ACT V: ON SPIRITS

Fig. a. PREVIOUS FACING PAGE:
Site Plan 1943–1949. Self. November 2017.
This axonometric drawing illustrates the construction of the T-Shaped Building, as well as the erection of quonset huts on Government Hill. The ACS constructed concrete pathways between the three buildings during this period, as well.

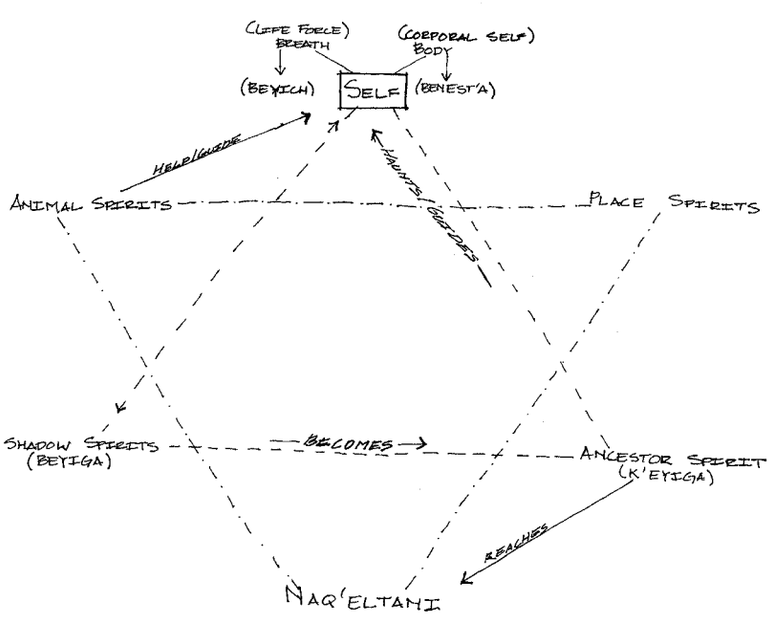
Fig. b. CURRENT PAGE:
Station 6. Self. March 2018.
This watercolor shows the sixth of twelve stations on the journey to the Wireless Station, the rehabilitation of the original roadbed up to the West End.

The declaration of war forever altered Alaska. The population of Anchorage grew as the Army developed Fort Richardson and Elmendorf Airfield. Unfortunately, the swift development of Government Hill into workers housing in Quonset Huts caused the end of communications at the Wireless Station, and it took on the new use as a storage and maintenance facility. However, the spirits of the stories once transmitted and received at the site were still present, even as Anchorage was transforming from a frontier town to an industrial hub. Only some buildings, like the Wireless Station, and pioneers to recall the past, and know its spirits.

Place spirits[i] preserve the essence of an event at a place, both positive and negative. Every action imbues a site with a spirit, and these spirits create significance for the site. In this way, the significance arises not from what is there, but what was there, much as an echo is not the sound, but the essence of the sound. Place spirits are also a memory device. The place remembers the events and actors through the spirits, and visitors engage the spirits to recollect the past. Although these are an oversimplification of what exactly transpires, it helps contextualize place spirits within this architectural Thesis.

Some might take issue with my use of the term ‘place spirit’, as it is one more commonly associated with indigenous peoples. Notwithstanding the traces of Crow in my blood, I do not use the term nor the broader shamanism of North American peoples as the explanation for my polemic, but as evidence for it. I am not appropriating the culture of the Dena’ina to serve my own means. Instead, I offer it as an example of how a people once held similar beliefs, and to reconnect with those is both affirming for the Dena’ina and supporting of contemporary cultural resources management practices, i.e. the preservation of intangible resources. Additionally, I fear that closeminded persons may not appreciate that an individual can espouse a belief that another culture has; however, my own beliefs should be unimportant to the Thesis. It is important to note that some Dena’ina still believe as their ancestors did, but practice different customs. I refer to the traditional practices and beliefs in the past tense to reflect the cultural evolution of the Dena’ina people. To write in the present tense would be to negate that change and the Orthodoxy many have adopted. The purpose is to enhance the present culture and sense of heritage, not to white-wash it.

