Between the Mines and the Mountaintops:
Remembrance, Learning, and Activism at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary

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A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Architecture

University of Washington
2015

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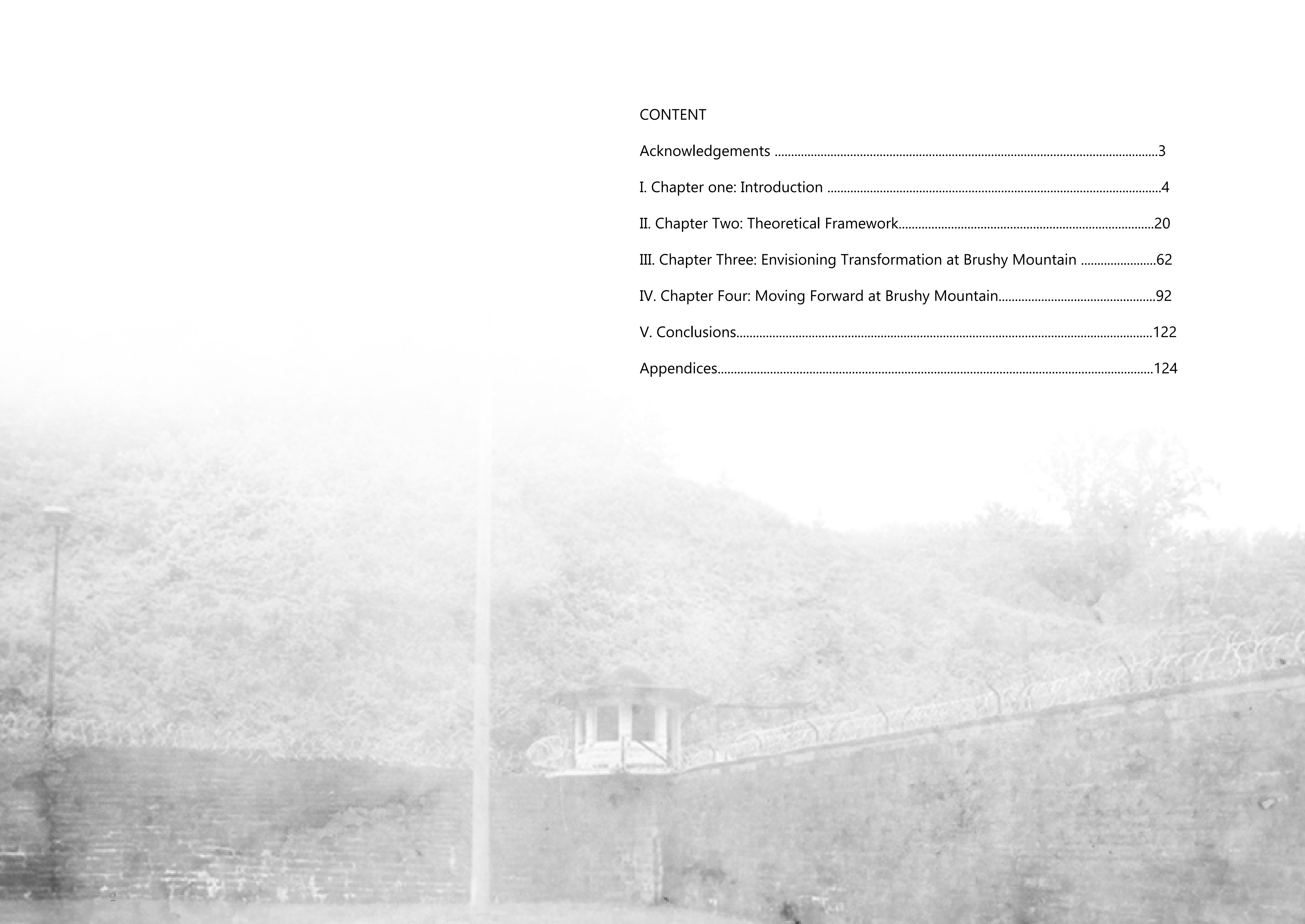
Program authorized to offer degree:
Architecture



CONTENT

Acknowledgements 3

I. Chapter one: Introduction 4

II. Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework....................20

III. Chapter Three: Envisioning Transformation at Brushy Mountain 62

IV. Chapter Four: Moving Forward at Brushy Mountain....................92

V. Conclusions....................122

Appendices....................124

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the amazing people who have inspired, supported, guided, and kept me on course. I extend my gratitude

to Dr. Sharon E. Sutton

to Susan Jones

to Kathryn Merlino

I am grateful to the folks in Tennessee for their assistance with the research and for the access to Brushy Mountain Penitentiary grounds:

Steve Westerman of Tennessee Department of Corrections

Peter Waddington, of Brushy Mountain Group

Larry Steelman of Morgan County Correctional Complex

Knox County Library

Tennessee State Library and Archive

Finally, to Ernest, for patience, trust, and love

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

Mass incarceration on a scale almost unexampled in human history is a fundamental fact of our country today - perhaps the fundamental fact, as slavery was the fundamental fact of 1850.

- Adam Gopnik

1

1. BRUSHY MOUNTAIN: A CENTURY OF AMERICAN INCARCERATION

Among the thickly wooded foothills of the Central Appalachian Mountains, just forty miles away from the urban bustle of Knoxville, Tennessee, lays Brushy Mountain Penitentiary - a place whose past is at once inconvenient and shameful, yet deeply interwoven into the socioeconomic and political tribulations of the past and present. Its establishment in 1896 was rooted in the system of convict leasing, a set of severely discriminatory laws and practices that were exercised throughout Southern states for nearly seven decades in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and were directed against recently freed slaves, a system that is largely unknown to the present-day American citizens. Its decommission in 2009 was reflective of the continuing rise of mass incarceration, a devastating socioeconomic problem of the present, as this aging 600 inmate prison was replaced with a new correctional facility just ten miles away, built to accommodate 2,441 prisoners. In the future, the use proposed for Brushy Mountain by a local developer will mask this present-day problem. This use includes a distillery and conversion to a site of "dark tourism" - thus yielding the reality of human suffering to an abstract fascination with the disastrous and the macabre, positioning “imprisonment and punishment as remnants of the past [and] introducing a social distance between the punished and the penal spectator.”[1] Yet, throughout its long history, Brushy Mountain bore witness as an accomplice and a silent observer to over a century of American incarceration, recording the passage of time within its buildings and surrounding landscape. Some scholars claim that places are products of culture; moreover, all places are results of decisions and choices made by members of a given society.[2] When this critical relationship between ideology and place is overlooked or forgotten, when places are taken for granted or seen as inevitable and natural as the wind or passing clouds – then everyone “becomes complicit in the political processes...that stewarded these places into being and continue to legitimize them.”[3] It is unquestionable that atrocities were committed in the United States against a group of people defined by its race, yet those who benefited were never prosecuted, those whose lives were devastated were seldom able to find closure, and the cites where these acts took place have either been destroyed or forgotten. Brushy Mountain Penitentiary stands as a reminder of complicity to such injustices as convict leasing of the past and mass incarcerations of the present, and as such should not – must not – be erased from the collective memory of American society.

This thesis will propose a new use for Brushy Mountain that seeks to preserve its memory while raising awareness of the conditions that created it with the goal of nurturing activists who can change those conditions. As a center for study, research, and education, it will provide a space of enlightenment for criminal justice scholars and activists, as well as members of the public, interested in the subject of American incarceration and prison labor, and who wish to become activists equipped change in the current justice system. This chapter begins by describing the practice of convict leasing of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and then narrates the establishment of Brushy Mountain Penitentiary. It outlines the continuing presence of racialized dimensions in the present-day imprisonment practices and their direct connection to the shameful history of convict leasing and the laws of Jim Crow, and notes the existing activist movement to oppose current discriminatory laws and practices. It argues that Brushy Mountain is an irreplaceable site that contains tangible elements of the turbulent history of American incarceration, and that should be explored and treasured not only for its historic values but also for its unique educational potential. It ends by proposing a two-part intervention into the Brushy Mountain Penitentiary site consisting of memorialization and preservation of historically significant elements of the site and careful insertion of new elements in order to accommodate the new proposed program.

But first, its genesis.

■ ■ ■

2. CONVICT LEASING

Most Americans are familiar with post Civil War history and the brief antebellum period of Reconstruction, which soon gave way to the era of "separate but equal" Jim Crow segregation laws. Yet, few are familiar with the tragic history of the system of convict leasing that coexisted with Jim Crow during this period and that persisted until World War II. Historically, the rise of convict leasing is traced to economic and political climate in the South in the mid- to late 1860s. The losses sustained by the region in Civil War and the political changes that followed nearly destroyed the southern economy and threatened the social and cultural practices that had developed over two centuries of chattel slavery. Legislators sought to mitigate the post-war panic and fear of freed slaves by passing "stringent police laws to govern the Negroes."[4] Most of the laws adopted were vagrancy laws applied solely to blacks.

In Tennessee, African Americans comprised 64 percent of prison population by 1869, and this proportion continued to increase over the following years.[5] Thousands of innocent blacks were arrested because they were not able to produce documentation proving their employment, or for such illegal actions as "insulting gestures" or "mischief;" prisoners were kept within the system for months or even years because of their inability to pay court fees or fines.[6] Those arrested under the new, hastily crafted laws were sentenced to labor camps, mines, plantations, and railroads that belonged to industrial corporations and private individuals. These entities and individuals were able to "lease" prisoners, essentially purchasing them from the state. In a landmark decision, the Virginia Supreme Court, in Ruffin v. Commonwealth (1871) established legal precedence legitimizing the evolving structure of convict leasing by declaring a convict to be "a slave of the state."[7] Leases were equated to ownership, and could be inherited, sold, or auctioned – amounting to a reinvented form of slavery.[8]

The coal mines of Tennessee were particularly harsh places of incarceration. The system of convict leasing provided mining companies with a seemingly unending and easily dispensable source of cheap labor. Pulitzer-prize winning author Douglas Blackmon offered descriptions of the working conditions in the mines of the Tennessee Coal, Iron, and Railroad Company (TCI), where, chained to subterranean barracks, burdened with a daily task of removing up to eight tons of coal, few prisoners survived their sentences. The bodies of the deceased were either buried in unmarked graves or, sometimes, burned in the company's coke ovens.[9]

The tragedy of the situation was exacerbated by the fact that hundreds of able-bodied black men were often abducted on the streets and railroads and sold into the lease system on fabricated charges, never to be heard of again. Yet, while highly desirable by proprietors, convict leasing also proved to be highly problematic by the late 1880s. Free salaried workers, especially those employed in mining industries, found that presence of convict labor left them little or no leverage when attempting to bargain for their wages and working conditions, since the owners were able to replace their work with unpaid convict labor to break the strikes.

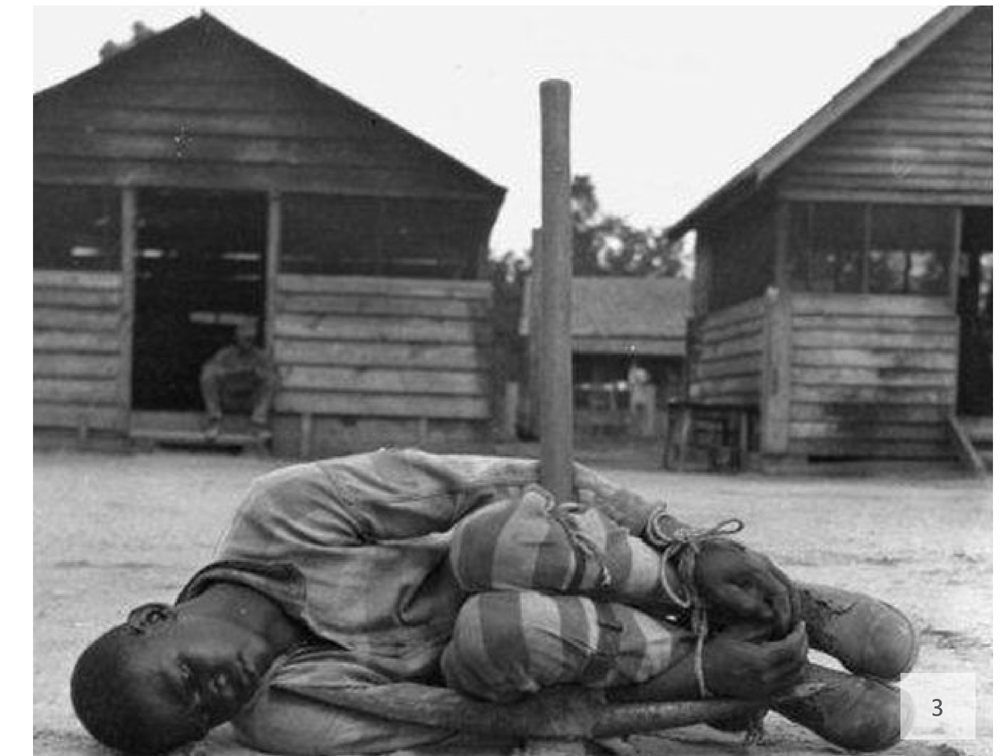


Figure 1
Parchman Farm was one of the largest "prison-farms" in the country, its vast cotton fields and predominantly black inmates reminiscent of an antebellum cotton plantation.
By Unknown, 1930s
timeonparchmanfarm.com

Figure 2
Ensley, Alabama, circa 1906.
"Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Co. furnaces."
8x10 inch dry plate
Detroit Publishing Company

Figure 3
Young man tied to a pickaxe
Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin
"Slavery by Another Name," KPBS.org

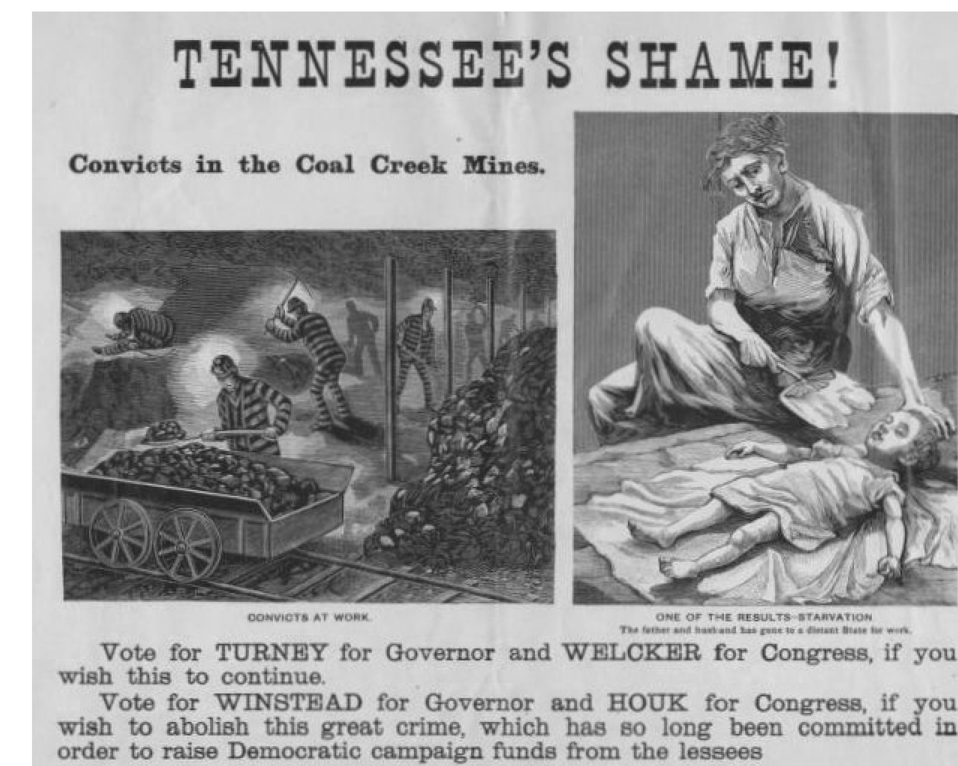
4

3. BRUSHY MOUNTAIN - THE BEGINNING

In this economic and political climate, permeated by the realities of convict leasing and harsh racism, begins the story of Brushy Mountain Penitentiary. In the late 1880s, TCI contracted 60 percent of the Tennessee prison population – a formidable strikebreaking force and "an effective club...[held] over the heads of free laborers."[10] The situation erupted in violent rebellions throughout the southern mines. Of particular note was Coal Creek War of 1891 – an armed conflict between white miners and TCI, which was backed by the governor, a self-proclaimed "champion of labor,"[11] and the state legislature. As the state administration issued the law making it a felony to interfere with the leasing system, the conflict escalated into a year-long war between hundreds of armed miners and state militia detachments, spreading to other mines in Briceville and Tracy City.[12]

In the aftermath of the conflict, state authorities decided not to renew the contract with TCI but rather to build a penitentiary in proximity to the coal-rich hills suitable for mining, where prisoners would work under supervision of state agents. Thus in 1896, Brushy Mountain Penitentiary was created. The deplorable conditions of its mines, corporal punishment, and the daily inmate quotas of coal extraction were similar to those of TCI.[13, 14] Although convict leasing was abolished in the South in 1928, the prison mine system established at Brushy Mountain continued, producing coal and income for the state until 1967, when the mining operations were finally shut down – largely due to the problems such as lack of safety and extraordinarily harsh conditions.[15]

The prison itself, however, remained in operation until 2009, when it was replaced with a sprawling Morgan County Correctional Complex, a state facility almost quadruple in size, just 10 miles east. While, according to TN Department of Corrections, the old Brushy Mountain was becoming expensive to maintain and technically outdated in the age of modern correctional technologies, the size of the new Correctional Complex was indicative of the arrival of the era of mass incarceration. While the total population of the state has only increase by 39 percent since 1940 (the year the main cell block was constructed at Brushy Mountain), the number of inmates within its prisons increased by 76 percent during the same period of time.[16]



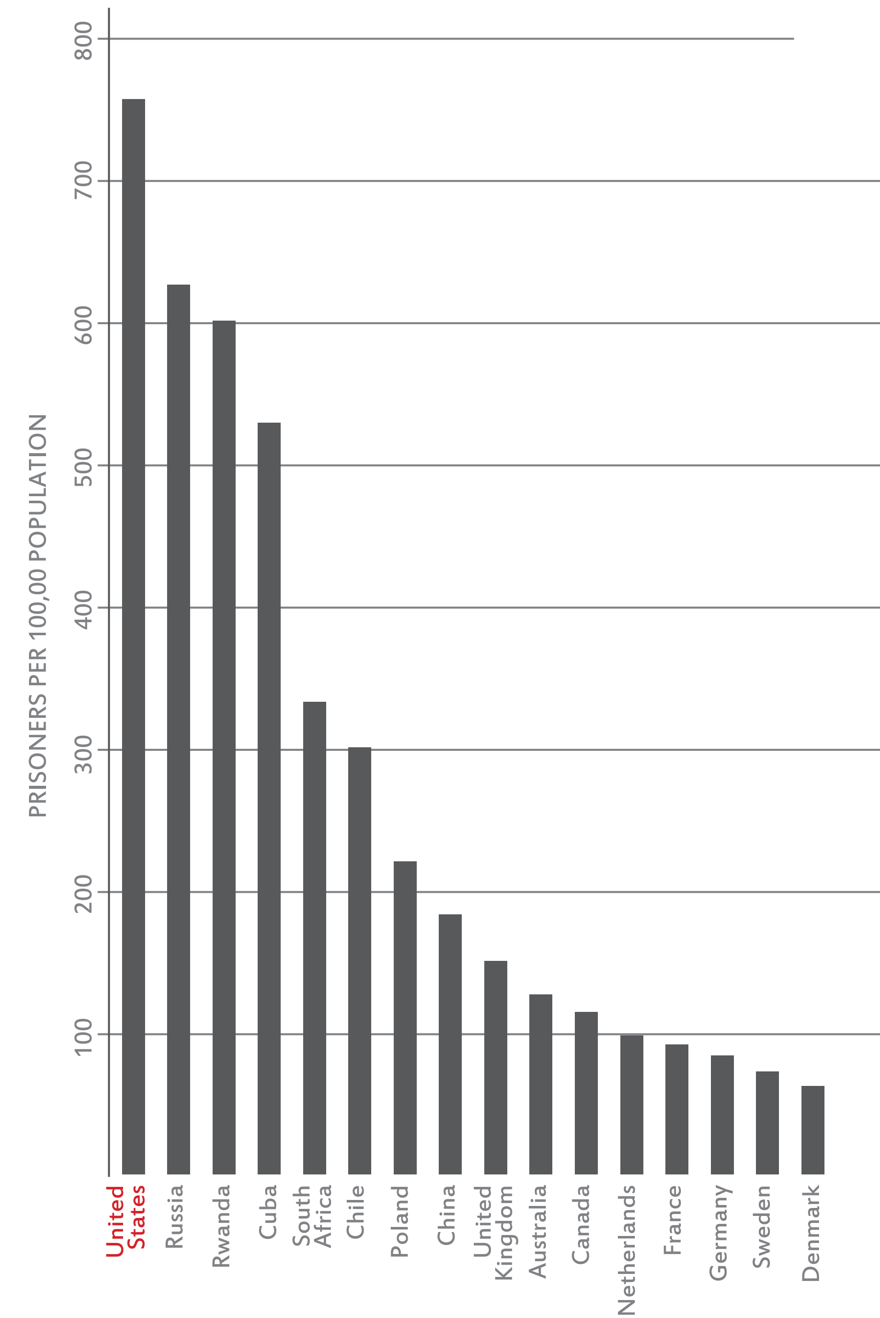
5

NEXT SPREAD:
Figure 6
World incerceration rates.
International Centre for Prison Studies at King College, London.
Veronique de Rugy, Mercatus Center at George Mason University.

Figure 7
Sentencing Project: Felony Disenfranchisement laws in the united States
Map: Peter Wagner, Prison Policy Initiative, September 2008

Figure 4
Miners firing at Fort Anderson during Coal Creek War:
Tennessee Miners' rebellion.
W. P. Satuke from photograph by McGrary and Branon.
Harpers Weekly, August 27 1892, Vol. XXXVI

Figure 5
Republican Party leaflet attacking Democrats for establishing convict lease system.
Cavin M. McClung digital collection



6

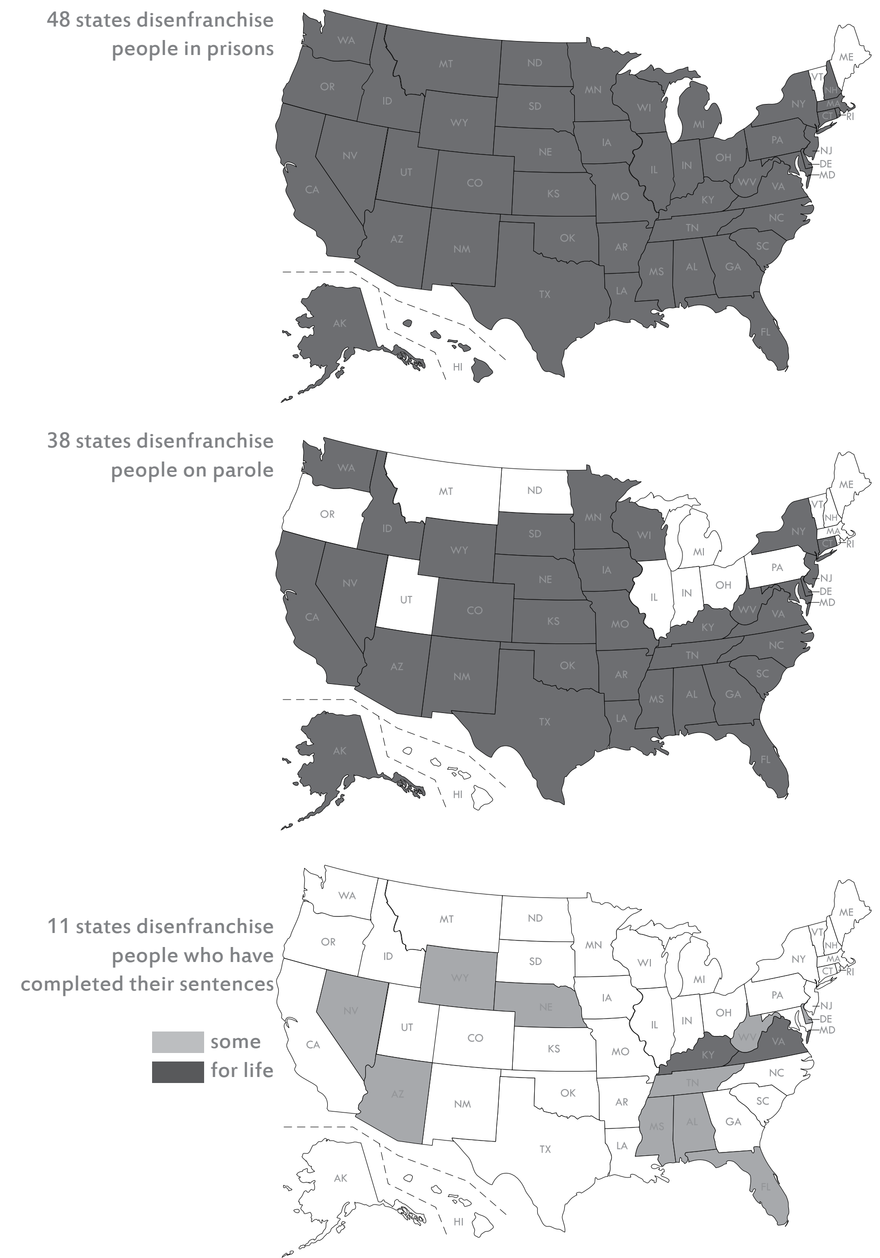
4. AMERICAN IMPRISONMENT IN THE 21ST CENTURY: NEW JIM CROW?

Civil rights advocates have argued that a system of racialized social control has been perpetuated in the United States throughout most of its history, manifesting with particular severity in the South after the Civil War in the form of convict leasing.[17] Moreover, they argue that such system persists in spite of periodic successes in the fight against it, and, while losing some ground each time, it nevertheless regains its power, simply taking a new form. Thus, slavery was replaced with convict lease system, which later gave way to the "separate but equal" laws of Jim Crow , which then was replaced with multiple discriminatory practices leading to mass incarceration. According to law professor Michelle Alexander, "those who are most committed to racial hierarchy search for new means to achieve their goals within the rules of the game as currently defined...The adoption of new system of control...has never been avoided."[18] Mass incarceration can be seen as the new iteration of such system, as "no other country in the world incarcerates such as astonishing percentage of its racial or ethnic minorities,...[creating] a system of social control unparalleled in the world history"[19]

Today, the United States incarcerates more of its citizens than any other country in the world, surpassing even Russia, Rwanda, and South Africa (fig. 6). According to the Bureau of Justice, 2.3 million adults are currently being held in U.S. state and federal prisons and county jails, representing 0.9 percent of the adult population.[20] Over 6 million people, or roughly 2 percent of the U.S. population, are under supervision of correctional systems, including those on parole and probation. Of those imprisoned, non-Hispanic blacks constituted 39.9 percent in 2011, a strikingly disproportionate percentage considering that the entire African American population in the United States is only 14 percent (fig. 7). In fact, the United States today incarcerates a greater proportion of its black population than South Africa did during the height of the apartheid regime.[21]

African American incarceration rates began to climb sharply shortly after President Ronald Reagan declared "War on Drugs" in 1982, approximately two decades after the significant victories of the Civil Rights Movement were achieved. The war was primarily prosecuted in African American communities and was accompanied by a well-organized publicity campaign, whose outcome, according to Alexander, "confirm[ed] the worst racial stereotypes about impoverished inner-city residents."[22] While the actual crime rate in the United States was comparable to that of other developed nations, the "War on Drugs" and other "Tough on Crime" laws increased incarceration rates in general and exacerbated the racial disparity in the U.S. prison population. According to criminologist Michael Tonry, government's decisions about punishment were "in no simple way related to crime rates" and, instead, reflected the use of punishment as a "tool of social control."[23]

Such disproportionate rates of incarceration have had a devastating effect on African Americans and their communities. For instance, in poor neighborhoods of Washington, D. C., a black man has a 75 percent chance of being imprisoned.[24] However, imprisonment and probation are only the direct and obvious punishment received by offenders. More grave are the so-called "collateral consequences" that effectively deprive an individual of the basic rights of citizenship for a lifetime: the right to vote, to serve on a jury, to hold a public office, to receive federal and state benefits, such as tuition assistance or federal aid, to enlist in the armed forces, and to be employed in certain occupations (fig. 7).[25] In this context, a felony conviction is not a simple form of punishment but rather is a means of forcing an individual into an "'underclass' or an 'undercaste' of lower caste of citizens who are permanently barred by law and custom from mainstream society."[26] Bearing in mind the racial disparity of the incarcerated populations and the collateral consequences imposed upon them, the system of mass incarceration maintains a system of racial hierarchy that bears a remarkable similarity to the systems of Jim Crow. This similarity prompted the term "The New Jim Crow" that was suggested by Alexander in her analysis of the current situation.



7

8

While the effects of mass incarceration and its collateral consequences are devastating in themselves, the recent trend toward privatization of state and federal correctional facilities once again places capital and financial interests onto the scales of justice – a combination that proved treacherous and inhumane during the earlier era of convict leasing and subsequent prison farms and prison mines.[27] According to historians Steve Fraser and Joshua Freeman, beginning in the 1970s, American corporations "found it increasingly unprofitable to invest in domestic production," and turned instead to utilizing the cheap labor of millions of workers overseas.[28] The exportation of jobs and wages overseas caused devastating economic effects on poor American communities: especially communities of color. In particular, high unemployment rates among African American youth forced many into the drug trade as crack cocaine was introduced to urban and inner-city streets. The War on Drugs and the enforcement of mandatory drug sentencing for minor drug offenses whisked large numbers of unemployed and underemployed African Americans off the streets and into private prisons. Private prison operators soon found an additional source of revenue vis à vis the human capital incarcerated within its facilities - just as had occurred in an earlier era. Fraser and Freeman explained the phenomenon:

> Disproportionately African-American workers...began showing up in similarly disproportionate numbers in the country's rapidly expanding prison archipelago. It didn't take long for corporate America to come to view this as another potential foreign country, full of cheap and subservient labor -- and better yet, close by.[29]

Today, prisons run by private correctional corporations contract labor out to hundreds of American companies, including Microsoft, Boeing, Starbucks, Victoria's Secret, JC Penny, Wall-Mart, and others, paying the inmates between $.93 and $5 per hour for their work.[30] The size of the prison population determines the profits for these companies. To insure the constant supply of cheap labor to satisfy their contract obligations with individual states, correctional facilities must effectively maintain an occupancy rate of at least 90 percent.[31] In addition, private prison companies spend millions of dollars lobbying state and federal governments for support of mandatory minimum sentences, "three strike" laws, and immigrant detention.[32] As a result, the two of the biggest private corrections companies, Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and GEO both reported profits of $3.3 billion in 2012.[33]

The facts paint a picture remarkably similar to that of the late 1860s post-Civil War penal system, suggesting that the practice of convict leasing has been reincarnated in a "perverse triumph for the law of supply and demand in an era infatuated with the charms of the free market."[34] Social commentator Adam Gopnik has suggested that significance of mass incarceration for profit and social control is as devastating and as determinative of our present time as slavery had been in the early history of the United States.[35] Strikingly, this historic connection to convict leasing, a practice so abhorrent that it was all but abandoned in the South before Jim Crow laws were overturned, is invisible to main-stream America, kept out of sight in a burgeoning prison system.

This thesis turns to Brushy Mountain Penitentiary as a manifestation of physical, tangible connection between convict leasing practices of the past and the practices of mass incarceration of the present. As such, it has a potential to draw public's attention to the forgotten shameful past as well as the uncomfortable hidden present. One of the goals of this thesis is to utilize the examples of similar sites that bravely turn to their difficult history in order to teach present generations and to inspire a better future.

