



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

**COMMISSION FOR
HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL
PRESERVATION**

Harry Spikes, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Chris Ryer
Director

October 11, 2022

REQUEST: Designate as a Baltimore Landmark: Canton Railroad Transfer Bridge

ADDRESS: Ward 01, Section 10, Block 1902-F, Lot 001

RECOMMENDATION: Approval of designation as a Baltimore City Landmark

STAFF: Lauren Schiszik

PETITIONER(S): Councilmember Zeke Cohen

OWNER: Mayor and City Council

SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT

General Area: This property is located in the Canton neighborhood of Baltimore. This property was historically part of the Canton Company's extensive landholdings. Founded in 1828 as a real estate venture, the Company once owned over three thousand acres in what was then Baltimore County, including over two acres on the Patapsco River that was ideally situated for both industry and shipping. The Canton Company developed railroads, ironworks, shipping companies, and was also a real estate developer, constructing housing, businesses and houses of worship for all of the employees of its various business ventures. It was its own industrial town. Later, the waterfront became home to a number of canneries and other industrial ventures were started in Canton, including breweries, fertilizer plants, and oil refineries, and cargo was shipped all over the world from its piers. The industries in Canton employed generations of Baltimoreans, and was an economic engine for the City into the 1970s, when nation-wide deindustrialization occurred. The area today still has some key industrial sites, but most of the former industrial sites have been redeveloped, with several representing some of the earliest adaptive-reuse projects in the city in the 1980s.

Site Conditions/Architectural Description: The Canton Railroad Transfer Bridge is a large steel bridge-like structure, that is located on concrete piers in the water approximately 50 feet from the shoreline of the Canton Waterfront Park. The transfer bridge features two towers which support a plate-girder span that runs between them. When the transfer bridge was in use, the plate girder would have had machinery that would have adjusted two parallel spans of railroad tracks running from the land towards the water. The structure overall is approximately 53 feet wide, 14 feet deep, and 38 feet tall.

BACKGROUND

- The designation is being sought by the Canton Community Association, spearheaded by Dr. Ray Bahr.
- Councilmember Cohen introduced the landmark designation bill in September 2022.

PROPOSAL & PROCEDURES

The proposal is to designate this property as a Baltimore City Landmark.

APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

For requests to designate properties as Baltimore City Landmarks, CHAP staff applies the guidelines for the designation of properties as Baltimore City Landmarks, which considers the quality of significance in Baltimore history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, public interiors, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and

1. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Baltimore history; or
2. That are associated with the lives of persons significant in Baltimore's past; or
3. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
4. That have yielded or may be likely to yield information important in Baltimore prehistory or history.

Staff has determined that the Harlem Theater meets two of the four designation criteria:

1. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Baltimore history; or
3. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction

The Canton Railroad Transfer Bridge is a significant surviving industrial maritime structure in Baltimore. Located in the water just south of Canton waterfront, it was built for the Philadelphia, Baltimore Washington Railroad in the early twentieth century. This transfer bridge allowed for the transport of railroad cars across the harbor on “carfloats” between Canton, Locust Point, and the Inner Harbor. Cargo passing through the transfer bridge was shipped up and down the East Coast along the railway of the Pennsylvania Railroad and its subsidiaries. This structure is an engineering landmark that reflects the intertwined histories of railroads, maritime industries, and manufacturing that were all so critical to Baltimore’s leading role in industrial heritage in 19th and 20th centuries.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS

The property is not located within a CHAP district; therefore, comments from an Architectural Review Committee are not applicable. However, CHAP notified Baltimore Heritage Inc., Baltimore National Heritage Area, the Canton Community Association.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends a finding of approval for the designation of this property as a Landmark, because it meets criteria 1 and 3 of CHAP's criteria for designation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "E. L. Holcomb". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "E" and "L".

