

A Quarterly Journal
of Environmental Design

PLACES

FEED & PARTNERS

Volume 7, Number 1 • Fall 1990

\$12.00

PEI COBB FREED & PARTNERS

LIBRARY

DEMCO

CARING ABOUT PLACES

- 2 **Layers**
Donlyn Lyndon

SPEAKING OF PLACES

- 4 **Incidental Architecture**
Stuart Pertz

VISION, CULTURE AND
LANDSCAPE

- 8 **Introduction**
- 10 **The Potential
Of Ethnic Places
For Urban Landscape**
Dolores Hayden
- 18 **Conflicting Landscape
Values: The Santa Clara
Pueblo and Day School**
Rina Swentzell
- 28 **The Visual Character
Of Chinatowns**
David Chuenyan Lai
- 32 **Seeing Beyond
The Dominant Culture**
Wilbur Zelinsky
- 38 **Tithing for
Environmental Education:
A Modest Proposal**
Paul Groth

- 42 **Sacred Places
Of the Southwest**

Laura Sue Sanborn

- 50 **The Making of a Market**

Herb Childress

PORTFOLIO

- 64 **Solomon's Temple**

Laura Volkerding

- 78 **An Indigenous Thing:
The Story of William
Wurster and the
Gregory Farmhouse**

Daniel P. Gregory

Comments by:

Lawrence B. Anderson

Morley Baer

Joseph P. Esberick

Robert A.M. Stern

DISPATCHES

- 94 **The City on a Hill**

- 95 **Contributors**

Donlyn Lyndon
editor

James F. Fulton
publisher

Todd W. Bressi
associate editor

Alice Wingwall
Allan B. Jacobs
Randolph T. Hester, Jr.
consulting editors

Charlotte Sproul
assistant to the editor

Neema Kudva
editorial assistant

André Schütz
designer

Jacqueline Thaw
design assistant

Cindy Poorbaugh
production assistant

Alfred D. Carvallo
controller

William Wright
circulation director

Jessica Parris
Giovanna C. Reynolds
administrative associates

Contributing Board

Stanford Anderson
Richard Bender
Clare Cooper Marcus
Lois Craig
John de Monchaux
John Habraken
Spiro Kostof
Ray Lifchez
Roger Montgomery
John R. Myer
William L. Porter
Marc Treib

Layers

The cover of this issue is from a portfolio of photographs by Laura Volkerding. They offer us glimpses into the European schools where the skills required for restoration and repair of historic buildings are practiced and refined, into the inner sanctums of craft. These images remind us that the intricacies of skill embedded in well-crafted places do not just happen. They are learned, passed from generation to generation. They represent knowledgeable care gained from observation, instruction and practice, then imparted in the materials of building.

Good places embody many kinds of care, then become overlaid with the acts, memories and concerns of those who use them. Daniel P. Gregory traces the evolution of his grandmother's summer home, an apparently artless ranch house by William Wurster that has long been considered one of the icons of California regional architecture. The story goes that Wurster designed it in a day—but the story behind the story includes two previous architects and layers of previous thought upon which Wurster built. There is a story after the story, too, which includes the bonding of a family, the building's entry into the annals of architecture and the visits of notable architects. We invited three of the latter to comment. They find, not surprisingly, three differing qualities in the place, each related to their own interests and background.

An entirely different array of decisions, inventions and multiple interests underlie the making of the Rockridge Market Hall, an uncommonly effective corner in Oakland. Herb Childress' account of the effort and ingenuity required to bring this place into being is set into the context of community concerns.

The multiplicity of our culture and the range of interests that it represents can be a rich source for environmental design, but more often it is not. A group of papers from a conference on vision, culture and land-

scape explores ways in which the dominant forces in our culture exclude, repress, or exploit minority interests and offers suggestions for expanding our access to cultural diversity.

We begin, however, with a look at the ephemeral layer of images and objects that envelopes everyday surroundings in New York City, a surface layer that unwittingly but persistently qualifies our feelings about places.

—Donlyn Lyndon



Cover:
Maison des compagnons, Paris.
Photo by Laura Volkerding.

Incidental Architecture

Stuart Pertz

Among the elements that tell us about a place—the forms of architecture, the shape of the sky and the character of incidental things—it is the character of incidental things about which cities can do most and whose impact we understand least.

Incidental means a chance or unde-signed feature, something casual, hence minor, of secondary importance. It also refers to an incident, a chance event. Incidental architecture consists of the expressions, gestures and touches that inform us about what a place is like. It is both incidental to buildings and infrastructure and a happening—an object in space and an act in time.

Little of incidental architecture is permanent. It is around for just a while—put there, moved around, taken down, or left to tatter. But while it is there, it tells us who has been by, the way things are done and the kind of care that's been given. It is the conversation, tone, or voice of a place.

Incidental architecture is signs and banners and “public art.” It is fences, flowerpots and checkered table cloths; window curtains, mailboxes and trash; cars and vendors and the sounds of each; and the smell of urine, washed pavements and coffee.

Collected by habit and happen-stance, molded by culture and sculpted by rules, this undefined, unnoticed stuff of city life has, overtly and subliminally, an overwhelming effect on everything from how we feel about where we are to how we feel at all.

We spend most of our time as professionals creating the buildings and the infrastructure of our cities. Yet most of the sense or feeling of the city comes from incidental things that just happen—seemingly without intention, but with far more impact than most of the architecture to which these things are incidental.

What we plan and design—the facades, the bulk, the surfaces and detail—is the armature on which the sensory life of the city is built. Like an armature, our architecture succeeds or fails on its ability to support this stuff of life, not by cleaning it up and putting it away but by knowing what it is, understanding how it works and setting a place that makes room for it to happen.

Shop signs for “specials,” posted announcements, flags, balloons and graffiti all speak about our daily tasks, our elation and our discontent. Even garbage waiting for pick up tells us what's being done, who cares and the way they live.

The accompanying photos show ordinary visual moments in an ordinary day in an attempt to reconstruct what we sense around us. Not what we think we ought to have sensed, nor things that we think should be meaningful—but what is actually out there. Most of the shots were taken in Manhattan on a single day by me or my associate Andy Johnston. They show how one would ordinarily see the street, but without the eye or the instinct of a “trained” observer who might look beyond all the clutter and activity to the architecture, thus missing what is really there.

Clearly, what we find in our lively, scruffy New York has no relation to what exists in more sanitized communities. But the concept of incidental architecture as reflections of habit, culture and rules applies anywhere.

The sooner we acknowledge it as a significant continuing part of our environment and as vital and articulate communication, the sooner we'll build to support it for all of us to enjoy.

Then there is the intended incidental architecture—officially recognized street furniture—but often so anthropomorphically expressive.



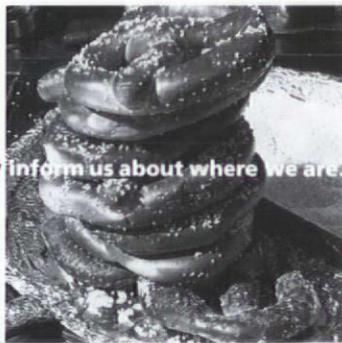
Most people are not trained observers, they usually don't see more than the sidewalk—the New Yorker's horizon.



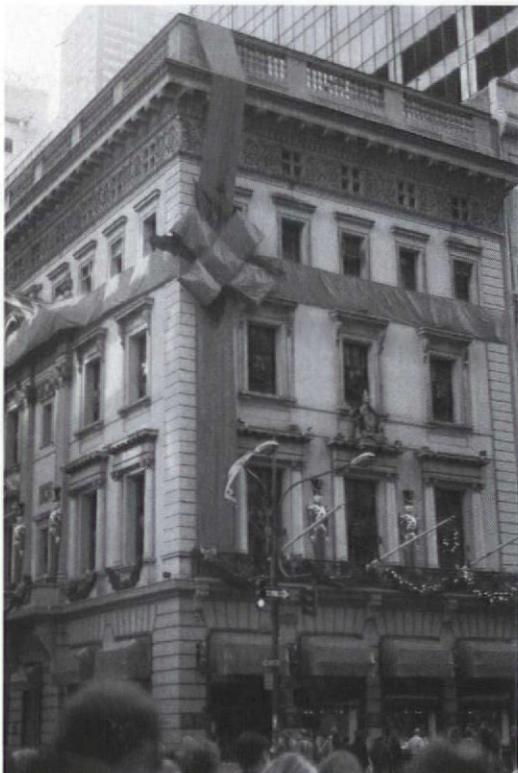
Few things tell as much about ourselves as trash we leave around.

Photos by Stuart Pertz and Andy Johnston.





Sights, sounds, smells and sidewalk activity inform us about where we are. Our response depends upon . . .



And then there are signs that say something—with words, or without them—Hey! Look at me! I'm here!!



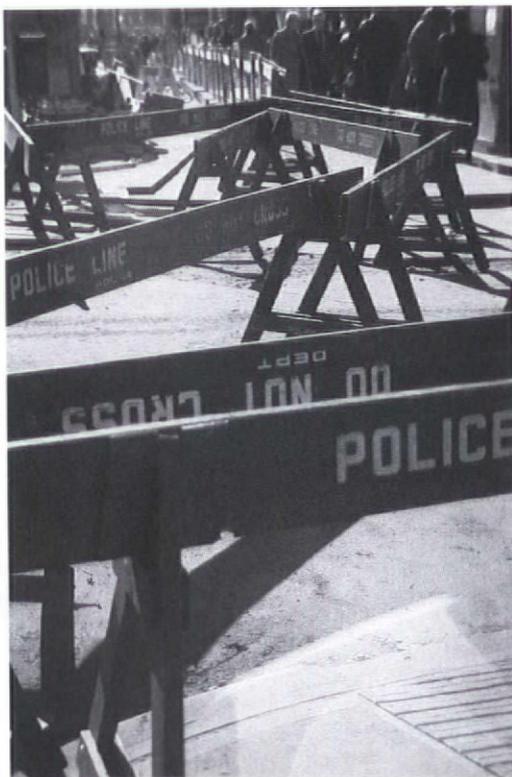


We all assume construction is a temporary phenomenon—a momentary adjustment until we're fixed or finished. Not so. We are permanently in con-

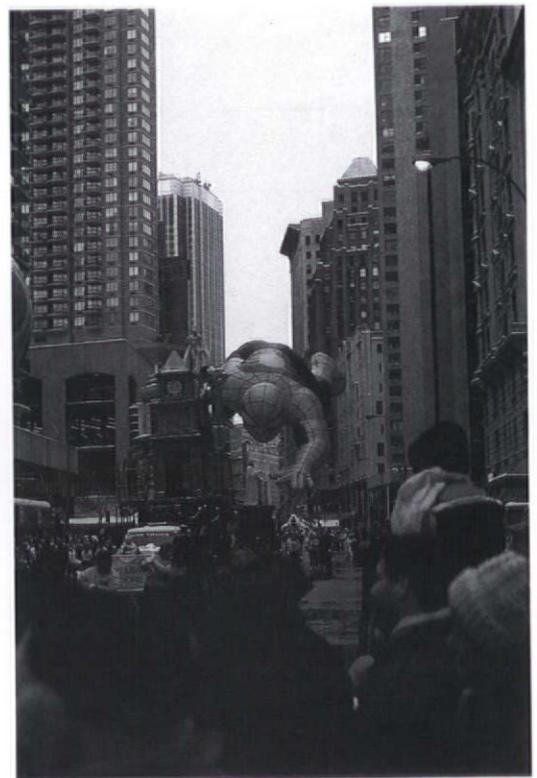
struction, and the sooner we recognize it the sooner we will make it a less intrusive and more responsible part of our street life.



... how closely we can or must identify with the things we experience. Who we are matters: stranger, visitor, denizen.



Some incidents are quite contrived—parades, street fairs and block parties where the choreography of the crowd is the incident.

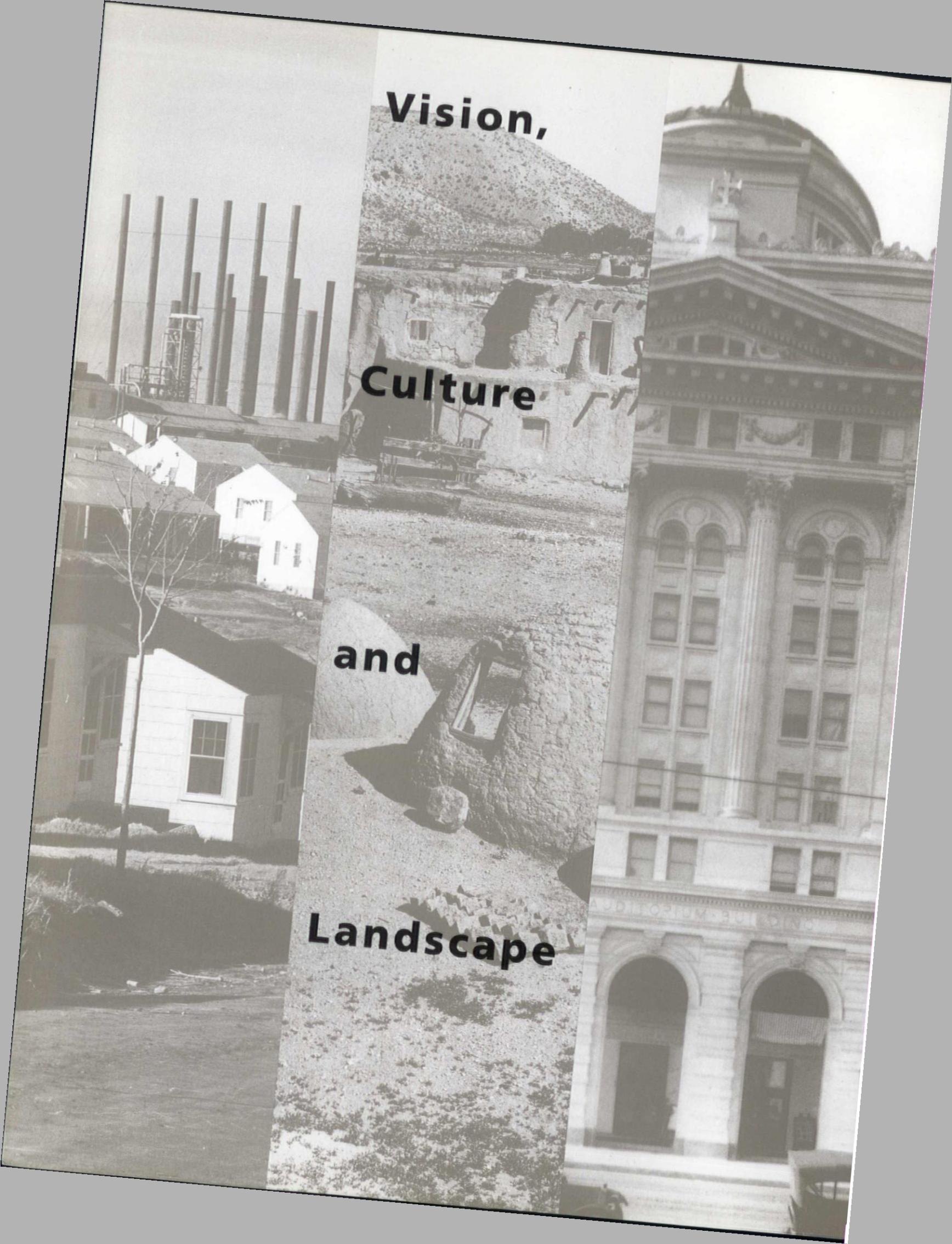


Vision,

Culture

and

Landscape





What landscapes have people who are ethnic minorities, or who are not politically or economically empowered, created? Are these landscapes territory for scholarly investigation, a resource worthy of preservation, or inspiration for new design projects? These questions, whose challenge has been recognized belatedly by designers, social scientists and preservation agencies, provide a framework for this discussion of vision, culture and landscape.

The work of Dolores Hayden, Rina Swentzell and David Chuenyan Lai reflects their varying levels of personal interaction with cultural landscapes (Hayden is an investigator and designer; Swentzell is a participant; Lai is an observer and analyst). It also offers insight into how we can look at these landscapes, understand their connection with the lives of people who create them, and maintain them as significant places. Wilbur Zelinsky comments on these scholars' work, and Paul Groth exhorts designers to assume responsibility for the environmental education of the public at large.

These articles (except the responses to Zelinsky) were expanded from remarks made at the Berkeley Symposium on Cultural Landscape Interpretation, held last March in conjunction with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley.

The symposium honored two retired Berkeley faculty, John Brinckerhoff Jackson and R. Burton Litton, Jr., whose divergent approaches to landscape analysis find common ground here. Lai borrows Litton's quantitative and qualitative visual analysis methods to explain how Chinatowns' unique identity is framed by their visual character. Hayden's uncovering of the history of women, labor and ethnic groups in Los Angeles reflects Jackson's study of how ordinary people express their cultural identities in the networks of places they make and use. The common lesson is that we must endeavor to see the landscape around us, and what we see inevitably influences our efforts to shape it.

—Todd W. Bressi

The text of these papers and others presented at the symposium can be found in Paul Groth, ed., Vision, Culture and Landscape: Working Papers from the Berkeley Symposium on Cultural Landscape Interpretation, available from the Center for Environmental Design Research; 390 Wurster Hall; University of California; Berkeley, CA 94720; (415) 642-2986.



TRINITY AUDITORIUM BUILDING

THANKSGIVING MARCH
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 1910
10:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

Using Ethnic History To Understand Urban Landscapes

In 1954, when the Immigration and Naturalization Service abandoned it as a place for processing immigrants and deportees, Ellis Island, the greatest national monument of American ethnic history, was considered surplus government property. The General Services Administration couldn't sell it. The National Park Service said it had little historic significance. Not until 1965 did it become part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument. Finally, in the 1990s it will reopen as "a fine example of America's changing sense of what we should historically commemorate and how."¹

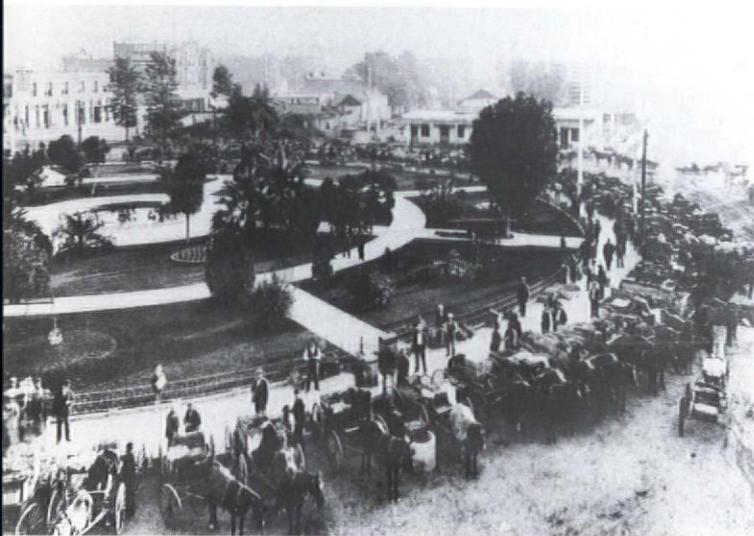
Yet, except for nationally significant places like Ellis Island, preserving and interpreting the history of urban ethnic groups is still controversial. Opportunities to save vernacular buildings in many urban neighborhoods—the modest homes, workplaces, public spaces and landscapes that have framed the daily lives of working people in the past—are still ignored. J. B. Jackson was one of the first to point out the importance of the vernacular landscape to understanding American culture. The vernacular urban landscape is also crucial to understanding our unique American urban history, which has immigration and ethnic diversity as central themes.

Because neither the national government, states, nor big cities have dealt well with urban ethnic places, many small non-profit groups have organized to celebrate their own cultural heritage. Today in Los Angeles African-American, Chinese-American, Japanese-American, Native American and Latino history groups are active. This is partly a response to a predominance in Los Angeles of landmarks of more traditional kinds—marking political, military, business and professional history and focusing on the achievements of men of Anglo-Saxon Protestant background. In Los Angeles today, at last count, more than 97 percent of the official landmarks were of this sort. But Los Angeles was founded in 1781 by a group of settlers whose heritage was predominantly Mexican, Native American and African. Even now, three quarters of the citizens are not white males. So where does the majority find its history?

Facing page: The Embassy Hotel and Auditorium remains the most significant site for commemorating the combined activities of ethnic minorities, women and labor unions in the development of Los Angeles. A Power of Place public art project will recall the community and labor organizing, especially among garment and cannery workers, that took place here. Photo courtesy Dolores Hayden.

Japanese-American family in a commercial flower field near downtown Los Angeles.

Photo courtesy Japanese-American Cultural and Community Center.



Chinese-American produce vendors at the La Placita outdoor market, 1895.

Photo courtesy Chinese Historical Society of Southern California.

In 1982 I founded a small non-profit corporation, The Power of Place, to address underrepresented aspects of the urban heritage. We are committed to identifying landmarks of ethnic, women's and labor history not yet seen as cultural resources, and creating more balanced interpretations of existing landmarks to emphasize the ethnic diversity of the city. We publish walking tours and scholarly research about historic sites and buildings, sponsor community history workshops, make proposals for historic preservation and sponsor public art.

The Power of Place is unusual because it is an organization with a multi-cultural focus, and because the focus is both historical and visual. While well-known professionals work on the project teams, most of the day-to-day work is done by UCLA interns—young architects, planners and scholars—who are learning to incorporate these concerns into their work.

I am a social historian of architecture and urban development. In focusing on public history, I have been influenced by groups such as the Brass Workers History Project of Waterbury, Conn., led by Jeremy Brecher, and the New York Chinatown History Project, started by Jack Tchen. I share their commitment to workers' history and ethnic history, but I am also interested in the physical design of the city (preserved buildings or districts, new art works, new itineraries) as a medium for some of our work.

It is a medium that promotes public memory. For example, the Black Heritage Trail, run by the National Park Service in Boston, is a project that has a strong physical presence on Beacon Hill, and this imageability means when people have seen it, they remember it as part of the city. I agree with Kevin Lynch, who once said "Choosing a past helps us to construct

a future.”² I would make this more explicit: Choosing to celebrate ethnic diversity, as a part of our history, should be an essential part of urban and cultural planning.

This is controversial in terms of both theory and practice. There are various approaches to the vernacular, the urban and the ethnic. One of the best books on ethnic architecture, Dell Upton’s edited collection, *America’s Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups That Built America*, includes brief essays on different rural ethnic groups and their vernacular buildings by a number of architectural historians, cultural geographers, folklorists and anthropologists, including Henry Glassie, John Vlach and Christopher Yip. This illus-

trated guide helps the student or the traveler spot an Irish-American house in Appalachia, a German-American barn in Pennsylvania, slave cabins in Mississippi, or a Japanese-American temple in Hawaii. While Upton suggests that “large urban ethnic groups evidently built little that was distinctive,” he then allows, “we cannot be too confident in making such assertions. The absence of urban ethnic architectures may be more apparent than real.”³

I think it is possible to tease out this material by using methods from social history as well as from vernacular building history to define some surviving ethnic cultural landscapes dating from 1850 to 1940 in many

Latina garment workers meeting at the Embassy Theater, 1946.

Photo courtesy Dolores Hayden.



The Power of Place's Biddy Mason Project

The first public art project undertaken by The Power of Place focused on Biddy Mason, an African-American working woman who struggled to gain her freedom from slavery, establish a practice as a midwife, raise a family and establish both her own homestead and various community organizations in Los Angeles.

When I first saw the site of Mason's homestead, it was a parking lot at 333 Spring Street in downtown Los Angeles, an unlikely place for a history project. Then in 1986 a planner at the Los Angeles Community Redevelopment Agency, Robert Chattel, contacted me and asked if The Power of Place would be interested in proposing new public art for the site, which was about to become a 10-story retail and garage complex. The developers and their art consultant, Michelle Isenberg, were also supportive of the project. I was project director and historian on the team, which included graphic designer Sheila de Bretteville, artists Betye Saar and Susan King, and curator Donna Graves.¹

The first public event was a workshop. Historians, planners, community members, students and the project team discussed the importance of the history of the African-American community in Los Angeles, and women's his-



tory within it. Mason's role as a midwife and founder of the AME Church was stressed.

The project included five parts. First, Saar's assemblage, "Biddy Mason's House of the Open Hand," installed in the elevator lobby, included motifs from vernacular buildings of the 1880s as well as a tribute to Mason's life. Second, King's large format letterpress book, *HOMEIstead*, was published in an edition of 35. King incorporated rubbings from Evergreen Cemetery in Boyle Heights, where Mason is buried. These included vines, leaves and an image of the gate of Heaven. The book weaves together historical text with King's meditations on the homestead becoming a 10-story building.

Third, "Biddy Mason: Time and Place," a black poured concrete wall with slate and granite inset panels, designed by de Bretteville, chronicles the story of Biddy Mason and her life. The wall includes a midwife's bag, scissors and spools of thread embossed into the concrete. De Bretteville also included a picket fence around the homestead, agave leaves and wagon wheels representing Mason's walk to freedom from Mississippi to California. Both her "Freedom Papers" and the deed to her homestead are among the historic documents and photographs bonded to limestone panels.

Fourth, we produced an inexpensive poster, "Grandma Mason's Place: A Midwife's Homestead," also designed by de Bretteville. Historical text I wrote for the poster included midwives' folk remedies. Fifth, my article, "Biddy Mason's Los Angeles, 1856-1891," appeared in *California History* in fall 1989.

The pieces share common imagery: gravestone rubbings in the book and carved letters in the wall, and a picket fence, medicine bottle and midwife's bag in the lobby and the wall. One old photograph of Mason and her kin on the porch of the Owens family house appears in several parts of the project, as does a portrait.

Everyone who becomes involved in a public history or public art project hopes for an audience that reaches beyond the classroom or the museum. The wall has been especially successful in evoking the community spirit of claiming the place. Youngsters run their hands along the wagon wheels, elderly people decipher the historic maps and the Freedom Papers. People of all ages ask their friends to pose for snapshots in front of their favorite parts of the wall.

—Dolores Hayden

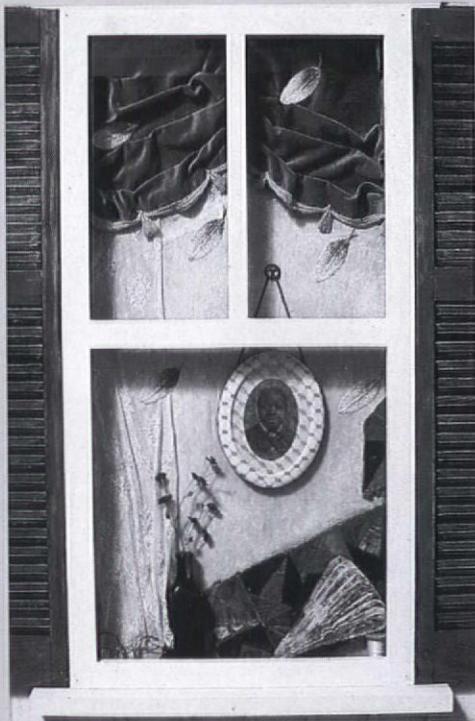


Sheila de Bretteville,
Biddy Mason: Time and Place,
1989.
Photo courtesy The Power
of Place.

Opposite:
 Women of the Owens
 and Mason families at the
 Owens' home.
 Photo courtesy University
 of California, Los Angeles.



Descendants of Bidy Mason at
 the dedication of the Bidy
 Mason wall.
 Photo by Dolores Hayden, cour-
 tesy The Power of Place.



Betye Saar,
*Bidy Mason's House of the
 Open Hand*, detail, 1989.
 Photo courtesy Power of Place.

American cities and towns. Indeed, it is not only possible to find these ethnic, urban places, but also our last chance to save some of them. As J.B. Jackson suggested in *The Necessity for Ruins*, decline is often the stimulus for action.⁴

What do these ethnic urban landscapes consist of? In addition to vernacular buildings, there are ethnic spatial patterns, ethnic vernacular arts traditions and territorial histories contributing to the whole.

Let me define each of these components. *Vernacular building* can be part of the public history of any community, if the construction of residences and workplaces is understood and interpreted as a social and economic process.⁵ While many vernacular structures are not exceptional as architecture, their age, scale and neighborhood meaning may make them vital reminders of the ethnic past.

In addition to considering the ethnic social history behind many physically unremarkable structures, it is also essential to analyze building types and their special relationships to ethnic neighborhoods. Religious buildings, meeting halls and markets have been important for almost all groups, but some building types are identified with particular ethnic groups. Laundries, produce markets and herb shops, for example, were often developed by Chinese-Americans; and flower markets and midwives' hospitals by Japanese-Americans. Not only can one study ethnic groups' distinctive approaches to creating space, it is also important to study buildings that are occupied by different ethnic groups over time, to see how groups impose different requirements and how architectural transformations take place.

Ethnic spatial patterns, such as Chinese-American gateways and underground passages, or Latino mar-

kets, streets and public plazas, can also be found in many neighborhoods. The kind of research David Chuenyan Lai has done on the spatial structure of Chinatowns in Canada would serve as an excellent example of what is needed for American ethnic neighborhoods.⁶ This physically oriented research can be joined to studies of people using space, such as Dan Rose's anthropological work on African-American street life or Christine Stansell's historical research on women and children in the streets of New York.⁷

Ethnic spatial patterns also mark the history of work in the city because members of different groups arrive with different skills and because occupational segregation often occurs along ethnic lines. Tying the history of work to the urban landscape often reveals patterns of infrastructure construction that can be interpreted as part of ethnic history. Water systems in Los Angeles were built by Irish-Americans, streetcar lines by Mexican immigrants working on *el traque*, railroads by Chinese-American workers. The brickyards were run by Latinos.

Ethnic vernacular arts traditions are also distinctive. Some I have come across in Los Angeles are Japanese-American flower decorations for streets, Anglo fruit and walnut architecture for citrus festivals, Chinese-American vegetable gardens and Mexican-American sign painting traditions for both commercial buildings and trucks. Many ethnic groups also have traditions of street festivals—an art form itself.

Probably the most complete account of the decorative traditions of a specific ethnic group is the Fleisher Art Memorial's Italian-American catalogue for Philadelphia which describes masonry, confectionery, window dressing and street festival design, among other traditions.⁸

Territorial histories are perhaps the most complicated part of the ethnic cultural landscape to research.