9

Figure 8
Louisiana prisoners returning from a day of work
Photo by Rahiem Shabazz, 2013, rashaintertainment.com

Figure 9
BP is using Louisiana inmates for oil spill clean-up to lower costs and increase tax benefits. The prison uniforms were soon covered by coveralls to mitigate public outrage.
Daily Kos, July 23, 2010

In Eastern Europe, holocaust sites stand as a constant reminder of the atrocities of the Second World War, memorializing human suffering made possible by hate, racism, pseudoscience, and indifference. As emotionally difficult as it may be to come in direct contact with physical remnants of extreme trauma at these sites, they remain vitally important loci not only of reflection, but also of visceral understanding of moral values, social justice, and human rights.[36] Reflection on the past in the physical presence of its attributes is an educational opportunity commonly called upon at holocaust sites; it is known as pedagogy of remembrance. At places rich in memories of human suffering and injustice, one has no choice but to reflect on the predispositions and attitudes of the present (fig. 10). Advocates of pedagogy of remembrance believe that place carries knowledge that is capable of transforming and shaping personal development and moral values. A contact between person and place in the context of historical memory can be extremely powerful, yielding lessons in social justice, empathy, tolerance, and sensitivity.[37] Power of physical, emotional, and cultural connection with place has also given rise to pedagogy of place, which emphasizes spatial and cultural aspects of social experience, and pedagogy of oppressed, theorized by Paulo Freire and centered on the place-based narrative, history, and cultural experience of the learner.

In their various forms, collective memories possessed by a community of people can be "instruments and objectives of power" and generators of collective identity.[38] However, difficult or shameful facts of American history, such as the existence of slavery and convict leasing, are often offered in cleaned-up, altered, or romanticized versions, or are absent from the history books altogether.[39] The alteration or erasure of such important and traumatic events from collective memories undermines the power and the collective identity of African American people who have been devastated by these events, making the return of atrocities possible. In this context, Brushy Mountain Penitentiary presents a rare opportunity to revive the memory that has been erased by officially accepted narratives. The site offers a physical connection to both convict leasing of the late 1800s as well as the New Jim Crow and mass incarceration of the present. The abandoned coal mines surrounding the site, the burial ground that holds unnamed bodies, the prison walls hewn by the hands of the inmates – all bear palpable connection to the difficult, painful past. Through these artefacts, the site draws a link between the prison labor of the early and mid-20th century and that of the present day. Architecturally, it also unfolds a history of the development of carceral space in America – the space that dominates the daily lives and the psyche of the millions of American citizens currently held in confinement. Some scholars argue that carceral space can also be likened architecturally and psychologically with the American ghettos – the impoverished communities of the inner cities, the birthplaces of many present-day inmates.[40]

As Jim Crow segregationist laws of the first half of the twentieth century have inspired civil rights movement, so the injustices of the present-day era of New Jim Crow policing and incarceration practices are beginning to stir public discontent and inspire numerous campaigns. The present situation has triggered a significant movement among members of the public, justice scholars and students, investigative journalists, and established social justice organizations, such as NAACP, to fight against the multiplicity of unfair laws and practices that lay at the root of mass incarceration. Most campaigns are organized through the publically accessible media and the internet. Yet, many successful political and social movements of the past were known to not only have an inspiring campaign, but also a physical place accessible to the activists in order to connect, learn, and teach. For example, Tuskegee Institute founded by Booker T. Washington provided a place for self-empowerment and education for African Americans in the late 1800s and early 1900s; Highlander Folk School was a highly important locale in Tennessee for adult education and activism in the era of Civil Rights Movement. Arguably, palpable connection to history within a significant setting would yield an experience that is much more potent than learning and communication in ordinary classrooms or through on-line media. Brushy Mountain

Figure 10
Visitors at Majdanek State Museum, a former concentration camp near Lublin, Poland.
"Pedagogy of Memory," Majdanek State Museum,
majdanek.eu

Figure 11

penitentiary constitutes a meaningful and powerful locale where a center for a movement against mass incarceration and carceral commercialization could be established.

Pedagogical opportunities that lie within Brushy Mountain can be explored and utilized by carefully transforming the place and making it accessible to the criminal justice students, justice scholars, activists, members of the public, and, perhaps, those directly affected by the injustices of the New Jim Crow. Re-imagining a new future at Brushy Mountain will become the focus of this thesis. First part of the transformation, based on the precedent of other sites of traumatic memory, will seek to memorialize and preserve certain buildings and sections of the site, such as the burial ground, the remnants of coal mine entrances, and some prison structures. Here, through direct contact with historic artefacts, pedagogy of remembrance as a critical learning may "enact the possibilities of hope through a required meeting with traumatic traces of the past."[41] The second part would consist of an insertion of new elements and adaptation and reuse of some of the existing buildings. To accommodate the needs of a center were scholars and members of the public can come together for learning and exchange of ideas, re-envisioned Brushy Mountain Penitentiary would need to include an archive and a library with classrooms, a space for temporary exhibits, a number of short- and long-term residential units or buildings, and, most importantly, indoor and outdoor areas for communal activities such as learning, discussions, performances, and storytelling. The interweaving of the new and the old in such a way that will assure a subtle yet persistent connection to the historic fabric will be an important part of the educational component of all architectural interventions.

It is important to note that re-envisioning at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary can become a place of coming together for those with various perspectives on the issue in order to re-work the ideas of identity and community through "learning to live with and in relation to" difficult history.[42] Looking at the past does not guarantee that its lessons will preclude future mistakes, nor does it offer an expectation of reparation or retribution, but the hope that "a just and compassionate future lies, at least in part, in working through the traumatic catastrophes."[43]

In order to understand how the intervention can occur at Brushy Mountain and what form it may take, it is necessary to conduct a thorough investigation of the pedagogical theories briefly mentioned in this introduction and to uncover historic significance and values of the material forms of the site. The following chapter will offer an overview of the existing academic discourse on pedagogies of remembrance and place, and will discuss application of these theories at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary. The chapter will also review several existing precedents that have successfully applied these theories in order to educate, empower, and inspire change. Finally, in order to begin to uncover educational values contained within the physical attributes of the site, the following chapter will investigate Brushy Mountain Penitentiary from the historic point of view.

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CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. PLACE, REMEMBRANCE, LEARNING

...people's memory
must lose material contact with the past
in order to make gossip into epic
and to transmute the muteness into music...

- Vladimir Nabokov
"Tolstoy"

This too I know – and wise it were
If each could know the same –
That every prison that men build
Is built with bricks of shame,
And bound with bars lest Christ should see
How men their brothers maim.

Oscar Wilde
"The Ballad of Reading Gaol"
July 7th, 1896

This thesis addresses the memories contained within Brushy Mountain Penitentiary that encompass the forgotten history of convict leasing, the century of prison labor, and the workings of structures of violence. Its goal is not only a preservation of these memories, but also their employment as a pedagogical tool. The latent educational potential of Brushy Mountain may be realized through a memorialization of some of its elements and also by introduction of new features in order to create a center for research, education, and activism. This goal requires a thorough understanding of the dimensions of the intervention at Brushy Mountain: concepts of pedagogies of remembrance and place, strategies that may be employed to apply these concepts as a means of physical intervention, and the position of Brushy Mountain Penitentiary in the greater historical context. These dimensions will be analyzed in this chapter, which begins by defining pedagogy of remembrance and pedagogy of place, followed by a description of the mechanisms of their workings and applications. To find a starting point from which to utilize these principles for the intervention at Brushy Mountain, the chapter analyzes several precedents that have employed successful strategies for using memory and place to teach and to inspire activism and resistance. Before applying these strategies to the site, the chapter investigates Brushy Mountain from an historical perspective. This investigation seeks to locate the penitentiary in the evolutionary progression of the prison – as an architectural typology, a philosophical idea, and a socio-political and economic entity – in order to define its historical and educational value. Finally, the lessons derived from the analyses are summarized, leading to a proposal of program of spaces, classification of existing elements, and strategic approach to the intervention.

Memories, recollections of histories, and interpretations of past events play a crucial role in the self-identification of individuals, communities, and societies. When addressing the past, groups and individuals have to make choices about what is going to be remembered, why, by whom, and for what reason. In other words, formation of memories carries certain assumptions, which makes this process pragmatic and sometimes political, in order to engage the members of a community in the "development of particular forms of historical consciousness".[1] Thus, since each individual member of a group or a community has to make a commitment or a choice, has to act in some manner to relate to the memories of the past, the practice of remembrance is inherently pedagogical. In the context of places rich with physical artefacts of memories, such as Brushy Mountain Penitentiary, remembrance of traumatic or violent events of the past carries a particular educational potential. An educator, scholar, and renowned pedagogue of remembrance, Roger I. Simon, suggested that an honest examination of traumatic events, especially in the presence of their tangible traces untainted by rigid interpretations and official or monocultural constructs, has a promise of a renewed, transformed future.

In their daily lives, individuals use normative frames of reference to function. A direct contact with physical artefacts of historical trauma or violence would inevitably disrupt such frames of reference, forcing individuals to reevaluate their established ideals and thoughts about community, relationships, and identity. Simon referred to this re-working of the previously held values as a "hopeful practice," an attempt to "remain in relation to loss without being subsumed by it."[2] At the same time, individuals learning of a traumatic event and establishing a palpable connection to it through place or artefact bear a risk of "becoming wounded when attending to the wounds of another." This wounding, a jolt to the established system of beliefs is the key to understanding the concept of the pedagogy of remembrance, especially when the newly received wound itself can be experienced "as an insufficiency of the present."[3] In this sense, pedagogy of remembrance is especially powerful when confronting official narratives that maintain structures of power, including such beliefs as "the past belongs to the past generations", or "focusing on the past serves no better purpose than public self-flagellation and blocks the normal development of patriotic identification with the fortunes of the nation."[4] Instead of distancing an individual from the past and removing the responsibility of the historical transgressions from the present generations, "attendance to the wounds of another" introduces a new dimension not only to the relationship between the past and the present, but also to the relationship between the self and "the other" (fig. 12).

In the 2004 season's opening episode of the television show "The Wire," the show's creator David Simon ponders the existence and destruction of places that carry difficult memories, as well as the fates of the people associated with them. In the process, viewers are invited to question official interpretations of the past and analyze their own relationship to "those whose identities, bodies, and memories have been impacted by violence."[5] In the opening scene of the episode, a crowd is gathered to watch the demolition of a housing project in an impoverished urban neighborhood of Baltimore. As the city's mayor speaks to the gathering, the camera turns to a small group of teenagers, former residents of the project, who discuss the significance of the moment: one of the boys muses that the "towers 've been home to me...my whole life been around them towers." The boys continue to debate whether the place is just "steel and concrete" that will be torn down and rebuilt with disregard to needs of the former residents, or whether the place is, instead, "people, memories, and stuff." As observers of this conversation, viewers are presented with a paradox: the crime-ridden, poorly built, poorly designed residential project where drug trade forced many young men into prison or resulted in their deaths, nevertheless, triggers feelings of sentimentality in one of the characters (fig. 13). Interrupting the dialogue, the camera returns to the mayor, who announces that "the Franklin Terrace Towers, which sadly came to represent some of the city's most entrenched problems, will [now] be gone," making the way for "the new Baltimore."[6] The explosion is triggered as the crowds cheer, and the buildings begin to collapse in an uncanny resemblance to the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe, an infamous residential project of St. Louis. Unexpectedly, a thick

Figure 12
"Cash Crop" by Stephen Hayes
Installation at African American Museum of Philadelphia
The artist evokes the painful memory of transathlantic slave trade to bring attenton to the "insufficiency of the present" - slave-like labor practices of sweat shops.
philadelphiacbslocal.com

Figure 13
A Baltimore housing project known as "The Pit,"
in a crime-ridden neighborhood of the city.
By Unknown
"The Greatest Cilty in America," Both Halves of the Glass
bothhalvesoftheglass.com

cloud of dust begins to spread from the swiftly cascading masonry walls and rubble. In moments, dust is everywhere. Like fog, the dust is thickly suspended in the air, engulfing the crowd, and associating the scene with the collapse of the Twin Towers in Manhattan during the tragic events of 9-11 (figs. 14 and 15).

These few scenes raise many challenging questions. Urban residential projects, such as Pruitt-Igoe or the fictional Franklin Towers depicted in the television series, contain a plethora of social, economic, political, and even architectural lessons: poverty, failure of social programs, segregation, inequality, politics of urban development, crime and punishment, education, and many others. In addition to these multilayered issues, failed residential projects may be viewed as places of a difficult and, in many cases, violent history. In his critical analysis of "The Wire's" demolition of Franklin Towers, cultural politics commentator Mark Chow notes that the scene also presents the much deeper tension of attempting to deal with distressing and complex history of such a place. As residential towers collapse, the event's reference to the traumatic events of 9-11 brings up questions of place, loss, and mourning. It also shocks the viewers by the reversal of antagonists – as the act of destruction is committed by the mayor instead of terrorists – and induces a disruption of normative frames of reference, which, as discussed above, constitutes a first step toward a reevaluation of established ideals. The process of collective mourning is often considered corrosive and is discouraged by officially induced narratives or, instead, is "heavily managed" in order to "transform a society's recollection of the past and manipulate its action in future."[7]

Yet, there is a need to consider one's relation to the loss, to ponder the mistakes of the past. The demolished residential project represents a societal shortcoming, "the rot." The erasure of a place that carried within itself all the palpable traces of such "rot" does not erase it, as the events that caused such shortcomings "occurred long before [Franklin] towers fell."[8] Thus, a severe tension contained within such a place is revealed: on one side of the opposition, the place embodies a shameful and even violent history that begs to be erased and forgotten – history that is contained within prisons, internment or labor camps, and sites of mass violence. On the other side of the dichotomy, the place is an instrument that can allow one to mourn, to determine one's own

the opposition, the place embodies a shameful and even violent history that begs to be erased and forgotten – history that is contained within prisons, internment or labor camps, and sites of mass violence. On the other side of the dichotomy, the place is an instrument that can allow one to mourn, to determine one's own position in relation to the loss, and then to learn, even if such learning "goes against a broader political construct that has...worked hard to prevent [the pubic] from looking soberly at what happened for fear that we might stumble onto the source of the rot."[9] Yet, the filmmaker does not offer a solution to the question and instead leaves the viewer to contemplate the significance of difficult history and the power of a place, even such a mundane one as an urban housing project.

At Brushy Mountain Penitentiary, a similar dichotomy is present. On the one hand, the prison can be linked to some of the darkest moments of history and sides of humanity: from Brushy Mountain's origins in convict leasing, racialized control, and forced labor, to the darkness and danger of daily survival in the penitentiary and the ranks of some of the convicts contained within its walls throughout history, which included James Earl Ray, the assassin of Martin Luther King. One may argue that, like the Pruitt-Igoe residential project or the fictional Franklin Towers, Brushy Mountain Penitentiary has "sadly come to represent some of...the most entrenched problems," and therefore should be erased or forgotten. Yet, on the other side of this dichotomy, is the vast educational potential contained within the physical traces of precisely the same darkness and shame that make the existence of Brushy Mountain so controversial. As discussed above, the teaching potential of memory is most effective when the established system of beliefs is shaken up, disrupted through a physical encounter with artefacts of a difficult past, leading to a reevaluation of the established constructs and revision of the future goals. This thesis makes an argument that the physical elements of Brushy Mountain Penitentiary and their historic and emotional attributes can be utilized through the framework of the concepts of pedagogy of remembrance; material realization of these concepts will become the goal of the thesis architectural interventions. Informed by this approach, it speculates that the site will become a powerful place of learning.

In order to apply the conceptual framework of pedagogy of remembrance to a particular site, it is also important to understand the educational potential of place itself – to see place as a universal idea that deals with real life rather than abstractions, encompassing material forms, people, their interactions, socio-political constructs, and such. The following section will delve into this subject and will introduce additional concepts through which Brushy Mountain can be understood and re-envisioned.

Figure 14
Destruction of the Pruitt-Igoe residential housing project in St. Louis, MA.
Architect: Minoru Yamasaki; constructed 1954, demolished 1970.
The project has become the emblem of segregation, poverty, and crime, as well as an epitome of failure of Urban Renewal and policies of public planning.
Illustration in "Periferie a Perdere" by Michela Barzi, Millenio Urbano, April 14, 2014.
http://www.millenniourbano.it/periferie-a-perdere

Figure 15
Demolition of fictional Franklin Towers in the television series "The Wire"
David Simon, "The Wire", Season 3, Episode 1 "Time After Time", Dir. Ed Bianchi, 2004

"THE POWER OF PLACE WILL BE REMARKABLE"[10]

Pedagogy of remembrance is, most commonly, called upon at such places as Holocaust memorials in Eastern Europe, significant locales of anti-apartheid resistance in South Africa, sites of nuclear bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki – places where traumatic events were localized in time and historic significance. In American history, the "oppressive past" containing slavery, convict leasing, and the regime of Jim Crow spans hundreds of years and concerns a multitude of locales, in which the evidence of past historical trauma has often been obscured, overlaid by other events and histories, and even deliberately erased. Brushy Mountain Penitentiary is one such site. Many of its sections contain the sort of clear, palpable connections to the traumas of the past and the "wounds of another" that could force visitors to reevaluate their worldview. However, the century-long history of the prison has generated a historical complexity, a layering that combines geological, architectural, political, economic, and cultural issues: the volumes of shale removed in the mining process have reshaped the terrain around the prison walls, many additional structures have been added to the prison complex over the decades, and events such as the guards' labor strike, temporary prison closure, multiple transitions in the correctional technologies and philosophies have left their varying, overlapping marks. Finally, the stories of people who have passed through this place have formed their own layers. However, it is precisely this complexity and layering that would yield richness to the pedagogical potential of the place.

Exploration of the elements that make places – physical artefacts, history, nature, culture – has long been viewed as an alternative to the classroom study of the same subjects, which many scholars critique as purely conceptual. David Orr, a scholar of environment and politics, argued that "a great deal of what passes for knowledge is little more than abstraction piled on top of abstraction, disconnected from tangible experience, real problems, and the places where we live."[11] Yet the places themselves, the carriers of real-life experience and problems, are "fundamentally pedagogical because they are contexts for human perception and for participation with the phenomenal, ecological, and cultural world."[12] Thus, learning, whose focal point is place with its complexities and layering of issues, is capable of closing the gap between academic theorizing and reality, offering an opportunity of personal investigation and resolution of real life problems. Such learning is known as place-based education, or pedagogy of place. Its goal is not only the elimination of the gap between abstraction and "tangible experience," it also seeks to examine and transform the ways in which individuals interact and act upon places and their own communities.[13]

David Gruenewald, a scholar and theorist of place and place-based education, noted that considering the educational potential of a given place requires one to accept it as a product of human culture, human choices, and individual and collective decisions; thus, places are human-made. This means that a given place is only one of many possible outcomes of such choices and decisions. Failure to understand this means that a place is seen as inevitable and its existence is accepted as incontestable, similarly to the acceptance of the laws of nature. Further, failure to consider places as cultural and political products makes one "complicit in the political process" that shaped them and "continues to legitimize them."[14] The ability to consider a place as a sum of sociopolitical and economic processes – any place, be it a park, a shopping mall, or a prison – can fundamentally transform one's worldview and beliefs about fellow human beings. Thus, a place, especially one as rich in layered history and meaning as Brushy Mountain Penitentiary, carries an infinite potential for place-based education. Additionally, learning from a place constitutes only a first step in the pedagogy of place: once the active role of individuals and societies in relation to place is understood, then from the role of observers and scholars, they may progress to a more active role of place-makers:

> Recognizing that places are what people make of them—that people are place makers and that places are a primary artifact of human culture—suggests a more active role... If human beings are responsible for place making, then we must become conscious of ourselves as place makers and participants in the sociopolitical process of place making.[15]

Figure 16
View of the main building at Brushy Mountain State Prison, with railroad tracks and trestle in foreground; these attributes of processes that shaped the place are now gone.
Tennessee State Library and Archives
By Unknown, Library Collection

Another quality of place addressed by scholars is its ideological dimension. As people make places, so do places, informed with the ideas and beliefs of dominant ideologies, produce "social formations." Returning to the earlier example of urban residential projects, one can argue that, as architectural and socio-economic phenomena, these projects were heavily influenced by the contemporary ideologies and expressed the beliefs of "reformed – rather than destroyed – white supremacy."[16] One such example, Robert Taylor housing project in Chicago constructed in 1960–1962, was built in place of several demolished city blocks on the edge of an impoverished urban community and set apart from remaining urban fabric by "cages of meshed wire."[17] It contained u-shaped tower "stacks" that faced bare courts reminiscent of prison exercise yards, creating a configuration that facilitated policing and surveillance. The towers housed its residents in small cell-like units that "illuminated the way confinement was built into projects... [by] jamming people into spaces unfit to house them."[18] On a greater scale, the location of the project within the city allowed its residents no contact with the residents of more prosperous white communities, because of the highway that separated them. Wedged between the highway and the railway tracks, the residents became cut off from grocery markets that carried fresh foods and accepted food stamps. Instead, they were forced use convenience stores, where distribution of limited food was highly regulated, and products unhealthy and expensive, much like at a prison commissary. While, permeated with ideologies, the "spatial forms [of Robert Taylor housing] expressed and performed the interests of a dominant class," they also acted upon the people who were forced to call this place home. The "carceral logic" of the configurations of units and housing towers, along with the isolation, police surveillance, and lack of choice in movement and access to food likened the housing project to prison and created a carceral society outside of a penitentiary. The young men growing up in Robert Taylor, saw their life there as "preparatory prison," knowing that "if you came from trey-nine [thirty-ninth street], prison was just a change of address."[19] Thus, this place was simultaneously a product of culture and also produced culture, a culture of "prisonization of Black quotidian space," where "subjects [were] not only prisonized through spatiality, but where the production of those subjects 'dictated' their mobility and prepared them for 'future' interaction with carceral space."[20] Emphasizing the overwhelming significance of place, Gruenewald noted that "domination is maintained not through material force but through material forms... Space, always inscribed with politics and ideologies, simultaneously reflects and reproduces social relationships of power and domination."[21] In this manner, places infused with ideologies (such as urban housing projects, prisons, schools) continue to reproduce the social forms that initiated them – reproduce them through the force of their physical, cultural, political, and spatial attributes.

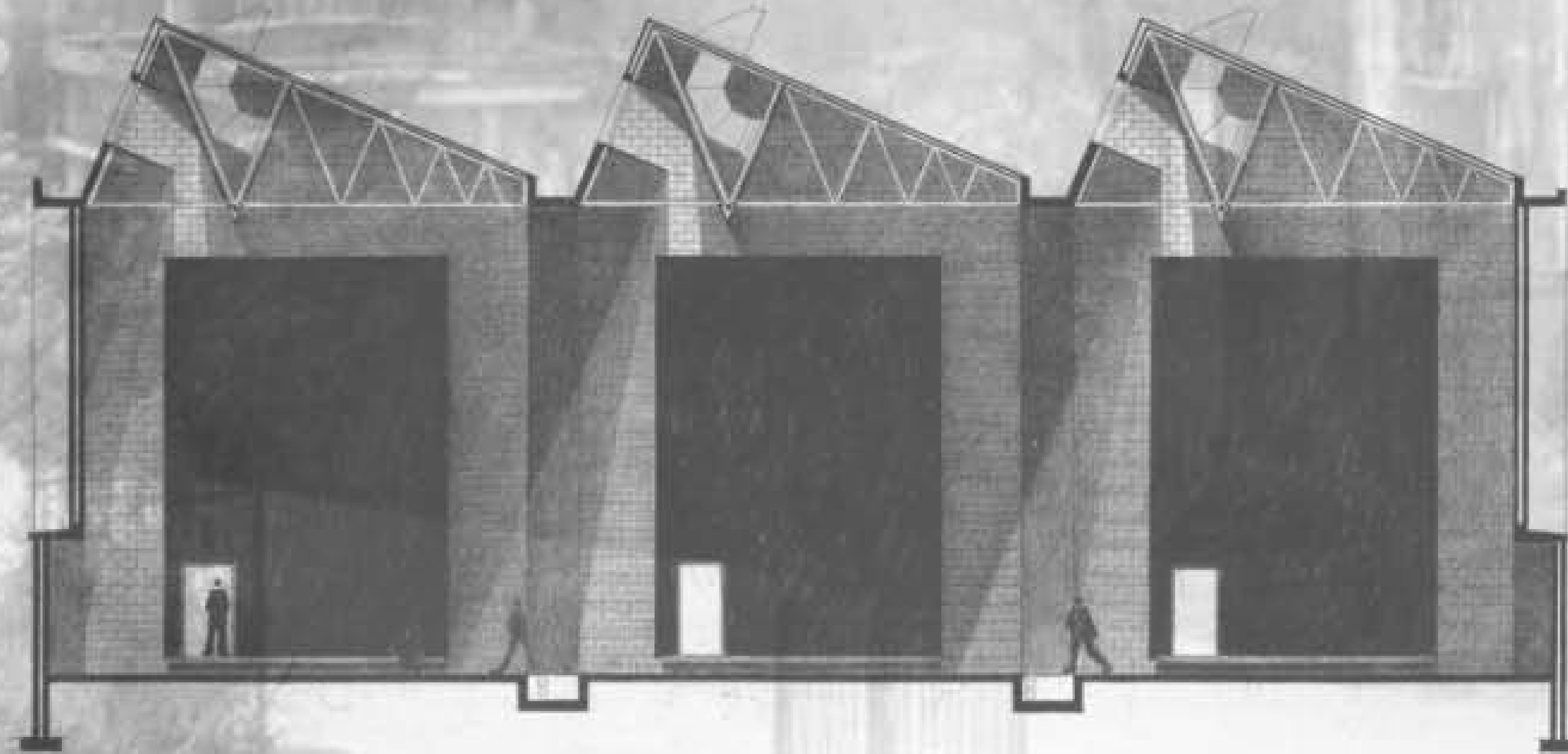
The full educational experience of place encompasses all the attributes and dimensions of places, along with their capacity for cultural production. The multiple layers at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary – geological, architectural, historic, political, and economic – the layers and attributes that make the site so complex and so different from other places of traumatic memory all add to the richness of the educational potential, when viewed from the position of pedagogy of place. Pedagogy of place, along with the concepts of pedagogy of remembrance investigated earlier, can aid in unfolding multiple meanings and contradictory interpretations at Brushy Mountain. As part of this thesis, an architectural intervention will address the existing historic fabric of the site and will introduce new material forms. Having in mind the power of the interaction of the visitors with the objects of traumatic memory and the material forms of the place "inscribed with politics and ideologies," it will be possible to develop certain strategies for the architectural interventions. In order to begin a quest for such strategies at Brushy Mountain, it may be helpful to examine existing solutions that have dealt with places of difficult or traumatic history. The following section offers an investigation into a number of such precedents.

Figure 17
Taylor Housing Project: the highway separated it from the more prosperous white communities.
http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events

Figure 18
Taylor Housing Project, Chicago, 1960, was considered to be "prison for the poor" by the city's residents.
Photo by Walter Kale, ChicagoTribune.com

2. PLACES OF LEARNING AND ACTIVISM

Throughout the world, there are a number of architectural interventions that have successfully applied pedagogical concepts of memory and place in order to create settings for reflection, learning, and activism. The following precedents can be broken into two categories. The first category contains a number of successful approaches to the sites of painful, traumatic memory, including two museums: Holocaust Museum at a former concentration camp in Majdanek, Poland, and Red Location Museum in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. These are places where pedagogical concepts are manifested in architectural forms or in a particular treatment of the site in order to accommodate learning. The second uses a number of strategies based on the ideas of place-based learning to inspire activism and resistance against systems of violence and oppression. This category includes Tuskegee Institute in Tuskegee, Alabama, and Highlander Folk School in New Market, Tennessee. The goal of this thesis – finding an architectural solution to accommodate learning and to inspire activism through memory and place-based learning – requires an understanding of both sets of strategies. The following investigation of the precedents seeks to provide a starting point for the development of architectural intervention at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary.



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Majdanek was a German Concentration Camp located in Lublin, Poland, whose establishment was initiated in 1941 by the order of Heinrich Himmler, a Reichsfürer of the Schufzstaffel (SS) and the leading commander of the Third Reich. Initially, the capacity of the camp was 20,000 to 50,000 inmates, who were gathered at Majdanek as a source of free labor, providing support to the eastward military expansion of the German forces. The 270 hectare (about 1.1 square mile) camp consisted of three sectors: the SS command, the administrative block, and prisoner area, which, in turn, was comprised of five "fields" filled with wooden prisoner barracks (figs. X and Y). By 1943, as the war momentum and the political climate in Germany shifted, the camp began exterminating the population of its inmates. Majdanek became one of the critical locales in the infamous plan entitled "Final Solution of the Jewish Question" – the strategy whose result was one of the most atrocious genocides in human history. Throughout its existence, Majdanek processed 150,000 prisoners, 80,000 of which, including 60,000 Jews, were murdered in gas chambers or fell victim to hunger or disease. The camp saw some of the most despicable atrocities of the war, including Bloody Wednesday, the 3rd of November 1943, when 18,000 Jews were executed by firing squad in the course of one day. The victims of violence and disease were burned in the crematorium or on pyres, constructed specifically for these purposes. The atrocities at Majdanek continued until the defeat of German troops in Poland; the concentration camp was liberated in 1944 by Soviet Armed Forces.[22]

The museum at Majdanek was founded shortly after the camp's liberation, in 1944. The initial goal was to memorialize the victims and to tell the world about the atrocities committed against marginalized groups of people. Increasingly, the curators began to realize that the place and the incredibly traumatic memories contained in its physical artefacts possessed a great educational potential. Overtime, "cultivation of memory" became one of the missions of the museum. Presently, it carries out a comprehensive educational program offered for different levels of participants, from junior high school students to university graduate students and teachers. The educational approach to studying at Majdanek is based solely on the concepts and theories of pedagogy of remembrance. In the following paragraph, the museum sums up its educational philosophy:

> Historical and social education in places of remembrance is not only limited to conveying knowledge, but also affects personality development, helps to shape the moral values system, and teaches social justice and respect for human rights. The main point here is to counteract discrimination, eliminate prejudices, tackle acts of aggression and violence, show the dangers resulting from social indifference, and create behaviors based on empathy, tolerance, and sensitivity.[23]

Having in mind the ideal outcome of memory-based education, the methodology with which one attempts to treat the site where atrocities took place becomes exceptionally important, especially in view of the size of the camp, the number of artefacts, and the complexity of the site. To accommodate its goal, the museum has been organized along these major programs: visitor accommodations (visitor center), study and research (archive building), commemoration (a number of monuments throughout the camp, existing and newly created), walking tour throughout the three sectors of the concentration camp (fig. 20), and exhibitions. The exhibitions are the most powerful and fluid part of the museum, simultaneously generating the need to "attend to the wounds of another," and displaying the response of present generations to the thoughts and emotions triggered by the wounds of the past. The permanent exhibit contains historical artefacts, while certain areas of the camp are reserved for continually changing modern works of art and installations. Modern pieces appear in prisoners' barracks or other areas of the camp, preventing a fixed, pre-interpreted route for visitors to learn about the site and, instead, offering alternate, flexible ways to comprehend the place through emotive responses of the artists (fig. 21). In addition, research and essays generated through educational programs are presented by visiting students on regular basis, adding the richness of individual interpretation to the knowledge available visitors.

The following precedent is an example of an even greater effort to offer a fluid approach to the past, one that is as free as possible from rigid or state-imposed interpretations of history, while keeping alive the activism and the relevance of the past events.

