United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

DRAFT

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Marcus Garvey Park

other names/site number Mount Morris Park; Mount Morris Square; Marcus Garvey Memorial Park

name of related multiple property listing n/a

Location

street & number Mount Morris Park West, 120th St, Madison Ave, 124th Street ☐ not for publication

city or town New York (Manhattan) ☐ vicinity

state New York code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10027

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _X_ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property _X_ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide _X_ local

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

DRAFT Marcus Garvey Park | New York Co., NY
Name of Property | County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

	private
X	public - Local
	public - State
	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

	building(s)
X	district
	site
	structure
	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	1	buildings
1	0	sites
2	0	structures
0	0	objects
6	1	**Total**

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE/Park
RECREATION & CULTURE/Music Facility
RECREATION & CULTURE/Outdoor Recreation
RECREATION & CULTURE/Sports Facility

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE/Park
RECREATION & CULTURE/Music Facility
RECREATION & CULTURE/Outdoor Recreation
RECREATION & CULTURE/Sports Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th & EARLY 20th C. REVIVALS/
Classical Revival (The Acropolis)
MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation:
walls: STONE; CONCRETE; BRICK
roof:
other: METAL: cast Iron; wrought iron

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Narrative Description

Location

Marcus Garvey Park is a square 20-acre city park that straddles Central and East Harlem in upper Manhattan. Conforming to New York's gridiron street plan, the park is bounded on the north by 124th Street, Madison Avenue on the east, 120th Street on the south, and on the west by Mount Morris Park West. Fifth Avenue is interrupted near the center of its southern boundary before resuming on the north side. The park is located one block south of 125th Street, Harlem's most important commercial and cultural cross-town corridor. The Harlem-125th Street station of Metro-North, a commuter railroad, is located at Park Avenue, one short block from the park's northeast corner. The blocks facing the park have a largely residential character with late nineteenth-century row houses, apartment buildings, a church, and a neighborhood library. The blocks fronting the western half of the park are within the Mount Morris Park Historic District (NR listed, 1973) and the Mount Morris Park Historic District Boundary Increase (NR listed, 1996). The Madison Avenue blocks opposite the park are dominated by a large non-historic hospital and two contemporary monolithic residential buildings. Two mid-twentieth-century school buildings are located across from the park's southeast corner. The park's period of significance begins in 1836 and ends in 1973.

Site

The park has relatively even terrain except for a dramatic 70-foot-tall outcrop of Manhattan schist at its center, which takes up roughly a third of the total park area. (Photo 1) It has been a natural landmark and strategic lookout since prehistoric times. During the Revolutionary War, earthen batteries and a block house were built on top of the mount by British forces after they seized control of New York in 1776 to take advantage of the commanding views across the plain to the northeast of the mouth of the Harlem River.[1] No traces of these defense structures survive today.[2] In 1856, a cast-iron fire watchtower with a bell (NR listed, 1976), designed by engineer Julius Kroehl, was erected on this promontory as part of a network of towers; it is the only one that survives today.[3] (Photo 2 & Fig. 7) The promontory and the land around its base was set aside as a public park called Mount Morris Square in 1836; the park boundaries remain unchanged to this day. (Figs. 3 & 4) The first landscape plan was not carried out until 1867 when the area around it was just beginning to take shape as an urban residential neighborhood. (Fig. 5) It comprised a naturalistic arrangement of specimen trees, lawns, and a network of meandering paths and trails in the spirit of Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's Central Park, which is located ten blocks south of Mount Morris and had begun construction a decade earlier. The square's early design is attributed to Ignatz Anton Pilát, who at the time was Central Park's chief gardener and superintendent. His design largely eschewed straight lines, symmetry, and geometric shapes except for circular and hexagonal garden beds at the northeast and southeast corner entrances. (Fig. 6 & 8) In the late 1890s, the park was enclosed with iron fencing supported on granite curbing along the park perimeter, which survives today. (Photo 3) After the watchtower, these perimeter fences are the oldest surviving park elements.

The park plan today largely reflects the 1935-1938 formalistic design prepared by Aymar Embury II (1880-1966) and Gilmore Clarke (1892-1982), who were consulting landscape architects for the New York City Parks Department under the direction of Parks Commissioner Robert Moses. (Fig. 9) The work was carried out by laborers employed by the Works Progress Administration. Pilát's naturalistic scheme was replaced with a symmetrical arrangement of oval-shaped lawns and play areas connected by malls. (Photos 5-8) The new play areas were the first instance of child-centered play facilities in the park, part of a city-wide effort in this period to provide neighborhood playgrounds. (Fig. 11) Other recreational infrastructure introduced at this time include climbing structures, two wading pools, two comfort stations, and a small

[1] Scanned image of the British Headquarters Map of New York, published in *Manhattan in Maps* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1997) via Eric Sanderson, *Manhatta: A Natural History of New York City* (New York, NY: Henry N. Abrams Inc., 2009), 55.
[2] The area where the defenses were located is covered by the Acropolis. It is unlikely an archaeological investigation was undertaken before WPA laborers commenced work in 1935.
[3] The footprint of the watchtower appears to constitute the National Register boundaries of this listed structure.

recreation center, none of which survive today. Embury and Clarke's plan included the new walks to the top of the mount with new overlooks part way up the ascent. (Photos 9-12) The summit of the mount was leveled for a huge, raised T-shaped stone terrace, later called the Acropolis. (Photos 13-17) This terrace is the most defining landscape feature of Embury and Clarke's plan. The watchtower, recently restored, is on the east side of the terrace's stem. Roughly 90 percent of the 1936 plan survives today.

The construction of a Modern amphitheater-recreational center complex and a large Brutalist pool facility in the late 1960s altered the park's 1930s symmetry on the west side. (Photos 18-23) These recreational and arts buildings/structures, which hug the base of the mount, are focal points when approaching the park from the north and west. Their development was brought about by the advocacy of local residents who organized the Mount Morris Park Rehabilitation Committee. Thanks to them, new lights were installed to discourage vandalism. By 1965, plans were being drafted for a new recreation center and outdoor amphitheater, which would be partly funded by a donation from the Broadway composer Richard Rodgers, who had grown up in the neighborhood. The 1,600-seat amphitheater, completed in 1970, consists of a large bandshell facing a concrete grandstand abutting the western base of the mount. (Fig. 18 & Photo 21) The bandshell faced the outcrop to buffer it from street noise. The rear of the stage is connected with the main lobby of the new recreation center, completed at the same time as the amphitheater. This combined building, grandstand, and two ancillary buildings were designed as a unified complex by the New York architecture firm Stonehill & Lundquist in a mid-century Modern style featuring low brick windowless volumes capped by tall triangular skylights finished with terne. (Figs. 19-20 & Photo 27). The connected bandshell associated with the 1970 complex, long considered acoustically deficient, was wholly replaced in 2010-2011 with the present one designed by Cooper, Robertson & Partners. (Fig. 21) It maintains the physical connection to the recreation center. (Photo 28) The 1970 concrete amphitheater grandstand was improved with new benches with back supports and white kite shades supported on poles. (Photos 29-30) The southern auxiliary building housing the restrooms was also replaced at this time with a new dark grey brick comfort station of similar size. (Photo 31)

In early 1966, the city government acceded to the Committee's years-long petition for a pool. The Department of Parks' new commissioner, Thomas Hoving, advocated for the architecture firm Ifill & Johnson (soon to be renamed Ifill Johnson Hanchard) to design a large pool facility in the park. It is the first instance of a Black-owned firm being awarded a design contract by the Parks Department in New York City history. The new Brutalist swimming complex was constructed with three pools: a large Olympic pool, a diving pool, and a wading pool that were complemented by sunbathing stands and a concession terrace. (Figs. 22-24 & Photos 32-35) It is located a short distance northeast of the amphitheater and off-axis to the park. It opened to the public in July 1971.

The construction of the pool represents the last major change to the park, which in 1973 was renamed Marcus Garvey Memorial Park. All subsequent changes, by comparison, were minor and mostly subtractive in nature, namely the removal of the 1886 flagpole, which had fallen down by the 1970s, and the demolition of the 1936 recreation building and a health clinic, built in 1938, at the east side of the park in the early 1990s. (Figs. 10-12) By this time, local community groups were again advocating for public investment in the park, which was in a heavily deteriorated state and seen as a place to avoid due to rampant vandalism and crime. Repairs and improvements were made in phases without altering the 1935-1938 park plan. In addition to demolishing the abovementioned park buildings, the asphalt-covered oval in the southwest corner was replaced with a turfed softball diamond and selective tree removal was conducted on the outcrop to reopen views. (Photo 36) An extensive restoration of the watchtower was carried out between 2015 and 2019. While certain areas of the park, specifically the walks leading to the overlook, remain in need of repair and maintenance, the park is arguably in the best condition it has been in since its 1930s overhaul.

Assessment of Integrity

The park retains a high level of integrity as an important public space set aside for passive and active recreation and used for mass gatherings within a densely populated neighborhood over a long period of time. It retains its original form, size, and setting. Most notably it retains its distinctive landform, the mount—the reason it was established as a park in 1836. It also retains features reflecting later eras of park development such as the ca. 1896 perimeter fence and the 1936 WPA-era park plan including the functional zones for activities (ballcourts/fields in the southern ovals, passive lawns in the northern half, and playground equipment in the marginal areas at the north end) and the Acropolis on top of the mount. Most but not all benches and play equipment have been upgraded since the 1930s. (The park has mostly 1939 World's

Fair style benches, which are likely reproductions, and the existing swing sets in the southeast oval date to the WPA era and remain in their historic location.) The late twentieth-century community facilities that were added at the demand of neighborhood improvement groups retain their location, setting, feeling, association, and, to varying degrees, their design, materials, and workmanship. The 2010-2011 bandstand does not diminish the integrity of the Recreation Center, as it replaced an earlier bandstand on the site and maintains its physical connection to the center. Likewise, improvements made to the amphitheater in that same period—namely, new bench seating and a canvas shade structure—are innocuous changes that do not diminish the overall integrity of the structure. The pool wholly reflects its historic design; the biggest changes are the painting of the brick walls and the covering of the diving pool. One park building was determined to be non-contributing because it was built after the period of significance.

Resource List

Methodology for Counting Resources

In addition to the park plan as a site, buildings and structures within it were counted as resources. Minor park features, such as playground equipment, benches, lampposts, and temporary art installations, were not counted. There is only one resource in the park that is considered non-contributing—a comfort station—as it was built after the period of significance—1836-1973.

List of Resources

Marcus Garvey Park Plan – 1 contributing site (20-acre park) and 1 contributing structure (the Acropolis)
Harlem Fire Watchtower – NHRP listed, 1976; not counted
Pelham Fritz Recreation Center & Richard Rodgers Amphitheater with two ancillary buildings – 2 contributing buildings (Recreation Center and north ancillary building), 1 contributing structure (amphitheater), 1 non-contributing building (south ancillary building)
Pool and Bathhouse – 1 contributing building

Marcus Garvey Park Plan (ca. 1896 & 1935-1938; 1 contributing site and 1 contributing structure)

The 20-acre square-shaped park is counted as one contributing site and the overlook terrace, known as the Acropolis, represents one contributing structure. The historic plan encompasses the paths, steps, landscaping, perimeter fence, and the Acropolis. The primary organizing natural element of the park is the 70-foot-tall Manhattan schist outcrop at its center, which consumes about a third of the park area and is known as the mount. The park's perimeter is enclosed with a ca. 1896 iron fence supported on granite curbs and partly on copings on stone retaining walls. On the north and west sides of the park, where the grade is four feet below that of the street, the curb functions as coping atop a low rough-face, square-cut schist wall. (Photos 3-4)

The park plan, paths, steps, and the Acropolis date to the 1934-1938 redevelopment designed by the New York City Department of Parks and carried out by workers employed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). It wholly replaced the 1867-1871 Picturesque-era plan of winding paths and naturalistic landscaping with a more Classical-inspired arrangement of oval lawns and linear malls that is still largely in place today despite the encroachment of later recreational facilities. The WPA-era work relocated the park entrances away from the corners so that most are on axis with Fifth Avenue or the side streets; the primary entrances are centered on each side. There are 15 entrances total; only one is not original to the 1930s plan. (The West 122nd Street entrance at Mount Morris Park West, which was added when the Pelham Fritz Recreation Building was constructed in the late 1960s.)

The north and south sides of the park have tree-lined linear walks. (Photo 8) There are fenced-in playgrounds on the north margins of the northern walk. The southern walk is partly bounded on the north by the rock escarpment of the mount. The east side of the park features two path-lined ovals connected by a central mall. The southern oval has historically served as an asphalt-surfaced playground with basketball courts and swing sets; today it accommodates two basketball courts, swing sets, and an exercise station. (Photo 7) The northern oval is an open lawn. (Photo 5) Off its western side, abutting the base of the mount, is an alcove with park benches arranged to accommodate a drummer's circle, which was designated such in the 2000s. (Photo 1) The wide mall connecting the two ovals is lined with double rows of trees, 1939 World's Fair-style benches, and chess tables. This section of the park once accommodated a brick child health clinic, a recreation building, and a rectangular wading pool, all of which were part of the 1930s plan and were demolished in the early 1990s.

The 1930s park plan featured three landscaped ovals on the west side. The construction of a combined recreation center and amphitheater in the late 1960s eradicated the central oval. It also encroached on the ends of the other two ovals, skewing their shape. The northern skewed oval is landscaped with trees and lawn and bordered with paths. The southern skewed oval was also a lawn that, in recent years, has been repurposed as a fenced-in turfed softball diamond; it had been surfaced with asphalt before then. (Photo 36) Throughout the park are specimen deciduous trees planted during or after the 1930s reconstruction. Species include Osage orange, oak, elm, basswood, black cherry, linden, and chestnut, among others.

There are four approaches to the mount, one from each side. (Photos 9-12, 16) Three are original to the 1930s plan; the fourth was added after the 1971 completion of the pool at the north end closed off the pre-existing path. The two southern approaches include circular observation terraces partway to the top. The western approach comprises a mirrored pair of curving steps with stone knee walls. The stone wall construction is the same throughout, consisting of square-cut, uncoursed mixed stone capped with pre-cast concrete coping. The western paths leading to the mount, which are mostly sloped instead of stepped, are paved with poured white concrete and bordered by low post-and-rail iron fencing supported on concrete curbs. The steps throughout are low and deep and are finished with granite. Some sections of the path are protected with tall iron security fencing to keep people from wandering on the sides of the mount.

The top of the mount is dominated by a large flagstone-paved terrace known as the Acropolis. (Photos 2, 13-17) This contributing structure is shaped like a T with a bowed top and rounded ends oriented northward. The raised base, which exceeds 20 feet in height in some places, is finished with similar mixed stone construction as the retaining walls. A section of the original crest of Manhattan schist punctures the terrace near the center before the terrace steps down three feet. Other sections of stone were removed to create a level terrace. The terrace is rimmed with low stone walls. An 1856 iron fire watchtower (NR listed, 1976) is located on the east side. An iron bolt, drilled into the northern end of the aforementioned exposed rock, is the only surviving evidence of a flagpole that was mounted to the rock for a century beginning in 1886. Strips of granite blocks provide decorative relief in the sea of flagstone paving. While mostly open to maximize the viewshed in all directions, a few mature trees provide shade including a large London planetree at the north end.

Harlem Fire Watchtower (1856; NRHP, 1976 – previously listed, not counted)
The 47-foot-tall, three-tier tower was constructed as an open frame with cast- and wrought-iron components. (Photo 2) It was designed by engineer Julius Kroehl and constructed in 1856. A 5,000-pound bell, installed in 1865, is suspended at the second level; it is the second one to hang in this tower. A winding iron staircase is incorporated within the structure. It leads to a covered observation deck at the top of the tower. The tower is located on the east side of the mount. Restored 2015-2019. Listed in the National Register in 1976; it is not counted.

Pelham Fritz Recreation Center & Richard Rodgers Amphitheater with two ancillary buildings (1970, 2010-2011, 2021; 2 contributing buildings, 1 contributing structure, 1 non-contributing building)
The combined Recreation Center and Amphitheater Complex was constructed 1968-1970 to designs prepared by the architectural firm Lundquist & Stonehill. Updates were made to the Amphitheater in 2010-2011, including the reconstruction of the bandstand, which is physically connected to the Recreation Center. The complex includes a comfort station built in 2021 to replace a previous one on the footprint.

Built in 1969, the Recreation Center and interconnected bandshell are counted as one contributing building. (Photos 18-20; 27) It is a long, one-story building facing Mount Morris Park West. Its central glass-and-metal entry lobby is on axis with West 122nd Street. The lobby storefront was modified in 2021 from its original three-bay, center-entrance configuration to six bays with the entrance in the two southernmost bays. It is fronted by a 22-foot-wide brick-paved plaza that extends to the street curb. The plaza is flanked by short flights of concrete steps that descend to the grade of the park. (The west side of the park is four feet below street grade.) The lower retaining walls of the plaza were rebuilt in 2021 with brick with concrete coping. The plaza is enclosed with heavy decorative iron fencing that is not original and inconsistent with the Modern Movement design of the building. The interior plan of the Recreation Center is a simple double-loaded corridor lined with multi-purpose spaces, locker rooms, and bathrooms. Secondary entrances are at the short ends of the

building, and, like the primary entrance, have brick-paved terraces with concrete steps and brick end walls. Its program is articulated in architectural form as four windowless brick volumes separated by the corridor and wide entrance lobby. The brick was originally unpainted; today the walls are painted cream-white to more easily cover graffiti. Daylight enters interior spaces via 17-foot-tall single-pitched skylights—eight in all—that face inward along the corridor. They were originally covered with raised-seam terne that has since been replaced with blue anodized aluminum with a similar seam pattern. The remainder of the roof is flat. A 38-foot-tall round brick boiler flue is located a few feet off the north terrace and is original to the complex. The center was renamed in 1988 to honor Pelham Fritz (1920-1988), a longtime recreation director for the NYC Parks Department whose childhood was spent in the park. The building contributes to the significance of the park.

The east end of the Recreation Center's lobby connects to the rear of a contemporary bandshell that opens to the amphitheater on the east side of the complex. (Photo 28) This non-historic bandshell, designed by Cooper Robertson and constructed 2010-2011, replaced an older bandshell at that location, an integral feature of the Lundquist & Stonehill plan that was long considered acoustically deficient. The new bandshell comprises a grey-brick-fronted stage, a large metal-paneled canopy supported on steel posts with solid end and rear walls topped with a minimalist clerestory light. Grey-brick side walls wrap on the side elevations of the bandshell to equate its volume with the scale of the Recreation Center. The bandshell does not diminish the integrity of the Recreation Center because it retains the location, setting, feeling, and association of the original bandshell. The bandshell is situated closer to the audience seating than the previous one to improve acoustical control. This allows for additional backstage space within the 2010-2011 lobby extension. The landscape on the north and south sides of the bandshell features six square planting beds (one large one paired with two small ones on either side) with low brick and concrete walls.

Built in 1970, the Amphitheater is counted as one contributing structure. (Photos 21, 29-30) Nestled against the 1930s mirrored flights of steps and stone retaining wall at the western base of the mount, the 1,600-seat Amphitheater is arranged as a three-section, semi-fan concrete stand. The seating was originally wood benches; they were replaced in 2010-2011 with stylistically similar benches with seatbacks and are made of recycled plastic. The rear-most rows are partially covered by cabled shades stretched on a white steel frame. The structure is supported by white steel posts. This structure is part of the 2010-2011 amphitheater upgrade project. A brick-and-metal sound booth, previously located behind the last row and on-center with the stage, was removed at that time. The steps along the amphitheater sides have simple metal handrails. The bandshell (which is interconnected with the Recreation Center) and amphitheater are named in honor of the Broadway composer Richard Rodgers, who donated funds for the original construction of the facility and whose family foundation donated additional funds for the 2010-2011 improvements.

Two ancillary buildings provide programmatic support for the complex; only the former concession building, now used as a park security office, is original to the 1968-1970 construction and is considered contributing. (Photos 26 & 31) This roughly 40-foot-square cream-white-painted brick building is located 48 feet from the north side of the bandshell. It has a double-door entrance centered on each elevation with metal security pull-down gates mounted above. All doors are solid metal. The entrances on the north and south elevations are recessed four feet. There are small irregularly placed clerestory windows on all but the north elevation, which was originally fronted with a low-walled service yard that has been removed. Each eleven-and-a-half-foot-tall elevation is topped with a band of blue anodized aluminum with seams, a legacy of the original roof design, which featured tall triangular skylights akin to those that survive on the Recreation Center roof. The present roof is flat. The other ancillary building of equidistance from the south side of the bandshell was built in 2021, replacing the pre-existing building on the footprint that served as a comfort station. The current grey-brick building with a flat roof is a combined comfort station and concession stand—a metal frame awning is mounted above a concession window at the south elevation. The building was built after the period of significance; it is considered non-contributing.

Pool and Bathhouse (1971; 1 contributing building)

Built in 1969-1971, the Pool and Bathhouse is a contributing building. (Photos 22-23; 32-34) This facility is a large two-level brick and concrete recreation building with three pools: an Olympic pool, a diving pool, and a wading pool. The diving pool has been filled in but its outline is still visible. The Brutalist facility was designed in 1968 by the New York architecture firm Ifill Johnson Hanchard. The significant length of the building necessitated it being oriented off-axis to

the park so that it faces northwest. The building design is notable for its rounded volumes and curving ramps that soften the building's intrusion into the park. The front is a solid brick volume with a short band of clerestory windows and topped by a board-formed concrete-walled pool deck that projects over the base and is finished with a continuous, orange-painted line except at the entrance. The northern end of the front terminates with a rounded solid volume of board-formed concrete that is detached from the brick volume allowing passage to mechanical rooms beyond. The opposite end terminates with a wide, circular uncovered concrete-walled ramp that wraps to the upper level. Two tall U-shaped brick towers that disguise ventilation shafts flank the ground-level, off-center entrance, which is recessed under a rounded convex concrete roof and behind a full-height metal security gate. Two pairs of entrances on either side of a semi-circular admission booth lead to gendered locker and shower rooms for visitors and employees at that level. Interior switchback ramps lead from the shower rooms to the pool deck at the upper level. The north end of the building is a semi-circular concrete form that projects over a brick base. The south end is a confluence of forms: the wide ramp and a formal set of walled steps that converge at an upper-level concession terrace. The concession stand is housed in a closed circular concrete volume with intersecting wing walls next to a large open circular volume in which the wading pool is located. The ramp switches back to continue up to a long observation deck above the locker and shower rooms. The rear wall of the pool building zigzags in response to the rock outcrop it hugs. The Olympic pool is at the center of the upper deck. The north end of the pool deck is closed off to the public with a non-historic wood stockade fence and is used for park maintenance. It was originally the diving pool area, but the pool, closed since the late 1990s, has been filled in and is currently covered by two temporary greenhouses. Concrete sunbathing stands wrap the south and east sides of the deck. Lifeguards' and manager's rooms are housed in a long brick volume with rounded corners facing the north side of the Olympic pool. A second concrete-walled observation deck tops this volume. A non-historic, five-bay wood trellis structure is located along the fence separating the Olympic pool from the old diving pool; it shades contemporary picnic tables. The perimeter of the upper deck is secured with tall black metal fencing. Pairs of pendant globe lights mounted posts symmetrically spaced along the perimeter of the upper deck. They are original to the building. The brick walls were originally unpainted brown brick but repeated acts of vandalism necessitated them being painted. Aside from the paint, the building is largely unaltered from its original design.

DRAFT Marcus Garvey Park | New York Co., NY
Name of Property | County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [X] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [X] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [ ] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorative property.
- [ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY
ETHNIC HISTORY/Black
PERFORMING ARTS
COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Period of Significance
1836-1973

Significant Dates
1836; 1936; 1968; 1969; 1970; 1971; 1973

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Aymar Embury II; Gilmore Clarke;
Lundquist & Stonehill; Ifill Johnson Hanchard

Period of Significance (justification)
The period of significance begins in 1836 when the park was established by an act of the state legislature. It ends in 1973 when the park was renamed for Black Nationalist leader Marcus Garvey.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph
(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Marcus Garvey Park is locally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Social History, Ethnic History: Black, and Performing Arts for the park's significant associations with civil rights, music, and community organizing in Harlem during the twentieth century. In the 1960s, Harlem residents, notably Hilda Stokely (1922-2011) and the Mount Morris Park Rehabilitation Committee, began intensely advocating for additional amenities at Mount Morris Park, as it was then named, including the construction of a large pool, recreation center, and amphitheater, to improve recreational opportunities and quality of life in Harlem. The park's symbolic role in the community as a civic square is evidenced by the groundbreaking music and spoken-word performances that occurred there in the 1960s and 1970s during the height of the Black Arts Movement. A key event is the first performance of The Last Poets, a collective of Black Nationalist poets associated with the creation of hip-hop; it was held in the park on May 19, 1968. Most significantly, the park is the location of the Harlem Cultural Festival, a concert series held between 1967 and 1974. The most successful of them was the 1969 concerts, referred to afterward as Harlem's "Black Woodstock," which occurred during an inflection point of the civil rights movement. Prominent artists, including B.B. King, Nina Simone, Gladys Knight and the Pips, Mahalia Jackson, the Staple Singers, and Stevie Wonder, to name just a few, played at the festival, merging music, Black Power, pride, and popular culture. Mount Morris Park was renamed Marcus Garvey Park in 1973, in honor of Marcus Mosiah Garvey (1887-1940), the influential Black Nationalist leader and activist. This renaming recognized Black heritage and pride in Harlem as well as the importance of the park in the Black community.

The park is additionally significant under Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Entertainment/Recreation as one of the earliest pieces of land to be set aside as a New York City public park. The park pre-dates Central Park by over two decades. It was created in 1836 after lobbying by local property owners who did not want the seventy-foot schist outcropping within it blasted for Fifth Avenue. It was named Mount Morris Square after the then-prominent New York family who once owned much of the land in the Bronx. Community Planning was also a significant theme in the 1960s and early 1970s when the park was again the focal point of local advocacy, which resulted in the completion of critical public recreation and entertainment facilities in the park in 1970-1971.

Finally, the park is significant under Criterion C in the area of Landscape Architecture as a largely intact example of the work of Aymar Embury II (1880-1966) and Gilmore Clarke (1892-1982), consulting designers hired by Parks Commissioner Robert Moses to carry out his ambitious city-wide park development agenda in the 1930s. Their formalistic arrangement of linear walks and large ovals supplanted the park's earlier Picturesque layout, and the rustic character of the mount was tamed with a massive stone-paved terrace at its summit, now referred to as the Acropolis. Work was carried out by hundreds of laborers employed through the Works Progress Administration between 1935 and 1938. The park plan was shaped, in part, by the neighborhood's changing demographics and attitudes about the value of active recreation. As a result, ball courts, play equipment, and wading pools were introduced into the park for the first time, but the larger infrastructure that would attract crowds, such as a baseball diamond or a full-size pool, was omitted to appease the remaining white residents who lived across the park and resented the changes.

