

## **EXTRACT: INTRODUCTION**

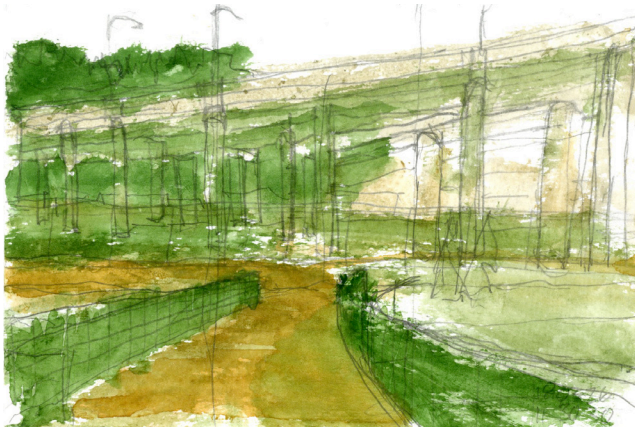


Fig. a. PREVIOUS FACING PAGE:  
*"Origins and Inspirations."*  
 Self. May 2018.

This illustration pictures several spaces that influenced this Thesis. From left-to-right, top-to-bottom: stairs in a cave in Cappadocia, Turkey. Self. June 2015. A hill in Cappadocia. Self. June 2015. A cave window in Cappadocia. Self. June 2015. Stone stairs in Cappadocia. Self. June 2015. "Origin" wall section drawing from Prothesis Seminar, ARCH 511. Self. Fall 2017. The Ship Creek Trail. Self. March 2018. Gasworks Park in Seattle. Rachel Harper. May 2018. Independence Mine Hatcher's Pass, Alaska. Ryan Marquis.

This Thesis began with a number of inspiring ideas floating within my head. These came from readings and conversations, and trips. The synthesis I reached during Fall term of all these concepts manifested in a single drawing of a wall section. To be more accurate, the drawing was to be a wall section, but was not in fact one at all. The drawing was less about the wall, and more about what it separated. It became the origin of the project, the seed for inquiry and interaction. I looked at the cave of Lascaux and the operating room of an early 20th century radio building and asked how both could be spaces for celebration and communication. What were the qualities both possessed? The answer was much different than I had anticipated. In any event, this drawing served as the beginning of the design of this Thesis.

Other inspiration came from the caves of Cappadocia in Turkey. The region is a national park, but many caves still are homes for residents of the area. For thousands of years the soft stone and peculiar cones provided shelter for refugee populations escaping persecution. A couple decades ago, a massive earthquake caused catastrophic damage to the area, and the government forced most of the surviving residents out of their caves into permanent structures. Nevertheless, there are living residents who remember living in the caves, and the community and connexion with heritage it cultivated. There are no ropes or guardrails around the ruins, and many still contain petroglyphs and paintings, although those are harder to reach. Visitors can walk freely through them, climbing up and down stairs tread down by thousands of footfalls and looking out windows at the same scenery of the ancients. Additionally, seeing the carved-out niches for sleeping and burying the dead were particularly powerful.

The question of a ruin was always interesting to me. Ruins too often become follies and attractions for viewing. They become idols of a sense, and their preservation, often with canopies, is somewhat strange. Archaeologists like to hold on to the relics of the past and raise them to holy unhealthy levels of significance and influence. There is something magical about a stone cave eroding in the wind and rain, or a wooden building rotting into corruption. That is why I liked Gas Works Park in Seattle so much. Although it does turn the ruins into a bit of an exhibit, the allowance for the reuse of the site as a public park, not a capitalistic attraction, is inspiring. Another ruin closer to Anchorage is the

Independence Mine site at Hatcher's Pass. The mine buildings now are unoccupied or have informational placards describing the former use of the site. The buildings are not roped off, however, and trails, both improved and informal, wind between them. In the winter, the road up to the mine and several of the trails around the buildings are groomed for cross-country skiing. A now-famous photo from the Anchorage Daily News shows skiers from the Alaska Pacific University ski team training on the trails with the buildings in the background.

