

JONES BEACH STATE PARK



A Report by Alexandra Parsons Wolfe
Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities
July 21, 2004

**JONES BEACH STATE PARK
OCEAN PARKWAY, WANTAGH, NY 11793**

FORWARD

The following report, prepared for the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, is an analysis of the status and condition of Jones Beach State Park, a site recognized as eligible for listing to the National Register of Historic Places by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. The report provides findings regarding the site's historic significance and offers recommendations for improving the care of what is essentially a cultural resource of national importance. Findings and recommendations are based on historical research and design analysis. An evaluation of the park's condition also factors into the findings through the assessment of significant features such as major structures, landscape, and ornamental details. Photographs are a major component of the report, and comparisons made between archival and current images provide compelling documentation of the effects of historically uninformed maintenance programs over the long term. They are proof that Jones Beach requires greater recognition as an historic site, and better care of its character defining features.

Alexandra Parsons Wolfe
July 21, 2004

**JONES BEACH STATE PARK
OCEAN PARKWAY, WANTAGH, NY 11793**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Significance and Findings	1
Recommendations	5
Location	7
Owner	7
Contact	7
Hours	7
National Register Status	7
Description	7
History	8
Design	12
Status and Condition	15
Conclusion	20
Illustrations	22
Sources	50

JONES BEACH STATE PARK OCEAN PARKWAY, WANTAGH, NY 11793

SIGNIFICANCE AND FINDINGS

Jones Beach State Park is a national treasure. It was conceived in the early 1920s by Robert Moses as the highlight of an extensive and unprecedented park and parkway system that would introduce a new heroic scale to the creation of outdoor recreational facilities for the general public. In order to realize this vision, Moses became the major force in the establishment of the Long Island State Parks Commission, the New York State Council of Parks, as well as numerous local transportation authorities. Through the power invested in these entities, Moses fiercely acquired land and revenue to execute and maintain a truly remarkable public works project. When Moses started in 1924 (the year the Long Island State Park Commission was created) there was only one state park in Long Island, an isolated rudimentary facility on 200 acres at Fire Island. When Moses resigned from his posts at the Commission and the Council in 1963, the Long Island region had fifteen state parks comprising thousands of acres, all connected to each other and to New York City by ribbons of unobstructed and interconnected automotive parkways. The system's crowning jewel and catalyzing agent was Jones Beach, the project Moses considered his greatest achievement.¹

Described as “what a public beach should be” when it opened in 1929, Jones Beach State Park is an extraordinary synthesis of planning, landscape architecture, architecture, and engineering.² It was the first public seaside facility in the nation executed on a grand civic scale and the first to provide resort type activities to the general population. It was also the first to incorporate automotive transport into its design. Intentionally devoid of the privately run amusement park concessions that typically developed in public recreational areas at the time, Jones Beach was planned to provide healthful recreation in a quiet, clean, safe, and aesthetically uplifting environment that was serviced by every modern convenience. It provided facilities for bathing, sports, dining, music, and theater, and organized various recreational activities and classes, and even provided day care.³ In addition to its lavish scale and visionary program, Jones Beach was distinguished by its attention to detail in all aspects of its creation. Working as a cohesive whole, the park's formally designed site plan, lush landscapes, highly stylized and ambitious architecture, high-quality materials, and thematic decorative elements provided a sense of upscale destination for its visitors. The formality of the site, however, was consciously tempered by the whimsical nature of ornamental details embellishing the park's numerous recreational facilities, emphasizing that Jones Beach was a place for fun as well as civilized behavior.

Today, Jones Beach State Park remains one the greatest achievements in twentieth century public works construction. It proved to be an immediate and enduring success, and is testimony to Robert Moses' belief that large-scale public recreational facilities could be grand, thoroughly modern, and essentially noble. With its ancillary parkway system, Jones Beach is the spectacular material outgrowth of a new age in the history of Long Island, New York State, and

¹ New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, “Greeting From Jones Beach,” *The New York State Preservationist*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2003), p. 15.

² New Beach at Jones Park Planned as a Place of Rest,” *New York Times* (August 4, 1929), p. XX11.

³ Meyer Berger, “Jones Beach, One of the World's Best, an Ideal Place for Family Outings,” *New York Times* (July 3, 1947), p. 23.

America in general. It embodies the reforming ideals of the Progressive Movement in government and responds to the cultural changes caused by industrial advancements. It represents a new civil agency serving and communicating to a vast general public with increased free time and new modes of transport, particularly the private car. By capturing and developing open space specifically and thoughtfully to satisfy their recreational needs, Moses created a “people’s country club,” that was “noncommercial [and] as careful and determined in its symbolism as a seat of government.”⁴

Although Jones Beach is appreciated as a recreational facility, its importance as an achievement of design and planning has been largely undervalued for many years. Much of what made the park special has slowly and insidiously disappeared due to maintenance and improvement procedures that failed to fully recognize the numerous components that contribute to the park’s significance. This is particularly apparent in the loss of architectural and landscape details, as expressed through material changes, the simplification and alteration of defining features, and outright removals that have, cumulatively over time, seriously compromised the fundamental character of the park. While these changes were identified as early as 1988, concerns over preserving the park’s historic significance have only recently developed and remain uncoded and vague.⁵

As Jones Beach State Park celebrates its 75th anniversary this August 4, 2004, the park is well due recognition and acknowledgment of its historic and cultural value through National and State historic designation. The site’s only designation, as of 1997, is National Register *eligible* and this is simply not enough for as important a resource as Jones Beach. Although National Register eligibility requires a similar state level review process as National Register listing (executed by the Resource Management Group), it is hindered by a lack of dedicated research to guide decision making.⁶ There is no formal document, such as an Historic Structure Report or even a National Register Nomination, to identify the resource’s specific significant features, and no master plan to provide long-term preservation goals and detailed guidelines for restoration and general maintenance. Without this information, regulatory criteria used to assess the impact of proposed work on historically significant features becomes vague, leaving the park vulnerable to oversights. This is especially so when proposed work is not required to enter a state level review but is decided at the regional level. As a result, the preservation of Jones Beach State Park becomes largely affected by the sensibilities of the individuals involved in a project’s development and/or its review process. Without standardized guidelines, it is impossible for these individuals to guarantee a sustained and consistent level of knowledge, awareness, and concern.

Luckily, for the time being, both the state and regional heads of the New York State Office of Parks show an increased concern for historic preservation than previous administrations. For Jones Beach, this has led to a “back to yesteryear” initiative.⁷ Beginning circa 2000, under

⁴ Paul Goldberger, “Robert Moses: Patron Saint of Public Places,” *New York Times* (July 26, 1989), p. B2.

⁵ R. Marc Fasanella, “Robert Moses and the Making of Jones Beach State Park, Part II: The Grand Design,” *Long Island History Journal*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Spring 1995), p. 218. Quoting Laura Rosen, “Robert Moses and New York: The Early Years,” *Livable City* vol. 12 (December 1988), p. 7.

⁶ As described by Ronald Foley, former head of the Long Island Region of the State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (interviewed June 22, 2004), the Resource Management Group is composed of members from various state offices who coordinate to review the feasibility and impact of proposed projects. The Group is lead by a member of the finance office and addresses issues of compliance with general policy, environmental impact, and historic preservation.

⁷ George Gorman, Director, Jones Beach State Park, interview (June 30, 2004). The term “back to yesteryear” is used among park officials to identify new projects developed around the park’s history.

Commissioner Bernadette Castro, public education in the park's history was introduced through permanently installed thirteen interpretive signs located on the main Boardwalk (figure 1). At about the same time, replicas of early wooden boardwalk benches began to appear as a result of a memorial funding program, and a permanent exhibit, named *Castles in the Sand*, was installed in the western addition of the East Bath House. With an admission fee of only \$1.00, this well-conceived compact exhibit provides an engaging view into the creation of Jones Beach and the larger Long Island State Park and Parkway System through a collection of historic photographs, plans, and objects.

For the 75th anniversary of Jones Beach, park officials have developed numerous events and restoration projects to celebrate the occasion. Celebratory events began on Memorial Day with a well-attended air show by the United States Navy's Blue Angels. In late July, the park will host an exclusive party for all park employees, past and present, and on August 4th, (the park's official opening date), a large public party will be held featuring "enough birthday cake to feed a thousand."⁸ The anniversary celebration will end on Labor Day with a revival of one of the park's Moses era "Circus Days" which will feature exotic animals and other entertainments.

Restorations that commenced in the winter of 2004 included the reinstallation of striped canvas awnings on the Central Mall buildings as well as over two boardwalk observation areas. More funnel garbage can covers, as well as replicas of early stencil printed crab garbage cans were also installed throughout the park (figure 2). Six laser-cut metal signs, replicating originals, can also be found in the Central Mall area and at the two main bathhouses (figure 3). Larger projects include the restoration of the circular wood rail at the base of the main Central Mall flagpole and a small portion of the area's central diamond boardwalk pattern. Some of the park's extensive landscaping has also been reinstalled. The landscape plan, donated by Richard Gibney of the Gibney Design Group, concentrates around the Central Mall area where new shrubbery, perennials and annual beds have been planted (figure 4). Less extensive plantings have also been installed at the West Bathhouse area, along the Field Four and Five parking area walkways, and at the Zach's Bay facilities. Finally, the park has undertaken to replace the second Boardwalk Restaurant (designed by Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill in 1966) with a new one referencing the Art Deco style of the first restaurant erected in 1936-37 and taken by fire in 1964. The 1966 building was demolished earlier in 2004, and the state's Resource Management Group is currently reviewing proposals for the new building.

While all these restoration initiatives are steps in the right direction, they remain (with the exception of the Boardwalk Restaurant) largely superficial. Although they are highly visible and will contribute to the education of the general public, they do not directly address the preservation issues resulting from past maintenance and improvement procedures that have failed to recognize all aspects of the site's historic significance. Such work has compromised a major component of the park's historic significance which is the high level of embellishment and the use of quality materials that characterized the park at its inception. In addition, even though park officials endeavor to use preservation principles to guide the maintenance of Jones Beach, such compromising maintenance procedures continue to slip by the review process. A case in point is the replacement windows on the second floor of the West Bathhouse. These were originally large metal casement windows with fixed transoms that had a distinctively thin and sculptural profile. All but one have been replaced this year with aluminum divided lights. While the new

⁸ Bill Bleyer, "Party at the Parks," *Newsday* (March 22, 2004), p. A34.

window frames generally maintain the same brown color and proportion as the originals, their metal members are much flatter and thicker, and fail to exhibit any attention to quality in construction (figures 5-6). This is a subtle but very significant material change that illustrates the problems inherent in maintaining an historic site that has not been properly documented from a preservation standpoint.