**Eric L. Holcomb
Executive Director**

Maps and Photos

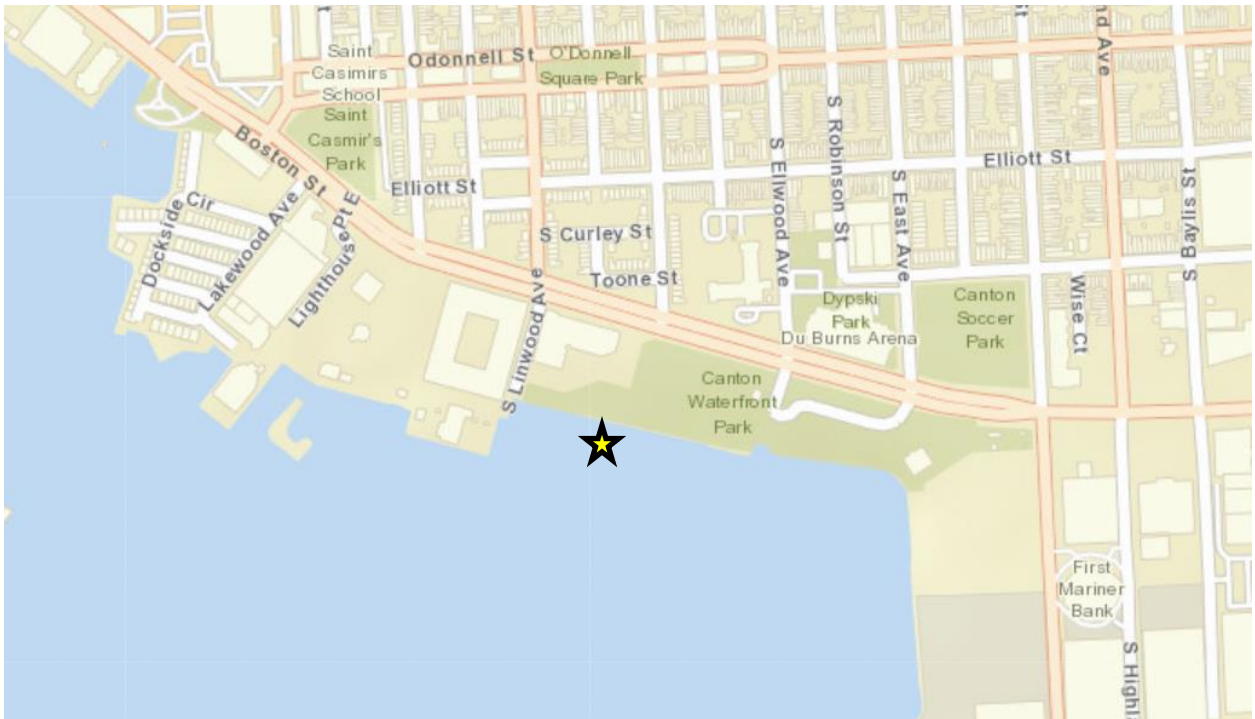


Image 1: Location of Canton Railroad Transfer Bridge, marked with a star, Baltimore City View



