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A study of an urban community and its children, 1890-1991. (Volumes I and II)

Gaster, Sanford, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1993

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A STUDY OF AN URBAN COMMUNITY AND ITS CHILDREN, 1890-1991

By

SANFORD GASTER

VOLUME I

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1993

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

May 21, 1993.
Date

Chair of Examining Committee

August 5, 1993
Date

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David Nasaw

Leanne Rivlin
Supervisory Committee

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

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Abstract

A STUDY OF AN URBAN COMMUNITY

AND ITS CHILDREN, 1890-1991

By

Sanford Gaster

Advisor: Professor Roger A. Hart

The purpose of the dissertation is to advance a critical understanding of how a neighborhood environment can have changed since 1890 and to identify the consequences these changes have brought to children. Current problems in children's access to their communities thus are discussed in light of their origins and historical precedents; the problem of today is considered as the result of social processes as played out through time.

Urban children's access to their communities is explored here through a multidisciplinary approach, the three main components of which are as follows: (1) an analysis of the neighborhood environment; (2) an analysis of children's interaction with their neighborhood and (3) an historical inquiry into these factors.

The analysis of the neighborhood and and of children's use of it are undertaken in light of current research into children's interaction with their environment. That body

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of research stresses children's need for freedom to encounter a broad range of environmental features, to develop "environmental competence," to have the chance to take reasonable risks while remaining free of constant overt danger, and to have recourse to free play as well as to organized, supervised play.

One urban community is used as a case study. Historical sources, such as documentary evidence and interviews (including oral history), were consulted to trace several trends in its development. These trends included: population; family income; race and ethnicity; provision of play and recreation facilities; community cohesion; community tension; level of municipal, federal and private involvement in community affairs; and children's actual use and perception of their community.

The data are analyzed qualitatively and presented in narrative form. Beginning with 1915, the data are grouped in fifteen-year segments (e.g., 1915-30; 1930-45; etc.). For each historical time period discussed, appropriate context is provided, followed by a critical discussion of the events that influenced the community. These are followed in turn by a presentation of informants' testimony of their experiences as children. An analytical concluding chapter seeks to synthesize the findings for that time period and derive insights into the problem.

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Although the 60 informants who so graciously took the trouble to talk to me about their childhoods for this project must remain anonymous, my warmest thanks go to them. I can only hope that my gratitude is borne out in the following pages.

My sincere thanks go also to the many others who have guided and otherwise assisted me in this effort. Roger Hart introduced me to his pioneering work in the urban neighborhood I have come to know and to love, and encouraged me to follow up where other responsibilities prevented him from doing so himself. To my great benefit, his profound respect for his students' intellectual independence removed any qualms he may rightly have felt about allowing me to re-work the project into something I can feel is my own. Leanne Rivlin has provided ongoing commentary from the beginning of my research and has taught me much about research and writing, from stylistic and grammatical matters to the fundamentals of synthesis and analysis. Although she has repeatedly attempted to shrug off my thanks by saying "I'm just doing my job," I, having here the last word, conclude the matter by affirming that she has been nothing less than a wonder. David Nasaw and Gerald Handel have generously taken the trouble, in stimulating discussions, to guide me through

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those aspects of this study that stretch the recognized bounds of environmental psychology. Cindi Katz's comments on the manuscript were invaluable.

Cecelia Perez, as a student in the Environmental Psychology Program in the mid-1970s, and as a research assistant to Roger Hart at the Center for Human Environments, Inc. during that time, collected much data which I have found most useful here. I hope that I have lived up to her example. Amy Rosano, as a student intern with the Center for Human Environments, Inc. in 1988, conducted one of the oral history interviews, and was a pleasure to work with. Stephanie Sarlin, a student intern during the summer of 1988 with that organization, performed invaluable archival research assistance.

