

*by Robert A. Caro*

**THE  
POWER BROKER**

***ROBERT MOSES AND THE FALL OF NEW YORK***



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Roosevelt in pushing him at the last moment into a race foredoomed by the fact that Roosevelt had a four-year head start.

Moses saw at once that the effort was hopeless. "The Smith movement never had a chance," he was to recall. "It started very late, and really had no organization to speak of." He never let himself be deluded by those reminders of past glories which gave Belle Moskowitz, Henry Moskowitz, Judge Proskauer, Herbert Bayard Swope and George McLaughlin flashes of hope: the rallying of Walker and Tammany to Smith's side after Roosevelt had authorized Samuel Seabury to investigate corruption in New York City; the defection to Smith's banner of big-city organizations and the consequent raising of his delegate count to 201; the wild cheers of the tremendous throng that lined his route from the La Salle Street Station in Chicago to the Congress Hotel, where a Smith-for-President headquarters had been hastily established. But practical realities did not weigh with Moses where Al Smith was concerned. Moses was one of those who struggled to the end in convention maneuvering so bitter that Ed Flynn called it "a fight to the death," who fought to hold together an alliance of dark horses that denied Roosevelt the nomination until the fourth ballot, who thought for a few brief hours that they actually had Roosevelt stopped and would be able to force the party to turn to Smith, and whose hopes were finally dashed when the ex-Governor's old adversary, William Randolph Hearst, used his influence with California's William G. McAdoo and John Nance Garner, Governor of Texas, to force the California and Texas delegations to switch to Roosevelt. Moses was one of the small group of friends who sat down with Smith in front of a radio in the Congress Hotel to listen to the last ballot, who watched the former Governor haul himself wearily out of his chair as soon as McAdoo began the speech that signaled the California switch and with a wave of his hand direct them to start packing so they could leave Chicago. He was one of those who sneaked out of the Congress Hotel by a side door with Smith at the moment that crowds were jamming the front entrance to greet the arriving Roosevelt, who listened to the ex-Governor, cornered by reporters, refuse to say he would support his party's choice and who watched anxiously as Smith sat silent on the long train ride home with his face marked by what one observer called a "tired sadness." And if Moses accepted Smith's defeat with his mind, he never accepted it with his heart. A month after the convention, with "Happy Days Are Here Again" drowning out the strains of "The Sidewalks of New York" forever in the Democratic Party's consciousness, Smith's campaign staff held its first and only reunion, complete with a menu featuring "Nuts McAdoo," "Celery Farley" and "Branchless Olives Roosevelt" in the Empire State Club in the Empire State Building. And Moses' contribution to the occasion reflected his bitterness. It was a quotation from Shakespeare that he selected for an epigraph on the menu's cover:

*Politics is a thieves' game.  
Those who stay in it long enough are invariably robbed.*

## 18. New York City Before Robert Moses

NOW ROBERT MOSES' EYES were turning again to the city around which, as a youth, he had wandered "burning up" with ideas for its improvement.

Nowhere had America's Great Depression struck harder than in America's greatest city.

New York in 1932 was half-completed skyscrapers, work on them long since halted for the lack of funds, that glared down on the city from glassless windows. It was housewives scavenging for vegetables under pushcarts. It was crowds gathering at garbage dumps in Riverside Park and swarming onto them every time a new load was deposited, digging through the piles with sticks or hands in hopes of finding bits of food. New York was the soup kitchens operated from the back of army trucks in Times Square. It was the men, some of them wearing Chesterfield coats and homburgs, who lined up at the soup kitchens with drooping shoulders and eyes that never looked up from the sidewalk. New York was the breadline, "the worm that walks like a man."

New York was the postman handing you the registered letter that you both knew was the eviction notice. It was the long queues that formed in the early afternoon at the Municipal Lodging Houses, and it was the desperate haste of the men turned away to get to one of the nearby bars which allowed customers who purchased even a single drink to sleep on the floor as long as there was space. Subways were truly for sleeping, and when patrolmen walked along station platforms rapping on soles, the men lying there arose without a protest, carefully gathering up their pallets of newspapers, shuffled onto a train and rode to the next station, where they spread their papers and lay down again.

More than 10,000 of New York's 29,000 manufacturing firms had closed their doors. Nearly one of every three employables in the city had lost his job. An estimated 1,600,000 New Yorkers were receiving some form of public relief. Many of those fortunates who had kept their jobs were "underemployed," a euphemism for the fact that they worked two or three days a week or two weeks a month—or, if they worked full time, were paid a fraction of their former salaries; stenographers, earning \$35 to \$40 per

week in 1928, were averaging \$16 in 1933; Woolworth's was paying full-time salesladies \$7 per week.

Parents skimped for their children—by December 1932 many parents could hardly remember a time when they *hadn't* been skimping—but skimping was only forestalling the inevitable. There was meat on the table twice a week and then once—and then not at all. Then there were no eggs. Parents could make their children feel it was an honor that they didn't have to drink milk any more and could drink coffee instead, but the lack of proper diet took a toll. "Looking back, we can see quite a change," said one schoolteacher. "The children haven't any pep; they don't seem like the same youngsters they were a year ago." They seemed tired; they didn't seem to learn as fast. Said a school nurse: "When you go into a classroom you notice a different expression on [their] faces. . . . There is a strained, anxious look not natural in children at all."

Sometimes the things that outsiders didn't see were worst of all. Teachers didn't see the children whose families were poorest; such children had dropped out of school because they had no money for carfare, lunches or suitable clothes. Staffers at the city's free health clinics were encouraged by the fact that the number of malnutrition cases they handled was rising only gradually (although by 1934 such cases nevertheless would account for 60 percent of all clinic work). Then the staffers realized that many people suffering from malnutrition simply weren't going to the clinics because they knew perfectly well what was wrong with them—and also knew that they would be unable to do anything about it. And no one could see a state of mind; all one could do was try to describe it, as Martha Gellhorn did: "Everywhere there seemed a spreading listlessness, a whipped feeling. . . . I find them all in the same shape—fear, fear . . . an overpowering terror of the future."

The city's government did little to help its people.

The will to help was not the force that drove that government. That force was greed. During the fifteen years in which Red Mike Hylan and then Beau James Walker had been Chief Magistrate of America's greatest city, the Tammany leaders who served under them had seemed motivated primarily by the desire to siphon the city's vast resources into a vast trough on which they could batten.

Former Judge Samuel Seabury's investigation of corruption in the city, which had begun in 1930, had revealed how successfully this siphoning had been accomplished, exposing the bank accounts, running into the hundreds of thousands of dollars, of literally dozens of city officials, who followed one another to the witness stand in a seemingly endless procession that was dubbed "The Tin Box Parade" after one testified that he had found \$360,000 in his home in "a tin box . . . a wonderful tin box." Then Seabury turned to the Magistrates Courts. Witnesses revealed that hundreds of innocent housewives and working girls had been framed as prostitutes and, if they could not raise money to buy their freedom, had been jailed, sometimes for months, by a

cabal of crooked vice-squad policemen, court clerks and magistrates. Shocked by the strangling in Van Cortlandt Park of one scheduled female witness—her teen-age daughter committed suicide a week later—the city listened in horror to the others Seabury paraded to the stand. One told of helping vice-squad patrolmen trail a young married woman as she inspected houses with a male real estate agent. When they had returned to her home and were waiting for her husband to arrive and conclude the transaction, the police broke in, frightened the real estate agent out of testifying and arrested her. Other witnesses testified that, when business was slow, the vice squad simply "raided" flats in Negro Harlem and made wholesale arrests at random. When Mayor Walker took the stand—"Don't look him straight in the eye," warned a Seabury aide familiar with Beau James's charm, and the former judge stood sideways to Walker as much as possible while questioning him—Seabury revealed that the Mayor had personally accepted more than a million dollars in "beneficences" from firms doing business with the city. On September 1, 1932, while Governor Roosevelt was pondering whether or not to remove Walker from office, the Mayor resigned and sailed for Europe to join Betty ("Monk") Compton, last and loveliest of his paramours, thereby following a traveling precedent established by Robert C. Van Wyck, the first mayor (1898-1901) of the consolidated city, who had died in Paris, and the man who had hand-picked Van Wyck for the job, Tammany boss Richard Croker, who had died in England. Surrogate John Patrick O'Brien won the special election to fill the remaining year of Walker's term, but he proved to be as much a creature of Tammany as his predecessors. While Tammany leaders were trying to persuade the electorate that they had no control over him, O'Brien was replying to reporters who asked him who his Police Commissioner would be, "I don't know. They haven't told me yet." And during O'Brien's administration local Tammany relief administrators would siphon off a big chunk of federal relief payments before they reached their intended recipients—and the city would continue to do nothing to supplement federal programs, although a supplement would have been helpful, since federal payments averaged seventeen dollars per week per family. Tammany would try to use federal payments to build its political power, putting ward heelers on relief payrolls under several different names so that they could draw several salaries for themselves. And the federal payrolls did not show whether the men receiving its money were the men who most needed it. In New York City under Tammany Hall, the test for employment on a federal project was generally politics rather than need; most applicants had to be cleared by their local Tammany leader; one leader boasted, "This is how we make Democrats."

Even had the city wanted to help its people, it would have been unable to. The Depression had forced New York to total up at last the cost of its Rake's Progress under the Hylan and Walker administrations.

When Hylan became mayor of New York on January 1, 1918, the city's population was 5,872,143. Fifteen years later, when Walker resigned, it

was 6,930,446—an increase of 15 percent. During that same period, the city's budget rose from \$240,519,858 to \$631,366,298—an increase of 250 percent. The per capita cost of the budget increased by 200 percent. Year in and year out between January 1, 1918, and December 31, 1932, the city's debt increased at a rate equal to \$100,000 per day, until, on the latter date, it had reached the staggering total of \$1,897,481,478—a figure that was almost equal to the combined debt of the forty-eight states and that required an annual appropriation for debt service (the payment of interest and amortization) of \$209,960,338, almost a third of the entire budget.

Since jobs were the fuel of Tammany's political machine, a disproportionate share of the rest of the budget went to purchase that fuel; between the day Hylan entered office and the day Walker left it, the number of city employees almost doubled, and their salaries, paid as political rewards at levels far above those paid for similar work in private industry, almost tripled. In 1932, they totaled \$311,937,199.

City officials acted as if they believed that the budgetary gyre could go on widening indefinitely. They based their optimism on the fact that the value of taxable real estate in the city, the base of the city's tax structure, was increasing almost as fast as city expenditures. As a result, even while the city's budget soared, there was only a slight increase in the real estate tax rate. If the Hylan and Walker administrations had erected a huge superstructure of city expenditures, that superstructure was nonetheless resting on a base that they thought was steadily broadening.

Even before the Depression, however, the rate of increase in the base had begun to slow down ominously. The annual percentage of increase in the value of taxable real estate in the city was 12 in 1927 but only 9 in 1928 and 8 in 1929. The Depression forced this key percentage down to 6 in 1930, 3 in 1931, 1 in 1932. And the Depression forced *up* another key percentage, the percentage of real estate taxes which the city was unable to collect; in the years between 1928 and 1932 this percentage was, successively, 11, 13, 15, 18, 26. The uncollected balance of the 1932 real estate tax, the tax which had to finance the bulk of the city's debt service and current expenditures, was \$137,613,213. The base on which the top-heavy superstructure of city finances teetered was shrinking, and it was shrinking fast. The superstructure began to topple.

In desperation the city deferred its required annual payments to the Teachers Retirement Fund and expropriated Sinking Fund surpluses already obligated for small-scale public improvements. Unable despite these expedients to meet even its ordinary day-to-day expenses, it was forced to borrow to pay them—at interest rates set higher and higher by bankers increasingly leery of the city's ability to repay. By 1931, even Jimmy Walker was talking about "economizing."

But the city's economizing capacity was limited because one-third of its budget was allocated for an all but irreducible debt service and because of political realities: the city payroll had become the payroll of the Tammany political machine, and while a city might reduce the number of its employees

or their salaries, it was less easy for a political machine to throw its retainers off the payroll or substantially reduce their stipends. City construction contracts had become the main ingredient of the rich swill of graft to which the palate of Tammany leaders—including those party leaders who held high city office—had become accustomed; city officials could reduce a city's appropriations for construction, but men accustomed to feeding at a well-filled trough were far less ready to reduce their own portions. Even while talking economy, city officials made clear that they would not economize on construction appropriations or salaries. (There was one exception: one group of city employees—schoolteachers—were not part of the Tammany machine. In 1930 and 1931, the city fired 11,000 schoolteachers.) The 1932 city budget was the highest ever. The city proposed to finance it with a record increase in the real estate tax rate.

But the day of reckoning for fifteen years of Tammany rule was at hand. When, in January 1932, the city attempted to float new loans to meet the payroll coming due at the end of the month, bankers, convinced that the loans could not be repaid if the city spent money during the coming year at the rate it proposed, refused to make them unless the budget was reduced. The city complied by virtually halting all repairs to its physical plant. It refinanced a quarter-billion dollars of subway bonds, which the city had planned to redeem out of current revenues, by selling long-term bonds in their stead—an expedient which loaded future generations of city taxpayers with a monstrous rapid-transit debt.

Still the city's balance sheet reddened. By December 1932, it was forced to go hat in hand to the bankers again, and when new loans were made contingent on further budget reductions, it had no choice but to cut the salaries of city employees by 6 to 33 percent. And hundreds of millions of dollars in short-term revenue notes would be coming due in 1933 and there was no money in sight to pay them.

Although Walker and O'Brien attempted to do so, it was a misleading oversimplification to blame the Depression for all of New York's problems. The truth was that the city had been falling further and further behind in the race to meet the needs of its people in good times as well as bad, and under reform as well as Tammany administrations.

The city's failure was most apparent, and the problems largest, in those categories of municipal responsibility in which the betterment of its people's lives required the construction of public works on a scale commensurate with the city's size. The concern of the people's tribunes during the Low and Mitchel reform administrations had been for the people's welfare, but that welfare had been conceived of primarily as a lessening of the burden on taxpayers through governmental economy rather than through the construction of civic improvements whose cost would increase that burden. And while Tammany administrations had spent the taxpayers' money with a lavish hand, the taxpayers had received in return surprisingly little increment in

life-improving steel and concrete, because the disproportionate amount of the city's budget funneled by Tammany into salaries—into patronage—left little money available for construction contract appropriations.

