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A CHALET FOR GUNSIGHT LAKE

SUMMARY PROJECT

by

Matthew Tompkins

Montana State University
Bozeman, Montana
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INTRODUCTION

Glacier National Park has always been known as a "hikers' park". In the early years of the park an extensive trail network was built by the Great Northern Railroad and the United States Government that made it easy for park explorers to experience the wonders of the Glacier area. Due to the unpredictable nature of Glacier's environment, however, the need for shelter along these trails became evident.

A great network of nine chalets was built by the railroad. Each chalet was conveniently located one day's hike apart and offered food, horses, and bedding to all those venturing into the wilderness.

Today, however, only two remain. The chalets at Sperry and Granite Park are today one of the park's biggest attractions. Both chalets are booked solid every year before the park opens in June depriving many would be visitors the opportunity to explore Glacier's backcountry.

The focus of this summary project will be to recreate a chalet environment at one of the original chalet sites on the shores of Gunsight Lake.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A Brief History of Glacier National Park

It would be hard to imagine a place more magnificent than Glacier National Park. "Glacier", as it is fondly called by its visitors, is located in the far northwestern corner of Montana and extends some 150 miles over the border into Canada's Waterton Lakes National Park.

Glacier is approximately a million acres grand, containing about 50 glaciers that survived the Ice Age and continue to cut and shape the rugged mountain landscape. These, along with bluish-green lakes, rugged mountain peaks, and hiking trails, make Glacier one of the best vacation spots in America.

The Glacier area, however, has not always been as inviting as it is today. There is very little evidence of any exploration of the area before 1850. This is primarily due to the rugged geography and climatic conditions that early explorers would have had to combat, not to mention the formidable presence of the Blackfeet Indians who in the early years of the park did not welcome visitors.

Soon trappers and explorers did venture into the area. Many came to establish trade with the Indians while some came to convert them to Christianity. The United States Government encouraged exploration as competition for the possession of North America grew and later to clarify the international border between the United States and Canada. Perhaps the biggest push for exploration came from the Great Northern Railroad (known today as the Burlington Northern Railroad) which had plans to construct a trans-continental line through the area.

The Great Northern began an intense promotional campaign to get people interested in visiting or possibly setting up homesteads in the area. The railroad needed to attract settlers to develop agriculture, industry, and commerce along its lines. Many of the first settlers came by train in hopes of finding the beauty and riches these early promotions promised.

As the population grew the railroad became more important to the first settlers. The railroad became their means of communication with the rest of the world. They also grew to depend on the railroad for their livelihood. Many homesteads were on poor farmland so some of the settlers had to rely on more ingenious means to make a living. Some became trappers and hunters while others began catering meals to

visitors as they got off the train at Belton Station near Lake McDonald to stretch their legs and enjoy the view.

As the potential for tourism increased the Great Northern Railroad began looking for new ways to attract visitors. There were always rumors about glacial activity in the area among the locals, and the railroad saw the glaciers, if they existed, as a great opportunity to bring more people to the area.

Dr. Lyman B. Sperry was hired by the railroad to locate and record any evidence of living glaciers. Sperry's first report to the railroad indicated that indeed there was evidence to suggest living glaciers in the area. Soon, after much study and with the help of a local man named Charlie Howe, Dr. Sperry located a living glacier which later became known as Sperry Glacier. Dr. Sperry returned to the glacier many times bringing with him interested guests who in turn helped publicize the beauty of the Sperry Glacier and the surrounding area. Tourism was born!

The impact of this discovery is not easily measured. It was perhaps the first step in the formation of the Glacier National Park. People began to flock to the area. Housing was soon provided for the visitors and plans to build hotels and develop the Lake McDonald area were introduced.

As visitation increased the government realized the need to create protection and preservation laws for the region. Forest reserves were established in 1891 and rangers were hired to patrol the reserves to guard against poaching and other unlawful activities.

These initial efforts to preserve the area were helpful, but soon proved insufficient. Exploitation by miners, poachers, loggers, the demand for private ownership, and the growing reality that more protection was needed eventually led President Taft to create Glacier National Park on May 11, 1910.

The Chalet in Glacier National Park

It was never the intention of President Taft or Congress to create an absolute wilderness. The bill signed by the President allowed for private land ownership, leased land for cottages, some mining and railroad activity, and the harvesting of dead, downed, or diseased timber.

The Great Northern Railroad took advantage of the Government's somewhat open policies within the park boundries and began an extensive building program aimed at opening remote areas of the park to visitors. Plans were announced for new hotels, tent camps, roads, trails, and chalets - all to be built by the railroad. The Government also aided in opening up more of the park in 1910 by assigning William Logan to the job of "Superintendent of Road and Trail Construction" with the intention of building new roads, trails, and administrative buildings which would organize the park for recreational activities.

The first chalet was built at Belton in 1910 by the Great Northern Railroad. Eventually as many as nine chalets would be operating within the park. The chalets were all rustic in character, built out of indigenous stone and log. They were strategically located a day's horseback ride apart, usually at the shore of a deep blue-green lake or along an icy river. The chalets became a symbol of shelter and warmth to early travelers after a long day's ride across the rocky passes.

Concessionaires operated from every chalet offering fresh horses and room and board for all who braved the long, rocky trails. In the early years of the park horse travel was the main method of seeing the park and remained so until the Going-to-the-Sun Road was completed in 1933. A person who came to visit the park could rent a horse at the Glacier Park Lodge, ride over Mount Henry to the Two Medicine Chalet, the next morning ride on to the St. Mary Chalet, then ride to the Cut Bank Chalet, and finally return to Glacier Park Lodge. Many loops such as this existed within the park and perhaps allowed the tourist then to experience more of Glacier's beauty than even today's modern tourist. The network of chalets soon became the best way to experience Glacier National Park. Visitation increased and with it the pressure to make more of the park accessible.

Roads were built by the railroad and the Government opening up more areas of the park to the automobile, and on July 15, 1933 the Going-to-the-Sun Road was completed, allowing a traveler to cross through the park in less than four hours without ever leaving his car. Ninety-five percent of all park visitors planned their entire trip around the activities offered along the roadway. The automobile quickly became the main way to see

Glacier. This proved to be the beginning of the end for the chalet in Glacier National Park.

The final blow to the chalets came during World War II when, over a four year period, park visitation dropped from 210,000 people a year to just 23,000 people a year. The railroad, due to the pressures of the war, no longer ran through East and West Glacier, and bus travel was terminated. Most of the concessionaires went out of business, and the chalets were empty.

Poor visitation during the war years led park officials to re-evaluate the necessity of some facilities within the park, and in 1944 the St. Mary Chalets were destroyed. By 1949 the chalets at Cut Bank and Sun Point were destroyed, and the areas in which they sat returned to their natural settings.

