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# Photographic Place: Crossroads and Porch

Text and Photographs  
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## Prologue: Photographic Place

*Photographic place has as much to do with deliberate design as with the existence of any physical space. With the eye, and with the camera in hand, the photographer responds to spatial passages and feelings evoked by people and structures. The photographer positions him/herself in order to frame—and thereby to redesign—the forms and juxtapositions of things seen and imagined. The photographer places elements and transmits, with another kind of room (camera), the power of formed, traversed, and inhabited places.*

## Place: Crossroads

The mission of San Antonio de Padua in California is a place of crossings. Here, Spanish religious fervor and architectural ambition served the expansion of Spanish royal power in the New World. The mission buildings marked the landscape in a seeming wilderness of Indian culture.

This place proclaims the merging of a built culture with the landscape, enclosed dwellings within the flat, open plain and surrounding hills, the implantation of an alien notion of communal organization on land that the Indians had not presumed to possess with buildings.

The landscape remains, the building forms follow the landscape. The long, long road to this still active mission poignantly recalls the long path of the Spanish friars through California. The road is the place memory of that arduous path, the trace of New Spain. At present, this road is watched over by the military, observed from the neo-colonial (mission revival) Officers' Club.

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2



3

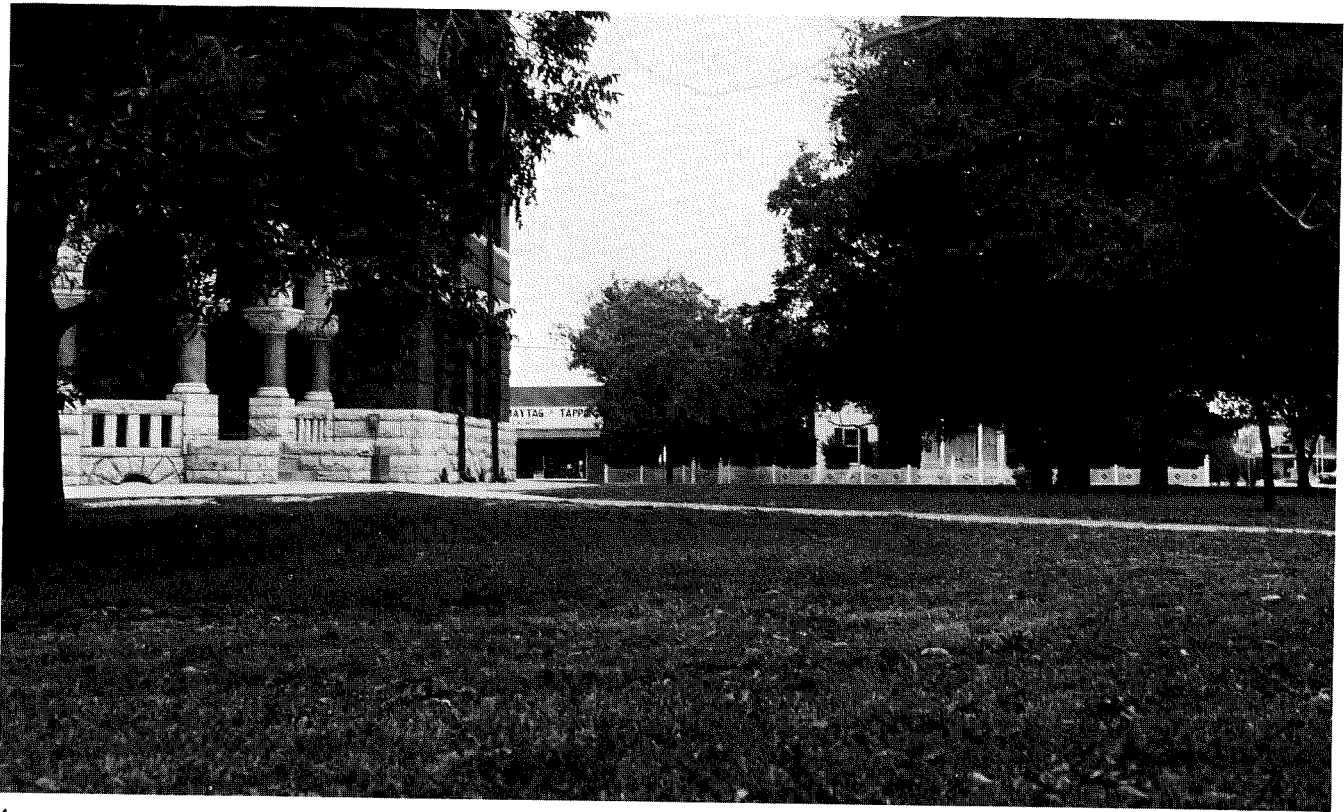
### Place: Crossroads

**An urban crossing.**  
 A walk to tea. The edge of the vast plain of the Boston City Hall Plaza meets the beginning of Court Street along the trace of Cornhill Street (now vanished). New plaza and past paths to Faneuil Hall and the old State House meet under a hanging tea pot, a warming sign of present hospitality, as well as a hint of Boston's tea legacy. Beside this sign of tea is another T, marking the entrance to the subway—to the system of trains working just under the feet of pedestrians in Government Center Station, an important confluence of lines and a transfer point.

The corner itself is an architectural viewing place. The photographic corner selects three enthusiastic building designs. Down the street to the right are the luminous columns and base of the old City Hall Annex; to the left, the arched motif of the Sears Crescent ends in the handsome proportions of the windows of the Sears Block. One hundred and fifty years of architectural design and renovation converge upon this one place, a crossroads for architecture, history, government, and the underground.

### Place: Porch

**A place must be evocative.** A bench for a quick sandwich becomes a transport to a larger world, a many-faceted view of an urban space. A bay of the Boston Five Cents Savings Bank addition frames benches, making a porch for city viewing. Between columns whose granite bases are scaled to human size, the glass panels of the bay mirror other buildings in the street, so that a sidewalk passage becomes a stopping place for urban confrontation and reflection.



4

### Place: Porch

**A porch, a lawn:** components of domestic residence. This porch, this lawn form one corner of the Lee County Courthouse in Giddings, Texas. Entry porches on four corners of the courthouse initiate diagonal paths to the outer corners of the courthouse square and connect directly to the main sidewalks around the square providing visible physical access to Lee County. These porches allow the town to view, figuratively, the county transactions, which are separated from, but framed within, the town. The courthouse relies on place

recall of domestic porches for this framing. Rather than using a single entry with a monumental stairway, the courthouse design utilizes four smaller porches similar to those of multi-entry houses, making the county as accessible as a private residence might be. The county hierarchy begins on a porch.

Views across the lawn to the light stone base of the courthouse porch, the white-based houses and porches, white picket fences (talking across the fence), more distant shop fronts, and commercial signs, extend the sense of connection to daily life. The component pieces reflect each other. The business of the county is removed from the town across the lawn, but is transacted in seemingly amicable fashion "on the front porch." A very neighborly notion of place, after all.