THE DESIGN AND EXECUTION OF THE SETTINGS FOR DARK OF THE MOON

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Morehead State University, 1976

Director of Thesis:

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# Statement of Problem

It is the purpose of this thesis to design the settings for the Morehead State University Theatre production of Dr. Howard Richardson and William Berney's Dark of the Moon.

The production was March 2, 3, and 4, 1976, at Button Auditorium in Morehead, Kentucky. Included within this design thesis is scaled working drawings, floor plans, side elevations, color photographs of the watercolor renderings of each set, and color photographs of the actual settings.

# Sources of Data

Research material came from the following publications:

- 1. Harold Burris-Meyer and Edward C. Cole, Scenery for the Theatre.
- 2. William G. Campbell and Stephen Ballou, Form and Style: Theses, Reports, and Term Papers.
- 3. Clyde W. Dow, Abstracts of Theses in the Field of Speech.
- 4. Loyal Durand, Jr., Encyclopedia Americana International Edition.
  - 5. Robert Edmond Jones, The Dramatic Imagination.
- 6. Franklin H. Knower, Graduate Theses--An Index of Graduate Work in Speech.
- 7. Marsha A. Nord, A Project Design of Costumes for Godspell.
  - 8. W. Oren Parker and Harvey K. Smith, Scene Design

and Stage Lighting.

- 9. Jerry V. Pickering, Theatre: A Contemporary Introduction.
- 10. Dr. Howard Richardson and William Berney, Dark of the Moon.
- 11. Bernard Sobel, The Theatre Handbook and Digest of Plays.
  - 12. Stark Young, The New Republican.

# Major Findings

Chapter I consists of the importance, background and justification of the problem. Included in the chapter are the statement of the project, researching the project, methodology of the project, definition of terms, and criteria for interpretation. Chapter II includes the analysis of the design problem consisting of (1) internal limitations, such as locales, period, and mood of the play and (2) external limitations, such as those limitations created by the production staff, Chapter III discusses physical facilities, and the audience. and presents the solutions to those design problems discussed in the previous chapter. Chapter IV relates information concerning the execution of the designs, such as the actual construction of the sets and major set pieces, the problems and solutions encountered during the construction, and the problems and solutions encountered during the technical and dress rehearsals. Chapter V includes the evaluation of the success of the project. The director and technical director evaluate whether the project has met all the requirements of effective scene design. To determine this, these questions were asked:

- Were the designs integrally a part of the script by reflecting and supporting the characters in the play and by providing an appropriate period and environment for their actions?
- 2. Did the designs provide a part of an act of interpretation, an indication in the graphic sense of the dominant atmosphere or mood of the play?
- 3. Did the approach and style used by the scene designer complement those of the production staff, whether it be realistic, stylistic, representational, or presentational?
- 4. Were the designs technically functional?

  Appendix I consists of the scaled working drawings used during the construction of the sets and major set pieces. Appendix II includes photographs of the watercolor renderings and actual sets of the show.

# Conclusions

The set designs for <u>Dark of the Moon</u> were successful for they had met all requirements for effective scene design; a fact further reinforced by the comments of the director and technical director.

Accepted by: Welliam Law

Chairman

# A Thesis

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### CHAPTER I -- PROJECT

Within this chapter, several preliminary procedures will be discussed. These will include the statement of the project, the researching of the project, the limitations of the project, the methodology of the project, the defining of the terms, and the criteria for interpretation of the project.

### STATEMENT OF THE PROJECT

It was the purpose of this thesis to design the settings for the Morehead State University Theatre production of Dr. Howard Richardson and William Berney's <u>Dark of the Moon</u>. The production was March 2, 3, and 4, 1976, at Button Auditorium in Morehead, Kentucky. Included within this design thesis is scaled working drawings, floor plans, side elevations, color photographs of the watercolor renderings of each set, and color photographs of the actual settings.

# RESEARCHING THE PROJECT

According to the following sources, there have been no theses written on the set designs for Howard Richardson and William Berney's <u>Dark of the Moon</u>:

- Silvey, Dr. H.M., ed. <u>Master's Thesis in Edu-</u>
   <u>cation</u>. 19 vols. Cedar Falls, Iowa: Research
   Publications, 1951-1970.
- 2. Dow, Clyde W. Abstracts of Theses in the Field of Speech. Speech Monographs, Nos. 12-42. U.S.A.:

The Speech Association of America, 1945-1975.

3. Knower, Franklin H. Graduate Theses--An Index of Graduate Work in Speech. Speech Monographs, Nos. 12-42. U.S.A.: The Speech Association of America, 1945-1975.

Research for this project began by studying the script, provided by Theatre Arts Books of New York, and by carefully noting the Foreword within the script, provided by Dr. Howard Richardson. Dr. Richardson wrote, within his Foreword, mainly about the chronological history of the play. He mentioned the trials and tribulations of getting it published, played, and produced. He did not, however, write on any of the design or technical aspects of the play. Noting this, I wrote Dr. Richardson and explained that I would like to include within this thesis a section on other designers' concepts and designs from previous productions of Dark of the Moon, thus showing the visual differences in approach. I asked him to send me information concerning this topic, i.e.: and addresses of theatre companies, photographs or photostatic copies of actual sets, literature on the technical aspects of the show, and perhaps his comments toward these approaches. Dr. Richardson responded by writing to me that he had not been very careful about keeping photographs or any graphic information on the play. However, he did refer to two sources for research: Mr. Kenneth Dresser, author of a recently

published book brought out by Special Services in the Army, and the theatre collection at the New York City Public Library. Also, within his reply, he stated some technical aspects used in various productions of the play:

"From a staging standpoint the scenic element in this play would appear to be a formidable challenge to both director and designer. It is written in many scenes with a fairly large cast and lends itself to tricky, theatrical devices and effects -- huge mountain formations and caves, flying witches, the supernatural raising of an apple barrel, crashing of lightning and thunder, and billowing fog. However it is somewhat paradoxical that almost without exception the productions that are the most successful are those which employ elaborate stage I have seen more productions than craft to a minimum. I care to count that all but failed because of the heavy, complicated scenery that required long waits in order to set up for the next sequence. Attempting to bridge these breaks by introducing additional folk songs does little to alleviate the problem. The story will simply not hold together unless it flows easily to each new location without delay. Many of the scenes begin with a song, which can start in the darkness while the new set is moving into If this does not give the crew sufficient time to make the change, then some other arrangement should be devised, even if it means cutting the set entirely.

The original production at the University of Iowa was one of the most effective—as well as the simpliest (sic)—that it had ever had. A series of colored slides were projected onto a curved cyclorama behind the barest of suggested sets that could be changed with little effort. On Broadway two platform stages were rolled on and off in jack—knife fashion in full view of the audience and in front of a permanent backdrop of mountains and a three-dimensional rock cliff. In London the play was mounted in almost ballet style on an all but bare stage with props and bits of scenery lowered from the flies—a string of colored lanterns for the central square; a clothes line with brightly patterned laundry for the cabin scene; bales of hay, rakes, and bolts of cloth hanging in space in the store scene.

For my Fargo production I used a unit set of several levels placed behind a false proscenium consisting of two gnarled trees for the two scenes that begin each act. The witches climbed in the trees, leaning down and calling

to those below them. In this way I was able to move the action from place to place without lowering the front curtain. The actors themselves carried on a few props and set pieces that were needed. A somewhat similar unit set was designed for an Army production by Kenneth B. Dresser... If a unit set is used, however, the action should not be confined to limited playing areas."

As the first point of reference I reflected upon his reply. I carefully noted some very relative points that were made within his letter. Heavy complicated machinery could not be used, especially in our production, because of the limited budget and also because of the fragile floor of the Button Auditorium stage. I agreed very strongly with his statement concerning the easy flowing of the story to each new location without delay. This device could work very well if a combination of various shifting systems were used, i.e.: fly system and wagons. I did not agree, however, with his statement concerning the cutting of the set entirely. There should be a mutual adjustment by the playwright, director, and scene designer when confronted with these various obstacles.

Variations upon some of Dr. Richardson's ideas were used in the set designs at Morehead State University. The moon was projected onto the cyclorama and could be changed with little effort. The stage-right tree unit was constructed on a moving platform, a wagon, and could be rolled on and off the stage area in full view of the audience. An all but bare stage was used with the help of the fly system to make the scenic changes. This device was used in conjunction with a

unit set of several levels placed behind a false proscenium.

Three three-dimensional gnarled trees were employed throughout the designs. These trees were constructed to be climbed upon by the witches if the director so desired.

According to several reviews of the New York production of <u>Dark of the Moon</u>, little was stated concerning the set designs and technical aspects of the play. Mr. Stark Young of <u>The New Republican</u> refers to Mr. George Jenkins' scene designs of <u>Dark of the Moon</u>,"...with the mountain and the crags, the various other scenes introduced as removable units, shall we say, was highly beautiful in mood and in contrivance." This review, too, did not relate much useful information concerning the technical aspects of the play.

A second source of inspiration was the Bald Mountain scene from Walt Disney's full-length film, Fantasia. The dramatic line and composition used within the film added much to the inspiration for the mountain peak scenes in Dark of the Moon.

The third point of reference that concerns my design concept and approach to the play was an idea that came from my memory as a five-year old child. I would sit "glued to

<sup>1</sup>Stark Young, "Varieties of Legend," The New Republican, April 2, 1945, p. 447.

the television set" watching my favorite cartoons with sheer ecstacy. Strains of one cartoon in particular provided much of the basis for my design concepts for Dark of the Moon.

Even though the plot and specific characters evade my memory, I do remember the ominous and ever-present settings provided by the cartoonist. There were two settings: the interior of a witch's castle and the forest scene with the witch's castle in the background. With its tall, dark, and overbearing trees that seemed to take on the appearance of evil and frightening persons, the forest scene was another inspiration for my design of Dark of the Moon. A combination of these ideas, in conjunction with various ideas contributed by the production staff, were the basis for the initial concepts that I used throughout the entire play.

# LIMITATIONS OF THE PROJECT

There were two basic types of limitations involved in the designing of the sets for <a href="Dark of the Moon">Dark of the Moon</a>: the internal limitations and the external limitations.

The internal limitations are these limitations that are provided within the script itself. They are the locale, period, and the dominant mood of the play.

The external limitations are those limitations that are derived from the concepts and ideas of the production staff, the actual physical facilities used, and the audience. These limitations will be discussed in greater detail in

chapters 2 and 3.

# METHODOLOGY OF THE PROJECT

The following is a brief outline of steps that were taken to produce the thesis project:

- The script was studied and analyzed in great detail.
- 2. Research was done on the project by referring to related books, ideas, personal interviews, and photographs of relative material.
- 3. The designs were developed by consulting the production staff. Specific formal meetings were scheduled so that all the staff could relate ideas to each other as an ensemble. Also, several informal meetings were scheduled by individual members of the production staff to discuss relative ideas within certain areas.
- 4. The playwright was consulted for his views on the concepts and approach taken by the production staff.
- 5. Approved rough sketches were developed into scaled elevations and colored renderings. Scaled floor plans, side elevations, and working drawings were developed.
- 6. Supervision of the construction of the sets and

- properties was ensued by myself with the aide of the shop foreman and properties mistress.
- 7. Supervision of the mounting and technical rehearsals was done by myself with the aide of
  the director and technical director...
- 8. The problems and their solutions encountered during the mounting and technical rehearsals were noted.
- 9. The audience reaction was documented along with the evaluations of the director and the tech-
- 10. The thesis was written.

# DEFINITION OF THE TERMS

The following terms are used frequently throughout this thesis and require defining:

Theatre. Word derived from the Greek meaning to see, or view. A general term comprising every department of the stage--acting, producing, directing, playwriting and the playhouse itself. As a form of expression Allardyce Nicoll characterizes it as one of the most traditional, yet an expression subtly symbolic of all literary media and one which consistently meets the needs of a particular age. In its broadest sense theatre means the entire field of amusement; drama, stage, cinema, circus, magic, vaudeville, and the entertainment side of radio and television.

lBernard Sobel, The Theatre Handbook and Digest of Plays (New York: Crown Publishers, 1948), p. 762.

Scene Design. A work of art in the purest aesthetic sense... function is to provide a part of an act of interpretation, an indication in the graphic sense, of the mood, the time, and the place of the play or spectacle to be designed. Whether it be realism or stylization, representation or presentation scenery is of importance only when it is integrally a part of the script, and must as a result confine itself to the frame dictated by the playwright.

Setting. It is something seen, but it is something conveyed as well, a feeling, an evocation. Plato says somewhere, "It is beauty I seek, not beautiful things." This is what I mean. A setting is not just a beautiful thing, a collection of beautiful things. It is a presence, a mood, a warm wind fanning the drama to flame. It echoes, it enhances, it animates. It is an expectancy, a foreboding, a tension. It says nothing, but it gives everything.<sup>2</sup>

# CRITERIA FOR INTERPRETATION

The settings for <u>Dark of the Moon</u> were designed to fulfill the requirements of effective scene design as defined above by Bernard Sobel. The following questions were asked to determine the validity of this statement:

Were the designs integrally a part of the script by reflecting and supporting the characters in the play and by providing an appropriate period and environment for their actions?

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 687.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Robert Edmond Jones, The Dramatic Imagination (New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1941), p. 26.

- 2. Did the designs provide a part of an act of interpretation, an indication in the graphic sense of the dominant atmosphere or mood of the play?
- 3. Did the approach and style used by the scene designer complement those of the production staff, whether it be realistic, stylistic, representational, or presentational?
- 4. Where the designs technically functional?

After researching the project and presenting the limitations that were to be confronted, a methodical process occurred until the designs were completed. The above questions were asked to evaluate the success of this project. The following chapters shall explore in greater detail the problems and solutions involved with the designing of the sets, the construction of the sets, and those problems and solutions encountered during the technical rehearsals.