The quality of men added to the city payroll, moreover, did not match the quantity, thanks to Hylan's destruction of civil service safeguards. If there was a man less devoted to the merit system than Red Mike, it was his successor; when Beau James departed for Europe, he left behind him, on the rosters of the engineering staffs of the borough presidents, the staffs which alone under the existing City Charter were empowered to draw the plans for major public improvements, a group of "engineers" of whom a substantial percentage lacked a high school diploma. And the city's resultant lack of technical expertise crippled its ability to carry out, or even conceive, complicated public works.

So did the amount of graft, the grease which kept the Tammany machine moving smoothly. From condemnation awards—"Every time the city built a school, a politician went into the real estate business," La Guardia growled—to certificates of completion, every step toward a public improvement required a payoff. Since contractors had to include the cost of such payoffs in their estimates of the cost of city construction work, their bids had to be inflated accordingly. The amount of steel and concrete that a city dollar purchased was correspondingly reduced, and the size of contracts the city awarded was not matched by improvements to the civic estate. "The city did not get what it paid for," commented Fusion financial expert Joseph D. McGoldrick. "Although it certainly paid for what it got"—several times over. For its single major public improvement, the construction of the Independent Subway System, the Walker administration paid \$800,000,000—approximately twice what outside experts said the job should have cost. And when the \$800,000,000 had been spent, substantial portions of the subway were still uncompleted.

And since the hands which city inspectors held out, palms up, to contractors could not easily be doubled into hard fists of regulation, the quality of public works in New York City was more than slightly suspect. No fewer than forty public schools constructed during Walker's administration had to be closed for major repairs—for ceilings that fell, roofs that leaked, stairways that collapsed and plumbing that didn't work at all—within a year of opening.

The gap between the city's physical plant and the increasing needs of its expanding population had, then, been widening in virtually all areas of municipal responsibility. The total accomplishment of the Walker administration in public housing, for example, consisted of the rehabilitation of *some* of the tenements on *one* block, and the number of public hospital beds when Beau James left office was precisely the same as when he entered it. But because of the sudden burgeoning in the use of the automobile and in the desire for active recreation, the city's failure to produce for its people was especially galling in precisely those areas in which Robert Moses had already produced, just outside New York City, so much: highways, bridges

office, there were 125,101 motor vehicles in the city; in 1932, there were 790,173. In all those fifteen years not a single usable mile of arterial highway had been constructed within the city's borders. Motorists were forced to travel through or around New York in 1932 on the same local streets that had existed in 1918, streets complete with intersecting traffic, traffic lights—and traffic jams reporters had long since run out of adjectives attempting to describe.

In 1913, Robert Moses had stood on a high bluff overlooking the muddy wasteland that was Riverside Park and had envisioned a great parkway running through it. In 1932, there was still no highway. The city had begun construction in 1927 of a West Side Elevated Highway running along the waterfront from the Battery as far uptown as Seventy-second Street, the park's southern border. But the pace of construction had been so slow that, when the Depression brought it to a halt in 1931, substantial portions of the highway had not been built—not that that mattered much, since neither had the entrance and exit ramps that would make it usable. And since there were no plans to extend the highway through Riverside Park, motorists heading for Westchester and New England still had to make their way through—and add to—the congenital traffic jams of Manhattan and the Bronx before they could reach the broad Saw Mill River Parkway, which Moses had built down to the city line.

Queens had once been the only borough with adequate through roads. Manhattan families heading for Nassau and Suffolk counties, once past the East River bridges, had not encountered serious delays until they reached the city line and the narrow roads beyond. But with the construction beyond the line of Moses' parks and parkways, the situation was now reversed; the lure of his creations had steadily increased the traffic flow through Queens, and its boulevards were inadequate to handle it. Furthermore, none of the boulevards linked up with a parkway, so drivers wanting to use one had to endure local streets before they got to it.

As for Brooklyn, borough of churches, its inhabitants had been praying for a way out of it for decades. There was, in the entire borough, not a single major through thoroughfare. There was no way out of its vast center, no way to reach Manhattan or Queens or Nassau County, except via local streets. And the streets of Brooklyn, like those of Queens, were becoming more clogged every year; the population of the two boroughs increased by more than a million between 1920 and 1930.

As for connections for automobiles under or over the water which separated the city's boroughs, there hadn't been one built in a quarter of a century.\* Manhattan motorists bound for the Bronx, Westchester or New England, after crawling uptown through Manhattan's congestion, found when they reached Manhattan's northern boundary, the Harlem River, that the only way to cross it to get to the congested streets of the Bronx was the

\* Two connections had been built, by the Port of New York Authority, between the city and New Jersey: the Holland Tunnel, which opened in 1927, and the George

Broadway drawbridge, only three lanes wide and so crammed with pillars that traffic tie-ups at either end often extended for blocks. On an average day in 1932, the bridge was raised fourteen times to permit the passage of ships. When one of these raisings occurred at rush hour, the tie-up could extend for miles.\*

The population of Long Island, concentrated in Brooklyn and Queens, was more than four million in 1932—greater than all except eight states. But except for a few small and ancient ferries that plied the East River, the only way on or off Long Island for motorists was the same quartet of "East River bridges" that had existed in 1909. Long Island still didn't possess a single vehicular link with the mainland United States. The Island didn't possess a single vehicular link with Manhattan Island north of Fifty-ninth Street, where the Queensborough Bridge touched down. The Queensborough, in fact, was the only link with Manhattan north of Corlears Hook, where the Brooklyn, Manhattan and Williamsburg spans debouched traffic onto the already jammed thoroughfares of the Lower East Side.

On an average weekday in 1933, 238,277 trucks and cars, three times what they were built to handle, poured onto the East River bridges. The Queensborough carried more cars than any other span in the country.

The inadequacy of the approaches to these bridges was matched by the inadequacy of their roadways. Built for horses, not automobiles, they were too narrow for cars and so slippery that, according to a police report, on the Brooklyn Bridge alone, "a dozen accidents were not uncommon on a rainy day."

City officials had been talking for years about repaving the bridges, but no repaving had been done. They had been talking for years about widening their roadways, but no widening had been done. Although in 1932 the Queensborough Bridge had been open for a quarter of a century, the city had not yet gotten around even to marking lanes on it. At either end of the bridge were traffic lights; when they were red, bridge traffic stopped completely. A 1931 police study found that during rush hours the average driver, frantically shifting gears while trying to keep his car in an unmarked lane, spent forty-three minutes negotiating the 1,182 feet of the Queensborough span. The city had created two additional lanes on the Queensborough upper roadway in 1931, but when the lanes were opened, it was discovered that there had been a slight miscalculation: the lanes were too narrow; cars were constantly skinning their tires on the granite curbs. The lanes had to be closed while workmen laboriously chipped away the edges of the curbstones—and the workmen would be chipping, and the lanes would be closed, for three years.

The lack of new interborough bridges and tunnels wasn't due to a lack of ideas; New York was littered with evidence to prove that there had

\* Northbound motorists could, of course, cross the Harlem River on one of seven bridges that had been built years before—the newest was finished in 1910—miles to the south. But these bridges debouched into the most congested section of the Bronx, miles from the parkways and other broad roads of Westchester.

been plenty of those. But the evidence also proved how difficult it was, in New York, for ideas to become reality.

In a weed-filled vacant lot in Riverdale just north of the Harlem River stood a marble column a hundred feet high with a strangely unfinished look about its top. There was supposed to be a statue up there, a statue of Hendrick Hudson, for the vacant lot had been purchased by the city as the northern bridgehead of a "Hendrick Hudson Bridge" that was supposed to ease the congestion on the Broadway drawbridge, and a statue of the Great Navigator was supposed to look down on the span that bore his name. But although the lot had been purchased, and the column erected, in 1909, in 1932 work had still not started on the statue—or the bridge.

On the shoreline in Brooklyn's Bay Ridge section, at the edge of the Narrows, stood two rude wooden palisades, rotting from a decade's exposure to sea spray. The palisades had been erected to keep children from falling into two huge holes, each ninety-six feet deep. Directly across the Narrows, dug into the Staten Island shoreline, were two similar holes. The four holes had been the start of the shaft heads for a great "Narrows Tube" designed to link Brooklyn with Staten Island. Work on the tube had begun in 1921. The city had spent more than \$7,000,000 on it. But digging had been stopped in 1923 and never resumed, and in 1932 the project was dead—the four empty holes the only evidence of the money spent on it.

And marching across low-lying Ward's Island in the East River were seventeen massive masonry piers, each of them forty feet thick, eighty feet long, more than a hundred feet high. These piers had been erected to support the central span of the "triborough bridge," first proposed in 1910, that would link together at last Manhattan, the Bronx and Queens. But in 1932 the piers had been standing for more than two years, and there was still no bridge for them to support—and hope that there ever would be was rapidly fading.

As for New York's parks, they were scabs on the face of the city.

Parks were the city's legacy from reformers who had fought against long odds for their creation; under Tammany they had become fiefs administered for private gain. The Brooklyn Park Department paid for hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of landfill that it never received. It constructed a large restaurant and for a yearly rental of ten dollars turned over its keys to a restaurateur who was allowed to keep all profits. When a Brooklyn brick manufacturer needed ten acres for a new storage area, the department allowed him to rent ten acres of Dyker Beach Park—for a rental of \$2.50 per year. And during his term as Brooklyn Park Commissioner, James J. Browne banked \$1,071,713.

Some of the city's choicest public beach front—in Wolfe's Pond Park on Staten Island and at Orchard Beach in the Bronx, for example—was rented to political insiders, who, for a fee of fifteen dollars, were allowed to erect private bungalows on it, and to form "civic associations" that promulgated regulations closing the beaches to the public.

Because parks were a handy place to conceal drunks and loafers, Tammany staffed the park departments with the dregs of its barrel of ward

heelers. Because skilled laborers' higher salaries would reduce the amount of patronage that could be distributed, Tammany balked at hiring skilled workers even for those jobs that required skills. So that most of the park department budgets could be devoted to salaries, Tammany scrimped on materials and equipment, spending exactly \$225,000 of the total park budget of \$8,576,319 on such luxuries in 1932—and in that year 90 percent of park department vehicles were still horse-drawn.

By 1932, the paths, walks and roadways in New York's parks were miles of broken pavement. The lawns, seldom mowed, sometimes looked more like meadows. So many trees were dying that some of the loveliest tree-bordered walks were bordered mostly by stumps—the result of allowing unskilled and unsupervised workers to prune trees by simply climbing up to the top of their ladders and sawing trees off at that height, since they were reluctant to risk their own limbs by climbing out on trees'. According to a Park Association survey, there was not a single structure of any type in any park in the city that was not in need of immediate repair.

What the city called a playground was an open space—equipped with slides and a swing or two, sometimes equipped with nothing at all—around which chicken wire had been strung. Most "playgrounds" were not surfaced; rain turned them into mud holes. Others were surfaced with cinders spread loosely over the dirt, and mothers hated to let their children play in them because they knew the children would come home covered with cuts.

If one of the hundreds of statues in the parks was undamaged in 1932, the Park Association couldn't find it. The faces of the statues were masses of bird droppings. Obscenities had been written on—and never erased from—their chests. Their identifying plaques had been torn off. Swords were missing from sheaths, laurel wreaths from brows. Poets plucked at broken harps, saints stood on cracked pedestals. An Indian hunter had lost his bow. The tiger in Central Park was slipping off his rock. The bayonets had been stolen off the rifles of the soldiers in the Seventh Regiment Memorial on Fifth Avenue.

The ironwork that could be seen in the parks—the fences, benches and playground equipment—was pitted and caked with rust. The condition of the ironwork that couldn't be seen was indicated by the rarity of the comfort stations whose plumbing worked.

Since park concessions were handed out to anyone who could raise the necessary payoff, pushcarts and ramshackle booths crowded park paths—there were nineteen along one short path in Battery Park, each with its own carnival-type barker—and since many sold substandard food, there were recurring reports of sickness among children who ate the hot dogs they sold.

Bryant Park, six priceless acres of green amid the concrete masses of midtown, had been allowed to become a haven for drunks and idlers. In 1932, the city obligingly trucked away two of the park's principal ornaments, eight-foot-high statues of Washington Irving and James Marion Sims, founder of the first women's hospital in New York, and allowed a "George Washington Bi-Centennial Celebration Commission" (debonair Grover Whalen, one of Walker's police commissioners, was chairman) to erect a flimsy reproduc-

tion of Federal Hall, the building in which Washington was inaugurated, in the park and then fence it off and place turnstiles at its corners so that the public would be forced to pay admission to see the hall. When the public declined in great numbers to do so, the commission went out of existence without funds to demolish its creation. After picking up the demolition tab, the city discovered that it had managed to lose the Irving and Sims statues. Possibly because the omission of five tons of granite and metal would not be easily concealed in a reconstructed park, Bryant Park was not reconstructed—and in January 1934 it was a weed-filled vacant lot.\*

Central Park, most famous and beautiful of the city's open spaces, "the most noble, the most praiseworthy, the most philanthropic of all our public works," according to an 1876 New York *Herald* editorial, had been the creation of Calvert Vaux and the genius of urban landscape, Frederick Law Olmsted, who, in 1857—with Olmsted still an unknown young park department employee—had won a nationwide contest with their design for the park. Olmsted had driven thousands of men to plant half a million trees and shrubs on its 840 rocky, barren and arid acres and to create bowers, mazes, lawns and vistas, revolutionary sunken transverse roads (that were criticized because people said there would never be sufficient traffic across the park to justify them), bridle paths (that were criticized because few New Yorkers

\* The Bi-Centennial Commission was one of the more hilarious episodes in the city's history. Its "board of directors" contained a number of well-meaning DAR types who had lent their names to what they thought was an attempt to honor the Father of the Country, but the presence of Whalen, an intimate of some of Tammany's most greedy insiders, was the tip-off to the fact that the celebration was intended as a public-scalping party—a suspicion confirmed when food-selling concessions at the "celebration" were handed out to Tammany favorites. First, the commission announced that it would finance the construction of "Federal Hall" by "allowing" citizens to sign a "patriotic roll call"—for a fee of one dollar per signature—designed to raise \$150,000. Despite parades beginning, or ending, at Washington Arch, and led by Jimmy Walker himself, that were designed to whip up public enthusiasm, the roll call was answered by only 18,629 patriots. Sears, Roebuck & Co. then announced that it would lend the commission the money against turnstile receipts—but the finished structure into which that firm's money was sunk turned out to be a plaster and papier-mâché structure that swayed alarmingly and looked barely strong enough to withstand a good wind.