Trails have always been important to Alaska and many communities, always for transportation and more recently recreation. Anchorage has some of the most extensive multi-use trails in the nation, and it is possible to circumnavigate the core of the city on these trails alone. The rail users come from every neighborhood and demographic, and are great equalizers and cultivators of community. The Ship Creek Trail is the newest of these, and goes very close to Government Hill, the site of this Thesis. This trail is unique because instead of paralleling a creek in a green belt, like the Chester and Campbell Creek Trails, it threads between the bank of Ship Creek and the industrial spaces that define the area. The trail is much more exposed, and more of an urban trail in that sense. As I began exploring methods of reconnecting the Government Hill neighborhood with the rest of Anchorage, I recognized the significance of these trails. I decided to design a new trail that split from the Ship Creek Trail to go through Government Hill, but the development of the neighborhood

meant that the trail would have to mediate an urban setting, much like the Ship Creek Trail does.

To say that this Thesis is about historic preservation is not entirely accurate. More specifically, this Thesis involves historic preservation. Over the last seven years of Thesis at Portland State University, many projects have dealt in one manner or another with the topic, but usually along the same lines of inquiry. The authors identify an historic building and provide a brief, or in some cases long, history of the building and perhaps mention some important characters associated with the building. Next, the authors explain what an historic site is and describe the National Register of Historic Places, as well as the Department of the Interior Standards for Preservation. These prospective Master's of Architecture students find fault with the Standards, stating they prohibit development, are too restrictive, are retrospective, or some other criticism, all of which is true. Through some sleight of hand employing Jane Jacobs<sup>i</sup> and Juhani Pallasmaa,<sup>ii</sup> the students inevitably either escape the Standards or choose only the easiest one, rehabilitation.

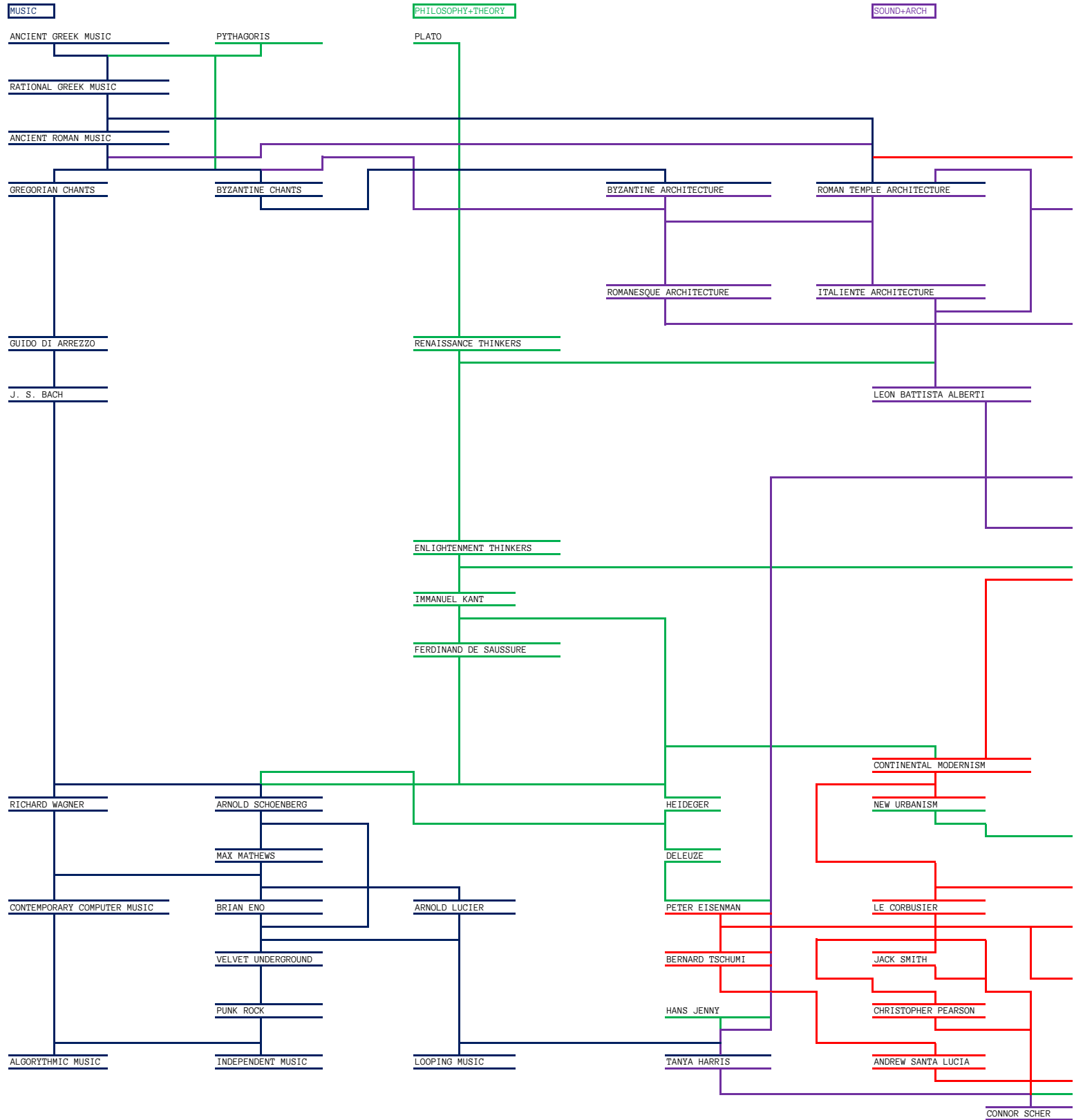
The Standards provide four methods for preservation: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction.<sup>iii</sup> The preceding theses provide in-depth descriptions of these, and to include such an explanation would be inefficient. Julia Mollner<sup>iv</sup> does a wonderful job of explaining non-linear time. Additionally, her thesis suggests how traveling along a prescribed path can illustrate the passage through snapshots of space-time.

