

# Design/ Build

## Thoreau cabin

LIZA CRUZE

**“If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.”**

*- Henry David Thoreau, Walden*



privacy\_

**Thoreau was the quintessential champion of solitude and is exceptionally quotable on the topic of privacy:**

**“I find it wholesome to be alone the greater part of the time. To be in company, even with the best, is soon wearisome and dissipating. I love to be alone. I never found the companion that was so companionable as solitude.”**

**“I had three chairs in my house; one for solitude, two for friendship, three for society.**

**“Nothing makes the earth seem so spacious as to have friends at a distance; they make the latitudes and longitudes.”**

**“I would rather sit on a pumpkin, and have it all to myself, than be crowded on a velvet cushion.”**

TOP Balloon frame house, USA, c1900  
LEFT Thoreau's cabin, Walden Pond, MA

### Background

Chatham University's Eden Hall Campus, designed by Mithun architects and completed in 2015, was conceived as a showcase of sustainable practices. It is home to the Falk School of Sustainability & Environment and serves as a living laboratory with a hands-on approach to learning that is supported by its farmland, apiary, orchard, and greenhouses. The campus is net-positive, generating more energy than it uses, and has integrated water management and treatment systems.

Eden Hall is located on 388 acres of woodlands. It has long been part of Chatham University's Master Plan to build a series of small, off-the-grid “Thoreau” cabins to offer visitors a glimpse of the direct and essential experience of the forest that Thoreau describes in Walden.

### Design/ Build

In this studio we will consider Thoreau's essay—so much of it about his own design/build experience—in today's context. Collectively, we will design a cabin to meet the high standards of sustainability set by Eden Hall. After a round of prototyping, testing, and design development, the studio will create a set of construction documents and shop drawings. Covid and funding allowing, we will begin building the cabin at mid-term, with construction continuing into the summer or fall as required.

**Co-requisite**

This studio has a nine credit co-requisite, 48-358 Cabin Building Systems, which is also open to CEE students. Its focus will be on the building systems for the cabin that is being developed in the parallel studio. Topics include energy performance (e.g. production, renewable energy systems, passive and active ways to achieve efficiency, and modeling); integrated structural and engineering systems (e.g. building envelope, water treatment and management, heating and cooling systems, and electrical and lighting systems; and sensing for monitoring and control.

The class will have a team-based format that is hands-on and lab-oriented rather than a seminar structure, and it will contribute directly to the build part of the studio.

*IMAGES opposite*  
*TOP Tham & Vindegard*  
*MIDDLE Snohetta*  
*BOTTOM Olsen Kundig*



*MWF 1.30-4.20*