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WALLACE, AND THE IN-BETWEEN:
The Search for an Authentic Architecture of Place

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A thesis submitted to,
The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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DEDICATION

For my grandfather, Leonard Wakefield, to whom I made a promise.

ABSTRACT

Due to profound economic and social shifts in the latter part of the twentieth century, Nova Scotia's small urban communities continually struggle to redefine their economies and social lives. In tandem with this, these fishing and farming communities are subjected to outside market forces that require them to satisfy the tourism industry, and related desires. As a result, the built fabrics in these towns very often turn to nostalgic copies of past architectures that neither contribute to the vernacular continuum, nor reinforce "concepts of place".

In contrast, this thesis looks for a way of discovering an authentic architecture for the region: one that is rooted in the particularities of place and is inherently local. Through a series of investigations that include topographical history, Maritime folksongs and vernacular precedent, this thesis proposes a new direction for Maritime architecture. In dialogue with specific memories of place unearthed through rigorous study of the village of Wallace, this thesis emerges as a case study for new local architectures. The design for a trade school in Wallace brings concrete clarifications to this search.

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You encouraged me along this journey since the very day I decided I wanted to be an architect. Without the strength of character you imparted to me, I would not have had the stubbornness, passion and drive to see me through the past seven years of my architectural education. You are my foundation.

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FOREWORD

To the readers of this thesis, I feel it important to take a brief moment to reveal the springboard from which this architectural project found its beginnings. The work reflected throughout this paper finds its roots in my childhood and the lasting impressions growing up in the Maritimes has left on me. I think this fact holds true particularly in how as an architect I read a site and its surrounding context (as you soon will see). During my years on the East Coast, I was most fortunate to have spent my childhood summers visiting with my grandparents at the family cottage along the Amherst Shore of Nova Scotia. This place has always kept a special place in my heart, and so how fitting it is that my thesis should bring me home once more.

My family was known to keep our cottage open into the month of October so we could make the most of the (reasonably) warm weather. As a child I was never particularly fond of this time at the cottage. The neighbours and kids had gone back to their respective towns by then and there was not much to do aside from linger at the shore just

a little longer. The only traces of summer life that remained were the carvings etched into the sandstone banks of the Northumberland Strait - a yearly tradition of the kids who had spent their summer there. Even the local general store closed its doors by Labour Day weekend, as there were not enough permanent residents for it to stay open through the off-season.

Now however, I love nothing more than to be by the shore in autumn. There is something in the starkness of the coast at this time of the year that catches you, and forces you to look with more awareness at your surroundings. It was only in my own encounters with the coast during the off season that I could come to appreciate the extent to which the summer realm limits our experience of place and moreover, distracts us from the particularities that enrich daily life.

Vestiges of the past can be found all around the cottages that dot the shores of this area for anyone willing to pause and look. From the Cold Spring Head Lighthouse to the rusted iron ties of the uncompleted Chignecto Ship Railway that lay embedded in the sandstone

at Lobster Cove, these misplaced layers work to create a spirit of place that makes it unique. I think it of the utmost importance to be able to walk away from visiting a place, having experienced a sense of place. And so with that, framed by context of tourism in Nova Scotia, this thesis embarks on a search for a new space of participation that could cross the boundaries of summer and winter and ignite a new imagination in the minds of the people who inhabit the shores, if even just for a little while.

Fig. 1
A Lonely
Figure.

INTRODUCTION

With some notable exceptions, current building practices in Nova Scotia neither adequately position themselves in a historical continuum, nor contribute in meaningfully anchoring present day life in the region. This thesis identifies a state of crisis, and advances that a new architecture for the Maritimes is urgently called for at this juncture in time. This thesis is, more specifically, intent on discovering a contemporary language of building for the village of Wallace that joins tradition and the present.

In dialogue with theorist Frederic Jameson's concept of commodification of culture, this thesis will track the progression of prevalent cultural forces influencing architecture today, and study them in the Nova Scotian context. In remote and increasingly sensitive locations such as Wallace, Nova Scotia, the reverberations of global commodification, are all the more poignant. In order to uncover rules that might guide a more relevant building practice for the present, the thesis will unfold an inventory and study of Nova

Scotian material traditions and rituals. Forces that contribute to the creation of particularity of place -- topography, rituals of inhabitation, and other cultural phenomena both tangible and figurative, including material artifacts and cultural themes -- will be systematically examined. The thesis will identify salient themes of rootedness in locality and place, exploring geographical and seasonal "limits" as promising architectural beginnings.

In Part I, the post-industrial era, romanticization of the coast, and the role the tourism industry's role in redefining Maritime culture, will be examined and interpreted. Part II is comprised of a series of searches into significant cultural artifacts, including folk songs such as the Sea Chanty, seasonal habitation rituals, and a prevalent building form known as "cribwork." The latter will be studied both as a cultural symbol and tectonic device capable of yielding useful ideas and spatial principles for an architecture that embraces seasonal change and the physical landscape. Enduring themes of loss and melancholy, instability and temporariness of inhabiting the coast (a geographical edge), become topics to renew a language of

architecture. Finally, the architectural exercise concluding this thesis and that constitutes the focus of Part III and IV -- a vocational school sited in the village site of Wallace, Nova Scotia, searches to test the thesis's discoveries and conclusions. The architectural proposition is meant to stand as a counter-project to prevalent building culture in Nova Scotia and illustrates an approach to architecture that is informed by land and seasons, etymology, and cultural memory. This thesis and its concluding project seek to address the present crisis in maritime architecture and offer an alternate path that transcends the historical pastiche and a romanticized past, by drawing upon embedded memories, reconciling former and future concepts of place, and thereby reinforcing the integrity and specificity of site for Wallace.

This work falls in line with other critical reexaminations of maritime architecture, in particular, the work of Brian Mackay-Lyons, whose architectural methodology and place in the Nova Scotian context will be examined through the study of Messenger House II of 2003. Messenger House II will serve as a reference point for the

architectural proposal of this thesis. The house is of particular interest to this project for its balance between the historic cultural landscape and modern touristic context. Furthermore, its development of narrative structural expression is of interest in reference to the conceptual role of cribwork to the architectural proposal.

Photographs taken by the author with a Holga medium format camera in the summer of 2009 are included at significant points of transition in the text, creating moments of pause between the layers of content. These images of favorite tourist locations constitute a commentary on the tourist's nostalgic gaze: the photographs' characteristic Holga yellowed hue corresponds to the romanticism of tourism, but the detail, grittiness, rawness and content (some of the photos point the camera towards views not normally valued), does not. As architectural artifacts of sorts, the images are designed to inspire reflection, and incite a curiosity for the context presented in this thesis.

Though this thesis identifies a state of crisis in the architecture of Nova Scotia today brought about by market forces and the industry of tourism, it is important to note that the architectural proposition contained in this thesis accepts tourism as a reality. Working in such a simple local economy such as Wallace (as will be discussed), it is unrealistic for any potential civic architecture to negate the existence of tourism in the area. After all, tourism remains Nova Scotia's largest source of revenue each year. To this end, programming for the project will look for a balance between the limits of seasonal dwelling in Wallace. In identifying the shortcomings and impasses of the tourist economy, this thesis looks for the opportunity through which architecture may reveal something more of this place. In this way, new architecture for Nova Scotia may reinforce sense of place to the people who live and visit Wallace. This thesis is a search for authenticity - for architecture is the gateway to culture.

I. UTOPIAN IMAGININGS VERSUS AUTHENTIC MEMORY

i. The backward gaze of tourism and the search for the simple life.

The McDonald's restaurant on Highway 103, just outside Halifax, is built in the shape of a lighthouse. On this eastern tip of Canada, the icon of globalized fast food makes a gesture towards the region's collective memory. The superficiality of the image is made all the more absurd by the fact that this lighthouse lies surrounded by an asphalt parking lot far from the shore. Thirty minutes away, on the Halifax waterfront, small woodsheds from which tourist businesses operate sit dwarfed below tall glazed buildings -- harking back to sublime and forlorn coastal experiences of the nineteenth century. The search for an authentic architecture for the present day Nova Scotia, particularly in small town Maritime locations, inevitably confronts the powerful expectations and promises related to the tourism industry. The latter has played a strong role in shaping Nova Scotia's contemporary built environment. This section recounts the history of tourism in Nova Scotia - characterized by backward gazing imagery and idealizations that limit authentic experience -- in order

to identify the cultural conditions that drive contemporary building practice and coastal inhabitation.

Tourism has been an identifiable industry in the Nova Scotia since the 1870s. The province's rich natural resources offered an unspoiled "paradise" to wealthy sportsmen. By 1900, Nova Scotia's countryside was marketed in American newsmagazines as a land of sports adventure. Marked by the arrival of modern transportation, the onset of modernization in Atlantic Canada would have substantial repercussions on the province's socio-economic and cultural landscape -- repercussions that persist to this day. Industrialization in Nova Scotia resulted in vast economic turmoil as the province bed farewell to the Golden Age of Sail. Previous to the 1880s, commercial shipping trade had been at its peak. Nova Scotia's infant tourism industry promised the means to fuel a waning economy at the dawn of the twentieth century. And so it was that in 1926, Nova Scotia was reborn as "Canada's Ocean Playground."¹ From this point onward, the

¹ Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1994), xx.

maritime province -- aided by a group of cultural enthusiasts -- worked to establish a new vocabulary of identity that could provide deeper access to Nova Scotia's "cultural heart"².

Prior to the onset of industrialization in the late nineteenth century, the Nova Scotian coast represented a "veritable hell on earth" in the Victorian mindset.³ Mid-century missionary reports described the inhabitants of the coast, or fisherfolk, as wild people who lived in small, half-finished wooden shanties, sustained by potatoes, fish and rum. However, it is precisely this so-called "damned landscape" of destitution and drunkenness that the folk ideal would soon appropriate in order to proffer it to the tourist's gaze.

The folk movement marked a new way of seeing the rural coasts and the people that inhabited them. In the quest to distance themselves from the iron clutches of industry, participants of "the quest of the

² Nova Scotia's cultural heart refers to the significance placed upon the Coastal regions, and the fisherfolk who came to bear the cultural essence of the province.

³ Ibid., xiv.

folk"⁴ -- primarily middle class urbanites -- found in the idealized primitivism of the fisherfolk "the simple life" they longed for. To them, the fisherfolk represented an antidote to modern industrial life and fulfilled their thirst for a world re-enchanted by history and nature.⁵ This "folk culture" provided a fulfilling sense of identity to Nova Scotians coping with the economic and social uncertainties of modernity. Romantic idealizations of folk culture would spread with the onslaught of commercial tourism in Nova Scotia, as "the people of the coastal fishing villages came to be seen as the bearers of Nova Scotia's cultural essence" and identity.⁶ Once depicted as heathens, people of the coast were reborn in travel literature as resourceful folk who led "a simple life" by the sea, untroubled by urban stresses and nourished by the natural beauty around them.⁷

⁴ Term by Ian Mackay used to describe the Nova Scotian folk movement.

⁵ McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, 4.

⁶ McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, pp xiv.

⁷ *Ibid.*

This deeply attractive idea of "the simple life" continued to thrive through the twenties and thirties, at a time when Nova Scotian's were facing unprecedented socio-economic crisis. As historian Ian Mackay concludes:

*The concept of the folk, and of the province as essentially a folk society - intrinsically rural, traditional and conservative - gradually became a new matter of common sense, promulgated by cultural producers with both symbolic and economic success of this new vocabulary.*⁸

Essential folk culture offered Nova Scotian's young and old, rich and poor, a regional identity of which they could be proud. Moreover, adopting the folk identity offered people the ability to "re-live" the Golden Age through idealized cultural traditions thought to be representative of a more prosperous time in their history. Due to its overuse by the tourism industry however this ever-powerful notion of what it means to be a Nova Scotian has been reduced to commodity.⁹ Nova Scotia's over-insistence on romanticization of its past is not

⁸ McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, 265.