Today all that remain are the chalets at Granite Park and Sperry. Built in 1915 and still operating today, they are a lasting reminder of the proud people of the Great Northern who helped make Glacier National Park what it is today.

PROJECT STATEMENT

-Gunsight Chalet should provide accommodations that allow visitors to remain in close contact with nature. Backcountry visitors are constantly involved with their surroundings - both physically and mentally. Thus the chalet should not serve simply as shelter, but should provide visitors the opportunity to become involved with the area and interact with each other.

-The new Gunsight Chalet should provide elements of comfort, convenience, excitement, and safety. The architecture can provide these elements and give the visitor a mixture of sport, leisure, and social contact.

-Gunsight Chalet should not ignore its surroundings. Indigenous materials such as wood and stone should be the main building materials. The building(s) should feel at home in this mountainous region and be calm and compatible with the site and the natural environment.

-Special emphasis should be put on the connections between materials. All connections should be strong and versitile to meet the demands of the severe climate of the region.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Due to the rugged environment of Glacier National Park, Gunsight Lake specifically, there are a few unique conditions that must be considered for the project to be successful.

-The Gunsight Lake area is isolated and inaccessible due to snow from late October through early to mid June.

-The site is accessible only by horseback or by foot.

-All materials for the construction of Gunsight Chalet must either be available at the site or brought in by pack animals and helicopters.

-The chalet must be built in stages. Perhaps several seasons of work will be required to complete the construction phase.

-Materials used in the construction of the Gunsight Chalet should require very little upkeep.

-Rodent and pest control should be designed into the project since it will be unattended for 10 months out of the year.

THE SITE

The site for the Gunsight Chalet rests on the northeast shore of Gunsight Lake near the mouth of the St. Mary River. This is one of few relatively flat, grassy areas around the lake.

The lake sits in a "half-bowl" formed by the pink argillite cliffs of Mount Jackson to the south and Fusillade Mountain to the north. A half-dozen streams originating from small glaciers above flow over the rocky cliff walls into the blue lake below. The Continental Divide snakes its way along the cliffs to the east, across Gunsight Pass (elevation 6946 ft.), then north to the Canadian border.

Known for its fighting rainbow trout, Gunsight Lake can be reached by following Gunsight Pass Trail - one of the premier hiking trails in the park. The hike to the site is approximately 8 miles if approached from the east and 14 miles if approached from the west with the Sperry Chalets resting near the half-way point at Sperry Glacier.

THE SITE

SPACE ALLOCATION

Main Building(s)
-20 private rooms
-lobby
-lounge area
-kitchen
-employee kitchen
-services
-mechanical
-employee quarters
-restrooms
-manager's office
-linen and cleaning storage
-public dining room
-employee lunch room
-equipment storage
-food storage

Utility Building
-water unit
-power generation
-storage
-septic system
-garbage disposal

Hitching Rack Area
-shelter for 20 to 30 horses
-room for unloading/loading

Helicopter Landing Area
-area for helicopters to land during construction phase.

PRESENTATION GOALS

DRAWINGS

-Location Plan (macro/micro)
-Overall Site Plan
-Floor Plans
-Elevations
-Sections
-Interior Perspectives
-Exterior Perspectives

Media
-Plastic lead on milar

RESOURCES

Books

-Christopherson, Edmund., Adventures Among the Glaciers, Montana, Earthquake Press, 1966.

-Buchholtz, C.W., Man in Glacier, Montana, Glacier Natural History Association, Inc., 1976.

-Edwards, J. Gordon., A Climber's Guide to Glacier National Park, Montana, Mountain Press Publishing Co., 1976.

-Ruhle, George C., Roads and Trails of Waterton-Glacier National Parks, Minnesota, John W. Forney, 1972.

- Bulger, Leroy M., A Chalet Environment for Glacier National Park, Montana, Montana State University, 1968.

LEGEND

Main Building

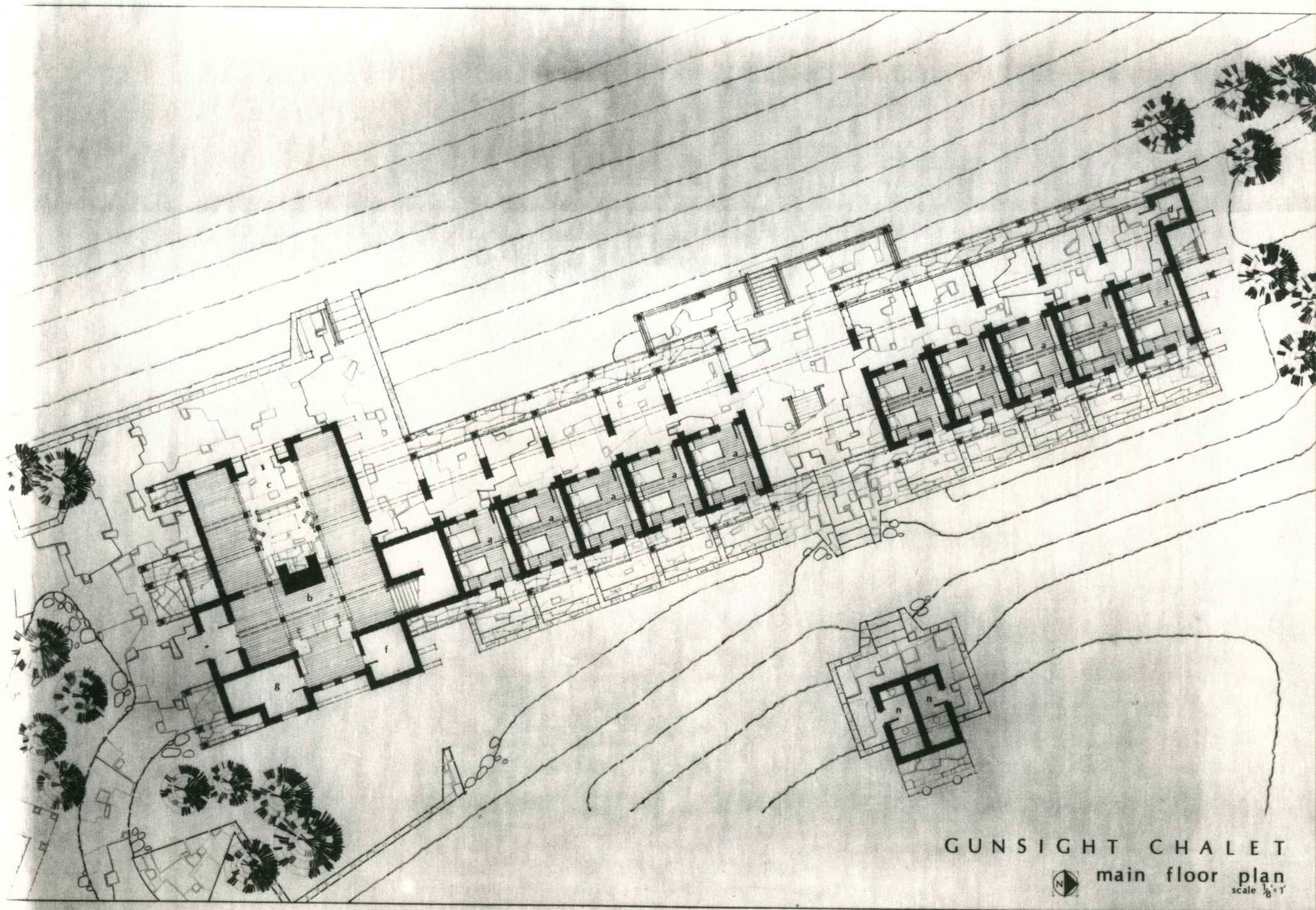
a) guest room
b) lobby
c) lounge
d) storage
e) linen
f) mechanical / equipment storage
g) managers office

