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Stone Barns Center

Pocantico Hills, New York

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MACHADO AND SILVETTI'S RENOVATION OF A COMPLEX OF BARNES AND ASFOUR GUZY'S RESTAURANT DESIGN REJUVENATE FALLOW FARMLAND.

By Suzanne Stephens

Architect/planner for Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture:

Machado and Silveti Associates—Jorge Silveti, principal; Rodolfo Machado, consulting principal; Michael LeBlanc, Gretchen Neely, project managers

Architect/interior designer for Blue Hill at Stone Barns:

Asfour Guzy Architects—Peter Guzy, Edward Asfour, Mark Bixler, team

Owner: *Stone Barnes Restoration Corporation (Center); Dan, David, and Lauren Barber (Blue Hill)*

Consultants: *Arup (structural, m/e/p for Center and Blue Hill, plus acoustic and a/v for Center); Richard Burck Associates (landscape); Peter Coxé Lighting Design (Center); William Armstrong Light Design (Blue Hill); Shen Milsom & Wilke (acoustic for Blue Hill); Lauren Barber (tabletop and accessories for Blue Hill); Sam Tell and Son (kitchen)*

Size: *40,000 square feet (Center, phase one); 14,000 square feet (Blue Hill)*

Cost: *Withheld*

Completion date: *Summer 2004*

Sources

Steel windows: *Hope's Windows*

Glass: *Pilkington*

Seamless acoustical plaster: *BASWAphon (Blue Hill)*

For more information on this project, go to Projects at www.architecturalrecord.com.



Over the past few decades, as more farmland around New York City has been grabbed up by developers building 10,000-(or more)-square-foot houses, the small farmer has often succumbed to the pressures of the buyers' market. But ironically, aid for the farmer has come—at least in Pocantico Hills, New York—from the landed gentry. David Rockefeller and his daughter Peggy Dulany have turned a complex of stone barns designed for the Rockefeller family by Grosvenor Atterbury in the early 1930s into the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture. Here, a working farm for livestock, chickens, and vegetables, plus a learning facility and cultural center, now demonstrate to the public the advantages of local, community-based farming and environmentally sensitive agricultural practices.

As an extra draw to the rustic complex, the center also includes a

restaurant, Blue Hill at Stone Barns, run by the owners of the much-acclaimed Blue Hill Restaurant in Greenwich Village. At Stone Barns, the produce and livestock from the farm are transformed into exceptional cuisine.

The fieldstone barns, which display the same craft, scale, and detail of Atterbury's famed Tudor-style Forest Hill Gardens in Queens, New York, were built by John D. Rockefeller, Jr., to provide fresh milk for his large family (including his sons Nelson and David) at Kykuit, their weekend home. Kykuit is now a house-museum, and the barns long ago ceased to serve any function. Yet their stone walls and silos, arranged around large and small courtyards, coupled with their bucolic setting in Pocantico Hills, 20 miles from Manhattan, are unique. So Rockefeller turned 80 acres of the originally 4,000-acre family estate into a farmland preserve for the cen-

ter, dedicated to his late wife, Peggy. She had worked to preserve the vanishing farmlands through the American Farmland Trust, and at one point had used the barns to raise Simmethyl cows. With a \$30 million investment, Rockefeller and Dulany put together an imaginative mix of nonprofit and for-profit uses, of which the first phase, some 40,000 square feet, opened last year.

