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GATEWAY
JACOB RIIS PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT



NATIONAL RECREATION AREA / NEW JERSEY-NEW YORK

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HISTORIC STRUCTURE REPORT
JACOB RIIS PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT
HISTORICAL DATA
GATEWAY NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
NEW JERSEY - NEW YORK
PACKAGE NO. 109

by
Harlan D. Unrau

DENVER SERVICE CENTER
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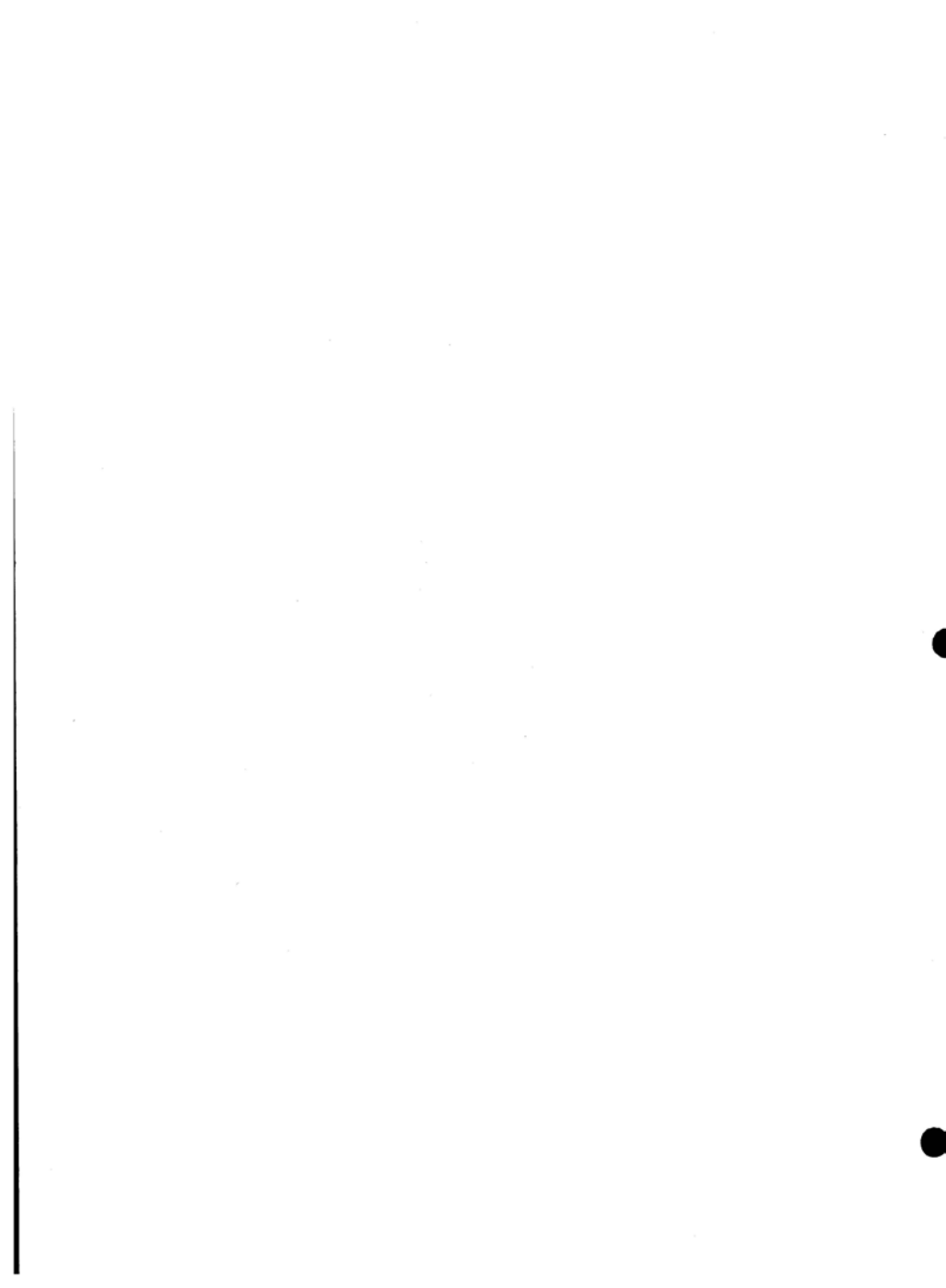


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PREFACE

This historic structure report (historical data section) has been prepared to satisfy in part the research needs as stated in the task directive (of September 1978; revised February 28, 1979) covering the designated buildings at Jacob Riis Park Historic District in Gateway National Recreation Area under Package No. 109. The package comprises a program for the rehabilitation of lands and facilities at Gateway. As per agreement with the late North Atlantic Regional Chief of Cultural Affairs Ricardo Torres-Reyes, the following structures and sites were to be included in this report:

1. Bathing Pavilion (HS-606)
2. Central Mall Buildings (HS-603, 604)
3. Maintenance Shops and Garage (HS-601A, 601B)
4. Refreshment Stands (HS-602, 605, 607)
5. Boiler Room (HS-603A)
6. Golf Course Concession Stand (HS-603B)
7. Electrical Hut (HS-605A)
8. Landscape (or layout of park)
9. Clock

Hence the purpose of this study has been an effort to provide a thorough historic study of the Jacob Riis Park Historic District to insure that the stabilization/preservation treatment of these structures and sites is historically accurate.

This report conforms to the standards and requirements of a historic structure report (historical data section) as set forth in the National Park Service Activity Standards for Historic Resource Studies and Management (1971) and Management Policies (1978). These requirements provide that the historical data section will include documentary and illustrative data on the background history

of the area's development and the architectural evolution and uses of the designated structures and sites from the construction period to the present. In addition, the requirements provide that other historical data pertinent to the structures and setting but not to the development project that is not already in a Historic Resource Study may be included in the report. Thus, this report includes some sections of such material that were specifically requested by Sam Holmes, Chief of Interpretation at Gateway. These sections are:

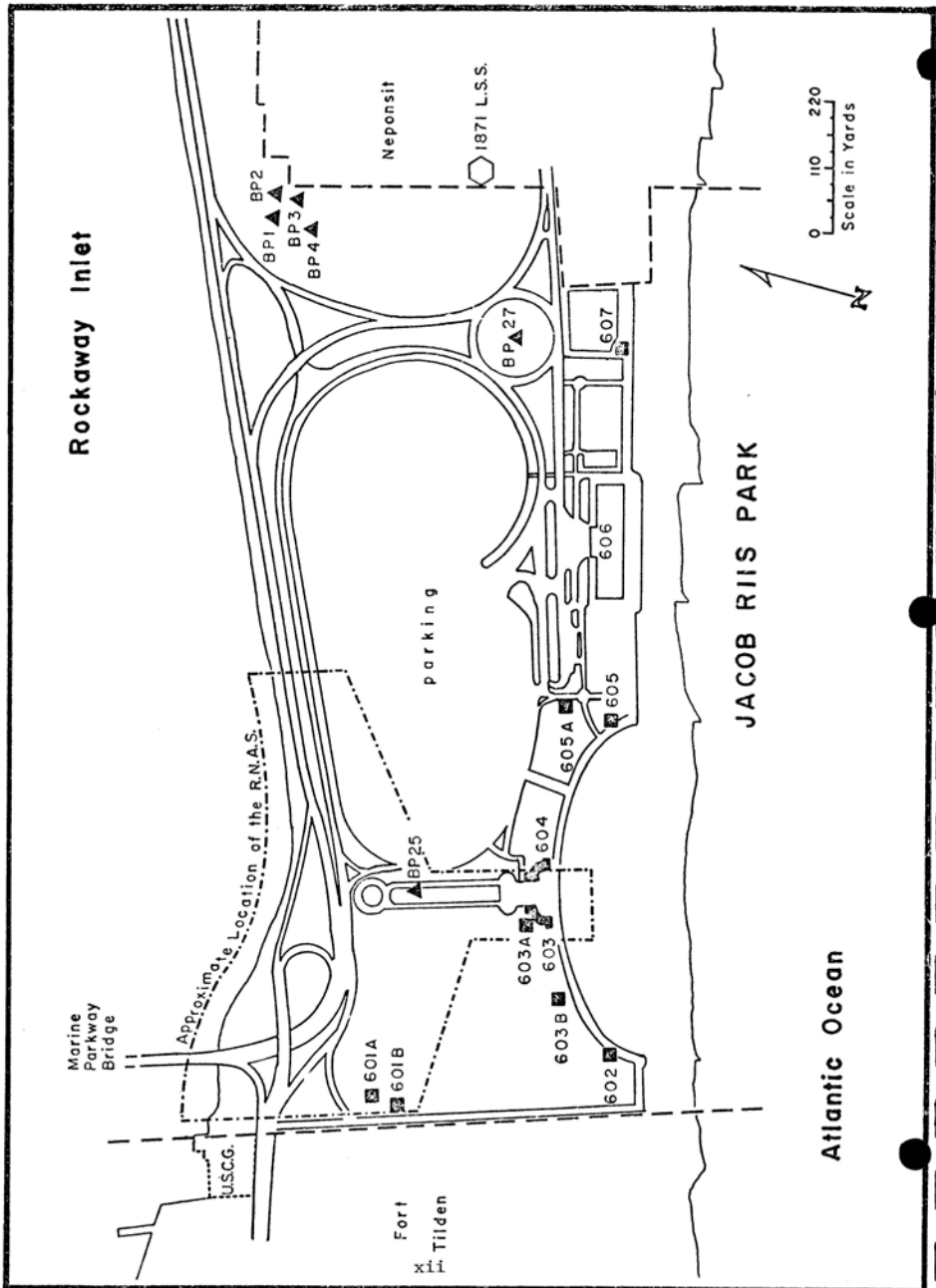
1. Formation of Rockaway Peninsula/problems and solutions to beach erosion.
2. Role Jacob Riis played in acquisition and development of park/relationship of Riis to recreation philosophies in general.
3. Short history and development of Rockaway Naval Air Station.
4. Events surrounding opening of Riis Park.
5. Early plans for recreational development and activities in Riis Park.

A number of persons have assisted in the preparation of this report. Special thanks are due to Superintendent Herbert S. Cables, Jr., and his staff at Gateway. Those who were of help at the park headquarters were Sam Holmes and Deryl B. Stone, Supervisory Park Ranger of the Breezy Point Unit, both of whom provided suggestions for research and made available their park files for my perusal. Frank D. Escalet, Park Ranger (Environmental Education) at the Breezy Point Unit, not only made his documentary and photographic files available to me but also conducted me on an extensive guided tour of the facilities at Jacob Riis Park.

Harlan D. Unrau
May 1, 1979

STATEMENT OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Jacob Riis Park, located near the western end of the Rockaway Peninsula in Queens County, New York, is historically significant as a relatively unaltered example of a publicly-planned and designed municipal bathing beach in the 1930's. Named after Jacob A. Riis, a journalist and social reformer who did much to alleviate the plight of the New York City slums, the park was established to provide an inner-city beach and other non-commercial recreational facilities for the residents of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens. Fully developed by June, 1937, the park was formally laid out with playing fields and recreational courts, an 18-hole "pitch 'n putt" golf course, a large mall and concession area, the largest paved parking facility in the world to date, a boardwalk and promenade that stretched for almost a mile along the beach, and a large bathing pavilion. The bath house is the most important historic structure in the park and is an excellent example of beachfront recreational architecture of the early twentieth century.



KEY TO MAP

HS 601A, 601B	Maintenance Shops and Garage
HS 602	Refreshment Stand
HS 603, 604	Central Mall Buildings
HS 603A	Boiler Room
HS 603B	Golf Course Concession Stand
HS 605	Refreshment Stand
HS 605A	Electrical Hut
HS 606	Bathing Pavilion (bath house)
HS 607	Refreshment Stand





CHAPTER ONE

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WESTERN PORTION OF
THE ROCKAWAY PENINSULA PRIOR TO 1904

A. FORMATION OF ROCKAWAY PENINSULA

The Rockaways, a narrow windswept peninsula jutting from the southern portion of Queens and extending some nine miles along the Atlantic shore line, are in fact the western continuation of the great barrier beach running along the southern shore of Long Island.¹ As far as can be determined, the western extremity of the Rockaway Peninsula, on which Jacob Riis Park is located, did not exist until the mid-nineteenth century. It was not until the period 1841-55 that land existed as far west as the present eastern portions of the park, and it was not until the late 1870's that land above the high water line as far west as the present western portions of the park grounds had been formed by the westward accretion of sand. In fact, it was not until the early twentieth century that the westward accretion of sand peculiar to the Rockaway Peninsula had progressed as far west as its present terminus at Rockaway Point.²

A report entitled "Beach Erosion at Jacob Riis Park, Long Island, N.Y." prepared by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in cooperation with the New York City Department of Parks in January 1936 summarized the westward extension of the Rockaway Peninsula. The report which was the first beach erosion examination performed on the Long Island shore stated:

Maps of surveys made by the United States Coast
and Geodetic Survey were obtained for 1835, 1855, 1878,

1. Federal Writers' Project (American Guide Series), New York City Guide (New York, 1970), p. 591, and Vincent F. Seyfried, The Long Island Railroad: A Comprehensive History (Garden City, 1966), p. 1.

2. "Map of Rockaway Peninsula from Rockaway Point to Nassau County Showing Changes in Atlantic Coast Line for Various Periods" (City of New York, Borough of Queens, Office of the President, Topographical Bureau, 1917).

1927, and 1934. The high-water shore lines in the vicinity of Jacob Riis Park, for the different surveys, were superimposed in order that the changes which have taken place since 1835 may be readily apparent (pl. 3). The survey of 1835 shows that the area which is now Jacob Riis Park was then wholly under water and its eastern boundary was located about 2,000 feet west of the tip of the east spit of Rockaway Inlet. The park covers what was at that time the gorge of the inlet. The survey of 1855 shows that the east point spit had extended westward about 5,000 feet during the 20-year period but the park area under consideration was still mostly under water. By 1878 the spit had moved west for an additional distance of about 1 mile and the Jacob Riis Park area was almost entirely above the highwater line. During the following 49-year period (1878-1927) the shore line along the park front had become straight by cutting back 60 to 80 feet along the eastern half of the beach and building out from 0 to 400 feet at the western end. From 1927 to 1934 the shoreline shows very little movement as beach-protective structures had been placed along this and adjacent beaches before this period. The major changes in the shoreline, as shown by these surveys, have been the extension of Rockaway Point with a slight erosion of the older portion of the shoreline....

The surveys show that the western movement of Rockaway Point, the east spit of Rockaway Inlet (pl. 4) has been continuous and large. Between 1835 and 1934 the point extended westward for a distance of 23,000 feet, representing as an average annual growth of about

230 feet.... The growing spit indicates a large quantity of sand moving westward along the shore.³

B. HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THAT PORTION OF THE ROCKAWAY PENINSULA ON WHICH JACOB RIIS PARK IS LOCATED

By 1878 the westward accretion of sand on the Rockaway Peninsula had formed land above the high water line as far west as the present western boundaries of Jacob Riis Park.⁴ In 1880 the trestle which today still traverses Jamaica Bay was completed and put into service by the New York, Woodhaven, and Rockaway Railroad Company, thus providing a direct line from Brooklyn to the Rockaways. This railroad contributed to the accelerated development of the peninsula which had begun in the 1860's as a result of the completion of the South Side Railroad from Valley

3. U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Rivers and Harbors, Beach Erosion at Jacob Riis Park, Long Island, N.Y., H. Doc. 397, 74th Cong., 2d sess., January 17, 1936. Copies of Plates 3 and 4 mentioned in the text of the quotation may be seen on the following page. Also see Marion J. Klawoon, Cradle of the Corps: A History of the New York District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1775-1975 (New York, 1977), p. 233.

4. For a history of the development of the Rockaway Peninsula the following works should be consulted: Alfred H. Bellot, History of the Rockaways From the Year 1865 to 1917 (Far Rockaway, 1917); John W. Hean, "The United States Coast Guard," Rockaway Review (1942), 62, 84-85; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Gateway National Recreation Area: An Inventory of Cultural Resources," by John Milner, Associates, 1978, pp. 83-91; Seyfried, The Long Island Railroad; and Benjamin F. Thompson, History of Long Island, 2 vols. (Port Washington, 1962).

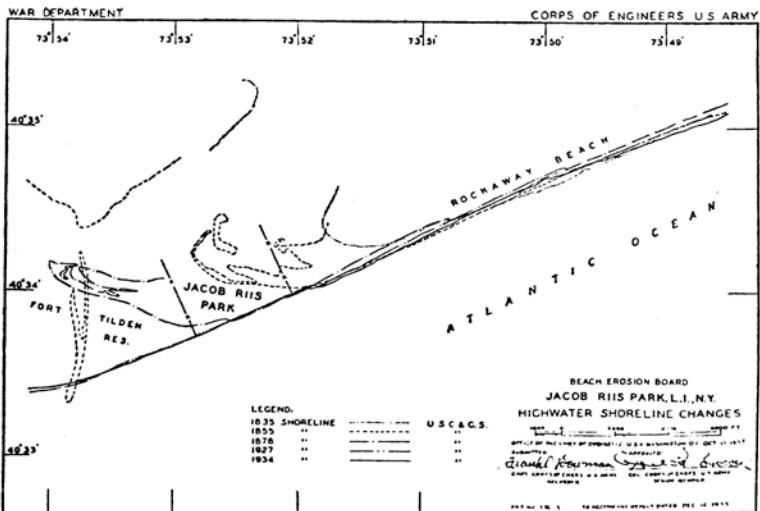


PLATE 3.

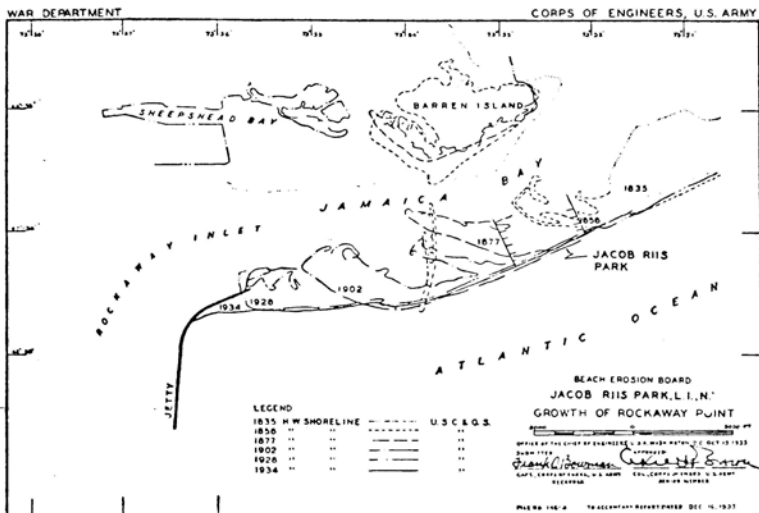


PLATE 4.

Stream to Far Rockaway in 1869.⁵ The construction of the New York, Woodhaven, and Rockaway Railroad also played a significant role in the ensuing beach, recreational, and park land development boom on the western extremity of the Rockaway Peninsula that foreshadowed the layout of Jacob Riis Park.

During the summer of 1879 a syndicate of New York bankers and western capitalists matured plans for a grandiose project to use the new railroad as an excursion access road to convey New York vacationers to a 750-800 acre outdoor playground by the sea that they proposed to build on the Rockaway Peninsula from contemporary Rockaway Park to the then Point (in the vicinity of the western portion of contemporary Jacob Riis Park). The syndicate, known as the Rockaway Beach Improvement Company, consisted of the following individuals:

Collis P. Huntington, President,
Central Pacific Railroad
Jerome B. Chaffee, U.S. Senator,
State of Colorado
David H. Moffat, President,
First National Bank of Denver
H.C. Lord, Cincinnati
Benjamin E. Smith, President,
Cleveland, Columbus and Indiana
Central Railroad and contractor for
New York, Woodhaven and Rockaway
Railroad
Henry Y. Attrill, New York banker
Fish & Hatch, investment bankers
(William B. Hatch, President)
Morton, Bliss & Co. (Levi P. Morton,
President)

5. Bellot, History of the Rockaways, pp. 34-35, and Seyfried, The Long Island Railroad, pp. 5-6. By 1875 the South Side Railroad had been extended westward to contemporary Beach 107th Street. Prior to this, travelers to the Rockaways either had to come by stage via Hempstead or by ferry from Canarsie to Rockaway Beach.

Frederick Taylor, President,
The Continental Bank⁶

During the summer of 1879 Henry Y. Attrill, acting for the syndicate, purchased some 750 acres of land on the western extremity of the Rockaway Peninsula. On July 18 he purchased about 150 acres (from a point mid-way between contemporary 109th and 110th Streets to about 125th Street) from Dewitt C. Littlejohn for \$80,000. Later on August 20 he bought another 600-acre parcel (from contemporary 125th Street to the then Point including much of present Jacob Riis Park) from Aaron A. DeGrauw of Jamaica for \$200,000. On this barren, windswept tract the syndicate proposed to lay out a landscaped park of "hills and valleys" on which would be erected several hotels, and pavilions, accommodations for both surf and stillwater bathing, a race course, and a theatre. A three-mile narrow gauge railroad would wind around the edge of the beach to carry sightseers at a nominal price to all the points of interest. At the tip of the Point (in the vicinity of the western portion of contemporary Jacob Riis Park) a pavilion was planned where persons could sun bathe and enjoy the scenery. Between contemporary 111th and 116th Streets the world's largest hotel, consisting of 1,000 rooms and having an ocean frontage of nearly 1,200 feet, would have a commanding view of the beach.⁷

Later in 1879 the syndicate obtained the services of Frederick Law Olmstead, the well-known landscape architect and urban park planner, to make a preliminary survey of its tract on the Rockaway Peninsula preparatory to laying out a park. Olmstead noted that

6. Seyfried, The Long Island Railroad, pp. 7, 10-12.

7. Ibid., pp. 12, 15.

the peninsula would be plagued by the stench of decaying fish from Barren Island whenever the wind blew from that direction. He found the area to consist primarily of low, broken sandhills with some slight vegetation, small bushes, and clumps of cedar trees and of low-lying swamps that were breeding areas for flies and mosquitoes. He observed that

North of the line of dunes which protects it [the peninsula] in storms from the wash of the surf and, from a line half a mile from the east end to the extreme west, very little of the property is a foot above ordinary high-water and probably nine tenths of it is occasionally flooded....the westernmost part is liable to be swept by the sea...the extreme point is gaining, however, and there is good reason to expect that it will continue to gain both in extent and elevation.

The western extremity of the peninsula, according to Olmstead, was a better bathing beach than Coney Island and old Rockaway Beach to the east. At Rockaway Point

for a mile and a half the beach has a more regular slope. The breakers ordinarily reach it more unbroken and with equal force of wind are a little larger. There is usually a larger proportion of powdered shell in the composition of the surface stratum; it is consequently firmer, finer in grain, and it is less apt to be pebbly....

Beyond a point a mile and a half to the westward of your east line the beach has a longer slope, but for another mile and a half is still an excellent bathing beach.... At a distance of about a hundred and fifty yards from the shore and parallel with it is a bar upon

which, with the ordinary afternoon sea-breeze, the waves pass undisturbed, but if the wind freshens and the waves run higher and deeper, they are checked or broken upon it and consequently come to the shore with abated force.⁸

In August 1881 a portion of the hotel was opened to the public at a cost of \$1,250,000. By that time, however, the financially-strapped Rockaway Beach Improvement Company had dropped its plans for a park and had gone into a receivership with Drexel, Morgan and Company, the Philadelphia banking house, and Cyrus P. Huntington, son of Collis P. Huntington, emerging as the majority bondholders. In 1882 the property was again purchased by the creditors and the newly reorganized Rockaway Beach Improvement Company managed to attract some additional backing from William B. Hatch, Levi P. Morton, Collis P. Huntington, and Frederick Taylor. After several more attempts to reorganize the company and complete the hotel, most of the land of the Rockaway Beach Improvement Company was sold to Drexel, Morgan and Company in 1883 and in 1889 the hotel was dismantled.⁹

Despite this financial disaster the Rockaway Peninsula continued to develop in the 1890s. A boardwalk was constructed from Holland to Seaside in 1893 and the Rockaway Beaches became increasingly popular as summer resort areas. In 1897 an electric trolley line was completed from Far Rockaway to Neponsit, aiding in

8. Albert Fein, ed., Landscape into Cityscape: Frederick Law Olmstead's Plans for a Greater New York City (Ithaca, 1967) pp. 301-325.

9. Seyfried, The Long Island Railroad, pp. 29-33.

the subsequent residential development of Belle Harbor and Neponsit and increasing the potential recreational value of the undeveloped land to the west of Neponsit.¹⁰

The Rockaway Point area, west of Neponsit, witnessed its first development around 1900 when families began to erect tents and a few frame buildings in the vicinity. Two communities, known as Roxbury and Rockaway Point, began to form on land, known as the "Harriman Tract", which was rented from the Rockaway Point Company. This company in turn leased the land from the Rockaway Pacific Corporation, a subsidiary of Collis P. Huntington's Southern Pacific Railroad which had acquired title to all the land west of the United States Coast Guard station in November 1897.¹¹

At the same time Edward P. Hatch had acquired title to a 1,000-acre parcel just east of the "Herriman Tract" that consisted of undeveloped upland, meadow land, and marshland.¹² He purchased a 350-acre piece of land, known as the "Hatch tract," and an adjoining 650-acre plot, known as the "Bell Harbor tract" for \$150,000 at judicial sale and thus became the owner of nearly 2 1/3 miles of ocean beach frontage. On the "Hatch tract" would be

10. Bellot, History of the Rockaways, p. 106.

11. Breezy Point Cooperative, Inc., 1969 Annual Report (New York, 1969), n.p.; Spargs to McNulty, October 14, 1935, Jacob Riis Park Land Files, Park Lands Division, New York City Parks and Recreation Department; and Department of Parks, City of New York, Queens, Report for the Year Ending 31st December 1912 (New York, 1913), p. 299.

12. Atlas of the Borough of Queens, 4th and 5th Wards, City of New York, Published by E. Belcher Hyde, 1901.

located Jacob Riis Park and on the "Bell Harbor tract" would be located the Neponsit and Belle Harbor real estate developments.¹³

13. Report for the Year Ending 31st December 1912, p. 299, and New York City, Department of Parks, Topographical Division, Borough of Queens, "Report of Title Search of Jacob Riis Park (Seaside Park) to Accompany Map Q-T-49-301," December 23, 1936, in Jacob Riis Park Land Files, Park Lands Division, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.





CHAPTER TWO

ACQUISITION OF SEASIDE PARK BY THE CITY OF
NEW YORK: 1904-1912

A. CAMPAIGN TO ACQUIRE PARK: 1904-1911

In 1902 and 1903 there were several attempts by New York City officials to establish a municipally-owned oceanfront bathing beach and recreational area on Staten Island and the recently-burned Dreamland section of Coney Island. However, the first resolution in favor of laying out a public waterfront park near Rockaway Point was approved by the Local Board of Estimate and Apportionment of the Jamaica District in February 1904. Acting on a local petition, this body voted favorably to establish a park having a 7,000-foot ocean frontage.¹⁴

In May 1904 agitation on behalf of this proposal was begun by the East Side Civic Club, an organization whose secretary was Charles B. Stover, the New York City Parks Commissioner. Later as president of this civic group and as president of the Outdoor Recreation League, Stover devoted several years time to persuading city officials to acquire a tract near Rockaway Point.¹⁵

The matter first came up in the New York City Board of Estimate and Apportionment in September 1904. This body adopted a resolution proposing "to change the map of the city by laying out a public park" at Rockaway, and a public hearing on the proposal was held in November at the conclusion of which the matter was referred to the Board's Committee on Small Parks. However, the park plan lay dormant as the Mayor suspected that a city official would receive one-third of the purchase price.¹⁶

14. Report for the Year Ending 31st December, 1912, p. 299.

15. New York Times, October 5, 1911.

16. American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, 1921 (Albany, 1922), p. 30.

Interest in the project was revived in 1905 by John W. Brannon, President of Bellevue and Allied Hospitals, who proposed utilizing the Rockaway beach not only for a park but also as a site for fresh air hospitals to treat poor children suffering from non-pulmonary tuberculosis and convalescent homes for patients from the overcrowded city hospitals. After subsequent discussions the city officials came to an informal understanding with the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor (AICP), an organization under the leadership of Jacob A. Riis and William H. Allen that maintained the Bellevue and Allied Hospitals as well as the experimental Sea Breeze Hospital at Coney Island. The 45-bed Sea Breeze facility had been opened in 1904 as the first institution in the United States demonstrating the therapeutic and rehabilitating effects of fresh sea-air treatment for children suffering from bone and glandular tuberculosis. However, there was an urgent need for a larger hospital to treat a greater proportion of the estimated 5,000 poor children in New York City suffering from the disease. Accordingly, a bargain was struck whereby the city would attempt to buy the site for the hospital and park and the AICP would build and equip the hospital with funds to be received from a subscription drive. Estimating the cost of the hospital to be \$250,000, Riis and Allen persuaded John D. Rockefeller to donate half of the amount on the condition that others matched his gift. In September 1905 the AICP received its first gift of \$25,000 from an anonymous Wall Street broker and soon other donations came in from prominent individuals such as Jacob H. Schiff (\$5,000), Andrew Cornegie (\$10,000) and George H.F. Schrader (\$19,850) as well as 364 contributions ranging in size from 25 cents to \$500.¹⁷

17. Report for the Year Ending 31st December, 1912, p. 299; James B. Lane, Jacob A. Riis and the American City (Port Washington, 1974), pp. 180-181; Jacob A. Riis, "The Story of Sea Breeze," Outlook, CVII (May 9, 1914), 85-88; and New York Times, July 28, 1911.

The year 1906 saw significant movement toward the establishment of a municipal beach near Rockaway Point. On January 1 Mayor McClellan recommended speedy provision for fresh air homes for children and convalescent patients from the city hospitals and suggested three beaches, one being Rockaway, which he thought could be acquired at a reasonable price.¹⁸ In March Edward P. Hatch made known his desire to sell the "Hatch tract", which had an ocean frontage of some 7,000 feet and a similar frontage on Jamaica Bay, to the City of New York for \$1,000,000 provided the authorities took prompt action.¹⁹ On May 15 the New York state legislature enacted "An Act to Establish and Maintain a Seaside Park for the Health and Recreation of the Citizens of the City of New York" at the urging of numerous civic and charitable groups. The act provided that the City of New York could acquire a beach inside or outside the city limits at a cost not to exceed \$2,500,000 and could lease portions of the park property to benevolent societies for the erection of hospitals.²⁰

A large public hearing on the establishment of a seaside park for the "poor" of New York City was held before the Board of Estimate on June 1, 1906, at which 77 civic and charitable organizations were represented. The Rockaway site received

18. Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, 1921, p. 30.

19. "Hatch to Stover, March 12, 1906," Exhibit A, "Telewana Park," Report for the Year Ending 31st December, 1912, p. 303. At the same time the Southern Pacific Railroad interests offered to sell an adjacent 400-acre parcel of the "Harriman tract" to the City of New York for \$2,000,000. New York Times, June 2, 1906.

20. "An Act to Establish and Maintain a Seaside Park for the Health and Recreation of the Citizens of the City of New York" (Chapter 456, Laws, 1906), Exhibit B, "Telewana Park," Report for the Year Ending 31st December, 1912 pp. 303-305.

strong support although Coney Island, Long Beach, and a Staten Island location received favorable mention. The advantages of the Rockaway site that made it the prime choice of those in attendance were as follows: (1) the surf there was adding 100 acres of land to the peninsula per year; (2) it was the most accessible location of the three sites to the "poor" of New York City; (3) its surf and beach were superior to the other available sites; and (4) it had the largest area of any available waterfront beach within the limits of New York City. Since the Hatch and Harriman tracts, which had been assessed at a value of \$200,000, were being offered for sale at a cost of \$3,000,000, the majority of those present spoke in favor of acquisition by condemnation.²¹

The acquisition of a seaside park came closer to reality in 1907. On March 8 the Board adopted a resolution to lay out Rockaway Beach Park pursuant to section 442 of the city charter after hearing a report from a special committee

that none of the sites proposed is as desirable or available as that which was first suggested, namely, the portion of Rockaway Beach lying immediately east of Rockaway Point.... and that this will be the last opportunity for the city to acquire an ocean front park with a fine bathing beach within the city limits. . . .²²

On March 15 the Board formally accepted the offer of the AICP to build a \$250,000 hospital for sufferers of non-pulmonary tuberculosis provided the city would maintain the institution

21. New York Times, June 2, 1906, and Ibid., Editorial, June 3, 1906.

22. Report for the Year Ending 31st December 1912, p. 300.

through the supervision of the Board of Trustees of Bellevue and Allied Hospitals.²³

Failing to agree with the owners of the beach property on a purchase price, the Board of Estimate on October 18, 1907, voted to acquire the property by condemnation. However, the financial panic that occurred in the fall of 1907 put an end to plans for any costly city acquisitions, and on November 1 the Corporation Counsel was instructed to take no further action until another vote of the board.²⁴

The matter of property acquisition lay dormant for two years until it was revived on November 26, 1909, by a petition to the Board of Estimate signed by numerous distinguished citizens and philanthropic organizations. The petitioners urged the acquisition of the park site at Rockaway as "the most available, if not the only possible, site remaining" for a public beach before the cost of the property would become prohibitive. The petitioners encouraged only the acquisition of the 350-acre "Hatch tract" which since the death of Edward P. Hatch in 1908 had been transferred to the control of the Neponsit Realty Company. Although the value of the property had been appraised variously at \$850,000 and \$1,050,000 in January 1909, the new owners were willing to sell the land for \$1,500,000. According to the New York Times, the beach would afford

23. "New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor to Mayor of New York, November 26, 1906," and "Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, March 15, 1907," Exhibits C and D, respectively, "Telewana Park," Report for the Year Ending 31st December, 1912, pp. 305-306.

24. Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, 1921, p. 31.

to tenement house dwellers a seaside park, where they could enjoy the ocean breezes in Summer under less crowded conditions than is possible at present. Moreover, free bathing houses would be provided for them. . . .

Every summer the charitable societies take for a few days from the crowded districts of the city to the seaside from 150,000 to 200,000 women and children. Applications have poured in on them in far greater numbers than it was possible for them to accommodate, and it was feared that with the steadily falling of possible bathing beaches into private hands their exploitation for gain will soon make it impossible to increase this work except at prohibitive cost. These ocean excursions are made not only to bring a little brightness into the hard lives of the tenement house dwellers, but also to build up the health of tired women and sickly children, whose hopes of restoration to vigor depend almost entirely on some such chance to breathe the fresh air for a time.²⁵

During the next two years further delays were experienced in the acquisition of the seaside park at Rockaway. It was charged that the park would be inaccessible to the city's poor, that the price was much higher than for surrounding land, and that the resolutions of the Board of Estimate to date for acquiring the site were ill-defined and illegal.²⁶ Questions of clear title to the

25. "Petition in Re Rockaway Park, November 26, 1909," Exhibit E, "Telewana Park," Report for the Year Ending 31st December 1912, pp. 306-311, and New York Times, November 29, 1909.

26. New York Times, December 3, 17, 1908.

property arose and there was some uncertainty as to claims to the tract of land by the federal and state governments.²⁷ By August 1910 the various alleged title claims were settled and the Neponsit Realty Company was confirmed as the owner of the former Hatch property. In October the City of New York agreed to erect a bulkhead and fill in its rear to protect and stabilize the beachfront of the Neponsit Realty Company's property.²⁸

B. ACQUISITION OF PARK: 1911-1912

During the summer of 1911 the final steps were taken by the City of New York to acquire a seaside park on the western end of the Rockaway Peninsula. This action was prompted by pressure from the New York Parks and Playgrounds Association. On June 17 that organization urged the city to purchase "a tract of 250 acres at Rockaway Beach, with a shore frontage of about one mile, for a seashore park," a portion of which would also serve as a site for convalescent and children's hospitals. The Association set up a Seaside Park Committee, chaired by Jacob A. Riis, to arouse public interest in the project, and it was agreed to hold a public meeting at Cooper Union.²⁹

The July 5 meeting at Cooper Union, led by Riis, adopted a report urging city officials to take immediate action to acquire an oceanfront park. The report set forth the advantages of both the Coney Island and the "Hatch tract" beaches and warned the city that

27. Report for the Year Ending 31st December, 1912, pp. 302-303, and New York Times, December 18, 1909.

28. "Report of Title Search of Jacob Riis Park," pp. 49, 89.

29. New York Times, June 17, 1911.

unless the opportunity to buy one or the other is now seized and the money provided for in corporate stock the matter must go over for another year, with the chances of the city's having to pay a third more than whichever one the city selects can now be bought for. . . . the city is faced once more with the question: Shall an ocean side park be acquired for its people? Alone among all the seaboard cities of the world it has none. . . . close to the city and now within its corporate limits are matchless ocean beaches that could have been bought for a song a generation ago. . . . today two sites are offered, and very probably for the last time New York has the opportunity it has so often allowed to pass. . . .³⁰

After receiving strong support from the Aldermanic Committee on Public Parks and the Corporate Stock Budget Committee the matter of acquiring the Dreamland property at Coney Island and the "Hatch tract" on the Rockaway Peninsula went before the Board of Estimate on July 27.³¹ A special committee, consisting of the president of the Board of Aldermen, the Comptroller, and the presidents of the Boroughs of Manhattan and Queens, issued the following report concerning the Rockaway site:

Two sites at the west end of Rockaway were considered by your Committee. One, containing approximately 250 acres, now owned by the Neponsit Realty Company and adjoining its development, "Neponsit", immediately west of Belle Harbor, constituting the remaining and undeveloped

30. Ibid., July 9, 1911.

31. Ibid., July 13, 14, 1911.

part of the Hatch Tract before referred to after the cession to the Federal Government of the strip before mentioned; the other, known as the "Harriman Tract", owned by the Southern Pacific Railway Company, comprising about 700 acres lying west of the U.S. Government strip and forming the extreme westerly end of the Rockaway Peninsula. This latter site shares many advantages with the Neponsit property. A distinguishing feature, however, is the constant accretion to the land whereby the area has steadily increased and will probably continue to increase, through tidal action. This natural agent, it is urged by some, may be supplemented by engineering skill so as still further to augment the natural accretion and control its direction, at the same time improving the contour of the beach front, which at present is undesirable, if not dangerous to bathing purposes, owing to constantly shifting gulleys and sand bars. Because of engineering problems requiring solution and involving differences of opinion as to methods and cost of any plan to develop this property to a proper point of usefulness as a seaside park and further, because of the probable large initial cost of acquiring the property--owners are asking \$5,000,000 at private sale--your Committee deems it inadvisable to consider its acquisition by the City at this time. THE NEPONSIT tract of about 250 acres lies east of the Government strip and west of the Neponsit development. It may be secured, if the City authorities act promptly, for not more than \$1,225,000 with interest at 6 percent, from July 26, 1911. It comprises a stretch of nearly 5000 feet of regular shelving beach on the Ocean side and something more than this on Jamaica Bay, owing to the more irregular

contour of the bay side. Its average width is about 2500 feet. The Neponsit Company has already contracted with the Federal Government to build a macadamized road 50 feet in width adjoining the Government strip from the Ocean to Jamaica Bay. This road, already dedicated to street purposes, will be about 2600 feet in length. Washington Avenue, 100 feet wide, is not included in the area under consideration, but there is a perpetual right of way over it. This Avenue runs throughout the length of the property and extends over the Neponsit Company's development and Belle Harbor. The Company has also agreed to macadamize this avenue. The Beach front is perfect and needs no treatment whatever for park purposes. The bay front will in the course of time require filling in landward of the bulkhead line. This, it is thought, may be done in connection with the dredging of Jamaica Bay. The property is very desirable in every way for a seaside park, and in addition the area is sufficiently large to accommodate the City's needs for sites for convalescent homes and seaside hospitals.

Your Committee is of the opinion that this property should be acquired by the City as soon as it is legally possible to do so. The Company prefers that title be acquired through condemnation proceedings. Under date of July 26, 1911, the Neponsit Realty Company offered two options to the City. The first option gives the City the right to buy at private sale all the property at \$1,225,000. The second option gives the City the right to buy for \$1,225,000 any award that the Commissioners in the condemnation proceedings may make, no matter how great the sum. The consideration for these options is that the Board of Estimate and Apportionment, shall at

the meeting of July 27, 1911, direct the Corporation Counsel to begin condemnation proceedings, and that every preliminary action necessary to condemnation proceedings be begun.

We recommend that this Board accept both options and that the resolutions hereto attached be adopted. These resolutions rescind the resolution adopted October 18, 1907, providing for the laying out of a park at Rockaway, and provide for new proceedings toward the laying out of a park also for a public hearing as provided by law, and for condemnation proceedings, and also for the acceptance of the two options of the Neponsit Realty Company.

The report prompted the Board to accept the two options submitted by the Neponsit Realty Company and adopted new resolutions for laying out the park at Rockaway.³²

Later, on August 28, 1911, Chief Engineer Nelson P. Lewis submitted a map comprising the two parcels described in the resolutions of July 27. Together the parcels constituted

an undivided area extending for 4,900 feet along the ocean front and reaching from the Atlantic Ocean to Jamaica Bay, with a width from the ocean to the bay varying from about 2200 feet to 2600 feet and including an area of 262.577 acres. The last-named area included

32. "Report of Title Search of Jacob Riis Park," pp. 2-13, and New York Times, July 28, 1911. On the same date, the Board voted to acquire the Dreamland property at Coney Island for \$1,500,000. See Appendix A for the boundary descriptions of the two contiguous land parcels to be acquired for the Rockaway oceanfront park.

Washington avenue, a street 100 feet in width extending through the entire length of the tract and covering 11.32 acres, and also an unnamed street fifty feet in width adjoining the land of the United States Government on the west of the proposed park amounting to 2.9 acres.... the total assessed value of the land included within the proposed park is, as nearly as can be determined, \$490,000.³³

The final steps toward acquisition of the municipal beach were taken on September 21, 1911, when the Board of Estimate adopted the map laying out the public seaside park on the Rockaway Peninsula. After the meeting, Riis, whose Seaside Park Committee had sparked the final drive for the park's acquisition, submitted a letter to the New York Times stating:

The all important thing now is the Mayor's approval of the change in the map. This will realize the hopes of the people of New York for a park on the seashore--a hope long deferred. Everything depends on his action this week.³⁴

After the Mayor approved the map on September 28, the Board met on October 19 and voted to commence condemnation proceedings at the Rockaway site. After the vote, Riis told the members of his Seashore Park Committee that "we may now disperse." Five days

33. Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, 1921, p. 31, and New York World, September 1, 1911. A copy of the map may be seen in Appendix B.

34. New York Times, September 21, 25, 1911, and "Report of Title Search of Jacob Riis Park," pp. 14-16.

later, John A. Kingsbury, the new general agent for the AICP, thanked Riis for his "endless enthusiasm and tireless endeavor" on behalf of "the many little sufferers."³⁵

The Board of Estimate directed the Corporation Counsel to acquire title to the property by condemnation on December 14. On March 21, 1912, the title to the property was vested in the City of New York. Altogether, the acquisition costs amounted to \$1,250,000 (for awards), \$66,458.33 (for interest), and \$13,572.02 (for surveying and preparation of map, etc.) for a total of \$1,330,030.35 or more than \$5,000 per acre. On March 25, 1913, the new public park at Rockaway Beach, having no official name but commonly referred to as Seaside Park, was transferred to the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Parks. On April 14 the final decree of condemnation was issued by the Supreme Court of the State of New York.³⁶

35. Lane, Riis and the American City, p. 182, and American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, Seventeenth Annual Report, 1912, American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society (Albany, 1912), pp. 138-139.

36. "Report of Title Search of Jacob Riis Park," pp. 17-24; Report for the Year Ending 31st December, 1912, pp. 296, 312; Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, 1921, p. 31; "Riis Park, Queens-Acquisition," Jacob Riis Park Land Files, Park Lands Division, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation; New York City, Department of Parks, Minutes of Park Board of the Department of Parks of the City of New York for the Year Ending December 31, 1913, p. 108; and John Purroy Mitchel and William A. Prendergast, The Facts About Rockaway Park and Dreamland (New York, 1917), p. 19. A copy of the technical boundary description of the park may be seen in Appendix C.



CHAPTER THREE

EARLY DEVELOPMENT IN THE NEW SEASIDE PARK:
1913-1917

In May 1914, only several weeks before his death, Jacob A. Riis had an article published in which he described the park that he had done so much to acquire for the people of New York. He observed:

It stretches westward between bay and ocean beyond the summer towns of Belle Harbor and Neponsit, a country of tumbled sand-hills overgrown with beach grass and fragrant bayweed that may easily be transformed into attractive parkland. . . . the tract is reached at present from the Pennsylvania station by way of the Long Island Railroad across the salt meadows of Jamaica Bay; by the Brooklyn Rapid transit; and in summer by steamboats from the Battery. These routes are all too expensive, the round trip costing from thirty to fifty-five cents or even more; but this fact was deliberately ignored in the purchase. Once the park is underway cheap fares will come of themselves; or if they do not, will be made to come.³⁷

Although there was little development in Riis Park during the pre-World War I period, the park increasingly became a popular summer bathing beach. The first real growth and popularity of the park to be documented occurred in 1916 when it was reported that hundreds of single-day camping permits had been granted. One permit was issued to the Turn Verein Vorwärts of Brooklyn to establish a temporary camp for up to 300 children near Jamaica Bay at the eastern end of the park.³⁸

37. Riis, "Story of Sea Breeze," 85-88.

38. New York City, Department of Parks, Annual Report - 1916 (New York, 1917), p. 287.

In the pre-World War I years four principal projects were undertaken in the new public Seaside Park at Rockaway. These included the adoption of a plan for the development of recreational and beach facilities, a new name for the park, the construction of beach stabilization structures, and the construction of a hospital for children suffering from non-pulmonary tuberculosis.

A. ADOPTION OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR PARK

Plans for the development of the new park were not long delayed. In October 1913 a competition was arranged, open to all landscape architects and engineers, each of whom was to submit a plan for the improvement of the park. Fifteen designs were submitted and a board of judges selected six for which substantial money prizes were awarded. The first prize of \$500 went to Richard Schermerhorn, Jr., of Brooklyn. Carl F. Pilat, landscape architect of the New York City Parks Department, prepared a plan which included the most desirable features from the six. The plan provided for bathing beaches on both the ocean and bay fronts and a maritime basin jutting in from the bay for swimming and boating. The plan also called for picnic grounds, a lagoon for boating, three playfields, tennis courts, a croquet lawn, playgrounds and concessions for children, a bandstand, four boat houses, and two restaurants and adjacent parking areas on the north side of Washington Avenue. A pier, boardwalk, two bath houses, and two shelters were to be built on Jamaica Bay, and on the ocean front, south of Washington Avenue, provision was made for two bath houses and an esplanade. The oceanfront development was to be flanked on either side by space reserved for the open-air children's and convalescent hospitals. Despite almost immediate approval of the plan, little development took place in the park until the early

1930's because of problems arising from seashore erosion, budgeting constraints, and the outbreak of World War I.³⁹

B. CHANGE OF PARK'S NAME TO JACOB RIIS PARK

Shortly after the death of Jacob A. Riis on May 26, 1914, a movement was started to name some New York City park in his honor. The first suggestion was to change the name of Columbus Park, formerly Mulberry Bend Park, to Jacob A. Riis Park as he had been largely responsible for wiping out Mulberry Bend, one of the worst tenement blocks in the city, and building in its place Mulberry Bend Park and the Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood House in 1888. This plan, however, was unsuccessful.⁴⁰

It was then proposed to rename the new public park at Rockaway Beach in honor of Jacob Riis as he had played a prominent role in its establishment. The name of the undeveloped park was somewhat anomalous because it was commonly called "Seaside Park" although it never had been named officially. Under the act authorizing the purchase of the property, the park was designated as Seaside Park, but sometime after it was formally transferred to the New York City Parks Department in March 1912 it became known as Telewana Park, a name whose origin has not been determined. Soon after Park Commissioner John F. Weir assumed office in May 1914, he directed that the actual name given by the state legislature be used. In June the Board of Aldermen began

39. New York City, Department of Parks, Annual Report of the Department of Parks of the City of New York, For the Year 1913 (New York, 1914), pp. 239-240, and New York Times, June 25, 1930. A copy of the Pilat plan may be seen on the following page.

40. American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, Twentieth Annual Report, 1915, of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society (Albany, 1915), p. 147, and Dictionary of American Biography, VIII, 606-608.

consideration of an ordinance to change the name of the park to Jacob Riis Park. After a favorable report from its Committee on Public Thoroughfares, the Board of Aldermen passed the ordinance on December 15, 1914, and the mayor approved the name change on January 4, 1915.⁴¹

Naming the new oceanfront park in honor of Jacob Riis was a fitting memorial to that journalist, author, and city reformer who had long championed the cause of the New York City tenement dwellers and had taken a special interest in alleviating the plight of the slum children. As a resident of nearby Jamaica, he had taken a special interest in the acquisition of the park. A native of Denmark, he immigrated to New York in 1870 at the age of 21 and became a prominent police reporter for the New York Tribune (1877-88) and the New York Evening Sun (1888-99). His activities at police headquarters led Riis to his life's work--the cleansing of the New York slums. Active in the rising tide of Progressivism, the politico socio-economic reform movement that blossomed in America during the late nineteenth century, he became involved in municipal, housing, educational, and social reform. In widely disseminated newspaper and periodical articles, lectures, and books, he pictured the physical wretchedness and the moral degradation of the ghettos, especially of the tenement children, and rallied support for their relief.⁴²

Riis became active in the movement to provide small parks and playgrounds for the New York City poor in June 1897 and is

41. "Report of the Title Search of Jacob Riis Park," p. 40, and Twentieth Annual Report, 1915, of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, p. 147.

42. Dictionary of American Biography, VIII, 606-608. For a more complete biographical sketch of Riis see Appendix D.

considered by many as the "father of the small park movement" and the initiator of today's "vest pocket" parks. In that month he persuaded Mayor Strong to establish a Small Parks Advisory Committee with Abram S. Hewitt, a former New York City mayor, as chairman and himself as secretary. During the next four months, Riis played a leading role in getting the group to examine the entire question of the functions of parks and the steps necessary to achieve those ends rather than merely select park sites. Declaring that parks were vital for the "physical and moral health of the people," the committee's final report included research and recommendations for over a dozen park sites, including a large \$3,500,000 recreation complex on Randall's Island. In addition, the report urged the planning of parks at the outer reaches of the city before rising land prices would make land acquisition prohibitive.

The spirit of the report, which was written by Riis, embodied the views of Friedrich Froebel, a German philosopher and father of the creative play movement, and English social reformers who believed that athletics could cure crime. An advocate of creative play, Riis viewed physical fitness as a necessary attribute of individual well-being and national strength, but he decried regimentation of children's play as unnecessary since youngsters had the imagination to know what was best for them to do. Believing that children became criminals for want of recreational areas, he felt that parks would deter vandalism and gang warfare.

Although only a few of the recommendations in the report were carried out, Riis was successful by 1899 in persuading the New York School Board to maintain 31 playgrounds during the summer, expand its evening school activities to include supervised recreational activities, and operate recreational piers and sand gardens in Central Park and a number of kindergarten centers. By persistent "nagging" at city officials he succeeded in getting many small parks in the crowded inner city areas where there had not

been a "spot of green." Later he almost single-handedly pushed through the New York state legislature the law that "no school shall be built without an adequate playground."⁴³

C. CONSTRUCTION OF BEACH STABILIZATION STRUCTURES

In September 1914 a contract was let to Ralph M. Brown of New York City to build five timber jetties in front of the children's tuberculosis hospital at the east end of Jacob Riis Park to aid in building up the oceanfront and prevent further beach erosion.⁴⁴ Additional jetties were recommended before the beach line could be considered safe. An engineering study of the shifting high water line in the park area revealed that between March 1912 and September 1914 a total of 25.2 acres, or more than one-third of the area between Washington Avenue and the beach, was washed away. Between the turn of the century and 1912 the washing away during the winter and the building up during the summer had kept the entire beach front on a fairly permanent line. However, the recent residential development of Neponsit had disturbed this continuity as the private owners of the town had constructed a system of fifteen 200-foot timber jetties and twenty sand baffles with embedded hedge rows for the protection of their ocean frontage, thereby catching and holding the drifting sand. These beach stabilization structures were injurious to the unprotected beach of Jacob Riis Park since they largely absorbed the natural east-west drift currents along the

43. Lane, Riis and the American City, pp. 123-127, 158-160; Edith Patterson Meyer, "Not Charity, But Justice": The Story of Jacob A. Riis (New York, 1974), pp. 66-77, 162-163; and Louise Ware, Jacob A. Riis: Police Reporter, Reformer, Useful Citizen (New York, 1938), p. 275.

44. New York City, Department of Parks, Minutes of the Park Board of the Department of Parks of the City of New York for the Year Ending December 31, 1914 (New York, 1915), pp. 99-100.

shore of the Rockaway Peninsula. Thus, nothing but a wash of water occurred along the park front, taking away its quota of sand and depositing nothing in return.⁴⁵

A series of violent spring storms in 1915 caused considerable damage to the timber jetties and oceanfront at Jacob Riis Park, the extent of the damage being aggravated by the fact that bulkheads had not been constructed to buttress the jetties. Accordingly, a contract was let in September 1915 to A.M. Hazell, Inc., of New York City for the construction of 580 lineal feet of timber bulkhead and 340 lineal feet of timber jetty and for strengthening 350 lineal feet of existing jetty. A backfill, composed of 1,000 cubic yards of sand, was deposited behind the bulkhead and a six-inch layer of sea grass was planted to cover the fill. Thus, about 1,000 feet of the approximately 4,900-foot long park beach was protected. Within several months, it was noted that the beach stabilization structures had proved their worth by building up the beach some five feet in height and extending out some 200 feet toward the sea. The remaining 3,900 feet of the park shoreline was still unprotected and the ocean surf was getting closer to Washington Avenue in some places on the west end of the park.⁴⁶

The beach stabilization structures at Jacob Riis were extended in 1916. A contract was let to the D. Donegan Company of Brooklyn in September to construct 2,000 lineal feet of timber bulkhead and ten timber jetties consisting of 2,280 lineal feet, all of which was to be backed with 5,000 cubic yards of sand fill. When

45. New York City, Department of Parks, Annual Report - 1914 (New York, 1915), pp. 296, 308, 311-312.

46. New York City, Department of Parks, Annual Report - 1915 (New York, 1916), pp. 303, 318.

the work was completed early in 1917, some 3,000 feet of shore front were protected and about ten acres of land had been reclaimed from the sea.⁴⁷

D. CONSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

In accordance with its agreement with the New York Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, the Board of Estimate formally granted the benevolent organization a 14.43-acre parcel of land in the southeast corner of Jacob Riis Park for the construction of a children's hospital on April 24, 1913. Plans for the new hospital were drawn up by McKim, Mead and White, a noted architectural firm in New York, and groundbreaking ceremonies took place on January 27, 1914. As designed the hospital was to be 1,000 feet in length and house 1,000 patients. Behind the central administration building were to be located the isolation wards, nurses' quarters, gymnasium, school, power house, and convalescent home. Due to the fact that the AICP had only \$250,000 in initial construction funds, the first phase of construction included two of the planned eight pavilions, which would house 180 patients, and the essential part of the administrative plant.⁴⁸

Despite the plans for a 1,000-bed facility, the hospital capacity appears never to have come close to that goal and the plans as


47. Annual Report - 1916, pp. 287, 295-296, and New York City, Department of Parks, Minutes of the Park Board of the Department of Parks of the City of New York for the Year Ending December 31, 1916 (New York, 1917), pp. 70-71, 73.

48. New York City, Department of Parks, Minutes of the Park Board of the Department of Parks of the City of New York for the Year Ending December 31, 1913 (New York, 1914), p. 105; Riis, "Story of Sea Breeze," 85-88; and Lane, Riis and the American City, pp. 181-182.

drawn by McKim, Mead and White were never carried out. By 1922 the Neponsit Beach Hospital for Children, as the hospital had come to be called, had 120 beds and treated 157 patients annually.⁴⁹ Eventually, the hospital complex would consist of a four-story brick building with projecting wings extending toward the beach with separate structures for a school, storage area, garage, and laundry.

49. Henry Isham Hazelton, The Boroughs of Brooklyn and Queens, Counties of Nassau and Suffolk, Long Island, New York, 1609-1924 (4 vols; New York, 1925), II, 1,051, 1,058.





CHAPTER FOUR

DEVELOPMENTS IN JACOB RIIS PARK AND THE
ESTABLISHMENT OF THE ROCKAWAY NAVAL AIR
STATION: 1917-1930

The American entry into World War I in April 1917 led to significant changes in the development of Jacob Riis Park. During the war the New York City Department of Parks issued permits to the Navy to occupy some 94 acres, or more than one-third of the park, for the establishment of a naval air station. From 1917 until 1930, when the naval air station was removed from the park, little in the way of recreational development took place elsewhere on the park grounds, although some improvements were made in the oceanfront stabilization structures and access routes to the municipal beach.

A. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE PARK: 1917-1930

During the period that the Rockaway Naval Air Station occupied a portion of Jacob Riis Park, some improvements were made to the 168-acre part of the park that remained under the jurisdiction of the City of New York. The chief improvements were the repair and extension of the system of beach stabilization structures and the construction of better access roads to the park.

In October 1920 a contract was let to Sam Casolino of Rockaway Beach to repair the bulkheads and jetties at Jacob Riis Park. A severe storm in early December 1918 had caused considerable damage to these structures and had washed away some 24 acres of park land. The project included 425 lineal feet of timber bulkhead, 160 lineal feet of timber jetty, and 1,200 cubic yards of backfill.⁵⁰

50. New York City, Department of Parks, Minutes of the Park Board of the Department of Parks of the City of New York for the Year Ending December 31, 1920 (New York, 1921), p. 76, and New York Times, July 20, 1919.