For those who remain skeptical about place spirits, I encourage the translation of 'place spirit' to 'feel', although the latter seems altogether more amorphous and mystical. The Department of the Interior and National Park Service employ 'feel' in their CRM literature. The trouble with the term, aside from its potential synesthesia, is that it is too subjective and nostalgic. Place spirits are specific and powerful entities, and invaluable to the heritage of Alaska Natives. There are current efforts in the Municipality of Anchorage, and Statewide, to promote the heritage and preserve the resources of the aboriginal peoples, and their involvement in cultural resources management is paramount.



TRADITIONAL DENA'INA CULTURE AND COSMOLOGY

The Dena'ina people are a branch of the Athabascan cultural group that settled throughout Alaska and Canada, and have close cultural similarities to Native American peoples in the Contiguous states. The Dena'ina had a unique culture, however, because of their territory. They remain devoted to the sea and its resources, unlike their inland relatives, and when they settled in Southcentral Alaska, their new practices changed their diets and culture to reflect the new location. Captain James Cook's expedition was the first European contact for the Dena'ina, and their language was the first Alaska Native language transcribed and translated into English. The journal of the ship's surgeon for the voyage includes a page of words, mostly greetings and numbers, from the people the British encountered, later identified as Dena'ina. [ii]

There are several groups of Dena'ina, as reflected in different dialects of the language: Inland, Upper Inlet, Outer Inlet, and Illiamna.[iii] As early as 3000 BC they had spread over a territory that stretched from the Alaska Range to Kachemak Bay, although accurate dates are difficult to derive from the archæological record, as they were a very efficient people.[iv] The group in the Anchorage area is the Upper Inlet Dena'ina, and most of their current individuals live in the Municipality, with their governmental seat in Eklutna.

Until the first millennium AD, Dena'ina were nomatic. Even after they established permanent villages, and until Europeans arrived, the Dena'ina held particular views about objects that caused them to waste very little. What they could not eat they

i. Note:
A place spirit, or spirit of place, is an entity that exists in a "'semi-visible world that is a shadow of their own environment'" (from Borass & Peter). Like any other spirit, they are independent of a body, in this case a place, but tied to it. They can be either good or bad, depending on the events that transpired at the site. Place spirits involve "a message of a past event that emanates from a location which some [true believers] can detect, whether or not they had been part of the original events." (Boraas & Peter, p. 217. A western equivalent would be an "aura", although this is reductive.

Fig. c. PREVIOUS PAGE:
Dena'ina Cosmology Diagram. Self. February 2018.
This diagram simplifies the six-element cosmology of the Dena'ina.

reused, and what they could not reuse they burnt. Objects that did not burn, they either reused, or cast into lakes and streams. As a result, histories of pre-contact Dena'ina are difficult to derive from archæological data. The few discovered sites have such a paucity of detritus that could elucidate pre-contact customs of hunting, cooking, and place-making. Instead, anthropologists have relied on oral histories recounted by elders, such as Peter Kalifornski. The stories reify the cultural importance of objects and places, as well as the connexions between people and animals.[v]

The Dena'ina cosmology revolved around six main entities. Each person had a spirit that was independent from the body, Benest'a. This life-force was Beyich. When the body expired, the Beyich changed to the shadow spirit, Beyiga, which alternatively could travel independently during sleep or after death. Upon a person's death, the shadow spirit transform into K'eyiga, the ancestor spirit, and could reincarnate. Eventually, a spirit could go to Naq'eltani.[vi] Animals had spirits of their own, and although a person's spirit could not become one of an animal, the animal spirits could communicate with a person's shadow spirit and "guide" the person.[vii] The main power that governed the world and its spirits was Naq'eltani. Places had additional spirits, either generically tied to a geographical feature, like a river spirit, or specifically tied to a place, like Dghely Dhayi, the mountain spirit. Sites of battles or successful hunts, places of events, retained the spirit of that event, and remained long after any physical evidence had disappeared. An additional importance is that within this cosmological system, there was no concrete sense of good or evil, as the Christian faith requires. Instead, an encounter with a spirit was either fortunate, Beggesha, or unfortunate, Beggesh. Although the Dena'ina feared and avoided the unfortunate spirits and places, these were not inherently evil, in the Christian sense. Kalifornski relates how many contemporary Dena'ina avoid historic village sites where the Spanish Influenza killed most of the population, or where settlers forcibly removed them, because the place spirits are harmful.[viii]

