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The Central Park Zoo: Its Development and Connection to Greater New York City

John Behre  
History 202  
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Monkeys, lions, hippopotami, llamas, elk, buffalo, and bears of various size and color—these were the attractions that awaited visitors to the Central Park Menagerie and subsequent 1934 Central Park Zoo. For more than 150 years, visitors entering the zoological collection at Fifth Avenue on Sixty-Fourth Street with the hopes of finding respite from the bustling metropolis have found a secluded jungle in the heart of Manhattan. But how disconnected were the Menagerie and the Zoo from the institutions and movements responsible for change in the greater city? The Central Park Menagerie and 1934 Central Park Zoo were inherently an extension of, rather than a contradiction to, the economic, cultural, and political influences shaping New York City from the late 1850s to early 1960s.

Demands for the creation of a large green space in New York City emerged in the early 1850s. Without any formal green space created in the 1811 city plan, the wealthy and working class alike saw a large park as satisfying not only their varying needs, but those of the city, as well. The economy of New York was exceptionally strong in the middle of the nineteenth century, and many New Yorkers saw a large park, similar to those in other prominent cities, as a defining feature which would attest to the city's greatness.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it was believed that a large green space in New York City would satisfy the needs of the various classes; it would provide a pastoral landscape for elite carriage rides, while also providing an environment capable of improving the "public health and morals of the working class."<sup>2</sup> These demands for a large park in New York City can also be seen as part of the larger movement in the mid nineteenth century to create green space in American cities. Indeed, the drive for Central Park's creation was preceded by the construction of Boston's Mount Auburn Cemetery and Brooklyn's Green-

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<sup>1</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar. "The Park and the People: Central Park and its Publics: 1850–1910," in *Budapest and New York: Studies in Metropolitan Transformation, 1870–1930*, eds. Bender and Shorske. (New York: Russel Sage Foundation, 1994), 110-111.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

wood Cemetery—two spaces which provided a natural landscape for public enjoyment in the midst of large developing metropolises.<sup>3</sup> New York’s great park would have to be extraordinary, and the city arranged a contest for its design. Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux created the winning design, and were announced as the winners on April 28, 1858.<sup>4</sup> Their design focused on creating natural landscapes with an emphasis on open spaces.

Indeed, Olmstead and Vaux’s design aimed to preserve the “bold and sweeping” natural elements of the land which was to be turned into Central Park. The upper and lower portions of the park were to be preserved, and the “rugged and...several bold, rocky bluffs” to be celebrated as adding “individuality” to the park. The Greensward Plan, the name of Olmstead and Vaux’s design, called for four transverse roads connecting the east and west sides of Manhattan, and for the grandest entrance to be constructed along Fifth Avenue.<sup>5</sup> A defining feature of the Olmstead and Vaux design was the sinking of transverse roads eight feet below the carriage drives and surface of the park. This would maintain the “views through the park.”<sup>6</sup> In short, the sunken transverse roads would facilitate travel through the city, while ensuring the sight of “coal carts and butcher’s carts, dust carts and dung carts” in the park would be masked.<sup>7</sup> A promenade was planned in the southern edge of the park. A playground was planned for the space directly east of the reservoir, and a police station and other “necessary buildings” were to be constructed just

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<sup>3</sup> François Weill. *A History of New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 109.

<sup>4</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 111, 117.

<sup>5</sup> Frederick Law Olmstead, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmstead: Volume III: Creating Central Park*, eds. Charles Capen McLaughlin, Charles E. Beveridge, Jane Turner Censer, Victoria Post Ranney, David Shuyler, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 119, 122, 124.

<sup>6</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 132.

<sup>7</sup> Frederick Law Olmstead, *The Papers of Frederick Law Olmstead: Volume III: Creating Central Park*, eds. Charles Capen McLaughlin, Charles E. Beveridge, Jane Turner Censer, Victoria Post Ranney, David Shuyler, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), 121.

north of the reservoir.<sup>8</sup> In regards to planting, “the avenues of the promenade...[were] proposed to be formed of the American Elm, a tree of distinct character, remarkably well adapted to the purpose, and peculiar to this part of the world.”<sup>9</sup> Trees were, though an integral component to the park, not to be over planted, as Olmstead and Vaux sought to maintain an “impression of great space and freedom.”<sup>10</sup> Indeed, this was achieved through the construction of numerous open spaces in the park: the playground near Merchant’s Gate, the Cricket Ground, and the Parade Ground, for example.<sup>11</sup> The creation of numerous broad open spaces within this decidedly natural landscape elucidated the way in which Frederick Law Olmstead and Calvert Vaux viewed the purpose of Central Park.

Olmstead and Vaux viewed Central Park as a place of leisure—a place to which one could escape from the city. In an April 6, 1890 article in *The New York Times*, Frederick Law Olmstead asserted that Central Park was designed to “[provide] great numbers of people living in a compactly-built town all around such a place with an opportunity to get quickly out of the scenery of buildings, streets, and yard into scenery to be formed with a view to supply a refreshing contrast with it.”<sup>12</sup> The park was to provide a place where one could leisurely walk or take a carriage ride. Indeed, the Arsenal, constructed prior to the adoption of the Greensward plan, would offer “pleasant opportunities for shady walks.”<sup>13</sup> Taking people out of the city, the grandest entrance to Central Park at Fifth Avenue had a diagonal path which led directly to the center of the park.<sup>14</sup> Central Park was a space to be uncorrupted by remnants of urban or commercial life, and at no time did Olmstead or Vaux plan for a zoological collection to be

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 153–154.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>12</sup> “The Zoological Gardens.” *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Apr 06, 1890, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/94808316?accountid=12043> (accessed October 10, 2013), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Olmstead Papers: Volume III, 128.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 180,181.

established within its confines.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps it was the American peoples' long tradition of interest in traveling circuses and zoos which made the creation of a zoo within Central Park more than likely.

The display of animals for public enjoyment and education first appeared during the French Revolution in the establishment of the Jardin de Plantes in France. The animals displayed there were once the possessions of the overthrown king. The subsequently constructed 1828 London Zoo came to epitomize the ideal organization of a modern zoological garden—a “compact” area in which carefully organized gardens surrounded the display of animals in cages. The earliest incarnation of the modern zoo in America was seen in the 18<sup>th</sup> century collections of animals which would travel between cities. Exotic animals such as elephants and tigers came to be featured in the mid-nineteenth century. Perhaps the most prominent examples of the latter type of show were those created by P.T. Barnum in the mid nineteenth century. Barnum traveled across America, showing his animals and “freaks” in such large American cities as Milwaukee and New York.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, a September 9, 1851 *New York Times* amusement column advertised P.T. Barnum’s “American Museum” as being open “day and evening.”<sup>17</sup> The presence of such a show in New York City just years prior to the Menagerie’s establishment in Central Park illustrates New Yorkers’ interest in such zoological collections. The Central Park Menagerie, largely regarded as simply a display of “caged specimens of exotica,” can perhaps be seen as the culmination of public interest in traveling “animal shows.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the improvised Menagerie beginning in Central park during the late 1850s was likened to early animal shows in that it

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<sup>15</sup> The Zoological Gardens.” *New York Times* (1857-1922), Apr 06, 1890, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/94808316?accountid=12043> (accessed October 10, 2013), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Helen Horowitz, “Seeing Ourselves through the Bars,” *Landscape*, volume 25 (1981) 12-19: 13.