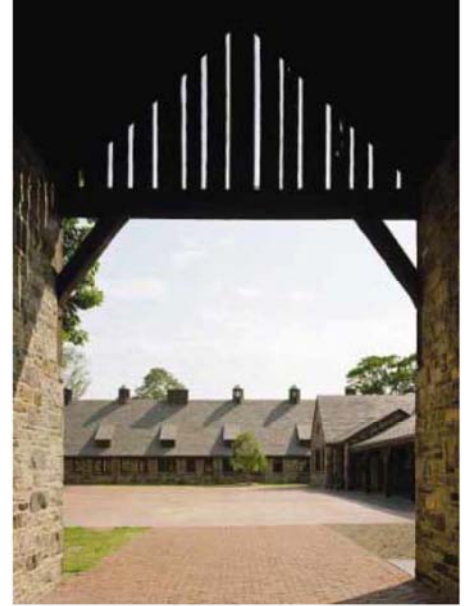
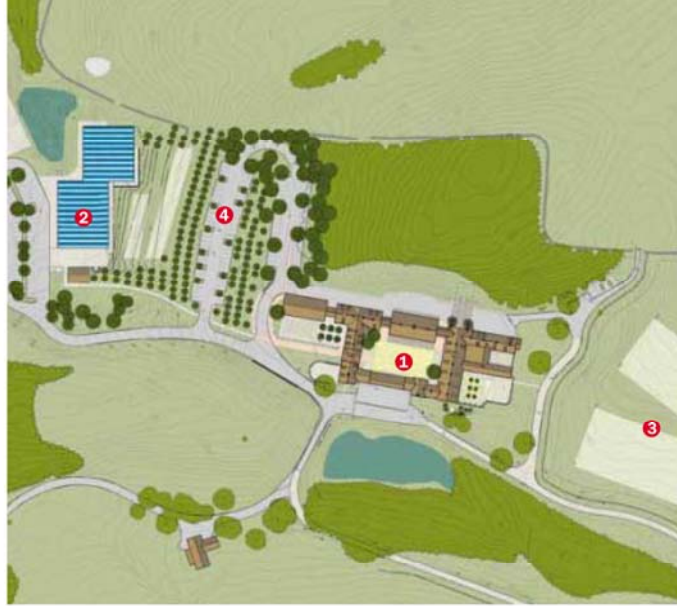
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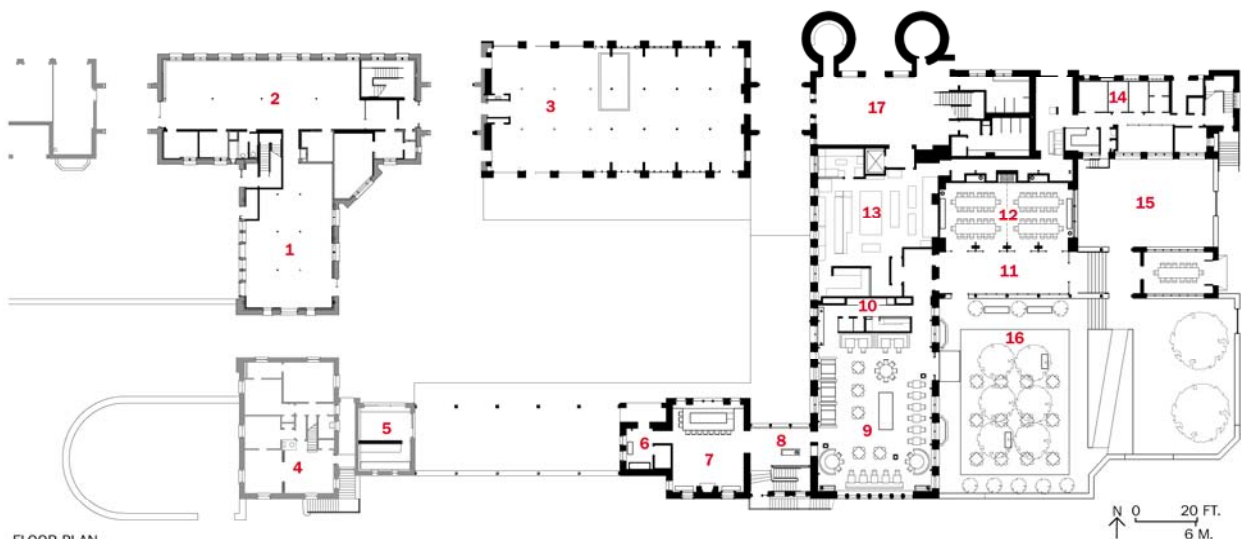
In drawing up a master plan, Machado and Silveti Associates of Boston not only renovated the barns for classrooms and conference spaces, exhibition spaces and offices, but also designed a 24,000-square-foot greenhouse for growing produce all year. Now Machado and Silveti is working on the 20,000-square-foot second phase that includes an almost-finished visitors' center. Plans call for an "event hall"

PHOTOGRAPHY: © MICHAEL MORAN

Visitors drive past the Blue Hill at Stone Barns restaurant (opposite), then around the south side to the parking area (site plan, right). The main entrance (far right) takes them into the main court. On the north side, the twin silos (below) herald an entrance to the event space.

