

# Course in PENCIL SKETCHING

*Ernest W. Watson*

Editor Emeritus, American Artist

## BOOK 3

BOATS AND  
HARBORS



REINHOLD







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**ERNEST W. WATSON'S**  
**COURSE IN**  
**PENCIL SKETCHING**

**BOOK THREE**  
**BOATS AND HARBORS**

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## CONTENTS

	<i>Frontispiece — Sketch in Camden, Maine</i>		
4	<i>Course in Pencil Sketching</i>	25	<i>How to Use this Book</i>
6	<i>Pencils • Paper • Weather</i>	26	<i>Assignment #1</i>
9	<i>Outdoor Sketching</i>	28	<i>Assignment #2</i>
11	<i>Erasers; Size</i>	30	<i>Assignment #3</i>
13	<i>Two Contrasting Subjects</i>	32	<i>Assignment #4</i>
14	<i>Study of Rocks</i>	34	<i>Assignment #5</i>
15	<i>Fishing Dock at Port Clyde, Maine</i>	36	<i>Assignment #6</i>
16	<i>Tide Out, St. Ives, Cornwall, England</i>	40	<i>Assignment #7</i>
17	<i>From St. Ives to Maine</i>	42	<i>Assignment #8</i>
18	<i>Boats at New Harbor, Maine</i>	44	<i>Assignment #9</i>
19	<i>Lobster Processing Plant</i>	46	<i>Assignment #10</i>
20	<i>Waterfront Shack</i>	48	<i>Assignment #11</i>
21	<i>Dragger for Sale</i>	50	<i>Assignment #12</i>
22	<i>A Two-minute Sketch</i>	52	<i>Assignment #13</i>
23	<i>Subject Finished in Studio</i>	54	<i>Assignment #14</i>
24	<i>Your Sketching Assignments</i>	56	<i>Assignment #15</i>

A vertical column of pencil sketches on the left side of the page. At the top is a pulley system with a hook. Below it are several hanging vessels or containers of various shapes. Further down is a bundle of items, possibly a bundle of fabric or a bundle of tools, tied together. The sketches are done in a loose, gestural style.

## COURSE IN PENCIL SKETCHING

This is the third in a series of books that comprise my *Course in Pencil Sketching*; the first book deals with "Buildings and Streets," the second with "Trees and Landscapes."

By concentrating in this manner upon one type of subject matter at a time, I believe that two objectives will be realized. First, it is possible to be more thorough in the treatment of each classification than if all were included in a single book. Second, the production cost of these smaller books, hence their sales price, is much less than that of a larger, more inclusive text. Thus the student is enabled to choose the book that relates to his special interest, or if he wishes the complete course he will be purchasing it on the installment plan as it were. An additional advantage in these smaller books — they lie open for convenient study and thus are more practical to work from.

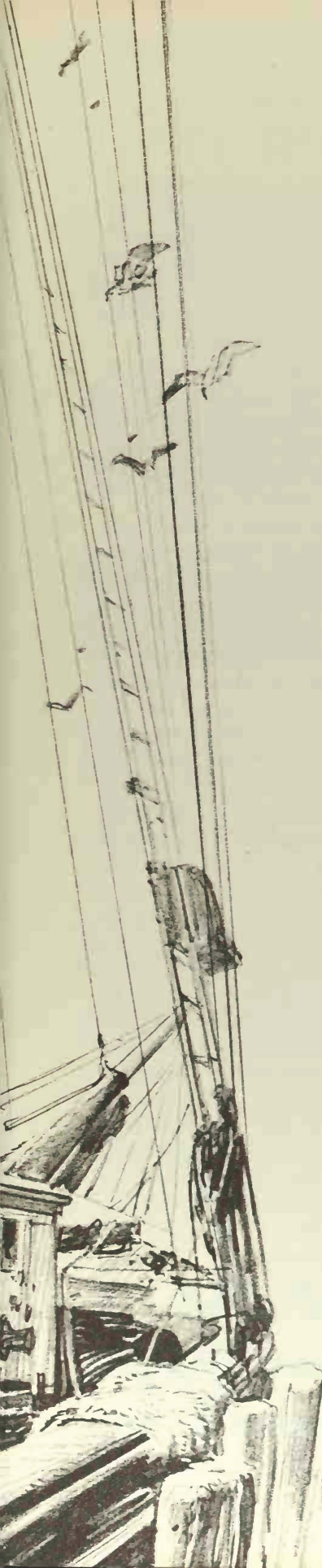
The series is appropriately called a "course" because in addition to my pencil demonstrations the student is provided with photographic subjects from which he can sketch creatively and apply the given instruction. In this book there are 15 such subjects, photographs of boats and harbor scenes by Samuel Chamberlain, internationally known artist, who has roamed much of our country and Europe, recording with his camera innumerable picturesque and historical places. From these I have selected subjects to cover as wide a variety of interest as possible.

Sketching from these photographs represents definite student assignments which afford a substantial amount of practice in pencil rendering and picture-making. This is the way I have always taught sketching at Pratt Institute and in many private classes. It is a practical way that has given splendid results. Through the medium of photography the student has access to much exciting subject matter not otherwise available. Working from photographs, to be sure, lacks some of the stimulus of sketching directly from nature, but it has its advantages too. One can learn the basic principles more conveniently and more rapidly sitting comfortably in a studio, avoiding the inconveniences and difficulties of outdoor work. Afterwards will come the desire and the need for direct sketching from nature; indeed the student is urged to supplement his indoor study with as much on-the-spot drawing as possible. Those who live on or near a coast have ample opportunity for this, and even the inland waters have good subjects, if not quite so romantic as those found in fishing ports.

In sketching from a photograph the student does not "copy" the picture; he uses it creatively as he would if he were on the spot looking at the subject. He may want to transpose values, move things around a bit, even change the sun from morning to afternoon. Seldom does he find the subject exactly as he would like it in all particulars. This will be demonstrated in many of the following pages.

The student may want to copy the *pencil drawings* in the book. This indeed is recommended for the beginner as a means of acquiring technical facility with the pencil. Such practice will prepare the student for more assurance in his creative work from photographs and outdoor subjects. There is a "knack" in using the broad-stroke method of





pencil rendering that can be learned only through considerable practice. During this period of training, one is not thinking so much of creativeness as of developing craft skill.

I want to inject here a word of caution for the student who is inclined to be impatient. Good results cannot be had in "ten easy lessons." Although the pencil is as simple an art tool as there is, it does take considerable effort to get the most out of it. Of course the more drawings you do, the quicker mastery will come. Consider even your failures as progress, because, as in all learning, we have to make mistakes in order to go forward. And keep all your drawings. It is always encouraging to look back and see how much improvement has been made.

One of the first things to learn about sketching is that its whole purpose is to make drawings that are *interesting* whether or not they are faithful to the subject. We may take the greatest liberties with the subject if by so doing we bring home a fascinating sketch. What will insure *that* is not facsimile rendering, but the *touch* which one develops as confidence and skill increase. Just as the touch of a skilled pianist accounts for spirited rendering of a musical composition, so the inspired touch of a pencil makes even an ordinary subject sparkle with vitality. It is largely a matter of line, which can be alive when it is spontaneous.

There are many ways of handling the pencil. Each artist has his own touch, his own mannerisms. His work becomes so characteristic that it is easily identified. So the techniques I have developed are personal. However, the broad-stroke method which I usually — though not always by any means — employ is common enough among pencil artists. I have found through much experience that it is more practical to use my own drawings as models rather than those by other illustrators. If this were a larger volume I would have liked to include work by others; but that would have made it more costly. I recommend that students study drawings by others when possible. And I am not fearful that my students will merely copy my individual technique. When they have acquired facility in handling the pencil, their own characteristics will emerge and their work will be quite different from that of their teacher.

There is much to commend the pencil as a sketching medium. Its great convenience is obvious; a handful of pencils and a few sheets of paper are all one needs to take on a sketching trip. More important is the special discipline that the pencil imposes upon the artist. Because with his pencil he simply cannot *copy* the subject's values, he is forced to become creative — recognizing the essence of the subject's charm and rendering it with discretion and resourcefulness. The pencil is a shorthand medium, best suited for light, spontaneous recording.

Now the main difference between studying with me, personally, and learning through this printed instruction is in the opportunity for criticism afforded by class instruction. This difference is not as important as it might seem. The student who diligently pursues the lessons in this text soon becomes his own critic. By comparing his own work with the pencil demonstrations, he cannot fail to discover his own mistakes, and, through more practice, he can correct them.

## PENCIL • PAPER • WEATHER

The diagrams on the opposite page demonstrate what can be expected of different degrees of pencil leads in producing dark, medium and light tones on papers having any amount of "tooth," that is, a degree of roughness, such as Strathmore *Alexis* on which the diagrams were made. Most pencil papers have such a tooth.

On practically all papers the soft leads (5B, 6B, 7B) are needed for the darkest tones. Only on a clay-coated paper like *Video*, which has a surface suggestive of extremely fine sandpaper, will the harder leads produce black and very dark tones. However, as is demonstrated in the small swatches at the left, leads as hard as B or even HB will in small areas — on all but smooth-surfaced papers — make nearly black strokes. So, when drawing with a B pencil on such surfaces we do not have to pick up a 6B just to make an incidental black accent.

A soft lead (6B or 7B) will produce a complete range of tone from black to light gray; but on papers having any "tooth," or roughness (papers like *Aquabee Drawing 812* and Strathmore *Alexis*) the middle and light tones will have a "grained" appearance which usually is objectionable although there are times when one may desire just that quality. On such papers the 4B produces middle tones of smoother quality but the light tones are grained. To make pleasant, smooth, light tones on such papers we have to go to HB or H leads; seldom harder. Thus, it will be seen we have to use three degrees of leads in a rendering like the detail from page 20, done on *Aquabee Drawing 812*, in order to produce tones of desired quality.

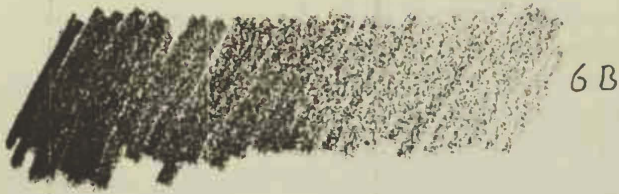
Now what has been said in the preceding paragraph applies only when using a paper having a degree of roughness like those I have mentioned. As shown in the drawings on pages 10 and 11, the situation varies radically with different papers. On some smooth surfaces a single soft pencil (5B, 6B or 7B) will give you velvet smooth tones from the darkest to even the lightest. Such a paper is *Aquabee Satin Finish*. This is the best smooth-surfaced pencil paper I have discovered. If your dealer does not have it in stock he can get it for you from the Bee Paper Company, 1-9 Joralemon Street, Brooklyn, New York. It will pay you to insist upon this paper, which comes in 11 x 14 inch pads. Or, if necessary, you can order it direct from Bee Paper Company. Don't accept something "just as good."

On *Video* paper, already mentioned, you can get splendid tonal quality with but one or two pencils; an H or even a 2H will give both jet black strokes and good, smooth light tones. This paper is sold by Arthur Brown's art supply store at 2 West 46th Street, New York, New York. It may be available in other stores. The 11 x 14 size pad is a convenient one. This is very expensive paper but it is a delightful surface to draw on, and the serious student may want to try it, especially if he wishes to scrape-out, as I did in drawings on pages 18 and 23.

Whenever the use of pencils having varying degrees of hardness is specified in my drawings, it can be assumed that the paper was a relatively rough-surfaced sheet, such as *Alexis* and *Aquabee Drawing 812*, rather than a smooth surface.



Low Zone Middle Zone High Zone



6B



4B



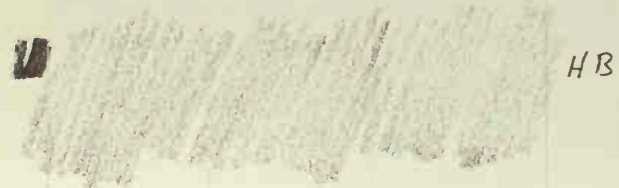
3B



2B



B

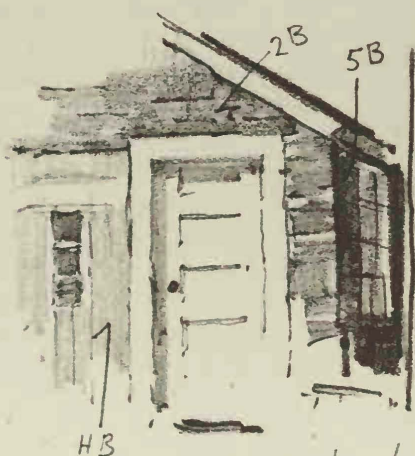
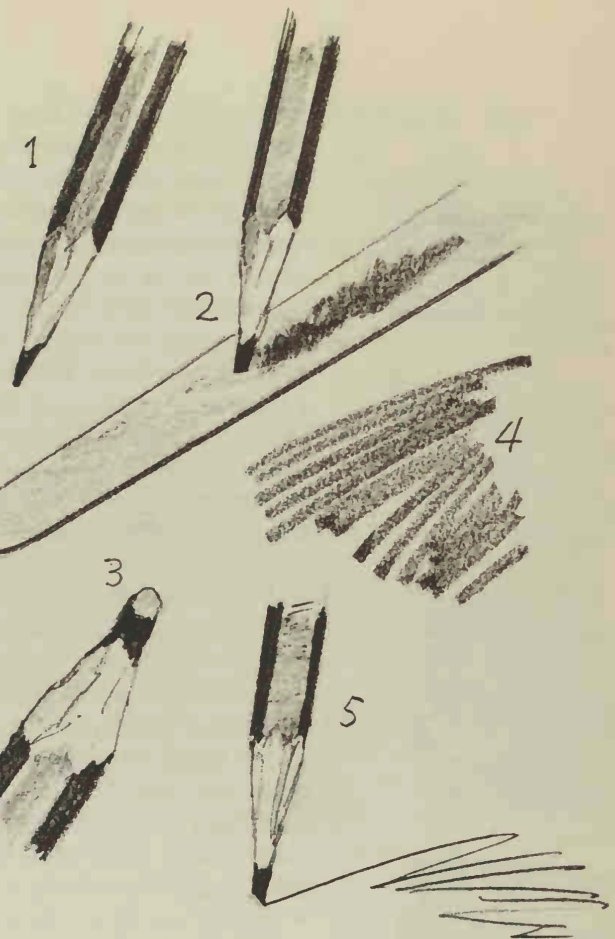


HB



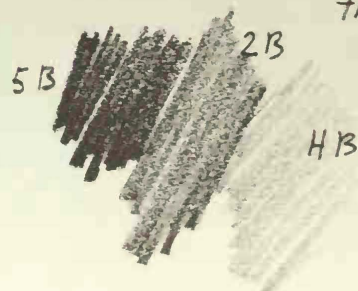
H

Low Zone Middle Zone High Zone



Detail from page

Most subjects can be rendered in three tones



It may surprise those who have not used the pencil seriously to learn what a determining factor the paper is in this medium. Indeed, to find the most responsive surfaces to work on is the pencil artist's chief problem. Good pencils, of course, are important, but the best of them will do nothing creditable on unsuitable paper. What the student should do is to get samples of as many papers as possible and experiment with them. Go to a lot of trouble about this.

Generally speaking, smooth surfaces are best, provided they are not hard surfaces. To be responsive to the pencil, the paper must have a degree of softness so that when the leads bear down on it — as they must for smooth tones — the surface “gives” a little. The pencil actually “irons out” the paper in producing a smooth tone instead of skimming lightly over its surface. This applies especially to papers that have a degree of “tooth” or roughness. *Results are greatly improved when a number of sheets of paper lie under the work sheet to give added resilience.* I have put this direction in italics to give it the importance it deserves; nothing is worse than a hard-surfaced paper or any paper lying directly on the drawing board.

How does the “weather” enter into this? In humid or rainy weather all papers absorb moisture and become softer. Then you have to use softer leads. Some papers will become so soggy that even the softest leads will not give black tones. The “Video” paper I’ve described is your best choice in such a condition. Since, when it is dry, it will give black tones with even a 2H pencil, you can see that it will stand considerable dampness without failing to respond to the softer leads.

Pencils are made in a wide range of hardness and softness. From 9H, a lead used only by draftsmen, they get progressively softer up to a 7B lead. Do not be discouraged by all these pencils; seldom will you need more than three in any one sketch, regardless of the paper surface you are using. And often, as previously stated, one will do the whole job. But you should have at hand 2H, H, HB, F, B, 2B, 3B, 4B, 5B, 6B and 7B to be prepared for the varying conditions I have been discussing.

Unfortunately, the grading of pencils by most manufacturers is far from accurate and there is no dependable standardization common to all brands: the B pencil of one brand may be equivalent to an HB or a 2B of another brand. In consequence there may be a gap in the tone scale of a certain brand that will have to be filled by a pencil of another make.

The diagrams on page 7 give some directions for sharpening the pencils for broad-stroke work. First, sharpen them with a knife rather than a pencil sharpener. Do not point the lead, leave it blunt, then, holding it at a natural writing position, rub it lightly on the fine side of an emory board, or fine sandpaper, or any rough-surface paper to give the point a flat drawing surface like that in #3 — this is not a chisel edge. Such a point will produce broad-edged strokes as in #4. That is the effect known as broad-stroke. This technique has also been called “pencil painting” because the broad, definite pencil strokes have an affinity to brush strokes.

When the pencil is thus sharpened for broad-stroke, it will also give thin, sharp lines as in #5. These thin lines are a very important factor



in rendering. Examining the drawings in this book you will see how such lines enhance the broad-stroke technique.

When you pick up a pencil thus sharpened — after having laid it down — you will want to try it on a scrap of paper at the edge of your board to be sure you are holding it at the proper angle to again produce the desired stroke.

## OUTDOOR SKETCHING

In sketching outdoors one naturally prefers to get along with a single soft pencil. The student has enough difficulty at first in on-the-spot drawing, without having to think of different grades of pencils. However, one does become accustomed to a handful of pencils with practice and it is advisable to do so because one cannot always have at hand the surface that is ideal for single pencil work. Indeed, most of my own sketching over many years has been on the rougher stock. I have a system of notching the ends of my pencils for ready identification. I will not make any suggestions as to notching because everyone will devise a system of his own. When you get used to handling several pencils in sketching, there is no awkwardness about it at all.

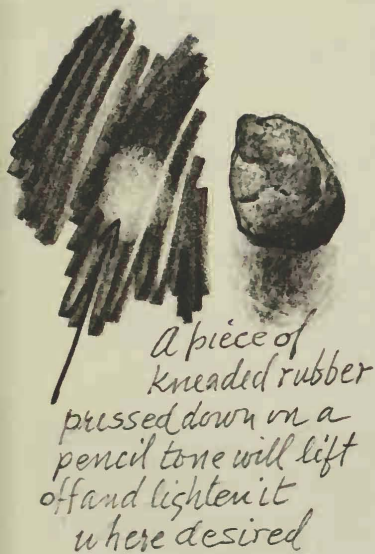
You will prefer to sketch on a sunny day because of the clear patterns of sunlight and shadow. However, there is likely to be difficulty in finding a place in the shade to draw. So often the best position from the standpoint of the picture is right out in the sun. The glare of sunlight on white paper is trying on the eyes and it interferes with values. But it is not impossible; by holding the board at an oblique angle to the sun, glare is avoided and one can work in relative comfort. The sketch of Camden Harbor, on page 2, was done under these conditions.

A small portfolio that carries your paper serves also as a drawing board — the paper being secured by two large rubber bands.

Curious spectators may sometimes be a nuisance; they make most artists uncomfortable as they stand at one's shoulder, perhaps asking questions. One way to avoid them is to turn the drawing face down as the spectator approaches and merely gaze at one's subject. That leaves nothing for him to do but pass on.

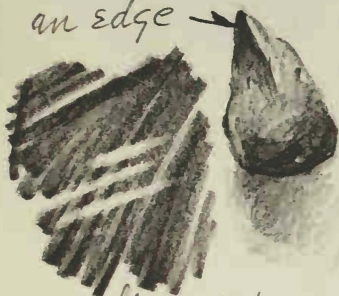
I first carefully lay-out the essential composition and the large outlines of forms with a very light line, thus leaving me free of drawing problems when I begin tonal work. In rendering I like to lay-in black tones first. This gives the drawing vitality to start with, and the lighter tones can be better related when this strongest note has been established.

To keep drawings from smearing until you get home, fasten another sheet of paper to them with paper clips or masking tape. Later, if desired, they can be "fixed" with one of the many plastic spray fixatifs on the market. I prefer not to use fixatif at all because in time it does alter, if only slightly, the pencil tones; despite all claims to the contrary it also turns yellow after a while. I find that matting drawings on a heavy board is good protection because the raised surface of the matt prevents smearing.



