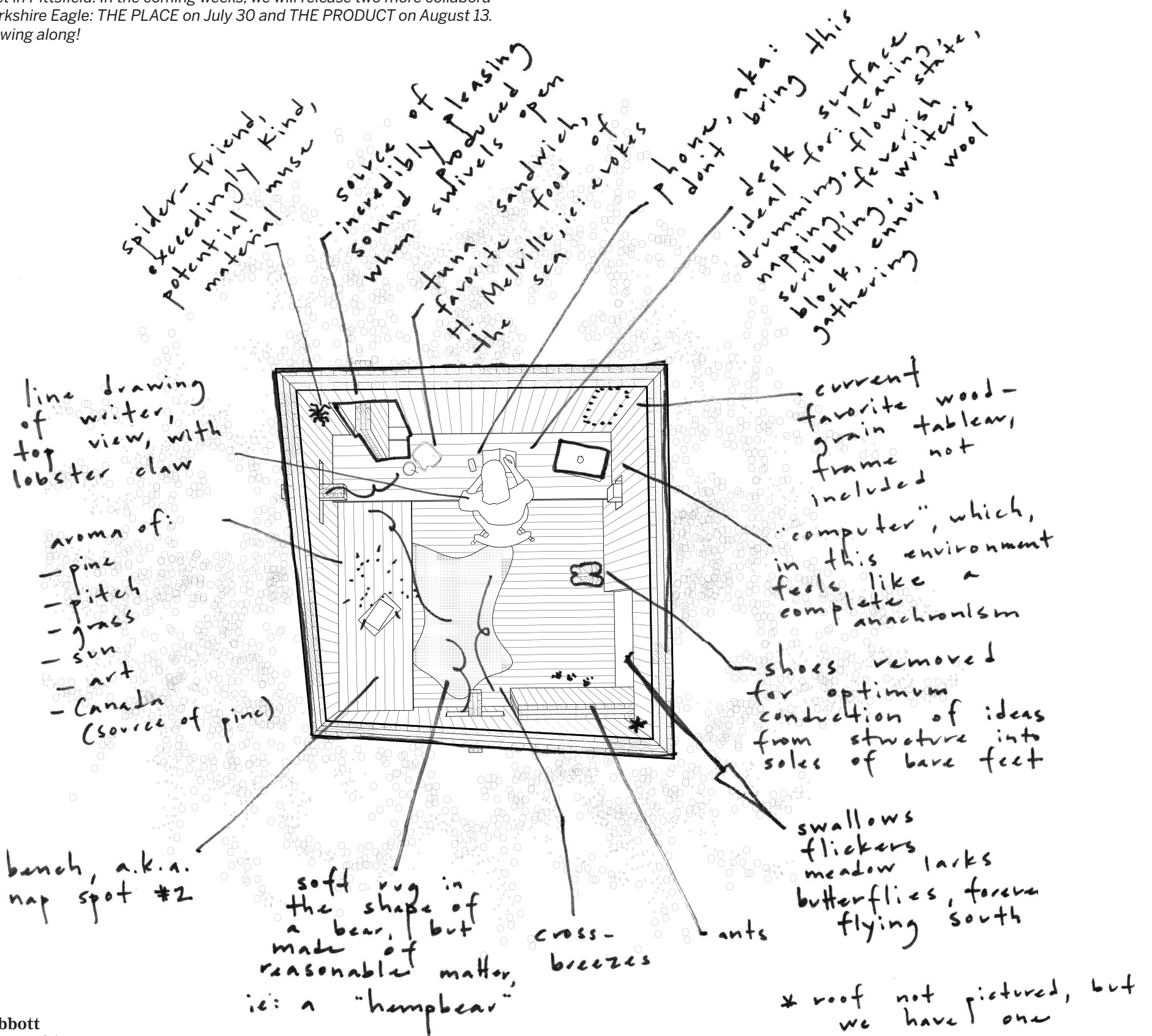


Welcome to our second THE MASTHEADS x The Berkshire Eagle Fold: THE PROJECT.

Inside this fold, you will learn about ideas behind The Mastheads, a new literary and architectural project in Pittsfield. In the coming weeks, we will release two more collaborative folds in The Berkshire Eagle: THE PLACE on July 30 and THE PRODUCT on August 13. Thank you for following along!



Text by John Babbott  
Drawing by Chris Parkinson

# project (proj-ekt) • noun:

1. Something that is contemplated, devised, or planned; plan; scheme.
2. A large or major undertaking, especially one involving considerable money, personell, and equipment.
3. A specific task of investigation, expecially in scholarship.

1. Project name: The Mastheads

2. First, they were five tiny boxes, the size of a matchbox. Ghost houses. On stilts or spider legs.

3. A masthead. The highest part of a ship's mast.

4. We moved to Pittsfield. The new studios soared across the Lichtenstein floor, on sloping white bases, a family of dreams in wood. We questioned ourselves when a critic said the Hawthorne studio looked like a Howard Johnson hotel.

5. "In the serene weather of the tropics it is exceedingly pleasant the mast-head: nay, to a dreamy meditative man it is delightful. There you stand, a hundred feet above the silent decks, striding along the deep, as if the masts were gigantic stilts, while beneath you and between your legs, as it were, swim the hugest monsters of the sea, even as ships once sailed between the boots of the famous Colossus at old Rhodes. There you stand, lost in the infinite series of the sea, with nothing ruffled but the waves. The tranced ship indolently rolls; the drowsy trade winds blow; everything resolves you into languor. For the most part, in this tropic whaling life, a sublime uneventfulness invests you; you hear no news; read no gazettes; extras with startling accounts of commonplaces never delude you into unnecessary excitements; you hear of no domestic afflictions; bankrupt securities; fall of stocks; are never troubled with the thought of what you shall have for dinner- for all your meals for three years and more are snugly stowed in casks, and your bill of fare is immutable." - Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

6. "They are beautiful but they are not inspiring."

