

97 SD 0229

**HISTORIC AND NATURAL DISTRICTS  
INVENTORY FORM**

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**DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
NEW YORK STATE PARKS AND RECREATION  
ALBANY, NEW YORK (518) 474-0479**

YOUR NAME: B. Van Liew, Consultant/ NS Foster DATE: 8/79

YOUR ADDRESS: Box 416, St James, L.I. TELEPHONE: 516- 584-5600

ORGANIZATION (if any): Natural Heritage Trust

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1. NAME OF DISTRICT: Heckscher State Park

2. COUNTY: Suffolk TOWN/CITY: Islip VILLAGE: East Islip

3. DESCRIPTION: The Park is situated in a deciduous forest bordered by marsh lands, a "neck", creating a separateness suitable for the multiple Park activities of picnicking, boating, swimming and camping. The Park entrance road, (A State Parkway) is adjacent to heavily populated South Shore towns.

4. SIGNIFICANCE: The Land has been of interest since the 17th C. when William Nicoll (1657-1723) bought it from the local Indians in 1683. The family lived here as "Lords of the Manor" naming it "Islip Grange" until the 19th C. By the mid 19th C. the area was called "Great Neck", and after several owners of short duration, James Neal(e) Plumb purchased in 1872 689 acres for an estate which was named "Deer Range Farm". During excavation for Plumb's large French mansardic style mansion, silver candlesticks and other items were unearthed. They were returned to the surviving Nicoll.

George C. Taylor bought, in 1885, acreage to the west of Plumb's holdings. He too, built a mansion and many farm buildings in the prevailing style of architecture, quite different from that preferred by the Plumbs. Later the Plumb estate (or parts of it) was bought by George Taylor. The large main residences were cut into sections, as part of the Plumb mansion

5. MAP: serve as a commercial building on Main Street, Bay Shore. An allee of trees from the Taylor mansion survives.

- DOT. Bay Shore East Quadrangle.
- 1858 - Chace. Islip Township
- 1873 - Beers, Comstock. Atlas of Long Island. Great South Bay.
- 1888 - District.
- 1915 - E. Belcher Hyde. Atlas of the Ocean Shore of Suffolk County, Long Island, Westerly Section. Plate

Bailey, Rosalie Fellows. The Nicoll Family and Islip Grange.H

6. SOURCES: Order of Colonial Lords of Manors in America. 1940.pp.35-42.

Bayles, Richard M. Historical and Descriptive Sketches of Suffolk Co.....  
1874. Reprint 1962. pp.218,219.

Blakelock, Chester R. "The Story of Heckscher State Park" Long Island Forum.  
vol IV July 1941. pp.159-163. Reprinted in Paul Bailey, ed. L.I. A History....  
N.Y. Vol II pp265-273.

Caro, Robert A. The Power Broker. N.Y. Alfred Knopf. 1974. pp. 155,162,146,485.

Dyson, Verne, Anecdote & Events in L.I. History. n.d. (?1968) pp35,36.

Hollins, Harry. "Happy Hunting Ground". typescript. 2 pages. n.d. (?1910).

News Item. South Side News. 11/20/1872.

See Attachment.

7. THREATS TO AREA: None

BY ZONING

BY ROADS

BY DEVELOPERS

BY DETERIORATION

OTHER \_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

8. LOCAL ATTITUDES TOWARD THE AREA:

9. PHOTOS: See Attachements.

HECKSCHER STATE PARK

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	<u>USAGE DESCRIPTION</u>	<u>YEAR-CIRCA</u>
H 1	Maintenance Building	1872
H 2	East Bathhouse	1931 (1936)
H 3	Supt's Quarters	1885
H 4	Supt's Garage	1934
H 5	Asst. Supt's Quarters	1872
H 6	Asst. Supt's Garage	1872
H 7	Kiddie Play Area Building	1886
H 8	Pump House #1	1931
H 9	Picnic Area #1 -Refreshment Stand	1933
H 10	Equipment Barn	1872
H 11	Storage Barn	1885
H 12	Sign Shop	1885
H 13	Picnic Area #3, Comfort Station	1885
H 14	Picnic Pavilion	1885
H 15	Storage Shed (2)	1887
H 16	Picnic Area #6, Comfort Station	1872
H 17	Greenhouse Office	1933
H 18	Greenhouse Work Room	1933
H 19	Greenhouses (2)	1933
H 20	Picnic Area #1, Comfort Station	1872





## HECKSCHER STATE PARK

## Park Development

The area subsequently to become the Heckscher State Park has been used for recreational purposes for generations. The type of use follows sociological patterns, from casual hunting and fishing, to private outdoor recreation, to sports clubs, and now, with the Park to varied recreational activities by the public.

