

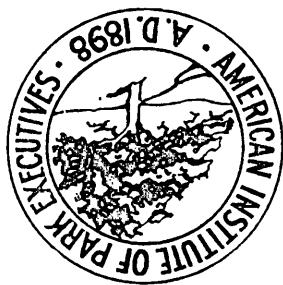
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AMERICAN PARK SOCIETY

1937

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"TO MAKE MORE ABUNDANT FACILITIES
FOR A MORE EXPRESSIVE LIFE FOR ALL"



PARKS & RECREATION

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GEORGE WASHINGTON MONUMENT PARK

Outstanding among Works Progress Administration park projects in the greater New York City area is the work recently completed at George Washington Monument Park, the site of which is a part of the Brooklyn approach to the Williamsburg Bridge. The improvements here consisted of enclosing the area surrounding the monument by an ornamental cast stone fence 657 feet long, inside of which was installed a landscaped sunken garden, with an ornamental spray fountain, drinking fountains, two rest pavilions and cast stone benches. Inside the railing and between it and the sunken garden is a shrubbery area eight feet wide, filled with ivy and privet.

The improvements were begun late in 1936 and were completed by the summer of 1937 at a cost of a little over \$80,000 — approximately \$2,000 under the estimated cost. An average of sixty men was employed, the number at times reaching 120. Most of the pouring of the cast stone was done in the winter months. The men were employed with maximum efficiency because of a number of jobs in the immediate vicinity to which men could be diverted at any time, thus averting idleness due to job conditions. The high degree of skill among the mechanics is indicated by the results obtained in such parts of the project as the casting of the fountain and the finish of the pavilions.

An interesting sidelight showing the resourcefulness of both supervisory force and mechanics is found in the ornamental fence. The original design drawn by WPA engineers called for balusters of ornamental cast granite, the same material as the rest of the fence. Then it was found that the Department of Plant and Structures, sponsor of the project, had a number of real granite balusters which had been removed from the Manhattan Bridge approaches. The design therefore was changed to include these in the ornamental cast granite construction. The problem then became one of incorporating real granite into the structure and of imitating

this as closely as possible for the remainder of the railing. A special mix was developed, using white cement, copper slag, marble dust, sand and other ingredients. The completed pieces came out of the forms practically a perfect match in color and texture but with a smooth surface and it was necessary to bush-hammer every inch of the surface to give the complete effect of real granite. One hundred tons of crushed marble were used in making the imitation stone. Most of the pouring of the cast stone was done in the winter months.

The efficiency of the job was attested by the detailed figures of the work. For instance, the excavation for the sunken garden was done for thirty-seven cents per cubic yard for labor; the installation of the steel curb and concrete sidewalk around the entire area, consisting of 657 lineal feet of curb and of 15-foot sidewalk was done in six days by ten masons and twenty laborers. Only five men in supervisory capacity including mechanics' foremen, of the skilled trades, were assigned permanently during the construction of the job. Special care had to be exercised to avoid disturbing the magistrate's court in session across the street.

Field work was discontinued during the winter months. During this time, granite slabs, copings and other castings were cast indoors ready for erection in the spring.

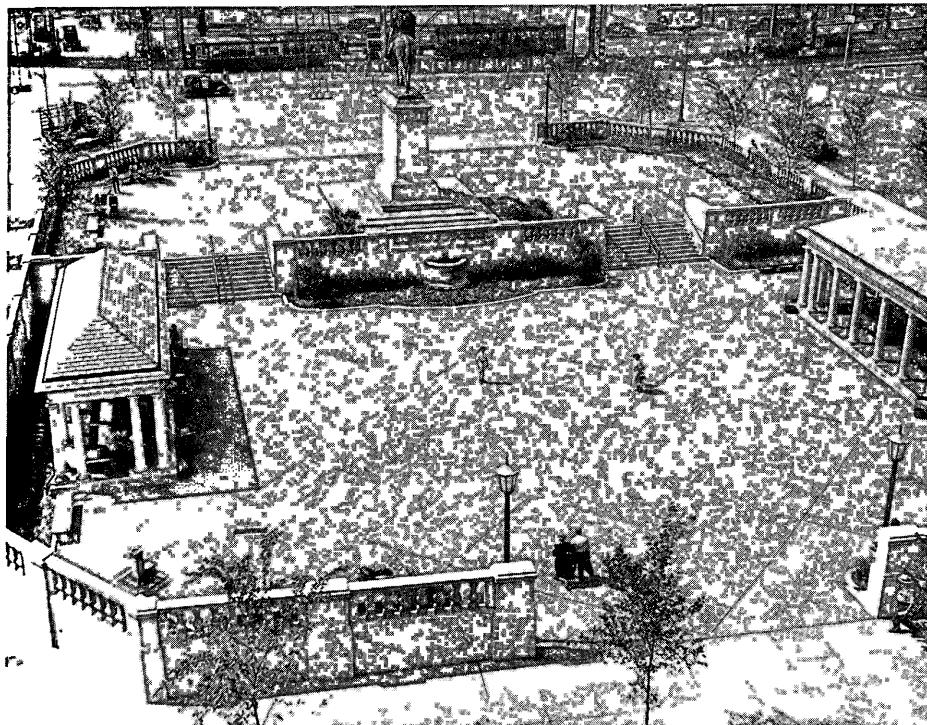
The park is just across the street from the LaGuardia Playground, built by the CWA, also a part of the bridge plaza and also under sponsorship of the Department of Plant and Structures, which is responsible for bridge property. This playground is already seriously overcrowded, with an average daily attendance of 16,000, and the newly renovated park will help to take care of the overflow, especially of mothers with infants. This overcrowding of the park has made necessary the replacement of the present two-foot steel panel fence with a new three-foot concrete wall surmounted by a

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four-foot wrought iron fence to keep the children at play safe from the heavy traffic past the playground. The same WPA unit that improved the park already has started work on this new fence. The wall will be 800 feet long and is estimated to cost \$19,000.

The first steps in the development of a suitable plaza for the bridge approach were taken by Brooklyn citizens at the beginning of the century. James R. Howe, a dry goods merchant and former congressman, who was register of Kings County at the time, presented the monument of George Washington as the central feature of the plaza. A Commission of Supervision and

Construction for the George Washington Monument Park was formed on Washington's Birthday, 1901. The bridge was opened in December, 1903, and nearly three years later the monument was dedicated.

Since that time no important change had been made in the site until the CWA built the LaGuardia playground. Mayor LaGuardia and Commissioner Kracke of the Department of Plant and Structures felt that an adequate plaza approach for the bridge called for a complete rehabilitation of the remainder of the area. An application was made to the Works Progress Administration and WPA engineers designed the present park.