

Orchard Beach Development

By FRANK MUHLFELD

Chairman, Community Needs Committee

WHEN ORCHARD BEACH was formally dedicated with impressive ceremonies last month, it signaled the addition to The Bronx park system of the most comprehensive recreational development in recent years. That which the borough has so ardently desired for a long time—safe surf bathing, with adequate beach and playground facilities, has been realized with the opening of Orchard Beach.

Actually, the project is as yet incomplete. Work is to continue daily upon the resort until every inch of its 115 acres is appropriately landscaped and developed. But in the meantime, Park Commissioner Robert Moses feels that the work to date justifies permitting the public to benefit from the facilities at hand. With the labor of completion still going on, people may enjoy what there is for the balance of the summer, the Commissioner explained. By next season, it is hoped, the entire development will have been finished.

New Land Added

The facilities opened include a crescent-shaped white sand beach approximately 200 feet wide at high tide, and 2,500 feet long facing the Sound; a beach walk and concrete seawall, which forms the backbone of the beach; two temporary parking



Frank Muhlfeld

fields that will accommodate 3,500 cars and a section of the two-story bath house having 1,568 lockers for men and 540 lockers and 192 dressing rooms for women.

A new four-lane traffic relief road approximately two miles long, running from Eastern Boulevard to the bath house, eliminates the former narrow circuitous route from Eastern Boulevard to City Island. Bus and taxi service will be in operation from the bath house to the Pelham Bay station of the Lexington Ave-

nue line of the Interborough Rapid Transit.

When completed, Orchard Beach will compare favorably with Jones Beach. Over 115 acres of land will have been added to Pelham Bay Park by the addition of between 3,500,000 to 4,000,000 cubic yards of fill and the new beach, approximately one mile long, will not occupy any land that was formerly part of the park.

Developments to Come

There will be a brick pavilion with limestone trim and colonnades of simplified Greek architecture, with lockers and dressing room facilities for over 5,400 persons, a cafeteria, rest rooms and a loggia terrace on the second floor facing the Sound; a Mall 250 feet wide and 1,400 feet long, with benches and trees along the edges, connecting the bath house with a large lagoon for small boating. This lake will be provided with a tidal dam to keep the water at a permanent level.

In the Rodman Neck section there will be parking space for 7,000 cars; athletic fields with nine baseball diamonds, seven football fields, thirty-two tennis courts, a completely equipped children's play area and a field house with dressing

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Orchard Beach—as it once was—inaccessible and with poor accommodations—but a popular Bronx beach.

ORCHARD BEACH DEVELOPMENT

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room, lockers, toilet and shower facilities. A small boat harbor will be provided. The Split Rock and Pelham Bay Golf Courses and Golf House, about one mile distant from the beach, were opened this spring. The entire development is fitted into a landscape scheme taking full advantage of the natural rocky hillsides and wooded areas.

Boat Basin

Plans for the marina boat basin to accommodate large yachts and other sizeable craft, as proposed by The Bronx Board of Trade, is as yet incomplete. Preliminary plans submitted to the Park Department by the Board of Trade's special marine committee headed by Dr. Thomas H. Curtin, Chairman, contained specifications for three boat basins in Rodman's Neck facing Eastchester Bay. The large one was 200 by 1,000 feet, flanked on both sides by two smaller ones, 200 by 300 feet and separated by open pavilions containing locker rooms. Running the entire length of the basins was to be a wide promenade and roadway with flower beds, lawns, fountain and picnic grounds in the rear.

At the present time, the section of the bathhouse open to the public contains lockers for 1,568 men and 732 women. Showers, drinking fountains and other facilities incidental to the bathhouse are in working order. Life lines have been strung several hundred feet into the bay with guards assigned to duty throughout the area. Landscaping of bathhouses is now in progress.

Moses Praised

One of the greatest difficulties in connection with the engineering of the resort was the securing of properly graded fill. Part of the sand now on the beach was piped to the development from shore areas across the bay at Long Island and barges are now bringing white sand from Jacob Riis Park on the Rockaway Peninsula in Queens which is to be spread out on the beach to a depth of three feet.

Praising the work of Commissioner Moses in developing the area formerly used as a camping site for water enthusiasts, President Roderick Stephens termed the project "an example of what can be done

when a determined public official sets out to do a good job properly planned".