## Land Acquisition.

Negotiations for a state park in this area began in 1924 in an attempt to purchase the Taylor estate as a nucleus. This was thwarted for a time by a coalition of wealthy land owners in both Suffolk and Nassau Counties who objected to the State's incursions into what they felt were their land use prerogatives.

As the park developed, other perimeter lands were included, many by gift.

Attachment  
Historic and Natural Districts Inventory Form

H

6. Sources:

Photo. Suffolk County News. 10/16/75.

Weeks, George L. Jr. Islands of Shells. Islip, N.Y. 1965. pp298,299.

# The Story of Heckscher State Park

NEVER in the history of the State of New York has the acquisition of land for park purposes had such far-reaching results as did the establishment of Heckscher State Park at East Islip.

It was the subject of actions in every possible court from the County Court of Suffolk County to the Supreme Court of the United States and involved twenty-five separate appellate proceedings.

It was the cause of a special summer session of the state legislature.

It held up the expenditure of park funds throughout the entire state for nearly a year.

It was instrumental in changing the route of a parkway more than thirty miles away.

It was the subject of mass meetings, printed pamphlets, newspaper campaigns and finally, it was even indirectly responsible for the making of a new political figure.

The property involved in the controversy having these far-reaching results was formerly the George C. Taylor estate of 1500 acres on the Great South Bay in the Town of Islip. It was wild and picturesque property with a wild and picturesque history.

George C. Taylor, who assembled this large tract had been an unusual and eccentric man of considerable means. In 1886 he built there a large and ornate country home. He then erected about 30 other buildings, such as carriage barn, stables, dairy barns, greenhouses, and quarters for his employees, etc. The wooded areas of the estate he stocked with deer and game birds. For proper effect he had peacocks and a herd of elks wandering about the lawns of the mansion. Inside he displayed seven cupid-like statues of himself, supposedly representing the seven ages of man. The spacious porches

By Chester R. Blakelock

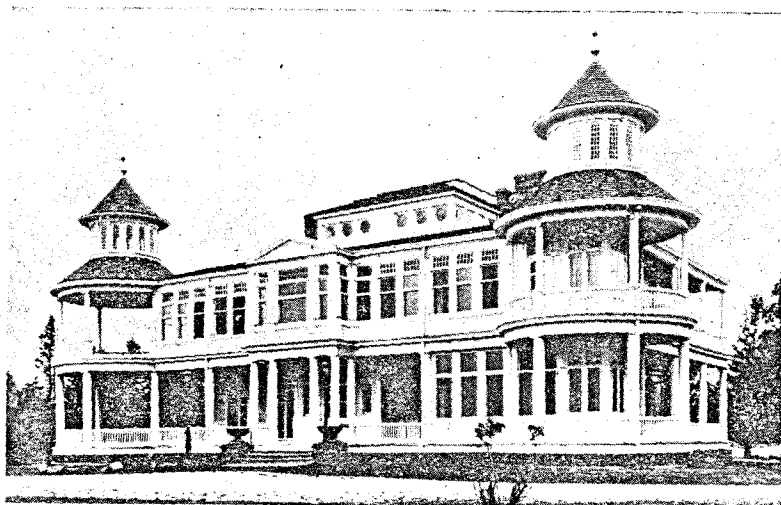
Executive Secretary

Long Island State Park Commission

of the mansion overlooked a broad canal, starting at the far edge of the lawn and stretching over half a mile to the bay. In the canal he kept a yacht for cruising and fishing in bay and ocean. In fact

who had been so zealously guarded unexpectedly ran off and was married to her bicycle instructor by a local Justice of the Peace.

This may or may not have contributed to George C. Taylor's eccentricities. In any event he and his companion became heavy drinkers. At times the winding staircase in the three-story mansion be-



The Taylor Mansion as it Appeared Prior to Demolition in 1933

everything was apparently perfect for the normal life of a country gentleman.

But George C. Taylor's life at his Islip estate was far from what the good people of the local community considered normal. He isolated himself on the estate with a common-law wife. Their daughter was rarely seen off the private grounds. They hired special tutors and instructors for her and when the bicycle craze came along they imported a bicycle instructor from England who brought with him all available models of English made bicycles. They also had constructed a special bicycle house for storing and repairing the newly acquired equipment. The outcome of these activities was that the girl

came hard to navigate so he had an elevator installed. Other tales relate how he built a log cabin not far from the mansion where he kept his liquor stored and where he slept when he and his companion had had a fight. Still others tell how his companion became even more eccentric than old George and how the normal complement of servants was reduced to a butler and two maids because she took to the sport of throwing knives at the rest of them.

