

BERGEN COUNTY'S PARK PROGRAM

Sixth Annual Report of the
BERGEN COUNTY PARK COMMISSION
1952



"Wild" Ducks at home to Park Visitors

February 1953

Board of Chosen Freeholders
Administrative Building
Hackensack, New Jersey

Gentlemen:

In submitting its Annual Report of activities during 1952, the Bergen County Park Commission takes pleasure in announcing that the public began its enjoyment of park properties and facilities during the past year.

For the first time since the Commission was established emphasis was shifted from land acquisition to park development. It is hoped that this program may be accelerated and that an ever-increasing number of citizens may use county parks to sustain their health through recreation and relaxation.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Thornton Bishop

A. Thornton Bishop
President
Bergen County Park Commission



With the pond iced over, approximately four acres of skating surface was made available to adults and children.

BERGEN COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

A. Thornton Bishop, *President*

Ira H. Davey, *Vice-President*

William Staubach, *Secretary*

Harold M. Davison

Emil J. Geering

Clifford Mische, *Executive Director*

Names of parks are temporary and for identification of area only.

The Year in Review

During 1952 the Bergen County Park Commission was pleased to make certain areas of its acquired park sites available to the public. In the Ridgewood area approximately 125 Girl Scouts from Ridgewood, Ho-Ho-Kus, and Glen Rock held an encampment in a cleared section of the Wild Duck Pond Park throughout the month of July. A softball diamond and play area was completed in Lodi as a part of the Saddle River Park system, and a play area was opened in Lyndhurst, along the Passaic River. A section of the Van Saun Park, fronting on Howland Avenue in River Edge was cleared and prepared as a play area for young children.

Through the courtesy of the Garfield Rotary Club, the Commission received several hundred hybrid tea roses for planting in the oval in Belmont Hill Park. The ball diamonds in Memorial Field and 20th Century Field, both in Garfield, were in steady use throughout the year, and the picnic areas, both in Lyndhurst and Ridgewood received considerable use.

With the purchase of a bulldozer and a tractor with accessories, the Commission's field staff accomplished a broad program of land improvement in various areas. Several men were assigned to clearing the Saddle River with crews of the County Mosquito Commission. Elm trees and viburnums were removed from the Ridgewood property and planted along the railroad embankment in Dahnerts Lake Park and Memorial Field in Garfield. At the northern end of the Van Saun Park a nursery was started for which 9,000 seedlings have been purchased from the State's Forestry Commission.

At the organization meeting in January, the Commission elected A. Thornton Bishop, president; Ira H. Davey, vice-president; and William Staubach,

secretary to succeed themselves. Harold M. Davison continued as a member of the Commission, and Emil J. Geering, of Paramus, was appointed by the Board of Chosen Freeholders effective January 22, to succeed Chester A. Smeltzer, who assumed his place as an elected member of that body.

Changes in Personnel

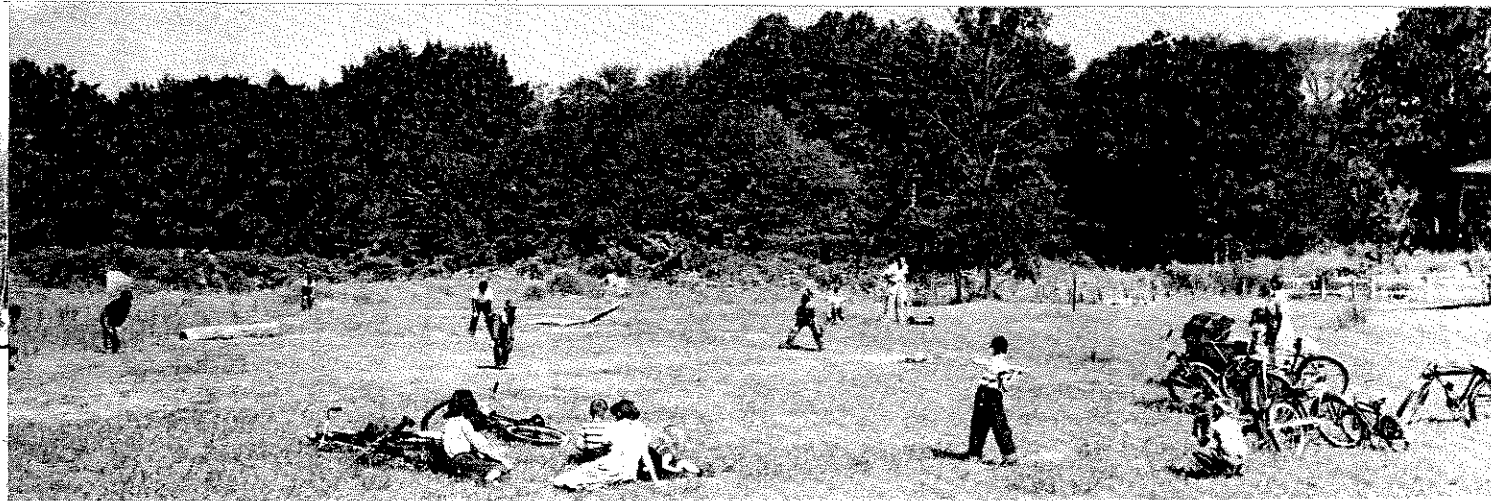
After interviewing many applicants for the position of Executive Director, the Commission appointed Clifford Mische and the Board of Chosen Freeholders approved the appointment on January 10, 1952. Mr. Mische assumed his post on January 28th. Mrs. Cornelia Kelm joined the Office Staff to replace a stenographer, resigned, and William L. Mann, draftsman, was employed during February.