<sup>17</sup> “New-York City.” *New York Daily Times* (1851-1857), Sep 29, 1851, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/95784341?accountid=12043> (accessed November 15, 2013), 2.

<sup>18</sup> Horowitz, “Seeing Ourselves through the Bars,” 4.

presented animals as “stamp collections”: different animals being placed in cages alongside each other.<sup>19</sup> This initial collection in Central Park found quarters at New York City’s Arsenal building, a former militia storehouse which soon became synonymous with the zoological collection surrounding it.

The Arsenal building was to be the focal point of the Central Park Menagerie and, later, the 1934 Central Park Zoo. The state of New York constructed the Arsenal on Fifth Avenue in 1848 with the intent of housing state militia supplies. Sitting on a ten acre plot of land, the Arsenal also provided a drill ground upon which troops could train.<sup>20</sup> The city of New York purchased the Arsenal and its accompanying land in 1857, and used the premises as a training ground for troops during the Civil War. After the Civil War’s conclusion, the building briefly housed and displayed artifacts for the Museum of Natural History.<sup>21</sup> Beginning with the donation of a bear in the late 1850s,<sup>22</sup> the Arsenal came to house a growing collection of animals which were donated to the city as the pets of children who had died or moved away.<sup>23</sup> These animals were initially housed in the building’s basement, or in makeshift cages outside of the Arsenal. In 1870, the Park Commissioner determined that the Arsenal was no longer adequate in properly housing the improvised collection. As a result, several animal quarters were constructed around the Arsenal that same year.<sup>24</sup> But who patronized such a zoological collection? As it would turn out, the Menagerie attracted both wealthy, as well as working class, New Yorkers throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

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<sup>19</sup> Joan Scheier, *The Central Park Zoo* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 11.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>21</sup> New York City Parks Department. 1934 New York City Department of Public Parks Budget Request and Annual Report. October 10, 2013. [http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/g\\_ovpub/4289annual\\_report\\_nyc\\_dept\\_parks\\_1934.pdf](http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/g_ovpub/4289annual_report_nyc_dept_parks_1934.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> “Central Park Zoo.” City of New York Parks and Recreation, accessed October 5, 2013, <http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/zoos/central-park-zoo>.

<sup>23</sup> Rosenzweig and Blackmar. “The Park and the People: Central Park and its Publics: 1850–1910,” 123.

<sup>24</sup> Joan Scheier, *The Central Park Zoo* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 14.

The wealthy elite visited the Central Park Menagerie, albeit at different times than their working class counterparts. Indeed, while the working class crowded the Menagerie on Sundays and special holidays, the wealthy preferred the Menagerie during the week, and often attended church or sought other forms of attraction during the weekend. This idea was conveyed by an April 10, 1873 article in *The New York Times* which reported on the tendency of New York's wealthy to go to church on Sunday, as opposed to the Menagerie and park, in part because they had the opportunity to visit it "every day in the week."<sup>25</sup> Instead, the wealthy patronized such attractions as the "races at Long Branch" on Sundays and other working class holidays.<sup>26</sup> The wealthy's aversion to the park and Menagerie on days dominated by the working class can perhaps be explained by the complaints of Fifth Avenue residents in regard to the Menagerie's working class visitors: they were of "unpleasant character."<sup>27</sup> In terms of aspects of the Menagerie which directly signaled wealthy patronage, donkey rides around the paths of the Arsenal building required money, and were thus only within the financial reach of wealthy visitors.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, while horses were common in New York City, donkeys were much rarer—therefore giving validity to the idea that a donkey ride was a marker of wealth and elite status.<sup>29</sup> In concert with wealthy use of the Central Park Menagerie in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, another class of New Yorkers, as afore mentioned, found respite and amusement at the park's zoological collection during this same period.

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<sup>25</sup> "Crowds in Central Park." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Apr 10, 1893, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/95065070?accountid=12043> (accessed November 15, 2013), 8.

<sup>26</sup> "At Central Park." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Jul 05, 1873, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/93339079?accountid=12043> (accessed December 6, 2013), 8.

<sup>27</sup> "Object to the Menagerie." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Dec 24, 1885, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/94241433?accountid=12043> (accessed November 1, 2013), 8.

<sup>28</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar. "The Park and the People: Central Park and its Publics: 1850–1910," 126.

<sup>29</sup> Joan Scheier, *The Central Park Zoo* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 14.



The Menagerie's visitors were composed largely of working class people from the 1870s onward for the simple fact that it was a free form of entertainment.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the working class people who entered Central Park beginning in the 1870s were described as "Sunday excursionists": people in who were not interested in "quiet pleasures," but instead wanted "sensation."<sup>31</sup> The Central Park Menagerie fit the bill. The emphasis on the Menagerie in such papers as *The New York Times* as being especially thronged on Sunday attested to the working class nature of the Menagerie's visitors. Usually working six days a week, working class people and their families had no other day to visit the Menagerie except Sunday, their one day off (309)<sup>32</sup>. Indeed, an article in the New York Times on April 10, 1893 reported:

While the bells of the fashionable churches were calling to worship those who can see New-York's great pleasure ground every day in the week, a great multitude of those whose week days are spent in work began to swarm into the Park, and by noon every path was crowded....It was a crowd [that] surged through the menagerie houses, looked with awe at the elephants, [and] shuddered at the fierce-looking tigers and lions.<sup>33</sup>

This observation was reaffirmed when yet another article on May 14, 1894 pointed to the Menagerie, and specifically, the elephant house, as being the "centers of attraction" the day before, a Sunday, for "more than 150,000 men, women, and children."<sup>34</sup> Members of the working class also visited the Menagerie during weekdays, albeit in small numbers. Indeed, John W. Smith, director of the Menagerie in 1900, claimed that "laborers...not finding work in the early morning, came to the menagerie with their shovels under their arms and [spent] an hour or

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<sup>30</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 344.

<sup>31</sup> From the *New York Herald*, as used in Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 332.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 309.

<sup>33</sup> "Crowds in Central Park." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Apr 10, 1893, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/95065070?accountid=12043> (accessed November 15, 2013), 8.

<sup>34</sup> "Central Park's May Throng." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, May 14, 1894, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/95204240?accountid=12043> (accessed November 15, 2013), 1.

two looking at the animals.”<sup>35</sup> The dominance of working class people in the Menagerie beginning in the 1870s required the transportation of these people from often very far distances. It is in this context that the Menagerie’s link to advancements in public transportation can be examined.