Figure 19
Rusted "red" shacks of Red Location - migrant workers' settlement at New Brighton Township , South Africa, and the architect's conceptual drawing for the new museum.
Noero Wolff Architects
Author's collage

Figure 20
Permanent exhibit at Majdanek
Majdanek State Museum,
majdanek.eu

Figure 21
Temporary installation dedicated to the children victims of Majdanek
Majdanek State Museum,
majdanek.eu

22

RED LOCATION MUSEUM OF STRUGGLE

Noero Wolff Architects/New Brighton Township, Port Elizabeth, South Africa

Red Location was one of the oldest black townships in South Africa that was founded in 1902 in order to house poor black migrant workers, many of whom were forcibly relocated there. The workers constructed their dwellings with the materials they salvaged from Boer Concentration Camps, which were built by British troops during Second Boer War at the turn of the century. Corrugated iron panels used for the worker's shacks rusted red, inspiring the name given to the township (fig. X).[24] After apartheid was implemented in South Africa as an official government policy in 1948, Red Location became the center of the resistance movement, becoming a home to many South African activists and leaders, such as Govan Mbeki, Raymond Mhlaba, and Vuyisile Mini. Within its crowded shacks and passageways, it supported developments of numerous movements, such as the Defiance Campaign of 1952, and witnessed many turbulent events during the decades of resistance. The resistance from within and pressure from the international community eventually led to the open multi-racial elections of 1994 and victory of National African Congress under Nelson Mandela when apartheid officially came to an end; however, persistent racial tensions and disparity could not be erased by these events. The struggle continues today, and the Red Location Museum was proposed as an instrument in this struggle. In 1994, under the pressure from the New Brighton Council, the city government agreed to move the cultural center of town to the old township of Red Location, in order to re-activate it and to maintain its cultural significance. This commitment "prepared a fertile ground for the new generation" by creating a community center open to public participation, yet with the memories of its difficult history at the core.[25] One of the challenges faced by the architect of this project was trying to find "a tangible representation of collective memory" in the community where memories of apartheid were still recent, unmediated by decades of rigid interpretations.[26] The designer's goal was to avoid making a memorial that blocked individual associations and perceptions of history. The principal creator of the museum, Jo Noero, said that he was keenly aware of the danger of "collapsing South African political history into an official narrative...to be used for political means – much like Afrikaans nationalism used the Boer War."[27] In order or to help visitors face history on their own terms, Noero turned for inspiration to the memory box, a South African cultural artefact. When black laborers left their families to work at the mines, they built small boxes that contained objects and mementoes reminding them of their homes and the loved ones. These boxes helped maintain a fragile connection to the lives they left behind. They became "depositories of memory," glimpses of stories and lives that could only be understood through deeply personal interpretations

The profoundly personal way of experiencing history through memory boxes is the inspiration for the museum, were everything is aimed at preventing "static interpretations of history." For this reason, the archives and the library were included into its program in order to facilitate learning, which would "keep the place alive with activism."[28] The museum building is described by the architect as "cavernous," with twelve free-standing rooms or "boxes" that are clad in corrugated, deliberately rusted iron, making a direct reference to the site. Each box contains a set of historic artefacts organized by themes, so that a visitor, stepping inside, experiences different stories, different ways to remember and interpret the past. Outside, the space is bare, almost blank, which allows one to pause and contemplate before moving on (fig. X).[29] According to Noero, the memory box disrupts creation of a singular official narrative and "provides an opportunity to deal with memories of struggle that cover a whole range of subjects, but include everyone – white, black, women, and children."[30] While the materials used in the construction of the museum are humble and representative of the place – iron, inexpensive concrete, steel – careful lighting, thoughtful design and spatial arrangement give the building a sense of dignity and beauty. Speaking of the museum, Archbishop Desmond Tutu said that the most important thing about it was that "it raised the morale of people by showing them beautiful things. Thus, if not in a direct way, [the museum] contributed to the struggle against the viciousness of apartheid."[31]

The museum constitutes the core of a larger, multiphase transformative plan for Red Location, which, by the time it is completed in 2016, will have taken nearly twenty years to implement. The museum, which has already become an integral part of the township, contains a library and an archive and is surrounded by an inviting social space for the community; many of the old shacks in the neighborhood have begun to be replaced with social housing, and a theater and an art school were completed in 2014. However, memory and reinforcement of the connection to the origins of the place will always remain at the center of the communal experience, as the township and the council have made it an explicit goal of the future development.

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Figure 22
Interior interstitial spaces of reflection
Red Location Museum of Struggle
Noero Wolff Architects

Figure 23
Red Location Museum sections
Noero Wolff Architects

PLACE AND ACTIVISM:

The analysis of the following two precedents will look at strategies based on the concepts of place-based learning used to inspire activism and resistance against systems of violence and oppression.

24

THREE

TUSKEGEE NORMAL AND INDUSTRIAL INSTITUTE

Tuskegee, Alabama

Tuskegee Institute is a historically black college, established in Tuskegee, Alabama in 1881. Lewis Adams, a former slave, played a pivotal role in the establishment of the institution, delivering black votes for a State Senate candidate in exchange for securing a legislative bill to "establish a school for colored teachers at Tuskegee."[32] The school's first president, Booker T. Washington, is known today as "the most famous black educator" and advocate for African American rights.[33] As an organizer, fundraiser, and politician, he was responsible for the remarkable transformation of the institution, from a single ramshackle building in 1881 to a respectable campus situated on 2,300 acres with a 1,590-person student body by 1906.[34] Since its beginnings, the school's program was deeply rooted in the specific characteristics of the place, responding to the needs of the surrounding community and instilling the ideas of self-sufficiency in its students (fig. X). Describing the first years at the new school, Washington wrote:

> All of the industries at Tuskegee have been started in natural and logical order growing out of the needs of the community settlement. We began with farming because we wanted something to eat.[35]

The overall location of the campus and its layout were greatly influenced by the local tensions, representative of the place and time when the majority of the campus was laid out: the school housed mostly African American students and faculty who were attempting to break social and economic barriers that limited their advancement during the Jim Crow era in the post-bellum South. According to a scholar of landscape architecture, K. Ian Grandison, politics of race have also influenced the type of educational programs offered to students. In the early decades of the school's existence, white southerners believed that black education "undermined the economy of the region by endangering the supply of agricultural labor," and presence of black students and faculty was seen as threatening to the established status quo of the power structure.[36] To maintain peace,

Figure 24
Female students at Tuskegee Institute assembly
by Frances Benjamin Johnston
print from a 1902 glass negative
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Figure 25
Students working on the construction of one of the Tuskegee buildings
by Frances Benjamin Johnston
print from a 1902 glass negative
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

assure the perseverance of the school, and provide the much-needed agrarian knowledge to the surrounding rural black populations, Booker T. Washington emphasized vocational and outreach agrarian programs. Today, this approach can be defined as "place-based education," instead of the classical education that was available at the white universities. At the same time, the classical collegiate architecture of many of the buildings at Tuskegee spoke of higher aspirations, of great possibilities that education unlocked for the students (fig. X). To the students and visitors, the "material forms" of place described by Gruenewald projected this duality, this multilayered complexity of ideology, power, agency, and resistance.

At Tuskegee, the material forms of place reveal a particular set of strategies that can be separated into three categories: overall site/location, campus layout, and building orientation. In his investigation of the Tuskegee campus, Grandison alludes to a joke in which a poor black community located at the top of a hill is called "bottom," in reference to its economic status and the unworkable quality of the land, as "regardless of their actual location in the landscape, the poor and the weak are consistently relegated to their proper space in the literal or symbolic 'bottoms.'"[37] The location of the agrarian Tuskegee on the ridge of a hill, where any usable soil was consistently washed down the gullies, however ironic, was not a matter of choice. Called in some accounts Burnt Place or The Big Hungry, this was the only land of appropriate size Washington was able to acquire. Situated on this difficult terrain, equipped with minimal funds, the institution had to forgo traditional collegiate quads and axial paths. Its layout was not haphazard due to the lack of planning; rather, it came to reflect the powers that were at play at the time of its founding.

The orientation of the buildings on the campus revealed another layer of racial tensions: while possessing familiar collegiate look and grandeur, the buildings were turned inward, their grand entrances facing the center of the campus. Moreover, the entrances into the campus were difficult to locate (fig. X). In a 1916 survey, architect A. H. Albertson observes that "the main entrance to the...institution...when discovered gives the impression of being a back way in; it certainly does not suggest the main approach to a large institution of high standing."[38] This quality was dictated by several factors. One of the concerns of campus life was student safety, as attacks and threats had occurred, including the infamous Ku Klux Klan rally of 1923; obscure entrances along with inward looking buildings made the campus somewhat safer, intentionally separated from the life of nearby town.

Another factor in campus planning was of a symbolic nature. The back way, the service entrance, the back of the bus were "pervasive metaphors for the marginal status of blacks in American society...[and] a concrete, everyday experience of space that became embedded in the consciousness of those who experienced these things."[39] By inverting the buildings, the planners also inverted the notions of front door and back door and the status symbols that applied to them, subtly infusing the daily interactions of Tuskegee students with their environment with dual meaning. Protection also meant motivation, as true front entrances were reserved exclusively for them, concealing high aspirations that went beyond vocational training. Finally, Tantum Hall, one of the grandest buildings on campus, was situated on the crest of the hill and, like the rest of the buildings, presented its back door to the street. It faced the gully that contained all the evidences of the institute's agrarian program – grazing livestock, students busy with farm work, farming conferences. This created a "juxtaposition of high architectural forms and 'simple' Alabama rural landscape," which, nevertheless, corresponded to the dual meaning that permeated the campus. Classical architectural forms continued to inspire students to uplift themselves in spite of the limitations placed upon them, yet "not letting their familiar community out of sight."

The following precedent is one of the most important educational and activism centers of the Civil Rights era. The principles employed there in order to bring together people from all walks of life in order to unite for a single goal serve as an inspiration to the intervention proposed at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary.

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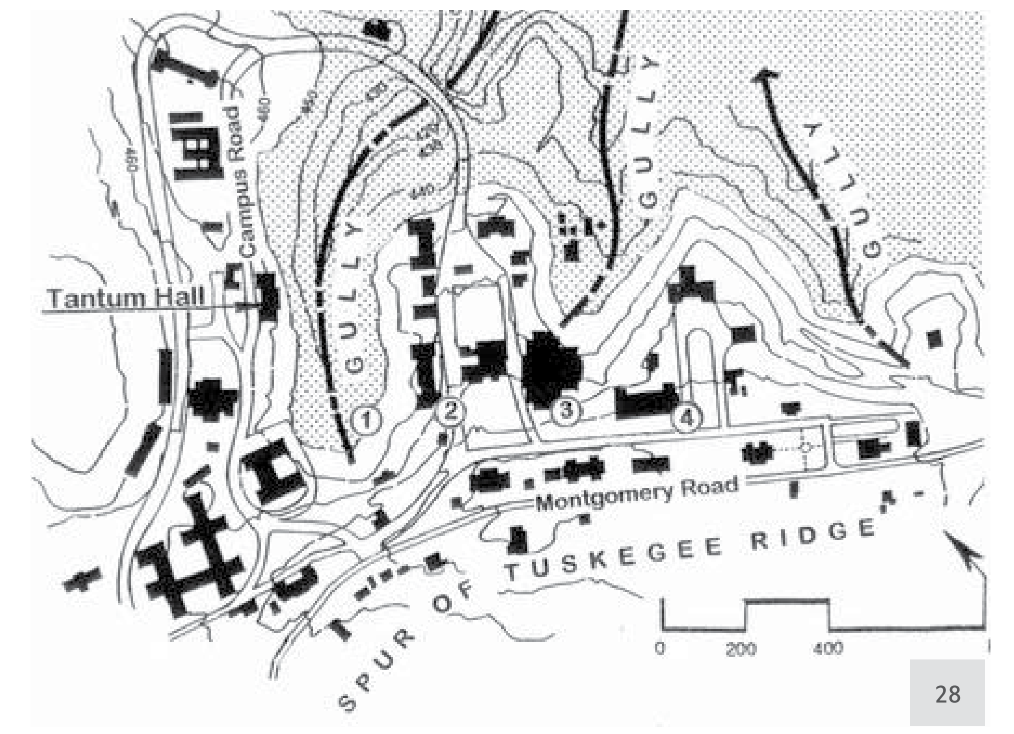

Figure 26
Panorama of Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute
C. H. McMillan,1915, Black and White film
Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division

Figure 27
Facade of Tantum Hall facing the gully, 1907 photograph
"Sites of Memory" Princeton Architectural Press

Figure 28
Layout of Tuskegee in relation to its challenging terrain
"Sites of Memory" Princeton Architectural Press

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FOUR
HIGHLANDER FOLKS SCHOOL
Knoxville, Tennessee

Highlander Folks Schools was established in 1932 in Monteagle, TN by Miles Horton, an educator and organizer who made it his life's goal to expose the workings of the existing power structures to the oppressed and to educate for empowerment and resistance. Horton was a student of Reinhold Niebuhr, one of the world's important religious thinkers, who was known for his great impact on political philosophy and for his development of Christian Realism. Niebuhr believed that theory removed from the actuality of life and utopianism were incapable of solving the problems of reality.[40] His philosophy greatly influenced Horton's search for an educational system that would be capable of solving such problems. In 1930, Hoton traveled to Denmark, where he was introduced to Folk Schools – centers for free education to the people of countryside, which used music, poetry, and history to teach and empower the poor of the country recently devastated by war. Horton found that most school directors were "men on fire to correct injustice, to awaken peasants to the misery restricting their lives...evoking a picture of reality not as we have it but as it ought to be."[41] Here, in Copenhagen, Horton came up with simple but powerful idea for the educational system he was searching for: instead of making decisions for the poor he was to "help people make their own decisions." [42]

Back in the United States, Horton, with the help of donors, was able to open a school in Grundy County, TN, first of its three successive locations. Incidentally, the first site of the Highlander was in the county devastated by the Coal Creek wars several decades earlier, a place were "life has been a struggle for subsistence," and where Horton now was starting a school whose educational methods "had to be rooted in the life of the people."[43] The model used at Highlander included several educational stages. First, the students were exposed to difficult conflict situations where "real nature of our society is projected in all its ugliness." Some of the students, local miner who have participated in violent strikes, could take on the role of educators by telling their stories. Secondly, students received instruction to understand what was happening; and, finally, they were given a glimpse of what new societal structure "ought to be," the example of which was the communal way of life and equality at the school.[44] All teaching was rooted in real situations close to the student's heart, and, therefore, never lost connection with the realty, or became utopian.

During the first two decades of its existence, the school devoted itself to the issues of fairness of labor practices and resistance to the practices of mining companies, textile factories, and other private and government enterprises. However, as the era of Civil Rights Movement began to take on momentum in the 1950s, Highlander chose to dedicate itself entirely to the cause. During this time, Highlander was one of the few places in the South where interracial meetings and classes could take place. Following its educational model of empowerment through participation in ongoing struggle for justice and by presenting a model of what society "ought to be," the school trained a generation of Civil Rights activists. The names that are now legends of the movement, such as Martin Luther King, Rosa Parks, Septima Clark, Marion Barry, and many others have been directly associated with Highlander. Many historians attest that Highlander "served as a crucible for social protest in the South," being a generator of ideas and a training center for many brave initiatives and protests.[45] For instance, Rosa Parks had attended a workshop there just a few months before Montgomery Bus Boycott, and Septima Clark taught a citizenship and literacy class to the African American students in the 1950s, starting a movement of Citizenship schools that propelled many people who thought themselves ordinary to the position of leadership.[46]

The successes of Highlander School were increasingly threatening to the state's authorities and to the status quo of white supremacy. As a result, Highlander Folks School was subjected to the practices of Red-baiting, and was labeled "communist training school" in the press. Finally, in 1961, The Monteagle, Grundy County location was closed under falsified charges. During the following decade Miles Horton re-opened the school in Knoxville, changing its name to Highlander Research and Education Center. In 1971, Highlander was moved to its present location in New Market, TN.

Highlander Folks School had only a few physical features that can be seen as design precedents. One iconic attribute of Highlander was its the circular room in at the New Market location, where everyone was made to feel equal while sitting together in a circle and exchanging stories and ideas. The rocking chair, which has become the school's symbol, further served the purpose of imparting equality to the educational process – the unequal roles of teacher and pupil were eliminated. However, of even greater importance, was the school's legacy as a place that embodied the ideas of place-based education, a place of true empowerment where knowledge was shared between participants and then disseminated to their home communities.

The goals and methods of Miles Horton at Highlander coincided with the philosophy and work of Paolo Freire, who developed his "pedagogy of the oppressed" in Latin America. While working independently on different continents, Freire and Horton developed essentially similar ideas, which were expressed most eloquently in the work of Freire. The overarching idea of the pedagogy of the oppressed can be summed up as the following:

> Every human being, no matter how "ignorant" or submerged in the "culture of silence" he or she is capable of looking critically at the world in a dialogical encounter with others. Provided with proper tools for such encounter, the individual can gradually perceive personal and social reality, as well as the contradictions in it, become consciousness of his or her own perception of that reality, and deal critically with it.[47]

In this process, individuals learn to "take action against the oppressive elements of reality," and are able to take what they have discovered into their own communities. These principles can be taken as guiding for anyone aspiring to create a center for place-based education for empowerment and activism.

Figure 29
Martin Luther King, Charis Horton, Pete Seeger, Rosa Parks, and Ralph Abernathy at Highlander Library
Institute for Southern Studies

Figure 30
Taking knowledge to the community: Zilphia Horton teaching a song to the striking workers in Chattanooga.
chactivist. com: "We shall not be moved"

3. BRUSHY MOUNTAIN PENITENTIARY IN THE CONTEXT OF HISTORY

As theory of place suggests, Brushy Mountain, as any other place, is only one of many possible outcomes of ideological and cultural production. Therefore, an analysis of the ideas, cultures, and beliefs that have given rise to this particular place may impart a greater meaning to its tangible forms. The maps presented in figures X and Y provide an overall view of the site in order to supply a context to the following discussion (the site will be examined more thoroughly in a later chapter).

The penitentiary, which includes the main prison compound and supporting outbuildings and dwellings surrounding it, is situated in a deep valley in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains of Eastern Tennessee. Most of the mines that were excavated between the late 1890s and 1967 are found within the hills to the northeast. Just south of the main prison campus, on a flat hillock, lays the prison cemetery. It can be more accurately defined as a burial ground, since it lacks grave markers. According to the local lore, one of the wardens found it too cumbersome to keep bringing stones for the head of each new grave, and, instead, collected all of the markers that existed at the time to make a base for an iron cross at the entrance to the cemetery. Today, this move is seen as highly insensitive, yet in the view of the warden, a single respectful sign was created for the entire cemetery eliminating the need to mark the graves in the future.[48]

The main prison buildings, constructed in 1934-38, which include cell blocks (buildings 1 and 2 on the map), a laundry/chapel/solitary confinement building (3), and a gymnasium (4), are located within the perimeter of a stone wall. The wall roughly forms a rectangle and its northern corner is adjacent to a vertical cliff. The area within the wall also includes later additions: a maximum security block (5) and an educational building (6), both constructed in the late 1980s.

The stone wall, the main cell block, the mines, and the burial ground constitute the most important elements of the site, but not only from the point of view of their historic significance. The architectural features of Brushy Mountain, the layout of its buildings, the physical forms of its site, and the histories it contains can all be viewed as a result of millennia-long evolution of carceral spaces and philosophies of incarceration. Over the course of centuries, imprisonment for the purposes of temporary pre-execution confinement gave way to imprisonment for the purposes of punishment; prisons as squalid and diseased spaces within city walls became orderly machines of organized labor and unrelenting observation. In this general history of imprisonment, Brushy Mountain could be defined with a greater precision as a direct descendant of an 1816 prison system that originated in New York State. However, on a greater scale, it can also be considered a descendant of the ideas of the Enlightenment, of racial tensions of the ante bellum and post-civil war American South, and of the overall economic, cultural, and political forces that shaped the nation. Only when seen as a result of multiple choices made by individuals and groups influenced by their contemporary beliefs and power structures, can Brushy Mountain begin to tell its true story and teach through place-based and remembrance-based pedagogies.

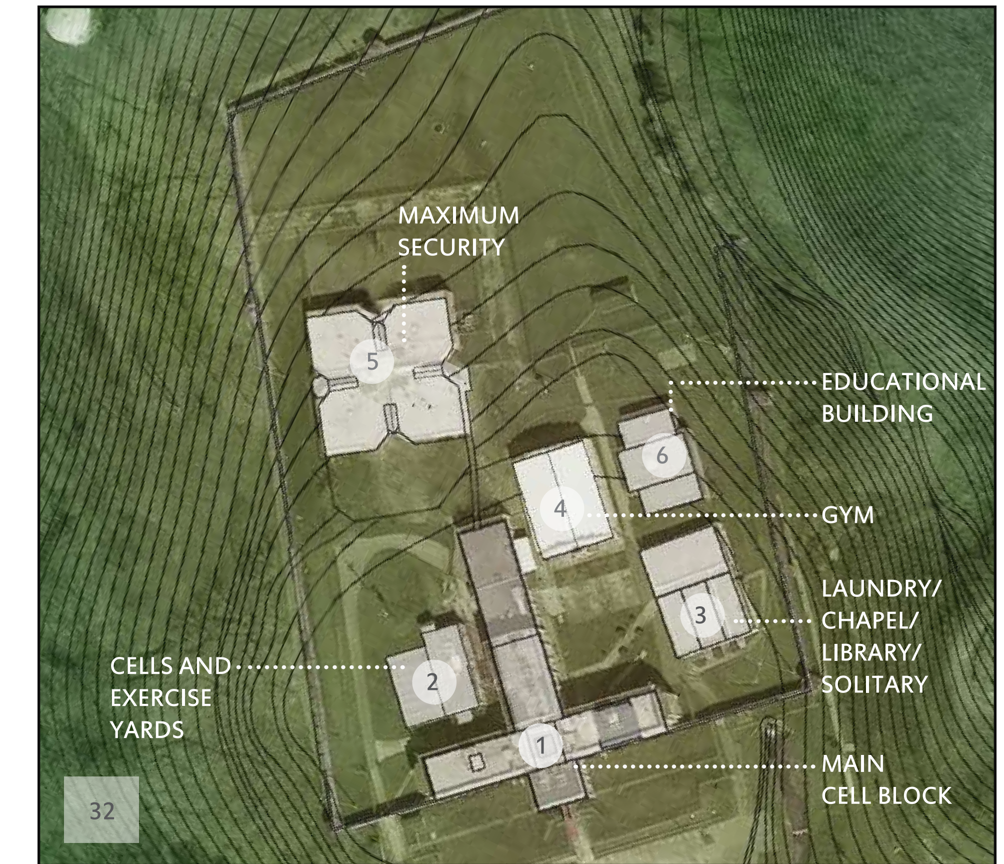

Figure 31
Interior interstitial spaces of reflection
Red Location Museum of Struggle
Noero Wolff Architects

Figure 32
Red Location Museum sections
Noero Wolff Architects

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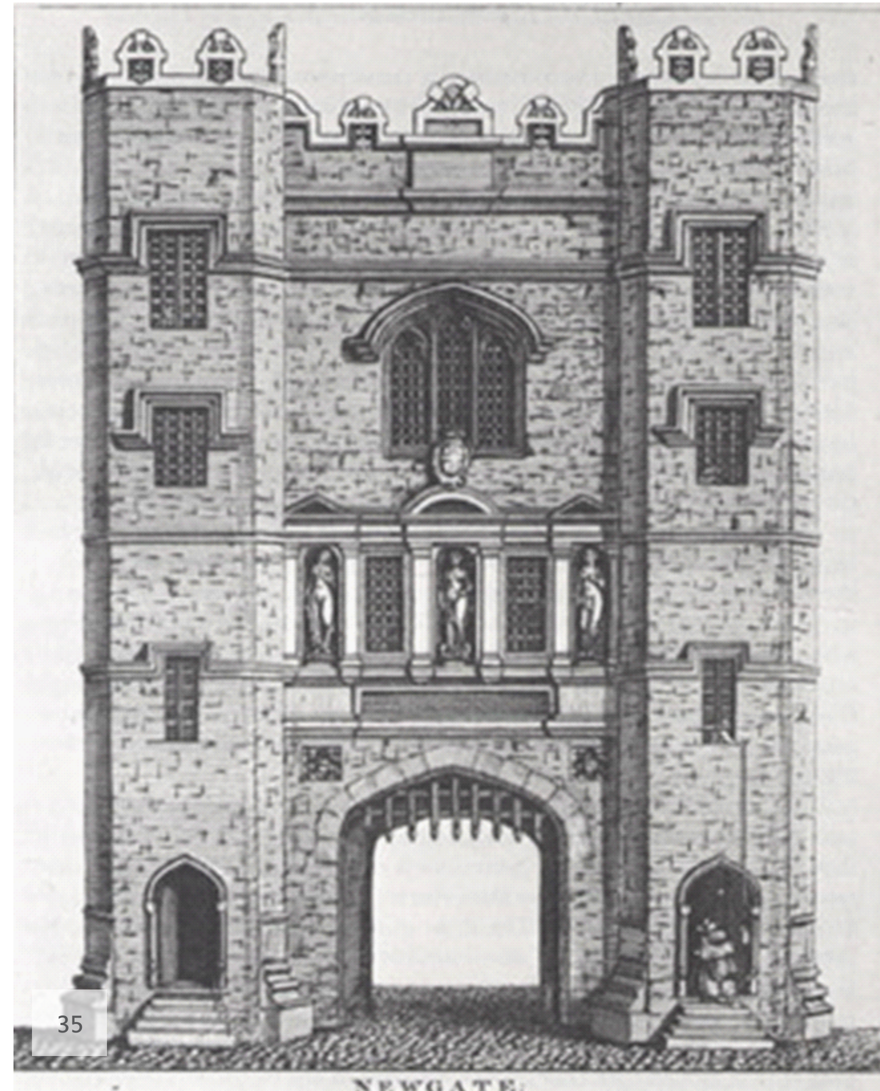


Historically, prisons were placed within city walls or gates, since the gate was seen as a border between the human-made and divine creation, and, thus, represented a spatial threshold where "social and spatial categories broke down" (fig.35).[49] Anthropologist Mary Douglas suggested that social groups and, by the same token, cities and towns, are a metaphor for a human body, where gates guard against its contamination and filter between the categories of the self and the foreign, external.[50] Today, the subconscious understanding of the entity of prison may be traced back to these historic views: prison as a place outside of a boundary, a space that contains those refused by or forcibly separated from the society, a place where impurity "can be made visible and filtered out before it contaminates the interior insidiously."[51] While the nature of what is deemed "impure" or "undesirable" has been fluid (albeit there are transgressions that are timeless and universal) and the architecture of prisons has evolved to respond to the changing public views on incarceration, the nature of carceral spaces has retained the unique philosophical characteristics of the original prison within a gate.

The collection of buildings, walls, observation towers, and utility structures that comprise Brushy Mountain Penitentiary appears inserted into the crease between thickly wooded hills that extend far in all directions (fig. X). The wall surrounding the prison – which was erected by prisoners from hefty stones they quarried themselves, metaphorically surrounding themselves within a cage or a grave – is interrupted at the northeast corner. At this place, the cliffs are nearly vertical and so jagged that they take on the role of the wall (fig. x). Here, the age-old story of prison as the place of banishment, a final threshold between civilization and the wilderness where "social and spatial categories brake down" comes alive. This wall-cliff-wall connection makes it difficult to discern the natural from the human-made to such an extent that visitors can easily lose sight of the fact that this wall, as well as the prison, is only "one of many possible outcomes" of human choices and decisions and not a natural part of the overall mountainous landscape. The contemplative and the learning processes drawing on the teaching power of the place might begin here, where wall, cliffs, and the coal beneath them constitute the beginnings of Brushy Mountain.

As suggested by Gruenewald, "domination is maintained not through material force but through material forms," and the buildings at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary are such forms, representing the sum of political, social, and economic processes. They also represent a particular building typology. To an educated eye, a stained glass window in a church tells volumes about the evolution of architectural metaphor for Godly presence, progression of human thought on religion, and, perhaps, reveals the place of a given church in the ranks of religious architecture. Prison typology is not commonly studied, yet, in a similar fashion, its history can open a door to the ideas of state, punishment, redemption, righteousness, social control, and domination. When viewed through the lens of historic progression, the buildings of Brushy Mountain become portals to another layer of complexity of the place adding a new dimension to its pedagogical potential.

Throughout the centuries, prisons became much more than a place of temporary banishment of the transgressors: the idea of prison and its architectural manifestation has reflected the social structure that generated it, as well as the society's goals toward those individuals it chose to contain within the institutions (figs. X). French novelist and political activist Jean Genet noted the symbolism of prisons in relation to contemporary social regimes:

> [Prisons] are the buildings constructed with the most faith, those which give the greatest certainty of being what they are...The masonry,...the proportions, and architecture are in harmony with a moral unity which makes these dwellings indestructible so long as the social form of which they are a symbol endures.[52]

The crenellations that adorn the parapet of the main cell block at Brushy Mountain can be seen as an expression of that certainty, as medieval fortification-inspired motifs reflect the state's belief in its own righteousness and into the impenetrability of its prison.

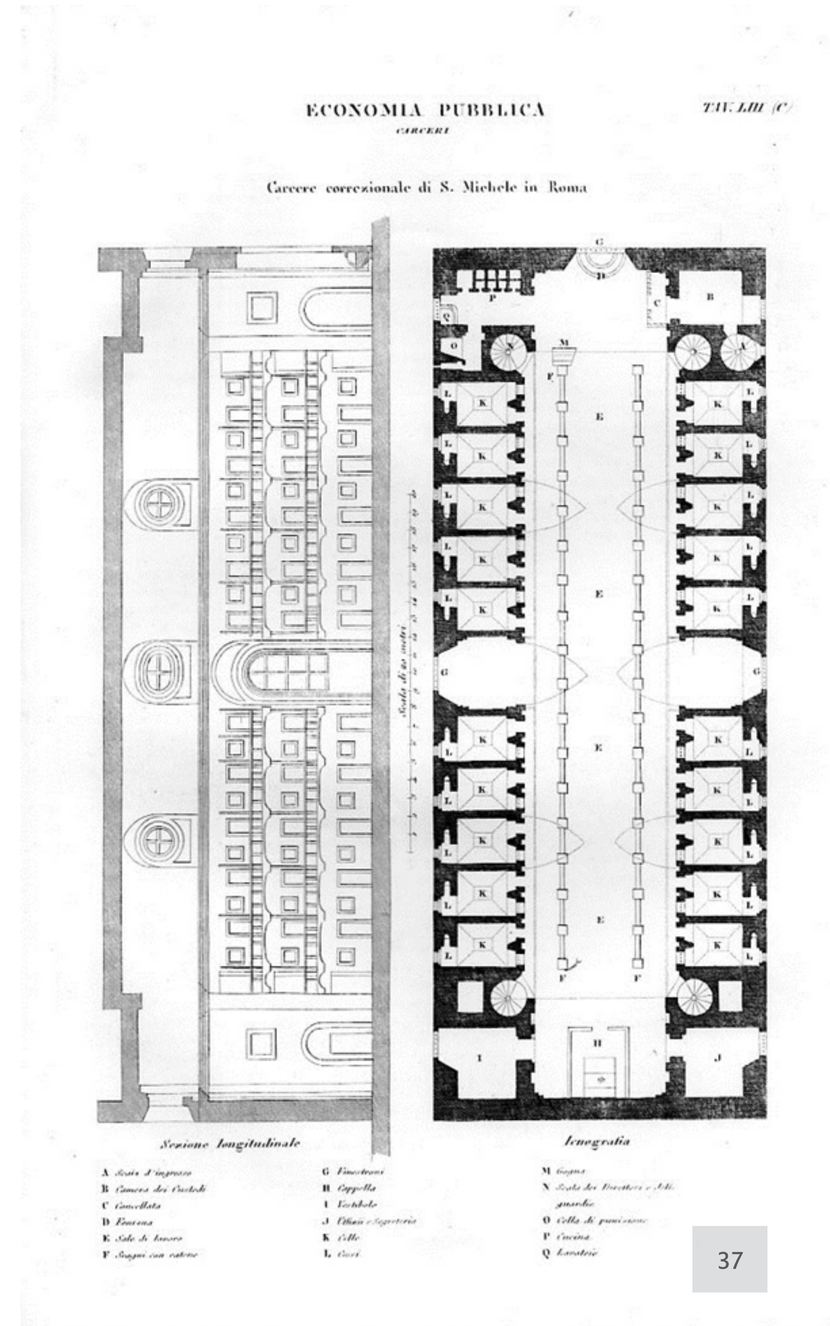
While exteriors of prisons, for the most part, maintained their somber and intimidating appearance, their interiors have evolved significantly over the centuries. Scholars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, such as Cesare Beccaria, John Howard,

Figure 33
View of Brushy Mountain Penitentiary from the burial grounds
Photo by author

Figure 34
View of the cliffs at the northeastern corner of the prison compound: here, natural rock formations take on the function of the prison wall
Photo by author

Figure 35
Newgate prison held inmates temporarily before an execution. Allegorical images of Justice, Fortitude and Prudence were sculpted above the entrance into the city.
University of California Santa Barbara, http://oldsite.english.ucsb.edu

Figure 36
Kilmainham Gaol, 1796, Ireland.
The gaol contained prisoners and provided staging for executions until 1924, serving as a highly visible and feared symbol of Imperial British power in Ireland.
Robert Deba, "Empire and its Discontents; an Examination of Kilmainham Gaol and Aapravasi Ghat," VIDES, 2014, pp. 121-130



and Jeremy Bentham, theorized the spatial organization of carceral spaces that allowed or more humane treatment of inmates and aided in prisoner reform, but also provisioned greater levels of control.

