

A RURAL RESIDENCE

by

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(ABSTRACT)

A place to live for a family and guests which structures the landscape and whose form is generated from ideas about small scale informal urban relationships.

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A RURAL RESIDENCE

But . . . how can man withdraw himself from the fields? Where will he go, since the earth is one huge unbounded field? Quite simple; he will mark off a portion of this field by means of walls, which set up an enclosed finite space over against amorphous limitless space . . .

Jose Ortega Y Gasset

The Site

The site for this single family house with garage and guest house lies at Keezletown, near Harrisonburg, Virginia. It is situated on the top of a long hill which runs parallel to and opposite from Massanutten Mountain, the end of the Blue Ridge Mountain range which penetrates the center of the Shenandoah Valley. The site is half wooded and half meadow. The line where the woods and meadow meet follows the top of the hill and lies parallel to the mountain. This mountain, which rises to an elevation of one-thousand feet above the site, is a wall running from southwest to southeast. From the vantage point of the site, it ends without resolution or differentiation, descending down to the hills of the Valley. The mountain is not an object to be focused on as much as it is a presence to be felt.

In the distance, to the southwest, the hills of the Valley, the houses of McGaheysville, and the rim of mountains which form the Valley are visible.

The Project

The settlement is situated on the top of the hill straddling the line where the woods meets the meadow. The approach follows this edge with the overhanging arcade of

the woods on the left and the meadow on the right.

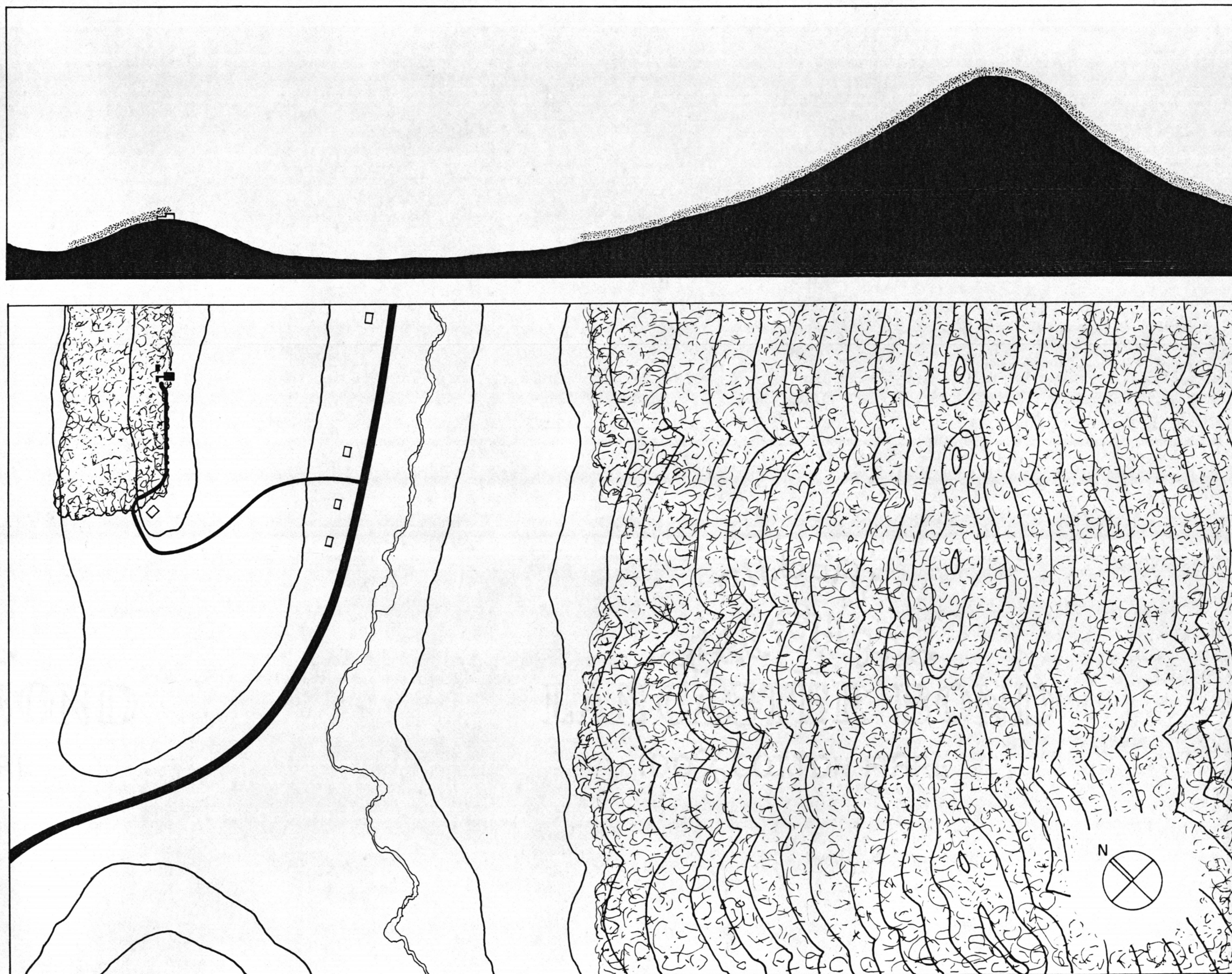
The main house is positioned to allow a distant view of the Valley to the southwest and yet to eliminate any view of the Perma-stone and pink vinyl siding of the houses at the bottom of the hill. No buildings closer than one mile are visible.

The main house is composed of two "houses" and the "street" between. The guest house and single family house are close enough to form places between, but are oriented away from each other for privacy. The primary external orientation of the main house is toward the open field; the guest house is oriented toward the woods except for the view of the mountain provided between the walls which form the kitchen.

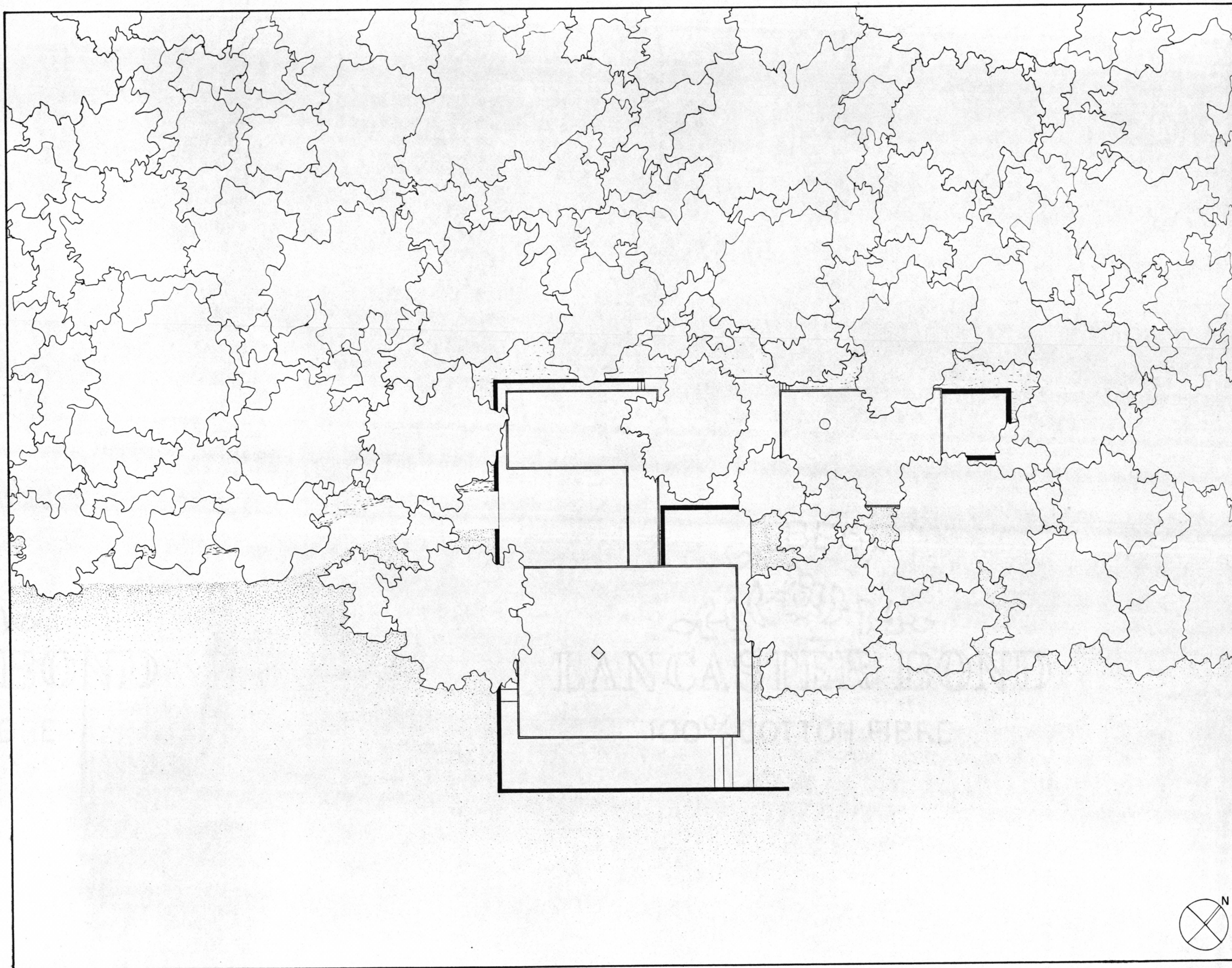
The rectilinear form of the main house cuts perpendicularly across the parallel topographical formations to arrest their movement and provide a quiet place for habitation. The powerful but ambiguously defined features of the landscape are structured by the form of the house. The mountain is filtered by the skeletal frame-

