

Preserving Soul: A New Hall for the Village of Prospect

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kmaq'i,
the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.
We are all Treaty people.

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Abstract

As global forces homogenize diverse places, rich local knowledge is eroding, prompting individuals to seek fulfillment beyond their rural communities. The solution lies in reconnecting people with their localities, fostering a sense of belonging and rootedness. To achieve this, the establishment of shared spaces that celebrate local idiosyncrasies is essential. A study of vernacular approaches to landscape and building becomes a guide in crafting a place-specific architecture, addressing the losses incurred by globalization. When the village of Prospect, Nova Scotia lost its church and church hall to private development, it disrupted the community cohesion and left residents with nowhere to gather as a community. A new community hall will be established that takes the essence of the church, Prospect's former shared space, and shape it into an architecture that promotes a stewardship for the land and nourishes the village's soul, thus reducing the need of travelling elsewhere to belong.

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To my roommates for encouraging me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

A Global Age

Concern for particular places is fading as the world becomes ever more connected and interdependent through the advancement of trade and technology (Policy Horizons 2018). While this is beneficial in some regards, our cultures, architecture, ways of life, and places are slowly becoming homogenized (Policy Horizons 2018). This is particularly evident in the built environment with a rise in standardized approaches to building and global architectural styles. A building in New York might possess the same qualities as one in Beijing, London, Sydney, Cape Town, Sao Paulo, and so on (Moore 2001). In a global society, it is less common for an individual to stay in one place for their entire life which can disdain a sense of belonging to a particular community. According to a report by Mustel Group and Sotheby's International Realty, more than 80 per cent of respondents aged between 18 to 28 who live in urban centers are worried that they will not be able to afford and purchase a home in the community of their choice (SIRC 2021). With the rise in renting, the challenge of fostering a robust community may increase due to constant mobility among individuals.



Aerial view of Levittown, New York (Sheidlower 2020).

Exploitative Development

As the world experiences the impacts of climate change and the exploitation of its resources, it is important now more than ever that people care about the wellbeing of places. When people do not develop a sensitivity towards a particular place, it can leave landscapes and fragments of the past vulnerable to exploitative development with no

pattern of purpose or relationship. (Relph 1976). Distinctive landscapes are what contribute to the uniqueness of various parts of the world (Frampton 1983). When architectural design is responsive to the land and its features, as found in most vernacular architecture, it generates architectural distinctiveness that offers diverse experiences. (Relph 1976). If communities maintain their distinctiveness, the individuals within them adopt an identity closely aligned with that of the place itself (Relph 1976). However, in a continually globalizing world marked by a sense of what Relph would describe as “sameness,” the ability for people to connect with a specific locale becomes increasingly challenging (Relph 1976). Identity transcends a simple geographical location or address; rather, it is intricately connected to our experiential interactions with places (Relph 1976). The significance individuals give to places shapes their sense of identity, rather than relying solely on an external view of those locations.

Loss of Community Cohesion in Rural Areas

When a rural community loses the industry that came to shape it, people typically move away or turn to a nearby urban center for employment. What was once an independent entity, becomes an extension of the urban environment which people rely on. Without independence, places can lose their unique identities that help develop roots and provide diverse experiences (Relph 1976). Living in an urban dependent rural community can make it difficult to feel like you belong, since so much time is spent moving elsewhere to be a part of something. In this global age, the home can now be seen as a marketable good where

people may find it increasingly difficult to establish roots in a particular place (Relph 1976). This can leave landscapes vulnerable to exploitation and development with no pattern of purpose or relationship.

This loss of cohesion is being felt particularly in urban dependent rural communities (Oncesu and Robertson 2010). A report conducted in the fishing village of Newport, Nova Scotia found that the effects of globalization and population decline have led to a change in leisure styles. The study notes that the town's economy has changed from being dependent on resource extraction to resource appreciation, where people spend more time leaving the town for work and recreation. The youth of the town cannot stay as there is no work left due to the decline in the fishery. As individualized recreational activities and pursuits in Newport increased, the residents slowly became segregated and resulted in a loss of community cohesion (Oncesu and Robertson 2010).



The former St. Barnabas Anglican Church in the Head of Chezzetcook, Nova Scotia (Rent 2022).

Churches have long acted as the neighborhood organizations of rural areas (McRae 2023). Offering opportunities for volunteering, and social events where people can interact with their neighbors and feel a sense of belonging amongst a community. Across Canada, churches are closing as there becomes less of a following with newer generations (McRae 2023). The current model of the church community might also be restricting to individuals of other beliefs or backgrounds which can be inflicting for connecting an entire community. With many rural communities relying on churches for recreation and social gathering, once they are closed there may not be any space left for people to gather.



A group of volunteers from the village have launched a fundraiser to save the former Our Lady of Mount Carmel church in Prospect, and the adjacent hall, from demolition. JEFF HARPER/METRO

Group prays to save soul of town

PROSPECT VILLAGE

Campaign to turn church into community centre launched



Yvette d'Entremont
Metro | Halifax

For more than 200 years, a church and its steeple have served as a beacon for residents and visitors to the seaside village of Prospect.

A community group is now trying to keep the church and adjacent hall from being sold and potentially demolished.

"We've heard stories from so many people who have memories of Prospect either summering in the village or they grew up there. And it all really revolves around the church," Laura O'Hearn, president of the Prospect Old Church Association, said Tuesday.

"Once you get to Prospect, you'll see the church is the dominant structure, and outside the church it's really just the houses that remain. All the stores are gone.... The church really re-

mains the last place that as a community we can come together," she said.

In the summer of 2014, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Halifax and Yarmouth decided to deconsecrate the church, Our



The church really remains the last place that as a community we can come together. Laura O'Hearn

Lady of Mount Carmel, and sell the historic property.

Although the church and hall remained available for community use throughout 2015, both buildings were closed in early

2016 and are now selling for an asking price of \$334,900.

"We launched our fundraising campaign last week.... It is really a huge responsibility for a few volunteers to take on," O'Hearn said.

However, the group is optimistic. They have already received support locally and from as far away as Georgia and Texas.

The association conducted a survey followed by a community

meeting in the fall of 2014 to determine what residents wanted. O'Hearn said they were enthusiastic about finding uses for the space that maintained the peacefulness of their small village.

"Our primary interest is to hold community events, music events, community suppers," O'Hearn said. "However, to make ends meet we will also need to rent out the space and we have heard from a number of groups that are interested in using the space for anything from yoga to research and even a music school."

"We'd also love to offer the occasional wedding and we're

very excited to be able to open it up to groups of people who wouldn't previously be able to get married in a beautiful little old Catholic church. There's so much that we can do with this space."

The community's first church was erected in 1794. It expanded over the years but was destroyed by fire in 1921. The current structure was built in 1922.

"The church is a beacon and an icon and we want to preserve that and take stewardship for both historical reasons and the continued culture and health and vibrancy of our community," O'Hearn said.

A newspaper clipping that covers the church closure in Prospect Village, Nova Scotia (Prospect Old Church Association 2016).

Chapter 2: The Village of Prospect

Personal Basis of Inquiry

I was born in the city of Halifax but moved to the village of Prospect, Nova Scotia at the age of 2, so my formative years were spent in Prospect. My family's decision to relocate from the city to Prospect was driven by a preference for rural life, with the added benefit of easy commuting for my parents. Although we have moved away from Prospect since, my mom often expresses that her soul belongs there. Despite not residing in Prospect since I was eleven, it also feels like my roots are firmly planted there. When I lead friends on hikes along the High Head Trail, memories of playing on the granite outcrops as a child flood back, fueled by the scent of blueberry bushes and the sound of the harbor's signal buoy bouncing with the waves. Visiting Prospect transports me back to my childhood, and I consider myself fortunate to have experienced that time in such a special place.



My brother and I sitting amongst the rocks.



Overlooking the village of Prospect from the High Head Trail, a 7.7km hiking trail along the Atlantic Ocean.



The boarded up church.



The church and community hall before being sold (Google Maps 2017).

However, a recent visit to Prospect left me feeling less nostalgic and joyful than previous visits. The village seemed altered, as if something vital was missing. Driving slowly down the main road, I noticed the absence of a significant old house that once stood close to the road; it had been demolished. As I approached the two-hundred-year-old church at the village center, I was disheartened to find it boarded up and abandoned. The community hall, which had always been beside the church, had vanished, replaced by a new home. Standing in front of the space where the old community hall once stood and gazing at the abandoned church, it felt as if there was a hole in the village, as if a piece of my childhood had been taken away. The memories of dances, craft fairs, the library, plays, and the memorable lobster suppers, all centered around the community hall, became more challenging to imagine in my mind's eye, as the building was nowhere to be seen—only the granite outcrops remained.

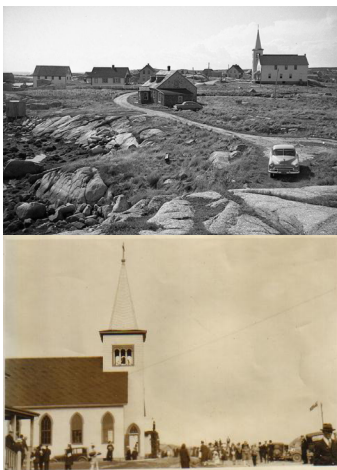


The church, now abandoned, and the hall, gone.



Watching the sunset from the public wharf.

This thesis has revealed a history of the village that I was previously unaware of. An entire fishing industry once dominated these shores, and hardly any traces of it remain as most of the wharves and stages that supported the fishery have vanished with the tide.



Since 1794 a church has stood at the middle of the community of Prospect. In 1922 the community gathered to open and christen a new building to replace the church that had burned down a year earlier. (Prospect Genealogical Website, 2023).

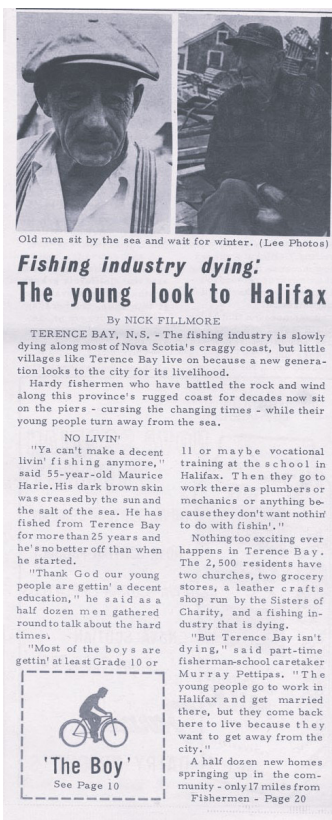
The Church and the Fishery

One of the earliest documented descriptions of Prospect can be found in a volume named “Description and Natural History of the Coasts of North American-(Acadia)” (Ryan 1987). The book was written by Nicholas Denys, the former governor of Acadia under King Louis XIV of France, and was published in 1671 after returning to France from Acadia (Ryan 1987). In the book Denys describes Prospect as such:

On the right one does not find good woods. There is nothing here but bald rocks, rather high. Among these rocks there is a little harbor where vessels anchor and where men are often found making their fishery and drying their fish upon the rocks which are isolated. A little outside these islands the fishing is very good and abounds in cod. Mackerel and herring are very abundant on the coast. This place is called Passapec (Ryan 1987).

Passapec was the MicMac name of the area until 1754 when it was settled by a small group of Irish Catholic fishermen and became known as Prospect (Ryan 1987). Prospect’s first church was erected in 1794 and has played an important part of the village’s history (Bousquet 2014). In the middle part of the 19th century, the village of Prospect flourished as a fishing community. The village was so prosperous that it built a new church in 1852 and was described by parish priest John Lanigan as such:

It was a pretty and well-appointed church, its becomingly adapted architecture putting it in striking contrast to the unpretentious appearance of the first Catholic church on the western shore. It was God’s new home in Prospect. Built to seat nearly five-hundred persons, there it stood, the day it was blessed, an imposing structure on elevated land, facing and commanding as it were, the broad Atlantic, with its stately spire pointing heavenwards – homewards – as if silently saying: “Glory to God in the highest”; indeed, it was the source of great joy, consolation and peace to those souls of good will who faithfully labored for its erection. It was a great reward for their preservice; it was a beautiful memorial to the propagation of the faith (Ryan 1987).



A newspaper clipping talking about the dying fishing industry in Terence Bay, a village near Prospect (Nova Scotia Archives 2020).

Despite the village's economic success of the mid-19th century, it began to experience hard times throughout the 1860s and 1870s as younger residents began to find work in the nearby city of Halifax and elsewhere across Canada or the United States (Bousquet 2014). However, due to the high tariffs of the National Policy, the village began to grow again after 1879 and its population increased to nearly 1000 people in the 1890s (Bousquet 2014). At the peak of the fishing season, the village's small harbor saw as many as 40 tall ships that brought salt and ice back to New England. During these times, Prospect had stores, bars, dance halls, a post office, and a school (Bousquet 2014).

The village's 69-year-old church burnt down in 1921 and by this time, the remaining population of the village could not secure enough money to build a new one. However, former residents of the village that lived in Halifax raised money to rebuild the church which brought the sense of community and belonging back to Prospect for the next several decades (Bousquet 2014).



Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Prospect Village (Prospect Genealogical Website, 2023).

A Fragmented Community

Prospect's population began to decline in the mid to late 20th century along with many other rural Nova Scotian villages (Bousquet 2014). During this time the local grocery and stores began to close, the Post Office turned into a community mailbox, and the school shut its doors for the last time. Eventually, the fishing industry that once defined Prospect became extinct with no fishermen left in the village. While Prospect transitioned from a fishing village to a suburb of Halifax, the church and community hall survived for a little while longer. The community hall was home to a small lending library and hosted a number of events such as the annual lobster supper, dances, craft fairs, and plays. The church and old hall were the remaining pieces that glued the village together and allowed people to gather as an individual community where one could find a sense of belonging.



A for sale sign sits at the steps of the church (Prospect Old Church Association, n.d.).

Due to declining congregations and the high costs of operating these old buildings, many churches across Nova Scotia have closed, Prospect's church being one of them (Bousquet 2014). In 2014, the 220-year-old church held its final mass and was then deconsecrated and sold to a private developer along with the community hall (Bousquet 2014). A few years later, the hall was demolished, and a house was put in its place, while the church remained abandoned.

Prospect could now be considered an urban dependent rural community, since most residents of the village need to travel elsewhere for employment, recreation, or social gatherings. As Halifax continues to expand and new people move to the village, it might be increasingly difficult for new residents to find a sense a community and belonging here with nowhere



People gathering outside of the old community hall, which is now demolished (Prospect Genealogical Website, 2023).

to practice community-oriented activities that the church and hall achieved for so long. A poem written by Ralph Welsh illustrates the transition Prospect has experienced, where memories of the past are fading, and new residents may not develop the same understanding for the place as people once had.

