

## **Application**

*VI. Site – selection and analysis*

*VII. Proposal – redevelopment of Healing Springs*

*VIII. Findings-afterword and notions of retreat*

## V. Site – selection and analysis



(Fig. 6.1) Cascade Inn and Motel, Healing Springs, Virginia, 1996 aerial photograph, courtesy United States Geological Survey (accessed at <http://nmviewogc.cr.usgs.gov/viewer.htm>)

There are literally dozens of springs located in the border country between Virginia and West Virginia. Healing Springs, located in Bath County represents a unique setting for the application of patterns identified through cultural landscape study. The site's historic context is rich, being associated since the early 19<sup>th</sup> century with the Hot Springs and the Warm Springs resorts (Ingalls, 1946 and Cohen 1997). Existing buildings on the site include the historic Cascade Inn, believed to have been built as early as the 1850s (Cohen, 1997) and used at one point as a bottling plant (Ingalls, 1949). Maps from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century show a system of trails connecting the spring to other key elements in the Warm Springs Valley.



(Fig. 6.2) Cascade Inn viewed from State Route 220, 1946 (Left) (Library of Congress) Prints and Photographs Division, LC-G612- 49058

(Fig. 6.3) Handbill advertising the Bath County Springs, (Right) (Library of Congress), Printed Ephemera Collection; Portfolio 187, Folder 44

A few structures beyond the motel and Cascade Inn do survive, but more interesting are a series of abandoned and

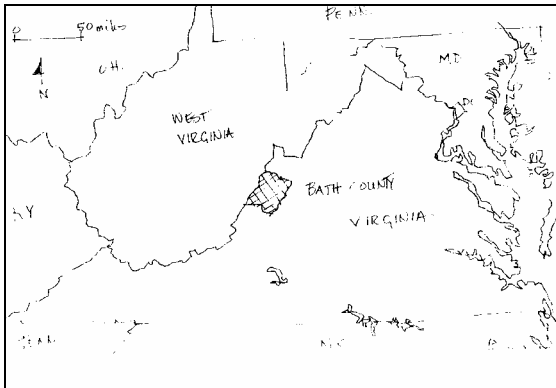
naturalized terraces that encircle the site of the bath house suggesting the density and separation so characteristic of the great spring spa site plans (examples such as Red Sulphur, White Sulphur, etc.). Most attractive are the clearly legible landscape elements still existent on site (examples: photos and discussion). While some earthmoving has taken place to alter natural slopes, much of the site landform retains its integrity, especially the sense of enclosure provided by the surrounding ridgelines and the views afforded by constructed and natural terraces.

Bath County is also the location of an unusually high concentration of thermal springs. Only Greenbrier County in West Virginia has a comparable concentration of this naturally occurring landscape feature (USGS 1932) (USGS 1979). Bath Alum and Millboro Springs were also located in Bath County. Millboro was the location of the closest rail link until the



Ingalls family extended service into Hot Springs. Bath Alum, now a part of the Jefferson National Forest, was once a rival to the White Sulphur Springs in grandeur (Cohen, 1997).

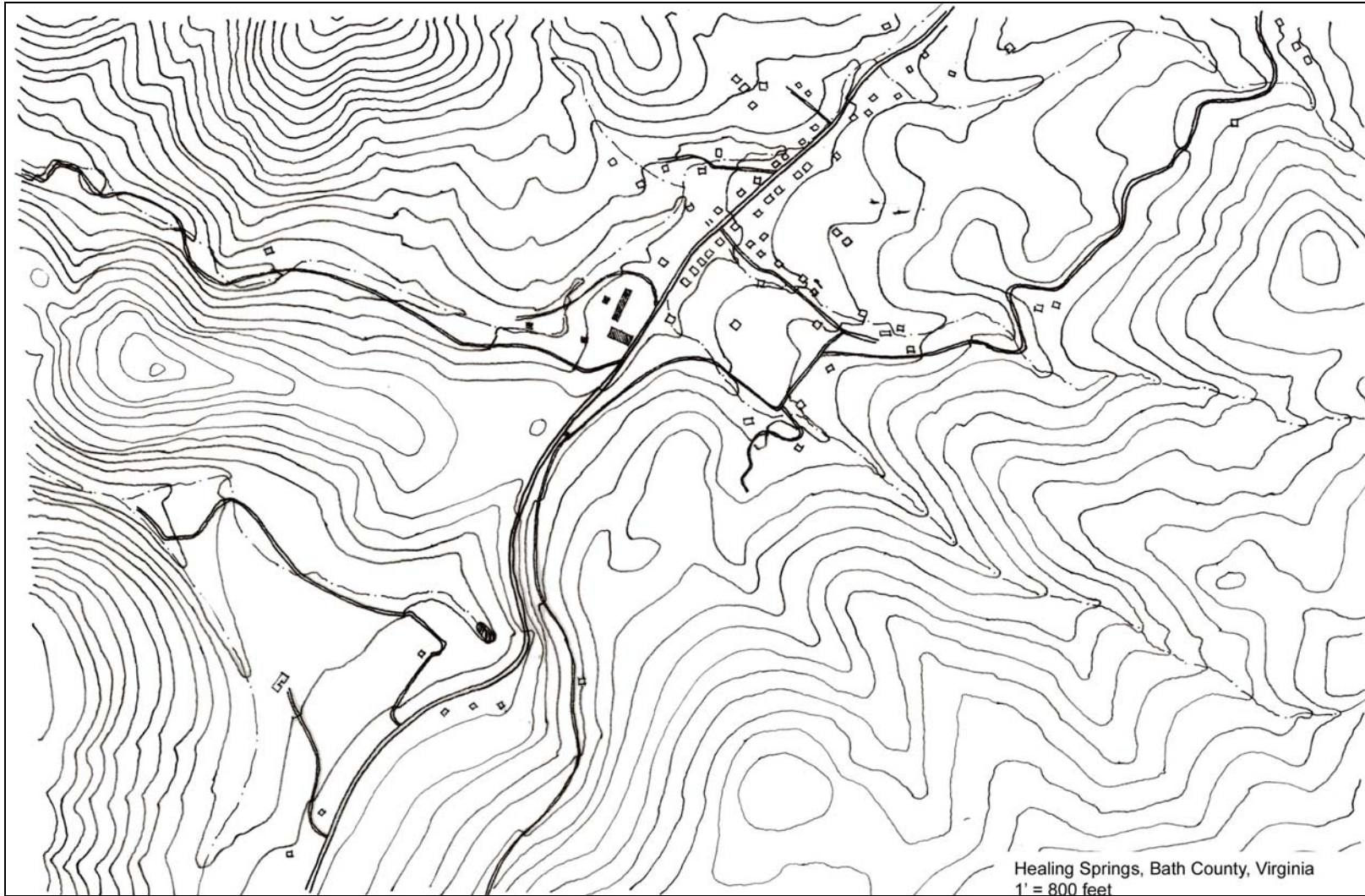
As for Healing Springs, little documentation on the site survives. Cohen (1997) found that the Cascade Inn dates from the 1850s. Ingalls (1949) recalls the building being used as a bottling plant for some time. The proximity of the Inn and springs to the Cascade Golf Course made it a natural location for visitors from the nearby Homestead.



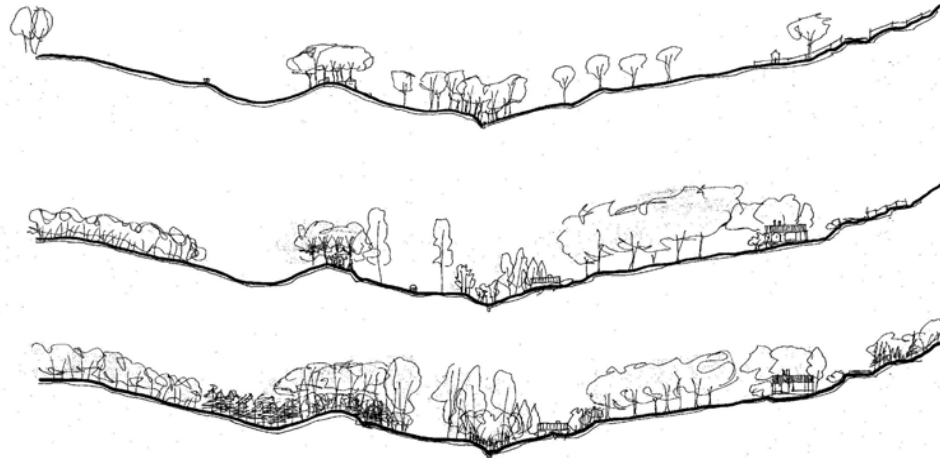
Location map – Bath County, VA



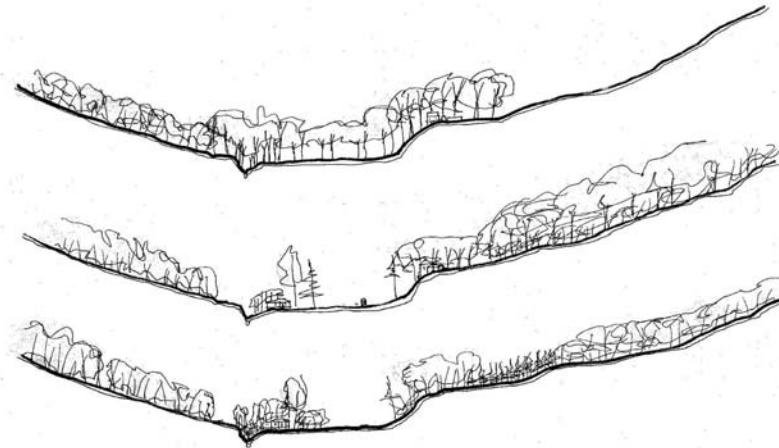
(Fig. 6.4) 1996 Aerial photograph of Cascade Inn and Motel and vicinity, Healing Springs, Bath County, Virginia, courtesy United States Geological Survey (accessed at <http://nmviewogc.cr.usgs.gov/viewer.htm>)



Healing Springs sits in the Healing Springs Valley of Bath County, Virginia just southeast of Warm and Hot Springs. Local topography provides much of the sense of boundary experienced by the visitor to the site.



Landscape evolution – following initial clearing for settlement of the Warm Springs Valley, Healing Springs has gone from agricultural pattern (top), to resort landscape (middle) and more recently allowed to naturalize (bottom).



Landscape evolution - The original forested slopes (top) gave way to open space around the spring (middle) and eventually have returned to a naturalized, second growth forest (bottom).



Healing Springs, Bath County, Virginia – Existing Conditions





Existing Conditions – Currently the site is occupied by the Cascade Inn, an attached motel and a collection of dependencies including two cabins and a dormitory / bath house. While owned by the Homestead, the Cascade Inn and Motel have not functioned since the 1980's. Access to the site is available from State Route 220. To the south (across a small east- west running ridge) is the historic Cascade Golf Course designed during the 1920's by Flynn. In addition to the Cascade Inn and the motel, two small cabins and a dormitory building are located within the tiny valley. Immediately to the west of the site (above the north terrace) is a sizable overgrown plantation of white pine possibly dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. To the north of the site is the hamlet of Healing Springs which includes a small church and cemetery as well as several residences and small farms. There are remnants of the interior park. Maintenance in

recent years has emphasized huge swaths of turf grass, a series of ornamental plantings around parking lots and driveways combined with regeneration through neglect for much of the site. Roads and circulation systems on site have been maintained only for maintenance purposes. A gravel road running east to west along the southern edge of the site services the Cascade Golf Course owned and operated by the Homestead. While views from the site looking west through the Healing Springs gap are still apparent, no attempt at keeping them clear has been made.





