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Mary Griffin William Turnbull's Extended Meditation on the Land



Fisher Winery

Bill was a farmer at heart, and he became a grape grower and a winemaker. When, as an architect, he had the opportunity to design wineries, the buildings were informed and shaped by the needs and discipline of agricultural practices.

Having grown up on a dairy farm in a river valley in New Jersey, Bill was mentored by the land, both cultivated and wild. Taught to tend land by his father and the family's Italian gardener, Bill knew how to prune a tree long before he arrived in California. As he began working in the Napa Valley, designing wineries and then operating one himself, Bill's interests in architecture and working the land came to a remarkable convergence.

Bill sited the Fisher Winery building up against a hillside so it would take advantage of the natural cooling of the northern slopes. This decision reduced operating costs and allowed the upper level to open directly onto the hillside for easy access to the barrels; the lower level opens onto a terrace with a large latticed porch used to crush the grapes during harvest. The simple, weathered wood barn with its steeply sloping roof merges into the hillside.

Trees that the owner had cleared to make way for the vineyard were milled and reused as the lumber to build the winery. Bill was deeply satisfied by this economy of resources.

Client: Fred and Juelle Fisher
Architect: William Turnbull Associates
Sonoma, California, 1981

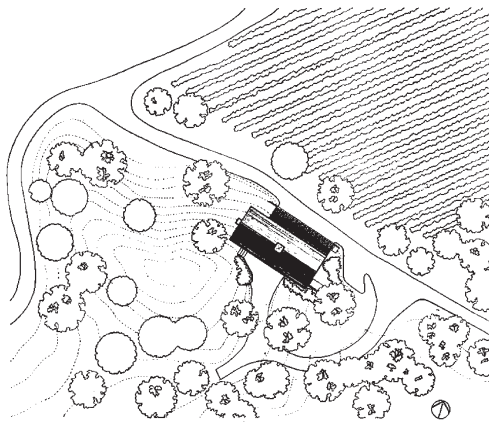
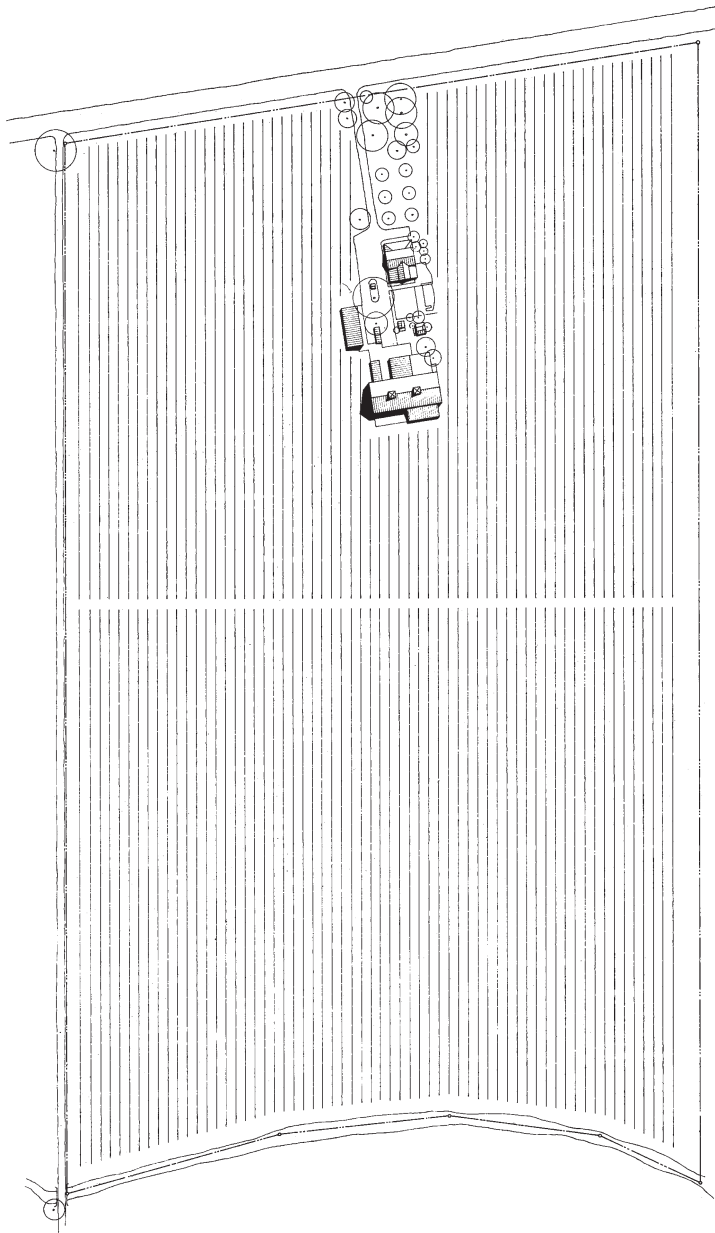