7. Earlier name: Isolatoes

8. "What do you mean by studios?"

9. "How it is, there is no telling, but Islanders seem to make the best whalem. They were nearly all Islanders in the Pequod, Isolatoes too, I call such, not

acknowledging the common continent of men, but each Isolato living on a separate continent of his own." - Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

10. The studios got doors. They tightened up into clean geometries. With helical piers and metal cross-bracing, we would disassemble and reassemble every year!

11. Mastheads: between solitude and nature. Isolatoes: between solitude and society.

12. "They make sense, but they are less interesting."

13. "I like piazzas, as somehow combining the coziness of indoors with the freedom of out-doors." - Herman Melville, *The Piazza*

14. And last, the foam core models, with rough edges and pencil marks. We placed the CLT order.

15. "There is no quality in this world that is not what it is merely by contrast. Nothing exists in itself." - Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

16. And Sarah went to the schools. The kids touched the studios with love, on their desks, felt relived, felt free, empathized, or so it seemed.

17. In *Kavanaugh, A Tale*, Longfellow's main character has an idea. But he never writes it down, never begins his book, never tests his thoughts, because the mail comes, the bills come, the neighbors come, the kids need to be put to bed. The fear of our own ideas can freeze us.

18. Francois drove in from Quebec. An atriculating forklift. The Japanese pull saw. Those enormous clamps.

19. "We must add to our heritage or lose it." - George Orwell

20. The secret is they're on trailers, wrapped in wooden skirts. A solution to temporality and moveability we so long resisted as too obvious, too mundane. The 8'-0"

panel. The 8'-6" road maximum, the 13'-6" clearance.

21. "This is such an odd and incomprehensible world. The more I look at it, the more it puzzles me; and I begin to suspect that a man's bewilderment is the measure of his wisdom." - Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The House of Seven Gables*

22. We coated them with pine tar. The studios became black velvet, plush plywood. Abstract. A scary day - the fear of a misstep. The bees in the knots. Sealed up.

23. "Why has man rooted himself thus firmly in the earth, but that he may rise in the same proportion into the heavens above?" - Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

24. We drove the route with a fishing pole tied straight up against the bed of the pickup truck to test the height ahead of time. Would we whack an electrical line, a low hanging branch.

25. Fireflies like those ideas that come in a flash and if you don't catch them and you usually don't.

26. Studios in the landscape. The Housatonic River, the birdlands, Mount Greylock, the lakes. Individuals in a community. Mariam, John, Justin, Greg, Maria.

27. I keep wondering if someone will get a tick.

28. "I went and I didn't see it. The caretaker had never heard of it."

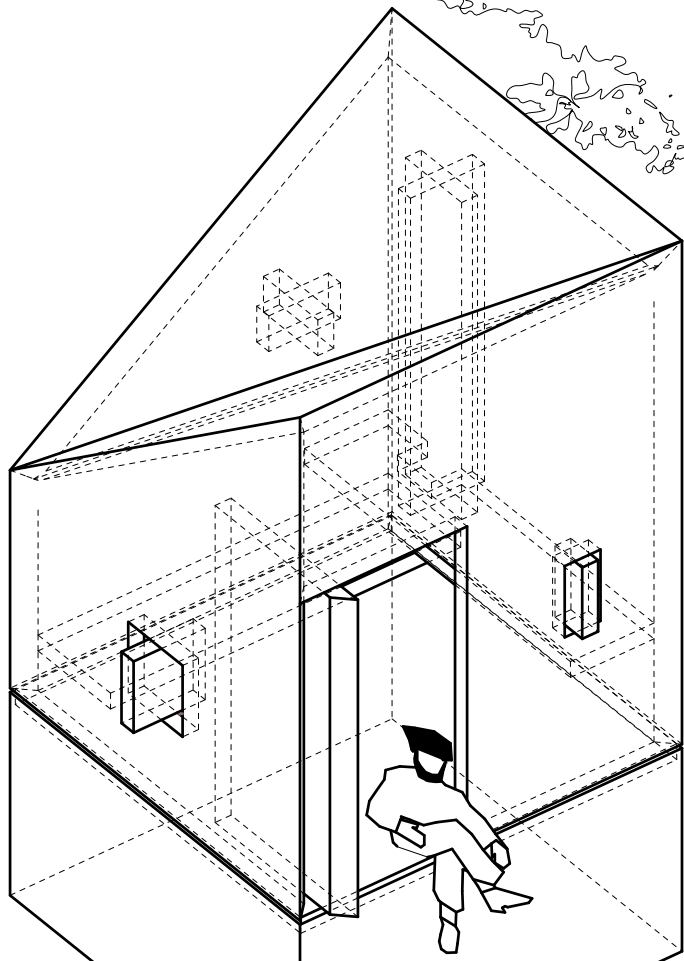
29. July 1 to July 31.

30. Another disgruntled neighbor.

31. "I don't think they even notice it."

