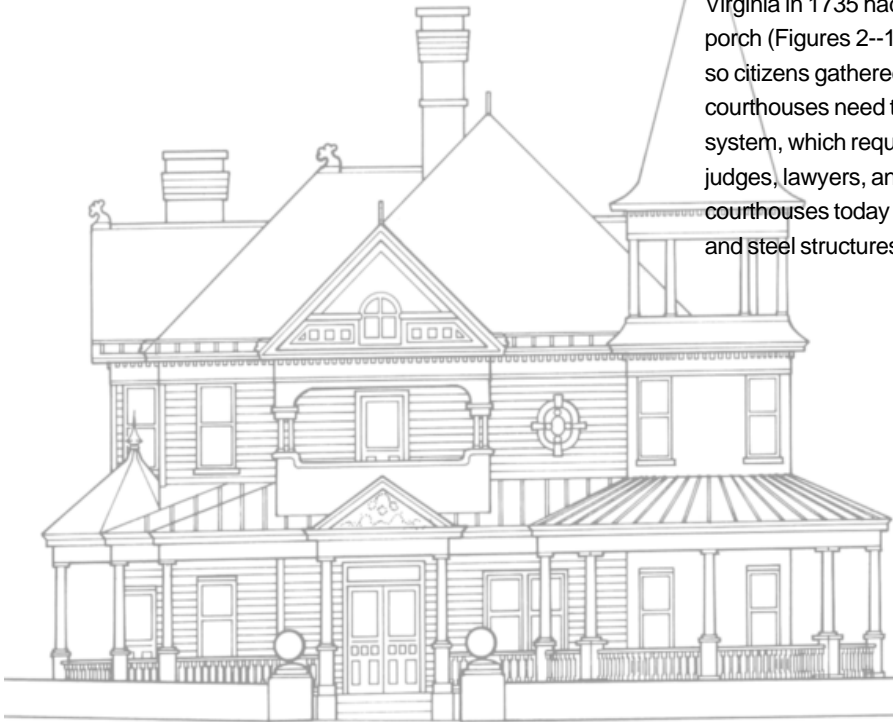


TRANSITION OF TIME

— HISTORICAL INFLUENCE

Architecture, a history book written in stone, is a recorder of the transition of time. Architectures in different eras have characteristics formed by different cultural background, social status, and technology development. A modern courthouse can respect its origin from the Ancient Roman Basilica, which is one of the earliest public building types. However, spatial arrangement and the functional separation change significantly during its long history. Using brick and wood, a courthouse in Virginia in 1735 had only one simple courtroom and a front porch (Figures 2--1,2). It was seated in the center of the town, so citizens gathered on its portico everyday. Modern courthouses need to respond to the twentieth-century judicial system, which requires smore courtrooms, and spaces for judges, lawyers, and administrators. Several of these courthouses today are high-rise buildings using glass curtains and steel structures outside.



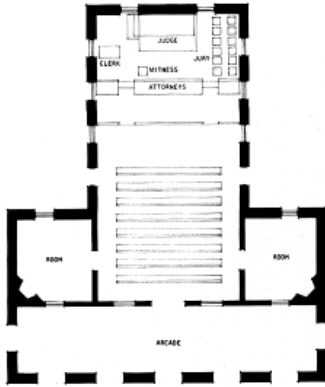


Figure 2--1 plan of Hanover County Courthouse, Hanover, Virginia, 1735

Architectures of the same building type have similar characteristics beyond the material, function, and space, regardless of the building time. The nature of the building begins before the physical foundation was laid out. Louis Kahn indicated this spirit of the buildings in several articles: "I think of school as an environment of spaces where is good to learn. The schools began with a man under a tree, who did not know he was a teacher, discussing his realizations with a few others, who did know they were students. ... The establishment of schools was inevitable because they are part of the desires of man. ... The existence-will of school was there even before the circumstances of a man under a tree."¹ He emphasized the same idea again in his famous speech, *I Love Beginnings*: "the form of a school could have something to do with the conversation of the various rooms, their nature, and how they complement each other and enrich the environment with the feeling of a 'good place to learn'."²

Different from other public buildings, the courthouse is the place that most judicial procedures will take place in. It reflects the role of the judicial system, implying a duty to educate the people, as well as public participation. The courthouse has such significance that it should present a bold but dignified appearance to symbolize the administration of an ordered society and to conform to traditional images of justice. The challenge of modern courthouses is to recreate buildings that speak to the independence, dignity and importance of the judicial system, as did the courthouses of the old days.