The period of significance begins in 1836 when the park was established by an act of the state legislature. It ends in 1973 when the park was renamed for Black Nationalist leader Marcus Garvey.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Marcus Garvey Park is a 20-acre public park in the heart of Harlem, which, after the First World War, became globally recognized as the capital of American Black culture and politics. By virtue of being the only large, centrally located open space in this part of upper Manhattan, the park has a heightened level of importance to the community as a place for refuge, recreation, and assembly. This virtue has also made it a default place for cultural and political expression serving

as an important stage for milestone musical performances and other events, none more so than the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival, which occurred at a particularly fraught time in the struggle for civil rights and as the Black Arts Movement was flourishing in Harlem.

The park's very existence is a testament to its value as an open space, and its history mirrors the evolution of Harlem. In the 1830s, residents lobbied city government to set its 20 acres aside as a public square because they did not want its most defining feature, the massive 70-foot-tall outcropping of Manhattan mica-schist—a natural landmark and physical link to a lost primeval landscape—to be blasted away to extend Fifth Avenue. In 1836, the state legislature established Mount Morris Square, making it one of the earliest public parks in the city at a time when Harlem was still a rural place. The presence of the park influenced the development of an elite neighborhood around it in the late nineteenth century, increasing the value of the real estate and the prestige of the residences built there for wealthy and well-connected white families of merchants, manufacturers, and professionals of Irish, German, English, and New England descent. By this time, the park had been fashioned as pleasure grounds in the Picturesque mode as laid out by the landscape designer Ignatz Anton Pilát.

This vital community resource is symbolic of the racial tensions and inequality that defined twentieth-century Harlem. In the 1930s, after Central Harlem had already become a mecca for Black people from the American South and Caribbean, the neighborhood's dwindling number of white residents and institutions, concentrated on the blocks surrounding the park, contested the changes being made to the park by the New York City Parks Department.[4] Their letters to the agency made plain their resentment towards the growing number of Black and Latino children playing in what they felt was their park. (By this time, East Harlem, located east of the park, had become an anchorage place for migrants from Puerto Rico.) Parks Commissioner Robert Moses (1888-1891) privately admitted at the time that there was a "tremendous racial problem in this neighborhood, one of the most complicated in the city."[5] While there was little he could do to alter the demographic trend of the area, his Parks Department did site the new basketball courts and swing sets in the park's southeast corner, removed from the homes of the most vocal white residents, and larger infrastructure that would attract crowds, such as a baseball diamond or a full-size pool, was omitted from the redevelopment.

Moses's remark came as his agency and its newly established Divisions of Design and Construction were directing a wholesale redevelopment of the park to accommodate new forms of recreation and child-centered play facilities, part of a city-wide effort. Carried out between 1934 and 1938, it resulted in the erasure of Pilát's winding paths, passive lawns, and specimen trees for a new symmetrical arrangement of landscaped ovals and playgrounds. The centerpiece of this plan was a massive stone terrace atop the mount with new footpaths leading up to it. Today, the park remains an excellent example of the work of landscape architects Aymar Embury II (1880-1966) and Gilmore Clarke (1892-1982), who were the lead designers of city parks under Moses during this period. Their design approach reflected the era's shift away from a focus on natural features to a neo-Renaissance emphasis on axial relationships and monuments. Embury and Clarke's vision was implemented by laborers employed through the Works Progress Administration (WPA), a Depression-era federal program—the park is an important example of this legacy.

By the 1960s, city agencies, including the Park Department, were failing to improve the social conditions of majority-minority communities like Harlem, which, in the aftermath of white flight, were struggling with widespread disinvestment, unemployment, crime, and the upheaval caused by large-scale urban renewal projects. When the government did respond, it was largely in a top-down, patriarchal manner. It was in this environment that a coalition of Black community groups organized the Mount Morris Park Rehabilitation Committee, led by Hilda Stokely (1922-2011)

[4] This agency has had minor variations to its name since its establishment in 1870 as the New York City Department of Public Parks. For many years, its official title was the Department of Parks. In 1967, it became the Department of Parks and Cultural Affairs. Today, it is known as the Department of Parks and Recreation. For brevity, this nomination uses the title parks department in most instances.
[5] Letter to Iphigene Sulzberger (aka Mrs. Arthur Hays Sulzberger) from Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, 5 Sept 1935, Mount Morris Park folders, NYC Dept. of Parks and Recreation Archives, NYC Dept. of Records.

to agitate for capital improvements to the park. Their demands centered on public safety and new facilities to support organized recreation for neighborhood children. To overcome the Park Department's then-characteristic intransigence, the committee formed strategic alliances with white elected officials and professionals to prepare and sell a new vision for the park, which got the attention after several newspapers reported on it.

The committee's first big success came in 1965 when the city government agreed to construct a combined recreation center and amphitheater complex in the park, aided by a generous donation from the Broadway composer Richard Rodgers, who grew up near the park. Rodgers selected the New York firm Lundquist & Stonehill to design the facility. However, it took five years to complete. The committee did not give up its calls for a substantial pool, so it was well-positioned when the ambitious pool-building administration of Mayor John V. Lindsay (1921-2000) began in 1966. The Mount Morris pool was one of the largest of 18 built city-wide during his eight years in office, which is more than the number built during the WPA era. It was a recognition of the importance of park infrastructure and programming for diffusing tension in the hot summer months. The pool is the first Parks Department project in the city's history to be designed by a Black architecture firm—Ifill Johnson Hanchard. It opened in July 1971.

As the recreation center and amphitheater complex were being constructed, the park hosted its most culturally consequential events of the period. On May 19, 1968, The Last Poets, a percussive poetry ensemble and precursor of hip-hop, held its first performance in the park in honor of the late civil rights leader Malcolm X's birthday, who had been assassinated in Harlem three years earlier. Their spoken-word songs channeled Black Nationalist sentiment, emphasizing community control, Black pride, and a more confrontational approach to addressing social injustices. The event occurred a little over a month after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., which sparked major uprisings in Black urban centers like Harlem and left the civil rights movement at a crossroads. This fraught moment fueled the rise of the Black Power Movement and its cultural corollary, the Black Arts Movement, of which The Last Poets were central figures.

In 1969, the park was again a stage for amplifying messages of Black Power and pride as the locale for the third annual Harlem Cultural Festival. It was organized by promoter Tony Lawrence on behalf of the recently expanded NYC Department of Parks and Cultural Affairs as another way to diffuse tensions that could flare among youth during summer break. The event, held over six summer weekends, attracted a total estimated 300,000 people with an impressive lineup of talent representing a nexus of musical and diasporic cross-currents: Civil rights icon Mahalia Jackson, Black pop act the 5th Dimension, soul singer Stevie Wonder, the gospel crossover Staple Singers, Motown artists Gladys Knight & the Pips, the funk-soul-psychedelic band Sly and the Family Stone, blues guitarist B.B. King, avant-garde jazz drummer Max Roach and singer Abbey Lincoln, the South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela, the Afro-Cuban conga drummer Mango Santamaria, among others. The Rev. Jesse Jackson and the singer-songwriter Nina Simone separately addressed the tense cultural moment in unflinching terms and with calls to action. These performances collectively came to be referred to as "Black Woodstock," even if the festival did not achieve the legendary status of its more famous principally white counterpart.

The park hosted other less publicized events associated with the Black Power Movement, aided by the completion of the Richard Rodgers Amphitheater. In 1971, the park hosted Nation Time, a festival of Harlem arts and culture organized by Kimako Baraka, and included a performance by her brother Amiri Baraka, who was the father of the Black Arts Movement. This cultural association was cemented with the 1973 renaming of the park in honor of the magnetic Black Nationalist leader Marcus Garvey (1887-1940), who led a mass populist movement from his base in Harlem between 1916 and 1927. The campaign to rename the park was part of a wider effort by community activists at the time to elevate Black pride and heritage in the civic realm by renaming Harlem places and institutions. The park's renaming reflected its value within the community which has not diminished in subsequent years.

Early History & Development

The island of Manhattan, prior to European settlement, was an ecologically diverse wilderness with thick forests, freshwater and tidal marshes, hardwood swamps, and grasslands. The last-mentioned ecosystem was what surrounded today's Marcus Garvey Park. Its seventy-foot-tall craggy outcrop was the tallest in what was an isolated cluster of exposed rock mounds called the Round Hills, surrounded by a flat alluvial plain, a culturally derived landscape managed by generations of Munsee-speaking Lenni Lenape people through prescribed burns.[6] They called this land *Muscoota*, or the Flat. The outcrop to be known as Mount Morris is the only recognizable evidence today of this primeval landscape.

It is difficult to overstate the impact and scale of European exploitation on the area's natural resources and their shaping of the land to meet their subsistence and economic ends after colonial settlement in 1627. Many of the native Lenape people were exterminated through disease and war or else banished. By the time of the American Revolution, according to period accounts, much of the island had been stripped of its ancient hardwood forests for construction materials and firewood.[7] The implementation of an unforgiving rectangular street grid in the nineteenth century to create building lots resulted in the blasting of obtrusive rock and the leveling of the topography.

After 1627, European settlers, mostly Dutch, established farms on the Harlem plain. Over the next century and a half, they developed roads, and a small village called Harlem grew a short distance east of today's park. (It was centered near present-day Third Avenue and 119th Street.) The mount, a natural landmark, was known as Snake Hill, or Slang Berg in Dutch, for its supposedly substantial population of snakes. The area comprising the park was part of a farm owned by members of the Kortright family until 1733 when it was purchased by Johannes Benson. It remained in the Benson family for over a century. A family homestead built for Adolph Benson (1703-1802), Johannes's brother, was located near present-day Seventh Avenue and West 122nd Street.[8]

During the Revolutionary War, the mount was a strategic position for Hessian troops firing upon American troops in the south Bronx with cannons. The British Headquarters Map of New York, created in approximately 1782 to guide defense strategy during their occupation, depicts it in its pre-historic cluster with the two northern mounts illustrated as being of greater height than the rest and both with fortifications on top. (Fig. 1) British forces built earthen batteries and a block house after they seized control of New York in 1776.[9] These structures did not remain long after the war.[10]

Farm maps, produced by John Randel Jr. between 1818 and 1820 using data collected during his extensive survey of Manhattan for Commissioners' Plan of 1811 to devise a street grid, record the boundaries of these estates and their owners.[11] (Fig. 2) Much of the area comprising the present-day park was contained in the 90-acre estate of Samson Benson (1733-1825), eldest son of Adolph. Samson's grandson, Samson A. Benson (1821-1851), who lived in Fishkill in Dutchess County, was the last Benson to own this land.[12] The boundaries were the old Kingsbridge Road, the now-buried Harlem Creek, and an estate owned by Thomas Emmet on the south. Snake Hill is depicted as a long, narrow hill just off-center of the future north-south course of Fifth Avenue. Its sibling mount is partly in the course of the future New York &

[6] Eric Sanderson, *Manhatta: A Natural History of New York City* (New York, NY: Henry N. Abrams Inc., 2009), 125-126.
[7] Sanderson, 64.
[8] "History of Mount Morris Park," *Twelfth Annual Report, 1915 of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society To the Legislature of the State of New York* (1915), 195.
[9] Scanned image of the British Headquarters Map of New York, published in *Manhattan in Maps* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1997) via Sanderson, 55.
[10] They are not depicted on John Randel's farm maps of 1808-1820 though he depicts fortifications elsewhere.
[11] Randel's farm maps represent the most exhaustive early topographical survey of the entire island, depicting in minute detail watercourses, marshes, roads, property boundaries and more. These maps are available digitally on the Museum of the City of New York's exhibition webpage, "The Greatest Grid: The Master Plan of Manhattan, 1811-Now": https://thegreatestgrid.mcny.org/greatest-grid/randel-composite-map
[12] James Riker, *History of Harlem*, 434.

Harlem Railroad on Park Avenue, a convergence that amounted to its eradication in the mid-1830s. No buildings are depicted in the area of today's park.

By the early nineteenth century, family estates like this evolved into suburban retreats of well-heeled New Yorkers away from the bustle of the growing city at the southern end of Manhattan, a trend that accelerated with the railroad's opening in 1837. By the 1830s, the Benson estate had been redeveloped for a race or trotting course that in 1834 was variously called the Race Course Farm and the Harlem Park Trotting Course, operated for a time by John Armstrong, who leased the land.[13] The J.H. Colton Map of the City and County of New York, published in 1836, depicts the oval race track cutting into the western part of today's park. (Fig. 3) There is no surviving evidence of this entertainment venue today.

The Colton map is the first to show the existence of the park, which had been created by an act of state legislature the same year.[14] The boundaries depicted are the same as those today. It is labeled "Mount Morris." It effectively replaced another park square, to be called Harlem Square, that the Commissioners' Plan of 1811 had proposed a short distance southwest. The first official resolution to relocate the park was made in 1835 by the New York Common Council's Committee on Public Lands and Spaces at the urging of landowners in the area to preserve the "high and bold eminence, elevated about seventy feet above the adjacent table land, crowned with various kinds of forest trees, many of them of great antiquity, and possessing altogether a very particular and distinctive character."[15] The committee agreed that the mount and its immediate surroundings, already a popular destination for picnicking and country walks, were better suited for a park than development, which would require extensive blasting. Though the report does not mention the concurrent blasting of the neighboring hill for the railroad, it likely was a factor in mobilizing support for the creation of a park at this location. While a definitive explanation for the park's name has been lost to history, there is a strong case to be made that it is an honorific name connected to a member of the Morris family, which for multiple generations owned a vast tract of land in the Bronx bordering the Harlem Creek.[16] Prior to urban development, the overlook afforded views of the creek and the village of Morrisania beyond, which was fired upon from the mount during the Revolutionary War. (The Common Council took the lands for the square through condemnation proceedings in 1839.[17])

By 1848, Samson A. Benson had the old family farm platted into 870 building lots with the square at its heart. (Fig. 4) He sold the entire tract in 1851 to John Bruce, a Brooklyn hardware merchant, who advertised individual lots for sale with restrictive covenants.[18] The as-of-yet improved park would have been a selling feature in advertisements. In 1860, the Board of Alderman ordered the street commissioner to "proceed at once with laying out" the square, which did not happen immediately, possibly owing to the still sparse development of the surrounding blocks.[19] (Fig. 5)

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[13] A notice was published in *The Evening Post* in September 20, 1834 (page 3) advertising the racing schedule for the "Harlem Park Trotting Course." The proprietor is John Armstrong. See also Riker, 434.

[14] The park was established as Mount Morris Square. Most neighborhood parks created during this period were referred to as squares, i.e. Union, Madison, Tompkins, and Gramercy squares. It is unclear exactly when or why the name was changed to park.

[15] "Document No. 10. Board of Aldermen, June 22, 1835, The Committee on Wharves, Public Lands, & c. presented the following Report in favor of laying out a Public Square at Harlem, between 120th and 124th street and 4th and 6th avenues, which was adopted," 39-41, http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/cul/texts/ldpd_7153480_001/ldpd_7153480_001.pdf

[16] Another Morris has a historical association with the area but he is not related to the Bronx Morris family. The British army officer Roger Morris (1727-1794) and his wife Mary Philipse had a 130-acre country estate called Mount Morris on a bluff in the present-day neighborhood of Washington Heights, a couple of miles north of the park. They lived there from 1765 to 1775. The house survives today on a greatly reduced plot of land; it is known as the Morris-Jumel Mansion. "History of Mount Morris Park," 200.

[17] "History of Mount Morris Park," 200.

[18] City of New York Conveyance Records, Samson A Benson, grantor, John Bruce, grantee, January 27, 1851, Liber 560, p 249. Also see Francis Nicholson, "Mount Morris Homestead. May 1848, compiled and surveyed by Francis Nicholson, city surveyor," lithograph published by Mayer & Korff. For restrictive covenants, see NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission, "Mount Morris Park Historic District Designation Report" (September 2015), 7.

[19] "City Government. Board of Alderman," *NYT*: 8 May 1860, 5. Subsequent articles published in the paper make clear that work in the square was delayed without providing specifics. The Dripps Map of 1867 shows the blocks surrounding Mount Morris as sparsely

Before the creation of the 843-acre Central Park, an endeavor that began in 1857 and took two decades, Mount Morris Park was the second largest of Manhattan's 18 public parks and squares, which included the Battery and City Hall parks and Union and Madison squares. It was also the northernmost. (Morningside Park, Harlem's next oldest park, was established in the late 1860s.) The largest park, Observatory Place at 89th Street between Fifth and Park avenues, and two other undeveloped parks were eliminated when the plan for Central Park was accepted. These open spaces represented a tepid response by city planners to address the needs of a rapidly urbanizing city being shaped by feverish land speculation. Funding public improvements with special assessments levied on nearby property owners meant that most parks at the time were in developing elite residential neighborhoods, particularly those controlled by large landowners who desired improved real estate values.

The 1840s brought vocal calls for ambitious park planning to address the growing social imbalance between the well-off and the ballooning number of impoverished immigrants arriving in the city. Landscape architect Andrew Jackson Downing famously called for a large park to serve as the "lungs of the city" and to promote democratic ideals through a shared public space.[20] In 1858, the late Downing's associate, the English architect Calvert Vaux, and the landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted put forth a plan for Central Park that expressed the Picturesque Movement's most defining design tenets. The Greensward Plan eschewed straight lines for romantic walks in various naturalistic settings, be it meadows, forested outcrops, or ponds. It was intended to counter Manhattan's rigid street grid with reminders of urban life suppressed—service roads were sunken to not disrupt the park's pastoral harmony. Such pleasure ground planning prioritized passive activities like strolling, picnicking, and afternoon concerts; organized sports were discouraged. When the state-appointed Central Park Commission awarded Vaux and Olmsted the contract, Olmsted was already filling the role of park superintendent. In time, their influence and personnel would expand to the city's smaller parks, including Mount Morris.

State control of Central Park ended in 1870 when Mayor A. Oakey Hall, backed by the corrupt Tammany Hall and its leader, "Boss" Tweed, established the Department of Public Parks, the forerunner of today's New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. The new agency looked to improve other parks while also lining the pockets of political allies through lucrative contracts and kickbacks. In its first annual report, published in 1871, the agency described its goal of converting smaller parks "into breathing-spots that should be not only ornaments but a pleasure to the people frequenting or passing them, and to the masses who have not the means of frequent access to Central Park."[21] Even so, the city's Common Council had already appropriated $10,000 in its 1867 budget for improving "Mount Morris Square," which was to be expended under the direction of Olmsted and Vaux.[22]

Austrian-born gardener Ignatz Anton Pilát (1820-1870) is largely credited for the 1867 plan for Mount Morris Park. At the time he was the chief gardener for Central Park. According to the New York Public Library, which holds his papers, he oversaw the planting of all trees and shrubs in Central Park and had special responsibility for the creation of its picturesque "Ramble" area.[23] In 1870, months before his death, Pilát was appointed head of the new Department of Public Parks. A park plan for Mount Morris published in the 1871 report attributes it to Pilát and Montgomery A. Kellogg (1830-1898) was the engineer-in-chief for the Department of Public Parks, who also worked on Central Park. (Fig. 6) The plan depicts the square landscaped in a rustic spirit similar to that of Central Park with winding paths through shaded lawns

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developed with scattered houses on the north side. Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library. "Bounded by 149th Street, (Harlem River, Bulk Head & Pier Lane), E. Hundred & Twenty Fourth Street" New York Public Library Digital Collections, https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e2-49fb-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

[20] Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 791.

[21] Department of Public Parks, "Mount Morris Square," *First Annual Report of The Board of Commissioners of the Department of Public Parks* (New York: William C. Bryant & Co., 1871), 54.

[22] "City Government. Proceedings of the Common Council," *New York Atlas*: 25 May 1867, 8.

[23] Pilát is attributed to other park improvements, including Washington Square, City Hall Park, and the Battery. New York Public Library, "Ignatz Anton Pilat Papers" webpage, https://archives.nypl.org/mss/2427

and ascending the mount where "noble forest trees" covering the bluff were retained.[24] One footpath winds its way to the top of the mount from the northern Fifth Avenue entrance along the west side with another from the south and east represented in dashed lines as a future path. The primary park entrances are shown at the corners, distinguished with circular and hexagonal garden beds. An architectural feature for the southern Fifth Avenue entrance, which resulted in the excavation of "about eleven hundred cubic yards of rock," was put off until "the neighborhood about this spot is built up."[25] Additional paths and observation areas on the mount were approved by Olmsted and Vaux in 1872.[26]

Not depicted on the Pilát-credited plan but in existence atop the mount by this time is the three-tier, octagonal fire watchtower (NR listed, 1976). Designed by engineer Julius Kroehl, the forty-seven-foot-tall watchtower was erected in 1856 using cast- and wrought-iron components.[27] Hung within the structure is a large bell. The tower was one of eleven cast-iron towers that composed an early fire alarm system for the city. It is the only one that survives today. (Fig. 7) After it was decommissioned in 1878, the bell continued to be rung regularly by local firefighters to mark time "in all of Harlem." Residents opposed the demolition of "one of Harlem's oldest and most historic landmarks" in the 1890s when the tower was in poor condition.[28]

In 1881, the city's leading real estate publication reported, "With the exception of the east of the Central Park, there is no part of the city which has been so greatly improved as the vicinity of Mount Morris. Now houses are going up every day and soon all the neighborhood will be covered with substantial, and in many cases, elegant houses."[29] The "choicest section of private dwellings in Harlem" comprised the blocks immediately west of the park stretching to Seventh Avenue, which was exclusively residential in those days.[30] Madison Avenue on the east side was noisier due to commercial through-traffic; therefore, those blocks attracted more modest row house and flat development. Early residents of the Mount Morris neighborhood included leaders in the Tammany Hall political machine, such as Mayor Thomas F. Gilroy at 7 West 121st Street, Postmaster Charles W. Dayton at 13 Mount Morris Park West, and Jesse D. Powers, a banker, builder, and one-time parks commissioner (from 1884 to 1888), who lived at 34 Mount Morris Park West. One of the most grandiose residences facing the west side of the park was built in 1890 at 123rd Street for Massachusetts native John Dwight, the manufacturer of Arm & Hammer baking soda and other household products. Their neighbors were mostly families of well-off merchants, manufacturers, and professionals of Irish, German, English, and New England descent.

The neighborhood's wealth no doubt attracted additional improvements to the park in the late nineteenth century. In 1883, a resolution was passed by the Common Council to install electric lights.[31] Soon after it was reported that crowds were attending the summer concert series there on Wednesday evenings aided by the electric lights.[32] In 1890, a debate was occurring over the cost of enclosing the park with a granite wall similar to the one around Central Park. Five years earlier, the Parks Department had solicited proposals that entailed architecturally elaborate designs, but to date, only the stone foundation had been built at a cost of $30,000. One of the parks commissioners argued that stone walls were impractical

[24] Department of Public Parks, *First Annual Report*, 294.
[25] The rock excavation occurred in 1869 according to the report. Department of Public Parks, *First Annual Report*, 54 and 223.
[26] Olmsted and Vaux's signatures are on the drawing. See New York City Department of Records, Department of Parks and Recreation files, digitized.
[27] Robert Kornfeld and Charles Van Winckle, "Restoration of the Harlem Fire Watchtower," *APT Bulletin: The Journal of Preservation Technology*, 2023, Vol. 52, No. 4 (2023), 22.
[28] "Watch Tower of Harlem. The Old Landmark in Bad Condition—Liable to Succumb to Heavy Storm," *NYT*: 13 Sept. 1896, page unknown.
[29] "Street and Park Improvements Needed," *The Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide (RERBG)*, vol. 27, no. 675: 19 Feb. 1881, 156.
[30] "Recent Improvement Noticed in Demand for Harlem Dwellings," *New York Herald*: 2 Aug. 1903, RE 2.
[31] "Real Estate Department," *RERBG*, vol. 32, no. 800: 14 July 1883, 501.
[32] "Men and Things," *RERBG*, vol. 44, no. 1120: 31 Aug. 1889, 1184.

for keeping out "amorous lovers, who seem to flock in large numbers to Mount Morris Park."[33] Ultimately the projected price for a stone fence was too much for officials to swallow. Instead, simpler granite curbs and posts supporting a decorative iron picket fence were approved in 1892 along with a bandstand.[34] However, the perimeter fence was not completed until 1895 or 1896.[35]

Harlem in the Early Twentieth Century

The speculative frenzy surrounding the opening of the Interborough Rapid Transit subway line led to a sharp decline in Harlem's real estate values between 1904 and 1905. The Financial Panic of 1907 deepened these economic troubles, leaving landlords struggling to attract middle- and upper-class tenants. As a result, property owners increasingly rented to working-class Eastern European immigrants and, more hesitantly, to African Americans. During this period, the Great Migration was underway, with millions of African Americans fleeing the oppressive Jim Crow South in search of better economic and educational opportunities in cities like New York, Chicago, and Detroit.[36] The completion of the subway further reshaped Manhattan, creating new forms of racial isolation and solidifying Harlem as a predominantly African American enclave.

Although segregation and discrimination were less explicit in the North, Black newcomers encountered a litany of private behaviors, market practices, and coded policies that maintained racial segregation and oppression in nearly all facets of life.[37] Predatory landlords charged exorbitant rents, exploiting the limited options available to Black residents. At the time, development pressures bearing down on the city's existing Black strongholds—the West Side neighborhoods of the Tenderloin District and San Juan Hill—forcing the displacement of many residents. This coincided with an influx of people emigrating from the Caribbean and the restriction of European immigration. These patterns transformed Harlem into a place of refuge, promise, and self-determination. By the 1920s, Harlem was recognized globally as the heart of Black culture and politics in America, where intellectual and creative life flourished as part of the Harlem Renaissance, a period that lasted into the early 1930s. However, even amid its cultural successes, Harlem's residents continued to confront systemic economic, legal, and political barriers rooted in racial discrimination.