Photo: Rob Super
Graphic: Turnbull Griffin Haesloop



Johnson Turnbull Winery

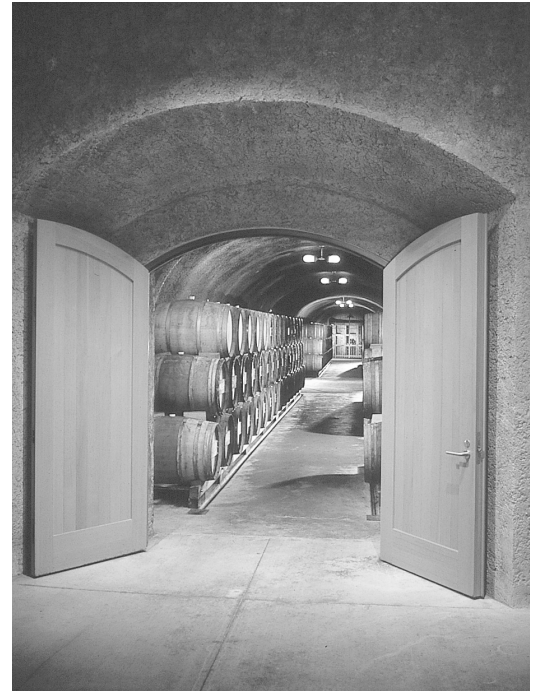
In 1977, Bill and his friends Reverdy and Marta Johnson bought a vineyard on the floor of the Napa Valley and re-established it as Johnson Turnbull Vineyards. The vines were healthy but the farmhouse and out buildings were dilapidated. They restored the buildings and the landscape into a beautifully kept farm complex.

Centered around a huge eucalyptus tree and complete with fruit trees and vegetable gardens, Johnson Turnbull is reminiscent of the east coast farms where Bill and Reverdy grew up. They intended to be grape growers and sell their crop to neighboring wineries, but when their contract was canceled just before harvest in 1978, they decided to become winemakers. They needed space for equipment and storing barrels, so Bill designed a new winery building, a large wooden barn with twin cupolas, behind the existing barn and shed. In 1989, with the help of their contractor friend Matt Sylvia, they built a new winery building, with Bill and Reverdy serving as carpenters.

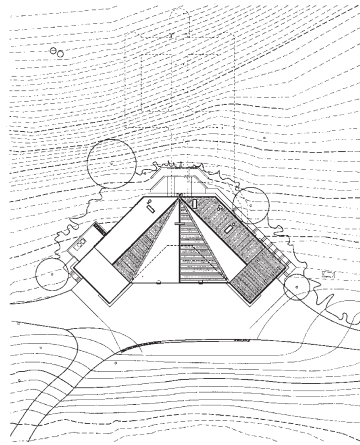
Client: William Turnbull, Jr.
 Reverdy and Marta Johnson
 Architect: William Turnbull Associates
 Oakville, California; 1978, 1989