i. Note:  
Although the work of Jane Jacobs has proved invaluable for city planning, preservation, and feminism, her writing is five decades old, and the desire of this Thesis was to update the field. As a result, most of the sources come from the last two decades. However, this Thesis should only add a layer to the Preservation discussion, and does not seek to dismiss its precedents. The other theses authors later mentioned provide valuable insight into her work.

ii. Note:  
Pallasmaa is a Finish writer and thinker who writes about phenomenology and architecture. Although his books are interesting, the wish to exclude them from this Thesis was first to explore other resources, and second because of personal disagreements with many of his postulates. The other theses authors later mentioned provide valuable insight into his work.

iii. Reference: *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. Grimer, ed. 2017.  
Acts VI-IX provide definitions for each.

iv. Reference: *Once Upon a Time*. Mollner. 2015.



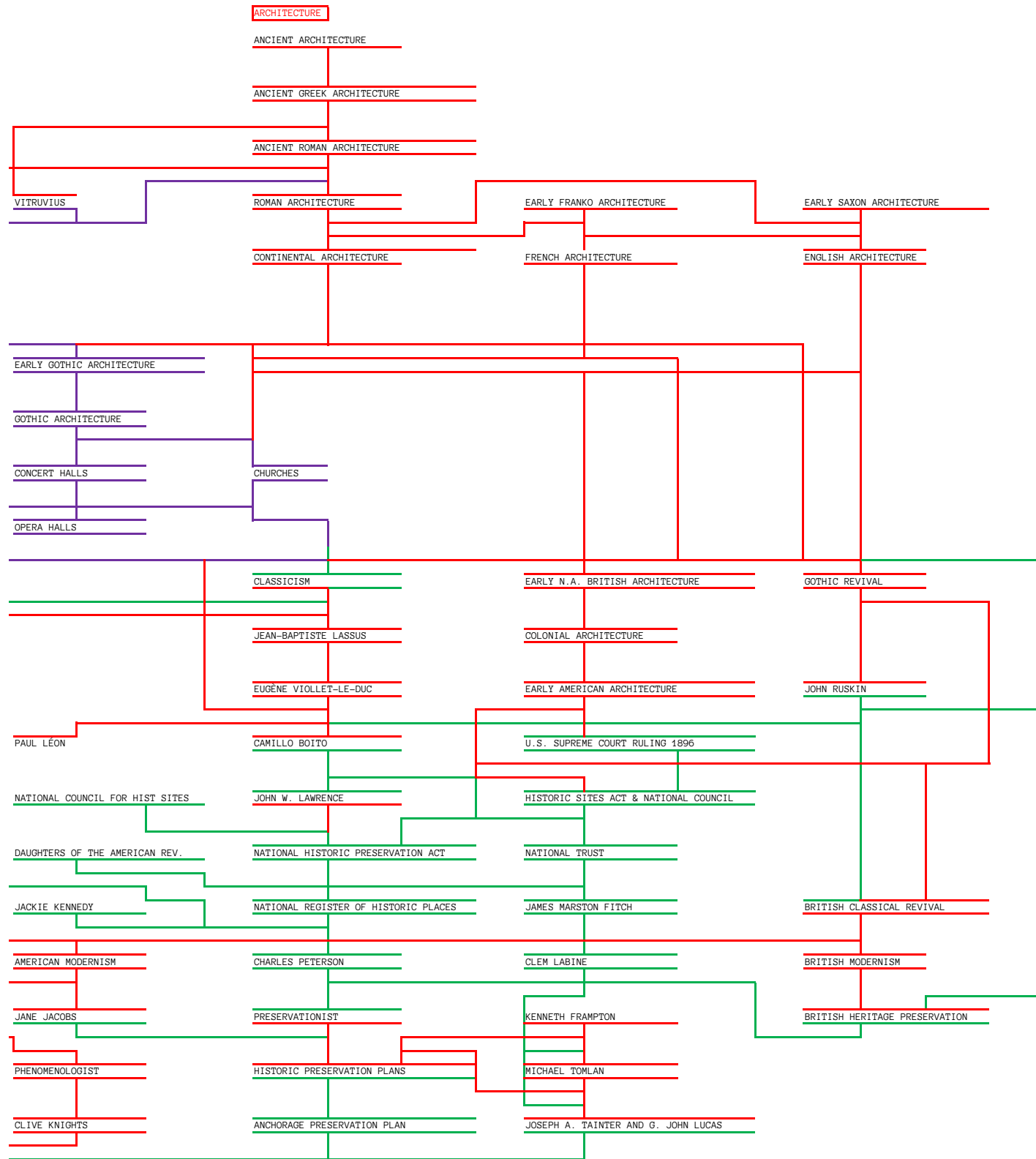


Fig. b. FOURTH PREVIOUS PAGE:  
**Station 1. Self. March 2018.**  
This watercolor shows the first of twelve stations on the journey to the Wireless Station from Ship Creek, the original railroad bridge across the creek.

Fig. c. PREVIOUS SPREAD:  
**Genealogy Diagram. Self. October 2017.**  
Showing the development of theories, individuals, and technology over time, this diagram illustrates the theoretical context for this Thesis. There are four lines of descent: Music (blue), Philosophy and Theory (green), Sound and Architecture (purple), and Architecture (red). The lineage attempts to illustrate how the three disciplines of Sound, Philosophy, and Architecture relate, as well as how this Thesis is the product of them. Each horizontal row highlights contemporary movements, thinkers, and ideas.

Antionette Lettier writes about memories in architecture and the ability for a building to be a “living memorial”. She also proposed that “true memories exist in the human soul, not architecture itself.” Her work included the notion that the “present is the echo of the future.” Other theses dealing with similar topics are by Stephan Salazar, Julie Baines, Abby Cooper, and Aaron Webster.

In early iterations of this Thesis, I wanted to create a design for each of the four methods. The fact that so many designers, and architecture students, shirk from historic buildings and standards seemed interesting to explore. I thought that the Thesis could explore how four methods might affect the designs of an historic building. The Standards are not malevolent, but because archaeologists and historicists drafted them, they are rather distrusting of newness. For National Parks and Historic Landmarks, these methods work great because those are places for the preservation of the environment. In an urban setting, however, the Standards create a milieu of contrivance based solely on aesthetics, usually specifically of the exterior. The Standards assume that if a building looks the way it always has, or once did, it will ‘feel’ the same. Unfortunately, this is not true. Historicists leave the odors, the hardships, and the sounds of the past in the past, and only care about an historic look.<sup>v</sup> The feeling it evokes is instead a nostalgically spectacular folly.

