STATION POINTS

A · PLACE · IN · THE · WORLD

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This thesis is submitted to the faculty of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and the outside world in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Architecture.

Richard Bradford Stallings

July 1995

WENDY JACOBSON

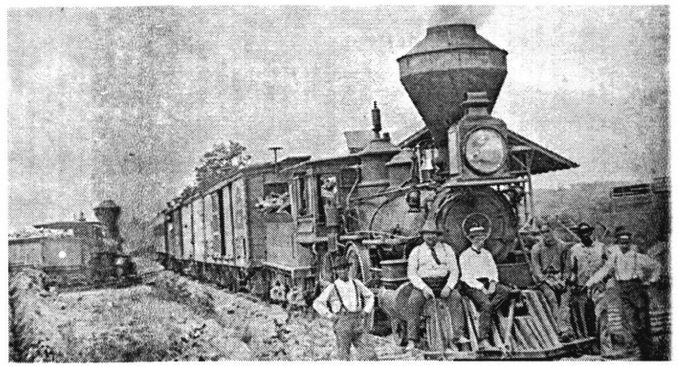
MICHAEL O'BRIEN

STEVE THOMPSON, CHAIR

SINE QUA NON. . .

My family
My friends, who are a part of my education that is beyond measure.
My instructors: Wendy Jacobson, Michael O'Brien, and Steve Thompson at VPI&SU;

My great-grandfather—farmer, sheriff, and Odd Fellow—who built a house in 1892, and had his picture taken in 1901.



PINETOPS, NORTH CAROLINA: 1901

The reasonable thing to do is to learn from those who teach.

—SOPHOCLES

The stuff of mythology and the substance of the Earth's atmosphere are of the intangible. The magic brought forth by such images… is also available in that solid place we refer to as the real world. Who has not, at certain times and in certain terrain, felt the stillness of atmosphere that places on the land a hush? It is my conviction that the Earth and all its manifestations contain this magic… Achieve the mystery of stillness and you can experience a dynamic interaction with the life force that goes far beyond intellectual thought and touches the deepest wells of existence.

—PAUL CAPONIGRO

All this is a dream. Still, examine it with a few experiments.

—MICHAEL FARADAY

F O U N D A T I O N

FIRST ITERATION: THESIS

F O U N D A T I O N

FIRST ITERATION: THESIS

Stand in the place where you live—now face north. Think about direction; wonder why you haven't before.

Stand in the place where you work—now face west. Think about the place where you live; wonder why you haven't before.

If you are confused, check with the sun. Carry a compass to help you along.

Your feet are going to be on the ground. Your head is there to move you around.

—BERRY, BUCK, MILLS, STIPE

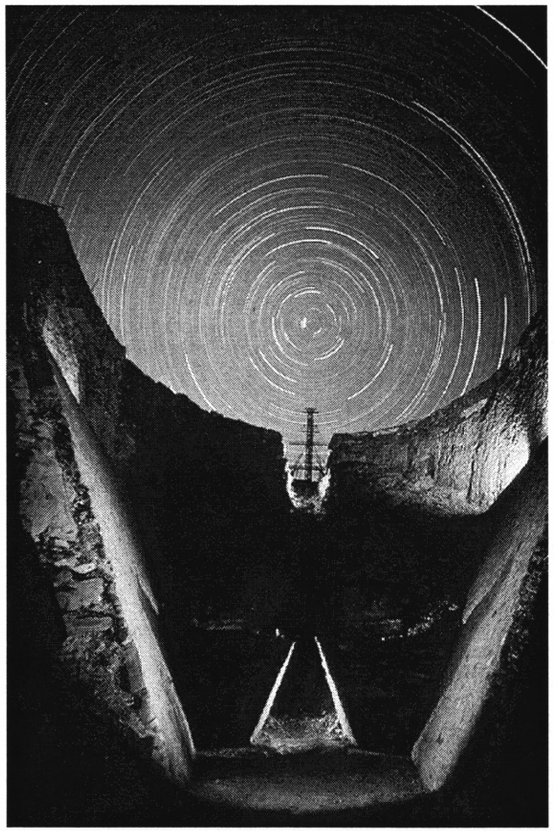
The aspects of things that are most important for us are hidden because of their simplicity and familiarity.

—LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

HUMAN BEINGS HAVE CONTINUALLY SOUGHT AN UNDERstanding of their place in the world. Creation mythologies abound in an attempt to discern and communicate a meaningful relation between mankind and the surroundings of earth, sky, and sea. These stories provide if not a dominant position for man, then at least an identifiable one. In extending this practice of projecting a human order onto the world, man has built earthen mounds, painted on cave walls, named groups of stars for queens, kings, and warriors, and erected architecture to give this projection physical form. Architecture acts as an intermediary, allowing people to see themselves as part of the larger world—the palace complexes of Crete are oriented to specific combinations of topographic patterns, cathedrals face east towards the rising sun, totem poles and prayer towers become *axis mundi* connecting the earth and heavens, all in an effort to bring definition to location, because it is to place that both identity and memory are anchored. In understanding the local surroundings, some knowledge of the larger environment is inherent. Knowing that a dwelling's front door faces south, or that a particular road leads to a distant mountain, provides a continuity of environment that connects the individual to the world. Knowing more about *where* and *how* we are in a place can tell us more about *who* we are—learning about ourselves as we learn about the world.

As part of this undertaking, architecture searches for what is unique, or at least characteristic, of a place. It endeavors to reveal and interpret some aspect of its context, a context that encompasses far more than the appearance of the buildings next door or across the street. Any location exists at a given time in a vast matrix of continua—physical, temporal, political, climatic, geographic, historic, religious, economic, mythologic, and social among them—and each plays, or can play, a role in the creation of architecture; the place precedes and informs the design process. Architecture makes manifest the human presence in a landscape through the physical reality of building, whether it is a home, a factory, a skyscraper, a school, or a barn. In a self-perpetuating process, architecture mediates between the inner needs of people and the physical characteristics of a place, becoming a part of the landscape that influences subsequent designs by creating other needs or conditions. A house (or railroad tracks, or a farm) can simultaneously be a characteristic element of a place, a response to a specific set of influences, and a sign to the community or to outsiders.[1] Many positions are occupied at once by a single structure and nothing exists in isolation—nothing *can* exist in isolation. Architecture cannot be stopped at the elevation or the property line. Even the design of a house in an isolated field carries with it the implications of the primeval fire, the telling of stories around that fire, the dome of the sky overhead, and cyclical time among others.

The innumerable factors and relationships involved create boundaries for any work of architecture; the more boundaries that are recognized, the richer the project can become. In the Greek sense, a boundary is not a limit where a thing stops, but instead where it begins to be present. More boundaries allow more interpretations, increasing the chance that each person will discover something comprehensible, and possibly meaningful, to themselves. Seen in this light, boundaries are not barriers but are connections that aid in the elaboration of place at many scales: hand, body, room, building, site, town, region, and world. Through this transition of scales, a person can begin to interpret their environment, starting with themselves and extrapolating through larger scales. Architecture takes a part in this process because it is founded in creating scaled-down analogs of larger things: the heavens, the world, the city, and so allows us a grasp of things that would ordinarily be out of our reach because of their size and complexity. (In *Poetics* Aristotle proposes that any act of making (*poiêsis*) is necessarily an imitation (*mimêsis*) of something else—a model, not a duplicate—and can be recognized as such.[2]) Buildings have historically been based on these larger originals, and become less satisfying if the operation is reversed and archi-



STAR AXIS, SANGRE DE CRISTO MTS., N. MEXICO

EARTHWORK BY CHARLES ROSS ORIENTED TO THE NORTH STAR

CALVARY EPISCOPAL CHURCH CEMETERY, TARBORO: 1994

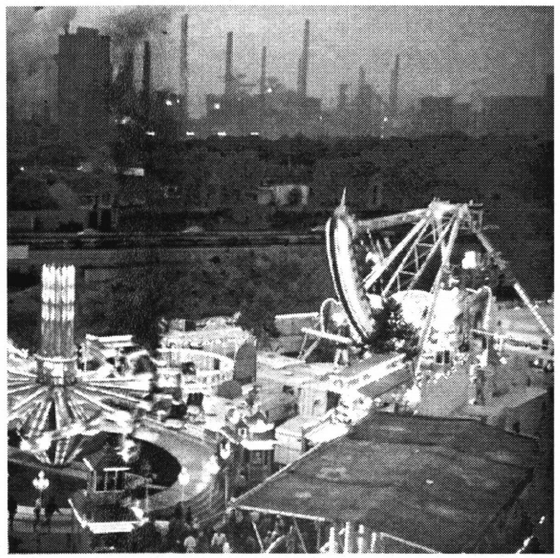
HEADSTONES MARKING PRE-REVOLUTIONARY WAR GRAVES (WALL IS LATER CONSTRUCTION)

tecture is made by inflating a detail, attempting to make a whole from what is only a fragment.

The experience and the interpretation of a place and the boundaries that shape it require an investment of time and a certain amount of room or emptiness to operate in, all of which are becoming perilously rare; buildings meant for the public are insular and filled to overflowing. Cineplexes, restaurants, and shopping malls are full—full of consumers, of conditioned air and artificial light, of goods for sale, of signs and arrows, and of themselves, trying to be self-sufficient worlds unto themselves. This spoon-feeding leaves no room for the intellect to operate, for any conjecture about the surroundings to be made; all possible questions have been answered before they can even be asked. Engagement with the world is hindered by the architecture that should facilitate it. Chances for invention, discovery, or revelation are removed, valuable opportunities even if they result in misinterpretations. Architecture is reduced to the level of bad television.

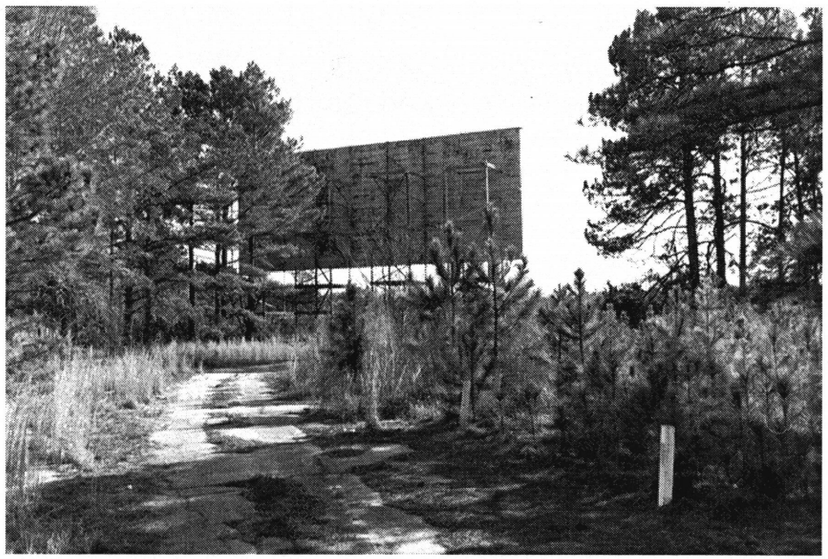
This practice isolates itself through shortsightedness. There is little regard for place or time; all places are assumed to be equal (except possibly in financial terms), and there is no time but the present. Short-term returns are favored over quality, appropriateness, or thoughtfulness. The buildings designed from this point of view alone will miss the opportunity to take part in the passage of time that connects the past to the present and to the future—they will only get old. The human desire to be in touch with places and artifacts that give physical evidence of their passage in time is neglected. The appended clock towers whose tops are inaccessible, the gable ends that do not support a roof, and the colonnades made of Styrofoam—built in an attempt to evoke some imagined civic past—are no substitute for the copper roof turning green with verdigris, the unpainted surface of clapboards turning silver with exposure, the brick wall softening with age, or the brass railing dulled by the passing of countless hands.

Architecture that is built well, that weathers the passage of years, takes on a presence and a depth that engages the mind. As a building transcends its original conception, even if it is completely abandoned (perhaps especially if this is true), it becomes part of another world, another time, overlapping with and enriching our own. Where this overlap (and it is not limited to the temporal realm) occurs—the bridge over water, the corridor through fields and woods left by train tracks, the derelict building in the midst of those still in use, the cemetery near the center of town—the place becomes charged. Disappearance can make things more present; the presence of an absence can often be felt even more powerfully than the original conditions ever were. This is the quality associated with ruins, with places that seem to be waiting for our return, like sepia photographs of long-dead ancestors who look as if *they* remember *us*. Ruins and places that are visibly old are the tap on our memory's shoulder, the trail of bread crumbs that reminds us that there is something to be remembered, that others have passed this way before us, and that new action can be taken, traditions continued. Traditions connect past and present ways to the future; new customs, artifacts, and places join with those already established. Our traditions, our architecture, accompany us as we make our way through the years, providing a foundation for our present and future places in the world.



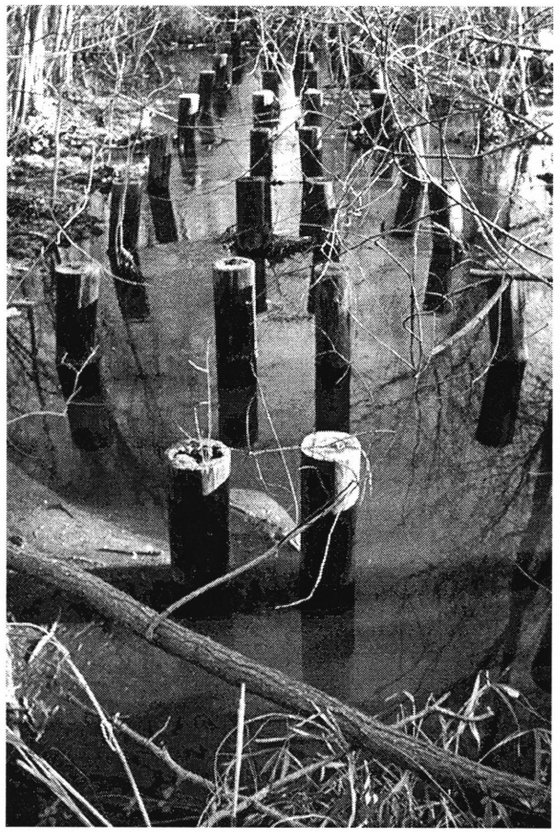
DUISBURG, GERMANY: 1992

AMUSEMENT PARK AND BLAST FURNACES



TOWER DRIVE-IN, ROCKY MOUNT, NORTH CAROLINA: 1993

ABANDONED DRIVE-IN THEATER SCREEN



OTTER CREEK, EDGECOMBE CO., NC: 1994

PILINGS LEFT AFTER REMOVAL OF RAIL CROSSING

WORDS

1 Frank Gohlke, *Measure of Emptiness: Grain Elevators in the American Landscape*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992. 21

2 Demetri Porphyrios, "Imitation and Convention in Architecture," *Architectural Design*, vol. 58, no. 1/2, 1988. 15

PICTURES

TITLE Tarboro, North Carolina quadrangle, United States Geodetic Survey.

p 3L "Underground," *Daidalos* 48, June 1993. 41

p 5L "Public Open Spaces," *Casabella* 57, January/February 1993. 24

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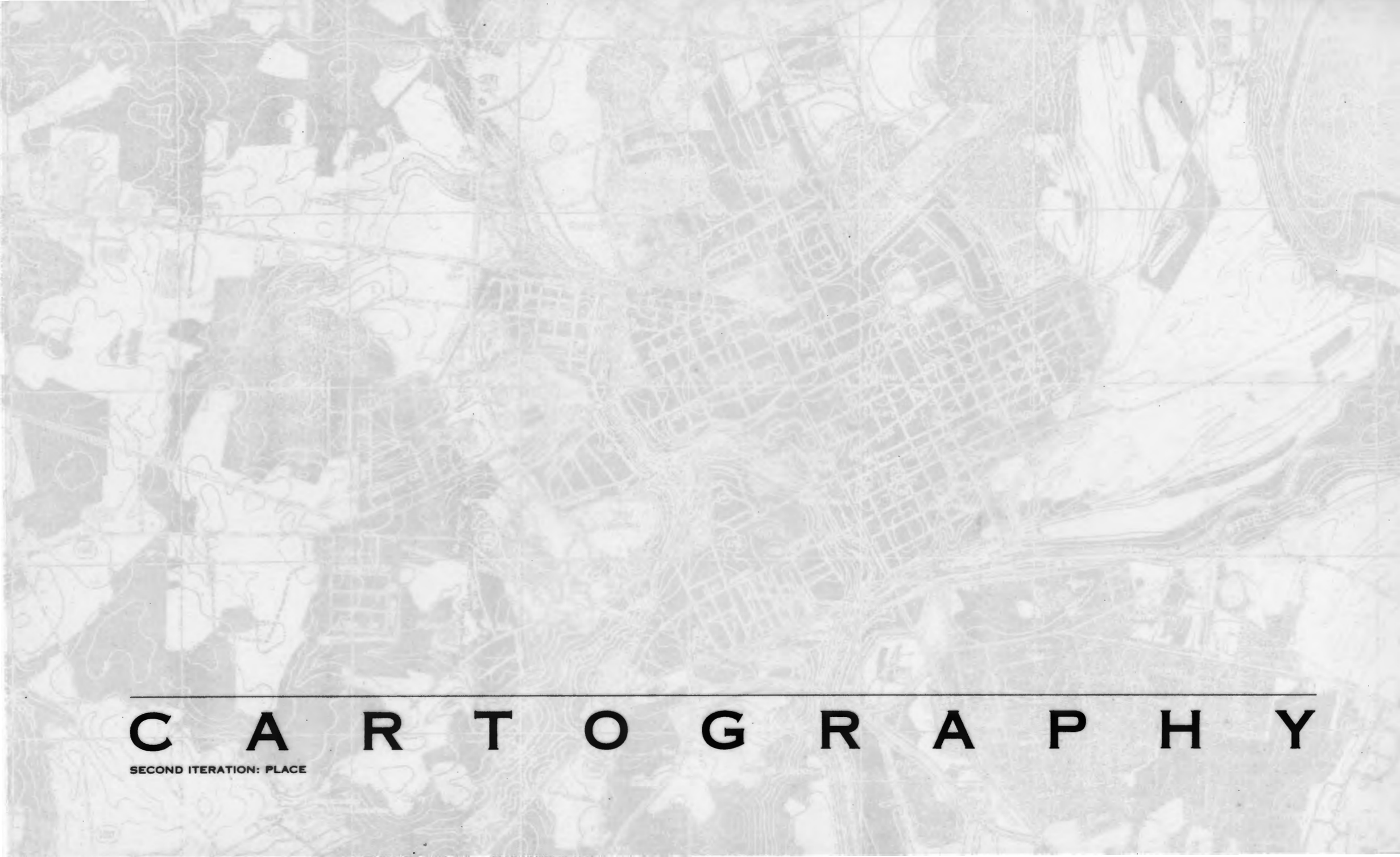
C A R T O G R A P H Y

SECOND ITERATION: PLACE



CARTOGRAPHY

SECOND ITERATION: PLACE

Who built the seven towers of Thebes? The books are filled with the names of kings. Was it kings who hauled the craggy blocks of stone? In the evening when the Chinese wall was finished, where did the masons go?

—BERTOLD BRECHT

If my daddy wanted a barn, he would just build it.

—COLONIAL NORTH CAROLINA FARM RESIDENT

DESPITE ATTEMPTS AT COLONIZATION DATING FROM 1585, including the enigmatic "Lost Colony" of 1587, North Carolina was not settled by Europeans. The forbidding coastline of narrow barrier islands, their treacherous currents and tides, and the shallow, ever-shifting inlets proved to be more than a match for most 16th and 17th century navigators, who dubbed it the "Graveyard of the Atlantic." The first settlers to deserve the title traveled over land, not ocean.[1] They were Virginians in search of farmland that was in short supply from where they immigrated, the populous Chesapeake Bay region.[2] They arrived in the pine forests and marshes in the northeast corner of what would become, in 1663, the Proprietary Colony of Carolina.[3]

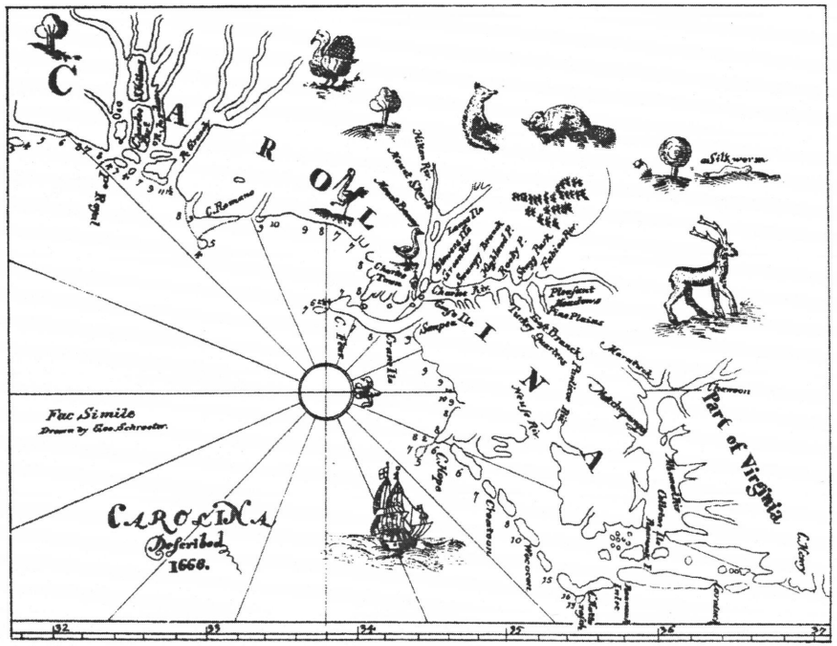
Granted to the eight Lords Proprietors (*sic*) by Charles II of England, Carolina encompassed the territory from Virginia's southern border to the Spanish colony of Florida's northern border, and spanned from the Atlantic to the Pacific.[4] Free settlers in the colony were granted the token right to participate in the virtually nonexistent Proprietary government and one hundred acres of land for living and farming.[5] In fact, the law forbade the accumulation of more than six hundred acres by any individual, and these could be only partially contiguous.[6] By severely restricting the amount of land, and therefore wealth, that could be amassed, the Proprietors easily prevented anyone but their

own figureheads from gaining or exercising any power in the colony. This policy planted the seed of subsistence farming that dominated the Carolina landscape until after the Civil War. Small homesteads, comprising clearings in the forest large enough only for one- or two-room houses and whatever crops the family needed to survive, stood in stark contrast to the much larger and grander holdings of Virginia tobacco planters to the north and Carolina rice planters to the south. The result was a thinly settled, slow-growing colony whose appointed Governors promoted their own interests ahead of the colony's, and left Carolina vulnerable to attack from hostile Indians in the interior and pirates along the coast.[7]

Hampered from the start by their own policies, Carolina failed to provide more than the slightest amount of the Lords Proprietors' overriding interest—profit—and for that reason was sold back to the English government under George II in 1729.[8] Immediately a stronger and more centralized government was established by the Crown and presided over by a Colonial Governor. This change came too late to have any effect on the general character of the landscape in North Carolina, though. (South Carolina was made a separate colony after the sale of 1729.) Small farmers usually held between fifty and two hundred acres.[9] The profitable cultivation of tobacco and cotton as cash crops required a great deal more land than this and extensive slave or indentured labor, as well as ready access to suitable and reliable transportation. The colony's still infamous coast prevented both the importing of labor and commodities and the exporting of crops that Tidewater Virginia relied on to support its plantation economy.[10] Shipping tobacco by land to Chesapeake for export was always expensive, and at times prohibited, under Virginia's self-serving commerce regulations. In spite of these natural and man-made obstacles, North Carolina became the American colonies' largest exporter of naval stores during this period.[11] Abundant pine forests provided enormous quantities of tar, pitch, turpentine, lumber, shingles, and masts for the wooden ships that plied the trade routes between the Old and New Worlds.[12] Though unable to participate directly in the international agricultural trade, North Carolina was in part responsible for it flourishing.

