

BERGEN COUNTY'S PARK PROGRAM

Ninth Annual Report

**BERGEN COUNTY
PARK COMMISSION**

1955





BERGEN COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

A. THORNTON BISHOP, President

IRA H. DAVEY, Vice-President

WILLIAM STAUBACH, Secretary

HAROLD M. DAVISON

EMIL J. GEERING, Assistant Secretary

CLIFFORD MISCHÉ, Executive Director

BERGEN COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDING, HACKENSACK, NEW JERSEY

A. THORNTON BISHOP, *President*

IRA H. DAVEY, *Vice-President*

HAROLD M. DAVISON



WILLIAM STAUBACH, *Secretary*

EMIL J. GEERING, *Ass't. Secretary*

CLIFFORD MISCHÉ, *Executive Director*

May 1956

Board of Chosen Freeholders
Administrative Building
Hackensack, New Jersey

Gentlemen:

The Bergen County Park Commission submits its report for the year 1955, and desires to direct attention to the completion of designs for certain areas where development will progress during 1956.

The favorable vote of the majority of citizens voicing their desires on park improvement will permit the Commission to proceed with construction of certain projects that should prove immensely popular with the people.

The Commission wishes to express its thanks and appreciation to the Board of Chosen Freeholders for its helpful cooperation in the furtherance of the park program.

Respectfully submitted,

A. Thornton Bishop

President
Bergen County Park Commission

ATB:bfm

The Year in Review

The consistent growth of Bergen County is a dramatic example of the extent to which Parks have become a factor in the economic life of the 675,000 residents of the County according to a representative of one of the large realty firms. Large corporations relocating plants and offices in New Jersey feel that the recreational potential for their employees is an important factor to be considered when looking for the proper site.

The Bergen County Park Commission, one of the fastest growing park systems in the United States today*, is often a major element in attracting new business to our County.

It is estimated that in 1960 our population will consist of 760,000 people in 222,500 families. To meet this ever increasing population, with its demands for better living, your Park Commission has attempted to keep abreast of the growth, and take up many of the recreational needs that existed before the creation of the Park Commission.

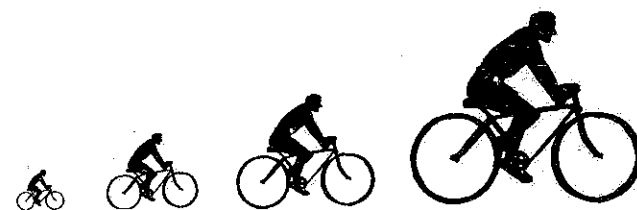
Park land totaling 3,066 acres has been acquired throughout the County, which will preserve for all time many of the natural scenes and contours that might have long since disappeared under the impact of the demands for expansion.

**National Recreation Association*

Each year new development opens new park areas to the public. In 1955 the last of the burning, vermin infested garbage dumps, that dotted the borders of the vast Overpeck Creek meadows for more than 50 years, vanished. In their place, grass, trees and shrubs are being planted.

PEOPLE USING COUNTY PARKS*

500	25,000	70,000	158,000
-----	--------	--------	---------

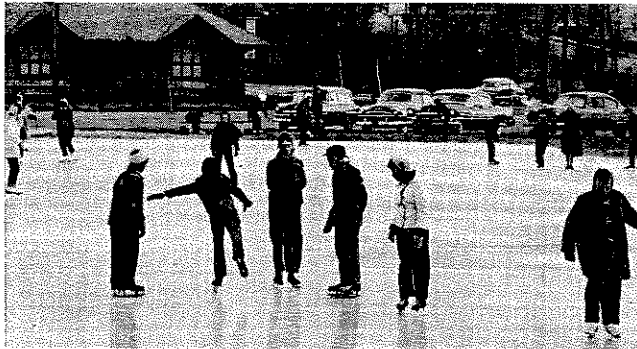


1952	1953	1954	1955
------	------	------	------

The Commission has no way of tabulating the number of times the same person uses a park, consequently these figures do not necessarily represent different people.

Ballfields have been built in Leonia, Teaneck and Palisades Park. A new entrance road and traffic circle make the new Ridgefield Park picnic area easily accessible. The new Sanitary Land Fill

project, being operated by the Board of Chosen Freeholders, will make it possible to bring large recreational areas to the public. In Lyndhurst a comfort station was built in the heart of the park area.



The floodlit Leonia Ice Rink provided a safe skating rink in the Overpeck.

The Borough of Wallington assembled 17 acres of vacant garbage filled swamp land and hillside property, which they deeded to the County early in the year. Part of the assembly of this property was purchased by municipal funds and part was donated to the borough for the purpose of establishing a County park. Before winter set in the entire area was graded and a small ice skating rink installed. This project is expected to be completed in 1956.

A modestly successful ice skating rink was installed in the Leonia area of Overpeck Park. Flood lights permitted night skating but the limitations of a naturally frozen pond clearly pointed out that adequate ice skating could not be supplied on man made ice rinks that depended on the temperature for freezing.