Little Mountain as seen from the bath house



View looking southwest across the capped spring towards the bath house



View looking west of the Cascade Inn from State Route 220



View looking west from State Route 220 across entry court at the Motel and the Little Mountain ridgeline beyond.



**Signature Buildings and Structures** – Remnant buildings and structures such as the Cascade Inn are located on naturally occurring terraces just above the open, bottom land immediately adjacent to the spring and along the Healing Springs Run. While there is some response to topography, especially in smaller structures, for the most part building is imposed on the topography. The downhill (west face) of the Cascade Inn reveals a significant change of grade between its front face (towards State Route 220) and its back. Rather than re-grading the site, the original builders sought to create a series of levels on either brick or stone piers, often screened with lattice work. Stone foundations were also used as a means of letting the buildings “ride the contours” and thus respond to the site. Such stonework is decidedly within the traditional building vocabulary of Appalachia, it may have been viewed as

unsightly, prompting the “camouflage” of green paint still visible on the site today. Although probably not intentional, the effect to the 21<sup>st</sup> century eye is one of a series of floating levels supporting buildings. The presence of fog makes the buildings connections to the ground mysterious.

Significant buildings on site include 2 cabins, the Cascade Inn and a dorm/ bath house.

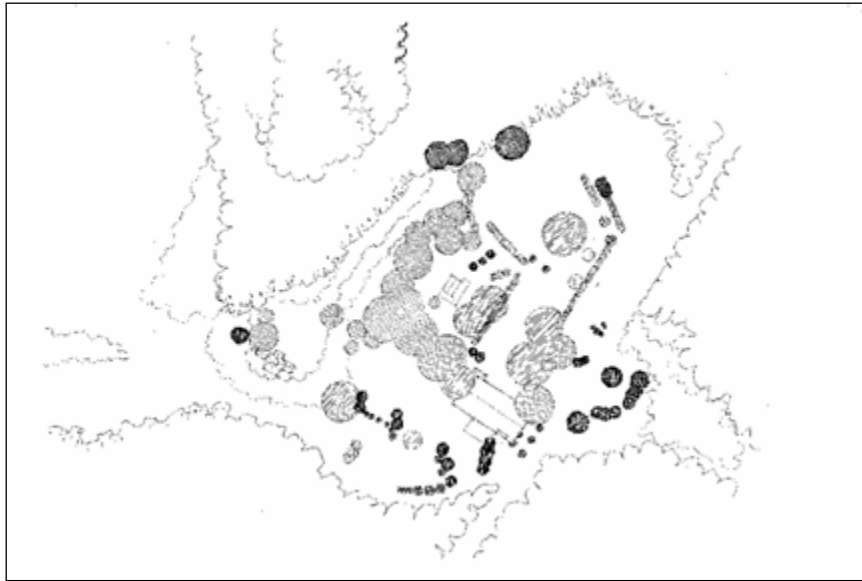




**Built Response to Topography** – Landform within the site follows a larger regional pattern. Ridgelines that enclose the site run from northeast to southwest, with stream courses following the larger pattern. At the south of the site is a small ridge. A number of significant views and vistas on site have been partially or completely obscured by allowing the forest to regenerate. A secondary feature of the traditional building practice of first elevating and then adding a porch or gallery to every building or structure is the creation of a number of pleasant views. The site's relationship to its encircling ridges and peaks is not wholly apparent except for in the midst of the park and near the spring. Still individual elements of these features are visible almost upon entering the site. Several peaks are visible from within the site.







**Ornamental and architectural plantings** – A series of hedges and screens subdivide the site. While the west bank of the Healing Springs Run has been allowed to revert to forest, the east bank has been maintained in some semblance of a park land. Several large shade trees characterize the interior space of the spring site, recalling the ‘cabin and campus’ plan found on so many Springs sites and depicted graphically. Evergreen plantings tend to function as boundaries and markers. Evergreen planting especially provide a sense of boundary and direction. Signature planting such as spruce located west of the spring and hemlocks near the kitchen entrance to the Cascade Inn suggest a consistency among Spring Sites even into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Newer planting within the main entry court and parking lot adjacent to State Route 220 are primarily deciduous shade trees such as oaks and hickories

suggesting recognition of the centrality of the park to defining the site’s interior open space. Forsythia hedges are planted along the highway, along the interior porch of the motel and along the service drives to the north of the motel. Yews are planted as foundation plantings near the Cascade Inn and the cabin located south and west of the Inn building. Yews have also been planted near the entry drive along route 220. Spruce and hemlock have been planted as architectural gestures near the spring and the Cascade Inn. Hemlock has been used to screen the service driveway near the Cascade Inn kitchen entrance and loading dock. White pines mark the northern boundary of the site.





**Circulation** – Existing circulation patterns connect the Cascade Inn with the highway, the motel with the highway and both buildings with the dormitory across the Healing Springs Run via a gravel paved driveway. A separate private access road runs perpendicular to Route 220, connecting the Cascades Golf Course while bypassing the spring site. Numerous footpaths encircle the main campus of the spring. Well worn footpaths connect the site to both the hamlet of Healing Springs to the north and to the Cascade Golf Course to the south. Remnant farm road cuts are apparent just above the north terrace remnant connecting to fire roads higher up the Warm Springs Ridge. Across State Route 220 (to the east of the site) remnant road cuts connect with the dispersed hamlet of Healing Springs.

**Paved Surfaces** – The parking lots and driveways located immediately adjacent to the Cascade Inn and along State Route 220 are paved with asphalt. Most of the secondary drives, such as those connecting the Cascade Inn and motel with the dormitory/ bath house are paved in gravel. The service road along the south edge of the site is also paved in gravel.

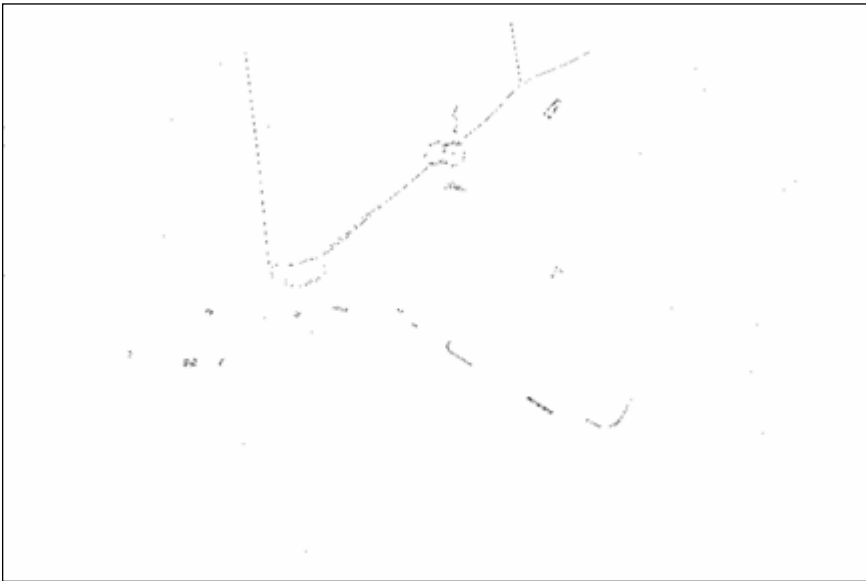
**The Automobile Landscape** – Since the 1910's and 1920's the automobile has been a reality at Healing Springs. Indeed a significant reorganization of the site must have taken place as Route 220 developed into the principle entry to the County. The motel is probably the best example of this change on site. Where once overnight visitors were accommodated in dispersed, freestanding cabins and cottages scattered through the surrounding woods and campus, the motel is located immediately adjacent to the highway. Two stories of bedrooms are located in a single building. The entry court is currently dominated by the asphalt parking lot, the driveway and surrounding hedges.



**Forest Cover** – Although primarily maintained as forestry through neglect, the site retains an open feel, especially on the east slope overlooking the Healing Springs Run. Morning and midday sun filters through an open canopy of mixed hardwoods. Remnant conifers, especially along the steep slopes forming a southern boundary of the site provide an approximation of the local ecology. The spring's proximity is not revealed until the visitor is virtually on top of it. The North Terrace, probably once the site of a series of cabins or cottages, has been allowed to revert to unmanaged second or third growth forest. Dense underbrush obscures the remnants of foundations or terraces and along with the overgrown corridor along the Healing Springs Run has created a vegetative barrier in the middle of the site. Trees located within the park/campus are natives for the most part, selected and

maintained for their canopy effect. Central campus forms a room with high 'ceilings' to filter sunlight during hottest months of the year. The pine plantation hints at the working landscape that once existed around the resort. Clear cut to the west of the site has no value. A glade or open space around the spring survives in some form.





**Small-Scale Features** – As a site that has been adapted to its current use over time, the site contains many small reminders of past configurations and functions.  
**Adaptations to the topography**

Visible markings in the landscape indicate where a farm site was once located above the North Terrace. Stairs, culverts, footbridges, fencing, retaining walls and earth terraces are all details that are significant in explaining the site's evolution.







**Landscape Remnants** – While building at Healing Springs took advantage of views to the west, a sense of enclosure created by ridgelines and a bottom land bounded by natural terraces, earthworks are also apparent even in its current condition. Visible only at ground level, the grading, roadways and springs provide a glimpse of the function of such a site. Diagonal stream crossings to accommodate horses, tee boxes from an abandoned golf course and a series of overgrown terraces suggest a dispersed but interconnected community devoted to a variety of recreational activities.