The following is a poem written by Ralph Welsh. It was given to me by our cousin Dot Christian shortly before she died.

Many years have passed at Prospect since the tide came in
 Bringing on its heaving bosom men determined there to win
 To themselves a little homestead with garden and green sward
 A school to educate their children and a church to worship
 God

Very few there are remaining, who knew Prospect at its peak
 When the hills resounded laughter and a thousand walked the
 street
 They have gone away forever, like the trees on Taffy's beach
 They joined that long procession, the end our souls may
 reach

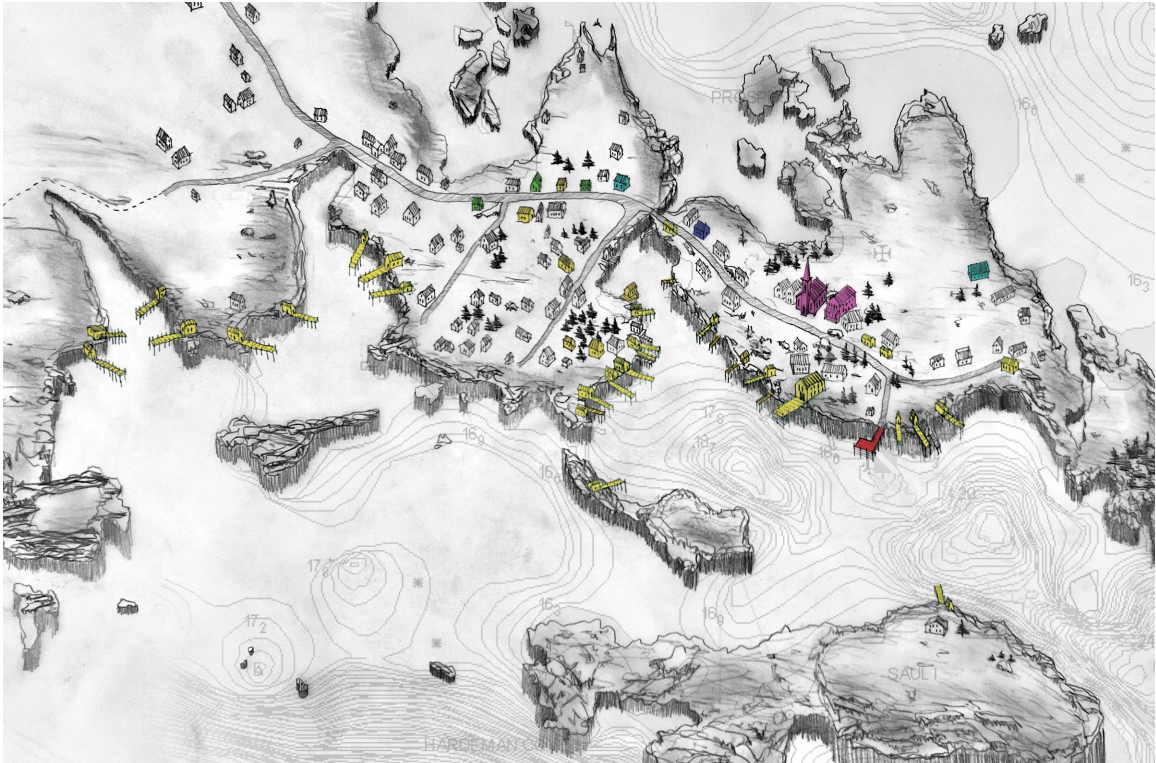
But who can visualize the change, when a million years have
 flown
 The people then will all be strange, the shoals will be
 unknown
 They will not know about Christian's Rock, The Puffer, or
 White Horse
 And the mackerel schooling down apast will be unmolested in
 their course

On winter's night when the folks have gone and left you all
 alone
 We will return in spirit along the shores to roam
 There will be no sorrow in our hearts, no greedy hands to
 clutch
 But the whole night through we'll be with you to help you
 stand your watch

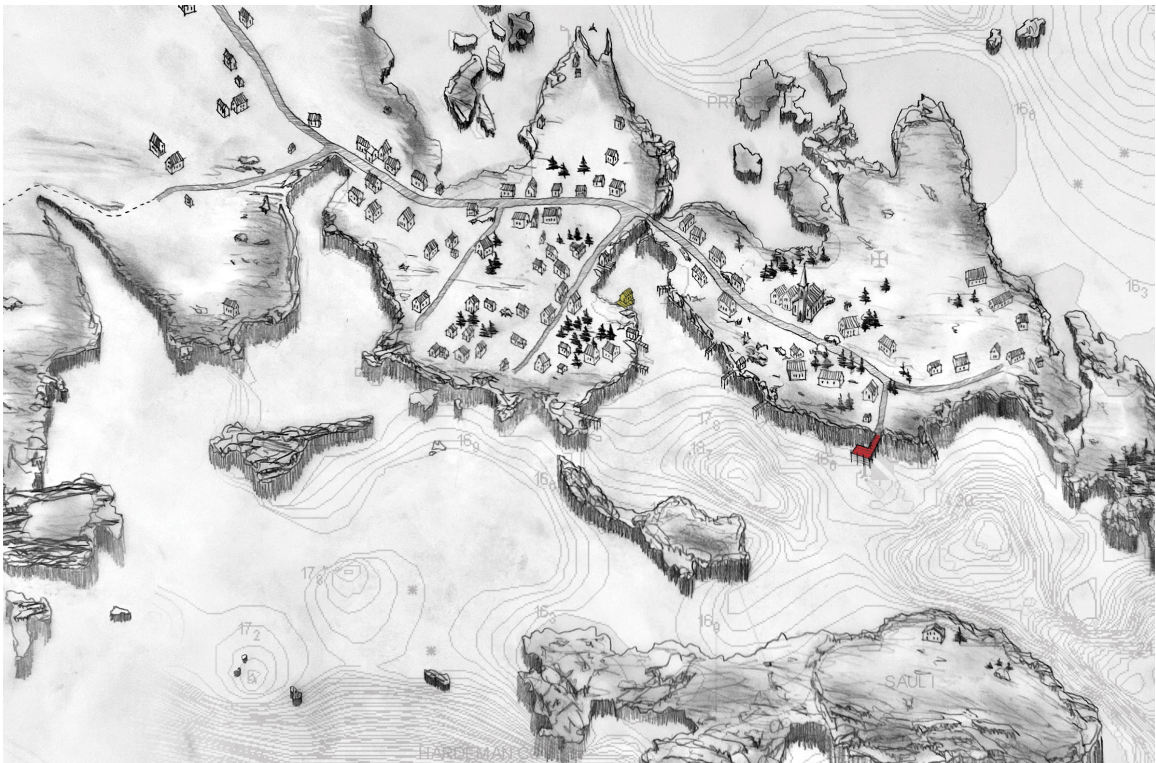
The same old waves are restless, they break into the night
 Then speed to shore in haste, like a racehorse in their
 flight
 As they strike Saul's head they send aloft the spray, like
 some gigantic host
 That seems to beckon us to pray for dear old Prospect's
 ghost

The tide is quickly ebbing now, for me the dawn has passed
 But my thoughts are still with you old town, and will be to
 the last
 When I think of those who've tried so hard, it is then I
 always hope
 That God will bless them all because the tide is going out.

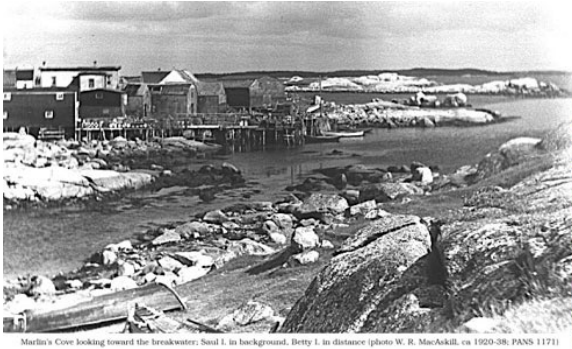
A poem about the changes Prospect has experienced.



Prospect during the height of the fishery included stores (green), school (teal), grocer (blue), a church and community hall (purple), public wharf (red), and numerous fishing stages and wharves (yellow) which dotted the coastline.



Today, all that remains is the public wharf (red), and one original stage/wharf that has been preserved (yellow).



Marlin's Cove looking toward the breakwater; Seal I. in background, Betty I. in distance (photo W. R. MacAskill, ca 1920-38; PANS 1171)



© D. Grant 2000



Marlin's Cove, closer to the breakwater, from Mason's Point off Indian Point Road (photo W. R. MacAskill, ca 1920-38; PANS 2872)



© D. Grant 2000



Marlin's Cove from Mason's Point off Indian Point Road (photo W. R. MacAskill, ca 1920-38; PANS 1458)



© D. Grant 2000



Upper end of Prospect harbour from Barber's Hill, across from the church. (photo W. R. MacAskill ca 1920-38; PANS 0590)

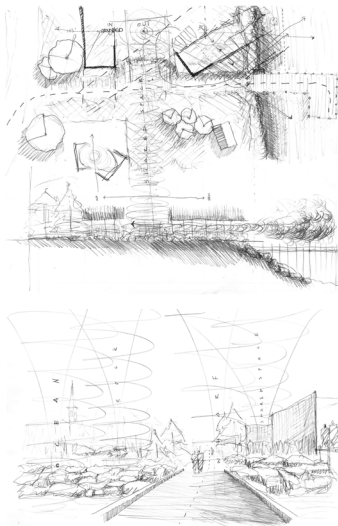


© D. Grant 2000

Before and after photos of various locations around Prospect. Over the years, most of the original infrastructure that supported the fishing industry has disappeared (Prospect Genealogical Website, 2023).

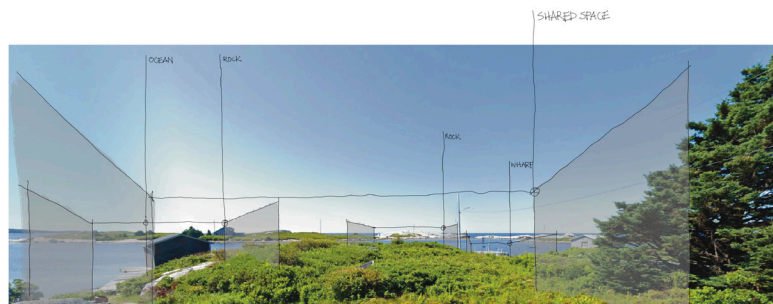
Preserving Soul

It is apparent through Welsh's poem that the village has changed drastically over the years. In the poem, Welsh worries about a future where "the people then will all be strange, the shoals will be unknown". With the inshore fishery extinct, and nowhere for villagers to gather, this future could be near. To combat this, a new hall will be established that connects people with each other, and the landscape that they call home.



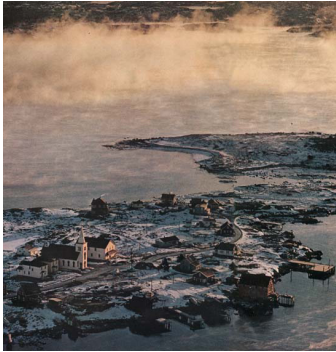
Imagining a new community hall that celebrates the unique traits of Prospect.

To inform the design of a community hub, it's crucial to delve into the distinctive traits of the locale and allow those traits to influence moves made on the site. The architectural concept should grasp the locality's history and the significance of traditional approaches to landscape as these represent ways of working with the land and not against it. Aspects of the old hall will be found in the new, but reimagined in ways that allow people to connect directly with the landscape that makes Prospect unique. The new hall will be a space informed by principles extracted from the past and celebrates the village's idiosyncrasies, while looking to the future and allowing people to understand that they are part of Prospect's ever-changing story. If people are able to reinforce their sense of belonging through this new hall, their commitment and attachment to this locale should only strengthen, countering the detrimental impacts of exploitative globalization-driven development.



Chapter 3: The Soul of Prospect

Rocks



Prospect on a cold winter's day (Prospect Genealogical Website, n.d.).



The church steeple poking above rocks (Prospect Genealogical Website, n.d.).

As noted earlier, the earliest written account of Prospect from 1671 underscores the abundance of rocks in the vicinity and their utilization by fishermen during that era. However, the ruggedness of Prospect has not always been a positive draw for individuals. In 1815, a Bishop visiting from Quebec described the village as “A most horrible place in the world where you see nothing but a pile of naked rocks” (Bousquet 2014). He also went as far to say that “in such a place, we should send convicted criminals to death whose sentences would have them commuted into exile” (Bousquet 2014). While the rugged geography of Prospect may seem off putting as a comfortable place to live, it was its proximity to the rich fishing grounds that made people adapt to the landscape and overcome the challenges of living so exposed to the elements. With the inshore fishery now extinct in Prospect, people no longer live here out of necessity, rather a desire to live amongst its raw beauty.



Prospect's raw and rugged beauty from above (surfsupNS, 2011).



The High Head Trail in Prospect.



HMS Fantome memorial along the High Head Trail (Wikipedia 2024).



A Prospect rock garden.



Hikers nestled behind the rocks.

Presently, the High Head Trail is one of the main reasons people visit Prospect considering its close proximity to Halifax. While popular among non-residents, walking parts of the trail is a part of many villagers' daily routines and remains an integral part of Prospect's identity. This pristine 7.7-kilometer hiking trail allows people to traverse the beautiful granite outcrops with complete exposure to the Atlantic Ocean at all times. Those who hike the High Head Trail may encounter a sizable rock commemorating the 1814 shipwreck of the HMS Fantome somewhere along the shore. The large rock, repurposed as a gravestone, is likely to persist indefinitely and serve as a memorial, provided people continue to repaint the lettering. While the rocks in Prospect stand as a permanent fixture, the surrounding activities and constructed elements are transient, utilizing the rocks as anchoring points and relying on their resiliency.

What was once used for drying fish upon, are now elements that people play upon, or highlight as distinct features in their property. Many of the buildings in Prospect use rocks as elements to be worked around. Since they can be costly and difficult to get rid of, it makes more sense to build with them, rather than against them. In Prospect, rocks can be seen as anchors or places of refuge on three different scales.

When walking along the High Head on a windy day, hikers can often be found nestling behind a rock to break the wind as they rest to eat their lunch. Or during a storm, people will hide behind the rocks to break the wind while viewing the intense waves breaking along the shore.



People seeking refuge behind a rock during a storm.