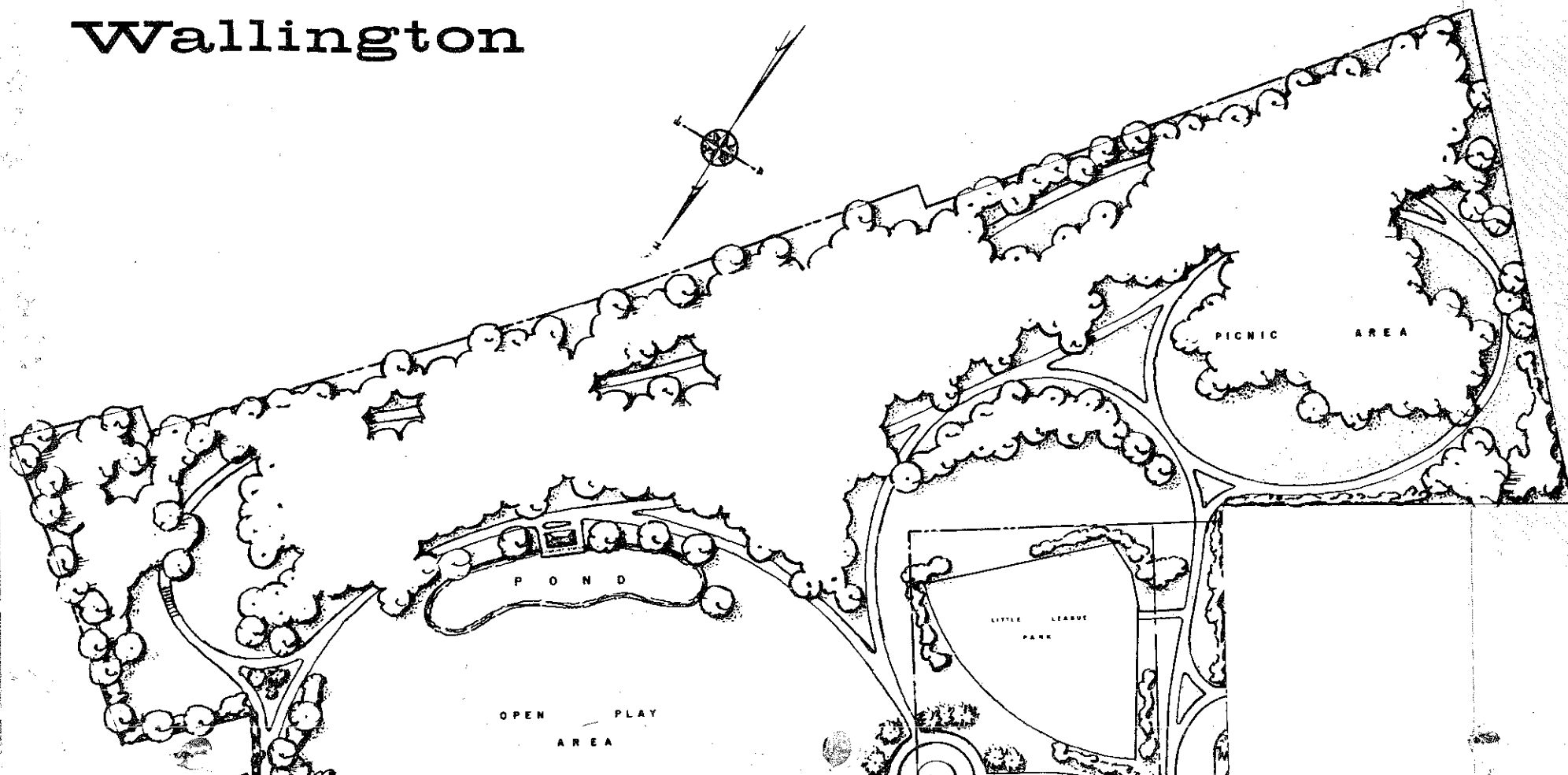
Ice skating at Dahnert's Lake in Garfield, and at Wild Duck Pond Park in Ridgewood lasted 27 days, while skating on the new ten acre Saddle Brook Lake and the new Wallington pond was considerably shorter. Even with the difficulties encountered by depending upon temperature for creating ice, the winter of 1955-56 offered thousands the opportunity to skate on patrolled ice and under flood lights.

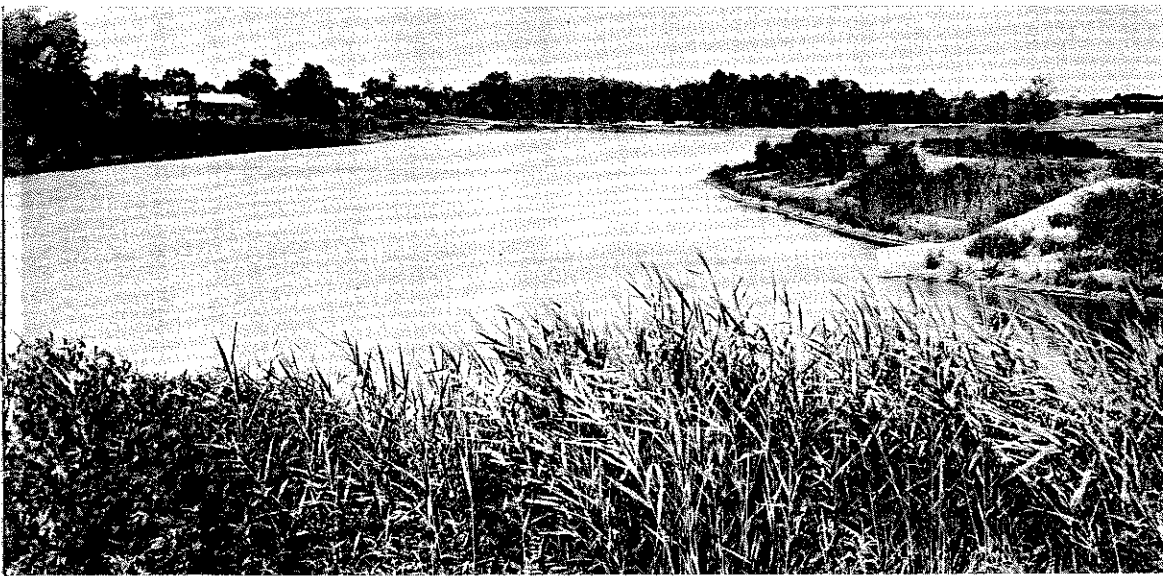
Elimination of the Overpeck garbage dumps. The ballfield being created will be ready for spring play.



*Commissioner Stau-
bach and Mayor
Marut watching the
start of the elimina-
tion of the swamp
and garbage dump at
Wallington Park.*

County Park Developed in Wallington





The 800-acre Saddle River project is a combined flood-control park project that is designed to alleviate flood conditions in six of the municipalities through which the river flows, and at the same time, develop a park project on both sides of the river along a six and a half mile stretch. The Commission, in cooperation with the County Engineer and the Highway Authority, has constructed a ten acre lake and developed a ball field and play areas in the Saddle Brook section of the park.

