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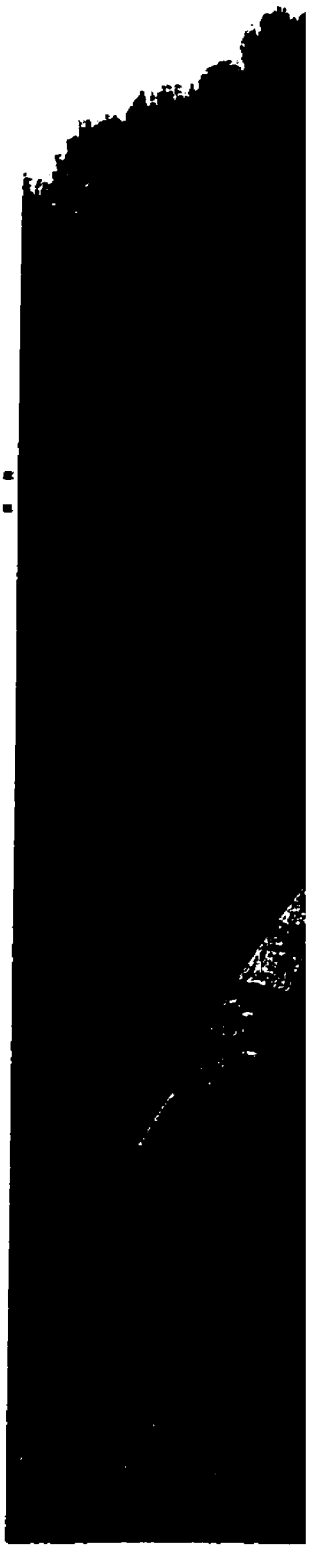
a hostel in the mountains:
contemporary construction in the canadian rockies



by
jeff howlett

october 1987

A Master's Degree Project
submitted to the
Programme of Architecture
Faculty of Environmental Design
The University of Calgary

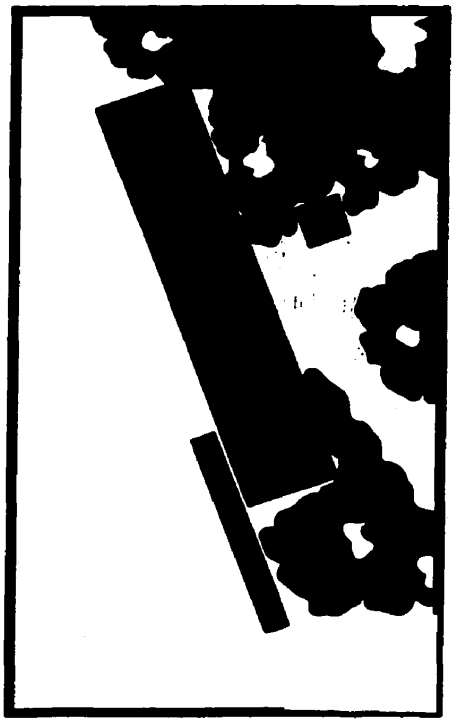
abstract

The intent of this Master's Degree Project is to further my design education in translating ideas and discussion into architectural expressions. The creation of successful form and space results from multi-dimensional design considerations. Embracing a sense of place and time, respecting local building traditions and cultures, challenging spatial organization and requirements, and synthesizing it all within a poetic idea is the challenge.

As we re-examine the human presence in our national parks, it is important to consider how the built environment can assist the appreciation and preservation of our natural surroundings. The programme, a hostel in the mountains, contributes architecturally and programmatically to Banff. The design exemplifies a conceptual architecture for the site while the programme adds additional desirable activities. I propose a new type of hostel including a substantial educational component that ties to adventure tourism.

The project is a conceptual design of a new form of hostel in the Canadian Rockies. Ideas are translated into architecture and are conveyed through drawings and model.

Adirondacks, Banff, Banff Park Pavilion, Canadian Rockies, Frank Lloyd Wright, Hostel, Scandinavian Architecture, Stav



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contents

introduction

"The past reappears because it is a hidden present." – Octavio Paz

Today, there is a movement to connect all cultures of the world electronically. Specific situations, local cultures and a sense of belonging to one place are lost in the shuffle of progress. Industrial and post industrial development has destroyed much of our cultural and ecological heritage as we move onwards into the future of homogeneity. However, architecture possesses the ability to produce objects of identification, orientation and recognition for a specific time and place. The re-emergence of a grounded architecture in the everyday events of its surroundings is the challenge of this Master's Degree Project. A general exploration through historical precedents,

site and programme to finding meaning culminates in an architectural expression of a hostel in the context of the contemporary Canadian Rockies.

Today, many architects strive to separate themselves from history in an attempt to seem fresh, innovative and contemporary. They sell themselves as originals even though the elements of their architectural vocabulary have been around for centuries. Architecture follows a continuum based on constant critique, reinvigoration, devaluation and extension of earlier prototypes and models. The relatively short building history in the Canadian Rockies led to a search of two other similar environments: Scandinavia and the Adirondacks. Additionally, these areas have been looked at in both a historical and twentieth-century context in an attempt to capture the everchanging nature of the vernacular.

Architecture and its site are always connected, whether it be in apparent opposition, as with Le Corbusier's *Villa Savoye* (Poissy, France 1929-31), or in harmony, such as Frank Lloyd Wright's *Fallingwater* (Bear Run, Pennsylvania, USA 1936). Wright's *Fallingwater* is tied to the land and cannot exist as a separate entity (figure 2). Similarly, the myth of the Rugged North in Canadian history unites us across our sparsely populated piece of real estate. Lacking a critical mass of citizens to be known for its people, and without a common skin colour, religion or language, Canada is known for its scenery. We have idealized and valourized our natural environs in an attempt to create a uniquely Canadian identity. As we learn when the CBC television signs off at night with our national anthem and accompanying images, we are a country made up of quaint Newfoundland fishing villages, lonely pines clinging to the rock of the Canadian Shield, a

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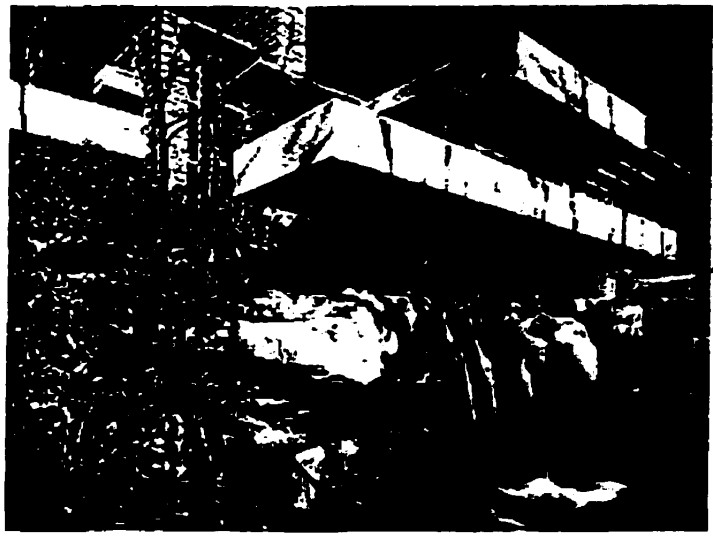

sea of flowing prairie wheat and snow covered mountains overlooking the Pacific Ocean.[1] Although these regions have pronounced differences, their ties to the land unite them and conversely, unite us. Architecture attempting to portray an aspect of the Canadian psyche should have a close relationship to its site.

More often than not, space allocation is left up to the client even though it is the use of the building that gives it life. Trained in spatial design and organization, it is up to the architect to push and challenge the programme in an effort to create invigorating space. The final design of the hostel reflects the desire to create a place that engages the visitor within a programme-, time-, and site-specific resolution.

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[1] Rick Andrighetti, "Facing the Land: Landscape Design in Canada," *Canadian Architect.* 39 no. 8 (August 1994): 13.

historical

A symbiotic relationship between a society's culture and its built environment is necessary in the creation of meaningful architecture. More often than not, references to culture are synonymous with history. In Canada, we grow up unaware of history since it is not a constant presence in our lives. Our cities are not a woven fabric created by centuries of settlement but rather by generations. Layers of time do not surround us in built form as it would in Europe or Asia. We take history classes and grow up with the knowledge that some things around us are older than other things, but history seems to happen someplace else. Consequently, in Western Canada the idea of a built environment transformed is relatively new.

We have often looked to other cultural influences to find our own but, unfortunately, we have looked to places far removed from the harsh realities

of the Canadian landscape. The structures of the sun-filled landscapes of the Mediterranean and the weathered, rolling hills of southern Europe do not adequately transfer over to our own rugged environment. We cannot all make single pane windows joined by mere caulking or fluid transparencies between indoor and outdoor. We live in a harsh environment that needs strong architecture to protect us from the elements (figure 1). Instead, we should look to other countries similar to us in culture and place, spanning the northern hemisphere of the world. Examining the styles of a region does not necessarily promote the idea of fixed styles for regions and typologies, but rather is a look at the truth of construction and site specificity. Familiarity between the building styles of various regions and our country has less to due with mimicry for aesthetic reasons and more to do with finding common solutions to coping with a cold, snowy climate.[1]

As in the case of human memory, site memory can be both a weakness and strength. Memories of site and moments past are reassuring in their familiarity yet problems arise when one becomes stuck in the past. In terms of buildings, one may become trapped in fantastical kitsch suitable for Disneyland. Passage of time and changed social values must also be considered.

However, the past and especially vernacular architecture leads to a return to the base ideas of architecture. Nothing is really new and it is up to architecture to respect the continuum between past and present. Architects position themselves as groundbreaking, avant-garde artists as a marketing device, whereas reality shows that tectonics is part of the tradition of building. In order to

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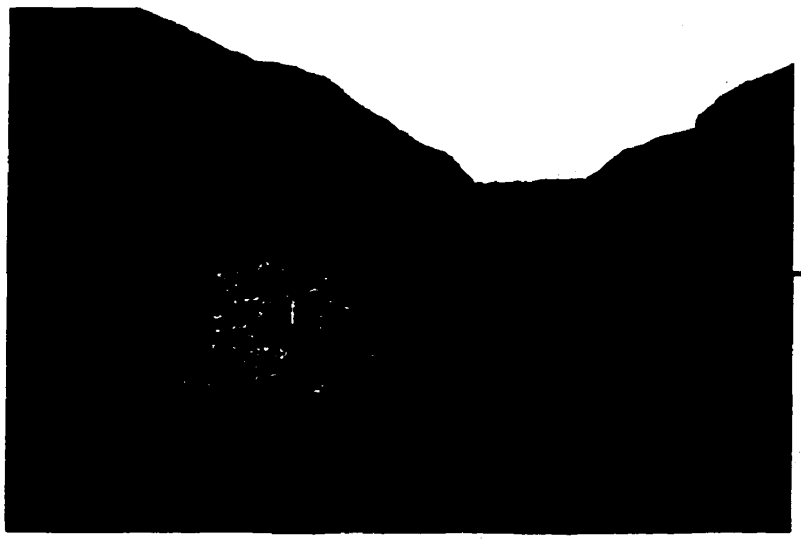

[1] Lionel Atwill, "Roughing it in Style," *Architectural Digest*. 43 no. 6 (June 1986): 58.

challenge the past one must know it thoroughly. How buildings typically touch ground or how windows sit should be understood before they are done poetically. We transform tectonics and construction and do not need to invent something new. Tectonics has to mediate between productive means of building and craft and technique of an individual.

Canada is a diverse country consisting of diverse peoples. Over time, Canadians have become adept at absorbing and simplifying prototypes from abroad and modifying them into our own, more restrained, version.[2] A look at our dinner tables shows a culture whose own tastes lean towards a diversity of foods from varying sources. We have often looked to other cultural influences to find sources for our buildings. Similar environments and our neighbours provide typologies that we twist and bend into our own language. In the case of the Canadian Rockies, a search for suitable building traditions takes us to Scandinavia, the Adirondack Mountains and our own mountain building tradition. We embrace tradition because it gives a feeling of comfort through familiarity. Building traditions provide objects of identification, orientation and recognition.

[2] Harold Kalman, *A History of Canadian Architecture, Volume 2.* (Toronto: Oxford UP), 869.

scandinavia

Placed on the outer fringe of the world and next to a somewhat overbearing neighbour, Scandinavia has numerous affinities to Canada (figure 1). Not only are we home to many migrated Scandinavians but some Canadian artists have turned to the Nordic region before for inspiration in the arts. Realizing our land was not the harmonious countryside of Britain or Southern Europe, artists naturally looked to an area comparable to our own. The Group of Seven and other painters turned to Scandinavia when searching for a means to depict our rugged north. In a like manner, our lack of a substantial building tradition often sends us in search of precedents from other countries. Comparable climate, geography and social values make Scandinavia a logical departure in the search of a Canadian identity in building.

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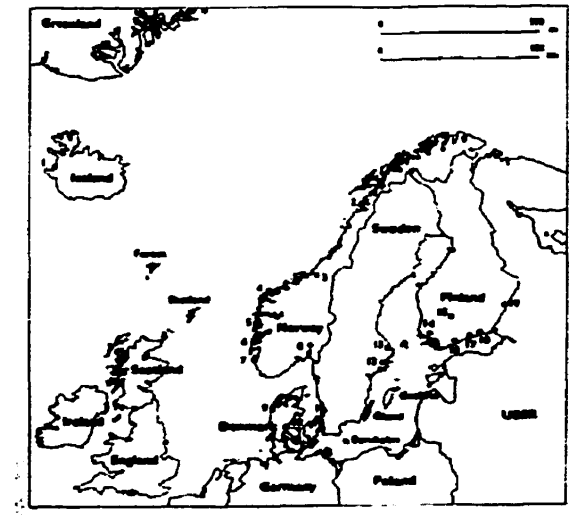

Norway has a varied landscape not unlike Canada. The land is marked with peaks that appear to simultaneously soar upwards and crash down, potmarked with pinnacles, crevasses and barren scree slopes. The mountains are an extension of the earth aspiring to join the sky. They seem to bring the sky closer and with it ever-changing weather – haze, rain, snow, clouds, light. We are left with a world of eternal motion that, surprisingly, remains the same.[1] In the midst of all this lies valleys and within it settlement. More often than not, the city or village represents culture, conflict, decadence and the dominance of humans whereas nature represents innocence and harmony. Living on the edge of a harsh natural environment that accepts only those who know how to cope with the extremes and understand the potential of materials, results in an architecture of gritty integrity forms.[2] The structures are a response to climatic concerns combined with exploring the potential of locally found materials (figure 2).

The act of building used to be a highly personal one involving humans, tools and materials. Wood's versatility makes it the most practical of building materials. We all feel that in one way or another that we can cut it, bend it, shape it.[3] Combined with the ease that it may be worked are high structural strength, insulating and acoustical qualities, variety of textures and colours and numerous ways to treat its surface. Wood is also rich with symbolism – the Tree of Knowledge, the Tree of Life, the Tree of History and so on.[4] Practicality and significance are joined in wood an authenticity and substantiality not found in other materials. Proper

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[1] Christian Norberg-Schulz, *Nightlands: Nordic Building*. Translated by Thomas McQuillan. (Toronto: Oxford UP, 1986), 35.
[2] Davey 4-5.
[3] Davey 4.
[4] Pallasmaa 22.

knowledge of construction techniques is crucial and thus the building type is the realm of the building artist.[5]

The use of wood in traditional Norwegian construction falls under two main categories: laft and stave.[6] Laft construction involves laying logs horizontally on top of one another, dove-tailing them where they cross corners (figure 3). An airtight seal was achieved between the logs by laying moss, or, in the finest houses, cloth, between the horizontal logs. Ideally, the houses would be left unfinished for a year or more to allow for settling. Because timber warps and shrinks, craftspeople have to plan for this. As a result, any materials that would have differential settling from the horizontal logs, such as vertical members or openings like window or door frames, have to be grooved to allow the members to slide past one another.[7] Once one learns how to deal with these issues, the construction of laft buildings may become a matter of routine. Stave construction involves ranging logs vertically side by side and holding them rigid by beams at the top and bottom. The resulting form is a skeletal system where the bearing elements are the vertical staves or masts, thus emphasizing verticality and its greater potential openness.[8]

Norway offers a glimpse of what Canadian building tradition may have been. People of a northern latitude, somewhat isolated from the rest of the world in their rugged landscape, the building culture of the Norwegians shows a dialogue with nature. The ties to the surroundings are stronger than merely using locally found materials or, as later is the point, in the creation and sustainment of mythology.

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[5] Helge Abrahamsen, *Building in Norway*. (Oslo: The Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Office of Cultural Relations, 1959) 17-18.
[6] Abrahamsen, *Building in Norway*, 17.
[7] Guthorm Kavli, *Norwegian Architecture Past and Present*. (London: B.T. Batsford, 1958), 23.
[8] Norberg-Schulz, *Nightlands*, 65.

Heavy roofs and massive walls with spartan openings typify the vernacular. The structures sit as objects in the landscape, similar to a boulder that rolled into the valley or as a natural outgrowth from the rock.

As is common with western architectural heritage, it is more often than not the religious edifices that survive to demonstrate the style of a time and its people. In Norway, wooden stave churches constitute the country's most innovative and elegant architectural contribution. During the Middle Ages, stave churches numbered around one thousand, whereas now roughly thirty are still standing.[9] The stave church stands as a monument to the ingenuity of a people to create a work of beauty out of a common material to glorify their gods.

4

A boldness and sense of vitality are the first impressions of the towering structures. Roof rising upon roof moves the eye upward until culminating on the spire (figure 4). The effect is emphasized by breaking the vertical movement with horizontal eaves and ridges to give the eye a pause on its journey to the sky. Life and energy are given to the facade through the treatment of sculptures and reliefs. Moldings lined with black, roof projections and the open gallery at the base create an interplay of light and shade.[10] Consequently, the eye is left to wander over the differing textures of the exterior and forgets that it is created out off one of the most common building elements around.

The plan of the stave church is fairly simple in comparison to the complexity of its construction (figure 6). Typically square but with many variants, the church is symmetrical around an west-east axis leading from the entry, through the nave to a short chancel. The plan is generated from the construction

[9] Norberg-Schulz, *Nightlands*, 83.
[10] Abrahamsen, *Building in Norway*, 9.

of the base and moves upwards. Four ground sills, two lengthwise and two crosswise, rest on a bed of stones and cross with their ends projecting outwards from the points of intersection. On top of the points of intersection sit freestanding, roof-bearing columns that are joined at the top with horizontal plates (figure 7). A lace collaring of intersecting diagonals, called 'Saint Andrew's crosses', stiffens the columns to provide lateral support and offers the only break in the verticality. Garnished with minimal carvings, it is the repeated crossing pattern that stands out the most as ornament. Exterior walls are formed at the extreme end of the ground sills and create lean-to roofs attached to the central volume.[11] The resulting effect is of lines rushing to the ceiling over rich carvings until they converge high up in the ridge, thus causing the apparent heaviness of the exterior to be belied by the loftiness of the interior (figure 5).