Additionally troubling is the silencing of alternative historic narratives.<sup>vi</sup> Historic preservation evolved from the exact and authoritative science of archaeology, wherein the collection of data

and precision of practice is crucial. As a science, archaeology must remain tied to these standards, but history, and architecture, is a more complex discipline. History and design all have nuance and editing. There must be an exactitude in the creation of buildings, and the writing of history, as well as objective editing. Nevertheless, the looseness of the disciplines allows a flexibility to accommodate multiple positions and factors. In this way, historic preservation need not be so retentive in its methods. I agree that many structures are of such significance as to require their retention and preservation, ones that do conform to the criteria for nomination. However, there are far more structures that deserve attention and care that are not objectively significant, but instead are important to a few or for multiple, less exact reasons.

Other issues arise from the expense of maintaining an historic building. Not only is it best practice to care for buildings, but the National Register requires owners of historic buildings to maintain them for the reason they were listed; failure to do so can jeopardize the listing.<sup>vii</sup> However, renovation is expensive and urban historic buildings are often inconsistent with contemporary zoning, requiring variances, rezones, and replats.

The Government Hill Wireless Station has been abandoned for over twenty years, and its last use was the storage of rock cores. The last owners of the buildings, the U.S. Geological Survey, performed little maintenance, and the very nature of the items they stored in the buildings damaged them greatly.<sup>viii</sup> Environmental damage concurrent

with the aggressive Alaskan climate incurred further damage. Two of the three buildings straddle lot lines, and none meet the setback requirements for the residential zone. The permitted uses also restrict redevelopment. Such conditions make maintenance and reuse nearly impossible, and the design would violate either the Standards, or the local codes.

The question of sustainability is another issue surrounding historic preservation that is rarely questioned. Every historic architect repeats the same mantra that appears on the U.S. Green Building Council website. Practitioners support themselves on its very words, although they might be inaccurate. “An existing building is the most sustainable building.” The sentiment is pleasant, but the message is false at its core. The most sustainable building is the one never built. Nevertheless, LEED gives a great deal of points to the reuse of a structure and its materials,<sup>ix</sup> enough to offset less-efficient mechanical systems and public amenities. Although it may be true that an old building contains embodied energy that outweighs the expenditure of new carbon fuels, the concept is obtuse. To think of a building as a body that absorbs an intangible resource, in this case carbon energy, requires a leap of faith that many architects and environmentalists are willing to make. When that concept extends to other intangibles, however, like sounds and stories, those same practitioners dismiss it as mystical metaphysics. Existing buildings are not the greenest ones, but to reuse them is more environmentally and socially responsible than demolishing.

This Thesis is not about historic preservation. Historic preservation provides the stage, the milieu, for this Thesis. My goal for providing designs for each of the four methods came from a desire to complete the Request for Proposals that the Municipality had opened during the first half of the summer of 2017.<sup>x</sup> I had thought that I could provide a detailed exploration of the four methods without directly countering them, and that the smallness of the buildings lent itself to this study. It would be through the lens of following the standards that I could explain, explore, and offer criticism upon them. The project would exist in a hyper-real world, and every design and use would be very realistic and serious. The Thesis could become a submittal to the Municipality and provide options for moving forward with their dream.

Unfortunately, my goal of addressing each of the four methods began eroding almost immediately, because reconstruction, the most involved and controversial of the methods,<sup>xi</sup> was not applicable. The Government Hill Wireless Station, is on the National Register<sup>xii</sup> and still exists in its entirety, disqualifying reconstruction. The next battery came from the growing conclusion that the buildings were beyond repair, and that a successful rehabilitation project would have been cost-prohibitive, if not impossible. Addressing the uniqueness of the site plan would have been very difficult. Additionally, I did not want to take the path some of my predecessors had already treaded, who chose rehabilitation out of either spite or hubris. My visits to the site in December and March reified this reality, as I investigated the damage to the physical fabric

v. Reference: “Historic Preservation and its Even Less Authentic Alternative”. Strahilevitz. 2016.

vi. Reference: *Power of Place*. Hayden. 1995.

vii. Reference: 36CRF60. NPS. 2004

viii. Reference: “Request for Proposals”. MOA. 2017.

ix. Note: LEED, or Leadership in Energy or Environmental Design, is a program from the U.S. Green Building Council to promote sustainable design practices.

x. Reference: “Request for Proposals”. MOA. 2017.

xi. Reference: *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. Grimer, ed. 2017.

xii. Reference: “National Register of Historic Places Registration Form”. NPS. 2015.