In 1956 it is anticipated that a playground development

Progress Along the Saddle River

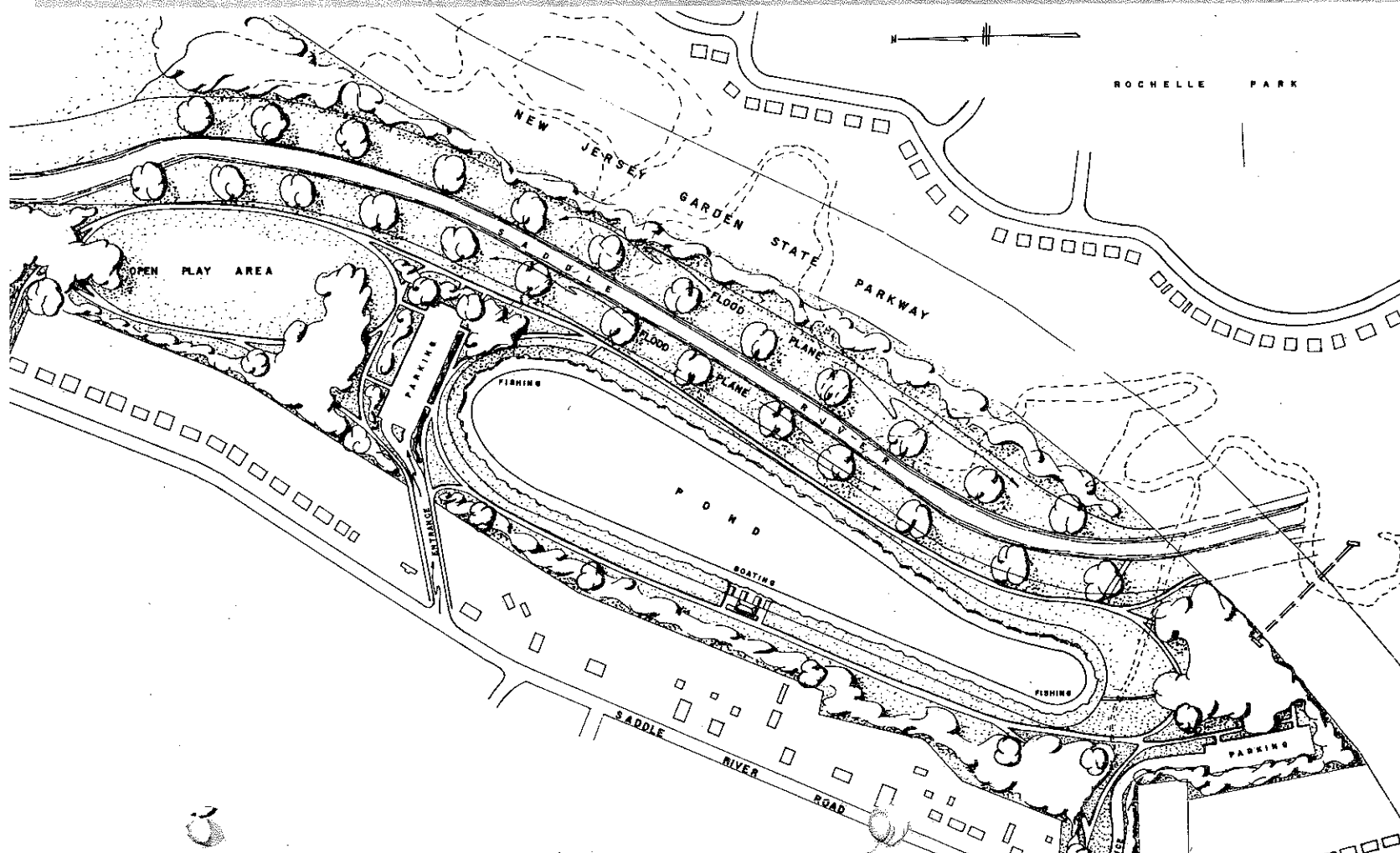


will be completed near the Saddle Brook Library.

Plans have been prepared for the relocation of the river south of the Garden State Parkway as far as Railroad Avenue in Rochelle Park. These plans call for swamp elimination, grading, landscaping, drainage work and the construction of playgrounds. On the following page the plan of the area north of the parkway crossing is shown.

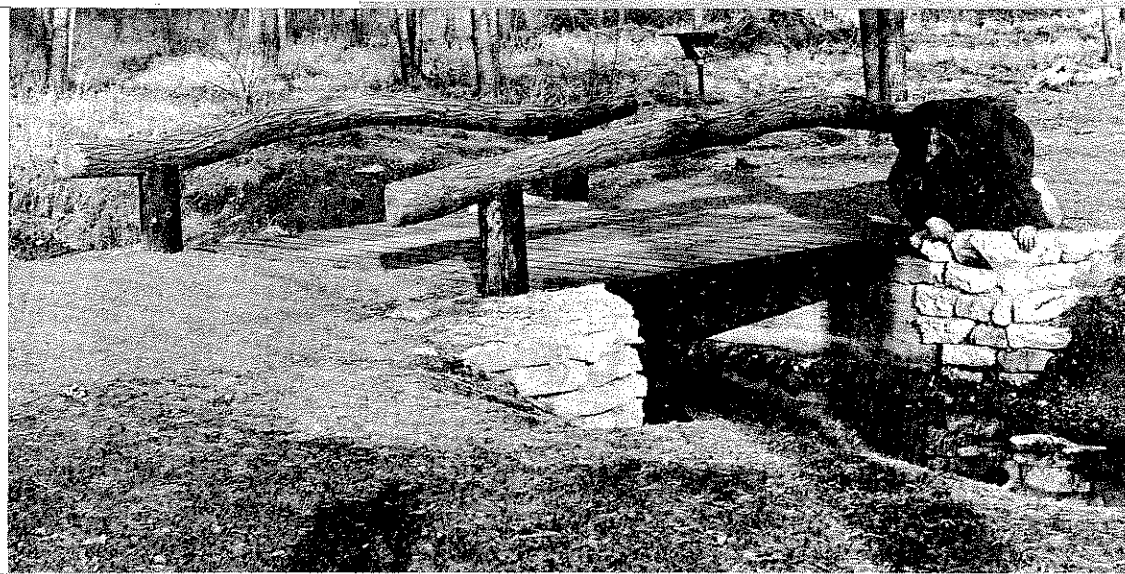
Scheduled for 1956 is seeding, grading and planting around the new Saddle Brook lake by the forces of the Commission. It is anticipated that the twin drain lines north of the lake will be completed by contract. Other details of development shown on the plan on the opposite page are scheduled to be done in the near future.

Saddle Brook Development



Each year new recreational areas are made available for public use and the existing parks are improved or enlarged. Each year the cost of maintaining new areas increases the cost of everyday operations. As new areas develop, the problems change. When public installations are completed, they require servicing, and consequently increased personnel. The program is established, the goal is always in sight and each activity brings us a little closer to an adequate recreational and park system in Bergen County.