**Bath house set within the riparian corridor – view looking south along Healing Springs Run**



**Bath house faces the Little Mountain ridge across the bottom – view north from the front porch**



**Cascade Inn, entry drive and motel with parking lot**

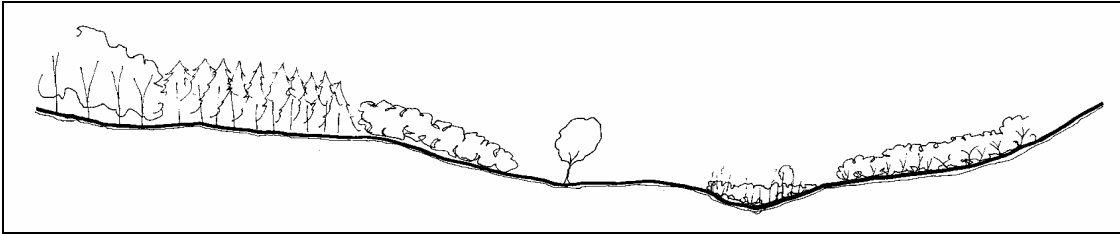


**South end of the site showing natural bowl and view to 'Little Mountain'**

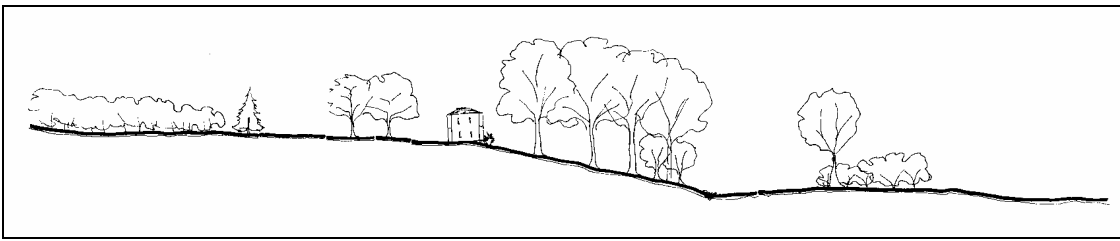


# Existing Conditions - Sections

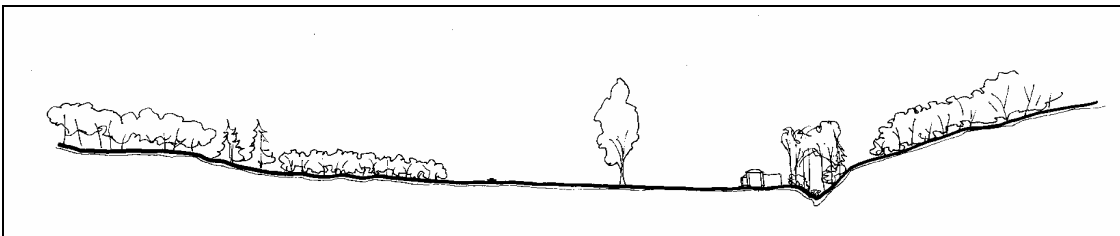




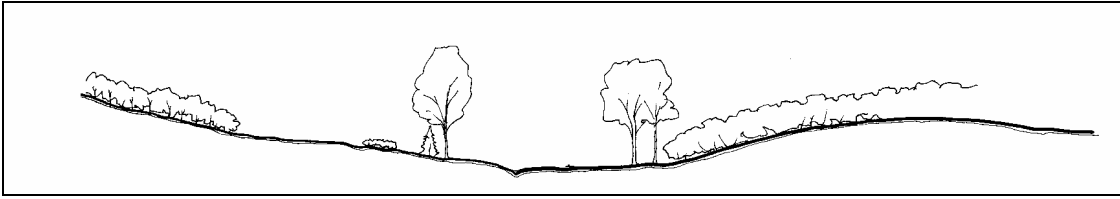
**Section 1. North to south shows White Pine plantation, open space near capped spring, overgrown riparian corridor and reforested hillside.**



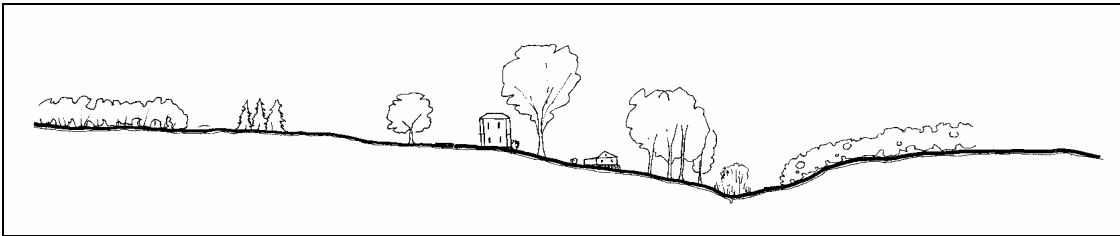
**Section 2. East to West from across state route 220 through existing parking lot, motel, park/ grove, across healing Springs Run towards Healing Springs Gap.**



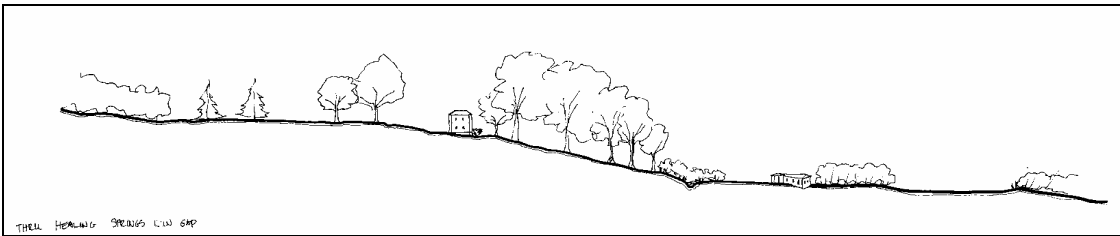
**Section 3. Northeast to southwest from two boundary pines through the bottom (Healing Springs Run), to bath house, across the Healing Springs Run ravine and up ridgeline forming the south boundary of the site.**



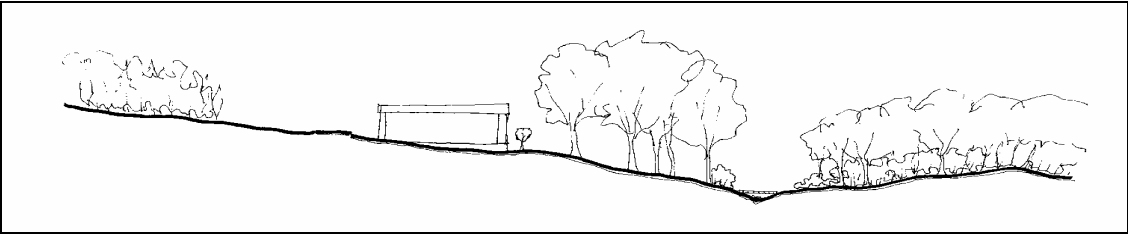
Section 4. Southeast to northwest across the hollow located south of the Cascade Inn, across the healing Springs Run and the bottom near the capped spring, to the base of Little Mountain via terraces overlooking the spring.



Section 5. – Southeast to northwest through the Motel and cabin, across the healing Springs Run and up the north terrace towards the existing White Pine plantation.



Section 6. – East to west from across state route 220 past the parking lot and motel, through the remnant park/ grove, past the overgrown Healing Springs Run riparian corridor and existing bath house located on a lower terrace to the Healing Springs Run Gap.

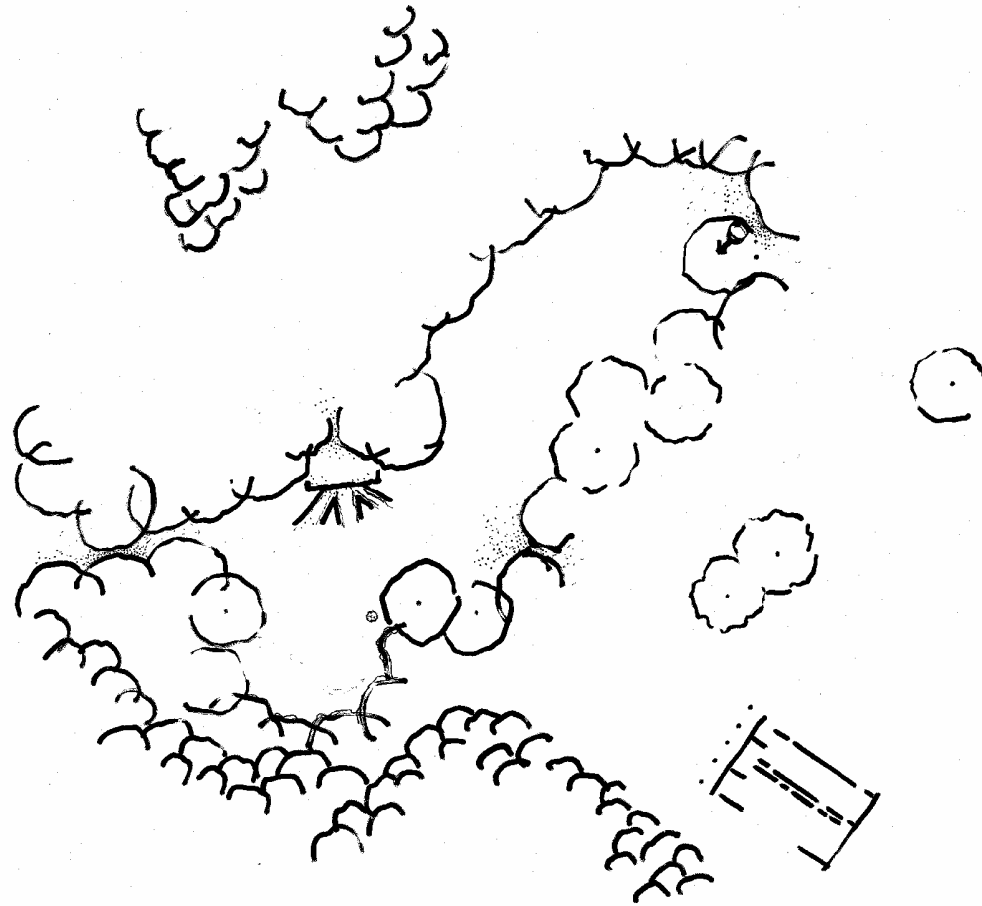


Section 7. – Southeast to northwest through the Center Hall of the Cascade Inn, through the remnant park/grove across the Healing Springs Run and into the overgrown hillside of the north terrace.



Healing Springs is typical of Virginia Springs. The components of its site plan, its hotel, dependencies, enclosed park space, planted grove, bathing and drinking springs, cabins and cottages, even its conversion to an automobile-focused motel site, not to mention the sense of enclosure experienced as a result of its proximate ridges and peaks parallel many other Virginia Springs. Still significant qualities set it apart and can form the basis for a redevelopment that takes advantage of this identity.

## VI. Proposal - redevelopment of Healing Springs



**Concept for planting – the glade at the center of Healing Springs**



**Plan for the Redevelopment of Healing Springs, VA**

The proposal calls for the redevelopment of the Healing Springs resort as a multi-season retreat. The historic Cascade Inn is to be revived as a restaurant and tavern with outdoor seating available in the main entry court during the warmer months. Overnight accommodations for the latter day spring-goer include two cottages on the south lawn, four cabins ranged along the north terrace, three cabins overlooking the spring and three cabins at the west extremity of the site with views west towards the Healing Springs Gap. The Cascade Inn will also contain several smaller rooms for additional overnight accommodations. To the south of the site, a small natural hollow is proposed as the location of a day-time picnic and recreational area, with a separate entrance to the spring and bath house.

At the center of the site is proposed a revived grove of native hardwoods, limbed up to produce an enormous outdoor room, the public space of the retreat. An existing hunter's cabin and a spring keeper's cottage have been retained as additional options for visitor's accommodations. An existing bath house located south of the spring will be retained. The drinking spring at the middle of the site will be restored in a small pavilion.

The site plan draws from the 'cabin and campus' plan that evolved at the Virginia Springs over 200 years. Outdoor spaces such as the grove at the center serve many purposes. Views into and out of the site will be restored to accentuate the visitor's experience of the local landform. A system of paths, many based on historic routes, provide the primary means of circulating on site. In laying out smaller spaces for gathering or seclusion, the site's wonderfully varied natural landforms and microclimates have been explored. Throughout a goal of the proposal has been to preserve and utilize identified components within the cultural landscape to reveal connections to the site's and to the region's historic pattern.



**Conceptual Diagram – Elements of the Retreat at Healing Springs**

The proposed retreat will feature several interrelated components drawing on the historic precedent of the Virginia Springs as surveyed in this document.

The center of the conceptual plan is the springs, one of which has been diverted to a bath house (an existing building). A second spring has been uncapped and is the site of a small pavilion containing a drinking fountain. The third spring, currently located on the ruins of an old farmstead site, will be revived as another drinking fountain and incorporated into the small Terrace Overlook.

The restored Cascade Inn will serve as entry point. Its Entry Court will also contain outdoor seating for a proposed tavern. Three belvederes mark the transition from the parking area and Entry Court into the Grove. The South Lawn Cottages, along with the existing Spring Keeper's cottage and Hunter's cabin, provide accommodations closest to the Cascade Inn.

