



# **From Tavern to Courthouse: Architecture and Ritual in American Law, 1658-1860 (Creating the North American Landscape (Hardcover))**

*Martha J. McNamara*

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During the formative years of the American republic, lawyers and architects, both eager to secure public affirmation of their professional status, worked together to create specialized, purpose-built courthouses to replace the informal judicial settings in which trials took place during the colonial era. In *From Tavern to Courthouse*, Martha J. McNamara addresses this fundamental redefinition of civic space in Massachusetts. Professional collaboration, she argues, benefitted both lawyers and architects, as it reinforced their desire to be perceived as trained specialists solely concerned with promoting the public good. These courthouses, now reserved exclusively for legal proceedings and occupying specialized locations in the town plans represented a new vision for the design, organization, and function of civic space.

McNamara shows how courthouse spaces were refined to reflect the increasingly professionalized judicial system and particularly to accommodate the rapidly growing participation of lawyers in legal proceedings. In following this evolution of judicial space from taverns and town houses to monumental courthouse complexes, she discusses the construction of Boston's first civic building, the 1658 Town House, and its significance for colonial law and commerce; the rise of professionally trained lawyers through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; and changes in judicial rituals at the turn of the century and development of specialized judicial landscapes. A case study of three courthouses built in Essex County between 1785 and 1805, delineates these changes as they unfold in one county over a thirty year period.

Concise and clearly written, *From Tavern to Courthouse* reveals the processes by which architects and lawyers crafted new judicial spaces to provide a specialized, exclusive venue in which lawyers could articulate their professional status.

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