Negotiation for Land Continues

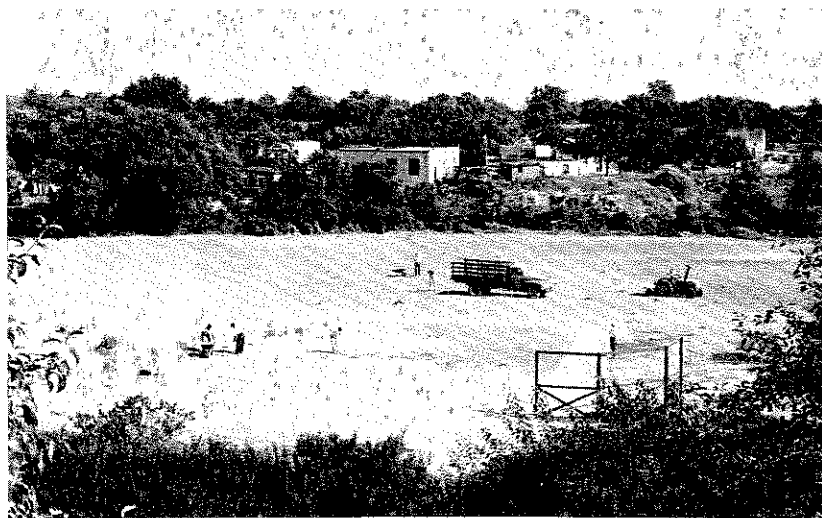
During 1952 many parcels of land were acquired to piece out the large areas marked for park sites. Many contracts consummated earlier were subject to title search which proved a lengthy process, especially in areas unmarked by monuments.

No additional sections of the County were proposed for new park sites during the year, but an enlargement of the areas along the Saddle River were studied for acquisition as lands required for retaining basins in flood control. While the major part of this acquisition program was scheduled for the near future, some parcels were acquired as opportunities were presented.

Among the parcels acquired during 1952 were properties in Leonia, Ridgewood, Paramus, Garfield,



Left, A field cleared and seeded in the Van Saun Park area gave the small fry a much needed play-field. Below, at left, A field crew puts the finishing touches to a ball diamond in Lodi. The Saddle River lies just behind the line of trees in the middle distance.



North Arlington, River Edge, Saddle River Township and Mahwah.

Plans for Development of Areas

An interim report prepared by Mr. Mische concerning plans for the development of seven areas was submitted to the Board of Chosen Freeholders in September which was followed by an inspection of many park sites by a majority of the Board in company with members of the Commission. Decisions were reached by the joint bodies for construction work on areas in Lyndhurst, Ridgewood, Saddle River Township and in the Van Saun Park. The work along the Saddle River will be in the nature of land reclamation wherein the stream will be cleared and areas of low land filled. The report presented a Work Plan for 1953 and reviewed the Commission's long range program in the light of the County's growth during recent years.

During the year members of the Commission served as guest speakers at meetings held by local civic organizations.



With Dahnerts Lake frozen over, the folks of Garfield are able to enjoy a large skating area.

Progress in Land Acquisition

Although many parcels of land were added to the park system's sites during 1952, these did not increase greatly the total acreage acquired up to that time. The new acquisitions were chiefly small areas purchased to round out larger assemblies of land that the Commission had been forming in recent years. For the most part the recent purchases were sites having a value in excess of much of the land acquired earlier.

✓ The total acreage purchased in 1952 was 107.05 acres at a cost of \$121,896.50. This represents contracts consummated and approved by the Board of Chosen Freeholders. Total acreage to date is

2,415.55 acres. ✓

During 1952 the City of Englewood deeded by ordinance 10.75 acres of municipal land along the Overpeck Creek to the County for park purposes, completing the group of municipalities bordering the Creek to donate land. The Commission is grateful for this cooperation. In Saddle River Township, the governing body vacated by ordinance certain planned streets which traversed land acquired by the Commission.

A statement of the Land Acquisition program to December 31, 1952 follows:

LAND ACQUISITION STATEMENT PRIVATE PROPERTY

	TOTAL		TOTAL	
	Acres	Cost	Acres	Cost
Reported close of Dec. 31, 1951	1,103.11	\$495,322.00		
Minus title-closing adjustments	<u>47.51</u>	<u>5,066.50</u>		
			1,055.60	\$490,255.50
COMMITMENTS MADE IN 1952				
Overpeck Creek Area	6.09	\$ 31,250.00		
Passaic River Area	17.04	36,500.00		
Saddle River Area	10.58	10,585.00		
Southwest Bergen Area	0.12	2,200.00		
Van Saun Area	1.75	3,675.00		
Van Saun-Northwest Bergen Area	<u>71.47</u>	<u>37,686.50</u>		
			107.05	\$121,896.50
Combined Total			1,162.65	\$612,152.00

MUNICIPAL PROPERTY

	Acres	Cost	Acres	Cost
Reported close of Dec. 31, 1951	1,233.63	-0-		
Plus Acres adjusted	7.04	-0-		
	1,240.67	-0-		

ACQUIRED BY ORDINANCE 1952

City of Englewood	10.75	-0-		
Saddle River Township	1.48	-0-		
Combined Total			1,252.90	-0-

