



History of the Foundation Buildings and Landscapes

The Fourth Corner Foundation's name derives from occupying one corner of the intersection of Windham Four Corners, but also references "the four corners of the earth." It is, after all, our mission to impact as much of humanity as our limited resources allow: to explore the many possibilities of sustainability, how it can be developed, and how it might look, focusing on the human infrastructure applicable to the natural world.

In 1969, Robert Foote Shannon purchased an eight acre parcel of land on Hitchcock Hill Road, after having built, with a few friends, a spec ski house nearby on Timber Ridge, while still a student at the Yale School of Architecture. The intent was to build a home for his family of four, and eventually build some experimental spec houses.

The Long House

In 1970 construction began on the first half of what was to become the Stone Wall Inn, now the Long House of the Foundation. A local carpenter and his two sons completed the work during the winter and spring. Occupation and construction of part two began the following summer, built by the architect with some friends and two students from the architecture school at the Pratt Institute. The building at that time comprised owner's quarters and a 2 bedroom, income-producing apartment.



In 1974 one acre of land, on the downhill southern edge of the property, was spun off for a solar spec house, and has since had a history of owners who made significant changes. Around the same time an adjacent 8 acre parcel of land to the north became available, and was purchased.

The Corner House

In 1976 construction began on another solar spec house which, with 2 acres of the land, was eventually sold to the photographer, hired by *House Beautiful Magazine* to document the project. For occupational education, architecture students and recent high school graduates were hired as the builders, under the watchful eye of the architect, acting once again as the general contractor. The south side of the house stepped down ziggurat-configured, with overhead angled reflectors to bounce light into the glass below when the winter sun was low in the sky, and to partially shade the glass from the high summer sun. Two of the horizontal surfaces were decks accessible through sliding glass doors.



The interior was a continuous space from living room at ground level to bed lofts at the top. Two small bedrooms were tucked a half level down from the living room, earth-sheltered on three sides, by an added mound of soil and stone. This building was later revamped to become a B&B, and known as The Corner House, initially intended as a minimally sized vacation retreat, a “*small is beautiful*” structure.



Foundation House

1985 saw the beginning of the third building, now known as Foundation House. The first construction was the shop, now the art gallery/all-purpose space, in which various pieces of the new house and office could be used year round. It served this purpose for 30 years, and that of creating components for the eventual renovation of the long house.

The house exterior walls are mostly cavity block, a sandwich of 4 inch reinforced concrete block, 4 inches of extruded polystyrene foam and an interior 4 inch concrete block. The exterior serves as a weather and fire resistant surface, the foam for insulation, and interior for fire resistance and thermal mass to retain heat.



With a large opening into the car court, the west façade presents the first image seen by car arrivals



The site concept of this structure on the abandoned pasture land is based on replacing a section of the old stone wall, originally flanked by tall trees, with concrete columns as metaphoric trees used as a central organizing element. In front of this colonnade is a large two-story greenhouse, and centered behind it is a concrete tower containing ten thousand gallons of water, acting as a thermal mass heat storage. The southeast and southwest sides of the tank are glazed with double low E glass, however, in the house the tank is clad in black tiles, radiating heat in the winter into the living space. The office space is sheltered by a sunspace containing the entry ramp, which precedes a glass bridge into the greenhouse, and then the living room. The office connects to the shop (now gallery) through a bridge displaying art on both walls. The double height car court, covered by a corrugated translucent roof is proportionally based on the Campidoglio in Rome, and has been mainly used for rain-protected purposes.



West exterior stair with brick arches under the deck off the kitchen.



Concrete columns next to the bridge, seen from the car court.



Brick entrance drum above a 6' cistern with roof-collected water.



The fence, a large sculpture follows the driveway as an immediate introduction to the property

Revamping

All three buildings experienced major ongoing renovations in their program, energy use, weather resistance, and material upgrades. During this phase the gardens were designed, planted, modified, and expanded to their present state. For environmental focus, the continuing lawn reduction is now beautified by the addition of agricultural plantings.



The Corner House was enlarged and totally reorganized to have four bedrooms, three bathrooms and a living room/dinning room/ kitchen on the second floor overlooking the gardens. Wrapping the building with additional insulation, and reducing the fenestration to match, vastly improved the energy use. The exterior new cedar siding was stained with two colors delineating the private rooms from the common areas inside.



The common space is high and colorful with multiple materials, while the bedrooms are cozy with light-sharing windows into the common space. In winter the high-efficiency wood stove, backs up the direct solar gain.



The Long House was next, the most elaborate of the renovations, creating six bedrooms, a two-story breakfast room and kitchen, an apartment, a lounge, a spa and sauna, two dipping pools, and a work room. The building was wrapped with additional insulation and new siding, mostly cedar. The original house was a 13' wide, 30' high, and 150' long. Various bumps and projections were collaged on these surfaces. Tucked up under the great bridge, the lounge space had been added in the 1980s, with a 2 car garage beneath. The curving walls of the lounge, originally used as a work space, were recessed at the edges, but projected at the center to show this was an addition. This curved wall was rebuilt with diffusing and clear glass behind a banquet as an active solar heater,

powered by a photovoltaic panel, cantilevered in the center of the bulge. All the bedrooms have their own spatial and material character, as far distant from a holiday inn as possible, a playhouse for adults.



The Gardens

Over the last 25 years openings between the buildings which were lawns have been filled in with botanical and agricultural plantings. A long term goal is to expand these with an increase in agriculture integrated into the over design, part of our Rescape Project.





Managing the landscapes is Master Gardener, Steven Fellows, who, with a small crew of helpers maintain these gardens to perfection.

The Gallery/All Purpose Space

In 2015 the wood-working shop conversion to a new all-purpose space was complete, and the first art show opened on August 15 with 15 artists, hence 15/15/15. In the subsequent two years the gallery had hosted five more shows, a documentary film night, and 2 conferences.



2018 Will see the expansion of the foundation work-study-make spaces, and new programs.

www.theFourthCornerFoundation.org