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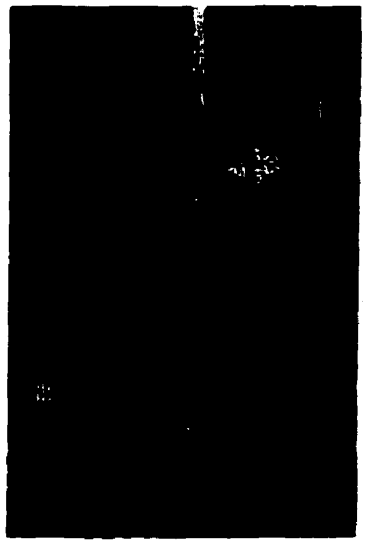
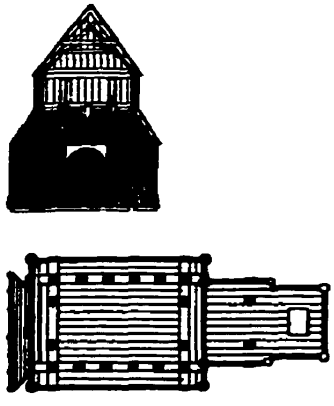
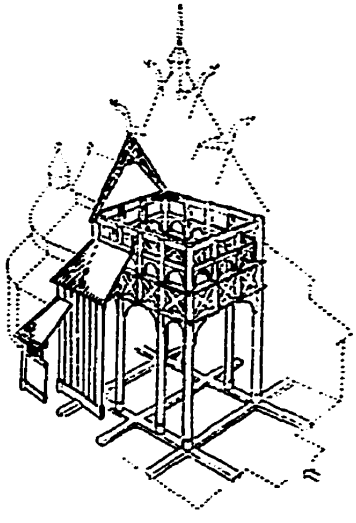


A counterpoint to the richness spent on a religious edifice is the noble beauty and primitive simplicity of everyday buildings. Economy and practicality are the main concerns as peasants work their surrounding materials to create structures that seem proportioned and of the land. The most important building of the farmstead was a small, two-storey dwelling known as a loft. The house was constructed of a mixture of laft- and stave-work with lafting occupying the majority of the structure.[12]





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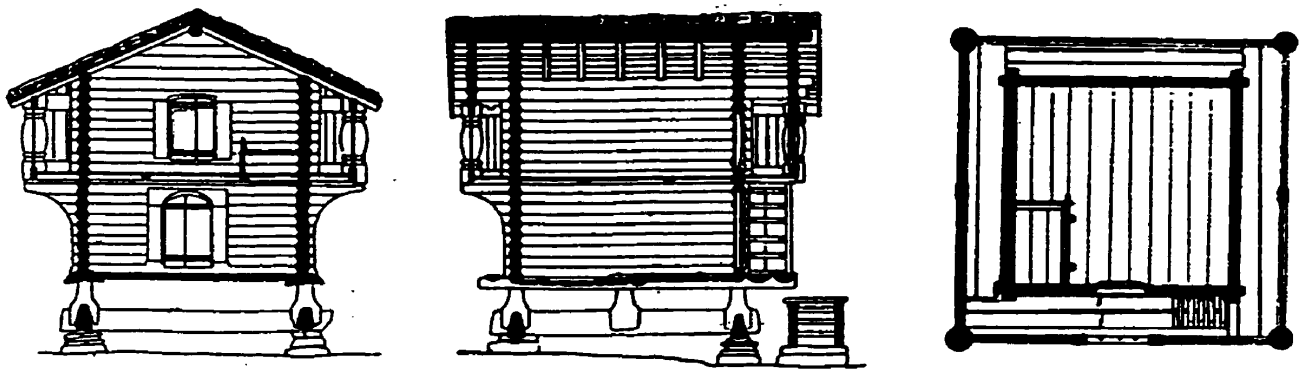
The loft is a square structure resting on a stone foundation or footings. One room on each floor with a lightly constructed balcony running around the exterior makes up the structure. Stores were kept

[11] Marian C. Donnelly, *Architecture in the Scandinavian Countries*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 34.
[12] Kavli, *Norwegian Architecture Past and Present*, 23-24.



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in the ground floor while a bedroom for guests occupied the second. A staircase outside the walls of the ground floor connected the two levels.[13] The ground floor is built in typical laft fashion with a log frame resting on top of it. Upright poles, or staves, are located at the corners of the frame and carry the load of the roof. Vertical planks fill in the gaps of the frame and may have holes or openings let into it (figure 8). The resulting structure corresponds to the ground sills of the stave church.[14]

The resulting effect was of a heavy building dwarfing a smaller base. The balcony enabled the lower level to be shrouded in shadow and thus made the building appear to float. The effect is aided by the horizontal laying of the logs of the lower level contrasting with the vertical planks above. The heaviness of the construction is thus negated and you are left with the impression of a compact building that belongs alone in the landscape.

Scandinavia's building tradition demonstrates a balance between the pragmatic and imaginative, the technical and spatial. For example, the buildings engage the ground in a manner that not only satisfies building science requirements, but also celebrates the connection between the two (figure 9).

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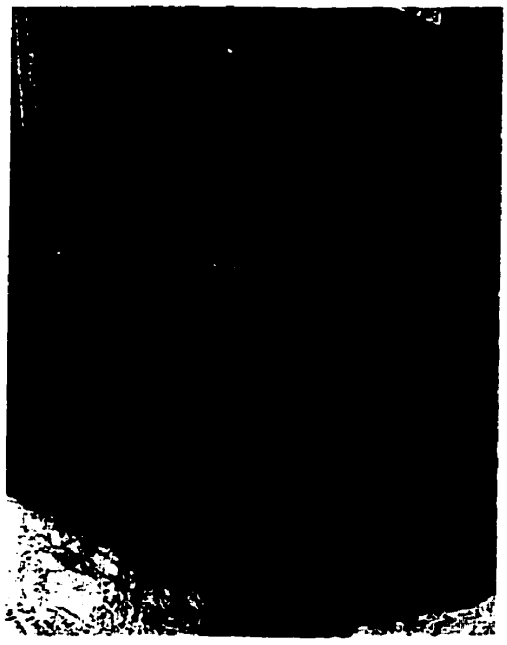

[13] Hans Jürgen Hansen, *Architecture in Wood.* Translated by Janet Seligman. (London: Faber & Faber, 1971), 44.
[14] Kavli, *Norwegian Architecture Past and Present*, 24.

Material and form change articulates the connection, commonly by this stepping the underside of the building back then resting it on giant stone knuckles. Consequently, the stone appears to rise from the earth whereas the rest of the building appears placed on top. Additionally, the post and beam structures are an expressive architectural feature arising out of their engineering simplicity and elegance. The frame allows the walls to act independently and take on a life of their own while the structure exemplifies its own grace.

Norwegian wooden building tradition today is not neatly divided into categories but is still bound to combination of stave and log construction. Together they provide rich possibilities for a varied architectonic expression, suited to diverse programs, given environments and temporal concerns.[15]

[15] Norberg-Schulz, *Nightlands*, 67.

adirondacks

"These camps are never really completed, for one of the fascinating features of the camp is that it is bound by no rules of time and architecture. It expands and blossoms with the passing seasons." - Seneca Ray Stoddard

Escaping into the woods and leaving congested urban centres is ingrained within the Canadian psyche. Log cabins are no longer seen as merely habitation but as places of relaxation. Nonetheless, we have not always looked to nature as a place of spiritual renewal or for its picturesque rugged scenery. Ideas of escaping our built environs first became prominent in the Adirondacks in the United States (figure 1).

The rise of in popularity of the Adirondacks

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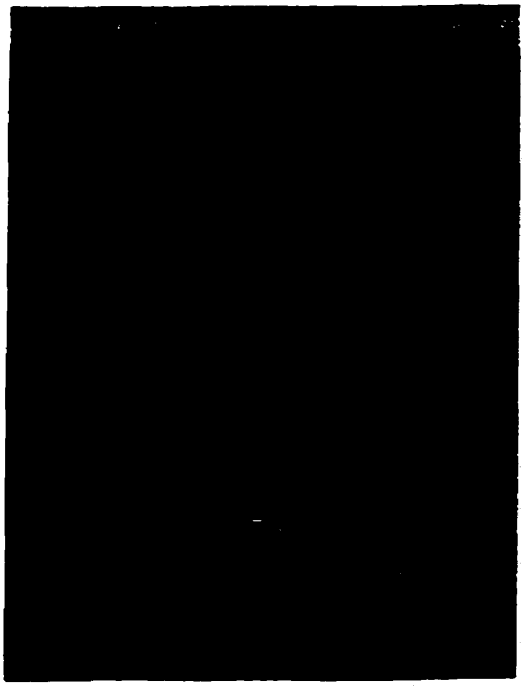

typifies the changing attitudes of North Americans during the period between the American Civil War (1861-1865) and the Depression. Industrialists, financiers, railway magnates and others amassed incredible amounts of wealth and, turning their backs temporarily on the urban environment that brought them their riches, they headed to the woods for a healthy escape from the rigors of the city.[1]

A return to the woods arose out of nationalistic sentiments and a changing notion of nature brought about by the Industrial Revolution. The American Civil War and the severed ties from Europe that it brought planted the seed for a personal identity for the former colony. The pioneering spirit that separated America from its colonizers was glorified and along with it coonskin hats and wooden cabins. Consequently, log construction was simultaneously embraced by the rich and famous for recreational retreats while maintaining its traditional place as a vernacular building type in the frontier fringes.[2]

Concurrently, Western society created a backlash to the Industrial Revolution through the Romantic style. In England, the writings of John Ruskin advocated a return to historical, pre-industrial references and a move to native building materials.[3] Prior to the writings of the Romantics, rustic implied derogatory connotations of unsophisticated, crudity and mediocrity.[4] Humans were in a constant battle with nature in an attempt to subjugate wilderness for our own purposes. The Industrial Revolution relaxed the pressure of providing from the land and created a new relationship with it.

Writings of Walt Whitman, Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, H.H. Murray and John Muir hint at the romanticized vision of a

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[1] Harvey H. Kaiser, *Great Camps of the Adirondacks.* (Boston: Godine, 1982), 1.
[2] Edward Mills, *Rustic Building Programs.* (Ottawa: National Historic Sites Directorate, Parks Canada, August 1994), 18.
[3] Mills, *Rustic Building Programs*, 17.
[4] Mills, *Rustic Building Programs*, 16.

wilderness growing less wild each day.[5] Recreation possibilities and the value of undisturbed wilderness swept across North America with the works of these writers. Trying to emulate the heightened spiritual awareness Thoreau gained on Walden Pond, the upper class searched for their own escape from the city.

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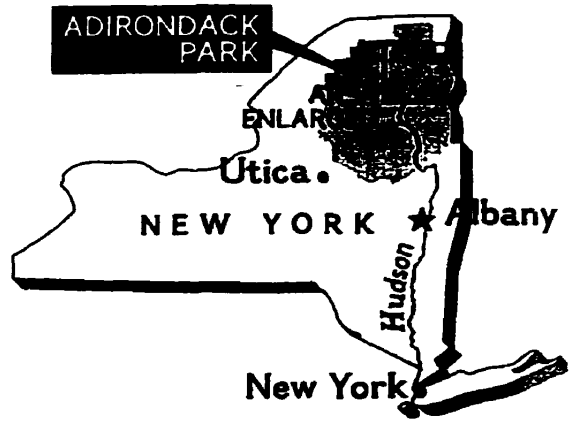
The changing attitudes of the people manifested in an area of northern New York State known as the Adirondacks (figures 4 and 5). Travel convenience for a large urban population and its untouched wilderness made the area attractive for development. The beauty, healthy atmosphere and dependable hunting and fishing made the area popular as a summer retreat in the month of August with occasional use in the spring for fishing and the fall for hunting.[6]



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Affluent families headed for the woods in the 1870s to shelters consisting of tent platforms. As the area grew in popularity and use, the structures became more permanent. Early shelters were built with logs felled while clearing the land.[7] Eventually, these humble retreats became more sophisticated and evolved into the camp lodges we know today. As time progressed, the camps remained primitive in name only as they contained all the modern conveniences of estates in the city. They sat as symbols of conspicuous consumption for their patrons as one wondered how such luxurious accommodations came to be in such remote settings. They were displayed in a similar manner to paintings or sculptures, with the patrons inviting guests to their retreats to see a glimpse of how well they live. Eventually, this idea turned the camps into a combination of retreat and hotel. Guests helped alleviate costs while also helped

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[5] Mills, *Rustic Building Programs*, 21.
[6] Kaiser, *Great Camps of the Adirondacks*, 2.
[7] Kaiser, *Great Camps of the Adirondacks*, 10.

6

strengthen the image of the retreat for the upper class in the wilderness. Ironically, the camps evolved into a series of contradictions: roughing it in the bush with a full compliment of servants, a vernacular style done very expensively. All in the name of the creation of the myth of the serenity and challenge of the outdoors, the term "camp" was kept despite now being removed from its original connotations.

Widely seen as the originator of the regional design was William West Durant (1850 - 1934). The son of a railway magnate, Durant took control of the family holdings in the Adirondacks and created a popular tourist destination (figure 3). His first attempt at creating a retreat occurred in 1879 among the giant white pines on Long Point peninsula at Raquette Lake.[8] Camp Pine Knot developed into a series of small structures that created a self-sufficient community. Characteristic of the camps is a central lodge serving as a dining and entertainment centre with sleeping quarters and support services adjacent. As services and space became necessary, new structures were built on the site. In the end, the site became covered in a complex set of buildings sited as a result of views and programmatic relations to one another.

The prominent details of the buildings arose out of concerns of building science. The remote sites made locally found materials logical for construction. The weather of the region, combined with the properties of the materials, dictated how these pieces were assembled. Timber was abundant and was already chopped down to clear the site. Its ease of use made it the prominent material. However, it was necessary to separate it from ground dampness so stone foundations were used to carry the beams. Wide overhangs channeled snow and spring rains away from foundations and walls and thus prevent their damage

[8] Kaiser, *Great Camps of the Adirondacks*, 77.

from water penetration[9]. The roof also had a shallow pitch to accommodate snow for insulation. Purely decorative elements were usually made of gnarled, curved and twisted logs for use in banisters and porch gables.

The abundance of differing trees in the area led to certain woods being exploited for given qualities. Hardwoods were considered too heavy for the structure, lighter spruce, pine, hemlock, tamarack and balsam were preferred. Spruce was also used for roof boards, ceilings, walls and paneling. Stairs and floors were made of birch, beech, maple or fir and other woods were also used for walls and paneling.[10] The woods each had a unique natural colour and grain and thus were used for decorative elements as much for design intent as for availability (figure 6).

The unhidden materials and roughness resulting from the use of unmilled timbers aided in creating the myth of the wilderness retreat. Even though the luxuries of the city were contained within these structures, the native materials were in contrast with those experienced in urbanity and thus enough to create a differing experience in the visitor. The camps of the Adirondacks demonstrated that one could get away from it all, but do it in style. The resulting architecture enhanced this feeling as a rustic vernacular developed to aid in romanticizing our ties to the land.

The Adirondack camps show the power in using fundamental shapes and forms in massing. The square and rectangular plans lend themselves to strong formal axes and view corridors extending into

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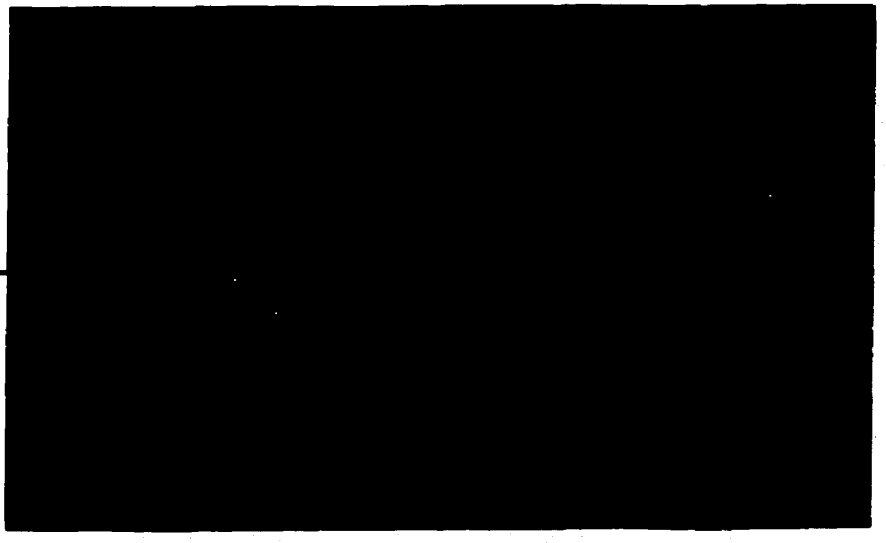

[9] Kaiser, *Great Camps of the Adirondacks*, 11.
[10] Kaiser, *Great Camps of the Adirondacks*, 66.

the land. The buildings become part of the site even though their forms may initially appear foreign. Additionally, the spans demanded by the large entertainment and gathering spaces show that wood can cover significant distances. Therefore space is freed up from structural roles and the buildings can become more open and light.

canadian rockies

"Since we can't export the scenery, we shall have to import the tourists." - CPR's William Cornelius Van Horne

The tale of building in the Canadian Rockies takes two paths: one of a tradition rich in vernacular history; and another, more circumstitious route, to a definition of Canadian. A country known more for its natural features than its human population, Canada has struggled to grow up fast and is continually worried by outward appearances (figure 1). Consequently, the simplicity of a culture tied closely to the land is overlooked for the richness of a more elaborate Western architectural heritage. The struggle between these two influences are seen in our popular tourist destinations as we attempt to uniquely define ourselves yet be acceptable to the rest of the world.

1

2

Banff is synonymous with Canada in the minds of many travellers. Located in the heart of Canada's first national park, founded in 1885, Banff townsite sprouted up as a railway depot in the Bow Valley adjacent to the Cave and Basin springs in the fall of 1886. Developed for tourist reasons, the park searched for an architectural identity linking its picturesque landscapes with its tourism aspirations (figure 2). The resulting architectural typology is referred to in various ways: the Rocky Mountain Style, Rustic Style, and the Parks Style (figure 3). The renaissance of the "Parks Style" spans from the establishment of the park until the 1930s, which saw the end of the its architectural program. Development in the parks mirrors our nation's quest to create an identity, rather than be known for its landscape.

Unbeknown to today's visitors, rustic themes for tourist facilities were innovative in the 1880s and shrewdly capitalized on the burgeoning public interest in the North American wilderness and the mythologies attached to it.[1] The government maintained strict control over development in the park through a series of organizations spanning the time period. At first, all operational matters fell under the responsibility of the Park Superintendent. The park rapidly expanded and 1911 saw the establishment of the National Parks Branch and ten years later an internal design unit within the Commission. By the beginning of the thirties, a clear set of design guidelines were in place for what was the most prolific building period of the parks. The Depression brought about relief building programs to employ the thousands of unemployed people. Relief funding was eventually abandoned in 1936 and along with it the internal architecture design

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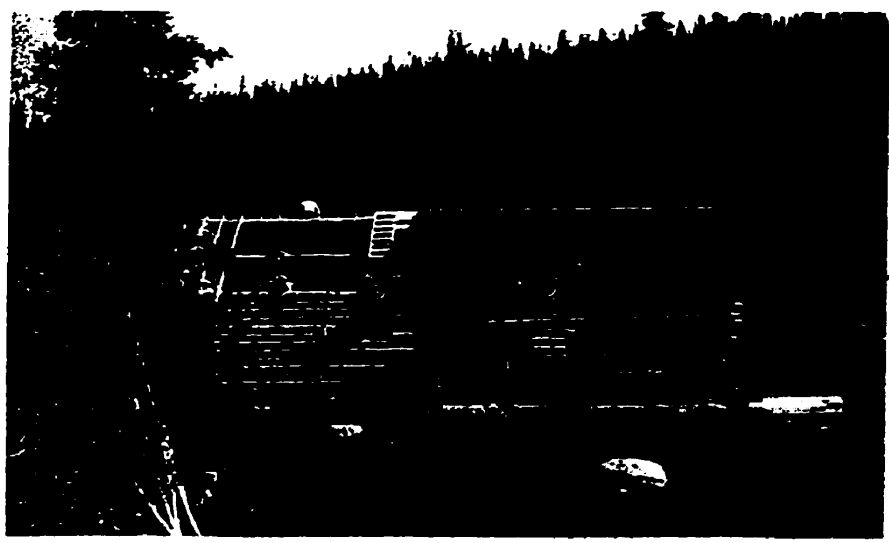

[1] Mills, *Rustic Building Programs*, 12.

unit.