32. What happens when we're not young anymore?

Tessa Kelly  
Co-founder of The Mastheads



**But Now, For a Space**

Space is a full field. Emptiness breathes you as wholly as you breath it. In the sweet-smelling, Spartan cupboard of this studio, the oxygen stretches deeper into my fingers and toes. My scalp pulsates, brain radiating alpha waves beneath it, like a tiger-lily bulb testing the air with its mind before sprouting. Here, the moment unfurls vertically, up and down; the soul remembers its height and depth. The horsefly coos like a good lover, and I love and do not kill it. Its hum adjoins the mystical din of the swishing leaves and swaying needles, the animated song of tiny finches and wrens. The source of all floats closely beneath the surface of so raging a beauty. Raspberry hoops unscroll into the distance like chase-work. Hawthorne walks his fingers like cat's feet down my arm; it writes; Melville whispers maxims in my ear. There are no centuries here at Arrowhead. The lie of time is as obvious as a wooden box. Its doors open onto every kind of path. The skylight bends the mountain to my arms. Wildflowers wave like cilia, the field an emerald tongue. I know what it means to float, speak freely here, my heart swearing: I am; I am; I am. And who am I? I am the writer in the talking box. My spirit shines here; it knows its breath as Melville's swelling lungs, as Hawthorne's scribbling arm. Part of me will be here for all time.

*Greg Allendorf  
2017 Mastheads Resident*

**The House**

On the outside it's plain and it's dark.  
It's a creative house  
or it's not a house.  
It smells like it was just painted.  
All the plants wilted  
and it's a really big house.  
I write inside of it and draw.  
On the inside it's pink of all things or colors.  
There is a hallway.  
There are holes in it so I don't think it's newly built.  
There is a little pond and frogs.  
It's a small place.  
There is a bird, a small one,  
and there are more birds, too,  
and a cactus.  
When I get tired I go to bed.  
When people come over I have rules.  
Rule 1 Stay quiet.  
Rule 2 Don't kill.  
Rule 3 Don't even come in.

*Tru McNamara  
for Mastheads Fireside*

**My Studio**

You get on the boat on top  
because the deck is huge.  
Also you can sail to mount Chiliad.  
Inside there is only a steering wheel.  
I dream about fishing.  
Also I would have a dog named Max.  
Water is outside. It's an ocean  
as calm as a sleeping dog.

*Lucas Fones, 3rd grade  
for Mastheads Fireside*

**My Studio**

It is an ice cavern  
I would eat ice food  
ice burger  
ice pickle  
ice yogurt  
I would lie down on my ice bed  
I would dream of ice people  
playing basketball  
I would have an ice fidget spinner  
I see ice animals: a leopard,  
a snow leopard, and a jaguar  
I see a bigger ice cavern  
Outside, it feels like snow