work on the southeast side, casting it in the role of outside wall of the house. It is further mediated in the living room by the southeast wall of that "house" being reconstituted into a long, low mass containing the living room and answering the mountain. The Valley, to the southwest, is focused between columns and the ends of walls. The internal configuration lends itself to different levels of exposure to the landscape and the sun and weather. The "street" is exposed at both ends; the rooms being received between white masonry walls.

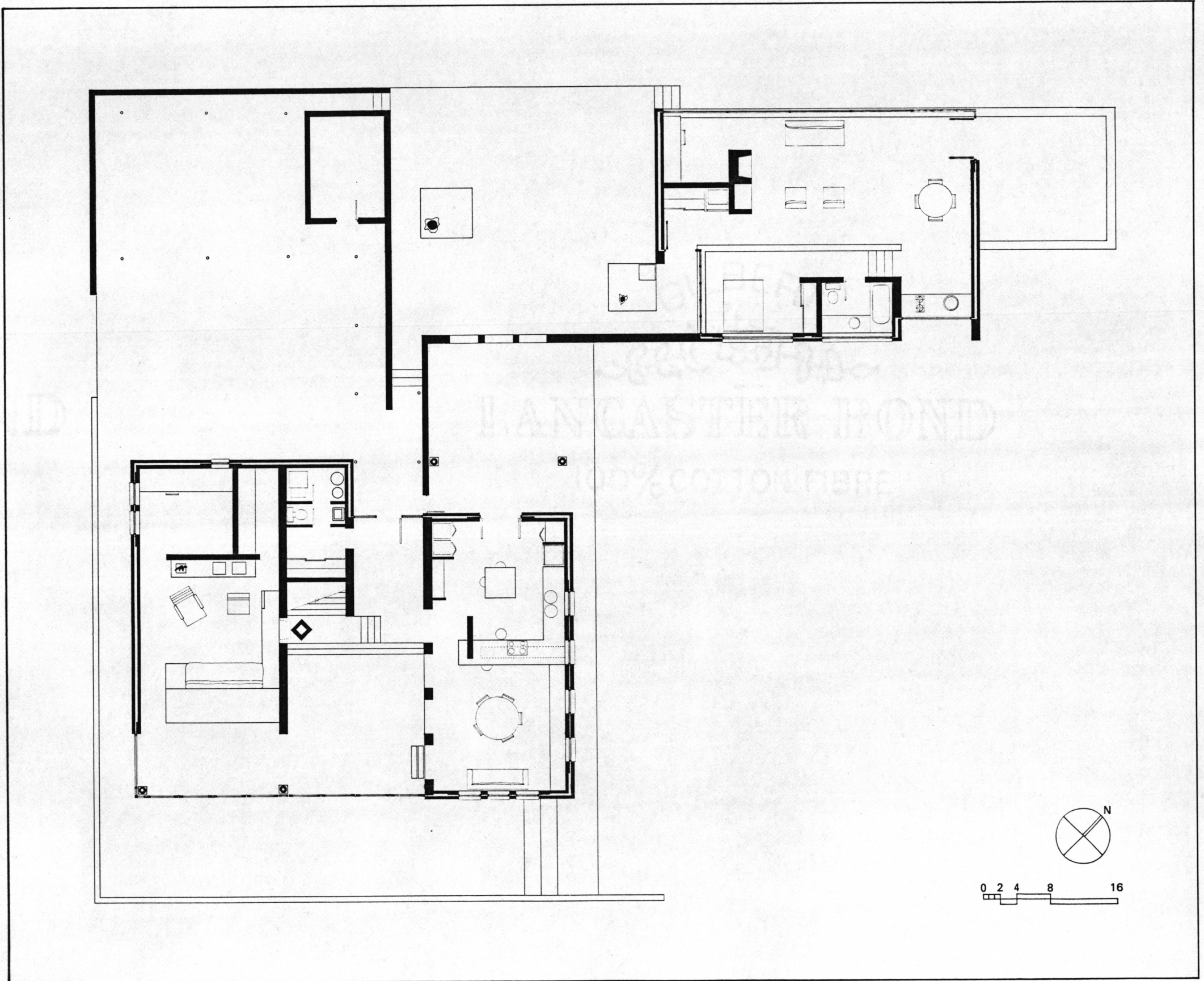
The concept of the internal form has been developed from ideas of urbanity implicit in the small scale, informal places frequently found in Italian hilltowns. I refer to the narrow sidestreets where the walls of the houses form the public domain of the street. The relationship to that public place through doors at street level, through windows, balconies, bridges, stairways, corners and terrace walls allows a wide range of human experience and interaction. Within exterior walls that structure the topography, I have appropriated this urban model to serve the family that is to inhabit this rural place.



