

Where Ravens Dream
Encountering Property in Relation

by

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A thesis
presented to the University Of Waterloo
in fulfillment of the
thesis requirement for the degree of
Master of Architecture

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of this thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

This thesis asks a personal question that I have struggled with since before the Masters program:

Is Architecture inherently an imposition on place?

Through personal relation, reciprocity and dialogue with a particular place, Willow North, and the life that calls that place home, I offer a counter position to the implication of architectural imposition.

Presented as a series of personal narratives, this thesis records my encounters and continually evolving relation with Willow North, a family property at the base of the Bruce Peninsula. These narratives include my relation to the Ravens that inhabited this place, memories of my first visits to Willow North and reflections on home, a history of the landscape and property formation, a further description of my visits and activities over the course of a summer, and an account of my struggle to find personal meaning in architecture during the process of designing architectural responses for Willow North.

The outcome of my encounters and self-reflection on the question of architectural imposition in my relation to Willow North is presented as four designs: the Foxberm Residence, the Ravenbarn Studio, the Monarch Lookout and the Boneforest Waystation.

Acknowledgments

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Dedication

for Life at Willow North

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Introduction

... the universe itself can only be presented in a story with a mythic as well as a scientific aspect. Science deals with objects. Story deals with subjects. Since every form of being has both objective and subjective modes, neither is complete without the other.

Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme
Universe Story

[One]... might begin openly to develop and cultivate their personal rapport with that which they study as a means of deepening their [] insight.

David Abram
Mechanical and Organic

*We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time*

T.S. Elliot
Little Gidding

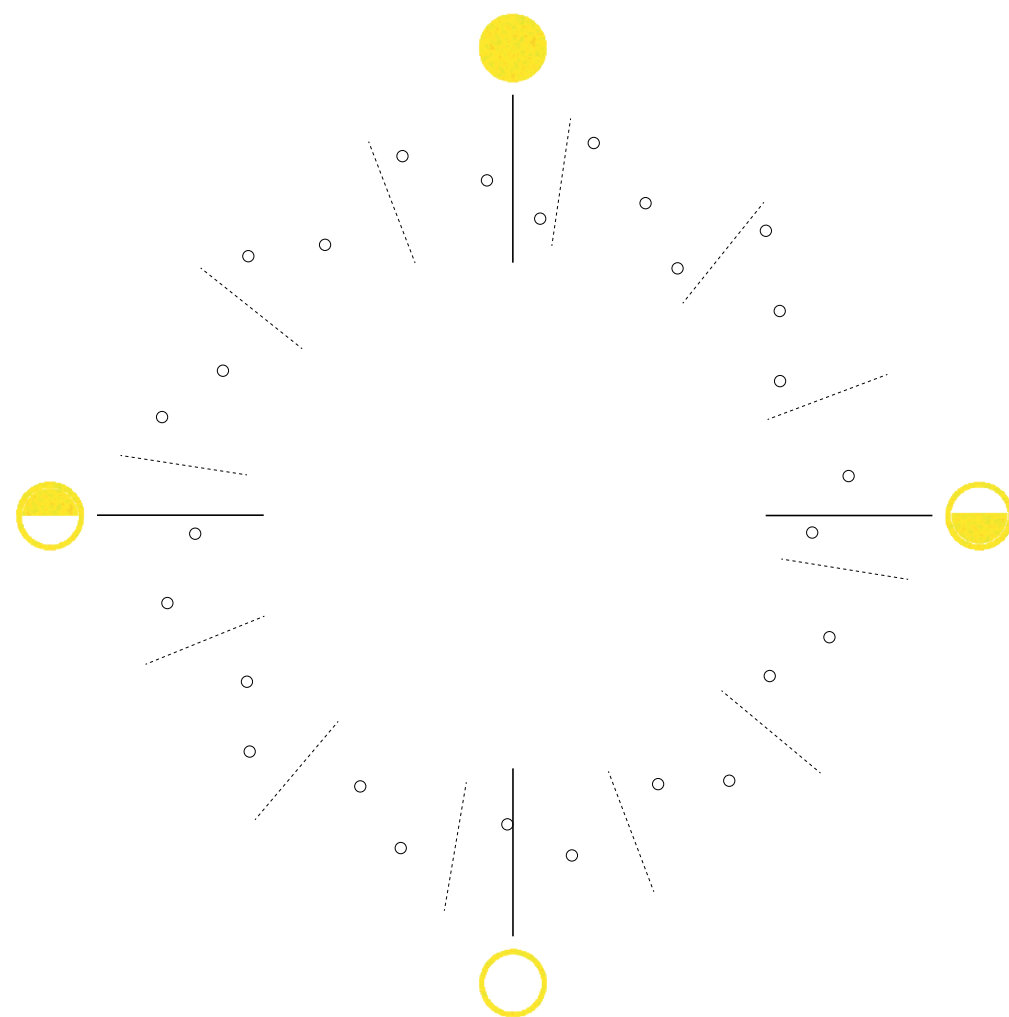


fig. 1

*Willow North Calendar: Time progresses outward from centre in a spiral scaled to life of Author.
Cardinal Axes: Up = Summer Solstice; Right = Fall Equinox | Radial lines: Start of months | Small circle: Full moons*



In Relation to Architecture:

The word, 'Architecture' encompasses many personal and shared definitions in pointing to myriad relations of people to the World.

I hold that Architecture is fundamentally about humans in a particular place, occupying and changing their environment, through time immemorial here on the land of the Earth. I hold that any intentionally created environment has a fundamental responsibility to be in support of ever-evolving, cyclical Life.

In Relation to Thesis:

I position this thesis within a wholistic approach to Architecture. I have chosen to focus on my personal relation to land as bounded by an impersonal distinction of property. Embracing both subjective and objective modes of expression, I seek to move from within the impersonal boundaries of property outwards to a personal relation to place.

The language of this thesis is predominantly personal, a dialogue. The dialogue starts with a story I share with You, Dear Reader. The story is an expression of my personal relation to the wholistic ideas of Land, Architecture and History; Life, Beauty and Home. The subject of this story is a property named Willow North purchased two years ago by my dad.

The narrative follows my encounters with Willow North in search of personal meaning in my relation to Architecture.

fig. 2

Willow North

(all photos from within Willow North, unless noted otherwise)



fig. 3

The Prologue: In Relation to Ravens, tells a story of the Ravens of Willow North in support of the story as a whole.

My personal narrative starts with, In Relation to Property: Part One, an account of my first visits to Willow North beginning Summer 2018, before I started the master's degree, and continuing until Spring 2019, when I began visiting Willow North as the site of my thesis. This includes reflections on memories of my childhood home.

In Relation to History presents my research into Willow North's past as a brief narrative describing the natural and cultural formation of the land. I present an account of the First Nations living in relation to this place and the sequence of treaties with the then forming Canadian Government that led to their displacement and the defining of this land as property.

In Relation to Property: Part Two, presents my first extended trips to Willow North starting Spring 2019. I completed a topographic survey of the property and began rebuilding one of the fieldstone walls that characterize Willow North.

In Relation to Architecture, presents a summary of my design process which started in the Fall of 2019. I share my personal struggle to find an architectural response to Willow North resolved through continued iterations of design and self-reflection on a feeling of separation from the idea of Architecture.

The final chapter of the narrative, In Relation to Willow North, offers a walk through Willow North describing four designs embedded within the property: a residence, a studio, a lookout and a waystation.

The Epilogue: In Relation to Story, offers a summative reflection on the events of the thesis narrative.



fig. 4

The end matter of this thesis is composed as follows:

Appendix A: Portraits of Willow North

A plan showing the dates and locations of photos presented throughout document.

Appendix B: Objective Property

A transcription of the original deed to Lot 23, which Willow North is part of.

Appendix C: Historic Records

Notes on historic census sources and currency conversions.

Appendix D: Iterations

Sequential notebook sketches from throughout the thesis.

Appendix E: Raven and Charybdis; The Quest within the Question

A personal essay reflecting on struggle in relation to conceptual frameworks.

Bibliography

Lists sources referenced, and those that have informed the writing of the narrative.

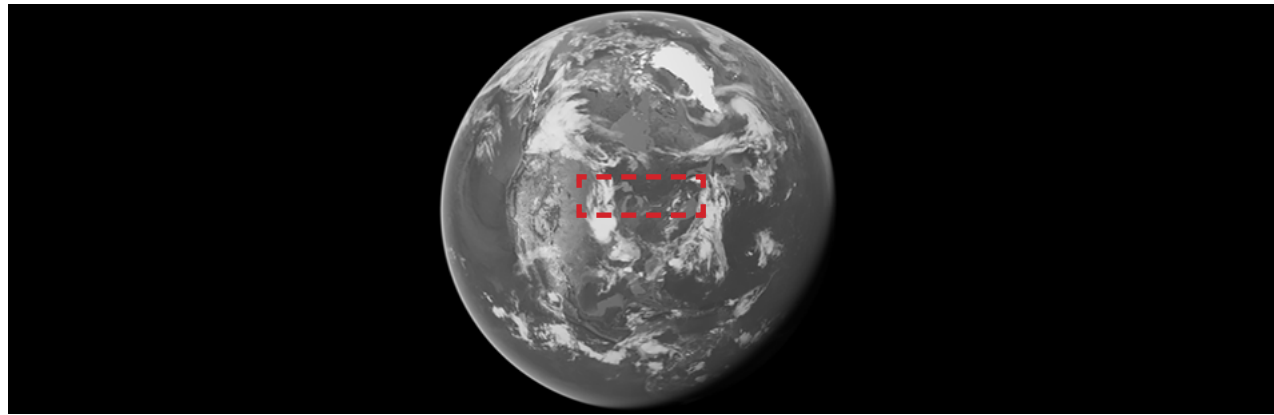
General notes:

Cardinal directions are capitalized throughout to orient the reader. Smaller measurements are often written in feet, meant in relation to the body. Larger measurements, beyond relation to the body, are written in metric.

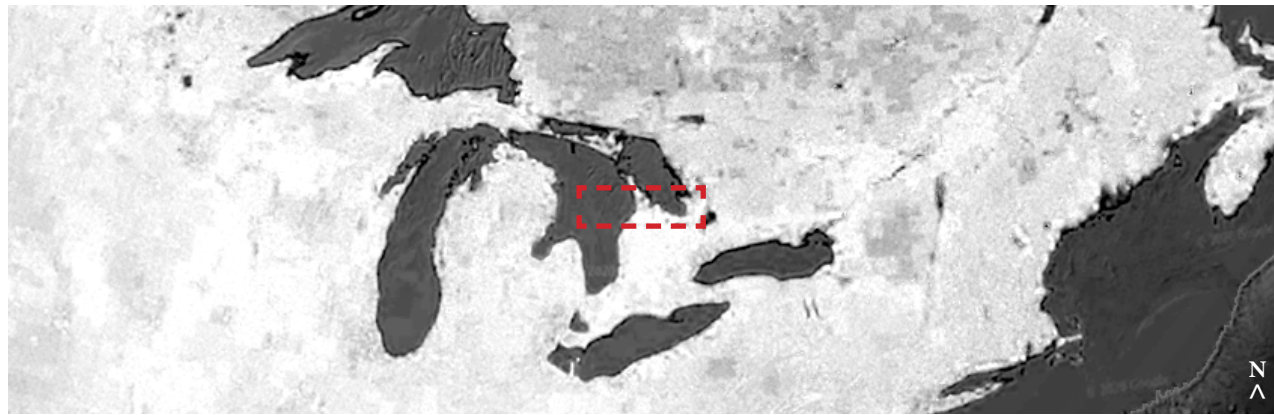
All measurements are meant to be accurate, not precise.

All drawings are presented scaled without dimensions.

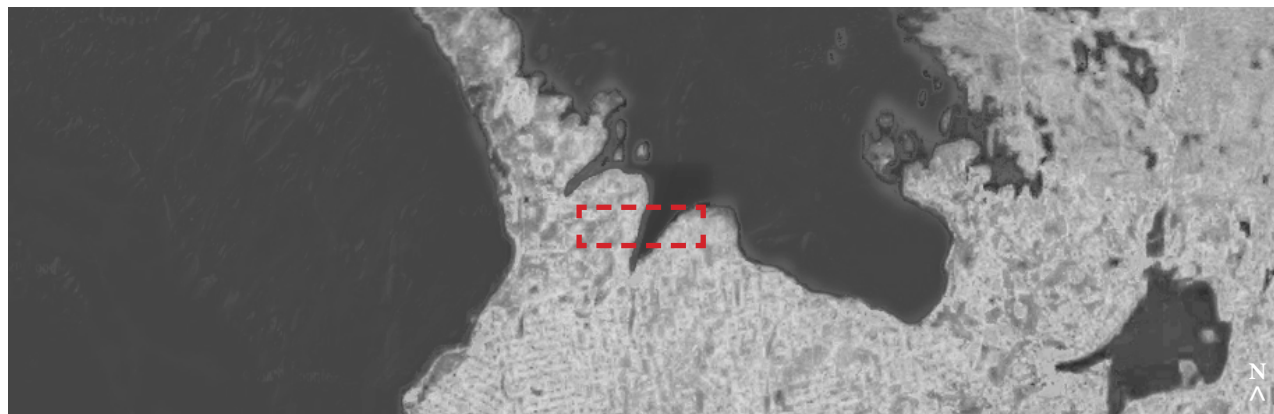
All plans are oriented with North up.



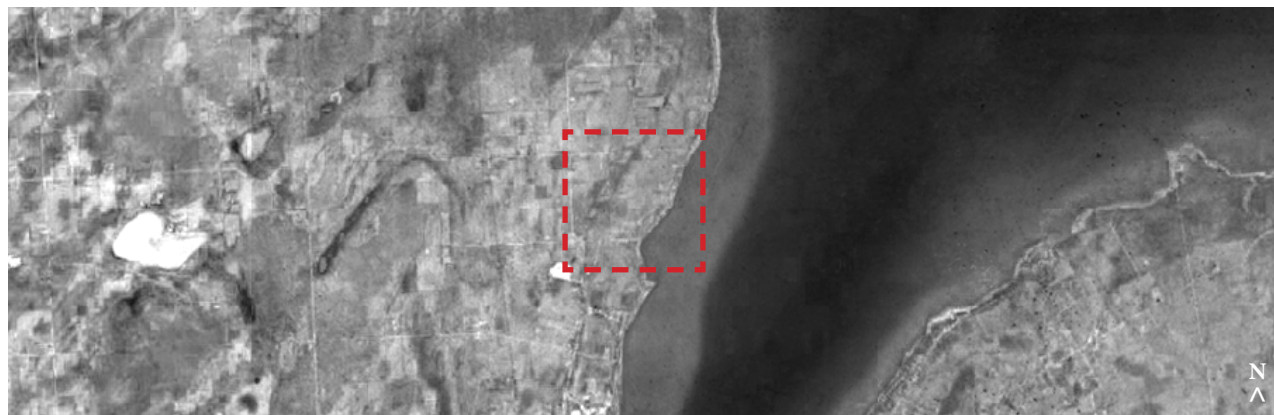
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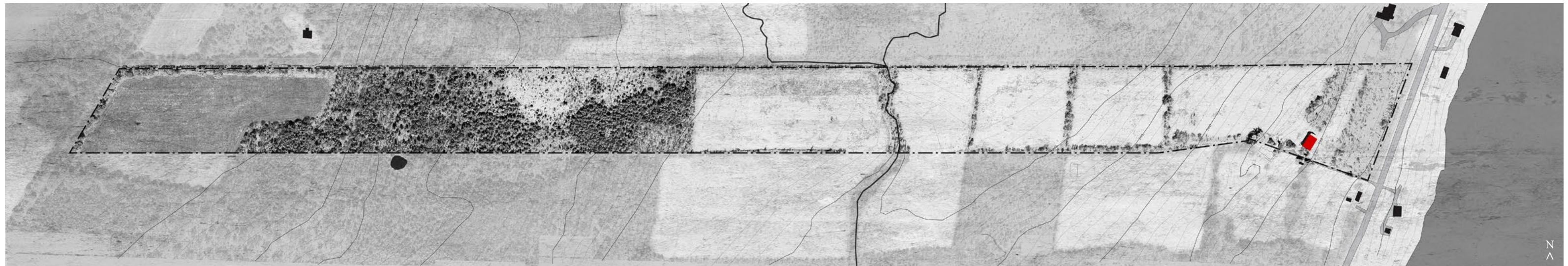


1 : 20 000

fig. 5 / fig. 6 / fig. 7 / fig. 8 (opposite page) / fig. 9 (this page)
Exponential Site Plans
Next smaller plan outlined in Red



1 : 5 000



1 : 5 000

fig. 10 / fig. 11
Existing Site Section / Site Plan
Barn in Red



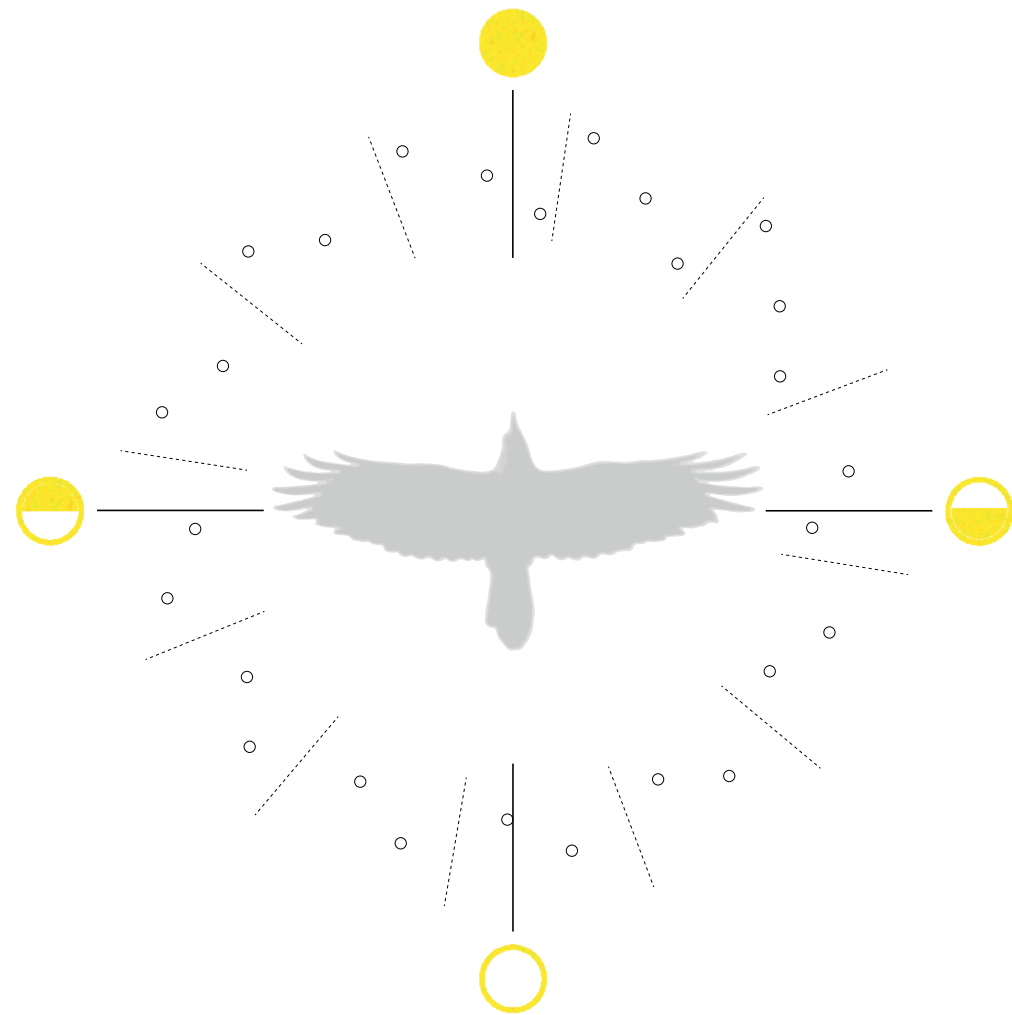


fig. 13
Willow North Encounters: *Ravens*

Prologue: In Relation to Ravens

*We are human only in contact and
conviviality, with what is not human.*

David Abram
Spell of the Sensuous

*Animals as characters in literature, as
universal presences in the imagination,
and in the archetypes of religion are there
because they were **there**.*

Gary Snyder
Practice of the Wild

*Every encounter is a way
station that grants [one]
a view of fulfillment...*

Martin Buber
I and Thou



I arrived on a late winter afternoon and parked in front of the snowbank at the road. Hiking up the driveway on top of a crusty layer of snow, as more fell quietly, two Ravens called to my left announcing my arrival and flew ahead of me. I didn't expect to see Ravens in this area but their croaks and kraaks were unmistakable.

My relationship to Ravens began in Vancouver. My first memory is of them flying overhead, chased by a dozen or more Crows near the Vancouver Harbour, where I was working at the time. I was amazed, never before noticing the difference between the two: the Ravens being more than twice the size of the Crows. After, I would recognize them perched around the city, their prehistoric, saurian look, with tufted beards and thick black beaks, gnarled at the base, impressing on my mind, wondering at the inflection in their guttural calls.

I had not seen Ravens in Ontario before, or had no memorable encounter with them here. It had always been Crows in fresh-cut farm fields and flying from tree to tree around Cambridge, cawing monotonously.

fig. 14
Vancouver, BC



fig. 15

I continued walking up the driveway to the barn, passed the two large sliding doors, arriving at the smaller access door at the far end. It opened inwards cutting a perfect arc in the snow that had blown in through cracks to the interior. I stepped down from the snowbank breaking the snowy arc with my foot and entered the barn.

As I let my eyes adjust to the darker interior space, enjoying the silence, I noticed a white line of bird shit down the centre of the barn over everything in its way. Looking up from this, there in the centre of the barn, at the top of the rafter supports was one of the largest nests I'd ever seen in person - the Ravens' nest!

I had seen Eagle nests on the West Coast, and Osprey nests in Cambridge that were comparable in size, but I had never been anywhere near as close to such a nest. It looked wiry, made of sticks as long as my arm and thick as my thumb, maybe bigger. The Ravens' entry place was clearly in front of me; up high on the South wall through a gap where a board had fallen out of place. The Ravens would have had to tuck their wings or twist as they entered carrying one those sticks with them each time.

As I moved further into the barn I noticed countless tiny paw prints drawing lines through the snow drifts; mice, raccoons, maybe a squirrel. In some places the Ravens had landed and walked around, perhaps hunting.

Croaking and grumbling from outside reverberated through the barn breaking the silence. I suddenly felt I was a guest here and a need to walk slowly came over me. Conscious of every step, I walked to the far wall and spotted the Ravens through a window perched on some Sumacs, waiting for me to leave.



fig. 16

The second time I arrived at the property the snow bank at the road had grown. The neighbour across the road told me his driveway was too steep and icy to use, but I could use the other neighbour's driveway to park. I told him I didn't mind digging and borrowed a spade shovel from him that would cut into the icy snowbank. I felt like I needed to dig.

It wasn't until I was done digging an hour later and walking over to move my car to the cleared area, that I looked up and noticed one of the Ravens watching me from the barn roof. I reached for my camera and took a photo before they flew off.

When I arrived at the barn, I first heard and then saw the Ravens flying to the West at the edge of the field and around to the forest to the North. The barn looked the same as before, except for my old footsteps clearly visible in the interior snow drifts. They looked less intentional than the animal tracks criss-crossing the place. Seeing my footsteps, I was less concerned about intruding on the quiet of the barn this time.

While resting in a room within the barn, I could hear one of the Ravens arrive at their nest. They began cooing and grumbling, sounding like one who might mutter and hum while alone. I must have made a noise in trying to open the door of the room to look, for I only heard them leave quickly.



fig. 17

A month later, as the freezing weather subsided, I was planning to survey the property. I was prepared to use the barn sparingly, to live with the Ravens as amicably as I could and not intrude so nosily. Before the trip my dad, visiting the property on his own whenever he could, told me that he saw the Ravens only once more since I had last been there and he hadn't seen them during the past two trips.

When I arrived I wasn't greeted by the Ravens but I did see Crows, which I hadn't until then, and I thought to myself: *I don't know if it was mine or my dad's trips to the property, or the Crows arriving which compelled the Ravens to leave, but I hope it was the Crows.*

From then on the Ravens presence became a breeze on a hot summer day, arriving unexpected and bringing relief. They danced at the edge of the forest, talking to each other in the unseen distance. They flew fast and carefree over the field chased by half a dozen Crows. The beat of their wings was heard from behind, as they flew erratic and flippantly overhead, disappearing behind a treeline.

The abandoned Ravens' nest remained in the barn just as impressive without their being there.



fig. 18

Their Being There...

The Being of the Ravens...

'Being': a verb, an action, much like the action of a stone sitting silently. The act of maintaining a recognizable state of reference among the forces of an ever changing present can easily be forgotten for its apparent inaction.

The Ravens' Being not there...

In feeling the absence, in expectation for what is not there, a void remains. That the relation also remains is not so immediately felt.



As I arrived at the property during the summer, after spending a month or so away, my dad told me the Ravens' nest had fallen. He had collected the sticks, piling them outside, and stored the inner nest in one of the old baskets in the barn.

The Inner Nest, how could I have not considered such a thing!

When the Ravens built their nest, they weren't going to lay their eggs on the thick wiry sticks that so strikingly caught my eye. Those sticks were the structure created to support the Inner Nest that sat at the heart of that framework.

I pulled the Inner Nest out of the basket to take a closer look. It was a microcosm of scavenged material from some unknown radius around the barn: deer hair, moss, bailing twine, small twigs, dense foam, synthetic stuffing, sheep's wool, bark strips, wasp paper. These materials were felted into a half metre wide cushion, pressed into the hollow of the branches by the feather-light, muscled body of the Ravens, with a depression on the top where the eggs would have been laid and rested until they hatched.



How do the Ravens using only a hard beak and sharp claws know what materials will be soft enough and which will be too hard for the Inner Nest?

Do they check for the pliability of the material? Do they know these materials from experience? Do they spot them while flying? Do they explore with uncertainty where they land, looking for anything nearby; taking hair as a souvenir from a scavenged meal?

Do they know where to look? Searching for sheep to find wool? Do they know the deer trails and look for hair from a nearby thorn? Do they test the bark of every tree in the forest? Do they know the smell of pliant cedar?

Hear these questions only as an expression of wonder rendered in words. A lifetime could be spent in search of answers, or the mystery could remain with the Ravens and the Inner Nest be held within the heart.

fig. 20



I sat reading on the deck of the trailer at the end of the summer. It was a humid afternoon filled with intermittent rain, and restless trees anticipating coming storms. Pausing to look up from my book, there sitting on the dead birch tree by the well in the field was one of the Ravens watching me read. We looked at each other for a moment, before they took off croaking, turning to fly towards the forest. Minutes later the heavy rains came rolling in from the South.

fig. 21



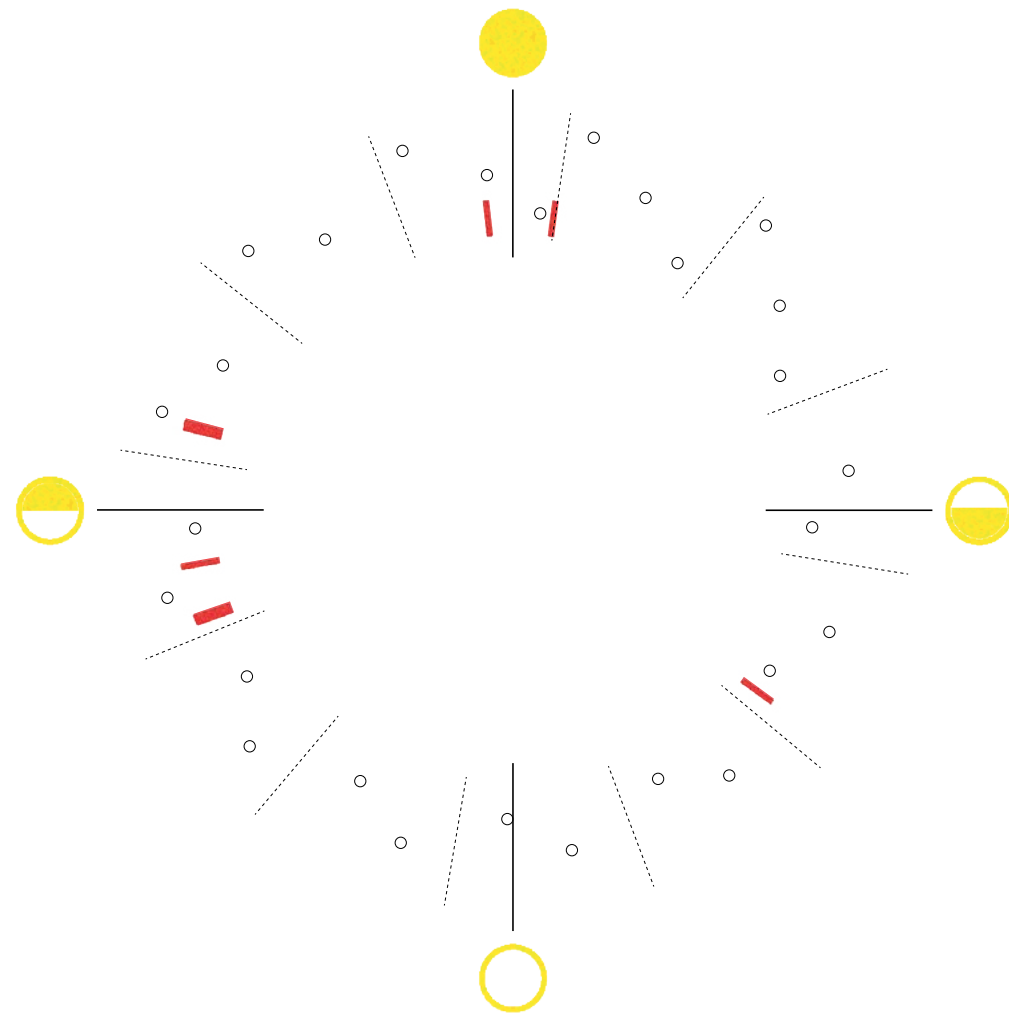


fig. 23

Willow North Encounters: 2018.06.16 - 2019.04.07

I.

In Relation to Property: Part One

*Our relation to the natural world takes place in a **place**, and it must be grounded in information and experience.*

Gary Snyder
The Practice of the Wild

It is important for us to have a home, it could be a small apartment, but still you have a place where your life is protected; you can look after your self, after your life, after the life of your family.

Peter Zumthor
A Different Kind of Silence

It feels good to bring my life into felt contact with these other lives, even if only for a moment. But how does my weight feel to those grasses; how do my steps feel to the terrain itself as I walk upon it?

David Abram
Becoming Animal



fig. 24

The first time I visited Willow North was shortly after the closing of the sale; I was going to meet my dad who had driven up from his house on Willow Dr. in London. I drove from my apartment in Toronto to my hometown of Meaford, and continued onwards through Owen Sound, then turned North along the bay. Passing the turn I would normally take to my Aunt and Uncle's house at Lake Charles, I continued another ten minutes along the coast before taking a sharp right turn down a hill I couldn't recall traveling before. I began reading the property numbers and a minute later I realized I passed the one I was looking for and turned the car around. Finding the correct number I drove through a metal farm gate questionably supported by a cedar post leaning against a tree and continued up the overgrown gravel driveway.



fig. 25

I first caught sight of the barn to my right beyond the trees and then saw my dad's car and another I didn't recognize. Hannah, my dad's dog, came to greet me and we walked together towards the other two cars where my dad was talking with Ian, who had just purchased the neighbouring property. They had both arrived coincidentally and after introductions we set off to walk both properties.