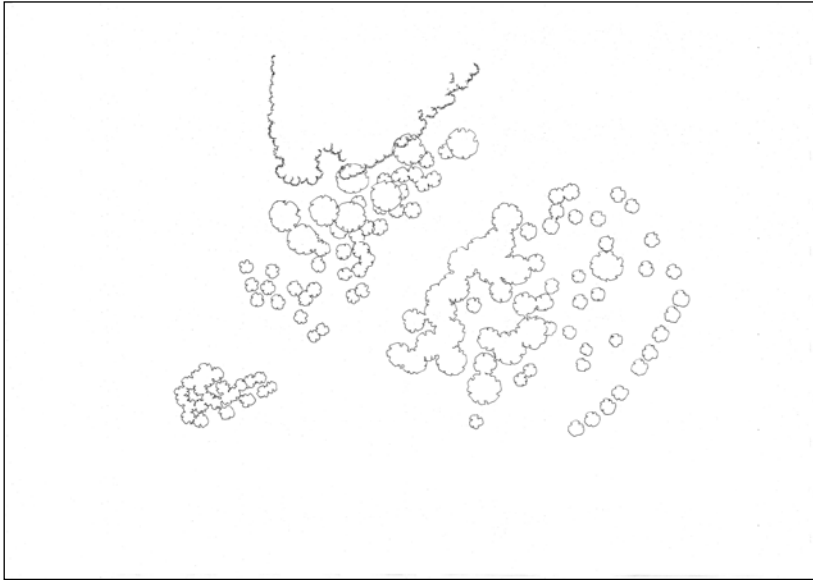
Proposed Circuit Paths provide pedestrian connections amongst the retreat's facilities. Vehicular access to the North Terrace cabins and beyond is provided via a gravel driveway extending from the secondary parking lot north of the Entry Court. The North Crossing provides pedestrian access to the North Terrace cabins as well as connecting to Hot Springs via a ridgeline trail along Little Mountain.

A second pedestrian bridge is proposed to connect the Cascade Inn with the North Terrace closer to the springs. The Sunset Hill cabins and the Overlook Terrace as well as the drinking spring pavilion are all visible from this crossing. Trails west from the Overlook connect to Wilderness cabins located at the outer limits of the site. Also forming a western boundary to the site are a Stone Bridge and Fog Forest (based on native riparian plantings).

The southern boundary of the site is formed by a proposed 'pinetum' or large-scale evergreen planting which contains day-use picnic and recreational facilities, including a separate parking lot. Trails connect from this section to the historic Cascade Golf Course located just to the south at Little Healing Springs.







**The Ornamental Forest** - Historically, springs sites were a combination of rustic natural scenery and utilitarian, often neoclassical buildings and structures in a park like setting. A significant feature at the center of such a campus was a grove, an enormous outdoor room providing space for collection, circulation and dispersal. The scale of natural forms such as ridgelines provided a sense of enclosure. Each site differed and in fact drew some its character from its physical setting.

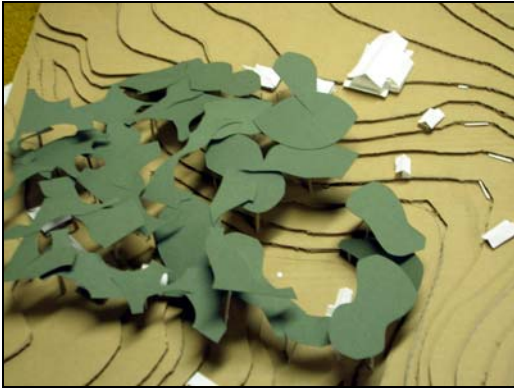
The Grove at Healing Springs will be an ornamental forest after a similar landscape feature proposed by Thomas Jefferson at Monticello as he sought to adapt the aesthetics of the English landscape school to the microclimates encountered on his own 'little mountain'.

But under the beaming, constant, almost vertical sun of Virginia, shade is our Elysium. In the absence of this no beauty of the eye can be enjoyed. This organ must yield its gratification to that of the other senses; without the hope of any equivalent to the beauty relinquished. The only substitute I have been able to imagine is this. Let your ground be covered with trees of the loftiest stature. Trim up their bodies as high as the constitution & form of the tree will bear, but so as that their tops shall still unite & yield dense shade. A wood, so open below, will have nearly the appearance of open grounds. Then, when in the open ground you would plant a clump of trees, place a thicket of shrubs presenting a hemisphere the crown of which shall distinctly show itself under the branches of the trees. (from Baron, 1987)

The proposed redevelopment of Healing Springs seeks first to re-establish the distinction between the Ornamental Forest and the surrounding landscape. In doing so the definitive open space pattern is reasserted. The same trees make up the Ornamental Forest but will be cultivated to provide a high canopy and contained open space. This is a decidedly social space, historically the location of the bath house and drinking fountains as well as the residences and gathering spaces that made up the resort. The remnant grove at Healing Springs already contains the hunter's cabin and spring keeper's cottage.

The Ornamental Forest, the organizing gesture of the design, is reasserted through both natural and cultural processes. There are already remnant trees within the Healing Springs site. Additional planting and more importantly additional maintenance can approach the historic conditions - a huge outdoor room, covered by a canopy branching. Variety in the

site's topography means that the 'floor' of this outdoor room will be extremely variable. This allows for a diversity of spaces within the Ornamental forest.



View of Grove looking east with Cascade Inn building Visible at top right.



View of Ornamental Forest/ Grove from above With Cascade Inn visible at the lower right.



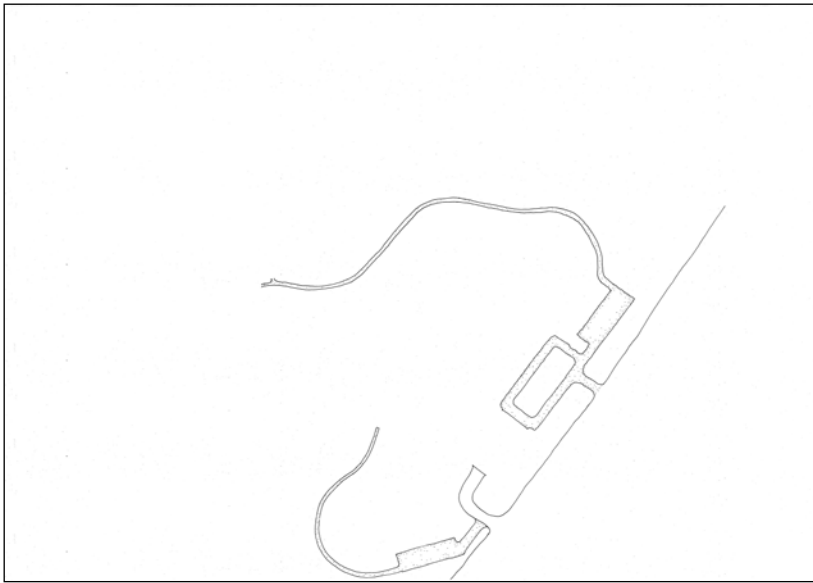


**Planting Plan** – While the Ornamental Forest provides structure for the site, unifying outlying cabins and other distributed facilities under its canopy, ornamental plantings are intended to engage latter day spring-goers. The planting plan is especially focused on first opening the site to views from the highway, re-establishing the Grove or ornamental forest at the center of the site and articulating a series of smaller open spaces within the grove.

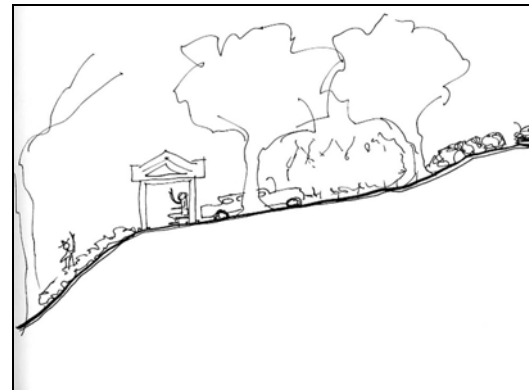
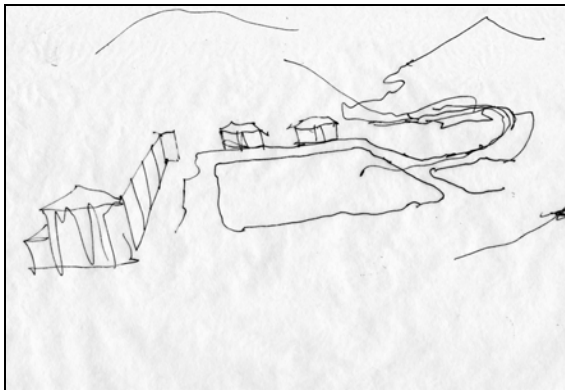
‘The space in the middle, between the colonnades and open to the sky, ought to be embellished with green things; for walking in the open air is very healthy, particularly for the eyes, since the refined and rarefied air that comes from green things, finding its way in because of the physical exercise, gives a clean-cut image, and by clearing away the gross humours from the eyes, leaves the sight keen and the image distinct. Besides, as the body gets warm with exercise in walking, this air, by sucking out the humours from the frame, diminishes their superabundance, and disperses and thus reduces that superfluity which is more than the body can bear.

from Vitruvius’ *Ten Books on Architecture*, Book V, Ch. IX (Morgan, 1960)

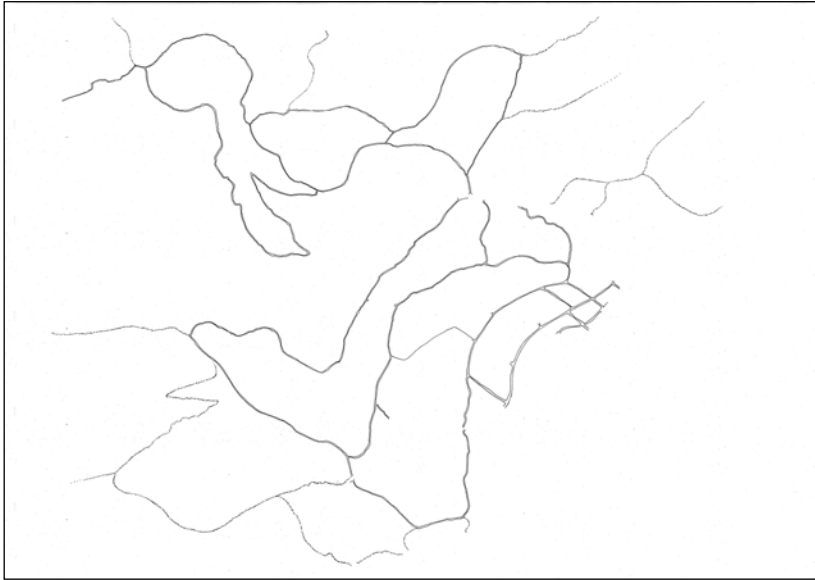
Eight smaller spaces primarily articulated through plantings include a small ‘fog forest’ at the west end of the site based on native plants, an overlook terrace located just north of the spring and bath house, the residential, linear ‘north terrace’, a small horseshoe-shaped contemplation garden on the north end of the site, hillside plantings that connect the visitor to the grove from the entry court through three neo-classical pavilions, the main entry court which is really the front lawn of the Cascade Inn, a ‘pinetum’ for day visitors at the south end of the site and finally a reforested backdrop for the bath house.