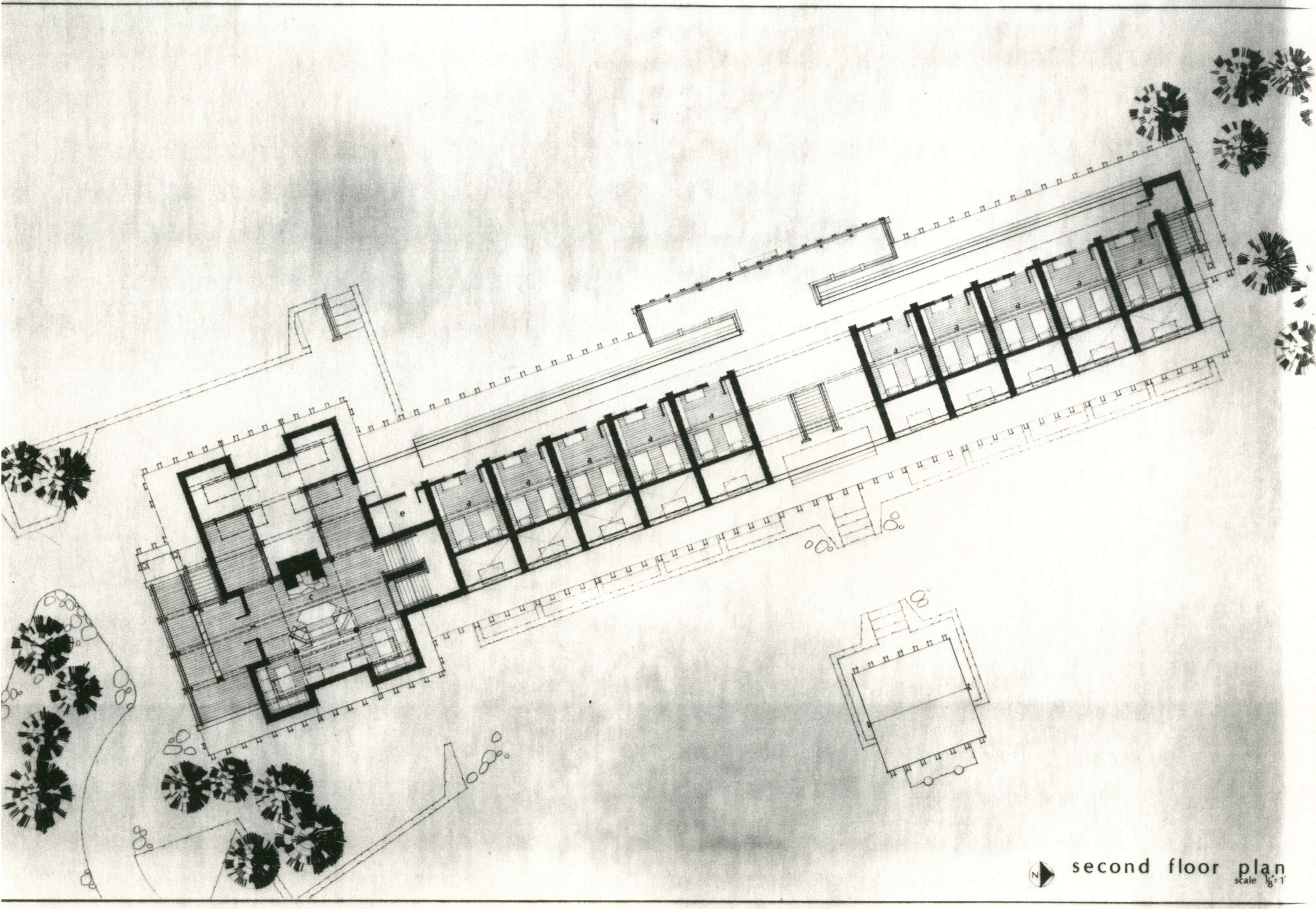
Dining Room/ Employee Quarters

h) dining room
i) kitchen
j) food storage
k) garbage disposal
l) employee living quarters
m) employee lounge
n) restroom