Many additional individuals connected with the study area have assisted me, some in their official capacities. They have not only made my job easier, but made me feel that I was not just picking their brains but working alongside them -- however briefly -- for a common cause. (Although they have assisted this student researcher generously, the mention of these individuals below does not imply their endorsement of this dissertation's content). My thanks thus go to the following: Fred Amershadian, social activist and former Upper Manhattan publisher; Michael Cohen, educator and Upper Manhattan

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Aims

The urban neighborhood today, for all its problems, offers things essential to children's development. These may include newness, diversity, stimulation, belonging, unpredictability and challenge. All of these stem from the fact that a neighborhood is a public [1] environment, as distinct from an institutional one such as a school. Further, it is the neighborhood, rather than the city, town, nation or planet, that is usually the first public environment a child encounters on his or her own. When a child learns to cross a street, buy a popsicle, scale a fence or reach a playground -- and do these things beyond the eye of a parent or guardian -- he or she has taken an important step toward developing what developmental and environmental psychologists refer to as "environmental competence." We may say also, in more basic terms, that a child who has done these things has taken an important step toward involvement in public life.

Children in cities today, however, face formidable barriers to experiencing their neighborhoods freely and in safety. Indeed, we may be witnessing humankind's first generation to be brought up without ready access to a public realm where children play among adults who are not performing duties related to the childcare profession.

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Contributing to this troubling estrangement between the child and the neighborhood are, of course, crime, traffic, and the neglect (including the lack of staff) of parks, playgrounds and recreation centers -- all of which afflict most urban neighborhoods. As though these very tangible problems were not serious enough in themselves, they are compounded by the more elusive reality of human environmental perception and public misconception: adults, whether mothers or mayors, may simply resign themselves to the increasingly common perception that there is no longer reason to look at an urban neighborhood as something valuable to children, or even potentially so. Such an outlook can only worsen children's alienation from their physical and social surroundings.

This work is based on certain premises regarding children's freedom and autonomy in their neighborhoods. One is that children need and deserve the opportunity, within reasonable bounds, to experience and to know their neighborhoods firsthand. Another is that there are and always were problems with this philosophy in actual practice (physical and social dangers, for instance, may interfere), but that the benefits outweigh the risks and the risks themselves can be dealt with. Yet another premise is that the neighborhood, whatever its problems, holds a wealth of sights, sounds, textures, situations,

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places and activities that, taken together, can give a child a sense of freedom and autonomy -- provided he or she is free to venture forth and claim them.

When we speak of the present state of children's access to safe and rewarding outdoor play, we should speak not in terms of a lack but rather of a loss; it is the thesis of this dissertation that there has been a progressive deterioration. Yet it is not enough simply to say that where once children had free run of their neighborhoods today that is no longer so. To do so would be to utter a gross and useless oversimplification. Thus it is necessary to look at the processes that have brought this problem about, in order to reach a fuller understanding of its causes and dimensions. Like most social problems, children's estrangement from their neighborhoods did not arise with such convenient historical cliches as "the devastating drug wars of the 'eighties," "the ravages of the fiscal cutbacks of the 'seventies," "the permissiveness and unrest of the 'sixties," "the juvenile delinquent street gangs of the 'fifties," "The war and genocide of the 'forties," "the misguided social engineering of the 'thirties," "the meddlesome reformism of the 'twenties," and so forth. Rather, its historical dimensions go far deeper than such

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labels imply. Moreover, these antecedents need to be explored without sentimentality or nostalgia -- however difficult it may be, when discussing childhood past, to avoid sentimentality and nostalgia. In short, the story of how children lost access to their urban environment cannot be told without telling the parallel story of how that environment has deteriorated.

The impressive advances in environment-and-behavior research and application, including that which focuses on children, have not satisfactorily highlighted the importance of the neighborhood context. This may be due to the prevalence of a narrow conception of play as something taking place within designated areas, such as the home or playground. This can lead easily to insufficient attention to the larger public sphere, i.e., the neighborhood that is part of a city that is in turn part of an evolving social order. Thus an investigation of a wide spectrum of social factors that have shaped children's interaction with a given neighborhood over time can be expected to deepen and broaden one's understanding of the problem.