Image 2: Canton Railroad Transfer Bridge parcel, Baltimore City View

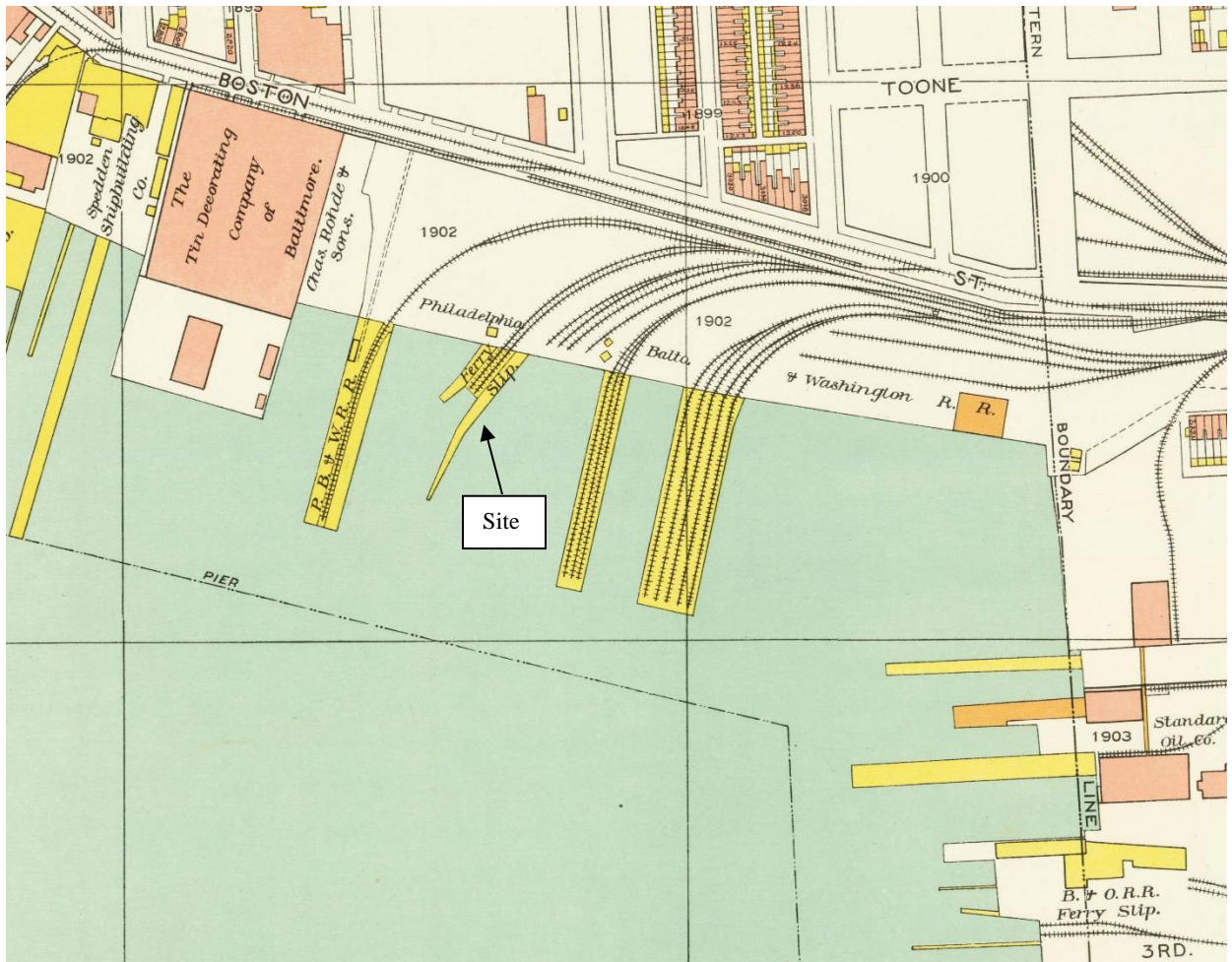


Image 3: Atlas of the City of Baltimore, Maryland 1914 (Sheet 31, 2S-3E&3S-3E), published by the Topographical Survey Commission. The wooden “Ferry Slip” is the site of the Canton Railroad Transfer Station; the steel gantry is not depicted in the map. The B&O Railroad Ferry Slip, which no longer exists, is depicted on the bottom right of the map.

