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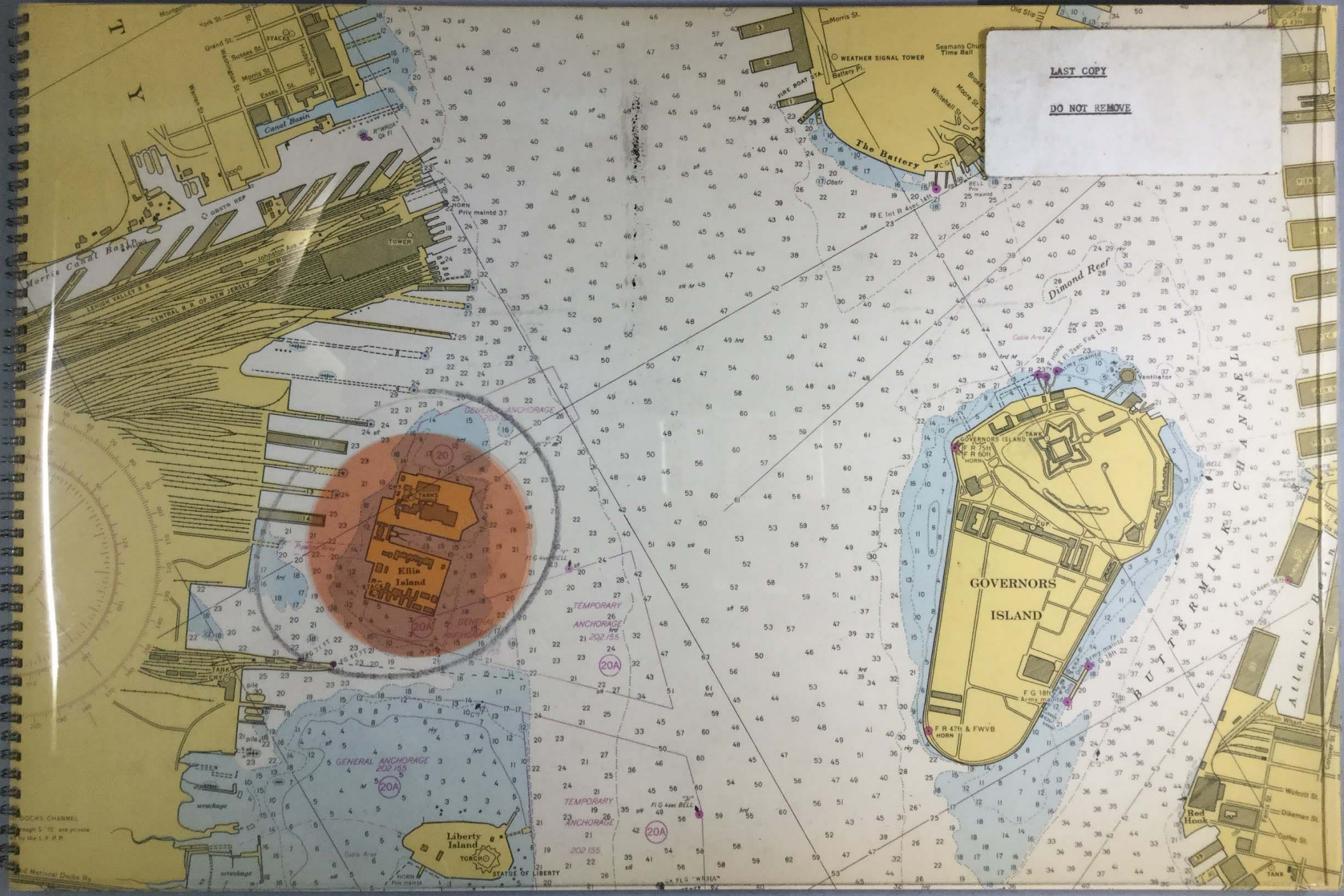
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