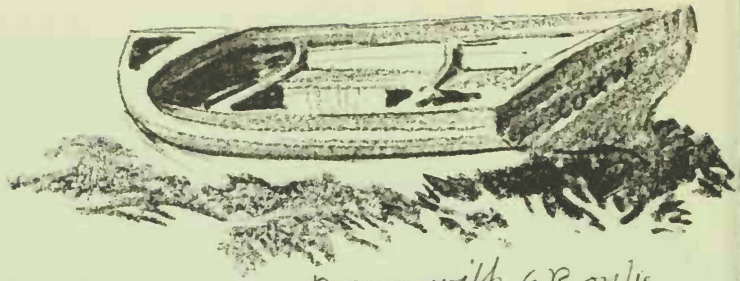
*A piece of kneaded rubber pressed down on a pencil tone will lift off and lighten it where desired*

*When pinched to an edge*



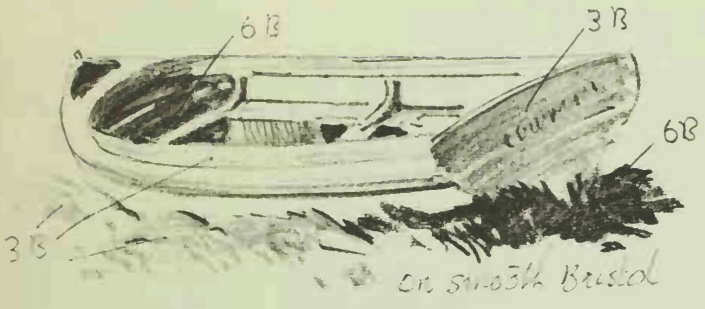
*it will cut light strokes into the tone*

1



Drawn with 6B only  
on a rough surface

2



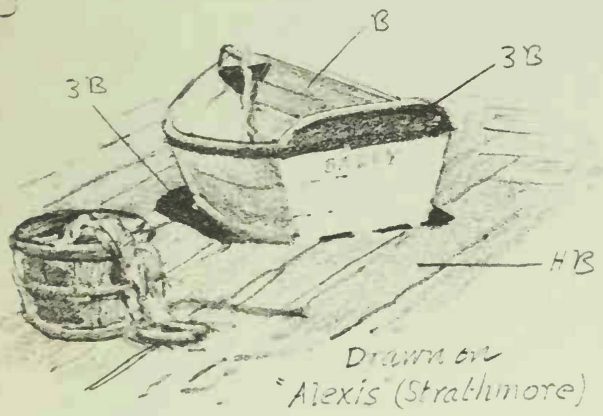
on smooth Bristol

4



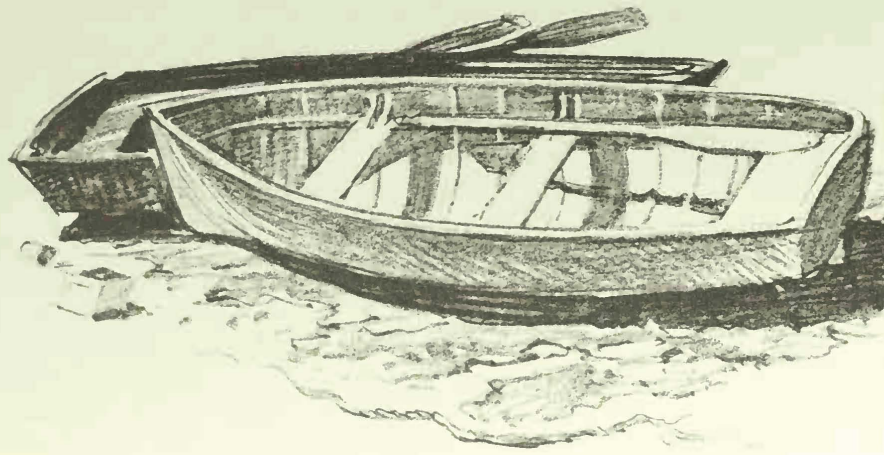
6B  
on  
Reverse side  
of Video

3

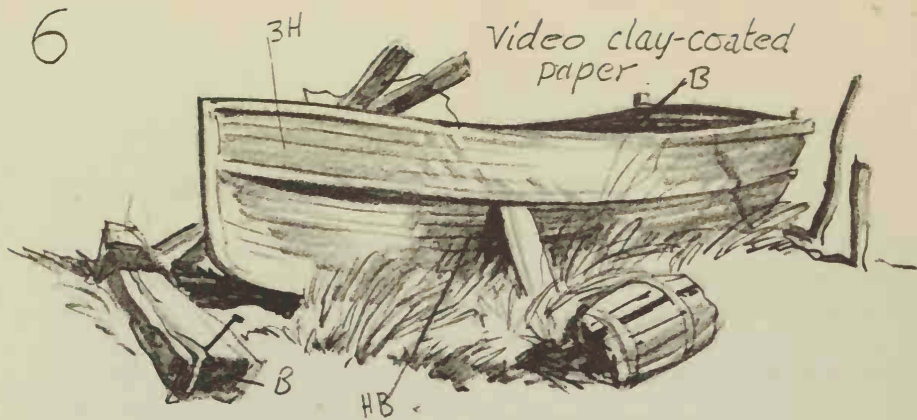


Drawn on  
"Alexis" (Strathmore)

5



2H  
Video  
clay-coated



## ERASERS

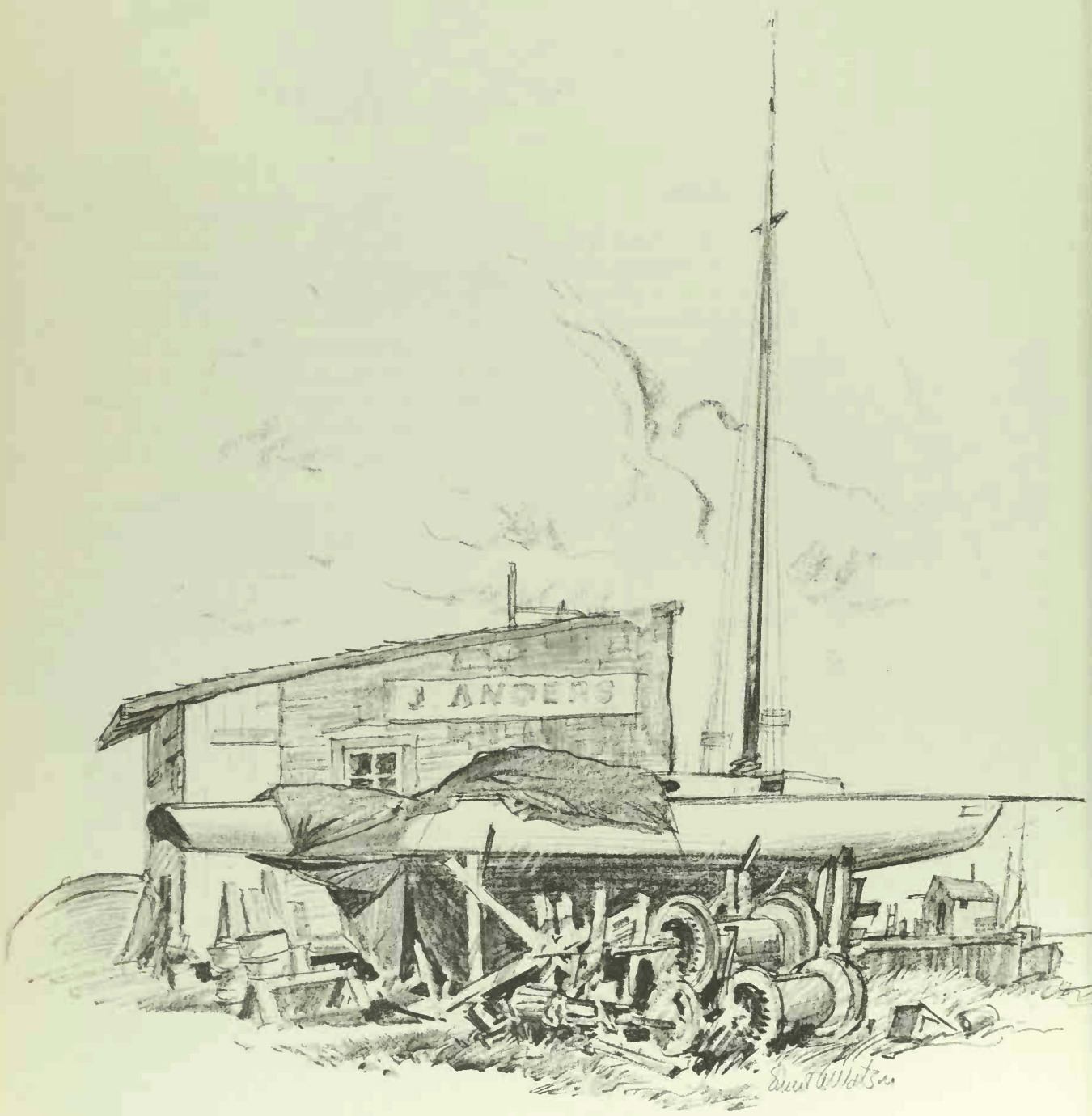
Yes, the eraser is a tool, too; not so much for erasing errors as for a creative adjunct to the pencil. I refer now to the kneaded rubber. Unlike most erasers, it "lifts" the pencil tones without smearing them. Kneaded erasers come in rectangular blocks. Cut or tear off a piece the size of the end of your thumb and knead it between thumb and fingers until it becomes soft and pliable. When in this condition, a tone may be lightened with it by pressing down lightly upon the area and lifting up without rubbing. Pinch it to a fairly sharp edge and it will, by gentle rubbing, take out white areas that might inadvertently have been covered.

A drawing that needs a lot of *correction* by erasure is not likely to end up successfully. It is better to start over than to labor too long over any drawing.

## SIZE

What is the natural size for a pencil drawing? There is no minimum size; a sketch two inches square can be satisfying and charming in a jewel-like way. A pencil drawing eight or ten inches in either dimension is about as large as I recommend; a little smaller is better. Most of my drawings printed in this book are reproduced at approximately the size of the originals. Some are reduced a trifle. When I began studying the pencil years ago, I made the mistake of working too large, and my progress was slower than it should have been. Remember that your pencil point, even at its broadest, is a relatively small tool for covering a large area. A very large drawing becomes a laborious operation. Another thing—and this is important—the width of the pencil strokes, related to the entire drawing, is pleasanter when the drawing is not too large.

Some artists are temperamentally inclined to work small, others to work large, and this personal predisposition should be considered. And, of course, when one becomes expert with the pencil he can draw in a very large scale, as do architectural renderers whose drawings have to be large enough to illustrate buildings in considerable detail. But even if the student in this course intends to become a renderer, he will be well-advised to make his student drawings relatively small. When a degree of technical mastery has been achieved in smaller scale, it will not be difficult to apply it to large renderings.





## TWO CONTRASTING SUBJECTS

The sketch on the opposite page, made in Camden, Maine, started with only the catboat and rusting winches in the foreground. Behind was a modern, uninteresting shed and at the right was a hill. I substituted the weathered shack and the distant pier with the lobster boat to give a more exciting setting. The drawing was made on clay-coated *Video* paper, with a 2H and an HB pencil.

The drawing below, made in the Charleston, South Carolina, harbor, was drawn with a 6B pencil on *Aquabee Satin Finish*. The water below the ship and dock structure was dark with their reflections, an effect that would not be rendered easily with the pencil and would certainly not improve the composition. The thing to do here, I thought, was to suggest the reflections without actually massing them in.

The treatment of water is indeed one of the interesting problems you will have to solve in your assignments on the following pages, and when you sketch from nature. More often than not water is very dark in value, as it was in this subject. Since the relatively small point of a pencil, even at its broadest stroke, does not render large dark areas pleasantly, you have to find ways to handle water suggestively. I have indicated some of these methods in many of the drawings in this book.





## **STUDY OF ROCKS**

Rocks on the seacoast make fascinating subjects. Eroded into strange shapes and tossed about by stormy seas, they challenge the illustrative skill of the pencil artist. They have to be drawn carefully in order to portray their character.

This drawing was made on *Aquabee Satin Finish* with 6B and 5B pencils.

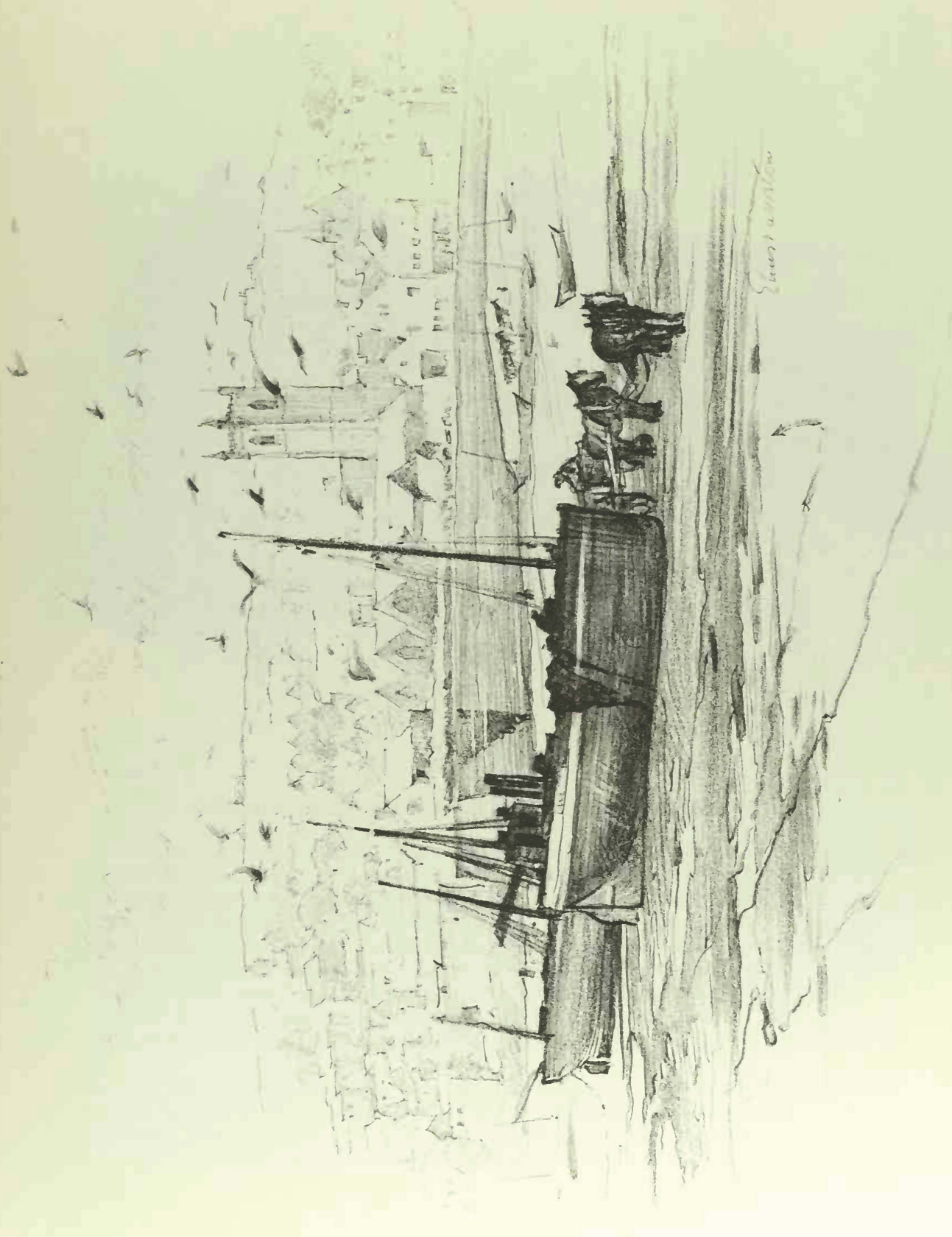
Rocks have to be rendered with considerable vigor and yet they present delicacies too. They combine the jagged character of split and broken forms with rounded shapes and surfaces worn smooth by the relentless motion of waves.



### **FISHING DOCK AT PORT CLYDE, MAINE**

Fishing docks usually are ready-made subjects for the pencil artist. The litter of lobster traps, crates, barrels, lumber and miscellaneous junk piled in front of the dark fish house on this Port Clyde dock gives plenty of opportunity for an inviting play of light and shade, and detail interest. In sketching such stuff we do not need to understand exactly what it is we are drawing: a mysterious conglomeration of light-and-dark shapes is sufficiently illustrative when partly hidden by enough well-defined objects. For example, in this sketch we can distinguish only the lobster traps, two or three barrels and a bucket or two.

The wavy planks of the dock add rhythmic flowing lines to the composition. Note how I have let the light "eat-out" their detail in the background. The sharp lines indicating the planks give a pleasing technical contrast to the broad strokes of the tonal areas.



East Looe

Tide Out, St. Ives, Cornwall, England



## FROM ST. IVES TO MAINE

*Tide Out, St. Ives* is the harbor of the famous St. Ives in Cornwall, England, which was the destination of the "man with seven wives" in the well-known nursery rhyme. When the tide is out, fishing boats are left stranded on the sands as in my sketch, which was made on the spot several years ago. I reproduce it here because I think it shows quite successfully how a distant village might be treated. Comparison with the Camden, Maine, sketch on page 2 is interesting; in the former, the buildings are barely suggested with delicate line, while here we see them indicated by light tone as well as line. This more tonal treatment is appropriate in the St. Ives subject because it supports the very dark massing of the foreground boats. Furthermore the buildings in strong sunlight offered definite shadow shapes that make a pleasing pattern.

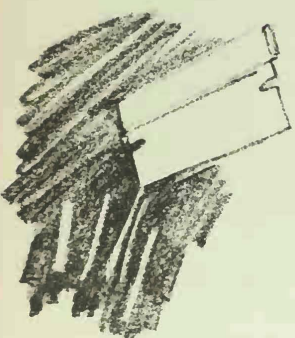
The New Harbor, Maine, subject presented quite a different problem. The landscape across the bay was rather uninteresting so I substituted an entirely different bit of scenery that was simpler and made a more agreeable background for the fishing shacks and dock.



## BOATS AT NEW HARBOR, MAINE

This small sketch done at New Harbor, Maine, is only slightly reduced from the original drawing. It is not the kind of treatment one would want for a large sketch; to render that dark tree mass in a large area would be laborious. First, the boats were carefully drawn with a sharp point, and then the dark, tree mass was brought down to their outlines. The masts and other light objects that project into the dark area of the foliage were scraped out with the corner of a sharp razor blade. This was possible because the drawing was on clay-coated paper.

I call special attention to the treatment of the water. Note that the reflections, rendered with a rather light tone, are given emphasis by outlining with a very sharp point; this I think enhances their pattern interest. Actually the reflections seemed much darker than I made them, but I felt that the lighter treatment more successfully suggested the gentle play of sunlight on the undulating water.





### **FISH PROCESSING PLANT**

This sketch was made on *Aquabee Satin Finish* paper with a single soft lead (6B). First I drew the large shed with its stone pier — after outlining the posts in the foreground which break across its dark shadow mass. The sun from the right illuminated the top of the stone pier, an important effect I was careful to preserve. Note how small accents of white throughout all the dark areas are a factor in keeping the sketch alive. Actually those wood piles that lean against the stone were not light. Furthermore the long timbers that lie along the bank in the immediate foreground were quite dark. When working with the pencil — instead of with color — we have to make translations of this sort. The rowboat that lies in the foreground fills a space that was quite empty in the subject itself.

The lobster traps are casually suggested: I felt that if meticulously drawn they would command too much foreground attention.