RIPARIAN RIGHTS PURCHASED

Overpeck Creek Area (40,000 feet) *		\$40,000.00
GRAND TOTAL OF ALL PROPERTY	2,415.55	\$652,152.00

SUMMARY OF LAND ACQUISITION

Private property acquired by purchase - Bond Account	536.33	\$422,510.00
Private property committed by contract - Bond Account	624.99	189,632.00
Riparian Rights purchased (40,000 feet) Bond Account		40,000.00*
Total Charged to Bond Account	1,161.32	\$652,142.00
Private property acquired by purchase - Budget Account	.08	10.00
Private property acquired by gift	1.25	-0-
Municipal property acquired by ordinance	1,252.90	-0-
GRAND TOTAL	2,415.55	\$652,152.00

* Check issued; deeds being prepared.

Progress in Park Development

During the year the Commission determined on a general plan as to how the park sites would be developed over a period of years. Scheduling the work involved various factors. The important ones are:

- (a) present character of the soil
- (b) urgency for recreational facilities in area
- (c) suitability of the land for development
- (d) money available

Under Mr. Mische's supervision plans were prepared for parks in Lyndhurst, North Arlington, Van Saun (Paramus-River Edge), Ridgewood, Saddle River Township - Rochelle Park area, and Fleischers Park in Garfield. These plans, though subject to further study and certain refinements, indicated the most appropriate use of the areas with consideration of local requirements. In general, the facilities suggested included picnic areas, ball diamonds, open play fields, parking space and certain portions of the sites devoted to planting and beautification. Where the terrain offered opportunity for other treatment, such as horseback riding, skating, fishing, archery and camping, these facilities were indicated.

It appeared impractical to the Commission to hope for the completion of any area in a single stage of construction. Funds, available under the present park law, would limit operations for any one year. Therefore, it was decided to program the development of the areas over successive years and plan for a partial development in as many sections of the County as possible in the shortest time.

With the purchase of new equipment, including a bull dozer and a tractor, the Commission's field

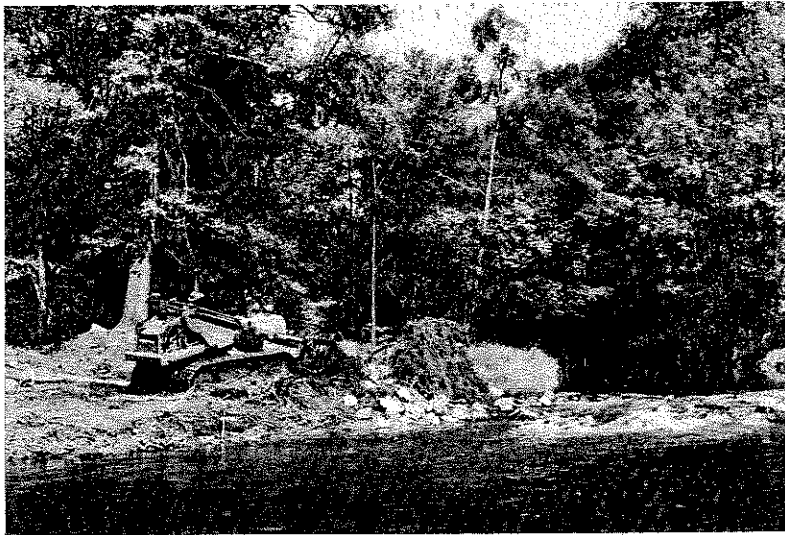
A Commission tractor, with blade arm extension, hews down tall weeds and underbrush on a Passaic River site.

staff went diligently to work clearing areas of reeds and underbrush, grading, seeding and rolling until the public was able to begin its use of the County Park system.

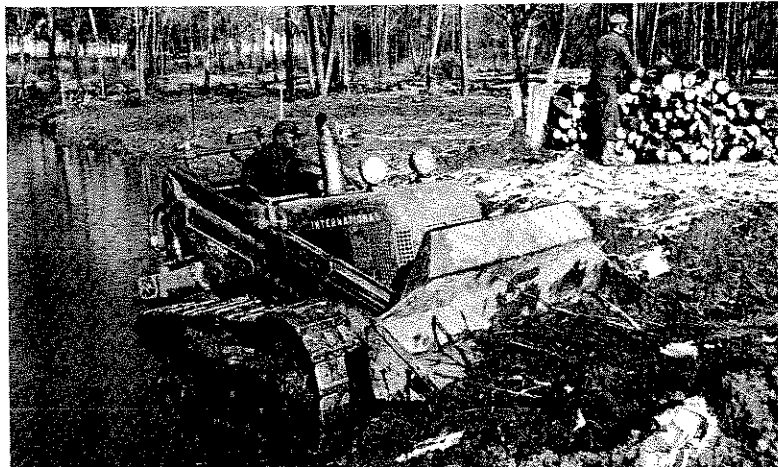
Lyndhurst

In Lyndhurst, along the Passaic River, at the beginning of the year, Commission property presented a sandy swamp, overgrown with reeds and underbrush. It was almost impossible to find a passage through the rough scrub growth. By June, 13 acres had been cleared and seeded, a baseball backstop had been erected, and more than 20 fireplaces and picnic tables had been set in place in a cleared grove. A drinking fountain was installed several hundred feet from the street. Pot holes were leveled, a bank obscuring the river had been removed and, as limited as these facilities were, the area was host to over 500 people on various occasions.