Another point illustrating oversights in maintaining Jones Beach as an historic site is the current arrangement with its new concessionaire, J & B Restaurant Partners. Under a new ten-year vending contract, J & B will take over and renovate the interiors of the park's thirteen food concessions, outfitting them with "national brands" similar to shopping mall food courts.⁹ They have also taken over the ice cream parlor in the former Marine Dining Room and have installed the "Friendly's" brand. With growing awareness of the park's historic significance, park officials have required that the concessionaire preserve any surviving original material in the buildings, but they did not take things a step further and use the new contract as an opportunity to coordinate the development of interior renovation plans that might be more sympathetic to the original design intent, or more pro actively, require the concessionaire to perform some restoration work as part of the arrangement. Park officials seem to have forgotten that Robert Moses' original vision of the park was distinctively absent of the aesthetically incoherent results of commercialism which he achieved by disallowing private concessions altogether.¹⁰ While such an arrangement may no longer be possible in the current time period, efforts could be made to adapt the aesthetic impact of franchise operations to Moses' intention. This would be particularly effective in the control of signage which, it appears, was not part of the contract negotiations as evidenced by the presence of a large and ungainly Friendly's sign outside the West Bathhouse (figure 7).

Remarkably, as much as has been compromised at Jones Beach, there is still a great deal remaining of the park's defining character. The site plan is largely unaltered and most of the early structures remain, although diminished from their earlier grandeur. A good deal of their architectural detail also survives, from the raised seam copper roof of the Pitch Putt booth and the interior paneling and a few light fixtures in the former Marine Dining Room at the West Bathhouse, to the original doors and furnishing inside the lounge area at the comfort station at Zach's Bay. In addition many of the ornamental features that embellished the park survive in-situ. This includes the boardwalk funnel garbage can covers, a ships wheel water fountain, Art-Deco style cast stone planters/garbage can covers at the West Bathhouse, some (but not all) slate mosaics, and paving details such as curved steps leading to the beach proper (figures 8 – 12). These structures and details are essential elements expressing the realization of a great public undertaking that was never before attempted and never again achieved in the United States during the twentieth century. The quality and historic significance of Jones Beach State Park deserves more respect. It needs its own preservation plan that will identify, conserve, repair, maintain, and protect all aspects of its significance. It is important therefore, to ensure the prevention of future decline and historically insensitive alterations. Appropriate historic preservation should be mandated for the site, and a thorough restoration and conservation plan should be created to properly maintain it.

⁹ Bill Bleier, "Here's the Dish, New Wave of Eats at Beaches, *Newsday* (April 29, 2004), p. A18.

¹⁰ "New Beach Planned at Jones Park; Planned as a Place of Rest, *New York Times* (August 4, 1929), p. XX111.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Listing to the National Register of Historic Places as a Step Towards Designation as a National Historic Landmark

The National Register of Historic Places and the National Historic Landmarks program are two ways the federal and local governments recognize and sustain historic properties. The National Historic Landmarks program, established in 1936 is an older and more exclusive program that operates in tandem with the later National Register of Historic Places Program established in 1966 under the National Historic Preservation Act. While the National Register includes properties of local, state, or regional significance, the National Landmarks program is limited to properties that especially exhibit national significance. Such properties are described in the National Historic Landmarks website as “possessing exceptional value or quality in illustrating and interpreting the heritage of the United States.”¹¹

Nominations to both programs undergo a rigorous review process. For Jones Beach, just the act of preparing a nomination will begin the process of officially identifying its character defining features. If national significance is clearly addressed in a National Register nomination, it will automatically be submitted for consideration as a National Historic Landmark.¹² Conversely, designation as a National Historic Landmark gains automatic listing to the National Register of Historic Places. Once a property is designated in either program it is subject to the same New York State and federal environmental review processes, although recognition as a National Landmark gains greater protection in federal undertakings. In addition the condition of a National Landmark is also monitored every two years by the National Historic Landmarks Assistance Initiative, and the status of a property may be brought to the attention of Congress by the Secretary of the Interior who reports annually on any known or anticipated damage or threats to its integrity.

National Landmarks represent only 3% of the properties listed on the National Register. Consequently they maintain a higher honorary status and have greater opportunities for receiving grants from agencies such as the Getty Foundation and Save America’s Treasures. For a site that operates on such a large scale as Jones Beach, such access to additional funding would be well worth investigating. In addition, the property gains admission to the National Historic Landmarks Stewards Association. This association, established in 2000, comprises the owners, managers, and friends of National Historic Landmarks and provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and information regarding the care of nationally significant resources.

For Jones Beach, it is recommended that recognition of its historic significance begin with a nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination should clearly demonstrate the site’s cultural importance on the national level so that it will be forwarded to the National Historic Landmarks program. In this way, the park will benefit from the positives of National Register status while it is reviewed for the more exclusive designation as a national Historic Landmark.

¹¹ National Landmarks Program, www.cr.nps.gov/nhl.

¹² Austin O’Brian. Chief Editor, *The New York State Preservationist*, interview (June 24, 2004).

Designation as a State Historic Park

On the state level, designation as a State Historic Park provides the greater stewardship services and technical support of the Bureau of Historic Sites. Jones Beach is a complicated site in terms of materials and artistically crafted details, and will require a certain level of critical sensitivity if appropriate preservation is to be achieved. The Bureau, established in 1972, was developed to satisfy such needs.

Originally limited to historic sites and later opened to parks in 1996, the Bureau of Historic Sites oversees the maintenance and interpretation of identified historic resources. Its services are available to any site or park interested in historic preservation, but it is not mandatory except for those designated as State Historic Sites or Parks. The Bureau provides technical advice and services for building, landscape, and objects conservation, collections management, curating, interpretative research, exhibition design, and protection and maintenance plans. It is through this bureau that the special needs of historic resources are addressed; whether it be supplying research assistance for preparing a landscape restoration plan, or providing custom architectural replacement materials. While Jones Beach has used the service of the Bureau in the past for certain projects, the Bureau is not required to be involved in the development any maintenance or improvement plans. As it stands any coordination with the Bureau is up to the discretion of the park and/or the regional director. Because Jones Beach is such a large complex of design elements with extensive embellishments, it is essential that the added attention of the Bureau of Historic Sites be mandated for the park.

Creation of a Jones Beach State Park Master Plan

In addition to the necessary research to gain listing to the National Register and National Historic Landmark status, the preparation of a Jones Beach Master Plan will specifically document significant architectural and landscape features that will provide a foundation for establishing guidelines for their appropriate conservation. A Master Plan will also provide an historical framework to encourage and guide public education and increase interest. It will also assist in realizing long-term restoration projects by establishing a phased series of preservation goals. Such a clear and tangible list of goals will also facilitate applying for grant monies.

Improved Modes of Interpreting the Site to Increase Public Awareness

Well-planned historic interpretation of a site often elicits a greater respect and appreciation from the public that uses it. It also can draw increased attendance by visitors interested in cultural and historic tourism. At Jones Beach, this may take many forms: For example: strategically placed discreet signs that discuss the historic and design significance of certain key features and/or areas; production of a small book made available at a souvenir shop that discusses the architecture, landscape, planning, and history of the park; improved advertising of the Castles in the Sand Exhibit; and historic walking tours. All these endeavors will help disseminate an understanding of the importance of Jones Beach's contribution to American heritage.

LOCATION

Ocean Parkway, Wantagh, New York 11793

OWNER

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island
Region

CONTACT

George Gorman, Director, Jones Beach State Park, 631- 669-1000, ext. 246
John Norbeck, Regional Director, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and
Historic Preservation

HOURS

Park open year-round, seven days a week.
East Bathhouse pools; 10 – 8, weekends and holidays, May 25 – August 11.
Exhibit, “Castles in the Sand,” located at East Bath House; year-round, 10 – 5.
West Bathhouse pools: 10 – 6 weekdays, 9 – 8 weekends and holidays, June –
September.

NATIONAL REGISTER STATUS

Recognized as a National Register eligible district in 1997.
In addition the original portions of the Wantagh and Meadowbrook Parkways (south of
Merrick Road) and the entire length of the Ocean Parkway have been designated as
eligible under the heading “Robert Moses National Register Parkway” in 1994.¹³

DESCRIPTION

Jones Beach is a linear park located on a western barrier island on Long Island’s South Shore in Nassau County. It consists of 2,413 sea-side acres extracted from the Towns of Hempstead and Oyster Bay and includes six miles of sandy beaches along the Atlantic Ocean and a calmer half-mile beach on the opposite side at Zach’s Bay. The park provides facilities for a variety of recreational activities. Besides open ocean bathing beaches, there is a boat basin, fishing piers, the Jones Beach Marine Theater, a restaurant, numerous cafeterias, two pool houses, picnic and barbecue areas, bicycle paths, a nature center, hiking trails, a golf course, and a variety of sports fields and courts (figure 13). Roughly twenty-three structures now service the park. Of these, thirteen remain from the park’s earliest period of development (1929 – 39), and includes five of its major public structures: the East and West Bathhouses (1929 and 1931; figures 29 & 44), the Water Tower (1930; figure 19), and the Central Mall and Cafeteria building (1931; figures 21 &

¹³ James Warren, former Regional Representative, National Register of Historic Places. Interview (July 7, 2004).

43). In addition, lesser, but equally significant structures that survive from this era are the Police Headquarters (1935; figure 58), the Pitch Putt Kiosk (1932; figure 60), and the Zach's Bay Concession Stand and Comfort Station (1932; figure 62).