At the close of this year, all but three of the privately owned

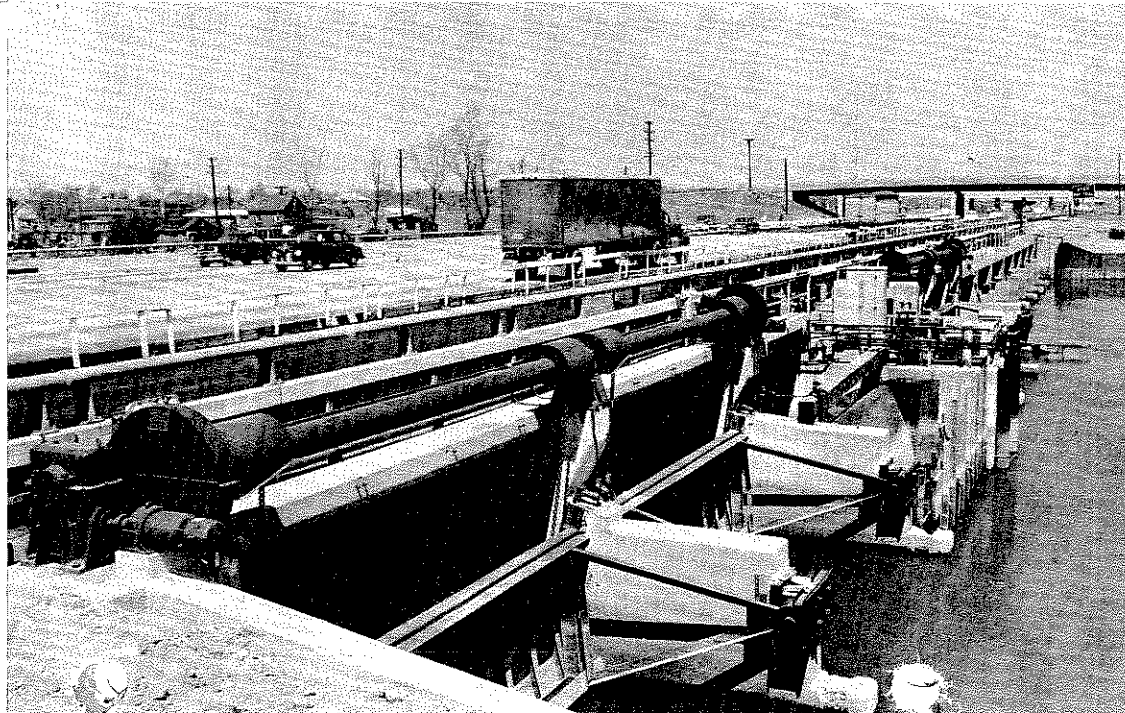


A small rustic bridge.

Construction & Plans

properties along the Overpeck's Fort Lee Road were acquired. There are still a few parcels to acquire, but the land acquisition program in our largest park area is drawing to a close. Almost two-thirds of the land needed for the Saddle River Project has been acquired. An isolated parcel or two for the proposed golf course in Rockleigh is still needed and a parcel or two remain to be acquired for the Campgaw Mountain Reservation. Additional small properties are scheduled for acquisition in several communities, but it is clear that the first phase of the land acquisition program is nearing completion.

Accentuated in the immediate future are special facilities, those features that in themselves cost as much or more than the yearly budget of past years. These facilities are being studied and plans will be prepared in the immediate future.



The great Overpeck tide gates nearing completion.

VAN SAUN PARK

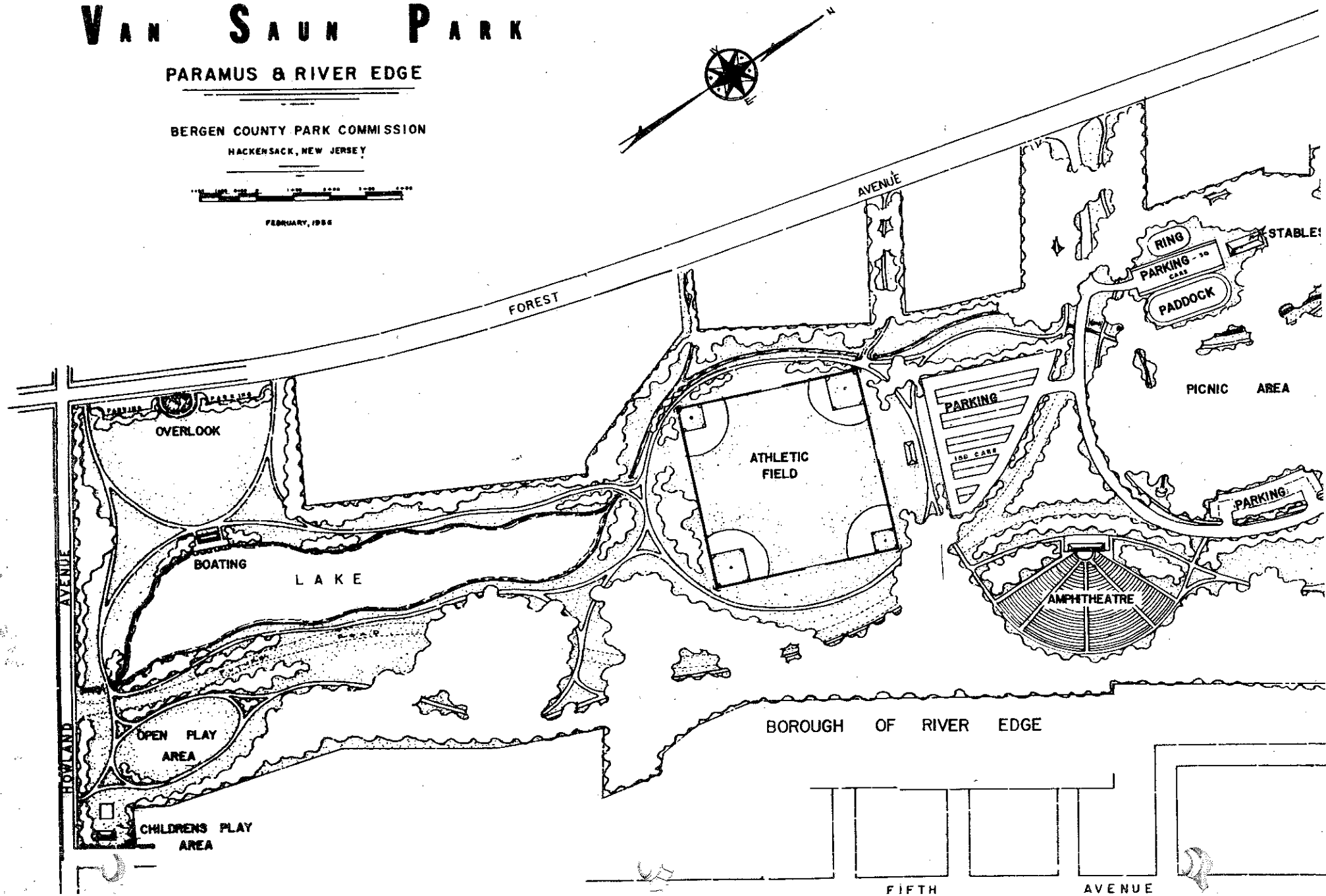
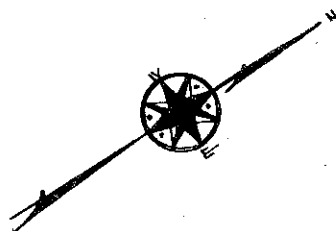
PARAMUS & RIVER EDGE