Willow North and Ian's property are two parallel halves of what was once a thinner-than-normal, one hundred and ten acre farm lot subdivided lengthwise and share the driveway ending near the barn. Each property is a little over one hundred metres wide and over a kilometre and a half long. A three acre cottage property at the road was the third subdivision of the farm under one ownership until all were sold the previous year.



fig. 26

My dad brought an official survey overlaid on a satellite image to try and determine the property boundaries as we walked through a number of fields. Passing by treelines and old stone walls we reached a mostly dried up stream where Hannah found a shaded pool of water to cool off from the summer heat. From there we crossed the treeline at the edge of the property to an unopened road allowance running along the North edge of the property.

Following the road allowance, we bypassed the forest for easier walking and eventually made it to the road that borders both properties at the West end. Ian showed us a survey marker he had found at the far corner of his property and he and my dad then set off to count strides trying to determine where the line between the two properties fell.

After walking back to the cars Ian joined us for lunch. We ate inside the barn at a table with some old benches and chairs and the sliding doors left open with a view of the field to the West.

After lunch Ian left to start cutting paths on his property and my dad and I started clearing trees under the powerline running from the road to the barn. Once this was done, we would be able to activate the electricity service to the barn.



fig. 27

I felt a mixed pleasure as I worked, an initial hesitation of ending the lives of so many trees coupled with the physical satisfaction of sawing, cutting and hauling them away.

As I worked I lifted a log causing another to swing over and hit my ankle. The hit was painful and seeing the branch covered in thorns, I hobbled out of the bush onto the driveway to inspect my foot. A thorn had entered through the side of my boot and hit my ankle directly, leaving a tiny pinprick of a mark. Stretching my foot helped with the soreness and continuing to move felt better than stopping. We worked for another half hour then packed up and drove to my Aunt's house at Lake Charles for dinner. Arriving fifteen minutes later, I stepped out of the car and could only limp. By the end of dinner, I could barely stand on my left foot.

I drove back to my Mom's house in Meaford with my ankle swollen like a tennis ball. Seeing the redness around the puncture had grown, I had my Mom drive me to the hospital. The doctor suggested antibiotics and set an IV drip. I waited in the hospital bed listening as a women arrived in labour. Being less of a priority I was left for an hour, thinking about the day.

I felt the place had achieved some retribution for my actions. The trees demonstrating their agency. Not some intentional muscular agency, but a bodily presence in the world with an ability to act on other bodies. The fallen tree responding with thorns ever ready to engage in physical interaction with an outstretched hand or misplaced foot.



fig. 28
Toronto, ON

The old farmland and abandoned Barn at Willow North reminded me of my childhood home. I grew up forty-five minutes east of Willow North, a single child living with my Mom outside the town of Meaford on an eighty-five acre property.

The surrounding land was full of farmers' fields and woodlots covering soft rolling hills and valleys with lazy rivers winding through. About ten years ago, while I was in the second year of my undergraduate architecture degree, my Mom sold the property to move into town.

I've longed to sit with such a place since then, unbounded by money, schedules or concrete. I've longed to see the stars every night that I step outside, to see around me the forests and fields of grasses, gold finches and turkey vultures, deer and coyote tracks, to feel the force of the ground under my bare feet and the fresh air bringing the smell of rain. I've longed to be immersed in the endless mystery and agency of the encompassing world of non-human others that I carry within my heart always.

I've looked for and encountered these mysterious others within the cities and towns that I've lived since leaving home, kept my eyes open for the Wild in the cracks of concrete and the alleyways behind buildings. But it is easy to lose sight of, and I am quick to fall under the illusion that Life in all its wild forms is bounded and not the encompassing field of relations within which everything is created.



In 2008, two years before the sale of my childhood home, my dad's sister and her husband bought a fifty acre property North of Owen Sound at Lake Charles in the Township of Georgian Bluffs. There farms share space with thick forests, cold lakes and the rocky outcrops of the Niagara Escarpment.

I had visited this area since I was young, with early memories of hiking the Bruce Trail at Skinner's Bluff and the Slough of Despond with my dad, skipping rocks at Big Bay and visiting the Bruce Caves.

After purchasing the Lake Charles property, my Aunt and Uncle remained in the United States where they were living at the time. They moved to Lake Charles in 2018. In those ten years my dad and I, being within driving distance to Lake Charles, traveled there often in the summers to explore, steward the land and renovate the century-old farmhouse. When my Aunt and Uncle moved to Lake Charles my dad purchased Willow North in 2018, the year before I started my master's degree.

fig. 29
Bruce Trail, Georgian Bluffs



I talked with my dad early into the master's program about possible sites for my thesis, and he suggested his new property as a place to explore my ideas.

Three months into the program, and five months before I met the Ravens in the winter, I went to Willow North. I set up a desk in the middle of the barn and spent the afternoon measuring and drawing the space.

From time in the Barn

- coyotes at night

- snake skin in basement

Arriving up north and spending time there felt forced. I have no intrinsic attachment to the place. I felt such a sense of needing to connect which seems the anti-thesis of connecting with anything. It was cold and wet and the barn offered little comfort. It could perhaps be made into a space of comfort, to go to connect, but the whole idea feels forced.¹

The next day I changed my thesis site to a conservation area. I changed my stated focus twice more before the end of term. I ended the term balancing stones and considering architectural references that I felt had a philosophical connection.

Starting the second term I moved from balancing stones to ideas of homeostatic balance and systems theory then to ecological systems and world scale environmental issues. I then turned to more philosophical ideas about self and environment.

Remaining without a sense of what I wanted halfway through the second semester I turned to a felt sense of beauty in the memory of another's home.

¹ 2018.10.29 Passage from Notebook



fig. 31
Cuers, France

At the end of the summer after my first year of the undergraduate Architecture program at Waterloo, I was visiting a friend in the south of France whom I had been partnered with for a high school exchange program. We stayed at his father's house situated at the bottom of a mountainous hill, surrounded by vineyards. The family didn't have a vineyard, but they did have an enormous half wild garden covering a third of the property. We ate outside every day for dinner, much of the food coming from the garden except for bread and a few other items bought from the local town. Lunch was eaten on the patio under a canopy half covered in leafy vines. At other times the patio was used for naps or reading in the shade.

The house was old, and quietly grand. I don't know if the house was bought or inherited, but the family wasn't wealthy and the life they lived wasn't extravagant, though it felt so rich, like a much loved leather jacket. The father collected Napoleon-era silverware and there was a room filled with a variety of these types of things. Other eclectic objects were found everywhere around the house, casually where they wanted to be as if they had a life of their own.

My friend and I stayed there for a little over a week with the family. It was a dream that I remember fondly. I can still taste the fresh figs that I ate everyday from the trees growing around the patio.



fig. 32
Cuers, France

I am describing this place in an attempt to wrest the feeling that I have when I see this photo (fig. 32). This feeling that is as much a memory as a dream. As I reflect on this place, I realize how little I remember of the layout of the house. I don't even remember where the entry was, let alone any of the details of the building. When I chose this particular photo over others, I did so based on it best capturing the feeling of my memories of the time and place.

When I look at the photo now, I start picking it apart for details, looking for anything that might be objectively adding to my feeling. Those things that another who has never been there might have felt somewhere else before:

- *The sunshine edging in from the right*
- *The basket sitting in the sun next to the dog dish with a leaf in it*
- *The simple square column with wine bottles becoming its base*
- *The tropical leaved plants casting shadows on the column*
- *The tree as big as the column with leaves obscuring the sky*
- *The reflection of light in the glass cabinet in the foreground*
- *The matching seafoam-green shutter doors*
- *The shower curtain rod in the doorway with mismatched pastel clips bunched together at one end*
- *A cane resting against the door*
- *The rough hewn stone steps leading to the lower patio, worn smooth and shiny after an unknown number of years*
- *The bouquet of sunflowers in the window like a fresh Van Gogh*
- *The lower patio shrouded in shadow*
- *The view of the sunlit landscape in the distance*
- *A lantern sitting at the edge of the patio and another hanging*
- *The mismatched patio furniture and blanket on a chair*



fig. 33
Sarnia, ON

I don't remember any of these things in their particular time and place, and only a few can I recall generally, but as I look at the photo I know they all belong. I feel as if I am reading the recordings of a dream a year later: the memory returns clearly but I am not certain I could have recalled any of it otherwise.

As I investigate this feeling, I am still searching for something, some meaning...

There are many memories of times and places that carry meaning for me: those moments of encounter when the beauty of a place shines through so clearly such as crossing paths with a fox. These encounters bring a contentment in and of themselves, but the longing that drives my search remains when the contentment passes.

The longing felt for the home in France rests with the memory of the life lived there, and not in remembering the building, I find myself questioning the meaning of the architecture. Perhaps that particular building in that particular place was the only one that could support that way of life. Perhaps the family that lived there, changing their environment consciously and unconsciously would have created such a life in any place.

When I first started writing about this memory, reflecting on the feeling of longing, it brought a memory of my home that I grew up in. I didn't want to revisit this memory, as it is primarily one of loss, and I stalled my reflections for a week.



fig. 34
Meaford, ON

I think about the home I grew up in and it remains a great feeling of loss for me. I don't often try to remember the place, but when I do recall memories, I feel much of what I consider meaningful rests there; or rather this place shaped my felt sense of beauty.

The house was a simple, efficient building that my dad designed and built. The beauty I felt was in the surrounding landscape, which the house framed with a giant deck and large windows looking out over the pond, the rolling hills and the incoming storms. That is where my dreams and feelings of loss lie, between the deck and the fields.

The house, the pond, the hills are all still there, but another family owns the property. The difficulty is knowing the place is not to be returned: that the loss is real but the memories are also real.

I don't feel attached to any other place in particular now. Of the multitude of places I've enjoyed living in since leaving home, I have also felt a subtle detachment; that I could wander forever, from one place to the next, untethered. The buildings that I have lived in remaining a frame for the feeling I'm searching for.

It has taken time to know this search is for an idealized home: from a different time and impossible to return to. When I stop pursuing this intangible idea of home, and turn to my life in relation to any place since, I know the feeling of home only waits – needing only time to grow and a place to be an anchor. Such a time and place may then become the source of new memories and dreams; from there I may expand my relation to the world.



fig. 35

As I reflected on my felt sense of home I began to think about Willow North again.

Maybe the barn on my dad's property is the way to go. I could design a residence and studio for my dad. I was so anxious when I went there last, I didn't know what I was doing. I didn't even stay the night. It could be beautiful.²

Three days later, in the course of an hour, I decided that I needed to go to Willow North and called my Aunt at Lake Charles to ask to stay the night. I then drove up that afternoon to the snow covered fields.

I returned to my apartment the day after and soon talked with my dad about being at Willow North and ideas for the place.

I get a doubtful feeling of approaching the property after talking with my dad. Nothing he said really. It is something to do with hearing his plans for the property & barn and not feeling like I want to intrude on his property.³

2 2019.02.28 Passage from Notebook

3 2019.03.04 Passage from Notebook

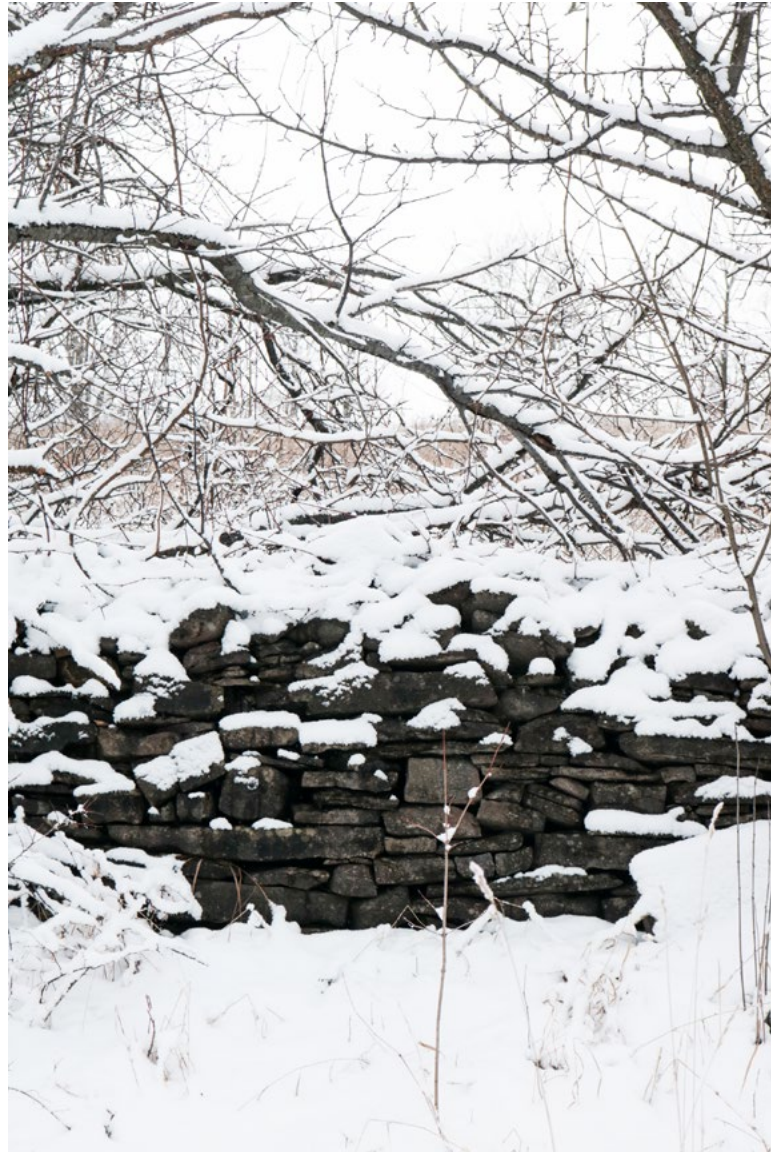


fig. 36

After one more trip digging into the snowbank, the final presentation of the term arrived. I talked about my first visits to Willow North, about documenting the barn, and I showed some initial design sketches. I wasn't certain of pursuing any designs yet and I talked of wanting:

a space to be able to actually sleep in, to stay in, to spend more time with the site. Some point where I feel I can respond honestly and not feel like I'm imposing something on the site

To which the guest critic replied:

You're always going to be imposing something. You're doing architecture you have to at some point confront that reality.⁴

The conversation turned to the physical context of the property and my supervisor and another professor suggested an approach of developing "a portrait of this piece of land in this piece of Ontario" or "a kind of biography".

This approach alleviated my apprehension towards imposing anything at Willow North and I moved forward with an idea of "Understanding Place".

⁴ 2019.03.21 Transcription of audio recording



fig. 37

In looking to understand Willow North, I began piecing together a story of the formation of the landscape, searching for information regarding the bedrock exposed at the stream, the stone walls and treelines lining the fields and the property lines that bounded the place and my encounters. My research into the property history started with a framed photocopy of the deed for the original farm lot from which Willow North was subdivided.

The deed stated:

“Lot 23 of the Georgian Range”, 110 acres “more or less” of the Township of Keppel, was purchased by John Crampton for \$291.62⁵ on June 6, 1876.

Lot 23 was part of land “set apart for the use of the Chippewas of Nawash Indians”, sold by the Minister of the Interior and Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs on behalf of Queen Victoria, “in order that the proceeds may be applied to the benefit, support and advantage of the said Indians, in such a manner as We shall be pleased to direct from time to time”.⁶

⁵ 9,500 CAD (2019 equivalent)

⁶ See Appendix B for full transcription of deed



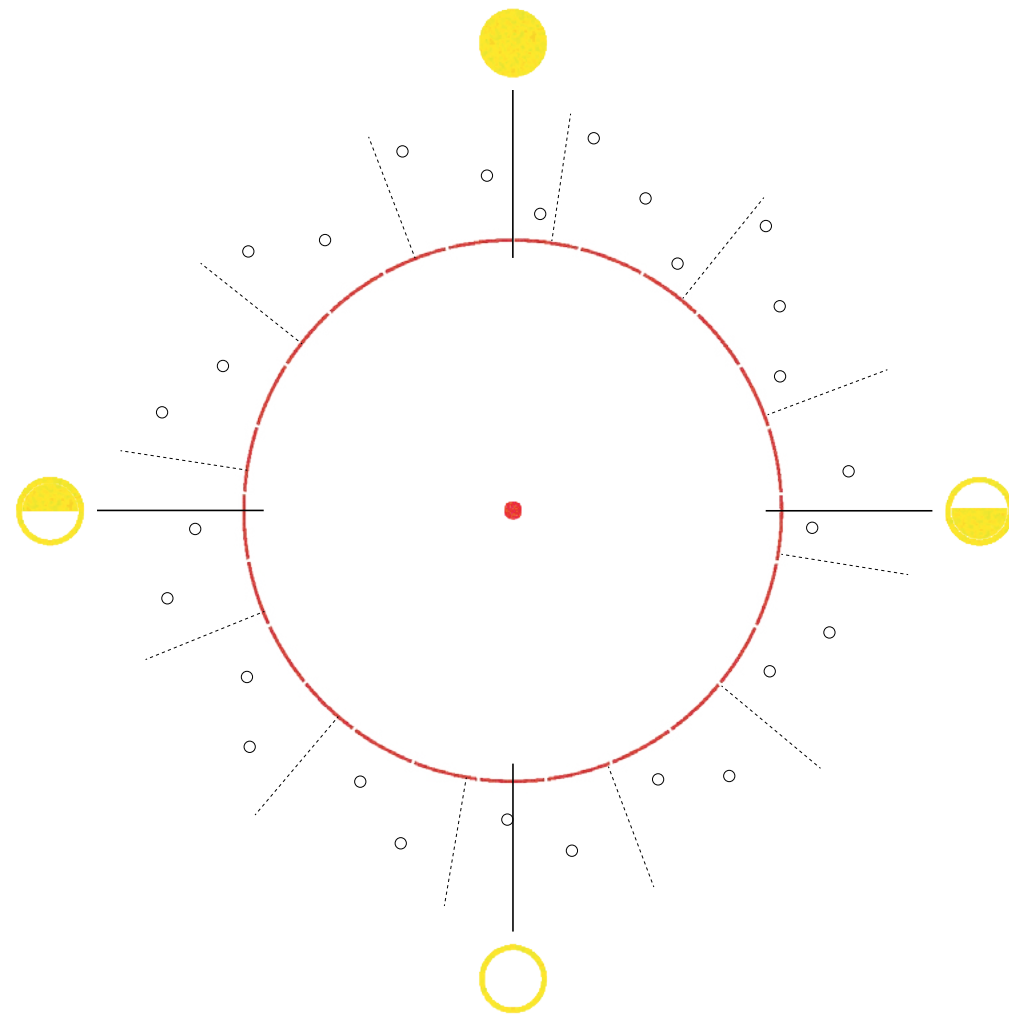


fig. 39

Willow North Encounters: *Recordings of the past*

II.

In Relation to History

[Possessing] is a formal claim, not a lived bond. It represents a unidirectional claim to mastery—the “right” to “use or abuse, destroy or alienate”—rather than the experience of mutual belonging. The claim to possess cannot grow out of a lived experience: it is an abstract, legal claim, a construct established by social convention to order the life of a world of artifacts....

Erazim Kohak
The Embers and the Stars

The world as experience belongs to the basic word I-It. The basic word I-You establishes the world of relation.

Martin Buber
I and Thou

Anonymous, implacable, unperturbed - the biting cold of a winter wind returns one to one’s unity with the bedrock

David Abram
Becoming Animal



fig. 40

Over four hundred million years ago, when the continent now known as Europe was pressed against this continent, a time when fins had not yet been invented by fish and the fossils found among the stone walls were not fossils, the bedrock that supports Willow North was beginning to be formed.

Shellfish, snails, and trilobites lived in this place among coral reefs at the bottom of a shallow, salt water sea, perhaps similar to the Mediterranean. Over millions of years, calcium rich bodies and particulate brought by rivers from the grandparents of the Appalachian Mountains, were compressed and cemented together layer by layer forming limestone, sandstone and shale.

Two hundred and fifty million years ago, as this continent rose higher and the seas dried up, immense domes of Precambrian rock, more ancient than the sea floor, were moved upwards with the pressure of the earth's interior warping the sedimentary bedrock into a basin over seven hundred kilometres wide. With its centre in the area now known as Michigan, the softer shale and sandstone layers along the exposed edges of the basin were continuously eroded away in turn causing the harder layers above to break off. As rivers flowed over the landscape of the basin towards the edges, they carved ravines and valleys that became inlets and bays like the one visible from Willow North. These eroding processes continued to move the edges inward to the point they can be seen today as the face of the still eroding Escarpment, exposing the land that sits below.¹

¹ Tovell, Dr. Walter M.. *Guide to the Geology of the Niagara Escarpment*



fig. 41

The smooth topography that covers the bedrock of Willow North was formed by glaciers beginning over twenty thousand years ago. The glaciers grew to cover much of the landmass of the Northern hemisphere of the earth eventually standing two kilometres tall over this place. These ice bodies scraped away everything down to the bedrock which was left scarred and exposed at higher elevations nearby.

As the glaciers began to retreat twelve thousand years ago, leaving behind fertile soil and erratic boulders as markers of their presence, their melting forms began to flood this area. The fresh glacial waters formed Lake Algonquin which joined much of what is now Lake Huron and Lake Michigan into one water body, covering the land between.

Rivers and drainage channels far and near continued to shift with the further recession of the glaciers causing the lake levels to fluctuate. The water fell and rose and fell again over the next seven thousand years until a relatively stable period starting three thousand years ago and continuing until today. The various lake forms left behind shorelines of sand and rounded beach-stone whenever they receded. The Barn at Willow North was built into the slope of one ancient shoreline that rises twenty metres above the current lake level.²

² Tovell, Dr. Walter M.. *Guide to the Geology of the Niagara Escarpment*

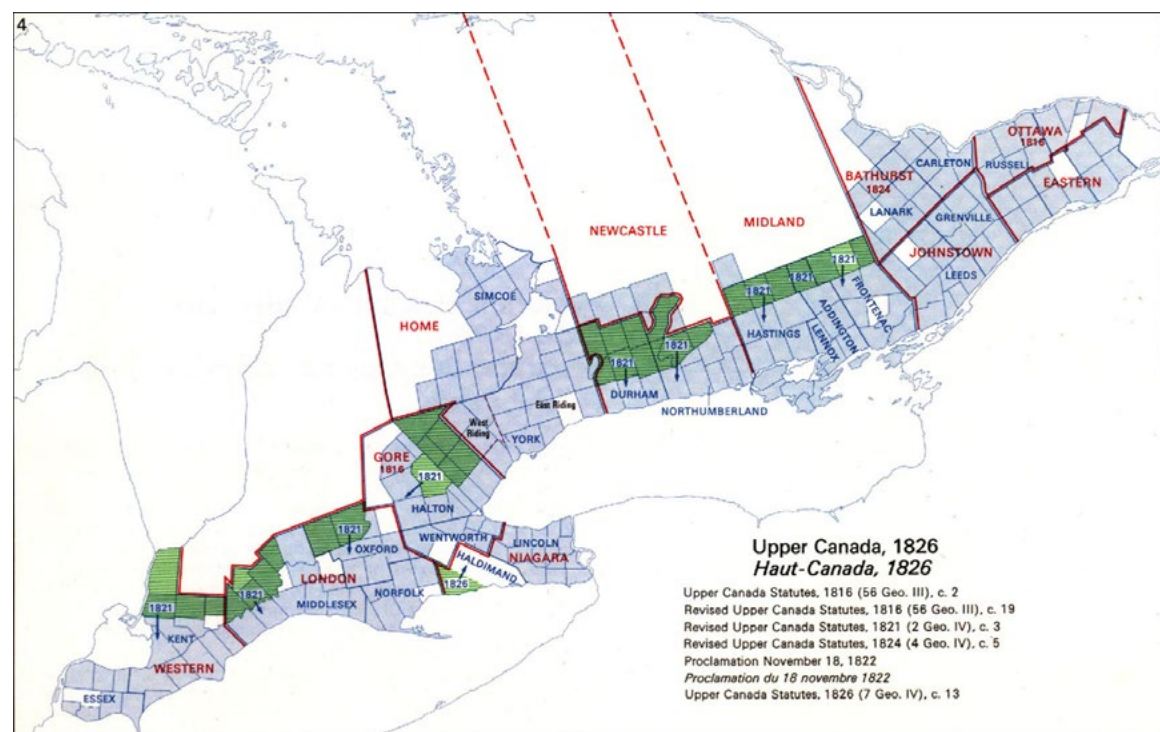
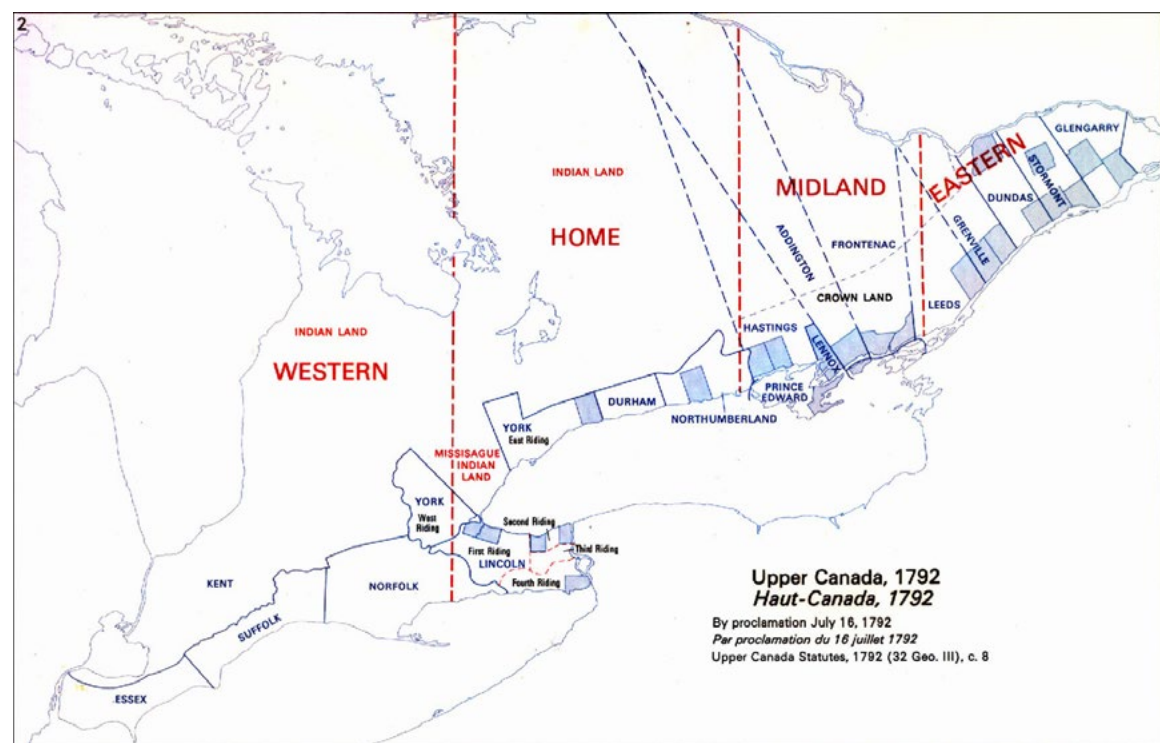


fig. 42 (top) / fig. 43
County Evolution Maps of Upper Canada

The first humans began settling along the newly exposed shorelines and interior land following the retreat of the glaciers. For at least the past two thousand years early groups of the Algonquin language group (e.g. Ojibway, Odawa, Pottawtomi) collectively referred to as the Saugeen Complex by present day archaeologists, likely arrived from the North and West to live on land extending from Lake Erie up to the Saugeen Peninsula, now know as the Bruce Peninsula. Those of the Iroquoian language group (e.g. Mohawk, Huron) likely arrived in the Southern Ontario region from the South and East.³

The Saugeen First Nations continued to live along the Saugeen Peninsula until over three hundred years ago when in 1650 tensions between the Iroquois who were allied with the English and the Saugeen who were allied with the French were exacerbated by French and English political-economic tensions. This led to the Saugeen First Nations being driven back to the North shores of Lake Huron and Superior by the Iroquois.

Within fifty years, the Saugeen First Nations had reclaimed the land and in 1701 engaged in Peace treaties with the Iroquois and other First Nations at the Mohawk settlement of Kahnawá:ke, near Montreal, to share hunting grounds throughout the Great Lakes region.⁴

Following the defeat of the French by the English for possession of “North America,” the British Royal Proclamation of 1763 ordered a stop of wider colonial settlement beyond the thirteen British colonies along the East Coast of the continent. The Proclamation designated the land West of the Appalachian Mountains as a First Nations reserve. The American War of Independence from 1775-1783, nullified this agreement in the US. In the British Provinces of Canada, colonial expansion also continued. Following the war of 1812, colonial settlement in Southern Ontario significantly increased, and many First Nations people from the area were encouraged by the government to move into the Saugeen Peninsula.⁵

³ www.ontarioarchaeology.org/summary-of-ont-arch

⁴ Lytwyn, Victor P. *Dish With One Spoon*. p. 217

⁵ Schmalz, P. *The History of the Saugeen Indians, Chp. 1*



fig. 44
Bruce Trail, Georgian Bluffs

The water visible from Willow North is an inlet off Georgian Bay named Owen Sound, and first named Wadi-weediwon by the Chippewas that live here. At the South end of the sound where the Sydenham River flows out is the city Owen Sound, first named Sydenham when the land was surveyed in 1840, four years after the Saugeen Tract Purchase of 1836 (Treaty No. 45 1/2).

Treaty No. 45 1/2 with the Saugeen First Nations, primarily consisting of three bands of Ojibway First Nations (Chippewas), saw the land they lived on, South of the line running between Owen Sound and South Hampton, purchased by the British Crown. This in turn established the Saugeen Peninsula, now known as the Bruce Peninsula plus the historic Grey County townships of Keppel and Sarawak,⁶ as First Nation territory⁷ which the Crown agreed “for ever to protect for [the Saugeen First Nations] from the encroachments of the whites.”⁸

6 The townships of Keppel, Sarawak and Derby (to the South) along with Shallow Lake were amalgamated into Georgian Bluffs Township in 2001.
7 Schmalz, P. *The History of the Saugeen Indians*, Chapter III
8 Canada. *Indian Treaties and Surrenders; From 1680 to 1890 in Two Volumes*. Vol. 1, p113.

