

TOWN-PLANNING AND HOUSING.

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PROPOSED X-BRIDGE IN PARIS

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AMONG the various street improvements contemplated by the Municipal Council of Paris are the completion of the Rue Beaubourg, between l'Hôtel de Ville and l'École Centrale, the Rue Étienne-Marcel, in which is situated the Hôtel des Postes, the Boulevard Haussmann, the Rue du Louvre, the Avenue Ledru-Rollin, and other important thoroughfares.

An improvement of even greater urgency than any of the foregoing for relieving the congestion of traffic in central Paris is the extension of the Rue de Rennes across the Seine and its connection with the Rue du Louvre on the opposite side. At present the Rue de Rennes stops at the Boulevard Saint-Germain, and traffic can only reach the northern bank of the river by tortuous byways and comparatively narrow bridges.

Many years ago Baron Haussmann proposed to effect this much-needed improvement, on the lines indicated in Fig. 1, by opening up a new street commencing opposite Saint-Germain-des-Près and terminating at the Quai de Conti, cutting in two the Palais de l'Institut by passing through the courtyard of that building. This project embodied also a new bridge across the river at the point of l'Île de la Cité and a branch along the island to the

Place du Vert-Galant to give access to Pont Neuf.

Such a bridge would certainly spoil one of the most characteristic views in the whole city of Paris, and the destruction of the clump of trees at the extremity of l'Île de la Cité would be an inexcusable act of vandalism.

An alternative scheme proposed in 1903 by M. Henard, and again brought forward by him for consideration at the present juncture, provides a simple and rational solution of the problem. The idea, as illustrated by Fig. 2, is (1) to continue the Rue de Rennes straight up to the Quai Malaquais, and thence diagonally across the river to connect with the Rue du Louvre, (2) to construct a branch giving direct communication between the Rue de Rennes and Pont Neuf, thus providing a main artery from the Faubourg Saint-Germain to the Rue Turbigo, and (3) to provide a diagonal route across the river for traffic between the Quai de Conti and the Quai du Louvre.

In addition, the project contemplates a short branch street from the Rue Mazarine to the other new highway, and the opening of a triangular garden affording breathing space and a good view of the Palais de l'Institut.

The two intersecting diagonals would take the form of an X-bridge, similar to the well-known structure at Mans. Before discussing the features

PROPOSED X-BRIDGE IN PARIS

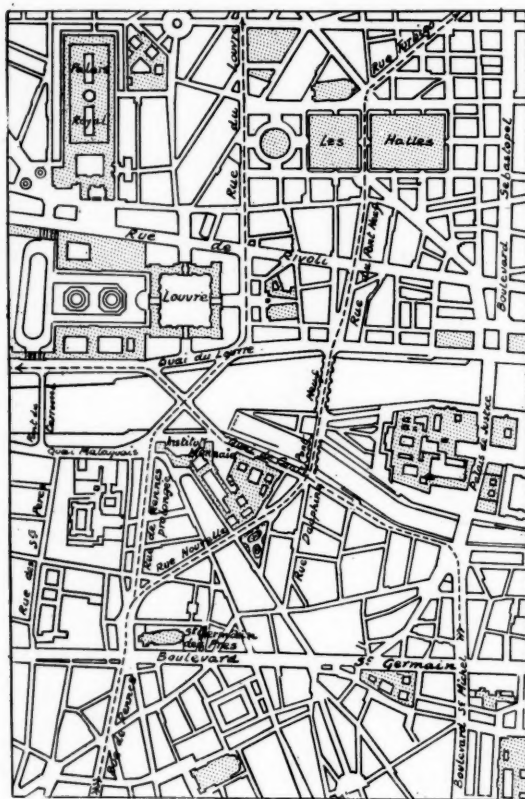


FIG. 2

of the proposed bridge we may point out that the direct connection of the Rue de Rennes and the Rue du Louvre is much to be desired, that the second diagonal would be a welcome alternative for traffic between the Place Saint-Michel and the Place de la Concorde, and that the branch to Pont Neuf would open up a most useful north and south highway.