#### CHAPTER II -- DESIGN PROBLEMS

This chapter deals with the internal and external limitations confronted by the scene designer. The internal limitations include the locales, period, and mood of the play. The external limitations include those limitations created by the production staff, the physical facilities, and the audience.

#### INTERNAL LIMITATIONS

### LOCALES OF THE PLAY

Dr. Howard Richardson decided to set the play within the Smoky Mountains. He provided Dark of the Moon with eight different locales, all of which are located within that area:

Act I Scene 1: The Peak of a Ridge in the Smoky Mountains.

Act I Scene 2: The Central Square of Buck Creek. Act I Scene 3: Outside the Allen Cabin on Chunky

Gal Mountain.

Act I Scene 4: The General Store of Buck Creek.

Act II Scene 1: A Clearing in the Woods.

Act II Scene 2: Barbara and John's Cabin.

Act II Scenes 3 and 5: The Mountain Ridge.

Act II Scene 4: The Church in Buck Creek.

### PERIOD OF THE PLAY

The playwright did not choose any specific period in time for the play to take place. Therefore, a period had to be selected by the production staff. The period selected

had to have been no earlier than the 1750's because the Smoky Mountain area had neither been settled nor developed before this time. 1

### MOOD OF THE PLAY

Dr. Richardson chose a mood of mystery and magical fantasy that should be ever-present throughout the play.

#### EXTERNAL LIMITATIONS

### LIMITATIONS CREATED BY THE PRODUCTION STAFF

The production staff at Morehead State University that worked with <u>Dark of the Moon</u> included myself, as scene designer, the director, the costume designer, the makeup designer, and the lighting designer. Each of these members provided many solutions to the completion of the production of the play. However, they also provided some limitations.

### DIRECTOR

The director was the first to present his general interpretation of the play. Within that interpretation he discussed the approach he would like to take, which included the mood and period of the play, various color com-

Loyal Durand, Jr., "Great Smoky Mountains," The Encyclopedia Americana International Edition (1973) XIII, 355.

binations that he saw, and the mass, texture, and balance that would support his approach. He felt the theme of the play was one of "change and forgiveness" and that the townspeople and the witches did not want changes made. Therefore, they were the antagonists; while John and Barbara did want changes made and were the protagonists. An antagonist is a character who stands in opposition to the leading character of the play.  $^{
m l}$  A protagonist is a character for whom the audience has the most sympathy and in whom they are the most interested. 2 The director related that the mood called for the soft romantic lines of impressionism combined with a stylized realism, thus resulting in a supernatural feel. To expose a rough , primitive quality of the Smoky Mountain area, Dark of the Moon was to be set in the late 1800's. The director envisioned the use of large areas of dark blue colors fading into dark violet and rich brown colors, accompanied with touches of grayed oranges and muted green colors. He felt the need for many levels of rocks and ramps to give him ample flexibility in obtaining a certain pictorial mass. of a pictorial texture, he wanted a rough, but not coarse, look. The line of the forms, rather than their texture was

duction (U.S.A.: West Publishing Company, 1975), p. 283.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 291.

what he wanted to dominate the picture. The director felt that the texture should be stylized to the point of almost being suggestive, rather than realistic. Informal balance was what he was searching for, visually. He did not see any symmetrical pictorial balance, whatsoever. Also, several specific elements that he felt were necessary for the production were the usage of synthetic fog and the witches were to be incorporated as a part of the scenic designs.

#### COSTUME DESIGNER

The scene designer's approach determined the approach of the costume designer. Therefore, the costume designer did not impose any limitations upon the scene designs.

### LIGHTING DESIGNER

There was only one limitation imposed by the lighting designer upon the scene designs. Originally, the scene designer had planned to extend platforms "B" and "D" (Appendix I, Figure 56) farther up-stage to accommodate more acting area. However, this space was needed by the lighting designer to produce a projected special effect; part of his equipment was to be located there. Therefore, platforms "B" and "D" had to be limited to their resulting dimensions.

# LIMITATIONS OF THE PHYSICAL FACILITIES

There were many limitations and problems imposed by

the physical facility of Button Auditorium. The major limitations were as follows:

- 1. I had a total of 28'6" in depth of stage floor space. However, there was a 6' difference involved because of the location of the batten on which the cyclorama was hung.
- 2. Concerning the height of the proscenium arch,
  I had a total of 18'6".
- 3. The flying system did not meet the minimum standards for scenery clearance in relation to the proscenium opening height.
- 4. There was inadequate space for storage on either side of the stage. Stage-right was crowded with a 7' x 10' light booth, a 7' x 10' piano case, a 4'6" x 8' concrete staircase, and a 6'4" x 3.6" concrete staircase. Stage-left was crowed by a low-lying fly system and by four 4" pipes and four 6" brackets that supported the fly system. This off-stage space was also needed for the storage of the many set pieces, properties, and costumes, as well as a place for actors to stand before making their entrance.

5. Button Auditorium was not equipped with a wraparound cyclorama and the budget of the theatre would not allow me to install one.

#### AUDIENCE LIMITATIONS

If there is such a thing as an average audience, then they seldom realize that they impose several limitations upon the scene designer. Some of the limitations imposed by the audience for Morehead State University's production of Dark of the Moon follow:

- 1. In general, is the audience intelligent enough to comprehend the various artistic and theatrical movements within a scene design?
- 2. Will they find the rape scene offensive? How can this be alleviated by the scene design?
- 3. Will the handling of various or singular religious denominations become offensive?

This chapter has asked specific questions concerning the various design problems. Chapter III shall attempt to answer these questions.

#### CHAPTER III -- SOLUTIONS TO THE DESIGN PROBLEMS

This chapter will discuss the solutions to the limitations of the design problems. These include the solutions to the internal and external limitations imposed upon the scene designs:

#### SOLUTIONS TO THE INTERNAL LIMITATIONS

The set designs for <u>Dark of the Moon</u> fulfilled the limitations imposed by the playwright and the script.

### LOCALES OF THE PLAY

It was decided by the production staff that Act I

Scene 1 be treated similarly to Act II Scenes 3 and 5. Thus,

I actually had to design seven different locales, rather than
eight.

# PERIOD OF THE PLAY

Although the period selected to do the play was the late 1800's, my designs reflected no specific year of the period of architecture that was prevalent of that time.

However, they did reflect a general period of early American architecture. Even in this, the designs elaborated on the abstract of this type of architecture and furniture.

### MOOD OF THE PLAY

Keeping with the mood set forth by Dr. Richardson, the mountain ridge scenes were treated with three half-human/half-tree shapes. These shapes appeared lifelike and evil in their stance. The scenes that required buildings were treated with a similar flair. The walls were fragmented and the roofs loomed mysteriously in mid-air. This approach complemented the mysterious magical fantasy feel that the playwright had wished to achieve.

SOLUTIONS TO THE EXTERNAL LIMITATIONS

SOLUTIONS TO THE LIMITATIONS CREATED BY THE PRODUCTION STAFF

The set designs for <u>Dark of the Moon</u> fulfilled and overcame most of the limitations imposed by the production staff.

#### DIRECTOR

Concerning the director's interpretation of the mood of the play, the scene designs supported this mood of soft romantic lines combined with a stylized realism. Thus, the over-all effect was one of a supernatural fantasy. In the mountain peak scenes, this mood was brought about by the long and slow-moving lines created by the trees and their rocky roots. A similar line was repeated within the wing-and-border masking devices and false proscenium. These lines were soon

abstracted into a slight mist when the synthetic fog seeped onto the set. The stylized realism was obtained within these scenes by the almost human-like trees that seemed to have taken on various evil personalities. However, within the "building" scenes (those scenes with a roofed structure), the slow, romantic curve took on a different form, a form of intersecting, long, angular lines. The stylized realism took on a different meaning, as well. It was reflected by the fragmented wall pieces, the bent roofs suspended in mid-air, and the dagger-like understructure that supported the roofs.

The basic color scheme used was dark blues faded into muted blue-greens with accents of bright siennas and umbers, grayed oranges, and greenish-grays. The mountain peak scenes were predominantly dark to lighter blues with a high contrast between their values of intensity. The "building" scenes had a similar feel in their colors, however, they had a grand serving of sienna and umber combinations with accents of grayed oranges and greens. The forest clearing scene was predominantly dark blue fading into dark greens. The value of their intensity was principally dark with little contrast.

Several levels were provided within the set designs to achieve flexible combinations of picturization and balance. These levels were mainly included within the basic mountain peak scenes, which were constantly present within all the scenes. However, since these levels were so far up-stage,

they were used most effectively during the mountain peak scenes. Thus, the director had to rely on his ingenuity of using groups of actors as an elevated scenic element. He could also create various levels by using domestic units, i.e.: stools, benches, store counter, and an altar rail.

A rough, but not coarse, texture was obtained in the mountain peak scenes by the addition of humps and dips to the slow-moving romantic curve of the trees. By adding these variants to the composition I gained a much needed variety to the picture. However, too much variety can cause the picture to look busy and therefore lose its unity. Within the "building" scenes and forest scene, a slightly different approach was used in gaining this mellow-rough texture. The process used was nothing more than painting the texture onto the buildings and forest trees and then accenting this with sponged-on colors. This sponging gave two advantages: it gave a controlled rough texture and it also united the various colors that were painted onto the surfaces by "toning" or graying them down to a lower intensity.

As mentioned earlier, the director saw informal or occult balance throughout the play and did not see any symmetrical or axial balance. I did use axial balance within many of the scenes, however, the usage of this balance was subtly toward the abstract. Using expressionist terms, they created a feeling of the occult balance by using axial elements.

"There are several arrangements of forms that are organized in a manner to bring a sense of balance or equilibrium to a specific area. The arrangements are classified as axial, radial, and occult balance." In my approach to the set designs for Dark of the Moon, I used variations of the axial and occult balances. "Axial balance is a symmetrical arrangement of forms of equal weight on either side of an axis. The axis may be an actual line or a central-division line. A composition based on such a symmetrical balance may seem dignified and classical in feeling, though rather static and severe in effect." 2 "Occult balance differs from axial balance in the absence of any axis or focal center. It is the balance of unlike elements, the felt balance of mass against There are no rules except the judgement of the designer. The result is a feeling of greater movement and excitement which lends itself readily to dramatic uses."3 The following is a list of the scenes with the different types of balance used in each:

Act I Scene 1: The Peak of a Ridge in the Smoky Mountains--axial balance.

Act I Scene 2: The Central Square of Buck Creek--

axial balance.

Act I Scene 3: Outside the Allen Cabin on Chunky

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>W. Oren Parker and Harvey K. Smith, <u>Scene Design</u> and <u>Stage Lighting</u> (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 66.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 66-67.

Gal Mountain -- occult balance.

Act I Scene 4: The General Store of Buck Creek--

occult balance.

Act II Scene 1: A Clearing in the Woods--axial

balance.

Act II Scene 2: Barbara and John's Cabin--occult

balance.

Act II Scenes 3 and 5: The Mountain Ridge--axial

balance.

Act II Scene 4: The Church in Buck Creek--axial

balance.

#### LIGHTING DESIGNER

As mentioned earlier, the lighting designer needed the stage floor space directly behind platforms "B" and "D" for a special piece of lighting equipment to create a projected effect onto the cyclorama. Therefore, these platforms were reduced to the following dimensions:

Platform "B"-~3'6" x 8' x 8'8½".

Platform "D"--4' x 3' x 2'6" x 3'4".

Originally, these platforms were to have been doubled in size.

SOLUTIONS TO THE LIMITATIONS OF THE PHYSICAL FACILITIES

The set designs for <u>Dark of the Moon</u> overcame most of the limitations imposed by the physical facilities in Button Auditorium. The following is a list of solutions for these limitations that were discussed in chapter 2:

 There was very little that I could have done to enlarge the stage floor space in Button. I took

- the liberty to extend the stage's apron to the outer edge of the orchestra pit to allow the actors ample space for movement.
- 2. There were four false prosceniums used as scenic elements and masking devices in my sets for Dark of the Moon. The first false proscenium was needed to mask the permanent proscenium arch, as well as part of the off-stage areas. The height of the permanent proscenium arch was 18'6". To mask this would require a total height of 20' with a 16' opening. The three other false prosceniums that were located behind the permanent proscenium arch reached a total height of 18' with a 15' opening.
- 3. Needed in the forest scene were two trees that stretched the height of 18'. When completely flown out, approximately two feet of the trees were still visible because the grid system was constructed 5' lower than it should have been. To help alleviate this problem, we attached the batten to the trees approximately 2' lower than we normally would have.
- 4. Crowded off-stage space highly affected the set designs for <u>Dark of the Moon</u>. There were fewer platforms and a lesser amount of properties because of this problem. When the stage-right

tree in the mountain peak scene rolled off-stage and the actors needed to make an entrance, they would have to crawl through the tree structure, over several large properties, to make their entrance.

### SOLUTIONS TO THE AUDIENCE LIMITATIONS

.The set designs for <u>Dark of the Moon</u> fulfilled most of the limitations set forth by the audience. The following is a list of solutions for those audience limitations listed in chapter II:

In general, is the audience intelligent enough to comprehend the various artistic and theatrical movements within a scenic design? My art background has taught me that there are many ways of viewing an object. One possible way of viewing a set is realistically and naturally with the eye. A more deeply related view can be seen with the mind: impressionistically, expressionistically, or abstractly. I chose to approach the settings for <u>Dark of the Moon</u> in the "more deeply related" view because I felt that the audience, in general, had previously been exposed and become familiar with

- this view. This approach not only satisfies the requirements of the playwright and director, but also satisfies the philosophy of the educational theatre audience.
- 2. Will they find the rape scene offensive? How can this be alleviated by the scene designs?