Territoriality is a term geographers use;⁹ *territorial history* is a term I have devised. By territorial history, I mean the history of a bounded space, with some enforcement of the boundary, used as a way of defining political and economic power. It is the political and temporal complement of a cognitive map; it is an account of both inclusion and exclusion.

The interviews of oral historians are full of territorial history that the compilers usually don't know what to do with. For example, a black lawyer who grew up in a middle class family in Los Angeles in the 1930s and 1940s recalls that he had to sit in segregated movie theaters, that he could not drive to Compton, Inglewood, or Glendale, but that he could go to the beach safely at any time on the streetcar.¹⁰ The lawyer also remembers having Japanese-American friends, watching them sent to Manzanar, going to visit there and finding a fence in the visiting room, so that he couldn't play with the other children. This is an individual account taken from an oral history interview; a collection of such accounts can create an ethnic territorial history for a given time in a city's history.

That ethnic territorial history will also help to locate potential landmarks that are sites of political struggle—a church whose congregation led the civil rights movement or a crusading newspaper like the Los Angeles *Eagle*, whose editor took up fair housing. In this context, these buildings can become more viable locations for architectural preservation efforts than they might be as isolated structures.

There are many territories, some defined by ethnicity, some by class and some by gender, just as there are many identities. It is important not to gener-

alize too broadly about any one of these territories or identities in isolation from the others. If public history projects are organized by ethnicity, then it is particularly important to review them to make sure that class and gender have been represented.

I tackled the problem of integrating ethnicity and class by beginning The Power of Place walking tour series with a multi-ethnic tour of downtown, based on the history of the labor force in the city. It included workers in the vineyards and groves, produce markets, flower fields, the oil field, a pre-fabricated housing factory and garment factories, as well as midwives and firefighters. Ethnicity and gender were subthemes, as men, women and children of every ethnic group were identified as part of the work force needed to feed, clothe and shelter the residents of the city. Overall, the tour tells the history of the city through production rather than consumption.

Like class, gender cuts across ethnic lines and is a distinctive aspect of territorial history. Women's history has been neglected even more than class or ethnic history, and acknowledging the presence of women in history should be an essential part of every new ethnic history project, as well as an incentive for the reinterpretation of many existing landmarks. The Power of Place has found that it is possible to celebrate women's traditional occupations (such as housewife, midwife, nurse and garment worker) as well as women's entry into non-traditional fields (such as oil wildcatter and labor organizer) in a small area of downtown Los Angeles, and touch all of the major ethnic groups.

Ultimately, the strategies I have been describing are the scholar's ways of understanding ethnic history and making it visible in lectures, books, tours and exhibits. Historic preserva-

tionists may also find some of them useful. Ethnic history presents great challenges for American architectural preservation, with its emphasis on commercial real estate and adaptive reuse.¹¹ *The Power of Place* has helped save some buildings, but what is more unusual is that we have experimented with involving artists and designers in making ethnic history visible.

Successful ethnic history projects can expand the audience for all public history and preservation. First, the awareness that every citizen's history is important can generate a new kind of pride in a multicultural city. Second, recognition of historic structures in poorer neighborhoods can support other kinds of community organizing for change. Such projects can be tied to the overall economic development of a neighborhood and anchor a variety of activities. Third, if vacant sites of historic importance can be used for new public art projects based on ethnic history, or for new open space designs with the same emphasis, the energies of talented artists and designers will enrich the city.

A variety of ethnic history projects—some walking tours and books, some physical projects based on preservation of vernacular buildings, some on new art or landscape designs—can create a stronger urban sense of place and a more egalitarian approach to the urban landscape, where attention is given to every urban neighborhood, not just those where commercial real estate ventures are profitable. This is the kind of city *The Power Place* would like to help create.

The author acknowledges Donna Graves, executive director of The Power of Place, for her comments on this paper.

Notes

1. Michael H. Frisch and Dwight Pitcaithly, "Audience Expectations as Resource and Challenge: Ellis Island as Case Study," in Jo Blatti, ed., *Past Meets Present: Essays About Historic Interpretation and Public Audiences* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1987), p. 157. An excellent overview of preservation, including a chapter on ethnicity, is Antoinette Lee and R.E. Stipe, *The American Mosaic* (Washington, D.C.: US/ICMOS, 1987).
2. Kevin Lynch, *What Time Is This Place?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1972), p. 64.
3. Dell Upton, ed., *America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups That Built America* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1986), p. 14.
4. J.B. Jackson, *The Necessity for Ruins* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1980), pp. 89-102.
5. Elizabeth Collins Cromley, "Public History and the Historic Preservation District," in Blatti, pp. 30-36.
6. David Chuenyan Lai, *Chinatowns: Towns Within Cities in Canada* (Vancouver, B.C.: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1988).
7. Dan Rose, *Black American Street Life* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), and Christine Stansell, *City of Women* (New York: Knopf, 1987).
8. Dorothy Noyes, *Uses o Tradition: Arts of Italian Americans in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Fleisher Art Memorial, 1989).
9. Robert Sack, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), pp. 1-2. Another example is Dell Upton, "White and Black Landscapes in Eighteenth Century Virginia," *Places* 2:2, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), pp. 59-72.
10. Los Angeles *Times Magazine*, Feb. 5, 1990.
11. Dolores Hayden, Gail Dubrow and Carolyn Flynn, *The Power of Place: Los Angeles* (Los Angeles: The Power of Place, 1985) a walking tour; and Dolores Hayden, "The Power of Place: A Proposal for Los Angeles," *The Public Historian*, (Summer 1988), pp. 5-18.

Note for "The Power of Place's Biddy Mason Project"

1. Funding came from the National Endowment for the Arts and local sources.



Conflicting Landscape Values: The Santa Clara Pueblo and Day School

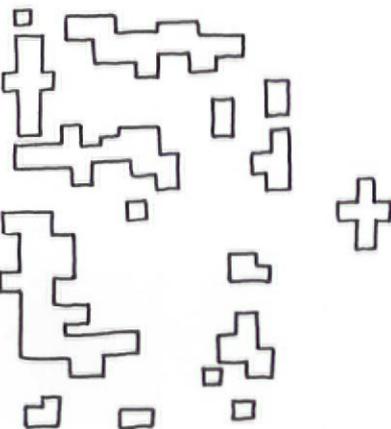
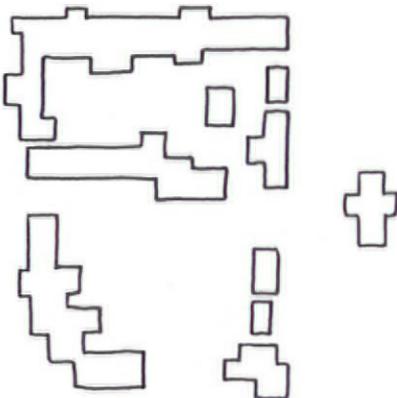
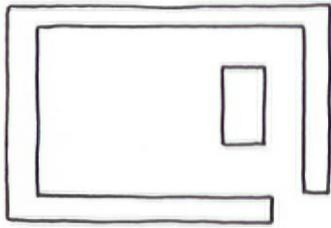
The following is about my understanding—and feelings—about two very different relationships to the land represented by the Santa Clara Pueblo, in New Mexico, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) day school established next to it. These different relationships reflect the divergent world views of two cultures, as well as their differing methods and content of education.

Pueblo people believe that the primary and most important relationship for humans is with the land, the natural environment and the cosmos, which in the Pueblo world are synonymous. Humans exist within the cosmos and are an integral part of the functioning of the earth community.

The mystical nature of the land, the earth, is recognized and honored. Direct contact and interaction with the land, the natural environment, is sought. In the pueblo, there are no manipulated outdoor areas that serve to distinguish humans from nature. There are no outdoor areas that attest to human control over “wild” nature. There are no areas where nature is domesticated.

Santa Clara, where I was born, is a typical Tewa Pueblo with myths that connect it to the nearby prehistoric sites and also inextricably weave the human place into a union with the land from whence the people emerged. The people dwell at the center, around the *nansipu*, the “emergence place” or “breathing place.” The breath flows through the center as it does through other breathing places in the low hills and far mountains. These symbolic places remind the people of the vital, breathing earth and their specific locations are where the people can feel the strongest connection to the flow of energy, or the creation of the universe. The plants, rocks, land and people are part of an entity that is sacred because it breathes the creative energy of the universe.

View from roof of pueblo church, 1899.
Photo by Vroman (no first name given). Courtesy Smithsonian Institute, National Anthropological Archives.



Evolution of the Santa Clara pueblo from traditional form (top) to recent years (bottom).

Drawings courtesy Rina Swentzell.

The physical location of Santa Clara Pueblo is of great importance—the Rio Grande snakes along the east of the Pueblo; the mysterious Black Mesa, where the mask whippers emerge, is to the south; the surrounding low hills contain shrines and special ceremonial areas; and the far mountains define the valley where humans live.

This world, for me as a child, was very comfortable and secure because it gave a sense of containment. We roamed in the fields and nearby hills. At an early age we learned an intimacy with the natural environment and other living creatures. We learned of their connectedness to rocks, plants and other animals through physical interaction and verbal communication. We gained tremendous confidence and an unquestioning sense of belonging within the natural ordering of the cosmos. Learning happened easily. It was about living. In fact, the word for *learning* in Tewa is *baa-pu-web*, which translates as “to have breath.” To breathe or to be alive is to learn.

Within the Pueblo, outdoor and indoor spaces flowed freely and were hardly distinguishable. One moved in bare feet from interior dirt floors enclosed by mud walls to the well-packed dirt smoothness of the Pueblo plaza. In this movement, all senses were utilized. Each of the various dirt surfaces (interior walls, outdoor walls, plaza floor) were touched, smelled and tasted. Special rocks were carried in the mouth so that their energy would flow into us. Everything was touchable, knowable and accessible.

There was consistency in that world because the colors, textures and movements of the natural landscape were reflected everywhere in the human-made landscape. Reflection on the cosmos was encouraged. Separation of natural and human-made

spaces was minimal, so conscious beautification of either outdoor or indoor spaces was not necessary. Landscaping—replanting, bringing in trees, shrubs and grass for aesthetic reasons—was thought to be totally unnecessary. The mobility of humans and animals was accepted but the mobility of plants rooted in their earth places was inconceivable.

The Pueblo plaza was almost always full. People cooked outdoors, husked corn, dried food and sat in the sun. The scale of the Pueblo plaza was such that I never felt lost in it even when I was the only person there.

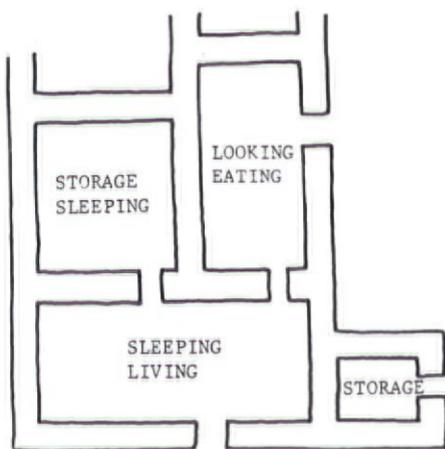
The form and organization of the Pueblo house reinforced the sense of security and importance of place. One sat on and played on the center of the world (the *nansipu*) and thereby derived a sense of significance. Houses were climbed on, jumped on, slept on and cooked on. They were not material symbols of wealth but were rather, in Thoreau’s terminology, a most direct and elegantly simple expression of meeting the human need for shelter.

Construction methods and materials were uncomplicated. The most direct methods were combined with the most accessible materials. Everyone participated, without exception—children, men, women, elders. Anybody could build a house or any necessary structure. Designers and architects were unnecessary since there was no conscious aesthetic striving or stylistic interest.

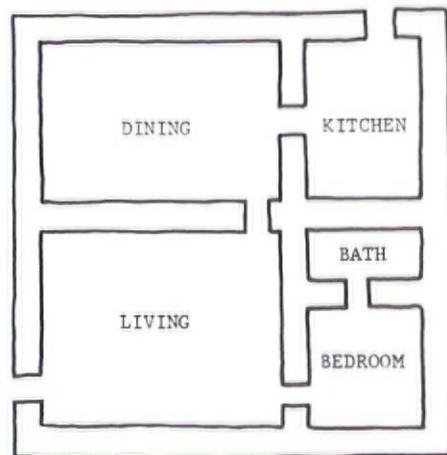
Crucial elements of the house interiors were the low ceilings; rounded and hand-plastered walls; small, dark areas; tiny, sparse windows and doors; and multiple-use rooms. All interior spaces were shared by everybody, as were the exterior spaces. The need for individual privacy was not important enough to affect the plan of Pueblo houses. Privacy was viewed in a differ-

View of the Santa Clara Pueblo,
1879.

Photo by J. K. Hillers. Courtesy
Smithsonian Institute, National
Anthropological Archives.



Typical pueblo interior layout,
1940s.



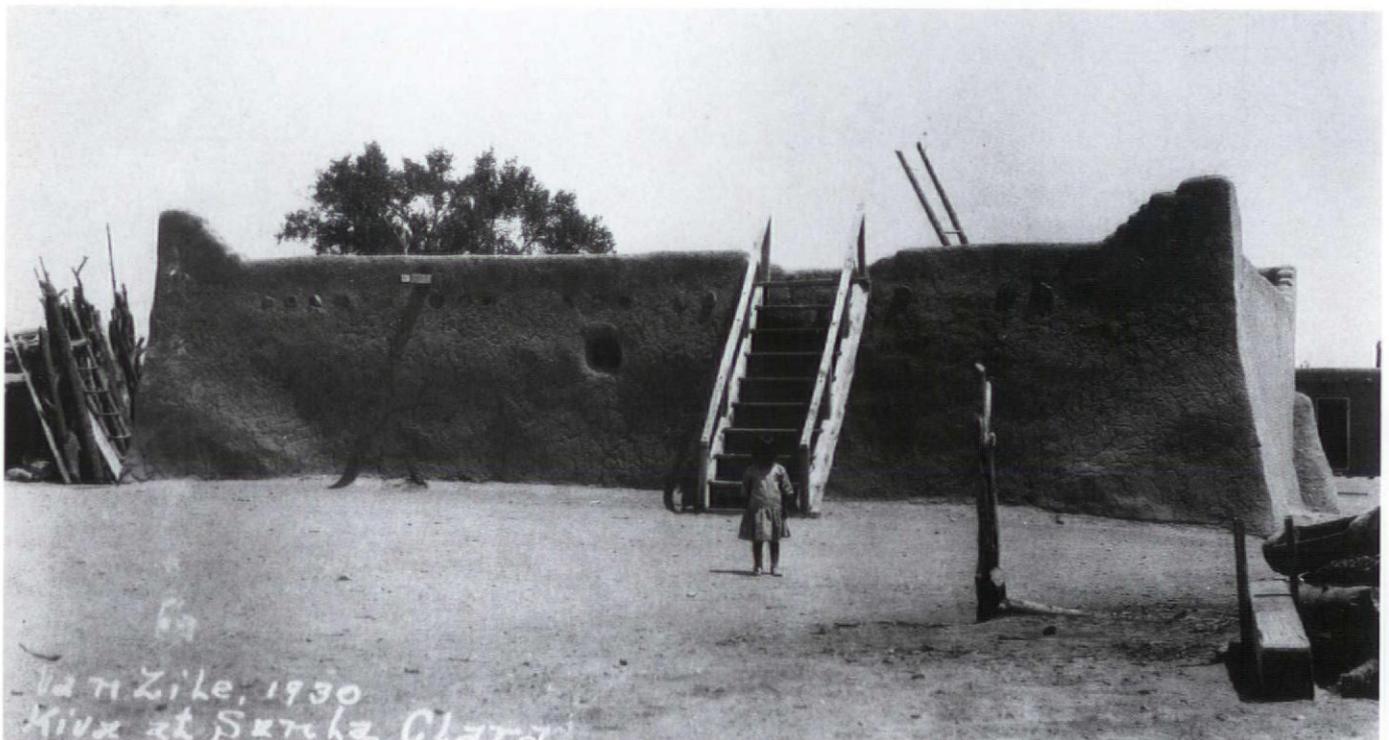
Typical pueblo interior layout,
recent years.

ent way; it was carried around within the individual and walls and physical space were not needed to defend it. Sharing was crucial.

Within the house, as without, spirits moved freely. Members of families were sometimes buried in the dirt floor and their spirits became a part of the house environment. Besides those spirits there were others who had special connections with the house structure because they assisted in its construction or because they were born or died in it. Since houses survived many generations, the spirits were many. Houses were blessed with a special ceremony similar to the ritual performed for a baby at birth. There

was also an easy acceptance of the deterioration of a house. Houses, just as people's bodies, came from and went back into the earth.

Ideas that characterize the Pueblo human-made and natural environments, then, are that humans and nature are inseparable, human environments emulate and reflect the cosmos, creative energy flows through the natural environment (of which every aspect, including rocks, trees, clouds and people) is alive, and aesthetics and the cosmos are synonymous.



**Kiva at Santa Clara Pueblo,
the enclosure for the *nansipu*
or "breathing hole."**

**Photo by Fayette W. Van Zile.
Courtesy Smithsonian Institute,
National Anthropological
Archives.**

How Western Education Shaped the Day School Landscape

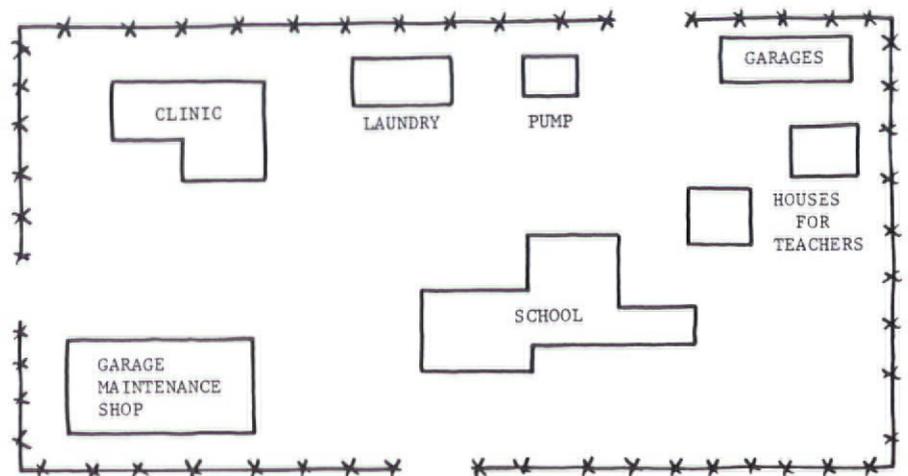
*"The goal, from the beginning of attempts at formal education of the American Indian, has been not so much to educate him as to change him."*¹

Santa Clara Day School was introduced to such a world in the early 1890s during the BIA's golden age of constructing schools for Native Americans. In the very early years of European settlement in America, various religious groups attempted to "civilize" and Christianize Native Americans. In 1832, that responsibility was assumed by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and the focus narrowed to "civilizing" Native Americans.

From 1890 to 1928, the goal was to assimilate Native Americans; the tactics were dissolving their social structure through Western education and destroying their land base. After 1928, when an influential government study asked for "a change in point of view" in how Native Americans should be educated, programs in bilingual education, adult basic education, training of Native American teachers, Native American culture and in-service teacher training were initiated across the country. But these programs were halted almost as quickly, and certainly before these ideas reached Santa Clara Day School.

The years after 1944 saw a new determination to terminate Native American reservations and abolish the special relationships between Native Americans and the federal government, relationships that had been guaranteed by centuries of law and treaties.² It was during this time, from 1945 to 1951, that I attended Santa Clara Pueblo Day School.

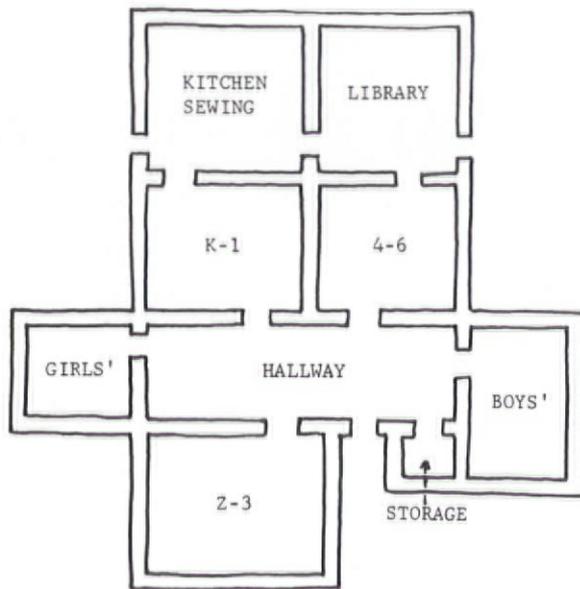
The government school grounds and buildings, built during the 1920s, not only reflected that attitude of changing and civilizing Native Americans but also characterized the



Plan of BIA school at Santa Clara.



BIA school playground.
Photo courtesy Rina Swentzell.



Plan of BIA school building.

general Western-European attitude of human control that seems to stem from the Renaissance glorification of human capabilities. Everything had to be changed so it would be in accordance with the Western way of thinking and being. The BIA school compounds reflected a foreign world view that opposed the Pueblo world and its physical organization.

At Santa Clara, the BIA school complex was located a quarter of a mile from the center of the Pueblo and had a barbed-wire fence around its periphery. That fence defined the complex and effectively kept the two worlds separate. The cattle guards and the double-styled ladders built over the fence provided the only openings into the compound. They kept out both animals and old people. All large rocks and natural trees had been removed a long time before I was a student and there were but a few foreign elm trees within the barren, isolated landscape.

The loss of trust that occurred when people moved from the Pueblo to the school setting was most striking. Within the Pueblo, pre-school-aged children were allowed enormous free-

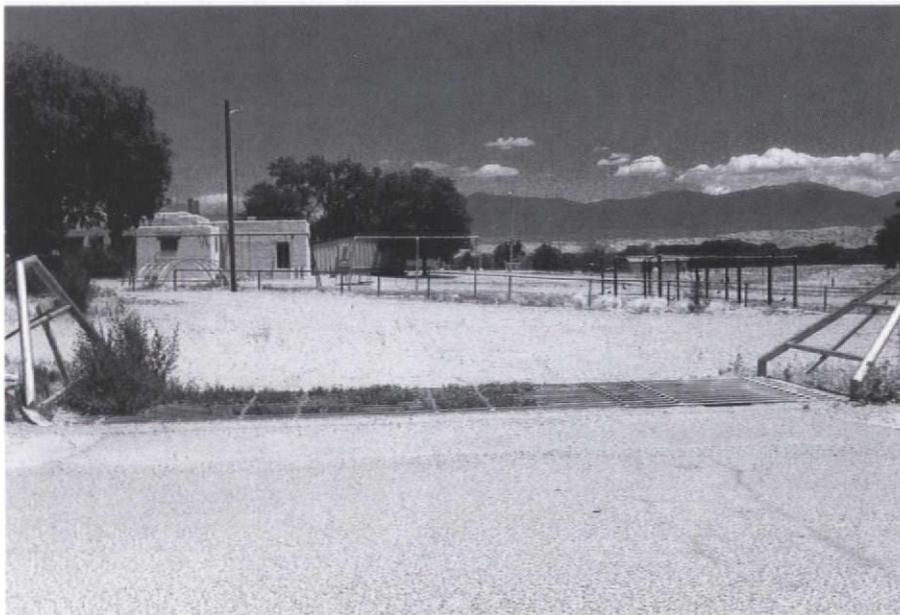
dom of activity and choice; to a great extent they were trusted as capable of being in charge of themselves. This liberal assumption created its own self-fulfilling prophecy. Since Pueblo children were expected to care for themselves in an adequate, responsible way, they generally did.

But within the BIA school, there was a different attitude: The overall atmosphere was one of skepticism. The fence was an expression of the lack of respect and trust in others. Although the formal reason given for the fence was that it kept out animals, everyone in the Pueblo knew its purpose was also to keep people out. It was an unsettling feeling to know other people had to physically protect themselves from community.

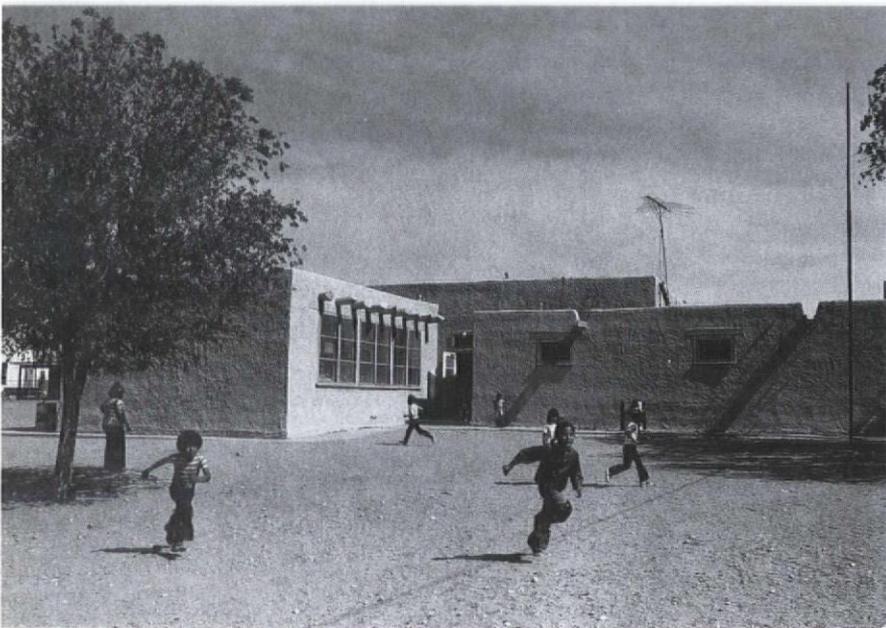
As the school grounds were separate from the life and environment around it, so were the various structures located within the compound separate from each other. There were separate laundry and shower buildings—as part of the civilizing effort, everybody, including adults, was supposed to take showers. Also included in the compound were a health clinic, a maintenance shop, the main school building and small separate houses for the teachers. All of them were scattered seemingly randomly in the approximately five-acre compound.

Within the school building, children were grouped into rooms according to grade level. Inside the various classrooms, the divisions continued. Those who could read well were separated from those who could not. Individual desks and mats were assigned. Individual achievement was praised. Concentration on the individual, or the parts, which has become the hallmark of modern American society, was strongly emphasized. This was in contrast to the holistic concepts of the Pueblo, which emphasized togeth-

**View from roof of Pueblo
church, 1899.
Photo by Vroman (no first
name given). Courtesy
Smithsonian Institute, National
Anthropological Archives.**



**Cattle guard-entrance to the
BIA school grounds.
Photo courtesy Rina Swentzell.**



Above: Buildings at the BIA school were constructed with pitched roofs, which were foreign to the Pueblo residents.

Below: The roofs of some of the buildings were subsequently removed.

Photos courtesy Rina Swentzell.

erness and cooperation and which were expressed in connected and multiple-function structures.

The floor plan of the school was efficient and designed to create an aspiration of moving up—the good old American attitude of upward mobility—from one room and grade level to the next. The move, however, was always disappointing because there were expectations that something special would happen in the next room but it never did. The whole system had a way of making people unhappy with the present situation. Again, this was totally foreign to Pueblo thinking, which worked towards a settling into the earth and, consequently, into being more satisfied with the moment and the present.

Inside the school house the ceilings were very high. The proportions of the rooms were discomfoting—the walls were very tall relative to the small floor space. The Catholic church in the Pueblo also had high ceilings, for Spanish priests sought to maximize both interior and exterior height in the missions they built. But in the church there was no sense of overhead, top-heavy space. It had heavy, soft walls at eye level to balance its height, as well as dark interiors that made the height less obvious.

Although there were plenty of buildings on the school grounds, it seemed that there were never enough people to make the spaces within the grounds feel comfortable. Everything seemed at a distance. The message was don't touch, don't interact. The exterior formality of the structures, as well as the materials used, discouraged climbing on them, scratching them, tasting them, or otherwise affecting them. There was no way to be a part of the place, the buildings, or the lives of teachers who lived there.

The creation of artificial play areas on the school grounds within the Pueblo context and community was ironic. The total environment (natural as well as human-created) was included in the Pueblo world of play. Play and work were barely distinguishable. Every activity was something to be done and done as well as possible; the relaxation or joy that play gives was to be found in submerging oneself in the activity at hand.

Play and work were distinguished from one another in the BIA school and specific time was assigned for both. There were recesses from work, yet play was constantly supervised so that the children could not discover the world for themselves. Every possible danger was guarded against. Lack of trust was evident in the playground as opposed to the Pueblo setting where we roamed the fields and hills.

It was apparent that the Anglo teachers preferred indoors and human-made spaces over the outdoors, and they tried to instill this preference in us. In the Pueblo, the outdoors was unquestionably preferred.

The saddest aspect of the entire school complex was the ground. There was no centering, no thought, no respect given to the ground. The native plants and rocks had been disturbed a long time ago and the land had lost all the variety one finds in small places created by bushes, rocks or rises and falls of the ground. The ground had been scraped and leveled, and metal play equipment was set upon it. It was also a gray color, which was puzzling because the ground in the Pueblo plaza, only a quarter of a mile away, was a warm, brown color.

The sensation of being in the Pueblo was very different from that of being on the school grounds. The Pueblo plaza had soulfulness. It was

endowed with spirit. The emergence place of the people from the underground was located within the plaza and the breath of the cosmos flowed in and out of it. The land, the ground, breathed there; it was alive. The school grounds were imbued with sadness because the spirit of the place, the land, was not recognized. Nothing flowed naturally. The vitality of the school came from faraway worlds, from lands described in books. Appreciation of the immediate landscape was impossible.

The Legacy of Conflicting Landscape Values

The Pueblo and the school grounds were imbued with different cultural values, attitudes and perceptions, and the students who moved from one setting to the other were deeply affected by those differences.

The school was part of a world that was whole unto itself and its orientation towards the future, time assignments, specialized buildings, artificial playgrounds and overall concern with segmentation were elements of a conscious world view that was not concerned with harmony and acceptance of spirituality in the landscape.