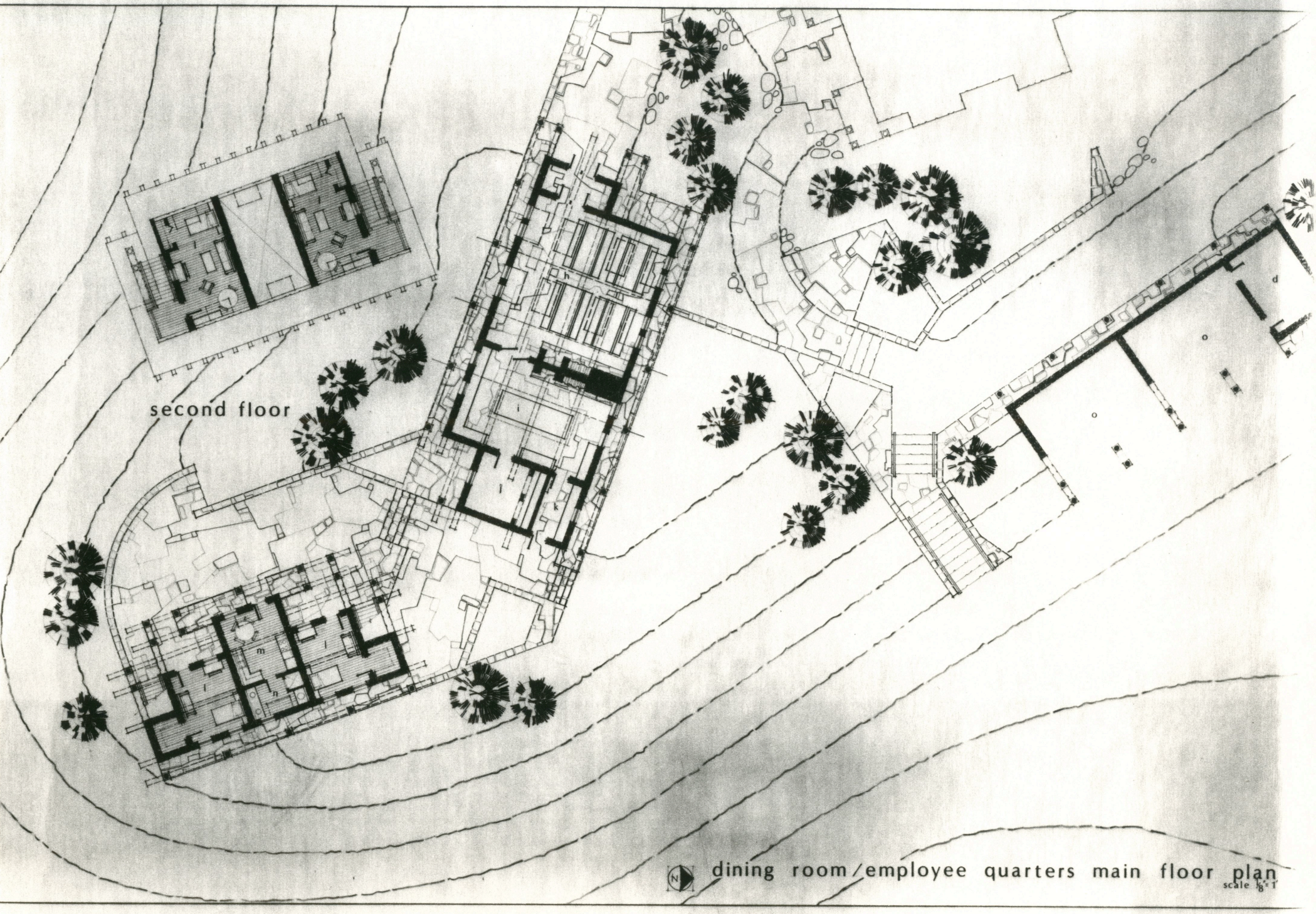
Hitching Rack Area

o) stables

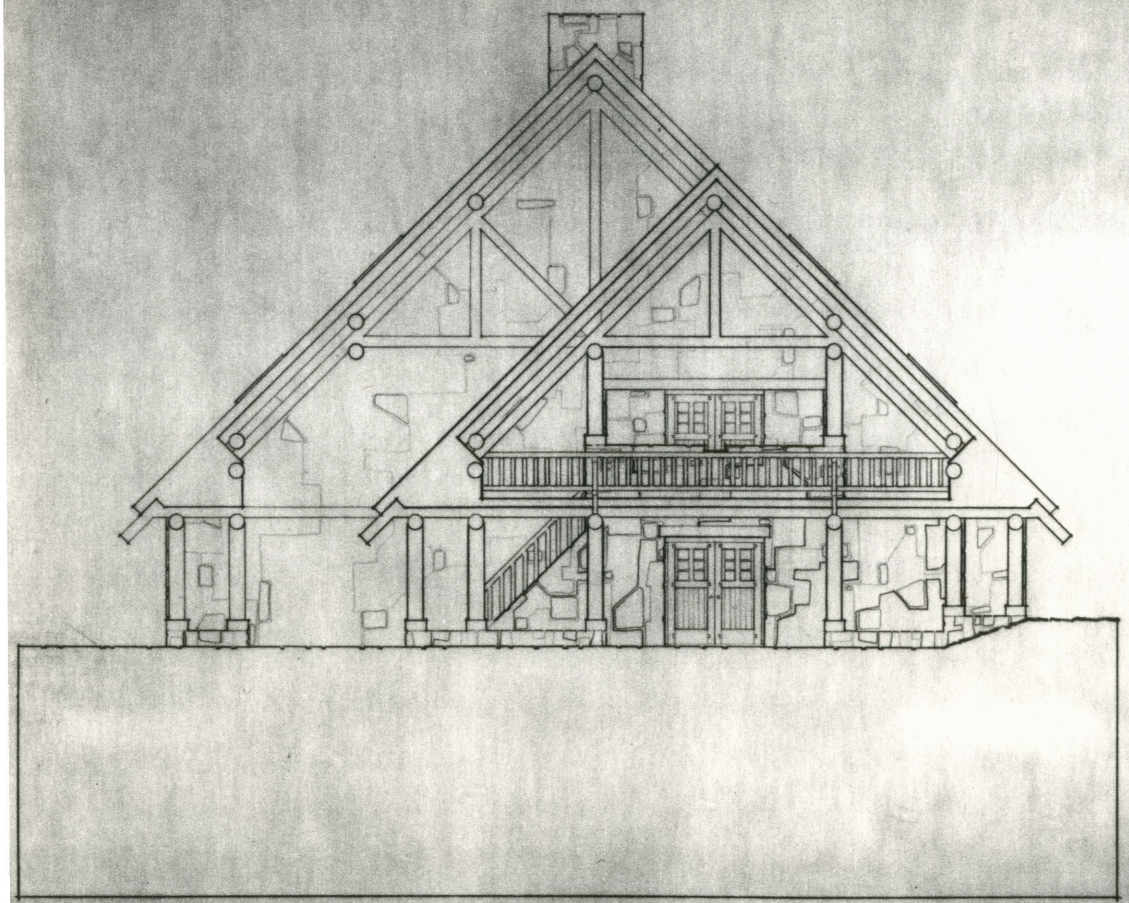

GUNSIGHT CHALET
main floor plan
scale 1/8" = 1'