⁹ Tourism in the province remains the single largest source of revenue each year and continues to rely on the established cultural image of Nova Scotia as a draw for tourists.

unique. Ian Mackay discusses similar phenomena in terms of a "cultural panic" whereby cultures identify pleasing elements of their past and elevate them above the realities of the present.

The postmodern cultural condition in Nova Scotia characterized by such an intensified "crisis of selfhood" jeopardizes any concepts of authenticity that remain.¹⁰ Despite folk imagery's marketability and resulting appeal, the romanticized folk ideal provided a flawed answer to the question "who are we?" The backward gaze has stranded the Maritimes in a reductive cycle of cultural repetition. Commodification of Nova Scotian culture by the tourism industry has, in turn, resulted in the erosion of authentic memory. The effects of this cycle can be read on the built landscape. Iconic shapes, such as lighthouses and sheds forms, provide imagistic references to the region's identity. Is there not another form of architecture in which images have no importance? Might regional resonance be more adequately established through memory-laden configurations, materials

¹⁰ McKay, *Quest of the Folk*, 278.

and assemblages rooted in local traditions, and relationships to the
landscape that foster wealthier experiences of place?

Fig. 2
Boat Sheds at
Blue Rocks.

ii. *Commodification of coastal narratives*

Atlantic Canada is often referred to as "the place time forgot" -- a land of villages and "fisher folk" enjoying a simple existence unaffected by the troubles of urbanity and sustained by the rich landscape around them. This stereotypical image of the Maritimes describes the fundamental cultural condition of post-modernity in Atlantic Canada. Twentieth-Century literary critic Frederic Jameson suggests that culture in post-modernity has become a commodity in its own right, characterized by pastiche and superficial historical references.¹¹ Such commercialization of culture has contributed to a crisis of Maritime architecture defined by the inability for the region to express itself through building.

In 1954, American architect Harwell Hamilton Harris distinguished an architectural stream known as restrictive regionalism, defined by

¹¹ Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism, Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke UP, 1992), xx, quoted in Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-century Nova Scotia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 1994), xx.

fixed, stylized forms incapable of adapting to changing situations.¹² Harris' concept of restrictive regionalism presents an accurate description of Nova Scotian architecture produced over the last 60 years. Most architecture of the twentieth century has tried to find sustenance in existing romanticized forms of the coast or from the architectural movements of Europe in order to cement a modern image for the Maritimes. As a result, architectural motifs ubiquitous to Nova Scotia persist however fundamentally unresponsive to their contemporary context. Urban centers like Halifax have come to resemble theme parks where steel and glass buildings mingle with nautical relics. These cities, towns and villages designed around by what the tourist will buy into have become confused and disassociated from the inherent qualities of place and locality. The use of pastiches and overt copies of architectures of other times has the contradictory effect of producing a generic architecture devoid of cultural specificity and of a sense of actuality.

¹² Robert McCarter, "The Thought of Construction," in *Ghost: Building an Architectural Vision*, ed. Brian Mackay-Lyons (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 197.

Other recent additions to the Nova Scotian built landscape seem to impose an external logic of indifference and placelessness. Developments such as Dartmouth Crossing -- a commercial power centre boasting over two million square feet of retail space -- can be found in every metropolitan centre in Canada. To walk along its soulless "Main Street", one would hardly know if they were in Ottawa, Calgary or Vancouver, let alone greater Halifax. This is a shame, especially in a city so bountifully endowed with geographical and cultural character, and sheer natural beauty. By failing to engage the specificities of their location, these generic environments miss an opportunity to participate and advance a material culture developed over hundreds of years, in which building practices refer to deep-seated concepts of inhabitation.

Culturally specific architecture must attempt to develop design strategies that ensure a unique solution to each situation in order to maintain relevance for the present. One can also add that when designing buildings in ex-centric regions like Nova Scotia, a

critical look into the history and "culture" of place is even more pressing than in larger centers. As Alberto Pérez-Gómez reminds us:

*Despite the frightening power of modern planning to obliterate the past and create nightmarish environments, history is like a layered palimpsest of our cities, providing a vast store of enticing memories embedded in matter. The perennial questions still have to be answered by every generation in its present world though; historical answers are only partial.*¹³

Regardless of the tourism industry's reductive use of Nova Scotia's past, one cannot forego historic precedent entirely. Indeed, in his critical stance on postmodernism outlined in the work, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Frederic Jameson presents a dystopic image of the contemporary situation that he associates with a lost connection to history, or "historical deafness."¹⁴ For Jameson, "postmodernism is not the cultural dominant of a wholly new social order... but only the reflex and the concomitant of yet another systemic modification of capitalism itself."¹⁵ Jameson

¹³ Gómez, Alberto Pérez. "Built Upon Love" (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT University Press. 2008) 108.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, xi.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, xii.

identifies postmodernism and its empty return history as a merely symptom of the capitalist age. He instead calls for the return to historical consciousness and truth in order to move beyond the idealized images of the past. Jameson's thesis would imply that a study of traditional building practices and an understanding of historical conditions of production may point the way to a new and more meaningful architecture for the present. Such a forward-looking approach to historical paradigms fosters site-specific architecture as an alternative to the banal stylized architectures propagated by the tourism industry. After all, re-interpreting embedded vernacular matter maintains cultural narrative in the evolution of a place. Here, continuity is valued over progress. But in addition to environmental site specificity, Jameson also seems to call for a socially specific building practice. Introducing a new institution that is both a social hub and source of economic revival to the coasts and, reclaiming the coasts as public, space is one such way this thesis searches to re-kindle the past in a meaningful way.

iii. Arcadian Landscapes

*The pattern laid down by the glaciers is like a musical staff over which the melody of human settlement has been laid, ultimately producing the genius loci, or particular sense of place for this region.*¹⁶

The previous sections have described the impasses of tourist romanticization and the commodification of the coast. It is useful to understand that the divide between romantic idealization and reality in the Maritimes is far from recent. Indeed, a backward gaze examining first encounters with the region reveals the constancy of this tension. In the indigenous place names and vernacular building traditions of Nova Scotia we find cultural memories of inhabitation and place narratives that perhaps might offer insights into a way out of these impasses. The following etymological study, while not exhaustive, yields some interesting clues towards a new maritime architecture.

¹⁶ Brian Mackay-Lyons, "Hill," in *Ghost: Building an Architectural Vision* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 35.

While the contemporary perception of Nova Scotia conjures images of fertile inland valleys opening up to sweeping rocky coasts, this Arcadian landscape has long been cast as a place of desire. Sixteenth Century Italian explorer Giovanni da Verrozzano was one of the first to document the Nova Scotian landscape. In his 1524 map of the North American Eastern Seaboard, Verrozzano bestowed the name "Archadia" to the region now inclusive of the Carolinas through to the shores of Nova Scotia. Having been inspired by the "beauty of the trees,"¹⁷ Verrozzano's accounts would inadvertently cement Nova Scotia as a place of natural splendor and simplicity. Making an illusion to the classical Greek utopia renown for its pastoral peace and harmony with nature, Verrozzano chose the epithet Arcadia for these lands. Many narratives of place for this region have emerged from such understandings of Nova Scotia as an unreachable, utopian (let us recall that u-topos, from the Greek, signifies "no place") domain of beauty and a place of desire born out of such images of landscape. Historically, while outsiders like Verrozzano tended to nurture the

¹⁷ Marc Johnson, "Acadia." *Encyclopedia of Music in Canada, Historica Foundation*, 2009, 5 Dec 2009, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com>

utopian ideal most avidly, other narratives of place exist that -- far from describing "non-places" -- are more deeply embodied in the realities of Maritime life. We only need consider indigenous traditions of place naming to discover these narratives.

"As linguistic artifacts... place names tell us something not about only about the structure and content of the physical environment itself but also how people perceive, conceptualize, classify and utilize the environment."¹⁸ While Verrazano's reading of the Nova Scotian landscape lie guided by aesthetic impulse, Native place naming traditions in contrast, draw upon cosmographical understanding of place. To this end, indigenous place names demonstrate the mutual influence of the landscape and its inhabitants to each other, and furthermore, embody narratives about the places to which they are attached. In contrast to Verrozzano's utopian allusions, the secondary etymological origins of Arcadia acknowledge specificities of the landscape rooted in physical inhabitation. Acadia, or

¹⁸ Thomas F. Thornton, "Anthropological Studies of Native Place Naming," *American Indian Quarterly*, vol.21, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 1, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1185645>

l'Acadie (in the French pronunciation) can also be traced to a corruption of the Mi'kmaq word, *quoddy*. Meaning fertile place, the term makes reference to the many salt marshes that line Nova Scotia's coasts. These intertidal zones were vital to the Mi'kmaq First Nations as bountiful summer fishing and hunting grounds. It is only from this direct, habitual relationship to the land that such an embodied understanding emerges. Architecture, like place names, creates an instrument to measure, structure and understand the world.¹⁹ It is through the act of building that we reorganize and domesticate the nameless, and measureless, thereby creating a domicile and giving it a name.²⁰

Vernacular traditions of the Acadians, too, embody narratives of place structured from the realities of (coastal) inhabitation.²¹ After all, architecture must begin with the land. The Acadians, new to this often-inhospitable region, adapted their architecture to

¹⁹ Juhani Pallasmaa, "The Dance of Construction," in *Ghost: Building an Architectural Vision*, ed. Brian Mackay-Lyons (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 146.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 145.

respond to the demands of life on the Nova Scotian landscape. The architecture that has emerged from these circumstances attest to a “what you do when you can’t afford to get it wrong” ideology, consisting of buildings pragmatically attuned to their environment and available resources.²² Wood was exclusively employed here for its ability to weather the rain and salty air, and for its tolerance of the frequent freeze-thaw cycles. Wood shingles weaved together to create taut building envelopes that, like the feathers of a duck, kept the dry in and the water out. Over the course of two and a half centuries, climate, landscape and stick framing, have brought into being an architecture of chameleon-like structures that are at once solid looking as well as dangerously flimsy in appearance.²³ Mindful of resources, the Acadians reduced their buildings to the absolute minimum structure needed and sheathed them in load-transferring skins, a methodology borrowed from the shipbuilding trade. It has been said that these buildings look as though they might float away.

²² Brian Mackay-Lyons, “The Village Architect,” *E²: The Economies of Being Environmentally Conscious*, PBS, September 9, 2008.

²³ Brian Mackay-Lyons, “Why Albert Oxner Shingled his Barn,” in *Ghost: Building an Architectural Vision*, ed. Brian Mackay-Lyons (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 96.

Buildings were carefully placed in acknowledgment of the sun's movement across the land and cardinal orientation. Winds from the West and rain from the East prompted protective Northern facades and sun-filled southern fronts. These constructions which were clad on all surfaces including the walls and roof in a single material, cedar shingle, often gathered in the landscape. What is more, their siting on the landscape was carefully choreographed as a conversation between multiple structures. The configurations they formed together created archetypal courtyard spaces or "outdoor rooms," sheltered from the wind and sun.