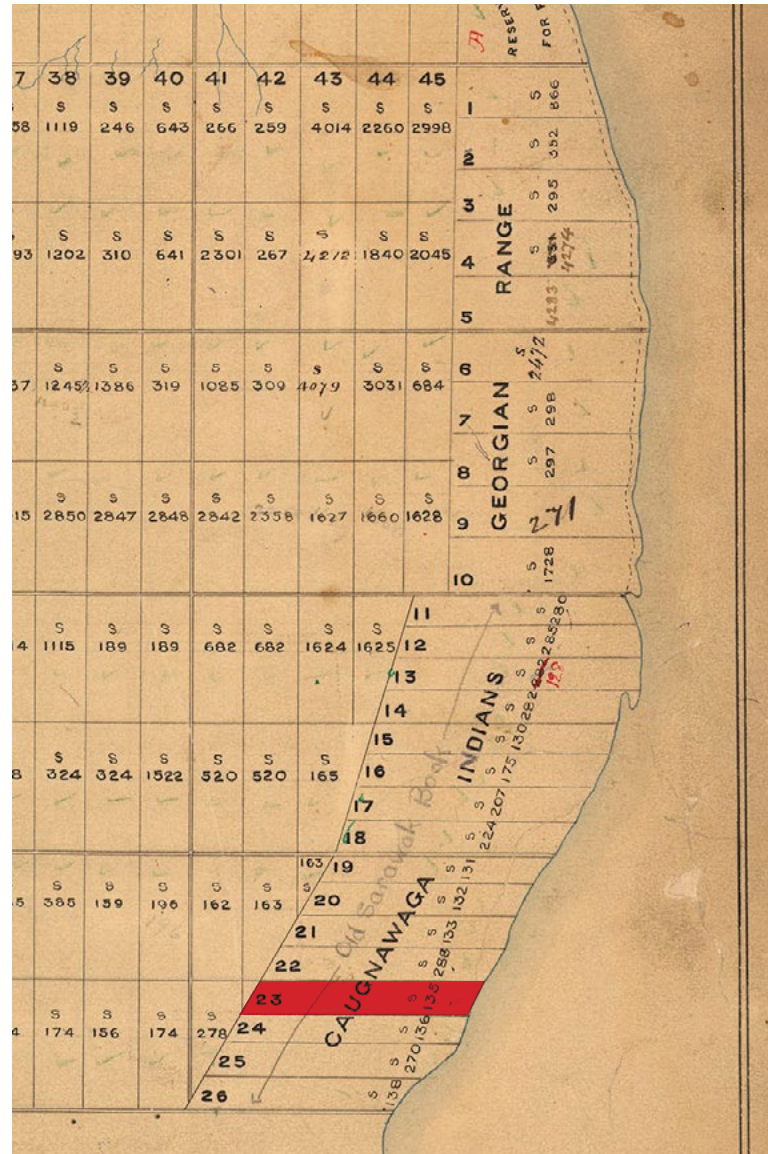


fig. 45
1856 survey plan of Keppel Township
(cropped to Georgian Range) Lot 23 in red

In August of 1851, fifteen years after the establishment of the Saugeen Peninsula, James Bruce, Governor General of Canada and the future namesake of the Bruce Peninsula, moved a group of forty-four Mohawk⁹ from their reserve near Montreal to an area of land along the coast north of Owen Sound. That land included Lot 23 (part of which is now Willow North).

Earlier that year, the Mohawk living near Montreal at Kanehsatà:ke appealed to British authorities for help in dealing with the unfair treatment by the Sulpicians, French Roman Catholic missionaries that were acting as an authority over these Mohawk at the time and selling reserve land to colonial settlers. In response the government offered to move the Mohawk to different locations.¹⁰

The Mohawk were not embraced by all the Chippewas of the Saugeen Peninsula and never received band recognition while living on the Saugeen Peninsula.¹¹

9 “Caughnawaga” is the name that appears on local historic maps and documents, and is likely an English phonetic spelling of Kahnawá:ke, a Mohawk reserve near Kanehsatà:ke. I have been unable to find any reason for those from Kahnawá:ke to be moved, and I have assumed therefore this group came from Kanehsatà:ke, but was referred to in general as from Kahnawá:ke. Kanien’kehà:kam is the autonym of the Mohawk.

10 In 1868 Kanehsatà:ke was renamed Oka by the Sulpicians, and in 1990 was the site of the Oka crisis. “Oka Timeline: An Unresolved Land Claim Hundreds of Years in the Making.” *CBC*.

11 Schmalz, *The History of the Saugeen Indians*, Chapter II, p45-55



In 1854, eighteen years after the Saugeen Tract Treaty, colonizing pressure of Scottish and Irish immigrants seeking land continued with many squatters trespassing onto the Saugeen First Nations land. Superintendent-General of Indian affairs, L. Oliphant, then negotiated with the Saugeen First Nations to sign the Saugeen Peninsula Treaty (Treaty 72) in which all the land of the Saugeen Peninsula excluding five reserves was surrendered.¹² One of the five remaining reserves, belonging to the Chippewas of Nawash, extended three kilometres inland from the coast, from Owen Sound to a kilometre South of Lot 23. The land allocated to the Mohawk was located just north of this.

The land which would become known as Keppel Township was surveyed over the next year and a half by crews led by Charles Rankin to be sold by auction in Owen Sound in 1856.¹³

12 Schmalz, *The History of the Saugeen Indians*, Chapter III, p56-79
13 Keppel Township Historical Society, *Beautiful Stoney Keppel*, p 7

fig. 46
1856 "Map of the Saugeen Indian Peninsula"
advertising first property auction (Lot 23 in red)



In the fall of 1856 following the auction of land in Keppel Township,¹⁴ seventeen of the twenty Mohawk families were moved back to their reserve near Montreal, being paid 51 pounds and 14 shillings each¹⁵ for their improvements to the land over the past five years.¹⁶

Six months later in 1857 the Chippewas of Nawash were pressured into signing the Jones Treaty (Treaty 82) removing them from their reserve land along the coast and placing them fifty kilometres Northward at Cape Croker, where they live today.¹⁷ The remaining three Mohawk families moved with them to Cape Croker.

The reserve lands were promptly surveyed, subdivided and auctioned later that year, along with the land that had been occupied by the Mohawks and any remaining land that went unsold on the Peninsula. The Chippewas, not being recognized as persons in the law, were not permitted to purchase any of their land back.

The Chippewas of Nawash Reserve became Sarawak Township. The land inhabited by the Mohawk became a continuation of the Georgian Range concession in Keppel Township.

14 "The Caughnawaga Tract, situated very advantageously on the Owen Sound Bay, the surrender of which was only obtained from the Indians during the progress of the late sale, though small, is reported to be good land." - Official report of Mr. Bartlett on the sale of Saugeen Peninsula land, November 20th, 1856, - found in *History of the County of Bruce by Norman Robertson (1906)*

15 9,200 CAD (2019 equivalent) was two-thirds of the general value of 100 acres in Keppel at the time. See Appendix C

16 Schmalz, *The History of the Saugeen Indians*, Chapter II, p50-51

17 Schmalz, *The History of the Saugeen Indians*, Chapter V, p103-115

fig. 47

1880 "Map of Sarawak and Keppel Townships" (Lot 23 in red)



fig. 48

The 1861 agricultural census¹⁸ of the British Province of Canada, shows the first recording of John Crampton listed on Lot 23 of the Georgian Range, fifteen years before the deed to the land was granted. John Crampton lived on the property with his wife Jane, Jane's mother, and three children; one newborn, the others age two and three.

Born in Ireland in 1830, ten years before the Great Famine, John Crampton moved to Canada with his parents and siblings likely sometime between the census of 1851 and 1856 when he and his brother Charles were part of Charles Rankin's survey crew for the Township of Keppel.¹⁹

At the time of the census, Lot 23 had twelve acres of land "Under Cultivation", extending from the shoreline road to the back of the first field, with the remainder "Under Wood or Wild".²⁰ Nine acres of the cultivated land was used for crops, including spring and fall wheat, potatoes and turnips, as well as three tons worth of hay. The three acres of pasture were for a half dozen cows and a couple pigs. The farm had a cash value of \$800.²¹

¹⁸ Following farm information from the Agricultural Census of 1861 See Appendix C

¹⁹ Keppel Township Historical Society, *Beautiful Stoney Keppel*, p 312

²⁰ Key plan of Lot 23 showing twelve acres cleared:



²¹ 23,300 CAD (2019 equivalent)



fig. 49

By 1871,²² five years prior to the deed, John and Jane Crampton had three more children. There were two houses on the lot. One was used by a tenant family of five that had an acre of land to grow vegetables and keep a couple cows. The husband was a cooper and grew staves of pine and ash to make barrels, of which he had a considerable stock of on hand.

John Crampton's farm had grown to include three vehicles, a plough, a thrashing machine, a couple fanning mills and two farm buildings. One of the farm buildings is likely the barn still standing on Willow North. The barn was constructed with mortared field stone foundations and Rock Elm from the forests used to make the post and beam structure; board cladding would have come from a local saw mill.²³

There were now forty acres of land "improved,"²⁴ reaching back to the stream. Fifteen acres were devoted to hay fields and six acres to pasture for more than a dozen cows producing hundreds of pounds of butter, two dozen sheep producing over a hundred pounds of wool, a few pigs, and four horses. Spring wheat, oats, peas, potatoes, turnips and carrots were grown on the remaining land.

The Cramptons had an apple orchard and from the forests they collected a hundred pounds of maple sugar and two dozen cords of firewood the previous year. They also had a fishing boat and hired fisherman who caught mostly herring in the bay.

²² Agricultural Census of 1871 - See Appendix C

²³ "MALLARD" is painted on the lintel of the barn door likely corresponding to David Mallard (1812-1887), who built a sawmill in Sarawak in 1862 at the end of the Indian River
Keppel Township Historical Society, *Beautiful Stoney Keppel*, p369.

²⁴ Key plan of Lot 23 showing forty acres cleared:





fig. 50

The last recording of John Crampton is in the 1911 Census, age eighty-three. At the time he lived with his forty year old son, John C., as well as his twenty-six year old niece and a ten year old boy, who arrived the previous year as a home-child from England and acted as a full time servant.²⁵

Thirty years later in 1941 the Crampton family sold the property for \$4,000.²⁶ Twenty-five years after that in 1966, the property was sold for \$10,700.²⁷ Four years later in 1970 the property was sold again for \$10,000.²⁸

For thirty years from 1970 until 2000, the property was shared in changing ownership while the land was also being subdivided. No more than a nominal \$2 was officially exchanged for the legal record during this time. In 2000 the majority of the original lot, now subdivided, was purchased outright by one of the then owners for \$110,000.²⁹ That owner then began selling the subdivided lots starting in 2016.³⁰ Willow North, a little less than half of the original lot, was purchased in 2018 for \$187,500.

²⁵ Information from Census of 1911 - See Appendix C

²⁶ 66,400 CAD (2019 equivalent)

²⁷ 84,700 CAD (2019 equivalent)

²⁸ 67,050 CAD (2019 equivalent)

²⁹ 157,750 CAD (2019 equivalent)

³⁰ Sales until 2006 from historic records of land registry office

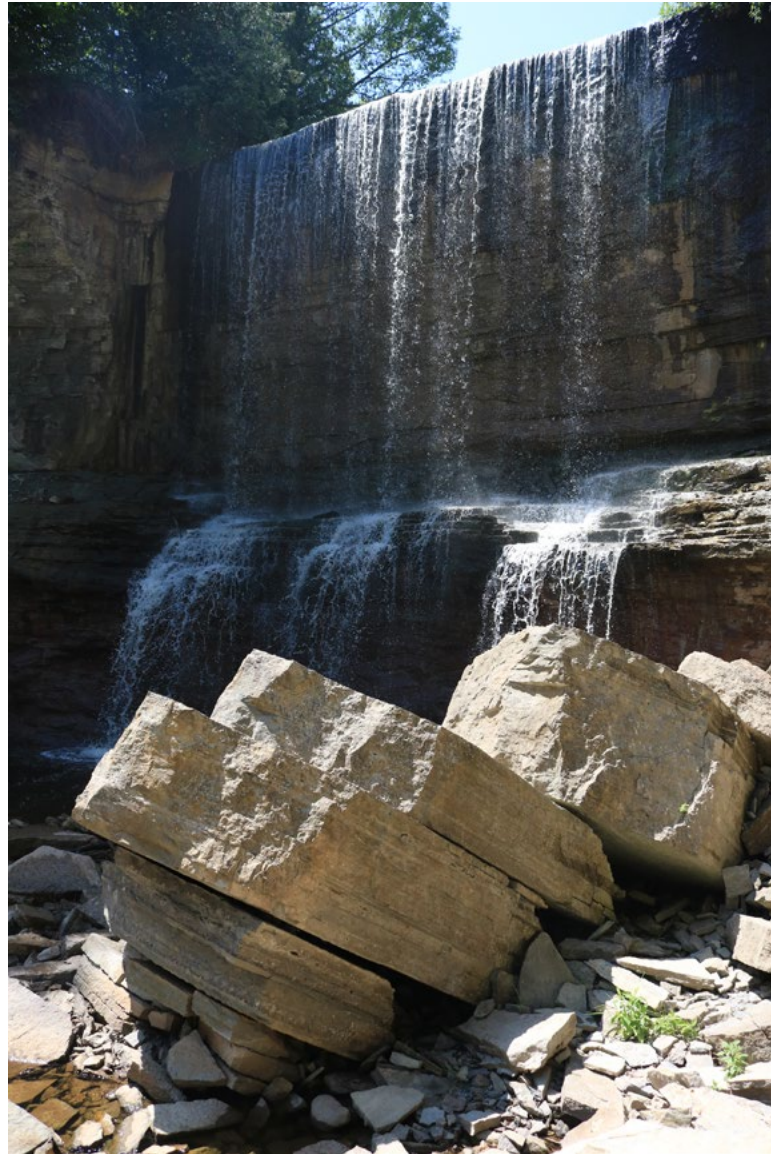


fig. 51
Indian Falls, former Sarawak Township

In 1994, the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, comprised of the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation and the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, commenced a court case for a land claim of the Saugeen Peninsula, including the township of Keppel.

The court case continued to evolve to include the lake bed of the traditional fishing grounds of the waters surrounding the Peninsula. The land claim is based on the violation of government guarantees to protect the Saugeen Peninsula as written in the Saugeen Tract Treaty (Treaty No. 45 1/2). The lake bed claim is based on there being no written statement of water rights in any relevant treaties.

The Saugeen Ojibway Nation has stated that they respect the legal ownership of private property, and make no claim to the lands purchased by individuals from the governing bodies with whom their case rests with.³¹

The court case remains active and unsettled with government owned public lands such as the unopened road allowance that defines the North edge of Willow North remaining in dispute.

31 Saugeen Ojibway Nation. *Claims Update Newsletter 2016*



fig. 52
1954 Aerial Photo
Red line: Willow North; Red dashed line: South extent of Lot 23

The forests of Southern Ontario were significantly cleared by those settling the land³² and by 1919 Grey County was reduced to ten percent forest cover.³³

Eleven years later in 1930, before reforestation efforts could be felt, some of the more densely settled areas experienced desert like conditions caused by erosion of the soil from wind, floods and water run off no longer captured by tree roots.³⁴

A timber agreement for Lot 23 was signed in 1928 for \$2000,³⁵ likely selling the rights to any trees on uncleared land, continuing from the fifth field to the back of the property.³⁶

By 1954, Lot 23 had few trees except for those bordering the fields and one small woodlot halfway along its length at the base of the slope (see fig. 52, opposite page)

32 “Ten years ago this neighbourhood was nearly all forest, but the forest is being cut down everywhere, rock elm is all gone for square timber. Now the axeman is in the swamps, cutting telegraph poles, railway ties, fence posts and saw logs, our saw-mill men are culling for all kinds of hardwood, and saw logs, so that in ten years more there will only be culls, except some small pines that are protected. Our firewood will not be easily obtained ten years from now.” - D. Marshall, Keppel Township - R.W. Phipps, Forestry Report, 1884 (Source: Bacher, John. *Grey County: The Death and Rebirth of a Forest.*)

33 Ontario Dept. of Planning and Development et al. “Part III- Forestry.” *Saugeen Valley Conservation Report.* 1952

34 Armson, K. A. *Ontario Forests, A Historical Perspective.*

35 30,000 CAD (2019 equivalent)

36 From historic records of land registry office

In constructing this narrative in relation to the history of Willow North defined as property, I found myself searching to fill in the ever present gaps between every piece of information found in the photocopy of the deed. While reflecting on the information uncovered throughout the search it is only in stopping that I reflect on the overall relation between the British Colonial Nation and the Saugeen First Nation.

I remain in my reflection within a personal cultural history arising from the British Colonial Nation. I was born in Canada, my dad born in Scotland, my Mom born in the US. My dad's parents and family before them were born in the British Isles and my mom's parents were born in the US and their parents before them in the British Isles.

I uphold a fundamental respect for land, and all forms of life, human and otherwise, that call that land home. I attribute this respect wholeheartedly to the lessons I have learned from both my parents. I also acknowledge the cultural mindset that I have been born into, aspects of which may undoubtedly be expressed unconsciously through my interactions with any other, aspects of which have been taught consciously and unconsciously through school, aspects of which are embedded within every other cultural institution that I have been raised among.

In acknowledging this, and seeking to reveal what has been unconsciously and consciously enacted by the British Colonial Nation who progressively acquired more and more land, to the present day state of surrounding the First Nations that came before, I move my reflection into that mindset of objectified and absolute rules of idealized relations which I see backed such actions.

Throughout the events leading to the formation of Willow North as property, The British Colonial Nation conducted their public relations with the Saugeen First Nations objectively, that is with an object of paper, whether Proclamation or Treaties. In this way both signing parties, and all those under their authority, could see what had been agreed to and refer to such agreements.

The potential for problems only arose after particular people, whether intentionally or unintentionally, transgressed the agreed on boundaries stated in the contract of relation. When such transgression occurred as happened at the Saugeen Peninsula, the problem could have been quickly addressed by requesting the people leave the territory that is not contractually theirs.³⁷ Instead, it would appear the then-establishing Canadian authorities admitted their own inability to act as an authority of the population they governed as a reason to authoritatively enact a new objective Treaty, always in favour of themselves. In this way, the contracted definition of territories became a means of justified imposition.

I can only imagine such an act of imposition could be remedied by acknowledging the act,³⁸ sharing a story of the events, and only through an unknown amount of time and effort, working towards rebuilding a relation between one and another. That this act of imposition was repeated, again and again by the then establishing Canadian Government on the Saugeen First Nations is, personally speaking, deeply unsettling.

37 "And We do further strictly enjoin and require all Persons whatever, who have either wilfully [sic] or inadvertently seated themselves upon any Lands... still reserved to the said Indians as aforesaid, forthwith to remove themselves from such Settlements." - Royal Proclamation of 1763

38 "And whereas great Frauds and Abuses have been committed in the purchasing Lands of the Indians, to the great Prejudice of Our Interests, and to the great Dissatisfaction of the said Indians; in order therefore to prevent such Irregularities for the future, and to the End that the Indians may be convinced of Our Justice, and determined Resolution to remove all reasonable Cause of Discontent, We do, with the Advice of Our Privy Council, strictly enjoin and require, that no private Person do presume to make any Purchase from the said Indians of any Lands reserved to the said Indians..." - Royal Proclamation of 1763

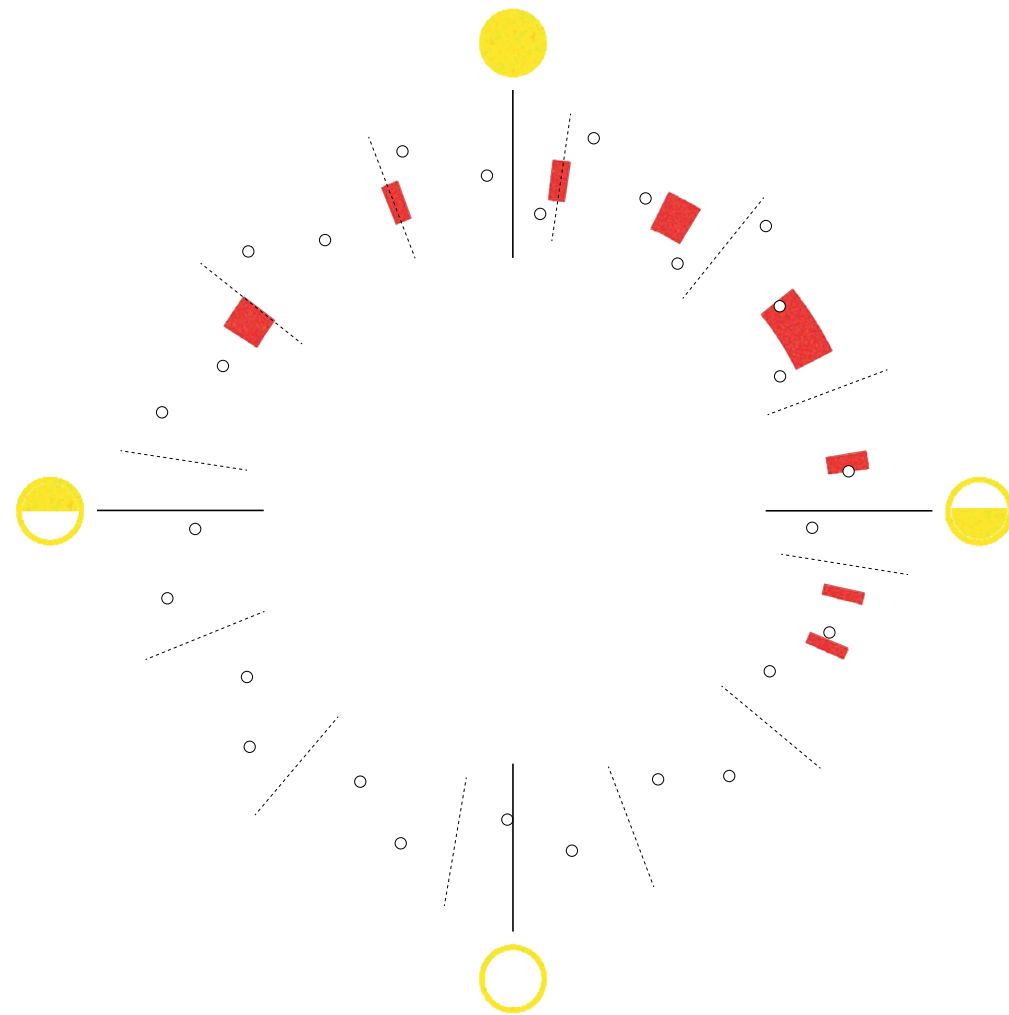


fig. 54

Willow North Encounters: 2019.04.06 - 2019.10.15

III.

In Relation to Property: Part Two

The bond of belonging that grows up over years of life, love, and labour is the most basic truth of being human in a world. Here the claims about the "sacredness of private property," trite and blasphemous when used to justify abstract possession, become meaningful. They reflect not possession but the utterly basic relationship of belonging between a human and [their] world.

Erazim Kohak
The Embers and the Stars

*...as I contemplate the tree I am drawn into a relation and the tree ceases to be an It. The power of exclusiveness has seized me....
The tree... confronts me bodily and has to deal with me as I must deal with it - only differently.
One should not try to dilute the meaning of the relation:
relation is reciprocity.*

Martin Buber
I and Thou

*Take off your shoes and socks,
and go walk outside.
You need to ground yourself.*

Mom
life advice



fig. 55

To visit Willow North from Cambridge, Ontario, where I was living and attending graduate school, I would drive three hours North to spend part of the day at the property. Afterwards I would drive to my Aunt and Uncle's or my Mom's house for the evening and a bed usually returning to Willow North the next day before driving back to Cambridge.

Unsatisfied with leaving after every afternoon, I planned a trip to spend five days at the property. While there I planned to measure the topography and come away with more detailed measurements than the five metre contours I had been able to find of the area. The barn had electricity, there was a portable toilet near the driveway and I planned to sleep in my car.



fig. 56

I went to sleep with the wind rocking the car into the night, waking intermittently to the sound of the barn door screeching and banging as the wind slowly unscrewed the latch. When woken in the night the air was cold and I hid under the covers not noticing the first light. When I emerged the windows were covered in condensation and snow, each on their respective side of the glass.

Quickly switching from the blankets to a coat and insulated rubber boots, I climbed out the back of the car. I admired the white coated field before going into the barn to boil some water for coffee and oatmeal on the single electric burner I bought for the trip. The Ravens' abandoned nest sat above me.

I spent the first two days of the trip walking the property. In the unopened road allowance were deer, coyote, raccoon and turkey tracks but I only saw song birds at the fields edges. The stone walls bounding the fields stood out clearly without the snow of the winter or the growth of the summer.

When not walking, I spent time in the barn, cleaning up and organizing the room, turning it into a usable space with things I found in the barn: storage shelves, a bench and table to work on, a chair to sit and read. If the nights weren't so cold, I would have slept there.



fig. 57

On the third day I started my topographic survey of the property packing a small backpack with everything I'd need: some dried fruit and nuts, water, tape measure, notebook, pens and pencil, some string, just in case. I hung a range finder and camera from my neck and carried in my hand a Zip Level about the same size and weight as my backpack.

The Zip Level measured elevation changes based on atmospheric pressure in relation to a set base elevation or zero point. A handheld electronic reader connected by a pressurized tube of air was unrolled from the yellow body of the device to take a reading anywhere in a 30m radius. After taking a reading at the 30m limit, that measurement was "held" and the body moved to another point of reference. This process could be repeated allowing for continuous measurements over any distance. I used the range finder to locate horizontal references.

As I was ready to set out, the dusting of snow was beginning to melt in the morning sun, the fields were swollen like sponges running with water and cold winds were picking up from the West. Zeroing the elevation reading at the floor of the barn, I started my Westward trek to measure the property from the barn to the back road.

After three days of measurements I had a line of spot elevations roughly every 30m along the North and South sides of the property. When I eventually checked my measurements against the published contours I was pleased to see they lined up very closely. I used my measurements to refine a digital site model and site plan but never found a use for the relative precision of the measurements except near the barn.

The real meaning of the survey remained between every measurement taken.

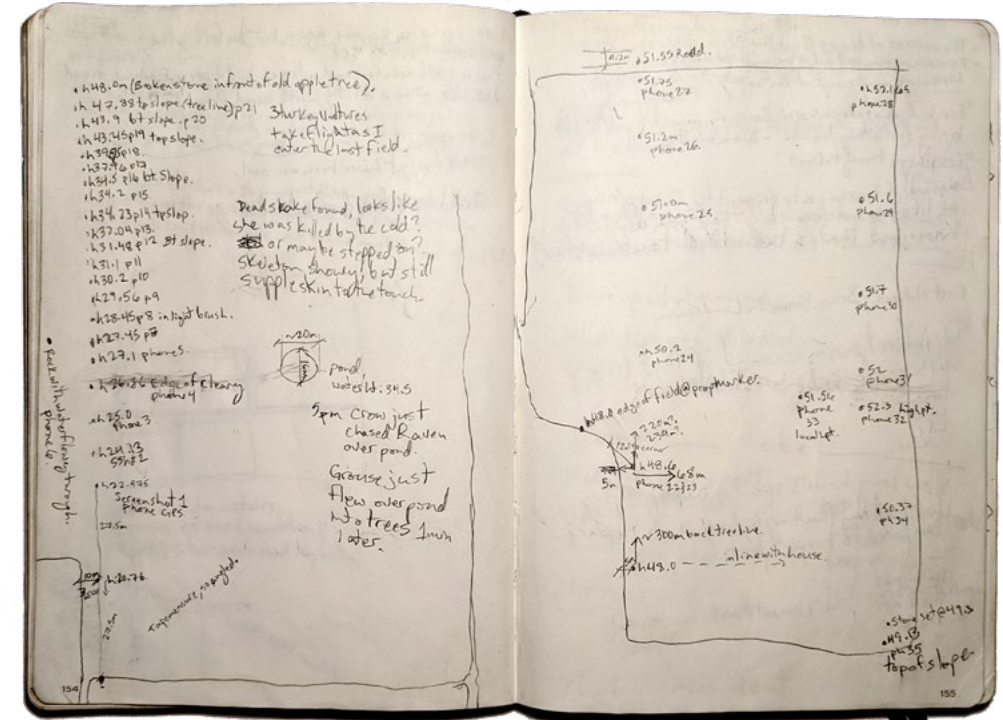
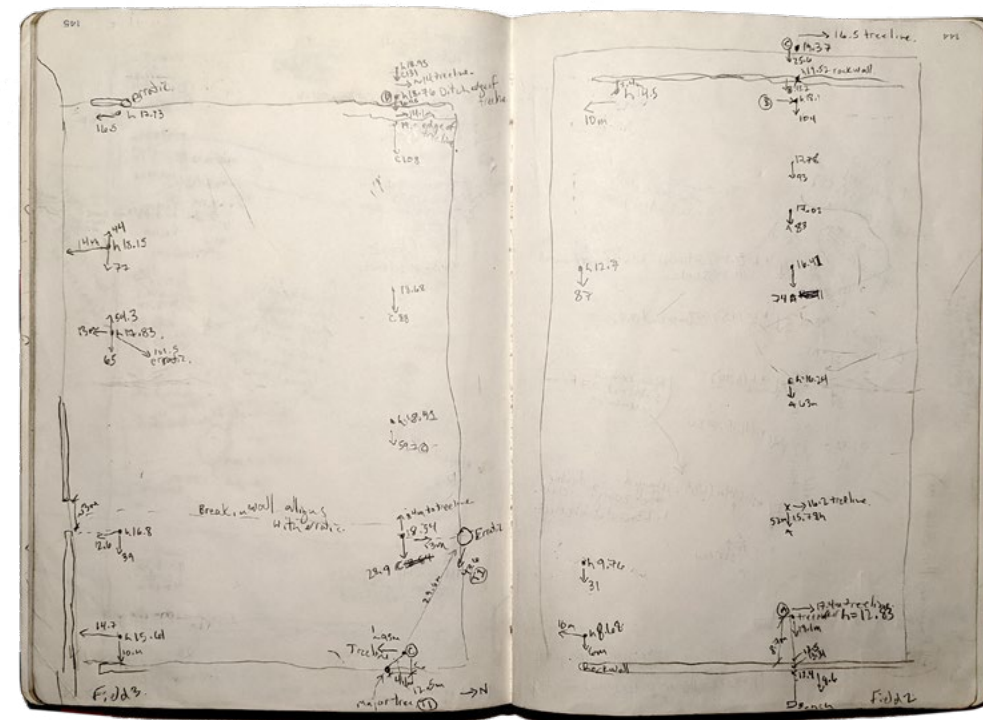
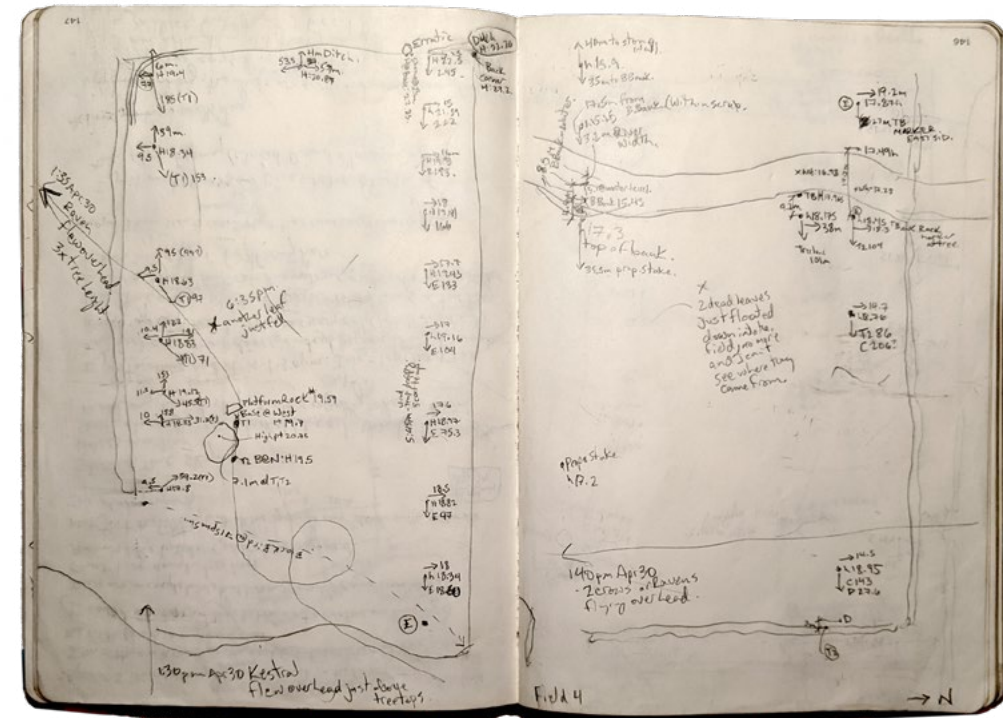
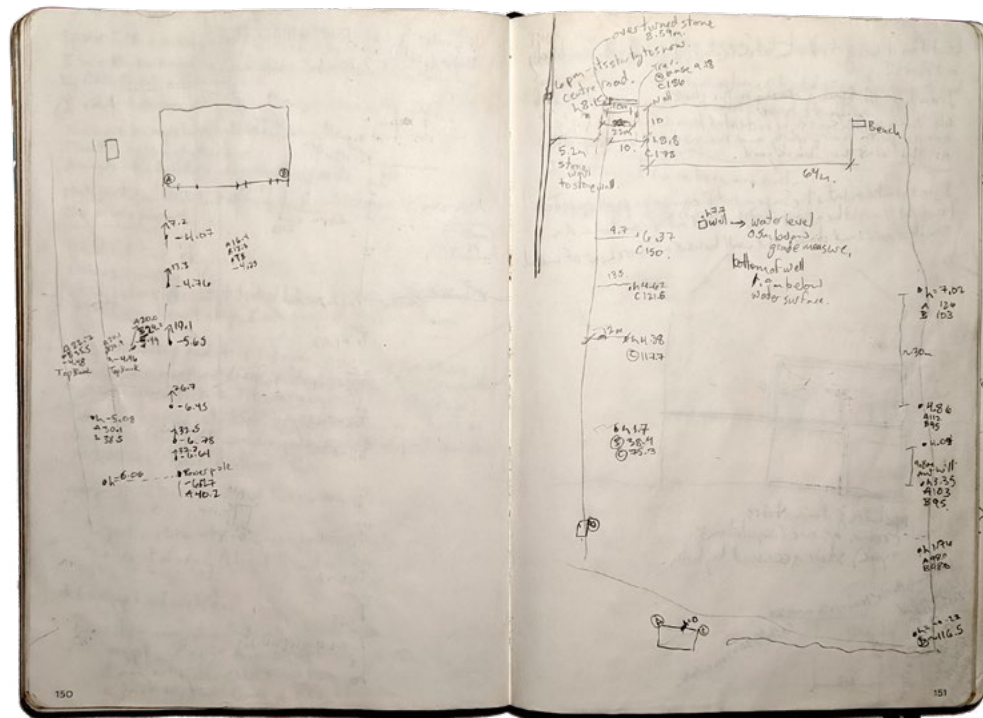


fig. 58 (top) / fig. 59
 Survey Notes / Survey Notes
 Driveway and Field 1 / Field 3 & Field 2

fig. 60 (top) / fig. 61
 Survey Notes / Survey Notes
 Field 5 and Field 4 / Forest & Field 6