  I felt that the morals of the Morehead audience coincided with the morals of the rest of the United States and thus deemed rape not only offensive, but illegal. Therefore, the approach that I used as scene designer for that scene had to be delicate and had to reveal as little as possible to the audience. I felt that little could be done to the designs to alleviate this problem without destroying the pictorial line of the show. Therefore, the director decided to position the actors so that the rape sequence was not visible to the audience.
- 3. Will the handling of various or singular religious denominations become offensive? I felt that if one made mention of a certain religion, then he immediately communicated with that part of the audience that was of that religion. The communication stops, however, when that religion is referred to in a negative manner, as it is

Therefore, no specific religion was reflected in the set design for the church scene in the play. Also, the very church building was abstracted to the point that it was not a church at all: it was something more evil-looking. This design approach allowed the audience to focus upon the dialogue and the action of the play, rather than becoming defensive toward the treatment of any certain religion.

This chapter has discussed the solutions to the internal and external limitations imposed upon the set designs for <u>Dark of the Moon</u>. Chapter IV shall discuss the actual execution of the designs, the problems and solutions during the construction, and during the technical rehearsals.

## CHAPTER IV -- THE EXECUTION OF THE DESIGNS

The construction of the sets for <u>Dark of the Moon</u>
was undertaken once the designs were completed. During the
construction period several problems arose that required solutions by the designer. There were also problems that
arose during the technical rehearsals that required immediate
solutions.

After the design concepts were finalized and approved, elevations of the various scenes were drafted in 1 inch scale. These elevations were transferred into watercolor renderings and later photographed. These photographs, accompanied by photographs of the actual settings, are included within Appendix II. Scaled working drawing were also developed and drawn for every scenic element used in <a href="Dark of the Moon">Dark of the Moon</a>. The measurements used for these drawings were 1 inch scale, 1 inch scale, and 1 inch scale. Various views included within these working drawings follow:

- 1. Floor plans (top view) -- drawn in 1/2 inch and 1/2 inch scales.
- 2. Side elevations (side view) -- drawn in 4 inch scale.
- 3. Frontal elevations (front view) -- drawn in ½ inch and l inch scales.

# CONSTRUCTION OF THE SETS AND PROPERTIES

Standard rectangular units were used sparingly and were disguised as to appear non-rectangular. An example of this situation occurred within the construction and assembling of the forest tree unit (Appendix I, Figure 26). This entire unit was composed of six rectangular flats and profiles of irregularly-cut plywood. Its effect was one of highly non-rectangular forms, although rectangular units were employed. This same economy and practicality was repeated within the four false prosceniums, the Allen cabin and John's cabin units, and within the platform structures that supported the tree units and those that composed the forestage (Appendix I, Figures 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 28, 38, 43, 46). Again, minor additions were made to disguise the forms.

Irregular units were designed and built when and where they were needed. The following is a list of irregular units that were used:

- 1. Barbara and John's cabin back wall (Appendix I, Figure 21) was built from one sheet of 3/4 inch plywood.
- 2. Allen's cabin back wall (Appendix I, Figure 23) was built from one sheet of 3/4 inch plywood.
- 3. The General Store sign (Appendix I, Figure 24) was built from one sheet of 3/4 inch plywood.

- 4. The rock (Appendix I, Figure 25) was built from two sheets of 3/4 inch plywood.
- 5. The church rafters (Appendix I, Figure 27) were built from three sheets of 3/4 inch plywood.
- 6. Nine platforms were designed for the irregular shape of the forestage (Appendix I, Figure 28).
- 7. Platforms "A", "B", "C", "D", "E", "G", and "H" were designed and built to surround and support the three tree elements (Appendix I, Figure 29).
- 8. The stage-right tree, supported by platform "I", was three-dimensional and very irregular in shape (Appendix I, Figure 44).
- 9. The stage-left trees, supported by platform "J", were also three-dimensional and very irregular in shape (Appendix I, Figure 47).
- 10. The General Store counter required old rotten lumber with splits and cracks, plus a lid with an irregular facing on its edge (Appendix I, Figures 48, 49, 50).
- 11. Barbara and John's bed required various heights on the bed posts, plus they had to appear chipped and rough-hewn. This was achieved by actually chipping the posts with an ax (Appendix I, Figures 51, 52, 53).
- 12. The church altar had an irregular altar rail

attached. This rail was constructed with rolled chicken wire covered with papier mache. (Appendix I, Figures 54, 55, 56).

The predominant materials used in the construction of the sets for <u>Dark of the Moon</u> were wood, cloth, metal, plastic, and paper.

The flats that composed the four false prosceniums, Barbara and John's cabin, the Allen cabin, the General Store, and the forest trees were constructed of wooden frames covered with unbleached muslin. Plywood was attached to these flats to distort and change their shapes. Also, plywood was used by itself to create special scenic shapes, i.e.: church rafters, store sign, and the Allen cabin back wall. In addition, plywood capped all the standard rectangular platforms and irregular platforms, while masonite covered the main stage acting area.

Metal pipes and flat metal plates were welded together and attached to platforms "I" and "J" to form their legs and bracing. They also formed the skeletal structures for the three-dimensional tree units that sat upon these platforms.

Liquid polyurethane foam, a thermoplastic, was poured around the skeletal limb structures. The foam expanded, much like dry yeast expands when mixed with warm water, and then hardened into a rigid substance. The foam was then shaped

into the desired forms by way of sawing off the excess foam and sanding the remaining rough edges.

The trunks of the three-dimensional trees were shaped with chicken wire and covered with newspapers and papier mache. The mache was made from powdered wheat paste and warm water. Platforms "A", "B", "C", "D", "E", "F", "G", "H", "I", and "J" had various treatments and layers of chicken wire, newspapers, and papier mache.

Four 7" swivel casters were bolted underneath the metal legs of platform "I". This was to facilitate easy movement of that platform and anything on it or connected to it. Six 5" swivel casters were bolted underneath platform "E" because that platform was hinged to and had to move with platform "I".

# PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS ENCOUNTERED DURING THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE SETS

There were eight major problems encountered in the construction of the sets for <u>Dark of the Moon</u>. The following is a list of these problems plus their solutions:

 One of the major problems was an inaccurate floor plan. This problem did not make itself known until the time of setting up. Setting up is a term used to describe the procedure of putting groups of units together to form the various sets. 

In essence, many slight proportional problems were corrected after some careful measurement and appropriate shifting.

2. A noticeable problem was found with the height of the opening to the second proscenium. The design required it to be a total of 15' high. Due to a faulty side elevation of the main stage area, the forest tree unit could be seen behind the proscenium when flown completely out. A partial solution to this problem was arrived at when the batten containing the forest tree unit was lowered and attached two feet from the top of the unit. The end results allowed the audience to see approximately six inches of the forest tree unit rather than two feet of it.

Harold Burris-Meyer and Edward C. Cole, Scenery for the Theatre (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1971), p. 301.

- Scene painting created problems to the set designer because of his lack of knowledge toward the art. Scene painting was approached by the designer with the exacting methods of those used by watercolorists, i.e.: flat washes, graduated washes, wet into wet. It was soon learned, however, that an adapted and broadened set of rules must be mastered before one attempts the art of scene painting, i.e.: scumbling, sponging, stippling, and spattering. It was also learned that one needs more colors with which to work in scene painting than in watercoloring. This meant that the set designer needed to delineate in greater detail the various colors in his watercolor renderings in order to reproduce the same effect with scene painting techniques on a larger scale. There were approximately forty colors used within the seven sets for Dark of Moon.
- 4. Only one unit was rejected after it was totally constructed. There were two back wall units designed: one for the Allen cabin and one for

Barbara and John's cabin. Just before the back wall unit for Barbara and John's cabin was painted, the idea of its being a reality was discarded by the director and the designer. The reason for this action was that the unit distracted from the line of the set within that scene.

- and John's cabin and back wall, the rock, the church rafters, and the store sign proved to be a slight problem within itself. The lighter units resulted in being hung with several strands of piano wire. This allowed firm support to the structures with very little mass to draw attention to the eyes of the audience. Therefore, visually they disappeared from the audience's viewpoint. The heavier units were suspended with airplane cable. This cable was sturdy in strength, but it was slightly noticeable from the audience.
- attached to each other and had to be made portable with the use of casters. Originally, we had planned to use stationary casters on platform "I". However, time and budget would not allow us to buy four stationary casters. Therefore, we used four swivel casters that we already

- had in stock and we welded the turning case to the caster housing to make them stationary.
- 7. Originally, the counter for the General Store was to have been on the main stage floor. However the weight of the counter greatly increased when heavy oak boards were used in its construction. As a result, a stock 4' x 8' platform was used to house the unit. This platform was equipped with six swivel casters to facilitate its movement on and off the stage.
- 8. I had formerly intended to cover all of the elevated areas of the set with rigid polyurethane This type of platform and structural treatment would have allowed flexible molding, easy carving, and enough rigidity and strength for actors to act upon. Since this foam was very expensive and very difficult to obtain, just enough of it was purchased to cover the limbs of the three-dimensional tree units. In order to gain a similar silhouette and pictorial texture, papier mache and newspapers were applied to the rest of the elevated structures. substitution worked very well, except for one small disadvantage: the actors could not stand Therefore, or move upon the papier mache surface. the papier mache and newspapers were applied

to the platform facings and not to their tops. PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS ENCOUNTERED DURING TECHNICAL REHEARSALS

There were five minor problems encountered during the technical and dress rehearsals for <u>Dark of the Moon</u>.

Four of these problems were wholly or partially solved, while one was not:

- 1. Most importantly was the problem of very little off-stage space. Space was needed for the storage of immediate set pieces and properties, for actors and crew to wait within, and for the 10-12-piece orchestra. To alleviate a part of this problem, some of the smaller set pieces and properties were stored just behind the proscenium legs, stacked upon each other, or within the shop area directly behind the stage.
- 2. The shifting of the set pieces and properties and the flying of scenic units posed another small problem. Since most of this was done without blackouts and in full view of the audience, then they had to be done in a logical and graceful manner. It was decided that several actors would be choreographed into changing the set pieces and properties with the tempo of the

action while the suspended scenic units would be raised and/or lowered.

A secondary problem concerning these two processes was that of organization and presentation. The specific actors who were responsible for changing the set pieces and the technical crew operating the fly system needed to know the following:

- a. When were certain changes to be made?
- b. What were the specific changes to be made?
- c. How were these changes to be accomplished?

Therefore, they were informed by the technical director. The presentation was to be timed with either the tempo of the scene or with that of the specific scene change. It was to appear graceful and believable yet logical.

3. The need for synthetic fog called for the imagination of an innovative plagiarist. Due to a restricting budget, a fog machine could not be purchased and was substituted with a home-made adaptation: a large metal drum that was used as a container and a mixing vat for dry ice and hot water. The reaction of the two substances within this drum created a billowing fog that

- flowed onto the stage and among the actors. This effect was used twice within the performance: during the first scene and the last scene of the play.
- 4. Another problem encountered during the technical and dress rehearsals was that of flying wood chips when a prop tree was chopped. This was immediately recognized as a safety problem that caused danger to not only members of the cast, but also to members of the immediate audience.

  The actor doing the chopping was instructed not to chop as vigorously as he had rehearsed and was also to weigh his strokes carefully, thus deflecting the flying chips onto, rather than off, the stage area.
- 5. The main aesthetic problem encountered during the technical and dress rehearsals was the fact that the visual and artistic line, created by the false prosceniums, were so subdued with shadows that it became lost within the total picture. This problem did not present itself until the lights were focused and gelled. Therefore, a lack of time kept us from solving this problem.

This chapter discussed the various minor problems

that were encountered during the technical and dress rehearsals. Chapter V summarizes the success or failure of the
project and draws conclusions upon the thesis.

### CHAPTER V--SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In chapter I, the questions listed to evaluate the effectiveness of scene design were:

- Were the designs integrally a part of the script by reflecting and supporting the characters in the play and by providing an appropriate period and environment for their actions?
- 2. Did the designs provide a part of an act of interpretation, an indication in the graphic sense, of the dominant atmosphere or mood of the play?
- 3. Did the approach and style used by the scene designer complement those of the production staff, whether it be realistic, stylistic, representational, or presentational?
- 4. Were the designs technically functional?

This chapter shall discuss the answers to these questions from the viewpoint of the author. They are the following:

Were the designs integrally a part of the script by reflecting and supporting the characters in the play and by providing an appropriate period and environment for their actions? The set designs reflected and supported all the characters

within the play while providing an appropriate period and environment for these characters. The set designs for Dark of the Moon reflected the meager homes of the Smoky Mountains, referred to by the playwright. They painted a simple, non-cluttered picture that reflected the personalities of the townspeople, the witches, and the conjur people. However, as the play progressed, the shapes became more intricate and complicated. This too picturized the complications of the people's interaction. Finally, the shapes and colors resembled that of a bloodsoaked dagger in the last major scene. supported the action of the characters pictorially coming to a final climax within the play. the scenic devices used within the sets were abstracted portions of natural objects found within the local regions of the Smoky Mountains.

2. Did the designs provide a part of an act of interpretation, an indication in the graphic sense, of the dominant atmosphere or mood of the play? The set designs reflected the dominant mood of the play. Bright and cheerful colors would not have given the same meaning to Dark of the Moon as did the subdued and mourn-

fully cold colors that were used. The mood of the play was highly reinforced by the intermingling of the earthen colors of the townspeople with the subdued supernatural colors of the witches and conjur people. The sets reflected a definite change in pictorial line. The line of the sets started out long, flowing, and romantic, slowly changed to sharp, diagonal, and tense, and eventually returned to the former. This progression of line helped to reveal a more specific mood of the play: romantic to tense returning to romantic.

designer complement those of the production staff, whether it be realistic, stylistic,representational, or presentational? The approach and style used by the scene designer must coincide with those of the production staff. The scene designs for Dark of the Moon harmonized with the approaches used by the production staff. The approach taken was one of mystery and magical fantasy. This was represented within the set by the use of strange muted shapes that were subdued in color. This concept had two major advantages: it instilled a certain feeling of mystery within the cast shadows and suggestive

- shapes, while allowing the settings to recede into the environment.
- designs had to be technically functional? The designs had to be technically functional to make the play believable. The set designs for <a href="Dark of the Moon">Dark of the Moon</a> were approached practically, as well as aesthetically. If certain effects called for the use of special machinery, either the machinery was obtained or a more economical and practical machine was substituted. However, if no such machine could be obtained and no substitution would suffice, then the use of that effect was determined in relation to its necessity. All of the designs were not only mechanically functional, but also allowed the director maximum use of the floor area.