On some days total attendance in the park was so low that only twenty persons paid their twenty-five cents to see it. Whalen then conceived the idea of combining the exhibit with "patriotic movies"—which turned out to be Mickey Mouse cartoons. When interest remained low, Italian opera was tried. The commission couldn't even raise enough money to demolish Federal Hall and restore Bryant Park to its original condition, as it had promised to do in its contract with the city. It announced that "a large part of the population feels that this patriotic shrine should be retained" and went out of existence, leaving \$76,254 in largely unexplained "expenses," and Sears, Roebuck holding the bag for its contribution. The "Hall" stood, crumbling around the edges, in the huge vacant lot that Bryant Park had become until the city, embarrassed by the screams of rage from the Park Association, tore down the structure at its own—or rather at its taxpayers'—expense.

The Bi-Centennial Celebration did, of course, provide Whalen with valuable experience in running a public exposition. He put it to use in running the 1939 New York World's Fair—which lost \$200,000,000.

owned saddle horses), delicate and colorful gardens (that were criticized because people said there would always be enough room in New York for private gardens). Then, his vision completed as he wanted it, Olmsted had fought Tammany for a decade to preserve it, his health and spirit breaking in the fight. Finally ousted as Park Commissioner after a series of worsening nervous breakdowns, he had had to watch hordes of Tammany laborers tear the ivy from the Arsenal walls, "clean up" his beloved "wildernesses," sweep moss and ferns out of all the rocky crevices with house brooms and hack down thousands of trees and shrubs along Fifth Avenue so that park strollers could better view the mansions being built there. And, in 1932, Central Park showed the ravages of the sixty years of neglect that had followed Olmsted's ouster.

The park's lawns, unseeded, were expanses of bare earth, decorated with scraggly patches of grass and weeds, that became dust holes in dry weather and mud holes in wet. Its walks were broken and potholed. Its bridle paths were covered with dung. The once beautiful Mall looked like the scene of a wild party the morning after. Benches lay on their backs, their legs jabbing at the sky. Trash baskets had been overturned and never righted; their contents lay where they had spilled out. The concrete had been stripped off drinking fountains so completely that only their rusting iron pipes remained. And nine out of every ten trees on the Mall were dead or dying.

The red brick of the Arsenal at Fifth Avenue and Sixty-fourth Street had been stuccoed over and painted, and when the stucco had flaked away, the bare spots had been repainted in what was supposed to be the same color but wasn't. The building's turrets, which had made it so quaintly medieval, had been covered with striped wooden cupolas, which were supposed to make it gay, but the wood had broken and caved in and had never been repaired. The ground floor was used as a park department garage; the three upper floors were used mostly as a warehouse to store department records.

Around the Arsenal squatted the twenty-two ancient wooden animal houses of the Central Park Menagerie, crumbling away beneath their yellow paint. So rotted were their walls that park department officials feared that a single charge from a large animal, perhaps maddened by fire, might tear the cage bars right out of them. Instead of rebuilding the animal houses, the department had stationed keepers in front of the lion and tiger cages with rifles and had instructed them to shoot the big carnivores if fire broke out.

The Menagerie was filled with surprises. Because it gratefully accepted any gift that would fill a cage, and people therefore donated their unwanted family pets, it was housing in 1932, alongside the hyacinth cockatoos and the vulturine guinea fowl, several dozen canaries, and, in a cage between the mountain lions and the leopards, an Airedale. Because the Menagerie did not adequately care for its animals or dispose of them when they grew old, its exhibits included such old pensioners as a senile tiger, a puma with rickets and a semi-paralyzed baboon. Its most fearsome exhibits were rats, which roamed it in herds and had become so bold that they were stealing food from the lions' feeding pans. The most vivid memory carried away by many

visitors was of the sickening stench that rose from the dung-heaped Barbary-sheep pen.

Almost directly across the park, off Central Park West, was Jacob Wrey Mould's sheepfold, considered by some critics the finest existing example of the full-blown architecture of the mid-nineteenth century, and from a distance the sheep who grazed opposite it on the Green or Sheep Meadow, under the care of a resident shepherd who twice a day held up traffic on the park's West Drive to herd his flock across, made a picture as pretty as Olmsted had envisioned. But a closer look disclosed that, because for generations the sheep had been allowed to inbreed, every one of them was malformed.

Unlovely as the scenery in the parks might be, there was little to do in the parks except contemplate it. Provision for active sports was so inadequate that although Tammany reserved permits for the city's 162 baseball diamonds for teams which had the blessing of its aldermen—Negro teams from politically powerless Harlem seldom got one—there were still 942 teams *with permits* waiting to use the diamonds on a typical Sunday. Waiting time at tennis courts was measured in hours, and the city's one modern golf course was so crowded on weekends that, the *Herald Tribune* reported, "a player standing on line at dawn is lucky if he gets through his rounds by sunset."

New York was a city of islands, a city surrounded by, permeated by, water. But with Orchard Beach and Wolfe's Pond Park handed over to Tammany insiders, the only acquaintance that most of the city's lower-income families, who did not own cars and thus were virtually barred from Jones Beach, made with the ocean surf was at Coney Island, where a million people, treading gingerly among broken glass and filth that seemed never to be cleaned up, jammed the beach so full on a Sunday that one could hardly see the sand. The beach at Jacob Riis Park in the Rockaways was used only sparsely, but there was a reason: there was no way for a family without a car to reach it, and families with cars could reach it only after a tortuous trip. Swimming in one's own neighborhood, moreover, was all but unheard of; in the entire city, there were in 1932 two tiny outdoor swimming pools. Children who wanted to wade and splash in an outdoor shower could wade in the gutters after they unscrewed fire-hydrant covers; no one had ever heard of wading pools in playgrounds.

The men who worked in the parks complemented the scenery. Even in an era in which every city department was staffed through patronage, the five borough park departments were something special. Recalls one observer: "You couldn't tell the difference between a park employee and the bums hanging out in the parks." The weight of the rheumy-eyed drunks who served as lifeguards at Jacob Riis Park, Rockaway Beach and Coney Island was as excessive for their job as were their ages. "The first time I saw those guys lined up in their swimming costumes, I could hardly believe it," recalls Samuel M. White, who was later put in charge of them. "Some of them ran 225 or 250 pounds. And there were guys there sixty years old." Even on summer Sundays, they used the lifesaving dories for fishing. Not all the lifeguards would go out in the dories, of course. Some of them were afraid to; they



didn't know how to swim. Parents who took their children to city beaches on Sundays learned not to allow them near the shacks on the beach labeled "First Aid Station." The shacks were invariably filled with prostitutes sleeping off the effects of their Saturday-night parties with the lifeguards. ("Those whores were as unbelievable as the guys," White recalls. "They were some of the ugliest women I have even seen.") The aged biddies in charge of park comfort stations were widows of Tammany ward heelers and they understood that no work was required of them. According to one reporter: "Some had curtained off all but, say, two of the eight toilet compartments, had imported chairs, tables and hangings into the cozy space, and frequently had in their friends to afternoon tea." The lady in charge of the comfort station perched on a rocky bluff overlooking the Metropolitan Museum of Art spent her time there removing much of the plumbing and then building herself a cozy little sitting room, in which she had installed a grand piano. The chords of a Chopin nocturne startled more than one woman who entered the comfort station in good faith.

The Depression added its own touches to the parks: the shack towns named, bitterly, "Hoovervilles," in which homeless men sought refuge. One of the largest was a collection of more than two hundred hovels of old boards, flattened gasoline tins and pieces of sheet iron and cardboard in the dried-out bed of the abandoned Central Park Receiving Reservoir behind the Metropolitan Museum of Art; at night its inhabitants ate birds they caught in the park's bird sanctuary.

It wasn't what the Depression did to existing parks that most worried New York's reformers, however; they were more concerned about its effect on the city's plans to acquire new ones.

Nothing was more disturbing to reformers than the city's lack of park land. In 1932, only 14,827 acres, or 7.28 percent of its area, had been set aside for the recreation of its citizens, a percentage smaller than that set aside for recreation in any of the other ten largest cities in the world or in America. And almost half the 14,827 acres were not really parks but only land intended for parks: 3,256 of those acres, for example, were contained in the two "marine parks" in Brooklyn and Staten Island, and these two parks were nothing but utterly undeveloped marshlands under water part of each day.

There was least park land, moreover, in those areas that needed parks the most. For generations, reformers had been attempting to nerve city officials to buy up tenements, tear them down and thereby shatter with shafts of sunlight the solid shadows of slum streets. But the difficulties of relocating tenement families, the veto power over city policies exercised by powerful Tammany district leaders who didn't want Democratic voters removed from their districts, and the lack of will to civic improvement had kept the Hylan and Walker administrations from taking the leap. And the economy-minded Low and Mitchel administrations, led to the brink several times, had always shied away at the last moment because of the sheer enormity of the cost in-

involved. As a result, after nearly a century of agitation for the creation of "breathing spaces" in slums (Moses' grandfather, Bernhard Cohen, had been one of the agitators during the 1870's), there were on the Lower East Side—in an area a mile wide into which were crammed more than half a million people—exactly two small parks, neither of which contained a single piece of play equipment. With the exception of a block-square dirt- and weed-covered vacant lot owned by the city at Corlears Hook just to the east of this area, there was not another clearing in the wilderness of tenements stretching away from the massive granite piers of the Brooklyn Bridge all the way to Tompkins Square—thirty-one blocks to the north. And if one stood, atop the Upper West Side's high ridge, in Morningside, St. Nicholas or Colonial Park and looked down to where the ridge fell suddenly into an alluvial plain once known as Harlem Flats, which in 1932 contained the city's Spanish, Negro and Italian slum areas, he would see nothing between the end of Central Park on 110th Street down to his right and the beginning of Coogan's Bluff at 155th Street down to his left but a vast expanse of the asphalt gray of streets, the tar-paper gray of tenement roofs and the dingy brick red of tenement walls stretching endlessly eastward until it was at last mercifully cut short by the East River, an expanse in which, except for a poignant hint on the rocky slopes of Mount Morris Park at 124th Street, there did not exist a single patch of green. Wrote one reformer: "In the winter months, when the sun is most needed, it is no uncommon sight to see herds of children blocking the streets in sections where a little sun has been allowed to penetrate because there happen to be a few low buildings on one side of the street."

If slum children could not have parks, reformers had pleaded, at least let them have the tiny, pathetic, chicken-wire-fenced, cinder-paved substitute known as playgrounds. But in 1932, after generations of such pleading, there were only four playgrounds on the Lower East Side and two playgrounds in Harlem. In all Brooklyn, there were only thirty-six playgrounds. In all New York, a city which in 1932 contained approximately 1,700,000 children under twelve years of age, there were only 119, or one for every 14,000 children.

"Children's gardens" in playgrounds were the only places in which most slum children could engage in that most precious of childhood activities: digging. So few were the playgrounds—and their "gardens"—that they could accommodate no more than a handful of those who wanted to use them. Playground supervisors made children stand on line with their pails and shovels until a spot in the gardens was open, and the lines were so long that most of the little girls and boys could see at a glance that they were unlikely to get a turn. Most of them stood on the line anyway; childhood, after all, is the time of hope—and there was, after all, little else for them to do.

Reformers had at least hoped that the difficulty of obtaining park land in areas of the city that had already been built up had taught city officials the necessity of reserving land for parks in other areas before *they* were built up. But all during the 1920's, as they watched with horror, the city allowed developers to devour its open spaces without making more than a few gestures

in this direction. Before the reformers' eyes, the red bricks that had walled out the sun in the Lower East Side and Harlem were cemented into place on the hills and meadows of the Bronx and Queens. "It looks as though all sunshine will soon be crowded out and dark shadows take its place," one reformer wrote in despair.

While campaigning for mayor in 1925, Jimmy Walker had promised to spend money lavishly to renovate Central Park. And no one could accuse him of a complete breach of faith. For not four hundred yards beyond the Sixty-fifth Street Transverse Road which formed the northern border of the Menagerie, visible from the Barbary-sheep pen when winter stripped the leaves from the park's trees, was dramatic evidence that, in at least one location in Central Park, Walker had more than kept his word. Not four hundred yards beyond the Transverse Road stood the Central Park Casino, a legend in its time.

The Casino was the brain child of restaurateur Sidney Solomon, front man for a cabal of socialites and Tammany officials who felt the need, as Walker euphemistically put it, of a sanctuary in which they might "entertain visitors without being molested." He asked the Mayor to let him establish one in the Casino, a low, rambling brick-and-stone building that had been built in the park in 1864 as a "Ladies Refreshment Salon" and had since been turned into a quiet little night club.

Walker owed Solomon a great debt. The restaurateur had introduced him to his favorite tailor. Throwing out the night club's previous owner, the Mayor turned it over to Solomon—for a rental of \$8,500 a year, a sum which turned out to be equal to one night's receipts.

"The Casino will be our place, Monk," Walker reportedly said to his mistress, Betty (Monk) Compton. (Mrs. Walker's place was apparently Florida, the state to which she had been packed off for an extended vacation.) Although Solomon retained the celebrated Viennese interior decorator Josef Urban, who announced that he would strive for "a feeling of wind among young leaves," none of Urban's sketches was executed until Jimmy and Monk approved. The Mayor, whose disregard of city affairs was legendary, dedicated himself to making the Casino perfect in every detail. When it had been renovated—at a cost to Solomon and his backers of \$365,000—and the restaurateur was about to announce its opening, Walker noticed that one of the bandstands blocked the headwaiter's view of the main entrance and thus deprived him of time to screen his guests and decide how important they were and where to seat them. He insisted that a new entrance be constructed—and it was, at a cost of \$22,000.

When it opened, the Casino was hailed by one well-qualified observer as "the swankiest restaurant New York has yet seen." The dining pavilion was silver and maroon; the ballroom, except for Urban's flowing golden murals, all black glass; the dayroom fumed knotty pine. Emil Coleman's popular society orchestra played in the pavilion, Leo Reisman's in the Black and Gold Room. Spelling the orchestras were two pianists, the famous Nat

Brandwynne and a handsome youngster, unknown, on whom Solomon had decided to take a chance: Eddie Duchin.