Two incidental merits of the proposal are that all interference with the Palais de l'Institut is avoided, and that traffic would be diverted in great measure from the front of the building. The removal of the present Pont des Arts suggests no regret, for this is simply an iron footbridge of no value for vehicular traffic, possessing no historic associations and of no artistic beauty.

Two objections at once occur against the suggested X-bridge—one being its rather objectionable appearance in plan (perhaps owing to the fact that it is something new) and the other being the obvious undesirability of establishing a street crossing in the middle of a river, and particularly of a river liable to severe floods.

The unequal length of the arms would probably not be perceptible in the completed structure as viewed from either side of the river, and as the centre of the bridge coincides with the middle of the Pont des Arts, the view of l'Île de la Cité would be as good as that now obtained, and nothing

detrimental is involved to the concordance of l'Institut and the Louvre.

The general acceptability of the proposed X-bridge depends very much upon the manner in which artistic and practical considerations can be met. Without doubt, with proper architectural collaboration, a structure of entirely pleasing appearance could be designed, and engineers could solve the structural problems involved in a manner safeguarding navigation rights and complying with traffic requirements.

M. Henard has recently published three tentative sketches illustrating different types of design for the proposed bridge. These need not be discussed in detail, as the whole question will have to be considered by competent experts if the idea should be finally adopted by the Municipal Council. It may be pointed out, however, that one sketch shows a bridge with a single river pier at the centre of the X, that another contemplates five piers forming three obstructions to the flow of water, and that the third shows four piers constituting only two obstructions. M. Henard favours the last, whereas the writer is rather inclined to regard the first as being preferable, because it interferes less with the natural conditions of the river and gives more space for navigation.

With regard to the street improvements on the

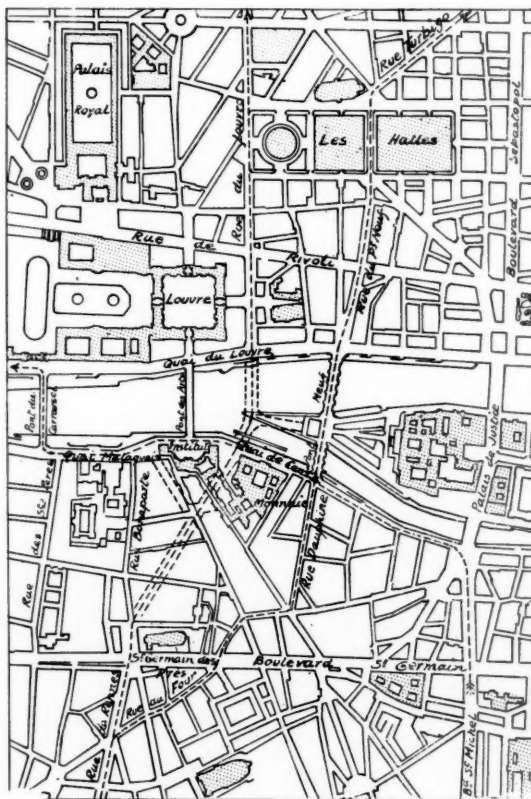


FIG. 1

ROCHDALE GARDEN SUBURB

Enceinte de Philippe-Auguste, one of the bastions being on the site of the proposed garden. The lower portion of the tower and part of the wall are still in existence, although hidden by modern buildings which could easily be removed, and thus would be regained a most interesting mark of the history of Old Paris.

ROCHDALE GARDEN SUBURB

THE accompanying illustrations show the garden suburb which is proposed to be developed on the outskirts of Rochdale according to the design of Mr. Gilbert Waterhouse, architect, of London and Middleton.

The estate is the property of Mr. Samuel Smethurst, of Oldham (past-president of the National Federation of Building Trade Employers, and a prominent housing reformer in the district).