The 1920s also marked the height of Black separatist politics, best represented in Harlem by the Jamaican immigrant and entrepreneur Marcus Garvey (1887-1940). Millions of Black troops had returned to the US with hopes of greater participation in American society in recognition of their sacrifices, but their expectations were unrealized.[38] As the leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), Garvey promoted economic self-sufficiency, Pan-Africanism, and repatriation in the country of Liberia, drawing thousands to UNIA mass rallies and parades in Harlem that would transform the neighborhood's political landscape and inspire a generation of Harlem activists. Although Black nationalist views were highly controversial and quickly lost influence, Garveyites who remained in Harlem founded pragmatic, self-help institutions. They continued Garvey's street oratory practice (at both the famous Speakers' Corner at 135th Street and Seventh Avenue and 125th Street near Mount Morris Park) to proselytize the movement's edicts. Other early civil rights

[33] The 1885 design proposals for the enclosure are available on the digitized DPR archives via NYC Department of Records website. "Mount Morris Park," *RERBG*, vol. 46, no. 1176: 27 Sept. 1890, 394-395.
[34] "In and About the City," *RERBG*, vol. 49, no. 1266: 18 June. 1892, 957.
[35] "Park Contract Bids; Estimates for Work in Central and Mt. Morris Parks," *The World*: 30 June 1892, 2. Also, "From the Engineer of Construction, recommending that an order in favor, of Joseph Marren for the erection of iron railings and gates at Mount Morris Park be cancelled, as Mr. Marren has failed to do the work, and that a new order be issued. Approved," *Minutes and Documents of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Public Works for the Year Ending April 30, 1896*: 17 July 1895, 67.
[36] Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (New York: Vintage Books, 2011), 9-11, 248-252.
[37] Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), iii.
[38] "NAACP: A Century in the Fight for Freedom," Library of Congress, https://www.loc.gov/exhibits/naacp/the-new-negro-movement.html.

organizations, like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), formed influential chapters of prominent black politicians and lawyers in Harlem who kept their sights on the American experience and pursued racial equity through litigation, anti-lynching campaigns, and new labor movements.[39]

Park Improvements in a Changing Neighborhood, 1934-1938

Demographic changes came more slowly to the Mount Morris Park neighborhood, which remained a wealthy enclave into the 1930s. Racial tensions flared as some of its white residents took issue with newcomers using what they felt to be their park. For example, in 1926, complaints were registered by an organization of white residents called the Mount Morris Park Association, who claimed to be relics of "old New York." They argued that the park's original beauty was being spoiled by "the baseball-playing element" on its lawns.[40] Almost a decade later, another group member wrote to the parks department to "express the hope that the Park authorities will with us realize the necessity for protection of land owners as well as a community of fine old American people."[41] She specifically complained about "undesirable" children "from the north-west and south" playing in the park and that "this section" of the neighborhood was the only one that was still "entirely white."[42] The "undesirable" element she was referring to was Black and brown children from Central and East Harlem. (East Harlem had become an anchorage place for Puerto Ricans migrating to the United States after the passage of the Jones Act of 1917, which conferred citizenship on them.)

The simmering resentment expressed in the 1930s letters was sparked by the park's deconstruction in the spring of 1934 in anticipation of improvements that did not immediately materialize. That January, Fiorello LaGuardia became mayor of a city facing extraordinary economic and social crises brought on by the Great Depression. Days after entering office, he swore in Robert Moses (1888-1981) as the first city-wide commissioner of parks, consolidating all five borough offices into one. Moses had more than proven his worth in his previous post in state government, where he presided over ambitious public works projects using savvy political machinations to clear regulatory and funding hurdles. LaGuardia needed Moses's help obtaining federal funding from Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs to employ out-of-work laborers on improvement projects. Moses wasted no time getting park projects started, often directing crews to begin site work before plans had been developed.[43] This was the case at Mount Morris, for which plans were not ready until late 1935.

It wasn't only the neighborhood association complaining about the park's state. In September 1935, Iphigene Sulzberger, the daughter of the publisher of the *New York Times* and its newest trustee, wrote to Moses about its torn-up condition. In his response, he blamed the slow pace of construction on the lack of funds from the Works Progress Administration (WPA), which, in reality, was only partly to blame. Without elaborating, he also cited a "tremendous racial problem" as a challenge to park planning:

There are enormously complicated problems at Mount Morris Park with which you must be familiar. There are residences and hospitals around it in the hands of people who want Mount Morris Park to be a quiet restful spot. There are other people living nearby who want it solely for recreation. There is a tremendous racial problem in this neighborhood, one of the most complicated in the city. A major change was made in the planning of this area on account of this problem. These

[39] Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty*, 14-19.
[40] "Mount Morris Park Needs; Neighborhood Association Asks That Park Be Reconditioned," *NYT*: 11 July 1926, 57.
[41] Letter addressed to L. Ray Nelson, Department of Parks from Isabel Porter, First Vice President of Mount Morris Park Association, dated 11 May 1935, Mount Morris Park folders, NYC Dept. of Parks and Recreation Archives, NYC Dept. of Records.
[42] Letter addressed to Commissioner of Parks [Robert Moses] from Isabel M. Porter, Mount Morris Park Association, 15 W. 122nd St, dated 25 April 1935, Mount Morris Park folders.
[43] Robert A. Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* (NYC: Vintage Books, 1975), 371.

are matters which are difficult to discuss publicly without arousing bad feeling on the part of various elements in the community.[44]

All park plans at the time were prepared by in-house architects and engineers, approximately 1,800 in all, who struggled to keep up with Moses's vast scope of improvement projects.[45] The leading designers were Gilmore Clarke and Aymar Embury II, both of whom Moses had personally recruited to work for him. The "major change" in the park plan that Moses alludes to was possibly restricting noisy play areas to the southeast corner of the park. This change was made as a compromise to older white residents on the park's west side and the Hospital for Joint Diseases at the corner of Madison Avenue and 122nd Street. The play area comprised swing sets, basketball courts, climbing equipment, and a small recreation building fronted by a children's wading pool. Such equipment was being installed in neighborhood parks throughout the city.

Aerial photos taken of the park in early 1934, weeks before site work began, show Pilát's plan wholly intact, along with the bandstand and three isolated cottages that served as gendered comfort stations and a milk station.[46] (Fig. 8) There were no playgrounds or organized sports fields. Clarke and Embury's landscape plan, first drafted in late 1935 and tweaked repeatedly into 1937, eradicated all elements of Pilát's design, save for the stone outcropping itself, in place of a symmetrical arrangement of ovals on the east and west sides and linear tree-lined walks on the north and south sides. (Fig. 9) Two of the five ovals—the center west one and the southeast one—were designated playgrounds. An additional playground was located in a marginal area, flanking the linear walk on the north side. Where previously a small terrace adjacent to the fire watchtower was the only level area atop the mount, the parks design team under Moses specified a grand elevated T-shaped terrace with stone flagging. Early plans omitted the fire watchtower. Internal memos from 1935 indicate there were plans to demolish it, but by March of that year, they decided to keep it for reasons that are unexplained. They also kept a large flagpole that had been mounted on exposed rock in 1886.[47] (Fig. 10) Aside from those two elements, the top of the mount was remade for the grand, classically inspired terrace. This involved denuding it of most of its trees and excavating rock. The terrace retaining walls, which exceed twenty-five feet in height in some places, were laid up with a mixed aggregate of square-cut stone. Access to the terrace was provided via stone stairs at the west and east sides of the south end and via steps that wrap the outer east wall at the north end. The stairs connect to wide paths that wind down to street level with two semi-circular observation terraces halfway down the mount on the east and west sides.

The park's new arrangement, with its emphasis on symmetry and hierarchy, fit within the period's broader trends in landscape design, which shifted focus away from nature to a neo-Renaissance emphasis on axial relationships and monuments. At the ten-acre Bryant Park (NR listed 1980; New York Public Library and Bryant Park) in Midtown, curvilinear walks were replaced by an axial design with linear walks at the periphery and a large fountain serving as the

[44] Letter to Iphigene Sulzberger (aka Mrs. Arthur Hays Sulzberger) from Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, 5 Sept 1935, Mount Morris Park folders.
[45] For the number of architects and engineers, see Cormier, Francis, "Some New York City Parks and Parkways: Recreational Developments Made Since 1934." *Landscape Architecture* 29, no. 3 (1939): 125, http://www.jstor.org/stable/44670861.
[46] Robert Moses was known to hire commercial photographers to take aerial views of parks, highways, beaches, and housing developments. Little archival information about the cottages is available. The two comfort stations appear on the 1890 Sanborn map as small wood-frame buildings on the west side of the park. The milk station was a 20-foot-by-foot-wide wood-frame cottage built in 1893 in the southeast corner of the park. It was one of 14 financed by the department store tycoon Nathan Straus to alleviate infant deaths and illness from tainted milk. By the 1930s, the station was operated by the city's Department of Health.
[47] "Department of Public Works," *The City Record*, Vol. XIV, no. 4,015: 4 August 1886, 1846. Other objects removed from the park in this period include a World War I German field canon, a bronze memorial plaque featuring the Gettysburg Address, and a commemorative horse trough. The plaque was riveted to exposed rock on the mount in 1930 by the William G. Mitchell Women's Relief Corps, an auxiliary of the Grand Army of the Republic. It was a memorial to Frederick M. Meres, a Civil War veteran who died that year. The group's headquarters was located nearby at 110 E. 125th St. The plaque was reported stolen in January 1938 as WPA construction was nearing completion. "Bronze Plaque Torn From Rock in Park," *NYT*: 13 Jan. 1938.

focal point that is on-center with the street grid. The new design, carried out in 1934-1935, was among the earliest carried out by Moses's new division of design. At the thirty-acre Fort Greene Park (NR listed 1983; Fort Greene Historic District) in Brooklyn—originally laid out by Olmsted and Vaux in 1867—Gilmore Clarke created a new system of paths that reduced the number of arterial walks. He also designed a more dramatic entry point at the southwest corner on "a scale commensurate with" the McKim, Mead & White-designed Prison Ship Martyrs monument atop the knoll, which it led up to.[48]

The desire by Harlem business leaders and others for a Fifth Avenue tunnel through the mount presented an opportunity for an axial park feature. It was an idea proposed in 1922 by the Harlem Board of Trade so that traffic could flow unimpeded.[49] The concept gained momentum in early 1935 when the chief engineer for the Manhattan borough president raised the idea with the Parks Department, arguing that a tunnel would improve property values on Fifth Avenue above 110th Street. Moses, who developed his reputation as a master planner with the construction of extensive parkways and roads, supported the idea and tasked Gilmore Clarke and Aymar Embury with designing the tunnel entrances.[50] The proposed design featured a wide, flattened-arched opening flanked by tall ship bow-like piers with monumental stairs ascending both sides to an observation plaza above the opening. Embury wrote that the design was inspired by "Italian city gates."[51] While ultimately shelved due to a lack of funds, the project would have realized Pilát's vision for an architecturally distinctive park entrance at Fifth Avenue.

A New Direction for City Parks in the 1930s

Aymar Embury II (1880-1966) was a New York architect who, after working in the offices of noted architects like George B. Post, Cass Gilbert, and Howells & Stokes, became known for designing country houses and social clubs for the well-off, many on Long Island, where he caught the attention of Robert Moses. He joined Moses's division of design in 1934 as the chief consulting architect. The most notable designs attributed to him include the bathhouses at Orchard Beach and Jacob Riis Park (1936 & 1937, respectfully), the Central Park Zoo buildings (1934), and Bryant Park, and he supervised the design of the Triborough and Henry Hudson bridges (both 1936). He utilized neo-Georgian, Art Deco, and eclectic *moderne* styles and details then popular for public works. In most cases, these projects were a collaborative effort with Gilmore Clarke (1892-1982), a civil engineer and landscape architect who rose to prominence while developing Westchester County's parkway system and subsequently designed many parkways throughout the state parks system. He was the chief landscape architect for the 1939 New York World's Fair in Queens.

At the parks department, the roles of Embury and Clarke were largely as part-time consultants. It was left to full-time staff such as William Latham, the park engineer, who oversaw the division of design, and W. Earle Andrews, the general superintendent, to realize Embury and Clarke's visions and respond to complaints and pleas from the public. Lower-level architects and engineers produced the drawings and fussed over construction details. James V. Mulholland, the director of recreation, was a key voice in deciding the type and location of recreational infrastructure for parks citywide. As in all city parks during the 1930s, construction labor was funded by the New Deal's WPA, which was established in May 1935 to get unemployed workers off relief rolls. By October 1935, 200 laborers were reported to be working in Mount Morris Park, constructing new paths, stone walls, and playgrounds.

[48] NYC Department of Parks, "Press Release Monday June 28, 1937," https://kermitproject.org/newdeal/pdf/1937.html#1937/06/28
[49] "New York City Parks," Twenty-eighth Annual Report of the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society (New York: 1923), 26-27.
[50] "Snake Hill Tunnel Proposed by Levy. Fifth Av., Now Blocked from 120th to 124th St., Would Run Under Mt. Morris Park. Moses Approves of Plan. His Department Has Designed Entrances and Would Put Observation Plaza on Top," *NYT*: 21 Jan. 1936, 26. For photo of model, see NYC Dept. of Records Digital Archives.
[51] Aymar Embury II Parks Department memo to W. Earle Andrews, 26 Oct 1935, Mount Morris Park folders.

The urgent need for recreational facilities—playgrounds, ball courts, pools, and comfort stations—for neighborhood children was a driving factor for park planning in the 1930s. This was true for both existing parks, like Mount Morris, and the numerous new ones being created at the time. The earlier generations of park designers did not welcome active play or group sports. There was no playground in Central Park. Many urban children played in the streets and the rear yards of tenements. While not the primary aim of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs—it was first and foremost an employment generator—its focus on constructing or improving politically neutral public spaces, like parks, zoos, schools, and community centers, improved the quality of life for those who used them, especially at a time when most Americans could not travel beyond their neighborhoods for recreation. The New Deal triggered a sea change in how urban parks should be used; whole parks were designed around active recreation and cultural programming, reflecting a new attitude that childhood should be about play and education rather than work.[52]

At Mount Morris, Pilát's picturesque plan was replaced with landscaped ovals, three of them being lawns for passive enjoyment and two asphalt areas for active play with basketball and squash courts, swing sets, slides, and climbing equipment. Two new brick comfort stations and wading pools were located near the play areas. This programmatic change was not welcomed by all neighborhood residents, as noted above. Others who did not live in the immediate vicinity of the park felt the parks department did not do enough to accommodate organized sports, specifically football and baseball. Parks staff insisted that there was not enough space to provide football fields or baseball diamonds.[53]

In 1934, Central Harlem woefully lacked neighborhood parks for children to play in, a problem that sociologists argued contributed to increased rates of illness and disease, illiteracy, and truancy.[54] To address this shortcoming, the city prioritized improvements, including the construction of pool facilities, in two underdeveloped parks: Colonial Park (renamed Jackie Robinson Park in 1978) in Central Harlem and Jefferson Park in East Harlem. Colonial Park, sited on thirteen hillside acres along Edgecombe Avenue between 145th and 155th streets, was developed with a band shell, an outdoor dancing venue, baseball fields, playgrounds, and a large swimming pool and recreational building complex. The fifteen-acre Thomas Jefferson Park by the East River at 115th Street was also upgraded with a substantial pool complex, playgrounds, athletic fields, and a wading pool. Embury and Clarke designed both parks. Colonial Park was intended by Moses to serve the Black and brown community of Harlem. He intended for Jefferson Park, in a largely Italian neighborhood, to be for whites only despite the growing Puerto Rican population in that area.[55] A public pool was briefly considered for Mount Morris Park at the outset of the LaGuardia administration—one of twenty-three sites considered citywide—but it was not a priority project like Colonial and Jefferson parks. It was likely dropped because of the vocal protests of white residents living on the park and the limited WPA funds available.[56]

[52] Marta Gutman, "Race, Place, and Play: Robert Moses and the WPA Swimming Pools in New York City," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* Vol. 67, no. 4, Dec. 2008, 539.
[53] See Mount Morris Park folders.
[54] Marta Gutman, "Race, Place, and Play" *JSAH*, 536.
[55] The pools at Colonial and Jefferson Parks were among ten built city-wide in the 1930s. While there is plenty of evidence to suggest that Robert Moses was racist, the frequently cited example of him ordering that the Jefferson Park pool be unheated because he thought cold water would deter Black swimmers, which is based on a single anecdote documented in Caro's *The Power Broker*, is questionable. See Caro, 512-514.
[56] Robert Moses, "Public Swimming Facilities in New York City" Dept. of Parks Press Release, 23 July 1934, https://kermitproject.org/newdeal/pdf/1934a.html#1934/07/23. Gutman writes that the elimination of a pool in Mount Morris Park was due to the Harlem Race Riot that occurred in March 1935 and centered on 125th Street near the park. However, the idea for a pool appears to have been dropped before then. There is no mention of it in the Mount Morris Park folder for the year 1935 of the NYC Parks Archives; Gutman, "Race, Place and Play," 542.

Completion of WPA Park Improvements

Mount Morris Park improvements were carried out in phases from late 1935 to 1938—one of 255 parks being improved by WPA laborers in that period.[57] Repeated tussles between Moses and the local WPA administrator over funding and employment numbers slowed progress.[58] By March 1937, workers had completed the southeast playground while work continued on the nearby wading pool and a white-brick comfort station that included an indoor playroom. Parks department photos from that time show construction concentrated on the mount with the paths, steps, and massive terrace—labeled "terrace overlook" on plans—well under construction. (Much later, the terrace would come to be known as "the Acropolis," though who named it that is a mystery.) The entire east half of the park was completed by October 1937.[59] (Fig. 11)

In June 1938, as work on the west side of the park was nearing completion, ground was broken for a new department of health "baby health" station on the east side near the comfort station.[60] It was the seventh such station to be built in the city as a new neighborhood-based approach to public health education and immunization. Fourteen in all would be built throughout the city in the 1930s. Built by WPA laborers, the austere architecture of the one-story brick station mirrored that of the other stations. (Fig. 12)

On October 15, 1938, before an assembly of 200 people, Mayor LaGuardia, accompanied by Moses and other officials, dedicated the reconditioned Mount Morris Park. In a speech, he proclaimed it to be a symbol of peace, likening it to Gibraltar, according to a *New York Times* reporter, "because of its location amid mixed racial groups" and because of its distinctive rock outcrop. Speaking rhetorically, LaGuardia dedicated it "to the neighborliness, love and friendship of all the people surrounding it."[61] Meanwhile, a reporter for the *Amsterdam News*, a weekly newspaper with a largely Black readership, did not make note of the mayor's claims about racial harmony. He instead found the civil service commissioner's remarks to be of greater significance: "Ferdinand Q. Morton made it clear that Harlem would receive the same consideration as other sections of New York City," adding that "he received an applause equal to that of the mayor."[62] (Fig. 13)

Roosevelt's New Deal had broader implications relevant to Harlem's community. First, the programs created new relationships between the government and the public, shifting to the government as the guarantor of "positive rights," including the right to employment, recreation, and a decent home.[63] Early civil rights organizers picked up on the national rhetoric to expand their case for workplace rights, quality education, and economic development in their communities. Second, public parks and swimming pools were small but significant battlegrounds in resisting Jim Crow segregation in public accommodations, which, although less explicit than in the South, the doctrine of "separate but equal" left African American communities with substandard public services. Third, the job creation engendered by the New Deal allowed

[57] Caro, 509.
[58] Lieut. Col. Brehon B. Somervell, the WPA administrator for New York City from 1935 to 1938, was one of Moses's chief nemeses in that period. Numerous headlines document their feud over control of park projects, funding, and staffing. In May 1937, in a fit of spite, Moses closed 142 playgrounds to the public after Somervell refused to staff playground directors through the WPA program. See "142 Playgrounds Closed By Moses, Seized By Police," *NYT*: 13 May 1937, 1.
[59] NYC Department of Parks, "Press Release Tuesday October 26, 1937," https://www.kermitproject.org/newdeal/pdf/1937.html
[60] "City Starts Work on 7th Health Depot; Ground Broken for Structure in Mount Morris Park," *NYT*: 10 June 1938, 14 L+.
[61] "Peace Symbol Seen in Mt. Morris Park; Mayor Dedicates Center, as Restored by WPA, to the Neighborly Spirit; Likens It To Gibraltar," *NYT*: 16 Oct. 1938, 46 L+.
[62] "Mayor Acts To Speed Up Work On Playgrounds, Projects; Harlem to Get Its Share of Recreational Facilities," *New York Amsterdam News*: 22 Oct. 1938, 5.
[63] Sugrue, 19-21.

middle-class Harlemites to enter public service positions.[64] Beginning in the 1940s, local political groups elevated African American activists to elected offices.[65]

Community-Driven Park Planning, 1961-1971

By 1960, the exodus of white middle-class residents to suburban communities following the Second World War and the continuing influx of African Americans and Puerto Ricans to the city had transformed Central and East Harlem into solidly majority-minority districts. According to the U.S. Census of 1950, the residents in the immediate vicinity of Mount Morris Park were almost entirely Black, most of whom migrated from Southern states and who worked service and factory jobs. A large number of households had multiple lodgers, a common arrangement to meet high rent. The population of Central Harlem peaked in 1950, falling 30 percent by 1960 as the city's manufacturing economy shrank and urban conditions worsened.

In Harlem during the 1950s and early 1960s, state and federal programs incentivized large-scale redevelopment projects to address poor-quality housing. These initiatives often labeled areas as urban blight—a designation strongly shaped by Robert Moses as his influence in city government grew. As a result, entire blocks of tenements and row houses were demolished to make way for public housing superblocks. This rapid redevelopment displaced existing residents and businesses, concentrating low-income Black and Latino communities in the new developments and exacerbating segregation. The socio-economic homogeneity combined with the loss of vibrant commercial street life led to increased isolation for both residents and outsiders.

In the post-war years, community-level activism was galvanized by a growing mistrust in the government to serve the public interest without causing greater harm. In this context, parks took on heightened importance as shared public spaces for outdoor recreation, a connection to nature, organized events such as concerts and rallies, and spontaneous gatherings. While some adjacent residents voluntarily slept in Mount Morris Park overnight to escape the summer heat in their cramped apartments, most did not feel safe venturing into the park.[66] This was particularly true of Mount Morris Park. In an appeal to the parks department for help, Gladys Coleman of the 119th Street Block Association wrote:

Unfortunately, the park is used mainly by an assortment of thugs, perverts and alcoholics. The outdoor tables seem to be used mostly by cursing, drinking cardplayers. We believe that with the proper activity on the part of the Department of Parks and the Police Department, this park could once again be made, as it once was, an area where children of all ages and adults, could find relaxation and recreation without the disorderly and unlawful behavior characteristic there now.[67]

The letter, dated June 29, 1961, kicked off a years-long effort to improve park conditions and make it safe for children to play in. The Block Association partnered with the Parents' Association of Junior High School 120, located across from the southeast corner of the park, to form the Mount Morris Park Rehabilitation Committee along with twenty-eight other community groups. Hilda Stokely (1922-2011), a member of the parents' association (PA), was a leading voice in this effort. Stokely—who moved to Harlem in 1942 from North Carolina and lived eight blocks north of the park—was an adept organizer, having served as the president of another PA and the East Harlem United Neighborhood Council. (Fig. 14) In 1962, through her involvement with the Italian-dominated Kanawha Democratic Club, she was elected the first female district leader of East Harlem's 68th Assembly District, serving closely with then-state assemblyman Frank Rosetti. (Fig. 15)

[64] Sugrue, 19-21.
[65] Ora Mobley Sweeting and Ezekiel Mobley, *Nobody Gave Me Permission: Memoirs of a Harlem Activist* (Self-Published: Xlibris, 2000), 47.
[66] Scotty Bryant, oral history by Jenna Dublin-Boc, 29 June 2024.
[67] Gladys Coleman of the 119th Street Block Association letter to the Dept. of Parks, 29 June 1961, Mount Morris Park folders.

With Rosetti's help, the rehabilitation committee got an audience with the Manhattan Borough President Edward Dudley's office in late 1961. There, they presented photos of broken benches, a trash-strewn mount, large dirt patches in lawns, and old unused playground equipment on asphalt surfaces.[68] Beyond improving safety in the park with additional lighting, police surveillance, and emergency call boxes, the committee demanded "a complete rehabilitation" and new facilities so that the students of six nearby schools and a day nursery could have a place for outdoor learning and recreation and be a place of respite for senior citizens and the patients of two hospitals bordering the park. In one of her many public hearing testimonies, Stokely spoke of the park's essentialness:

> [The park is] used by some 75,000 families, 3,000 of these persons live on one block alone near the park, who are decent, law-abiding, church-going citizens, who ask no more than the bare necessities of life. We seek no luxuries, our park rehabilitated is a necessity if we are to continue to grow as decent citizens in this great metropolis. …Mount Morris Park is a necessity for our community because we cannot afford to travel away from its confines to seek recreational outlets.[69]

In attendance at the Borough President's office meeting were architect Arthur Rosenblatt (1931-2005) and Jerome Wilson (1931-2019), then the press secretary for the borough president. Within months of the meeting, Wilson was elected to the New York Senate, representing parts of Harlem. Wilson introduced the committee to Elinor Guggenheimer (1912-2008), an urban planner who had just been appointed the first female city planning commissioner by Mayor Robert F. Wagner. Rosenblatt, Wilson, and Guggenheimer staunchly supported the committee's efforts to "penetrate the iron curtain" of the parks department with persistent community organizing, conceptual planning, and press coverage.[70] (Fig. 16) Stokely's partnership with these white professionals and politicians like Rosetti and Wilson exemplified a larger trend in the civil rights and other mass movements of that era (environmental justice, gay rights, women's rights) as historically marginalized yet civically astute voices fought government policies or actions through strategic alliances.[71] In an oral history, her daughter Madlyn explained how her mother built political capital by organizing Harlem mothers as a constituency that couldn't be ignored by the Italian male-dominated East Harlem Democratic clubhouse.[72]

Between 1962 and 1964, Rosenblatt, a design consultant on parks and playgrounds, worked pro-bono with the committee to prepare plans and sketches that communicated their vision and goals for the park. Early drafts proposed a two-story gymnasium at the northwest corner of the park, a full-sized swimming pool in place of the existing playground on the west side, baseball diamonds at the southwest corner, new playgrounds at the northeast corner, as well as nursery and "golden age" facilities.[73] The design exercise represents an early example of alternative planning by an interest group as a way of facilitating dialogue with a reticent government. This proactive approach was an evolution of the late 1950s grassroots opposition against widespread neighborhood demolition in that architects and planners supplied community groups with the tools and language of their profession. It gained steam in 1964 with the founding of the Architect's Renewal Committee in Harlem (ARCH), one of the best-known examples of an advocacy planning organization of that period.

[68] Helen Bowman, Mount Morris Park Rehabilitation Report, 12 Dec. 1965, Mount Morris Park folders.
[69] Hilda Stokely, "Statement Made Before the Board of Estimate At the Budget Hearing Concerning Rehabilitation of Mount Morris Park, Budget Item 379," undated (ca. 1964), Mount Morris Park folders.
[70] Bowman, Dec. 12, 1965.
[71] Michelle Hall Kells, "Landscapes of Civic Literacy: The Rhetoric of Remembering," *JAC*, Vol. 29, No. ½ (2009), 453.
[72] Madlyn Stokely, oral history by Jenna Dublin-Boc, 27 June 2024.
[73] A keyed plan was published in a *New York Times* article about the committee's efforts. "Harlem Groups Win Assurance On Restoring Mt. Morris Park; City Department Agrees to Coordinate Its Plans With Theirs—Budget Item Is Expected to Expedite Action," *NYT*: 14 Dec. 1963, 29.