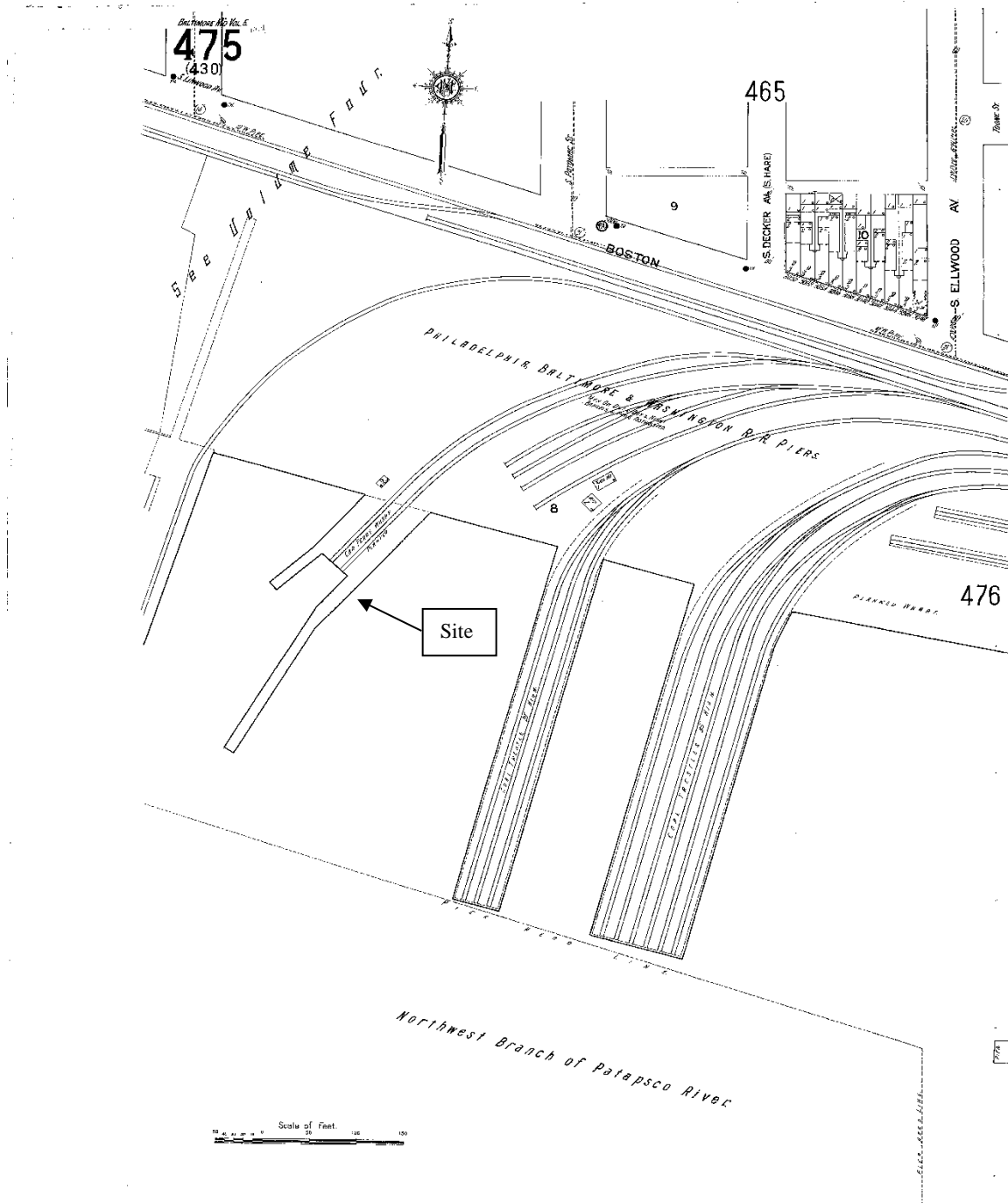


Image 4: 1914-1915 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Vol. 5, 1914, Sheet 475) with site outlined in red, which was referred to as a “car ferry wharf”. Again, the steel gantry is not depicted.