The complete scheme, together with plans of the first thirty houses proposed to be built, was submitted to the Rochdale Corporation last year, and subsequently forwarded by them to the Local Government Board as a town-planning scheme under the new Act. Owing, however, to the procedure necessitated by the regulations of the Act, building operations have been delayed.

The general lay-out of the estate has been influenced a good deal by the following factors: (1) The contour of the land and the existence of one or two hollows, which it is proposed to utilise as sunk gardens; (2) the consideration of aspect; and (3) the existence of one or two roads and other property which cut into the land in places somewhat awkwardly. All roads are at least 40 ft. wide, of which 16 ft. is devoted to carriage-

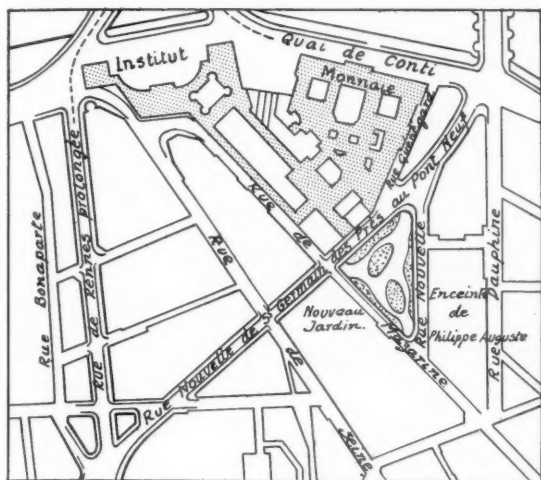


FIG. 3

Saint-Germain side of the river, which are drawn to larger scale in Fig. 3, it may be pointed out that the cutting of the branch towards Pont Neuf would involve the demolition of some property of no great value at present obscuring the Palais Mazarine at the corner of the Rue Guénégaud and the Rue Mazarine, an operation enabling the authorities to give the building a façade and an entrance on the new thoroughfare. The branch would also sweep away the squalid buildings of the Rue de Nevers, although not abolishing the cul-de-sac of the same name.

Hence the reason for the second branch and the triangular garden throwing open the new façade of l'Institut to an area covering about 4,400 square metres. In addition to its value as a breathing space in a densely-built part of the city, the garden would include an archaeological relic of historic interest. The reference is to some remains of the