**Circulation and Paved Surfaces** – Automobile access to the site has been limited though not eliminated altogether. By clearly defining parking areas and access roads, the ‘notion of retreat’ is played out as the visitor literally must leave their car behind to gain entry to a majority of the site. Parking lots are located on higher ground so that the visitor is given an opportunity to survey the site in some, hopefully meaningful fraction of its entirety as they enter. Service access to the ‘north terrace’, the ‘hunter’s cabin’ and the Cascade Inn have been maintained.



The automobile is limited to a few select areas located immediately adjacent to the highway. The visitor must disembark to enter the retreat, leaving the car behind.

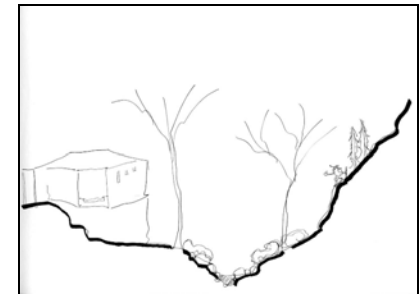
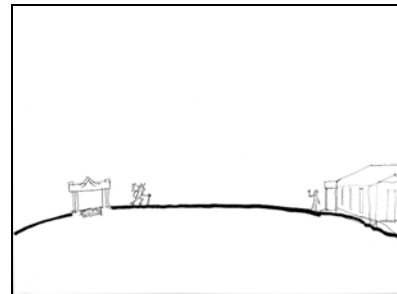
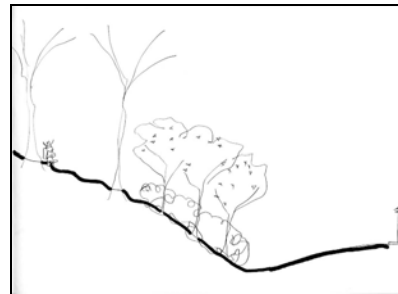
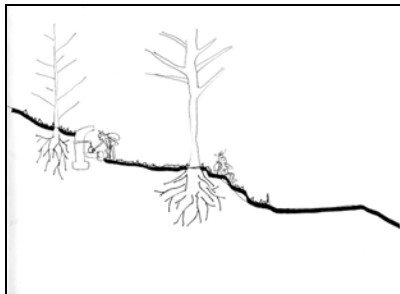


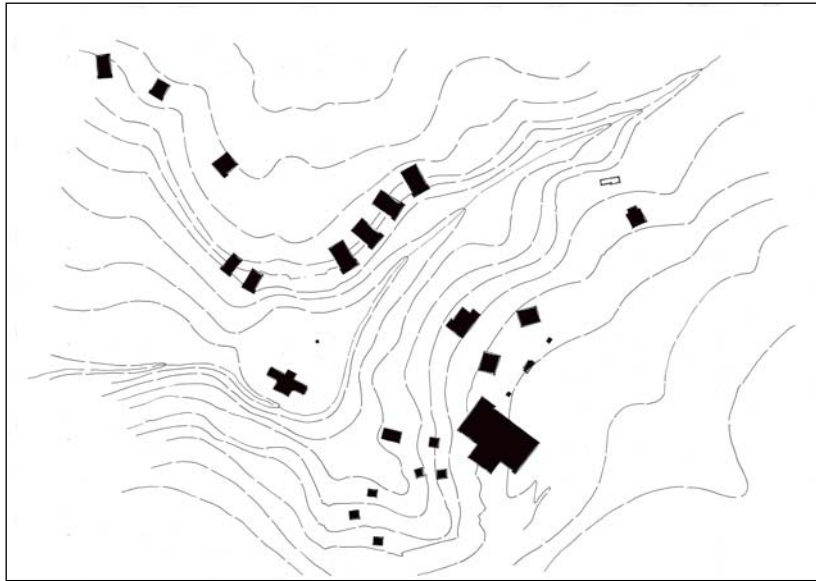
**Pedestrian pathways** – Building on existing paths, visual cues and the connections of significant site features, the circulation paths proposed are especially related to the sites landform. The entire site can be navigated by foot. The proposed plan also calls for establishing pedestrian path connections to the Hot Springs resort along the ridgeline of Little Mountain, as well as access to the Cascade Golf Course to the South and the hamlet of Healing Springs to the northeast.

Pathways connect proposed structures, buildings and viewpoints allowing for exploration and an extension of the retreat into the site.

Historically, circulation was both literally and figuratively significant to the Virginia Springs experience. The healing regimen often included such physical activity as horseback

riding and strolling as well as bathing and ‘taking the waters’. The revived Healing Springs will offer a network of pathways that encourage exploration, contemplation and connection with the site.

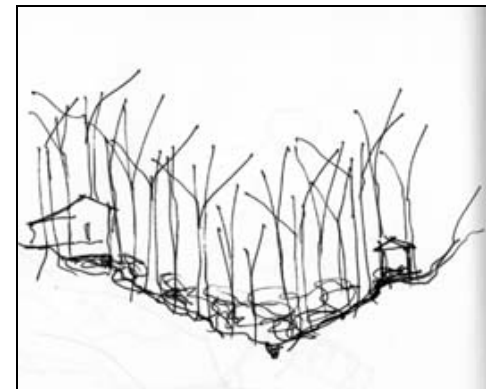
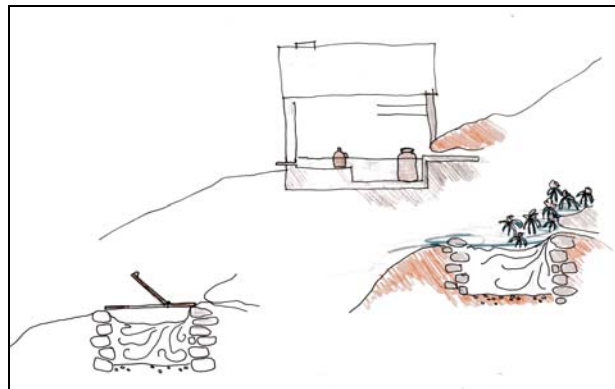
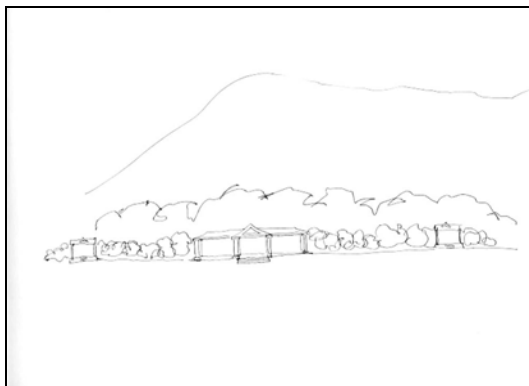


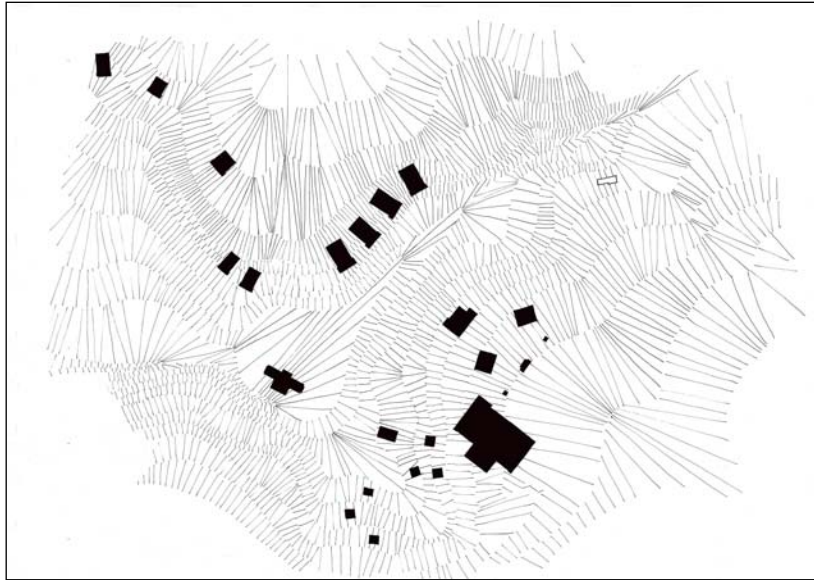


**Building with the topography** - Site plans at the Virginia Springs varied considerably from formal, symmetrical layouts to informal, scattered and asymmetrical arrangements. The key factor in design seemed to have been response to a given site's topography. Visual unity resulted more through the use of similar or even identical architecture among housing types than from a geometry or formal symmetry. Still, the effect of informally arranged rows of cottages, ranges and cabins draped across encircling slopes is comparable to the enclosure experienced within Piedmont and Tidewater plantations. Paradise and Baltimore Rows at the White ...

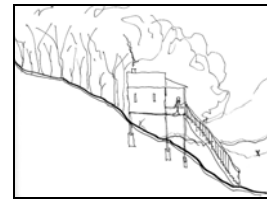
The proposed design calls for first removing the existing motel building (as while it provides visual access to the site also cuts harshly across the slope of the south terrace). It also encourages the construction of cabins and cottages that 'ride

the contour', replicating the historic relationship with landform.

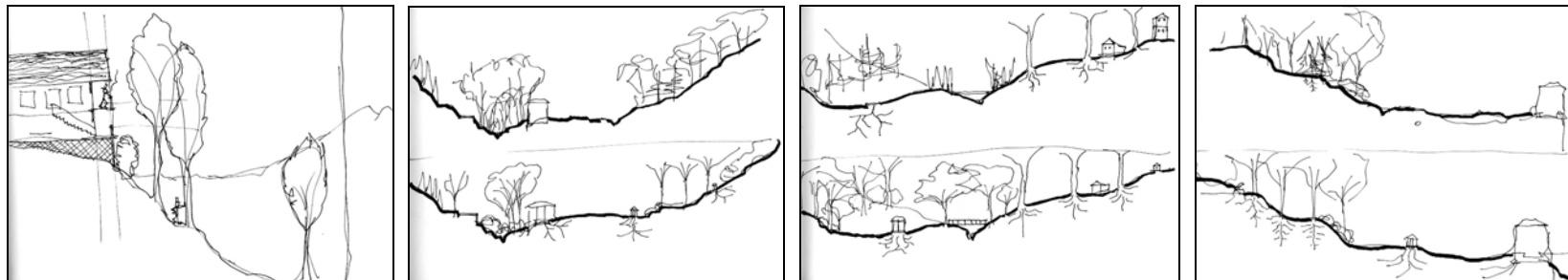




**Working with variable Slope** – One of the real opportunities offered by the healing Springs site is the number of viewpoints available in a small space. Vertical arrangement also figured prominently in how the Virginia Springs functioned. Since most springs were located in locally varied topography, slope often figured prominently in how a site was developed. The lowest terraces, closest to the spring, were usually maintained as lawn, mimicking the glades that occur in the saturated bottomlands adjacent to a spring.



Views afforded by the variable landform also take advantage of slope. At the western portion of the site, wilderness cabins have been proposed that are connected to the main campus only by pathways. They sit high enough up slope that they are ‘around the bend’ of the foot hills of Little Mountain.