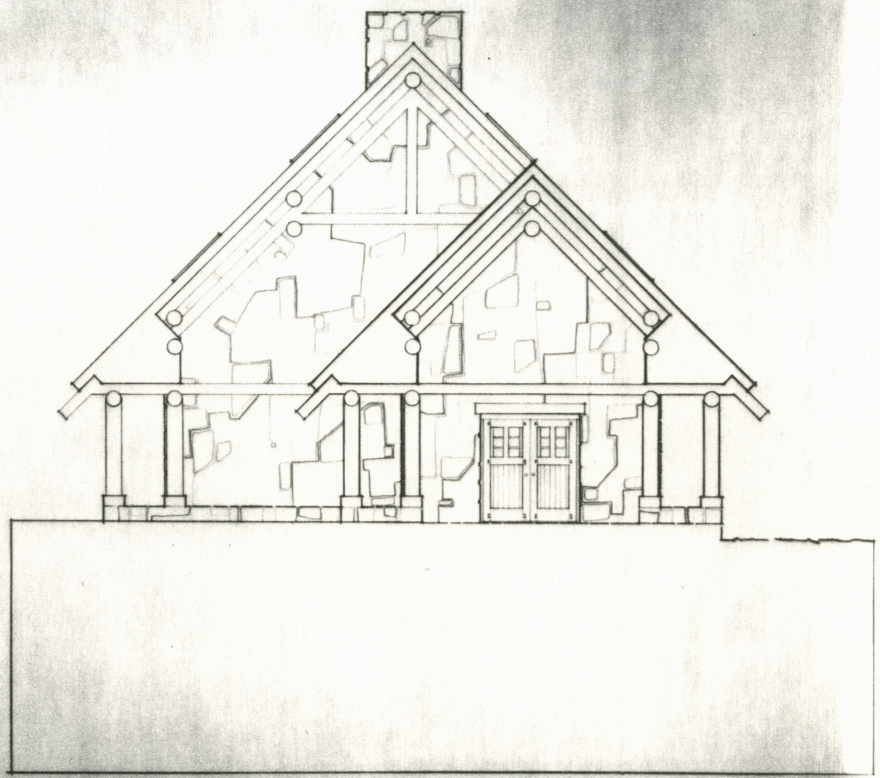
second floor plan
scale 1/8" = 1'


second floor
dining room/employee quarters main floor plan
scale 1/8"=1'