HISTORY

At its inception Jones Beach, and the Long Island Park and Parkway System in general, were planned to serve an urban population that increasingly sought open recreational space outside the city. Moses developed his plan in the early 1920s at a time when Long Island had reached its apex as place for millionaire country houses.¹⁴ It was also a time when improved modes of transportation and the popularization of the automobile allowed more people to venture further out into Long Island's countryside. This led to increased competition for the use of open space between the general population looking for a day in the country and estate owners who wanted their country retreats to remain exclusive. In Moses' opinion, too many private developers and wealthy individuals had swallowed up Long Island's open land, leaving little for a public desperately in need of recreational space and a way to get there.¹⁵ Moses' park and parkway system would solve this problem; it would provide public "playground[s] within easy access" to the city, to provide relief from the intensity of urban life through a day long sojourn.¹⁶

In 1922-23, Robert Moses began the process of implementing his extensive and visionary park and parkway system by preparing a report entitled *A State Park Plan for New York*, a document Robert Caro, in his biography of Robert Moses, describes as a "seminal document in the history of parks in America." Included in the report (which Moses wrote) were submissions from a "comprehensive study" of state parks prepared by trustees of the state's Commission for Reconstruction, Retrenchment, and Reorganization. With this document, Moses convinced Governor Alfred Smith that a consolidated park system was necessary for the welfare of the general, mostly urban population. Shortly after, Moses drafted a park consolidation and bond-funding bill which the state approved on April 9, 1924 leading to the creation of the State Council of Parks and the Long Island State Park Commission. Robert Moses was then appointed President of the Long Island State Park Commission and almost immediately began acquiring land for the creation of parks and parkways (mostly on the south shore of Long Island) using appropriation methods that sometimes led to well-publicized legal troubles.¹⁷ Jones Beach was among the earliest properties acquired by Robert Moses. In 1925, he propositioned the Towns of Hempstead and Oyster Bay to transfer ownership of their South Shore barrier beaches. The citizens of Hempstead voted against Moses' proposition, and in Oyster Bay it was defeated before reaching the ballot. In 1926, after Moses created the Hempstead Development Commission to promote (through public education) a second proposal, the Town of Hempstead granted the Long Island

¹⁴ Dennis P. Sobin *Dynamics of Community Change: The Case of Long Island's Declining Gold Coast*. (Port Washington, New York: Ira J. Friedman, Inc., 1968), p. 49.

¹⁵ "State Soon to Achieve a Unified Park System," *New York Times* (December 20, 1925), p. XX6.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Robert A. Caro. *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1975) p.166.

¹⁸ The most publicized land acquisition was caused by a battle between Robert Moses and W. Kingsland Macy and Horace Havemeyer of the Pauchogue Land Corporation over the former George C. Taylor estate which would become Heckscher State Park in East Islip.

State Parks Commission a portion of land smaller than what originally requested as well as the right of way to the beach from Wantagh.¹⁹ This allowed work on the park and a causeway connecting the barrier island to the mainland to begin almost immediately.

The scope of engineering at Jones Beach was enormous. In addition to simply addressing the facility's unprecedented scale, park engineers (headed by Sidney Shapiro) had to deal with the fact that they were entering uncharted structural territory by erecting large buildings on a sandbar. Isolated from the mainland and regularly flooded by sea water, Jones Beach was essentially, as Moses described it, "a mosquito infested tidal swamp full of stagnant pools, [and] flanked by shifting dunes."²⁰ The first phase of the Jones Beach project was to build a large bathhouse, parking lots, and a causeway connecting the Jones Beach barrier island to the Long Island mainland, but first the beach's topography had to be altered. According to Robert Caro, between 1927 and 1928 about 40 million cubic yards of fine grain sand was pumped from the ocean floor to raise the entire park area and the seventeen miles of the causeway fourteen feet above sea level. Added to this feat, millions of small sea grass clumps were planted by hand all along park's dunes to prevent the freshly excavated fine sand from blowing away, a feat described by Caro as akin to building the pyramids in Egypt.²¹

In 1929 both the Wantagh Causeway and the East Bathhouse with dining facilities were completed, and Jones Beach State Park, providing four miles of Atlantic surf and a half-mile of calmer bay waters to the general public, opened on August 4th to great success. During its second year of operation, with the completion of the Water Tower, Jones Beach was already used to full capacity.²² By the summer of 1931, the West Bathhouse with cafeteria and Marine Dining Room, and the Central Mall and Cafeteria with observation deck were completed. At the opening ceremonies for the West Bathhouse, Lieutenant Governor Herbert H. Lehman and former Governor Alfred H. Smith hailed the park as "a symbol of the advances made by New York in social consciousness," and "the finest development of its kind in the world, . . . unequalled anywhere in USA or abroad."²³

In the fall of 1931, Depression Era relief labor was assigned to the construction and improvement of numerous state park and recreational facilities under the state Temporary Emergency Relief Administration. At Jones Beach, relief labor was responsible for the construction of two refreshment stands (likely at Zach's Bay, completed in 1932), the filter plant and a storage building, the Marine Stadium, completed circa 1934 (razed circa 1945 because it was deemed unstable), and the Boardwalk Restaurant, completed in circa 1936 (figure 14). They also repaired the Pitch Putt golf course and shuffleboard courts.²⁴

Also in 1931, the Town of Hempstead conveyed Short Beach, an adjacent, two-mile parcel west of Jones Beach, and the right of way for construction of a new western causeway to the

¹⁹ Oyster Bay eventually transferred a small, eastern portion of their beach which became Gilgo State Park in Babylon.

²⁰ R. Marc Fasanella. "Robert Moses and the Making of Jones Beach State Park, Part I: Persistence," *Long Island Historical Journal*, vol. 7, no. 1 (Fall 1994) p. 100. Quoting Robert Moses, "The Building of Jones Beach," transcript of recording, Freeport Historical Society (February 26, 1974).

²¹ Caro, p. 232.

²² "Enlarging Jones Beach Park," *New York Times* (July 21, 1931), p. 9.

²³ "Jones Beach Opens Huge Bath Center," *New York Times* (July 3, 1931), p. 17.

²⁴ "Relief Labor's Aid to Parks Reviewed," *New York Times* (Sept. 16, 1935), p. 21. The state Temporary Emergency Relief Administration was taken over by the federal Works Progress Administration in 1935.

Long Island State Park Commission.²⁵ In order to raise funds for the new the causeway (soon known as the Meadowbrook Parkway) Robert Moses created the Jones Beach State Parkway Authority. Run like a private corporation through a board of directors, this public entity maintained both a high level of capitalizing power and autonomy from the local government, and provided Moses with a great deal of immediate control over his projects.²⁶ Construction of the Meadowbrook Causeway began in 1933 and was completed in 1934 with \$5 million borrowed from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, a federal level New Deal agency.²⁷ Also during this time the Wantagh Causeway (later renamed the Wantagh Parkway) was extended from Merrick Road to the Southern State Parkway. New parking facilities were also added in the park to accommodate the swelling summer weekend visitors whose numbers were reaching into the hundreds of thousands. Later in 1935, the Meadowbrook Parkway was extended from Merrick Road to the Southern State Parkway, thus providing two direct and unobstructed ways into the park. The extension was constructed by the New York State Department of Public Works and was financed separately from the Long Island State Park Commission.

By the late 1930s, almost all of the park's major public structures were completed and attendance continued to climb. In 1937–38 Robert Moses created amendments to the empowering legislation of public authorities. The new language empowered the boards of public authorities to fund new projects under the heading of “other corporate purposes” so long as the work was “not inconsistent with the use of [the original] project.”²⁸ This meant that funds and loans acquired by the parkway authorities could be used to maintain and improve parks. Through the Jones Beach Parkway Authority, Moses found a way to sustain his lavish creation.

On August 5, 1949, twenty-two years after it first opened, plans for a Jones Beach State Park expansion were announced. The scope of the project, to begin in 1950, included construction of a new Marine Stadium with a man-made island for the stage (completed in 1952), the Field Six facilities (completed in circa 1950), the Field Two facilities (completed c. 1952), and additional food stands and improvements to the sewage system.²⁹ In 1957, another Jones Beach expansion was announced for the two-mile Short Beach property located west of the Meadowbrook Parkway. Plans for the expansion, which took five years, included a boardwalk (demolished by a hurricane in the late 1980s), three bathhouses with concessions, and new parking fields.³⁰ The result was the Field One, West End One, and West End Two facilities all completed between 1959 and 1962. Work also included improvements to the boat basin on the channel side of the barrier island.

In 1963, resulting from disputes with Governor Nelson Rockefeller, Robert Moses resigned from the Chairmanships of the Long Island State Park Commission and the Jones Beach State Parkway Authority, as well as the presidency of the State Council of Parks. This meant that after 38 years Moses no longer wielded the equivalent of executive power over his beloved parks. He could no longer personally ensure that they be “kept beautiful,” through maintenance

²⁵ Undeveloped until the late 1950s, Short Beach would become the site of the Jones Beach West End.

²⁶ Caro, p. 623.

²⁷ “600 Hundred to Start Work on Jones Beach Jobs,” *New York Times* (April 13, 1933), p. 15; and www.nycroads.com/roads/meadowbrook. (Note: Whereas the article says construction began in 1933, the website says it began in 1932.)

²⁸ Caro p. 626–627.

²⁹ Ira H. Freeman. “Dewey to Enlarge Jones Beach,” *New York Times* (Aug. 5, 1949), p. 20.

³⁰ Philip Benjamin. “Moses to Expand Jones Beach Site,” *New York Times* July 30, 1957, p. 48.

and expansion plans that he developed and managed.³¹ Jones Beach, which required enormous funds to maintain, began to enter its period of gradual decline. In 1964, the original Boardwalk restaurant burned down and was replaced in 1966 by the Brutalist building designed by Skidmore, Owings, & Merrill. In 1967, the park's first major alteration to an existing structure was made. This was the addition of a pool and diving tank to the East Bathhouse as well as two flanking wings that provided rest rooms and a first aid station. The result of the alteration was a significant loss of original materials in the building's interior and radical changes on the east and west sides of the building (figures 15 – 16).³²

The high standards maintained at Jones Beach had visibly diminished during the 1970s as patrons identified less services and reduced staff. In 1977 allocated budgets for park operations (excluding mandatory wage increases for full-time employees) remained the same as in 1974 despite inflation, and seasonal work staff was reduced with workweeks cut by 20%.³³ The park's financial problems were likely exacerbated by the dissolution of the Jones Beach Parkway Authority in circa 1976 which provided additional funding to the park through the amendments crafted by Moses in 1937-38. Nonetheless, a record 14.5 million people visited Jones Beach State Park in 1977, proving that Moses' fundamental mission, to provide large recreational facilities to the general public, was an essential civil service.³⁴

In 1981, park officials announced a \$500 million five-year "facelift" for Jones Beach.³⁵ Rehabilitation fell into three categories: masonry repair; carpentry, including new roofing, windows, and doors; and utilities, including electrical, heating, plumbing, sewage, and sanitation. The initial phase of the \$26 million project included boardwalk and bathhouse repair, dock and pier renovations, rehabilitation of the pools' recirculation and filtration systems, and improvements to the sewage treatment center and water supply system. Work began in 1983 and almost all of it was completed by 1988 except for the east bathhouse. If any of the original cedar-shake roofs survived into this period they would have likely been replaced. Some of the larger alterations of this period include the construction of a new band shell (completed in 1984), the conversion of the east side of the West Bathhouse Marine Dining Room into an ice-cream parlor, and the addition of a large glass and aluminum windscreen surrounding a significantly altered Central Mall cafeteria.³⁶ Also during this time, (in 1983) the park initiated its rock concert series at the Marine Theater.

