

Buster Simpson 1994

ST NICHOLAS PLACE

MERSEYSIDE THRESHOLD

MERSEYSIDE THRESHOLD

The floating roadway was Liverpool's threshold to the River Mersey. This proposal creates a threshold through which the River Mersey could return to its historic shoreline. When St. Nicholas Church was at the water's edge, a tidal marsh extended to where the floating roadway cut now exists. To this day, the river continues in its attempt to reclaim its wetlands, evident by the net gain of silt in the cut.

By accepting this natural phenomena, an ecological slice of reclamation is created in contrast to the ordered urban surroundings — an urban anomaly. This informative approach sets the stage for the components of this proposal.

BUSTER SIMPSON

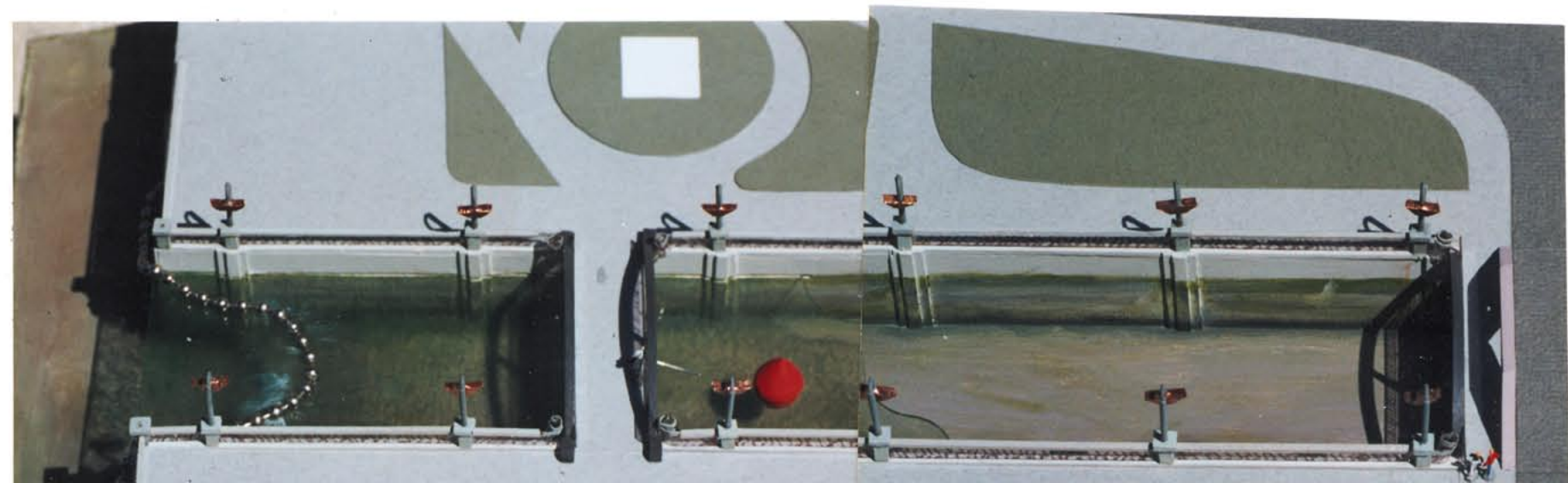


Fastnet Lighthouse.
Called the Teardrop,
by emmigrants heading west to America

The two primary components consist of a **Half Tide Ram**, which is both functional and metaphorical, and a musical **River Mersey Buoy**, which announces the nurturing tide cycles.

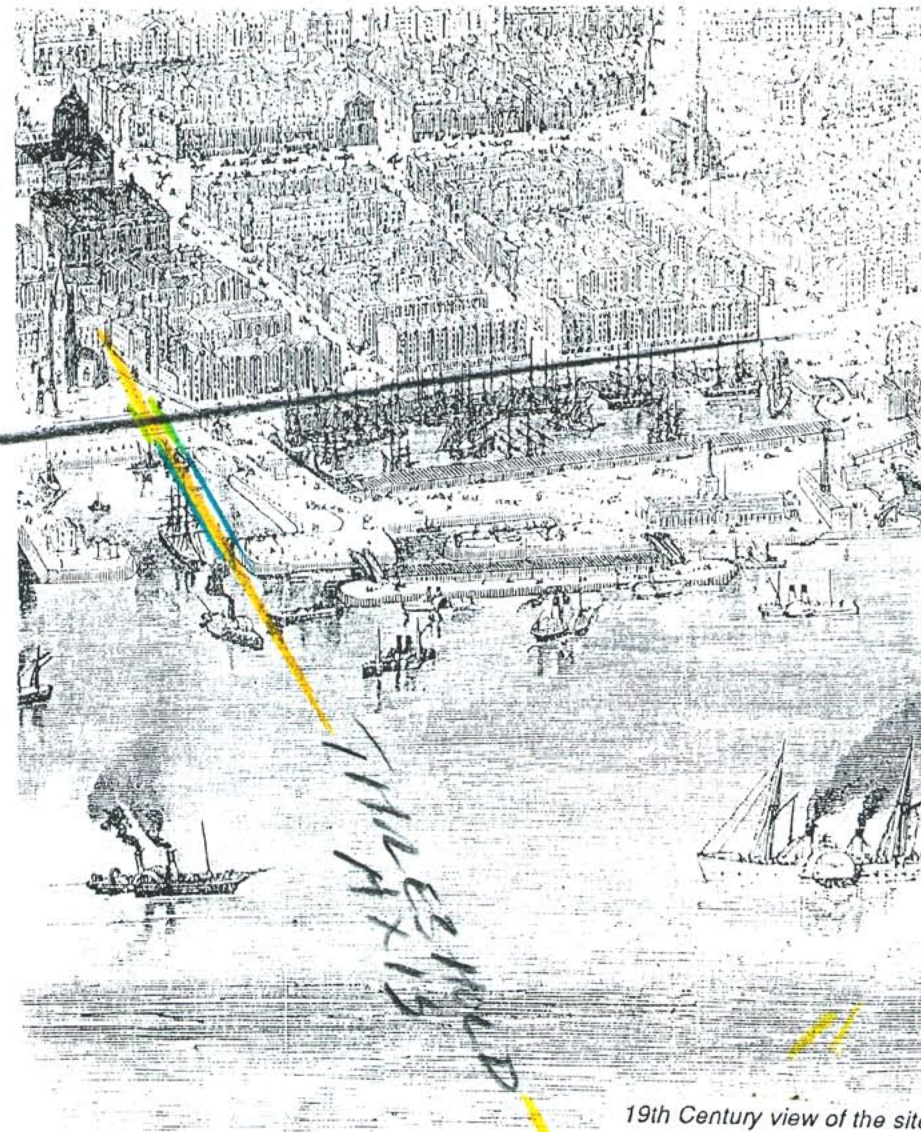
A secondary set of elements work in concert with the **Ram** and **Buoy** to give this site a meaningful and informative experience to both the casual and repeat visitor. These secondary elements consist of:

- the **Threshold Sill**, which acknowledges the historical floating roadway,
- the **Descendant Balustrade**, which profiles the significance of the immigration history,
- the **Queenpost / Kingpost Trusses**, as an expression of civil engineering and architecture,
- the **Illuminated Life Boats**, a metaphor of the fact that we are the canary in the cage (lifeboat), and
- encouraging native vegetation and a return of the tidal marsh, a dramatic contrast created with the ordered urban-scape.