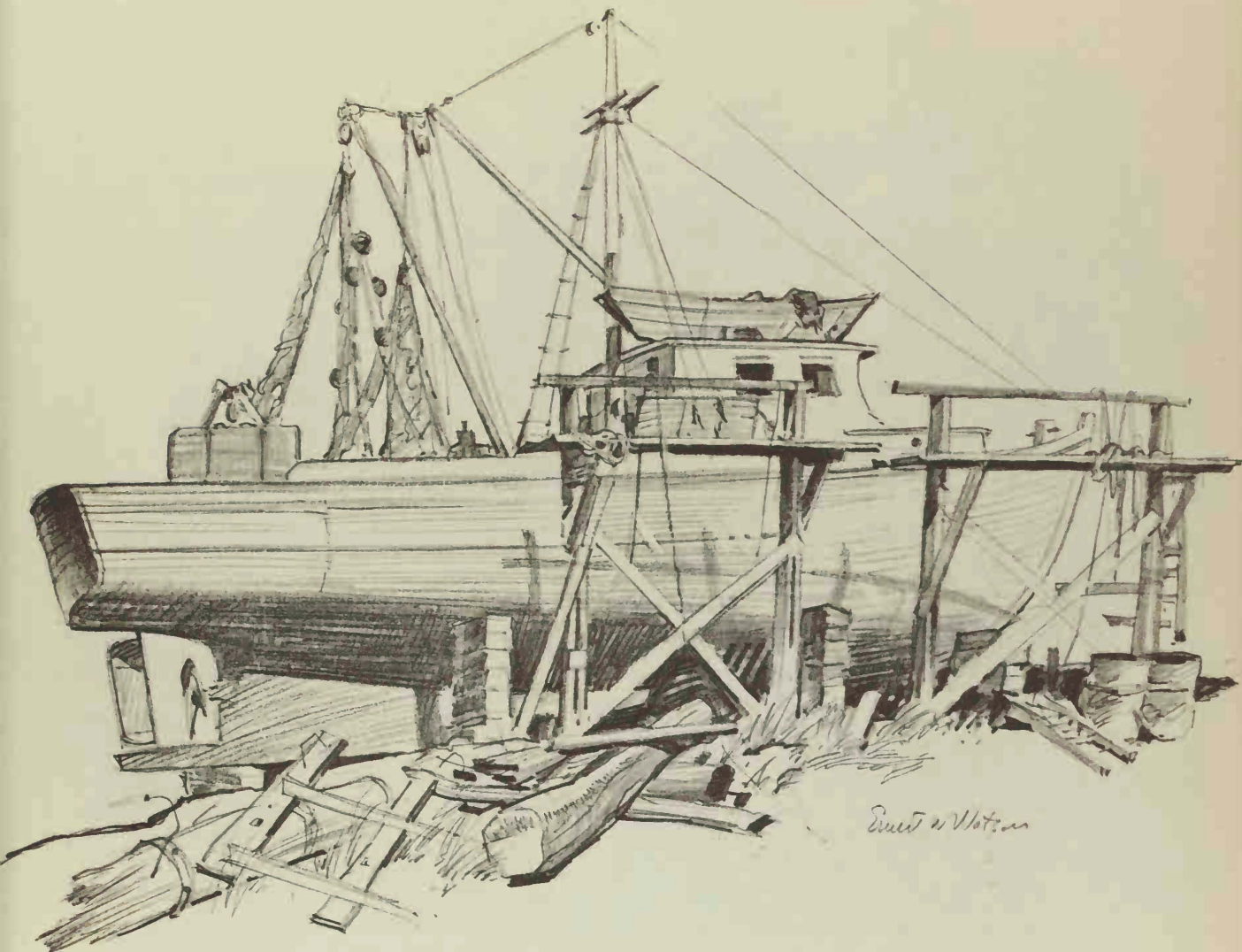


## WATERFRONT SHACK

When I saw this subject the sunlight came from the right instead of the left. Reversing the effect, I felt that the composition would be better and it would be possible to make the front of that old shack more interesting. The barge rotting at the pier would be a dark mass in either event. The foreground was partly improvised; I added the logs and the broken crate. The clapboard shack was in a state of semi-decay. Note the variety of pencil strokes to simulate this effect, and the little white accents throughout. I am going to call your attention to what seems a very minor technical trick: it is the accenting, with sharp thin lines, of tonal passages around small white areas as pointed out in the sketch at the left. Of course this can be overdone but, judiciously used, the device sharpens the sketch and keeps it sparkling.

Sharp  
lines for  
accent





### **DRAGGER FOR SALE**

A “dragger” is a craft that drags for fish with such nets as you see suspended from the boom in my sketch. I was told that this boat, fully equipped, was shored-up at the basin awaiting a purchaser — \$15,000 asking price.

My drawing was made on a fine clear day when sunshine and shadow provided ideal sketching conditions. All there was to do here was to produce a literal transcript of what was before me. I worked on a smooth-surface bristol board with 6B, 3B and B pencils. The latter, sharpened to a point, was used for those plank lines on the lighted side of the hull and, of course, for the rigging. Needless to say, I made a meticulous line drawing of the entire structure before beginning to render it. The original, nine inches long, took two hours to complete.



## **A TWO-MINUTE SKETCH**

There are times and occasions when it is not convenient, even impossible, to sit down to render a subject that you very much want to add to your portfolio of sketches. The ability to carry it home with you depends upon your skill in memorizing. The student soon discovers that a rapid sketch supplies the necessary framework for a more or less detailed memory of the object. The explanation is simple; even in such a rapid sketch, the searching eye encompasses nearly every detail and records it on the mental "film." This impression does not have the permanency of a camera film; it fades rather quickly, but is likely to remain clear for a day or two.

I suggest the rapid sketch as a discipline which will certainly pay off many times in future work.

My rapid sketch may seem to record little enough detail from which to make the detailed drawing. In this particular instance I was aided by a fairly good knowledge of tug boat construction, having drawn many such craft in New York harbor.

This boat is the wreck of an old ocean-going tug in a cove at South Bristol, Maine, where it had been towed to serve a useful purpose even in death. Warped into position across a neck of tidal water and sunk, it serves as a sort of dam, protecting a series of lobster pounds to the right of the pilings in my sketch.

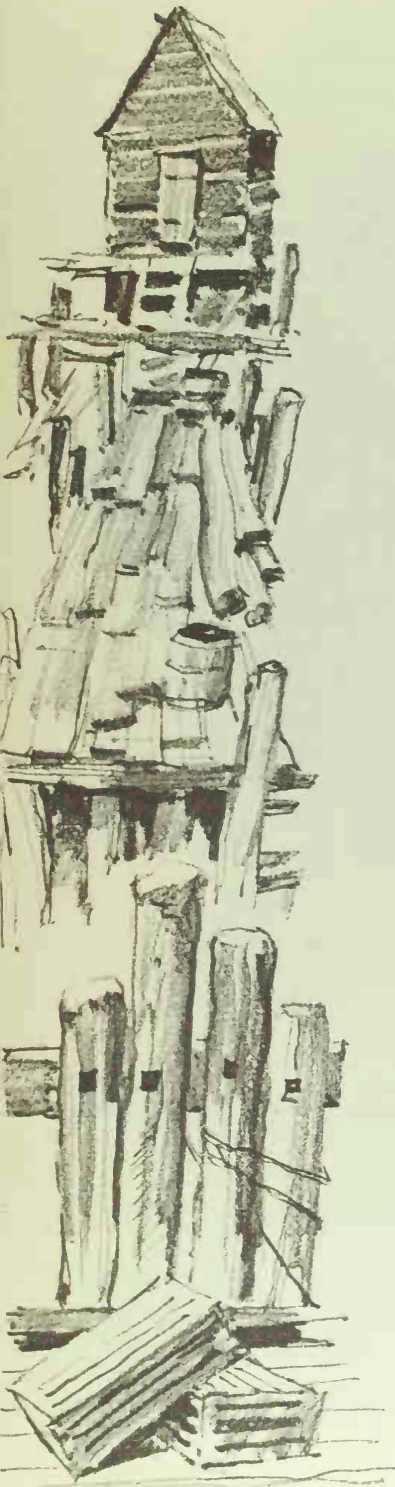
The treatment of a wooded hillside, especially when it serves as a backdrop, calls for some artifice. Note that I tried to make it interesting by creating a pattern of white shapes to break up an otherwise monotonous foliage mass.



*An Ocean-going Tugboat in its Last Anchorage*

### **SUBJECT FINISHED IN STUDIO**

The clay-coated paper used here made possible the white scraped-out details such as the lights on window frames and those diagonal white streaks across the boat under the pilothouse. Those are intended to give atmospheric effect, perhaps hinting at sun's rays. The reproduction is the same size as the original drawing.



## YOUR SKETCHING ASSIGNMENTS

The latter part of this book is devoted entirely to student assignments; photographs of stimulating subjects from which one can sketch as though on the spot where the pictures were taken. The pictures were carefully selected to present as many typical scenes and objects as possible and to involve a great variety of problems in composition and rendering.

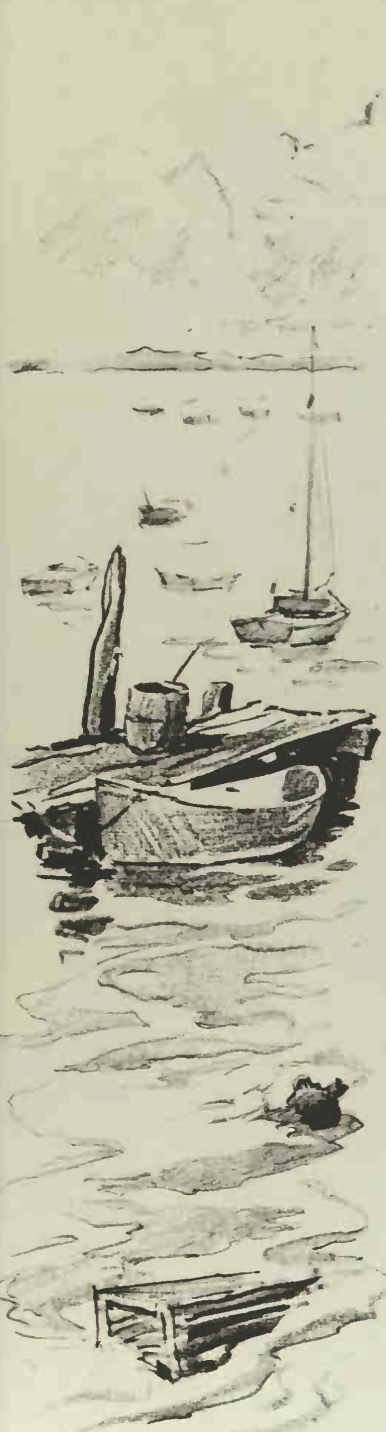
On the pages opposite the photographs, I have made such suggestions with my own pencil as I consider helpful in the study of the particular subjects. Some of these are hints on composition, others are on rendering.

As I pointed out in my introductory remarks on pages 4 and 5, the student is expected to use these photographs creatively rather than to "copy" them. The pencil artist should be inventive and resourceful rather than slavishly imitative. Several different sketches might be made from each subject, experimenting with composition, light-and-shade effects and technique. It is not often that the subject is ready-made for the artist. Usually he has to do some scene shifting and improvising. Turn, for example, to the boats on page 56. The boats themselves compose satisfactorily, but the shed roof over the dock is awkward and distracting. I would remove the roof entirely to permit the pilothouse of the foremost boat to silhouette in an interesting way against a light background. I would also omit that black post, or pile, which sticks up at the side of the pilothouse — possibly bring it forward on the pier to clear the boat entirely. In such a position it may well be a valuable design feature.

Turn to page 42. That picture presents a problem. The *Leonard A* in the foreground is interesting in itself, but I think a sketch of the scene would be better without it. When it is removed, perhaps one of those rowboats should be pushed into the water for foreground interest. Or simply insert one or two rowboats taken from the photograph on page 36. I think that the composition of a sketch from the page 42 subject needs an extension of interest at the right of the shack. Complete the drawing of the boat that is only partly visible in the photograph, or add another from some other picture.

These comments, I hope, represent what I have in mind when I ask the student to be creative and resourceful in using the assignment pictures. So try to think of yourself as out of doors, unconfined by the edge of the photograph from which you are working. The other photographs supply objects and effects such as you might see if you were sketching from nature. Try to imagine what the scene would look like at another time of day when the shadows and light would be reversed. In other words *create* rather than *copy*.

All mediums have their limitations. The pencil student soon learns what his pencil will and will not do. He will discover, for example, that he cannot illustrate water tonally as in the photograph, and as a



painter can do with color. The water in the picture on page 36 is very dark. To try to copy that effect in pencil tone would give a dismal effect. Here and there in the book I've given suggestions for solving that kind of problem. Turn, for example, to the drawing of the harbor at Camden, Maine, on page 2. In the subject itself the reflections of boat and dock darkened the entire area of water in the foreground. To simulate that effect would not only have been forcing the medium, it would have been poor composition.

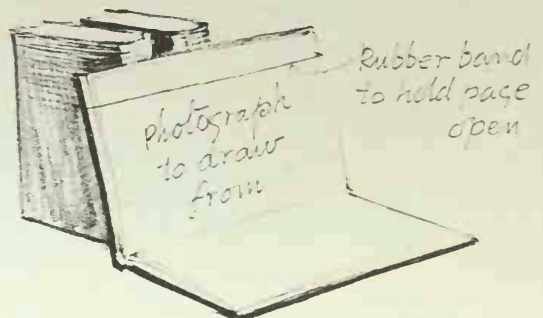
This same Camden sketch points to another limitation. I refer to the distance which the painter would represent in tone and color. As a matter of fact it was quite dark. All the pencil can do with such a distant effect is to indicate it very lightly, usually in line but perhaps with some light tone. Compare the Camden sketch with "Tide Out, St. Ives" (page 16) in this connection.

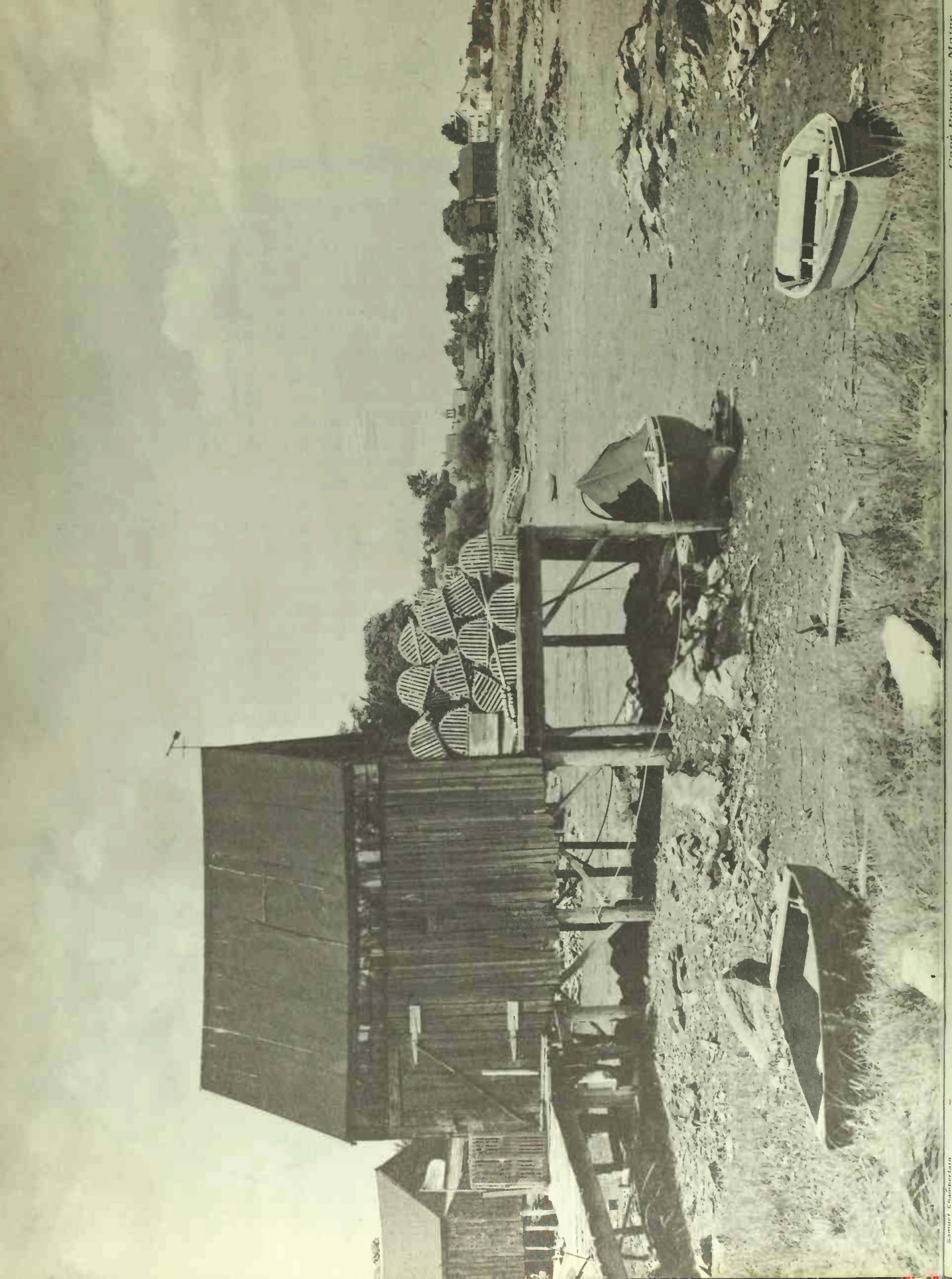
You will discover that sky is just as impossible to illustrate tonally as is water. While some very light tone may successfully indicate cloud shadows, line often will be found to be more satisfactory as a means of indicating clouds.

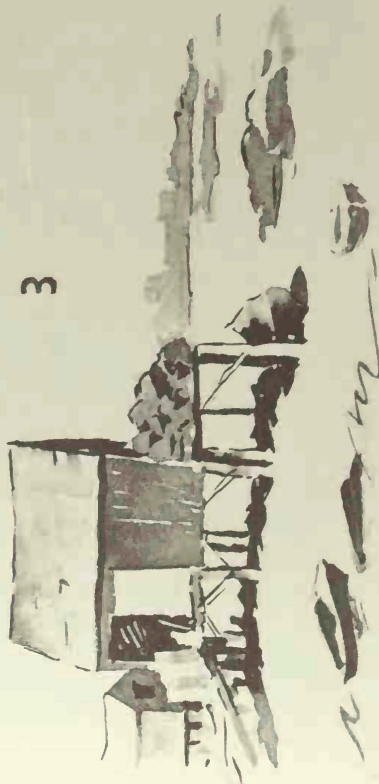
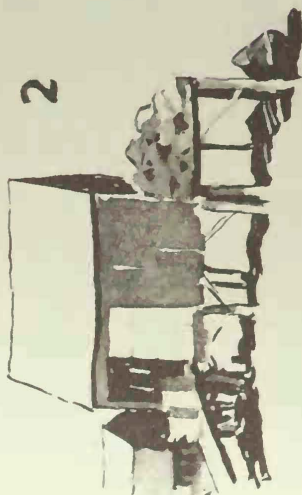
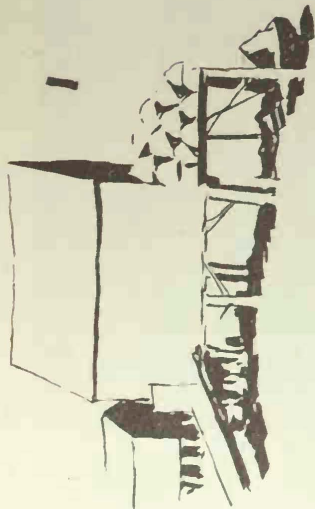
The student will note that in none of my drawings have I worked within a rectangle as the painter would do. Each sketch is a vignette without a surrounding border. I do not condemn the practice of working to a border line, but I do think that the vignette is more interesting and that it suggests a continuation of the subject on all sides indefinitely. It invites the imagination to conceive of the entire setting of which the sketch is a part and it forces the artist to a more creative attitude toward the subject.

#### *How to Use this Book*

The assignment photographs are printed on the page so that the book has to be turned, in viewing them. There are two good reasons for this. First of all they can be larger when placed on the page this way; secondly, they are more convenient to draw from than if they were placed across the page's narrow dimension. The accompanying sketch demonstrates this, I think. These small books stay open quite readily but, if necessary, a rubber band will hold the desired page in position.