The intended result of this endeavor is the introduction of a wholistic and critical perspective on urban children's experience of their neighborhood, one

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that embraces diverse phenomena, i.e. children's play, the physical realm, the larger social context, and historical time. The merging of these four considerations is, I think, one way to provide the closest possible investigation of the problem, while confining the investigation to one small neighborhood in a large city is intended to keep the project to a manageable scope. It should be noted, however, that the term "play" as used here is meant broadly to embrace a wide range of actions that a child may take in the neighborhood -- such as planting a garden, going to the movies, avoiding bullies, buying candy, being scolded by a policeman, selling magazines or finding a secluded place to be alone, as well as the more commonly-recognized play forms such as playing ball, climbing a tree or playing "let's-make-believe".

This work is meant for those interested in children and their environment who are receptive to a rather detailed presentation and analysis of the life of one neighborhood. However, what is presented here is not crafted expressly to lead up to anything like a "blueprint" or "set of guidelines" to assist shapers of public policy in any future effort to address the problems of that or any other community. Rather, the design and policy implications of this dissertation will be found

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throughout, interspersed among many other types of findings, questions and conjecture; additionally, they will be consolidated and discussed in the Conclusion. Yet however much design and policy considerations may be present, this entire work ought not to be regarded as a means to that end. For although my approach is primarily analytical, it is also descriptive, not prescriptive.

Understanding children's experience of their environments in light of complex social forces is the thrust of this dissertation. It cannot be presented through "blueprints" or "guidelines." Historical research and reflection -- concerning a wide range of social phenomena -- is the way (one among many possible ways, certainly) I have chosen to accomplish this task. Why have I chosen historical research and reflection from among many viable alternatives? I must confess that the decision lay within my nature as much as it is a response to the demands of the research question. My reasoning on this accords with what Isiah Berlin (1991) identified as five common but quite different motives for historical research.

First, according to Berlin, is pride -- the glorification of a people, institution, etc. My research question precludes this (literally) antiquated motive and so we may move on.

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Secondly, Berlin writes, there is a search for exemplars. But had that been my goal, I would have sought a society where children have the greatest interaction with their environment, and certainly not the United States. Moreover, I do not intend to glorify any supposed "golden age" in which urban America was a "children's paradise."

Third is a search for an overarching cyclical plan, a cosmic drama, a surefire predictive tool. But this is a largely discredited 19th century orientation toward the world, historicism in its crudest form.

Fourth is simple curiosity; this certainly is a benign enough motivation. I, however, have a specific research problem to attended to.

The fifth of Berlin's alternatives is the wish to know:

> ...how we, the present generation, came to be what we are, who our ancestors have been, what they have done, what were the consequences of their activities, what was the nature of the interplay between these activities, that were their hopes and fears and goals...(p. 50-51).

These are the questions that have moved me; large issues surrounding the interaction of children with their urban environment.

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Footnotes to Section 1.1

[1] "Public" here means places outside the home that are publicly accessible and are usually, but not necessarily, outdoors. They may not be even technically "public": As Altman and Zube (1989) point out, "public" and "private" are "not necessarily related to ownership but to use. Some privately-owned places are accessible to the public, and some publicly owned places are not" (P. 1). In this research, school buildings during school hours and houses of worship during services or classes are excluded.

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1.2 The Literature

Because the research proposes to unite two seldom-united perspectives -- children's neighborhood play and urban planning and policy in historical perspective -- the following review has two parts. The first concentrates on the larger context of the environment, i.e., the urban setting and its history, without consistent reference to children, while the second addresses issues in children's play in the city.

The Context of Urban Children's Play

The obvious uniqueness of environmental psychology lies in its recognition of the physical and social environments as major forces in human behavior, something the more established branches of psychology have done only in piecemeal fashion, if at all. Even so, environmental psychologists' treatment of environments is unsatisfactory to some. In Moore's (1987) assessment of the field, for example, too much attention has been paid to the appropriate units of analysis of behavior and not enough to those of the environment. Social realities, especially, are often overlooked: as Rivlin and Wolfe (1985) have pointed out, environments, long seen in the profession as a stimulus, should be seen instead as a system, an organized, functioning entity with a structure,

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process and history.