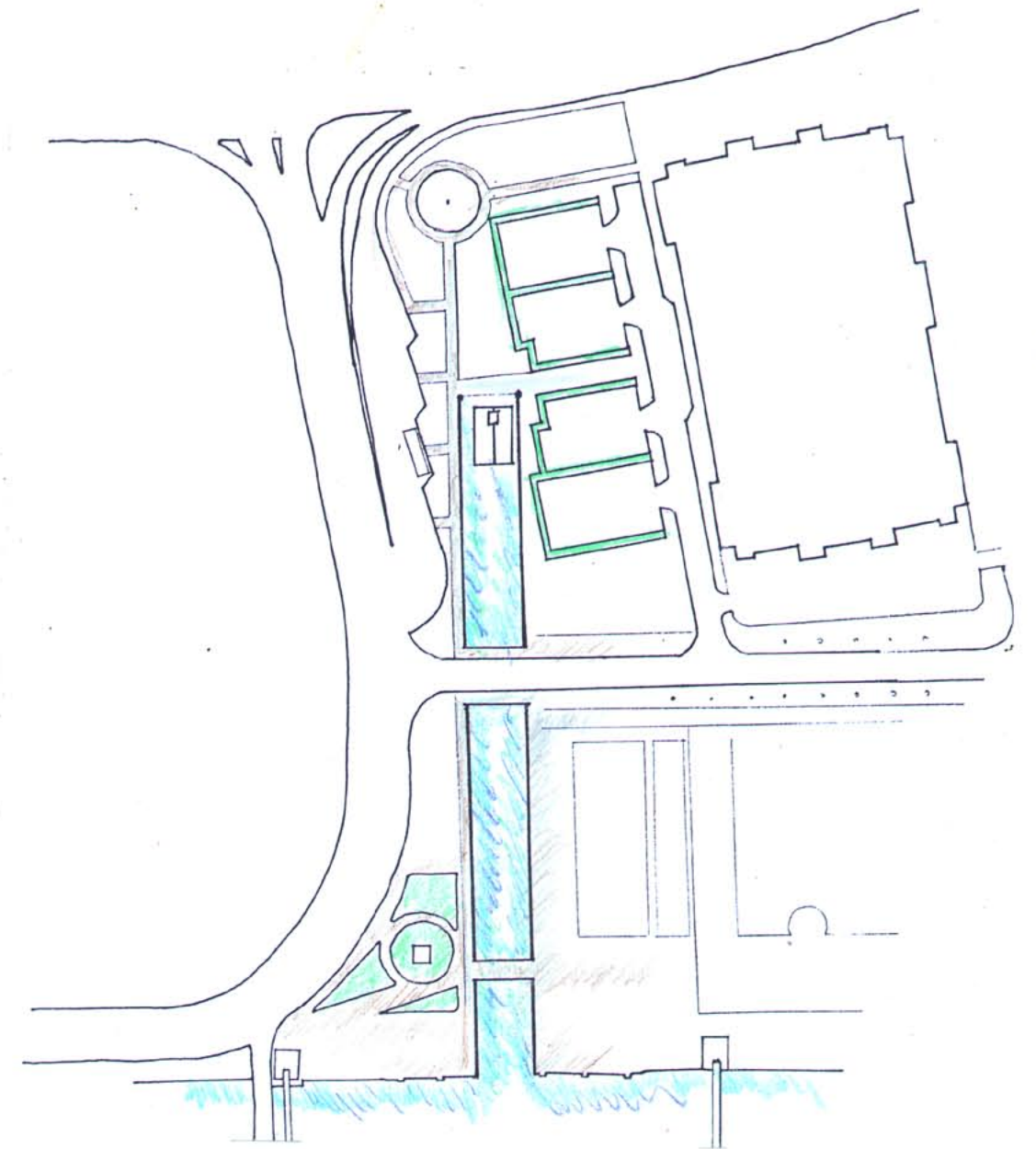


that the relationship of the Pier Head to the rest of the city is re-established, that, for example, the primary significance of The Strand as the original waterfront road is not forgotten and that the especial importance of Water Street as it descends the hill from the Town Hall and Castle Street is reinforced.

Strand

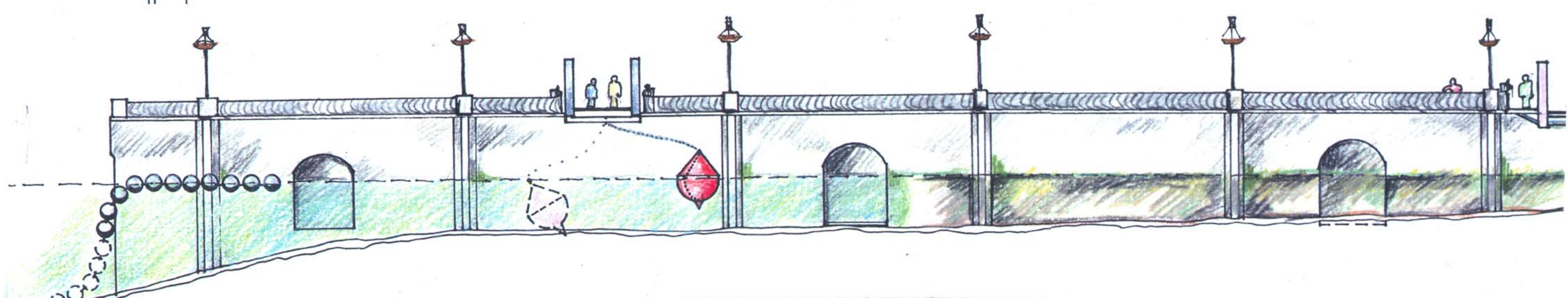
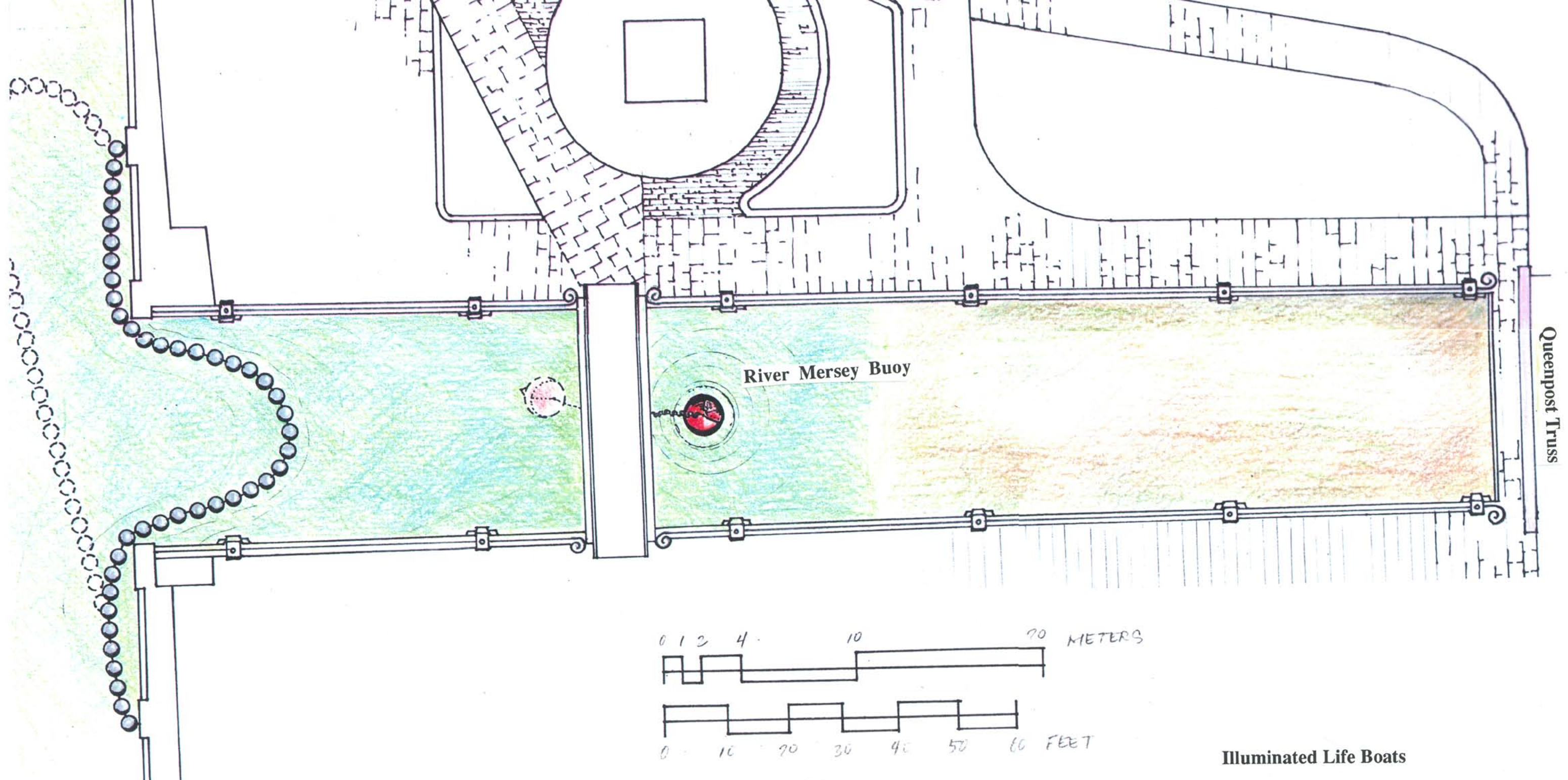


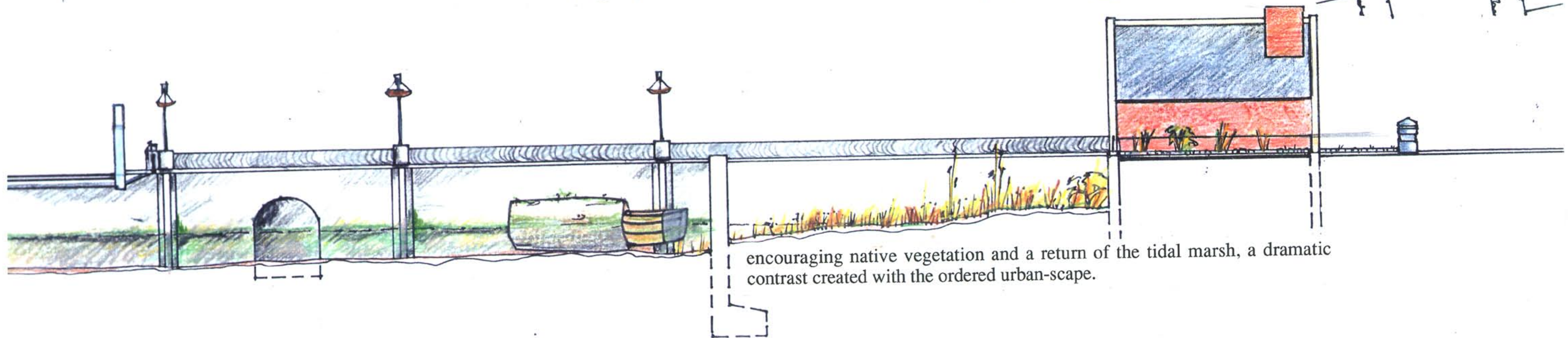
19th Century view of the site



The site plan develops recommendations concerning pedestrian and vehicular circulation which minimize impact to the site and pedestrian experience.