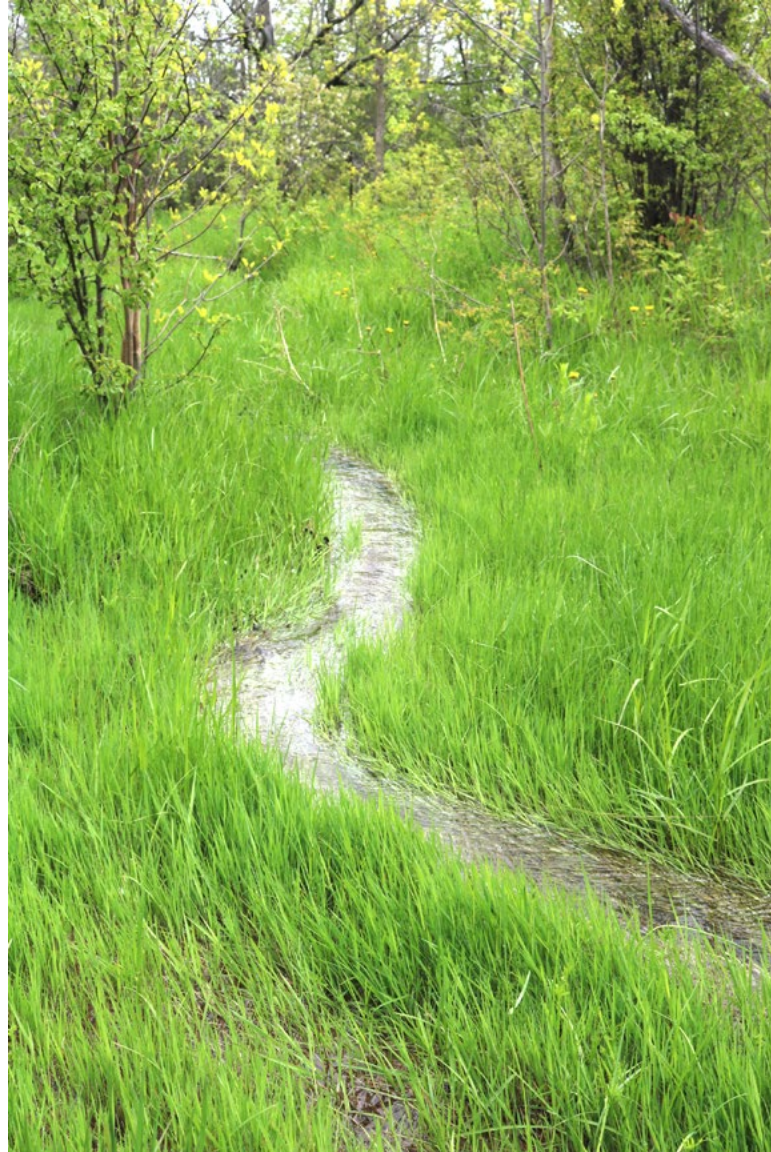


fig. 62

Sleeping in my car had satisfied my desire to stay with Willow North longer than a day, and I was thinking about the next trip shortly after. At the beginning of summer, before I had planned another trip, my dad purchased a camper trailer, which he parked at the West side of the Barn towards the North end where it could be connected to the barn electricity. A storage tank within the trailer collected sewage water. A pump moved non-potable water to the trailer from a stone-lined dug well between the driveway and the Barn. At the entry to the trailer facing the field my dad built an eight by eight foot deck from cedar lumber found in the barn.

With basic living needs satisfied by the trailer, staying at the property now required little planning beyond food and drinking water. After a couple of shorter stays I arrived for a week long visit in the middle of July. After four days spent walking and exploring Willow North I began to work on one of the stone walls.



fig. 63

The stone walls each have their own distinct character. Along the North edge of the fields and under the treelines past the first field, low mounded lines of weather blackened rubble lay where they were once tossed since being pulled from the soil.

Dividing Willow North from Ian's property along the South edge are significantly built up, roughly squared walls, four feet wide and three feet tall. Their mass has left them without much change and you can walk atop their length.

The stone wall at the back West edge of the first field stands about three feet tall and three feet wide, defining the first cleared field and visible from the barn in the Spring and Winter. Along its length sections of the wall have heaved over from freeze-thaw cycles, other sections have toppled as trees pushed against the wall with their growing bodies.

I began work on a section of this wall near the North West corner of the field. I wanted to create an opening where I regularly climbed over the toppled stones through a slight clearing in the trees on my way to the back of the property. A bench sat nearby offering a place to admire the view towards the East, over the field to the lake beyond.



fig. 64

The wall stood upright among the trees ten feet to the North side, and mostly upright again ten feet to the South while remaining half hidden under a tangle of wild grape vines. I started work by first clearing out toppled stones until I reached the relatively intact portions to each side. This took most of the afternoon.

Two days later I began to work on the North side of the opening. I first cleared down to the ground where yet more stones remained buried; the stones that would not move became my foundation. I then moved some of the larger flat stones back into place.

I rebuilt the wall taking note of the intact portions. Each edge stone was more or less pointed lengthwise towards the middle of the wall. Smaller, rounder stones were then piled into the middle weighing down the ends of the edge facing pieces. Working each stone into place I was concerned only with keeping a relatively straight edge on each of the three sides while also keeping the stones from wobbling by using small pieces of limestone as shims.

By the end of the afternoon I had built the right side of the opening to three feet in height. The next day I left to go back to Cambridge.



fig. 65

At the end of August I returned to Willow North for another twelve days. I spent my time pruning dead branches from trees, finding paths through the forest and continuing work on the wall, slowly building up the South side of the opening.

The process was the same as before, though I didn't progress as quickly. The stones I chose for the base were larger and heavier than the ones I had used for the North half and I spent the first three days working on leveling by eye stones as large as my torso to make up the foundation layer.

Moving a large stone and uncovering a thousand ants scurrying off with grub-like offspring, I'd leave them be and move to a different section of the pile. I enjoyed taking my time, finding a rhythm of knowing where stones would fit best, tightly pressed against their neighbours. I'd work for two or three hours with the nearby trees caressing my neck and shoulders until I couldn't lift another stone. Returning the next day the ants were nowhere to be found.



fig. 66

Unopened Road Allowance, Georgian Bay

After working on the wall I would often walk down the driveway and North along the road to where the road allowance continues to the water alongside a neighbouring driveway.

When I first came here a couple months back, the neighbour came out to ask what I was doing. He hadn't known about the public road allowance when he bought his house a number of years ago, thinking the land was his property. It was only recently that another neighbour across the road had approached him, then the township, wanting access to the water. He asked, "Please be respectful, this is my home right here." I assured him I would only come by for a swim or to sit.

As I would stand in the warm water and wash off the dust and dirt from my face, arms and legs, the waves rolled stones back and forth over my feet.

Where I would walk further into the water the bottom of the bay was covered in stones the perfect size to jab into the soles of my feet and covered in slippery algae. Crayfish would dart out of sight as I aimed my steps for larger flat stones that I flipped over during a previous visit, exposing their less slippery underside. About twenty feet from the shore, the stones become big enough to step around and onto the exposed limestone bedrock.

Even when the water was at my waist it was clear enough to see the small fish that came to inspect my toes. When I reached tiptoe depth there was only bedrock, cracked in a triangular diamond pattern here and square in other places.

A quick swim to cool off was enough before drying off in the sun, resting for a while on the shore and then walking back to Willow North.



fig. 67

By the end of my stay in August, I had built up the South side of the stone wall opening to half the height of the North side. Preparing to leave, I cut down three small trees I had left until then standing in the centre of the path on the far side of the opening, while the remainder of the toppled stones lay scattered around the ground.

The end of the summer coincided with my birthday and a dozen family members and friends that were in the area showed up for lunch at Willow North. We ate inside the barn at a table with some old benches and chairs and the sliding doors left open with a view of the field. The next day I drove back to Cambridge.

I returned to Willow North a month later and a month after that, staying only a couple nights while trying to spend what time I could at the property before the trailer was closed up for the winter.

Throughout the Spring and Summer at Willow North I had spent much time reading, recording my experiences and reflecting on my overall intention in being there. While I still intended to develop a design, I had not worked on anything beyond notebook sketches since the midterm presentation. Starting the design process in the Fall back in Cambridge, I knew only that I wanted a house to be sited at the base of the field, close to the barn.



fig. 68

I can hardly imagine how the Cramptons would have built so many walls originally, except with time and a steadfast determination to clear the land. On the other hand, I can understand the physical pleasure of the work as well, and the sense of connection to a particular place that is developed, as I also felt clearing the trees from under the powerline to the barn.

In this understanding I feel a conflict, not only within the act itself, of ending the lives of so many trees in favour of easy access to energy, be that food or electricity, but also in the potential outcome of continuing the act: of mature forests that remain absent from this place.

But there is another understanding that may be drawn from the Cramptons: that the resonance of the act and the sense of conflict may only be addressed through determination and time. In cutting the trees to bring electricity to the barn, I did so within a larger continuing act of inhabiting this place such that I may care for the land that this property defines; to bring more abundant and diverse life to the property; to work to bring back the forests and reduce the area of uniformly cleared land.

In another act towards this dream, I offered my time, energy and attention to creating the opening in the stone wall that defined this cleared land. By investing the time in a concerted act, I might walk with more physical ease between this inhabited field and the uninhabited, rewilding land beyond, consciously and unconsciously carrying the memory of the act with me wherever I go.



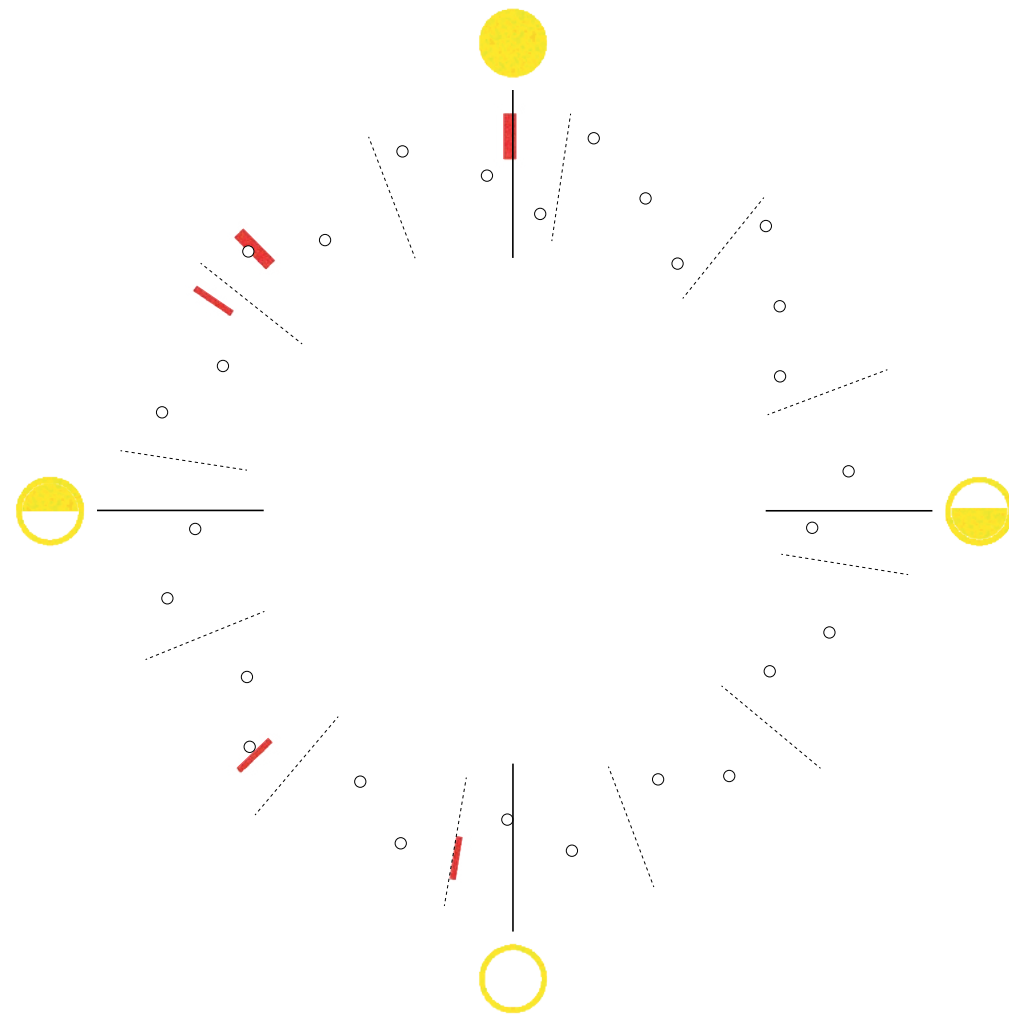


fig. 70

Willow North Encounters: 2019.12.31 - 2020.06.21

IV.

In Relation to Architecture

...the universe is both violent and creative, both destructive and cooperative. The mystery is that both extremes are found together. We even find it difficult to determine when violence is simply destructive or when violence is linked to creativity.

Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme
Universe Story

We look first, we feel first, and then we trust our feelings and then we start to analyze our feelings, not the other way around.

Peter Zumthor
Different Kinds of Silence

Only the spell of separation needs to be broken.

Martin Buber
I and Thou



fig. 71

I wanted to be many things when I grew up, but an architect was not one of them.

After an unhappy year of studying engineering science, my dad recommended I look into architecture, that it might compliment my artistic pursuits that had largely run parallel to school. In reading the program description for Architecture I was intrigued and pursued an undergraduate degree at Waterloo.

Being accepted to the school, I found every aspect of my education to be invigorating: the design, the history, the technical studies. My sense of the tangible world expanded quickly and I felt the capacity to give life to an idea through spatial design grow exponentially.

After the first semester I became more focused on the technical and conceptual backing of my designs, losing the initial feeling of freedom of expression in form.

At the same time, I became quite focused on informing myself about environmental issues. I became increasingly impassioned and quietly overwhelmed by the information available regarding the state of the natural world. I began to feel Architecture, being my studied focus, was largely at fault.

Seeing no clear answers to the large problems of the world and not feeling a longing for architecture, I held onto the idea that I never wanted to be an architect. I said to myself that it was my dad's idea, while I remained enjoying the pieces of my education.

I still felt this way when I returned for the master's degree.



fig. 72

In moving through the thesis, at points when I was looking for a way forward, I returned to my notes to read what came before. Through a cyclical and evolving process, which I attribute in part to this self-reflective act alongside my bodily engagement with Willow North, I have moved from a personal feeling of being separate from the idea of Architecture to a feeling of appreciation for the architectural dreams I hold in relation to Willow North.

At the start of the process, I felt particularly distant from the act of design as I had not worked on developing an architectural project alone since the end of undergrad, five years previous. To work on a design personally motivated without the express desire of another, real or imagined only added to the struggle.

While I had made a range of sketches for house ideas since my first visit to Willow North in Spring 2019, when I began working on a design in the Fall, my first drawings began with memories of my childhood house.¹ From there, and an initial desire to site the building near the Barn where I wanted to design a space to replace the existing room, I took cues from my supervisor in developing the design. I spent most of my time adding detail to a drafted site plan and digital model of the property and Barn rather than progressing with my vision for a house.

¹ See Appendix D for a complete collection of notebook sketches



fig. 73

Three months later, I decided to change my design idea to a house in the barn.

*I was very pleased to start work on this new idea of the barn/house design after talking with my dad. Excited to have something that would be more of a iteration of reuse, something I let go of earlier. Now, as I start sketching with trace, I feel frustrated and repeat to myself 'I don't dream of Architecture.'*²

For the next two days I began to critically question my intentions in returning to the masters program. Writing out my thoughts in this time, I felt a sense of catharsis and freedom to explore my idea of a house in the barn.³

*The barn keeps its structure as a framework to build within; the shell becomes fluid, the interiority is the world of work and warmth. No other building exists. The barn is a gift from the Past which the future will emerge from, struggling to emerge from within, while respecting the integrity of the past.*⁴

Within two weeks I changed my file names from “Willow North” to “Raven Barn”, and developed a design as detailed as the previous for a meeting with my supervisor on December 2nd. My house design filled the North bay of the barn, with a room half projecting out the roof and another half out of the wall facing the field side. The existing floor structure was removed and the foundations reached to the basement floor. A studio space replacing the existing room in the barn remained in the West half of the South bay.

² 2019.11.16 Passage from Notebook

³ Following this change of design direction, I wrote an Essay for the final assignment of an elective course, The Inner Studio (2019.12.08). This essay was a personal reflection on a feeling of resolution in a search for ideas. See Appendix E

⁴ 2019.11.19 Passage from Notebook

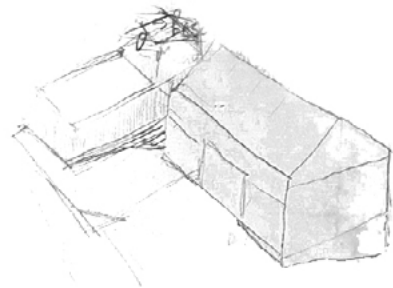
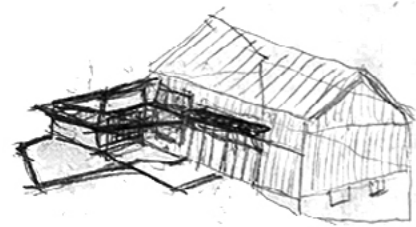
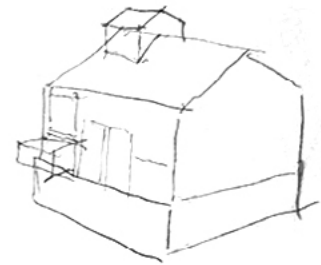
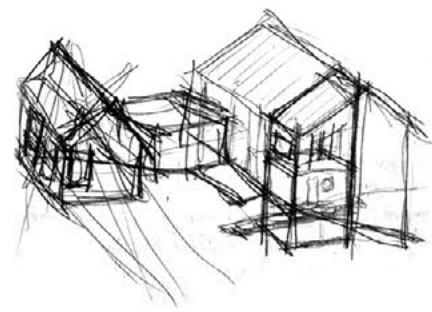


fig. 74 / fig. 75

fig. 76 / fig. 77

Design Sketches

My design evolved over the next two months to include an addition at the North side of the Barn to accommodate more floor space. Within two days of discussing this iteration with my supervisor, I modified the design to become a single story space with the addition remaining outside, allowing for some of the North wall to be visible from the Studio that I was beginning to focus on more.

As I design the residence within the barn the idea/reality of the perfect wall and completely insulated structures is the first and primary aspect of any design on my mind.⁵

For the next month and a half, while I began to write out my experiences of being at the property, I continued to develop the design for the single storey house and studio in the barn until discussions about the design with two friends.

I appreciated talking but ended up feeling overwhelmed by indecision between Building Science vs Beauty (as if it was antithetical) Also doubting my response to; 'What says that you are in the barn when you're in the kitchen? Why not keep that program outside the barn and enter through the wall?' The design has evolved from the original to the point where old driving ideas (house in a barn) have lost their importance.⁶

After these conversations, I saw that my idea of building in the barn was driven by a desire to not dig into the ground, wanting to avoid any further building footprints on site, it was not lead by my experience of the property.

I would still actively resist the expression, maybe because I don't want to invest myself emotionally or because I feel so hesitant in light of the world. That I would seek to make the smallest impact as to not act. Not through Architecture. Not in building.⁷

5 2020.02.02 Passage from Notebook

6 2020.03.18 Passage from Notebook

7 2020.03.23 Passage from Notebook

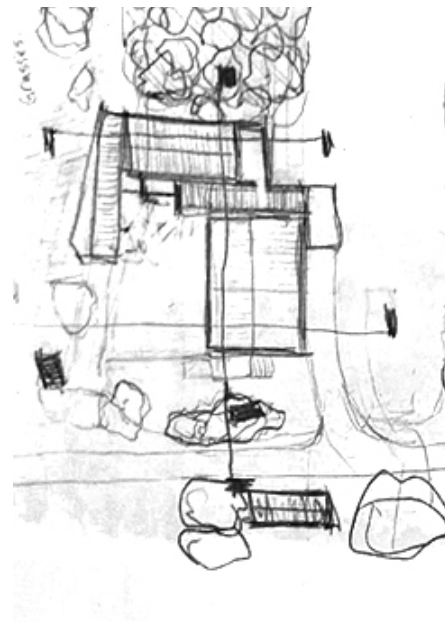
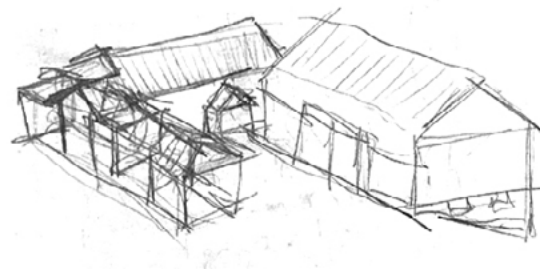
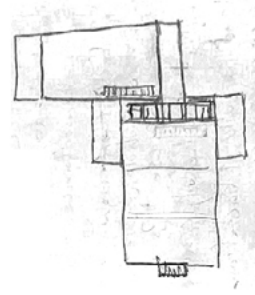
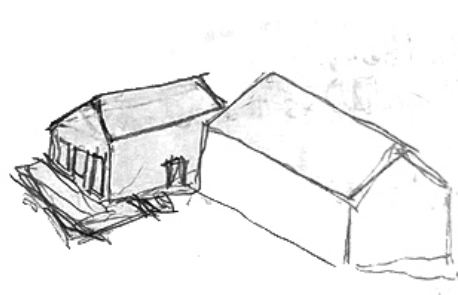


fig. 78 / fig. 79
fig. 80 / fig. 81
Design Sketches

At the end of March I moved to London, ON to live at my dad's house. Since the conversation with my friends, my designs had moved iteratively out of the barn, returning to a plan similar to where I had started: a house perpendicular to the berm next to the barn.

Planning for meeting with Andrew:

Design

- > Went through another full redesign & started another
- > continued with uncertainty of Barn & intended client
- > Final design iteration derived from experience, not "idea" of house in barn -> derived from problem with digging ->
- alleviated by questioning sense of investment and 'belonging' to place, responsibility
- recovering quality of barn that is amazing⁸

I had completed a drawing set for this design iteration and met with my supervisor on May 5th to talk about the design. During the meeting my supervisor asked me about some of my design intentions. I couldn't really offer an answer, and he said, not to worry, I would be able to defend it later.

I talk about what moves me in design, and it has little to do with the journey of the thesis, about the experience gleaned from being at the property, which wasn't for the purpose of architecture, and then I lose track of the meaning of the whole endeavour. So then I'm back to constructing a meaning which feels meaningless because it isn't coming from elsewhere, and thereby reveals the issue.

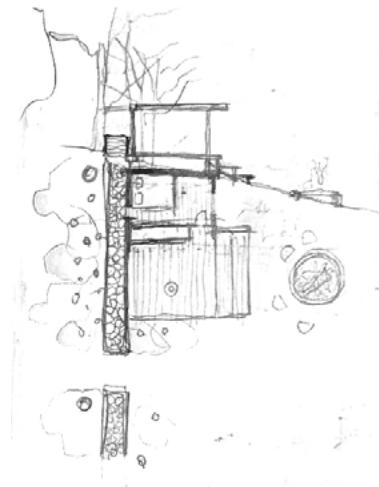
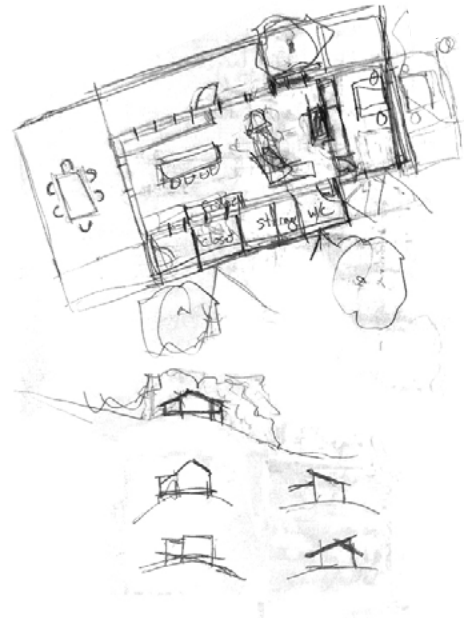
This whole thing is supposed to come from me and I've been sitting back on deck letting the ship steer itself, watching the clouds and saying there is no ship at sea that I can see.

So what do I make of this?....

From here forward the thesis is no longer about the struggle, but about the experience.⁹

⁸ 2020.04.20 Passage from Notebook

⁹ 2020.05.05 Passage from Notebook



Two days later I traveled to Willow North with my dad. He spent the day cutting down the remainder of the Buckthorn growing in the fields. I spent time on the berm experiencing the view of the field and sketching a new layout for a house. Later I walked back to the forest and began sketching an idea for a structure in the forest that I had considered in passing back in November. That evening my dad and I ate dinner on the deck of the trailer and watched a fox hunting through the field.

The next day I divided my morning between sitting on the berm, where the winds were cold, and sitting on the bench at the top of the field, in the light and warmth of the morning sun. In the afternoon I spent my time in the barn, climbing up the ladder to the top of the old room. As I was leaving the barn my dad called me over to the trailer, pointing to the far East side of the berm where the fox we had seen the previous evening was chewing the remains of a large rabbit with six pups playing around the nearby den.

We drove back to London later that day and the following day I sketched the first iterations of four designs for Willow North.

fig. 82 / fig. 83
fig. 84 / fig. 85
Design Sketches

Since after first year I have held onto an idea that Architecture was fundamentally an imposition on the place in which it was built, an idea which I carried with me as I entered the masters program.

I have not been thinking of the Architectural exploration of any of my ideas, because:

*architecture = building = progression = expansion
= material use = natural degradation.*

I recognize this as false simplicity in patterns of thinking, but this is none-the-less my thinking.¹⁰

I had never used the word imposition in regards to the feeling, until hearing another say at my midterm review:

"You're always going to be imposing something. You're doing architecture you have to at some point confront that reality."

I remember feeling that I fundamentally disagreed, but I couldn't offer a response at the time. Despite a reaction against the idea, in reflecting on this statement, I also felt it clearly summarized the ideas and feelings that I had held onto since the middle of my undergraduate education.

10 2018.10.30 Passage from Notebook

As I return to my notebooks after a feeling of resolution in my last design iterations, I can see traces of the designs in writing back to my visit to the property in October 2018, and in sketches as far back as April 2019, just before coming to survey the property.

Barn as base -> design places of rest, 3 places of repose.¹¹

In reflecting on the time between then and now and my felt sense of both iterations I can see little difference in their fundamental nature.

Now I see that it was only in remaining with the ideas through that entire time, that both caused my struggle and resulted in a resolution. These ideas were derived from a felt sense of my relation to Willow North, immediately registered, but obscured by a feeling of separation from my idea of Architecture, which I also remained in relation to despite my feeling of conflict.

I remember early on agreeing with the suggestion of my supervisor that if I were to design a house for the property, I would be free to work on what I wanted otherwise. I committed to this idea when I started designing, ignoring everything else that I had worked on in the exclusive aim of a house. In doing so, by my own mindset of saying that Architecture was only the house, I felt disconnected from all that was meaningful to me at Willow North.

Unwilling to give up the ideas that I held in conflict, both the idea of Architecture as physical imposition and the responsibility to the place in which such building was meant to become part of, I experienced a recurring cyclical struggle in my approach to Architecture.

Only in encompassing both ideas within a felt sense of Willow North have I been able to no longer feel they are separate in action.

11 2018.10.30 Passage from Notebook



fig. 86

The more I sit with this design, the more it feels like a design for my dad. Not just for the property in general or for myself, but how I imagine my dad living, with an office & everything.

Yes, I seek the land, but it was my parents who chose to raise me in the country side. At present, I am less a steward than my dad, the whole idea was generated off of his suggestions toward architecture and thesis.