The director and the technical director were asked to give a critique of the set designs for <a href="Dark of the Moon">Dark of the Moon</a>. Their comments follows:

# Dr. William J. Layne, Director

I believe the design for <u>Dark of the Moon</u> to be one of the most exciting in the last three years at Morehead. It was not only aesthetically pleasing, but also effectively functional. I believe the most effective individual element was the prevailing mood.

The designer as a theatre artist was greatly evident in his sensitive approach to the visual concept of the play. The flow from scene to scene was effectively conveyed never

disturbing the continual flow of the production. The eye of the audience was skillfully guided from one pictorial image to another with a consistancy and uniformity of scenic style that was significantly satisfying. This style was complementary to the director's interpretation and the actors' approach. All visual elements were presented to make the total production aesthetically pleasing.

From the director's point of view, the setting was very workable. The levels allowed the director to create interesting stage pictures. The only problem being that some afeas of platforms were not substantially solid so that actors had to be extremely careful and often had to be positioned in awkward places. They looked effective but it took some manipulation to get the actors to an effective position.

The actors helped with the scene changes. I felt this made for smooth transitions and did not hamper the flow of the production. Limited stage space proved to be a minor problem because of the amount of scenery and great number of actors that were stationed in the wing areas. This was solved relatively easily through organization.

The traffic patterns on stage were carefully planned and with the exception of an up left exit that was limited by lighting instruments, it proved to be most workable. The flow from up-stage to down-stage was especially effective.

The element of mood was the most pronounced visual scenic effect that pleased this director. It was achieved by an excellent blend of scene painting art, color and value selection, and texture designation. The modeling of paint and the spatter and dry brush technique gave an overall pleasing professionalism to the set. This worked together with the flow of color and light and dark patterns. The choice of blues, greens, grays, and reddish browns were in good proportions to make the all over mood of impressionistic eeriness. The dominance of dark value added to the superstitiously frightening feeling of the super-The coarseness of the rocks, trees, and wood blended the texture to enhance the oppressive mood. these artistic elements, I felt lay the strength of your As a director, I was most satisfied. design.

### Mr. Paul W. Whaley, Technical Director

Stanley Moore's settings for <u>Dark of the Moon</u> were a beautiful contribution to the production. Visually exciting and functional in every way, they added greatly to the overall style of the show.

The delicate composition of irregular realistic forms arranged asymmetrically created a most moving impressionistic stage picture. Further, a color scheme of greyed blues and browns reinforced the opposition of supernatural and natural forces, respectively. Overall, the design lended itself admirably to the playwrite's intention and the director's concept.

The design served functionally without flaw. The movement patters on stage were extremely flexible, allowing the director a myriad of pictorial possibilities. The design was thoroughly developed from initial concept to working drawings, permitting relative ease in construction.

Without doubt, the scene design for Dark of the Moon was an artistic as well as theatrical success.

The comments of the director and technical director reinforced the success of the set designs for <a href="Dark of the">Dark of the</a>
Moon.

The sets were integrally a part of the script. They reflected and supported the characters in the play by providing an appropriate period and environment for their actions. The sets provided a part of an act of interpretation, an indication in the graphic sense of the mood of the play. The approach and style used within the design of the sets complemented those of the production staff. Finally, the sets were technically functional. The sets for <u>Dark of the Moon</u> were successful for they fulfilled all the requirements of effective scene design.

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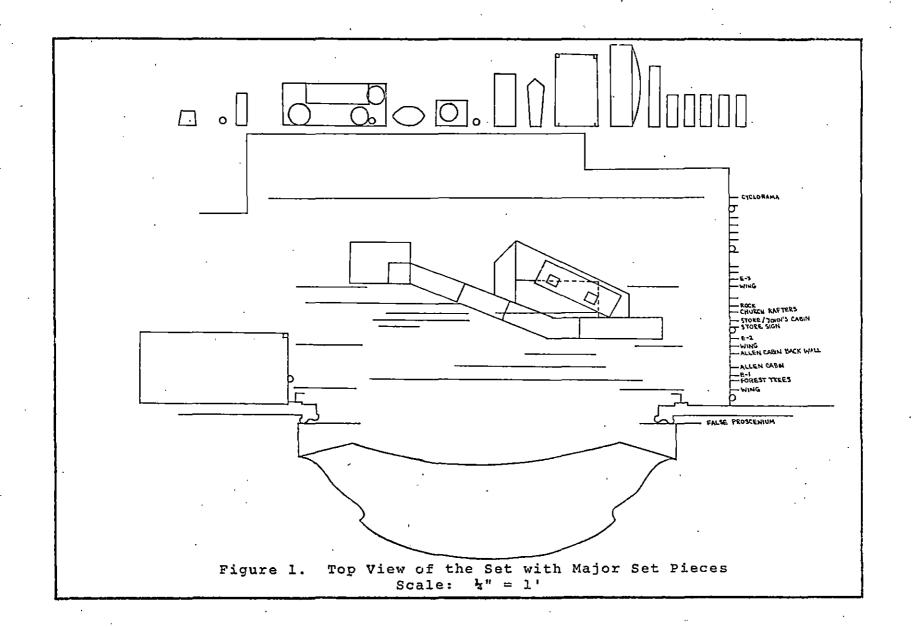
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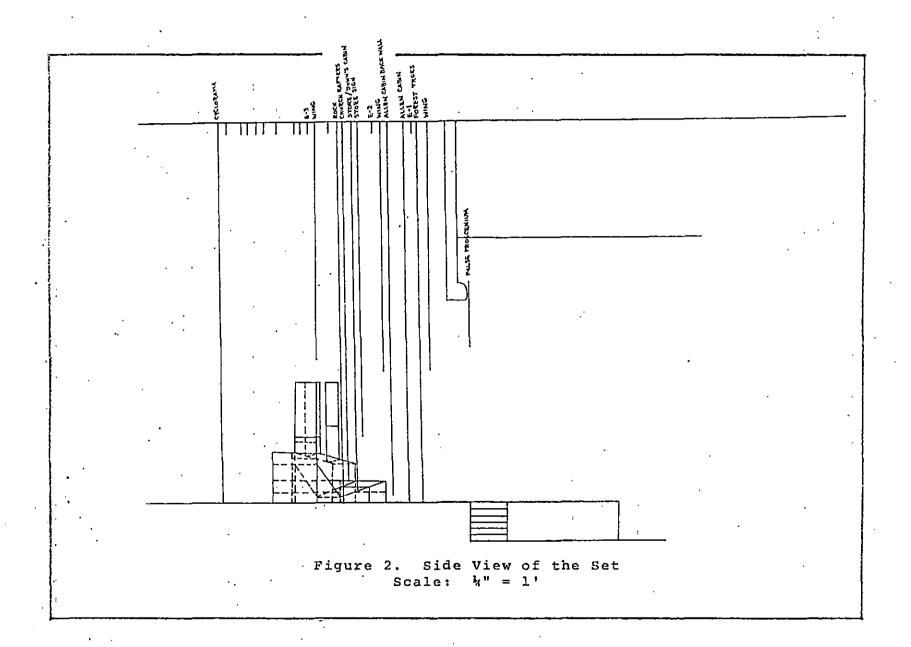
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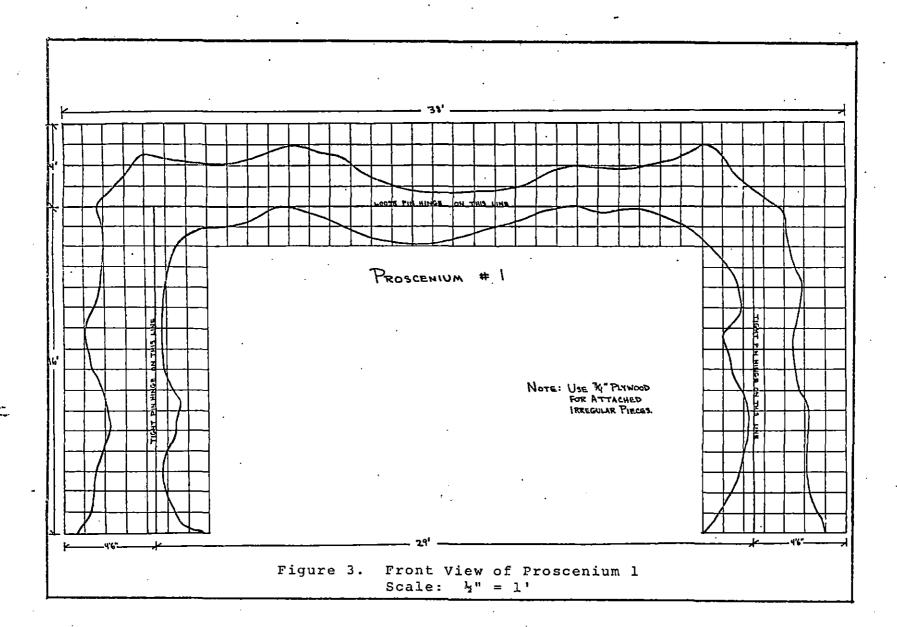
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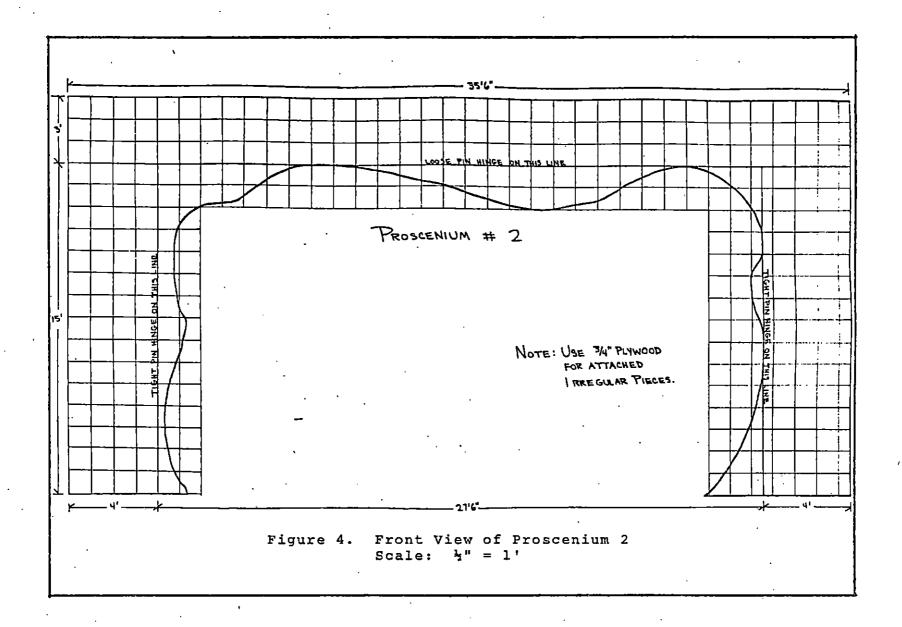
# APPENDIX I -- SCALE DRAWINGS

The following pages consist of scale working drawings used in <u>Dark of the Moon</u>. The scales used throughout the project were a inch, and i inch. However, due to limited printing procedures, the drawings were reduced to standard sizes in order to fit within this thesis. Therefore, the written dimensions and/or scales are included for each figure.









