

BERGEN COUNTY'S PARK PROGRAM

Eighth Annual Report of the
BERGEN COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

1954

E. A. MOSLEY
714 COLUMBUS DRIVE
TENAFLY, N. J.

The Fishing Competition in Ridgewood

Christmas at Dahnert's Lake Park



Colorful cutout figures were illuminated by floodlights.



Angels hovered over the Nativity scene as carols were heard.



The rebuilt lake offered reasonably safe opportunity for ice skating. 1,000 people enjoyed the sport on a single day.

March 1955

Board of Chosen Freeholders
Administrative Building
Hackensack, New Jersey

Gentlemen:

In presenting a report of activities of the Bergen County Park Commission for 1954, emphasis is directed to the construction operations in various areas. Park sites are gradually becoming parks available for recreation programs. Even operations in the larger projects show progress.

The Commission feels that in its eight years of existence a clear picture has been produced of what a county park system can be. However, the park program is not yet keeping pace with the growth of the County. The public will be given opportunity this November to express its desire that the progress made can be accelerated.

Respectfully submitted,

Athornton Bishop

A. Thornton Bishop
President
Bergen County Park Commission



Construction began in many areas during 1954. This shows activity started in the Ridgefield Park section of the Overpeck Park site.

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

The Year in Review

Development of park sites featured the progress of the Bergen County Park Commission during 1954. The park program had at last reached the phase where construction dominated the activities of the Commission and its Staff and, by the end of the year, some new areas had been made available to the public.

Acquisition of land continued where parcels were required either for flood control purposes or to round out larger assemblies of land where recreation areas are planned. Purchases during the year acquired 70 parcels of land in six areas, consisting of 162.27 acres, at the total cost of \$137,655.00.

More of the public began to enjoy recreational areas that had been prepared in Lyndhurst, North Arlington, Lodi, Saddle River Township, Ridgewood, Garfield and Leonia. When the newly created lake in Saddle River Township froze, approximately 800 people skated there on a single day. 1,500 people glided over the Wild Duck Pond in Ridgewood on a Sunday this winter, and about 1,000 people enjoyed the pond for skating at Dahnert's Lake Park in Garfield where flood lights for night skating and a warming room have been installed. The playgrounds and ball fields in Lyndhurst, North Arlington and Garfield have been crowded on every pleasant weekend.

On August 21st, the Ridgewood Young People's Fishing Competition was held at the Wild Duck Pond Park at which approximately 300 youngsters competed. Prizes donated by the service clubs of Ridgewood were presented to the winners by Dr. Oswald B. Deiter. As in the two years previous this park served as the site for the day encampment exercises of the Ridgewood-HoHokus-Glen Rock Council of the Girl Scouts of America during July and August. The

area accommodated also the Boy Scouts who used the facilities for a 'cookout'. An area in Rochelle Park was designated where the local Boy Scout Council could develop camp sites, make trails, and assist the Commission in the control of the area.

At the organization meeting in January, the Commission re-elected A. Thornton Bishop, president; Ira H. Davey, vice-president; and William Staubach, secretary. Later in the year Emil J. Geering was elected assistant secretary to make available the needed signature during the vacation period. Harold M. Davison continued as a member of the Commission. The Staff remained essentially unchanged, Mrs. Martha Miller resigning at the end of the year, and Henry Peters being engaged as an assistant engineer.

Commission's Work Is Extended

In the field of design further studies were made for the Overpeck Park and the Saddle River project, and new designs were made for both the Lyndhurst and North Arlington areas of the Passaic River parks, as well as for properties in Lodi, Garfield, Saddle River Township, and the Camp Merritt Memorial Circle in Cresskill.

A number of advanced studies were made in reference to the preservation of the water resources of Bergen County and the future extension of Commission properties along waterways.

In October, installation work on the tide gates in the causeway over the Overpeck Creek was started. By the end of the year four of the seven gates had been installed, and the operating controls for these gates are now being installed. It is anticipated that the gates can be in operation by early summer.

During 1954, the Commission's Staff maintained a total of 122 acres of properties in public use, and created another 33 acres of park lands out of swamps and refuse dumps. In recreational centers three backstops were installed on ball fields, 27 picnic tables and 22 benches were constructed by shop personnel. The landscape men planted, transplanted and staked 692 trees throughout the system, and planted 4,800 seedlings and 1,000 cuttings and scrubs at the Van Saun nursery, which area is now being maintained and protected by the Commission.

In cooperation with the County Agricultural Agent and Rutgers University, several lawn plots were installed to be used for public information and for study by the County Agent and the University. Each of these plots has a different mixture of lawn seed and has been marked with signs. A sod nursery has been created consisting of two acres so that sod may be used to replace the infields of the more heavily used ball fields in the County parks.