The rock concert series proved be a successful update in programming the Marine Theater which began to lose attendance in the late 1960s. Producer Ron Delsner sponsored the renovation of Jones Beach Marine Theater in 1991. Jack Gordon Associates was the architectural firm selected for the project which included expanding the existing brick amphitheater and filling in the moat for additional seating. The theater then underwent a second expansion (also by Jack Gordon Associates) in 1998, which yielded a new upper deck and a new food concession area, but left the 1952 reinforced concrete stage-building unchanged. A year earlier in 1997, after seventy years of continued use and in spite of incrementally significant alterations due to

³¹ Caro, p, 1078. Quoting Sidney Shapiro, Moses' chief engineer and general manager for the Long Island State Parks Commission.

³² Sharon Monahan. "Bathhouse Project is Stalled," *New York Times* (Nov. 6, 1988), p. LI8; and Fasanella p. 218

³³ Frances Cerra, "Mark of Moses at Jones Beach 50 Years Later," *New York Times* (May 29, 1979), p. B1.

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ James Baron. "Jones Beach: Crowds and Repairs," *New York Times* (March 15, 1981), p. LI 3.

³⁶ The new band shell replaced an interim band shell (erected in 1950) which replaced the original, built in 1934.

maintenance, Jones Beach was recognized as the single most popular site in the entire state park system.³⁷

The most recent alterations at Jones Beach began in 2000. At this time, the food and comfort station at West End One, which was closed in 1991 due to budget cuts, was converted into the Theodore Roosevelt Nature Center. Developed with funding from the Ford Motor Corporation, the Center is a state-run organization that provides educational programs in environmental and wildlife studies. The main food concession was converted into an exhibition space with the help of exhibition services provided by the Bureau of Historic Sites. The building is powered by a geothermal heat exchanger and photo-voltaic roof tiles, an innovative technology system installed and maintained in partnership with the Long Island Power Authority. At about the same time, the “back to yesteryear” initiative began. Through the installation of signs on the boardwalk interpreting the history of the park’s activities and the opening of the Castles in the Sand in the west wing of the East Bathhouse, the public with an introduction to the historic significance of Jones Beach State Park and Robert Moses’ great Long Island Park and Parkway System.

DESIGN

The planning and design of Jones Beach State Park was the brainchild of Robert Moses. It is the realization of a visionary attitude towards public recreational planning and construction, and is an achievement that is yet to be matched. The park’s overall scope and scheme was initiated entirely by Moses. He was responsible for assembling the staff that would create it and he took it upon himself to review the execution of the park’s every detail. The major designers who ultimately had the greatest hand in realizing Moses’ vision were staff architects Herbert Magoon and Earle Andrews, landscape architect, Clarence C. Combs, and chief engineers, Arthur Howland and Sidney M. Shapiro (who became the Long Island State Park Commission’s chief engineer and general manager for the next 46 years).³⁸

At the time Jones Beach was planned, there were two types of public beach in the United States: those that were minimally developed and rustic, and those that had yielded to the erratic development of amusement park concessions.³⁹ Jones Beach would be radically different. Large in scale and conceived as an integrated beach and recreational complex, it was city planning applied to a beach; addressing transportation, circulation, infrastructure, and design all at the same time.⁴⁰ When Moses first proposed this vision to state officials and consulting architects it was considered too grandiose and unrealistic, but Robert Moses made Jones Beach happen anyway.⁴¹ After it was essentially completed, Moses was awarded the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society’s annual gold medal in 1937 for rendering the most important service to the country’s parks.⁴²

³⁷ Bruce Lamber, “One Man’s Dream, Blissful Jones Beach is Like No Other Place,” *New York Times* (September 28, 1997), p. 35.

³⁸ Fasanella p. 210; and Alden Whitman, “An Architect of Leisure is Retiring,” *New York Times* (April 9, 1972) p. 1A. Magoon was the main architect of the first structures. Moses, Andrews, and Howland signed the title sheet of every major drawing set throughout 1920 and 1930.

³⁹ Caro, p. 221.

⁴⁰ New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, p. 17.

⁴¹ Caro p. 223.

⁴² “Moses Gets Prize From Scenic Society,” *New York Times* (January 26, 1937), p. 23.

The original Jones Beach State Park site (which excluded the later West End beaches) is based on the formal planning of the Beaux-Arts aesthetic which incorporates an overall symmetrical scheme and grand axial views (figure 17). The park's center is marked by the water tower, the site's tallest structure. Visible for miles, the tower (which is essentially an embellished functional building) serves as the park's beacon and identifies its central hub of transportation exchange: a large turning circle at the t-intersection of the Wantagh and Ocean Parkways. For dramatic effect, a reflecting pool (now removed) was placed on either side of the tower, within the medians of the Ocean Parkway (figures 18 – 19). Directly beyond the tower on the south side of Ocean Parkway is the large rectangular lawn panel of the central mall. The mall accesses the center of the park's boardwalk which features the main flag pole with nautical colors, supported by the circular ship's rail and placed on axis with the tower. Just south of the flagpole, wooden steps lead down to the sand, completing the axial composition to culminate at the ocean (figure 20).

On the boardwalk on either side of the central mall, are the cafeteria with observation deck to the west (now altered), and the Boardwalk Restaurant to the east (now razed and soon to be replaced) (figure 21). A half-mile in either direction from the flagpole are located the park's two largest recreational structures: the West and East Bathhouses. A half mile further in either direction were two overlook parking fields that became the sites of two new bathhouses during the park's expansion announced in 1949. The park's playing fields and secondary structures are located between these four main buildings. Except for the Zach's Bay development, most of the park's recreational buildings are located on the south side of Ocean Parkway and are separated from the service structures located on the north side. This arrangement provides patrons with an optimum aesthetic experience of the park, ensuring that they rarely encountered the mechanisms that actually made it run. Parking lots also were originally limited to the north side of Ocean Parkway. Though no longer the case due to subsequent expansions that resulted in parking fields on the south side of the parkway, the original lots accessed the seaside facilities through pedestrian tunnels beneath the parkway. Such a separation not only addressed safety, it enhanced the relaxing qualities of the park; once patrons arrived and shifted to a pedestrian mode, they were free to enjoy strolling between recreational buildings without encountering automotive traffic.

Along with some of the other earlier parks developed by Robert Moses through the Long Island State Park Commission, Jones Beach is one of first recreational sites to incorporate automobile use into its design. The park's main connector to New York City and other parts of Long Island is not the railroad, as was the case in the previous era, but the parkway, exclusively used by automobiles. The parkway was both physically and conceptually connected to the park and was meant to be a part of the recreational experience. The design of the roadway was intended to enhance the pleasure of driving. The parkway provided spectacular views of the wetlands and bays between the mainland and its barrier island, and where there was no naturally occurring view, one was created through extensive landscaping at the road's edge and median. Drama was created by the slow approach of the water tower and climaxed with the ritualized circling of the grand beacon which signaled one's official entrance into the park's heart of activity.

Precedents for Moses' plan can be identified in the visionary urban parks created by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in the mid-nineteenth century and the planning of the Bronx River Parkway in 1917. While the former introduced the idea of planned open space for public recreation and separated main carriage way thoroughfares from the scenic roads in the park, the Bronx River Parkway expanded on the unobstructed carriage way idea and applied it to

auto transport.⁴³ Daniel Burnham's 1909 plan for the development of Chicago's waterfront also appears as significant precedent. According to Michael P. McCarthy in his paper "Who Designed Jones Beach: Robert Moses or Daniel Burnham," Burnham's earlier plan bore a striking resemblance to Jones Beach, calling for a waterway lined with restaurants, bathhouses, and pleasure pavilions, as well as a beautiful parkway extending along the shore. Burnham's plan was never fully implemented, but it was well publicized and became a model for students of architecture and landscape architecture.⁴⁴ While the conceptual resemblance is uncanny, Jones Beach remains distinguished because it was fully achieved and built well without the city limits.

At the time the main buildings at Jones Beach were erected, they were unlike any beach structures in the world. They were designed and built on a grand scale that has been likened to courthouses and college campuses, exhibiting as much a concern for symbolically communicating an ideal about civic life as providing well-functioning modern recreational buildings. Paul Goldberger, in an article of 1979, aptly describes the style of the Jones Beach buildings as composite, and identifies a mix of the Art Deco and Collegiate Gothic styles that were common in the late 1920s.⁴⁵ Another style source, identified in an essay about the design of Jones Beach by R. Marc Fasanella in 1995, is the organic architectural aesthetic developed by Frank Lloyd Wright and derived from the fundamentals established by his mentor, Louis Sullivan.⁴⁶ Both observations are accurate as they aptly describe the combination of the reductive classicism of the Art Deco as seen in the base of the water tower; the heavy massing and stately bulk of the Collegiate Gothic as seen in the West Bathhouse; and the active connection between interior and exterior space of Wright's organic architecture as seen in the integrated way the buildings engage the space around them.

Aspects of Wright's principles of organic architecture are also apparent in the textural relationships between materials, where color and surface are used to describe forms and draw attention to the relationship of the buildings' structural parts. For example, the heavy rustic surface and varied color of Ohio Sandstone exterior wall cladding is coupled with smoothly sculpted cast stone trim elements, and muscular wooden members once articulated awning supports. Whereas elements connected to the ground were meant to express mass and were executed in stones, elements meant to express lightness and a connection to the sky, such as tower roofs, were executed in a smooth and finely sculpted copper. In addition to the sandstone, barbizon brick was used as an exterior wall cladding, adding another layer of variety in texture. Barbizon brick essentially describes a running bond brick pattern that incorporates individual bricks in different shades of red, tan, and brown. When coupled with the sandstone it provided a smoother (and cheaper) means of expressing variation in color. Working together the two materials provided many opportunities for creative embellishment, as in the water tower where sandstone identifies the supporting base and brick articulates the rising shaft which terminates at the pointed cooper roof.