Italian jurist and philosopher, Cesare Beccaria, opposed capital punishment and advocated commensuration between crime and penalty, calling for greater sensitivity in prison design, according to his theories. Beccaria's views on imprisonment were highly influential on his contemporaries, one of whom included John Howard, an English prison reformer and humanist. In his 1777 work The State of Prisons, which exposed abhorrent conditions found in most prisons of the time, Howard wrote that all inmates "are men and by men they ought to be treated as men." Based on the series of personal observation of tens of prisons throughout England and Eastern Europe, he proposed classification and segregation of inmates by categories, introduction of hygiene and ventilation in the prison buildings, and inclusion of religious services into the daily routine – measures that were gradually implemented throughout Europe, and, eventually, the United States.

Howard's recommendations led to a proposal for new prison designs and popularization of the existing successful architectural solutions, such as the St. Michele Prison for Young Men in Rome (fig. 37). This structure had tiers of cells arranged on arcades providing "both air and better security."[53] The design of St. Michele was seen by some as prophetic and, in conjunction with Beccaria's theoretical writings, would later influence the work of Jeremy Bentham and his creation of Panopticon.[54] At St. Michele, as well as in a number of contemporary and subsequent institutions, the prison chapel or an altar became a focal point of the spatial organization of the prison, "a geometric center [that] drew the gaze of all toward itself, in return for which, metaphorically, God saw and encompassed all."[55] As the chapel, in many cases, was not visible to all the prisoners, its central position was also symbolic: it was an attempt to introduce a unity of experience and to provide a constant reminder of the prison's ideal purposes of penance and rehabilitation.

In the United States, penance, a largely religious approach of punishment and reform, had been overshadowed by the need to achieve financial viability for prisons. Notably, at Brushy Mountain, penance and religion found prominent expression. The main cell-block, constructed in 1933, was laid out in a distinctive shape of a cross – an investigation of American prison architecture will show that such floor plan is uncommon. The Christian cross, reformers believed, would instill feelings of penance in the inmates who occupied the prison. Later additions of structures and outbuildings have obscured the clarity of the original cross-shaped cell-block. Furthermore, the unity of experience allowed by religious or spiritual affiliation at St. Michele was hardly possible at Brushy Mountain, where prisoners were segregated by race and occupied different wings according to the color of their skin. Still, religious overtones are clearly present in Brushy Mountain's main cell-block floor plan (fig. 38) and the presence of a chapel within the prison wall (fig. 39).

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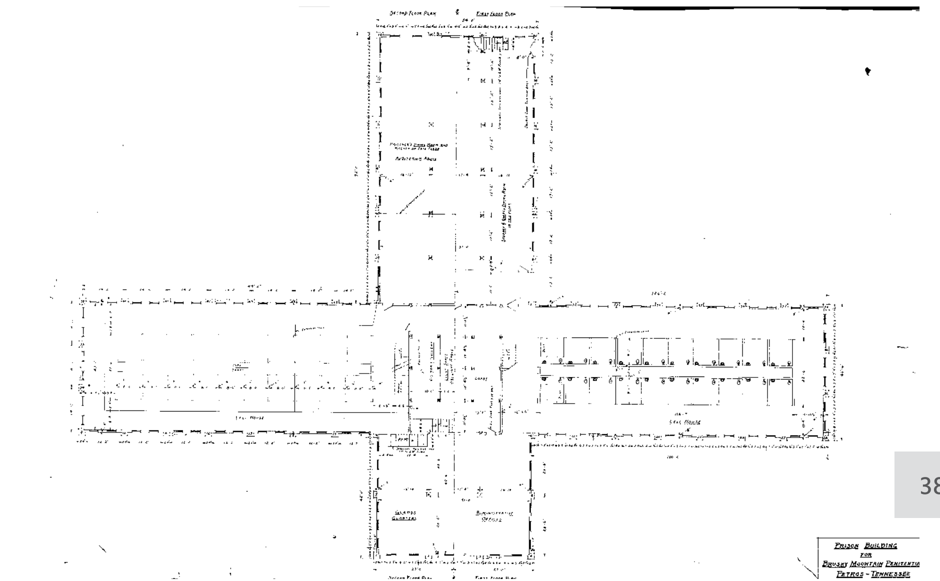
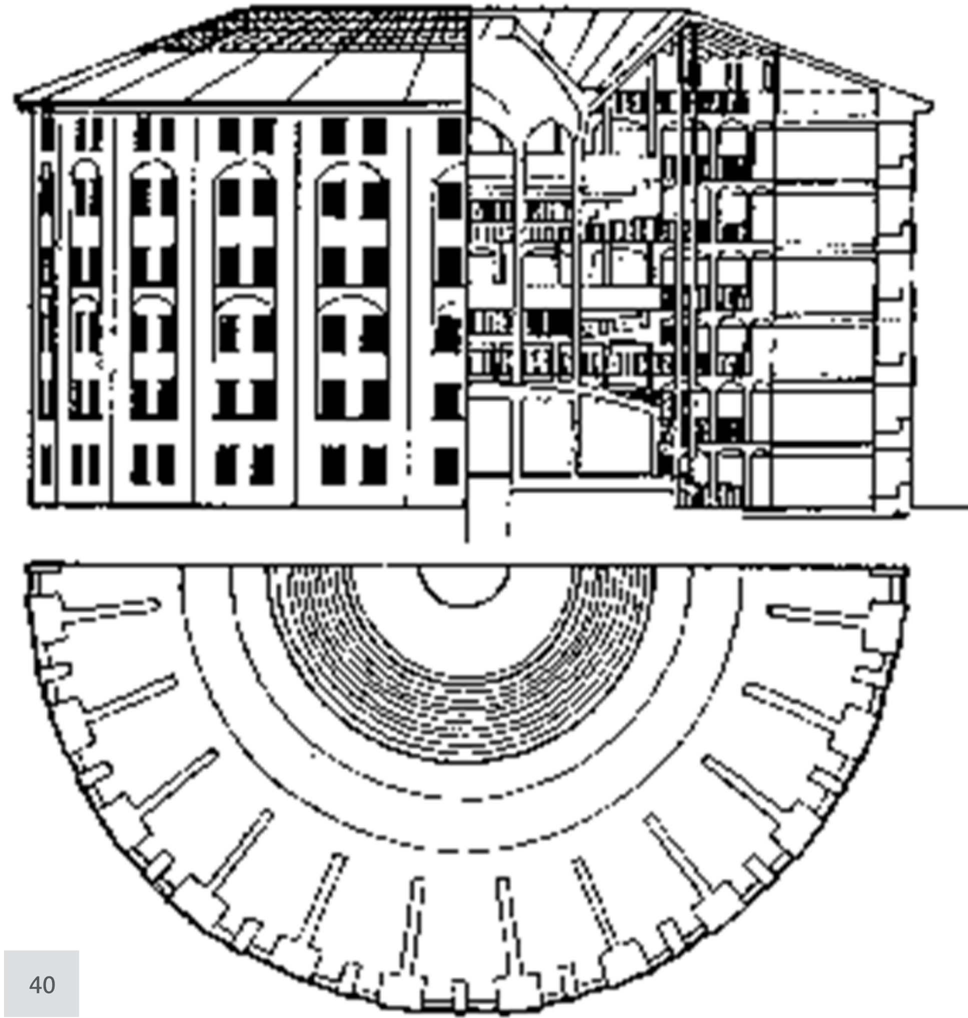


Figure 37
Carcere Correzionale di San Michele in Roma (Prison for Young Men, San Michele, Rome). The arrangement of the individual cells with sanitation units is seen by some as prophetic: a precursor to the later Bentham's Panopticon, the cell layout at Auburn Penitentiary of New York, and, subsequently, modern prison architecture.
Stamperia Stampe Antiche
<http://www.stamperiastampeantiche.it/select_cat.php?page=6&ID=N24#>

Figure 38
Main cell block at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary, 1934
Plans: floors one and two
Courtesy of Tennessee State Library and Archives

Figure 39
Chapel at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary,
constructed 1938
Author's photo



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The end of eighteenth century saw the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution and great socio-economic changes and upheavals, such as French Revolution, the rise of Russian Empire, and American Revolutionary War. With these changes came massive migrations, poverty, and disease – a climate of unrest and uncertainty, to which Enlightenment minds responded with theories of control and discipline, that were, "in microcosm, theories and practices of social order."[56] Within this historical context, English philosopher and social reformer Jeremy Bentham introduced the design for Panopticon, or the Inspection House. French psychoanalyst and writer, Jacques-Alain Miller provides a succinct description of the structure:

> It is circular. There are cells around the circumference, on each floor. In the center, a tower. Between the center and the circumference is a neutral, intermediate zone. Each cell has a window to the outside, so constructed that air and light can enter, but the view outside is blocked...The cells can be viewed from the rooms in the central tower, but a system of shutters prevents those rooms or their inhabitants from being seen from the cells. The building is surrounded by an annular wall...There is only one entrance or exit to the building or through the outer wall. The building is completely closed (fig. 40). [57]

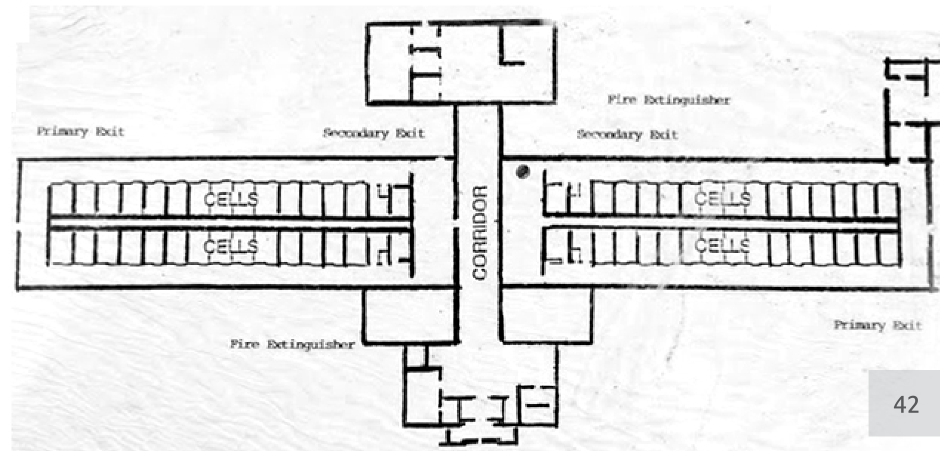
Creation of a perfect prison was not Bentham's sole intention. In a collection of letters known as "Panopticon or the Inspection House," he wrote that the scheme would be "applicable to all establishments, in which...a number of persons are meant to be kept under inspection."[58] The eerie ingenuity of Panopticon lay in its main operational principle. Since it was not practically possible for each prisoner to be physically observed at all times, the "next thing wished for is, that, at every instant, feeling reason to believe as much, and not being able to satisfy himself to the contrary, [the prisoner] should convince himself to be so."[59] In other words, a prisoner did not know when he was observed, but had a reason to believe that he could have been observed at any time. French philosopher Michel Foucault, renowned for his analysis of Bentham's Panopticon, noted that transparency of the cells combined with the imperviousness of the central tower concealing the invisible inspector "reversed the principle of the dungeon": it enclosed the inmate and separated him from the others, yet it did not hide him from sight and from light (fig. 41).[60] While scholars view Bentham's Panopticon critically today as an architectural expression of power and a prophetic mechanism of social control that reached its fullest potential with the evolution of modern technology, at the time of its invention, the Panopticon suggested a radically new approach to the architecture of prisons. The symbolic center that was previously occupied by an altar and centripetally drew gaze to itself, unifying worshippers, at least theoretically, in their faith, now turned into the outwardly directed gaze of the inspector, an invisible eye of power, which divided prisoners and "dispersed [them] centrifugally."[61]

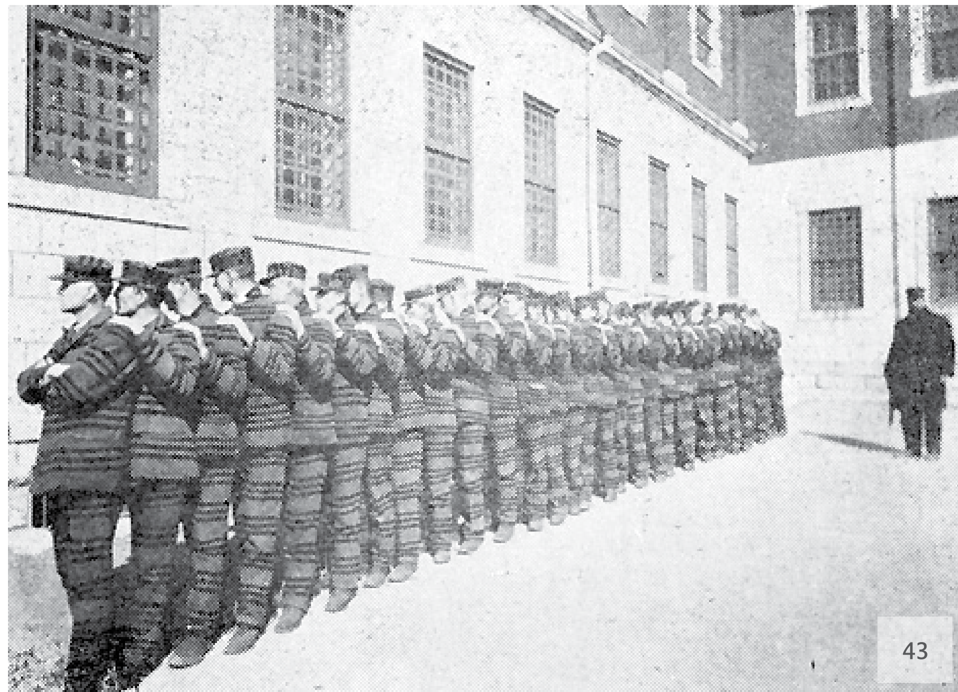
The influence of Bentham's theories and his concept of Panopticon can clearly be seen in any prison today, including Brushy Mountain. Whether the overall floor plan of a prison can be likened to the original circular Panoptic layout or not, the concept of cage-like cells open for observation without possibility of privacy – with individual prisoners lacking certainty about whether they are being observed – has been applied ubiquitously. The emergence of the new prison architecture was concurrent with and responded to the overall change in the approach to the imprisonment and social control. The work of Beccaria, Howard, and Bentham was met with enthusiasm by public and state officials not only in England but also in North America, shaping the architectural, political, and philosophical discourse on crime and punishment for many decades. Brushy Mountain is a direct descendant of these developments and the following section will place this penitentiary more precisely in the architectural and political historic context.

41

Figure 40
Panopticon. In spite of Bentham's campaign to construct Panopticon, it has never been built to the exact specifications provided in his Letters. The closest approximation was erected in Cuba in 1928 (see fig. 6)
Cartome, Courtesy of University College London Library, June 16 2001, <http://cartome.org/panopticon1.htm>

Figure 41
Presidio Modelo, Isla de la Juventud, Cuba.
Panopticon, as envisioned by Jeremy Bentham, was built two centuries after its inception, between 1926-28, by the order of Cuban dictator Gerardo Machado.
Photograph by Jason Florio, <www.floriophoto.com/#/story archive/cuba-presidio modelo/>





The initial stages of the establishment of penal institutions in post-revolutionary America were marked by the increasing repugnance toward the harsh English criminal code, in conjunction with the general desire of the public and the political leaders to separate themselves from the penal system of the Old World.[62] Caleb Smith, a scholar of the narrative of punishment, noted:

> The founders of the U.S. political order – men of enlightenment, including Rush, Benjamin Franklin, ad Thomas Jefferson – felt that the new nation, with its social contract based on liberty of the individual citizen-subject, required laws and punishments commensurate with its radical political vision.[63]

The American political leaders argued against Calvinist doctrine which preached the intrinsic sinfulness of men, and instead advocated that all men were rational beings capable of reform. Thus, they argued, imprisonment institutions of the new world should be places of penance and transformation brought on by contemplation and work, places that created "remade citizen-subjects,"[64] or, according to Benjamin Rush, men "who were lost and are found – were dead and are alive."[65] Here, in the outwardly humanistic effort, the ancient idea of "civil death" was brought back as a precondition of prisoner's reform.

In the early nineteenth century, these much discussed theories were put to the test when new, larger prisons were built in New York and Pennsylvania. The penitentiary at Auburn, New York was constructed in 1816. Ironically, the first warden of Auburn penitentiary, Elam Lynds, did not believe in the individual's capability to reform, and was credited with the invention of the disciplinary regime which, in combination with the prison's architectural model, became known as the "Auburn System," the most widely practiced penitentiary regime in the United States. Auburn cell blocks consisted of banks of small solitary cells, 7.5 feet by 3.8 each, whose doors opened into an observation corridor. The banks were arranged in several tiers, similarly to the familiar pattern established by St. Michele Prison for Young Men in Rome; however, instead of facing each other across the court, they were laid out back-to-back, always facing the gaze of the guards and preventing communication between inmates (fig. 42). While this arrangement differed from that of Panopticon, the principle of dividing and "dispersing [inmates] centrifugally" still applied. At Auburn, the inmates congregated in large workshops during the day, where they were required to work. In both the cells and the shops, prisoners were made to follow strict rules of silence and harsh discipline, enforced by guards and preserved by fear of severe punishment (fig. 43).[66] With the establishment of profitable industrial workshops that generated revenue for both the state and private institutions that contracted prison labor, the goal of imprisonment at Auburn concentrated on "breaking the convict's spirit and turning [him] into a silent and insulated working machine."[67]

When Auburn's floor plan is compared with that of a 1934 Brushy Mountain cell block, its influence on the architecture of subsequent carceral spaces becomes evident (figs. 43 and 44). The floor plan developed for Auburn was readily adopted by other prisons because it was economical, efficient, and facilitated observation. Following the Auburn precedent, the architect of the main block at Brushy Mountain grouped the cells back to back, creating the plumbing and ventilation chase within the central wall formed between the two bays of cells; the observation corridors ran the length of the bays. All tiers of cells faced the vertical canyon-like space that ran the height of the building. The differences between the Auburn and Brushy Mountain plan were insignificant: Brushy cells were designed for four inmates (although they were refitted for two prisoners after a renovation in the late 1970s) and were larger at 8' X 9.' Also, the overall cell block plan formed two arms of a cross rather than a long bar. At Brushy Mountain, the central "leg" of the cross contained supporting facilities and administrative spaces that did not exist at Auburn as part of the cell blocks, such as a mess hall, an auditorium, and an infirmary. However, the overall architectural concept of housing and observing prisoners remained unchanged in the period of time between the 1816 Auburn and 1934 Brushy. Most notably, the prosaic and practical goal of turning prisoners into workers sought at Auburn, a goal far removed from the idealistic idea of penance and reform originally voiced by political leaders, continued at Brushy's mines until

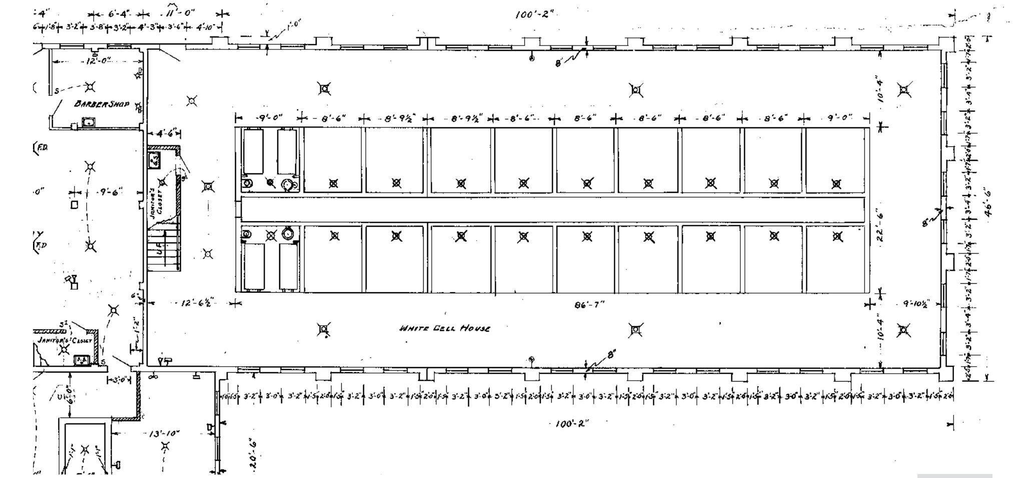


Figure 42
Auburn Penitentiary floor plan, partial
<http://archiveofaffinities.tmblr.com/post/11896375268/john-haviland-eastern- penitentiary-plan>

Figure 43
Prisoners walking in lockstep, a disciplinary measure practiced at Auburn Penitentiary. The Lockstep was abolished in 1900.
From "100 Years Of Progress," NY State Department of Corrections, 1970.
correctionalhistory.net

Figure 44
Brushy Mountain Penitentiary, second floor, partial plan
Courtesy of Tennessee State Library and Archives

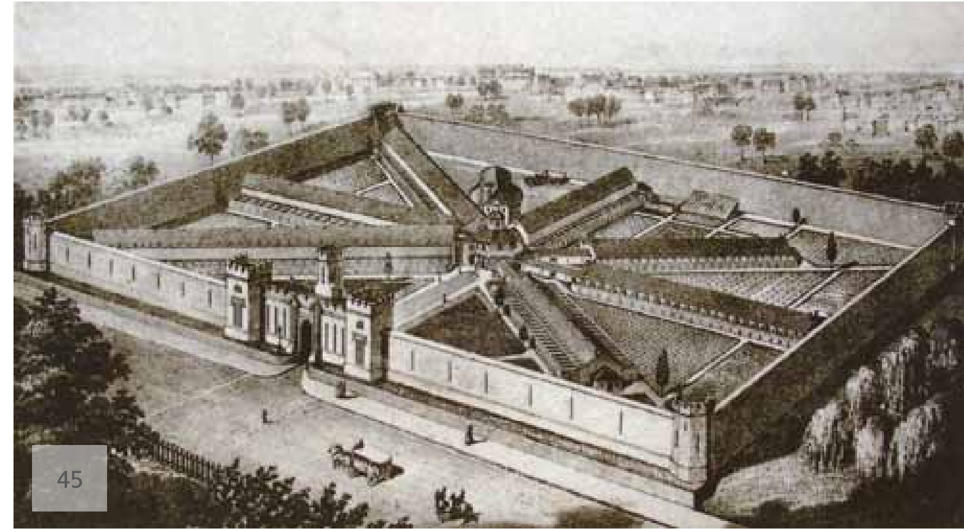


Figure 45
Eastern Penitentiary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1823-1825, Architect John Haviland.
he prison's design, comprised of the central tower and the wings with their corridors radiating from it, was greatly influenced by the work of Jeremy Bentham. The ease of observation, minimum amount of prison guards, and sufficient light in each cell to facilitate daily labour were some of the design goals.
Lithograph by P. S. Duval and Co., 1855

Figure 46
The very theories of imprisonment and prisons were reserved for those who had been or would be free. America treated those who were enslaved with medieval cruelty. Slaves were punished for minor offences at the liberty of their owner.
<http://ontd-political.livejournal.com>

their closure in 1967, where the quotas that had to be fulfilled by the inmates required a removal of eight to nine tons of coal or 200 cubic yards of stone daily.* [68]

In contrast to the Auburn system, Eastern Penitentiary, constructed in 1821 in Pennsylvania, was directly influenced by the work of Jeremy Bentham. Based on solitary confinement, Pennsylvania system never allowed prisoners to leave their 18 by 12 foot cells, where they performed labor during the day (fig. 45). The system required fewer guards, and was based on the hopes of individual prisoner reform through solitude and labor. The profitability of prisoner's work products was never the goal of the penitentiary, and, in opposition to the Auburn system, the Pennsylvania model was financially taxing for the state. Also, in addition to the reported cases of insanity resulting from prolonged and complete solitary confinement, the merits of this model in terms of prisoner reform were never adequately demonstrated, and Pennsylvania system was not emulated outside of the state.

Note: The closure of the mines was initiated by a comparatively progressive warden Lake Russell and corresponded to the official end of segregation in the state's correctional facilities. While mining accidents were not uncommon at Brushy Mountain, the one that occurred in 1967 and resulted in the death of two inmates bore heavily on the warden's consciousness, forcing him to advocate the closure and make a pledge that the mines "would never run as long as he was around."

Despite their differences, both the Auburn and Pennsylvania models were based on Enlightenment beliefs of humane treatment of inmates and the reformative potential of punishment. However, it would be inaccurate to relegate an understanding of the seminal influences on the American prison solely to these reform theories and theorists. While discussions of the fate of "men lost and found" inspired by European Enlightenment occupied the political rhetoric, "whipping, branding, and killing were not fading from the American social landscape", particularly in the American South (fig. 46).[69] Indeed, no investigation of the American prison would be complete without addressing the fundamental and powerful influence of race in determining the incarceration and treatment of prisoners. So prominent was the influence of race as a counter to Enlightenment reform that French intellectuals Gustave le Beaumont and Alexis de Tocqueville, in their early 1830s analysis of the American prison system, omitted the American South from their research of progressive prison practices in the new world. They noted:

> ...in every place where one half of the community is cruelly oppressed by the other, we must expect to find in the law of the oppressor, a weapon always ready to strike nature which revolts or humanity that complaints. Punishment of death and stripes – these form the whole penal code for the slaves...There are no prisons [for] slaves. Death, whips...cost nothing.[70]

As general history of imprisonment traces its evolution "from the scaffold to the penitentiary," the complete picture of punishment in America suggests simultaneous existence of both. Being "a matter not so much of chronology as of race and geography," this contradiction can be traced throughout two centuries, into the age of convict leasing and further, to the prison farms and prison mines of the twentieth century, such as Parchman Farm in Mississippi or Brushy Mountain in Tennessee.[71]

The contemporary American penitentiary can be seen then as an entity arising, in part, from the prison formed by the theories of enlightenment and,

in part, from the antebellum plantation. In the antebellum South, the prison stood against a background of institutional racism enacted on the plantation. At that time, prison was an establishment that primarily housed white offenders, while the slave-holders were left to deal with the offences of their human property as they pleased. Within this structure, prisons kept the status of an "institution that reinforced race...as the principle of solidarity in southern society," a solidarity of white citizens. Antebellum prisons also upheld the myth of white individuality against "undifferentiated collectivity" and enforced dependency of slaves confined to the plantation.[72]

The need for a new means of racialized control after the abolition of slavery led to the emergence of the system of convict leasing, which also fulfilled a pressing economic need in the post-bellum South. Prison in the United States has already become associated with profit, as has been demonstrated by the workshops of the Auburn Penitentiary. The emerging convict-lease scheme was an ingenious conglomeration of "legalized" slavery, plantation work model, and segregation, all within the system of unchecked capitalism. As noted by professor Edward Ayers,

> ...the lease system was tailor-made for capitalists concerned only with making money fast. Labor costs were reduced to the vanishing point, lucrative jobs could be undertaken that others would not risk, convicts could be driven at a pace free workers would not tolerate.[73]

This horrific system, which, by many accounts "left a trail of dishonor and death that could only find a parallel in the prisons of Nazi Germany," was abolished in most states by the late 1920s, while still persisting in some forms until WWII. However,[74] the legacy of the plantation remained within American systems of incarceration, manifesting itself in the prison-farms, chain-gangs, and prison-mines (figs. 47, 48). Arguably, this connection can also be made to the profiteering from prison labor today.

The end of convict leasing directed a great number of black convicts into the general prison system, creating a dilemma for the institution. Questions of racially mixed prison populations first became an issue soon after the Civil War, when first waves of black inmates were introduced into the system. During

Figure 47
Cotton Inspection at Parchman Farm, 1930
By Unknown
Parchman Farm was one of the largest "prison-farms" in the country, its vast cotton fields and predominantly black inmates reminiscent of an antebellum cotton plantation.
timeonparchmanfarm.com

Figure 48
Inmate miners at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary, between 1930 and 1940
By Unknown
Courtesy of Tennessee State Library and Archives

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the 1886 National Prison Congress, one of the Southern speakers claimed that unsegregated prison population would "constitute a punishment too cruel to permit" for the white inmates, comparing it to the "ancient torture...of tying a murderer to the dead body of his victim...until the decaying corps brought death to the living."[75] In the absence of a more definitive means of separation of races, such as that provided by slavery, segregation remained a vital part of prison's modus operandi, persisting for nearly a century. Similarly to other prisons and jails throughout the country, racial segregation continued at Brushy Mountain until it was officially banned by the state of Tennessee in 1966. Segregation was such an unquestionable fact of life that race designation was specified on the architectural drawings for the main cell block at the penitentiary (fig. 49, 50). While the Civil Rights Movement inspired change in all avenues of life in the country, prisons sustained their adherence to the practice. Notably, federal court dismissed a challenge to racial segregation in prisons in 1959, four years after Brown v. Board of Education, ruling that "the reasons for abolishing segregation in public schools did not apply to prisons."[76] Similar challenges continued to be dismissed for another decade, until federal courts began to view segregation in prisons as unconstitutional.[77]

Race also remains to be an overwhelming factor in the desegregated contemporary prisons and jails. Arguably, echoes of historic "racial solidarity" of all-white prison in opposition to the lawlessness of plantation of the antebellum era continue to define prison subculture today. Randall Kennedy, a scholar of race and law in America, observed that, "with substantial frequency, race has determined job assignments, levels of discipline, the tenor of relationships between inmates and between prisoners and guards." Moreover, he noted that "the Constitution did not breach prison walls for over 170 years," as, until the last decades of the 20th century, most courts refused to hear complaints generated from within prisons, including "racially motivated official misconduct."[78]

Another layer in the racialized nature of contemporary imprisonment is the ancient idea of "civil death," which found a new potential in relation to racialized imprisonment. Upon entering a prison, inmates undergo the rituals of "booking in," abandoning personal possessions, worldly connections, and the privileges possessed by free citizens, including participation in the democratic process. Thus, inmates enter a state which legal scholars refer to as criminal disenfranchisement or "civil death."[79] While the concept of civil death can be traced to medieval criminal laws, and has been denounced as "vestigial doctrine," and "a relic of...superstitious codes"[80] by the modern-day jurists, it remains the "legal language that finds its materialization in the modern prison."[81] Yet, today former prisoners do not emerge from the gates of a penitentiary "resurrected" as citizens; on the contrary, collateral consequences of their prior conviction and imprisonment force them into an "undercaste" – or unremitting civil death – which constitutes the basis of the modern day reincarnation of Jim Crow. Rogers M. Smith, a noted American political scientist, suggests that civil death constitutes an "overly racist ideology that developed directly in support of criminal disenfranchisement law at the end of 19th century and sought...to remove black offenders, more than whites, from the franchise."[82] Such form of "civil death" still disproportionately affects black communities, forcing their members into a kind of modern state of enforced dependency, further perpetuating the historic dichotomy of idealized American individuality versus "undifferentiated collectivity" and enforced dependency of plantation, chain-gang, or a modern urban ghetto.