New York City’s working and immigrant populations, the likes of whom constituted a growing majority of the visitors to the Menagerie and Central Park in the 1870s, were predominantly concentrated in Lower Manhattan. Indeed, though working class neighborhoods did exist on the Upper East Side of Manhattan,<sup>36</sup> neighborhoods of concentrated German and Irish immigrants were predominantly established in the Lower East Side. In the 1880s, those immigrants moved uptown and were replaced by Jewish and Italian immigrants.<sup>37</sup> These working class people, as a result of their place of residence, had little access to the Menagerie. Though horse drawn streetcars did exist, many “did not have the means to use them,”<sup>38</sup> and the streetcars did not solve the problem of congestion in the streets. This led to the proposal of an “elevated railway” in 1868 by the inventor Alfred Beach.<sup>39</sup> Beach’s first elevated railway from Battery Place to Cortlandt Street was an immediate success, and ushered in the age of the elevated railway—a period from the 1870s to 1900s—which greatly afforded many working class people in New York increased access to Central Park and the Menagerie.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 388.

<sup>36</sup> “Yorkville,” Places that Matter, accessed November 2, 2013, <http://www.placematters.net/node/1701>.

<sup>37</sup> François Weill. *A History of New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 203.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>39</sup> François Weill. *A History of New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 100.

<sup>40</sup> Eunice Fuller Barnard. "New York’s Elevated Now Sixty Years Old." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jul 01, 1928, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/104517279?accountid=12043> (accessed October 20, 2013), 122.

Though working class use of Central Park and the Menagerie increased prior to the construction of any elevated railroads,<sup>41</sup> the construction of an elevated railway on Third Avenue in the late 1870s provided working class people with increased access to the Central Park Menagerie. The “El” on Third Avenue was opened in 1878, and ran from the Bowery to the Harlem River along Third Avenue. Inherent to the Third Avenue Railway’s popularity as the primary means of transport to the Menagerie was its stop at Fifty-Ninth Street. Only five cross streets and four avenues from the Menagerie, the Third Avenue “El” was especially helpful in bringing people conveniently close to their desired destination.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, a May 20, 1878 account of a Sunday afternoon in Central Park reported: “The facility with which...people can reach the Park has...tempted a good many of them to indulge in the pleasure of frequent rides by the rapid transit routes, and many of those...tramped down the long stairway at the Fifty-Ninth street station.”<sup>43</sup> People traveling from Brooklyn on the ferry to Manhattan likewise used the Third Avenue Elevated to reach the park after arriving at Peck Slip in Lower Manhattan.<sup>44</sup> While the Third Avenue Elevated Railway had made it a great deal easier to travel to the Menagerie from lower Manhattan and Brooklyn, perhaps the greatest draw of the Menagerie in the 1870s for the working class—in addition to its being free—were the improvements made to it by the Sweeny Park Board.

In 1870, William Tweed appointed Peter B. Sweeny as Park Commissioner, in effect disbanding the previous Board of Commissioners. As a consequence of Peter B. Sweeney’s association with “Boss” Tweed and his politics, the Sweeny Board came to illuminate the

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<sup>41</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 308.

<sup>42</sup> “The 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Elevated,” NYC Subway, accessed October 21, 2013, [http://www.nycsubway.org/wiki/The\\_3rd\\_Avenue\\_Elevated](http://www.nycsubway.org/wiki/The_3rd_Avenue_Elevated).

<sup>43</sup> “A Spring Day in the Park.” *New York Times* (1857-1922), May 20, 1878, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/93738407?accountid=12043> (accessed November 1, 2013), 8.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

Menagerie's direct link to New York's political culture. Though being in charge of the parks and Menagerie for merely one year,<sup>45</sup> Sweeney rushed to please those working class voters who, in addition to increasingly visiting the zoo, voted for the mayor who had helped put Sweeney in power.<sup>46</sup> Though Sweeney relaxed formal standards of etiquette in the park by allowing boat rentals, pony rides, goat rides, and a Carousel,<sup>47</sup> these were attractions requiring money, and thus were largely not available to the working class visitors in Central Park.<sup>48</sup> Sweeney *truly* enticed working class visitors by renovating the Menagerie.

Peter B. Sweeney's greatest contribution to the Central Park Menagerie was his giving permanence to the zoological collection on the grounds of the Arsenal in 1870. Prior to 1870, donated animals had been housed in cages in the Arsenal's basement or in the yard behind the building. This was largely done as a way to prevent the animals from running loose in the park.<sup>49</sup> Under Sweeney, the Menagerie underwent a revolution in which permanent buildings were constructed west of the Arsenal. A new movement towards buying animals—as opposed to accepting donations—augmented these newly constructed quarters.<sup>50</sup> Such a trend was demonstrated in the 1871 Parks Report which detailed the following purchases by, and for, the Central Park Menagerie: two Sea Eagles, two African lions, two African leopards, one cheetah, one spotted hyena, one saddle-billed stork, two emu, and two geese.<sup>51</sup> Newly purchased animals, in combination with the more permanent structures of the Menagerie, enticed many new visitors

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<sup>45</sup> "Park Planning for Greater New York (1870-1898)," City of New York Parks and Recreation, accessed October 12, 2013, <http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/timeline/park-planning-for-greater-ny>.

<sup>46</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 309.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 309, 315.

<sup>48</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar. "The Park and the People: Central Park and its Publics: 1850–1910," 126.

<sup>49</sup> Joan Scheier, *The Central Park Zoo* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 15.

<sup>50</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 344.

<sup>51</sup> New York City Parks Department. 1871 New York City Department of Public Parks Annual Report. October 10, 2013. [http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4279annual\\_reort\\_nyc\\_dept\\_public\\_parks\\_1871.pdf](http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4279annual_reort_nyc_dept_public_parks_1871.pdf), 167.

to its location at Sixty-Fourth Street and Fifth Avenue. Indeed, these transformations had the effect of attracting one fourth of all park visitors in 1873, and close to 90 percent of all park visitors in 1888.<sup>52</sup> In short, the Central Park Menagerie had been allowed to thrive in the early 1870s, and beyond, through its connection to New York politics. The Menagerie's connection with such cultural institutions as P.T. Barnum's famous programs and *The New York Times* also, in combination with the changes made by Sweeny, strengthened not only its validity as a zoological institution, but its place in the public conscious.

P.T. Barnum maintained a strong relationship with the Central Park Menagerie from the 1870s to 1890s. In the 1870s, the Menagerie became a sort of storehouse where animals belonging to circus performers and producers could be housed during the winter, or given a rest from show life if they appeared "overworked."<sup>53</sup> Barnum, one of the greatest showmen of the nineteenth century, utilized the Menagerie in this way—allowing his animals to be shown there in the winter, yet using it as a collection from which he could supplement his own if need be.<sup>54</sup> For example, in 1871, the Central Park Menagerie exhibited two lions, two elephants, one African porcupine, one lynx, and one camel—all from Barnum's personal collection.<sup>55</sup> Yet, when Barnum needed an eagle for one his shows, he readily found one for the taking at the Menagerie.<sup>56</sup> Barnum also outright donated animals to the Central Park collection. The showman donated one elephant and two bears to the Menagerie in 1896, for example.<sup>57</sup> Such donations, in addition to

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<sup>52</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 344.

<sup>53</sup> "The Genesis of the "Zoo"." *New York Times* (1857-1922), May 19, 1901, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/96097899?accountid=12043> (accessed November 15, 2013), 19.