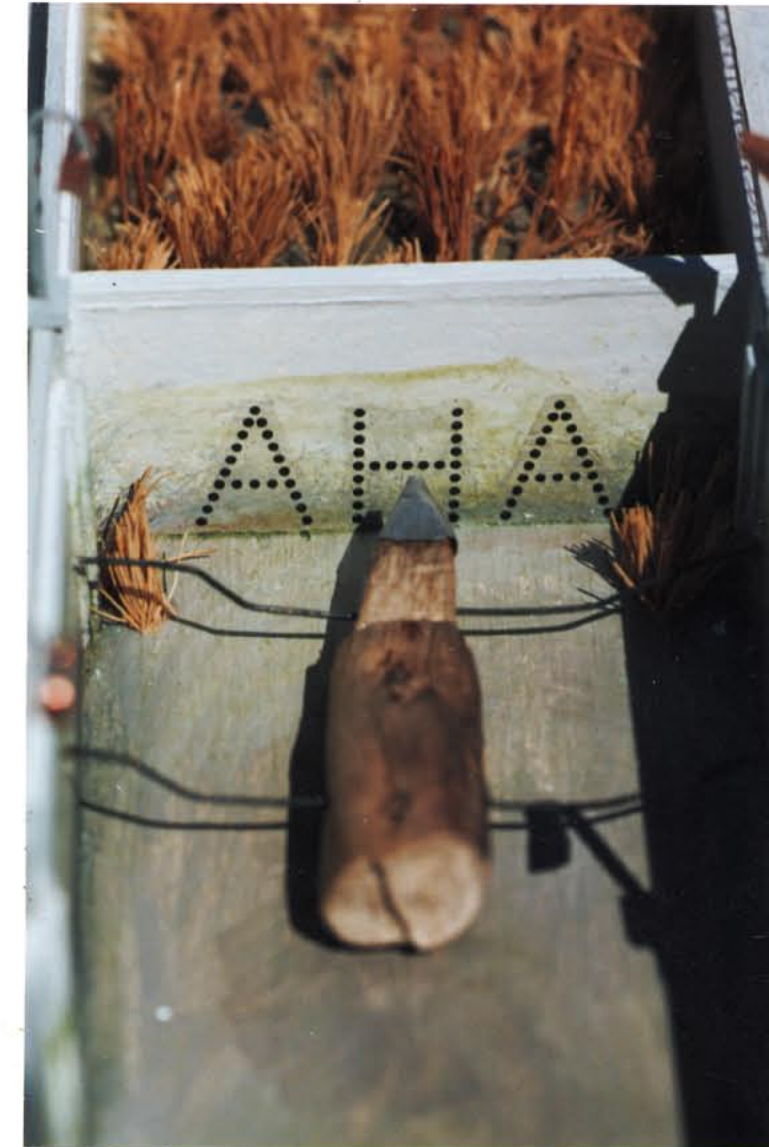


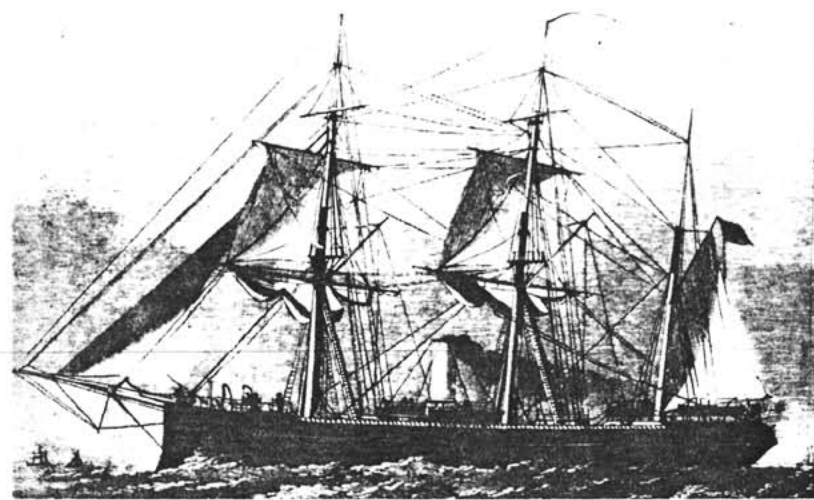


HALF TIDE RAM

A large log, carved and ironclad at one end, is made to resemble a lifeboat. This log/life boat is modified to ram a relatively recent wall which prevents the cut from being whole, thus denying the proposed marsh of its life, the tide. The ram sculpture refers back to the Rams of Birkenhead, a ramming ship used in warfare, only now it is directed toward regeneration processes. In the tradition of the dockland civil engineers, the half tide energy is employed. Slowly and methodically, the ram will work away at the concrete obstruction. Setting up a fracture line for the ram impact, the palindrome "AHA" receives the blow. The letters "AHA" are made by drilling holes through the concrete wall. This will allow the tide to pass through. The final size of these holes can be calculated so that filling and draining of the "trapped" marsh are slower than the tidal rise and fall, thus creating a tidal fountain in both directions.

Left to chance, the Half Tide Ram may or may not break through the wall before the ram silts in. At that point the ram becomes part of the habitat, the iron bow an artifact and the "AHA" wall stands in defiance — awaiting a decision on what to do.

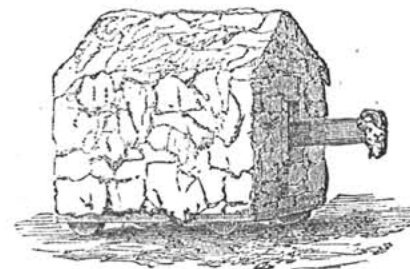




H. M. S. Wyvern, Double-Turreted Iron-Clad Steam-Ram
(Courtesy Illustrated London News)

The Confederate Rams at Birkenhead: A Chapter in Anglo-American Relations

strength. See *armor-plates*.
In ancient times and in the Middle Ages. It consisted of a beam of wood with a mass of bronze or iron on one end, resembling the head of a ram. In its simplest form it was borne and impelled by the hands of the soldiers; afterwards it was suspended in a frame, and made to swing. Another form moved on rollers.



Battering-ram.

The alternating motion was communicated by ropes. To protect those working it, a wooden roof (*testudo*) was constructed over it, and the whole was mounted on wheels. The beam of the ram varied from 60 to 120 feet in length, the head sometimes weighed above a ton, and as many as 100 men were employed in impelling the machine. When the blows were long enough continued, hardly any wall could resist. When or where it was invented is unknown. It is mentioned by Ezekiel. The Romans derived it from the Greeks.