Building in the Canadian wilderness differed immensely from our American counterparts because of government support. Whereas south of the border development became mired in conservationist lobbies and an unsymphathetic government, Canadians were enthusiastically supportive and quickly began our national park's system.[2] The government and railways realized our untapped natural resources were a lucrative commodity to an ever-growing tourism industry. Based on the successful Swiss model and spurred into realization by the discovery of the hot springs at Banff, 1887 saw the establishment of Rocky Mountains Park. Realizing the gift horse that stumbled into their laps, the CPR began to create a network of mountain hotels in an attempt to re-coup the incredible expenses involved with traversing the mountain ranges of Alberta and British Columbia. National parks in Canada were first seen as a system of resort hotels situated in places of scenic grandeur.[3]

Switzerland provided a precedent because of its similar rugged landscape and its success as a tourist locale. The mountains beckoned as physical hardship and challenge to those with the wealth and desire for new-found alpine pursuits (figure 4). Mountaineers began to descend on the region on the 1860s when The Alpine Club (London) chose it for its adventures and Thomas Cook's Swiss excursion parties simultaneously began.[4] The desire for contact with nature became synonymous with the vernacular structures of the area. Wooden architecture of broad verandas, large windows, wide eaves and richly ornamented gables and parapets became widely known as the 'Swiss Style' and was linked in the minds of many to the mountains.[5]

Prior to the establishment of the park the

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[2] Mills, *Rustic Building Programs*, 22.
[3] Mills, *Rustic Building Programs*, 23.
[4] E.J. Hart, *The Selling of Canada*. (Banff: Altitude, 1983), 60.
[5] Norberg-Schulz, *Nightlands*, 123.

vernacular building tradition was evident in cabins for trappers, prospectors and railway workers, but the arrival of the railway brought sustained building to the region. Even then, construction in the Canadian Rockies arose from financial, not solely touristic, issues. The logistics and economics of a railway operation through the mountains necessitated a series of dining stops instead of hauling the heavy dining cars up mountain passes. In 1886, the CPR built Mount Stephen House at present-day Field, BC and Glacier House in Roger's Pass in 1887.[6] Built for function rather than aesthetics, they had more in common with their vernacular neighbours than European models. Increased tourism brought more attention to the construction of such buildings, and with it the style diverged.

The romanticized vision of the wilderness became accessible to a fairly broad section of the urban population thanks to the railway.[7] While the wealthy can afford their own private wilderness tracts, the middle class head to our national parks. The romance of the peaks drew tourists, adventurers, settlers, the sick and the well to their offers of leisure, recuperation, work, escape and challenges.[8] As more and more people streamed into the parks, services had to be added to accommodate their needs. Paralleling the building typology of the Adirondacks, the rustic style manifested itself in two forms. The first was influenced by European ideals and was used most commonly for larger, more public structures. The vernacular present in the park at its inception continued to be used for smaller structures such as warden cabins, picnic shelters and rest spots.

Fitting somewhere between these two extremes is the Natural

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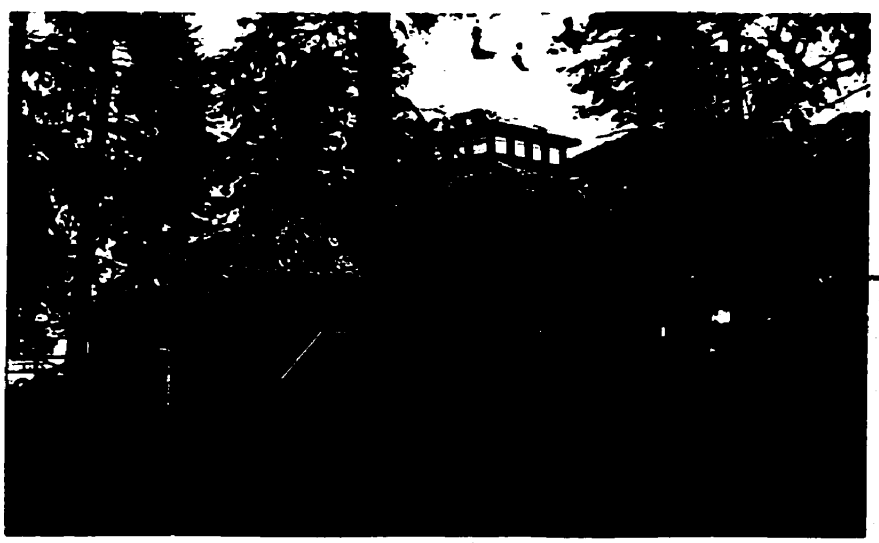

[6] Graeme Pole, *The Canadian Rockies.* (Banff: Altitude, 1991), 10.
[7] Mills, *Rustic Building Programs*, 21.
[8] Lisa Christensen, *A Hiker's Guide to Art of the Canadian Rockies.* (Calgary: Glenbow, 1996), 4.

History Museum in Banff (figure 5). Designed in 1902-03 by John Stocks, the assistant chief engineer for the Department of Public Works, the building has occupied an important place in the collective image of the town.[9] Offering visitors an introduction to the wildlife of the Canadian Rockies without the discomfort and danger of actually being outdoors, it ranks up there with the Banff Springs Hotel and the Cave and Basins as an important historical destination.

Located at the north end of the Banff Avenue Bridge, the museum sits in a green space adjacent the Bow River. Previously separated from the river by Bow Avenue and once next to a government-operated zoo, the building has always reminded one that they are still in a wild environment. Whether through the elk surrounding the building, its delicate positioning amongst the pines or its predominantly wooden structure, the Banff Park Museum has a close connection to nature. Surprisingly, the plan of the building does not reflect this. The building is symmetrical despite being on the transition of town proper and the natural environment offered by the river. No hint of its surroundings is given from the interior.

The interior of the building stands in sharp contrast to its exterior. One enters the museum from Banff Avenue to the east and moves from the compressed space of the porch into the two-storey expanse of the main display area. The display area stretches upward to the roof lantern and is ringed by a cantilevered second floor balcony. Built prior to the availability of electricity, natural light was needed to illuminate the interior. The roof lantern provides natural lighting for the cantilevered mezzanine level of the interior display area and is allowed to filter down to the lower level because of the balcony. The lantern bears affinities to traditional Japanese pagodas and can be

[9] R.W. Sandford, *The Book of Banff.* (Banff: Friends of Banff National Park, 1994), 111.

6

seen elsewhere in the park as a means of maximizing natural light.

The effect of lightness is aided by the lightly stained interior. Contrasting with the dark, heavy feel of the exterior treatment is the detail douglas fir woodwork inside the museum (figure 6). The wood is light and delicate, hinting at the civilization the wealth tourists are most familiar with and seems aglow with natural light. Stuffed animals perched on the display cases of the lower level tie the two levels together as one views them from grade as the hunted and from above as the hunter.

In elevation, the building has affinities to the bridges of its time (figure 7). A former structural engineer for the CPR, Stocks' use of trusses and the brackets supporting the broad eaves suggest the influence of his previous line of work[10]. The eaves create a transitional space between the exterior and interior. It offers protection from the elements while allowing one to still feel apart of the site.

The Banff Parks Museum demonstrates a deft combination of vernacular and architectural heritage. The use of pine timbers for the structure combined with railway construction techniques and allusions to the traditional Japanese pagoda shows an attempt to find stylistic elements suitable for the region. Public commissions were used to reinforce the image the government and railways were trying to cultivate for the region. The myth of the rugged north sold well to wealthy tourists and the parties involved used the built environment to reinforce the impression. As a result, Canada was faced with the difficulty of an identity not associated with its people but with its landscape. The building typology expected in the region was not of a modern civilization but one matching the raw, crude dramatics of the mountains.

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[10] Mills, *Rustic Building Programs*, 39.

twentieth century

A look to the present inspires both wonder and disappointment. Wonder flows from the use of manufactured building materials to create structures that appear to defy the laws of gravity. Disappointment comes with the apparent disjuncture between site and building techniques throughout contemporary examples. An influx of new building materials and philosophies in the past century has led to architecture devoid of a sense of community, belonging, and identity. In our world where it is becoming harder to find distinctions between places it is also harder to find meaning.[1] Our environment has become more global through the transfer of information and communication yet it is still desirable to feel grounded. Architecture has the potential to explore the character, climate and culture of a region and, in turn, help define and enrich cultural life.

[1] George Kapelos, *Interpretations of Nature* (Canada: McMichael, 1994) 146.

A century ago these problems were coming to light as architecture struggled to catch up to innovations in other fields of construction, mainly engineering. Whereas engineers whole heartedly embraced the new materials of steel, glass and reinforced concrete and with it standardized, modular construction, architects remained distant until the appearance of Modernism. Not merely a style but also a set of beliefs, Modernism called for buildings of their time, thus the use of industrially-produced materials and structures not hidden under coats of decoration. Extraneous elements were shunned in favour of revering functional elements such as joints and details. As one was to look to the future, not the past, historical precedents and site history became irrelevant as the buildings took on a life onto their own.

The new materials freed walls from their structural roles and glass allowed for transparencies between interior and exterior. Architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, in their earlier houses, exploited these characteristics with the free-space plan. The removal of non-structural walls allowed a more open plan and a flowing of space connecting the house with the surrounding natural environment (figure 1). Buildings became less about their users and topography and more about spatial exercises in transparencies and transitional zones. Nonetheless, the romance with the new materials of steel, glass and various composites soon passed. No longer is there an air of mystery, aura or awe with these materials. It is not enough to use them for what they are,

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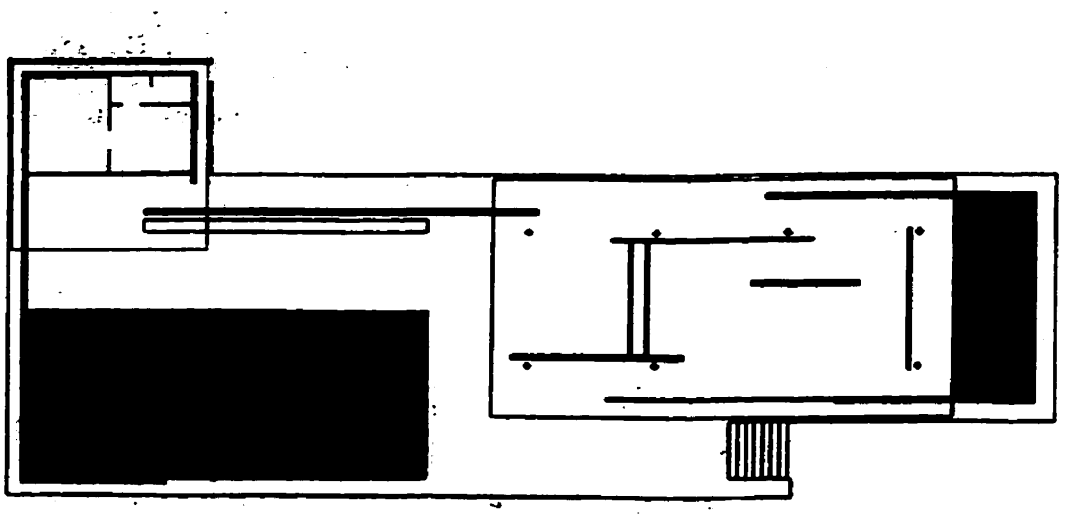

such as in Mies' Barcelona Pavilion (1929), but they are expected to be used in conjunction with greater ideas concerning site and programme. The harsh reality of most Modernist projects was that they left a cold and harsh built environment. Building materials were foreign to the mind and to the touch and thus elicit no response from participants. Nor did the buildings themselves with their indifference to site. Placed randomly throughout cities, Modernist buildings evoke a placeless landscape that may be any corner of the globe (figure 2). Cities lose their individuality and become assimilated into one common image of a contemporary city full of freeways and skyscrapers.

Positioned in opposition to Modernism, Post Modernism brought a return of contextualism. Architects once again considered history and local influences as appropriate in the design of their buildings. Buildings became rich through tradition-, program- and site-specific considerations. History was again deemed acceptable as architects searched through it to create site specific buildings. The root of Post Modernism is a return to materiality with substantiality through memory. The problem is that it came back as visual simulation, as a veneer, to be clad on the outside of completely dissimilar structures. Material became a device rather than something grounded phenomenologically. The Post Modernists did not come to terms with contextualism and the new building technologies.

Most Post Modernist buildings degenerated into kit-of-parts designs of pastel-coloured, garishly

outscaled, columns and porticos. It seemed that history had to be reinvented at the expense of progress. Memory of place and contextualism was forgotten as buildings became architectural texts rivaling Sir Bannister Fletcher's. Attitudes concerning these ideas were then assumed in the thinking of the Deconstructionists. Borrowingly heavily from thoughts prevalent in literature, Deconstructionists attempt another rethinking of base values by breaking down things to their core components. Consequently, we are left with the essence of the piece and can better understand it in its simplicity. Unfortunately, it too has suffered by becoming stylistic compositions of skewed geometries that borrow more so from the works of 1920s Russian Structurists and Constructivists than from any architectural discourse (figure 3).

Although faults are evident in all architectural styles and directions, there are numerous lessons to be learned from them. Modern architecture is not about reinventing the wheel, but is about challenging our preconceptions. Each building approaches site, programme and stylistic decisions in a particular way and it is up to us to agree or disagree with those choices. By examining an area over time, one sees how the architecture changes and adapts. Sometimes it may lag behind innovations in other fields or it may be at the forefront of progress. Architecture moves in fits and starts and it is up to designers to continually challenge its role in society.

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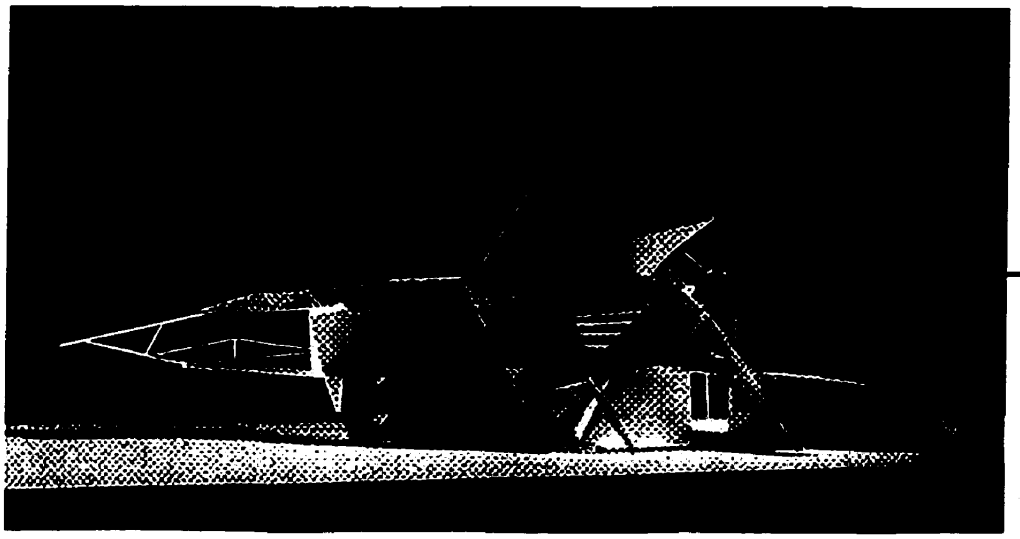

scandinavia

Scandinavia's isolation from cultural currents slowly faded with the advent of faster means of travel, and now by instantaneous means of communication. No longer is it a region naively, or perhaps ideally, going about its business without concern from the rest of the world, but it is also influenced by occurrences in far away countries. As a result, styles were transported from other regions and began to call themselves home in the north. In a world defined by opposites, the essence of the vernacular building traditions was pushed into the background as the region rushed to gain acceptance with the rest of Europe. Public buildings became towering stone edifices decorated with the classical orders in an effort to appear as one with the great structures of Rome and Paris. Shiny, pristine modernist boxes appeared on the landscape to show that Scandinavia was keeping up with the

times. Architecture that was climate specific and topographically sensitive fell to the wayside as designers embraced the styles from abroad.

As modernism swept across western Europe and into North America, the Scandinavians never fully embraced the movement and always maintained some regionalist attributes. Similar to Canada, Scandinavia came to Modernism later and with more selectivity than other regions. Subtly combining tradition and innovation, architects such as Alvar Aalto (1898-1976) did not see the International Style as a stylistic formula but rather as a way of working and thinking that may be adapted to specific cultures and landscapes.[1] Although they embraced the ideas of rational construction, social responsibility and many of the stylistic maneuvers, they rejected other tenets of Modernism. Mass production, universal siting and unitary massing were dismissed in favour of unique, site specific buildings that were dynamic compositions of varied massing and unusual shapes. Consequently, the emergence of regionalism in the works made them a series of juxtapostions: international and regional, industrial and hand crafted, archaic and modern, frame and wall.[2]

A Scandinavian artist community sitting in the mountain landscape of western Norway draws on both ancient and modern technology to achieve harmony with site and nature (figure 1). Rune Grov and Hilde Haga won an invited competition in 1992, and brought in architects Knut Hjeltnes and Ivar Egge to help with the project's execution. The artists' centre replies to the demands of place with a modestly conceived group of buildings that explores the possibilities and associations of local materials.[3]

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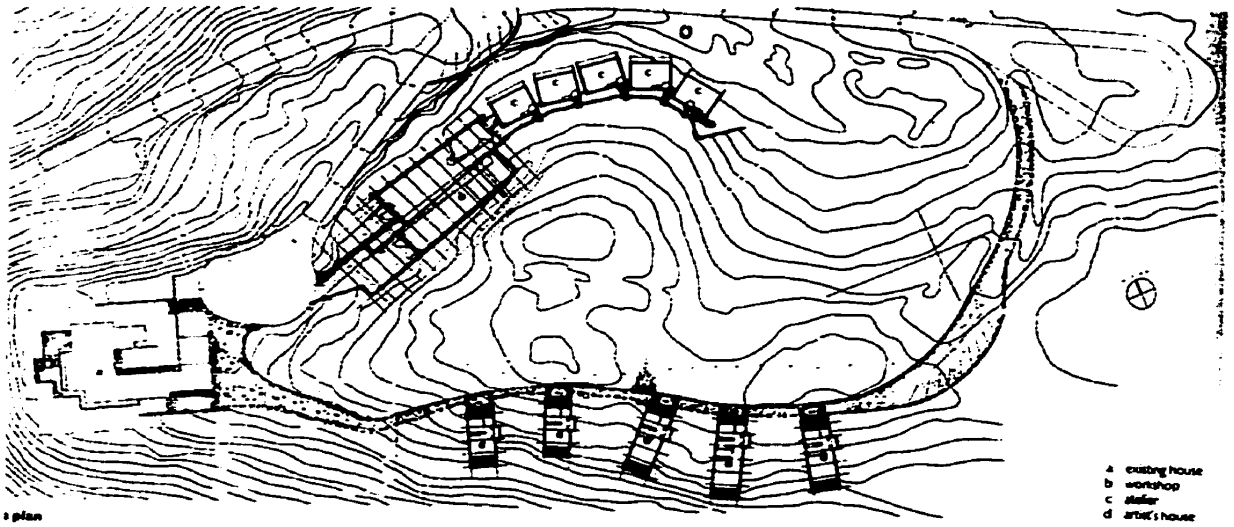
The community is spectacularly set on

[1] Richard Weston, *Alvar Aalto* (Hong Kong: Phaidon, 1995) 227.
[2] Edward Ford, *The Details of Modern Architecture, Volume 2* () 127.
[3] Ingrid Helsing Almaas, "State of the Art" *The Architectural Review* (CCCIII, no. 1214 April 1998 59-63) 60.



the brow of the forested hill of Dalsåsen in a remote part of coastal Norway. Views of mountains, blue-green fjords and the community of Dale below in the valley dominate the scene. An existing modern house serving as the administration building teeters on the brink of the hill and completes the site conditions. Haga and Grov link the project with the physical surroundings by separating the programme into a variety of smaller buildings (figure 2). Five buildings, five ateliers and a large workshop building, along with the existing house, form a loose row circling the hill's crest.[4] The encircled hilltop thus links the physical surroundings with the artist's daily lives by forcing them to trudge over it in even the most inclement of weather or enjoy the open courtyard in warmer seasons.