roof /site plan
scale 1/16"=1'
N

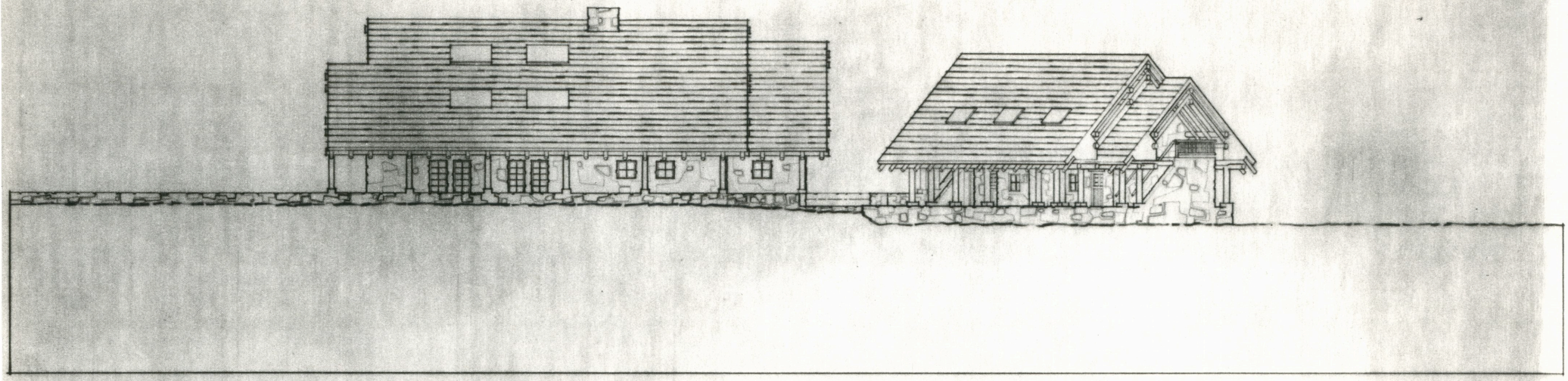


main entrance

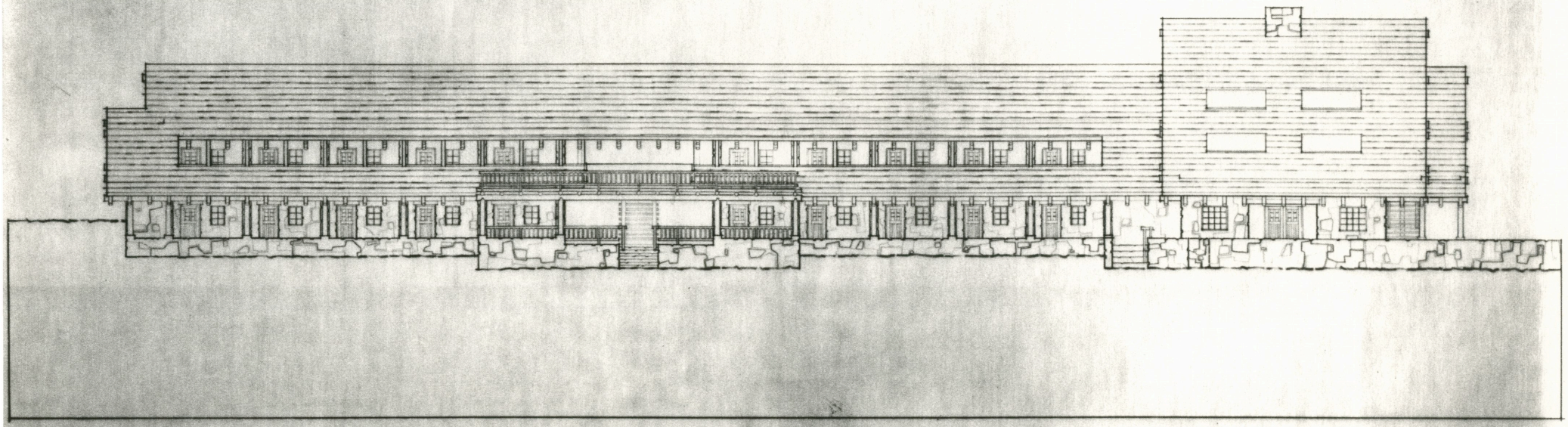


dining room

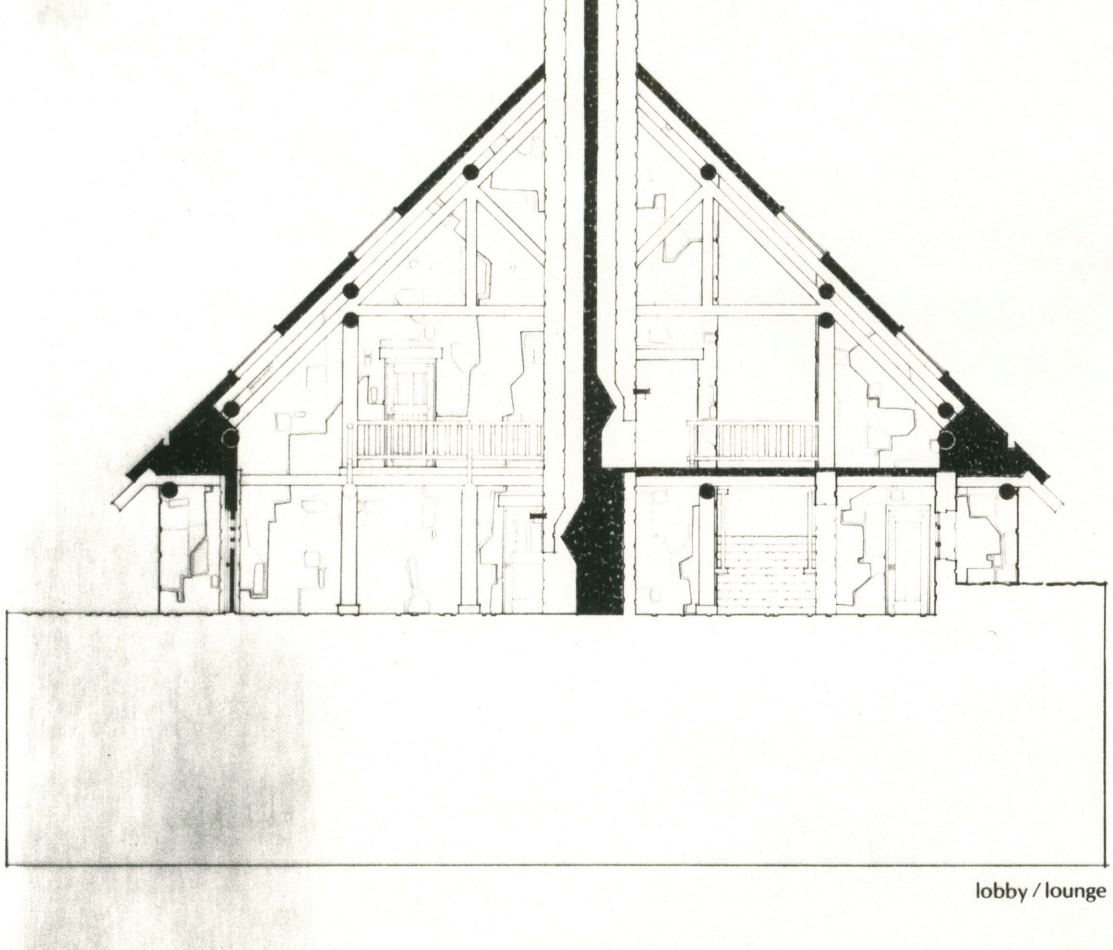
elevations
scale 1/4" = 1



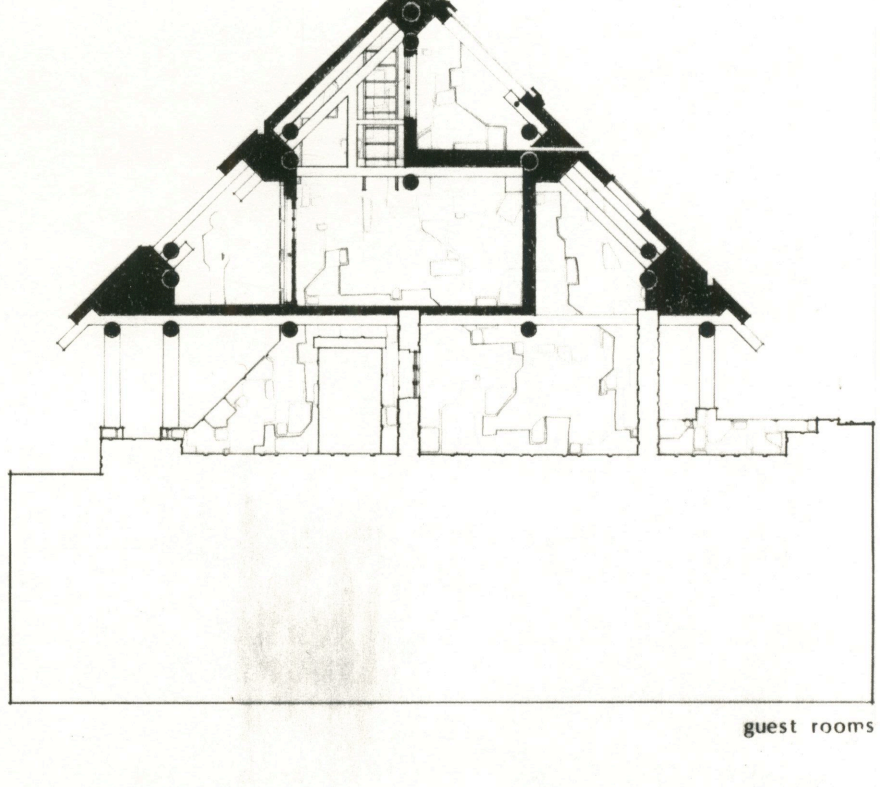