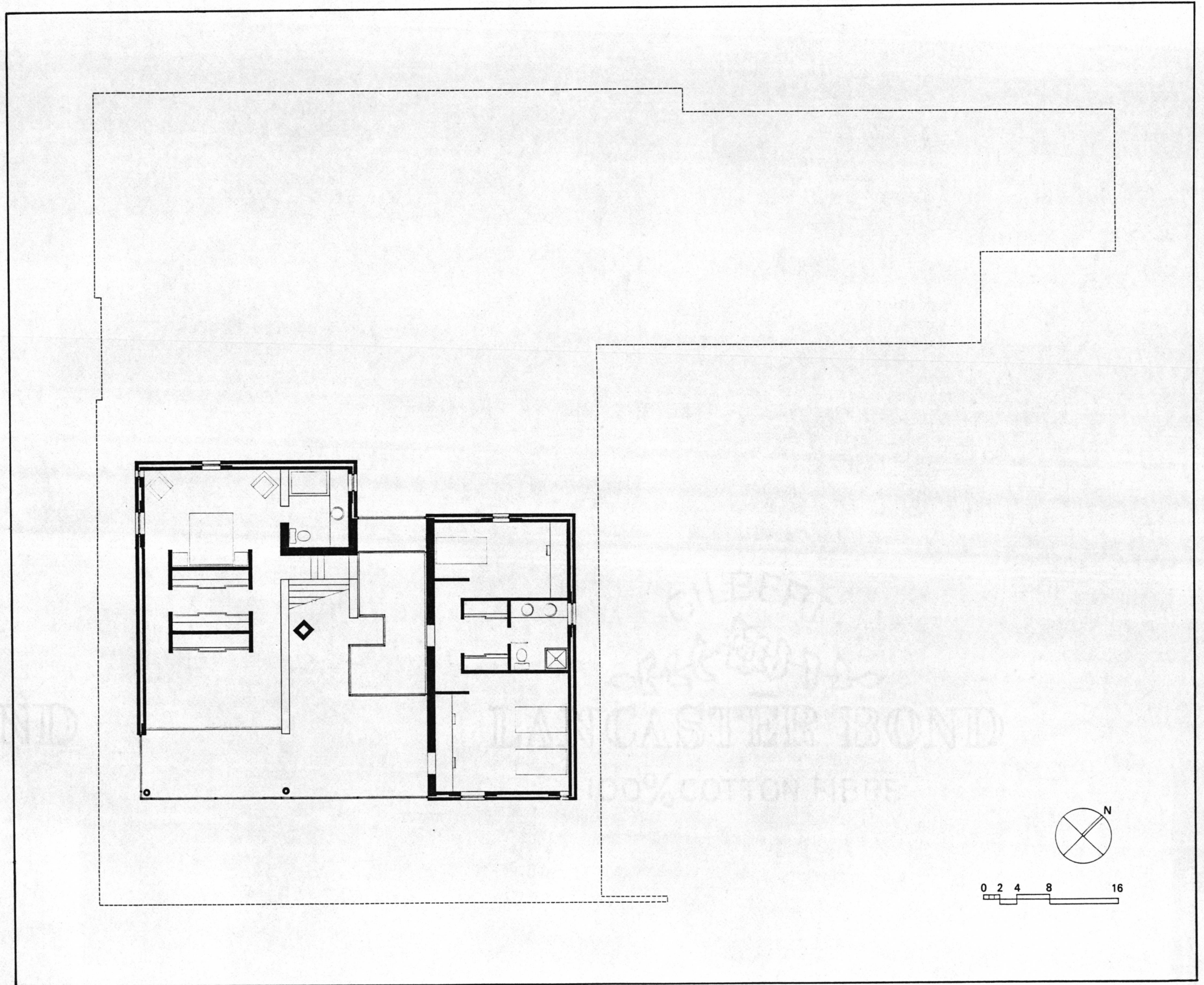
Site Section and Topography



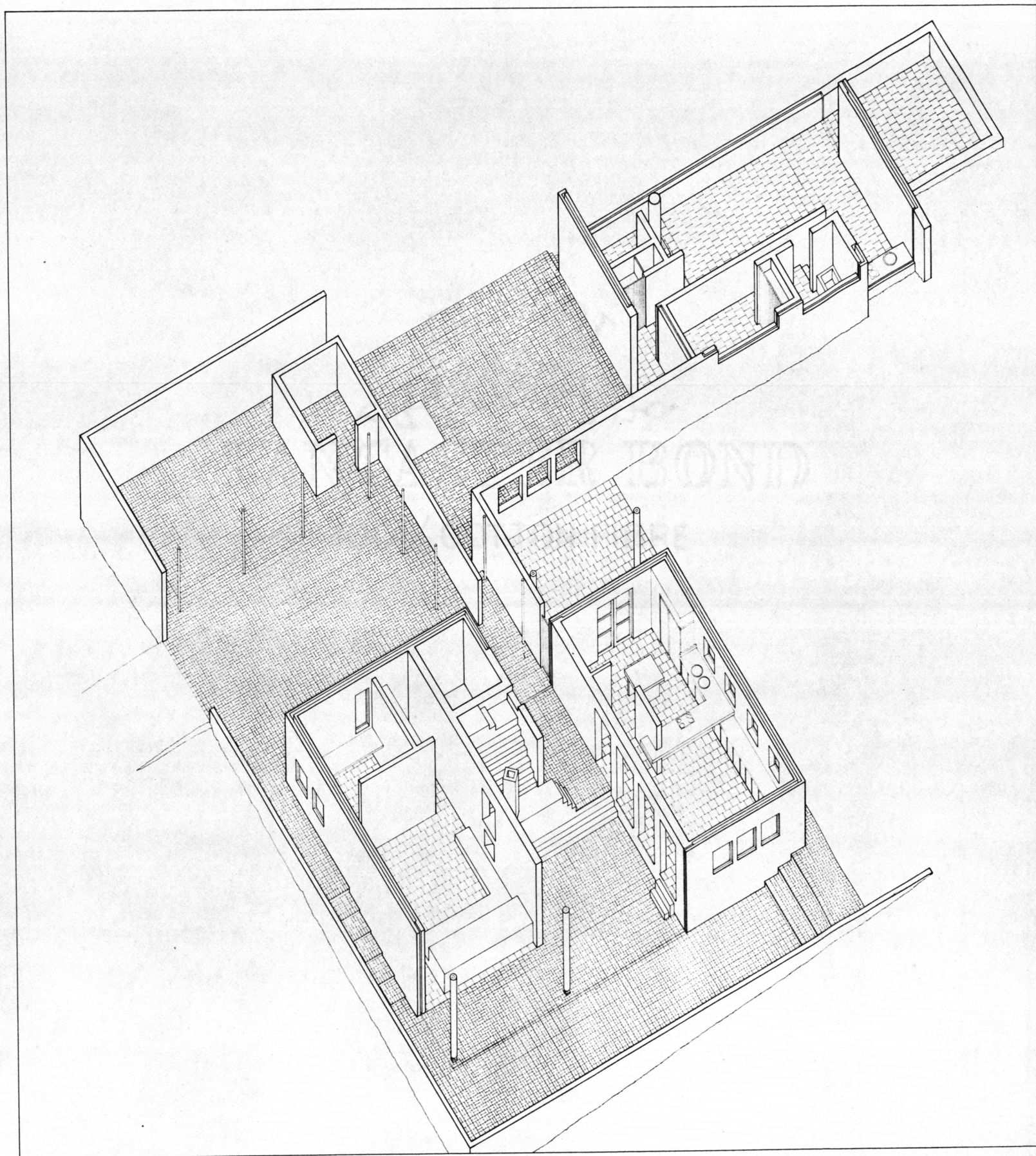
Site Plan



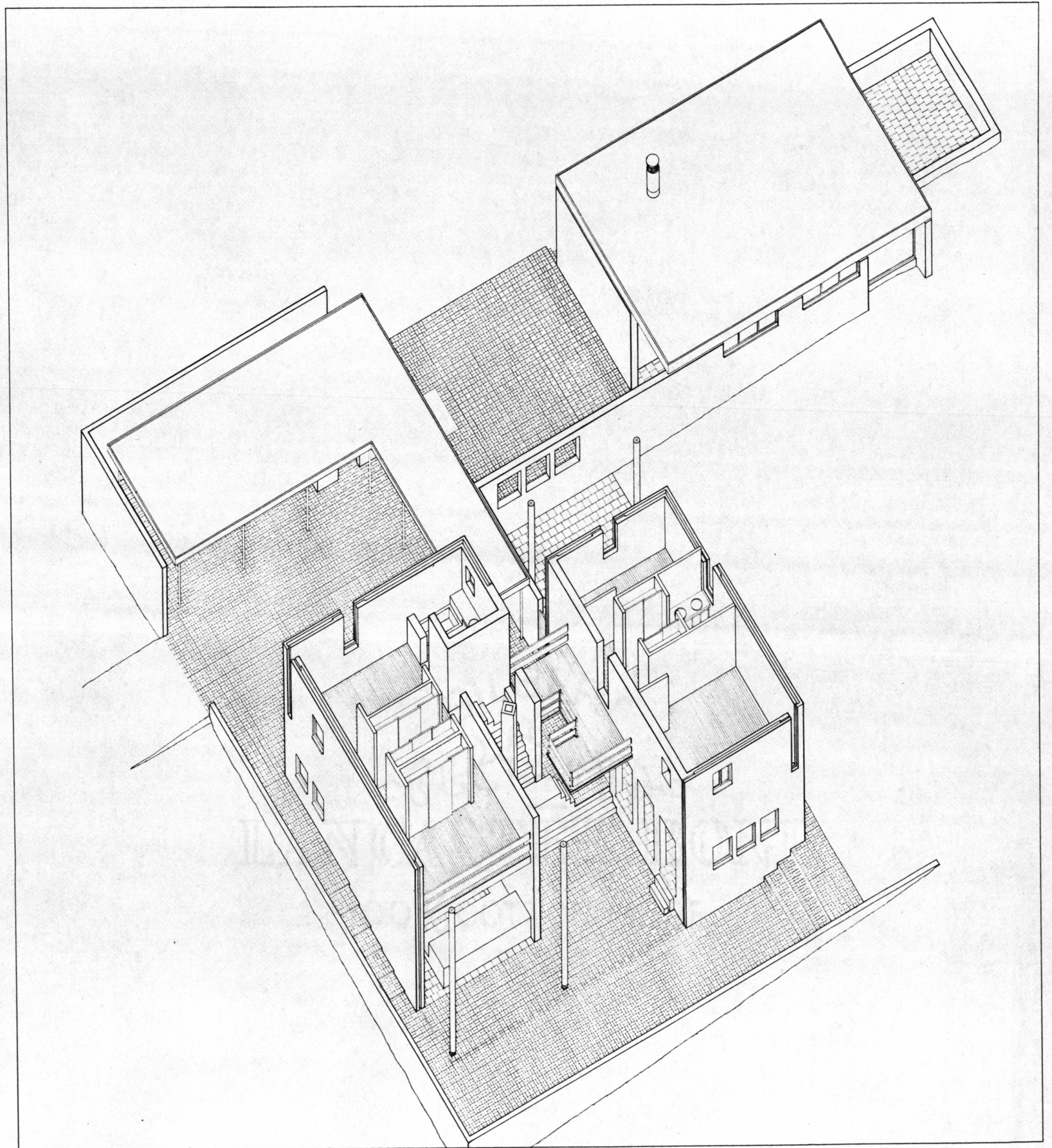
