

public art for the fire station at the public safety building  
mission bay, san francisco, ca

concept proposal  
january 2012



merge

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conceptual design





## research

- Tour of the AWSS
- Day at Fire Station 8
- Fire boat Phoenix
- Fire Department Museum
- San Francisco History Center, online and library
- Toured the neighborhood with Mission Bay CAC chair / house boater Corinne Woods, explored immediate neighbors
- Studied SFFD training manuals



# placement

Areas studied for artwork application:

Glass facades at penthouse and parking garage staircase

Concrete facades at fire station and along ground level towards 3rd Street

Entrance alcove to the fire station

Sidewalk pavement

Landscaped area along Mission Rock Street and corner of 3rd Street



## goals

- Represent the Fire Department visually at the site

Create an artwork that draws from the rich history and/or operations of the San Francisco Fire Department.

- Accommodate various viewing modes

A large scale sculptural element can identify the site to passing vehicle traffic, while smaller scale elements can relate a more differentiated narrative to a pedestrian audience.

## inspirations

We developed several proposals that show the uniqueness of the San Francisco Fire Department compared to other US Fire Departments. The stories that we were interested in were:

- San Francisco's Auxiliary High Pressure Water Supply System

- System of underground cisterns

- Wooden ladders built by SFFD's own ladder shop.

- The topic of the personal motivation that drives an individual's decision to become a fire fighter in San Francisco.

- The fire alarm street boxes.



# cisterns

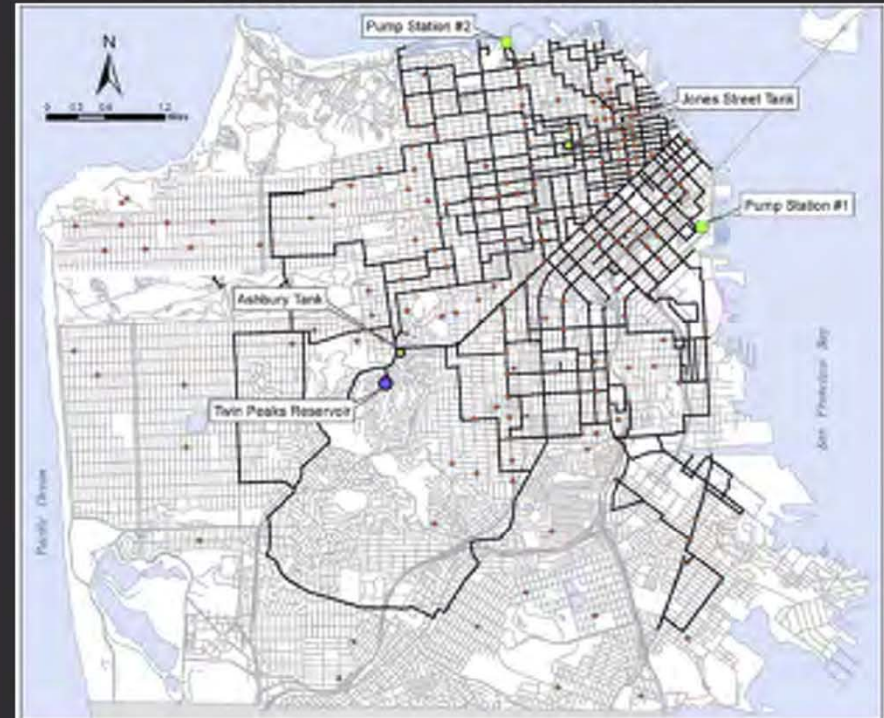
System of underground cisterns dedicated to fire fighting:

- 172 cisterns, storage capacity of 11 million gallons of water, strategically located throughout the city
- Integral component of the Fire Department's operations
- Part of San Francisco's unique AW55 system
- The same bond that pays for the construction of PSB will pay for AW55 and cistern improvements



# cisterns

- Unique Feature of the urban landscape of San Francisco
- Not widely acknowledged by the general population, wide range of interpretations of what rings might signify
- The rings have become public art in their own right



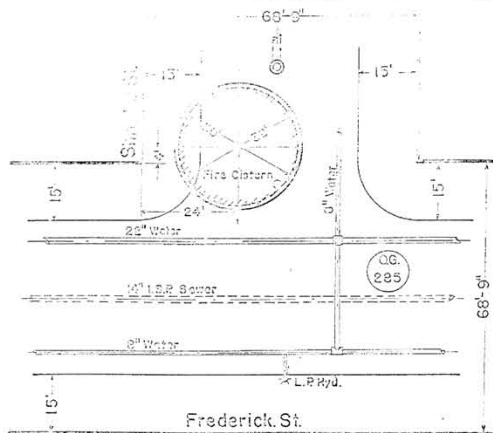
Legend  
■ Pump Station  
● Reservoir  
● Tank  
● Cistern  
— Existing AWSS Pipeline

site plan of AWSS system and cistern locations

# geometry

- Cisterns are marked in the street by a 32' dia. ring of brick pavers
- Typically 15 feet deep, hold 75,000 gallons of water
- The cisterns have been built since the late 19th century, and continue to be built today