Above, With a power saw, members of a field crew clear an area near the Wild Duck Pond in Ridgewood preparatory to development work in that area. Left, The bull dozer is regrading along the Saddle River where a picnic area is being established. Below, Cleaning the pond of 30 years of muck and using the silt for fill along the banks made another helpful operation.



Lodi

In midsummer, the Borough of Lodi deeded to the Commission a swampy piece of property along the Saddle River which is destined to become one of a chain of parks along that river. Although the area is small, the opportunity offered a chance to develop some play area where the younger children in the immediate vicinity could escape from the hazards of the streets. The area was graded and a large grass-covered field was made available. Baseball facilities were installed with backstop and a regulation clay infield. Later in the fall the bank obscuring the river from view was removed and used to fill swamp land farther to the south which will extend the park in a later stage of construction.

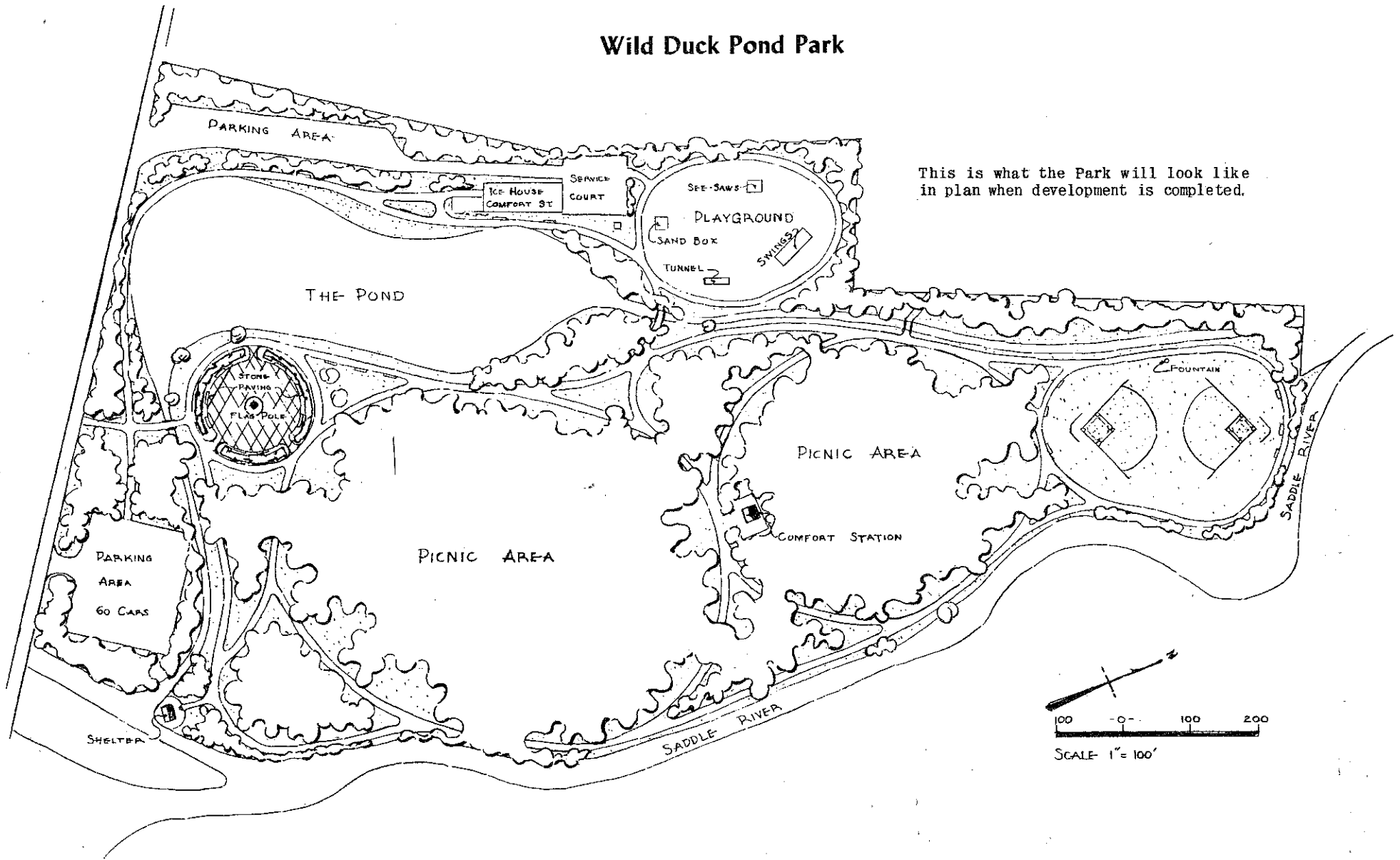
Ridgewood

In the fall of 1951 the Commission had acquired the old ice house and pond on East Ridgewood Avenue along the Saddle River in Ridgewood. The building was in a bad state of repair, one end almost rotted away. Throughout the winter months the field staff worked repairing the building and by spring 1952 it was usable as a storage shed and a work shop where equipment was installed so that the force could pour concrete bases for park benches, make picnic tables and fireplaces. During the spring wooded areas were cleared and the obviously artificial lake was reshaped according to the new landscape design.