\$33,000 An Acre

In describing the development, Commissioner Moses sketched briefly the history of Orchard Beach and the obstacles his staff had to surmount in constructing the resort. Tracing the acquisition of Pelham Bay Park in 1888 along with Van Cortlandt, Bronx, Crotona, Claremont and St. Mary's parks, Commissioner Moses stated that the man who conceived the Bronx park and parkway systems was John Mullaly.

When originally acquired Pelham Bay Park cost \$1,650 an acre. Today, with the developments planned for it and with those already in progress, it is estimated that the land is worth twenty times its purchase price or about \$33,000 an acre. Explaining the inauguration of the Orchard Beach program, Moses stated:

Safe Bathing

"Pelham Bay Park was never properly laid out and made available to the public. A reorganized Park Department had the opportunity to make real plans for the area when, in 1934, it made a survey of the pollution of boundary waters. Orchard Beach proved to be the only available waterfront in the city, outside of the oceanfront, where safe bathing for large numbers could be provided.

"In facing a problem such as this,

the most important thing is to plan on a proper scale. We must consider that the area is to be used by a large number of people and we want to avoid the mess and confusion which go with overcrowding and which is so characteristic of our ocean beach resorts.

"Developments of such a nature, taking in as they do, complete change of topography and involving huge expenditures, naturally results in a period of misunderstanding on the part of certain elements of the public. But that is something an executive must live through. We can't all be engineers or administrators trained in public works and the executive must have sufficient conviction and courage to put up with criticism.

Should Have Been Contract Job

"I have been through precisely the same kind of criticism many times and I am not going to tell you of the difficulties in the face of this work except to remark that all of the work previously done here had to be undone; that we had to get along with relief funds on a job that should have been done by contract:

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Stephens Lauds Moses on Achievement of Triborough in Dedication

President of Board Selected for Honors at Exercises

THE HONOR of opening the exercises attending the dedication of the Triborough Bridge last month was conferred upon President Roderick Stephens. Introducing Commissioner Robert Moses and signalling the beginning of a series of speeches by men in high public esteem including President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Mayor F. H. La Guardia, Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes and others, Stephens said:

"To participate in these dedication exercises is, in itself, a privilege. To be accorded the honor of introducing the next speaker, who will thereupon conduct the ceremonies, is a distinction which I appreciate.

"There are as many concepts of public service as there are public servants. Some there are who look upon office-holding as a job, desirable or not, dependent upon the salary. Others look upon positions of authority as conferring distinction upon the holder. Some there are who look upon such positions as opportunities to advance the public welfare and who take pride in things accomplished, regardless of temporary political or public acclaim or criticism. The next speaker belongs to this last sanctioned group.

"It is fitting that this gathering should acclaim the accomplishment of two great tasks, well done. To



President Roderick Stephens

have had a part in the inception of this project or to have contributed support to the adoption of the legislation enabling the construction of this bridge and this stadium, will be a source of pride to all who have shared in its early vicissitudes, particularly such of those as are here present.

"It would not be possible to mention organizations or individuals. Their satisfaction must rest upon

their knowledge of the part each has played. Still greater satisfaction must exist among those who by their administrative or engineering skill have had a vital part in the actual fulfillment of a magnificent dream.

Lauds Moses

"I count it a personal privilege to acclaim the man who, in his official relationship to these two great public projects—the Triborough Bridge, itself an engineering feat of major magnitude, and this great stadium, a project of immense value as it will contribute to the public appreciation of sports for sport's sake in this sports-loving community—the man who by his unselfish devotion, undaunted by political pressure, and unswerving in his determination to adhere to plan and to accomplish it on schedule, today celebrates an almost unprecedented achievement, the completion of this magnificent project, without touch of scandal and on the hour set for its use.

"As representing the civic bodies of the three great boroughs joined together by this bridge and whose interests are consolidated in this stadium, it is my high privilege to present to the audience here present and on the air, a man who has earned the respect of this community for his constancy, courage, and determination in the face of untold obstacles, the executive officer of the Triborough Bridge Commission, a man among men—the Honorable Robert Moses."

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that the expedients we resorted to, such as filling with mixed sanitation ashes did not work and subjected us to ridicule and that we have finally brought the project to a stage at which it can be opened to the public after the weirdest shifts and devices I can remember in connection with any major construction work.

"Let me add that a word of thanks goes to a man without whose help this project would never have been possible, General Hugh Johnson, whose long experience in cutting red tape made him understand what we were driving at and got us started on the only procedure which would have made this project possible with relief funds. His successor, Mr. Victor Ridder, has also been enormously helpful."

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