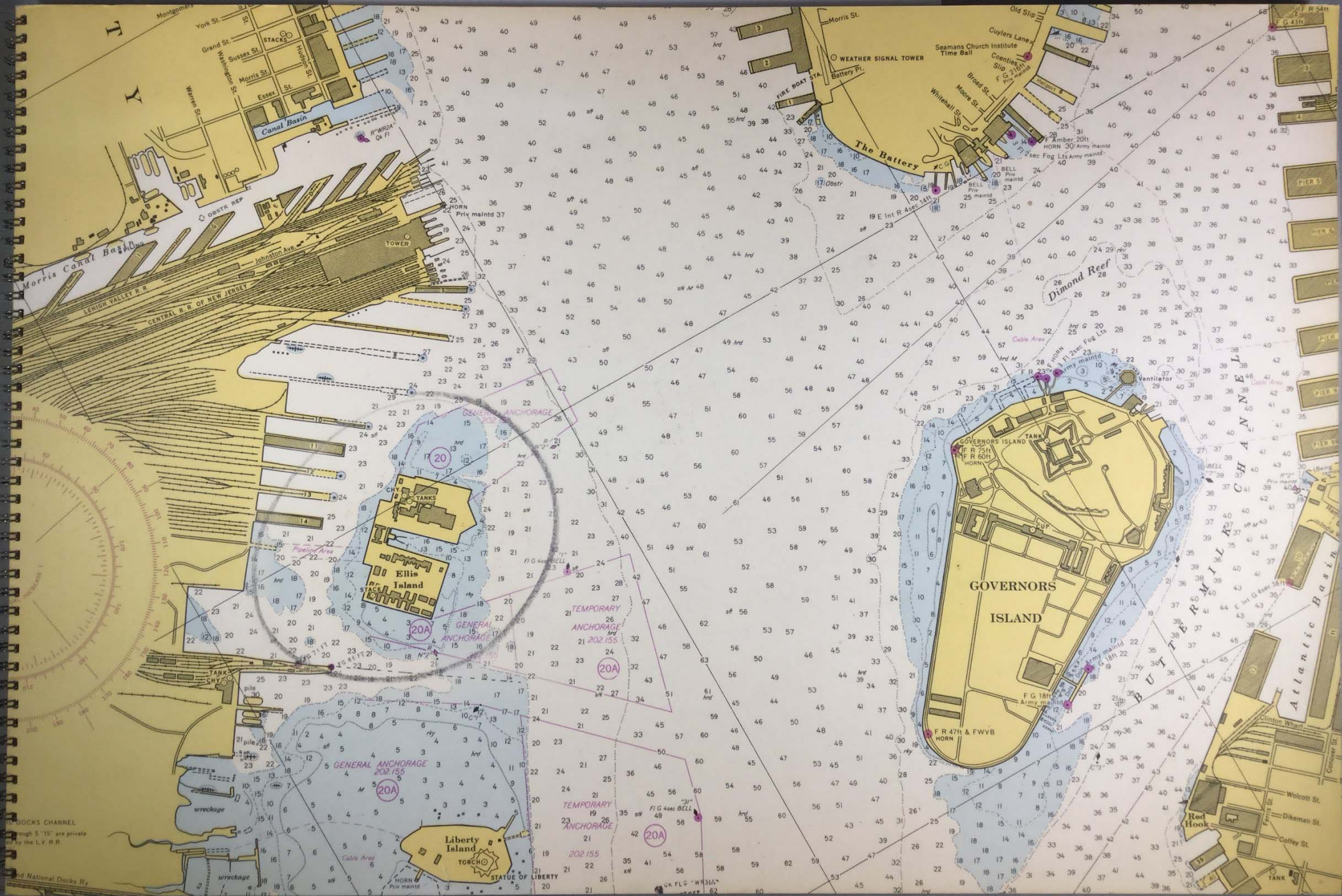
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Ellis Island is three things:

