

Staircases are rarely designed to be used to their fullest advantage.

There is little empirical evidence for this pattern. It is based on the following conjecture. Changes of level play a crucial role at many moments during social gatherings; they provide special places to sit, a place where a woman can make a graceful or dramatic entrance, a place from which to speak, a place from which to look at other people while also being seen, a place which increases

face to face contact when many people are together.

If this is so, then the stair is one of the few items in a building which is capable of providing for this requirement, since it is one of the few places in a building where a transition between levels occurs naturally. Stairs should therefore always be designed to take full advantage

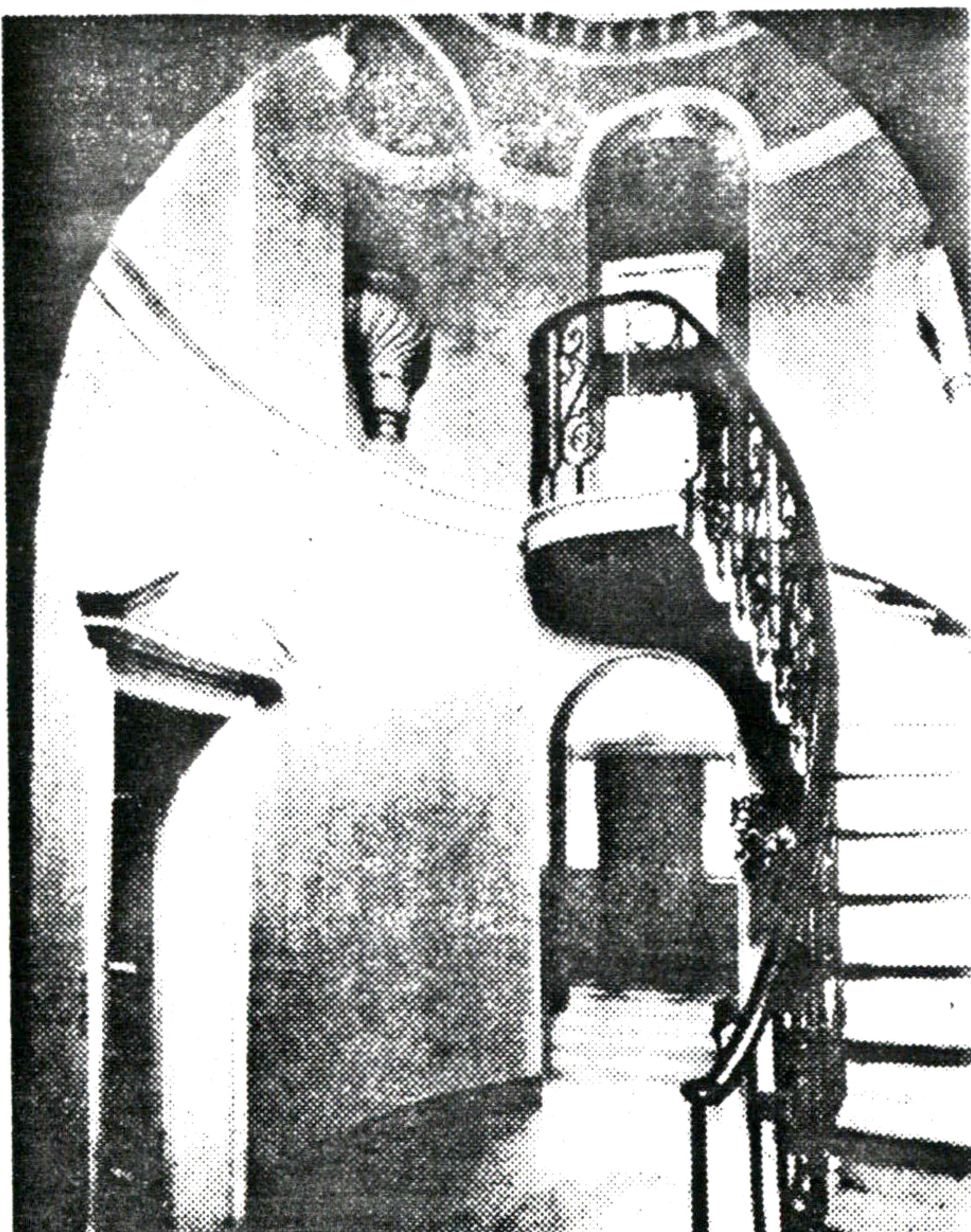