By midsummer a large picnic area with fireplaces and tables had been developed, and nature trails had been hewn out through the wooded sections. The Ridgewood-Glen Rock-Ho-Ho-Kus Council of Girl Scouts, in cooperation with the Commission, established a summer day camp in the park and provided a cool retreat for approximately 125 "Brownies" during July.

During summer and early fall, the Saddle River

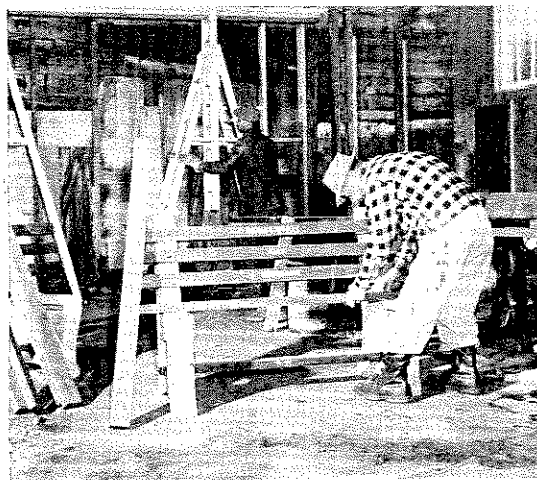
Wild Duck Pond Park



This is what the Park will look like in plan when development is completed.



Left, a bull dozer lifts a tree with roots balled for transplanting, onto Commission truck. Below, two operations carried on in the maintenance shop when it is rainy. Forms are poured for bench supports, benches are assembled, picnic tables and fireplaces are built.



A power lawn mower is equipped with a snow plow and clears an early fall.



was straightened and widened north of East Ridgewood Avenue. Soil from the dredging operations was used to fill in the flooded portions and eroded gullies of the park land. The pond, itself, was drained, and the bottom muck of 30 years removed so that the water could be kept at a low level.

Before the first cold snap of this winter came, the ice house had been re-roofed, the south end rebuilt, and a warming room with stoves installed for ice skaters. The new low water level permitted ice skating daily and, in the evening the sport continued under newly installed flood lights, when other ponds in the County had become dangerous, the first controlled recreation feature of the new County Park system.

River Edge — Paramus

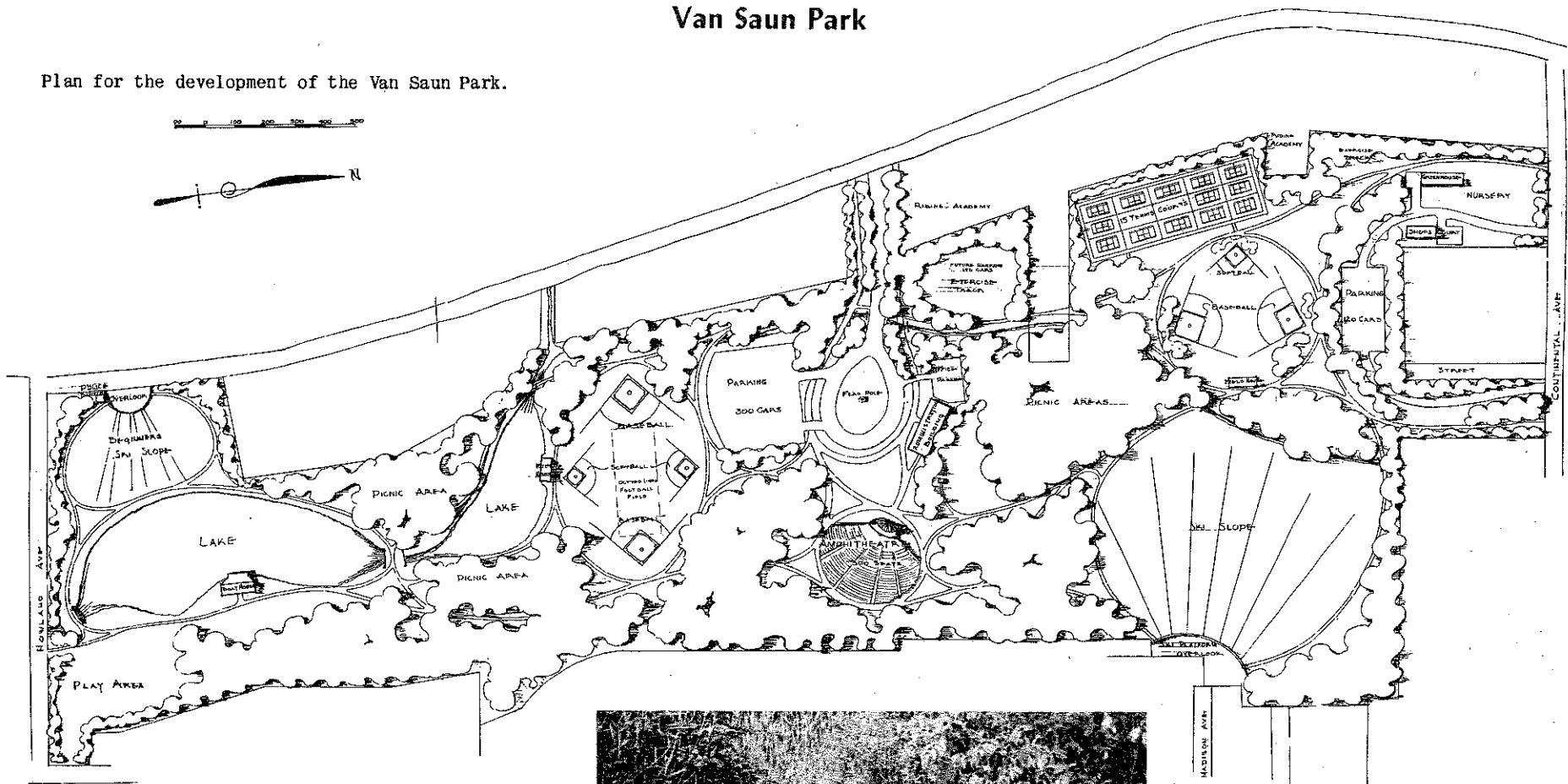
The southeast corner of the park property fronting on Howland Avenue had been used as a dumping ground for neighboring developers when the Commission acquired the land in 1951. At the request of the Borough of River Edge that the Commission prepare some place for small children to play, the field staff removed the debris, leveled the land and seeded almost 10 acres, erecting a stained-log barrier along the Howland Avenue side. Although this represented a small beginning in a park which will exceed 140 acres, it was the most expedient work that could be done to bring much needed play space to this community.