In the nursery the variety of plant materials has more than doubled, and several hundred plants put in during past years have been removed and transplanted in park projects.



A new feeding station in the Wild Duck Pond Park gave youngsters and parents a better chance to enjoy the fowl.

Park Referendum Will Be Submitted

Early in the year the Commission proposed to the Board of Chosen Freeholders that the legal limitations of the bonded debt and budgetary appropriation be brought to the attention of the general public, and that a referendum be submitted to the people to permit the Commission to increase its budgetary appropriation by 1/4 of a mill on the assessed valuations of the county real estate, and its bond appropriation by \$2 million. The Board of Chosen Freeholders was quick to recognize the urgency of the suggestion and in a few weeks State Senator Jones introduced bills in the State Legislature that were speedily passed.

With this wholesome prospect, the Commission accelerated its planning to be in a position of proceeding with park development. Progress, generally, was braked down somewhat when these park bills were vetoed by the Governor. Consequently, the referendum was not submitted to the public on the ballot at the General Election. Steps that might have been taken preparatory to the possible

The pond frozen over, the ducks migrated to their winter quarters along the banks of the Saddle River that lies beyond the trees.

approval of the changes in the Park Act were postponed, and plans for use of only the funds allowable under the present law were substituted.

However, when the Legislature again convened, the bills were passed over the Governor's veto, and the public will have opportunity to determine the future of its park program.

Planning for Park Facilities

In many of the areas now in public use, the Commission's Staff carried on an improvement program. In Garfield, at Dahnert's Lake, the park area was completely reconstructed. The lake was dried out, re-excavated and increased in size. The banks were regraded to make them less steep and less dangerous. An entirely new path system and two new bridges were installed. More than 80 trees were transplanted from various locations in the park to form a new barrier adjacent to the Erie railroad tracks on the west side of the park.

During the Christmas holidays the Carl Kem Loven exhibit was displayed, the exhibit consisting of the manger scene, carol singers, and arrangements depicting episodes in the adventures of Peter Pan.

The displays brought large crowds to the park evenings.

On Belmont Hill, several new trees of larger size were planted, and at Belmont Oval the ball field was regraded to correct ineffective drainage. Fill excavated from the bed of Dahnert's Lake was used for this purpose. The usable play area was also increased.

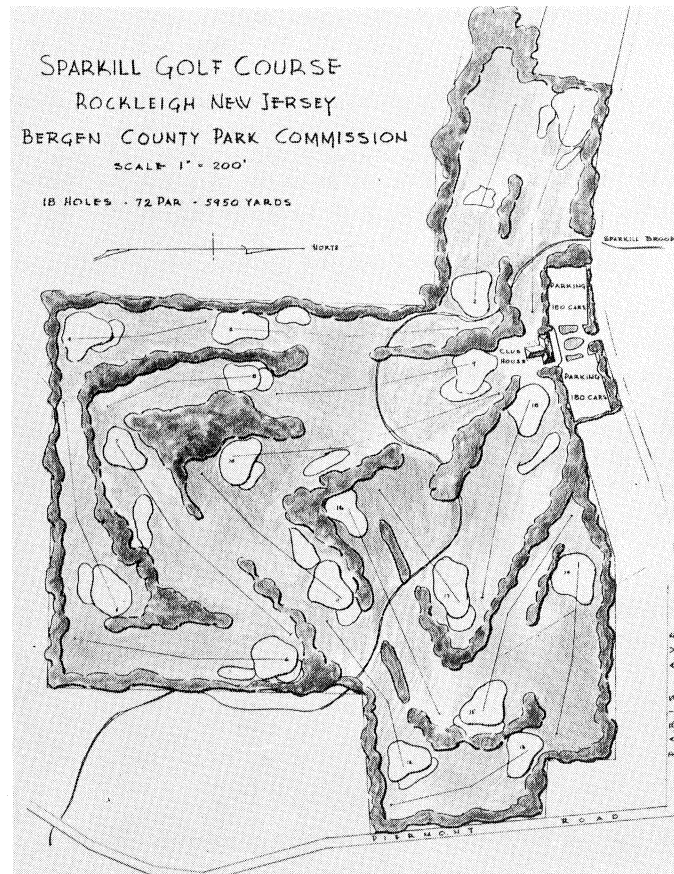
At Memorial Field a new park area was installed and the overhead electrical wires were put underground with the cooperation of the Garfield Water Department.

At Lodi a two-acre swamp area was filled and added to the recreational space that is being redeveloped. An artificial ice skating rink 80 by 200 feet was created that was enjoyed by hundreds of skating enthusiasts this winter.

At the Passaic River Park, in the Lyndhurst portion, exceedingly rich material was transported from the Tri-borough Sewer Commission's settling tanks to the ball field area where approximately five acres were regraded and reseeded. The first section of a new path system was installed, and a

In the North Arlington area of the Passaic River Park swamps were drained, and a baseball diamond was provided.