*Armani Santiago, 3rd grade  
for Mastheads Fireside*

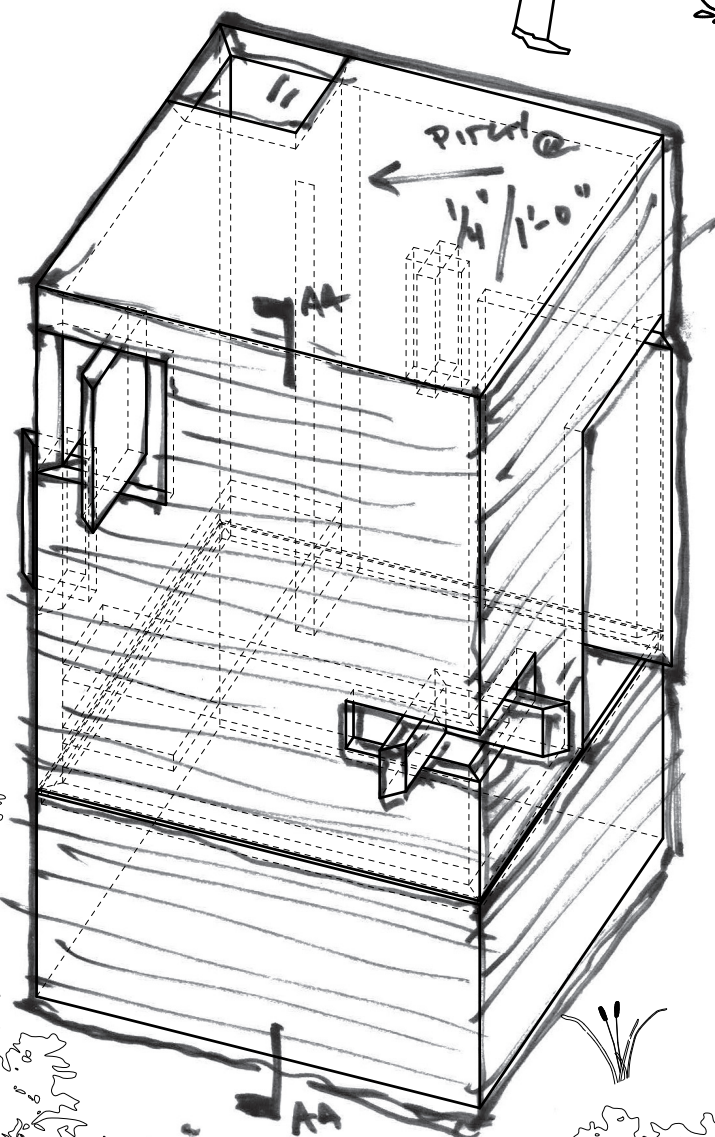
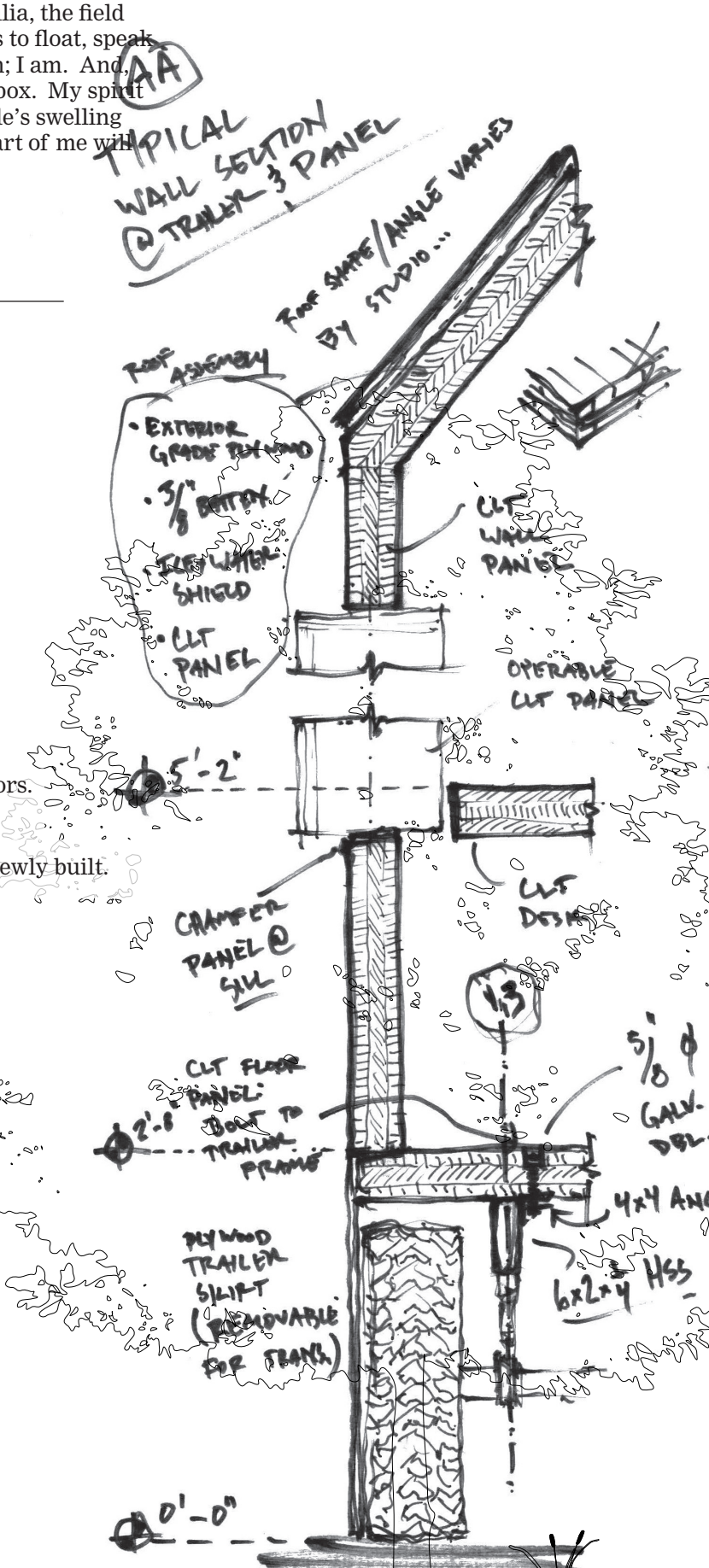
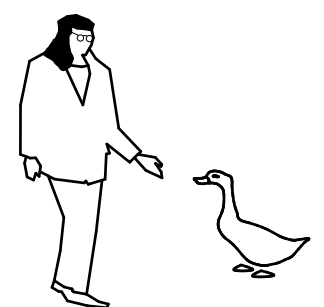
In Arthur C. Clarke's *Space Odyssey*, monoliths are advanced technological machines built presumably by an unseen extraterrestrial species. I like to think of the Thoreau studio as a machine built by unseen extraterrestrials. Both the monoliths of *2001* and the Thoreau studio at Springside Park seem to hold the same indescribable power, one that, watching the Kubrick adaptation, I'd always assumed emanated from whatever advanced whizzbang lived inside it. But considering the whizzbangless-ness of the Thoreau studio, maybe there's some other explanation for the monolith's strange, divine ability to inspire.

Walking up the hill toward the studio for the first time, seeing it isolated there, away from any trees it may have otherwise had to compete with for its authority, I was reminded of that pivotal early moment in the film, when, after the monolith appears in the night, one sulking hominid plucks a femur from a pile of remains and sees for the first time not just a bone, but a club, a tool, one easy to use, and capable of fracturing a skull with a single inspired blow. In part, this is to say the ape didn't invent what he needed; he discovered it. He saw something he'd seen many times before, but this time looked at it until it was something new.

There's a pernicious idea about art and art making—one celebrated and spread wide by the late public television landscape painter Bob Ross—that an artist's job is to insert into a world what was always meant to be there. Here, let me put a happy little tree by the pond, where the man in the cabin lives, at the foot of the awe inspiring snow-capped mountain. His paintings never surprised me, never shocked me into seeing this world as new, changed, necessary, which is what makes Bob, god rest his soul, a fine craftsman, but a poor artist.

Chris and Tessa are artists. Their studios are art. The structures are in and of themselves a prompting to search for what is necessary in what may seem frivolous. They don't aspire merely to agree with their surroundings, which they do, but also to dissent. To stand in front of them is to be assured that discovery, which is change, no matter how improbable, is inevitable.