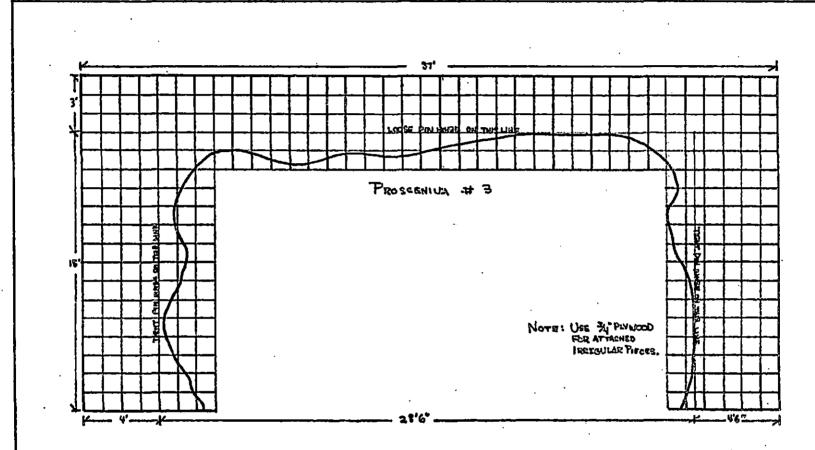
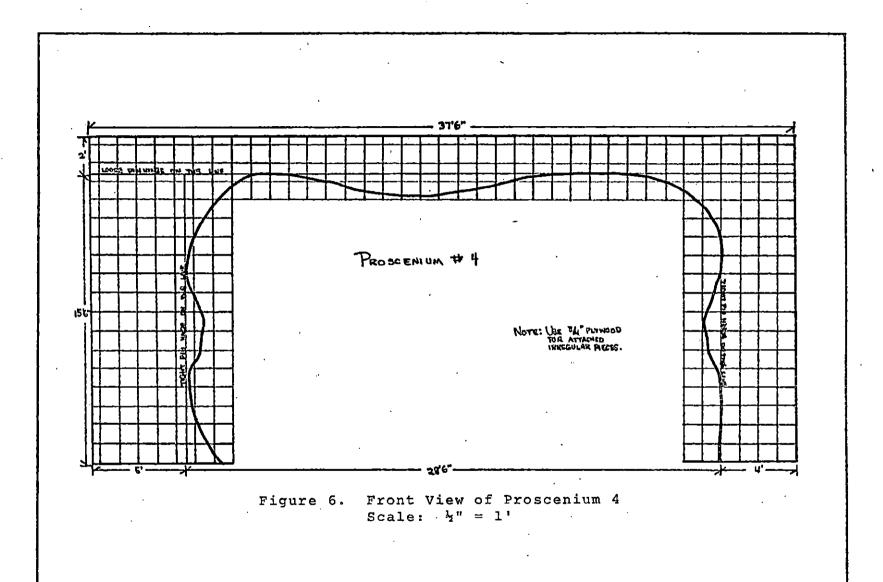


Figure 5. Front View of Proscenium 3
Scale: ½" = 1'



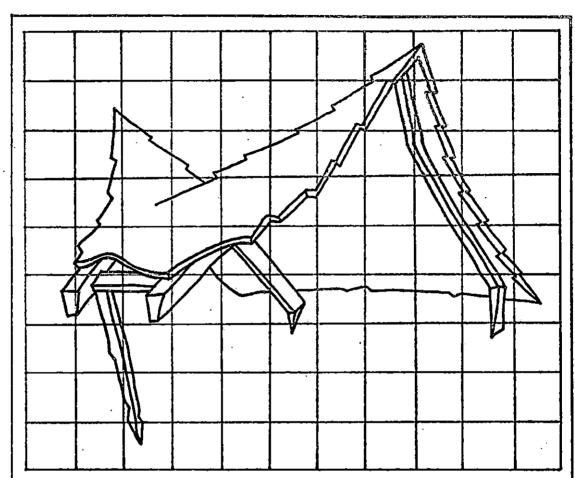


Figure 7. Front View of Barbara and John's Cabin Scale: 1" = 1'

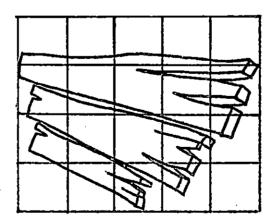
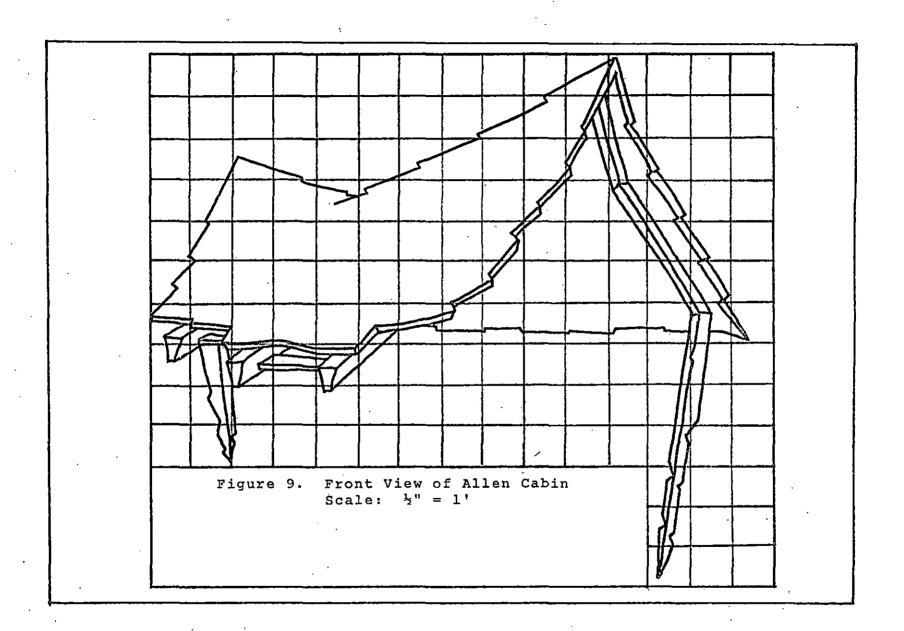
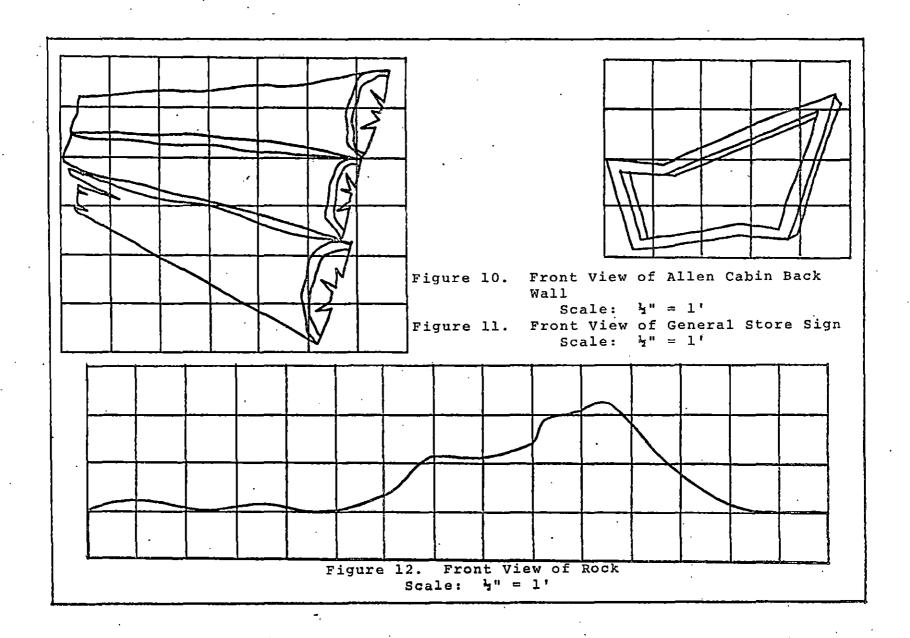
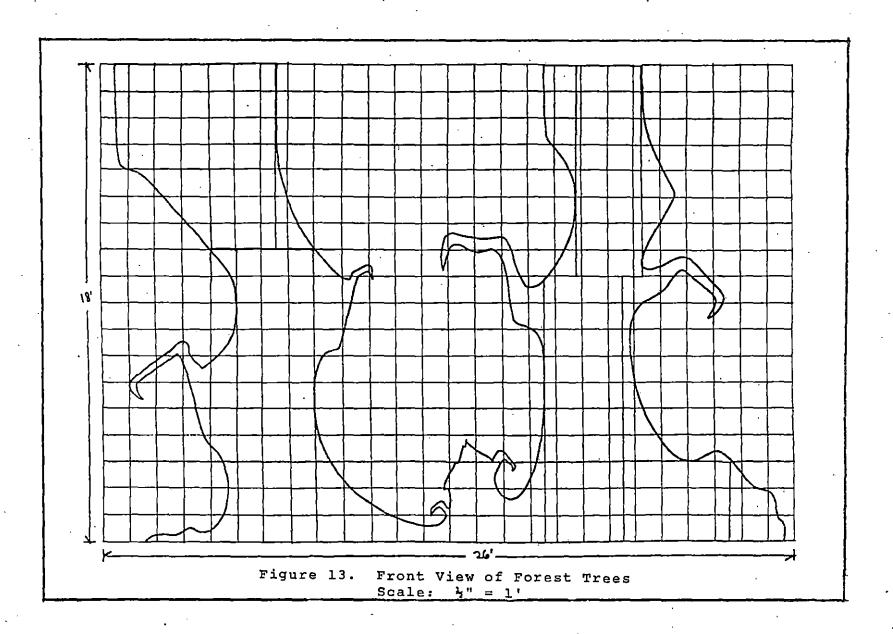


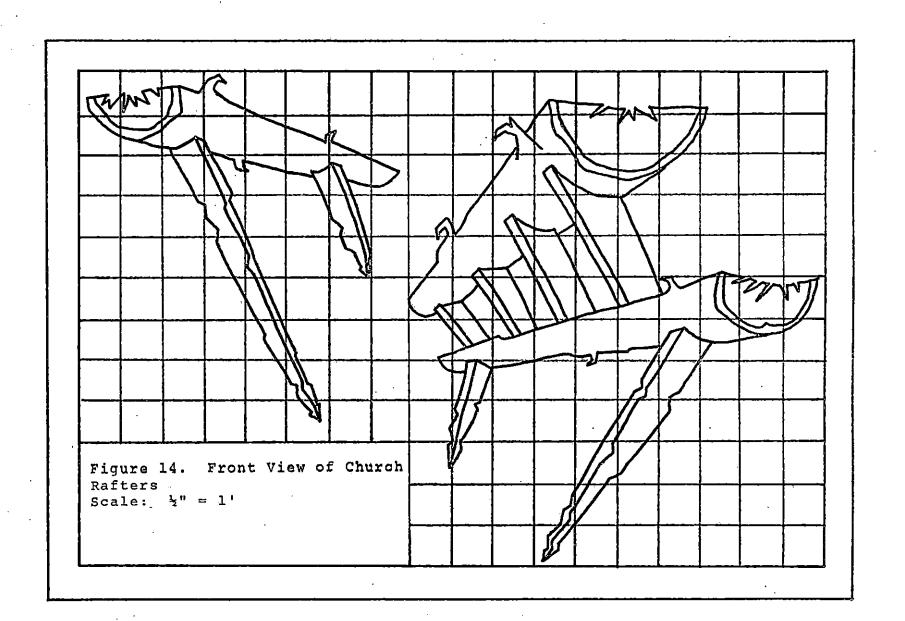
Figure 8. Front View of Barbara and John's Cabin Back Wall

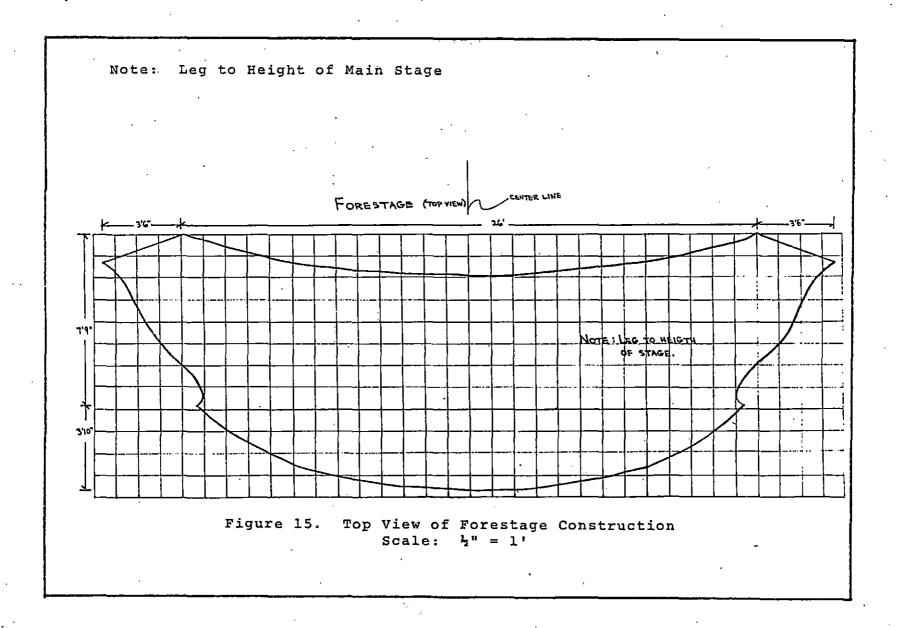
Scale: ½" = 1'

