

LSP's creation summary from 1957 to 1976

In 1957, Morris Pesin left his Jersey City home to take his wife Ethel and children to visit the Statue of Liberty. After spending two and a half hours in heavy tunnel traffic and waiting on a long line for the Battery Park ferry, they finally arrived at the Statue. Looking west, two things struck Pesin. One was that the Statue was so much closer to Jersey City than to NYC, and the other was that his hometown's derelict waterfront of decaying piers and junkstrewn abandoned railroad yards formed a shameful backdrop for Ms. Liberty.

Morris Pesin conceived the ideas of a family park replacing the desolate landscape and of building a causeway from the Jersey side to Ms. Liberty. About a year later, on June 13th, 1958, Pesin kicked off the crusade for LSP by an 8 minute canoe ride with a **Jersey Journal** reporter from the neglected waterfront to Ms. Liberty. At a **J.C.** Council meeting a few days later and at dozens of speeches in the coming years, he proclaimed, "We have here at our doorstep, America's greatest shrine - the Statue of Liberty - and we have failed to realize its potential". Morris, Ted Conrad, and other activists spent 18 years spearheading the park's creation.

From the 1970's to the present, the public has played a decisive role through public hearings in advocating for an open space park and against commercialization. There were plenty of ups and downs in the struggle to establish LSP, but the idea of a beautiful urban park was too powerful and its supporters too passionate. In 1962, The Statue of Liberty Causeway and Park Association, Inc. was founded by Morris Pesin and Theodore Conrad to get government and public support. Its members included religious, civic, and business leaders who worked hard to spread the word about the park. Also in 1962, historian and nationally known architectural model builder, Theodore Conrad, took his effective model of a tree-filled people's park behind Lady Liberty and Ellis Island on the first of his many trips with Morris to Trenton and around Hudson County to win park support.

By the late 1960's, **The Hudson County Citizens Committee** started to play a park advocacy role. Its leaders included Morris Pesin, Ted Conrad, city historian Owen Grundy, and Audrey Zapp.

There were two concrete milestones in pre-park history. One was President Johnson declaring in May, 1965 that Ellis Island was part of the Statue of Liberty National Monument and his tying the immigrant shrine's renovation into the creation of a waterfront park. The other was the Aug. 1965 Jersey City deeding of 156 acres to the state, the first parcel of LSP.

The next few years saw slow progress, as state officials didn't approve sufficient funds to acquire land from the railroads. The passage of the 1972 Green Acres Bond Act and the strong interest of Richard Sullivan, the first commissioner of the new NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection, brought \$3 million for land purchase.

The die was cast once and for all for what was destined to become our nation's foremost urban state

park.

The dream came true on **Flag Day, June 14, 1976**. With Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts raising 50 state flags lining the park entrance, the park opened - just in time for America's Bicentennial Summer.