

20. One Year

ON JANUARY 19, 1934, Governor Lehman signed the legislation allowing Robert Moses to become the first commissioner of a citywide Park Department. At 5 P.M. that same day, Mayor La Guardia swore Moses into office at City Hall. As soon as his right hand came down from the oath, Moses turned to the assembled reporters and told them he had an announcement to make: the five borough park commissioners and the five borough park superintendents, along with the commissioners' personal secretaries and stenographers, and assorted deputy commissioners and other top-level park aides, were fired—"as of now."

The next morning at 9 A.M., a fleet of chauffeured black Packards roared up to the curb on Fifth Avenue in front of the Arsenal. Out of them stepped Moses and a squad of his top Long Island aides. These men would be running the Park Department from now on, Moses announced. Leading them up the steps of the Arsenal, which he announced would henceforth be departmental headquarters, he assigned them offices.

Moses had given these men their orders. They were to weed out—immediately—those headquarters employees who would not or could not work at the pace he demanded. The weeding out would be accomplished by making all employees work at that pace—immediately.

Unlike the commissioners and their personal secretaries, most headquarters employees were protected by civil service, but that didn't help them much. Men who lived in the Bronx were told that henceforth they would be working in Staten Island; men who lived in Staten Island were assigned to the Bronx. Or they were given tasks so disagreeable they couldn't stomach them. Women were treated no better. One ancient biddy, accustomed to spending her days at the Arsenal knitting in a rocking chair, refused to admit she was over retirement age and gracefully accept a pension. When a search failed to produce a birth certificate to disprove her story, she was ordered to work overtime—all night. Every time she tried to rest, she was ordered to keep working. She retired at 2 A.M.

Down at his State Parks Council office at 80 Centre Street—Moses was never to have an office at the Arsenal and was to visit the building infrequently during his twenty-six years as Park Commissioner because he didn't want to be accessible to departmental employees—Moses was confronting the CWA. Its officials were worried themselves about the demoralization of the 68,000 relief workers in the parks. Moses told them that the first requirement for

getting those men working on worthwhile projects was to provide them with plans. Blueprints in volume were needed, he said, and they were needed immediately. He must be allowed to hire the best architects and engineers available and he must be allowed to hire them fast. The CWA must forget about its policy of keeping expenditures for plans small to keep as much money as possible for salaries for men in the field. The agency must forget its policy that only unemployed men could be hired so that Moses could hire a good architect even if he was working as a ditch digger or was being kept on by his firm at partial salary. And the agency must drop its rule that no worker could be paid more than thirty dollars per week. The CWA refused: rules were rules, it said. I quit, Moses said. La Guardia hastily intervened. After seven days of haggling, the CWA surrendered. Moses was given permission to hire 600 architects and engineers without regard to present job status, and to pay them up to eighty dollars a week. So that he could hire them as fast as possible, he was even given an emergency allocation to summon them to interviews not by letter but by telegram.

The CWA capitulated on the morning of January 27. By noon, 1,300 telegrams were being delivered to carefully selected architects and engineers all over New York State, telling each of them that if he was interested in a job, he should report to the Arsenal the next day.

No profession had been hit harder than architecture and engineering. Engineers were particularly reluctant to accept relief. "I simply had to murder my pride," one said. "We'd lived on bread and water for three weeks before I could make myself do it." But *The Nation* estimated that fully half of all engineers were out of work—and six out of seven architects.

These men had been hiding out in public libraries to avoid meeting anyone they knew, or tramping the streets carrying their customary attaché cases although those cases contained only a sandwich. Although the Park Department interviews weren't supposed to begin on January 28 until 2 P.M., on that day, with the temperature below freezing, when dawn broke over the city, it disclosed a line of shivering men outside the Arsenal. The line began at the front door. It wound down the steps, out to Fifth Avenue at Sixty-fourth Street, and along the avenue to Seventy-second Street.

The interviewing went on all day; some of the men who had been waiting on line before dawn didn't get into the Arsenal until late afternoon. But for 600 of them the wait was worth it.

"When you got inside, nobody asked you how much money you had in the bank or what was the maiden name of your great-grandmother," one architect recalls. "All they asked you was: 'What are your qualifications?'" Those whose qualifications satisfied Moses' men were hired on the spot, shown to the Arsenal's garage, in which drafting tables had been set up, handed assignments and told to get to work. In the evening, some started to go home. Those whose assignments didn't have to be finished for a few days were allowed to do so; several hundred whose plans were needed faster were told flatly, "If you go home tonight, don't come back tomorrow." Without exception, these men stayed, catching naps on cots Moses had had set up in the Arsenal's corridors.

Out in the parks, the ragtag ranks of the CWA workers were being shaped up.

Moses had found the men to do the shaping. Out of fear of losing them permanently to rivals, idle construction contractors were struggling to keep on salary their "field superintendents," the foremen or "ramrods" whose special gift for whipping tough Irish laborers into line made them an almost irreplaceable asset. Pointing out that the CWA was not a rival and would probably go out of existence when business improved, Moses persuaded contractors throughout New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and New England to give him their best ramrods, "the toughest you've got." And when the new men arrived, 300 in the first batch, 450 more within two months, his instructions to them were equally explicit. CWA workers, he was to say later, "were not accustomed to work under people who drove them. I see to it that my men do drive them."

Arriving at Marine Park on January 31, new superintendent Percy H. Kenah ordered the men away from their bonfires, and when some moved too slowly for him, fired sixty-six on the spot. The men refused to leave. They moved threateningly toward him—and then they noticed that patrol cars crammed with policemen had quietly driven up behind them. On the same day, with patrol cars backing them up, new superintendents fired hundreds of other workers in other parks.

If this method disposed of malingerers and malcontents, it nonetheless proved difficult to whip the relief workers who remained into an efficient work force. Most wanted to work at the pace demanded but were unable to do so. The suits, overcoats and fedoras many wore while wielding shovels were testimony not only to their inability to afford warmer work clothes but also to their lack of experience in performing hard physical labor outdoors. Even in mild weather, they would have had difficulty. In winter, they suffered bitterly from exposure. Since their pay was \$13.44 per week, many were still scrimping on their own food so that their children could have more. "I remember guys just keeling over on the job," one laborer recalls, "and you always knew that it was just that they had come to work without anything to eat." And they were scrimping in other ways, too. A worker at Dyker Beach Park at the southern edge of Brooklyn, who had caught a reporter's eye because "the side of his neck is swollen and his breath is from a sick throat," told the reporter that he lived in Manhattan. Shivering in a thin overcoat, he said that to get to work "I walk over four hours. I set the alarm clock for half past two and start walking quarter of four." The reporter asked him why he didn't take a trolley, "Carfare is twenty cents a day," he replied.

Some of the new superintendents quietly handed quarters to laborers whose inability to keep up was due to hunger or frostbite; others fired them. But none of the ramrods stopped driving. If they did, they knew, they would be fired themselves. They were, after all, working for a boss who, when questioned about a new wave of firing that almost touched off riots in several parks, said, "The government and the taxpayers have a right to demand an adequate return in good work, faithfully performed, for the

money that is being spent. . . . We inherited men who were working without plan and without supervision. The plans have now been made, the supervision is being supplied, *and we expect the men to work.*"

The winter of 1934 was the first of five of the most severe in New York's history. The temperature dropped below zero on five different days—on one day it hit fourteen below—and a steady succession of heavy storms dumped a total of fifty-two inches of snow on the city. The mean temperature for the entire month of February was 11.5 degrees. But all through that winter, the residents of the tall apartment houses rimming Central Park could look down into the park and see, in the snow, thousands of men swinging pickaxes and shovels, climbing ladders set against trees, swarming over scaffolding erected around older structures and building new ones. From behind the park's granite-block walls came the pounding of pneumatic drills, the rumble of concrete mixers, the dull roar of steam shovels and the sharp rapping of hammers.

And to the consternation of those apartment-house residents, this clangor did not stop at five o'clock. At dusk, thousands of men filed into Central Park to replace those who had been working during the day, and when the watchers in the apartment houses retired for the night—for nights that they complained were made restless by the noise—they could take a last look out their windows and see the pickaxes still swinging in the harsh glare of hundreds of high-powered carbide lamps. When they awoke in the morning, the pickaxes were still swinging—and they realized that a third shift had filed into the park during the night. The work was going on twenty-four hours a day. And from behind the granite-block walls of Prospect Park, the high wooden fence left around Bryant Park from the George Washington Bi-Centennial Celebration, and a score of others erected that winter by Moses around other parks, came the same clangor—on the same schedule. Late in the afternoon of February 22, heavy snow began to fall. It continued falling all through the 23rd, dumping a total of eighteen inches on the city. But during those days, the rebuilding of New York's parks never stopped.

Sometimes, now, the laborers were even performing the construction phenomenon known as "working ahead of plans." By February, there were more than 800 architects and engineers in the Arsenal and they had become accustomed to working fourteen-hour days. But often, after they had finished a blueprint and it had been approved by Clarke, Embury, Andrews or some other supervisor and they rushed it themselves out to the project site, they would find that the work crews had already begun, or finished, digging ditches for pipes and foundations, or other preliminary work, and they would have to sit down on the spot and draw new plans to fit in with the work that had already been completed. The team of fifteen architects working at the Arsenal under Embury's personal direction to design a new Central Park Zoo—Moses didn't like the name "Menagerie"—were, Latham recalls, "working [while] looking out the window to see what had already been done." These men, Embury wrote in amazement, "had never seen each other before beginning work." They had to work "with little equipment,

crowded together two or three to the table, and moved about from one place to another every few days." They completed the plans for the entire new zoo in sixteen days.

Embury and Clarke themselves, giants of their professions though they were, were caught up in the excitement. Once, going out to lunch together, they stopped at Bryant Park to review the reconstruction work, which was already well under way, and decided they didn't like the plan, already approved by themselves and Moses, on which hundreds of men were already working. Over lunch, they began to discuss new ideas and sketched them out on their tablecloth. When they finished their meal, they asked the head-waiter for permission to take the tablecloth with them, drove straight to 80 Centre Street to show it to Moses and, when he approved, gave it to another team of draftsmen to translate into blueprints.

By March, the economy was beginning to recover and optimism was rising—along with demands from the nation's press, heavily anti-New Deal, that the government begin phasing out the spending of "taxpayers' money" on such "socialistic" practices as work relief. Moses had been led to expect an extension of the act creating CWA, but at the last moment Congress changed its mind, and the agency went out of existence on March 31, on forty-eight hours' notice. With only a limited amount of funds from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration available for park work, half of Moses' men were abruptly dismissed. But he kept the remaining half working.