As Maritime towns struggle to redefine themselves after profound economic changes, narratives to do with revealing cultural and material memory seem promising paths to follow. As Juhani Pallasmaa has written, "Instead of obscuring and distracting, the task of architecture is to clarify and intensify."²⁴ In place of reiterations

²⁴ Juhani Pallasmaa, "The Dance of Construction," in *Ghost: Building an Architectural Vision*, ed. Mackay-Lyons (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 146.

of building shapes -- and these arguably only serve to aggravate the rupture from place through nostalgia and idealization -- this thesis seeks an architecture that may contribute to situating and orienting the dwellers of this region once more.

Fig. 3
Messenger II

II. MESSENGER HOUSE II: A STUDY OF VERNACULAR PRECEDENT

That the many layered history of settlement, which has been so obviously shaped by geography at this threshold to the continent, can influence design and inform the act of building today is an important thesis.²⁵

It is impossible to discuss recovery of traditional building in the Nova Scotian context without examining the work of contemporary Nova Scotian architect, and one of Canada's most well know architects today, Brian Mackay-Lyons. Mackay-Lyons' works assert the importance of vernacular traditions of ecology and material culture. Indeed, mappings studying modest Nova Scotian shed forms and their relationship to site, land, and weather, inform the methodology of his practice. At the same time, these very forms to which the architect brings a contemporary elegance have become the language of choice of higher end tourist markets. Perhaps due to his success, Mackay-Lyons' work has come to occupy a contradictory position in the local landscape because it is so intimately tied to the foreign

²⁵ Brian Mackay-Lyons, *Brian MacKay-Lyons: Selected Projects 1986-1997* (Halifax: TUNS Press, 1998), 8.

market and to tourism itself. Nonetheless, his buildings affirm the importance of historic example, of theory based on precedent, and of the necessity of making reference to the cultural evolution of architecture.²⁶ His search for an architectural language and spatial organizations based upon a grammar of form and construction rooted in the modest means of maritime building tradition constitute the value of this work. While Mackay-Lyons can be criticized for making a career "out of the local," it must be conceded that his work stands in resistance to the crude commercial tourist architecture that dominates the landscape.

Fig. 4
Mackay-Lyons
sketch of
vernacular drumlin
development
typical of the
hilly glacier
lands on the South
Shore of Nova
Scotia.

²⁶ Malcolm Quantrill, *Plain Modern: The Architecture of Brian Mackay-Lyons* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), 25.

For it not to be merely a superficial nod to the past, a regionalist architecture must neither be literal nor sentimental; it should challenge current practice by appropriating "techniques from the past" rather than "images of the past."²⁷ The following case study examines Messenger House II with a view to understanding and reflecting on Mackay-Lyons' brand of regionalist architecture, and on how it is indeed regionalist and how it is not. Following the case study, some reflections on Mackay-Lyons' opus as a whole, from his lower budget early works to his more elaborate recent works, and the question of public versus private commission, yield critical reflections that will be carried back into this thesis project.

This twenty-three hundred square foot house for a retired couple from Toronto built on a limited budget in 2003 and to be occupied on a part time basis, stands

Fig. 5
Messenger House
II, parti sketch.

²⁷ Malcolm Quantrill, *Plain Modern: The Architecture of Brian-Mackay-Lyons* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), 124.

as a rather typical commission in the architect's mid-career portfolio: neither extravagant, neither entirely independent of the tourist economy. Perched atop the hilly landscape of the south shore in the village of Upper Kingsburg, Nova Scotia, the house is aligned with a historic road once used for the hauling of sea manure for fertilizer. The siting is as much about the cultural landscape of

which it is a part as it is the sweeping seascapes to the East and South. While the house continues very traditional patterns of siting along the South Shore, it is also an instrument

for viewing the landscape. In this way, Messenger House II can be understood as the architectural manifestation of the kind of cultural crossroads which this thesis is interested in. Messenger House II is

Fig. 6
Plan, Northeast
and Southwest
elevations.

a meeting of Maritime form and craftsmanship with modern inhabitation of the coast. Though physically rooted in vernacular tradition, the house cannot escape its only part-time inhabitation as a summer home.

Fig. 7 (left)
Southwest façade
of Messenger II
and view to the
east.

Fig. 8
Southwest view
from central
courtyard space.

Built on a budget of less than one-hundred dollars per square foot, the dwelling seems to answer in many ways the question, "how can the vernacular idiom transcend its original type while standing up against mainstream practices and market forces that negate understanding of place?" Messenger House II resolves the clients' dual requirement for a practical residence and for prospect over the landscape. The following case study will first examine formal and spatial relationships that delineate the paradigmatic tensions in maritime town architecture: the balance between dwelling and prospect, and between mundane life and ecstatic view. Secondly, we

will study the structural expression of locale in the house to identify a means through which vernacular architecture of the Maritimes may move beyond archetypal references to the cultural landscape.

The organization of Messenger II is clever: the processional-like approach through the landscape is indirect, withholding views to La Have River Estuary and La Have Islands until one rises above the ridge of the drumlin hill and through the entry porch that separates the main house from a guesthouse.²⁸ This enclosed courtyard-like space composes the gathering areas of the house located at either end of the structure, becoming too, the space

Fig. 9
Messenger house
approach.

²⁸ Malcolm Quantrill, *Plain Modern: The Architecture of Brian-Mackay-Lyons* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2005), 124.

between the agrarian landscape and pasture, and view to the ocean. This courtyard is Mackay-Lyons' rebellious gesture: a space that is not exclusively devoted to the coveted view of the ocean, and where in fact this view is played down and balanced with other important elements of the landscape, such as the pasture. The house makes these more featureless lands present. This space is defined on the outside by a solid and severe façade to the Northeast and an almost entirely glazed façade to the Southwest. In this way Messenger House II avoids an outwardly blatant command of the hill it occupies and ocean views beyond. The house is grounded further still by the use of sliding barn doors that protect the windowed Southwestern face, which in many ways serve as reminder of the realities of inhabiting such a high point in the landscape; for although there is the an impressive view, storms of the this region can be violent.

As much as Messenger House II is an essay on traditional practices of siting that developed in response to the weather and weathering, it also tests the literal expression of conventional platform framing.²⁹ The tectonic and formal narratives of the house continue Mackay-Lyons' line of inquiry into the material culture traditions of Nova Scotia. Mackay-Lyons methodically abstracts a modern idiom characterized by simple forms, the shed roof, the use of wood and metal, constructive contrasts that recall the tensions employed in boatbuilding, and structures that give tangible expression of prevailing winds. In the Messenger House II we find a method of construction that is more than simply a means to an end. The tectonic language carries the conceptual meaning of the house.

Fig. 10
Detail of timber
cross bracing in
the courtyard.

²⁹ Ibid.

The structural plasticity of Messenger House II makes way for a didactic hierarchy of tectonic expression, allowing one to clearly read its structure as the physical manifestation of external forces. A seventy-foot central spine constructed of two by six studs forms a longitudinal stud brace wall that bisects the interior to form a service bank to the northward side of the house. This structural spine is revealed on the second story mezzanine space overlooking the great room, announcing the house as a platform frame construction.³⁰ Timber bracing, horizontal steel columns and exposed shear walls draw awareness to Messenger II as a built response against unforgiving transverse winds. The steel columns, circular in section and on display in the most public areas of the house, are particularly revealing of the wind across the site. Their horizontal nature emphasizes that these steel members operate in compression as columns

Fig. 11
The great room space of Messenger House II framed by a cobalt-blue shear wall. The stud wall spine links the main house, courtyard and guest house, while the steel columns reach across the building toward a glazed Southwest view.

³⁰ Ibid.

dealing with direct loads. The shear walls at either end of the house (behind which are sleeping spaces) are painted cobalt blue and give a sense of permanence that contrasts with the wood structure. These elements come together to create a deceptively complex constructional system made out of ordinary parts that in turn signify spatial order.

The capacity for a deeper form of expression of place demonstrated by Messenger House II is particularly promising as a precedent for new architecture in Wallace. In the Messenger House II, traditional ways of siting a building help anchor the new architecture in place; additionally, the highly evolved spatial and structural order , brings physical form to ephemeral factors such as local prevailing winds and movement of the sun. They are didactic in this sense. The house in its very bones embodies the particularities of place, exposing the wind and weather. Furthermore, the extent to which the house embraces the constructional process of conventional platform framing to inform its design demonstrates Mackay-Lyons' interest in

using structure as a narrative device rather than merely instrumentally.

Fig. 12
Messenger House
II, Southeast
perspective.

In the larger scheme of Mackay-Lyons' work, it is the smaller scale and modest budget projects that speak most loudly, precisely because they exist in greater continuity with the local economic and cultural context and are not examples of the excesses of the tourist economy. Houses such as the White-Leger House and Yaukey Cottage contribute to the vernacular continuum not only in their minimal aesthetic, but also in their small size and frugal budgets. Both of these year-round homes are less than fifteen hundred square feet and were built for eighty-five thousand and fifty-five thousand dollars respectively.

This kind of bare bone architecture is defined by Mackay-Lyons as the zero building and described as the minimum physical and visual impact a building can have on a site. However through its plain aesthetic, the zero building embodies a wealth of cultural content as per the vernacular models Mackay-Lyons admires. Plain forms such as the barn and boat shed are considered to be zero buildings by Mackay-Lyons in the way their material construction (the act of making) describes a cultural process.

Though his way of thinking about the architecture of Nova Scotia largely remains intact, there is an identifiable shift not only in the clientele Mackay-Lyons is designing for, but in the purpose of the constructions as well. His early clients were largely local whose needs had to be met on a restricted budget. Though a reality of architectural practice, his national acclaim has attracted an entirely different stream of client -- those of wealth. Such facts cannot be ignored. His private homes of the last ten years in particular appear as tasteful and refined versions of the Nova Scotian vernacular, built for those (often wealthy) who come from

away in search of a summer home on the coast. Many of these commissions, including Messenger House II, are some of his most lauded. Although the work of Brian Mackay-Lyons is indisputably important to the development of modern architecture in Nova Scotia, his means of practice via the private home raises as many questions as it answers. How can a house so completely embodied in the vernacular grammar of form and patterns of siting actively contribute to the cultural landscape in the same capacity as its precedent when it is only inhabited for four months of the year?

The forthcoming architectural proposal returns to many of the tectonic questions addressed by Messenger House II, testing both traditional relationships to site in the modern cultural landscape, and the extent to which architecture can embody material process. However this thesis reconsiders the place of cultural memory in the architecture of Nova Scotia. In contrast the work of Mackay-Lyons, the architectural project of this thesis examines the re-organization of coastal cultural memory as collective property and not something that can be individualized at the scale of a house. Collective

cultural memory can only be examined via the scale of public architecture and on a public site in order to profoundly re-activate the shore through building. In doing so the project, a school at the centre of the village, may maintain a democratic place in Wallace, serving to orient inhabitants of the area (permanent and seasonal alike) to deeply seated vernacular memories and thereby re-activating the spirit of place. In the maritime town, a truly regionalist architecture can only be achieved fully in the realm of public architecture.

III. CULTURAL ARTIFACTS AS ARCHITECTURAL BEGINNINGS

*What we need most today is integrity in our architecture, which requires integrity in our social and cultural relations, integrity in our relationship to the land and environment, and integrity in our lives as inhabitants of architecture.*³¹

*If mutually isolated, tradition stagnates and modernity vaporizes; if joined, modernity breathes new life into tradition and tradition responds by providing depth and gravity.*³²

This thesis participates in an active search for a language of architecture that bridges past and present. The following section will examine persistent themes and rituals in Nova Scotian cultural memory that hold architectural implications for the present. These cultural artifacts will be explored through their capacity to contribute to richer experiences of inhabitation, and potential to inform a new language of architecture, with a view to reconciling former and present place.