- 1. Main building
- 2. Greenhouse
- 3. Growing fields
- 4. Parking





1. Visitors' center
2. Library/research
3. Exhibition space
4. Offices
5. Café
6. Blue Hill entrance
7. Restaurant bar
8. Reception
9. Main dining room
10. Wine rooms
11. Private dining foyer
12. Private dining
13. Kitchen
14. Storage
15. Herb garden
16. Outdoor dining
17. Event space entry hall

FLOOR PLAN

for social functions catered by the restaurant, which will occupy the second story of the middle barn kitty-corner to the restaurant.

Meanwhile, Dan, David, and Lauren Barber, the restaurateurs of the for-profit restaurant, brought in Asfour Guzy Architects, designers of Blue Hill in Greenwich Village. The country restaurant accommodates 125 guests in the former dairy barn, plus another 60 in private dining rooms, and 48 on outdoor dining terraces.

Solution

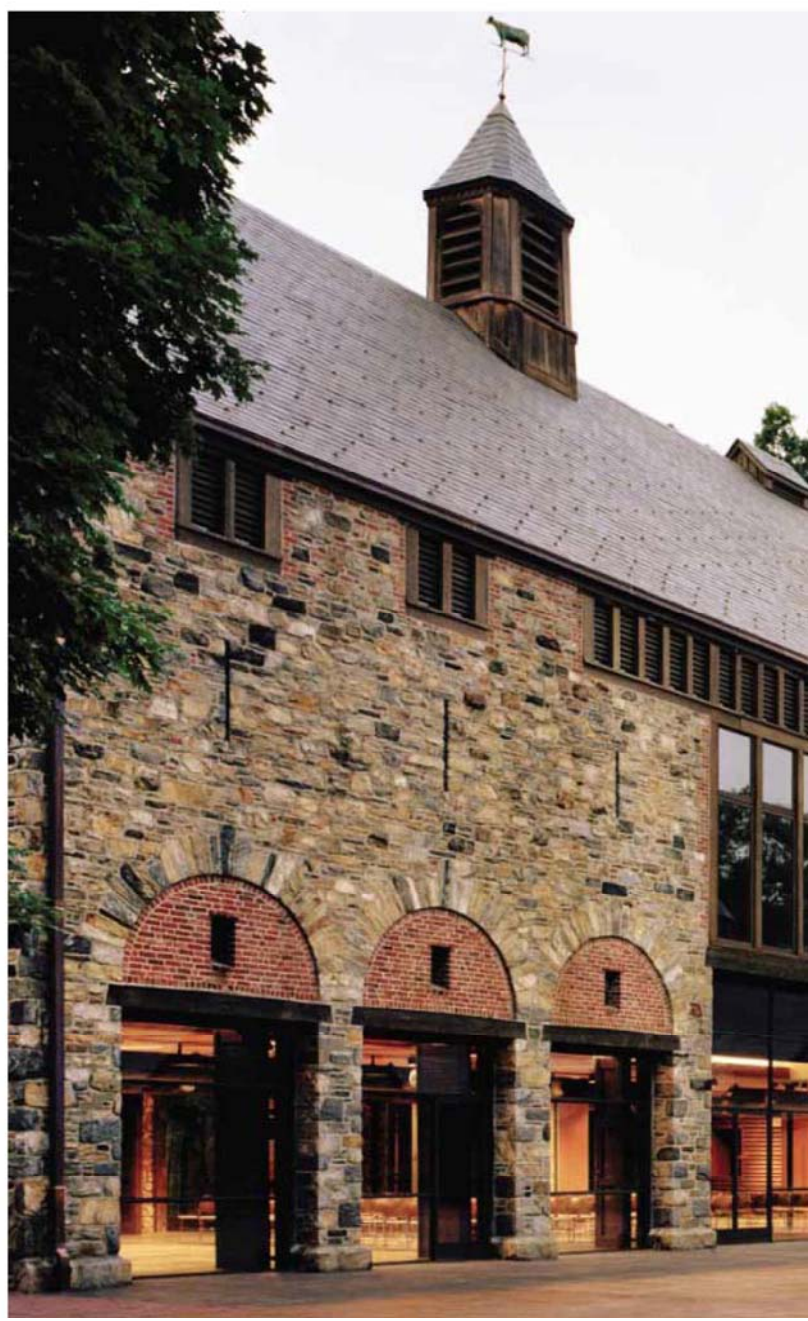
The entry road takes visitors past rolling hills where cows and lambs graze, Berkshire pigs chow down, and chickens lay eggs, and then along the south side of the barn complex to the parking lots. From here, visitors enter a gatelike passage into an expansive courtyard, bounded by stone buildings of different sizes, and containing a visitors' center, library, and exhibition space on one side, and a café, administrative offices, and the restaurant on the other. A small, discreet porch on the right of the courtyard signals the location of the restaurant, while the two stone silos mark the entrance to the event space.