The harshness of the winter persisted into April, and every weekend was either cold or rainy. But on Saturday, May 1, 1934, the weather turned balmy, and, as they do on the first warm Saturday of every spring, New Yorkers poured into their parks.

Seventeen hundred of the eighteen hundred renovation projects had been completed.

Every structure in every park in the city had been repainted. Every tennis court had been resurfaced. Every lawn had been reseeded. Eight antiquated golf courses had been reshaped, eleven miles of bridle paths rebuilt, thirty-eight miles of walks repaved, 145 comfort stations renovated, 284 statues refurbished, 678 drinking fountains repaired, 7,000 wastepaper baskets replaced, 22,500 benches reslatted, 7,000 dead trees removed, 11,000 new ones planted in their place and 62,000 others pruned, eighty-six miles of fencing, most of it unnecessary, torn down and nineteen miles of new fencing installed in its place. Every playground in the city had been resurfaced, not with cinders but with a new type of asphalt that Moses' engineers assured him would prevent skinned knees, and every playground had been re-equipped with jungle gyms, slides and sandboxes for children and benches for their mothers. And around each playground had been planted trees for shade.

"Generations of New Yorkers," as the *Times* put it, "have grown up in the firm belief that park benches are green by law of nature, like the grass itself." But now, as New Yorkers strolled through their parks, they saw

that the benches had been painted a cool *café au lait*. Generations of New Yorkers had believed that the six miles of granite walls around Central Park were a grimy blackish gray. Now they saw that sand blasting had restored them to their original color, a handsome dark cream. Rare was the New Yorker who could remember when the Columbus Circle monument to the men who died in the explosion of the U.S.S. *Maine* in Havana Harbor had not been dingy, or when the boy standing in the prow of the monument's bow had possessed a wreath, or, for that matter, hands to hold it with. As soon as Moses had taken office, he had surrounded the monument with scaffolding and concealed it with drop cloths. Now the scaffolding and drop cloths were removed and the boy had his hands back, and a wreath was in them—and the entire huge monument behind him had been scrubbed clean and white. And a thousand plots in the parks, plots which as long as New Yorkers could remember had contained nothing but dirt and weeds, were gay with spring-blooming flowers.

By midsummer, new construction projects in the parks were being completed. Ten new golf courses, six new golf houses, 240 new tennis courts, three new tennis houses and 51 new baseball diamonds were to be opened to the public before Labor Day. The Prospect Park Zoo was completely rebuilt and a new zoo erected at Barrett Park on Staten Island. Complete reconstruction jobs were done on St. James, Crotona and Macombs Dam parks in the Bronx; Owl's Head, McCarren and Fort Greene parks in Brooklyn; Crocheron, Chisholm and Kissena parks in Queens; and Mount Morris, Manhattan Square and Carl Schurz parks in Manhattan.

On a sunny Saturday, the fence around Bryant Park came down and thousands of spectators in a reviewing stand set up behind the Lowell Fountain saw that the weed-filled lot had been transformed into a magnificent formal garden. Two hundred large plane trees, grown in Moses' Long Island Park Commission nurseries, trucked to the city and then lifted over the fence and lowered into prepared holes by giant cranes, had been planted along its edges, and their broad leaves shaded graceful benches and long flower beds bordered by low, neat hedges. The four acres they surrounded were four acres of lush and neatly trimmed grass, set off by long, low stone balustrades and flower-bordered flagstone walks, that looked all the greener against the grayness of the masses of concrete stores and office buildings around it. As a newly formed sixty-six-piece Park Department band, outfitted in white duck trousers, forest-green jackets with white belts and white caps trimmed with green and gold braid, blew a fanfare, the great-granddaughter of William Cullen Bryant, the poet and journalist for whom the park had been named, and the sister of Mrs. Josephine S. Lowell, in whose memory the fountain had been built, walked together from the reviewing stand to the fountain, escorted by twenty youthful pages and Park Department attendants in uniform, and flung handfuls of petals into it. At that signal, water gushed from the fountain's five dolphin spouts for the first time in a decade, and a speaker said that Robert Moses had outdone his biblical namesake because while the Moses of the Israelites had smote a rock in the desert and brought forth water, Moses of New York had "smote

the city's parks" and brought forth not only water but trees, grass and flowers.

In Central Park, Moses' men restored Olmsted's long-defaced buildings, replanted the Shakespeare garden, placing next to every flower a quotation from the Bard in which it was mentioned, and exterminated herds of rats; 230,000 dead ones were counted in a single week at the zoo site alone. While seven hundred men were working night and day to build a new zoo, another thousand were transforming the dried-up reservoir bed that had been called "Hoover Valley"—Moses had torn down the shanty town there—into a verdant, thirty-acre "Great Lawn," were laying flagstone walks around it and planting along them hundreds of Japanese cherry trees. Then, having satisfied those who objected to use of the reservoir bed entirely for active play, Moses constructed a playground and wading pool in the northeast corner of the bed, outside the lawn's borders, for small children and a game field in the northwest corner for older children. On the North Meadow he built handball courts, wading pools and thirteen baseball diamonds. He deported the deformed sheep and turned the old sheepfold into a "Tavern-on-the-Green," an old English inn-in-a-park complete with door-men wearing riding boots and hunting coats and top hats and cigarette girls in court costumes complete with bustles—and with the added touch of an outdoor flagstone terrace on which couples could dance among tables shaded by gaily colored umbrellas to the music of a twelve-piece orchestra costumed in forest green.

And Moses was not merely beautifying the city's parks. He was doing what generations of reformers had despaired of doing: he was creating new ones—in the areas that needed them.

In his first flush of enthusiasm following La Guardia's offer of the park commissionership, Moses had believed that by forcing landlords to dump real estate on the market at a fraction of its former value, the Depression had given the city at last a chance to acquire and tear down slum tenements and use the space thus gained for play space for the slum children who so badly needed it. But then La Guardia disclosed to him the extent of the city's financial crisis and told him that, because of the Depression, even fractions were beyond the city's ability to pay.

"I remember one time he came back from talking to La Guardia and he told us this," said Bill Latham. "And I remember that he said then—I don't remember the words, really, but the idea was: 'All right, then, god-dammit, we'll get land *without* money.'"

Moses instructed Latham to set his surveyors to making an "inventory" of every piece of publicly owned land in New York City, every tract or parcel owned by any city department, and to determine, not by asking departmental officials but by personal inspection, whether every piece of that land was actually being used. Within a month, he had learned that on the Lower East Side there were nine long-vacant strips of land along Houston Street that had been acquired by the Board of Transportation to store equipment during subway construction but that had been lying idle ever

since the construction was completed, ten elementary schools so old that they had been abandoned by the Board of Education for years and five vacant lots that were owned by the Park Department itself but that the Park Department had somehow not been aware it owned. Alongside the Williamsburg Bridge piers were pieces of land that had been acquired to store equipment used in the construction of the bridge and had been lying idle during the thirty-one years since the construction had been completed. On the other side of the East River, among other tenements, were more piers—and more pieces of land. In the Red Hook tenement slums, Brooklyn's version of Manhattan's "Hell's Kitchen," thirty-eight acres of land had been purchased for a public housing project, but no such project had yet begun. Among the flimsy shacks on the Gravesend Bay side of Coney Island, eight solid blocks of vacant waterfront property was owned by the Dock Department, but the Dock Department had no interest in it. And throughout all the city's slums were scores of small triangular "gores," where streets angled together or bits of land had been left over from street-widening condemnation proceedings, that were now just unnoticed pieces of dirt or concrete and that were too small to be used for play but that were, if planted with grass and a tree or two, large enough to add a touch of green to the drabness around them. Moses asked La Guardia to direct the city Sinking Fund Commission, the body which, under existing charter provisions, held the actual title to all city-owned land, to turn this land over to the Park Department. Often, the other departments involved objected to such incursions into their jealously guarded empires—the Tenement House Commission hastily began drawing up plans for the Red Hook housing project to prove that construction on it was imminent—and sometimes, as in the Red Hook case, La Guardia sided with them. But generally the new mayor backed Moses. Within four months after taking office, the new Park Commissioner had obtained, in slum areas in which there had been no significant park or playground development for at least half a century, no fewer than sixty-nine separate small park and playground sites.

And one that wasn't small. North from the Manhattan Bridge, through the very heart of the Lower East Side, through an area in which tenements were jammed solidly into every block, stretched a row of seven blocks that were completely empty. The "Chrystie-Forsyth Development," as it was known from the names of the streets which bordered it, was another monument to Tammany Hall and to one of its judges, Joseph Force Crater. Forty years later, Judge Crater's mysterious disappearance would still be unexplained, but contemporary speculation linked it with the judge's unexplained generosity to the owners of the disease-breeding tenements which had occupied those seven blocks before the city took them over in 1929. Jimmy Walker had announced with great fanfare that the city would raze the tenements and resell the land at cost to private developers who would erect on it a "model" housing development. But the astonishingly high condemnation awards Crater bestowed on the owners made the cost so high that the private builders who had previously expressed interest now expressed only dismay, and while the razing had been accomplished, the

replacement had not. For more than four years, with the lost taxes and interest on the award (the Depression, of course, prevented the city from paying it) costing the city almost half a million dollars per year, the tract had lain between the red brick walls that lined it solidly on either side as flat and featureless as an urban desert. Moses proposed that it be made an oasis of grass, trees, baseball fields, basketball and tennis courts, wading pools and playgrounds. *La Guardia*, trumpeting "Page Crater!" when reporters asked why the housing development would not be built, agreed.*

While studying the state government for the Reconstruction Commission in 1919, Moses had learned about "unappropriated state lands." A century before, to help tide the country over a time of financial uneasiness, the federal government had made loans to the states, which in turn loaned the money to individuals who pledged farms or other, smaller pieces of property in cities, as security. Some loans had not been repaid, and the states thereupon foreclosed. In most instances, the New York State Legislature later passed bills allowing the municipalities in which the land was located to "appropriate" it. But not, Moses had learned, in every instance. Some of the properties involved had seemed too small to bother about in an era in which property was measured in acres rather than feet, and as time passed, these pieces of land had simply been forgotten and had remained "unappropriated." Now Moses sent men to Albany to look up such pieces—and they found several in areas of Brooklyn that were now slums. The city could not afford to buy them, so—hastily, since the Legislature was shortly due to adjourn for the year—he drafted, and got passed, bills turning this land over to New York City.

One day—Sid Shapiro can recall the moment—Moses suddenly remembered that in 1922 the State Division of Canals had filled in swampland near the Gowanus Canal in Red Hook to provide a foundation for a grain elevator it was building there. And he seemed to recall, he said, that there had been some land left over. An investigation proved that he was right: there had, in fact, been eleven acres left over. He had a bill passed in Albany allowing the state to give the land to the city for recreational purposes.