³¹ Robert McCarter, "The Thought of Construction," in *Ghost: Building an Architectural Vision*, ed. Brian Mackay-Lyons (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 197.

³² Octavio Paz, quoted in Robert McCarter, "The Thought of Construction," in *Ghost: Building an Architectural Vision*, ed. Brian Mackay-Lyons (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 198.

i. Seasonal Ritual and a new choreography of the Landscape

Coastal Nova Scotia was once a place of work. Through the generations its shores have been home to hundreds of farmers, boat builders and fishermen alike. Guided by the cyclical rhythm of the seasons, fishing and boatbuilding were, for hundreds of years, the very heartbeat of Nova Scotian livelihood. While such activities still take place in a few remote communities -- Blue Rocks and River Port for example -- the coasts are now largely places of leisure inhabited by wealthy owners, primarily from the United States and Europe, on a part-time basis. Beaches once lined with boats in various stages of completion are quiet almost year round, while coastal farmers' fields have been subdivided and made into summer cottage communities. The people that inhabit these spaces rarely set foot on the beach. With the startling views of the shore and ocean from their sweeping cottage windows, they need not. Coastal spaces and architecture therein have become distracted by the need to command the best view of the ocean rather than respond to embedded memories of inhabitation that shaped the coasts. Formerly, this relationship to the landscape, developed over thousands of years,

informed a choreography of movement between the land and the sea. Seasonal dwelling and the pressures related to increased costs and property taxes have has displaced this dynamic relationship between buildings and the landscape. Historic ecologies of coastal living reveal spatial implications that may work to establish a re-imagined participation with the landscape.

Before recreational migration to the shores in summertime became commonplace, seasonal migration was rooted in the *human ecology* of the coast.³³ The Mi'kmaq people inhabited the shores and forests guided by the summer to winter cycle. Summers were spent along the coast, fishing and hunting amidst the rich resources of the salt marshes and tidal zones. In contrast, winter marked a return inland to the coniferous forests that supplied refuge from the inhospitable conditions of the Nova Scotian winter. For the Acadians, the working coast created a bookend to the farms and villages further inland, establishing a ritualistic flow of movement to and from the waters

³³ Human Ecology is an interdisciplinary term referring to the relationship between humans and their natural, social, and created environments.

edge through the summer months. Farmers participated in the inshore-fishing season, making their way down to the beaches and docks before dawn's first light, and returning mid morning to the duties of the farm. The same men that would build boats on the shore by summer would build sheds through the winter.³⁴ Furthermore, because boat making requires a high level of craftsmanship, traditional vernacular building is of an unusually high quality in this region.

Coastal inhabitation today, by comparison, is by and large static and superficial. People come in the early summer and leave in the fall; lost is the participatory landscape. That is not to say the coastal paradigm shift has wiped out seasonal ecologies entirely. While modern seasonal inhabitation fails to engage the landscape in daily practice, touristic migration to and from the coast is laden with its own rituals. To "open up" a cottage in the spring signifies the coming summer season and is typically marked by the Victoria Day weekend in late May. "Closing" a cottage for the winter is similarly

³⁴ Brian Mackay-Lyons, "Why Albert Oxner Shingled his Barn," in *Ghost: Building an Architectural Vision*, ed. Brian Mackay-Lyons (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), 95.

marked by the Labour Day weekend in September. Both cases are commonly celebrated with a large bonfire among neighbours along the shore.

It would seem important to develop an approach to architecture that, in line with deep-rooted tradition and contemporary practice, would celebrate springtime rituals of inauguration and the departures and closures of the fall. Thoughtful architectural design may work to reconcile the modern touristic context and embedded memories of movement between land and sea. In marrying the past and present forms of the Nova Scotian coast, architecture may impart richer experiences of seasonal inhabitation to the dwellers of this space.

ii. *Of land and sea: understanding the landscape through Nova Scotian folk song*

In an age dominated by global building practice and a disregard for local sensibilities, it seems all the more urgent to secure a new cultural rootedness in architecture. In a combative measure against prevailing architectural practice of the coasts, new architectures

must reach from both vernacular material tradition and embedded cultural artifacts to sustain a deepened dialogue with the landscape (and place) for the present. Indeed, as we have discovered through etymological investigations of native place names, one need not look far to discover inherent themes of locality within such cultural artifacts. As this thesis searches for an alternate, more forward-looking architecture for coastal Nova Scotia, the maritime folksong emerges as a source of inspiration. As articles of maritime memory, Folksongs are replete with imagery that recall the land and sea. The theme of vulnerability, a salient narrative of the Sea Chanty in particular, has clear architectural implications, as will be examined later.

As a social medium, Folksongs served to impart knowledge generation to generation, infusing present and future place with cultural memory. Vernacular architecture, too, stands as a socio-cultural monument to the accumulated knowledge passed along in building. "Anything worth knowing your grandparents knew," goes the adage. Folksongs such as the *Pilot Verse* are testament to this philosophy.

These verses, composed of sailing coordinates sung to popular tunes, proved valuable means of memorizing crucial navigation information.

Indeed, *Wadham's Song*, dated 1756, was considered to be the best guide to Newfoundland's coasts at the time.³⁵

Wadham's Song

This song demonstrates the importance laid upon knowing the land and seas, as the consequences of ignorance could result in death.

Wadham's Song reminded sailors of the hidden dangers close to shore so as not to be fooled by the welcome sight of land. More than just coordinates, this

*Then nor'-nor'-west thirty-three miles
Three leagues of shore lies Wadham's Isles,
Where of rock you must beware
Two miles sou'-sou'-east from off Isle bears.*

*Then nor'west by west twelve miles or more,
there lies Round Head on Fogo's shore,
But nor'-nor'west seven or eight miles
lies a sunken rock near Barrack's Isles.*

*Therefore, my friend, I would you advise,
since all these rocks in danger lies,
That you may never amongst them fall,
but keep your luff and weather them all.*

*As you draw near to the Fogo land,
you'll have fifteen fathoms in the sounding sand --
From fifteen to eighteen, never more,
and that you'll have close to the shore.*

³⁵ Huggill, Stan, *Shanties from the Seven Seas*. (London: Routledge, 1966), xx.

verse also acknowledges prevailing wind direction - "*but keep your luff and weather them all.*" This line in particular suggests, rather than fighting existing conditions, environmental elements (wind) can in fact inform a safer path home.

Inherent traditions of building and cultural artifacts are rich in ideologies that reinforce cultural memory, and work to cultivate continued relationships to the landscape. Furthermore, approaching the unique subtleties of an unfamiliar context in the same manner as those who worked it before puts the architect in a unique position to develop appropriate contemporary solutions that take into account accumulated local knowledge. Just as *Wadham's Song* provided sailors with the necessary information to chart a safe course to land, a well-considered building invested in the local can serve as example for future architectures of place.

In the sea songs of Nova Scotia, we find poetic sustenance and a strong conceptual underpinning for new coastal architectures. The Sea Chanty commonly addressed the temporal nature the coast and other realities of inhabiting such a unique environment. Traditionally,

the Chanty was sung to ease the rhythmic labours of rigging sails and other tasks on the high seas, however it also provided sailors an outlet through which they could express themselves during off hours, recounting tales of love unrequited and tragedy at sea. Similar laments echoed from land, sung by troubled wives as they longed for their loved one's safe return.

The spatial tension created by this memory of longing, both spatial and temporal, is laden with architectural implications that may contribute to a more intimate experience with place. Here longing, as interpreted through the Sea Chanty, supports a narrative for spatial choreography, both urban and architectural in scale. As an urban strategy, establishing architectural or spatial "longing" would serve to reconcile existing place to new spaces, thereby contributing to a newfound sense of orientation to the landscape of the coasts. This might be achieved by, for example, playful spatial planning, whereby the space between buildings becomes more important than the buildings themselves. Furthermore, in dialogue with vernacular ideologies of siting (as described in Part I), this new spatial configuration -- a

play of tensions between physical spaces across the landscape -- may restore the choreography of movement between land and sea and encourage participation with place. More natural implications born from the manifestation of longing in architecture could include reinforcing visual relationships to strategic markings in the landscape, and likewise, to other built structures.

Other salient themes within the Sea Chanty, such as vulnerability and incompleteness, possess further architectural content. These themes suggest an interpretation of porousness; this quality could be played out through non-hermetic enclosures and carefully considered physical limits. Being inside and outside, on the land and in the sea; the dichotomy of these conditions draws awareness to the physical act of inhabitation of the coast.

iii. Cribwork: architectural precedent and tectonic metaphor

Drawing upon tangible fragments of material culture grounds new architectures in time and place. The vernacular precedent of

cribwork serves as a further example of how cultural artifacts (be they figurative or material) can inform an architectural expression reflective of the modern cultural landscape and historic physical landscape. Cribwork will be examined as a tectonic device that responds to, and informs, a context of transition between water and land. In turn, cribwork draws awareness to the nature of the edge condition of which it is a part. Analyzed further still, this vernacular building system reveals a clear spatial order that is both urban and architectural in scale.

Fig. 13
Cribwork in use at
Blue Rocks, along
the South Shore,
Nova Scotia.

Fig. 14
Tectonic study of
cribwork.

By definition, cribwork, is a cellular framework of wood posts or "dead-men" assembled in layers, with each layer having its units at right angles to the layer below it. Traditionally filled with stones, it is used in the construction of waterside foundations and wharfs. However, beyond this tectonic description, the poetics of cribwork reveal a meaningful response to the Nova Scotian context in which it is used.

Traditionally utilized to support constructions of the fishing trade, cribwork as a modular system asserts the imposition of regularity and stability onto a physical context where none occurs naturally. Metaphorically, cribwork articulates the permanence of *terra firma* as it gives way to the ocean tide: a coming to terms with the impermanence of living caught between land and sea. Being of both land and sea, both buoyant and grounded, such contradictions create a tension that breathes life into architecture. Framed another way, the tectonic elements of cribwork inform a spatial strategy to guide new urban architectures (see Fig. 15). Here, the regular framework of timber can be understood as the existing urban condition.

Fig. 15
Conceptual
analysis of
cribwork;
understanding as a
transitional
building system.

The random grouping of mass held inside the frame correspond to pockets of new program between which a circulatory flow of movement is established, recalling the ebb and flow of the tide. The in-between serves as reconciliatory space, reinforcing the dialogue between the old and the new. Furthermore, these tectonics evoke a tensioned play between heavy and light, closed and enclosed, suggestive of an architectural language (in the metaphorical spirit of cribwork) capable of negotiating a transitional context such as the coast of Nova Scotia. Cribwork serves as an ordering metaphor for architecture and urbanism.

IV. SITE

The village of Wallace is located on the northeastern shore of Nova Scotia along scenic Route 6, the Sunrise Trail. Perched at the edge of Wallace Bay, a deep sub basin of the Northumberland Strait, the village is flanked by fertile salt marshes, which give way to red spruce forests. The unique confluence of geography and the vast natural resources therein has resulted in a rich history of inhabitation and architectural narratives. The village of Wallace was chosen at the beginning of this thesis based on its conformity to the contemporary cultural conditions of Nova Scotia as discussed in

Fig. 16
Map of Nova
Scotia, locating
the village site
of Wallace.