This wild gossip which had kept the locality excited for so long a time came to an end in 1908 when both George C. Taylor and his companion died within a few days of each other.

The large estate passed to three sisters and a brother



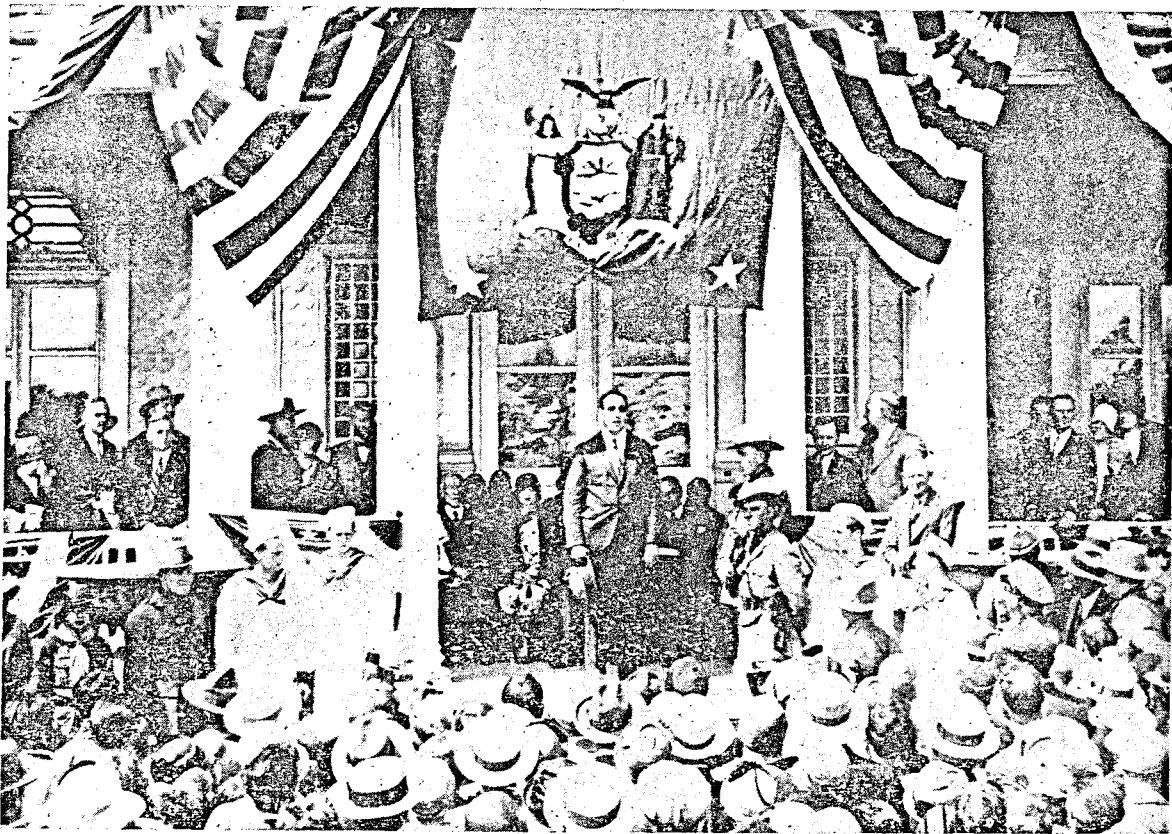
and several of their kin but the property remained practically unused and unoccupied for the next sixteen years. These heirs, about eighteen in number, formed a corporation, known as the Deer Range Corporation for the purpose of better handling the estate. It is reported that one of the first corporate acts was to settle a reputed million dollars on George C. Taylor's daughter. The corporation of heirs carried the property at quite some expense and tried without success to sell it. The only use made of it was by Percy Pyne, 2nd, one of the heirs who established a private shooting preserve on it where ducks, pheasants and other wild life, tamed by regular feeding became easy prey.

That was the status of the Taylor Estate when in the summer of 1924 the newly created Long Island State Park Commission was investigating locations for new state parks and for a headquarters for the Commission's staff.

The Taylor estate was found to be for sale and considered suitable for both purposes. After negotiations between Robert Moses, President of the Long Island State Park Commission and the officers of the Deer Range Corporation, the officers agreed to give an option to the State to purchase the property for \$250,000 in anticipation of the funds being made available by a Park Bond Issue Act to be voted on by the people of the State. The new park was to be known as Deer Range State Park. The action of the officers, however, could not be binding without the consent of the stockholders so a meeting of the stockholders was called to pass on the matter.