Plan First Floor



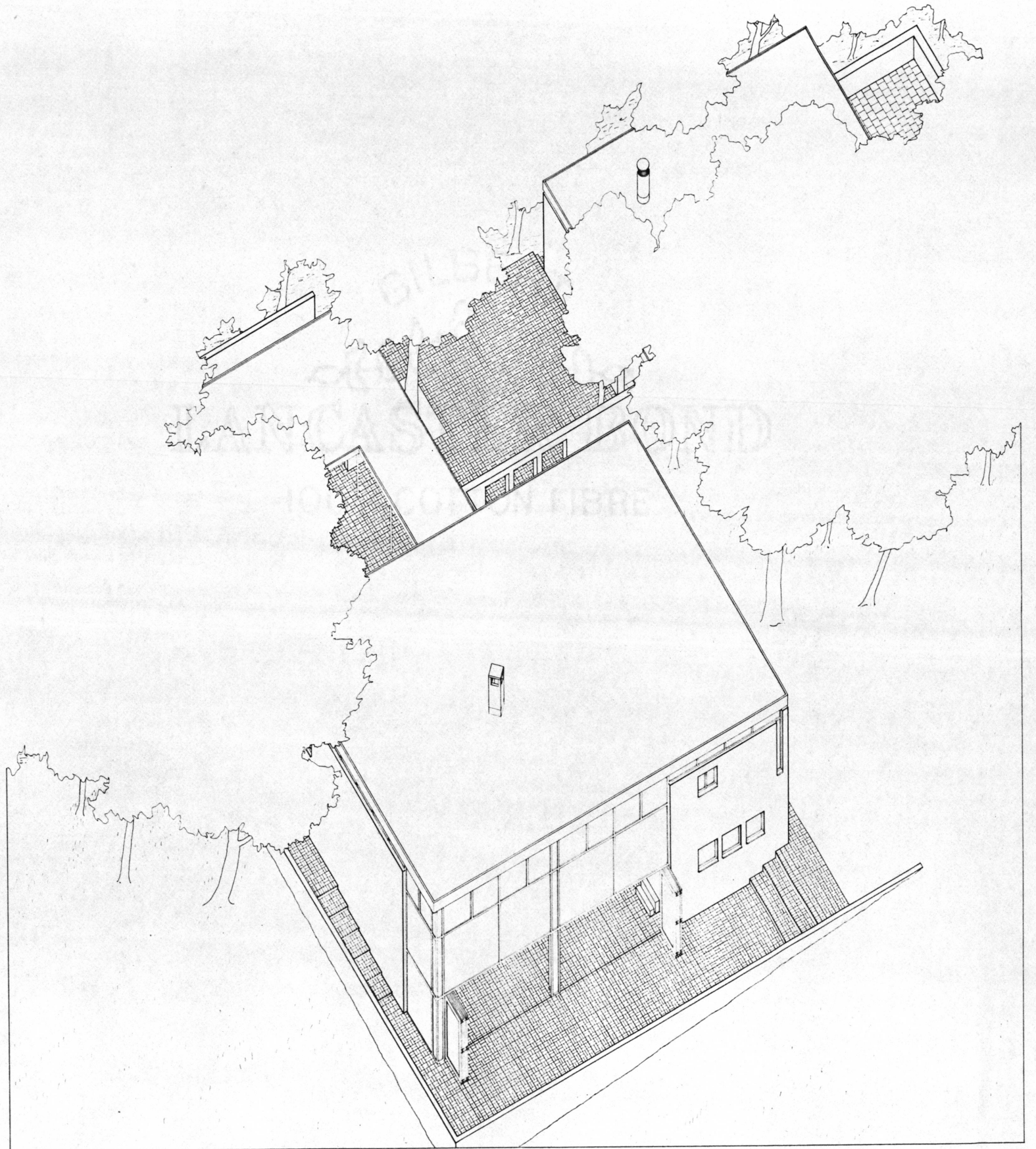
Plan Second Floor



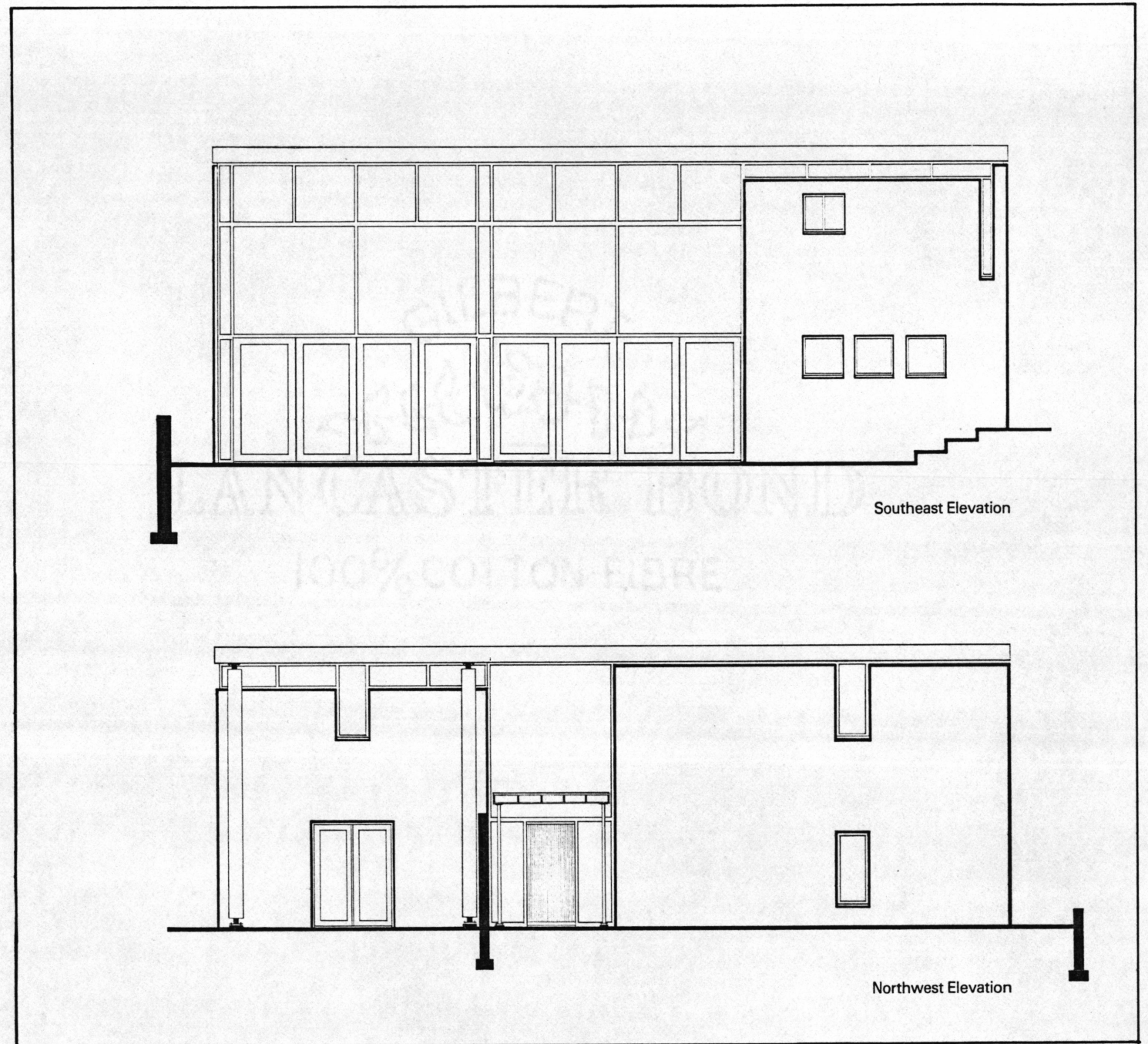
Axonometric First Floor