GILBERT WATERHOUSE, ARCHITECT

ROCHDALE GARDEN SUBURB

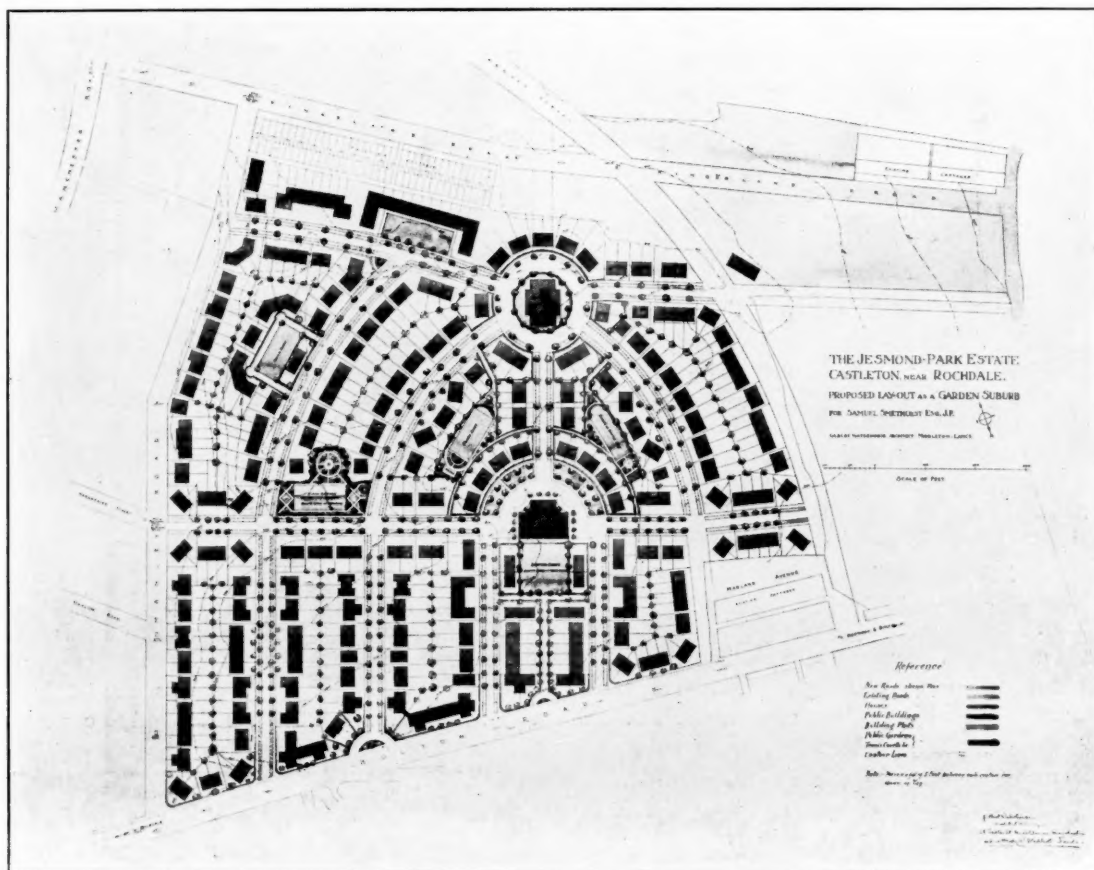
way, 5 ft. to path, and the remainder to grass margins, which it is proposed to plant with privet and other shrubs.

The estate is served on two sides by existing main traffic roads with a tram service along them to Bury and Manchester respectively, and it is proposed that the new 50 ft. roadway which is shown along the western boundary shall also be constructed as a main traffic route. The other roads on the estate will thus be saved from all but light traffic, and could be constructed accordingly.

passing over Queen Victoria Street and Thames Street, and crossing the river by means of a new bridge at a given point east of St. Paul's Wharf. The design deals only with the bridge and approaches.

It is suggested that the new road should widen at the approach to the bridge, forming a small "place" surrounded by office buildings in connection with the adjacent wharves; these buildings being connected by means of curved colonnades.

With regard to the actual St. Paul's Bridge, there appears to be every probability that the