The choice of materials used at Jones Beach remained unique among the regional New

⁴³ Fasanella (Spring 1995), p. 209.

⁴⁴ Michael P. McCarthy, "Who Designed Jones Beach: Robert Moses or Daniel Burnham?" (conference paper, Hofstra University Symposium on Moses, 1988, Long Island Studies Institute, Hofstra University), p.p. 5, 8. Cited in Fasanella (Spring 1995), p. 208.

⁴⁵ Paul Goldberger, Design Notebook: After 50 Years, the design of Jones beach Still Inspires Awe." *New York Times* (July 12, 1979), p. C12.

⁴⁶ Fasanella (Spring 1995), p. 207.

York State park system. Whereas most state parks relied on the use of convenient local materials and created buildings that were meant to recede into the landscape, the materials used at Jones Beach were selected for aesthetics and durability, and its buildings were meant to complement the vast setting with an equally impressive architectural expression.⁴⁷ Besides Ohio Sandstone, barbizon brick, cast stone, copper, and wood, Jones Beach incorporated a wide variety of decorative materials: terrazzo tiles, bluestone paving and stairways, brick pathways, slate and concrete floor mosaics, custom cast iron hardware and rails, metal window frames and light fixtures, cut metal signs, and fabric awnings. In addition, original roofs would have been clad with cedar shakes.

Varying combinations of the above mentioned materials were used on all buildings that date from 1929 and 1939 (the initial period of the park's construction). The more significant buildings, such as the two bathhouses, the original Boardwalk Restaurant, the Central Mall Cafeteria, and the Water Tower received the most lavish and varied use of materials (i.e. sandstone, metal windows, and copper). Others, such as the Police Station and the Zach's Bay facilities incorporated fewer and more modest materials (i.e. only barbizon brick and simple cast-stone and wood details). Buildings dating from 1960s were executed with less opulent materials. These are generally clad in simple brown brick. Visible wood trusses support asphalt-covered roofs, and wooden frames house large plate glass windows. With the exclusion of Jones Beach Marine Theater, which features contemporary design elements expressed through materials such as painted steel, the buildings erected after 1984 use materials that reference the appearance of the older structures. These incorporate a version of "barbizon brick" trimmed with a sandstone similar in appearance to the Ohio Sandstone originally used by Moses.

STATUS AND CONDITION

In terms of general upkeep and safety, the buildings at Jones Beach State Park are adequately maintained. In terms of preserving a site that has potential to be a National Landmark, it has only been minimally maintained up until very recently. Although many original details are intact, the park has taken on the appearance of decline. While the buildings are sealed against the weather with regularly replaced roofs, many elements that contributed to the site's former splendor have been diminished. This is most apparent in the gradual loss of significant decorative elements which are likely deemed too expensive to properly maintain, and the historically insensitive (and sometimes aesthetically inappropriate) replacement materials used for architectural details (figures 24 – 25). Decline is also evident in the landscape: the two reflecting pools that once embellished the Ocean Parkway approaches to the Water Tower have been filled with lawn panels and ornamental plantings throughout the park have been dramatically reduced (figures 22 – 23). In addition most of the lawn panels (excluding the one at the Central Mall which remains lush) have been generally meager and patchy although the anniversary celebrations have incentivized greater care of the landscape.

The five main, and three secondary structures that remain from the initial period of the park's construction (1929 – 1939) have received an in-depth assessment of status condition. The following are findings specific to the East Bathhouse, the Water Tower, the Central Mall, the Cafeteria, the West Bathhouse, the Zach's Bay Concession and Comfort Station, the Police

⁴⁷ Fasanella (Spring 1995), p. 218.

headquarters, and the pitch-putt golf kiosk. Related landscape features are addressed with the condition of the structures.

Five Main Historic Structures

East Bathhouse (1929)

The East bathhouse is the park's first building erected. It is a long single story structure clad primarily in Ohio Sandstone and trimmed with barbizon brick and wood. Its roof (originally cedar shingle) is now covered in asphalt. The north façade is divided into three sections, with a central entrance zone composed of five bays flanked by two one-and-a-half story towers and followed by two flat roofed three-bay wings. The south façade has a wide and expansive feeling and consists of ten bays flanked by two two-story towers. Between the towers above the main concession floor is a recessed observation deck. Two additional wings are also visible from the south façade and extend north on both sides. These were added in 1967 when the building was altered to accommodate swimming, diving, and kiddie pools. The east wing addition now houses lockers, dressing rooms, comfort stations, and a first-aid center. The western addition now houses the Castles in the Sand exhibit and a comfort station.

Unfortunately, the East Bathhouse has seen better days. The condition of the building is fair. Mortar has deteriorated in places as evidenced by white stains on the bricks and sandstone. This is especially apparent in the exterior bluestone stairway areas. Re-pointing is wider in these areas suggesting either wide settlement cracking or simply poor craftsmanship. More significantly, alterations and removals have turned a simple, yet elegant structure into something dull. While the north façade preserves its original Art Deco style wooden collection booth area (figure 26), large decorative roof top lanterns and muscular wooden brackets have been removed (figures 27 – 28). Low evergreen hedges that once famed neat lawn panels with a few ornamental trees on either side of the façade have also been removed. On the south façade, tide and time clocks that once faced the towers have been removed, and wooden doors with side-lights leading into the concession have been replaced by banal aluminum kit doors. Art Deco style cast-stone planters have also been removed. The patio and retaining walls have been altered to accommodate handicapped access, and most of the surrounding landscape embellishments have been removed (figures 29 – 30). Steps leading to the sand, however, survive (figure 12). The most aggressive alteration is at the observation deck. Once an open area covered by a canvas awning supported by carved wooden posts, it is now enclosed by an aluminum and glass windscreen, and covered by an extended fiberglass roof. In addition, handsome wooden railings with alternating smooth and carved members located between pillars have been replaced by base aluminum rails (figures 31 – 32). The overall effect of these changes is a flattening of the building's surface, rendering it uninteresting and uninviting. The significant removal of landscaping only emphasizes this bleak quality.

Water Tower (1930)

According to Robert Caro, Robert Moses modeled the four-sided water tower on the Venice campanile.⁴⁸ It is composed of an Ohio Sandstone base with cast-stone (or possibly limestone) embellishments, a barbizon brick shaft trimmed with sandstone at the top, and a pyramidal copper roof. A frieze sculpture of an Egyptian style figural seal embellishes the north side of the tower and twelve pillars surround the structure to conceal large spotlights. While the water tower houses the park's fresh water supply, it also functions as a symbol and beacon for the park, and works in tandem with the Central Mall to identify its main formal entrance. The tower site is the park's rond-point, visually tying several of the park's main elements together and serving as the central roundabout for auto traffic exchange.

While the Water Tower and its light pillars remain unaltered, the four pathways of the original parterre landscape have been covered over with sod, and an old boxwood hedge now defines a circle on grass (figures 33 – 34). Some landscaping also survives within a chain-link fence, and includes some planned and volunteer plants. While the tower appears to be in good condition, Bill Bleyer's October 31, 2002 *Newsday* article reported that severe cracks had been found in the structure's upper region on all four walls. An initial assessment performed by the engineering firm, LiRo Group, discovered "loose and cracked stone work," and indicated concern over the structure's metal frame.⁴⁹ Because the actual water tank is a separate structure inside the tower, the water storage system is luckily unaffected by these developments. To date, a restoration plan is still in the process of development.⁵⁰

Central Mall and Cafeteria (1931)

The Central Mall is the heart of Jones Beach State Park. It includes a large formal lawn panel flanked by landscaped paths, the seaside central boardwalk area, the adjacent west side cafeteria, and a now vacant restaurant site on the east side which will be developed in the near future. The lawn panel is framed by neatly clipped hedges and twelve lamp-posts. On the north side of the lawn panel, large slate and colored concrete mosaics embellish the sidewalk, and the pathway leading to the Ocean Parkway underpass has newly installed flower beds (figure 35). The central boardwalk area, composed of wooden planks and metal railings, contains many of the park's surviving freestanding decorative features. This includes the main flagpole with nautical colors supported by a circular ship's rail, the ship's wheel water fountain, and funnel garbage covers. The cafeteria is a sizable single story structure highlighted by a corner two-story observation tower which is no longer open to the public. The building is entirely clad in barbizon brick and its tower is trimmed with cast-stone and wooden details. It also features a romantically sculpted small copper balcony on its south side (figure 36). The vacant restaurant site is fenced off with plywood boards that exhibit large photographs of the original 1936 Boardwalk Restaurant.

The Central Mall is the site of the greatest concentration of restoration efforts coordinated by park officials to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Jones Beach. It is here that new

⁴⁸ Caro, p. 223.

⁴⁹ Bill Bleyer, "Cracks Found in the Tower," *Newsday* (October 31, 2002), A22.

⁵⁰ Gorman.

canvas awnings and most of the laser cut metal signage have been installed; and it is here that the flagpole's supporting circular rail has been restored and the new restaurant will be built in a style planned to be more sympathetic to the design intent of original structures. Unfortunately, these efforts seem small when larger preservation issues are taken into account. For example, while the lawn panel and framing shrubs are lush, and the canvas awning and new signage add a welcomed return of some embellishment, other important and more permanent features seem to be poorly preserved. This is apparent in the mosaics just north of the lawn panel, where patching of the colored concrete does not accurately match the original color or texture (figure 37). Replacement materials of lesser quality have also impacted the aesthetics of the site. The elegantly sculpted Art Deco glass lamps that once embellished the central lawn panel, for example, have been replaced by banal and featureless substitutes (figure 38 – 39). The boardwalk rail, once made of wood, is now of a composite material, and even the restored diamond boardwalk pattern under the flagpole is a much smaller and consequently less interesting version of the expansive original.

The cafeteria with observation tower best illustrates the slow demise caused by insensitive alterations. Once an appealing structure that housed a cafeteria with covered outdoor dining on the boardwalk and open outdoor dining on a rooftop viewing deck, the building has been altered beyond recognition. The raised seam, copper covered access structure on the roof along with its ships railing has been removed, as has the large awning covered extensions over the boardwalk. These have been replaced by a utilitarian steel and glass windscreen that wraps around most of the building (figures 40 – 41). The building's wood panel and tile interior has also long been replaced with a sterile stainless steel and tile insertion. The tower once had a playfully executed copper covered exterior staircase that evoked stylized ocean waves which has been removed. Originally, the tower was crowned with a canvas covered pergola and a crow's nest both executed using heavy wooden details (figures 42 – 43). The crow's nest, accessed from pergola area, was supported by a pole, and utilized the same diagonal railing motif as the adjacent deck. These tower features were removed by 1936 as they proved too fragile against the seaside weather, but the improved technologies and weatherproof materials of the present day would encourage a restoration of these handsome architectural features.