The dwellings push southwards to the view and hover over the dropping hillside on stilts. Modest in size and appearance, the free space plan opens up to the landscape by a floor to ceiling wall of glazing and is capped with a corrugated metal roof (figure 3). Oiled and varnished plywood sheets clad the interiors and provide a blank canvas for each new occupant to leave their marks on.[5]

The workshops sit opposite the dwellings and are out of view thanks to being inserted halfway into

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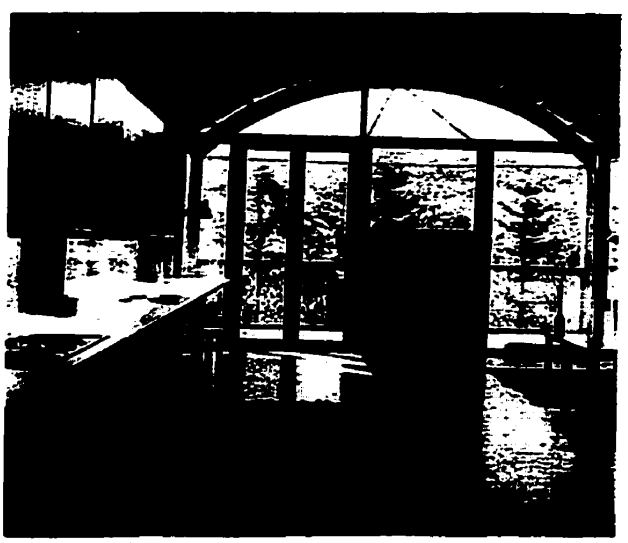

[4] Almaas, "State of the Art" 60.
[5] Almaas "State of the Art" 61.
[6] Almaas, "State of the Art" 63.

the hill. A rough stone wall holds back the earth and along it runs a corridor connecting the building to the individual ateliers. Meant as a communal space, the workshop is essentially an open space. Within it occurs an exploration of both traditional and modern timber construction. The complex plywood composite beams spanning the workshop, the flamboyant plywood and steel structure, the finely perforated walls of the central service zone and the wooden surfaces sunk into the concrete floors intermingle with the historically-based juniper weatherscreen. Intended to keep the driving rain predominant on the coast away from the vulnerable boarded wall behind, the north wall of the workshop is covered by juniper branches tightly woven into a timber framework.[6] The resulting wall is a local variation of thatch that successfully ties the building historically to the region. Despite being labour-intensive and thus also expensive, the wall provides one of the most artful surfaces in the centre.

Either by passing through the workshop or by walking through the courtyard, one reaches the ateliers. An underground corridor, sided by the retaining wall, leads one to the individual studio rooms. The rooms are double height spaces, allowing for clerestory windows facing south to allow in light and, more practically, for the creation of large works of art (figure 4). The north facade is open and allows views of the mountains. The separate volumes may be closed to offer solitude and acoustic separation, allowing for artist to focus simply on their work.[7]

Construction techniques and aesthetic decisions are not made merely to make the project fashionable for today's architectural publications, but in order to create a place rich in experience and feeling. The variety of materials, textures and aging of surfaces makes the place contemporary yet comfortable.

[7] Almaas, "State of the Art" 60.

In part brought about by the Depression in the 1930s, it was the changing social conditions that brought the end to the camps of the Adirondacks. The camps became too expensive too maintain, people tired of the isolation and the upper class family with several generations vacationing together is the exception not the rule.[1] Today, families are smaller and follow the seasons by jet, globetrotting to the Caribbean or the ski hills when they see fit. The camps eventually fell into disuse and were either demolished or turned over to larger institutions that could afford to run them. Many became retreats for various organizations.

Nonetheless, camps still survive in the area albeit in a smaller form.

[1] Kaiser, *Great Camps of the Adirondacks* 224.

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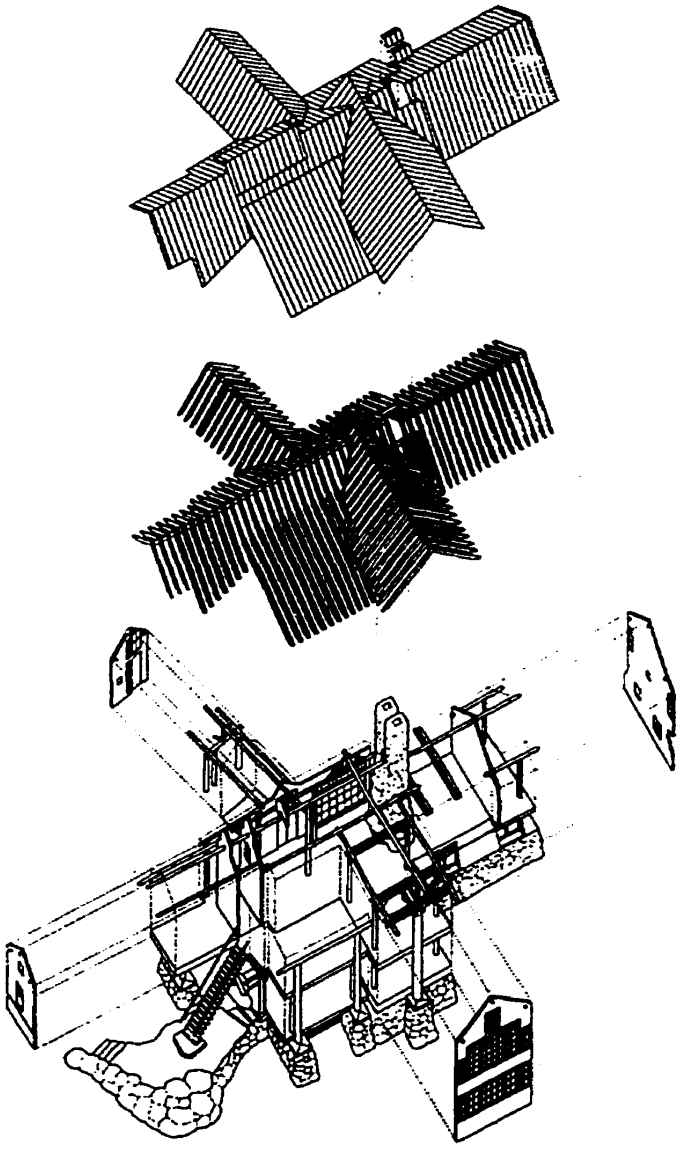
Memories of the camps remain as idyllic visions in the minds of many as the natural dwelling in the forest. Mentions of the camps connote imagery of lazy summer days passed on the shore of a lake. Connections are made through the camps to yester-years wealth. Consequently, many clients return to the imagery of the rustic style for their modern cabins.

An example is the house in the Adirondacks by Bohlin Cywinski Jackson in upstate New York. At first glance, the house appears to be a survivor from the area's early years, but closer inspection tells us differently. The house sits as a library of the architectural details and language of the great camps yet updates the mythology with twentieth century ideas.

Partner Peter Bohlin took advantage of the dramatic site to create the 4000 square foot house, which is located on a steep slope overlooking a lake. A winding stone path leads to a non-descript view of the broad, overhanging roof and entry portico (figure1). The length of the house hides the lake that is not revealed until one enters the central living volume. Conversely, the other side of the house opens up to the lake with an abundance of windows (figure 2).

Sectionally, the house takes advantage of the slope by creating a full lower level below the main one. Built for a family with three children, and the occasional house guest, the house is divided programmatically between the two floors as the children occupy the lower half. The two levels are joined by staircase at the entry that runs between two walls of glazing (figure 3). The staircase exemplifies the combination of vernacular and Modernism overtones with the rows of red



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painted, square windows contrasting the tree trunk piers supporting the roof (figure 4).

The house is full of architectural details reminiscent of the great camps. Foundation and fireplace constructed of massive boulders, columns of large tree trunks and split log wall surfaces connote imagery of the rustic vernacular (figure). Nonetheless, these elements are combined with other architectural innovations to create something more meaningful than merely a reconstruction of a style long past.

The abundance of glazing is the first clue to its modernity. Even though the typical punched window of typical log cabins exists, it is the expansive sections of glass offering views of the lake that demonstrate an updating of the style. A glance at the floor plan bares similarities to Le Corbusier's *plan libre* with its separation of columns from the enclosing walls.[2] The tree-like columns puncture the living spaces in almost a random order, thus echoing the rhythm and forms of the forest outside.[3] Additionally, the building also contains a flow of space between the differing areas of the house, thus avoiding the box mentality of original cabins (figure 5).

The design approach heightens awareness of the style by exemplifying, rather than hiding, how the structure is constructed. Separation of walls and columns allows structural elements to be acknowledged and, for that matter, decoration to be seen likewise. The combination of the vernacular with Modernist plan sensibilities deconstructs the imagery and tectonics of the great camps of the Adirondacks without resorting to mere replication.

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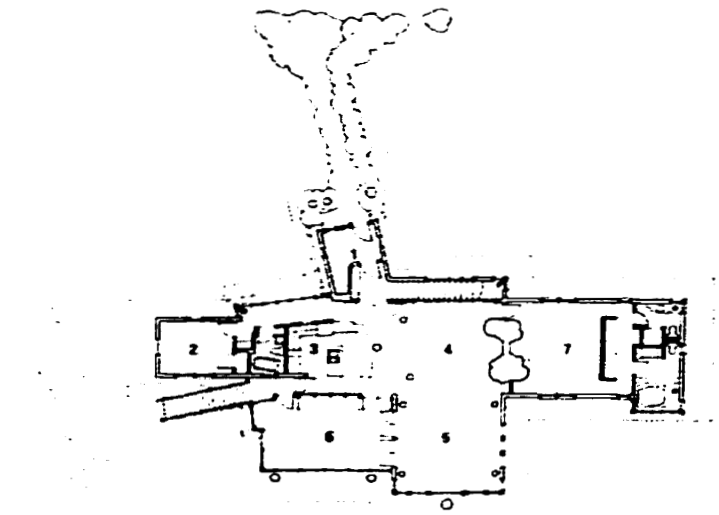
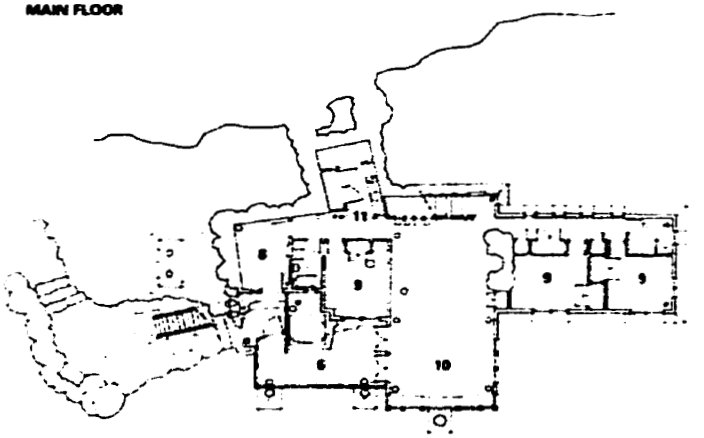


MAIN FLOOR



LOWER FLOOR

N 20'/6m

1 VESTIBULE
2 GUEST ROOM
3 KITCHEN
4 LIVING
5 DINING
6 SCREENED PORCH
7 MASTER BEDROOM
8 EXERCISE ROOM
9 BEDROOM
10 RECREATION
11 KITCHENETTE

[2] John Morris Dixon, "House of the Forest" *Progressive Architecture*. (April 1992): 108.
[3] Penelope Digby-Jones, "Talking to the Trees" *The Architectural Review*. CCI no 1199 (Jan 1997): 59.

canadian rockies

Present-day Banff is disappointing. The evolution of a building style has become mired in a facadism design sensibility where we find Rundle slate fronting steel stud elevations.[1] Problems tend to arise out of the dualistic role of Banff – a conservation area and a tourist mecca (figure 1). Conservation wrongfully excludes anything in the parks after their inception, thus time stands still as we make a museum out of a living organism. Similarly, we are trying to maintain, preserve and strengthen the romanticized vision of the Canadian Rockies. Scarlet-clad Mounties and the untainted land are now as much a marketing tool as they are reality. Nonetheless, these images must progress with time in order to stay relevant.

The downfall of the park and its architecture was its initial success.

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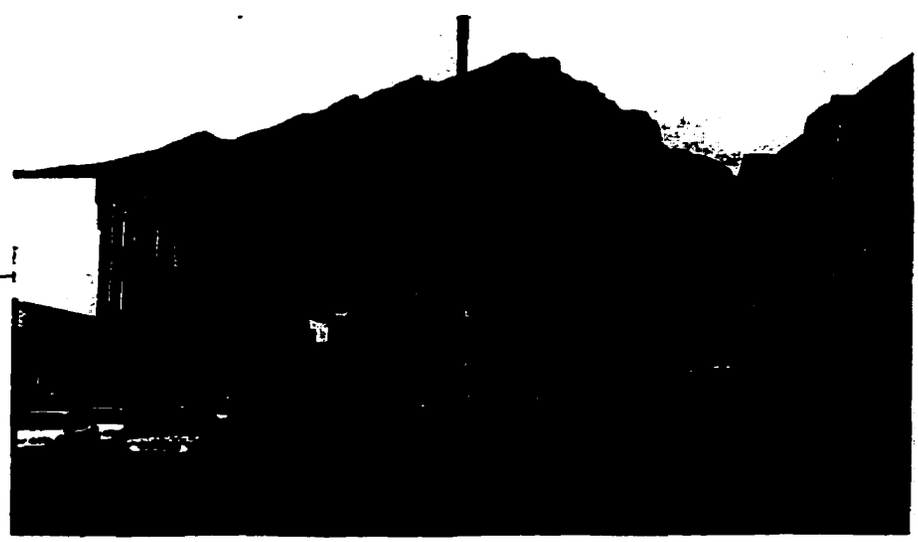

[1] Trevor Boddy, "The Architecture of Tourism: Banff Boulderized," *Canadian Architect*. January 1997. 18.

Increased popularity led to more people that led to more buildings. Expanding range of applications led to the erosion of the initial precepts of the rustic vernacular. The exterior appearance was a direct reflection of building processes but became merely veneer and was employed for aesthetic reasons alone. Economics meant less time available for design as structures were rushed into construction in order to meet the growing demands of the now automobile-driven mass of visitors.

The middle to late 1940s saw the beginning of the decline of the park architecture. The National Parks Branch saw diminishing authority as its internal design unit was dismantled and the Depression relief building programs were abandoned.[2] Additionally, the rustic style came under criticism as people began to see the dangers associated with having a static style being considered the only appropriate one for the parks for all time. The attempt to adopt interiors contemporary in design, materials and use, with a cladding of a traditional style was criticized for lacking a truth and honesty of construction.[3] Consequently, Banff entered a brief period of uncontrolled private development that later became the impetus for design regulations.

The design regulations were a move to recapture the Parks Style. Set up and administered by the Town of Banff, the municipality issues guidelines and themes considered appropriate for the vision and ideals of the area. The guidelines are not meant to be a kit-of-parts leading to a successful project, but merely the foundations of a sensitive design. The appearance from the street is the prime concern and thus guidelines deal with building scale, human scale, signage, exterior finishes and overall look. Many of these ideas are characteristic in the original structures of the park; strong roof forms, deep overhangs, distinct base, middle and roof, relief and texture, and emphasis on structural

[3] RAIC Journal Dec 1957 479.
[2] Mills, *Rustic Building Programs* 38.

expression. The list and examples are meant to be the impetus for good design but more often than not become elements for a developer to tack on to pass the design requirements.

Banff did not enter into an architectural vacuum with the decline of the Parks Style. Enlightened clients and architects have combined to create buildings appropriate in both time and place. Two approaches to design in the parks have formed over the years; one is a mere updating of the original rustic vernacular with some aspects of contemporary architecture included whereas the other is a more comprehensive reworking of the language.

The tenets of log construction have been adhered to in varying designs for small park shelters at trailheads but were taken to another level with the Leighton Artists Colony (figures 2 and 3). Tucked into the trees in the sprawling Banff Centre campus on Tunnel Mountain, the follies-cum-studios exemplify a new attitude towards log construction. Ron Thom, Richard Henriquez, Douglas Cardinal, Peter Hemingway and others designed basically one room cabins for the artist's retreat. Despite the small scale and limited programme, the structures show a playful nature in design in comparison to typical log cabins. The swirling logs forming the roof of Cardinal's cabin demonstrates how we are no longer primarily concerned with sheltering, but now have the freedom to explore the potential of the style. Nonetheless, a large convention centre looming on the colony's edge now overwhelms the cabins in the wilderness. No longer is the site a place of repose in the mountains but it is now a cash register. The human and natural worlds are no longer separate yet they still hold a mystery and power over our imaginations.

In Canada, we are left with an ideological

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wilderness. Every parcel of land has been walked and mapped and we are no longer living in the unknown. We still must come to terms with the rugged aspects of nature when she unleashes a snowstorm upon our cities or a drought on our farms, but more and more this is merely an inconvenience as we drag out our snowblowers or sprinklers. Changing relationships with nature means a change in built form. More often than not, these changes result in a stronger visual and experiential connection to the landscape through transparencies to the outside. Early West Coast works by B.C. Binning and Arthur Erickson demonstrate the capacity to make structures balance between enclosure and openness.

The Valley of the Ten Peaks Day Lodge at the base of the Lake Louise ski area takes the normally heavy log structure and opens it to the outdoors. Designed by Ross Hayes of Calgary's IBI Group, the ski lodge opened for the 1997/98 ski season to alleviate some the overuse of the neighbouring Whiskey Jack Lodge. Sited on the edge of the parking lot, the lodge slopes down to the base of the ski hill. Entering from either direction gives a vastly differing reading of the building. The parking lot elevation portrays a quaint log structure punctuated by large amounts of glazing under a broad cedar shake roof (figure 4). A large gable awning extending into the parking lot denotes entry. Surprisingly, the visitor does not enter unto a floor but merely a landing. The expanse of the massive structure is then realized as it opens up around the landing. One can see through to the curtain wall greeting the ski hill, the main level food services or the two lounge areas flanking the entry landing. A stone fireplace dominates the east side of the

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lodge and is accessible from both levels.

The ski hill elevation contrasts as the heroic facade and structure is apparent from a long distance (figure 5). A large balcony running along the face of the building combined with two massive dormers hints at the open structure contained within. However, entry through the lower level dissipates the energy built up through the approach as one feels like they are entering the back door. Acoustical t-bar ceilings and generic gypsum board walls dominate the ski rental areas of the lower level. The only relief from the monotony of typical suburban strip mall is the grand stair, complete with log details, rising into the main space of the lodge.

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The Valley of Ten Peaks Lodge demonstrates how far we can push the log structure. Normally viewed as a small, cozy cabin deep in the wilderness, the lodge challenges pre-conceptions with its openness and large scale. The use of logs is appropriate topographically as it portrays the imagery associated with ski resorts and exhibits an honesty and integrity normally absent in the region. For the most part, the truthful use of log construction demonstrates a reality that is apparent and reassuring to the visitor. Central elements in the design are also key components of the ski vacation; the fire to warm oneself, the logs and stone reminding one of their reprieve from the city, and the sociable atmosphere created by the large, open space (figures 6 and 7). The elements combine to create the image, or myth, associated with the use and location.