But the Casino was more than a restaurant or a night club. The Casino was Jimmy Walker's Versailles. Friends joked that the Mayor spent more time there than he did at City Hall. When his limousine pulled into view, the doorman would scurry inside and signal the orchestra, so that when Beau James and Betty entered, it would be to strains of "Will You Love Me in December?" Holding hands with Betty, sipping champagne while she sipped beer, the Mayor would receive the parade of visitors to his table with careless ease, and sometimes, when Betty asked him to dance, he would even arise, pinch-waisted and slim in the tuxedo with the shiny lapels that people were beginning to copy, and glide with her around the floor, and the Mayor's friends would know that he was feeling very good indeed, for although he was so graceful a dancer that he had once wanted to be a professional, for years before he met Betty he had refused to dance a step, for reasons he never told anyone.

The regulars at Walker's court played their parts well. They brought their own champagne, their chauffeurs cooling it outside in the Rolls-Royces lined up along the dark paths until the doorman signaled that another bottle was wanted at table. Their wives and girl friends crowded around the bandstands so Reisman and Coleman and Brandwynne could autograph their slippers. Their spending was in character; one insurance man always announced his arrival by handing a thousand-dollar bill to the bandleader. At closing time, the bills fluttering down onto the hat-check girls' little silver trays seemed to one observer to be mostly hundreds. Reisman and Coleman were offered fabulous fees to play on after closing at private homes, and when the society crowd discovered Duchin, there was no limit to their generosity; a member of the Grace steamship family once paid him \$20,000 to play at a party. The Depression? What Depression? "Until La Guardia came in, we never had a losing day, panic or no panic," Solomon was to say. And in a duplex upstairs retreat, closed to the public, its very existence concealed by the building's lowering mansard roof, Tammany politicians were entertained by Broadway chorus lines—rushed to the Casino *en masse* by motorcycle escort. And all the while, in a small adjoining office, its walls covered with green moiré and its ceiling with gold leaf, its heavy door carefully soundproofed, Walker held court for favor seekers and politicians, and it was there, insiders said, that much of the city's business was transacted.

Moses' attention had been drawn back to New York even before the Depression. Realizing in 1926 that city officials were not following through on promises to plan a new Queens road network to feed the Long Island parkways he was building, he had, during a solid year of conferences, all but begged the officials to widen Queens, Northern and Conduit boulevards and other major east-west thoroughfares in Brooklyn and Queens, to link Queens Boulevard with the Northern State Parkway, to make good on the promise given to him in 1924 and widen the two-mile stretch of Central

Avenue, the narrow winding farm road that was the only route to the Southern State Parkway. Disturbed that Bronx and Westchester residents could reach his Long Island parks only by driving down into Manhattan and across the Queensborough Bridge, he had persuaded Al Smith to urge a start on construction of the long-talked-about "triborough" bridge.

But in 1932, six years later, not even a start had been made on building these thoroughfares (with the exception of Queens Boulevard, on which work was proceeding so desultorily that its completion was nowhere in sight), and the farms that in 1926 could have been acquired cheaply for the right-of-way had become subdivisions the city could no longer afford to buy. Central Avenue was still unwidened; six years after the opening of the most modern highway in the United States the only approach to it was still a farm road. And as for the Triborough Bridge, the ring of the pile drivers hammering in its foundations after Mayor Walker had broken ground on October 25, 1929, had a distinctly hollow undertone, for while city officials were proclaiming that New York's traffic problems would be largely solved on the day that cars could speed up its mighty ramps, Moses was asking the project's chief engineer, a Tammany hack who had entered city service in 1886 as an axman, where the cars were going to go when they came down—and was learning that no one had thought to plan even a single approach road at any one of the bridge's three termini. And upset as Moses was at that, he soon realized that it was likely to be of no consequence. October 25, 1929, was a Friday, the Friday after "Black Thursday," the day of the stock-market crash. The proximity of the two days proved significant. The city's \$5,400,000 initial allocation, largely wasted on extravagant condemnation awards, counsel fees and other items of Tammany graft, ran out after the Ward's Island piers had been built, and the city was prevented by the Depression from raising any additional funds for the project; in 1932 it had been at a complete standstill for two years.

Moses' plans for New York were not confined to Queens. The city's prestigious Park Association, inspired by his Long Island work to attempt again to save the city's fast-disappearing open spaces, had formed the Metropolitan Park Conference and made him its chairman. Assigning selected State Parks Council staffers to city problems (without the knowledge of the Legislature, of course), he furnished the reformers with the ingredient their efforts had been lacking: the expertise of engineers, landscape architects, draftsmen and surveyors experienced in park work. There were plenty of ideas for park acquisition floating around the city; some had been floating around for decades. Now Moses firmed up these ideas, made them concrete, codified them in terms that enabled the reformers to present specific demands to the Walker administration.

And Moses gave the reformers something as valuable as his organization. He gave them his vision. No sooner had he become chairman of the Metropolitan Park Conference than he began driving endlessly around New York. The big black Packard that had once been pulled up in the yards of Long Island farmhouses was parked now at the edge of the lonely marshes on the shore of Jamaica Bay; in the empty, rocky fields on a deserted Bronx

peninsula known as Ferry Point; and at the spot on Riverside Drive to which, twenty years before, he had taken taxicabs while he was conceiving his great highway along the Hudson. And while his chauffeur waited in the car, he was walking around, with the same long, restless strides with which he had covered Long Island, lost in concentration, occasionally making sketches on a yellow legal note pad.

On February 25, 1930, before five hundred civic leaders gathered in the Grand Ballroom of the Hotel Commodore for the Park Association's annual dinner, Robert Moses, dressed in tuxedo and black tie (tied by Mary), rose to his feet and tugged a cord which dramatically pulled the drapery from a huge map of New York City hanging behind the dais. Running across the map were heavy red lines. One, which started in Brooklyn at the Brooklyn Bridge, ran along the borough's western and southern shores, skirting Jamaica Bay, and then, in Queens, headed north along the city's eastern boundary. The shore-front portion, Moses said, was a "Marginal Boulevard"—he had not yet named it the "Belt Parkway"—which would provide a quick circumferential passage around Brooklyn. The portion that ran north along the city boundary was a "Cross Island Parkway." A third of the way up its length, it crossed and linked up with the Southern State Parkway. Two-thirds of the way up, it crossed and linked up with the Northern State and with the proposed Grand Central Parkway. And at its end was a bridge—a "Ferry Point-Whitestone Bridge," he called it, not yet having named it the "Bronx-Whitestone"—that would enable motorists to speed across Long Island Sound. And then . . .

The audience's eyes followed the pointer in Moses' hand. At the northern end of the Ferry Point-Whitestone Bridge was another line, heading northeast to link up with the Hutchinson River Parkway that he had already built in Westchester County almost as far north as the Connecticut border. This, Moses said, was a "Hutchinson River Parkway Extension."

The audience, most of whose members had been concerned for years about the city's traffic problems, grasped at once the significance of what Moses was showing them. If the Marginal Boulevard, the Ferry Point-Whitestone Bridge and the Hutchinson River Parkway Extension were built, they saw, motorists would be able to leave Manhattan Island on the Brooklyn Bridge and then proceed over broad modern roads, unhindered by a single traffic light, all the way around Brooklyn to the Long Island parkways and parks. In addition, Manhattan and Brooklyn motorists would be presented with a through route to the Bronx, Westchester and New England—and so would motorists from Nassau and Suffolk counties. And, looking at it in reverse, the Bronx, Westchester and New England would suddenly be brought within easy access of the Long Island parks.

Moses' pointer reversed itself, tracing the Marginal Boulevard backward around Brooklyn. When it got to the Narrows, at a point opposite Staten Island, it stopped. Planners had long dreamed of a crossing between Brooklyn and Staten Island, Moses said; the Narrows Tube had been only one of several abortive attempts to make that dream reality. Now it was time to finish the tube. As soon as it was built, it could be linked with a parkway

system on scenic Staten Island—more red lines rimmed the shoreline there—and, via a parkway straight across the island, with the Goethals and Outerbridge Crossing bridges on its western shore. And on the other side of those crossings, the audience realized with a start, was New Jersey! Moses' plan would give the city at last the long-discussed "northeastern bypass," the route, so long vaguely dreamed of by planners, that would enable traffic to and from New England and points south of the city to avoid crowded Manhattan Island and stop jamming its streets, that would free Manhattan forever from tens of thousands of cars and trucks that flooded into it every day although it was not their destination.

And there wouldn't be only one bypass route. The pointer flicked back across the Narrows and then eastward and northward along the Marginal Boulevard until it reached its intersection with the Grand Central Parkway. The western terminus of the Grand Central was no longer Queens Boulevard, the audience saw; now the parkway extended westward all the way to the point where the Triborough Bridge was supposed to touch down in Queens. And from the proposed Bronx terminus of the Triborough, red lines radiated out northwestward along the Harlem River to the Saw Mill River Parkway he was building in Westchester County and northeastward along Bruckner Boulevard to the Hutchinson River Parkway Extension. These, Moses said, would be other parkways—and as he said it, the reform leaders sitting on the dais suddenly realized that the lines behind Moses formed a whole series of rough but concentric rings that would provide a whole series of possible bypass routes around the city and at the same time would make the parks and parkways Moses had built on Long Island easily accessible to any family in the city with a car. Manhattan motorists would be able to drive all the way to Jones Beach without ever being slowed by a traffic light or intersecting traffic. Turn those red lines on Moses' map into concrete, they realized, and motorists in great sections of the city would be largely freed from the trap of local streets in which they had been so long confined.

There were other lines on the map, too. One ran along the western shore of Manhattan Island all the way up to the Harlem River, over the river and up through the Bronx. If the West Side Elevated Highway was extended up through Riverside Park, Moses said, and if it was carried across the Harlem by the Henry Hudson Bridge, and if it then ran north to the city line, its northern terminus would be within three miles of the southern terminus of the Saw Mill River Parkway the state was constructing. If the city built the parkway—the "Henry Hudson Parkway," he called it—he would see that the state extended the Saw Mill River Parkway south to meet it, and there would be a continuous through route from the bottom of Manhattan Island to Westchester County.

A Henry Hudson Parkway would provide further advantages, Moses explained. It would give the city a fast, modern route to the George Washington Bridge. On the other side of that bridge was Palisades Interstate Park. It would no longer be difficult to reach it. All New Jersey, in fact, would be opened to motorists from the west side of Manhattan. And if the

Henry Hudson Parkway was built properly and a great park created alongside it on what was now the mud flats of Riverside Park, the city's residents would not even have to leave the city to find beauty. They would be able to drive along the water, the river stretching to one side of them, the green of the park to the other, above the park the spires of Manhattan. It would be a public improvement unequaled in the world!

Before he finished talking about parkways, Moses said, he had a final point. The plan he proposed was admittedly somewhat ambitious. But it was realistic—and it was realizable. The dream of opening to the residents of New York City the beauty of the lands around it was in reach. After all, he said, much of it was already reality. The Southern State, Northern State and Hutchinson River parkways were already built, the Saw Mill River Parkway begun. Much of the rest of it was begun: the State Council of Parks was committed to building the Saw Mill River Parkway and Hutchinson River Parkway extensions; at least a start had been made on the Triborough Bridge and the West Side Highway. All that needed to be done was to knit these elements together.

Now, he said, he wanted to discuss parks. His listeners, who had noticed that the park along the Henry Hudson Parkway was colored green on the map, saw that much of the land bordering the other parkways Moses was proposing was also green.

All along the parkways, he said, there should be small parks. The parkways' right-of-way itself should be "ribbon parks" similar to those along the parkways on Long Island. Obtaining the necessary land would be easy along much of the Marginal Boulevard and Cross Island Parkway, and along all the parkways in Staten Island, because the areas these parkways ran through were still largely undeveloped and land there was cheap. It would be expensive to buy land along some of the other parkways. But it was never going to become cheaper. It would only become more expensive. It should be bought now.

The larger green areas on the map, he said, represented larger parks. Specifically, he said, they represented a substantial portion of the last areas of natural beauty remaining in the city. The corridor parks he was proposing in eastern Queens, for example, running roughly along the route of the proposed Grand Central Parkway, represented the last undeveloped portions of the heavily forested hills of the glacial moraine. The parks he was proposing along the north shore of Jamaica Bay represented the last chance to preserve from commercial exploitation the bay's wild marshes and abundant animal and bird life. The park he was proposing on the meadows at Flushing Bay represented the last chance to preserve a portion of *that* bay from development. These parks, he said, should be purchased at once. His engineers had compiled estimates of their cost, and it was \$30,000,000. A bond issue for that amount should be authorized at once by the Board of Estimate. Admittedly it would take a hard fight to persuade the Board to do what had to be done. He invited the people listening to him to join in that fight.

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The reformers stood up and cheered when Moses had finished, but the reaction of city officials was somewhat less satisfying. For all the cooperation he received from them he might still have been the starry-eyed idealist of 1914 arguing in the language of a Yale bull session for the construction of mothers' shelters in Central Park.

The scale of his plans was too big for them. Not one city official, he would recall, seemed capable of comprehending a highway network on the scale he had proposed—a fact which would not have been surprising even if the officials had been men of vision, since no highway network on that scale had ever been proposed for any city in America, or, for that matter, any city in the world.

The scale of the money involved was too big for them. The total cost would obviously be in the hundreds of millions of dollars, and they felt there was no sense in the city even considering such an amount.

What the city officials could comprehend about Moses' plan they didn't like. The relocations involved for his highways would be on a scale almost unknown in the city: the Whitlock Avenue approach to the Triborough Bridge in the Bronx would alone require the condemnation of buildings containing more than four thousand apartments—voters' apartments.

Moses' general plans for his parkway system were turned over for analysis to city engineers, who, sensing the attitude of their superiors, did not rush to begin working on them. Try as he would, Moses could not get the city to move on them. And once the Depression began to tighten its hold on New York, there was no longer much sense in trying to get the city to move. In 1932, the city had not even begun seriously considering any of the parkways he had proposed at the Hotel Commodore dinner two years before.

Walker's administration did agree in 1930 to issue \$30,000,000 in bonds to buy new park land. In 1930, the city acquired 2,530 acres that would be known as Great Kills and Willowbrook parks on Staten Island; Highland, Alley Pond and Kissena parks in Queens; and Owl's Head Park in Brooklyn. But, by the end of that year, it was becoming apparent that the city's people had needs even more pressing than the need for parks, even if there had still been any market for the bonds that had to be sold to buy them. In 1932, with only \$4,000,000 of the \$30,000,000 spent—and exactly one tenement-area park acquired—even most reformers were agreeing that acquisition of park land was a luxury that New York would have to postpone to some other, happier, decade.