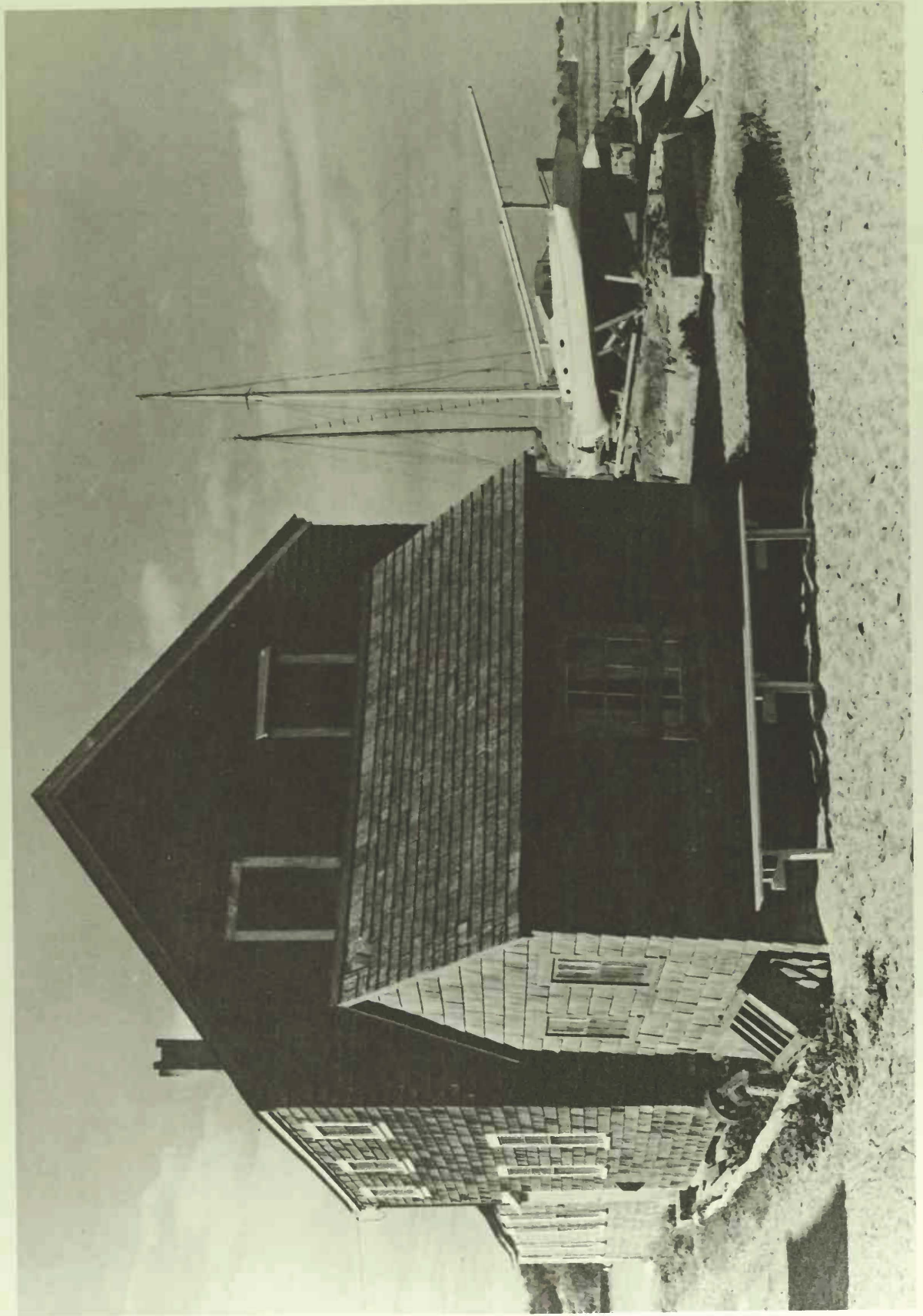






### ASSIGNMENT 1

This is an almost ready-made subject. It composes naturally and needs only the artist's good selective judgment. The diagrams are made in wash, the better to encourage thinking of picture composition in terms of rather simple, flat tones. First we usually consider what shadow pattern alone will do for us. Brushing in the shadows with a solid dark gray, we find that we already have a good compositional basis. In sketch #2 we add an intermediate tone, opening the door in order to break up an otherwise monotonous rectangle of tone. In sketch #3 the roof is treated with a broken light tone to suggest old shingles, a more interesting roof than the tar paper — an artist's license. Thus we have altered the tonal scheme of the subject to suit a more agreeable arrangement for the pencil rendering. Now this is not the only way to treat this subject; indeed I suggest that the student try as many other devices as he can conceive. For instance, dark roof, lighter side wall — even try matching the values of the photograph. The pencil sketch is reproduced at exact size of the original. It is too small to do more than indicate in a general way how I would be likely to render this subject. Note that I have omitted the foliage that appears over the lobster traps; it is a confusing element. See other drawings in the book for suggestions for rendering details.



Samuel Chamberlain

*View at Chatham, Massachusetts*

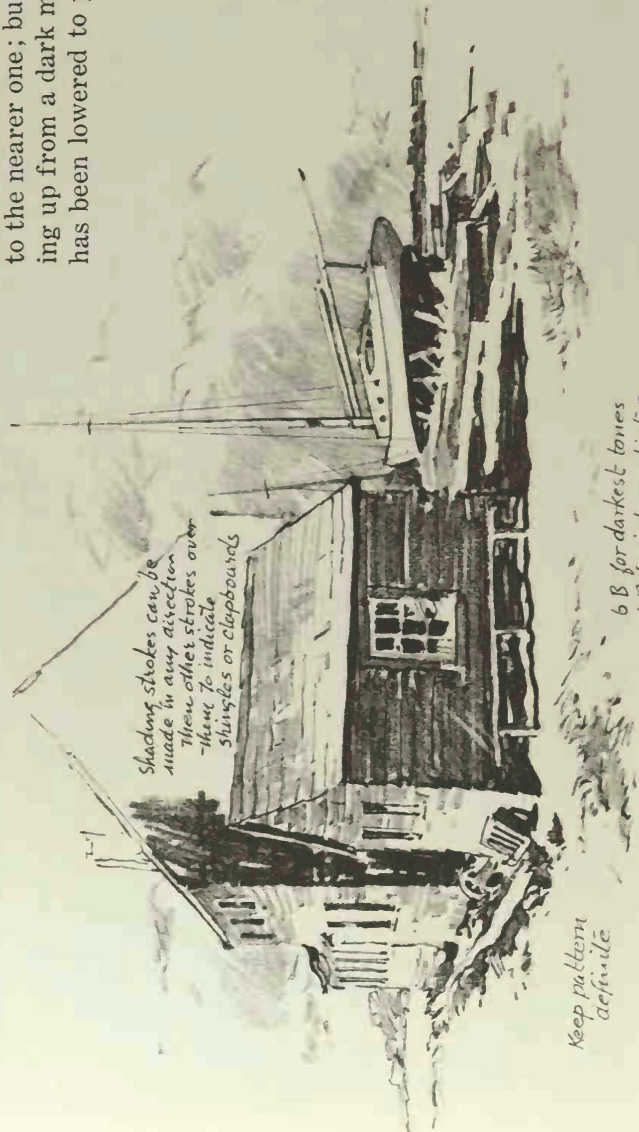
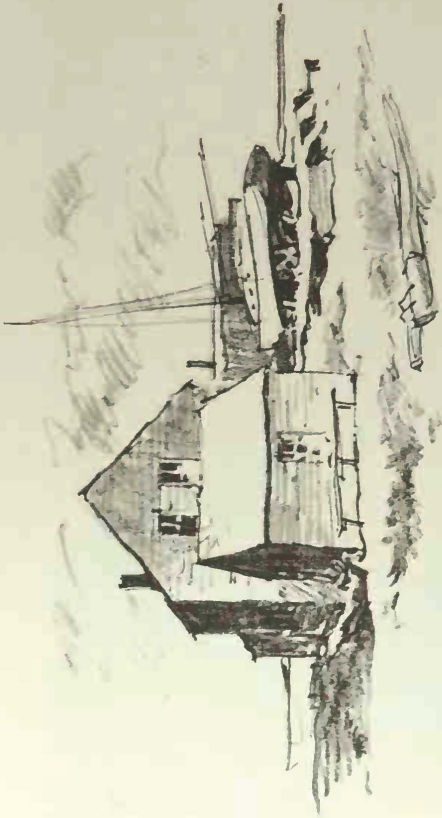


## ASSIGNMENT 2

Although I believe the subject is best rendered with the sun at the left, as in the photograph, I have made a quick sketch ( left ) to "try out" a scheme with the sun coming from the opposite direction. After a subject has been selected it is a good idea to consider how it might look under other light conditions, then experiment in a rapid small sketch unless, being experienced, you can readily visualize other possible effects.

So much of the charm of this scene depends upon the white accents of that yacht, that I would do what I usually avoid — render the sky with tonal clouds, as in the lower drawing — to provide a gray background; or I would improvise some old buildings behind it as in the upper sketch. If the cloud shadow can be restricted to a small area, and you have a dark foreground mass in front of it, the result may be quite satisfactory.

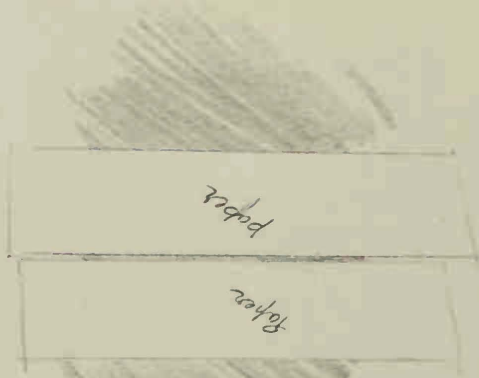
Note that in my sketches I have enlarged the boat somewhat; also that I eliminated the second boat in order to give a better silhouette to the nearer one; but I have shown the mast of a second boat extending up from a dark mass merely suggesting another boat. The skyline has been lowered to permit the silhouetting of the boat's stern.



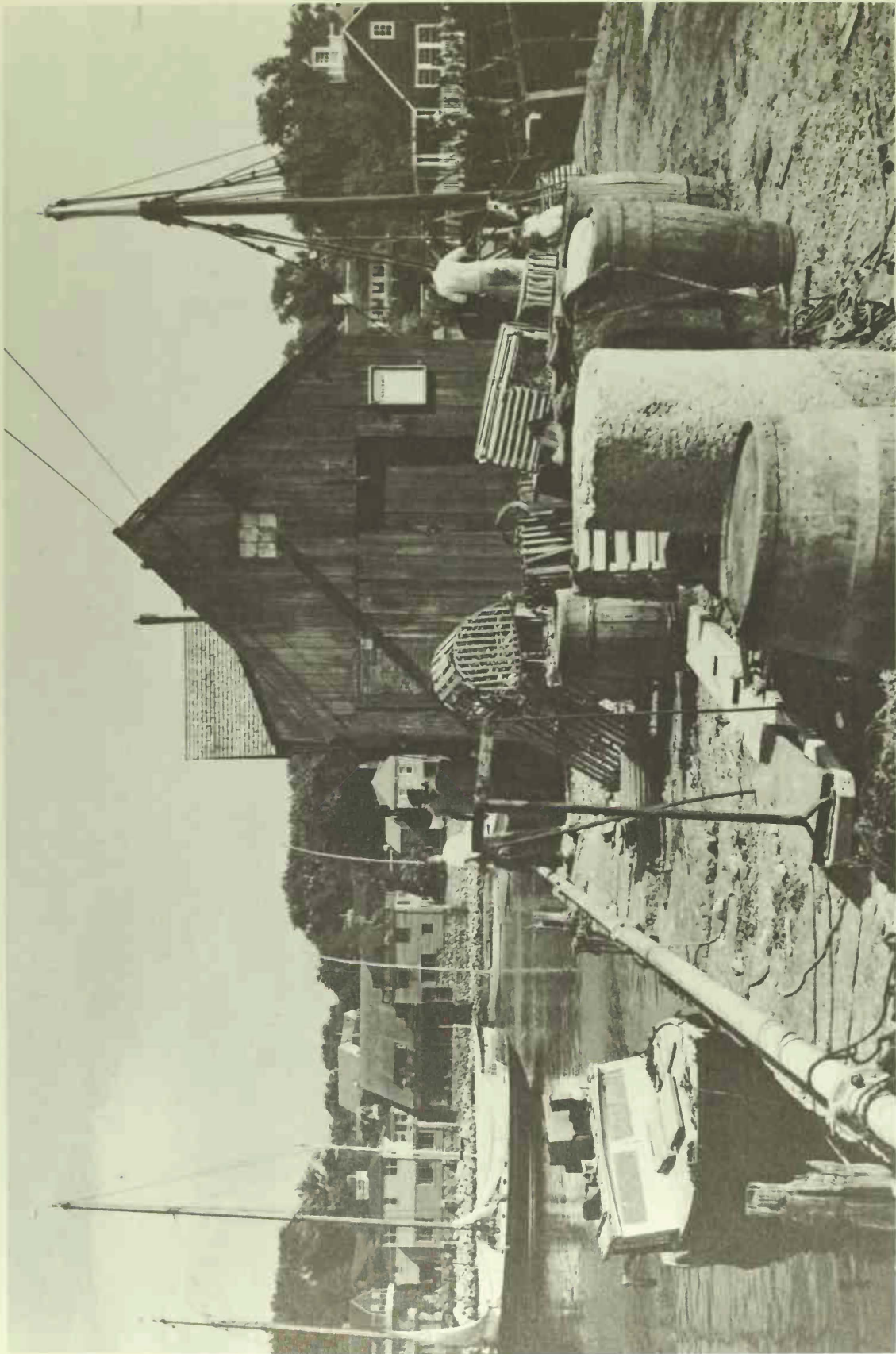
Shading strokes can be made in any direction — then other strokes over them to indicate shadows or clippings

Keep pattern definite

6 B for darkest tones  
4 B for intermediates  
B or HB for lightest tones



I erased the mast and boom out of the cloud. Through two pieces of paper laid over the tone



Samuel Chamberlain

*Fishing Pier, Rockport, Massachusetts*

### ASSIGNMENT 3

In this subject the building is nearly in the center of the picture; your sketch ought to be developed so that interest is focused at one or the other side of the pier, rather than being divided as it is in the photograph. Since there is scarcely enough information on the right side to "get hold of," I suggest concentrating on the left side of the building. However, we could wish that a sizeable fishing boat, like that partially visible on the right side, were moored at the left in place of the small craft which has small compositional value. Try this: turn to page 54 and make a tracing of the SAOMI GUEL. Lay your tracing, reversed, that is, upside down, over the photograph alongside the pier. You will see that the SAOMI GUEL takes her place very pleasantly in the picture. The traced boat will be a trifle large in scale, but you can reduce it slightly in size, or you can bring her into the foreground so that the barrel on her deck is about level with the top of the pile. This will throw her stern out of the photograph, but you can extend your sketch to include as much of the harbor on that side as you wish.

If you moor the SAOMI GUEL close like this you may want to bring in the boat that lies just in front of her in the photograph. Note, also, that the photograph (page 54) provides fishing craft at a distant pier that will serve as models for lightly sketched boats at the right side of your pier.

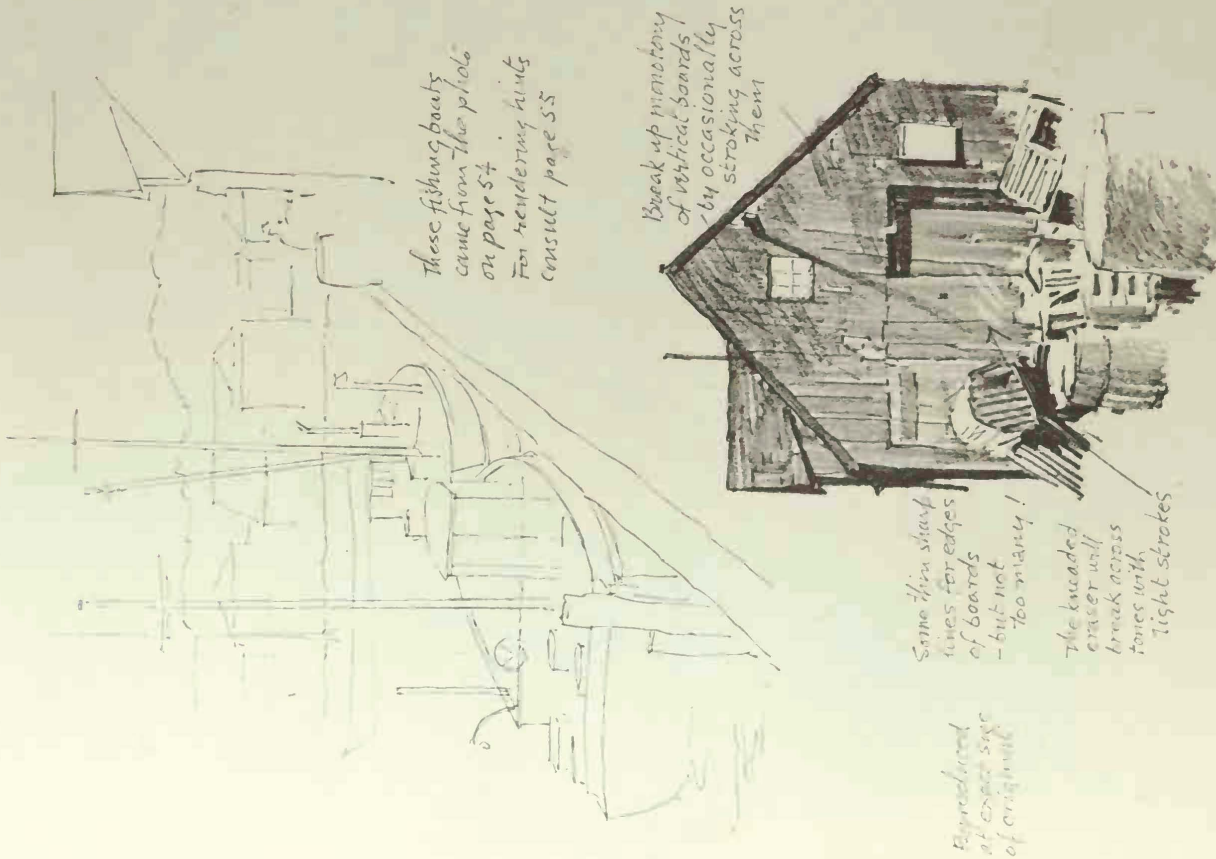
The litter of lobster traps, barrels and other objects in the foreground provide ample interest, as do corresponding things in my sketch on page 15. Try rearranging them to suit your design better after you have your boats moored at the dock.

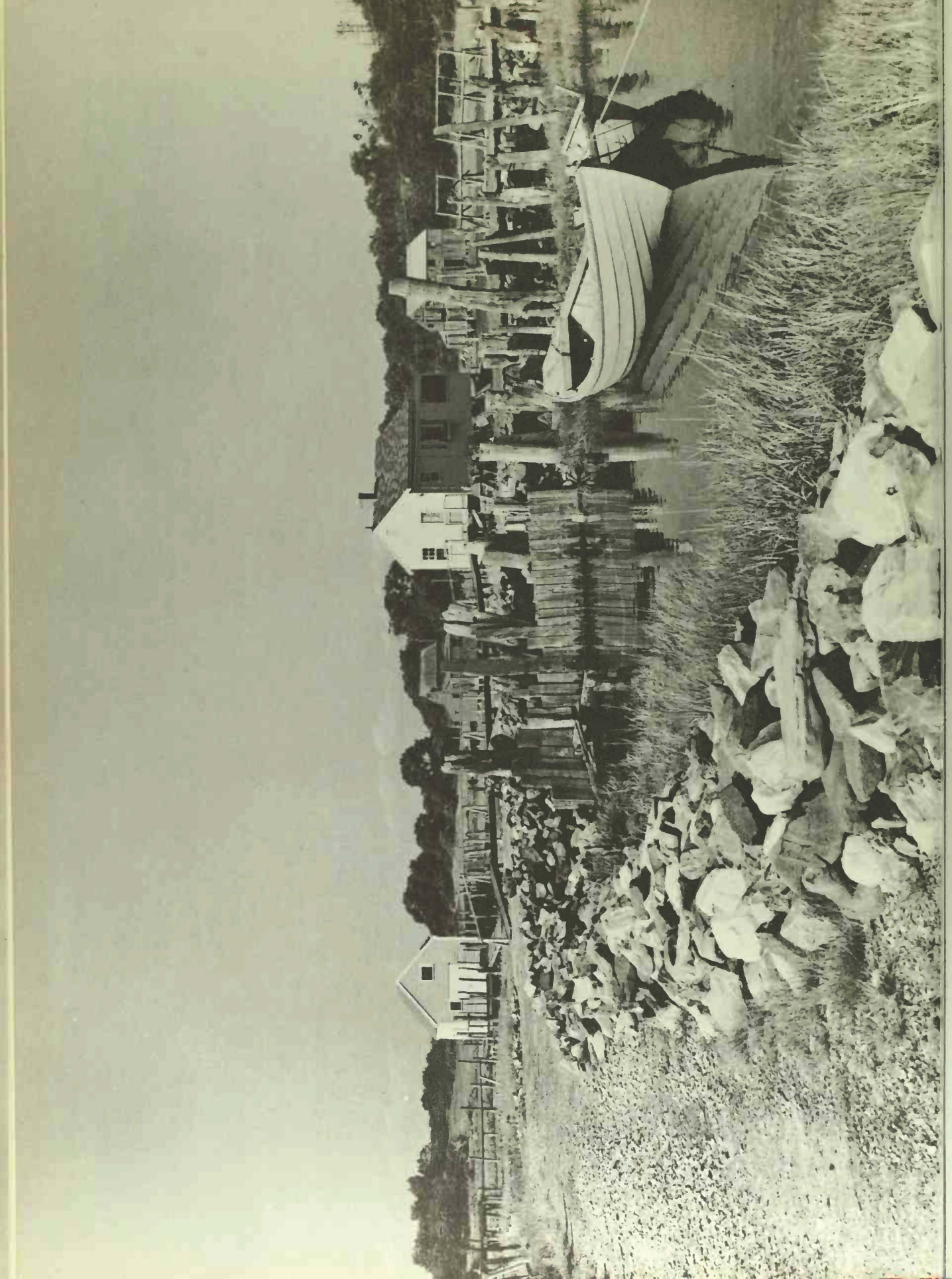
It is obvious that this subject is worth more than one sketch. Make as many interpretations of it as you have time for, and compare the sketches critically.

It seems to me that the dormer roof ought to be dark enough to silhouette against the sky which, by the way, might be treated somewhat like that in the Camden, Maine, sketch on page 2.

That shadow running along the end of the shed is cast by a projecting beam over the door, from which hoisting tackle is suspended. It will scarcely explain itself in the sketch unless it is given a different direction.

The planks of the pier in the photograph are obscured by litter; you may want to indicate them in your sketch although the litter itself is interesting.





#### ASSIGNMENT 4

The sketches reproduced here at about half-size of the originals demonstrate how I would develop this subject. Always, or nearly always, I lay-in the very darkest tones as in sketch #1, because all of the other values are related to the darkest, which usually is as black as a soft pencil can make it.