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Nonetheless, the myth continued through the design is a static representation of the mountains. The

building glosses over contemporary construction techniques by hiding the lower level steel frame beneath a split log exterior and glazing aside, seems like a timeless design dating from the 1930s. There is no intent to reinterpret and enliven the design ideas present in the mountains. The more interesting projects challenge the language of past designs and attempt to add new layers of time and space to the culture.

Phillipe Delesalle's Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies in Banff is one of the few projects in recent memory to evoke the present. Built in 1968, the museum records the history of Banff through photography, paintings, writings and memorabilia yet the built form is not constrained by historical technology. New materials are deftly combined with traditional ones to create a building that belongs in its surroundings and time.

Situated near the terminus of one of the main routes into town, the building forms a civic precinct with the adjacent library, post office and town hall. A parking lot separates the building from the busy Lynx Avenue and places the structure at the base, and parallel to, a gentle slope rolling down towards the river. Before the addition to the south, entry to the original structure was gained by a ramp bridging the valley between building and parking lot (figure 8). Now, one enters closer to the street and works through the addition before entering the original portion longitudinally.

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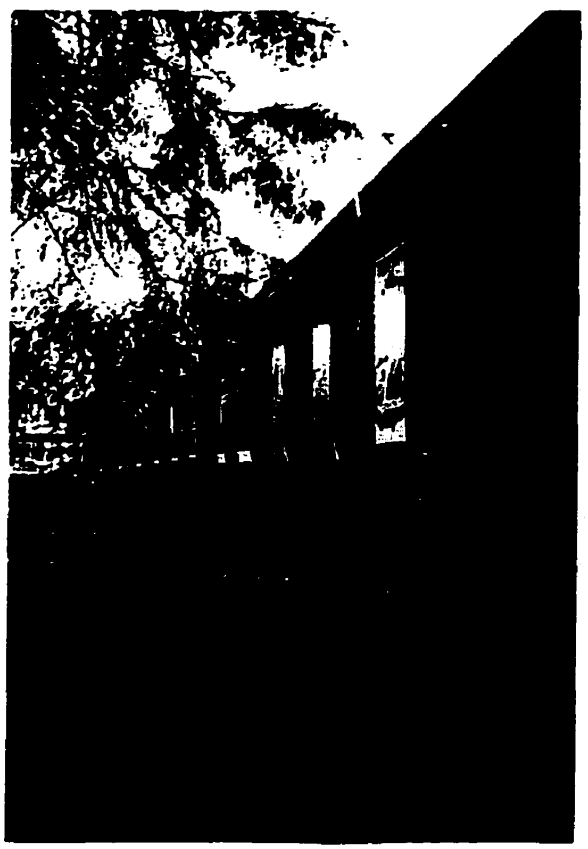

The museum combines materials that play off one another to differentiate feelings of structure and enclosure. The main mass of the museum cantilevers beyond its Rundle stone base by means of concrete ribs. Slender vertical windows visually tie the lower ribs to the ones supporting the roof and set up a rhythm stretching across the front elevation. Furthermore, the warm of the cedar cladding contrasts with the stark

grey concrete. A copper roof completes the structure and delineates entry by folding upwards to create a clerestorey window at the midpoint of the museum.

Inside, the expressive, tree-like, cast-concrete structure dominates the rooms. Once again cedar cladding and Rundle stone are used to contrast the man-made material. The honest expression of the structural system is reminiscent of earlier vernacular buildings in the park, especially the exposed king truss of Wright's Banff Park Pavilion of sixty years before.[4] The programme of the facility limits visual connections to nature to the slender windows between the structural ribs. Natural light is detrimental to the preservation of artifacts and thus is limited. Nonetheless, the locally found materials and tree allusions of the columns invokes notions of wilderness within.

[4] Boddy, *Modern Architecture in Alberta*, 95.

frank lloyd wright, 1913

Visitors to Banff might be surprised that the town was once the home to one of only two of Frank Lloyd Wright's Canadian buildings. By 1913, the increased number of residents in the area put demands on the local infrastructure and numerous services and amenities were requested from Ottawa. Although the people longed for a curling rink and ice hockey rink, the federal government commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright and his Ottawa associate Francis Sullivan to design a recreation centre (figure 1). Far from being a place of winter activities, the pavilion accommodated summertime parties and picnics and served as a resting point during the journey from the train to the Cave and Basin hot springs.[1]

One of the most prolific and innovative designers of the twentieth century, Frank Lloyd Wright (1867-1959)

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[1] Jeff Adams, "Painful Regrets" *Calgary Herald* (May 10, 1994).

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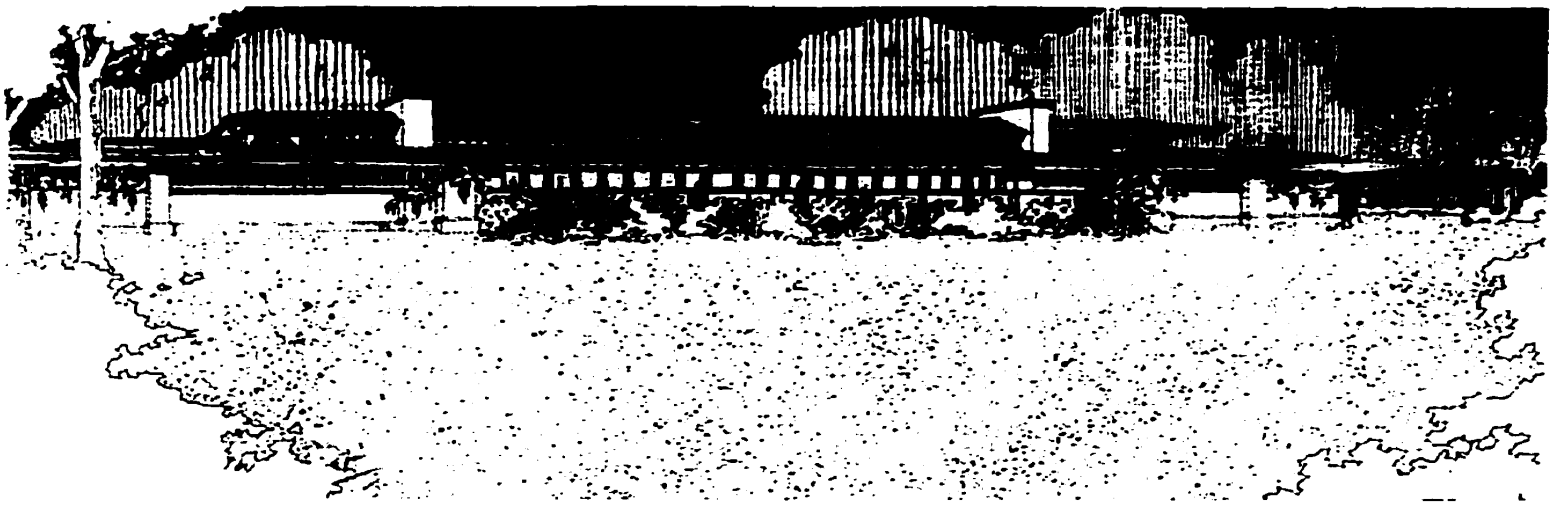

is one of the most recognizable names associated with American architecture. His designs are almost as well known as is his personal problems and colourful personality, which are immortalized as the basis for Ayn Rand's Howard Roark in *The Fountainhead.* Consequently, Wright is not only important for the designs he has produced but also for the architectural image he invokes.

The long, narrow building sat on the edge of the trees, separating meadow from forest (figure 2). Vehicular access was gained by turning off Cave Avenue and proceeding down a road that looped between the building and the meadow. Access to the pavilion was either gained through the terrace facing the road or the two entry porticos jutting out towards the trees. Unplanned site additions included a wading pool near the trees and canals allowing visitors to paddle up to the canopied entrances.[2] The low water table and proximity to the river allowed these features to be added.

Built at the end of Wright's Prairie Style Period, the Banff Park Pavilion stays true to the characteristics particular to his Oak Park projects. A long, low

[2] Adams, "Painful Regrets".

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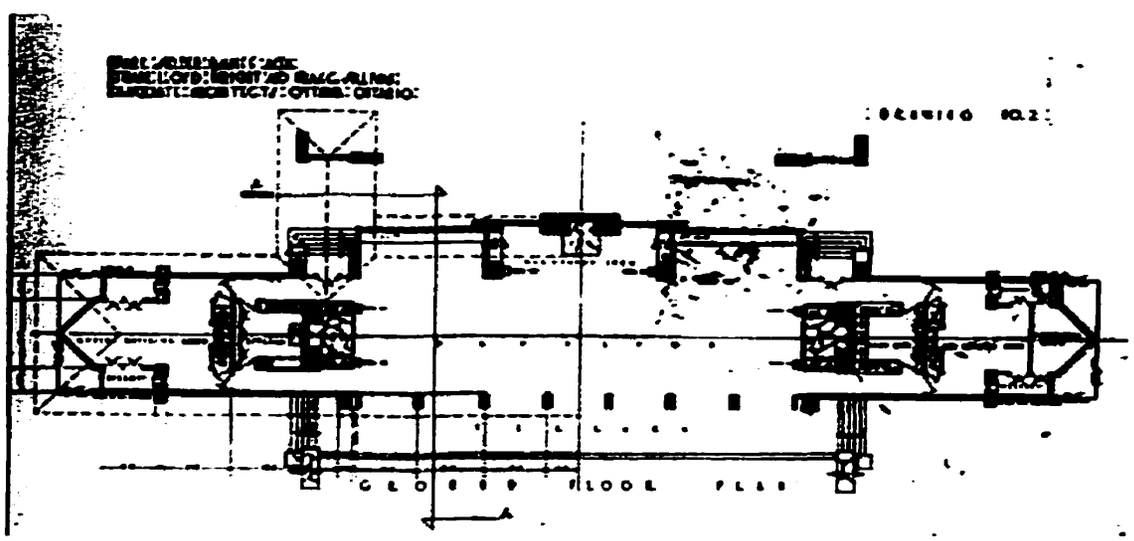
overhanging hipped roof interrupted by the stone masses of the fireplaces dominates the exterior reading. The ribbon band of windows running at head height over the length of the building allowed the roof to hover over the building. Wright saw the essence of building not as making a cave, but as a broad shelter in the open related to vistas.[3]

The axial massing stretches outward symmetrically from the main volume of the dance hall (figure 3). Private lounges for each gender were located at the ends, separated from the dance hall by stone fireplaces. Two entry porticos, flanking the third fireplace, provided the main entry to the pavilion. A terrace ran adjacent to the dance hall and provided access to the back of the building. A series of leaded glass doors divided the two spaces. The spaces flow into one another and are only loosely defined by such elements as differing roof planes and the fireplaces. This was characteristic of Wright and his use of the open plan.



The dominating interior

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[3] Wright, *The Natural House*. (Toronto: Mentor Books, 1954) 16.
[4] Trevor Boddy, *Modern Architecture in Alberta*. (Manitoba: D.W. Friesen & Sons, 1987) 38.

element was the exposed, repeating king trusses running the length of the building (figure 2). These stepped upwards in the middle section to provide natural light through a clerestorey window. Cut-glass leaded windows with emblematic chevron decorated pattern were characteristic of Wright as were the built-in alcove benches and tight dimensions.[4] These elements from his highly regarded Chicago period did not make the Banff Park Pavilion appropriate for the Canadian Rockies. The building is essentially a stretched version of earlier designs. The foundation was particularly inadequate for the site conditions and only consisted of strategically located pilings. Nonetheless, the imagery invoked by the mention of Wright's name in the minds of many are more powerful than the pavilion could ever be.

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Not long after completion of the pavilion, the government came under criticism from the local citizens. The building was too remote from the town centre. This was alleviated by the introduction of the automobile into the park in the 1920s. But the townspeople had wanted a winter facility, and never grew to like the summer-only pavilion. Additionally, it was built on boggy ground and subjected to severe frost and water damage. Years of exceptionally high run-off led to extensive flooding that eventually took its toll on the foundation, floor and lower woodwork (figure 5). On one occasion, the *Crag and Canyon* mentioned in jest that someone, if so inclined, could wade out to the pavilion and fish from its front steps.[5]

[5] *Crag and Canyon* July 10 1920.

Nonetheless, the destruction by nature was nothing compared to the bungling that led to its demise. Ignored by locals, its users came primarily from the affluent Mount Royal community in Calgary.[6] The site became a resting spot in journeys between the Cave and Basin and the townsite proper. Additionally, the continual cost and time of repairs and maintenance took its toll on the patience of the town. A Parks bulldozer cutting a drainage ditch in the area eventuallydemolished the pavilion in 1938, somewhat "accidentally".[7] Myths and stories are rampant about the circumstances leading to its demise, from a municipality desiring its destruction to a government official racing across the country to prevent this occurrence. In the end, the boggy land finally swallowed the remaining piles, foundations and any leftover debris during a flood in 1964. The legacy of Frank Lloyd Wright in Banff thus remains buried and can only be seen in a series of photographs at the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.

[6] Boddy, *Modern Architecture in Alberta*, 36.
[7] Boddy, "Banff Boulderized", 18.

hostels

To help all, especially the young, gain greater understanding of people, places and cultures through hostelling. - IYHF 1933

Humbly emerging in 1933 at Bragg Creek, Alberta, hostelling began in Canada with a canvas tent set up by sisters Mary and Catherine Barclay (figure 1). Popularity dictated the replacement of the tents with a wood cabin the following summer. Growth was aided after the Second World War with the donation of old internment buildings to form a chain of huts.[1] Steadily expanding into a network of cabins stretching between Banff and Lake Louise, the hostels offer inexpensive and welcoming hospitality

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[1] Jill Sawyer 8.

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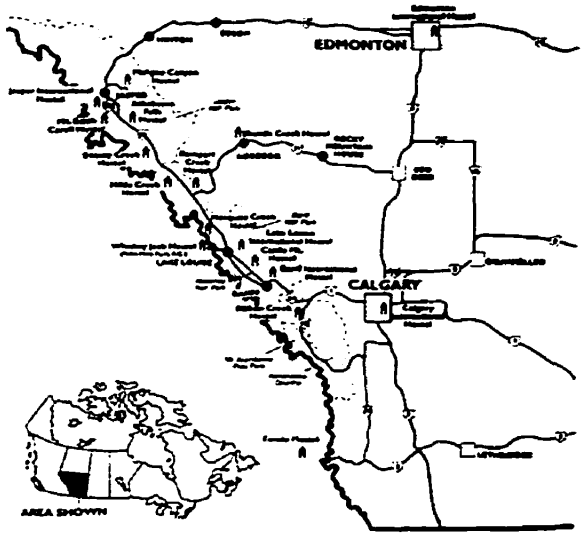

for travellers (figure 2).

The idea of low cost accommodation for the traveller has been around for thousands of years but it was only the start of the current century when the hostel movement as it now stands began. A German schoolteacher named Richard Schirrmann in the summer of 1907 began using the school to provide overnight accommodation for young travellers. Desks and chairs were moved aside and thin straw sacks were placed on the floor for sleeping. Customarily, each morning the hostellers helped to put the school back together. The foundations of a caring atmosphere and helpful attitude were laid from the onset.

Over the years, hostelling has expanded to encompass a wide variety of countries and organizations. Hostels are no longer meant merely for students and youths seeking low cost accommodation, but there are now programs available for everyone in search of a new experience. For example, school groups may visit a hostel to facilitate their educational needs or seniors may take part in elderhostel programs as a chance to explore their natural surroundings in organized groups. Additionally, hostels come in all shapes, sizes and locations, from hostels in castles, sleepy towns or in the midst of busy urban centres.

The word 'hostel' does not describe a place as much as it does an attitude or philosophy, the coming together of culturally diverse people sharing wonders, high and low, of the travelling adventure[2]. Hostels are unique because nearly all facilities are shared with the other guests. Dormitory style rooms furnished with bunkbeds are the norm for sleeping quarters with common bathrooms, lounges and food preparation areas. The shared facilities arrangement keeps the cost per guest low as functions are not duplicated and, more importantly, creates a warm and welcoming

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[2] Janet Thomas "Hostelling Into New Territory".

communal atmosphere between guests.

The typical hosteller is difficult to categorize but common characteristics exist. Although hostelling is available for all ages, it is usually the young or the old that takes advantage of them (figure 4). Middle class families with kids and a car usually opt for the privacy of hotels or campgrounds. The hosteller is usually united with their fellow companions by a spirit of adventure or a youthfulness at heart. They may be from the host country and are only travelling for a few days or their hostel stay may be part of a larger trip spanning several countries. Resultantly, the hostel should make the traveller feel at home while still representing the uniqueness of the local culture. They chose the hostel route because they want to interact with their surroundings; they want to be a participant, not merely an observer. Their trips are usually only roughly planned and without itineraries, therefore allowing for last minute changes when something unexpected and exciting presents itself. Many solo travellers use hostels as a way of meeting others and sharing the travel experience. Basically, hostellers stay longer, see more, and do more for less money.

A hosteller is also known as a backpacker and, as the name implies, they bring only what they can carry with them. Generally travelling on public transportation and walking around the locales, travelling light is fundamental if you are going to have an enjoyable time and get anywhere. Backpacks are the easiest way to carry possessions from one place to another although the amount of gear they may hold is limited. Commonly articles brought on a trip include toiletries, a

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sleep-sheet, a few changes of clothes and possibly some eating supplies. Consequently, the traveller relies on the hostel to provide eating utensils, sleeping supplies and clothes washing facilities as it usually serves as a place for repose and rest for the traveller.

A hosteller in Banff would visit for numerous reasons; partying, hiking, skiing, snowboarding, trail skiing, mountain biking, touring between Jasper and Banff, or simply viewing the wonder of the mountains. In this respect, they do not differ much from the average tourist to the area. However, the typical hosteller is looking for a different experience, to be interacted with the events happening around them. They are not content to stay cloistered in their hotel room shied away from the world outside. Their surrounding built environment of the hostel may be developed in such a way to encourage spontaneous meetings, or to act as a stage set where activities are never far out of sight. Drama, intrigue and interaction with the surrounding landscape would all be desirable characteristics for a hostel. Nonetheless, architecture can only go so far in creating a dynamic atmosphere. The functions of the hostel are also necessary in creating a lively mood. Offering programs teaching various skills pertinent to the area, or various group activities do as much, if not more, to create the communal feel than any built response can.

technology

Reconciling visions of architecture with the realities of construction confounds most practitioners today. Although the two cannot exist independently, more often than not architectural canons overlook the pragmatic issues of building in favour of more glamourous, and photographic, aesthetic concerns. However, good architecture merges all aspects of the project into a successful design. Architecture is not complete unless all the systems fit seamlessly into one concept. The structure, lighting, mechanical systems, finish materials and so on combine to create the artistic expression of a building while fulfilling their functional roles. It is obvious when you find a building where the construction is not intrinsic to the overall design. Indifference to the act of building has led to a disjunction between appearance and reality. We are often left with projects where aesthetics were only considered as

clothing to be pulled over a standard shell. The expression of the design then becomes lost when one gets beyond the finish materials. Perception versus the truth is always an issue in architecture and it becomes more prominent when trying to deal with an honesty of expression.