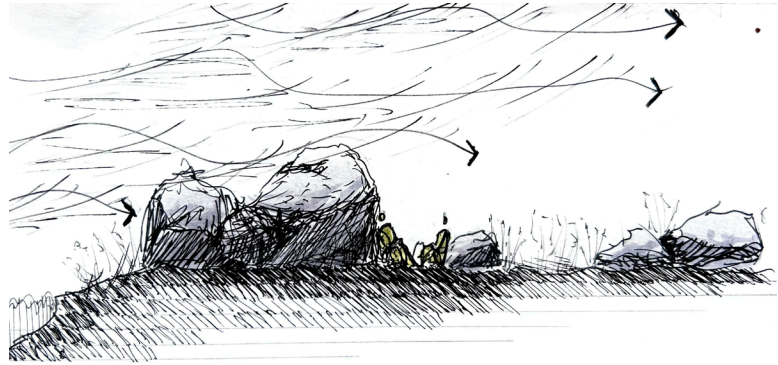
Rocks shelter a house from cars.



Buildings seeking refuge behind a rock.

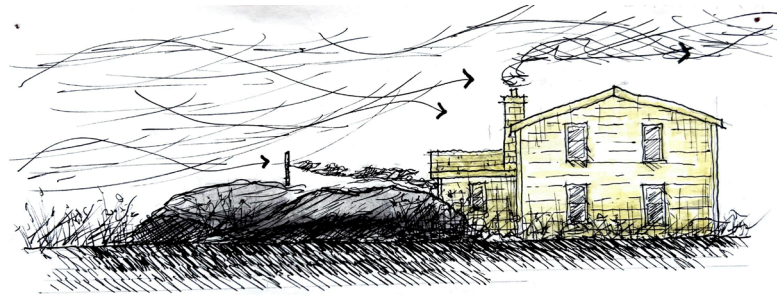


Saul's Island (in the distance) protects Prospect from the forces of the open ocean beyond (Prospect Genealogical Website, n.d.).



PERSON

Houses too find refuge behind rocks. One of the oldest houses in Prospect has rocks placed on its corners to protect it from passing cars due to its close proximity to the road. The large granite outcrops around the village are typically built around, rather than removed. Like hikers along the High Head, buildings also shelter behind rocks and use them as organizational features.



BUILDING

On a larger scale, the village itself seeks refuge behind a rock. Saul's Island acts like the village's breakwater that protects its coastline from rough seas. Prospect's fishing industry was once able to thrive thanks to Saul's Island, as it offered a sheltered harbor where fishermen could safely moor their boats while being in close proximity to excellent fishing grounds.



The village's harbour is protected by the rocks of Saul's Island (the island on the right). Prospect itself seeks refuge behind a rock (Prospect Peninsula Resident's Association n.d.).



Weather

Weather plays a large role in the culture of Prospect considering its exposure to the relentless and unpredictable North Atlantic Ocean. Depending on the weather, people will either seek prospect or refuge. First described by Jay Appleton in 1975, prospect-refuge theory seeks to describe why certain environments feel safer than others (Dosen and Oswald 2013). This theory proposes that humans are drawn to spaces that provide clear views of the environment and a sense of enclosure (Dosen and Oswald 2013). An example of a place of prospect is an elevated location which provides an unobstructed view, while a place of refuge could be a semi-enclosed environment such as large rock formations (Manolakelli 2023). The village itself constantly plays with these two principals. Prospect sits quite exposed to the relentless North Atlantic Ocean meaning that it is quite vulnerable to harsh weather. Historically, when the weather was calmer, fishermen would head out on their boats to the open ocean in search of fish (prospect). During adverse weather conditions, it would be safer to head to shore and seek shelter within a building and wait for the weather to pass (refuge). Depending on the state of the ocean, people



Viewing the ocean from the safety of an enclosure on Big Tancook Island, Nova Scotia.



The aftermath of Hurricane Juan (Prospect Genealogical Website, 2003).



The red stage shown in the top left corner of this image was the only original stage to survive the storm (Prospect Genealogical Website, 2003).

are either embracing or hiding from it, which can be difficult at times considering the village's unique geography.

On the average day, it is common to see people fixing or maintaining parts of their house or property. Maintenance and upkeep are a common theme in Prospect, given the perpetual battle against the weather's attempts to disrupt orderliness. In the early hours of September 29, 2003, Hurricane Juan made landfall near Prospect with sustained winds of 157 kilometers an hour (MacDonald 2023). Prospect was at the center of the storm and felt some serious destruction. The storm destroyed every single wharf and shed of the village (except one) and washed all of their pieces onto the shore. Today, there is hardly any trace of any original wharf or stage in a place where these used to dominate the coves.

Building Attitudes

To learn about the identity of a specific region, examining the vernacular architecture of the place is an effective way to do so. The vernacular architecture of a region is typically born from the working class, people who could not afford to get it wrong (Rudofsky 1964). This architecture was born from a time before the world was as connected as it is now and demonstrates what people did with what was around them. Most of this architecture works with the landscape, rather than against it as much of our globalized architecture does today where levelling a site is common practice (Rudofsky 1964). When people do not have the means to work against the landscape, people work with it. It is too often that modern architectural practices remove existing landscapes to make way for a building (Frampton 1983). In Prospect, people



The natural landscape's identity has been kept intact between these houses in Prospect. This is an example of working *with* the landscape.



The natural landscape's identity has been erased to make way for this lawn in Prospect. This is an example of working *against* the landscape.



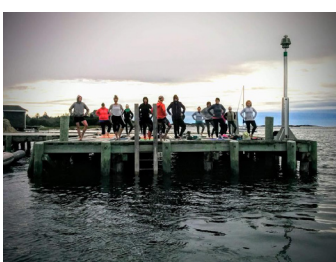
An old building in Prospect that has kept the landscape's identity intact.



A new building in Prospect that has erased the natural identity of the site (Google Maps, 2017).

used to work with the landscape which has nurtured unique development patterns and positionings of buildings. When the natural landscape dictates the orientation of a building, it allows for unique situations to happen in the in-between spaces, contributing to the overall character of the place. However, in some cases around the village residents have found the natural landscape to not be as important as a manicured lawn. Once that earth is disturbed, all of the traits that make it unique are forgotten and the site becomes a typical lawn that could be found anywhere else in the world.

The architectural elements and structures in Prospect have always been prone to deterioration due to exposure to the natural elements. Although the concept of buildings and wharves has been present in Prospect since its establishment, the individual structures are not permanent. For example, the church in Prospect has been part of the town since its inception, but its physical architecture has undergone various transformations over the years. This emphasizes the dynamic nature of the built environment in Prospect, where structures evolve and change rather than remain static. Since Prospect's environment is so harsh, architecture is never static and constantly changing. Whether shingles are flying off from the wind, paint peeling from salty air, or wharves are falling apart from the waves, the built environment is always changing and requires constant upkeep. What is essential to the identity of Prospect is not necessarily the appearance of the physical architecture itself, but rather how those buildings respect and weave themselves through existing landscape.



The wharf as shared space (Prospect Peninsula Residents' Association, n.d.).



The road as shared space (Prospect Genealogical Website, n.d.).

Shared Space

The community of Prospect has long been a closely knit one. The village used to consist of a number of families whose houses were placed in small clusters. Most people worked with one another in the fishing industry and when the fishermen were at sea, the women usually bonded on land awaiting their arrival. When community cohesion is strong like it once was, property lines are blurred and there is an emphasis on shared space. Shared spaces in Prospect were once the wharves, church, community hall, spaces between houses, and even roads. Nowadays, the emphasis on shared space might not be as strong since people have more individual pursuits and extended families no longer make up the village's population. However, throughout the loss of Prospect's formal shared spaces (the church and hall), the village has continued to demonstrate their need for a shared space. When the government divested from the public wharf, the residents of Prospect began fundraising to keep the wharf for the public and continue to use and maintain it to this day. The public wharf is where people tie their boats off, recreationally fish, or partake in a New Year's Day swim in the cold North Atlantic.

Roads in the village also remain an active shared space. Upon entering the village, one might notice that the yellow line in the center of the road vanishes, and cars might slow their speed. Due to the little amount of traffic, it is common to see people walking in the middle of the road or using it as a space to chat with their neighbor. When large events happened at the old hall, cars would line the streets due to the lack of parking around the village. Wherever there was space to fit a car along the shoulder of the road, it would park there.



A photo of the flexible space in the old hall (Prospect Old Church Association, n.d.).



A photo of the library in the old hall (Prospect Old Church Association, n.d.).



A photo of the kitchen in the old hall during the lobster supper (Daniels, 2008).

The old community hall was an adaptable space that was capable of holding a number of events throughout the year. The main floor of the hall was a large open room with a stage at the far end. This space hosted events such as craft fairs, concerts, theatrical performances, weddings, and other various fundraising or social occasions. The upper floor had a small lending library, a large open room, and a kitchen where meals would be prepared for events. The most anticipated occasion of the year was the annual lobster supper, which was typically held in August. This event would use all sections of the building, as well as the exterior space where a beer tent was located. The lobster supper was a way for the residents of the Prospect to open the doors of their small village to individuals near or far. When the government divested from funding the government wharf with the extinction of the fishery, the lobster supper became a way of fundraising money to keep the wharf in the community. Sadly, the demolition of the old hall brought an end to this cherished tradition.



The annual lobster supper took place in the old community hall. The beloved event no longer occurs since the hall was demolished (Prospect Peninsula Resident's Association n.d.).

Chapter 4: A New Hall

The “Govie”

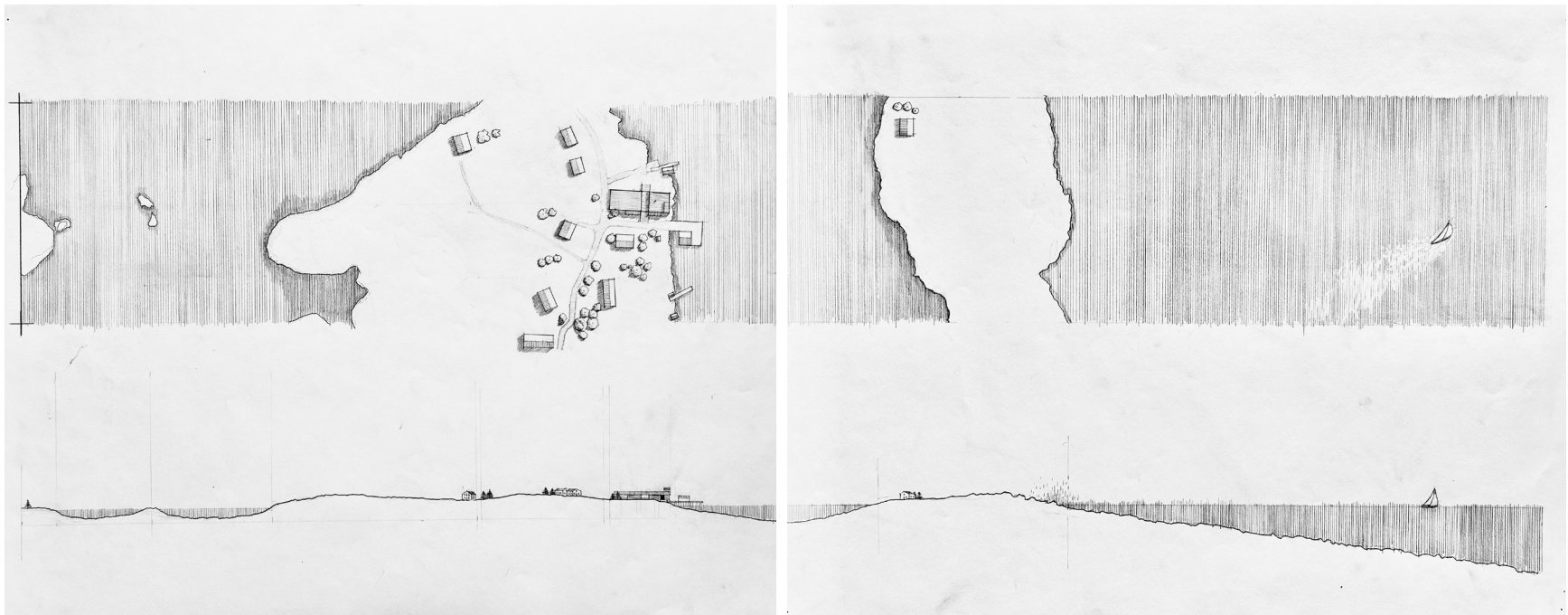
While not entirely original in its makeup, the site of the public wharf has remained the same for decades. With the closure of the church and demolition of the old hall, the “Govie” (government wharf) remains one of the last shared spaces in the village. It is also one of the only locations in the village which safely provides the public with ocean access. The wharf used to be maintained by the government, but after they divested from the wharf it has become entirely maintained and funded by the public. When the old hall was still standing, funds from the annual lobster supper would go toward the upkeep of the wharf. The “Govie” has a storied history as being the Prospect’s town square, and its survival through all of the village’s changes over the years makes it a fitting location for the new hall.



The “Govie”, with Saul’s Island beyond.



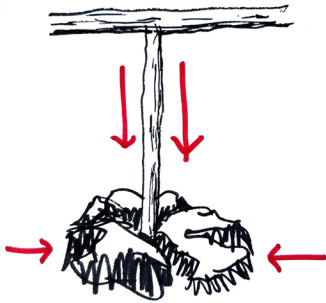
Prospect Village Plan with the new hall shaded darker.



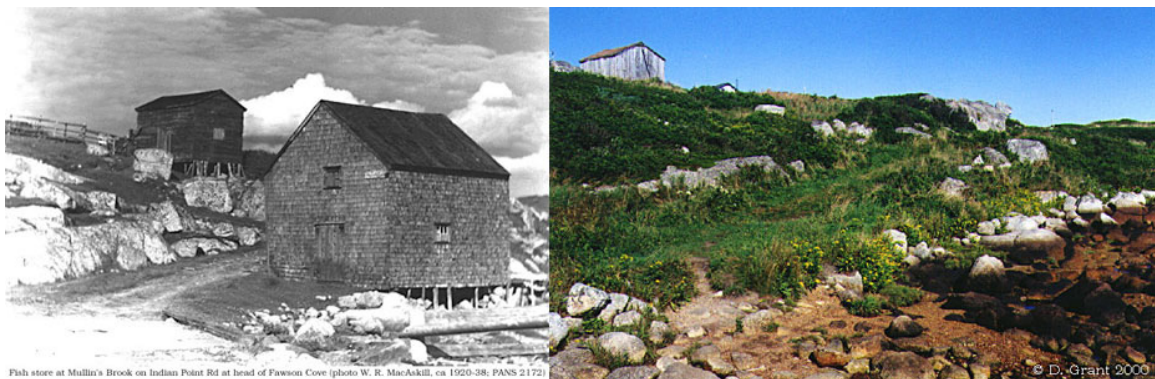
A plan and section of the new hall's relationship to Saul's Island and open ocean beyond. Saul's Island protects the harbour from rough seas.