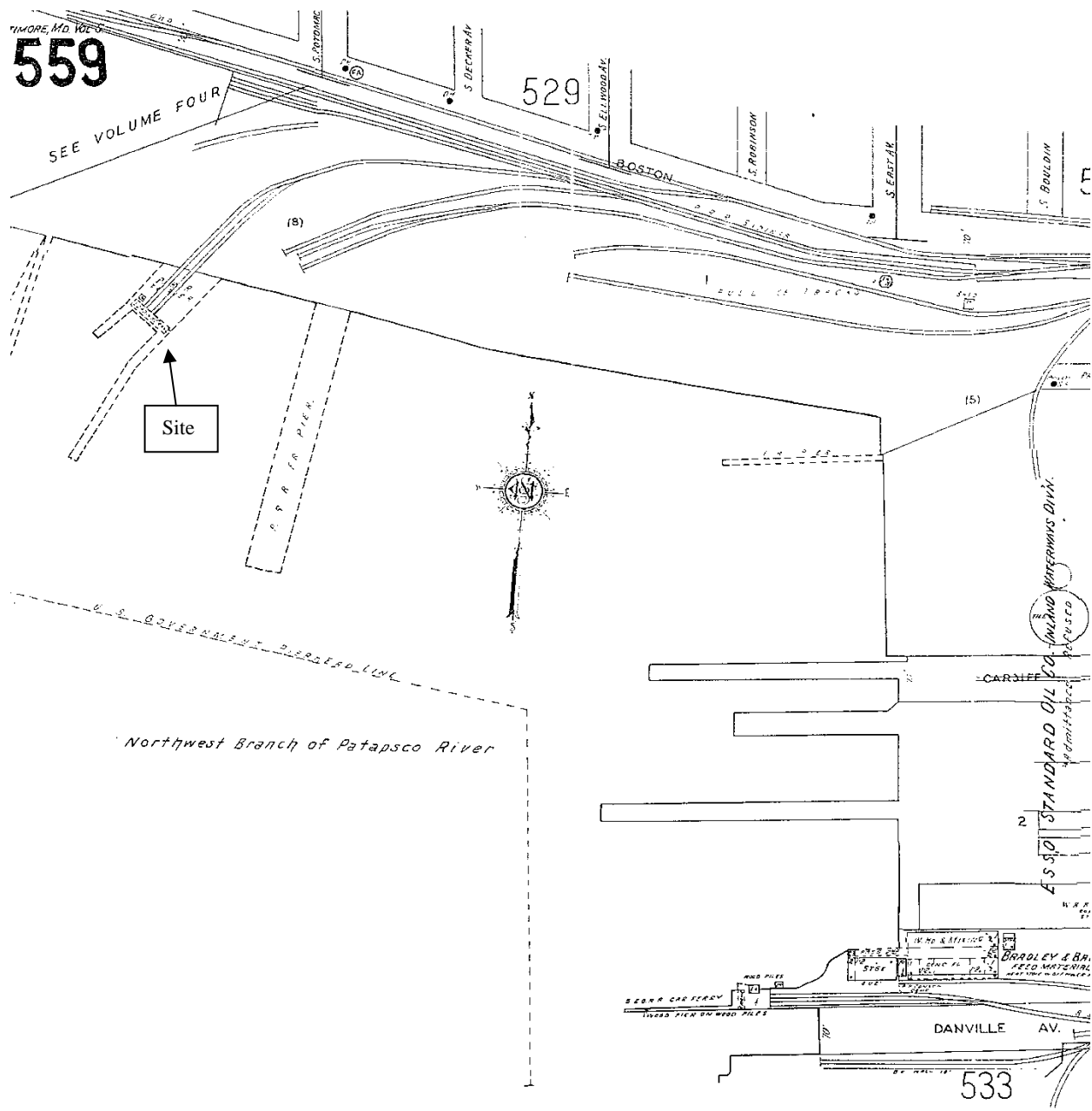


Image 5: 1914-1953 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (Vol. 5, 1936, republished 1953, Sheet 559) with property outlined in red, depicting the steel gantry, which is labeled “Loading Cars” on the PRR RR Pier, referring to the Pennsylvania Railroad. (The B&O Railroad’s Canton transfer bridge is also visible at the bottom right of the map, on Danville Ave.)