When it became known that the State intended to acquire the Taylor estate for a park, W. Kingsland Macy, the President of the nearby Timber Point Country Club and Horace Havemeyer, his brother-in-law, both of whom were owners of nearby property,

became alarmed for fear that a park at this location would be detrimental to the neighborhood. Many of the Taylor heirs were their friends to whom they made an offer to buy the estate themselves at the same price offered by the State. As a result the option to the State was disapproved by a majority of the heirs over the protest of the officers. The corporation then voted to sell to Messrs. Macy and Havemeyer who obtained title in the name of the Pauchogue Land Corporation. Mr. Macy, who was president of both the new land company and the country club, informed the Park Commission that he was strongly opposed to the establishment of a state park on the Taylor estate not only because he thought that a public park would be objectionable to nearby estate owners, but because a park at that location would also make it difficult for new estates to spring up near enough to the country club for it to benefit.



Commissioner Robert Moses Speaking From the Porch of the Taylor Mansion at the Dedication Ceremonies Held on June 2, 1929

An active campaign was started to create sentiment against a state park at East Islip and a combination was formed between the Macy group and the large estate owners of Nassau County whose object was to block the proposed Northern State Parkway. This welding of interests brought about a change in the parkway route in Nassau County where it now swings toward the south to avoid the estates in the Wheatley Hills section. The change was made, however, only after the payment to the State of nearly a quarter of a million dollars. In later years, after the completion of the parkway, those who brought about the change were sorry that it had been made and wished that it was more convenient for their use.

The combined opposition in no way changed the Commission's plan to acquire the Taylor estate and on November 4, 1924 when the Park Bond Issue Act was approved at the polls allotting \$1,000,000 for park development on Long Island, the Park Commission resolved to take the Taylor estate by eminent domain. All necessary papers to effectuate the acquisition were prepared for the signature of Alfred E. Smith, the Governor.

Before Governor Smith signed the papers he held a hearing in the Hotel Biltmore in New York City at which the Long Island State Park Commission was represented by Robert Moses, Judge Townsend Scudder, Raymond P. McNulty, George D. Carrington and H. L. Bowlby and at which Mr. Macy, Mr. Havemeyer and their friends stated their objections to the proposed park. Mr. Havemeyer asked, "Where can a poor millionaire go?" This went unanswered but when someone objected to being "over-run with rabble from the city", the Governor said, "Why that's me". He then signed the papers.

Thus began probably the most intensive campaign to

block a public project and hamstring a public body ever carried on in this State. The representatives of the newly formed corporation, outspoken in their intentions to do everything in their power to prevent the establishment of the park, proceeded to launch their attack along all possible lines. On December 31, 1924, they brought suit against the Commission claiming that the taking of the land by the method of eminent domain, known as entry and appropriation, had been illegal because the legislature had not yet made available to the

papers denouncing the action taken by the Commission. Bills were introduced in Albany to abolish or cripple the Commission and to take away the power of acquiring land by entry and appropriation.

The late Judge George H. Furman of Patchogue was the first of a long list to hear the law suit brought by the newly formed Pauchogue Land Corporation. He granted the corporation an order declaring the seizure by entry and appropriation illegal.

In the meantime the opposition before the 1925 Leg-



Lt. Governor Herbert Lehman and Ex-Governor Alfred E. Smith Officially Receive the Park From August Heckscher

Commission any of the funds authorized by the Park Bond Issue referendum. In order to make this objection hold they sent eminent counsel to Albany to urge the legislature not to appropriate any funds out of the Bond Act to be used on Long Island. Meanwhile pamphlets were printed and articles appeared in news-

islature resulted in a delay of the whole state-wide park program. A bill appropriating funds authorized by the Park Bond Issue referendum of the previous November was passed containing provisions taking away control of the acquisition of land from the various regional park commissions of which the Long

Island commission was one.

Governor Smith vetoed the bill on April 1, 1925 with the result that no funds were available for the state-wide park program as authorized by the previous referendum. He then called a special session of the legislature for June 2, 1925 but again at this extra session the objectionable appropriation bill was passed and again it was vetoed by the Governor.

The late August Heckscher, long a champion of public recreation facilities, became interested in the controversy and decided to give to the State \$262,000 which amount was the original option price plus interest so as to enable the Commission to pay for the property. Upon receipt of this gift the Commission again appropriated the property on September 25, 1925, in order to meet the legal objection that it had been without funds in hand at the time the property was first taken.