The Department of Parks was active in encouraging the opening of ferry service between Neponsit and the Flatbush Avenue Extension in Brooklyn. Accordingly, it leased a small portion of land in the northwest corner of Jacob Riis Park to the Department of Plant and Structures for the location of a ferry terminal in January 1925.⁵¹

Work was started in March 1926 on the construction of a transverse road between Washington Avenue and the new ferry to serve as a short cut to the beach. This road, which ran along the west border of the park, had formerly been a 20-foot-wide dilapidated macadam pavement. The new road, constructed by Fleming and Shepard, consisted of a reinforced concrete pavement, forty feet wide, eight inches thick, and laid in slabs approximately ten feet wide and thirty feet long. The new transverse road carried heavy traffic which emptied onto Washington Avenue--a narrow 20-foot wide concrete road running east and west across the park just above the beach front.⁵²

In early 1926 the Parks Department let a contract to the Siebrock Corporation of Rockaway Beach to open a concession at Riis Park. A small one-story frame building was constructed by the corporation on the beach near the western border of the park

51. Taylor to Squire, January 28, 1936, Jacob Riis Park Land Files, Park Lands Division, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.

52. New York City, Department of Parks, Annual Report of the Department of Parks, Brorough of Queens, City of New York, For the Year 1926 (New York, 1926), pp. 13-14, 37, and New York City, Department of Parks, Minutes of the Park Board of the Department of Parks of the City of New York for the Year Ending December 31, 1917 (New York, 1918), pp. 66-67.

just south of the junction of the transverse road and Washington Avenue. The concessionaire rented out beach chairs, lockers, and umbrellas and sold snack foods and drinks.⁵³

The system of beach protective structures which had been constructed along the easterly ocean front of Riis Park in the prewar years was extended to include the westerly portion of the park in 1926-27. The system consisted of groins, 130 feet to 220 feet in length, attached to a bulkhead and spaced about 200 feet apart. A 1936 beach erosion report at the park by the Corps of Engineers described these structures as follows:

The bulkhead is constructed of timber sheet piles with round pile supports, the top and face being covered with a thin shell of reinforced concrete. The sheet piles are 3 by 10 inches, tongued and grooved, 15 feet long, and the round piles are 20 feet long and spaced on 5-foot centers. The top of the bulkhead is about 14 feet above mean low water (pl. 10).

The groins are untreated timber structures of 3- by 10-inch tongued and grooved sheet piles supported by round piles, and it has two upper wales and one lower wale. The sheet piles and round piles are 15 and 20 feet long, respectively, along the inshore length of 75 feet, and 20 and 25 feet for the remaining 145 feet. The round piles supporting the wales are spaced at 4-foot centers along the inner 75-foot length and those along

53. New York Times, June 26, August 4, 1931. The small concession building was torn down some time during the early 1930's.

the remaining length are spaced at 3-foot centers, and all are placed on one side of groins. The groins are not all 220 feet long nor are they built to the same elevation. The elevations of the tops of the inshore ends vary from about 10 to 13 feet above mean low water; thence they slope seaward with a slope of about 1 on 30 for a distance of 100 feet; and with a slope of 1 on 50 to a 20-foot level section at the outer ends, the top elevation of which vary from about 5.5 to 8 feet above mean low water. At the outer end of each groin there is a cluster of 7 piles, bound together by 4 turns of 3/4-inch steel cable, with tops at 4 feet above the ends of the jetties.

There has been no material change in the beach since these structures were built.⁵⁴

Responding to the growing popularity of the Jacob Riis Park beach the New York Parks Department took further steps to make the park more accessible to the public in 1927-29. Washington Avenue was widened and paved with concrete, and a sidewalk was constructed along the transverse road on the western edge of the park. The gores along Washington Avenue were supplied with various plants, new signs were erected on the 1,000-car parking area (located below Washington Avenue just east of the junction of the transverse road and Washington Avenue), and the beaches were cleared of refuse and driftwood and protected by lifeguards.⁵⁵

54. H. Doc. 397, pp. 9-10, and New York Times, February 25, 1927. A copy of the plans and drawings of the beach stabilization structures (p. 22 of aforementioned report) may be seen on the following page.

55. New York City, Department of Parks, Annual Report of the Department of Parks, Borough of Queens, City of New York, For

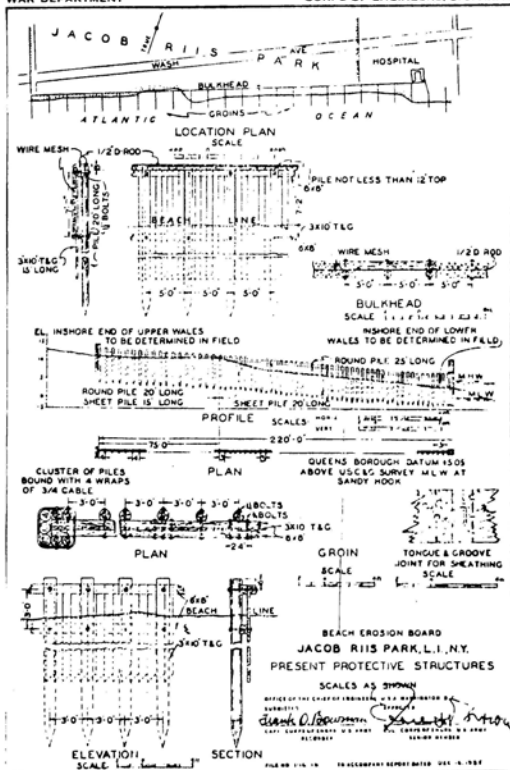


PLATE 34.

The increasing popularity of Jacob Riis Park made it necessary to increase and improve the size of the 1,000-car parking space in July 1929. Accordingly, a contract was let to the Sprague Construction Company of Arverne to do the work.⁵⁶

Even this improvement to the parking facilities at Riis Park appears to have been insufficient for the growing number of visitors to Riis Park. No official estimates of the park visitation for this period are available, but various reports by beach users indicate that the municipal beach was becoming overcrowded on summer weekends by the early 1930s. One such report appeared in the New York Times in June 1931:

I have been bathing at Jacob Riis Park for the past eight years, both Saturday and Sunday, and during that time have seen this barren spot grow from a small bathing beach accommodating about 100 persons to a beach practically on a par with Jones Beach or Long Beach. In other words, I have carefully noted on a very warm Sunday as many as 15,000 to 20,000 automobiles... Starting June 20 and 21 to Labor Day inclusive, there are about twenty-four Saturdays and Sundays, during which time the most modest figure for Saturday is 10,000 cars and Sunday 20,000 cars, which does not include weekly

the Years 1927 and 1928 (New York, 1928), pp. 57, 69, and New York City, Department of Parks, Minutes of the Park Board of the Department of Parks of the City of New York for the Year Ending December 31, 1928 (New York, 1929), p. 161.

56. New York City Department of Parks, Minutes of the Park Board of the Department of Parks of the City of New York for the Year Ending December 31, 1929 (New York, 1930), pp. 66-67, 69.

visitors, who from Monday to Friday inclusive number about 10,000. . . .⁵⁷

B. ESTABLISHMENT AND OPERATION OF ROCKAWAY NAVAL AIR STATION: 1917-1930

The construction of the Rockaway Naval Air Station was authorized on May 11, 1917, in the western portion of Jacob Riis Park to patrol the coastal waters and sea lanes of New York Harbor against the possibility of submarine attack. On April 16 the New York City Parks Department issued a permit to the War and Navy Departments "for the duration of the present war" granting the privilege of exclusive occupancy of approximately 60 acres of land of the park. Permission was granted on May 4 for the installation of a temporary mortar battery by the Corps of Engineers in Riis Park--an emplacement that would be removed when permanent fortifications were established at Fort Tilden.⁵⁸ On June 14 the first contract for the construction of the base at Rockaway was let. The station was placed in commission on October 15 with a personnel slate of one officer and nineteen men. The assignments of the air station were to patrol the seaward approaches of New York Harbor against submarines, to provide regular convoys for troop ships, and to train student dirigible and kite balloon pilots, hydrogen gas engineer officers, and aviator-bombardiers. Flight operations began in early December, and on March 18 the Parks Department issued a second permit to the Navy Department "for the duration of the present war" granting the exclusive occupancy of

57. New York Times, June 26, 1931.

58. "Report of Title Search of Jacob Riis Park," p. 89. The mortar battery was located in the northwest part of the park that ultimately was developed as a golf course.

approximately 34 additional acres of land in Jacob Riis Park. Thus, the air station occupied some 94 acres of park land bounded by Fort Tilden on the west, Jamaica Bay on the north, Washington Avenue on the south, and a straight line between the bay and avenue on the east just west of the contemporary bath house.⁵⁹

During the latter stages of the war the Navy undertook a secret project at the Curtiss Engineering Laboratories at Garden City, Long Island, to design and construct four 3-engine bomber flying boats which were of sufficient power and range to fly across the Atlantic. In 1918 the naval air station was designated as an experimental testing station for the seaplanes, and a 110 x 165-foot hangar was erected to house the NC aircraft.

Marine railways were built for launching the planes, and small 60-horsepower trucks were installed to pull the planes along wooden walkways from their parking position to the railways. The first test flight of the NC-1 took place at the station on October 4.⁶⁰

By the end of World War I the naval air station was an active military installation. At its peak it had a complement of 125 officers and 1,160 enlisted men, eighteen seaplanes (primarily R-9, HS-2,

59. Benninger to Phelps, January 5, 1932, Confidential Files, Rockaway Naval Air Station, Records of the Bureau of Aeronautics, Record Group 72, National Archives, and U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Navy, Naval Aviation History Office, "Naval Air Station Rockaway," n.d., n.p.

60. Department of Education, Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Corporation, The Flight Across the Atlantic (New York, 1919), p. 24; Hy Steirman and Glenn D. Kittler, Triumph: The Incredible Saga of the First Transatlantic Flight (New York, 1961), p. 34; Preston R. Bassett, Long Island: Cradle of Aviation (Amityville, 1950), pp. 22-23; Edward Jablonski, Atlantic Fever (New York, 1972), pp. 3-5; and Richard K. Smith, First Across (Annapolis, 1973), pp. 28-29.

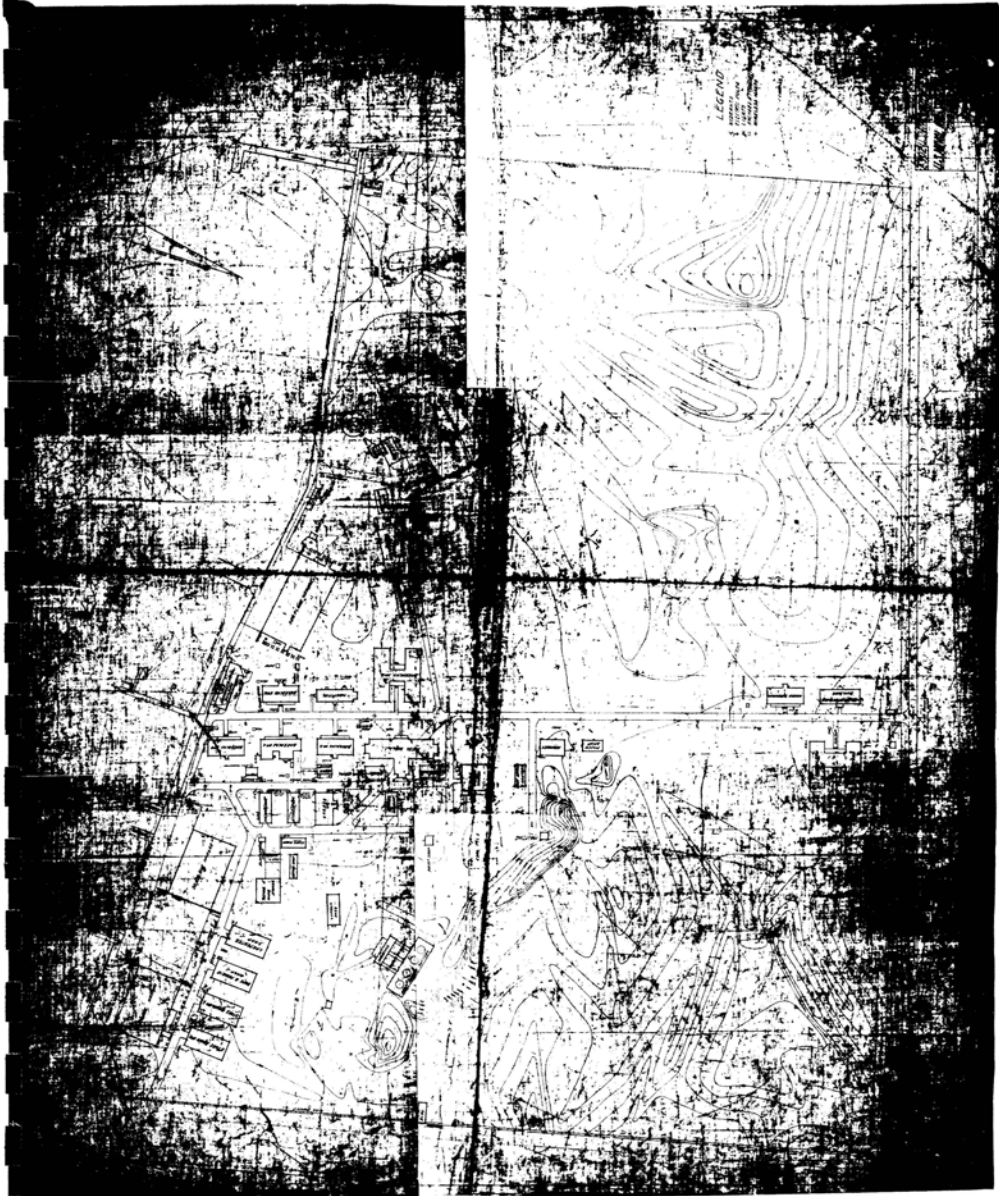
and HS-16 types), two dirigibles, and four kite balloons. The following buildings at the station were listed as completed by November 11, 1918:

- NC Hangar
- Hangars 1, 2, and 3 - (wooden structures built for HS flying boats)
- Erecting Shop - (designed for housing R-9 seaplanes and later for constructing and overhauling planes)
- Dirigible Hangar - (frame constructed with steel and covered with asphalt roofing; designed to house two dirigibles and two kite balloons)
- Barracks 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 - (small one-story structures housing 80 men each)
- Barracks 6 - (housing 600 men)
- Radio Building
- Hydrogen Cylinder Storehouse
- Mess Hall
- Motor Testing Shed
- Lumber Storehouse
- Administration Building
- Commissary Storehouse
- Power House
- Motor and Wing Storehouse
- Runways and Docks⁶¹

Although the Armistice put an end to efforts to develop the NC flying boats as long-range bombers, interest remained high in improving the aircraft for use in transatlantic civilian and mail routes. On November 25, 1918, the NC-1 took off from Rockaway on a one-minute flight with 51 persons aboard establishing a new world record for persons carried in flight.⁶²

61. "History of Naval Air Station, Rockaway Beach, Long Island, New York, From May 1917 to November 1918," Subject File, 1911-1927, ZPN-3, Naval Records Collection of the Office of Naval Records and Library, Record Group 45, National Archives. For a layout of the buildings of the Rockaway Naval Air Station see the survey map on the following page entitled "U.S. Navy-Yard, New York, N.Y., May 1919, U.S. Naval Air Station Rockaway, N.Y., Survey Map." Although this map is of poor quality for reproduction purposes, a copy of the original of this map will be sent to Gateway National Recreation Area for filing. This map is located in Record Group 80 in the National Archives.

62. Ibid.; Steirman and Kittler, Triumph, p. 40; and New York Times, August 19, 1923.



Preparations for an historic transatlantic flight by the NC flying boats continued until May 8, 1919, when the NC-1, NC-3, and NC-4 slid down the rails and taxied into the deeper waters of Jamaica Bay. Turning westward into the wind, they took off on the first leg of their flight to Trepassy Bay, Newfoundland, by way of Halifax, Nova Scotia. On the 16th the three planes started across the Atlantic for the Azores. Mechanical troubles caused the NC-1 and the NC-3 to drop out, but the NC-4 reached Horta on May 17, flew on to Lisbon via Ponta Degrada on May 27, and completed the trip to Cattewater Naval Air Station at Plymouth, England, on May 31. Thus, the NC-4 became the first aircraft to cross the Atlantic, the flight between Rockaway and Lisbon covering 3,322 miles in an actual flying time of 41 hours, 58 minutes.⁶³

In the early postwar years, Rockaway Naval Air Station saw little activity and was listed as an inactive facility from 1922 to 1925. A Naval Reserve Aviation Unit began operation at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn in 1924 and moved to Rockaway in 1926. The mission of the station was to maintain and operate facilities and provide services and material to support operations of the aviation units of the Naval and Marine Air Reserve Training Commands. In September 1928 the base was designated as an armory of the New

63. Steirman and Kittler, Triumph, pp. 5, 52-55, 64-65, 74-75, 84-87, 176-177; Jablonski, Atlantic Fever, pp. 9-32; Bassett, Long Island, pp. 22-23; Smith, First Across, pp. 172-175; Eugene M. Emme, ed., Two Hundred Years of Flight in America: A Bicentennial Survey (San Diego, 1977), pp. 69-71; Charles Harvard Gibbs-Smith, Aviation: An Historical Survey from its Origins to the End of World War II (London, 1970), p. 180; Lowell Thomas and Lowell Thomas, Jr., Famous First Flights that Changed History (Garden City, 1968), pp. 19-20; and Sir Peter Masefield, "Gateways to the World, The Airports of New York and London, Past, Present and Future," Speech presented at the Wings Club, New York City, on May 17, 1972 (New York, 1972), p. 32.

York Naval Militia, but the two naval reserve squadrons were permitted the continued use of the station. The naval militia unit operated at Rockaway until February 1929, when a severe storm crippled the seaplane operations area. For the next two years the unit operated from Philadelphia, later transferring to Valley Stream, Long Island, where it remained until April 1931 when it took over a hangar at the recently-completed Floyd Bennett Field.⁶⁴

C. EFFORTS TO REMOVE ROCKAWAY NAVAL AIR STATION
FROM JACOB RIIS PARK: 1921-1930

In the postwar years the City of New York and the Navy conducted a running battle as the Parks Department attempted to have the naval air station relocated and to have Riis Park developed as a public recreational beach. In January 1921 the Navy requested that the city deed to the United States Government the 94 acres of Riis Park which had been leased for the air station. The reasons given for the request were as follows:

1. The Navy had erected permanent and semi-permanent buildings amounting to \$2,000,000.
2. It was a good location for anti-submarine seaplane patrols.
3. It was a good location due to its close proximity to Ambrose Channel, the focus for the sailing routes of the majority of American commerce.
4. It was near the artillery range of Fort Funston across Jamaica Bay which afforded it maximum protection.

64. U.S. Department of Defense, Department of the Navy, Naval Aviation History Office, "NAS New York, New York, New York," n.d., n.p.; Resolution Adopted by the Armory Board at a Meeting Held on September 12th, 1928, Confidential Files, Rockaway Naval Air Station, RG 72; and New York Times, October 12, 1930.

5. The erosion of land on the bay side required immediate attention as the piers and hangar foundations were being undermined.

While the Navy request was under review, strong opposition to the permanent cession of the park property by the city was raised by various citizens groups and the Parks Department. The civic groups regarded Riis Park as the only open public ocean beach within the New York City limits and one of the few beaches with valuable park land and attractive beach fronts within reach of the people. As better transportation lines would be developed, Riis Park would become an important recreational site and thus was urgently needed to relieve the congestion at Coney Island. As to the structures, it was felt that the three steel frame hangars could be razed and transferred to another location with little difficulty and the temporary wood and frame machine shops, barracks, and office buildings could be demolished or moved at little expense. Although the road along the bay had been undermined by shifting sand, the hangar foundations were found to be at least fifteen feet from the water at high tide and in no immediate danger of being undermined.⁶⁵

After the Navy request was refused, the question of relocating the air station lay dormant until November 1923. In that month Albert C. Benninger, the Commissioner of Parks for the Borough of Queens, urged that Riis Park be fully developed as a recreational facility in view of the rapid development of the Rockaways and the

65. Public Recreation Committee of Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce to the Sinking Fund Commission, March 21, 1921, Vertical Files, New York City Municipal Reference and Research Center, and Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, 1921, pp. 30-32.

planned opening of direct ferry service between Brooklyn and Neponsit. In his opinion, Riis Park was "splendidly adapted for a seaside resort, and would afford the great populace of New York City a haven of rest and recreation." At present the park was "entirely undeveloped" and was "made up of sand dunes and marshes from three to five feet below a usable grade." The prospects for the park were "almost unprecedented in the history of the City, affecting. . . a location unlike any other which the City has had to deal." Accordingly, the opportunity "should be embraced to give the people of this City a playground of which they will be proud, the benefits of which will be accessible to all by reason of the many avenues of transportation which are now being opened."⁶⁶

The issue of removing the base from Jacob Riis Park was raised again in September 1927. Various Rockaway civic groups petitioned the City of New York to construct a 9-hole golf course, tennis courts, baseball diamonds, other recreational facilities, and additional access roadways in the park. The organizations supported the removal of the air station and were opposed to the use of the existing roads in the park for the transport of field pieces, anti-aircraft weapons, and other military equipment.⁶⁷

The Department of Parks became increasingly active in the campaign to remove the naval air facility and to develop Riis Park as a recreational center. In December 1927 the future plans for the park were described as follows:

66. Benninger to Hulbert, November 28, 1923, Departmental Letters Received, 1923, John F. Hylan Collection, New York City, Department of Records and Information Services, Municipal Archives.

67. Butler to Wilbur, September 9, 1927, Departmental Letters Received, 1927, James J. Walker Collection, Municipal Archives.

In Jacob Riis Park. . . great possibilities for development present themselves. Due to the establishment of a ferry service between Brooklyn and the lower end of the Rockaway peninsula thousands of people are now taking advantage of the splendid bathing facilities offered at this beach. Most of the visitors come in automobiles and, as there are no bathhouses along this front, dress and undress in their cars. The congestion brought about through the adoption of this expedient has made it necessary to provide additional parking space, funds now being available for this purpose.

In the opinion of many this park constitutes one of the best beach fronts that the city possesses. Its direct accessibility from Brooklyn has converted it from a rather isolated piece of beach to a very popular bathing resort. The question that confronts us is how to adequately provide for the recreation of these pleasure seekers. Among the permanent plans for the future. . . was a million dollar development for Jacob Riis Park. In the opinion of the members of the Board of Estimate and Apportionment such a plan is considered premature at the present time. However, the proposed development embraces such features as the construction of roads, walks, lawns, water supply and drainage, bathhouse, comfort station, a large children's playground and other recreational facilities. . .

. . . It is my opinion that the Navy Department ought to surrender this valuable piece of property to the Park Department for its proper and originally intended development. In the meantime it may be well to give

thought to the advisability of erecting a municipal bath house here, such as are in operation at other public beaches throughout the city.⁶⁸

In February 1929 Commissioner Benninger cited the air station buildings as "dilapidated and an eyesore" and urged their removal. He also called the naval facility a danger to the thousands of summer bathers at Riis Park since student pilots made frequent practice runs over the beach.⁶⁹

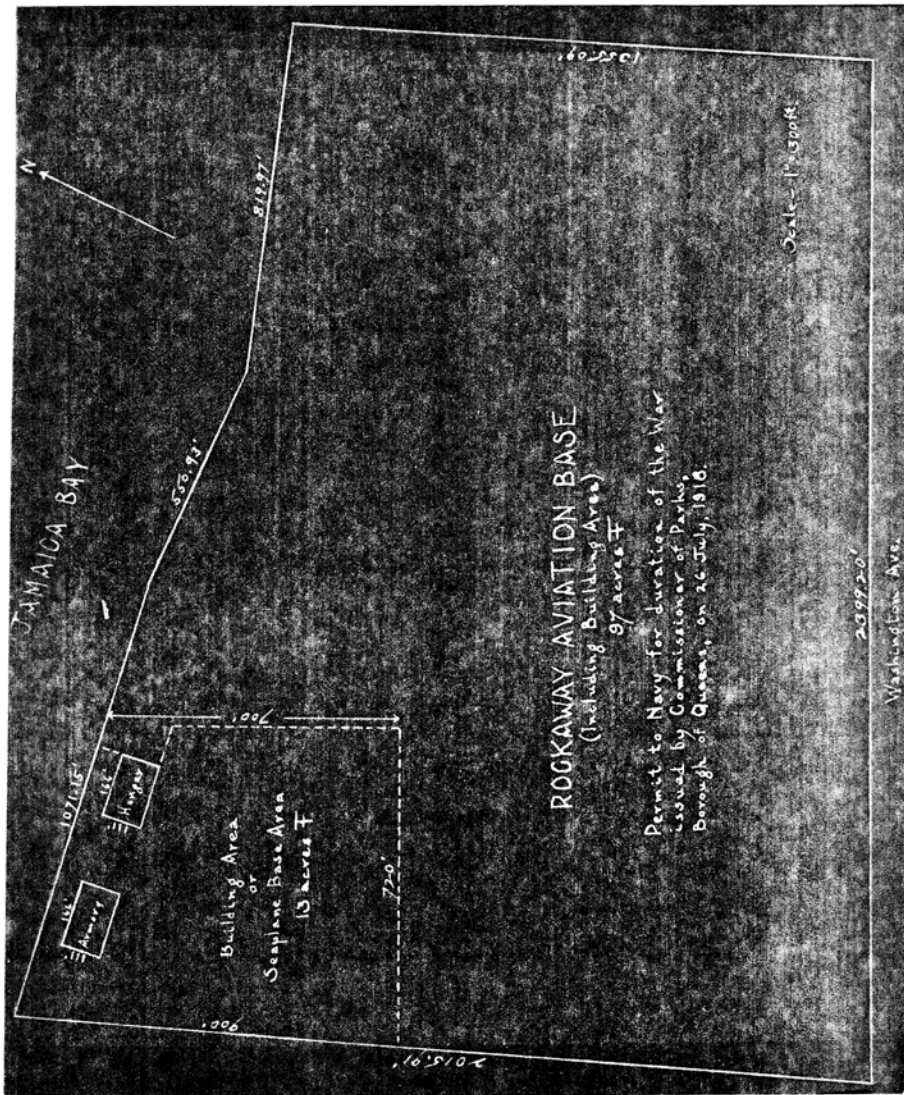
The Navy countered this campaign with proposals of its own. In May 1929 it requested \$250,000 from the city to recondition the air station that had been damaged by a recent storm. As a last resort the Navy indicated that it would settle for a long-term lease for the use of only thirteen acres in the northwest corner of the park on which the stations' hangars, principal buildings, and runways were located.⁷⁰

Finally in February 1930 the long dispute was settled when the City of New York facilitated the removal of the air station from Riis Park by leasing two private air fields for the Navy until Floyd Bennett Field would be completed. The two fields were at Valley Stream, Long Island, and part of North Beach Airport at Bowery

68. Annual Report of the Department of Parks, Borough of Queens, City of New York, For the Years 1927 and 1928, pp. 13-14.

69. Benninger to Walker, February 25, 1929, Jacob Riis Park Land Files, Park Lands Division, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.

70. New York Times, May 10, 1929, and Wildman to Butler, October 8, 1929, Jacob Riis Park Land Files, Park Lands Division, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. A copy of the map illustrating this request may be seen on the following page.



Bay. Plans were then made to move the base equipment and the eight seaplanes stationed there.⁷¹ In April it was determined that the Navy would demolish all of the 51 existing surface structures except for the following:

Building 4	- Dispensary
Building 4A	- Dispensary Extension
Building 17	- Storehouse
Building 18	- Blacksmith Shop
Building 36	- Photo Lab
Building 43	- Lumber Storehouse
Building 68	- Pump House
Building 70	- Pump House
Building 80	- Pump House

The Navy also agreed to remove from the base the oil tanks, the seaplane runways projecting beyond the sea wall, the flag pole, and accumulated rubbish. The roads, sidewalks, concrete building foundations, sea wall, wharf, and subsurface utility systems were to be left in place.⁷² The Navy vacated the premises by June, and a contract was let in October for the demolition and removal of 51 structures.⁷³

71. New York Times, January 19, February 20, 21, 1930.

72. Taylor to Benninger, April 19, 1930, and Benninger to Taylor, July 14, 1930, Confidential Files, Rockaway Naval Air Station, RG

72. A list of structures at the air station as of April 1930 may be seen in Appendix E.

73. New York Times, October 12, 1930.





CHAPTER FIVE

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE BATH HOUSE AND THE
FIRST RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF JACOB RIIS PARK
AS A MUNICIPAL BATHING BEACH:

1930-1933

While various plans for the development of Jacob Riis Park were under consideration during the fall of 1930, Commissioner Benninger began urging the construction of a large \$425,000 bathing pavilion on the oceanfront in the park. The proposed pavilion would be similar to one of the bath houses at Jones Beach State Park, an extremely popular bathing beach resort some twenty miles east on Long Island that had been opened in August 1929. In November designs for the proposed structures were prepared by John L. Plock, an architect for the firm of Stoughton & Stoughton in Manhattan. The Board of Estimate approved an appropriation for the work and the drawings were forwarded to the Municipal Art Commission for review. The necessary approval of the plans and specifications was obtained from the commission and the mayor's office in February 1931.⁷⁴

Construction began on the foundation of the bathing pavilion during the following month. By July it had become clear that the bath house could not be completed for the original estimate of \$425,000, and the Board of Estimate was requested to approve an additional \$89,000 for the project. The foundation work for the structure was finally completed in mid-August at a cost of \$48,600.⁷⁵

In August 1931 the partially-completed bath house became a matter of public controversy. A. Joseph Geist, president of the Chamber of Commerce of the Rockaways and part-owner of Rockaway's Playland Pool and Amusement Center, charged that the

74. *Ibid.*, October 12 and November 17, 1930, and Assistant to Mayor to Benninger, February 18, 1931, Departmental Letters Sent, 1931, James J. Walker Collection, Municipal Archives.

75. *New York Times*, June 22 and August 16, 1931, and Assistant to Mayor to Benninger, July 27, 1931, Departmental Letters Sent, 1931, James J. Walker Collection, Municipal Archives.

\$500,000 bathing pavilion was "a totally unnecessary expenditure of public money." In his opinion, the bath house would be detrimental to the peninsula's business interests and to the value of private property adjacent to the park. At its completion, the bath house would make necessary new roadways, a swimming pool, and more beach stabilization structures in Riis Park, all of which would be assessed against Rockaway taxpayers. He ridiculed the pavilion as a pet idea of Commissioner Benninger solely for self-glorification and criticized Benninger's statement that Riis Park would become a second Jones Beach by saying that the undeveloped park was intended only for low income people and would never become self-supporting. Furthermore, he charged that the improvements to the park that would be required at the completion of the bath house would raise the cost of developing the park to \$1,000,000. All of these changes were met with solid contrary evidence by the Parks Department and the conflicting financial interests of Geist served to discredit his campaign.⁷⁶

In early September 1931 contracts were let for the superstructure, plumbing, heating, and lighting of the bath house. While the architects originally had estimated the cost of this work to be \$275,000, the low bids were considerably higher than the earlier projected costs, the greatest discrepancy occurring in the item for the general construction of the pavilion. Before contracts were let, the Parks Department secured an additional \$105,000 appropriation from the Board of Estimate, thereby increasing the cost of the pavilion to \$530,000. In October the contracts were let, the principal one going to the general contracting firm of Robert J. Murphy, Inc., for the superstructure.⁷⁷

76. Ibid., August 7, 8, 9, 16, 1931.

77. Ibid., August 22, September 30, 1931, and July 15, 1932.

On May 1, 1932, Commissioner Benninger announced that the bath house would be completed and opened to the public on July 4. After inspecting the building he reported that

the brick and stone work on the administration section of the pavilion is 75 per cent completed and all the structural steel has been set. All the brick and stone work on the two wings, which will contain lunch rooms and foot pools, has been completed and the rough cement floors laid. More than half of the bathhouse area to be allotted to the use of women has been graded.⁷⁸

Soon after the aforementioned inspection the financial difficulties of Robert J. Murphy, Inc., caused delays in the completion of the bath house. By mid-July the firm was unable to meet its obligations, and on July 14 a committee of forty subcontractors took over the work. Organized under the chairmanship of Robert Morrison, the subcontractor's committee included Otto A. Held, secretary of Robert J. Murphy, Inc. City officials approved the arrangement and the tentative date of completion was set for August 1.⁷⁹

The \$530,000 bathing pavilion at Riis Park was completed to the point that it was ready for occupancy by August 1 and officially dedicated at afternoon ceremonies on August 6. A crowd of 1,000 gathered to watch the unveiling of a bronze tablet set in the wall of the entrance to the pavilion. Then the city officials went to the terrace overlooking the ocean where the ceremonies were concluded with music by the police department band and brief

78. Ibid., May 1, 1932

79. Ibid., July 15, 1932.

speeches by Corporation Counsel Arthur J. W. Hilly, Commissioner Benninger, John Morris, president of the Chamber of Commerce of the Rockaways, Fred Marsell, president of the Rockaway Beach Board of Trade, and John L. Plock, architect for the building.

During its first day of operation, the bath house was used by several hundred bathers. The pavilion of brick, stone, and tile gave the appearance of a semi-Byzantine structure modeled closely after the east bath house at Jones Beach State Park.⁸⁰ No landscaping around the building had been commenced. One refreshment stand and cafeteria was in operation, but the other restaurant would not be opened for another year. The park concessionaire Max Fuchs, who was a Manhattan restaurateur, had agreed to pay the city \$70,000 the first year and an annual increase of \$5,000 over a five-year period for the privilege of operating the bath house and the two restaurants and cafeteria in the bath house as well as the parking space, umbrella and chair

80. The east bath house at Jones Beach State Park had been designed and constructed in 1928-29 under the direction of Robert Moses, then president of the Long Island State Park Commission. Composed of stone and brick, it was described as a building having a Middle Eastern or Moorish style of architecture. It had two 60-foot towers each topped with a green turret that swirled upward into a spear point. The stone for the structure was Ohio sandstone--a gray stone with tinges of tan and blue to blend with the colors of the sand and sea. Barbizon brick was used because it had a random pattern of beige, brown, and brownish-red that would catch the color of the sand and complement it. Inside the bath house there were 10,000 lockers, bath and shower rooms, wading, diving, and swimming pools, canopied terraces above the pools for spectators, terraces on which people could dine at tables under gaily colored umbrellas, solarium, restaurants for several price ranges, and diaper-changing rooms. The bath house was surrounded by landscaped lawns, hedges, and flower beds. Robert A. Caro, The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York (New York, 1974), pp. 221-224.

rental, and a new refreshment stand 3,000 feet to the west of the pavilion that he was to build at a cost of not less than \$25,000.⁸¹

Although the bath house was open for the remainder of the summer, it was not completed entirely until the spring of 1933. The major items of work to be finished during the intervening period were the men's and women's lockers, restaurants and grills, and a \$30,000 solarium on the roof of the pavilion that was located on the oceanside of the bath house. The solarium was a large tile balcony, about 200 feet long and 80 feet wide, enclosed with heavy thick glass to afford up to 2,000 people the benefit of the sun's ultra-violet rays while occupying lounge chairs. A new concrete bulkhead was also built by WPA labor along the beach front of the park during this time.⁸²

The bath house was completed by May 7, 1933, and was opened to the public in mid-May. The major portion of the structure, which was approximately 617 feet in length and some 240 feet at its greatest width, comprised a large single-story area for women's (west side) and men's (east side) lockers. On the west side of the bath house were a single-story clinic building and women's wash room, while on the east side were a single-story administration building and men's wash room. On the oceanfront facade of the bath house were two 2-story extensions adjacent to two towers. Between the towers were several terrace areas leading up to the pavilion on which the solarium was located.

Upon the completion of the bath house, the New York Herald Tribune announced that:

81. New York Times, June 8, 18, 25, 28, and August 7, 1931.

82. Ibid., September 14, 1932.

With the reopening of Jacob Riis Park...the City of New York will realize one of its most ambitious projects in providing seaside recreation for the people. The project was only partly under way when its first season began last July and the huge bathing pavilion, partly used, was then unfinished. With its facilities now adequate and with many improvements, Riis Park can function to its full capacity for the enjoyment of many thousands of New Yorkers.

The article went on to describe the facilities in the bath house as well as other features in the park:

Ocean air, surf bathing and the wide vision of the open sea are the chief charms of Riis Park. The city built there a brick pavilion at a cost of \$500,000 for the enjoyment of visitors. In this are 9,000 lockers in bath houses arranged in the lower part so as to be readily accessible to the beach without the bathers being crowded in coming and going. Only a few of these accommodations were available last season, but this year there is the full complement. Automobiles are not to serve as bath houses any more, although there is parking space for between 6,000 and 7,000 cars. It is estimated that 15,000 persons, at least, can enjoy the surf at one time and that 25,000 in all can find recreation in the park. The pavilion is arranged much as would be a private club. The idea is fostered by an arrangement of a section of it for those who have season tickets for bath houses. They will have a special entrance at their disposal. . . .

There are to be three restaurants in the completed pavilion instead of the one moderate-sized one available last season. From three to four thousand persons can dine there at one time. The largest one accommodates 2,000 persons and is called the Empire Room. It will have a popular concert and dance orchestra in action. Another restaurant seats 400 and the third 200. There are also smaller units for dinners, teas, bridge parties and benefits, as well as accommodations for banquets. A feature of the commissary arrangements is the bather's grill, where refreshments will be served for visitors in bathing suits. At the insistence of the Park Association of New York, a section was also set aside for picnic parties.⁸³

Meanwhile other facilities were placed in the park during the spring of 1933 while construction on the bath house was being completed. The New York Herald Tribune observed:

Although the Riis Park plan has many features all its own, it resembles somewhat the highly successful Jones Beach Park, which the State of New York's Long Island

83. New York Herald Tribune, May 7, 1933. Within several years the restaurants had achieved a measure of renown for their cuisine and atmosphere. The Rockaway Review noted in May 1936 that: "At Jacob Riis Park is located the famous dining pavilion operated by Simon Linz and Max Fuchs, renowned for its shore, steak and a la carte dinners...there is the Empire Room where all the large seashore dinners of leading organizations are held... also the East and West wing dining room, with a total seating capacity of 2,000...the food served at this place is tasty and in conformity with the rules of the Park Department. The prices are reasonable...Music, dancing and entertainment are features at the dining pavilion and the large dining terrace is swept by ocean breezes and makes dining real enjoyable on a warm afternoon or evening."

Park Commission conducts a few miles distant in Nassau County. It resembles Jones Beach in its orderliness and in its landscaping effects.

Riis Park has been designed for the quieter enjoyment of the seashore, without any artificial devices. In atmosphere it is not unlike the English seaside resorts. The facilities provided all contribute to restfulness for the many and amusements of the out-of-door life.

The landscaping and installation of recreational facilities were performed by employees of the Parks Department and several hundred unemployed workers supplied by the Works Progress Administration. The improvements were described as follows:

...Back from the beach a considerable distance is a delightful aspect of landscape gardening. More than 3,000 plants and shrubs have been set out in the last few months, and here and there trees have been planted for future shade. New concrete walks traverse the area.

Hundreds of the unemployed army have been busy in the meantime grading tennis courts and ball grounds. The activity of the large staff of engineers, gardeners and laborers has been concentrated about the bathing pavilion. Further away are new handball courts and nearer the beach and enclosed by a low rail are playgrounds for children. A special playroom for children who get lost has been set aside. It will be in charge of an expert who will keep them amused until claimed. In the pavilion is also a first-aid station with a physician and nurse in charge.

The staff of Riis Park consists of about 600 persons, all of whom will wear special uniforms.

In addition, tentative plans were developed for future improvements to Riis Park. These included the rehabilitation of the former naval pier in Jamaica Bay, the construction of an open-air beer garden, and the development of the Jamaica Bay side with a boardwalk and canoe beaches.⁸⁴

84. Ibid.



CHAPTER SIX

PLANS FOR RECONDITIONING AND FULLY DEVELOPING
JACOB RIIS PARK AS A MUNICIPAL BATHING BEACH:
1934-1935

A. DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEW YORK CITY PARK SYSTEM
UNDER COMMISSIONER ROBERT MOSES

On January 19, 1934, Robert Moses, who had gained renown as a "park developer" as President of the Long Island State Park Commission, became Commissioner of the New York City Department of Parks. With the support of Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia, Moses brought under his office the borough departments which prior to that time were under five separate commissioners.⁸⁵ Under the energetic and dynamic leadership of Moses one of the outstanding achievements in the field of large-scale municipal planning relative to the extensive development of recreational facilities was carried out in New York City during the next seven years.⁸⁶ Involving an expenditure of nearly \$300,000,000 of federal, state, and municipal funds, the great majority of the work was done by 70,000 Works Progress Administration (WPA) laborers, but the program also involved the cooperation of other Moses-dominated organizations such as the Henry Hudson Parkway Authority, Marine Parkway Authority, and the New York City Parkway Authority.⁸⁷ The Final Report of the Works Progress Administrative for the City of New York concluded:

85. Thelma E. Smith, ed., Guide to the Municipal Government of the City of New York (New York, 1973), pp. 269-271.

86. There are two principal biographies of Robert Moses. A highly-complimentary study is found in Cleveland Rogers, Robert Moses: Builder for Democracy (New York, 1952), while a lengthy, critical analysis of his career is found in the aforementioned Caro, The Power Broker.

87. Francis Cormier, "Some New York City Parks and Parkways: Recreational Developments Made Since 1934," Landscape Architecture, XXIX (April, 1939), 124, and John D. Millett, The Works Progress Administration in New York City (Chicago, 1938), pp. 37-41, 46-49.

In addition, the parks program carried out by the WPA in New York City is undoubtedly the largest park and playground development program ever undertaken in the whole world. It comprised the construction, reconstruction and rehabilitation of bathing beaches, golf courses, swimming and diving pools, parks--ranging from street intersection triangles to developments of several hundred acres, parkways, playgrounds, stadia, zoological parks, and other recreational facilities. These were equipped with every kind of convenience, such as recreation buildings, concession stands, parking areas, locker facilities, bathhouses, band shells, concert areas, yacht basins, boat houses, drinking fountains, grandstands, bleachers, and sitting areas. Recreational facilities included play areas for children and adults with the necessary play apparatus, wading pools, sand pits, game areas, bowling greens, tennis, handball, basketball and horseshoe pitching courts, baseball and soft-ball diamonds, football, soccer, and athletic fields, running tracks, ice and roller skating rinks, bridle and bicycle paths, and picnic grounds. Extensive repairs were also undertaken at the City's museums.

Work executed at the various parks included general landscaping, grading and regrading, repairing of erosion damage, spreading of topsoil, seeding and reseeded, selective forestry, planting of trees, shrubs and hedges, spraying operations, erection of benches, chain link, ornamental iron and pipe rail fences, construction of bulkheads, sea walls, jetties, retaining walls, roads, walks, paths, promenades, malls, steps, stairways, curbs, erection of flagpoles, the demolition of obsolete

structures and buildings standing on the sites of new developments, the installation of water, lighting, sewer, and drainage systems.⁸⁸

A statistical breakdown of the extensive parks and playgrounds development program indicates the striking accomplishments of the WPA in New York City during the 1935-38 period which saw its most significant activities. The program included the acquisition of nearly 7,400 acres of lands for parks and parkways, the construction or rehabilitation of 287 parks, totaling 14,293 acres, and the building of the 30,000-seat Randall's Island Municipal Stadium, eleven swimming pools accommodating from 3,000 to 5,000 persons each, 197 playgrounds, two municipal bathing beaches (one of which was Jacob Riis Park), three zoos, and ten 18-hole golf courses.⁸⁹

B. CHANGES IN THE OPERATION OF JACOB RIIS PARK UNDER ROBERT MOSES: 1934

Under Commissioner Moses a WPA park study of all 608 units under the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Parks was completed in January 1934. The report on Jacob Riis Park noted that the entire area north of Rockaway Beach Boulevard consisted of undeveloped sand dunes, while the area south of the boulevard included the parking area, bulkhead, boardwalk, bath house, and playground.⁹⁰ The report also noted the poor condition of the park facilities as well as the inefficient operation of the park. It was noted that the entire park

88. U.S. Works Progress Administration, Final Report of the Works Progress Administration for the City of New York: 1935-1943 (New York, 1943), p. 157.

had been turned over by the former Queens Park Commissioner to a concessionaire without City control. The whole park was simply a private concession...The operation of all these facilities was disgraceful. The jetties, walks, parking fields, and buildings had been allowed to deteriorate. Beach guards were untrained and life saving equipment was inadequate. There were lifesavers who could not even swim. The park was being run as a money making scheme with no regard for public safety and with no attempt at public service. Even under these conditions, it failed to bring in sufficient money to enable the concessionaire to meet his contract payments to the City. They were almost \$20,000.00 behind in their rent, and had spent so little on the maintenance and repair of this City property that the facilities had depreciated in value many thousands of dollars through sheer neglect.

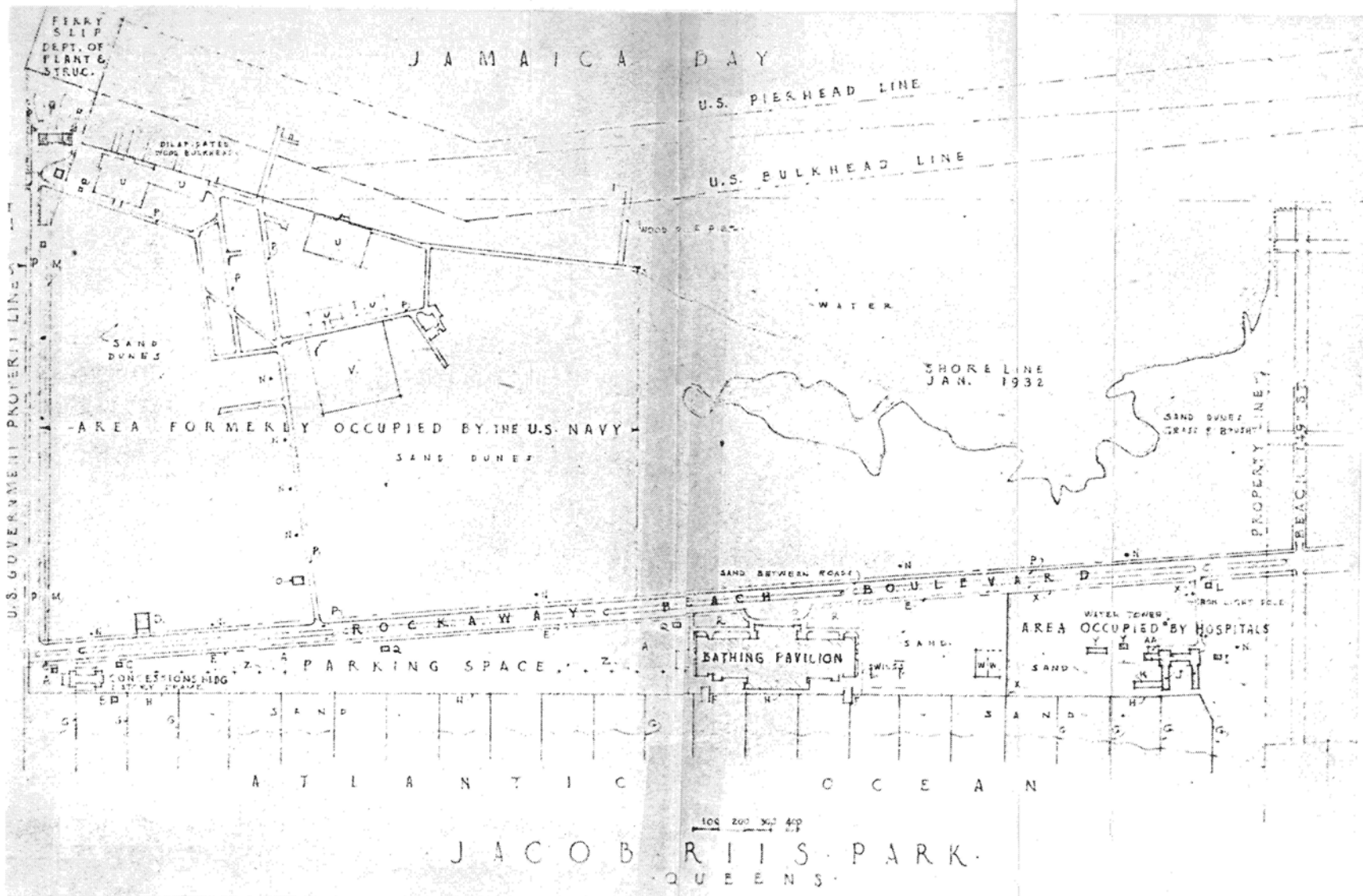
Dirty attendants, undisciplined life savers and early custodians were lounging around this park, grabbing quarters and half dollars from the public who were entitled to courtesy and disciplined service. Life guards, supposed to be guarding the lives of children

89. Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia, "Community Improvement Appraisal: New York City" (New York, 1938), pp. 32-35. (typescript).

90. "Praeger-Queens, Jacob Riis Park," Works Progress Administration Park Study, 1934, Long Island Historical Society. A copy of a layout map of the park that was contained in the report may be seen on the following page.

INDEX TO MAP

- A. CINDER PARKING SPACE
- B. RED CROSS STATION - FIRST AID
- C. ATTENDANT'S HOUSE
- D. FIRE ENGINE HOUSE - 1 STORY
- E. PINE POST AND WIRE ROPE FENCE
- F. WOOD WALKWAYS
- G. BREAKWATER - WOOD PILES
- H. CONCRETE BULKHEAD
- I. GREENHOUSES
- J. HOSPITAL BUILDINGS - BRICK
- K. HOSPITAL ADDITION - SCHOOL
- L. WATERMAN'S HOUSE
- M. CONCRETE WALKS
- N. FIRE HYDRANTS
- O. POLICE GARAGE
- P. CONCRETE ROADS
- Q. ATTENDANT'S SHED
- R. GRASS PLOTS
- S. CONCESSION STAND
- T. FERRY TICKET HOUSE
- U. CONCRETE FLOORS OF BUILDINGS REMOVED
- V. FOOTBALL AND BASEBALL
- W. FIELD-GRASS AND CINDERS
- X. HAND BALL COURTS
- Y. GARAGE, STORAGE HOUSE, FLOWER GARDEN
- Z. GARAGE AND STORE
- +. FLOOD LIGHT POLES
- 2. TRUCK SCALE
- AA. LAUNDRY



playing in the surf, were fishing out beyond the breakers in City-owned life-boats and bringing their catches ashore at the close of the day to sell to the patrons on the beach. Beach cleaners were running a well organized policy game among park patrons. The only park facilities which were smoothly run were the cash registers but these somehow did not bring in enough to pay the city for the park rental.⁹¹

Accordingly, Moses canceled all the concessions at Jacob Riis Park with Max Fuchs except for food and that concession was henceforth to be based on a percentage of the gross receipts. A non-profit organization, called the Riis Management Corporation, was organized to operate the other facilities in the park and the corporation was staffed with key men who had been trained at Jones Beach State Park. Olive Hatch, a former champion woman swimmer with the Los Angeles Athletic Club, was appointed assistant manager of the park in charge of athletic activities.⁹²

C. IMPROVEMENTS TO BATH HOUSE AND PARK FACILITIES:

1934

Several improvements were made to the bath house and other park facilities at the instigation of Commissioner Moses. All of the work was carried out with the use of WPA laborers. A number of projects involved structural changes in the bath house. In April various alterations were made in the stone and brick work on the (a) south entrances to the east and west end pavilions; (b) towers

91. Press Release, The City of New York, Department of Parks, April 24, 1935, Departmental Letters, 1935, Fiorello H. La Guardia Collection, Municipal Archives.

92. Ibid., and New York Times, March 2 and June 16, 1934.

of the ocean pavilion; (c) south terrace parapet walls and lighting units; (d) arches on the east, west, and north sides of the north or main entrance; and (e) bay upper part of the central section of the north wall of the ocean pavilion.⁹³ Later in the month steel partitions were installed in the Lost Children's Play Room in the east pavilion to provide for three offices as well as space for working and the public.⁹⁴ In addition, some portions of the structure were painted.⁹⁵

A variety of other projects were carried out to increase and improve the facilities in Jacob Riis Park. In May rectangular beds on the east and west sides of the bath house were landscaped and planted with flowers, shrubbery, and various types of beach vegetation.⁹⁶ During the summer the beach in front of the bath house was illuminated by five floodlights installed on poles at the land end of the beach jetties.⁹⁷ The existing playground area was raked and covered with sixteen inches of clean sand, and a new playground area was developed and opened on July 15, 1934. The

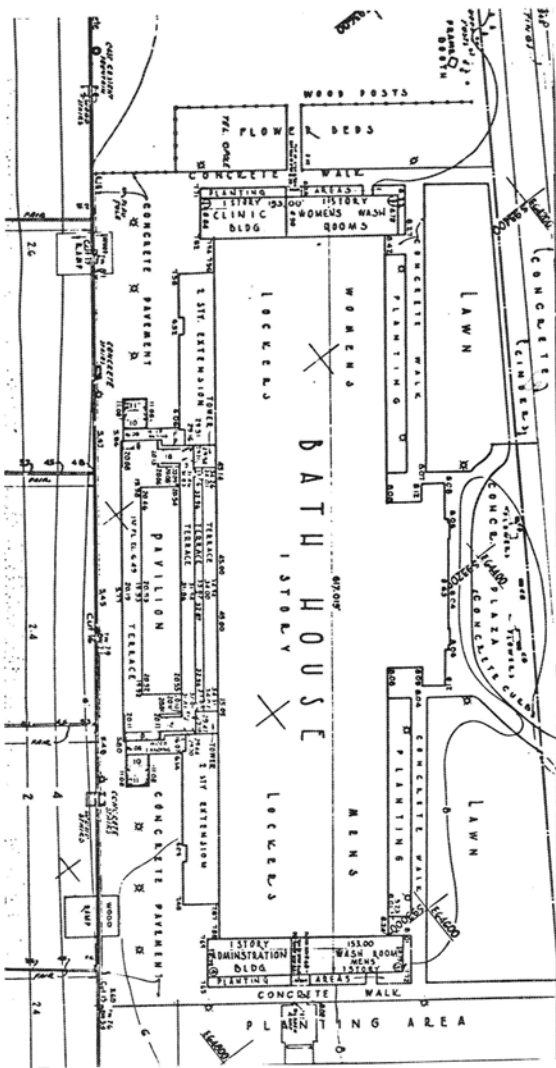
93. Drawing No. 62819/1 sheet, Bathing Pavilion Alterations, April 1934, Architectural, Landscape and Topographical Survey Drawings, Gateway National Recreation Area, Jacob Riis Park, 1934-1975, on file in the Graphics Systems Division of the Denver Service Center. Hereinafter, this collection of drawings will be referred to as Architectural Drawings.

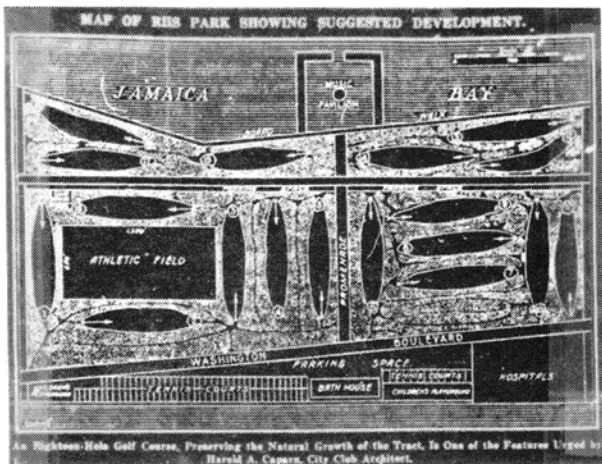
94. Drawing No. 62814/1 sheet, Bathing Pavilion Offices, April 29, 1934, Architectural Drawings.