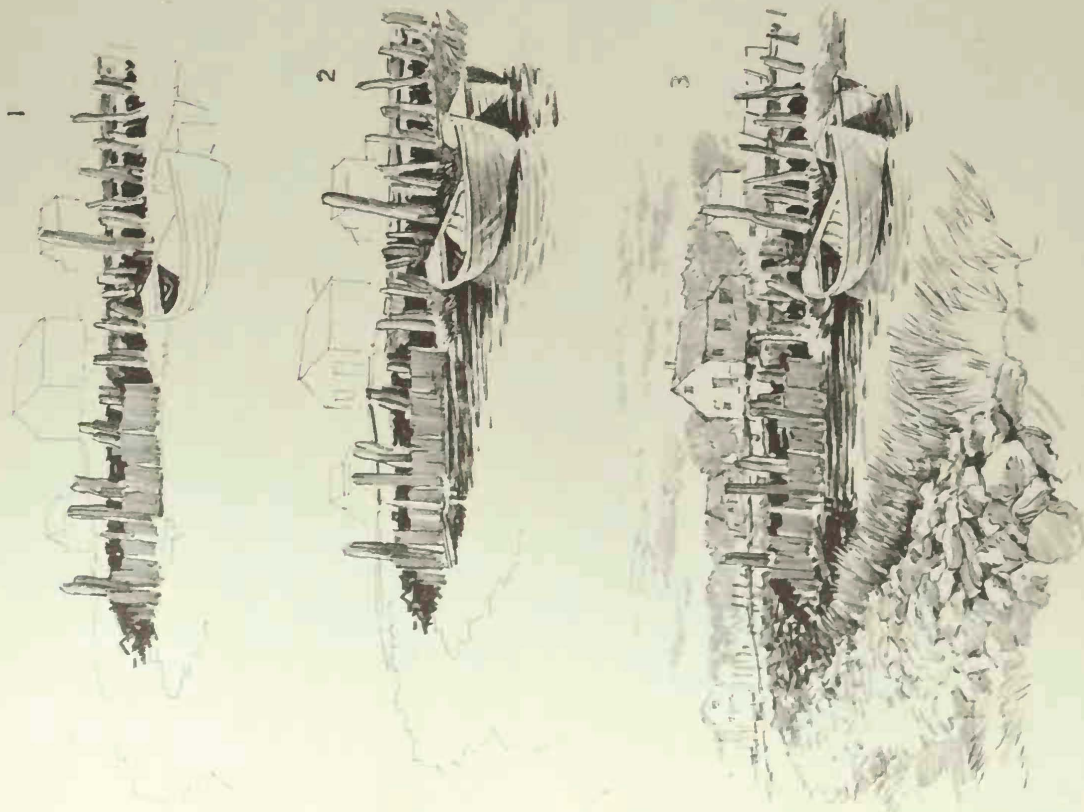
The boat, being the most important item of interest, naturally gets next attention. If it is to look like a white boat there must be contrast with the dark water. Now with pencil it is possible to make a reasonable facsimile of that dark water mass, showing the reflections of the planks and piles, but it would be a laborious process and the drawing would certainly look labored. The pencil is not a medium for that kind of tonal effect, so we have to devise a method of indicating the appearance of water. We really are obliged to illustrate water in motion, because then we can break up its surface with reflected lights as I have done. The small amount of dark tone that I have put near the boat serves as a contrasting foil for it.

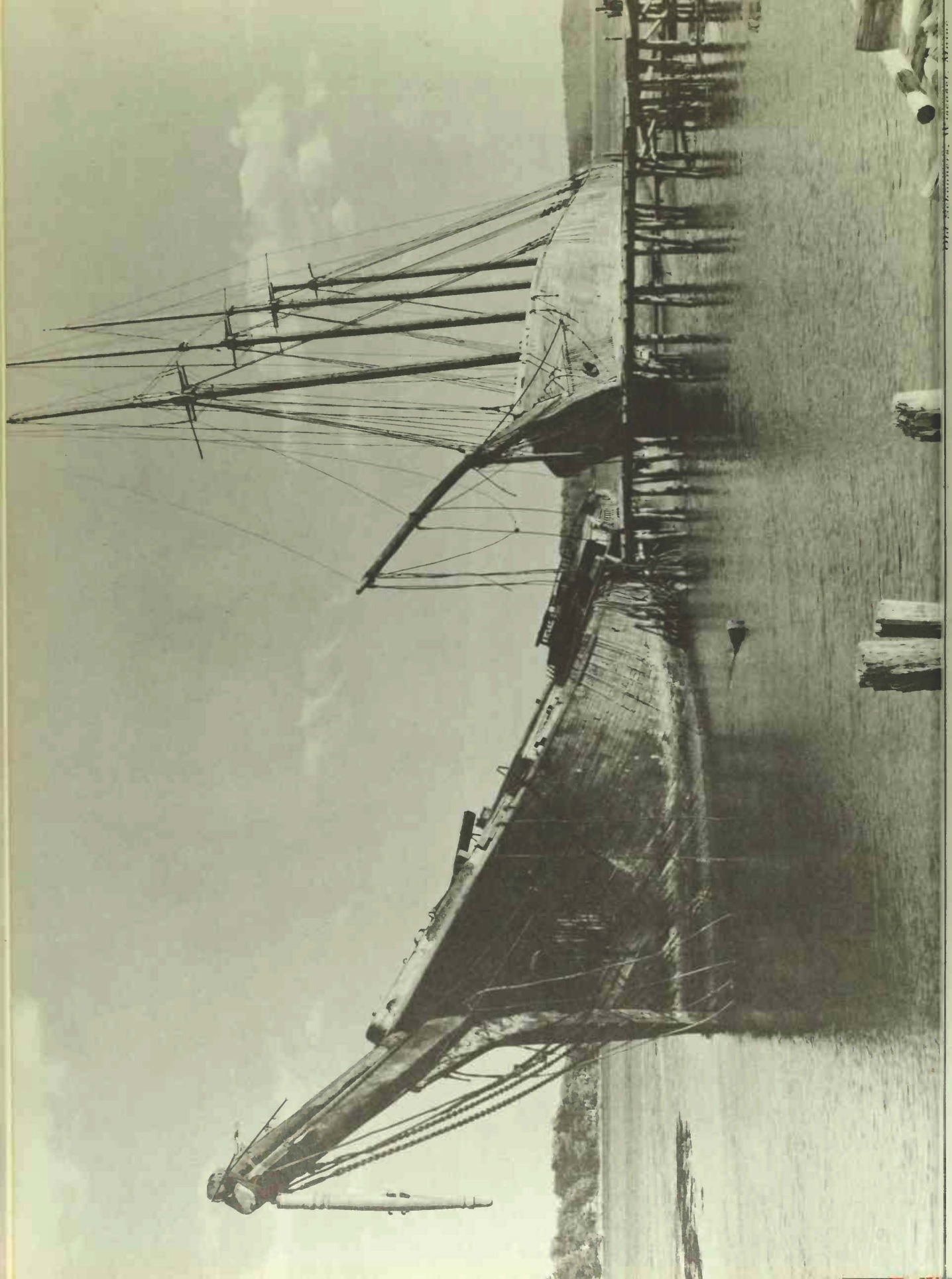
The light shading on the boat's side is improvised; there is nothing comparable in the photograph. I tried to apply it in such a way as to leave white accents that suggest light reflected up on the curving boards, an effect that is seen when the sun shines upon dancing waves.

Note, throughout, the function of thin, sharp lines used along with the broad strokes.

The background, obviously, is treated in a very casual way, no effort being made to be literally faithful to the subject. I have kept the background trees very light; to render them in dark tone, as in the photograph — or in nature itself — would destroy perspective effect.

The treatment of the rocky breakwater presents an interesting problem. If we attempted to render each of the innumerable stones we would find the result very fussy and the breakwater would become too important in the picture. While we do want to give it sufficient attention to look like what it is, this is not the center of the sketch's interest: it should not be so detailed as to prevent the eye from going over it readily to the boat and plank wall beyond. I started to draw the nearest rocks rather meticulously but, as soon as possible, to suggest rather than define those at a greater distance. Not over a dozen stones are drawn with verisimilitude. Note here the use of line, as well as of tone.





## ASSIGNMENT 5

Here we have a subject with dividend interest. We find ourselves looking from one abandoned schooner to the other. Both are equally interesting and claim equal attention. This is nothing against the subject, we are glad of the dual attraction. But in a sketch we seek a focal point to give the picture stability. In the lower of these two rough sketches, reproduced at exact size of my drawings, I have indicated one way of doing this — concentrating our darks on the more distant schooner and the stern of the other. Now, because the eye will always be attracted by a dark area, we have established an orientation that overcomes the instability of competing points of interest.

This does not mean neglect of interest in the nearer hulk; although we keep it light in tone, we can give it as much illustrative content by making the most of all its details. Possibly we would be as successful if we reversed the picture plan, concentrating our dark tones on this boat and leaving the other one very light. In this event — and I suggest you give the scheme a tryout — I think the sketch should be extended further to the left of the prow, perhaps mooring a fishing boat (from page 13 or 54) out there, or a rotting tug boat (page 23). These should be small, in the distance.

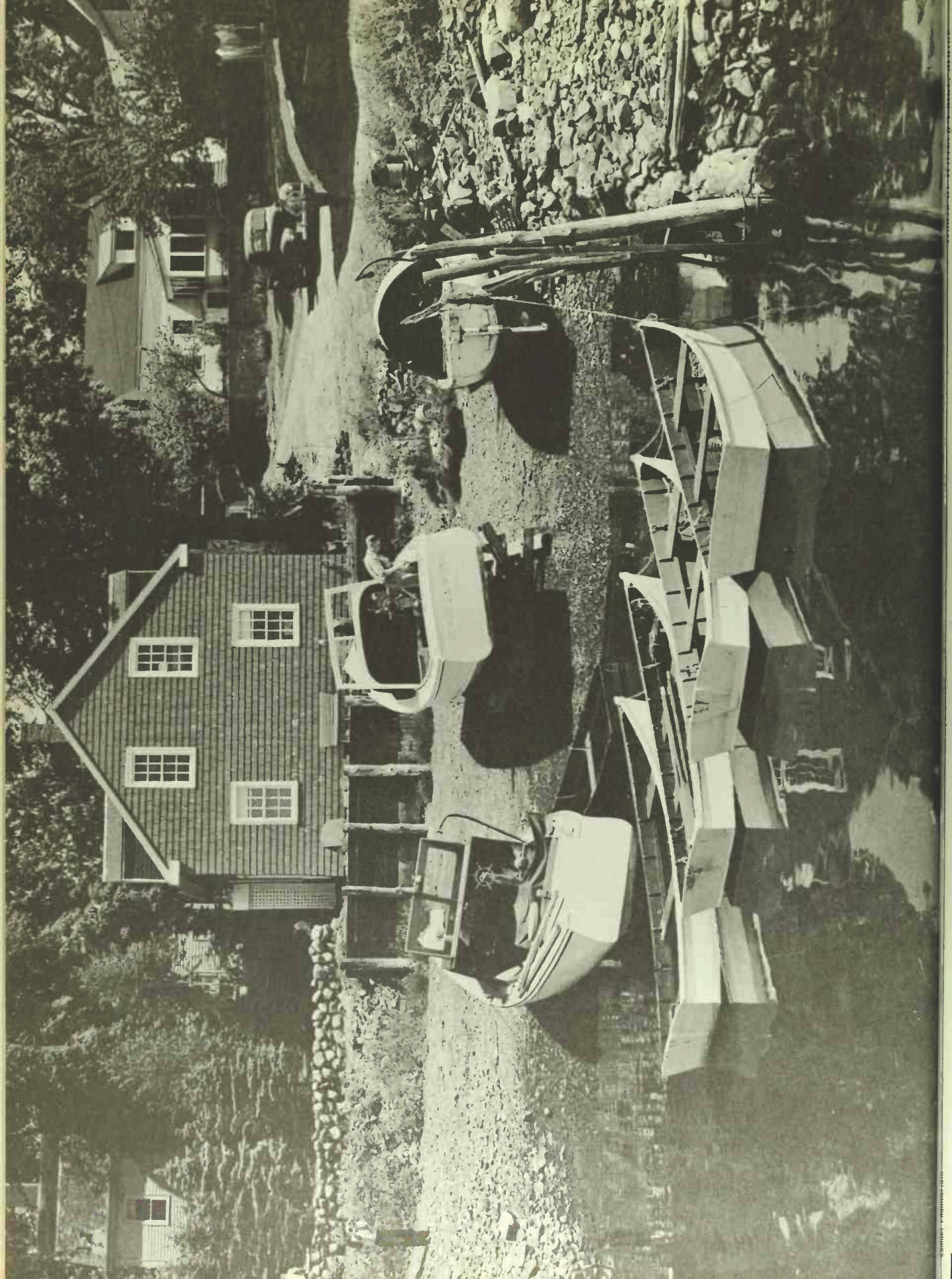
You will note that I have raised the pier in the foreground so that it enters into the design, as it does not in the photograph. Doubtless the photographer could have produced nearly this effect if he had held his camera lower.

Thus, in almost every sketch we make, we have to be imaginative, inventive. And whether working from nature or photographs, we have to translate our subject from its full tonal expression to arrangements that make extensive use of white paper and line.

Again in this subject we have the problem of indicating water without recourse to tone. Anyone who has studied the nature of water, either of harbor or lake, is familiar with the many effects due to currents and winds that give the artist hints of simple ways to represent it in a pencil sketch.

In drawing from photographs, a fairly powerful reading glass is very useful; detail that might otherwise be overlooked may well be revealed by a magnifying glass.







## ASSIGNMENT 6

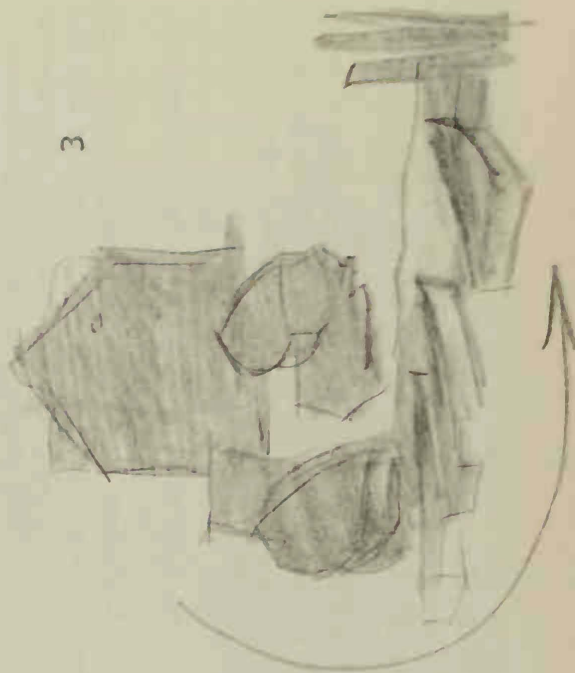
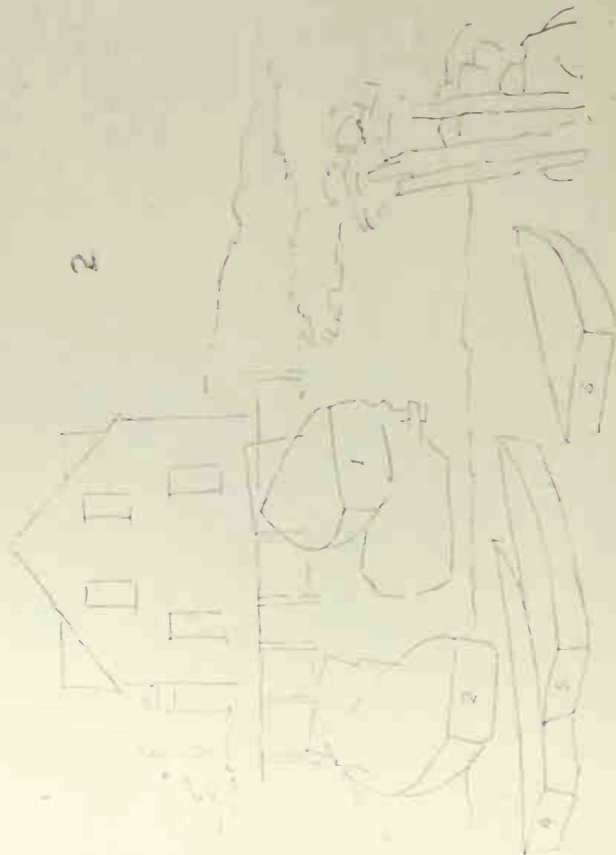
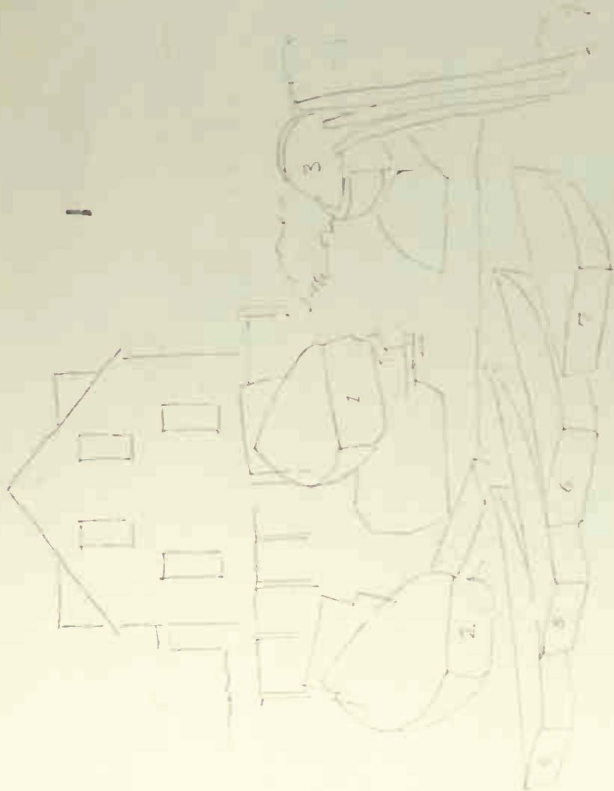
Since this is a tough assignment, I am taking considerable space to demonstrate the approach I would make to it.

A subject may attract us for a great variety of reasons, sometimes reasons that are not as valid for pencil rendering as for oil or water-color. If it is color that interests us we have to ask if it can be translated into black-and-white and in lines and patterns that are appropriate to the pencil medium. If it is values — that is, tonal relationships — we have a similar problem, because we have learned that the lead pencil is not adapted to literal tonal representation.

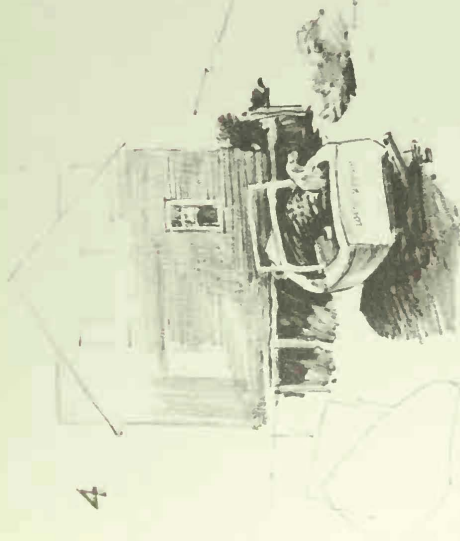
The subject in the above photograph certainly has great tonal appeal, but in our pencil sketch we cannot rely on that. However, it is an exciting group of boats in brilliant light and shade; we certainly ought to find it stimulating and suited to our medium.

At the beginning of our study we may not know how much of the scene we shall use; but we are certain that our sketch will include the boats and the dark building. I made a tracing from the photograph of these details which you see reduced in size, in fig. 1, thinking it would simplify things to have these isolated from the confusing background.

Then I considered whether the design of the group would be better if boats 3 and 6 were eliminated. I particularly wanted to get rid of boat 3 because I was thinking of an arrangement which might be



4



expressed roughly by the diagram in fig. 3, which demonstrates a movement of interest, forming a sweeping curve from the building down through the boats to the vertical piles which serve to arrest the movement at the right. You can see that boat 3 would have no function in this movement; in fact it would serve to block it.