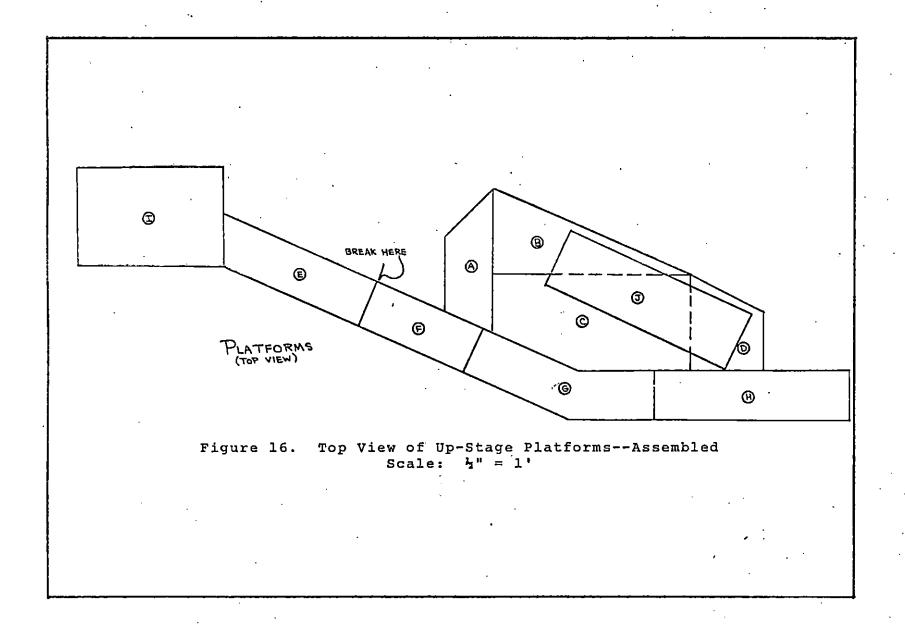


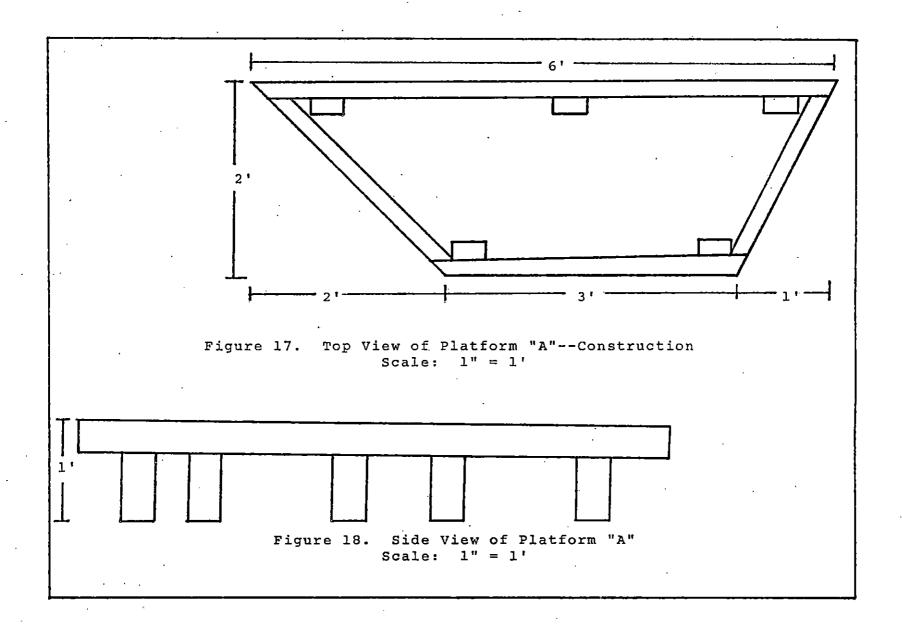


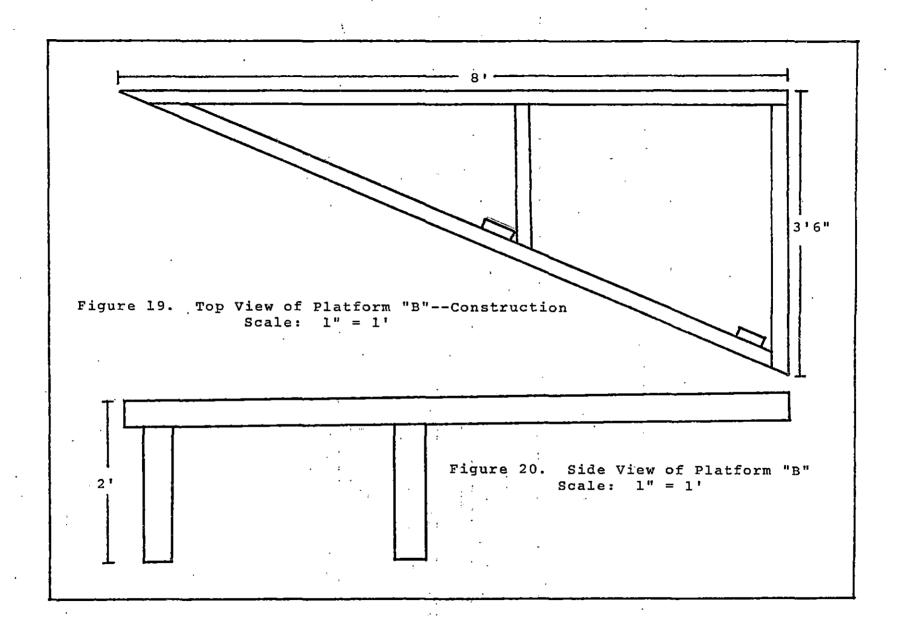


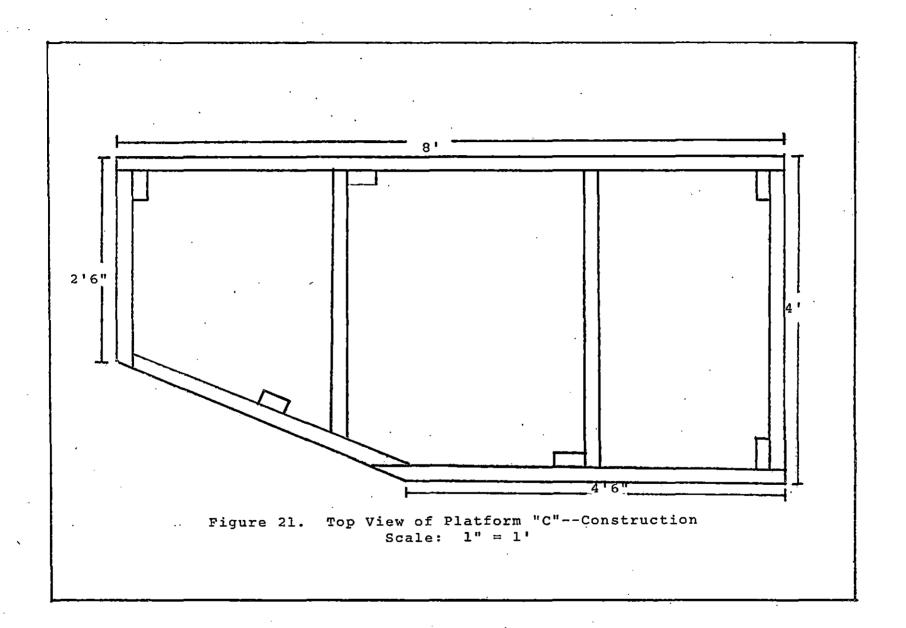


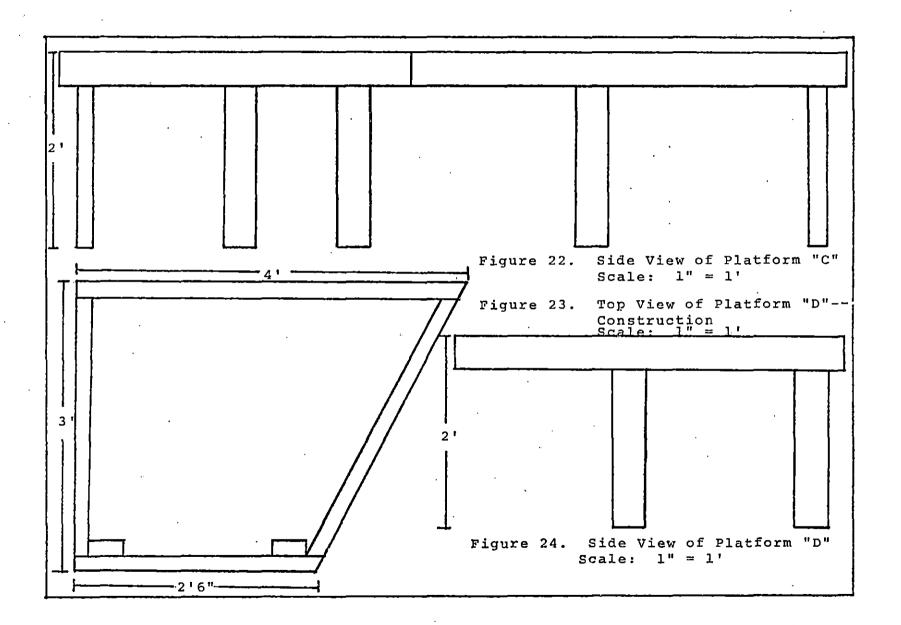


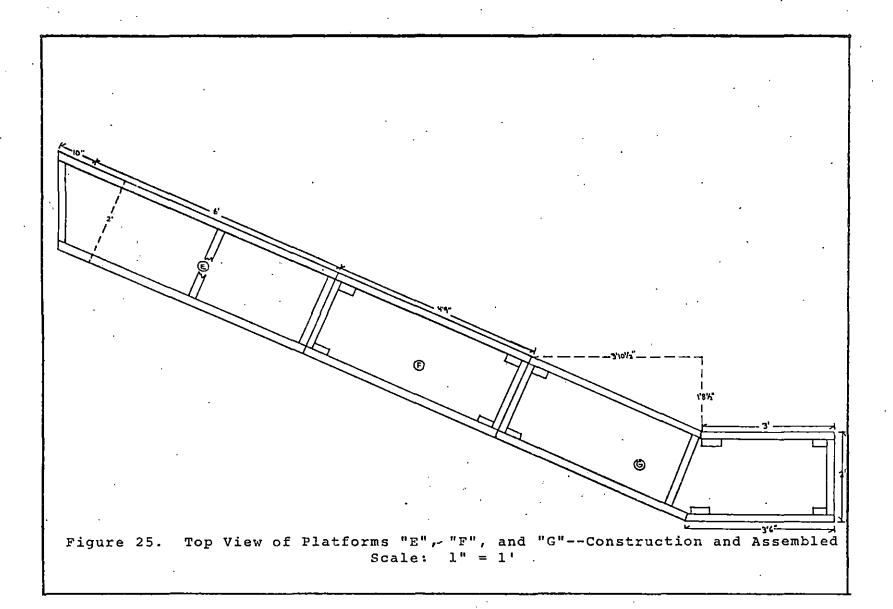


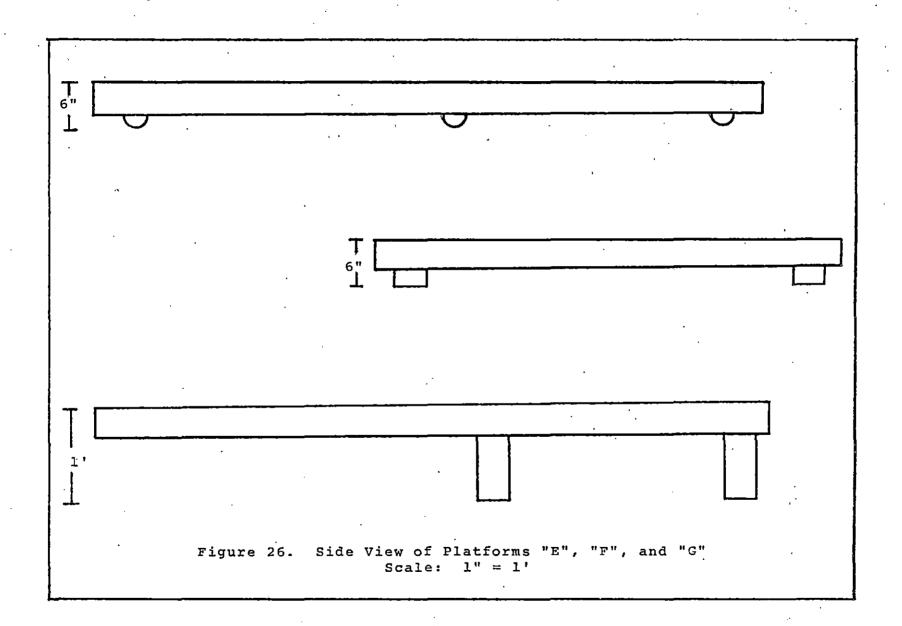


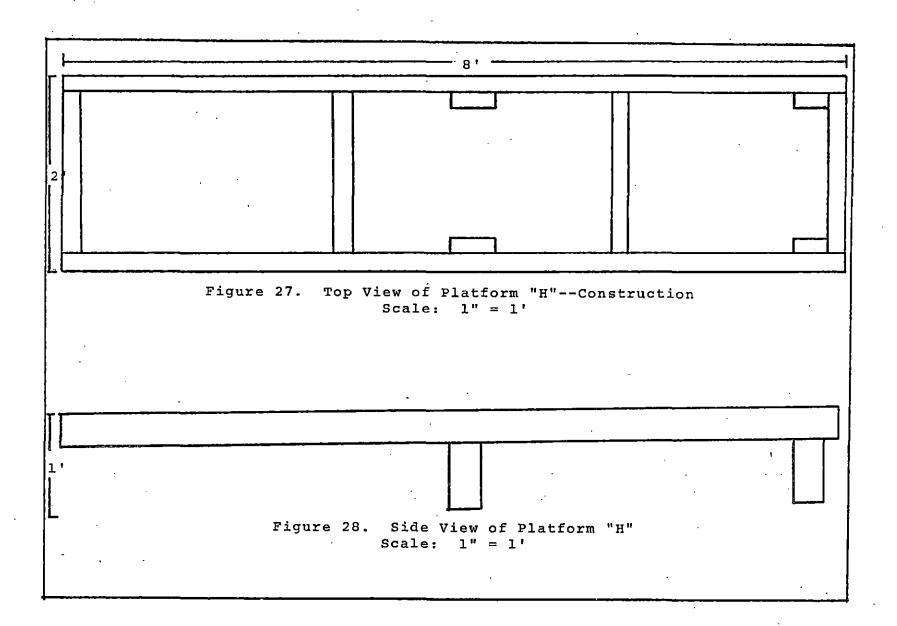


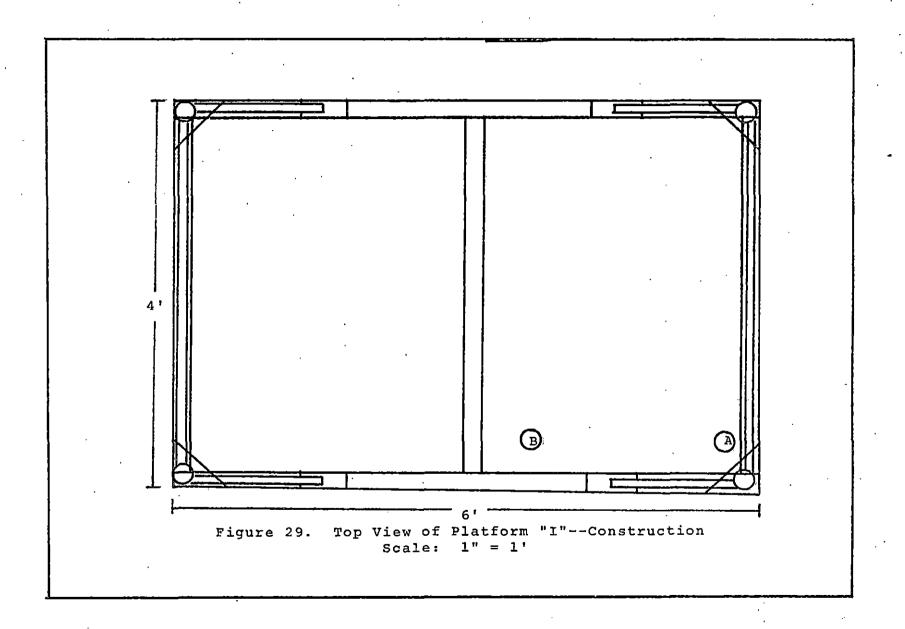