Plan of the proposed golf course and a portion of the site.

new road and parking field was constructed. Plans for 1955 include a comfort station for this area.

In the North Arlington portion of the Passaic River Park an additional 10-acre field was graded, topsoiled, and an area of approximately two acres was planted in order to make a new picnic space. A new baseball field and a football field were constructed which accommodated large crowds weekends.

The Commission has assumed the maintenance of the grounds at the Cresskill Circle on Knickerbocker Road where the Camp Merritt Memorial is located. A number of trees have been planted and benches have been placed on the County property to accommodate people waiting for buses.

Golf Course Site Being Assembled

In the northeast part of the County, the Commission has been successful in assembling the greater portion of a tract suitable for development as an 18-hole golf course. Negotiations for the balance of the acquisition are proceeding and it is reasonable to expect that the entire area will be County-owned in the coming few months.

The site is located mostly in the Borough of Rockleigh, the terrain rolling and partly wooded. The Sparkhill Brook traverses diagonally the area so that it offers features most favorably regarded by golf course architects. As the course is planned, the ninth hole is placed near the point of beginning for those who desire a shorter period on the links. The development of the course in the near future depends on the additional funds that may be made available through the public approval of the park referendum.

Progress in Land Acquisition

Land acquisition during 1954, consisting of 126.27 acres, was chiefly directed along the Saddle River for flood control purposes, and in the northeast portion of the County where the site of a golf course is being assembled. Parcels were also purchased in the Overpeck Creek area to unify the Commission's holding there.

A tract of 25.69 acres for which a commitment had been made in the report for 1953 because of negotiations then in progress was not acquired. Negotia-

tions resolved in a condemnation court, and the award was higher than the Commission deemed it advisable to accept. The acreage therefore appears as a deduction on the following statement.

The land acquisition program continues with emphasis on consolidating areas where purchases have been made and where municipalities have donated large tracts, with a view of rounding out these parts of the park program in a relatively short time.

LAND ACQUISITION STATEMENT

PRIVATE PROPERTY ACQUIRED

Close of December 31, 1954	SUB-TOTALS		TOTAL	
	Acres	Cost	Acres	Cost
Reported close of Dec. 31, 1953	1,557.30	\$812,585.68		
Title closing adjustments made in year 1954	- 25.69	1,249.00		
			1,531.61	\$813,834.68

COMMITMENTS MADE IN 1954

Overpeck Creek Area	14.76	\$ 42,030.00		
Northwest Bergen Area	34.05	6,025.00		
Northeast Bergen Area	51.95	33,370.00		
Saddle River Area	35.12	56,230.00		
			135.88	137,655.00

MUNICIPAL PROPERTY ACQUIRED

Reported close of Dec. 31, 1953	1,252.90	-0-		
Acquired by ordinance or by Tax Title Liens in 1954	26.39	-0-		
			1,279.29	-0-

Ridgewood



Bicycling along the park trails is a favorite pastime of the youngsters, or having a snack at one of the tables in the picnic grove, shown below, is quite a familiar scene



Brought forward	Acres	Cost
	2,946.78	\$951,489.68

RIPARIAN RIGHTS

Reported close of Dec. 31, 1953				
45,311.19 linear feet	-0-	\$ 45,311.19	-0-	\$ 45,311.19
Grand total of all property			2,946.78	\$996,800.87

LAND ACQUISITION
CONDENSED STATEMENT OF
PROPERTY ACQUIRED FOR PARK DEVELOPMENT

Close of December 31, 1954

	SUB-TOTALS		TOTAL	
	Acres	Cost	Acres	Cost
OVERPECK CREEK AREA				
Purchased or committed for	108.54	\$133,184.00		
Municipal land donated	957.04	-0-		
Riparian rights	-0-	45,311.19**	1,065.58	\$178,495.19
PASSAIC RIVER AREA				
Purchased or committed for	50.46	\$121,321.00		
Municipal land donated	80.16	-0-	130.62	\$121,321.00
SADDLE RIVER AREA				
Purchased or committed for	333.45	\$243,960.00		
Municipal land donated	42.09	-0-	375.54	\$243,960.00
SOUTHWEST BERGEN AREA				
Purchased or committed for	0.12	\$ 2,200.00		
Municipal land donated	90.00	-0-	90.12	\$ 2,200.00

	Brought forward		Acres	Cost
			1,661.86	\$545,976.19
VAN SAUN AREA				
Purchased or committed for	137.97	\$193,961.73		
Privately owned land donated	1.25	-0-	139.22	\$193,961.73
NORTHWEST BERGEN AREA			901.09	\$168,482.95
Purchased or committed for				
NORTHEAST BERGEN AREA			134.53	\$ 88,370.00
Purchased or committed for				
HACKENSACK RIVER AREA			.08	\$ 10.00
Purchased				
PASCACK BROOK AREA			110.00	-0-
Municipal land donated				
Grand Total			2,946.78	\$996,800.87