The Dena'ina had a rich pagan culture, and believed that objects retained the spirit of a person.[ix] This concept was Beggesh and Beggesha, wherein artifacts can "absorb and exude information of events associated with their use".[xi] During potlaches, the people would exchange gifts that not only symbolized friendship but a spiritual connexion between one individual and another. Additionally, elders could give tools to the youth as a sign of affection, and the youth would cherish the object, especially once the elder died, as it carried with it the spirit of the elder. This reified a deep and tactical connexion with elders and the lessons they could teach, the stories they could share. Congruently, when an individual died, the Dena'ina traditionally cremated the body, along with all of the person's possessions. This conflagration would release the spirit from the body, and the shadow spirit from the tools, clothing, and objects that the individual possessed in life. The family would cast the stone and bone that did not burn into a lake or river, to carry the shadow spirit to the ocean, and thence to become K'eyiga or escape to Naq'eltani. The cremation was a ceremony of gathering and fellowship, and had an associated potlatch. These sentiments

remain in contemporary Dena'ina culture, although the death ceremony now follows the practices of their Orthodox faith.[xii]

PLACE SPIRITS

More importantly to this Thesis was the belief that places retained the memories of events and individuals, called place spirits. Although the concept is difficult to explain in a Western lexicon, the basic translation is memory or feel. It describes the experience of visiting an historic Normandy battlefield, for example, and having the knowledge of standing in the place where thousands died consume your person. That memory, that empathy, that feeling, is the experience of place spirits. The trouble is that that place evokes such visceral responses in visitors, whereas any place might contain place spirits, however inconsequential. The appreciation of the significance of both the everyday and extraordinary within the Dena'ina culture appears in their place-names. Potter Marsh, or Hkaditali, was "Drift Lumber"[xiii] or McHugh Creek was Q'isqa Betnu, the "Banjo Snowshoe Mountain Stream".[xiv] Alternatively, Campbell Creek Valley was Qin Cheghi, or "Crying Ridge"[x] and Point Campbell was Ułchena Huch'ilyut, "Where we Pulled up the Alutiiq".[xv] These actions imbued each place with the spirits of those actions, and the shadow spirits of the individuals. These memories retained the sounds and stories that transpired there as well.

STORYTELLING

Instead of holding on to physical objects, the Dena'ina told stories to share their heritage and preserve their culture. They did not have a written language for millennia, until Europeans came and transcribed the language with the phonetic alphabet. Nevertheless, storytelling, or Sukdu, is still in active practice. Although the Dena'ina language is nearly extinct, the invaluable work of James Kari at the University of Alaska Fairbanks and others during that period retained a digital and typographic record of many words, stories, and place names. These researchers in the 1970s and '80s recorded and interviewed elders such as Shem Pete and Peter Kalifornski, who had grown up during settlement, and remembered the experiences of their grandparents, in the middle of the 19th century, at the end of the ancient Dena'ina culture. Most of the stories are allegorical and often humorous. The "Story of the Raven and the Caribou" tells of how caribous gained the sense of smell. Raven was a trickster and common figure in Dena'ina folk lore. Antone Evan, of Nondalton, a village on Lake Clark, near Lake Illiamna, recounted the story in 1974.[xvi] He was a Dena'ina elder who spoke the Inland dialect of the language. The "Stupid Boy" story tells about a mischievous child that did not listen to the lessons of his elders. Another Nondalton elder, Albert Wassillie, recounted this story in 1975.[xvii]

TAK'AT

James Kari transcribed another story in his book *Shem Pete's Alaska* that involved Anchorage in the first two decades of development. Shem Pete, Mike Alex, and Billy Pete told the story of a fish camp called Tak'at, several miles north of the mouth of

ii. Reference: *Shem Pete's Alaska*. Kari. 2003.

iii. "Dena'ina Dialects". Dena'ina Qenaga. 2017.

iv. Reference: "The Role of Beggesh and Beggesha in Precontact Dena'ina Culture". Boraas & Peter. 2008.

v. Reference: "The Role of Beggesh and Beggesha in Precontact Dena'ina Culture". Boraas & Peter. 2008.

vi. Reference: "The Role of Beggesh and Beggesha in Precontact Dena'ina Culture". Boraas & Peter. 2008. This was a "state of purity, goodness, and harmony." p. 215.

vii. Reference: "The Role of Beggesh and Beggesha in Precontact Dena'ina Culture". Boraas & Peter. 2008. p. 222. The only animal not described as having a spirit is the moose, which was not in Southcentral Alaska until the turn of the Twentieth Century. This could explain its absence from sukdu'a.

