MEETINGHOUSE

a retreat facility
Meetinghouse

Beech Grove, Indiana

Andrew N. Costlow
Thesis 1982
College of Architecture and Planning
Ball State University
SPECIAL APPRECIATION FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF:

PROF. JACK WYMAN (ARCH.)

APPRECIATION FOR THE INSTRUCTION OF:

PROF. SONNY PALMER (ARCH.)
PROF. J.R. TAYLOR (ARCH.)
PROF. OMAR FARUQUE (L. ARCH.)
RONALD SPANGLER (L. ARCH.)

SPECIAL THANKS TO MY LOVING WIFE, LINDA, FOR HER ENCOURAGEMENT AND SUPPORT.
contents

SOLUTION

FINAL DOCUMENTS 6-14
CONCEPT DIAGRAMMING 16-20

PROGRAM

GOALS 22
PROBLEM STATEMENTS 23
HISTORY 24
BUILDING TYPE ANALYSIS 25
SITE ANALYSIS SUMMARY 26
SPACE SUMMARY 28

PROCEDURE

APPROACH 30
METHODOLOGY 31
PHILOSOPHY 33
CONCLUSION 34
SOLUTION
THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS REPRESENT THE FINAL SOLUTION
OF AN EXTENSIVE NINE MONTH ARCHITECTURAL THESIS.
CONCEPT DIAGRAMMING
entry

CONCEPT OF "RETREATING" ITSELF...
ENTRY IS A SEQUENCE OF EXPERIENCES:
ENTRY THROUGH GATE ON AXIS WITH POND
SURPRISE GLIMPSE OF MEETINGHOUSE FROM CURVE IN ROAD
PROGRESS UP SLOPE THROUGH CANOPY OF TREES TO PARKING POCKETS
ENTOURAGE DEFINES WALKWAY TO MEETINGHOUSE WHERE BUILDING PIECES FORM ENTRY COURTYARD
correlation

zoning and circulation

CIRCULATION AS SPINE THROUGH USE SPACES

EXTERIOR CIRCULATION AS HIERARCHICAL NETWORK OF PATHS (SEE SITE PLAN)
graphic composition of plan
massing

TALLEST PORTION OF MASS LOCATED AT OR NEAR CENTER OF BUILDING IDENTIFYING ENTRY; SIGNIFYING SPECIAL SPACE

MEETING SPACES PHYSICALLY DETACHED AS SEPARATE ELEMENT

structure

LOADBEARING WALL PIERS AS ORDERING COMPONENTS

PERIMETER OF MASSIVE PIERS CREATES SUBTLE SENSE OF SECURENESS
concept parti

A SINGLE CIRCULATION SPINE WITH MEETING OPPORTUNITIES OCCURING ALONG IT
goals

OPERATIONAL
TO OFFER BOTH INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS THE OPPORTUNITY TO MEET TOGETHER IN A COMMON PLACE REMOVED FROM FAMILIAR SURROUNDINGS

TO ACCOMMODATE PEOPLE IN A MANNER THAT ENHANCES COMMUNICATING, LEARNING, RECREATING, AND REFLECTING

TO SERVE THE PUBLICS' NEEDS THROUGH RENTING OUT PARTS OF THE BUILDING FOR CERTAIN PURPOSES

FACILITY
TO CREATE SPACES THAT ENCOURAGE PERSONAL GROWTH AND SOCIAL INTERACTION

TO OFFER ADAPTABLE SPACES THAT WILL SUPPORT A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES

TO DEVELOP AN ACCESSIBLE, COMFORTABLE ENVIRONMENT WITH A VARIETY OF SPATIAL OPPORTUNITIES AND STRONG INTERACTION BETWEEN INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR FUNCTIONS

TO GENERATE AN ARCHITECTURE THAT WILL UTILIZE NATURAL MATERIALS HONESTLY REFLECTING THE BUILDINGS' PURPOSE, WHILE RESPONSIBLY AND SENSITIVELY RESPONDING TO THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT
problem statements

BECAUSE THE MAIN PURPOSE OF MEETINGHOUSE IS TO SUCCESSFULLY ACCOMMODATE GROUP MEETINGS, THE DESIGN SHOULD PROVIDE SPACES (INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR) THAT RESPOND TO THE VARYING NUMBER AND NEEDS OF PARTICULAR GROUPS.