<sup>54</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 345.

<sup>55</sup> New York City Parks Department. 1871 New York City Department of Public Parks Annual Report. October 10, 2013. [http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4279annual\\_reort\\_nyc\\_dept\\_public\\_parks\\_1871.pdf](http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4279annual_reort_nyc_dept_public_parks_1871.pdf), 200.

<sup>56</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 344.

<sup>57</sup> "More Animals for Central Park." *New York Times* (1857-1922), Mar 06, 1896, <http://search.proquest.com>.

the temporary exhibitions of his personal animals, greatly strengthened the zoological validity of the Menagerie's collection. The Central Park Menagerie's connection with the equally culturally significant *New York Times* likewise strengthened the Menagerie; yet in a different way.

The *New York Times*, a prominent paper in New York City, strengthened the Menagerie from its inception in the 1860s to its demise in 1934 by publicizing the arrivals, births, deaths, and general developments of the Menagerie and its inhabitants. *The Times* regularly printed stories on new arrivals at the Menagerie. When, in June of 1869, an eleven foot, thirty-eight year old elephant named "Andra" was delivered to the Menagerie for a one month stay, a story was printed in *The New York Times*.<sup>58</sup> When the Menagerie was preparing for warm spring weather by taking down the walls which had surrounded the cages, and the larger animals were once again allowed to run around their enclosed spaces, the *New York Times* detailed it in an article.<sup>59</sup> Even the deaths of animals in the Menagerie were covered by the newspaper, which, for example, ran a particularly descriptive account of an elephant's poisoning by Menagerie workers in October of 1902.<sup>60</sup> These articles, though attracting people to the Menagerie, served a deeper purpose: they made the Menagerie and its occupants omnipresent in the minds of New Yorkers. By reading of the Menagerie and its changes every week, people began perceiving the collection as intrinsically a part of New York. It became a part of the public conscious. This is demonstrated by an incident in which a fake newspaper article was published which detailed the animals' escape from the Menagerie. This sparked great alarm and confusion in the public—in

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com/docview/95462245?accountid=12043 (accessed November 1, 2013), 10.

<sup>58</sup> "The Female Elephant in the Central Park." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Jun 05, 1869, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/92506739?accountid=12043> (accessed November 1, 2013), 2.

<sup>59</sup> "Summer at the Menagerie." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Aug 05, 1884, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/94208119?accountid=12043> (accessed November 1, 2013), 3.

<sup>60</sup> "Central Park Elephant is Killed by Poison." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Oct 04, 1902, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/96264845?accountid=12043> (accessed November 1, 2013), 16.

effect validating the Central Park Menagerie's place in New York City's collective conscious.<sup>61</sup>

In addition to its connection with the press, the Central Park Menagerie again transcended the bounds of Central Park to participate in, and benefit from, the economy surrounding the sale of animals.

The Central Park Menagerie began interacting with the New York City economy in the 1890s by selling "remnant" animals, as well as sheep and their wool, through staged auctions. One of the first documented Menagerie auctions was in 1899, at which several sheep, 240 pounds of wool, six lambs, two zebras, a red deer, and two donkeys were sold.<sup>62</sup> A similar stock of fifty-three sheep, one American elk, two red deer, and two zebu were sold at a Menagerie auction in 1908.<sup>63</sup> Similar auctions continued into the 1920s, with a zebu, lion cubs, and a one-eyed hyena being auctioned off by the Menagerie in June of 1929.<sup>64</sup> These auctions, especially the sale of sheep, generated a great deal of revenue for the Menagerie. In 1910, sheep sales raised \$577.50. Money raised at the auctions was in turned used to purchase more animals. Indeed, the revenue raised in 1910 from the sale of sheep helped pay for one polar bear, twelve Rhesus monkey, three black swans, and several species of bird.<sup>65</sup> These unwanted animals were often sold to those planning to use them in shows, or, in the case of sheep, to those owning restaurants.<sup>66</sup> Strengthened by this connection in raising money to purchase new animals, the

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<sup>61</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 345.

<sup>62</sup> "Auction Sale at the Park." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Jun 27, 1899, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/95668435?accountid=12043> (accessed November 15, 2013), 14.

<sup>63</sup> "Central Park Stock Sold at Auction." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Jul 01, 1908, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/96872507?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), 7.

<sup>64</sup> "No Bids for Lioness at Park Zoo Auction; One-Eyed Hyena Brings \$15 and Camel \$600." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jun 28, 1929, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/104973864?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), 16.

<sup>65</sup> New York City Parks Department. 1910 New York City Parks Department Annual Report. October 10, 2013. [http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4026annual\\_report\\_nyc\\_dept\\_parks\\_1910.pdf](http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4026annual_report_nyc_dept_parks_1910.pdf).

<sup>66</sup> "Central Park Stock Sold at Auction." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Jul 01, 1908, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/96872507?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), 7.

Central Park Menagerie was simultaneously vitalized by certain infrastructural improvements beginning the late 1890s.

Infrastructural developments in the late 1890s benefited both the Menagerie's animals, and its visitors. Indeed, in 1898, separate, new enclosures were created for the collection's monkeys, eagles, birds, and pheasants.<sup>67</sup> In 1900, all walkways around the Arsenal and Menagerie were repaved with asphalt at a cost of \$2,100.<sup>68</sup> In 1902, new public restrooms for Menagerie visitors, as well as new enclosures for prairie dogs and "water fowl," were constructed. These developments helped attract countless visitors to the Menagerie: it was estimated that 20,000 people visited the zoological collection in Central Park each weekend in 1902.<sup>69</sup> Becoming a cultural institution itself as a result of its connection with people and movements outside of the park, the Central Park Menagerie came to greatly anger Central Park's co-creator, Frederick Law Olmstead.

Frederick Law Olmstead's frustration with the zoological collection was a function of the collection's being in direct opposition to the original purpose of Central Park. Olmstead publicly denounced the Menagerie in 1890, saying that the park was never intended to house such a collection, and that the Arsenal's original function within the Greensward Plan was to provide the backdrop for "screening plantations."<sup>70</sup> Olmstead later went on to note that the purpose of the park was to provide a pause from city life—not to provide the people of New York with a source

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<sup>67</sup> New York City Parks Department. 1898 New York City Department of Public Parks Annual Report. [http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4489annual\\_report\\_nyc\\_dept\\_parks\\_1898.pdf](http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4489annual_report_nyc_dept_parks_1898.pdf), 17.

<sup>68</sup> New York City Parks Department. 1900 New York City Parks Department Annual Report. October 10, 2013. [http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4028annual\\_report\\_nycdept\\_parks\\_engineering\\_bureau\\_1900.pdf](http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4028annual_report_nycdept_parks_engineering_bureau_1900.pdf), 7.

<sup>69</sup> New York City Parks Department. 1902 New York City Parks Department Annual Report (Part 1). October 9, 2013. [http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4298annual\\_report\\_nyc\\_dept\\_parks\\_1902\\_part1.pdf](http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4298annual_report_nyc_dept_parks_1902_part1.pdf), 22, 23, 13.