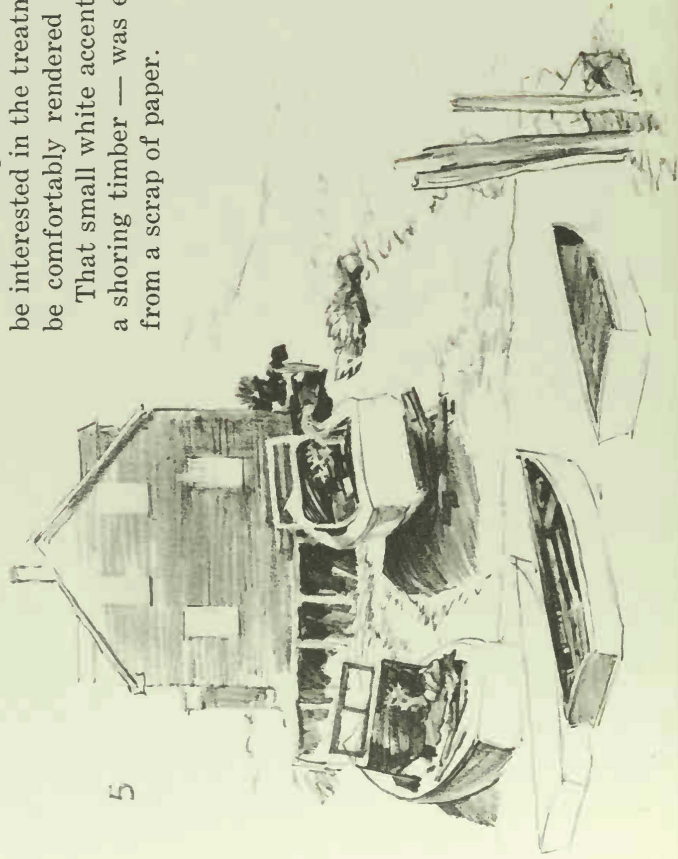
Having made this decision I began to render boat 1 (fig. 4) which certainly ought to be the focal point in the sketch. In the photograph the boat's shadow on the ground is nearly solid black. I wanted to take advantage of the black for the sake of value contrast with the shadow on the white boat which, naturally, had to be light; but, as you see, I confined the black to a relatively small area next to the hull, permitting us to see a suggestion of the shoring timbers.

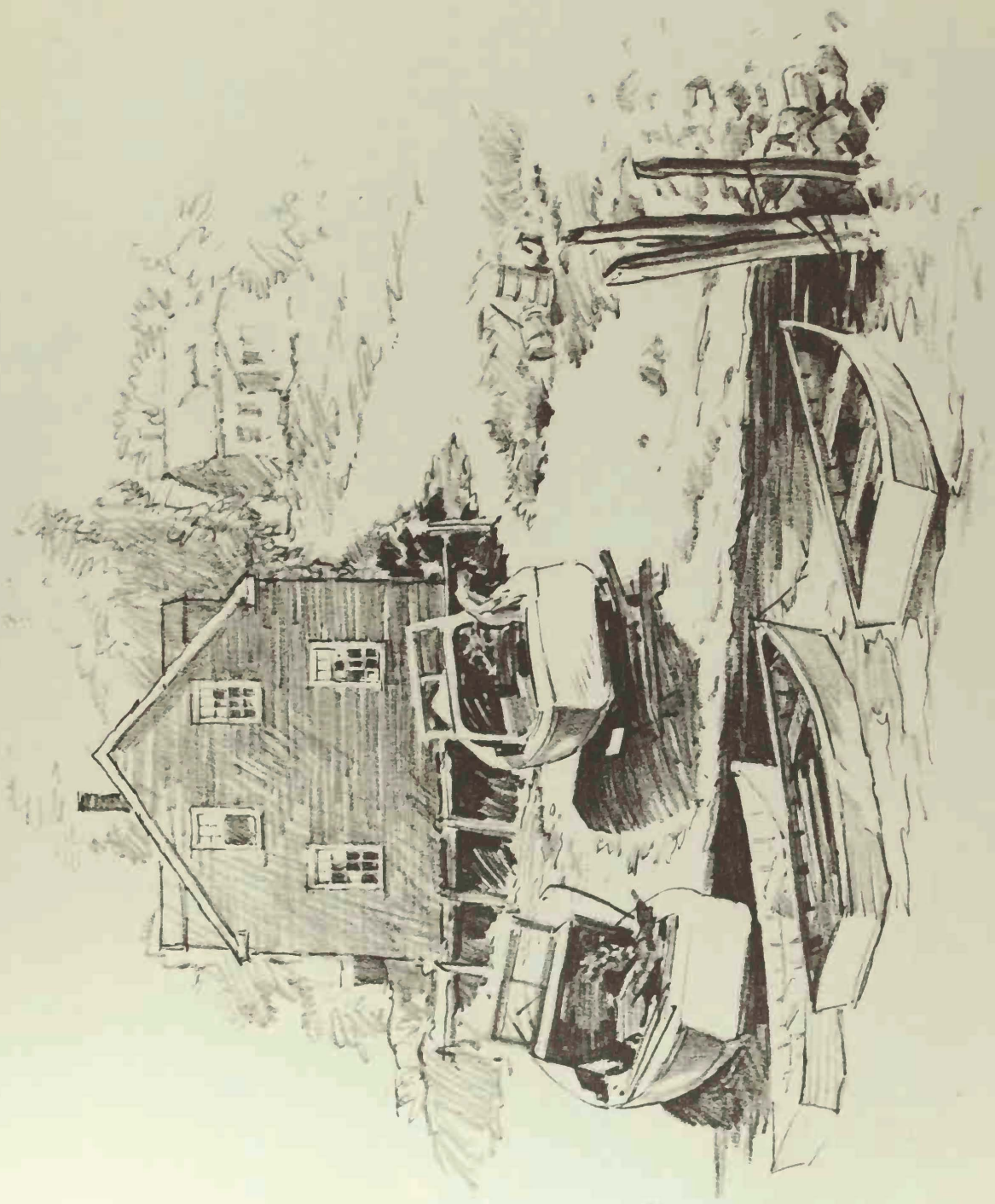
The sketch in fig. 5 has been further developed as I felt my way in its tonal development. I was not quite certain at this point just how I would treat the foreground boats and the water, but, as is obvious, I had the basic pattern in mind which I mentioned in my reference to fig. 3. Note that the shadow, on the ground, of boat 2 is kept lighter than that cast by boat 1 which I chose for the focal point of the sketch.

In the completed rendering, reproduced at exact size below, you will be interested in the treatment of the water which, in small areas, can be comfortably rendered black.

That small white accent in the shadow under boat 1 — sunlight on a shoring timber — was erased through a rectangular "window" cut from a scrap of paper.

5







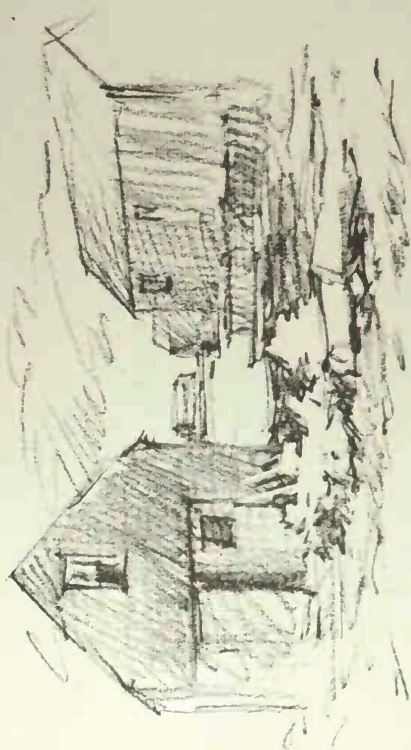
ASSIGNMENT 7

In this subject the interest seems to be concentrated in the foreground — the weathered lobster shack, the lobsterman's boat anchored nearby, the BOAT FOR SALE sign and the pile of junk. However we doubtless need the fairly complete setting such as I have indicated in the rough sketch above. You might not feel the necessity for including the entire front of the shack but I think you will, even though the left side of it is neglected as in the little rough. And it seems as if the larger building at the right would have to be more complete also, perhaps more complete than indicated. As you develop your drawing, these points can be determined. My sketch is on *Alexis* paper.

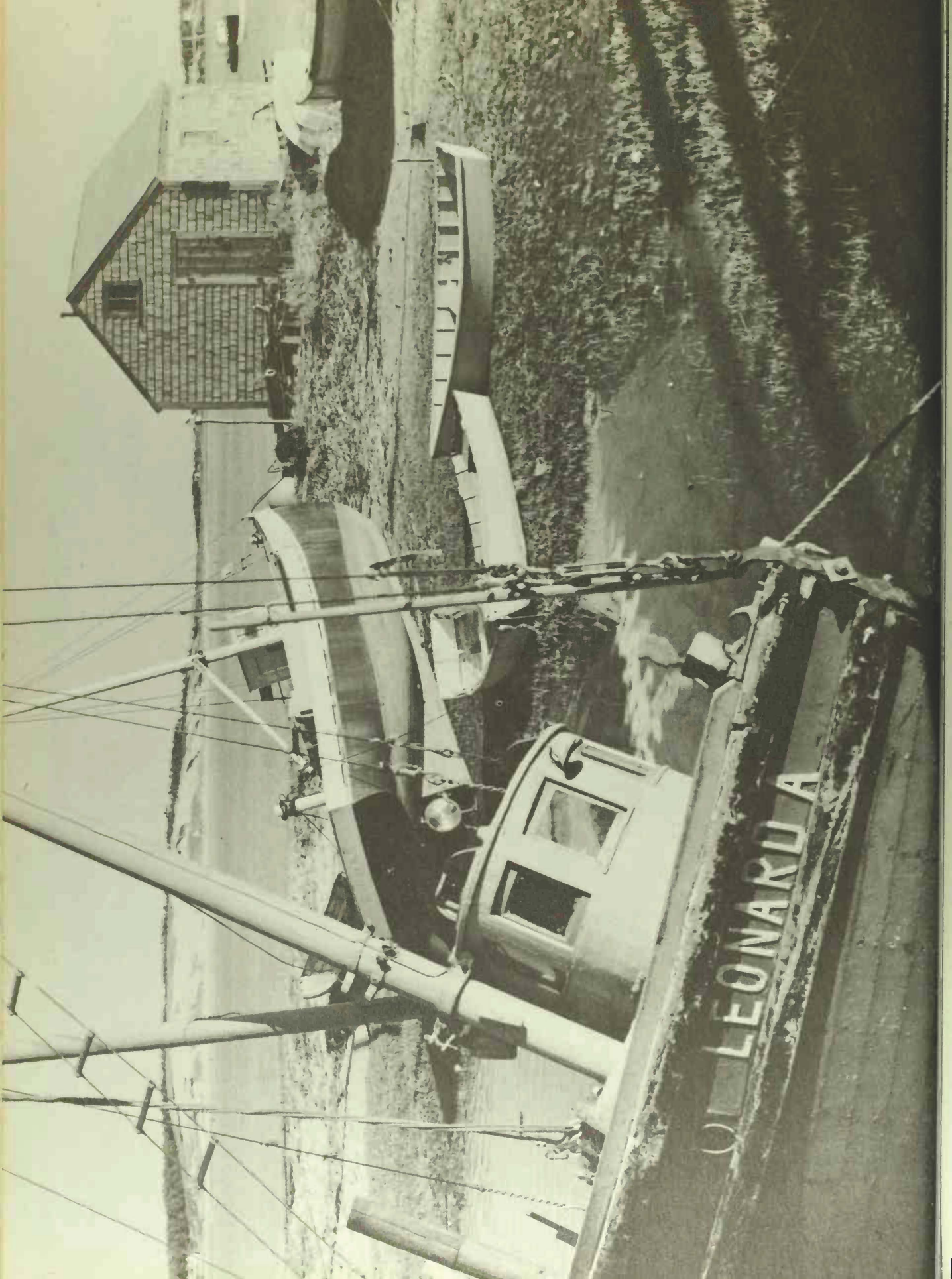
Begin by rendering the foreground as I have done below (reproduced same size as original) and work out from there in all directions, stopping where it seems natural.

Here is a situation where the dark water reflections, being limited in area, can very easily be rendered in approximately their true value. You will note that I have even laid a light tone for the lighter water area, but I wouldn't carry it beyond the boat; I think you will want white paper there.

As you can see, I have taken considerable liberty with the foreground. Consult sketches on pages 19 and 21 for suggestion of logs and other detail. I have eliminated the boat that is moored close to the building because it is confusing.



*Note the use of thin sharp line with the broad strokes throughout*



LEONARDA

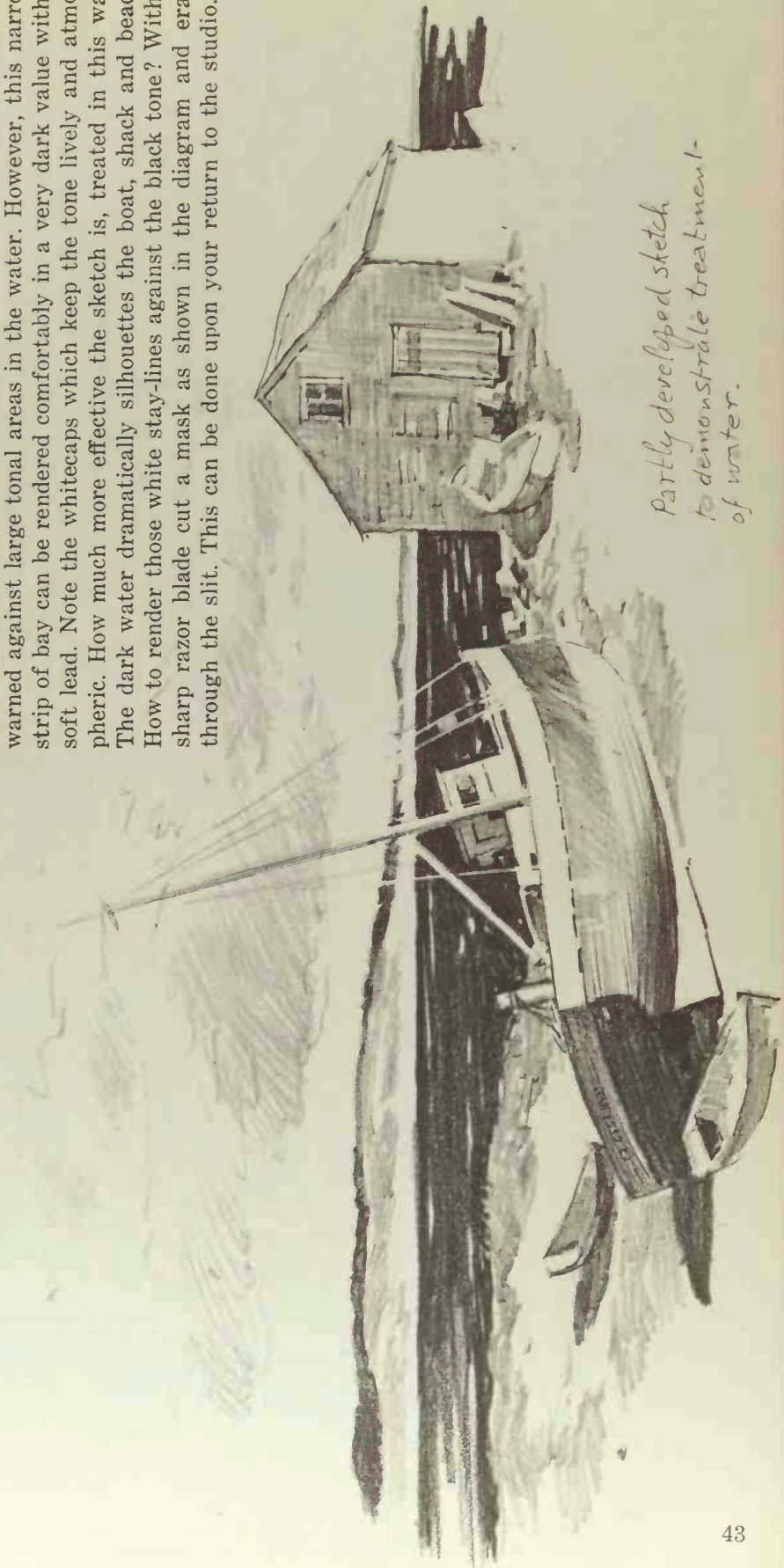
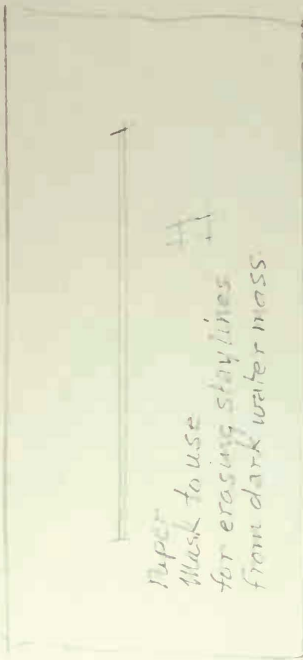
## ASSIGNMENT 8

This subject appears confusing because of the LEONARD A which does not fit into a well-designed sketch. Forget the LEONARD A, eliminate it and you have an ideal subject, one that is practically self-composed except for some minor details.

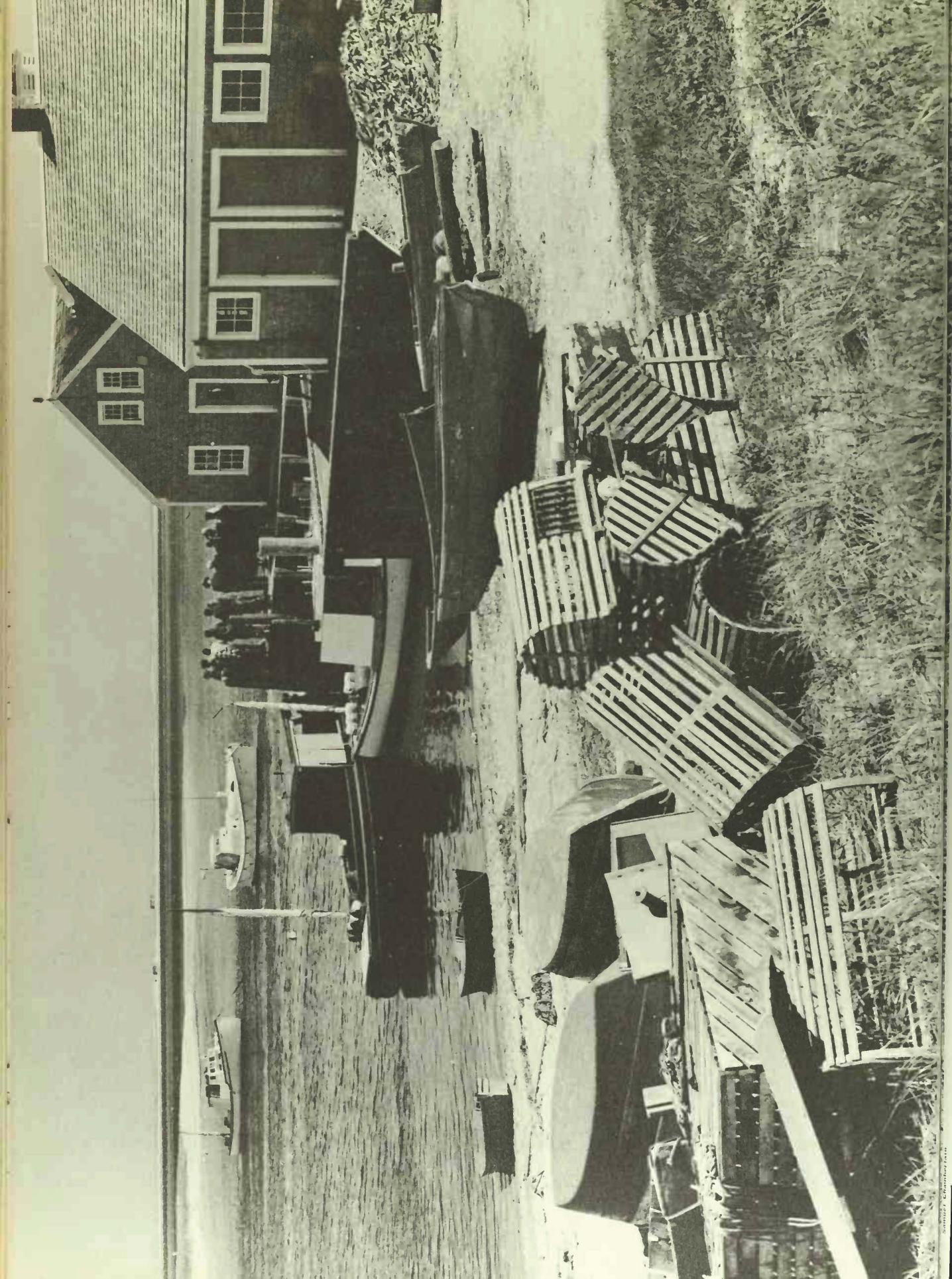
When the LEONARD A has been removed you will have a foreground problem, though one that is readily solved. Moor a rowboat or two in the water, placing them where they will best adjust to the other boats.

Of course you will have to develop a pattern of gray and white on the ground, much as we did in assignment #6. The variation of tones in the photograph gives you a hint.

The most radical procedure which I have suggested below is the rendering of the water of the bay with black tone. Heretofore I have warned against large tonal areas in the water. However, this narrow strip of bay can be rendered comfortably in a very dark value with a soft lead. Note the whitecaps which keep the tone lively and atmospheric. How much more effective the sketch is, treated in this way. The dark water dramatically silhouettes the boat, shack and beach. How to render those white stay-lines against the black tone? With a sharp razor blade cut a mask as shown in the diagram and erase through the slit. This can be done upon your return to the studio.



Partly developed sketch  
to demonstrate treatment  
of water.