SUMMARY OF LAND ACQUISITION

	Acres	Cost
Privately owned properties purchased or committed for	1,666.24	\$951,489.68
Privately owned properties donated	1.25	-0-
Municipally owned properties donated	1,279.29	-0-
Riparian Rights (Overpeck Creek Area)	-0-	45,311.19
Grand Total	2,946.78	\$996,800.87

** Riparian Rights represents 45,311.19 linear feet at \$1.00 per foot.

The average cost for private properties purchased and committed for is approximately \$571.00 per acre.

Cresskill



Commissioner Staubach (left) and Staff Director Handelmann officiate at the planting project for the Camp Merritt Memorial.

North Arlington



Golf enthusiasts practice driving on the enlarged play area.



The Saddle River with its banks inundated during a typical spring flood. To control this situation at various points along the river, the Park Commission and the County Hydraulic Engineer are cooperating.

Taming a River and Building a Park

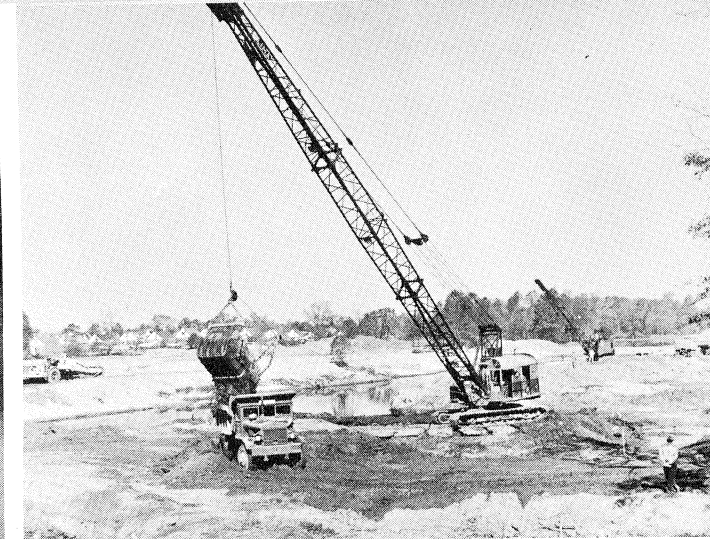
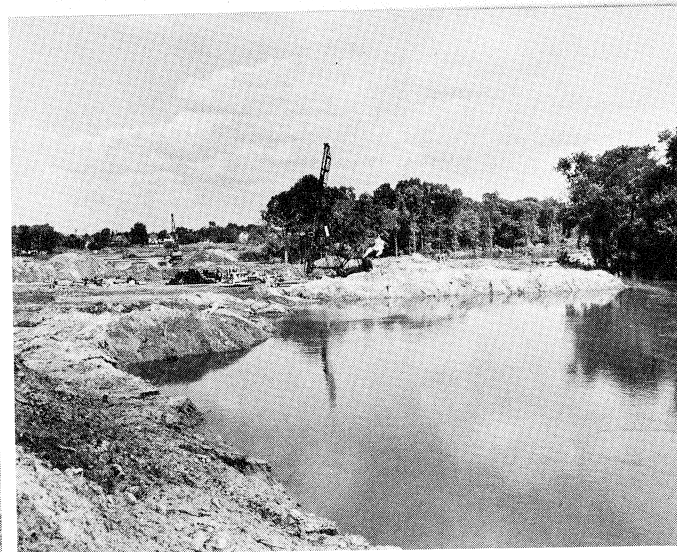
Development of a large segment of the Saddle River project in Saddle River Township had progressed when the plans of the Garden State Parkway Authority became known. These plans called for the parkway to cross the park area and proceed within the limits of Commission-owned property along the Saddle River northward. The new road's right-of-way caused great changes in the plans for the control of floods in this locality, the relocation of the river, the rebuilding of the lake that was to be used as a retaining basin of flood waters, in fact, a complete revision of the park plans.

The Commission, in conjunction with the County Hydraulic Engineer, negotiated with the Garden State Parkway Authority for the transfer of Commission-owned property to the Authority and for an agreement by which the Authority would alter the construction of the area so that the objectives of flood control would not be sacrificed. A considerable amount of park development work, completed in 1953, had to be redone as the result of the parkway crossing.

The fine cooperative spirit shown by Mr. Orrie de Nooyer of the Garden State Parkway Authority has protected the Commission's investment in the Saddle River project, and will ultimately prove highly beneficial to the interests of Bergen County. The bridge across the river, the road bed and slopes have been established,

Work was started early in the summer of 1954 to change the course of the Saddle River and construct a 15-acre lake to serve as a retaining reservoir in high water periods.