Fig. d. FACING PAGE:  
*Government Hill Wireless Station. Self. December 2017.*

of the buildings: the rotted-out floors, the broken windows, the sagging eaves, and the settling foundations.

Preservation would have also been too costly because the building did not conform to current building codes. There was something artificial about Preservation as well, and its restrictive standards for repair too often make buildings look like un-aging movie sets. Restoration was the only method remaining, but it is the stickiest. I proposed a restoration alternative at the beginning of Winter term, and the response was hardly positive. The critics challenged me to think about what "significance" meant, and who would, or morally could, make that decision. To return the Wireless Station to a former era would be to erase entire decades of its history, and the significance its occupants and neighbors had ascribed to it. The critics suggested that if I wanted to continue down the Restoration route, I should augment the interaction, and demolish entire neighborhoods and reconstruct former infrastructure. This seemed farcical and just as damaging as restoring the building to a different time. Perhaps it was my own attachment with the Wireless Station that caused me to shift my thinking away from this approach.

The final blow to this method came from an interview with the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office, and they explained why the period of significance for the site spanned so many decades. Conversations with residents of Government Hill and staff at the Municipality had convinced me that the significance was only the first one or two

decades of use, which would have given more freedom for development of the site. However, this effort to amend the period of significance came from the misconception that SHPO had overstepped its authority and not offered adequate notification to the Municipality. All documentation, and the SHPO, as well as the opinions of other Municipal staff and representatives, provided evidence that SHPO had followed all procedures outlined in the National Historic Preservation Act with the nomination.<sup>xiii</sup> My restoration concept hinged on the specific notion that the period of significance did not accurately reflect the history of the site, and that the Municipality could work to modify it. Reality was becoming too difficult a context for exploration.

It had forced my hand, and in response, I instead occupied my own reality, a Scher reality, or sur-reality: a fiction. I made the decision that the buildings were too far-gone to rehabilitate or preserve, were not yet gone enough to reconstruct, and were all too significant to restore. The condition of the buildings could remove them from the National Historic Register, and this freedom allowed a different exploration. There must be a way to retain the history and significance of the site, even if it were not eligible for the Register, and especially if the physical resources of the site were not worth saving. Critics at the beginning of Winter term suggested I look more into the concept of preserving intangible resources, and conversations in the following weeks with family, professionals, and myself drew me towards the concept. The site must retain the sounds, stories, and spirits that had always been present and



accumulating over the decades. There must be a way of curating, and preserving, those so that they could remain for future generations.

This Thesis is an allegory with multiple readings, interpretations, and levels, and that is entirely purposeful. Although I may not have done everything well, I did do everything for a reason. Fiction, stories, is no different from reality, history, because both have authors, both are selective, and both are contrivances. This Thesis might make lots of people angry for different reasons, but it should illicit a conversation and critical thinking around the preservation and recitation of stories. To understand this Thesis, the concept that stories and histories are synonymous is necessary, however much discomfort it arouses. In addition, the reader need not believe in place spirits or paganism to appreciate this Thesis, it is universally accessible if not universally understood. The wrong question to ask is if I adequately explore a design or variation. Everything in this Thesis provides a frame of reference, not an object for observation. Significance of intangible resources does not reside in physical elements, but in things less concrete, like stories.

The allegory has ten Acts, but fits in a twelve-part narrative. Each act explains the process, the theories, and the findings of the Thesis. Each offers a specific architectural method of preservation, rehabilitation, reconstruction, and restoration, although not always through a building. I call the designs of three of these methods, restoration, preservation, and reconstruction, Variations. These Variations are parts of a sequence,