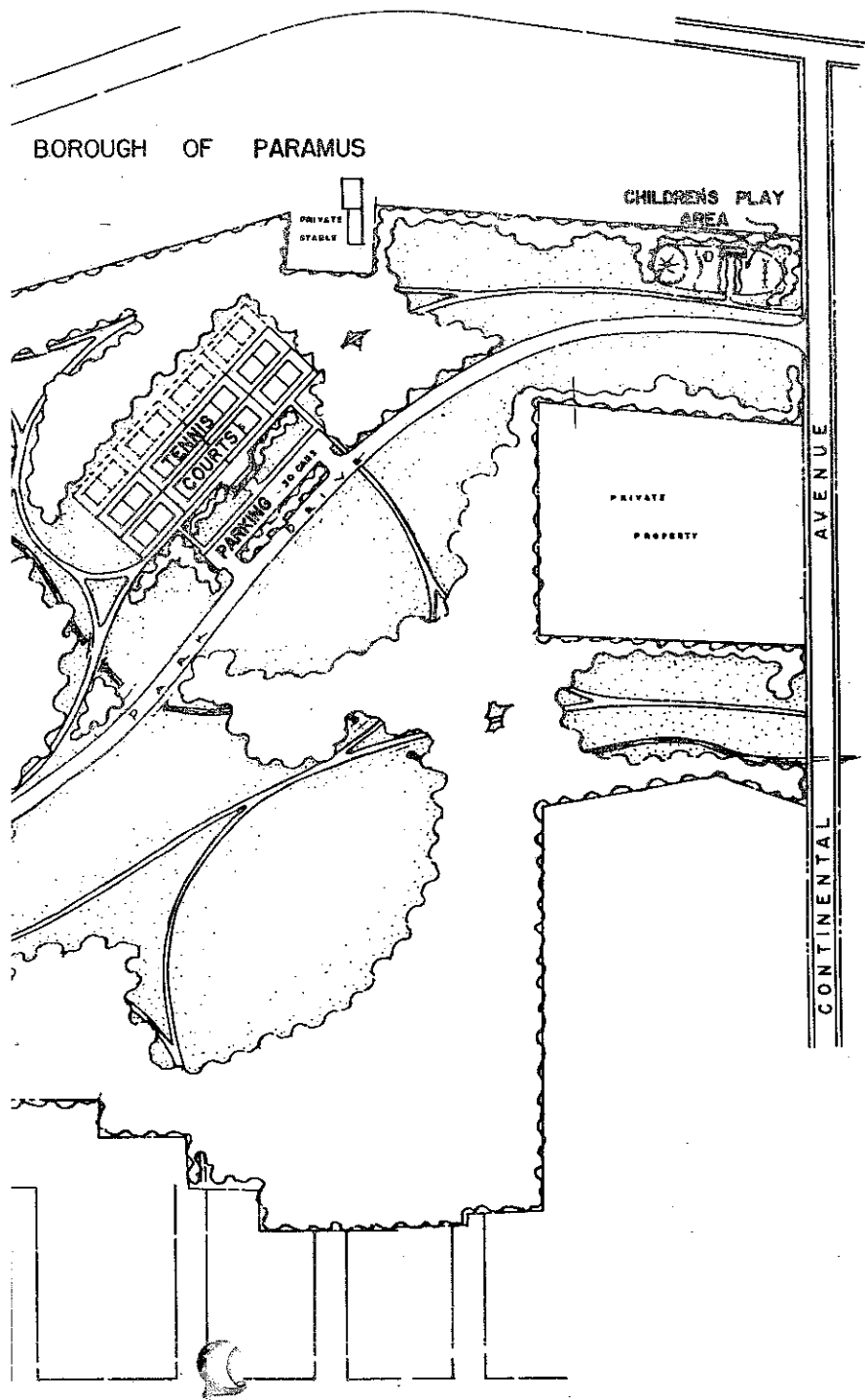
BERGEN COUNTY PARK COMMISSION

HACKENSACK, NEW JERSEY



FEBRUARY, 1934





VAN

SAUN

PARK

The 140-acre Van Saun Park area is almost exactly located in the geographical center of Bergen County. The low swamp lands along the twisting Van Saun Mill Brook, which runs through the park, lend themselves to the creation of an artificial lake while the large trees and steep slopes of the east bank are well suited as a natural backdrop to the park development. The favorable referendum vote of 1955, which authorized the Board of Chosen Freeholders to appropriate additional funds to the Commission, will make it possible to proceed with the development of this park.

Several miles of bridle paths now exist in the park, which are heavily

used by riders of the privately owned adjacent stables. These paths will be improved through the years and, with the development of the area, regulations and supervision will be needed. It is quite possible that the establishing of a riding school under County auspices, will be offered the public interested in this sport.

The center section of the Van Saun plan shown at the left is the area proposed for development in the coming year. It is hoped that the entrance road and parking field will open a large area for picnicking in the immediate vicinity. The amphitheatre, riding stables and tennis courts are not scheduled for installation in 1956.