*Justin Boening  
2017 Mastheads Resident*



"I'm going to build one in my yard," my partner says in response to pictures I have sent him of my studio, which I texted along with the caption *Just obliterated my personal record for most words written in a three-hour sitting*. This man, who despite my own worries, never had a doubt I would be a writing machine during my month at the Mastheads, goes on to say that he'll build two; one for me and one for him, side by side in the yard, perfect for when he works from home. I don't have the heart to say that part of the reason the setup here in Pittsfield works so well is that it is loved-one free.

Well, that's not entirely true—there is a wild turkey whose head bobs up and down in the field of tall grasses, milkweed, and wildflowers adjacent to the Melville studio at Arrowhead with which I think I might have fallen a little in love. I love its copper sheen in the July sun, how I can look up whenever I may to see it has migrated a few feet in its leisurely way, eating whatever it is that wild turkeys eat.

And I am hopelessly in love with the pine scent of the studio—I think I feel a little high from all the deep breaths I take in my effort to incorporate that perfume into my lungs.

And I'm enamored of my view of Mt. Greylock, the way it changes from day to day, how sometimes it wears its clouds like a veil, how sometimes it seems to swim the clean, clear horizon like a stolid whale.

There's also the papier-mâché sculpture of William Cullen Bryant (I think we're supposed to pretend it's Melville, though, so don't tell anyone) sitting in The Piazza, on Melville's porch, reading a book turned to a page with a Byron epigraph (I've been meaning to ask what the book is), surrounded by faeries. I've grown to love the sentry-like protection he exerts over the grounds at Arrowhead, and how the faeries encircling him have frozen in frolicking attitudes.

Of course, the love that went into the construction of those timeless portals, the studios, is palpable—each time I view them from a distance I feel a swell of inspiration. Visitors to Melville's grounds walk up to the sibling structures in which me and my fieldmate, Greg (with whom I've developed a loving, psychic connection), are working, and can't help but exclaim at us, despite strict orders from the Arrowhead staff not to interrupt, things like "Wow, you've even got a skylight!" and "What a neat little woman cave!" and "I bet you could sleep in there! (wink)."

Neat little woman cave indeed. I'm at home each time I sit at my pine plank desk, which is truly a testament to the minds that dreamt it up and the hands that made it. Each time I step up and into the studio, I feel I'm signaling to my characters that it's time for them to possess me. The space propels my fingers over the keyboard with an energy that isn't native to my body. Time ceases to exist. Or it turns to something I can use as a channel. I guess what I'm saying is okay, sure Partner! By all means try and try and try to replicate this splendor at home. (wink).

Maria Pinto  
2017 Mastheads Resident

### My Studio

My little galaxy studio with a see-through door will open magically. And I dream of being an artist and think of Pegasuses. I have a great time sleeping and playing then I wake up painting, painting something pretty can you guess what the painting is . . . It's a very pretty . . . butterflies and bees sucking nectar out of the flowers.

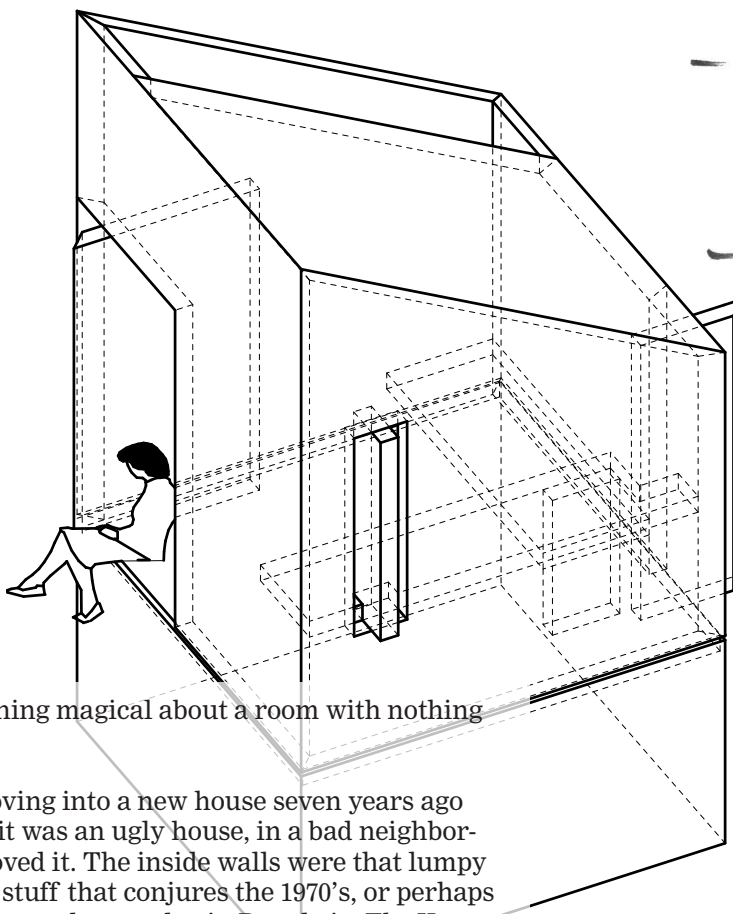
Jordynn Cote, 3rd grade  
for Mastheads Fireside

### Untitled

The universe is poetry.  
Poetry is the universe.  
Is poetry the universe?  
Poetry is a chocolate universe.  
Poetry is a universe puppy.

Niamonnie Artis Fountain, 3rd grade  
for Mastheads Fireside

All poems included here were written by students in Mrs. Cutler's and Ms. Wagner's third grade class at Morningside Community School as part of Mastheads Fireside, our writing-in-schools program led by Sarah Trudgeon.