Guggenheimer hosted planning meetings with the park committee at her home. She was particularly attuned to park issues as a leading member of the city-wide non-profit Council for Parks and Playgrounds, of which State Senator Wilson was chairman. In October 1963, she organized a council-sponsored bus tour of New York parks to bring attention to their conditions; she asked Stokely to present her views on the status of Mount Morris.[74] As a city planning commissioner, she was instrumental in getting funding allocated for design services into the commission's budget and lobbying the parks department to request capital funds for park improvements. For his part, Wilson used his clout to push Parks Commissioner Newbold Morris (1902-1966) to meet with the committee in Harlem and to direct the department's notoriously opaque design division to study their proposal.

By the fall of 1963, the rehabilitation committee was at an impasse with the parks department, which was not forthcoming with its rehabilitation plans. While he supported a recreational building of some kind, Commissioner Morris was set against the idea of a large pool, arguing that there was neither the space nor the budget for one.[75] On November 2, the first of a slew of articles about the committee's efforts appeared in a major newspaper, the *New York Courier*: "Determined Citizens Group Vows to Rehabilitate Mt. Morris Park." In it, Stokely is quoted: "We want major new facilities such as an adequate indoor recreation building, a swimming pool, a decent modern playground. Such budgets and facilities are not uncommon in downtown areas." She goes on to cite the budget for rehabilitating Washington Square in Greenwich Village, adding, "It's time we got a first-class park in Harlem for a change. We can start with the one with the name of the Commissioner."[76]

That article may have been the catalyst for the committee's sought-after meeting with parks department representatives, which took place the following month at the borough president's office. With most of the major stakeholders present, as well as reporters with the *New York Times*, *Amsterdam News*, and *World-Telegram*, it was announced that $1 million would be earmarked for park improvements and that a new Olympic-size pool was to be built at the Harlem Meers in Central Park, ten blocks south of Mount Morris. The earmark was based on plans recently prepared by the parks department and that largely resembled those proposed by the committee with the exception of the pool. While city officials, including Borough President Dudley, supported the park representative's contention that the Harlem Meers pool makes one at Mount Morris "superfluous," Stokely adamantly disagreed. The committee viewed the pool as "a basic human necessity."[77] The headlines that ran the following day and week include, "Which has Best-Laid Plan For Mt. Morris Revamping" (*World-Telegram*, December 14); "Harlem Groups Win Assurance on Restoring Mt. Morris Park" (*New York Times*, December 14); and "See New Mt. Morris Park in Future; Swimming Pool In Doubt" (*New York Amsterdam News*, December 21).

A Recreation Center-Amphitheater Complex is Developed

The *New York Times* headline caught the attention of the Broadway composer Richard Rodgers of Rodgers & Hammerstein fame, who from Europe contacted the city government the same day the story ran to offer a monetary contribution towards improving his childhood park. After a personal visit to Mount Morris the following spring with Commissioner Morris and Guggenheimer, Rodgers offered $100,000 with 10 percent of it to be released immediately for architectural services to plan an outdoor amphitheater. (He eventually donated a total of $150,000.) This was the second amphitheater project in the city pursued by Commissioner Morris and also one that would be partly financed by a patron. The other was Delacorte Theater in Central Park, the permanent home of the annual New York Shakespeare in the Park

[74] Letter to Hilda Stokely from the Council for Parks and Playgrounds, 8 Oct. 1963, Mount Morris Park folders.
[75] Letter to William Kirk, Community Planning Board Chairman, from Parks Commissioner Newbold Morris, 18 Oct. 1963, Mount Morris Park folders.
[76] "Determined Citizens Group Vows to Rehabilitate Mt. Morris Park," *New York Courier*, 2 Nov. 1963, 24. Newbold Morris is a descendant of the old New York Morris family.
[77] Minutes of the Mt. Morris Park Rehabilitation Group at the Manhattan Borough President's Office, 13 December 1963, Stokely Papers.

Festival organized by Joseph Papp. It was completed in 1962 with a $150,000 gift from George T. Delacorte, a wealthy publisher. Harlem had its own Papp in Simon Bly Jr. (1923-2001), the founder and executive director of the Afro Arts Cultural Center, which had been putting on summer concerts, theatrical performances, and film screenings in Mount Morris Park since 1959. He was also a member of the park committee with Stokely and had lobbied the parks department for a permanent performance venue in Mount Morris since at least 1961.[78] With Rodgers's gift, Bly would get a voice in its design, attending meetings with Rodgers, the parks department, and the architectural team.

The selection of an architect was Rodgers's to make. He chose John Jay Stonehill (1933-2005) of the New York firm Lundquist & Stonehill after receiving an unsolicited letter of introduction from him after news of the gift was made public in July 1964.[79] Stonehill expressed avid interest in theater design, citing his relevant experience, and noted his partner Oliver Lundquist's specialty in theatrical lighting design and involvement with the United Nations Headquarters in New York. An official service contract for preparing preliminary plans was issued months later. Another firm, Blauvelt Engineers, would be hired to produce plans for site work beyond the amphitheater.

By August 1964, tensions were again rising between the Mount Morris Park Rehabilitation Committee and the Parks Department, which was slow to share its plans and incorporate the committee's feedback. Stokely, Rosenblatt, Assemblyman Rosetti, and State Senator Wilson were "hostile" to the department's omission of a swimming pool and the fact that the Richard Rodgers bandshell, as it was then being called, was not connected to the proposed recreation center and that the audience seating was not permanent.[80] After the meeting, Rosenblatt created a series of sketches on tracing paper over the parks department plans that illustrated the committee's desired design approach. In place of isolated facilities, it showed a singular complex of interconnected hexagonal forms devoted to varied programming: stage, concessions, bathrooms, youth center, health center, and a wading pool.[81] (Fig. 17) By December, with Lundquist & Stonehill leading preliminary design work, an agreement was reached by all parties for a combined recreation center and amphitheater centered on Mount Morris Park West at West 122nd Street, with the stage facing the mount for better acoustical control.

Lundquist & Stonehill's preliminary design work was completed in April 1965. The following month, they personally presented drawings to Mayor Robert Wagner, who expressed a desire to expedite the project.[82] The plans featured a recreation center with a multi-purpose room, dressing rooms, a rehearsal room, senior citizens and youth rooms, locker rooms, and an auxiliary kitchen. In addition to the bandshell, which was to be attached to the center, there was to be a 1,600-seat fixed spectator stand, sound booth, and ancillary buildings for concessions and bathrooms. (Fig. 18) The design for the one-story recreation center prioritized durability and low maintenance, expressed in the form of two windowless brick volumes connected by a central lobby. Daylight would enter the building via tall triangular skylights. The bandshell, projecting from the main building, featured the same architectural vocabulary, albeit with a taller roof. (Figs. 19-20) The parks department allocated $1.2 million to construct the complex, which would be included in the 1966-1967 capital budget. Another $750,000 was earmarked for rehabilitating the rest of the park.

In June, Stokely presented a model of the complex to U.S. Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall at a 500-person luncheon organized by Guggenheimer at Tavern-on-the-Green in Central Park. Udall was there to announce a new commitment by the federal government to support urban parks. Senator Robert F. Kennedy and Mayor Wagner also

[78] Simon Bly, Afro Arts Cultural Center, letter to Newbold Morris, Department of Parks, 20 Aug. 1961, Mount Morris Park folders.
[79] Sam Zolotow, "Rodgers Is Giving Theater To City," *NYT*: 15 July 1964, 37L. Rodgers apparently took an immediate liking to John Stonehill; he commissioned Stonehill to design a Modern house for him and his wife in Connecticut around the same time.
[80] John A. Mulcahy Dept. of Parks Memo for Commissioner Morris, 19 August 1964, Mount Morris Park folders. To save money, the Design Division had proposed foldable chairs to be stowed away when not in use.
[81] Arthur Rosenblatt, AIA, Mount Morris Park West sketch, ca. 1964, Stokely Papers. By this time, Stokely worked as a housing consultant for Constance Baker Motley, the first female borough president.
[82] John Jay Stonehill letter to Commissioner Newbold Morris, 12 May 1965, Mount Morris Park folders.

attended.[83] Despite the fanfare and the mayor's support, progress came to a standstill that summer for unknown reasons. While Wagner approved the contract for preparing construction drawings during his last days in office, Lundquist and Stonehill were not given permission to proceed until the following February. Construction began in September 1966. While Guggenheimer and the new parks commissioner, Thomas Hoving, had hoped that the complex would be open for performances by the summer of 1968, it was not completed until 1970. Stokely's daughter, Madlyn, recounts, "I remember going to the amphitheater for the first time and just being astonished…we used to have to stand around and listen to concerts. So we actually had seating and the stage looked so professional, and it was just really quite exciting that we had that right here in the community where you could really enjoy a concert in a very different way than we were used to."[84] (Fig. 21)

The Community Gets Its Swimming Pool

New York City parks got a major boost from the new administration of Mayor John Lindsay (1921-2000), who entered office in January 1966. Lindsay saw himself as an activist mayor, one who demonstrated his commitment to civil rights and the needs of the poor through tangible action. It was a tumultuous period of protests, race riots, and assassinations. The killing of an African American teenager by a white police officer on the Upper East Side ignited a firestorm of rage in the form of protests and rioting that unfolded in Harlem over six consecutive hot summer nights in 1964. In February of the following year, the civil rights activist Malcolm X was assassinated at the Audubon Ballroom in upper Manhattan in front of an audience of 400. Lindsay's administration recognized that tensions could be diffused by having strong relationships with community leaders and lowering the barrier to City Hall.

For the park committee and other community groups throughout the city, the Lindsay administration represented a major change in the culture of bureaucracy by promoting a decentralized, community-centered planning approach. The new parks commissioner, Thomas P. Hoving (1931-2009), whose personal mission was "to put the people back in the parks," recruited the committee's own Arthur Rosenblatt as a consulting architect and planner because of his experience with community groups.[85] From within the parks department, Rosenblatt expedited dormant projects, like the recreation center and amphitheater complex, and advocated directly for others. A study for building a pool in Mount Morris Park was initiated in the first month of Lindsay's term. His administration understood the importance of cultural and recreational programs to keep people engaged and cool in the summer months, reflected in its ambitious plans for capital improvements.

In February 1966, likely at Stokely's urging, Rosenblatt approached Conrad Johnson (1919-1991), a Black architect, about designing the Mount Morris pool. Johnson and his partner Percy Ifill (1913-1973) would soon begin designing what would be their best-known project, an office tower for the state government on 125th Street. At the time, Ifill and Johnson were two of just thirteen registered Black architects in the New York metropolitan area.[86] In a memo to Commissioner Hoving following his meeting with Johnson, Rosenblatt lobbied for hiring the firm, explaining:

[Johnson] doesn't want to be window-dressing or grandstand play but if he does participate in the development of the swimming pool he wants to be architect for the swimming pool, for the design and construction of the swimming pool, locker rooms, etc. …The firm's principals are Conrad Johnson, Percy Ifill, both of whom are experienced and

[83] Samuel Kaplan, "U.S. Will Promote Little Urban Parks, Udall Says Here," *NYT*: 8 June 1965, 1, 24. See also Bowman Memo, 12 Dec.1965, 5, Stokely Papers.
[84] Madlyn Stokely, oral history by Jenna Dublin-Boc, 27 June 2024.
[85] Mariana Mogilevich, *The Invention of Public Space: Designing for Inclusion in Lindsay's New York* (Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2020), 12.
[86] "Negro Architects Get Harlem Job," *NYT*: 25 April 1966, 27 L.

distinguished architects. In the past they have done significant and distinguished work. It would be to our credit and to theirs to involve them in the project.[87]

Ifill and Johnson founded their firm in 1962 with an office in Midtown. Theirs was the only mid-sized Black-owned firm in the city at the time. Both men were Harlem sons born to parents from the Caribbean. They met while attending night school at New York University to train as architects. During the Second World War, Ifill worked as a draftsman for several government entities; Johnson joined the U.S. Air Force's elite corps of African American pilots, famously known as the Tuskegee Airmen. After the war, Johnson completed his studies at the Harvard University School of Architecture, which at the time was led by Walter Gropius, a major proponent of Modern Movement architecture. Upon graduating, he worked for a firm that designed hospitals. Meanwhile, Ifill became the first Black architect to work in the New York commercial interior design firm of Eleanor LeMaire, where he designed interiors for a Neiman-Marcus department store in Dallas and bank offices in New York. The "distinguished work" that Rosenblatt alluded to likely includes Ifill & Johnson's 125th Street branch of Freedom National Bank (1963), a branch of Carver Savings & Loan (1962), and the 20th Precinct Police Station on W. 82nd Street (1964).[88] A third partner, George Hanchard (b. 1933), a British-trained architect from Jamaica, joined the firm in 1967.

In a three-page letter to Mayor Lindsay dated March 30, 1966, Commissioner Hoving laid out the case for a swimming pool in Mount Morris Park and for hiring Ifill & Johnson to design it. He wrote that there was "a desperate need for it… the population density and the unique social conditions that prevail make it absolutely necessary that we honor the commitment made to this community…," explaining that he and other parks representatives had met with several community leaders after Lindsay's election victory the previous November where Hoving promised to "do everything possible" to get a pool constructed there. He also insisted on raising the professional design fee to 5 ½ percent of the total construction cost from the prevailing 4 percent, which he explained was "too low for an architect to do a decent job." (Rosenblatt had pushed Hoving for a 6 or 6 ½ percent fee.) As for the architects, Ifill & Johnson was "a distinguished firm of Negro architects," and to the best of Hoving's knowledge, it "would be the first time that the Department of Parks has retained the services of a Negro architect for consultant work."[89] On April 24, in the presence of members of the park committee and the press, Hoving announced that a new pool would be built on the very site at a cost of $850,000 and that Ifill & Johnson would be the architects.[90]

Indeed, the pool was the first instance of a Black-owned architecture firm being awarded a design contract by the parks department. The contract coincided with several other government projects the firm had been awarded, which, in addition to the State Office Building on 125th Street, included a subsidized cooperative housing project (Village East Towers near Tompkins Square). (Fig. 22) Their early success was likely due partly to the paucity of well-staffed Black architecture firms in New York at a time when state and local governments increasingly recognized the value of having minority firms design public interest projects, especially in minority communities.[91] Before then, African American architects in public projects were rare. There was John Louis Wilson Jr., the first African American student to graduate from the Columbia University School of Architecture, who was part of a consortium working under a white society architect to design the Harlem River Houses (NR listed 1979) in the 1930s, one of the city's first public housing developments. He had been hired at Mayor LaGuardia's direction to work on this WPA-funded project intended for working-class Black families. For ambitious projects, many Black architects went abroad to West Africa in the late 1950s to participate in nation-building for seventeen newly independent nations. This was true of Ifill & Johnson, who worked on several projects in Liberia in

[87] Arthur Rosenblatt memo for Commissioner Thomas Hoving, 1 March 1966, Mount Morris Park folders.
[88] Ifill and Johnson biographical information comes from Dreck Spurlock Wilson, *African American Architects: A Biographical Dictionary 1865-1945* (Routledge: 2004), 307-312, 326-329.
[89] Commissioner Hoving letter to Mayor Lindsay regarding Mount Morris Pool, 30 March 1966, Mount Morris Park folders.
[90] "Negro Architects Get Harlem Job," *NYT.*
[91] Brian Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance: Gentrification and the Struggle Over Harlem* (Princeton Univ. Press, 2023), 70.

the early 1960s.[92] J. Max Bond Jr., a contemporary who established a New York practice shortly after Ifill & Johnson, designed several government buildings in Ghana in the 1960s.

Ifill & Johnson began designing the pool in late 1966; construction drawings were ready by 1968. (Fig. 23) The facility would have a large Olympic pool, diving pool, and a children's wading pool, as well as locker rooms, showers, and a concession stand. It would be sited a short distance north of the amphitheater and positioned contrary to the park axis to accommodate its substantial width. One junior architect, Harry J. Simmons, who worked on the project after the parks department apparently rejected earlier iterations, recounted the pool's design inspiration as a "container of liquid" expressed with "barrel" forms.[93] Indeed, interlocking rounded forms are a defining feature of the facility, with nary a right angle to be found. A generously wide ramp curves around the west end, and the diving pool is isolated in its own rounded volume at the opposite end. The locker rooms and showers were tucked into the lower level of a long brick volume with rounded ends. The upper level is an expansive pool deck with sunbathing stands wrapping the south and east sides that back onto the mount. Simmons explained that these stands and two viewing platforms were intended to support large spectator events, suggesting there were plans for a serious aquatic program. According to Hanchard, there was a desire for "the kids in Harlem to have the same advantages as any other white child, with the possibility of competing in the Olympics."[94] Within the park, Simmons said, "the building was to be a gentle and quiet giant laid horizontally to create a backdrop, through the trees, for the park." (Fig. 24)

The Mount Morris pool was one of eighteen built during the Lindsay administration and one of the biggest, along with those built in Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx and the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn. All three were intended to serve minority communities. The Brooklyn facility, known as the Kosciuszko Pool, was developed at the same as Mount Morris, though larger in size and budget—$4 million. The community there had reportedly pressured the city for a pool for eight years before its completion in 1971.[95] For that pool, the Ukrainian-born Modern Movement architect Morris Lapidus, who had grown up near the site, and his son Alan utilized simple concrete forms and large sunbathing stands to create a playful design similar in spirit to Ifill, Johnson, and Hanchard's pool. Both pools were among nine that opened in July 1971 with ribbon cuttings attended by Mayor Lindsay and a bevy of government officials and community leaders. (Figs. 25 & 26)

The greater park improvements that were sought by the Mount Morris Park Rehabilitation Committee, such as the restoration of paths and the Acropolis and the removal of asphalt play surfaces, would not be carried out until the 1980s and 1990s.

Black Power and the Black Arts Movements

The Black Power Movement emerged as a forceful response to the limitations of traditional civil rights organizations and the assassinations of key freedom movement leaders. It emphasized community control, cultural pride, and a more confrontational approach to achieving racial justice. Historians have described the Black Arts Movement of the late 1960s and 1970s as the cultural corollary of the Black Power Movement.[96] It was an artistic response to the movement's calls for radical political, social, and economic change and the pursuit of cultural autonomy through the exploration of Black art, literature, theater, and music. Figures like poets Amiri Baraka, Gil Scott-Heron, Nikki Giovanni, and Audre Lorde, playwright Larry Neal, writer James Baldwin, and painter Romare Bearden utilized their craft to incite political

[92] Ibid. George Hanchard was about to move to Africa for work before joining Ifill & Johnson in 1967, see George Hanchard, oral history by Jenna Dublin-Boc, 29 June 2024.
[93] Harry Simmons, Simmons Architects letter to Hilda Stokely, 8 Feb. 1993, Stokely Papers.
[94] Hanchard oral history.
[95] Emanuel Perlmutter, "Pool Opens in Bedford-Stuyvesant," *NYT*: 11 July 1971, 33.
[96] James Smethurst, "Chapter Five: The Black Arts Movement," *Black Power 50* (New York: Schomburg Center, 2016), 89.

consciousness and inspire action.[97] The Black Arts Movement also played a crucial role in reviving and celebrating the legacy of the Harlem Renaissance, drawing attention to the cultural significance of Harlem's spaces and institutions.

Long a place for performance and artistic expression, Mount Morris Park hosted important Black Arts Movement musicians and performers. On May 19, 1968, as part of a larger celebration of Malcolm X's birthday, The Last Poets collective Abiodun Oyewole, David Nelson, and Gylan Kain gave their debut spoken-word performance in the park, a somewhat spontaneous event that still attracted a crowd. (Fig. 27) Their revolution-infused poems spoken over a percussive beat are widely considered to be a precursor to hip-hop music, which would become popular in the 1970s.[98] Oyewole's work, in particular, was informed by his community activism; he was an assistant recreation director for a youth program in East Harlem. In the summer of 1969, he was a leader of a large group squatting on the site of the future Ifill Johnson Hanchard-designed Harlem State Office Building on 125th Street, impeding its construction in protest of the lack of community control residents had over this large publicly funded project.[99] He was joined by other Black Arts Movement artists including Baraka, jazz drummer Milford Graves, singer Leon Thomas, and others who participated in the impromptu festivals, rallies, and political seminars held at the site over the three-month encampment.[100]

The Last Poets performed again at Mount Morris Park in 1970 as a part of the three-day celebration of the opening of the new Richard Rodgers Amphitheater. The traveling creative arts program Jazzmobile, the National Black Theatre, and Harlem Philharmonic also performed. In June 1971, producer and director Kimako Baraka hosted "Nation Time Festival of Arts," a parks department-sponsored initiative that featured musical performances, dancing, poetry, movie screenings, art exhibits, and an African market.[101] The name was borrowed from the title of a book of poetry written by her brother, Amiri Baraka (1934-2014), widely recognized as the founder of the Black Arts Movement. According to Kimako, Nation Time was an effort to promote and celebrate arts and theater in and of the community, most often through street fairs and performances.[102] Such community-based arts initiatives directly responded to Malcolm X's call for a grassroots cultural revolution.[103] Other organized and spontaneous events occurred in the park in these years, but little attention was paid to them at the time, making contemporary assessment of them a challenge. For example, on August 14, 1971, Louis Farrakhan apparently spoke on behalf of the Nation of Islam at a rally in the park, but little information has been recovered about this event.[104] Compellingly, in Chapter 21 of Ralph Ellison's novel *Invisible Man* (1952), Mount Morris Park is the site of a procession and funeral for a character named Clifton, indicating the long-term importance of the park as a gathering place, even in Harlem's public imagination.

Harlem Cultural Festivals

The best-known and attended events in the park were those associated with the Harlem Cultural Festival, a concert series held in 1967-1969 and 1971-1974. The concerts were the brainchild of Tony Lawrence, a local musician, church director, and talent promoter. His 1966 Harlem block parties were closely coordinated with the Lindsay administration to celebrate

[97] "Black Arts Movement (1965-1975)," *National Archives*, https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/black-power/arts
[98] Poetry Foundation, "The Last Poets," https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/the-last-poets.
[99] Abiodun Oyewole Oral History, Shawn Wilson, interviewer, "Interview Tape 8 Abiodun Oyewole recalls protesting the Harlem State Office Building's construction, pt. 1," The History Makers (2006-2007), https://connect.liblynx.com/wayf/fae6a168ce6fe54f8070dbb311a5226d
[100] Goldstein, *The Roots of Urban Renaissance*, 100.
[101] *New Yorker* via New York Public Radio archive, "Kimako Baraka," 10 Aug. 1971, https://www.wnyc.org/story/kimako-baraka/; "2,000 Blacks Mark 'Nation Time' with Verse and Song in Harlem," *NYT*, 14 June 1971.
[102] "Kimako Baraka," 10 Aug. 1971
[103] Sylviane Diouf and Komozi Woodard, eds. *Black Power 50* (New York: Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 2016), 60.
[104] On August 14, 1971, Louis Farrakhan spoke on behalf of the Nation of Islam at a rally in the park. Little information has been recovered about this event. "Farrakhan to Speak in Park," *Amsterdam News*, 14 Aug. 1971.

the city's first vest pocket park, located on West 128th Street.[105] In 1967, recognizing the success of holding free events in community parks, the city moved its four-year-old office of cultural affairs under the umbrella of the parks department. Doris Freedman, working under new Parks Commissioner August Heckscher, is credited with the festival concept as a larger approach to parks programming; there was an Olmsted Festival, Shakespeare Festival, and Asian Festival, among others, held in other parks.[106]

The administration viewed the festival as a way to diffuse tensions during what was a highly volatile time following the 1964 Harlem uprising—a response to police brutality—and the ongoing national movement for civil rights. It was intended to "cool 'hot summer'" for Harlem youth by attracting them to parks and away from street corners. The festival schedule aligned with the summer break for city schools.[107] For Lawrence, it was about unity, cultural expression, and celebrating Harlem: "The Festival is a showcase for Harlem, but talent and audience will come from all over New York, all over the Americas, and all over the world."[108]

Working from the agency's Central Park headquarters, Lawrence organized a large festival that would occur over nine summer weekends and feature different musical genres—calypso, Latin, gospel, and soul. The 1967 festival was held in various locations each weekend, including Mount Morris, St. Nicholas, and Morningside Parks. (Mount Morris Park hosted the festival's Gospel Music Night on August 8.) Not just music, boxing matches, go-kart races, a fashion show, and a beauty pageant were organized to engage larger numbers of youth. The second Harlem Cultural Festival in 1968 was held exclusively in Mount Morris Park over six summer weekends and featured top-tier talent, like gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, jazz pianist Count Basie, jazz fusionist Herbie Mann, and the mambo and Latin jazz star Tito Puente. Jackson's concert, held on July 28, attracted a crowd of 25,000.[109] The overall audience was even larger because the festival was broadcast on the local television station WNEW, thanks to the sponsorship of the Schaefer Brewing Company.