dining room / employee quarters



main building

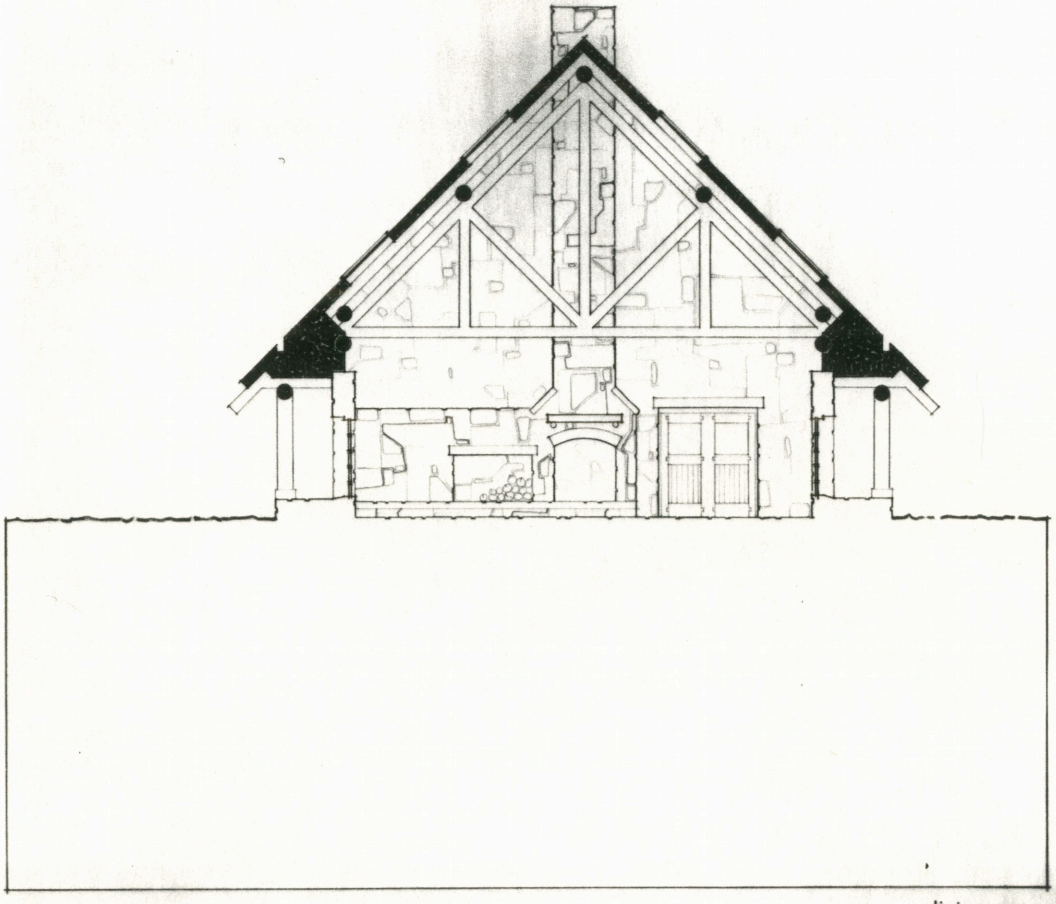


lobby / lounge

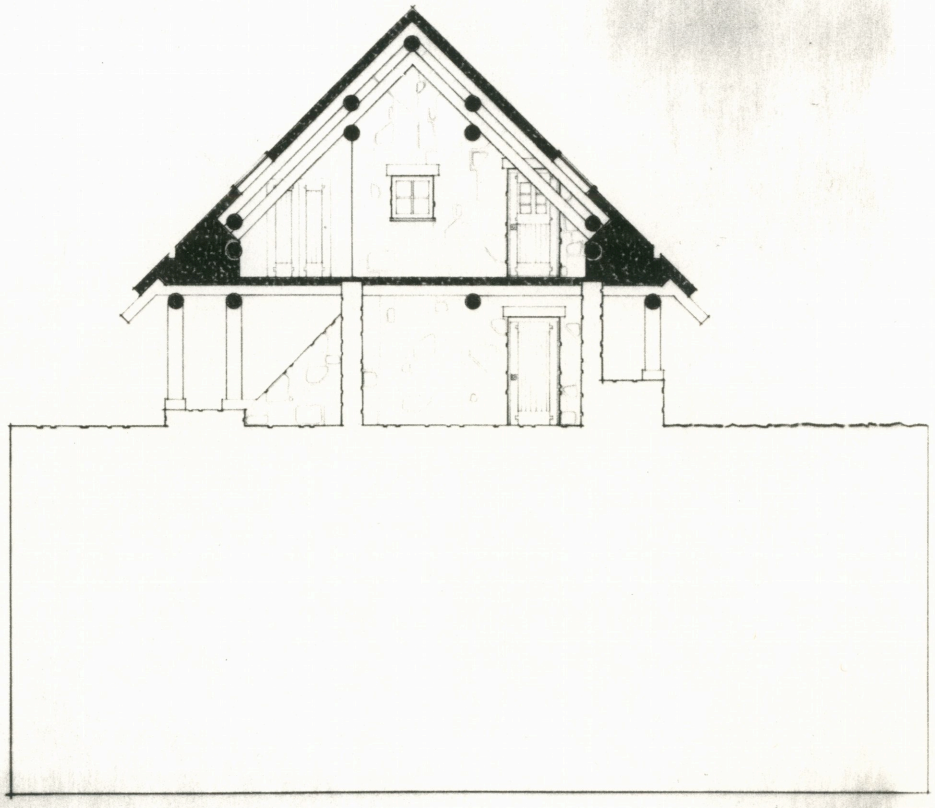


guest rooms

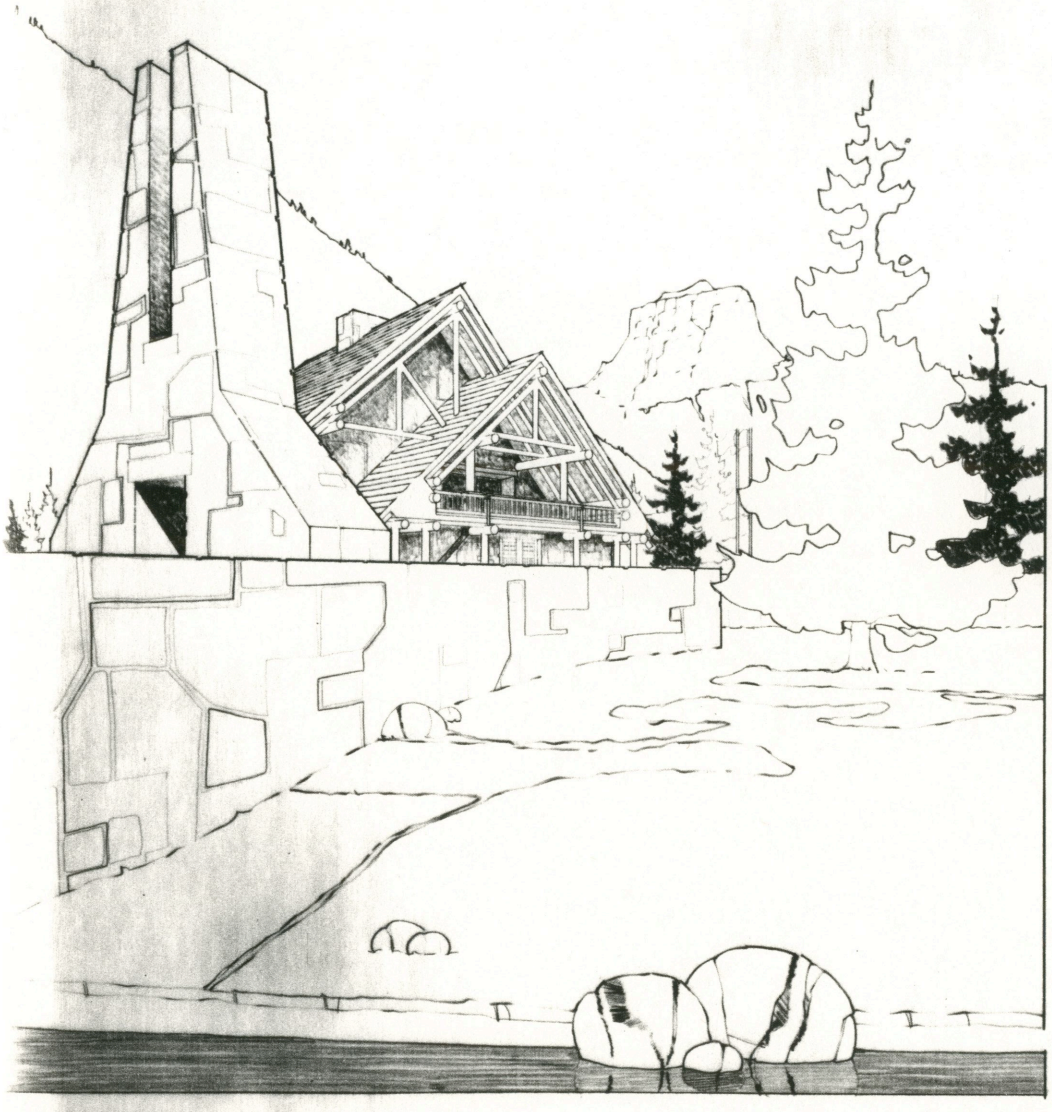
sections