The government did not come to Santa Clara Pueblo out of inner kindness or benevolence. Rather, the government was dealing with Native Americans in what it considered to be the most efficient manner. This efficiency, which was so apparent in the structures, took away human interaction and dignity. We had to give ourselves totally to this order.

BIA authoritarianism assured the absence of any human-to-human or human-to-nature interaction. The monumental structures and sterile outdoor spaces in no manner stimulated the community to enter and

exchange communications at any time or at any level of equality. In that people-proof environment, the natural curiosity that children have about their world was dulled and respect for teachers far exceeded respect for the larger forces in the world.

Santa Clara Day School was a typical American school of its era— isolated and authoritatively emphatic. Its visual landscape read accordingly with the surrounding fence, the barren land and the tall, pitched-roof structures scattered within the compound.

But the longest-lasting impact may not be visual. The two physical settings taught different types of behavior to Pueblo children. Consequently, lack of confidence and feelings of inadequacy have become characteristic traits of children who lived in the Pueblo and went to the BIA school.

Notes

1. Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, *Indian Education: A National Tragedy—A National Challenge* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1969) p. 10.

2. *Ibid.*, p.13.

G HOUSE

BEAUTY SALON
儂髮莎龍

BEST FI
頂好丑業

JUELAS
妍嬌美膚中心

久雄保險
三樓

妍
皮膚不用
面皴、黑
乾皺、老
脂肪疣
草本換
專業設
紋眼
請上

京滬
經濟實惠

妍嬌
電腦健身
妳身上每一
時
外費
請



貴賓
髮
REBE
BEAUTY
9AM-7
2/FL 請上

妍嬌
電腦健身中
COMPUTER TONING C

八折
燙髮

儂髮

The Visual Character of Chinatowns

“Chinatown” means different things to different people at different times and in different cities. Chinatown may be conceived of as a social community, an inner city neighborhood, a suburban shopping plaza, a skid row district, a historic district, a tourist attraction, a place of mysterious evil, or a cultural hearth. Although our perception of Chinatown may be shaped by our knowledge of it as a social entity, our perception is also influenced by the act of seeing.

It is the facades of the buildings in Chinatown that constitute the most striking visual component of place character. Western architects or contractors built most of the old Chinatown buildings, but they tried to create “chinoiserie” or “exotica” by modifying or manipulating standard Western architectural forms. In Victoria’s and Vancouver’s Chinatowns in British Columbia, for example, buildings exhibit both Chinese decorative details and Western facades constructed in the prevailing commercial Italianate and Queen Anne fashions of the day.¹ Other Chinatowns, such as those in San Francisco, Seattle, Vancouver and Montreal, still have cohesive groupings of similar nineteenth-century buildings. These blend features of both Chinese and Western architectural styles.

Although a homogenous style of Chinatown architecture has never developed, Chinatown structures usually contain several architectural features rarely found on other downtown buildings. The most common elements are recessed or projecting balconies, upturned eaves and roof corners, extended eaves covering the main balconies, sloping tiled roofs, smooth or carved columns topped with cantilevered clusters of beams, flagpoles and parapet walls bearing Chinese inscriptions.

A series of narrow, tightly grouped entrances to retail and service establishments, common along the commercial streets of the Flushing, New York, Chinatown.
Photo by Todd W. Bressi.

Decorative features such as green or yellow tiled roofs, circular moon-shaped entrances and Chinese inscriptions transform these three Western-style buildings in Washington, D.C. into typical Chinatown structures. Photos courtesy David Chuenyan Lai.

Recessed balconies dominate the upper stories of many Chinatown buildings. This element may be a duplication of practices in Hong Kong, Macao, Canton and other cities in South China, where the facade of a building is set back at each level and the facade plane is met by a wrought iron balcony. Recessed balconies are common in South China because they help keep building interiors cool in the summer and warm in the winter. On rainy days, residents will dry their clothes on bamboo poles hung in the recessed balcony.

A recessed balcony also provides an open space for children to play and for households to worship the heavens during the Chinese New Year and other festivals. In Chinatowns, most Chinese association buildings have recessed balconies, which are useful when the interior assembly hall is too crowded during a festival celebration or when there is a street parade.

I have not come across any building with a recessed balcony outside Chinatown except one in Portland: The Waldo Block, a three-story building at the corner of Washington Street and S.W. Second Avenue, has a recessed balcony, but is four city blocks south of Portland's Chinatown. Even so, a search of the history of the block reveals that it was owned by the Gee How Oak Tin (Zhi Xiao Du Qin) Association during the late 1880s, when Chinatown included that block.²

The facades of Chinatown buildings are usually covered with Chinese decorative details.³ The major decorative elements include schemes of gold, red, green, yellow and other brilliant colors; animal motifs, including dragons, phoenixes, or lions; plant motifs, including pine, bamboo, plum and crimson; other motifs, including pagodas, lanterns, bowls and chopsticks; inscriptions of stylish Chinese characters such as *fu* (happiness or blessings) and *shou* (longevity); signboards inscribed in Chinese characters; hanging lanterns; doors, windows, or archways that are circular, moonshaped and overlain with ornate lattice work; and decorative balustrades adorned with frets.

In traditional Chinese architecture, the colors and animal motifs are believed to influence the fortune and destiny of a building's occupants. Red signifies happiness, gold is linked with prosperity, yellow is the imperial color, blue is associated with peace and green





The On Leong Chinese Merchant's Association Building, Chicago, is a good example of a Chinatown building with many decorative and structural components.

is associated with fertility. Certain mystic animals such as dragons and phoenixes are believed to be auspicious and are commonly carved or painted on walls, columns and shop signs.

Chinatown also is visibly different from other city neighborhoods because of other Chinese structures, such as the Chinese pavilion in Seattle, the Chinese pagoda in Montreal and the Chinese gardens in Vancouver and Winnipeg. There are also Chinese decorative features, such as telephone booths and bilingual street signs in Chinese characters and English letters. Chinese fittings such as pagodas, lanterns and other objects are used as decorative features on many restaurants and gift shops in Chinatown.

Lavishly decorated Chinese arches or gateways are prominent landmarks of many Chinatowns across North America. For example, Chinese arches serve as a symbolic entrance to Chinatowns in Boston, Chicago, Edmonton and Winnipeg. Two Chinese arches in Los Angeles function as entrances to a shopping plaza. A Chinese arch is a symbolic entrance to the Chinese Cultural Center in Vancouver. In Victoria, the Gate of Harmonious Interest was built to commemorate cooperation of the Chinese and non-Chinese citizens of the city in the rehabilitation of Chinatown as

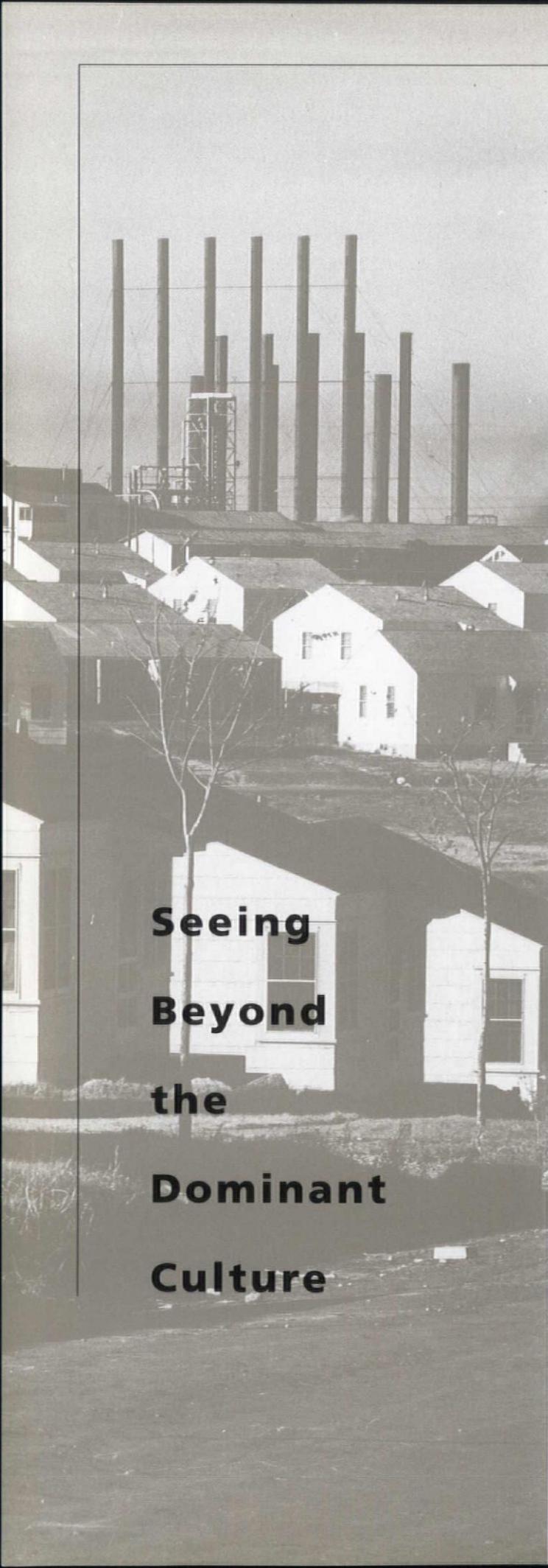
well as the harmony of the city's multicultural society.

The way our serial views of Chinatown are linked may cause our minds to mold the chaotic images of Chinatown into a perceived coherent precinct. In Victoria, for example, intricate networks of picturesque arcades, narrow alleys and enclosed courtyards are still found behind the commercial facades of the old buildings. The architectural components relate harmoniously to the scale of people passing through the street: We see a large impressive gateway, then details of its design, then facades of the three-story buildings, then the street, sidewalks, people and vehicles, and finally the alleys and courtyards. The scales of the various parts of Chinatown integrate hierarchically so we have a sense of complexity, coherence and satisfaction.

Also, we are keenly conscious of objects and the intervals between one object and another—the signboards, the merchandise, telephone booths, sidewalk benches and street lamps. They are closely spaced and make us visually aware of the densely populated and overcrowded streetscape — and community — of Chinatown.

Notes

1. Alastair W. Kerr, "The Architecture of Victoria's Chinatown," *Datum* (Summer 1989, Vol. 4, No. 1).
2. Nelson Chia-Chi Ho, *Portland's Chinatown* (Portland, OR: Bureau of Planning, City of Portland, 1978).
3. David Chuenyan Lai, "Chinese Imprints in British Columbia," *BC Studies* (Autumn 1978, No. 39), and Christopher L. Salter, *San Francisco's Chinatown: How Chinese a Town?* (San Francisco: R & E Research Associates, 1978).



**Seeing
Beyond
the
Dominant
Culture**

Perhaps the most useful contribution I can make to a discussion about “seeing beyond the dominant culture” is to offer a critical glance at the concept of ethnic landscapes with special reference to the American scene.

For most of our compatriots in recent times, the term *ethnic* has acquired a rather limited definition, but I prefer to frame it in a broader and, I believe, much more meaningful way by having it refer to the *ethnie* or, if you please, the nation. Such a term identifies a fairly large real, or perhaps imagined, community of individuals who cherish a distinctive culture or history and regard their specialness as peculiarly important, setting them apart from other social groups. Such a community may—but often does not—aspire to some degree of political autonomy. If we adopt such a definition, what sorts of ethnic landscapes have ever existed, or are possible, in the U.S.?

What we find in geographic fact in some three million square miles of territory sandwiched between Quebec and the borderlands of Middle America is a single dominant culture—one pervasive ethnic group—an entity we can properly label Anglo-American. (To simplify the argument, I am ignoring the closely related Anglo-Canadian community; the interrelationships between our two communities are close, complex and not yet fully worked out.) The Anglo-American ethnic landscape is the product of early transfer of various immigrant groups and their cultural baggage from northwest Europe, then a certain set of transformations

under the impact of novel environmental and social conditions here, and, subsequently, the automatic acceptance of the resulting package by millions of later arrivals and their progeny.

Needless to say, the invading Europeans encountered in North America a varied set of genuine, pre-existing ethnic landscapes, which were the result of many generations of cultural revolution. We have only a hazy perception of what most of these humanized places were like in visible, physical terms, and for too many virtually no information at all. Obliteration was the fate of nearly all Native American landscapes, with perhaps only one major regional exception—those scattered, but reasonably authentic patches surviving in New Mexico and Arizona. (We can increase the count to two if we consider a large fraction of Alaska.) Elsewhere, the places inhabited or frequented today by Native Americans bear little resemblance to the homelands of their ancestors.

The supremely potent Anglo-American cultural system has its regional variety, of course, and with such variability a distinctive set of regional (but by no means ethnic) landscapes. As it happens, I have spent much of my career exploring these fascinating regional nuances. Thus we have the individualities of New England, the Pennsylvania Culture Area, the Middle West, Southern California, the Mormon Culture Area and other special tracts, but all are locked within a single unifying cultural embrace. The nearest approach to a genuinely autonomous ethnic—and it is a close call—is to be found in the persistent particularities of the South. There are also instances of partial hybridization with alien but related cultures, as in Louisiana's Acadiana and that ethnic shatter zone stretching from Southern California to the mouth of the Rio Grande. And, of course, the entire system keeps on evolving in response to external stimuli and its own internal logic.

But, despite all the intriguing regional variations upon a central theme and the effects of time, there is really no serious challenge to a pervasive, if largely subconscious, code governing the proper ways in which to arrange human affairs over American space: how to cope with natural habitats; how to design towns, cities, houses, roads, other structures, or cemeteries; how to occupy rural territory; and, in general, how to relate to our surroundings.

If, for the sake of argument, you can accept this reasoning, what thoughts can we entertain concerning the sorts of land-

scapes set forth in the three previous papers? I discern two different situations, neither of which can inspire very much cheer among those who enjoy visualizing the U.S. as a multi-ethnic land.

Rina Swentzell's poignant account of the clash of two utterly different mind-sets, two irreconcilable ways of dealing with the face of the earth and the things upon it, serves to remind us that a conflict that began in the American Southwest more than 400 years ago has not yet completely played itself out; that there is no solution mutually acceptable to the two contending ethnic groups. When it comes to the crunch, can there be any question as to which party will prevail?

We can only hope, as much for the sake of our own enlightenment as for the general cause of ethnic integrity, that some pueblo landscapes will remain intact and endure. Clearly there is no comfortable answer to the dilemma of such embattled groups surrounded and constantly assaulted by the intrusions of an overbearing national society. But in the setting of the American Southwest, there is the advantage of having some surviving shreds of the pre-existing landscape around, in this instance one with special appeal even to outsiders, with which to marshal resistance.

No such advantage was available to those relative latecomers from Asia and Latin America (or the earlier ones from Africa) and from those sections of Europe beyond the zone nurturing the founders of our dominant culture. These immigrants confronted a pre-formed, predetermined set of rules, a settlement code already locked solidly into the ground and one they could modify only in the more trivial of details.

That was certainly true in the case of the large, reluctant influx of Africans. With a certain amount of luck you may be able to identify a few tangible items that may have had an African origin, or then again may not. I have in mind such things as the style of some Southern Black church buildings, certain grave decorations, the bare-swept front yard and some gardening practices. But even the Blackest of Southern rural tracts does not replicate any portion of Nigeria or Ghana, and the urban Black ghetto could never be mistaken for any neighborhood in an African metropolis.

I enjoy prowling through the so-called ethnic neighborhoods of our cities as much as anyone and looking at whatever is to be seen. But I must confess that I have never been able to

identify any non-American ethnic landscape in any American city. There are, of course, particular sections of a city where a particular immigrant group, or its descendants, comprises all or most of the population. And, sure enough, one comes across "ethnic markers," such as distinctive shop signs, exotic religious objects in yards or on porches, ephemeral festival decorations, certain cemetery features, an occasional historical monument, or startling new color patterns for houses acquired by Portuguese-Americans and other chromatically adventurous groups (not to mention what the invading Quebeçois have done with old Yankee farmhouses in New England). Perhaps the closest approximation to an ethnic statement is in ecclesiastical architecture—those alien synagogues, mosques and non-Protestant church buildings. But, upon further scrutiny, these structures turn out to be compromised structures, a blending of styles and construction techniques from two contrasting ethnic worlds.

But whatever exotic tidbits one may glean in these "ethnic" neighborhoods are the handiwork of rather temporary sojourners, and we are dabbling with cosmetics instead of basics. The immigrants did not design or build the neighborhoods and will almost inevitably pass them on some day to other sets of newcomers. The same neighborhood (including its churches) can be recycled through a varied succession of immigrant groups. The textbook sequence of Irish, Germans, Italians, Eastern Europeans, Jews, Blacks, Hispanics and East Asians observed in several of our larger metropolises is only one of the actual scenarios.

Moreover, some of these transient groups were not aware of their so-called ethnic identity until they were briefed on the matter by 100-percent Americans. That is what seems to have been the experience of many Italian-Americans, German-Americans, Yugoslavs, African-Americans and others who previously had little group consciousness beyond that of their village or region in the Old World.

The disconcerting truth would seem to be that we really have no Polish-American, Greek-American, Jewish-American, African-American, or other such ethnic landscapes in any meaningful sense.

Professor David Chuenyan Lai has served us well by classifying and describing the various types of Chinatowns in the U.S. and Canada, but here again, I must question their au-

thenticity as ethnic expressions. As a matter of fact, Lai reveals the essential visual fakery of such neighborhoods in a single pivotal sentence when he states that "Western architects or contractors built most of the old Chinatown buildings, but they had tried to create 'chinoiserie' or 'exotica' by modifying or manipulating the standard Western architectural forms."

And, of course, an ever increasing majority of Chinese-Americans reside in homes and neighborhoods quite indistinguishable outwardly from those of old-stock Americans. I invite the reader to inspect the upscale African-American sections of Greater Atlanta or Washington, the predominantly Jewish suburbs of Detroit or Chicago, those tracts of greater Los Angeles frequented by affluent Americans of Japanese or Korean origin and then shown me their ethnic specialness. The moral, of course, is that all these non-WASP folks were expected to conform and melt into the larger physical fabric of American life as fully and rapidly as possible. And the overwhelming majority were only too delighted to do just that.

What we seem to be getting in our latter-day Chinatowns, whatever their historical origins, is fantasy made tangible, a make-believe China as tourist or patron would like to imagine it or the China best calculated to separate the visitor from his cash. They are specimens of a larger tribe of roadside attractions that includes synthetic Wild West frontier towns and those garish Indian villages to be found in western North Carolina's Cherokee country and elsewhere. We also encounter their ilk vicariously, at an even further remove, in movies filmed in North African villages, Mexican plazas, or Polynesian paradises on the back lots of Hollywood movie studios. Any resemblance to cultural reality is strictly accidental.

This entertainment genre goes back to Chicago's Columbian Exposition of 1893, if not to even earlier events, when an array of exotic villages was concocted for the edification of the visitor. Still vivid in my recollection is the Belgian Village of Chicago's World's Fair of 1933-34 and other absolutely non-Midwestern villages magically erected along the shores of Lake Michigan. The tradition lingers on, after a fashion, in some of our newer theme parks.

In considering The Power of Place project in which Dolores Hayden has been so deeply involved, we confront a quite different phenomenon or question: How best to remember, or resurrect and celebrate, ethnic history? As it hap-

pens, I am in total personal and ideological sympathy with her didactic strategy and I applaud all such efforts to remind us of a largely forgotten, too often ignominious past—and thus, indirectly at least, to help mend a contemporary world that needs all the healing it can get. But again, I am obliged to express reservations about the ethnic authenticity of whatever landscapes we may be rescuing, restoring, or fabricating.

Hayden's paper suggests a much vaster problem: How are we as a society to deal with the past in its entirety, not just the ethnic facets thereof? How much is to be preserved or rediscovered? To which fragments of the visible fabric of our daily lives should we cling, and which should we permit to change or disappear? Which elements, if any, should be museumized? How do we join together harmoniously the preservable past with an unruly present? But thereon hangs another conference, or rather an endless series of discussions.

Yes, it is certainly important to look beyond the dominant culture, to learn how all those many alien peoples have fared as they tried to cope with that huge, absorbent phenomenon we call the American cultural system. What I question is the effectiveness of examining pseudo-ethnic landscapes as a strategy for getting at cultural adjustment or survival.

Just as is the case with our political and legal systems, we have in the built landscape something thoroughly public—and, to a certain degree, official. It does not take kindly to foreign intrusion or modification, for serious deviance from the norm is simply too offensive to the collective eye. If we wish to explore what is happening with the minority cultures within our borders, we must resort to less visible departments of cultural behavior, to those venues (such as worship, cuisine, social organizations, literature and the arts) where there is space for experiment, improvisation and cross-fertilization.

On the other hand, there are other motives for scrutinizing whatever passes for ethnic landscapes in America. Such places fall within the category of the landscapes of entertainment or fantasy. If we really wish to know more about Americans in general, they deserve our earnest attention.

Wilbur Zelinsky states that most minority cultures within the U.S. can boast of having created only "pseudo-ethnic" landscapes because they have been "only too delighted" to accept the Anglo-American ethnic landscape. He questions the ability of an ethnic people to establish an authentic ethnic landscape without first defining and describing a basic relationship to the land on an everyday and on-going basis (especially immigrants, who confront a "predetermined set of rules, a settlement code already locked solidly into the ground and one they could modify only in the more trivial of details"). He suggests that it is difficult for a group to establish an ethnic identity unless it has first established such a relationship to the land, and denies that the U.S. is a multi-ethnic land because its immigrants have expressed an "automatic acceptance" of the dominant Anglo-American culture.

But what is the immigrant nature of a people? One definition of *immigrant* is "an organism that appears where it was formerly unknown." Non-Native American peoples of the U.S. clearly are people whom the land does not know (recognize). As the first wave of these immigrants came to North America, they indeed stepped into a "settlement code already locked solidly into the ground"—a symbiotic relationship between humans and the land within which humans symbolically and ceremonially recognized and honored the land. But for these immigrants and subsequent waves of new arrivals, the land was first a commodity out of which a livelihood could be eked and later a means to gain profit. Honoring and knowing the land in an interactive relationship was not considered or encouraged by these immigrants.

It is no wonder that with each new immigrant group the hope of forming an authentic ethnic landscape is virtu-

ally impossible. The "absorbent phenomenon we call the American cultural system" allows no possibility for a group of people to define a meaningful relationship with the land of this country because the predominant culture's concept of land, and especially of land ownership, is focused on use and consumption. All that remains, as Zelinsky tells us, is for people to pretend or fantasize that a meaningful relationship is possible.

As a consequence, we are left with a landscape of alienation—from the land, from each other and from ourselves. Instead, we live within a landscape that shows our blatant worship of consumption and profit.

I define the word *ethnic* to mean a shared cultural tradition, and I see the U.S. as a multi-ethnic nation in which many different cultures co-exist. Native-American, Anglo-American, African-American, Asian-American and Latino are some of the broader ethnic traditions, but there are many more. I myself am an Irish-American and feel sharply differentiated from a WASP, although we might both be called Anglos. People from Guatemala, Mexico and Puerto Rico may find clear differences among themselves despite the fact that others may call them all Latinos. Whatever the ethnic origin of a group, its settlement in the U.S. begins its cultural, political and social history here.

Wilbur Zelinsky uses a different definition of the word *ethnic*. He claims that it means "nation," and that in the U.S. there are no surviving ethnic landscapes other than those he calls Anglo-American. He defines the Anglo-American landscape as one that was shaped by immigrants from Northwest Europe and has received "automatic acceptance...by millions of later arrivals and their progeny."

Thus Zelinsky argues for assimilation, the melting-pot theory developed by Robert E. Park of the University of Chicago in the 1950s and expanded in Milton Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life* in 1964. According to a more recent scholarly review by William Petersen, "With such works American sociologists gave an aura of verisimilitude to the vista of a future either without meaningful ethnicity or at least with little or no ethnic conflict." Zelinsky extends these sociological problems to geography, arguing for one assimilated cultural landscape.

Recent scholarship in social history, urban anthropology and vernacular architecture has stressed the importance of cultural diversity above that of

assimilation. Dell Upton's edited collection, *America's Architectural Roots: Ethnic Groups That Built America*, analyzes more than two dozen different ethnic cultural landscapes, mostly rural. Ricardo Romo and Ghislaine Hermanuz provide urban examples in their work on East Los Angeles and Harlem.

Zelinsky no doubt knows some of this new work, but he has a curious definition of what is ethnically authentic. He looks for physical forms that would be part of the ethnic culture of origin rather than part of the immigrant subculture of the U.S., complaining "even the Blackest of Southern rural tracts does not replicate any portion of Nigeria or Ghana, and the urban Black ghetto could never be mistaken for any neighborhood in an African metropolis."

Of course we do not see Lagos in Watts or Accra in Harlem: It is African-American culture that is distinctive here, not African. Zelinsky does not find Beijing or Canton in the Chinatowns of the U.S., but Chinese-American culture. He does not find Spain or Mexico in Arizona, but Chicano culture, and therefore calls this a "shatter zone."

Zelinsky's particular way of looking at landscapes becomes condescending. He decries the "visual fakery" of Chinatowns and for the same reason apparently dislikes "alien synagogues, mosques and non-Protestant church buildings," calling them "compromised structures, a blending of styles and construction techniques from two different ethnic worlds." Only pre-industrial, rural vernacular architecture in pristine condition would seem to meet his narrow definition of "authentic."

We would need many more pages to discuss definitions of cultural landscape, vernacular architecture and urban history that augment our differ-

ent views of the terms *ethnic* and *authentic*. Let me conclude instead by saying that in a multi-ethnic society, we will have great difficulty writing our own multi-cultural history unless cultures such as African-American and Chinese-American are recognized as essential parts of a diverse America.

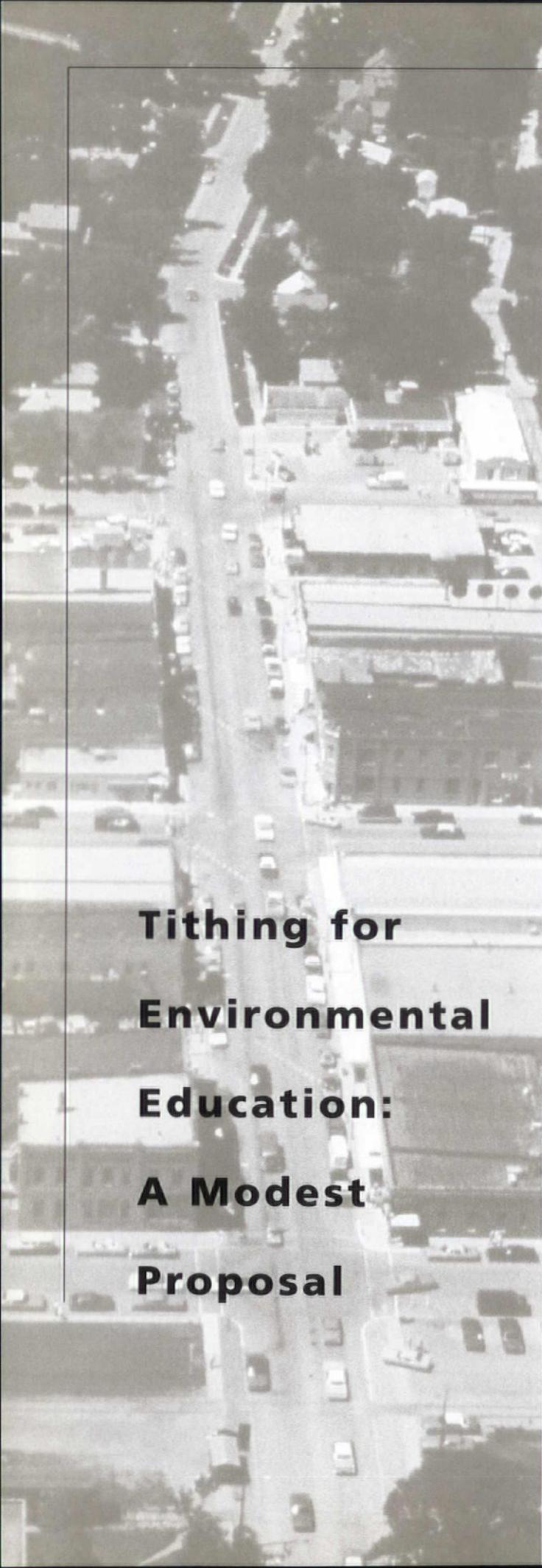
J.B. Jackson, in whose honor (in part) was held the conference where these debates originally took place, opened up the field of vernacular studies at a time when ordinary people and everyday life were controversial realms of study. In *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* he wrote: "The beauty that we see in the vernacular landscape is the image of our common humanity: hard work, stubborn hope and mutual forbearance striving to be love. I believe that a landscape that makes these qualities manifest is one that can be called beautiful."

For the next generation of scholars and activists, beyond Jackson and Zelinsky, the vernacular landscape of the U.S. will be seen as a terrain where class, gender and ethnicity provide different experiences. But it will be due to the work of an earlier generation of study of the Anglo-American landscape that we will be able to extend their analysis of building and inhabiting American places toward an understanding of the larger whole.

Most of the Chinese who came to the U.S. and Canada during the Gold Rushes did not know English. All the Chinese stores in Chinatowns had Chinese signboards, which were a necessity rather than a decorative component of a structure. Chinatown structures virtually had no other Chinese architectural components.

In those early days no decent white person would enter Chinatowns, which were considered places of vices and evils. According to the old-timers in Canada, white people began to patronize Chinatown businesses after the 1940s. Many Chinese restaurants began to employ all sorts of Chinese decorative details to attract Western patrons. Meanwhile many Chinese associations began to use tiled roofs and other Chinese architectural components to decorate their association buildings; this was one means to enhance the status of an association in the community.

A place is said to express human scale when human beings can relate to it visually, particularly through structural forms increasing or decreasing in size so that an individual feels comfortable in his or her surroundings. In Victoria's Chinatown, for example, the Chinese Gate, buildings, streets and alleys appear as a sequence of transitions from large to small scale. A person's eyes move from large units to smaller and smaller ones, and are able to relate the size of the whole by degrees. As the pedestrian strolls into and through Victoria's Chinatown, a sense of scenic integrity is knitted together at different scales.