As I have struggled against this in trying to find myself in the work, I have not found expression through the work. But, What if I approach this as a gift for another, for my dad. Then I can find a vision, then I can know what needs to be done.¹²

12 Mar 17, 2020 Passage from Notebook



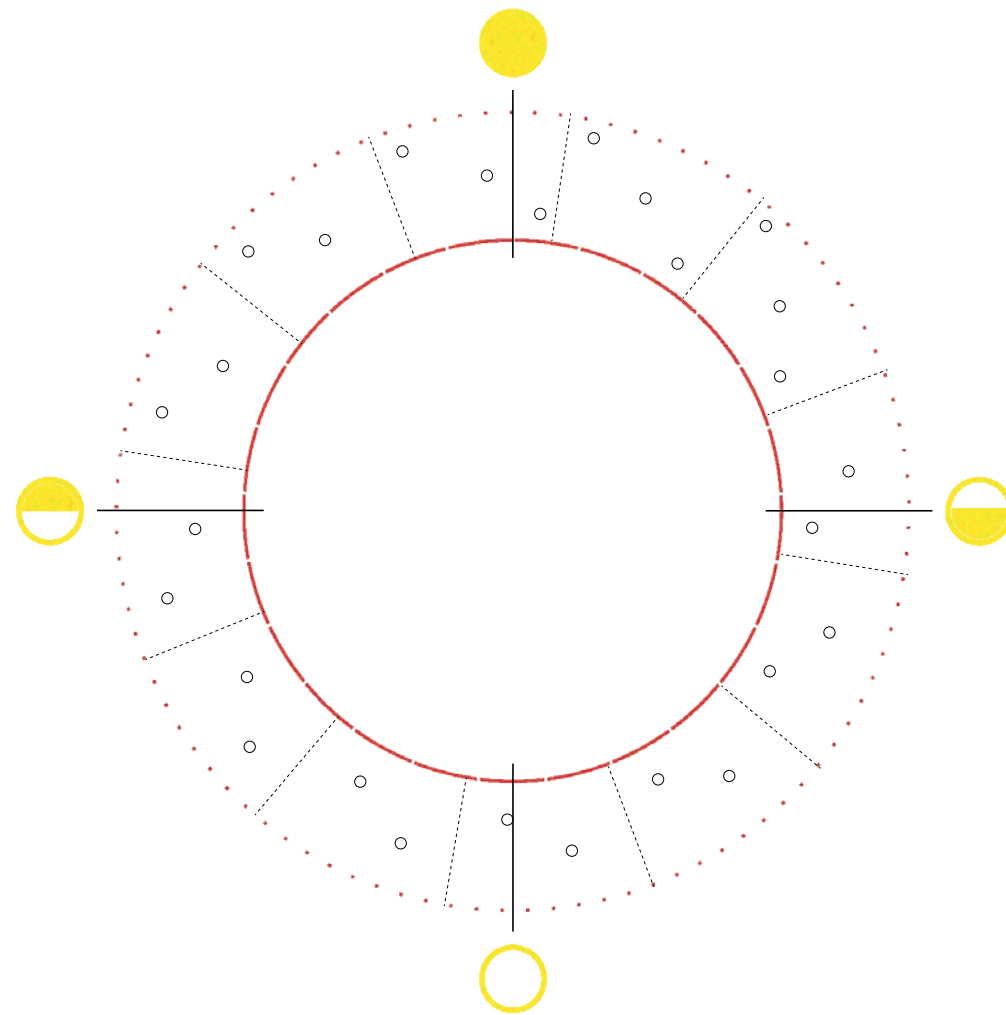


fig. 88

Willow North Encounters: *Thresholds of Memory and Dream*

V.

In Relation to Willow North

So we come back to the place from which we started - seeing that place in a wider perspective.... The wider perspective is about perspectives, and the question posed is: Do we... foster whatever will promote... those wider perspectives which will bring our system back into an appropriate synchrony or harmony between rigor and imagination?

Gregory Bateson
Mind and Nature

If one wishes to work creatively with enduring things then the inevitable and central vehicle for passion and preoccupation is life, perhaps even better, consciousness. Save for the atoms themselves, it is life that has longest endured - while continents rise and fall and towering mountain ranges emerge only to erode to inconsequence.

Ian McHarg
Design with Nature

... [Life] describes the interactions taking place in any ecology. Organisms are alive, but life is not something 'in' them. Organisms are 'in' life. They grow there, change there, and by being there, change the nature of their surroundings.

Lyall Watson
Dark Nature

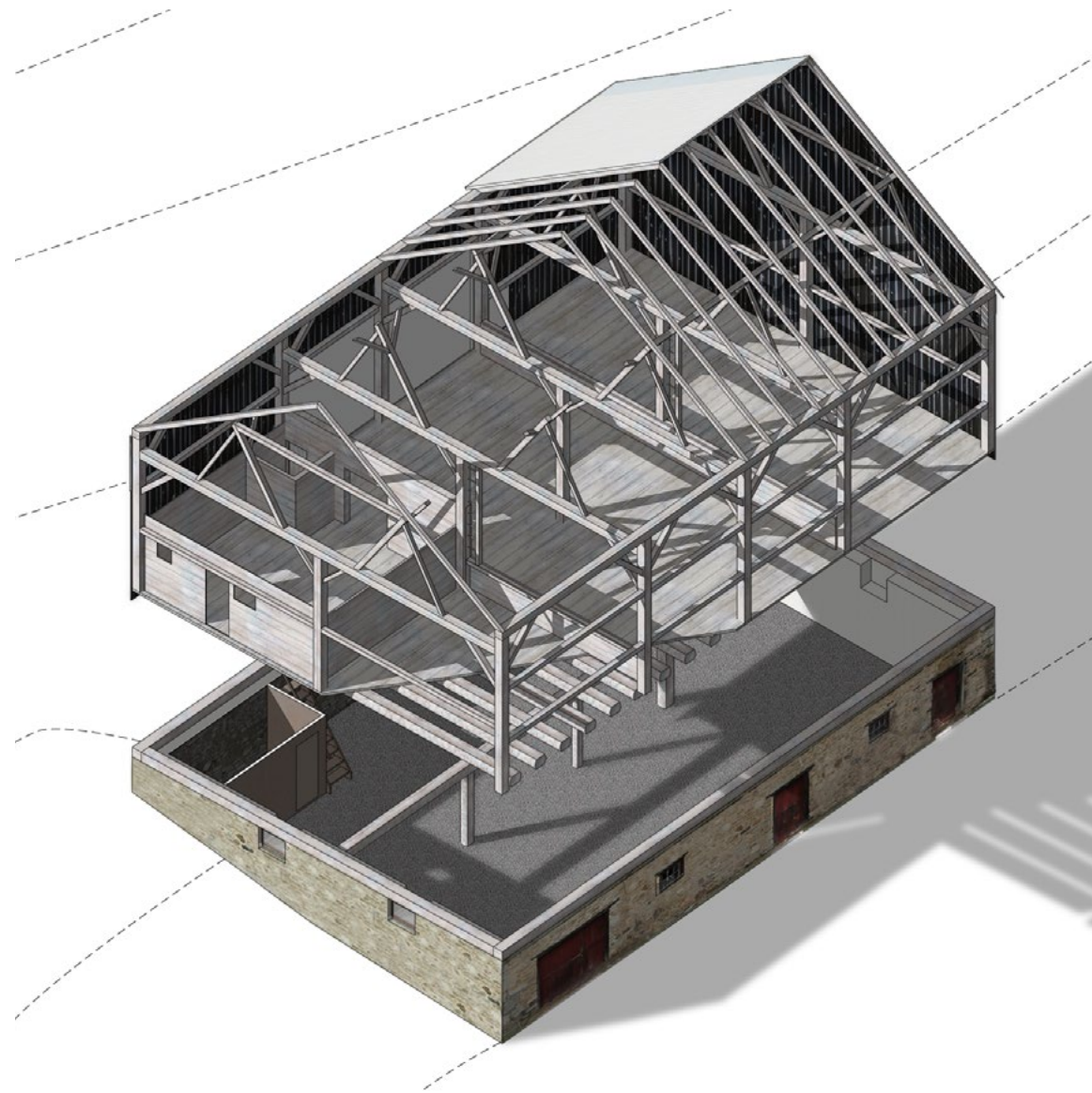


fig. 89
Exploded Axonometric of existing Barn - n.t.s.
Rafters, roof, siding and floor partially removed

The following written walk through Willow North blends descriptions of four proposed designs with the particular places they are sited.

Each design is presented as follows:

- a site plan
- a description of the unified designs and local environment they are part of, with existing photos and vignettes of the designs
- Scaled plans, and sections

In order of presentation the four designs are:

The Ravenbarn Studio

Located within and integrated with the structure of the existing Barn. The Barn (see fig. 89 for reference) is the only existing structure on the property apart from a small well house and a deteriorating shed. Within the Ravenbarn Studio drawings, the existing structure is shown with a white fill.

The Foxberm Residence

Located atop the berm running between the Barn and the first field.

The Monarch Lookout

Located at the back edge of the first field, near the opening in the stone wall.

The Boneforest Waystation

Located within the forest after the fifth field.



19m

18m

17m

16m

15m

14m

146

147



fig. 91
Meaford, ON

All I see when I drive to Willow North are barns: new, old, collapsed. There was a barn on the property I grew up on; we ruined it.

The barn as I understand wasn't in good shape, a potential hazard, and instead of waiting for its collapse, my mom hired a backhoe to knock it over. Everything fell within the foundation walls and the only thing that remained standing was the concrete silo.

I used to climb among the ruins as a child, finding my way through the overgrown plants, old boards and beams that lay where they fell. Ever watchful for rusty nails, I would search for objects that had been forgotten in the basement and climb the rusted steel rungs to touch the top of the silo. The silo became my secret fort, with a hidden tree growing within.

I continued spending time in the ruin as I got older, helping my mom to clean up the barn board, mostly rotten after fifteen years, heaving and teetering the beams off each other like giant levers to move them out of the way. Eventually we created a makeshift, open air sitting area for the summers, like some rustic Italian bistro seen in a magazine. My mom and I would entertain friends there throughout the summer, with a fireplace in the corner set against the crumbling stone foundations and a view to the neighbours' field full of cows.

I measured the foundations and drew the existing plan after my first year of architecture school but never did anything more that summer than enjoy my time there.



fig. 92
Vignette

Arriving at Willow North, you can park your car on a gravel bed just passed the Barn next to the driveway with a low cedar hedge defining the North edge. As you walk North passed a ramp to the Studio balcony you arrive at a flagstone paved court in front of the two large Barn doors. The Berm rises a few feet to the West, directing rain, snow-melt, and ground water from the field off to the North. Sitting atop the Berm, beyond the Barn and between some older apple trees is the Foxberm Residence. Before the Residence, at the far end of the paved court, a covered landing extends from in front of the barn access door to ten feet passed the North wall of the Barn. A covered stair runs from the landing up the Berm to the deck of the Residence and an enclosed wooden stair runs from the landing down the slope along the North wall of the Barn to a carport.

The access door to enter the barn is as tall as the lower beam tying together the columns along the West wall. To enter you must bend down so as not to hit your head on the faded, rose coloured letters on the lintel.



fig. 93

An old window as tall as the access door remains loosely fixed in place at the opposite wall. The only other light enters through the thin layer of wooden boards acting as an envelope; narrow vertical gaps between every board as well as every crack, cut and hole softly glowing. As the light soaks into your eyes and the contrast diminishes, the post and beam structure begins to stand out.

The barn interior is an open volume divided into four bays defined by a repeating series of five bents. Each bent is comprised of three columns, almost one foot square, tied together by a beam the same size resting four metres high on top of the middle column and notched into the sides of the end columns. Up close, each structural member is a veritable tree with bark still clinging to the occasional side where the carpenter's adze didn't reach; the directional marks of each swing still visible along the length everywhere else. Tying together the bents are two spliced beams on top of the end columns running the length of the barn along the East and West sides. Roof rafters rise from notches in these spliced beams to the peak, each is composed of two pieces of wood that meet at the halfway point and are supported there by diagonal bracing rising from the tie beam of the bent. Smaller diagonal members act as cross bracing throughout the bents and rafters.

Two sets of lower tie-beams, to which the exterior barn boards are nailed, sit equally spaced between the spliced beams and the floor. Within the bents at the end walls one lower tie-beam is set at the height of a tall person. The bents next in from the ends have tie-beams set just above hip height with horizontal boards extending from there to the floor, at one point holding back hay mounds. In the middle bent, there are no lower tie-beams allowing for free movement around the middle two bays.



fig. 94
Vignette

The two large sliding doors opening along the West wall are each as wide as one of the middle bays and almost as tall. Along the opposite wall to the East, new sliding doors have been constructed, with the barn board being removed and fastened to frames that hang on overhead sliders, allowing for the wall to be opened. The existing lower tie-beams remain and a new railing has been added along the edge which sits ten feet above the grade below. With both doors open, the light of the morning and evening sun and the West winds can move freely through the interior volume.

Within the farthest bay to the South is the two storey Ravenbarn Studio, built around an old one storey room in the West half. To reach the Studio from the access door you must climb over the hay barrier, using a newly installed wooden stile in place of the tree stumps used previously. The wooden floor feels soft when you walk through in bare feet, a feeling developed over a century and a half of use. The occasional board moves loosely when you step in right place.

The wall of the old room facing the middle bays is paneled in reddish coloured wooden boards ranging from ten to sixteen inches wide and full of holes from carpenter bees. At the West end of the wall is a wooden door providing the only interior access to the basement. In the centre of the wall is the original door to the old room comprised of two inch thick wood boards. Running most of the height of the door is a wooden handle, wound with bailing twine to hold together the crack that runs most of its length. You can feel the handle flexing as you drag the door across the floor through the worn wooden channel in which it sits. A new glazed door has been installed in the opening behind to provide a better air seal to the newly constructed Studio.

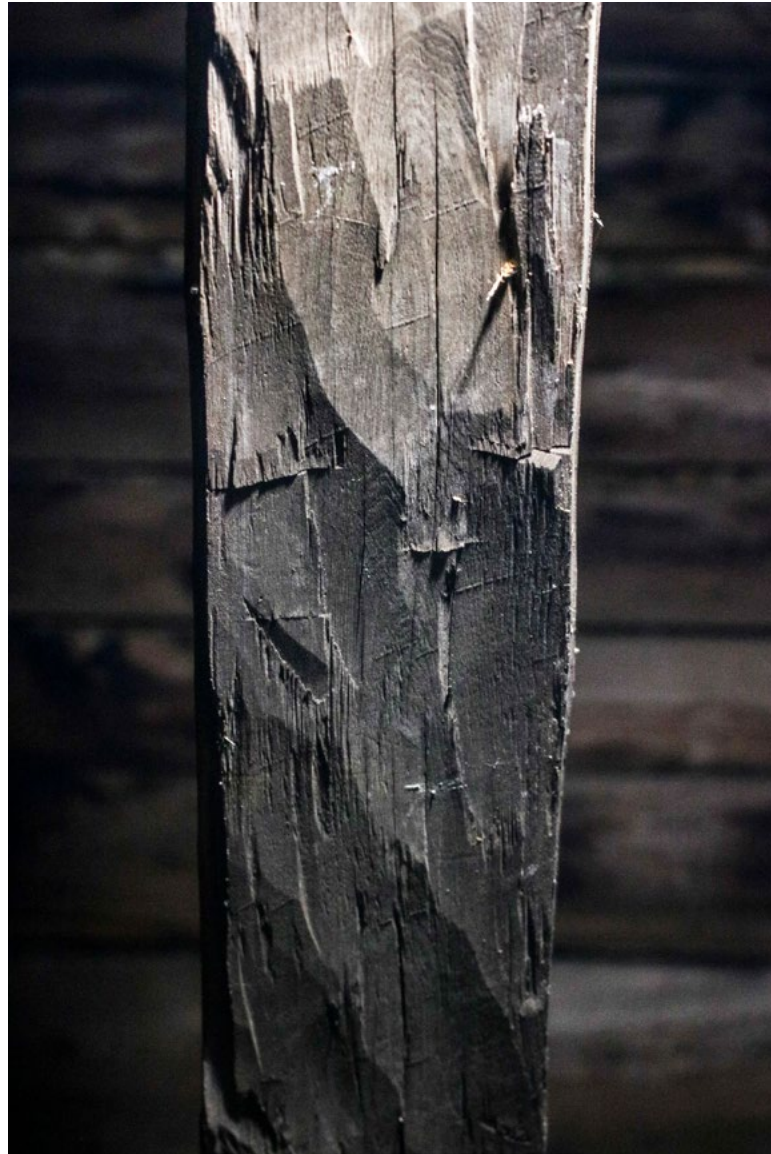


fig. 95

The interior of the room is lined with original boards generally smaller and more uniform than the exterior. The existing wood floor remains as well. The ceiling once comprised of only logs still covered in bark, has been reinforced with wood joists to support the second floor above. A small window sits within the South wall as it has for years with a view to the large Mulberry tree growing next to the driveway and well house. An old door next to the window, opens onto a new covered balcony providing secondary access to the Studio with a stair leading East down to the grade in front of the well house, and a ramp leading West towards the gravel parking area.

Within the old room, a new wall to the West conceals a washroom and a storage space. A steep access stair leading to the second floor rises along the North wall. There's a small table to eat at with a kitchenette built along the South and East walls. Above the counter at the East side there's a serving window into the Studio. Next to the kitchenette in the East wall is a doorway leading you into the double height Studio space.



fig. 96
Vignette

A communal working table sits in the middle of the Studio with enough room for four people. A work bench runs along the North wall at the height of the original hay barrier that was left in place.

The twelve foot high walls of the studio are built within the existing structural bents; the finishes cover the lower tie-beams but reveal the columns and larger tie-beams above. Two ten foot high windows sitting at the top of the hay barrier, look to the barn interior. Opposite these windows along the South wall are four windows; two upper windows aligned to two lower ones, divided by the lower tie-beam that runs between the columns of the exterior bent. The lower windows are operable and the upper ones are fixed frosted glazing with the barn board remaining behind. The East wall is painted drywall without any openings. The West wall is also drywall, and apart from the serving window and the doorway there is an glazed opening to the second floor stair well.



As you return through the doorway of the Studio and take the steep stair to the second floor, you arrive in a hallway entirely glazed along the North side looking into the barn. A chair and a low table sit ahead, and within the South wall is a door to the guest room. The guest room has a washroom at the West end and two inward opening windows facing South; the barn board beyond the windows has been made into shutters that open upward as an awning.

Returning to the hallway, next to the stair leading to the main floor is a door with a small window. Through the door you enter an unheated landing with a stair rising steeply in front leading you to the mezzanine atop the studio and guest bedroom. There's a railing at the interior North edge of the mezzanine and everywhere else there is only the original barn structure and cladding. Here you stand above the top of the bents within the rafters

fig. 97
Vignette



fig. 98
Vignette

In order to reach the basement from the main floor you take a steep staircase with a skinny sapling for a railing. As you walk down you come face to face with the end of a one foot diameter floor joist containing ninety rings before arriving within a newly constructed utility room. Exiting the utility room through the door directly ahead, you enter the main space of the basement.

The basement is cool and dry with light coming in through six windows on three sides. A faint remnant layer of preservative white lime still covers the eight foot high stone and mortar foundation walls and wood structure above. The West foundation wall, embedded into the slope of the Berm and having lost all its mortar from years of water seeping through in the spring, has now been reinforced with a series of concrete buttresses and a steel mesh running between.

There are nineteen pairs of roughly equal floor joists running East-West supporting two layers of thick floor boards above. Each pair of joists, intermittently spotted with abandoned mud swallow nests, runs from the stone foundation walls to meet at a centre beam running continuously for the full eighteen metres of the barn's length. This centre tree-beam is supported at the North and South foundation walls as well as by three tree-columns roughly aligned with the bents above.

Under the North and South bays the floor has now been paved with concrete, while the floor between remains covered in eroded beach stone exposed when the Berm was dug into. Contained by a stud wall, the North bay contains an uninsulated workshop with work benches and some wood-working machinery. An access door and rolling garage door open into the middle of the basement along with a window. The South paved bay remains open, apart from the utility room, to allow for a small tractor to drive in through the only exterior door large enough along the East wall. Any one of three Dutch-style doors along the East wall will lead you outside to a gravel court.



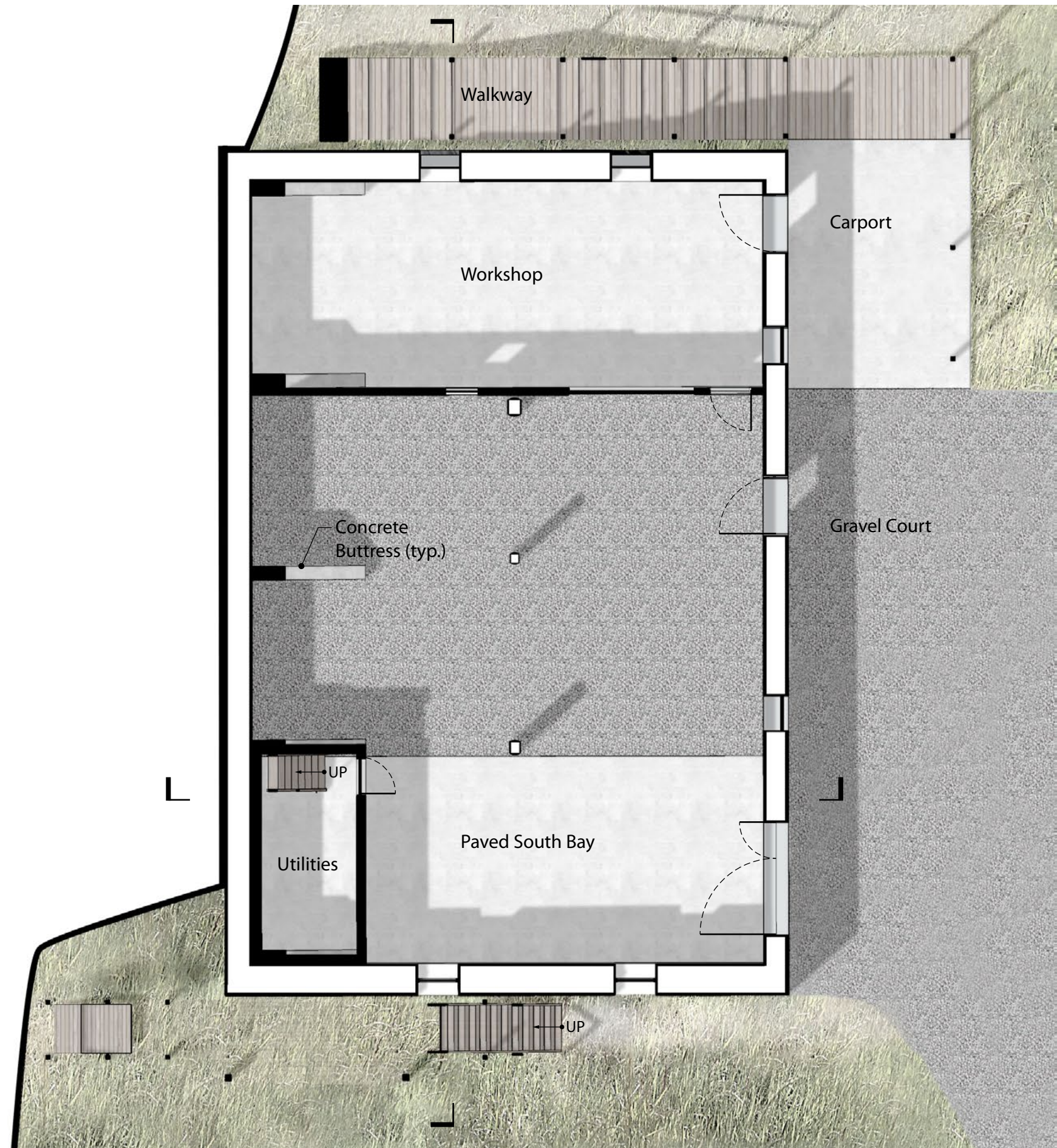
fig. 99

From the gravel court, the grade gradually slopes down to the East towards the sumacs that are growing at the edge of a treed area. Beyond the sumacs among the trees, the ground levels out for the next hundred metres, covered in surfacing beach stone, before steeply sloping down once more to reach the road. At the top of the slope before the road is an old cedar rail fence and a Maple that looks to be one of the oldest trees on the property.

The gravel court is accessed from the driveway and when arriving at Willow North in the Winter, or any other time of year, you can park under the carport at the North end of the court in front of the workshop inside the basement of the Barn. Through the carport you can access the enclosed outdoor stair that leads you up the slope of the Berm along the North side of the Barn to the Foxberm Residence.

As you walk up the stairs you can open the North facing wood shutters to allow the breeze through, no longer needing to be kept closed to block the Winter snow.







Foxberm Residence Deck

Walkway Roof Below

Carport Roof Below

North Bay

Stile

Access Door

Centre Bay

Paved Court

Gravel Court

DN

UP

Studio

Kitchenette

Storage

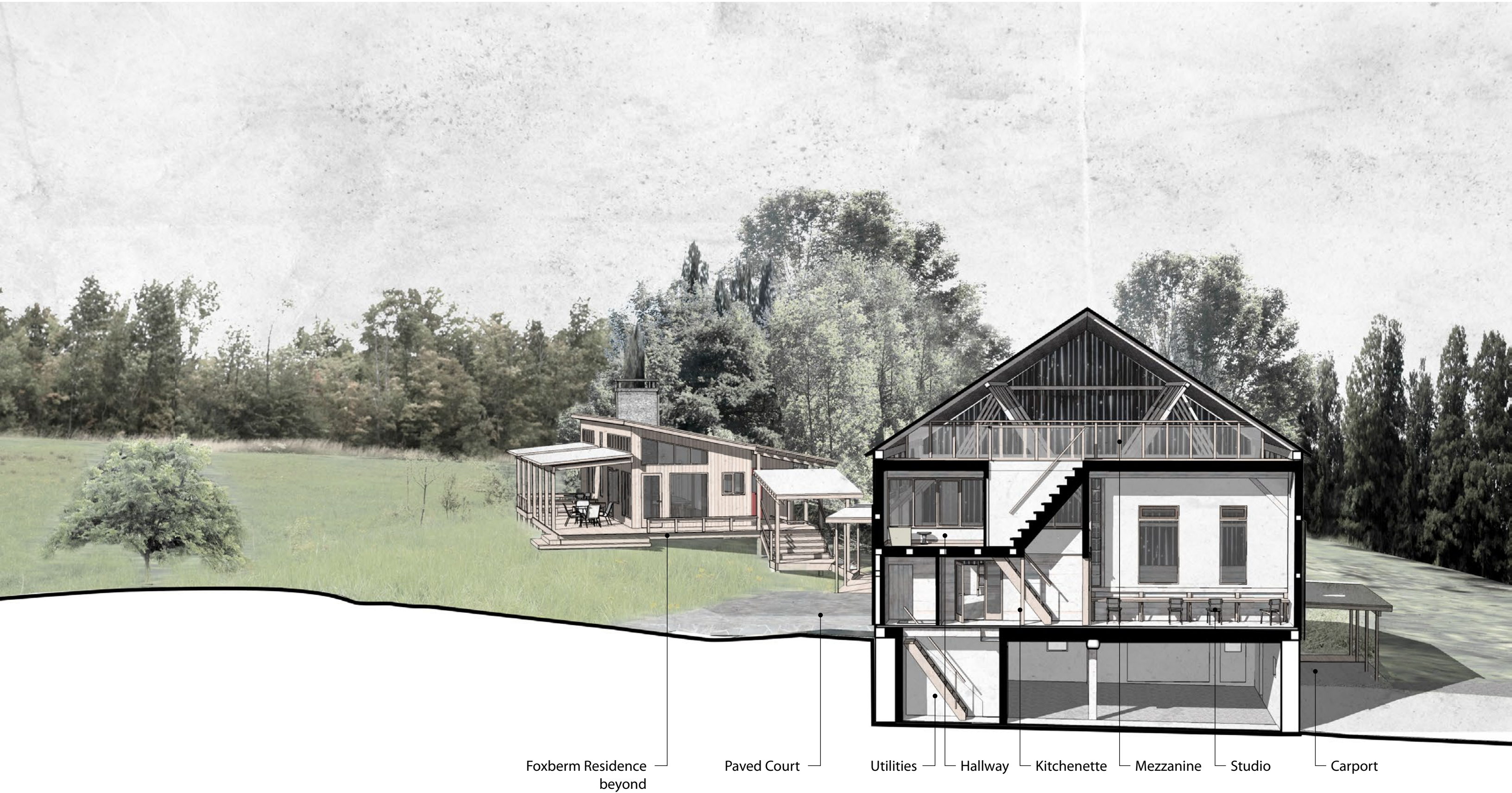
W/C

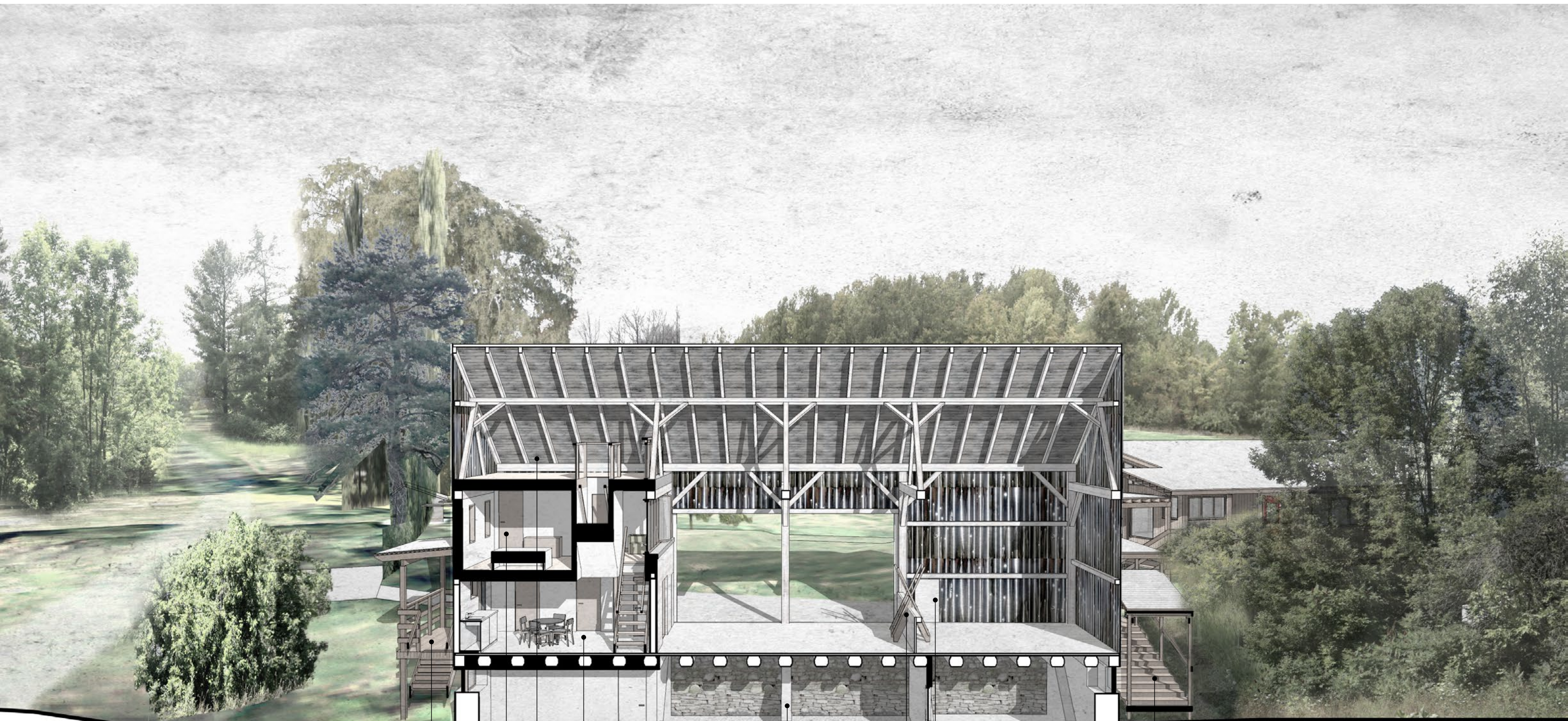
Ramp

Balcony

DN







Balcony — Guest Bedroom — Kitchenette — Concrete Buttress — Stile — Access Door — Workshop — Covered Walkway

Mezzanine



178

179

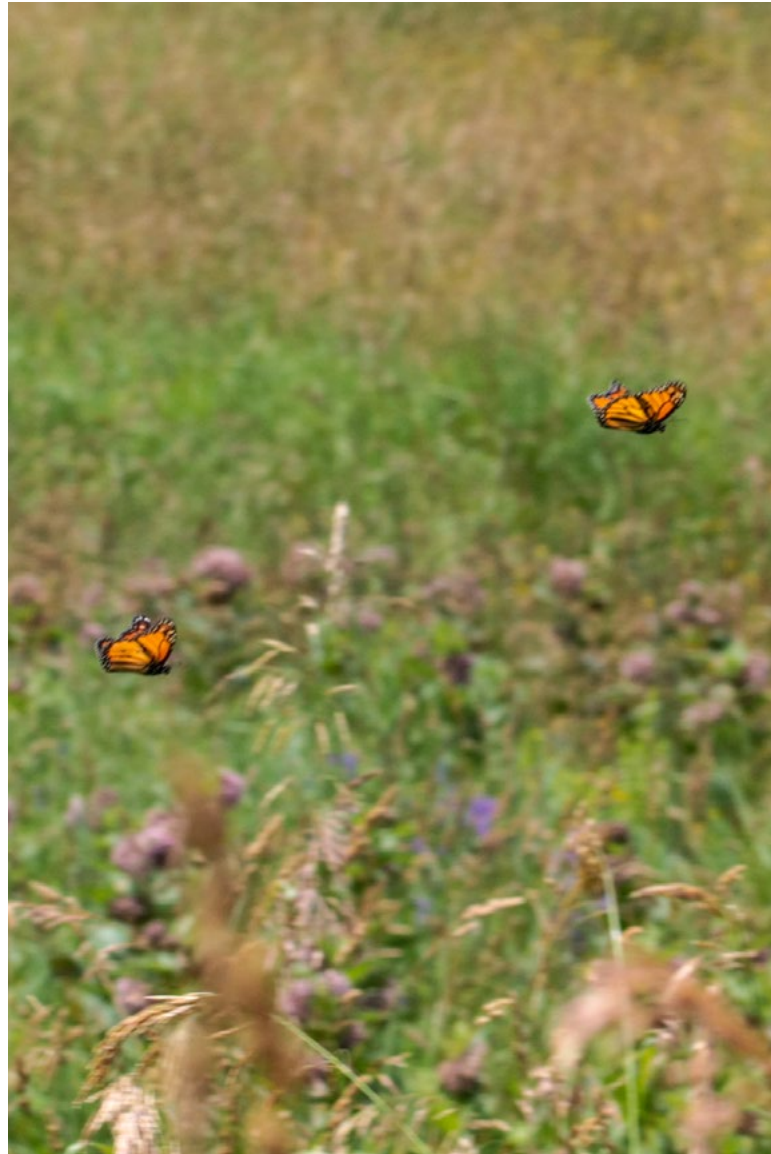


fig. 107

*Two Butterflies went out at Noon -
And waltzed above a Farm -
Then stepped straight through the Firmament
And rested on a Beam -*

*And then - together bore away
Upon a shining Sea -
Though never yet, in any Port -
Their coming mentioned - be-*

*If spoken by the distant Bird -
If met in Ether Sea
By Frigate, or by Merchantman -
No notice - was - to me -*

Emily Dickinson



The Foxberm Residence situated on top of the Berm is supported by piers and raised just high enough for air to flow under the primary grade beams that run North-South. From the landing at the top of the enclosed stairs another nine steps leads you to the South East corner of the Residence deck. Straight ahead from here is a door to an entry vestibule just beyond the Apple tree growing at the East edge of the deck.