Architectural writers are beginning to reclaim the importance of building just as architects are rediscovering the pleasures of real materials and substantial construction. One example is Kenneth Frampton's recent book, Studies in Tectonic Culture. The endeavor returns to the nineteenth-century idea of 'tectonics' and again places value on the expressivity arising from constructional form.[1] Instead of relying on applied ornament for its beauty, tectonics valourize the assembly itself - the material, the joint and the detail.[2] The resulting forms emerge from the nature of materials and the methods of their construction or fabrication.

Nonetheless, concerns of technology have been expressed by architectural practitioners since the beginning of building, as can be seen through Marc-Antoine Laugier's primitive hut or Gottfried Semper's Caribbean dwelling. Both men theorized that architecture is a continuous process built up from a few basic types of structures, thus attempting to reduce architecture to its origins.[3] The models they chose, the basic shelter woven from trees and branches, demonstrate the base elements of construction technology. Primitive, or vernacular, styles were seen as being without style, therefore are unencumbered by such concerns and could build clearly and accordingly.[4] Even though most of the first acts of building deal with wood construction, the material is not usually looked upon as promoting technological innovation. Concrete, glass and metal were the hallmarks of the Modernists and are still widely used,

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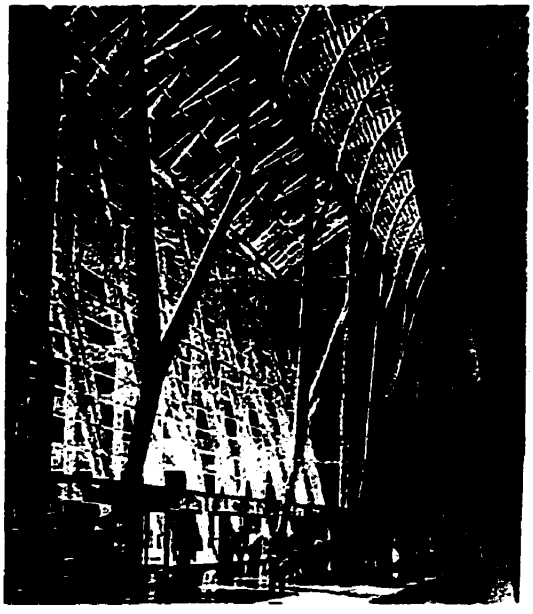

[1] Frampton, *Studies in Tectonic Culture*, 19.
[2] Macy, "Appropriate Technology," 16.
[3] Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture*, 422.
[4] Ford, *The Details of Modern Architecture, Vol. 1*, 19.

despite the questionings of the Modern movement itself (figure 1). Other materials, such as heavy timber, are dismissed despite their merits due to negative connotations and associations with the past.

Historically, the use of wood was justified because architecture was less about aesthetic and poetic concerns and more about providing basic sheltering. People used what was familiar to them; areas with extensive forests, and consequently an ample supply of wood, used timber to create their homes. The ease and expedience with which wood may be worked and shaped promoted its use as a building material (figure 2). Additionally, its high thermal mass makes it a good insulating material, an essential property in cold climates.[5] Issues concerning aesthetics were, for the most part, overlooked unless the building typology called for something more ostentatious than timber buildings.

The influx of new building materials and the industrialization of the building process at the turn of the century made traditional log construction less desirable. These two related events were debated in separate forums: architecture and building. Although architects looked to the new materials as giving an expression appropriate for modernity, they paid less attention to how they influenced building systems. The Modernists became preoccupied with space and time, causing materiality to became only something to shape the spaces. The designs became a series of tectonic gymnastics of monolithic planes in an effort to create varied, and interesting, spaces. Honesty of expression was sacrificed for the sake of aesthetic compositional studies of differing materials. Pieces of the puzzle were asked to serve more than one function, thus the way the building is clad and structured is desirably the same material.

[5] *Abrahamsen* Building in Norway *6-7.*

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Conversely, the construction industry debated the merits of the monolithic and layered building systems separate from stylistic preferences. Specialization of labour in the workforce and the advent of specialized products made it difficult to coordinate the integration of individual trades on a job site. The modern trades finish their specific task as quickly as possible and leave the site with a minimum of interaction with the other subcontractors.[6] As a result, the layered building system was developed as an efficient means of enclosing space. Layering allows for different systems to do differing things, such as a typical partition wall in residential construction. The wood studs provide a structural framework that contains an insulating material and supports a gypsum board cladding. The cladding acts as the vapour barrier and hides the other parts of the system in a seemingly monolithic shell.

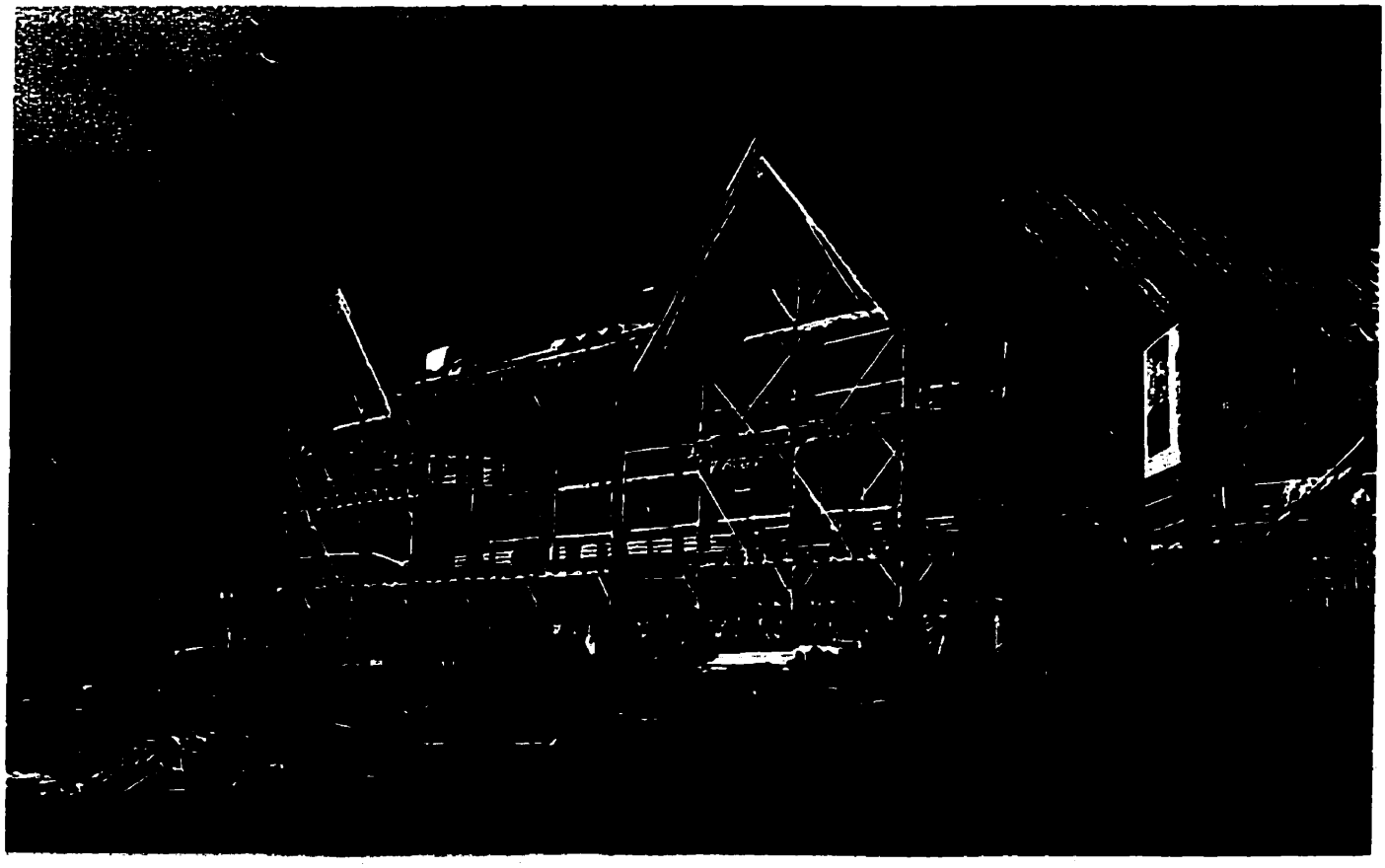
Log construction contains a certain aesthetic quality of its own. The rough, hewn logs wit their varied textures and colours have an appeal in their individuality and naturalness. Limb lines, revealing curves, or even the clawmarks of a bear, create a varied rhythm across the surface of the material. However, our urgency for perfection, effiency and replication often negates the beauty of these chance happenings by attempting to recreate them in an automated fashion. Machine peeled logs may shorten the log-preparation process, but produces logs so perfectly alike that they resemble drinking straws from a package.[7] The beauty of a log structure comes through its imprecision rather than its exactness. Additionally, the material is the same inside and out. There is no disjuncture between it sides, allowing the designer to sculpturally blur the distinction between interior and exterior.

Today, the environmental movement and the

[6] Ford, *The Details of Modern Architecture, Vol. 1*, 352.
[5] Mackie, *Building with Logs*, 13.

return of tectonic concerns has pushed architectural discourse on technology in new directions. Architects are beginning to see that they have an ethical obligation to work towards sustainability in all aspects of building design. Accordingly, labour and natural materials are recognized as limited resources and, if they are to be renewable, their use must be sustainable. Technology becomes rooted in both a natural and social context, and can thus be called 'appropriate technology'.[7] It is no longer a neutral preoccupation, but is rooted economically and geographically. As a result, architecture is once again looking to its vernacular origins.

The reality of heavy timber construction today is that its pragmatic advantages over other building materials are no longer what they used to be. Logged



[7] Macy "Appropriate Technology" 16.

for over a century, our forests now contain mostly small dimensioned lumber, making suitable logs just as difficult to find as manufacturing some building systems. Additonally, the skills of the labour force have changed over time and log construction knowledge is now the domain of the highly skilled. Despite numerous reasons mitigating the extensive use of heavy timber, one must also consider more qualitative, societal concerns. Wood is synonymous with the Canadian Rockies and many expect to see its use when visiting the region (figure 3). It illicits a personal response through its attachments to the senses and memory. Familiarity with the material in our everyday events makes us feel comfortable and secure in its presence.

Building technology is not a neutral construct that can be transported from place to place. Although the works of high-tech architects appear placeless and they rely heavily on the mystique of new materials and forms, their effect wears off as the viewer grows accustomed to them. They are an attempt to represent a specific point in time but fail in representing a special culture or place. Just as a style or form is grounded by its surroundings, so should building construction. Aesthetic concerns and the act of building should not be dissimilar. Tradition, precedent, style and ideology are all factors interal to building construction.

site

The building of architecture always occurs in a place. Architecture is driven into its place like a sharpened spike. Architecture, then, agitates the environs, and transforms its periphery into a living magnetic field." Tadao Ando

Choosing a site in the mountains steeped in mythology and tradition carries many implications. First of all, history is usually denied presence in the mountain parks. We wrongfully view them as museums of how the country once was, prior to their establishment as parks. We forget that we have inhabited the parks now for over one hundred years and that they contain their own history. As a result,

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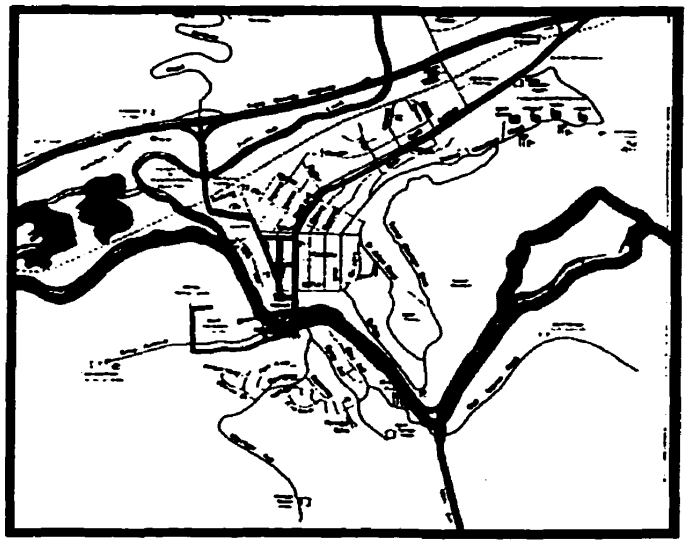

the park has built up an architectural heritage in the short time since its inception. Secondly, we tend to forget that our mountain parks are as much an economic venture as they are wildlife preserves. The areas are populated with humans and their interaction with the natural environment cannot be overlooked.

Situated in the Bow Valley, Banff is synonymous with tourism in the Canadian Rockies (figure 1). Ever since railway workers in the fall of 1883 stumbled across the Cave and Basin hot springs, tourism has been the driving force for development. The completion of the railway through the area and the creation of a national reserve around the hot springs eventually led to Banff being established in 1885 as Canada's first national park.[1] Shortly afterwards, an infrastructure of roads, bridges and services sprung up in the form of the townsite in order to serve the park and its visitors. Currently Banff

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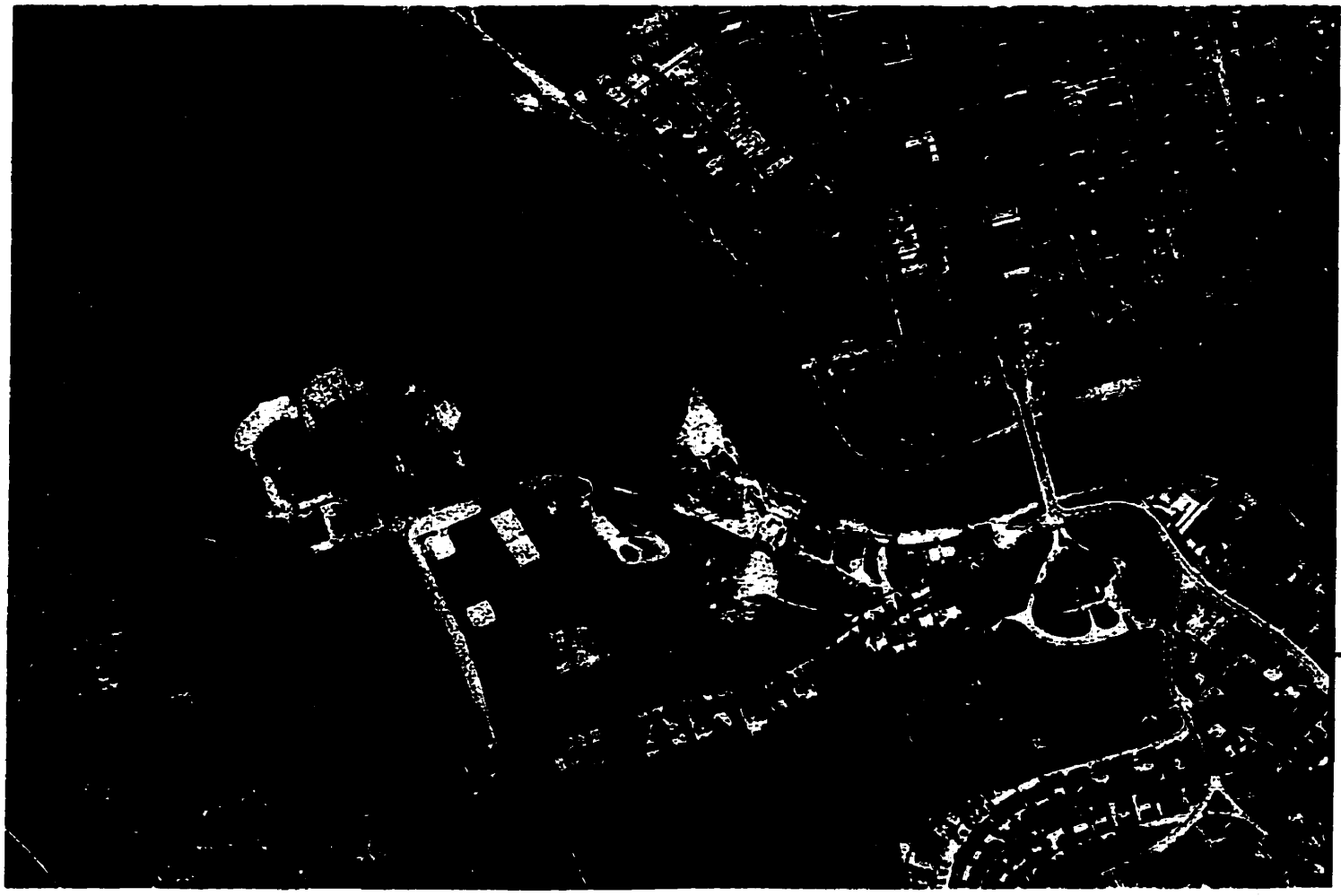
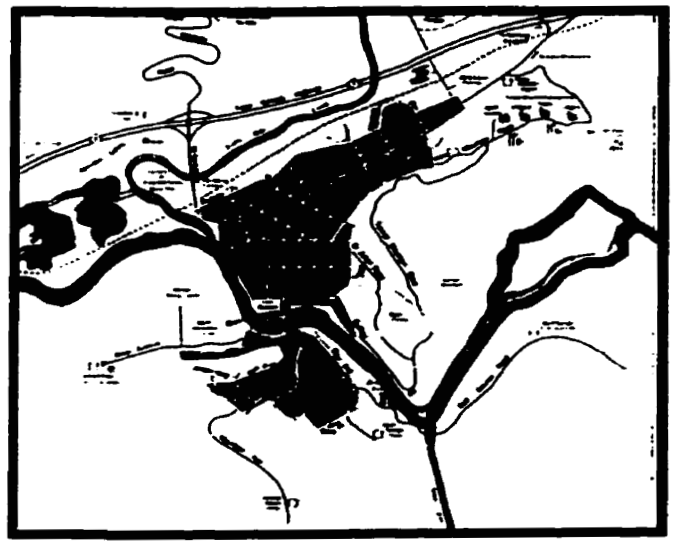


is stuck in an ongoing debate concerning development in the park. At the time this project began, the current limitations to development were not in place. Nonetheless, the programme addresses the need for low cost accomodation and wilderness educational programs. The hostel demonstrates an acceptable use within the boundaries of the park.



Located off the Trans Canada Highway, Banff is predominantly reached by automobile. Two exits provide entry to the town and converge at the north end of the Banff Avenue Bridge (figure 2). Train and bus stations are located at the northwest corner of the town. Although taxis and local bus service are

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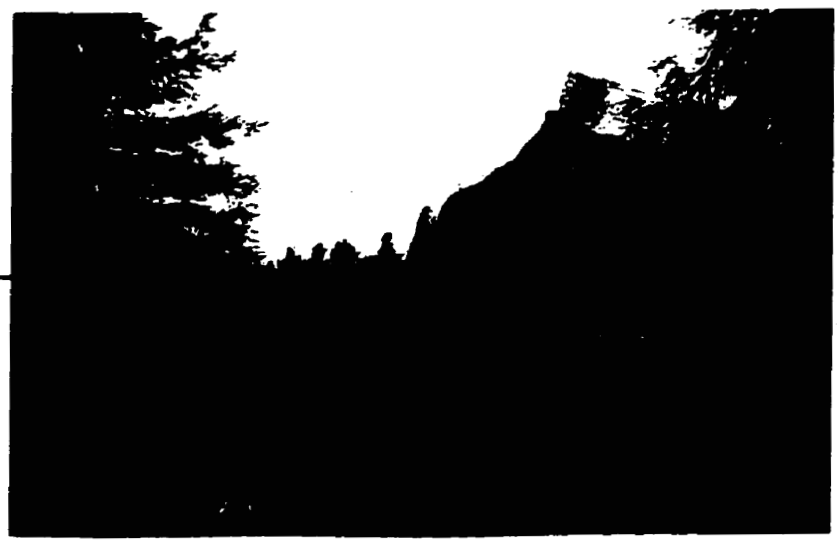
available, a pedestrian can easily traverse the town. The access roads from the highway form a triangle containing the main commercial area of the town. To many, Banff consists of the stretch of Banff Avenue between the face of Cascade Mountain and the Parks Administration



[1] Sandford, *The Book of Banff* 40.