The 1969 festival performances are the most famous, drawing an estimated 300,000 attendees over six weekends between June and August. (Fig. 28-29) It, too, had a corporate sponsor—the coffee company Maxwell House. They featured an impressive lineup of talent representing a nexus of cultural cross-currents: civil rights icon Mahalia Jackson, Black pop act the 5th Dimension, soul singer Stevie Wonder, the gospel crossover Staple Singers, Motown artists Gladys Knight & the Pips, the funk-soul-psychedelic band Sly and the Family Stone, civil rights activist and singer Nina Simone, blues guitarist B.B. King, avant-garde jazz drummer Max Roach and singer Abbey Lincoln, the South African trumpeter Hugh Masekela, the Afro-Cuban conga drummer Mango Santamaria, among others.[110] The festival performances collectively came to be referred to as "Black Woodstock." Interviewed on the 55th anniversary of the June 29 performance (to the day), Harlem resident and festival attendee Scotty Bryant elaborated that the Harlem Cultural Festival was "Woodstock before Woodstock" since it predated the more famous rock festival, which occurred over a single weekend in August, by over a month.[111] In another oral history interview, longtime Harlem resident Glenn Hunter recalls the peace and pleasantness of

[105] The park, which was partially funded by the federal government and located on a 20-foot by 100-foot city lot in Harlem, was completed in May 1965. "Gala Party Opens Vest Pocket Park," *Amsterdam News*, 14 May 1966, 12.
[106] In his memoir, Heckscher recounts descending on the Mount Morris summit in Mayor Lindsay's helicopter, where Heckscher was to be sworn in. The location was chosen so that a definite construction date for the new recreation building and amphitheater could also be announced. However, the weather that day, March 16, 1967, necessitated relocating the ceremony to the gymnasium of a nearby school. August Heckscher, *Alive in the City: Memoir of An Ex-Commissioner* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1974), 62-63 (swearing-in ceremony), 161-164 (festivals).
[107] "Mrs. Brown's At Work to Cool 'Hot Summer'," *Amsterdam News*, 17 Feb. 1968, 27.
[108] "WNEW-TV to Televise Second Annual Harlem Cultural Festival," *Amsterdam News*, 18 May 1968, 19.
[109] Raymond Robinson, "Crowd Jams Park to Hear Mahalia," *Amsterdam News*, 3 August 1968, 16.
[110] Sly and the Family Stone was the only artist to play both the Harlem Cultural Festival and Woodstock. Raymond Robinson, "40,000 in Heat at Harlem Cultural Festival," *Amsterdam News*, 5 July 1969, 1.
[111] The upstate Woodstock took place August 15-18, coinciding with the fifth concert of the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival series. Bryant oral history.

the days and found that the concerts were a gift to the Harlem community. The performers traveled the globe but still made the time to perform in Mount Morris Park.[112]

In contrast to the actual Woodstock Festival, the setting of which, on a dairy farm in rural upstate New York, was beside the point, the Harlem Cultural Festival's location in Mount Morris Park, a public park in the heart of America's Black cultural and political capital, was intentional messaging. According to Lawrence, it was "about where the negro lives, physically and spiritually."[113] The concerts, showcasing Black talent and pride, were free, easily accessible, and family friendly. It was also a major economic opportunity for the community, employing hundreds in various roles, from television technicians to security guards. Pushcart and concession stand vendors ringed the park's perimeter during festivals, capitalizing on the crowds.[114] "The 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival was one of the most exciting things that happened in Harlem," says former congressman and Harlem native Charles Rangel. "And I know damn well that a whole lot of entertainers wanted to be part of the Harlem Festival." Bryant recalls the June 29 concert:

> At the Harlem concert, Sly and the Family Stone sang a record. It was called 'You Can Make It If You Try.' That was the most powerful record for me because, being 13, 14 years old, to hear that from someone big and successful, he was telling me that I can make it.[115]

According to the Rev. Jesse Jackson, who spoke at the July 13 concert with the Operation Breadbasket Orchestra, "The festival was a way to offset the pain we all felt after MLK. The artists tried to express the tensions of the time, a fierce pain and a fierce joy."[116] Jackson was then the director of Operation Breadbasket, an initiative of Martin Luther King Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference to pressure businesses to hire African Americans. The 1969 festival occurred just over a year after the King's assassination, an event that precipitated uprisings in major Black cities, including New York, and left the civil rights movement at a crossroads as the effectiveness of its non-violent protest tactics were increasingly questioned. (The nascent Black Panthers, a political organization rooted in Black Power ideology, provided supplementary security at the festival.) At Rev. Jackson's request, Mahalia Jackson sang King's favorite hymn, "Take My Hand, Precious Lord," in a duet with the much younger Mavis Staples, whose popularity was on the rise.

There were other moments during the festival when civil rights and systemic injustices were addressed, directly and indirectly. As historian Charles Hughes describes it, "Artists engaged with the Black freedom struggle in their performances. These included B.B. King's piercing discussion of American history, 'Why I Sing The Blues,' Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln's diasporic dream, 'Africa,' and the Staple Singers' urgent reminder, 'It's Been A Change.'"[117] Nina Simone, after singing "Revolution," her answer song to the 1968 Beatles hit of the same name, recited a provocative Black Nationalist poem by David Nelson of The Last Poets in which the lines include "Are you ready to smash things and burn buildings? …Are you ready to build Black things?" Even the affable Tony Lawrence, who emceed the festival and drew a government salary, called attention to the government's failure to meet the needs of the community by inviting on stage 200 members of the group protesting the planned state office building on 125th Street that summer.[118] Perhaps most poignantly, when asked for their impression of the first lunar landing, a groundbreaking event that coincided with the

112 Glenn Hunter, oral history by Jenna Dublin-Boc, 29 July 2024.
113 "WNEW-TV to Televise Second Annual Harlem Cultural Festival," *Amsterdam News.*
114 Raymond Robinson, "Harlem Cultural Festival Visited in Retrospect," *Amsterdam News,* 18 Oct. 1969, 20.
115 Bryant oral history.
116 Jonathan Bernstein, "This 1969 Music Fest Has Been Called 'Black Woodstock.' Why Doesn't Anyone Remember?" *Rolling Stone*, 9 Aug. 2019: https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/black-woodstock-harlem-cultural-festival-history-859626/
117 Charles L. Hughes, "Black Woodstock: The 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival," August 2024, Origins Current Events in Historical Perspective (Ohio State University): https://origins.osu.edu/read/black-woodstock-1969-harlem-cultural-festival
118 Bernstein, *Rolling Stone*.

festival's July 20 concert, concertgoers expressed disappointment that so much money was expended on reaching the moon when there was rampant hunger and poverty in their community.[119]

Despite the overwhelming success of the 1969 festival in terms of star power, attendance numbers, and the fact that there were no noteworthy security issues over six weekends, the Harlem Cultural Festival was not repeated on that scale again. The 1970 festival closed after just one show due to insufficient funding. With the parks department's continued support, Lawrence revived a smaller version of it in 1971-1974 with performances at the new Richard Rodgers Amphitheater. The 1971 festival collaborated with the youth enrichment organization Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (HARYOU-ACT).[120]

There are some likely explanations why the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival was not registered in the mass cultural consciousness like Woodstock despite being a watershed moment in music, social justice, and Black identity and pride. One attendee later noted, "Even though the festival was recorded all summer, it feels like it happened and then they threw it away." The Harlem Festival was a locally advertised affair organized under the aegis of the parks department as an event for the Harlem community. It did not have the logistical drama and generational rebellion that attended Woodstock, and that was amplified as a disaster in daily news coverage. CBS and ABC television networks each aired a special program on the festival soon after its conclusion, but they were never to be seen again. Perhaps of greater consequence was the festival's location in Harlem, which was labeled by many an urban ghetto and, therefore, not worth reporting on in the minds of white-run news organizations despite being just a few miles from their offices.[121]

The festival has belatedly achieved its due thanks to the 2021 release of the documentary *Summer of Soul (…Or, When the Revolution Could Not Be Televised)*. The film, directed by the music historian Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson, features extensive archival footage of the concerts captured by filmmaker Hal Tulchin, whose intention in filming them was to produce a feature-length film. Despite marketing it to movie executives as "Black Woodstock," Tulchin was unable to secure a deal. "Nobody was interested in a Black show. Nobody. Nobody cared about Harlem," he said when interviewed for the 2021 documentary. Instead, Tulchin's tape reels sat in his basement for decades.[122]

Establishing Cultural Identity Amidst Neighborhood Change

Harlem in the late 1960s and 1970s faced significant challenges amid the city's fiscal crisis, which hampered municipal services like park maintenance, police patrols, and garbage collection. This further exacerbated the trend in disinvestment by absentee property owners and lending institutions, reflected in the increasing number of abandoned buildings. (A field survey taken by local residents in this period documents twenty-six vacant buildings and twenty-seven empty lots in the vicinity of Mount Morris Park.[123]) Meanwhile, the city continued to bleed manufacturing and other blue-collar jobs as the local economy transitioned to a predominantly service sector one. In this environment, scrappy individual property owners with limited means took on the formidable task of rehabilitating row houses in red-lined neighborhoods like Mount Morris. In the absence of greater help from the government or large institutions, new grassroots organizations provided social services to the neighborhood's growing number of at-risk youth and individuals suffering from addiction.

Even against this backdrop, in 1966, members of the Mount Morris Park Rehabilitation Committee, including Hilda Stokely, began lobbying the city's newly established Landmarks Preservation Commission to protect the neighborhood's

[119] *Summer of Soul (…Or When the Revolution Could Not be Televised),* directed by Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson (Onyx Collective and Searchlight Pictures, 2021).
[120] "Harlem Summer's End Festival Set for Mt. Morris Park August 29," *Amsterdam News*, 21 Aug. 1971,
[121] The *New York Times* published brief reports on the events for its local section.
[122] *Summer of Soul.*
[123] Stokely Papers.

architectural character by designating the blocks immediately west and south of the park as a historic district. They saw this as an important tool for stabilizing the neighborhood and retaining residents.[124] It took five years for the commission to designate the Mount Morris Park Historic District (NR listed 1973; NR boundary increase 1996). However, in 1967, at the same hearing in which Grand Central Terminal, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Carnegie Hall were considered, the fire watchtower at the top of the park's mount was designated an individual landmark despite its deteriorated condition (NR listed 1976.)

Mount Morris Park, like other urban parks, was a haven for drug use and other dangerous or illicit activities. Community Thing, a subsidiary of the Community Council on Housing, undertook an extensive forty-four-block, door-to-door survey on drug use in July 1970 that was subsequently cited by the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH) in testimony before Congress. The group also operated addiction treatment centers and juvenile group homes in abandoned buildings on and near the park. The group's community-centered programs were "oriented toward self-and-mutual-help treatment practices" and stressed "Black heritage identity" as part of the larger mission.[125] Its lack of certified professionals, governing structure, or any leases or deeds was an obstacle to receiving funding from larger organizations and agencies, including the NIMH. The inclusion of "thing" in its name is influenced by a popular slang term. In The Last Poet's famous poem, "What's Your Thing, Brother?" the word "thing" meant one's passion or affiliation to revolutionary politics and echoed a similar sentiment.[126]

During this period, organized events were what brought most people into the park, an important one being the annual Holcombe Rucker Memorial Basketball Tournament. It was started in the 1950s by Rucker (1926-1965), a Harlem playground director, and soon after became a basketball showcase where professional stars played against street legends.[127] It also featured a youth league. The 1965 tournament, sponsored by HARYOU-ACT, engaged hundreds of junior high and high school kids on the courts of Mount Morris Park.[128] It was the first of 16 consecutive years the youth tournament was hosted there.

The Renaming of Marcus Garvey Park

The Nation of Islam, the African freedom movements of the late 1960s, and the re-emergence of Black Nationalism strongly influenced early 1970s Harlem culture and politics. Marcus Garvey's work and messages were revived and celebrated, potentially more than in his own time.[129] For community-based organizations like the Harlem Council for Economic Development, which was led by the civil rights activist James Lawson, the fight for self-determination also

[124] The Rehabilitation Committee's efforts intensified when bulldozers arrived to demolish historic row houses on Mount Morris Park West, which would become known as the Ruins, for the construction of a drug treatment facility. The demolition was halted and plans for the drug treatment facility were shelved. Tracie Rozhon, "Dreams, and Now Hope Among the Ruins," *NYT*, 16 Aug. 1998, F1.
[125] Clay Evans, "Narcotics Program Find Goings Tough," *Amsterdam News*, 11 July 1970.
[126] "The Last Poets," *Record Collector*, 10 June 2019, https://recordcollectormag.com/articles/last-poets. According to a 2019 interview published online, founding Last Poet Abiodun Oyewole explained the song this way: "The song of the day was 'It's Your Thing, Do What You Want to Do,' a song by The Isley Brothers. I heard black folks walking up to other black folks saying, 'What's your thing, brother?' Brothers would say, 'Oh I'm a member of the Nation of Islam' or, 'I'm a member of the Black Panther Party.' But I just said right away that when you said, 'What's Your Thing?,' you're talking about what's your affiliation with the black power movement. My very first poem was entitled What is Your Thing? Is it a Black Thing? Save black women and children, we'll build a black nation." Jayson Buford, "When the Revolution Comes: An Interview with the Last Poets" (June 13, 2019), Passion of the Weiss website, https://www.passionweiss.com/2019/06/13/last-poets-interview/
[127] Russ Bengston, "A History of Rucker Park: The True Mecca of Basketball" (no date): https://www.complex.com/sports/history-of-rucker-park-true-basketball-mecca
[128] Mount Morris Park folders.
[129] Columbia University Center for New Media Teaching and Learning, "Mapping the African American Past: Kenneth Jackson discussed Marcus Garvey Park and the Man for Whom it was Named," https://maap.columbia.edu/video/29.html.

included renaming public institutions and places after famous individuals of African descent to reflect Black heritage and pride. Beginning in the 1960s, Harlem community organizer Ora Mobley initiated the Harlem Council's renaming campaign. In 1967, they successfully petitioned to rename John Hancock School on West 127th Street in honor of Harriet Tubman. In addition to renaming, the council picketed to increase the number of Black educators and administrators in public schools. In 1971, the Central Harlem Mother's Association, also spearheaded by Mobley, petitioned the commissioner of hospitals to rename Harlem Hospital for Dr. Louis T. Wright, who led pioneering cancer research and was the first Black physician to join the staff of this city hospital.[130] While unsuccessful in that effort, the renaming campaign expanded to streets, parks, and institutions, embedding a Black legacy in the public landscape.[131]

The renaming campaign, led by Community Thing, came to Mount Morris Park in 1973. In 1970, its volunteers found a previously unknown collection of 10,000 papers attributed to the late Marcus Garvey in an abandoned tenement they were renovating near the park.[132] The discovery set off a public debate about ownership of the papers and accessibility to them. Community Thing director Beraneece Sims argued that the recently completed Recreation Center in Mount Morris Park should serve as a museum for the study of Marcus Garvey. At the time, she was the chair of the organizing committee for the new complex.[133] However, city administrators did not support changing the multi-use programming of the building.[134] The renaming of the park in honor of Marcus Garvey may have been a compromise with the city.[135] It was nonetheless championed by the Harlem Council, Community Thing, and City Councilman Fred Samuel, who would later be part of the effort to rename Jackie Robinson Park (formerly Colonial Park). The City Council unanimously approved the name change on July 19, 1973.[136] The following month, dozens attended the renaming ceremony, including Mobley, Samuel, Lawson, and officials from the parks department.[137] The Mount Morris Park Rehabilitation Committee did not support the renaming effort as its members felt it robbed the newly established historic district of its connotation.[138]

After the Period of Significance: Second Harlem Renaissance

As the city's fiscal crisis abated, forces of gentrification and its effects became evident in Harlem, particularly in the rising real estate values and increasing number of white residents. The neighborhood also continued to be shaped from within by community organizations active in housing rehabilitation and economic development. These forms of self-generated revival would be known as Harlem's Second Renaissance.[139] In this context of hopefulness for a future Harlem created for and by its African American residents, a celebratory parade honoring Marcus Garvey's birthday was an annual tradition in the park in the 1980s.[140] In 1985, the Garvey Day Committee sponsored pan-Africanist talks and "cultural presentations."[141] Two years later, Susan Taylor, then editor-in-chief of *ESSENCE* magazine, and Marta Vega, executive director of the Caribbean Cultural Center, co-chaired a festival to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Garvey's birth. Called "Raising the Black Star" in recognition of Garvey's shipping company called the Black Star Line, the event featured an

[130] Charlayne Hunter, "Harlem Hospital Focus of Dispute," *NYT*, 14 Jan. 1971, 33 L.
[131] Mobley, *Nobody Gave Me Permission*, 44-46.
[132] Les Matthews, "'Come in My Child' for Young Drug Addicts," *Amsterdam News*, 21 March1970; Carole Lyles, "Garvey Papers Mystery," *Amsterdam News*, 16 May 1970, 45.
[133] Letter to Beraneece Sims from Courtney Callender, Ass. Administrator, Community Projects, Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs, February 1970, Stokely Papers.
[134] "An Arts Complex Opens in Harlem," *NYT*, 27 June 1970, 25.
[135] No internal memos or correspondence on the subject were found in the Department of Parks or other agency archives.
[136] "Renaming of 3 Places in City Clears Council," *NYT*, 20 July 1973, 35.
[137] The official name at the time of its renaming was Marcus Garvey Memorial Park, but the Parks Department recognizes it as simply Marcus Garvey Park. "Marcus Garvey Memorial Park," *Amsterdam News*, 3 Sept. 1973.
[138] Informal interview with Madlyn Stokely by Marissa Marvelli, 19 June 2024.
[139] Peter Bailey, "Can Harlem Be Saved?" *Ebony Magazine*, January 1983, 84.
[140] "Marcus Garvey's birth honored by Harlem poet," *Amsterdam News*,16 Aug. 1986, 23.
[141] "Group Honors Garvey," *Amsterdam News*, 17 Aug. 1985.

array of Caribbean, African American, and Brazilian musical and dance performances to promote cultural pride and unity.[142]

Mount Morris Park Community Improvement Association

In 1981, Patricia Pates-Eaton founded the Mount Morris Park Community Improvement Association (MMPCIA), initially in response to the growing crack epidemic in and around the park.[143] Early on, MMPCIA's organizing work focused on a row of partially demolished, state-owned row houses, referred to as "the Ruins," on Mount Morris Park West at West 120th Street. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, MMPCIA successfully fought several state proposals for the site, including a 1990 proposal to expand an existing minimum-security women's prison at 10 Mount Morris Park West.[144] In 1998, the powerful Empire State Development Corporation, a quasi-government entity, announced that the ruins would be redeveloped as a thirty-four-unit luxury condominium development disguised behind sensitively reconstructed facades, restoring the block's historic residential use and character.

While the MMPCIA worked to increase home ownership and promote the preservation of row houses through its annual house tours, the run-down condition of the park continued to be an obstacle to more extensive neighborhood renewal. In 1983, the Harlem Urban Development Corporation commissioned a study of four public spaces in Harlem, including Marcus Garvey Park. Architectural consultants Laura Orsorio and Eric Gerdes published a report that year that documented the park's deterioration and identified opportunities for improvement. The photos they included show the large flagpole lying prostrate across the Acropolis. The buildings were underused or not at all in use. The pool exterior was tagged with graffiti. They noted that the fire watchtower, a designated landmark by this time, was in dire need of stabilization. Stone steps and flagging needed resetting. They recommended that the mount itself be designated a scenic landmark.[145]

The report was a catalyst for renewed advocacy by the MMPCIA for park improvements. In response, the parks department commissioned several architectural and landscape assessments of the park, the most extensive being a 1987 schematic plan prepared by the landscape architecture firm Quennell Rothschild Associates in association with Armstrong Cumming Architects. It identified areas for improvement related to park use, vegetation, drainage, vandalism, and design.[146] Some of their recommendations were carried out in subsequent years: The abandoned 1930s park buildings on the east side of the park were demolished; the asphalt-covered oval in the southwest corner was replaced with a turfed softball diamond; and selective tree removal was conducted on the outcrop to reopen views. In the 1990s, eager to attract more park visitors, the MMPCIA organized cultural programs in the park, like the "Sunday Afternoons in Harlem," which featured modern dance.[147]

Gentrification's Cultural Effects

By the end of the 1990s, hope was fading that the Second Renaissance would center on a large-scale transformation led by its working-class residents. Instead, the preexisting neighborhood culture was challenged by wealthier newcomers. In Marcus Garvey Park, the African and Caribbean tradition of group drumming became a flashpoint for tensions around

[142] "Slate Garvey Tribute," *Amsterdam News*, 22 Aug. 1987.
[143] Kelly Carroll, "Mount Morris Park Community Improvement Association Oral History," 25 Aug. 2021, 3.
[144] Tracie Rozhon, "Dreams, and Now Hope Among the Ruins," *NYT*, August 16, 1998.
[145] Laura Orsorio and Eric Gerdes, "Central Park North, Marcus Garvey Park, Lenox Avenue, Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard Site Analysis Report to Harlem Urban Development Corporation," (May 1983), n.p., copy in Stokely Papers.
[146] "Schematic Plan for Marcus Garvey (Mount Morris) Park Prepared by Quennell Rothschild Associates and Armstrong Cumming Architects for City of New York Parks and Recreation," Nov. 1987. Copy in Stokely Papers.
[147] "Sunday Afternoon in Harlem to Feature Mosley," *New Amsterdam News*, 26 Oct. 1996.

gentrification in Harlem at the millennium. On Saturday afternoons since 1969, the percussive sounds of a drummers' circle reverberated in the park, with community members freely joining to drum or dance. For longtime residents, the weekly event represented "a beautiful kind of cultural memory of being in Harlem," as local gallery owner Saundra Heath described.[148] The drumming marked each weekend, becoming integral to the neighborhood's rhythm, not unlike the regular ringing of the tower's fire bell generations before.

However, new residents living in new high-rise apartment buildings nearby did not share Heath's sentiment and instead filed noise complaints. In response, city officials repeatedly relocated the drummers' circle within the park as complaints mounted. This, in turn, provoked anger among longtime community members who questioned the authority of newcomers to dictate the use of public space. "It was a big deal," Heath recalled. "There's a lot of anger around it because it's like, how? You know? Who and how dare you? And how do you get to determine what happens in the park? And how do you get to determine that people who've been here forever can no longer do X, Y, and Z?"[149]

The controversy eventually resulted in a compromise solution: establishing a dedicated location in the park at the northeast base of the mount, complete with benches arranged in a circular formation, thus formalizing what had once been a spontaneous, organic gathering. The drummers' circle controversy exemplifies broader tensions around preserving cultural practices in public spaces during neighborhood change, highlighting questions about who determines the acceptable uses of shared community spaces.

Continued Park Activism: Marcus Garvey Park Alliance and Save Harlem Now!

In recent years, another organization has focused exclusively on improving the park. The Marcus Garvey Park Alliance (MGPA) was founded in 1999 by a group of area residents to advocate for park maintenance, safety, preservation, and general enhancements that benefit the wider community. MGPA members were among the 1,000 people who gathered at Union Square the weekend before September 11, 2001, to rally local electoral candidates for a 1 percent increase to the city's parks budget.[150] After a series of visioning sessions held in 2001 and 2002, MGPA raised over $6 million to put toward improving the amphitheater and restoring the fire watchtower. The former was successfully upgraded in 2010; the latter was sensitively restored in 2015-2019.[151]

MGPA's efforts are aided by another local organization, Save Harlem Now!, which advocates for the documentation and preservation of culturally and architecturally significant places throughout Harlem. The group is currently campaigning for capital improvements to the Ifill Johnson Hanchard pool and bathhouse and its recognition as a significant example of Modernist civic architecture by a Black architectural firm.

Conclusion

For close to two centuries, the twenty-acre public green space now called Marcus Garvey Park has been a place of refuge and cultural expression for Harlem residents. The relative scarcity of parks in this part of Manhattan has heightened its importance as a community resource worth defending and advocating for, as local groups have done for decades. The park's very existence is the result of successful lobbying by local residents who, in 1835, did not want to see the seventy-foot-tall rocky eminence, a popular picnic spot, obliterated for an avenue. Its official establishment as Mount Morris

[148] Heath oral history.
[149] Heath oral history.
[150] Yusef Salaam, "Parks 2001 Campaign: Restoring, Reforming, Revitalizing City Parks," *New Amsterdam News*, 13 Sept. 2001.
[151] Valerie Jo Bradley, interview by Jenna Dublin-Boc, 14 Nov. 2024.

Square the following year makes it among Manhattan's oldest parks and Harlem's oldest—a reason for the park's nomination in the area of community development.

The park's central location is fundamental to it being a physical and cultural nexus—just one short block separates it from the clamor of Harlem's most defining commercial corridor, 125th Street. It interrupts Fifth Avenue, the central spine of Harlem, and also the historic dividing line between African American Central Harlem and Spanish East Harlem. This reality has imbued events held there with great symbolism, none more so than the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival, a multi-genre, multi-ethnic musical showcase that, while intended to be in and of Harlem, spoke bluntly to the fraught moment felt nationally in terms of civil rights, social justice, and Black identity. This is among the reasons the park is nominated in the area of social history, Black heritage, and performing arts.

Marcus Garvey Park largely retains its 1930s landscape built by laborers employed through the Works Progress Administration and designed by Aymar Embury II and Gilmore Clarke, who worked at the direction of Parks Commissioner Robert Moses. As in other parks, they replaced the previous Picturesque layout, designed in the late 1860s by Ignatz Pilát, with a formalistic arrangement of linear walks and oval lawns. The most defining feature of their plan, the massive terrace atop the mount, known as the Acropolis, is wholly intact.

The park's redevelopment in this period was more than an aesthetic change; it introduced equipment and facilities that supported child-centered play, reflecting changing trends in public recreation. However, this new programming and later facilities reflect the park's legacy as a contested public space. In the 1930s, the park was claimed by a vocal but dwindling population of well-off white residents who resented the growing presence of Black and Latino children in what they felt was their park. Embury and Clarke acceded to some of their demands by locating the basketball courts and swing sets in the park's southeast corner, where they remain today. The 1960s efforts by a wholly different contingent of park users and advocates representing a majority Black neighborhood challenged the same parks department over the lack of park maintenance and security and pressed the opaque agency for major capital improvements. The 1970 recreation center and amphitheater complex and the 1971 pool represent the community's decade-long crusade to bring more substantial recreational facilities to their neighborhood.

Finally, the renaming of the park in 1973 to honor the late Black Nationalist leader—an effort led by yet a different group of Harlem residents—is a significant symbolic act of space-claiming and the earliest renaming of a major park in the city.[152] Such renaming of institutions and places reflects the limited options at the time for elevating Black heritage and pride in the public realm, given the paucity of Black-built civic spaces of consequence. Such symbolism contributes to Marcus Garvey Park's significance in the area of Black heritage.

[152] The earliest open space in the city to be named for a Black person is Dorrance Brooks Square (a contributing resource in the Dorrance Brooks Square District, NR listed 2019.) Located at 136th Street in Central Harlem, it was dedicated in 1925 to Dorrance Brooks, a soldier who died in action while serving with a segregated military regiment in the First World War. It is a small triangular remnant of land formed by the intersection of St. Nicholas and Edgecombe avenues.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
____previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

__X__State Historic Preservation Office (oral history transcripts; annotated bibliography)
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
____Local government
____University
____Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

DRAFT Marcus Garvey Park New York Co., NY
Name of Property County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 19.64
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84:_____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)
Reference points use the WGS 1984 datum.

1. Latitude: 40.806249 Longitude: -73.944209
2. Latitude: 40.805072 Longitude: -73.941429
3. Latitude: 40.802739 Longitude: -73.943133
4. Latitude: 40.803916 Longitude: -73.945913

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nomination boundaries are 124th Street on the north, Madison Avenue on the east, 110th Street on the south, and Mount Morris Park West on the west. They are indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed site map with scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries shown on the enclosed site map are the historic boundaries of the park as recognized by the City and State of New York.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marissa Marvelli, Jenna Dublin-Boc, Neil Larson
organization Neil Larson & Associates date Dec. 16, 2024
street & number 60 Noone Lane telephone
city or town Kingston state NY zip code 12401

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

  A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Fig. 1: A ca. 1782 depiction of future Mount Morris (right-most mount) in its historic cluster. Scanned image of the British Headquarters Map of New York, published in Manhattan in Maps (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1997).