The story of evolution of prisons – architectural, philosophical, ideological – sheds a new light on the features of Brushy Mountain Penitentiary. Infused with the intrinsic power of their historic associations, these artefacts allow visitors and scholars to establish a palpable connection to a difficult, and still evolving, memory or a shameful period in history. In this process one becomes "wounded by wounds of another" and then begins to assess critically the contemporary world in which this "wound is experienced as an insufficiency of the present."[83] Workings of power, politics, economic forces, structures of violence and domination – so much can and needs to be learned at Brushy Mountain. The following chapter will investigate possible course of intervention at Brushy Mountain in order to transform the place into a site of learning based on the principles of pedagogies of memory and place.

■ ■ ■

Figure 49 and 50
Segregated way of life began at architect's easel - drawings for the 1934 main cell block designate separate "colored" cell wing as well as lavatories in the infirmary.
Brushy Mountain Penitentiary main cell block, second floor.
Courtesy of Tennessee State Library and Archives

CHAPTER TWO NOTES

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CHAPTER THREE

ENVISIONING TRANSFORMATION AT BRUSHY MOUNTAIN

While the pedagogical potential of the site has been made evident, the question remains: what architectural intervention is appropriate at Brushy Mountain? In order to begin an intervention at the site of Brushy Mountain Penitentiary, this chapter will review some of the important lessons derived from the precedents that have successfully integrated place, memory, and activism into architectural or design solutions. To further understand the nature of transformations that should take place at Brushy Mountain, this chapter will investigate the possible user groups that will come to the re-envisioned site, their interests and needs. The goal of this chapter is to thoroughly investigate these pre-requisites and to propose a list of spaces and facilities that will transform this site of difficult history into a place of learning and activism.

60

1. PRECEDENTS: LESSONS LEARNED

A. PROGRAMMATIC PRINCIPLES

1. Overlaying new program over the existing fabric (Majdanek)

One of the most important strategies used at Majdanek was clear identification of programmatic elements (accommodations, study and research, commemoration, contemporary installations) and their application to various parts of the site. In contrast to Brushy Mountain, which developed over a century, the traumatic history at Majdanek occurred within a period of just a few years. Therefore, at Brushy Mountain, it is particularly important to identify the elements, both existing and new, and the purpose that they will seek to accomplish within the framework of the pedagogy of memory.

2. Creating a threshold between difficult experience within and the comfort of the familiar world outside (Majdanek)

It is important to note that the visitor center at Majdanek is a new building specifically designed for the purpose and situated at the entrance into the site of the museum. It allows the visitors to get situated and check in, but also provides a sort of a buffer, a threshold between the emotionally charged experience that awaits beyond and the comfort of familiarity of the world outside.

3. Connecting through art – temporary exhibits (Majdanek)

Another lesson that can be taken from Majdanek is its modern art installations, which never cease to reflect on traumatic history and to keep it alive for new generations. They create an open link between the present and the past, a new avenue for the visitors to encounter a disruption of daily frames of reference in order to reevaluate the past. This element of museum offers a moving inspiration for the intervention at Brushy Mountain.

4. Avoiding rigid interpretations of history and carefully framing the experience (Red Location Museum)

As opposed to the museum at Majdanek, Red Location Museum houses collection of historic artefacts and documents within new architectural forms, while the historical site around it continues to be transformed. The museum acts as a preserver of unaltered memories – taking care to keep them unaltered – while aspiring to influence and inspire the flows of life outside. This is also the goal for Brushy Mountain's transformation. The greatest difference is the scale of the artefacts containing difficult memories – instead of objects that can be fit within memory boxes, they are buildings, hill slopes, and mines within. Nevertheless, the lessons of Red Location Museums can still be applied. Experience within the memory box is carefully framed, placed within the deliberately blank, cavernous space. Having been "wounded by the wounds of another," the visitors have to remove themselves from the intensity of the memory box in order to reflect and gain strength to move on. Such framing of experience is very important in order to fully realize application of the concepts of pedagogy of remembrance and can be achieved at Brushy Mountain, albeit on a different scale and with different means.

5. Subtlety and sensitivity of architectural elements in their interaction with the site can convey greater lessons (Tuskegee Institute)

One of the lessons to draw from Tuskegee Institute is the subtle power created by sensitive interaction of architecture with the site. The way visitors enter the Brushy Mountain and move between historical, new, and natural artefacts of can be infused with deep meaning. As mere orientation of Tantum Hall at Tuskegee conveyed thoughts of resistance to the status quo and, at the same time, adherence to the values of the rural community, so can simple strategies, such as framing of a particular view or introduction a new path, inspire a first step toward change at Brushy Mountain.

Figure 60
Brushy Mountain Penitentiary, main compound
Drawing by author

1. Creating a place for the community, while maintaining ties to the past (Red Location Museum)

At Red Location, the museum was only one part of the multilayered and multiphase architectural project, whose daring purpose was the reactivation of the true cultural center of New Brighton Township – the center that was never recognized as such under the apartheid government. While the purpose of the Red Location Museum, and the library and archives it contains, was to educate and to inspire new generations, as a whole, the project aspired to create a new center for the entire community with ties to its past, which will always remain at the center of the communal experience (fig. X).

2. Creating paths for the transformation of the community (Tuskegee Institute).

The uniqueness of Tuskegee Institute lies in its profound interaction with place – place in the holistic sense that was discussed earlier – that is different from the traditional academic establishments. Place defined everything at Tuskegee, from the nature of educational programs to the layout of buildings, yet the Institute also came to define the place, to empower the black rural community and to begin a transformation in thinking of the white community, even if the latter did not succeed at first. In this sense, a parallel may be drawn to Brushy Mountain Penitentiary. The penitentiary was defined by the place, by factors ranging from political, economic, and ideological to physical, such as the topography of the valley that shaped the prison campus, or the ideology and economy that created it in the coal-rich mountains. In turn, the penitentiary profoundly transformed the neighboring community: culturally, by producing generations of prison guards and oral traditions; economically, by creating a dependency on the existence of prison; and ideologically, by enforcing the existence of an undercaste of prisoners and a class of guards, "them" and "us." Yet, taking a cue from the lessons of positive transformative power of Tuskegee, Brushy Mountain has a latent strength to enact a positive transformation. As curriculum at Tuskegee was dictated by the needs of the place, where "industries started...growing from the needs of community," so can some of the educational or interpretive programs at the transformed Brushy Mountain. While the educational programs can draw justice students and activists from afar, for the new center to truly take advantage of the place-based education it must also include the community that is already there.

3. Boldness and fearlessness in pursuing programmatic and design goals (Highlander Folks School).

One of the paramount principles at the foundation of Highlander Folk School was a simple but powerful idea expressed by Paolo Freire: false charity simply gives limited resources to the needy until a new infusion is needed again, creating a dependency, while true charity empowers the needy in such a way that they are able to transcend their economic or political situation and no longer depend on the powerful. Highlander Folk School empowered generations of activists through such true charity, enabling them to move on to their home communities and disseminate the knowledge they received, working against the adversity of their current political situation. In this lies the most important lesson of Highlander: fearlessness and adherence to the principles identified at the start.

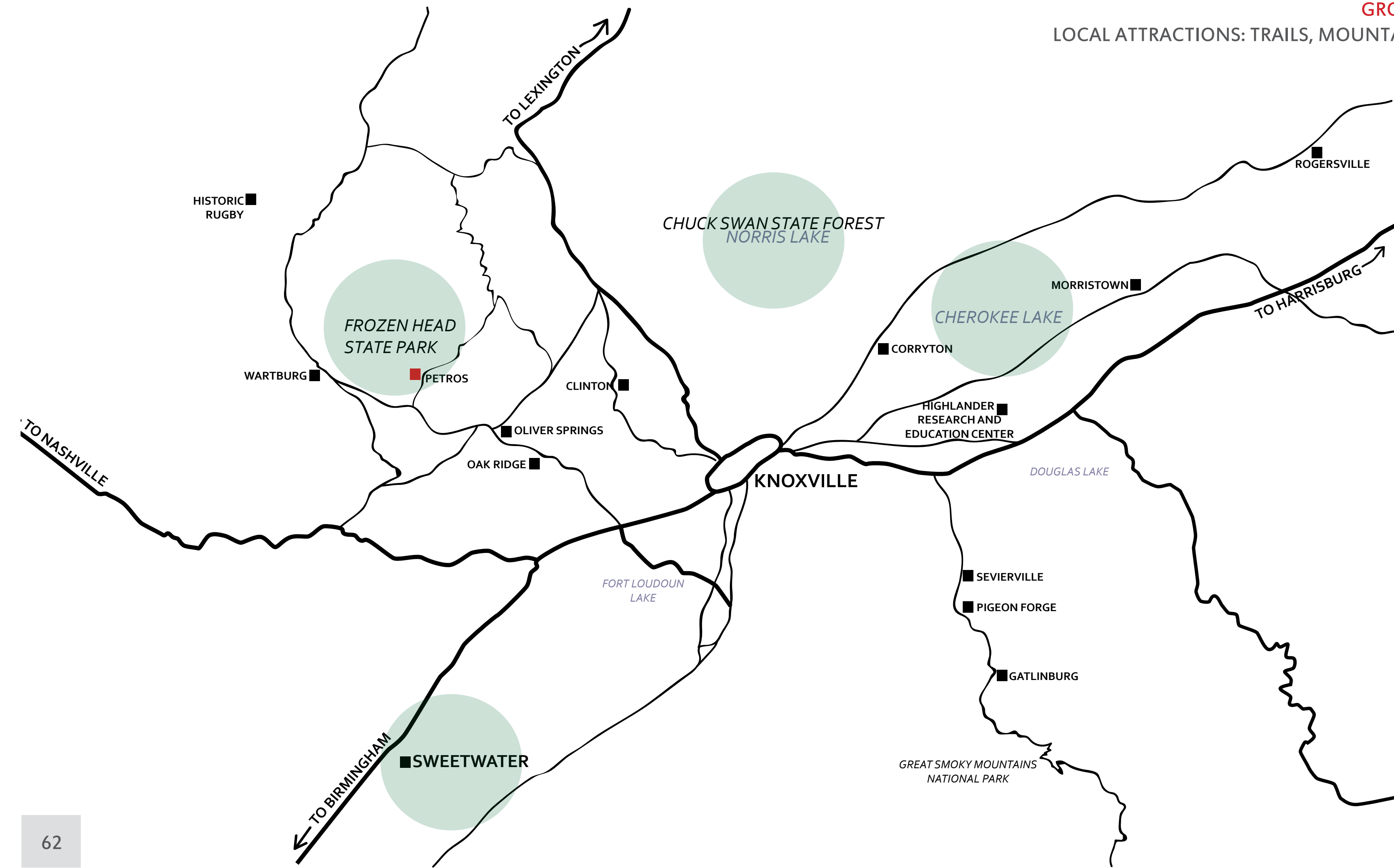
While Highlander School had taken over existing buildings several times through its existence, small design interventions have always emphasized the ideas of equality regardless of origin or race. Such was the circular meeting room or the rocking chair, the emblem of the school. Design that encourages coming together on equal terms should be another important lesson of Highlander.

This thesis has demonstrated that the site of Brushy Mountain Penitentiary has the ingredients necessary to create a powerful place of learning, yet the task of designing a place that provides an environment where the true charity of empowerment can be implemented still remains.

Figure 61
Community square in front of Red Location Museum creates a well-used gathering place
Photo Warwick Mihaly, Worldpress

2. TRANSFORMATION OF BRUSHY MOUNTAIN PENITENTIARY: USERS

GROUP ONE: HIKERS
LOCAL ATTRACTIONS: TRAILS, MOUNTAINS, LOOKOUTS



NORRIS DAM

Built by Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) during the depression era of the 1930s.

FROZEN HEAD STATE PARK

Brushy Mountain Penitentiary is located at the edge of Frozen Head state park, and can be seen at the lower right corner of this photo, at the bottom of the valley.

A stream on the north slope of Old Mac Mountain

Natural attractions of Appalachian Mountains draw a significant number of tourists to the area. Brushy Mountain Penitentiary and the nearby town of Petros lie at the edge of Frozen Head State Park (fig. 62), which currently attracts a following of hikers and backpackers. A part of the intervention at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary must take this into consideration, inviting a group of users that may come to see the surrounding mountains and lookouts, but will learn something about the history of the place in the process, or even become deeply moved by what they discover.

This thesis proposes a series of trails for the visitors arriving at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary, which would lead to the historically significant points: burial ground at the southwest corner of the site and remains of the mines in the hills to the east (please see diagrams on pages 68 - 71). Following one of the lessons derived from the precedents, these paths will allow connection to the difficult past without its rigid interpretation, allowing the discovery take its own pace.

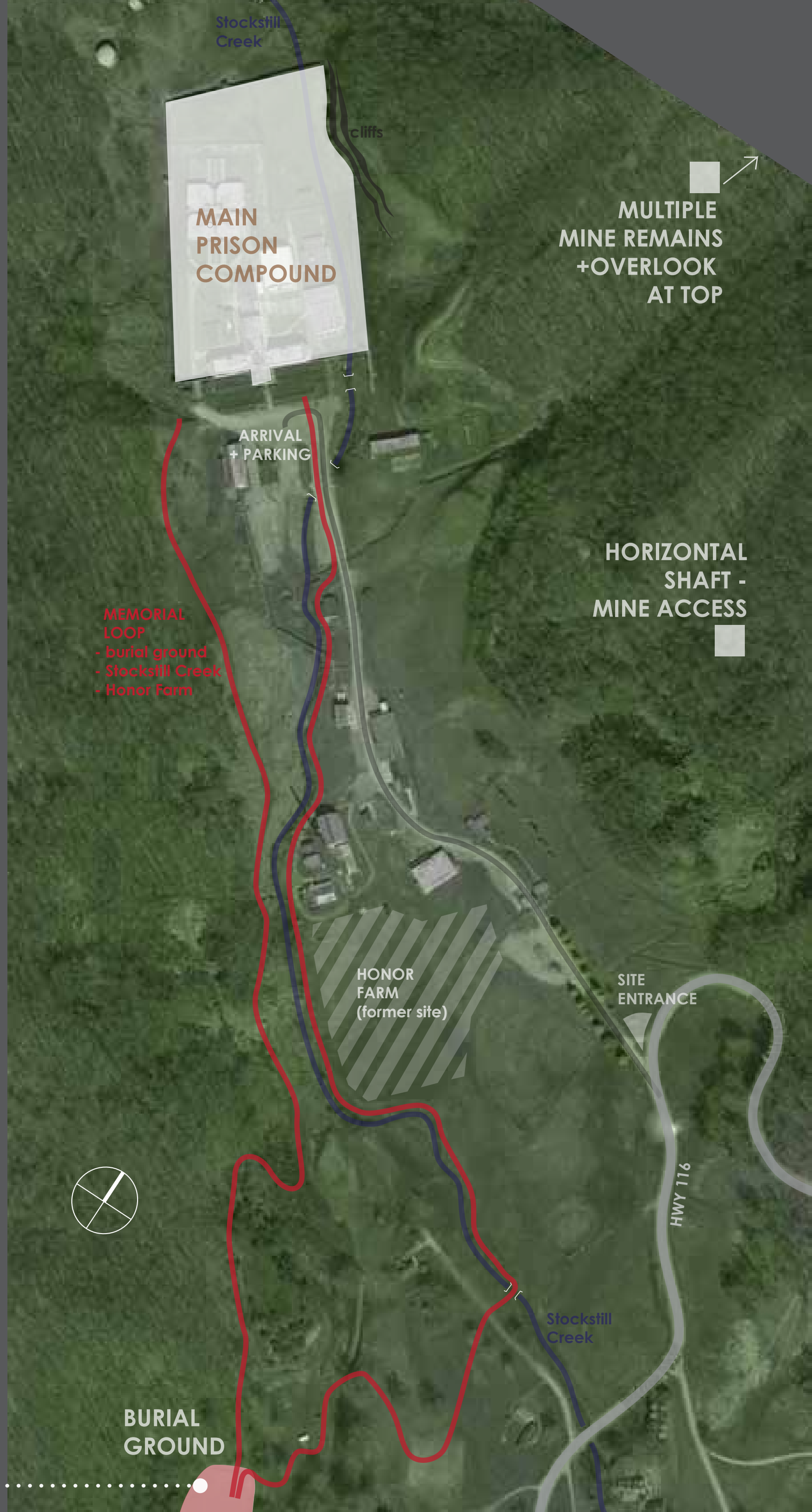
Figure 62
Map of natural attractions in the area. Brushy Mountain Penitentiary is located in the town of Petros.
Image by author

Figures 63 - 65
Norris Dam, Frozen Head Park, and natural lookout point
Images by author

TRAIL ONE:
MEMORIAL LOOP

For the first group of users, the most easily accessible trail would be the Memorial Loop - a walk from the parking area in front of the main prison compound, along the edge of the valley, to the burial grounds or prison cemetery. To complete the loop, visitors would walk along Stockstill Creek and various structures and outbuildings that remain on the site. These include a shooting range just below the cemetery, guard's barracks, the site where prison's Honor Farm was located (later replaces with baseball fields), and various support structures.

Figure 66
The cross at the burial grounds build from the stones that used to serve as grave markers
Image by author



TRAIL TWO:
LOWER MINE ACCESS TRAIL

A more difficult trail takes the visitors into the terrain that was heavily mined until the operations stopped four and a half decades ago. It moves on the edge of the heavily forested hillside, which had little vegetation when coal mining was active. Here, the concrete remnants of mining structures begin to "disrupt the daily frames of reference" of visitors revealing the latent power of the site to teach and to change minds.

Figure 67
Remnants of the horizontal manshaft accessible from the prison compound.
Image by author

TRAIL THREE:
UPPER MINE ACCESS TRAIL

The most challenging trail will take visitors from the arrival point at prison compound to the outlook point at the top of the Waldens Ridge overlooking the valley. It contained the uppermost mine, Frozen Head, nearly a mile above the prison. The remains of the mines and infrastructure are dispersed along the hillside. The trek, using switchbacks to account for the needs of the walking up the hillside, will follow the route of the original lift that was built to haul coal and people between the prison and the work locations.

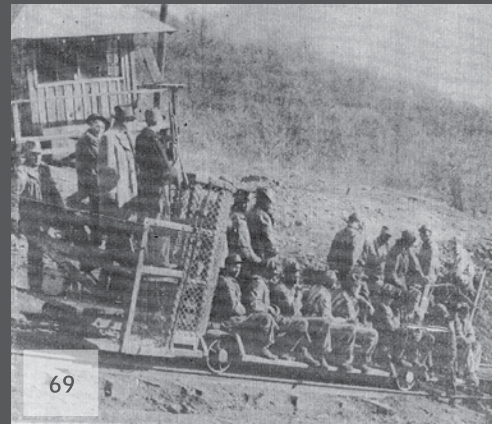


Figure 68
View from the top of Wladens Ridge

Figure 69
Prisoners and inspectors returning to the prison compound on the incline man car, from the Pewee Seam mine.
Knoxville Journal, 1950

Figure 70
concrete structures, overgrown with vegetation tell of a past that should not be forgotten
Image by author

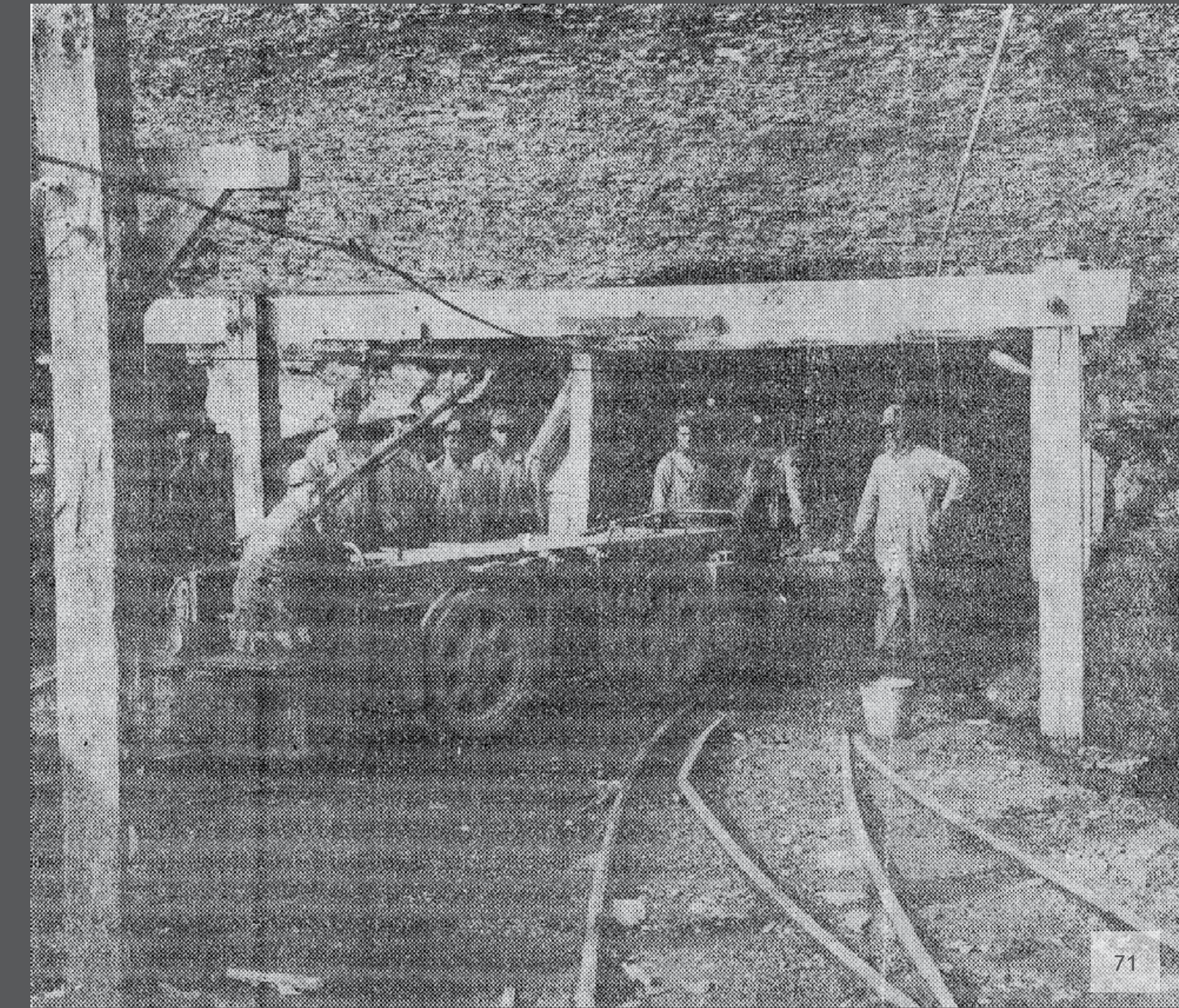
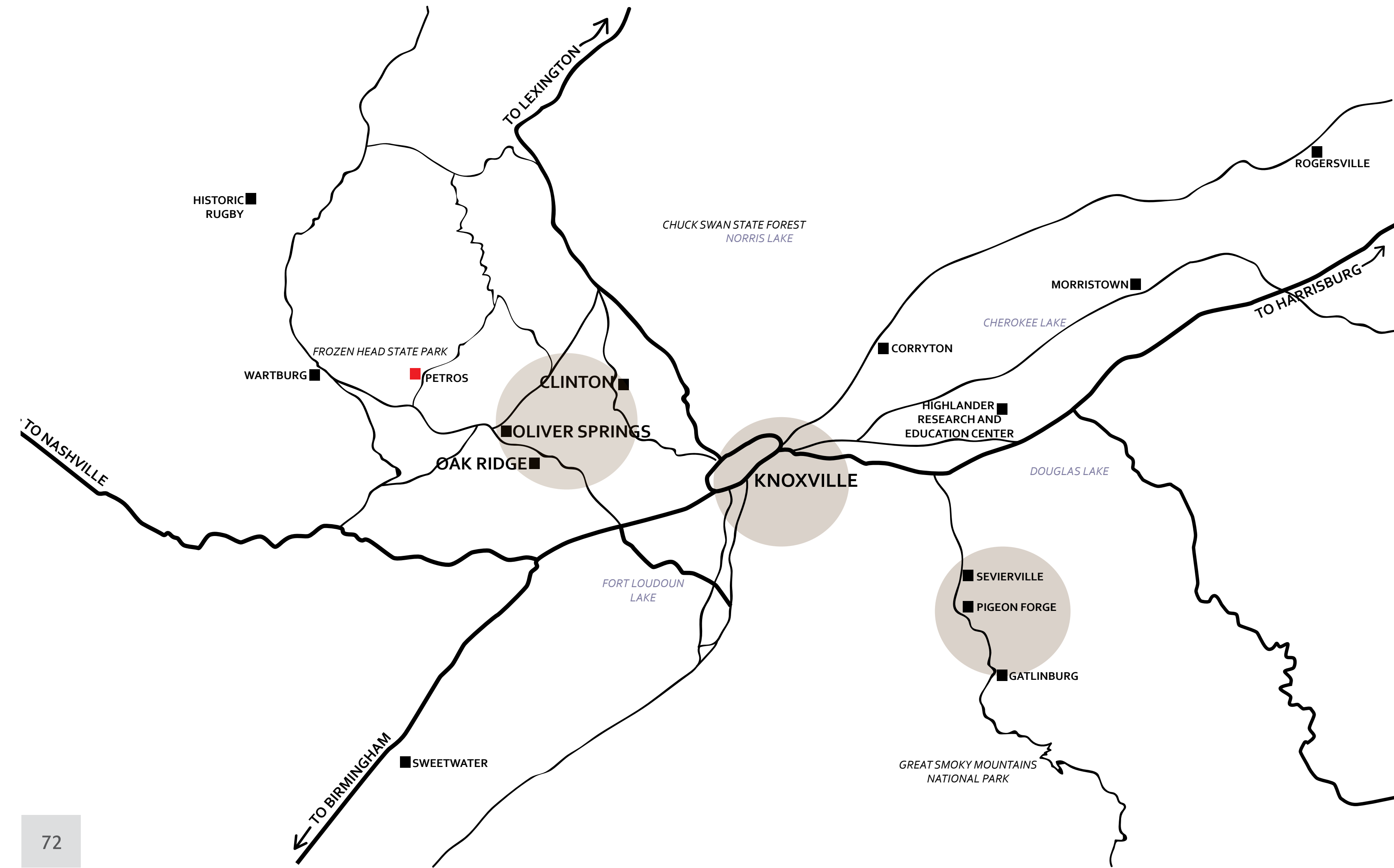


Figure 71
Prisoners stand in front of the opening into horizontal manshaft at Frozen Head mine, neaarly atop of Waldens Ridge
Knoxville Journal, 1950

GROUP TWO: DAY VISITORS WITH INTEREST IN HISTORY
LOCAL ATTRACTIONS: MUSEUMS AND EXHIBITS



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EAST TENNESSEE HISTORY CENTER (Knoxville)

Library, archives, and artefacts, with an emphasis on the history of the Civil War. Diverse temporary and permanent exhibits and installations.

74

OAK RIDGE NUCLEAR LABORATORIES

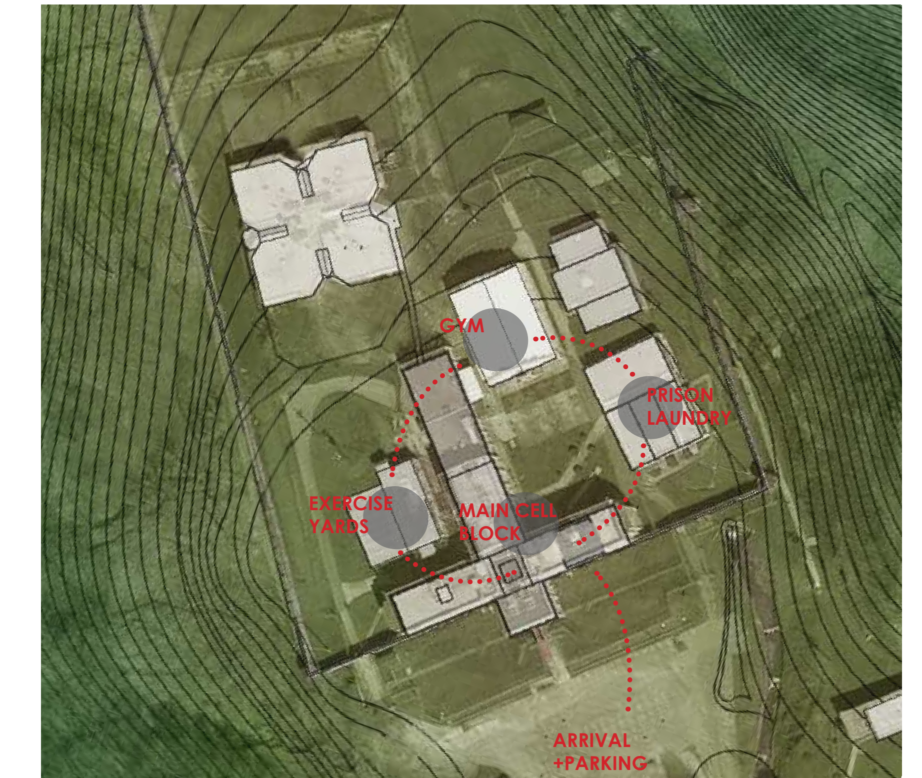
Part of the Manhattan Project. Master plan by Skidmore, Owings, and Merril (SOM).

75

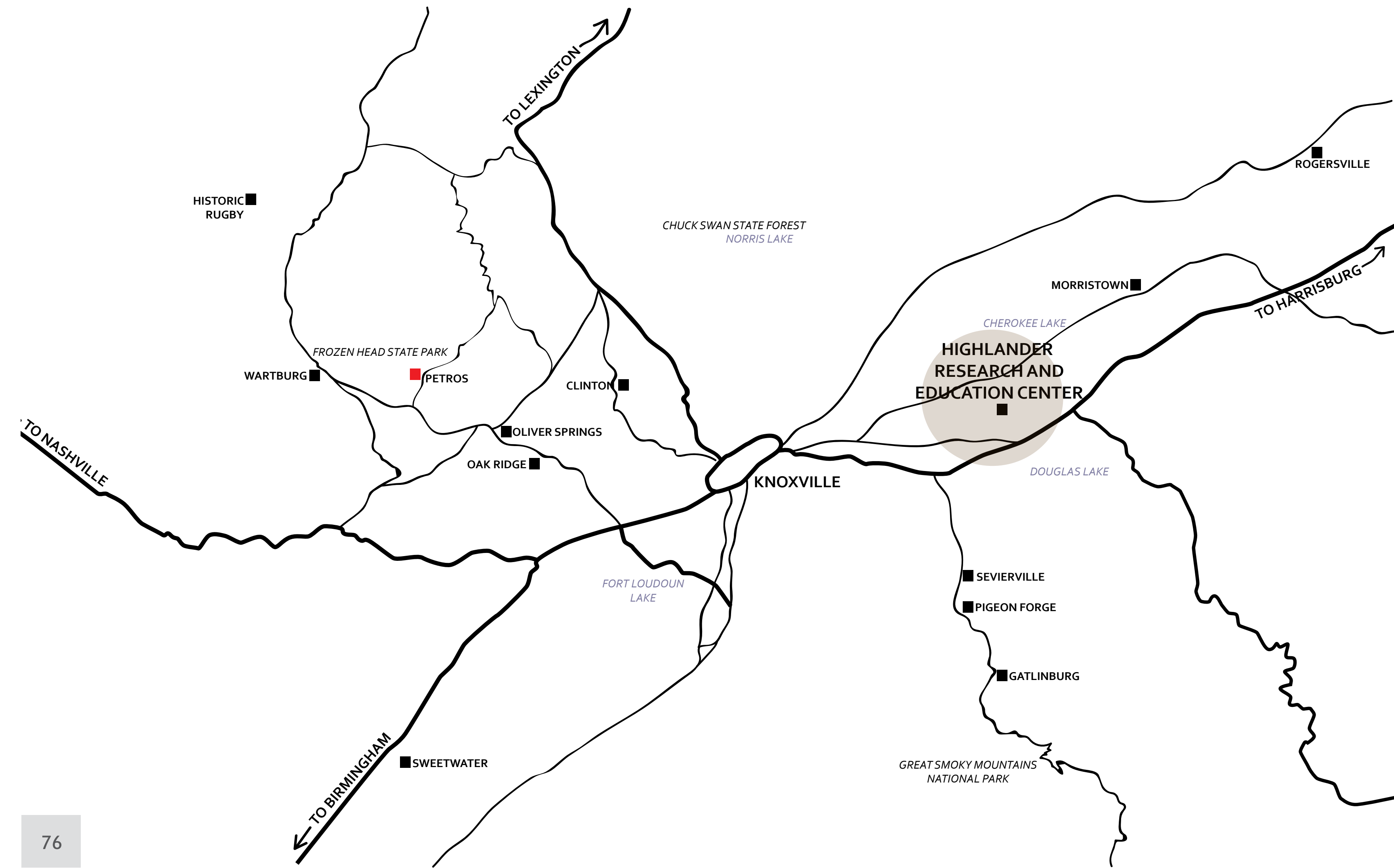
PIGEON FORGE

Exhibits celebrating self-sufficiency and independence of the Appalachian homesteaders, attracting visitors who are interested in the past life and the crafts of the region.