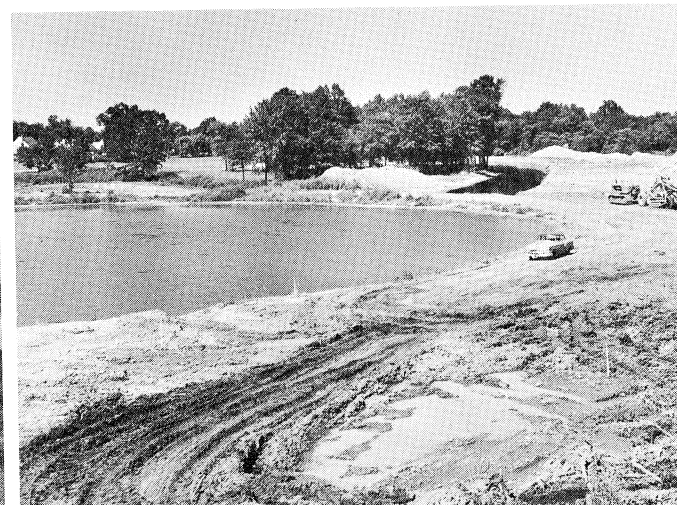


Heavy equipment begins to change the topography of the whole area, and what was once an impassable swamp will soon be land serviceable for recreational use.

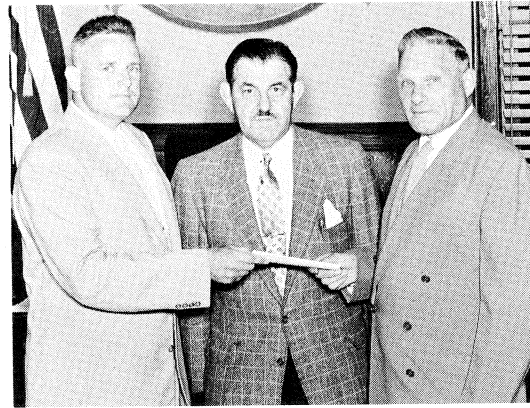
the river has been relocated, and additional drainage lines have been installed, and a new lake, larger than the Commission's original lake, has been constructed. It is anticipated that approximately 30 acres of park land will become available for use by the people of Bergen County this year as a result of these operations. The ball field constructed in Saddle River Township and made inoperative during 1954 because of the construction program will be refurbished and put back in use early in 1955.

Operations south of the point where the Garden State Parkway crosses the Saddle River will soon begin. In this area which extends to Railroad Avenue, flood control work will precede park development. However, once this work is finished the land area can be prepared for recreational use. Because of the wooded character of the section, the Commission intends to preserve as much of this interesting and beautiful location as possible, building fireplaces in the clearings and providing tables and benches for picnic areas.

Along the background in the picture to the left the roadway for the Garden State Parkway can be seen. In the center picture the new river channel can be noted.



Wallington Deeds Land for a County Park



Mayor Marut, former mayor Samuel Nelkin, and Commissioner Staubach at the ceremony in Wallington Council Chamber when the municipality conveyed the deed to the County.

During 1954 the Borough of Wallington conveyed to the Park Commission a tract of land of approximately 20 acres. The property, much of which extends over a hillside, is being studied for development in the near future.

This gift comprised land from three different sources. The Borough deeded about 12 acres of property it owned outright; Mr. Samuel Nelkin, a former mayor of the Borough, made a gift of an acre and a half; and the officials of the municipality purchased approximately 6½ acres at a cost of about \$15,000 to complete the assembly and so present a single unit to the Park Commission for a County park.

Usually, gifts of municipally-owned land represent parcels acquired under tax-foreclosure procedures. This is the first time that a Bergen County municipality has purchased land with current funds, or by means of a bond issue, for the purpose of presenting the tract to the County park system. Mayor Walter Marut made the presentation for the Borough, Commissioner William Staubach accepted the deeds for the County.

Views of the area deeded by Wallington for County Park development. The foreground offers opportunity for playgrounds.