When Roosevelt, under Moses' prodding, agreed to fight the Depression with a state public works program of unprecedented size, Moses saw the agreement as a chance to make the city move. The state had never spent any money on roads in New York City, but Moses persuaded Roosevelt to authorize the state's Temporary Emergency Relief Administration to pay the construction costs of the Grand Central Parkway and the Central Avenue linkup with the Southern State Parkway, and of another, "Interborough," parkway, long proposed but never built, that would provide

access into and out of central Brooklyn. The city would have to pay only for the right-of-way. The Legislature, having learned the inadvisability of giving Moses an opportunity to drive the opening wedge for a project that would later turn out to cost many times what he had estimated, gave Moses only \$5,000,000, payable at the rate of a paltry \$1,000,000 per year. All other expenses, the bill provided, must be paid by the city. But in the city Moses had no political leverage. The Board of Estimate kept delaying approval of the route, the allocations for right-of-way kept getting involved in endless snarls and at the end of 1933 Moses could look back and see that it had taken him as long to build a total of two miles of the parkway projects in Queens as it had taken him to build twenty-two miles of the Southern State Parkway.

Roosevelt's successor as Governor, Herbert H. Lehman, deeply respected Moses. Says one man who served as an adviser to both: "Roosevelt saw Jones Beach in terms both of people swimming and in terms of the political gains that could come from those people swimming. Herbert Lehman thought only of helping people to go swimming and be happy. And he felt that no one could do that job better than Robert Moses."

Within a month after Lehman took office in January 1933, he handed to Moses even more power than Roosevelt had given him. In 1932, Congress, at President Hoover's request, had created the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to help self-supporting public works projects. Lehman set up a State Emergency Public Works Commission to screen such projects and determine which should be submitted to Washington, and named Moses its chairman. This post gave Moses the power to get work under way on his huge park and parkway plan for the Niagara Frontier; a Niagara Frontier Bridge Authority was established, received \$2,800,000 in federal funds and constructed bridges that linked both the north and south ends of Grand Island, near Buffalo, to the mainland. A Thousand Islands Bridge Authority built the international bridge to Canada. Under his direction, a New York State Bridge Authority was established to purchase—through agreements he negotiated—the Bear Mountain Bridge from the Harrimans and its other private owners. A Saratoga Springs Authority began refurbishing and expanding the spa. Negotiating in Washington with the RFC, Moses obtained funds for the Port of New York Authority to construct the Lincoln Tunnel and for the city to construct Hillside, Knickerbocker and other housing developments. And he persuaded Mayor O'Brien to ask the Legislature to establish a Triborough Bridge Authority that could issue its own bonds, secured by toll revenues, and that would therefore be eligible for aid from the newly formed federal Public Works Administration, and the PWA granted a \$44,200,000 combination loan and grant to the Authority on condition that the city make certain additional token contributions. But hardly had the Tammany-controlled Authority gotten its hands on the first installment of the grant than it blew it on inflated condemnation awards and counsel fees; in addition, the city proved unable to make even the first installment of its token payment. The PWA thereupon cut off funds and announced that no more would be forthcoming until the city paid up and the

Authority cleaned up—and in 1933 there were no immediate prospects of either development.

In vain, Moses pointed out to the Board of Estimate that the money the TERA and PWA were prepared to spend in New York would create vast improvements in the city—at virtually no cost to its taxpayers. In vain, he pointed out that the money would put thousands of hungry men to work for salaries that would feed their families. Such considerations were not of interest to the Tammany-dominated Board. And those that were of interest, Moses, outside the city's power structure as he was, could not offer them.

All through 1933, the city's financial situation worsened. In May, City Comptroller Charles W. Berry informed Mayor O'Brien that the city would be unable to pay \$100,000,000 in short-term revenue notes coming due in June. The bankers agreed to extend the notes only after the city agreed to an almost doubled interest rate and budget cuts so stringent that they made it all but impossible for the city to keep its physical plant in repair. And, despite the extension, in September Berry told O'Brien that the city would be unable to meet its October 24 payroll.

After nine days of frantic meetings in which a worried Governor Lehman participated, the bankers agreed on September 27 to further extensions—after the city agreed to accept even more stringent repayment provisions, and to balance its 1934 budget.

The city's worries were still not over. It required legislative authorization to meet the bankers' demands, but the Legislature's Republican majority saw the city's plight as a lever they could use to pry various concessions from Lehman, and a long, tense bargaining session ensued. Not until October 18, just six days before the city would, by all common business definitions, enter a state of bankruptcy, was the authorization given. And a look ahead was hardly reassuring. The amount of short-term revenue notes coming due in the next two years was \$500,000,000.

Nevertheless, in the summer of 1933, Moses was convinced that events were moving for, rather than against, him. For during that summer, over a period of several weeks, he was convinced that he was going to get a chance personally to move the city—as its next mayor.

## 19. To Power in the City

IN NEW YORK CITY, 1933 was the year of the Goo Goo.

Dormant since debonair John Purroy Mitchel had one-stepped it into the ground nearly two decades before, the city's Good Government movement—"Goo Goos" was the politicians' epithet for the men and women in it—had been hauled back on its feet by stern-visaged, cane-carrying Samuel Seabury. In the early stages of the Seabury investigation, the city had only snickered at the fantastic alibis offered by the participants in the Tin Box Parade. Pretty young women had thrown roses at Jimmy Walker's feet as he left the hearing room after testifying. But as Seabury's quiet, courteous but relentless prodding reached higher and higher and the revelations it uncovered became more and more sordid—not even a \$10,000,000 welfare fund for the unemployed went unlooted—and as the deepening Depression made the public less tolerant of the making of illegal fortunes with its money, the laughter faded. In the last weeks of the hearing, when Seabury left the courthouse in Foley Square for lunch, thousands of men and women hung out the windows of surrounding office buildings to cheer him. (The judge courteously raised his hat but did not smile.) Mayor John Patrick O'Brien was proving that his gaffe about the Police Commissioner was in character; a master of the malapropism, he told a Harlem audience, "My heart is as black as yours," and he didn't do much to win the Jewish vote when he told a synagogue audience that he had always admired "that scientist of scientists, Albert Weinstein." O'Brien would be the Democratic nominee in the regular election to be held in November 1933, and obviously he would not be the most formidable of candidates. With Roosevelt, spurned by Tammany at the 1932 Democratic National Convention, moving as President to take control of the city away from the Wigwam, the stars that made Fusion feasible—incontrovertible scandal and Democratic disunity—had never been more favorably in conjunction.

All the reformers needed was a candidate with charisma. Founding a City Fusion Party, they united with the city's Republican Party in a Fusion Conference Committee whose purpose was to select one. And when Seabury, their first choice, refused to run and they began considering other names, Robert Moses' was prominent among them.

New York's reformers considered Moses one of them.

The Old Guard of reform viewed him almost paternally. Darwin James and Henry Moskowitz liked to tell anecdotes about his work for them on the Municipal Civil Service Commission. Henry H. Curran, Fusion candidate against Hylan in 1921, remembered Moses as secretary of his campaign committee. Joseph M. Price, a wealthy dress manufacturer and chairman of the City Club's board of trustees, remembered him pleading earnestly in the City Club lounge for the club's support for the executive budget proposal. And Richard Spencer Childs, who had made Moses secretary of his New York State Association, delighted in telling friends (inaccurately): "I am the man who gave Bob Moses his first job."

Other, slightly younger, reformers—men in their fifties like Stanley Isaacs and Raymond Ingersoll—considered Moses a comrade-in-arms. And he was nothing less than an idol to many of a new generation of reformers, including six-foot five-inch, blond and blue-eyed Newbold Morris, a Yale graduate who at thirty was president of the Silk Stocking Fifteenth Assembly District Republican Club; college professors like Wallace S. Sayre, twenty-eight, of New York University, and Adolf A. Berle, Jr., thirty-eight, and Joseph D. McGoldrick, thirty-two, of Columbia; and young experts in public administration like Rufus E. McGahen, thirty-nine, secretary of the Citizens Union, and Paul Blanshard, forty-one, director of the City Affairs Committee of New York, who were spending enough evenings studying legislative bills and debating municipal policy in the lounges of the City Club and Citizens Union to prove that the Tammany view of man was still, as one historian puts it, "only partially valid; men are moved by things other than just narrow self-interest."

The attitude of the reformers toward Moses was understandable. Not only had he fought in so many causes in which they believed; he had triumphed. Reformers who had learned through bitter, repeated experience the difficulty of translating ideas into realities were almost in awe of his success in doing so. Lillian Wald of the Henry Street Settlement wrote him: "May I . . . tell you how profoundly I admire your genius in designing the parks and procuring them for the community." "His . . . administrative accomplishment at Albany," Rufus McGahen said, was "amazing."

The reformers didn't know the details of those triumphs. They were not, after all, on the inside of state government, where Moses' power plays had been executed, and they knew nothing of his methods. If there had been a change in Robert Moses, none but a handful of them had even an inkling of it, and those who had seen glimpses of the change had, like Childs, been charmed into forgetting them by a Moses who needed their continuing support. They attributed Moses' arrogance to brilliance, his impatience to zeal.

Moreover, reformers, more than slightly addicted to a black-and-white view of morality and life, tended to classify all government officials as either "politicians," who were in public service for power and money, who put those considerations ahead of the common good and who had debased

politics into a somewhat questionable way of making a living; or as "public servants," who were "nonpolitical" and therefore good. And they had no doubts about which class Moses belonged to. As a Bureau staffer, no reformer had been more scornful of practical politicians than he. His well-publicized refusal to accept a salary for his services, coupled with his frequent denunciations of patronage and of favoritism in contracts and condemnation awards, convinced reformers, since they had no reason to question his sincerity, that his views had not been changed just because he had obtained power. "The principle is the important thing," he had written. They thought he still believed that. "High purpose," Richard Childs was to tell the author. "And ability. And not interested in getting something for either the boys or for himself—utterly selfless in all of it. That was how I thought of Moses."

His brilliance was legendary among them. In the field of public administration, they agreed, his mind was unequaled in suppleness and inventiveness. Lillian Wald was not the only reform leader who used the word "genius" in describing Moses. One reformer who maintained a certain detachment about reformers because he was at home not only in the paneled board room of the City Club but also in the bare-walled clubhouses of Brooklyn's Fourth Assembly District—where he had proved himself a canny practical politician by ousting the old-line Republican boss and installing himself in his place—was Paul Windels. Says Windels: "Those people [reformers] could get a little starry-eyed sometimes, and at that time they were very starry-eyed indeed about Bob Moses. They saw in him a man whose ideals were just as high as theirs and who had in addition qualities which enabled him to accomplish things of revolutionary magnitude in the public sphere. The younger men there, and some of the older ones, too, to tell you the truth—they idolized that man. They seemed to consider him the Beau Ideal of what the reformer should be. And to tell you the truth, I thought I was a pretty shrewd cookie—and sometimes I felt the same way."

More practical considerations also recommended Moses to them as a candidate. First, there was the immense favorable publicity he had received. This was no candidate respected in the councils of reform but unknown to the public; this was a candidate about whose virtues the public had been educated for years. More important, there was Moses' relationship with Al Smith. The Brown Derby was still the most popular figure in the city. When, early in 1933, a downtown Tammany club had begun circulating petitions urging *him* to run for mayor, it collected more than 200,000 signatures in one week before Smith issued a statement categorically refusing to make the race. The Fusion leaders knew how Smith felt about Moses. If Moses ran, they believed, Smith would either break with Tammany and support him or, at the least, remain neutral. And either of those stands, they believed, would result in a mass Democratic defection to Moses, a defection essential to victory in a city in which the party registration of enrolled voters was almost four to one Democratic.

Before the Fusion Conference Committee began meeting in March

1933, Moses was contacted by City Club board chairman Price, who had, as chairman of the legendary Committee of One Hundred and Seven, been the prime mover behind John Purroy Mitchel's nomination in 1913, and who wanted now to play the same role for Moses. Moses assured Price that he would accept the Fusion nomination if it was offered to him. As soon as Seabury turned down a renewed offer of the nomination, Price brought Moses' name before the Fusion Committee and received an almost unanimously favorable response.

But Seabury had not been present at the meeting. And Seabury's opinion of Moses was markedly different from that of other reformers.

He didn't like him. Opinionated as well as dedicated, Seabury was accustomed to deference when he presented his views (reformers fondly called him "the Bishop" because of his pontifical air, although they were careful to do so behind his back), and deference was not Moses' strong suit. In 1932 the two men had had a bitter confrontation in Al Smith's Fifth Avenue apartment when Seabury attempted to win the ex-Governor's support for a City Charter revision that would determine membership on the City Council on the basis of proportional representation and would therefore encourage minority parties and help end Tammany's domination of the council. Seabury and Moses, a foe of proportional representation, had argued for hours before Smith, who, ill with a severe cold, was propped up in bed, too hoarse to speak. Exactly what happened at the confrontation is unrecorded, but Moses says, "He [Seabury] didn't stand up very well. He didn't seem to have his stuff [facts] at all. It was a very, very painful session."

More than personality differences lay behind Seabury's hostility to Moses, however. Its root lay in the judge's hostility to Tammany Hall—and in his conviction that Moses' election would allow Tammany to retain control of the city.

A direct descendant of "Speak for Yourself, John" and Priscilla Alden of the *Mayflower*, whose ancestors included Samuel Jones, "the Father of the New York Bar," and a long line of distinguished Episcopalian clergymen, Samuel Seabury had, even as a boy studying in his father's library with the portraits of a dozen famous ancestors peering down, stern and patrician, on his work, been markedly aware and proud of this lineage of law and righteousness, and determined to live up to it.

He was an idealist. In his youth an adoring disciple of single-tax philosopher Henry George, he was elected at the age of twenty-one president of the Manhattan Single-Tax Club. At twenty-four, he gave up his own nomination as Citizens Union Party candidate for the State Assembly to play Sancho Panza in that most gallant of all the Don Quixote rides of New York politics, George's mayoralty campaign of 1897. (When that impossible dream was ended by George's death less than a week before Election Day, Seabury followed on horseback behind the casket—adorned with white roses and the inscription "Progress and Poverty"—as the body of his idol was borne through the streets of the city with half a million citizens watching

and the hats coming off as the cortege approached and the whisper going through the great crowds: "Uncover, uncover.")