Tennesseans are very proud of their roots and local history, especially Appalachian pioneering, homesteading, and the history of Civil War. There are a number of local indoor and outdoor museums that bring a large number of visitors to the area. In close proximity to Brushy Mountain Penitentiary are Nuclear Laboratories in Oak Ridge that are open to visitors, museums in Knoxville, and historic district of Pigeon Forge. Outside of the non-controversial and officially embraced history are sites of the Civil Rights movement, such as the town of Clinton, were turbulent events and bombings related to the integration in the schools took place in 1958. The visitors who come to see these sites and museums will comprise the second group of users, who will be interested in visiting the exhibits within Brushy Mountain prison compound. A day trip will, most likely, allow them to see the points highlighted on the map below.



GROUP THREE: SCHOLARS AND ACTIVISTS, EXTENDED STAY
REASON FOR COMING:
GENERATION, EXCHANGE, AND DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE

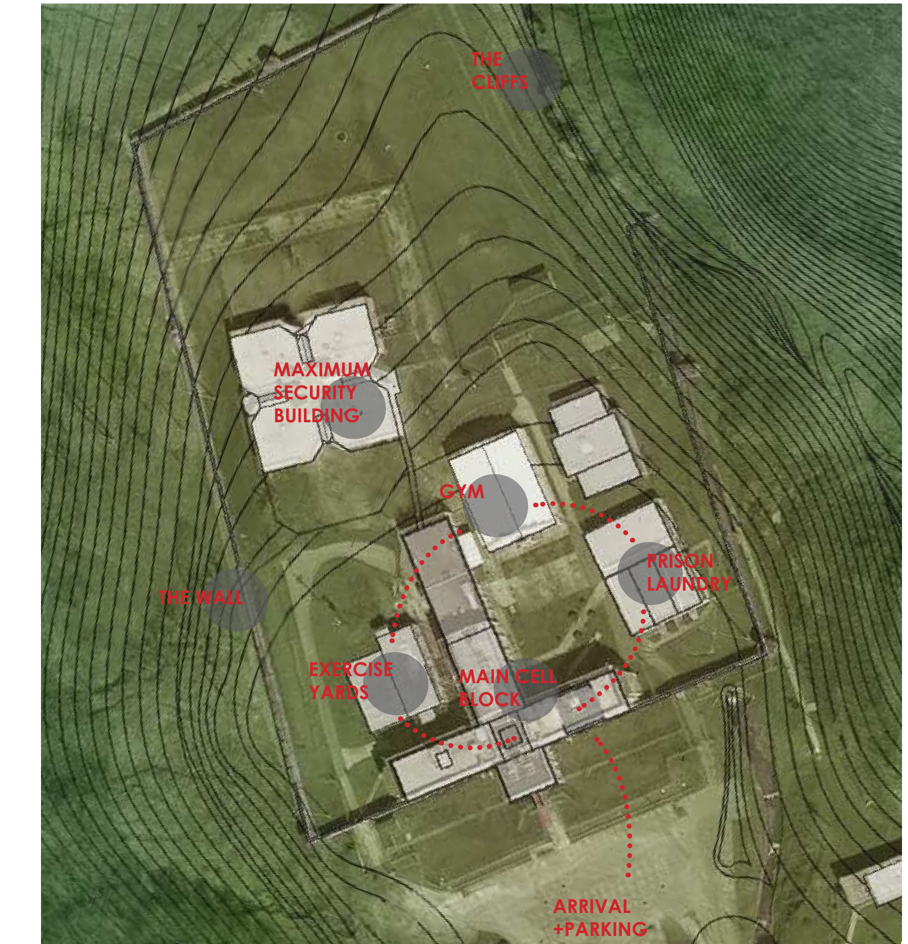


HIGHLANDER RESEARCH AND EDUCATION CENTER

Founded by Miles Horton in 1932. It was the ideological and educational center for the civil rights activists.

In the 1960s, Highlander Center devoted itself to the issues of safety of the miners and coal-field workers of Appalachia, initiating the environmental justice movement.

Highlander Folks School was one of the precedents described in the previous chapters, and an inspiration for this thesis; it is also located near Knoxville, within a two-hour drive from Brushy Mountain. In the recent years, Highlander has devoted itself to the issues of migrant workers; however its legendary history continues to provide inspiration to the new generations of activists, students, and scholars. They will comprise the third group of users at re-envisioned Brushy Mountain. Within this group, there may be those who will come for a weekend conference, or those who will wish to stay for an extended time to study, research, and exchange ideas before returning to their home communities. These visitors will have time and the need to investigate the entire site more closely, as shown on the diagram below.



2. TRANSFORMATION OF BRUSHY MOUNTAIN PENITENTIARY: WHAT WILL BE THERE?

Based on the types of visitors at the re-envisioned Brushy Mountain Penitentiary their different needs, and in view of the lessons learned from the precedents analyzed in the previous chapter, there are a number of spaces that would be required in order to create a successful program for study and activism.

1. Visitor center
User Groups: All
Lesson: Creating a threshold between difficult experience within and the comfort of the familiar world outside (Majdanek)

A similarity between Majdanek and Brushy Mountain is that both are large historic sites comprised of entire buildings and landscape features. Therefore, both require an element in their program to provide a buffer, an experiential threshold between the normalcy of the world outside and the disruption of the normative frames of reference that awaits inside. At Majdanek, this function is fulfilled by a visitor center on a periphery of the site, close to the existing routes of circulation. The first experience for the arriving visitors, students, and tourists is the visitor center, a modern building that was introduced to the existing historic site to provide a space for registration, familiarization with the site, sale of tickets and distribution of maps, and other similar tasks. Aside from a prosaic function to organize, orient, and direct visitors, the center functions as a threshold.

2. Temporary exhibit
User groups: All
Lesson: Connecting through art (Majdanek), avoid pre-interpreted history (Red Location)

The importance of art in the interpretation of traumatic events, building a spirit of community, and community organizing cannot be underestimated. It also allows to keep the ideas alive, preventing rigid interpretations of history, as has been shown by the precedents. A space for temporary art installation and art-making will be an important part of the program at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary.

3. Flexible gathering space (includes dining, conference, indoor/outdoor)
Users: Group Two, Group Three
Lesson: Creating new program over the existing fabric (Majdanek), subtle interaction of architecture with site (Tuskegee University), creating place for community

Learning for the purposes of resistance is not a solitary occupation, as has been shown by the example of Highlander Folk's School. The circular room at its Newmarket location was the central locus of learning, knowledge exchange, and the origin of the ideas that were disseminated back to the home communities of the visitors. Exchange of ideas at Brushy Mountain holds a great importance, and a presence of ample gathering and exhibit space – both indoor and outdoor – is vital to its program.

4. Library and archives
Users: Group Three, local community
Lessons: Creating paths for the transformation of the community (Red Location, Tuskegee University), overlaying new program over existing site (Majdanek)

Study of primary sources, research of the history of the place, interviews, and presentations – all comprise necessary elements of learning from the place and from the memories of the events and people. This programmatic element is an important part of the museums at Majdanek and Red Location, as well as Highlander Folks School. Moreover, taking a cue from the lessons at Tuskegee, Brushy Mountain transformation must include the immediate community in its educational effort, and a local library is one of the best ways to begin.

5. Residences/lodgings
Users: Group Three
Lessons: Subtle interaction of architecture with the existing fabric of the site (Tuskegee University)

Visitors arriving for conferences or extended study - group three outlined above, will need place to stay for a period from a day to several weeks of months. Theses spaces can take a cue from Tuskegee, where dormitories at Tantum Hall where oriented in such a way as to always keep in mind the principles of resistance to the status quo and adherence to the values of place. At Brushy Mountain, residences can also be introduced in such a way that the greater ideas of memory and learning permeate the visitors' stay.

Figure 72
Map of local attractions - museums and historic districts
Image by author
Figure 73
East Tennessee History Center
Figure 74
Worker housing in Oak Ridge by Skidmore, Owings, and Merril
Figure 75
Homesteaders' cabin in Pigeon Ridge
Figure 76
Location of Highlander Research and Education Center in Newmarket, TN
Image by author
Figure77
Building that served as the first location of Highlander Folks School in Monteagle, TN
Figure 78
Present location of Highlander in Newmarket, TN
Figure 79
Highlander's rocking chair circle enables all participants to speak as equals
by Christine Lonergan

3. TRANSFORMATION OF BRUSHY MOUNTAIN PENITENTIARY: EXISTING FABRIC OF THE SITE

CRITERIA FOR TRANSFORMATION

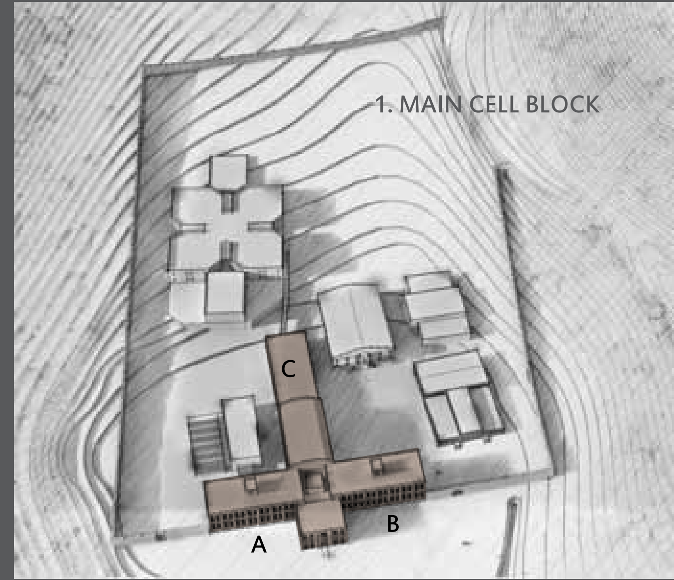
- HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE AND AGE
- DENSITY OF STRUCTURAL FABRIC (partitions, walls, number of floors)
- ROLE IN THE PROCESS OF LEARNING THROUGH MEMORY
- ROLE IN UNIFYING VISITORS THROUGH EXPERIENCE

The elements of Brushy Mountain Penitentiary can be broken into two main categories. The first encompasses buildings, artefacts, and site elements that possess the greatest historical and educational value from the point of view of pedagogies of memory and place. The overview of the evolution of prisons placed some of these elements in the historic context (they will be analyzed with a greater detail in the following chapter). These include the main cell block, the stone wall that forms the perimeter of the main prison campus, the burial ground, and multiple mines within the northeast hills. Most of these elements should be preserved with limited and very thoughtful alterations, and would constitute an important part of the educational program. They will be presented as a part of the overall tour of the permanent exhibit. It is these elements that may be likened to the memory boxes of Red Location Museum of Struggle. The encounter with these artefacts may produce a strong emotional response: disruption of the daily frames of reference, the "wounding" that Roger Simon spoke about that initiates the workings of the pedagogy of memory. As is the case at Red Location Museum, the goal at Brushy Mountain would also be to prevent "static interpretation of history," and allow the visitor to connect with the past through the direct encounter with artefacts. This goal is similar to the one achieved by memory boxes that do not dictate how one should feel, but simply allow one to feel. Following the lessons of Red Location Museum, it is important to also provide a blank interstice or a refuge from the emotional encounter, a place where one can reflect, possibly study, before returning again to a place charged with memories.

The second category includes existing buildings that can undergo a sensitive adaptation to a new function. These can include the gymnasium and the laundry/chapel/library/solitary confinement buildings, both of which have been constructed during the same phase as the main cell block, in 1933-38. The former is a rectangular, cavernous, well-constructed masonry building with the roof supported by exposed wood trusses, located just north of the main cell block. It is lacks any partitions or other interior structures and would be well suited to be adapted as a space for temporary exhibits. The latter is currently a mixed-use building and parts of it, such as the chapel or the solitary confinement section should become part of the permanent tour. However, the north section of the building, similarly to the gym, is cavernous and empty, and could also be transformed to become the flexible gathering/dining space. Other buildings within this category are the later additions to the main prison campus – such as the 1989 maximum security building. They would allow a greater degree of transformation, because of their lesser historical significance, and may be adapted as library, archives, and administration services.

The following will delve into the particulars of the site and explore the interventions proposed here in a greater detail. Archival architectural drawings, detailed facts about the elements of the site will be explored in order to develop a clear master plan and architectural strategies for the transformation in the spirit of critical pedagogy and activism.

Figure 80
Map of the prison compound
Building classification



Main cell block is one of the oldest surviving and most recognized structures at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary. The oldest portion of the building forms a shape of a cross. The two arms of the cross contained cell blocks A (designated as "colored cell house" in the 1934 architect's drawings) and block B (designated as "white cell house"). The central leg of the cross contained administration and medical facilities, guard's mess hall on the ground floor, prisoners' mess hall and kitchen on the second floor, and an auditorium on the third (please see appendices A and B for the original building plans). The leg of the cross was later extended to include block "C", whose layout is identical with the existing cell blocks.

Each cell blocks holds four tiers of cells, the size of each cell is 8' X 9'. Originally, they were designed to hold four prisoners, and were adopted to hold only two during the 1976 renovation. Currently, each cell contains two bunk beds, one above another, a small table, a set of shelves, a toilet and a sink. At the end of each corridor, one cell is replaced with an open shower for six inmates.

81

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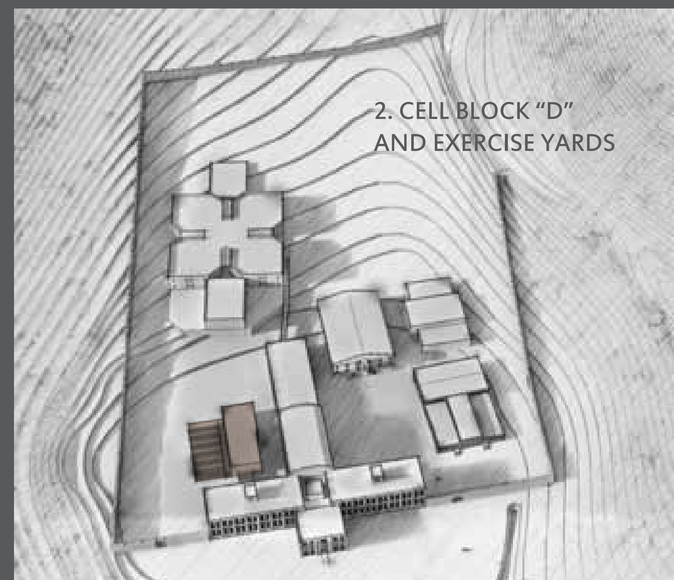
83

Because of the building's historical significance, the role of the architectural fabric in the educational process and its density, it is proposed to be preserved as a permanent exhibit at the re-envisioned Brushy Mountain. Architectural interventions here should remain minimal and surgically precise.

Figure 81
interior of Cell House A
Figure 82
Main Cell block as seen from the outside of the wall
Figure 83
Interior of a typical cell. Note that until mid-1970s, two more bunks were in place of the table and the shelves on the right. Courtesy TN Department of Corrections
Figure 84
Main cell block shortly after its completion in the 1940s. Note the stack of the coke burning oven operating in the premises. TN State Library and Archives

84



A later addition to the prison compound, block "D" was seen as a an unusually harsh place in which to survive one's sentence. It served a function of a "control unit," or a place of heightened security. In a 1982 ruling, Federal Judge L. Clure Martin deemed the block to be a form of cruel and unusual punishment and an instigator of 12 murders within its walls, which occurred within six years preceding the ruling. *

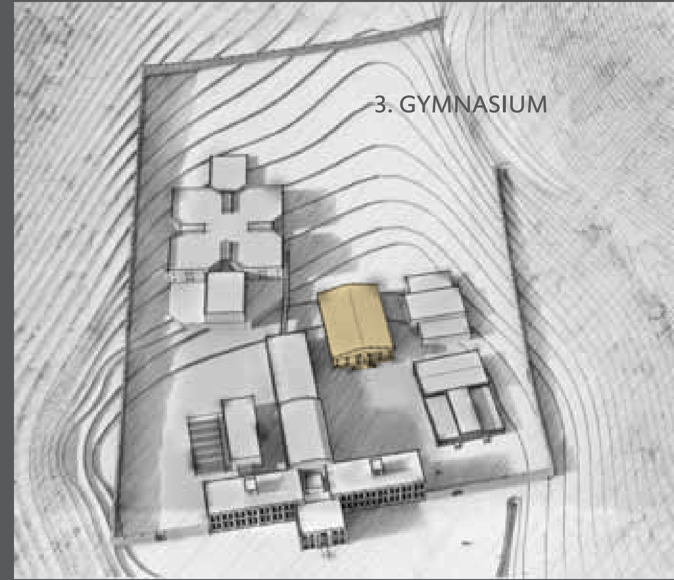
As is the case with the Main Cell Block, this building is proposed to be preserved as a part of permanent exhibit.

* Matt Nauman, "Brushy In Light of Court Ruling," *The Knoxville Journal*, 1982, courtesy of Knox County Public Library

Figure 85
One of the exercise yard sections to the west of the Block "D" building.

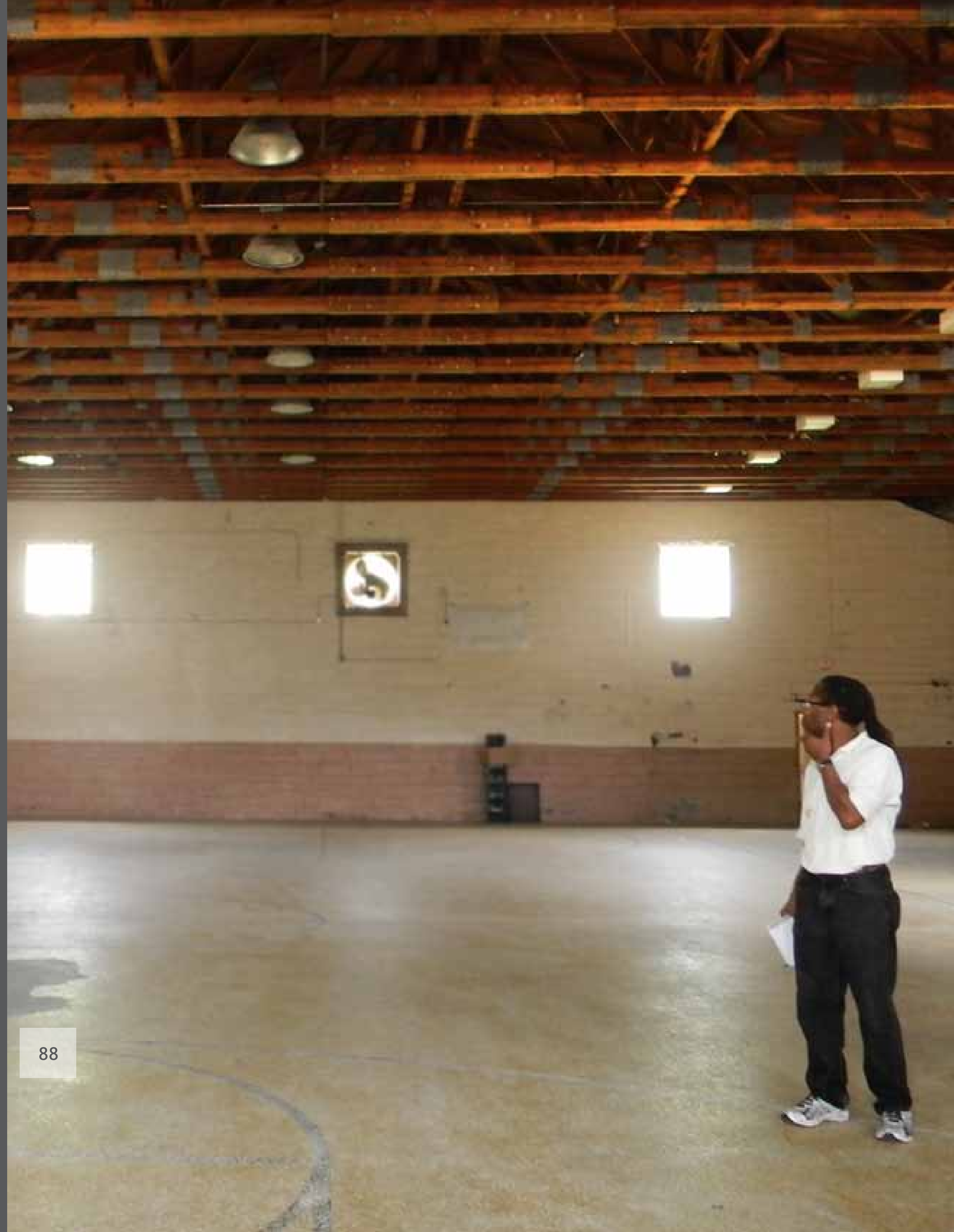
Figure 86
A window of Block "D"

Figure 87
Eastern wall of the cell block "D"
Images by author



The gymnasium was built as a part of the original complex, whose construction was initiated in 1933, and which also included main cell block and the laundry/chapel building. This collection of buildings was unified by their aesthetic - which was influenced by the established prison architecture of the late 19th century - and by their grouping, which created a central courtyard (figures 89 and 90).

While the gymnasium carries an historical significance no less important than that of the cell blocks, its cavernous, light-filled character allows it to be successfully adopted to one of the programmatic requirement of the center for activism and education. This building is proposed to become a place for temporary exhibits and installations.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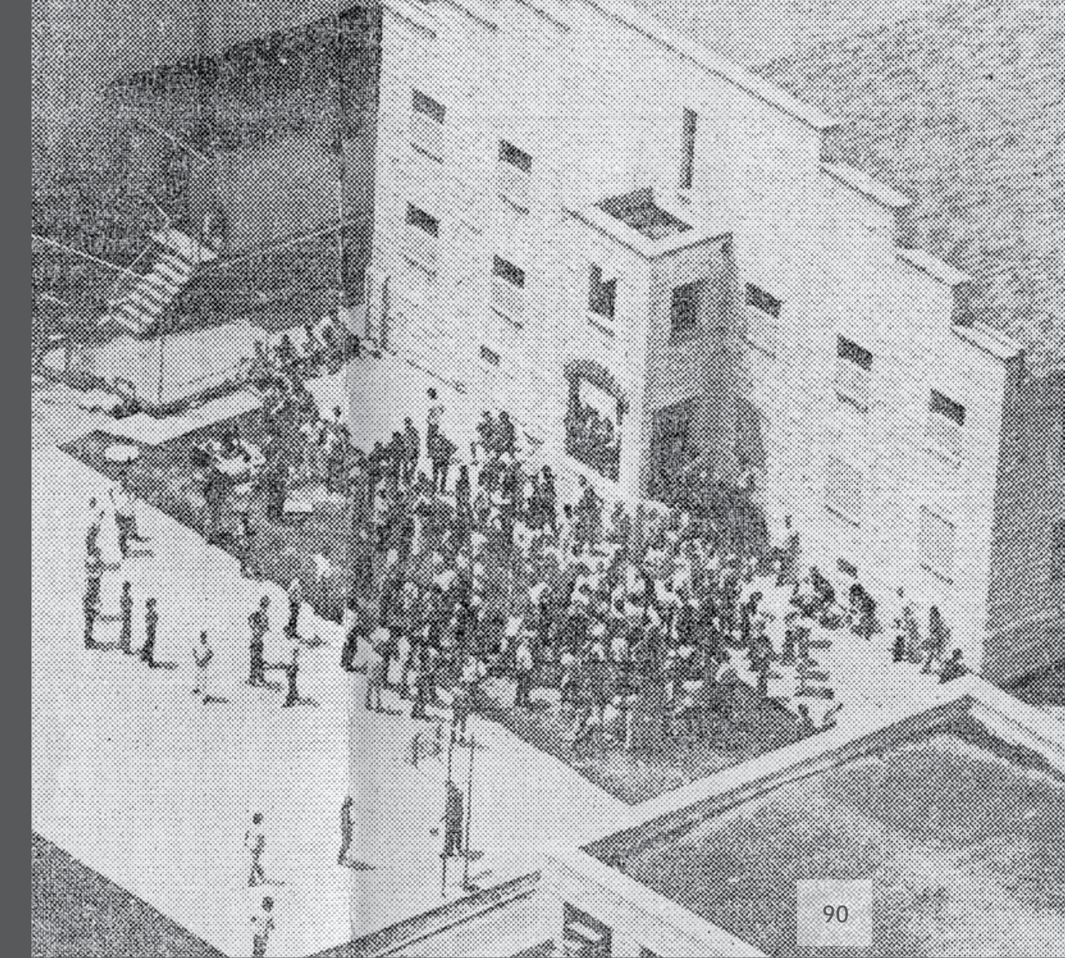
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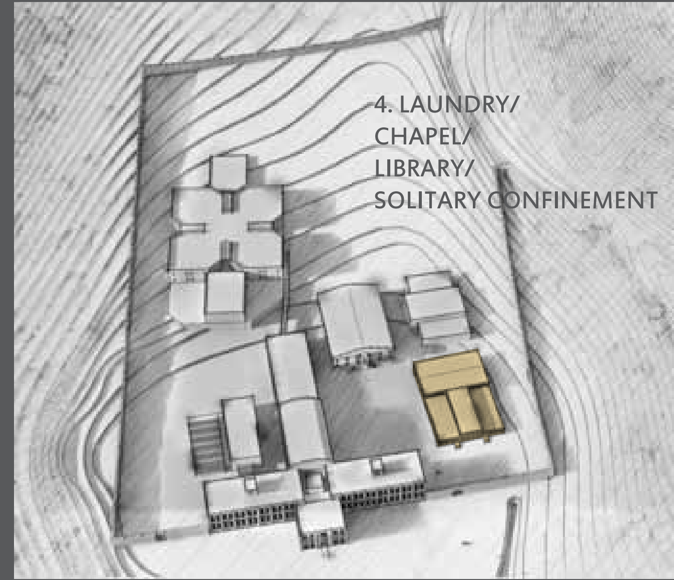
Figure 88
Interior of the gymnasium
Image by author

Figure 89
The courtyard formed by the original three buildings of the prison compound, as seen today
Courtesy TN Department of Corrections

Figure 90
The courtyard has served a role of gathering and organizing for many years - in this historic photo, black inmates are gathered in the action of protest in front of the gym. The hunger strike of 1981 was organized to bring attention to the acts of racial discrimination and generally poor conditions. At the time, 40% of the inmates at the institution were black, and constituted 60% of the prison population on lock-down.
Knoxville News -Sentinel, March 22, 1981



Also a part of the original complex of buildings, this structure used to fulfil many functions. The northernmost portion (upper horizontal bar in the roof view above) served as a laundry and has a character similar to the gymnasium - light-filled and cavernous. The southern portions of the building contained a chapel and a library, and the basement held several cells used for solitary confinement - also known as "the hole."

This building, along with the wings of the main cell block and the gym, completes the rectangular shape of the quad. Currently, its quad facing facade is fairly impermeable, and the spaces within carry different functions. In order to re-create the quad as a truly vibrant space for all user groups and the community, this building will also need to take on a new role. The most successful use for the cavernous laundry and the adjacent spaces along the quad facade (excluding the basement) would be their transformation into flexible gathering space, which include areas for dining and conference. Making the facade more permeable would open the building to the court, making it more vibrant.

Figure 91
Southern facade of the building

Figure 92
The interior of the laundry portion of this multipurpose building

Images on this page - by author

Figure 93
The original miners' entrance into the prison compound through the eastern wall, as seen through the laundry window. This is one of the unexpected connections to the difficult past that visitors encounter at different points of the site. . This entrance will be described in greater detail on page 90.

Maximum Security building is one of the later additions to the compound that occurred in 1989. This building has a markedly different character than the rest of the structures, it is massive, block-like, and is elevated upon a plinth in order to negotiate steepening terrain in this part of the site. From its position above the rest of the structures, this heavy concrete structure dominates the compound.

Because of the later construction date and its structural character, this building can afford a greater degree of intervention in order to adopt to the new uses of the site. At the same time, it can be a great candidate for the archives and library, where stacks can be protected from direct sunlight.

94

95

Figure 94
East-facing entrance into the building.

Figure 95
Smooth concrete with very few openings is strikingly different from the older buildings within the prison wall: this building can undergo a more dramatic intervention in order to create a place for study.

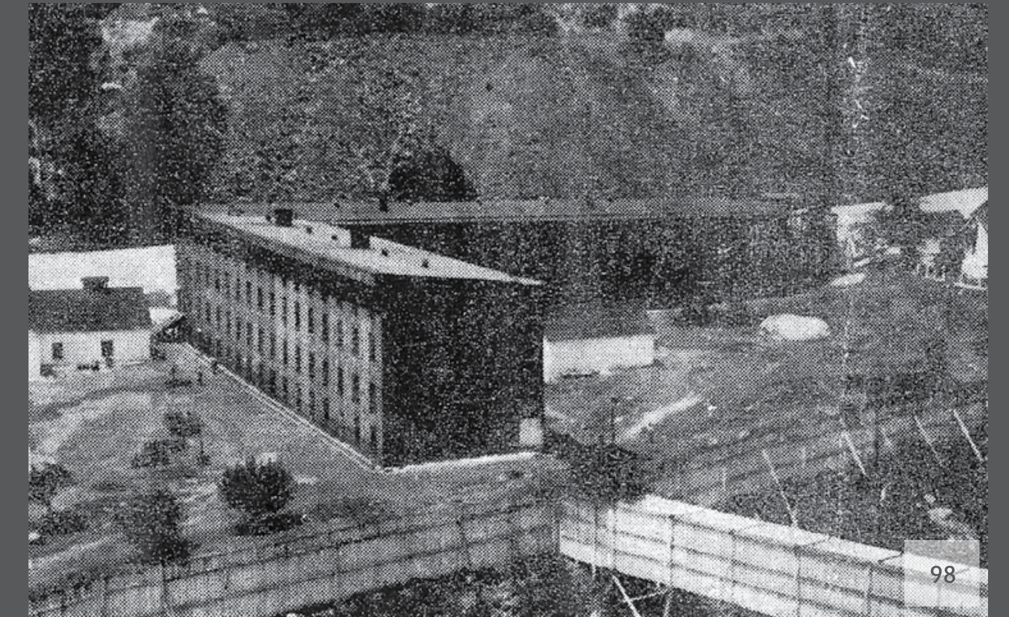
The wall surrounding prison compound took several years to complete. The stone for it was quarried by the inmates, who had their daily quotas, just as the inmates who worked in the coal mines, a failure of whose completion was punishable by a bull-whip. The marks of the drills used at the quarries are clearly visible on each stone of the wall that is fifteen feet high in most places.