Part I, the point of departure for this thesis. In order to respond to the distinct subtleties of the Wallace context, the following section identifies and explores two reoccurring histories that will guide the forthcoming architectural proposal.

i. Wallace, Nova Scotia: a place between

To come upon the village of Wallace today, it is unlikely one would take second notice of this unremarkable point of density along an otherwise scenic coastal drive. At its economic height in the mid 1800s, the stretch of Route 6 that passes through Wallace, maintained a dense archetypal main street lined by countless retail and service shops. Wallace today is but a shadow of its former self. There is little economic infrastructure left in the village since the decline of critical industries; shipbuilding and the lobster fishery were once the very heartbeat of Wallace. The commercial fishing wharf and lobster cannery still operate here, however unreliable the employment. As a result, most year-round habitants of Wallace maintain jobs in larger nearby centers such as Amherst. Dissolution of critical industry has led to the closure of other village infrastructure through the last fifty years. Inhabitants of Wallace must now make the drive to the adjacent town of Pugwash for basic necessities. This dramatic change in how Wallace is permanently inhabited has greatly affected the village's relationship to the seasonal zones that surround it. The tourists and other seasonal

inhabitants of the area, despite their proximity to the village have little need to venture here, opting instead to make the drive to Pugwash or Truro where larger commercial stores are available to them.

Fig. 17
Seasonal Context
surrounding
Wallace, NS,
organized by
choice coastal
location.

Like most other coastal communities in Nova Scotia, Wallace finds itself encompassed by a number of seasonal tourist destinations and attractions (see Fig. 17). Across Wallace Bay, Fox Harb'r posits itself as a four-star ocean-side golf destination, featuring a hotel and spa, private marina and airport. The newest addition to the Wallace area, Cambra Sands, is but one of numerous cottage communities that dot this section of coast. This collection of colourful summer dwellings advertises itself as a "world of magnificent coastal beauty, with unspoiled beaches, charming country cottages and gentle breezes that whisper 'Welcome.'"³⁶ Lastly, positioned just inland from the mouth of Wallace Bay, Jost Winery offers daily tours and summer wine festivals for tourists and locals alike.

By comparison, the year-round context of Wallace is comprised of decrepit nineteenth century buildings entangled with 'modern' constructions from the 1950s and onward. Historically, organization of the village proper was guided by the natural harbour of Wallace

³⁶ Cambra Properties Inc., The Cottages at Cambra Sands, <http://www.cambrasands.com/>.

Bay, as well as by the availability of natural resources. Rather than being guided by choice coastal location exclusively, the year-round context follows a progression from agricultural land to the working coast. This linear earth to sea cycle is notably absent from seasonal destinations like Cambra Sands.

Not only have developments like Cambra Sands overridden embedded land to sea cycles -- effectively interrupting them by privatizing the coast -- they have also caused serious economic disparities in the region. Market forces and the desire for coastal property have forced real estate properties to rise. Today, even land-locked properties, which have now lost their linear connection to the water's edge, are becoming unaffordable for many. The new resort-style developments transform the geographical relationship to the coast and profoundly alter socio economic structures.

Fig. 18
The linear land to
sea organization
of Wallace. The
map to left c.1860
versus a
contemporary
aerial photograph.

Fig. 19
Year round context
of Wallace in
relation to key
economic
infrastructure.

Fig. 20 & 21
Wallace Main
Street density
c.1910 versus
2009.

Hidden among the modern face of Wallace there lies a secondary history of place: that of the in-between. Two-hundred-and-fifty years ago, Wallace went by another name: Remsheg. The Mi'kmaq used this native place name, meaning the place between, to delineate the geography atop which Wallace now sits. Between the Northumberland Strait and the Wallace River, the Wallace River Estuary and Harbour was home to a large Mi'kmaq summer encampment. In fact, Remsheg may also refer to the use of these lands as a place between winters. No physical evidence remains of this ancient layer of inhabitation aside

from the porcupine quill woven baskets, once treasured by the Victorians and now at home in museums.

The strategic physical location of Remsheg would contribute to uninterrupted inhabitation of this place. The confluence of the Wallace River and Northumberland Strait forms a protective harbour that is both narrow and deep, and large enough for a schooner to safely moor. Through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, extensive logging occurred along the Wallace River. This industry in turn supported building yards along the beaches of Wallace Bay. For the ships christened in these yards, Wallace harbour was a place between life and death -- a place of re-birth. Trees once logged were floated along the river to the village proper, where upon milling, found new life in the tectonics of a schooner or dory.

Establishment of the logging and shipbuilding industries coincided with development of a permanent village. Remsheg, by this time reborn Wallace, straddled the only route from New Brunswick to Halifax at the southern edge of the province. The village of Wallace

sits squarely between the larger centers of Amherst to the East and Truro to the West. In the 1800s, as the last village of the day's travels from New Brunswick, the Wallace Hotel was common stopover and place to pause. Like so many other coastal towns and villages, the end of the Golden Age of Sail resulted in lasting economic instability. The hotel soon disappeared, and over the next one-hundred-and-fifty years Wallace would become the sleepy farming and fishing community we see today.

Fig.22
Panorama of main
junction in
Wallace.

Wallace is no longer a place between. This memory of inhabitation has been displaced by economic turmoil and contemporary building practice. As a result, Wallace has been rendered placeless. New architectural interventions for the village proper must recall these narratives of *in-betweenness* in order to contribute to a renewed sense of place so urgently called for at this time. Wallace must be made a place to pause once more. Embracing other embedded cultural memories

-- in particular seasonal and geographic limits -- will reinforce Wallace's innate *in-betweenness*, and work to anchor the village within the existing conditions that otherwise stifle its future.

ii. *Wood, water and stone*

Though there is little evidence visible to the passer by, Wallace has a long history of fabrication fueled by the abundance of natural resources. At the height of the Golden Age, the village boasted eleven shipyards that, over a period of fifty years, launched two-hundred-and-twenty from Wallace Bay. There was also a brick factory, later replaced by a concrete plant. Most notable however, are the Wallace sandstone quarries. Sandstone was first discovered

Fig. 23 (left)
Ship launching in
Wallace Bay, 19th
Century.

Fig. 24
Wallace sandstone
quarry, 19th
Century.

along the Wallace River in 1810. A second deposit of sandstone was uncovered in 1868 at the Southern edge of the village proper after a farmer, trying to set fence posts, found that he could not drive the posts more than six inches into the ground. The valuable blue-grey stone, quarried, would be moved via gravity rail to the quarry wharf and then shipped by schooner to its destined location. The quarries proved to be a stable industry, surviving the disappearance of the shipyards, and continue to operate to this day.

rt 6. readymix concrete

Fig. 25
Contemporary
material culture
context of Wallace
indicated by the
circled zones.

Fig. 26 & 27
Stone cutting at
the Wallace
Quarries, 2009.

Historically, traditions of fabrication in Wallace were exclusively for the benefit of others. Many of the ships built here would later serve the British during the Crimean War. Likewise, Wallace sandstone was shipped across North America and used in the construction of countless monuments, from upper crust townhouses of New York, to the Parliamentary Peace Tower in Ottawa. Despite the resounding material history of this place, the architecture of Wallace has largely failed to engage its own traditions of material craftsmanship. Only one building was ever constructed in the village using the prized sandstone. The house stood for no more than ten years before it was

destroyed so the stone may be used in other (more financially advantageous) projects. Scottish masons that immigrated to the area

Fig. 28 & 29
The only building
ever constructed
using Wallace
Sandstone.

came equipped with the knowledge and skills to make good use of the sandstone resources, and yet timber construction was exclusively employed. More curious still are the instances of typical mason joinery details found translated to wood, despite the availability of stone.

What could be characterized as an unfulfilled potential for architectural expression holds true of Wallace's wood buildings. Of

those that remain from the golden age, most are definitively Victorian: the former estates of wealthy ship captains, preoccupied with popular fashion of the time. A thriving economy meant wealthy business owners who afford to impose a metropolitan sophistication upon the village. The lone exception lies hidden in the tectonics of the Davison-Kennedy house. Beyond the Victorian plan and building envelope, the Davison-Kennedy house cannot escape its ship-like bones and proportions. The one and a half story house of hand-hewn timber maintains a ruggedly exposed structure on the interior and exceedingly low ceilings reminiscent of a ship's cabin and utilitarian finishing. With its uncharacteristically Victorian traits, the house clearly exudes a narrative of construction that transcends its very walls, expressing the greater material context of which it is a part, and moreover, the hands that built it.

Recent additions to the villagescape in the last fifty years, demonstrate the village of Wallace's continued struggle to express itself through building. The closure of the shipyards in 1868, resulted in the failure of Wallace's local economy and further

dissolution of engagement with place. Buildings such as the post office exemplify this crisis of architectural expression. Even within the eclectic ensemble of architecture in Wallace, the institutional building stands categorically out of context as the only red brick building in the village. One could argue that this bureaucratically imposed building negates the village's capacity for self-expression.

In contrast to other Nova Scotian communities, whose architectural traditions clearly express vernacular material language as a direct response to available resources, the architecture of Wallace today does not avail itself of long-standing traditions of fabrication and material culture, and claim for them for its own. In this, the architecture of Wallace falls short. A new architecture for Wallace must embrace the rich material history at hand in order to contribute to a sense of place, and recapture the village's "in-between" in innovative ways. Direct engagement with local materials and the cultural memories of these contain, seems to be a sound place to start.

iii. A cribwork wharf

In effort to confront the contextual conditions outlined above, the forthcoming architectural proposal was imagined as an urban planning exercise designed to engage the village site of Wallace in its entirety. While the proposal considers a series of architectural interventions for the villagescape as a whole, in order to test the conclusions of this thesis in a focused manner, the historic Quarry Wharf operates as the architectural nucleus from which all other urban interventions will emerge.

Fig. 30 (left)
Wallace sandstone
quarry wharf
(gravity rail in
foreground),
c.1890.

Fig. 31
Wallace quarry
wharf, 2009.

The old Quarry Wharf is a small artificial projection of land in Wallace Bay, built up from material refuse of the Wallace Village Sandstone Quarry in the 1800s. Remnant aggregate and ashlar from the stone cutting process was moved from atop quarry hill down to the harbour's edge and pushed out into the sea. Throughout the course of this process, timbers were laid down to form a crib, thereby reinforcing the edges of the new wharf structure, and yielding a large cribwork over time. This peninsula-like outcropping sits at the center of Wallace and has largely sat empty for the last thirty years, functioning only briefly as a storage yard for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada in that time.

If reexamined, cribwork can be understood in its most essential form as a regular framework containing a random mass, which together create a stable foundation for other things. This architectural system carefully operates as a porous body, embracing the natural rhythms of the tide, thereby negotiating the complexities of its transitional context. How appropriate it is that, in effort to reposition the village of Wallace within its given context, a new

architecture for this place should arise from a site that is indeed a
cribwork.

Fig. 32
Wallace sandstone
quarry wharf
c.1890.

Fig. 33
Wallace quarry
wharf, 2009.

Fig. 34
*Quarry Wharf
Work Sheds.*

V. THE PROJECT

i. Program

Part III of this thesis identified two reoccurring local histories in the village site of Wallace, Nova Scotia. Study of these histories revealed a village devoid of sense of place and characterized by unfulfilled architectural potential. The wharf site, understood as a cribwork, opens itself to supporting an architectural program between the realms of yearlong and seasonal space, thereby embracing the long established patterns of seasonal inhabitation of the region. In order to respond to the dichotomy of prevalent themes of geographic and seasonal limits, as well as embedded memories of temporality and in-betweenness, this thesis proposes a major institution in Wallace, in particular a school for the material crafts, devoted to training in traditional fabrication.