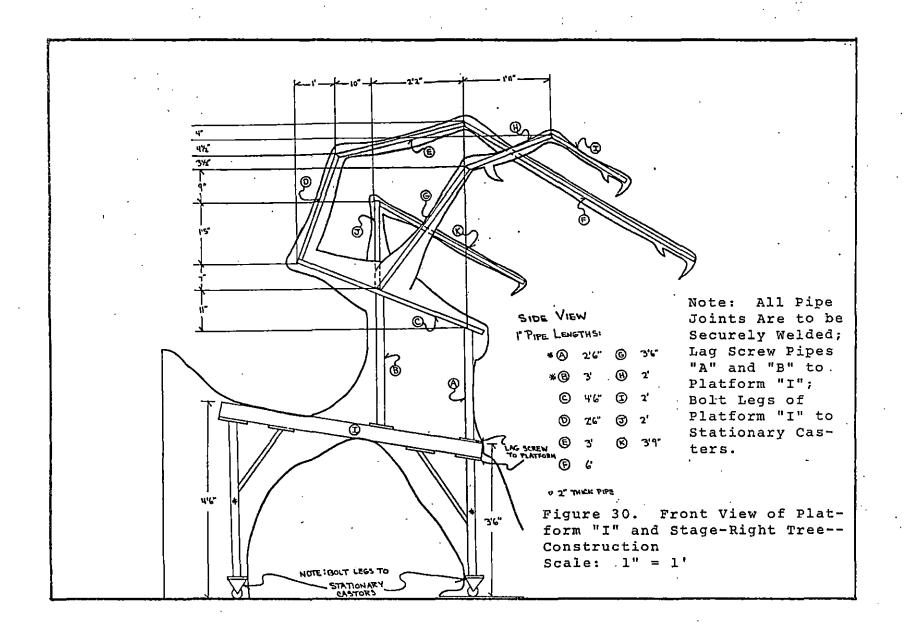


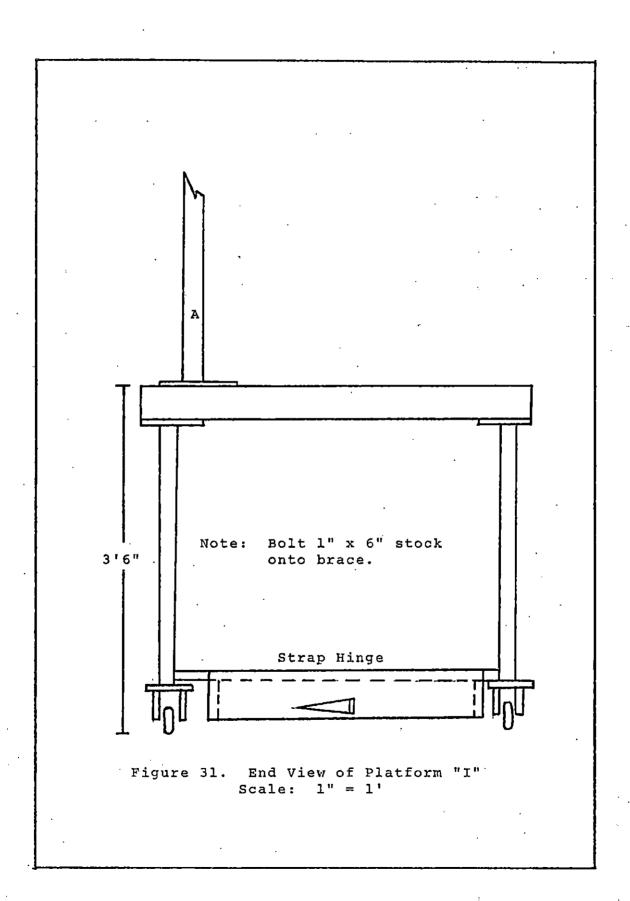












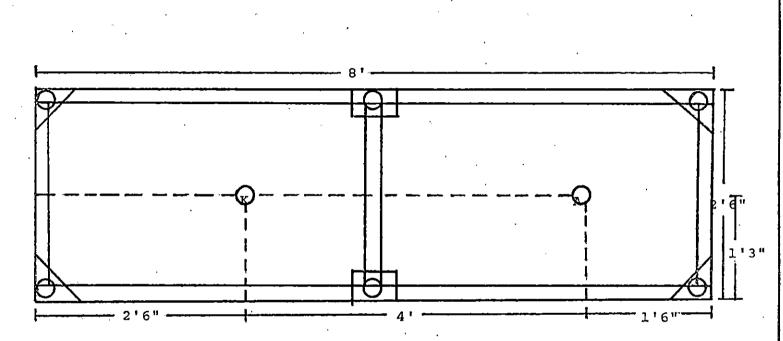
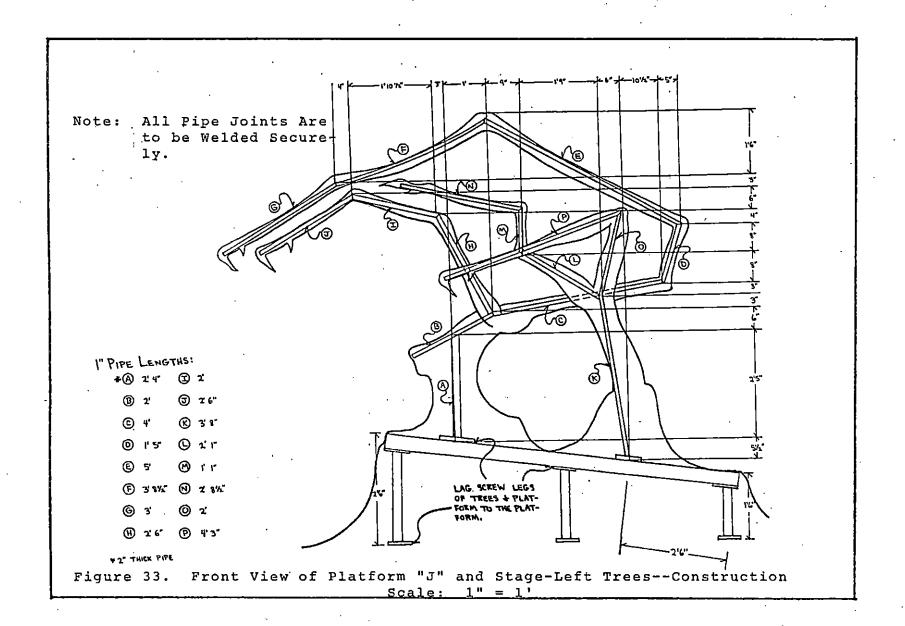
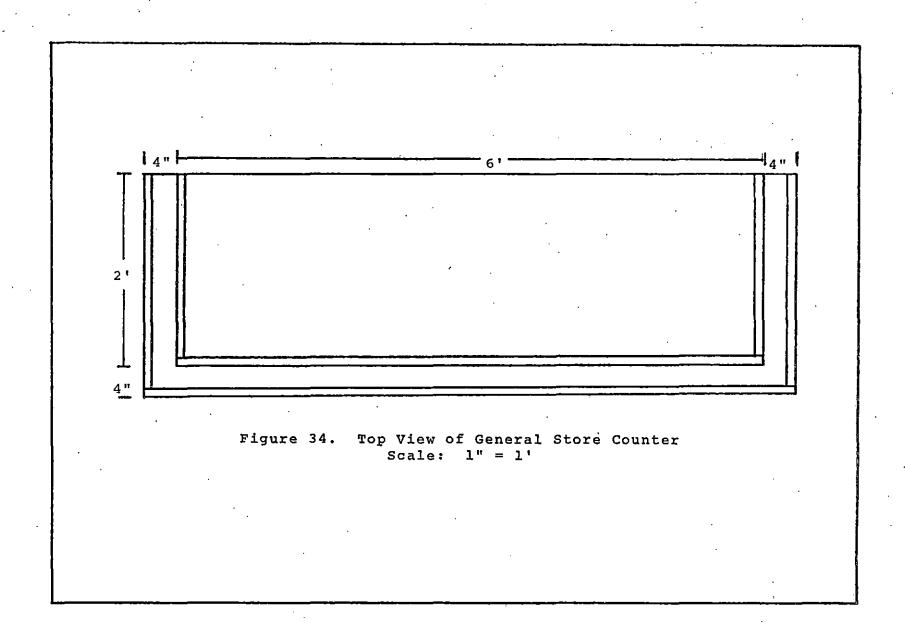
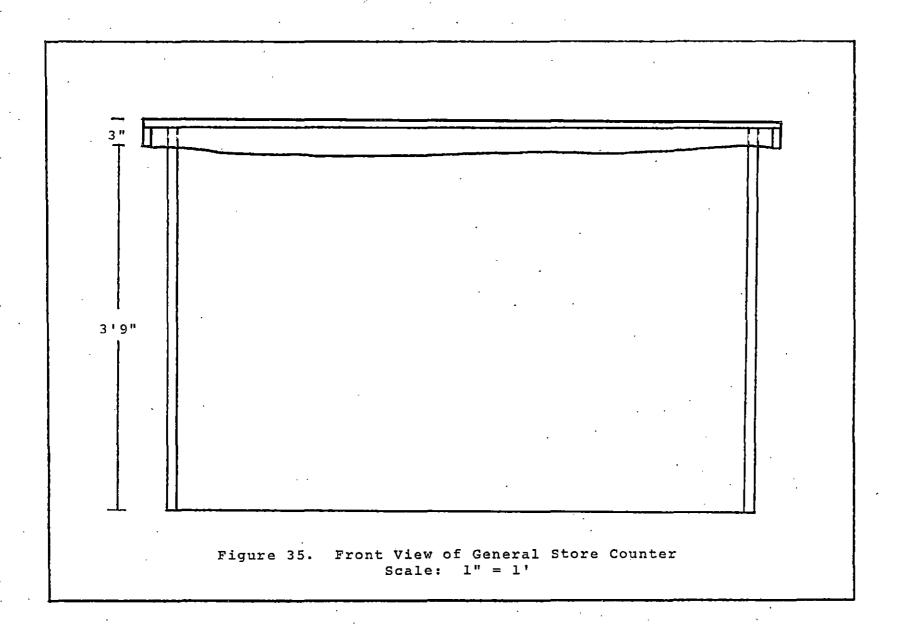
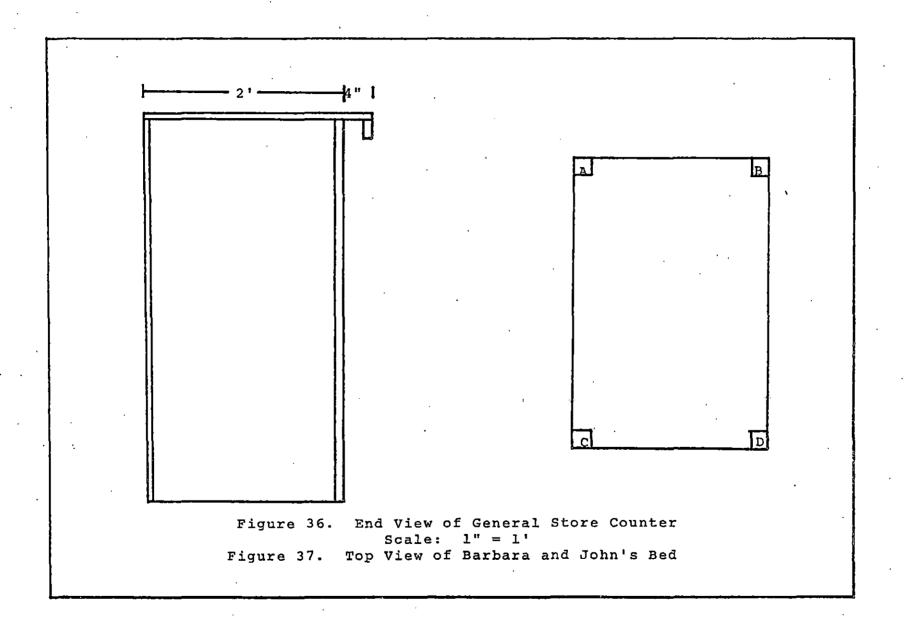


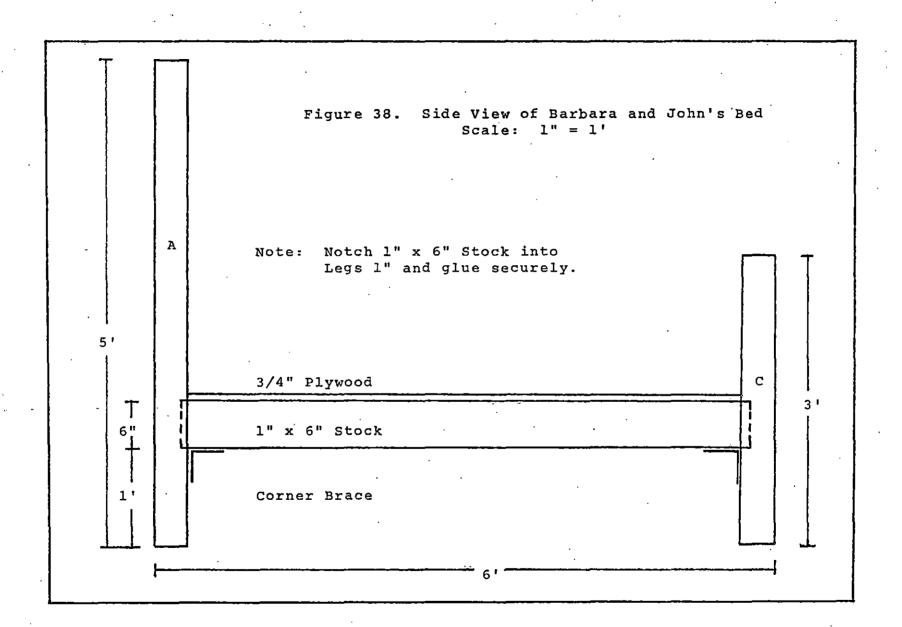
Figure 32. Top View of Platform "J"--Construction Scale: 1" = 1'