On another occasion, chatting with aides, Moses suddenly asked, "Wasn't there some kind of fund set up about fifteen years ago for a war memorial that was never built?"

There was indeed. In 1918, a public subscription had been held to finance construction of a million-dollar World War Memorial Arch. But the subscription raised only \$210,000 and the drive's sponsors, already squabbling over which borough the arch should be located in, were unable to agree on details of a smaller memorial and in 1922 turned the money over to the City Chamberlain's office for safekeeping until the dispute was resolved. It never was, and during the intervening twelve years the sponsoring committee stopped meeting, and the existence of the money, which the Chamberlain had deposited in banks, was all but forgotten—and when Adolf Berle, appointed Chamberlain by *La Guardia*, looked for it at Moses'

* This park is now known as "Sara Delano Roosevelt Park."

request, he found that accumulating interest had swelled it to \$338,395.

The people who had contributed the money had intended it to be used for a war memorial. But Moses persuaded Berle that the definition of "war memorial" could be extended to mean "War Memorial Playgrounds" and he persuaded the surviving members of the sponsoring committee not to oppose the use of the money for this purpose, a persuasion made easier by Moses' agreement that each playground would contain a bronze plaque honoring the memory of World War veterans—and that there would be at least one playground in each borough. With the money, Moses purchased in congested areas of the city eight pieces of property big enough for playgrounds.

He seemed to see opportunities everywhere. While being chauffeured around Harlem, he noticed two tennis courts belonging to a Roman Catholic church on 138th Street. Telling his chauffeur to stop, he jumped out, ran into the church, found the pastor and asked if the courts were much used. When the pastor said they were not, Moses asked him to give them to the city for a playground, and when the pastor told him that such a gift could be arranged only through Cardinal Hayes's office, Moses sent a representative to see a representative of the Cardinal, and the gift was arranged. Noticing a two-acre vacant lot on Eleventh Avenue between Fifty-ninth and Sixtieth streets, he learned it was owned by the Consolidated Gas Company, which had no "present plans" for using it, and persuaded the company to give him a temporary permit to put a playground on the site. In "Middle Queens," the dreary belt of cemeteries, small single-family homes and shabby little factories sprawling northeast from the oily waters of Newtown Creek, there was still one large vacant tract, 127 acres formerly owned by murdered gambler Arnold Rothstein. Learning that Rothstein's estate owed the city \$334,000 in back taxes, Moses asked Surrogate James Delehanty if the city could buy the property if it forgave the back taxes and paid \$68,000, the difference between the taxes and the assessed valuation. Delehanty agreed, but *La Guardia* was not able to find even \$68,000 that the city could spare. Moses recalled that there was usually several hundred thousand dollars kept in a special "emergency account" of one of the more obscure Sinking Funds. City attorneys informed him that legal restrictions prohibited the expenditure of any of this money except on genuine emergencies. Moses informed *them* that if they restudied the law, they would find there was one exception—money could be removed from the fund temporarily for "first instance" appropriations, appropriations to be repaid out of the next city budget, for a single specific purpose: the purchase of undeveloped real estate. But *La Guardia*, while agreeing that the acquisition of 127 acres for \$68,000 was an unprecedented bargain, was afraid to obligate the city even for that amount. So Moses returned to Surrogate Delehanty and worked out another arrangement under which the city "bought" 74 of the 127 acres for \$334,000 but the estate paid the \$334,000 back to the city to clear the tax deficiency on all 127 acres, leaving the estate with 53 acres free and clear—and the city with a 74-acre "Juniper Valley" park which it had acquired without a cent of cash outlay.

Moses' charm was as powerful a weapon as his mind. Turning it on John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Moses persuaded the billionaire to donate several other pieces of land to the city. He persuaded his old benefactor August Heckscher to donate a playground in Central Park. When he discovered a well-to-do family with philanthropic leanings but insufficient resources to buy and equip a playground completely, he brought it together with another family in similar circumstances—as he did to give the city the Dreier-Offerman Playground in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. Learning that a small charitable foundation was unable to meet mortgage payments on a piece of property in Queens and was planning to let it go to the bank by default, Moses appeared before its board of trustees, several of whom were directors of the bank, and talked to them so movingly about the need of slum children for recreation that they agreed to use the foundation's few remaining assets to pay off the small balance remaining on the mortgage—and default instead on the taxes, so that the city could take it over rather than the bank.

And as soon as Moses had his hands on the title to these pieces of land, he filled them with workmen. By July, the eight War Memorial Playgrounds had been finished, by Labor Day, there were fifty-two others, including the Chrystie-Forsyth Street complex, which was really a park but which was dubbed "the finest playground in the United States"—and a city which in its entire history had managed to build 119 playgrounds had seen its stock of that item increased by 50 percent in a single year.

The city cheered. Its thirteen daily newspapers, however divergent their philosophy, united in heaping wreaths of adjectives on his head. The new Park Commissioner was "dynamic" and "brilliant" in the ultra-conservative *Sun*, "able" and "enterprising" in the then ultra-liberal *World-Telegram*, "tireless," "fearless" and "incorruptible" in the sometimes conservative, sometimes liberal *Hearst Evening Journal*.

Headline writers, using topical catch phrases, talked of Moses' NEW DEAL FOR PARKS and the AMAZING ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF MOSES' FIRST 100 DAYS. Editorial writers were more poetic. "Robert Moses has made an urban desert bloom," said an editorial in the *World-Telegram*. The *Herald Tribune*, formally recanting the heresies of which it admitted it had been guilty during his Long Island controversy, dubbed him the "Hercules of the Parks." And the *Times* said:

... Jan. 19 of this year was a red letter day in the history of New York. . . . The time, the place, and the man met in Mayor LA GUARDIA's appointment of ROBERT MOSES as Park Commissioner on that date. Measured in park progress and development on the scale to which this city had been accustomed, it seems years ago. . . .

The achievements, tangible as well as intangible of the new Commissioner in his first few months of office . . . seem little short of miraculous. It is almost as if MR. MOSES has rubbed a lamp, or murmured some incantation over an old jar, and actually made the jini leap out to do his bidding.

Reporters fought for interviews with him. And when they got them— for he gave them freely—the interviews were very friendly. Murray Davis of the *World-Telegram*, telling readers that "for ten years he has worked long hours, without pay, to give New Yorkers inexpensive outdoor pleasures," added:

To the suggestion that he was independently wealthy and giving hard work and time to an unremunerative job, he smiled.

" . . . You can't teach an old dog new tricks and I'm 45 now. Ever since I was a kid I was interested in government. My fancy led me into parks and playgrounds and I have nourished those fancies as a hobby, avocation; take your pick.

"The fact remains that I enjoy this work more than any other, so why not stay with it? I have had only two public offices that paid salaries. Now I have my third. It pays—? I don't know. What do commissioners get? \$13,000? I don't know. I'm satisfied to make just a bare living if I can realize all my plans for these things I enjoy. I'm interested in cutting down the overhead and getting results, not in pay."

During 1934, Moses was in the New York papers even more than J. Edgar Hoover, who spent the year compiling a highly publicized elite hierarchy of "Public Enemies," and then shooting down Number One on the list, John Dillinger, in a blaze of gunfire. Moses was in the New York papers almost as much as *La Guardia*. The *Times* editorial on Moses, for example, was only one of 29 praising him in that single newspaper that year. And the *Times* also carried 346 separate articles on his activities, an average of almost one a day.* There were days, in fact, on which there were five separate stories in the *Times*. So many were carried on the "split page," the first page of the second section, devoted in the early 1930's largely to municipal affairs, that there were whole weeks in which this prominent page of the nation's most respected newspaper read like a Park Department press release. There were Sundays on which six separate newspapers were carrying long, uncritically laudatory interviews with Moses or reviews of his accomplishments. His picture stared out from their pages a hundred times during that year.

Each park opening brought forth a new volley of praise. After one, the *Herald Tribune*, under a headline proclaiming: THE PEOPLE OWN THE PARKS, called the event "just another of those triumphs whereby Mr. Moses has almost convinced the public that it really owns the parks. After the long night of Tammany it is an idea difficult to grasp."

The cheers of the press were echoed by the public. While the parks were blossoming with flowers, editorial pages were blossoming with letters from the public praising the man who had planted them. And it was not unusual at park and playground opening ceremonies for children, prodded by their parents, to break into the cheer "Two, four, six, eight—who do we appreciate? Mr. Moses! MR. MOSES!! MR. MOSES!!!"

* The *Times* index lists them not only under his name but under "New York City—Parks, Department of," under the names of the individual parks and under other listings given in the index.

The cheers rose to a crescendo when the Central Park Zoo reopened on December 3, 1934.

Moses had a personal reason for being interested in the zoo. Nineteen thirty-four had been a sad year for Al Smith. The public humiliation to which Jimmy Walker had subjected him at the Inner Circle dinner was only one indication of the fact that there was no longer any place for the old leader in the organization he had led and loved. Only sixty years old, as vigorous as ever, Smith wanted desperately to play a role in the federal government's efforts to end the human misery caused by the Depression. No man was better qualified; Roosevelt himself had told Frances Perkins, "Practically all the things we've done in the federal government are like things Al Smith did as Governor of New York." Roosevelt had asked Smith to campaign for him against Hoover, and Smith had done so. And when Roosevelt had won, Smith had told acquaintances flatly that a man did not feud with the President of his country; he gave him loyalty. He only hoped, he said, that Roosevelt would allow him to work for him. But Roosevelt, another young man of whom Smith had been fond and whom he had helped up the political ladder, refused even to consider him for any federal post. And if Smith considered this the ultimate humiliation, he learned during 1934 that it was not. Worse was to come. When John J. Raskob and the other businessmen who controlled the Empire State Building Corporation had offered him its presidency, they had told him the post was honorary, but, with the skyscraper completed, the Depression made it so difficult to obtain tenants that the corporation was on the verge of bankruptcy, and they told him he would have to do something to earn his \$50,000 a year: he would have to go to Washington and beg Roosevelt to throw some government leases his way. For months, Smith refused, but he was finally persuaded that loyalty to his friends required him to help them. Roosevelt responded generously to his entreaty—federal agencies were moved out of offices as far away as Philadelphia to fill up the New York skyscraper—but now in the late afternoons, when Moses dropped by to see him, he would often find the man who had been called the Happy Warrior sitting staring out the windows of his apartment with new lines of bitterness and disillusionment hardening on his face.