There's something magical about a room with nothing in it.

I remember moving into a new house seven years ago with a friend—it was an ugly house, in a bad neighborhood, and we loved it. The inside walls were that lumpy nozzle-sprayed stuff that conjures the 1970's, or perhaps Daniel LaRuso's condo complex in Reseda in *The Karate Kid*, which is just to say: ugly. But god, it was good. That first night we sat on the floor on a rolled-up carpet we'd scavenged and drank tall cans of Budweiser, fishing them one after another from a plastic bag, and they seemed an unimaginable luxury because it was very hot and we were both unemployed. We slept on the floor. I think we both successfully scavenged beds within a couple days.

Any single feature of this studio has more beauty and thought poured into it than every stick/lump of that house combined, though I have to mention first the familiar magic the two have in common: emptiness, possibility, and the implicit invitation, from the structure itself, to do anything.

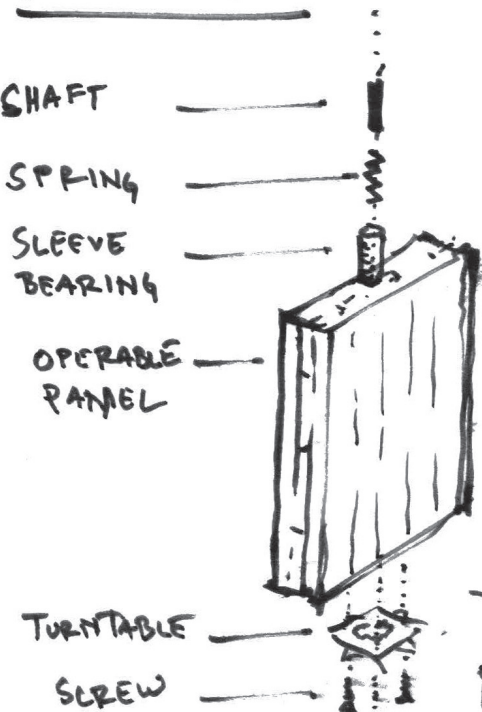
The Holmes studio is a tiny prairie house with a canted roof and single door that opens to invite in an expansive view—a rolling meadow of tall grass with woods and an amphitheater of green hills beyond. There are three horizons, or possibly four, depending on interpretation, that imbricate together their varying textures and shades of green. In the meadow there are ground-nesting birds, their sharp shapes dark and flitting like kites, sometimes just one or two, and sometimes in gyres so involved it seems their purpose could only be play (though I know they're eating bugs).

Inside, right now, the light is soft on the planks' tawny gold, and it's late afternoon, the breeze is blowing, and the large vertical swivel window opposite the door is turning. The air moves in here with remarkable consistency, as if in ribbons. I have my favorite sections of wood-grain, and my favorite knots. My roommates—a few spiders, the iridescent beetles that careen in and then scam—are polite. It's comfortable: the solid walls retain the cool of night until late afternoon. I've been spending four or five hours a day in here, typically, writing and writing, or watching the meadow, and when the wind shimmer its grass it looks like a beast's coat being stroked by an invisible hand.

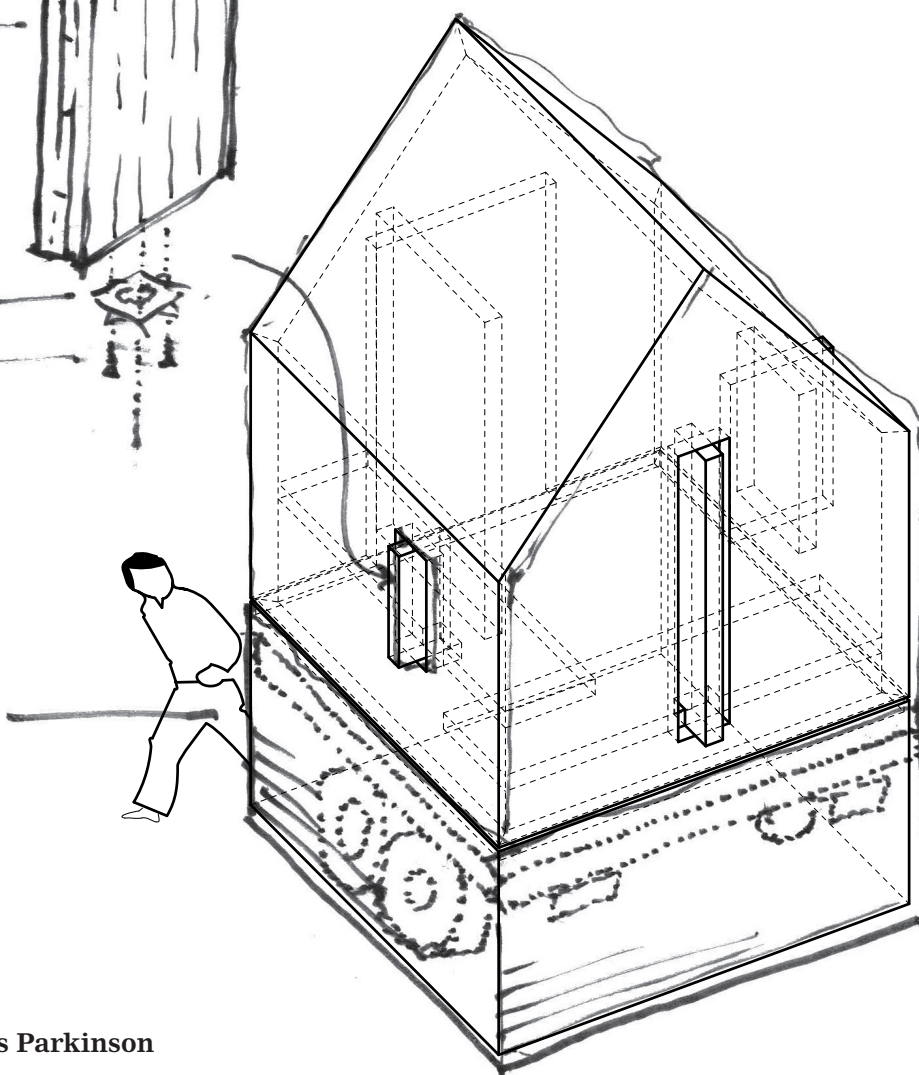
I do not know if this was intended, but the Holmes studio is oriented—to the degree—along cardinal directions. It is a sanctuary in here, and I am in solitude, but I'm finding it impossible to feel isolated, or to feel lost. I can hear the train. I'm facing south. Behind me, in the nearby community garden, there are exactly three scarecrows hard at work. The spare elegance of this interior invites the world in, and keeps me connected to it, but always in the context of: this emptiness, this blank canvas, this infinite possibility.