Garfield

Members of the Rotary Club in Garfield suggested to the Commission in the early spring of 1952 that a rose garden be established on Belmont Hill as a contribution toward the beautification of that featured County park. A plan for the development of the oval in the park was made by the Commission and several hundred hybrid tea roses were presented by the Rotary Club for planting. Late in October, when the beds were mulched for the winter, the beautiful yellow "Peace" rose was still blooming.

Van Saun Park

Plan for the development of the Van Saun Park.



A group of youngsters finds Washington Spring, in the Van Saun Park area, a fascinating spot. The spring percolates up through a sand bed, its source a mystery. Records refer to the spring as serving soldiers in Washington's army.



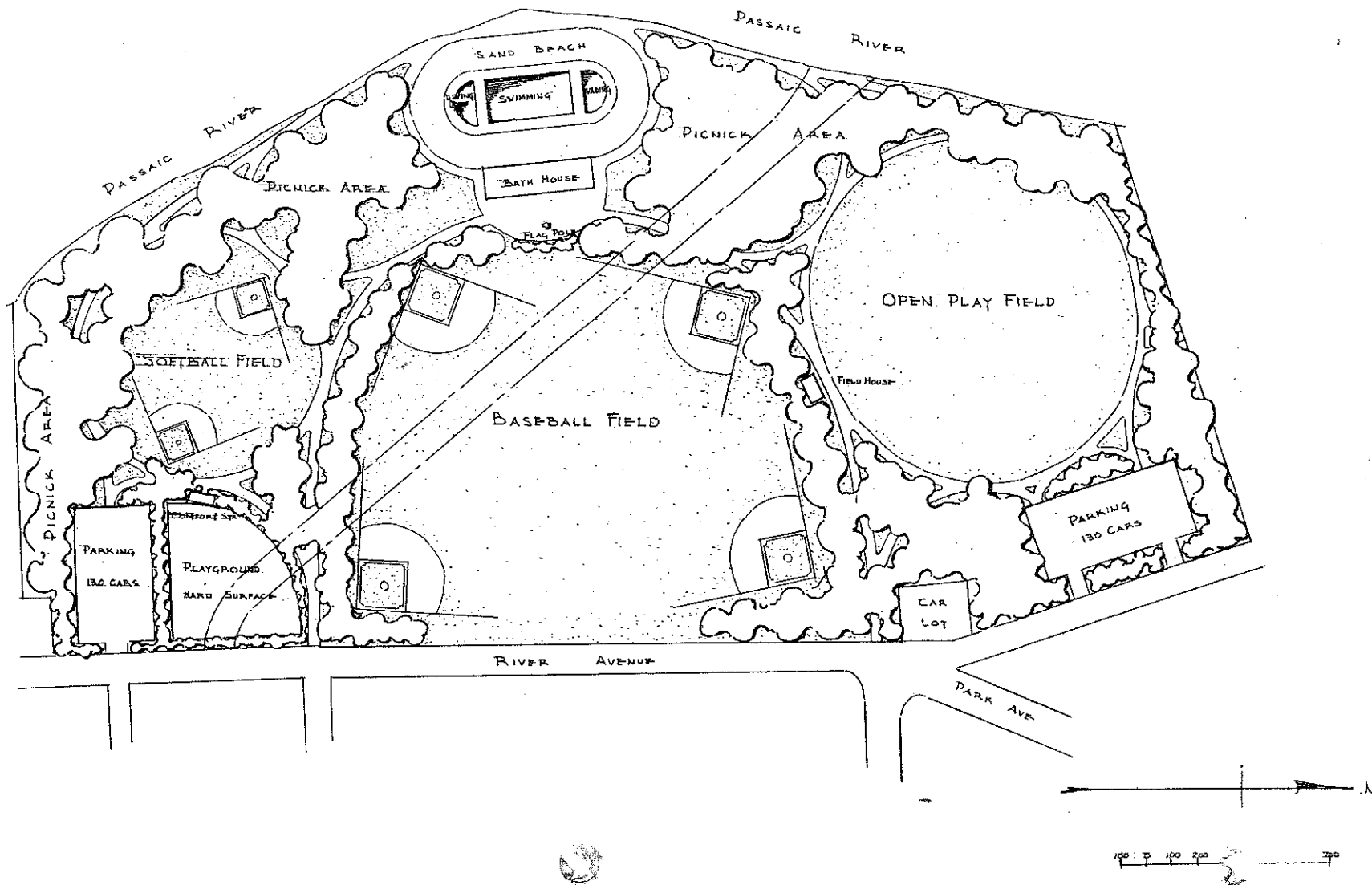


Passaic River Park North Area

Left, A picnic area has been established as a beginning of an extensive park development. Below, plan of finished park is shown.