<sup>70</sup> "The Zoological Gardens." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Apr 06, 1890, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/9480808316?accountid=12043> (accessed October 10, 2013), 3.



of excitement and amusement.<sup>71</sup> In accordance with his views on the Central Park Menagerie, Olmstead proposed an alternative location for the collection. If needing to be within Central Park, Olmstead felt the zoological collection should be moved to “the shadow of the outer wooded parts,” where “structures necessary for the zoological collections... would stand veiled from view across the openings and not be in any way obtrusive to the natural scenery.”<sup>72</sup>

Olmstead’s *ideal* location for the Menagerie was a location between Ninety-Eighth Street and One-Hundred and Fourth Street, “west of Winter Drive”—out of Central Park completely.<sup>73</sup> Not only violating Central Park’s purpose of providing a “refreshing contrast” to the city by being an institution founded upon public amusement, the Menagerie also transgressed the physical ideals of Central Park by polluting the natural scenery and sightlines with its buildings and cages. Evidently, Olmstead’s desire to have the Menagerie removed from Central Park was also shared by the wealthy inhabitants of Fifth Avenue—in effect showing the Central Park Menagerie’s placement within the context of class conflict.

A great debate emerged in the 1880s as to whether the Central Park Menagerie should be moved from its location on Fifth Avenue; a measure the residents of Fifth Avenue vehemently supported. Fifth Avenue transformed from largely undeveloped land during the Civil War,<sup>74</sup> to “Millionaire’s Row” after the Lenox Library was constructed on Seventy First Street and Fifth Avenue for Caroline Astor in 1877.<sup>75</sup> Wealthy property owners on Fifth Avenue were disgusted by the foul odors of the animals, as well as the “unpleasant character” of those who visited the

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<sup>71</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar. “The Park and the People: Central Park and its Publics: 1850–1910,” 125.

<sup>72</sup> “The Zoological Gardens.” *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Apr 06, 1890, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/94808316?accountid=12043> (accessed October 10, 2013), 3.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 3

<sup>74</sup> “History,” Friends of the Upper East Side History Districts, accessed October 15, 2013, <http://www.lexingtonexhibit.org/history.php>.

<sup>75</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 291.

Menagerie. Fifth Avenue residents “[claimed] that the presence of the animals [tended] to pollute the soil and [rendered] the neighborhood unwholesome.”<sup>76</sup> Finding that the noises from the animals living across the street also made it increasingly hard to sleep, those living on Fifth Avenue proposed that the Menagerie be moved to a “more central location, which would give ample space for future additions.”<sup>77</sup> The owners of property on Fifth Avenue mobilized support through signing petitions,<sup>78</sup> as well as appealing to the Board of Health.<sup>79</sup> Though wealthy residents on Fifth Avenue gained widespread support among those in their neighborhood, the residents of Yorkville, a working class neighborhood to the east of Fifth Avenue, posed a formidable threat to these efforts.

Beginning in the 1880s, Yorkville flooded with German immigrants migrating from the lower Manhattan enclave of “Little Germany.”<sup>80</sup> Separated from Fifth, Park, and Lexington Avenues by the Third Avenue El, there existed a “psychological barrier” between the two classes of people living on either side of the railway.<sup>81</sup> Yorkville, in opposition to Fifth Avenue, was a decidedly German working class neighborhood in the late nineteenth century. The neighborhood was filled with social clubs, beer gardens, and breweries.<sup>82</sup> The working class residents of Yorkville found considerable value in living in close proximity to the Menagerie. As such, they opposed its relocation. Those in Yorkville, as well as other working class people residing close

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<sup>76</sup> "Object to the Menagerie." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Dec 24, 1885, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/94241433?accountid=12043> (accessed November 1, 2013), 8.

<sup>77</sup> "The Animals in the Park." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Feb 14, 1886, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/94441456?accountid=12043> (accessed October 17, 2013), 4.

<sup>78</sup> "Object to the Menagerie." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Dec 24, 1885, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/94241433?accountid=12043> (accessed November 1, 2013), 8.

<sup>79</sup> "The Animals in the Park." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Feb 14, 1886, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/94441456?accountid=12043> (accessed October 17, 2013), 4.

<sup>80</sup> François Weill. *A History of New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 202.

<sup>81</sup> C. J. Hughes, "Where Change is Underfoot, and Overhead." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jun 01, 2008, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/905087895?accountid=12043> (accessed November 2, 2013), RE9.

<sup>82</sup> "Yorkville," Places that Matter, accessed November 2, 2013, <http://www.placematters.net/node/1701>.

to the Menagerie's location on Fifth Avenue, fought for the collection's location on the argument of convenience. These people had neither the time, nor the economic means, to travel to a relocated Menagerie—or, for that matter, the newly created Bronx Zoo.<sup>83</sup> The Bronx Zoo, one of the largest zoological collections to be built in the country, opened in 1899.<sup>84</sup> The working class argument was articulated in a March 17, 1887 article in *The New York Times* which claimed: "The present position of the menagerie is...convenient for great numbers of poor people who may visit it on holidays with their children for an hour's entertainment. If taken to the meadows it would be much more out of the way for such persons."<sup>85</sup> Moreover, the record numbers of visitors to the Menagerie in 1904 attested to the inability of the Bronx Zoo to replace the Central Park Menagerie as the most popular zoological collection in New York City.<sup>86</sup> The working class eventually prevailed in their struggle for the Central Park Menagerie, as it was never relocated. Despite this victory, no could deny the deteriorating conditions of the zoological collection on Sixty-Fourth Street. The Menagerie was in a state of physical decline.

The period from 1900 to 1934 marks the decline of the Central Park Menagerie,<sup>87</sup> largely due to reduced funding from the city. Funding to the Menagerie dwindled as increased funding went to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the American Museum of Natural History. These appropriations were made, to the detriment of the zoological collection, as a way to please the politically important trustees of the two Museums.<sup>88</sup> With reduced funding, the Menagerie was,

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<sup>83</sup> "The Park Menagerie." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Mar 17, 1887, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/94552585?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), 4.

<sup>84</sup> "Bronx Zoo," City of New York Parks and Recreation, accessed November 10, 2013, <http://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/zoos/bronx-zoo>.

<sup>85</sup> "The Park Menagerie." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Mar 17, 1887, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/94552585?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), 4.

<sup>86</sup> New York City Parks Department. 1904 New York City Parks Department Annual Report. October 10, 2013. [http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4012annual\\_report\\_nyc\\_dept\\_parks\\_1904.pdf](http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4012annual_report_nyc_dept_parks_1904.pdf), 37.

<sup>87</sup> François Weill. *A History of New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 128.

<sup>88</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 387, 388.

according to a newspaper article, in “near ruin.” Indeed, the cages in the lion house were said to be at such a point of deterioration that “the lions, if they tried...could easily push them apart and make their escape.”<sup>89</sup> A letter to *The New York Times* in 1902 read: “Even animals have some rights, and the greater distance of the Bronx collection from the homes of some of the visitors is surely a less evil than the cruel restriction necessitated by the location in Central Park.”<sup>90</sup> A 1928 guidebook described the Central Park Menagerie as “a small collection, inadequately housed in cramped and gloomy buildings.”<sup>91</sup> The Central Park Menagerie needed revitalization and renovation. Robert Moses would be the man to enact it.