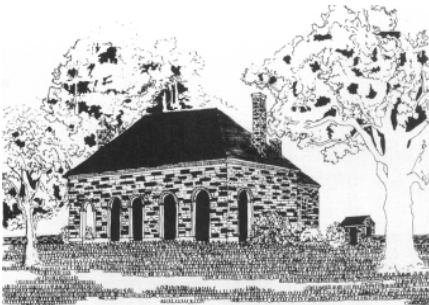


Figure 2--2 perspective drawing of Hanover County Courthouse

Moreover, buildings are supposed to exist for hundreds and thousands of years because of their functional aspects. Nowadays, with the advanced technology and materials, modern architecture can last longer than those built in ancient times. On this site, architectures built in different time periods are seated side by side, generating a unique architectural cultural environment. Considering the transition of time, the traditional influence of the certain building type, and the historical environment of the site is always the first step in architectural design.

Many architects interpret the issue of transition in time and thus develop strong architectural ideas. Kahn studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. At that time, the university had the strongest architectural program in the country, successfully following the traditions of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts of Paris. In 1928, four years after graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, Kahn spent a full year in Europe studying classical architecture. This experience had by far the most influence on him of all his studies, and he would continue to compare and come back to this style of design and thought. His respectful attitude toward history and the transition of time in a certain site can be seen in several projects. In designing the Yale Art Gallery, he carefully used brick and concrete slabs in the street façade to indicate the relationship with the surrounding Gothic buildings (Figure 2--3). Kahn's Philip Exeter Academy Library is another example of his getting the historical influence from the surrounding environment. Not just simply copying the classical forms, he was concerned more about the historical context of the school of Philip Exeter Academy. With the materials similar to the neo-Georgian buildings in the campus, the library appears like a heavy brick box instead of a simple imitation of the slope-roof building (Figures 2--4,5).

Figure 2--4 the exterior appearance of the Exeter Library

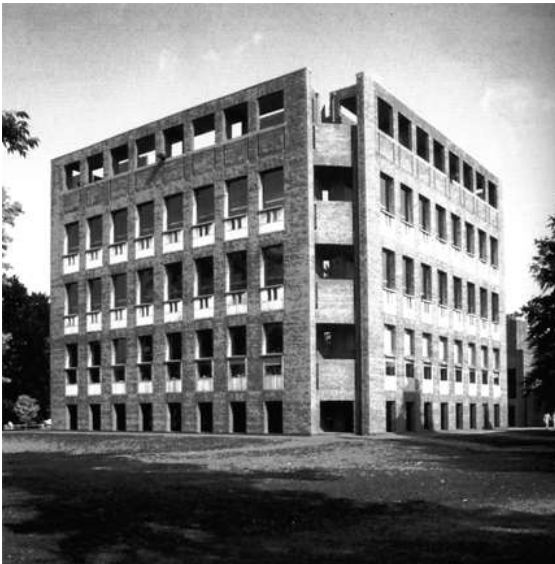


Figure 2--3 Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, Conn., 1951

Figure 2--5 the interior corridor for reading, Exeter Library, Exeter, N.H., 1965