BERGEN COUNTY PARK COMMISSION
HACKENSACK, NEW JERSEY

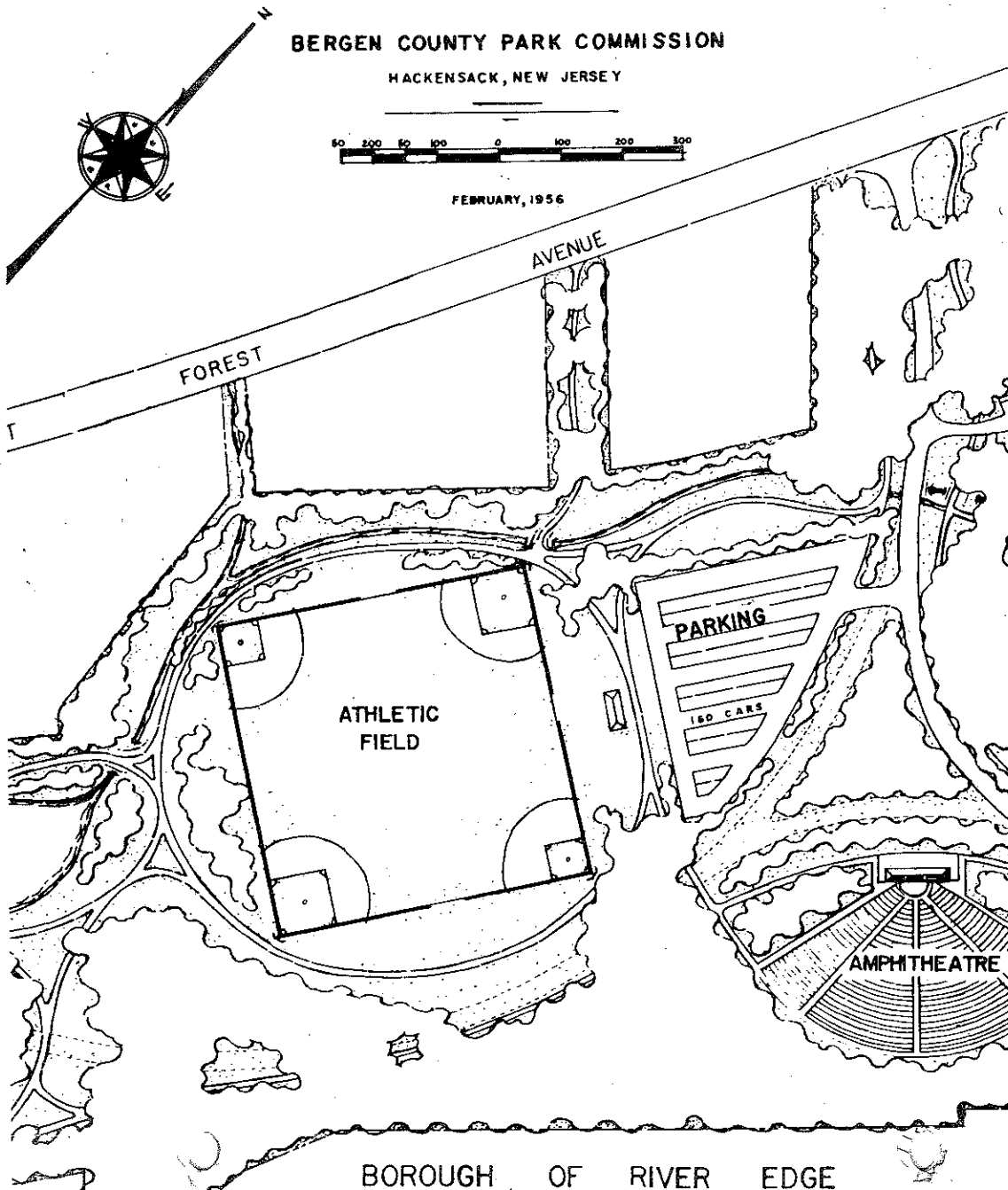
60 200 50 100 0 100 200 300

FEBRUARY, 1956

VAN SAUN PARK

Shown at the left is a larger scale drawing of the area scheduled for development in 1956. An entrance through the forested area abutting Forest Avenue will provide shaded approach to the athletic field and parking lot. Essential to the opening of this area will be the relocation of the Brook and the construction of a bridge to carry the road over the water. Both the road and the parking field are scheduled to be gravel finished.

In the athletic field two 90 foot baseball diamonds and two 60 foot softball diamonds are scheduled. Extensive clearing and grading in the area may make this work relatively slow but they are scheduled for Fall seeding. It is anticipated that the deepening and widening of the brook will aid in the solution to some of the flood problems in the adjacent area. The amphitheatre, and some of the paths and the future roads shown in dotted lines are not scheduled for construction at this time.



Lyndhurst

The demands for additional picnic facilities and play areas in Lyndhurst were met by starting construction of a new road and parking field pattern last fall. Additional trees, shrubs and grass will be effective in the Spring.

The first comfort station constructed by the Commission was built in the park this year. The pink brick building, located some 600 feet from the street will serve both the athletic area and the new picnic groves. The area now under construction will just about double the size of the picnic area and put approximately 35 acres of this park in public use.