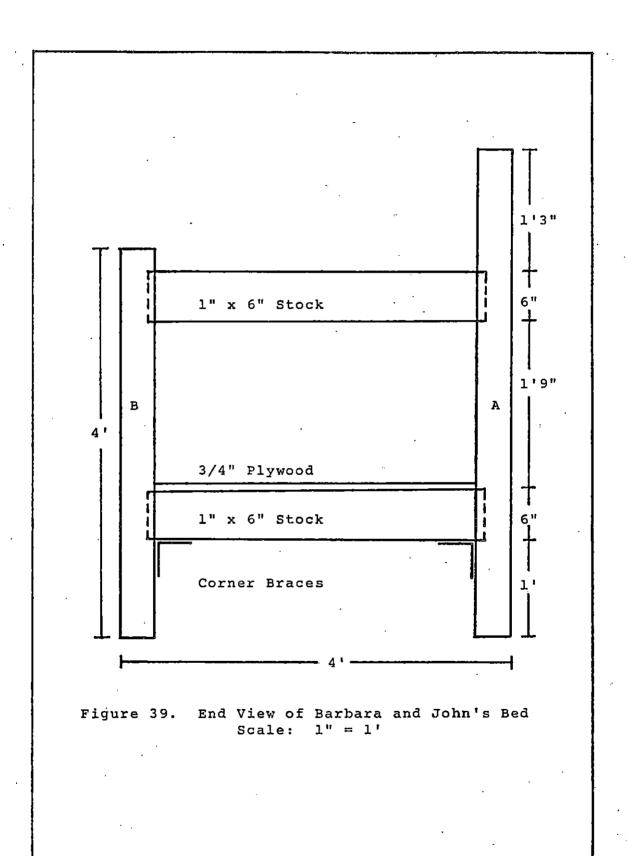












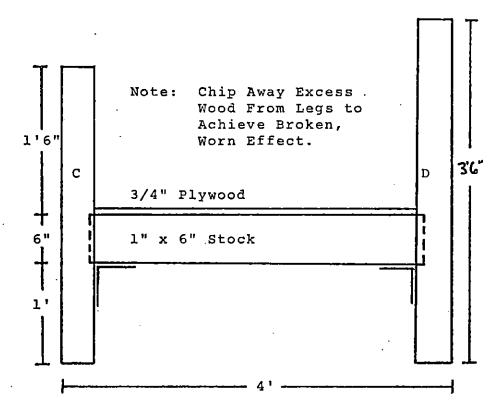


Figure 40. End View of Barbara and John's Bed Scale: 1" = 1'

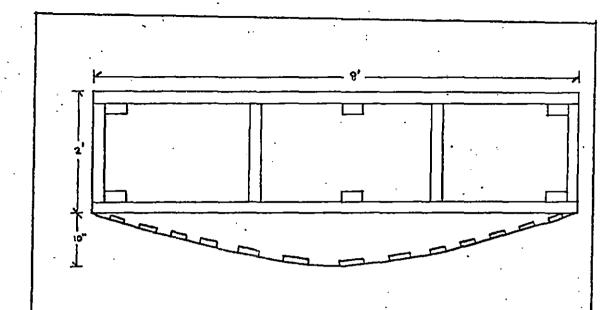


Figure 41. Top View of Church Altar Scale: 1" = 1'

NOTE: MAKE FROM ROLLED CHICKEN WIRE AND

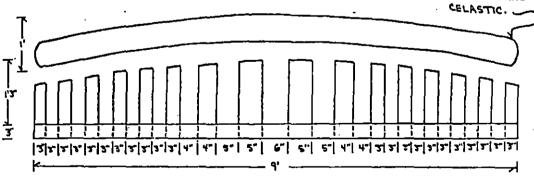


Figure 42. Front View of Church Altar Scale: 1" = 1'

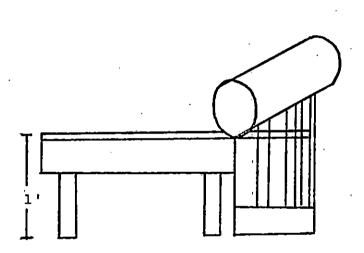
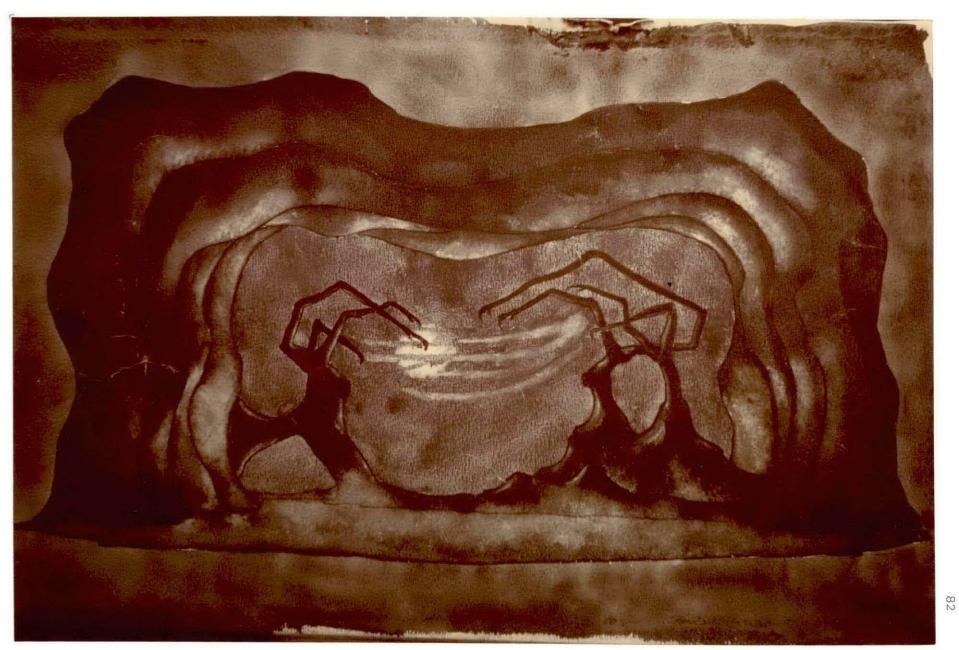


Figure 43. Side View of Church Altar Scale: 1" = 1'

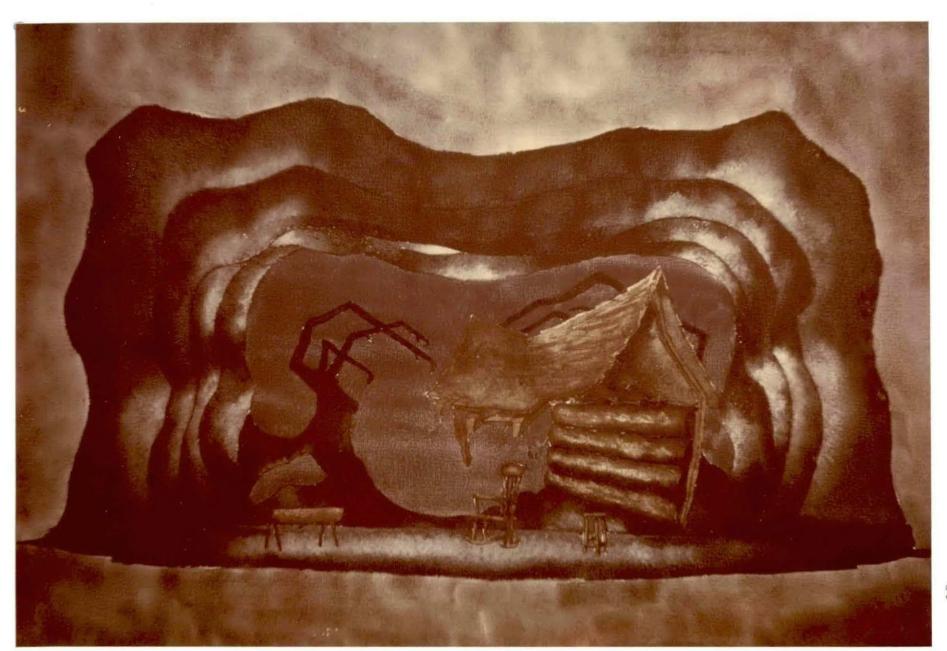
APPENDIX II--COLOR PLATES

Photograph of Rendering of Act I Scene 1



Photograph of Rendering of Act I Scene 2







Photograph of Rendering of Act II Scene 1



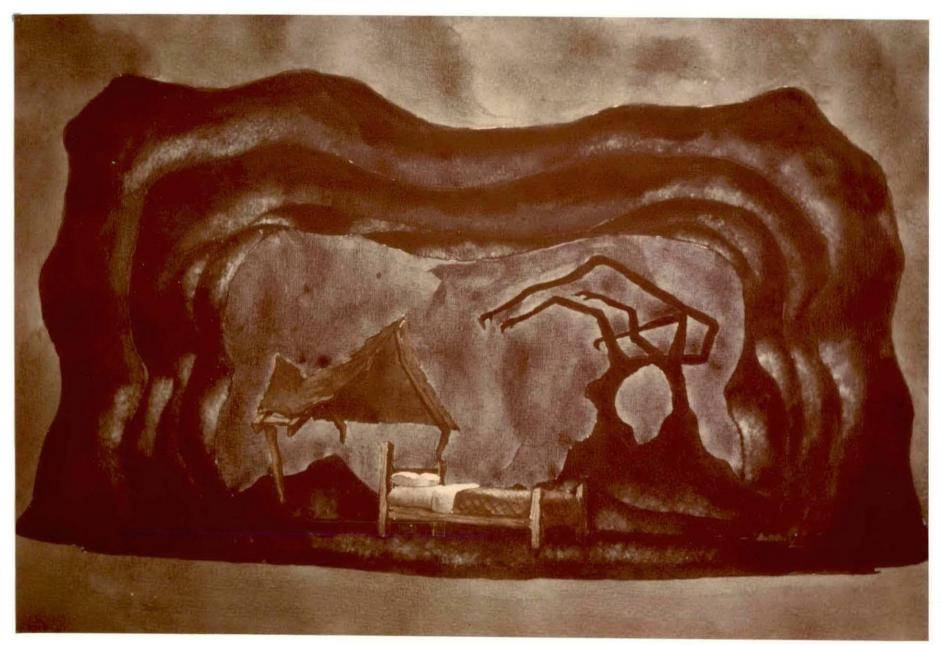








Figure 10 -

Photograph of Actual Setting of Act I Scene 3



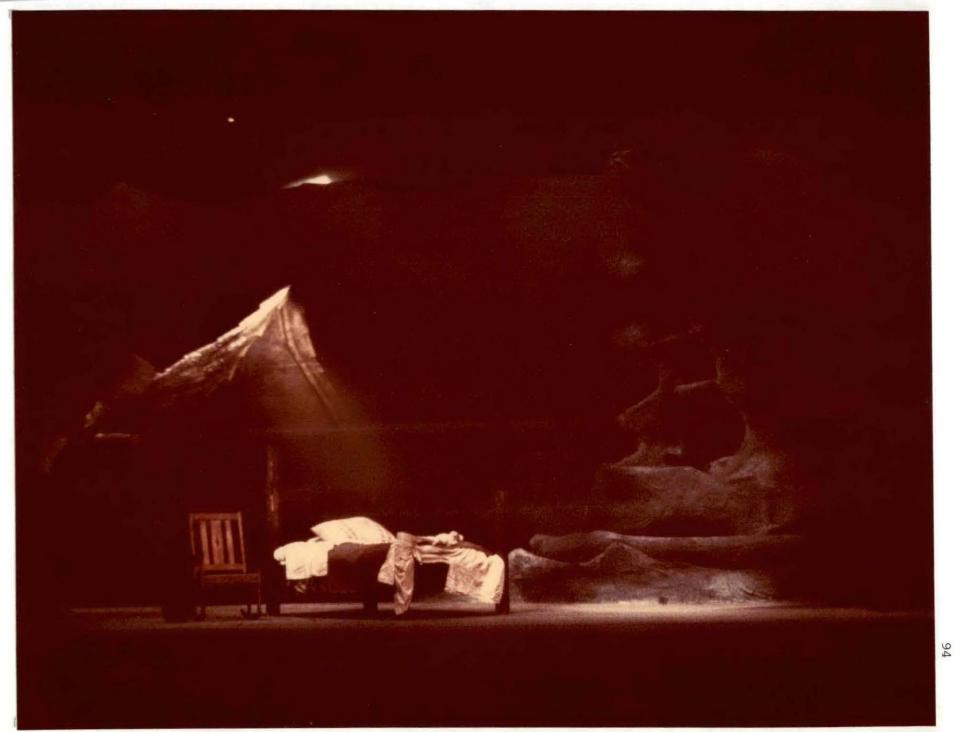




Photograph of Actual Setting of Act II Scene 1



Photograph of Actual Setting of Act II Scene 2



Photograph of Actual Setting of Act II Scene 4