Moses knew how much the old Governor loved animals and he knew he missed the little zoo he had maintained behind the Executive Mansion in Albany. The former Governor and Katie now lived at 820 Fifth Avenue, almost directly across from the Menagerie, and Smith spent a lot of time strolling among the cages, feeding and talking to the animals. Saddened by the unsanitary conditions in which they had to live and the lack of care for their physical ailments, Smith was horrified when he learned that in case of fire the animals might be shot. When Moses was appointed Park Commissioner, Smith told him he would regard it as a special favor if the Menagerie were improved.

Moses gave the job top priority. When materials and equipment ran low—because of the CWA's reluctance to spend money on them, they were

always running low—what was available was diverted there from other projects. The best ramrods were put on the job to drive the thousand men working around the clock in the fenced-off area behind the Arsenal. Most of the animals had been moved out, but not all, and the lions, shunted from one animal house to another as the buildings were torn down and kept awake by the glow of the carbide flares and the pound of the pneumatic drills, roared through the night, while a reporter who visited the site early one morning found the Menagerie's old polar bear pacing "restlessly up and down in bewilderment, pausing occasionally to peer out at the grimy, torch-lit laborers." The residents of Fifth Avenue apartment buildings near the site roared, too, but Moses refused even to listen to their complaints. Often, in the evenings, he would suddenly materialize on the scene, joking with the field superintendents and with the men, encouraging them, telling them how important their work was, urging them on. All summer and fall, he spurred the job with a special urgency. And when it was finished, on December 2, he turned the reopening into a surprise party for Al Smith.

It was quite a party. Some observers said New York had never seen anything like it. To emphasize that he was trying to make the zoo not so much a great animal museum like its counterpart in the Bronx but a place of delight for young children, Moses had already dubbed it a "picture-book zoo," and when the twelve hundred invited guests filed into the stands set up in front of the Arsenal for the opening ceremonies—twenty-five thousand other persons lined Fifth Avenue waiting to be admitted—they found that in front of the zoo entrance had been erected a six-foot-high wooden replica of an open picture book, with painted green elephants charging across its bright-yellow pages. Flanking the speakers' platform were two huge boxes wrapped in striped and polka-dotted paper and adorned with satin bows like a child's present. As the ceremonies began, four olive-clad trumpeters blew a flourish, the wrapping paper was pulled away—and inside one box was a cage containing a lion, inside the other a cage with a gorilla. Public Welfare Commissioner William Hodson, called to the microphone to give a speech, startled the audience by breaking instead into several choruses, delivered in a rather wheezy tenor, of "Oh, I went to the animal fair." Thousands of balloons were released at intervals to fill the air with color until they were wafted northward by the prevailing breeze. Uniformed, flag-bearing high-school bands and elementary-school fife-and-drum corps came marching, one after the other, up Fifth Avenue. And clattering around the corner of the Arsenal came a team of white ponies drawing a tiny, gaily colored barouche in which sat a little girl holding a large gold key with which La Guardia could "unlock" a door in the middle of the picture book and thus officially open the new zoo.

But before La Guardia got the key, there was something for Smith. Moses had given the former Governor no hint that he would even participate in the ceremonies, simply telling him that there would be a seat for him on the reviewing stand. But when the old warrior walked out the front door of his apartment house to make his way to the stand, he found three hundred schoolchildren from the Fourth Ward lined up in front of the door, cheering

and waving balloons, waiting to escort him across Fifth Avenue. He found that his seat was in the place of honor next to La Guardia. (Moses, who had been supposed to sit on his other side, was absent; during the past week he had refused to take a day off despite a severe case of influenza, and doctors summoned over his protests by a worried Mary just two hours before the ceremony began found him in a state of complete collapse and ordered him to bed.) Hardly had Smith sat down when he realized that he was being summoned to the microphone himself, and Earle Andrews, substituting for Moses, pinned to his lapel a large, elaborately engraved medal with a lion's head on its face and announced that he was now, and permanently, "Honorary Night Superintendent of the Central Park Zoo." As Andrews finished speaking, a horse-drawn wagon, reminiscent of those Smith had chased through the Fourth Ward in his youth, rolled around the corner of the Arsenal, and it was jammed with boys—from the Fourth Ward—singing, "East Side, West Side." The horses pulled up in front of him and eleven-year-old Eddie McKeon jumped out and presented him with a large Christmas turkey as the whole reviewing stand stood and joined in his old campaign song.

The old Governor's eyes were tearing, from the cold December wind, no doubt, and it took some time for him to clear them, and even after he did he spent a rather long time chewing on his cigar, which was already in shreds, before he began to speak, but when he did, he knew exactly what he wanted to say. "When Mr. Moses was appointed Park Commissioner, I used all the influence I had with him to get him to work on a new zoo," he said. "And now look at him! In less than eight months, we've got a zoo that's one of the finest of its kind in the world." Smith began then to recite the whole list of Moses' achievements, stopping only when he noticed the children on line trying to peer over the park wall at the cages. Cutting himself short, he said with a smile, "I bid you welcome to this new zoo as night superintendent, and I hope you have a good time," and sat down.

Later that week, when he was well enough to tell him himself, Moses informed Smith that the night superintendency carried with it certain privileges. He gave Smith a master key which unlocked the animal houses and told the Governor that the zoo caretakers had been instructed that he was to be allowed to enter them whenever he wanted, day or night. And until the end of his life, Smith would delight in this privilege. The doormen at No. 820 would become accustomed to seeing him walk out the front door in the evenings and across Fifth Avenue under the street lights, a somewhat paunchy figure with a big brown derby set firmly on his head and a big cigar jutting out from his face, and disappear down the steps of the darkened zoo, not to reappear for hours. The former Governor and presidential candidate would walk through the animal houses, switching on the lights as he entered each one, to the surprise of its occupants, and talk softly to them. He would have in his pocket an apple for Rosie, the huge hippo. And if one of the zoo's less dangerous animals was sick or injured, Smith would enter its cage and stand for a while stroking its head and commiserating with it. When he had dinner guests, he would take them along and, since

they were usually Tammany stalwarts unhappy at what La Guardia was doing to the Tammany Tiger, they delighted in a little show he would put on with the zoo's biggest and fiercest tiger, who could be counted upon to respond angrily if anyone growled at him. When Smith and his guests approached, the tiger would be sitting silently staring at them through the bars. Smith would walk up to the cage, thrust his head toward the bars and, in his deepest and harshest voice, roar at the tiger, "La Guardia!" The tiger would snarl, bare its teeth and leap at the bars, growling in what Smith's daughter describes as "obvious disapproval."

While there were cheers aplenty for Smith at the zoo opening, however, there were plenty left over for Moses.

The invited guests on the reviewing stand had been startled by the transformation in the Arsenal. The stucco had been sand-blasted off its walls, revealing handsome dark-red bricks. The cupolas had been torn off its turrets, revealing battlements complete with archer's slits. The newel posts of the banisters on the stairs leading up to its front entrance were now upturned Colonial cannon muzzles, and the banisters themselves were supported by wrought-iron imitations of Colonial flintlock rifles, painted white. Atop the gleaming white doorway, whose lintel had been crenelated to mirror the battlements on the roof above, an eagle glared from between two carved mounds of cannon balls, and on the jambs had been carved crossed swords and Indian spears. The large lamps on either side of the door had been enclosed in wrought-iron replicas of tasseled drums like those carried by Revolutionary War drummer boys. And above the doorway three large flags fluttered colorfully from flagpoles. All in all, the once shabby wreck looked quite like a little fort, a gay little fort that when seen in miniature from the higher floors of Fifth Avenue apartment houses seemed almost to have been set in the park by mistake and really to belong six blocks down the avenue in the windows of F. A. O. Schwarz.

And when La Guardia "unlocked" the door in the bright-yellow picture book, after asking the Honorary Night Superintendent's permission, the crowd followed the two men through the door and through a short corridor erected for the occasion, its walls covered with picture-book inscriptions such as "A is for Ape," "B is for Buffalo." Emerging on the side of the Arsenal, they found there was nothing left of the old Menagerie at all. Where they had been accustomed to see ramshackle wooden animal houses, they found, to their astonishment, neat red brick buildings decorated with murals and carved animal friezes, connected by graceful arcades that framed park vistas beyond—and framing a sea-lion pool set in a handsomely landscaped quadrangle.

Moses had wanted to use distinctive materials as he had used Barbizon brick and Ohio sandstone at Jones Beach, but the CWA's refusal to purchase any but the cheapest materials had forced him to settle for concrete, plain red bricks, and some cheap limestone, and to forgo dozens of imaginative little touches he had planned.

But the eye of the visitor still found plenty to delight it. The sea-lion house in the pool was constructed of unadorned concrete, but it was constructed so that visitors could watch the sea lions even while they were inside. The paths to the pool divided a sunken landscaped quadrangle into four separate, neatly trimmed lawns. Each was surrounded by low hedges. In the center of each was a wonderfully gnarled and twisted Japanese ginkgo tree. The steps leading down to the quadrangle were flanked by fierce-visaged stone eagles big enough to glower eyeball to eyeball at many of the children walking past them. And in its four corners were huge Victorian flying cages from which glowered live eagles.

On the far side of the quadrangle, at the animal-house level, past the cavorting sea lions, the stone eagles, the lawns, the shrubbery and ginkgo trees, the eye was startled by a large lioness proudly holding up for inspection a peacock she had killed, while her two cubs sniffed at the beautiful tail dangling limply to the ground—a bronze statue that had stood in some seldom visited corner of the park for seventy years until Moses rescued it. And behind the statue was a long, low terrace on which little tables topped with gay parasols sat in the shade of a bright, vertically striped awning eighty feet long—an outdoor dining terrace on which diners could sit and be entertained by the sea lions and by the crowds being entertained by the sea lions. And as the eye followed the vertical stripes of the awning upward, it abruptly found itself being stared back at by lions, tigers, elephants and hippopotami gathered under waving palm trees—for the cafeteria's eighty-foot-long clerestory had been covered with a droll animal mural.

Throughout, the zoo was proof piled on proof that Moses had been able, to some extent at least, to make imagination take the place of money.

The CWA had insisted that the animal houses be constructed primarily of common red brick and concrete, but Embury, an architect accustomed to working with the costliest of materials, nevertheless succeeded, under Moses' prodding, in making them attractive. Their proportions were exceptionally well balanced, their lines exceptionally clean. Some of the brick had been used to place charming ornamental chimneys on their roofs. Some more had been used for designs that broke the monotony of the concrete clerestories. Connecting the animal houses with arcades gave the whole scene unity.