The Remsheg School of Material Craft is sited on the historic former quarry wharf at the heart of Wallace Bay. In celebration of local tradition, the campus operates centrally from the wharf site as a series of three distinct "trades sheds," offering professional

training in masonry, both traditional and sculptural, boatbuilding and blacksmithing. Existing conditions were leading considerations for development of the school program. In order to put forth an economically feasible proposal for the village of Wallace, the school operates between the seasonal limits as a space of participation for the permanent and seasonal inhabitants alike. Architectural programming for the campus looked to the Penland School of Crafts for precedent.

Located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina, Penland is a center for hands-on education. The school offers one to eight weeklong workshops for the novice with keen interest in the crafts. These courses are run throughout the year (though primarily during the summer), while yearlong artist residences and community education programs are the foundation of the school. The two-tier inhabitation of Penland provided a prototype for the programming of the Wallace school. Inspired by Penland, the Rensheg School of Material Craft operates predominately as a summer institution, offering programs of various lengths to the residents of Wallace. Scaled back operation

continues through the winter months, maintained by resident master craftsperson's that work from private studios. Here, the inhabitation of the school echoes the seasonal patterns of Wallace. Through multi-faceted programming, the school is not only active during the high tourism season, but also during the winter months, when Wallace can seem like a ghost town. In this way, the school aims to be a civic anchor within the community.

Other programmatic elements for the school located on axis with the wharf site include a public library and student residences. The library would house the Wallace Quarries archives, which include geographic data of Wallace, photos of the quarries in operation from the 1800s, and a collection of letters and other miscellaneous documentation. The library would also serve as a community gathering space, and maintain a continuing education centre for adult learning.

The proposition locates two groupings of residences toward quarry hill, to the south of the wharf campus (see figure 35). A collection of dwellings would house the resident craftspeople that continue to work from the harbour front campus during the winter months. Tucked among the trees behind the quarry, these residences induce a tension between the two sites, and hark back to a flow of movement between the land and sea. Secondary living quarters for full time students would be located between the wharf campus and quarry residences, amongst the zone of permanent inhabitation in Wallace.

Fig. 35
Urban
programming
diagram.

A series of rentable studios would also operate from the Wharf site, contributing to a hub of material craftsmanship and inhabitation for Wallace. These studios, modeled after those at Penland School of

Craft, keep a place for craftspeople from the region over in Wallace. Not only supplying a secondary component of economy to the school, the studios aim to activate the spirit of the master-apprentice relationship on the campus.

The introduction of the School to the villagescape is intended to stimulate a new cycle of development. Key services, such a bank and local grocery may find a place in Wallace once more upon growth of the school. The Remsheg School of Material Craft will foster new participation with the village, imparting a richer experience of place for both the permanent and temporary residents.

Fig. 36
*The Architect
and his
Village.*

ii. Remsheg School of Material Craftsmanship

The architectural project derived from the above text is intended to bring about a heightened sense of awareness and rootedness to the village of Wallace by embracing the existing context and celebrating seasonal and geographic limits and material history. The campus was conceived as an "anti resort": a project to run counter to both the current building practices in the Maritimes as well as the seasonal patterns of inhabitation that perpetuate a dissection of land from sea. With this objective in mind, the project's development is played out through a series of spatial and material explorations designed to underline embedded narratives specific to the wharf site and the village beyond.

The architectural program for the Remsheg School of material craftsmanship took cues from the historic place name of Wallace. As it was so aptly named by the Mi'kmaq people, Remsheg, the place *between*, led me to develop a program for the school that would foster a celebration of this unique condition that lies at the heart of so

many of Wallace's historical narratives. Programming for the school and other resultant architectures needed to fall within this understanding of the wharf site as a place between. To this end, and as aforementioned, the school's program was imagined to operate between the established seasonal patterns of inhabitation in greater Wallace that are largely influenced by tourism. While the school is intended to operate year round, the arrival of summer brings a new layer of inhabitation to the main site and with it a different experience of place. The school thus operates between the limits of summer and winter. Upon arrival of the Victoria Day weekend in May, the school would open its doors to the tourists and permanent residents of Wallace making available a wide array of workshops to those interested in learning a traditional craft.

I conducted a series of modeling exercises that aimed to clarify the site's logic and patterns of use, and the relationship between the village and the wharf. My goal was to (1) create a landmark that could be seen from the quarry, inducing a spatial tension across the village. This would, in part, work to (2) organize the trade school

on the wharf site and (3), weave together student paths and visitors' paths, linking Wallace's historic material context the modern one. The final goal of site design was to (4) reinforce important cultural relationships on the site (the edge), and views toward the harbour, and above all, secure the coast as a public space in this location (See figures 37-39, and 42). The criteria guiding site design - like Mackay-Lyons's Messenger House II - follows traditional methodologies of siting, while managing the view. As a public entity, the project seeks a balance between the historic cultural landscape and Wallace's modern seasonal context. Using polystyrene foam board, massing was modeled and manipulated at a 1:200 scale. This exercise allowed me to execute a series of studies quickly, documenting each along the way. The goal was to discover an appropriate massing for the school buildings that would be conducive to seasonal ritual and celebration, and to organize the journey of the student and that of the visitor coherently, and in a powerful dialogue with the site and coastal edges.

Because the relationship of Wallace to the wharf site is so crucial, site planning for a school campus required me to consider the village schema in its entirety. As such, the first move in my planning methodology led me to consider the strong axis created by the intersection of Route 6 and the historic gravity rail line, and its ability to direct the campus plan itself. In siting the school on the old quarry wharf that naturally acts as a bookend to the gravity rail axis, the project reinforces a North-South flow of movement through Wallace. This has the effect of bringing complexity to a town otherwise dominated by the East-West Main Street axis. In all the iterations of the planning exercise, the boatbuilding laboratory takes the form of a linear North-South building that reinforces the gravity rail axis.

STUDY I

In order to establish linkage to the quarry and the campus among the historic context of Wallace, the first site plan iteration locates the boatbuilding lab on the gravity rail axis. Entry onto the site on foot is intercepted by the boatbuilding and masonry laboratories, forcing movement directly into the center of site. In this way the school itself becomes the destination (not however the

Fig. 37
Campus planning
Study I.

intent of the project). The spatial choreography around the school needs to incite awareness of the greater context of Wallace and not just the site. How material enters the site and makes its way to each of the trades sheds is of more interest in this study than the flow of people. As a result there is no hierarchy of movement through the

site; students and the public enjoy the same paths into and around the campus. The masonry and blacksmithing labs, along with the private craftsperson studios find their place more loosely on the site in contrast to the boatbuilding lab. Haphazard arrangement of smaller programmatic elements such as the forges creates awkward moments that fail to contribute to the scheme in a meaningful way. Though relationships between each of the trade sheds are promising, this scheme lacks a deliberate reasoning. This scheme is too inward looking and does not reach enough into the modern context of Wallace strongly enough.

STUDY II

The first move of this massing study shifts the boatbuilding lab eastward such that it teeters on the physical edge of the site. Still defining the gravity axis, the shift organizes a strong flow of movement directly into the site past the boatbuilding lab and to the water's edge. Placement of masonry lab at the forecourt or entry zone of the campus provides a first encounter with raw material. Here, the visitor is greeted by a storage zone for uncut sandstone.

Beyond this initial arrival zone of the campus, the scheme's spatial order and hierarchy of the scheme begins to break down moving past the initial arrival zone of the campus. Though the placement of the blacksmithing lab to the Northern edge of the site sought to delineate the public zone at the waters edge from

Fig. 38
Campus planning
study II.

the associated with the interior of the site, there is no hierarchy between the promenade space and the path into the campus. The scale of these spaces will need further testing. While the boatbuilding lab created a strong eastern edge then intersected by the public promenade, the interior of the site and heart of the campus seems too far removed from the boat lab. Placement of the forges is promising however. Their scattered placement around the central courtyard builds opportunities for participation with the public as visitors wander

around the school. Their location in contrast to the main building of the blacksmithing lab is awkward and distant. Overall, the scheme lacks cohesion and the simplicity of organization reflected in vernacular ensembles, like the once that once occupied the site (see Fig. 34). Spatial ordering requires more refinement and subtlety to define public and student paths. Similarly, the physical relationships between each of the laboratories require further consideration.

STUDY III

The strong entry established by the masonry lab and boatbuilding study carried over into this study as placement of the two buildings was deemed strongest. The long linear edge established by the boatbuilding lab harks back to the gravity rail, and incites the same kind of movement in and out of the site. The idea of a public promenade at the waters edge is played once more, this time angling the sea wall to force a shift in orientation through the boat building lab and to views of the harbor mouth. Private craftsperson studios delineate the entry (gravity rail) axis from the promenade space to create more of a sequencing of spaces through a play of

shifting scales. The forges locate themselves on the site again as scattered figures, bridging the public promenade to the interior courtyard space. In this way their location looks to spark curiosity in visitors to the campus, drawing them across the promenade, past the forges and into the center of the site. The Western edge of the campus plan is contained by the blacksmithing lab, which in

Fig. 39
Campus planning
study III.

dialogue with the boatbuilding lab to the East frames the site reinforcing the earth to sea organization of the village at the campus scale. This does however appear to give the view across Wallace Harbor away immediately due to the collection of smaller pockets of programming along the Northern sea edge; the promenade loosens its spatial impact as a result. There needs to be greater

balance between physical access to the edge and framing of this view. Again the interior courtyard is vaguely defined, though there are more definite spatial relations between each of the buildings. Access from the entry axis requires thought.

STUDY IV - Final Campus Design

Carving out a campus from the quarry wharf generates a moment of pause and awareness of the existence of the quarry. In line with the primary goal of this thesis to discover an architecture that reveals embedded material and cultural memory, the final study resolves the site plan by referring to two organizational devices, one physical, and the second, metaphorical: the gravity rail and cribwork. These two ordering devices are applied to two parts of the site: the linear eastern edge, dominated by the boatbuilding lab, and the remaining body of the site containing the other trades laboratories and public gathering spaces. The final site plan reinforces the land to sea organization of the village and the historic patterns of inhabitation governed by this relationship. The boatbuilding lab recalls the gravity rail axis. In turn, with their more casual and organic

placement, the masonry and blacksmithing labs, the forges and resident craftsperson studios, and the public gathering spaces, are akin to the random masses of cribwork held inside their crib frame.

Memory of the land to sea cycle and residual axis of the gravity rail generates a very strong flow of movement leading one from the quarry proper down through the site and further still to the water's edge. This flow of movement into the school campus from Route 6 and beyond recalls the site's past role of quarry wharf. A memory of sandstone moving down to the wharf site will play out once more, only now reinforced by the movement of apprentice craftspeople as they wander down the hill to the wharf campus from the residences that lie overlooking the village from the top of the quarry hill. The boatbuilding lab, placed at the northwest corner of the site, further acknowledges this movement. This long narrow building anchors the gravity rail axis at the water's edge, as a linear sequence of spaces that celebrate each step of the boatbuilding process (the material cycle). The building culminates with a launching bay for newly christened boats. This building slips past the edge of the site,

thereby reinforcing the land to sea relationship and bringing heightened awareness to this edge condition. The idea of transition along this edge is reinforced by the use of cribwork to support the wood and boatbuilding laboratory. Over time, the wood cribs will begin to bear the signs of the repeated ebb and flow of the tide, marking the low and high water levels.

Fig. 40
Parti-sketch of
public access
through the
campus.