CHULYIN VEJEX SUKDU’A

Sukdu gini Chulyin sukdu’a. Q’et’gheli q’u Chulyin. Chulyin gun nudnulzex nudnulzex ch’u vejex egh dnalen. Vejex nghił’an. Niqa’ idenghalen ch’q’u hdinugheltlet ch’u k’inghildi k’ineya. K’inghildi ghun ku t’ daydnalt’ech’ gu dghiłkuh gheli ch’q’u, vejex ghini yech’ tazyu. Vejex ghini veyghi’an hnuyu vejex ghini veł tseghaytghaltlet. Ndah yan va ighidghach hqu vejex ghini veghi quisen ha’ dyuq qu. Htsast’a veghidesha quilan ha’ dghit’a łu. Ggagga yeghdishla nihdi q’ent’a ha’, veghidesha qilan ha’ dghi t’a. Ye Chulyin ghu iqech’ dyilq k’inghildi it hnuyu veghi ha’ dyuq. Q’uyehdi t’eyłni łu, “Nda int’a du gu nch’u k’izhiłchik da?” yełni łu vejex ghini. “Qut’ana nchan yilggix ghu k’i nch’u k’izhiłchik. Q’u ki q’u negh ntugheshdyuł,” yełni łu. Chulyin gun ndaha tq’aztinteh qilan yeh nugheyuł ch’u nichił degh nghazgits’I kut’ gheldatl’ ch’q’u yeł nutasdyu. Ey ghu hunusdyu. Nichi’ił ghini niłenyighałhet ch’q’u nyis’agh ch’q’u yenki’ tunyildets nichił. “Yeh dach’ ch’aniyu nchan yitghelggex,” yełni łu. Vejex ghini vek’uch’ hch’a niyu łu. Chulyin gin ye’uh gheli niqa daghiset gheli vech’ danich’ey yechan yighelgguk, hnuyu vejex ghini nik’u’itqy ch’q’u hch’a itjay. Vyiłchun. Q’uyehdi Chulyin gu nudnilen. Iqech’ q’uyehdi vejex ghini k’ iłchix ha’ dyuq. Qut’ana nih vechan yilggix ch’q’u k’iłchix ha’ dyuq.

RAVEN AND CARIBOU STORY

This is a Raven story. A long time ago, there was Raven. That Raven was flying around, flying around, and he flew by a caribou. He saw a caribou. He circled around and landed, and he picked lowbush cranberries. He filled up all his pockets – all over him – with cranberries, and then the caribou started walking toward him. The caribou saw him, and then the caribou attacked him. He bit him a few times, but after that, the caribou had no more teeth. In those days he had fangs, that was how he was. Just like a brown bear, or a black bear, or some animal, he had fangs. That’s how he was. But after Raven did that with the cranberries, he had no more teeth. And then Raven said to him, “Why can’t you smell anything?” he said to the caribou. “Even when people walk upwind of you, you don’t smell anything. I’ll come back to you later,” he told him. That Raven walked around in the woods and tore off pieces of birch bark and put them in his pocket and started back with them. He walked back there. He rolled up the birch bark and twisted it and screwed it into the caribou’s nostrils, that birch bark. “Walk out this way, and I’ll walk upwind of you,” he told him. The caribou started walking away from him. Raven went out far around and walked back upwind of him, and the caribou suddenly jumped up and ran away. He had smelled him. And then that Raven flew away. And that is how the caribou became able to smell. He became so that whenever people walked upwind of him, he smelled them. And that is how it happened, the story of the Raven and Caribou. It’s a short Raven story.

KIŁ CH'QINAGHIŁNIK'EN SUKDU'A

Ts'iłtan qut'an tutazyu ve'u ełа k'u qilan. Yen kił ghunhdi ch'qinaghiłnik'. Vez'a gun yegełdih hq'u nch'u qeldik. Vez'a gun ał nini'un. Nuy-telquxhci'q'u nuqinel'ih hq'u nch'u chik'dełnil. Kiq'u q'ut'un kił gun, "Zhala, ał ghin nung-hel'anni." Aa, yełni. "Nch'u va k'iłkełda nda'ich q'u tgheshli?" Vez'a gun, "Nt'I ałchen ghini va thgicheł," yełni. Kił gun tazyu ch'u ał ghini yegh nu'idyu. Ałchen ghini yeghetneq ch'u yanichet. Udiq'u chihudalyuq Va nughiłghatl'. Nch'u nu'id-yul. Vach'ala gun "nda eł dinindin?" yełni. Tałqun idi'eł yeh nutasdyu. Ał ghini yegh nu'idyu iła yet'ich'endal'ts. Ał ghini yeghidghiluha kił gun yeghetneq ch'u chench' yih ch'iyełt'eq'. "Nch'qin-aghiłnik'a shughu chindałyuggi," yełni.