The wall is one of the most interesting and telling artefacts of the prison, and as such should be preserved and memorialized. This thesis proposes minimal interventions in regard to this element. However, as one of the most powerful instruments of connection between the visitors of the present and the people whose lives were change by this wall in the past, the wall must become a part of the daily experience for the various groups of visitors.

Figure 96
The wall

Figure 97
A guard's observation turette at the corner of the wall

Figure 98
This newspaper photograph, taken prior to 1933, is one of the oldest existing views of the compound. The large L-shaped building in the center is the wooden cell block that was in existence between 1896 and 1933, before it was replaced with the current main cell block. Extending from the prison wall to the right (lower right corner of the photo) is a wood tunnel through which prisoners left and entered the compound on the way to and from the mines. This old miners' entry can still be seen within the stone wall, infilled with bricks. Memorializing this part of the wall will become part of the architectural intervention.



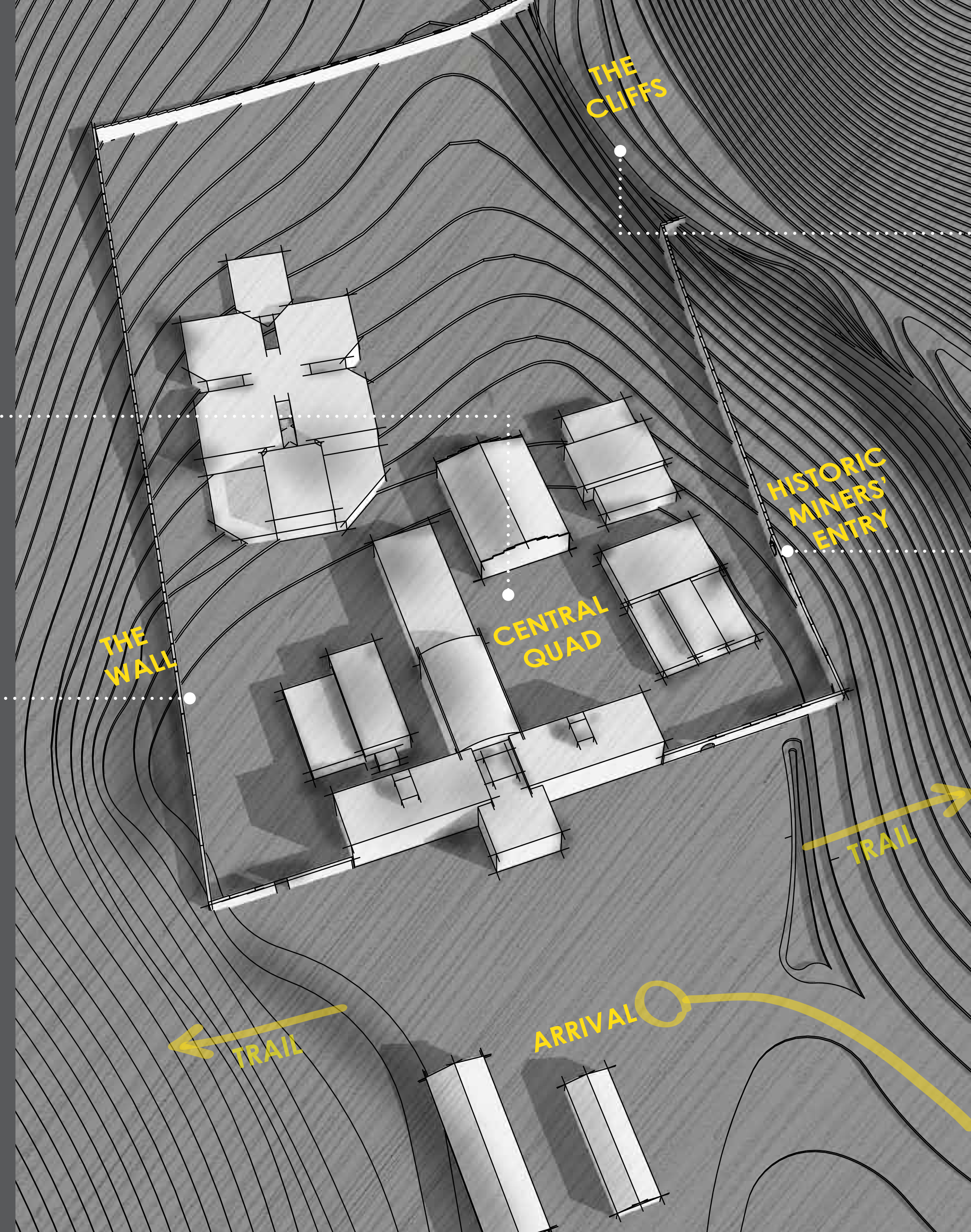
CHAPTER FOUR

MOVING FORWARD AT BRUSHY MOUNTAIN

The goal of this thesis project has been a discovery of a way in which a place of difficult memory can become a vibrant locus of learning and activism for various groups of users. The research undertaken in the previous chapters has laid the groundwork for thorough understanding of the nature of the site in the historical and sociopolitical sense, as well outlining its pedagogical value. Several precedents were analyzed to help outline programmatic and design criteria that underpin the intervention.

Drawing from this theoretical foundation, the following chapter presents an intervention at Brushy Mountain Penitentiary proposed as a mechanism for transforming hearts and minds about the role of race and place in America's past and current penal systems.

Figure 99
Dwelliing units - concept
Image by author

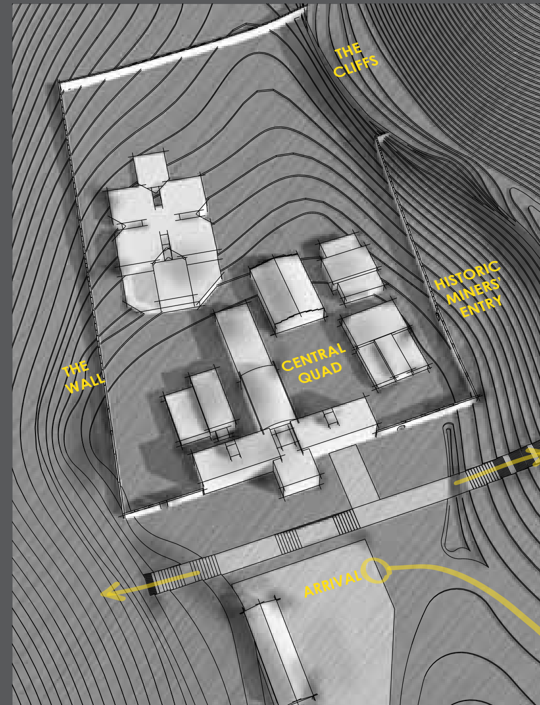


1. CREATING A MASTER PLAN

Site analysis so far has demonstrated that the site offers several important points that all user groups will be able to access once they arrive to the prison compound. These include:

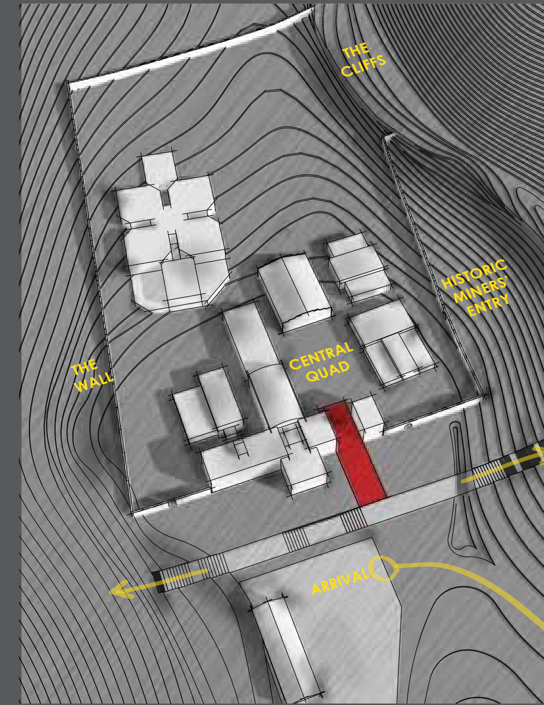
- access to the trails, Memorial Loop to the west and Mine Access trails to the east
- the quad, an historically important gathering area that continue to fulfil this function
- the exhibits in the historic core of the compound and the library and archives in the adopted maximum security building
- historic miners' entry in the eastern portion of the wall
- the cliffs
- the prison wall

The architectural interventions are proposed for individual buildings, fit within a master strategy for the site: the diagrams on the following page reveal the strategy that will become an organizing principle for creating a master plan for the site.



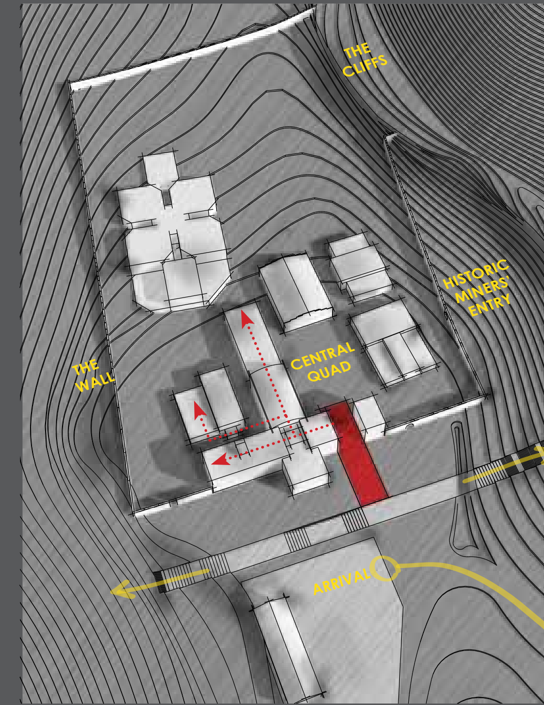
1. PARKING AND FORMAL SQUARE

The first intervention will remove one of the guards' barracks (east barrack), currently dilapidated and in the center of the area proposed for parking use. A square will be introduced running parallel to the front portion of the prison wall, and connecting trailheads that lead east and west. A series of constructed steps will lead visitors up the sloping hills and to the beginning of each trail.



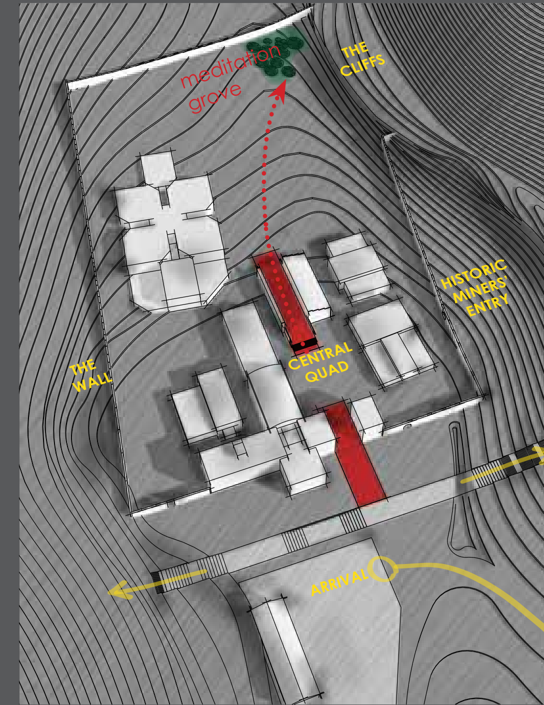
2. VISITOR CENTER

The next intervention proposes a direct access for the visitors to the both permanent and temporary exhibits and to the heart of the compound's core - the quad. This intervention will cut through three bays of the main cell block, inserting a visitor center, and creating a buffer between the comfort of the familiar world and the difficult experience inside.



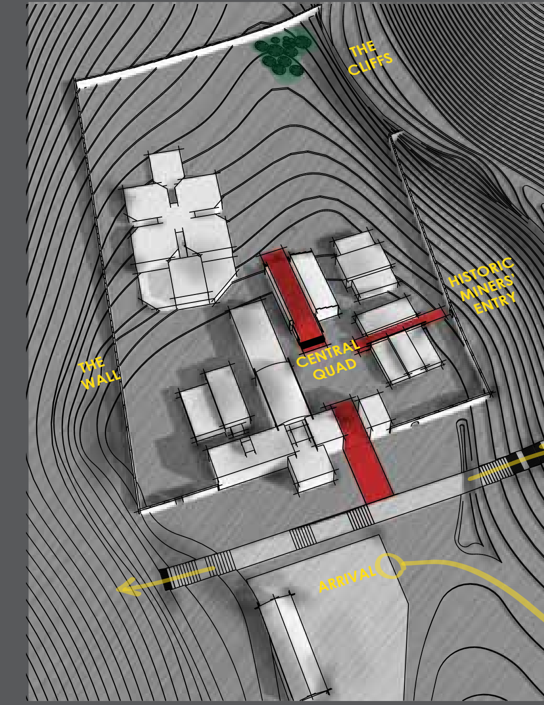
3. NEW POINT OF ACCESS TO EXHIBITS

The previous intervention also allows for easy and organized access to the permanent exhibits located within all the cell blocks. At the same time, visitors may proceed through to the temporary exhibits and gathering/ conference/ dining areas. Moving on, it is important to note that interventions appearing as cuts on these diagrams are not always intend to cut into the existing fabric - in most cases they will become architectural interventions that allow movement along the newly created axes.



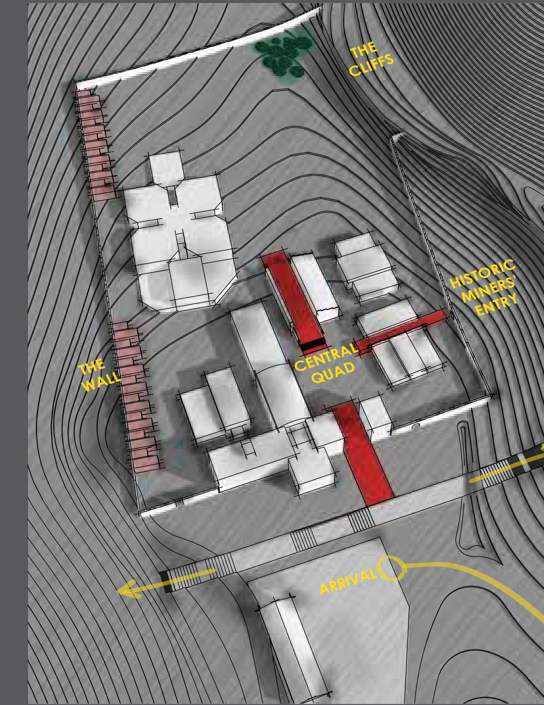
4. TEMPORARY EXHIBITS

The new axis that has been introduced by the incision through the main call block, continues through the court yard and onward to the gym, adopted as a temporary exhibit space. This new access allows the movement to continue on through the open space in the northern part of the compound and to the cliffs, where visitors can find a refuge from the difficult encounters with artefacts.



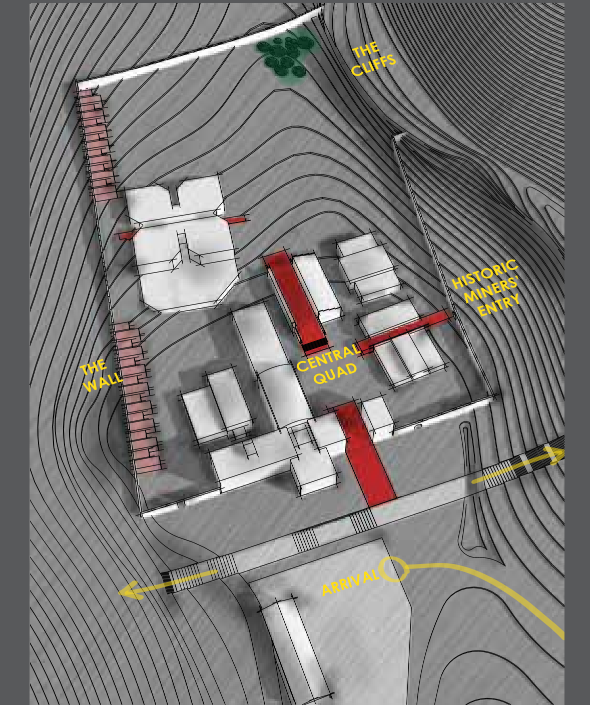
5. DINING AND EVENT

The laundry/chapel/ library building adopted as a dining/event space rounds out the function of the quad as central locus of activity. In addition, to allow access to the historic miners' entry and to assure the connection with the history of the site, a direct way is provided to move from the quad to the wall.



6. LODGINGS

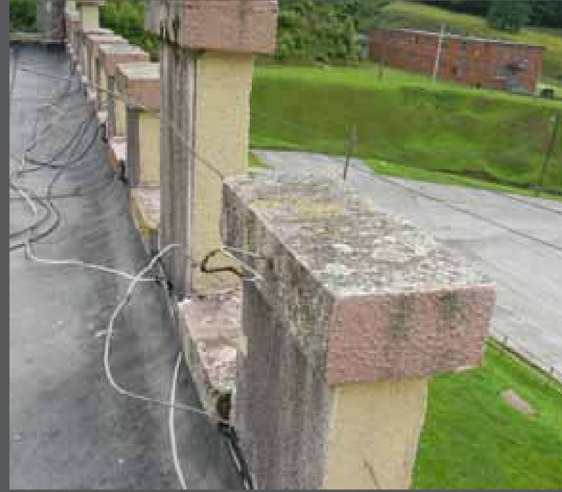
The prison wall is one of the most important architectural artefacts on the site. The markings of the hand drills left from the extraction of the stone provide a direct connection to the inmates who lived and worked here. This proposed intervention makes the lodgings part of this wall, grabbing onto it and making it a part of the daily experience for extended stay visitors.



7. ARCHIVES/LIBRARY

Finally, a direct access from the western wall to the newly introduced axis is provided by a cut through the maximum security building. Now all new program overlaid upon the existing fabric can successfully move alongside the old forms - and across them, following the new agenda that has now been given to Brushy Mountain Penitentiary.

EXISTING FABIRC - MEMORY



NEW - CLARITY OF INTERVENTION

All new proposed forms will be clearly differentiated from the existing fabric of the site for a number of reasons:

1. New/modern signals familiar and comfortable. As demonstrated by the precedent of the Red Location Museum, it is important to create spaces of interstice or refuge, where visitors are able to process what they have learned or discovered, and to relieve the pressure of the exposure to the artefacts of difficult history. As the proposed new fabric interweaves with the old, it creates such zones for the visitors.

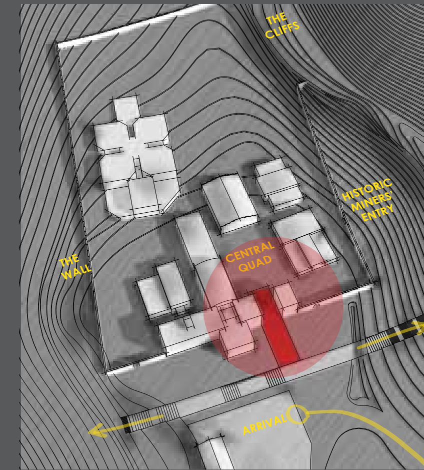
2. The new differentiated fabric can be used to frame a particular experience and to emphasize its pedagogical or memorial value.

GLASS

LIGHT

STEEL

WOOD



INTERVENTION ONE:
PLAZA AND CUT THROUGH THE MAIN CELL BLOCK

VISITOR CENTER

Appendix C offers the master plan for the entire site: please refer to it for the location of each individual intervention in the context of the prison compound as a whole

This architectural intervention provides the first point of contact for the visitors of all user groups with the physical artefacts of the prison compound. While this intervention cuts into the historic fabric of the main cell block, it creates a successful visitor center for a number of reasons:

- modern materials and architectural language clearly delineate old and new, and provide a buffer between the familiar, comfortable, and contemporary - and the difficult reality of the past.
- this "cut" allows for a direct access into the hub of activity, the quad, and makes the interior of the compound visible, permeable, and no longer a prison. This is a necessary intervention if Brushy Mountain is to become a center where the attitudes of the past must change: this cut places itself in opposition to the past, leaves the "guts" of the cellblock exposed.
- turning the east part (the portion that is now "cut off") of the cellblock wing into a visitor center, this intervention also allows easy and direct access into the permanent exhibit area.

CONDITIONED AREA

EXISTING HISTORIC FABRIC - PERMANENT EXHIBIT

FRONT DESK

BLOCK B

NEW CUT THROUGH

NEW ENTRANCE, VISITOR CENTER

administration

101

Figure 100
Visitor Center - the "cut" as seen from the plaza in front of the building, outside of the prison wall.

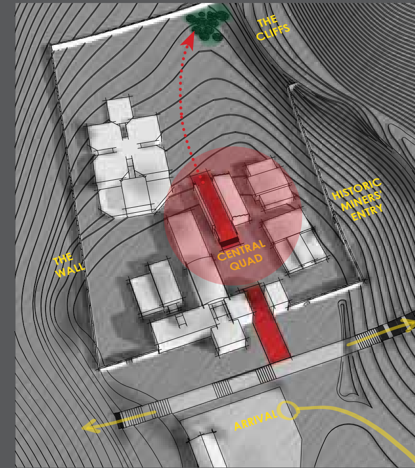
Figure 101
Visitor center ground floor plan

Figure 102
The interior of the "cut"

Figure 103
The re-envisioned main cell block form across the front plaza, with a memorial to the convict miners in front.

Images by author

103

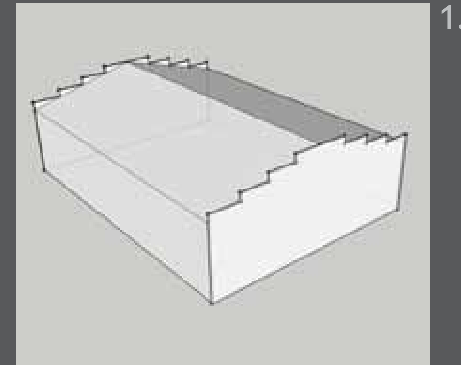


INTERVENTION TWO:
GYMNASIUM

TEMPORARY EXHIBIT

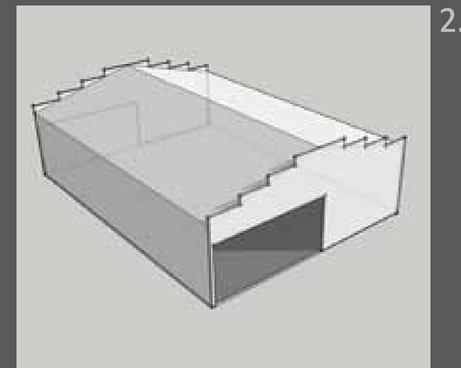
This intervention connects the entry point to the furthermost corner of the compound by way of creating an axis through the quad and the former gymnasium. The simple, cavernous space of the gym is made more open to the quad through the insertion of two vestibules, one on each end. The interior is converted to flexible temporary exhibit space, using movable partitions and new exhibit lighting (please see rendering on next spread).

1.



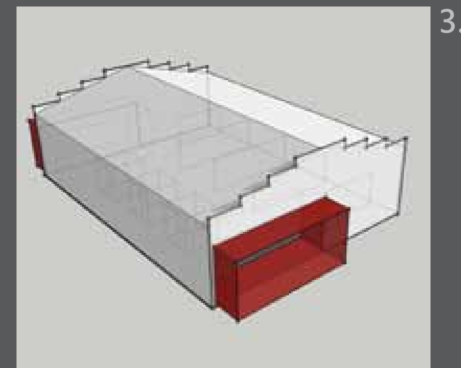
EXISTING GYM

2.

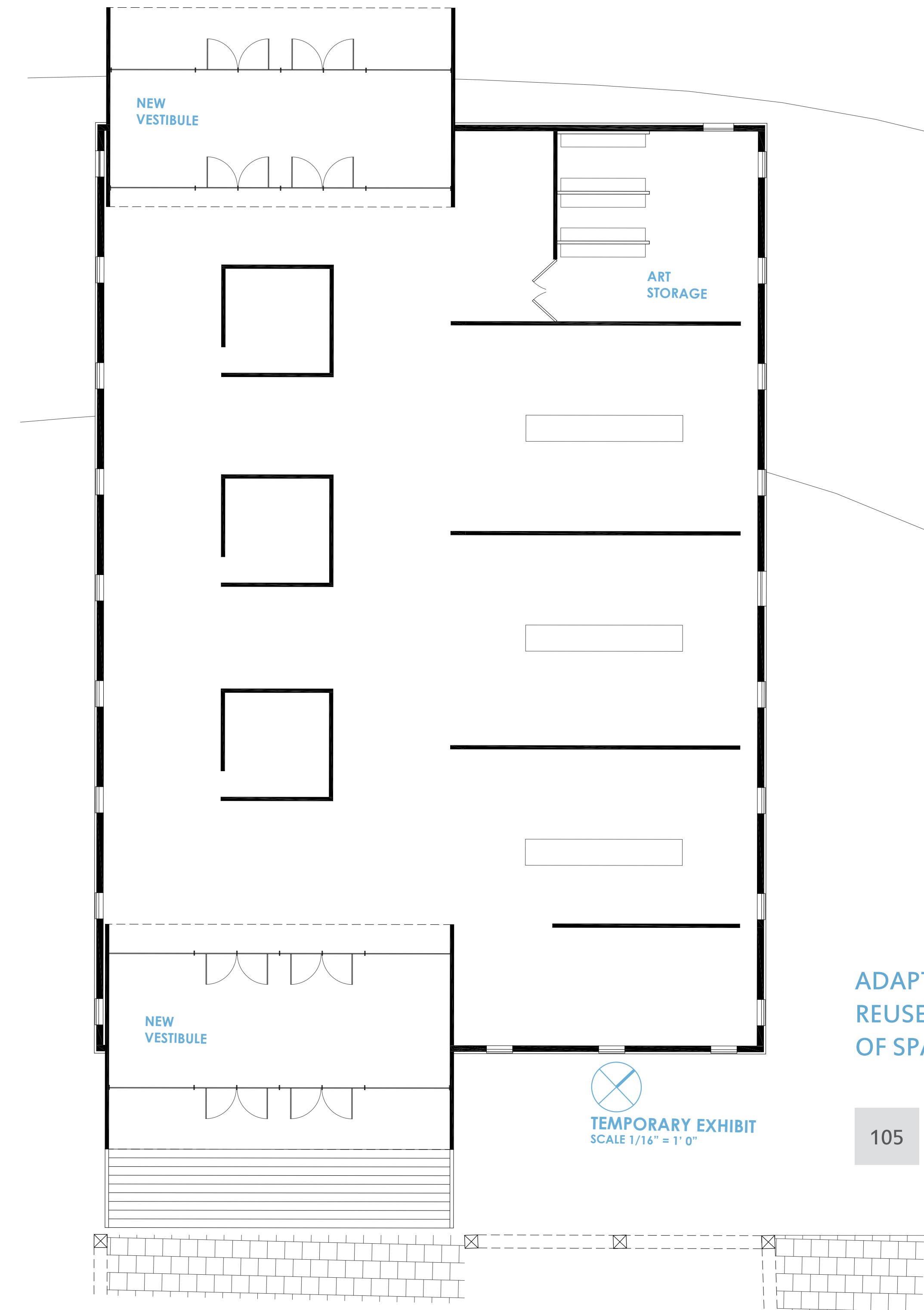


CUT

3.



INSERT VESTIBULES
AND PARTITIONS



ADAPTIVE REUSE OF SPACE

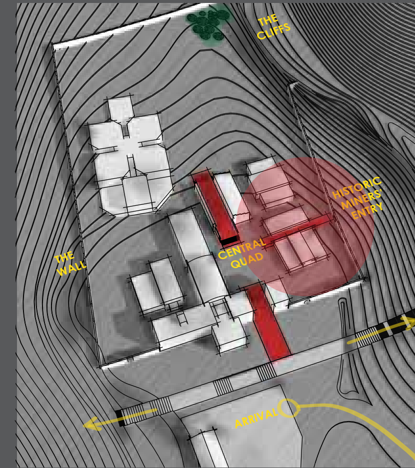
105

Figure 104
Quad-facing vestibule

Figure 105
Ground floor plan

Figure 106
The interior of the gym adopted as temporary exhibit space

Images by author



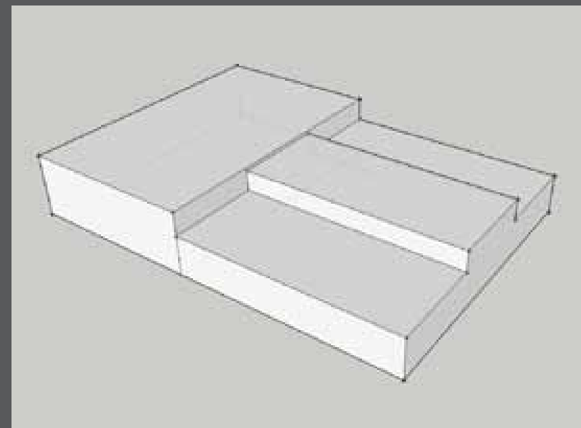
INTERVENTION THREE:
LAUNDRY/CHAPEL/LIBRARY/SOLITARY

DINING AND EVENT

Making the quad-facing facade of this building permeable and transforming its interior into a place for gathering is a crucially important part of this project. This building, in its re-envisioned function, opens itself to all the activities that happen in the quad, now adding an indoor area for gathering for meals, exchange of ideas, or storytelling.

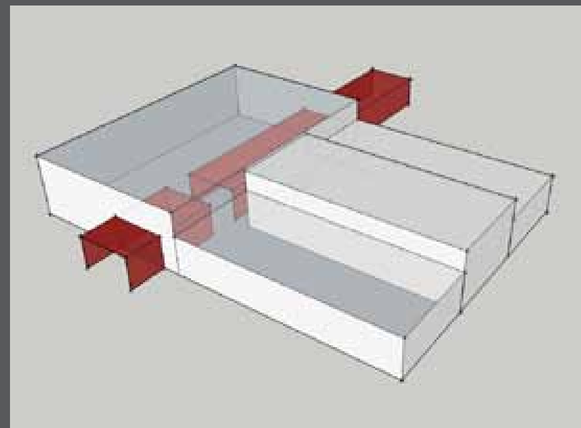
The palpable connection to history, however, still remains at its heart, as a walkway is added through the building, from the quad to the old miners' entry at the eastern wall.

1.