Progress Along the Overpeck

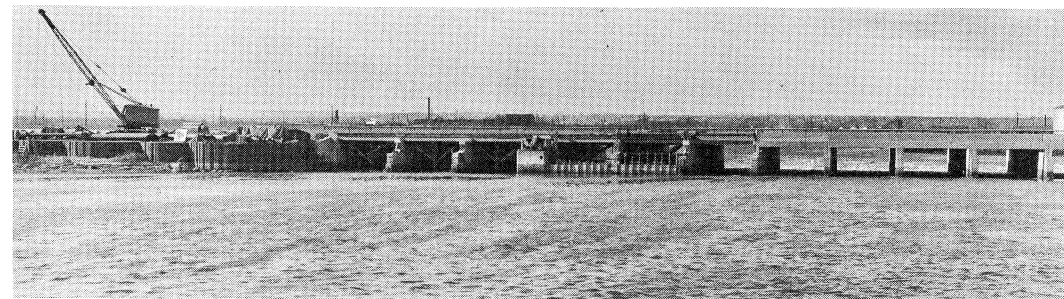
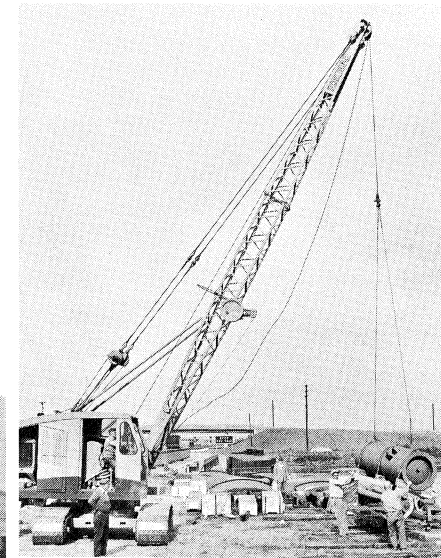
Preparation of land for development purposes has been carried on in the Overpeck Creek valley for some time. The only available land above the high water mark are the areas that had been filled by the municipalities' disposal of refuse. The Park Commission requested the Borough of Leonia to discontinue further disposal of refuse on lands deeded to the County by the Borough and, instead, deposit the material in the area being used as a pilot plant for the Sanitary Land Fill program.

This permitted the Commission to eliminate fires and objectionable features of the former Leonia dump by regrading the area and covering it with a high grade topsoil salvaged from the meadows. A parking lot, entrance road and picnic areas were installed. 150 trees were planted, and a ball field is in the process of construction.

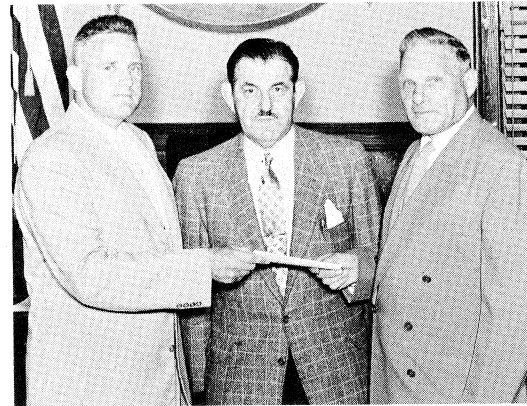
In Teaneck, the former refuse disposal area of the municipality has been regraded, vermin exterminated and fires extinguished. The land is now being covered with fill materials in preparation for development into a picnic area. A ball field is also planned on the ground so reclaimed.

More recently, the Commission's heavy equipment has started to disperse the refuse in the Ridgely Park area of the Overpeck where wastes will be buried under a ground cover suitable for recreational use.

In October 1954, installation of the tide gates began. This operation will eventually make the Overpeck Creek a body of fresh water stocked with fish and fowl. A lower level of the creek can be maintained that will eliminate floods at the northern end.



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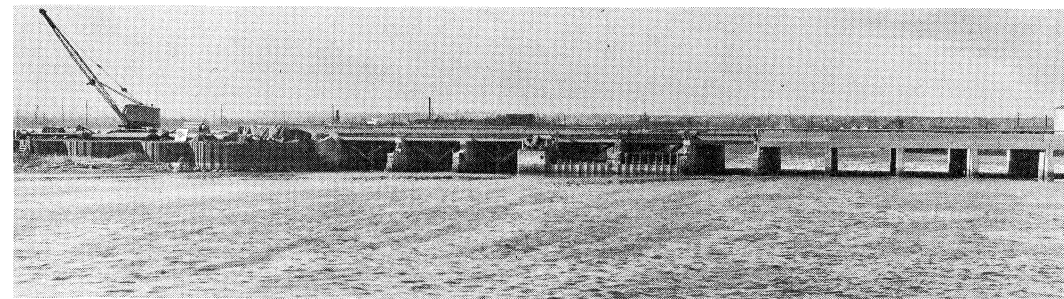
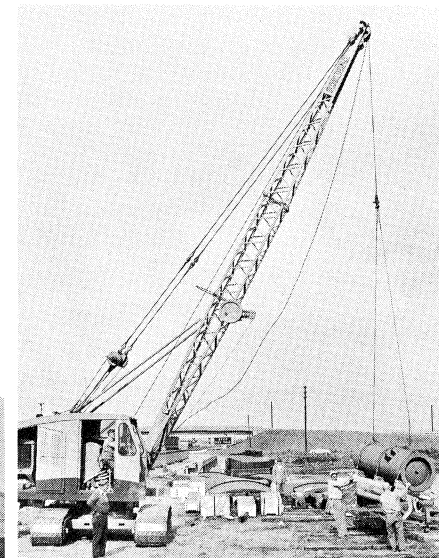
Preparation of land for development purposes has been carried on in the Overpeck Creek valley for some time. The only available land above the high water mark are the areas that had been filled by the municipalities' disposal of refuse. The Park Commission requested the Borough of Leonia to discontinue further disposal of refuse on lands deeded to the County by the Borough and, instead, deposit the material in the area being used as a pilot plant for the Sanitary Land Fill program.