95. A copy of the layout of the bath house may be seen on the following page.

96. Drawing No. 62755/1 sheet, Planting Plan, May 11, 1934, Architectural Drawings.

97. Drawing No. 62840/1 sheet, Floodlighting, June 28, 1934, Architectural Drawings.





New York Times, June 22, 1931.

small space area on Washington Avenue from Beach 149th Street to Beach 167th Street was excavated, covered with top soil, and fertilized. Beach patrol equipment was purchased, the first aid stations were equipped, and the surf and umbrella shops were renovated. The existing parking field was resurfaced, a new cinder parking field was constructed directly north of the bath house across Rockaway Beach Boulevard, and a one-story frame garage was erected at the northeast corner of the new parking area. Altogether, the improved facilities attracted some 500,000 visitors and produced a total revenue of \$71,883.⁹⁸

D. ROBERT MOSES PLANS TO CREATE A SECOND JONES BEACH AT JACOB RIIS PARK: 1934-1935

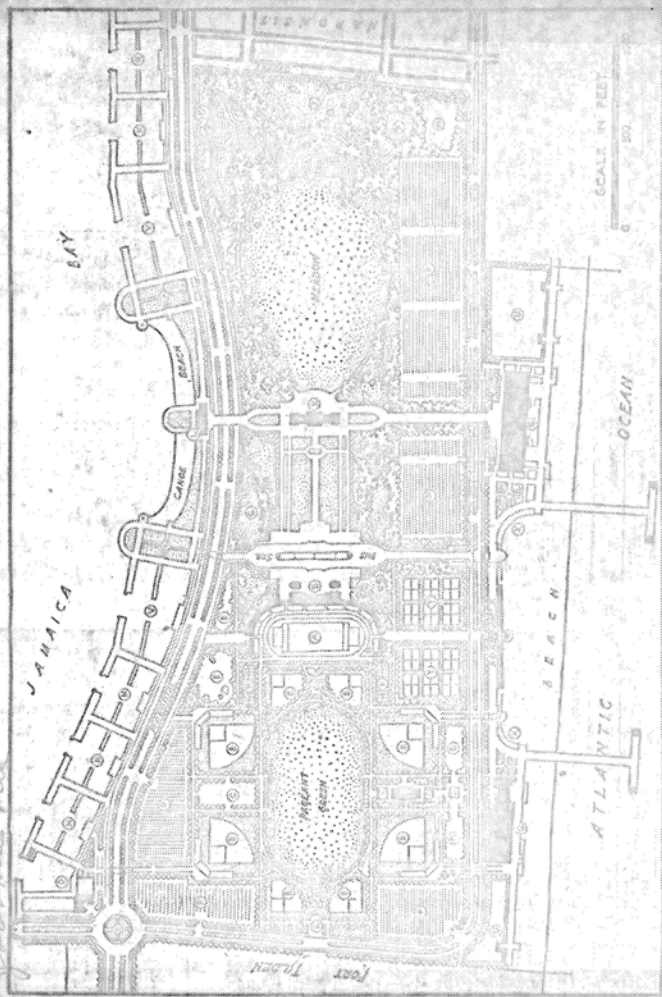
In August 1934 Commissioner Moses unveiled his preliminary plans for the creation of an inner-city metropolitan replica of Jones Beach State Park at Jacob Riis Park by fully developing the entire tract for bathing and beach recreation.⁹⁹ The plan was drawn up with the help of Gilmore D. Clarke, a consulting landscape architect, and Earle Andrews, general superintendent, both of the

98. "Prager-Queens, Jacob Riis Park," Works Progress Administration Park Study, 1934; Press Release, The City of New York, Department of Parks, April 24, 1935; New York Times, April 25, 1935; and "Playgrounds Opened, Boro of Queens, July 1934 to August 1937," and News Release, October 27, 1937, Departmental Letters, 1937, Fiorello H. La Guardia Collection, Municipal Archives.

99. The plans unveiled by Moses resembled some aspects of earlier plans for the comprehensive development of the park that had been submitted in the early 1930s. These plans included those designed by (a) Harald A. Caparn, an architect of the parks committee of the City Club, in June 1931, (b) Earl Morrow, an assistant engineer for the Regional Plan Association of New York, in May 1932, and (c) Julius V. Burgevin, a landscape architect for the New York City Park Board, and Joseph Gattringer, an assistant architect of the board, in April 1933. Copies of the three plans may be seen on the following pages.

REGIONAL PLAN'S DESIGN FOR DEVELOPMENT OF JACOB RUS PARK.

The proposed features



The location of the park's proposed features are shown as follows: (a) athletic field, (b) baseball diamond, (c) cricket pitch and (d) tennis court, (e) roller skating rink, (f) roller skating rink, (g) roller skating rink, (h) roller skating rink, (i) roller skating rink, (j) roller skating rink, (k) roller skating rink, (l) roller skating rink, (m) roller skating rink, (n) roller skating rink, (o) roller skating rink, (p) roller skating rink, (q) roller skating rink, (r) roller skating rink, (s) roller skating rink, (t) roller skating rink, (u) roller skating rink, (v) roller skating rink, (w) roller skating rink, (x) roller skating rink, (y) roller skating rink, (z) roller skating rink.

New York Times, May 2, 1932.

CITY OF NEW YORK,
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION,
BUREAU OF THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT OF JACOB RISS PARK IN THE BOROUGHS OF QUEENS

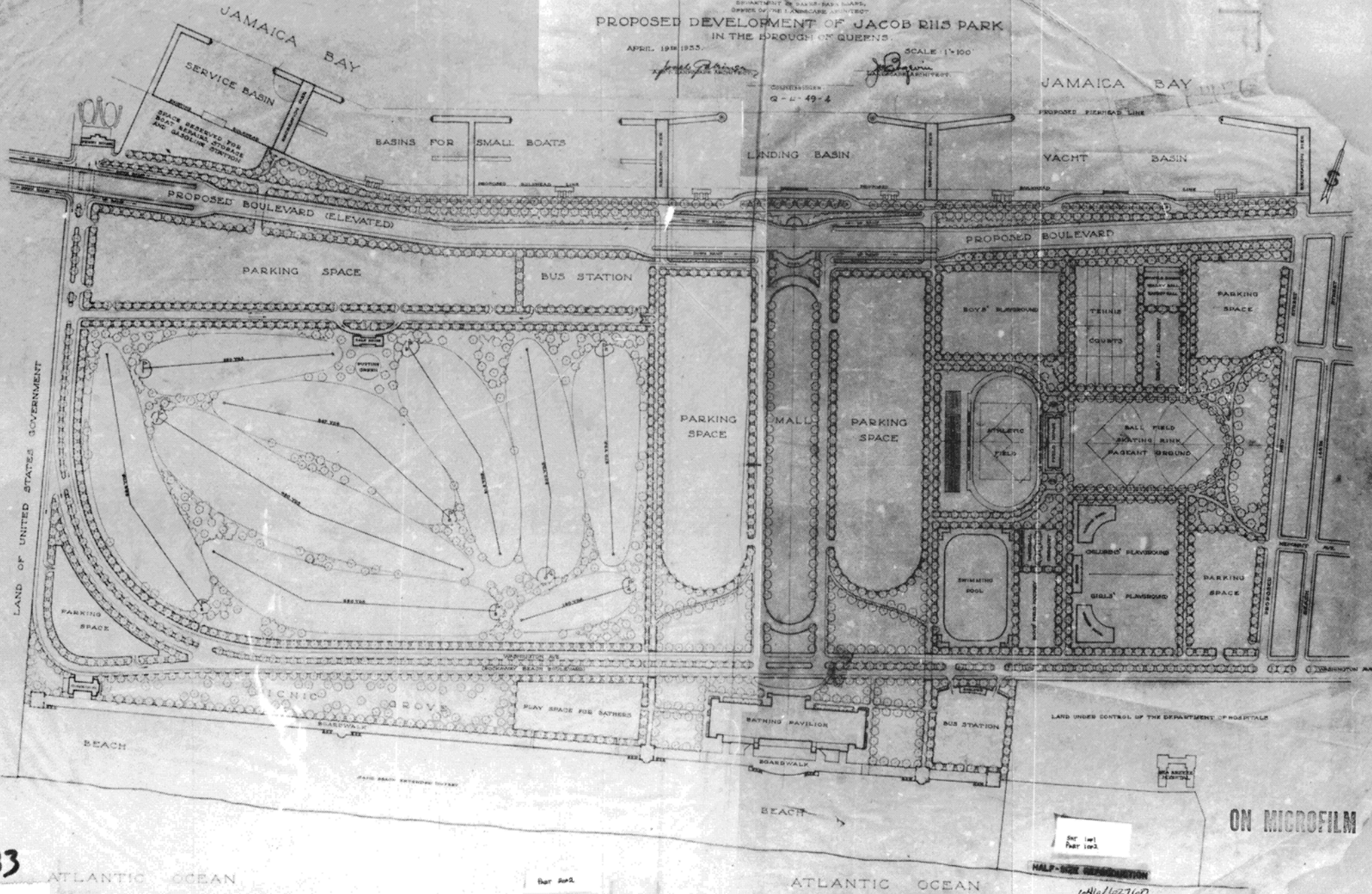
APRIL 19th 1955.

SCALE 1"=100'

COMMISSIONER
Q-4-49-4

J. B. ...
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

JAMAICA BAY



83

ATLANTIC OCEAN

Part 2 of 2

ATLANTIC OCEAN

ON MICROFILM

Sht 1 of 1
Part 1 of 2

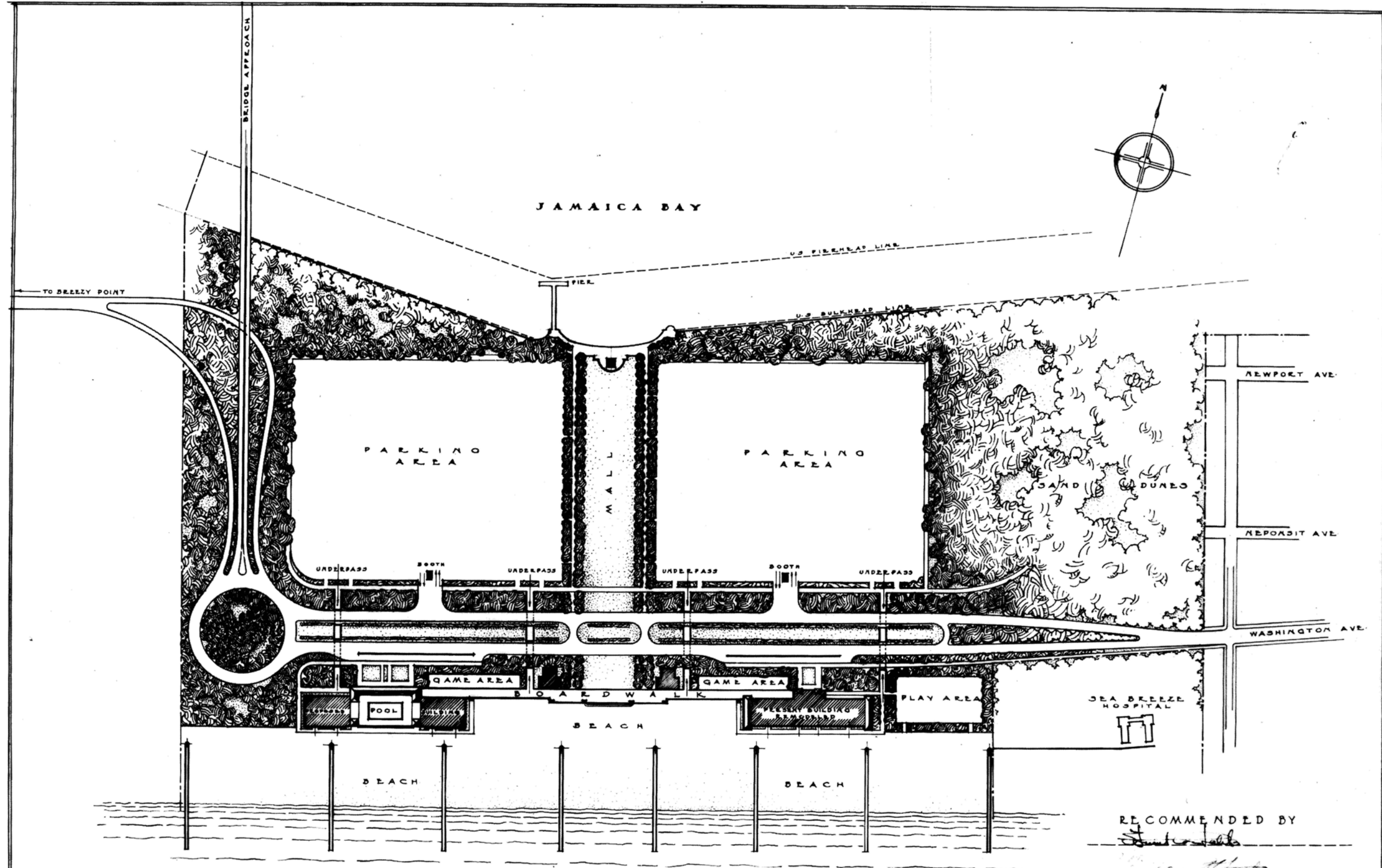
HALF-SIZE REPRODUCTION

646/42760

Parks Department. One of the most significant parts of his plan concerned the extensive enlargement and remodeling of the bath house. He proposed to widen the beach by shearing off a large portion of the oceanfront facade of the pavilion, demolishing the concrete sea wall that had been built by WPA laborers across the entire length of the park during the winter of 1932-33, and moving the parking field north of Rockaway Beach Boulevard, which in turn was to be moved further back from the beach. He urged that virtually the entire area above the relocated boulevard, except for a natural sand dune area on the east side and a pier and yacht basin on the Jamaica Bay waterfront, be occupied by large concrete parking areas to accommodate some 15,000 automobiles. The parking lots would be connected with the beach by underpasses and separated by a mall. At the end of the mall there would be a boardwalk with game areas at either end. The beach would be quadrupled in size by removing the bulkhead and building a new one further back from the water. A second bath house would be built at the west end of the park together with a championship-size swimming pool. The existing jetties would be reconstructed. The park would be linked to Marine Park in Brooklyn by a causeway and high-level bridge across the Rockaway Inlet.¹⁰⁰

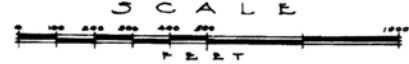
Moses criticized the existing layout of the park facilities. The bath house was so close to the beach that at high tide only a twenty-foot strip of sand in front of the structure was not covered by water. The balance of the valuable shorefront area had been developed as a cinder-surfaced parking lot retained by a bulkhead that encroached on the beach as much as did the bath house. He

100. Drawing No. 62850/1 sheet, Layout Plan, ca. 1934-35, Architectural Drawings. A copy of this plan may be seen on the following page.



JACOB RIIS PARK
QUEENS

DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & NEW YORK CITY



HALF-SIZE REPRODUCTION

RECOMMENDED BY
[Signature]
PARK ENGINEER
APPROVED BY
[Signature]
GILMORE D. CLARKE - CONSULTING LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
[Signature]
EARLE ANDREWS - GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT
[Signature]
ROBERT MOSES COMMISSIONER

646-62850
1 of 1

6-1-29-18

ON MICROFILM

Whitall & Tabor Engineers

was also critical of the exterior appearance of the bath house. Accordingly, he intended to trim off various "gimcracks on it and make it into a decent looking building." The interior was adequate since it had been modeled "after the bathhouses at Jones Beach."

Moses also found the layout of the park to be poorly planned from an economic standpoint. The bath house was

built to accommodate 8,000 bathers, but it never can be filled to capacity at present because the parking field accommodates only 5,000 cars. Each car brings five persons to the beach on Sundays and holidays, it is estimated, but four out of five arrive in their own bathing suits. Thus the maximum number of bathhouse customers at any one time is 5,000.

The reconstruction of the park and the bath house was planned to begin in the fall and would be accomplished with WPA labor. The projects relating to the construction of a second bath house and swimming pool, however, would have to wait until the Marine Parkway Authority began to function or until the city provided an appropriation. Moses justified the extensive development of Riis Park on the basis of the fact that it, Orchard Beach in the Bronx, and Marine Park on State Island were the only parks in the city where natural pollution-free oceanfront bathing would be possible.¹⁰¹

101. New York Times, August 7, 9, 1934, and Editorial, Ibid., August 11, 1934; New York Daily Star, August 7, 1934; New York Daily Press, August 7, 1934; Brooklyn Eagle, August 7, 1934; Robert Moses, "New York Metropolitan Beach Development," Rockaway Review (August-September, 1939), 9-10, 20; and New York City, Department of Parks, 16 Years of Park Progress, 1934-1949 (New York, 1949), p. 18.

On September 5 the New York City Department of Parks formally announced its plan for the comprehensive improvement of Riis Park. The press release read as follows:

Jacob Riis Park will be devoted entirely to aquatic activities. Adjacent to and east of the existing building is a large play area for smaller children which will be fully equipped with play apparatus.

The present building, approximately 600' east of the Mall, containing bath-houses, shops and lockers, is to be completely remodeled.

The park fronts on the Atlantic Ocean and will have a wide, white sandy beach nearly a mile in length, which is to be widened an additional 300 feet. The park is divided into two sections by a wide mall, which extends from the beach front on the ocean to the boat landing on Jamaica Bay.

A 1200 foot boardwalk at the ocean end of the Mall will run parallel to the Atlantic Ocean and will connect the present building with another which is provided in the new design.

Across the boardwalk, opposite the present building, will be a game area which will have shuffle-board, horseshoe pitching and paddle tennis courts, as well as areas reserved for quoits, archery and table tennis.

A new area has been planned paralleling the boardwalk approximately 600 feet west of the mall. There will be a large swimming pool for exhibition purposes as

well as for the use of those who enjoy pool bathing. On either side of this pool new buildings will be erected and will contain bath houses, lockers, locker rooms and restaurants. These new buildings, as well as the open pool, will front on the ocean.

Another game area in the same relative position and similarly equipped as that in the old area will be included.

Access to the park by car will be had on an extension of Washington Avenue which is to have a double drive, paralleling the beach, north of the two recreational areas and extending the entire length of the park to a large circle at the extreme western end where the roads from the bridge approach and Breezy Point merge without any cross traffic at the circle.

North of the park road, and east and west of the Mall, will be two large parking areas with accommodation for 7,000 cars in each field. These parking areas will have access to the boardwalk and buildings by means of two underpasses leading from each parking space.¹⁰²

The development work in Riis Park did not begin as planned in the fall of 1934, primarily because of the strong opposition of various Rockaway civic groups, and the lack of adequate funding. Local opposition to Moses' plans resulted from fears that the development of Riis Park would provide unfair competition to

102. Press Release, Department of Parks, New York City, September 5, 1934, Jacob Riis Park Land Files, Park Lands Division, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.

private bathing establishments along the peninsula and would be detrimental to property values. Instead, these groups urged that development in the park be limited to a golf course, tennis courts, and a playground.¹⁰³

103. New York Times, August 9, November 22, and December 14, 26, 1934.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE RECONDITIONING OF JACOB RIIS PARK:
1936-1937

Under the administration of Commissioner Moses a series of construction projects were undertaken during 1936-37 to effect his comprehensive plan for the rehabilitation and full development of Jacob Riis Park. WPA funding and labor, averaging between 200 and 800 men per day, were used to carry out the majority of the work that cost some \$5,000,000.¹⁰⁴ The Marine Parkway Authority, with Moses as its sole commissioner, also was involved in the work. Plans for the redesign and enlargement of the bath house and recreational facilities at the park were developed from the summer of 1936 to the spring of 1937 by Clinton Loyd, chief of architectural design, and Aymar Embury II, architectural consultant. Both men were valued assistants of Moses and both were involved in numerous park improvement projects.¹⁰⁵

A. BATHING PAVILION OR BATH HOUSE (HS-606)

The plans for the bathing pavilion (commonly referred to as the bath house) as approved by the Municipal Art Commission in November 1936 included a thorough renovation of both the exterior and interior of the structure. Equipment would be modernized, the concessionaire's space enlarged, and locker-room areas increased to accommodate some 11,500 bathers. The private dining rooms and dance pavilions would be decreased in size or eliminated. The plans provided for a marine cafeteria paneled in Mediterranean blue tiles and a spacious sundeck forty feet above the beach on the roof

104. According to Caro in The Power Broker, Moses requested the Board of Estimate in 1935 to allocate \$3,600,000 for construction projects in Jacob Riis, Fort Tryon, Pelham Bay, and two Marine Parks. An additional \$3,500,000 was authorized for Jacob Riis Park before it was completed in June 1937. Caro, The Power Broker, p. 476.

105. See Appendix F for a brief outline of the organization of the Division of Design in the New York City Parks Department from 1934 to 1939.

of the oceanfront pavilion. Architectural changes included increasing the height of the towers and installation in them of tide and time clocks, a long two-story addition on the south side of the structure, adding new police accommodations, and increasing the height of the wall around the open-air dressing rooms. With the construction of a concrete promenade on the new sea wall along the beach the entire oceanfront portion of the existing structure would be removed to allow for a deeper beach at that point.¹⁰⁶

The reconstructed and redesigned bath house was ready for public use by June 1937. The structure was basically a T-shaped brick masonry building which consisted of the aforementioned rectangular single story unit built in 1931-32 and enlarged by a long two-story addition on the south during the 1936-37 reconstruction. The earlier section was composed of a rectangular open court enclosed by high brick walls on the north, east, and west and by the two-story addition on the south. In the center of the north wall a single-story projection provided the entrance to the bath house and housed a vestibule, lobby, ticket counters, towel return facilities, offices, and equipment rooms. Its front facade was faced with a long arcade supported by corinthian pillars and topped with two octagonal turrets. Within the arcade were pairs of double doors topped with fanlight transoms and separated by booths, which provided entry into the vestibule of the locker area. This projection was covered with an asphalt-shingled gable roof.

The open-air outdoor dressing area was divided into a women's area on the west and a men's area on the east with a divided shower area in the middle separated by a high wall. There were

106. New York Times, November 13, 1936, and June 7, 1937.

approximately 11,500 simple wooden cabanas in the inner court along with a number of enclosed cubicle-type showers and foot baths. Passageways through the southern addition led from each of these areas out onto the promenade along the beach.

There were two identical single-story rectangular brick buildings located on the southeast and southwest corners of the inner court. The eastern structure housed a police control garage and administrative offices and that on the west contained a first aid station, staff room, and rest rooms. Behind the west structure was a large women's toilet and behind the east structure was a large men's toilet, both of which were entered from the open-air dressing rooms.

The oceanfront side of the bath house was a long, two-story, brick structure with concrete trim, dominated by two octagonal four-story towers. The central area projecting between the two towers consisted of an arcade supported by round concrete columns. The first floor of the central area contained food, refreshment, and garbage storage rooms, employees' locker, mess and rest rooms, sand compressor and boiler rooms. On the second floor above the arcade was a rectangular concrete bay with rounded corners, a flat roof, and glass block windows, which contained a cafeteria, cafeteria bar, kitchen, and storage and refrigeration rooms.

On either side of the central projection were four rectangular single-story projecting bays. The inner bays provided access to the open-air locker courts, while the outer bays contained the umbrella, deck chair, and surf shop concessions. There were symmetrical stairways on either side of these projections which led up to terraces which served as sun decks with a women's lounge and rest room on the west and similar facilities for men on the east.

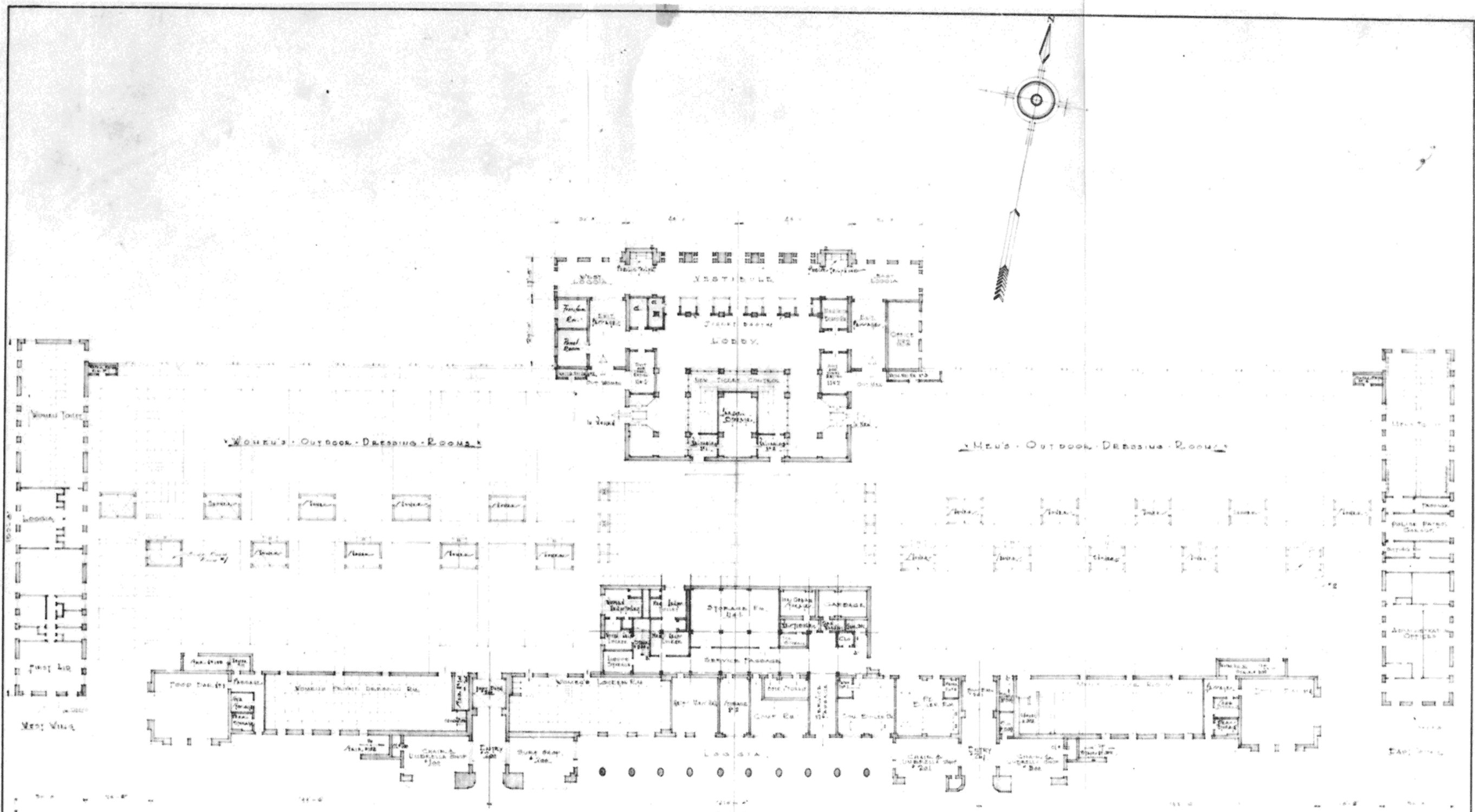
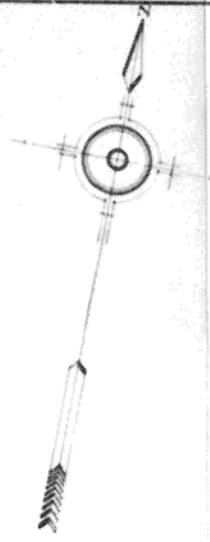
Extending to the east and west of the central area were symmetrical two-story wings with gable roofs which terminated in square wings with hip roofs. The west wing contained a women's private dressing room, shower, and food bar on the first floor and women's dressing rooms and showers on the second floor. The east wing contained a men's locker room, shower, and food bar on the first floor and men's dressing rooms and showers on the second floor. The windows on the second story level were all glass block.¹⁰⁷

Although the bath house was opened to the public in June 1937, some details of the construction were not completed until the fall of that year. On August 2 Moses reported to Mayor La Guardia that the following work on the structure needed to be finished:

- Accordian doors, east and west food bars
- Women's private locker rooms
- Interior painting
- Hollow metal doors
- Terrazzo flooring
- Marble toilet partitions
- Glass sliding doors, Surf shop
- Glazing
- Plaster patching
- Mastic flooring
- Furnish hardware
- Metal top rail on marble toilet partitions
- Fan motors in men's and women's toilets
- Time and tide clocks in east and west towers
- Steel lockers

107. Ibid., June 7, 1937; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form: Jacob Riis Park Historic District (Gateway NRA)," by Richard Greenwood and Ricardo Torres-Reyes, 1977; and Drawing No. 62854/63 sheets, Bathhouse and Ocean Pavilion, April 16, 1937, Architectural Drawings. Copies of the first twelve sheets of this series may be seen on the following pages.





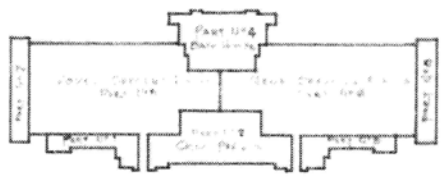
HALF-SIZE REPRODUCTION

ISSUED JAN 21 1937	APPROVED BY	DATE
ISSUED FEB 17 1937	REVISION	DATE
ISSUED APR 16 1937	REVISION	DATE

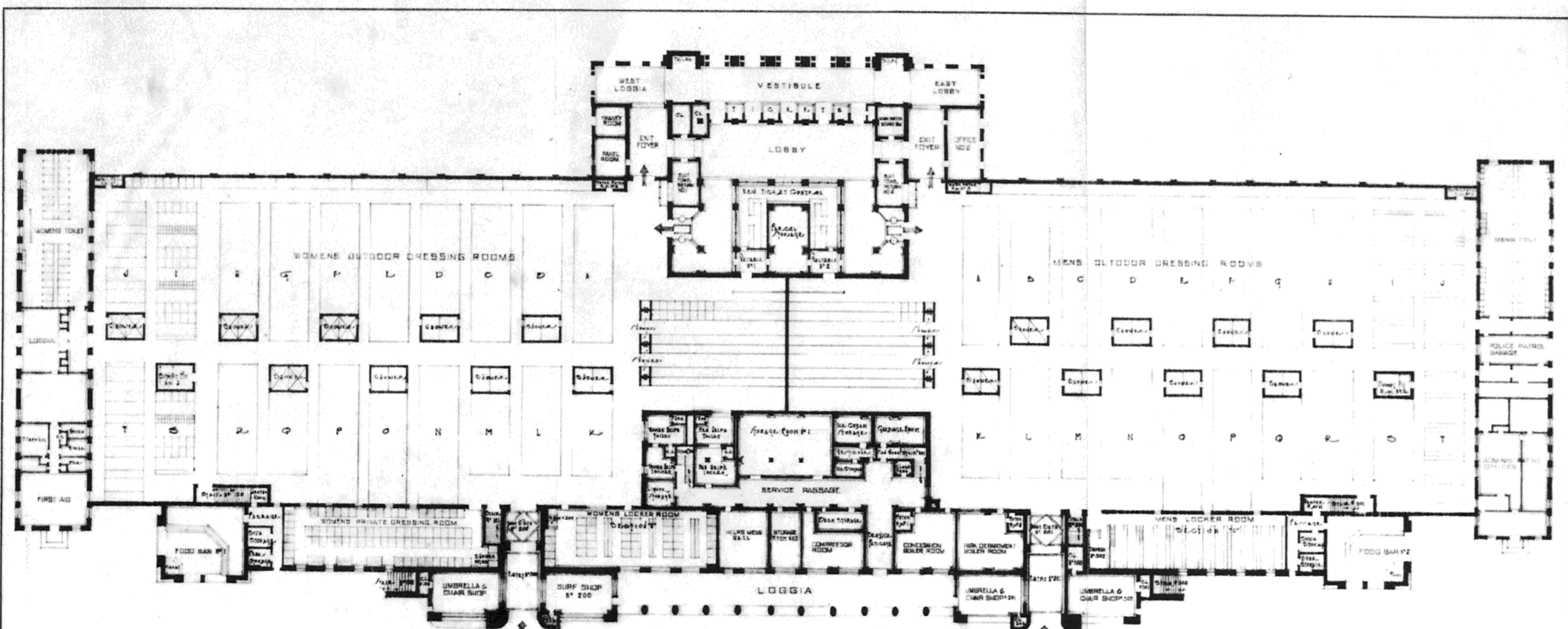
CITY OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
ARSENAL CENTRAL PARK

REVISIONS

646-62854
1 of 63

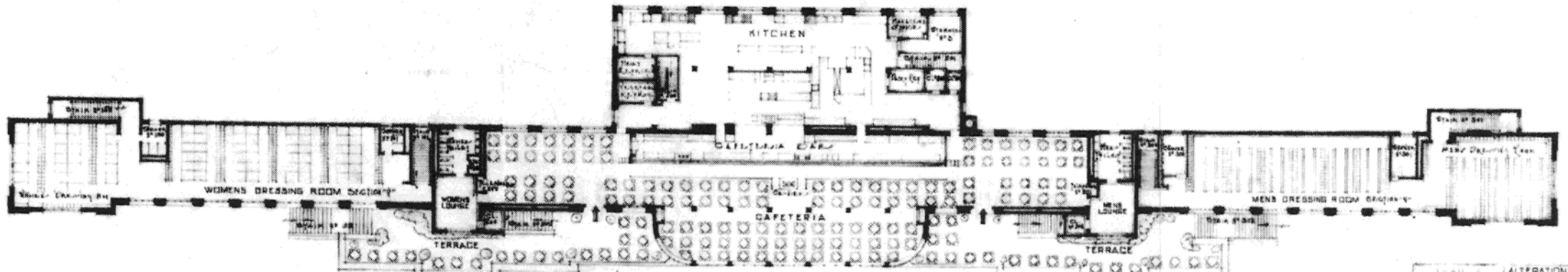


ON MICROFILM



FIRST FL' PLAN

FIRST FL' PLAN



SECOND FL' PLAN

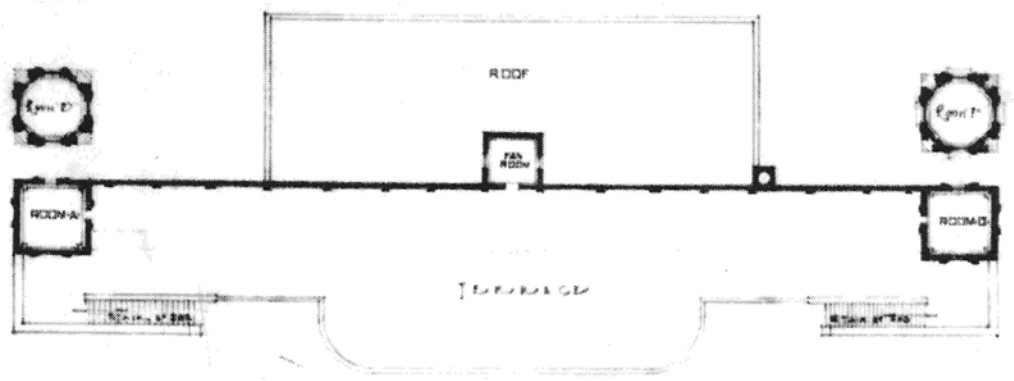
SECOND FL' PLAN

TOWER PLAN

TOWER PLAN

ROOF PLAN

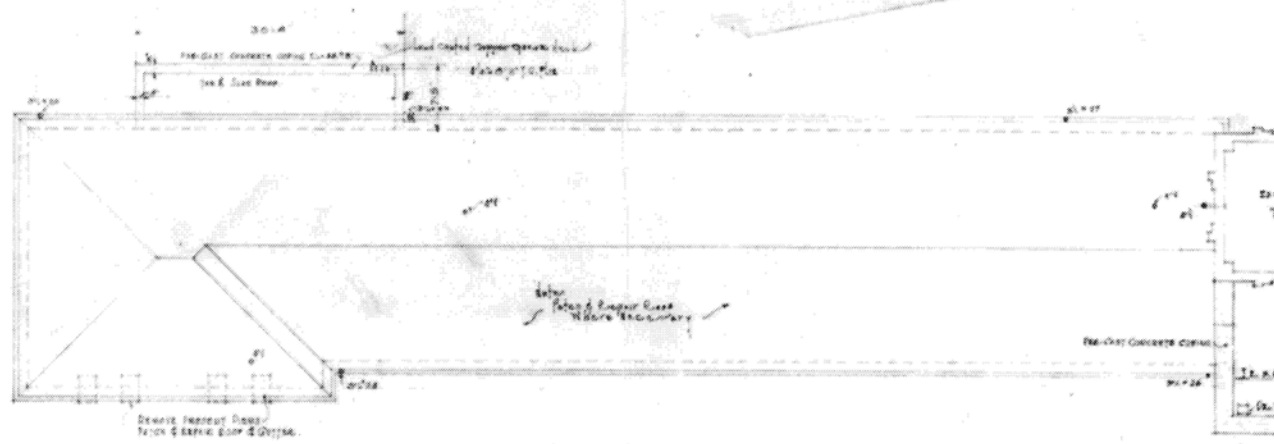
ROOF PLAN



STUDY PRELIMINARY FINAL REVISIONS	ALTERATION TO BATH HOUSE & OCEAN PAVILION JACOB RUIS PARK - ROCKAWAY - N. Y. Q. A49 OPERATION PLAN Q248 1900 OPERATION 1/4" = 1'-0" CITY OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF PARKS ARSENAL CENTRAL PARK REVISIONS
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646-62854
2 of 63

ON MICROFILM



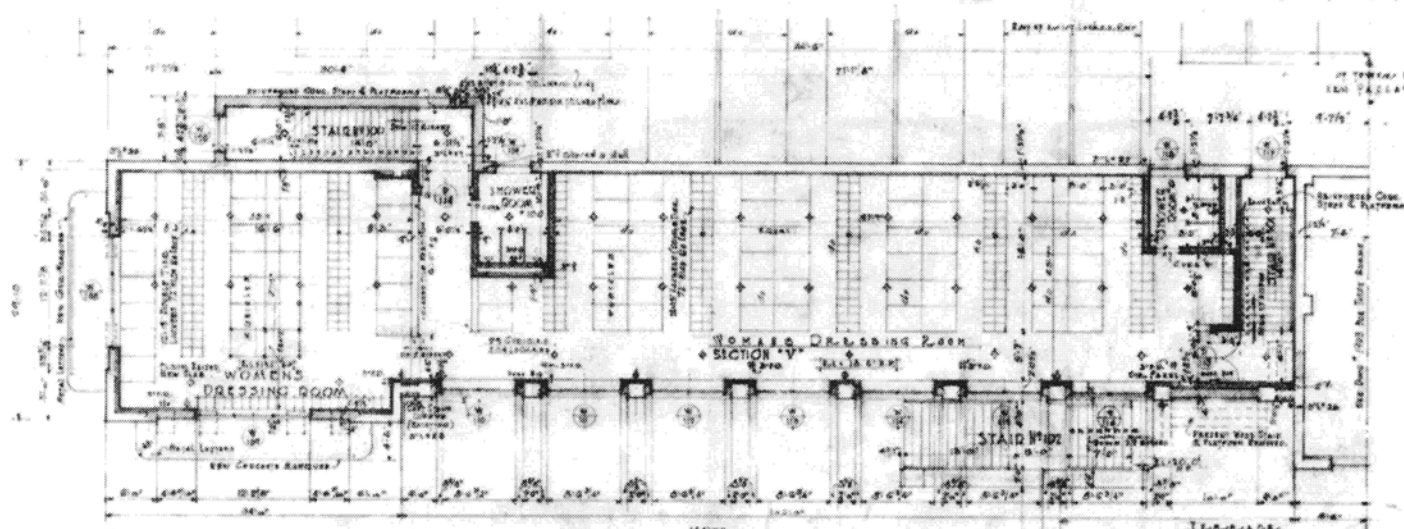
ROOF PLAN PART NO. 1

DOOR SCHEDULE

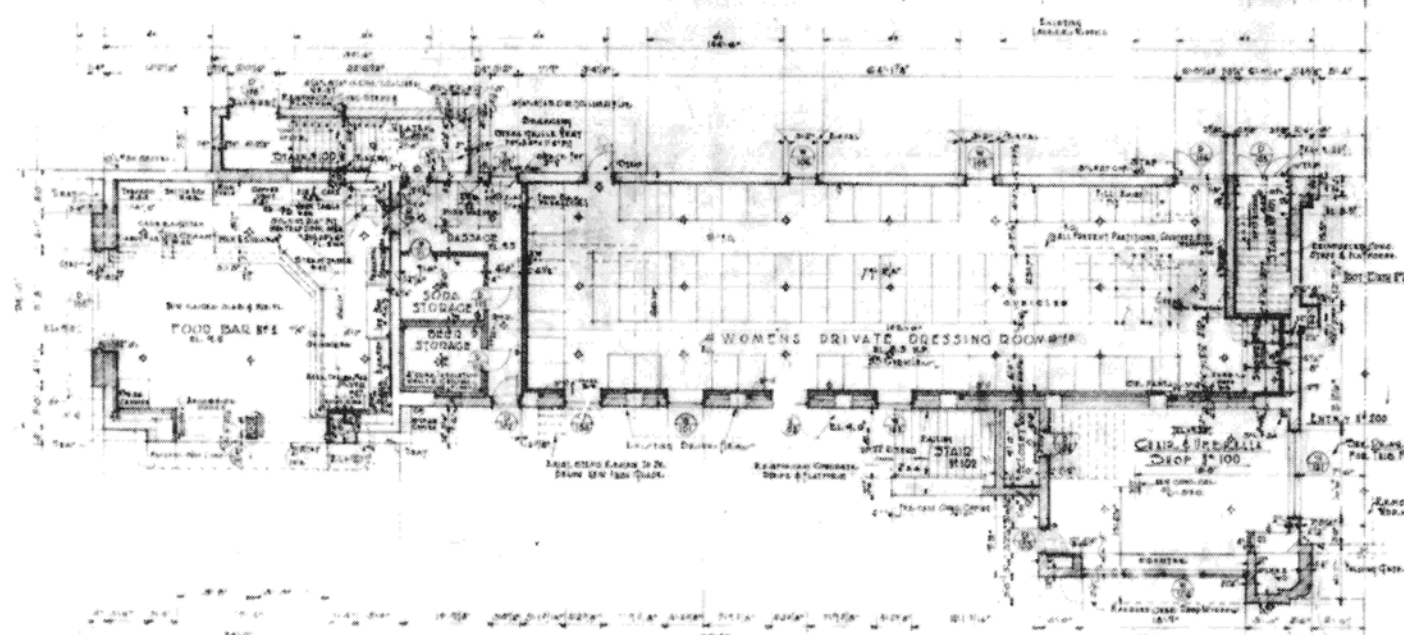
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102	B	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
103	C	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
104	D	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
105	E	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
106	F	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
107	G	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
108	H	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
109	I	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
110	J	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
111	K	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
112	L	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
113	M	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
114	N	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
115	O	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
116	P	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
117	Q	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
118	R	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
119	S	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
120	T	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	

WINDOW SCHEDULE

Window No.	Type	Material	Finish	Weight	Area	Remarks
101	A	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
102	B	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
103	C	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
104	D	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
105	E	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
106	F	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
107	G	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
108	H	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
109	I	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
110	J	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
111	K	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
112	L	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
113	M	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
114	N	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
115	O	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
116	P	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
117	Q	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
118	R	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
119	S	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	
120	T	Steel	Paint	150	15.0	



SECOND FLOOR PLAN PART NO. 1



FIRST FLOOR PLAN PART NO. 1

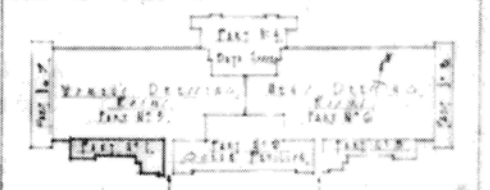
646-62854
309 63

SCHEDULE OF INTERIOR FINISHES

Room	Finish	Material	Weight	Area	Remarks
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102	B	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
103	C	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
104	D	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
105	E	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
106	F	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
107	G	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
108	H	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
109	I	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
110	J	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
111	K	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
112	L	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
113	M	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
114	N	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
115	O	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
116	P	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
117	Q	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
118	R	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
119	S	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
120	T	Steel	Paint	150	15.0

IDENTIFICATION

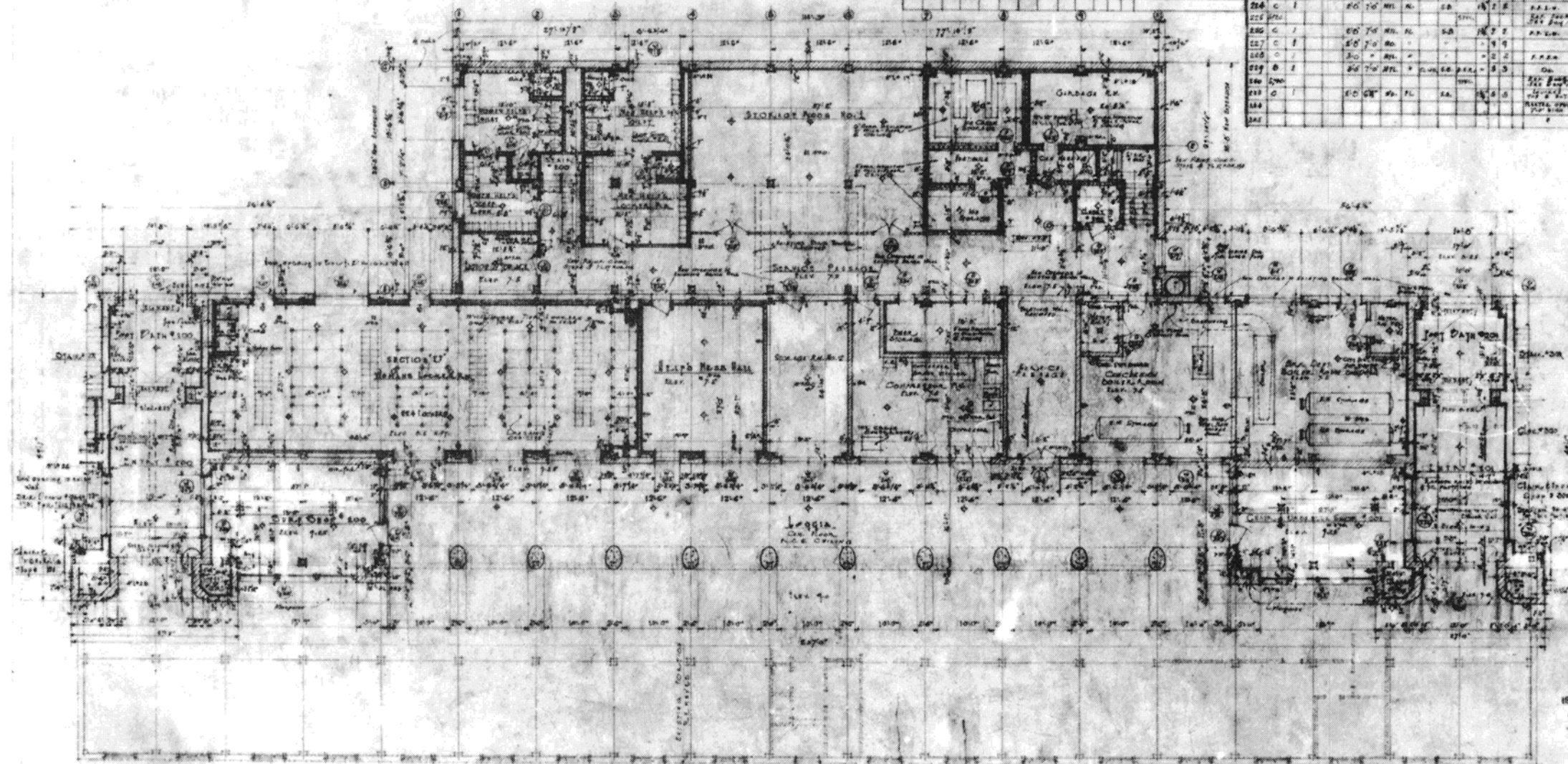
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102	B	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
103	C	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
104	D	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
105	E	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
106	F	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
107	G	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
108	H	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
109	I	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
110	J	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
111	K	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
112	L	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
113	M	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
114	N	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
115	O	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
116	P	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
117	Q	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
118	R	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
119	S	Steel	Paint	150	15.0
120	T	Steel	Paint	150	15.0



ISSUED JAN 25 1901
 PART 1-142 OF 64 ROOF PLANS
 CITY OF NEW YORK
 DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
 ARSENAL CENTRAL PARK
 REVISIONS

ON MICROFILM

WINDOW SCHEDULE										DOOR SCHEDULE										SCHEDULE OF INTERIOR FINISHES									
NO.	TYPE	FINISH	GLASS	GLAZING	FRAME	REMARKS	NO.	TYPE	FINISH	REMARKS	NO.	SPACE	FINISH	REMARKS	NO.	SPACE	FINISH	REMARKS											
101	C	6x8	1/8"	1/2"	1/2"	See DWG 1120	101	C	6x8	1/8"	1/2"	101	CEILING	Acoustic Tile	101	WALL	Plaster	101	FLOOR	Concrete									
102	C	6x8	1/8"	1/2"	1/2"	See DWG 1120	102	C	6x8	1/8"	1/2"	102	CEILING	Acoustic Tile	102	WALL	Plaster	102	FLOOR	Concrete									
103	C	6x8	1/8"	1/2"	1/2"	See DWG 1120	103	C	6x8	1/8"	1/2"	103	CEILING	Acoustic Tile	103	WALL	Plaster	103	FLOOR	Concrete									
104	C	6x8	1/8"	1/2"	1/2"	See DWG 1120	104	C	6x8	1/8"	1/2"	104	CEILING	Acoustic Tile	104	WALL	Plaster	104	FLOOR	Concrete									
105	C	6x8	1/8"	1/2"	1/2"	See DWG 1120	105	C	6x8	1/8"	1/2"	105	CEILING	Acoustic Tile	105	WALL	Plaster	105	FLOOR	Concrete									



FIRST FLOOR PLAN
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

646-62854
40263

KEY OF MATERIALS

CONCRETE	CONCRETE	CONCRETE	CONCRETE
PLASTER	PLASTER	PLASTER	PLASTER
GLAZED TILE	GLAZED TILE	GLAZED TILE	GLAZED TILE
ACoustic TILE	ACoustic TILE	ACoustic TILE	ACoustic TILE

ABBREVIATIONS

CEM	CEMENT	DR	DRIVE
GLZ	GLAZED TILE	FM	FLOOR FINISH
PL	PLASTER	FM	FLOOR FINISH
CON	CONCRETE	FM	FLOOR FINISH
AC	ACoustic TILE	FM	FLOOR FINISH
...