THE STUPID BOY STORY

One man went out in the woods with his wife and his nephew. That boy was stupid. His uncle would teach him things, but he never learned. He built a deadfall trap. Every day they would check it, but nothing was killed. One morning the boy said, "Uncle, let me check the trap." "Yes," the uncle said. "If nothing is trapped, what should I do?" The uncle said, "You just pull that bait." The boy went out, and he came to the trap. He took the bait, and he pulled it. He killed himself. It got dark. The boy didn't return. The aunt said, "What happened to him?" The next day she went out. When she got to the trap, she saw his feet sticking out. After she took apart the trap, she took the boy and threw him down the bank. "Your stupidity killed you," she said.

viii. Reference: "The Role of Beggesh and Beggesha in Precontact Dena'ina Culture". Boraas & Peter. 2008. p. 218. The article relates the story of an abondoned village on Cook Inlet which came to be called Tiduqilts'ett, or "Desaster Place".

ix. Reference: "The Role of Beggesh and Beggesha in Precontact Dena'ina Culture". Boraas & Peter. 2008. p. 215-6.
Several researches and Kali-fornski describe this as a "scent".

x. Reference: "The Role of Beggesh and Beggesha in Precontact Dena'ina Culture". Boraas & Peter. 2008. p. 214.

xi. Reference: "The Role of Beggesh and Beggesha in Precontact Dena'ina Culture". Boraas & Peter. 2008.

xii. Reference: *Shem Pete's Alaska*. Kari. 1987. p. 341.

xiii. Reference: *Shem Pete's Alaska*. Kari. 1987. p. 341.

xiv. Reference: *Shem Pete's Alaska*. Kari. 1987. p. 341.

xv. Reference: *Shem Pete's Alaska*. Kari. 1987. p. 338.

Fig. d. CURRENT PAGE:
T Tree. Grover, Margan. 2005. Courtesy of 673d CES, JBER.
This tree with a T carved in its side stands at Cairn Point, indicating the likely location of Tak'at.

Ship Creek, somewhere around Cairn Point. Tak'at is a general name for a dipnet platform,[xviii] much like Anchorage is a general term for any harbor, but this particular place achieved increased significance over time. Alaska Natives, both aboriginal and transplanted, use dipnets as a method of subsistence fishing for salmon. The anglers wade into water, up to their waists or chests and drag a 13-foot long pole with a three-foot diameter net at the end through the water, then heft the two to five trapped fish up onto the shore, where the other family members kill, head, and clean the salmon before preserving. The soils of Cook Inlet, however, are not conducive to standing upon, and signs warn would-be beach-goers to avoid the mud flats. The Dena'ina at Tak'at built a floating dock upon which the anglers could stand. This structure appears along the Susitna River as well, where some traditional communities still practice traditional subsistence methods.

The necking between Cairn Point and Point Mackenzie forces Knik Arm to drain and fill rapidly, and large quantities of salmon once waited for each waxing tide to carry them to the Matanuska and Knik Rivers on their one-way journey to the spawning grounds. The two headlands were once much closer, and this location would have been ideal for catching enough salmon to feed a village, or several villages. Tak'at was significant because of its centrality as well. It was centrally located for the major villages in the Upper Cook Inlet, Tyonek, Ch'aghałnikt (Point Possession Village), Idleghet (Eklutna), and Nughay Bena (Knik).[xix] Dgheya was important to the Upper Inlet Dena'ina who lived in Idleghet and Nughay Bena, for the salmon and stickleback runs, but Tak'at held a regional significance. It was the site of a yearly potlach and First Salmon Ceremony, and must have been a place of many stories.