Shortly thereafter the Court of Appeals sustained the Pauchogue Land Corporation and held that the first taking of the Taylor estate was invalid for lack of actually available funds but indicated that a reappropriation of the property when moneys were in hand would cure all defects. In the meantime an action to eject the Commission from the property was started and on the same day that the Court of Appeals handed down the above decision, Judge Selah B. Strong called the new action to trial at Riverhead although counsel for the Commission was busy at the time in another court. The President of the Commission was present to testify but the Commission could not go on with the trial in the absence of counsel and default judgments were entered against Robert Moses, President of the Park Commission, Judge Townsend Scudder and Clifford L. Jackson, the other Commissioners, individually for \$22,000. The county sheriff acting on the judgment served papers on employees of

the Commission who were on the property immediately to vacate. A dinner was organized by the jubilant Timber Point opposition and held at the Timber Point clubhouse to celebrate the event, but the judgment was later stayed and on appeal was reversed by the Appellate Courts.

But the taking of the property by appropriation for the second time with Mr. Heckscher's gift gave new impetus to the battle. The main trial, marked by intense interest and bitter feeling, was heard by Judge James Dunne at Riverhead. It lasted for three weeks and was

The land corporation contended that the award was insufficient and that both the Heckscher gift and the second appropriation of the property were invalid. On appeal, however, the judgment was affirmed in the Appellate Division and finally in the Court of Appeals on July 9, 1928.

A writ of Error was immediately sought by the land corporation. This was denied by Chief Justice Benjamin N. Cardozo of the Court of Appeals on September 1, 1928. An attempt was then made to bring the case to the Supreme Court of the United States on constitutional grounds. On



Air View of the East Beach Area at Heckscher State Park Showing Modern Bathhouse and Game Area Adjacent to Parking Field

made notable by the appearance as witnesses of such public figures as Governor Smith, August Heckscher, Commissioner Moses, Judge Scudder, Mr. Macy and others. Judge Dunne held that the State had good title to the property by reason of the second appropriation made after the receipt of the gift from August Heckscher and a jury awarded the Pauchogue Land Corporation the sum of six cents as damages suffered for the period between the first and second appropriation.

January 21, 1929 this court handed down a decision in favor of the park commission and denied the application for a writ of certiorari made by the corporation.

The State Court of Claims then determined the amount which the state had to pay. Although the Pauchogue Land Corporation paid only \$250,000 for the property in 1924, it alleged that the \$262,000 contributed by Mr. Heckscher was grossly inadequate. In this new action it was claimed that the property in 1925 was worth \$1,468,000. The Court

of Claims made an award of \$275,000, substantially agreeing with the contentions of the park commission.

During the years these legal fireworks were taking place and the consequent indecisive status of the new park, the Park Commission acquired Belmont Lake State Park and established its administration headquarters there with funds finally made available by the Legislature in 1926. These funds, incidentally were appropriated as authorized by the earlier Park Bond Issue referendum and in the exact manner that had been originally recommended by Governor Smith to the regular and special sessions of the 1925 legislature.

Formidable opposition was thus defeated but the battle had been a real one which had been closely followed by the press. The attendant publicity obtained by Mr. Macy no doubt was responsible to a large degree for bringing his name before the public and for his subsequent role in state and local politics. Ever since his defeat in the Pauchogue case, Mr. Macy showed generous cooperation and interest in plans for furthering the state park program on Long Island and especially the extension of the parkway system in Suffolk County.

On June 2, 1929 with the controversy over the acquisition of the Taylor estate closed, the name of the park was changed from Deer Range State Park to Heckscher State Park at appropriate ceremonies attended by August Heckscher, Lt.-Governor Herbert H. Lehman, Ex-Governor Smith and other state and local officials.

The speeches made on this occasion were delivered from the front porch of George C. Taylor's mansion to an assembled crowd of several thousand people.

In 1933 the old mansion was demolished. No longer needed as an administration office, its huge rooms with wood carvings, gas light chandeliers and

statues were found useless for park purposes and too costly to maintain. On its site is a large boulder with a bronze plaque reading:

HECKSCHER STATE PARK  
A GIFT FROM  
AUGUST HECKSCHER  
TO THE PEOPLE  
OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Many other changes have been made since the estate was last used by George Taylor. The bicycle house where his young daughter first met her bicycle instructor was moved to the bay front and has been used for the past fifteen years as a refreshment stand at the west beach area. Likewise the bathhouse at this area was originally a boat house on the canal. A new modern bathhouse was constructed in 1931 at the east beach area with accommodations for 1700 bathers. The log cabin used for liquor storage and "nights out" by old George remains in the park. His main carriage barn has been converted into a recreation hall for outing picnic groups. The pony barns at the pony ring were part of the original pig pen. The old dairy barns are now used as a garage and machine shop. The Taylor stables still house horses which may be hired for riding on extensive bridle paths throughout the park.