KEY PLAN

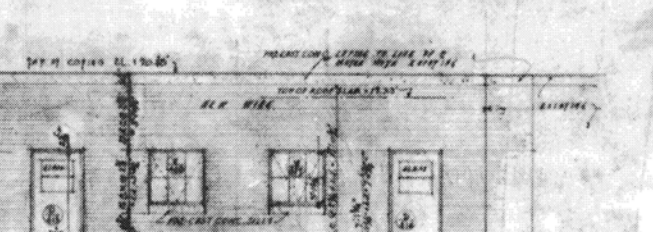
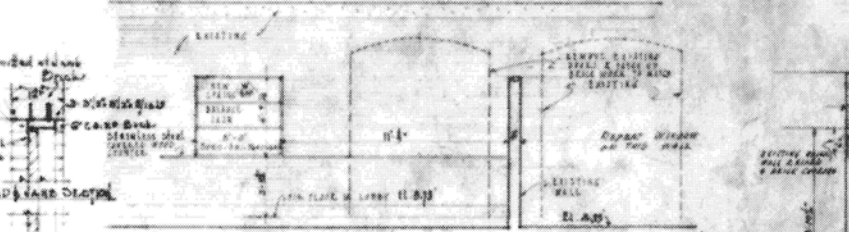
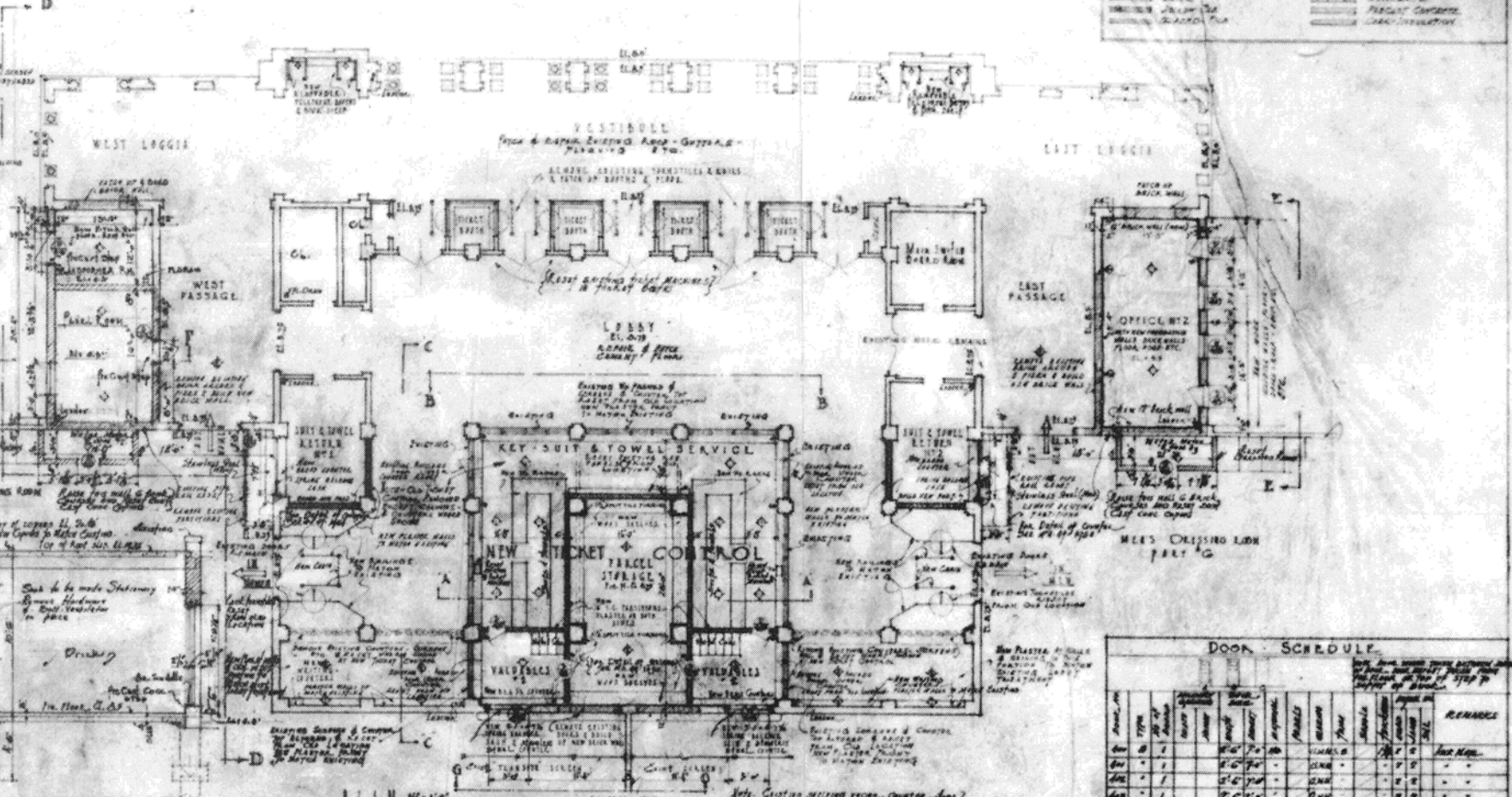
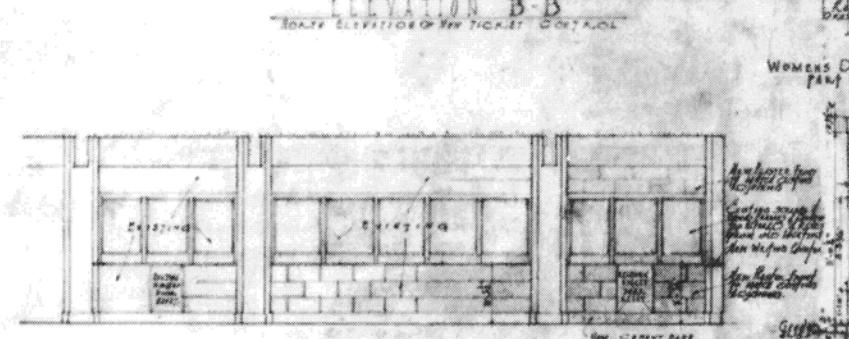
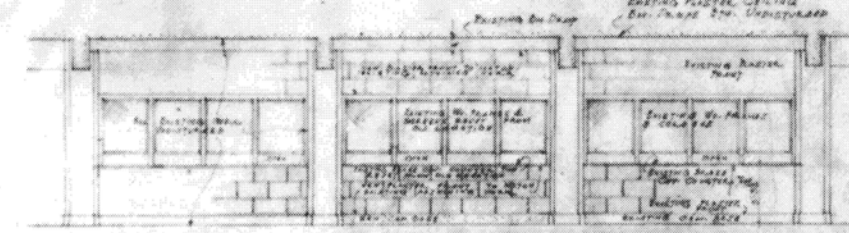
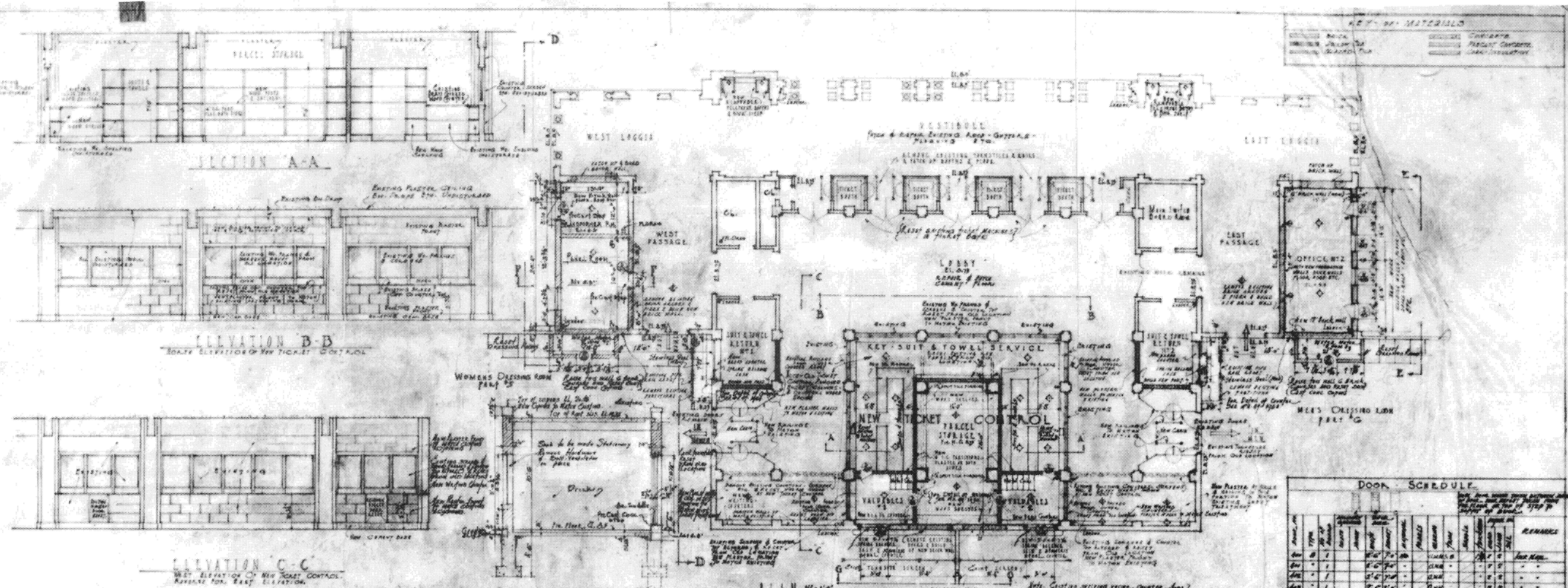
ISSUED JAN 28 1937
REVISED APR 20 1937

PREPARED BY: *Henry Jones*
CHECKED BY: *[Signature]*
DATE: 4-27-37

CITY OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
ARSENAL CENTRAL PARK

REVISIONS

ON MICROFILM



WINDOW SCHEDULE

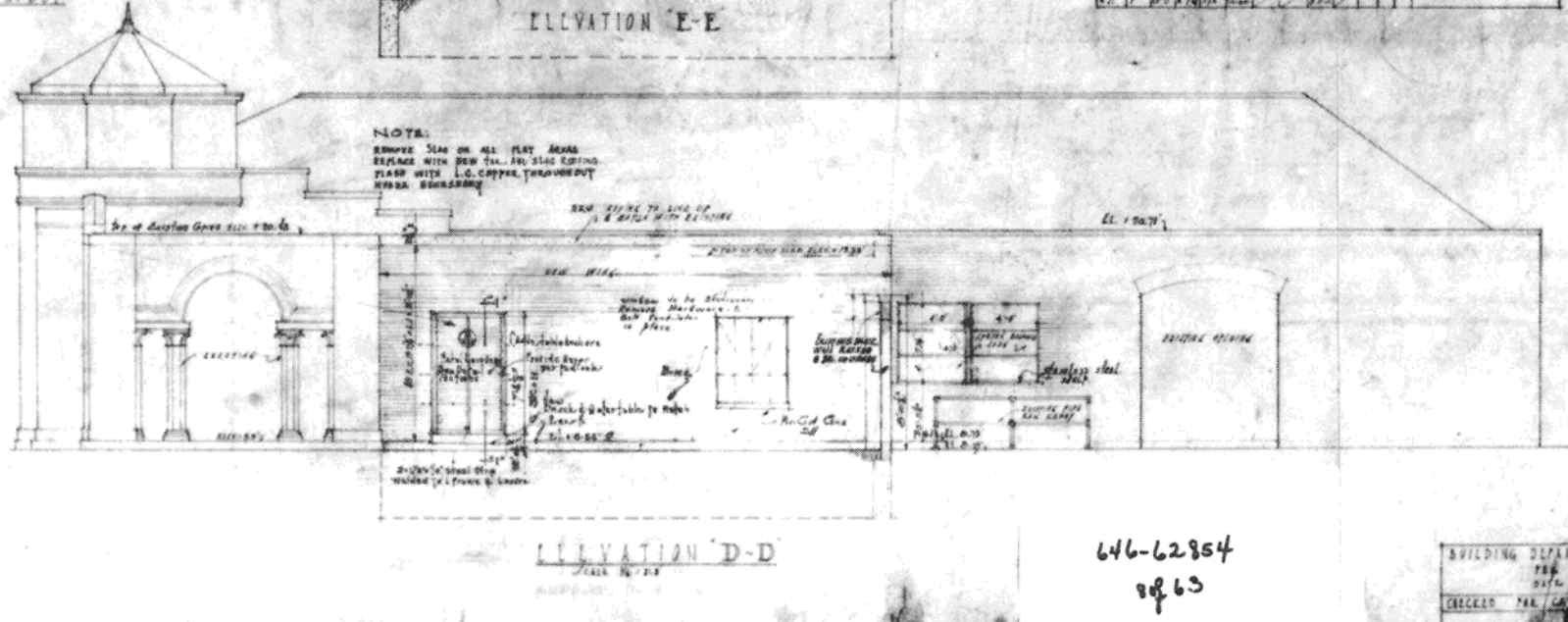
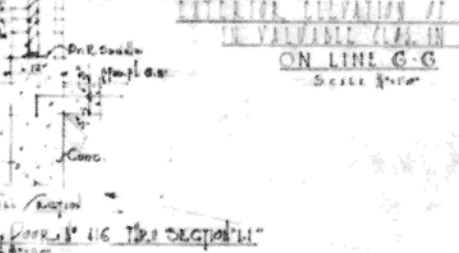
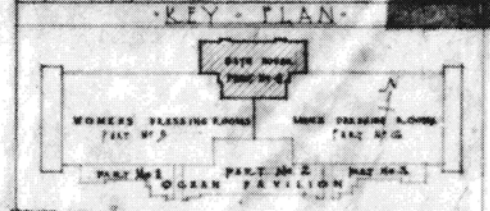
NO.	TYPE	FINISH	GLASS	FRAME	REMARKS
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

DOOR SCHEDULE

NO.	TYPE	FINISH	GLASS	FRAME	REMARKS
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10

ABBREVIATIONS

C.M.	CONCRETE	D.A.	BRICK
M.F.	MASONRY	F.F.	FLOOR FINISH
P.L.	PLASTER	F.M.	FRESH MASONRY
A.C.S.	ASBESTOS CEMENT SHEET	F.C.	FIRE CLAY
O.W.B.	OSBORNITE WIRE GLASS	C.C.	CONCRETE
P.W.B.	PERMANENT WIRE GLASS	T.C.	TERRAZZO
C.S.	CLEAR GLASS	S.T.	SET TERN
S.S.	STEEL SHEET	S.I.	WOODWORK
W.B.	WOOD BLOCK	L.C.	LEAD CEMENT
M.	METAL	E.L.	ELEVATION
A.S.T.	ARMORED TIRE	A.L.P.	ARCH POINT & LOW POINT
C.T.	CORNER TIE	P.L.	PLUMB LINE
S.P.	SPECIAL	M.	MASON
R.	ROOF	M.S.	MASONRY
S.A.S.	SAND AND SANDS	S.A.S.	SAND AND SANDS
N.P.	NORTH POINT		



SCHEDULE OF INTERIOR FINISH

SPACE DESIGNATION	FINISH	REMARKS
VESTIBULE	EXISTING	EXISTING WORK TO REMAIN
EAST WEST LOBBY	EXISTING	EXISTING WORK TO REMAIN
EAST WEST PASSAGE	EXISTING	EXISTING WORK TO REMAIN
OFFICE #1	EXISTING	EXISTING WORK TO REMAIN
LOBBY	EXISTING	EXISTING WORK TO REMAIN
TICKET BOOTHS	EXISTING	EXISTING WORK TO REMAIN
TRANSFORMER ROOM	EXISTING	EXISTING WORK TO REMAIN
W.C.	EXISTING	EXISTING WORK TO REMAIN
STAIR	EXISTING	EXISTING WORK TO REMAIN
MECHANICAL ROOM	EXISTING	EXISTING WORK TO REMAIN
PARCEL STORAGE	EXISTING	EXISTING WORK TO REMAIN
VALUABLES	EXISTING	EXISTING WORK TO REMAIN

REVISIONS

ISSUED JAN 20 1907

REVISED NOV 17 1907

REVISED OCT 18 1907

PRELIMINARY

REVISED SEP 18 1907

REVISED APR 18 1907

ATTENTION TO BATH HOUSE & OCEAN PAVILION

DESIGNED BY *Hans J. Wegman*

CITY OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
ARSENAL CENTRAL PARK

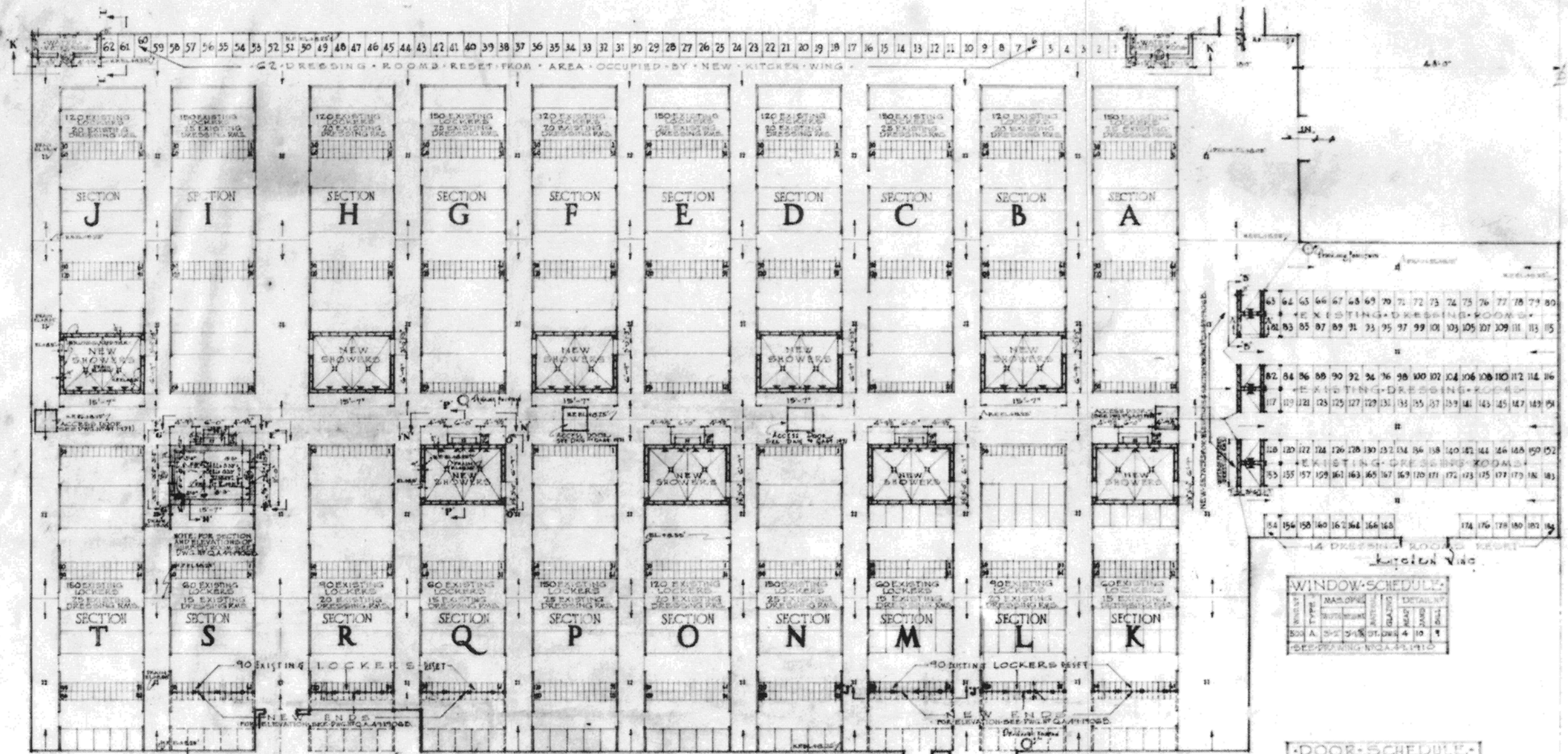
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

646-62854
1863

BUILDING DEPARTMENT PRINT

CHECKED BY: *[Signature]*

ON MICROFILM



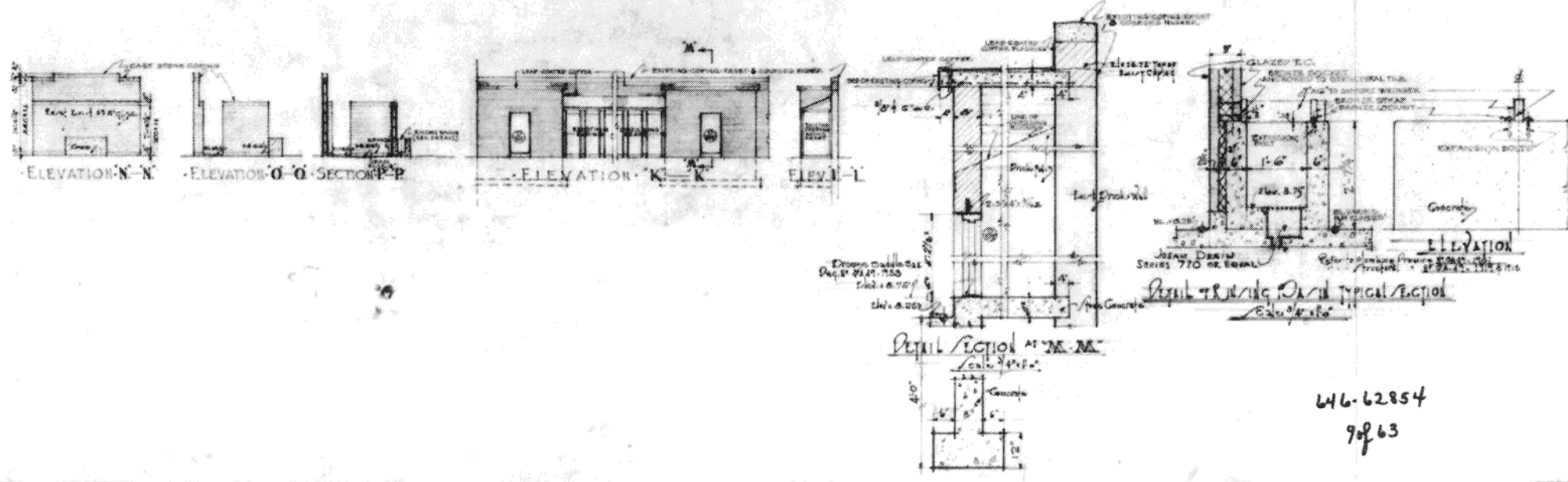
WINDOW SCHEDULE

NO.	TYPE	MATERIAL	FINISH	DETAIL NO.
100 A	6'-0" x 4'-0"	ML. GLASS	1	1
100 B	6'-0" x 4'-0"	ML. GLASS	1	1

DOOR SCHEDULE

NO.	TYPE	MATERIAL	FINISH	DETAIL NO.
100 C	6'-0" x 4'-0"	ML. GLASS	1	1
100 D	6'-0" x 4'-0"	ML. GLASS	1	1

NOTE:
 Existing Lockers (31 Date Corrosion Plank) 2620
 Existing Shower 184



PARTS

ISSUED: ALTERATIONS TO R.N. 15 AND OCCUPANCY PERMITS FOR JACOBUS PARK ROCKAWAY BY 2A-171

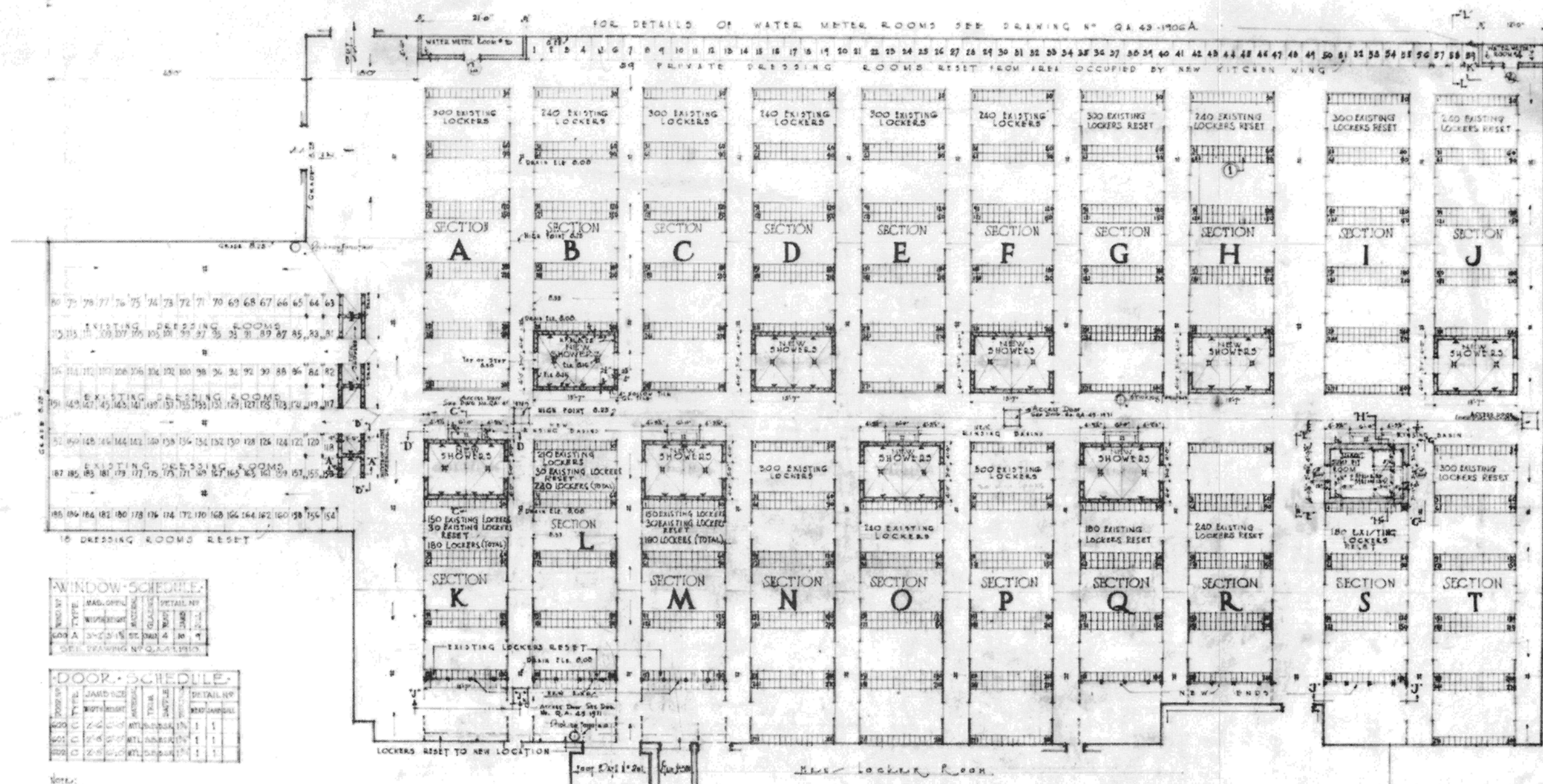
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APR 18 1963

CITY OF NEW YORK
 DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
 ARSENAL, CENTRAL PARK

46-62854
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ON MICROFILM



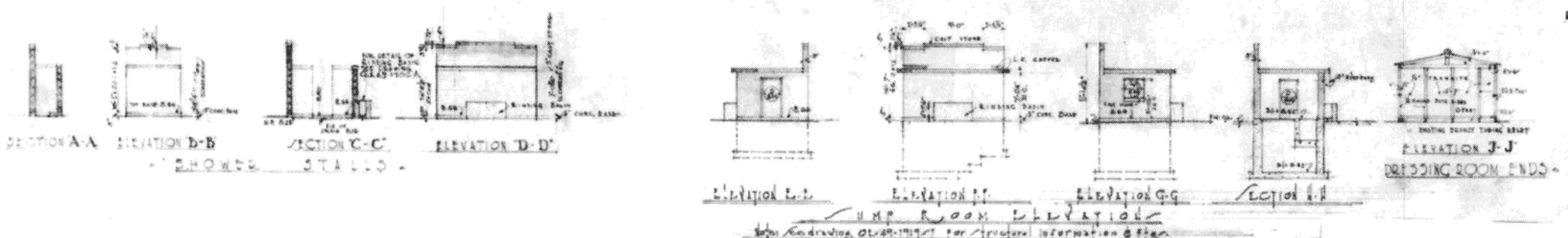
WINDOW SCHEDULE

NO.	TYPE	MATERIAL	DETAIL NO.
600 A	3'-2" x 1'-6"	ST. GALV. & IR. 1"	1

DOOR SCHEDULE

NO.	TYPE	MATERIAL	DETAIL NO.
600 C	2'-6" x 6'-0"	MTL. SCHEDULE 1"	1
601 C	2'-6" x 6'-0"	MTL. SCHEDULE 1"	1
602 C	2'-6" x 6'-0"	MTL. SCHEDULE 1"	1

Notes:
 5000 SCHEDULE LOCKERS
 JAB (JAMES) CHAIRS



- PART 'G' -

1906S ALTERATION TO BATH HOUSE & OCEAN FACILITY
 JACOB RILEY PARK ROCKAWAY NY QA 49

WORK PREPARED BY
 HARRY ROSS

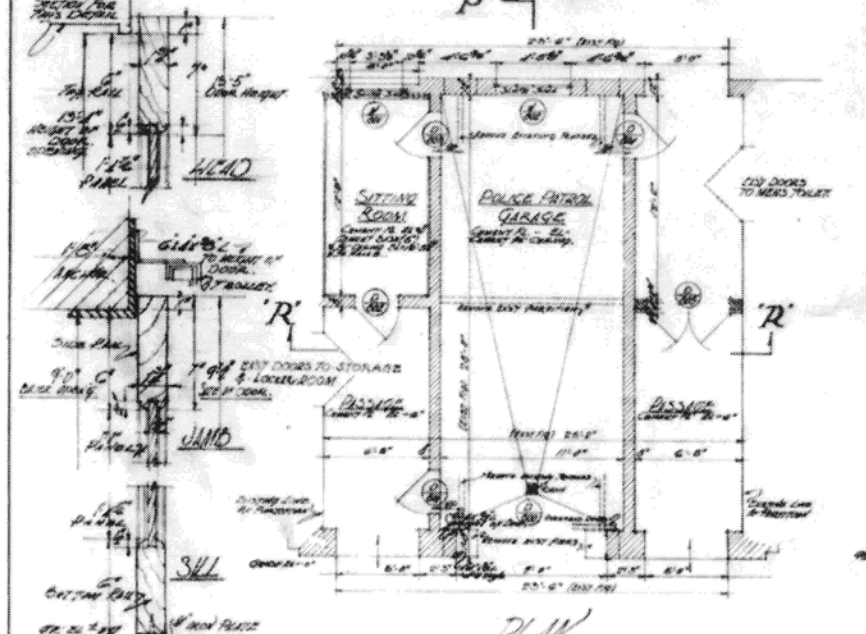
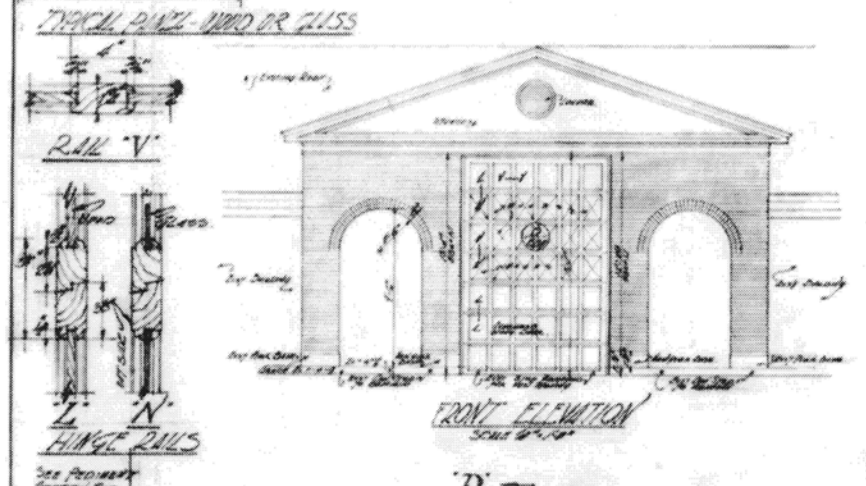
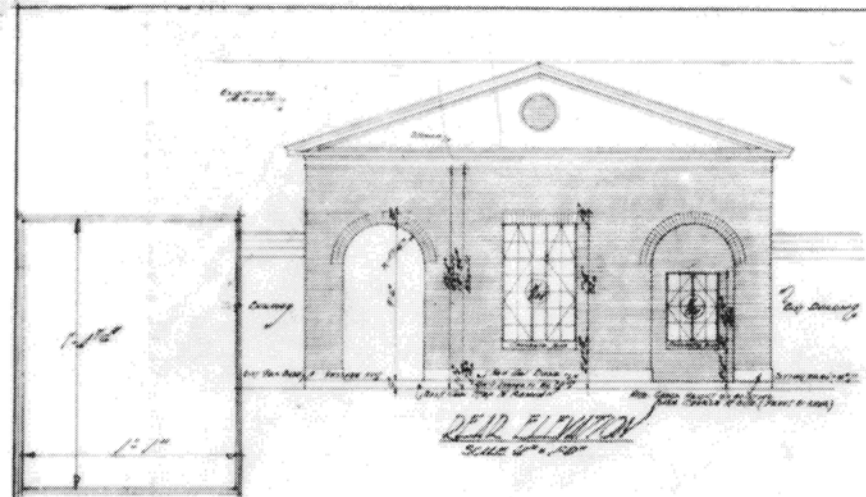
FINAL

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OVERHEAD DOOR
#800 DETAILS
 SCALE 3/8\"/>

KEY OF MATERIALS

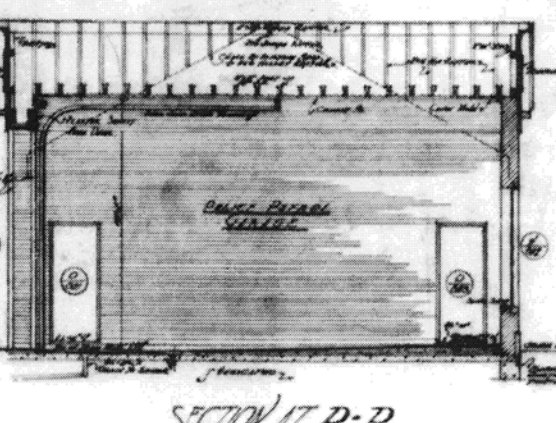
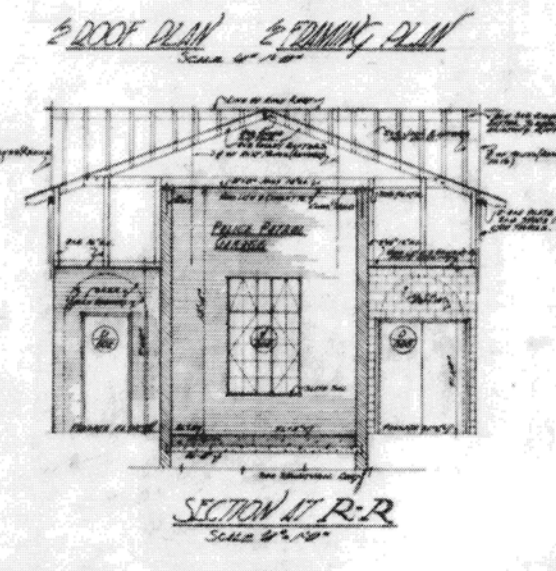
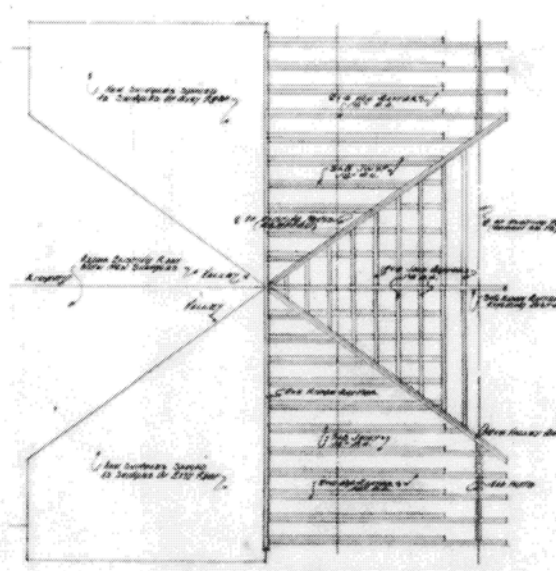
WINDOW SCHEDULE

NO.	TYPE	FINISH	GLASS	REMARKS
101	1/2	1/2	1/2	
102	1/2	1/2	1/2	
103	1/2	1/2	1/2	
104	1/2	1/2	1/2	

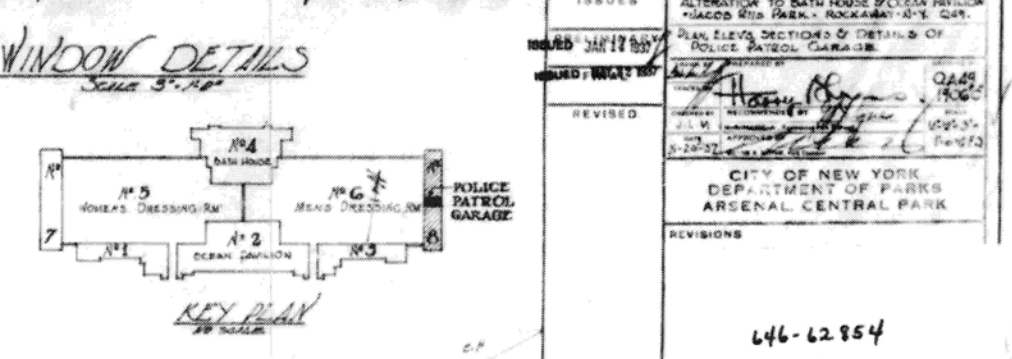
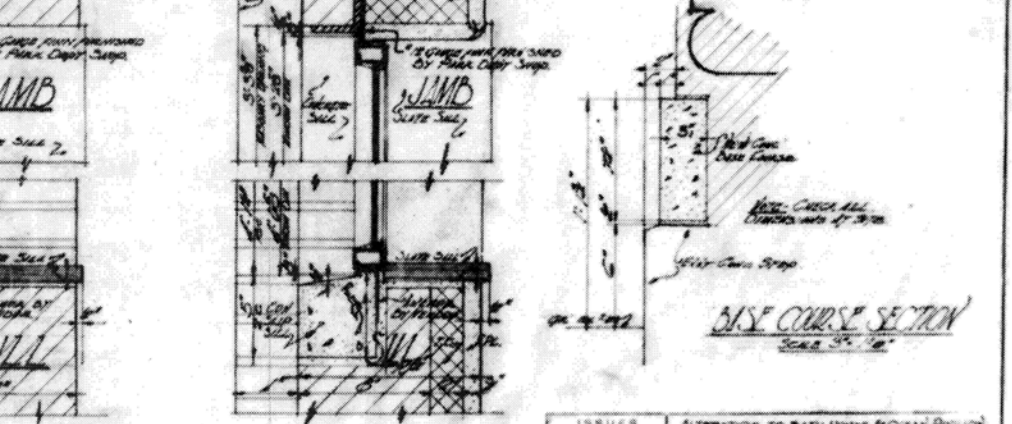
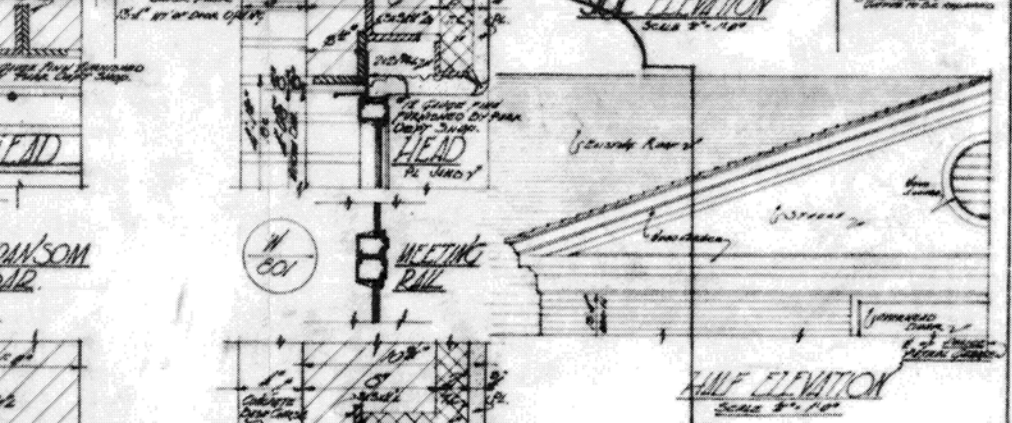
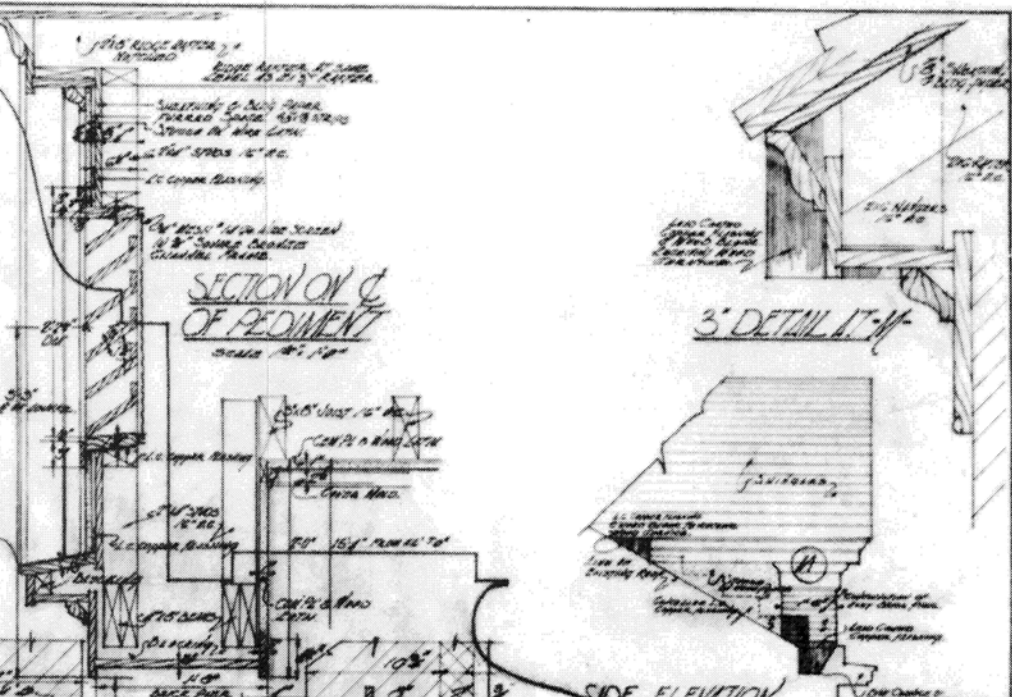
DOOR SCHEDULE

NO.	TYPE	FINISH	GLASS	REMARKS
101	1/2	1/2	1/2	
102	1/2	1/2	1/2	
103	1/2	1/2	1/2	
104	1/2	1/2	1/2	

KEY PLAN



F.S. PROFILE OF CORNICE



ISSUES

ISSUED: JAN 12 1965

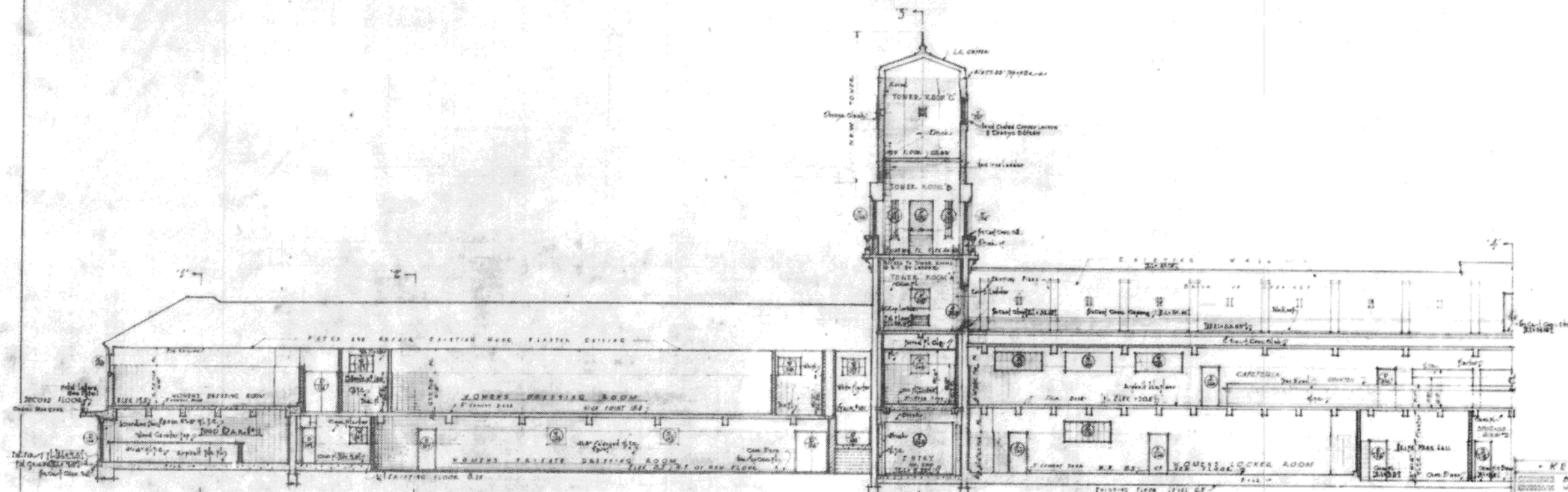
ISSUED: MARCH 1965

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CITY OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
ARSENAL CENTRAL PARK

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ON MICROFILM



SECTION 5-5

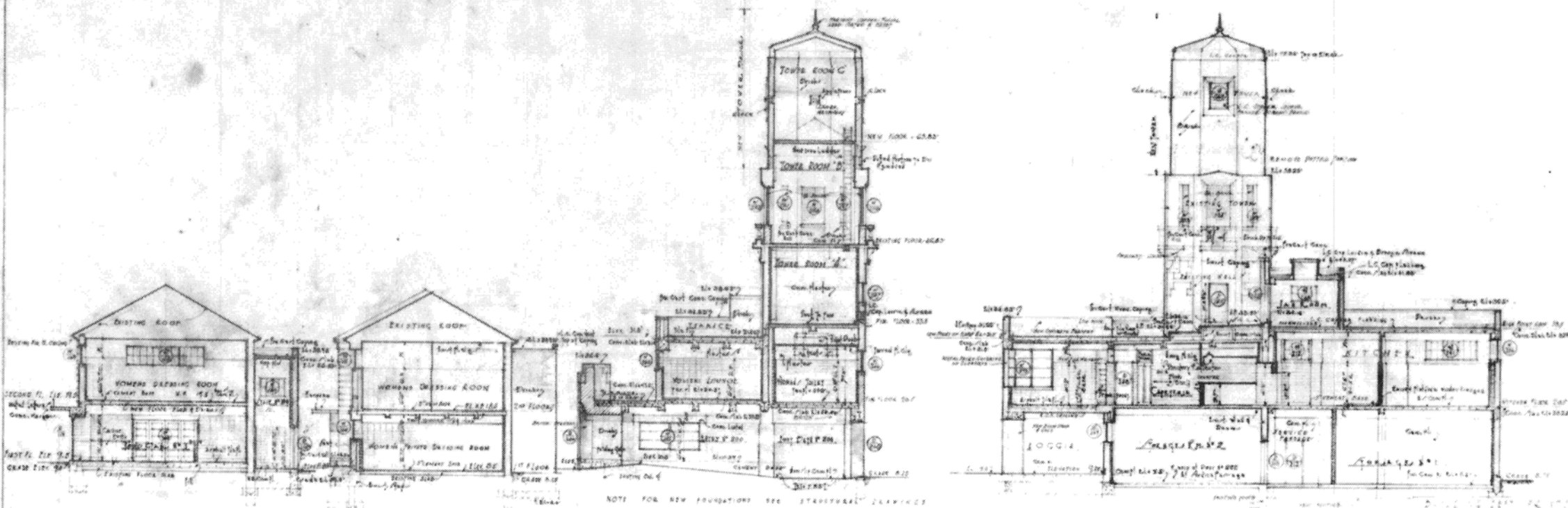
NOTE: CORRESPONDING SECTIONS THROUGH EAST HALF OF PART NO. 2 AND PART NO. 3 SIMILAR.

KEY OF MATERIALS

CONCRETE	CONCRETE	CONCRETE
HOLLOW TILE	HOLLOW TILE	HOLLOW TILE
GLAZED TILE	GLAZED TILE	GLAZED TILE
PRECAST CONCRETE	PRECAST CONCRETE	PRECAST CONCRETE
CORNER INSULATION	CORNER INSULATION	CORNER INSULATION

ABBREVIATIONS

CEM	CEMENT	BR	BRICK
GLT	GLAZED TILE	FIN FL	FINISH FLOOR
FL	FLOOR	FIN GR	FINISH GRADE
RCS	ROUGH CONCRETE SLAB	FIN CT	FINISH CEILING
DRCL	DRESSING HALL CLAD	CONC	CONCRETE
FRD	FLOOR FINISH	TRK	TRUCK
GLD	GLAZED GLASS	CT	CAST IRON
ST	STEEL	W	WOOD
W	WOOD	LC	LOAD CAPACITY
W.P.	WOOD PANEL	EL	ELEVATION
W.P.L.	WOOD PANEL LINING	RE	REINFORCED
W.P.L.	WOOD PANEL LINING	W.D.	WOOD DRESSING
W.P.L.	WOOD PANEL LINING	W.D.S.	WOOD DRESSING STUD
W.P.L.	WOOD PANEL LINING	W.D.S.	WOOD DRESSING STUD
W.P.L.	WOOD PANEL LINING	W.D.S.	WOOD DRESSING STUD



SECTION 1-1

SECTION 2-2

SECTION 3-3

SECTION 4-4

ISSUED	FOR THE	PRELIMINARY	FINAL
NOV 17 1909	NOV 17 1909	NOV 17 1909	NOV 17 1909
NOV 17 1909	NOV 17 1909	NOV 17 1909	NOV 17 1909
NOV 17 1909	NOV 17 1909	NOV 17 1909	NOV 17 1909

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ARSENAL CENTRAL PARK

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Paint exterior masonry
Install and glaze sash in police garage¹⁰⁸

There is almost no documentation for the construction of the bath house outside of scattered references in a few books, newspapers, and periodicals. An examination of the Records of the Works Progress Administration (Record Group 69 in the National Archives) pertaining to New York City projects proved to be unfruitful, and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation had no documentary construction records. Hence the principal source of construction data for the bath house is the aforementioned series of architectural drawings. As an aid for further reference the following drawings are applicable to the 1936-37 reconstruction of the bath house:

<u>Drawing No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
62828/1 sheet	Bathhouse Feeder Sheet	10/23/36
62842/2 sheets	Plumbing Riser Diagram	10/28/36
62827/4 sheets	Bathhouse and Pavilion Electrical	12/11/36
62911/1 sheet	Bathhouse Alterations (Steel Lintels Plan)	12/17/36
62933/1 sheet	Bathhouse and Seawall Tie In	12/22/36
62831/3 sheets	Plumbing Riser Diagrams	1/11/37
62844/1 sheet	Men's Comfort Station - East Wing	1/11/37
62843/1 sheet	Women's Comfort Station - West Wing	1/11/37
62839/2 sheets	First Floor Heating, Ventilation, and Electrical	1/28/37
62846/1 sheet	Second Floor Plumbing	2/13/37
62845/1 sheet	Plumbing Storm Water	2/13/37
62834/1 sheet	Pavilion Roof and Tower Plan	2/13/37

108. Moses to La. Guardia, August 2, 1937, Departmental Letters, 1937, Fiorella H. La Guardia Collection, Municipal Archives.

<u>Drawing No.</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>
62836/1 sheet	First Floor Plan Plumbing	2/13/37
62912/3 sheets	Cafeteria Extension	2/13/37
62914/1 sheet	Office Roof and Foundation Plans	2/13/37
62930/5 sheets	Kitchen Wing	2/13/37
62835/1 sheet	Bathhouse Sanitary Plumbing	2/19/37
62987/1 sheet	Bathhouse Layout Plan	2/26/37
62916/1 sheet	Compressor and Pump Base	3/2/37
62830/1 sheet	Bathhouse-Plumbing Detail	3/4/37
62915/1 sheet	Boiler Foundations	3/8/37
62908/4 sheets	Terrace Over Shops	3/8/37
62832/1 sheet	Roof Drainage Disposal	3/11/37
62907/1 sheet	Tower Floor and Terrace	3/25/37
62638/1 sheet	Police Patrol Garage	3/25/37
62854/63 sheets	Bathhouse and Ocean Pavilion	4/16/37
62917/1 sheet	Sump Pit Details	6/22/37
62913/2 sheets	Stair Details	6/22/37
62910/1 sheet	Food Bar Framing Plan	6/22/37
62909/1 sheet	Food Bars and Stair Details	6/22/37
62769/1 sheet	Bathhouse and Pavilion Alterations (North Elevation)	7/12/37
62852/1 sheet	East and West Tower Details	7/12/37
62986/1 sheet	Ocean Pavilion Elevations	7/12/37
62828A/1 sheet	Bathhouse Switchboard	9/1/37
62833/1 sheet	Bathhouse Fire Hydrants	ca. 1937

A small rectangular pump house was located adjacent to the recreational area just west of the bath house. The structure contained an automatic control system and floats for sewerage pumps as well as relief pumping equipment related to the bathing pavilion.¹⁰⁹

109. New York Times, November 13, 1936, and Moses to La Guardia, August 2, 1937, Departmental Letters, 1937, Fiorello H. La Guardia Collection, Municipal Archives.

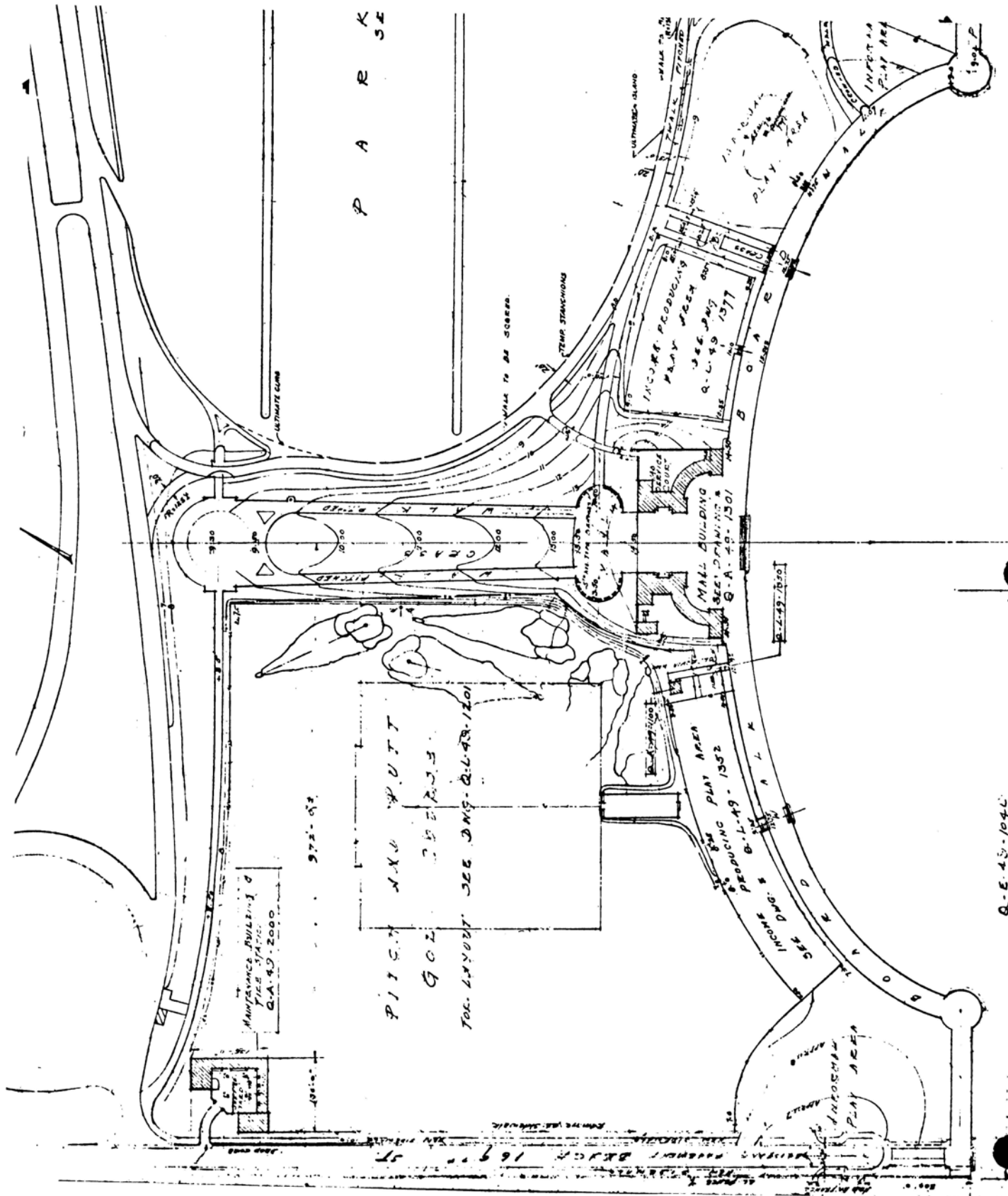
B. CENTRAL MALL BUILDINGS (HS-603, 604)

The mall of the reconditioned park was located to the west of the vast parking area and east of the Pitch and Putt Golf Course. The mall area, consisting of grass, landscaped shrubbery, and concrete walkways, led nearly 500 feet south from a circle just below Beach Channel Drive to the elliptical beachfront boardwalk in the western end of the park. At the end of the mall and in the middle of the semi-circular promenade stood the principal new structures of the park's development--twin brick and tile masonry buildings with concrete trim, which faced each other in the form of a horseshoe. The intended purpose of the buildings was to provide offices for the supervisor and administrative staff of the park and space for two surf shop concessions, two food bars, a cafeteria-restaurant facility, men's and women's restrooms, and public telephones.¹¹⁰

Although the central mall buildings were opened for use in June 1937, they were not entirely completed until later in the year. Among the projects that were completed after June were the following:

- Coping on wall east of East Surf Shop
- Exterior bronze lighting fixtures
- Time and tide clocks in chimney
- Window and counter top in West Surf Shop
- Steel roll-up shutter and counter top in East Surf Shop
- Asphalt tile floor
- Pipe and boiler covering
- Hot-water circulating pumps
- Screens
- Electric panels, switches, and wiring
- Interior painting

110. New York Times, November 13, 1936, and Drawing No. 62768/1 sheet, Layout and Grading Plan, February 1937, Architectural Drawings. A copy of a portion of this drawing showing the mall, the central mall buildings, and the elliptical promenade may be seen on the following page.



Q.E. 4.5.104L

Exterior painting of masonry
Flagpole
Incise lettering for men's and women's comfort station
Glazing¹¹¹

Upon their completion each of the two central mall buildings were a mirror image of the other. Each consisted of a square two-story block (flanked by single-story wings) which was connected with a rectangular, one-story wing to the south by a single-story, semi-circular wing. The north sections of the buildings had full, recessed porticoes supported by concrete columns. The semi-circular wings had seven doorways with sliding steel doors, separated by brick piers. Both buildings had flat concrete roofs, cornices, and floors.¹¹²

In the center of the open court between the two mall buildings a mall bandstand and dance floor were constructed during the summer of 1937. The wooden dance floor, approximately 81 feet by 59 feet, extended north from the edge of the boardwalk and was set off from the rest of the mall by a railing. At the oceanfront edge of the dance floor next to the flag pole stood the roofed bandstand on a platform having a rectangular area of 20 feet by 6 feet with a projecting elliptical 7-foot, 2-inch radius section. The mall facilities provided room and conveniences for up to 2,000 dancers.¹¹³

111. Moses to La Guardia, August 2, 1937, Departmental Letters, 1937, Fiorello H. La Guardia Collection, Municipal Archives.

112. "National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form, Jacob Riis Park Historic District (Gateway NRA)," 1977.

113. Drawing No. 62874/2 sheets, Mall Building Bandstand, July 24, 1937, Architectural Drawings. No other architectural drawings for the central mall buildings during the 1936-37 period were located.

C. MAINTENANCE SHOPS AND GARAGE (HS-601A, 601B)

The maintenance shops and garage were two single-story brick buildings that formed a partially enclosed compound around a concrete service yard in the northwest corner of the park. The compound was located adjacent to Beach 169th Street just below the traffic circle that connected the Marine Parkway Bridge to Beach Channel Drive and Rockaway Beach Boulevard. Building 601A was a rectangular building at the southern edge of the service yard. It had a slate shingled gable roof supported by steel rafters, wall footing foundations, and a concrete slab floor. The ceiling was open to the roof rafters. The building was used as a garage or open storage shed for boats and trucks.

Building 601B was an L-shaped structure along the north and east edges of the service yard which housed maintenance shops, a small garage, and an office. The building consisted of an office, hand tool room, garage, tractor and mower room, rest rooms, meter room, transformer room, seed and fertilizer storage room, game storage room, general storage room, and pit room. One wing had a flat, built-up roof, while the other wing had a slate shingled gable roof, both supported by steel rafters. The entire building had wall footing foundations and concrete slab floors. The windows were steel-framed, the doors wooden, the floors covered with quarry tile, and the ceiling plastered.

The maintenance shops and garage were substantially completed by June 1937. During that summer entrance gates to the service yard, a gasoline tank and pump in the compound, and overhead door hardware were installed. Landscaping and planting around the entrance to the yard also were carried out. The buildings were variously referred to as the Golf Maintenance Buildings and the Fire House and Service Group since a future single-story brick fire house was to be built at the southwest corner of the service yard.

In December 1937 an external 75-foot high incinerator stack was attached to one end of Building 601B.¹¹⁴

D. REFRESHMENT STANDS (HS-602, 605, 607)

Buildings 602 and 605 were constructed in 1946-47 and Building 607 was built in 1961. Hence these structures will be treated in Chapter 9 of this report.

E. BOILER ROOM (HS-603A)

Connected to the west central mall building (HS-603) by an underground tunnel, the Boiler Room was a rectangular, single-story brick building with a concrete cornice. It was connected by a raised brick duct to a square brick stack, several feet distant. The doors and windows were steel framed, the floor was a concrete slab, and the ceiling was a concrete arch.¹¹⁵

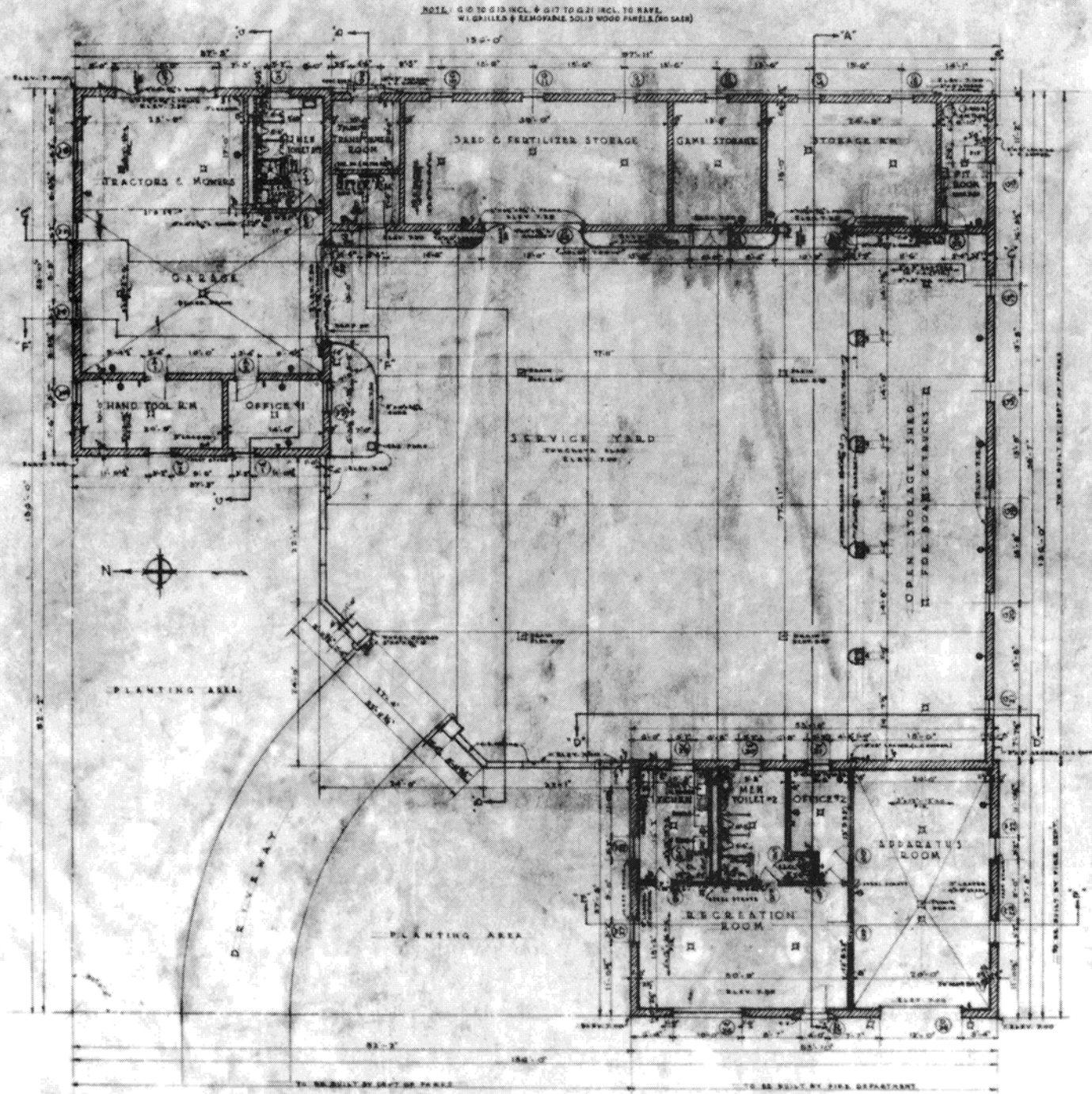
F. GOLF COURSE CONCESSION STAND (HS-603B)

According to all layout drawings of Jacob Riis Park in 1936-37, there was no structure located at the present site of the Golf Course Concession Stand. However, numerous drawings indicate

114. "National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form, Jacob Riis Park Historic District (Gateway NRA)," 1977; Moses to La Guardia, August 2, 1937, Departmental Letters, 1937, Fiorello H. La Guardia Collection, Municipal Archives; and Drawing No. 62919/5 sheets, Fire House and Service Group, March 11, 1937, Architectural Drawings. Copies of Sheets 1 and 3 of this drawing may be seen on the following pages.