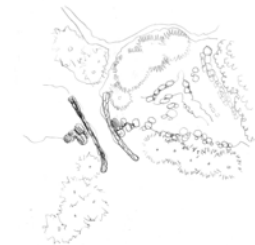
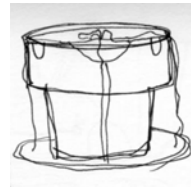
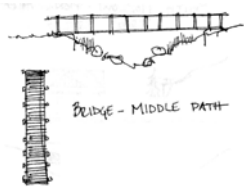


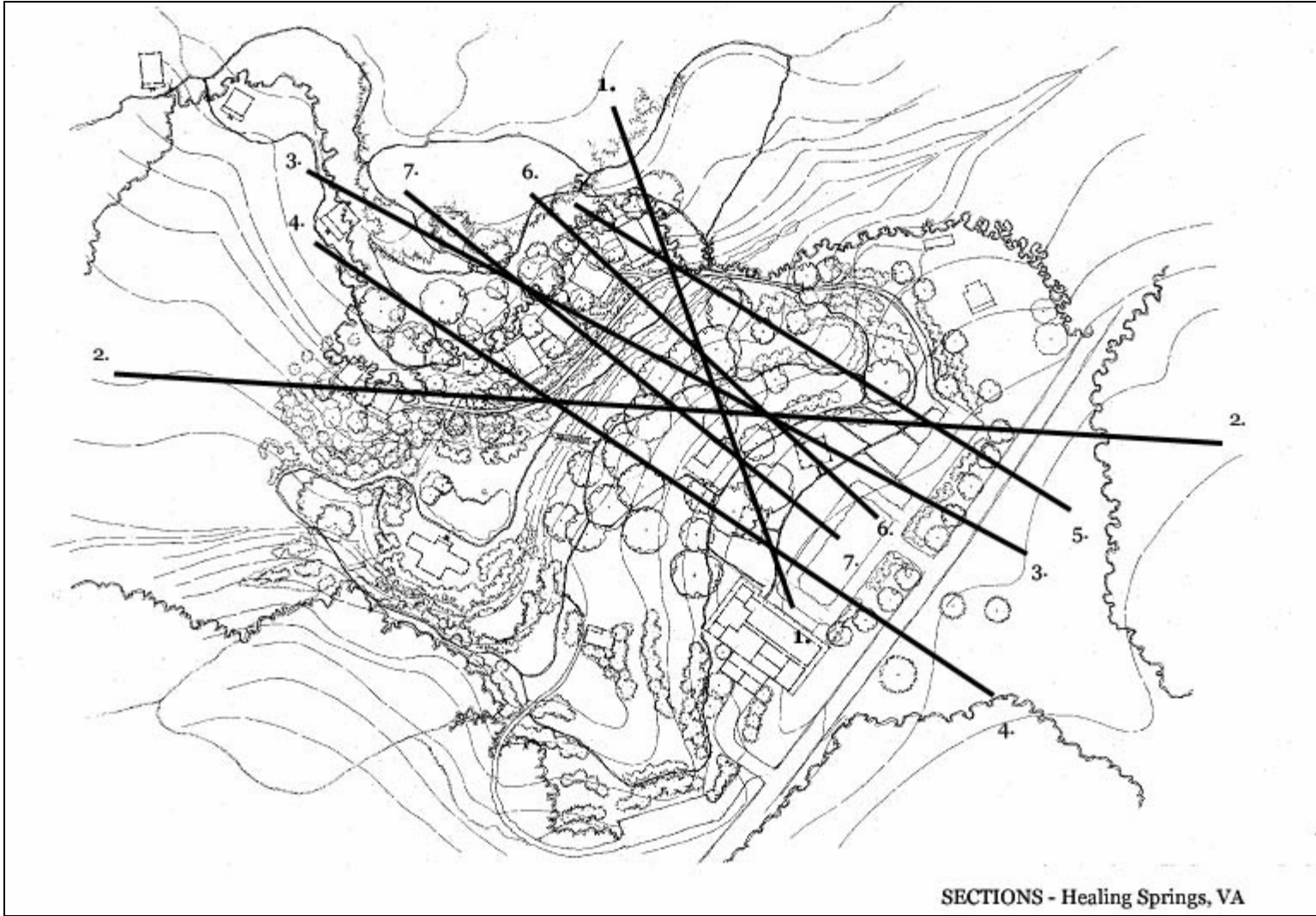


**Small Scale Elements** – The proposal calls for incorporating a number of small-scale design elements to further articulate connections to the site’s and the region’s historic pattern. Especially important in compiling the design vocabulary for these features has been the photo documentation of the Historic American Building Survey/ Historic American Engineering Register (HABS/HAER).

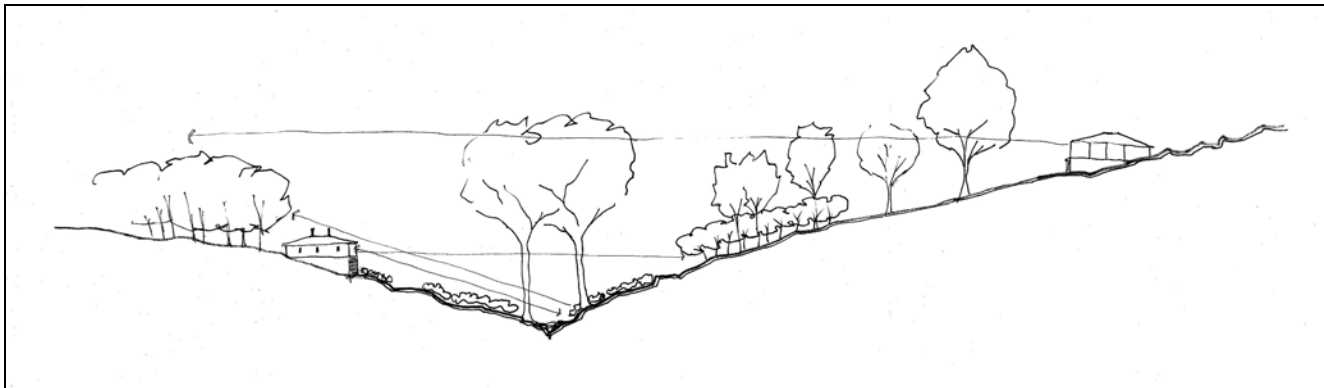
Two drinking fountains provide the visitor with the opportunity to taste the ‘fam’d waters’ of Healing Springs. One is located on a former farmstead site on the terrace just north of the bath house. The other, now capped is located in the center of the site and will be the location of a small pavilion. Outdoor seating will be located in the horseshoe garden at the north end of the site, near the bath house and around the fire pit located above the ‘North Terrace’, as well

as part of the ‘picnic area and pinetum’ south of the Cascade Inn. Three pavilions form an edge between the entry court and the south lawn. These are transitional spaces, with framed views of the retreat laid out at the feet of the visitor. The ‘Fog Forest’ located west of the bath house along the Healing Springs Run stream course includes rustic stone walls, slabs and seating among its native plantings. Three bridges cross the Healing Springs Run. One connects the overflow parking lot north of the Cascade Inn with the North Terrace cabins. The second connects the back side of the Cascade Inn with the spring proper and is accessible by pedestrians only. The third is within the Fog Forest garden and forms a western boundary of sorts for the retreat.

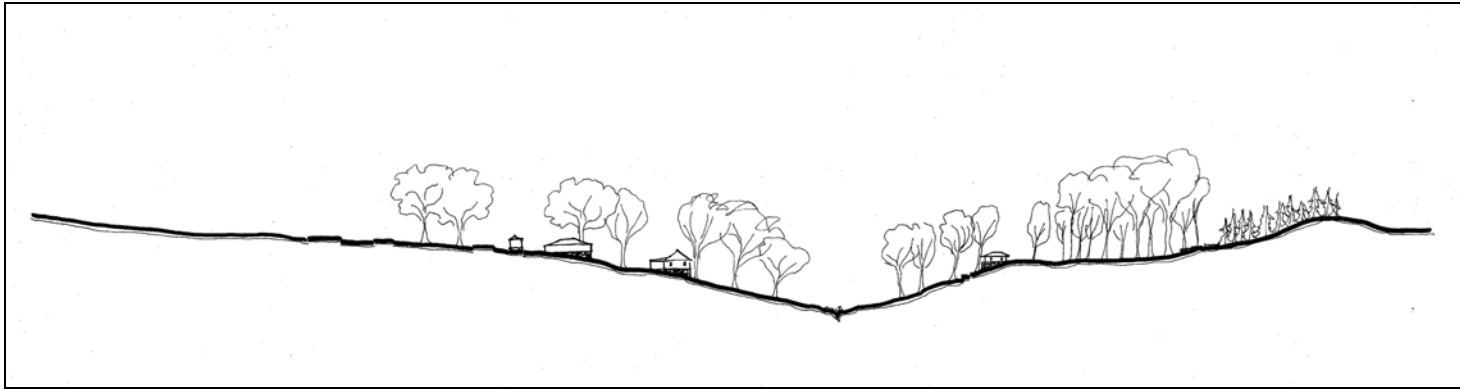




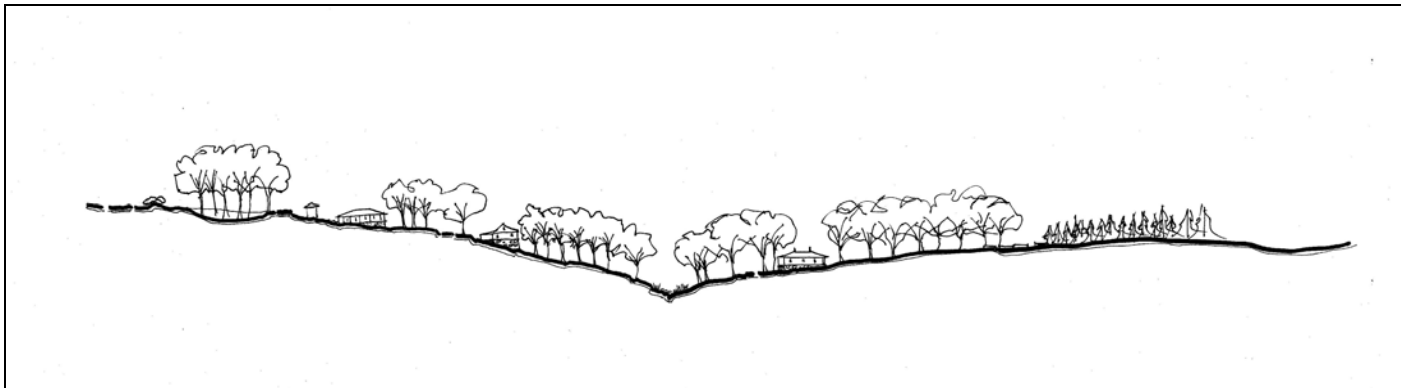
**Sections** – Three important features of the proposed redevelopment for Healing Springs are revealed by a series of section drawings through the site. First, by clearing the overgrown riparian corridor (Healing Springs Run) and the North Terrace, views into, through and out of the site are improved dramatically, allowing the visitor to experience the varied landform on site. Second, by re-planting a Grove at the center of the site, a ‘connective tissue’ can be established, providing an outdoor space that unifies varied and disparate components to the landscape. Third, sections reveal the simple but effective strategy of organizing elements in proximity to the riparian corridor (Healing Springs Run). Historically cabins, cottages and most buildings and structures other than bath houses and spring pavilions were constructed on the natural terraces above the bottom lands. The effect, seen in historic documents and still perceptible even in abandoned sites such as Healing Springs, is of a place both private and accessible.