Robert Moses first rose to fame through his work within the New York State Parks system.<sup>92</sup> Moses received critical renown for his transformation of the Jones Beach State Park in 1929. Moses, as president of the Long Island State Parks Commission, transformed an undeveloped strip of beachfront property on Long Island into a painstakingly designed recreational complex for the public. Moses not only designed every aspect of Jones Beach, from staff uniforms to trash bins—he also organized and constructed the roads and parkways which led to the Park.<sup>93</sup> New York City Mayor Fiorello La Guardia wanted Moses to transform New York City’s parks system, just as he had done at Jones Beach. Moses accepted the job as Parks Commissioner for New York City from Fiorello La Guardia with the stipulation that if he were to take the job, he would receive “unified power over all the city parks and... only as part of a

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<sup>89</sup> "Park Repair Needs Told by Gallatin." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Jan 26, 1920, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/97923851?accountid=12043> (accessed November 5, 2013). 6.

<sup>90</sup> George Henry Knight. "More Room for Park Animals." *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Apr 13, 1902, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/96224957?accountid=12043> (accessed November 1, 2013), 6.

<sup>91</sup> "The Central Park We See On Sunday." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Dec 09, 1928, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/104397975?accountid=12043> (accessed November 5, 2013), X15.

<sup>92</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 448.

<sup>93</sup> Michelle Kleehammer. "Robert Moses, Jones Beach, and the Legacy of Progressive-Era Conservationism," *The Long Island Historical Journal*, volume 14 (2001) 27-41: 27, 36.

unified control of the whole metropolitan system of parks and parkway development.”<sup>94</sup> Moses was ultimately granted not only the rights and powers of the Parks Commissioner, but also the power over the parkways, Triborough Bridge Authority, and the Marine Park Authority. Moses assumed his duties in January of 1934.<sup>95</sup> One day after being appointed Parks Commissioner, Moses moved into his office at the Arsenal Building in Central Park.<sup>96</sup> From his throne on Fifth Avenue and Sixty-Fourth Street, Moses enacted a grand reconstruction of the Central Park Zoo in 1934. Moses’ new Central Park Zoo was in concert with a national movement to renovate American zoos during the 1930s with funds and labor appropriated under the New Deal.

The renovation and rehabilitation of American zoos with federal funding in the 1930s was done to both advertise New Deal efficacy, as well as provide the American people with amusement during a time of economic hardship. Indeed, newly constructed zoos were an “ideal advertisement for New Deal projects...they were free (or inexpensive), wholesome entertainment for the masses and offered appealing visuals and storylines....[Zoos] gave the people something constructive to do with the ‘enforce leisure’ created by the Depression.”<sup>97</sup> The Detroit Zoological Park was a prime example of an American zoo being assisted through federal funds in the mid-1930s. The Detroit Zoo began construction in 1925, but, when economic depression hit the city and its people could no longer pay taxes, the zoo’s financial support from the city declined. Thus, the project was never completed. The zoo finally received funds from the Civil Works Administration and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration in late 1933. With this money, the Detroit Zoological Park was finished in 1935. The Philadelphia Zoo also

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<sup>94</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 448

<sup>95</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 448.

<sup>96</sup> Joan Scheier, *The Central Park Zoo* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 36.

<sup>97</sup> Jessie C. Donahue and Erik K. Trump, *American Zoos during the Depression: a New Deal for Animals* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010), 70.

benefitted from New Deal funds in the early 1930s; it used federal money to expand the park by constructing a shelter for some 3,000 animals.<sup>98</sup> Zoos in San Francisco, Buffalo, and Toledo were completely rebuilt in the 1930s with funds appropriated under the New Deal.<sup>99</sup> In concert with such revived interest in American zoos, Robert Moses engineered the design and construction of a new Central Park Zoo—the likes of which, through virtue of federal financing and use of Works Progress Administration workers, was inextricably linked to the New Deal policies sweeping New York in the 1930s.

Robert Moses' Central Park Zoo was designed in sixteen days in February of 1934,<sup>100</sup> and opened on December 2 of that same year. The design of Moses' zoo was quiet simple: nine, one story buildings, "most of them grouped around a landscaped quadrangle behind the [A]rsenal."<sup>101</sup> The new buildings were designed to be in architectural accordance with the Arsenal, though relatively inexpensive materials were chosen. The buildings were constructed out of brick, and adorned with limestone friezes. All roofs were slate.<sup>102</sup> A defining aspect of the 1934 Zoo was the buildings' circulation around the sea lion pool—one of the major attractions of the 1934 zoo. Four ornate bird cages were also constructed on each point of the central quadrangle surrounding the sea lion pool.<sup>103</sup> The Zoo's construction began upon Moses' hasty acquisition of federal funding.

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<sup>98</sup> Earl Chapin May. "To the Zoos has Come A New Deal." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Feb 10, 1935, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/101492013?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), SM19.

<sup>99</sup> Jessie C. Donahue and Erik K. Trump, *American Zoos during the Depression: a New Deal for Animals* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010), 18.

<sup>100</sup> "New Zoo Designed by CWA in 16 Days." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Feb 27, 1934, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/101054661?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), 21.

<sup>101</sup> "Picture Book' Zoo Will Open Sunday." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Nov 30, 1934, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/101204908?accountid=12043> (accessed November 3, 2013), 21.

<sup>102</sup> New York City Parks Department. 1934 New York City Department of Public Parks Budget Request and Annual Report. October 10, 2013. [http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4289annual\\_report\\_nyc\\_dept\\_parks\\_1934.pdf](http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/4289annual_report_nyc_dept_parks_1934.pdf), 148.

<sup>103</sup> Joan Scheier, *The Central Park Zoo* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 49.

Benefitting from La Guardia's close relationship with Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Moses was also known to be extremely efficient in applying for federal aid—having all plans ready to be shipped to Washington at a moment's notice.<sup>104</sup> With funding secured, Moses required a large body of workers to give life to his grand designs. He found his workers among those employed through the Works Progress Administration, a New Deal program employing millions of workers in the 1930s.<sup>105</sup> As it would turn out, WPA workers were hard at work in the 1930s transforming the world outside of the Central Park Zoo through the creation of numerous public buildings, public facilities, and artistic works in greater New York City.

Indeed, WPA workers constructed such public facilities as the Crotona pool in the Bronx, the Jackie Robinson Pool in Upper Manhattan, the First Houses public housing project in Lower Manhattan, and the Midtown North Police Precinct.<sup>106</sup> Perhaps most remarkable was the WPA employees' contribution of many fine art pieces to the city of New York. WPA artists and their murals included Lucienne Bloch and James Michael Newell's fresco in the House of Detention for Women, as well as Max Spivak's murals in the Astoria Library.<sup>107</sup> WPA construction workers and artists, transforming New York City with their work, came to be the driving force behind the construction of the 1934 Central Park Zoo.