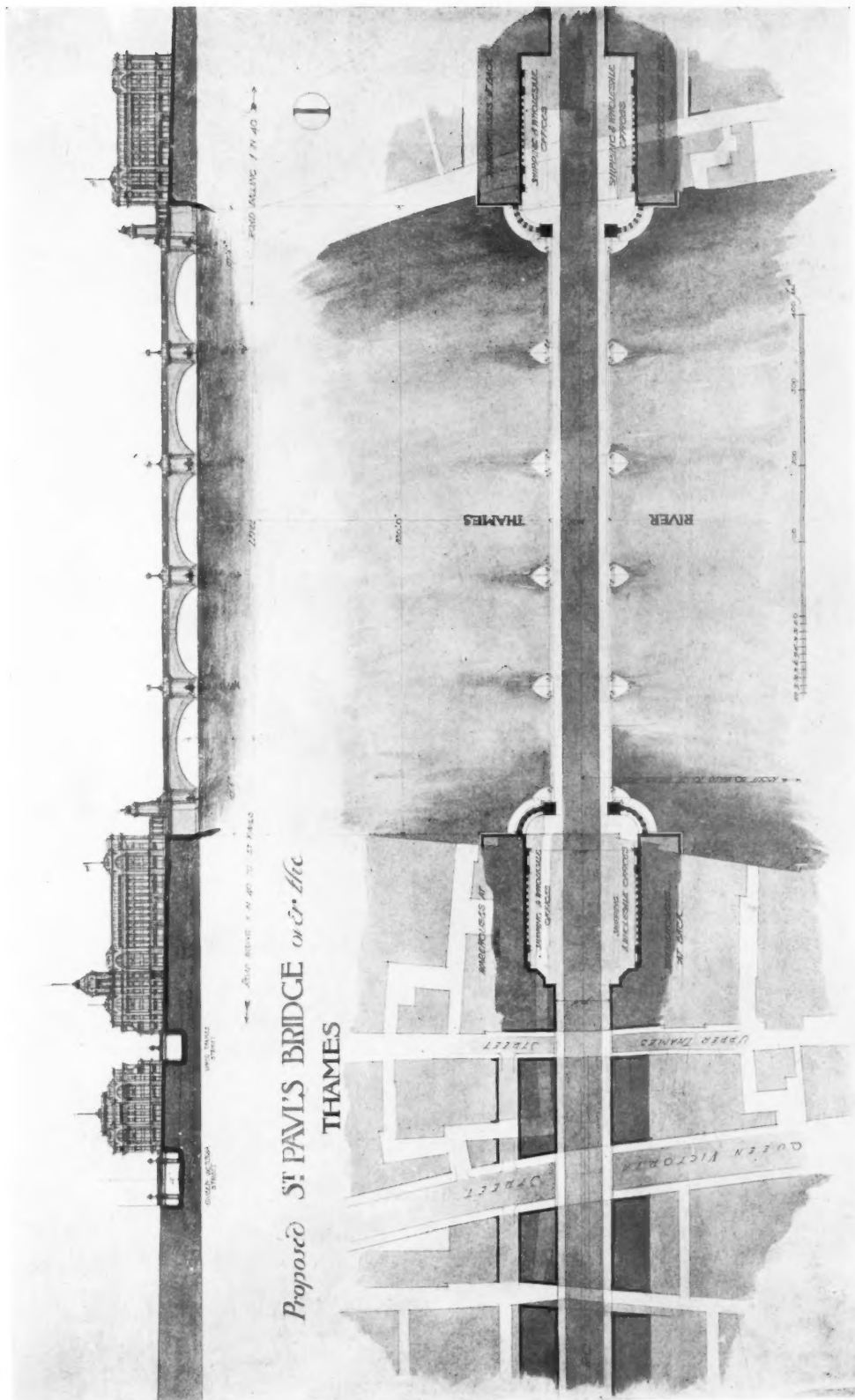


In the design of the houses the architect has avoided, as far as possible, all expensive or elaborate treatments, relying for effect upon proportion and grouping, and the consideration of each street architecturally as a group of buildings.