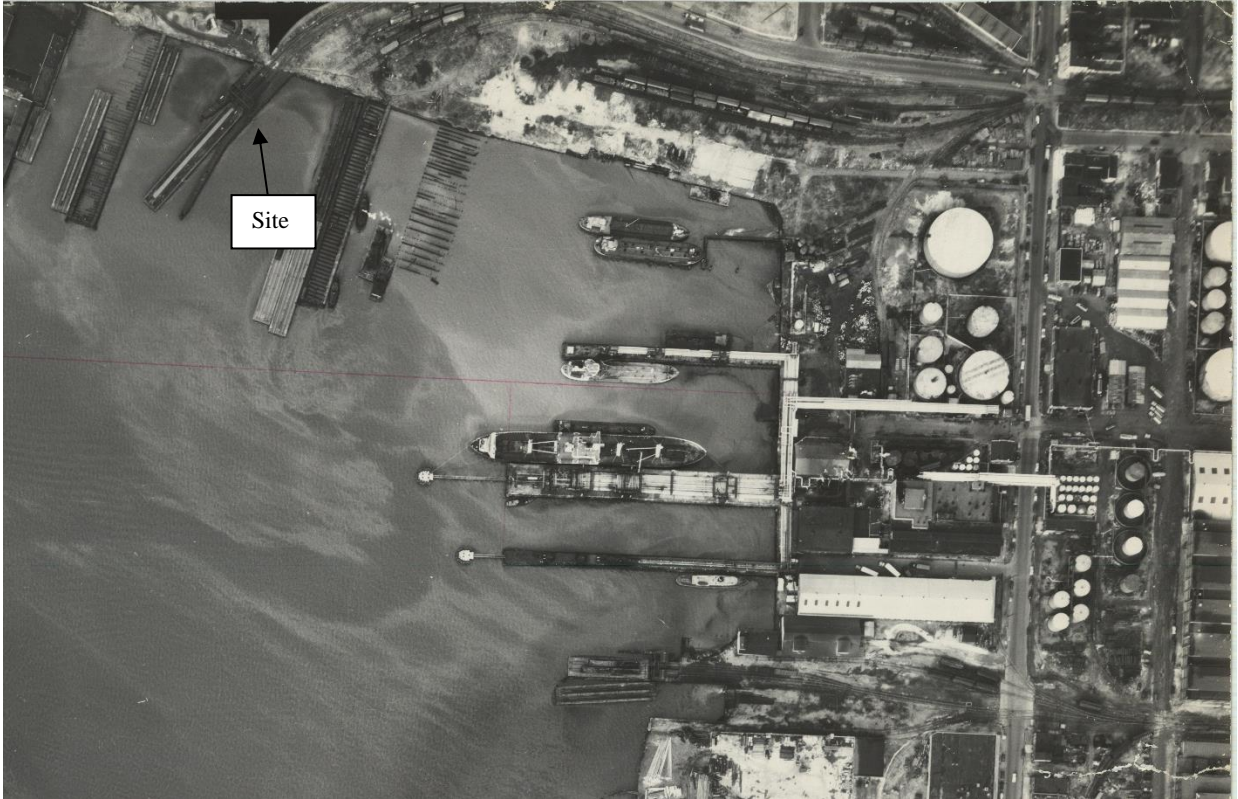


Image 6: 1948 aerial photograph of the Inner Harbor, depicting the railroad transfer bridge (Approaches to Baltimore Harbor, Aerial Photography 1948 and Controlled Mosaic, 1949 Prepared for the District Engineer, Baltimore, Maryland, By Aero Services Corp., Photographic Engineers, Philadelphia, PA. <http://jhir.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/36067>)