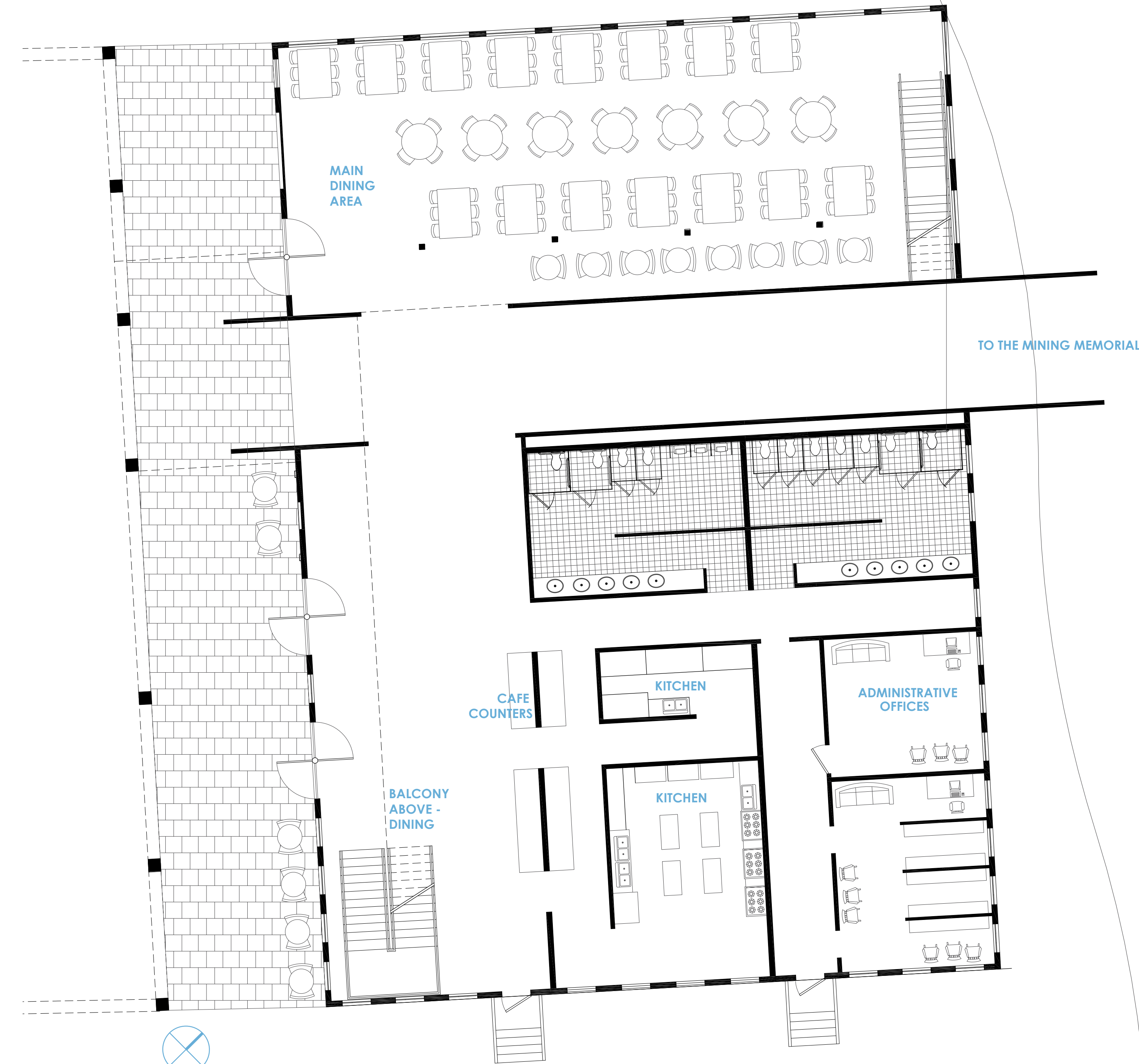


LAUNDRY, ETC. BUILDING

2.



ADD WALKWAY TO MINING MEMORIAL



ADAPTIVE
REUSE
OF SPACE

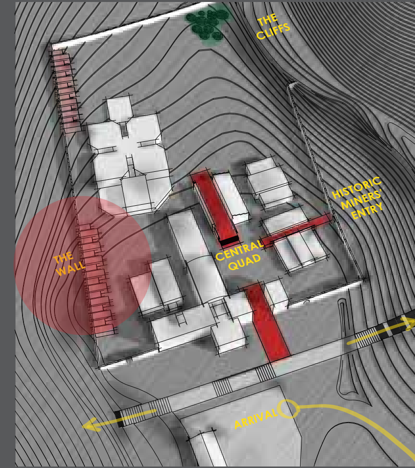
MAIN DINING AND EVENT
SCALE 1/16" = 1' 0"

Figure 107
Court-facing facade

Figure 108
Ground Floor plan

Figure 109
Re-envisioned interior of the former laundry area. Most of the structure remains, clerestory and a gallery are added. A walkway to the old miners' entry is seen to the right. New additions are clearly differentiated from the old fabric through the use of the new "palette."

Images by author



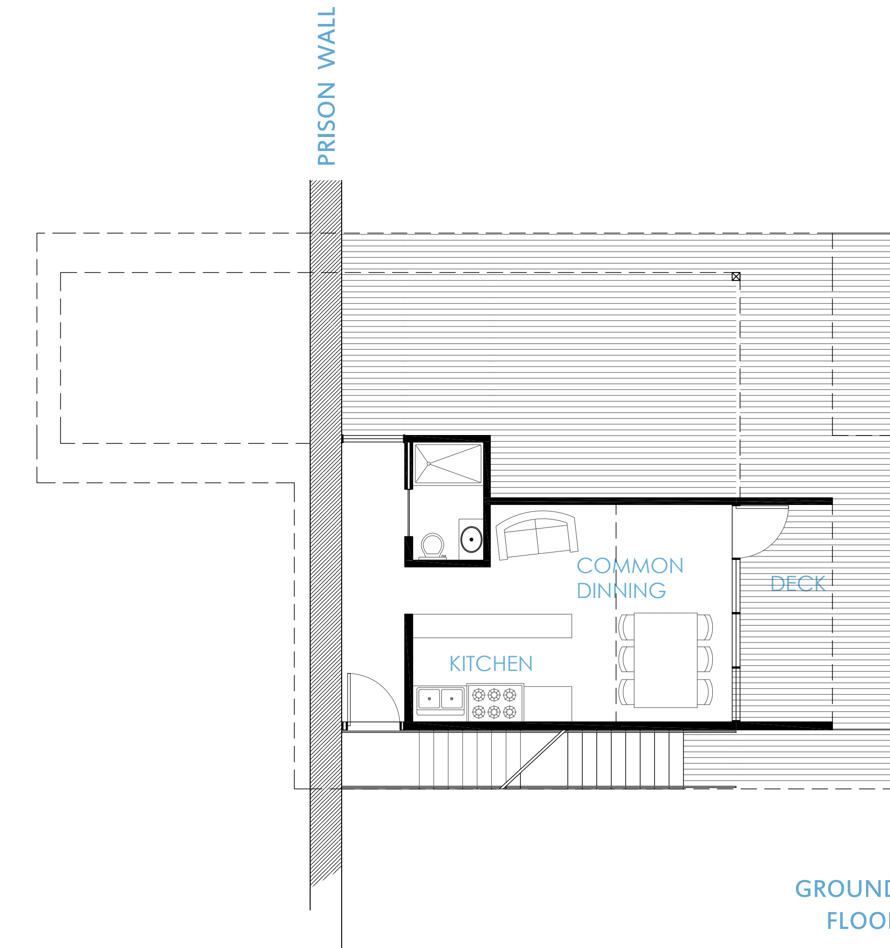
INTERVENTION FOUR:
NEW STRUCTURES

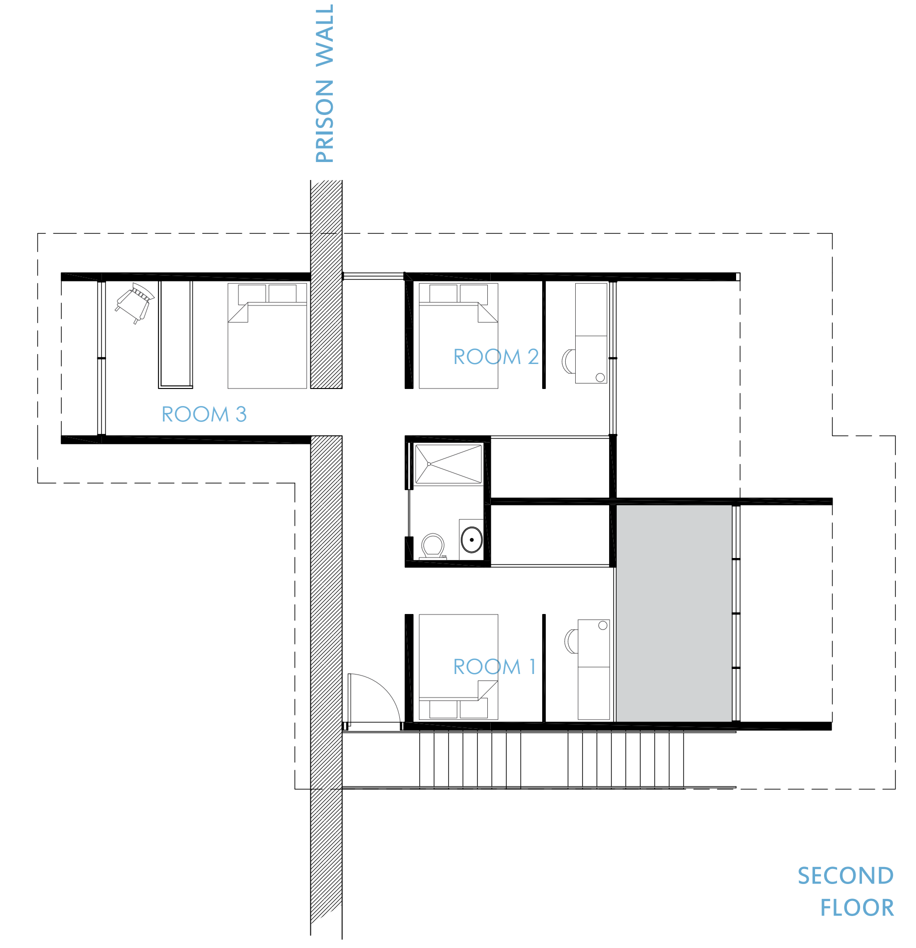
VISITOR LODGINGS

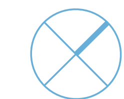
110

Visitor lodgings constitute the only entirely new addition to the site. Designed for students, scholars, members of activist groups, and other diverse groups of visitors, they serve a dual function. On the one hand, they are a place of refuge from the experiences of the day, or from encounters with the physical artefacts of difficult history. On the other hand, they maintain a strong connection to the individuals who have been here before, and the marks of whose labor are engraved in the stones.

To fulfil this dual role, the units employ the materiality that is very different from the existing fabric of the site: they are constructed of wood (main structure), steel (stars, railings) and glass (open facades). They permeate formerly impenetrable prison wall at the second floor level allowing one of the rooms to come through, facing away from the interior of the prison compound and affording a view of the woods beyond (fig x, next page). This architectural move aspires to make a statement about the purpose of one's stay here - understanding and always connecting to the past, yet looking ahead, from the mines - to the mountaintops.







VISITOR LODGINGS
NEW SPACE
(ADDED TO THE EXISTING
WALL TO REMAIN)

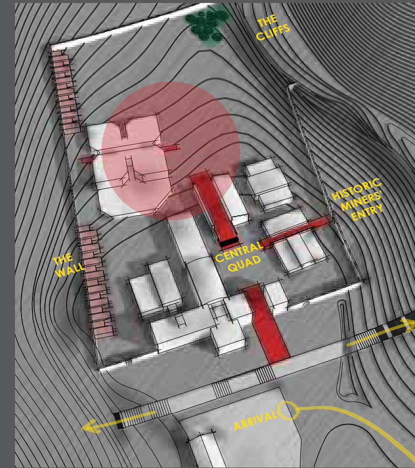
111

Figure 110
Exterior of the lodgings as seen from the inside of the prison compound

Figure 111
Plans: ground and second floors

Figure 112
Exterior of the lodgings/units as seen from the outside of the western portion of the wall

Images by author

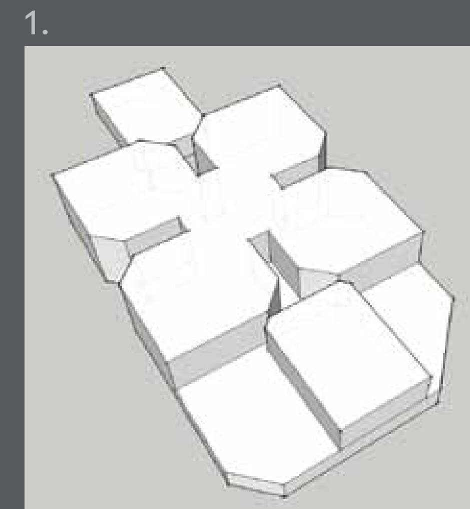


INTERVENTION FIVE
MAXIMUM SECURITY BUILDING
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVE

While the Maximum Security Building, with its solid concrete walls, can successfully serve as a library and archives building, it requires a great amount of transformation in order to become a place where students and scholars can comfortably spend extended hours, and where there is plenty of light for reading and gathering areas, yet stacks remain protected from excessive solar exposure.

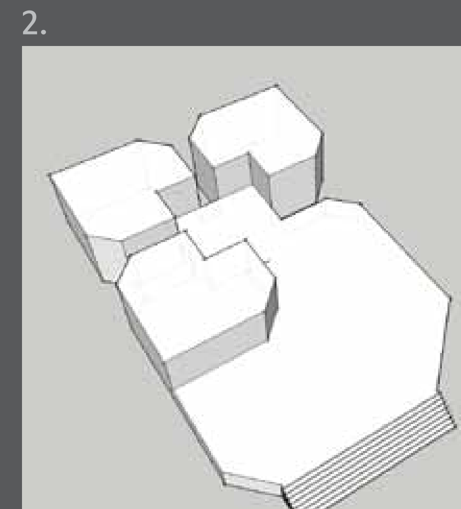
This intervention is an attempt to respond to all these needs, while creating an inviting outdoor gathering area in place of the removed portion of the building. This gathering space is a variation of a southern porch - shaded with trees and canopies. As in the previous examples, all new structures utilize the "palette" of glass, steel, and wood. Here, the intervention is especially visible in contrast to the somber, heavy concrete of the remaining structure.

1.



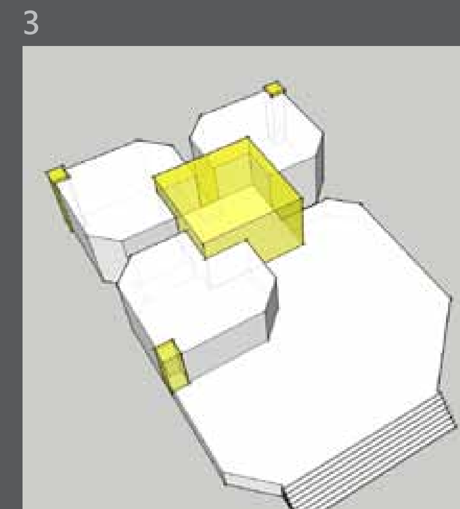
MAXIMUM SECURITY BUILDING WITH PODIUM

2.



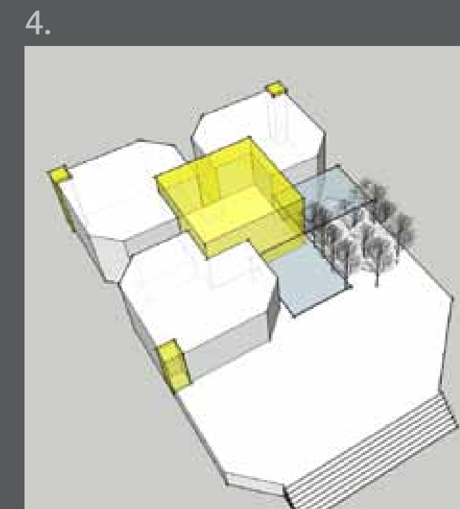
REMOVE CENTER ROOF, EXERCISE YARDS, AND ONE "LEAF"; ADD STAIR

3



ADD LANTERN AND LIGHT SHAFTS

4.



ADD CANOPIES AND TREES IN PLACE OF THE REMOVED "LEAF"

READING ROOM

CLASSROOM/ CONFERENCE

ARCHIVES

READING ROOM

REFERENCE DESK

ARCHIVES

CANOPY ABOVE

CANOPY ABOVE

PLAZA

ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY GROUND FLOOR
SCALE 1/16" = 1' 0"

ARCHIVES AND LIBRARY FLOOR 2

ADOPTIVE REUSE OF SPACE

114

Figure 113
East entrance into the library and archives. Canopy and the lantern use the materials from the intervention palette - steel and glass. The trees and canopies create an outdoor space inspired by southern porch - shaded and cool.

Figure 114
Plans: ground and second floors

Images by author

Figure 115
Overview of the former maximum security block with the proposed interventions. The visitor lodgings are seen along the prison wall.

Figure 116
The view of the quad, as re-envisioned by this project. The former gym is in the background, and the former laundry building with its renewed facade and new canopy is on the right.

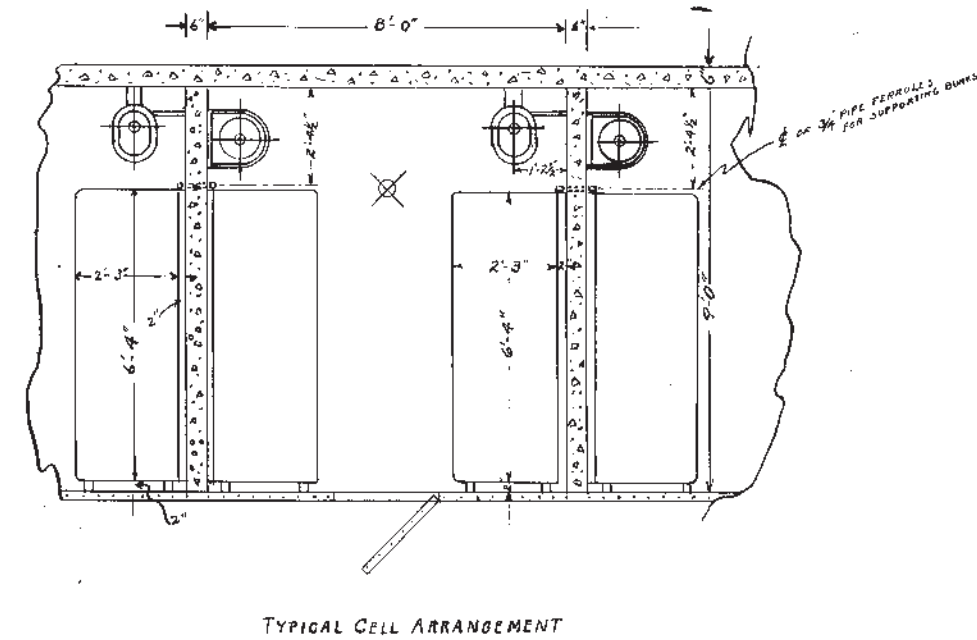
Images by author

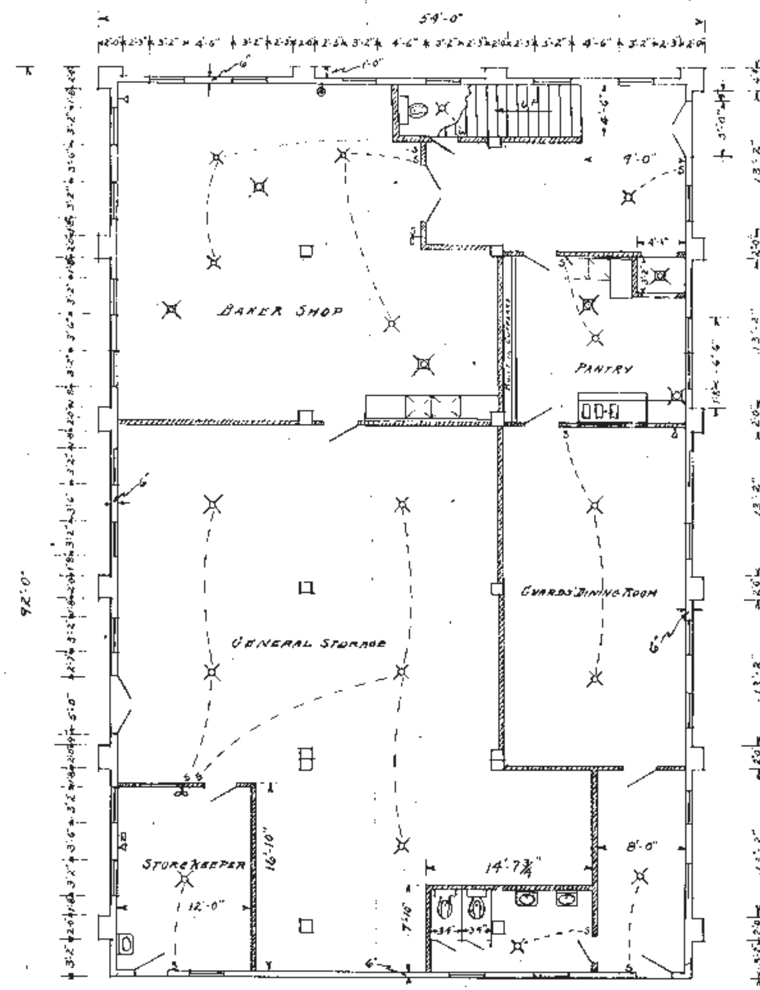
CONCLUSIONS

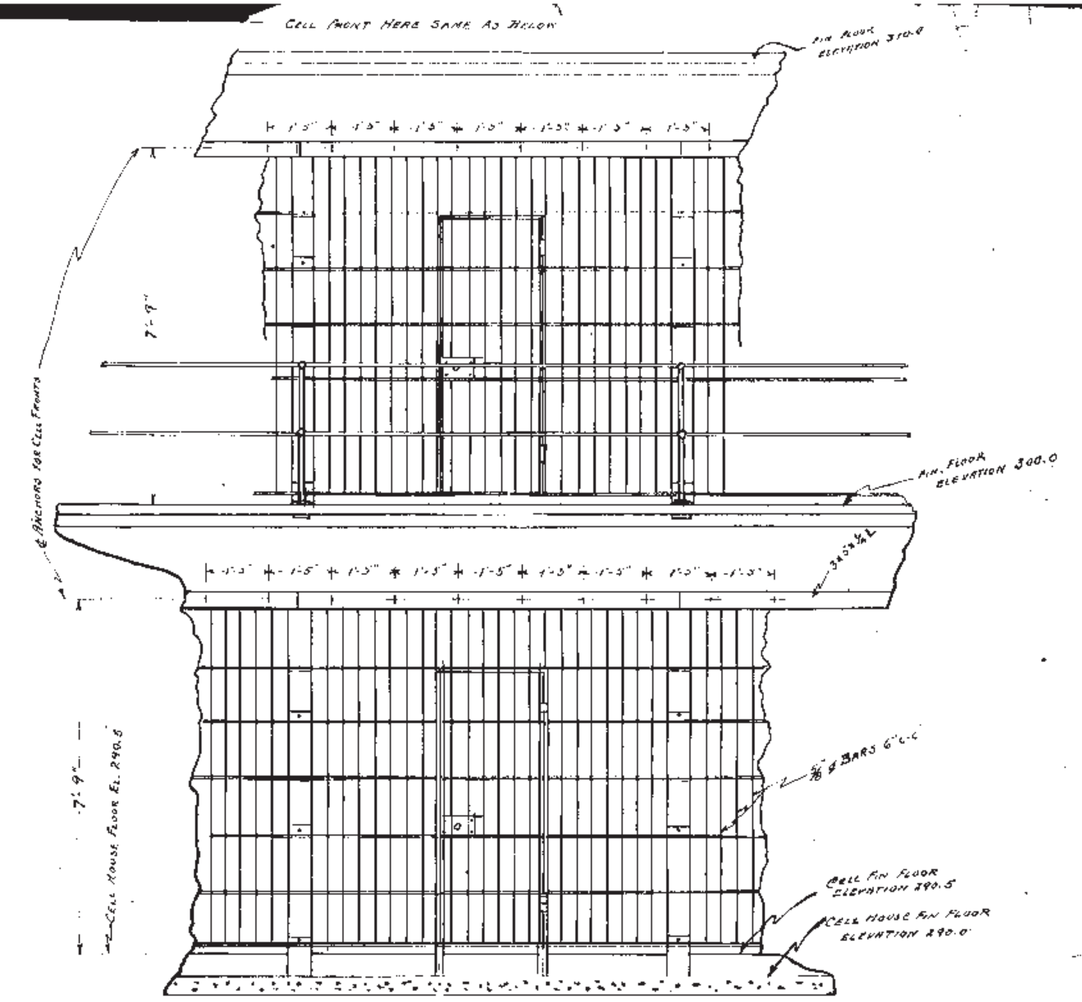
This thesis has investigated one possible solution at the site of difficult memory. The proposed architectural intervention aspired to unveil difficult past and use its power to inspire visitors to change their present and create a better future. There are many places like Brushy Mountain Penitentiary in America - some are abandoned neighborhoods, some are individual buildings or landscapes. As suggested by David Orr, such places should not be taken for granted, erased, replaced with other buildings or landscapes - as all places are results of choices and decisions, and as such are inherently pedagogical. However uncomfortable it is to encounter them, they are a powerful illustration of the shortcomings of the current systems and power structures. Following the lead of such centers for knowledge and activism as Highlander Folk School, where place-based education created generations of activists, places of difficult memory can become sites that look forward - while being empowered by the knowledge of the past.

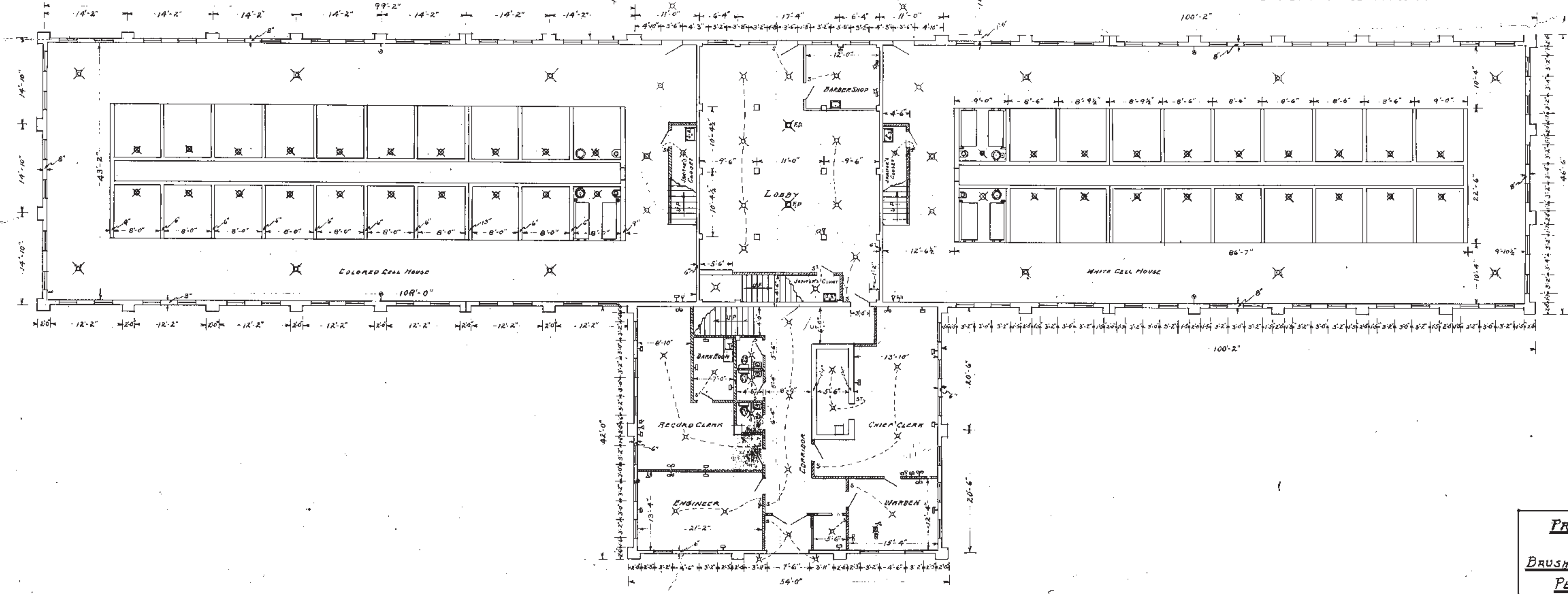
APPENDIX A
MAIN CELL BLOCK
1933
ARCHITECT UNKNOWN

FIRST FLOOR PLAN



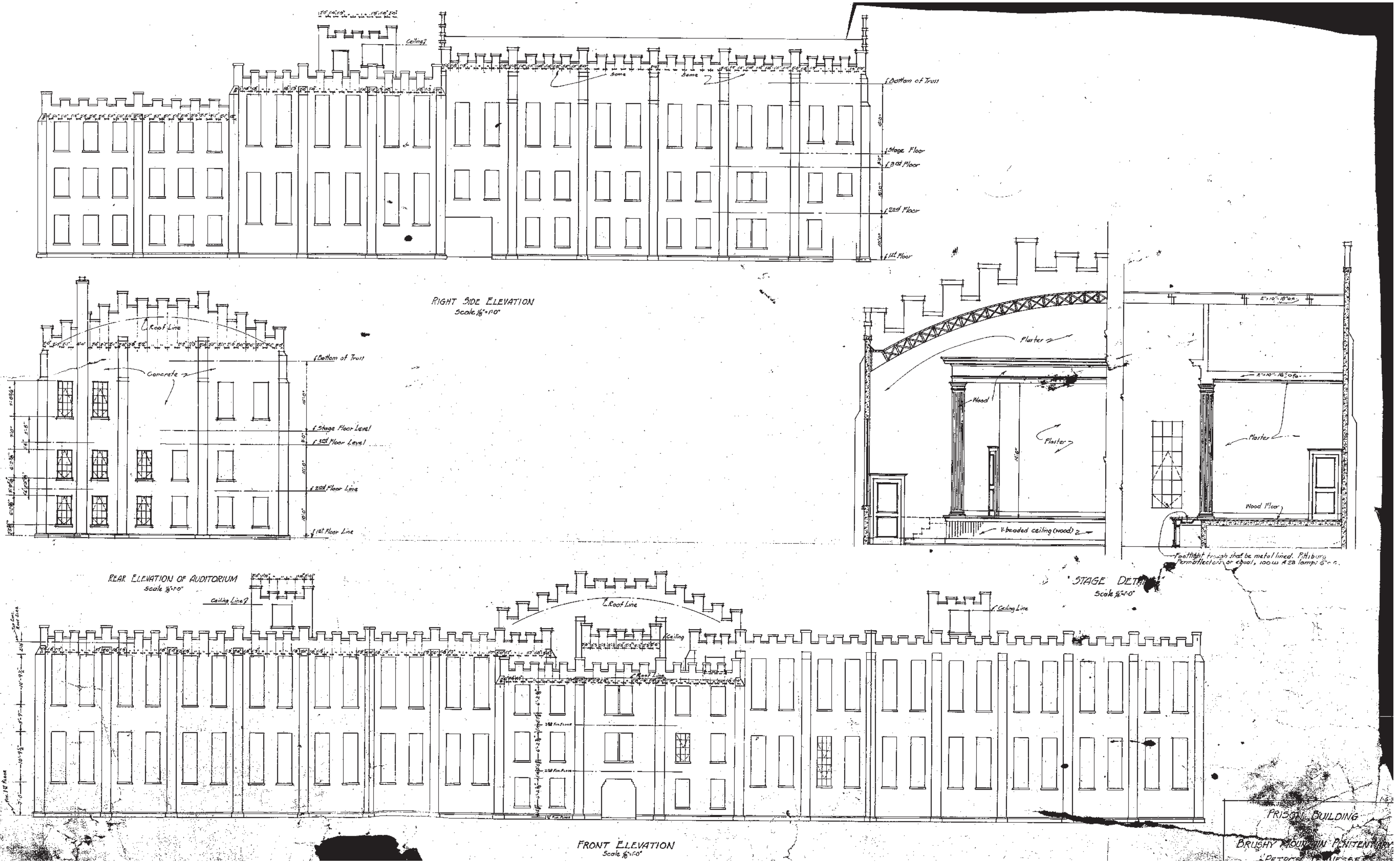






APPENDIX B
MAIN CELL BLOCK
1933

ELEVATIONS AND
SECTION THROUGH
AUDITORIUM



APPENDIX C
MASTER PLAN

RE-ENVISIONED
PRISON COMPOUND