Designing a New Hall

There is something mesmerizing about the fact that there are hardly any traces of the fishing industry in Prospect. Visiting the place now, one would have no idea about the dozens of fishing wharves and stages that once lined these shores. This fact indicates how lightly upon the land these structures sat, because the means of flattening and erasing topography were either unavailable or not cost-friendly. The old wharves and fishing stages used the rocks as anchor points to secure the piles that supported the structures. Over the years, fierce weather has caused all but one of the village's original stages to remain. All of the other stages and wharves have disappeared with the tides, leaving only the rocks they sat upon behind. Rocks play an important role in the identity of Prospect and have dictated how people traverse the landscape on foot, how they build, and allowed the fishing industry to thrive. Rocks are either used to anchor (work with) or used for refuge (work around).



Rocks are used to secure the piles of wharves and buildings.

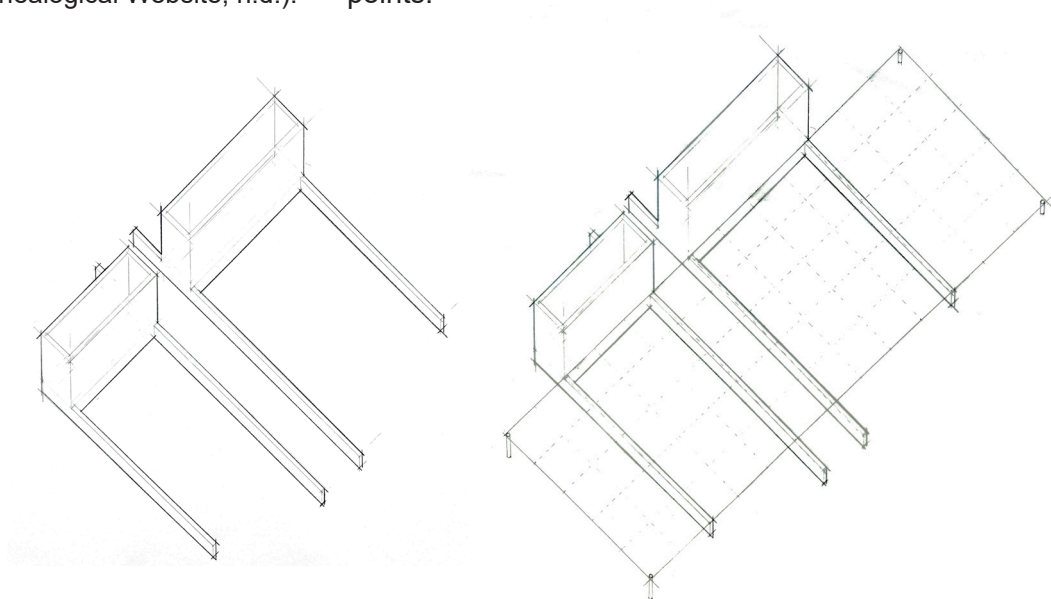


These photos were taken at the entrance of the High Head Trail. I have walked down this path countless times and had no idea that this old fish store once sat here as it left no trace (Prospect Genealogical Website 2023).

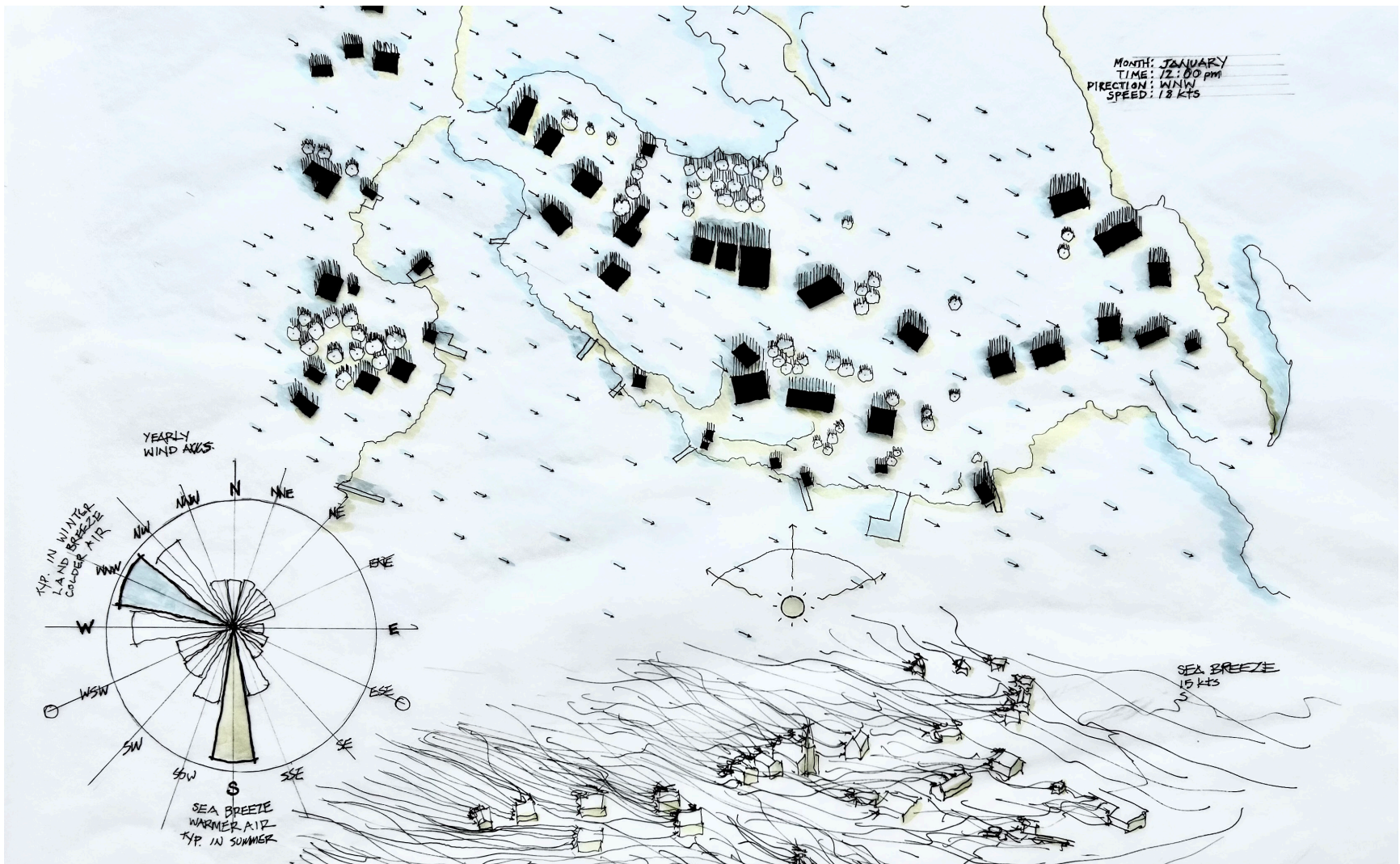
Since rocks have been determined as elements which provide shelter and act as anchors in Prospect, the project begins with anchoring the more permanent parts of the project to the rocks themselves. Concrete will be anchored to the rocks below and provide both a shoulder to the cold northwest wind, and the stability a public building deserves. The concrete boxes have been placed on the western facade of the building to allow people to seek refuge “behind the rocks” on days when a cold land breeze is prevalent. The concrete of the building will act almost as an extension of the physical rocks that make up so much of Prospect’s terrain. Then, above the concrete is where the wood structure will sit, cradled and secured by the solid concrete. The building will be lifted by the fins to not disturb too much of the landscape beneath it while still receiving the stability and strength it needs for a public building that can be loved by the community for the foreseeable future. The design approach is inspired by how light wooden structures, like wharves, use the strength of the rocks below as anchor points.



A wooden wharf anchors to the rocks below. (Prospect Genealogical Website, n.d.).



Concrete is first anchored to the existing rocks, then the lighter structure is placed on top and supported by the concrete.



In the winter, when the land is colder, prevailing winds hail from the northwest. This is known as a landbreeze. In the summer, when the land is warmer, prevailing winds hail from the south. This is known as a seabreeze.



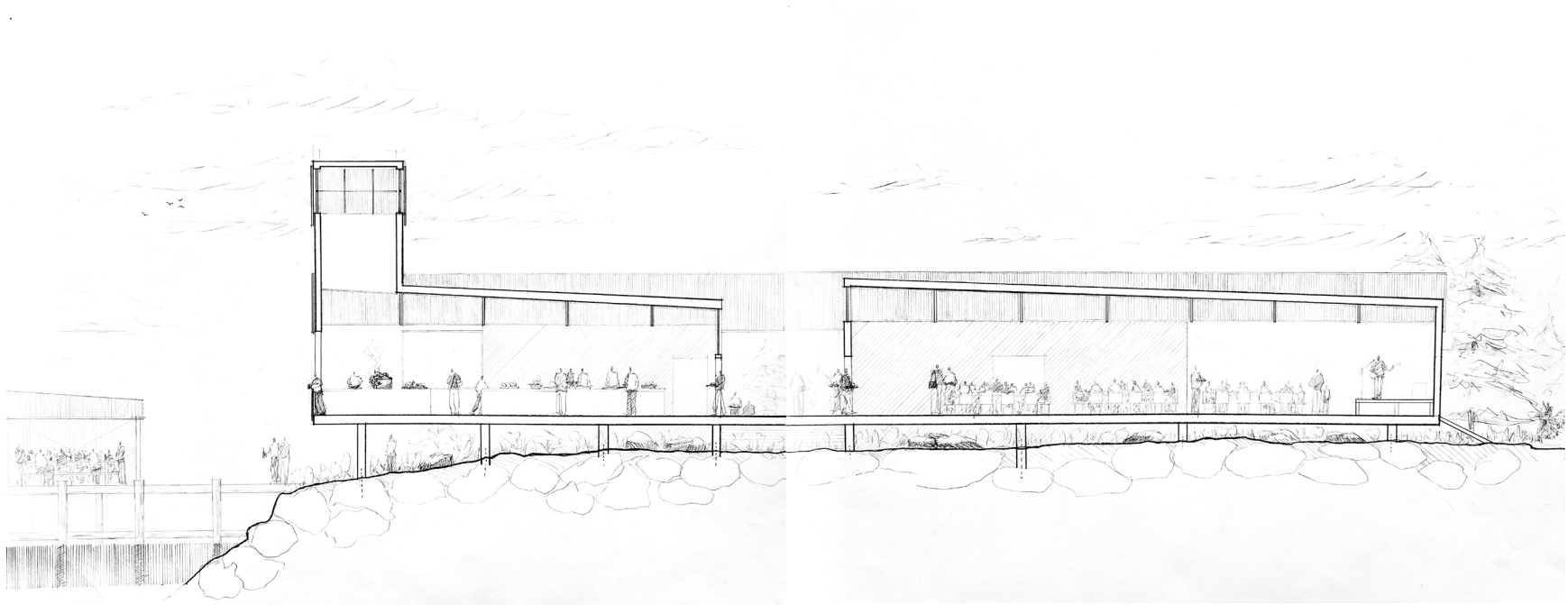
The building's "rocks" sit at the entrance of the building for people to seek refuge behind. These concrete boxes support the fins which the building sits upon.



The building sits on a series of concrete fins to not overly disturb the land below

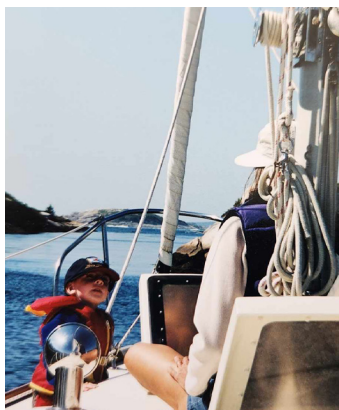


The lighter frame of the building rests on the fins.



The entire building is grounded with a series of concrete fins. These fins allow the building to find the strength it deserves for a public building, while not overly disturbing the land below.

Program



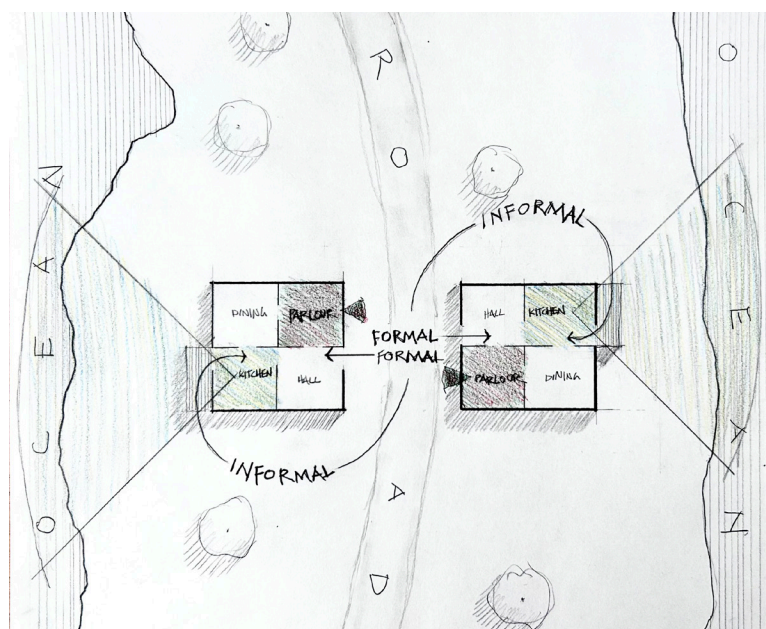
A photo of me sailing in Prospect as a child. Introducing a boat slip could allow resident's connection with the ocean to be further strengthened.

Traditional programs found in the old hall will make up most of the program within the new hall. The programs that will carry over from the old hall include a large flexible space (referred to as the hall's "parlor"), library, and kitchen. Additionally, the installation of a boat slip will enhance residents' ties to the ocean, fostering opportunities for sailing programs and welcoming visiting sailing teams to Prospect due to its convenient access to the open sea.

It is important that users of the building find a familiarity in the arrangement of programs and how they relate to the land around. Older houses in Prospect often have more than one that serves different purposes. Off of the street is the formal entrance that flows into the parlor. This entrance is less frequently used by those who live there, rather might be used by guests visiting the house. Residents of the house or close friends will typically use the informal back door of the house that enters into the kitchen, where most time is



Since Prospect is located on a peninsula, kitchens at the back of the house always face the ocean (Google Maps, 2017).