scale 1/4" 1



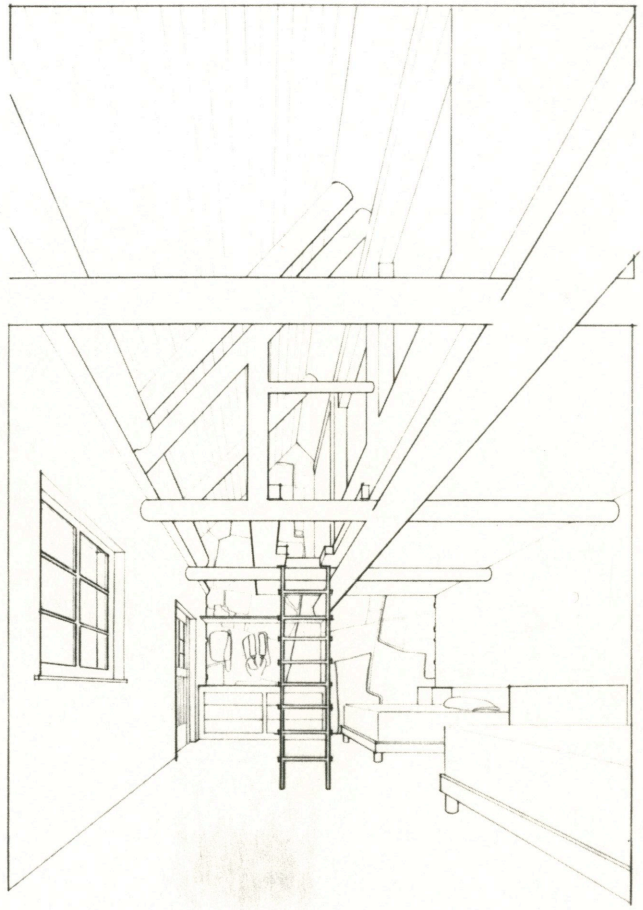
dining room



employee quarters



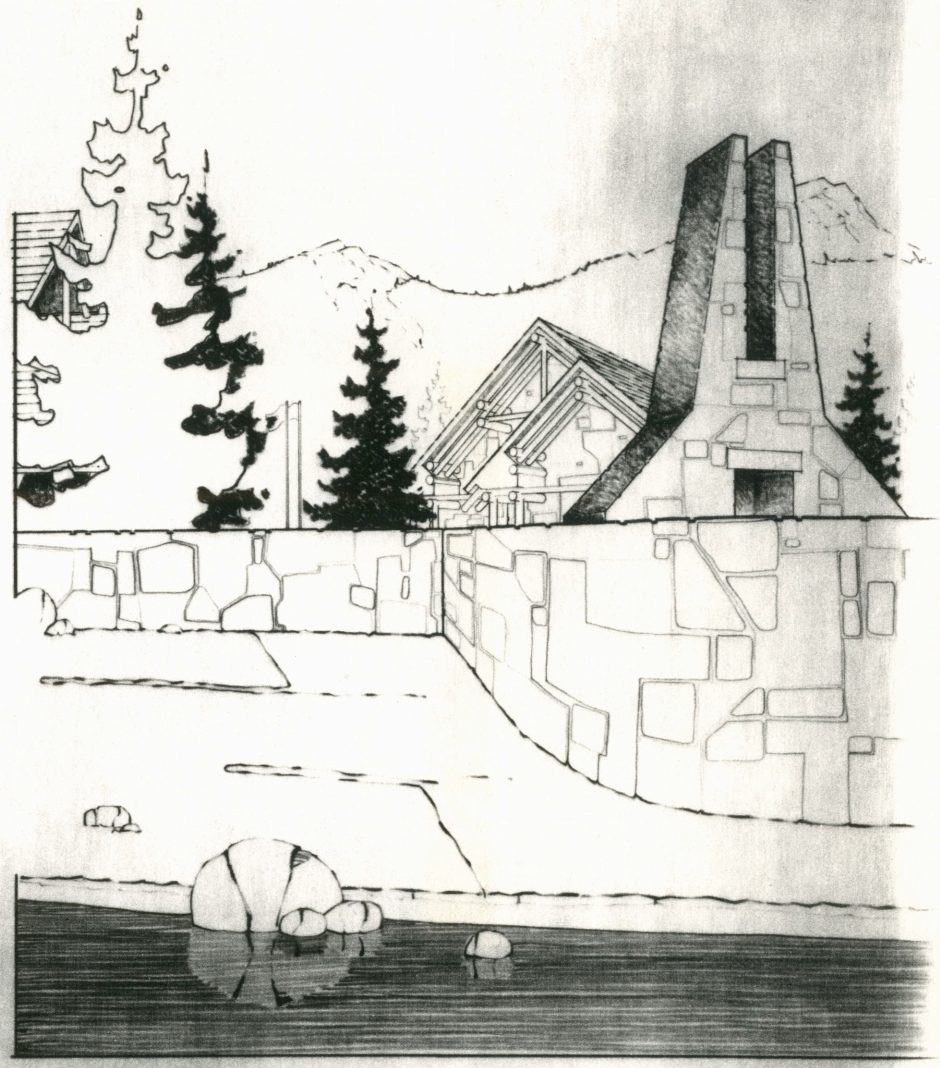
main building



guest room



employee quarters



dining

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