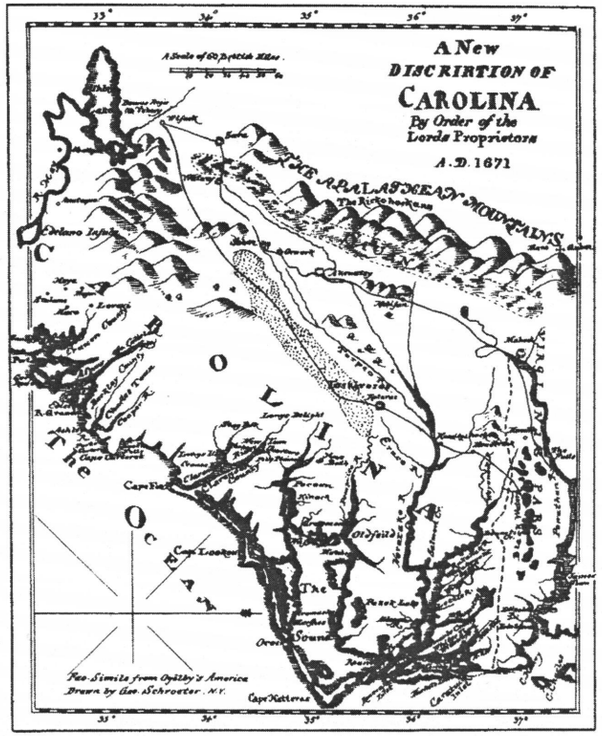
The geographic factors that restricted trade also adversely affected building practices in colonial North Carolina. Chronic shortages of glass, hardware, tools, and nails resulted in the precious nature and prohibitive cost of all these items. It was a common practice at the time to burn houses, barns, sheds, outhouses, fences, and other unneeded wooden structures to salvage nails and metal hardware for use in subsequent construction.[13] Another considerable obstacle to building was the lack of established trades. The absence of large towns and the general poverty of North Carolina's small population could not sustain the artisans skilled in masonry, carpentry, glazing, and similar specialties that other colonies enjoyed.[14] Without the necessary resources of materials and labor to fashion and assemble the complex joinery of heavy timber frames that were common in England and to a lesser extent in the colonies, domestic architecture diverged from this type to two extremes: log and light frame construction.[15] Both of these types could be undertaken with a minimum of tools and skills familiar from the practical experience of clearing land for farming; by necessity the person who owned and cleared the land also built whatever buildings were needed on it, with little or no help from outside the immediate family. Houses built during this time were predominately one or two dirt-floored rooms with a sleeping loft in the rafters. The corner posts of these dwellings were typically set directly into the ground, dispensing with the need for a masonry foundation (and a wooden floor), which would have been costly in terms of materials, skills, and labor.[16]

After forty-two years as a colony, North Carolina saw the incorporation of its first town, Bath, on the Pamlico River in 1705.[17] Bath was joined by New Bern in 1710 and



EASTERN EDGE OF THE PROPRIETARY COLONY OF CAROLINA: 1668

DRAWN BY GEORGE SCHROETER



PROPRIETARY COLONY OF CAROLINA: 1671

DRAWN BY GEORGE SCHROETER

Edenton in 1712.[18] These towns, and many that followed, were sanctioned by the colonial government as official ports of entry, providing central locations for overseeing commerce, enforcing customs laws, and levying taxes.[19] In addition to the financial gains they made possible, these early colonial towns provided a laboratory of sorts for the latest European city-planning theories. In Europe new ideas were integrated into the context of older, established cities; in America they could be carried out in what was regarded as virgin territory, and could be evaluated on their own merits from a new perspective.[20]

There was a trade-off for this supposed condition of *tabula rasa*, however. With an ocean separating the mother country from her progeny, only ideas themselves could be imported without compromise; the means to fully carry them out were quite another matter. New towns had to be constructed to provide adequate shelter as quickly as possible with the materials and methods at hand, and so fell victim to the same shortages of skills and materials that plagued the building efforts of individuals.[21] One such idea that did not have to be compromised was the plan layout of the towns themselves. In this age of growing rationalism, the preferred pattern for new settlements was that of the Cartesian grid, which would eventually come to influence the planning of the entire western United States.[22]

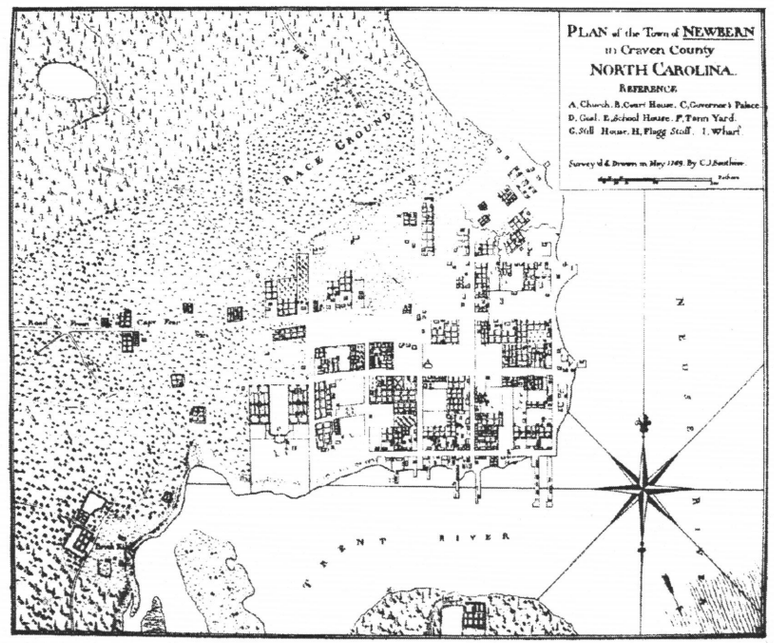
The grid was an easily perceivable qualification of man's presence in the landscape, a landscape that was alternately viewed as an idyllic garden or a horrific wilderness. In either case the grid was a positive sign of man's place in an unfamiliar world. A grid plan was also linked to many primitive and ideal city plans based on the mandala, or four-square, arrangement. The mandala plan was traditionally seen to raise the city and its inhabitants to a middle ground between the secular earth and the spiritual heavens. A center, or *axis mundi* (literally, the center of the world), was necessarily inherent in a four-square plan, and it was through this center that the world of man was linked to the spiritual world beyond.[23] In early cultures a stone-covered pit containing the spirits of the ancestors, the axis mundi was always occupied by the dominant force in a town's life and evolved to become the place of the cathedral in Europe and, in America, the place of the courthouse, the physical manifestation and seat of colonial power. *"Whether in classical or in primitive foundations, the mandala ground plan was never dictated by considerations of aesthetics or economics. It was a transformation of the city into an ordered cosmos, a sacred place bound by its center to the other world. And this transformation accorded with the vital feelings and needs of religious man. The city, the fortress, the temple become symbols of psychic wholeness."*[24] As opposed to the often spontaneous and convoluted patterns of ancient European cities, the gridiron pattern was perceived and utilized as an ahierarchical model of flexibility, equality, democracy, and rationality in the face of an apparently trackless wilderness. Use of a grid as a tool for planning was evidence that the fundamental understanding of cities was changing: from that of a view bound to the ground and looking towards the skies, to that of a view freed from the earth's constraints and enabled to look down from the skies.

North Carolina's towns and cities grew slowly in number and size. They were most often places that had been occupied for many years as frontier outposts, trading markets, farming areas, or ports. The relatively small population, uniformly distributed across the colony, had by necessity developed a self-reliant, entrenched attitude that was rooted in the land and its cultivation, local in its point of view, and resistant and slow to change.[25] Concentrations of settlement were a matter of convenience to colonists who were quite satisfied to govern themselves, and they took a rather dim view of official incorporation and the attendant increases of administration, regulation, and taxation imposed from outside their locality. It was into this world that the town of Tarrburg came to exist upon its incorporation in 1760.

ACME
ASYLUM
BARBECUE
BARIUM SPRINGS
BELLS
BETA
CAIRO
CALYPSO
CARTHAGE
DAMASCUS
DUCK
ECHO
EGGTOWN
EGYPT
FOLLY
FROGSBORO
GENOA
GUM NECK
HALF MOON
HOLLAND
INDEX
INSTITUTE
IRON STATION
JERICHO
JUPITER
KALMIA
KILL DEVIL HILLS
KING
LABORATORY
LEDGER
LIGHT
LONG VIEW
MICRO
NAPLES
NEW BERN
OAKS
OLD SPARTA
OLYMPIA
OXFORD
PACTOLUS
PALESTINE
PENELOPE
PINETOPS
QUICK
RADICAL
RHODES
RIDDLE
SALVO
SECCESSION
SHINE
SODA HILL
TATER HILL
TOAST
TUNIS
VALHALLA
VINEGAR HILL
WARSAW
WHALEBONE
WHYNOT
YEOPIM
ZEBULON
ZEPHYR

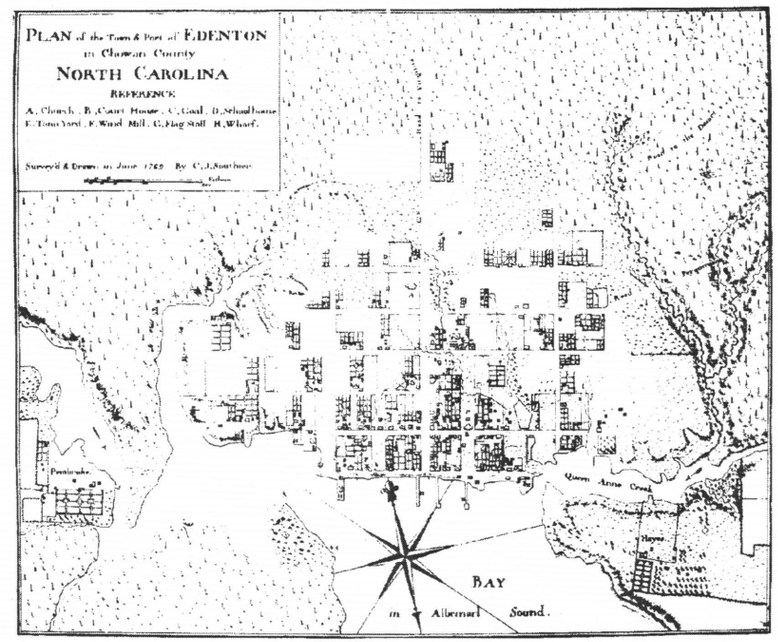
NORTH CAROLINA PLACE NAMES

FROM THE *N. C. ATLAS & GAZETTEER*



NEW BERN, NORTH CAROLINA: 1769

SURVEYED AND DRAWN BY C.J. SAUTHIER



EDENTON, NORTH CAROLINA: 1769

SURVEYED AND DRAWN BY C.J. SAUTHIER

The Coastal Plain of eastern North Carolina was occupied for many hundreds of years before the first immigrants arrived. The Tuscarora Indians who lived there hunted, farmed, waged war, and built towns, outposts, and fortifications—providing the white settlers with invaluable insights into survival in a world alien to them. The region's abundant rivers and smaller waterways were an important means of transportation to the natives, and their settlements naturally gravitated to them. One of these riverside settlements was Ucohnerunt, on the northern bank of the Tar River. ('Tar' is a corruption of a syllable from the Tuscarora language, but since places were never named by single syllable words, its origin cannot be fixed.)[26] Ucohnerunt lay near the center of the Tuscarora territory, approximately ninety miles northwest of the Tar's mouth into Pamlico Sound. Various factions of the tribe were alternately hostile or welcoming to the colonists, and in 1713 the sporadic series of conflicts known as the Tuscarora Wars ended.[27] The friendly confederations of the Tuscarora, led by King Tom Blunt, were rewarded for their loyalty to the settlers with land in northeastern North Carolina, with Ucohnerunt becoming a point on that area's southwest boundary.[28] The *New and Correct Map of the Province of North Carolina*, drawn by Edward Mosely after a 1733 surveying expedition, shows both the Tuscarora name and the name by which the colonists knew the settlement, King Blount's (or Blunt's) Town. By the time this survey was made, emigrants from Virginia had been in the area for thirteen years.[29]

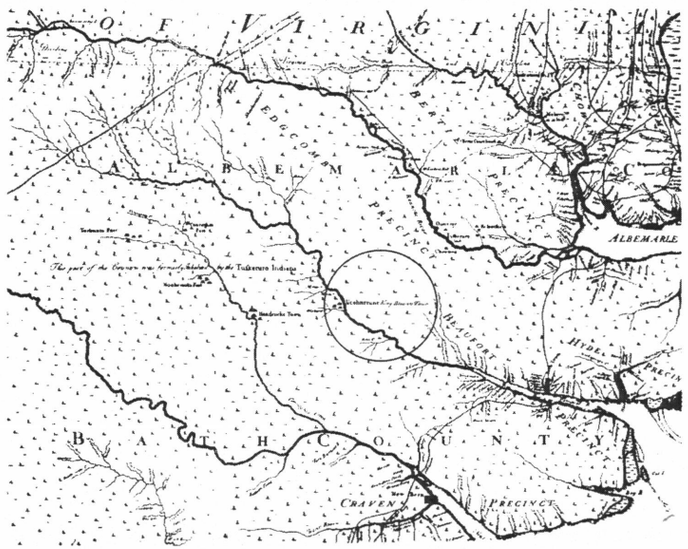
Colonial government and evidence of increasing population appeared three years later in 1736, when a building was constructed to serve as the Edgecombe Precinct courthouse.[30] From this colonial government the first large land grant to encompass present-day Tarboro took place in 1742, when Samuel Holloman obtained four hundred acres for "agricultural purposes."[31]

The settlement on the Tar was officially incorporated as Tarrburg by the Legislative Act of 1760. Five commissioners were granted a one hundred and fifty-acre tract of land. Tarrburg was laid out as a grid of square, two-acre blocks divided into four half-acre lots each, the blocks separated by streets sixty-six feet wide.[32] On the town's north and east sides were rectangular one-acre blocks, for a total of one hundred acres. The remaining fifty acres were common grazing areas for livestock bordering the gridiron,[33] a tradition of English origin.[34] Building lots were sold for £ 2 each, with lots reserved for a courthouse and a jail. A site was also reserved on the river bank for a warehouse and a boat landing,[35] Tarrburg being the inland terminus of navigation for the English ships that traveled the Tar River picking up cargoes of cotton and naval stores.[36]

At the urging of the town's Episcopal rector, many of the streets were named for religious figures: Saints Patrick, James, Andrew, John, and George.[37] In 1790 a new county courthouse was erected on the northwest corner of the center block of the twenty-five block grid (in keeping with the idea of the axis mundi being a connection to authority), facing St. George Street.[38] Already prominent due to its crossing of the river to the south, St. George Street prospered with the location of the courthouse and with the marketplaces for livestock, produce, drygoods, and traveling merchants that it attracted. It soon became Main Street in name as well as rank.

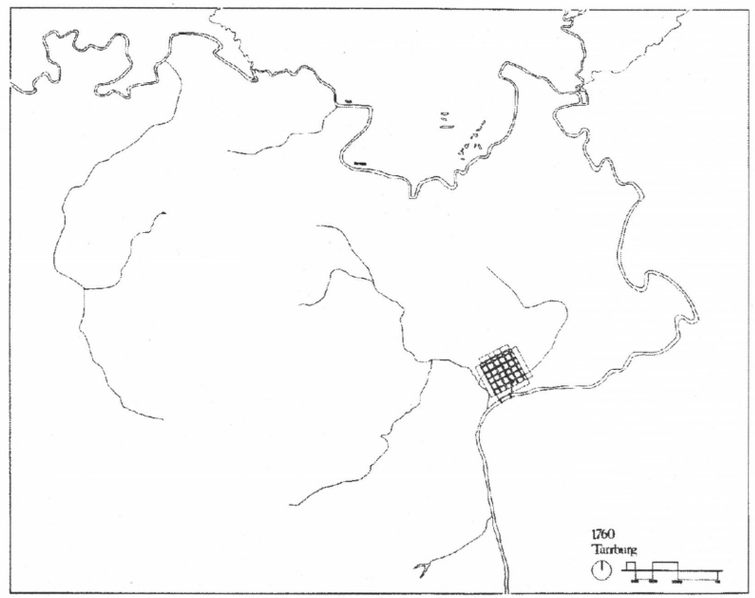
With the exception of the courthouse's location, Tarrburg's plan, like most gridiron plans, ignored the third dimension regarding building placement and topography.[39] The disposition of churches, schools, and the town cemetery was attributable more to available land rather than planning or forethought, and unlike other Southern cities such as Charleston, South Carolina; Wilmington, North Carolina; and Alexandria, Virginia; adjacency was the only physical relation Tarrburg had to its namesake river. Almost one hundred years into North Carolina's existence, utility was still the driving design force.

This attitude was not to last; by the early part of the 19th century, disparities began to develop between the classes in



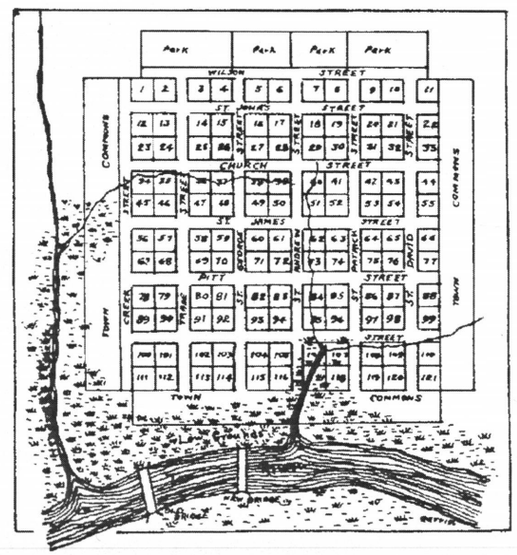
NORTHEASTERN NORTH CAROLINA: 1733

NEW AND CORRECT MAP OF THE PROVINCE OF NORTH CAROLINA BY E. MOSELY



TARRBURG: 1760

TOWN PLAN, TAR RIVER, AND TRIBUTARIES



TARRBURG: 1760

TOWN PLAN AT INCORPORATION

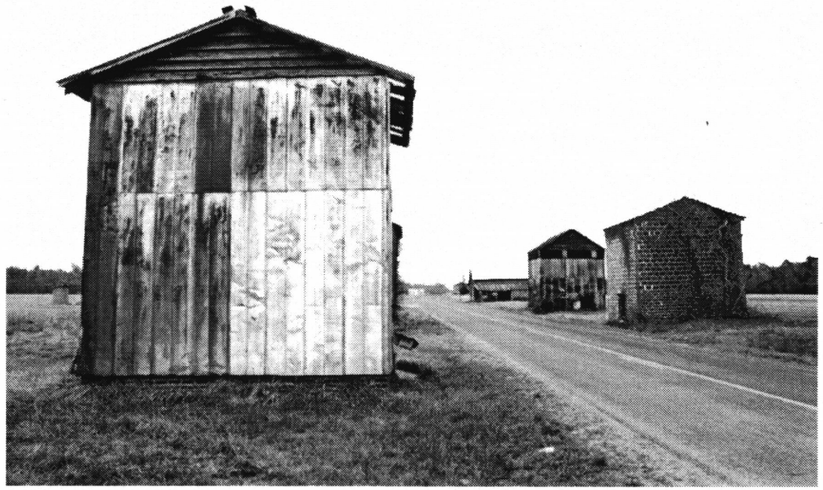
North Carolina. In 1820, less than fifteen thousand of the state's total population—638,829—lived in towns larger than one thousand people.[40] By this time a class of large land owners whose prosperity, predictably, was based in agriculture had developed. Although they were a relatively small group, the planters' wealth allowed them to monopolize local and statewide political offices, and to enact stringent and self-protecting laws regarding property rights and ownership.[41] Other, more subtle measures of upper class self-protection were to allow citizens relative autonomy in matters other than land ownership, and to minimize public displays of rank and authority, downplaying the gap between income levels. Wealthy architectural patrons in North Carolina did not indulge in extensive ornamentation or the latest styles; their privileged position was evident in more conservative ways—quality of materials and craftsmanship were favored over ostentation.[42] In ordering furniture for a new house in 1817, a letter written by the owner warned the Northern purchasing agent to be mindful of "the Meridian of Carolina" as he made his selections.[43] A degree of continuity between the classes was also maintained through employing local builders and craftsmen for virtually all building projects.[44] In this way, each region of the state came to be identified with the work of a particular group of artisans, giving rich and poor inhabitants alike at least some common ground in their built environment. These practices, knowingly followed by wealthy North Carolinians, minimized class differences and so protected the privileged positions of those in power. They also led to an architecture that favored consistency over variety.

The mid 1800s saw North Carolina adapt to the impact of two diverse forces. One was a familiar aspect of agricultural life brought to prominence in a new form, the other was completely new not only to North Carolina, but to the entire world. Bright leaf tobacco and steam locomotives, though introduced one hundred and fifty years ago, still mark the landscape of eastern North Carolina.

Bright leaf tobacco was discovered, albeit by accident, in North Carolina in 1839. Until that time, tobacco leaves had been cured in vertical tiers over a steady fire inside drafty log barns. The fires were tended around the clock for several weeks to insure even curing. In one instance, however, a fire was inadvertently allowed to die out, and had to be restarted. This variation in time and curing temperature produced a golden yellow leaf instead of the expected dark brown. Because of its more attractive color and aroma, tobacco from this particular barn was sold for four times the amount of that from other barns at that year's auction.[45]

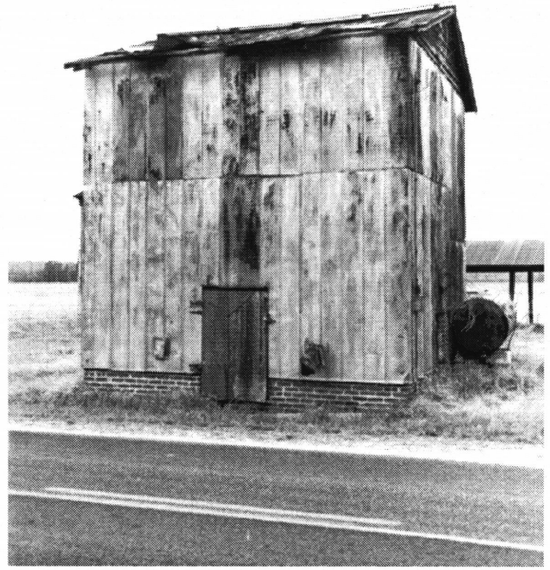
Consequently this curing practice spread, and tobacco slowly began to replace cotton as North Carolina's most profitable cash crop.[46] The continued refinement of the curing process brought about what remains, despite obsolescence, an iconic form of eastern North Carolina—the flue-cured tobacco barn. For more precise control of the curing temperatures, barns were more tightly constructed on masonry foundations, chimneys were added, and the barn itself became more uniformly square—typically sixteen feet wide and fifteen to twenty feet tall with a gable roof. Eventually, the curing fire was moved outside the barn and heat was transferred to the interior more evenly than was previously possible through a system of flues, with a metal or clay tile stack through the roof at each corner or through a continuous ridge vent.[47] Clusters of barns grew between fields and the roads necessary for transportation, growing in number as the crop increased in demand and production. As the result of an accident, North Carolina had at last become home to the kind of plantations that had flourished to the north and south for generations.