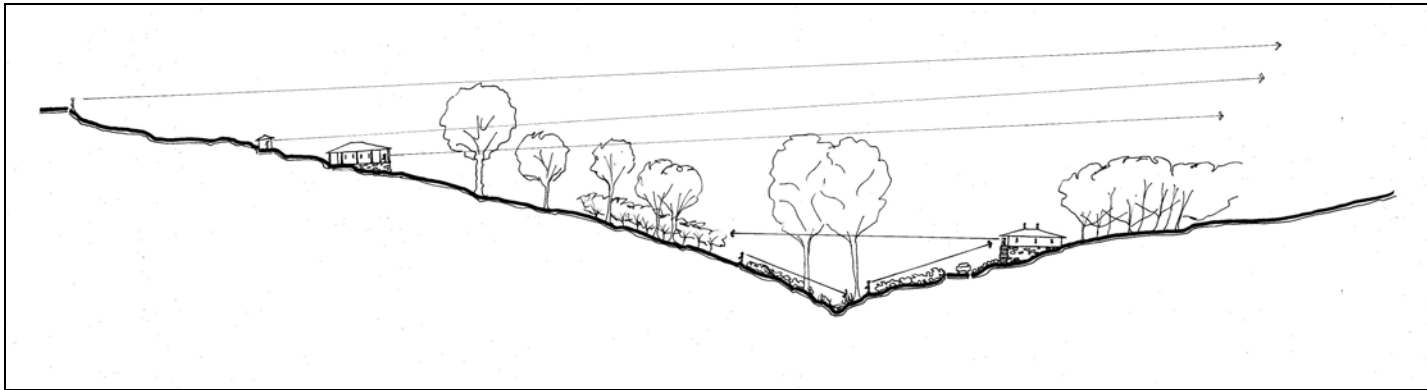
Section 1. Northwest to southeast across the Healing Springs Run, showing views into and out of the North Terrace cabins and from the cottages on the south terrace.



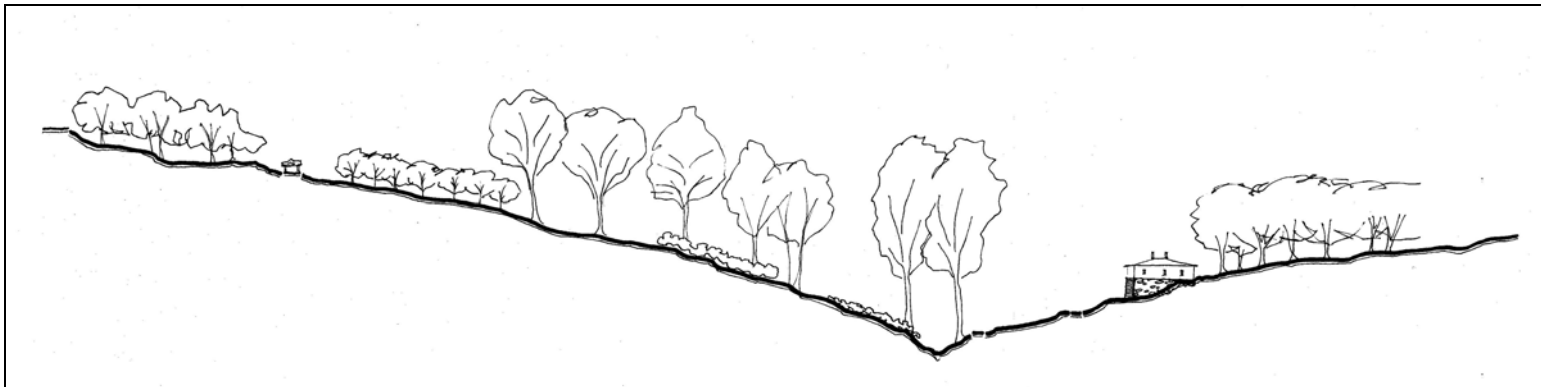
Section 2. Southeast to northwest through the Spring Keeper's cabin, across the north terrace and through the white pine plantation



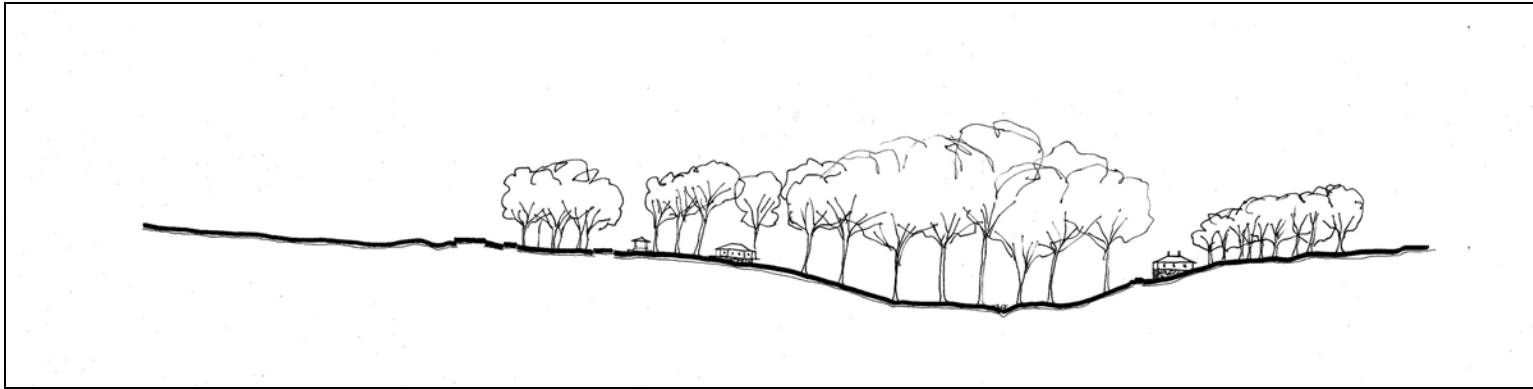
Section 3. East to west across the parking lot through the ornamental forest and west through the fire pit above the north terrace



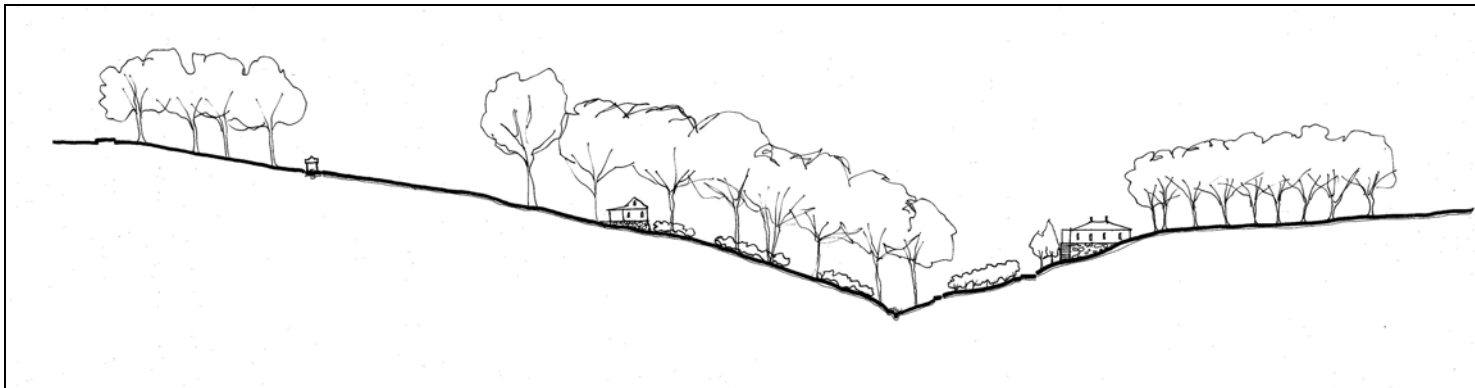
Section 4. Views into and out of the proposed retreat allow for a sense of enclosure, privacy as well as providing a backdrop of scenery



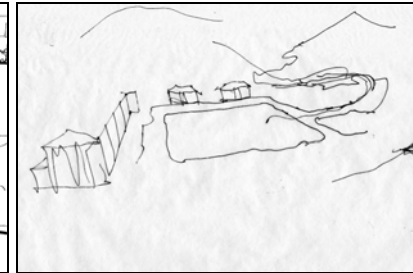
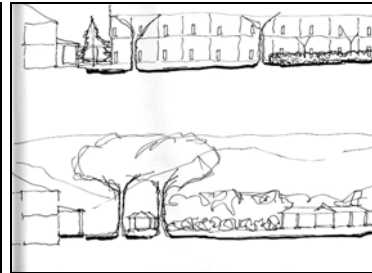
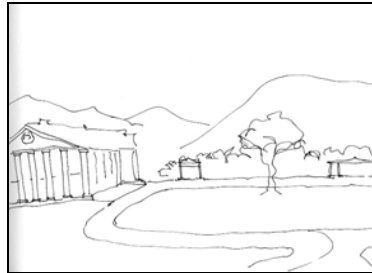
Section 5. Variety in the form of plantings (canopy, smaller ornamentals and understory plantings) characterizes the space between the entry (at left) and one of the North Terrace cabins (right).



Section 6. The proposed Grove, visible at the center, provides the unifying outdoor space of the revived retreat.



Section 7. Deciduous trees, limbed up to provide a high canopy, are under planted with a palette of ornamentals that take advantage of the site's microclimate. Visible at the center-left is the Spring-Keeper's cabin, retained as an earlier response to the site's topography.



**The Entry Court** – A formal space marking ‘The Arrival’ at Healing Springs, also serves as outdoor seating for the proposed tavern at the revived Cascade Inn. The Healing Springs Gap is clearly visible upon entry, providing both scale and boundary to the space.



**South Lawn** – The portion of the site between the two Cottages and the Healing Springs Run offers opportunities to maintain the open feel of the site while also taking advantage of its variety.

This is the site of the most intact surviving fragment of the ornamental forest. Limbed up native trees such as hickories, maples and oaks have been cultivated to structure this ‘outdoor room’. As a southern exposure, receiving the heaviest afternoon sun, this area benefits most from the shade created.





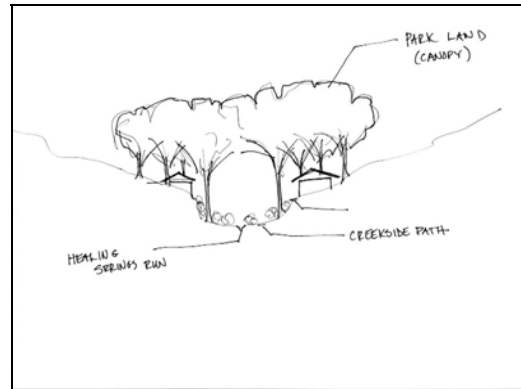
**The Ornamental Forest** – Canopy, under story and scenic views beyond are key features of this central landscape gesture. The ornamental forest should consist of native hardwoods such as oaks, hickories, maples and in the bottoms, sycamores.