Fig. 2: John Randel Farm Map depicting property boundaries in ca. 1820 with the Commissioner's Plan of 1811 traced over. Mount Morris is labeled "Snake Hill" on this map. John Randel Farm Map, No. 62, Vol. 2, P15 from NYC Municipal Archives via Museum of the City of New York online exhibition, "The Greatest Grid": https:// thegreatestgrid.mcny.org/greatest-grid/

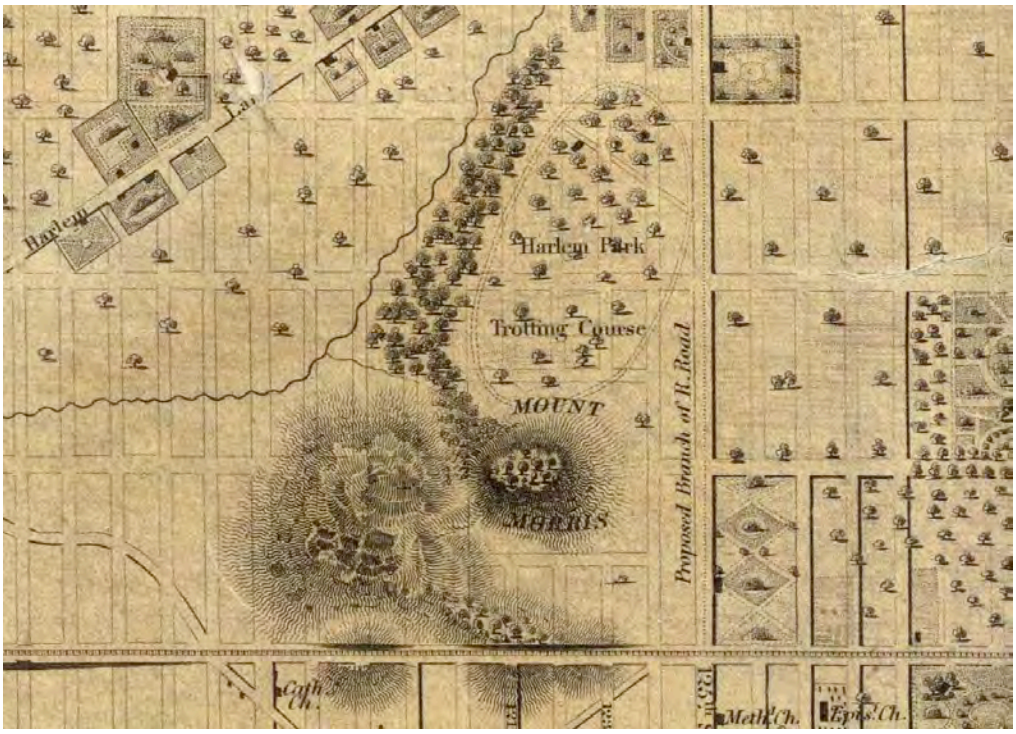


Fig. 3: Colton Map of New York, 1836, depicting the newly established Mount Morris Square and the Harlem Park Trotting Course cutting into its west side. From David Rumsey Map Collection: https://www.davidrumsey.com/

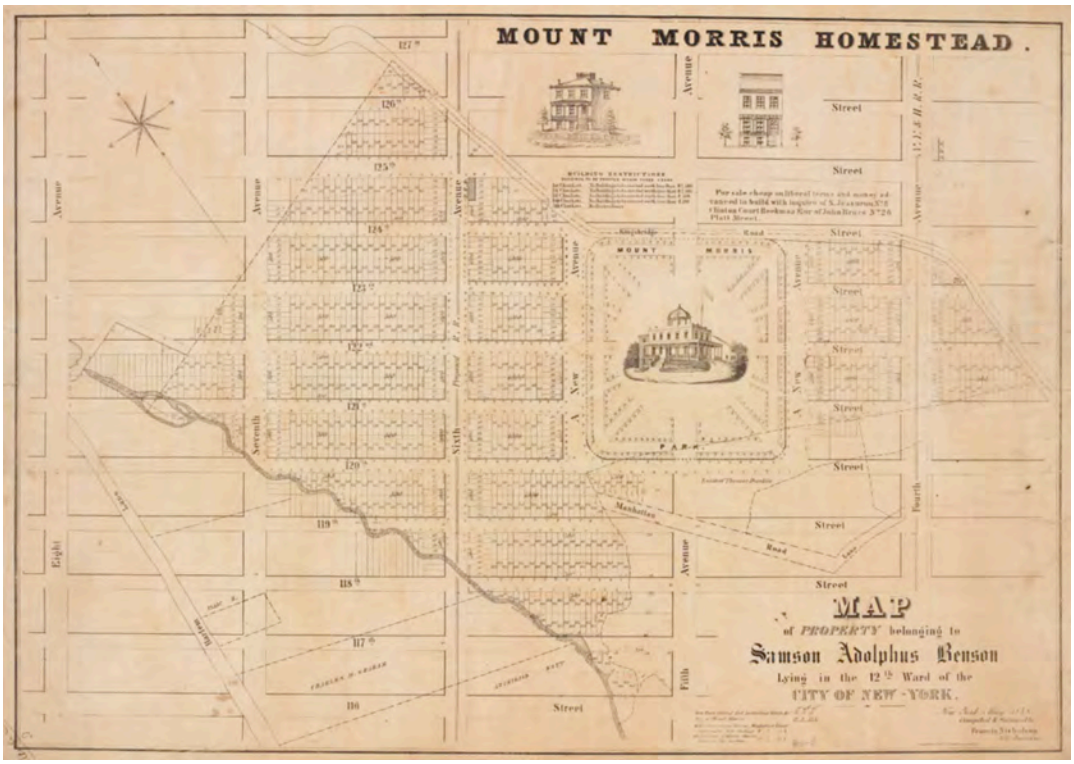


Fig. 4: Francis Nicholson, "Mount Morris Homestead. Map of Property Belonging Samson Adolphus Benson Lying in the 12th Ward of the City of New York, May 1848, compiled and surveyed by Francis Nicholson, city surveyor." Lithograph published by Mayer & Korff. Source: Museum of the City of New York, The J. Clarence Davies Collection, 29.100.2880

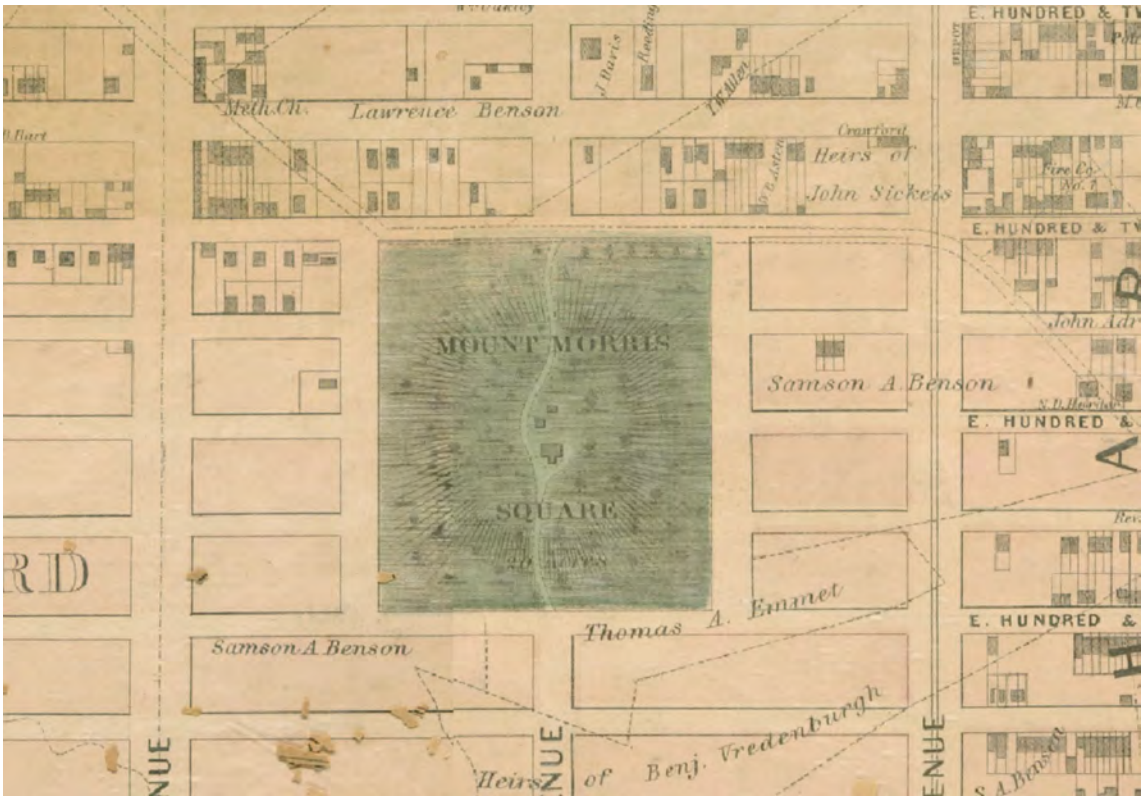


Fig. 5: Composite Dripps Map of 1867 Lionel Pincus and Princess Firyal Map Division, The New York Public Library Digital Collections.

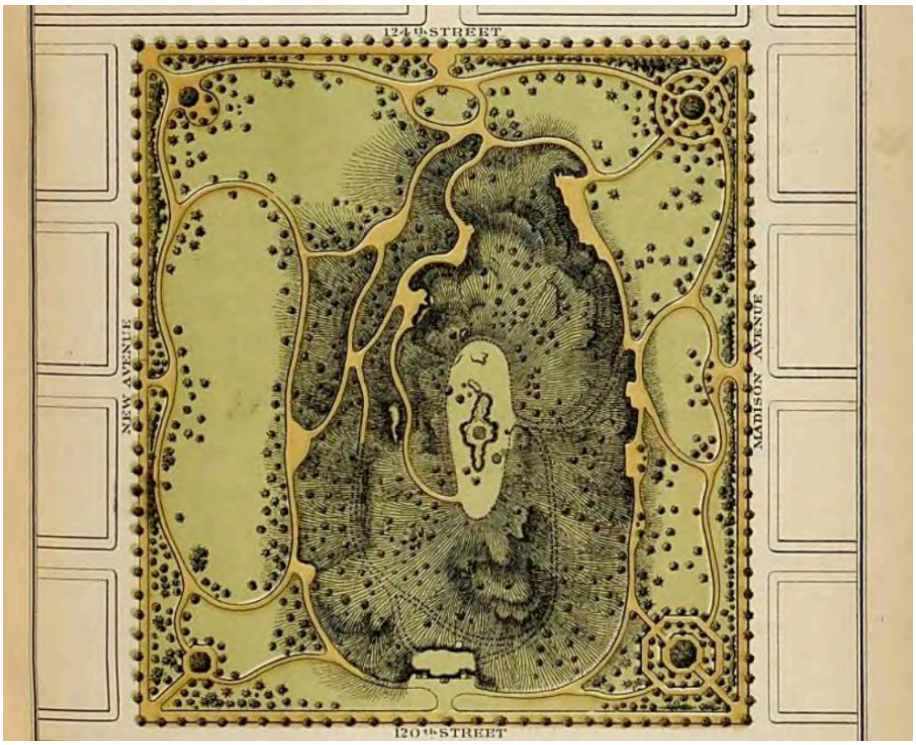


Fig. 6: Ignatz Pilát plan for Mount Morris Square. From First Annual Report of The Board of Commissioners of the Department of Public Works (New York: William C. Bryant & Co., 1871), 294.

Fig. 7: View of the Fire Watchtower from the northeast in 1975. Photo by Stephen Zane for HAER report, Library of Congress.

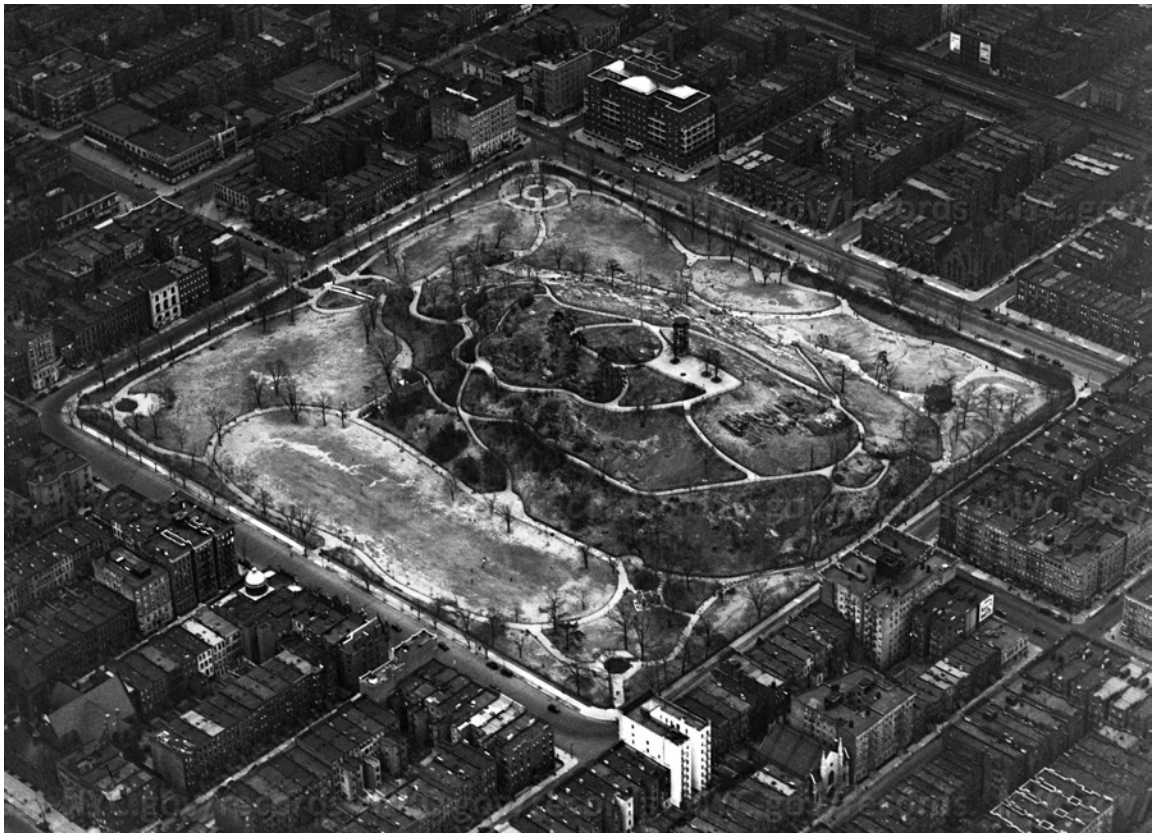


Fig. 8: Aerial photo of the park from the southwest in January 1934. Image Source Attributed to NYC Parks' Archived Collection.

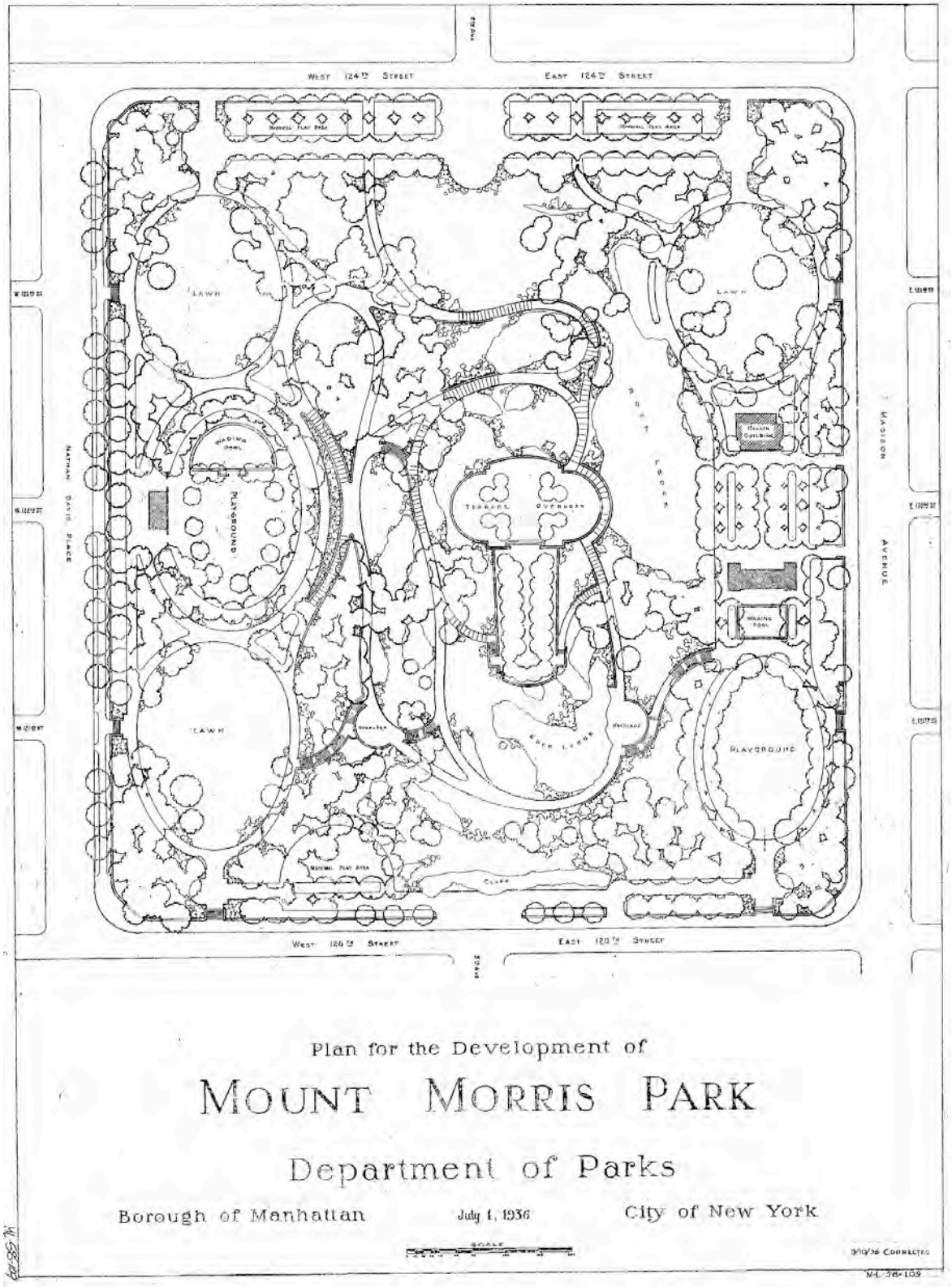


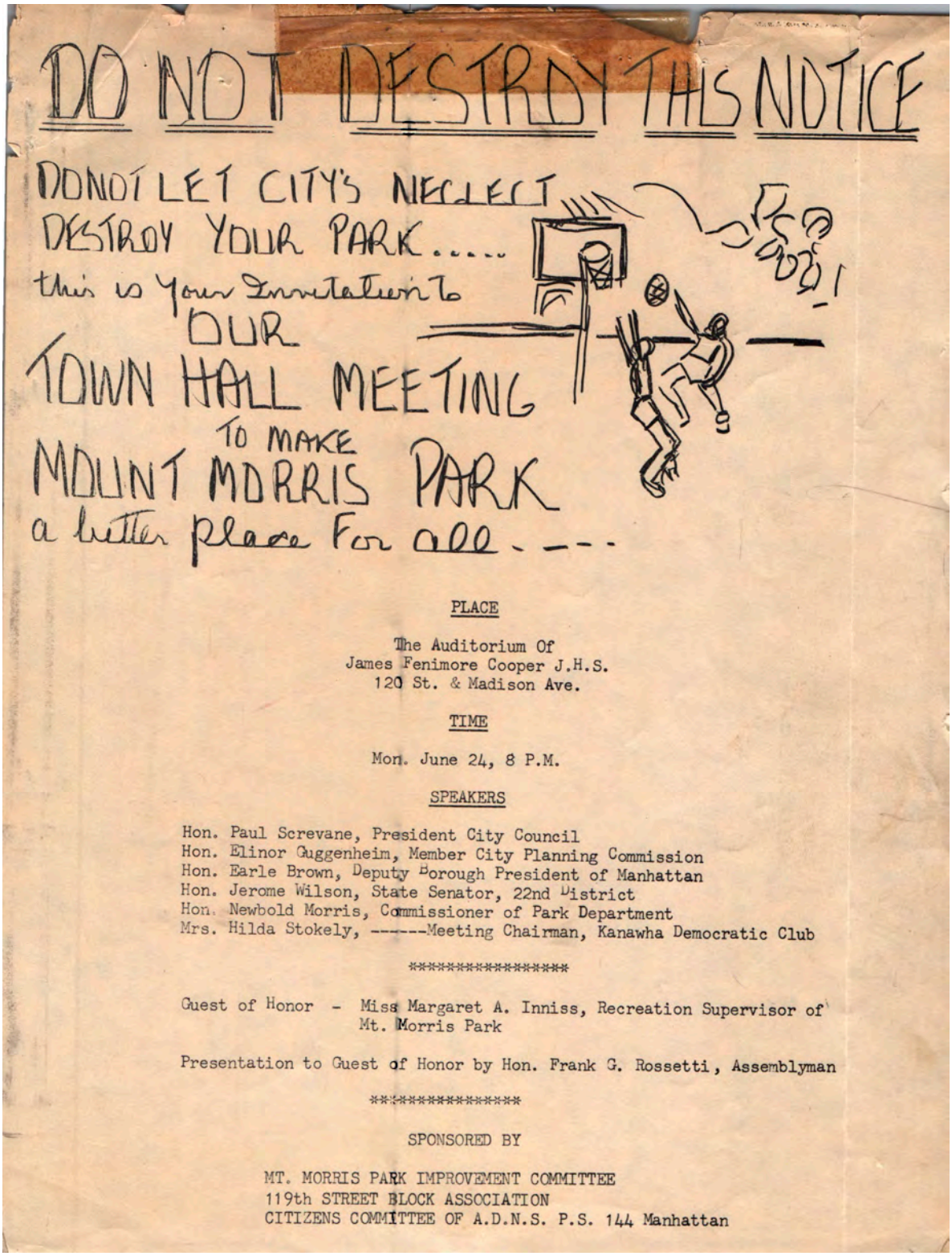
Fig. 9: NYC Department of Parks plan for Mount Morris Park, July 1, 1936. Image Source Attributed to NYC Parks' Archived Collection.

Fig. 10: View from the southwest of the large flagpole left of watchtower at the Acropolis in 1939. Image Source Attributed to NYC Parks' Archived Collection.

Fig. 11: View from the southeast of playground oval in March 1937. Recreation Building at far right. Image Source Attributed to NYC Parks' Archived Collection.

Fig. 12: Department of Health Baby Health Clinic at east side of Mount Morris Park in March 1940. The Dept. of Public Works Collection, NYC Municipal Archives.

Fig. 13: Dedication ceremony at west side of Mount Morris Park on October 15, 1938, attended by Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, and Civil Service Commissioner Ferdinand Morton. Photo: Times Wide World, NYT.



DO NOT DESTROY THIS NOTICE

DONOT LET CITY'S NEGLECT
DESTROY YOUR PARK.....
this is Your Invitation to
OUR
TOWN HALL MEETING
TO MAKE
MOUNT MORRIS PARK
a better place For all.---

PLACE

The Auditorium Of
James Fenimore Cooper J.H.S.
120 St. & Madison Ave.

TIME

Mon. June 24, 8 P.M.

SPEAKERS

Hon. Paul Screvane, President City Council
Hon. Elinor Guggenheim, Member City Planning Commission
Hon. Earle Brown, Deputy Borough President of Manhattan
Hon. Jerome Wilson, State Senator, 22nd District
Hon. Newbold Morris, Commissioner of Park Department
Mrs. Hilda Stokely, ------Meeting Chairman, Kanawha Democratic Club

****

Guest of Honor - Miss Margaret A. Inniss, Recreation Supervisor of Mt. Morris Park

Presentation to Guest of Honor by Hon. Frank G. Rossetti, Assemblyman

****

SPONSORED BY

MT. MORRIS PARK IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE
119th STREET BLOCK ASSOCIATION
CITIZENS COMMITTEE OF A.D.N.S. P.S. 144 Manhattan

Fig. 14: Flyer for June 24, 1963 community meeting about Mount Morris Park conditions, which was attended by Parks Commissioner Newbold Morris. Image Source: Hilda and Madlyn Stokely Papers, Private Collection, New York, NY.

Fig. 15: Members of the Mount Morris Park Rehabilitation Committee photographed in the park in early 1963. At center is State Assemblyman Frank Rosetti, who served as the first chair of the committee. Image Source: Hilda and Madlyn Stokely Papers, Private Collection, New York, NY.

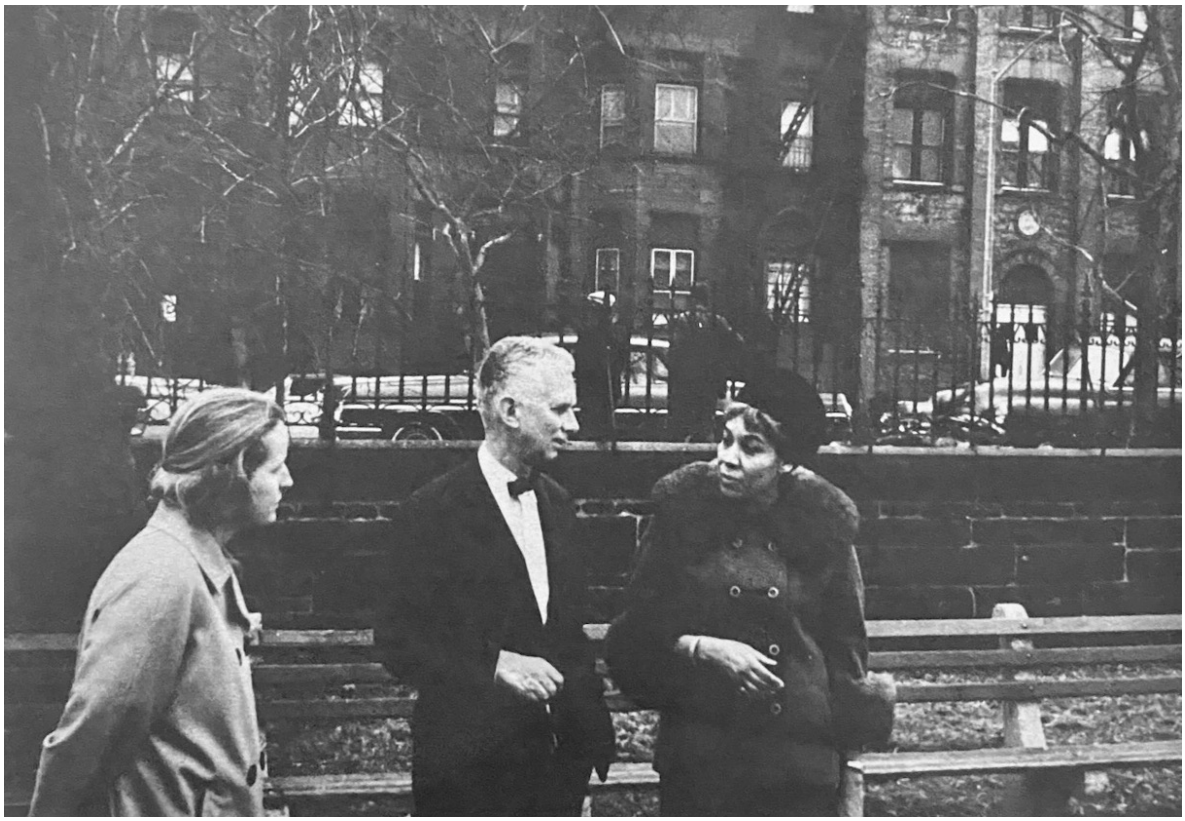


Fig. 16: Hilda Stokely (right) speaking with Elinor Guggenheimer and Parks Commissioner August Heckscher at Mount Morris Park in 1967. Source: Hilda and Madlyn Stokely Papers, Private Collection, New York, NY.