Within the vestibule, to the right, windows open with a view to the East where glimpses of the lake can be seen when the leaves have fallen. A continuous bench runs under the windows with shoes stored below. Coats hang in a line on the opposite wall. At the far end of the vestibule is a door to the utility room housing a grey-water tank collecting water from the roof. Fresh water is pumped from a lake shore well to the barn where it is filtered before being pumped to the house. An electrical panel receives current from the power line running along the driveway to the barn. To the left of the utility room a door leads you into the centre of the house.

fig. 108
Vignette

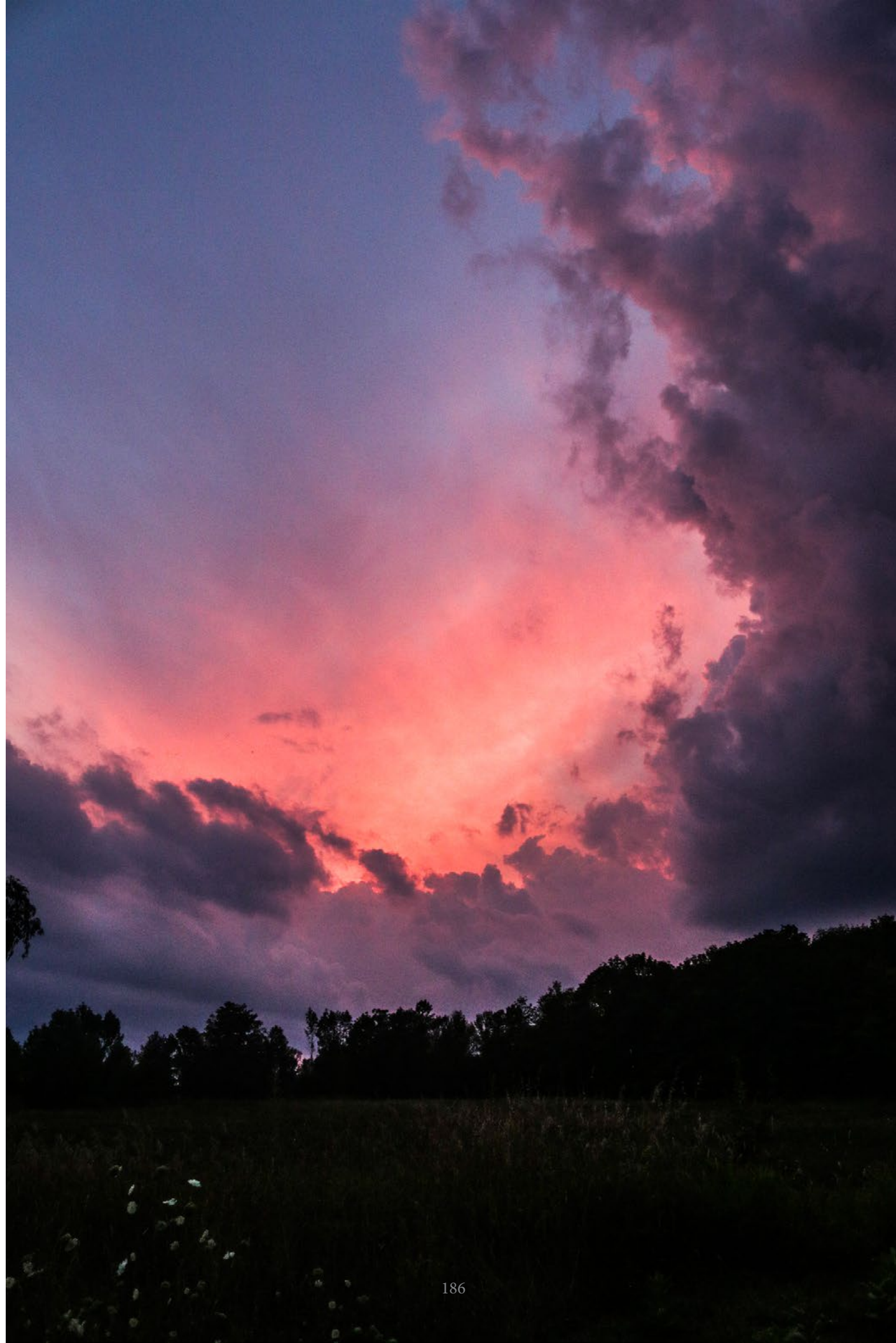


fig. 109
Vignette

The main living space of the house is composed of an open kitchen area to the left and a sitting area to the right. The ceiling angles up following the slope of the field to the West, allowing for a row of windows with a view of the sky to run above the canopy that covers the outside deck. The kitchen counter and utilities run along the East wall, with a single operable window looking towards the entry. A kitchen island with polished limestone top runs through the middle of the space doubling as the dining surface with seating at the far South end. The majority of the South facade is glazed with a door to the deck to the West end. Two large windows with operable sections continue from the South corner along the West facade and a sliding door on the East wall opens to the deck across from the entry door. To the right of the sliding door, a window reaching up to the height of the clear-storey windows above is centred on an apple tree that grows next to the deck and provides a view from the sitting area. A wood burning fireplace rises upwards in layers of limestone at the North wall at the far end of the sitting space.

A hallway to the right of the fireplace continues for a short distance with a window at the end looking into the trees beyond. At the end of the hallway a door opens to the East onto a small covered back deck where firewood is stored. Also opening from the hallway is a bathroom with a sink, composting toilet and bathtub and one large East facing window with an operable top light.

At the West side of the hallway a door opens to the bedroom which shares its South wall with the fireplace. Behind a three quarter height wall is the closet with an upper horizontal window at the North Wall, similar to the South, offering a view of the Scotch Pine canopy beyond. Along the West wall is a window with an operable side light, and a door leads you to a small covered deck separated from the main deck by an apple tree. Clear-storey horizontal windows similar to the main space reveal the sky above the canopy.



As you look out from the deck of the residence towards the West, the rising field and the treeline at its West boundary obscure the horizon. West winds bring ever changing clouds and the occasional storm arriving unexpectedly, announced only by the sound of thunder or changes in air pressure and humidity. Looking up into this voluminous ceiling, the tangible weight of the atmosphere and its relation to the earth below your feet becomes palpable.

Field grasses reach to the edge of the deck where you stand visually and tangibly immersed within the Earth. The diversity of the plants growing in the field since not being cut is reminiscent of a mosaic or a meadow. Diffused patches of blue and purple Asters and white Daisies trail off vying for territory amongst the grasses that give structure, thickness and body to the field. Purple Milkweed patches eaten by black and white Monarch caterpillars gather together away from tanning grasses with feathery heads taller than the eye that sway back and forth lazily in the breeze. Sweet tasting fuschia Clover and toxic yellow Buttercup grow next to low vine-like plants at the ground with seed pods drying in the sun, rattling as you walk by. Goldenrod adds shades of yellow to the edges of the field in the late summer attracting Gold Finches and Yellow Jackets.

The smell of the flowering field is subtle enough to not be noticed from the deck except for the sun dried grasses noticed on first arrival. Any such smells though are quickly overtaken by a neighbouring bonfire or the occasional breeze bringing the scent of the fish from the lake.

fig. 110



fig. 111

Flickers and Bluejays, Woodpeckers and Robins fly from the trees on the Berm to the those along the driveway and back again throughout the day. A Cardinal also lives nearby, defending his territory early in the morning from reflections in the Barn's basement windows. The bird calls continue throughout the day diminished only by the wind blowing through the trees or the sound of nearby chainsaws and trees crashing in the Fall.

An old deer path starting where the back deck of the Residence ends marks a clear but narrowing route along the top of the Berm. On the leeward side of the slope, to the East, is the Fox den dug out of the side of the Berm. West of the deer path, standing just North of the deck is a Scotch Pine with a Pear tree nestled next to it at the edge of the field. The rest of the trees growing along the Berm are primarily a mix of coniferous trees, with the exception of one of the largest trees on the property, a dying Ash too big to wrap your arms fully around. The Ash grows halfway along the length of the treed section of the Berm next to a crosswise cut through the slope where the field drains eventually reaching the ditch at the road.



fig. 112

The North treeline of the first field meets the Berm beyond the Ash out of view from the deck, but then rises to the West filled with towering Maple and Ash to reach its highest point at the North West corner of the field. The Monarch Lookout sits just South of the corner, hidden from view among the shadows of the West treeline which continues sloping down to the South.

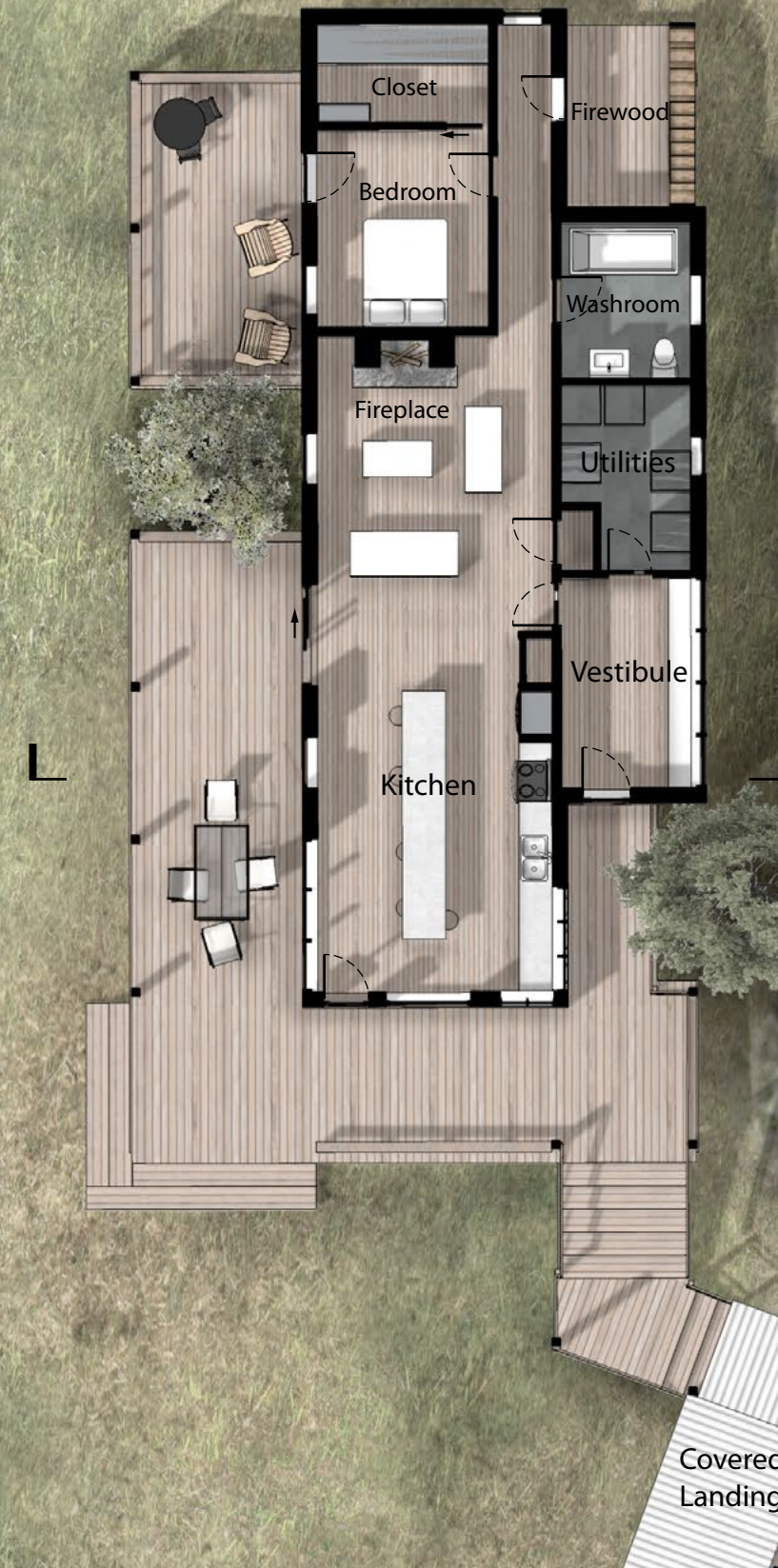
From a prominent Maple standing halfway along the West treeline your gaze then jumps to a clump of trees growing up around an old stone-lined well within the field. In the summer the well is dry to the bottom and its wooden casing hidden from view. From the well, your eyes move South to the towering Willow that obscures the South treeline from view with wispy cascades of leaflet covered boughs glowing golden yellow-green in the evening sun.

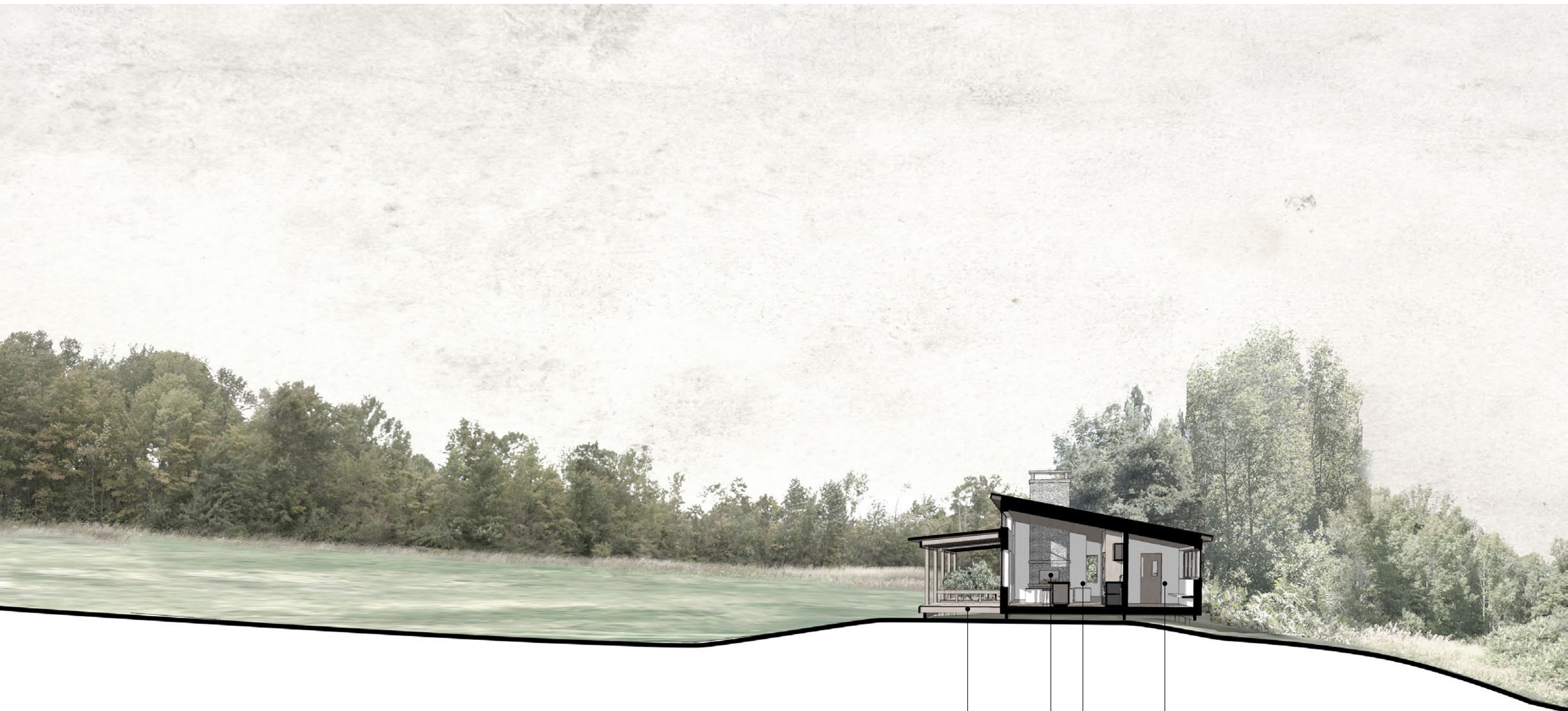
Extending in a line East from the Willow, you can see a White Pine, the stump of a fallen Larch with thirty-one rings, and another White Pine, each standing twelve feet apart next to the end of the driveway. These trees and a variety of others were planted near a previous house that sat on Ian's property on the other side of the driveway before it burnt down maybe fifteen years ago. Ian's trailer sat in its place until he built his house at the top of his first field West of here.

Roughly in line with the Willow and White Pines, where the Berm meets the driveway, is a worn out garden shed; in front of the shed a young Black Walnut grows on the top of the Berm. East of the shed and Black Walnut, is the Scotch Pine next to the open parking area.

Before the parking area there is a grass path that will lead you along the edge of the field to the Monarch Lookout. To reach the path you can walk from the South West corner of the deck, down two steps to the Berm, continuing along the low slope to the edge of the paved court to the start of the path.







Deck — Fireplace
beyond — Kitchen — Vestibule



Monarch Lookout



20m

15m

10m

5m

0m

200

201



fig. 118
Vignette

Following the grass path from the paved court in front of the Barn leads you passed the Black Walnut and the abandoned shed. Brushing through the Willow boughs, you continue in the shadows of the trees along the South edge of the field until turning right at the far side of the well. From here you follow the stone wall at the back of the field, passed the large Maple to the opening in the wall.

The Monarch Lookout, a symmetrical covered wooden platform with an unimpeded view under the canopy of the trees, sits to the North of the opening in the stone wall with a couple of chairs waiting.

The grass path leads you to a single large stone embedded in the ground below two steps that extend from the South East corner of the platform above.

The canopy has an exposed wooden structure and is tilted upwards shedding any water not deflected by the trees towards a rain gutter above the wall. A chain directs the water to a channel that flows towards the field. Two benches are built between the columns along each side of the platform and the back edge sits flush with the stone wall.



You are bathed in sunlight at the Monarch Lookout from morning until noon when the canopy above you and the trees behind you cast their shadows. From the platform, the field tilts downwards away from you passed the Barn and trees that half hide the Lake. The sound of the wind through the trees and the waves in the distance are indistinguishable; the surface of the water and the tree canopies both shimmer in the breeze. Stronger winds can be heard hissing through the forest some unknown distance behind you. The distant shoreline rises in discrete low steps of the Escarpment that wraps its way from here to there.

A black squirrel walking quietly across the stone wall behind you, is noticed only because of a rickety stone that pulls your attention from the clouds that are hanging seemingly motionless just ahead some uncertain distance away.



From this vantage point Willow North becomes a frame for contemplation, your gaze resting on the distant horizon and expanding into the atmosphere. As clouds carried by the West wind drift away from you they move ever more slowly, carrying the tangible atmosphere of the past to the horizon where they become too small to see, as if you were looking out a train window in the direction of the place you once were.

As the evening comes to a close and a dozen seagulls fly overhead towards the call of a loon, the silk of ten thousand spiders drifts through the rays of the evening sun covering all the earth in a shimmering web of light.

Another hour later, when night has set in, Jupiter and Saturn watch from over the blurred hue of the Milky Way to the South as the fireflies dance in the field.

fig. 120







30m

25m

20m

15m

10m

5m

0m

212

213



fig. 124

I lie on my belly in the grasses looking for Strawberries below shady leaves, each one bursting with wild energy, staining fingers red to the touch. In the fifth field the strawberries are so plentiful in the early summer you have to be careful where you walk; they become harder to find the closer you are to the Barn.

The wavering hum of a bumble bee and the slightly higher frequency of a fly buzzing around flowers nearby fill the air among the grasses. A spider darts by hunting along the ground while ants move over everything, carrying anything. A grasshopper lands on my chest, stopping to look me in the eye, while a praying mantis tries not to be seen. My leg has become the ground plane of one ant that would appear to not know the difference between my flesh and that of the earth, both equally supporting this tiny body in search of food.

A ladybug skuttles up to the high reaches and seedy head of a stalk of timothy grass. I turn over onto my back to watch them fly away somewhere I'll never know. The depth of the sky beyond the grass tips has blended into a single monotonous hue, until a blue jay flies overhead from one treeline to the other. A monarch glides by in sharp contrast arriving from some unknown place. Flicking their wings once they turn, flicking them again, they're gone to land on the flower of their choosing.



fig. 125

As you pass through the opening in the stone wall, the slope of the next field continues to rise. The diversity of plants from the first field have not made their way here yet, but some trees are beginning to grow scattered throughout the uniform field grasses; an Hawthorn, an Apple, a couple Ash, and some Pear trees among them. Ant hills revealed in the early spring and late fall dot the field between the trees.

Maple, Ash, Beech, Poplar, Buckthorn, Hawthorn, and less common Basswood and Ironwood fill the treed edges. Sweet Service Berries and Pin Cherries can be found intermittently along both the North and South edges in the summer. Tart wild Apples with green skin and white flesh and hard Pears that dessicate the mouth audibly tumble from their trees in the Fall.

As you walk the path cut along the North edge of the field, traces of footsteps can be seen among the dry uncut grasses not yet springing back. Arriving at the North West corner a large half-dead cherry tree reaches forward indicating a passage through the treeline with three flat limestone pieces carrying you into the next field. Looking back East before continuing offers the highest view of the Lake, though partially obscured by the previous treeline.



fig. 126

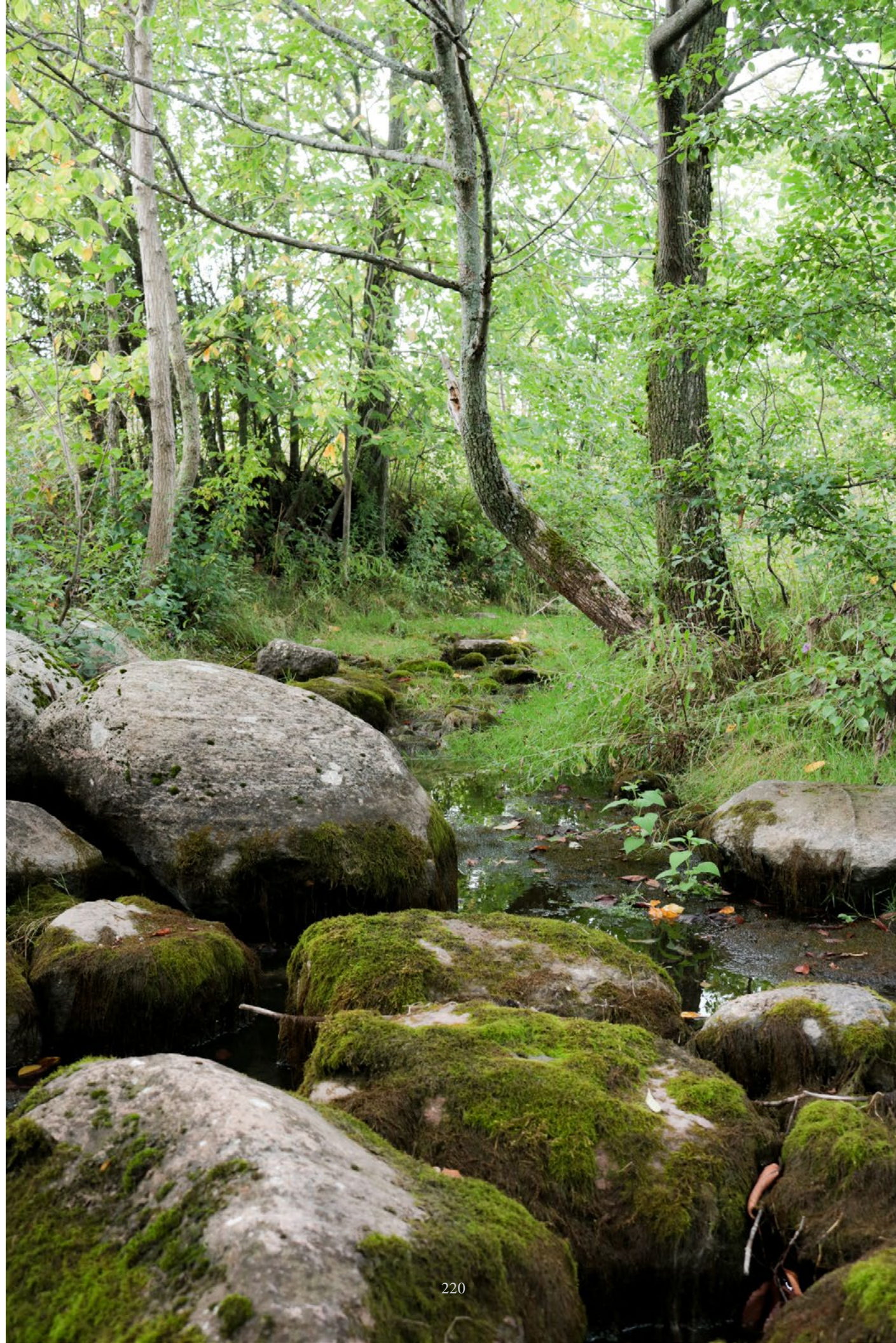
You arrive at a highpoint entering the third field, at the top of a shallow berm visibly running towards the South West. This berm is another ancient lake shore running parallel to the first.

Walking down the slope on the West side of the berm, you arrive at a low point around a massive pink granite boulder; a glacial erratic perhaps six feet long, five feet wide and five feet high.

The ground becomes relatively flat after this point for the first time since being near the Barn. Water pools here in the spring and mosses grow on the exposed ground in the summer and the field plants begin to show more diversity again favouring the wetter soil.

At the South edge of this field is a massive stone wall; halfway along its length, opposite the erratic, there is an old opening large enough for a tractor or wagon. The field beyond on Ian's property has grown into a woodlot, thick with saplings.

The next treeline to the West is less full of tree growth and contains primarily smaller granite boulders lining the base. Fallen tree branches obscure the way through, until you reach a larger stone, that you can just step over.



Crossing the sparse, bouldered treeline you enter a field that has more tree growth than any previous. Many juvenile trees, twice as tall as any person, appear to spread from the North East corner of the field and begin to blend in with the North treeline. The view to the South is open with no treeline or stone wall, and only marked by a cut path through the grass over the property line continuing from the end of the vehicle drive. To the West the next treeline stands closer than any of the previous, and meanders back and forth, following the seasonal stream that crosses the property flowing from North to South. A footbridge of repeating four by fours crosses the stream at a low point in the bank to the South.

In the Spring and Fall, when the rains are steady or the snow is melting, the stream rages. Fast currents carry detritus from the watershed that continues a few kilometres North to the headwaters; a wetland at the bottom of the escarpment. Into the hot Summer, the water slowly dries to a trickling stream, before turning into pools of muddy standing water, then algae crusted bedrock. When the water is low you can climb down the bank lined with granite boulders that have been rolled in from the fields keeping the stream's winding path stable.

As you walk along the dry stream bed covered in sun bleached snail shells, a group of twittering House Wrens talk amongst the shady bushes and a Chipmunk streaks from view behind a boulder.



