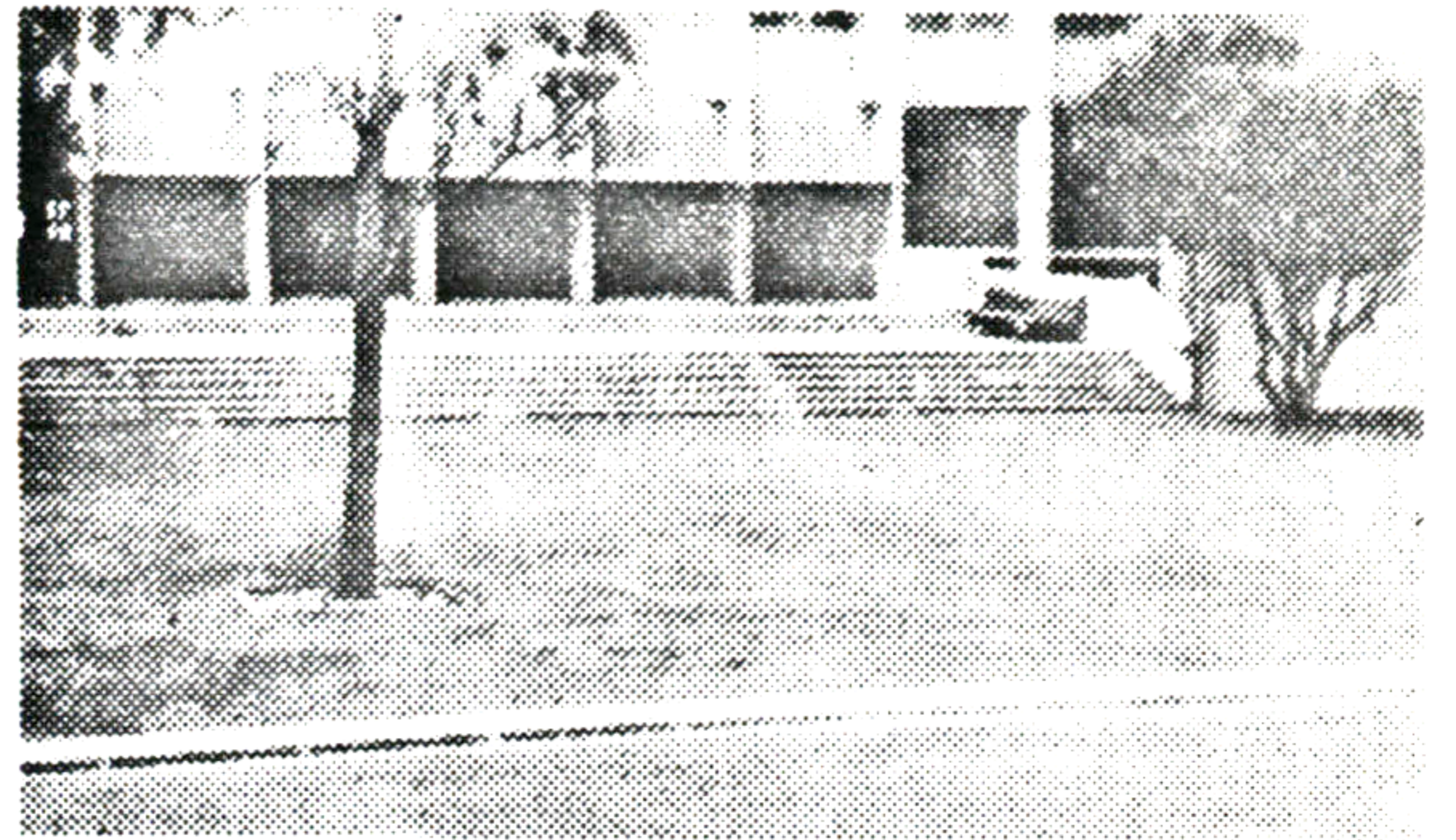


Many of our modern public squares, though intended as lively plazas, are in fact deserted and dead.



Pedestrian Density in Public Places

In this pattern we call attention to the relationship between the number of people in a public square, the size of the square, and a subjective estimate of the extent to which the square is alive.

We do not say categorically, that the number of people per square foot *controls* the apparent liveliness of the place — other factors, including the nature of land around the edge, the grouping of people and what they are doing, contribute to it. Moving people, especially if they are making noise adds to the liveliness. A small group, attracted to a couple of folk singers in a plaza at