Photo and Graphic:
 Turnbull Griffin Haesloop



Photos: Cesar Rubio



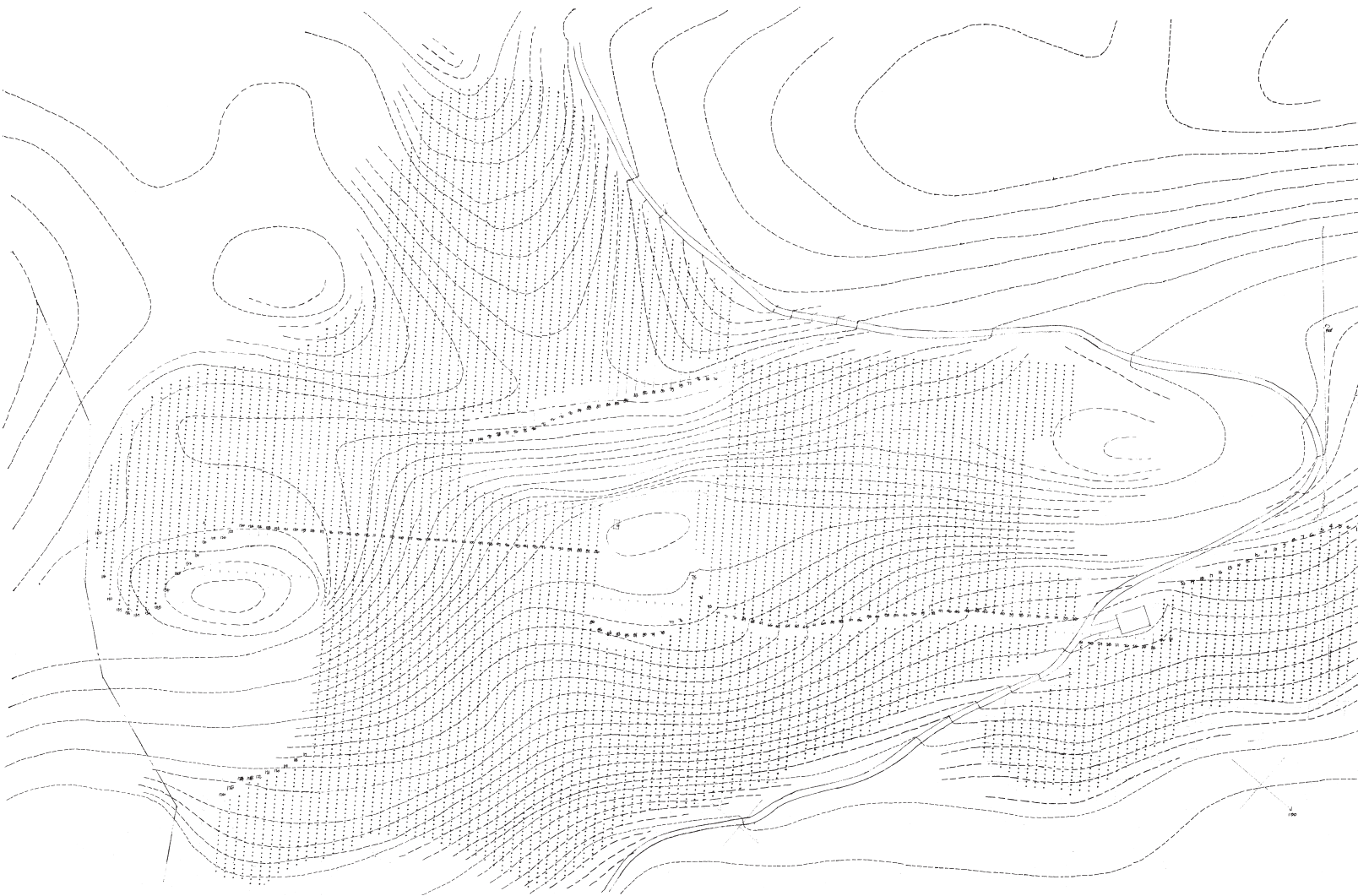
Hall Long Meadow Ranch

The Long Meadow Ranch Winery is a wine- and olive oil-making building on a ranch below the Mayacamus Mountains.

Sited on a gently sloping hill backed by forests, the building digs into the hill on the north side to take full advantage of the passive cooling opportunities. Caves for wine storage run deep into the hillside. The tailings of the caves were used to create the pisé walls that enclose the building.

Since grapes are harvested in the fall and olives in the winter, the processes are complementary and the building allows a wing for each with shared support in the center. The big, trellised porch provides space for crushing the grapes during harvest, but the rest of the year it is a place for people to gather and enjoy the views.

Client: Ted Hall
 Architect: Turnbull Griffin Haesloop
 St. Helena, California, 1998



Teviot

Bill's appetite for owning land was voracious. Not long after he started Johnson Turnbull Vineyards, he began looking for a special property he could buy for his own family. In 1983, he found a remote, abandoned prune orchard intertwined among mature forests of fir and madrone located on a sloping hillside overlooking Mount St. Helena.

Bill was reluctant to clear land that had not previously been cultivated, so the vineyards weave in and out amongst the stands of trees. He

loved working out contours on paper, so his working drawing for the vineyard shows where every vine would be planted—up and down the hills and around the trees.

When I first visited, I expected the vines to be planted along terraces stepping down the hillsides, like in Italy. Instead the rows run up and down the steep slopes. Bill explained that terracing land is expensive today, and that because the terrain falls in several directions, it is easier to farm up and down the slope.

Being mentored by the landscape means more than learning by casual observation; there needs to be a depth to the learning. Bill brought not only his experience of studying, thinking and observing, but also of building and farming to the making of this place.

Client: William Turnbull, Jr., and Mary Griffin
Architect: William Turnbull Associates
Knights Valley, California, 1986

Graphic: William Turnbull