The secondary gesture of the campus plan itself was led by spatial interpretation of cribwork, which became the conceptual archetype for planning at grade. Deconstruction of cribwork into its individual parts, a regular framework and a random grouping, intersected by the tide, revealed a spatial order that was then applied directly to the wharf site. This exercise in planning sought to establish a natural flow of movement through the site in contrast to the strong formal gesture of the boatbuilding lab and gravity rail axis (see Fig. 30). The final site plan segments the two distinct layers of inhabitation on the site, creating a public promenade at the northern edge of site and internal courtyard while establishing spatial choreography and order between the two realms.

Movement into the site is direct, guided by the gravity rail axis and enforced by the rhythm of sandstone paving, and the wood arcade that reaches across the entry concourse from the boatbuilding lab. The wood arcade also draws focus to the central courtyard space. This moment reveals the secondary, and permanent layer of inhabitation on

the site, denoted by a shift in architectural and material scale. This visual linkage to the interior of the site for the public is fleeting, as the promise of the ocean view pulls one past this moment to the sea wall edge. It is here scales shift again; upon slipping past the Eastern façade of the blacksmithing lab, one is met by a one-hundred-and-eighty degree view of the Wallace Harbour.

The blacksmithing and boatbuilding labs, and protective seawall contain the public Promenade of Memory. This space is the most public of the project, and intended to give back the waters edge (the coast) to the inhabitants of Wallace as a place of participation. The openness and freedom of the promenade is intended to contrast usage of the coastal edge in the modern tourist context - perceived as a private space. The coast is in fact a public realm and no ownership extends to the beach as per the Fisheries Act of Nova Scotia.³⁷ The promenade straddles the historic cultural landscape and modern context in the way it operates publicly responding to both the view

³⁷ The Fisheries Act of Nova Scotia grants any person access to the shores for the purposes of fishing. This includes passing through otherwise private property. As a result communities often establish public right of ways for access.

and memory of the working coast. This in turn creates a play between seasonal and yearlong rituals.

The Courtyard of Making, hinged off of the boatbuilding lab, internalizes the site as a hub of activity within the village of Wallace; it is connected to and from the wharf site through a series of views, furthering development of spatial tension between the campus and village. Public movement into the courtyard from the Promenade of Memory is filtered by placement of the forges. Passing between the forges and through the fabrication zone of the blacksmithing lab, the courtyard is decidedly private in character, offering the public a more intimate experience with the school. This space, though primarily of the day to day, may be rented out for events allowing the project to further bridge the public and private, and seasonal and yearlong. Framed by the blacksmithing lab to the North, masonry to the South, boatbuilding to the East private craftsperson studios to the West, the space is both enclosed and translucent, responding to issues of climate. The private studios in particular can open up completely in summer allowing for both greater visual interaction

between the campus and the villagescape beyond, and physical contact between the student and master craftspeople. Placement of the private studios also creates a small minor courtyard completed by the wind reflective wall of the masonry lab. This space is the most private on the site providing the master craftspeople a sanctuary of their own.

While inter-relationships between each of the distinct trade programs played a critical role in the final placement of the masonry and blacksmithing labs, labs, the connections between the school buildings and other industries and industrial fragments along the harbour were also operative in the siting decisions. As the school is located on an isolated portion of land in the village, establishing a visual tension to the interior of the campus was a prime concern. As important as the view from the site is, equal consideration of the view into the site was made in order to finalize the subtleties of the campus plan.

The architectonic cribwork model employed in the secondary gesture of the campus plan also informed the preliminary design of the trade

sheds. All campus buildings operate structurally as a regular bay system to which pockets of enclosed programming are then added. The space between the two contains circulatory zones. In the context of the free plan of the campus site, the trade sheds become pavilions perched above the water. This model recalls the memory of the wharf site as a cribwork in of itself. The memory appears to reach up out from the ground plane, informing a new architectural language for this place.

Fig. 41
Vignette of the
Courtyard of
Making.

The history of the site as a cribwork is revealed further through an archaeological cut at the heart of the campus plan. This cut, which organizes a tidal clock, incites a new awareness of the site as an artificial piece of land. In contrast to the inward looking nature of the Courtyard of Making, the tidal clock located at its epicenter, was imagined to reinforce the cyclical rhythms of the landscape and the theme of the in-between that historically have guided inhabitation in Wallace. The void space created by the cut also becomes a fire pit for the Labour Day weekend closing ceremonies. As the tide comes in on the last evening of the school term, the celebratory bonfire will slowly die out, engulfed by the sea and thereby signaling the end of another summer.

Detailed design of the blacksmithing forges was intended as an architectural foreshadowing for the rest of the campus. The forges, located along the northern edge of the site, are foreboding stone structures punctuating the sea edge. In their placement along the Promenade of Memory, the forges were imagined first as lonely figures in the landscape, providing a haunting presence of inhabitation to

the coast in winter. Expression of the forge spaces came as a direct response to the material narrative of the wharf site: we know the site was built up from leftover sandstone from the stone cutting process. Re-imagined remnant sandstone from the quarry is used for the construction of gabion basket walls to house the blacksmithing forges. This system of construction works to control both light and temperature within the forge space, while reinforcing particularity of place through concise material expression.

Fig. 42
Forges and
Promenade of
Memory.

The proposal for this site is composed of a an urban intervention -- a school for the material crafts -- that is both entangled in the existing villagescape and centralized in its location on the historic Quarry Wharf. Design of a greater campus plan, in a formal gesture through the landscape, brings awareness to the earth-to-sea cycle of the village and innate sense of the in-between therein. This flow of movement through the village echoes the spatial choreography once reinforced by the quarry gravity rail. The axis established by this gestural flow, delineates spatial arrangement of the campus proper, creating the Promenade of Memory and Courtyard of Making. Development of these spaces responds to the two distinct layers of inhabitation on this site: the seasonal and yearlong. In this way the campus plan becomes an urban celebration of particularity of place, embracing the history of Wallace and the in-between, and inspiring a deeper understanding of place for its residents.

While this architectural proposal only goes so far as to allude to a material and tectonic language for the Rensheg School of Material Craft, a thoroughly conceived architecture for this site would best

emerge as a series of material explorations. In this way, architecture may test the limits of vernacular tradition in Nova Scotia, while firmly establishing a new architectural language for the village of Wallace.

Commercial Fishing Wharf

Lobster Cannery

Highway Route 6

Gravity Rail Axis

- 1 Entry
- 2 Changeroom
- 3 Office
- 4 Metal Shop
- 5 Welding Area
- 6 Fabrication Zone
- 7 General Storage
- 8 Coal Storage
- 9 Forge Area
- 10 Compressor Room
- 11 Custodial Room

- 1 Entry
- 2 Changeroom
- 3 Fabrication Room
- 4 Office
- 5 Custodial Room
- 6 Paint and Finish Room
- 7 Launching Bay
- 8 Wood Shop
- 9 Tool Room
- 10 Milling Floor
- 11 Exterior lumber storage

VI. C RIBWORK: URBAN ORDERING DEVICE AND ARCHITECTURAL DETAIL

i. Cross section through the boatbuilding lad and tidal clock

In order for the project to address the complex issues and questions of this thesis, the program required a strong public and socio-economic underpinning, as well as a very public place in the village of Wallace. Moreover it required careful planning and design at the urban, architectural and material scales. As a result the project struggled to maintain a focused line of inquiry between urban design and development at the architectural scale. Ultimately, development of the school's campus plan here took precedence over the development of its individual buildings, and investigations at the building and material scales here remain impressionistic. The East-West cross section through the water's edge, boat lab and tidal clock therefore aims to do the double duty of conveying architectonic sensibilities and ideas of urban and public space.

The spatial concepts revealed through study of cribwork guides the tectonic development of the architecture represented in section. The

boatbuilding lab rises out from the water supported by a series of cribwork piers that puncture the floor at grade emphasizing their role in supporting the second and third levels of the building. The three-storey service corridor that organizes vertical circulation through the boatbuilding lab inhabits the space above the cribwork piers. Physical interpretation of cribwork is embodied through the tectonic expression of the building's programming. The open structural steel bay system is punctuated by the placement of concrete volumes that house elements such as change rooms, offices and a classroom space. These private spaces are staggered through the length of the building over all three floors. The interstitial spaces are rendered public rooms that facilitate the making of boats.

Beyond establishing spatial order throughout the boatbuilding lab, the cribwork foundation is also a preliminary investigation of didactic building narrative (presented previously in the Messenger House II case study). Each crib is made on site out of six-by-six posts, then sunk in place and filled with leftover stone from the quarry (see Fig. 46). Concrete fins are then poured into place where

the west side of the building meets the land. The columns sewn into the cribwork organize each bay of the structure, and so on and so forth.

Rigorous physical material and tectonic investigation is the natural next step for further development of this architectural proposition. The concept of "in-betweenness" in particular is ripe with tectonic implication that would benefit from material exploration and hands-on investigation. This kind of exploration, in the spirit of making this thesis advocates, would bring the projects themes and outcome full circle.

Courtyard of Making

Tidal Clock

Stage Area

Public Concourse

Boatbuilding Lab

Vertical
Cribwork
Circulation

cribwork module

Fig. 47
Tectonic Narrative
Study Sketch.

VII. REMSHEG SCHOOL OF MATERIAL CRAFT: BEYOND NOSTALGIA

The following section reflects on the thesis itself, and in particular, on the choice of program of a school in traditional crafts over other possibilities. The question of how to continue the past without nostalgia, of how to be contemporary while dealing with tradition, is paramount. This section will reflect on the proposition of a school of traditional crafts (1) as the appropriate outcome of a historical trajectory in the town's collective identity; (2) in relation to economic realities and feasibility, and in dialogue with prefabrication and industrialized making; (3) as effective catalyst for elevating construction skill in the surrounding community and (4) as historical vessel of public memory and knowledge.

The architectural proposition of this thesis, a school for traditional material crafts, was first conceived as a response to the rich material history in Wallace and its unfulfilled place in the village's building expression. An institutional program offered a venue through which the village could recover and participate in a

largely forgotten aspect of its history, and this, both during the high tourist season and during the quieter winter months. Wallace's relationship to making things is immortalized by the wharf, the residual stone quarry and the cement factory (once a brick making factory). But the town's crafts and manufacturing vocation has repeatedly been frustrated by economic obligations and pressures. The town of Wallace, be it today or in the past, has rarely been the recipient of its own talents, its own expertise, and its own resources.

While the town's circumstances have profoundly changed since the turn of the century -- tourism having taken the place of fishing, quarrying stone and shipbuilding as main sources of revenue -- it seemed necessary to recover and claim the town's traditions of craft in a spirit of healing, and, one might even say, of restitution. But how best to achieve this end? Indeed, the project struggled to come to terms with the validity of its programming devoted to training in traditional trades such as boatbuilding and blacksmithing which point more directly to the past than to the present. In the culturally

charged context of Nova Scotia, the proposition must recon with scrutiny, and this, legitimately so: is this coastal trades school yet another cynical and opportunistic venture where wealthy outsiders come and learn a trade and return home with a beautiful souvenir craft object at the summer's end? How to ensure that the town of Wallace and its yearlong community be the primary beneficiaries? How to ensure that the town's material culture and present-day built fabric be elevated by the school's presence?