West Bathhouse (1931)

The West Bathhouse is largest and most architecturally ambitious historic structure in Jones beach State Park. It contains swimming, diving, and kiddie pools; lockers and dressing rooms; two refreshment stands on the ground floor; and a Friendly's ice-cream parlor on the second. Like the East Bathhouse it is mainly clad in Ohio Sandstone and is trimmed in cast-stone, metal, and barbizon brick. In addition, limestone coping was used on the walls of second floor observation deck surrounding the pool area. Unlike the East Bathhouse, the cast-stone elements are highly decorated, featuring circular and zig-zag motifs as well as stacked stripe motifs. The one-story north façade is relatively quiet; composed of a central three-bay entrance area flanked on either side by a two-story pillar followed by another single story one bay wing (figure 51). The south façade is palatial. It is two stories high with a large central block five bays wide (figure 44). This is flanked on either side by a pillar and an extended wing. Behind the pillars (which are not really pillars but elevated portions of the east and west facades) are engaged copper-roofed towers that face the pool area courtyard. The south façade features most of the cast-

stone ornamentation and a patio that steps down to the beach. On either side of the south façade, large stairways lead up to the surrounding observation deck of the pool area. Cladding that faces the pool area (paved in bluestone) is executed in barbizon brick.

The West Bathhouse, a grand and theatrical structure, requires more attention than the park's standard maintenance plan provides. Although the building has a new asphalt roof, and the pools are in good condition, there have been other developments that indicate gradual and increasing deterioration. Most visible are the rusting steel lintels over doors and windows and sagging replacement metal door frames that lead into the ground floor concession. Also evident on the south façade is deteriorating cast concrete trim that reveals, in places, rusting reinforcement bars below the surface. Cracking has become apparent (on the west side second floor patio more so than on the east), and out-of plane cracks may indicate movement.

Other issues affecting the west bathhouse have to do with the incremental loss of decorative elements and the use of lower quality replacement materials. The overall landscape has been diminished and banal railings have been added to the stairways (figures 44 – 45), Original benches have been removed from the pool area, and awnings have been removed from the viewing deck that surrounds it (figure 46 – 47). These were originally executed with heavy wooden posts on the south façade, and lighter wrought iron members accented by handsome lanterns inside the courtyard. Five of the large metal-framed windows on the second floor of south façade have been replaced by inferior aluminum ones, and the equivalent windows on the pool side have been filled in with brick. Metal frame French doors, and cast-stone window grills and a decorative string-course have also been removed (figures 48 – 49). Almost all of the original wooden and metal frame doors have been replaced; only the wooden service area door, and the two metal framed doors on the second floor remain. Finally, a vertical wooden plank fence, once featuring handsome metal strap-work joints, has been replaced by a simpler horizontal fence with no details sometime between 2002 and 2004.

Remarkably, many decorative details remain at the West Bathhouse. The north façade is largely unaltered except for its landscape (figures 50 – 51). The wooden carpentry of its Art Deco entrance area (a replica of the East Bathhouse) survives almost intact, and maintains one of its original pendant lights. Some of the building's original glass also survives, as do cast-stone Art Deco planters now used as garbage containers. A few original metal-framed windows, as well as the previously mentioned doors also remain (figure 52). In addition, a considerable amount of the interior architectural finishes remain on the second floor. On the west side, original doors, paneling, phone booth, and a light fixture in the entrance lobby to the Marine Dining Room remain in-situ (figures 53 – 54). In the south corner of the space, Robert Moses' summer office also retains its cabinetry and an original light fixture. The original terrazzo floor of the former Marine Dining Room also remains, however the current wood paneling (installed sometime before 1984) and light fixtures are not original (figures 55 – 56). Half of the space is used as a conference room while the other is now Friendly's. According to the New York State Park Regional Director, John Norbeck, removal of the original terrazzo floor in this area is not permitted although the current franchise may cover it with a removable material. In addition, the original ceiling details of the restaurant may still exist hidden above an acoustic tile drop ceiling.

Other Significant Structures

The Police Headquarters (1935), the Pitch Putt Golf Booth (1932), and the Zach's Bay cafeteria and comfort station (1932) all remain largely unaltered from their original states however the surrounding landscapes of the Zach's Bay facilities has been largely reduced. The Police Headquarters is a two-story structure with two small single-story wings. It is clad entirely in barbizon brick and trimmed with cast-stone and terrazzo tiles and a central pillar on the south façade features a frieze sculpture depicting a figural seal. The north façade is less embellished and serves as the building's main entrance. The Pitch Putt Booth is a small single-story cylindrical structure with a slightly pitched conical roof made of raised seam copper. Surrounding the booth is a low circular barbizon brick wall opened at four equidistant points. The Zach's Bay facilities are relatively modest single-story structures clad in barbizon brick and trimmed with cast-stone and wood. The interiors of these structures are worth mentioning as they retain many of their original architectural details. This includes original wooden doors and cabinetry in the lounge area of the comfort station, and original tiles in both structures. In addition, the comfort station retains its diaper changing booths which, when specified under Robert Moses, were the first of this type of amenity to be installed in any public facility (figures 63 – 65).

The police station, though largely unaltered, is in fair condition and requires additional maintenance and repairs to upgrade its status (figures 57 – 58). Exterior zinc gutters and copper flashing need repair and the police seal is stained. Steel lintels above replacement aluminum doors and windows are rusting, and the decorative terrazzo tiles above are consequently unstable due to loose mortar. The small Pitch Putt Golf Booth is in good condition however most of its floor to ceiling windows have been filled in with a new cladding material and its immediate landscaping is unkempt (figures 50 – 60). The structures at Zach's Bay are remarkably intact but dreary and downtrodden. As stated earlier, many original interior architectural elements remain however some windows have been replaced and new bathroom and kitchen fixtures have been installed. Wood trim is in need of paint and some mortar joint separation is apparent. Exterior features such as landscaping, patios. And brick pathways have been altered with the removal of shrubbery and the replacement of paving (figures 61 – 62). (New plantings, however, have been installed for the park's 75th anniversary celebrations.) Given that it is unclear whether the surviving interiors have been recognized and documented, it may be only a matter of time before an improvement maintenance plan calling for the replacement of these features slips by the state review process.

CONCLUSION

Jones Beach State Park is a remarkable achievement in twentieth century public works. When completed, it was grand and democratic, and its immediate popularity illustrates the success of a visionary approach to public recreational planning. Through its realization, creator Robert Moses introduced to the nation, a new kind of public beach that has yet be equaled in terms of scope and scale. Jones Beach is also the crowning jewel of an equally visionary, and more ambitious regional state park and parkway system that came to life through Robert Moses' creation of the State Council of Parks and the Long Island State Park Commission. As such, it serves as an inspiring symbol of larger system's success. In addition, Jones Beach and the New York State Park System represent one of the first large undertakings by a government agency

to provide open recreational space to the general public, and it served as an example for other regions in the nation.

Jones Beach today is unfortunately a pale expression of its former self. This is due to the gradual loss of its distinctive high-quality materials and well-designed ornamental details through historically insensitive maintenance procedures of the past. Luckily, attitudes towards the park's historic significance are changing, and the park, though shed of many details, retains much of its essential character (albeit in a compromised form). The park's original site plan is basically intact and most of the primary recreational structures remain, as do a few freestanding ornamental features. Park officials' current efforts to address the historic significance of Jones Beach through recognition of its eligibility for listing to the National Register of Historic Places is an optimistic start that needs to be advanced. Jones Beach deserves the elevated status of official listing to the National Register and recognition as a National Landmark. It also needs the required added attention of the Bureau of Historic Sites through recognition as a State Historic Park. In addition to proper documentation and a master plan to guide preservation and maintenance initiatives. Finally, Jones Beach needs to be identified in the cultural landscape as an historic site as well as a fantastic beach. Jones Beach remains a very popular destination, and is one of the best-attended parks in the state system. Widely disseminated awareness of its historic significance will only increase the appreciation of an already successful site, and it will surely activate public involvement in future preservation efforts.

ILLUSTRATIONS

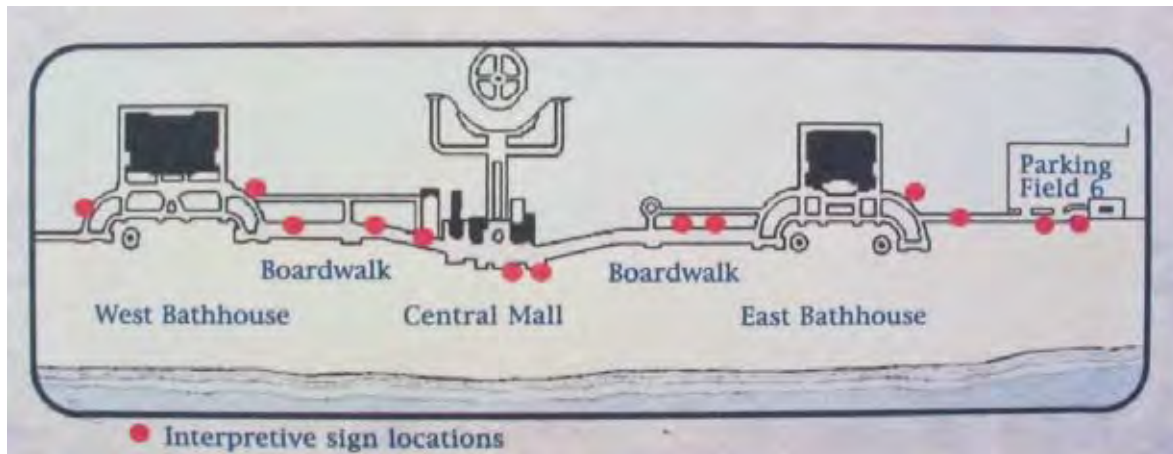


Figure 1: Map indicating locations of interpretive Boardwalk signs, 2004. Primarily concentrated on park activities, the signs represent the earliest initiative (started circa 2000) to address the history of Jones Beach State Park.