BATTERING-TRAIN—A train of artillery used



91
Sledge Hammer Head



92
Sledge Hammer Head



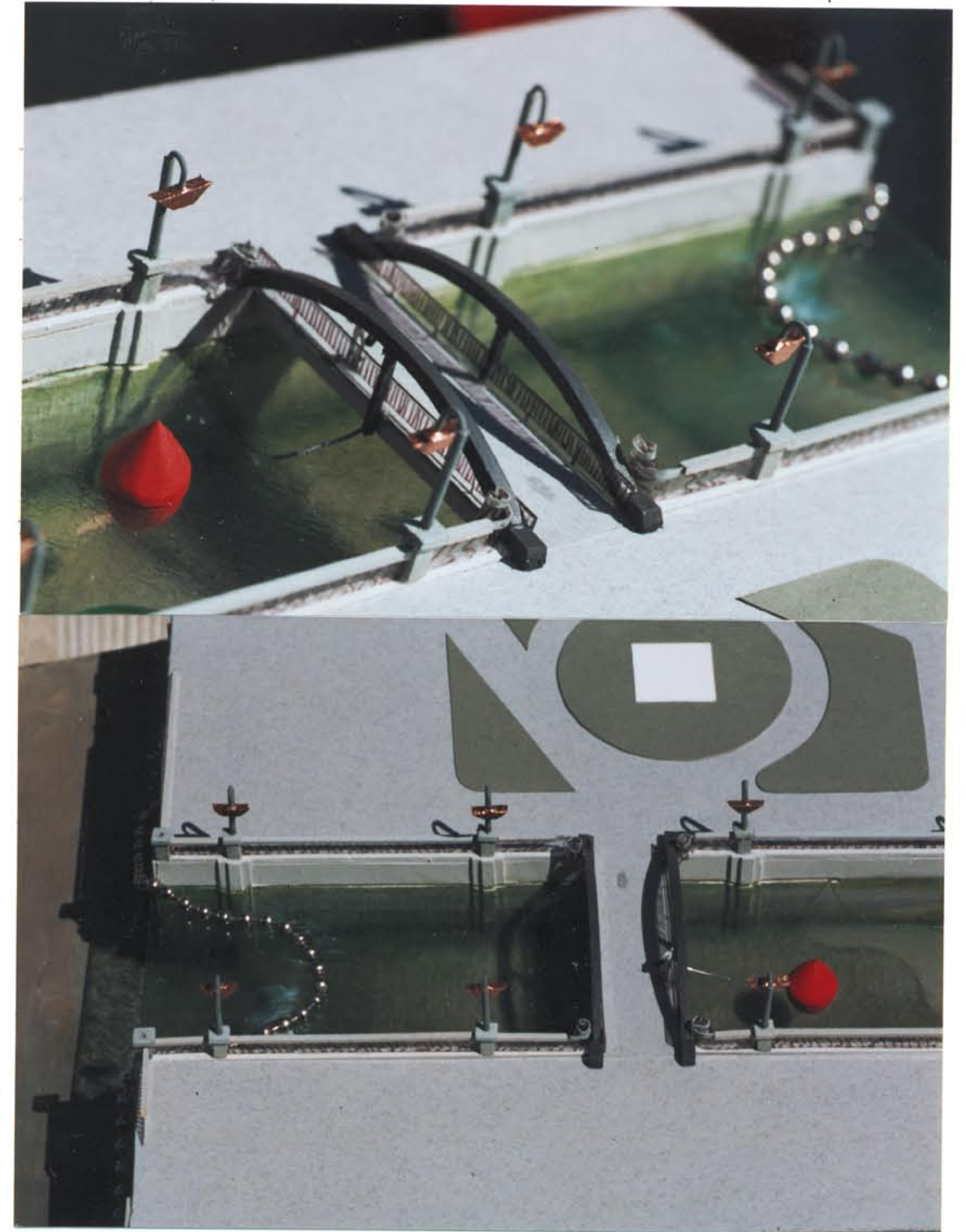
93
Sledge Hammer Head



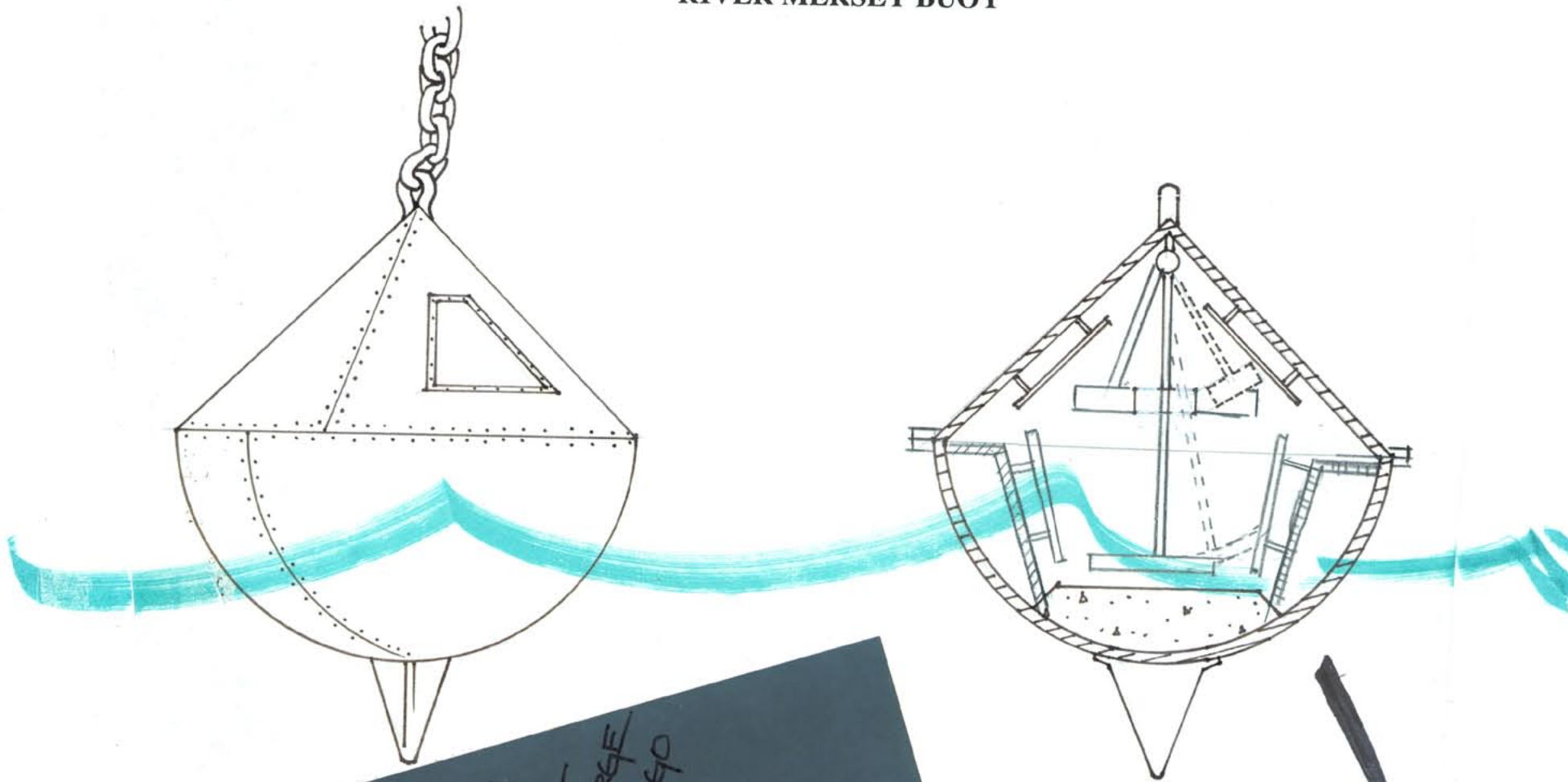
RIVER MERSEY BUOY

(For John Cage and the Beatles)

The **River Mersey Buoy** is constructed with two wave activated clappers randomly striking a set of six single pitches and four different chord bars. The river's wave frequency determines the rhythm. Selecting pitches and chords from the Beatles' musical scores, numerous chance compositions will occur — the odds are that some may be familiar. The housing is an abstracted plate steel cone buoy with a watertight access panel. Two stainless clappers swing independently inside the housing striking the thick plate of stainless steel musical bars. The bars are attached at their resonating node to the inside wall of the buoy. A local musicologist could assist in pitch selection. The buoy is tethered to either an anchor or to the underside of the pedestrian bridge. At low tide the buoy is at rest, tacitly awaiting the next tide.

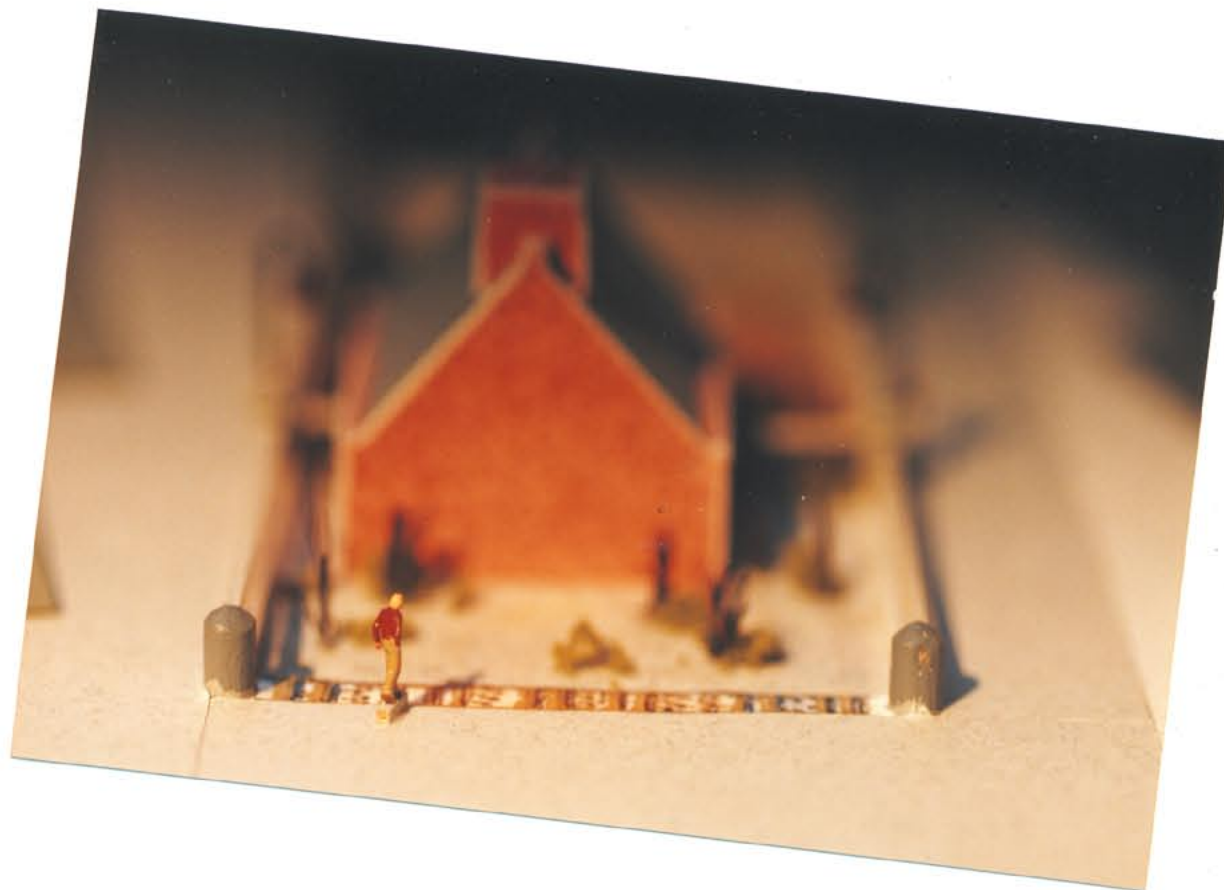


RIVER MERSEY BUOY



THRESHOLD SILL

The proposed circulation between the bus stop, parking lot and Royal Liver Building is formalized and presents the threshold sill. Cast into the threshold are bronze impressions of commerce, immigration, travel and war efforts, in the form of tracks, prints and treads. This sill memorializes the floating roadway. Crossing over the sill, one enters a ground plane of either "fill" or plank where a regenerative native landscape erupts. A fence at the west side of the MEPAS Control Building allows viewing down into a sanctuary marsh/habitat.





encouraging native vegetation
and a return of the tidal marsh,
a dramatic contrast created with the
ordered urban- scape.