And his idealism had a target. All his life Samuel Seabury stalked the Tiger. While still in his teens, he took to the street corners—and was stoned by Tammany hooligans—as he spoke against Tammany candidates as an independent Democrat. As a young lawyer, in love with the law, he hated the Tammany-controlled judges who turned New York's courts into instruments of politics rather than justice. Representing, in a hundred cases, men unjustly accused by police who took orders from Tammany and unfairly tried before judges who took orders from Tammany, he knew the bitterness of a hundred unjust defeats.

Just as his idealism grated against Tammany, so did his ambition, which was also strong. His bearing and a rare, stern eloquence made him stand out among the crowd of young reformers. Winning a plurality that for a Citizens Union Party candidate was unprecedented, he was elected a judge over his fellow men at the age of twenty-eight. Soon his fairness and firmness awed even his Tammany colleagues on the City Court into assigning him the most difficult cases. His prematurely white hair, parted in the center, his ruddy complexion, his flowing black robes, his pince-nez—and his bearing—made him a striking figure on the bench. He needed no gavel to quiet spectators, a biographer wrote—"His mien alone served to silence the courtroom." He sat through one long case, according to the *New York World*, "as if his face had been carved out of stone." At thirty-three, he was elected to the State Supreme Court, at forty-one to the Court of Appeals, at forty-three he was running for Governor.

Tammany ordered its braves, in voting for the Democratic state ticket, to ignore the man at its head, and he lost.\* He hoped the nomination would come his way again in 1918, but that was the year Silent Charlie Murphy saw that it was handed to Al Smith. Embittered, Seabury retired to private life and a series of monumental legal fees and for more than ten years kept silent on public issues until, suddenly swooping out of the past to take on Tammany Hall in 1930, he revealed that prosperity had not blunted his zeal for reform and that he was still a man against the machine.

There was no telling how far Seabury might have climbed in politics if he had become Governor. The terminus he had in mind was the White House—in 1932, on the strength of the publicity he received from his investigations, he authorized the launching of a try for the Democratic presi-

\* Another element in his defeat—which took place in 1916—was Theodore Roosevelt. TR, whose Progressive Party had joined reform Democrats in support of Seabury's run for the Court of Appeals, persuaded Seabury to resign from the bench and run for Governor in the first place, promising to support him against the GOP nominee, Charles S. Whitman. But after Seabury had won the Democratic nomination, Roosevelt, breaking his word, rejoined the GOP and commanded the Progressives to back Whitman. (Seabury paid a visit to Sagamore Hill. Roosevelt started to say something, but Seabury interrupted. "Mr. President, you are a blatherskite!" he said, and stalked out.)



dential nomination—and the hatred for Tammany that had been ignited by his idealism was fueled by the wreckage the Tiger had made of his ambitions. Much of his bitterness centered on Al Smith. While most other reformers felt that Smith had risen above the organization, Seabury felt, as he had always felt, that Smith had simply put a respectable smile on the face of a tiger that was as voracious as ever. If anything, he felt, Smith was more inimical to the public interest than the depredations of the most corrupt ward leaders, because his popularity provided them with protective coloration. And, of course, it was Smith who, by winning five times in a row the Democratic gubernatorial nomination, had insured that Seabury would not be able to follow the gubernatorial road back to the public eye. "He had a real conviction about Smith," Moses told an interviewer. "It amounted to an actual hatred. He felt that Smith had prevented him from being Governor and if he had been Governor he would have been President. Seabury hated the Governor, really *hated* him." By 1933, wrote a Seabury biographer, "his anti-Tammany stand was not merely a cause. It was a mania." The narrowness of his perspective made him feel that the most significant fact about Moses was that he was Smith's protégé. If Moses became mayor, Seabury thought, the ex-Governor would have an opportunity to move Tammany quietly back into control of City Hall. Reform's great opportunity to cleanse the city, the opportunity he had given it, would be lost.

When Joseph Price, following the Fusion Conference Committee meeting, told Seabury its members were for Moses, Seabury refused to approve the choice. And he strongly hinted—he would "reserve all personal liberty of action" was the way he put it—that if the committee nominated Moses, he would enter his own candidate in the race. Recalling his own feelings, Moses said later: "Nobody could be elected without Seabury. With Seabury on his side, anyone running on a Fusion ticket could have won that year. Without him—no, it would have been absolutely impossible to win." Moses issued a statement saying: "I am not a candidate for the Fusion nomination for mayor and should not accept the nomination if it were offered to me."

The Fusion leaders agreed that Seabury's support was crucial. And even if they hadn't felt that way, they would have been reluctant to go against his wishes. They began looking for other candidates. Price drafted an angry statement of resignation from the committee. "The best equipped and most able man considered for the Fusion nomination, a man fearless and independent, was objected to by Judge Seabury upon the narrow-minded reason that he is a close friend of Alfred E. Smith, the most popular man in New York City," the statement said. "The Fusion Conference itself was practically unanimous for Mr. Moses. . . ." But Price was persuaded to withdraw his resignation, to leave unpublished his statement—and to join with the rest of the committee in a search for another candidate.

Five reformers were to be offered the nomination during the hectic weeks that followed.

But these were men to whom politics was something more than an avenue for the realization of personal ambitions. Two of the five—judges—

said that they were happy being judges; a third, a business executive, preferred a career in private life to one in public. And if they did have political ambitions, they subordinated them to principle. Raymond Ingersoll, fifty-eight, a wealthy respected social worker who had served as a park commissioner in the Mitchel administration and as a campaign manager in Smith's 1924 gubernatorial campaign, wanted to be mayor but was afraid his health would not allow him to do the job properly, and so he declined the nomination. Then Seabury and Maurice P. Davidson, chairman of the City Fusion Party, taking a room in the Hotel Commodore to avoid reporters, offered the nomination to Nathan Straus. Wrote Davidson: "I remember how he came into the room; slim, well-groomed, and how he removed his gloves, laid down his hat and cane, and how delighted he was with the offer, and how he said 'nothing has occurred in my lifetime or would ever occur which would bring me greater happiness than the opportunity to serve as mayor of the City of New York, but I ask forty-eight hours to consider.' We met again several days later, and he said that he had discussed the matter with some of his advisers and had decided to decline. . . . The ill-fated star of Adolf Hitler was rising. . . . Jews were accused by Hitler of endeavoring to encompass the control and government of the whole world. Ridiculous and absurd as those charges were, Nathan Straus refused to accept a nomination for Mayor at a time when Herbert Lehman was Governor because it might give credence in some quarters to Mr. Hitler's charges. He felt that in the interest of the welfare of his own people of the Jewish faith and in order not to handicap the success of the reform movement in New York it was up to him to subordinate any and all personal ambition in the interests of the public good and he, too, therefore declined."

There was a politician who wanted the nomination, wanted it desperately. "Fiorello H. La Guardia was standing in the wings—not standing, but moving around very, very rapidly," Davidson was to write. "He would send for me every once in a while and say, 'How are you getting on?' . . . He would say, 'Well, who's your latest mayor?' and I would tell him. He would jump around and shake his fist and he'd say, 'Well, there's only one man going to be the candidate, and I'm the man. I'm going to run. I want to be mayor.'"

La Guardia, a nominal Republican too liberal for most Republicans, had already lunged for the prize twice before. In 1921, president of the Board of Aldermen, he had sought the nomination from the Fusion committee of which Moses was secretary, but the reformers had turned instead to Henry Curran, one of their own, and when La Guardia ran against Curran in the Republican primary, he had failed to carry a single borough. In 1929, the Little Flower had received the Republican nomination, and the only remarkable aspect of his campaign against Jimmy Walker, then at the height of his popularity, was the size of his defeat: failing to carry a single assembly district, La Guardia received only 367,675 votes to Walker's 867,522. Then, in 1932, after five terms as a congressman from Latin East Harlem, where he had constructed an aptly named personal Italian-American

political machine—the Gibboni (apes)—La Guardia had been defeated by a Tammany hack. Out of a job at the age of fifty, branded a loser, only by winning the mayoralty could he resuscitate a political career that seemed to be gasping out its last breath.

La Guardia possessed qualifications for making the run beyond the fact that, half Jewish and half Italian, married first to a Catholic and then to a Lutheran of German descent, himself a Mason and an Episcopalian, he was practically a balanced ticket all by himself. Campaigning for mayor in 1929, he had made charges—many of the city's magistrates were corrupt; except for Al Smith, "there isn't a Tammany politician that would care to have his bank account examined"—that the city had thought exaggerated until the Seabury investigations, which began just a month after the election, had proved that most of them were understatements. As the Tin Box Parade swung into full stride, the *Times* commented that La Guardia was the only man with the right "to stand up in New York City today and say: 'I told you so.'"

But La Guardia, son of immigrants, raised in tenements, possessor of neither a high-school nor an undergraduate college degree,\* was from a different background than the reformers, and this was not an unimportant point with them. The members of the Fusion Conference Committee, and much of that segment of New York for which the committee spoke, were, as one of La Guardia's biographers put it, "educated at the best colleges, financially secure, eminent in the professions and business, and primarily old-stock American Protestant but also significantly Jewish. . . . The fusionists came, in short, from Gotham's gentry." And the attitude of many of them was, if not bigoted, at least parochial. "They preferred one of their own kind as Mayor or at least a type more like themselves" than the swarthy little Italian-American.

La Guardia's personal style was screaming, ranting, fist-shaking and more than a little irresponsible. (Learning that a family had been burned to death while the mother tried unsuccessfully to telephone the Fire Department, he insinuated that the telephone company was guilty of murder. Testifying before a legislative committee on rent controls, he said, "I come not to praise the landlord but to bury him.") These men who distrusted excess distrusted him. And he did not hesitate to play melting-pot politics, to wave the bloody flag, to appeal, in one of the seven languages in which he could harangue an audience, to the insecurities, resentments and prejudices of the ethnic groups in the immigrant district he had represented in Congress. ("I can outdemagogue the best of demagogues," he told one aide. "I invented the low blow," he boasted to another.) His naked ambition for high office, his cockiness, truculence and violent temper—while he was president of the Board of Aldermen, Curran once had to restrain him physically from striking the City Comptroller—repelled them.

\* He had earned an LL.B. from New York University Law School by attending classes, mostly in the evening, from 1907 to 1910.

Furthermore, although the reformers considered themselves liberals, their definition of the term was decidedly pre-Depression, and La Guardia was far too liberal for them. A New Dealer before the New Deal, he made a career for himself as a leader of the have-nots against the haves—and they were haves. His efforts in Congress might have made him, in his biographer's words, "the plumed knight of organized labor," but organized labor, militant, aggressive organized labor, was not precisely what reformers had in mind when they spoke moist-eyed of the working man. La Guardia lashed out, moreover, at the city's businessmen who were Fusion's financial cornerstones, charging, without offering proof, that big property owners were receiving low assessments on their property. When in 1929 he attempted to falsely persuade voters that he was a Fusion as well as a Republican candidate, the Citizens Union replied with a statement characterizing him as an opportunistic, excitable, unpredictable radical. Many reformers, La Guardia's biographers say, were happy that his ouster from Congress had apparently put an end to "an obnoxious career propelled by unstable and dangerous ambitions." The fact that in 1933 La Guardia was "the only professional Republican politician in the city who could dramatize both himself and an issue" did not move them. Moreover, Republican leaders detested this Republican whom they considered a radical. They flatly refused to accept him. Seabury, while not committing himself, noted that La Guardia was an excellent campaigner; the judge wanted to win. But every time La Guardia's name was brought up, it was greeted with open hostility by most other members of the Fusion Conference Committee. Running out of candidates, they began again to lean to Moses. Price asked him to reconsider his withdrawal. Seabury began pushing more strongly for La Guardia, possibly because he saw him as the only remaining viable alternative to Moses, but on July 26 Price took an informal telephone poll of the Fusion Conference Committee. The vote was eighteen for Moses, five for La Guardia. Moses agreed to let Price present his name again. He felt that Seabury, confronted by the *fait accompli* of the nomination, would not split the movement and would back him.

The Fusion leaders felt the same way. A meeting of the committee was scheduled for the following afternoon at the Lawyers Club, 115 Broadway, at 3 P.M. A room was reserved. Reporters were alerted that an important announcement would be made. Everything was in readiness to offer Moses the Fusion nomination for Mayor of the City of New York. As late as noon on July 27, Moses must have felt confident that he had it.

But at noon on July 27, three hours before the meeting was to convene, Seabury invited Davidson to lunch at the Bankers Club and demanded the nomination for La Guardia. When Davidson told him that the committee had decided to give it to Moses, Seabury struck the table with his clenched fist so hard that dishes rattled loudly in the suddenly hushed dining room.

"You sold out to Tammany Hall," the judge shouted. "I'll denounce you and everybody else. You sold out the movement to Tammany Hall." Leaving his guest at the table, he strode out of the dining room to the

elevator. Davidson, remonstrating, followed, but Seabury, in the elevator, turned and said, "You sold out. Goodbye"—and the door shut in Davidson's face.

Striding back to his office, which was located at 120 Broadway, directly across from the Lawyers Club where the Fusion Committee was to meet, Seabury issued a statement broadly hinting that he would run another ticket. The Fusion leaders, realizing that they had miscalculated, began to search frantically for a new candidate. Moses, learning of these developments by telephone from Price, told him that he didn't want his name placed in nomination.

In an attempt to placate Seabury while not alienating the Republicans, who still refused to nominate La Guardia, the committee nominated independent Democrat John F. O'Ryan, former member of the City Transit Commission. The reporters covering the Fusion meeting ran across Broadway to Seabury's office to learn his reaction. Seabury hardly knew O'Ryan—and since he knew his ignorance was shared by the voters, he believed O'Ryan could not win. Seeing by now a tiger behind every bush, the Judge told the reporters that this was the reason O'Ryan had been nominated. Tammany, he charged, had forced Republican leaders, some of whom "have long been the owned and operated chattels of Tammany Hall," to nominate a weak candidate. O'Ryan withdrew for the sake of unity. A new "harmony committee" was formed. It included not only Seabury but the one man who could match him in prestige among the reformers, Charles Culp ("CC") Burlingham, who at eighty-two still had the gift of making men forget their differences and remember their common cause. When Seabury began to roar "sellout" during one harmony committee meeting, Burlingham said, "Sit down, Sam, sit down." While the other members goggled at hearing the Bishop called by his first name, he sat down. And after midnight on August 4, CC persuaded the committee members, with the exception of Price and Davidson, who held out for Moses to the last, to authorize Seabury to call a waiting La Guardia and tell him the nomination was his.