BECAUSE OF THE FACILITY’S SECONDARY FUNCTIONS, (RENTABLE AUDITORIUM AND WEDDING RECEPTIONS) THE SOLUTION SHOULD REFLECT SENSITIVE ZONING AND SECURITY OF THOSE SPACES INVOLVED.

AS A WHOLE THE FACILITY SHALL CONSIST OF THREE SEPARATE, YET RELATED PARTS... MAIN MEETINGHOUSE, RETREATANT ACCOMMODATIONS, AND EXTERIOR RECREATION... THEREFORE THE DESIGN SHOULD ESTABLISH A CLEAR, UNDERSTANDABLE LINK BETWEEN THESE PARTS.
THE HISTORY OF THE MEETINGHOUSE CAN BE TRACED TO 17th CENTURY NEW ENGLAND. ONE OF THE FIRST ACTS OF EVERY PURITAN SETTLEMENT WAS TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE BUILDING OF A MEETINGHOUSE. THIS ONE BUILDING DOMINATED AND FOCUSED THE ENTIRE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY. IT WAS THERE THAT PEOPLE MET FOR EVERY PURPOSE... TOWN MEETINGS, PUBLIC WORSHIP, EMERGENCY SHELTER..., HENCE THE NAME OF "MEETINGHOUSE"

THESE STRUCTURES WERE USUALLY LOCATED ON A HILL OR SOME OTHER PLACE OF IMPORTANCE. THE ORIGINAL MEETINGHOUSES WERE SQUARE OR SQUARE-LIKE IN SHAPE AND EMPLOYED A PYRAMIDAL HIP ROOF, OFTEN WITH SOME TYPE OF BELFRY. MANY BUILDINGS WERE ENCLOSED BY HEAVY LOG PICKETS FOR PROTECTION FROM INDIANS. THE MOST FREQUENTLY USED MATERIALS WERE WOOD AND STONE TO REFLECT PERMANENCE AND SECURITY.
building type analysis

AFTER ANALYZING FIVE DIFFERENT BUILDINGS OF SIMILAR NATURE TO MEETINGHOUSE SEVERAL OBSERVATIONS WERE MADE:

CLEAR DEFINABLE CIRCULATION

DISTINCT ZONING OF CONFERENCE, ADMINISTRATION, AND OTHER MAJOR USE SPACES

EMPLOYMENT OF A "COMMONS" SPACE AS THE HEART OF THE COMPLEX AND CENTER OF SOCIAL GATHERING

SENSITIVE USE OF EXTERIOR SPACES

ALLOWANCE FOR A VARIETY OF SPATIAL CHOICES WITH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE WELL DEFINED

EFFICIENT AND ADEQUATE STORAGE

CREATIVE USES OF NATURAL LIGHT

GENEROUS AND SENSITIVE VIEWS DUE TO MANIPULATION OF BUILDING FORM
site analysis summary

AMENITIES
36 ACRES DENSELY WOODED WITH SAPLINGS
RICH TOPOGRAPHY OF 760'-810'
PLEASANT BROOK SPLICES SITE INTO TWO PIECES
ACCESSIBILITY FROM I-465
EXCELLENT VIEWS FOCUSED TOWARD "VALLEY"

LIABILITIES
HARSH INTERRUPTION OF ACCESS ROAD ACTS
AS A DIVIDING ELEMENT
NOISE OF I-465
MAIN BUILDING LOCATED ON NORTHERN HALF OF SITE TO:

AVOID NOISE OF I-465
TAKE ADVANTAGE OF NATURAL TOPOGRAPHY
MAXIMUM SOLAR GAIN
ENJOY BEST VIEWS

DEVELOPMENT OF 6 ACRE POND AS A PRIME ORGANIZER AND VISUAL STIMULUS

NETWORK OF PATHS

proposed site
# Space Summary

## Administrative Spaces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Area (sq.ft.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director Office</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Director Office</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretary</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lounge</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>610</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Activity Spaces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Area (sq.ft.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dining</td>
<td>860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dining Storage</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Room</td>
<td>620</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respite Alcoves</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibits/Display</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar (Divisible)</td>
<td>650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture Hall</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storage</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4180</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Accommodations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Area (sq.ft.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Suites (16 Units)</td>
<td>1 @ 290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Bunk Suites</td>
<td>1 @ 1160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6960</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUPPORT SPACES

KITCHEN 560 sq.ft.
COOL ROOM 60 sq.ft.
RECEIVING 60 sq.ft.
LAUNDRY 160 sq.ft.
LINEN STORAGE 30 sq.ft.
MECHANICAL ROOM 270 sq.ft.
RESTROOMS 85 sq.ft.
JANITOR CLOSET 20 sq.ft.
MAINTENANCE STORAGE 120 sq.ft.
TOTAL 1450 sq.ft.