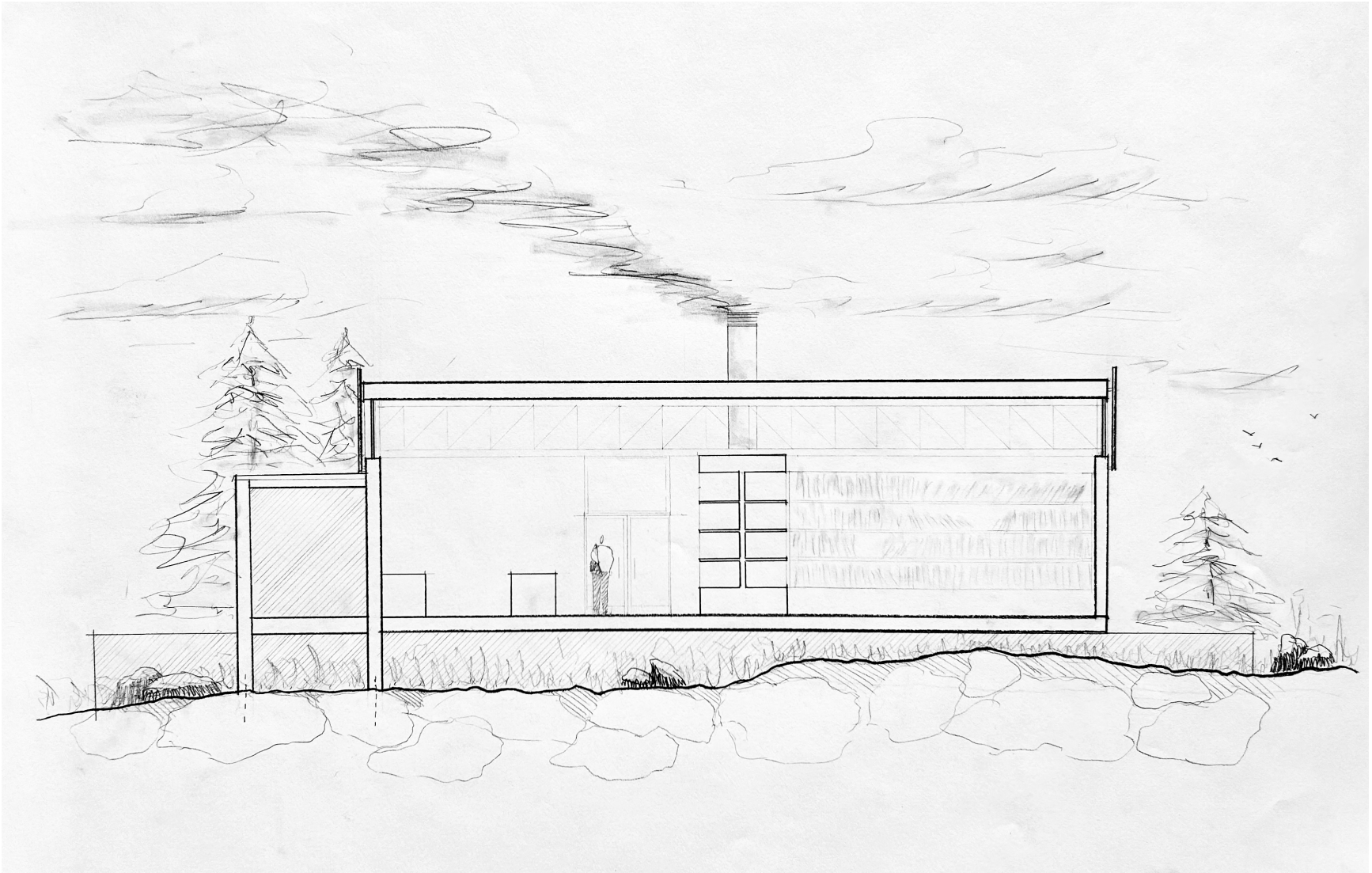


Formal entries off of the road enter the parlour, while informal entries off of the back deck enter the kitchen.

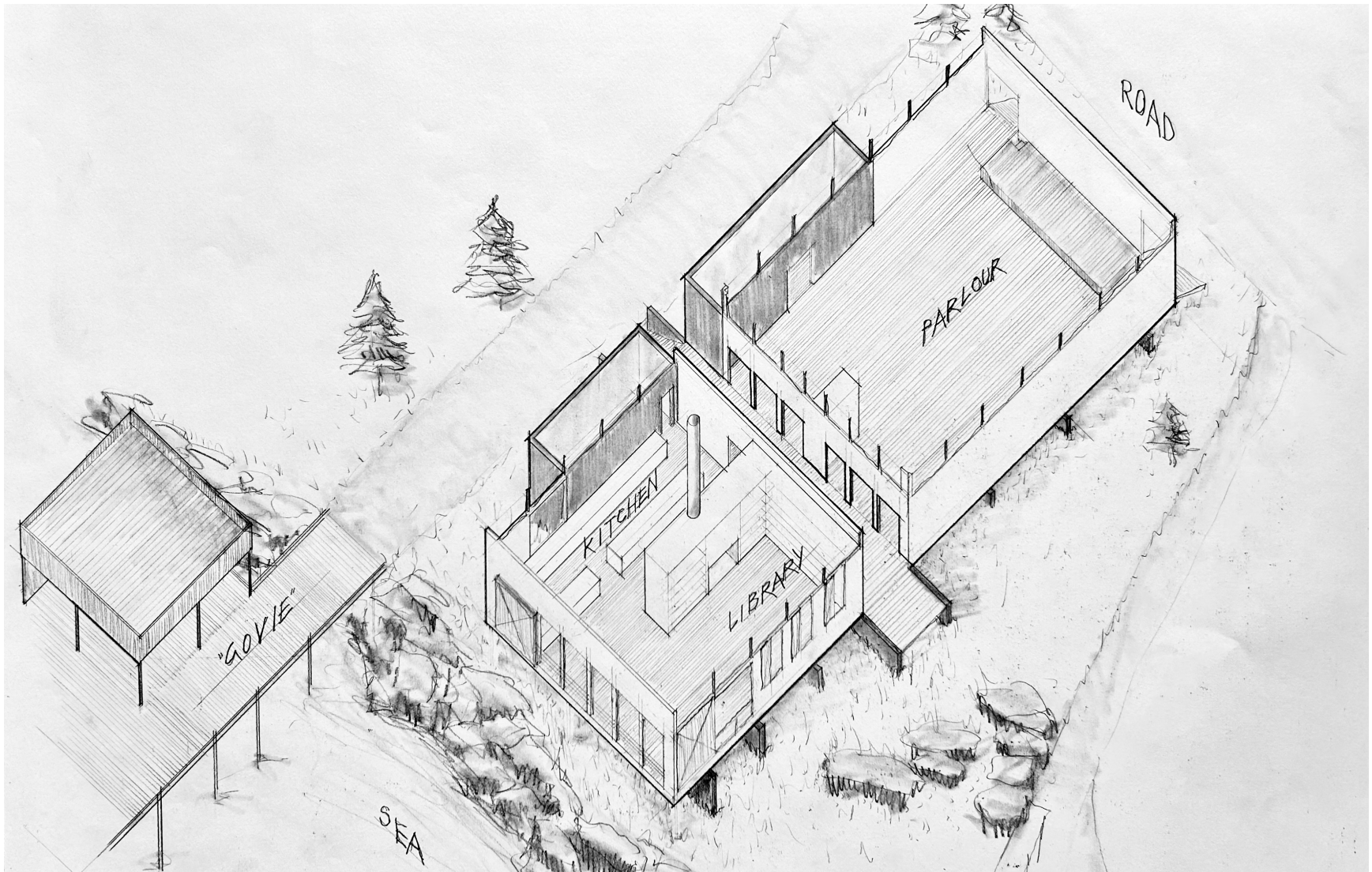
spent. Many houses in Prospect have the kitchen on the back side of the house, and considering Prospect's unique geography as a peninsula this means that kitchens typically face the ocean.

To instill a sense of ownership and familiarity in the new hall, the design process begins with placing the formal parlor off the road, and the kitchen on the ocean. Between the two is the library as this is a space that suggests intimate gathering with a sense of security. In these old houses, fireplaces were typically found in the center of the building and were used to heat the entire house. In the centrally located library, a fireplace will be found here that acts as the new hall's hearth. For the building to find meaning among the residents of the village, it is essential that the building feels familiar and like a larger version of their home. The building follows a similar arrangement to a typical house in Prospect with separated doors into either the parlour or kitchen. When hosting larger events where members of other communities would be visiting, the new hall can "open its doors" to the public. Since the kitchen and library sit exposed to the ocean, the back wall is fairly solid, offering a wall for people to put their backs to while they gaze out over the ocean (prospect/refuge theory).

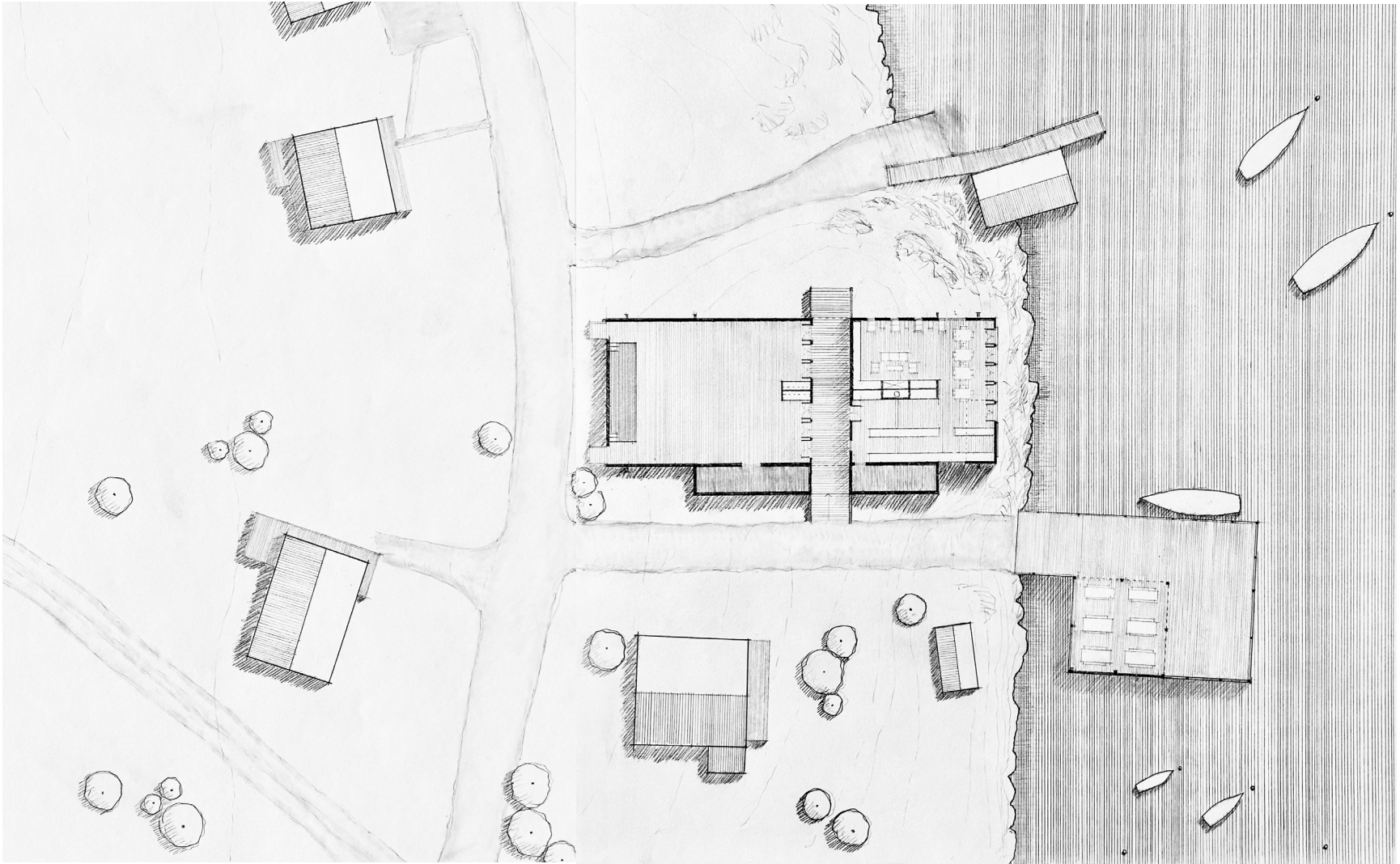
There is now a chance to resurrect the annual lobster supper with the establishment of the new hall, with the option of expanding it onto the wharf with an added pavilion. The building's adaptability supports gatherings of any size. Whether for 200, 20, or 2 people, one can find comfortable spaces both inside and around the hall to convene.



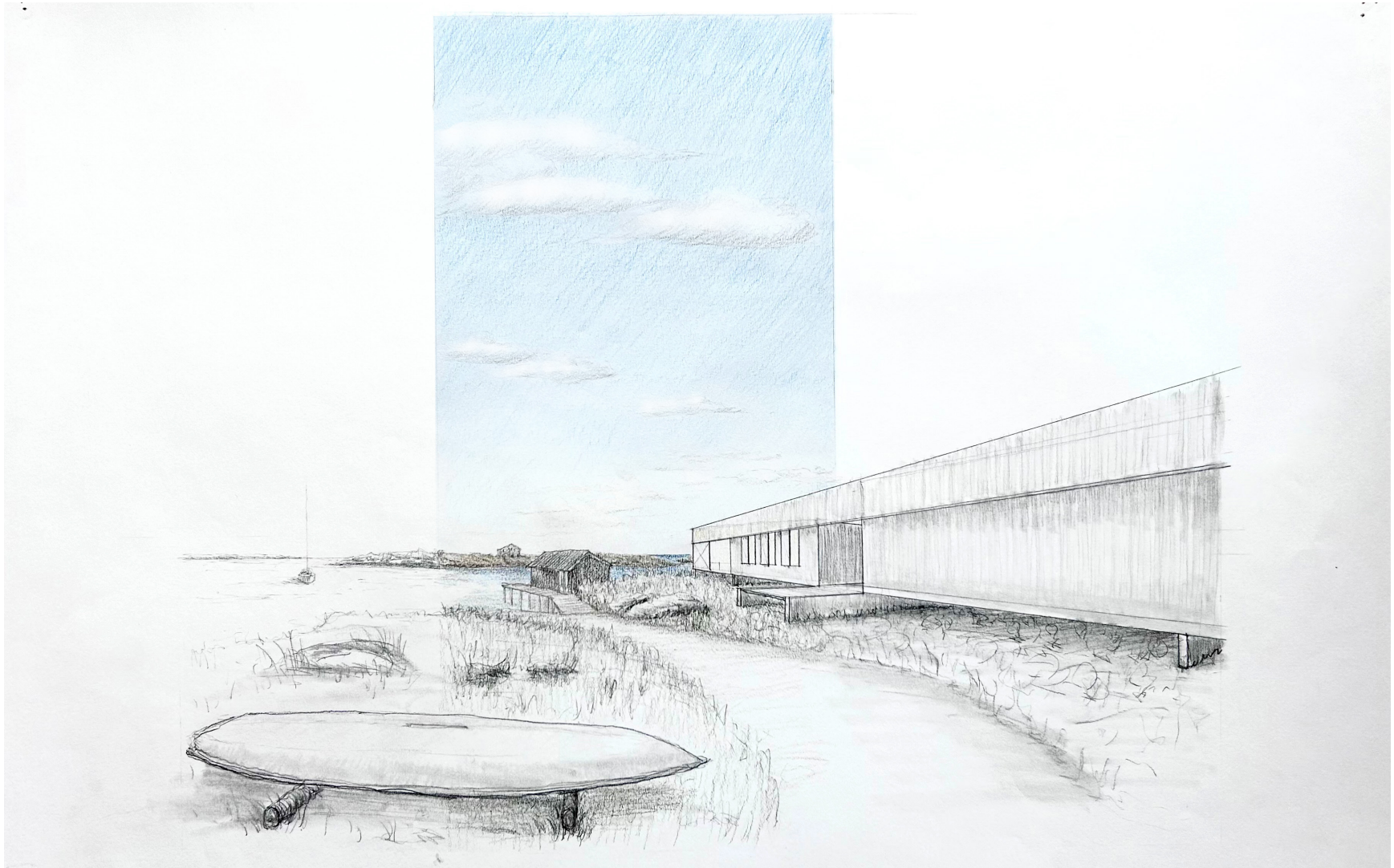
The building's hearth divides the kitchen and library from one another.