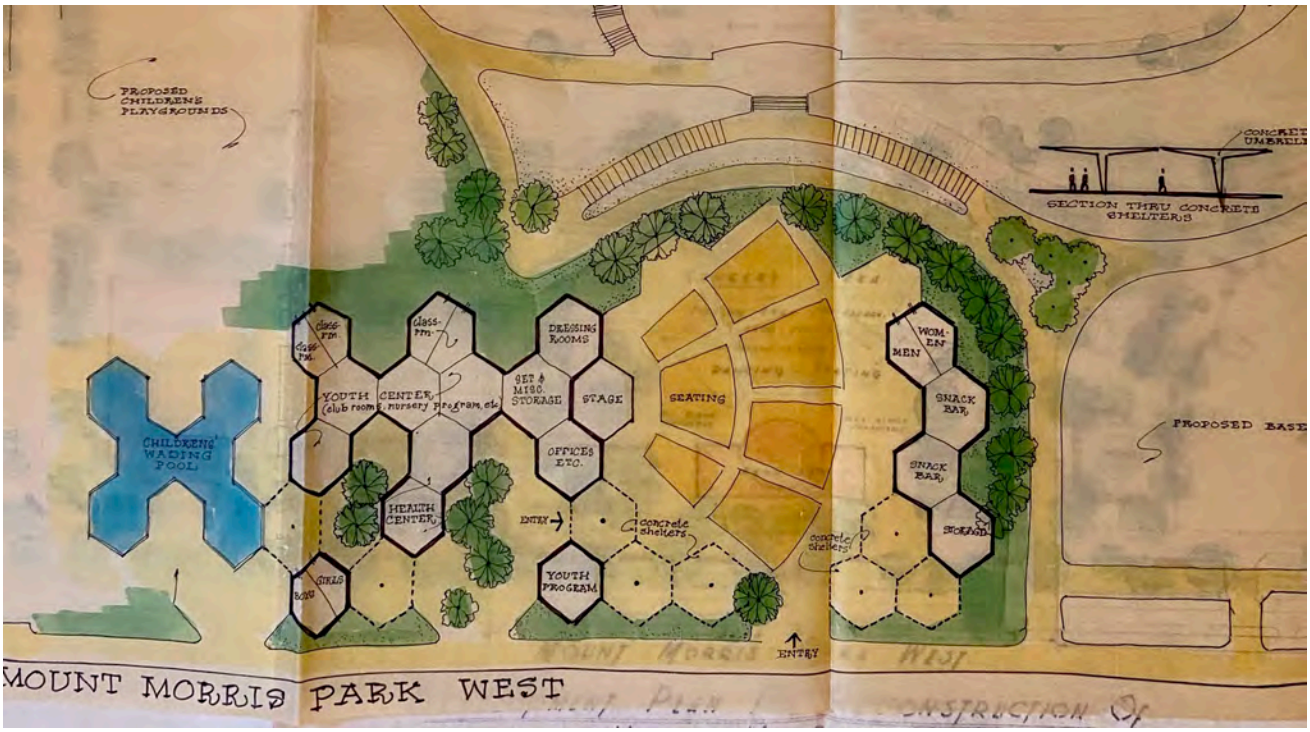


Fig. 17: Undated design sketch drawn by Arthur Rosenblatt, working pro bono for the Rehabilitation Committee, likely made in 1964. Source: Hilda and Madlyn Stokely Papers, Private Collection, New York, NY.

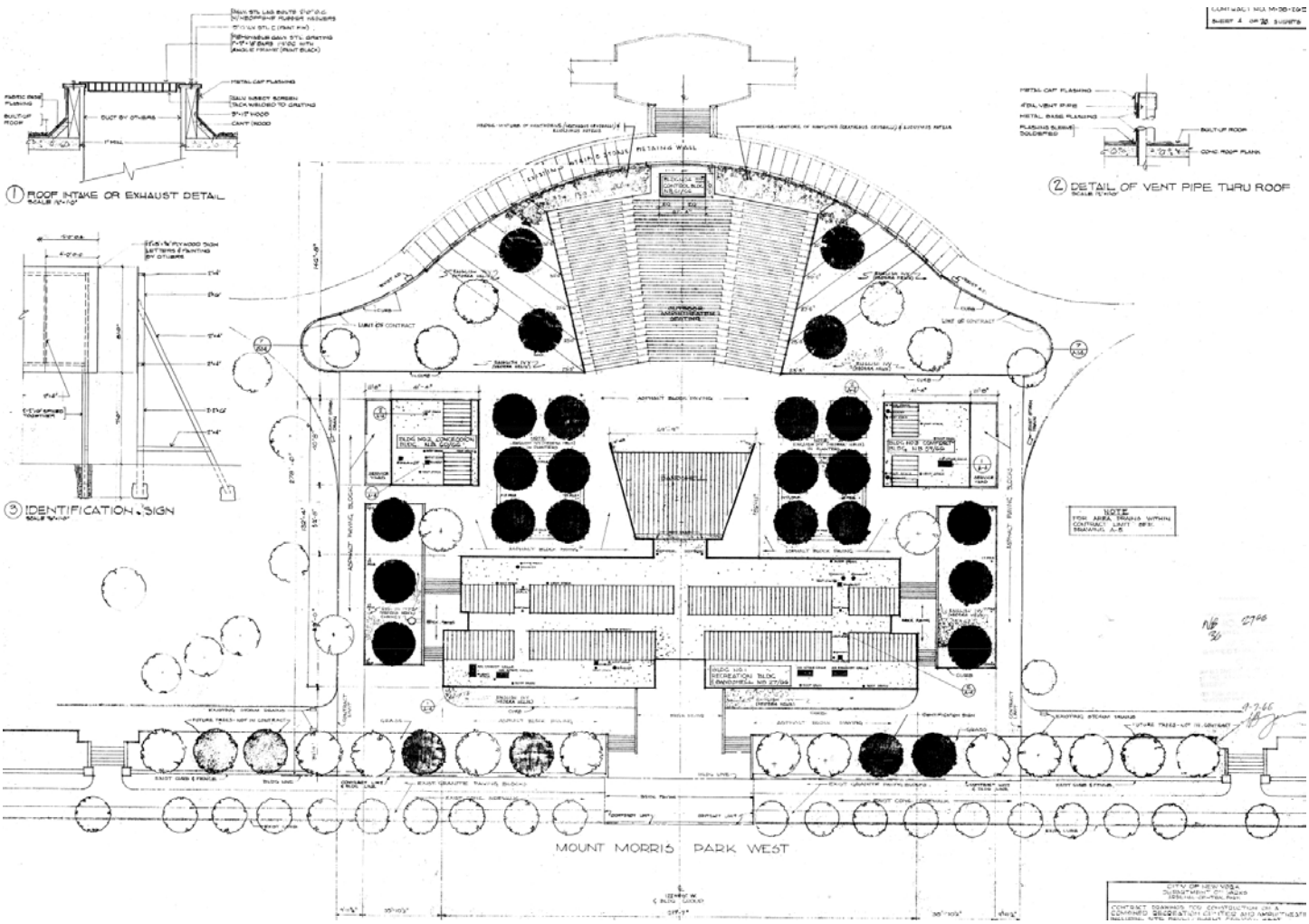


Fig. 18: Site plan for Recreation Center-Amphitheater Complex, prepared in 1966 by Lundquist & Stonehill. Image Source Attributed to NYC Parks' Archived Collection.

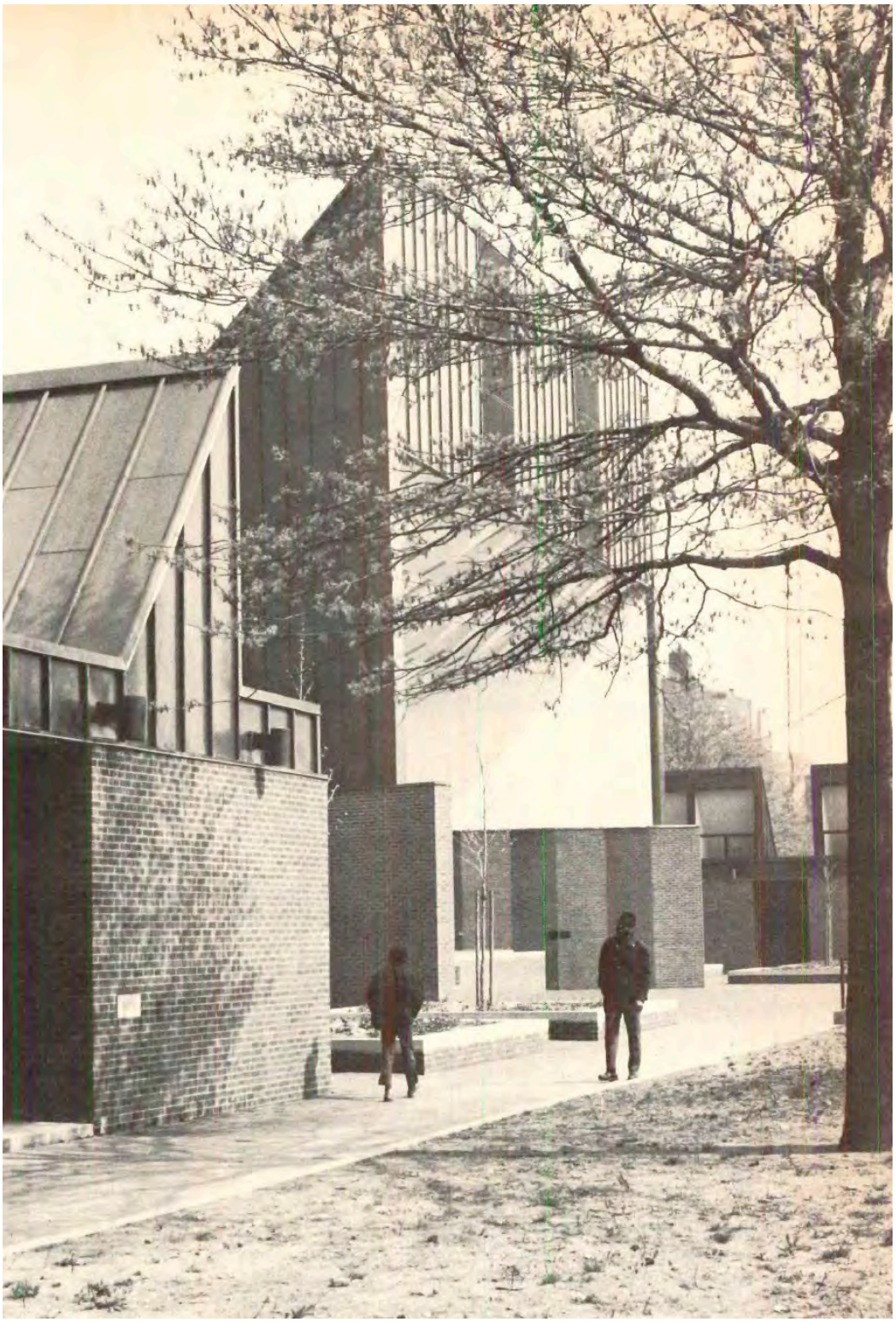


Fig. 19: Ancillary buildings—a comfort station (left) and concession stand (in distance at right) with the bandshell in between. Photo by Bryant Conant, Dudley Grey for *Progressive Architecture*, April 1972.

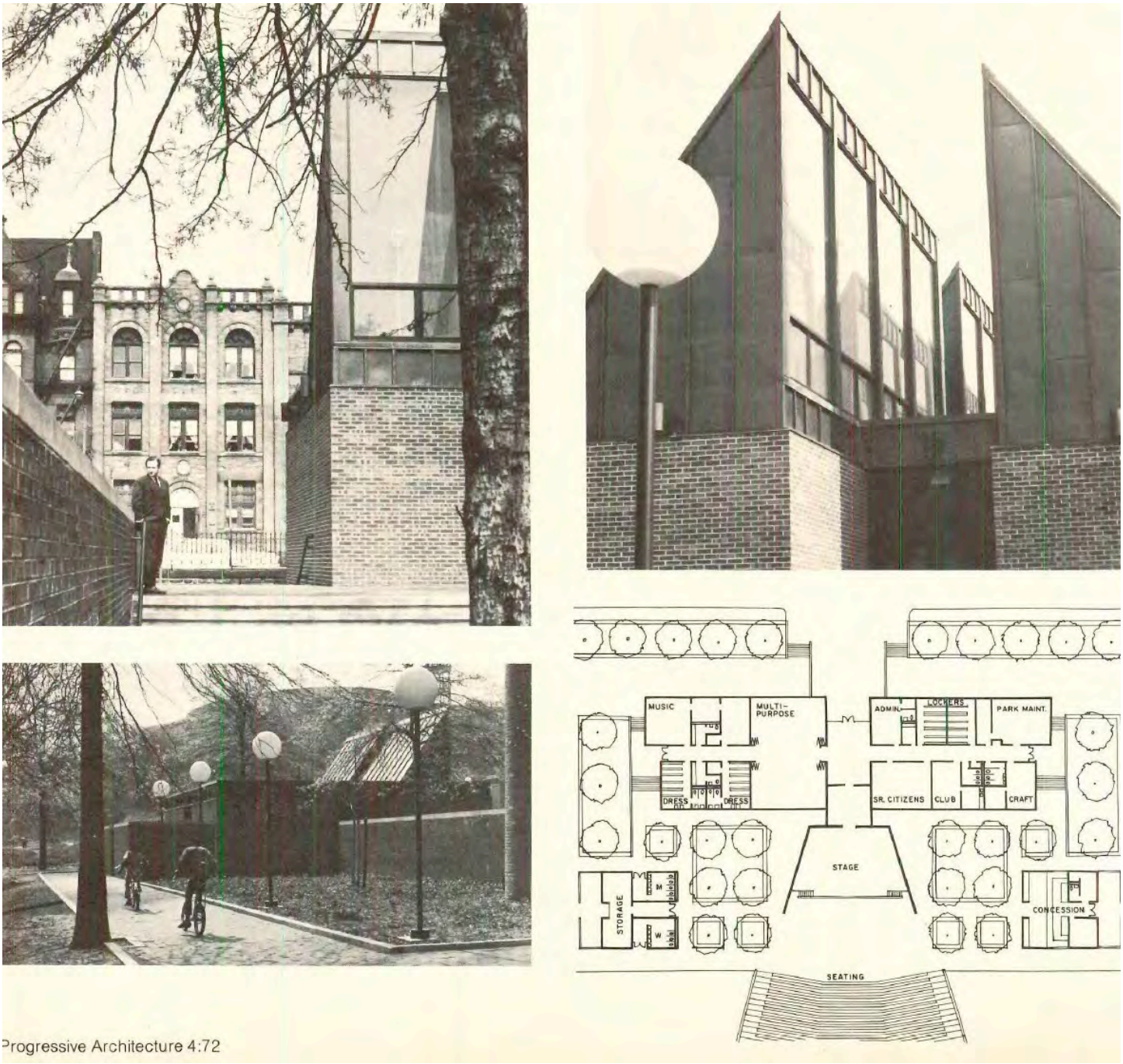


Fig. 20: Clockwise from top left: Secondary entrance at south send of Recreation Center; close-up of skylights and terne roofs at south end of center; basic floor plan; view east towards concession stand ancillary building. Photos by Bryant Conant, Dudley Grey for Progressive Architecture, April 1972.

Fig. 21: View of bandshell from amphitheater stand during 1971 Harlem Cultural Festival. Image Source Attributed to NYC Parks' Archived Collection.

MOTLEY'S Seven Point Plan

Executed by Ifill, Johnson and Hanchard

The architectural firm of Ifill and Johnson was started five years ago when New York University trained Percy Ifill and Harvard trained Conrad Johnson decided to cast their lot together. Two years later they were able to add Birmingham (England) University trained C. George Hanchard into the firm as partner.

Today, Ifill and Johnson boasts 20 employees and are located on the entire ninth floor of 49 West 45th Street, in New York City. Ifill and Johnson has been responsible for producing the architectural plans of three PAL Centers; four bank buildings belonging to Carver Federal Loans and Savings, and the Freedom National Bank, Three Church Community centers of eight or more stories; a State Office Building to be erected at 125th Street and Seventh Avenue and two housing projects namely Village East (pictured below) and Hudson View Plaza, to be constructed at 158th Street and Riverside Drive, Ifill and Johnson are the architects of the swimming pool and bath houses to be erected in Mount Morris Park and are associate architects on the proposed East River Park development which will redesign the Harlem River waterfront from 132nd to 145th Streets.

PERCY IFILL

CONRAD JOHNSON

C. GEORGE HANCHARD

IFILL • JOHNSON • HANCHARD
ARCHITECTS
49 West 45th Street
New York, N.Y. 10036
LT 1-1706

New State Office Building now in construction on 125th Street and 7th Avenue

Mt. Morris Park Swimming Pool, to open Summer, 1971

396

Fig. 22: Featured work of Ifill Johnson Hanchard architecture firm, including the Mount Morris Park Pool. Image: *Delegate Magazine* (1970), 369, from the Smithsonian Institute digital archive.

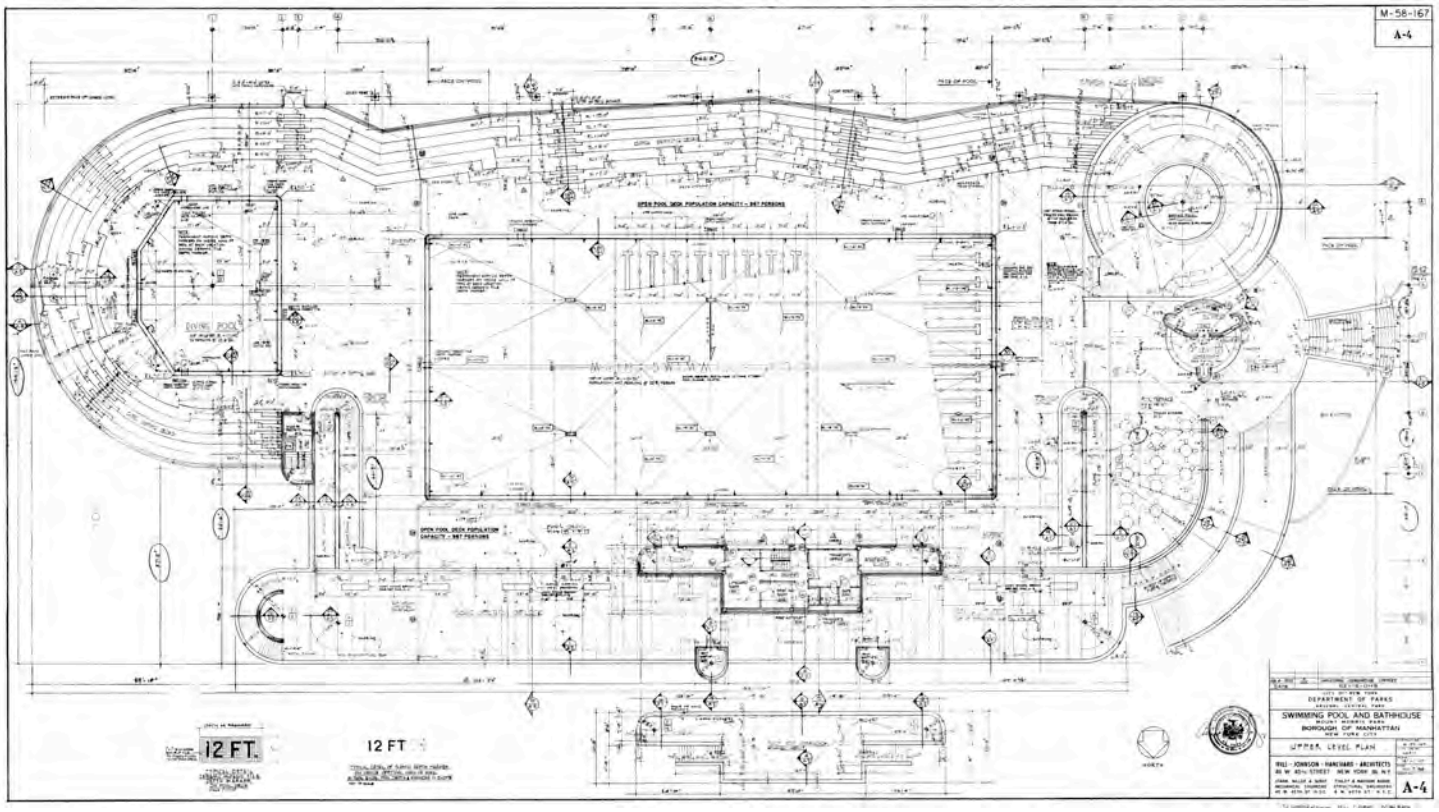


Fig. 23: Upper Level Plan of Pool, prepared 1968 by Ifill Johnson Hanchard. Image Source Attributed to NYC Parks' Archived Collection.

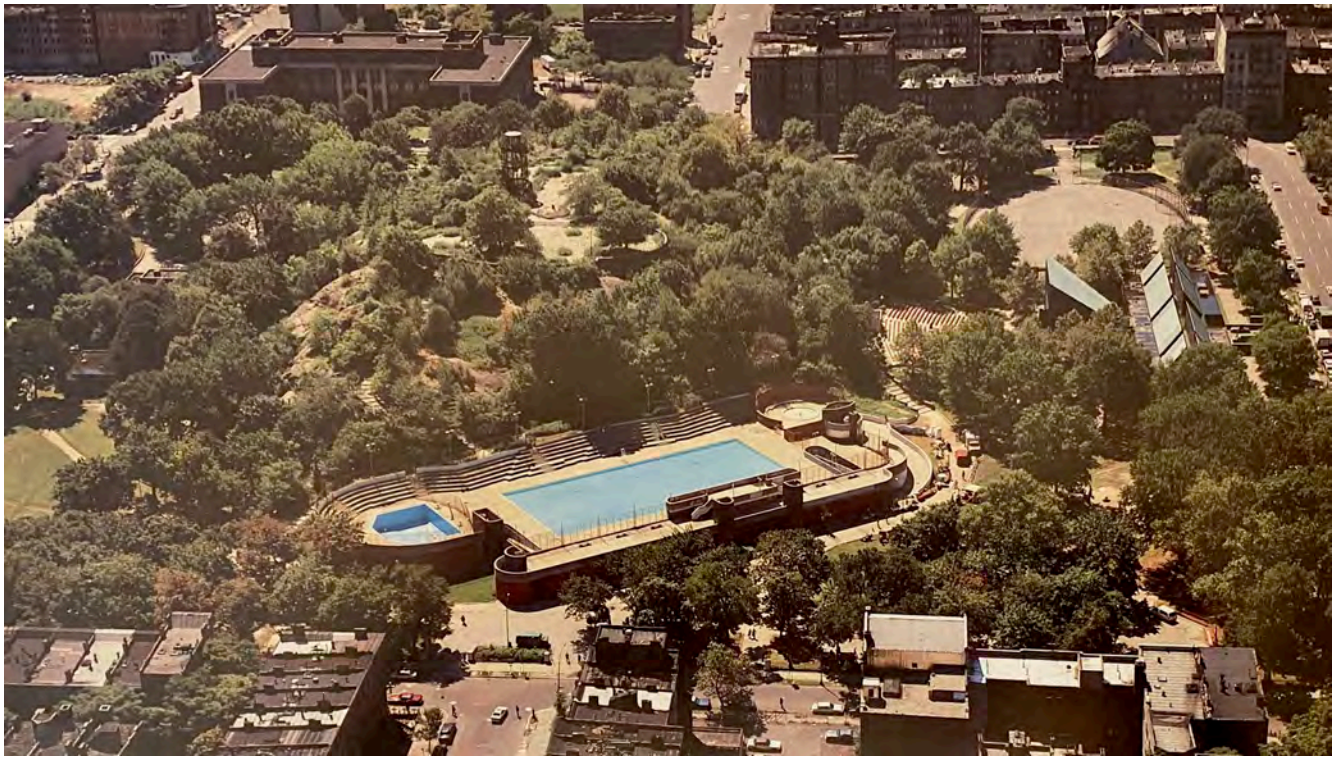


Fig. 24: Aerial photo of the pool taken in 1987. Note the Recreation Center and Amphitheater at right. Photo by Robert Cameron for the book *Above New York* (Cameron Books, 1988).

Fig. 26: Mayor John V. Lindsay inspecting the diving pool during the pool dedication in July 1971. Image source attributed to NYC Parks' Archived Collection.

Fig. 26: Mayor John V. Lindsay inspecting the diving pool during the pool dedication in July 1971. Image source attributed to NYC Parks' Archived Collection.

Fig. 27: Three of the current members of The Last Poets in 2018, from left to right: Abiodun Oyewole Baba Donn Babatunde, and Umar Bin Hassan. Uncredited photo.

Fig. 28: Performance at the 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival in Mount Morris Park. Visible in the background is the Hospital for Joint Diseases on Madison Avenue at E. 124th Street. It was later demolished. Image source attributed to NYC Parks' Archived Collection.

Fig. 29: Jesse Jackson with Operation Breadbasket Band at the July 13, 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival. Photo: Donal F. Holway for the NYT.