And the zoo buildings were adorned with little touches that, as at Jones Beach, scaled down the architecture "to the size of a good time." Tiny, delicate cast-iron birds perched atop the lamps that flanked the doors of the animal houses. Slender rods topped with little white balls held big white globes that cast light over the walk in front of the cafeteria terrace. The lamps hanging in rows in the animal houses were glazed balls, but around each ball was a slanted copper ring that made the fixtures look like a long row of Saturns whirling in the sky.

No one had to wonder what was in each building. Around the top of each wall was a frieze, carved in low relief in limestone panels, depicting its occupants in marvelously lifelike poses; among the figures over the monkey houses, for example, were a monkey chasing butterflies and a gorilla chewing a twig with a wonderfully contemplative expression upon his face. And

the weathervanes atop each building were comic depictions of one of the building's inhabitants, done by the unknown designers who had caused architects from all over the world to exclaim at the weathervanes at Jones Beach; the one over the bird house, for example, showing a spindly-legged heron jutting its long bill under water in search of food, was a miniature masterpiece of angularity silhouetted against the sky.

The purpose of a park, Moses had been telling his designers for years, wasn't to overawe or impress; it was to encourage the having of a good time. Wheeling through the park were movable refreshment carts. But these weren't ordinary refreshment carts. They were adorned with painted animals and garlands of flowers in colors that were intentionally gaudy—replicas of gay Sicilian *carretinas*. Their operators were dressed in costumes that were extravagantly Sicilian. Even their wares were special; in addition to the standard peanuts, sodas and candy bars, each carried, prominently displayed on top, whirling silver-foil windmills, strings of brightly colored balloons, flags, banners, braided whips—and stacks of animal picture and coloring books. And to blow up balloons, the zoo was equipped with the latest in balloon-blowing devices—the "Kelly's Rocket," whose windy woosh delighted children. And the decision to build the zoo around a sea-lion pool was the crowning touch; the boisterous barking and slippery antics of these traditional circus clowns, the raucous enthusiasm with which they played tag under water, dove for the fish thrown to them by keepers and playfully slithered big-bellied and long-necked around their concrete home, insured that the central panorama would be one to delight any child—and any adult who had any child left in him. On a summer day, when the animals were all outside, and the central quadrangle in which the sea lions frolicked was lined with black-and-white-striped zebras, tan lions, furry brown monkeys and red-rumped baboons, the central panorama was, as near as any man could make it, given the CWA's stinginess, exactly what Robert Moses had envisioned—a scene out of a child's picture book.

And the zoo was viewed as the triumph it was. Some zoophiles, ignoring the violet-ray baths Moses had installed so that monkeys would get their necessary quota of sun in winter, the specially designed scratching posts set up for the lions and the replacement of Tammany's rifle-toting keepers with trained animal experts and doctors, criticized the concrete floors of the cages, which they said would give the animals tender feet. But architects, as quoted in *Fortune*, found the architecture "gay and amusing and occasionally pointedly absurd." *Architectural Forum* called the view from the cafeteria terrace "the finest eating view in the city." The press cheered, too. And the public gave its own vote of confidence. The crowds that streamed into the zoo behind La Guardia and the Honorary Night Superintendent on opening day numbered 32,000, a figure that Moses found so unbelievable that he ordered the counters he had installed at the entrance double-checked. But the next Sunday, after word of mouth about the new zoo had had a week to spread, attendance was 57,000. By 1935, on an average Sunday, more than 100,000 visitors would come to the picture book in the park.

* * *

And the Triborough Bridge was finally being built.

Here was a project to kindle the imagination.

In size, its proportions were heroic. For all Moses' previous construction feats, it dwarfed any other single enterprise he had undertaken. Its approach ramps would be so huge that houses—not only single-family homes but sizable apartment buildings—would have to be demolished by the hundreds to give them footing. Its anchorages, the masses of concrete in which its cables would be embedded, would be as big as any pyramid built by an Egyptian Pharaoh, its roadways wider than the widest roadways built by the Caesars of Rome. To construct those anchorages and to pave those roadways (just the roadways of the bridge proper itself, not the approach roads) would require enough concrete to pave a four-lane highway from New York to Philadelphia, enough to reopen Depression-shuttered cement factories from Maine to the Mississippi. To make the girders on which that concrete would be laid, Depression-banked furnaces would have to be fired up at no fewer than fifty separate Pennsylvania steel mills. To provide enough lumber for the forms into which that concrete would be poured, an entire forest would have to crash on the Pacific Coast on the opposite side of the American continent.

Triborough was really not a bridge at all, but four bridges which, together with 13,500 feet of broad viaducts, would link together three boroughs and two islands.

One of those bridges, the span over the Harlem River that would connect Manhattan with Randall's Island, would be the largest vertical-lift bridge in the world. Its two steel towers would have to be big enough to support the 2,200-ton steel deck—longer than a football field and wide enough to accommodate a six-lane highway, two sidewalks and a broad median safety island—that would hang between them. The towers would have to be big enough to contain drum hoists capable of raising that deck, together with its highway, sidewalks and median islands, eighty feet, keeping it perfectly horizontal all the time, to permit the passage of large ships.

And the Harlem River span would be the largest vertical-lift bridge in the world only on sufferance from another of Triborough's four bridges, the eight-lane, triple-span, steel-truss affair over the Bronx Kills that would connect Randall's Island with the Bronx. Because the Bronx Kills was not navigable, the Navy had ruled that its span could be a fixed structure—but only if it were built so that its central span could be converted into a lift bridge if the Kills was ever made navigable. And the Bronx Kills span would be so large that if it *were* ever converted into a lift bridge, it would be a lift bridge half again as large as its Harlem River counterpart.

And both the Harlem River and the Bronx Kills spans looked small beside the half-mile-long suspension bridge, one of the largest bridges of *that* type in the world, that would arc 135 feet in the air to carry Triborough's roadway across the turbulent rip tides of Hell Gate, the narrow, twisting, rock-lined passage between Ward's Island and Astoria in Queens. The steel towers

of *that* bridge would each be higher than a football field standing on end, and it was *that* bridge's anchorages, in whose concrete would be embedded cables made up of enough wire to circle the globe twice around, that were as big as pyramids.

The last of the four bridges—a causeway connecting Randall's and Ward's islands—would have stood alone as an engineering feat of no mean magnitude, but so huge was Triborough that the causeway was a mere incident in its construction, as was the "flying junction" on Randall's Island, the largest batch of traffic-sorting spaghetti ever concocted, a cloverleaf as big as a railroad switchyard and so ingeniously designed that although twenty-two lanes of traffic converge on, and radiate from, its long lines of toll booths, winding around one another on three decks, no one of those lanes meets or crosses another at grade and every driver using any one of them, no matter what his destination or point of origin, must stop at one, but only one, toll booth. Triborough was not a bridge so much as a traffic machine, the largest ever built. The amount of human energy that would be expended in its construction gives some idea of its immensity: more than five thousand men would be working at the site, and these men would only be putting into place the materials furnished by the labor of many times five thousand men; before the Triborough Bridge was completed, its construction would have generated more than 31,000,000 man-hours of work in 134 cities in twenty states. And the size of the bridge is also shown by the amount of money involved. With \$5,400,000 already contributed by the city and \$44,200,000 promised by the PWA, the amount promised for its construction was almost equal to the combined cost of all the projects Robert Moses had built on Long Island during the previous ten years.

And size was the least of it.

From the air—and Moses spent hours over New York City as a passenger in chartered small planes in 1934 studying the city's contours—one could hardly fail to appreciate more significant implications of the Triborough project. The built-up streets of Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens rushed together at the bridge site but paused there, held apart by the tangle of water surrounding Randall's and Ward's islands. A procession of piers, erected by the old bankrupt Triborough Authority, was scattered at odd intervals across those islands as if to show how easy it would be to bring those massed streets together by building the Triborough Bridge. But until the bridge was built, the streets would remain separated, their inhabitants condemned to countless wasted hours of needless travel. The man who built the Triborough Bridge would be a man who conferred a great boon on the greatest city in the New World. He would be the man who tied that city together. In fact, since each of the three boroughs was as large as a city in its own right, the man who built the Triborough Bridge could be said to be performing a feat equal to tying together three cities. And he would also, of course, be the man who, patching together the rent torn in the earth millennia before by the glaciers rumbling down from Hudson Bay, reunited Long Island with the mainland of the United States.

Other implications of the project were as dramatic as its size and setting.

the Legislature would not and the city could not finance its construction any further into the city. Therefore, the Triborough project—and, perhaps, only the Triborough project—could provide the funds to finish the parkway and thereby enable motorists, once they reached the Triborough Bridge, to drive all the way to Jones Beach or the other Long Island state parks on modern parkways on which they would not be delayed by a single traffic light or intersection.

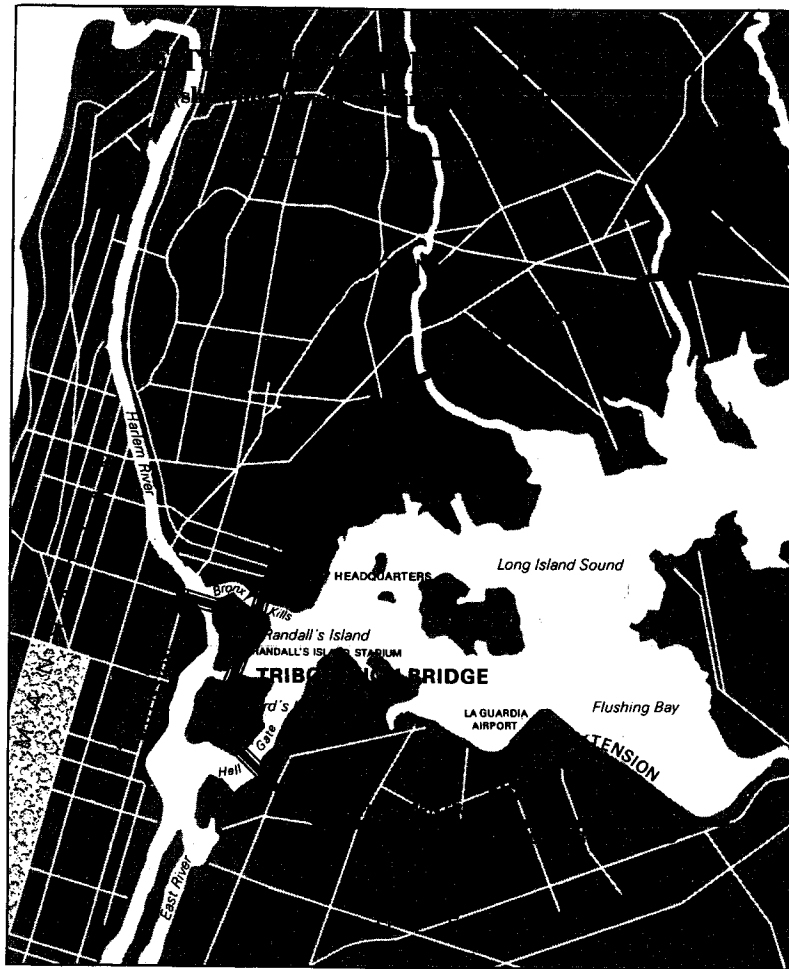
Because the Legislature would not and the city could not extend his Westchester parkways into the city, the Triborough project was the only hope of doing that, also. Moses felt sure that money could be found in the Triborough allocations to link up the bridge at least with the Hutchinson River Parkway. And once *that* link was constructed, the Long Island parkways would be linked with a Westchester parkway. Build Triborough, he felt, and the Long Island parks would at a stroke be made easily accessible from the entire New York metropolitan area.