The Central Park Zoo's incredibly swift construction in 1934 was largely due to Moses' employment of thousands of Works Progress Administration workers. Indeed, the initial drawings of the 1934 zoo were created by sixteen engineers from the Civil Works

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<sup>104</sup> Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackwell, *The Park and the People, A History of Central Park* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992), 458.

<sup>105</sup> "General Article: The Works Progress Administration (WPA)," PBS, accessed November 10, 2013, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/general-article/dustbowl-wpa/>.

<sup>106</sup> "Living New Deal," University of California-Berkeley, accessed November 10, 2013, <http://livingnewdeal.berkeley.edu/us/ny/new-york-ny/>.

<sup>107</sup> Greta Berman, "The Lost Years: Mural Painting in New York City under the Work's Progress Administration's Federal Art Project," (PhD Diss., Columbia University, 1975), 52.

Administration,<sup>108</sup> a program which ended on March 31, 1934 and was, like the WPA, designed to provide jobs for those who were unemployed.<sup>109</sup> Approximately 700 workers labored during the day, and 400 at night, during the construction of the 1934 Central Park Zoo. Within one week, one of the largest buildings in the Menagerie—the lunchroom—had already been torn down.<sup>110</sup> Approximately half of the antiquated Menagerie buildings had been demolished, and almost all foundations had been poured for the Zoo's new buildings by late March 1934. Two hundred brick layers were taken from other public works jobs and began brick work on the Central Park Zoo on March 28, 1934. (March 28, 1934). The Central Park Zoo also came to reflect New Deal trends in greater New York City by utilizing several New Deal artists in the Zoo's adornment.

The Central Park Zoo displayed the work of New Deal artists both in the Arsenal building as well as in the zoo proper. The murals painted by Allen Saalburg in the Arsenal's foyer depicted different Central Park scenes, including scenes within the Central Park Zoo.<sup>111</sup> These paintings were created in the style of "Victorian rococo and intended to approximate what artists of the last century would have produced had they been ordered to decorate the building."<sup>112</sup> Within the zoo proper, F.G. Roth sculpted sixteen ornate friezes running along the top of each building to illustrate the type of animal living within. Finally, an eighty foot long mural depicting wild animals roaming amongst the foliage of the jungle, painted upon the restaurant which faced the sea lion pool, provided the most noticeable example of New Deal

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<sup>108</sup> "New Zoo Designed by CWA in 16 Days." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Feb 27, 1934, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/101054661?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), 21.

<sup>109</sup>"Civil Works Administration." Princeton University, accessed November 2, 2013.

[http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Civil\\_Works\\_Administration.html](http://www.princeton.edu/~achaney/tmve/wiki100k/docs/Civil_Works_Administration.html).

<sup>110</sup> "Picture-Book' Zoo Being Built in Park" *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Mar 09, 1934, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/101055918?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013). 12.

<sup>111</sup> Jessie C. Donahue and Erik K. Trump, *American Zoos during the Depression: a New Deal for Animals* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2010), 190.

<sup>112</sup> "Artists Start Murals in Park to Relieve Mall's Somber Aspect." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Aug 03, 1935, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/101386164?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), 15.



artwork in the 1934 Zoo.<sup>113</sup> These murals and artistic features of the 1934 Central Park Zoo greatly contributed to the popular conception of the space as a “picture-book” zoo.

Unlike the Central Park Menagerie, which housed its animals in stylish corbeled buildings and denoted the species of animals with their Latin names, the 1934 Zoo took a more whimsical approach to the presentation of its inhabitants.<sup>114</sup> Being referred to as the “Picture Book Zoo,” no doubt a reference to the colorful images seen in children’s book, the 1934 Central Park Zoo appealed to the tastes of children. In addition to the chiseled friezes, weather vanes designed by Wilhem Hunt Diedrich adorned each building and denoted the type of animal inside. Animals incorporated into the weather vanes included a monkey, a fox, and a leopard—the last of which was depicted as gingerly licking its paw.<sup>115</sup> In concert with such whimsical aesthetic design, ornately painted pushcarts called “carretinas” were used to sell ice cream, hot dogs, and candy. These carretinas were constructed by CWA workers and were adorned with twenty six panels—each painted with the image of an animal shown in the zoo.<sup>116</sup> These visual elements created a zoological experience which met with unrivaled success upon the Zoo’s opening.

The 1934 Central Park Zoo was an instantaneous success. On the Sunday after its opening, 57,607 visitors entered its gates. What is more, an average of 75,000 people entered the zoo’s gates each week in the first four months of 1935.<sup>117</sup> One year later, attendance continued to boom, as 175,000 people visited the zoo weekly, with approximately 100,000 visitors on Sundays. Though other playgrounds and public spaces had been constructed in Central Park during this same time, the Central Park Zoo was by far the grandest product of the New Deal

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<sup>113</sup> Joan Scheier, *The Central Park Zoo* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 60, 41.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>115</sup> Joan Scheier, *The Central Park Zoo* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 62-63.

<sup>116</sup> “Flashy New Pushcart for Park Zoo Is Shown.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jun 15, 1934, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/100918643?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013). 14.

<sup>117</sup> Milton Bracker. “The New Zoo -- A Good Time is had by All.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Apr 14, 1935, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/101536033?accountid=12043> (accessed October 10, 2013), SM8.

within Central Park. Indeed, the Zoo was seen as being responsible for the “increasing ‘zoo consciousness’” gripping the public in the mid-1930s.<sup>118</sup> Not only had the New Deal saved the Central Park Zoo from deterioration and collapse, it had also, in the process, brought a wider movement responsible for the renovation of New York City’s urban landscape into Olmstead’s pastoral environment. The Central Park Zoo would, in the 1940s and 1950s, act as an extension of Moses’ movement to educate and entertain New York City’s children.

During his reign as Parks Commissioner, Robert Moses inaugurated countless playgrounds and park programs geared toward the education and entertainment of children. One of his first acts as Parks Commissioner was to launch a city wide movement to construct new playgrounds. Indeed, 235 new playgrounds were constructed in New York City between 1934 and 1938.<sup>119</sup> These spaces performed a very specific function, however, as Moses claimed they would “train [the children] for good citizenship, respect for authority and obedience to rules and regulations and inculcate loyalty to their playground and create a greater interest in their local neighborhood, parks and playgrounds.”<sup>120</sup> Moses also organized countless children’s shows which were performed in the city’s parks from the 1930s to the 1950s. In 1945 alone, the public parks in New York City hosted 102 magic and 110 marionette shows. A particularly favorite performer was “Peter Pan the Magic Man,” a magician who performed six days a week—each night in a different borough.<sup>121</sup> In addition to shows and performances, Moses inaugurated the Annual Children’s Dance Festival, an event at which children from different boroughs

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<sup>118</sup> “Zoo Visitors Here Setting Records.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Nov 17, 1935, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/101302606?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), NI.

<sup>119</sup> New York City Parks Department. 1938 Parks Department Press Releases. October 12, 2013. [http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/41921938\\_press\\_releases.pdf](http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/41921938_press_releases.pdf), 1.

<sup>120</sup> New York City Parks Department. 1937 Parks Department Press Releases. October 12, 2013. [http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/41901937\\_press\\_releases.pdf](http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/41901937_press_releases.pdf), 20.