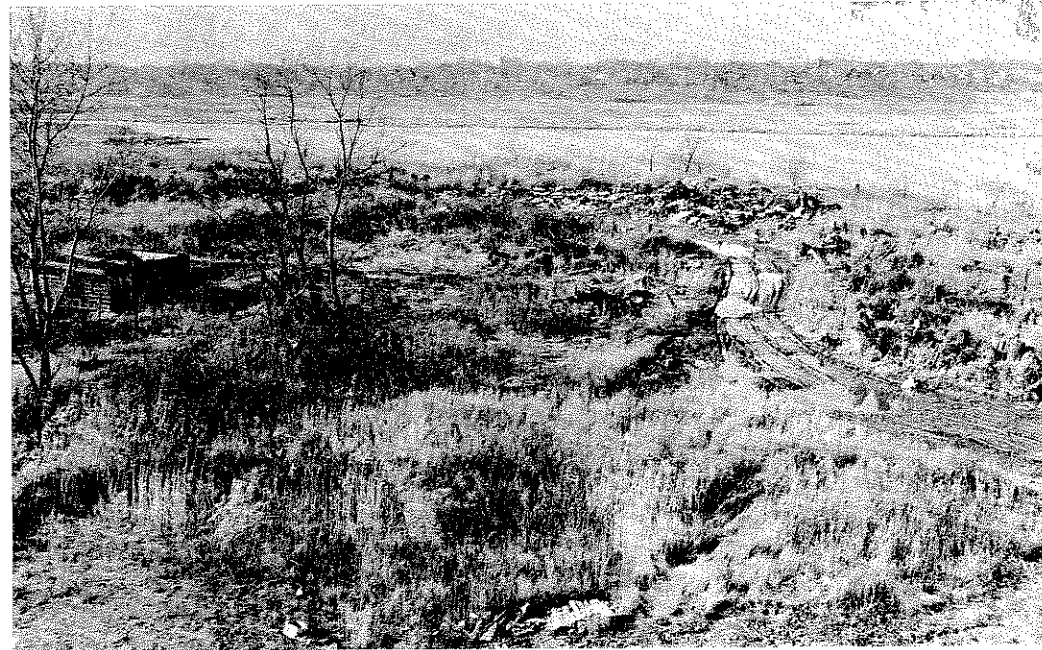
Shown in the photograph are units of the Commission construction equipment as they grade and fill the new road extension.



Innumerable problems concerning the development of Overpeck Park were forced to await solution until funds became available. Even the preparation of a master plan and schedule of dredging could not be finally prepared until the source of funds was known. The favorable referendum vote in the 1955 election made bond funds available for solving the major basic problems.

Development in the Overpeck has continued throughout the year with considerable satisfaction irrespective of the lack of a detailed solution to some of the basic problems. The old garbage dumps vanished and were replaced by park projects.

Expansion of the Leonia area took place during the year with the main work concentrated on the creation of a shallow depth ice skating rink. The soft ballfield was improved, some trees replaced and a number of additional trees planted around the municipal storage yard.



The two views of the old dump are shown merely to indicate the change that has taken place.

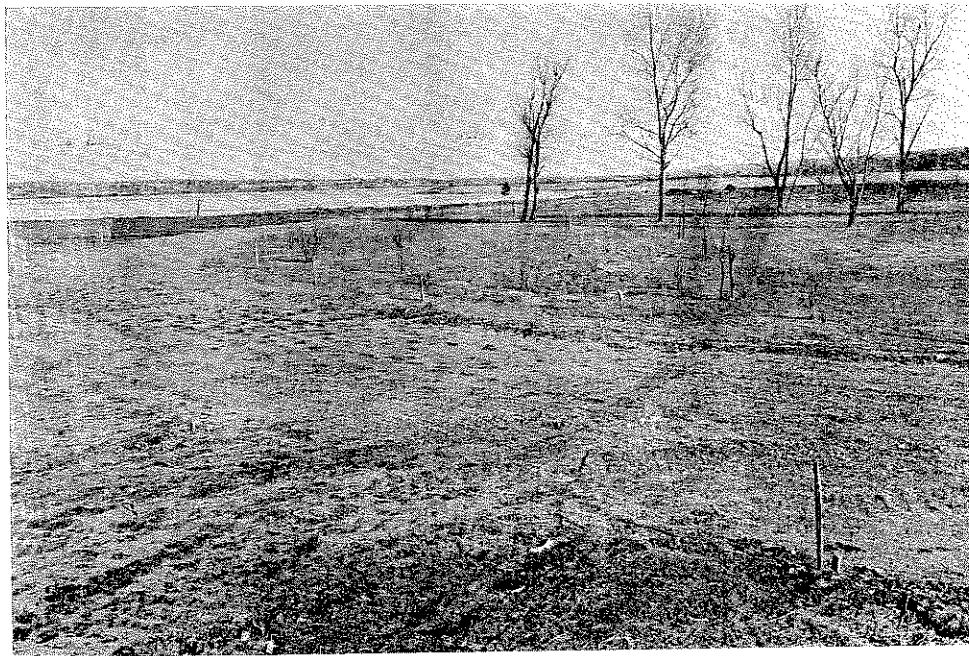
Teamwork in the Overpeck

The Sanitary Landfill test operation at the foot of DeGraw Avenue in Teaneck had filled an area of sufficient size to contain a ballfield. Improvements on the road to the newly constructed ballfield and the adjacent parking lot will make this field a popular place in the coming year.

The last of the vermin ridden Overpeck dumps were eliminated by the creation of the new park area in Palisades Park during the year. Great heaps of ashes and old tin cans were leveled to permit the Commission's installation of new, large size drainage lines. Hundreds of rodents that infested the area were exterminated. Excavation of several thousand yards of high humus content meadow mat was installed over the rubbish, graded, treated for saline content and seeded to establish the ballfield and lawn areas. An entrance road was graded and lined with trees and shrubs to provide a proper access.

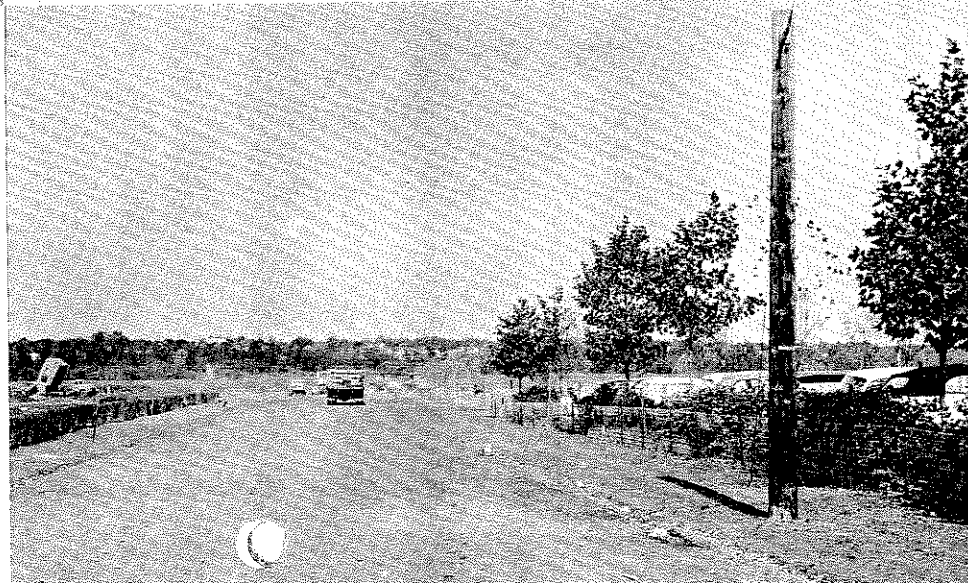
The Palisades Park rubbish area—before.