In November, the field staff trucked elm trees and viburnums from other park property to Garfield and planted them along the railroad right-of-way in an effort to screen the embankment from the park.

Throughout the summer the lawns in various Garfield park areas were maintained, and work began in the northern portion of the Fleischer Park toward a leveling and clearing of space suitable as a picnic area in the near future.



Following a policy outlined in earlier reports by the Commission of planning parks along the County's waterways, land has been assembled in various areas bordering the Saddle River. The existence of improved properties at certain points, some businesses operating in the recreational field, made it impractical to secure the banks of the stream in public ownership continuously. Therefore, parks have been planned along the river where parcels of sufficient size could be assembled to offer a recreational program.

Land has been acquired in Lodi, Rochelle Park, Saddle River Township, Paramus and Ridgewood and the development of some of these areas is reported elsewhere in these pages.

Flood Control Is Part of the Problem

In a valley that is inconvenienced periodically by flash floods, it is necessary to recognize the need for the control of the excess water before planning any extensive installations for public use. Since it is a problem that extends throughout the length of the stream, it is beyond the scope of any individual municipality to solve. The solution will have to be achieved through cooperation with the County.

To aid toward an effective solution, the Board of Chosen Freeholders engaged the services of a Hydraulic Engineer to work in collaboration with county departments. Studies have been made which show that control of flash floods in the Saddle River valley can be accomplished without extensive expenditures of funds, and at the same time can be coordinated into the park program.

Low lands, graded to provide water retention areas during flash floods, and developed to serve as ball fields and open park areas at other times, would become valuable assets as park lands, and the division of costs could make flood control practical and feasible. In this program municipalities are presented with the opportunity to cooperate to their own benefit by making available any municipally-owned land bordering the Saddle River to the County for this double purpose.

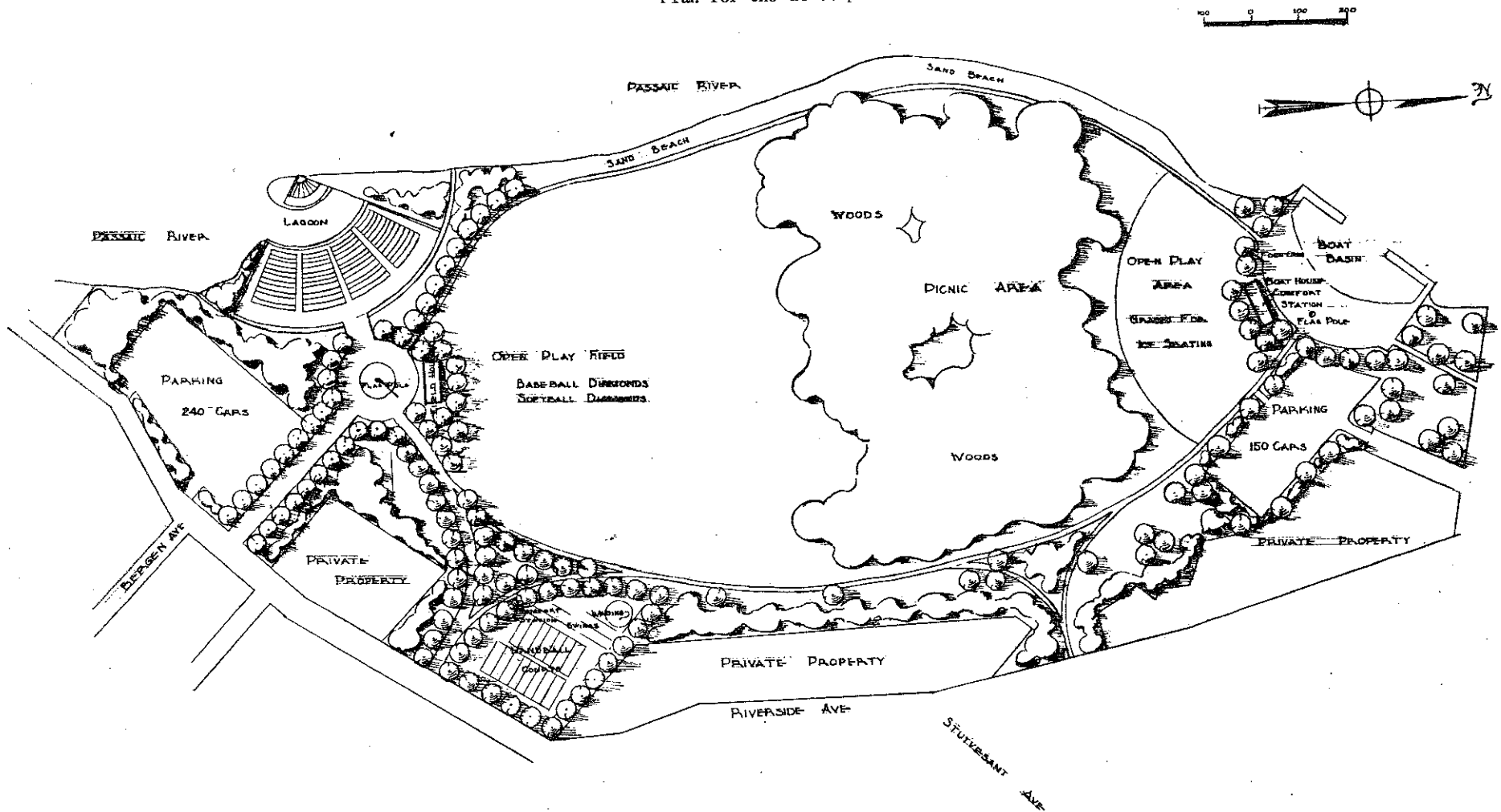
Working in conjunction with the County Mosquito Commission, the park field staff has already aided in the clearing of various sections of stream of fallen trees and accumulated driftwood. Extension of this work is programmed for this coming year when, in consultation with the Hydraulic Engineer, the Park Commission will endeavor to speed the work so that areas can be prepared for public use in the near future.