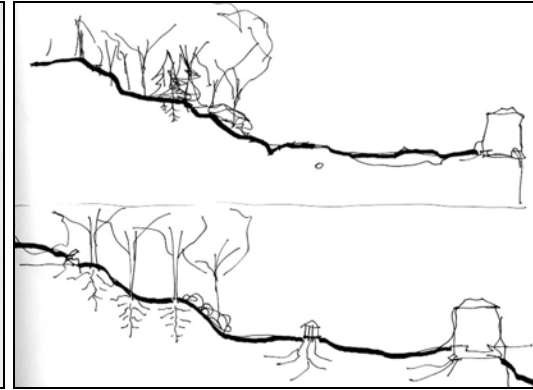
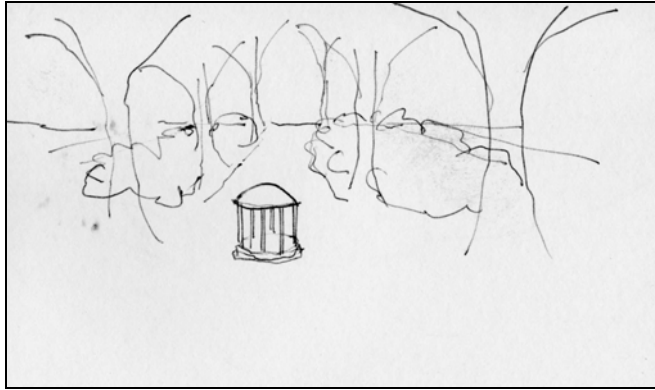
**The Row along the North Terrace** – These small cabins based loosely on LaTrobe's cabins at the White are to be arranged along the contours at the base of Little Mountain. The row of cabins located across the Healing Springs Run on the North Terrace should draw from traditional building patterns and techniques. Porches and raised foundations accommodate the natural. Cooling air that moves through the lowest portions of the site at night.



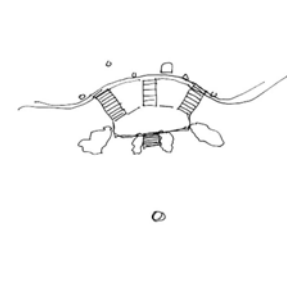
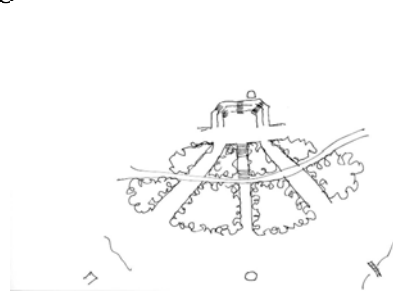
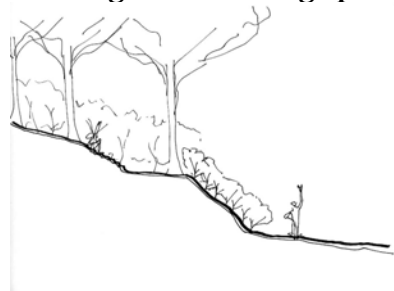
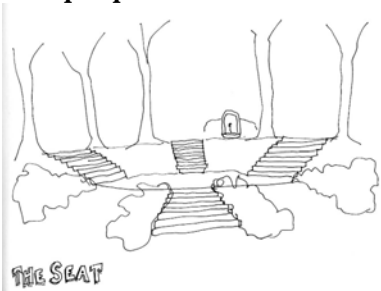
**Picnic Area and Pinetum** – Located south of the Cascade Inn in a small hollow, this public picnic grounds has views to the west as well as access to the Bath House.



**Riparian corridor (Healing Springs Run)** – Currently in an overgrown or naturalized state, the Healing Springs Run can be made into a focal point through riparian plantings that provide continuity between its opposite banks.



**The Bath House and Glade** – The existing bath house sits on the lowest natural terrace associated with the historic resort. The proposal calls for reviving the bathing and drinking springs. An overlook



**Fire Pit and Overlook** – Located at the lower end of an existing White Pine plantation, the Fire Pit has views back towards the Cascade Inn across the campus. It represents another vantage point along higher ground, allowing for collection



## VIII. Findings – afterwords and *notions of retreat*



### The Appalachian landscape – what sort of design tradition has it produced?

When I started this thesis I had a clear if fragmented set of impressions of the Appalachian landscape. Massive industrial disruptions like strip mining, vast tracts of wilderness and spectacular views of scenic rivers as well as charming if often run down settlements tucked into hidden coves, narrow roads rippling along valleys and ridgelines and haunted villages draped along impossibly steep road cuts are visual fragments that have basis in fact and in myth. Appalachia is certainly a place. As I have grown older I have come appreciate my own connections to it. As a developing designer I have been privileged to have had access to the cultural and natural patterns that both define it and make a wonderful and terrible place to build. First and foremost I wanted to explore how this landscape has affected my development as a designer.

During the time I lived and studied in Blacksburg, I had access to the Appalachian landscape essentially whenever I wanted. The proximity of the Virginia Springs to campus allowed me to conduct site visits and surveys frequently. Although historically 'summer places' the Springs are also excellent places to observe seasonal change. This was especially important when looking at what kinds of materials were most characteristic and appropriate for design. Having access to the sites has instilled in me an appreciation of a regional approach to design. Although new media and a globalized economy allow the designer to access, specify and draw from an increasingly diverse palette of materials and aesthetics, when landscape is the medium, local knowledge often is the difference between the long term success or failure of a design. The Virginia Springs are an example of local knowledge applied to a more global design program, the spa. The understanding of how the landscape was already working to create places of resort and retreat that underlay building at the Virginia Springs survives even in the ruined states of many sites and is legible in the landscape to this day. The Virginia Springs

### How can history inform design? What are the links if any between history and landscape?

In the course of assembling this thesis I really came to a better understanding of what type of history I find useful and helpful to my design work. Initially the structure of the enquiry was that of chronicling and recording a historic landscape type, the Virginia Springs. This combined archival survey with field or site visits. It was during the site visits that I really got a sense of how these landscapes functioned. I was fortunate to have access to so many Spring sites in Virginia, in close proximity to Blacksburg and even to the Washington, DC area. The more sites I visited, the more each Spring took on a personality in my mind. What was amazing was that some sites, like Blue Sulphur Springs in Monroe

County, WV, which survives only as a pavilion atop the flowing spring retain a powerful relationship with their natural setting. From a landscape perspective the Virginia Springs speak eloquently of the understanding of numerous unseen forces. What's most striking about historical accounts of visits to the Virginia Springs are just this sense of how the places themselves being magic. While the exercise of recording and measuring the built form that survives at the Virginia Springs gave me an appreciation for their role in American and even world history, being on a site whether the enormous central campus at Old Sweet or amongst the shabby, genteel ranges at Sweet Chalybeate, was what really opened me up to the possibility offered by these places. The Virginia Springs really took on meaning for me when I was able to view each site or spa as having its own 'personality'. This actually approaches the way that many visitors wrote about visits to the Virginia Springs. I'm not sure that compiling a cultural landscape study of all the Virginia Springs collectively really captures how spring goers were affected by their experience of these places. I certainly didn't get a feel for this until I began focusing on Healing Springs as the locale for my own statement on the Virginia Springs.

Which approach to landscape history is more valuable to design, the preservationist or the lyric?

One of the first tasks faced in this thesis was of selecting a research methodology. I was interested in the Virginia Springs as historical places, but also as natural systems. They are in themselves compelling phenomenon, even without the associated settlements. They have been surveyed as natural features. They were most interesting as historical documents, as cultural landscapes. I've tried to assess the utility of the cultural landscape approach to the problem of design within a historic context. The Preservationist approach was heavy on the gathering of data, the arranging of data, on the measurement of patterns and the establishment of consistencies among examples of the same landscape type. Thus architectural forms or plant materials or the treatment of water that occurred at the Virginia Springs could be seen as definitive or as unique. When clear, on-site or documented precedence is lacking, this may justify using patterns better documented or preserved on another, similar site. An internal consistency among similar landscape types might be said to be the desired result. In any case the Preservationist approach would seem to suggest a consultation with similar landscape types.

Where this approach reaches its limitations is what one finds having visited individual sites and consulted individual authors. The Springs each came to be known as having unique personalities, many of which changed over time. Although complementary in some respects they were in competition with each other for spring goers and their proprietors as well as their various celebrants (medical and social) consciously sought to distinguish each Spring from the next.

Mythmaking, medicinal claims, social or political prominence and eventually a romantic historicism developed to promote the Virginia Springs as places that appealed to the imagination.

As a result I have tried to develop a Lyric approach to landscape history that I think more closely parallels how designers assess places, conduct background research on specific problems and address the needs of an ongoing design. The Lyric approach in the case of the Virginia Springs actually comes directly from the writings that demonstrate their significance as cultural landscapes. The numerous accounts, letters and sketches making mention of the Springs Tour and the Virginia Springs as special places gave alternately vivid and suggestive accounts of just how these sites functioned at the height of their fame during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. After reading even a portion of such an account I often had a much better sense of how the sites worked and as a result why they took the form they did.

The lyric approach draws directly on the richest literature associated with the Virginia Springs, namely traveler's accounts of visits during the antebellum period. Not only are vivid descriptions of the landscape provided, but the significance is discussed as well. Landscape is viewed as distant and terrible, as well as present and benign. It is scenery as well as destination all at once. Movement through Virginia's varied landscape takes on a narrative quality, not the wilderness of *Pilgrim's Progress* or of the Puritans, but of a series of benevolent encounters, even dialogs with people and places. The spring goers advance is marked by places of hospitality and by views of the vast wilderness of America as well as by the experiences of one's fellow travelers, themselves seeking the waters for a multitude of reasons. The individual spring, each made famous by the healing qualities of their waters or by the especial qualities of their hosts, are treated as places with a personality or a spirit that makes them unique, even among themselves. The lyric quality of visits during the height of the Virginia Springs' popularity shows through in so many of the writings of the time as to be a definitive characteristic. The development of a narrative to precede and then to be connected with the design process that recounts how the Virginia Springs have functioned socially, medically, as places of retreat and of resort would seem an appropriate outcome of immersion in the lyric qualities associated with the Virginia Springs.

What unique design opportunities occurred at Healing Springs and what response is most appropriate?

A final thought. I was really struck by how the mere mention of the choice of locale, the Virginia Springs, for the focus of my thesis drew enthusiasm from nearly ever one I mentioned it to. It rarely took more than a couple of visual images or an account discussing what kind of a place I was looking into and people were hooked. In some ways this is proof enough of the continued relevance of the Virginia Springs. In their day they formed a vision in the minds of those



who had visited as well as those who hoped to. To me this quality is a lyric one and should form the basis for further building at the Virginia Springs. A designer able to pick out key or compelling features or elements from a landscape type like the Virginia Springs has a powerful set of tools for adding to the vitality of a landscape like the Virginia Springs.

Healing Springs proved difficult and exhilarating as a location for developing a strategy for applying what I had learned in compiling a landscape history for the Virginia Springs. The qualities that made it unique, the specific shape of its landform, the remnants of the agricultural landscape nearby, its historical connections to the nearby Homestead resort, the collection of buildings and plantings that survive also fit within the larger pattern encountered at so many of the Springs sites that I visited. I like that there was not a strong or overwhelming architectural presence. I was often frustrated that the site had been allowed to revert to forest because it made visual connections within the site so difficult to read. I found that the nearby Homestead (the Hot) as well as the Warm were much more famous and had much richer written histories. The little I could find on the Healing seemed to confirm its lesser status with respect to its neighbors. In some ways this confirmed my decision to redevelop the Healing as a retreat, focused on sociability in (or at least close by) the wilderness, still able to link into the larger resort landscape associated with Bath County as a whole. While many writings stressed the urbanity of the Virginia Springs, and the Healing at one point did house several hundred guests, I thought that referring to the earliest scattered clusters of rustic shelters, cabins and even tents in the proposed site plan offered an experience of what for me is really the most definitive landscape element at the Springs, the Grove. This ornamental forest sat at the center of the site of many of the Springs and functioned as an enormous outdoor room connecting all elements within the site beneath its leafy boughs, showering dappled sunlight across lawns and porches and paths and rooftops. The Healing has at its center the remnant of such a Grove. Building in and among it is a way to remind us that proximity to natural processes remains essential to a sense of healthfulness. We can and should build to be close to nature.