"As you approach the line of the railroad, ...signs of life and improvement begin to be manifest...The old dwellings are in better repair and there are many new ones of a more modern and pleasing style of architecture."[48] When a *Harper's* reporter traveling in



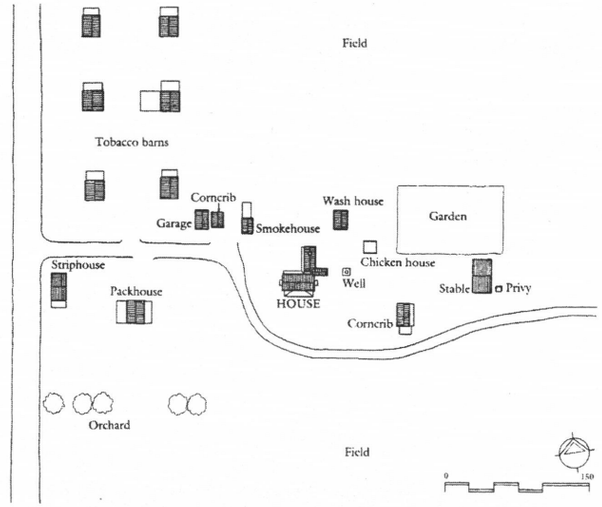
EDGECOMBE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA: 1992

FLUE-CURED TOBACCO BARNS



PITT COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA: 1992

FLUE-CURED TOBACCO BARN



GRANVILLE COUNTY, NORTH CAROLINA

TYPICAL PLACEMENT OF TOBACCO BARNS BETWEEN FIELDS AND ROAD

North Carolina wrote those words in 1839, he was a passenger on the longest continuous railroad in the world, the one hundred and sixty-one miles of the Wilmington & Weldon.[49] His words were evidence of the effect steam power had on America and her psyche, an effect that could hardly be overstated. As early as 1787, spokesmen for the growing manufacturing endeavors in the United States were equating machines with "the motions of the spheres, that roll throughout the universe," linking then to the ideas of Newtonian physics that were popular at the time.[50] Many American writers came to see steam-driven machines as vehicles of progress beyond the realm of science and technology. They wrote about them as a function of the inevitable advance of history that America was uniquely suited for—a combination of geography and technology, virgin land and machine power. Thoreau wrote "We have constructed a fate that never turns aside."[51] The westward expansion of the United States would soon begin to fulfill this prophecy.

In 1850 there were ten thousand miles of rail in the United States, and it was possible to travel from Maine to Wilmington, NC solely by train. It was said that "the application of steam to machinery has almost annihilated space," and "has accomplished what perhaps Prometheus attempted."[52] Even the possibility that the railroad would pass through or at least near a town instigated the construction of "new and beautiful buildings" and the people would "talk of nothing now but the railroad."[53] Entire towns could be brought into existence by the train, a phenomenon similar to the oil and gold rush boomtowns of roughly the same period. In North Carolina the population was so evenly dispersed across the land that numerous new towns appeared, at nearly every crossroads the tracks passed.[54] These towns primarily served the surrounding area's agricultural interests. They provided access to the rail lines that allowed crops to be exported in greater quantities, at lower costs, and for larger profits than had ever before been possible. Simultaneous with this agricultural boom, the presence of the train began to subvert the land's traditional value. Terrain once appreciated for its natural qualities or familial ties came to be seen as something to be overcome, or as a commodity desirable only for its location, not for what could be grown on it. Land prices increased as much as ten times in the face of the railroad.[55] Hausmann's Parisian boulevards were echoed in the line of the tracks through previously untouched forests. The rails took precedence and always sought the easiest crossings, the shallowest grades, and the gentlest curves; if the land did not provide these things, the land was cut, filled, graded, bridged, and drained until it did. Like the gridiron town plan, the railroad was a man-made, linear qualification of the world.

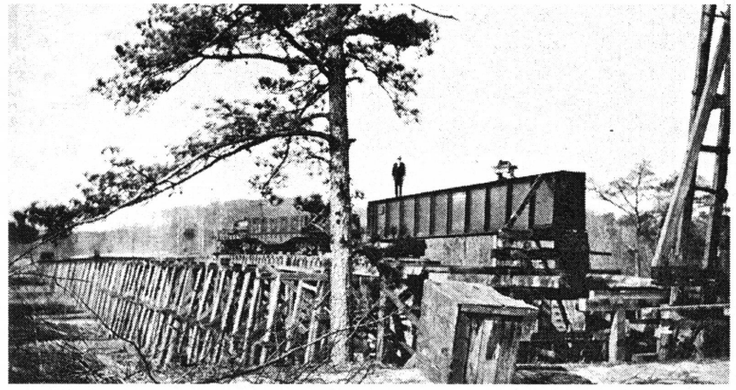
To small North Carolina towns like Tarborough, the railroad could mean both new prosperity and an enlarged sense of the world beyond the town limits. In an age when the feet of men and horses were the most common means of transportation, steam engines were a revelation. A train, the largest mobile object on the land, powered by fire and billowing steam and sparks, derived even more power over the imagination through its apparently autonomous travel to and from *someplace else*, these other places integral to the rail line's name. The required steel tracks existed outside the everyday realm of most people, and were a powerful axial contrast to the homogenous town grids they bisected. They connected the viewer to the unattainable horizon, *here* to *there*, and were an ever-present reminder of the train's presence in the land.

The railroad was a comparative latecomer to Tarborough when the first train arrived on the afternoon of August 1, 1860, just before the town's centennial.[56] Lines had passed on all sides of Tarborough for over twenty years to connect larger communities, but none had come through the town itself. When the Albemarle & Raleigh tracks were laid one-half mile north of the town commons, Tarborough's boundaries of water and steel became symbolic of a changing world. To the south, the Tar River was a reminder of a way of life linked to the land and measured by nature's

Albemarle Steam Navigation Co.
East Carolina Railway
Linville River Railway Co.
Kinston & Snow Hill Railroad
Carolina & Northeastern Railroad Co.
Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad Co.
Atlantic & Carolina Railroad Co.
Carolina & North-Western Railway Co.
Aberdeen & Asheboro
Durham & Southern Railway Co.
Piedmont & Northern Railway Co.
Raleigh & Gaston Railroad
Wilmington & Weldon Railroad
Seaboard Air Line
North Carolina Railroad
Norfolk & Carolina Railway Co.
Albemarle & Raleigh Railroad
Wilmington, Columbia, & Augusta
Norfolk & Southern Railway Co.
Elizabeth City & Norfolk Railroad Co.
Raleigh & Pamlico Sound Railroad Co.
Raleigh, Charlotte, & Southern Railway Co.
Sanford & Troy Railroad Co.
Durham & Charlotte Railroad Co.
Washington & Leaksville Railway
Wilmington & Manchester Railroad
Jamesville & Washington Railroad
Seaboard & Raleigh Railway Co.
Chowan & Southern Railroad

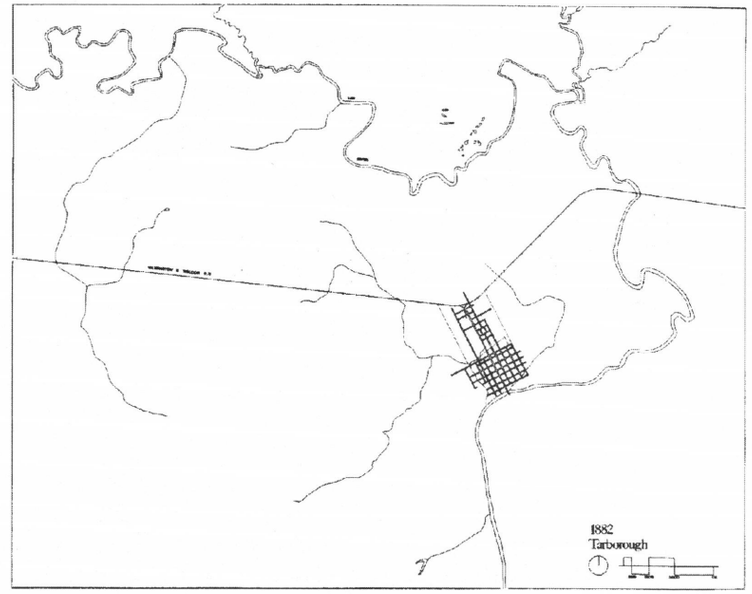
North Carolina railroads c. 1900

taken from *East Carolina Railway*



Moccasin River, Greene County, North Carolina: 1907

East Carolina Railway trestle under construction



Tarborough: 1882

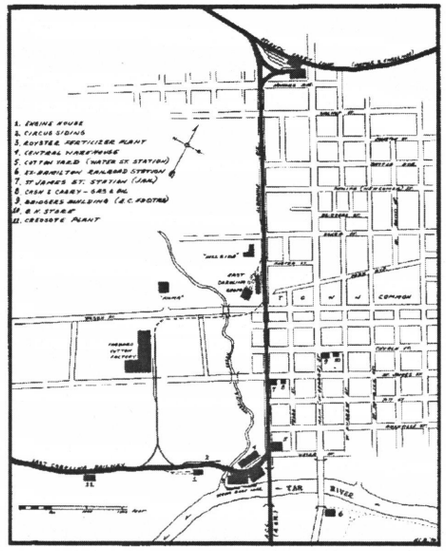
town plan, railroad, and river

cycles, in contrast to the world of the train, where time was standardized and linear and man was now the measure of all things. Between these extremes lay Tarborough itself, no longer bound by its initial five-by-five block grid. The grazing areas that once bordered the town had long since become building sites, with the exception of the northern commons, now a public park. North was also the primary direction of the town's expansion. Large imposing residences built by the town's leading citizens began to appear along the streets that had been extended in anticipation of meeting the curving railroad right-of-way, an unintended mirror image of the Tar River a mile south. New streets located near the tracks did not adhere to the town's original orthogonal plan, but adopted the geometry of the tracks, another facet of the railroad's effect on the town.

Robert R. Bridgers of Tarborough was an embodiment of the changing times. A member of a prominent family, Bridgers became president of three North Carolina railroads simultaneously—the Albemarle & Raleigh; the Wilmington, Columbia, & Augusta; and the Wilmington & Weldon. For many years he was president of the Time Convention that would, in 1883, override local time and establish Eastern Standard Time, thereby regularizing train arrivals and departures.[57] His descendant Henry Clark Bridgers would almost single-handedly create the East Carolina Railway that ran south from Tarborough, creating several new towns and utilizing the rail yard that is the site of this thesis project.

Steam power altered not just the land; the act of building on that land felt its influence as well. Building had always been in part an act of assembly but, previous to steam power, building components had borne the mark of the hand in their making—saw, chisel, plane, hammer and anvil—and each piece had been individual; similar to like pieces, but never identical. Now steam powered factories created thousands of standard, mass-produced building products—nails, planks, bricks, balusters, newel posts, hardware, window sashes, paneled doors, and mantelpieces—each one a mirror image of the previous one and readily available from catalogs courtesy of the railroad.[58] General construction methods changed with the advent of steam power as well. Traditional construction methods gave way to balloon frames of relatively small, repetitive, uniform members that allowed greater differentiation of space within a building.[59] Houses developed specific rooms: parlors, living areas, bedrooms, and dining rooms. The net effect of mechanization could be seen in new buildings that displayed more of the achievements of machines and less those of individual craftsmen, eroding some of the regional identity of architecture. This trend was mitigated to a degree by awarding significant commissions to local architects rather than to out-of-state, and possibly more prestigious, designers.[60] North Carolina's architecture, although it was changing, was still largely a product of her natives.

In Tarborough's case, this local architect was William Percival, who had received his training in England. Percival first came to note in 1857 for designing the First Baptist Church in North Carolina's capital, Raleigh, on a significant site facing the state Capitol.[61] Percival was hired the next year by William Battle to design his home in Tarborough. Battle was an extremely wealthy planter with extensive family land holdings that predated the existence of Tarborough, and Percival's eclectic design drew from Italian villas in similar contexts.[62] (The location of this house would later make Battle an opponent of the railroad in Tarborough, when he learned a proposed connection through town would pass directly in front of his property. After a lengthy disagreement, Battle relented but, in the deed granting right of way to the railroad, specified that trains had to start running "within a reasonable amount of time." In 1879, the track having been laid but with no trains scheduled to run, Battle gave fifteen days' notice to the railroad and then had the tracks in front of his house pulled up.)[63] Percival went on to design several large dwellings for prominent families, building materials arriving by steamboat and steam locomotive.[64] At the end of 1860 construction began on Percival's

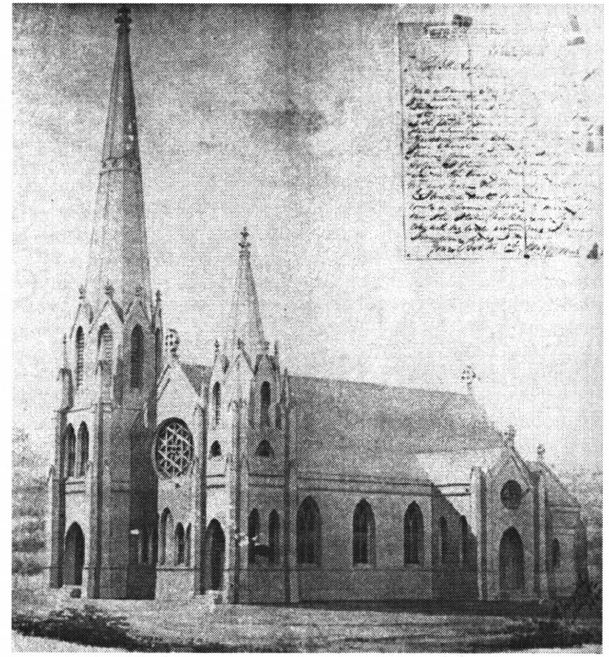


TARBOROUGH: 1880S

RAIL LINES, STREET GRID, AND RIVER

WILLIAM BATTLE HOUSE, *THE BARRACKS*, TARBOROUGH: 1858

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM PERCIVAL



CALVARY EPISCOPAL CHURCH, TARBOROUGH: 1860

DESIGNED BY WILLIAM PERCIVAL

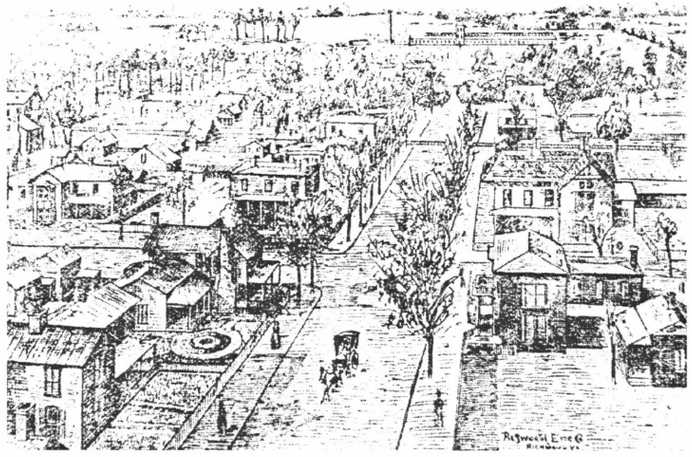
largest project in Tarborough, Calvary Episcopal Church, but the building, with its asymmetrical double steeples, would not be completed for seven years due to the Civil War.

Though not subject to the monumental battles that raged to the north in Virginia, North Carolina's landscape was nevertheless marked by the Civil War. Virtually all farmers, large and small alike, were left in debt, and there was a considerable new population of former slaves that were now free, but owned no land and had no means of income or support. Recovery from this debt necessitated increased dependence on the large, profitable cash crops of cotton and tobacco, and reduced the relative self-sufficiency and independence previously enjoyed by the small farmer.[65] A system of tenant farming developed in which the large antebellum agricultural estates were broken up into individual farms that were worked by the freed slaves and smaller farmers forced out of business due to debt. The trend towards more farms of less acreage continues to the present day. In 1860 there were 75,203 farms in the state averaging three hundred and sixteen acres each. In 1900 there were more than three times as many farms of less than one-third the average acreage, and in 1952, average farm size would be only sixty-seven acres, reminiscent of earlier times when a farmer could be responsible for all activities on his land.[66]

In order to prosper or even to recuperate in the changing times, it became obvious that North Carolina would have to diversify from its predominantly agricultural economy. The towns and cities became the centers of this diversification mandate; newspapers, industries, law practices, banks, and the political parties were based in the growing urban areas.[67] Even though most of the population could still be classified as rural and agricultural, the real seat of power and money had shifted to the cities, and they were seen as the place to be: *"Until after the close of the war...town people visited in the country on holidays and Sundays...for social enjoyment and festive occasions. The reverse is the rule now. Everybody who can, has left the country and lives in the towns and cities; and the people of the country districts enjoy few of the real comforts, and scarcely any of the luxuries, of life."*[68]

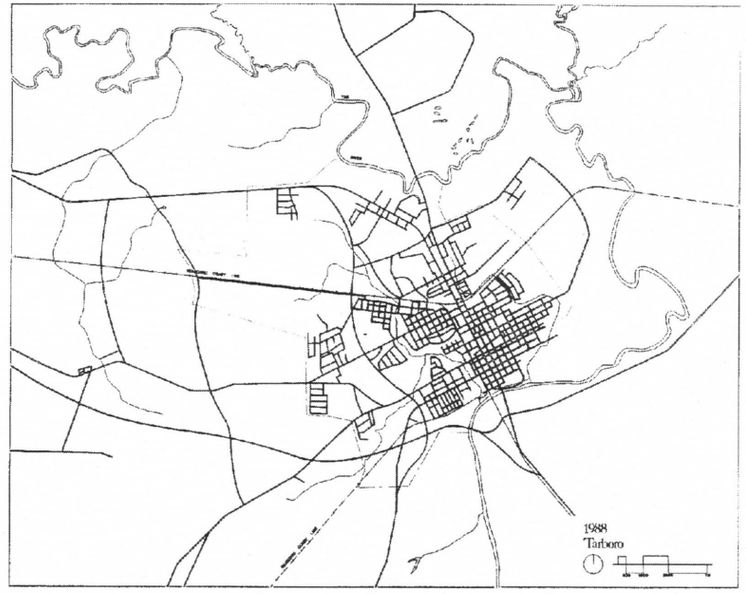
The results of this rejuvenation process, started over one hundred years ago, can still be seen in Tarboro today. Companies founded to capitalize on and advance the then-new science of agriculture continue to provide for the region's farmers. Buildings erected along Main Street at the turn of the century, many since adapted to other purposes, attest to the prosperity of the endeavors they were home to, just as the large and meticulously restored houses across the town commons from them testify to the wealth of the individuals who started those endeavors. Now, newer neighborhoods comprising dozens of small, nearly identical houses enfront roads conforming not to a Cartesian grid or the axial geometry of railroad tracks, but to the turning radius of a large fire truck. As powerful a force and image as it was, and in some ways still is, the train soon began to be eclipsed by the mass production of the automobile, a more personal and individually attainable expression of power and technology. Today Tarboro is a node in the ever-expanding system of county and state roads, highways, interstates, and bypasses; the attendant sprawl of fast food chains, strip malls, and convenience stores is geared to the automobile's scale and speed.

But new additions can never entirely erase the origins of a place, at most only obscuring them somewhat. The history of a place is continually recorded in the patterns that evolve from the interaction among people, places, and things over time. There is much to be revealed about Tarboro and its past in the contemporary form of the town, and from the things that are discovered we can learn as much about ourselves as we can about the place itself.



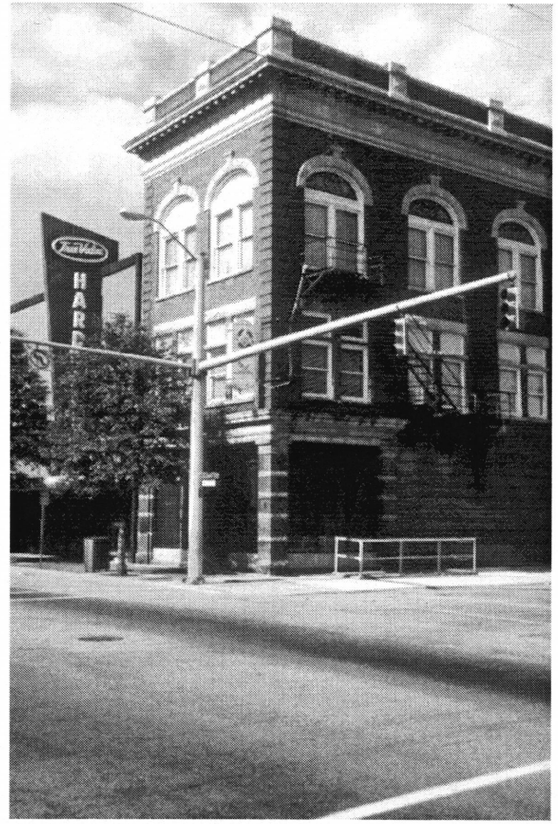
TARBOROUGH: 1891

VIEW TO THE WEST SHOWING RAILROAD AND COTTON MILL



TARBORO: 1988

TOWN PLAN, RAILROADS, RIVER, AND HIGHWAY CONNECTIONS



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CORNER OF MAIN AND ST. JAMES STREETS

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63 Bridgers. 6
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RECLAMATION

THIRD ITERATION: PROJECT

RECLAMATION

THIRD ITERATION: PROJECT

Tarboro!!?? That's not much of a town. Where's the Hardee's?

—ANONYMOUS FACULTY MEMBER

Even the search for the unforeseen is united or reunited with some form of the real.

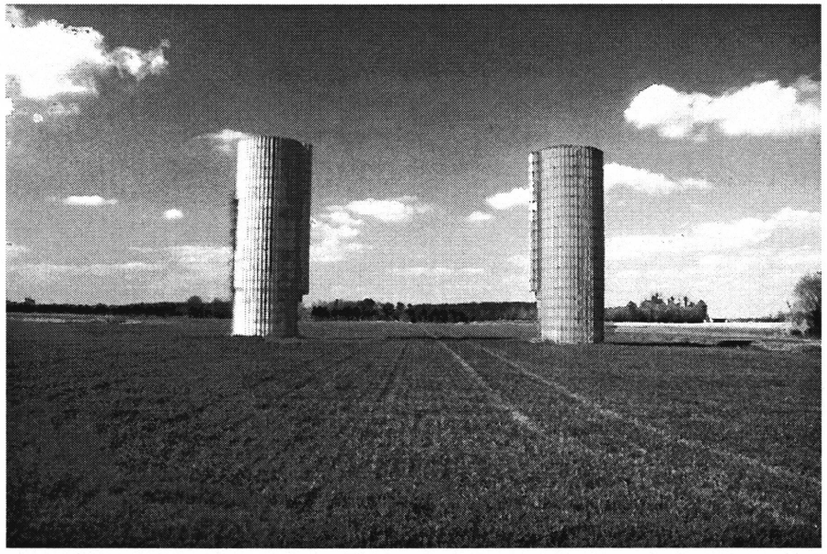
—ALDO ROSSI

THE LANDSCAPE OF EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA IS A QUIET one, dominated not by the kinetic energy of large cities or the grandeur of scenic attractions, but by small, aging towns and flat, fertile land that has been cultivated for hundreds of years. This subtlety, this lack of scenery, allows the commonplace the space and time to be seen as something more. Seemingly mundane, the everyday places and artifacts of this area have a depth and resonance that belie their apparent simplicity. The word *mundane* is chosen purposefully; it is derived from the Latin *mundus* (world) and implies connection. Connection to the ordinary is a powerful thing; the *how*, *why*, or *who* we continually search for is more apparent in things that are in some way familiar, or at least not entirely unfamiliar. A stronger identification with a place or a thing can provoke the memories and associations—people with themselves, people with places, places with the world—that root existence in, and understanding of, the world.

Architecture lays claim to a place and marks it with human presence. When the mark outlives the presence, the place, removed from daily use and often eloquent in its silence, can become haunted by what has vanished. Recognition and appreciation of this state can lead to the reclamation of things abandoned. New structures can be introduced to create an amalgam of past and present, the juxtaposition of utilization and neglect intensifying each other, each extreme becoming something more in the presence of the other. The project that is the vehicle for this thesis is a beginning move in this direction.