This permitted the Commission to eliminate fires and objectionable features of the former Leonia dump by regrading the area and covering it with a high grade topsoil salvaged from the meadows. A parking lot, entrance road and picnic areas were installed. 150 trees were planted, and a ball field is in the process of construction.

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For years the Overpeck has been the dumping ground for the municipalities bordering it. This refuse is now being buried.

In Palisades Park the Commission is now in the process of eliminating the refuse disposal area in preparation to constructing a parking lot and an entrance road leading to a picnic area.

The Sanitary Land Fill project will enable the Commission to obtain ground for park usage above the high water mark and provide a means for disposal of the excess refuse of the entire county, which is becoming a major problem to various municipalities. Approximately 400 acres of swamp land in the Overpeck have been reserved for filling in this manner.

The pilot plant operating in Teaneck has met with considerable success for more than a year and, although there have been some objections to this operation, it has clearly proved that sanitary land fill can be successfully conducted in the Overpeck.

A final construction report to guide the Commission in the development of Overpeck Park has been prepared by Seelye, Stevenson, Value and Knecht, consulting engineers. The Commission has now considered it advisable to retain a consulting landscape architect to aid the Commission in the

The Commission's bulldozers start to clean up the area. A disposal method known as Sanitary Land Fill will be carried on.





Piles of refuse are leveled and made more available for burying. The above pictures were taken in the Ridgefield Park area.

technical aspects of the development of this gigantic project. A master plan, to be studied and prepared by the consulting landscape architect, and based on the mass of material and information already accumulated, is the next step.

The Commission, in its desire not to obstruct the proposed traffic improvements necessary for the

orderly development of Bergen County, believes that extension of the New Jersey Turnpike northward or an expressway leading to the George Washington Bridge can be so conceived as to avoid destroying the effective use of Overpeck Park as a single unit. Collaboration of the Overpeck Park master plan with plans of the Port of New York Authority will be sought.

Similar operations are in progress in Palisades Park and in Teaneck. Land will be made accessible as fast as it is improved.



Report of the County Auditor

J. EDWARD SCHIERLOH

CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT

210 MAIN STREET
HACKENSACK, N. J.

February 14, 1955

Bergen County Park Commission
Administrative Building
Hackensack, New Jersey

Gentlemen:

Pursuant to your instructions, I have examined the financial records of the Commission for the year ending December 31, 1954 and, as a result of this examination, I submit the following:

<u>BUDGET FUNDS</u>		
SURPLUS, JANUARY 1, 1954		\$ 11,653.83
LESS: ADJUSTMENT OF 1953 APPROPRIATION RESERVE		<u>1,900.00</u>
		\$ 9,753.83
BUDGET APPROPRIATION - 1954		<u>275,000.00</u>
		\$ 284,753.83
EXPENDITURES:		
Salaries and Wages	\$ 138,650.10	
Administrative and Office Expense	12,686.71	
Engineering Expense	16,350.43	
Land Acquisition Expenses	9,545.67	
Legal Fees	11,996.58	
Field Expenses:		
New Equipment	20,368.65	
Maintenance and Repair of Equipment and Supplies	17,322.02	
Park Development Materials	<u>45,339.73</u>	
		<u>273,259.89</u>
SURPLUS, DECEMBER 31, 1954		<u>\$ 11,493.94</u>
<u>BOND ISSUES</u>		
COUNTY PARK BONDS AUTHORIZED, INCLUDING DOWN PAYMENT		\$1,141,000.00
LESS:		
Disbursed for Land Acquisition and Improvement	\$804,559.69	
Committed for Land Acquisition	<u>165,505.69</u>	
		<u>970,065.38</u>
BALANCE AVAILABLE, DECEMBER 31, 1954		<u>\$ 170,934.62</u>