An axonometric view depicting the hall's organization of spaces. The parlour faces the street, while the kitchen and library face the ocean.



In keeping with the traditional layout of homes in Prospect, the new hall places the formal entertainment space (the parlour) off of the road, and places the informal entertainment space (the kitchen) facing the ocean.

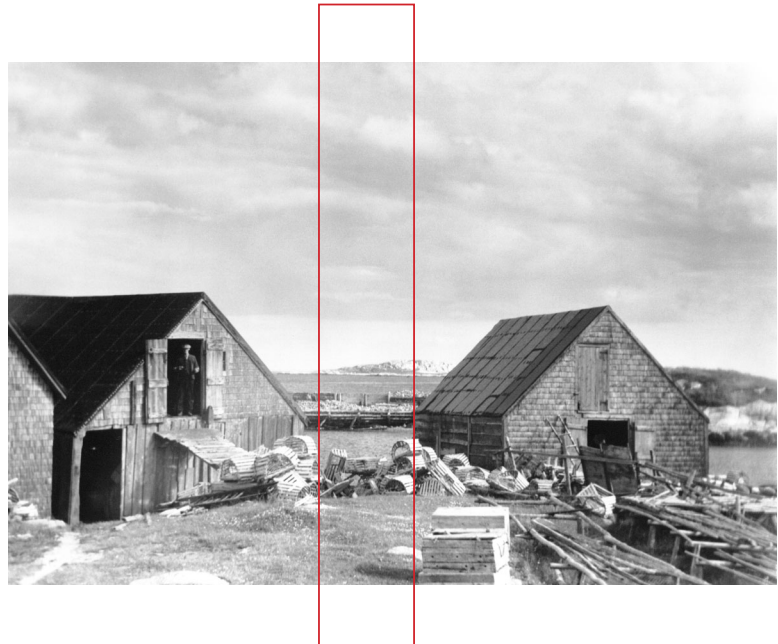


A view of the new hall sitting on its fins, mimicking a small boat placed upon two logs to not disturb the grass below. In the distance is the new launch ramp for sailors to use.

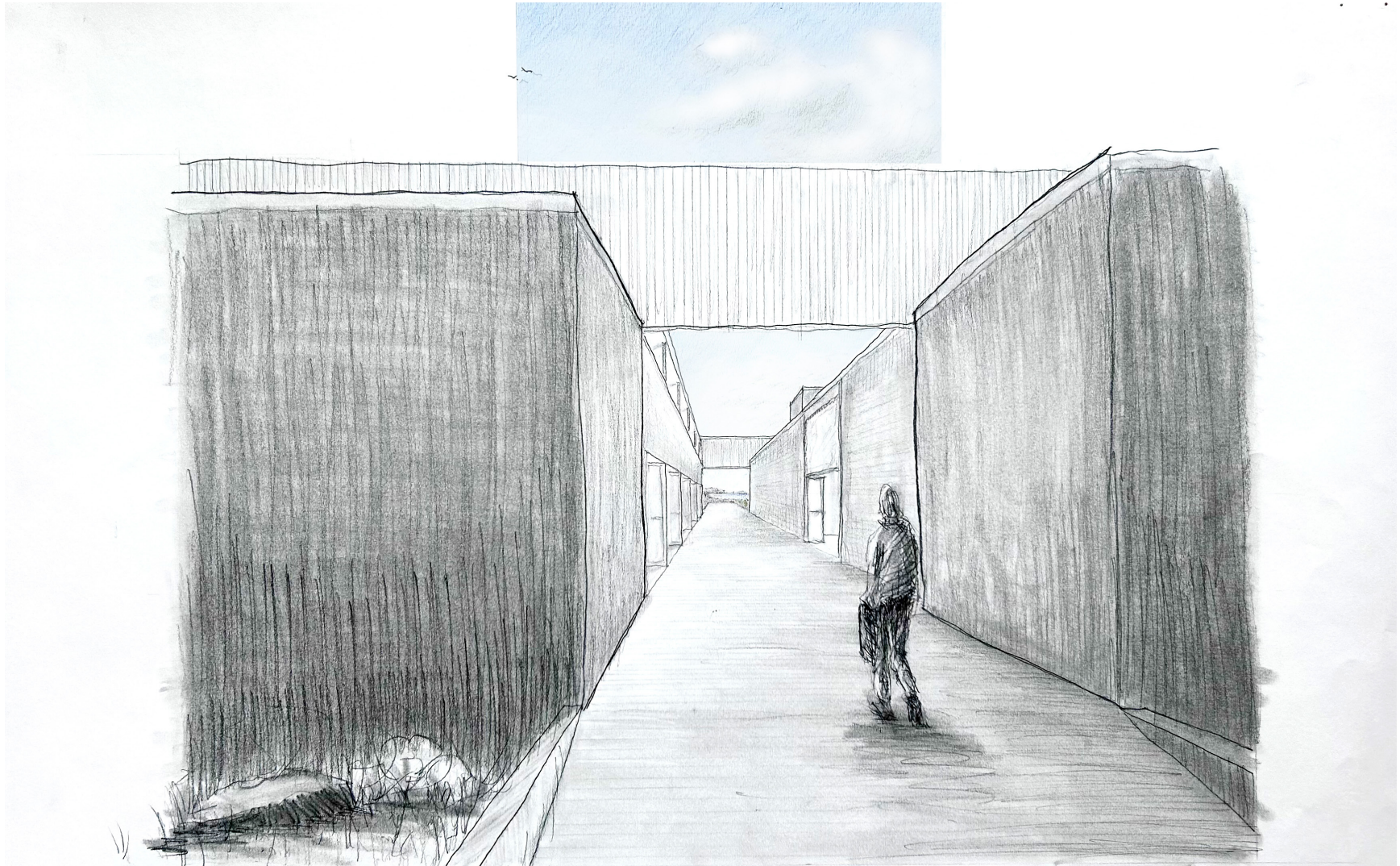
The Spaces In Between and Around

There was a time when Prospect's census data only included a handful of surnames. Families typically lived in clusters around the peninsula, where immediate neighbors were likely related to one another, or they were close friends. When this is the case, property lines are blurred and there is an emphasis on the "in between" spaces, spaces that are shared with one another. Given the narrowness of the peninsula and the sparse distribution of buildings, these spaces in between houses typically offer views of the natural landscape rather than other buildings.

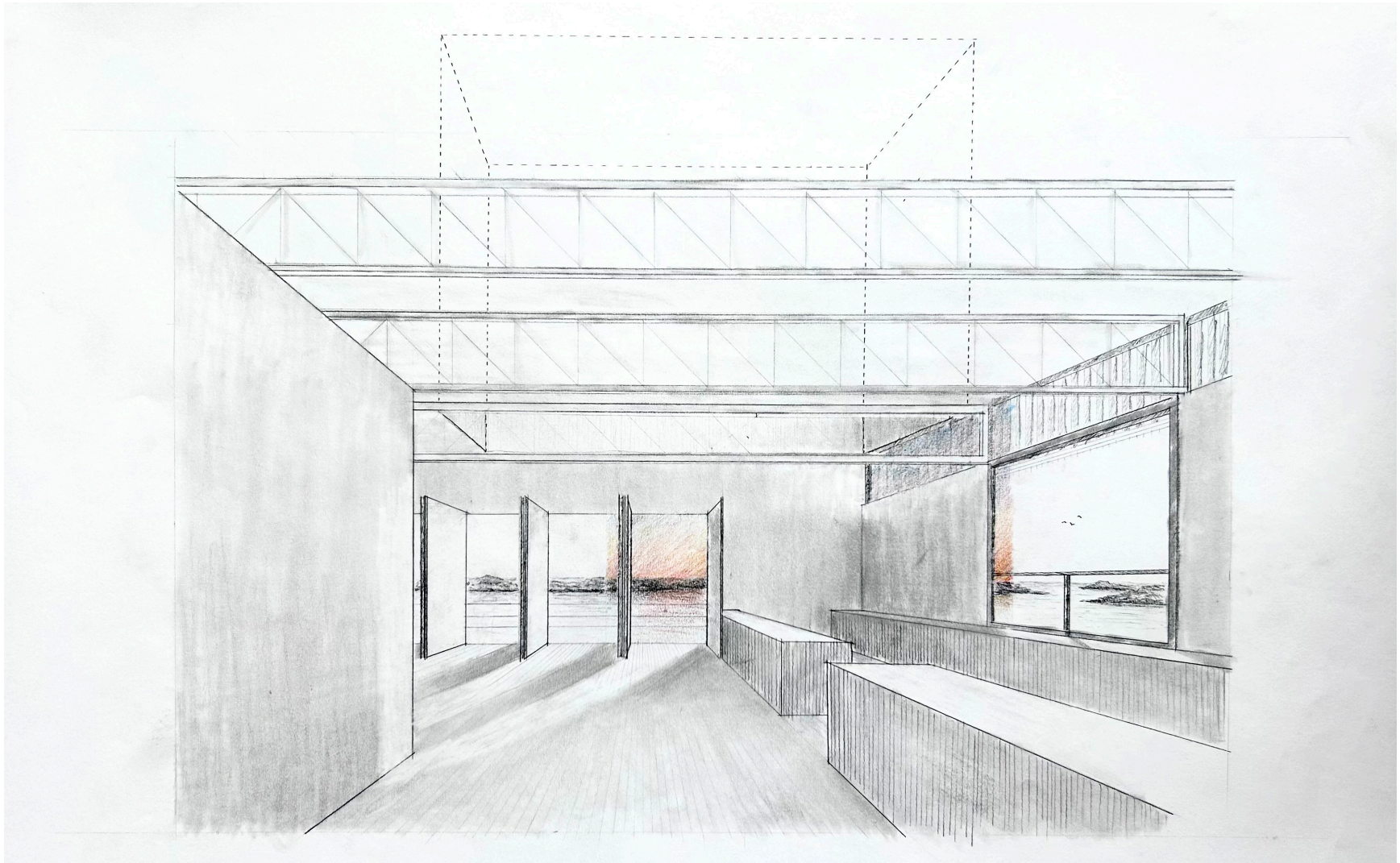
This informed me that a view of the natural landscape should be framed upon entering the dogtrot, which bisects the building's center and acts as the building's formal entrance. Acting as a comfortable outdoor space sheltered from the wind, this "in between" space hosts entrances to both the parlor and kitchen.



Buildings frame views of natural landscapes beyond (Prospect Genealogical Website, n.d.).



A view is framed at the end of the dogtrot. The screen which wraps around the building creates both a formal entry point and frames the view of the landscape beyond.

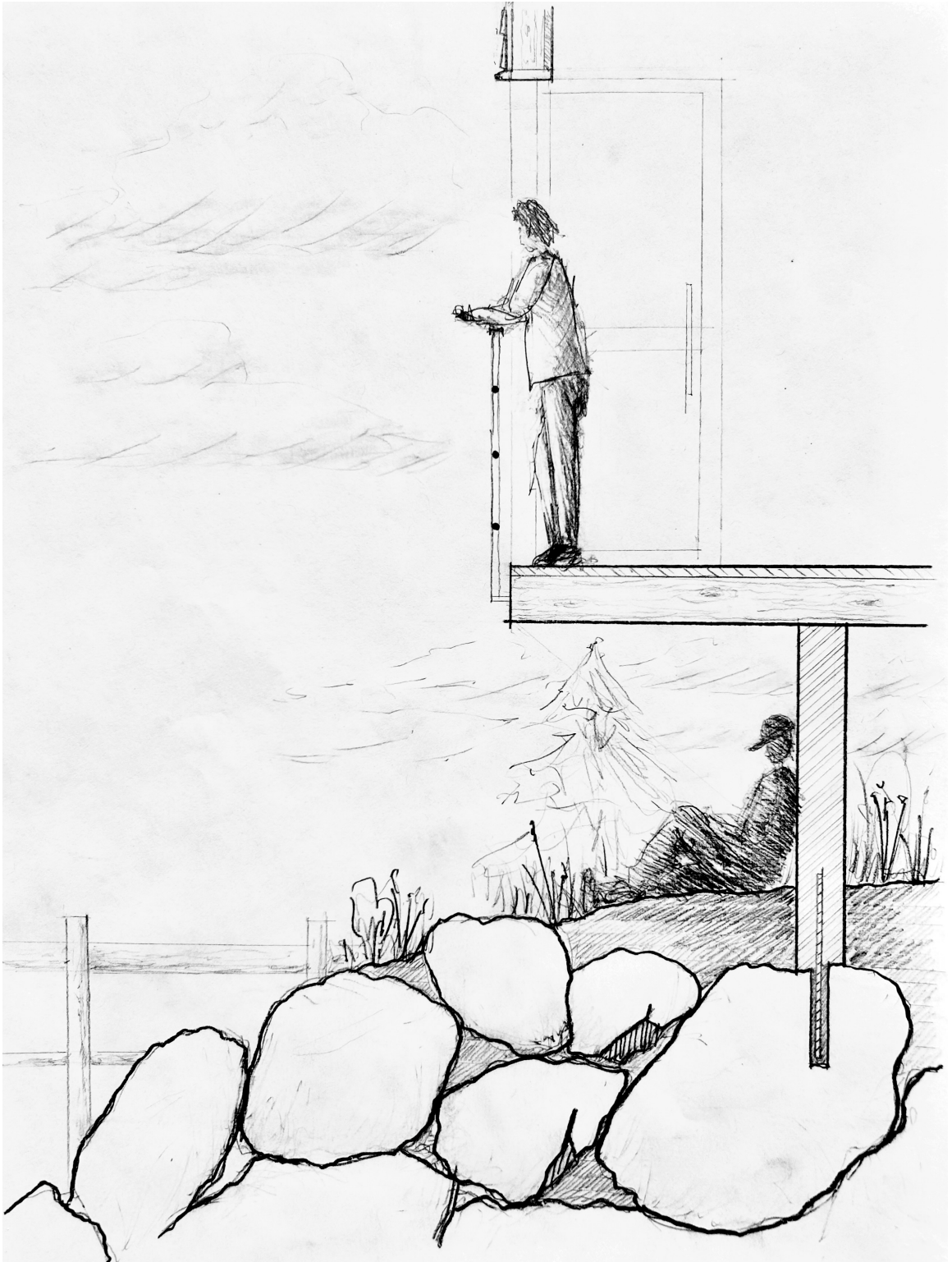


During a fine day, the southern facade can open to allow a seabreeze to fill the kitchen and library, inviting sounds and scents of the harbour to fill the room.