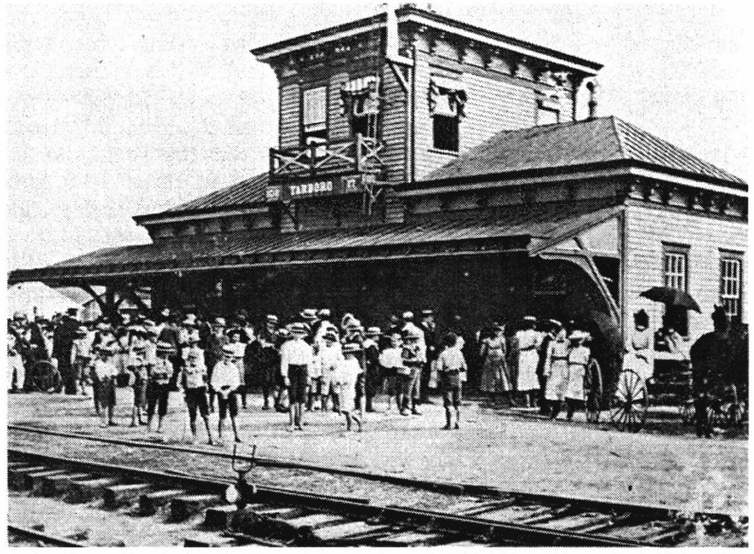
When the railroad arrived in North Carolina in the middle of the 19th century, it brought many things with it: progress, enthusiasm and excitement, mass-produced goods, new buildings and towns, and rapid transportation. When the railroad began to decline in the middle of the 20th century, it left behind many towns it had brought into existence, now dependent on other, hard to come by, sources for prosperity, and a sense of romance and nostalgia for the age of steam. In Tarboro it left a hole. The hole, an abandoned rail yard, still exists today in the town's fabric and in the town's memory. Robbed of its function as a rail yard, the site is empty of its most recent occupant, the train. Because it was meant to accommodate not people but machines—large, mobile machines—it is also empty of any human presence. The crumbling passenger station and freight warehouse (and on closer inspection, the partially buried and rusting rails) are the only evidence of the activity that once connected Tarboro to the rest of the country. The place is removed from the town even though it is virtually at its physical center, and at the convergence of residential, commercial, and industrial areas. Across the major streets that border it, the place is ignored by the people in the vet's office, the dance studio, the car wash, the fast food restaurant, the hardware store, the bank, the drugstore, the phone company, the gas station, the convenience store, and the houses. In some respects, the site is similar to Tarboro's town common and cemeteries, gaps in the pattern of the town that have been captured and held as voids. They are places apart from Tarboro's daily activities for remembering aspects of nature, the town, and people that no longer exist. The wasteland the rail yard has become is not far removed from these gardens in the machine that is the town.

Tiempo en eternidad esta en jardines. (Time in eternity is in gardens.)[1] Gardens have always been a middle ground between nature and man, evidence of both man's dominance and nature's presence. By being a step removed, gardens function as both an escape from and a reminder of our usual place and time, allowing us a different perspective. This quality exists in the abandoned rail yard because it is isolated from the town and simultaneously a part of the town's history since the arrival of the railroad, a relatively still point to gauge change and the passage of time against. In experiencing the place, the imagination is immediately engaged



Edgecombe County, North Carolina: 1994

abandoned silos, demolished in 1995



Tarborough: circa 1895

original Albemarle & Raleigh Railroad passenger station

because it has to fill in the gaps and silences left by the lack of function.

Before the place can be reclaimed, Tarboro needs to be reminded of its existence. The site does not fit the accepted historical picture the citizens have of the town, a picture made up of grand residences (restored to the point of being taxidermy), the oldest town common in North Carolina (occupied by more statues and historical markers than people, except on special occasions), and a colonial courthouse (that was in fact built in 1964).[2] Like the follies in landscape gardens that embodied decay and fear, and so gave added power to the Enlightenment ideals of reason and economy, the new constructions proposed for the site may show Tarboro a part of itself that lies buried; they may allow the town to remember a time and a part of itself it has forgotten. The word *museum* comes from the Greek *mnasthal*—to remember.[3] The rail yard can become a museum for remembering, different from places like Colonial Williamsburg that are disconnected from the world at an arbitrary point in time, tidied up, and presented as finite and complete; the new elements are a means of reconnecting the place to the world.

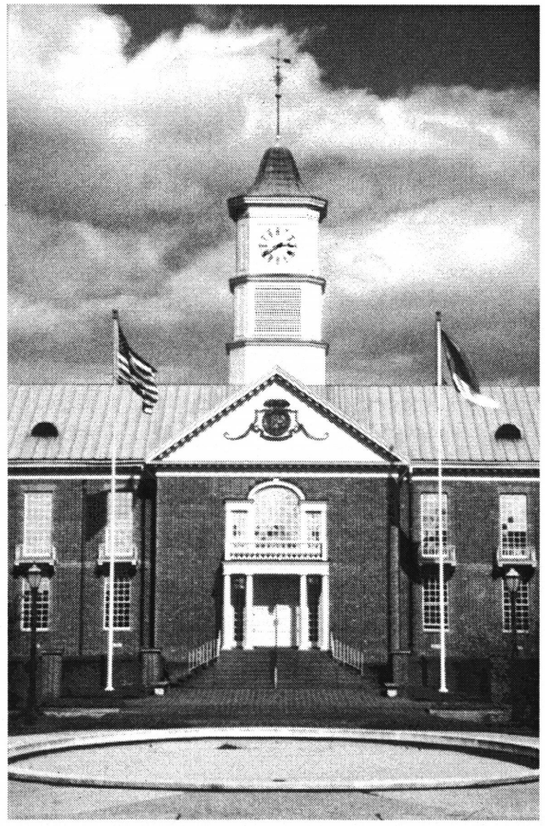
The three constructions, a tower, a ramp, and an amphitheater and bridge, placed at the apexes of the seven-acre triangular site, are the impetus for interpreting the place. Being visible beyond the site, but not obviously functional, they encourage further investigation. But because individuals are left to draw their own conclusions, many interpretations are possible, and there is opportunity for each person to have their own. The mind is engaged and connects the place to the rest of the world through continued consideration. The goal is not to design a place like an amusement park that is an escape from the world, but instead a place that grounds and reminds people of their location in time and space.

Because the rail yard is triangular and bordered by the railroad's parallel lines, its limits extend to the perspectival vanishing point. The elevated platforms at each corner of the site extend it visually and so encompass more of Tarboro. The enlarged perspective allows more of the relation between the place and the town to be appreciated. Before perspective was discovered in the early 1400s, the only relation possible was of a thing to God at the center of the universe.[4] Through the use of perspective, the relationship of one object or place to another could be measured. By mastering what was previously considered divine knowledge, man placed himself at the center of things. Even the location of unexplored places could be mapped relative to what was known, through triangulation.[5] In effect, the constructions make this possible on the site; two constructions are always visible from the one the view is seen. Each vantage point, favoring one point of view over another, is the station point of a perspectival view and becomes the center of, and a link to, the rest of the world by implication.

The vantage points each construction provides draw from and redefine Tarboro at the same time. Both viewing points and landmarks, the constructions unite the town and allow more of it to be inhabited at one time. From the top of the tower familiar places usually separated by a car ride—home and work, park and school—can be taken in together and joined in the mind. Patterns in the town separated by years and decades—the original grid plan, the path of the railroad, the webs of new development, and the land beyond—can be seen in relation to one another to form a whole. And from any place the tower can be seen, it is possible to imagine being at its top, and almost in two places at once; the same is true of the bridge and the ramp. In stepping back from one's usual position, it can be appreciated anew; detachment and engagement are not opposites but compliments. The constructions provide views that continuously change along each climb to the top; there is no elevator ride to separate the participant from the environment. The perception and experiencing of the constructions as objects in themselves is not the goal, instead it is the perception and experiencing of the environment as it is *re*presented by the constructions that is intended. A map

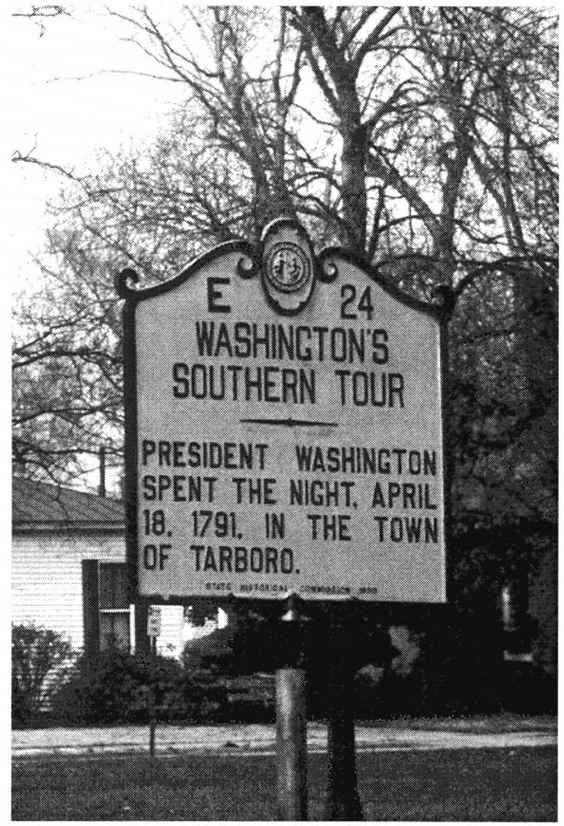
Tarboro town common: 1994

monument to Confederate soldiers



Tarboro: 1994

Edgecombe County courthouse, built in 1964



Tarboro town common: 1994

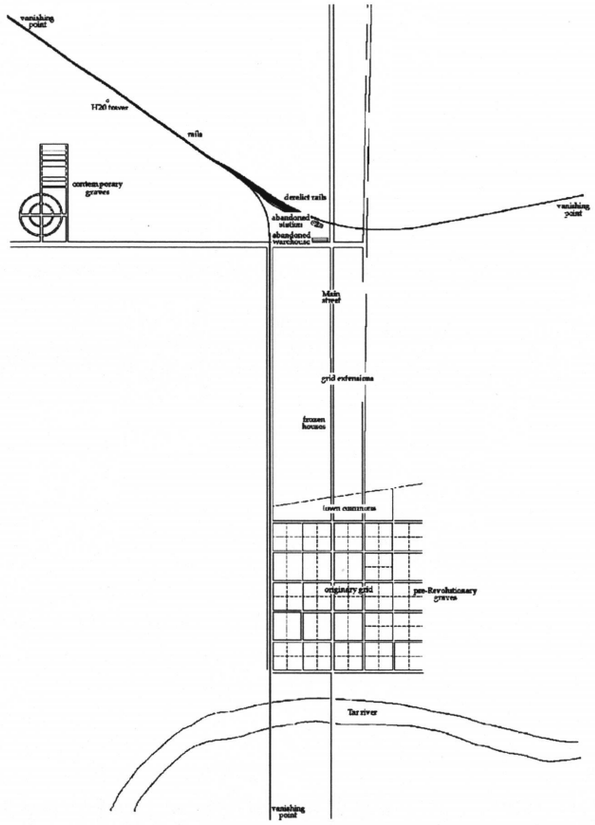
marker recording a visit from George Washington

or a model of Tarboro would not be sufficient; the reduction of scale would be too great, and the visual limit necessary to place ourselves in the center of things—the horizon—cannot be shown on a map or a model.

Neither the additions nor the existing buildings alone could bring the site back to the town. The existing buildings have become invisible by themselves, and the new pieces provide a measure of the site's emptiness, gaining presence from their adjacency to the hundred-year-old structures. The tower would be diminished if the slate-covered roof of the warehouse, one hundred and ninety feet long, was not there to be seen; if the old buildings were demolished, most of the site's temporal depth would be lost. The new whole, encompassing a span of many years, is a link between Tarboro's past and future, the old and the new supporting each other. The new structures are made with their foundations in what has come before and provide the opportunity for new uses and future events, without dictating what those uses and events will be. In recognizing boundaries beyond the immediate physical or political ones—Tarboro's original grid plan, the river, the horizon, the passing of time, the town common, the railroad tracks, the vanishing point—but not filling the site with them, room is left for the new landmarks to play whatever part the town chooses for them.

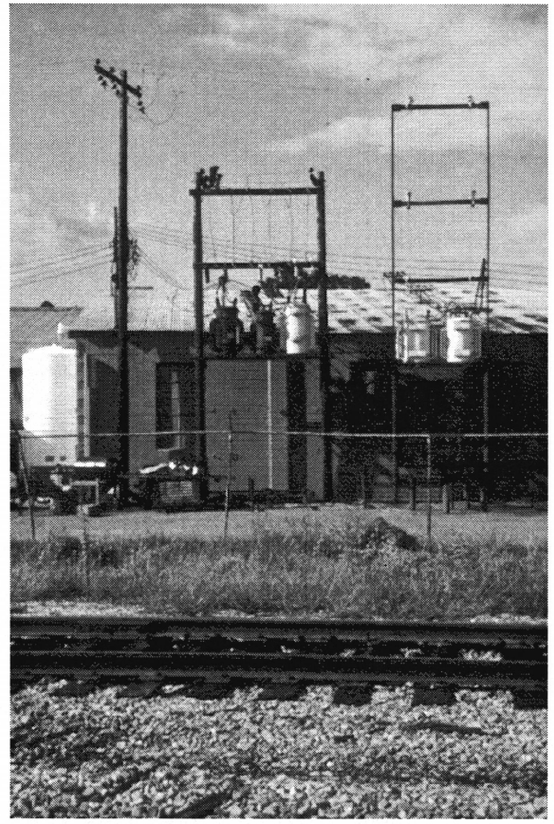
NOTE:

Because of the size and complexity of the computer models, and the memory limitations of the program, certain details of the project illustrated on the following pages had to be omitted; notably the aluminum grate walking surfaces.



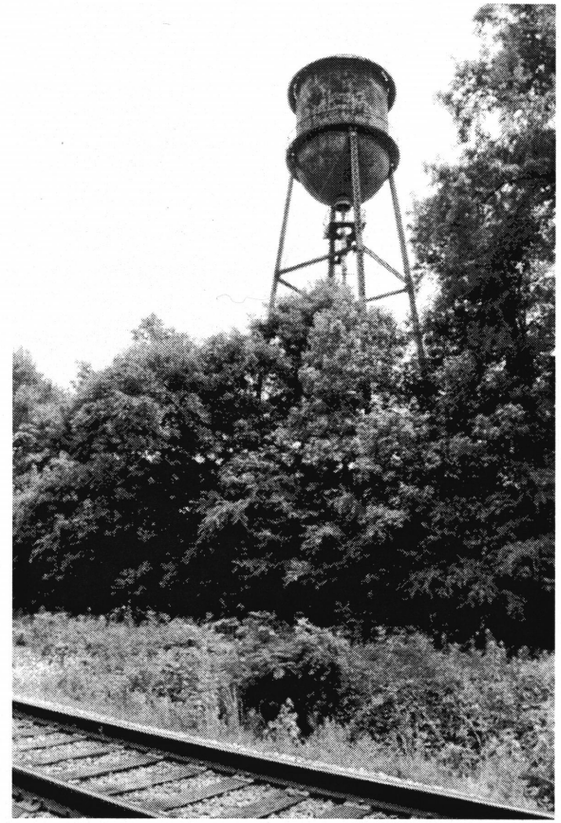
Tarboro

physical boundaries in the town beyond the site



Tarboro: 1994

Long Manufacturing Company building adjacent to site

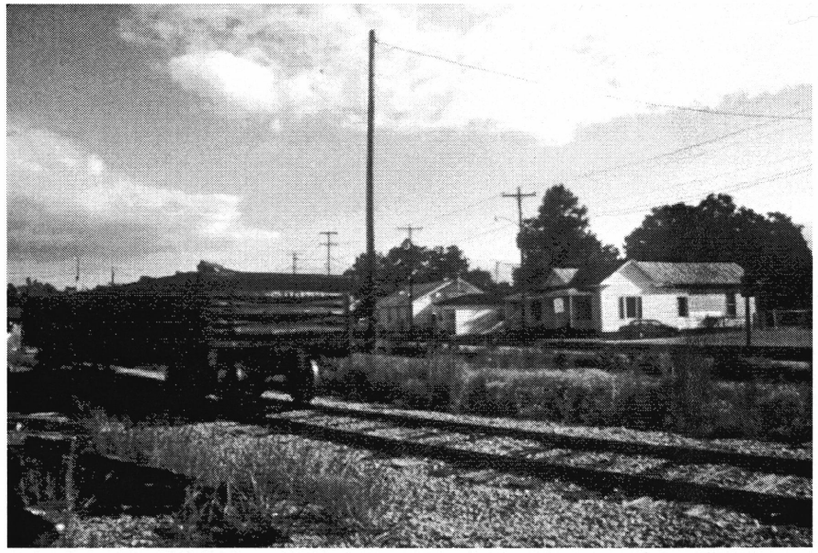


Tarboro: 1993

water tower dismantled in 1994

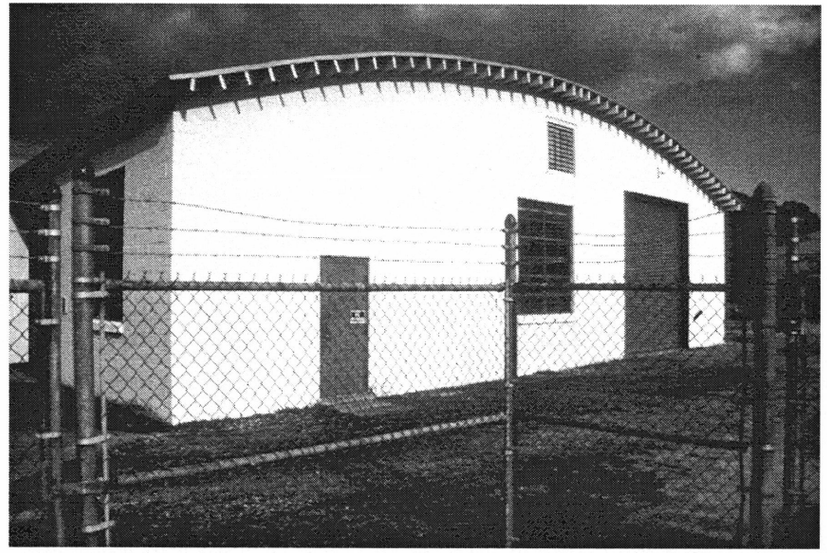
SITE

The property this project is proposed for has been largely dormant since the early 1980s and has been for sale since 1991. With the exception of the houses across the street from the western edge of the site, the surrounding buildings are large and utilitarian in character, particularly to the north where several buildings house agricultural manufacturing facilities, enclosing over four acres. Land across Main Street, to the east of the rail yard, has been claimed in order to encompass the convergence of the site's physical boundaries and sight lines. This property is currently occupied by a warehouse and two out-of-business restaurants, all to be removed.



TARBORO: 1994

HOUSES ACROSS THE STREET FROM SITE TO THE WEST



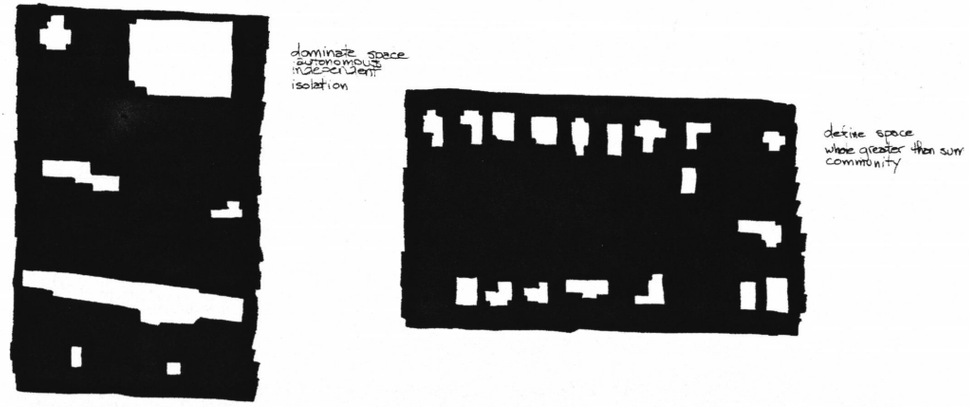
TARBORO: 1994

WAREHOUSE ACROSS THE STREET FROM SITE TO THE SOUTH

Bordered on the north by the railroad, the site's other edges are defined by city streets. Howard Avenue to the south is a major thoroughfare five lanes wide. The other bordering streets are smaller-scaled two lane roads. One of these is an extension of Albemarle Avenue, whose north and southbound lanes are divided by railroad tracks. Because part of another block beyond the rail yard is used in the project, Tarboro's Main Street crosses the eastern end of the site. The corner of Main Street and Howard Avenue is a major intersection and marks the end of a scale transition along Main Street. To the south, it is a three lane road that crosses the Tar River and passes through the original town grid, where the scale is pedestrian and space is enclosed by two to four story buildings that front directly on the sidewalks. Space expands laterally at the commons, and large trees act as a canopy. This canopy continues as Main Street passes large, turn-of-the-century homes that generally sit well back from the street but still provide a feeling of enclosure. Two blocks from the Howard Avenue intersection, the houses and trees begin to give way to a mixture of buildings holding mostly small businesses. At the intersection itself, Main Street becomes five lanes wide and begins to traverse a commercial strip lined with shopping centers and car dealerships that sit behind expanses of asphalt. The rail yard marks the inflection point between the scale of the pedestrian and the scale of the automobile.

PROJECT SITE, TARBORO

DIAGRAM OF VIEWS BEYOND SITE AND PERSPECTIVAL CONVERGENCES



BLOCKS ADJACENT TO RAIL YARD

FIGURE/GROUND STUDY OF THE SPACE BETWEEN BUILDINGS

EXISTING BUILDINGS

Although the switching tracks, passenger station, and freight warehouse still exist on the site, they are no longer maintained and are deteriorating. The only rails still in use are on the western edge of the site, and trains pass infrequently. The station, the second on the site, is a brick building that was constructed in the early 1900s. The station it replaced was a wooden structure built in 1860. The warehouse has been on the site since at least 1895 and was expanded in the 1960s. This addition was later removed, but its profile can still be seen on the bricks of the warehouse's western end.