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building. Sites of interest off this beaten past are located randomly throughout the town and anchor a spider web-like network that draws visitors to the edges of town. One of these arms stretches to the base of Sulphur Mountain and the Cave and Basin hot springs, the main impetus for the creation of the Recreation Grounds. The grounds sit along the access road to the springs and act as a break between it and the town proper (figure 4).

The recreation grounds sit in on a predominantly flat site in a crook in the Bow River in Vermilion Pass (figure 7). Located along the access road to the Cave and Basin Hot Springs, the grounds have historically acted as a break between the springs and the town proper. To the south, Cave Avenue marks the transition from flood plain to the base of Sulphur Mountain. The slope houses a row of deeply set back cabins that peek out from the spruce. On the other three sides groupings of spruce border the river and separate it from the expansive meadow. The Sawback Range is in full view to the northwest and the striking wedge form of Mount Rundle rises in the east (figure 6). The town of Banff is perceived more through memory and hearing than it is through site, although brief glimpses are possible through the trees and the streetlights illuminate the night sky. Proximity to both the services of an urban centre and the chance to explore the natural environment lets the visitor move between the two realms. Additionally, the site was also home to Frank Lloyd Wright's Banff Park Pavilion. A site with a built history allows the hostel to educate the visitor about our ever-changing relationship to the wilderness through building traditions. The recreation grounds contain a variety of site conditions and offer the opportunity to reintegrate the area, both functionally and physically, with the

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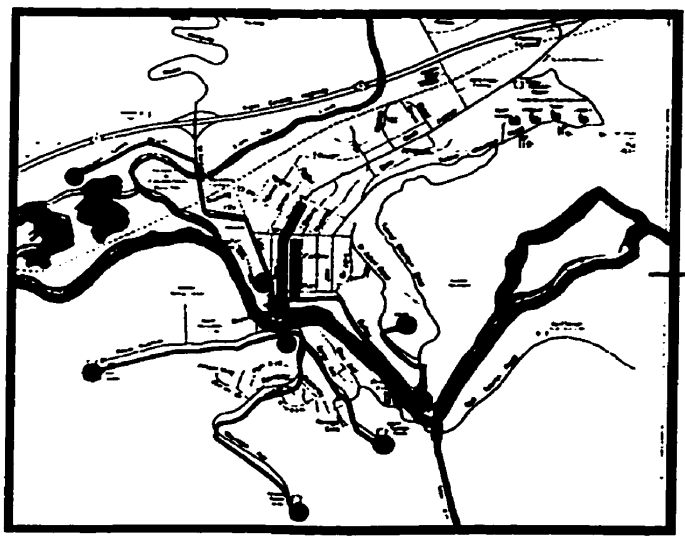


remainder of Banff.

Vehicular access to the grounds comes from two sources off Cave Avenue. Birch Avenue runs along the river past the Luxton Museum and the Rocky Mountain Co-op housing to a parking lot at the southeast corner of the grounds. Also, the road running north perpendicular to Cave Avenue to the riding stables veers to the east and encloses the sports fields to the north. It ends in a smaller parking lot. Walkers may access the site by following Birch Avenue or the riverbank until they are in the grounds. In the winter, the site may be accessed in a more direct route by crossing the frozen Bow.

The site is home to numerous recreational possibilities. Riding stables are situated to the north and the meadow is full of sports fields. A football field ringed by a track sits parallel to Cave Avenue and across the site from three ball diamonds. A tennis court adjacent to a parking lot occupies the middle ground. Various log shelters sit at the edge of the trees and act as picnic and barbecue areas. Trails for hiking, biking and cross-country skiing, depending on the season, meander through the trees and run the length of the road to the Cave and Basin historical site.

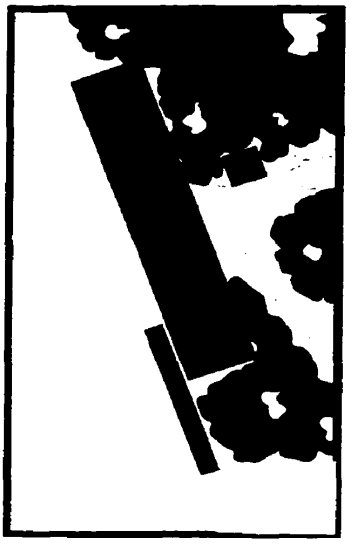
The line of line of trees ringing the meadow is the strongest force existing on the site (figures 5 and 8). No bushes or shrubs act as a transition between the tall pines and the short grass of the meadow, thus creating a dramatic edge condition. Brief glimpses of the Bow River, especially to the east where it closes in on the site, are also predominant. Furthermore, it is the closest point on the site to the town centre. As a result, the hostel will occupy the land in this location. A direct connection to the natural environment, either through the shape and scale of the building, natural materials, siting or landscaping is desirable. The building should be tied to the land and cannot exist as a separate entity. The site and building reinforce each other through the strategic placement of programme, materials respecting building traditions, and of environmentally friendly building practices.[2]

[2] Kapelos *Interpretations of Nature*, 39-40.

design principles

The heart of the design lies with three design principles that emerged over the course of the project; site specificity, precedent and programme. Each of these aspects push and pull the building into its resulting shape.

A direct connection to the natural environment, either through the shape and scale of the building, use of natural materials, siting or landscaping is desirable. The building should be tied to the land and cannot exist as a separate entity (figure 1). Consequently, the building straddles the line between meadow and forest in order to dramatize the existing site condition. The ground steps upward as you progress along the circulation spine in order to create an ever-changing vertical relationship to



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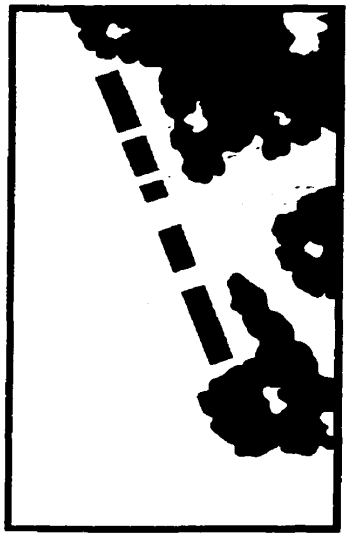
the natural surroundings, thus letting the user engage the landscape in various manners. The change in section is tempered by the simple, formal massing of building. The building falls as a line on the border between meadow and forest.

Architecture follows a continuum based on constant critique, reinvigoration, devaluation, and extension of earlier prototypes and models. Examining the styles of a region does not necessarily promote the idea of fixed styles for regions and typologies, but rather is a look at the truth of construction and site specificity. The project draws upon both historical and contemporary precedents from Scandinavia, the Adirondacks and the Canadian Rockies. For example, the gentle slope of the roof gains it massive and sheltering qualities in winter when it is blanketed with snow. Additionally, the slender form also is reminiscent of Wright's Banff Park Pavilion. The styles examined or not merely copied or dismissed based on aesthetics, but are integrated and modified according to the specific time, location and use of the project (figure 4).

More often than not, space allocation is left up to the client though it is the use of the building that gives it life. Trained in spatial design and organization, it is up to the designer to push and challenge the programme in an effort to create invigorating space that engages the user. For example, the circulation spine is generously proportioned to allow for common gathering places and chance encounters with other hostellers (figures 2 and 3). Rooms push in and out of the spine according to spatial needs, organization and relationship to the site. Other spaces in the hostel contain spatial transparencies and overlap in an effort to create a more open, communal feel in the building. The resulting form is a community of diverse programs



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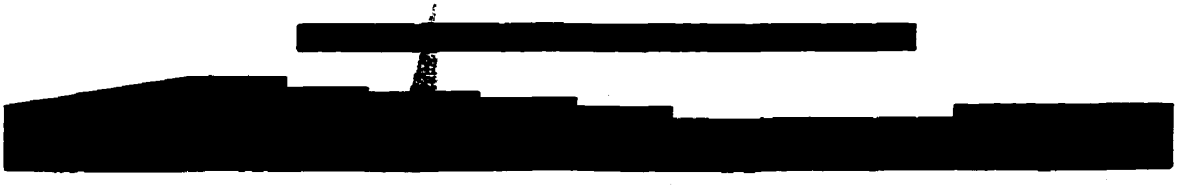

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banff townsite

Situated in the Bow Valley, Banff is synonymous with the tourist culture of the Canadian Rockies. The area is looked upon as a litmus test for new and innovative ideas and thus is fertile ground for the development of the project.

opportunities

Established in 1885, Banff is Canada's oldest national park. Its 6641 sq km encompass unsurpassed natural scenery and outdoor recreation. Available activities include hiking, biking, canoeing, climbing, whitewaterrafting and both cross-country and downhill skiing.

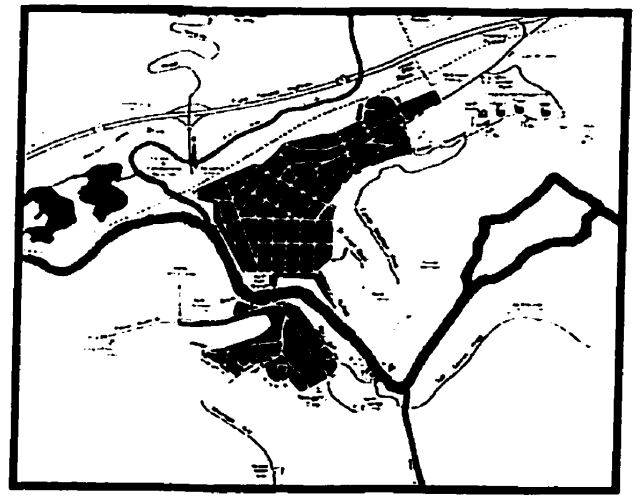
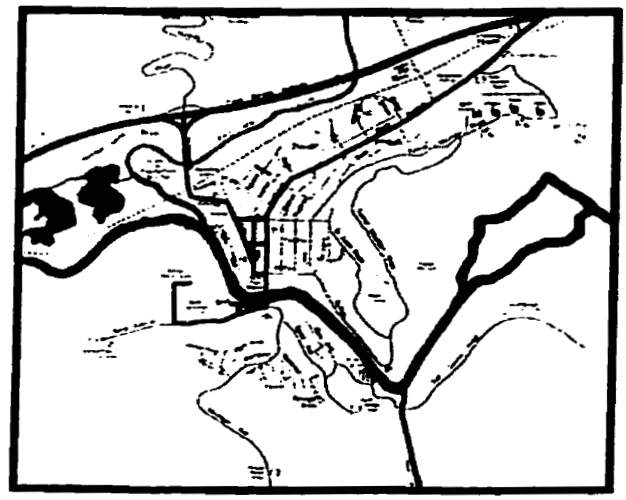


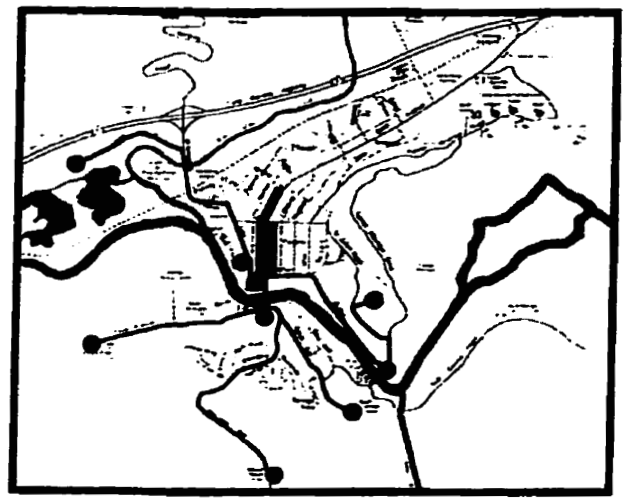
figure / ground

Located south of the Bow River and west of the Banff Avenue Bridge, the site sits on the periphery of the town. Proximity to both the services of an urban centre and the chance to explore the natural environment lets the visitor move between the two realms.



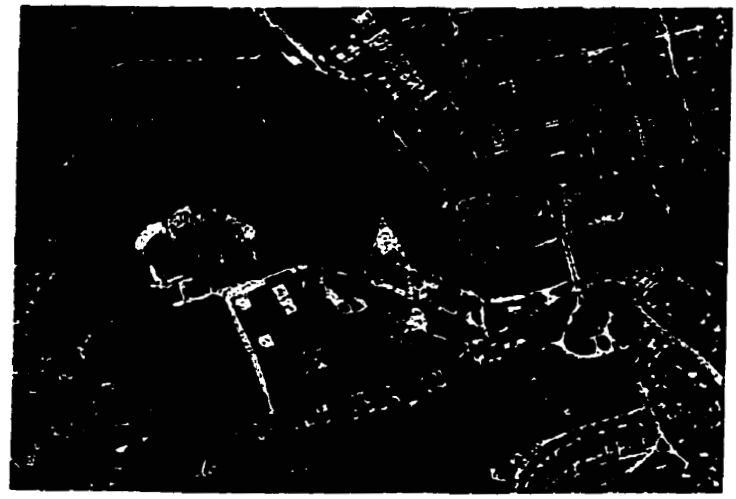
circulation

Located off the Trans Canada Highway, Banff is predominantly reached by automobile. Two exits provide entry to the town and converge at the north end of the Banff Avenue Bridge. Train and bus stations are located at the nw corner of the town. Although taxis and local bus service are available, the town can be easily traversed by a pedestrian.



points of interest

To many, Banff consists of the stretch between the face of Cascade Mountain and the Parks Administration building. Sites of interest off this beaten path are located randomly throughout the town and anchor a spider web-like network that draws visitors to the edges of town.



the recreation grounds

The Recreation Grounds sit in a crook of the Bow River in a flood plain. Located along the access road to the Cave and Basin Hot Springs, the grounds have historically acted as a break between the springs and the town proper.

mount rundle

The striking wedge form of Mount Rundle rises to the east over brief glimpses of the town of Banff. The Bow River wraps closest to the site behind these pine trees and can occasionally be seen through them.

sawback range

The Sawback Range is in full view to the northwest. The range consists of the popular ski area of Mount Norquay and the hiking destinations of Mount Edith and Mount Cory.

vermilion pass

The Vermilion Pass and the route to Lake Louise is visible to the west. The open expanse of the meadow offers panoramic views down the river valley and is reminscent of the prairies only an hour's drive to the east.

the bow river

Brief glimpses of the Bow River, especially to the east where it closes in on the site, are predominant. The town of Banff is also in this direction and is preceived more through memory and hearing than it is through sight, although the occasional glimpse is possible through the trees and the streetlights illuminate the night sky.

the trees and the meadow

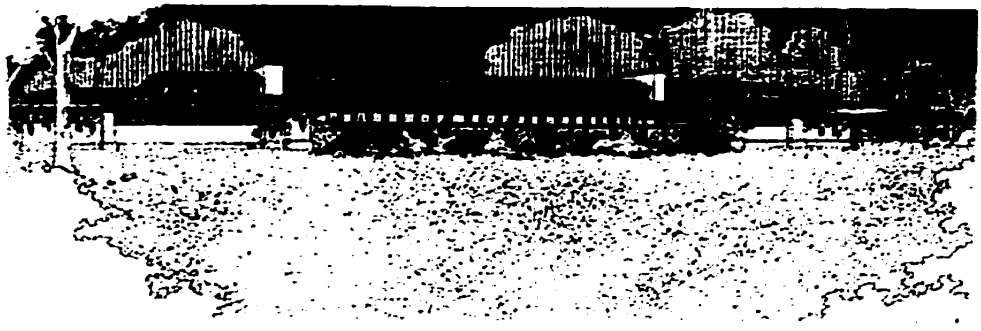
The line of trees ringing the meadow is the strongest force existing on the site. No bushes or shrubs act as a transition between the tall pines and the short grass of the meadow, thus creating a dramatic edge condition.

the grounds

The recreation grounds are full of recreational possibilities. Riding stables are situated to the north and the meadow is full of sports fields. Trails for hiking, biking and cross-country skiing, depending on the season, meander through the trees and run the length of the road to the Cave and Basin historical site.

frank lloyd wright

One of the most prolific and innovative designers of the twentieth century, Frank Lloyd Wright is one of the most recognizable names associated with American architecture yet many would be surprised to find out that Banff was once home to one of his buildings. Built in 1913 on the Recreation Grounds, the Banff Park Pavilion accommodated summertime parties and picnics and served as a resting point during the journey from the train to the cave and Basin hot springs.



the pavilion

Built at the end of Wright's Prairie Style Period, the pavilion stays true to the characteristics particular to his Oak Park projects. A long, low overhanging hipped roof interrupted by the stone masses of the fireplaces dominates the exterior impression. The axial massing stretches outward symmetrically from the main volume of the dance hall. The spaces flow into one another and are only loosely defined by such elements as differing roof planes and the fireplaces.

its fate

Not long after its completion, the pavilion came under criticism. Distance from the town centre and the locals desire for a winter recreational facility instead in its place led to it being ignored by the townspeople. Additionally, years of exceptionally high run-off led to extensive damage that eventually took its toll on the foundation, floor and lower woodwork. Continual repairs and maintenance took it toll on the patience of the town and the pavilion was bulldozed in 1938. In the end, the boggy land finally swallowed the remaining piles, foundations and any leftover debris during a flood in 1964.