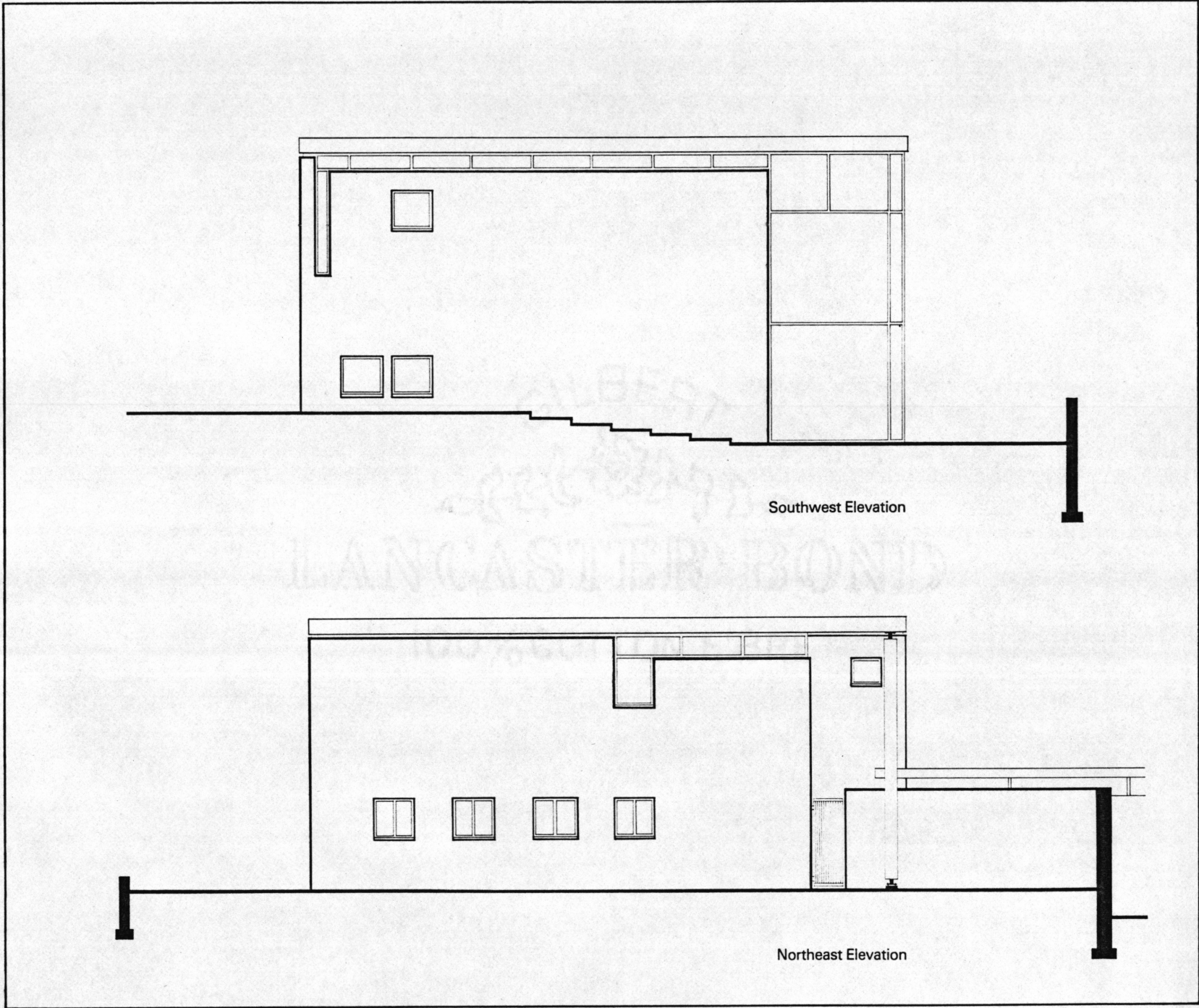


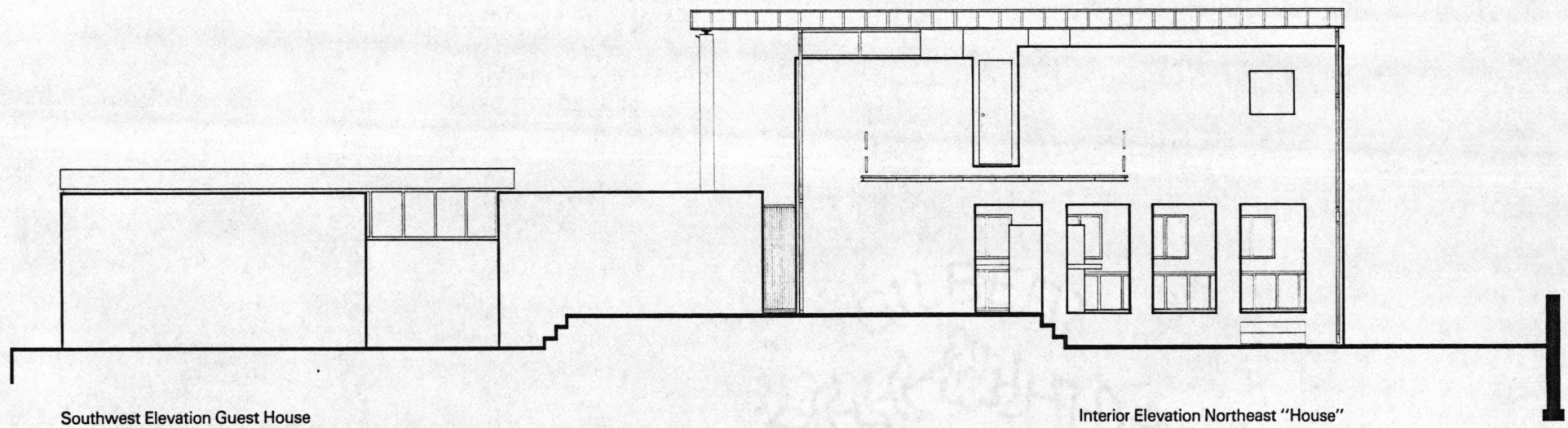
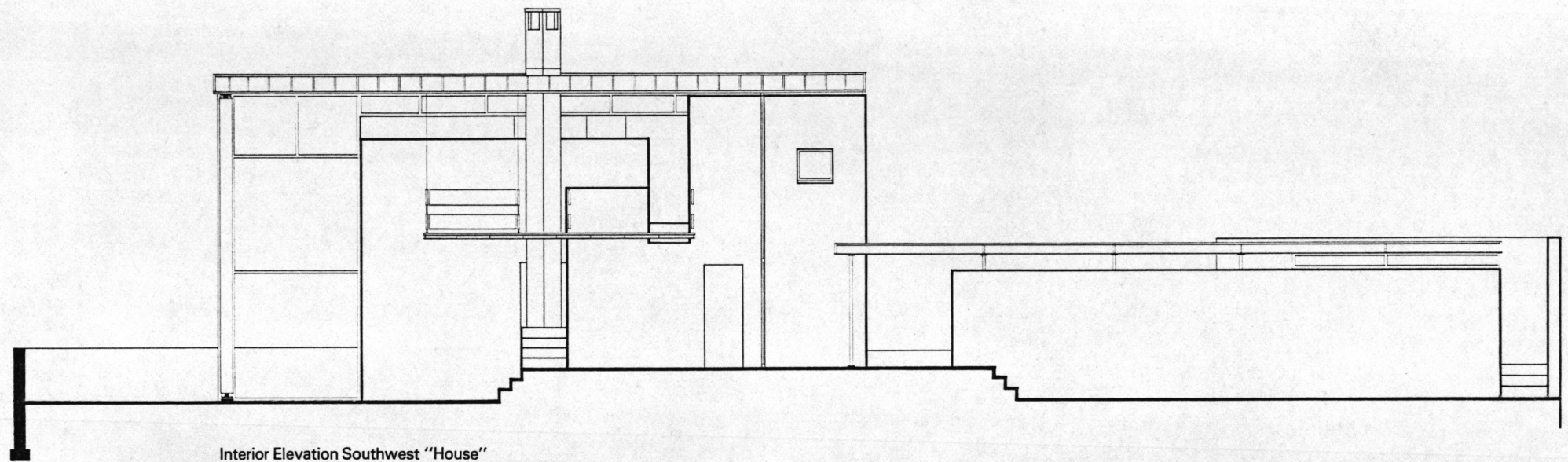
Axonometric Second Floor