Views on the Saddle River. Control of floods will make land to the west suitable for park development.

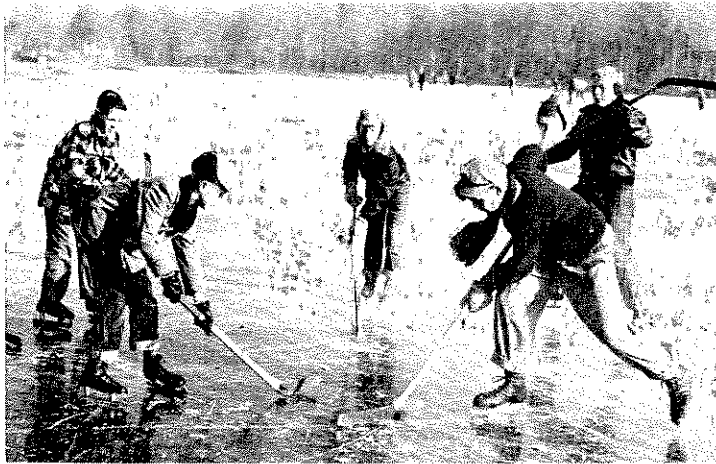


Passaic River Park — South Area

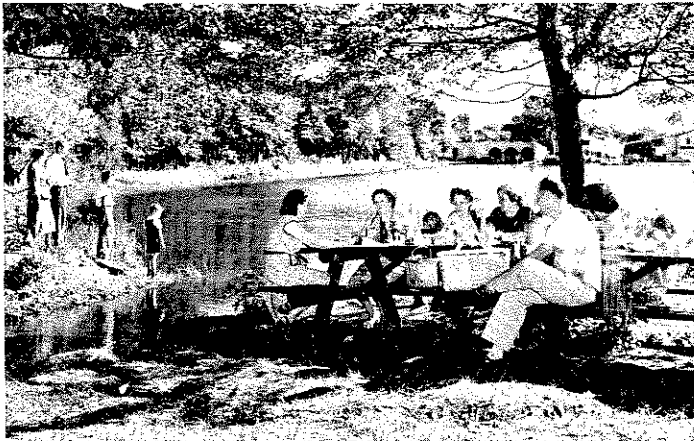
Plan for the development of area.



Parks Play Host to the Public



Ridgewood



Lyndhurst



Report of the Treasurer

February 16, 1953

Bergen County Park Commission
Court House
Hackensack, N. J.

Gentlemen:

Pursuant to your instructions, I have examined the financial records of the Commission for the year ending December 31, 1952 and as a result of this examination, I submit the following:

BUDGET FUNDS

SURPLUS, JANUARY 1, 1952	\$ 7,749.12
BUDGET APPROPRIATION - 1952	<u>129,477.55</u>
	\$ 137,226.67

EXPENDITURES:

Administrative Expenses:	
Salaries and Wages	\$ 19,900.20
Stationery, Printing, Postage, Insurance, Office	
Equipment, Legal, Audit and Other Office Expenses	15,192.21
Field Expenses:	
Salaries and Wages	35,082.87
New Equipment	15,576.49
Other Field Expenses, Including Supplies, Small	
Tools, Repairs and Gas and Oil	4,328.51
Engineering Expenses:	
Engineering, Consultant and Surveys	17,486.02
Appraisal and Negotiating Services	6,782.50
Site Improvements	<u>11,567.52</u>
	125,916.32
	<u>\$ 11,310.35</u>
	100.00
LESS: PETTY CASH FUND ON HAND	
SURPLUS, DECEMBER 31, 1952	<u>\$ 11,210.35</u>

BOND ISSUE

BONDS AUTHORIZED, INCLUDING DOWN PAYMENT	\$ 825,000.00
LESS:	
Disbursements for Land Acquisition and Improvement	\$ 491,730.64
Committed for Land Acquisition	<u>189,632.00</u>
	681,362.64
TOTAL AVAILABLE, DECEMBER 31, 1952, FOR FUTURE LAND	
ACQUISITION	<u>\$ 143,637.36</u>

All vouchers were examined and found to be properly approved. Checks issued in payment of these vouchers were compared with both the voucher and the entry in the financial records. These were found to be correct.

Cash in bank was reconciled with the book figure.

Respectfully submitted,

.....*Edward Scherloh*.....
Certified Public Accountant
(N. J. & N. Y.)