ATLANTIC COAST LINE PASSENGER STATION, TARBORO: 1994

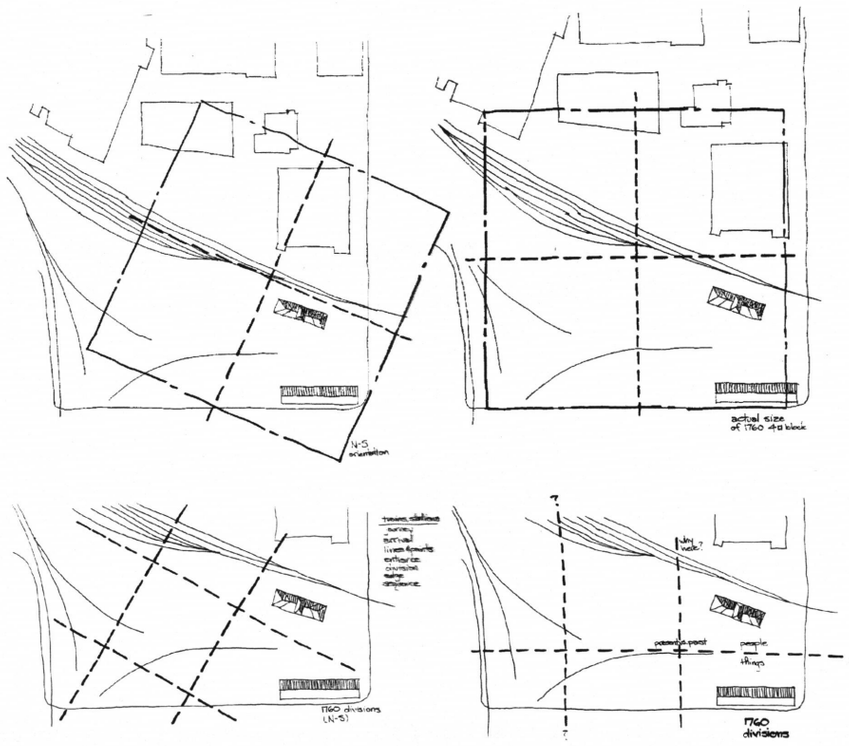
THE ABANDONED EAST-WEST RAILROAD LINE RUNS ON THE STATION'S OPPOSITE SIDE

FREIGHT WAREHOUSE, TARBORO: 1994

SCAR LEFT BY REMOVAL OF ADDITION

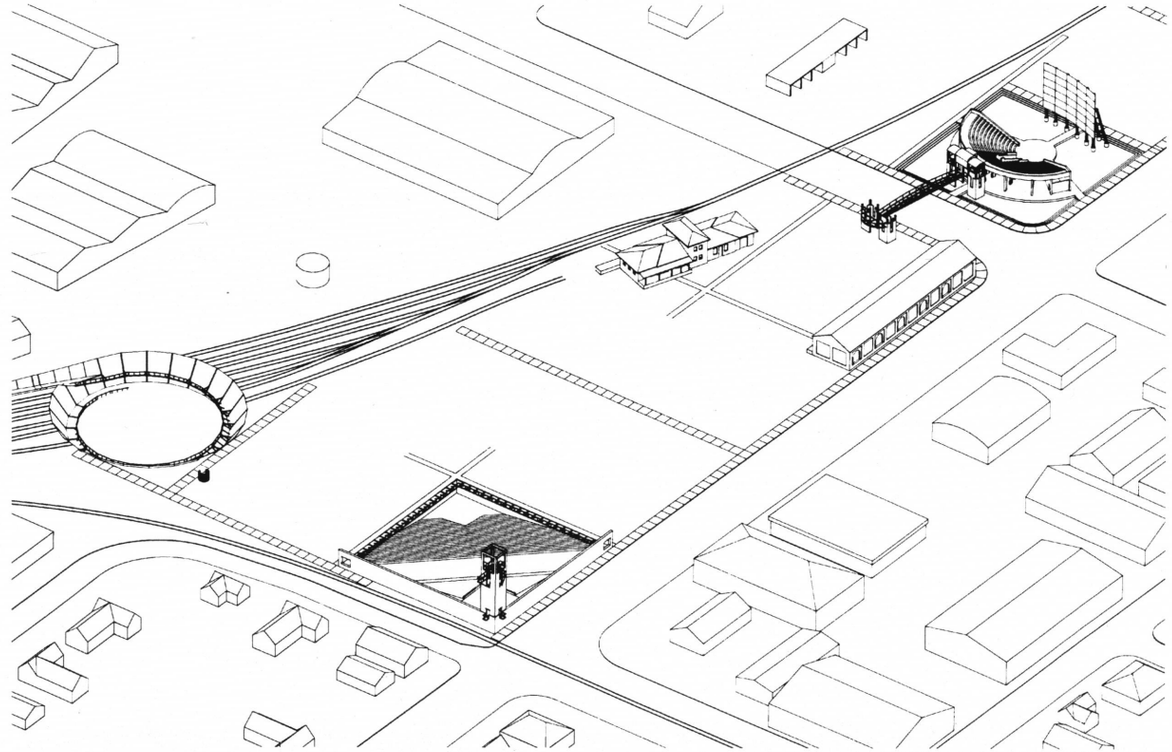
GRID

The site's location in the town pattern suggests it can act as a suture, knitting Tarboro's disparate parts. To this end, aspects of the town's past are incorporated into the new design, beyond the continuing presence of the station and warehouse. To determine the physical extents of the new constructions, the four-square division of blocks from the 1760 town plan is utilized. Because the rail yard is essentially two blocks wide, it is divided in half along Howard Avenue, into squares that are truncated by the tracks. This initial overlay is traced by paved walkways ten feet wide. These large squares are divided into four smaller squares, of which the constructions occupy one each. This smaller division is recorded by finely packed, crushed gravel paths that taper away as they extend beyond the constructions. The rest of the unrelentingly flat site is untouched and will continue to grow grasses ranging from broom straw to crabgrass. Reaching further into Tarboro's past, water is present across the site—Tarboro was a river town long before it was a railroad town. At each construction, water appears whenever the ground plane of the site is broken and ranges in character from a reflecting pool at the amphitheater, to a cascade at the tower, to a turbulent pit at the spiral end of the ramp.



SITE STUDIES

GRIDS DERIVED FROM 1700S LAND DIVISION



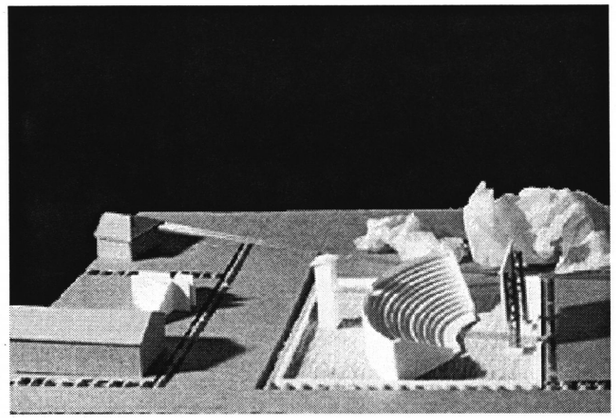
SITE, OVERLAID WITH TARBORO'S ORIGINAL BLOCK DIVISIONS, AND PROJECT CONSTRUCTIONS

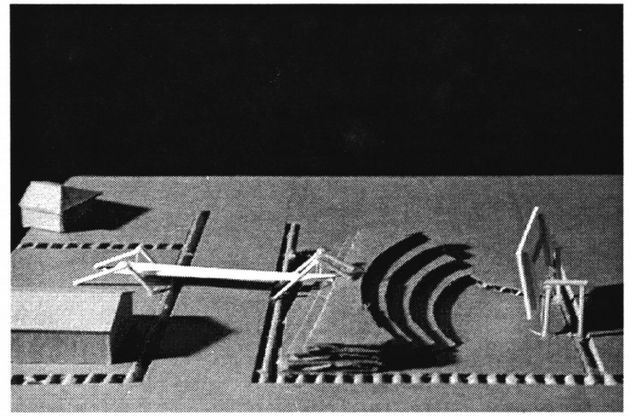
LOCATIONS OF CONSTRUCTIONS DETERMINED BY GRID

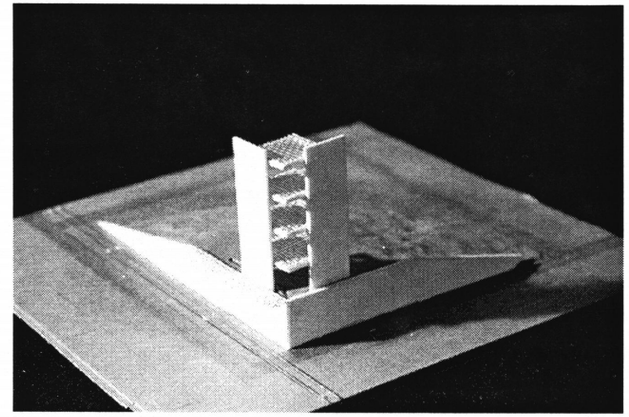
CONSTRUCTIONS

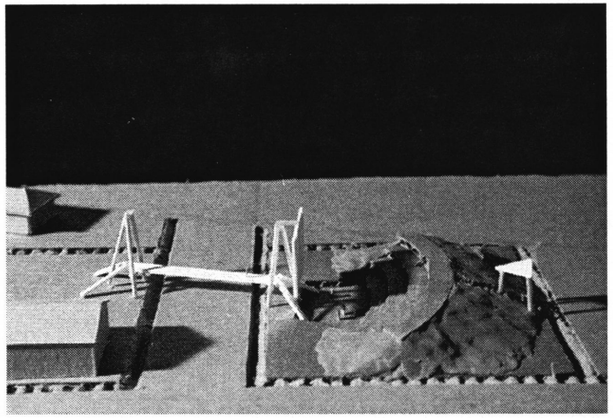
In addition to the larger visual and theoretical ties the constructions have to Tarboro, there are smaller, but equally important, relationships that inform the design of the additions. Although the bridge/theater, ramp, and tower are many times larger than human scale, they are built of small, off-the-shelf components—bricks, steel angles, two-by-fours—that reflect the scale of the hands that will construct them. The process of construction is meant to be legible; even though the final result may seem to be out of the ordinary, the means to that end should not be. It is possible, and even desirable, that materials will be recycled from other buildings; brick, block, and trusses from the buildings to be demolished (on the site across Main Street) can and should be salvaged. The new parts of Tarboro can be built from the old. Similarly, the constructions can be disassembled and their components reused, if necessary.

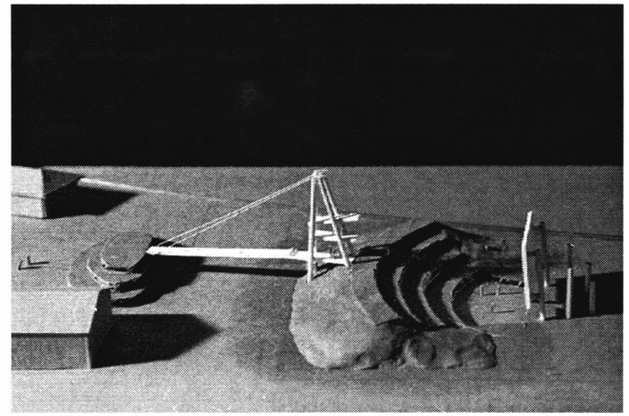
One of the points the constructions have in common is based on the context of the railroad. Any time a walkway surface is above ground level—the bridge, the ramp, and the tower platforms—it is made of extruded aluminum grating that is more void than solid. Similar to walking across a railroad bridge, where attention must be paid to every step because of the cross tie spacing, the open grating leaves no doubt about the viewer's position relative to the ground as much as sixty feet below. To heighten this sensation, the appearance of support is minimized from the platforms. In the bridge and the ramp, the walkway is supported on a single central truss with lateral bracing, analogous to the undercarriage of a train car. A certain degree of security may have to be sacrificed in order to gain access to the views.

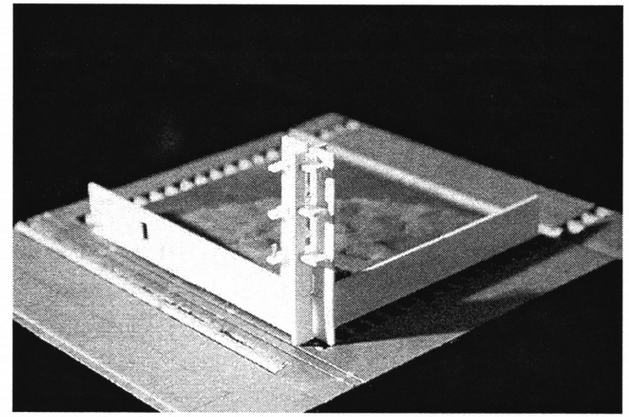










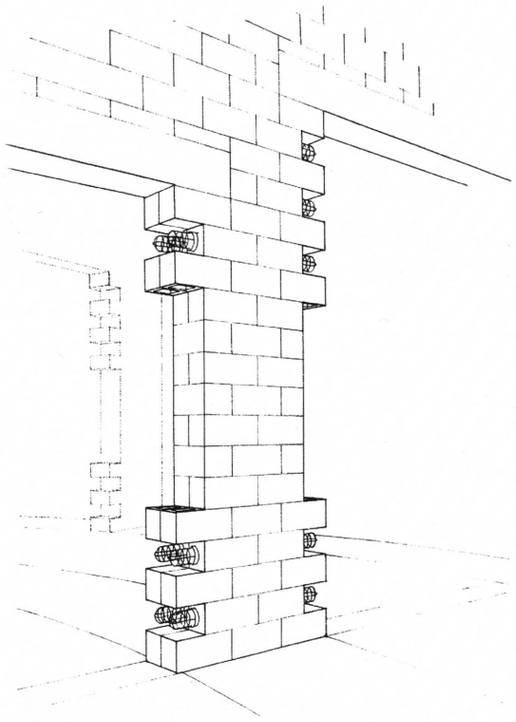


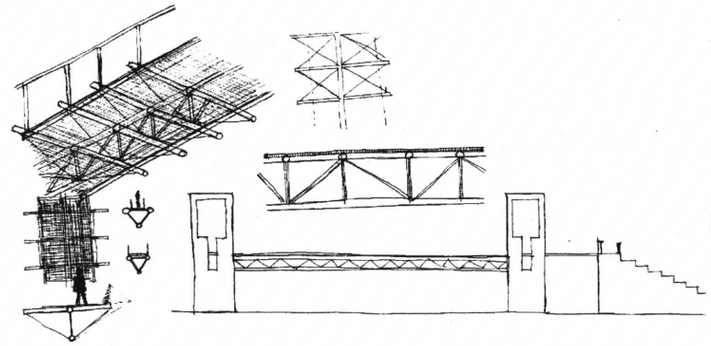
AMPHITHEATER/BRIDGE AND TOWER STUDIES

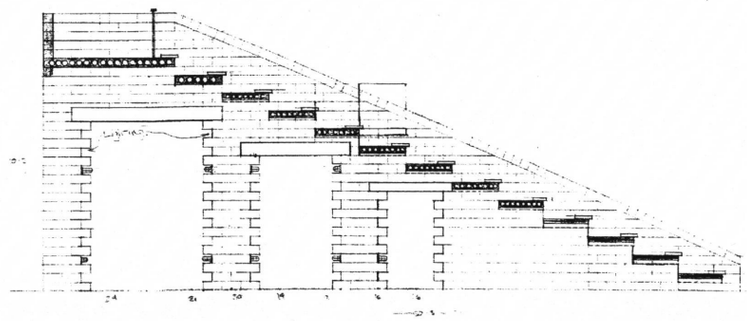
ORIGINAL MODELS: 12 BY 18 AND 10 BY 14 INCHES

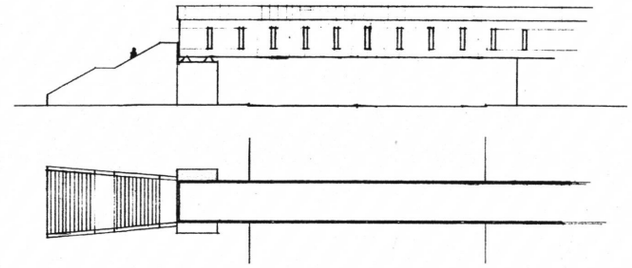
AMPHITHEATER/BRIDGE

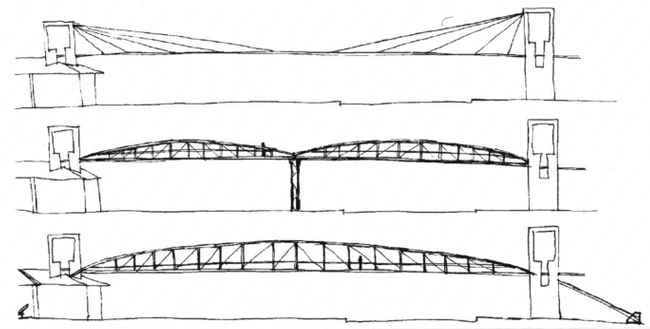
At the eastern apex of the triangular site, the amphitheater, screen, and bridge are the entrance to the project, a gathering place set in a shallow pool. The screen and its structure act as a gate between the town and the project; within the square made by extending the town's grid, the construction is rotated to bisect the angle implied by the station (aligned to the tracks) and the warehouse (aligned to the street). The visual and perspectival forces of the site are figuratively gathered in the frames of a film and projected onto the picture plane of the screen. (Like a train, a film is a linear time machine that runs on tracks and is given life by fire, or light. Similarly, the screen is analogous to a railroad car's window; the scene cannot be altered by the passenger, and the experience is a passive one.) At the center of the amphitheater, a third order, larger that the site or the town, is incorporated. The paving pattern is oriented to the cardinal points, locating the project and Tarboro relative to the world beyond. The opposite extreme in scale, that of the hand, is utilized in the amphitheater itself. The radiating walls that support the seating are not monolithic concrete pours, but are built of standard concrete blocks. The individual units are expressed in the openings in the walls, where some blocks extend beyond the opening's edge and provide a place for light fixtures; the materials and construction lend themselves to the detailing of the project. This detail also suggests the passage of time, as if blocks were removed from the original wall to create the openings.







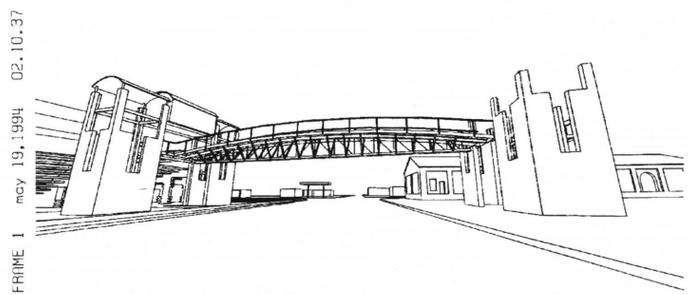


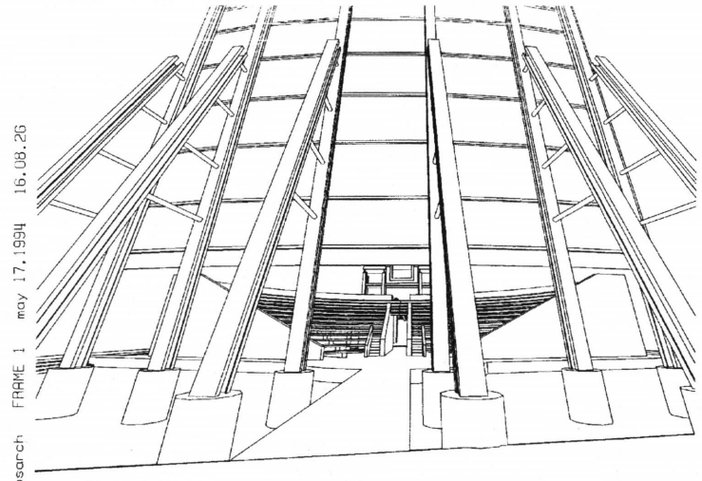


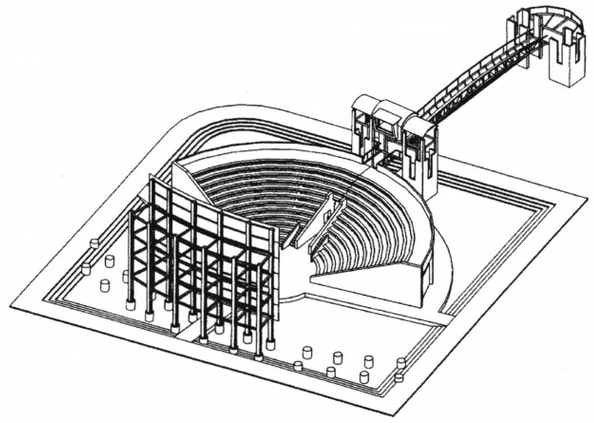
AMPHITHEATER AND BRIDGE STUDIES

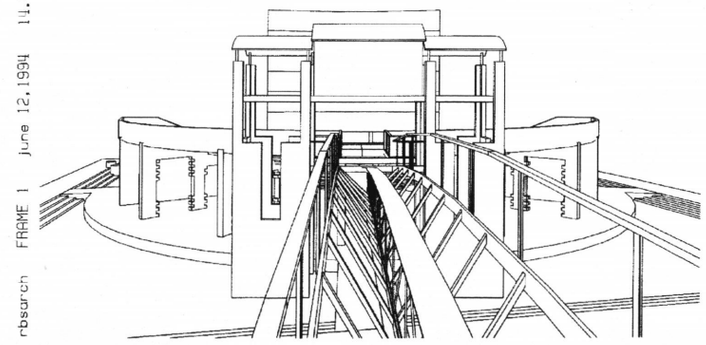
ORIGINAL DRAWINGS: FELT TIP PEN OR PENCIL ON TRACING PAPER

The bridge that crosses Main Street, like the screen, can be seen as a threshold between parts of town. The bridge is next to the intersection that marks the change from pedestrian to automobile scale along Main Street; it is between what is considered the old part of town and the new part of town. Crossing the bridge on foot affords the opportunity to walk on the line towards which the site seems to converge. Pausing in the middle, at the bridge's highest point, cars can be seen below through the metal grating, and, looking south, a viewer can mentally travel past the restored homes and the commons, through the originary grid, across the slow-moving river, and beyond to other towns, other places. At the west end of the bridge are the station and warehouse, where the past of the rail yard and its more recent neglect are confronted directly. Either of the buildings can be entered, but neither will be restored; they will be stabilized as ruins, not aestheticized.









AMPHITHEATER AND BRIDGE STUDIES

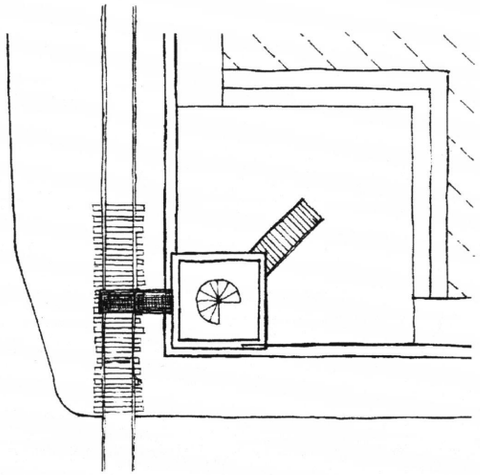
ORIGINAL DRAWINGS: LASER PRINTS FROM CATIA MODELING PROGRAM, 8.5 BY 11 INCHES

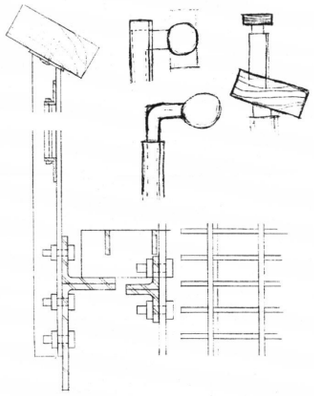
TOWER

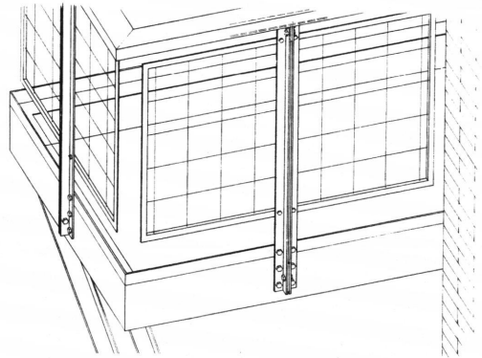
At the rail yard's other major corner stands the tower, a vertical element that claims the site, differentiating it from the uniformity of the horizontal grid, like a church's steeple or the more pragmatic elevation of a water tower. This is the corner where the still-active rail line enters the site, after traveling up the center of Albemarle Avenue, and begins to curve westward. From the line of the tracks to the south the tower is visible from across the river, a watchtower for awaiting the arrival of the next train.