Up from the beach on the headland were smokehouses and a traditional longhouse. Archæologists speculate that there were dwellings as well, and a cemetery, but there is inadequate data to be sure. The story in *Shem Pete's Alaska*[xx] relates the continued significance to the Dena'ina as the area developed, and the loss of their tradition with its destruction. Dena'ina living in Anchorage in the 1920s and '30s would take a taxi from town, cross over Government Hill, and then walk the dirt road along the bluff to Tak'at to be present at the potlach. Few Dena'ina lived in town, and

others squatted in the National Forest lands to the south and east of the townsite. The closest lived in houses along Chester Creek and the lagoon formed by the Railroad embankment. As the town expanded, the natives either fled to or were forced to live in Eklutna, their houses destroyed and their traditions lost.

The story explains that the last potlach at Tak'at occurred in 1938. President Roosevelt created Fort Richardson on Federal lands north of Anchorage, and Brig. Gen. Buckner quickly developed the Fort between 1939 and the U.S. entrance into World War II. Cairn Point became a dumping ground for refuse and equipment, and the Army burnt all the structures there, and destroyed any signs of occupation. This dumping continued well into the 1960s, and only ceased with the passage of the Environmental Protection Act and the expansion of the Port of Anchorage.

In the last few decades, the Port of Anchorage has extended its operation northwards from the mouth of Ship Creek almost to Cairn Point. The Knik Arm Bridge and Toll Authority has selected a route along the bluff for a new highway and bridge. These recent developments have endangered the Tak'at site. Understandably, the State of Alaska Department of Natural Resources is reluctant to disclose the location of archæological sites at Tak'at, and representatives of Eklutna Village are either too young, or too concerned to relate the exact location of Tak'at. This site is particularly sensitive as it is in an area of JBER set aside for recreation, and because of the infrastructural development around Cairn Point.

Nevertheless, the site retains the place spirits accumulated over centuries of use and celebration. It remains present, even with the destruction of buildings and landscapes, in the memories of living Dena'ina, and the spirits still haunting the site. Tak'at is not significant because of its architecture, nor even a specific period of significance, but simply because it occupies the memories of living Dena'ina, and retains the shadow spirits of their ancestors. This collective memory preserves its significance in a contemporary world, and its place spirits.

WIRELESS STATION

The Wireless Station has its own place spirits. It was a place of memory and sound, of celebration, grief, and community. Its spirits come from not only the experiences at the site and within the buildings, but also those of different locations that the wireless signal connected. Those transmissions brought sounds into the station that did not originate on Government Hill. The echoes of those voices and stories still pervade the site, as do the memories of the Wireless Station. Because it was such a central hub of the community, its prominence grew to mean more than just a building in a field, but a space of ritual and community. It filled a need for the community as the source of news and stories from Outside, and if not the literal source, at least the font.[xxi]

The building, but more importantly the fourth-dimensional realm it occupies, is the setting for place spirits, for the memories, the resonances, of sounds, and for the recounting of stories.[xxii] A visit requires guidance to appreciate them fully,

xvi. Reference: "Chulyin Vejex Sudku'a - Raven and Caribou". Evan. 1974. Anchorage Museum. 2013.

xvii. Refernce: "Kił Ch'qinaghiłnik'en - The Stupid Boy". Wassillie. 1975. Anchorage Museum. 2013.

xviii. Reference: *Shem Pete's Alaska*. Kari. 2003. p. 330.

xix. Note:
It is important to note that until the 1930s, Dena'ina families had fish camps from Tak'at to Ułchena Huchiuyut (Campbell Point), and whites hired them to commercial fish in Cook Inlet.

xx. Reference: *Shem Pete's Alaska*. Kari. 2003.

xxi. Refernce: *Government Hill Oral History*. MOA. 2012.

xxii. Reference: "The Role of Beggesh and Beggesha in Precontact Dena'ina Culture". Boraas & Peter. 2008. "Human actions, words, thoughts, and info absorbed by artifacts [and buildings] traveled across dimensions." p. 215.