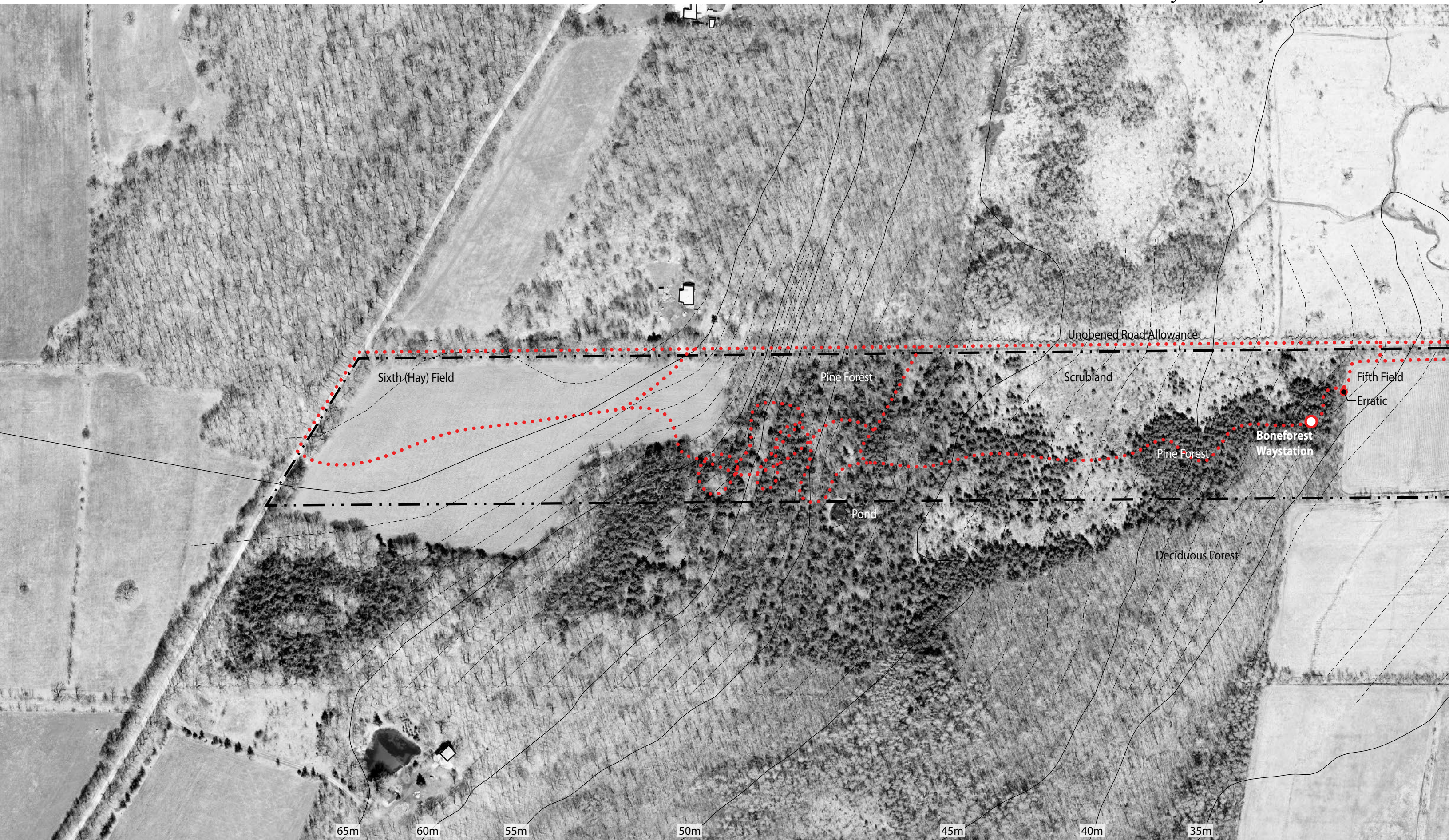
fig. 128

As you climb out of the stream bed and through the treed edge, the fifth and largest field opens ahead, the slope subtly beginning to rise again. A low line of trees and boulders at the South edge starts after a gap between the stream's edge. A ditch in front of the boulders runs along the South edge of the field curving around the far Southwest corner and continuing along the West edge. Beyond the ditch to the West is the forest, with Pines to the North and leafy deciduous trees to the South.

Following a path that arcs from the stream's edge you arrive at the South side of a rock pile sitting in the middle of the field with two Ash trees providing a little shade at the East and West ends. The rock pile is composed of granite boulders and gnarled limestone pieces that have been warped by the slight acidity of water flowing through cavernous underground karst deposits. Some stones make a comfortable seat offering a shallow lookout over the field. The sound of cars traveling on the surrounding roads and small planes flying low from the nearby airport blend with the calls of four Catbirds along the North treeline that beckon you Westward to the forest. You must push through the purple flowering Asters that have knit themselves together from either side of the path as you approach the five storey wall of trees defining the forest edge.

Arriving at the local high point of the North West corner of the field, you can see the lake again, this time in the distance to the South. Looking East, back the way you've come, you can just see the upper slopes of the peninsula on the other side of the inlet. From this corner, an opening in the North treeline bounding the property provides access to the unopened road allowance running the entire length of Willow North. Ten steps to the South a second glacial erratic waits at the threshold of the forest.

Boneforest Waystation



65m

60m

55m

50m

45m

40m

35m

224

225

Site Plan (West Half) | N
1:2500 | ^



fig. 130

There is a harshness to this place, in the hard stone-filled soil, the sun dried field plants that rasp bare skin, and the thorns that grow plentiful on a variety of trees.

The most common of the thorny trees is the invasive European Buckthorn, initially introduced as an easy to grow hedgerow planting and now found everywhere on this and nearby properties, their seeds spread by birds eating their black coloured berries in the Fall. Buckthorn resists removal not only by thorns but by a hydra effect causing one cut tree to produce a dozen tall sprouts from the stump within the season.

Native Hawthorns grow less common than the Buckthorn but with longer, more elegant thorns. Raspberry bushes growing by the barn and some hidden in the fifth field, offer a sour sweetness in exchange for their smaller barbs. Most unexpectedly, the wild pear trees that grow scattered over much of the property offering hard, bitter fruit have thick short thorns that jab relentlessly from stiff branches.



fig. 131

From the edge of the Forest at the corner of the fifth field, if you were to take the road allowance heading East back to the first field, you would pass by Savannah-like fields to the North where Meadow Larks sing vibrantly among hunter hides and the tracks of off-road vehicles driving in through openings from the road allowance. The road allowance becomes full of deep ruts that turn into ditches in the wetter seasons from previous tractor use and the continued use of off-road vehicles. A smaller stream flows from the forests to the North to reach the main stream through Willow North and the water runs red from your footsteps through the exposed clay.

Where the road allowance crosses the main stream, the path has been re-graded by those who drive their off-road vehicles through. Large stones sit at the bottom of the short canal allowing the water to flow through and vehicles to drive over top during the drier seasons.

Passed the stream to the East, the treelines begin to fill in on both sides and the ruts diminish as the road allowance continues to the lake shore. You can cross back onto Willow North through an opening at the edge of the second field, just before the passage through the stonewall.



fig. 132

If you were to take the road allowance continuing West, to avoid the forest, you would walk along a clear level path with an old cedar rail fence along the neighbouring North side. The trees continue to grow thicker on either side along the way and the exposed soil changes from clay to shale to surface rocks starting at the base of a steep slope.

Walking to the top of the slope, you reach a plateau that continues for a number of kilometres until reaching Escarpment faces that rise abruptly in the distance. To the North is a neighbour with an off-grid house who maintains the road allowance from here to the Kemble Bypass, a gravel road maintained by half a dozen local residents with similar off-grid lots accessed by the Bypass. Massive limestone boulders, larger than the granite boulders East of the forest, are found along the Bypass.

The only field still farmed on Willow North opens up on the plateau; cut for hay by a local farmer. The East boundary of this field curves to follow the top of the forested slope. To the South a sliver of the field is shared with Ian, and beyond that are forested edges with mature Maples that survived the clear cutting of the area.

When the field is cut for hay, you can walk straight through to the tractor access at the Bypass. Grasshoppers fill the air around you, Turkey Vultures soar above and a Coyote skips through the cut hay looking for mice.



fig. 133
Vignette

If you wish to explore the forest, the glacial erratic waits for you at the threshold of the forest and the field. Crossing a simple wooden ramp over the ditch bounding the field there is an undefined depth of trees ahead. To the right there is some sunlight visible where the forest thins and to the left, passed the erratic, is a path leading into the forest marked only by an absence of Pine branches on the ground and the trunks of trees.

As you walk the path for thirty or forty steps you pass a large limestone boulder with an Ash sapling growing from a crack in its top. The sapling, like many others in the forest, is no thicker than a thumb growing ten feet tall before sprouting leaves in search of sunlight. Just beyond this is a small stone pile, less than a quarter of the size of the one in the field, surrounded by more stones half submerged throughout the forest floor. West of the stone pile, there are slightly less trees, along with a larger Ash and a Maple defining a partial clearing within the forest.

At the North side of the clearing is the Boneforest Waystation, a simple structure meant as a place of rest while passing through. Under a low gable overhang, shedding pine needles to either side, are two hollow wooden doors making up the South wall. The small enclosure is raised on four posts step height above the forest floor.

The cedar interior holds two low benches and a taller bench-like table. Windows on the East and West walls open to allow the summer breezes to drift through, cooled by the shadow of the forest. Shear curtains hanging from all the openings can be fastened down to keep Mosquitoes from tasting your flesh. With the doors open there is a view to the South into the clearing. During the Winter when the openings are kept closed, a small glazed window on the North wall lets in light and a portable propane burner waits to boil water and heat up the small space.



fig. 134

Leaving any unneeded items at the Boneforest Waystation you can continue West from the clearing following the path into the forest. The uncertain depth of the forest obscures the unquestioned long views of the fields and the density of trees equally mutes distant sounds: the arrival of the smallest songbird within the forest is momentous.

The path you follow moves through a region of mostly Pines bounded to the North and South. To the North is a Scrubland with sparse tree growth. This region remains sunny and hot in the Summer, full of dry water channels that work their way around small groupings of White Pine, Dogwood and limestone and granite boulders hidden below grasses. In the spring, Poison Ivy grows along the boundary of the Scrubland outlining the Pines. To the South is a deciduous forest, thick with undergrowth. During the winter, the sun shines through the bare branches drawing a sharp shadowed line at the edge of the Pines.

Following the path through the Pines for five minutes you reach a Western boundary where the Scrubland wraps around from the North into Ian's property, bringing Poison Ivy with it. Along this edge, there is a narrow line of Pines that continues through the Scrubland guiding you deeper into the forest. The path does not continue but the way is still known beyond this threshold.



fig. 135

Finding the line of Pines, you must continue under and between tree boughs crossing deer trails passed moss covered beds of pine needles until you reach ant hills that are larger than you can step over. Here you arrive at a dense thicket of branches. If you can find a way through you enter a clearer region of Pine forest again where the slope of the ground begins to rise in a series of ridges. Underneath the rocky soil is a low section of the Escarpment that only reveals itself a kilometre North and South of here.

Hiking to the top of the first ridge and following it Southwest, you arrive at a clearing filled with Horsetails, Ferns, Coltsfoot, and cones of mud smaller than your hand made by Chimney Crayfish. At the North end standing atop a mound above the wet ground is a White Pine standing prominently out from the others nearby. To the South is a pond with constructed banks rising above the clearing. The pond is not particularly large or deep, becoming swamp-like by the end of the summer. The pond is home to an assortment of Bull Frogs that sing at your arrival, and a shy Turtle, or maybe two. Deer, Coyote and Raccoon tracks surround this communal watering hole.

If you continue West through the edge of the clearing the sloping ground rises again covered in reddish-brown pine needles and small stones under a consistent mix of Pine, Maple, Ash and wild Apple trees. The West wind and Sunlight visible through the trees both arrive from the hay field at the top of the slope.

Another route from the clearing will lead you North along the top of a ridge arriving at the road allowance. From there, you can return to where you started.









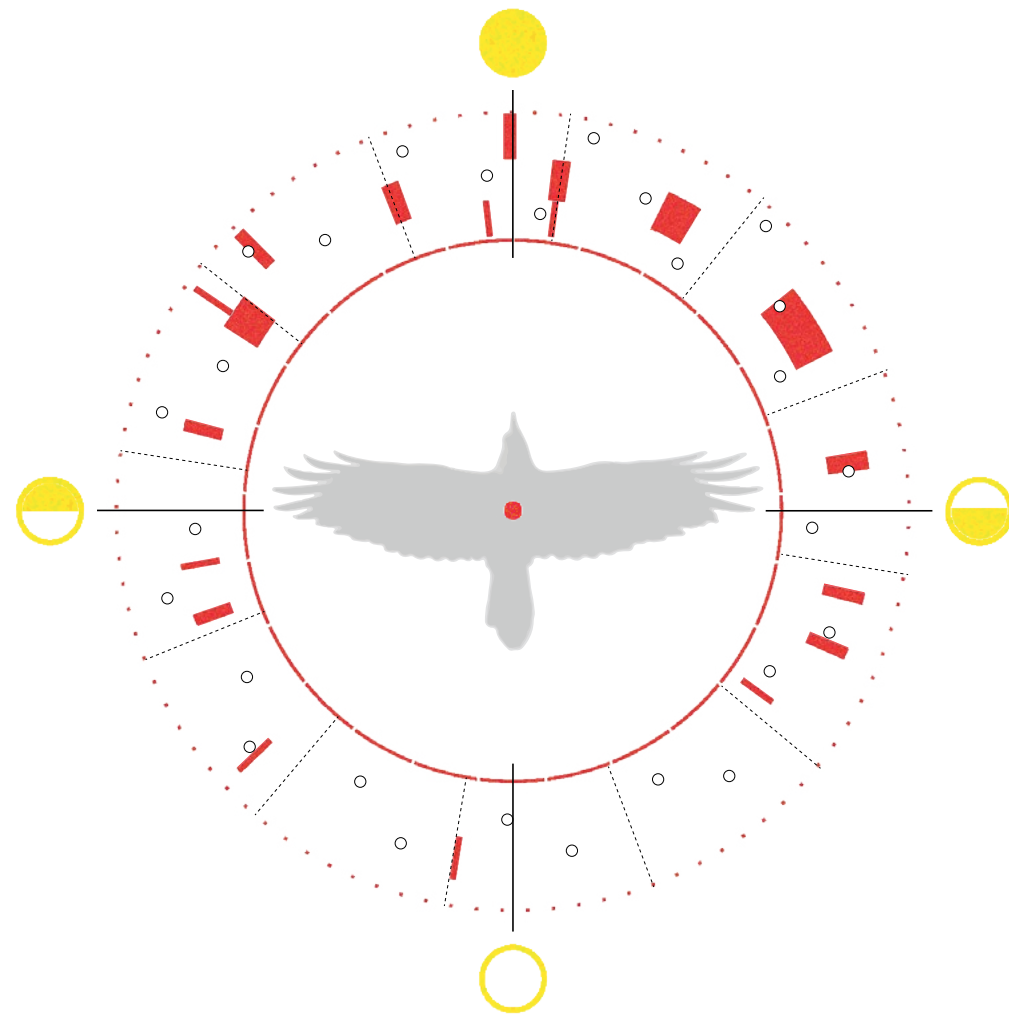


fig. 140

Willow North Encounters: *Story*

Epilogue:

In Relation to Story

A world made of story is an earth permeated by dreams, a terrain filled with imagination. Yet this is not so much our imagination, but rather the world's imagination, in which ours are participant. As players within an expansive, ever-unfolding story, our lives are embedded within a psyche that is not primarily ours.

David Abram
Becoming Animal

Another word that names this reality variously referred to by chance, random, stochastic, or error is wild.

Thomas Berry & Brian Swimme
Universe Story

... this finding is not an end of the way but only its eternal centre.

Martin Buber
I and Thou



Dear Willow North,

*I set out to understand you; such a simple unending task.
I wanted to study you, read your history, spend time with
you, document you, photograph you, work with you, offer
something to you. You who remain responsive to my every
action. I have managed a start, but how small my effort in
comparison to all you offer.*

*It has taken time, knowing your changing surface a little
more every return, but I am no longer lost as I wander
across you. The more time I spend with you, breathing
your air and light, the more you become part of me. And I,
moving stones and leaving trails, become part of you.*

*May I one day dwell within you.
May I call you home and leave only when I find the time.
May I be free from finding a purpose for you and let you
find a purpose for me.*

With Gratitude and Appreciation,

Callan

As I write, and work to share my relation to Willow North, I have been living with my Dad in London, Ontario. This being the first time since my parents divorce twenty-eight years ago, when we were all living in Vancouver at the time.

In the mornings before I get up, my dad is in his office-studio in an addition at the back of the garage, working on prepping for the Environmental Design and Planning course he's teaching this semester. After a quick coffee and oatmeal breakfast on the back porch, I pop in to see what he's up to for the day, then head up to my second floor room in the house where I've set up my own studio space.

Since my first sketches of the Foxberm Residence, I have been working within a flexible routine of disciplined work; writing steadily and repeatedly, expanding beyond the bounds of my time at Willow North, then returning to the particulars of my personal relation to the property.

After a morning spent moving back into the work, I head down stairs to make a sandwich for lunch; walking barefoot across the deck, to the less smooth mulch path on my way to the garden to grab some chives, sorel and lettuce. I eat on the deck under the partial shade of Cedar, Fir, Honey Locust, and Maple trees that are larger than those at Willow North. The animals are more abundant here too, or perhaps only less shy; at my feet a Chipmunk stops briefly for a peanut before continuing to the bird feeders frequented throughout the day by Chickadees, Cardinals, Wrens, Grackles, Gold Finches, and a dozen other songbirds.

After lunch I coast on my bike around the suburb filled with sixties and seventies style bungalows. I see people steadily working on their gardens, others building and rebuilding porches, those with porches sitting outside watching from them, and more people nodding or waving every day as I pass by. When I get back to the house I return to work, focusing all my attention towards Willow North.

My dad has been visiting Willow North regularly since the summer weather arrived, bringing back photos and stories of encounters during his time there. After helping to finish the opening through the wall I began, he's created a new opening in the next treeline to the West so that the path can continue winding its way through the fields, no longer bounded by the edges where it has stayed until now. I am excited to see the work that my dad's been doing there, but this close to the end I keep working to finish writing my story.

When I first started writing, I had no clear sense of what I wanted to express, feeling only the conflict with Architecture, which became unavoidable returning to the masters program. As I return to my notes from throughout the masters the writing moves freely from my experiences of Willow North, to ideas separate from any place, to other ideas related to all places. It is among these varied words I've found a story that was there from the beginning. In finding the story and selecting those points that draw the narrative, I have sought to write an accurate representation of my relation to Willow North.

When I started the masters program originally six years ago, I entered with an interest in the idea of home. I remember beginning that investigation not with my childhood home, but immediately charting out every place that I had lived throughout my life. In creating such a timeline, my studio professor, suggested I might be interested in a book by Greg Curnoe, in which he published all the records of the Lot that he lived on in London, ON. At the time, I found it interesting, but didn't know how I was going to use the information or where I would focus myself in any similar fashion. Now I feel a relation to this other person through undertaking a similar act and uncovering the history of a property that I have held close enough to spend the time and energy to do so. In this particular case a history that overlaps, less in our living in London, than the uncovered story of the First Nations that call the place that encompasses both properties home.

After dinners, I take a walk around the block, heading North and turning West at a particularly busy road, with wild Sumacs growing at the edge of a nature preserve on the other side. The cars stream steadily by me until I turn South again down the next side road, passed the four gnarled Scotch Pines growing in front of a uniform brick wall at the side of some unknown building. As I walk down the sidewalk under the Japanese Maple that caresses the top of my head, I can hear some people in their backyards, as others have their TV's on inside, and others still are out for a walk nodding as we cross paths again. I can feel every day being here that, as I remain in relation to the ground below my feet I may always feel at home wherever I am.

Making my way through the park at the far end of the block I return Northward to the house. I grab one of my dad's cookies that he regularly bakes from the pantry and I return to work.

As I finish writing this story, bounded by a definition of property, I feel my relation to Willow North now able to expand beyond the boundaries of some impersonal definition of this place that was never mine in ownership to begin with.

Reflecting on my first encounters with Willow North, I can see my relation to the particular place existing before ever traveling down the hill on that first trip driving up from my apartment in Toronto. In moving into my memories of my childhood home, I can see my relation existing as I grew up in the area nearby, traveling to visit the Escarpment often. In researching the history, I can see my relation extending to a time before I was born to a story I was never told. In my felt sense of the encounters with Willow North I have come back to finding the Life and Beauty in Architecture that I did not feel wholly within since my first year of learning about Architecture.

I now know the wholistic approach to Architecture that I was seeking without certainty of the outcome. Such a wholistic approach is encompassing and can not be seen objectively, only in relation. Such a wholistic approach does not provide a definitive outcome, only a continually changing relation.

I now know that if I should ever feel again that Life and Beauty are separate from Architecture, I need only remember where ravens dream.



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Appendix A:

Portraits of Willow North

A plan showing the dates and locations of photos presented through document



Appendix B:
Objective Property
A transcription of the deed to Lot 23.
Indentation maintained for visual reference.
Handwritten text shown in italics.



fig. 144

Photograph of photocopy of original deed

CANADA

Victoria, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain
and Ireland, QUEEN, Defender of the Faith, &c., &c., &c.

To all whom these Presents shall come - GREETING:

Whereas the Lands, hereinafter described, are part and parcel of those set apart for the use of the *Chippewas of Nawash Indians*, And Whereas We have thought fit to authorize the sale and disposal of the Lands hereinafter mentioned, in order that the proceeds may be applied to the benefit, support and advantage of the said Indians, in such a manner as We shall be pleased to direct from time to time: and Whereas
John Crampton of the Township of Keppel in the County of Grey in the Province of Ontario in Our Dominion of Canada Farmer hath

contracted and agreed to and with Our Minister of the Interior, our Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs, duly authorized by Us in this behalf, for the absolute purchase at and for the price and sum of *Two hundred and ninety one dollars and Sixty two cents* of lawful money of Canada of the Lands and Tenements hereinafter mentioned and described, of which we are seized in right of Our Crown.

Now Know Ye, that in consideration of the said sum of *Two hundred and ninety one dollars and Sixty two cents* by him the said *John Crampton* to our said Minister of the Interior in hand well and truly paid to Our use, at or before the sealing of these Our Letters Patent, We by these Presents, do grant, sell, alien convey and assure unto the said *John Crampton, his heirs* and assigns for ever, all that Parcel or Tract of Land, situate, lying and being in the *Township of Keppel in the County of Grey* in the Province of *Ontario* in Our Dominion of Canada,

containing by admeasurement *One hundred and ten acres, be the same more or less*
Composed of *Lot number Twenty three in the*
Georgian Range, in the aforesaid Township of Keppel.

To have and to hold the said Parcel or Tract of Land, hereby granted, conveyed and assured unto the said *John Crampton, his heirs* and Assigns for ever; saving, excepting and reserving, nevertheless, unto Us, our Heirs and Successors, the free use, passage and enjoyment of, in, over and upon all navigable waters that shall or may be hereafter found on or under, or be flowing through or upon any part of the said Parcel or Tract of Land hereby granted as aforesaid.

Given under the Great Seal of Canada Witness, *Our Right Trusty and Well Beloved Cousin and Councillor, the Right Honorable Sir Frederic Temple, Earl of Dufferin, Viscount and Baron Clandeboye of Clandeboye, in the County Down, in the Peerage of the United Kingdom Baron Dufferin and Clandeboye of Ballyleidy and Killelough(?), in the County Down, in the Peerage of Ireland, and a Baronet, Knight of Our Most Illustrious Order of Saint Patrick, Knight Grand Cross of Our Most distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, and Knight Commander of Our Most Honorable Order of the Bath, Governor General of Canada, and Vice Admiral of the same.*

At OTTAWA, this *Sixth* day of *June* in the year of Our Lord one thousand eight hundred and *Seventy six*, and in the *thirty ninth* year of Our Reign.

Ref. No. 5703 By Command,
Des. No. 1263

Richard Scott
Secretary of State

David Laird
Minister of the Interior

Appendix C:

Historic Records

Notes on historic census sources and currency conversions

Historic Census information has been acquired through the Library and Archives of Canada website (www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/Pages/census.aspx) which contains digital copies of census records for the area now known as Georgian Bluffs from 1851-1921. Censuses conducted after 1926 are held by Statistics Canada under privacy and confidentiality laws until 92 years after the collection of the data.

Detailed information pertaining to Lot 23 of the Georgian range was available for the years 1861 and 1871 and can be found at the following URLs:

Agricultural Census of Canada 1861

Sheet 94. Columns 1-38:

https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1861&op=&img&id=4391552_00471

Sheet 94. Columns 39-69:

https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1861&op=&img&id=4391552_00472

Agricultural Census of Canada 1871:

District No. 37. North Grey: Sub-District Township of Keppel

Schedule No. 1–Nominal Return of the Living, p 32 & 33

https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1871&op=&img&id=4396298_00157

Schedule No. 2–Nominal Return of the Deaths within last twelve months

no applicable information

Schedule No. 3–Return of Public Institutions, Real Estate, Vehicles and Implements, p 7

https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1871&op=&img&id=4396298_00192

Schedule No. 4–Return of Cultivated Land, of Field Products and of Plants and Fruits, p 7

https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1871&op=&img&id=4396298_00201

Schedule No. 5–Live Stock, Animal Products, home-made Fabrics and Furs, p 6

https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1871&op=&img&id=4396298_00210

Schedule No. 6–Return of Industrial Establishments, p 3

https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1871&op=&img&id=4396298_00217

Schedule No. 7–Return of Products of the Forest, p 7

https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1871&op=&img&id=4396298_00221

Schedule No. 8–Return of Shipping and Fisheries, p 7

https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1871&op=&img&id=4396298_00230

Census of Canada 1911:

Schedule No. 1. Population by Name, Personal Description, Etc.

<https://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?app=Census1911&op=&img&id=e001988336>

Loss of Agricultural Census after 1871

Detailed information for years following 1871 is unavailable due to the original census forms having been destroyed by Statistics Canada before they were transferred to microfilm.¹

The Library and Archives of Canada website lists the following regarding the destroyed census data:

Census of 1881

- 8 Schedules, 172 questions.

Only Schedule 1 (20 questions) has been preserved

Census of 1891

- 9 Schedules with 216 questions.

Only Schedule 1 (25 questions) has been preserved

Census of 1901

- 11 Schedules with 561 questions.

Only Schedule 1 & 2 (71 questions) has been preserved

Census of 1911

- 11 Schedules with 549 questions.

Only Schedule 1 (39 questions) has been preserved

Census of 1921

- 5 Schedules with 565 questions.

Only Schedule 1 (35 questions) has been preserved

Currency Conversions

Currency conversions are presented in the footnotes of In Relation to History from original values to 2019 Canadian Dollar equivalents to show the inflation of land value. Such conversions are typically based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI) determined by an aggregated value of staple goods purchases then and now (e.g. Food, Clothing, Alcohol).

Canada's CPI is recorded back to 1914, and for those values encountered from then until now I have used the Bank of Canada Inflation Calculator.² For the 1861 farm value in Canadian dollars, I have used a US dollar inflation calculator,³ as the two currencies were roughly equal at the time.⁴ For historic values in British Pounds (GBP), I have used a British Currency Converter⁵ to convert to present day GBP, then converting to Canadian Dollars based on a general 2019 exchange rate of 1 GBP = 1.7 CAD.

1 Grant, Tavia and Eric Andrew-Gee. "What went wrong at Statscan? A history of secrecy, small-time thinking and statistics." *CBC*.