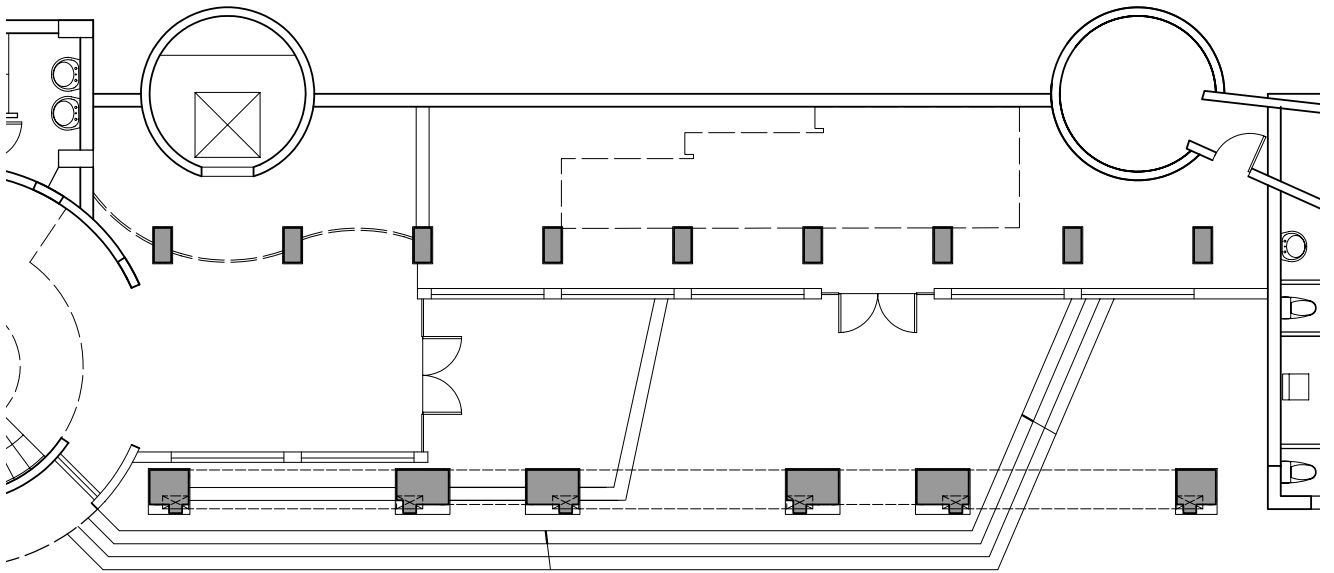
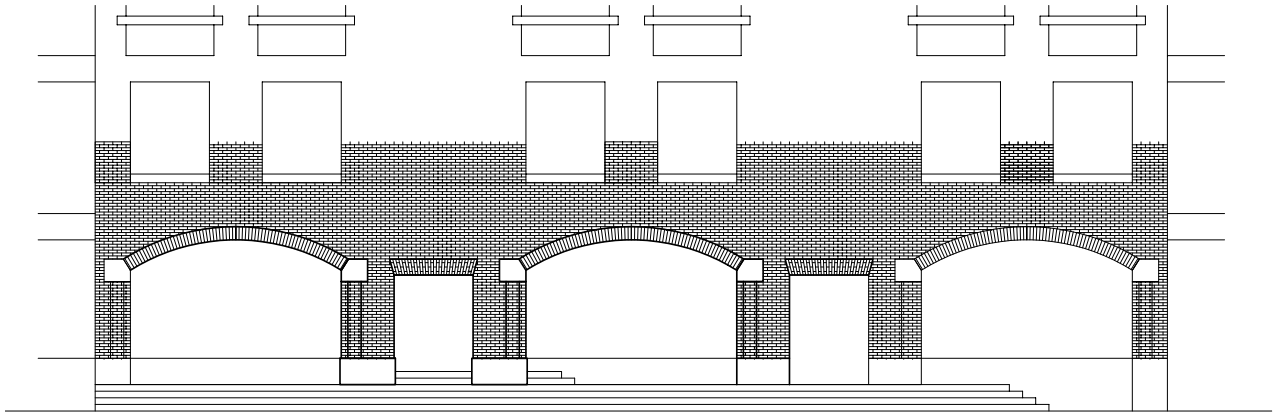


Figure 2--6 the portico at the east entrance of the courthouse

In a vicinity of rich historical surroundings (Figure 2--7,8), my intention is to provide an important and functional public building with contemporary construction technology and local materials.

The first attempt will use portico at the entrance of the courthouse (Figure 2--6). The portico is an architectural element used in traditional courthouses and the historical buildings surrounding the site. The portico at the entrance provides a familiarity of the tradition of judicial systems and the local traditional architectural symbols.



Figure 2--8 the south facade of McCoy Funeral Home

Figure 2--7 the south entrance of Thomas Connors House

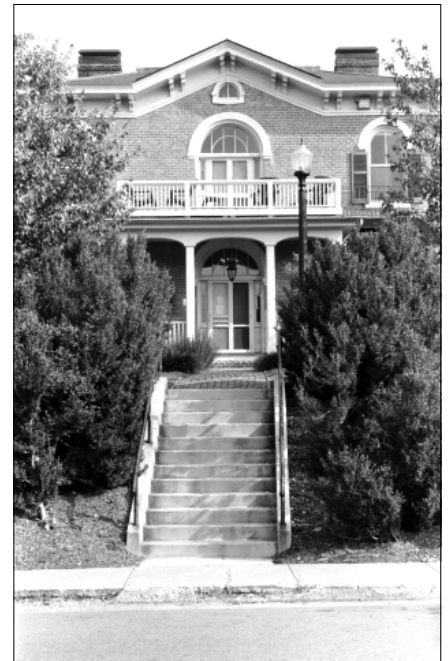




Figure 2--9 arches in the south facade of the courthouse

The arch, another traditional architectural element, will be used in the four facades. The history of the arch can be traced back to Ancient Rome. All major Roman buildings except for temples were designed based on arches and vaults. The Coliseum in Rome and the triumphal arches have remained the inspiration for many architecture (Figure 2--10). Palladio inherited the arch from ancient Rome and Alberti's innovative arches, and developed a unique architectural form — a set of windows having an arched opening in the middle and two rectangular window on the sides. This Palladian window has been copied and studied for hundreds of years, and it can be seen even in modern architecture. Kahn studied the arch and the material that makes the arch. His idea and design gave the traditional architectural form a new life (Figure 2--11).



Figure 2--10 arches in the Roman Coliseum, Rome

Figure 2--11 arches in the Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad, India, 1962