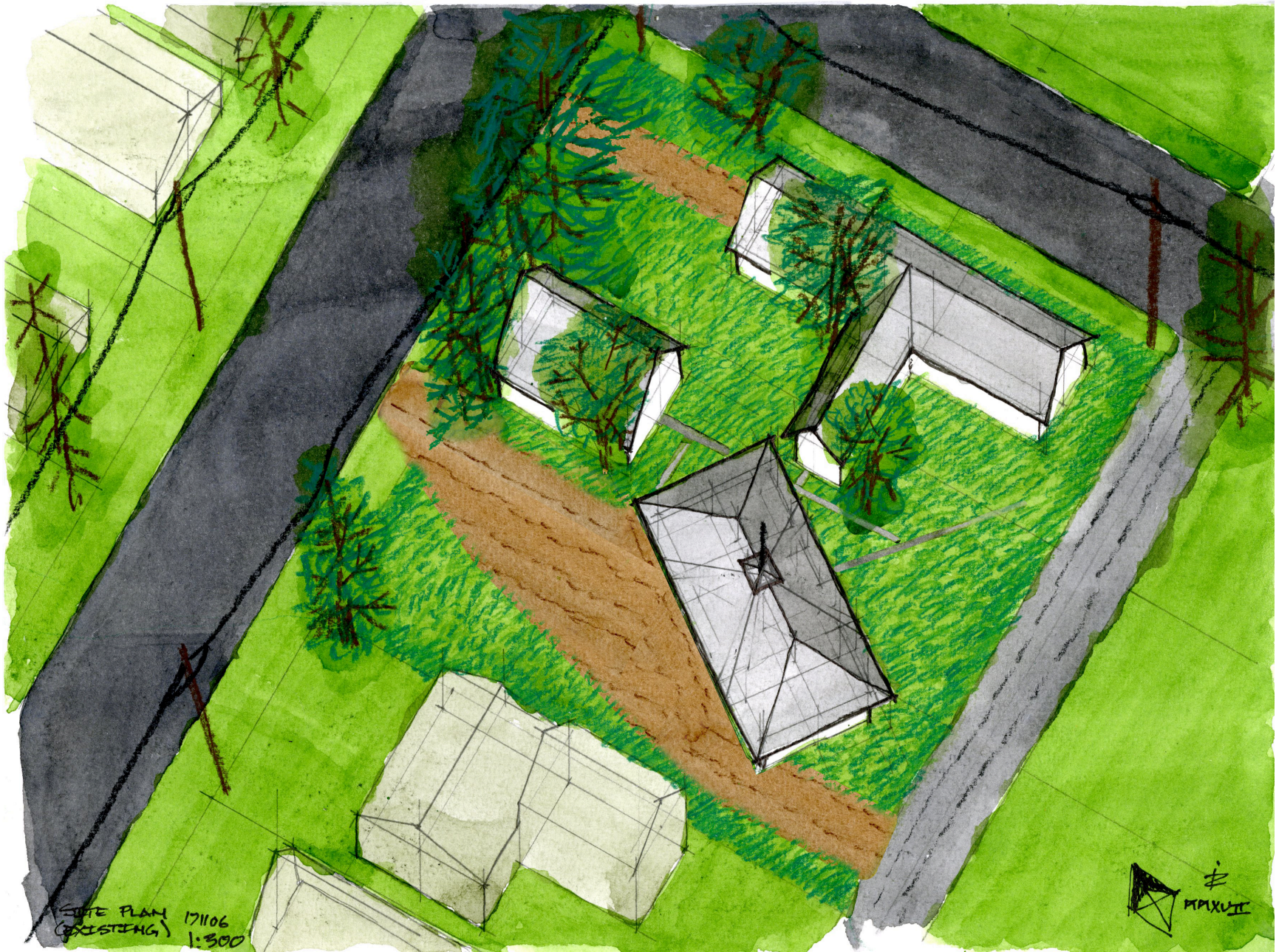


and relate. The meaning of the word “variation” is more akin to that in a piece of music, like *Variations on a Theme*,<sup>xiii</sup> than design alternatives. There are several readings of the narrative, and I choose not to explain all the metaphors I employ or the polemics I engage. However, I will provide guidance to some of the layering and division of the narrative with each Act. The work and polemic of this Thesis is very serious. Enjoy the journey, however contrived.

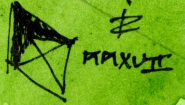
<sup>xiii.</sup> Reference: 36CFR30. NPS. 2004.