2 <https://www.bankofcanada.ca/rates/related/inflation-calculator/>

3 <https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/>

4 Powell, James. "The Canadian Dollar under the Gold Standard (1854-1914)." *A History of the Canadian Dollar*. p33.

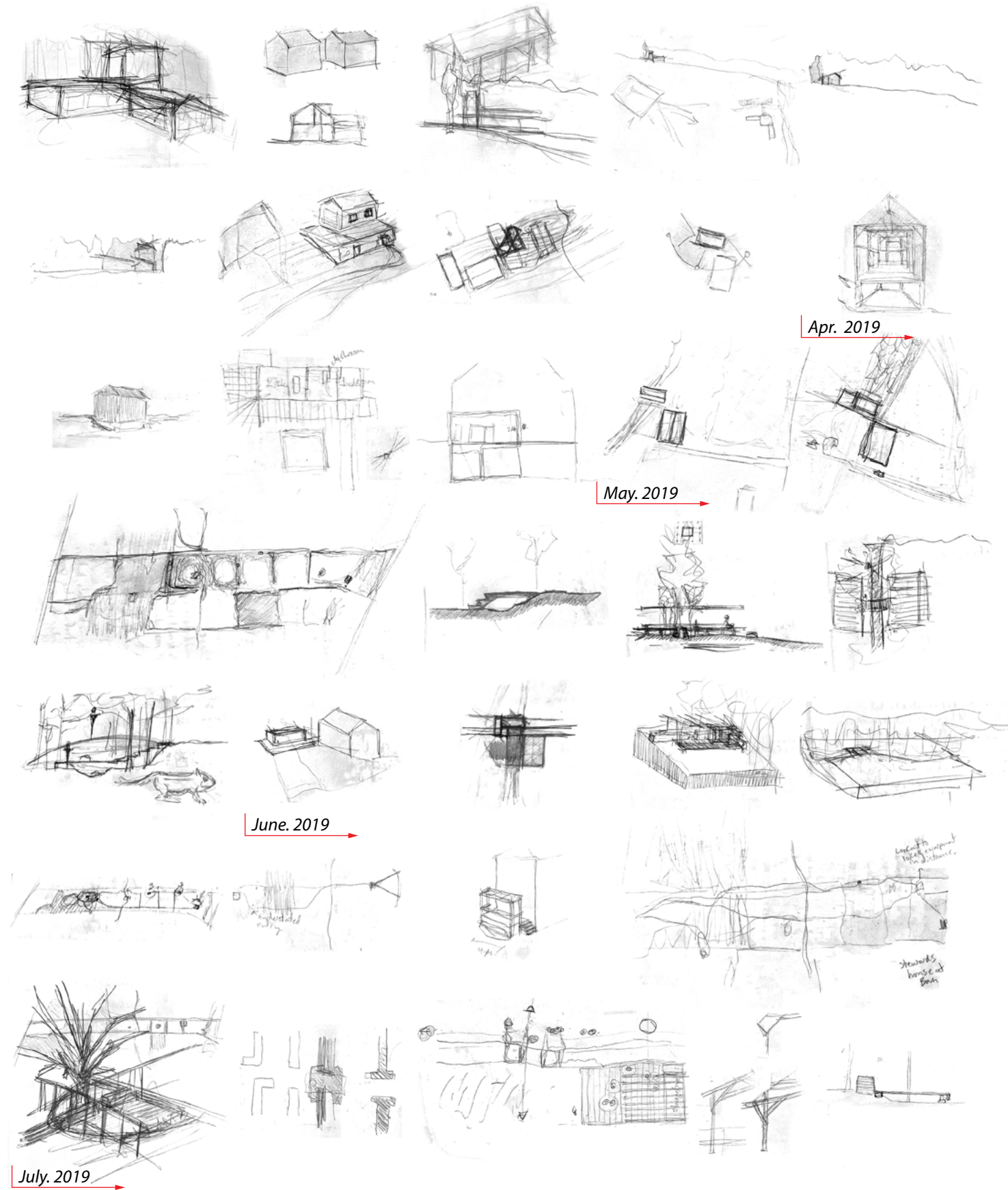
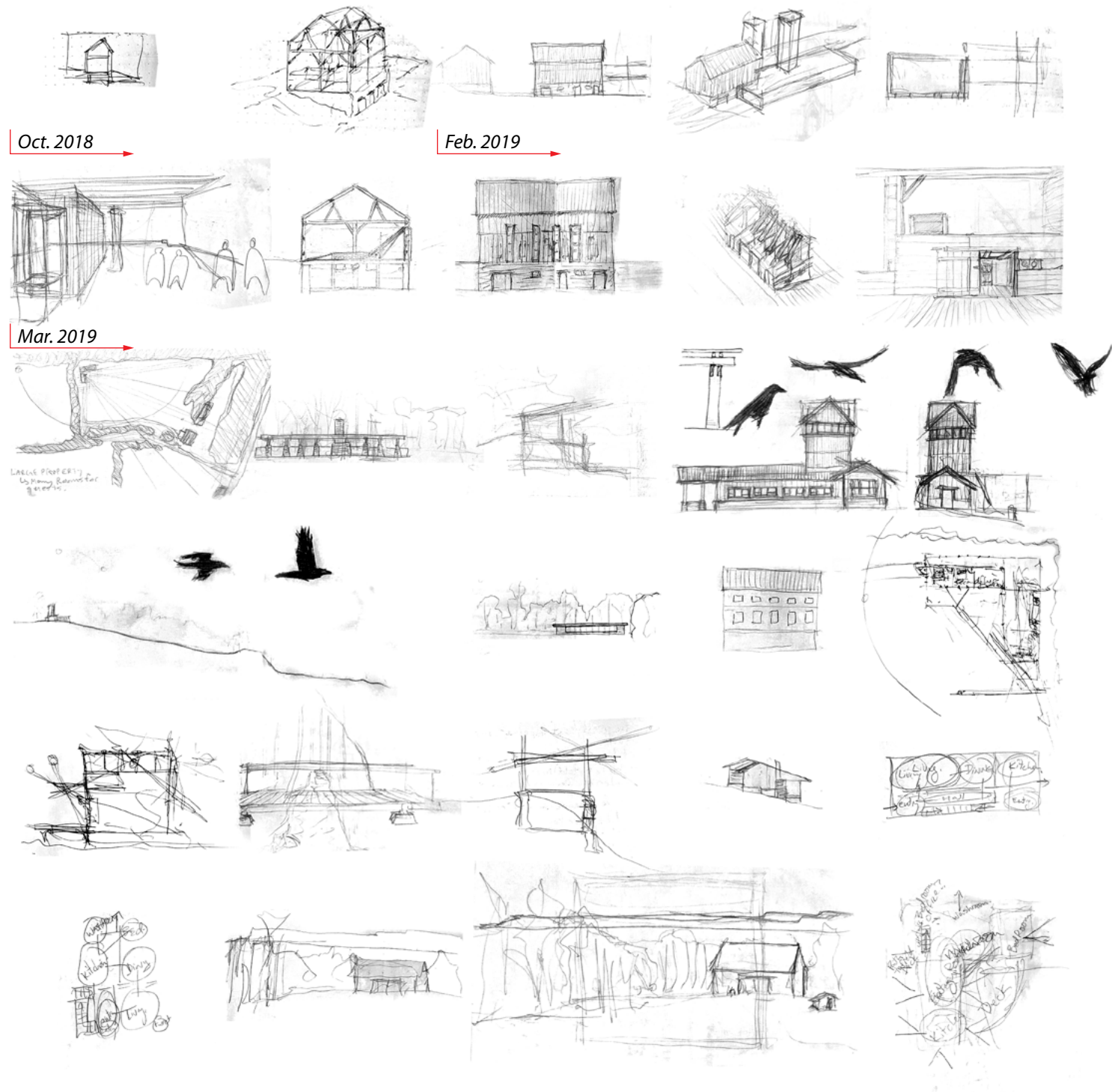
5 <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/>

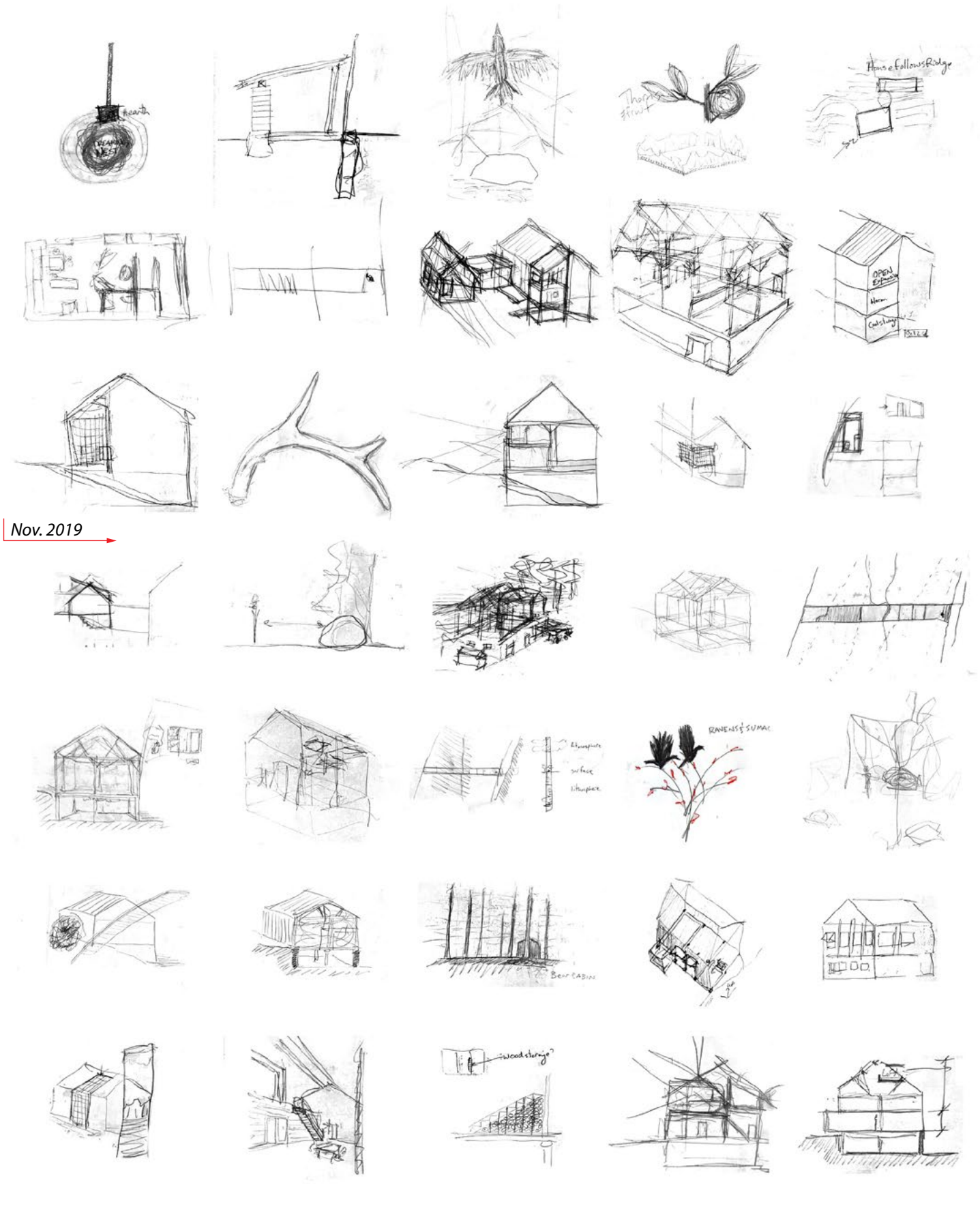
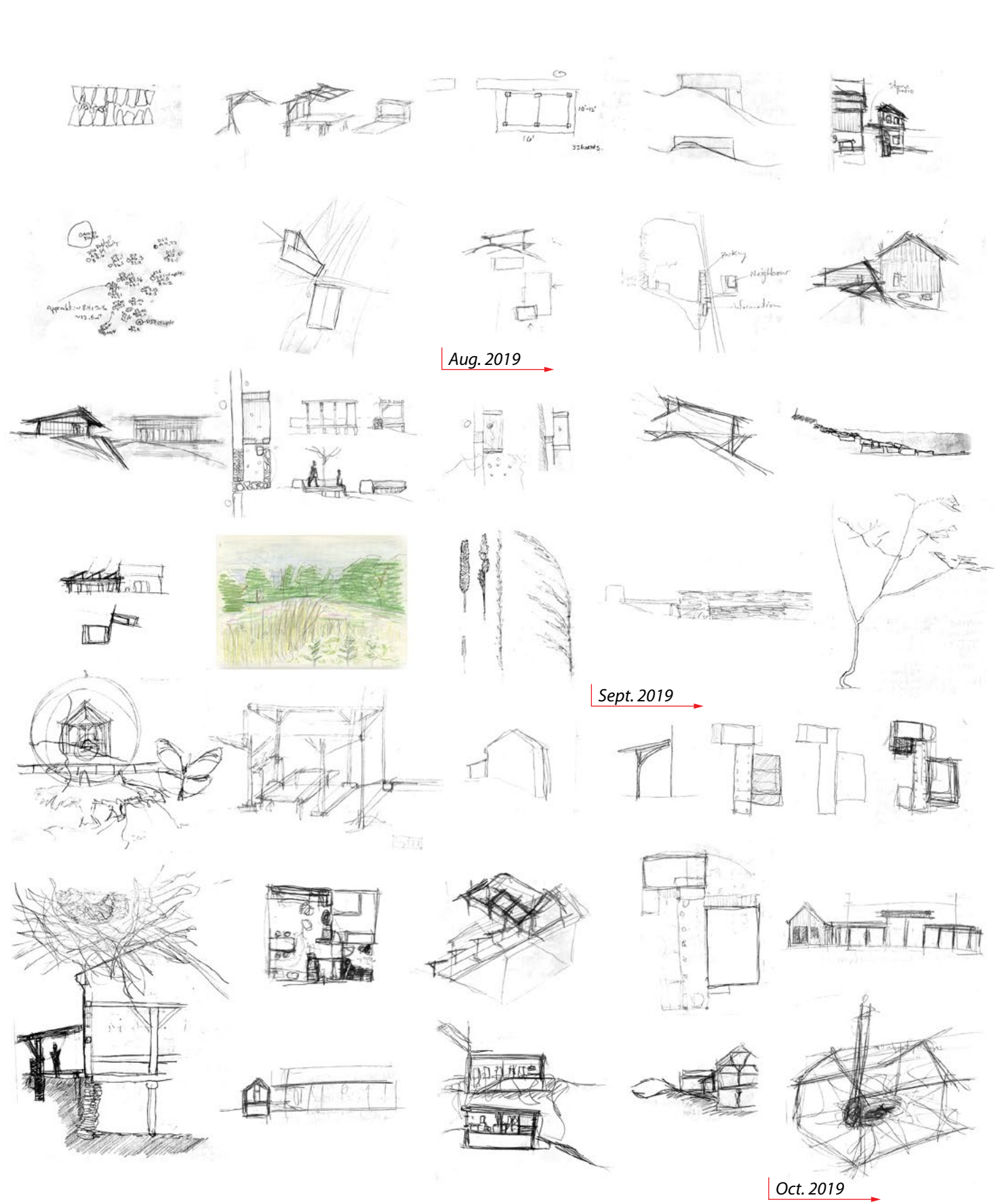
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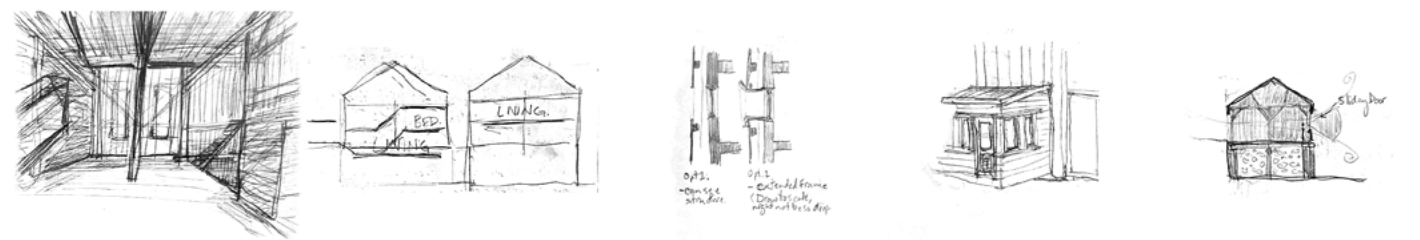
Iterations

Sequential notebook sketches from throughout the thesis.

Scale: ~1:3

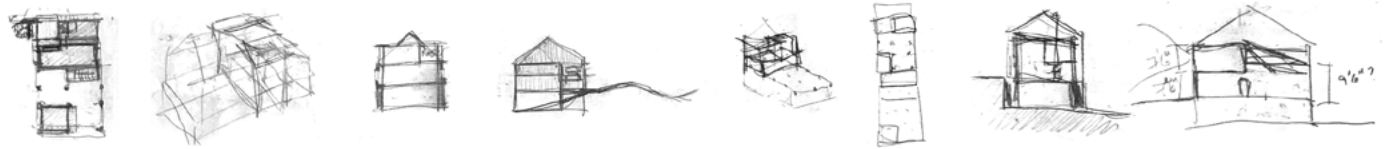




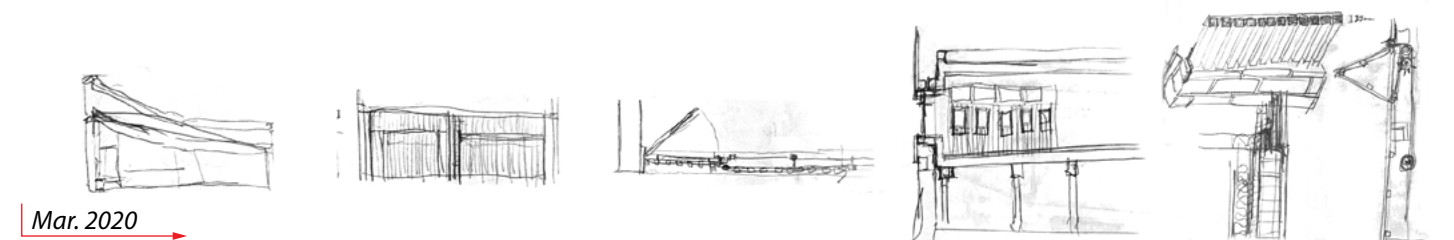
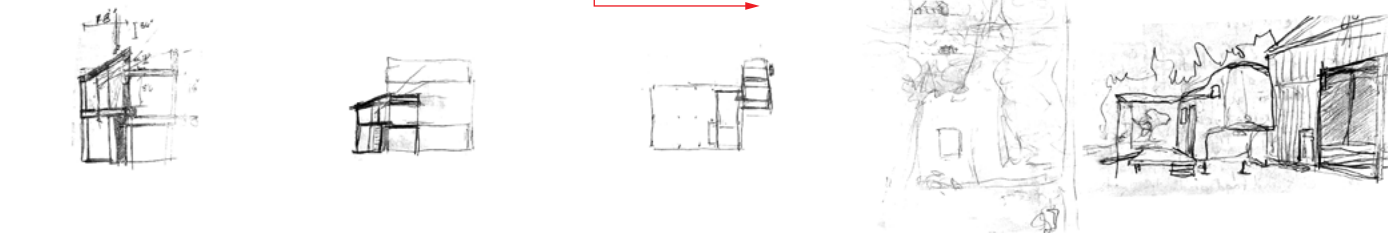


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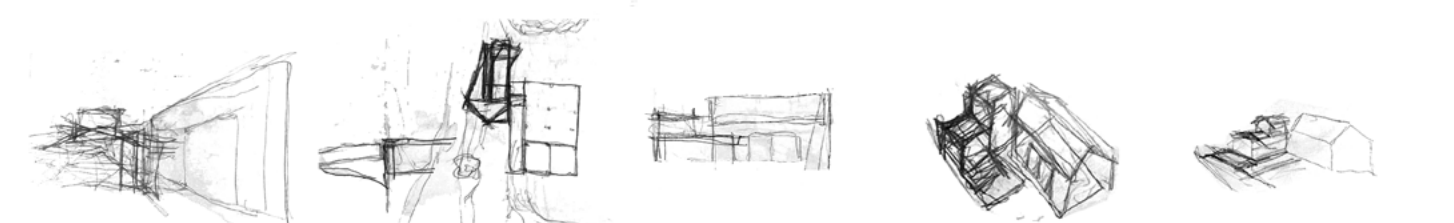
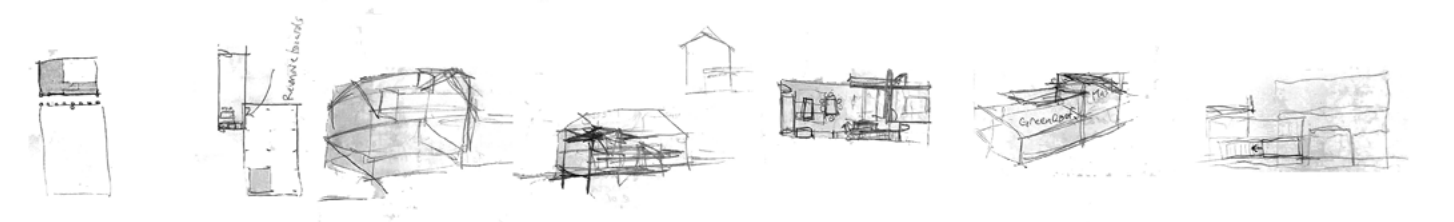
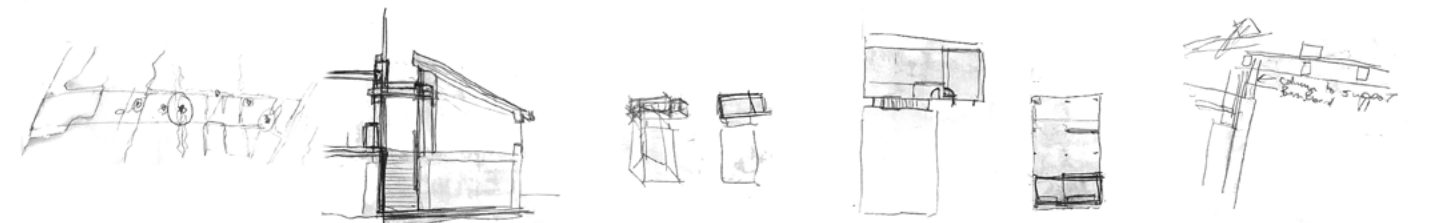
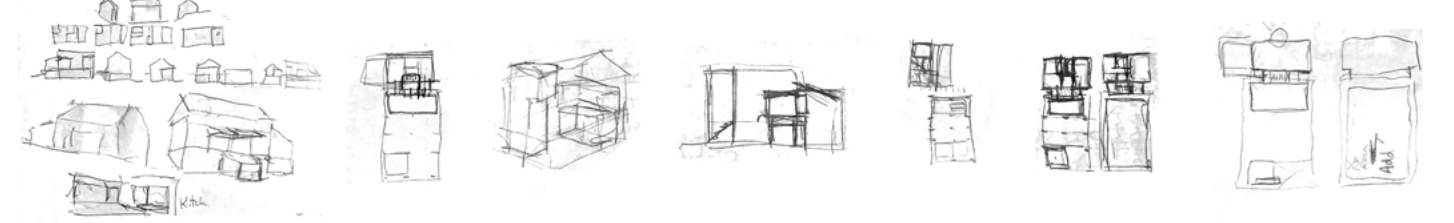
Jan. 2020 →



Feb. 2020 →



Mar. 2020 →



Apr. 2020 →



Appendix E:

Raven and Charybdis: The Quest Within The Question

At an early age, Raven knew how to fly.

Like all fledgling birds, Raven watched the other birds fly from his nest and, though he did not remember, dreamt of flying within his egg.

When the time came to leave the nest, Raven, like other young birds, was a bit scared, and so asked the Wind, "What are those birds doing?"

And the Wind replied, "They are flying."

Raven knew this, and felt better.

Still uncertain, Raven asked the Wind, "Why do birds fly?"

And the Wind replied, "Because birds enjoy it."

Raven knew this too, and felt better still.

Almost sure of himself, Raven asked "How do birds fly?"

And the Wind replied, "Jump and you will know."

Raven jumped out of the nest and he flew, and flew and flew.

Raven continued to fly until one day while flying he began to think, "I know this is flying, but what am I doing with my wings?". He continued to think, "I know I enjoy flying, but why do I enjoy it?" and he continued to think, "I know I flew when I jumped, but how did I know what to do?"

Suddenly Raven realized he was on the ground, not remembering how he got there. Looking up he saw the other birds flying overhead, but try as he might he couldn't get off the ground for he no longer knew what it meant to fly.

So Raven set out into the world to learn to fly again.

I remember 11 years ago, feeling a subtle but distinct shift. As if watching a pot boil and suddenly seeing a bubble where there was no bubble before. The shift was a feeling shared by many I have met, each in their own way. For myself there was a change of view, a feeling of clarity, and that which I had looked at every day suddenly looked different somehow, even if I couldn't quite put it into words. The shift I am talking about manifested externally towards the end of my first year in architecture school. I remember coming over to my studio desk maybe a week before the final project deadline and it felt like I was seeing my desk clearly for the first time. I could see the large stack of trace paper piled to the side, a bulging collection of pens and pencils filling a container, a stack of books and notebooks on my shelf, modeling supplies under my desk and tools filling my locker. For the most part it was reasonably organized, but it was the accumulation of things I didn't need that I could suddenly see so clearly, so much unquestioned stuff that I was sitting amongst as I worked. I spent that afternoon sorting through and getting rid of everything I didn't need or want and felt lighter because of it. Afterwards, the felt shift that precipitated the act remained.

I began to look at my life slightly differently, registering the felt shift in other aspects of my life. I remember looking at my closet at home, and seeing how many clothes I had, feeling the excess, and I decided I would cut down on what I kept with me going forward. I wondered why I wasn't a vegetarian, as that aligned with my ideals, and I decided that I would phase meat out of my diet by the end of the summer. I remember, after sitting with the feeling for a week wanting to end the relationship I was in, being unable to explain the felt shift and being unwilling to explore the subtle feeling with the other person. The feeling was subtle, and though not urgent, it couldn't be ignored

I spent that summer after my first year of architecture living at home, working the odd job, but mostly enjoying the luxury of my last summer off. I had started describing the feeling I had, the shift, as being 'aware' and I began to apply it everywhere in my perception of the world, creating games and experiments to explore the feeling. I would look at a car in front of me and start to say to myself everything that I could see. The car, the door, the handle, the yellow, the blue, the wheel, the tire, the metal, the rubber, the glass. I would look at the boards of a fence and wonder if the boards next to each other were from the same tree or even the same forest.

I became fascinated by the environment directly around me, spending the afternoon watching ants come and go from their anthill like I had as a young child. As I played with this sense of awareness, I remembered being at UofT, where I studied for a year before starting architecture school. One day I was walking down the sidewalk on campus and saw a classmate, whom I had talked to once or twice, standing still and looking up. I was curious what he was doing and I asked him. "I'm looking at this tree" he said, "It's amazing isn't it? I don't think we look at trees enough. They're always right there." It wasn't until I was watching the ants again that I understood what he was saying.

As I was experiencing the world anew, I also continued to read and expand my conceptual explorations from an early interest in the maths and sciences. Through high school the joy of clarity in mathematics merged with a fascination for the sciences into a personal exploration of the concepts of theoretical physics. Now two years later, as I was exploring my understanding of 'awareness', these interests began to meld into a blurred realm of science, philosophy and 'new age' spirituality. The latter being a realm I was introduced to at an early age through the personal stories and references of an aunt which were apart of my thinking growing up, and now pushing the boundaries of my explorations as comfortably into the supernatural, as the scientific.

I remember one evening towards the end of that summer talking with a cousin late into the night about this feeling of 'awareness' and ideas I was exploring. He was 20 years older than me and understand what I was saying and shared his own explorations with me, talking from his own points of interest and suggesting some references I might find valuable. In the end he warned me that the path that I was setting out on was like a razor's edge. It was about six more years before I would understand the reference.

When I returned to school for second year I brought a minimal amount of stuff with me, I had cut meat out of my diet and I felt energized with a new perspective on the world. With this renewed energy I set to work deconstructing my understanding of the world and myself.

After many years of studying aerodynamics, wind patterns, and even the molecules of the air, Raven was certain he was on the path to master flying. But try as he might, he just couldn't quite get off the ground. The most he could do was jump off a ledge, and glide down to the ground. It felt good to be in the air, but he was reliant on finding an edge to jump from, and there were only small hills nearby. Raven was not satisfied.

One day, Raven heard about a land on the other side of the sea, full of cliffs as high as the sky. Certain he could fly if only he found the highest cliff to jump from, Raven rented a boat, and set off to sea.

The sea was a dangerous place but Raven was a confident sailor and after many days he was nearing the end of his travels. As he approached the other shore, one last challenge lay ahead; the many headed Scylla and the spiraling Charybdis were blocking his way. Knowing the stories of past travelers, Raven felt confident he could make it past these two monsters, and as he approached them he began to plan out his strategy and think through all the maneuvers he would make.

As he watched the spiraling waters preparing to guide his boat along the flowing current his boat was suddenly pulled into the swirling Charybdis and torn to shreds.

At the end of my undergraduate degree, I only saw what was wrong with architecture. I knew the skills of architecture and had a fluency in the tools I used, including the language, but there was no value within architecture for me. I engaged in work with only a passion for the problems that I could answer, both formal and contextual. The latter of which was everything to me. That which architecture was not was its context, and exploring everything apart from architecture is where my focus had been the past four years. Deconstructing my understanding of the world revealed so many problems which I never had reason to confront in my life before. I was seeing the unsustainable rubber in every tire for the first time. After finishing school, I felt driven to come back for my Masters to have the time and space to bring together all that I had searched for outside of school, into an answer; an answer to everything, tethered to architecture.

Before coming back to start the masters I spent four months working in Toronto, and while there, continued to look for references across all manner of subjects that I found a resonance with, each providing more connections to my thinking. I spent those four months reading, thinking, writing notes, all adding to something I couldn't define, a network of ideas and references, largely about 'awareness' itself. Even if I couldn't summarize the idea I remember feeling very inspired and motivated with answers to a variety of problems, writing out their base structure in a philosophical logic, to try and show the patterns which they shared in a dynamic dualism; swinging one way, then the other, like a pendulum.

When I returned to school to start the Masters of Architecture degree, I was in a studio with a theme of thresholds and I framed my focus as "The threshold between one's self and one's environment". Though I didn't know the answer, or the question for that matter, I continued pulling references from everywhere to try and point to it. Nearing the middle of the term my thesis question had become "How can I best know myself?", and I argued that the architect should pursue self awareness to be a better architect. I was so inwardly forceful with this conviction, and so wrapped up in self-referencing ideas, like fractals and paradoxes and mirrors of mirrors, that any new idea was quickly pulled into spiraling, self-referencing thinking patterns and pulled apart until there was nothing left.

This continued for two months until one evening, experiencing what I would describe as an acute anxiety attack I got up from the couch feeling light headed and went into the washroom where I fainted, hitting my head on the bathroom sink and experienced a concussion that would take six months to recover from.

Disoriented and sore, Raven woke up on the shore of the land of cliffs. When he looked up at the cliffs, his wings ached. Exhausted, the only thing he could do was rest... and rest... and rest...

After many years living amongst the cliffs Raven felt recovered, and had even begun to think about flying again. But the cliffs here were so high, and any time Raven would walk up to the edge of one, he couldn't bring himself to jump, afraid that he might even forget how to glide.

One day Raven heard of a Wise Old Bird, who knew the secrets of flying and decided he would ask this bird to teach him to fly. This Wise Old Bird lived in a land near where Raven grew up and to reach him Raven would have to pass Charybdis and Scylla again. Confident but cautious, Raven tied a rope to himself and set sail.

Many times Raven tried to cross between Charybdis and Scylla to enter the open sea, and each time he had to pull himself back to shore.

Raven sat at the top of the seaside cliffs, and looked out to sea. There he could see spiraling Charybdis and wild Scylla, and beyond them he could just barely make out the distant shores he was trying to return to. He could see it all, but couldn't think of a way to get there.

After recovering from the acute conditions of my concussion I spent most of four years working in an heritage architecture office. Those four years required a self awareness which I had missed before: no longer could I ignore a meal, for I would get light headed and experience a feeling of anxiety; lifting heavy things would cause my neck muscles to constrict and give me a day long headache; thinking about the ideas of my thesis brought on a nausea of sorts. I could no longer ignore my body unless I wanted to trigger a memory of my collapse. I found no quick way to change the feeling, and only gradually over these four years did I learn to respect the physical aspect of myself and eventually release these triggered responses.

With an inherent desire for new ideas that did not go away, I continued over those four years to gradually search out new interests. When I came across a tangible architectural reference that I felt summarized my still latent thinking towards architecture, I felt a renewed vigor to come back to school and restart the Masters degree. I came back pointing to this one reference as the answer I had been seeking and, bringing my still growing library of references with me, I built my web of ideas around this one.

I literally built this web. My first assignment was to create a collage of thesis interests, and cutting and pasting together my printed notes from my first attempt at the Masters four years prior, I made a mat of words, quotes and ideas. The only images were book covers, and a web of lines criss-crossed the whole thing, trying to tie it together. I proceeded to walk forward into this veritable knot of references and ideas and remained tangled within for six months until I finally turned away and chose a tangible site to remain with, without knowing what I wanted.

The site was not the answer, but it provided me with a physical place to return to as I continued my conceptual exploration. Many times I considered abandoning the site for another one, but I knew the knot was still there. Other times I considered leaving architecture, but deeper down I felt that the other paths I was interested in would only lead to other knots.

One day, after spending six months with the site without feeling a clear direction, I was talking with my dad and suddenly felt inspired with a sense of what was missing in my approach to the design. We had talked about an idea that I had previously thought of without pursuing and I now realized I had been pursuing a design idea that was not mine. Back at my apartment, thinking about this shift and the new excitement I felt, I began to feel uncertain. I quickly became lost in a confusion of where my idea started and where my dad's ended; I couldn't hear my voice different from my dad's. I had struggled with this feeling regularly, over the past eleven years while deconstructing my ideas of my self and the world, and not just with my dad. My collage of references had become the voices I swallowed whole and used as my own. It was me pointing to one reference which pointed to the next, while I followed the knotted path criss-crossing everything, holding it all together.

The next day I was invited to take part in first year design reviews. I woke up that morning with a feeling of catharsis having written out my thoughts during the previous two days. I didn't have an answer, but I could see the pattern of my thinking and that was enough for me to not be lost in the feeling. I was excited to be part of the reviews, and I had a wonderful day discussing the students' designs. My intention during the reviews was always to bring an awareness to each student of the connection or disjunction between their design intentions and the work they were showing. All in the hope of allowing them to better show externally what they saw or felt inwardly; to better manifest their intentions in their actions.

And there it was. I was acting to support the unification of intention and action in others, while not approaching the unification in my self; expressing outwardly what I would not inwardly. The moment I was alone after the reviews were over, I felt the contradiction I was living expressed throughout architecture. This wasn't necessarily a new realization, but whereas before I might pursue the reasons for this, the truth I now realized was the reasons were not the answer.

I felt a shift then, subtle but clear. As if a bubble bursting, but not just the breaking of the surface, which was thinning the whole time, also the air inside, when the barrier is suddenly gone....

*Sitting alone atop the cliff with no answer to his troubles, Raven asked aloud, "How do I get back to where I can not go?"
And the Wind replied....*