115. "National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form, Jacob Riis Park Historic District (Gateway NRA)," 1977. A portion of Drawing No. 62829/1 sheet, Electric Feeder Layout, January 15, 1937, Architectural Drawings, showing the location of the Boiler Room may be seen on the following page.





SCHEDULE OF FINISHES						
ROOMS	FLOOR	BASE	WALLS	CEILING	COVER	NOTES
METER ROOM	CEMENT		BRICK	CEM. PL.		
OFFICE #1	CERAMIC		BRICK	CEM. PL.		
HAND TOOL ROOM	CONCRETE		BRICK	CEM. PL.		
GARAGE	CONCRETE		BRICK	CEM. PL.		
TRACTOR & MOWER ROOM	CONCRETE		BRICK	CEM. PL.		
TOILET #1	GUMBY T. CEMENT		CEM. PL.	CEM. PL.		
SLOP SINK #1	GUMBY T. CEMENT		CEM. PL.	CEM. PL.		
TRANSFORMER ROOM	CONCRETE		BRICK	CEM. PL.		
SARD STORAGE	CONCRETE		BRICK			
GAME STORAGE	CONCRETE		BRICK			
STORAGE RM	CONCRETE		BRICK			
PIT ROOM	CONCRETE		BRICK			
STORAGE SHED	CONCRETE		BRICK			
APPARATUS ROOM	CERAMIC	GL.T.C.	PLASTER	CEMENT STONE		
OFFICE #2	MASTIC	GL.T.C.	PLASTER	PLASTER		
TOILET #2	GUMBY T. CEMENT	GL.T.C.	PLASTER	PLASTER		
KITCHEN	MASTIC	GL.T.C.	PLASTER	PLASTER		
SLOP SINK #2	GUMBY T. CEMENT	GL.T.C.	PLASTER	PLASTER		
CLOSET	CONCRETE	WOOD	PLASTER	PLASTER		
RECREATION	MASTIC	GL.T.C.	PLASTER	STONE		

MATERIALS		ABBREVIATIONS	
	BRICK	BR.	BRICK
	CONCRETE	CONG.	CONCRETE
	PLASTER	PL.	PLASTER
	FLOOR DRAIN	F.D.	FLOOR DRAIN
	CAST IRON	C.I.	CAST IRON
	GLAZED TERRA COTTA	GL.T.C.	GLAZED TERRA COTTA
	TERRA COTTA	T.C.	TERRA COTTA
	SLOP SINK	S.S.	SLOP SINK
	ROLLED STEEL SADDLE	R.S.	ROLLED STEEL SADDLE
	BALAMEIN	BAL.	BALAMEIN

DOOR SCHEDULE							
DOOR NO.	SIZE	MATERIAL	TYPE	GLASS	TRIM	SHOULDER	NOTES
D-9	4'-0" x 7'-0"	WOOD	LOUVER		L-FRAME	ROLLED IRON	
D-7	3'-0" x 7'-0"	WOOD	PANEL		L-FRAME	L-GUIDE	
D-32	3'-0" x 7'-0"	WOOD	PANEL		WOOD	ROLLED IRON	
D-33	3'-0" x 7'-0"	WOOD	OVERHEAD		L-FRAME	L-GUIDE	
D-34	3'-0" x 7'-0"	WOOD	BATTEN		WOOD	ROLLED IRON	
D-35	3'-0" x 7'-0"	WOOD	OVERHEAD		L-FRAME	L-GUIDE	
D-36	3'-0" x 7'-0"	WOOD	GLASS	GLASS	WOOD	ROLLED IRON	
D-37	3'-0" x 7'-0"	WOOD	OVERHEAD		L-FRAME	L-GUIDE	
A-1	3'-0" x 7'-0"	WOOD	PANEL		WOOD	ROLLED IRON	
A-2	3'-0" x 7'-0"	WOOD	PANEL		METAL	ROLLED IRON	
A-3	3'-0" x 7'-0"	WOOD	PANEL		METAL	ROLLED IRON	
C-4	2'-4" x 7'-0"	WOOD	PANEL		METAL	ROLLED IRON	
D-24	3'-0" x 7'-0"	WOOD	OVERHEAD	GLASS	L-FRAME	L-GUIDE	
D-25	3'-0" x 7'-0"	WOOD	PANEL	GLASS	WOOD	ROLLED IRON	
A-5	3'-0" x 7'-0"	WOOD	PANEL	GLASS	METAL	ROLLED IRON	
B-6	2'-4" x 7'-0"	WOOD	PANEL	GLASS	METAL	ROLLED IRON	
D-7	2'-4" x 7'-0"	WOOD	PANEL	GLASS	METAL	ROLLED IRON	
D-8	2'-4" x 7'-0"	WOOD	PANEL	GLASS	METAL	ROLLED IRON	
D-9	2'-4" x 7'-0"	WOOD	PANEL	GLASS	METAL	ROLLED IRON	
D-10	2'-4" x 7'-0"	WOOD	PANEL	GLASS	METAL	ROLLED IRON	
C-11	2'-4" x 7'-0"	WOOD	PANEL	GLASS	METAL	ROLLED IRON	

WINDOW SCHEDULE						
WINDOW	WIDTH	HEIGHT	MATERIAL	LIGHTS	GLASS	NOTES
W-14	8'-0"	4'-0"	STEEL	12	1/2"	
W-15	8'-0"	4'-0"	STEEL	12	1/2"	
W-16	10'-0"	4'-0"	STEEL	12	1/2"	
W-17	10'-0"	4'-0"	STEEL	12	1/2"	

NOTE: HEIGHTS & WIDTH DIMENSIONS INDICATED ARE CLEAR OPENINGS

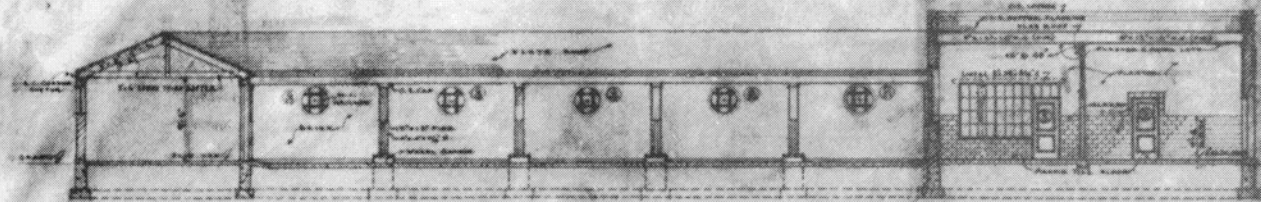
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1 of 5

APPROVED	DATE	BY
APPROVED	DATE	BY
APPROVED	DATE	BY
APPROVED	DATE	BY

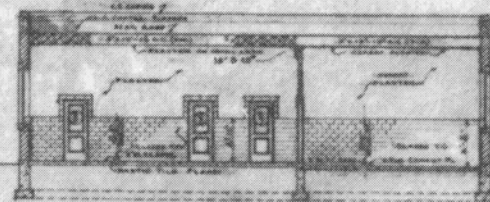
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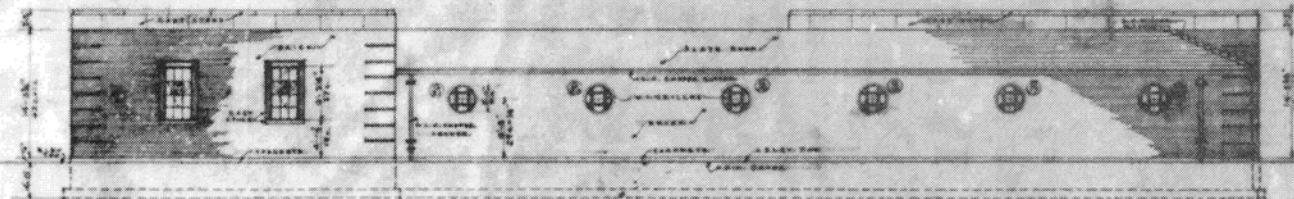
HALF-SIZE REPRODUCTION



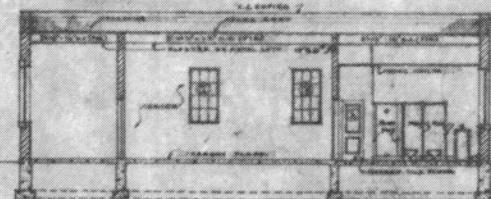
SOUTH ELEVATION IN SERVICE YARD AT A-A



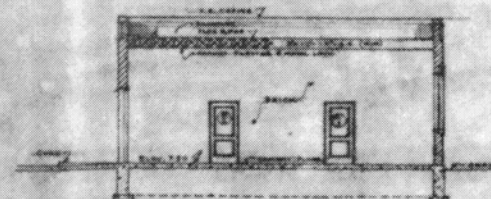
SECTION THRU FIRE HOUSE AT E-E



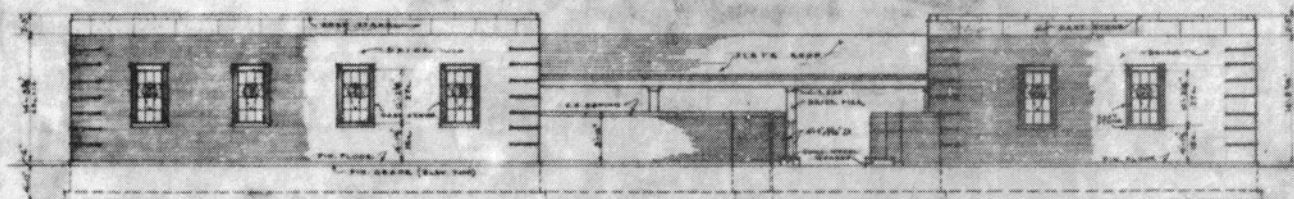
SOUTH ELEVATION



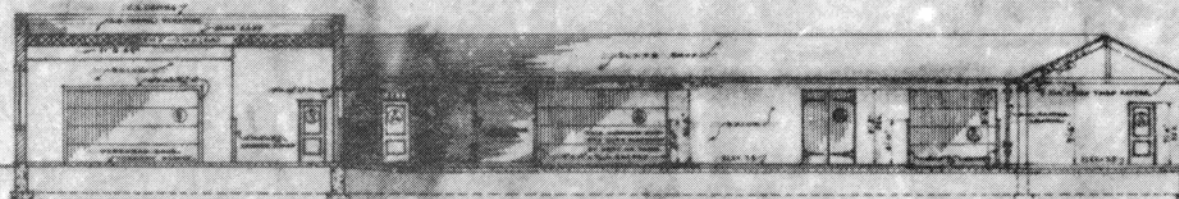
SECTION THRU GARAGE AT G-G



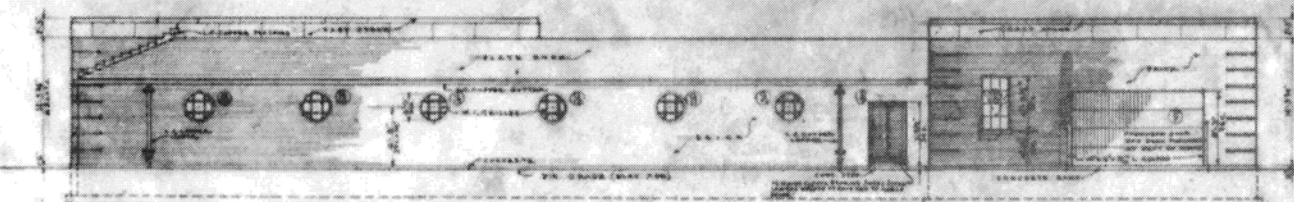
SECTION THRU GARAGE AT F-F



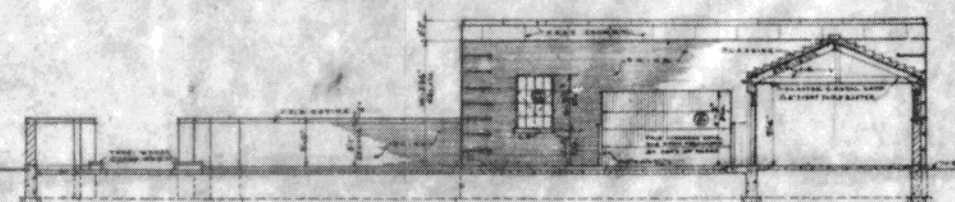
NORTH ELEVATION



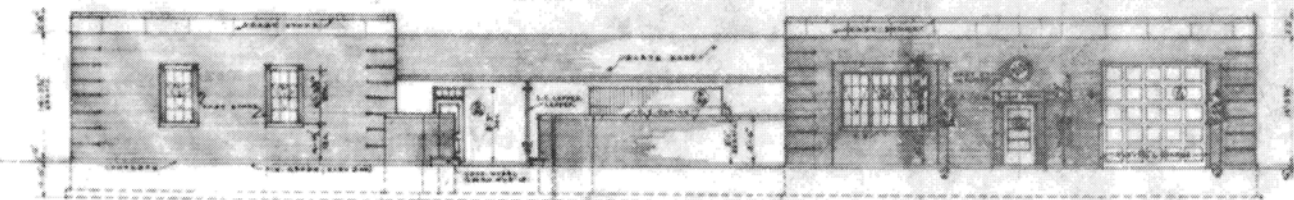
WEST ELEVATION IN SERVICE YARD AT C-C



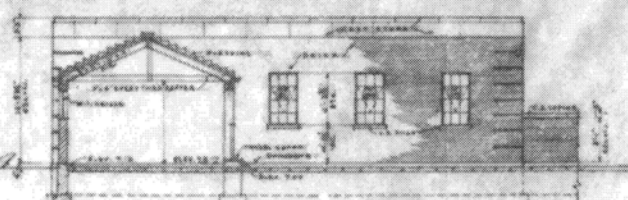
EAST ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION IN SERVICE YARD AT E-E



WEST ELEVATION

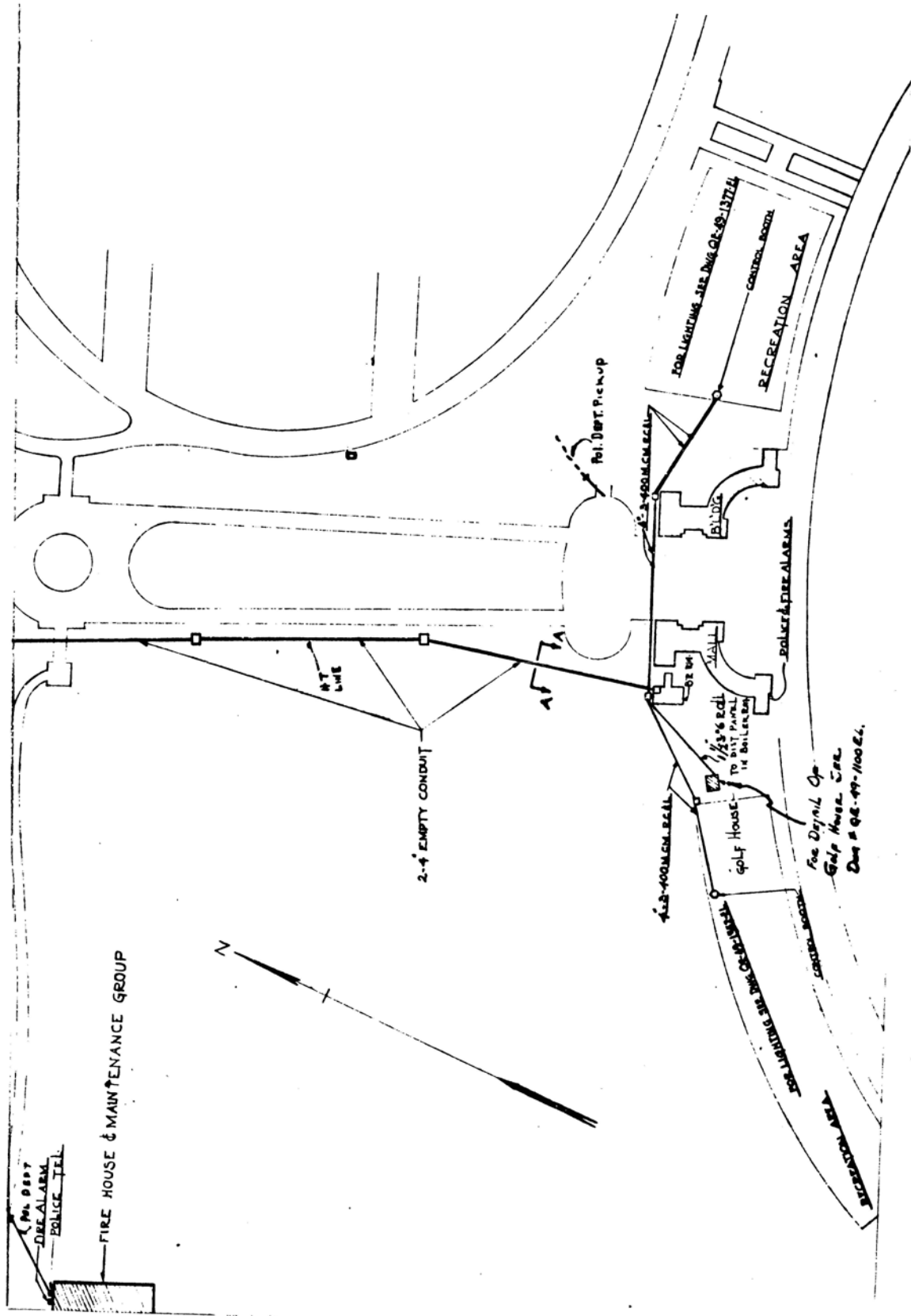


WEST ELEVATION IN SERVICE YARD AT D-D

ISSUES	ISSUED MAR 11 1907	MAJOR RUMBLE FIRE HOUSE & SERVICE GROUP	2002
ISSUED	JAN 11 1907	ELEVATIONS & SECTIONS	16-10
FINAL		DESIGNED BY	
REVIS		PREPARED BY	Henry Jones
		REVISIONS	
		APPROVED BY	
		CITY OF NEW YORK	
		DEPARTMENT OF PARKS	
		ARSENAL CENTRAL PARK	

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3 of 5

ON MICROFILM



that a golf house or golf central house was located just above the elliptical promenade between the west mall building (HS-603) and a recreation area located to the west. Since there is no extant structure at this location, it is likely that the golf house was later moved to its present location on the west side of the mall next to the golf course. The golf stand was a simple wooden frame building with metal siding and a wooden pavilion roof. It had a brick porch and a concrete slab floor as well as steel storage lockers inside.¹¹⁶

G. ELECTRICAL HUT (HS-605A)

This structure was built in 1940 and will be treated in Chapter 9 of this report.

H. LANDSCAPE AND/OR LAYOUT, PLAN, AND LANDSCAPING OF PARK

A discussion of the layout, plan, and landscape of the reconditioned Jacob Riis Park may be broken down under various subheadings. These are as follows: (1) enlargement of beach front and construction/rehabilitation of beach stabilization structures; (2) construction of new parking area; (3) construction of new promenade/boardwalk; (4) construction of Marine Parkway Bridge/new roadway alignment; (5) development of new recreational facilities; and (6) landscaping.

116. New York Times, November 13, 1936; Moses to La Guardia, August 2, 1937, Departmental Letters, 1937, Fiorello H. La Guardia Collection, Municipal Archives; and "National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form, Jacob Riis Park Historic District (Gateway NRA)," 1977.

1. ENLARGEMENT OF BEACH FRONT AND CONSTRUCTION/
REHABILITATION OF BEACH STABILIZATION/
STRUCTURES

In January 1936 the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the New York City Department of Parks cooperated in a beach erosion examination of Jacob Riis Park preparatory to the development of plans to extend the beach front for the reconditioned bathing beach. The report concluded:

...in order to increase the width of berm of the beach at this point to the extent desired within a reasonably short period of time reliance cannot be placed on bulkheads, jetties, or groins, either alone or in combination to build the beach to the desired degree. Sand, to accomplish that purpose, must consequently be supplied artificially. The usual recourse for such artificial supply is the hydraulic dredge which may obtain sand in any necessary quantity by dredging in the sheltered bay in the rear of the park. When the artificial supply has thus been provided, stabilization and protection by groins must be effected.

The desired end having been accomplished as above outlined, the Board is of the opinion that the supply of sand flowing to this park from the windward is probably sufficient to maintain for a number of years a recreational beach averaging 500 feet in width from the existing bulkhead to mean low water.

The study also included recommendations for the extension, stabilization, and preservation of the beach front at the park:

The Board recommends that the desired extension of the beach at Jacob Riis Park be effected by the deposit

of dredged sand along-shore as indicated in plate 11, this sand to be dredged out and pumped from the island waters north of the resort. The quantity of sand deposited should be sufficient to provide the slopes shown. At the close of the dredging operations the underwater slopes will presumably be steeper than those indicated in the drawing, but they may be expected to become automatically adjusted as a result of wave and current action.

The deposit of dredged material should be started at the westerly boundary of the park, extended in an easterly direction, and so deposited in general as to provide a level berm at elevation +8.0 feet for a width of 340 feet; thence a slope seaward of 1 on 20 to low water, with an additional underwater width of 320 feet. The total low-water width of the beach would then be 500 feet. The estimated volume of the fill required to produce the above beach is 635,000 cubic yards.

As rapidly as the deposits are made they should be protected by extending each third groin as indicated (pl. 11). If funds are insufficient for the entire project the work in completed form should proceed from the westerly boundary of the park as far to the east as available funds will permit.

The new extensions to each third groin should be started in-shore alongside of the present groin at the point where its top slope reaches an elevation of 8.0 feet above mean low water and extend to a point 650 feet seaward of the present bulkhead. The extensions may be flat or arch-section steel-sheet piling supported by

creosoted round wooden piling and creosoted wood wales. The new structures should be placed as close to the present groins as their construction will permit. The space between them and the present groins should be filled with rock or asphaltic concrete. The 140- or 240-foot (according to elevation of outer end of present groin) in-shore end of the new section is designed with a top elevation of 8.0 feet above mean low water (pl. 11); thence sloping seaward to elevation +2.5 feet (mid-tide) in a length of 160 feet, thence with a level top outer section at 2.5 feet above mean low water, 150 feet long.

In recommending that the outer horizontal section of the groins be placed at midtide level, it is realized that some construction difficulties may be encountered, and it may be impracticable to build this low-water section during the winter while weather conditions are unfavorable. If this condition must be met, it is recommended that the outer section be raised to an elevation of not more than 4.0 feet above mean low water and that this outer section be protected by the addition of heavy rock on both sides of the groins. Under these conditions, it is further recommended that the deep arch steel sheet piling be used. It must also be realized that groins of this height will force a larger proportion of the littoral drift to pass around their outer ends instead of passing over the groins along the foreshore. This may effect a reduction in the supply of sand that might be available for maintenance of the beaches to the west of Jacob Riis Park; although as a countervailing advantage of the higher elevation the scouring forces on the leeward side of each groin should be less than with the lower elevation. The outer ends of the proposed extensions

should be strengthened by the construction of a dolphin composed of six round piles having equal penetration with the supporting piles and extending to an elevation of 60 feet above mean low water, and all suitably bound together.

Estimate of cost. - Seven groin extensions, 550 feet long each: 3,850 feet of groins at \$25 per linear foot..\$96,250
635,000 cubic yards sand fill at \$0.10 per yard... 63,500
Engineering, contingencies, etc..... 24,250
Total.....\$184,000¹¹⁷

During the next two years the findings of the beach erosion report were used as the basis for tripling the size of the oceanfront beach at Jacob Riis Park. On April 1, 1936, the Atlantic Gulf and Pacific Dredging Company commenced the work of extending the beach. The fill for the enlarged beach was pumped by a steam dredge from the Rockaway Inlet in Jamaica Bay east of the present Marine Parkway Bridge. Altogether, some 2,000,000 cubic yards of fine white sand were dredged to triple the size of the nearly one-mile-long beach from 8 to 24 acres. Some mud was pumped out by the dredge, but this was quickly carried back into the channel by the water, leaving a smooth, firm, sloping beach.

During late 1936 and early 1937 improvements were made to other shore protection structures along the beach at Jacob Riis Park. The enlarged beach required the removal of the concrete bulkhead that had been built with relief labor during the winter of 1932-33. A new 4,660-foot reinforced concrete sea wall was

117. Beach Erosion at Jacob Riis Park, Long Island, N.Y., H. Doc. 397, pp. 10-12. A copy of Plate 11 referred to in the report may be seen on the following page.

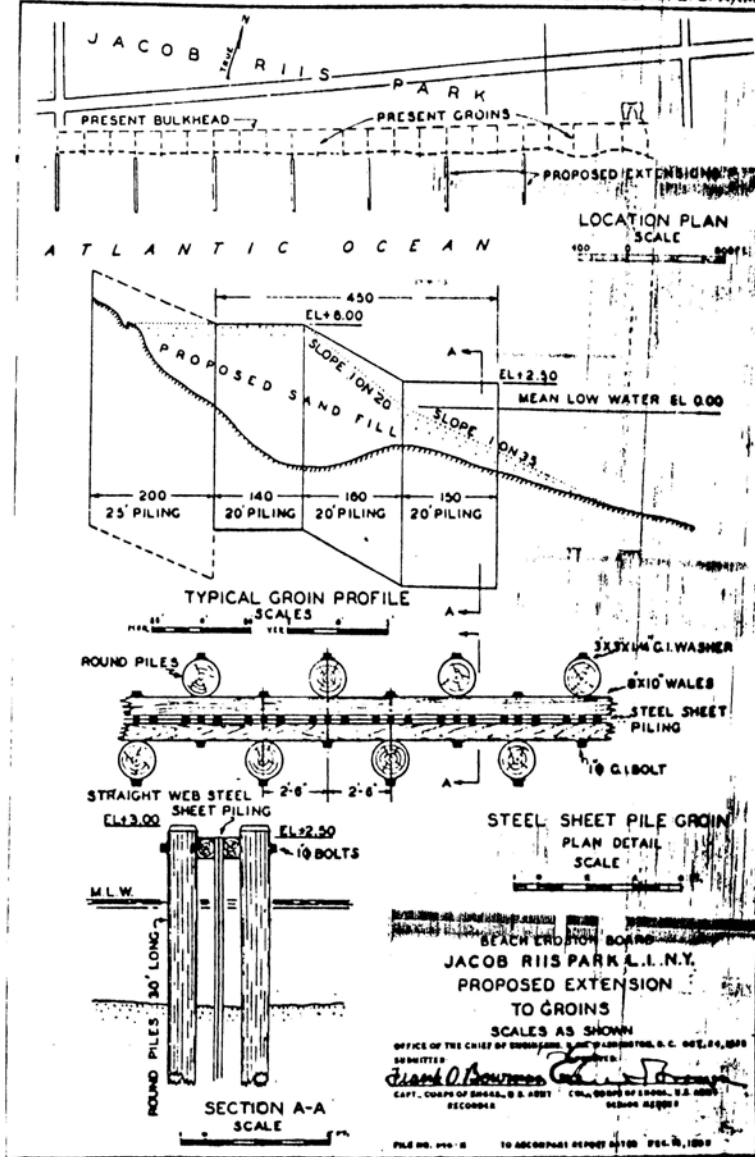


PLATE 11.

constructed further back from the shore to provide for the enlarged beach. The sea wall curved back into the western part of the park to allow for the crescent-shaped beach below the mall which was approximately one-third mile in length and over 400 feet at its greatest width.

Improvements also were made to the groins and jetties in the park. The capping and splicing of seven old groins in front of the central portion of the park were removed and replaced. The thirteen jetties, which were found to be in poor condition and portions of which were buried, were reconstructed.¹¹⁸

2. CONSTRUCTION OF NEW PARKING AREA

The existing corridor parking space that was located south of Rockaway Beach Boulevard and west of the bath house was developed as part of the new enlarged beach front. The cinder parking lot that had been built directly north of the bath house was also removed. A new 72-acre concrete parking facility for 15,000 automobiles was planned for the area north of the bath house and recreational facilities and south of Beach Channel Drive and extending vertically from the east end of the park westward to the mall.

A parking control gate would be located just east of the center of the park, and an underpass would lead from the parking lot east of the control gate to the bath house and adjacent beachfront recreational activities. The plans and financing for the

118. New York Times, April 2, June 12, and November 13, 1936; New York Herald Tribune, April 22, 1936; Final Report of the Works Progress Administration for the City of New York: 1935-1943, p. 158; and Drawings Nos. 62811/1 sheet, Groin Sheet Protection, August 22, 1935, 62810/1 sheet, Jetties and Sounding Location, September 16, 1936, and 62885/2 sheets, New Groins Details and Plans, September 30, 1936, Architectural Drawings.

parking facility were carried out by the Marine Parkway Authority, to which the park land for the lot had been transferred on December 16, 1935. Hence the Authority would have jurisdiction over the parking facility for revenue purposes to help pay for the construction of the Marine Parkway Bridge.

Portions of the new parking lot were opened by June 1936 and accommodations for 5,000 to 6,000 automobiles were available by January 1937. The entire parking area was opened in June 1937 at which time it was billed as "the largest paved parking area in the world." To facilitate public transit service to the park, a small fenced-off bus terminal area was established between the parking lot and the bath house and its adjacent recreation area to the west.¹¹⁹

3. CONSTRUCTION OF NEW PROMENADE/BOARDWALK

A boardwalk and promenade, variously reported to be 40 to 44 feet wide, were built on top of the new sea wall for the entire length of the park. An elliptical boardwalk was constructed around the crescent-shaped beach at the west end of the park--a layout which was similar to that at Jones Beach State Park. The boardwalk was decked with salt-treated Douglas fir from the Pacific Coast. Oregon fir was used for the ship's rail bordering the boardwalk. From the end of the boardwalk to the east end of the park a concrete promenade, having the same width as the boardwalk, was built on top of the sea wall that paralleled the beach for that distance.¹²⁰

119. New York Herald Tribune, April 22, 1936; New York Times, June 12, November 13, 15, 1936, and June 7, 1937; Rodgers, Robert Moses, p. 108; and Caro, The Power Broker, p. 634.

120. New York Times, June 12, 1936, and June 7, 1937; Ralph M. Mann, "8,800 Lineal Feet of Treated Boardwalk for New York Beaches," Wood Preserving News, (July, 1948), 83, 88-89; and Drawing No. 62905/1 sheet, Railings and Stairs, February 9, 1937, Architectural Drawings.

4. CONSTRUCTION OF MARINE PARKWAY BRIDGE/NEW ROADWAY ALIGNMENT

In the early 1930's transportation to Jacob Riis Park was limited to the municipal ferry from Barren Island and to Rockaway Beach Boulevard from the east. Thus, there was no way for a family without a car in Manhattan, Brooklyn, or Queens to reach the park and families could reach it only after a torturous trip. To increase the accessibility of the park to residents of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Queens the Marine Parkway Authority determined to build the Marine Parkway Bridge across Rockaway Inlet. The new parkway would join Marine Park, ultimately to be the largest park in Brooklyn, with Jacob Riis Park, the largest public recreation area on the Rockaway Peninsula. Marine Parkway was also to become a part of the great Circumferential Boulevard system, which would encircle all the westerly shore of Brooklyn from the new Battery tunnel on the north to the Long Island parkway system on the south.

The bridge, a 4,000-foot-long structure with three 500-foot spans having a clearance of 55 feet above mean high water, would carry the divided four-lane parkway from Flatbush Avenue on Barren Island to the northwest corner of Jacob Riis Park. The central span would be a vertical lift and when raised would provide a clearance of 140 feet above mean high water.

Work on the \$3,750,000 bridge began on July 15, 1936. The substructure was built by the Frederick Snare Corporation and the superstructure was built by the American Bridge Company. The bridge was formally opened to traffic on July 3, 1937. The bonds for the construction costs were amortized through the 15-cent bridge toll and the 25-cent parking fee at Jacob Riis Park.

Since the enlarged beach front crossed the existing line of Rockaway Beach Boulevard, it was determined to terminate the roadway just west of the bath house. Connection to the bridge was made via a two-lane boulevard starting at a traffic circle northeast of the pavilion and circling the parking area along the Jamaica Bay side. A traffic circle was laid out at the base of the bridge to provide access to both Beach Channel Drive and Rockaway Beach Boulevard.

A considerable section along the Jamaica Bay front was filled to provide for the new road network. In April 1937 a contract was let to the Clement Stone and Foundation Corporation for the completion of the bulkhead line (timber with steel coping) at the park by filling in land under water to meet the existing uplands. The contract also called for grading the new roadways.

A second contract was let in April 1937 to the Woodcrest Construction Company for the construction of a highway grade-separation bridge some 900 feet west of the east park boundary. The work also included the roadway and drainage connections and the walkways involved in the project.¹²¹

5. DEVELOPMENT OF NEW RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

From the outset Moses planned to incorporate at Jacob Riis Park many of the recreational facilities that had made Jones

121. New York Herald Tribune, April 22, 1936; New York Times, March 8, April 2, and June 12, 1936, and April 23 and June 7, 1937; New York City, Marine Parkway Authority, Published on the Occasion of the Opening of the Marine Parkway, July 3rd, 1937 (New York, 1937), n.p.; "Jacob Riis Park - Marine Parkway Bridge," Rockaway Review (June, 1937), 69; and Drawings Nos 62750/1 sheet, Proposed Pier and Jetty, September 11, 1934, and 62870/1 sheet, Proposed Bulkhead, December 23, 1935, Architectural Drawings.

Beach a popular public amusement resort. Although the development of the park was less pretentious than his original proposals, he offered to the public, on a smaller scale, many of the same attractions as those found at Jones Beach. Just above the curving boardwalk west of the mall were facilities for paddle tennis and shuffleboard and east of the mall were courts for hand ball, paddle tennis, and shuffleboard. At both the east and west ends of the boardwalk were informal lawn areas. Just west of the bath house and adjacent to the promenade was a recreation area providing facilities for ping pong, horseshoe pitching, paddle tennis, and shuffleboard. To the east of the bath house service area was a playground area and separate boys' and girls' play apparatus sections. Of the four recreation areas, all except the play area east of the bath house were income-producing areas and thus each had a small ticket booth where the charges would be paid. It was estimated that the four areas, comprising some four acres, provided facilities for 2,000 persons. North of the boardwalk and west of the mall was the 26-acre, 18-hole golf course. All of the recreation facilities were opened to the public in June or July of 1937 except for the golf course which was not opened until August 6 to give the turf a chance to get started and to install an irrigation system and the link tees. The recreation areas and the golf course were all surrounded by chain link fences.¹²²

122. New York Herald Tribune, April 22, 1936; New York Times, November 13, 15, 1936, and June 7 and August 6, 1937; Drawings Nos. 62807/1 sheet, Proposed Recreation Areas and Walks, October 2, 1936, and 62766/1 sheet, Planting Plan, March 9, 1937, Architectural Drawings; Excerpt from New York City Press Digest, June 14, 1937, Division of Information, Primary File, 1936-1942, Records of the Works Progress Administration, Record Group 69, National Archives; and New York City, Department of Parks, Parks, Parkways, Playgrounds, Malls, Public Places, Etc. (New York, 1938), n.p.

6. LANDSCAPING

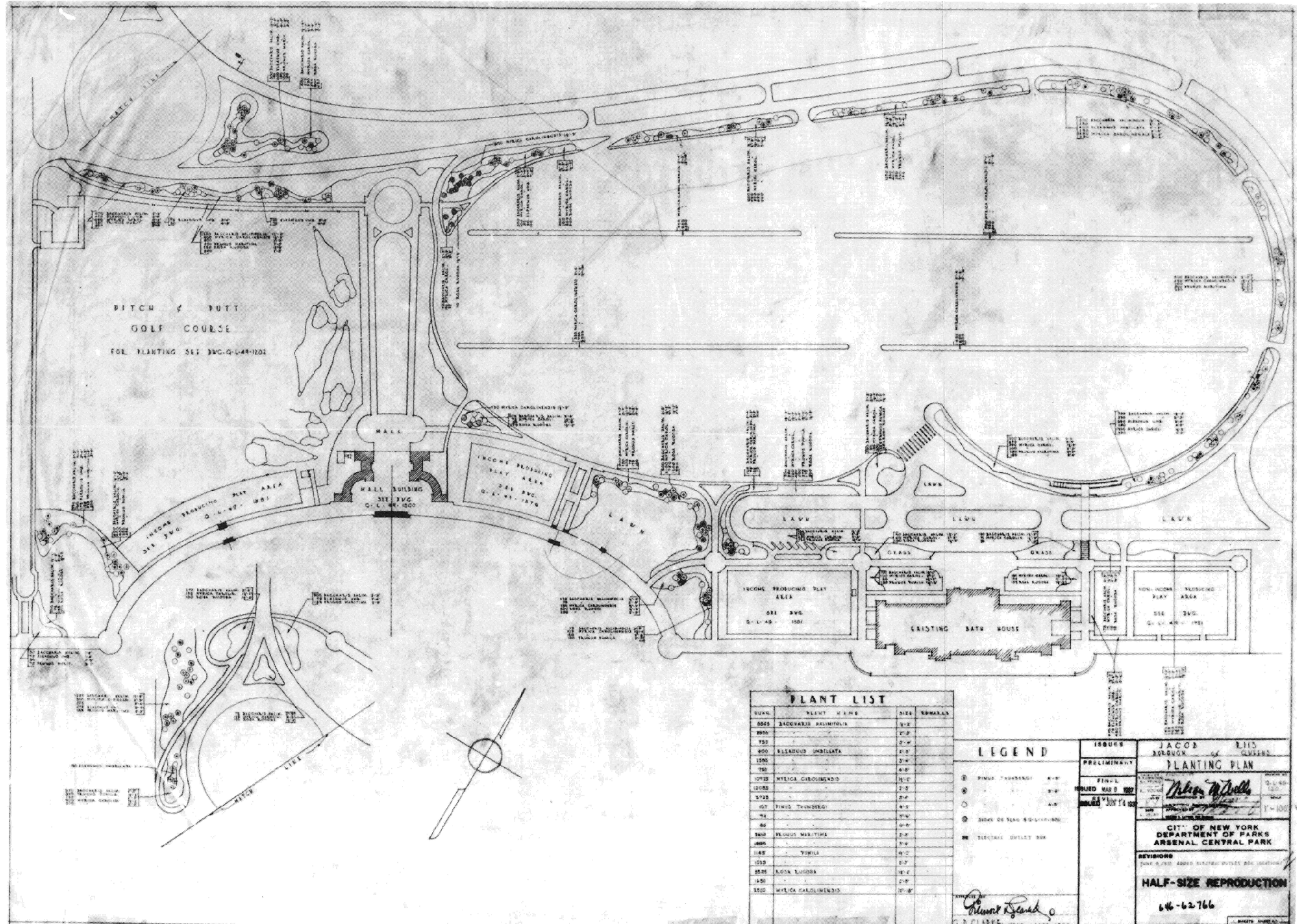
During the spring of 1937 the work of landscaping and planting trees and shrubbery in Jacob Riis Park was commenced. Areas in which lawns and shrubs were to be planted were excavated and filled with topsoil. Plantings throughout the park included various types of portulaca, verbena, petunia, sea holly, bay berry, beach plum, and Japanese black pines. In addition large strips of lawn areas were planted in beach grass. The planting program continued into the fall of 1937.¹²³

I. WISE CLOCK/RIIS PARK MEMORIAL CLOCK

The clock was installed in Jacob Riis Park in 1941 and will be treated in Chapter 9 of this report.

123. New York Times, November 15, 1936, and June 7, 1937, and Drawing No. 62766/1 sheet, Planting Plan, March 9, 1937, Architectural Drawings. A copy of this drawing may be seen on the following page.





DITCH & BUTT
GOLF COURSE
FOR PLANTING SEE SVG-Q-L-49-1202

HALL

HALL BUILDING
SEE SVG
Q. L. 49-1300

INCOME PRODUCING
PLAY AREA
SEE SVG
Q. L. 49-1276

INCOME PRODUCING
PLAY AREA
SEE SVG
Q. L. 49-1281

INCOME PRODUCING
PLAY AREA
SEE SVG
Q. L. 49-1701

NON-INCOME
PRODUCING
PLAY AREA
SEE SVG
Q. L. 49-1781

EXISTING BATH HOUSE

QUAN.	PLANT NAME	SIZE	REMARKS
5000	BACCARIS HALIMIFOLIA	1 1/2"	
2000		2 1/2"	
750		3 1/2"	
400	ELEAGNUS UMBELLATA	2 1/2"	
1200		3 1/2"	
750		4 1/2"	
10 1/2	MYRTLE CAROLINENSIS	1 1/2"	
12000		2 1/2"	
5725		2 1/2"	
157	PINUS THUNBERGI	4 1/2"	
74		5 1/2"	
80		6 1/2"	
2810	PRUNUS MARTINA	2 1/2"	
1800		3 1/2"	
1145	TUMLIA	1 1/2"	
1025		2 1/2"	
8550	ROSA LUGOSA	1 1/2"	
1400		2 1/2"	
1500	MYRTLE CAROLINENSIS	1 1/2"	

LEGEND

- PINUS THUNBERGI 4 1/2"
- 3 1/2"
- 2 1/2"
- 1 1/2"
- ⊖ SHOW OR PLAY EQUIPMENT
- ⊖ ELECTRIC OUTLET BOX

ISSUED
PRELIMINARY
FINAL
ISSUED MAR 9 1907
ISSUED JUN 14 1907

JACOB RUDOLPH
E. H. QUINN
PLANTING PLAN
Q. L. 49-1202
1" = 100'

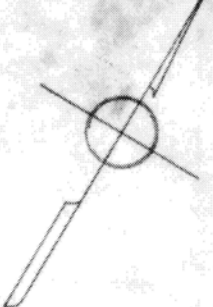
CITY OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS
ARSENAL CENTRAL PARK

REVISIONS
JUNE 8, 1907 ADDED ELECTRIC OUTLET BOX LOCATION

HALF-SIZE REPRODUCTION

64-62766

Prepared by
G. J. CLARKE, LANDS MAN



CHAPTER EIGHT

THE RECONDITIONED JACOB RIIS PARK IS OPENED
TO THE PUBLIC: JUNE 1937

Plans for opening the reconditioned Jacob Riis Park to the public were announced in early June 1937. It was widely reported that the municipal beach, which would be opened along with Orchard Beach at Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx on June 19, had been converted into "the first simple, uncommercialized seaside park in the city." Two weeks after the park opened, the Marine Parkway Bridge would be dedicated, thus putting the park within a 45-minute drive of most of Brooklyn and an hour from Manhattan. As the park was designed mainly for motorists who found Coney Island overcrowded and Jones Beach too far away, the 15,000-car parking facility, the "largest paved parking area in the world," was well-publicized. In addition, arrangements were made for bus connections with the B.M.T. and I.R.T. subways in Brooklyn and the Long Island Railroad in the Rockaways to enable additional thousands to reach the beach. It was anticipated that some 250,000 visitors would be accommodated. The advantages of the new park were described as follows:

Emphasis is placed on the natural aspect of the park, the care with which the beach has been expanded and all the so-called typical Coney Island attractions eliminated. Surf rolling between the jetties at Riis Park carries more of the thunder and spray usually associated with the seaside than do the tempered breakers six miles away at Coney Island. Playgrounds and beach games tucked behind the Riis Park boardwalk contrast sharply with traditional recreations of the older beach.

The projected staffing and financial operation of the park were announced as follows:

Ninety men will be assigned for duty at the park on June 19, the opening day. Twenty-five more will join the

force after the bridge is operating. Park Department estimates published last year indicated the overhead would amount to \$130,000, against an income to \$134,000. It was said yesterday that this revenue estimate probably would be surpassed. Two-thirds of the park is on a revenue-producing basis, with typical charges as follows: children's lockers, 15 cents; adults, 25 cents; dressing room, 50 cents. A 25-cent parking toll will be collected by the Marine Parkway Authority....

The Marine Parkway Authority facilities, including Marine Park, as yet undeveloped near Floyd Bennett Field, the Rockaway Inlet Bridge, Riis Park and connecting parkways, is financed by a bond issue of \$6,000,000 completed a year ago. The bonds will be amortized through the 15-cent bridge toll and the parking fee at the beach.¹²⁴

Several days before the official opening of the park the New York Times printed an editorial congratulating Commissioner Moses for his efforts at Jacob Riis Park and Orchard Beach. The editorial noted that

Unlike the Walrus and the Carpenter, the average New Yorker does not weep like anything to see large quantities of sand. He is willing to go to a great deal of trouble to see them, especially if they are bordered by a presentable stretch of salt water and the weather is hot.

124. New York Times, June 7, 13, 1937. The Park Department's overhead and revenue estimates for the park were printed in a New York Times article on March 8, 1936. Relevant excerpts from the article may be seen in Appendix G.

But for all of its many miles of shoreline, New York City has never had as many miles of bathing beaches as it needed in places where people could get at them. This defect will be partially remedied this week when Park Commissioner Moses throws open to the public Jacob Riis Park on the Rockaway Peninsula and Orchard Beach on Pelham Bay, both of which have been made, or made over, within the past year....¹²⁵

Despite the announcement that Jacob Riis Park would be opened to the public on June 19, the last-minute details of construction did not proceed as quickly as planned. On June 16 there were still scattered piles of building materials and partially-finished works of construction. Accordingly, the date for opening the park was changed to June 26.¹²⁶

Because clean-up operations were completed earlier than expected, both Jacob Riis Park and Orchard Beach were opened without ceremony on June 25. The lack of ceremony was due to the fact that although improvements had been made at both beach resorts during 1936-37 both had been in use during the previous summer. Only 2,500 bathers visited Riis Park on opening day, partially due to the cold temperatures. It was noted that the park had a staff of 150-175 persons under the charge of Superintendent William Donnelly. All of the recreational facilities were in operation except for the Pitch and Putt Golf Course and the play area for older children located east of the bath house.¹²⁷

125. Editorial, New York Times, June 15, 1937.

126. Ibid., June 16, 1937.

127. Ibid., June 25, 26, 1937, and "Jacob Riis Park Comes into Its Own," Brooklyn and Long Island, XVIII (July, 1937), n.p.

Despite the threatening weather during the first weekend of the operation at Riis Park, some 60,000 persons visited the new resort on Saturday (40,000) and Sunday (20,000). It is interesting to note that on Sunday 252 warnings were served on persons disrobing in locations other than in the bath house facilities and 325 warnings were issued for littering the beach.¹²⁸

The dedication of the Marine Parkway Bridge on July 3 encouraged greater visitation to Riis Park by providing more direct and accessible transportation to the municipal beach. In a pamphlet published for the occasion of the formal opening of the bridge, Moses observed:

The further development of Jacob Riis Park has been accomplished in large part through relief labor, with some assistance from the Authority, and thus represents one of the major useful activities carried on by cooperation of the federal, state and city relief authorities. Large areas of marshland previously useless and unsightly have been constructed and a new sea wall and boardwalk built to allow an increase of seven hundred feet in width of the main portion of the beach. The bathhouse has been remodeled to provide additional bathing, comfort and refreshment facilities. A mall has been constructed to afford pedestrian access from the bridge to the boardwalk, where people who do not care to use the beach may walk or rest in pleasant surroundings. Where the mall meets the boardwalk two buildings have been constructed providing beach shops and food bars for people using this area. Dances will be held here at

128. New York Times, June 28, 1937.

night. The boardwalk is bordered by game areas and play fields, including tennis courts and an 18-hole pitch-and-putt golf course. The seventy acre parking field capable of parking 11,000 cars has been constructed of concrete and is the largest single paved parking space in the United States. The entire park, with its greatly increased beach area, is estimated to accommodate maximum crowds of over 200,000.

We have been asked whether Jacob Riis Park will be a second Jones Beach. The answer is no, because we lack the acreage and the control of surrounding lands which make Jones Beach so spacious and protected, and, in addition, we have had to contend with the initial poor planning of Jacob Riis Park. If the advice of the Long Island State Park Commission, given to the Queens Park Department several years ago, had been followed, and if experience at Jones Beach had been considered, there would have been a great deal less reconstruction to do at Jacob Riis Park in the last two years. This, however, is water over the dam, and it is only worth mentioning to emphasize the fact that it is high time that public shore front developments in the metropolitan area be carried on by those who combine some recent success with a reasonable appreciation of future problems. The failure of previous city administrations to acquire more land at Rockaway Beach from the ocean to the inlet, including Breezy Point, is the one cloud on the horizon on this opening day. Given a little more imagination and honesty of purpose in the past, the city would not today be in the position of having to recapture and reclaim painfully

and bit by bit from private exploitation, parts of its once magnificent shore front heritage.¹²⁹

Later in 1939 George E. Spargo, one of Moses' closest aides, described the beneficial changes that had been made in the parks of New York City. Concerning Jacob Riis Park, he noted:

The best natural beach in New York City, at Jacob Riis park, was planned in such a way that there was and is no beach in front of the bath-house at high tide. A large part of the beach was covered with cinders and used for a parking space and was entirely inadequate. It would take care of only a few hundred cars, with the result that people did not patronize the beach. Some of the bath-houses had never been used when we started operation in 1934. We built a new bridge from the end of Flatbush avenue to Rockaway beach, built a large parking space back of the bath-houses and built a large crescent-shaped beach to the east of the bath-houses with a new cafeteria adjacent to it; beach games and a pitch-and-putt golf course have been provided, and today we have a development which compares well with any in the country.¹³⁰

That same year the Federal Writer's Project published a New York City Guide which described the recreational attractions of the beach resort. The Guide also commented on the "extremely attractive" vistas offered to the park visitors as follows:

129. Published on the Occasion of the Opening of the Marine Parkway, n.p. This report contained a list of the "Jacob Riis Park Charges" which may be seen on the following page.

130. George E. Spargo, "Parks and Recreational Facilities of the City of New York," Municipal Engineers Journal, XXV (Second Quarterly Issue, 1939), 78.

JACOB RIIS PARK CHARGES

The following is a list of the proces in effect at Jacob Riis Park weekdays as well as Sunday:

Children lockers	\$.15
Adult lockers25
Bathhouse50
Towel Rental10 (deposit .15)
Suit Rental50 (deposit .50)
Chair or umbrella rental25 (deposit \$1.00)
Games Areas for Handball Paddle Tennis Shuffle Board	.10 per half hour or fraction thereof

There is also a Surf Shop located here where bathing caps, shoes, sun tan oil, etc., may be purchased.

PARKING FIELD

Type of Vehicle	Parking Toll
Passenger cars	\$.25
Motorcylces25
Charter buses50

The view from the park is extremely attractive. On the southwest, far across the ocean, is the high jut of the Jersey shore. To the north, the serrated sky line of lower Brooklyn and downtown Manhattan, about fifteen miles away, is silhouetted behind Jamaica Bay. Planes cut patterns in the sky over nearby Floyd Bennett Airport. At night, the lightships Ambrose and Scotland, moored off the Atlantic Highlands, flash their warning gleams, while distant Coney Island shows its filigree of electric lights.¹³¹

The first year of operation of the reconditioned Jacob Riis Park proved to be an outstanding success. On some weekend days it was estimated that as many as 125,000 persons crowded onto the park's beach. Various special features and exhibitions encouraged the large visitation to the park. One of the most successful promotional ventures was the weekly Friday night fireworks displays (followed by outdoor dancing on the mall) which began on August 6. The displays included the release of a reproduction of a large American flag from a parachute shell coupled with the firing of signal shells. The fireworks were elaborate with "hanging chains of fire, aerial waterfalls, and other reproductions." More than 20,000 people attended the first Friday night event.¹³²

By the end of the summer bathing season on Labor Day, Jacob Riis Park showed a profit of \$61,000 over operating and maintenance

131. Federal Writers Project (American Guide Series), New York City Guide (New York, 1939), p. 594.

132. Long Island Daily Press, August 24, 1937; New York Times, August 6, 7, 1937; and Moses, "New York Metropolitan Beach Development," 9-10, 20.

expenses. The park was such a success that Mayor Fiorello H. La Guardia issued a press release on October 27 as follows:

The Pelham Bay Park - Orchard Beach developments and Jacob Riis Park are examples of complete rehabilitation of city properties whose possibilities as modernly equipped, attractive resorts had hardly been touched until the present program got under way.¹³³

In December 1937 another innovation was introduced at Jacob Riis Park to encourage the winter time use of the municipal beach. A curbing was built around a two-acre section of the larger of the two parking areas and flooded to form the largest ice skating rink in Queens. Flood lighting was installed for night skating, music was supplied, and a temporary food bar constructed. Skating and automobile parking were free.¹³⁴

133. City of New York, Office of the Mayor, For Morning Release, October 27, 1937, Fiorello H. La Guardia Collection, Departmental Letters, 1937, Box 680, Municipal Archives. Also see, U.S. Works Progress Administration, WPA in New York City: A Record of Accomplishment (New York, 1938), p. 28, and Regional Plan Association, Inc., From Plan to Realty, II, V-7, V-9, and III, II-7.

134. Unlabeled newspaper clipping, December 15, 1937, Vertical Files, Long Island Room, Queens Borough Public Library.

CHAPTER NINE

OPERATIONS, NEW STRUCTURES, AND STRUCTURAL
MODIFICATIONS IN JACOB RIIS PARK:
1938-1973

A. OPERATION OF THE PARK

Jacob Riis Park continued to operate much as it had during its first summer until the United States entered World War II in December 1941. Outdoor dancing and fireworks exhibitions proved to be popular with the public, and the bathing beach facilities and recreational areas continued to draw large crowds. During the summer season, the park operated with about 190 personnel and played host to more than 150,000 visitors on an average weekend. Ice skating on a portion of the parking lot area continued to be a major winter attraction in the park.¹³⁵

Although all the park's facilities were open from Memorial Day to Labor Day of each year, a comprehensive recreation program of summer activities was usually offered only in July and August. During those months free dancing was held on the mall every night except Sunday for three hours. A hole-in-one golf tournament was held every summer, and special children's days were held every Wednesday. A fireworks display was given at the park each Wednesday evening.¹³⁶

There is little documentary information relative to the operation of the park during the war years from 1942 to 1945. The park's bathing and recreational facilities were open to the public but were subject to various wartime restrictions.¹³⁷ In August 1944 four

135. "Jacob Riis Park," ca. 1940, Jacob Riis Park Land Files, Park Lands Division, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. In February 1939 a parcel of land along the west border of the park was released to the U.S. Coast Guard.

136. New York Times, June 30 and July 10, 1940, and New York Telegram, July 1, 1941.

137. From July 1, 1943, to June 30, 1944, a small parcel of park land adjacent to the east side of Beach 169th Street just north of Fort Tilden Avenue was leased to the U.S. Coast Guard. Lease

small parcels of land totaling about 7 1/2 acres were added to the northeast part of the park bordered by Jamaica Bay on the north, Riis Avenue on the south, Beach 149th Street on the west, and Beach 146th Street on the east. Various recreational activities were planned for this area. In the postwar years the normal program of summer recreational activities was resumed.¹³⁸

In 1955 the Rockaway Little League secured the permission of the Parks Department to use the Jacob Riis Park exhibition softball field during its idle daytime hours. This was a reversal of the Parks Department policy that had limited the use of the big field, which featured dugouts, a grandstand, lighting, and a well-manicured field, to adult teams playing twilight and weekend afternoon games.¹³⁹

In 1955 and 1956 Parks Commissioner Moses developed plans to extend Riis Park 1,000 feet along the ocean front to the east to include the 14.43-acre site of the former Neponsit Beach Hospital which had been abandoned on April 21, 1955. The plans called for the demolition of the four-story, brick buildings, lengthening the promenade, and laying out softball diamonds and an area for other games in the sand dunes back of the walk. In addition a million dollar, 150-foot salt-water swimming pool, which had been planned earlier for Riis Park but had never received adequate funding,

Between the City of New York, Bureau of Real Estate, and the United States of America, June 30, 1943, Jacob Riis Park Land Files, Park Lands Division, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation.

138. Drawing No. 62906/1 sheet, Outdoor Recreation Development, April, 1943, Architectural Drawings, and New York Times, September 6, 1947.