Ness Botanical Garden U. Liverpool
NATIVE PLANT GARDEN
Caltha palustris
marsh marigold herbaceous
(like buttercup)
Salix lanata
wooly willow
Cotoneaster integerrimus
Populus nigra
native poplar
Betula ~~folia~~ folia
bushes
Betula pendula
Fraxinus excelsior
native ash
Acer campestre
field maple

DESCENDANT BALUSTRADE

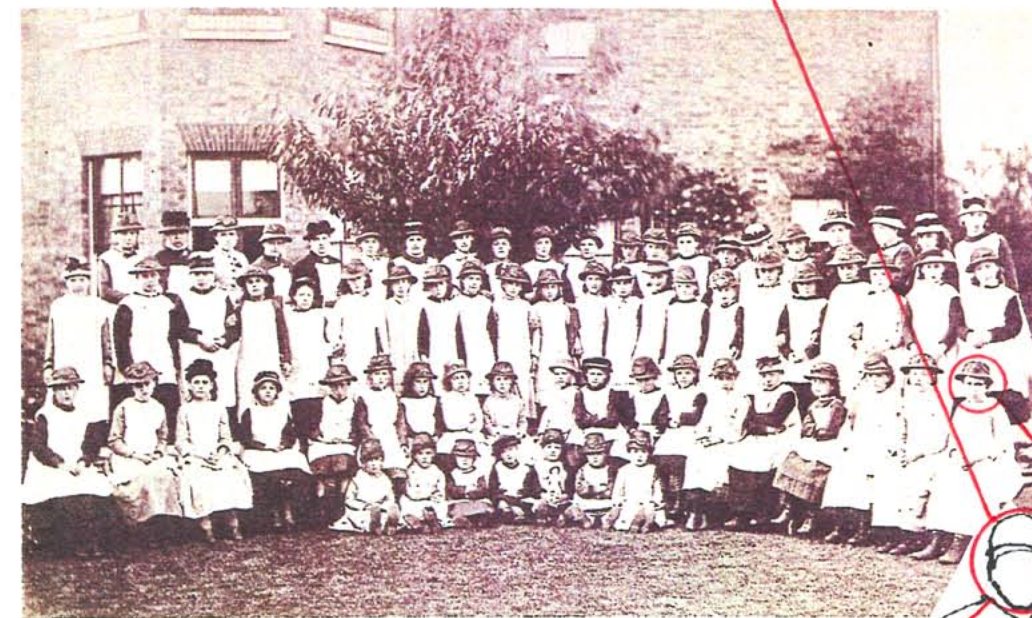
In the **Descendant Balustrade**, silhouette profiles evoke images from generations which immigrated, traversed and/or plied the threshold of the floating roadway in the 1800's. These silhouettes would be traced from descendants of the people who stayed or left.

Made of stainless steel painted black on the pedestrian side and mirror finish on the water side, the reflecting side casts the silhouettes into a silt or tidal water abstraction. Where the cut has been interrupted by two bridges, the threshold balustrade is a rolled back fence, suggesting a layering of the built environment.

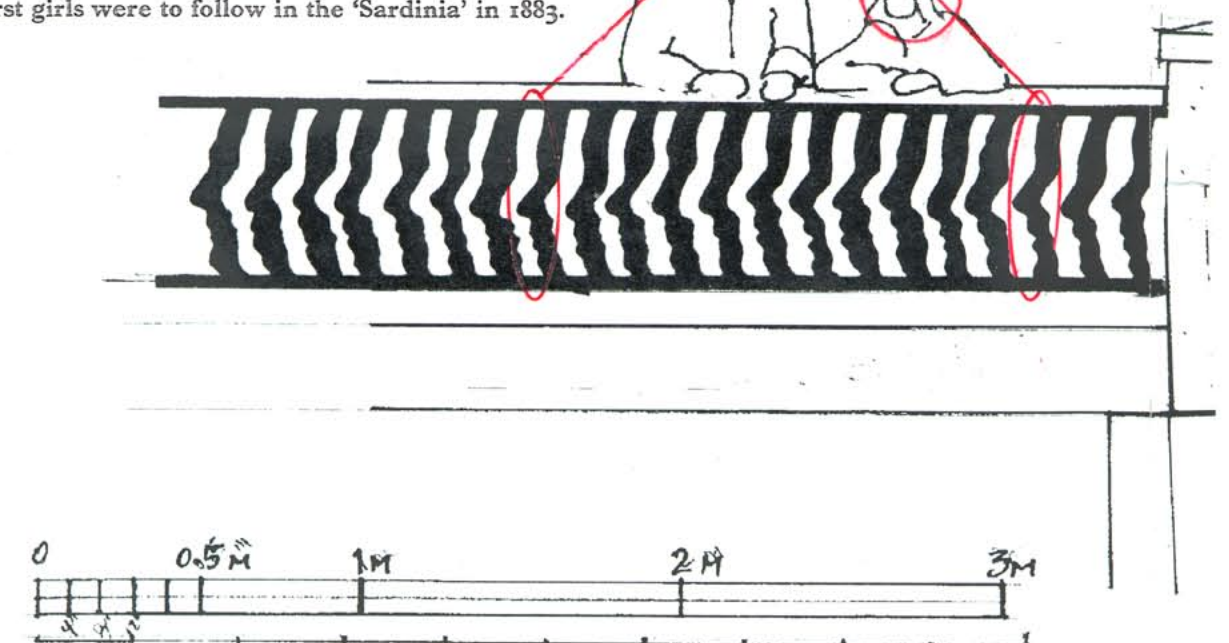
Strip lighting concealed under the railing illuminates and dramatizes the 550 foot length of the cut. One approach to the process of acquiring descendants' profiles would be to solicit contributors, a complement to the Ellis Island (USA) approach. Any revenue generating scheme should be handled in an equitable manner and should not be exclusionary.