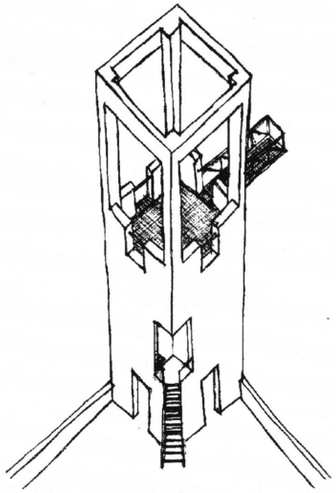
At ground level the tower's realm is delineated by two large walls, retaining an earth mound that raises the tower's lower floor fifteen feet above track level. (To further differentiate the zone of the tower, the ground plane is tilted on the square's northwest-southeast diagonal. The slope as a whole is uniform, with the tower at the high end. Beginning at ground level, water cascades from a series of jets down shallow, paved steps to a pool at the bottom that is the same size in plan as the area around the tower, and is the same distance below ground that the tower is above.) Seen from the south, these walls and the similarly scaled warehouse wall act as bookends that define the site's long street edge. The wall also supports a crossing signal and gate for car traffic on the street.

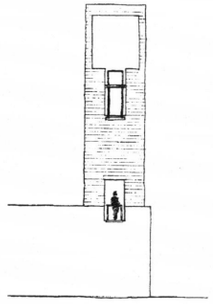
The tower itself is a vertical tunnel connecting ground-based views and knowledge to those of the sky. It is built of solid masonry, a wythe of block between two wythes of

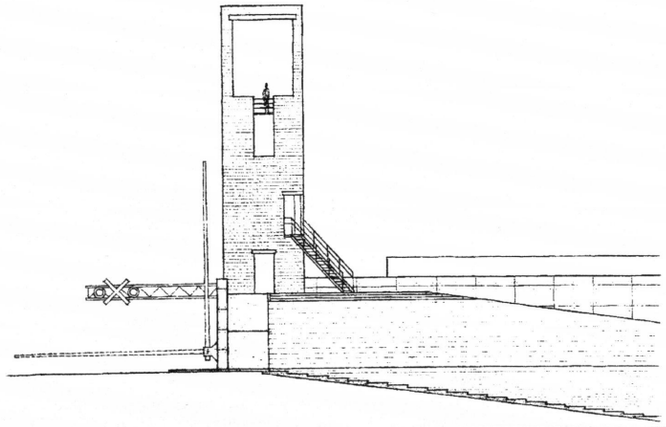


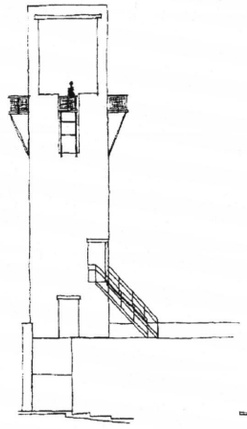


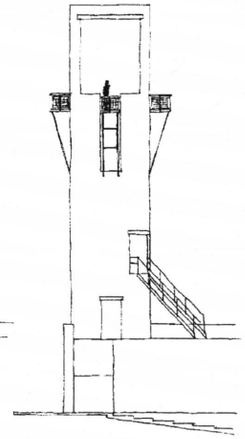


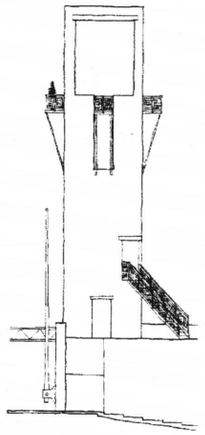










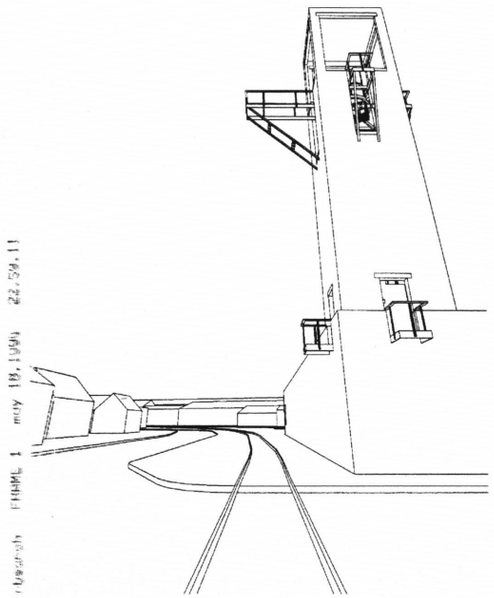


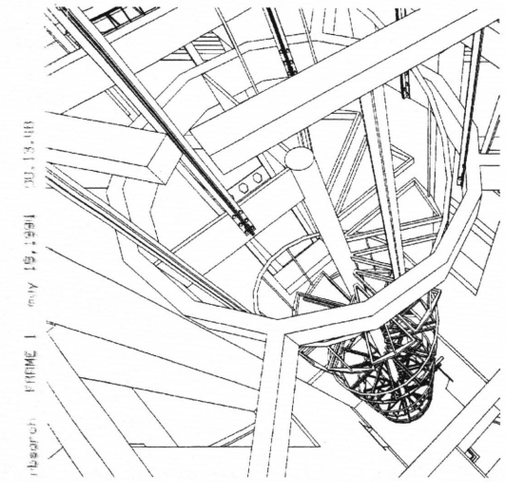
TOWER STUDIES

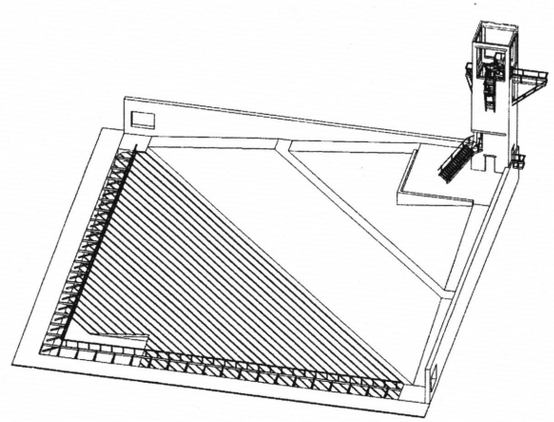
ORIGINAL DRAWINGS: FELT TIP PEN OR PENCIL ON TRACING PAPER

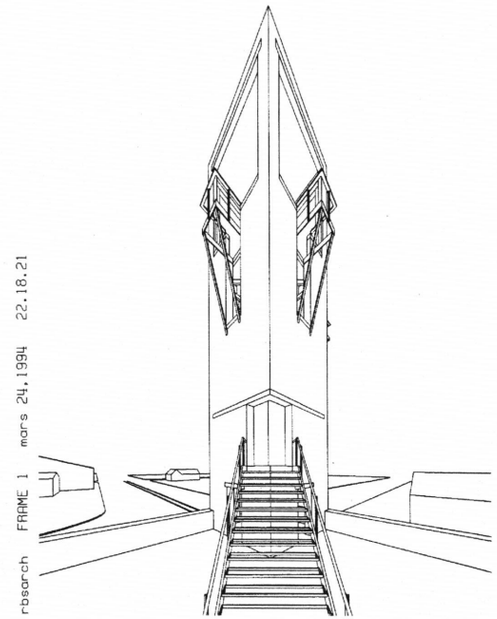
brick. This cross-section is revealed in the tower's openings, as if pieces were sliced out of the original wall. A similar detail exists inside the bottom of the tower, where its walls are built directly on the two retaining walls, exposing the concrete block. The floor of this level of the tower is steel diamond plate decking resting on, but not attached to, its supports. The sound of footsteps will reverberate in the empty space below, an auditory version of the metal grating walkways and platforms. Sound from the waterworks machinery below the tower is also audible here.

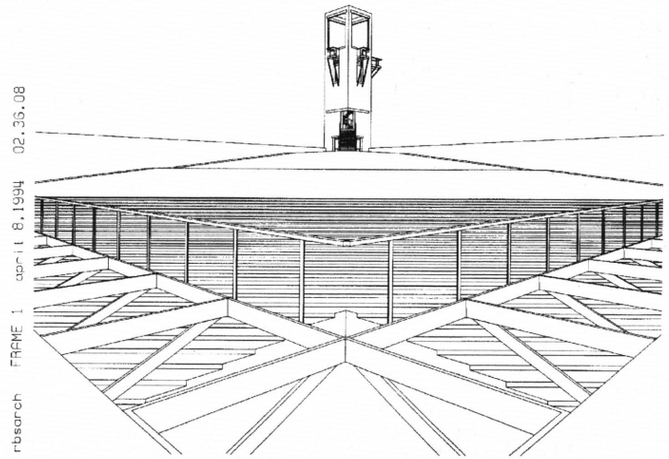
The spiral stair to the top of the tower is reached by an exterior stair that cuts through one corner of the tower. (If the spiral stair began at the bottom of the tower, it would block access to the to the platforms that cantilever from the retaining walls at this level.) The location of railings in this and all the constructions is recognized by their shape—flat to be leaned on when pausing, round to be grasped when climbing. At the top of the spiral, the square plan becomes cruciform; platforms extend past each wall of the tower, large enough for only one or two people to stand. These platforms allow a figurative breaking of the picture plane defined by the openings in the walls. The longest platform is thirteen feet, making it possible to stand directly above the tracks as a train passes sixty feet below. Standing in this spot, the viewer is connected to the horizon by the apparently converging rails, and to the cycles of time by the tower's shadow as it moves across the ground below.









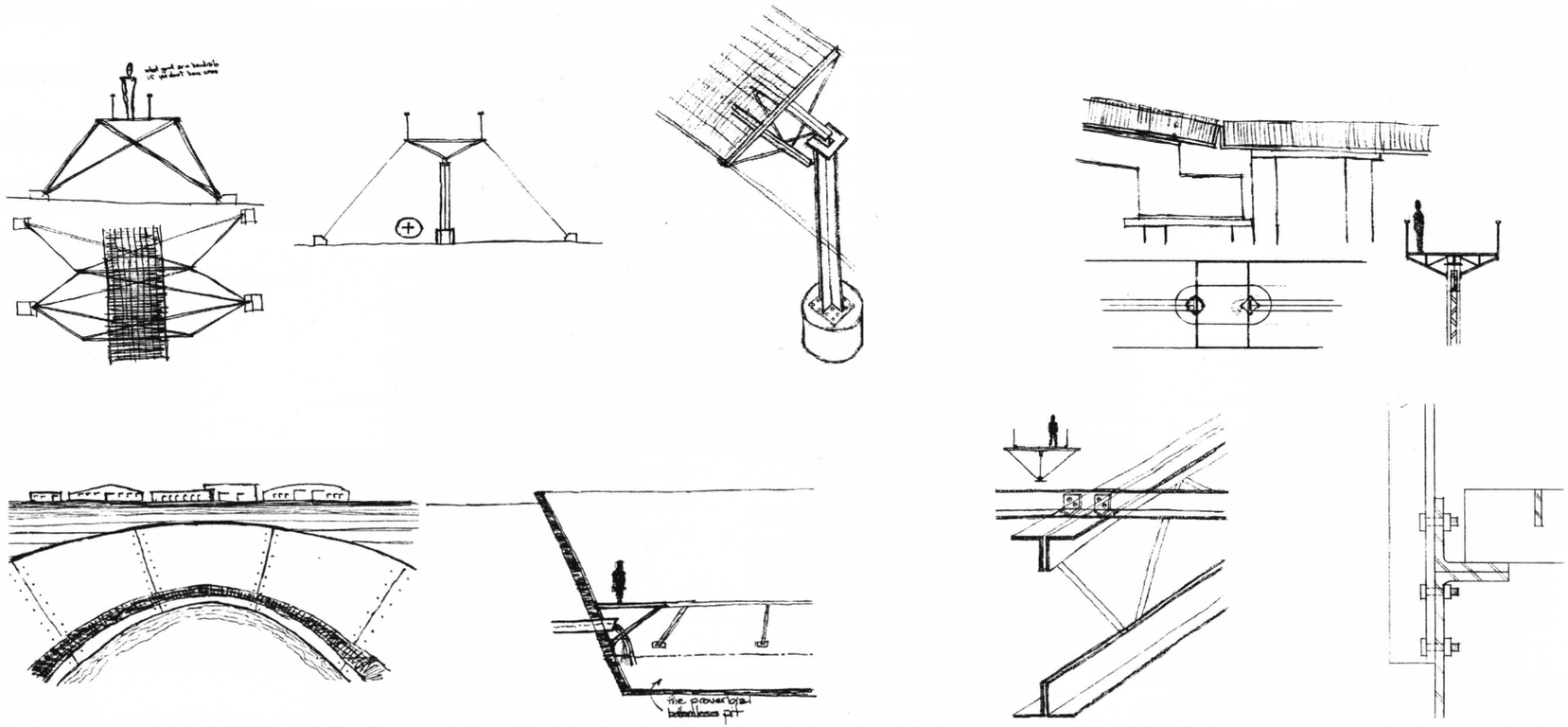


TOWER STUDIES

ORIGINAL DRAWINGS: LASER PRINTS FROM CATIA MODELING PROGRAM, 8.5 BY 11 INCHES

RAMP

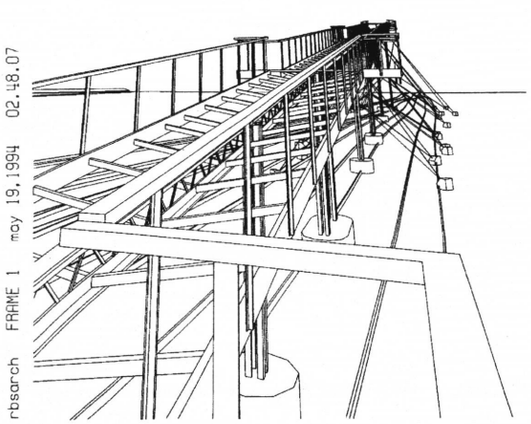
Over five hundred feet long, the ramp is the largest of the constructions. Its location in the northwest apex of the site is the furthest removed from the order of the town, and while its position is determined by the overlay of Tarboro's initial grid, the ramp draws more from the railroad than from the town. The segment above ground is an extrapolation of the rails it parallels, and that are always visible below; rails that run due west, the direction of America's expansion in the Age of Steam. It is a knowingly futile attempt to locate and build the vanishing point—after climbing several hundred feet to the ramp's end, the view is of yet another vanishing point, as the tracks below stretch away to the horizon. (*There must always be an end in view, and the end must not be final. —Eliel Saarinen*) Returning to the ground, the viewer carries at least some idea of the world that lies beyond Tarboro. The path to the end of the ramp is structured by landings located in an arithmetic progression along the 1:20 slope, like sound waves seemingly pulled apart by the Doppler effect. As in the other constructions, the appearance of supporting structure is minimized; the horizontal expansion of space is interrupted only by the railings to either side. The tension cables that brace the taller columns are the ramp's most visible means of support.

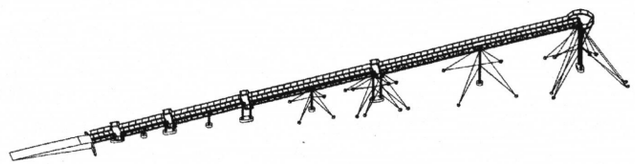


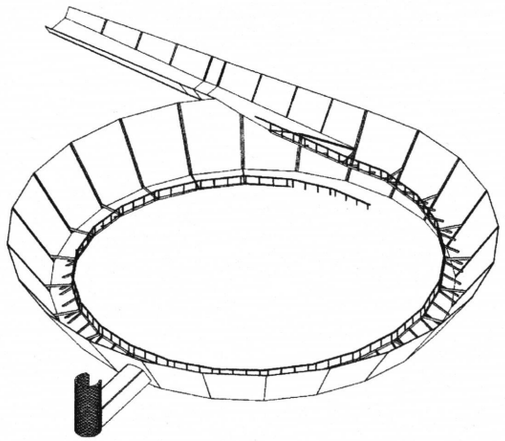
RAMP STUDIES

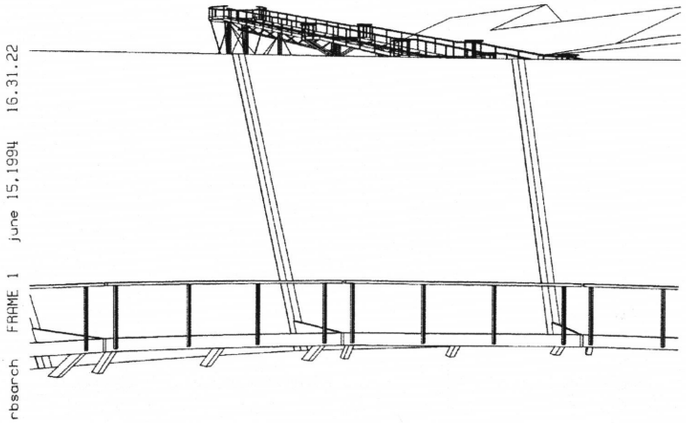
ORIGINAL DRAWINGS: FELT TIP PEN OR PENCIL ON TRACING PAPER

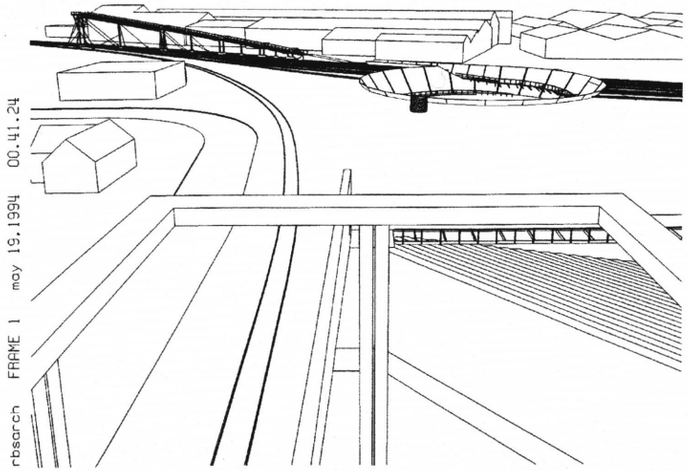
The spiral section of the ramp, lying below grade, is a counterbalance to the straight section's directional force. Its shape recalls the massive turntables used to align locomotives to the tracks in a switch yard, but here the turntable seems to have screwed itself into the ground. As the path breaks the ground plane, a channel lined with steel plate (potentially salvaged from water towers, box cars, etc.) begins to enclose its sides, forcing the view straight ahead. The floor here is steel diamond plate, just as in the bottom of the tower, that will amplify the sound of footsteps. When the path starts its clockwise turn, one wall is replaced by a railing made of steel angles and two-by-fours, and the floor changes to aluminum grating, but in this instance the view through it is not of solid ground, but of turbulent water that fills the bottom of the spiral. The walkway continues to turn downward, and after making one revolution it is completely submerged, making it possible to walk into the water. On the interior of the spiral, as much as eighteen feet below ground, the horizon is made uniform and roughly circular by the sloping sides of the pit. Everything outside the walls but the sky overhead is shut out, and the presence of the dome of the sky is acutely felt.