Fear of the project contributing further to the cycle of tourism and commodity in Wallace was daunting, but it prompted active development of a program that could operate within the village as a public entity. This public quality was pursued in three different ways. Firstly, the proposition secures access to the water's edge: unlike the resorts in the area, this project organizes a public path and space to encounter the coast at both the building and the urban scales. Secondly, the site planning inserts public spaces into the school domain, making it an integral part of the community. Thirdly, the site plan highlights historical axes and geographical

relationships that underscore Wallace's history in material craft, so the project becomes an orientation and mnemonic device for Wallace's residents in relation to its urban and socio-economic history. Though the concept of an "anti-resort" for Wallace could have been explored via other publicly oriented programs, a school for the material crafts ultimately was deemed the most appropriate means to address the themes of this thesis, as this postscript will argue.

Precedents such as the Penland School of Craft (discussed earlier in this thesis) and Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD) in Halifax, demonstrate a demand for schools that advocate hands-on learning. Attendance to these smaller colleges has continued to increase, so much so in fact that NSCAD opened a second campus in 2007 on the Halifax harbourfront. The new seventy thousand square foot building is dedicated to the study of industrial crafts such as pottery and metalworking. Penland School of Craft has also outgrown some of its facilities having held a competition for the design of a new Blacksmithing Studio in 2009. NSCAD and Penland School of Craft not only help fuel the local economies as sources of employment and

revenues in their respective towns, but through their support of material creativity and innovation, they also raise the quality of life there. After all, creativity is becoming an increasingly important component of economic development in the post-industrial era.³⁸ Creativity is also a central dimension in sustainability theories, be it in architecture or urban planning. As for their nurturing of hands-on material explorations, schools like Penland and NSCAD encourage specialty skills and high quality of construction. The presence of graduates with these skills and values in the local community is invaluable: their work in the community raises the bar for others, and has a ripple effect over time. Thus in many ways a traditional trades school promises to fuel local economic growth in Wallace and guide the town toward long term sustainable development.

Although its place in the Nova Scotian economy has shifted dramatically in the last one-hundred years, boatbuilding still occurs province-wide predominantly via two streams: the fishing industry and

³⁸ Some even goes as far as to state that creativity is the prime force in urban regeneration and a long-term guarantor of urban prosperity. This is the thesis of Richard Florida. See for example *Cities and the Creative Class*, (Routledge: 2005).

naval restoration. Over fifty boatbuilding companies operate out of Nova Scotia today, and together work toward sustainable growth and diversification of the industry (including a company in greater Wallace). Typically those interested in becoming a certified master boat builder have training in other areas such as metal or wood working and welding. Upon joining a boatbuilding company, usually working on the shop floor, the formal apprenticeship process begins governed by the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workforce Development. Master boat builders are qualified under Journey person Certification. Journey people are some of the most skilled tradespersons in the world. Their skill is broad and well rounded, and easily transferable to almost any facet of the building trade.

The school in Wallace would operate year-round as a center for journey persons training, while offering workshops to the general public during the summer months. With many opportunities for apprenticeship and employment in Wallace (at the quarry, with local boatbuilders, and also in the general building trades), the school operates as a stabilizing force in the community, both socially and

economically. Armed with a wealth of material knowledge and hands on training, full time students could readily find work with local businesses in the village upon graduation from the school. Furthermore, it is conceivable that insertion of the school to the villagescape could foster new business growth. Graduates could start their own businesses thereby encouraging competitive growth of the local economy.

Regardless of boatbuilding's place in the modern context and the shift in material palette from wood to fiberglass and steel, the fundamentals of construction remain unchanged. The art of crafting a boat relies on precision and quality of construction; after all, a poorly built boat will sink. If the programming of the project is considered with broader purpose, a school devoted to training in the craft of boatbuilding and other manual tradition nurtures a return to building skill as a whole. As an incubator for the development of material craftsmanship, it is the sincere intention here that the knowledge and skill imparted to the students of the school would affect the greater built environment of Wallace. As history has

shown, the kinds of techniques employed in boatbuilding are rich in tectonic implications for the buildings on land. Tectonic narratives like the meeting of a skin and a frame demonstrate thought and attention to joining. Such thinking is equally important to masonry construction as it is boatbuilding. Like the boat builders of the nineteenth century whose knowledge of wood transferred to the tectonic grammar of coastal houses, barns and outbuildings in other parts of Nova Scotia, a thoughtful return to building skill may work its way into the contemporary built environment once more. In this way, the school becomes more than just a museum school for restorations. Further still, it is the hope that the school may become a laboratory for continued material explorations and invention. In concrete terms, the first public space the visitor encounters upon arriving at the school is a stock yard for building materials. Visible from the town's Main Street, it is meant to supply the school, and could also supply local builders; symbolically, however, this expanse of raw materials -- replete with potential to become built things -- acts as a catalyst for the collective material imagination of the town.

Naturally the project could have pursued alternative means in an effort to foster a return to a higher form of building skill. The sea as an economic force within the community has passed. Boatbuilding and training in other traditional crafts like blacksmithing and architectural masonry may be considered nostalgic, and boatbuilding like a backward step rather than a move forward. An alternative project might have been a factory for prefabricated building parts using local materials and carefully considered assemblies that draw from historical construction traditions. Such a program could support the development of a new architectural language for Wallace, as well as contribute to the village's self regeneration. Additionally, it could elevate the characteristically banal building practice in Wallace in a very direct way by inserting beautifully crafted building elements into local buildings, and in so doing, instill a newfound sense of permanence to the yearlong context of Wallace.

While this idea is tantalizing, the problem with such a program lies on one hand in its failure to nurture the development of a site-specific response and in-situ architecture that continue the vernacular building traditions of Nova Scotia, and on the other, to training builders as individual makers. While the prefabricated component has didactic potential, it could be argued that direct training in the trades penetrates the individual builder's hands more deeply. Prefabrication, too, implies stylistic generalization and can result in a diminishing of cultural content, although there are ways this could be avoided. More importantly though, through its mechanized and regulated processes, prefabrication contradicts an important temporal quality in historical Nova Scotian building. Indeed, the vernacular buildings of Nova Scotia did not employ plans and sections; rather they developed organically on the site as a series of constructional processes, in tandem with the seasons. This thesis was interested in extended time, duration, and seasonal time in making traditions. While it is not the subject of this thesis, the idea of exploring a form of prefabrication that would register

temporal and seasonal variations is a very interesting one, and one worth exploring.

The choice to propose a school over other possible programs also continues the goal of this thesis of recovering cultural memory in the public realm. Not only are schools places of education, but they are the social and cultural heart of the towns and cities in which they are situated. For the small communities of Nova Scotia, schools are typically the settings for community politics, social gatherings, public festivals and celebrations. What better way to organize and share the cultural memories of place for the people of Wallace than through a program that historically has facilitated the gathering of community, exchange of information and community participation. Further still, the placement location of the school on public land at the water's edge boldly affirms the coast as public space in contrast to nearby places like Fox Harb'r and Cambra Sands.

In conclusion, through siting and site organization which elucidate a past in manufacturing and a seasonal relationship to the coast,

through programming that brings past trades into the present, and through tectonics that recover embedded historical logics of assembly, the Remsheg School of Material Craft is an active argument for the value of the past, in the present.

CONCLUSION

*The timeless task of architecture is to create embodied existential metaphors that concretize and structure man's being in the world.. Buildings and towns enable us to structure, understand and remember the shapeless flow of reality and, ultimately, to recognize and remember who we are.*³⁹

The cultural and economic forces at work in Nova Scotia today have led to architectural practices that fail to contribute to a meaningful present. Contemporary practice consciously chooses to emulate the overly romanticized forms ubiquitous to the Nova Scotian coast, resulting in an architecture devoid of authentic cultural memory as understood through theorist Frederic Jameson's concept of commodification of culture. This state of crisis is made all the more poignant in small centers such as Wallace, Nova Scotia. The reverberations of global commodification have led to a disconnect in the vernacular continuum, whereby new local architectures contribute to a state of placelessness.

³⁹ Juhani Pallasma, *Eyes of the Skin* (London: Academy Editions, 1996), 37.

This thesis advances that intrinsic cultural memories, both figurative and tangible in nature, can contribute to the creation and sustenance of particularity of place. More specifically, this thesis is intent on establishing a new language of building for Wallace. The deep-rooted regional and local narratives identified by this project provide the architectural underpinning from which this new language will emerge, thereby anchoring the village in the present and future.

Examination of the architecture of Nova Scotian architect Brian Mackay-Lyons reveals a body of work centered on vernacular precedent. His architecture, particularly Messenger House II, demonstrates the potential for architectural expression beyond formal and gestural relationships to site. Messenger II House sought to balance the historic cultural landscape and modern touristic context. Certain potential ideas in the house supported this thesis's exploration of the conceptual place of cribwork in architectural project. This thesis however attempts to move...by repositioning The didactic

quality of the house's thoroughly developed structural narrative is particularly promising in relation to the conceptual role of cribwork and architectural expression of this thesis project. This thesis attempts to move beyond the work of Mackay-Lyons by repositioning cultural memory of place squarely in the public sphere rather than the private house. As public property, cultural memory is best examined via a civic building located on a public site in order to re-activate former concepts of place in a meaningful way.

Study and inventory of material traditions and rituals uncovered a series of cultural phenomena that may guide a more relevant building practice for the present. A look into the Nova Scotian landscape through the mind's eye of its indigenous peoples, in contrast to the idealized imagery nurtured by European explorers, reveals a landscape that is deeply embodied and intimately known by its inhabitants. As seen in Acadian architectural tradition, Native place names reveal these powerfully embodied narratives of the land. It is from this knowledge that Nova Scotia's vernacular architecture emerge and draws its power. By replacing contemporary building practices that

rupture sense of place through nostalgia and idealization, architecture can work to re-orient us in the landscape. The act of recollecting the past offers current architectural practice a out from its impasses.

Examination of seasonal rituals of inhabitation reveals a choreography of movement between land and sea rich in architectural potential. Current practice chooses to covet the landscape rather than engage embedded memories of inhabitation and movement between the land and sea. In contrast to the static and superficial inhabitation nurtured by tourist dwellings and other coastal architectures, this thesis promotes architectural design that is conscious of both past and present concepts of place. In recalling deeply seated patterns of inhabitation and seasonal rituals, new architecture may impart richer experiences of inhabitation to the residents of Wallace, both permanent and seasonal alike.

The folksongs of Nova Scotia's past remind us of the great wealth of embedded knowledge available within cultural artifacts such as the

Sea Chanty. Transposing the theme of longing to an urban planning strategy helps to underscore the importance of securing the land to sea connection. Indeed this tension should be present and celebrated across the landscape in this region, for coastal and landlocked sites have always been understandable as interrelated parts. Similarly, investigation and interpretation of the cultural artifact, cribwork, reveals a tectonic model that is rich in poetry and latent with tensions that breathe life into architecture. These tensions impart both a meaningful response to the landscape, and an architectural language reflective of the modern cultural landscape and historic physical landscape.

The contemporary built fabric of Wallace demonstrates a community's ongoing struggle to express itself through building. The village, historically characterized by an innate sense of *in-betweenness* (Remsheg), has largely been rendered placeless as a result of economic pressures and unfilled material potential. The village of Wallace, in dialogue with persistent embedded memories, holds the potential to challenge the current state of architectural practice in

Nova Scotia. This thesis identifies a school for the material crafts as the most direct means to imprint the history of the trades in present day Wallace by operating as a public entity of participation. The architectural proposal for the Remsheg School of Material Craft emerges as an anti-resort, arguing for the value of the local, and endorsing the vivid present of maritime situations in Canada. For indeed architecture at the most elemental level, emerges from encounters with locale, and with local things. The material language of the project's architecture embraces Wallace's material past, bringing the village's material history full circle. The cribwork inspired site plan and buildings give to Wallace at last an embodiment of architectural expression and sense of place.

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