**Tithing for
Environmental
Education:
A Modest
Proposal**

It is time to push cultural landscape studies beyond mere description and critical connoisseurship towards active intervention.

With that challenge Roger Montgomery, dean of the College of Environmental Design at the University of California, Berkeley, opened the recent Berkeley Symposium on Cultural Landscape Studies. Historical and cultural studies of the built landscape, Montgomery said, could be and should be a basis for environmental action and change. The preceding discussion, expanded from that which took place at the symposium, suggests one avenue of action: We should use historical and cultural interpretation of the environment as a tool for public environmental education.

Rina Swentzell, a New Mexico architect and anthropologist, writes about the Bureau of Indian Affairs day school near her home in Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico, where she was a student. In the day school, as Swentzell put it, "appreciation of the immediate place was impossible." She and her classmates learned about New York and George Washington but not about the Santa Clara Pueblo or the people and places of the upper Rio Grande.

Dolores Hayden, an architect and urban cultural historian, outlines the path-breaking work of The Power of Place—a small non-profit group that celebrates the history of ethnic minorities and women through preservation, public art and design. David Chuenyan Lai,

as a geographer, traces how people of Chinese descent have displayed varying degrees of traditional Chinese imagery in North American Chinatowns.

Swentzell's experience points out the need for locally based environmental action; Hayden's experience shows how local information can be used subtly to change local awareness; Lai's analysis shows how variable and subtle the use of visual form can be.

All three show the importance of ordinary, everyday surroundings, often overlooked by outsiders, as expressions of environmental meaning. One need not go to school as a Native American in order to have one's local cultural landscape ignored. I grew up white, male, middle-class, middle-brow and very comfortable in a small farm-service town of the Upper Midwest. In my grade school and high school, appreciation of the immediate place was impossible. We sat in Mayville, N.D., and looked at pictures of large cities in Texas, New York and California, preparing to become out-migrants to join some distant labor pool. Later, in architecture school at North Dakota State University in Fargo, it was rare to find a course or professor seriously addressing the local scene.

Ironically, what changed all that for me was moving to Berkeley to study geography at the University of California. In my first year of graduate school, as a raw architect who had never read anything, a dozen first-rate faculty barraged me with new ways of seeing and thinking about spatial relations. My intention had been to learn about New York and Chicago, not Mayville or Fargo. Indeed, in that first year my ideas about large American cities changed radically. But so did my view and my understanding of little Mayville.

Today I am angry that it is necessary to move to Berkeley—or to Penn State, or to a very few other places—to learn to see the meaning of towns like those in North Dakota and Minnesota, or their counterparts in any other state.

Every day on my walk to school I crossed the empty, 200-foot-wide swath of railroad tracks in the middle of town. Along that stretch there was nothing to stop the bitter north wind but the Arctic Circle. I never thought about what it meant that those tracks were owned two thousand miles away.

No one explained that the old single men who ate at the Corner Cafe and lived at the Northern Hotel on the wrong side of the tracks were leftovers from the hobo labor force

The railroad swath in Ft. Madison, Iowa. This swath is a difficult-to-traverse zone.
Photos courtesy Paul Groth.





The difference in the appearance of the main streets of Madelia, Minn., and Fairbault, Minn. (below), has to do, in part, with whether the profits that were generated in the town were recycled in the local economy.



that had once harvested the local wheat crops and the more distant forests of Minnesota.

No one explained how the grain elevators that towered over the landscape explained the economic reality of our region. We were a colony of the rest of the U.S.: All the locally grown products were exported a thousand miles away, along with the profits to be gained from them, and everything else was imported, retail.

Had I known to ask such simple questions about the relationship between the circulation of capital and local culture, I would have understood why our minimal main street looked so mean and bedraggled in comparison to the luxurious main streets in towns that were of similar size but whose profits had circulated more locally.

In short, it never occurred to me just how much the building and layout of my town were enmeshed in the past and present social relations of the region—and that the same was true elsewhere, too.

Public education is no worse in North Dakota than in most of the United States. With the possible exceptions of people in New England and Virginia, perhaps, Americans have almost no chance that a local environmental literature is easily available to teach them about simple small towns or ordinary urban districts. Consider that there is not a single book about the cultural meaning of the suburban ranch house.

Teaching people how to see their present and past environments as active factors in human social relations is an enormously important kind of activism that environmental designers and spatially attuned historians ignore too often. Teaching about landscapes in public schools, on billboards and pamphlets, in newspapers—wherever we can—might save design educators from the trap of mere connoisseurship about which Montgomery warned.

Teaching, writing and professional practice can be activism if we set our sights beyond the quarterly journals and slick professional magazines. We cannot all be as effective as Dolores Hayden has been in her work with *The Power of Place*. However, as a means of avoiding mere connoisseurship, designers, geographers, students, faculty and practitioners should literally consider *tithing*; working perhaps every other Friday doing something for public education.

While broadly conceived guidebooks and newspaper features may be ideal projects, the actions themselves need not be media related. They can be quite simple, and there is no single best way.¹

Teachers, writers and designers might periodically advertise a short neighborhood walking tour. They might volunteer to discuss with a nearby high school English class an environmentally rich essay by J. B. Jackson or Joan Didion—or the absence of environmental influence in someone else's writing.

Architects might publicly post a series of isometric drawings (perhaps from Sanborn maps) of the historical development of adjacent blocks. The same exercise could be done for a school classroom, showing blocks near the school or near some part of town all the students would know.

One well-known educational project of the 1960s had inner-city junior high students map neighborhood gang turfs. The students knew exactly where they were, but had never seen social relations so unusually portrayed on a map.

For a new building or park, it would be educational to install a plaque showing what used to be on the site (and who lived, worked, farmed, or played there), as many generations back as possible. Leaving a copy of *Places* at your dentist's office might be an act of environmental education.

Projects such as these are important and long overdue. As the geographer Peirce Lewis has said, Americans are the most visually and spatially illiterate people in the industrialized world and perhaps in the entire world. The illiteracy is not a matter of whether Americans can discern style, elegant design, or innate esthetic delight in buildings or landscapes. Americans, by and large, simply are unconscious of how the organization of space affects their everyday lives. They live like fish that cannot recognize water. Or, as a social theorist might put it, Americans are not aware of how the social becomes the spatial.

The task, then, is rather straightforward. Each of us with the ability to see the local environment has a duty to teach that ability to some part of the public. Setting aside some time every other week—tithing—could get the project started.

We must be cautious not to teach about the environment only as product of design or as a series of isolated artifacts created by heroic designers. We must teach a way of seeing the built environment as an ever-changing quilt woven by our

group experience of social, political and historical forces all within the realities of the bioregion. We must teach a way of seeing the evolution and meaning of ordinary, everyday places as well as special places.

Our combined tithes could be quite a powerful force. If we begin to act now, by the year 2000 perhaps grade school and high school students will not have to become specialists to understand and appreciate the power, influence and interest of their everyday surroundings.

Note

1. For designers, Richard Saul Wurman's *Making the City Observable* (MIT Press, 1971), an early collection of visual teaching ideas, is still one of the best sources of inspiration.

The wrong side of the tracks:
a common laborer's hotel
in Mineral Wells, Colo.



Sacred Places of the Southwest



Not far from our house in New Mexico was the village burial ground of Hispanic Catholics, called a *camposanto*, or “field of the saints.” The *camposanto* is different than the cemeteries most of us know. Here, people are allowed to express freely their emotions by creating personal, handmade grave markers that constitute a unique collection of religious folk art.

Tranquil in its harmony with nature and yet a vibrant and colorful portrait of its people, both living and dead, the *camposanto* is full of human drama and filled with poignant expressions of emotion. It is a place of change where wind shifts sand against sandstone, softening sculpted lines; where paint blisters and peels, only to be repainted by those who play for time against the forces of nature; and where seasons and holidays are celebrated.

As you approach a *camposanto*, you notice the vegetation there is indigenous—there is no manicured turf, no irrigation. The desert *camposanto* may be covered with fragrant sage and dotted with dark green junipers, or filled with cacti whose bright pink spring flowers further enliven the place. In the mountain *camposanto*, long grasses grow with piñon pine, and boulders jut up among the grave markers. Visitors to a rural *camposanto* often find themselves completely cradled by nature, alone with no reminders of civilization other than the messages of the markers. Even those *camposantos* now surrounded by urban development retain their native vegetation, which harmonizes with the larger landscape of mountains and mesas.

All *camposantos* are enclosed in some way, and you enter through a gate or portal. Some have both entry and exit gates for funerals, symbolizing the passage of life from one point to another. Often a massive cross, erected in the center of the *camposanto*, serves as the focal point and symbolizes the sanctity of the place.

Painted concrete Jesus,
Espanola.

Photos by Laura Sue Sanborn.

Amid the native landscape inside the enclosure, you find the graves. Frequently, not only the grave marker but also the rest of the grave site is a work of art. Graves may be surrounded by handmade *cerquitas* (fences) commonly crafted out of wood, wrought iron, or metal pipe. One *cerquita* had wrought iron horses prancing at its four corners; another displayed the names of the deceased's children intricately carved on wooden side panels. Old, very ornate cast iron *cerquitas* were ordered by the wealthy from St. Louis and brought in by railroad.

The variety and ingenuity of the grave markers seem endless. You feel compelled to walk past each so as not to miss some new form of handicraft and creativity. The range of materials used to create the grave markers and by the exuberance of color and texture are amazing to a visitor.

The primary grave marker materials are wood, metal, stone and concrete, although re-used objects are also commonly incorporated. I have found grave markers made of or decorated with concrete blocks, patio stones, logs, wood rounds, bricks, large tiles, mosaic tiles, wrought iron, water pipe, PVC pipe, horseshoes, a floor grate, a sewer grate, appliance parts, automobile chrome, radiator parts, baby crib parts, ball bearings, glass blocks, marbles, shells, jewelry, a tackle box, earrings, rosary buttons, ashtrays, candlesticks, beer and pop cans, bottles, metal drums, jars, vases, pottery, pictures, picture frames, crucifixes, plastic flowers, silk flowers, paper flowers, flower boxes, egg cartons, Styrofoam, plastic, rope chicken wire, barrel rims, saw blades, paint, paint cans, cloth, yarn ribbon, plastic beads, glass beads, tacks, nails, pins, metallic letters, chunks of turquoise, cogs, gears, pebbles, lava rock, garden fence,

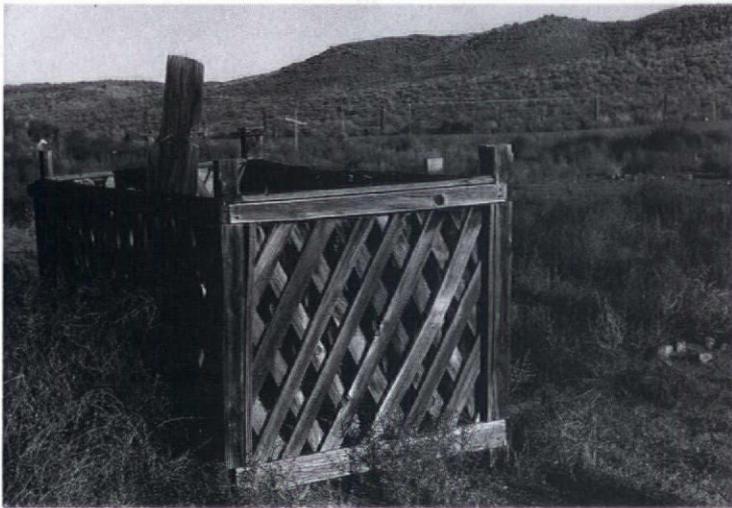
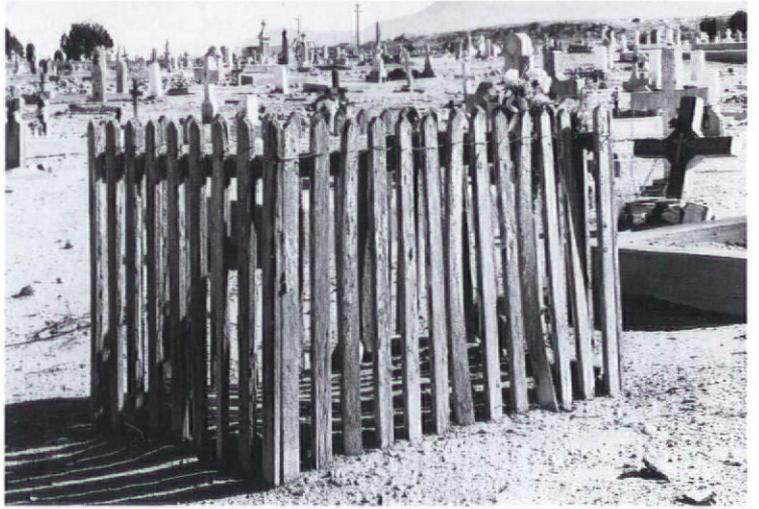
broken colored glass, small toys, pie pans, tin cans, a garden hoe, aluminum foil, Astroturf, carpeting, Popsicle sticks, sheet metal, shingles, wind chimes, light sockets, buckets, hood ornaments, padlocks, chains, flags, banners, wooden crates, silverware, door knobs and baby bottles.

The ways in which these materials are used are as fascinating as the range of objects. One grave marker was created by embedding in a concrete cross a sealed Coke bottle in which a statue of Christ had been placed by sawing off and then re-gluing the bottom of the bottle. One woman had made a grave marker for her husband by centering her favorite glass candlesticks in the rectangular opening of a formed concrete cross so that the evening light shone through the glass, illuminating the entire marker. A whimsical child's grave marker was created out of pink and green patio blocks to look like a giant Easter basket, complete with colored, concrete eggs. Sunshine's grave had been marked by torching her name into a large circular saw blade that was welded to some machinery parts for a base.

Individually, such personalized grave sites may lead us to speculate upon the character of the maker or that of the deceased. Collectively, the markers—their materials, colors, forms, symbols, words and spatial arrangement—provide clues to a people's history and culture.

The earliest *camposanto* grave markers, which were made of wood, date back to the mid-1800s. Before them the poor were buried in unmarked graves and the wealthy beneath the church floor, with the church building providing a monument of status. Although the King of Spain ordered a halt to church floor burial in 1798 due to the unhealthy conditions it caused, New Mexicans were reluctant to com-

Wood *cerquita*, Albuquerque.Metal pipe *cerquita*, Peralta.



ply since they thought unprotected grave sites would be prey to scavenging animals and raids by hostile Native Americans. But with the reduction of these threats, *camposantos* were created on the outskirts of villages, and grave marking became more important as wealthier members of the community were relegated to burial there.

Early wood grave markers became more elaborate when traders arrived in New Mexico with improved wood-working tools. Two of the most remarkable wood markers I found stood like Easter Island sentinels; these giant slabs of wood, a precious commodity in the desert, has weathered a silver gray and showed the patterns where plaques had once been. No names or dates were discernible—the markers stand as a mute testament to the status of those interred in their shadow.

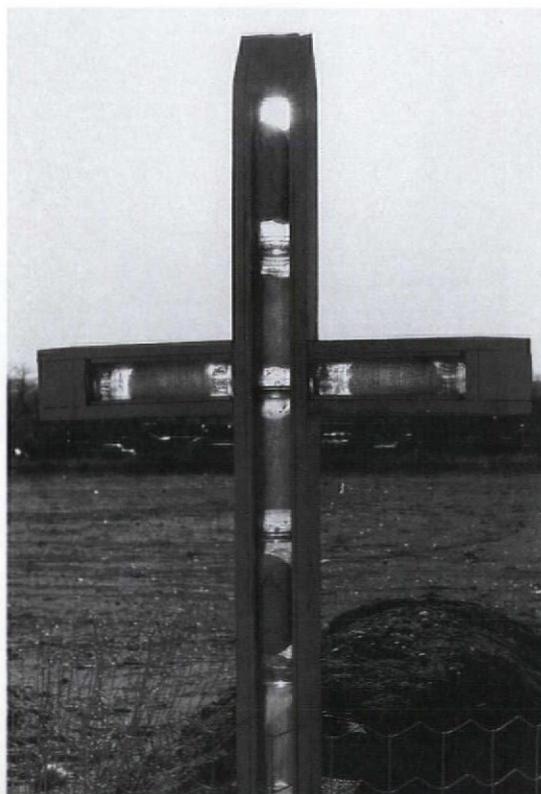
Traders also imported iron, which artisans formed into more durable crosses and *cerquitas*. Stone grave markers didn't become popular until the 1880s when the railroad arrived in New Mexico, along with a new wave

of settlers. Among these were French and Italian stonecutters, who were brought in to embellish public buildings, but who also carved marble headstones for the wealthy. Local people copied this art in the local sandstone and limestone.

Grave marker materials continue to reflect the material culture of the time. Concrete remains most popular because it is easy to form and decorate and is relatively durable. Grave markers made in the 1950s use large glass ashtrays, chrome car parts, hood ornaments and white and black enameled appliance parts. An influx of 1960s hippie culture is evident on markers decorated with peace signs and love beads. The use of other decorative materials is rooted in ancient traditions: The colored tile mosaics covering some grave markers represent a Moorish art brought over from Spain.

The *camposantos* are colorful places, not only because of the materials used, but also because many markers are brightly painted. Light blue, pink, green, red-orange and silver are the most popular colors. Murals or religious scenes are sometimes painted on markers or on concrete slabs covering the entire grave. Paint brightens gray machine-made markers, with the etched figures filled in like drawings in a coloring book.

In the *camposanto* religious symbolism abounds. Almost all grave markers are either in the form of a cross or are decorated with crosses and crucifixes. Often, three or four crosses are stuck in the grave mound along with rosaries, statues and framed pictures of Christ, Mary and patron saints. Other common *camposanto* symbols include the heart, long a symbol of love; the



**A recent cross made of glass
candle holders, Peralta.**

Paschal Lamb, often seen on children's markers; the dove, representing the soul's peaceful ascension into Heaven; and, in one village *camposanto*, a death's-head design, similar to those on early New England headstones.

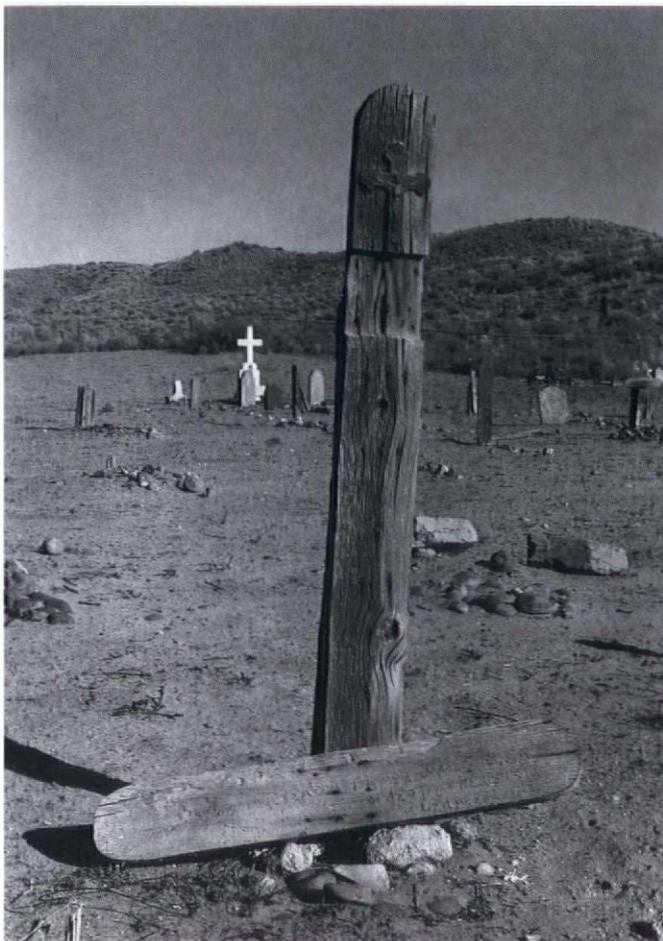
A fascinating gesture found in some *camposantos* stems from old Navajo and Pueblo traditions. The grave mounds are either completely covered with the deceased's dishes and pottery, which have been deliberately broken over the grave to symbolically break the chain of death in a family, or covered with dishes and pottery intact, placed there so the deceased will have something with which to eat in the afterlife. Even the contents of the deceased's refrigerator sometimes appear.

Other symbolic gestures suggest intriguing possibilities for their meaning and origin. A door plate and knob found on one grave may be a symbolic door to Heaven, or perhaps it is just the doorknob from the deceased's home. A light socket found embedded in a concrete marker may have contained a bulb that symbolically lights the deceased's way to the afterworld (just as some Swiss hang lanterns on graves for that purpose today), or it may be a sign of status for a family that was fortunate enough to have electricity.

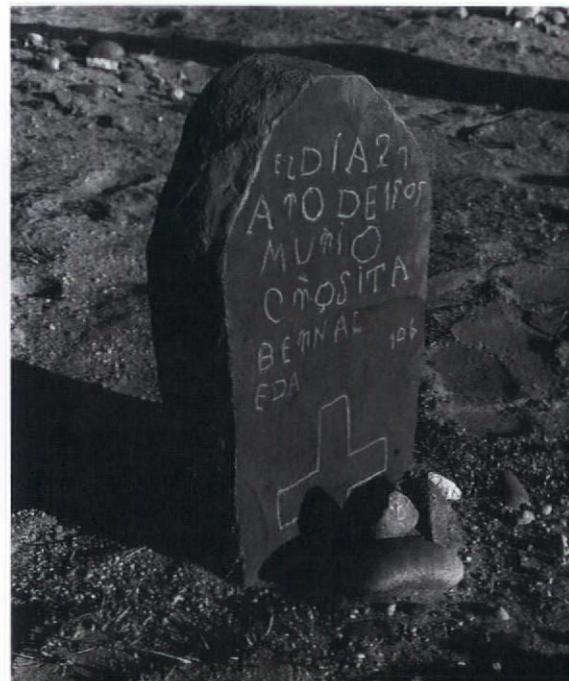
Symbols and decorations are used more extensively than words, especially on older markers, which sometimes have no more than a cross, name, or date. The abundance of misspelled words and backwards letters indicates difficulty with written language, especially English. I couldn't help but smile at the carefully carved child's stone that read, "For My Little Angle."

The spatial organization of the *camposantos* stresses the individual rather than the family. Curbed or fenced family plots with large family markers, common in Anglo

Early wood gravemarker,
Peralta.



Simple stone marker, Galisteo.





Grave decorated for the holidays, Albuquerque.

cemeteries, are rarely found in the *camposanto*. Instead, the individual's grave is curbed or fenced. Husband and wife do not necessarily lie side by side, and children are often relegated to a separate section. A particularly disturbing section of some *camposantos* is the "limbo" area—an array of small concrete blocks marking the graves of unbaptized babies whose souls can go to neither Heaven nor hell.

Grave alignment is important in many religions, with "feet to the east" the most common Christian burial pattern, reflecting a belief in Christ's resurrection in the east. The Hispanic Catholic burial, however, doesn't favor any particular alignment. I have found *camposanto* graves aligned with all compass directions as well as facing the main road, the central cross, the down slope on a hill, or secondary lanes within the *camposanto*. Susan Hazen-Hammond writes that the lack of a distinct orientation may reflect the belief that "since life is not orderly, why should death be?"

Camposantos are places where life is celebrated, not forgotten. Anna Marie kneels in the parted sage repainting her grandfather's name under the hot noon sun with the only tool she has—a toothpick. Mr. Romero brings a favorite baseball and places it on his son's ten-year-old grave. The Martinez family has gathered to braid bright new ribbons through the iron bars of a child's *cerquita* and to whitewash the boulders outlining family graves. Nearby, a new banner on a grave-mound is printed with the words, "I love you Grandpa."

During the Christmas holiday, decorated Christmas trees, garlands, wreaths, ornaments and toys are placed at some headstones. One Christmas I saw two small, red, toy-filled stockings propped up against the headstones of a baby brother and sis-

ter. At Easter, new crucifixes appear, lilies are planted and ceramic Easter bunnies and eggs are left on graves. Styrofoam hearts covered with red plastic roses are left for deceased wives and sweethearts on Valentine's Day. And attached to the *cerquita* of Maria Teresa were the shriveled remains of a pink balloon on a string and a "Happy Birthday" party napkin.

But something dismaying is happening to some *camposantos*: They are being destroyed. *Camposantos* in urban areas are falling victim to land use pressures and the lure of higher economic returns. *Camposantos* have been paved over for parking lots and built over for condominiums and commercial development. I watched as bulldozers ravaged one *camposanto*, destroying hundreds of handmade grave markers so the area could be turned into a manicured cemetery. Rows of wooden, stone and wrought-iron crosses were gouged from the places once sanctified by their presence. By the time the workers finished, 1,500 graves had been scraped bare.

The native vegetation of this *camposanto*, which was home to a wealth of urban wildlife, has been replaced with sod, which must be mowed and irrigated. Instead of the highly personal handmade markers, only uniform machine-made markers that lie flush with the grass are allowed. The *camposanto*, with its unique Southwestern landscape, has been replaced with a generic memorial park.

One day while photographing this destruction, I asked the cemetery superintendent why it was happening. He answered, "Money," and went on to explain that "once we've got sod and water in here, people have to pay for it, you know, perpetual care. And they have to buy the headstones too." Then, pointing to a few remaining handmade crosses laying in the sage-

brush, he added, "you can't make any money on this stuff."

Unfortunately, little or no protection exists for the *camposantos*. The National Register of Historic Places recognizes only those cemeteries with significance derived from association with historic events or persons of national renown (such as Arlington National Cemetery), or of exceptional architectural design (such as the mausoleums and crypts of New Orleans). The New Mexico Historic Preservation Division recognizes the cultural significance of the *camposantos*; however, it has not had the funds to document them systematically. Consequently, destroyed grave markers are lost without any public record of their existence.

Should we preserve *camposantos* for the future just as they are now? Or should the traditional pattern continue with nature, time and changing customs all taking their toll. To insist on preservation of the *camposantos*' existing qualities would put an end to their value as cultural indicators. Yet the loss of such highly personal, meaningful traditions would be lamentable.

Fortunately, there are several hundred rural *camposantos* where change takes place more slowly. Probably the best we can do is to recognize and document these jewels in the landscape. The *camposanto* will also be carried on in the minds of those who experience them. For those who witness the dramatic melding of land and people, for those who see the tiny stuffed bear tied with ribbons to little Maria's wooden cross or the eyes of Reyes as he stares from his picture across the field of saints, there will be no forgetting these sacred places.

THE MAKING OF A MARKET

Let me begin with what would normally be a conclusion: The Rockridge Market Hall in Oakland is an enormous success.

The upscale food vendors are crowded at all hours. The coffee bars are filled, and the customers—both neighborhood residents and outside shoppers—spill out into the sidewalk along with the smell of espresso and fresh bread. The restaurant at the corner draws turn-away crowds. The offices upstairs are all rented, and tenants express great satisfaction with their quarters. Real estate listings use proximity to the Market Hall as a selling point. The building gives a strong architectural focus to a busy and long neglected street corner and establishes a sound relationship with the rest of the buildings on the block.

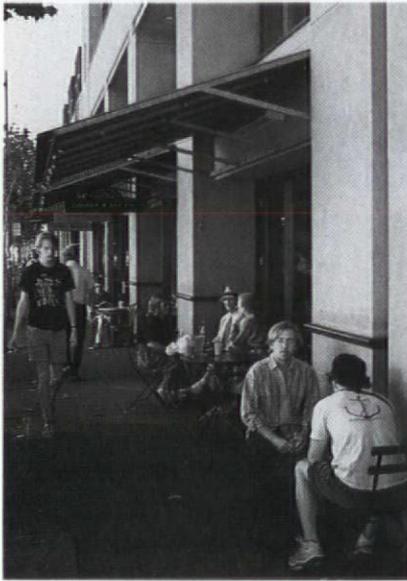
One might expect such a successful development to have had an easy time coming into existence and to have met with much approval along the way, but the Market Hall was almost four years in a troubled path to its creation.

The story of its birth is actually three stories: The first is the ability of its creators to establish a vision and stick with it through the inevitably unpredictable development process; the second is the depth of opposition to the project by its prospective neighbors. The third lies in the conjunction of the first two: What does the Rockridge Market Hall teach us about how we can create good places?

The Resurgence of Rockridge

Rockridge is a small neighborhood in northeast Oakland, built in the 1910s and 1920s as increasing automobile use allowed development to disperse from the city's center. All of the considerable commercial activity in Rockridge takes place on College Avenue, a two-lane street that leads from Broadway, Oakland's original main street, to the University of California campus in Berkeley. The rest of the neighborhood is residential, mostly modest one- or two-story California Craftsman bungalows, with a scattering of small apartment buildings and backyard second units. The neighborhood scene is pleasant in a Norman Rockwell-meets-Bernard Maybeck fashion.





In the mid-1960s, the elevated Grove-Shafter Freeway—and between its divided paths, the tracks of the regional Bay Area Rapid Transit System (BART)—cut through the neighborhood. Construction of the freeway and BART, both created to connect San Francisco and Oakland with the growing suburbs beyond the Berkeley and San Leandro Hills to the east, spelled the decline of College Avenue, which became peppered with vacant storefronts.

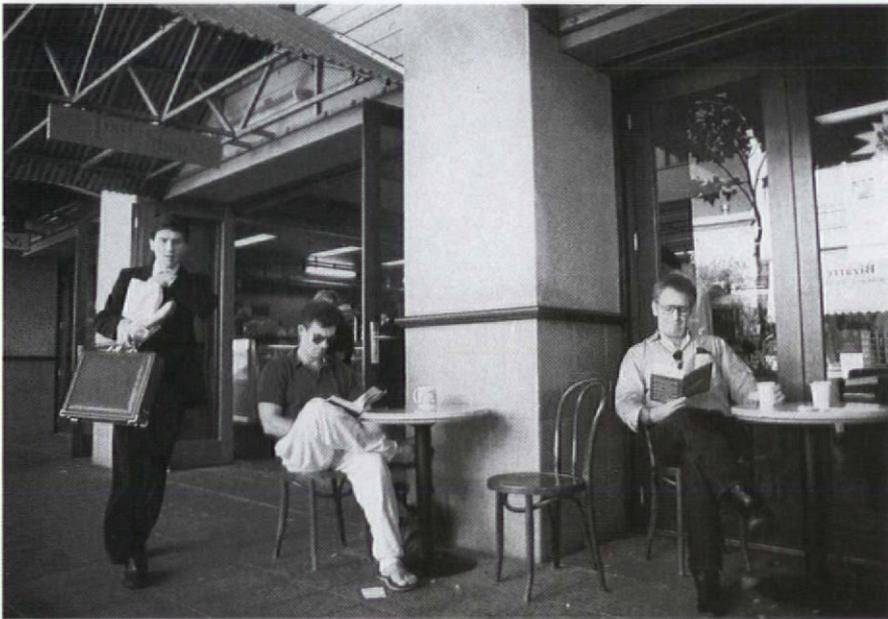
Many neighborhoods never recover from that kind of tear in their fabric. That Rockridge has is the result of several bits of good fortune.