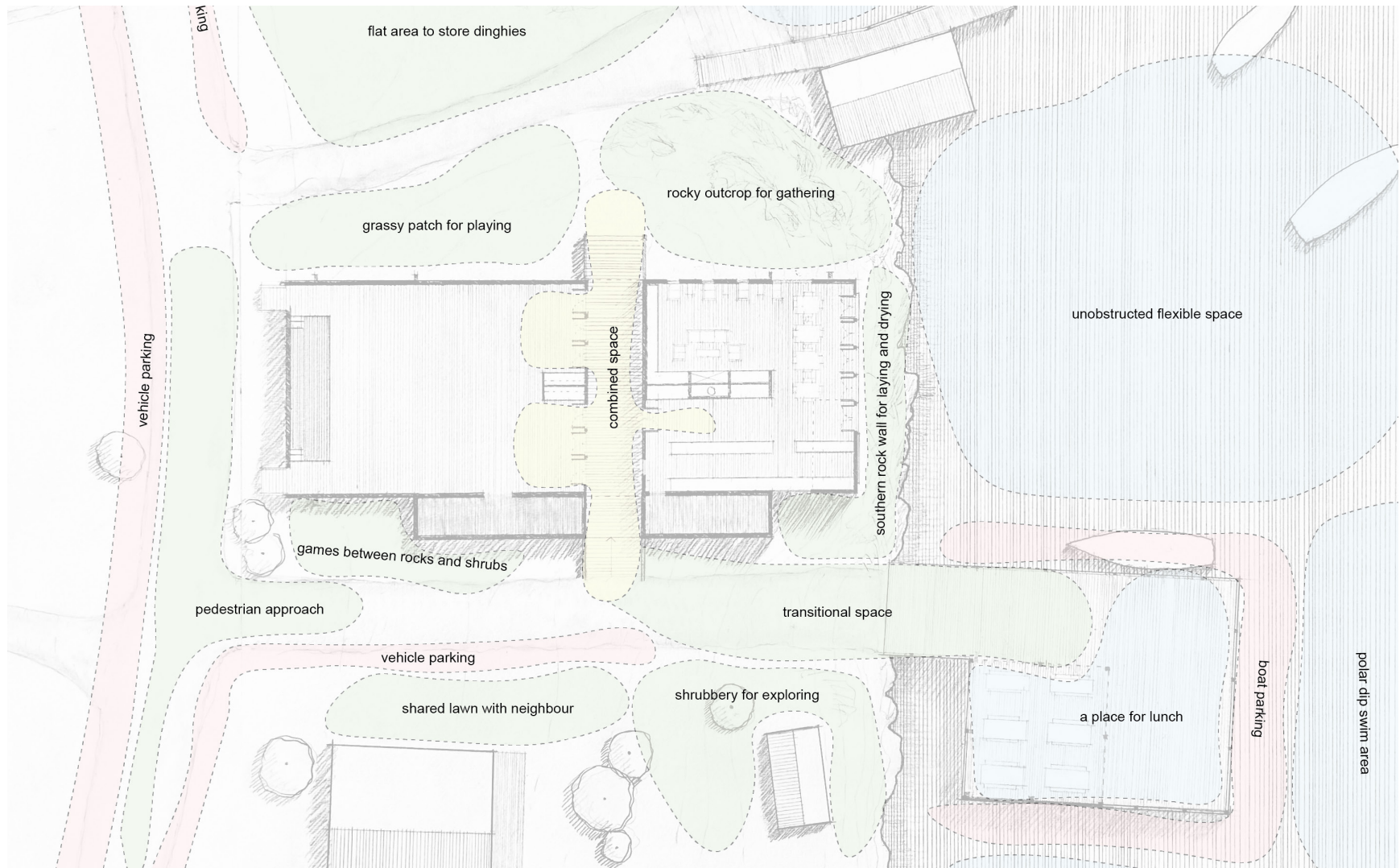
When a building does not seek to occupy the entirety of the site, the spaces in between and around are emphasized. Landscape and architecture should harmonize, where they work with one another to create diverse experiences particular to the place.



A previously inconspicuous rock becomes emphasized when buildings are placed on either side. This rock now becomes an “in between” space and entices more activity.



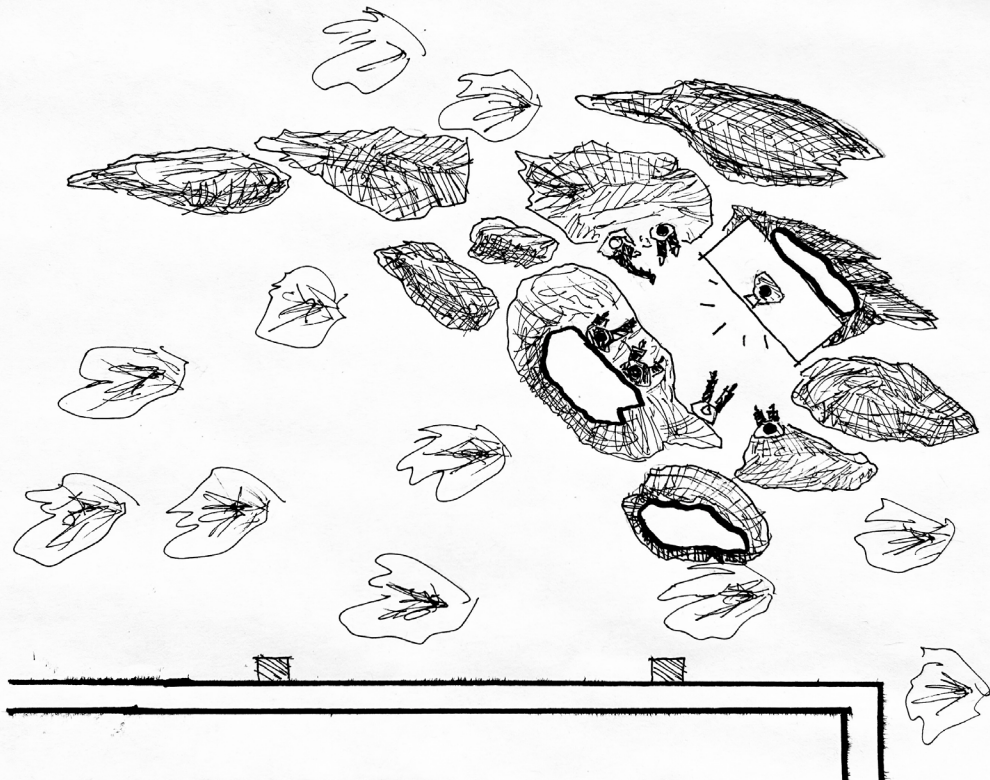
The new hall supports experience within the walls and among the landscape.



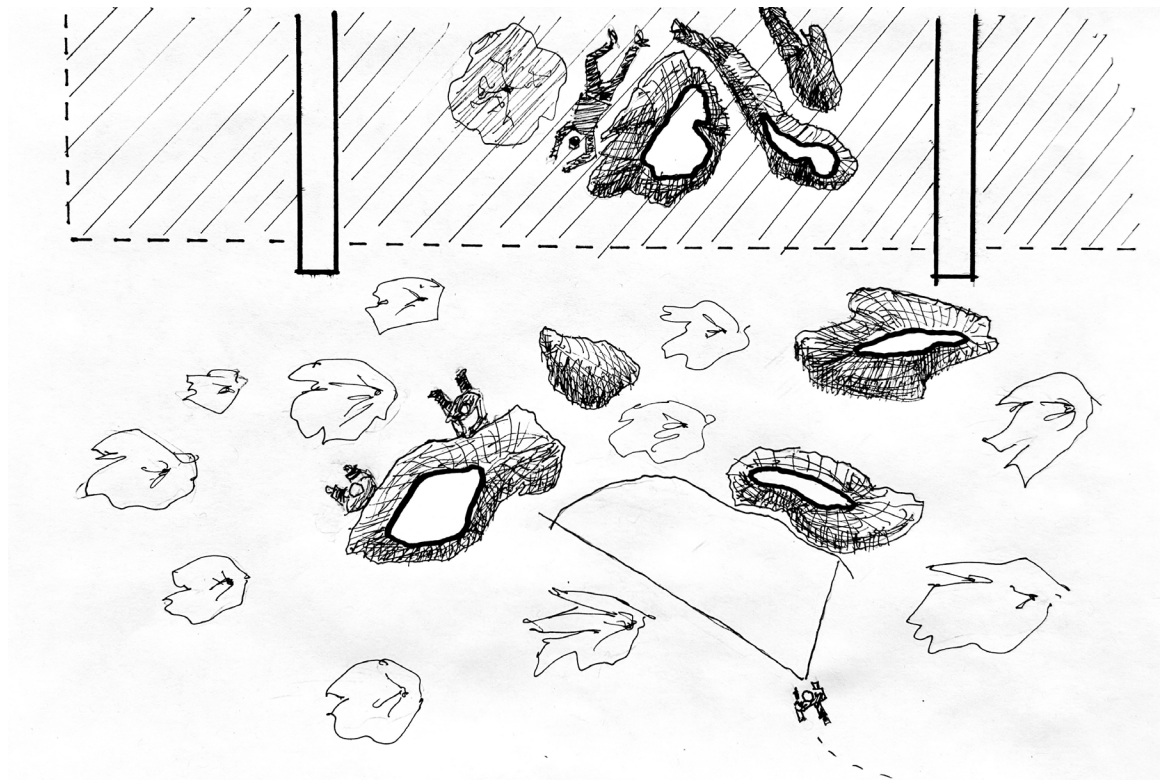
The porosity of the boundaries between properties in Prospect is unique. The new hall supports these shared spaces in and around the buildings and wharf.



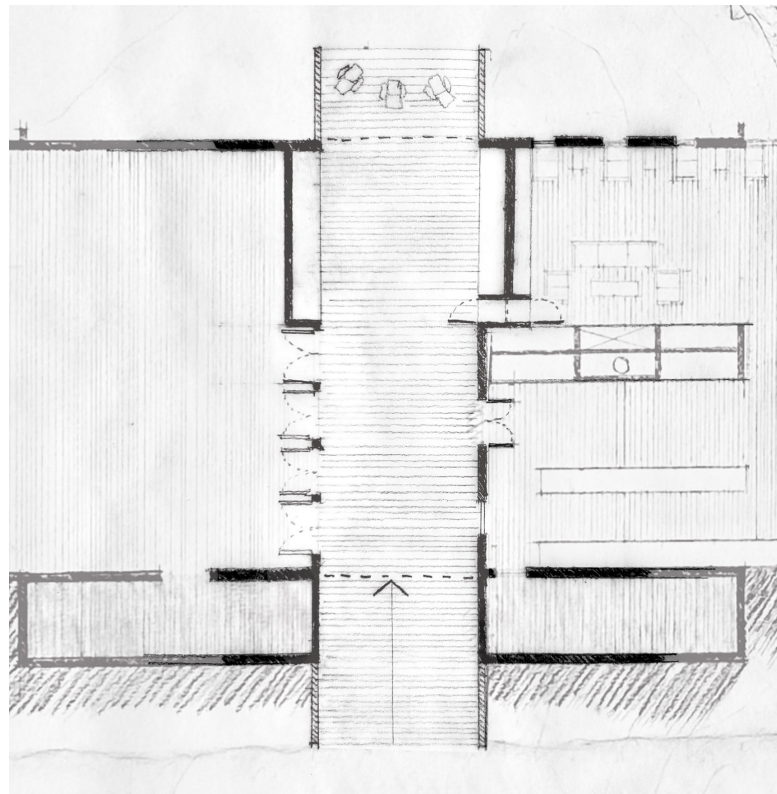
An old photo of people gathering amongst the rocks in the exact location of the new hall (Prospect Genealogical Website, n.d.).



People meet amongst the rocks adjacent to the new hall. A small architectural feature, such as a plinth, can work its way into the landscape to support such events.



Children playing hide and seek in the landscape around and underneath of the architecture.



A revised option of the dogtrot with added benches and book return, further supporting "in between" experience.

A Beacon



The old light at the end of the "Govie".