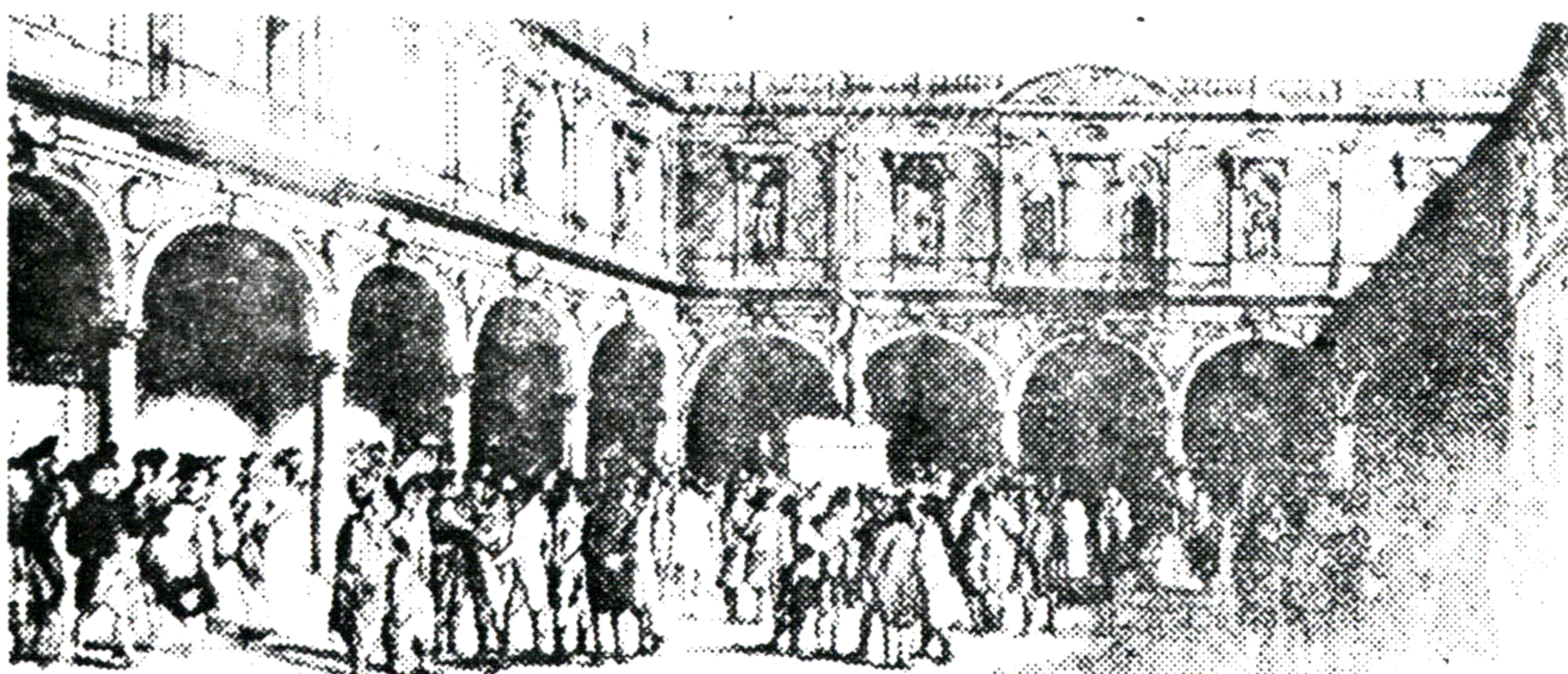
the University of California, gave much more life to the plaza than a similar number, sunning on the grass.

However, the number of square feet per person does suggest a reasonably crude estimate of the liveliness. Informal observation shows the following figures for various public places in and around San Francisco:

Golden Gate Plaza	Square Ft./Person
Golden Gate Plaza, noon:	> 1000 dead
Fresno Mall:	100 alive
Sproul Plaza, daytime:	150 alive
Sproul Plaza, evening:	2000 dead
Union Square, central part:	600 half-dead

One observer's subjective estimates of the liveliness of these places, are given in the right hand column.

Although the subjective estimates are clearly open to question, they suggest the following rule of thumb: If there are more than 300 square feet per person, the area begins to be dead. If there are 150 square feet per person, the area is very lively. (continued over)



Therefore: Give public squares an area of between 150P and 300P square feet; where P is the mean number of people that are ever likely to be there at one time.

Pedestrian Density in Public Places

Problem (continued)

We include here an example from the report, *A Pattern Language Which Generates Multi-Service Centers* (Center for Environmental Structure, Berkeley, California, 1968), where the pattern is used to derive the size of a community center arena:

"...we now give the upper limit on the arena size, as a function of N, the total population in the area served by the community center.

We know from the arguments presented in *Size Based in Population*, that a multi-service center serving a population of N persons, will require about $.0005N$ service interviewers. Since each interviewer sees about 4 people per day, and a typical interview lasts about 30 minutes, the number of people being interviewed at any given moment is about $.00012N$, and the number of people waiting for interviews will be about the same.

Besides the services, other center activities draw people into the arena. They include people coming to classes and meetings; people using self-service; people coming in to see the community organizers; people being interviewed for jobs in the multi-service center; people using community projects; people using recreational facilities, etc. In fact people coming in for these ancillary activities most likely equal those coming into the MSC for services. We guess that the people in the arena at any given moment may be twice the number of people waiting, thus $P = .00025N$. This gives an arena size of $300P$ or $.07N$ square feet."

Context

A public square of any sort — in a park, a courtyard, sometimes a

parking lot; a square which is intended to be full of life; and where the estimated mean number of people in the place at any one time can be determined.

By: Christie Coffin.

July 1968 revised June 1970

This pattern is tentative. If you have any evidence to support or refute its current formulation, please send it to the Center for Environmental Structure, P.O. Box 5156, Berkeley, California 94705; we will add your comments to the next edition.