Basically, Machado and Silveti worked with structural shells, since the stone barns were not heated, glazed, or fitted out for human habitation. Some of the walls were load bearing, although Atterbury had

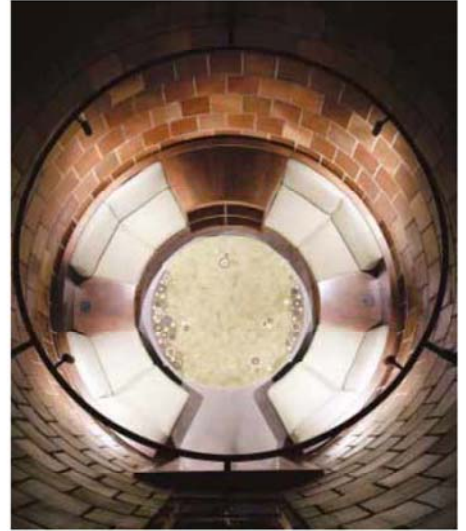
relied for the most part on a steel frame structure allowing large openings to occur in the stone masses. In adding windows, Silveti said his firm tried not to disrupt this mass-to-void relationship in the original architecture. In the old hay barn, which is now an exhibition and conference space, for example, the architects fitted Low-E double glazing with steel frames into the 8-by-10-foot bays (one, in the center, rises to 14 feet). Machado and Silveti also added slate roofs in certain areas to complement the local field stone, while leaving others shingled in wood. In the hay barn, a simple concrete slab for storing hay on top has been replaced by a dropped ceiling of recycled wood with acoustic properties. The original concrete floor, however, was left in place and stained, while existing chestnut doors were restored as partitions.

As far as the design of the Stone Barns restaurant goes, Peter Guzy of Asfour Guzy Architects is swift to explain, "We didn't want French country or a white Modern look." The architects sought instead to emphasize the tectonic quality of the space, while instilling an overall sense of comfort and warmth: "We searched for a vocabulary that would fit into the Atterbury construction," Guzy adds.

Steel bow trusses dominate the 2,250-square-foot dining room. By removing a plaster ceiling suspended from the trusses spanning the 38-foot-wide space beneath the



Machado and Silveti glazed large openings in the stone walls of the barns, and added slate roofs in certain areas. The firm also turned an old hay barn into a multipurpose space for exhibitions and lectures (right), and made the stone silos into sitting areas (far right). Asfour Guzy Architects placed the entrance to Blue Hill at Stone Barns restaurant at the far end of the courtyard (at far right below).





In designing the restaurant at Stone Barns, Asfour Guzy highlighted Atterbury's architecture (opposite), exposing the bow trusses in the dining room (below), and adding specially found furnishings there and in the bar (left). The private dining rooms (far left) have slightly arced ceilings made of acoustical plaster, with floors of antique heart pine planks from an old warehouse in New York.





steel-framed gabled roof, Asfour Guzy, working with Arup, thinned out the steel truss-and-beam frame and exposed it for dramatic effect. They also lined new arched vaults above the trusses with a seamless acoustical plaster system. Wide planks of antique heart pine surface the concrete floors in the main dining room and the new stable-size structures built for private dining rooms, while

Pompignon limestone paves the halls and vestibules. Stainless steel gives a cool glint to the inner surfaces of the deep portals between the rooms, yet the assortment of antiques and simple stained white oak furniture create a sensuous if pared down ambience.

Commentary

The pastoral setting of the renovated barns is handsomely

dramatized by the procession of spaces. Both architectural firms have inserted the new elements for exterior and interior spaces with a straightforward simplicity that allows the Modern elements to stand out in bold relief against the older backdrop. This dialectic often brings Carlo Scarpa's Modernist interventions in Italy's Veneto to mind, albeit executed with American forms and

materials. The restaurant interiors (along with the cuisine) instantly suggest that an inn would offer an ideal addition to the center. Yet this idea may be viewed with trepidation: Since the center is intended to bolster a simpler life—farming—some may fear that attracting more high-end tourism would paradoxically encourage more development in the surrounding area. ■