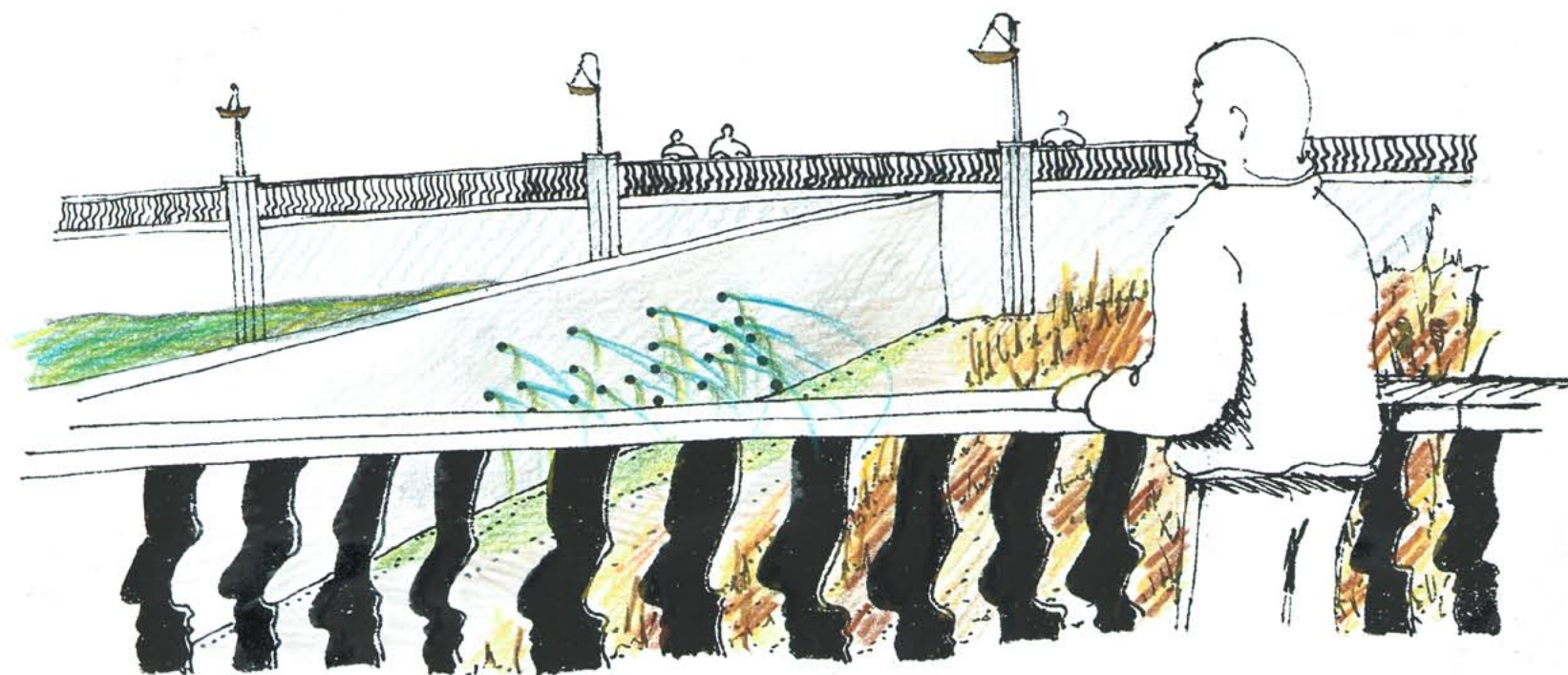
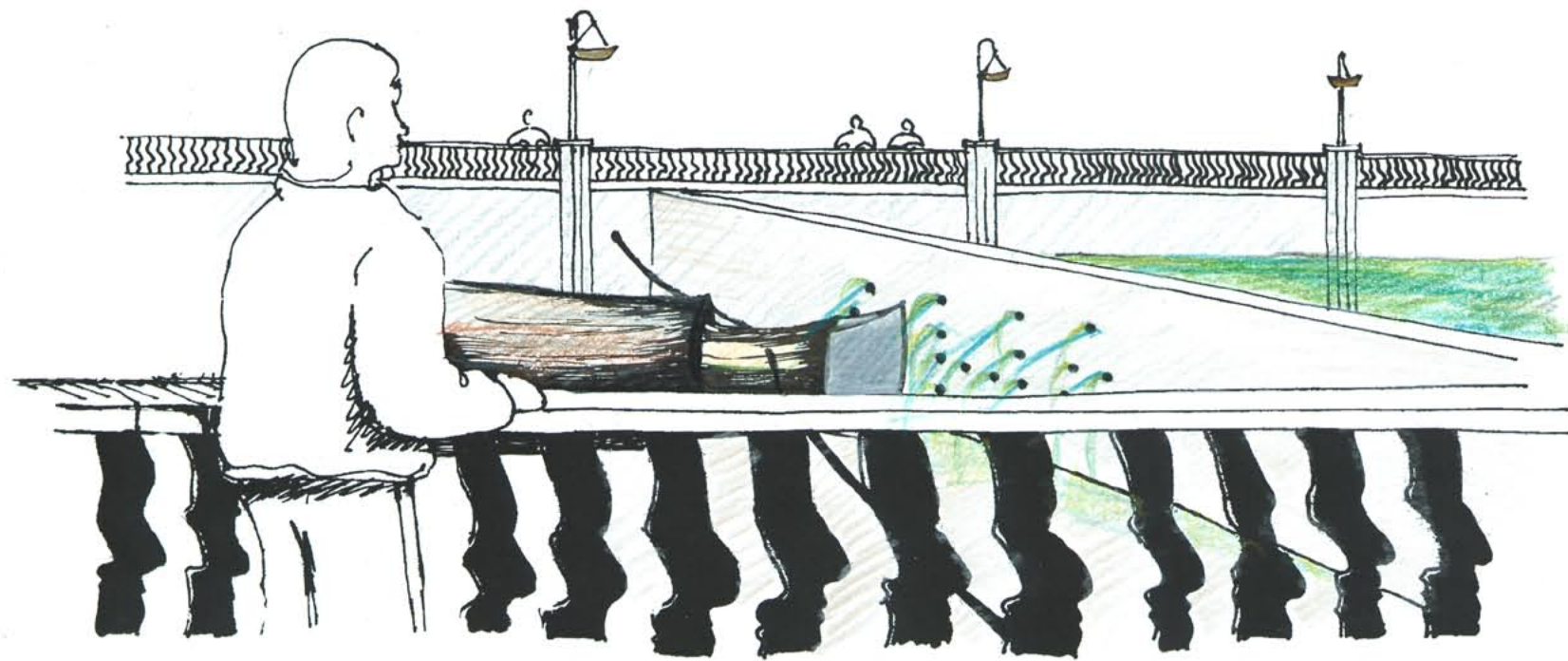


The first group of boys emigrated to Canada under Barnardo's own organization. They sailed in the 'Parisian' from Liverpool in 1882.



The first girls were to follow in the 'Sardinia' in 1883.





aha /ə'hɑː, ɑː'hɑː/ *int.* ME. [f. AH *int.* + HA *int.*]
 Expr.: surprise; triumph, satisfaction; mockery, irony.
 Comb.: **aha** experience, moment, reaction, etc.: of sudden insight or discovery.

is within two cables' length of the outside of the entrance; the basin is of such a size and so arranged that vessels may enter under steam or under sail, or by a tug boat. The great object I had in view was to give to the port a low water basin into which vessels might run, as soon as they could come up the river from the bar, previous to docking, so as to take away the necessity of dropping anchor or beating about in the river to the inconvenience of one another.

J. M. Rendel,
 7 May, 1844.

The width of the entrance to George's basin at Liverpool is 170 feet: the basins on the Liverpool side are all dry basins. The accommodation to be furnished by the proposed low water basin could not be afforded in any other part of the Mersey; for you must have the means of bringing an artificial river through a basin of that kind, especially on the Liverpool side, which is more exposed to bad weather, and consequently more liable to sanding and silting up, the whole of the sand at the mouth of the estuary of the Mersey being liable to be beaten upon by the waves on their first breaking over, and in north-west gales large quantities of sand being taken up by the waves so breaking on the banks and brought into the river; and unless you have the power of removing the sand so brought in you would not be able to contend against the filling up which would occur. The accumulation of sand and silt in the Liverpool docks is notorious; the docks most exposed to the waves breaking over the sand-banks are the most liable to silt up; on the Wallasey side, being the weather shore, there will be much less liability to accumulation than on the Liverpool side. Unless you have a large quantity of water to be passed through a basin of this kind, not in the way of ordinary scour but rather as an artificial river running through, there would be difficulty in keeping open a basin of such a size, and this difficulty is not to be met on the Liverpool side, because you have no such river, no creek of this kind, out of which to get such a river, and because it is more liable to accumulation than on the weather side. This basin would be resorted to by all small vessels; the sides will be walled and afford 4500 feet of wharfage.

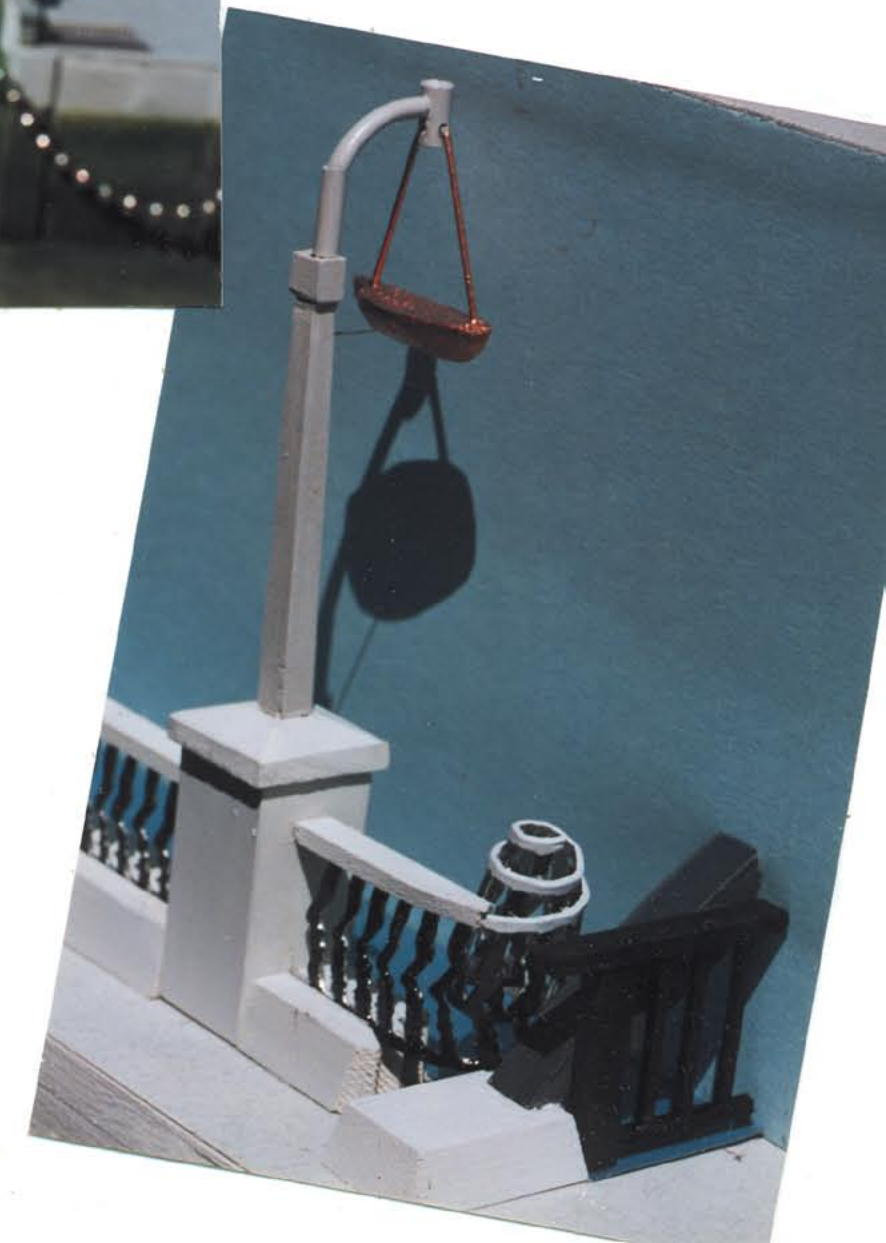
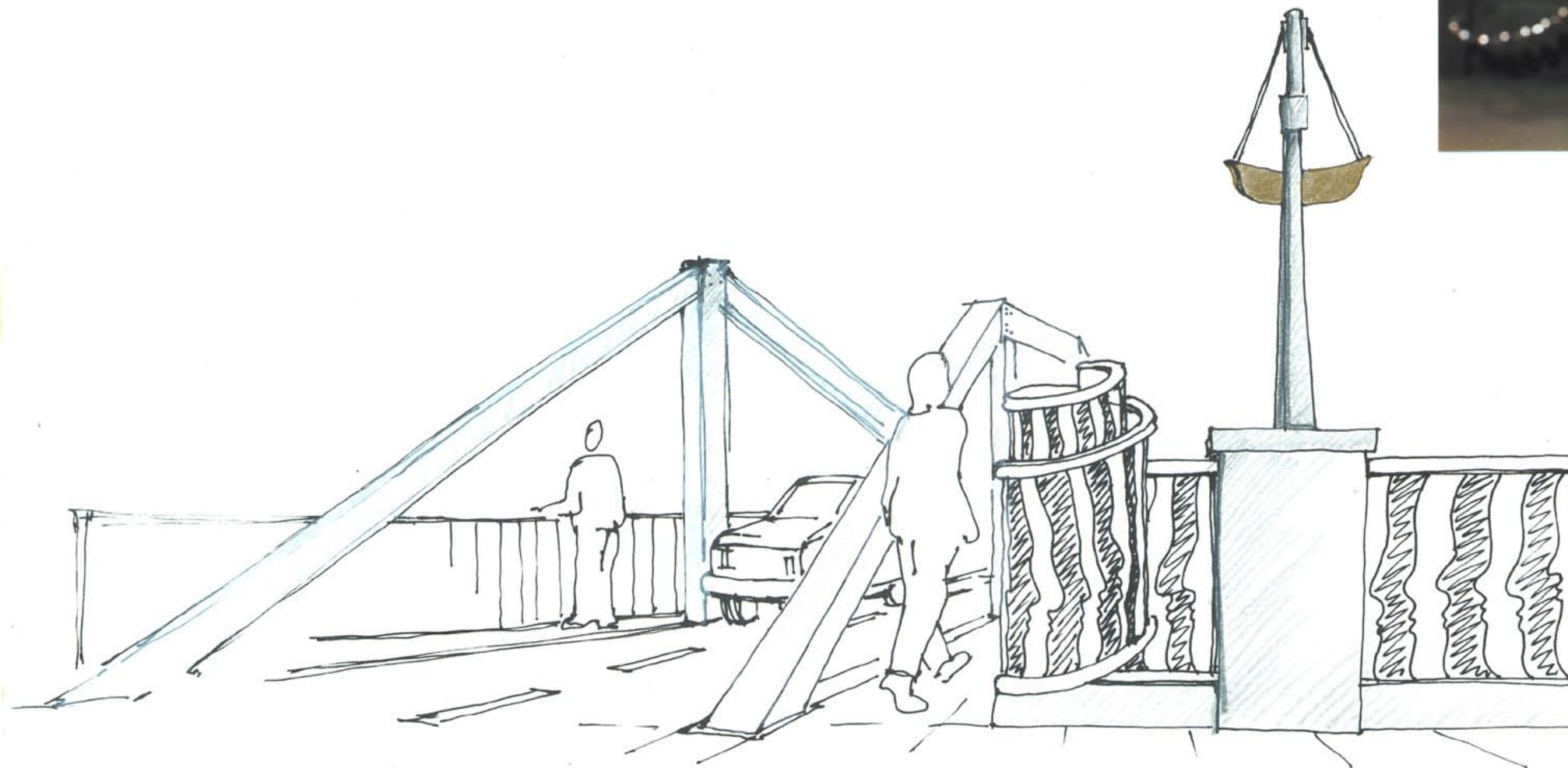
Basins at Liverpool.