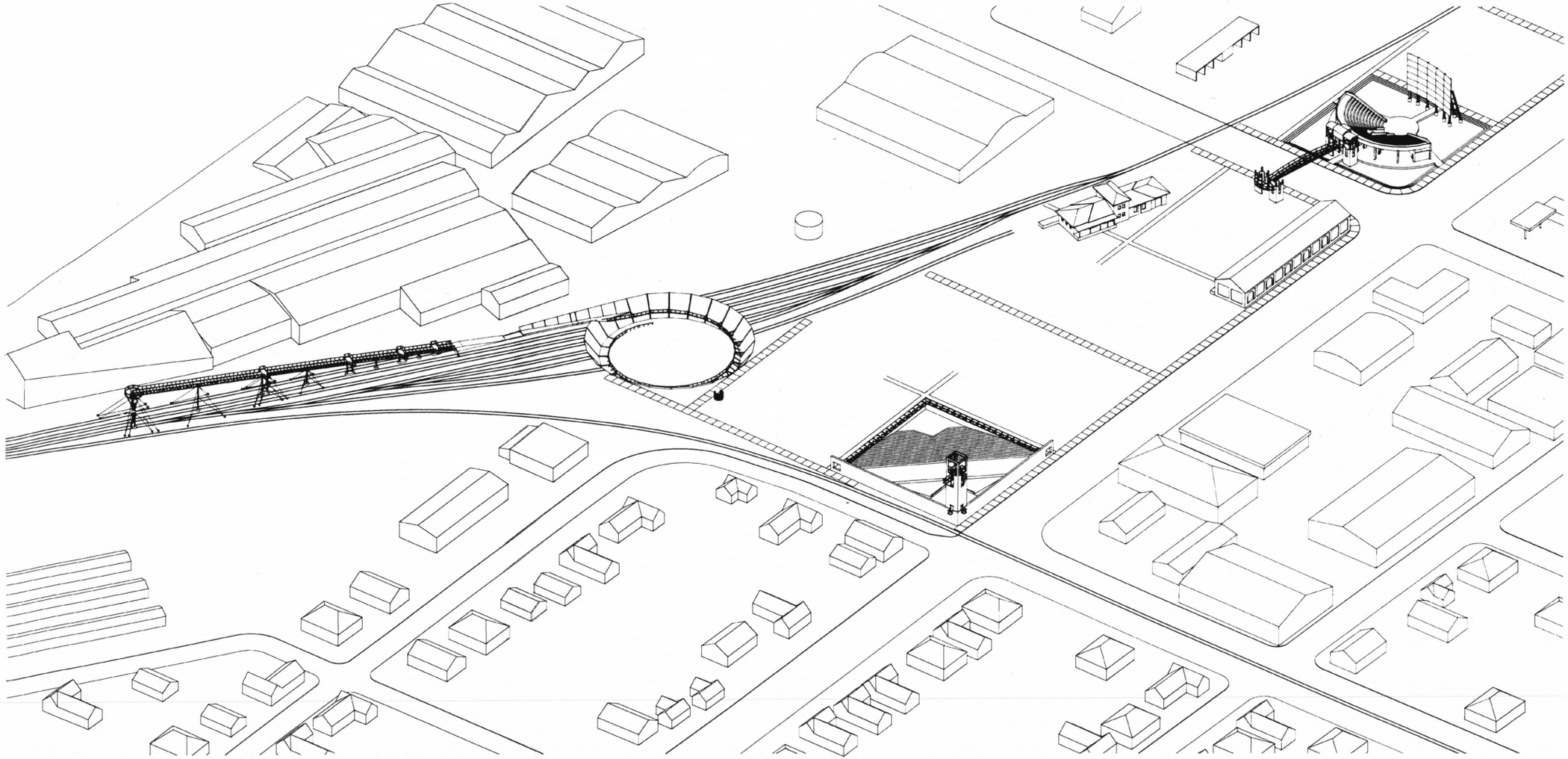


RAMP STUDIES

ORIGINAL DRAWINGS: LASER PRINTS FROM CATIA MODELING PROGRAM, 8.5 BY 11 INCHES

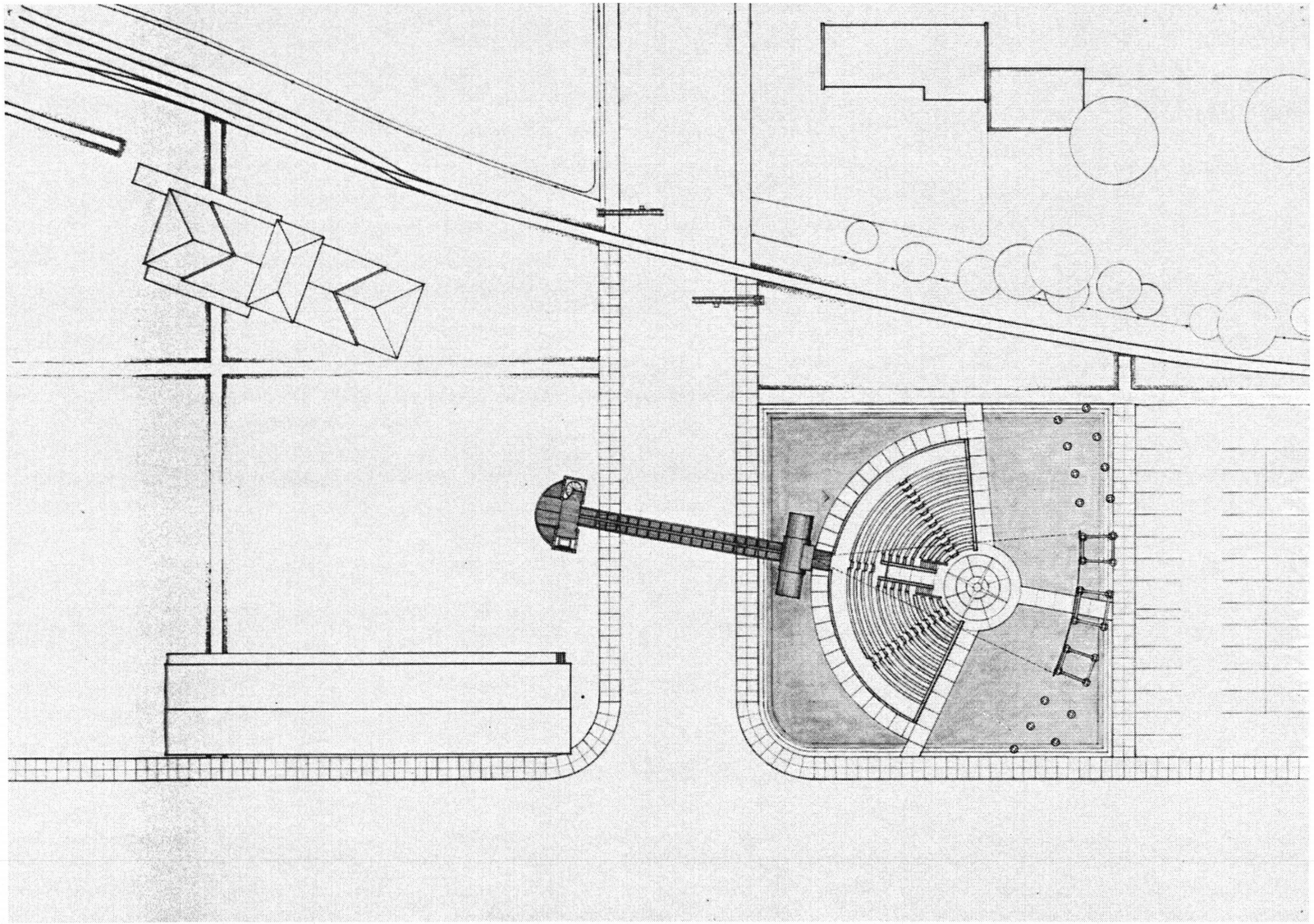
SITE, CONSTRUCTIONS, AND SURROUNDING STRUCTURES

ORIGINAL DRAWING: PLOT FROM CATIA MODELING PROGRAM, 18 BY 36 INCHES



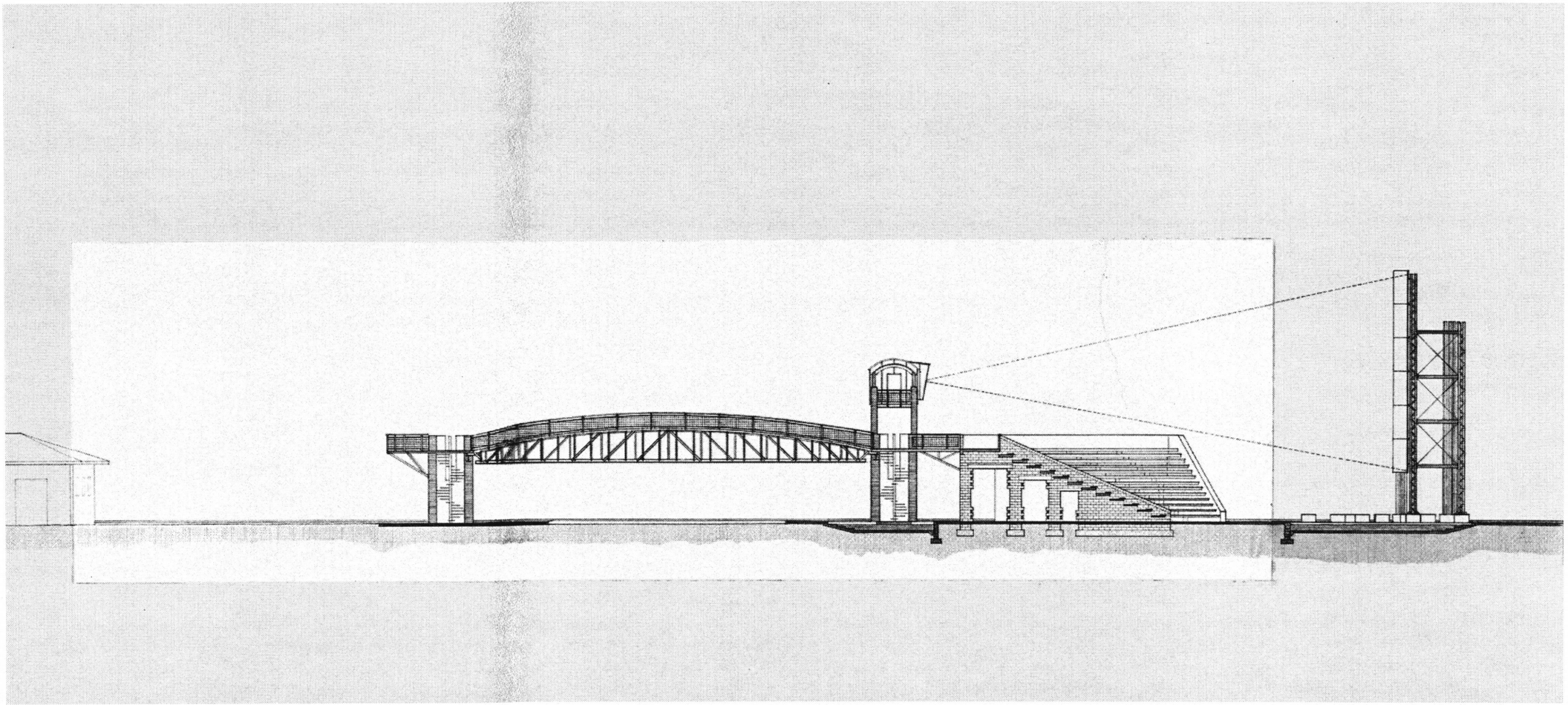
AMPHITHEATER, BRIDGE, STATION, AND WAREHOUSE

THE BRIDGE ACROSS MAIN STREET IS ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTEEN FEET LONG. THE PAVING PATTERN AT THE FOCUS OF THE THEATER CORRESPONDS TO THE CARDINAL POINTS.
ORIGINAL DRAWING: PENCIL ON VELLUM, 21 BY 30 INCHES



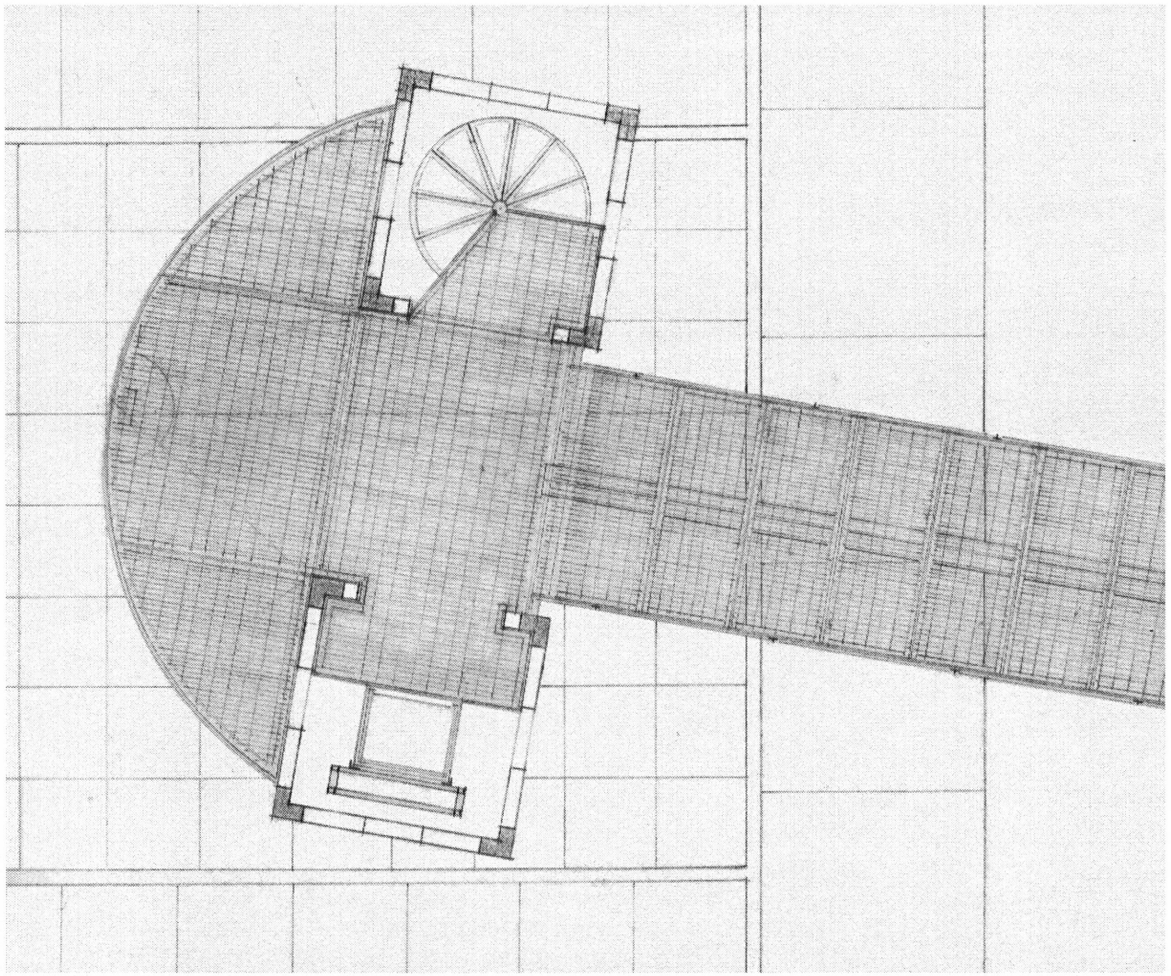
SECTION PARALLEL TO FILM PROJECTION

THE UNDERSIDE OF THE BRIDGE IS FIFTEEN FEET ABOVE THE LEVEL OF MAIN STREET.
ORIGINAL DRAWING: PENCIL AND COLORED PENCIL ON VELLUM, 21 BY 47 INCHES



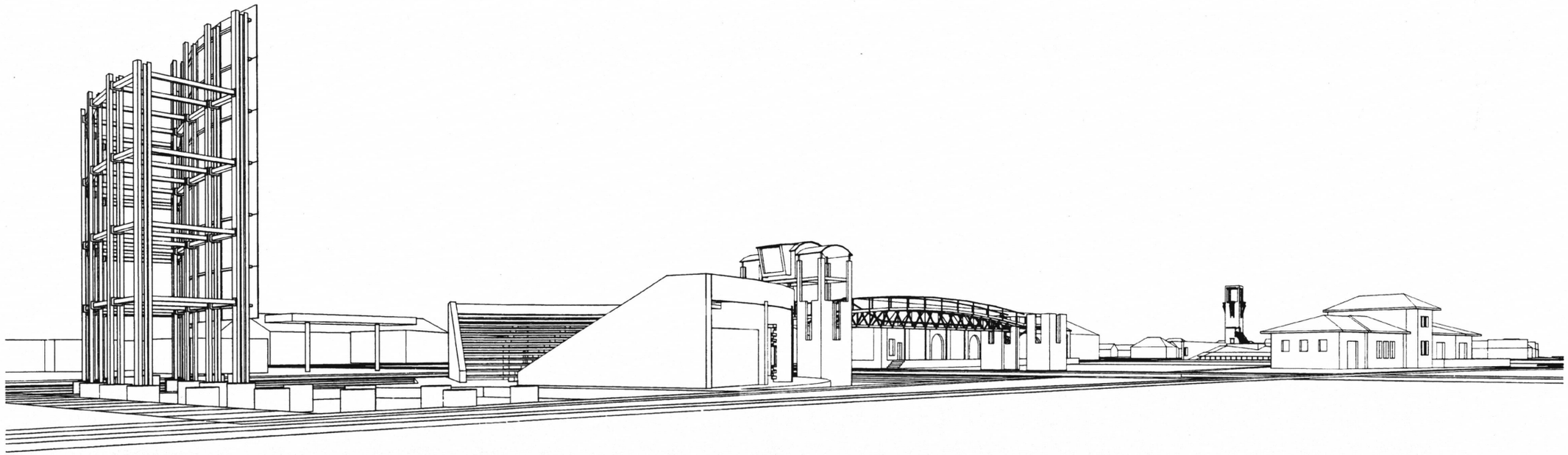
WEST END OF BRIDGE

THE BRIDGE IS SEVEN FEET WIDE.
ORIGINAL DRAWING: PENCIL AND COLORED PENCIL ON VELLUM, 24 BY 36 INCHES (DETAIL)



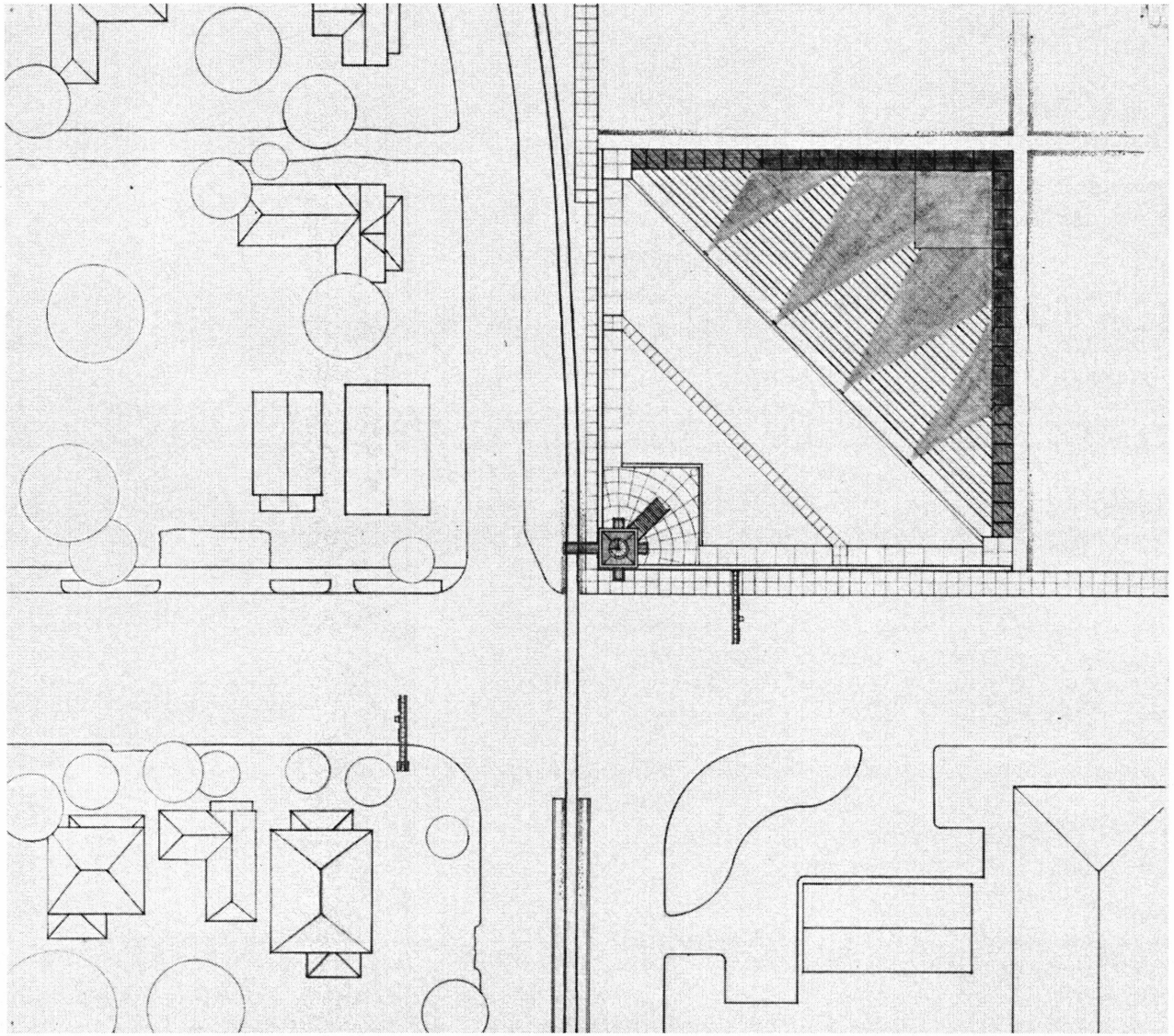
SCREEN, AMPHITHEATER, PROJECTION ROOM, BRIDGE, TOWER, AND STATION FROM THE EAST

ORIGINAL DRAWING: PLOT FROM CATIA MODELING PROGRAM, 16 BY 48 INCHES



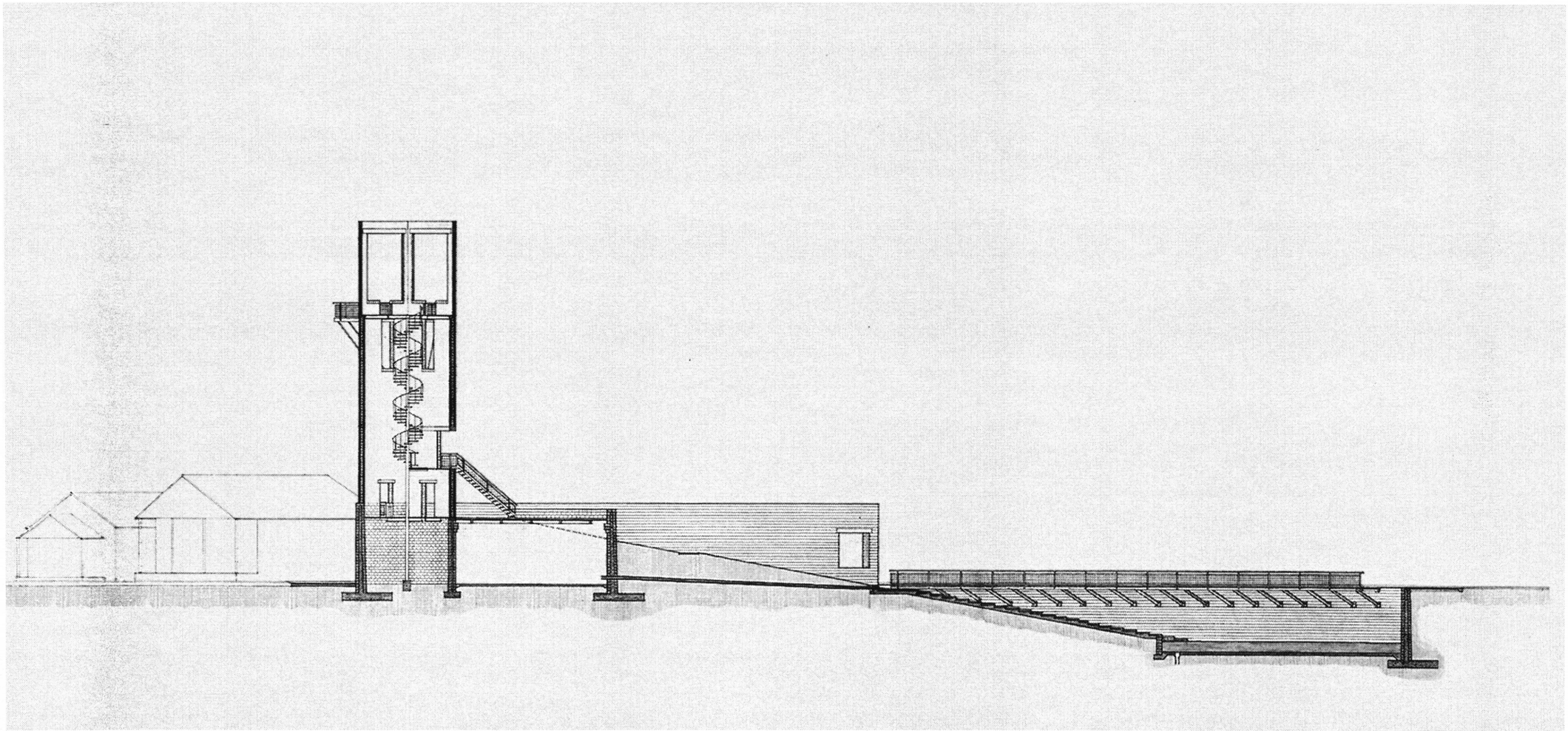
TOWER, WATERWORKS, AND HOUSES

THE AREA OCCUPIED BY THE TOWER AND WATERWORKS IS ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-TWO FEET SQUARE.
ORIGINAL DRAWING: PENCIL ON VELLUM, 21 BY 24 INCHES



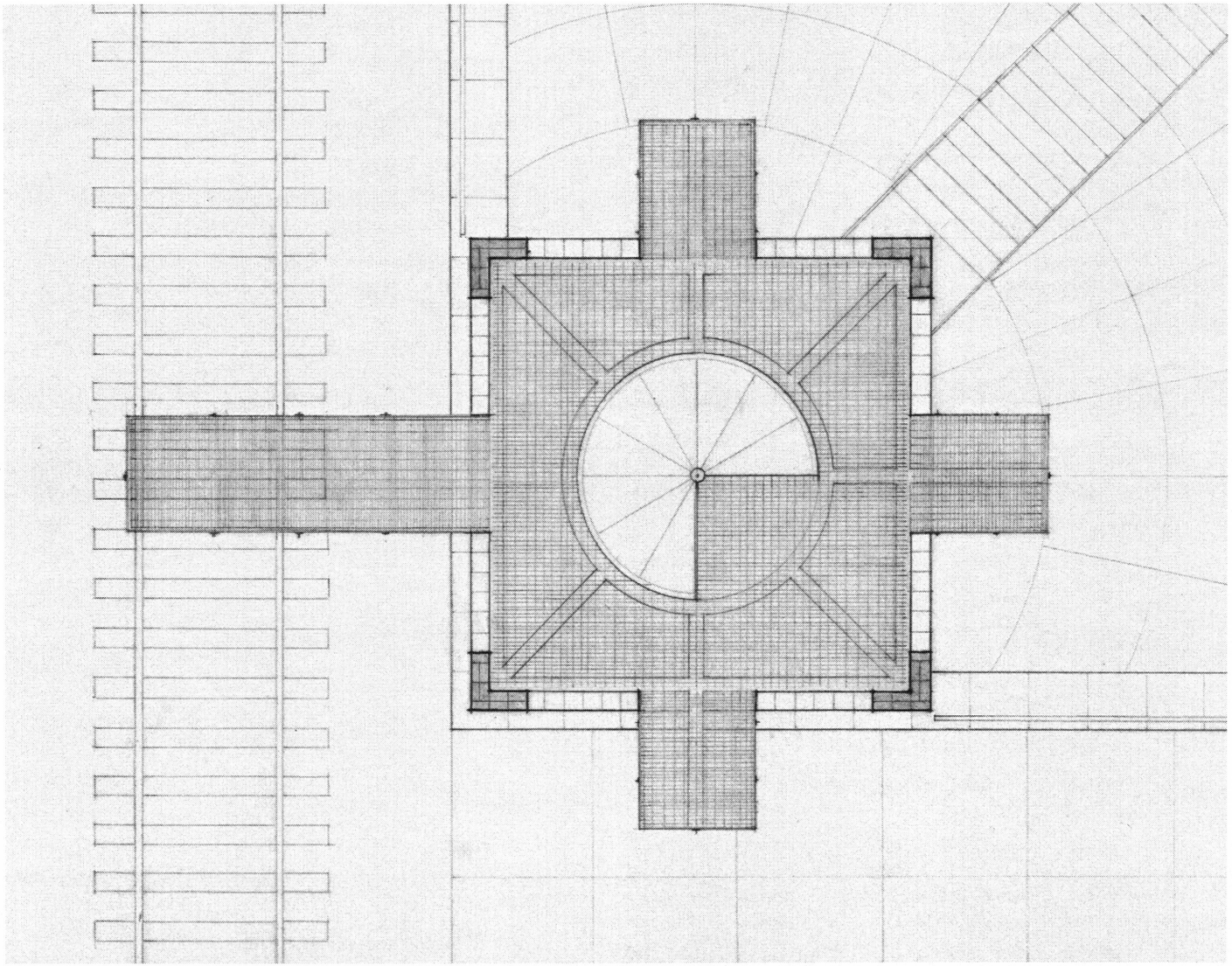
SECTION DIAGONAL TO TOWER

THE VIEWING PLATFORM IS SIXTY-ONE FEET, FOUR INCHES ABOVE TRACK LEVEL. *ORIGINAL DRAWING: PENCIL AND COLORED PENCIL ON VELLUM, 21 BY 45 INCHES.*