Randall's and Ward's islands provided large stacks of additional fuel for Moses' imagination.

Throughout the city's history, those islands had been used only as repositories for its refuse, inanimate and human. The site of garbage dumps, potter's fields and almshouses during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in 1934 they held—in addition to a municipal sewage-disposal plant—the City Hospital for the Feeble-Minded and Tubercular, the grim, barracks-like, Civil War-vintage "House of Refuge" of the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents, the Manhattan State Hospital for the Insane, complete with black-barred windows, and a military hospital. The rest of the islands' four hundred acres—and an uninhabited fifty-acre sand bar to the east named "Sunken Meadow" that was identified on maps as part of Randall's Island but was actually a separate body of land set apart by a hundred yards of water—was empty and barren marshland.

But Moses didn't care about the condition of the vacant land on the islands. What was important to him was that the land was there—and that there was plenty of it.

Obtaining land anywhere near the center of New York City was extremely difficult. When you talked about new parks in center city, you were talking about tooth-and-claw battles for a vacant lot that might with luck be big enough for half a basketball court. If you found a vacant lot that measured as much as a third of an acre, it was a bonanza. And here, at the city's very heart, were 450 empty acres. Join these islands to the city and you wouldn't have to talk about halves of basketball courts any longer. You could talk about football fields and soccer fields and baseball diamonds. And you could talk about them in the dozens. There could be boat basins and marinas, picnic grounds, tree-shaded esplanades overlooking the river and lined with benches on which people could sit and watch boats passing close by. Join islands to city and you would be creating a moated oasis at the city's core. The building of the bridge would, of course, accomplish the join-



It would slash at a stroke the immense Gordian knot of the East River traffic problem by creating the first direct link between the Bronx and Queens. For Robert Moses, of course, this implication had special significance. He had built his parkways to make accessible Long Island's "healthy air," its "salty shore and breeze and brine," but millions of residents of northern Manhattan, the Bronx and Westchester—and New Jersey—still had no way of reaching those parkways, no way of reaching Long Island, except by traveling into midtown Manhattan, over the East River bridges and along the congested Queens boulevards. The construction of the Triborough Bridge would enable residents of northern Manhattan to reach Queens simply by traveling cross-town and then over the bridge; residents of the Bronx, Westchester, and New Jersey could reach Long Island without ever entering midtown Manhattan at all.

Furthermore, Moses felt confident that, out of the \$50,000,000 allocated for the bridge, enough would be left over to link it with the Grand Central Parkway, whose western terminus was stalled at Northern Boulevard because

ing automatically. And Moses felt certain that, out of fifty million dollars, he could find enough left over to transform the islands into magnificent parks—especially if the institutional buildings were torn down, as he felt they should be so that they would not interfere with the beauty of the setting. The potentialities of the project, not only for transportation, but for recreation, were awesome.

But the arrangements entered into by the Triborough Bridge Authority during its days of domination by Tammany Hall threatened to make the project as nearly worthless as it was possible for a \$50,000,000 enterprise to be.

Before he had taken over the project himself, Moses had told aides that the Authority's refusal to make any semblance of provision for approach roads in Queens and the Bronx was the most glaring example of poor planning that he had ever seen. But now, studying the project more closely, he realized that he had spoken too hastily. What the Authority had done in Queens and the Bronx, he saw, was as nothing compared to what the Authority had done in Manhattan.

The Queens terminus of the Triborough Bridge was directly across the East River from 100th Street in Manhattan. Therefore, the Manhattan terminus of the bridge should have been placed at 100th Street. It certainly should not have been placed any further uptown; the bulk of the bridge traffic—85 percent by one estimate—would be coming from, and going to, destinations south of 100th Street. Placing the Manhattan terminus at 125th Street condemned most motorists traveling between that borough and Queens to drive twenty-five totally unnecessary blocks north and then, once on the bridge, twenty-five totally unnecessary blocks south—to thus add two and a half totally unnecessary miles to their every journey over the bridge. And the complete lack of provision for any approach road from downtown would make the Manhattan portion of the totally unnecessary journey tortuous.

Then there were the plans for the bridge structure itself.

The plans called for a two-deck, sixteen-lane affair. Such a bridge would have a capacity of approximately 16,000,000 vehicles per year, but traffic studies Moses had commissioned had convinced him that it would be forty years before that capacity would be needed. (Moses was, in fact, worried about attracting even the 7,500,000 vehicles per year required to meet amortization and interest payments on the Authority bonds purchased by the PWA; he was convinced that only a network of excellent approach roads that would make the trip via Triborough clearly superior to the old, toll-free, routes would persuade that number of drivers to pay twenty-five cents per trip.) Moreover, building the bridge on two decks would greatly increase its weight, and therefore would require towers, anchorages and piers of enormous size—and cost. And the weight would, under the old plans, be further increased by the fact that the Authority was planning to cover the Triborough's steelwork with great masses of enormously costly ornamental granite. Moses' engineers told him that the two-deck bridge would cost at least \$51,000,000 instead of the \$44,200,000 the PWA had allocated.

His engineers had another surprise for Moses. They informed him that the Authority's engineers had made Triborough's lanes the same width as the lanes on the Queensborough Bridge which had proved too narrow for cars and had had to be closed while the curbstones were chipped away. Triborough's "eight-lane" decks would hold only six adequate lanes.

After taking over the Authority, Moses took almost no time to find out why the Manhattan terminus had been placed at 125th Street: William Randolph Hearst had owned deteriorating real estate there and he had wanted the city to buy it. And it took Moses little time to learn why the bridge was supposed to be bedecked with costly granite: the quarries that were supposed to furnish the granite were owned by Tammany interests.

Moses had learned how to get things done and one way not to get things done in New York was to pick a fight with Hearst and his three newspapers. He left the Manhattan terminus at 125th Street.

But that was about all Moses left. With George V. McLaughlin admiringly letting him run the Authority as he wished, Moses controlled two of its three votes. The third, he soon learned, was in his pocket, too; its possessor, the chairman and lone remaining member of the original Authority, was an attorney, Nathan Burkan, whose only interest was in protecting Hearst's, and once Moses indicated that he would not interfere with those interests—the publisher received a \$782,000 award for his 125th Street holdings—Burkan showed little further concern about the operations of the body of which he was the nominal head and never attempted to contest Moses' assumption of its executive functions. Two years earlier, Moses had called on the Authority's chief engineer, Edwin A. Byrne, the old Tammany man who had entered city service in 1886 as an axeman, and had pleaded with him to strip the granite from the bridge design and to use the money saved for approach roads, and Byrne had refused. Now Moses was Byrne's boss. In his own words: "I sent for the chief engineer and asked him which he thought was more important—adequate approaches or ornamental granite. He unhesitatingly replied, 'Granite.' This ended the conference and I told him to resign and get his pension." And Moses gave similar instructions, after conferences of similar length, to almost all of Byrne's aides.

To head Triborough's new engineering staff, Moses hired the austere, no-nonsense Swiss aristocrat who had designed the graniteless George Washington Bridge: Othmar Hermann Ammann. To head Triborough's new administrative staff, Moses hired a male version of Amelia Clanton, a stern disciplinarian he had met at Hog Island and had hired to shape up the Long Island Park Commission: retired army brigadier general Paul J. Loeser. Loeser had a gift for rubbing almost anyone the wrong way—La Guardia called him "a Prussian and a Nazi"—but Moses had seen in brief encounters with the General qualities that could be useful to him. "He was, no doubt, a martinet," Moses was to recall. "He was tough. . . . He was not popular."

Then Moses set about giving Ammann and Loeser staffs to shape up: a team of the country's most experienced bridge builders. Within weeks, this team had come up with the kind of plans Moses wanted. The granite

was eliminated. The two decks were reduced to one, the sixteen lanes were slashed to six on the Manhattan arm of the bridge and to eight on the rest—and the cost of the bridge was cut by 40 percent, from \$51,000,000 to about \$30,000,000. The Authority was now going to have a surplus of about \$14,000,000 from its \$44,200,000 PWA allocation.

Moses' plans for using the money to build the roads that would link the great bridge with his Westchester and Long Island parkways raised legal problems: the PWA allocation was for building a bridge, not roads, and while the allocation did permit expenditures for bridge "approaches," that word had traditionally referred only to the ramps leading directly up to the bridge. But Moses persuaded PWA Administrator Harold L. Ickes that "approaches" could be defined as "approach roads." He told him that without such roads the number of motorists who would use the new bridge would be too small to enable the Authority to meet the payments on the bonds the PWA had purchased—an argument that weighed heavily with the thrifty Ickes. In fact, he persuaded him not only to let him use the \$14,000,000 for approach roads but to give him an additional \$2,000,000 as well.

Sixteen million dollars was an impressive sum, but it wasn't nearly enough for the approach roads Moses had in mind. He persuaded La Guardia to search the corners of the city treasury for additional right-of-way contributions. He persuaded Civil Works Administration officials to permit him to list some of the road-building work as "park" projects—and thereby obtain hundreds of CWA laborers. Then he obtained hundreds more by diverting CWA-paid laborers on other Park Department projects to the Triborough project without CWA permission. (It always took a few days for CWA officials to find out what their laborers were doing, and by then Moses could tell them that since the work had been started, it would be silly not to allow it to be completed. After all, he pointed out, if the laborers were now reassigned, the jobs would be left unfinished—unsightly scars, offending residents of the neighborhoods in which they were located. And if the newspapers got wind of such an example of governmental inefficiency . . . The argument never failed.) And by the autumn of 1934, thanks to the success of his tactics with CWA's successor agencies, work had been begun to widen Whitlock Avenue, the Bronx thoroughfare with which the bridge connected, and Eastern Boulevard, the thoroughfare with which Whitlock Avenue connected, all the way to the Hutchinson River Parkway.