Construction of the freeway and BART held property values down while prices in the rest of the Bay Area skyrocketed. The housing stock was in good condition and consisted almost entirely of single-family houses, while surrounding areas of Oakland and Berkeley were being redeveloped with apartments, townhouses and condominiums. Rockridge was close and convenient to downtown Oakland and San Francisco; easy freeway access and a BART station beckoned white-collar and professional workers with the promise of a quick commute. Its proximity to the Berkeley campus made Rockridge attractive to the academic community as well.

As Rockridge rebounded in the mid-1970s, pressure inevitably mounted to capitalize on the neighborhood's location by developing it more densely. Regional land use planners sought to couple the public investment in the BART station with zoning that would allow denser housing development near the station.

This pressure was thwarted early on by the efforts of a neighborhood association, the Rockridge Community Planning Council, organized in response to a plan to build an apartment building on a small side street. RCPC valued the neighborhood's character, particularly its predominance of single-family homes and the low-rise commercial strip on College (several stores operated out of converted bungalows). The group persuaded the city to downzone substantially the neighborhood, and that restrictive zoning is still in place.

Today Rockridge is one of the most desirable neighborhoods in Oakland, and its success has brought the return of retail business to College Avenue. Even with the soaring rents, though, there are few franchises or chain stores; neighborhood residents have



Cafe tables line the College Avenue facade. Bi-fold doors with large windows make it easy to see or walk into the bakery, coffee shop and cafe inside.

Photos by Todd W. Bressi.

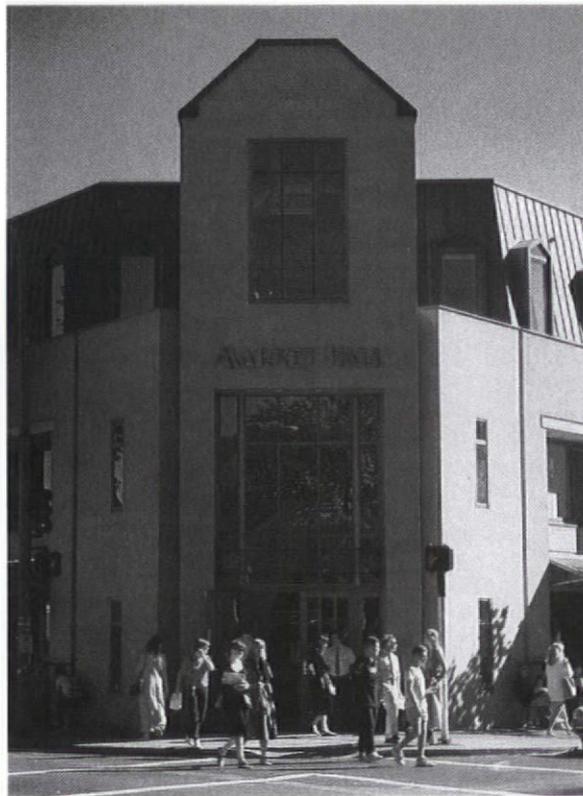
enough purchasing power to support boutiques, specialty stores and corner bookstores. More importantly, they wish to support them. In the politically liberal East Bay, spending money is often seen as a political and social act, and residents tend not to patronize enterprises owned by a faceless conglomerate when they could buy from a local artisan or merchant. Smallness is considered synonymous with quality.

This is especially true with food shopping and dining. Throughout the Bay Area here are dozens of small clusters of restaurants, wine shops and bakeries. Exotic hybrid vegetables, unique and expensive cheeses and microbrewery beers have a market there as nowhere else.

Establishing a Concept

One of the entrepreneurs looking at Rockridge was Anthony Wilson, a real estate lawyer practicing in the Bay Area. He and his brother Peter, a New York architect, had long been interested in developing properties themselves. Anthony recognized the enormous potential of resurgent Rockridge and purchased a small vacant lot at the busy intersection of College Avenue and Shafter Street (next to the BART station) as well as three houses on the block behind College.

The Wilsons decided to capitalize on the neighborhood's spending habits by creating a food market comprised of many small specialty vendors. They settled on this concept for two reasons. First, most of the site fronted Shafter—which is not a busy pedestrian street—and a parking lot built under the elevated freeway. The Wilsons realized they needed an activity and design that would pull people from the busy College frontage into the depth of the lot—suggesting an open market with many vendors.



Entrance to Olivetto's, the restaurant/cafe at the corner of College Avenue and Shafter Street.

Photo by Norman McGrath, courtesy Wilson Associates.

Second, both the Wilsons had an interest in food markets. Anthony was intrigued by how the design of markets like New York's South Street Seaport was influenced by marketing concepts. Peter was interested in restaurants and food merchandising.

To begin work on the Market Hall, Anthony called Peter, who was beginning to tire of the succession of designs for office suites and apartment remodelings common to a New York practice, and persuaded Peter to move to the Bay Area. The move foreshadows the brothers' depth of involvement in the Market Hall. From the start, they wanted to build something they would keep—something that would make them proud as they passed it on the street. That meant acting as developer, designer and manager, to make sure the job was done right.

The Wilsons didn't have to look very far for a precedent for either their leasing strategy or design. Less than a mile away on College, a small set of one-story row buildings housed some of the most popular and prosperous food retailers in the East Bay. Three side-by-side stores had openings in

their party walls, enabling shoppers to pass from one store to another without leaving the building. This arrangement offered the convenience of a large market along with the range of choices available only in specialty stores, and was a great success.

The combination of sidewalk frontage and interior connection became the model for the Wilson's market, which they planned as a series of street-level stalls accessible from both sidewalk and interior. The food businesses would be owner-operated, because, they felt, that was the best way to provide accountability and ensure quality.

The Wilsons topped the market with two stories of unspecified "something" to take advantage of the local three-story height limit. They thought offices would be more lucrative than housing, but were unsure of the office market, particularly for the small spaces they would provide. Consequently, their early designs for the upper levels were non-committal: The spaces looked like apartments but could easily be rented as small professional offices.



Shafter Street facade.

Photo by Norman McGrath,
courtesy Wilson Associates.

Securing the Site And Starting Construction

In late 1984, during the early stages of design, the L-shaped property next to and behind the Wilson's lot was purchased by Alta Bates Hospital, a large Berkeley health care corporation. The hospital did not really want the entire lot; its plan was to demolish the old wood-frame building that existed and to build a one-story showroom for its volunteer association thrift shop, the Alta Bates Showcase.

The Wilsons seized the opportunity and purchased the rear of the Showcase lot. Realizing the demand for housing in Rockridge, they also proposed demolishing their three houses, directly behind the Showcase lot, to make room for 22 apartments and a two-level parking structure to serve both the market and the apartments.

The neighborhood erupted in protest, and RCPC was determined to defeat the plan. The next RCPC board elections saw a wholesale change of directors, with the neighbors voting in a new group who lived near the Wilsons' properties. This group was

representative of Rockridge's new residents: young, well-educated, politically savvy and committed to protecting the feel of the neighborhoods and the value of homeowners' investments.

Before long the Wilsons realized they were fighting a losing battle. The lots upon which the three houses were situated were zoned for single-family, and the likelihood of obtaining a major variance with such organized neighborhood opposition was almost nil.

But the Wilsons had also made Alta Bates another offer: They would develop two floors of office or residential space above the Showcase building (taking advantage of the three-story height limit) and connect it to the upper two floors of their market building. The Wilsons agreed to pay the extra costs of building the foundation and structural system of the Showcase building so it could support their proposed upper floors, but believed that the price quoted by Alta Bates' contractor was too high.

By late 1985, the negotiations had dragged on to the point at which Alta Bates was ready to start construction, with or without the Wilsons. So the

Wilson's switched course and offered to build the entire three-story structure, delivering the completed ground-floor retail space to the hospital as a turnkey project for an agreed-upon price and keeping the top two floors for themselves. Alta Bates accepted, and the Wilsons found themselves, for the first time, in the general contracting business. Two months later, early in 1986—and before the design of the upper levels was finished—construction on the Showcase began.

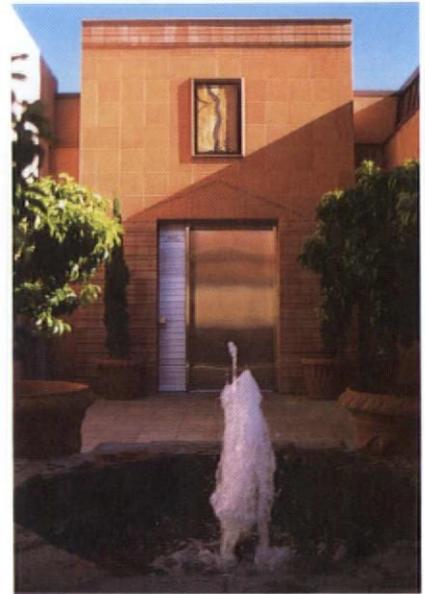
That spring, when the Wilsons submitted plans for the upper levels of the Showcase building and the city issued a building permit, RCPC again jumped into the fray. The commercial zoning along College Avenue mandates a neighborhood design review process for all projects; RCPC members claimed the only plans they had ever seen for that site were for the hospital's one-story building.

Claiming proof of the Wilson's deception, RCPC pointed to the Environmental Report that Alta Bates had filed for the Showcase Building. That report, filed when the hospital was still considering its original plan, was specifically for a single-story building. When the RCPC discovered the discrepancy between the ER and the permit, construction was halted. But within two weeks, the Wilsons (who claim to have formally notified both Oakland's planning department and RCPC earlier about the change in plans) had obtained a revised ER and construction resumed.

The transaction with Alta Bates allowed the Wilsons to refine several aspects of the Market Hall design. First, they were now able to push the parking for the Market Hall back from the original corner lot onto the rear lot, giving them an extra 40 to 50 feet of Shafter Street frontage and room for two extra vendors.

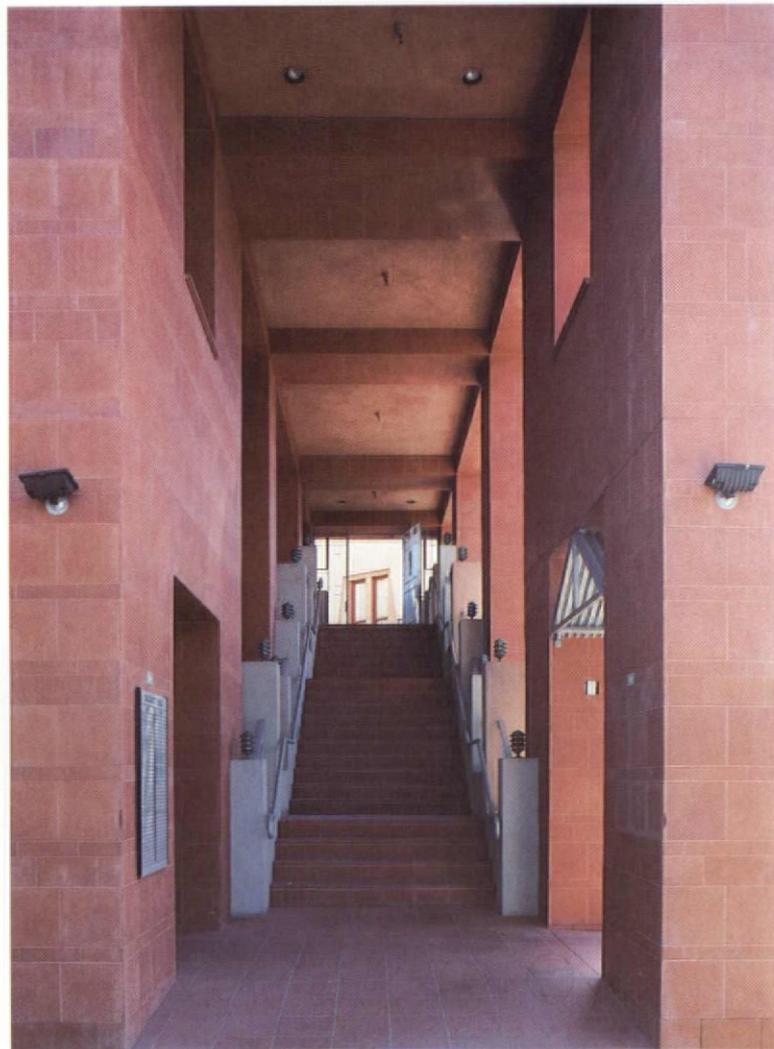
Courtyard on third level.

Photo by Norman McGrath,
courtesy Wilson Associates.



Stairway leading from Shafter Street to upper-level professional offices.

Photo by Norman McGrath,
courtesy Wilson Associates.



More important, Alta Bates, known for its many mental health services, pointed out the existence of a large community of psychologists, therapists and other mental health professionals who were sorely in need of accessible office space. The Wilsons saw an opportunity to give the undefined upper floors of the Market Hall a focus.

Finally, the question of access to the upper floors had to be settled. Alta Bates refused to allow access through the Showcase to the Wilsons' floors above, so Peter planned a small stairwell at the College Avenue end of the Market Hall and a larger, open air staircase at the rear Shafter Street

edge. These complemented the articulated entry tower at the corner of College and Shafter, and gave a visual termination to both of the two-story-plus-mansard street facades.

Getting It Built, Leasing Up

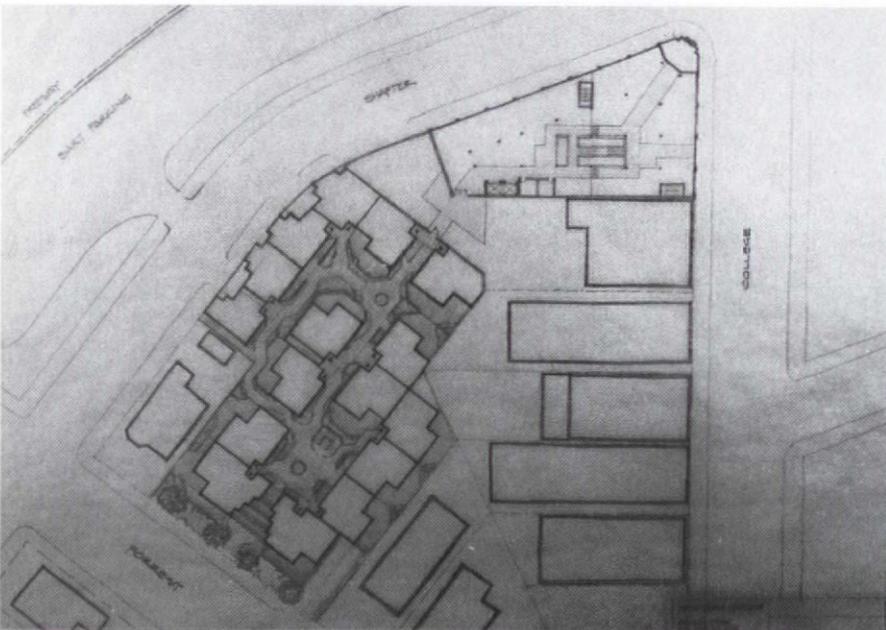
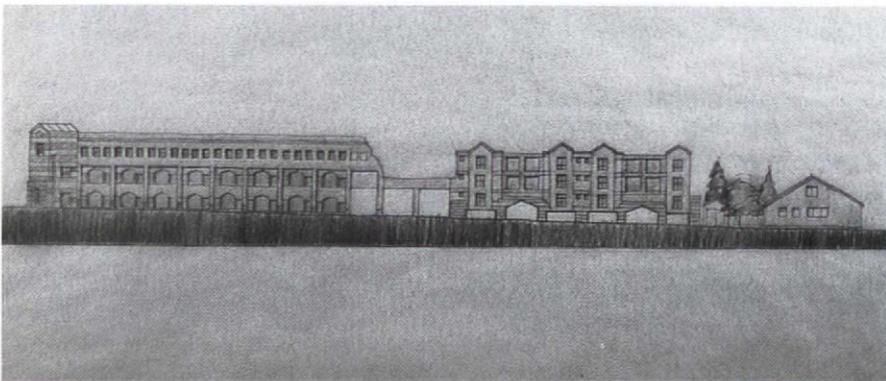
With the Showcase underway, the Wilsons realized they would have to start construction on the Market Hall soon. As of yet, they had little financing and no tenants. Fearing they could not obtain bank financing without tenants in place, they leased the corner space at College and Shafter and a second-story loft above the market to Olivetto's, a restaurant/cafe.

The brothers were not completely happy with the decision. They wanted both a market and a restaurant, but both demanded space on the first floor and along the street. Unable to make room for both (and fearing the loft would be hard to rent) they reluctantly gave Olivetto's the next best thing: the corner entrance.

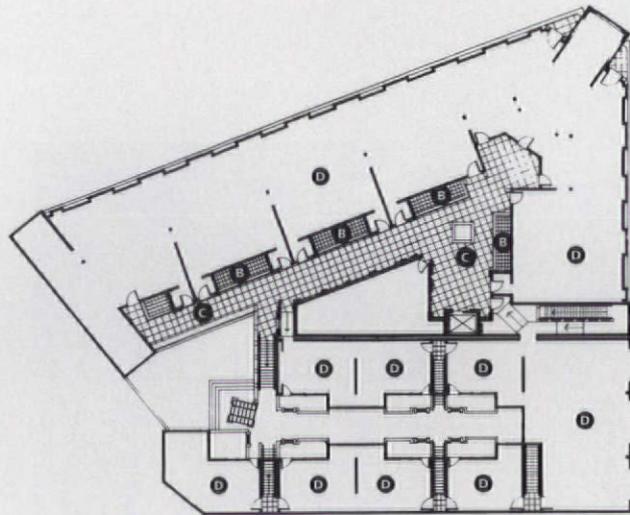
That decision changed the interior layout of the market, which had been planned as two rows of food stalls strung along a walkway leading lengthwise from the corner to the back of the building. Now, Peter planned a bending walkway that started at College Avenue, wrapped behind Olivetto's corner cafe, then turned along the Shafter edge of the market. The revision was an improvement, but the brothers were unhappy about the extent to which a leasing arrangement dictated the design.

The change also angered some neighbors, who had heard an earlier version of the plans explained at design review meetings. Even though the facades had not been changed (which is all the design review process covers, technically), the layout and circulation of the building were dramatically dif-

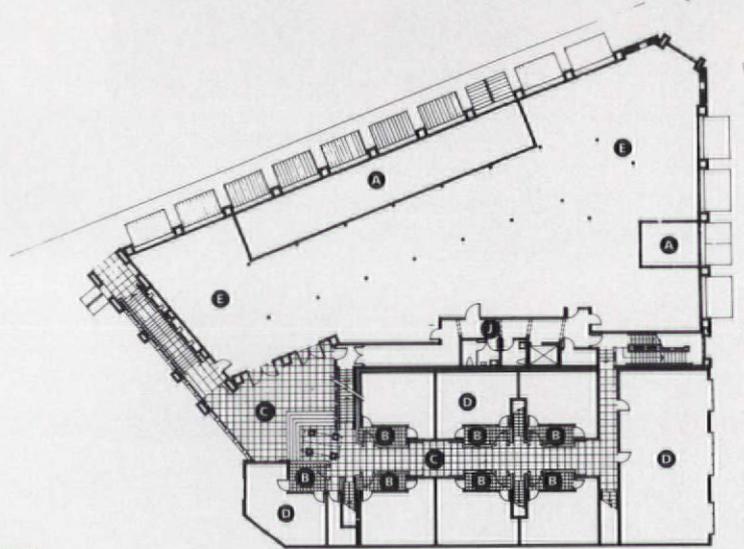
The evolution of the plan: sketches of an early proposal for apartments and a parking garage behind the market. Graphics courtesy Wilson Associates.



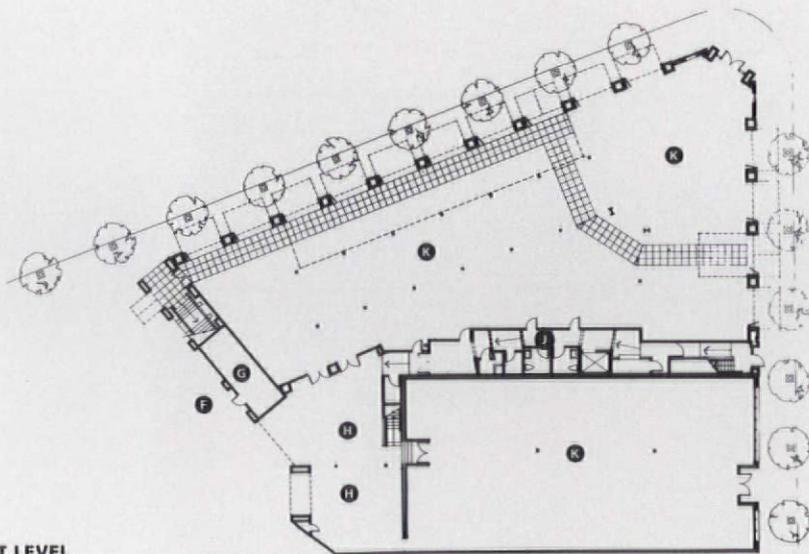
Plan of Market Hall and upper-level professional offices.



THIRD LEVEL



SECOND LEVEL



FIRST LEVEL

- A Open
- B Private Courtyard
- C Public Courtyard
- D Office
- E Storage/Restaurant
- F Parking
- G Electrical Room
- H Service Bay
- J Service Corridor
- K Retail

Opposite:

The "path" along the Shafter Street side of the Market Hall, with abutting vendors' stalls.

Photo by Norman McGrath, courtesy Wilson Associates.



Flower shop on Shafter Street side of the Market Hall.

Photo by Norman McGrath.



Plan of Market Hall, showing vendors' displays.

Graphic by Neema Kudva.

ferent. Once again, the neighbors felt misled, deceived and powerless.

Recruiting local food merchants for the project was difficult, and the Wilsons were still searching when construction began in late 1986. North Berkeley, with its myriad specialty food shops, was an attractive hunting ground but most of the shopkeepers were either content with one store or unsure of their ability to operate a second. The prospective tenants located by real estate agents were franchises, which ran counter to the Wilsons' vision for owner-operated businesses.

The Wilsons tried a new tactic. They purchased The Pasta Shop, which was operating nearby on College Avenue, moved it to the Market Hall and hired their sister to run it. They started a bakery and butcher shop from scratch and found a baker and butcher willing to manage them by canvassing their contacts with local restaurants.

There still was no major commitment to financing when construction began, partly because of the lack of tenants (since Olivetto's was a start-up restaurant, lenders still considered the project risky), partly because of the unusual character of the Alta Bates deal. So the Wilsons started construction with their own money and small loans from personal contacts. Eventually they were able to obtain a loan for about half the cost of the building from a local savings and loan, and another loan for the tenant improvements. With that, the Market Hall was completed and opened in 1987.

As the project was nearing completion in 1987, the frustrated and wary RCPC embarked on a different route, one which would put the neighborhood (its members believed) on the offensive. The group applied for and received more than \$30,000 in city funding to prepare a Rockridge Area



Specific Plan, which would amend the city's general plan, spelling out the direction for future growth and development in Rockridge. RCPC sees the plan as the only way it can influence the long-term direction of the neighborhood. Rather than react to each proposed development, the group reasons, it can now incorporate its own vision into city policy.

An Appraisal

If we look at the Market Hall as an object, a place and a destination, then it is a great success. If we see it for its process, it shows just how tenuous are our opportunities to get good places, and how far we have yet to go.

The design of the ground-floor market was integral to the Wilsons' tenancy plans, and is what makes the Market Hall unique. They believed the owner-operator tenants they hoped to attract would want a very visible street presence, because of both the obvious advertising advantages and the romantic storefront atmosphere that would be projected by stalls facing the public street. Thus they wanted to avoid the typical double-loaded interior corridor that would render the market a self-contained mall with stores visually and physically cut off from the street.

The solution was to line each facade with 15-foot bays that open to the sidewalk and connect to the interior path, which touches the front of each shop along the way (except the Pasta Shop, which it traverses, and the flower shop, which fronts only on Shafter).

All of the shops are open to one another and all can be seen from the middle of the curve in the path. This is because the ceiling is raised to double height above the path along the Shafter facade, allowing more afternoon sun to reach the market. The partitions between the bays exhibit



Shafter Street side of the Market Hall.

Photo by Todd W. Bressi.

varying levels of transparency: In the rear, near the storage and service areas, there are solid walls; in the merchandising areas, there are either openings or partitions made of glass; when a store is to be closed off, a mesh gate is pulled across the path. Altogether, this creates a sense of expansiveness, airiness and connection.

A trip through the market is visually dense but never confining. Each shop pays rent on its portion of the path and can display within its limits — some even display goods on the sidewalk outside. The effect is one of great bustle and activity, a spilling out from each merchant's bay onto the semi-public space of the path and the public way outside.

This permeability is apparent from the outside, as well. The Market Hall's street-level facade consists of a series of wood-frame bi-fold doors with large, plate-glass windows. When the doors are folded open, there is no sense of a wall between the outside and inside; pedestrians can wander freely between the market and the street without having the sense of passing through a door. A few mer-

chants elect to keep some of the doors in front of their shops closed and put low baskets of produce or cases of wines in front of them, but the interior remains visible.

Even if the doors are closed, passersby can easily see that food businesses extend along the length of the Shafter facade. And cafe tables are clustered under the galvanized metal awnings along Colledge, luring pedestrians into Olivetto's, the coffee shop and the bakery.

On the upper levels, the Wilsons created a courtyard scheme, emphasizing privacy and security, while using open-air courts and passages to maintain a spacious and street-like atmosphere. In fact, the third-level courtyard is a one-half scale duplication of the ground floor facade, with its corner tower and repeated bays. The main court, on the second level at the top of the grand staircase, offers a wonderful view of Rockridge, with the San Francisco skyline barely visible above the treetops.

The Wilsons developed this project almost single-handedly: They were the architect and client, did their own legal work in the complex Alta Bates negotiations, acted as general contractor, provided the initial financing for the Market Hall, acted as the real estate agent in finding their own tenants, loaned their own money to one tenant to start up a bakery and owned two of the shops themselves (they still own one, having sold the meat shop to the butcher who operates it), and are still the day-to-day operators.

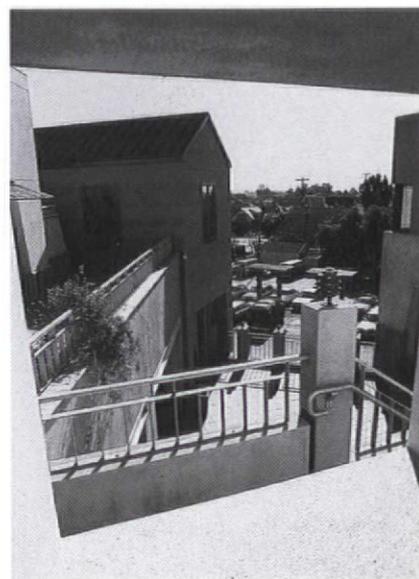
This in-house process allowed the Wilsons many important advantages. First, of course, it saved them tens of thousands of dollars in what would have been profits and commissions for the contractor, lawyer, real estate agent and others. This project would never have been built if, for instance, a

developer had had to spend \$50,000 on legal fees to negotiate the deal with Alta Bates.

Some of this savings found its way back into the building. The Wilsons chose Italian tile for the facade and specially ordered the bi-fold doors from a German manufacturer. They paid local artists to create sculptures that now grace the gates of the upstairs office suites. (The addition of the sculptures was serendipitous: The Wilsons gave the metals contract to a local sculptor who did metal work on the side and who suggested that his friends could embellish the gates.)

Second, this process allowed the Wilsons to exercise a control over the project that they would not have been able to maintain within any single role. They did not have to compromise with weak or franchise-backed merchants, they continue to pay close attention to the quality of merchandise sold there and the quantity of business done, and they exercise what Peter calls with a smile "paternal control" over the leases.

But the biggest advantage was the amazing flexibility with which the Wilsons could work toward their



View of Rockridge from the third level.

Passage leading to offices from second level.

Photos by Norman McGrath, courtesy Wilson Associates.





Sculptures installed on entrance gates to professional offices.

Left, by Gale Wagner and Don Rich.

Right, by Joe Slusky.

Photos by Norman McGrath, courtesy Wilson Associates.



vision. Each time a change in context came up—be it the shift from purchasing the Showcase air rights to developing the building turnkey, the modification of the pedestrian circulation pattern in the market, or the fight with the neighborhood over the apartments—the Wilsons could make unilateral decisions without having to involve a host of peripheral parties. This allowed them to make mid-course corrections with ease, turning their project to the new circumstances while still making steady progress toward their unchanging goal.

Together, these advantages enabled the Wilsons to establish a vision and stick with it. The initial vision was not whole, and they were able to extend and elaborate it as specific circumstances arose.

That the Wilsons approached the problems this way can be attributed not only to the range of skills and interests they personally brought to the collaboration, or to their inexperience in the development process, but also to their desire to make a place that would be worth calling their own.

A Model for Placemaking?

In the deregulatory 1980s, the return to Social Darwinism—whoever wins is right—has taken away many mechanisms for cooperation, consensus and broadened vision. Is it necessary that placemaking so often become a sporting event, RCPC versus Wilson Associates, in a fight to the finish?