In an interview by Chris Devanney named "Prospect Village Tales Vol1", longtime village resident Ellen Ryan talks about a call she once received from the Department of Transport. The DOT has always maintained the lights in the harbor and on the wharf. When the Federal Government divested themselves from the wharf, the community then had to maintain it. One day a gentleman called Ryan and said:

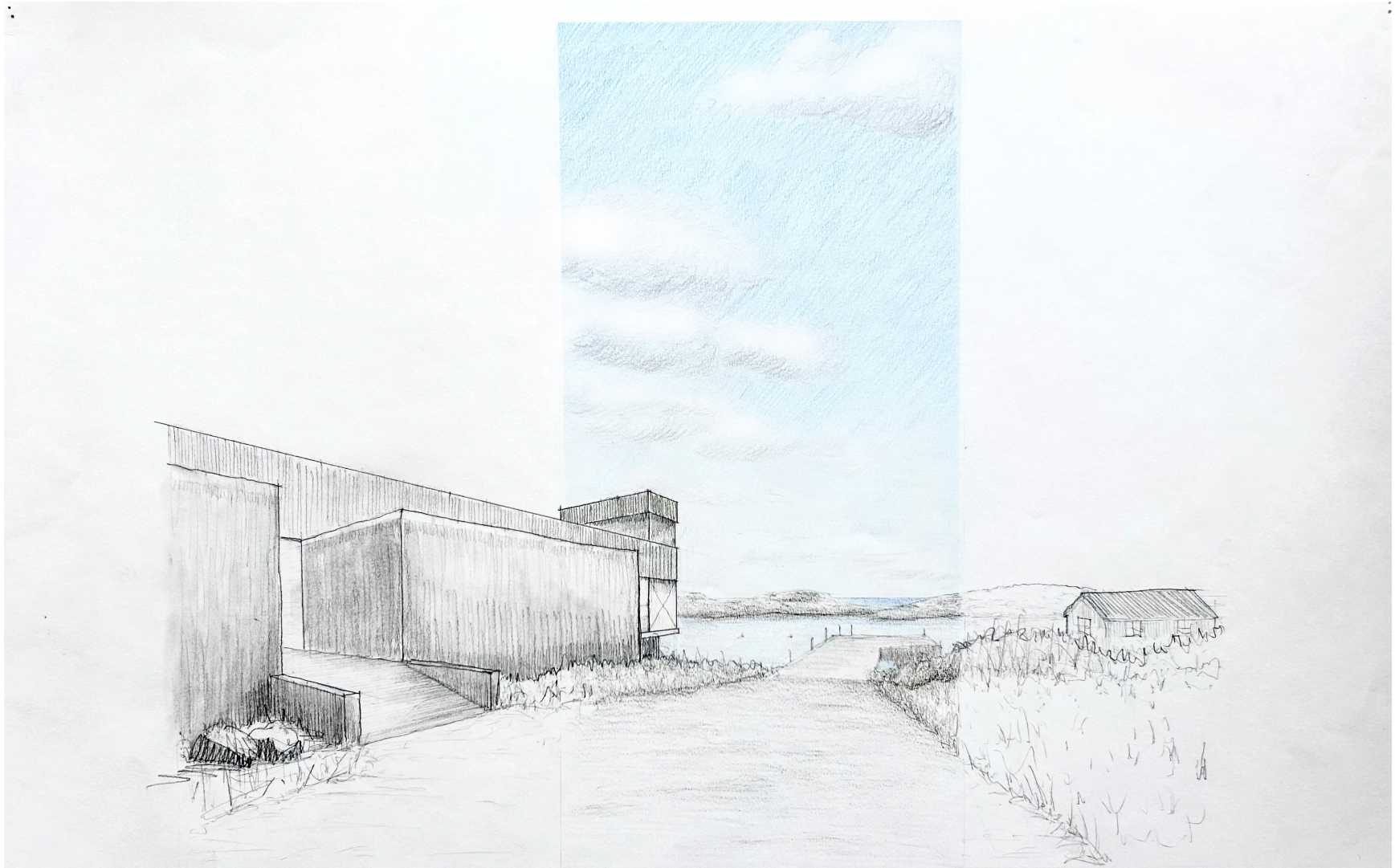
Now we have just changed the light on the wharf and from now on it's a solar light. But I want you to understand this is the last time we will do anything like this. From now on we will not be maintaining the light (Devanney 2016).

Ryan then continues to explain:

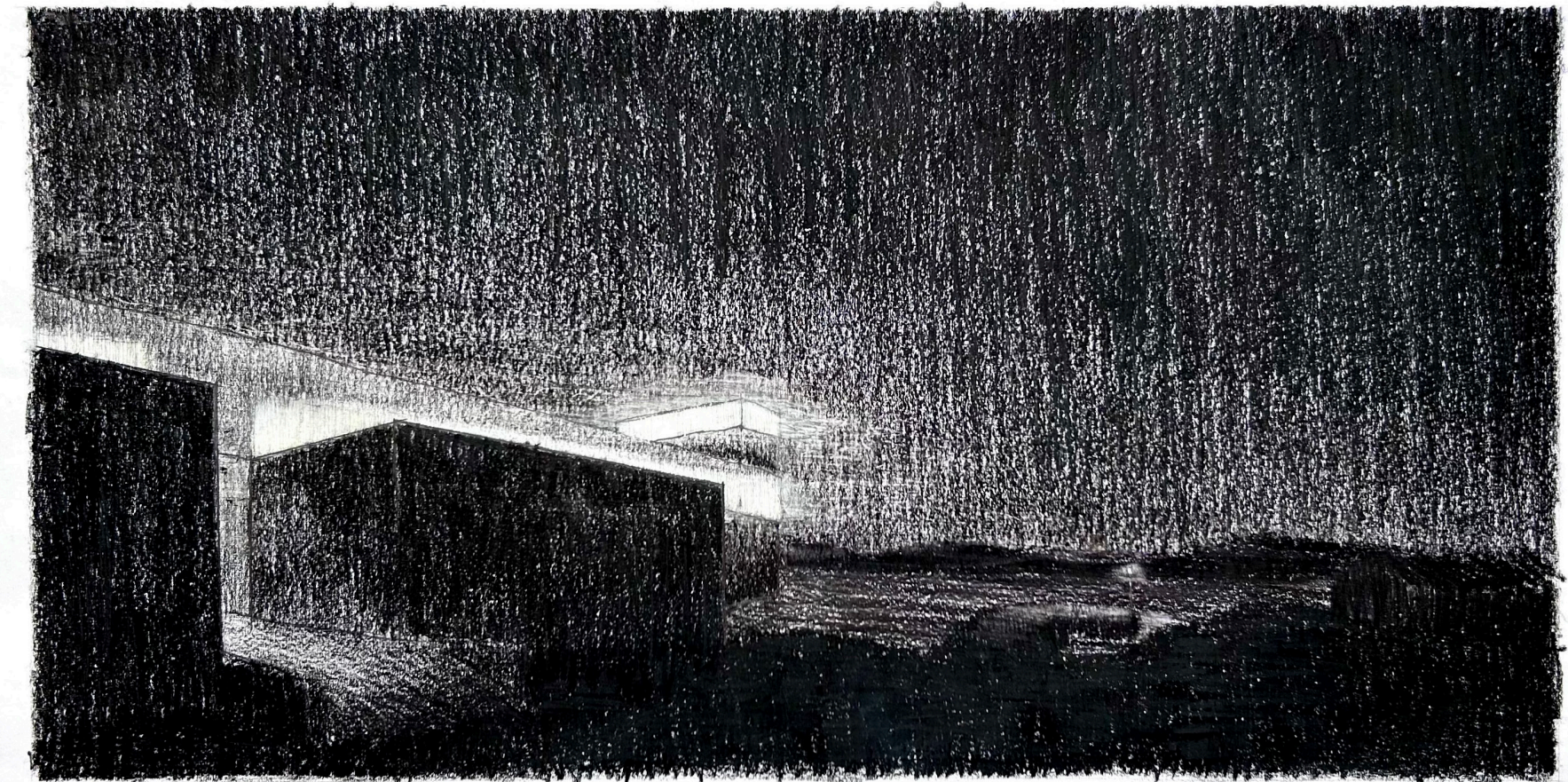
After a while it struck me really funny, I said, you know, this is a village that has lost everything that made it a community, I can't get upset about a light! It just seemed like, so what, one more thing, eh? (Devanney 2016).

In Prospect, navigational lights have long been crucial for sea travel. However, before these were established, the church steeple served as a prominent landmark guiding villagers across the ocean. Its towering presence was visible from afar, aiding fishermen in safely navigating back home.

While the church's steeple has long acted as the village's beacon, it is important to remember that buildings in Prospect are not permanent. Respectfully, the new hall synthesizes the idea of the steeple and navigational light. Facing the harbour, is a beacon that borrows light from the kitchen when in use. Additionally, the entire building can emit a gentle glow through its upper screen, beckoning other villagers to join the community within their new hall.



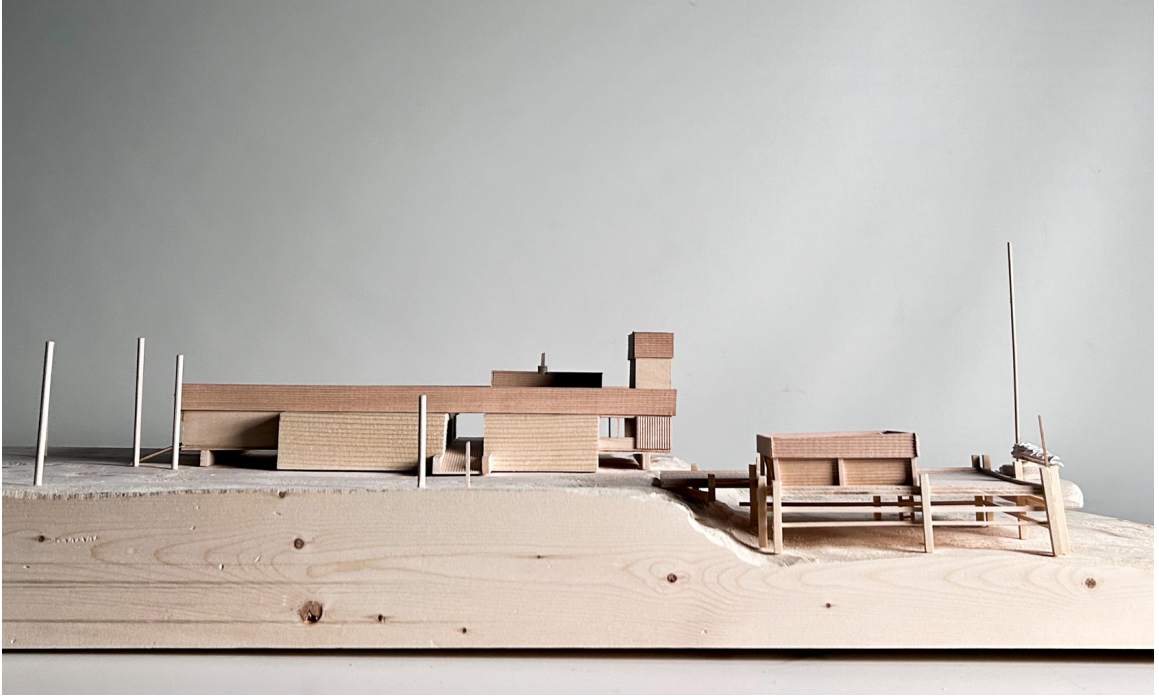
A beacon, which lights up when people are using the kitchen space, sits at the end of the building and defines the new landmark in Prospect.



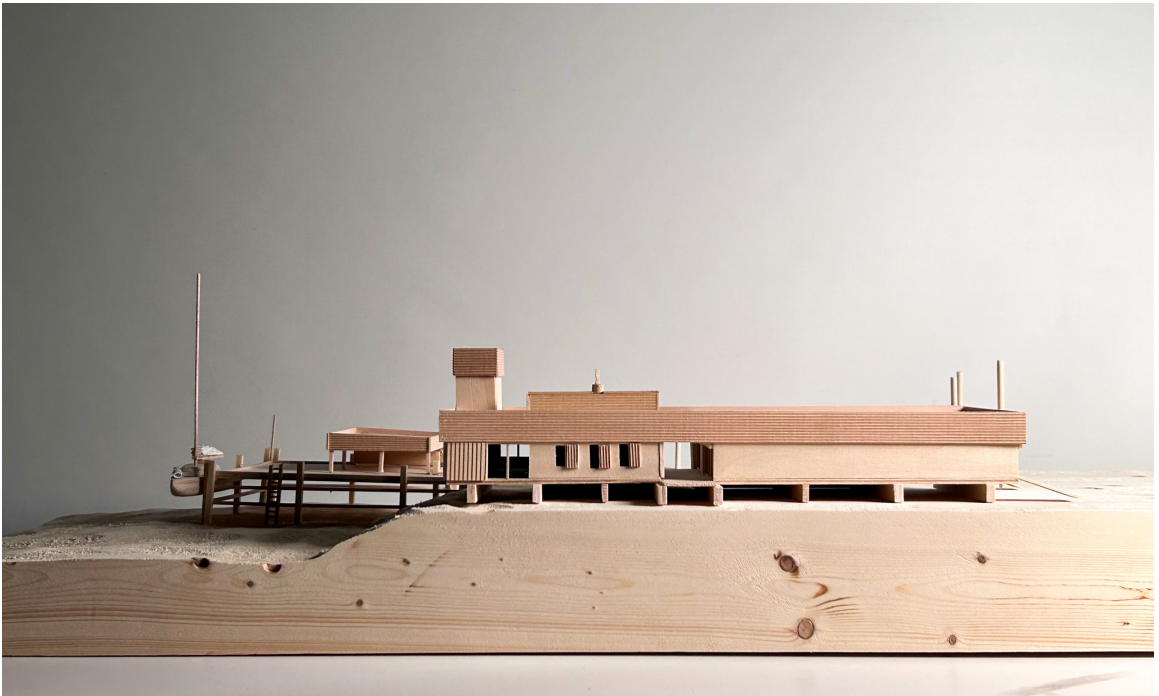
The beacon, emitting a soft light as people use the space.



Light shines from within the building through its clerestory windows. A screen, which wraps the hall, diffuses this light.



The new hall's western facade.



The new hall's eastern facade.



The new hall's southern facade. The "Govie" and its new pavilion sit below.



A view of the village from across the harbour. The new hall's beacon seeks to harmonize with the existing church steeple, rather than challenge it.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This thesis began when I was away from home and noticed the “sameness” that is found far too often across North American neighborhoods. Initially, I perceived this uniformity as a consequence of buildings lacking individual expression. However, through my study of Prospect, I’ve come to realize that this sense of “sameness” is not solely attributed to appearance, but rather to an attitude towards the surrounding environment. If people continue to impose their buildings upon a site and treat it as a “blank slate”, the unique identities and memories embedded within that landscape will be forgotten. While a significant portion of this thesis focused on designing an appropriate building for the place, it was also concerned with the adjacencies and “in between” spaces that were created as a result of it. These in between spaces do not necessarily require an architectural intervention, but can simply consist of natural or existing conditions of the site.

If we think of architecture as a lens to experience the unique traits of a place, the result will be a quiet design that is appropriate to its context. This thesis has taught me about the power of observation and how meaningful narratives can be discovered in the seemingly mundane. Any site carries a story, and as long as we care about creating architecture that seeks to harmonize with it, the soul of a place has a chance of survival amidst this global age.



A hazy summer's morning in Prospect among the rocks (Stampeen, 2013).

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