Fig. e. CURRENT PAGE, ABOVE: ***Government Hill Wireless Station. Self. December 2018.***

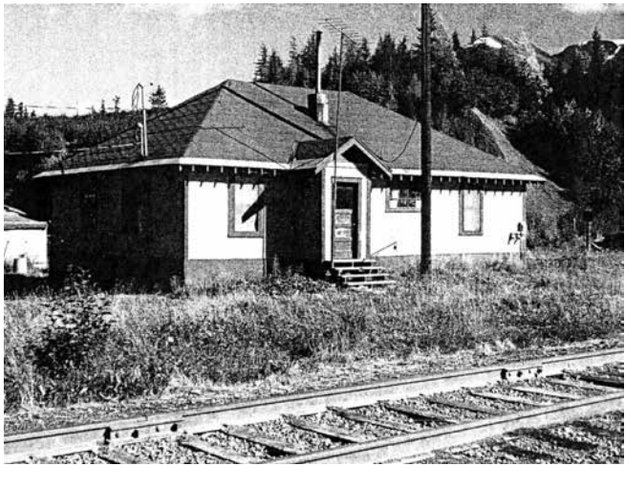


Fig. f. CURRENT PAGE, BELOW: ***Girdwood Section House. Ukn. (From* Patterns of the Past*). N.D. Courtesy of MOA.***

but the place spirits are what give the site significance, and the buildings. More specifically, it is not how the buildings look, but that they are present, physically manifested in space and time that is significant.

SECTION HOUSE

In order to provide a space for the guides, I relocated the Girdwood Section House to a vacant lot kitty-corner to the Wireless Station. In early iterations of the project, I had wanted to relocate another historic building to the vacant lot to act as a counterpoint to the Wireless Station. This other structure would contain spirits of its past users, as well as echoes of their sounds. The stories it contained had to support those of the Wireless Station, however. The Section House currently sits vacant in the village of Eklutna, and is the property of the Village. They acquired the building after the railroad removed it from its location near the train depot in Girdwood in the 1990s, and the railroad moved the building to Eklutna. The move damaged the structure, and Eklutna could not find funds to repair it nor determine an appropriate reuse.[xxiii]

The building is siteless, and placeless. Although its fabric still retains sounds, these can not become place spirits. The memories associated with the building rely entirely on the materials and forms of the building, not the supplementary spirits from its context. As a result of this placelessness, there is a risk that as the building decays, the memories will disappear forever.

The Section House could not remain in its original site at Kern Creek. During the 1950s, the development of the Seward-Anchorage Highway forced the railroad to demolish or move the remaining structures of Kern Creek, closed in 1930, including the Section House.[xxiv] The railroad relocated the building on 1 October 1956, roughly thirty years after its construction.[xxv] Kern was an important camp that operated for the entire period of railroad construction. It had been the terminus of the failed Alaska Northern Railroad,[x] the predecessor to the Alaska Railroad. The section received visits from dignitaries, and was a common overnight stopover on the journey to Seward. In 1919, a baby was born to the section chief.[xxvi] The child's birth certificate read Kern, Alaska, but within forty years, that town disappeared into history.

The Section House carried the memories of its town, as the sole survivor of Kern. It remained in Girdwood and survived the Good Friday Earthquake. By 1989, however, the increasing speeds of the trains negated a section crew at Girdwood, and the railroad sought to relocate the building again. This second rupture from its site again severed its connection to any place spirits there, and it carried the new sounds and memories to its current resting place in the Eklutna Historical Park, across the road from the cemetery. It can not connect with the place, however, because it is not grounded: it sits up on blocks of wood. The curators of the Historical Park have allowed bushes to grow up around it, and an abandoned truck is parked in front of the building. The Section House is slowly decaying on its blocks, and its memories are fading.

Relocating the Section House will bring those sounds and memories to join those of the Wireless Station. Both were critical structures to the construction of the railroad, and the early settlers. Now, the Girdwood Section House has significance to the Dena'ina. They wanted the building and could still own it, in the new location where it could imbue place spirits to the land once more. The relocation offers the Dena'ina a stake in the Wireless Station, and its continued use. The Section House could house the guides for connecting with the place spirits at the site and engaging with the sounds the buildings contain.

CONCLUSION

Place spirits are the memories of past events, and recollect the actors involved. They are the entity that gives an historic site "feel", and evokes visceral responses in visitors. They are neither benevolent nor malevolent, but are consistently present. Place spirits are the echoes of sound, the reverberation of a reverberation, and are metaphysical to commonplace understandings of the contemporary world. To understand them requires a journey of the spirit, as well as the body, to a place they are most vivid.