The Wilsons felt no compunction about proposing apartments in the single-family zone because, they say, “it’s an established planning principle that residential areas are buffered from commercial by apartment zones.” On the other hand, RCPC can state: “Fifteen years ago, the Rockridge community, led by RCPC and the College Avenue Merchants Association created special zoning for College Avenue and the adjacent residential neighborhoods.... Now we are the ones best suited to review them, improve them and add to them where necessary....”

The story suggests a greater role for government. The Oakland city planning department was decimated by former Mayor Lionel Wilson (no relation) and is just beginning a long climb from its current status as a mere record-keeping agency. The General Plan has not been attended to in years, and the department has been blown about by the political winds. By abdicating its intermediary role, Oakland, like many other cities, has fostered an unnecessarily combative relationship between strong developers and active anti-growth groups, one in which there must be a winner and loser.

Yet no planning process, no city plan, by itself can guarantee good places. The quality of a place is by nature based on a commitment to the future of that place.

The Wilsons knew that they were going to be connected to the Market Hall long after its physical completion, and were thus willing to take the un-

sual risks and responsibilities necessary to follow their vision. But we know that such commitment is rare indeed; RCPC can hardly feel comfortable depending on the *noblesse oblige* of the development community to protect and advance the neighborhood.

Similarly, Rockridge residents had a vision for their community that they were interested—and skilled—in articulating through a planning and political process. But the Wilsons would be justified in wondering to what extent that vision included the capability for transformation and to what extent it rested on an unyielding conformity with the status quo.

What is called for, perhaps, is a forum in which visions such as these can be aired, tested, elaborated, and nurtured; compared and contrasted to other visions; and critiqued. In Rockridge, the discussions that are leading to the formulation of a specific plan could turn out to provide such an opportunity. Whatever the forum—a planning procedure, community charrette, student studio, or some other process—it is important that these visions can be expressed and understandings forged before money is on the line or environmental change is imminent.

Third-level courtyard, and walkway leading to professional offices.

Photo by Norman McGrath, courtesy Wilson Associates.



SOLOMON'S TEMPLE

Laura Volkerding

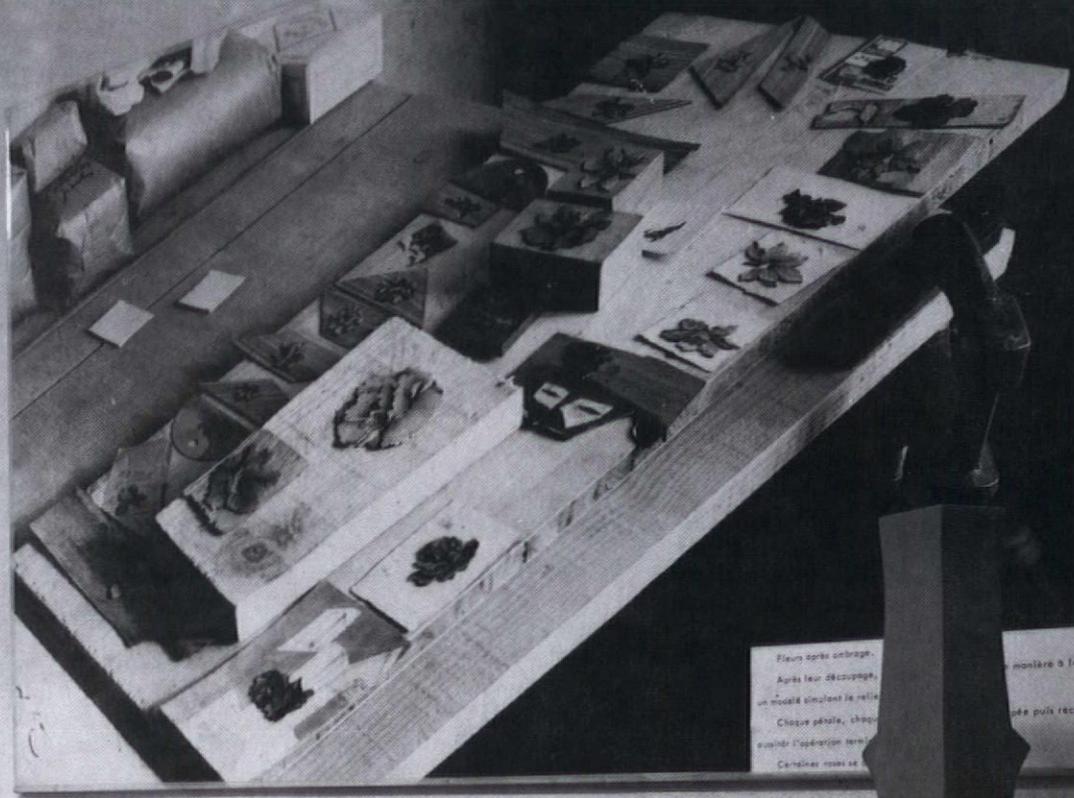


The photographs in this portfolio are concerned with how artisans are trained, the traditions and techniques particular to their trades and the resulting artifacts. *Compagnons*, as they are called, are the elite workers and master artisans of Europe. Their training is rooted in a deep tradition of passing on the secrets of the trades to new initiates. Their lineage can be traced to the ancient guilds, perhaps to the beginning of the history of buildings. Possibly at the heart of the *compagnons'* secrets is that they have come to understand that the working of materials is an esthetic endeavor.

The spirituality of things of lasting quality is suggested by an artisan's reverence for both his tools and materials. In the *in situ* compositions presented here, the work in process takes on an almost ritualized quality. The undercurrent of surrealism is the result of both the photographer's vision of reality and the factuality of objects and places described.

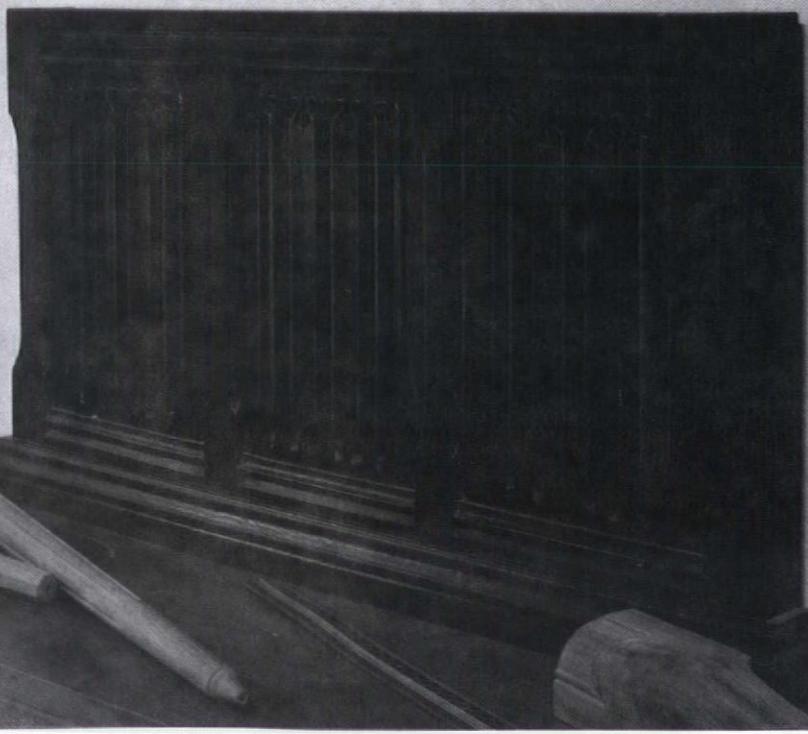
These photographs were made during 1989 and 1990 in the training houses of the *Compagnons du Devoir*, throughout France, and the European Center for the Training of Artisans for Restoration, at Isola di San Servelo, near Venice. The photographs were made with a 5 x 7 field camera. To retain their evocative force, they are presented without title, location, or descriptive captions.

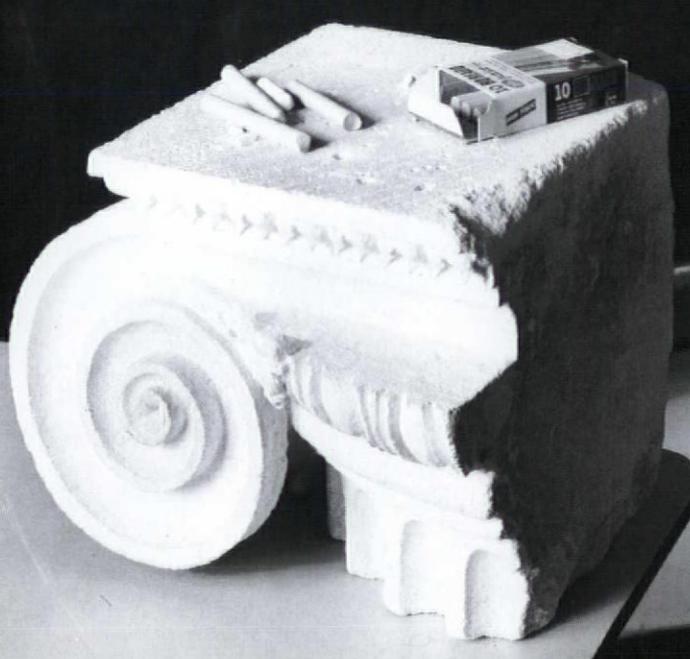
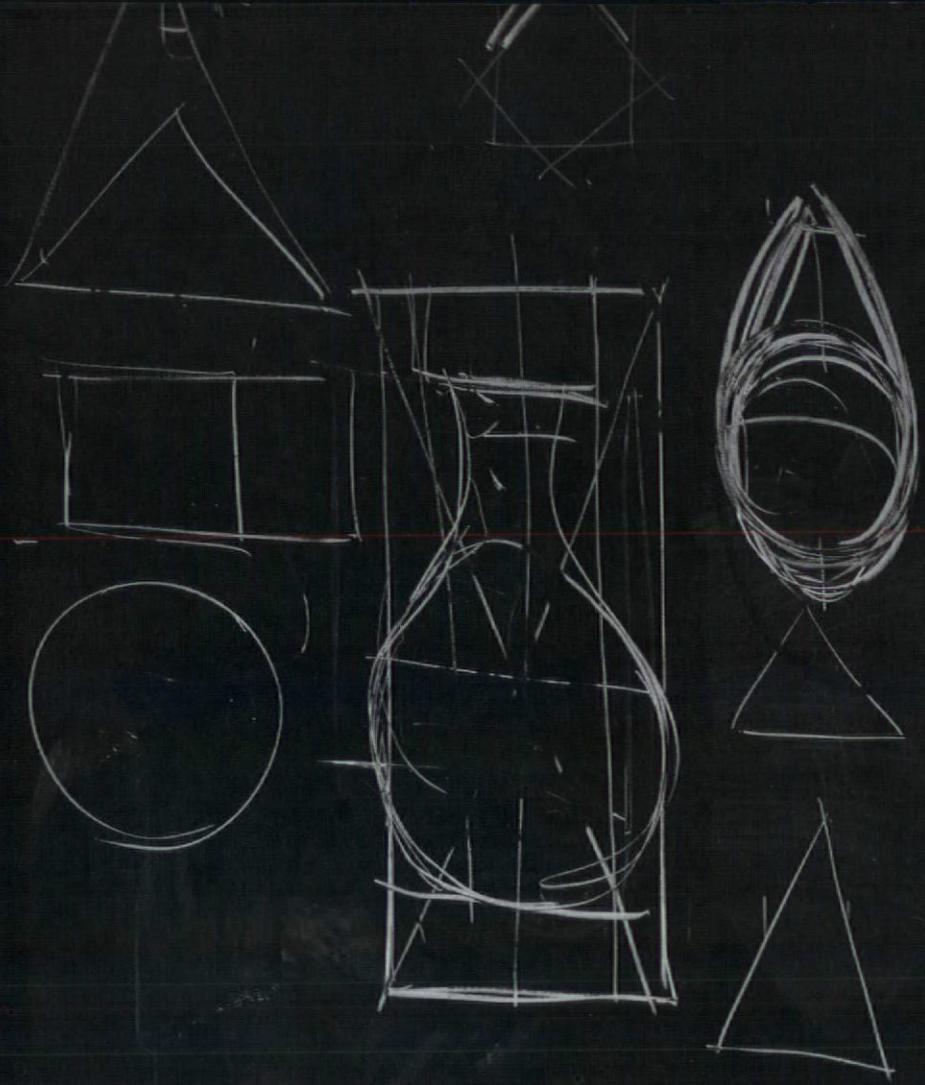




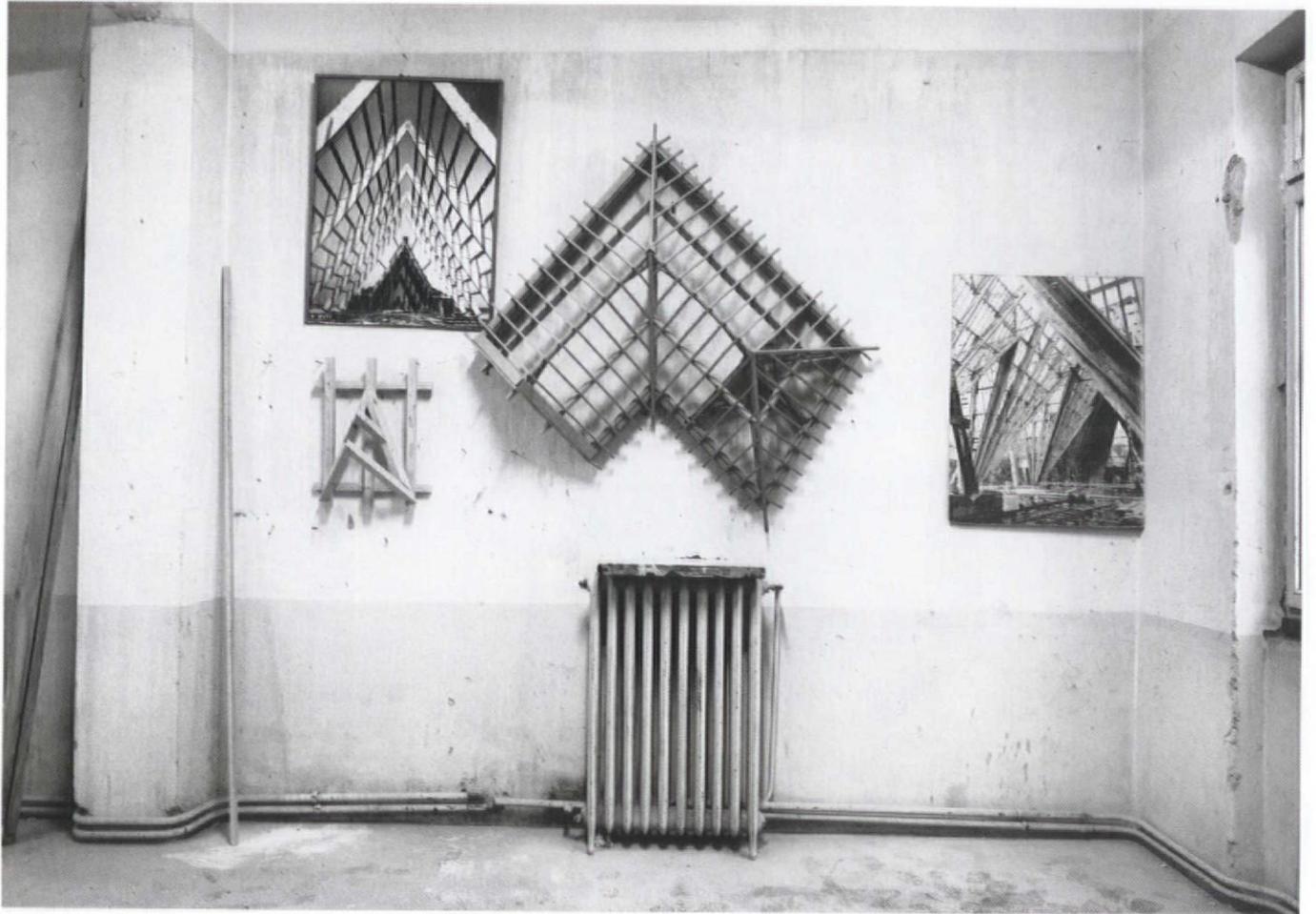
Flieurs après ontbrage.
Après leur découpage,
un modèle simulant la relie
Chaque pétale, chaque
feuille l'opération sera
C'est-à-dire nous se

manière à leur apporter
pétale puis reconstitue

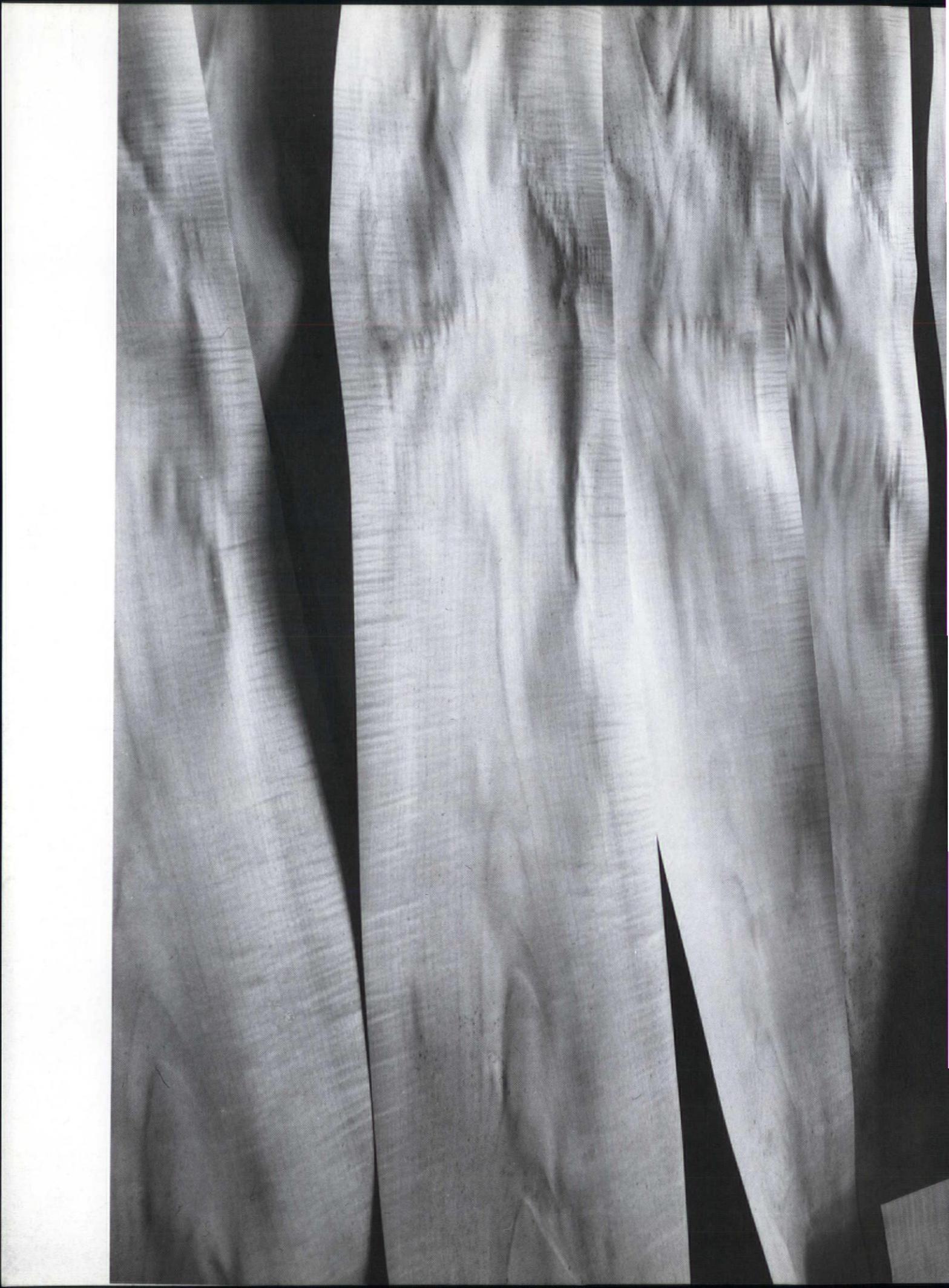




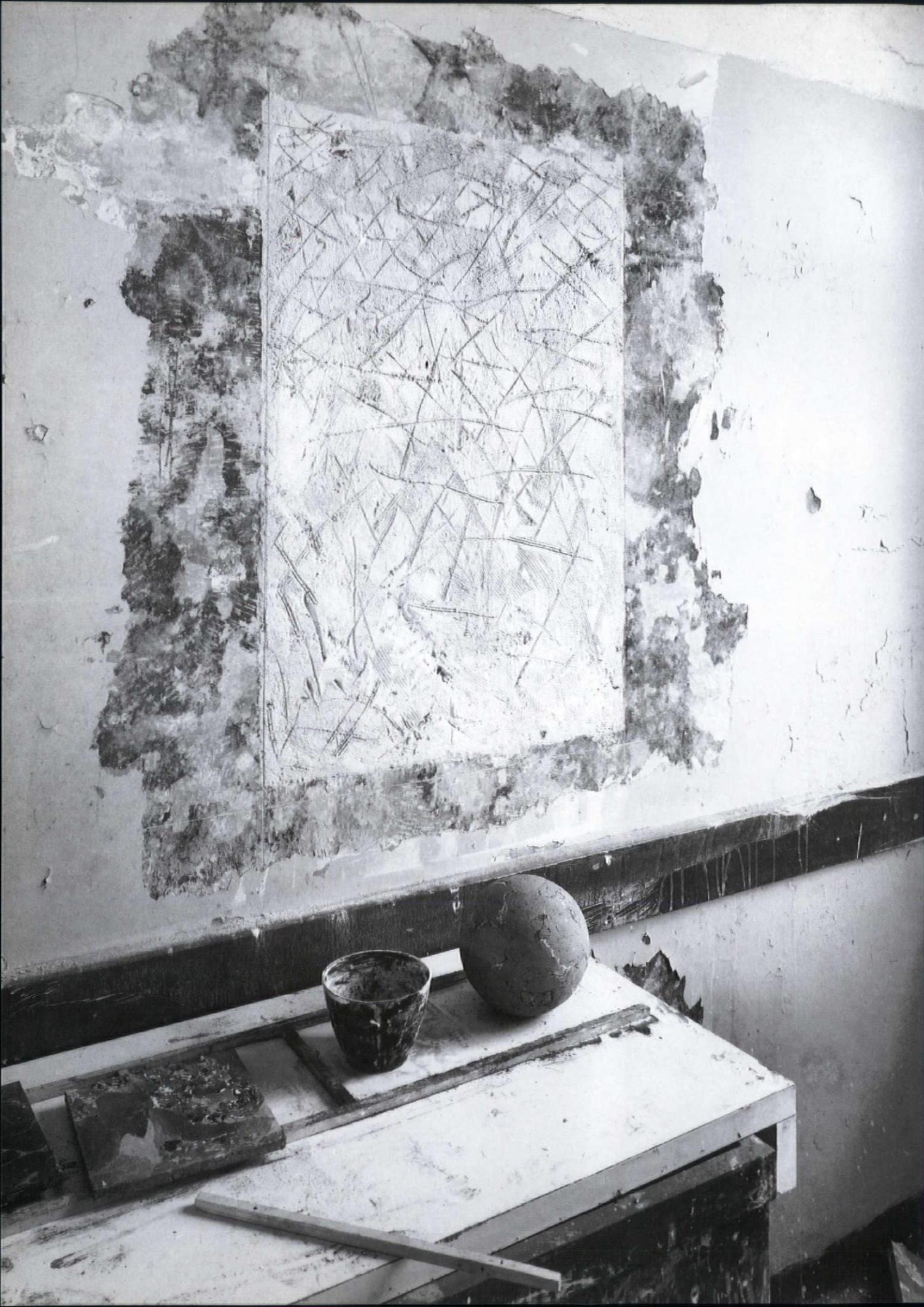


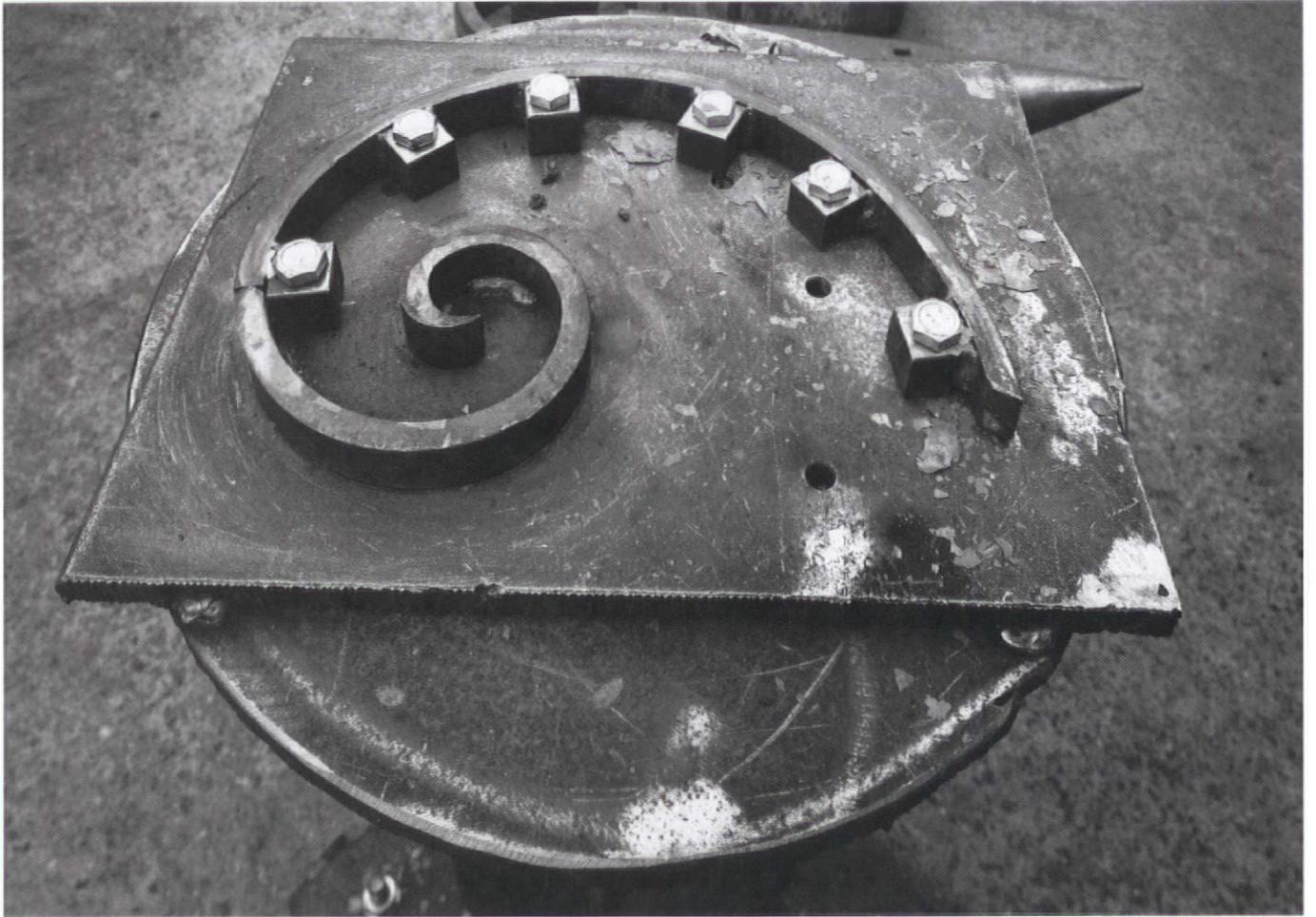
















AN INDIGENOUS THING: The Story of William Wurster and the Gregory Farmhouse

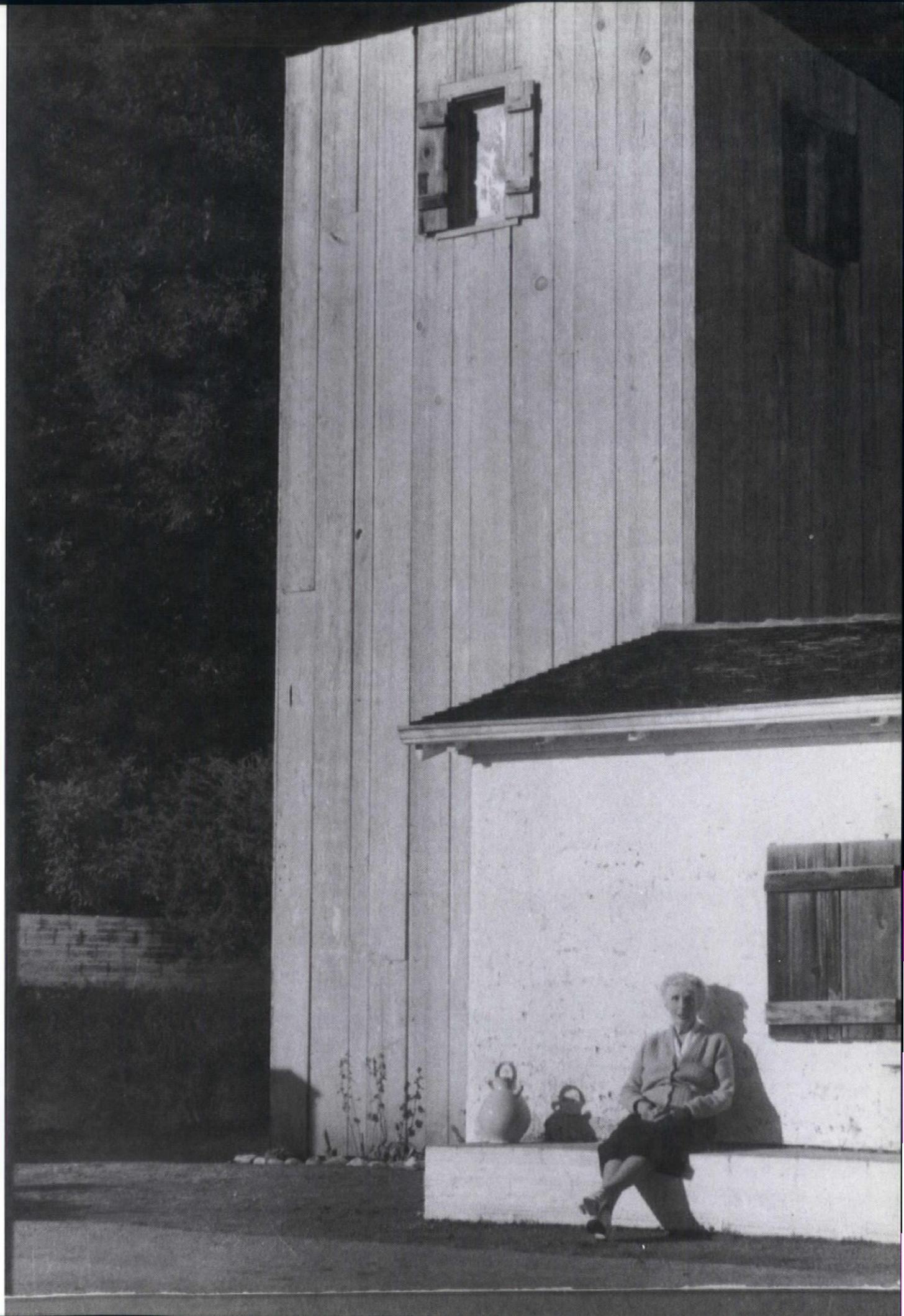
My grandmother's farmhouse stands at the end of a long, narrow, asphalt and dirt road that winds through dense manzanita and groves of redwood, oak and fir in the Santa Cruz Mountains along the central California coast. One's first glimpse of it is from a distance, a flash of white walls through branches. The house disappears briefly as the road climbs a slight ridge, then suddenly, after a short descent, there you are, in a dirt parking area beside the front gate.