DRAFT Marcus Garvey Park New York Co., NY
Name of Property County and State

Photographs:

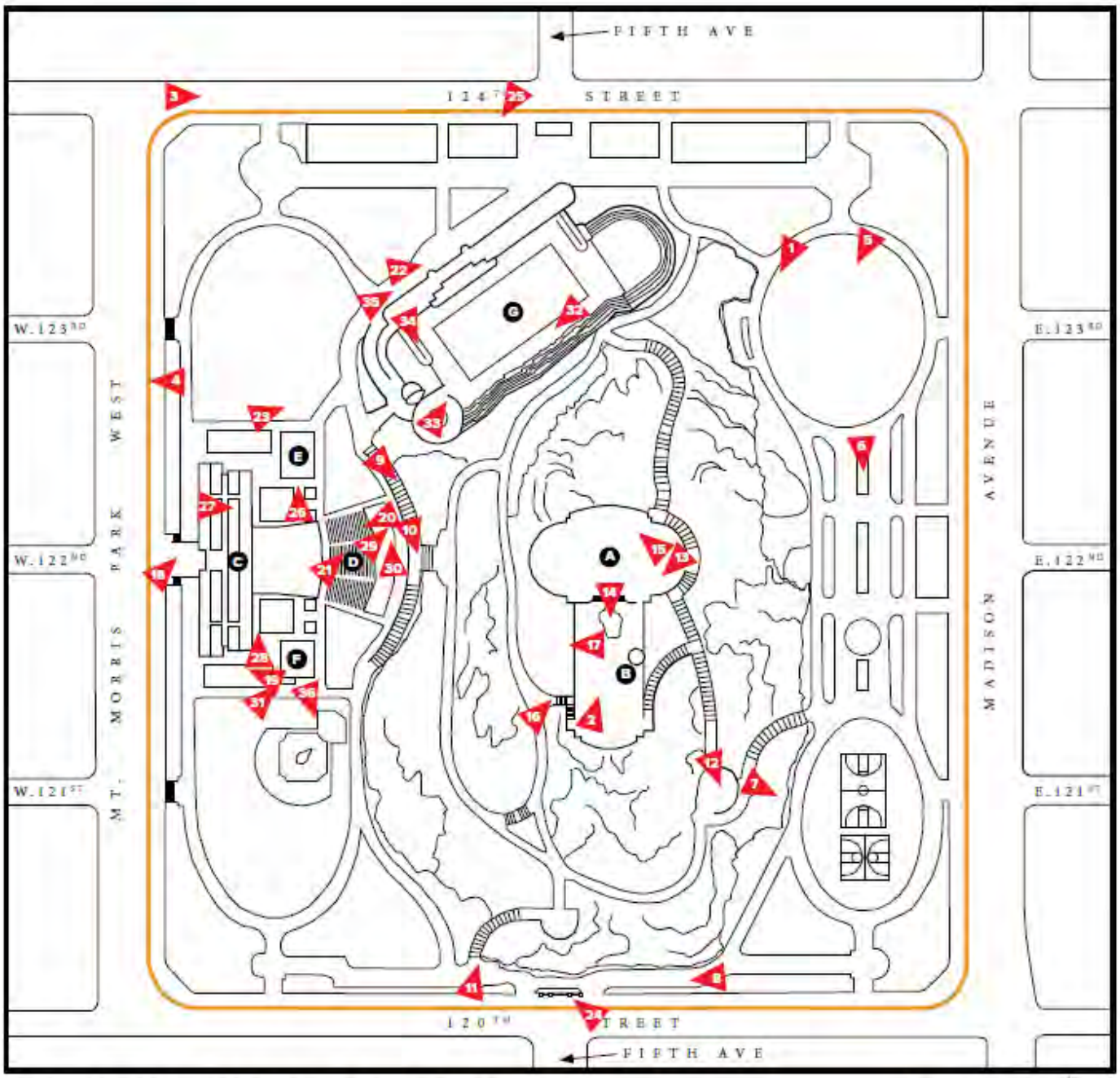
Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Marcus Garvey Park
City or Vicinity: New York (Manhattan)
County: New York Co. State: NY
Photographer: Marissa Marvelli
Date Photographed: listed below

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1: View southwest of the mount from the northeast oval. April 16, 2024.
2: View northeast of the Fire Watchtower at the Acropolis. Aug. 6, 2024.
3: View east of ca. 1896 perimeter fence at north side of park. Feb. 19, 2024.
4: View west of perimeter fence and retaining wall at west side of park. Feb. 19, 2024.
5: View southeast across the northeast oval towards the mount. April 16, 2024.
6: View south along mall on east side of park. Aug. 6, 2024.
7: View east from above the southeast oval. Aug. 6, 2024.
8: View west along south walk. Aug. 6, 2024.
9: Closeup of steps behind the amphitheater on east side of the mount. Aug. 6, 2024.
10: View south of terrace and steps behind the amphitheater. Aug. 6, 2024.
11: South steps to the mount located near park entrance at south side of park. Aug. 6, 2024.
12: View southeast from overlook terrace at east side of the mount. Aug. 6, 2024.
13: View south from north end of the Acropolis. Feb.19, 2024.
14: View south from steps at middle of the Acropolis. April 16, 2024.
15: View northwest of north end of the Acropolis. Aug. 6, 2024.
16: View northeast of west side of the Acropolis base and steps. Feb. 19, 2024.
17: Closeup of stone wall at the Acropolis. Feb. 19, 2024.
18: View northeast of the facade of the Pelham Fritz Recreation Center. Feb. 19, 2024.
19: South end of Recreation Center with steps leading to secondary entrance. Aug. 6, 2024.
20: View west of the ca. 2010-2011 bandshell attached to the Recreation Center. Aug. 6, 2024.
21: View northeast of the amphitheater. Feb. 19, 2024.
22: View east of front elevation of the Pool and Bathhouse. Aug. 6, 2024.
23: West elevation of Pool & Bathhouse showing stairs and ramp (at left). Aug. 6, 2024.
24: View northwest of Bellevue Hospital Gate at south Fifth Ave park entrance. Feb. 19, 2024.
25: Close-up of perimeter fence at north side of park. Feb. 19, 2024.
26: South elevation of 1971 ancillary building at north side of amphitheater. April 16, 2024.
27: Typical sky-lit room in Recreation Center. Aug. 6, 2024.
28: View north from the south end of the Recreation Center showing bandshell connection. April 16, 2024.
29: Typical amphitheater seating installed ca. 2010-2011. Aug. 6, 2024.
30: View northwest of ca. 2010-2011 shade structure at amphitheater. Aug. 6, 2024.
31: West and south elevations of non-contributing south auxiliary building. Aug. 6, 2024.
32: View from east end of Olympic pool. Aug. 6, 2024.
33: View south from within wading pool area. Aug. 6, 2024.
34: View down ramp to girls' locker and shower rooms at west end of deck. Aug. 6, 2024.
35: View of front elevation of Pool and Bathhouse from west end. Aug. 6, 2024.
36: View south of softball diamond in southwest corner of park. Aug. 6, 2024.

DRAFT Marcus Garvey Park New York Co., NY
Name of Property County and State

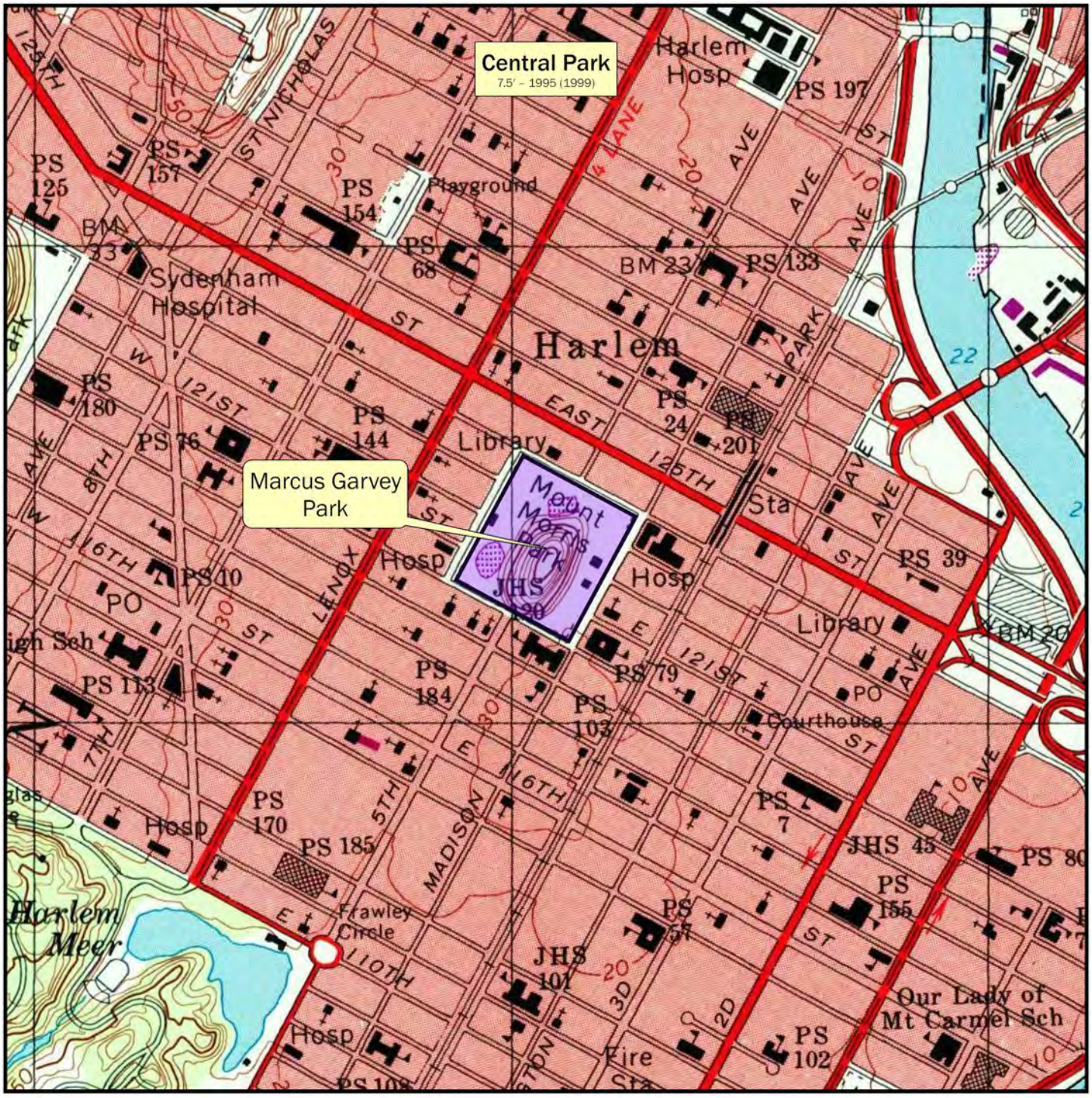


MARCUS GARVEY PARK SITE PLAN & PHOTO KEY

- A The Acropolis
- B Harlem Fire Watchtower
- C Pelham Fritz Recreation Center & Bandshell
- D Richard Rodgers Amphitheater
- E North Ancillary Building (Park Security Office)
- F South Ancillary Building (Comfort Station/Concessions)
- G Pool & Bathhouse

Boundary of the Marcus Garvey Park Historic District

DRAFT Marcus Garvey Park New York Co., NY
Name of Property County and State



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Marcus Garvey Park

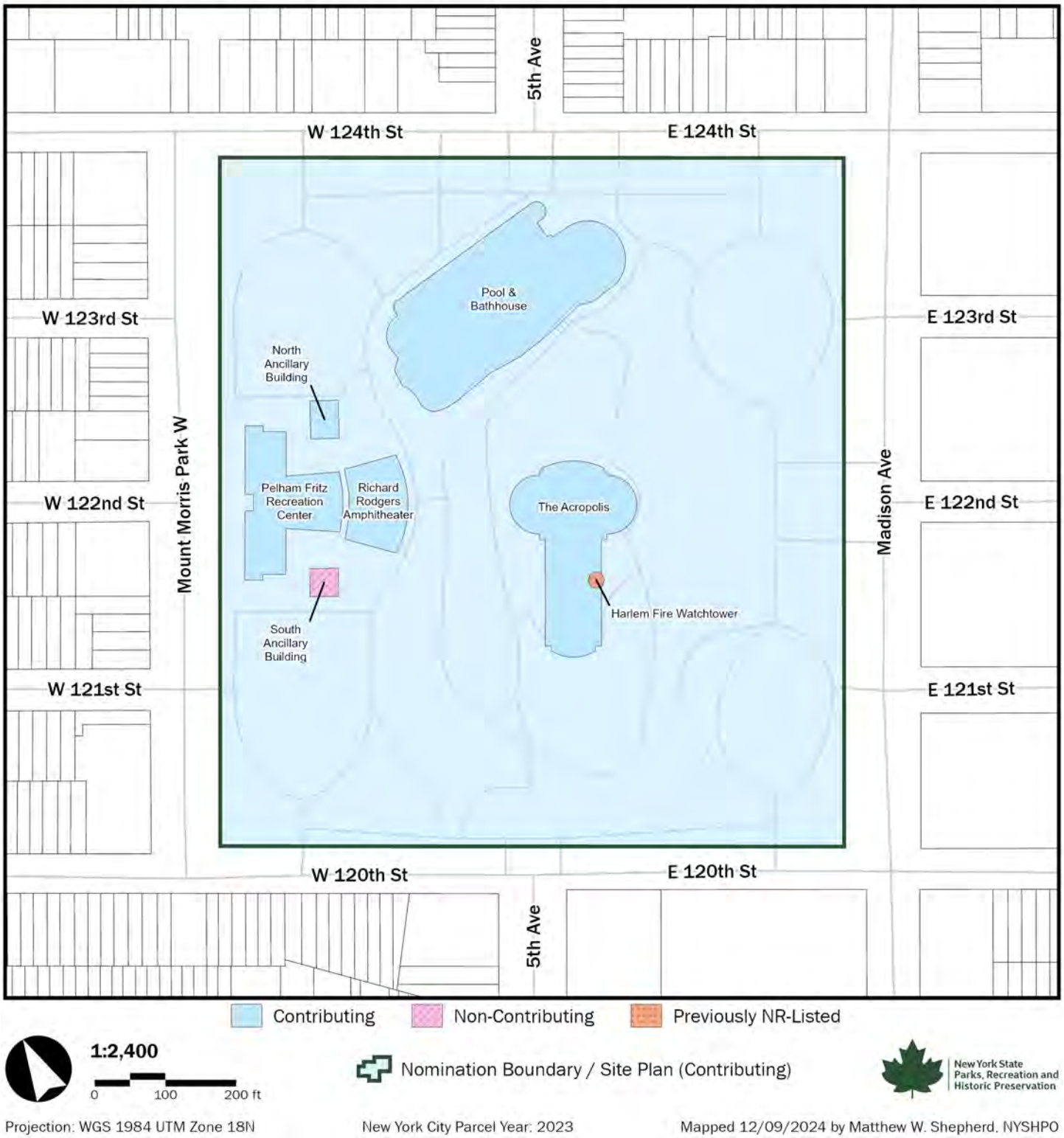
New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

Mapped 12/09/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

DRAFT Marcus Garvey Park New York Co., NY
Name of Property County and State

Resource Status Map
See Resource List for details



DRAFT Marcus Garvey Park | New York Co., NY
Name of Property | County and State

New area: 19.64 ac Previously National Register–listed: 0.01 ac

Point	Latitude	Longitude	Point	Latitude	Longitude
1	40.806249	-73.944209	3	40.802739	-73.943133
2	40.805072	-73.941429	4	40.803916	-73.945913

1:3,000
0 250 ft

Nomination Boundary (19.65 ac)

New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N New York State Orthoimagery Year: 2021 Mapped 12/09/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

DRAFT Marcus Garvey Park New York Co., NY
Name of Property County and State

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

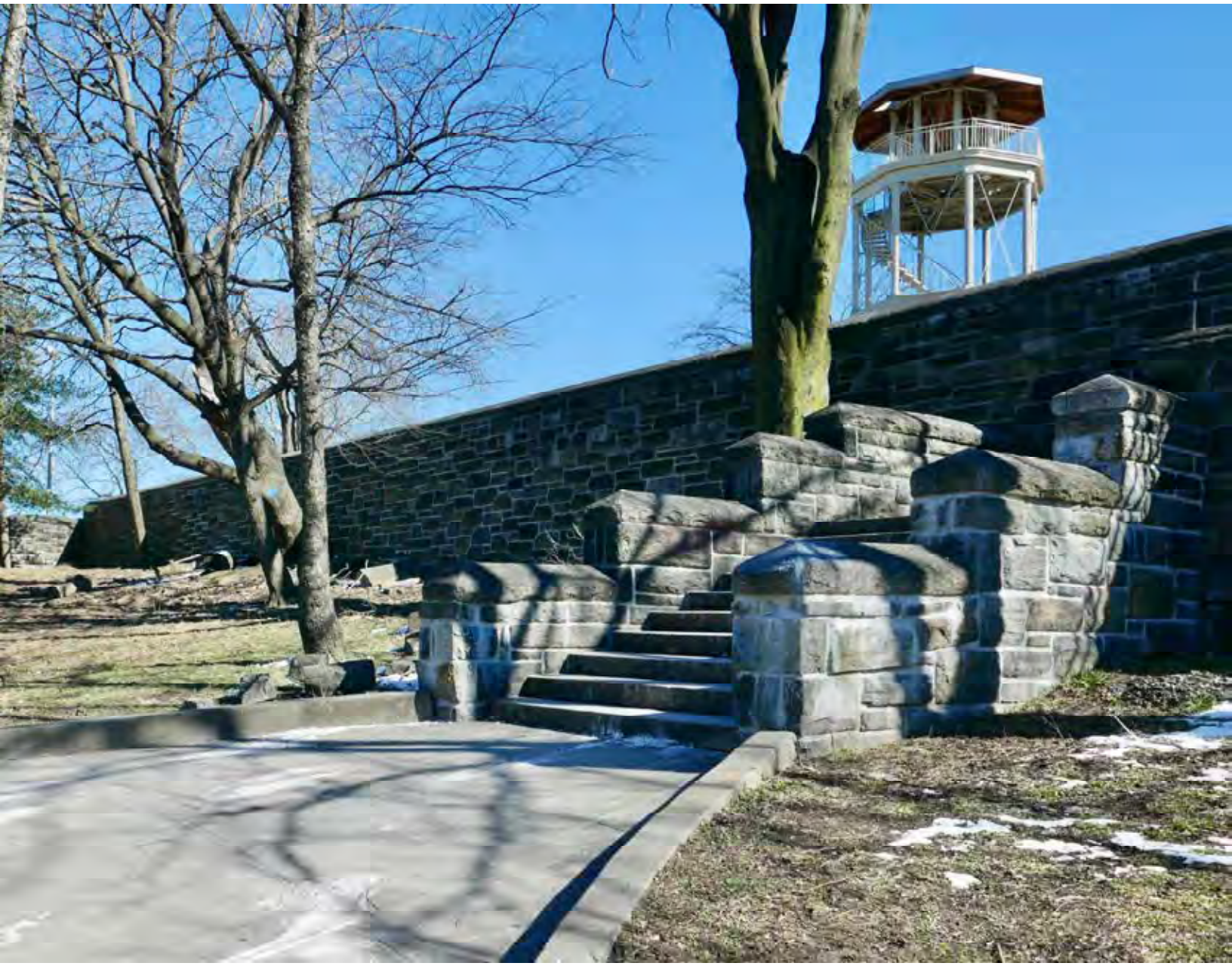
name City of New York Parks & Recreation

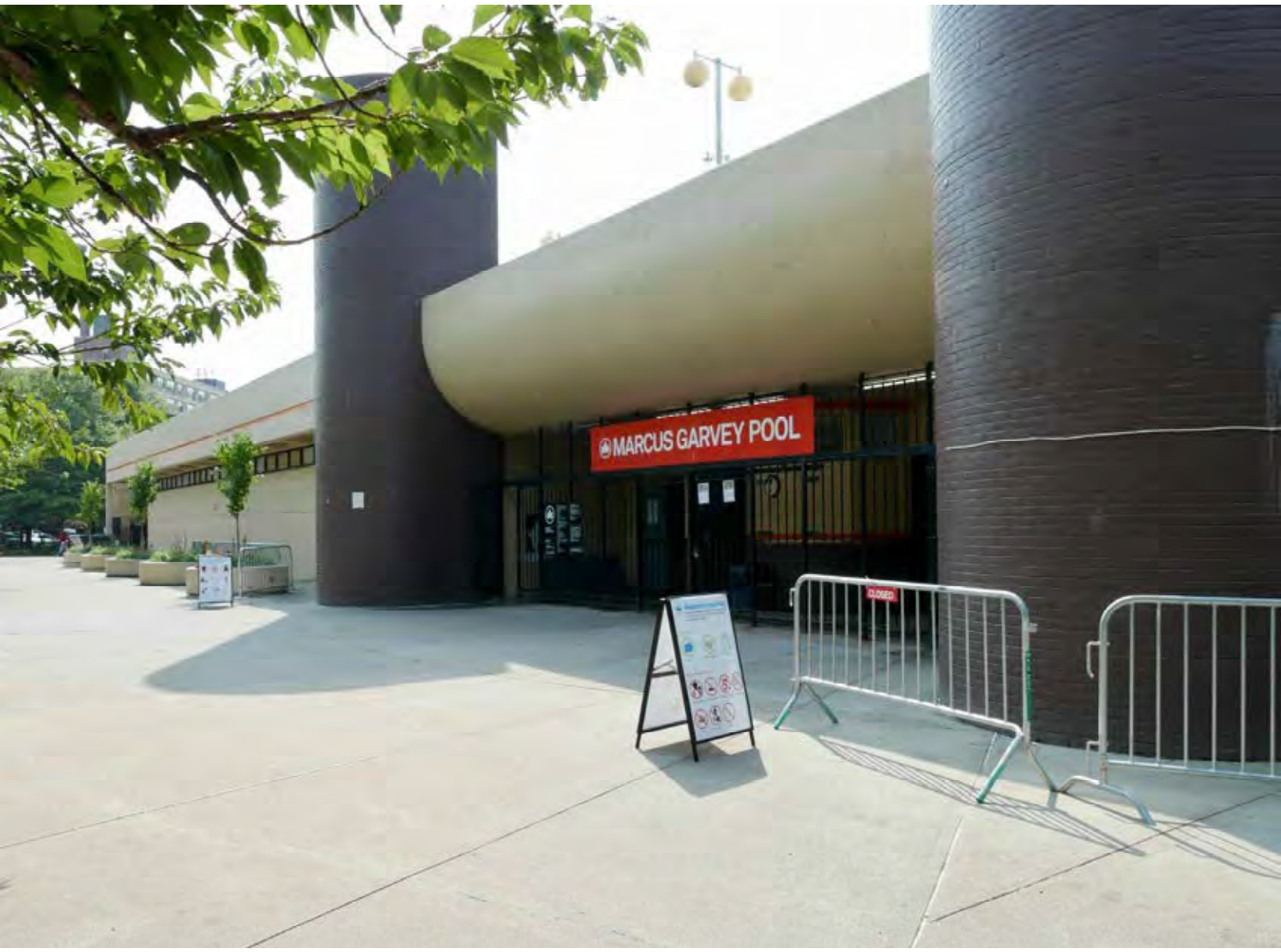
street & number Olmsted Center telephone

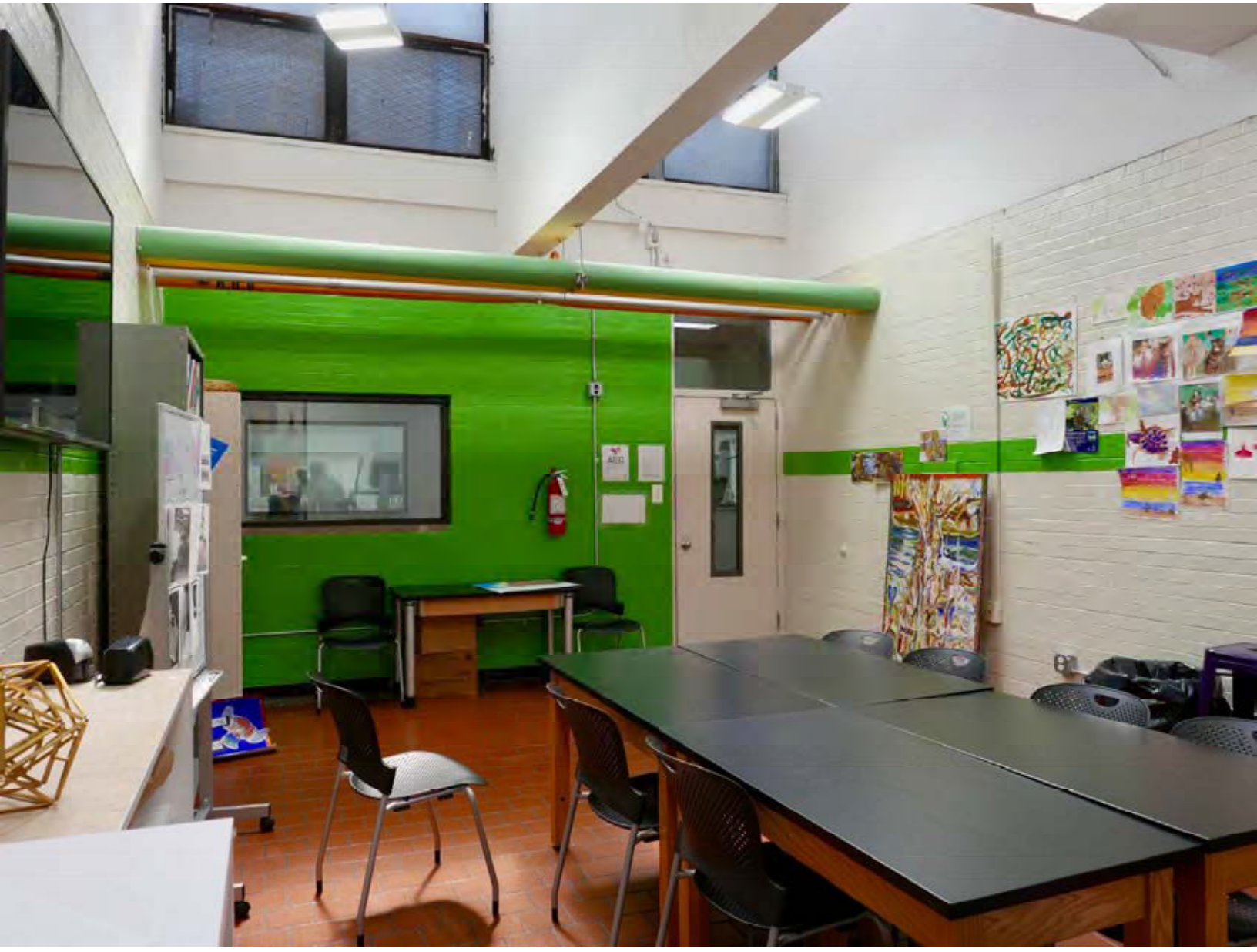
city or town Flushing Meadows, Corona Park state NY zip code 11368

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.




MARCUS GARVEY POOL
CLOSED

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