The changing scene: Palisades Park

The Palisades Park rubbish area—after.



The Referendum

In 1955 the Commission was appropriated \$277,694.39 by the Board of Chosen Freeholders for operating purposes, which was the maximum allowed by law. The \$11,993.94 surplus from the year before gave us \$289,688.33 for all operating purposes. Debt service for the Commission's land purchase bonds is not included in the above figures.

Maintenance of parks, land purchase, insurance, repairs and equipment absorbed so much of the budget, that it was obvious that development of our park areas could not be carried on with this highly limited fund. The Board of Chosen Freeholders were quick to recognize this fact and cause to be put before the electorate, two referendum bills asking the public whether or not they should be authorized to increase the Commission's allowable appropriation to an amount not to exceed $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mill of the assessed value of real property, and if they should be authorized to increase the County's bonded funds by two million dollars for park construction purposes.

The Board of Chosen Freeholders has indicated that funds from other sources will be made available to obtain essential parcels along the Saddle River in 1956.

It is anticipated that actual construction of the proposed golf course will begin by mid-summer, and the Overpeck Master Plan will be prepared.

CHANGES IN PERSONNEL

Joseph Volpe, the senior field employee of the Commission, has for some time functioned as our Superintendent of Maintenance and Construction. Mr. Volpe has always indicated a strong interest in golf course operation, and is well known in golfing circles, a ranking amateur, having consistently been either the winner or runner-up in local competition. He has been promoted to take charge of the new golf course as soon as construction begins.

The Commission's permanent field forces were increased to 40 men during the year.

The rolling lands of the proposed Golf Course Property.



Progress in land acquisition

LAND ACQUISITION STATEMENT PRIVATE PROPERTY ACQUIRED

Close of December 31, 1955	SUB-TOTALS		TOTALS	
	Acres	Cost	Acres	Cost
Reported close of Dec. 31, 1955	1,667.49	\$951,489.68		
Title closing adjustments made in year 1955 ..	-18.01	+8,865.75		
			1,649.48	\$ 960,355.43
COMMITMENTS MADE IN 1955				
Overpeck Creek Area ..	5.21	33,470.00		
Saddle River Area ..	112.42	94,800.00		
Northwest Bergen Area	.55	200.00		
Northeast Bergen Area	17.91	14,328.00		
Pascack Brook Area ..	1.92	5,404.87		
			138.01	148,202.87
MUNICIPAL PROPERTY ACQUIRED				
Reported close of Dec. 31, 1954	1,279.29	—0—		
Acquired by Ordinance, Deed or Tax Lien in 1955	—0—	—0—		
			1,279.29	—0—
Brought forward			3,066.78	\$1,108,558.30
RIPARIAN RIGHTS				
Reported close of Dec. 31, 1954	—0—	45,311.19		
45,311.19 linear ft.	—0—	45,311.19		
			—0—	45,311.19
Grand total of all property			3,066.78	\$1,153,869.49

CONDENSED STATEMENT OF PROPERTY ACQUIRED FOR PARK DEVELOPMENT

Close of December 31, 1955				
Overpeck Creek Area				
Purchased or committed for	113.52	\$166,654.00		
Municipal land donated	957.04	—0—		
Riparian Rights	—0—	45,311.19**		
CARRIED FORWARD			1,070.56	\$ 211,965.19

BROUGHT FORWARD			1,070.56	\$ 211,965.19
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	445.84	342,735.00		
Municipal land donated	42.09	—0—		
			487.93	342,735.00
Southwest Bergen Area				
Purchased or committed for	0.12	2,200.00		
Municipal land donated	90.00	—0—		
			90.12	2,200.00
Van Saun Area				
Purchased or committed for	137.97	193,961.73		
Municipal land donated	1.25	—0—		
			139.22	193,961.73
Northwest Bergen Area				
Purchased or committed for			880.19	165,464.95
Northeast Bergen Area				
Purchased or committed for			156.14	110,806.75
Hackensack River Area				
Purchased or committed for08	10.00
Pascack Brook Area				
Purchased or committed for	1.92	5,404.87		
Municipal land donated	110.00	—0—		
			111.92	5,408.87
Grand Total			3,066.78	\$1,153,869.49

SUMMARY OF LAND ACQUISITION

Privately owned properties purchased or committed for	1,786.24	\$1,108,558.30
Privately owned properties donated	1.25	—0—
Municipally owned properties donated	1,279.29	—0—
**Riparian Rights (Overpeck Creek)	—0—	45,311.19
Grand Total	3,066.78	\$1,153,869.49

**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 \$621.30 per acre.

Auditor's Report

BUDGET FUNDS

SURPLUS, JANUARY 1, 1955	\$	11,493.94
ADD: SURPLUS ADJUSTMENT		500.00
ADJUSTED SURPLUS, JANUARY 1, 1955	\$	11,993.94
BUDGET APPROPRIATION—1955	\$274,844.39	
Add: Additional Appropriation—1955 (U. S. Army Lease)	5,100.00	
	\$279,944.39	
Less Board of Freeholders—Transfer	2,250.00	277,694.39
		\$ 289,688.33

EXPENDITURES:

Salaries and Wages	\$152,141.01	
Office Operation Expense	20,433.34	
Engineering Costs	6,418.76	
Land Acquisition Costs	18,115.08	
Legal Fees	12,845.53	
Field Expenses:		
New Equipment	7,599.08	
Maintenance and Repair of Equipment and Supplies	19,865.56	
Park Development Materials	39,277.42	276,695.78

SURPLUS: DECEMBER 31, 1955

	\$	12,992.55
--	----	-----------

BOND ISSUES

COUNTY PARK BONDS AUTHORIZED, INCLUDING DOWN PAYMENT	\$1,211,000.00
LESS:	
Disbursed for Land Acquisition and Improvement	\$977,158.82
Committed for Land Acquisition	141,863.19
	1,119,022.01
BALANCE AVAILABLE, DECEMBER 31, 1955	\$ 91,977.99

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 Schenck
Certified Public Accountant
(N. J. & N. Y.)

A Brownie Troop Singing—Saddle River Area