The reform movement of New York City had wanted Robert Moses for mayor. Of all the influential reformers, only one had been firmly opposed to him. Given the almost certain success in 1933 of a Fusion ticket headed by so popular a candidate, it is hardly an overstatement to say that only one man had stood between Moses and the mayoralty, between Moses and supreme power in the city. But that man had stood fast; at the last moment, as Moses must have felt the prize securely within his grasp, it was denied him.

During the first two months of the mayoral campaign—which had been turned into a three-way race by the entry, with support from President Roosevelt, James A. Farley and Bronx Boss Edward J. Flynn, of anti-Tammany Democrat Joseph V. McKee—Moses declined to participate. His

visceral hatred of Roosevelt had been intensified by his philosophical antipathy to the President's social welfare policies, which he referred to in private as "socialistic." And the liberal La Guardia, who as a lame-duck congressman had introduced in early 1933 several bills favored by the incoming administration, was identified in Moses' mind with the New Deal.

But tough-minded reformer-politician and key Fusion strategist Paul Windels, believing in late October that La Guardia's campaign was losing momentum and needed a lift, asked Raymond Ingersoll to ask Moses to endorse the Little Flower.

Moses agreed. With less than two weeks remaining before Election Day, he suddenly abandoned his role as bystander. And his entry into the campaign had an impact even more dramatic than Windels had foreseen. For Moses' radio speeches and printed statements burst above the murk of the city's political battlefield like a Roman candle whose sparkle, coming from a shower of glittering, sharp-pointed barbs flung off by a graceful and witty malice, was both hard and brilliant.

Assailing Tammany and its mayors in a radio broadcast, Moses urged voters to remember "the strange characters they have seen occupying the places of Judge Gaynor and John Purroy Mitchel in City Hall—Hylan, the ranting Bozo of Bushwick; Walker, half Beau Brummel and half guttersnipe, and John P. O'Brien, a winded bull in the municipal china shop." Is it any wonder, he asked, that younger voters, who could not remember a non-Tammany mayor, "must think of the great office of Chief Magistrate with derision and contempt?"

As for the Farley-Flynn candidate, Moses said, he was a "pious fraud" whose attempt to portray himself as a reformer would forever be known in the city's history as "the strange interlude of 'Holy Joe' McKee." Electing McKee mayor, and thereby giving power to Farley and Flynn, would bring to City Hall only "another kind of Tammany."

"Do you think," he asked, "that the Currys, McCooeys, Farleys and Flynn are in any essential respect different from the Murphys, McCooeys, McCabes and McCalls of the cartoons of a generation ago? Do you think that the McCooey of today, who is the last living link between these two dynasties, is not the same old McCooey of the early 1900's? Let the younger voters ask the older voters this question. There can be no doubt of the answer."

Each of Moses' statements had its own sharp bite. "The Great Statesman McKee," he said in one, "is a synthetic character which never actually existed on sea or land, puffed up by the press . . . and now in the process of deflation. There's a large amount of unfairness to the individual in this process, but in the end it arrives at the truth."

And each statement contained praise for La Guardia couched in a prose that had to it a ring that sounded all the clearer above the dull clangor that is political strife in New York. "No one has ever questioned your independence," Moses told the Little Flower in a public statement. "You have no strings on you. You are not engaged in an obscure struggle for the con-

trol of a rotten political machine. You are free to work for New York City. Go to it."

"Moses' statements were no small help," Paul Windels recalls. "His support of La Guardia did more than any other single thing, I think, to give the impression that La Guardia did mean to give the city an independent administration." Moses' statements were front-paged, while others' were buried next to the bra and girdle ads. And their value was further enhanced because newspapers gave their readers the impression that he was speaking not only for himself but also for someone whose name was even more potent a political force in the city than his. Al Smith had not been able to bring himself to back either of his party's candidates. All during the election campaign the press pressed the Happy Warrior for a statement. When it was not forthcoming, reporters drew conclusions from Moses' statements. Pointing out that Moses was "one of Alfred E. Smith's closest friends," the *World-Telegram* said that his endorsement of La Guardia "has invoked a powerful, if silent, reinforcement to help La Guardia win." Moses, who was not speaking for Smith, tried to dispel the impression that he was. But La Guardia's advisers did all they could to foster that impression. When Moses was introduced to the crowd at a climactic Fusion rally at Madison Square Garden, the band played "The Sidewalks of New York." Before beginning his prepared speech, Moses said: "I have no desire to appear on this platform under false colors, much as I appreciate the implications involved in the instructions to the band. I do not come here as an emissary of my distinguished friend and former chief, who remains, in the affections of the people, the first citizen of this city." But at the end of Moses' speech, the band struck up the same tune.

Within a week after the votes were counted, La Guardia invited Moses to join his administration. Whether he had promised, through Ingersoll, to do so in order to obtain Moses' support—the making of such a deal might explain Moses' sudden decision to break his silence on the campaign—is unknown; but there were plenty of other explanations for the invitation.

Some of the explanations were rooted in personality. Fiorello La Guardia had an affection for his city. His wife recalls that when, after twelve years of trying, he finally became its mayor, "it was like he owned the United States. Nobody should do anything to it." With his romantic temperament, he wanted to beautify the city. He had a grand—if vague—conception of a metropolis whose citizens would pass their daily rounds in surroundings that uplifted the spirit. "Too often," he once said, "life in New York is merely a squalid succession of days; whereas in fact it can be a great, living adventure." And he thought of such beautification primarily in terms of public works. "He liked physical accomplishment," recalls Paul J. Kern, La Guardia's first law secretary at City Hall. "He liked to get things built for people; on Sundays, we used to drive around the city trying to think of things that should be built in the city."

La Guardia admired men who built. Lawyers, to lawyer La Guardia, were bad. He often remarked that a lawyer was like a prostitute: a man hired a prostitute to use her body and he hired a lawyer to use his brains and knowledge of the law. And, he would say, he didn't know but that the man who hired the prostitute got the better of the bargain. Engineers were good. "Engineers fascinated him," recalls Joseph D. McGoldrick, his Comptroller. "Lawyers were always getting in his way, telling him things he couldn't do. La Guardia didn't like people who told him what he couldn't do. But engineers could do things. They got things built for people." Says Kern: "He stood like a child in front of the simplest engineering feat." La Guardia's favorite evening watering hole was the Engineers Club at 32 West Fortieth Street, where he was an honorary member. Reuben Lazarus, who often watched him sitting in the club bar listening raptly to the club's non-honorary members talk about their achievements, says, "Engineers were his gods." And, although he hardly knew Moses, Moses' achievements especially awed him. He told Windels that he had, more than once, driven over the Long Island parkways "for inspiration."

Other explanations for La Guardia's invitation to Moses were rooted in politics.

La Guardia had won with only 40 percent of the vote; he was still a Republican in a Democratic town, a Republican who had been enabled to win largely because Democratic votes had been split between O'Brien and McKee. He could not count on another split, or on another Fusion-boosting Seabury investigation, in 1937; he knew that his political future depended, as one of his biographers has written, "on his giving New Yorkers the spectacularly good government he [had] promised them."

Specifically, La Guardia had promised to staff the city's government with nonpolitical, nonpartisan experts. To the public, Robert Moses epitomized the nonpolitical, nonpartisan expert. His appointment would prove that La Guardia was keeping his promise. And his immense popularity could not help rubbing off on the mayor who brought his talents to the city.

There were other reasons rooted in politics.

La Guardia feared Al Smith. He well knew that if Smith had been running against him, he would not be mayor, and he knew what would happen if Smith decided to run in 1937, or even to lend his immense prestige to some other candidate who would unify the overwhelming Democratic majority in the city. Making Smith's favorite a part of his administration would do much to keep the Happy Warrior happy—and off the warpath.

La Guardia knew that if he was to produce good government in a bankrupt city, the first requirement was money. "You know," he told a reporter earnestly, "I am in the position of an artist or a sculptor. . . . I can see New York as it should be and as it can be. . . . But now I am like the man who has a conception that he wishes to carve or to paint, who has the model before him, but hasn't a chisel or a brush." The only source of money to purchase a chisel or a brush of the size La Guardia had in mind was the federal government. Its President was not of La Guardia's party. He knew

that Moses had enjoyed great success on Long Island in obtaining federal funds—and he did not know of the hatred between Roosevelt and Moses.

Furthermore, La Guardia knew that a key reason for Moses' success in obtaining federal money was that Moses had plans for huge public works ready at the moment the money became available. To get plans, you needed first a large staff of engineers trained in building such works. He knew that the city departments did not have such staffs and he knew that Moses did. Moses needed La Guardia if he was to realize his great park and parkway plan for New York City—but La Guardia also needed Moses.

Moses knew it. To La Guardia's invitation, he replied with conditions. "I told the Mayor," he was to recall, "that I was not interested in taking the city job unless I had unified power over all the city parks and, even then, only as part of the unified control of the whole metropolitan system of parks and parkway development."

"Unified" was the operative adjective. There were five separate, independent park departments in New York City in 1933, one for each borough, each with its own borough park commissioner. If the five commissionerships were abolished and all five departments were consolidated into one, Moses said, he would be willing to be its commissioner—if the commissioner's authority was extended to include not only parks but parkways *and* if he was allowed to keep his state jobs. And since the key to a unified parkway program was the Triborough Bridge, he must also insist on control of the independent agency charged with the construction of that bridge, the Triborough Bridge Authority. He had a plan to finance construction of a "Marine Parkway Bridge" to the Rockaways: the plan was to create another authority to accept the necessary \$10,000,000 federal contribution. He wanted control of that authority, too. La Guardia agreed. The Mayor-elect could hardly restrain himself from blurting out the news before the arrangement was finalized. Seated at a dinner party next to Iphigene Ochs Sulzberger, who was bemoaning the state of the city's parks, he told her, "Don't worry. I'm appointing the best man in the United States as park commissioner!" In fact, when Moses suggested that he himself draft the bill consolidating the park departments and setting forth the powers he would possess as New York City Park Commissioner, La Guardia had seen no reason not to agree to that, too. It was the first bill submitted to the Legislature by the La Guardia administration. Neither man considered the Triborough appointment particularly significant; both still considered the Authority nothing more than a toll-collecting agency that would finish building a single bridge and then go out of business as soon as its cost was paid off. But they anticipated opposition in the Legislature, whose permission would be required for a state official to take a city job. The upstate Republicans who were the Legislature's leaders felt that Moses already possessed too much power, and would resist giving him more. Democratic legislators from the city would be opposed to his appointment because of the contracts and patronage it

would cost the party. And there were philosophical as well as personal and political objections. Concentrating in a single individual authority over both state and city parks and over most major road-building projects in the New York metropolitan region would give too much power to that individual, no matter who he was, some legislators said. Furthermore, in his state job, that individual would be the Governor's appointee; in his city job, the Mayor's. If the city's elected officials were to veto one of the projects he proposed to them in his capacity as a city official, he would be able to use his influence with the Governor to bring the state's influence to bear on the city officials to force the city into compliance with his will. The situation could also work in reverse. This line of reasoning could be carried on indefinitely, said one state senator: "No man is big enough to serve two masters." This was one reason why there was a law against the simultaneous holding of state and city jobs. And, some legislators attempted to remind the public, there were other, equally persuasive reasons. "Dual officeholding," they said, weakened the constitutional provision that the city should be a separate, independent entity within the state.\* There would be plenty of legislative opposition just to his proposed appointment as Park Commissioner; there was no sense in letting the Legislature know that La Guardia actually intended to appoint Moses to *three* city jobs, but permission was necessary for him to take each of them. The best bill drafter in Albany told La Guardia not to worry. Buried deep within the bill he drafted—it was Section 607, to be precise—allowing him to accept the park commissionership was the apparently innocuous phrase "an unsalaried state officer shall not be ineligible to hold any other unsalaried office filled by appointment of the Mayor." The camouflage worked. Unsalaried offices generally referred to meaningless honorary positions; not one legislator appears to have realized that it could also refer to an authority commissionership.

The opposition that boiled down from Albany anyway was blasted by the press—and by reformers who normally would have been the first to oppose a violation of the separation of state and city that they had always viewed as vital, and to oppose giving one man such power. They were not opposed now because the man was the one official they were confident would not abuse that power. And the reformers had considerable influence over the Republican legislators from the city. Soon Herbert Brownell, Jr., already, at twenty-nine, not only a state assemblyman but also a partner in a prestigious Wall Street legal firm, was speaking on behalf of the "Moses bill." Another GOP legislator from the city, Jay E. Rice, was arguing against

\* The courts had always emphatically upheld the law against dual officeholding. One memorable case, in fact, had enlivened the political vocabulary with a new phrase. In 1924, Murray Hulbert, the president of the city's Board of Aldermen, had innocently accepted membership on the Finger Lake State Park Commission, believing that because the park post was unsalaried it did not fall within the law's purview. But the City Comptroller, disagreeing, stripped Hulbert of his more important, salary-paying city job and the courts upheld the action—a circumstance which thereafter led Albany wags to refer to any suggestion that a city official be given a state job as an attempt to give the man "the finger."

Brownell when, as the *Herald Tribune* noted, "Mr. Rice was called on the telephone from New York and returned to the Assembly Chamber to withdraw his objection." The string-pulling Long Island barons who had come to see Moses as a friend pulled their strings. La Guardia gave assurances that the city was not surrendering any of its independence. "The city retains complete control through its properly constituted authorities over every cent it spends and everything it does." Governor Lehman, admiring Moses, sent the Legislature an emergency message to rush the bill through. Both the Mayor and the Governor—the two most powerful men in the state—were on Moses' side. So was the most popular; Al Smith publicly supported the appointment. While the press was still playing up the pledges by Tammany legislators to fight the bill to the finish, Moses knew that the fight was already finished—and that he had won. When a reporter called him for comment after one heated debate, Moses said, "There's nothing to get excited about." On January 19, 1934, Lehman signed the "Moses bill." That same day Moses joined a line of minor city officials waiting outside La Guardia's office. When his turn came, he entered the office and was sworn in as New York's first city-wide Park Commissioner.