139. New York Sunday News, May 22, 1955.

would be built. The pool, similar to the one at Jones Beach, would have a separate diving area and bleacher seats for spectators at water polo games and swimming ballets.¹⁴⁰

The use of the abandoned hospital property became a controversial issue. Moses' plans for the extension of Riis Park were opposed by the City of New York which wanted to offer the land for private sale. Such a move, however, was denied by both the Supreme Court in Queens County in October 1955 and the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court in Brooklyn in July 1956.¹⁴¹ Finally on May 22, 1958, some 9 acres of the western and southern portions of the hospital property, including the 1,000-foot beach area were added to Riis Park. The remaining 5-acre portion, on which the buildings were located, was turned over to the Department of Welfare on March 15, 1960, for use as the Neponsit Home for the Aged.¹⁴²

During the early 1960s the New York City authorities pushed ahead with plans to piece together more than 1,200 acres of land for a continuous 4½-mile beach at the western end of the Rockaway Peninsula. The proposed Breezy Point Park, extending from Riis

140. New York Times, May 27, 1955, and Drawings Nos. 62786/4 sheets, Bleachers Electrical, March 18, 1949; 62785/12 sheets, Bleachers Superstructure, March 18, 1949; 62784/5 sheets, Swimming Pool Plumbing, March 18, 1949; 62783/6 sheets, Swimming Pool Electrical, March 18, 1949; 62782/17 sheets, Swimming Pool and Bleachers Work, March 18, 1949; 62771/3 sheets, Swimming Pool-Bleacher Ventilation, March 18, 1949; and 62770/3 sheets, Swimming Pool Plumbing, March 18, 1949; Architectural Drawings.

141. New York Times, July 21, 22, August 2, and October 28, 1955, and July 10, 1956.

142. "Report of Title Search of Jacob Riis Park." The swimming pool was never built, but the beach and other recreational facilities were developed on the nine-acre extension of the park.

Park to the tip of the peninsula, was designed to provide an extensive seaside recreation area improvement for the expanding New York metropolitan population. The projected facilities would include a marina, bathing facilities, surf casting fishing, picnic areas, athletic fields, a combination swimming pool and ice skating rink, concession and maintenance buildings, parking lots, and landscaping. Inadequate funding, opposition from local property owners, real estate developers and the Breezy Point Cooperative Association, and refusal by the military authorities to give up any portion of Fort Tilden for park purposes served to frustrate the proposed park and prevented it from going beyond the planning stage.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, it was the controversy between development and preservation that later led to the decision to establish the Gateway National Recreation Area.

The facilities, programs, and services at Riis Park entered a period of decline in the early 1960s. On August 9, 1965, the New York World-Telegram reported that "major areas of Jacob Riis Park, once one of the city's most beautiful ocean playgrounds, have fallen into disrepair." Virtually every busy day some 150 bathers were cut by sharp sea shells and other debris "which blanket huge areas of the beach." This was especially true in the crescent-shaped mall area where cinders from the pre-1937 parking lot kept cropping up through the sand. The lone underpass from the parking lot to the bath house was flooded after every heavy rain, forcing "bathers to wade through dirty, garbage strewn water" or else detour one-quarter mile. The toilets were generally dirty and some had no seats or doors. In the bath house faucet handles were broken or damaged, and there often were no paper towels or toilet paper.

143. New York City, Department of Parks, Thirty Years of Progress: 1934-1964 (New York, 1964), n.p., and New York Times, September 13 and December 18, 1963, and August 17, 1965.

The steel bath house lockers, brushed over with aluminum paint, were rusty and dirty, many locks were missing from the private dressing rooms, and some showers were out of order. Concrete walks along the beach were cracked and in some cases buckled from two to four inches above grade level. The Jacob Riis bust had been stolen from the mall area. Several hundred homosexuals frequented the east end of the beach on weekends--an occurrence that the newspaper viewed as having a negative impact on the area. The staff, consisting of 150 persons in summer and about 25 in the off-season, was undermanned and unable to cope with the demands of the crowds at the beach.¹⁴⁴

After this expose' the Parks Department quickly promised to clean up the park. However, their efforts were rather meager compared with the myriad of problems. Two new beach sifting machines were purchased to help clear the sand of broken shells and cinders. The underpass was cleared and the main pump and sump pump were repaired. The Parks Department, however, refused to install doors on the toilets, saying that they had been removed some years before because people used the toilets to undress and thereby avoid the 50-cent bath house fee.¹⁴⁵

The Riis Park beach received more unfavorable publicity in August 1965. Some 80 swimmers were treated for Portuguese man-of-war stings at Rockaway and Riis Parks after a colony of jellyfish were washed close to the two beaches. The jellyfish were seen only at Rockaway Park and Bay 3 of Riis Park, and, according to authorities, unusual wind conditions off Long Island drove the

144. New York World-Telegram, August 9, 1965.

145. Ibid., August 10, 1965.

creatures to shore. Part of Riis Park was closed to swimming for a short period until the situation improved.¹⁴⁶

By the late 1960s the changing social mores and the changing clientele of the park's visitors had become grist for the New York City press. The New York Times reported on August 25, 1969:

To an extent not found in the melting pot of Coney Island or the more chic Jones Beach crowd, Riis Park tends to maintain some of the city's distinctions. Clearly identifiable portions of the mile-long beach of sand fronting the ocean are given over to homosexuals, blacks and teen-agers; even more exotic groups, such as airline stewardesses or surfers, have their places.

While the lines are enforced by nothing except habit and preference, they tend to give each of the beach's 14 'bays' - portions of surf set off by rows of rotting pilings - the character of a separate neighborhood....

Bay 1 you get surfers.... Bay 2 and 3, the homosexuals. Bay 4 a lot of single dames in their late twenties-stewardesses and stuff. Bay 5 the blacks, 'Soul Beach'. Bay 6 to 8, families with children. Bay 9, young married couples. Bay 10 and 11 college kids. Bay 12 to 14, teenagers and fishermen.

The aura of the beach, with its institutional Department of Parks hot-dog stands and pitch-and-putt golf course, is sedate and middle-class. Aside from some

146. New York Times, August 17, 1965.

of the creations on Bay 2, the styles are not daring. Until this year, the police tried to keep off the beach anyone wearing a bathing suit with less than four inches of cloth from hip to thigh, but the rule has gradually been forgotten.¹⁴⁷

Such distinctions and social mores would serve to cause problems both for law enforcement officials and future park planners who would be concerned with the rehabilitation of the beach.

B. NEW STRUCTURES BUILT IN PARK

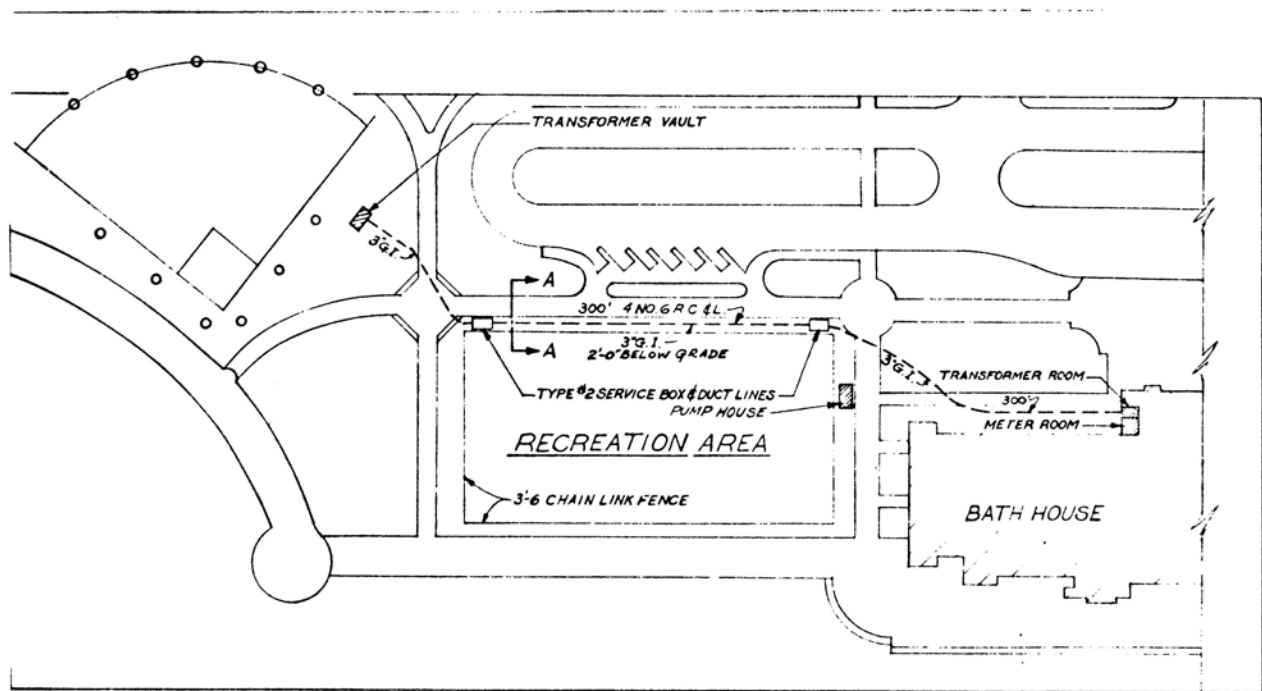
1. ELECTRICAL HUT (HS-605A) - 1940

In June 1940 a temporary floodlight control house was built near the new softball diamond just west of the bus terminal facilities and northeast of the ellipse. Since the softball field was to be lighted for night games, the structure was designed to control the eleven floodlights around the ball field.

Later in the summer a permanent floodlight control house was built near the softball diamond. It was a small, rectangular, single-story building, with a flat concrete slab floor and 8-inch concrete walls. The structure had one metal louvre door and two lead-coated copper louvre vents on one side just below the cornice. The building contained two rooms for transformers and other electrical equipment that was connected to the transformer and meter rooms in the north side of the bath house.¹⁴⁸

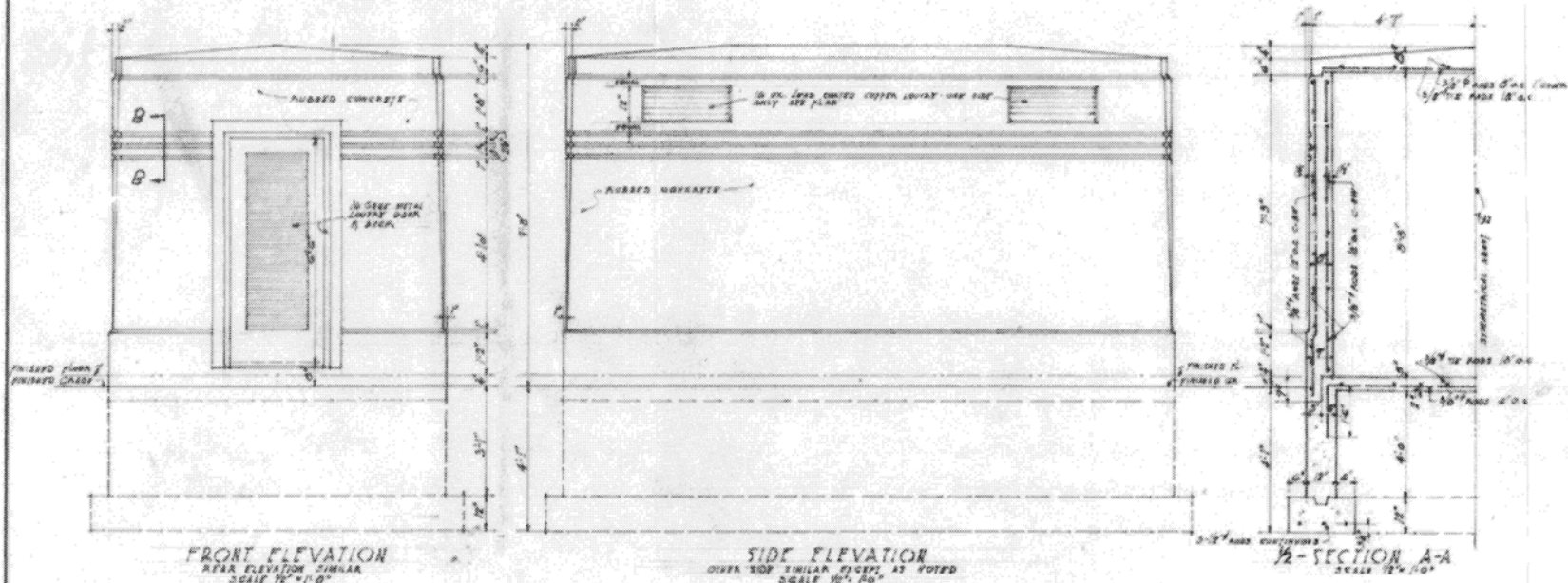
147. New York Times, August 25, 1969.

148. Drawings Nos. 62873/2 sheets, Floodlighting Plans, May 28, 1940, and 62872/3 sheets, Floodlight Control House, June 10, 1940, Architectural Drawings. Sheets 2 and 3 of Drawing No. 62872 and the plot plan for the floodlighting plans may be seen on the following pages.

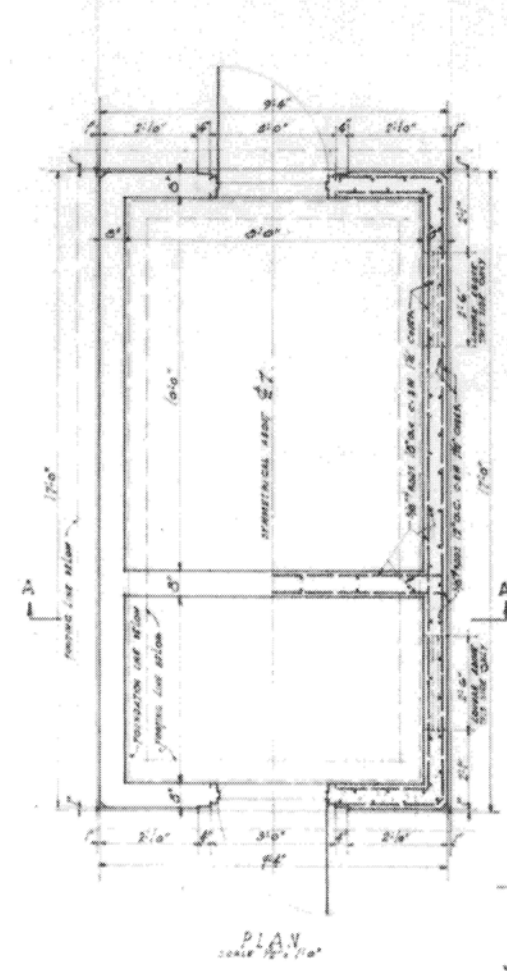


PLOT PLAN

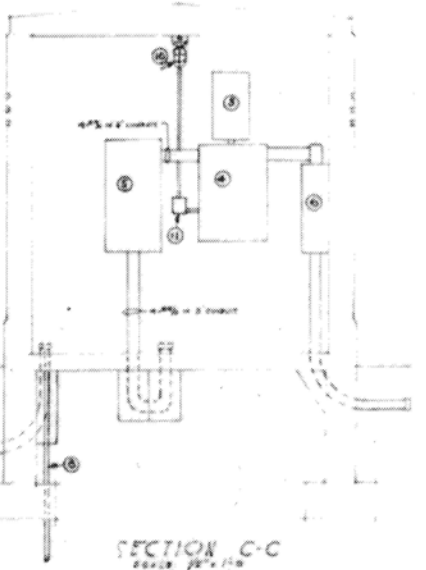
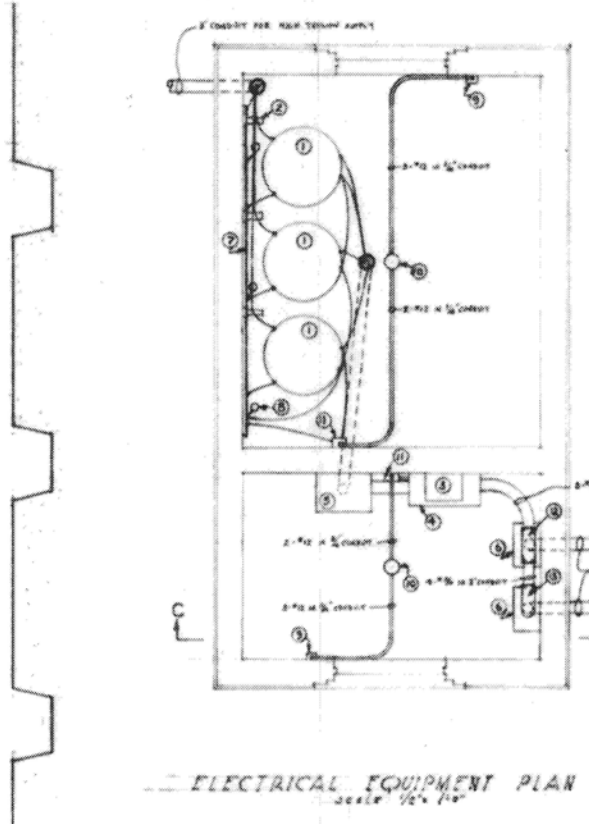
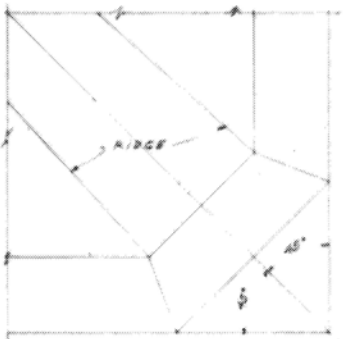
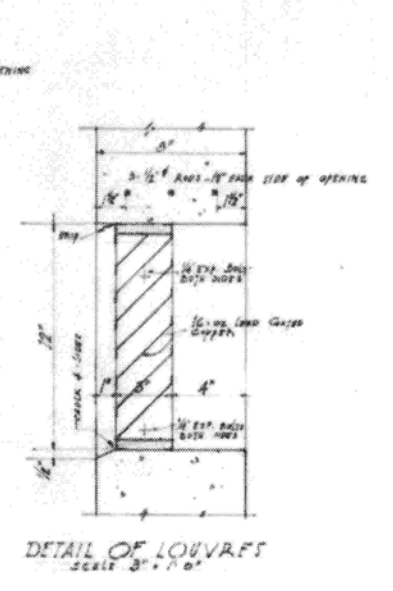
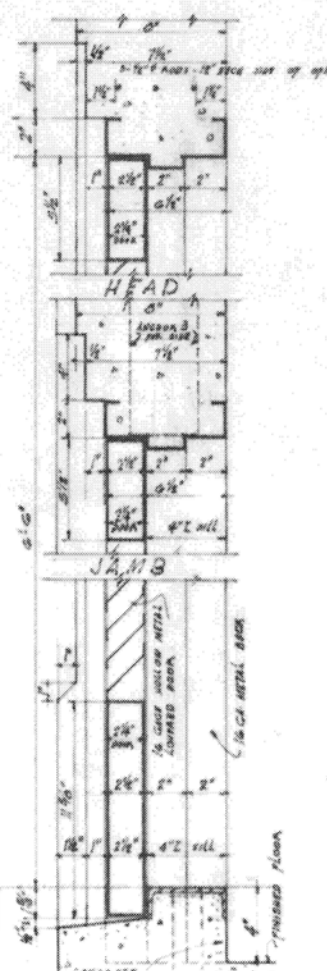




- ELECTRICAL LEGEND**
- ① 25 KVA, 2400/220 V TRANSFORMERS, FURNISHED BY PUBLIC UTILITY COMPANY
 - ② CABLE STANCHIONS & HANDERS, FURNISHED BY PUBLIC UTILITY COMPANY
 - ③ 3 PHASE, 4 WIRE, WATTHOUR METER, FURNISHED BY PUBLIC UTILITY COMPANY
 - ④ CURRENT TRANSFORMER CABINET
 - ⑤ 400 AMP, 250 VOLT, 3 POLE, 4 WIRE SAFETY SWITCH, WITH 225 AMP FUSES
 - ⑥ 200 AMP, 250 VOLT, 3 POLE, 4 WIRE SAFETY SWITCH, WITH 125 AMP FUSES
 - ⑦ 1/2" x 2" COPPER GROUND BUS, MOUNTED 12" ABOVE FLOOR, FASTENED TO WALL WITH 1" PIPE SPACERS & EXPANSION BOLTS ON 24" CENTERS
 - ⑧ 3-2" CONDUITS DRIVEN 12" BELOW SURFACE TO ACT AS GROUNDING BOND TO GROUND BUS WITH SUITABLE GROUNDING STRAPS
 - ⑨ COMBINATION RECEPTACLE & TUMBLER SWITCH UNITS IN SUITABLE CONDUITS
 - ⑩ PARK DEPT TYPE "K" FIXTURES, WITH LOCKING TYPE GUARDS, MOUNTED ON 4" BOXES
 - ⑪ 4 1/2" x 5 1/2" BOXES, WITH HINGED COVERS, CONTAINING DOUBLE CARTRIDGE TYPE CIRCUITS
 - ⑫ 4" TYPE "K" CONDUIT
 - ⑬ 5" TYPE "L" CONDUIT



NOTE: CONCRETE MIX FOR STRUCTURE TO BE 1-2-3 1/2

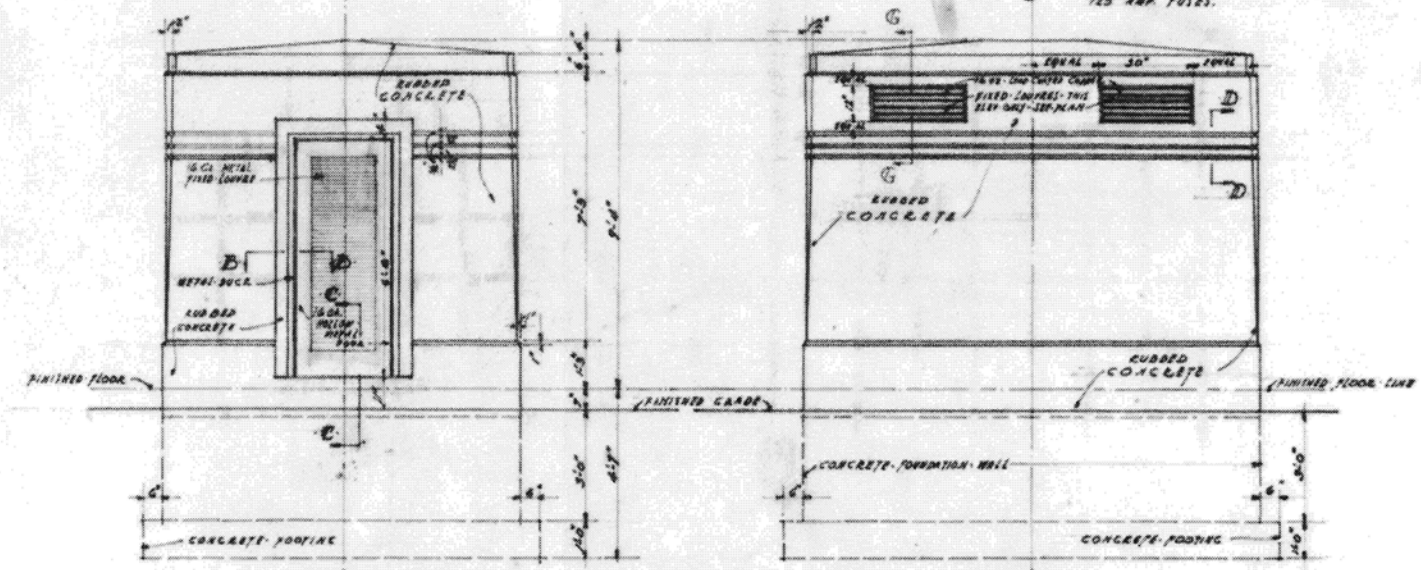


646-62872
2 of 3

50' BALL DIAMOND TOWER AND SPACER FOR FLOODLIGHT CONTROL ROUTE STRUCTURAL & ELECTRICAL DETAILS			
DESIGNED BY 1934-4-27	APPROVED BY [Signature]	DATE 3-4-49	
DRAWN BY 1934-4-27	REVISIONS BY [Signature]	DATE 2-20-49	
CHECKED BY A.A.C.M.	APPROVED BY [Signature]	DATE 2-20-49	
DATE JUN 17 1949	BY [Signature]	DATE 11-12-48	
CITY OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF PARKS ARSENAL, CENTRAL PARK			

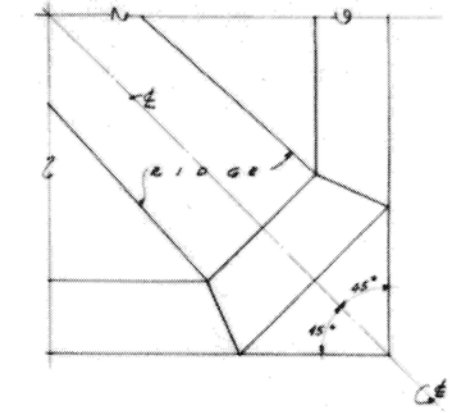
ELECTRICAL LEGEND:

- ① - 25 KVA, 2400/240 V. TRANSFORMER, FURNISHED BY PUBLIC UTILITY CO.
- ② - CABLE STANCHIONS & BRACKETS.
- ③ - CONCRETE CABLE SUPPORTS.
- ④ - THREE PHASE MATTHIAS 1070A.
- ⑤ - CURRENT TRANSFORMER CABINET.
- ⑥ - 400 AMP, 250 VOLT, 3-POL, 4-WIRE SAFETY SWITCH WITH 225 AMP FUSES.
- ⑦ - 200 AMP, 250 VOLT, 3-POL, 4-WIRE SAFETY SWITCHES WITH 125 AMP FUSES.
- ⑧ - 1/2" x 2" COPPER GROUND BUS, MOUNTED 12" ABOVE FLOOR, FASTENED TO WALL WITH 1" PIPE BRACKETS & EXPANSION BUSHES BY 3/8" CAPSCREWS.
- ⑨ - 2" CONDUIT DRIVEN 18" BELOW SURFACE TO ACT AS GROUND ROAD TO CLOSER BOX WITH JOINTABLE TAPS.
- ⑩ - SINGLE POLE, 10 AMP, 150 VOLT THERMAL SWITCHES MOUNTED IN JUNCTION BOXES.
- ⑪ - ONE NO. 1 TYPE X FUSEBOX WITH LOCKING TYPE COVER MOUNTED ON 4" BOX.
- ⑫ - 4 1/2" x 4 1/2" BOX WITH HANGER CORNER CONTAINING SINGLE CHETIDGE TYPE CIRCUIT BREAKER MOUNTED IN BOTTOM FOR WIRING TO 200 TRANSFORMER.
- ⑬ - 5" TYPE "D" CONDUIT.
- ⑭ - 5" TYPE "L" CONDUIT.

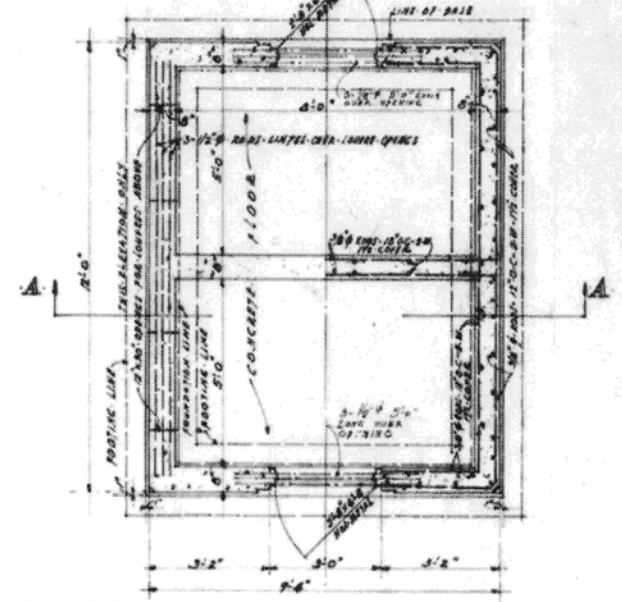


FRONT & REAR ELEVATION (SIMILAR) SCALE 1/2" = 1'-0"

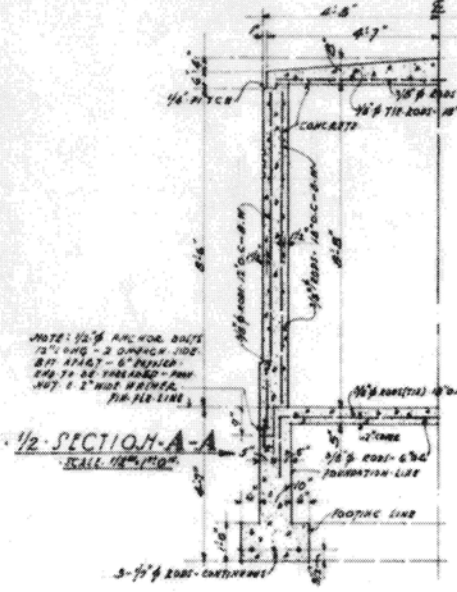
SIDE ELEVATION (BOTH SIMILAR) SCALE 1/2" = 1'-0"



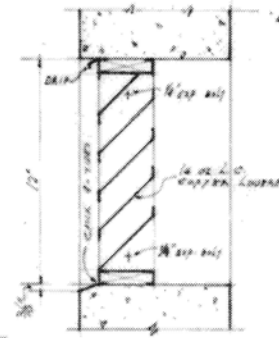
FULL-SIZE PLAN OF ROOF AT RIDGE



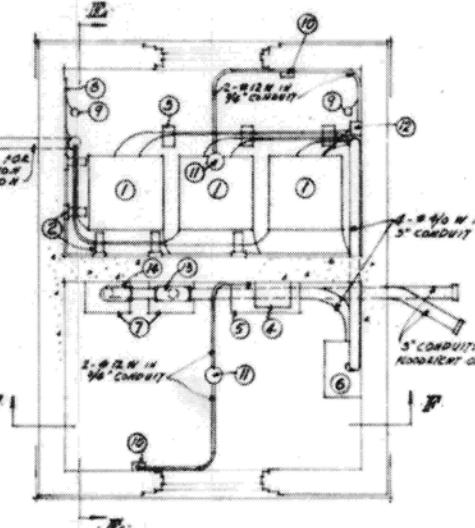
FLOOR PLAN SCALE 1/2" = 1'-0"



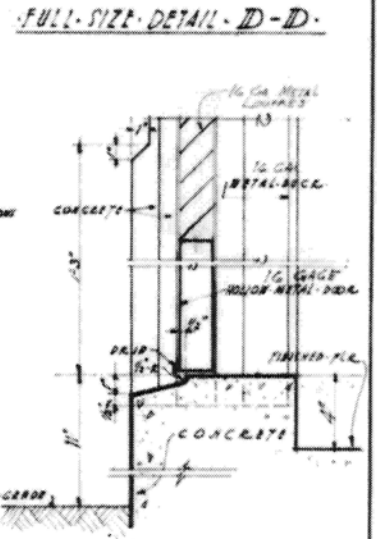
1/2 SECTION A-A SCALE 1/2" = 1'-0"



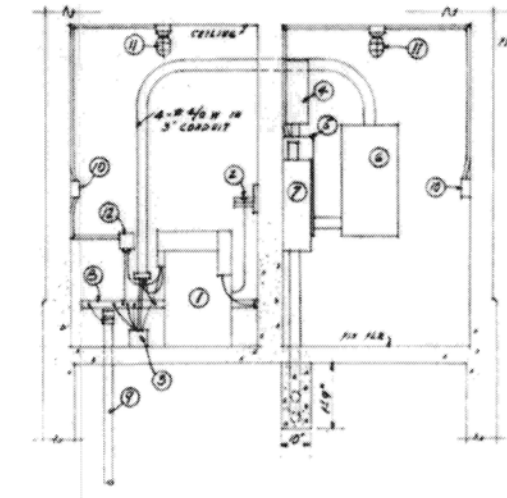
SECTION G-G SCALE 3/4" = 1'-0"



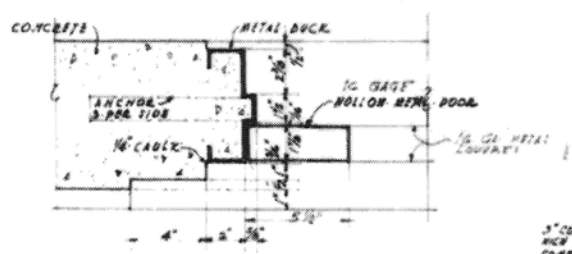
ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT FLOOR PLAN SCALE 1/2" = 1'-0"



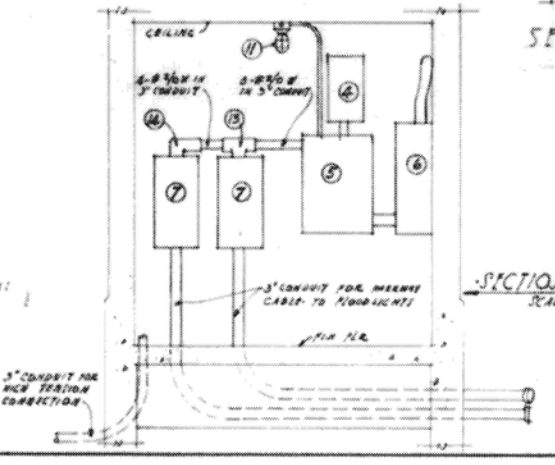
FULL-SIZE DETAIL D-D



SECTION C-C SCALE 3/4" = 1'-0"



PLAN AT B-B SCALE 3/4" = 1'-0"



SECTION F-F SCALE 1/2" = 1'-0"

NOTE: CONCRETE DIA FOR STRUCTURE TO BE 1:2:10

SOFT BALL DIAMOND BORDER OF QUEENS LIGHT CONTROL HOUSE STRUCTURAL & ELECTRICAL DETAILS			
DRAWN BY CHECKED BY DESIGNED BY DATE	APPROVED BY PROJECT ENGINEER DATE	QUANTITY SHEET NO. TOTAL SHEETS	CITY OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF PARKS ARSENAL, CENTRAL PARK

2. BUST OF JACOB A. RIIS - 1940

Work was completed on October 14, 1940, on the erection of a bronze bust of Jacob A. Riis between the columns of the west mall building. The inscription on the bust read as follows:

Jacob A. Riis
A distinguished citizen of Danish Birth. Pioneer in improving
city parks and playgrounds.

The bust was given to the Department of Parks by Roger William Riis, son of Jacob A. Riis. The simple granite pedestal was erected by the Department of Parks and was paid for by the Triborough Bridge Authority.¹⁴⁹

3. WISE CLOCK/RIIS PARK MEMORIAL CLOCK - 1941

The Wise Clock, sometimes known as the Riis Park Memorial Clock, was installed on the promenade at the east end of the ellipse on March 4, 1941. Although the exact origin of the clock is unknown, it was probably built in the 1890s as a special-made item by the Wise Jewelry Store in Brooklyn, although some sources claim that the clock was manufactured by the Howard Clock Company of Boston. The clock stood in front of the Wise Jewelry Store at Flatbush Avenue and Nevins Street for approximately thirty years. It was then moved with the firm to a new location at Fulton Street near Hoyt where it remained for nine years. From there it was moved to 288 Livingston Street for about five years before being removed to the park. The clock was donated to the Department of Parks by William A. Wise and Son in 1941 when the firm went out of business.

149. Report from Phil Cruise re: Jacob Riis Park, January 31, 1944, Jacob Riis Park Land Files, Park Lands Division, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, and New York City, Department of Parks, Construction and Restoration of Monuments, Memorials and Historic Buildings (New York, 1941), p. 32.

The clock was a four-dialed free standing mechanism. The base of the clock was cast iron, and from the pedestal top and above it was wood. The clock itself was twelve feet in height and the overall height of the standard about 20 feet. There were four faces on the clock, each face being four feet in diameter and each dial 30 inches in diameter. The clock had elaborate detailed scroll work throughout the pedestal.¹⁵⁰

The clock was set in a concrete foundation on the promenade at the park. A bronze weather vane in the form of a sailor looking through a spy glass was installed on top of the clock in September 1941.¹⁵¹

In the late 1960s or early 1970s the Wise Clock was used in a cracker jacks commercial for television. Several young children were seen buying cracker jacks from the nearby Concession Building and then gathering around the base of the clock to share their treat.¹⁵²

4. REFRESHMENT STANDS (HS-602, 605) - 1946-47

Two refreshment stands or concession buildings were built along the northern edge of the boardwalk at the east and west ends of the ellipse during the winter and spring of 1946-47. The structures were identical and were each located fifty feet from the

150. Ibid., and Memorandum, Area Manager to Park Planner, Vicki O'Doherty, September 19, 1975, Park Files, Breezy Point Unit Headquarters, Gateway National Recreation Area.

151. Drawings Nos. 62863/1 sheet, Wise Clock Foundation, September 30, 1940, and 62878/1 sheet, Clock Weather Vane, September 17, 1941, Architectural Drawings.

152. Memorandum, Area Manager to Park Planner, Vicki O'Doherty, September 19, 1975, Park Files, Breezy Point Unit.

ends of the elliptical boardwalk. The plans for the structures were prepared by Joseph A. Cicco of Wollaston, Massachusetts. The refreshment stands were rectangular (15'2" x 21'2"), single-story buildings with painted brick-bearing walls and structural concrete roof slabs. Each structure had a projecting flat hood over a counter window. The roofs were built up. There were no windows in the buildings and the doors, which were in the north facades, were wood. The stands had concrete slab floors with quarry tile flooring. The ceilings were plastered, and the interior partitions consisted of painted wood. Each counter window had a steel roll-up shutter door. The interior of the buildings provided space for an ice cream cabinet, two beverage coolers, a gas griddle, a wood counter, and a storage area. Canopy lighting was provided by fluorescent fixtures.¹⁵³

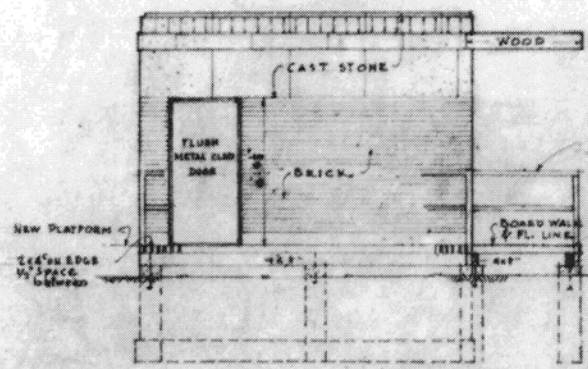
5. REFRESHMENT STAND (HS-607) - 1961

A parcel of land west and south of the Neponset Beach Hospital buildings between Rockaway Beach Boulevard and the ocean was added to Riis Park on May 22, 1958. During the spring and summer of 1961 two baseball diamonds were laid out on this ground. A Comfort Station and Concession Building was built along the beachfront promenade adjacent to the southernmost of the two ball fields.

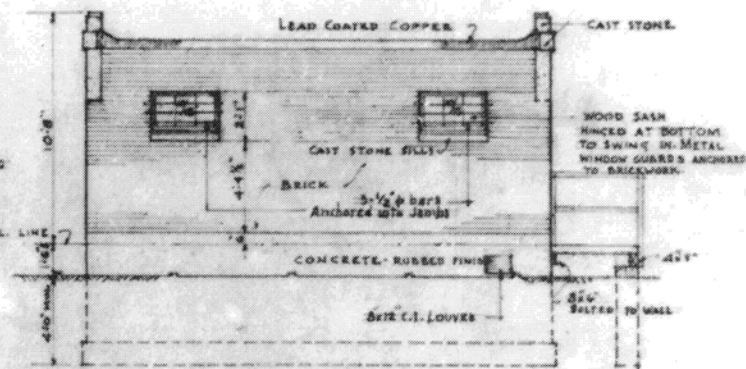
According to the contract drawings prepared by Elias J. Zindler, consulting architect of New York City, and Shumavon & Buckley, consulting engineers of New York City, the building was a single-story, rectangular, red brick structure (68 ft. 10 in. x 20 ft. 4 in.). It had concrete wall footings and a flat concrete roof

153. Drawing No, 62779/8 sheets, Concession Buildings Construction, December 2, 1946, Architectural Drawings. A copy of Sheet 2 of this drawing may be seen on the following page.

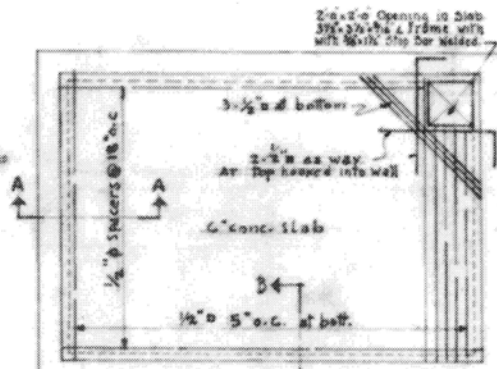




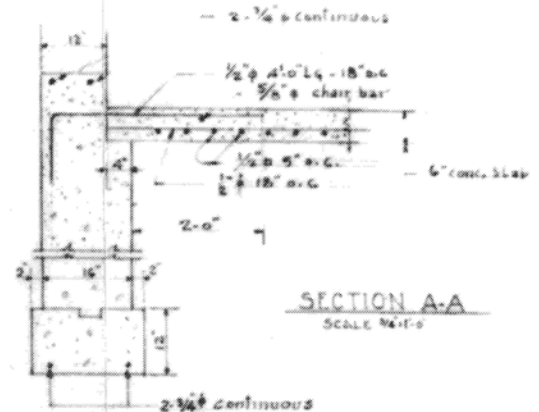
LEFT ELEVATION



REAR ELEVATION

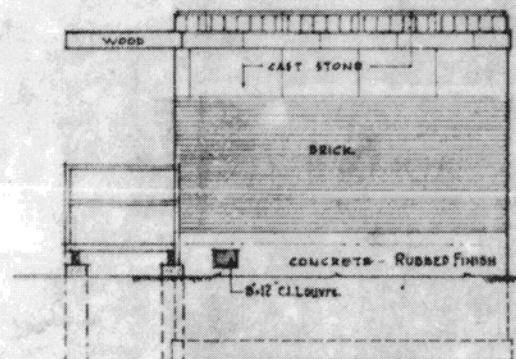


PLAN OF FLOOR SLAB

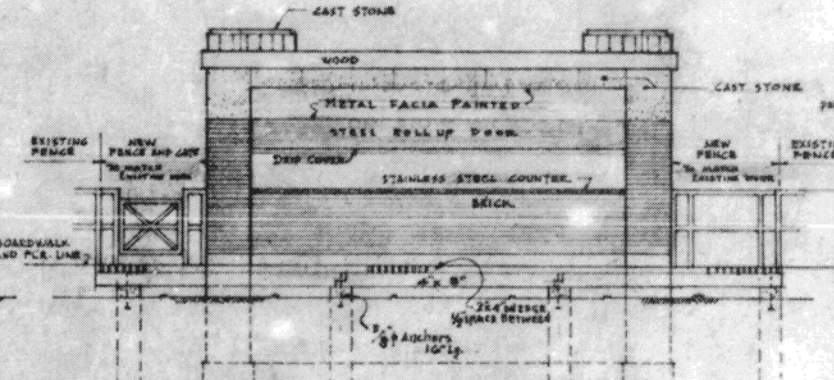


SECTION A-A

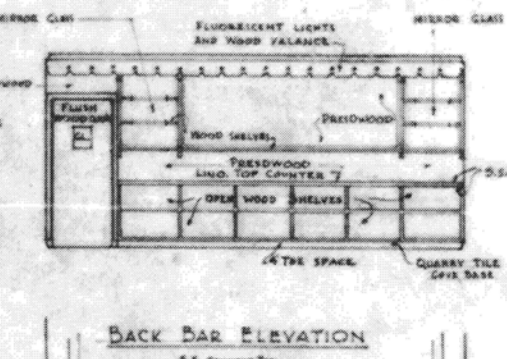
SCALE 3/4"=1'-0"



RIGHT ELEVATION

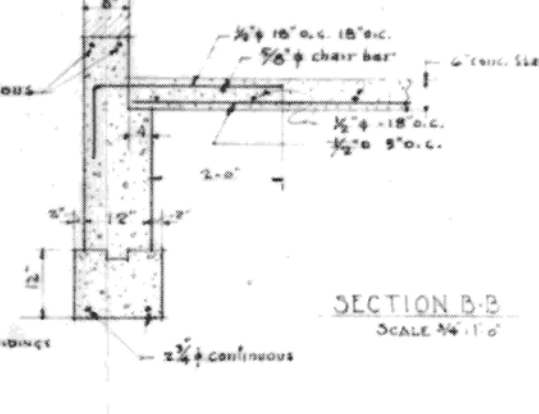


FRONT ELEVATION



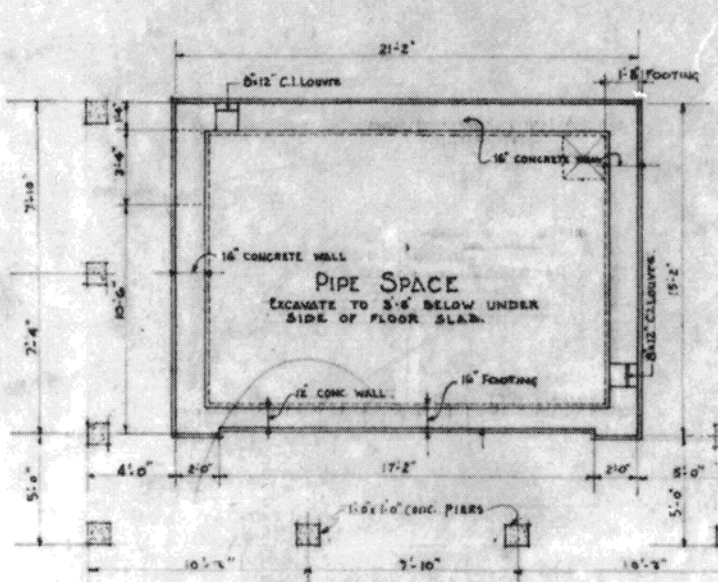
BACK BAR ELEVATION

ELEVATION OF UNDER COUNTER EQUIPMENT

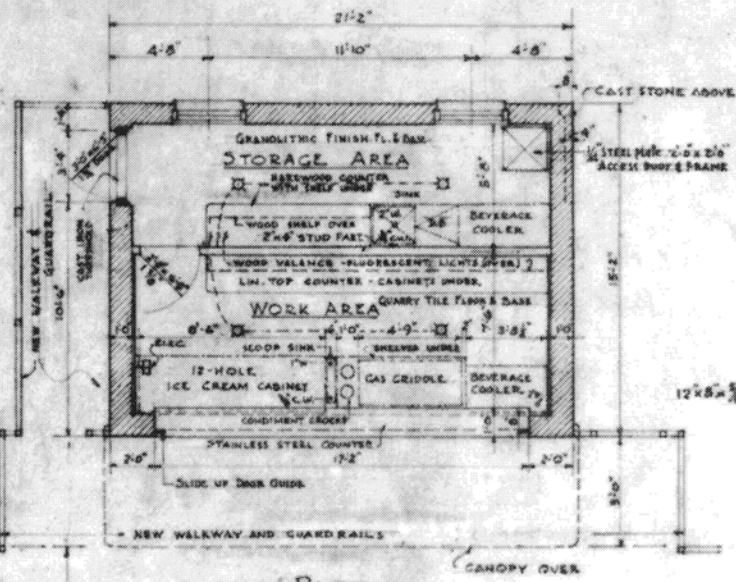


SECTION B-B

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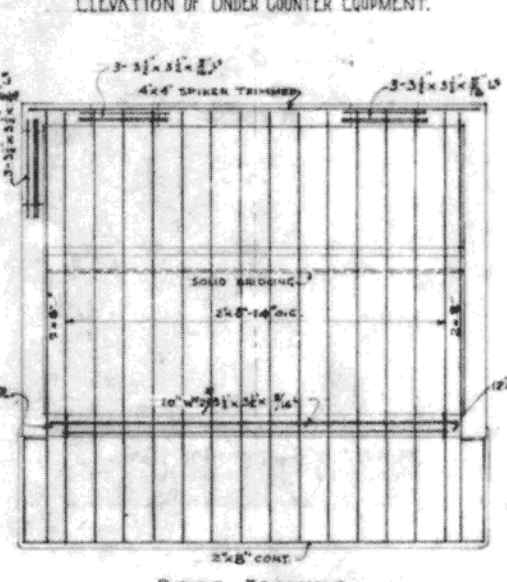


FOUNDATION PLAN



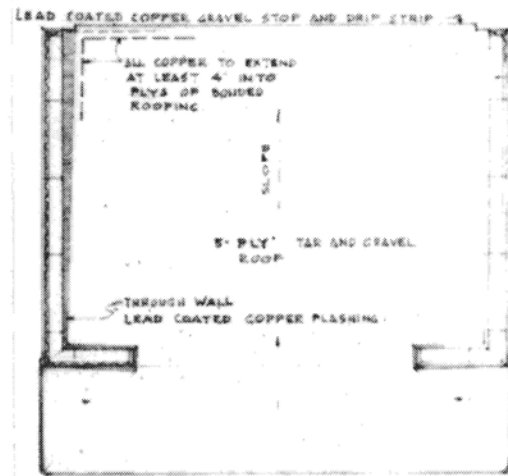
PLAN

PLAN OF BUILDING AT EAST END OF BEACH.
PLAN OF BUILDING AT WEST END OF BEACH
SAME BUT OPPOSITE HAND.



ROOF FRAMING

NOTE
ALTERNATE JOISTS SHALL BE ANCHORED TO WALL WITH 1/2" X 12" STRAP ANCHORS. JOISTS PARALLEL TO WALL SHALL BE ANCHORED TO WALL WITH STRAP ANCHORS 8" O.C. BATHING OVER 3 JOISTS AND SECURED TO EACH EQUIPMENT SHOWN WITH DOT AND DASH LINES IS NOT IN GENERAL CONTRACT.



ROOF PLAN

CITY OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF PARKS ARSENAL, CENTRAL PARK		CONTRACT NO. Q-49-146
CONCESSION BUILDINGS JACOB RITS PARK - BOROUGH OF QUEEN NEW YORK CITY		SHEET NO. 2
PLANS - ELEVATIONS AND SECTIONS		SCALE 1/4"=1'-0"
DESIGNED: SEPT. 21, '46 REVISED: APRIL 9, '46 REVISED: MAR 19, '46	JOSEPH A. CICCO, 5555 REG. ARCHITECT DRAWN BY 301 NEWPORT AVE., WOLLASTON, 70, MASS. J.J.B. DEC. 22, 1945	

646-62779

covered with asphalt prepared roofing. The building had steel-framed cement windows and steel doors, including an overhead folding door. A flat concrete hood projected over the overhead door. The interior partitions were brick and the flooring was concrete with quarry tile. The ceiling was plastered. The east portion of the building had men's and women's toilet facilities and a park storage room. The west portion of the structure had a service area, gas grill, walk-in refrigeration unit, freezer, meter room, and concessionaire storage room.¹⁵⁴

C. REPAIRS AND MODIFICATIONS TO EXISTING STRUCTURES

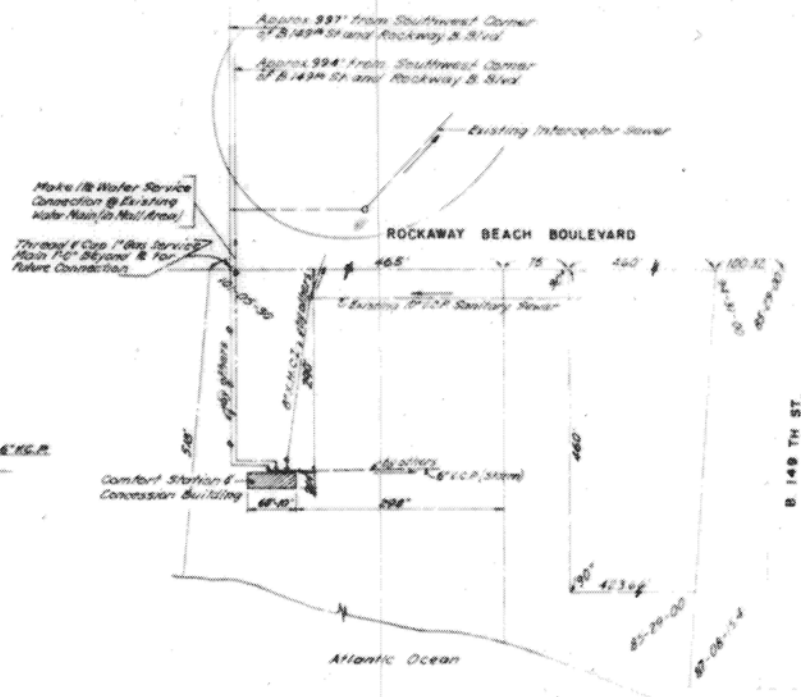
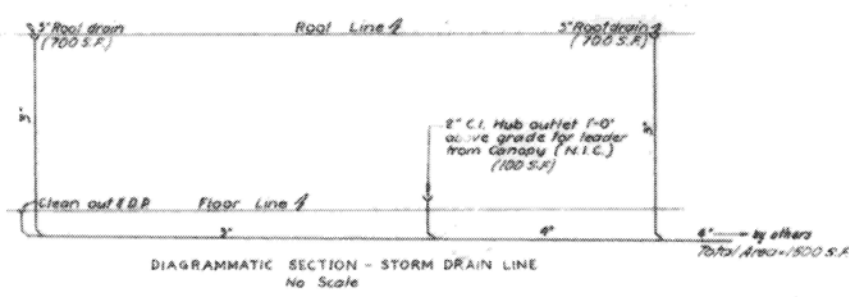
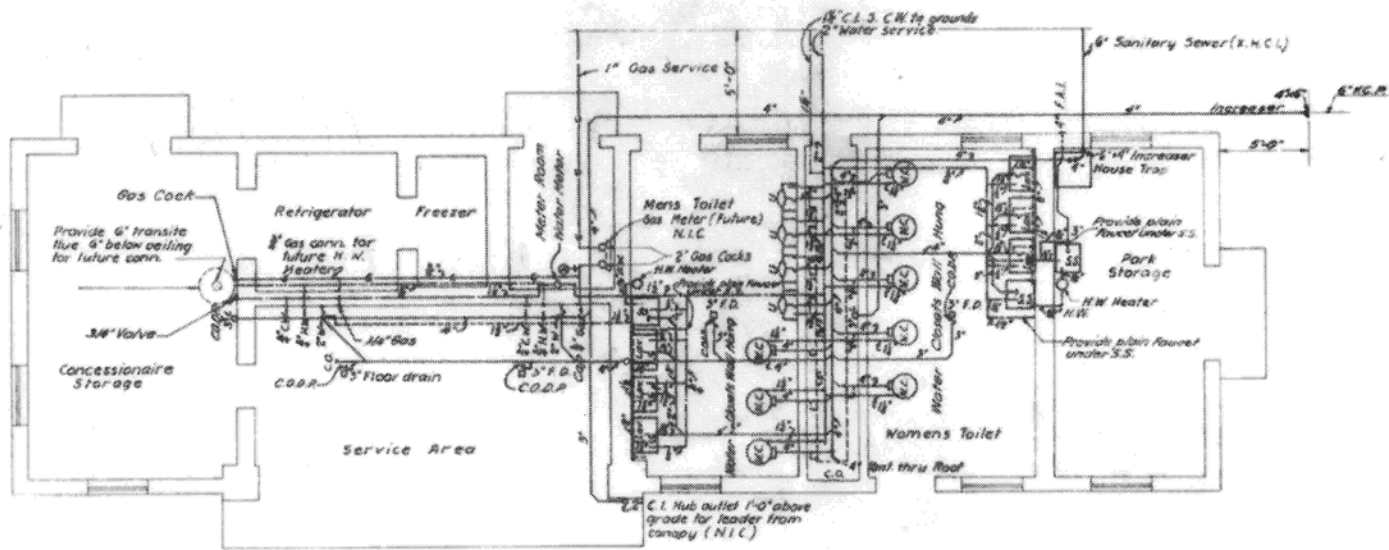
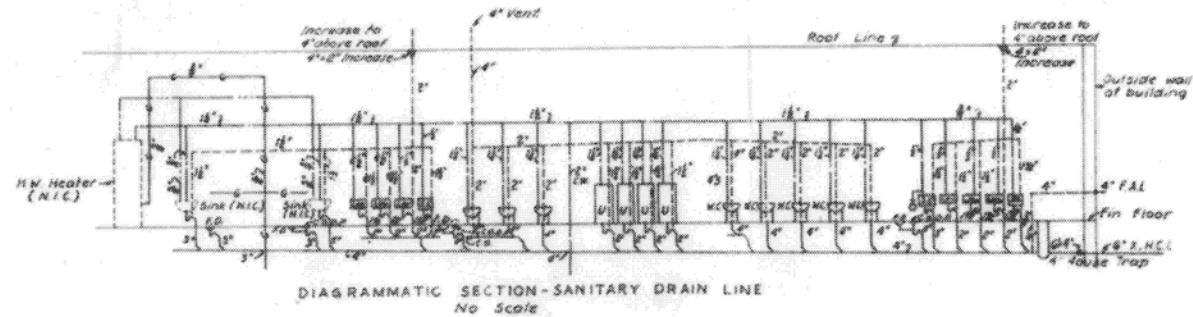
During the 25-year period from 1938 to 1973, various repairs and modifications were made to the existing structures in Jacob Riis Park by the Department of Parks. The following section will provide a list of the most significant structural repairs and changes.

1. BATHING PAVILION OR BATH HOUSE (HS-606)

As could be expected, the bath house was the building that received the greatest amount of attention in terms of structural repairs and modifications. The list of projects relating to the building were as follows:

a) In August 1938 a new wooden "ship's rail" was extended around the refreshment areas at the east and west edges

154. Drawing Nos. 62847/3 sheets, Comfort Station and Concession Building, October 7, 1960, and 62848/2 sheets, Comfort Station and Concession Building, October 7, 1960, Architectural Drawings. This building was constructed in connection with the recreation facilities described earlier in this report. Sheet 2 of Drawing No. 62848 may be seen on the following page. Sheet 3 of Drawing No. 62628A, which shows the full layout of the development associated with the Comfort Station and Concession Building, may also be seen.