1. It is a shrine commemorating the entry of some sixteen million people into our country from 1890 to 1926.
2. It is a landmark in New York harbor, the site of one of the first forts, which guarded New York in the early 19th century.
3. It is a recreation area for nearby New York and New Jersey

1. The Shrine.

It is our plan to preserve the central harbor with the main building on the right and the hospital buildings on the left as a Historic Site. In the harbor there is at present an old ferryboat which we propose to make part of the historic scene and leave it tethered to its moorings. Instead of restoring the buildings to their original state, à la Williamsburg, we propose to dismantle them, to a lesser or greater degree, changing them into a romantic and nostalgic grouping. Nature has already started this process, as can be seen in the following pages. This process can be accelerated and stabilized in the manner that the National Park Service practices in ruin stabilization in the Southwest.

In the case of the hospital buildings this would entail removing wood and glass, but keeping roofs and masonry. In the case of the Main Hall, the unsightly top floors (not in the original design), must be removed from each wing, as can be seen clearly in the two photographs in this book.

Secondly, after removing the wood and glass of the great arches, the Great Hall, with its fine Guastavino vaulting will be restored as a vast open room. It is this Great Hall which is the "sacred" part of the complex. It was through this Great Hall that vast numbers of immigrants were processed and which would be the most nostalgic site to those who had families who came to the country this way.

Around the buildings vines, poplars, sycamores and ailanthus will be allowed to run rampant. The public will visit this historic site, not by being allowed to wander through the old buildings (this would entail too much control and might even be physically dangerous), but rather will be routed along raised concrete walkways (as shown on the map) so that they will see the romantic scene much as the visitor to the General Motors Pavilion at the World's Fair has a vision of the scenery without actually getting into it. All the buildings of the historic grouping will be surrounded by a moat or ha-ha, which will isolate them from the rest of the Island. We hope that recorded messages can be broadcast at various places on this route, which may obviate a central lecture hall. Also, this is the best setting in America for son-et-lumière demonstrations.

2. The Landmark in the Harbor of New York.

Ellis Island was once the site of Fort Gibson, which had been intended to be one of the round forts constructed by Col. Williams in the year 1808. It is, therefore, an obvious (if tenuous) connection in history that we propose our great truncated cone, which we call "the Wall of the Sixteen Million." Its round, dominating shape will be as dominating today as Fort Williams on Governors Island and

Fort Clinton on the Battery must have been one hundred and fifty years ago. The great ramps that wind up both the inner and outer faces of the cone will be lined with photographic reproductions of the old ships' manifests which listed names of all immigrants. Within the cone we are planning a one hundred foot diameter pool around which, or in which, or both, will be statues commemorating our great citizens who began their new life as Ellis Island immigrants. The cone will in no way compete with the height and majesty of the Statue of Liberty, but its bulk will assure its importance in the skyline of the harbor.

For a second punctuation mark, we propose a 400 foot jet of water at the opposite end of the Island. Our engineers tell us that 400 feet is the logical extreme height of thrown water, and there can be no doubt that this will be the highest jet in the world. We have placed the jet at the upper tip of the Island so that the prevailing winds will carry the stream of water upstream. The jets need not be vertical, but can be at an angle such as those used by fire tugs in New York harbor. Rather than have the water return into the bay (bay water will, of course, be used in the recirculating pumps), it is our thought to have the water returned into a stepped bowl which will create concentric waterfalls toward the center, thereby doubling the dramatic effect.

3. The Recreation Center.

The proximity to the Jersey shore, and the proximity to Liberty Island, assure a vast and, undoubtedly, growing number of visitors to Ellis Island. It is our aim to keep them occupied and interested. Whether they come by foot across the causeway the State of New Jersey is planning as a part of their state park that joins our site, or whether they come by boat from Liberty Island and the Battery, they will be met at one of two reception shelters and from there will have a choice of objectives. A natural first would be the historic site with its walks around the nostalgic semi-ruined buildings, and through the Great Hall. A second would be "the Wall of the Sixteen Million" with its promenade on the top, 130 feet above the water, which will command the finest view of New York Harbor. In the open field between the cone and the dock, ceremonies, band playing, and national day celebrations could be organized.

Beyond the historic site at the other end of the Island there is further entertainment. When the wind is right, a view of the jet and its waterfalls can be viewed from the rim of the bowl. The intermittent playing of the fountain and shifting of the wind would make this a permanently exciting show.

At the outer tip of the Island, where years ago a triangular extension was built, we propose a viewing pyramid with steps on all sides for seating (or even for munching peanuts).

The view of the lower tip of Manhattan is directly perpendicular to the face of the pyramid. The rest of the Island is given over to a picnic grove with tables and chairs.