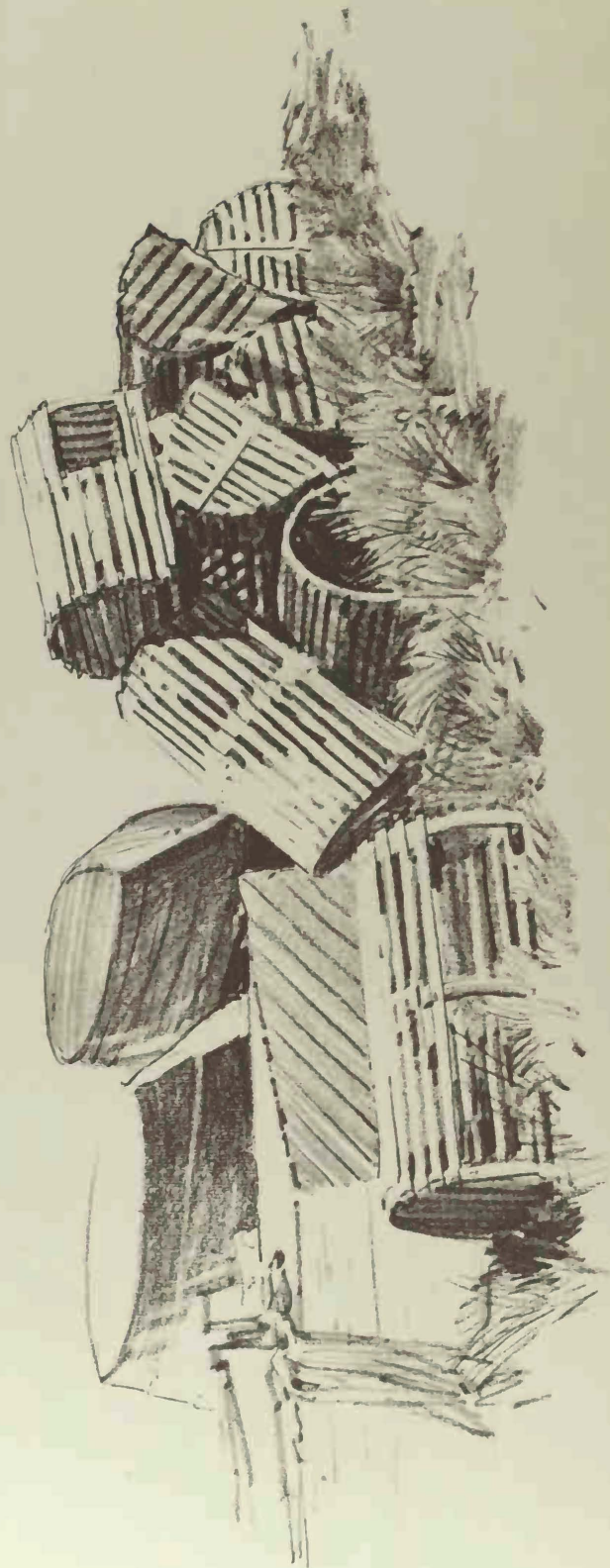


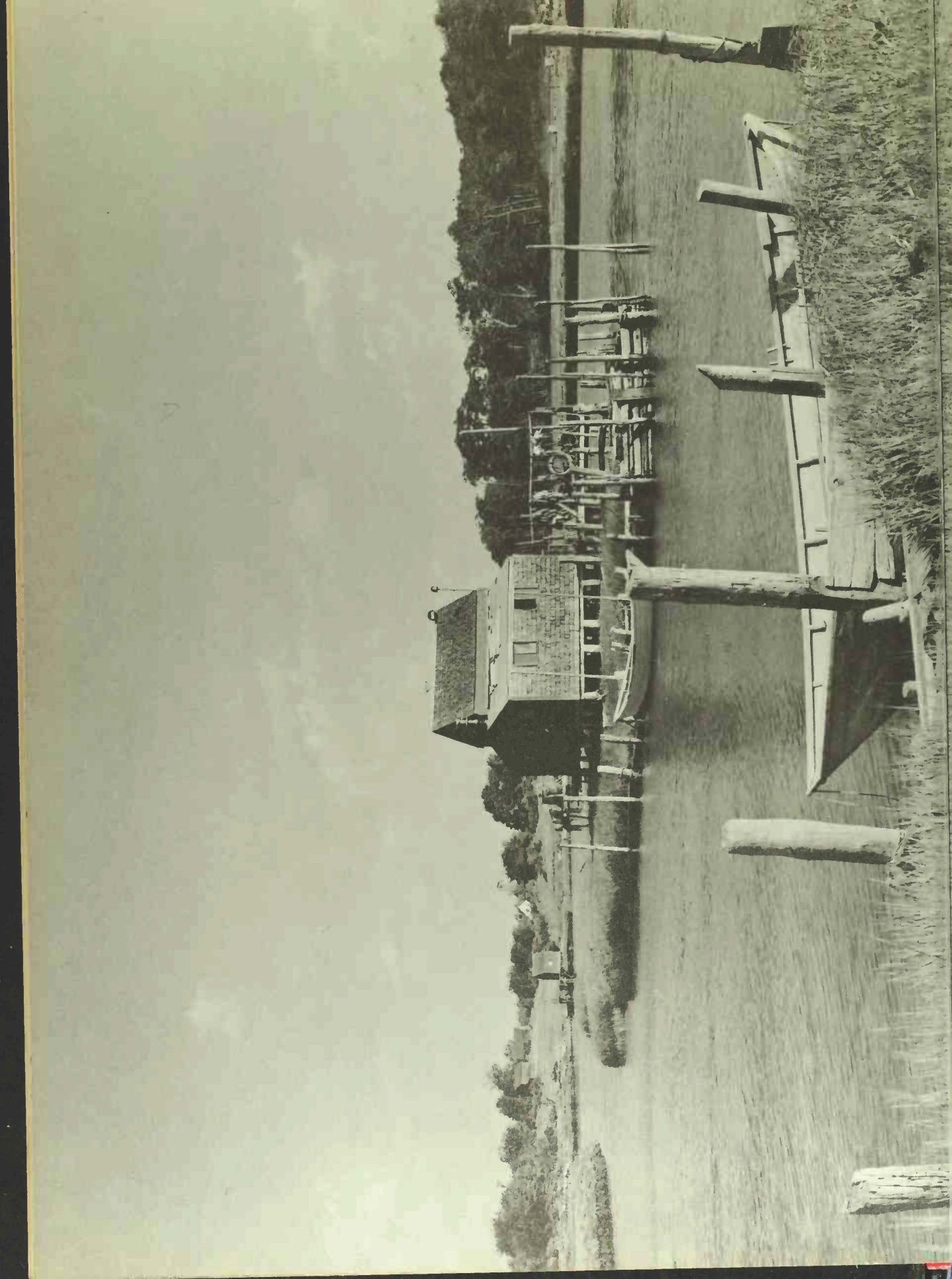
### ASSIGNMENT 9

I will concentrate upon "still life" in this subject and leave the composition to you, without more than written suggestions. If you have followed me thus far you have learned a good deal about designing your sketch. You have become more or less expert in translating the tonal effects in the subject, be it a photograph or the scene itself.

If you focus interest on the foreground you certainly will make the middle distant buildings and boats lighter in value than if you looked over the lobster traps to center interest on the activity at the pier. In the latter event you may not want to represent the foreground objects quite as much in detail as I have done. You have to focus on one area or the other.

I have made that little wash drawing to point out the importance of keeping in mind the geometric formation of the objects as revealed in their simple light-and-shadow pattern. Unless this is realized, it is very easy to produce a confusing rendering. In studying the picture possibilities of any of these photographic assignments, that kind of analysis (with your brush and two flat tones) will often help to compose your sketch in the most dramatic way.





## ASSIGNMENT 10

There are no new problems in this subject so I am not making any graphic suggestion. If I were doing it, I think, I would narrow the stretch of water to about one half its present width. This would raise the boat correspondingly. This done, it is possible that the narrow water area between the two boats might be rendered in a dark gray tone, at least that part of it directly under the sheds and dock. Chances are the rest of the water should be kept white, except for some light gray pattern of water movement which is indeed suggested in the photograph. We are all familiar with the interesting play of light and dark on water caused by a breeze that ripples its surface. These little waves, forming flowing, rhythmic shapes reflect the light of the sky in dazzling white pattern.

With the water area narrowed and the large boat raised, we can well create a more interesting foreground — a pile of boards, a barrel or crate and other objects that will come to mind.

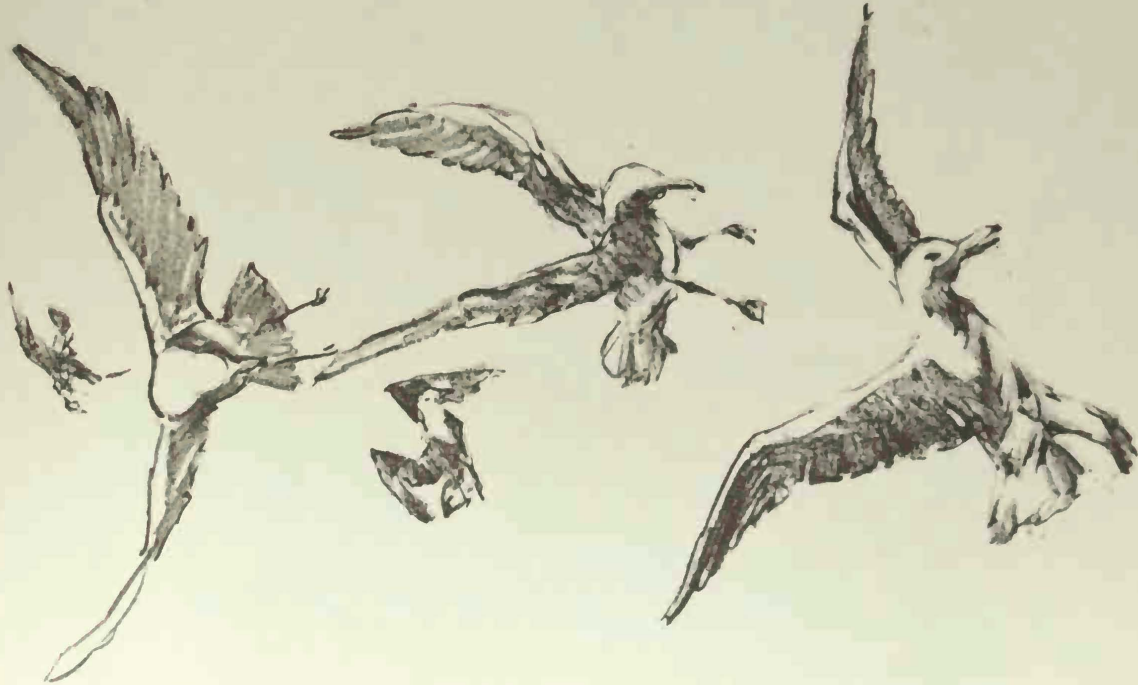
Those posts in the foreground are rather monotonous; you can group them differently, vary their thickness and make a much more ingenious composition in the foreground.

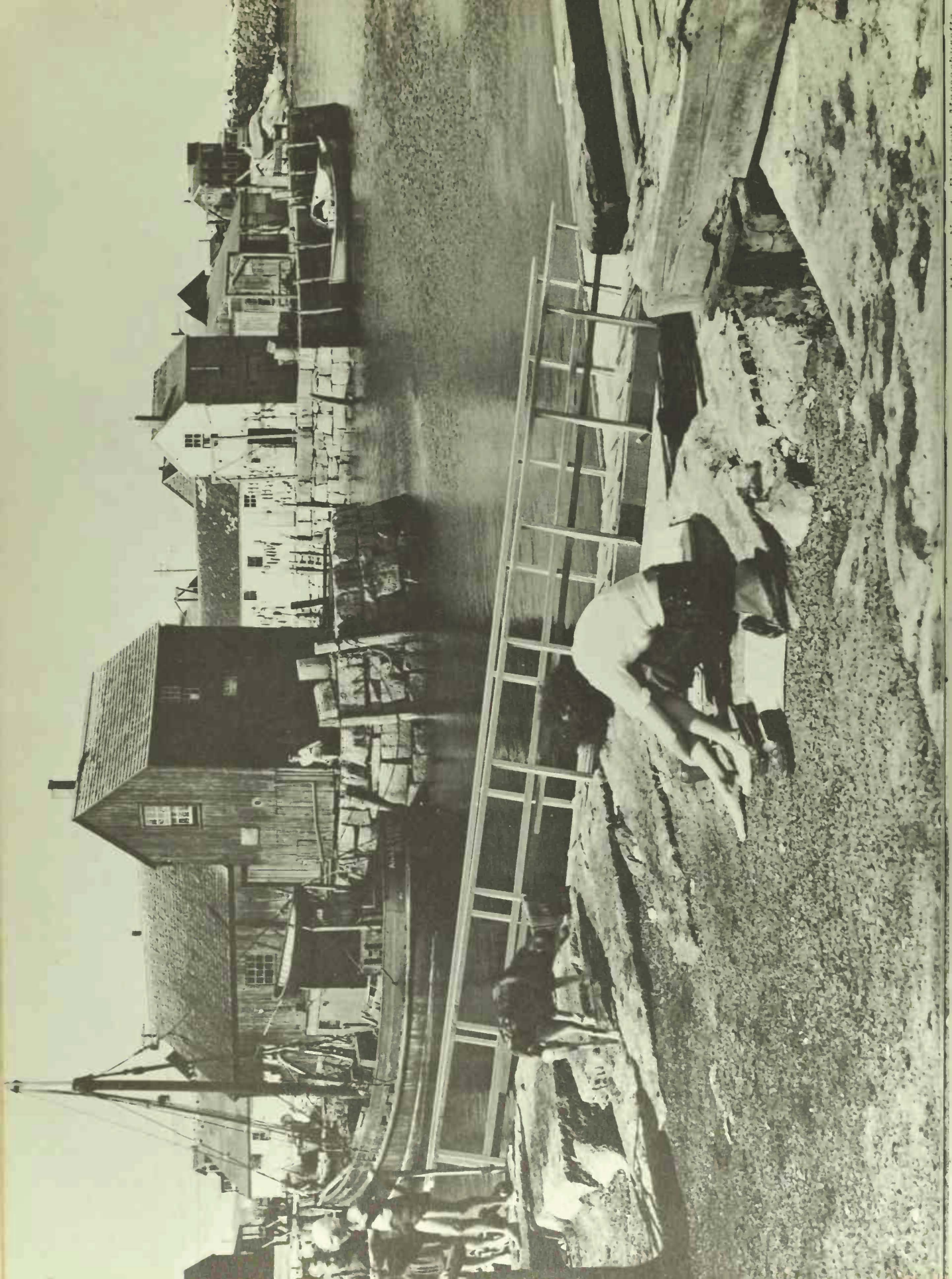
We have already discovered that it is seldom practical to render distant landscape in the true dark tones of nature. If we do, the distance will come forward and destroy perspective. Whether those trees should be sketched in a light gray tone or be indicated merely in line is something every artist will have to decide. Probably a light tone will be effective.

Obviously this subject needs some kind of sky treatment. I have made numerous suggestions for the rendering of clouds in various drawings in the book.

The building certainly should be the focal point in this sketch. Then looking past the building on the left side, we have a secondary center of interest. Those small buildings are good copy, and of course a small sail boat would not be out of place back there.

In working from photographs we have to realize that the values very often are not true to nature. Dark shadows are likely to be dense, revealing little or no detail within them. We have to use our imagination and improvise detail in any too-empty shadow masses.





## ASSIGNMENT 11

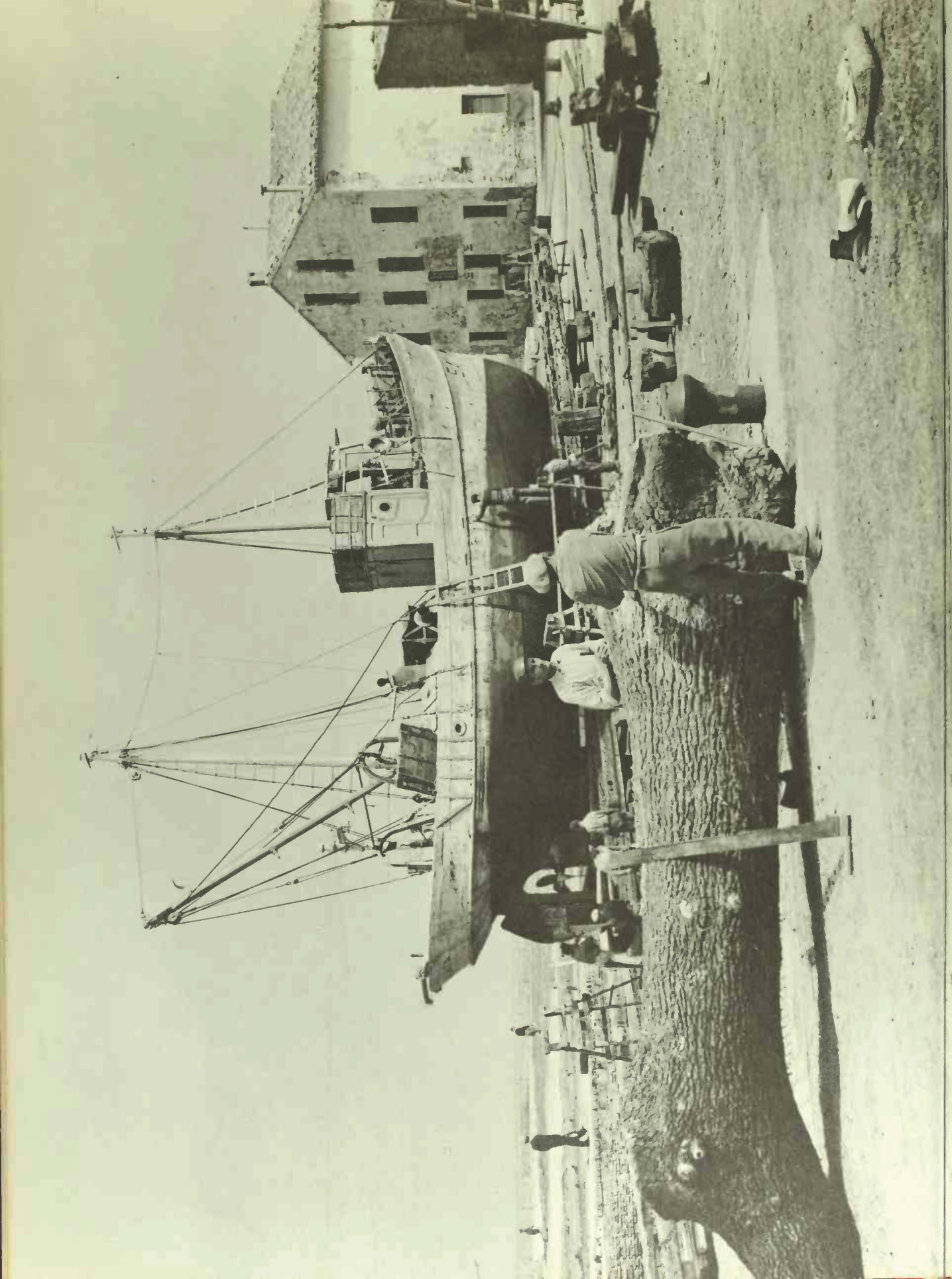
This is the celebrated Motif #1 at Rockport, Massachusetts. It is so called because for many years that old fisherman's shack has been the first subject to be painted by art students who have flocked by the thousands to this historic seaport on Cape Ann.

Now you will have to be imaginative in sketching this subject, albeit it is practically ready-made. If you were painting the shack you might well duplicate its tonal effect; color would be perhaps more important than light and shade. But with your pencil you will certainly want to treat the sunny side with a light tone. Then see how dramatically the superstructure of the fishing boat will silhouette against it.

Since, quite naturally, you will want to focus on the boat, it is evident that the sketch will have to be developed at the left some distance in front of the picture. Otherwise your focal point would be at the extreme left of the picture, which would not be good.

The gangplank in the foreground is a rather awkward element. Why not let the rocks and the old timbers take care of the foreground interest.