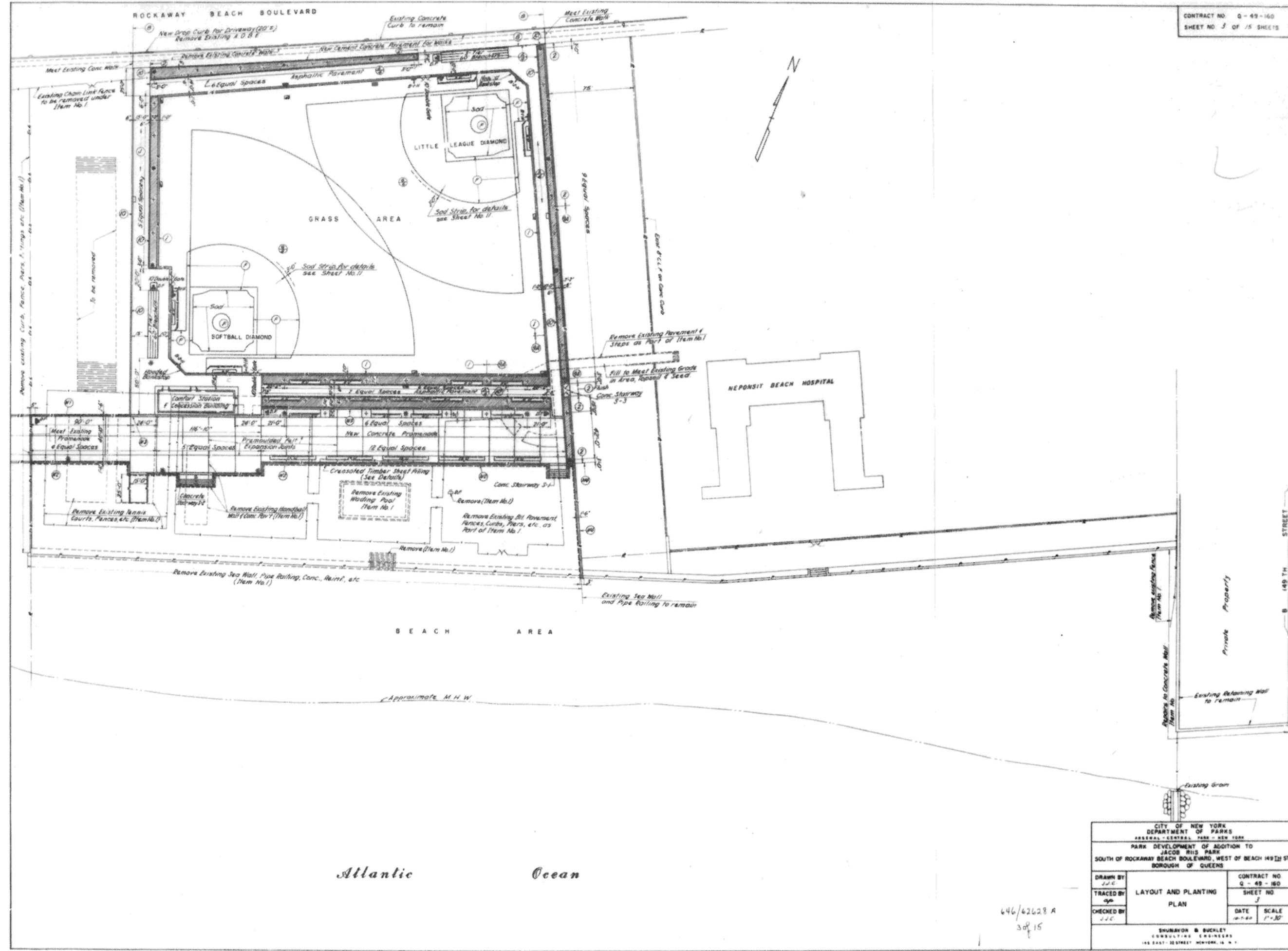
- PLUMBING SYMBOLS
- Cast Iron Drains
 - Galvanized Iron Vent Lines
 - Gas Lines
 - Brass No. 10 Water Lines
 - Brass Cold Water Lines
 - Clean Out & Deck Plates
 - Tee Connection for Bottled Gas
 - Brass Hot Water Line
- C.O. D.P.
H.W.

ON MICROFILM

- Notes:
1. All Service Lines are to be extended 5'-0" from Building, unless otherwise noted. Mark beyond 5'-0" by others.
 2. All Floor Drains shall have running traps with C.O. and Deck Plate.
 3. Provide Floor Flouzel Under Deck Slope Sink.

646-62848
2 of 2

CITY OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AT SINAL - CENTRAL PARK - NEW YORK			
PARK DEVELOPMENT OF ADDITION TO JACOB RISS PARK SOUTH OF ROCKAWAY BEACH BOULEVARD, WEST OF BEACH 149TH ST BOROUGH OF QUEENS			
DRAWN BY: K.J.Z.	PLUMBING DIAGRAMMATIC SECTIONS PLANS & DETAILS	CONTRACT NO. G-48-360	DATE As Shown
TRACED BY: K.J.Z.		SHEET NO. 2	
CHECKED BY: K.J.Z.		SCALE As Shown	
ELIAS J. ZINDLER CONSULTING ARCHITECT 150 EAST 30 ST. NEW YORK CITY		SHUMAYOR & BUDLEY CONSULTING ENGINEERS 180 EAST 32 STREET NEW YORK CITY	



CITY OF NEW YORK DEPARTMENT OF PARKS JACOB R. RIUS PARK - NEW YORK			
PARK DEVELOPMENT OF ADDITION TO JACOB RIUS PARK SOUTH OF ROCKAWAY BEACH BOULEVARD, WEST OF BEACH 149 TH ST BOROUGH OF QUEENS			
DRAWN BY J.S.C.	LAYOUT AND PLANTING PLAN	CONTRACT NO. Q-49-160	DATE 10-1-60
TRACED BY J.S.C.		SHEET NO. 3	
CHECKED BY J.S.C.		SCALE 1"=30'	
SHUNAVON & BUCKLEY CONSULTING ENGINEERS 145 EAST 32 STREET NEW YORK, N. Y.			

646/62628 A
30/15

ON MICROFILM

of the oceanfront side of the bath house. The "ship's rail" matched the existing railing along the promenade.¹⁵⁵

b) A number of improvements were made to the bath house during the early months of 1941. These included the (1) installation of screen metal partitions at the entrance to the men's and women's toilets; (2) installation of new wood screens at the east and west entrances; (3) installation of new metal partitions and extension of others in the men's and women's toilet areas; and (4) alteration of plumbing facilities in the restroom areas involving the rearrangement of some lavatories and urinals.¹⁵⁶

c) During the winter of 1941-42, various alterations were made to the toilet rooms in the southwest and southeast corners of the bath house.¹⁵⁷

d) During the summer of 1943, the bath house, along with all the other major buildings at Riis Park, was waterproofed. This project was probably the last project in the park accomplished with WPA labor and funds.¹⁵⁸

e) In February 1947 plans were developed to construct a relief sewer for the showers in the bath house. The new 8-inch

155. Drawing No. 62894/1 sheet, Ship Rail, August 19, 1938, Architectural Drawings.

156. Drawing No. 62877/5 sheets, Park Improvements, January 28, 1941, Architectural Drawings.

157. Drawing No. 62765/1 sheet, Miscellaneous Improvements, January 11, 1941, Architectural Drawings.

158. Progress Report: Post-War Works Program, City of New York, July 31, 1943 (New York, 1943), p. 18.

vitreous tile sewer was connected to the existing septic tank in the service area just east of the bath house.¹⁵⁹

f) During the winter and spring of 1948-49 the first major structural modifications were made in the bath house since 1937. The sum of \$240,000 was allocated for the work of repairing, remodeling, enlarging, and waterproofing the structure.¹⁶⁰ The various alterations that were made to the bath house included: (1) repair of metal roofs and louvres on the towers; (2) replacement of broken glass; (3) installation of new coping, flashing, drains and gutters on the roofs; (4) repair of the asbestos roof; (5) removal of existing doors and installation of new glass block wall on the oceanfront side of the building; (6) lowering of the terrace above the marquee on the oceanfront side of the pavilion; (7) removal of the outside concrete stairs from the promenade to the second floor and removal of the brick side wall, concrete stringer at the main wall, and the brick wall under the stairs; (8) repointing of all masonry; (9) replacement of existing asphalt tile floors in the food bars at the east and west ends of the building with grease-proof asphalt tile flooring; and (10) waterproofing the outside face of stone walls with a transparent substance and all other exterior walls with an opaque substance.

In addition, several major remodeling projects were undertaken in the interior of the bath house. These included the construction of new and larger locker room facilities for men and

159. Drawing No. 62780/1 sheet, Bathhouse Showers Sewer, February 5, 1947, Architectural Drawings.

160. Office of City Construction Co-ordinator, New York City Construction: Construction Progress, 1946-1949, Report on Public Works Construction Progress, 1946-1949, (New York, 1949), p. 10, and New York City, Department of Parks, Construction Schedule, 1946-1949 (New York, 1949), p. 21.

women on the second floor of the central portion of the bath house where the cafeteria had formerly been located and the construction of a new kitchen and cafeteria on the first floor of the central portion of the building where the locker rooms formerly had been located. New dressing cubicles, double tier lockers, and portable sliding-door key cabinets were installed in both the women's and men's locker areas. New floors were installed in place of the old asphalt tiles in the locker rooms, and new showers and exterior stairways were built. A new ticket booth for ticket and coin machines was also constructed. These alterations involved numerous changes in the electrical, plumbing, heating, and ventilating systems in the building.¹⁶¹

g) During the fall and winter of 1950-51 the men's and women's outdoor shower enclosures in the open-air dressing areas were reconstructed. The existing rinsing troughs were to remain, but the glazed tile shower enclosure walls were removed and replaced with new brick enclosure walls. The concrete shower floors and curbs were patched, and improvements were made to the asbestos locker space roofs. Apparently, only a portion of the shower stalls were reconstructed that winter because more shower stalls were rebuilt during the winter of 1951-52.¹⁶²

161. Drawings Nos. 62633/2 sheets, Bathhouse and Mall Buildings Plumbing, November 4, 1948; 62774/4 sheets, Bathhouse Electrical, November 4, 1948; 62636/2 sheets, Bathhouse Dress Cubicles, November 18, 1948; 62634/2 sheets, Bathhouse Lockers, November 18, 1948; 62772/8 sheets, Bathhouse and Mall Waterproof, November 19, 1948; 62635/2 sheets, Bathhouse Heating and Ventilating, November 24, 1948; 62632/4 sheets, Bathhouse Electric Work, February 10, 1949; 62817/1 sheet, Cafeteria Plumbing, March 21, 1949; 62817/1 sheet, Cafeteria Plumbing, March 21, 1949; 62809/1 sheet, Food Bar and Bathhouse Floor, March 25, 1949; and 62821/1 sheet, Locker Key Cabinets, June 17, 1949; Architectural Drawings.

h) During the spring of 1951 rolling steel door and refrigerator room plaster repairs were made in the concession areas of the bath house.¹⁶³

i) The Parks Department undertook the partial reroofing and other incidental work on the bath house during the winter and spring of 1953. The existing shingle roofing on the ocean front pavilions of the structure was replaced with new tile shingles. The missing or broken asbestos shingles on the extreme east and west pavilions of the bath house were patched with the old shingles salvaged from the ocean front pavilions. Gutters, leaders, flashing, and metal louvres on the oceanfront and end pavilions were repaired. The plaster on the walls and ceilings on the second floor of the ocean front pavilions were removed and replaced. The new plaster was to match the existing material except in the stair halls where new cement plaster replaced the former material.¹⁶⁴

j) During the summer of 1953 the existing sewage disposal system in the bath house and central mall buildings was removed and replaced with new sewer connections.¹⁶⁵

162. Drawings Nos. 62638/2 sheets, Bathhouse - Outdoor Showers, November 1, 1950; 62617/2 sheets, Bathhouse Plumbing, November 9, 1950; and 62616/1 sheet, Jacob Riis Bathhouse, February 21, 1952; Architectural Drawings.

163. Drawing No. 62618/3 sheets, Mall Building and Bathhouse Repair, April 26, 1951, Architectural Drawings.

164. Drawing No. 62619/3 sheets, Bathhouse Reroofing, January 8, 1953, Architectural Drawings.

165. Drawing No. 62758/3 sheets, Sewerage Disposal Alteration, July 27, 1953, Architectural Drawings.

k) In March and April 1954 a new ceiling was constructed in the refrigeration room behind the cafeteria. The new ceiling included a 4-inch foamglass insulation.¹⁶⁶

l) During the spring of 1954 additional sewer connections and new drain piping were installed in the bath house.¹⁶⁷

m) In the spring of 1956 the windows in the south or oceanfront wall of the second-floor locker room of the bath house were replaced with glass block.¹⁶⁸

n) Various alterations were made to the electric service line and to the apparatus in the transformer room in the northwest corner of the bath house during the spring of 1957. A new manhole, cover, and frame were constructed, and a new 4-inch duct, 2-2/c cable, and 4-inch conduit cable were installed.¹⁶⁹

o) In May 1958 the beach chair and umbrella concession in the bay just to the west of the main entryway to the bath house underwent certain modifications. Glass blocks were constructed on the wall along the entryway. New galvanized steel manually-

166. Drawing No. 62822/1 sheet, Refrigerator Ceiling, March 23, 1954, Architectural Drawings.

167. Drawing No. 62759/1 sheet, Sewer Connection Addition, May 10, 1954, Architectural Drawings.

168. Drawing No. 62625/2 sheets, Bathhouse Window Replacement, April 26, 1956, Architectural Drawings.

169. Drawing No. 62627/2 sheets, Bathhouse-Electric Service Line, March 20, 1957, Architectural Drawings.

operated roll-up doors were installed on the outside front facade of the shop facing the promenade.¹⁷⁰

p) During the spring of 1961 five new rolling steel doors were installed on the outside facade of the bath house cafeteria facing the promenade.¹⁷¹

q) During the winter and spring of 1964 a major rehabilitation project was undertaken on the exterior of the north facade of the bath house. The work involved a number of significant details:

- (1) Rehabilitate all existing letters signs and supports on exterior of building. Paint as required.
- (2) Remove all existing waterproofing material from all exterior masonry surfaces.
- (3) All flashings shall be repaired or replaced as required. Provide new lead coated copper (20 oz.) around all existing roof drains and vents where new roofing is to be installed. Flashing shall extend a minimum of 8" in all directions around drains and vents.
- (4) All broken, cracked, or otherwise defective components of existing drains, shall be removed and

170. Drawing No. 62823/1 sheet, Chair and Umbrella Shop, May 8, 1958, Architectural Drawings.

171. Drawing No. 62824/1 sheet, Cafeteria Doors, April 21, 1961, Architectural Drawings.

replaced with new components to match existing. Missing domes or grates shall be replaced with new domes or grates.

- (5) Rehabilitate all exterior metal work and woodwork, including cornices, fascias, soffits, mouldings and other trim.
- (6) Repair or replace all broken, damaged, deformed or otherwise defective downspouts, gutters, scuppers, etc. including their fastenings. All downspouts and gutters shall be rigidly secured to existing construction.
- (7) Rehabilitate all exterior doors, windows, louvres, frames, hardware, etc. All exterior windows and doors shall be made to operate properly and easily. Rehabilitate all existing exterior weatherstripping.
- (8) Remove all built-up roofing down to supporting concrete sheathing, or roofing boards or other base material. All defective concrete, roofing boards, etc. shall be removed and replaced with new to match sound existing work. Install new cant strips on all built up roofs. Provide cant strips or crickets around all skylights and elsewhere as required. Pitch all new roofing to drains, provide and install all material as required to properly pitch new roofing. Install new built up roofing as required.
- (9) Remove and replace all broken, cracked, or otherwise defective asphalt, asbestos, or clay tile and shingles. Replace all missing tile or shingles with new.

- (10) Remove all existing windows in locations where new windows, glass block, and glass block with vents are indicated. Do all cutting, patching, removals, etc. and provide all blocking shims, aluminum angles, channels and fastenings as required to install new items of work. New installations shall be weathertight and waterproof. Repair and restore surrounds of all openings, interior and exterior.
- (11) Remove all window guards, screens or other constructions interfering with the installation of new work, and performance of repair and restoration work. Replace all removed items after installation of new work and performance of repair and restoration work.
- (12) Rehabilitate all copings. All joints of copings shall be raked out to a depth of not less than 3/4". Install 2 part polysulphide polymer, in all cross joints, front, top, and rear.
- (13) All existing drains on roofs shall be mechanically cleaned to obtain proper drainage flow.
- (14) Remove all debris and bird droppings from the bottoms of the east and west towers.
- (15) Remove debris from all downspouts, gutters, etc. Provide new heavy copper screening in all leader heads, scuppers, etc. Provide new heavy copper strainer baskets in all downspouts.

- (16) Remove or protect all signs during sandblasting operations or other restoration work. Replace same after work is complete.
- (17) Relocate or alter existing conduit, pipes or other equipment which penetrates, or interferes with the installation of new windows, glass block, or glass block with vents.
- (18) Existing caulking around all exterior openings shall be removed and replaced with new caulking. Install new caulking around all new windows and glass block installations.
- (19) All exterior screening and frames shall be prepared or replaced as required including screening behind louvers.
- (20) Provide plaster stops, beads, casings, cornerites, metal lath, etc. as required to restore all plaster surfaces. All plaster accessories shall be galvanized.¹⁷²

r) At the same time new coin-operated lockers were installed in the open-air men's and women's dressing areas. The new lockers were placed on concrete bases covered with Douglas fir exterior grade plywood.¹⁷³

172. Drawing No. 62806/5 sheets, Bathhouse Exterior Rehabilitation, January 17, 1964, Architectural Drawings.

173. Drawing No. 62825/1 sheet, Coin-Operated Lockers, February 21, 1964, Architectural Drawings.

s) In June 1965 the lintels on the bath house were repaired. The existing cement, plaster, mesh, and wood coverings were replaced with a new concrete rubbed finish.¹⁷⁴

t) The east tower of the bath house was rehabilitated in June 1972. The existing roof was preserved, but the damaged brick was repaired and the steel lintels were replaced. The louvres were removed and reset. Repairs were also made to the plumbing and drainage system in the tower.¹⁷⁵

2. CENTRAL MALL BUILDINGS (HS-603, 604)

The central mall buildings received a lesser amount of attention than the bath house during the 1938-73 period, but a number of repair and remodeling projects were carried out on the two structures. These were as follows:

a) During the fall of 1938 the "ship's rail" around a portion of the dance floor in the mall area was extended around the entire dance floor. New and increased lighting facilities for the dance floor area were also installed.¹⁷⁶

b) Additions and alterations were made to the dance floor facilities during the early months of 1941.¹⁷⁷

174. Drawing No. 62929/1 sheet, Proposed Lintel Repairs, June 3, 1965, Architectural Drawings.

175. Drawing No. 62746/1 sheet, East Tower Rehabilitation, June 12, 1972, and 62816/2 sheets, Bathhouse-East Tower Rehabilitation, June 13, 1972, Architectural Drawings.

176. Drawing No. 62894/1 sheet, Ship Rail, August 19, 1938, Architectural Drawings.

177. Drawing No. 62765/1 sheet, Miscellaneous Improvements, January 11, 1941, and No. 628771/5 sheets, Park Improvements, January 28, 1941, Architectural Drawings.

c) The central mall buildings, along with the other structures in Riis Park, were waterproofed during the summer of 1943.¹⁷⁸

d) Various improvements were made to the central mall buildings during the winter of 1948-49. The exterior walls were repointed and waterproofed. New roofs were put on the structures, and the flashing, gutters, coping, and roof drains were repaired or replaced.¹⁷⁹

e) During the spring of 1951 new rolling steel doors were installed in the concession areas of the central mall buildings. Refrigerator plaster repairs and other incidental work were also performed in the structures.¹⁸⁰

f) In February 1953 the existing wood overhead doors in the east mall building were replaced with new overhead mahogany doors.¹⁸¹

g) During the summer of 1953 new sewer connections were installed in the central mall buildings to replace the existing sewage disposal system.¹⁸²

178. Progress Report: Post-War Works Program, City of New York, July 31, 1943, p. 18.

179. Drawings Nos. 62633/2 sheets, Bathhouse and Mall Buildings Plumbing, November 4, 1948, and 62772/8 sheets, Bathhouse and Mall Waterproofing, November 19, 1948, Architectural Drawings.

180. Drawing No. 62618/3 sheets, Mall Building and Bathhouse Repairs, April 26, 1951, Architectural Drawings.

181. Drawing No. 62620/2 sheets, North Mall Overhead Doors, February 10, 1953, Architectural Drawings.

182. Drawing No. 62758/3 sheets, Sewerage Disposal Alteration, July 27, 1953, Architectural Drawings.

h) Three concrete slabs were poured near the central mall buildings in November 1954 to serve as the bases for vending machines. One slab was located in front of each building, and one was located on the west side of the east mall building just above the elliptical curve of the structure.¹⁸³

i) In August 1970 the wood overhead doors in the east mall building were replaced by new doors, consisting of mahogany plywood panels.¹⁸⁴

3. MAINTENANCE SHOPS AND GARAGE (HS-601A, 601B)

There is little information relative to improvements or changes made to the Maintenance Shops and Garage during the 1938-73 period. In January 1941 a new roadway and curb was built to the structures from the traffic circle just below the Marine Parkway Bridge.¹⁸⁵ The buildings were waterproofed in the summer of 1943 and again during the winter of 1948-49.¹⁸⁶

4. REFRESHMENT STANDS (HS-602, 605)

There is no record of any structural modifications to these buildings during the 1938-73 period. The two structures apparently were waterproofed during the winter of 1948-49.¹⁸⁷

183. Drawing No. 62623/1 sheet, Vending Machine Concrete Slab, November 23, 1954, Architectural Drawings.

184. Drawing No. 62856/2 sheets, Mall Building Overhead Doors, August 5, 1970, Architectural Drawings.

185. Drawings Nos. 62765/1 sheet, Miscellaneous Improvements, January 11, 1941, and 62877/5 sheets, Park Improvements, January 28, 1941, Architectural Drawings.

186. Progress Report: Post-War Works Program, City of New York, July 31, 1943, p. 18, and Office of City Construction Co-ordinator, New York City Construction: Construction Progress, 1946-1949, p. 10.

187. Office of City Construction Co-ordinator, New York City Construction: Construction Progress, 1946-1949, p. 10.

5. BOILER ROOM (HS-603A)

This structure was waterproofed during the summer of 1943 and again during the winter of 1948-49. The heating system in the building was rehabilitated during the summer of 1970. A new hot-water heater and a new oil-fired steam boiler were installed along with some piping and electrical replacements.¹⁸⁸

6. BEACH STABILIZATION STRUCTURES

During the 1938-73 period numerous additions as well as structural changes were made to the existing beach stabilization structures both along the oceanfront and bayfront of Riis Park. In August 1939 an issue of \$150,500 in serial bonds was authorized by the Board of Estimate to meet the cost of constructing additional jetties along the oceanfront. During the fall of that year hydraulic fill was pumped in all along the beach. The area between the Neponsit hospital and the play areas just east of the bath house received considerable attention as some 22,000 cubic yards of fill was put in that vicinity. New jetties, consisting of a concrete cap and steel sheeting, were connected to the existing jetties to make them longer. Several jetties were relocated to the center of the elliptical beach area.¹⁸⁹

During the spring and summer of 1940 further work was done on the beachfront jetties at Riis Park. Five new jetties were built in front of the bath house, each extending approximately 500 feet from the seawall, and 250,000 cubic yards of fill were pumped in to extend the beach to a width of 250 feet immediately in front of

188. Ibid., and Drawing No. 62857/2 sheets, Mall Buildings Heating and Electrical, July 31, 1970, Architectural Drawings.

189. New York Times, September 1, 1939, and Drawings Nos. 62775/4 sheets, Beach Front Hydraulic Fill, July 25, 1939; 62776/3 sheets, Beach Front Jetties, July 25, 1939; and 62776A/4 sheets, Beach Front Jetties, October 31, 1939, Architectural Drawings.

the bath house. Portions of some of the older jetties were given new concrete caps and steel sheeting.¹⁹⁰

The bulkhead and walks along Jamaica Bay were reconstructed during the spring and summer months of 1945. A new riprap bulkhead was built between the end of the existing concrete and steel bulkhead and the Marine Parkway Bridge. The existing bulkhead, which virtually extended for the entire length of the park except for the west end near the bridge, received a new concrete seal. A new 4-foot-wide bituminous walk was built along the bayside of Beach Channel Drive to replace the one that had been built during the spring and summer of 1938. Curbs and drain lines were repaired, beaches were reset, and new pipe rail fences were installed.¹⁹¹

In 1957 and 1958 various beach stabilization structures were removed along the oceanfront at the east end of the park and in front of the Neponsit hospital buildings. The work included the removal of groins, piles, and pipes. The reason for such work could not be determined.¹⁹²

On March 6-9, 1962, a severe storm damaged the shorefront facilities throughout the New York City area. The most

190. Drawings Nos. 62773/1 sheet, Beach Front Jetties, March 15, 1940, and 62777/5 sheets, Jetty Profiles, March-July 1940, Architectural Drawings, and New York City, Department of Parks, 16 Years of Park Progress, 1934-1949 (New York, 1949), p. 18.

191. Drawings Nos. 62928/1 sheet, Rockaway Inlet Walk Plan, March 4, 1938, and 62778/3 sheets, Bulkhead and Walks Construction, April 24, 1945, Architectural Drawings.

192. Drawings Nos. 62629/2 sheets, Groins, Piles, and Pipe Removal, May 14, 1957, and 62876/1 sheet, Groins and Piles Removal, October 2, 1958, Architectural Drawings.

heavily damaged beach areas under the Parks Department were Rockaway Beach and Riis Park. Four emergency contracts, amounting to \$473,250, were let immediately to restore the two beaches for public use during the 1962 bathing season. In addition, four contracts, totalling \$800,000 were let to rehabilitate the beach stabilization structures in Riis Park. Most of the work under the latter contracts centered on the restoration of the two bulkheads. The principal activities carried out were as follows:

- a) removal of existing pipe rail and bulkhead cap
- b) excavation or fill offshore of bulkhead
- c) replacement of creosoted timber sheet piling and wales
- d) replacement of bulkheads' concrete seal and securing of tops of timber sheet piles to prevent excessive lateral deflection
- e) excavation of inshore side of bulkheads
- f) installation of 3-foot aluminum bulkhead fence
- g) placement and compaction of sand fill inshore of bulkhead and replacement of rip rap blanket
- h) replacement of bulkheads' concrete for structures
- i) replacement of reinforcing bars
- j) installation of end pieces of outfall sewer
- k) replacement of all deteriorated steel sheet piling.¹⁹³

7. LANDSCAPE OR LAYOUT OF PARK

Many changes and additions were made to the landscape or layout of Riis Park during the 1938-73 period. These modifications were as follows:

- a) During the winter and spring of 1937-38 the Pitch and Putt Golf Course was renovated. It was reopened on May 14, 1938, with the charge to be 50 cents per player per round. The Department of Parks would provide the balls and clubs.¹⁹⁴

193. Drawing No. 62849/13 sheets, Storm Damage Rehabilitation, October 15, 1962, Architectural Drawings, and New York City, Department of Parks, 30 Years of Progress, 1934-1964 (New York, 1964), pp. 36, 39.

194. New York Times, May 14, 1938.

b) During the spring and summer of 1938 a portion of the park near Rockaway Beach Boulevard and Beach 149th Street was graded and developed. Shrubbery was planted along 149th Street and two baseball diamonds were laid out, one on either side of the unconstructed line of Neponsit Avenue extended. An irrigation system was installed to water the grass ball fields.¹⁹⁵

c) During the spring and summer of 1938 eleven drinking and bottle filling fountains were built along the boardwalk of the park.¹⁹⁶

d) During the spring and summer of 1940 a new soft ball diamond was laid out just west of the bus terminal facilities and northeast of the eastern portion of the ellipse. The field was designed to be the premier diamond at the park, having dugouts, a grandstand, and floodlighting for night games. To light the field eleven 40-foot poles were erected around the field, three each along the foul lines and five around the outfield.¹⁹⁷

e) Three new concrete stairways were built from the boardwalk of the ellipse to the beach during the early months of

195. Drawing No. 62896/1 sheet, Grading Plan, June 2, 1938, Architectural Drawings.

196. Drawing No. 62902/1 sheet, Drinking Fountains, March 2, 1938, Architectural Drawings.

197. Drawings Nos. 62869/1 sheet, Floodlighting Plans, October 30, 1939, and 62873/2 sheets, Floodlighting Plot Plan, May 28, 1940, Architectural Drawings.

198. Drawings Nos. 62765/1 sheet, Miscellaneous Improvements, January 11, 1941, and 62877/5 sheets, Park Improvements, January 28, 1941, Architectural Drawings.

1941. The new stairs were located closer to the ends of the ellipse than the existing stairs.¹⁹⁸

f) In June 1948 an anonymous bather who frequented the Riis Park beach donated \$1,000 to the Parks Department for use in beautifying the park. It was determined in the fall to use the money to plant Christmas holly, inkberry, and small-leaved native hollies on both sides at the south end of the mall just above the ellipse. A bronze plaque was set on the west side of the mall telling the story of the anonymous contribution.¹⁹⁹

g) During the winter of 1948-49 the park lighting system was extended to the center mall area and the area west of the parking field. New lamp posts, known as New York City "Type B" Lamp posts, were installed as part of the project.²⁰⁰

h) During the spring of 1953 a concrete walkway was constructed between the center of the elliptical mall promenade and the sea wall. The top of the 500-foot walk met the top of the sea wall.²⁰¹

i) Additional hollies and seaside plants were planted around the mall during 1953. Some 339 plants were placed at various points to augment the existing greenery.²⁰²

199. New York Times, June 30, 1948, and Drawings Nos. 62862/1 sheet, Plaque Sketch, September, 1948, and 62890/1 sheet, Bronze Plaque, September, 1948, Architectural Drawings.

200. Drawing No. 62637/2 sheets, Jacob Riis Park Lighting, December 8, 1948, Architectural Drawings.

201. Drawing No. 62621/1 sheet, Concrete Walk Construction, April 10, 1953, Architectural Drawings.

202. Drawing No. 62757/1 sheet, Mall Planting Plan, ca. 1953, Architectural Drawings.

j) During the late summer and fall of 1954 the boardwalk around the ellipse was redecked. New lighting for the dance floor was installed, and a new railing was placed around the boardwalk. The bandstand at the south end of the dance floor and the railing around the dance floor were removed.²⁰³

k) A plan for the development of the park addition bordering the north side of Riis Avenue between 146th Street and 148th Street extended was adopted in September 1955. Eight clay tennis courts were laid out, a small maintenance building was constructed near the intersection of 146th Street and Riis Avenue, and an adjacent clay storage area was built.²⁰⁴

l) A large planting program was carried out along Beach Channel Drive from the traffic circle at the foot of the Marine Parkway Bridge to the eastern boundary of the park in 1955. The plants, many of which were brought from the Riker's Island nursery, were as follows: Myrica Pennsylvania (3,000); Pinus thumbergi (200); and Piniis martama (1,000). The area along the drive was seeded with beach grass.²⁰⁵

m) Certain repairs were made to the bridge over Beach Channel Drive eastbound during the early spring of 1957.²⁰⁶

203. Drawing No. 62622/3 sheets, Redecking Boardwalk, August 5, 1954, Architectural Drawings.

204. Drawing No. 62880/1 sheet, 8 Tennis Courts Development, September 8, 1955, Architectural Drawings.

205. Drawing No. 62624/1 sheet, Beach Channel Drive Planting, ca, 1955, Architectural Drawings.

206. Drawing No. 62626/2 sheets, Bridge Repairs, March 11, 1957, Architectural Drawings.

n) A plan was developed in October 1960 to construct various recreational facilities in a recent addition to Riis Park between Rockaway Beach Boulevard and the beach area and west of Beach 149th Street. The plan called for the layout of a Little League baseball diamond and a soft ball diamond, the construction of a new Comfort Station and Concession Building, and the building of a new concrete promenade between these facilities and the beach area. Below the promenade the existing tennis and handball courts, play area, wading pool, and sea wall were to be removed to make way for an enlarged beach area.²⁰⁷

The Board of Estimate approved the sum of \$320,000 for the construction, electrical, and plumbing work called for by the plan in April 1961. The project, which was completed during the spring and summer of 1961, was financed by the issue of several bonds and capital notes.²⁰⁸

o) During the fall and winter of 1969-70 the timber boardwalk around the crescent-shaped beach at the west end of the park was replaced with concrete decking. The existing timber superstructure and the existing concrete piers for the railings were removed. The railings were reset in the new concrete superstructure.²⁰⁹

207. Drawing No. 62628/15 sheets, Jacob Riis Park-Additional Development, October 7, 1960, Architectural Drawings.

208. Long Island Star Journal, April 28, 1961.

209. Drawings Nos. 62767/1 sheets, New Concrete Decking, October 12, 1969, and 62881/2 sheets, Concrete Decking, October 12, 1969, Architectural Drawings.



CHAPTER TEN

JACOB RIIS PARK AS A PART OF GATEWAY NATIONAL
RECREATION AREA: 1974-1979

On March 4, 1974, the City of New York formally turned over Jacob Riis Park and other properties, totaling nearly 26,000 acres, to the federal government for administration by the National Park Service as a part of Gateway National Recreation Area.²¹⁰ Efforts were begun quickly to assure New York City residents of the continuance of the types of recreation dreamed of by Jacob Riis and Robert Moses. Plans were made immediately to refurbish the park and undo the ravages of vandalism and winter weather to the beach's facilities in recent years before the opening date on May 27 (Memorial Day). Work that was done by that date included the rehabilitation of the playground areas and the repair of the promenade and railing. A contract was let for the installation of a new roof on the bath house and the central mall buildings and a silicone compound was sprayed on the bath house exterior for protection against the salt air and graffiti. The interior of the bath house was redone including the repair of the walls and the electric and plumbing systems and the replacement of windows and doors.²¹¹

In May 1974 the Wise Clock, which had been out of service since 1968, was restored by Herb Barth under contract. The clock was overhauled, the face changed, and the glass replaced. An individual mechanism for each face was put in. Prior to that time, all of the clock's faces operated on one mechanism that was located in the base.²¹²

210. Earlier in 1971 the park had been designated a National Historic Landmark by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

211. New York Sunday News, April 21, 1974.

212. Memorandum, Area Manager to Park Planner, Vicki O'Doherty, September 19, 1975, Park Files, Breezy Point Unit.

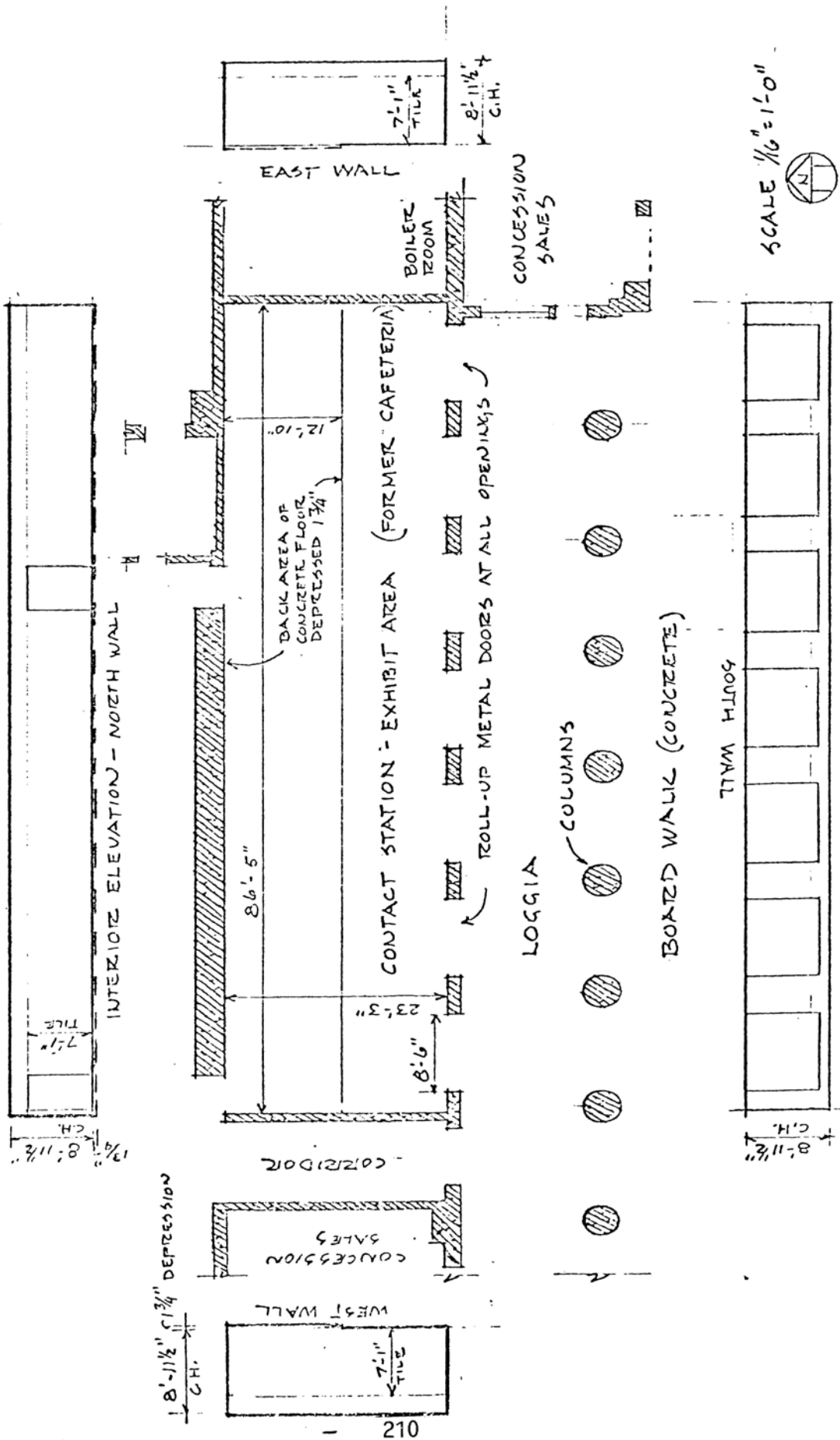
Several problems have faced National Park Service personnel at Riis Park. One has been the question of how to handle topless, nudist, and homosexual bathers at the beach. In July 1974 it was reported that about 100 such bathers congregated at one end of the beach every weekend. When an intoxicated nude male was arrested in July of that year a judge in the Brooklyn federal court suggested that the beach be closed if such activities were tolerated. Since local custom had allocated that end of the beach to such groups since the 1960s, Park Service personnel continued to allow those individuals to use the beach provided that they remained at their end of the beach and minded their own business.²¹³ A more critical problem has been the increasing number of assaults and homosexual activities that have taken place in the large open-air locker and dressing areas of the bath house. Such problems will have to be taken into consideration in the formulation of plans to rehabilitate the beach and adaptively restore the bath house.

In 1978 the National Park Service developed a preliminary plan for the construction of a contact station/interpretive-exhibit area in the center pavilion of the oceanfront side of the bath house. Preliminary plans were also discussed for the conversion of the front portion of the west wing of the bath house into a visitor contact/first-aid facility.²¹⁴ Some remodeling work was also undertaken in the second-floor locker room areas of the bath house.

Preliminary plans were drawn up to develop the mall area as a visitor contact-interpretive area. Large current events panels were

213. New York Times, July 16, 1974, and August 21, 1977.

214. A copy of the contact station plan in the center pavilion of the oceanfront side of the bath house may be seen on the following page.



RIIS PARK CONTACT STATION PLAN
 GATEWAY NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

LOCATION, CENTER SECTION OF
 RIIS PARK, BATH HOUSE, BEACH FRONT

to be placed on the semicircular exterior of the two mall buildings. Either simple outdoor exhibit waysides or more elaborate presentations were to provide recognition of Jacob Riis, the N-4 flight, and the creation of Gateway National Recreation Area.²¹⁵

215. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, "Gateway National Recreation Area: Interpretive Prospectus," by Denver Service Center, 1978, pp. 49-52.



RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the opinion of the author that no further historical research needs to be done on Jacob Riis Park. During the course of researching this report, the records pertaining to the park were examined at the following libraries and repositories:

Denver (Boulder), Colorado

Denver Public Library
Denver Service Center (Graphics Systems Division)
University of Colorado Library

New York, New York

Brooklyn Public Library
City of New York, Department of Parks and Recreation
City of New York, Department of Records and
Information Services, Municipal Archives
City of New York, Reference and Research Center
Gateway National Recreation Area (Headquarters,
Floyd Bennett Field; Headquarters, Breezy
Point Unit, Fort Tilden)
Long Island Historical Society
New York Public Library and Annex
Queens Borough Public Library

Washington, D.C.

Library of Congress
National Archives

It is recommended that the bath house and the central mall buildings be given appropriate preservation/stabilization treatment and adaptively used for the needs of a functioning rehabilitated bathing beach and the provision of facilities for such park needs as offices, visitor contact interpretive/first-aid stations, food concessions, and classrooms for environmental education exercises.

It is further recommended that additional study be given to three topics of concern in the general vicinity of Jacob Riis Park:

1. The location of the buildings and launching ramp of the former Rockaway Naval Air Station on the present terrain.
2. The locations of the exact sites of the United States Coast Guard lifesaving stations built near the then Rockaway Point in the period after 1871. In that year the station was built in the vicinity of contemporary 148th Street and the eastern boundary of Jacob Riis Park, having been removed from Barren Island where it had been established in 1854. A new station building was constructed at Rockaway Point in 1872 and remained there until 1886 when it was moved westward to the vicinity of contemporary Beach 169th Street (western boundary of Jacob Riis Park) in an effort to keep the facility near the ever-lengthening Point. In 1911 a new structure was built at that location, with the old building being used as a boathouse until the late 1930s. For further information on this topic, one should consult John W. Hean, "The United States Coast Guard," Rockaway Review (1942), 62, 84-85.
3. The location of the site of the small wooden fort or blockhouse built in West Rockaway by the United States Government during the War of 1812 and demolished in 1818. The fort was built on an island just west of what was then the westernmost tip of the Rockaway Point. The island was separated from the point by the "Gut or Inlet" just west of the contemporary village of Rockaway Park. While the author is most satisfied with this location, various sources list other locations for the fort. Seyfried in The Long Island Rail Road, p. 3, indicates that it was just west of the present line of Beach 119th Street in contemporary Belle Harbor and some National Park Service documents suggest that the fort was located on the present site of Fort Tilden, about three miles west of Rockaway Park. However, topographical maps of the peninsula show both sites to have been covered by water during the 1812-18 period.



APPENDIXES



APPENDIX A

DESCRIPTION OF LAND PARCELS FOR ACQUISITION OF SEASIDE PARK: 1911

For and in consideration of the sum of one (1) dollar, and other valuable consideration, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, the Neponsit Realty Company hereby gives to William A. Prendergast as Comptroller of the City of New York, the right or option to purchase the following described premises: Two contiguous parcels situated on Rockaway Beach, in Ward 5, of the Borough of Queens, City of New York, which parcels are more particularly described as follows:-

FIRST PARCEL: Bounded on the West by the dividing line between the land of the U.S. Government and that of the Neponsit Realty Company, bounded on the east by a line parallel with the first mentioned boundary line and distant fifty (50) feet easterly therefrom as measured along a line at right angles thereto; said easterly and westerly lines being right 2600 feet in length, more or less; bounded on the South by the Atlantic Ocean, and on the North by Jamaica Bay; and containing 2851 acres, exclusive of the land lying within the limits of a strip of land known as Washington Avenue, which strip is also designated as Lot #39 on a map attached to the report of Commissioners in Partition in an action wherein Horace H. Chittendan, as assignee of Alfrederick H. Hatch, was plaintiff, which said map was surveyed in June 1897, by Walter M. Meserole, which land lying in Washington Avenue is NOT TO BE ACQUIRED IN FEE. Said parcel is dedicated as a street in an agreement made with the United States Government, and is to be acquired subject to such agreement.

SECOND PARCEL: Bounded on the west by the easterly line of the first parcel as above described, said westerly line being 2600 feet, more or less, in length, bounded on the East by a line 2200 feet, more or less, in length, which is parallel with the easterly line of land of Neponsit Realty Company and distant 2060 feet westerly therefrom measured at right angles thereto; which easterly boundary line intersects the northerly side of Washington Avenue at a point 4,882.79 feet east from the easterly line of Parcel 1 measured along said Avenue, bounded on the south by the Atlantic Ocean, bounded on the North by Jamaica Bay; said parcel containing 246.059 acres, exclusive of the land lying within the limits of said Washington Avenue which AVENUE IS NOT TO BE ACQUIRED IN FEE. TOGETHER with a perpetual right-of-way over the said strip of land lying within the limits of said Washington Avenue included in both parcels, containing 11.324 acres which

strip of land is part of a plot designated as Lot 39 on a map attached to the report of Commissioners in Partition in an action wherein Horace H. Chittendan, as assignee of the estate of Alfrederick H. Hatch, was plaintiff, which map was made in June 1897 by Walter M. Meserole.

APPENDIX B

Sketch Not to Scale

of

Board of Estimate and Apportionment

Map or Plan showing the

PUBLIC PARK (Seaside Park)

Dated July 27, 1911

Located at

ROCKAWAY BEACH

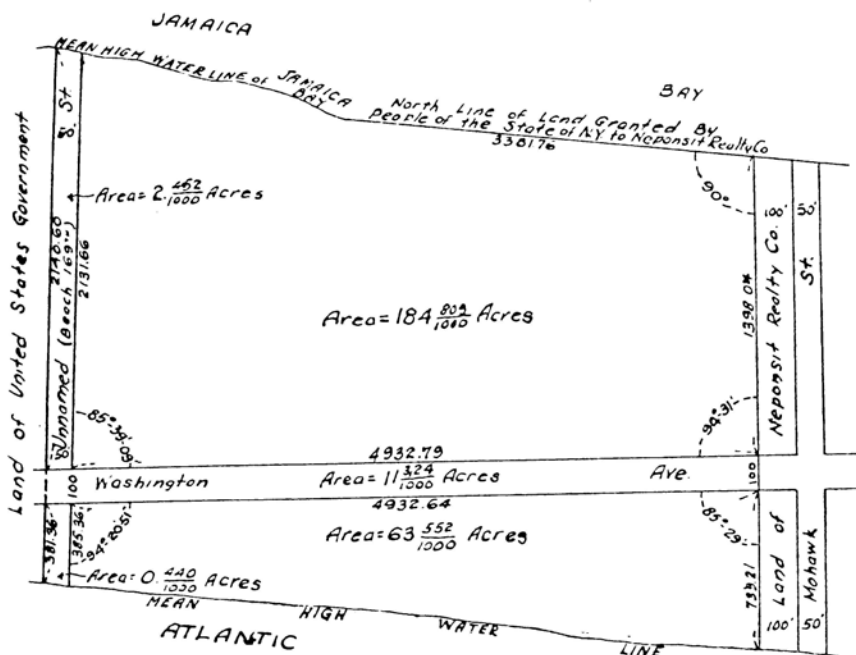
5th. Ward, Borough of Queens

City of New York

File
215
Nov. 9, 1911
Bd. E.&A.

Nelson P. Lewis
Chief Engineer
No. Filed of

Approved by the Bd. E.&A. Sept. 21, 1911





APPENDIX C

TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION OF SEASIDE PARK: 1912

LONG ISLAND CITY, January 19, 1912.

HON. MAURICE E. CONNOLLY,
PRESIDENT, BOROUGH OF QUEENS.

SIR:

I transmit herewith the following technical description of the Public Park (Seaside Park) located at Rockaway Beach, in the Fifth Ward, Borough of Queens, City of New York, as shown upon a Map or Plan adopted by the Board of Estimate and Apportionment on September 21, 1911.

Said area is colored red upon the accompanying map, bounded and described as follows:

Beginning at a point at the intersection of the Northerly Line of Washington Avenue, with the Easterly Boundary Line of Seaside Park, as shown on the above mentioned Map, adopted by the Board of Estimate and Apportionment on September 21, 1911, said point being distant 100.31 feet measured along the Northerly Line of Washington Avenue Westerly from the intersection of the Westerly Line of Mohawk Street with the Northerly Line of Washington Avenue, as at present existing upon the ground, and as also shown upon Section No. 1 of Map of Neponsit Beach, West Rockaway, property of Neponsit Realty Company in the Fifth Ward, Borough of Queens, New York City, filled at Jamaica, July 23, 1911, as Map No. 293.

Running thence northerly along the Westerly Boundary Line of Seaside Park, said line being at all times parallel with Mohawk Street, and distant 100 feet therefrom, measured at right angles thereto, for a distance of 1898.04 feet, to the Northerly Line of land granted by the People of the State of New York to the Neponsit Realty Co., pursuant to a resolution of the Commissioners of the Land Office, adopted December 10, 1909; thence Easterly deflecting to the left $0^{\circ} 00' 00''$ for 3381.76 feet along the Northerly Line of the Land granted by the People of the State of New York to Neponsit Realty Company, to a point on the mean high water line of Jamaica Bay, said point being designated as "A".

Thence westerly for 1590+ feet along the mean high water line of Jamaica Bay, to a point on the easterly Boundary Line of the Land of the United States Government, said point being designated as "B", and distant 1582.29 feet from point "A", being measured along a line of land granted by the people of the State of New York to Neponsit Realty Company.

Thence southerly along the easterly boundary line of the United States Government, deflecting to the left $103^{\circ} 06' 01''$ from the aforementioned line joining the points "A" and "B", for a distance of 2622.25 feet to the mean high water line of the Atlantic Ocean.

Thence easterly for 4920+ feet along the mean high water line of the Atlantic Ocean to a point on the southerly prolongation of the aforementioned easterly boundary line of Seaside Park.

Thence northerly for 830.52 feet along the easterly boundary line of Seaside Park to the northerly line of Washington Avenue, the point or place of beginning.

Respectfully,

Clifford B. Moore

Engineer-In-Charge

[signed]

APPENDIX D

BIOGRAPHY OF JACOB A. RIIS

RIIS, JACOB AUGUST (May 3, 1849-May 26, 1914), journalist, author, reformer, was born in Ribe, Denmark, the son of Niels Edward and Caroline B. (Lundholm) Riis. He received his education from his father, a teacher in a Latin school, and learned something of journalism from assisting the elder Riis to prepare copy for a weekly paper. His later career was impressively forecast in an incident of his boyhood. As a lad of thirteen years he discovered in his native town a tenement, built over a sewer, which was infested with rats. Horrified by the conditions under which the inhabitants of this loathsome house were living, the boy began a systematic extermination of the rats; and with whitewash and soap, purchased with a bit of Christmas money, undertook to clean away the dirt, and thus to bring some cleanliness and decency to the homes of the poor.

In Copenhagen, young Riis served for four years as apprentice to a carpenter. Having learned his trade, he came to America to seek his fortune. He landed in New York on Whitsunday, 1870. The usual experience of the immigrant, employed at any kind of job that would keep him alive, carried him into farming, coal-mining, brick-making, peddling. More than once he spent the night in the noisome horror of the police lodging-houses of the day. At a critical moment, his early journalistic experience won him a job on a weekly newspaper published at Hunter's Point, Long Island. When no pay appeared after the second week, he left. But a road had been opened which took him, after several years' wandering, to the New York Tribune (1877-88) and later to the Evening Sun (1888-99), as a police reporter. Afterward he supported himself by articles, books, and lectures.

His activities at police headquarters led Riis to his life's work, the cleansing of the New York slums. Again and again, in pursuit of stories of accident and crime, the young reporter invaded the tenement districts. Day and night his keen eyes and sensitive heart were gathering evidence of the physical wretchedness, the moral and spiritual degradation, of these downtown ghettos of the poor; and he declared war upon them. In vivid newspaper and magazine articles, in countless lectures, in widely read books, he pictured the life of the poor, especially of their children, and rallied and organized support for their relief. His energy was tremendous, his achievements were spectacular. He exposed the contaminated state of the city's water supply, and caused the purchase of the Croton watershed; he abolished police station lodging-houses; he worked for child-labor laws, and for their enforcement; he secured playgrounds for schools and the opening of classrooms to boys' and girls' clubs; he secured a truant school; he forced the destruction of rear-tenements; he demanded light for dark tenement hallways,

and revealed to a horrified country long-hidden dens of vice, crime, and filth; he drove bake-shops, with their fatal fires, from tenement basements (Steffens, Post, I 203-04). Perhaps nothing in all his victorious career so overjoyed him as the wiping out of Mulberry Bend, the worst tenement block in the city, and the building in its place of Mulberry Bend Park and his own Jacob A. Riis Neighborhood House (1888, though not called by his name until 1889).

Riis's enemies were numerous and powerful, the allied hordes of politicians on the one hand and of landlords on the other. He fought them singlehanded for years, till friends and supporters came. Chief among these was Theodore Roosevelt. The two men might well have been brothers in flesh as well as in spirit. Both as governor and president, Roosevelt offered his friend high office; but Riis insisted he was too busy to enter politics. In his later years Riis enjoyed a fame which overwhelmed him with invitations to write, lecture, lead public movements of reform. Suddenly, in 1904, he was stricken with heart disease which in succeeding years was aggravated by much travel and persistent overwork. In 1913 he was ordered by his physician to seek rest in a sanitarium at Battle Creek. Here his condition improved, but could not be healed. He died in his country home, at Barre, Mass., on May 26, 1914. On Mar. 5, 1876, Riis had married Elizabeth Neilson, of Ribe, a sweetheart of his boyhood. She died in 1905, but their five children, three sons and two daughters, survived him. On July 29, 1907, he married Mary A. Phillips, who had for some time been his secretary.

Riis was throughout his life natural, spontaneous, unspoiled, always the gayest and most exciting of companions. His unrestrained exuberance was on occasion mistaken for roughness or crudity, but at heart was a tenderness as of a woman, and a sensitiveness as of a child. What moved him was the spectacle of helpless human beings robbed of that sheer joy of living which was his own richest treasure. Called a reformer, he disliked the word, as it seemed to imply the improving of people. He was certain that the poor he knew needed not a change but a chance. So he sought to free them, and thus became the "great emancipator" of the slums. Chief among his writings are: How the Other Half Lives (1890); The Children of the Poor (1892); Out of Mulberry Street (1898); The Making of an American (1901); The Battle with the Slum (1902); Children of the Tenements (1903); Theodore Roosevelt the Citizen (1904); Is There a Santa Clause? (1904); The Old Town (1909).

Dictionary of American Biography, VIII, 606-608.