Figure 2: New canvas awnings and replicated “crab” garbage cans (installed for the park’s 75th anniversary celebration) seen next to a replicated bench installed through a memorial bench program, 2004.



Figure 3: New laser cut signs replicating originals created for the park’s 75th anniversary, 2004.



Figure 4: New landscaping at pathway to Central Mall, 2004. The new planting design was donated by Gibney Design Group for the park's 75th anniversary.



Figure 5: Original second floor West Bathhouse window, 2002. The metal frames are characterized by three-dimensionality and visible fasteners that express how the frames were made.



Figure 6: Replacement second floor West Bathhouse metal window, 2004. The new aluminum frames are flat, have no construction details, and do not adequately address the character of the originals.



Figure 7. Friendly's ice cream parlor sign at south facade of the West Bathhouse, 2004. An eyesore that detracts from the building and is grossly inconsistent with the park's original noncommercial aesthetic established by Robert Moses.

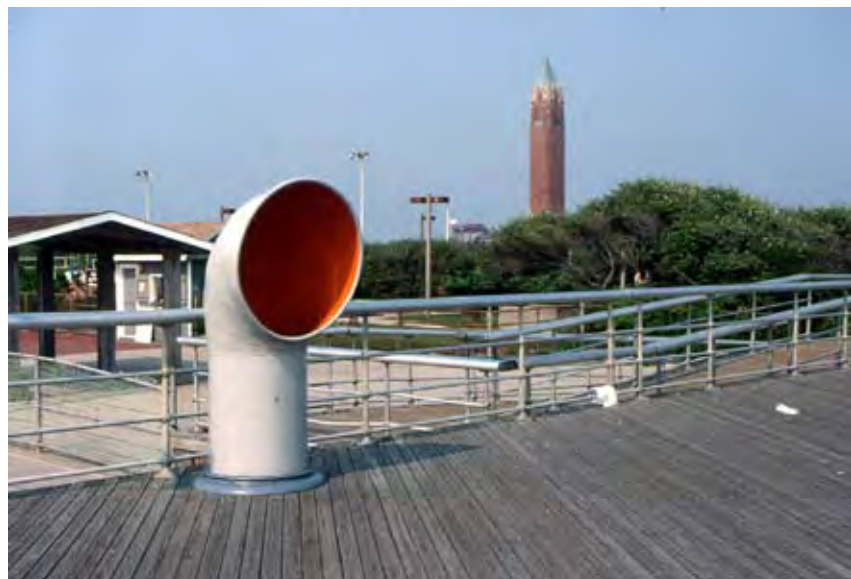


Figure 8: Original ship's funnel garbage can located on the north side of the Boardwalk, 2002. This is one of many decorative flourishes that contribute to the sites marine theme.



Figure 9: Ship's wheel water fountain at Central Mall Boardwalk, looking west, 2002. Another decorative element contributing to the park's marine theme.



Figure 10: Art Deco style cast-stone planter used for garbage at West Bathhouse, 2004. Originally, these planters were used to bring greenery to largely paved areas such as bathhouse patios.

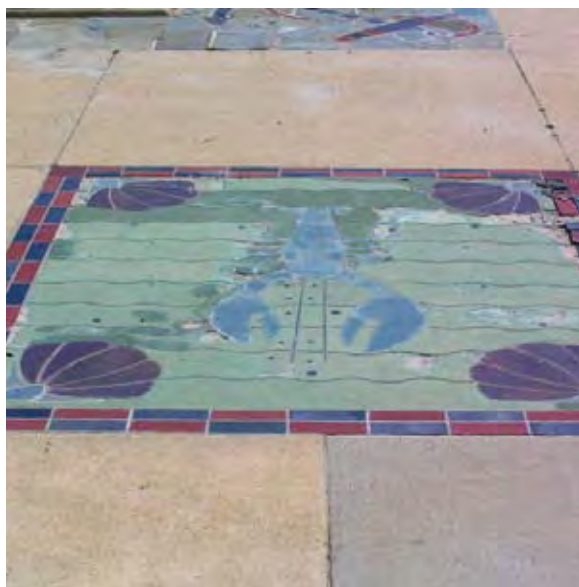


Figure 11: Slate and concrete mosaic depicting lobster at the north side of the Central Mall, 2004. Playful design and a variety of materials are major contributors to the character of Jones Beach.



Figure 12: Curved steps at East Bathhouse looking west, 2002. A pair of this Art Deco style feature (also at the West Bathhouse) formalizes, in the Beaux-Arts fashion, the separation between the beach and building.

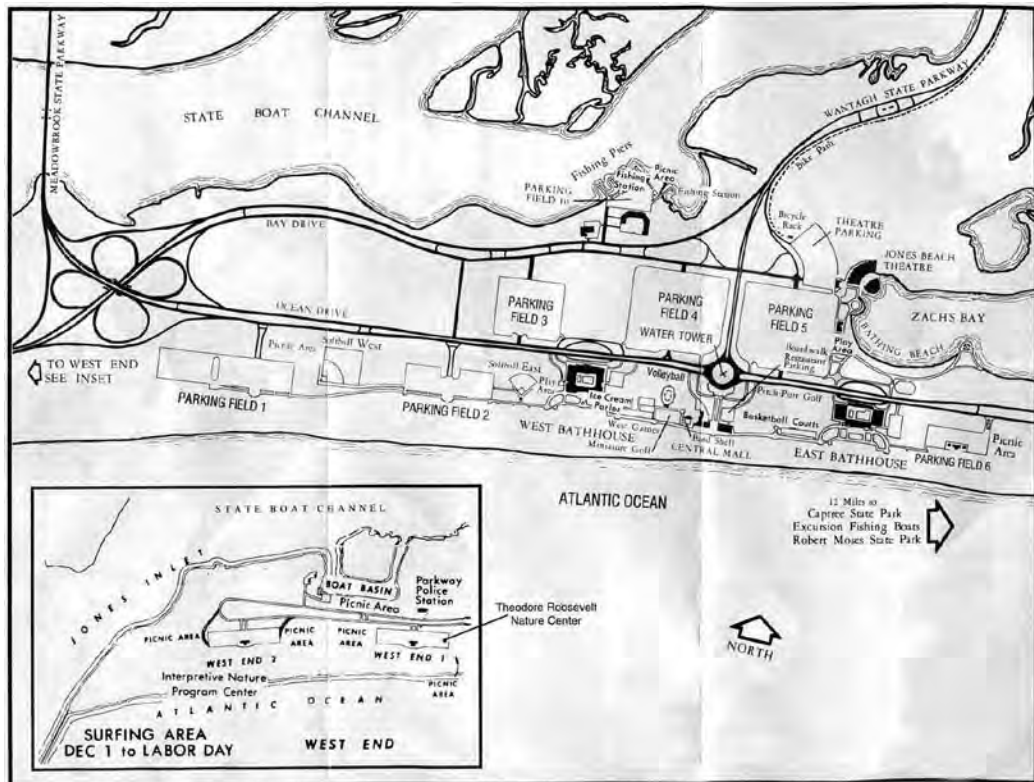


Figure 13: Map of Jones Beach locating facilities and activities, c. 2002.
(New York Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region)



Figure 14: Original Boardwalk Restaurant southeast facade, 1937. Built by Depression era relief labor, this streamline Art Deco building utilizes Ohio sandstone and three dimensional brickwork as a roof line decorative feature. (New York Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region)



Figure 15: East Bathhouse west facade looking north, 1937. This early photograph captures the park's quality of an urban downtown. Walkways are dense with people, signage provides direction, the buildings are of high quality materials, and landscaping enhances and unifies the overall site. (*New York Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 16: East Bathhouse west facade looking north, 2004. After the 1967 expansion, the site loses its charm entirely. The axial walkway is blocked, the signs are removed, the landscape is bare, and the now ill-defined space is no longer an inviting passage.

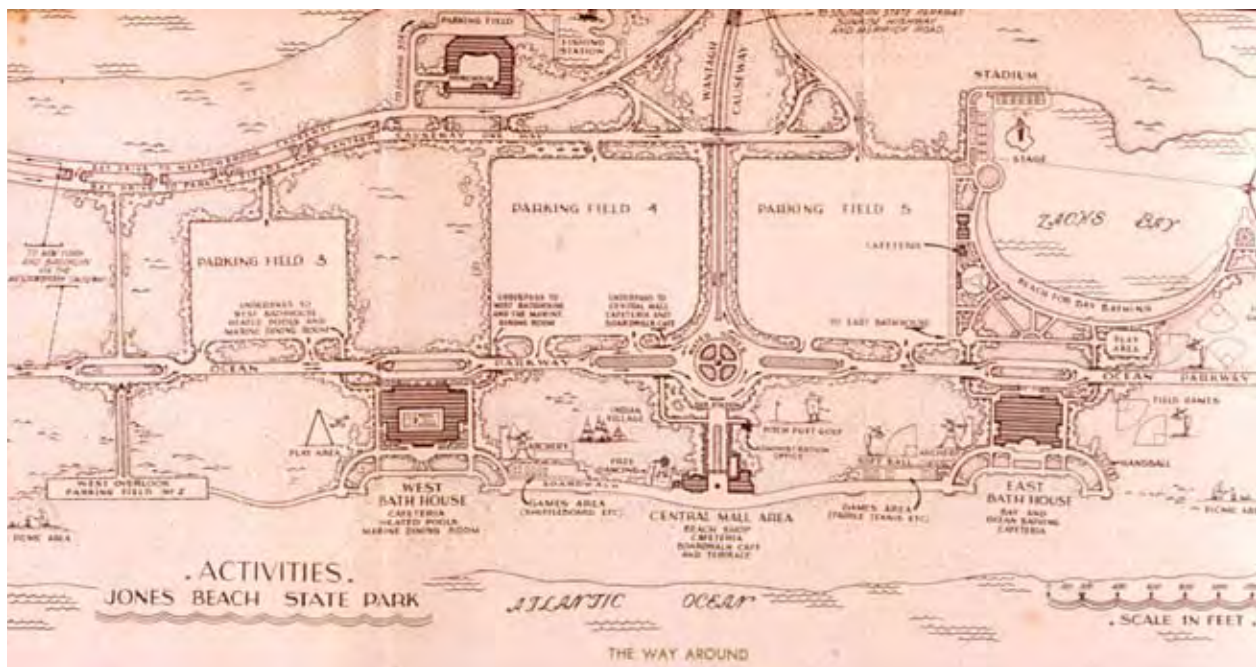


Figure 17: Map of Jones Beach, c. 1939. This early map of the park (cropped here at the right side) illustrates the park's axial plan. The Water Tower acts as the park's center. Marking the intersection of the Wantagh Causeway and the Central Mall on the north-south axis with the Ocean Parkway on the east-west axis. On the south side of Ocean Parkway the main bathhouses flank the Central Mall at equal distances and on the north side, two parking fields flank the Wantagh Causeway. (*Long Island State Park Commission*)



Figure 18: Water Tower with formal reflecting pool set into adjacent Ocean Parkway median, 1937. (*New York Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 19: Water Tower with reflecting pool replaced by un-edged sod and traffic signs, 2004.