John Babbott  
2017 Mastheads Resident

### OPERABLE PANEL ASSEMBLY



### SKIRT HIDES TRAILER



Drawings by Chris Parkinson

**Melville and the Berkshires, circa 1850**

*Excerpt from the introduction to The Mastheads Reader, "The Past in the Present: Pittsfield's 19th-Century Literary Legacy"*

One aim of The Mastheads is to reintegrate the Berkshires in general—and Pittsfield in particular—into a broader narrative about the development of American literature before the Civil War. Putting Pittsfield at the center of the project's literary map helps us to better perceive the city's place in the rapidly expanding cultural network of the antebellum United States. Let's take the legendary encounter between Melville and Hawthorne as a starting point for tracing that network. The two men met on August 5th, 1850 during a group hike up Monument Mountain in the company of Evert Duyckinck, Cornelius Mathews, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Sr., and James T. Fields. Literary scholars typically mark the day as the beginning of Melville and Hawthorne's intense intellectual bond. Shortly after the outing, Melville moved from New York City to Pittsfield partly to be close to Hawthorne, who had relocated to Lenox from his native Salem a few months before. They visited each other often over the next two years, and Melville ended up dedicating Moby-Dick to Hawthorne "in token of my admiration for his genius" (he would dedicate his next novel to his favorite neighbor to the north, Mt. Greylock). But the gathering was also significant for the other metropolitan cultural figures it brought into contact. Duyckinck was the editor of the upstart The Literary World and a major player in the New York Democratic Party. Along with Mathews, he helped to inaugurate the Young America movement that drew Hawthorne, Melville, and Walt Whitman into its orbit. Holmes, the Boston poet and essayist who had established his summer residence in Pittsfield two years before, also made the trip. They were joined by Hawthorne and the Boston-based Fields, who had recently brought out The Scarlet Letter and was to become the most prominent U.S. publisher of his day. When this extraordinary group reached the summit in the late afternoon, they recited William Cullen Bryant's eponymous poem about Monument Mountain, composed when he lived in Great Barrington from 1817 to 1823.

All of this is to say that although Melville apparently moved to Pittsfield with the idea of becoming a sort of gentleman farmer ("more gentleman than farmer," in the words of Melville biographer Hershel Parker), he was in fact putting down roots in a region rich in literary associations and increasingly connected to the

nation's cosmopolitan channels. The cultural historian Richard Birdsall has referred to midnineteenth-century Berkshire as the "American Lake District," drawing a parallel between the mountainous county of Western Massachusetts and the iconic English rural environment that fostered the two greatest British Romantic poets, William Wordsworth and Samuel Coleridge. Birdsall's phrase has the virtue of correcting the still dominant view that Concord was the furthest outpost of antebellum New England literature. But it also suggests a placidity and isolation to Berkshire life belied by the county's growing immersion in the national (and international) intellectual currents of the mid-nineteenth century.

Melville had a special talent for envisioning the vast expanses of the globe from the confines of his Pittsfield home. By the time he settled into his mansion on the outskirts of the city at the age of thirty-one, he had already seen more of the world than most nineteenth-century Americans witnessed in a lifetime. For much of his childhood, Melville shuttled between New York City, upstate New York, and the Berkshires, where Melville's extended family owned an estate just a mile from his eventual home at Arrowhead. In Power of Place: Herman Melville in the Berkshires, Marianna Poutasse reveals how his summertime escapes to Pittsfield as a child instilled a lifelong affection for the area. In 1841, following a brief stint as a schoolteacher in Pittsfield, he set sail from New Bedford on the whaling ship Acushnet. Over the next two years, Melville chased whales off the coast of Brazil and in the South Pacific, jumped ship in the Marquesas Islands, and stopped at a series of ports from Lima and Valparaiso in South America to the Hawaiian island of Tahiti. These voyages provided the raw material for the highly embellished tales of his early novels Typee, Omoo, Mardi, and White Jacket, as well as the background for the whaling descriptions in Moby-Dick. Even as Melville began to incorporate more domestic themes into his Pittsfield works of the 1850s ("I and My Chimney" is literally about home improvements), he imbued the local landscape with images of the distant locales he had visited. Hawthorne famously suggested that it was Melville's recombinative powers that spawned Moby Dick itself: "On the hither side of Pittsfield sits Herman Melville, shaping out the gigantic conception of his 'White Whale,' while the gigantic shape of Graylock looms upon him from his study-window." In Hawthorne's telling, Melville's view of Greylock provided him with both a physical model for the South Seas whale (with its "hump like a snow hill") and symbolic inspiration for the "conception" of his gargantuan novel.