APPENDIX E

DESCRIPTION OF BUILDINGS AT ROCKAWAY NAVAL AIR STATION: 1930

BUILDINGS--

No.	Description	Original Cost	Appraised Value
C	Seaplane hangar No. 1 115x170x35, asbestos shingles, timber, steel doors. Hot air fan blower heating furnace. Concrete floor.	\$69,230.00	\$6,174.00
D,E	Seaplane hangar No. 3, 107x216x24, timber, hot air fan blower heating furnace, concrete floor	73,386.00	6,327.00
F	Seaplane hangar No. 2, 113x168x35, duplicate 0 above, concrete floor	55,275.00	5,160.00
4	Dispensary, 1 story, 30x89, frame on concrete piers; 10 plumbing fixtures, 27 radiators	8,100.00	206.00
4a	Dispensary extension; 1 story, 30x113, frame on concrete piers; 11 plumbing fixtures, 1 water heater	16,500.00	462.00
5	Barracks No. 6; 2 story frame on concrete, 134x136 (H shape) 55 plumbing fixtures, water heater 42 radiators	71,448.00	2,393.00
6	Mess hall and galley, 1 story, 38x169 plus 36x49 (T shape) frame on concrete, 33 radiators	28,304.00	1,610.00

No.	Description	Original Cost	Appraised Value
10	Boiler House; 1 story 35x29, corrugated asbest- os on concrete; concrete floor	\$ 5,800.00	\$ 387.00
11	Motor test shed; open shed, wood on concrete, 31x36, concrete floor	3,348.00	226.00
15	Garage, 1 story, 48x82 plus 11x21, wood on con- crete; 5 radiators, con- crete floor	12,510.00	809.00
16	Power House; 1 story 31x60, wood on concrete; 4 radiators; concrete floor	3,500.00	396.00
17	Storehouse; 1 story, 25x61, wood on concrete 2 radiators, concrete floor	6,300.00	487.00
18	Blacksmith Shop, 1 story 12x17, brick on concrete concrete floor	520.00	167.00
19,20	Storerooms, 1 story, 60x60, wood on concrete, concrete floor	7,500.00	740.00
21	Magazine, 1 story, 16x21, concrete	3,310.00	204.00
22	Officers' Quarters, 2 story, 107x115 (H shape) wood on concrete; range, water heater, 24 plumbing fixtures, 91 radiators, burned	56,033.00	1,536.00
32	Administration Building 2 story, 34x107, wood on concrete, 4 plumbing fix- tures, 40 radiators	18,000.00	670.00

No.	Description	Original Cost	Appraised Value
33	Guard Barracks, 1 story, 39x89, wood on concrete piers; 6 plumbing fixtures	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 548.00
34	Fire extinguisher house; 1 story, 8x14, wood	206.00	12.00
35	Electric Shop, 1 story 15x21, corrugated steel on concrete, concrete floor	840.00	97.00
36	Photo Lab; 2 story, 27x51, wood on concrete, steam heat system, water heater, 10 plumbing fixtures, 15 radiators	13,720.00	458.00
37	Armory; 1 story, 40x60, wood on concrete piers, 11 radiators	4,300.00	278.00
38	Boiler House, 1 story 55x75, wood on concrete, concrete floor	16,000.00	1,178.00
39	Cold storage plant; 1 story, 30x46, wood on concrete, concrete floor	3,700.00	336.00
40	Bakery, 1 story, wood on concrete, 31x49, 2 radi- ators, concrete floor	2,600.00	326.00
41	Washroom, 1 story; wood on concrete, 38x23; steam water heater	2,120.00	205.00
43	Lumber Storehouse, 1 story, wood on concrete piers, 18x59	1,700.00	119.00
44	Washroom, 1 story, 12x31, wood on concrete, con- crete floor	3,546.00	105.00

No.	Description	Original Cost	Appraised Value
45	Paint shop, 1 story, 20x30, wood on concrete, concrete floor	\$ 600.00	\$ 164.00
46	Carpenter Shop; 1 story, 50x100, wood on concrete, 5 radiators, concrete floor	10,000.00	1,050.00
47	Storehouse, 1 story 50 x 100, wood on concrete concrete floor	10,000.00	1,065.00
48	Storehouse, 1 story 50 x 100, wood on concrete, 10 radiators, concrete floor	10,000.00	1,035.00
49	Storehouse, 1 story, 50 x 100, wood on concrete, concrete floor	10,000.00	1,065.00
51	Latrine, 1 story, 14x28 wood on concrete, con- crete floor	2,750.00	119.00
54	Pump House, 1 story 21x21 wood on concrete, concrete floor	1,989.00	115.00
55	Boathouse, 1 story, 13 x 17, wood on wood posts		20.00
56	Pump House, 1 story, tile and stucco on con- crete, 13x15, concrete floor	667.00	132.00
59	Sentry box, 1 story 6x8, wood on wood sill	55.00	9.00
60	Gate House, 1 story, 7x20 wood on concrete piers, 2 radiators	250.00	2.00
65	Canteen, 1 story, 26x50 wood on concrete piers, 2 radiators	2,800.00	144.00

No.	Description	Original Cost	Appraised Value
68	Pump House; 1 story, wood on concrete over sump 8x9	\$ 400.00	\$ 31.00
70	Pump House, 1 story, wood on concrete over sump 8x9	400.00	31.00
71	Hosecart House, 1 story 6x8 corrugated steel on wood frame	150.00	6.00
72	Hosecart House, 1 story 6x8, corrugated steel on wood frame	150.00	6.00
78	Hosecart House, 1 story 6x8, corrugated steel on wood frame	150.00	6.00
80	Pump House - See #68	400.00	31.00
88	Garbage House, 1 story 11x12, wood and wire mesh	100.00	9.00
--	Garbage House	5.00	5.00
<u>Total - Buildings</u>		<u>\$544,862.00</u>	<u>\$36,661.00</u>

	<u>Original Cost</u>	<u>Appraised Value</u>
MISCELLANEOUS--		
2 Oil tanks, 10,000 gal. in former Bldg. 53	\$ 3,000.00 (est.)	\$ 300.00
2 Oil tanks, 1,000 gal.	200.00 "	100.00
5771 ft. wire fence	9,000.00 "	Removed
1851 ft. wood bulkhead	15,000.00 "	2,450.00
281 ft. concrete bulkhead and runway	7,289.68	3,700.00
Wharf	8,509.00 (est.)	1,500.00

Runways	\$ 8,000.00	"	\$ 900.00
Flag Pole	200.00	"	10.00
Pipe Fence	900.00	"	Removed
	<hr/>		<hr/>
<u>Total - Miscellaneous</u>	\$52,089.68		\$ 8,960.00
PAVEMENT (Concrete) Exclusive of floors of standing bldgs.)			
Roads -	143,380 sq. ft.		
Misc. -	<u>99,380</u>		
Total	<u>4,500 cu. yds. (Est)</u>	\$ 90,000.00 (Est.)	\$27,000.00
	<hr/>		<hr/>
<u>Total - Surface Structures</u>	\$686,751.68		\$72,621.00

"Surface Structures, Naval Reserve Aviation Base, Rockaway, L.I., N.Y." (Enclosure D), Taylor to Commissioner of Parks; Borough of Queens, April 19, 1930, Confidential Files, Rockaway Naval Air Station, RG 72.

APPENDIX F

OUTLINE OF ORGANIZATION OF DIVISION OF DESIGN OF DEPARTMENT OF PARKS IN NEW YORK CITY AND BRIEF SUMMARY OF WORK RELIEF PROGRAM FROM JANUARY 1934 TO APRIL 1939

Organization of the Planning Work

An outline of the organization of the Division of Design of the Department of Parks in New York City and a brief summary of the Work Relief Program from January, 1934, to date will be of interest.

Unemployed hordes, ample funds, a job to be done, and a man with courage to tackle it are responsible for the creation and evolution of the Division of Design from a state of hibernation prior to 1934 to the largest and most active design force of its kind ever assembled in one working unit, and the start of a park program unique in the world. The chronicle of this job constitutes a chapter in municipal planning which will have far-reaching results in New York City and will influence park planning in many sections of this country.

In January, 1934, when Robert Moses took over the direction of Park Department affairs he brought under one head the five borough departments which prior to that time were under five separate Commissioners with their independent design and operation units. Relief funds through CWA, had unleashed some 70,000 men in the parks with nothing worth while on which to devote their efforts and an inadequate field force to direct them. No comprehensive plans were ready for any projects. A handful of architects, three landscape architects, and a totally inadequate group of designing engineers constituted the Design force.

In the field, 70,000 men kept warm around fires or went through the acts of the historic travesty of moving material from one place, only to move it back again; of raking leaves from places where they should have been left to prevent erosion and to form a mulch for the trees; of polishing sidewalks; of building grotesque granite-block walls in naturalistic park areas; of "made" work generally, to the moral degradation of the men and the physical degradation of the parks.

The situation called for courage and dynamic direction with highly efficient supervision to carry out a constructive program. The attack was made in two phases: complete renovation of all parks; and, after organization of Design and Construction Divisions, new construction.

The report on a survey of every one of the 608 park units, comprising 18,184 acres, which had been started in November, 1933, was completed early in January, 1934, and the house-cleaning and renovation were launched. Buildings were repaired and painted; miles of fences, walks, benches, drinking fountains, and

playground equipment were repaired and painted; miles of bridle paths were resurfaced; monuments were restored; and a comprehensive forestry and horticulture program was instituted to do the clearing of dead trees and pruning which had been neglected.

While this program was getting under way during the first month, Engineering, Architectural and Landscape designers were recruited from work relief rolls and the unemployment lists of the respective professional societies. With the exception of a handful of key men, all the members of the Design Division were paid from relief funds. By mid-January designs were being prepared for several major projects: the Central Park Zoo, Bryant Park, Roosevelt Park, other playground developments.

The Park Department became client, designer, and contractor rolled in one. A Construction Division was organized with Superintendents drawn from the forces of well-known contracting firms, and the end of January saw ground broken on new construction projects in all boroughs of the City. At the peak this supervisory group totaled 3960 men.

The organization of the Design and Construction Division was not unlike conscription for war, but this one was to reclaim land areas rather than to despoil them. Telegrams brought hundreds of recruits to the ranks.

The Evolution of a Plan

It is not within the scope of this article to describe in detail the preparation of plans or the execution of work. However, an outline of the evolution of a plan will give a picture of procedure and scope of the work.

The Commissioner's Executive head is the General Superintendent who in turn looks to two men for the execution of all work; in Design, the Park Engineer; in Construction, Operation, and Maintenance, the Senior Park Director.

The Park Engineer as head of the Division of Design is responsible for the preparation of all plans, specifications, and requisitions for materials. During the period of greatest activity, when there were 70,000 men in the field, the design force totaled 1842 persons.

In addition to the regular force there is a Consulting Landscape Architect and Consulting Architect, both on part-time schedule. Major problems are discussed by them before preliminary sketches are made. After the sketches have been completed they are submitted to the Park Engineer, General Superintendent, and Commissioner. The consultants, for the major part of the program, gave regular criticisms during preparation of the plans.

This technical force, recruited for the most part from the old-line private offices of Engineers, Architects, and Landscape Architects which were stripped to the core by the ravages of the depression, have received an invaluable training in large-scale

projects which in most cases were entirely different in scope and objective of design from any previously undertaken. Of equal importance was the close association and cooperation of the three design professions with each other and recognition by each one of the part the other plays in the successful design of park work and allied public-work projects.

Each department cooperates closely from the inception of the general development plan to the final working drawings. A typical job, for instance a city park such as Randall's Island, starts with complete topographical plans at 50 scale, showing every detail of the surface: one-foot contours (two feet where steep); individual tree locations; rock outcrops and other surface features which will influence the design; utilities, structures, and all underground lines. The survey sheets are then reproduced on one sheet at 100-scale or 200-scale for the largest parks.

The Landscape Architects then have a ground picture on which to develop the general design. The uses and form of the various park areas are determined and organized in a unified design which sets also the location and general ground plan (outline shape) of buildings. This "General Development Plan" is the coordinator for all departments.

From this stage work in all departments goes on simultaneously: the Architects prepare the designs for all buildings and other structures; the Engineers prepare the structural, plumbing, heating, and electrical plans; and the Landscape Architects prepare the detail 50-scale and 20-scale layout working drawings for each park unit. After completion of the basic layouts the drainage and water supply plans are prepared by Engineers working with the landscape designers. The layout plans then go to the Planting Department where planting plans, specifications, and lists of materials are prepared. The final working drawings from all departments after going through checkers and estimators are sewed up by the Specification Writers and issued to the Inspection Department and Construction Division.

As soon as a bill of materials is in order the standard requisitions are prepared and nursed through the WPA offices by a coordinator from the department who sits on each requisition until the materials have been delivered.

As soon as Construction starts, job inspectors--Landscape, Architectural, or Engineering, or all three, depending upon the nature of the work,--are assigned to see that plans and specifications are followed. They act as liaison between office and field and confer constantly with job captains in the drafting rooms.

In park work a monetary value is placed on appearance. Aesthetics is on better speaking terms with Utility and Dollar. And the importance of a master control plan is recognized by all departments. The Engineer considers more enthusiastically the effect of his work on the final appearance; the Architect who too often designs from the walls inward considers more thoroughly the influence of ground design outside the building on the plan; the

Landscape Architect anticipates, more intelligently than heretofore, the practical requirements of the Engineers and Architects. In this way the plastic surgeons of the construction profession have performed a face-lifting operation on Father Knickerbocker's parks which will have far-reaching results.

Francis Cormier, "Some New York City Parks and Parkways: Recreational Developments Made Since 1934," Landscape Architecture, XXIX (April 1939), 124-125.

APPENDIX G

FINANCIAL OPERATION OF JACOB RIIS PARK: 1936

The miniature Jones Beach being developed by the Park Department at Jacob Riis Park in the Rockaways is expected to produce an annual revenue of about \$134,000 when it is completed, according to estimates prepared by the department.

This sum is exclusive of income from parking fees, which will be collected by the Marine Parkway Authority to assist in amortizing the toll bridge to be constructed across Rockaway Inlet. It will be derived chiefly from bathhouse admissions, revenues from games, beach chairs, umbrellas, &c., and the food concessions.

The expenses of operating the park are estimated at approximately \$130,000, indicating that it should be self-sustaining. Personnel will total 139 persons, which will require an annual outlay of \$113,678. About \$16,000 will be needed each year for supplies and equipment....

The Park Department estimates total bathhouse receipts at \$65,774. Charges will be 15 cents for a children's locker, 25 cents for an adult's locker and 50 cents for a dressing room. It is believed that on at least three days for each season bathhouse admissions will total 11,000. There should be ten days when 7,000 use the bathhouse, ten days when admissions total 5,000, twenty-five days 3000, twenty-five days 2000, fifteen days 1,000, and eighteen days 200. These figures are based on past experience both at Riis Park and Jones Beach.

The city's percentage of gross receipts from the food concessions is estimated at \$20,000. From games, beach chairs, umbrellas and boats it is believed that an annual revenue of \$41,000 will be derived. The renting and sale of suits, towels and accessories should contribute \$5,550, while \$1,500 will be realized from the checking of valuables.

New York Times, March 8, 1936.



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PLATE I

Aerial view of Rockaway Naval Air Station looking east with Fort Tilden in immediate foreground and undeveloped portion of Jacob Riis Park in background.

Photograph taken December 27, 1918

Courtesy of National Archives

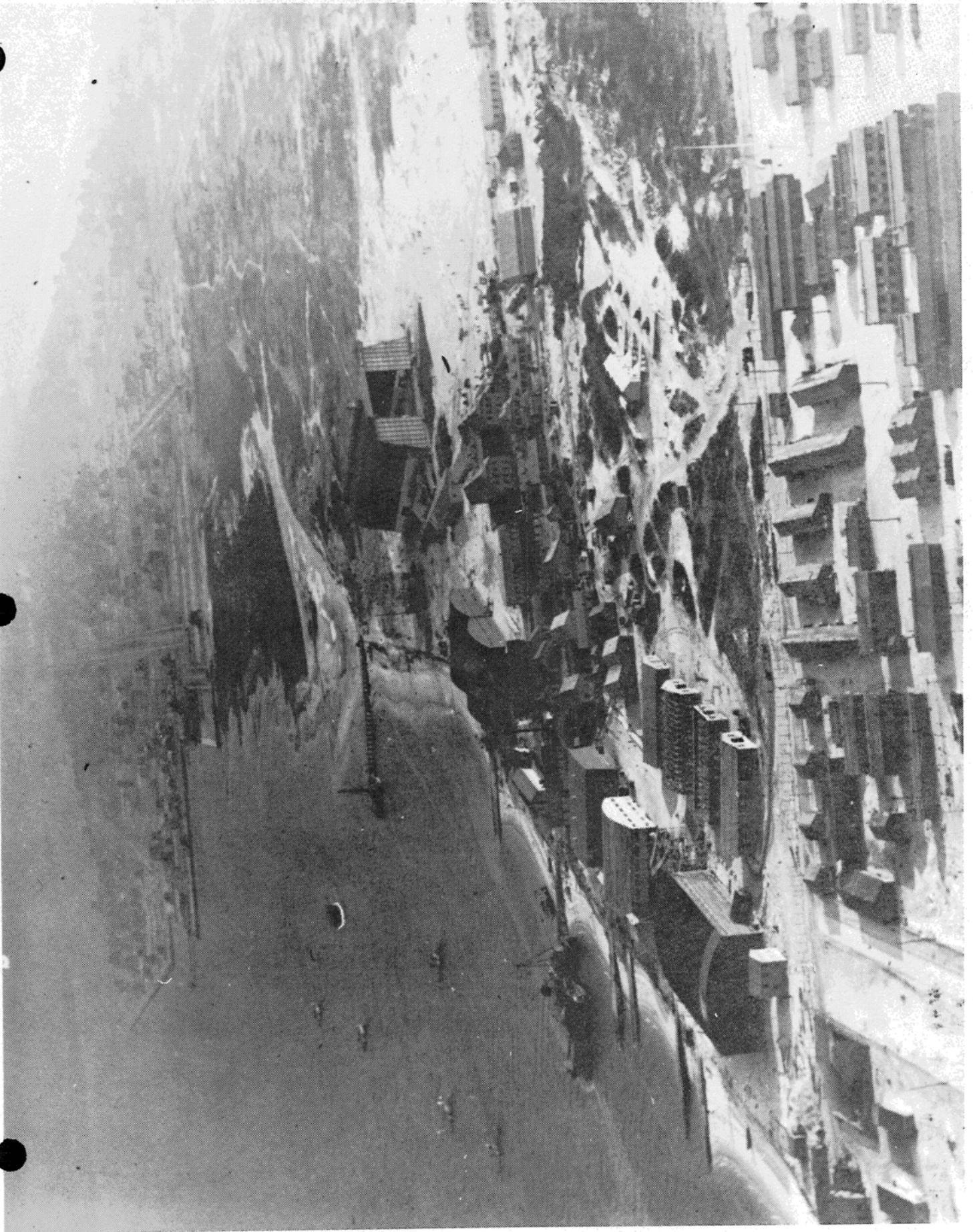


PLATE II

Aerial view of Jones Beach State Park on Long Island looking north.

Photograph taken in 1931

Courtesy of Library of Congress

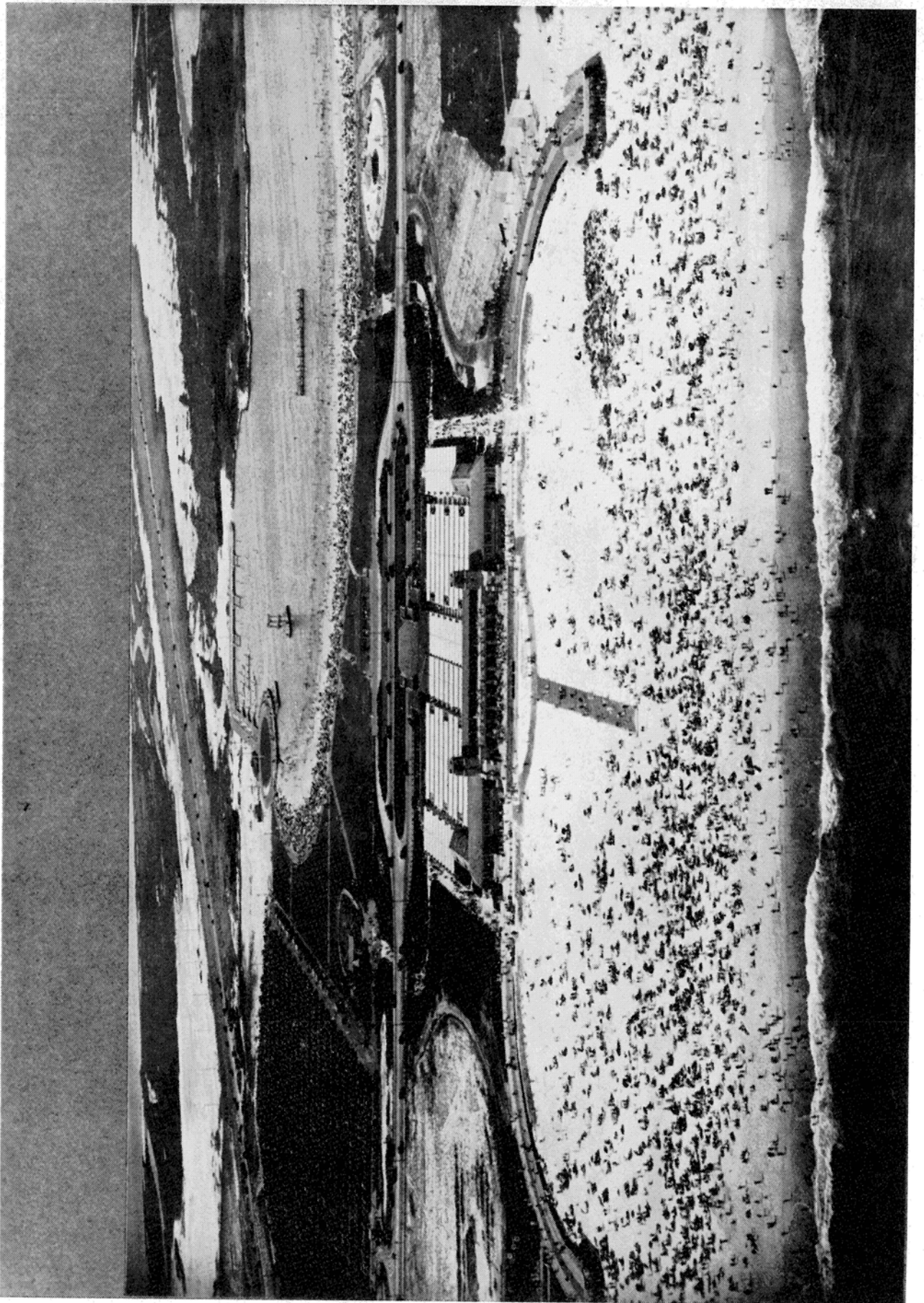


PLATE III

Aerial view of Jacob Riis Park bath house, beach, and parking lot looking east. At left is undeveloped portion of Park North of Rockaway Beach Boulevard.

Photograph taken ca. 1932-34

Courtesy of National Archives



PLATE IV

Aerial view of Jacob Riis Park looking north. Fort Tilden appears at the left, Neponsit at the right. Marine Parkway Bridge leads to Barren Island on which Floyd Bennett Field is located.

Photograph taken ca. 1937-42

Courtesy of National Archives

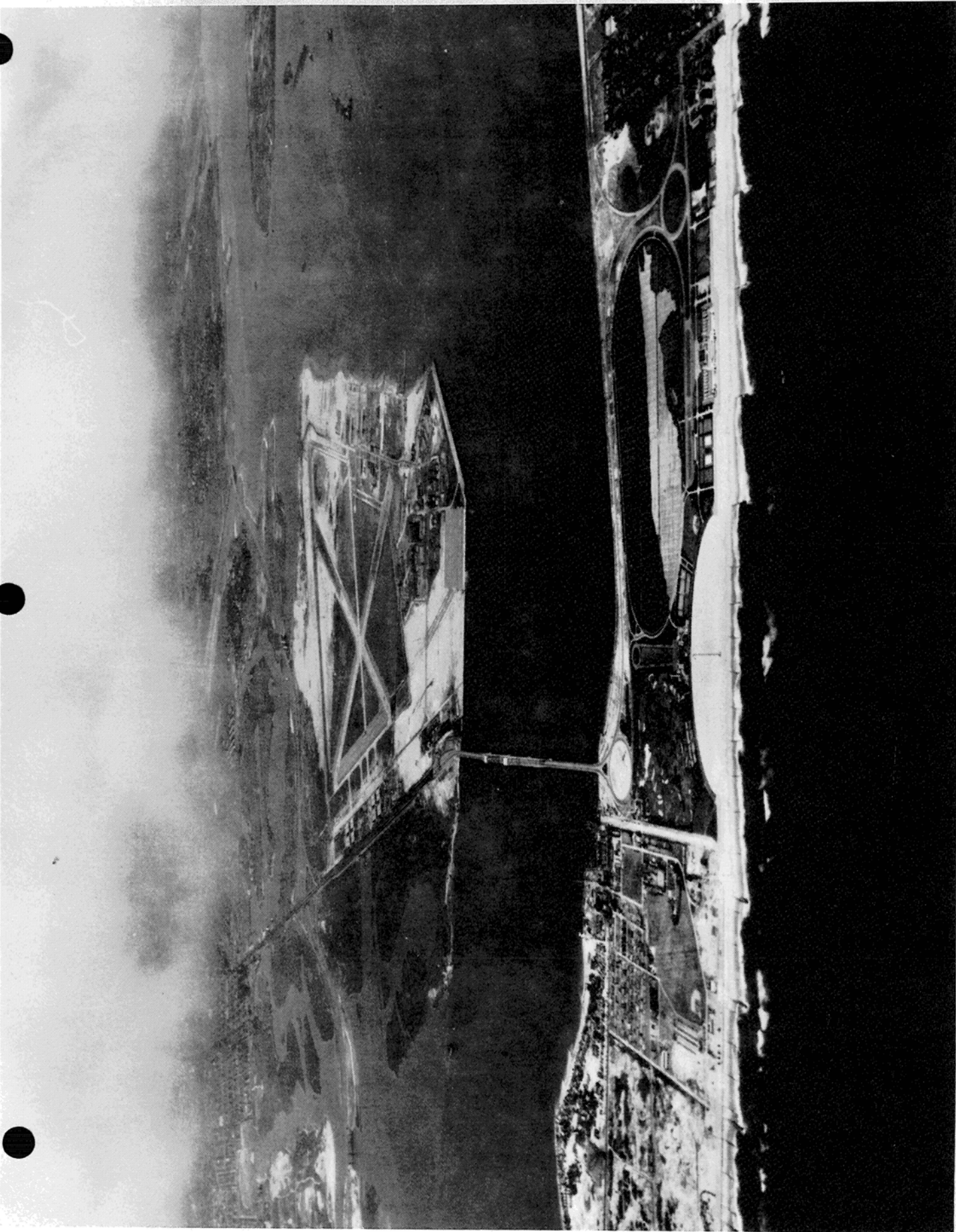


PLATE V

Aerial view of Jacob Riis Park looking east. Fort Tilden in immediate foreground.

Photograph taken ca. 1937-42

Courtesy of National Archives

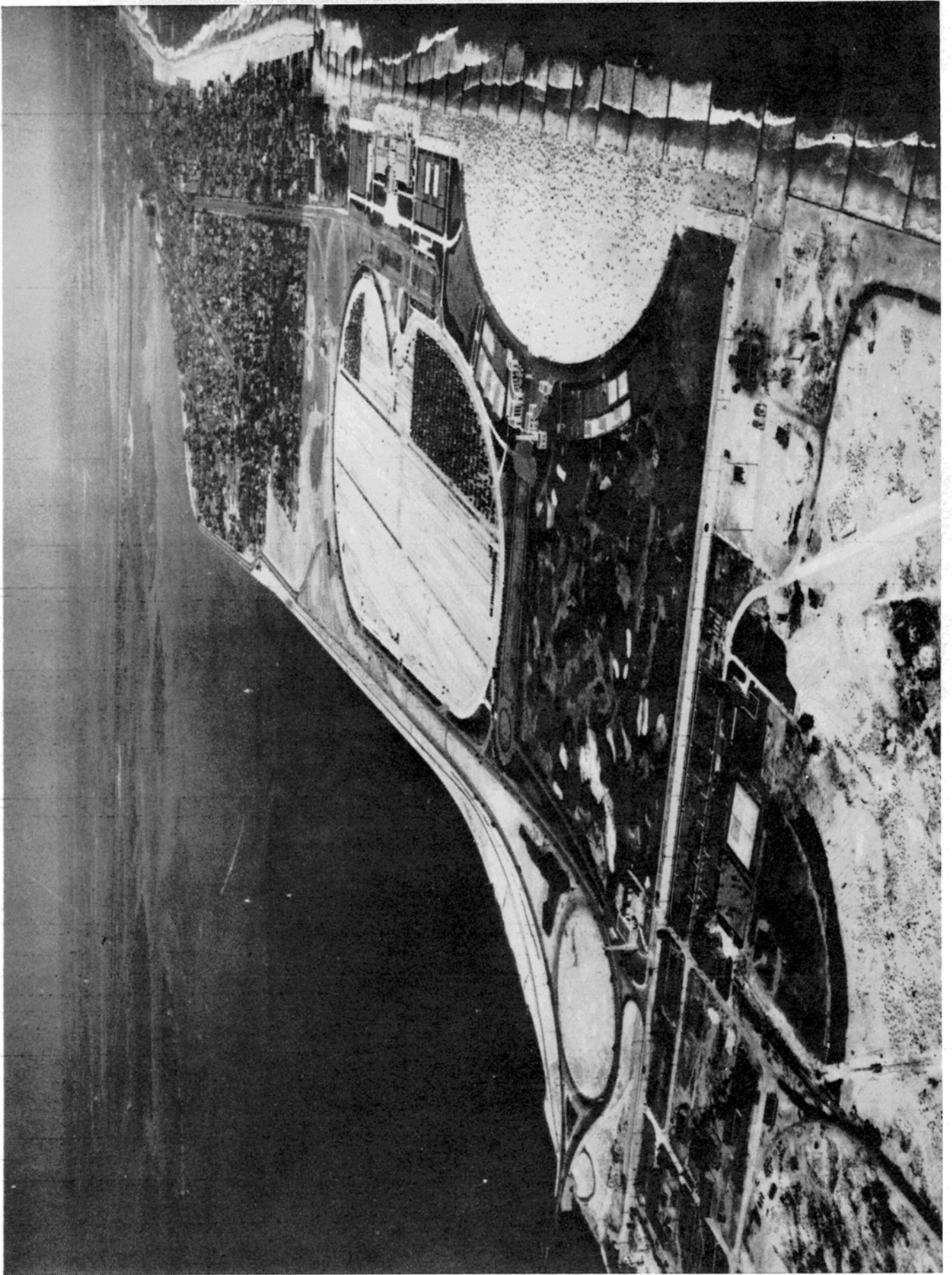


PLATE VI

View of Jacob Riis Park beach taken from bath house.

Photograph taken ca. 1937-42

Courtesy of National Archives

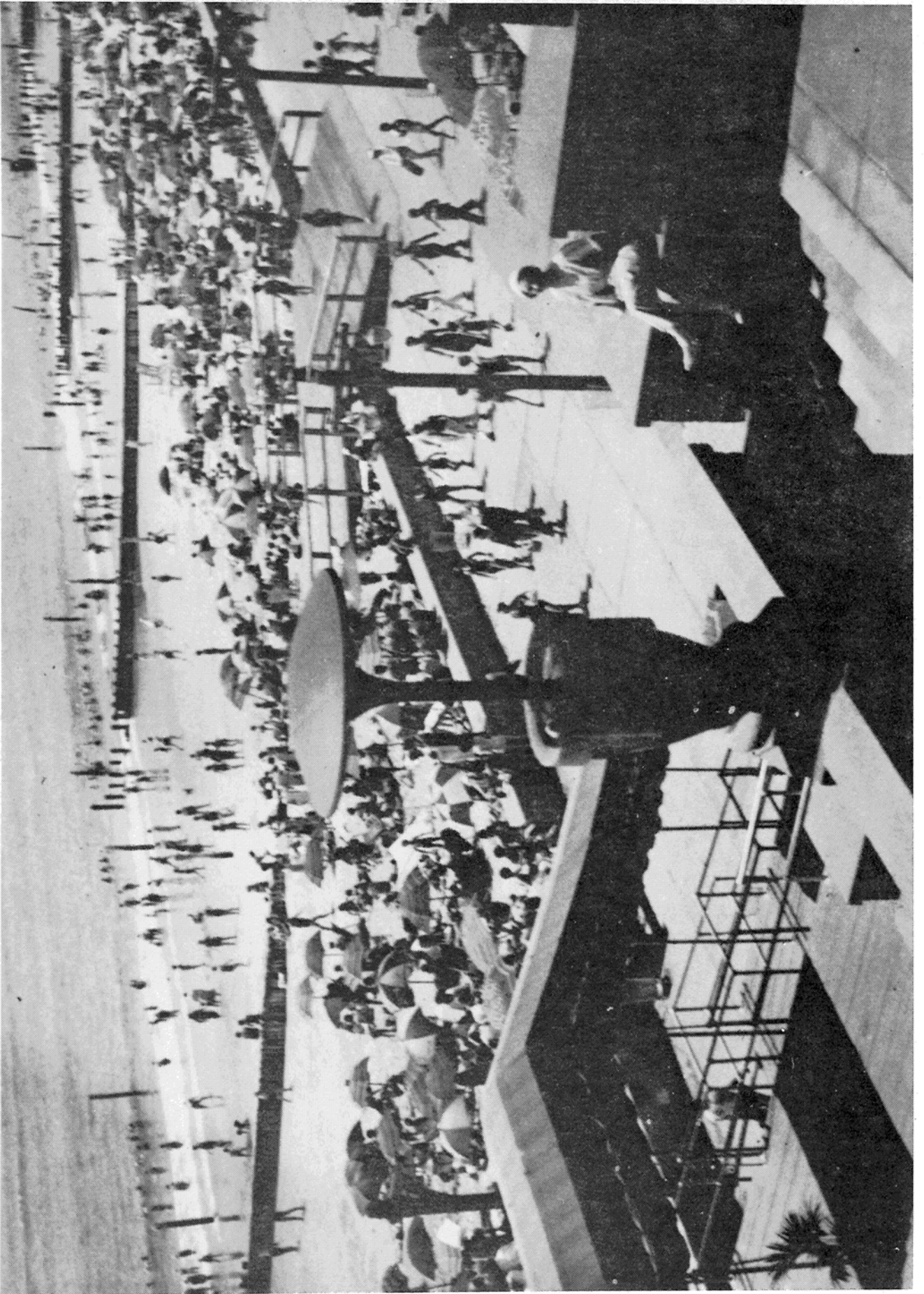


PLATE VII

Photograph of northern rectangular portion of East Mall Building.
Boardwalk mall court area is in immediate foreground.

Photograph taken ca. 1937-42

Courtesy of National Archives

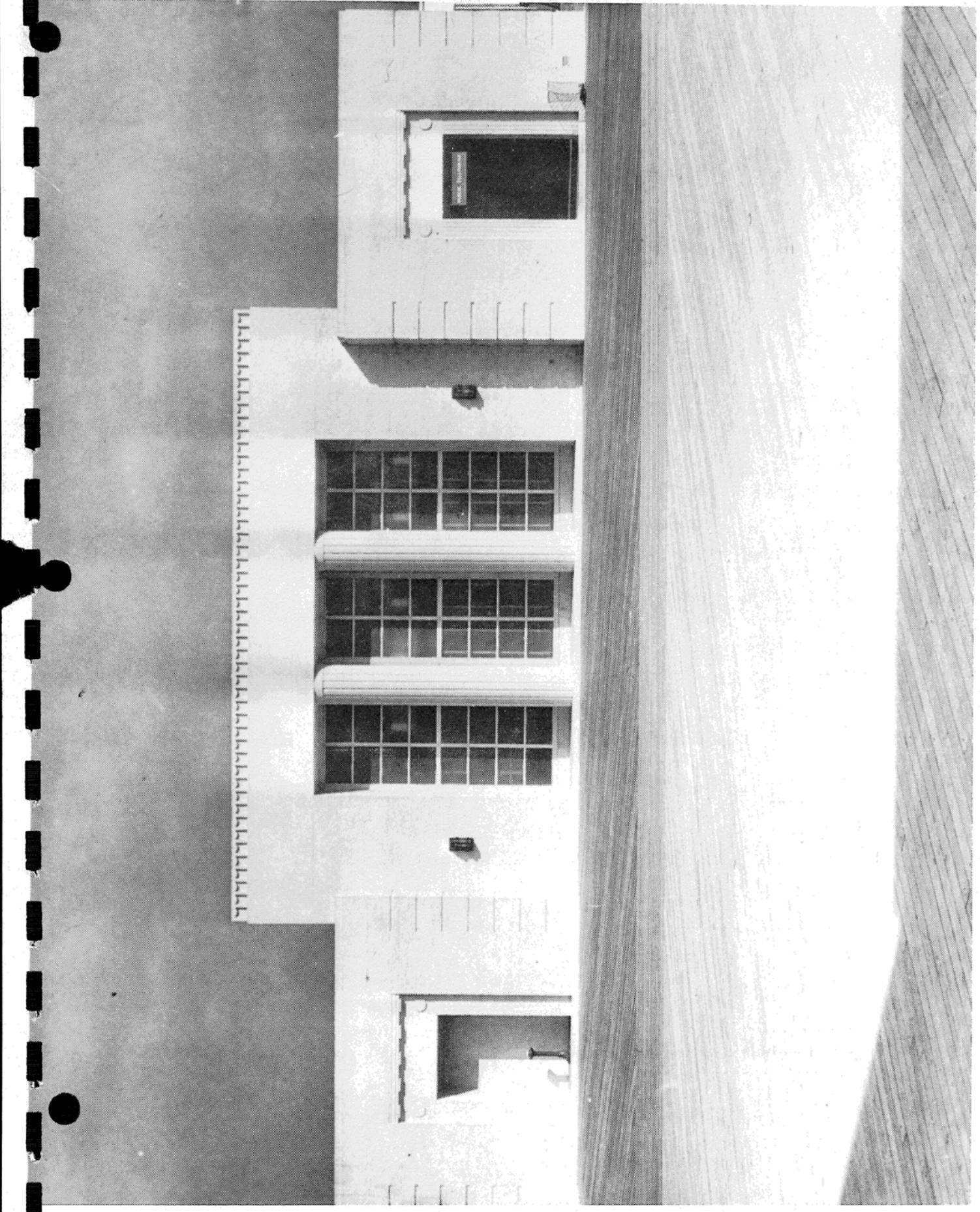
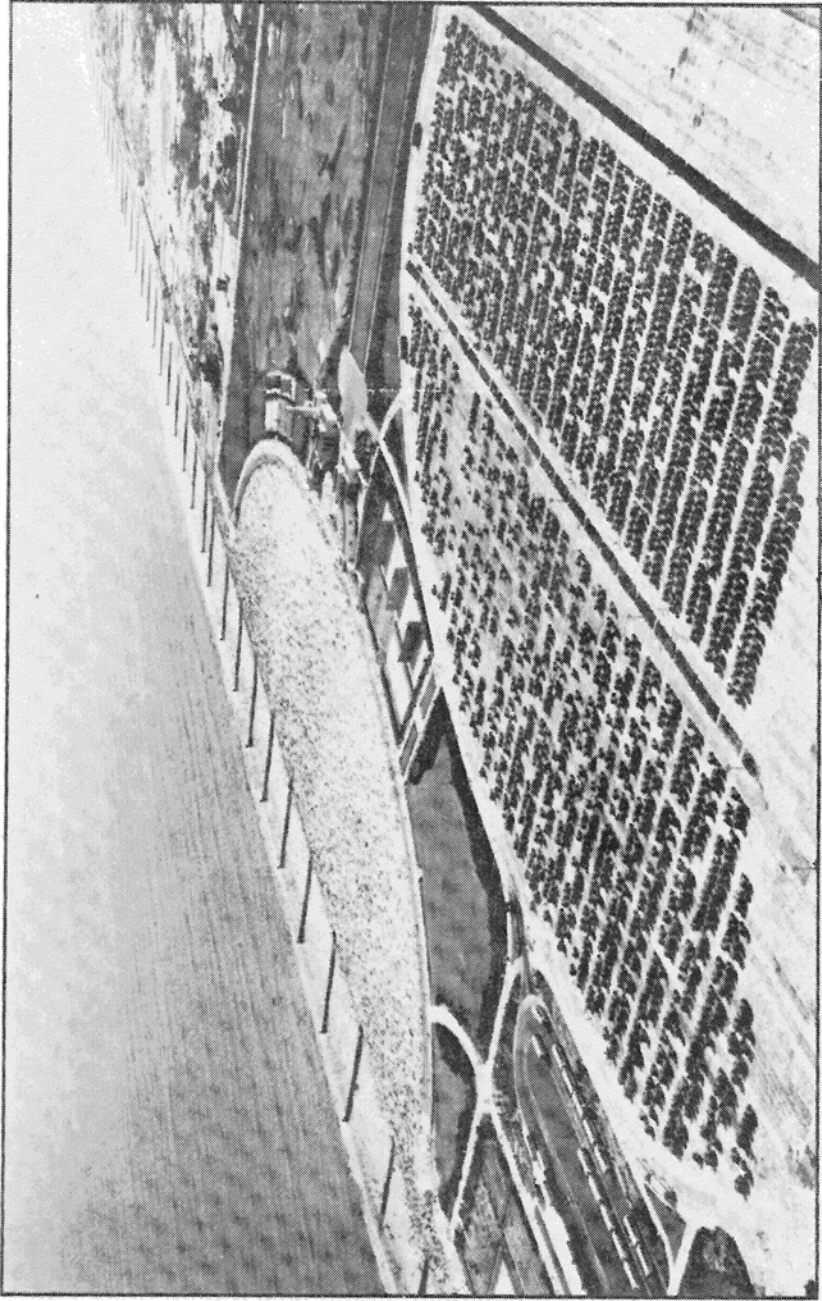


PLATE VIII

Aerial view of Jacob Riis Park looking southwest.

Photograph taken July 11, 1941

Courtesy of New York Public Library Picture Collection



NEW YORK CITY - Bathing beach at Jacob Riis Park on the Rockaway Peninsula, from the air
APR 15 1947

PLATE IX

View of south or oceanfront facade of Jacob Riis bath house looking northeast. Beach and sea wall are in immediate foreground.

Photograph taken in December 1978
By Harlan D. Unrau

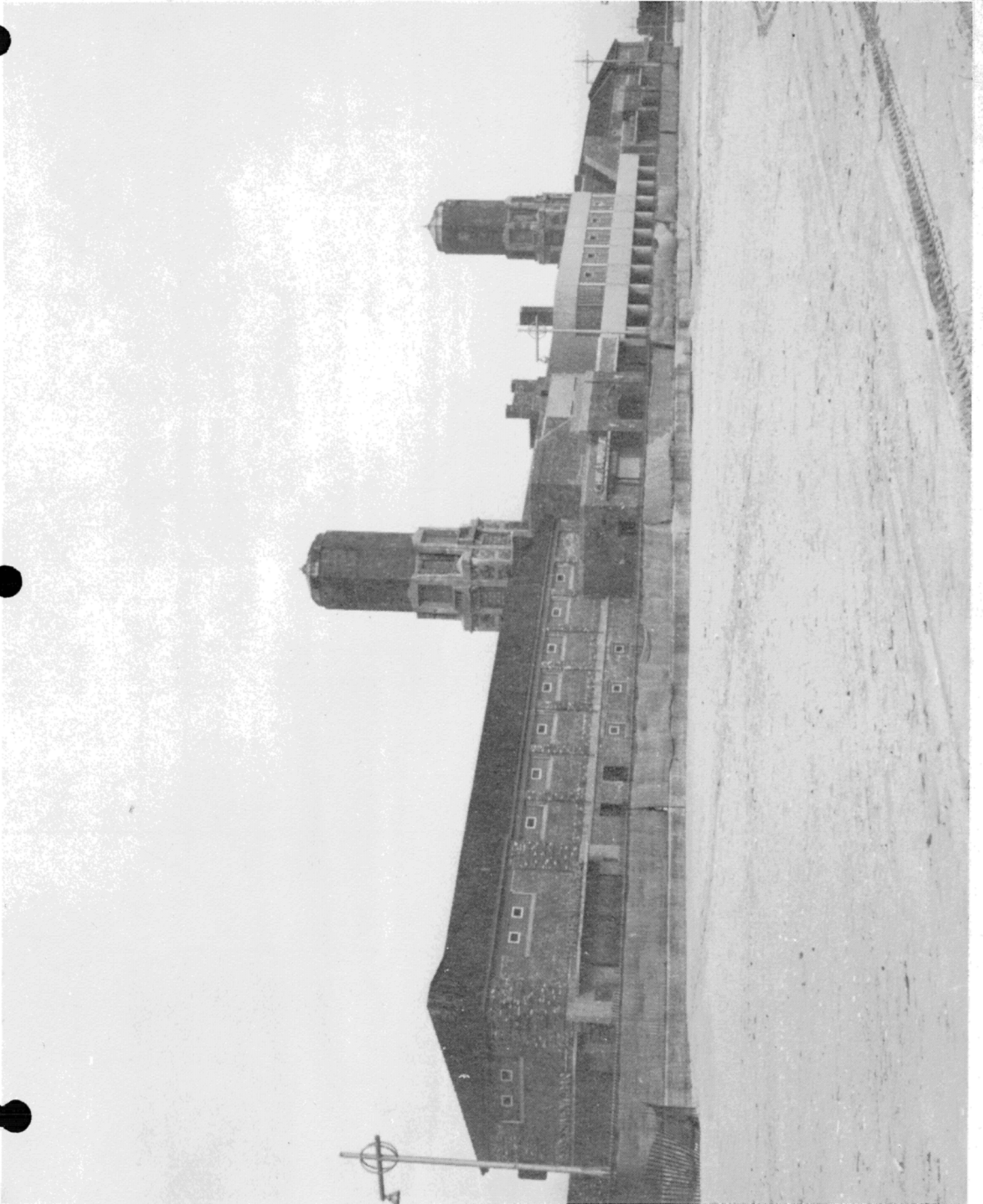
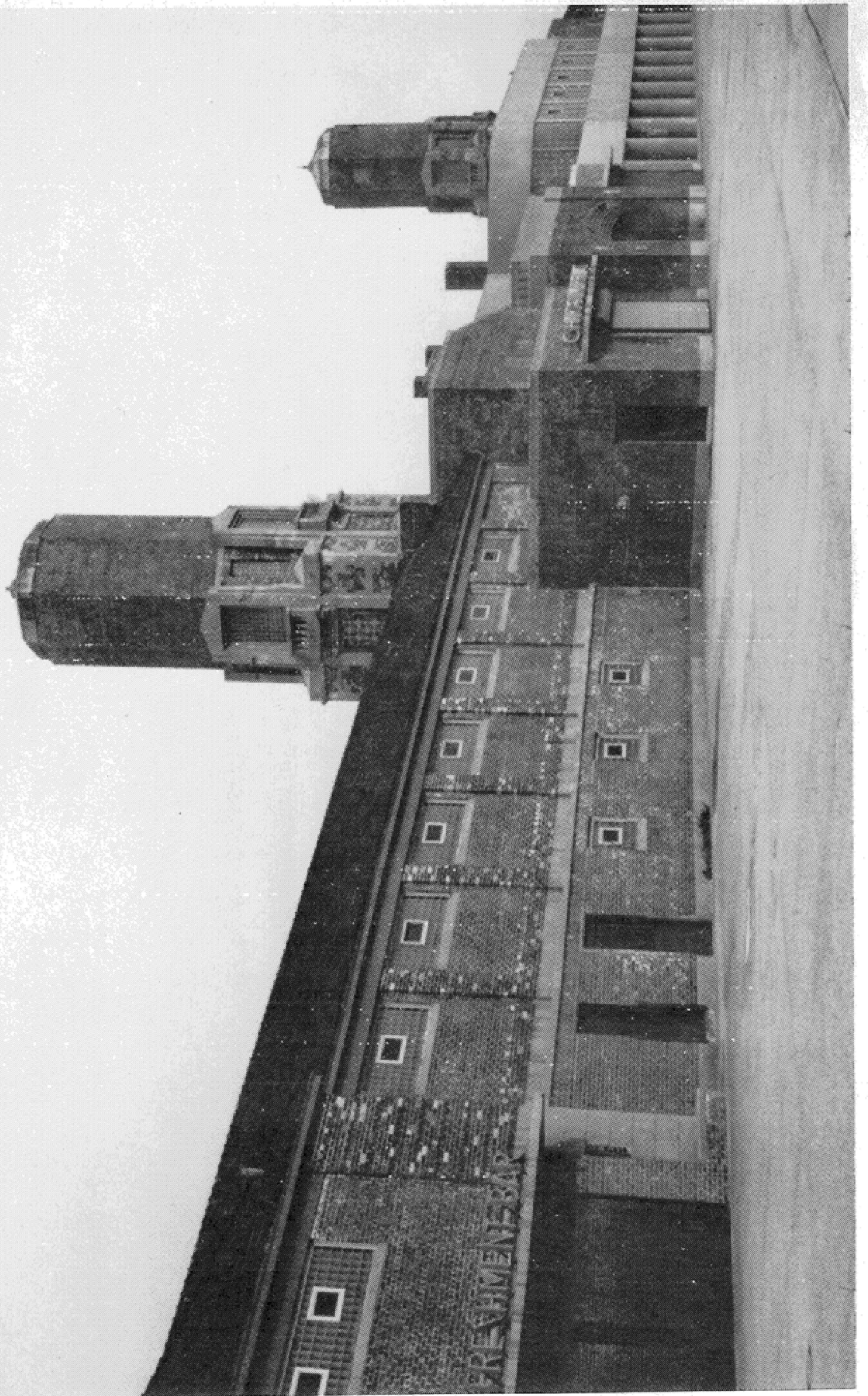


PLATE X

View of south or ocean front facade of Jacob Riis bath house from promenade looking northeast.

Photograph taken in December 1978
By Harlan D. Unrau



National Register of Historic Places Inventory - Nomination Form:
Jacob Riis Park Historic District (Gateway NRA)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM
FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Jacob Riis Park Historic District (Gateway NRA)

AND/OR COMMON

Jacob Riis Park

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Rockaway Beach Boulevard

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

New York

VICINITY OF

11

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

New York

36

Queens

21

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS (If applicable)

National Park Service, North Atlantic Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER

15 State Street

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Boston

VICINITY OF

Mass

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

Queens County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

45th Avenue

CITY, TOWN

STATE

New York

New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Tony W. Wrenn, "General History of the Jamaica Bay, Breezy Point, and
Staten Island Units," GATE

DATE

9/31/75

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

NAR

CITY, TOWN

STATE

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Jacob Riis Park Historic District comprises three significant recreational buildings constructed between 1932-1937. These buildings are the core structures of Jacob Riis Park, now a unit of Gateway National Recreation Area, Queens County, New York. Jacob Riis Park (220 acres) occupies a mile-long section of the Rockaway Peninsula. Aside from swimming and sunbathing, the park provides other recreational activities such as fishing, hiking, boating, limited biking, and playing fields.

The Bathing Pavilion (HS 606), a massive structure commonly known as the Bathhouse, is a roughly T-shaped brick masonry building which consists of a rectangular, single-story unit built in 1932 and enlarged by a long, two-story addition on the south built in 1936-37. The earlier section is composed of a rectangular open court enclosed by high brick walls on the north, east, and west, and by the two-story addition on the south. In the center of the north wall there is a single-story projection which provides the entrance to the bathhouse and also houses bathhouse facilities. Its front is faced with a long arcade supported by corinthian pillars and topped with two octagonal turrets. Within the arcade there are pairs of double doors topped with fanlight transoms and separated by booths which provide entry into the vestibule of the locker area. This projection is covered with an asphalt shingled gable roof. The locker area, which is not covered, is divided into a women's area on the west and a men's area on the east. There are 10,000 simple wooden cabanas in this inner court. Passageways lead from each of these areas out onto the promenade through the southern addition. There are two identical single-story, rectangular brick buildings located on the southeast and southwest corners of this inner court. The eastern building houses a garage; and the western contains office space. The architects for this portion of the bathhouse were Stoughton and Plonck. In 1936 and 1937 the bathhouse was enlarged by the New York City Department of Parks. Clinton Lloyd was the chief of architectural design and Aymar Embury, II, was the architectural consultant for the Marine Parkway projects. The ocean side of the bathhouse is a long, two-story brick structure with concrete trim dominated by two octagonal four-story towers. The central area, projecting between the two towers, consists of an arcade supported by round concrete columns. Above the arcade is a rectangular concrete bay with rounded corners, a flat roof, and glass block windows, which contains a restaurant. On either side of this central projection, there are four rectangular, single-story projecting bays. The inner bays provide access to the locker courts; the outer bays contain the umbrella and deck chair concessions. There are symmetrical stairways on either side of these projections which lead up to a sun deck. Extending to the east and west of the central area, there are symmetrical two-story wings with gable roofs which terminate in square wings with hip roofs. The end wings contain refreshment bars on the ground level. The windows at the second story level are all glass block. The concession booths and the refreshment bars are indicated by steel-lettered signs mounted above the windows.

The two Central Mall Buildings (HS 603 and 604), constructed in 1936-37, are twin brick and tile masonry buildings with concrete trim which face each other across the southern end of the mall. Both buildings consist of a square, two-story block (flanked by one-story wings) connected to a rectangular, single story wing to the south by a single

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE two

story, semicircular wing. The northern sections have full, recessed porticoes supported by concrete columns. The semicircular wings have seven doorways with sliding steel doors separated by brick piers. Both buildings have flat concrete roofs, concrete cornices and concrete floors. The eastern building houses a cafeteria and the western building contains offices, restrooms and a small bathhouse.

Although the other small buildings in the park--maintenance shops, refreshment stands, boiler room, golf course concession stand and electrical hut--are part of the Jacob Riis Park, they do not add significance to the Historic District.

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 100-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
	<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			Urban Planning Recreation

SPECIFIC DATES 1932-1937 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Julius Burgevin, Stoughton & Plor
New York City Department of Parks

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The buildings which comprise the Historic District--especially the Bathhouse--are excellent examples of recreational architecture of the early 1930's. They are the central structures in a fine example of public park design and community planning during the 1920's and 1930's. Also, Jacob Riis Park was completed through the Work Progress Administration, a Federal relief program of the Roosevelt Administration during the Depression. Therefore, it is associated with this important social and government program.

The Main Bathhouse is a good example of Art Deco design adapted to architecture. The Art Deco style, characterized by streamlined geometric shapes and occasional polychrome patterns, was particularly concentrated in New York City. The grounds at Jacob Riis were extensively landscaped to include ample recreational facilities among a setting of about 20,000 trees and 50,000 shrubs. Julius Burgevin, the landscape architect, included plantings of Japanese black pines, sea holly, bayberry, beach plum, as well as beach grass in his landscaping. The buildings and grounds, which have survived relatively unaltered since 1937, remain good examples of prevalent aesthetic design during the 1930's.

Although the development of the District as a city planned park begins in the early 1920's, the historical significance of the District derives from the implementation and construction of the park during the 1930's. Labor costs were funded through the Works Progress Administration. WPA projects in New York, including the nation's largest project, LaGuardia Airport, provided temporary relief for the city's unemployed.

As well as the district's association with a major innovation in public policy, the district is also associated with Robert Moses, the influential New York City Commissioner of Parks. In 1936, under Moses's direction, the bathhouse was enlarged, a mall was constructed, two semicircular buildings housing concessions and other facilities were erected, and new recreational facilities were added. A sixty-two acre parking lot located north of the bathhouse, was completed. With a 14,000 car capacity, it was the largest in the world at the time. Nearby the new Marine Parkway Bridge, another Moses project, was finished giving a new access route to the seashore park.

Jacob Riis Park officially opened on July 3, 1937. It was maintained by the City of New York until 1972 when the park was acquired by the National Park Service with the creation of the Gateway National Recreation Area.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

American Guide Series: New York City Guide (New York, Random House, 1939)

Wrenn, Tony: General History of the Jamaica Bay, Breezy Point and Staten Island Units. Gateway National Recreation Area, New York, NY (n.p., 1975).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	5,9,5	0,0,0	4,4	9,0	8,8,0	B						
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING							
C					D								

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Ricardo Torres-Reyes, NARO

ORGANIZATION

North Atlantic Region

STREET & NUMBER

15 State Street

CITY OR TOWN

Boston

DATE

2/15/77

TELEPHONE

223-3778

STATE

Mass.

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES ___ NO ___ NONE ___

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is ___ National ___ State ___ Local

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

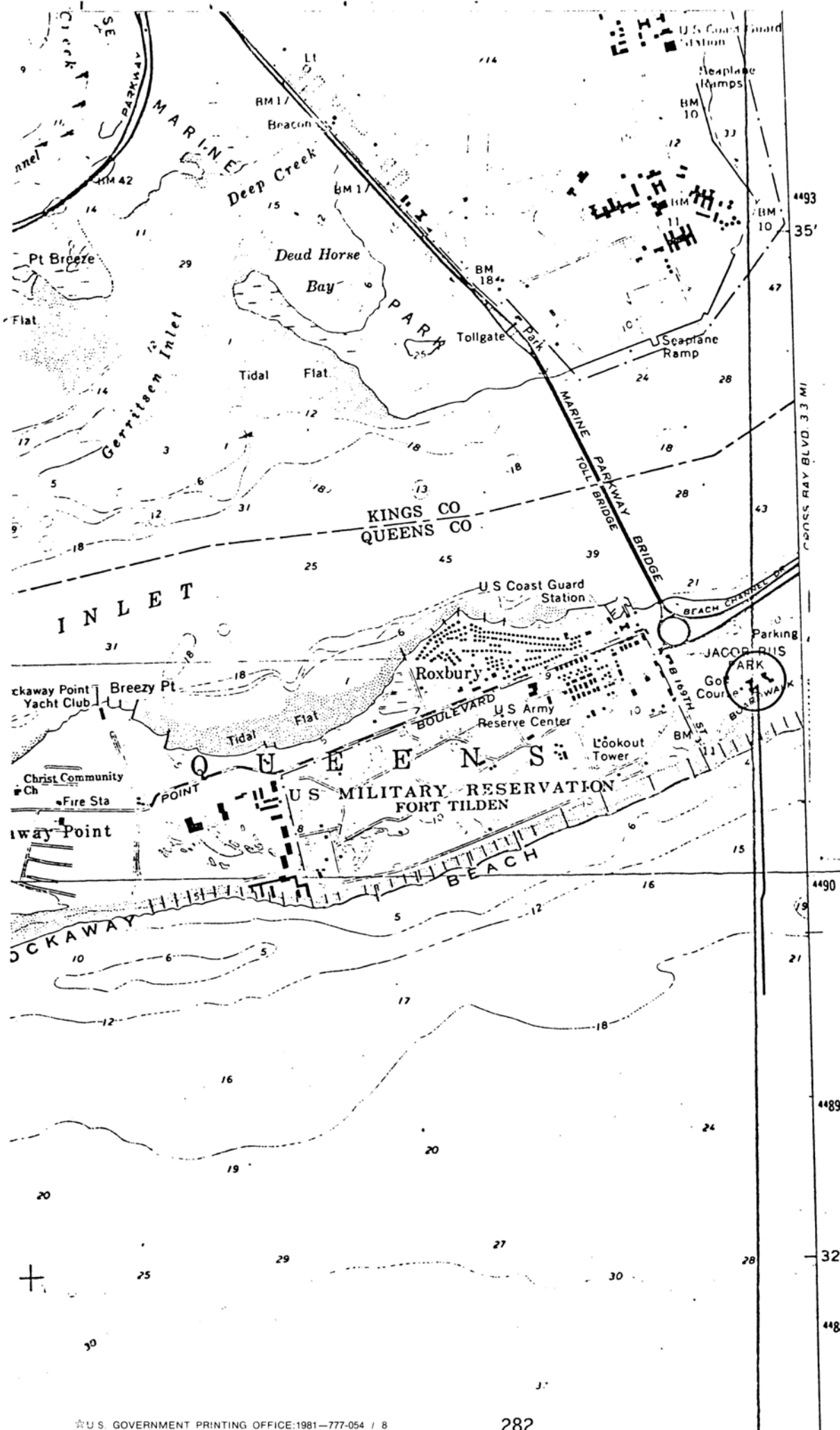
DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

TEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



**JACOB RIIS HISTORIC DISTRICT
Gateway National Recreation Area**

UTM Reference

18 595 000 44 90 880