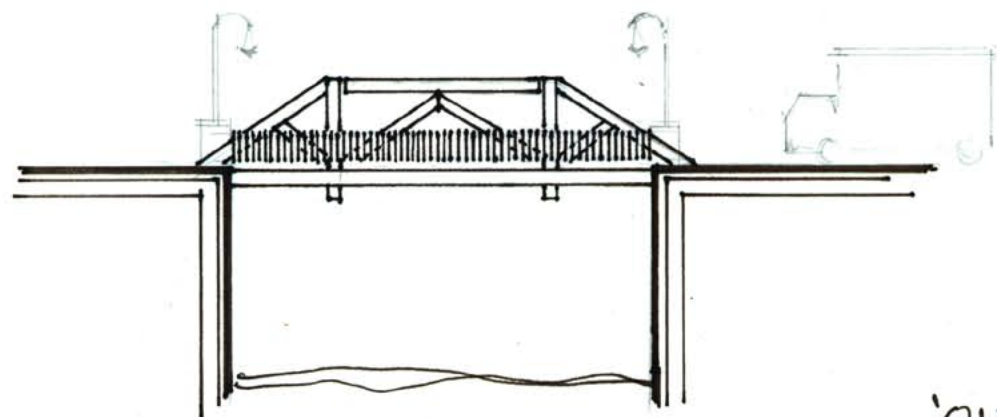
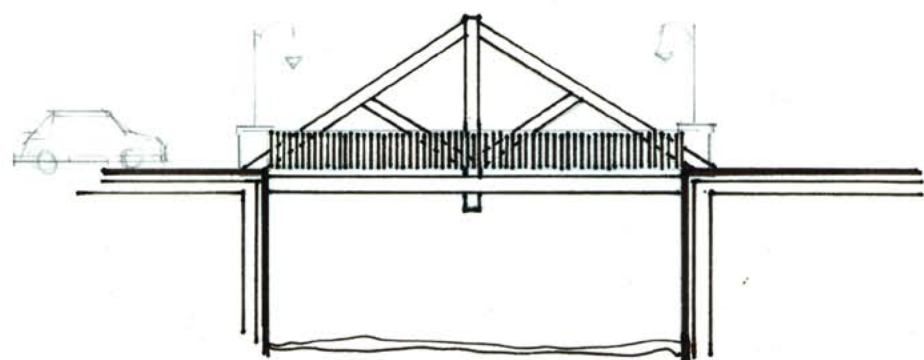
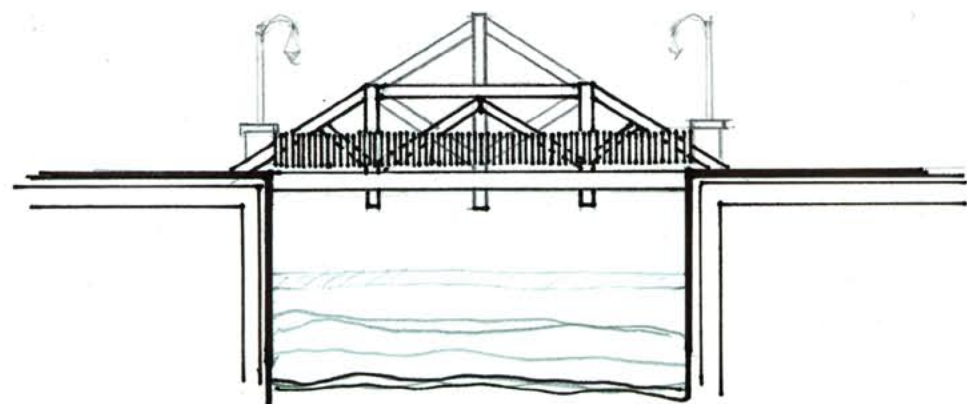
Saltney



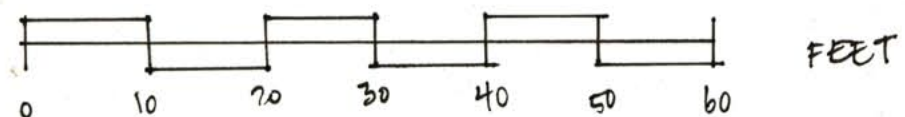
QUEENPOST TRUSS KINGPOST TRUSS

Two different trusses share the load, a recommended approach for the proposed roadway spanning the floating roadway cut. When viewing east from the center of the pedestrian bridge, the two truss bridges align and infuse. The trusses seem to share a vanishing point with the control building beyond. The **Half Tide Ram** may be viewed from the **Kingpost Truss** and the **River Mersey Buoy** may be viewed from the **Queenpost Truss**.