-Jeffrey Lawrence

**Correspondence:**

From: McGrath, Jim  
FW: Artist Station  
July 11, 2017 2:59 PM

To: me, justin\_boening, joe.durwin

See below.....

James McGrath, CPRP  
Park, Open Space, and Nat. Res. Program Manager  
City Hall, 70 Allen St.  
Pittsfield, MA 01201  
413.499.9344

-----Original Message-----  
From: Evangelisto, Chris  
Sent: Tuesday, July 11, 2017 2:57 PM  
To: McGrath, Jim; Turocy, David  
Subject: Artist station

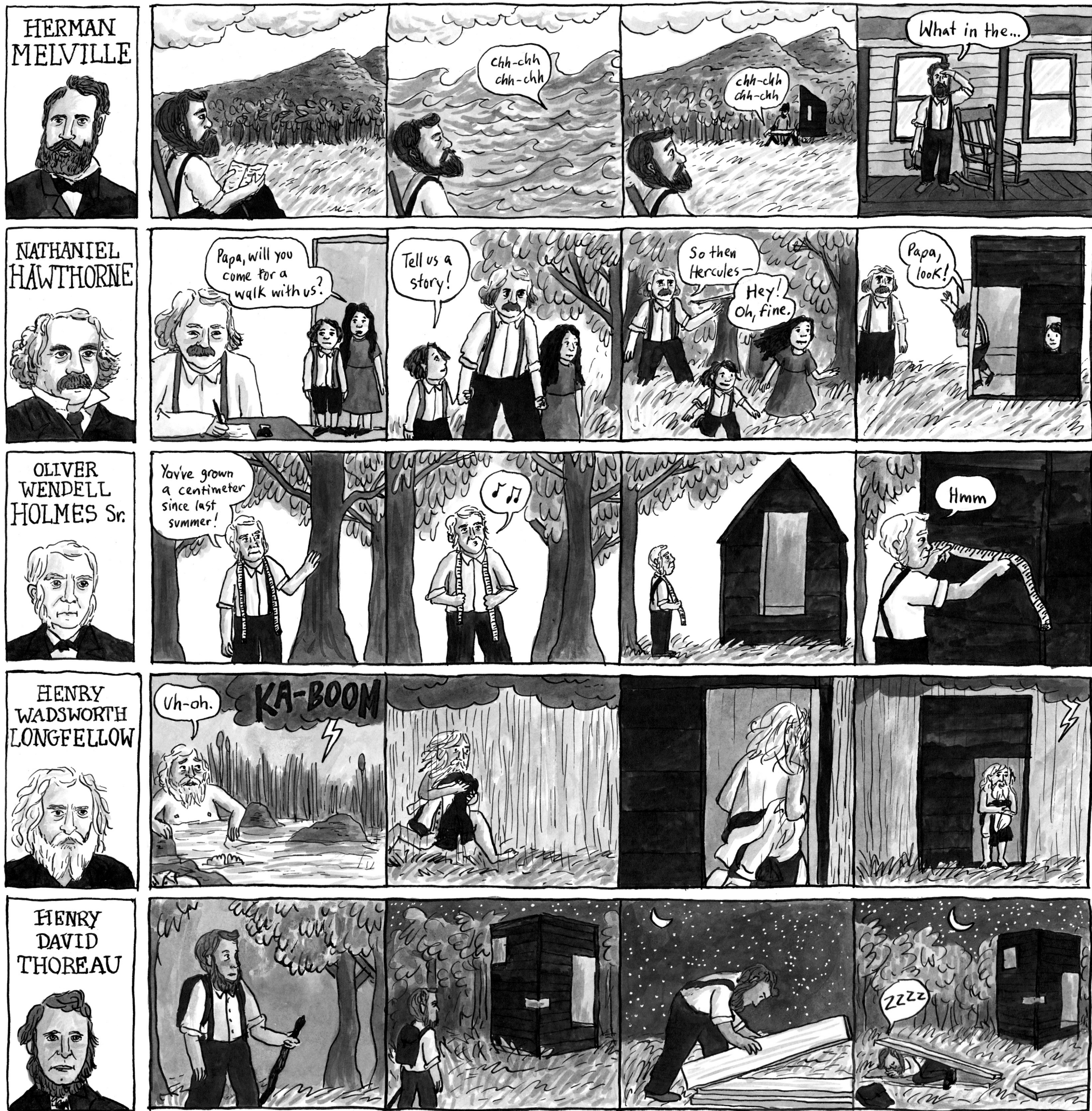
**Jim,**  
Just wanted to give you a heads up that today it was discovered that the artist booth at springside location was left open and we found a guy sleeping in it. Nothing appears to have been damaged just putting it out there so you are in the know!

Christopher Evangelisto

From: Justin Boening  
July 11, 2017 3:01 PM

To: Jim, me, joe.durwin

Sounds menacing but I'm pretty sure that guy sleeping inside it was me.



"But as it grew colder towards midnight, I at length encased myself completely in boards." -Thoreau, A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers

Comic by Melissa Mendes

Melissa Mendes was born and raised in Hancock and now lives in Adams. She's working on her third graphic novel, The Weight, which you can read at mmmendes.com.