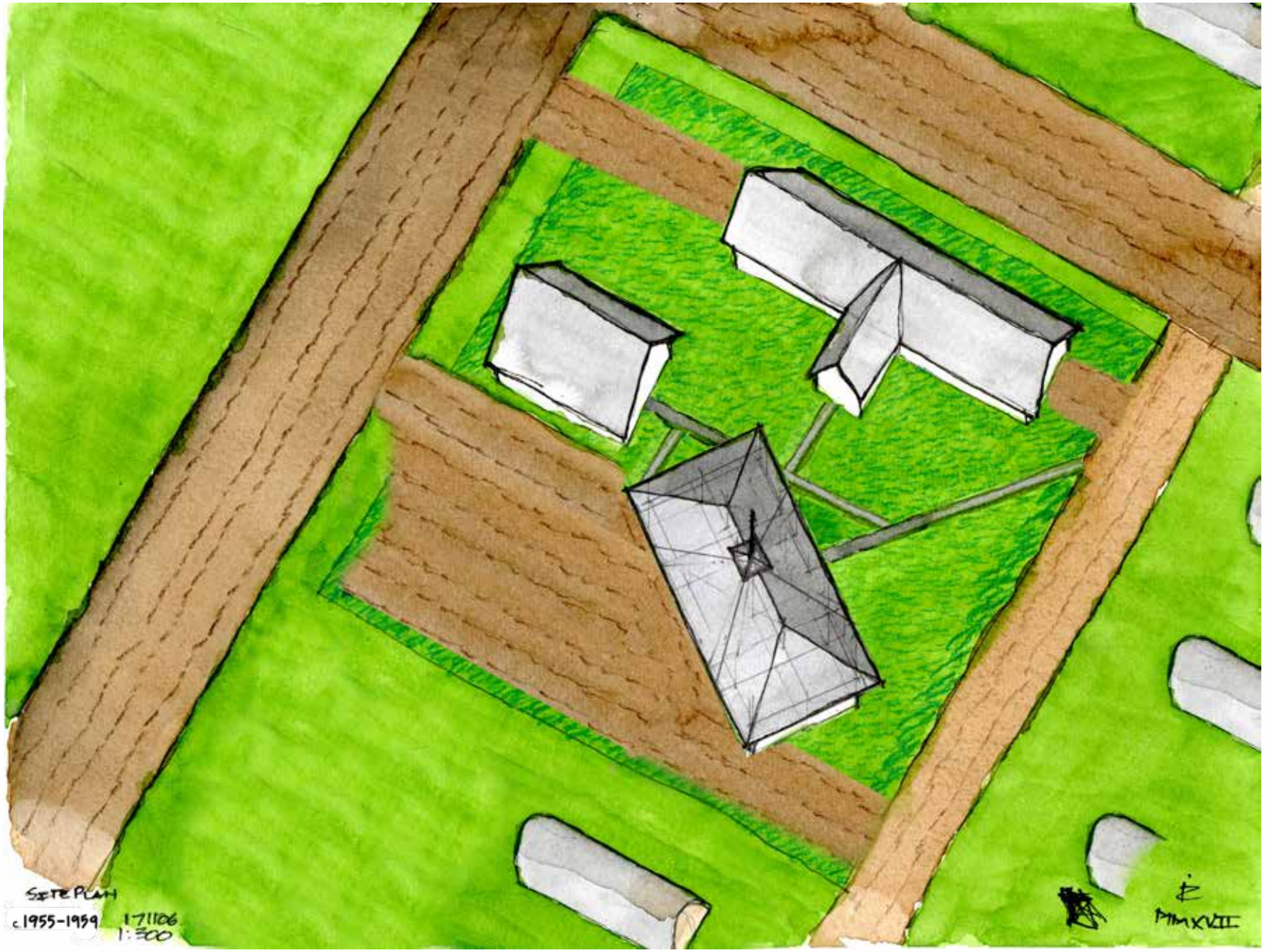
xxiii. Reference: "Eklutna Context Statement". *Historic Preservation Plan*. MOA. N.P.

xxiv. Reference: *Patterns of the Past*. Carberry, et. al. 1986.

xxv. Reference: "Section House Survey". ARR. N.D. (ed. 1956).
Although the drawings have no date, a note mentions the building was "relocated October 1, 1956".

xxvi. Reference: *Alaska Railroad Reports*. AEC. 1914.

xxvii. Reference: "Stork Makes its First Visit to Kern Creek on Turnagain Arm." *Alaska Railroad Record*. v. 3 #18. AEC. March 1919.


SITE PLAN
c.1955-1959
1:1106
1:300
MMXVIII