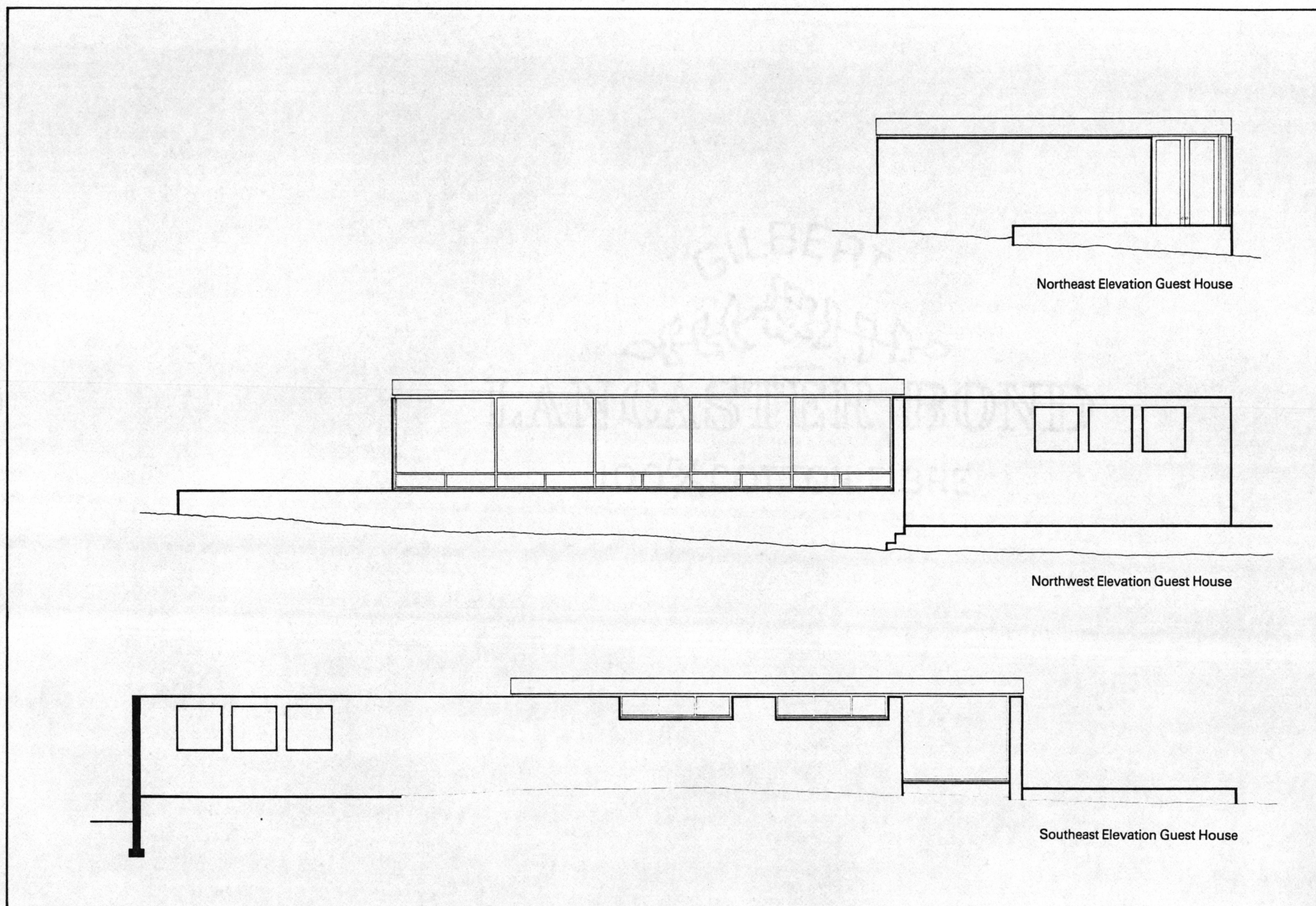


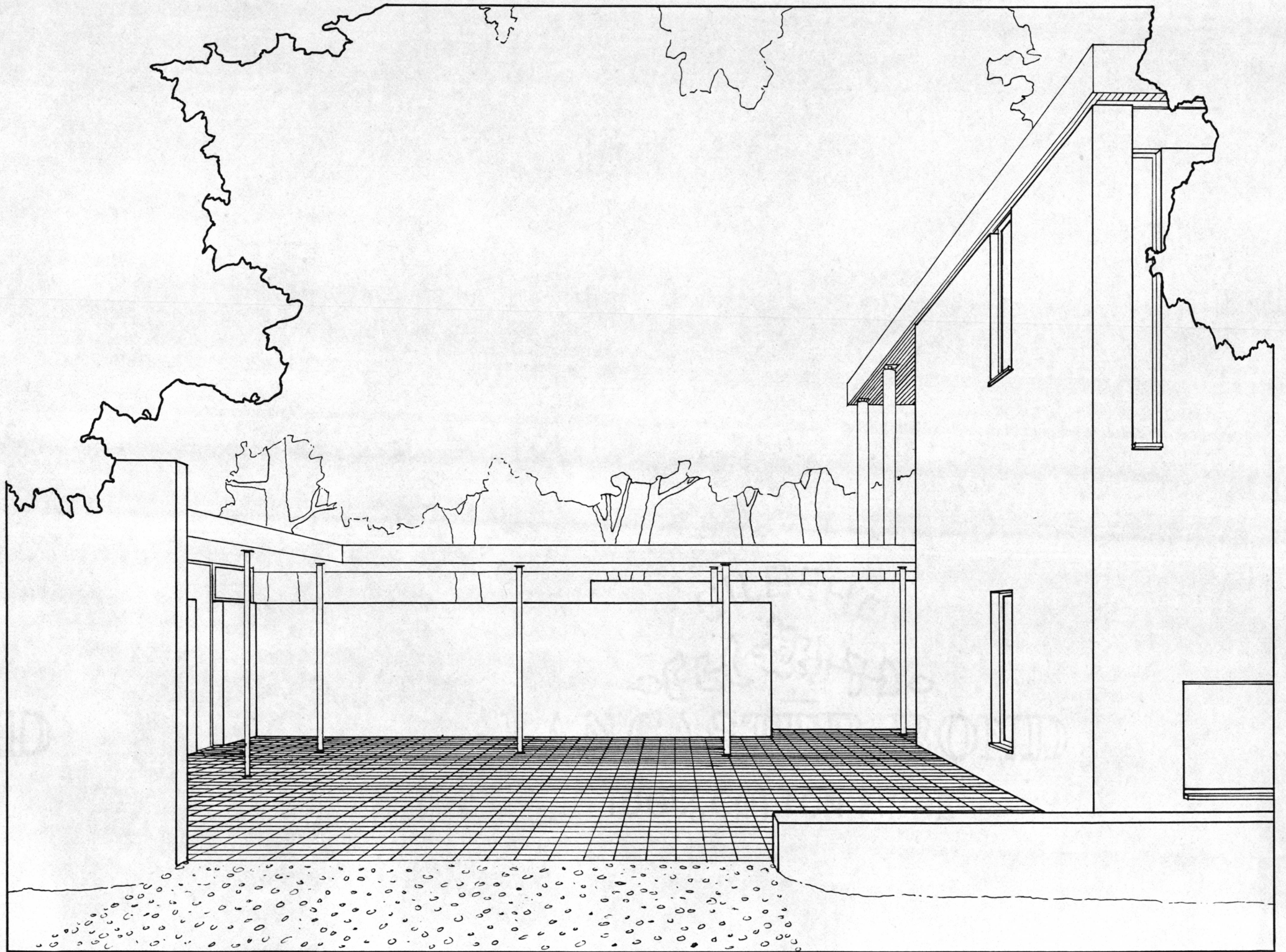
Axonometric Exterior



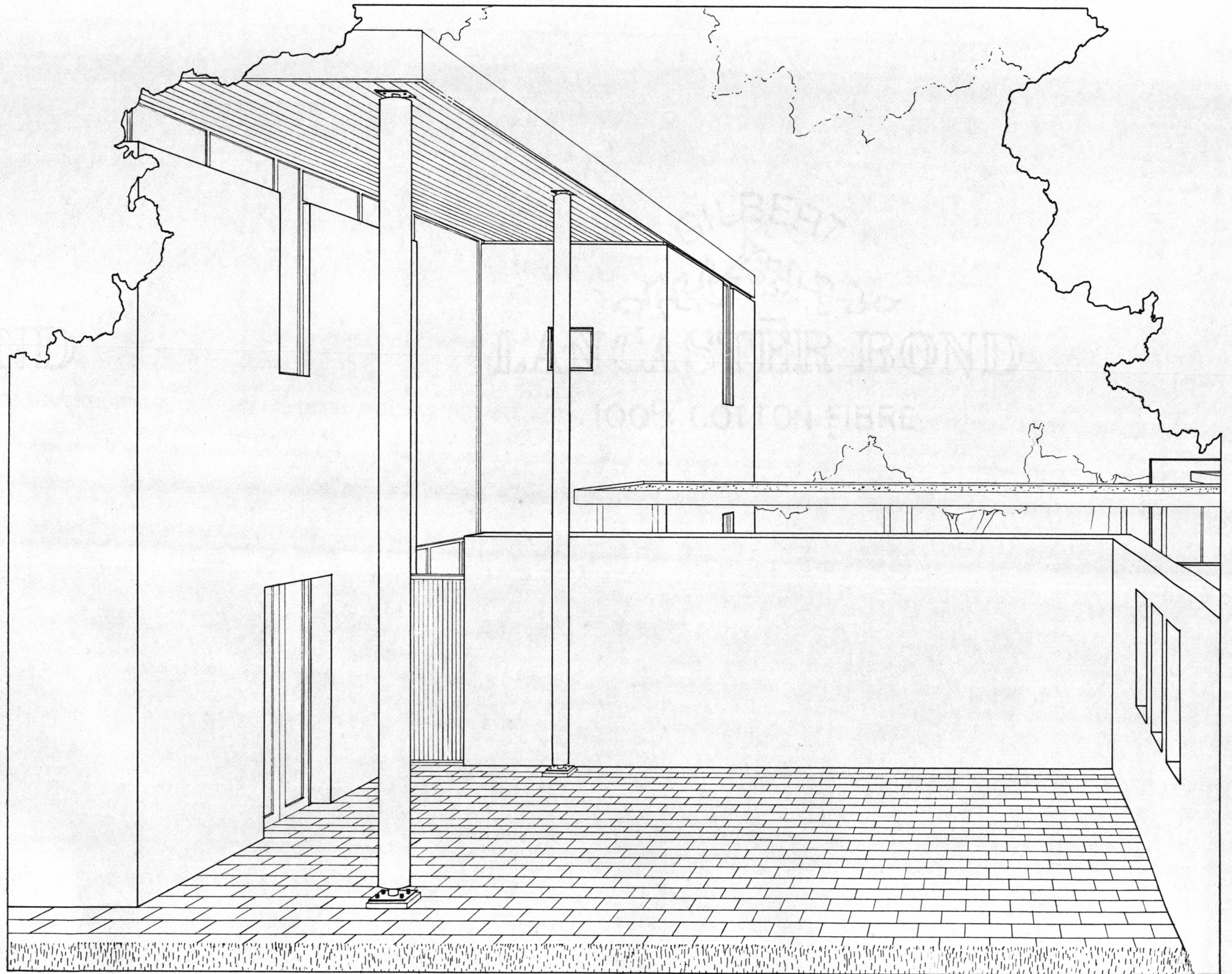




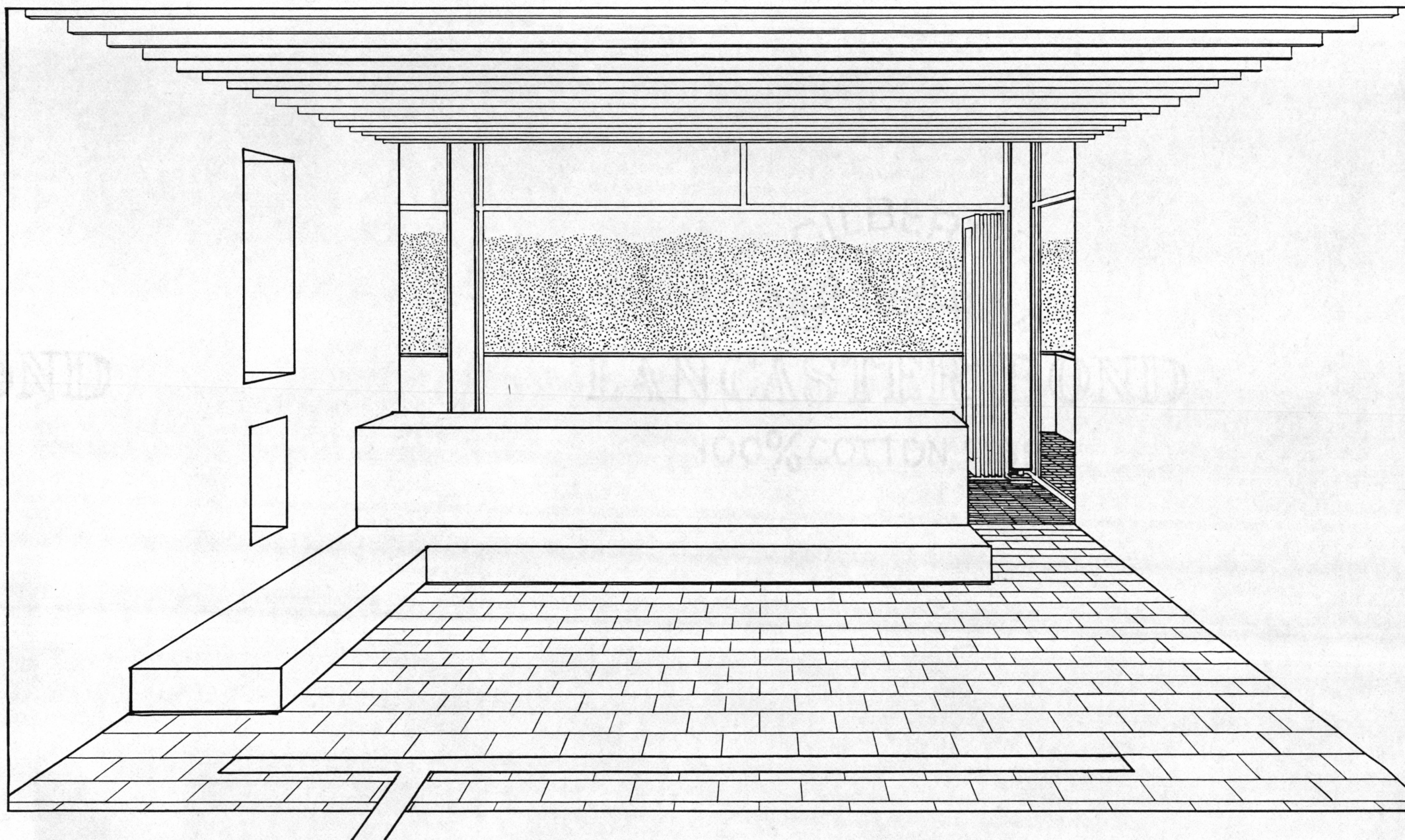


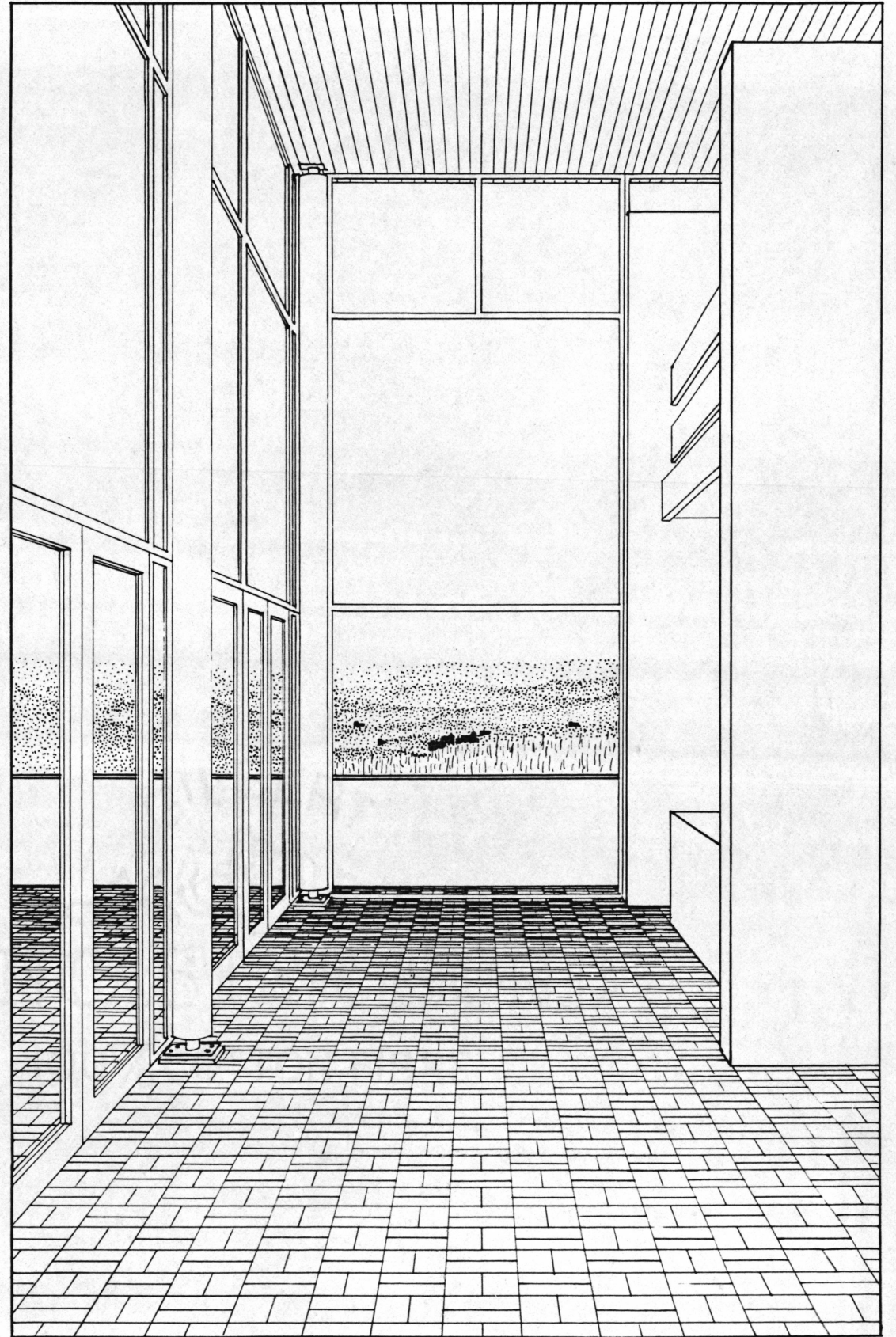


Entry Court

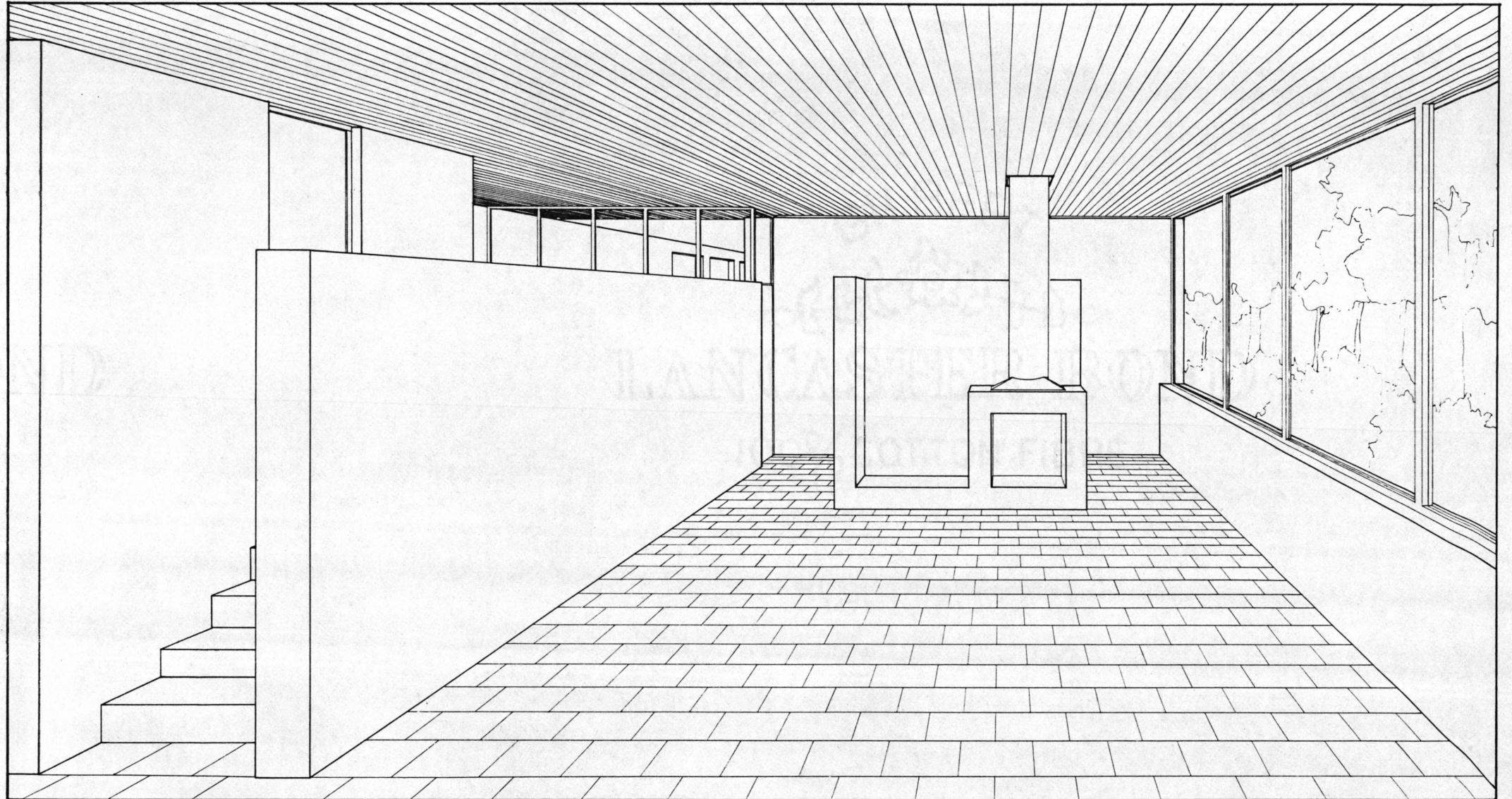


Kitchen Courtyard



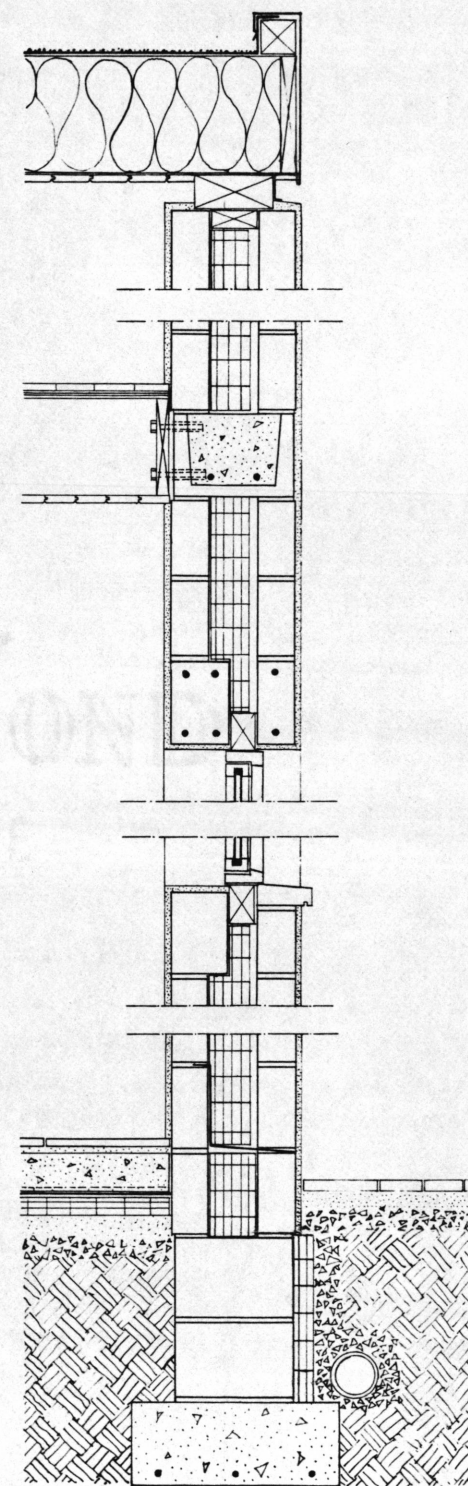


View Southwest



The Construction

The structural system consists of concrete block cavity walls carrying the wood framed second floor and roof. The block walls are stuccoed with a white sand, white cement, plaster mix. The mass of the masonry is intended to help even out the temperature swings caused by the glazing on the south side of the house. The mechanical systems are accommodated by the cavity between the block wythes and in the core of the block. The floor covering over the slab on grade is slate in the private places and brick paving in the public places. The wood frame roof is covered with synthetic rubber on top, galvanized steel on the sides, and spruce boards on the bottom.



Typical Section Exterior Wall

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