Offshore, we propose a restaurant, both to serve picnickers and for other types of eating. We have two proposals for this restaurant. One, shown on the map, would be sand barges floating alongside, which could be added to or unhooked, depending on the demand. Under design is a more exciting concept of a more permanent offshore restaurant (see plans).

Philip Johnson

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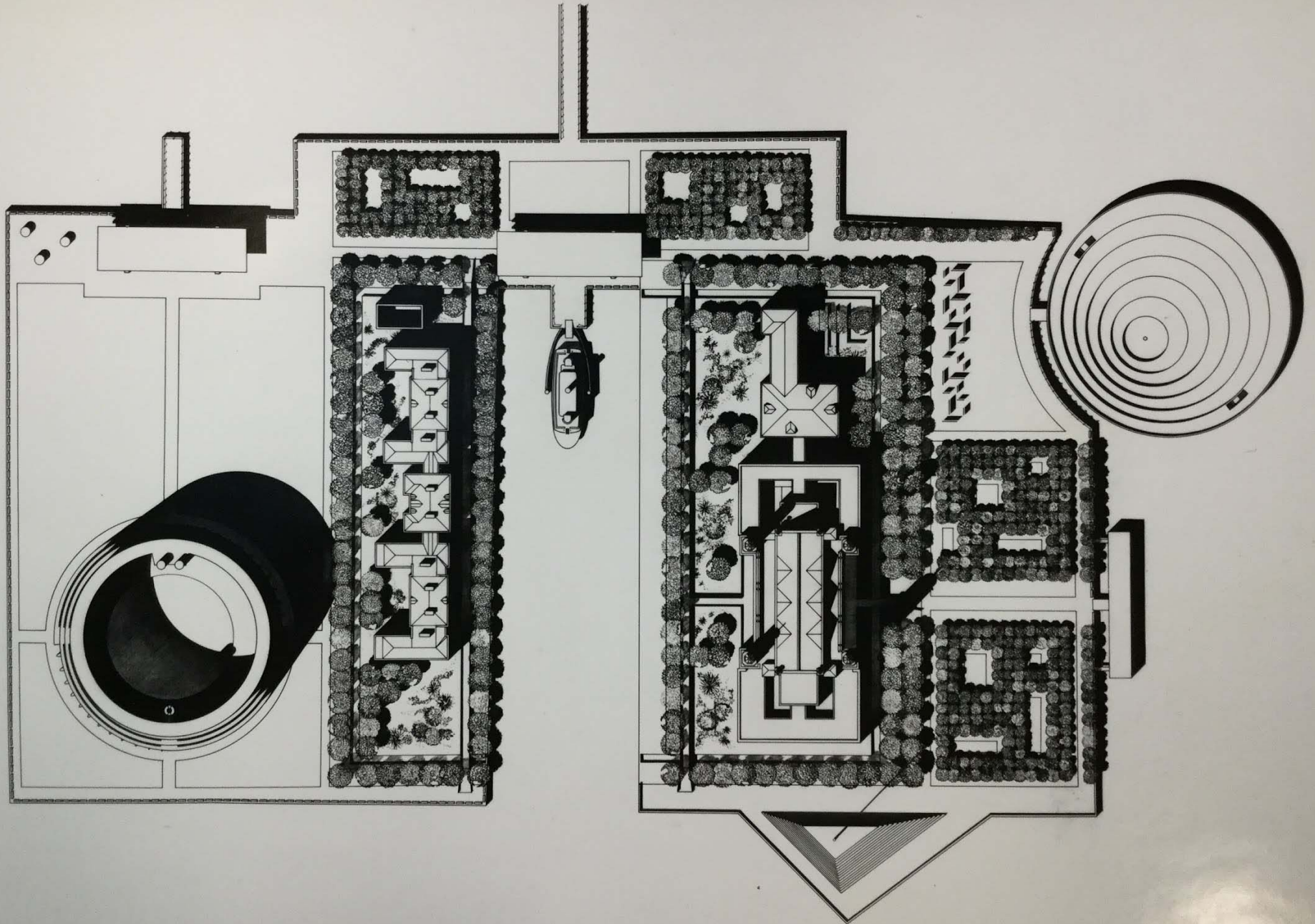
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