CIRCULATION/RESPITE 1400 sq.ft.

MAIN MEETINGHOUSE TOTAL 7640 sq.ft.
ACCOMMODATION TOTAL 6960 sq.ft.
GROSS TOTAL 14600 sq.ft.
PROCEDURE
approach

The initial image that I conceive of the facility is a sort of "monastery" for business, religious, and educational groups. To retreat one actually removes oneself from ordinary activity and withdraws or escapes to a place of isolation. I see the building as a place of refuge, requiring a sense of security.

The building consists of three separate, yet linked parts; recreation, accommodations, and main meetinghouse. Recreation occurs in many forms, but the major form is the development of a 6 acre pond. Accommodations are to randomly "dot" the hillside with generous views to the pond. They are to be separate from the main building to increase the sense of privacy. The meetinghouse is to be more formal, more public, located at the brow of the slope, (a place of prominence). Its length shall be solar oriented allowing views focused on the ponding below. The materials are to be natural; wood, limestone, and slate.
methodology

From my study of historical meetinghouses, I discovered that the majority of these early structures were square in plan configuration. This discovery combined with my feeling that the building should communicate a bold, strong, secure image led me to the final development of a parti of six square pieces arranged around a main circulation spine. These square pieces are ordered and defined by a series of smaller square elements at their corners. The smaller elements stem from a concept employed by the early meetinghouses. Often times a fortification was built surrounding the structure, safeguarding it from attack. In meetinghouse the concept of a perimeter of piers is employed as a means of creating a subtle sense of secureness. These piers are constructed of limestone and act as storage elements meeting the functional need of spatial adaptability. The pier also acts as the major structural member supporting the
FLOATING PYRAMIDAL HIP ROOFS AS WELL AS A MEANS OF WATER REMOVAL. THESE BUILDING ELEMENTS ARE THE BASIS, GENERATING THE BUILDING VOCABULARY.
philosophy

AS A DESIGNER, MY ROLE SHOULD BE ONE OF A SERVANT... A SERVANT OF MY GOD, AND OF MY FELLOW MAN... REALIZING WHERE MY ABILITIES ORIGINATE, ATTEMPTING TO USE THEM TO IMPROVE THE WORLD HE HAS GIVEN TO US.

SOME DESIGN VALUES.....

A BUILDING MUST PERFORM ON SEVERAL LEVELS: HEALTH AND SAFETY, UTILITY, ECONOMY, AND AESTHETICS

BUILDING DESIGN IS BASICALLY AN ACT OF IDENTIFYING, ASSEMBLING AND REFINING PARTS INTO A WHOLE

PROBLEMS AND CONFLICTS IN A PROJECT ARE A RICH SOURCE OF CREATIVITY IN DEVELOPING BUILDING FORM

ARCHITECTURE SHOULD BE EXPRESSIVE OF THE VALUES OF THE CULTURE WHERE IT OCCURS

BUILDING ELEMENTS SHOULD POSSESS A SENSE OF FIT, BOTH WITH RESPECT TO EACH OTHER AND TO THEIR SURROUNDING CONTEXT

GOOD DESIGN IS SOMETHING THAT MUST BE FINESSED OUT OF THE MIND; NOT FORCED

THE SIMPLER THE BUILDING THE BETTER
conclusion

MEETINGHOUSE PROVIDES AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO THE ACTIVITIES OF COMMUNICATING, LEARNING, RECREATING, AND REFLECTING. IT IS A "LARGE HOUSE" EXTENDING A WELCOME TO ANY WHO WOULD DESIRE TO ENTER AND EXPERIENCE ITS RICH VOCABULARY DERIVED FROM THE PAST, THE PRESENT, AND THE FUTURE.