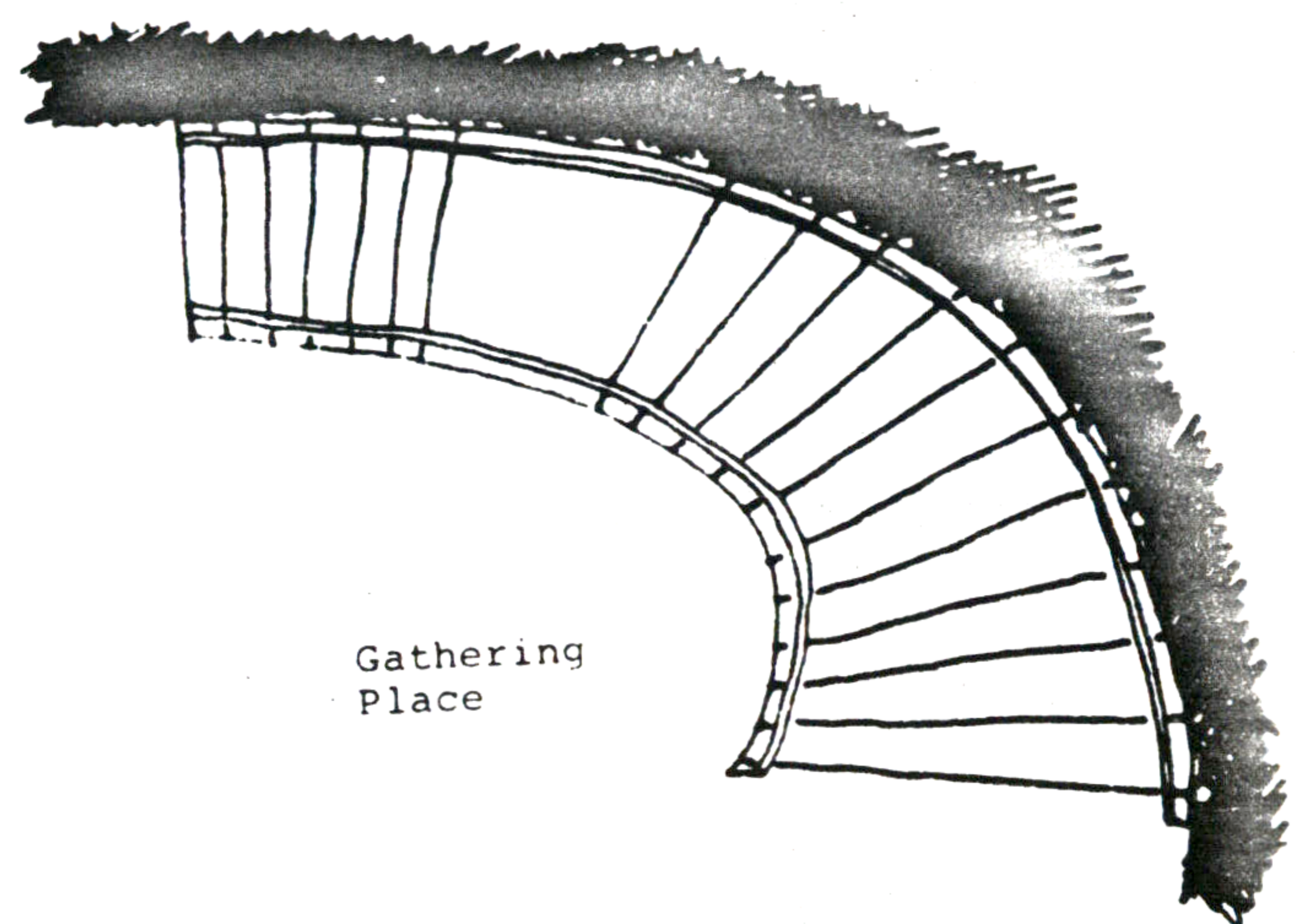
of this fact. The features named in the solution are all intended to increase the effect of the staircase as a stage.

Context

This pattern applies to any staircase in the public part of any building, and especially those where social gatherings take place (a hotel or restaurant lobby, for example).

Staircase is a Stage

Therefore: Place the staircase in any public part of a building so that the bottom of the stair and its landings (if any) look out into those places where social gatherings happen. Curve the stair if possible and make it slightly flared at the bottom. Put a wall behind it, and light the stair from above and from the front.



Staircase is a Stage

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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.