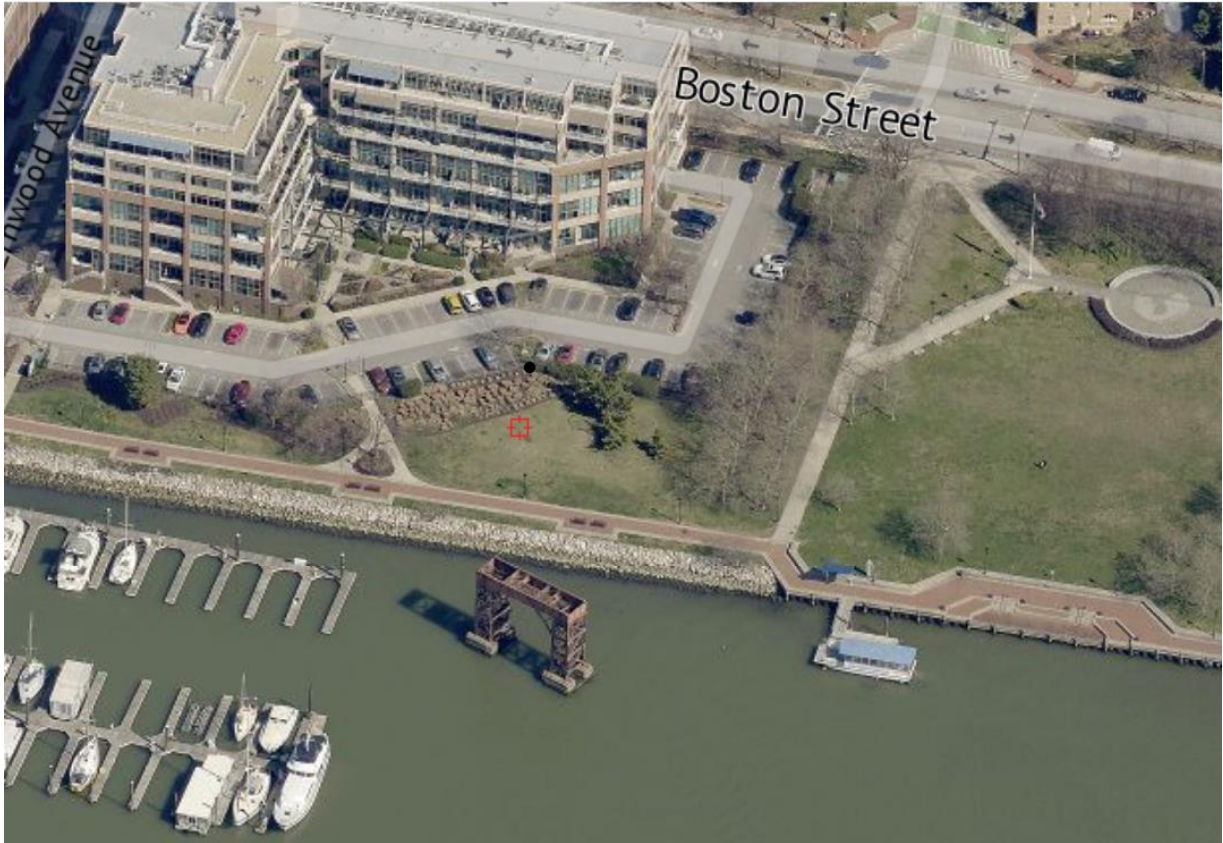


Image 7: Aerial view of Canton Railroad Transfer Bridge from south, Connect Explorer, March 2022



Image 8: Aerial view of Canton Railroad Transfer Bridge from east, Connect Explorer, March 2022