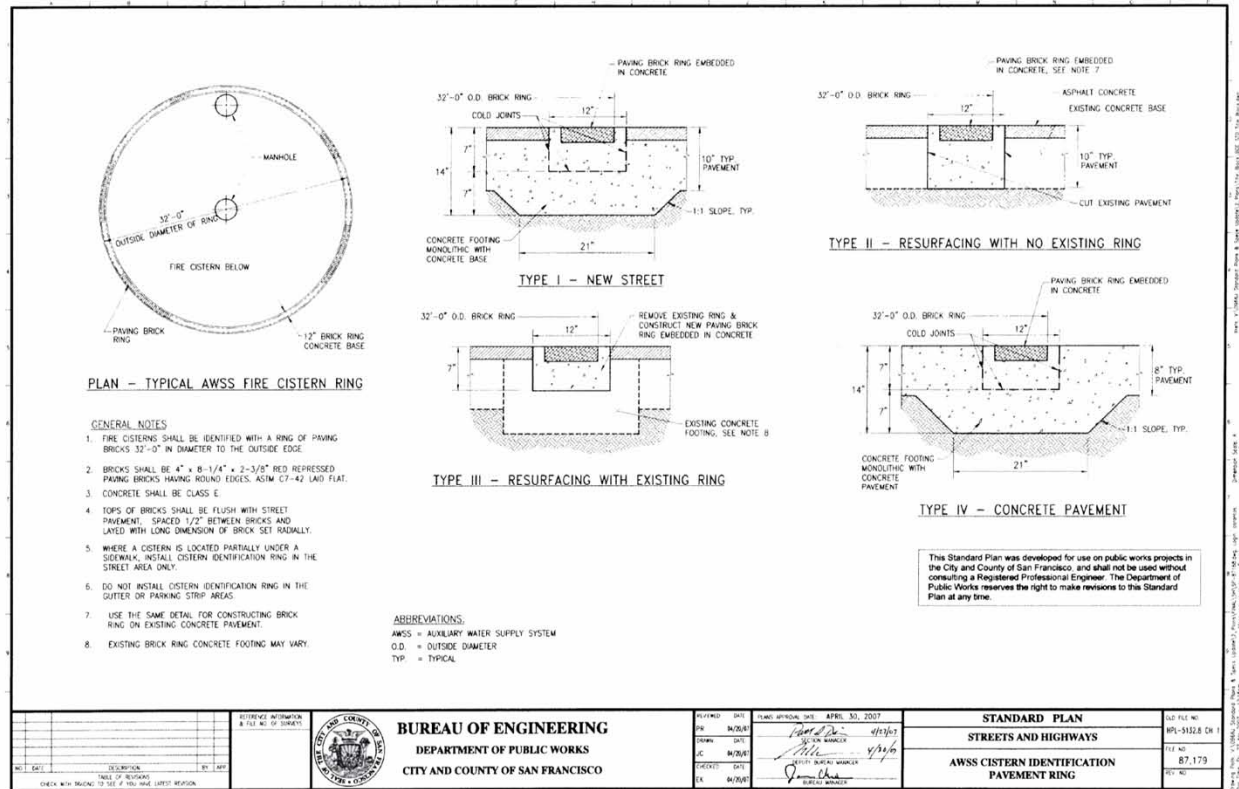
drawings from 1909 and 2007



## FREDERICK and SHRADER STS.

Contract No. 20 for 6 Cisterns. Spacif. No 49-40.  
 Contract signed June 8, 1909. Work accepted June 2, 1910.  
 Contractor Buena Vista Improvement Co.  
 Scale: 1" = 20'

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO	
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS	ENGINEERING
BUREAU OF ENGINEERING	
CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO	
DATE: 5-22-43	TIME: 5:35:40



## bricks

- At the time of the 1906 earthquake two brick factories existed in San Francisco:  
Bay City Brick Company at the foot of Twin Peaks, San Francisco Brick Company at States Street
- Several brick warehouses at the wharfs of Channel Street
- After the Great Fire buildings in San Francisco were increasingly built from brick so they would be more resilient to fires.
- The old Fire Station in close proximity to our site was built in 1928 and is one such example.





## installation

- Play with the shape, material and dimensions of a typical brick cistern
- Help viewers visualize this hidden, urban infrastructure
- Tell the story of the cisterns as part of SFFD's AW55 system



## elements

### 2-Dimensional Elements:

- 32' dia. rings of 1/2" thick brick pavers set flush into the building facade and sidewalk
- Create a visual reference to cisterns in the city

### 3-Dimensional Elements:

- Transform segments of a cistern into sculpture
- Some segments are at sitting height, while others become bent walls
- Tell stories relating to the cistern system and AWSS



scale