The elks are gone but many of the 325,000 persons who visit the park each year to enjoy bathing, picnicking, riding, hiking, or games have seen a peacock or two, pheasants, ducks and some of the herd of 200 wild deer that

live a sheltered life within this 1500-acre park.

August Heckscher died on April 26, 1941 at the age of 92 but in the words of former Governor Smith "Heckscher State Park will remain as a monument to his public spirit and generosity as long as the State endures."

Upon Mr. Heckscher's death the Long Island State Park Commission consisting of Robert Moses, Clifford L. Jackson and Herbert Bayard Swope, adopted the following resolution:

WHEREAS, August Heckscher courageously intervened in a suit against the State by selfish private interests and by a generous and timely gift of \$262,000 made possible the establishment of Heckscher State Park at East Islip, Long Island, and

WHEREAS, August Heckscher's death on April 26, 1941 terminated a long career distinguished by this and many other beneficences and countless evidences of public spirit,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Long Island State Park Commission hereby expresses to Mrs. Heckscher its profound sympathy and renews its assurance of the lasting gratitude of the People of the state of New York for August Heckscher's contributions to their welfare.

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properties, the one at Wantagh, ran all the way down to the Great South Bay, another road—connecting with the road leading out from New York—could be built south down to the bay without the necessity of any purchase or condemnation at all. Once it reached the bay, it would be directly opposite Jones Beach. And since the bay was so shallow, it ought to be easy to construct a causeway from the end of the road to the beach. "That was the idea behind Jones Beach and the Southern State Parkway," Moses would recall years later. "I thought of it all in a moment."

As he thought about the road, he thought about the Bronx River Parkway. Although it hadn't yet been opened, the newspapers were full of stories about it. With the exception of a three-mile stretch of the Fenway in Boston and, of course, the transverse roads in Central Park, the parkway would be the first highway in the country to eliminate traffic lights and intersecting traffic by lifting all crossroads above it. The bridges that carried the crossroads would be faced with stone to blend in with the scenery, and the bordering right-of-way would be completely landscaped. Newspapers were predicting that it would be the most beautiful road in America. A road through the Long Island water-supply properties, Moses realized, would, on that portion of it which traversed the properties, be lined with the beautiful trees he had seen. The north-south road running from it to the bay would be lined with trees its entire length, and the causeway across the water would cross the bay panorama. The roads he was thinking of, he realized, could be more beautiful than the Bronx River Parkway.

→ The line he had drawn on the map through the water-supply properties seemed to point like an arrow into Long Island's South Shore. Looking beyond its point, the easternmost of the properties, Moses saw a series of promontories jutting out into the Great South Bay. He recalled that the promontories were supposed to be beautiful. And on weekends now, Moses had himself driven east.

From the car, he could see that most of the promontories were private estates, but in East Islip he noticed a large piece of property fenced off but overgrown with underbrush and weeds and apparently deserted. A real estate agent told him that it had belonged to an eccentric old millionaire named Taylor and, when he died, had been purchased by a group of wealthy men who allowed it to grow wild because they used it as a game preserve.

There may have been caretakers on the Taylor Estate, but Moses didn't see them when he returned to it. Tramping through the brush and the woods, frightening groups of deer, startling coveys of pheasants, he came to a group of out-buildings, all deserted and all except one, which had been turned into a hunting lodge, crumbling. Looming over them was an old mansion, paint peeling, with broken windows. In front of the mansion was a long meadow of uncut, waving grass that had evidently once been an imposing lawn. Beyond it was white sand and then the dark blue-gray of the bay, and beyond the bay, just a line on the horizon, the dunes of Fire Island. Stirring the trees, the grass and the water was the gentle breeze which Moses had learned from the baymen invariably cooled the bay shore every day from about eleven o'clock in the morning until near sundown. Overhead was a

lot of sky. To it manicured grass—several fourses with the caddies a yellow legal n the property, an bathhouses for t still others to o trees and where youngsters could

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decided to turn it into a private club. The obstacles might have deterred less determined men. Davies had owned only 231 acres and most of them were marshland that was covered by water at high tide, so that there was only enough solid land for a nine-hole golf course. To make the second nine, they were told, dredges would have to work for a year to haul up sand and fill in the marshland with it. They set the dredges to work.

To design the course, they brought over an Englishman who was the most famous golf-course designer in the world. To help the members with their swings, they hired a famous touring professional. They staffed the kitchen with the best chefs they could find. For those members who wanted to sail, they built a large boat basin. And when all was ready, they thought of a name, the Timber Point Club, and opened the club—to exactly one hundred persons.