The best known photograph of the house was taken by Roger Sturtevant from this clearing and looks indirectly at the house's west-facing facade. Everything is visible at once: There is the front wall with its central, diagonally braced gates flung wide; the tall, sheer water tower, like an enlarged milk carton, with a thick, mud-walled one-story structure at its base; and the L-shaped house proper, its simple gable-ends and covered walkways forming two sides of a courtyard.

On the south, a low-walled terrace off the living room looks out over a vineyard sloping down to an old apple orchard. In the distance is a view of Monterey Bay. The terrace broadens into a sweeping curve as it extends around the east side or back of the house. The whitewashed vertical boards, double-hung windows, porch overhangs and shingle roofs combine to form a structure that looks as though it has always been there. In the words of its architect, William Wurster, or "Bill," as he was known, this is "a house of carpenter architecture—no wood beams or posts larger than absolutely necessary—an arid, California yard with the protecting walls about."¹

The white house commands its spur of land with authority, both independent of and complementary to the surrounding landscape, abstract and ranch-like at the same time. The three dominant elements—tower, wall and gate—form an almost allegorical image of habitation and arrival, as if this were not just a summer and weekend house, but a small outpost or stockade on an isolated frontier.

Sadie Gregory, the author's grandmother, sitting in the forecourt, outside her bedroom. Photo by Thomas Church, courtesy Daniel P. Gregory.



Resonance

A vivid composition fashioned out of ordinary forms and materials, the Gregory farmhouse expressed a brand of assertive modesty that became especially appealing during the Depression. Completed in 1928, it received an honor award from the Northern California Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1929 and the \$500 first prize in the small house competition sponsored by *House Beautiful* in 1930. Widely published in the architectural journals and popular shelter magazines of the day—including *Architect and Engineer*, *Architecture*, *Pencil Points* and *Sunset*—it stood out among the traditional Tudor, Neoclassical, or Spanish Colonial Revival-inspired houses and estates that were still appearing regularly.

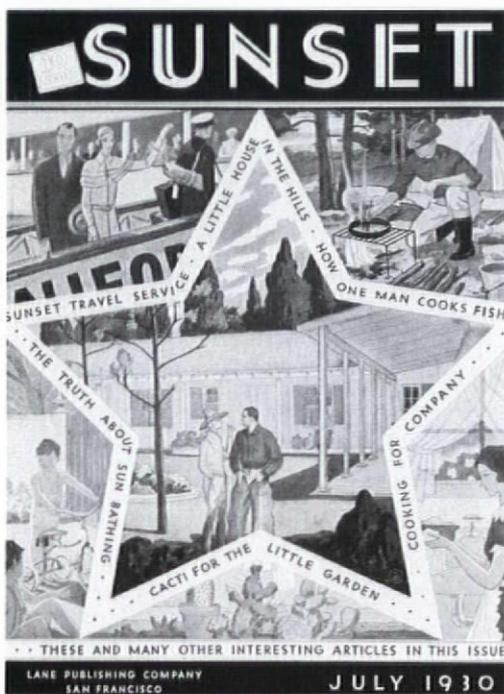
The house looked new and old at the same time. It expressed a modern approach to function without assuming radical new shapes and forms. *House Beautiful* wrote, “This house has, we believe, the great merit of originality and simplicity. Obviously a copy of no other house, it is a straightforward attempt to solve a specific problem, which it does in the most direct manner, The result is not only convenience of plan but charm of composition in no small degree.”²

Throughout the 1930s, writers and editors used the farmhouse as a praiseworthy example of how to design a vacation house for a mild climate. In her book *Designs for Outdoor Living*, Margaret Olthof Goldsmith wrote, “The lines of the house and its utter lack of pretense are an inspiration to anyone who seeks escape from official cares.”³ The professional press praised its sincerity and direct simplicity.

Simplicity became its most remarked upon quality, and the commentary acquired a moralistic undertone. *Pencil Points* editor Kenneth Reid wrote: “Forms natural to materials and uses, undistorted by any faint suggestion of ‘artiness,’ give this house the charm of honesty that might have been produced by a carpenter endowed with good taste.”⁴

By the 1960s the house had become an emblem of regionalism, used often to illustrate part of California’s contribution to the history of architecture. It represented an in-between stage in the evolution of Modernism: not traditional, not avant-garde, but free thinking and pragmatic. In *The Architecture of America: A Social and Cultural History*, authors John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown wrote that Wurster’s “early ranch houses stemmed from the historic tradition of revivalism. The one-story grouping he did in the simplest vernacular for Mrs. Gregory in 1927...shows how fine such work might be when approached simply. But the romance was still there.”⁵

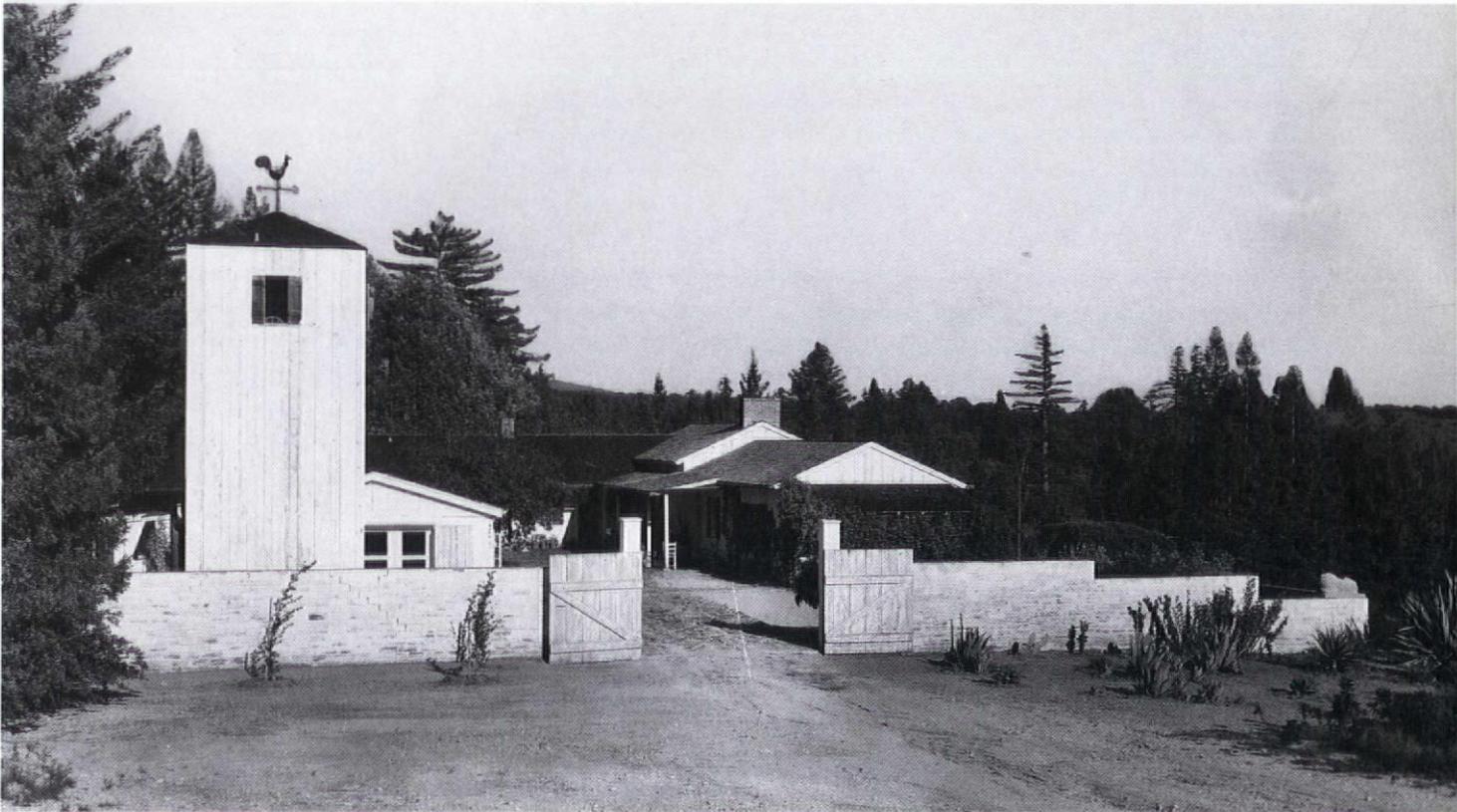
More recently, architectural historian Sally Woodbridge wrote that in the farmhouse Wurster “took the body of Modern architecture and gave it a regional soul.”⁶ With its inclusion in histories and guidebooks, the Gregory farmhouse has become an architectural icon.



The Gregory house fit the *Sunset* dictum that “there must be romance in the house you build.” The illustration includes two figures in chaps, boots and a cowboy hat, apparently in an effort to heighten the Western ranch feeling.

Courtesy Daniel P. Gregory.

Roger Sturtevant's classic photograph of the Gregory house, looking into the forecourt. Courtesy Sally Woodbridge.



Today the design still seems both fresh and familiar, simple and evocative. Visitors' reactions tend to bear this out. One first-time guest remarked: "I feel I've taken a sentimental journey to a place I've never been." Another asked, "So where is the architecture?" And another, seeing the house after it had undergone a period of meticulous painting and repair, observed: "It must have been quite a place once."

Bill would have been delighted. For what each of these remarks illustrates is this: Here is a house that illustrates simple place-making without being all that simple.

An Affection for the Site

Wurster met my grandparents, Warren and Sadie Gregory, through their eldest son, Don, a friend from his college days at the University of California, Berkeley. Sadie came to view Bill almost as an adopted son. He visited "The Farm" often to participate in family rituals, especially at Thanksgiving and the Fourth of July. He remained a devoted admirer of my grandmother, ultimately naming his only child after her. She returned the compliment late in her life (in the early 1950s) by selling him the Gregory house in Berkeley, which had been designed by John Galen Howard and which Wurster had admired since architectural school.

The Gregorys purchased the Santa Cruz mountain acreage in 1916, and they drove or took the train down from Berkeley to vacation there whenever they could. Initially, a small Gothic Revival farmhouse dating from the 1880s provided adequate shelter. But eventually it felt cramped for a family with four children, and it stood at the bottom of a heavily forested canyon—pleasantly cool during the hottest days of summer but uncomfortably cold, damp and dark the rest of the year. They often thought about building a new house on a sunnier site.

Warren and Sadie both loved the outdoor life and took their children on numerous horse-packing trips through the Sierra. They explored their own land with equal enthusiasm, finding here a grove of redwoods suitable for staging family pageants and there a hay field big enough for softball. There was no doubt about where a new house would go: up out of the canyon and in the sunlight, on a particular south-facing knoll where they had often picnicked.

Warren's affection for this particular knoll is movingly expressed in a letter he wrote the day he died: "I am building a new house up on the ridge where the sun is a more frequent visitor and we can look across Scott's Valley in the evening and count the evening stars."⁷

The Gregory House Forecourt

The house for Sadie Gregory has a feature almost always absent from American houses, whether they are urban, suburban, or rural. This is the enclosed forecourt. Daniel P. Gregory writes that the forecourt can be accounted for by William Wurster's having studied rural complexes in the Monterey area, quoting Wurster's own words, "an early California Yard." No doubt such a precedent exists and is an echo from distant Spain.

It is tempting to suggest an even broader reference. During Wurster's postgraduate year abroad, he surely savored, over and over, the rich patterns of the agricultural landscapes of

Europe. When people began to keep records of the ways these lands were used, there was already in place a social structure in which some farms were more important than others; these were surrounded by smaller holdings worked by serfs and tenants who owed services and productive goods to the local *seigneur* in return for his protection. The resulting installations have not been erased despite endless social and economic changes.

The manor house itself typically had an enclosed forecourt serving many uses. It clustered and controlled the various non-residential structures needed for farm management; it stored machines and tools and formed a sheltered outdoor workshop for their repair. (The farm animals, being more of a nuisance, lived

The south wing of the house.
Photo by Morley Baer.

in the *basse-cour*.) A sizable manor might generate wings that could help enclose a forecourt. In the courtyard people handled cargoes and climbed on and off horses and vehicles, thus creating a necessary locus for greeting and leave-taking. These activities are distinct from those taking place in an inner patio, a walled garden, an orchard, or a private terrace, but they are not unlike many events in modern life that find appropriate setting in a forecourt. See, for instance, the little ritual with flags photographed by Thomas Church.

More a concourse than a living space, the forecourt offers no obstructions to the movement of vehicles once they have been admitted. Foliage, if any, is restricted to vines or flowers at the edges, not foundation planting.



The inexpensive floor is preferably some earthy mixture that is firm underfoot, yet porous over buried drain tiles. Without ruts or gullies, it looks maintenance-free but may need endless raking and weeding.

The Gregory house is small, intended mainly for weekends and vacations. Owner and architect were in agreement about the desire for simplicity and the suppression of all useless features. Even so, they found ways to enclose the court, glorify the water tank and supply the gates. The Gregorlys took refuge in the forest but brought civilization with them.

—Lawrence B. Anderson

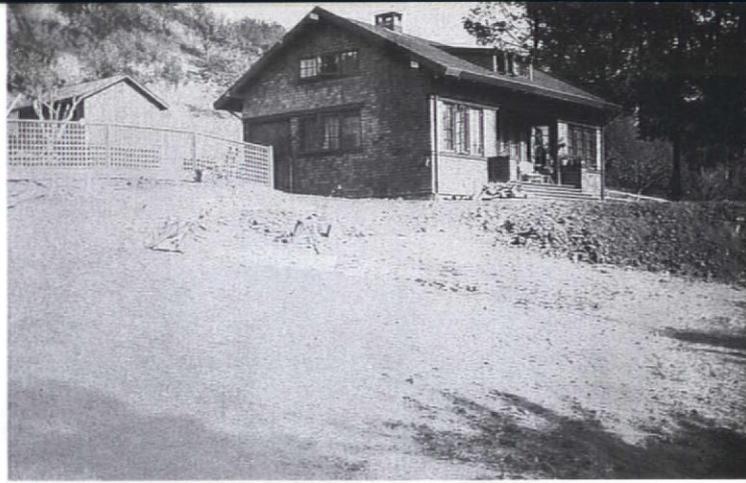
A Roundabout Search for Simplicity

Before beginning to build on the new site, however, Warren and Sadie considered the possibility of remodeling the old canyon house. They turned to their closest friend and Berkeley neighbor, John Galen Howard, who had designed houses for both the Gregorlys and for Warren's sister, and for whose own house Warren had paid.

In January and February of 1926 Howard's office drew up plans for an addition to the old farmhouse.⁸ This so-called guest house matches the simple board and batten appearance of the existing house, but is more rigorously symmetrical. A verandah runs the entire length of the free-standing, rectangular, shed-roofed structure. Behind that porch are a bedroom, bathroom, bedroom and another sleeping porch.

At the center of the verandah and parallel to it, a mirror-image pair of stairs leads down to another short flight of steps perpendicular to the porch. With its emphatic use of a verandah as an outdoor hallway and of smaller porches as sleeping areas, this design expressed its rustic, camp-like function simply and directly. Its directness was not to be lost on Wurster, who would later write of his own design that "the idea is to use the house as a weekend camp."⁹

The process of studying what could be done by remodeling seemed to help the Gregorlys justify their original resolve to start from scratch and build an entirely new house. By April, 1926, they asked Howard to draw sketches for a new house on the new site.

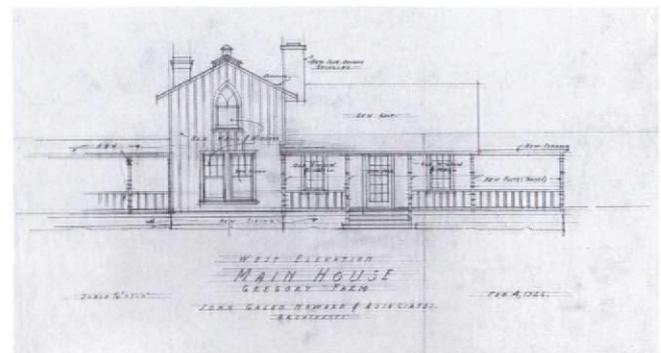
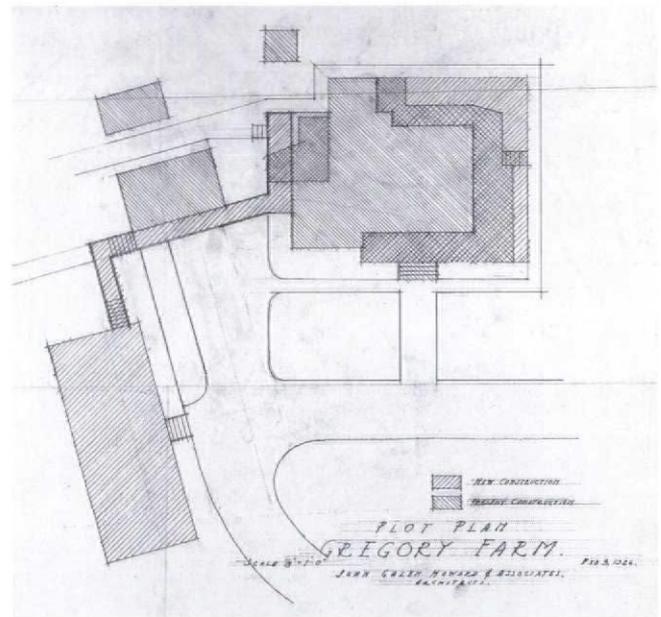


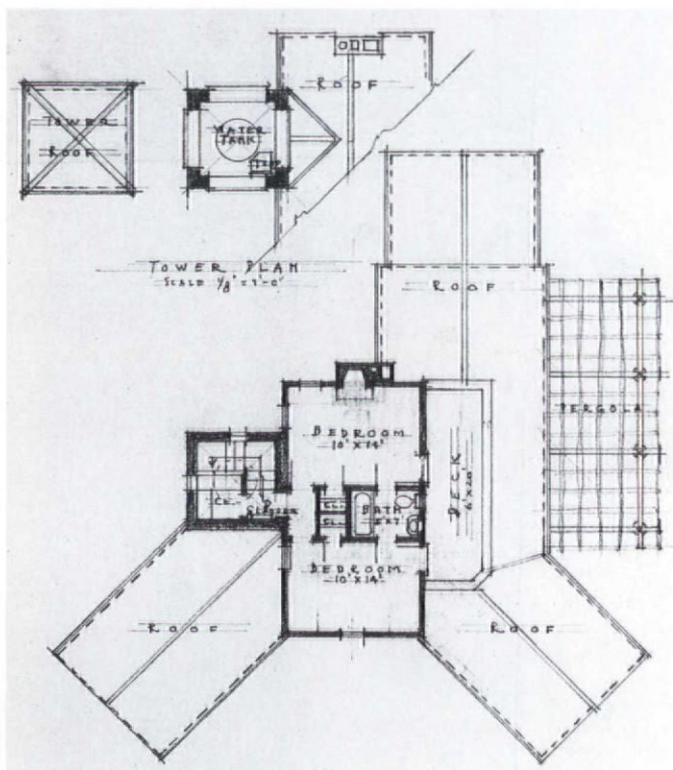
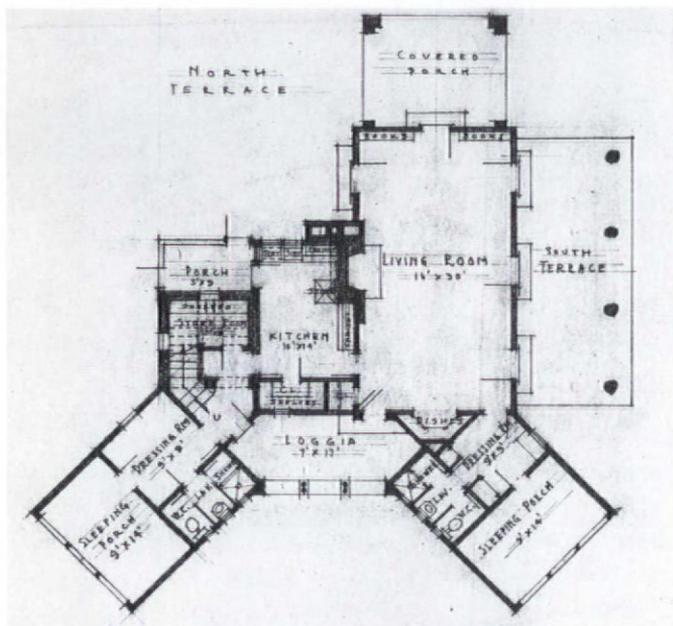
The Gregory house in Berkeley, circa 1900, designed by John Galen Howard.

Photo by Thorstein Veblen, courtesy Daniel P. Gregory.

Before deciding to build a new house, the Gregorlys asked John Galen Howard to draw plans for expanding a house that already stood elsewhere on their property.

Drawings courtesy Documents Collection, College of Environmental Design Library, University of California, Berkeley.





John Galen Howard's proposal for a new house contained several elements that Wurster would distill and refine.

Several of the elements that Wurster would later distill and redefine are in those drawings: the courtyard plan, water tower and sleeping porches. In this plan, geometry dominates: The entry court is octagonal and the two-story house rather awkwardly angles around three sides of it. The water tower is incorporated into the body of the house, and a graded terrace on the back side echoes the shape of the front court.

By June, Henry Howard, John Galen Howard's architect son, had produced a set of working drawings for a substantially altered design. In his version the house spread out on one level and assumed a Spanish Colonial Revival feeling, with tile roofs, stucco walls and elaborate grillwork for windows and gates. It was L-shaped, wrapping around two sides of a simpler, rectangular entry courtyard, with a water tower approximately where Wurster's tower would stand.

Warren and Sadie balked at the design, which they thought would be more formal and elaborate than that of their Berkeley house. They decided not to proceed, a decision that must have been difficult because of their close friendship with the Howards.

About this time, Warren engaged a contractor to build what he thought would become the garage for the new house out of rammed earth, or *pise de terre*. (It ultimately became Sadie's bedroom, at the tower's base.) He had become interested in this method of building, possibly during a 1909 trip to Mexico City, and was eager to try it. It would be a way of constructing part of the new house out of the very land on which it stood, making it literally indigenous (though the claylike loam used for the walls came from some distance away). He obtained instructions and advice from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and from the Agricultural School at Davis.¹⁰

In the fall of 1926 Warren had a heart attack. Despite his illness, the Santa Cruz project remained uppermost in his thoughts. He and Sadie decided to see what young Bill Wurster could do with it and sent him their accumulation of Howard drawings. In a letter dated December 19, 1926, Warren wrote Bill, saying that a board and batten exterior finish (like one Wurster had used in a house in Oakland)¹¹ would be suitable and that "we want this house to be a simple one which can be closed when we are away, but which nevertheless will have a maximum of comfort while we are there."¹²

Warren died in February 1927, and everything came to a halt. Six months later, Sadie asked Bill to resume his analysis. Bill recalled the subsequent events in a letter written to Sadie on her birthday 25 years later: "Dearest Mrs. Gregory: How well I remember this day in 1927 when I met you on Hearst and LeConte and spent the day on the beginning sketches for the Farm—and that evening at Don's you said, 'This is it—when do we start?'"¹³

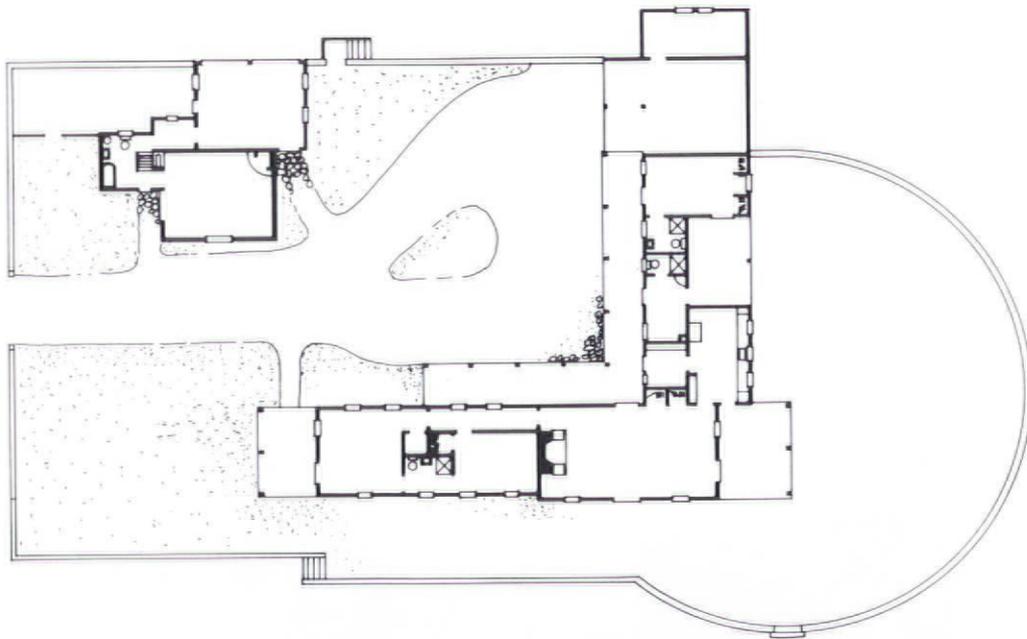
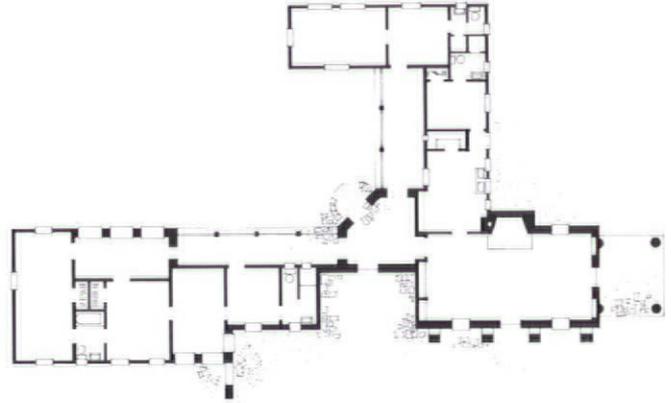
Stabilizing the Essential

Bill's design, after what he maintained was only a day's work, embodied everything Sadie and Warren had been looking for. It was a deeply original conception, but one that benefited from the close analysis of Henry Howard's earlier planning.

Bill's solution was to keep only the bare outline of Henry Howard's L-shaped plan. He pared it to the bone, removing as much stylistic elaboration as possible. Out went the stucco walls, wrought iron grille-work and tile roofs. Out went such formal-sounding and elaborately treated rooms as the "vestibule," with its ceiling detailed as a "five-part cloister vault," and the flagstone-paved "loggia."

Though Bill retained certain key spaces, he utterly transformed them. For example, Howard's two intersecting "corridors," though essentially open to the weather, were separated from the courtyard by balusters and could be used only as hallways between the bedrooms and the vestibule. Bill made them "galleries": covered extensions of the courtyard and fully accessible from it. The covered walkways themselves became a kind of vestibule leading to and protecting the front door,

Henry Howard's plan for a new house (top) and Bill Wurster's final plan.



Graphics by Neema Kudva, based on drawings from the Documents Collection, College of Environmental Design Library, University of California, Berkeley, and from *Bay Area Houses*.

Image and Reality

It was probably not until about six or eight years ago that I saw the Gregory farmhouse. Until then I had only known it from Roger Sturtevant's elegant photographs and from the plans that had been published in a number of consumer or professional journals.

I probably first saw articles about the farmhouse in *Architecture* when I was still at Penn in 1935. I confess that my first impressions, probably influenced in part by the fact that *Architecture* was the most conservative of the journals then (publishing largely derivative work, strongly or mildly so) and in part by the romantic character of Roger Sturtevant's photographs, led me to

see the farmhouse more as pictorial image and less as a real house. What did impress me strongly was the clarity and discipline of the plan of both the house and the beautifully simple garden. The clear, sharp definition of the house and garden separated from the entrance and a low garden wall had the greatest impact.

I had come to know Bill Wurster quite well before the war, and it was what he said, his wonderfully simple and straightforward description of what he was trying to do and what he thought we should all be trying to do, that was much more influential than the buildings, as beautifully and striking as they were. I was especially taken with many of Bill's San Francisco houses, especially the severely plain ones using that most ordinary siding, channel rustic. But

nothing, fifty years ago, came close to the wonder of the Yerba Buena Club built for the 1939 San Francisco Fair.

Finally seeing the Gregory farmhouse completely dispelled the soft romanticism that Sturtevant's photographs had conveyed. It had a wonderful, slightly beat up look to it. (I suspect it always had that) and a simplicity which for all its power did not get in the way. It is one of the best examples, if not the best, of Bill's ideas. I might regret that I did not realize this by looking at magazines, but then I had it straight from Bill. It is a useful lesson in the limits of flat images on flat paper. It is one hell of a good house.