Figure 20: Central Mall boardwalk stairway, looking north, 2004. The axial progression of Water Tower, Central Mall, and Boardwalk terminates at the beach with this stairway.



Figure 21: Aerial view of Central Mall looking south with Boardwalk Restaurant to the left and Cafeteria to the right; with floor mosaics visible at bottom and triangular boardwalk pattern visible at center, 1937. This photograph, taken from the Water Tower illustrates the formal landscaping and axial plan of the Beaux-Arts aesthetic. (*New York Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 22: Pathway from West Bathhouse to Parking Field 4 looking north showing original brick walkway and lushly varied landscaping, 1938. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 23: Pathway from West Bathhouse to Parking Field 4 looking north showing concrete replacement walkway and diminished landscape. 2004.



Figure 24: Original hardware remaining at Ocean Parkway underpass, 2004. (Note deteriorated concrete.)



Figure 25: Replacement hardware at Ocean Parkway underpass, 2004. (Note misaligned cross members.)



Figure 26: East Bathhouse north facade entrance area showing original carved wood Art Deco style entrance gates and collection booths with barbizon brick bases, 2004.



Figure 27: East Bathhouse north facade showing original central rooftop lights, ornamental brackets, and landscape features, 1937. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 28: East Bathhouse north facade showing removed rooftop lights and brackets, and reduced landscape, 2004.



Figure 29: East Bathhouse south facade showing original lush landscape, tower clock, and awning covered observation deck, 1935. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 30: East Bathhouse south facade showing a building devoid of its original embellishments, 2004. The landscape is reduced, the tower clocks are removed, replacement railings, doors, and awning are of cheaper materials, and handicap access ramp severs the patio retaining wall.



Figure 31: East Bathhouse south facade showing original observation deck with wooden posts and balustrade, canvas awning, and patio planters, 1935. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 32: East Bathhouse south facade showing replacement materials, 2004. What was once a simple yet charming building is made dreary by the cold utilitarian quality of the new materials. Artistically carved wooden posts, balustrade, and doorways are replaced by flat, lifeless aluminum components, and corrugated fiberglass replaces the colorful canvas awning. Even the aluminum picnic benches seem mean compared to the inviting cluster of round tables, chairs, and canvas umbrellas.



Figure 33: Aerial view of Water Tower looking west showing original parterre landscape and Ocean Parkway underpass pathway, 1938. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 34: Current Water Tower landscape looking south showing spotlight pillars (center left), overgrown landscaping behind a chain link fence near the tower, and boxwood hedges that no longer define pathways, 2004



Figure 35: View of Central Mall looking north showing Water Tower, hedge-framed lawn panel, lamp posts, new laser cut sign, and handicap ramp at foreground left, 2004.



Figure 36: Central Mall Cafeteria south facade detail showing surviving original sculpted copper-clad balcony, 2004.



Figure 37: Detail of mosaic map of Long Island at north side of Central Mall showing poorly matched concrete repair, 2004.

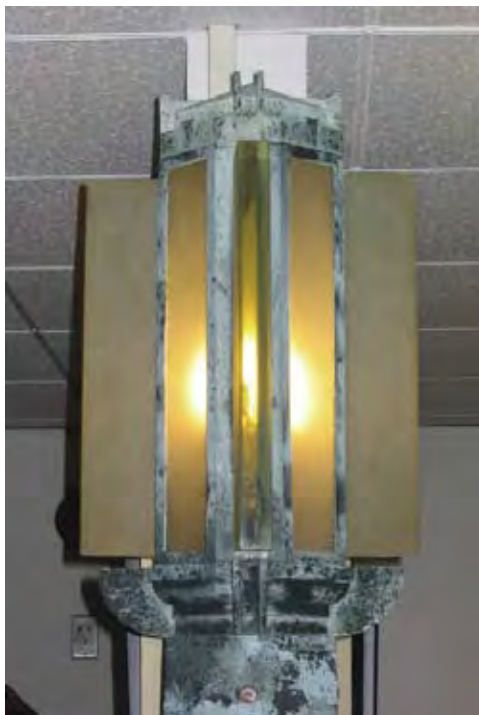


Figure 38: Original Central Mall light fixture executed in half inch thick glass and sculpted metal armature (located in *Castles in the Sand* exhibit), 2004



Figure 39: Current Central Mall light fixture (a cheap and uninteresting replacement of the original), 2004.



Figure 40: Central Mall Cafeteria east facade showing original open second floor dining deck and boardwalk level railing and awning, 1936. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 41: Central Mall Cafeteria east facade showing removed second floor structure and wind-screen addition, 2004.



Figure 42: Central Mall Cafeteria south facade showing original copper-clad stairway leading to observation deck with pergola and crow's nest, 1931. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 43: Central Mall Cafeteria south facade showing windscreen addition and removed stairway and observation deck, 2004.



Figure 44: West Bathhouse south facade showing original landscape, towers, cast-stone trim, and canvas awnings over second level walkways (center left), 1931. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 45: West Bathhouse south facade showing reduced landscape, removed canvas awnings, and additional stair rails, 2004.



Figure 46: West Bathhouse pool area facing north showing original viewing deck awning, diving boards, and benches, 1933. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 47: West Bathhouse pool area facing north showing surviving bluestone patio, altered diving board, and removed deck awning and benches, 2004.



Figure 48: West Bathhouse pool area facing south showing original doors, windows, and trim, 1939. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 49: West Bathhouse pool area facing south showing filled windows, altered roof line, doorways and decorative grills, and removed cast-stone trim details, 2004.



Figure 50: West Bathhouse north facade showing original cornice and landscaping with Art Deco style patio planters, 1934. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 42: West Bathhouse north facade showing removed landscaping, altered cornice, and original Art Deco planters used for garbage, 2004.



Figure 52: West Bathhouse west facade second floor showing original exterior metal doors, decorative glass, and cast-stone trim details at former Marine Dining Room entrance, 2004



Figure 53: West Bathhouse Marine Dining Room lobby showing original light fixture, wooden vestibule door, wood paneling, moldings, ceiling beams, and columns, 1938. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 54: Former West Bathhouse Marine Dining Room lobby showing surviving light fixture, exterior metal door, moldings, and ceiling beams (painted white), 2004.



Figure 55: West Bathhouse Marine Dining Room interior looking west showing original entryway with columns, terrazzo floor, wall and cornice moldings, ceiling beams with elongated brackets, and central skylight, 1932. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 56: West Bathhouse former Marine Dining Room looking south, 2004. The original wall details have been replaced by vertical wood paneling, the entryway columns have been removed, and a drop ceiling reduces the interior space. In addition, a partition wall divides the former dining area in two.



Figure 57: Police headquarters south facade showing original windows, terrazzo trim, zinc downspouts, and ornamental frieze sculpture, c. 1936. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 58: Police Headquarters south facade showing surviving decorative features and replacement windows, 2002. (Note: second floor replacement windows do not maintain the same unit ration as the originals: two units replace three in each fenestration.)



Figure 59: Pitch-Putt Golf Booth looking northeast showing neatly kept landscape, brick pathways, original floor to ceiling fenestration, barbizon brick circular wall, and picket fence, 1946. *(New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region)*



Figure 55: Pitch-Putt Golf Booth looking northeast showing overgrown landscape, additional stone walls, filled-in fenestration, and a surviving brick path, 2004. The barbizon brick circular wall also survives but is not visible in this view.



Figure 61: Zach's Bay looking north showing original brick paving, lamp posts, comfort station (center), cafeteria (center left), and unknown structure (left), undated. (*New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, Long Island Region*)



Figure 62: Zach's Bay looking north showing replacement paving and lamp posts with comfort station (center) and cafeteria (left), and unknown structure removed, 2004.



Figure 63: Zach's Bay comfort station showing original signage, wooden doors, and deteriorating mortar joints, 2004.



Figure 64: Zach's Bay comfort station lounge showing original cabinetry and terrazzo floor with replacement aluminum windows, 2004.



Figure 65: Original baby changing stations at Zach's Bay comfort station with surviving hardware for sconce lighting, 2004.

SOURCES

- Baily, Paul, ed. *Long Island, A History of Two Great Counties: Nassau and Suffolk*. vol. II. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., Inc. 1949.
- Bleyer, Bill. "Cracks Found in the Tower," *Newsday*. (October 31, 2002) A22.
- _____. "Long Island: Out Story. Chapter 7: Jones Beach, the Marvel by the Sea," *Newsday* (May 3, 1998) A57
- Caro, Robert A. *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*. New York: Vintage Books, 1975.
- Fasanella, R. Marc. "Robert Moses and the Making of Jones Beach State Park: Part One." *Long Island History Journal*, vol. 7 no. 1 (Fall 1994), pp. 99-110
- _____. "Robert Moses and the Making of Jones Beach State Park: Persistence and the Grand Design." *Long Island History Journal*, vol. 7 no. 2 (Spring 1995), pp. 207-219
- Inside Long Island Parks: A Recreation Guide to State & County Parks in the Nassau-Suffolk Area*. Guide. Co-produced: Newsday, Inc. & Island Metro Publications, Inc. 2002.
- Gold, Jim. Director, Bureau of Historic Sites, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. Interview (June 22, 2004).
- Gorman, George. Director, Jones Beach State Park. Interview (June 30, 2004).
- Kollar, Frank. Former Director, Jones Beach State Park. Interview (August 19, 2002).
- New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. "Greetings From Jones Beach," *The New York State Preservationist* vol. 7, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2003), p. 15.
- New York Times* (1851 – 2001). Online database: ProQuest Information and Learning.
- Norbeck, John. Regional Director, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. Interview (June 25, 2004).
- O'Brian, Austin. Chief Editor, The New York State Preservationist. Interview (June 24, 2004).
- Van Liew, Barbara. "Jones Beach State Park," *Historic and Natural Districts Inventory Form*. Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities, 1979.