"You could play golf there on a weekend and if there were two other golfers on the whole course, you considered the place crowded," recalls Robert Hollins, the son of one of the members. "God, that place was empty."

And that was exactly how the members wanted it. As they toured the majestic course that sloped down to the bay, men in caps and knickerbockers and long socks, ladies in long pleated skirts and middie blouses, they considered the lack of people as big an asset as the view. In 1923, Suffolk County established a Mosquito Control Commission and asked various members of the club for contributions. "God, the mosquitoes in the summer were unbelievable on that golf course," Hollins says. "You'd look at the fellow you were playing with and there might be twenty on his face." But most Timber Pointers gave nothing. If the commission got rid of the mosquitoes, Mrs. Hollins explained, more "foreigners" might find the South Shore attractive and try to live there. "I'd rather have the mosquitoes," she told her friends.

To keep the public out was worth any price. When the property adjoining the Timber Point Club, a 1,500-acre estate owned by an eccentric old millionaire who had never been one of them, anyway, George C. Taylor, came on the market after his death, the Timber Pointers raised \$250,000 to buy it. Then they hired caretakers, stocked it with herds of deer and flocks of wild pheasant—all for less than ten days of hunting a year and an additional guarantee that they would never have to look over from their golf course and see on the land adjoining it anyone they didn't know.

Thanks to the barons and the baymen, the sandy beaches of the South Shore were as thoroughly closed off to New Yorkers as the rocky beaches of the North. Those New Yorkers who could not afford the exorbitant charges at Long Beach or squeeze into the limited public area of the beach there were shunted along the South Shore from village to village until they reached the flat, unshaded, bleak potato fields of Suffolk County.

And the shunting on the South Shore was along Merrick Road, an artery as narrow as Northern Boulevard and even more congested, which crossed the clogged downtown areas of a dozen South Shore villages and was intersected at half a hundred locations by the tracks of the Long Island

### Heckscher State Park

Of all the state parks on Long Island, none had such a far reaching result as did the establishment of Heckscher State Park. The acquisition of the land the Taylor Estate involved twenty-five separate appellate proceedings. Prior to becoming a public park, the area consisted of 1,500 acres.

At one time, Taylor built a log cabin where he stored his supply of liquor. He slept there after many of his quarrels with his common-law wife.

After many years of local gossip, Taylor's strange life came to an end in 1908 when his mistress died and he also, within a few days.

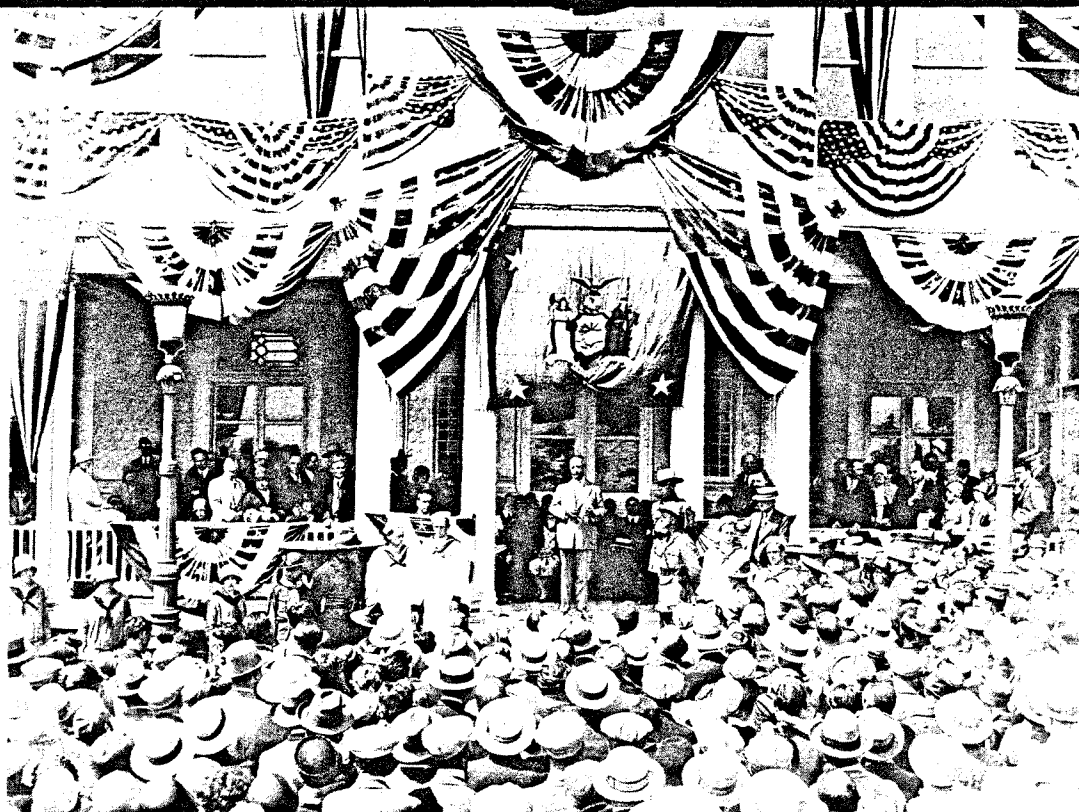
The estate passed to three sisters and a brother, and for sixteen years remained unused except by Percy Pyne, II, one of the heirs of the George C. Taylor estate. It was a wild and picturesque expanse of land, having an abundance of wildlife, and a herd of elk.