<sup>xiv.</sup> Reference: *Variations on a Theme*. Schoenberg. MSU Wind Symphony. 2016.





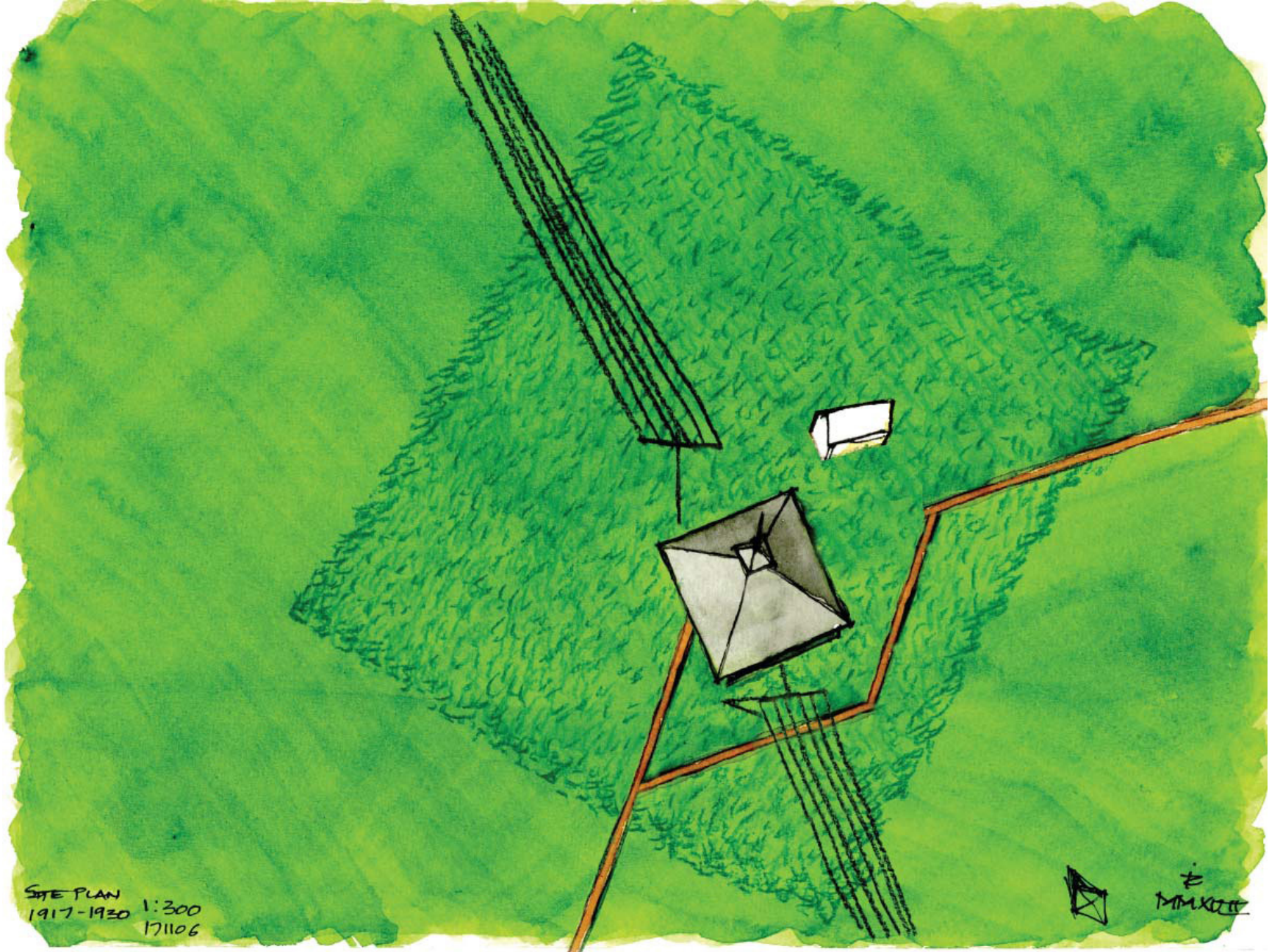
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**AN ARCHITECTURAL ALLEGORY ON THE GOVERNMENT HILL  
WIRELESS STATION**



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171106

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