Tammany's three Triborough commissioners held six-year terms, but the financial manipulations of two of them had been so blatant that La Guardia's investigators quickly uncovered them; one resigned and the other was dismissed. On February 4, at 11:57 A.M., a certificate of appointment as Secretary and Chief Executive Officer of the Triborough Bridge Authority, signed by the Mayor, was brought to the city clerk's office by one of the Mayor's secretaries and filed there. The name on the certificate was "Robert Moses." With the appointment to the second vacancy of George V. (the Fifth) McLaughlin, the bluff, red-faced Brooklyn banker and friend of Al Smith's who had long been Moses' friend and ally, control of the Authority was his. As soon as it was, a new bill was introduced, providing for the creation of a Marine Parkway Authority. Its powers were in general the same as those of the Triborough Bridge Authority. But there was one innovation. Those powers would not be exercised by a three-man board; the Authority would have only a "sole member." And that member, the man in whom all the powers of the Authority were lodged, would be "the Park Commissioner of New York City." On April 9, with scarcely any debate, the bill was passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor.

There were now seven separate governmental agencies concerned with parks and major roads in the New York metropolitan area. They were the Long Island State Park Commission, the New York State Council of Parks, the Jones Beach State Park Authority, the Bethpage State Park Authority, the New York City Park Department, the Triborough Bridge Authority and the Marine Parkway Authority. Robert Moses was in charge of all of them.

The New Deal's attempts to combat the Depression had apparently already given New York an opportunity to refurbish existing city parks. Harry

Hopkins' federal Civil Works Administration, set up in November 1933, had 68,000 men working on park clean-up projects in the city by Christmas. But Moses and his top Long Island park administrators, driving around to the parks to see what those men were doing, found that the city had given them neither adequate tools, materials, supervision nor instructions. Crews were laying asphalt roads and paths without adequate foundations—and even as they laid one section, another, completed a week earlier, was already heaving and cracking behind them from frost action. Six thousand men, assigned to "move ash dumps" in Riverside Park, were standing on the banks of the Hudson pecking at frozen cinders; two thousand were standing on truck beds on a little reef off Staten Island "building up" the reef by dumping out sand—which was washed away, at a cost of five dollars per cubic yard, almost as fast as they could dump it. Fifty-four hundred more were assigned to Brooklyn's Marine Park, purchased during the Mitchel administration and allowed to remain undeveloped for twenty years. Moses' engineers sneaked into the cupola of an old mansion in the park so that they could watch the work unobserved—and found that there was nothing to watch. Spread out over expanses of sand wastes and marshlands, in a scene more reminiscent of a French bivouac during the Retreat from Moscow than a park reclamation project, all but a handful of the fifty-four hundred sat huddled around small fires built against the freezing wind whipping out of Jamaica Bay. Some were passing around wine bottles held in brown paper bags. Others were throwing dice. Most had no tools—and Moses' men understood why when they saw men chopping up shovels and using their handles as firewood. Adding a poignant detail to the scene were a few men who had kept their tools and who obviously wanted to work; they spent hours "raking" the frozen ground or building little fences out of stone they found in the area, "just so," as one of them was later to recall, "I could feel I was doing something to earn my money."

Moses himself spent a lot of time at Orchard Beach, a very low, very narrow sand bar that linked together the eastern edges of Hunters Island and Rodman Neck, two of the little wooded pieces of land at the eastern fringe of Pelham Bay Park that were washed by the water of Long Island Sound. Here, in New York's northeastern corner, so far from any built-up areas in 1934 that visitors could hardly believe they were still within the borders of America's largest city, was located New York's most ambitious park project. When Moses arrived, \$346,750 had been spent on bathhouses, a breakwater and a retaining wall running behind the sand bar and designed to turn the bar into a bathing beach convenient to the bungalows of the six hundred families, Bronx Democratic stalwarts all, to whom most of Hunters Island and Rodman Neck had been leased. The engineer who designed the bathhouses, which were constructed of granite paving stones and had cost \$84,000 apiece, had apparently been inspired by the Black Hole of Calcutta; the only ventilation in the thirty-foot-high buildings was provided by a few narrow slits near the ceilings. The breakwater had been run out into the Sound through the very center of the beach, thereby splitting it in two and

forcing anyone wanting to get from one half to the other to climb over the top—which wasn't easy, since the breakwater designer had neglected to include steps. But the location of the retaining wall made reservations about this splitting of the beach irrelevant. The engineer who designed the wall had apparently seen the sand bar only at low tide; he had placed the wall so close to the water that, for most of the day, the waves lapped right up against it—and there was no longer any beach left to be split.

Moses dispatched teams of engineers to "inventory" New York City's parks—their acreage (incredibly no one knew their exact size), the buildings, paths, roadways, statues and equipment in them, the condition of these items and the type and amount of labor and materials that would be required to renovate them. He filed this information in a loose-leaf notebook kept atop his desk. By the time he was sworn in as Park Commissioner, the notebook was more than a foot thick, and he had a list of 1,800 urgent renovation projects on which 80,000 men could immediately be put to work.

But renovation was only a small part of Moses' plan. Day after day during the bitterly cold November and early December of 1933, while the great city lay inert in the grip of its long malaise, Robert Moses was being chauffeured around it in the big Packard, Hazel Tappan beside him with a stenographer's note pad open on her lap. Twenty years before, as a young staffer at the Bureau of Municipal Research, Robert Moses had wandered around New York City "burning up with ideas, just burning up with them." Now Moses was not young—one of the days he spent in the big Packard was his forty-fifth birthday—but he was still burning. "Sometimes it seemed to me that his voice never stopped," Miss Tappan recalls. "Things just kept pouring out of him. I remember once we were downtown someplace and he wanted to see some underground garage—for sanitation trucks or something—under a city building there to see if it would interfere with some plans he had for putting a park on the street near it and we started to go down this spiral ramp and it was getting darker and darker and he was still dictating. And finally it was almost pitch-black and he was still dictating. To this day I can see it getting darker and darker and that voice going on and on. Until finally I had to say, 'Mr. M! Mr. M! Wait a minute! I can't see!'"

By late December, the outline of his ideas for large-scale park construction projects was ready, and now, crowded into the Packard with him and Miss Tappan were his Long Island engineers. They came in relays. One crew would drive with him to certain parks—describing these trips, one engineer echoed Frances Perkins' words of two decades before, "Everything he saw made him think of some way it could be better"—and then that crew would go back to Babylon and translate his ideas into general engineering plans while another would head out with him to other parks.

Relays were needed to keep up with him. "His orders just poured out," recalls the engineer. "Bam! Bam! Bam! So fast that we used to all try to take them down at once so that when we got out to Babylon we could put them together and maybe get one complete list of everything he wanted. You'd start at dawn—hell, sometimes we'd start *before* dawn; I remember

driving around Manhattan when everybody was still sleeping except the milkmen, maybe, and the cops on the beats. I remember once a cop really jumping when that big black car filled with men came around a corner in front of him—and by late afternoon, I can tell you, your head would be just absolutely spinning. But he'd still be firing things at you." Didn't they break for lunch? "You didn't break for lunch when you were out driving around with Robert Moses."

Soon the engineers' concepts of his ideas were being presented for his approval.

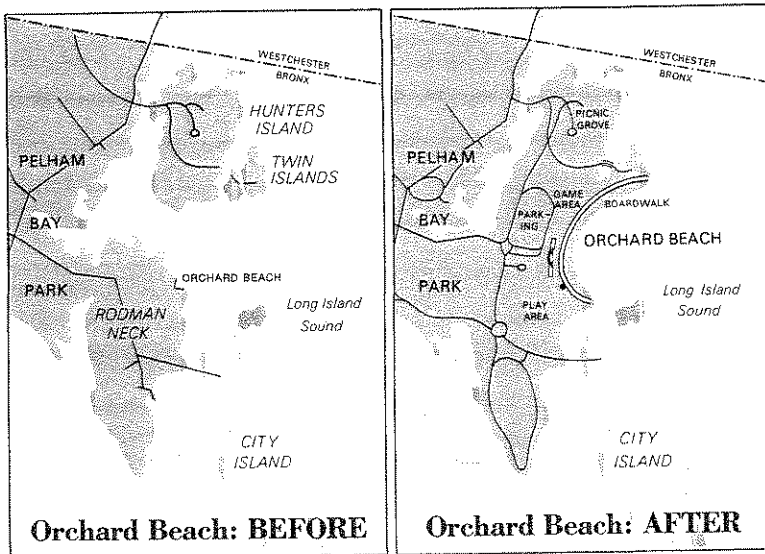
With few exceptions—City Hall is perhaps the most notable—the public works of New York City were hack work designed by hacks. But the men driving around with Robert Moses were not hacks. They included the unknown young architects, landscape architects and engineers—the Herbert Magoons and Earle Andrewses—responsible for Jones Beach and the other highly acclaimed Long Island parks. And they included Major Gilmore D. Clarke and Aymar Embury II. Clarke, designer of the Bronx River Parkway and other outstanding examples of highway beautification, was in 1934 the most famous landscape architect in the United States; he had been in the process of retiring from public work to accept lucrative private assignments. Embury, an architect, had designed Princeton University's classic Class of 1915 Dormitory and many of Long Island's most beautiful estates—parks in themselves. In 1934, he had waiting for him "more private business commissions than he could handle in a decade." Moses persuaded Clarke and Embury to come to work on New York's parks.

As had been the case with the famous architects who had gathered around him on the barren sand bar called Jones Beach a decade earlier, however, some of the men with him in the big Packard in 1934 had difficulty grasping the extent of his vision. When the plans came in for Riverside Park, where, twenty years before, he had dreamed of a great highway along the water, a highway that would cover the ugly tracks and cleanse the West Side of Manhattan of the smoke and stench from the trains that ran along it, they left the tracks uncovered. The engineers told him that to cover them would add millions to the cost of the park development—for which at the moment there was almost no money at all in sight, not to mention the additional millions that would be needed to build the Henry Hudson Bridge across the Harlem River Ship Canal and a parkway linking the bridge with the Saw Mill River Parkway. Moses told them to worry only about the plans; he would worry about getting the money for them.

Exasperated with their plans for Orchard Beach, he loaded the architects into the big Packard and drove out onto barren, snow-covered Hunters Island.

Standing under winter-stripped trees on a little hill that rose out of the marshes that fringed the islet, he looked across at Rodman Neck, four hundred yards away, at the sand bar, covered now with a thin scum of ice, that held them tenuously together, at the Tammany-built breakwater and Hole of Calcutta bathhouses, and at the six hundred private bungalows.

The sand bar would never be a decent bathing beach as long as those monstrosities were there, he said. He wanted them torn down; he didn't care how much they had cost—*tear them down!* And tear down those goddamned bungalows—yes, all six hundred of them. He had been spending a lot of time wandering around up here in the afternoons, he said, and he had decided



that the beach should consist of more than just the sand bar. If it extended all the way around the eastern shore of both Hunters Island and Rodman Neck, it would be almost a mile long and almost crescent-shaped. In fact, if it extended over to the Twin Islands—he pointed to two islets to the northeast separated from Hunters Island by two narrow strips of water—the length could be a full mile and the shape of the crescent perfect. He wanted the beach extended to the Twin Islands, he said; the strips of water couldn't be very deep; fill them in. And he wanted the sand on the beach to be gleaming white ocean sand like the kind at Jones Beach and the Rockaway beaches, not their present coarse, pebble-filled gray Long Island Sound sand. The sand could be dredged off the Rockaway beaches and then brought here by barge, up the East River to the Sound. Behind the beach, paralleling its mile-long crescent, he wanted a bathhouse—designed with the same imagination, the same attention to detail, as the bathhouses at Jones Beach, he said; he didn't want it looking like the typical public bathhouse. But that didn't mean it should look like the Jones Beach bathhouses, he said; if his men looked around him, they would see that the setting here was very different from that at Jones Beach. The setting there was the long, low sweep of sand and sea; here it was hills and trees. The Jones Beach bathhouse had

been long and low, its lines horizontal; the lines here should be more vertical—perhaps they should start thinking about columns, maybe even a colonnade. He would leave it to them, but he didn't want any of them forgetting that the function of a bathhouse wasn't to impress or overawe; it was to help people have a good time—he wanted it light, airy and gay. And for God's sake, he said, use this kind of imagination on the city's other parks—all the city's parks.



## 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, goddammit, 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

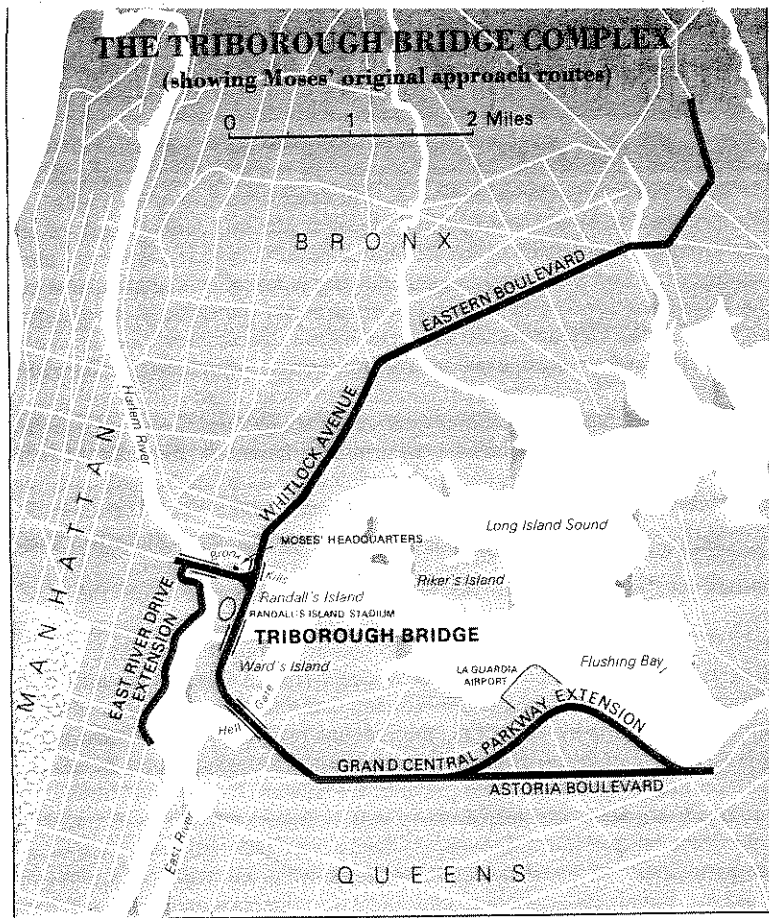
of *that* bridge would each be higher than a football field standing on end, and it was *that* bridge's anchorages, in whose concrete would be embedded cables made up of enough wire to circle the globe twice around, that were as big as pyramids.

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.



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

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-

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, warehouses 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.