—Joseph P. Esherick



which now opened directly into the living room. Bill's design contained only one short interior hall, from the living room to two bedrooms, and even that opens to the courtyard.

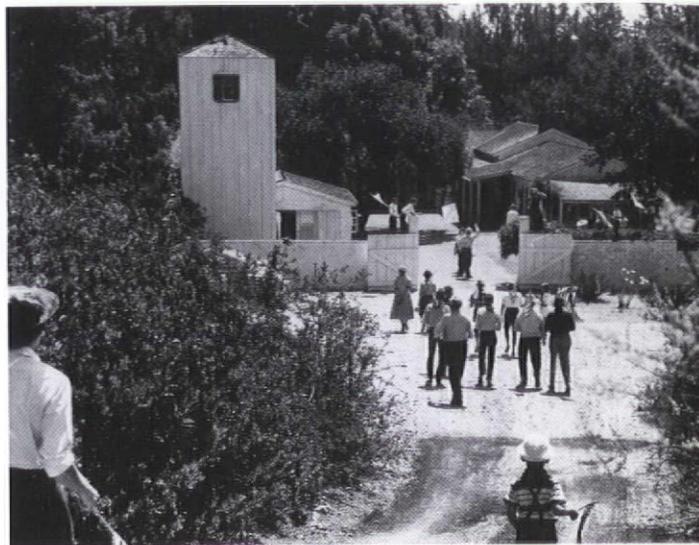
Bill concentrated on the idea that this house would be used primarily during the warmest months of the year and made sure that every major room opened directly to the out-of-doors. The living room has doors to the outside on three sides, and every major bedroom opens onto a porch. There is even a porch at the east end of the living room, just off the kitchen, to be used as an outdoor dining room.

Bill brought his own strong architectural sensibility to the commission. Like John Galen Howard before him, Bill had studied early California adobe architecture, especially the early nineteenth-century buildings of Monterey, with their signature verandahs, double-hung windows, shingled roofs and walled courtyards. He certainly knew the handsomely proportioned double-decker porches of the Larkin house, and he might well have seen the Sherwood Ranch, also in Monterey County, which consisted of adobe buildings and wooden buildings standing side by side around a walled courtyard with a distinctive arched gateway.

For the Gregory farmhouse, Bill reinterpreted aspects of the vernacular Monterey ranch, especially "an early California Yard," on his own terms: by abstracting it slightly, by favoring broad unbroken surfaces and by employing a stricter sense of proportion and axiality.

Perhaps Bill's most original contributions were his concentration on the idea of the house as a walled compound in the wilderness and his realization that the entrance and the sense of arrival should dominate. The importance of that feeling is apparent in his first reaction to the site, noted in a letter to Warren dated February 11, 1927: "I think the site very beautiful, not the least of its charms being the approach. An air of intimacy seems always gained when one descends into a forecourt. I was totally unprepared for this as I had conceived of it on a knoll in such a fashion that one always climbed."¹⁴ His gate, wall and tower create an essentially ceremonial public facade that is oriented toward the road, which shields the main living areas behind it and allows them to open informally to a private outdoor world of trees, sun and view.

The process of clarification and simplification, of reduction to essential elements, would no doubt have pleased Warren, but it was equally important to Sadie. Not only did she need to keep costs down now that her husband was gone; she also frowned upon pretense of any kind. She had been trained as a political economist at the University of Chicago, where she had studied under Thorstein Veblen. Any hint of "conspicuous consumption" was anathema.¹⁵ And since her shingle-covered, gable-roofed Berkeley house, where she and Warren had



The ritual Fourth of July parade.
Photo by Thomas Church, courtesy Daniel P. Gregory.

Opposite:
Southeast corner of the house.
Photo by Roger Sturtevant.

hosted “Dr. Veblen” many times, was stylistically unpretentious (though expansive), simplicity and informality would be even more important in her summer house.

Sadie and Bill were kindred spirits. Bill’s own description of the project soon after its completion underscores their mutual agreement on a form of architectural understatement: “A resolve was formed to make it simple and direct—no substitutes of any kind—to keep it free from any distorted or over-studied look.” That meant, for the walls, “rough vertical redwood boards, left without battens as it was desirable to have more restful surfaces than battens allow.” It meant little reliance on style: “In general there was a definite attempt to keep the building free from so-called decoration, relying for interest on the proportioning of the necessary elements.”¹⁶

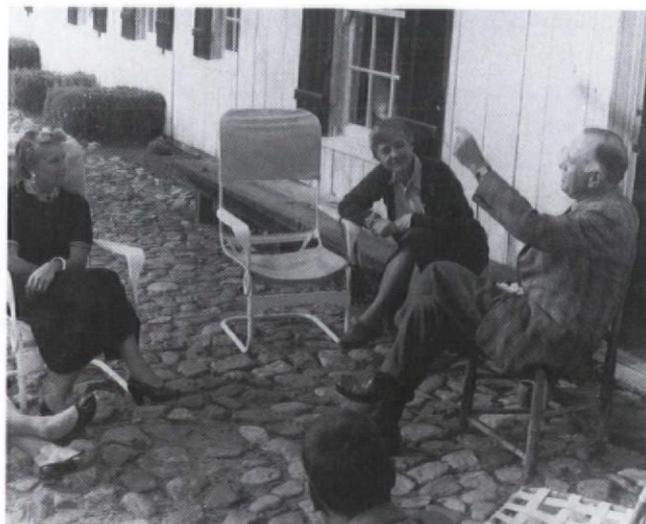
Architectural understatement meant collaboration. Family and friends brainstormed over the design of the farmhouse with excitement and enthusiasm. According to Josephine Gregory, the ideas of making the water tower an emphatic three stories instead of the strictly functional two (for gravity flow) and of placing it next to the rammed earth structure came from one of Sadie’s closest friends, Elizabeth Ellis, who had met Bill when he worked briefly for the New York architect William Adams Delano several years before. Sadie herself contributed the idea of built-in brick seats on either side of the living room fireplace.

One ultimately discarded suggestion was to use unpeeled madrone saplings for the roof beams in the living room. This would have been a picturesque homage to Sadie and Warren’s friend Joseph Worcester, the influential Swedenborgin minister who had incorporated unpeeled logs from the Santa Cruz mountains in the nave of his church in San Francisco many years before. Don Gregory said that they tried the madrone saplings “but it looked awful.”¹⁷ They decided to use ordinary wood beams and paint the living room white like the rest of the house, though a hint of romantic rusticity remained in Bill’s eye-catching basket-weave pattern of rough sawn fir floor boards.

Finally, but most importantly, architectural understatement meant a design that functioned well for the family who built it. Bill wrote: “This was a happy job from start to finish, for utmost cooperation lifted it far higher than any one of us could have brought about. Both the actual plan and the appearance are not too ‘busy’ for really simple living.”¹⁸ More than 60 years later, and with very little modification, the house continues to shelter and shape family activities as friends and relatives eddy through the big living room onto the terrace, gathering again for a Fourth of July picnic of ham and ravioli and artichoke hearts under the oaks at the edge of the hill.

An Eye on Bill Wurster

From his Carmel studio, photographer Morley Baer reflected on his 45-year career and his abiding interest in Bay Area-style architecture. He was introduced to architectural photography in San Francisco after World War II by Roger Sturtevant, whose work he had admired. Sturtevant helped him get started by telling him what architects to go see. Baer photographed the Gregory farmhouse during the mid-1970s. Several of those photographs, never before published, accompany this article.



Bill Wurster at the Gregory house.

Photo by Thomas Church, courtesy Daniel P. Gregory.

South wing and forecourt of the Gregory House.

Photo by Morley Baer.

Photography came first; I had no previous training in architecture. Because I had no background in architecture, I wanted to be sure that I was faithful to what the architect designed. I studied the design, asked why the house was sited where it was, how it functioned, what the materials were. I listened to the architect and prided myself on adhering to the architect's design. I tried to be deliberate and careful in my shooting. I felt my task was to explain the design in the photographs.

Bill Wurster had a lot to do with educating me about architecture. On Saturday afternoons in the early 1950s he would walk down to our house on Greenwood Common in Berkeley for

a chat on the patio. Bill said architecture had to have delight in it and I was astonished to learn that architecture should have anything to do with delight.

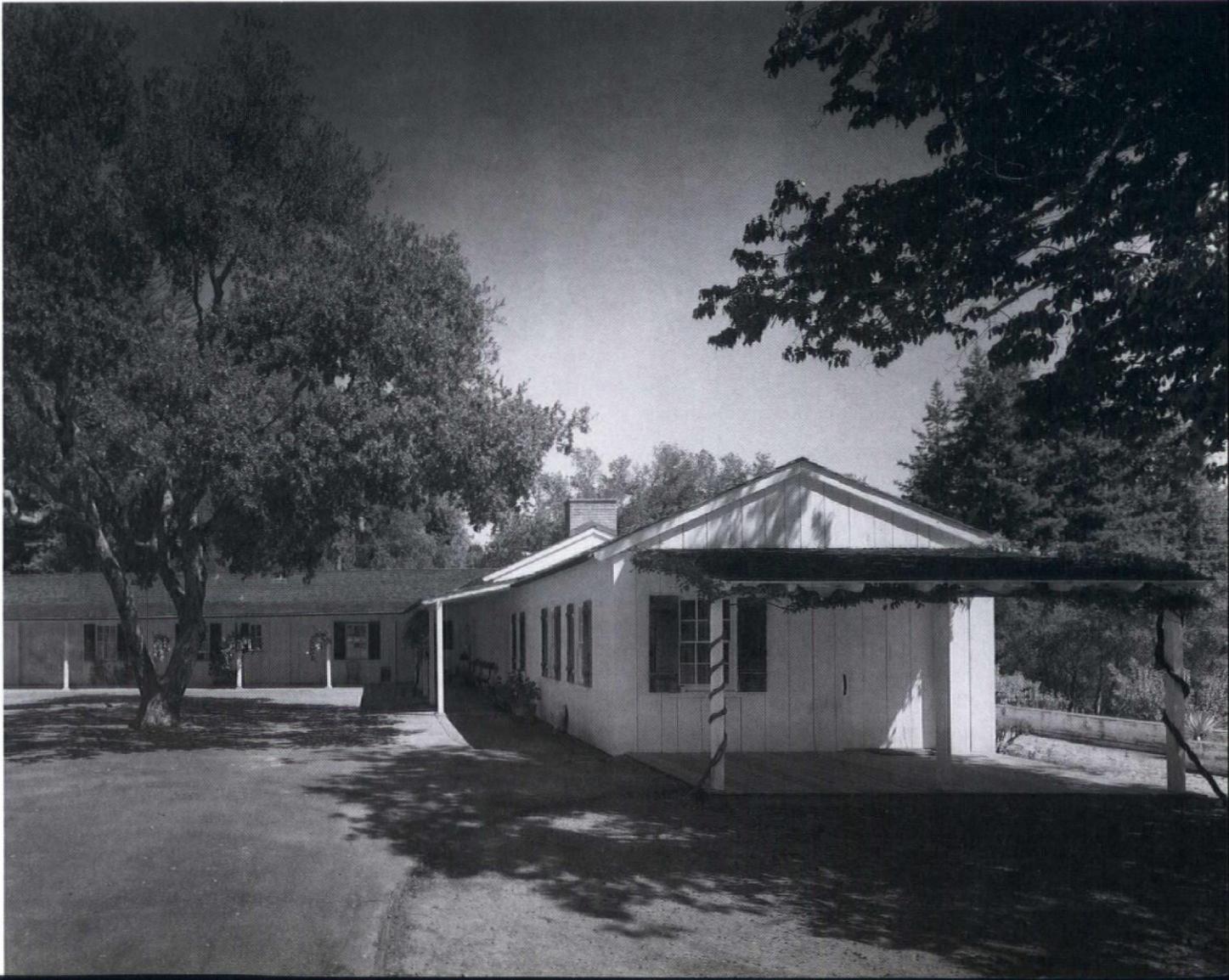
I really liked the Gregory farmhouse, which I considered the first modern ranch house. I knew Bill was sometimes criticized by other architects who thought his houses were so plain, but I thought that was why they were so wonderful. In many of Bill's houses there was very little need to edit the spaces for the photographs. They were not that bedecked.

I always liked Catherine Wurster's (Bill's wife) famous statement, which I heard her make, that "there's nobody like Bill to make a

\$90,000 house look like a \$10,000 house." There was a restraint, a holding back in his work.

An architect once said to me, "You interpret a house well for lay people, but not for architects. You explain where it's done and how it functions, but you don't provide the depth of analysis that architects would like." Well, I'm perfectly happy to interpret for lay people.

*Morley Baer was interviewed by
Daniel P. Gregory.*



Reflections on a Visit

To have known a work of architecture for a long time on paper, and then to have the opportunity to see it in person, especially when that work is a very private work, is a particular privilege. It was my good fortune to be taken to see the Gregory farmhouse by Daniel P. Gregory, who kindly invited San Francisco architect Toby Levy and me for lunch with his family at his mother's house on the same property.

I go into details of personal circumstances because building exists not only in a place, that is to say, a physical context, but in a social and cultural context as well. My sense of the Gregory farmhouse would have been perhaps

quite different if somehow magically I had been dropped onto the site and had explored it unaccompanied. But with so knowledgeable, and so personally involved and intimately connected a guide as Gregory, my experience was enriched immeasurably.

As my experience of the farmhouse had been only through photographs and through the words of such enthusiastic commentators as Charles Moore, I was prepared to be disillusioned by the reality. In the age of mechanical reproduction, reality is frequently less wonderful than our anticipation of it. Not so in the case of the Gregory farmhouse, which, as I think back on it now some five years later, had that ineffable quality in reality—dare I use the buzzword *aura*—that it had for me in the photos. A



work created at a pivotal point in an architect's career, the Gregory farmhouse is the minor masterpiece I had been led to believe it to be.

What makes it so special? It is not really natural to its place, though I had been led to believe it might so seem. In fact, it is arty and stagey and therein lies its charm. From artiness and staginess comes an intimacy of scale and a wonderfully toy-like spirit. Though a stage set and a toy, it is much more—it is a knowing work of architecture, with carefully composed elements that blend abstract order and scenographic effect.

Everything about it seems so deliberate yet so casual, so contrived yet so straightforward. The materials are handled in a way that suggests not a natural inevitability but the ingenious translation of one material to another. So too, the forms, Californian by adoption, seem much more of Normandy by way of New York. Thereby they invite interpretation and add mystery. The Gregory farmhouse is a marvel of architectural artifice.

—Robert A.M. Stern

The living room of the Gregory house.

Photo by Roger Sturtevant, courtesy Oakland Museum.



The road leading from the Gregory house.

Photo by Thomas Church, courtesy Daniel P. Gregory.

Frames of Reference

When Frank Lloyd Wright met Bill Wurster for the first time, so the story goes, he said: "Oh yes. You're that shanty architect. I understand your roofs leak too."¹⁹

This would have pleased Bill, because it showed that Wright knew enough about Wurster's work to start playing one-upmanship the moment they were introduced. Bill took some pleasure in his reputation for designing houses that looked, if not shanty-like, at least simple and straightforward, yet artful enough to make you think they belonged where they were. If a house looked cheap, so much the better. In his own words: "I like to work on direct, honest solutions, avoiding exotic materials, using indigenous things so that there is no affectation and the best is obtained for the money."²⁰ The Gregory farmhouse was one of his first houses to express that philosophy with eloquence and assurance.

Such early California architects as Ernest Coxhead, Bernard Maybeck, Julia Morgan and John Galen Howard had produced a regional architecture by using redwood and incorporating vernacular elements into their residential work. But it was really the next generation of Bay Area architects—led by Bill Wurster and including Gardner Daily, Hervey Clark and others—that consciously articulated a regional point of view.

Born in the central valley town of Stockton, Calif., in 1895, Wurster graduated from Berkeley in 1919. After working for other architects during the early 1920s, he launched his own practice in San Francisco in 1926. One commission led to another; on the strength of a visit to the Gregory farmhouse, for example, the developer of a residential gold course community at Santa Cruz, called Pasatiempo, hired Bill to do most

of the early houses and club buildings. The Pastiempo houses gave him his first extensive experience in reinventing the suburban ranch house.

By 1943 Bill had designed more than 200 houses throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, many in partnership with Theodore Bernardi and Donn Emmons. After a stint as dean of architecture at MIT from 1944 to 1950, he returned to Berkeley where, with his wife, city planner Catherine Bauer, he helped found the College of Environmental Design, becoming its first dean. He received the Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects (its highest honor) in 1969. He died in 1973.

Wurster's trademarks were a sophisticated simplicity, careful siting, emphatic indoor-outdoor relationships, natural materials straightforwardly worked and a contradictory air of informal, sometimes rustic elegance—like an expensively tailored work shirt. In his early houses especially, Bill Wurster reworked the old and the ordinary, helping us see familiar things as if for the first time.

His was not a radical but a subtle art. Like a photographer or collage-maker, he dealt in ready-made images, fashioning his assemblages out of the experience of everyday reality. He thought of architecture as a social art, a collaboration between architect and client. For Bill, architecture was “the picture frame and not the picture.”²¹

His most powerful works, like the Gregory farmhouse, remain indelible frames for living because they seem inevitable. They are capable of sparking a shock of recognition: Arrival means simply coming home at last through a big, generous front door to an outdoor room with a view. Such a house is not just regional but archetypal. Welcome home.

Notes

1. William Wurster Papers, College of Environmental Design Documents Collection, University of California, Berkeley.
2. *House Beautiful* (Vol. 69, Mar., 1931) discusses the first-prize winner in its editorial, p. 237.
3. Margaret Olthof Goldsmith, *Designs for Outdoor Living* (New York: George W. Stewart, 1941), p. 200.
4. Kenneth Reid, “The Architect and the House: William Wurster of California,” *Pencil Points* (Vol. 19, Aug., 1938), pp. 472-4.
5. John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown, *The Architecture of America: A Social and Cultural History* (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1966), p. 300.
6. Sally Woodbridge, ed., *Bay Area Houses* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1988), p. 157.
7. Letter, Warren Gregory to Armin O. Leuschner, Feb. 12, 1927; collection of the author.
8. This and subsequent schemes by the Howard firm are part of the Wurster Papers, CED Documents Collection.

9. Letter, Wurster to Carl C. Maurer, Mar. 8, 1928; collection of the author.
10. Letter, Warren Gregory to Wurster, Dec. 19, 1926; Wurster Papers, CED Documents Collection.
11. This was the Gillespie house, built in 1926 in the Montclair neighborhood, according to Wurster's biographer Richard C. Peters.
12. Letter, Warren Gregory to Bill Wurster, Dec. 19, 1926; Wurster Papers, CED Documents Collection.
13. Letter, Wurster to Sadie Gregory, Oct. 12, 1952; collection of the author.
14. Letter, Wurster to Warren Gregory, Feb. 11, 1952, Wurster Papers, CED Documents Collection.
15. According to Elizabeth Gregory Kent (the Gregory's second child), Sadie kept a photograph of Veblen on her dressing table and carefully preserved several snapshots he took of the Gregory house in Berkeley. In the autobiography *Two Lives: The Story of Wesley Claire Mitchell and Myself* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1953) author Lucy Sprague Mitchell mentions Sadie as a friend and colleague of her political economist husband Wesley: "Marriage and children meant for Sadie not only giving up an active professional life but to a large extent, losing contact with people who were working on economic problems. She still kept in close touch with Veblen, as she had ever since she had studied with him in Chicago; she also proof-read his manuscripts." pp. 152-153.
16. Wurster Papers, CED Documents Collection.
17. Interview, Donald and Josephine Gregory, Sept. 15, 1989.
18. "Farmhouse for Mrs. Warren Gregory," *Architecture* (Aug., 1935), p. 91.
19. My mother, Mrs. Jack Gregory, remembers Bill telling the leaky roofs anecdote about himself with a laugh.
20. "Quoting Mr. Wurster," *Architectural Forum* (Vol. 64, May, 1936), pp. 36-37.
21. Woodbridge, p.121.

THE CITY ON A HILL

Washington, D.C.—They stand here enigmatically, in a meadow, on a hill, in the far outer reaches of this monumental capital city. Twenty-two Corinthian columns, abandoned from the the U.S. Capitol when it was enlarged some 30 years ago, have been resurrected and re-arranged on a grassy knoll in the National Arboretum.

The National Capitol Columns, as they are called, are not quite a ruin, but neither are they a celebration. Arranged almost as they were when they stood at the Capitol, they suggest a portico or a colonnaded chamber, and are reminiscent of some place else, some time else—perhaps the Capitol itself in an era when government, and architecture, was much more accessible to ordinary people.

The columns surround a terrace of marble blocks that were removed from the Capitol steps during the same expansion, and whose chipped and worn edges betray their age. Bursts of thyme are planted in the gaps between these blocks, giving the assemblage an unkempt look. The names of those who contributed to this \$2 million project are carved in the marble, subtly reminding us of the financial limitations of our national government.

Because of their improbable location, one cannot separate the presence of the columns from the reason they are here. They were shorn from the Capitol facade because they could not support a new, enlarged pediment that was installed, and were left to languish. They were rescued through the persis-



The National Capitol Columns.
Photo by Todd W. Bressi.

tence of the late Ethel Garrett, who arranged for the Arboretum to accept them and raised money to pay for their installation. Russell Page, the English landscape gardener, chose the site and made a preliminary sketch; Pat Faux and Russ Hanna of EDAW's Alexandria office completed the project.

The columns are orphans of the expansion not only of the Capitol, but also of the city and the nation. They belong in Washington's monumental core as a testament to the restless expansion of the U.S. and the furtive rebuilding of its cities. Instead, they have been relegated to the Arboretum—not because we have no other place to erect them, but because we have not found a more comfortable way of integrating our past into our present.

So the columns stand improbably on this grassy knoll, transposing the moral and civic vision they embody to an unlikely venue, just as this nation carried that vision to the most remote corners of the continent. But they also stand resolute, offering a counterpoint to and commentary on the relentless transformation that thrust them here. In that sense, they stand as a city in exile, a silent city on a hill.

—Todd W. Bressi

Lawrence B. Anderson

grew up in the Middle West and studied at the University of Minnesota, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. His long career as an architectural educator has been primarily at MIT, where he served as Dean of Architecture and Planning from 1965 to 1971.

Herb Childress

is a freelance designer and writer living in Oakland and a graduate of the College of Environmental Design at the University of California, Berkeley.

Joseph P. Esherick

is a practitioner of the Bay Area style of architecture and was heavily influenced by William Wurster's work. He taught in the University of California, Berkeley, architecture department and is a founding partner of the firm Esherick Homsey Dodge and Davis. He is a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects, and was awarded the AIA Gold Medal.

Daniel P. Gregory

holds a doctorate in architectural history from the University of California, Berkeley, and is an associate editor at *Sunset* magazine, where he covers architectural subjects. He grew up in a Wurster house and his first job, as an office boy for landscape architect Thomas Church, impressed upon him the desire to make a career out of writing about the built environment.

Paul Groth

is an associate professor of landscape architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, and organized the Vision, Culture and Landscape Conference. A geographer and cultural landscape historian, he wrote *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the U.S.*, to be published by the University of California Press.

Dolores Hayden

is author of *Seven American Utopias*, *The Grand Domestic Revolution* and *Redesigning the American Dream*. She is a professor of urban planning at the University of California, Los Angeles, an architect and founder of The Power of Place.

David Chuenyan Lai

is a professor of geography at the University of Victoria, British Columbia. His most recent book is *Chinatowns: Towns within Cities in Canada*, and he has been named a Member of the Order of Canada in recognition of his work in Victoria's Chinatown.

Stuart Pertz

is a partner and director of planning and urban design at Haines Lundberg Waehler, a former professor and chair of the Pratt Institute urban design program and a former member of the New York City Planning Commission.

Laura Sue Sanborn

is interested in how people personalize outdoor space. Her quest for meaningful places has led her from the *camposantos* of New Mexico to folk art environments throughout the country. She has practiced and taught landscape architecture for 15 years and currently owns an art gallery in Logan, Utah.

Robert A. M. Stern

is a practicing architect, teacher and writer. He is senior partner in the firm of Robert A. M. Stern Architects, professor at Columbia University and a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects.

Rina Swentzell

is a native of Santa Clara Pueblo. She holds a master's degree in architecture and a Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of New Mexico. She writes and lectures on the philosophical and cultural basis of the Pueblo world and its educational, artistic and architectural expressions.

Laura Volkerding

is a senior lecturer in the art department at Stanford University, where she has taught photography since 1980, and was a Guggenheim Fellow in 1988-1989. The photographs in this issue will be published in her forthcoming book.

Wilbur Zelinsky

is a geographer and professor emeritus at the Pennsylvania State University. His research interests include the social, historical and cultural geography of North America, and his books include *This Remarkable Continent: An Atlas of North American Society and Cultures* and *The Cultural Geography of the United States*.

Places: A Quarterly Journal of Environmental Design is published Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer by the Design History Foundation.

Subscription Information

Annual rates: \$40 U.S., \$25 students, \$48 Canada, \$60 elsewhere. Add \$30 for airmail delivery.

Single copies

Current issues: \$12 U.S., \$14 Canada, \$17 elsewhere.

Missing Issues

Claims must be made immediately upon receipt of the next published issue. Call (212) 695-4955.

Postmaster

Send address changes to:
Design History Foundation
330 West 42nd Street
New York, NY 10036

Copyright Information

Permission to photocopy articles for internal or personal use, or the internal or personal use of specific clients, is granted by the copyright owner for users registered with the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) Transactional Reporting Service, provided that the fee of \$10 per copy is paid directly to CCC, 27 Congress Street, Salem, MA 01970. The fee code for users of the Transactional Reporting Service is 0731-0455/90 \$10. For those organizations that have been granted a photocopy license with CCC, a separate system of payment has been arranged.

© 1990 by the Design History Foundation

Business Office

Advertising, subscriptions, address changes and mailing list correspondence should be addressed to:

Design History Foundation
330 West 42nd Street
New York, NY 10036
(212) 695-4955

Editorial Office

Center for Environmental Design Research
390 Wurster Hall
University of California
Berkeley, CA 94720
(415) 642-9322

Patrons

Mr. and Mrs. Jeffrey Kenner

Dorothea Z. Lyndon

Skidmore Owings & Merrill
New York

Supporters

Department of Landscape Architecture
College of Environmental Design
University of California, Berkeley
Beatrix Farrand Fund

The New York Community Trust
Blecher Family Fund

Friends

Altman-Stiller Foundation

EDAW, San Francisco

Eskew Filson Architects

Haines Lundberg Waehler
Architects, Engineers and Planners

Hartman-Cox Architects

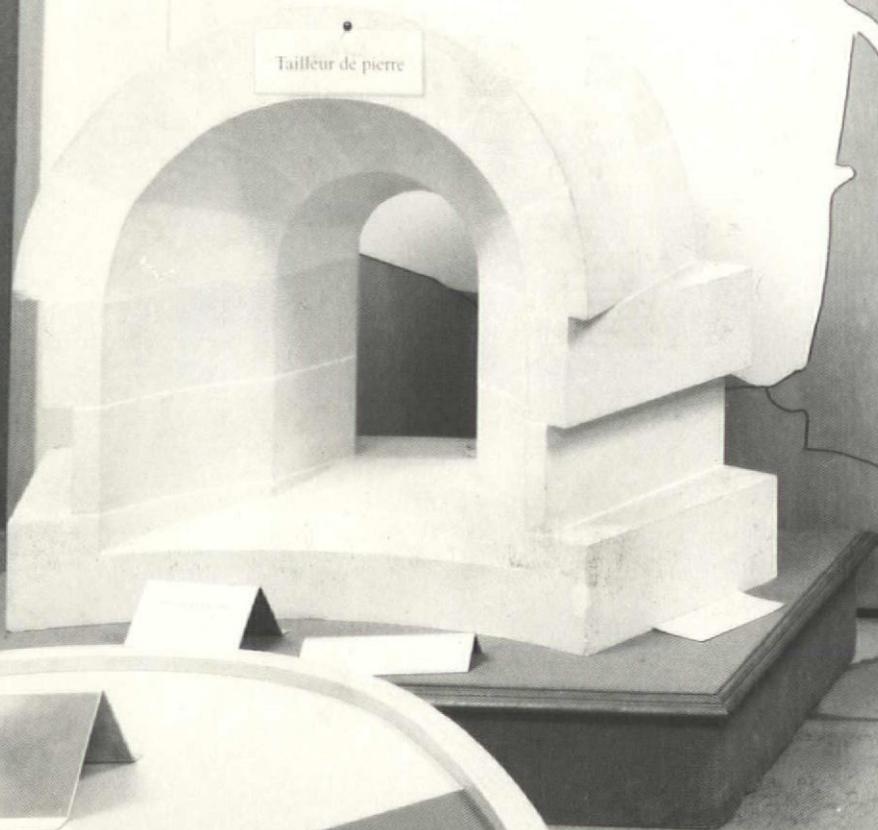
John Lund Kriken
Skidmore Owings & Merrill
San Francisco

The New York Community Trust
Ruth and Frank Stanton Fund

The Urban Construction Laboratory
College of Environmental Design
University of California, Berkeley



Taillleur de pierre



Incidental Architecture
Stuart Pertz

**The Potential
Of Ethnic Places
For Urban Landscape**
Dolores Hayden

**Conflicting Landscape
Values: The Santa Clara
Pueblo and Day School**
Rina Swentzell

**The Visual Character
Of Chinatowns**
David Chuenyan Lai

**Seeing Beyond
The Dominant Culture**
Wilbur Zelinsky

**Tithing for
Environmental
Education**
Paul Groth

**Sacred Places
Of the Southwest**
Laura Sue Sanborn

The Making of a Market
Herb Childress

Solomon's Temple
Laura Volkerding

**An Indigenous Thing:
The Story of William
Wurster and the
Gregory Farmhouse**
Daniel P. Gregory
Lawrence B. Anderson
Joe Esherick
Robert A. M. Stern

The Design History Foundation
330 West 42nd Street
New York, New York 10036