Taylor built an ornate country home in 1886. He isolated himself on the estate with a common-law wife. Their daughter was rarely seen but when the bicycle craze was at its height, an instructor came from England and brought all types of models manufactured in England. With the constant attention of the instructor, the daughter unexpectedly ran off and was married by a local justice of the peace to her bicycle tutor.

Taylor's eccentricities resulted in the constant changing scenes on the estate, such as seven cupidlike statues of himself representing the seven stages of man. He also established a private shooting preserve.

When the controversy over the acquisition of the estate ended on June 2, 1929, the name of the park was changed from Deer Range State Park to Heckscher State Park at appropriate ceremonies attended by August Heckscher, Lieut. Gov. Herbert H. Lehman, ex-Governor Alfred E. Smith, Commissioner Robert Moses, and other State and local officials.

The generous attitude of Mr. Heckscher made possible the establishment of Heckscher State Park. His gift of \$262,000 made the park possible and made it possible for the thousands to enjoy bathing, picnicking, riding, hiking, and games at the park.



*Al Smith speaking at the Heckscher dedication on the porch of the old Taylor Mansion. Moses is framed in pillars at left.*

Caro, Robert. The Power Broker  
Knopf, N.Y. 1974. Illustration.

*Moses receiving an award from children's clubs, 1934.*





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government and public figures and keeping a card file of impressions, wrote on a card he filed under the name "Robert Moses":

Bob Moses has climbed so high on his own ego, has become so hidebound in his own arbitrariness, that he has removed himself almost entirely from reality and has insulated himself within his own individuality.

This difficulty could to some degree have been overcome by sheer mental ability. Robert Moses' mind was supple, resourceful. Even without input of social and human considerations, it could have deduced some of these considerations simply by thinking about the problems involved.

But Robert Moses no longer had much time to think.

Building a state park system had been an immense job, but he had brought to it not only immense energy but immense ability to discipline that energy. He had found time—*made* time, to be more precise, made it by devoting to his work the hours when other men play or relax or sleep, or lunch, made it by working fourteen, sixteen, eighteen, twenty hours a day, seven days a week, fifty-two weeks a year—he had found time to oversee every detail of design, to present his architects and engineers with the basic concepts he wanted followed, to insist during the fleshing out of those concepts on a standard of excellence, of boldness and daring far above that common for public works and to inspire the architects and engineers ("I know you can do drawbridges. Can you do beautiful drawbridges?") to raise their work to that standard. And besides furnishing inspiration, he furnished ideas; many of the most brilliant touches at Jones Beach had been *his* ideas. He had found time—*made* time—to infuse the brick and concrete and sandstone of that park, and of other Long Island parks from Valley Stream to Montauk—and of other state parks from Palisades to Niagara—with his personal genius.

But when Moses expanded his sphere of activity into New York City he did not stop his work on Long Island or in the rest of the state—in 1934, on Long Island alone, he built Bethpage State Park and Bethpage State Parkway; in 1935, he built the Meadowbrook Causeway; in 1936, he built great new bathhouses at Sunken Meadow and Heckscher state parks as well as the Heckscher State Parkway Spur, and during all these years he was extending the Northern and Southern state parkways and building literally scores of smaller park structures. Instead he simply added to his state park work, itself enough to tax the strength of even the strongest of men, work in the city that was not limited to the direction of 80,000 men in the rebuilding of a huge park system but that also included the building of four parkways and three bridges, with each of the bridge-building jobs in itself a job that would have been considered a full-time job for any other man. It was not possible for him to make for himself any more time than he had already made. There were no more days in a week than seven or weeks in a year than fifty-two, and he was working all those days and weeks already. He had already sloughed off all social life and most family life; there was nothing more in his life that could be sloughed off. He was already, with his use of his limousine as an office and conference room,