The building of Triborough's Queens approach was a triumph of imagination over seemingly insoluble problems. The four-mile gap between the bridge and the Grand Central Parkway was four miles of Jackson Heights and Astoria, and in those two communities neat one-family homes, garden apartments, stores and small factories were jammed tightly together. Condemning the number of buildings involved would be impossibly expensive, but there was no vacant land left for a parkway right-of-way.

So Moses made land. A hundred yards out from the shoreline of Jackson Heights, giant pile drivers, mounted on giant barges, pounded steel bulk-

heads into the muck at the bottom of Flushing Bay. Then long strings of barges piled high with sand from the Rockaways made their broad-beamed way up the East River, through Hell Gate and into the bay to dump the sand behind the bulkheads. Long convoys of dump trucks loaded with shale and stone and gravel rumbled across Queens to heave up their backs and slide the shale and stone in with the sand. And the mixture became a mass solid enough to hold concrete, specifically the six concrete lanes that would allow the Grand Central Parkway to circle Jackson Heights for more than two miles and wait until the last possible minute before plunging into Astoria Boulevard for the final run to the Triborough Bridge ramp.

The building of Triborough's Manhattan approach was another triumph of imagination.

Since the Manhattan terminus was to be located at 125th Street, Moses told his aides, there had to be some way of getting up to 125th Street. York Avenue, which presently ended at Ninety-second Street, would have to be extended along the riverfront.

If Charles Dickens had been looking for an illustration for an American edition of *Hard Times*, he could have stopped looking when he got to that riverfront. The stretch between Ninety-second and 125th streets was a catalogue of the unlovely by-products of industrialism; scented by the raw filth pouring from open sewers into the river below was a long row of small, grimy factories, used-car lots, auto-repair shops, junkyards, coal pockets and oil-storage depots. Hogarth could have found a whole gallery of models in the occupants of the bars, whorehouses and tenements that mingled with them. To Moses, however, the panorama possessed less appeal. Unlovely as was the scenery, it would not be cheap to condemn it. On a single factory, the Washburn Wire Works, a large, grimy building that occupied three solid blocks of riverfront, from 116th to 119th streets, the price asked was \$3,000,000.

A riverfront highway had been proposed before, but an early Corporation Counsel had announced that he had searched the deeds to the land involved and found that there was no loophole that would allow the city to take title by any procedure other than the unfeasibly expensive one of condemnation. Succeeding city administrations had assumed for decades that that finding was correct. But Moses told his bloodhounds to forget about assumptions and search the deeds again—and to *find SOMETHING, goddammit*. And the bloodhounds found something. The title to some of the lots contained a covenant more than a century old, dating back to a time when the lots had been owned by the city itself, they told Moses. And in the covenant the city reserved the right to reclaim a sixty-foot strip along the waterfront in case it ever wanted to build a street there. Moses could have sixty feet of right-of-way along a considerable stretch of his riverfront highway for nothing.

Moses' problems were still far from solved. At least six lanes were required, he figured, and the minimum width for six lanes was not sixty feet

but one hundred. And Moses did not intend to waste the waterfront in a park-starved section of the city on a highway. He wanted the river side of that highway to be not a guardrail for the highway but a park from which residents of the area could enjoy the waterfront. There should, he decided, be a tree-shaded esplanade along the waterfront, complete with benches and play areas. And for such a park at least another thirty or forty feet in width were needed, thirty or forty feet that would, if condemnation was required to obtain it, be terribly expensive.

There were other complications. The Washburn company told La Guardia that, if it was forced to move, it would move out of the city altogether and find a cheaper location somewhere else—and the Washburn company employed 1,200 men. The Mayor told Moses that the city could not afford to lose 1,200 jobs—and therefore could not take the chance that the company was bluffing. The Consolidated Edison Company owned large portions of property that were set back from the river and would not have to be condemned. But Con Ed needed access to the waterfront, and that access was now provided by overhead conveyors which crossed the property on which the East River Drive Extension would have to run. If those conveyors were eliminated, Con Ed would be hurt, and the city would have to pay the utility substantial damages.

To keep the amount of land required for the improvement as small as possible, Moses decided to build the park out over the river on a reinforced concrete platform ten feet wide—because a ten-foot-wide platform was the maximum width that could be supported without the construction of expensive pilings. He wouldn't condemn the Washburn Wire Works, he decided. He would chop off its front, run the Drive through the land thus obtained, build additions atop the factory so that its floor space would not be reduced and an underground tunnel beneath the Drive so that it would still have access to the waterfront—and reface the entire shabby edifice with neat brick. This solution would cost a million dollars—two million less than condemnation would have cost. And it saved the city 1,200 jobs.

Moses decided to tear down Con Ed's overhead conveyors and build more underground tunnels to the river so that the company could not claim consequential damages. While he was negotiating with the company about this, he horsetraded—Con Ed's citywide operations required an endless stream of concessions from the city, so, with La Guardia behind him, Moses had plenty of ammunition to horsetrade with—and obtained portions of Con Ed's property along the right-of-way without having to pay for it. Then he made another trip to Washington and asked the PWA to contribute an additional \$6,000,000 to acquire land for the Drive so that the bridge would be made more accessible to motorists and more of them would be persuaded to pay tolls to use it. The PWA wouldn't give \$6,000,000—but it would give \$2,000,000. Moses took La Guardia on a tour of the proposed improvement. La Guardia, who lived in an apartment at 106th Street and Fifth Avenue, was keenly aware of the park needs of the neighborhood. And he was fascinated by the engineering aspects of the work. Moses persuaded him that men paid by CWA and its successor agencies could be reassigned

from other city departments to provide the labor needed for the job. This reduced the cost, for land acquisition and materials mainly, to \$1,878,500. Scour the city treasury as he would, La Guardia could find no more than about \$1,300,000 that could be made available—but this contribution brought the balance down to about \$578,000, and Moses said the Authority could afford to pay that itself. And by the end of 1934, the Board of Estimate, under La Guardia's goading, was rushing through the resolutions necessary to obtain title to the area.

Then Moses turned to the question of transforming Randall's and Ward's islands into parks. His Authority had no authorization from the PWA to build parks, it was true, but he convinced PWA officials that the parks would attract to the islands—and to the bridge—enough toll-paying motorists to justify a modest investment. And a modest investment was all he had in mind, he told the officials. The Authority would have to pay for the materials needed to construct baseball diamonds, tennis courts and bench-lined esplanades, but the total cost should not be more than \$225,000. The big cost involved, that of labor, would be paid for by the CWA, for he would make the reclamation of the islands a Park Department project.

The old Authority had planned, and had received PWA authorization to build, a Randall's Island municipal stadium with a seating capacity of 10,000. "Wholly inadequate," Moses said. He wanted a stadium seating "at least" 70,000, big enough to hold an annual interborough athletic competition—the competitors to be champions selected in track meets and other athletic events held in each borough—and the big crowds that he was sure would attend. And he wanted it big enough to be the site of Olympic try-outs and great outdoor spectacles. "The stadium must be adequate for big events or it is a failure," he said. "There is ample room on the island for a big stadium." Its components must be of commensurate size, he said. For example, it should have the largest movable outdoor stage in the world. Construction of such a stadium would cost the city millions in ordinary times. But now, the labor, the biggest single item, would be paid for by the federal government. He persuaded the CWA to list the stadium as a Park Department project. A million dollars in materials would be needed for these men to work with, but he persuaded the PWA that the stadium would help attract toll payers to the bridge, and the agency allowed the Authority to increase its previously authorized contribution by \$300,000.

There was still an obstacle to the creation of parks and a stadium on Randall's and Ward's islands: the institutional buildings already there. The military hospital was only partly filled and Moses had little difficulty persuading U. S. Army and Navy officials to move the patients to other hospitals and vacate the buildings. But the House of Refuge, the Hospital for the Feeble-Minded and Manhattan State Hospital presented a more difficult problem; city and state reformatories and asylums were already overcrowded. La Guardia's hospital commissioner, Dr. Sigismund S. Goldwater, flatly refused to move patients out of the city buildings on the two islands,

and state officials said any moves would have to wait until new state institutions were constructed. But Moses persuaded Lehman to overrule the state officials and La Guardia to overrule Goldwater, and by the end of 1934, with the patients crammed into overcrowded institutions, the House of Refuge had been vacated and demolished and the razing of the Hospital for the Feeble-Minded was under way.

Meanwhile, Moses' eyes had focused on the Sunken Meadow, the fifty-acre sand bar east of Randall's Island. The hundred-yard strip of East River that separated it from the island concealed land that lay only a few feet below the surface. Moses ordered the strip filled in—and Sunken Meadow was thereby made a part of Randall's Island, and another fifty acres was acquired for park space.

The residents of the high-rent apartment houses that lined the Manhattan side of the East River had never gotten much of a view for their money. Opposite them—to the east and dragging off to the south—was scenery done in Early Industrial Era Midlands, the grimy warehouses, factories, tenements, oil tanks and open storage depots of Astoria and Long Island City. Its dreariness broken only by the gaudiness of occasional monster billboards painted large enough so that their messages could be seen clearly across the river, that vista stretched away without a break (there were no housing developments or parks there then) beneath a pall (the word "smog" had not yet gained currency) cast over it by belching smokestacks. And the scene to the north where Ward's Island lay, low in the water with Randall's behind it, had not been any prettier. Dull-colored and lifeless in the distance even when fog didn't shroud them, the two islands had been adorned only by the squat red and gray institutional buildings that failed to block out the scenery behind the islands: the South Bronx, Long Island City's spiritual descendant. Since 1932, the piers erected for the first, abortive attempt to build the Triborough Bridge had been part of the scene, but, dun-colored, featureless and, without a bridge on top of them, seeming in the distance like a succession of walls to play handball against, they did little to relieve its drabness. The view had not been inspiring.

By the end of 1934, that was no longer true.

By the end of that year, the residents of the East River apartments, looking north, could see giant cranes moving about on the islands like long-necked dinosaurs prowling far-off marshes. Around the cranes were stirring masses of men. Over the water came the pound of pile drivers, a sound that was dull and far away, but that never seemed to stop. And rising from behind the little buildings on the left of Ward's Island and curving off to the right across the island in a gigantic curve, a highway was being bolted into place in the sky.