<sup>121</sup> New York City Parks Department. 1945 Parks Department Press Releases. October 12, 2013. [http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/42021945\\_press\\_releases.pdf](http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/42021945_press_releases.pdf), 145, 200.

participated in group dances,<sup>122</sup> as well as the “Learn to Swim” program, a program appearing in the 1940s which aimed to teach children how to swim in the city’s outdoor pools during the summer months.<sup>123</sup> Though occurring within the Parks system, this movement was not centered in Central Park, and largely took place in more urbanized park spaces around New York City. The extension of such an emphasis on children into the Central Park Zoo can thus be seen as incorporating a larger city movement into Central Park’s premier zoological collection.

Indeed, the 1934 Central Park Zoo harnessed Moses’ emphasis on the education and entertainment of children by not only better accommodating them physically, but by including them in the Zoo’s operations. On June 11, 1935, the Central Park Zoo was donated its first wheelchair. These wheelchairs were donated so as to make “children’s visits possible” in the new zoo. Attendants were also provided who pushed the children around the various exhibits. The experience of visiting the Central Park Zoo was thus made available to those children “whose only knowledge of animals [had] been derived from books and pictures.”<sup>124</sup> The Central Park Zoo also incorporated children into its operations by allowing children a role in naming new animals. This was done through a series of contests beginning in the mid-1930s and continuing into the late 1940s. Beginning in 1935, the Central Park Zoo ran contests in which children suggested names by writing them on a card and placing them in ballot boxes placed around the Zoo.<sup>125</sup> The names were read, and the winners selected. Such contests were incredibly

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<sup>122</sup> New York City Parks Department. 1952 Parks Department Press Releases. October 12, 2013. [http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/42941952\\_press\\_releases\\_part1.pdf](http://home2.nyc.gov/html/records/pdf/govpub/42941952_press_releases_part1.pdf), 48.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>124</sup> “Invalids Invited to Zoo.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jun 11, 1935, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/101454408?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013). 23.

<sup>125</sup> “Children will Name Animals in Two Zoos.” *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Aug 02, 1935, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/101389038?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), 15.

popular—a single contest in October 1944 received 1,844 suggestions.<sup>126</sup> Though zoo officials criticized the infantile and uninspired name suggestions,<sup>127</sup> the “Name Our Animals” contests were an effective way to both peak children’s interest in, and include them in the operations of, the Central Park Zoo. These contests, and their winning suggestions, were announced in *The New York Times*, thereby demonstrating the 1934 Zoo’s connection with New York City’s press from the mid-1930s to the late 1950s.

Much like the Central Park Menagerie of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the 1934 Central Park Zoo maintained a close relationship with *The New York Times*. New arrivals and births of animals were announced in the paper regularly. The birth of a buffalo calf was announced on April 16, 1937, with the notice that the baby would be on display in a “day or so.”<sup>128</sup> The introduction of an Albino leopard to the zoo in December of 1948 likewise garnered much attention. A “dozen reporters and photographers” were at the unveiling of the cat to document the occasion.<sup>129</sup> The birth of twin jaguars in July of 1953 warranted not only a story, but a large picture of the pair in the *New York Times*; the picture being one of only two on the whole page.<sup>130</sup> These announcements, appearing weekly and supplemented by numerous articles on the massive crowds visiting the Zoo, often included the dates on which people could view certain animals—as was the case with the buffalo calf. Such coverage in the press thus encouraged people to visit the Zoo. New York City’s newspapers, specifically *The New York Times*, also

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<sup>126</sup> "School Children to Get Medals Saturday for Choosing Names for New Zoo Animals." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Oct 26, 1944, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/106903507?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), 25.

<sup>127</sup> "Zoo Name Poll Closes." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Aug 28, 1935, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/101371807?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), 9.

<sup>128</sup> "New Buffalo Calf in Zoo." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Apr 16, 1937, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/102239495?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), 24.

<sup>129</sup> "Albino Leopard Joins Park Zoo." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Dec 17, 1948, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/108338139?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013), 36.

<sup>130</sup> "Jaguars in Debut Growl and Yawn." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jul 03, 1953, <http://search.proquest.com/hnpnewyorktimes/docview/112778791/abstract/141C7AE33047E1C05F7/4?accountid=12043>, 21.

functioned as the means through which people voiced their concern for not only the Zoo's treatment of animals, but the Zoo's physical decline. Evidently, the late 1950s and 1960s *was* a time of physical decline for the 1934 Central Park Zoo.

The late 1950s and early 1960s was a time of protest against the antiquated and unhealthy conditions of animal quarters in the Central Park Zoo. Largely unrenovated since 1934, many cages showed physical deterioration as paint chipped and grout lines were messily patched up or soiled by animals. Cages did little to imitate the animal's nature habitat, and in some cases did not even provide bare essentials; the bird cages did not have branches or leaves until the 1960s.<sup>131</sup> These conditions sparked mass protest from visitors frequenting the zoo. Indeed, a native of England decried the Zoo's conditions in 1960 by claiming: "I am aghast at the primitiveness of the Central Park Zoo, especially at the way the lions and tigers are housed. Surely these dark little cages, reminding one of a medieval fair, are unworthy of a rich city."<sup>132</sup> A letter to the editor the following year echoed these sentiments: "On my last visit...I was again shocked...by the inadequacy of the cages....It seems to me if we wish to maintain the zoo as it is now we should put over the entrance in large letters, 'Abandon compassion all you who enter here.'"<sup>133</sup> These protests ultimately led to change—improvements to the zoo began in 1969. Cages were expanded and platforms upon which animals could sleep were constructed. These transformations culminated in the 1988 Central Park Zoo—a zoo whose prime concern was precisely replicating natural environments for the comfort and health of the animals.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Joan Scheier, *The Central Park Zoo* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 84, 85.

<sup>132</sup> P. Elliot "Housing of Zoo Animals." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Dec 27, 1960, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/114924896?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013). 28.

<sup>133</sup> H.A. Dale "Zoo Space Facilities Protested." *New York Times (1923-Current File)*, Jul 01, 1961, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/115428593?accountid=12043> (accessed November 16, 2013). 16.

<sup>134</sup> Joan Scheier, *The Central Park Zoo* (Great Britain: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 85.

The Central Park Menagerie and 1934 Central Park Zoo were cultural institutions that drew great crowds to the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Sixty-Fourth Street. Though seen as providing the citizens of New York with a respite from chaotic city life, these collections were essentially the products of the economic, cultural, and political influences shaping greater New York City. Evolving from a ragtag collection of donated pets and unwanted specimens in the late 1850s, to a highly organized and integrated institution in the 1960s, the Central Park Menagerie and its successor acted as the transient home for thousands of animals. The animals of the Central Park Menagerie and 1934 Central Park Zoo, becoming permanent fixtures to the city, were oft described as “residents” of the zoological collection. The permanence of the memory of these animals in the millions who visited the zoological collection over its 150 year history suggest that the animals became “residents” of something even more significant—the individual and collective conscious of those living in, and visiting, New York City.

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