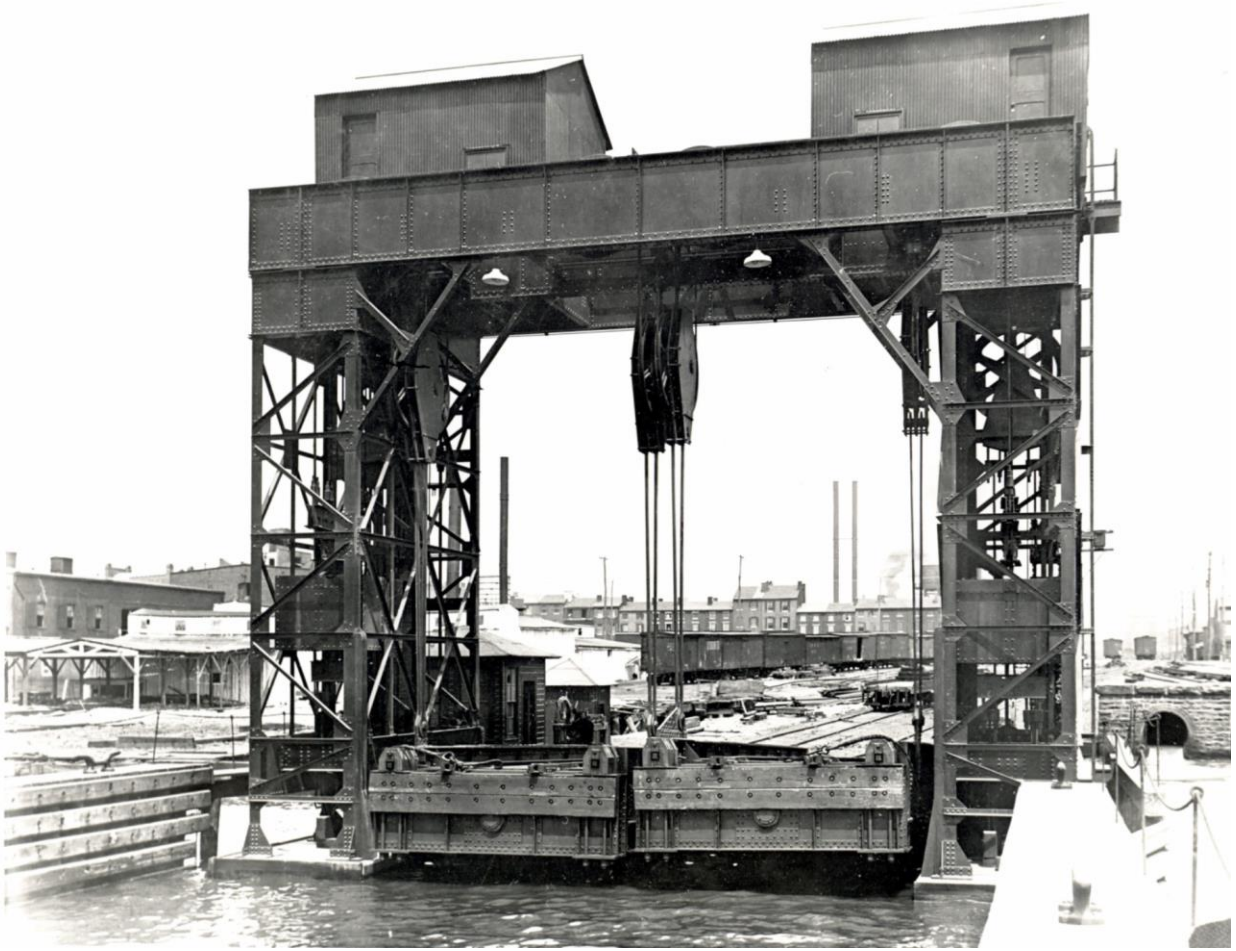


Image 9: Waterside view of B&O Railroad's Canton Transfer Bridge, ca. 1914, which was accessed from the intersection of S. Clinton St. and Third Street, today's Danville Avenue. It was similar in design to the Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington railroad transfer bridge. (B&O photo, John Teichmoller collection; reproduced in the Written Historical and Descriptive Data for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, Locust Point Transfer Bridges, 1055 Hull Street, Baltimore, Baltimore (Independent City), MD, HAER MD-180, Historic American Engineering Record (HAER), Library of Congress. Accessible here: <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/hh/item/md1932/>)



Image 10: The Canton Railroad Transfer Bridge, viewed from the waterfront, with the marker.



Image 11: The marker text.



Image 12: Another view from the waterfront.



Image 13: View east along the waterfront.