DESIGN FOR ST. PAUL'S BRIDGE

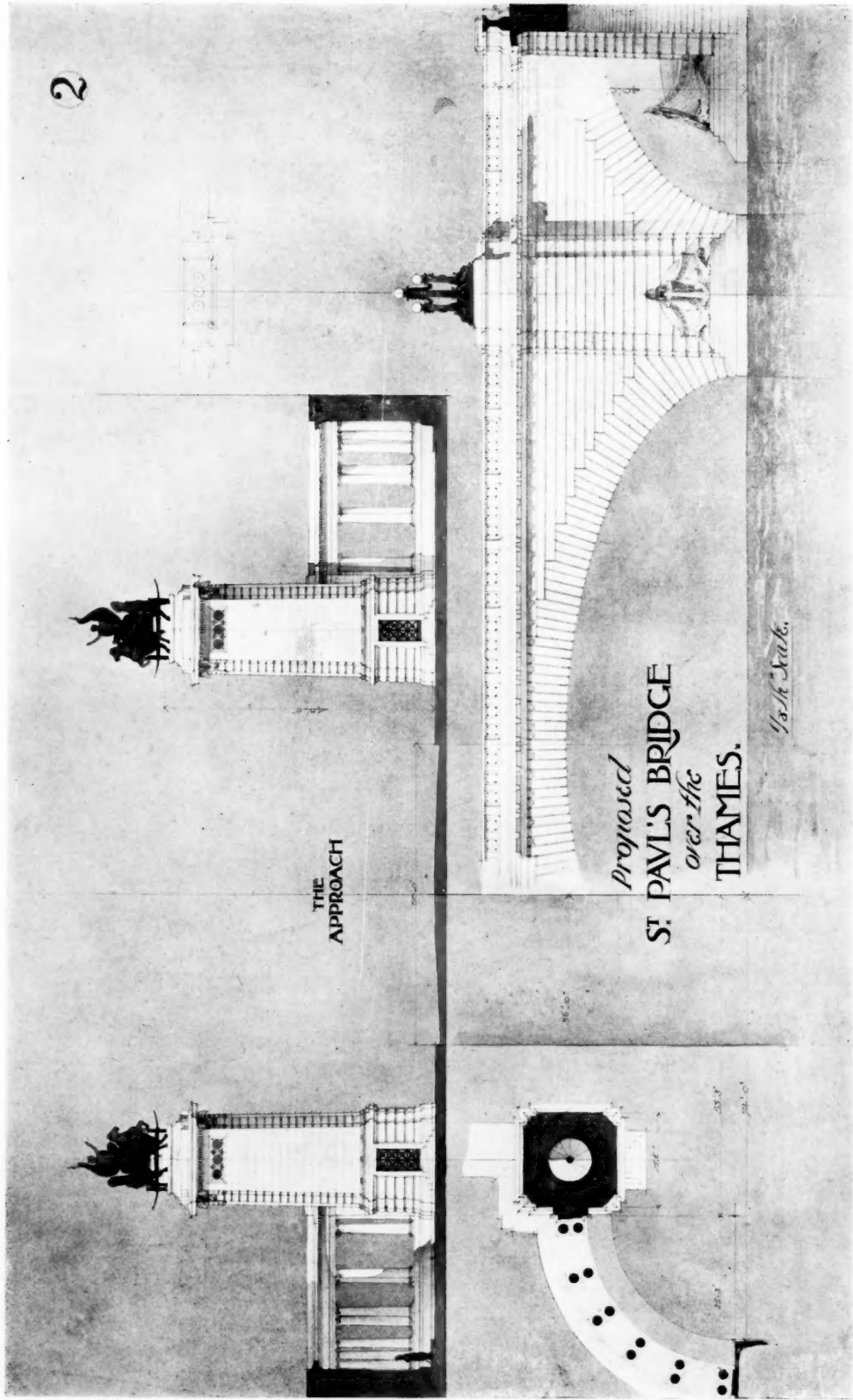
THE design for the St. Paul's Bridge shown by the accompanying illustrations gained for Mr. L. Holcombe Bucknell the silver medal and prize of £25 at the Royal Academy this year. The conditions were that a new road should be constructed continuing that on the east side of the cathedral,

Bill for its construction will go through Parliament unopposed. Sundry clauses may, of course, be modified to meet the wishes of frontagers, etc., but such alterations will not affect the measure in any material way. In these circumstances, attention is likely to be centred on the effect the bridge will have on property in the districts immediately concerned. Aldersgate Street will be the main thoroughfare on the route, and consequently it will undoubtedly become one of the best trading localities in the City in a few years' time. The value of property situate there will thus be greatly enhanced, and rents will increase in a corresponding ratio.



ROYAL ACADEMY PRIZE DESIGN. BY L. HOLCOMBE BUCKNEILL

THE ST. PAUL'S BRIDGE



ROYAL ACADEMY PRIZE DESIGN. BY L. HOLCOMBE BUCKNELL