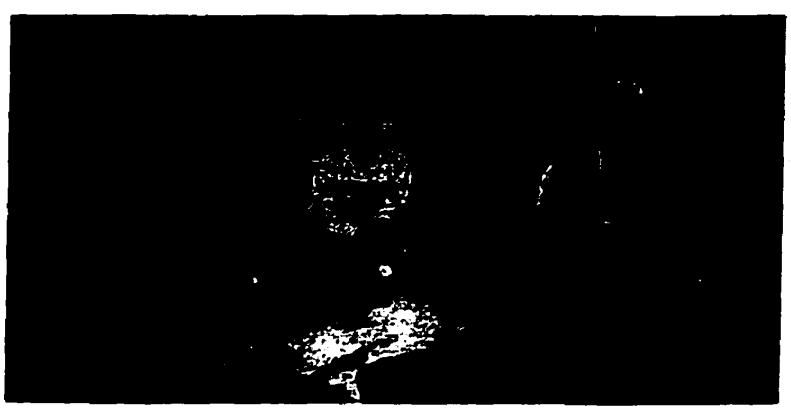
banff park pavilion

hostels

The idea of low cost accomodation for the traveller has been around for thousands of years but it was only the start of the current century when the hostel movement as it now stands began. The word 'hostel' does not describe a place as much as it does an attitude or philosophy, the coming together of culturally diverse people sharing wonders, high and low, of the travelling adventure.

north america's first hostel

Humbly emerging in 1933 at Bragg Creek, Alberta, hostelling began in Canada with a canvas tent set up by sisters Mary and Catherine Barclay. Popularity dictated the replacement of the tents with a wood cabin the following summer, steadily expanding into a network of cabins stretching between Banff and Lake Louise.



the hosteller

The hosteller is usually united with their fellow companions by a spirit of adventure or a youthfulness at heart. They chose the hostel route because they want to interact with their surroundings; they want to be participants, not mere observers. Their trips are usually only roughly planned and without itineraries, therefore allowing for last minute changes when something unexpected and exciting presents itself.

hiking

One of the most popular, and accessible, ways to experience the park is to hike in it. Getting off the beaten path and wandering along a wilderness trail offers sights and sounds unheard of in urban environments. Most of the trails are well maintained and marked and range from strolls to rugged alpine treks. A variety of trails means there's always more to explore, and favourite hikes beckon to you with their varying seasons and moods.

mountaineering

The thrill of summitting a peak and the physical, emotional and intellectual challenge it provides draws many to mountaineering. More technical demanding than hiking and sometimes requiring specialized gear, climbing mountains was one of the first draws of the Canadian Rockies. Banff and the surrounding area provide a variety of difficulties in climbs.

skiing

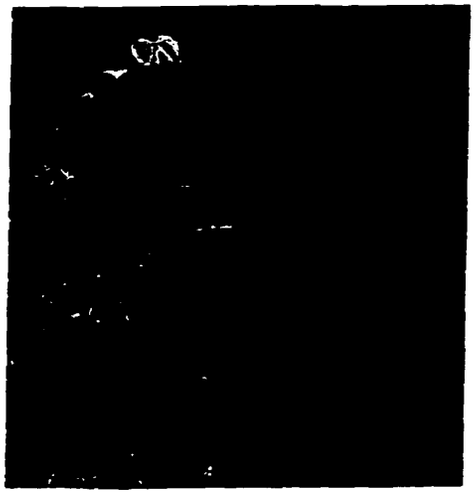
Whether gliding over maintained trails in the park, swooshing down the groomed slopes of a ski resort or telemarking backcountry bowls, skiing is one of the most popular winter activities in the region. The variety of terrain makes sure that skiers of all skill levels are accomodated.

boating

The water was the main means of travel for the fur traders when they first headed west. However, the mountains mean most of the water is a ragging current only suitable for kayakers and whitewater rafters. Calm bodies of water in the area include sections of the Bow River, the Vermilion Lakes and Lake Minnewanka.

rafting

Whitewater rafting provides an excellent combination of thrill and sightseeing from the waterways weaving throughout the area. Banff rivers vary from a float on the Bow River to a heart-stopper on the Kicking Horse.



mountain biking

A newcomer to the mountain recreation scene, the sport has extended its reach into more and more remote areas. Mountain biking is not allowed on all the trails of the park and are usually only permitted in areas designated for multiple-use. A popular bike ride in the area is the Banff - Jasper trip. Hostels are spread out along the route to accomodate travellers.

rock climbing

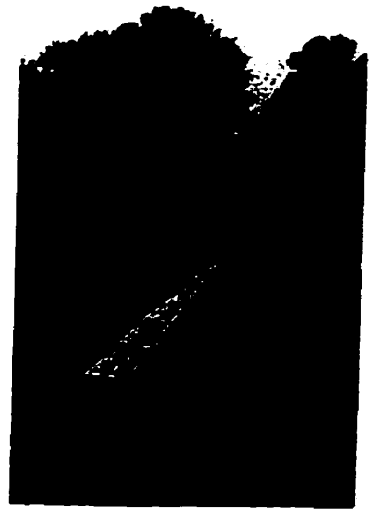
Climbing is a dynamic and gymnastic sport that differs substantially from its mountaineering roots. Sport climbing involves short routes with fixed anchors and may be done on a built climbing wall or on outdoor pitches. Instruction on a climbing wall insures a safe and controlled learning environment and may be used to teach programs ranging from begineer to advanced rescue.

ice climbing

Canada's frozen waterfalls makes the Rockies an ice climber's mecca. Sharing affinities to rock climbing, ice climbing may also be instructed on a climbing wall or out on a route.

horseback riding

Whether used by range riders to keep an eye on livestock or by park rangers to patrol the backcountry, horses have been travelling the trails of Banff for over one hundred years. Nowadays, the horse has taken the dual role of work animal and recreation animal and may be used on many of the designated trails in the region.

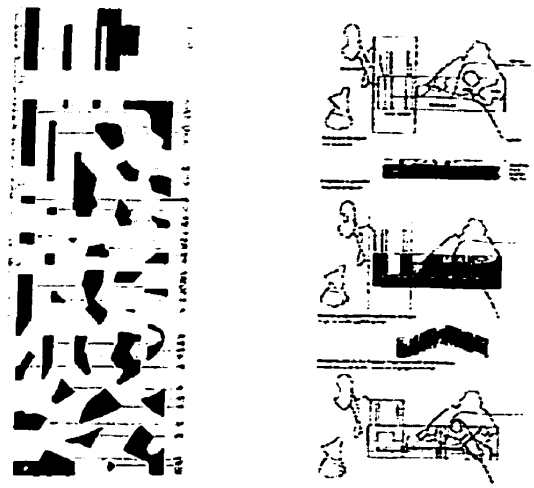


sense of place

A direct connection to the natural environment, either through the shape and scale of the building, use of natural materials, siting or landscaping is desirable. The building should be inexplicably tied to the land and cannot exist as a separate entity.

precedent

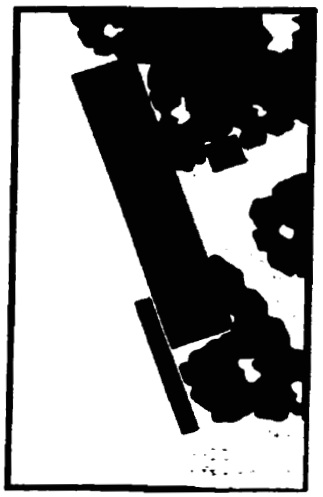
Architecture follows a continuum based on constant critique, reinvigoration, devaluation and extension of earlier prototypes and models. Examining the styles of a region does not necessarily promote the idea of fixed styles for regions and typologies, but rather is a look at the truth of construction and site specificity.



programme

More often than not, space allocation is left up to the client even though it is the use of the building that gives it life. Trained in spatial design and organization, it is up to the designer to push and challenge the programme in an effort to create invigorating space that engages the user.

design principles

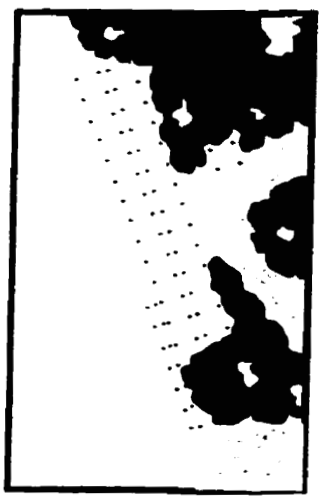


composition

The building straddles the line between meadow and forest in order to dramatize the existing site condition. The slender form also is reminscent of Wright's Banff Park Pavilion.

circulation spine

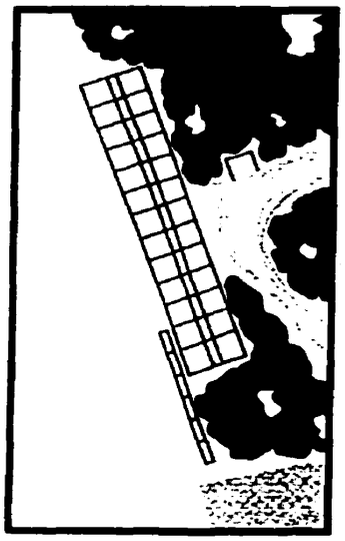
A circulation spine with periodic links through the building visually connects the meadow and the forest. The space is generously proportioned to allow for common gathering places and chance encounters with other hostellers.



structural expression

A frequent local characteristic is the expression of the building's structure on the exterior in the form of oversize wood columns, exposed heavy timber trusses and brackets, stone pilasters, buttresses and arches, masonry lintels and sills, and exposed cross-bracing.

design principles

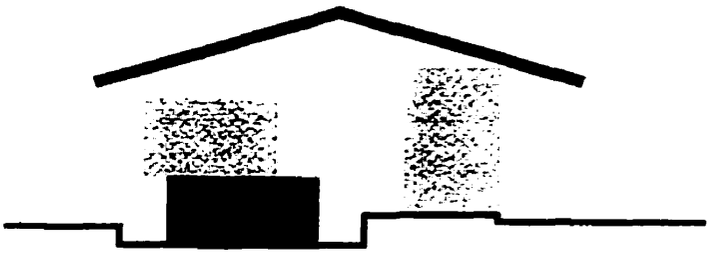


grid

The spatial organization of the building is derived from the structural grid. Rooms push in and out of the grid according to spatial needs, organization and relationship to the site.

ground

The ground steps upward as you progress along the circulation spine. The everchanging vertical relationship to the natural surroundings heightens the dramatic aspects of the site by letting the user engage the landscape in various manners.



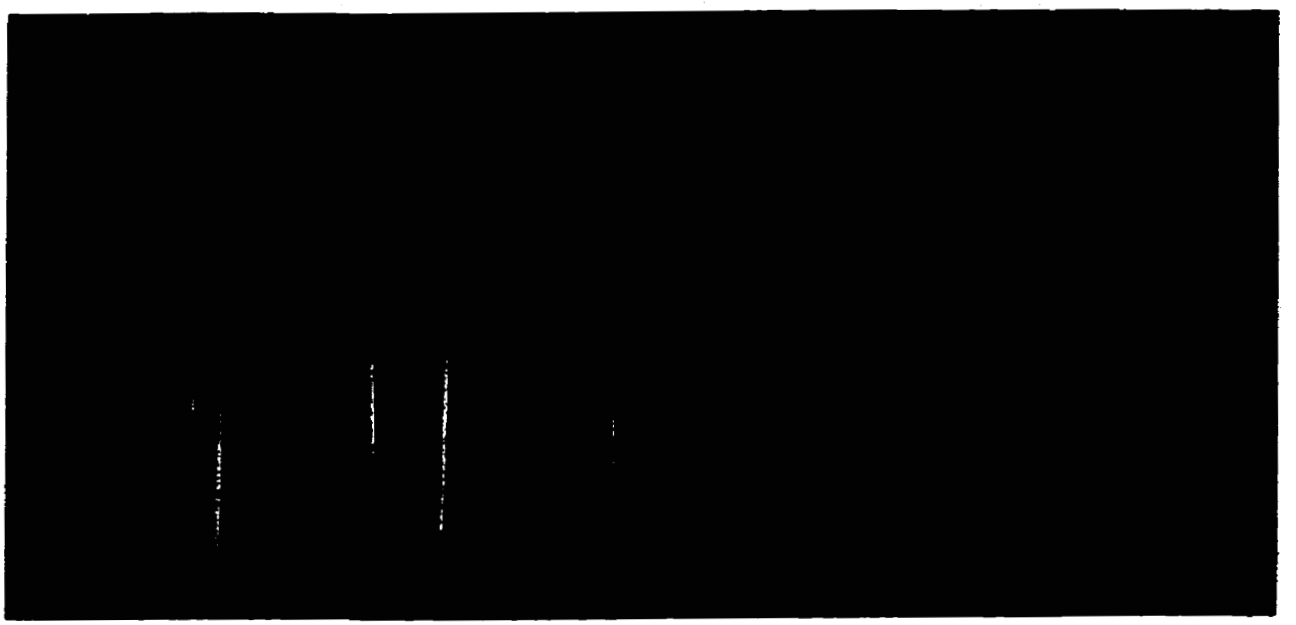
community

The hostel is a community of diverse programs connected by the circulation spine and sheltered under an all-encompassing roof.

design principles

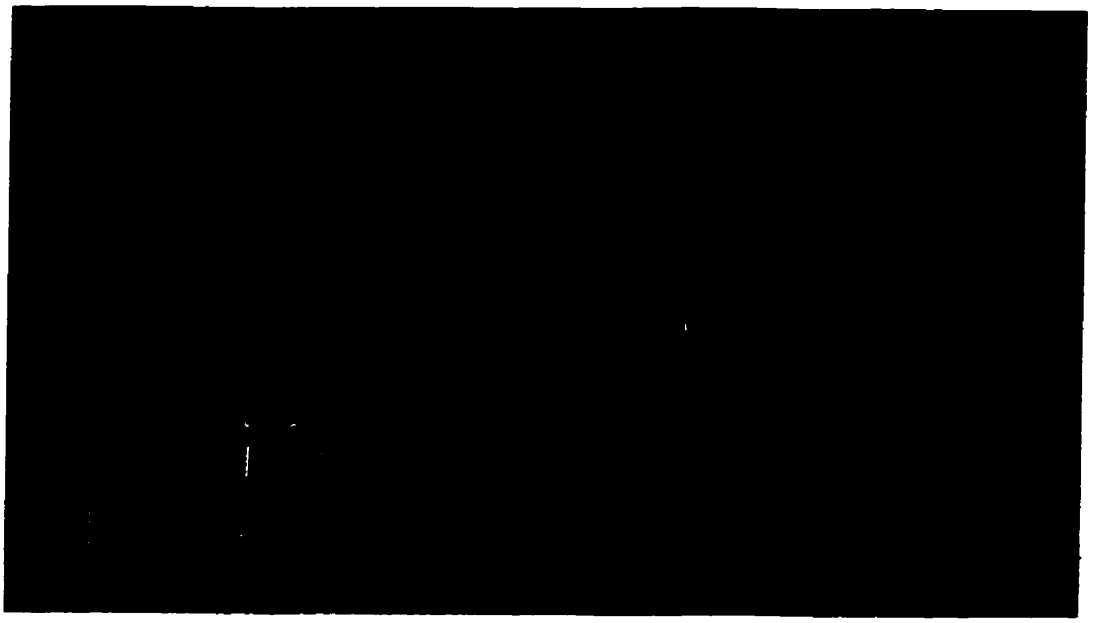
The meadow elevation

Detail of the meadow elevation



The open house

The meeting house



The stair house

The treehouse

figures

2.1.3 Rygnedstadloftet, Valle in Setesdal, c1700
Source: Abrahamsen, *Building in Norway* 24.

2.1.4 Eidsborg stav church, Telemark, 1200-1250
Source: Abrahamsen, *Building in Norway* 9.

2.1.5 Interior, Lom stav church, Gudbrandsdal, 13c
Source: Abrahamsen, *Building in Norway* 13.

2.1.6 Plan and section looking towards the entrance, Urnes stav church, Sogn, 1100-1150.
Source: Kavli, *Norwegian Architecture Past and Present* 18.

2.1.7 Isometric drawing showing the construction of a stav church. Gol stav church, Hallingdal, 1200.
Source: Kavli, *Norwegian Architecture Past and Present* 18.

2.1.8 Sections and first floor plan. Loft, Tveito, Telemark, 14c.
Source: Kavli, *Norwegian Architecture Past and Present* 27.

2.1.9 Detail of loft in Setesdal, 1650.
Source: Abrahamsen, *Building in Norway* 20.

2.2.1 Adirondacks overview.
Source: Atwill, "Roughing It In Style"

2.2.2 Adirondacks
Source: Atwill, "Roughing It In Style"

2.2.3 William West Durant outside Camp Pine Knot
Source: Atwill, "Roughing It In Style"

2.2.4 Map showing the Adirondacks in Northeastern USA
Source: Mitchell, "Adirondack High", 126.

2.2.5 Detailed map of the Adirondacks
Source: Mitchell, "Adirondack High", 126.

2.2.6 Camp Interior
Source: Atwill, "Roughing It In Style"

2.2.7 Boathouse in the Adirondacks
Source: Mitchell, "Adirondack High".

2.3.1 Banff Avenue, 1887
Source: Pole, *The Canadian Rockies* 14.

2.3.2 Postcard.
Source: Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.

2.3.3 Skoki Lodge.
Source: Pole, *The Canadian Rockies* 97.

2.3.4 Swiss guides at the 1907 Alpine Club of Canada camp in Paradise Valley.
Source: Pole, *The Canadian Rockies* 50.

2.3.5 Banff Parks Museum.
Source: Jeff Howlett.

2.3.6 Interior, Banff Parks Museum.
Source: Jeff Howlett.

2.3.7 Exterior detail, Banff Parks Museum.
Source: Jeff Howlett.

3.0.1 Plan, Mies van der Rohe
Source: Frampton, *Modern Architecture.*

3.0.2 Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye
Source: Frampton, *Modern Architecture.*

3.0.3 Coop Himmelblau's Open House, Malibu, USA, 1983.
Source: Nouver, *The End of Architecture?*

3.1.1 View of one of the ateliers
Source: Almaas, "State of the Art".

3.1.2 Site Plan
Source: Almaas, "State of the Art".

3.1.3 Interior of a typical atelier
Source: Almaas, "State of the Art".

3.1.4 Interior of the artists' workshop
Source: Almaas, "State of the Art".

3.2.1 View of the front entry
Source: Digby-Jones, "Talking to the Trees" 58.

3.2.2 View from the lakeside
Source: Dixon, "House of the Forest".

3.2.3 Exploded axonometric
Source: Digby-Jones, "Talking to the Trees" 59.

3.2.4 View looking down the stairway
Source: Dixon, "House of the Forest".

3.2.5 Floor Plans
Source: Dixon, "House of the Forest".

3.3.1 Banff Avenue, 1998
Source: Jeff Howlett.

3.3.2 Douglas Cardinal's artist cabin, Leighton Artists' Colony, Banff
Source: Jeff Howlett.

3.3.3 Douglas Cardinal's artist cabin, Leighton Artists' Colony, Banff
Source: Jeff Howlett.

3.3.4 Front Entry, Valley of the Ten Peaks Lodge, Lake Louise
Source: Jeff Howlett.

3.3.5 Ski hill elevation
Source: Jeff Howlett.

3.3.6 Interior view from the upper balcony
Source: Jeff Howlett.

3.3.7 The massive stone fireplace dominating the interior
Source: Jeff Howlett.

3.3.8 Front Elevation, Whyte Musem of the Canadian Rockies
Source: Jeff Howlett.

4.0.1 Front Elevation, Banff Park Pavilion
Source: Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.

4.0.2 Rendering of the pavilion by Frank Lloyd Wright
Source: The University of Calgary Fine Arts Slide Library.

4.0.3 Interior view of the main space
Source: Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.

4.0.4 Ground Floor Plan
Source: Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.

4.0.5 Exterior view with Mount Rundle in the background
Source: Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.

4.0.6 The Banff Park Pavilion engulfed by flood waters
Source: Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.

5.0.1 Raising the tent walls at the first Bragg Creek Hostel
Source: Cameron, *Kananaskis*, 133.

5.0.2 Locations of Alberta's hostels
Source: Alberta Hostels pamphlet.

5.0.3 Hostel sign in Kananaskis Country
Source: Jeff Howlett.

5.0.4 Backpackers enjoying a campfire
Source: Alberta Hostels pamphlet.

6.0.1 Santiago Calatrava, *BCE Place: Gallery and Heritage Square*, Toronto, Canada, 1987-1992.
Source: Sharp, *Santiago Calatrava* 39.

6.0.2 Fellers cutting into the trunk of a tree
Source: Elliot, *Technics and Architecture* 14.

6.0.3 Valley of the Ten Peaks Lodge under construction
Source: Jeff Howlett.

7.0.1 Banff from Cascade Mountain
Source: Jeff Howlett.

7.0.2 Transportation Route Diagram
Source: Jeff Howlett.

7.0.3 Aerial Photo of Banff and surrounding area
Source: Mackimmie Library Maps.

7.0.4 Figure / Ground Study
Source: Jeff Howlett.

7.0.5 View to the southeast of the site
Source: Jeff Howlett.

7.0.6 The Bow River from the site
Source: Jeff Howlett.

7.0.7 The Recreation Grounds
Source: Jeff Howlett.

7.0.8 Points of Interest
Source: Jeff Howlett.

7.0.9 The dramatic edge of trees and meadow
Source: Jeff Howlett.

8.0.1 Carl Andre, *Secant*, Roslyn, New York, 1977. One hundred sections of Douglas pine wooden beams, each measuring 12 x 12 x 36 inches; the whole work measuring 12 inches x 300 feet.
Source: Tiberghien, *Land Art* 37.

8.0.2 Overall massing strategy
Source: Jeff Howlett.

8.0.3 Conceptual plan showing the circulation spine
Source: Jeff Howlett.

8.0.4 conceptual section through the project
Source: Jeff Howlett.

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