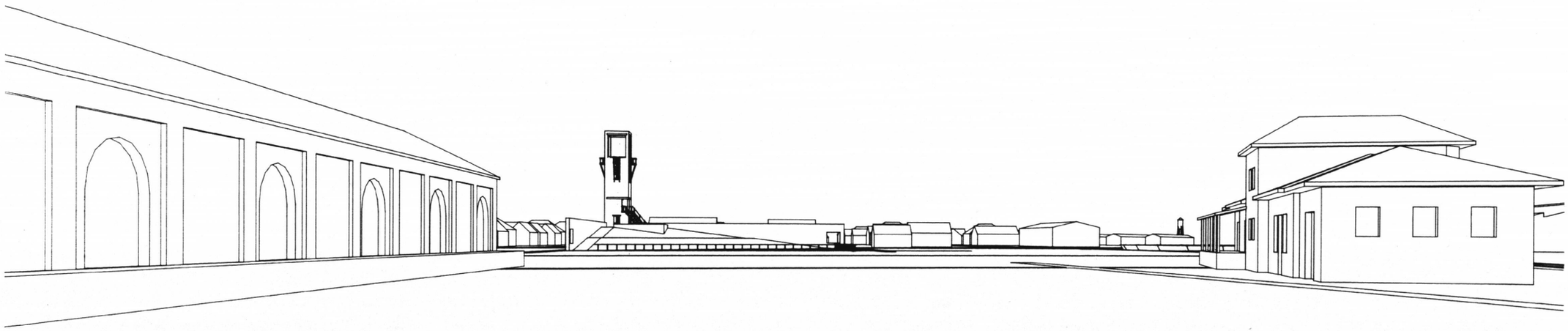
UPPER LEVEL OF TOWER

THE TOWER IS SIXTEEN FEET SQUARE. THE PLATFORM EXTENDS THIRTEEN FEET TO THE OUTSIDE RAIL.
ORIGINAL DRAWING: PENCIL AND COLORED PENCIL ON VELLUM, 12 BY 18 INCHES. (DETAIL)



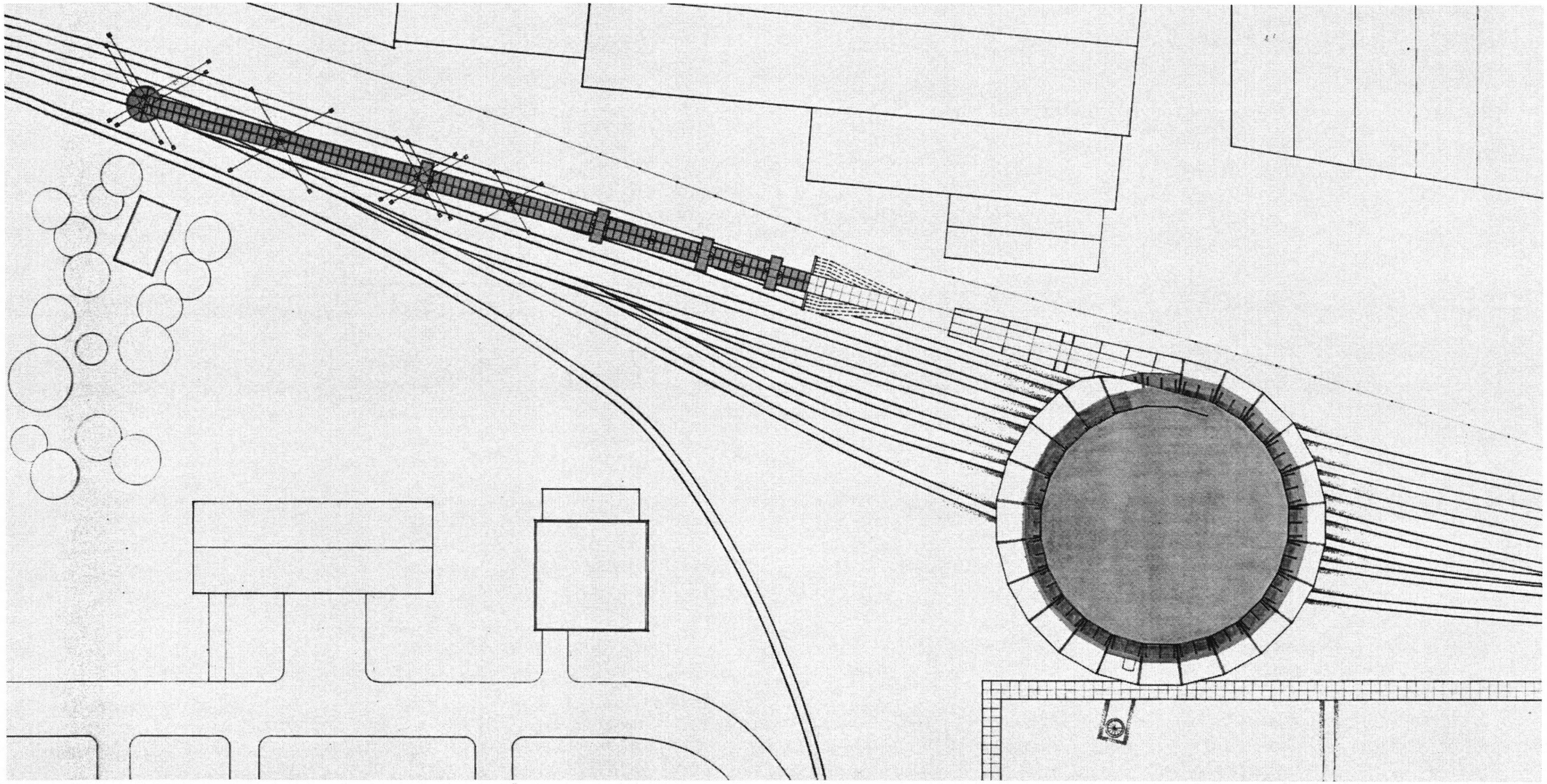
WAREHOUSE, TOWER, STATION, AND SURROUNDING STRUCTURES FROM THE EAST

ORIGINAL DRAWING: PLOT FROM CATIA MODELING PROGRAM, 10 BY 48 INCHES



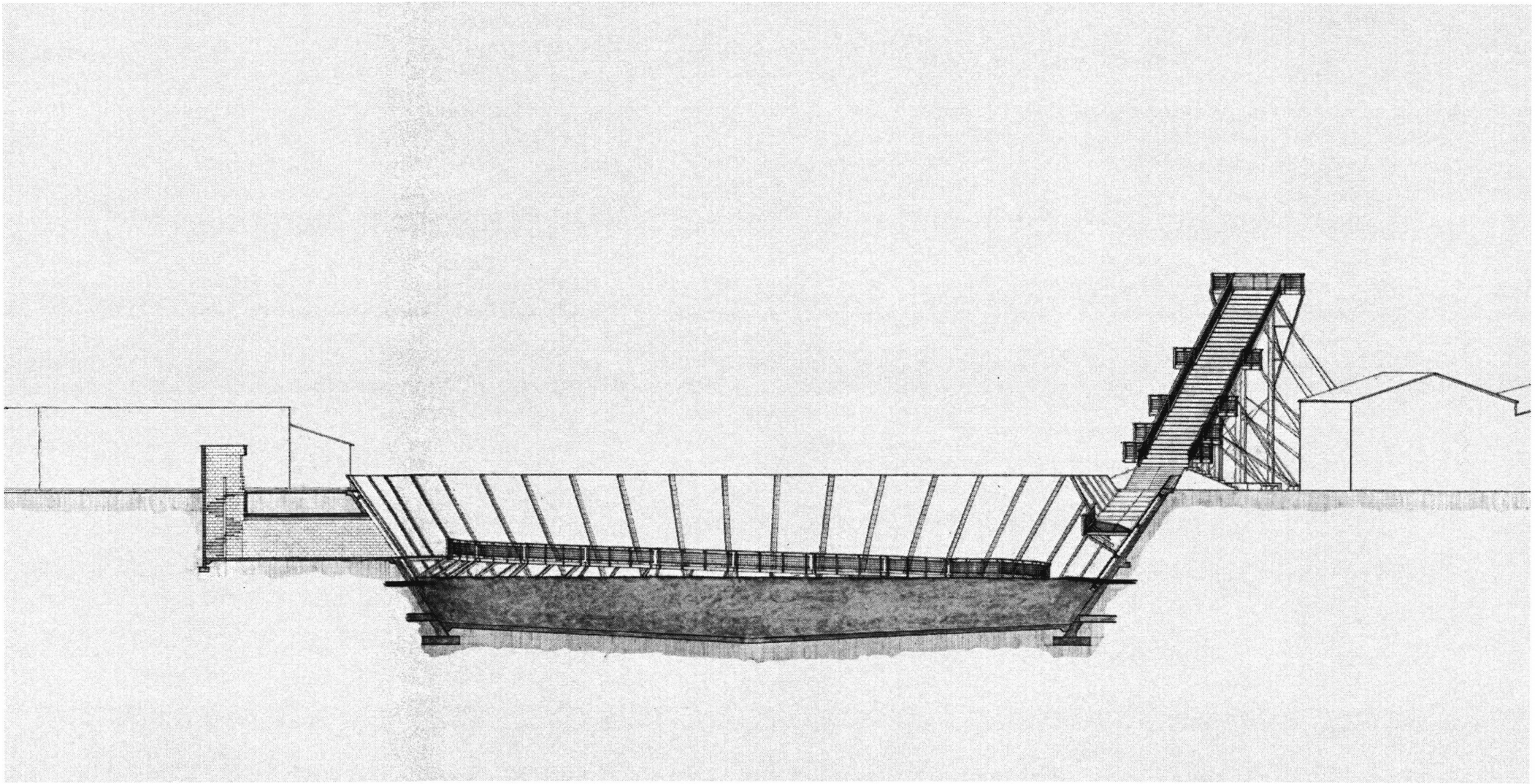
RAMP, RAILS, AND ADJACENT STRUCTURES

THE PORTION OF THE RAMP THAT IS ABOVE GROUND IS FOUR HUNDRED AND SIXTY FEET LONG.
ORIGINAL DRAWING: PENCIL ON VELLUM, 21 BY 42 INCHES



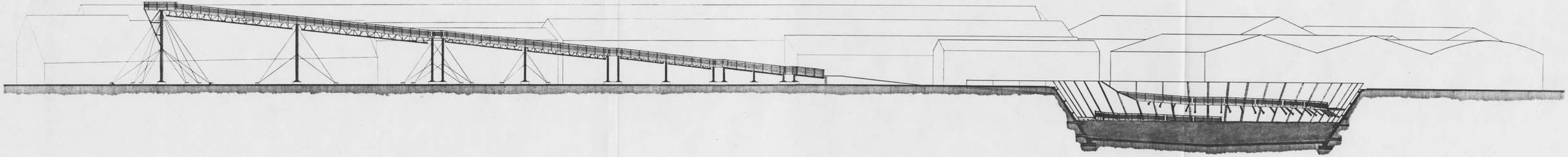
SECTION PARALLEL TO DUE NORTH

WATER LEVEL IS APPROXIMATELY EIGHTEEN FEET BELOW GROUND LEVEL.
ORIGINAL DRAWING: PENCIL AND COLORED PENCIL ON VELLUM, 21 BY 41 INCHES



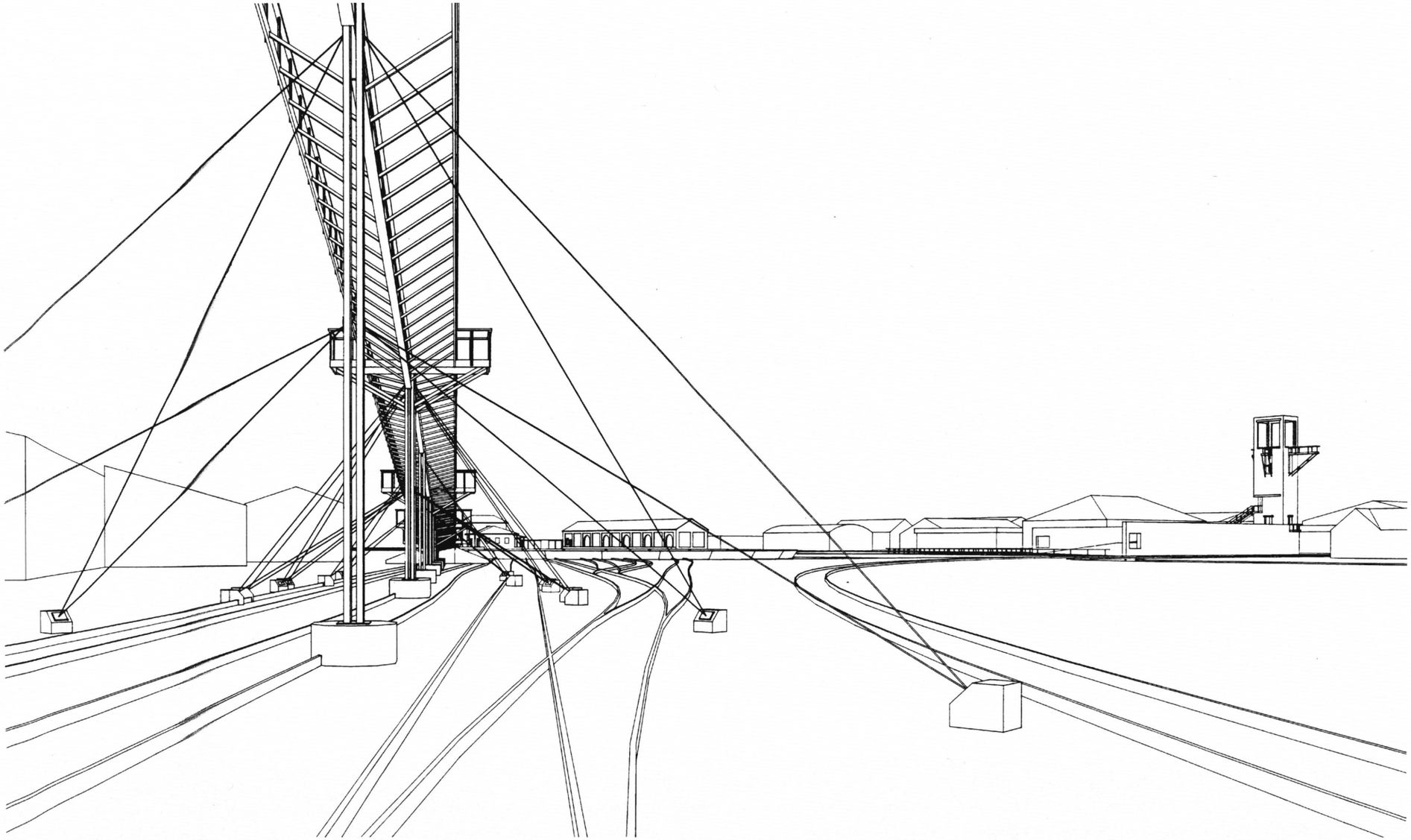
SECTION PARALLEL TO DUE WEST

THE CONSTRUCTION IS SEVEN HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SEVEN FEET LONG.
ORIGINAL DRAWING: PENCIL AND COLORED PENCIL ON VELLUM, 21 BY 41 INCHES



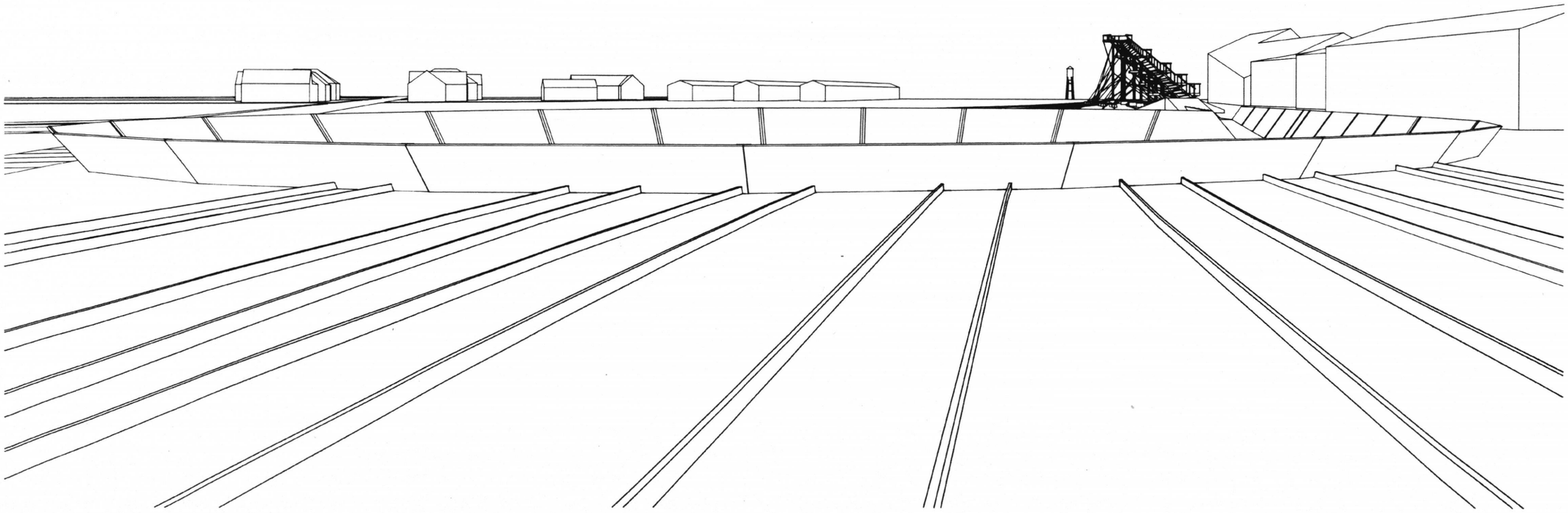
RAMP, WAREHOUSE, TOWER, AND SURROUNDING STRUCTURES FROM THE WEST

ORIGINAL DRAWING: PLOT FROM CATIA MODELING PROGRAM, 24 BY 34 INCHES



RAMP, RAILS, WATER TOWER, AND SURROUNDING STRUCTURES FROM THE EAST

ORIGINAL DRAWING: PLOT FROM CATIA MODELING PROGRAM, 14 BY 48 INCHES



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1 B.J. Archer & Anthony Vidler, *Follies: Architecture for the Late Twentieth Century Landscape*, New York: Rizzoli, 1983. 89

2 Sara Veith Jenkins, ed., *The Edgecombe Story*, Tarboro: Bicentennial Commission, 1976. no page numbers

3 J.A. Simpson & E.S.C. Weiner, eds., *The Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989. vol. X, 123

4 James Burke, *The Day the Universe Changed*, Boston & Toronto: Little, Brown, & Co., 1985. 76

5 Burke. 85

PICTURES

TITLE Orthophoto map section of Edgecombe County, North Carolina, no. 4738.05, Westinghouse Landmark GIS, March 1989.

p 3R Henry Clark Bridgers, Jr., *East Carolina Railway: Route of the Yellow-hammer*, Louisville: T & E Publishers, 1973. 39

ALL OTHERS BY RBS.

RESOURCES

Archer, B.J. & Anthony Vidler. *Follies: Architecture for the Late Twentieth Century Landscape*. New York: Rizzoli, 1983.

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Burke, James. *The Day the Universe Changed*. Boston & Toronto: Little, Brown, & Co., 1985.

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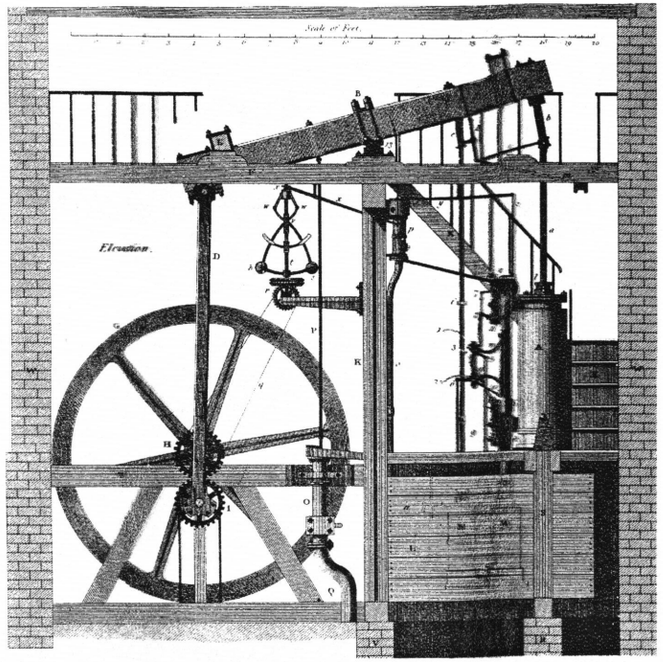
Simpson, J.A. & E.S.C. Weiner, eds. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.

POST SCRIPT

IN THE END, ARCHITECTURE CAN ONLY BE REALIZED THROUGH the act of building. The design process is exactly that—not an end in itself, but a process with the ultimate goal of constructing an artifact. These drawings and this book are only the writings of architecture; necessary, but having the same relation to the final goal that a musical score has to the performance, or that a map has to the journey

If this project succeeds at any level, it is in recognizing that architecture is meant to be built, and so cannot exist, or be designed in, isolation. Architecture is irrevocably bound to the world it must occupy, a world populated by individuals who are not (thankfully) all well-read architects. This project is designed with an inherent acceptance of its place; architecture can draw from, and exist in, the daily life of a small town. In eastern North Carolina, walls are built from concrete blocks and bricks laid up by hand, and railings are assembled with bolts and washers from the local hardware store. A poured-in-place concrete wall by Ando or a custom-fabricated bridge by Grimshaw would be thoroughly alien to Tarboro.

But the project falls short because even though it has been designed to be built, it would probably not be perceived as useful (or useful enough to be built). While it is envisioned that Tarboro's citizens would feel a need to construct this project for themselves, to take back this part of their town, the reality is that they would be much more likely to restore the existing buildings to an idealized condition as a traditional museum setting, if they could afford to buy the land from the railroad in the first place. If the project were more realistically considered, it could probably retain its present qualities and become a place the town would appreciate as well. As it is, the surgery performed to reattach the rail yard to the town is not cosmetic enough to be acceptable. Ability has yet to equal perception.



COMMERCIAL STEAM ENGINE: 1787

BUILT BY MATTHEW BOULTON AND JAMES WATT

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