The highway, carried across Ward's Island on the piers, climbed in a long, slow, powerful line. Across the river—to the right as the watchers looked north—they could see its steel roadbed slanting unhurriedly down behind the first line of factories. There was a great gap in the center, but it took

little imagination to see how the roadbed would continue to rise there until it was flung across the Hell Gate, for the hulking concrete anchorages that would hold the cables for the Hell Gate suspension bridge were already in place ("Immense things they are," wrote an observer; "beside the Nile they would pass for pyramids"), and so were the bridge's steel towers, which loomed over the river like the façades of twin cathedrals. And even as the watchers watched, new portions of the roadbed paraded past them. Pushing aside the sullen gray of the East River would come a squad of barges, lashed together side by side to bear a weight measured in thousands of tons and pushed along by a whole covey of panting tugboats, bearing to the waiting cranes the specially fabricated steel girders that would hold the bridge roadbed girders—some of which were as big as a ten-room ranch house.

Enormous as the Triborough Bridge seemed to watchers along the East River, moreover, they were seeing only a small portion of the whole project.

Engineers and journalists felt that it was only from a plane that one could get a feel of the project in its three-borough entirety. From the air, one journalist said, "you could see the avenues being widened as if a giant chisel was being rammed between them."

And from the air, more than one journalist said, the project seemed almost too big to grasp.

Robert Moses erected the complex of buildings that was the Central Park Zoo at least partly because of his devotion to Alfred E. Smith. He tore down another building in the park wholly because of that devotion.

He tore down Jimmy Walker's Casino.

Everyone who was interested in the cause of parks in New York City disapproved of the use to which Calvert Vaux's Ladies Refreshment Salon was being put, of course. But none of them wanted the building torn down. As a structure designed by one of the creators of Central Park, it held a special place in the city's history. And for many of the reformers, it was associated with pleasant memories; they could remember accompanying their parents on Sunday bicycle or horseback rides through the park that ended with lunch there in the quieter days before the World War. Moreover, the building possessed a Victorian charm precious in its own right. As a practical matter, although Solomon and his backers had poured almost \$400,000 into improvements in the building's interior, he was nonetheless only renting it from the city. The city still owned it. The Park Department could ask him to lower his prices and thereby make the magnificent dining rooms and pavilions more accessible to the general public. If Solomon refused, the city could attempt to cancel his lease and install in his place a more amenable concessionaire. And even if the attempt failed, the lease had only five more years to run; after that, the building, and the improvements, would revert to the city forever. The Park Association had been campaigning for the Casino's conversion into a moderate-priced restaurant, but when the Association's members heard that Moses was planning to raze the building—announcing

that it was structurally unsound, that it would cost too much to repair and that luxury restaurants had no place in parks anyway, he said that a playground, complete with wading pool, would be constructed on its site—they were aghast. Such an act, they said, would be wanton destruction. Financially, it made even less sense; a group of restaurant owners had already asked for permission to operate the Casino as a moderate-priced restaurant, abiding by any rules that Moses wished to establish—and pay the city \$25,000 annual rental plus a liberal share of the receipts. And finally, as the Casino's chef, Henri Charpontier, put it in a plaintive letter to the *Times*: "Why choose the site of the Casino . . . when there are broad expanses as far as the eye can reach on either side of the Casino, where as fine a swimming [sic] pool as the Commissioner's kind heart urges him to provide could easily be located?"

But Moses refused to compromise. The considerations which motivated him were not historical, aesthetic or financial. To a large extent, they were hardly rational. "It was a case of revenge, pure and simple," says Paul Windels, La Guardia's Corporation Counsel who advised Moses on the case before turning it over, "in disgust," to Assistant Corporation Counsel William C. Chanler. "He never said so straight out, but everyone around him knew why he was doing it—he wanted to get back at Walker for what Walker had done to Governor Smith. God, he wanted to get Walker!" (And the oddest part about the affair, Windels says, was that, "to the best of my knowledge," Moses never spoke to Governor Smith about it—and if he had, Governor Smith "would have told him not to do it.")

Solomon, panicking over his investment, offered to confer with Moses and revise his price list. "I am not going to confer with Mr. Solomon," Moses replied. With La Guardia, advised by Windels against supporting an establishment as notorious as the Casino, refusing to intervene, Chanler served Solomon with an eviction notice that charged the Casino Corporation with a number of technical violations of its lease; a typical charge was that, by allowing fashion shows to be held there, the Casino had violated a regulation prohibiting advertising on park property.

Solomon took the case to court. The trial turned out to be embarrassing for both him and Moses.

Solomon was forced to admit that, during the five years of its existence, the Casino had grossed more than three million dollars and he himself had drawn more than a quarter of a million in salary—while paying the city a total of \$42,500 in rent. He had to admit that Park Department officials had been allowed to consume tens of thousands of dollars of free food and liquor. And he had to manage to keep a straight face while maintaining under cross-examination that he couldn't remember the name of a single one of those officials, or of a single one of the Casino's stockholders.

But Moses had some bad moments on the stand, too.

One was reminiscent of the way he had been trapped in an apparent lie the only other time he had found himself under oath. In the Taylor Estate trial, he had testified that he had never been advised that appropriation without funds was illegal, and W. Kingsland Macy's attorney, Charles H. Tuttle, had thereupon produced the paper which had given him that very

advice and waved it in front of him. Now, sitting in the witness chair in State Supreme Court in Foley Square, Moses said that he would allow in city parks only restaurants that charged "reasonable" prices, and when pressed for his definition of "reasonable," he said that luncheon should be one dollar or less, coffee no more than a dime—and that "the à la carte system" is a luxury which should not be permitted to exist in a park restaurant. Whereupon Solomon's attorney, the same Charles H. Tuttle, produced a paper, waved it in front of Moses and asked if he recognized it. It was a luncheon menu, approved by Moses, from the Tavern-on-the-Green, the restaurant Moses had installed in the sheepfold after renovating it and turning it over to a favorite concessionaire for a nominal rental, and the attorney read from it a long list of à la carte entrees for luncheon, all priced over a dollar, and concluded by reading the Tavern's price for coffee—twenty-five cents.

The press, which had long used the Casino as a convenient symbol of the abuses of the corrupt "Walkerian Court," treated the trial as an attempt to end those abuses. If there was a principle involved, the press ignored it. But some reformers did not. The Casino case marked the first significant defections from the solid ranks the city's Good Government movement had previously formed behind Moses in every encounter. Not all reformers disapproved of his attempt to demolish the building, of course. Most still believed that anything he did was right—apparently, judging from their comments, because they believed his motives were pure; when he said the building was structurally unsound and repairs were unfeasible, they believed him. And most of those who, having seen the Casino, found his contention difficult to believe, felt sure that he had simply made a mistake, one to which, in view of his past record, he was more than entitled. But some reformers, and among them some of the men and women who had played the most vital roles in persuading the Legislature to allow Moses to assume the city park commissionership, found it difficult to reconcile their idealized image of him with the fact that he was now contemplating "destroying property . . . in Central Park which did not belong to him but to the entire city." And they were certain, they said, that he did not have the power to do so.

But this last group of reformers was in for an awakening, the same kind of awakening that had been undergone ten years before by Trubee Davison, who had introduced a bill Moses had drafted without thoroughly studying it, and by upstate reformers like Ansley Wilcox and Alphonse Clearwater, who had been tricked by Moses into supporting the Davison bill. In outlining the powers of the New York City Park Commissioner, as in outlining the powers of the chairman of the State Council of Parks, Moses had proved again that he was the best bill drafter in Albany.

The city reformers had supported the bill that had allowed Moses to become Commissioner despite reservations about some of its broader provisions. Now they looked at the bill more closely—and found that it was not only its broader provisions that they should have been worried about.

Chanler startled them by arguing in court that the bill granted the City Park Commissioner absolute power "to raze or remove . . . buildings which had been erected as incidental to park uses, such as restaurants, boat houses

and similar structures," and that it further provided, as additional insurance against any check on his actions, that "such changes will not be supervised by the judicial power unless palpably . . . abusive of the grant." The inclusion of such language in the bill, they realized, meant that not even the courts could stop Moses from tearing down any structure in the parks that he wanted to tear down. As Trubee Davison had done ten years before, they hurriedly began reading the law—and they found that the language was, buried within a mass of other legalese, indeed in it. And they found that some other language was *not* in it, language that had previously been included in city park laws at their request to insure against willful changes in the parks at the whim of a Park Commissioner. Under the old statute, the approval of a landscape architect, "skilled and expert," had been required for any major alteration in a park. Now there was no longer any such requirement. Moses had skillfully amended it out of the new law. Chanler said in court that the new law gave Moses the right to do whatever he wanted in parks as long as it was for a "proper park use" and that Moses was the only man who could determine what was, and was not, a proper use. And Chanler was right. As the reformers read the law, the law that they had helped pass, they realized that they had helped turn over the parks that were the priceless heritage of the city to the whim of one man.

Before the issue was finally decided, a number of requests for injunctions against the demolition were argued before several different Supreme Court Justices. One, John F. Carew, allowed his emotions to boil over on the bench. Moses' contention that the Casino was in an irreparably bad state of disrepair, Carew said, was "obviously preposterous and contrary to the facts." Having thus called Moses a liar in legalese, Carew went on.

The Casino, he said, "has long been an honorable, useful, beloved, admired, valuable and even historic monument. . . . The Park Commissioner has no more power to destroy the Casino than he has to destroy the Obelisk, to fill in the reservoir, or the lake, to tear down City Hall, the Arsenal [or] the many historic buildings, monuments, structures, statues in the many other parks of the City, the treasured relics of generations here. He is only to hold office for a brief term. He is the passing creature of a day. He will in time, and that not long, be superseded. He may not 'waste' the heritage of New York. In the meantime . . . he must restrain his extravagant, excessive energy and zeal or he must be restrained." He issued the injunction.

But Moses wasn't worried. He knew what was in the law. "I think the higher court will take care of Justice Carew," he told a reporter airily. And he was right. When Chanler appealed Carew's decision to the Appellate Division in Albany, the five justices of that court, sitting together in their high-backed chairs, said that the powers the Legislature had granted to Moses were far too broad and indicated that they wished the Legislature would revoke some of them. But for the present, they said, the law was passed, and it was unfortunately clear; they had no choice but to overrule Carew's decision. If Moses had the power to destroy the Casino, Carew had said, he had the power to destroy the Obelisk, the Arsenal, City Hall or any other structure, no matter how historic, no matter how beautiful, no matter

how treasured, in any park in New York City. Carew was wrong about City Hall; it lies just outside the northern boundary of City Hall Park; Moses couldn't tear it down. But Carew was right about everything else.

Moving quickly to forestall any further appeals, Moses had crews of workmen tearing down the Casino within twenty-four hours after he received a copy of the Appellate Court decision. Within two months, the building was gone and its site was covered with a playground. Except for its stained-glass windows, which were used in the new police station being constructed on the Eighty-sixth Street Transverse Road, Robert Moses had succeeded in eradicating every trace of the spiritual home of the man who had publicly humiliated Alfred E. Smith.