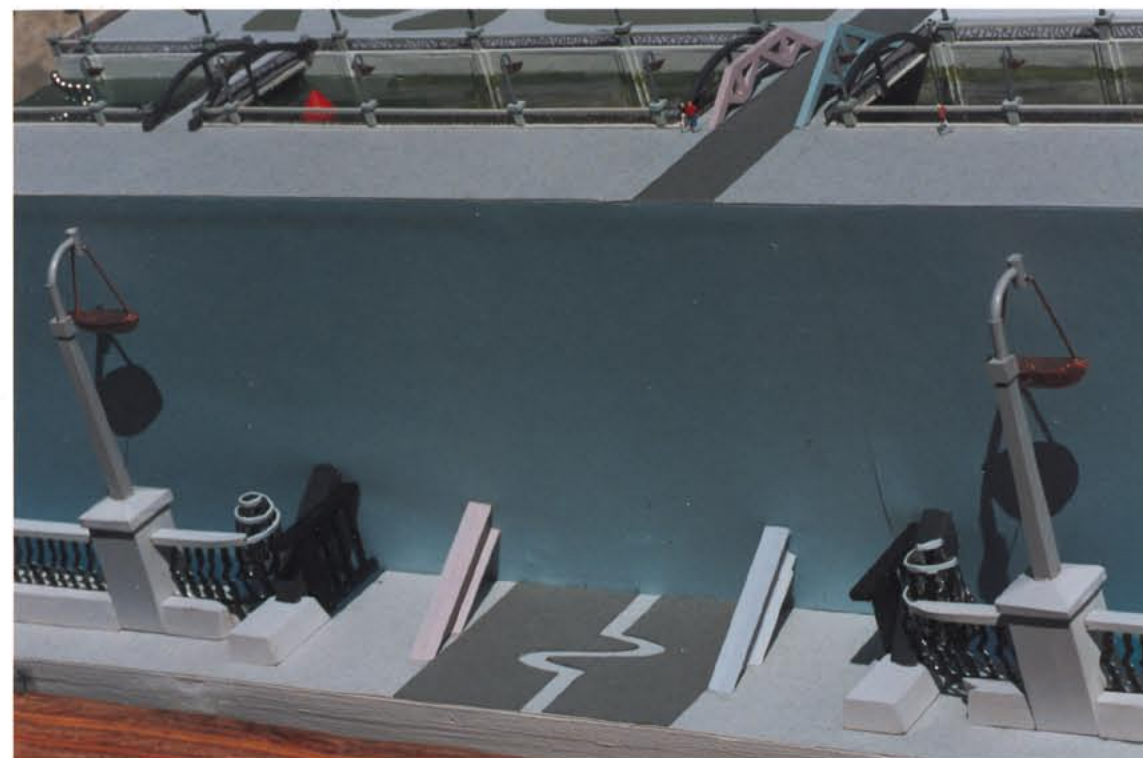




'KING POST'
ELEVATION

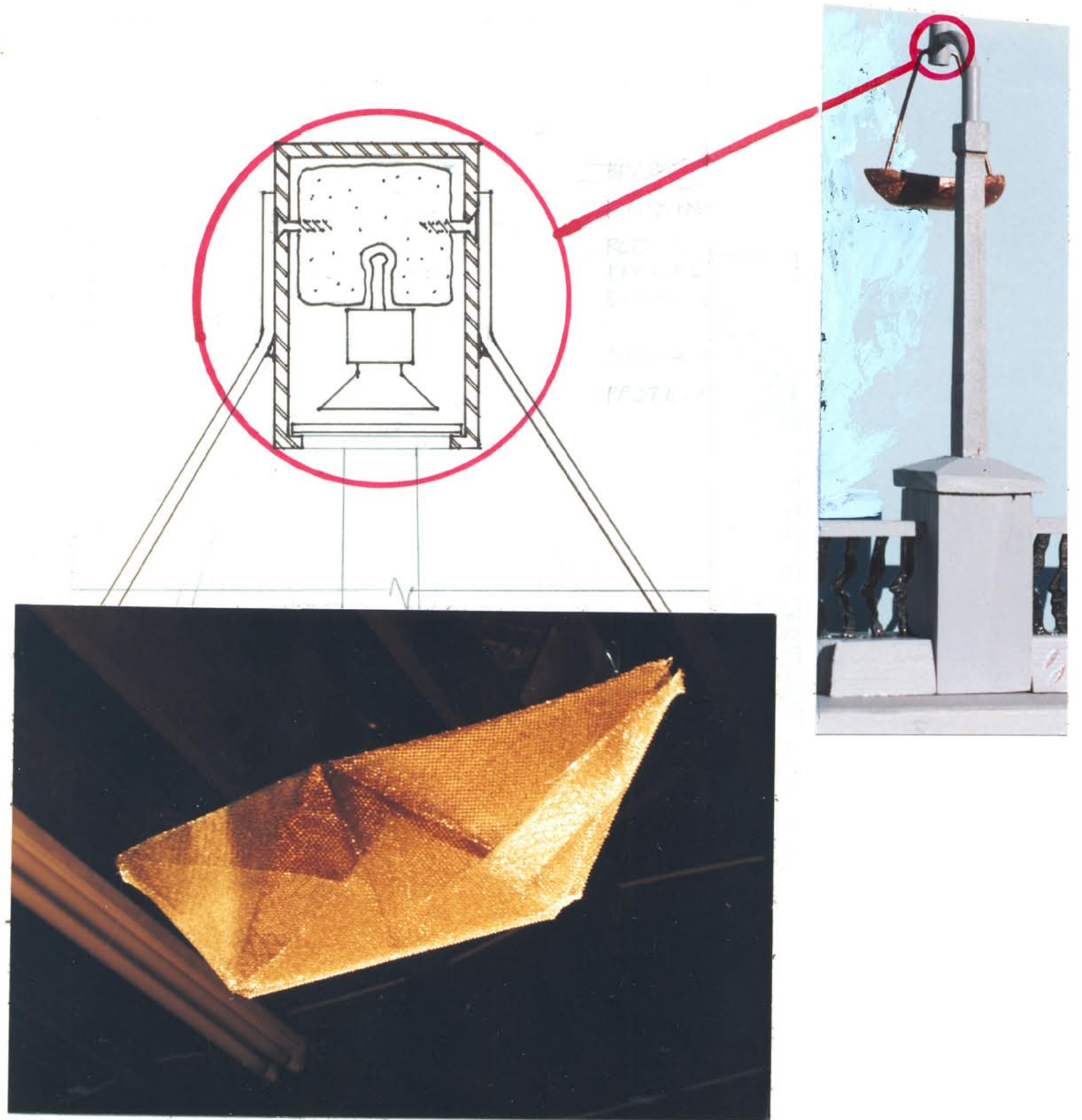
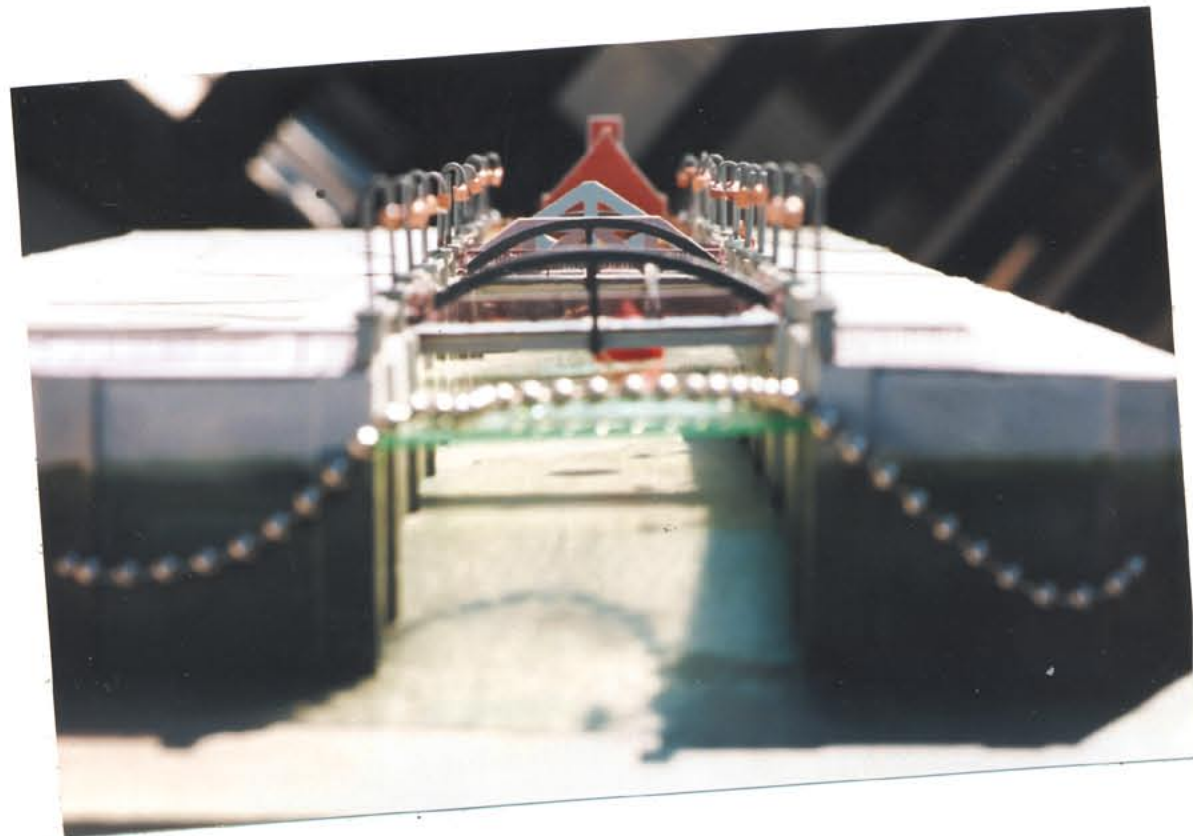


'QUEEN POST'
ELEVATION



ILLUMINATED LIFE BOATS

Along the threshold balustrades, each of the existing column light posts with their davit pose will be re-fitted with low wattage spotlights directing light into the holds of scale model life boats. These boats will be made of brass wire cloth and rod, which when illuminated from above will glow, creating an illuminated flotilla punctuating both sides of the 550 foot length of the cut. The life boat bow is repeated in the wave ram, expanding the notion of "life boat." From the park by St. Nicholas Church, the "sailors' church," the alignment of the life boat flotilla beckons.



Prototype Lighting Study for Illuminated Life Boat