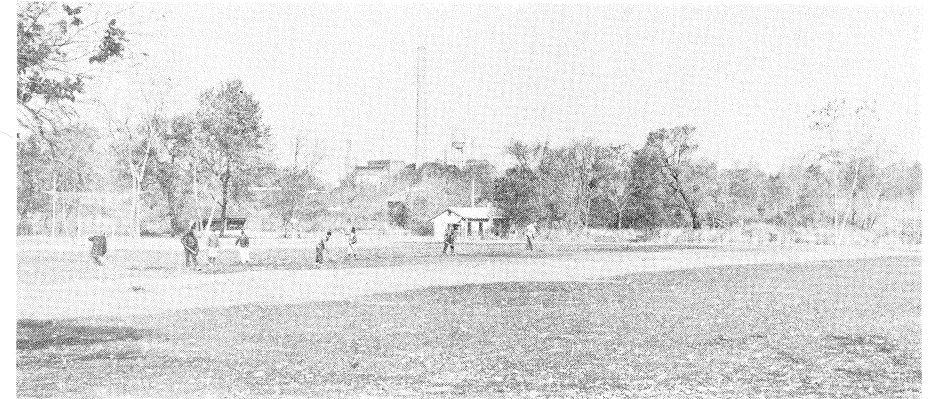
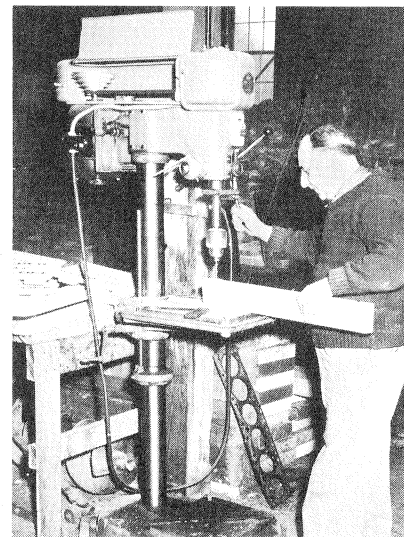
All vouchers were examined and found to be properly approved. Checks issued in payment of these vouchers were compared with both the voucher and the entry in the financial records. These were found to be correct.

Cash in bank was reconciled with the book figure.

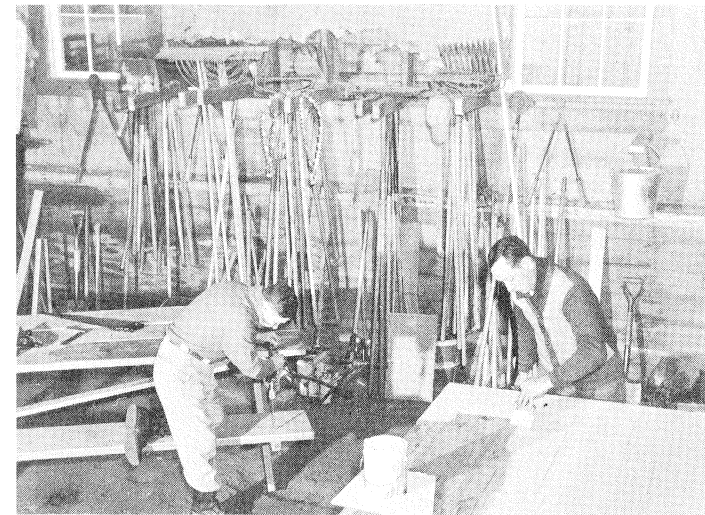
Respectfully submitted,

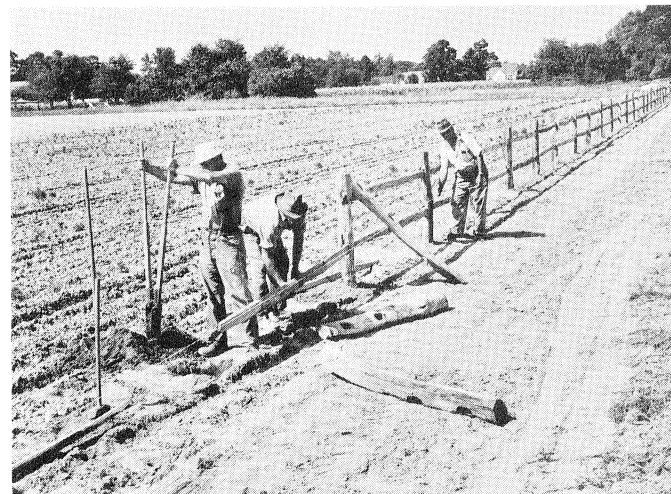
J. Edward Schierloh
.....
(Certified Public Accountant
(N. J. & N. Y.))

Activities of the Commission's Staff



The work of the Commission's Field Staff is varied. Portable work shanties, benches, tables and signs are built in the maintenance shop in Ridgewood; backstops are installed, planting is done, grass cut, fireplaces are built, and foot bridges are erected. An electric drill press was added to the equipment during the year.





The Nursery in the Van Saun Park Area

The landscape crew takes care of the seedlings and horticultural experiments. Also, 2,800 feet of rail fencing was installed during 1954.