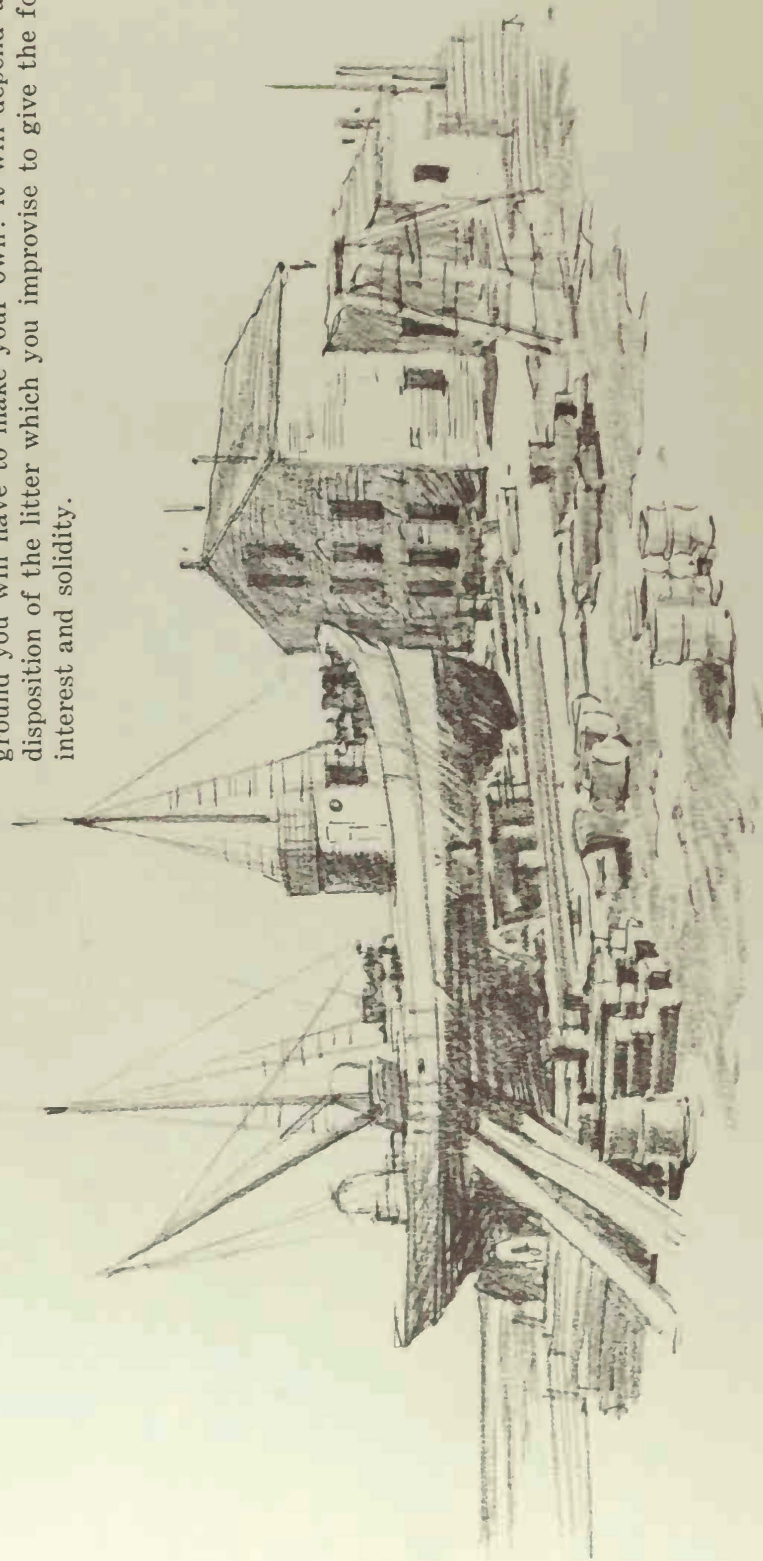


ASSIGNMENT 12  
This "dragger" is much like the one I sketched in Rockland, Maine, and reproduced on page 21 — even though the one pictured here is an Italian craft.

There are two points of interest here; one in the foreground, and the other beyond — the boat and buildings. My suggestion is to focus upon the latter, eliminating the log and workmen entirely.

When you do this you will have to supply some foreground interest. I have suggested the pile of timbers in my rough sketch, reproduced at exact size. You will do better to make your drawing larger. This will permit more detail of the boat, which is sharp enough in the photograph to give all the data you need for a meticulous rendering.

Although the photograph shows a pattern of light gray on the ground you will have to make your own: it will depend upon your disposition of the litter which you improvise to give the foreground interest and solidity.

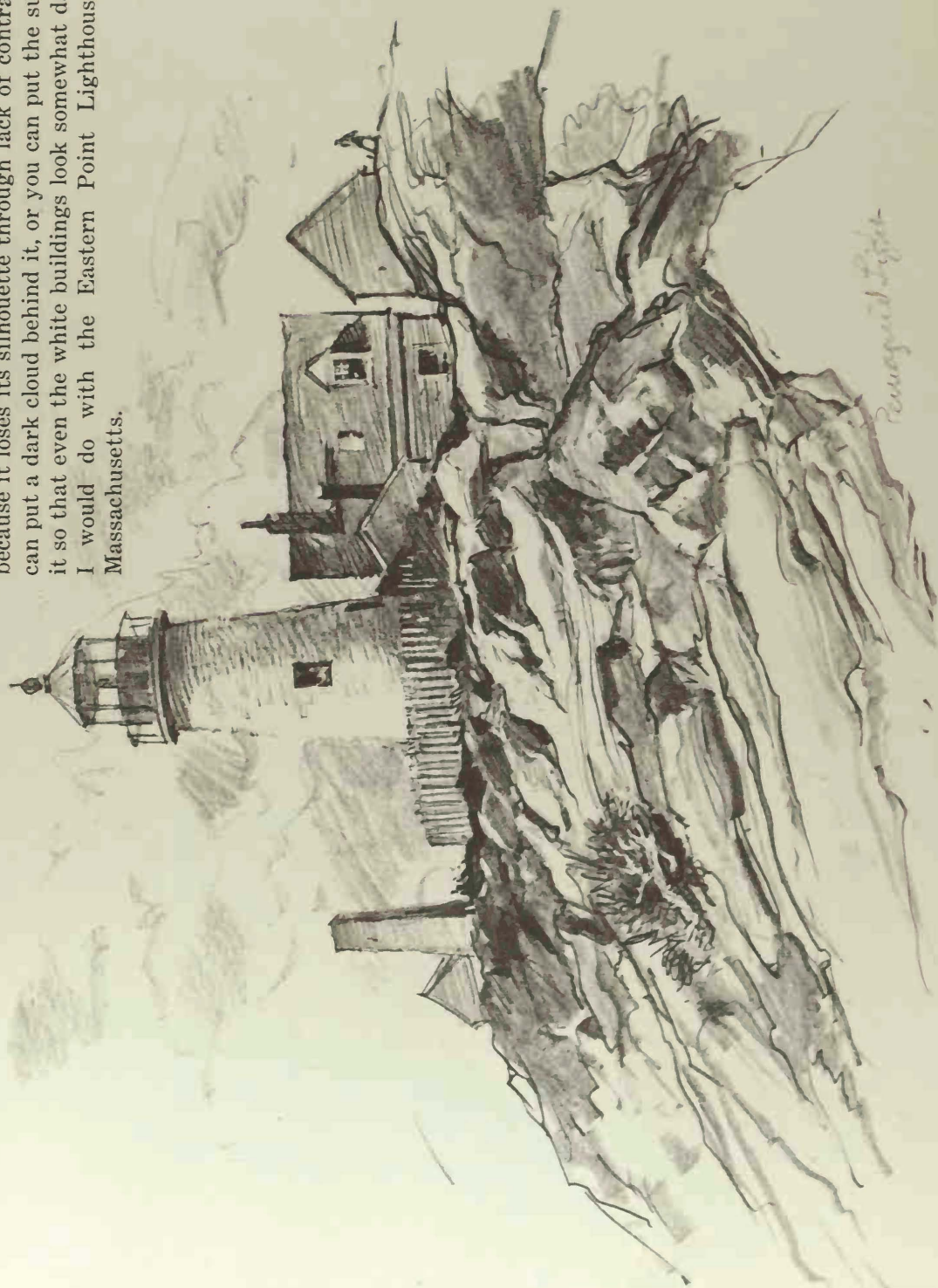


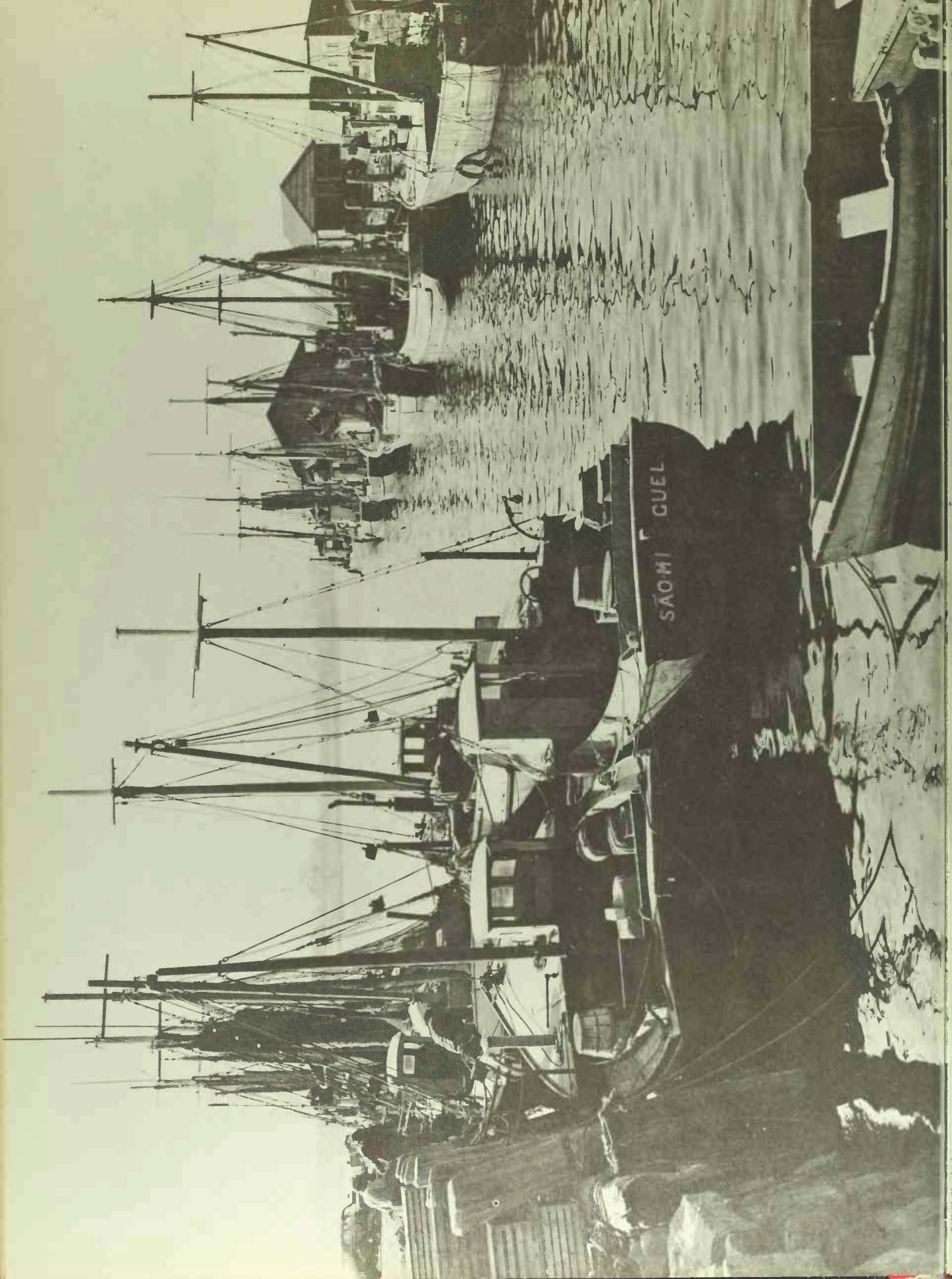




## ASSIGNMENT 13

Rendering a white structure against a light sky is rather difficult because it loses its silhouette through lack of contrast. Of course you can put a dark cloud behind it, or you can put the sun directly behind it so that even the white buildings look somewhat dark. That is what I would do with the Eastern Point Lighthouse of Gloucester, Massachusetts.





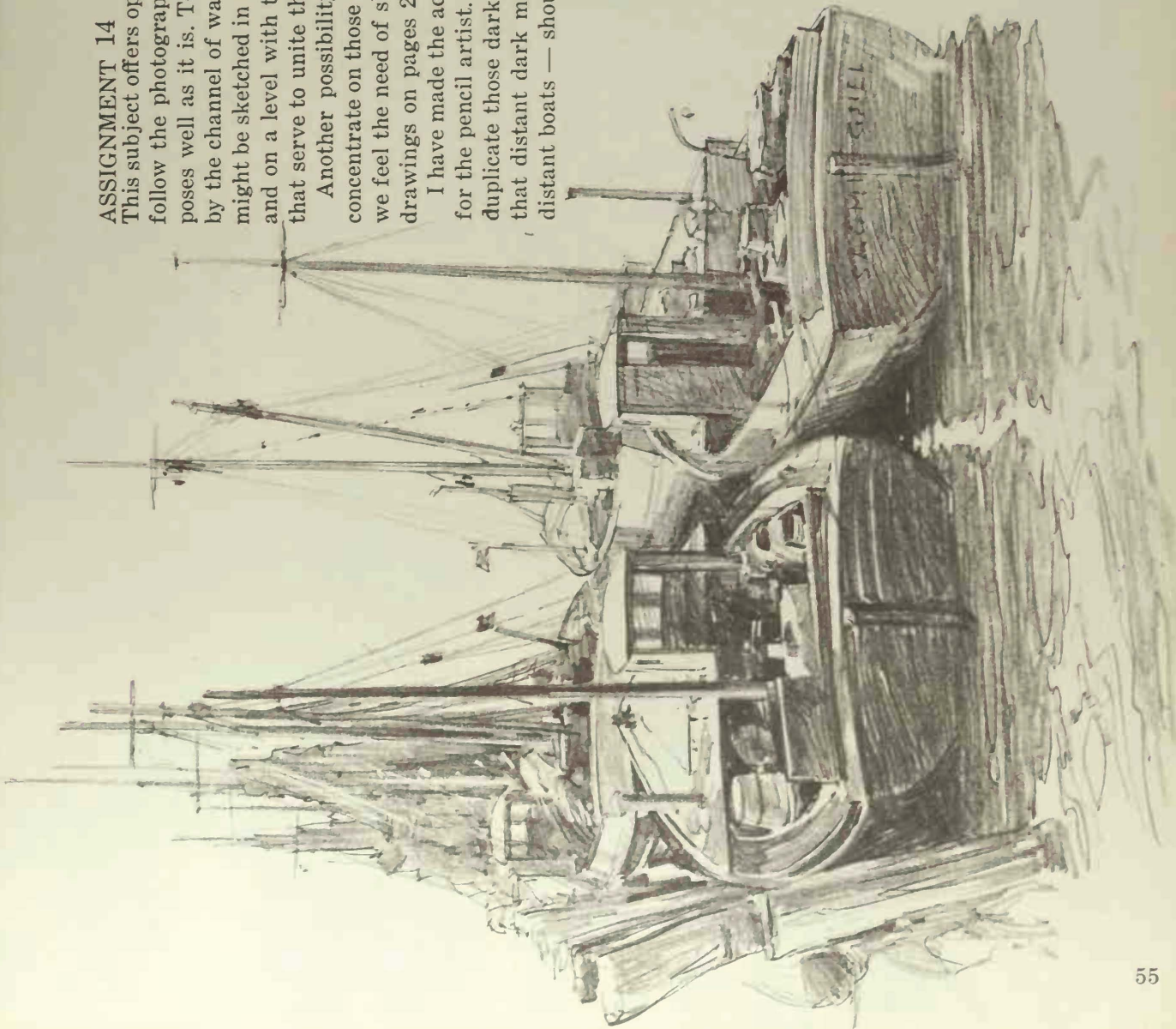
SÃO MI GUEL

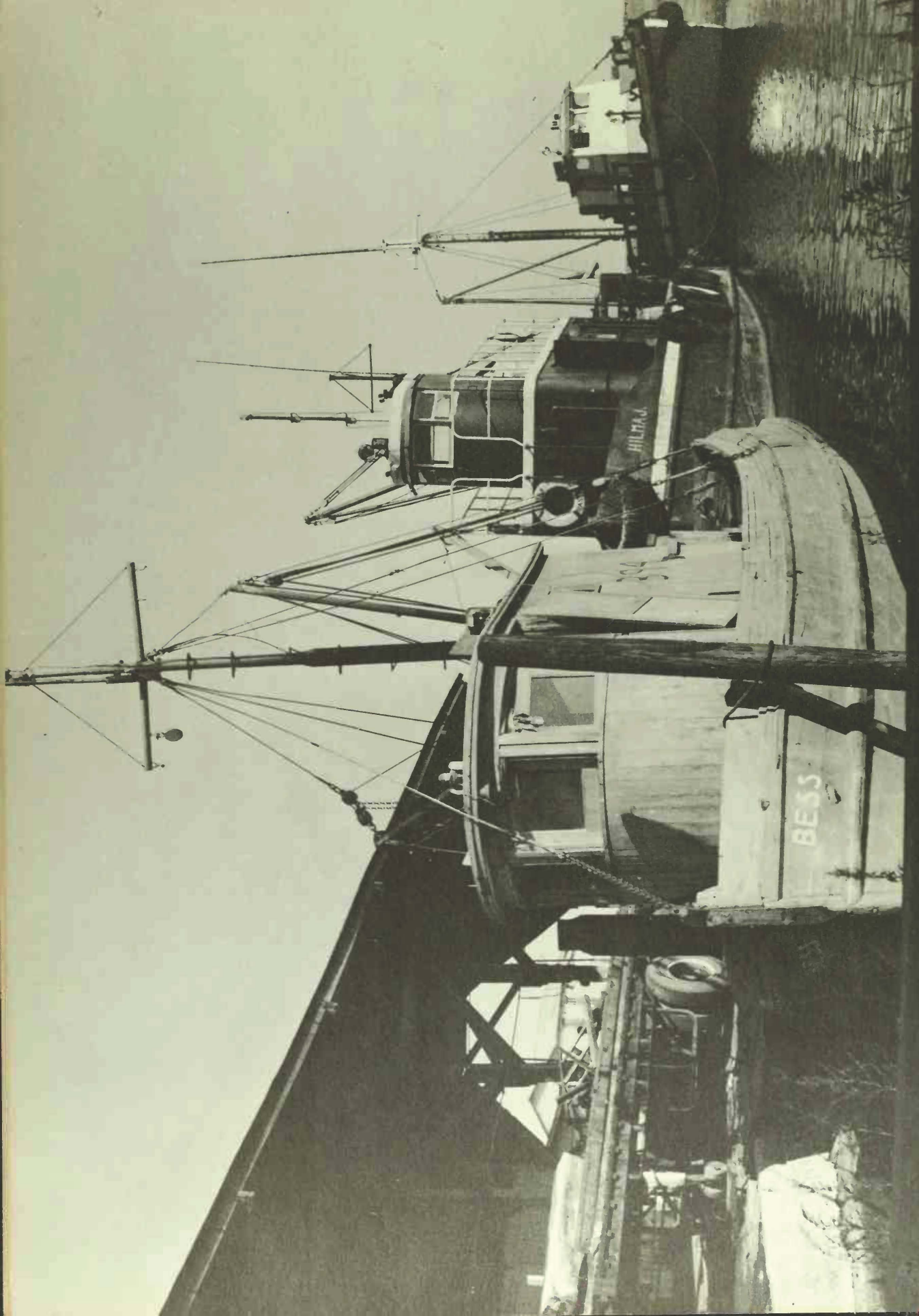
### ASSIGNMENT 14

This subject offers opportunity for two different compositions. One can follow the photographic copy quite literally because the picture composes well as it is. To be sure, the two groups of ships are separated by the channel of water between them. Another boat going or coming might be sketched in the channel, just over the wheel of the SAOMI GUEL and on a level with the third boat at the right-hand dock. Would not that serve to unite the two sides of the picture?

Another possibility is to ignore the right-hand row of boats and concentrate on those directly in front of us. When we do that however, we feel the need of showing more of the dock at the left. Possibly my drawings on pages 2 and 15 will be of some help in this.

I have made the accompanying drawing to demonstrate three points for the pencil artist. The first is that, with the pencil, we just cannot duplicate those dark tones we see in the picture. The second point is that distant dark masses — the masts and drying nets of the more distant boats — should be made perspectively much lighter than they





seem to appear even in nature. The third point is the advisability of concentrating our darks in a relatively restricted area. Now it might seem that there is no reason why the SAOMI GUEL should not be rendered in a tone as dark as its nameless companion on the left. However, as I proceeded with my sketch I instinctively made that boat and the one in front of it quite a little lighter in treatment. This does not mean giving it less interest, but it does give the sketch a more comfortable focal point. This would be even more evident if, as suggested, the picture were to be developed at the left, rendering a reasonable amount of the pier which barely shows in the photograph.

#### ASSIGNMENT 15

I took this photograph in Charleston, South Carolina, the day I made the sketch on page 13. In fact the very dock which I drew is seen just at the right in the photograph. If you want to take a more extensive scene than that represented in the photograph you can use the detail of my sketch to complete the picture, at the right.

These fishing boats make a very interesting subject. The troublesome thing about the picture is the dark shed on the dock that interferes with the nearest boat, which would be much better if its shaded side were silhouetted against something light. Certainly I would eliminate the shed. The truck seen on the dock is excellent background interest. That dark mooring pile which stands up in front of the pilot-house is disturbing. Cut it off a few feet and move it to the left or right a bit so that it will not continue the line of the mast above.

I think I would do something with the foreground; that horizontal line, which is a great timber lying on the edge of the dock, ends the picture too abruptly. Perhaps it would help to show a little more foreground.

Another recourse would be to eliminate the foreground pier and let the water flow right into the foreground — as though the boats were moored a bit further away.



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