Ecological approaches to psychology represent one well-known attempt to view the environment comprehensively, although these strive to address the social rather than the physical environment. In Kurt Lewin's "field theory" the environment is a "dynamic" system of interdependent facts that at any moment presents the person with a "situation" or "life space" that determines behavior (Lewin, 1964). Lewin found the "life space" within the much larger "psychological field," by which he sought to identify large-scale social and cultural realities as ultimate influences of behavior. Another, much more recent ecological paradigm is offered by Bronfenbrenner (1979) who, like Lewin, emphasizes the importance of the larger social and cultural phenomena. Bronfenbrenner, however, differs from Lewin in that he looks not just at behavior but at the process of social development in a person. In Bronfenbrenner's structure of the environment, concentric layers of environmental influences, from the most distant and impersonal to the most immediate and personal, filter through to influence the development of the person.

A third variation on ecological psychology is offered by Lewin's pupil, Roger Barker, who, taking Lewin's theories into the field, studied an American town in terms

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of "behavior settings" (i.e. a baseball game or church service) composed of "behavior episodes" (i.e. catching a ball or kneeling, respectively) (Barker, 1968; Barker & Wright, 1955). By looking at such real-life activities at the "molar" scale (as opposed to muscular and nervous activity at a "molecular" scale), Barker and Wright were able to further Lewin's theory that (a) the environment is composed of a system of socially and culturally-shaped "behavior settings," and (b) that social settings, and not just internal motivation, strongly influence behavior. Methodologically, the originality of Barker's approach is striking, for it enables one to examine not a sample of people who happen to occupy a place, but a place in terms of its occupants, thus ensuring that the social setting would not be relegated to the status of mere background.

Ecological psychology, however, has come under criticism on several levels. Humans, after all, do not respond only to immediate situations, nor do they lack past histories and future goals (see Wapner, Kaplan & Cohen, 1973), nor are the settings people inhabit immune from the influence of their goal-directed users (Wicker, 1987). Barker (1987) himself later allowed that the concept of behavior settings was, at least in its early phases, perhaps too mechanistic or inflexible.

But the most enduring criticism of ecological

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psychology has concerned its inattention to the properties of the physical environment (see Hart, 1982): that it does not provide enough that is of interest to environmental designers. The wide impact of such works as Kevin Lynch's The Image of the City, (1960) with its purely visual approach to environmental behavior and urban design, and Edward T. Hall's The Hidden Dimension (1966), with its cross-cultural approach to human use of space, helped make the environment-and-behavior field almost synonymous with the empirical and applied study of humans in architectural space, with the dominant methodology being the analysis of "cognitive maps" and spatial relations. This led naturally to the introduction, where children were at issue, of Piagetian concepts of the development of spatial cognition (Hart, 1979; Hart & Moore, 1971; Ladd, 1970; Maurer & Baxter, 1972). Thus in the decades since Barker and Wright (1955) the ecologists' inattention to the physical environment has been amply compensated for.

What I see lacking in environment-and-behavior studies is sufficient exploration and critique of the forces that shape the environments with which we interact. I am not referring to an approach that targets only so-called "ultimate causes" -- whether the means of production and its attendant ideology, or any supposed innate territoriality of the human species -- while ignoring

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important subtleties. I seek instead an environmental orientation that looks at how people interact with the environment and then researches how that environment got to be the way it is as well as how people have interacted with it along the way. This ought to broaden our focus to take in not only the user, who in most cases merely uses or perceives the environment, but those persons and institutions responsible for the very shape of the environment.

In researching children's use of local play areas outside the home, the focal point for this study is the neighborhood, or community. Although the urban children's relationship to the entire city is extremely important, it is the neighborhood where they have their earliest and most sustained contact with the world outside the home -- where new and strange people and situations are met (Mead, 1966). Such writers as Lewis Mumford (1954) and Jane Jacobs (1961) criticized the modern planning profession's single-minded pursuit of a vision of urbanity that was city-wide and not neighborhood-centered, contending that neighborhoods are so basic a social phenomenon as to form naturally no matter what the planners may prescribe. Although there are of course many excellent studies (some of which are to be discussed here) that examine children's

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activities on the neighborhood level, their adherence to only those phenomena which children themselves can directly experience or "image" often leaves out vital social and historical information unknown to the children but hardly irrelevant to their lives.

Sociology is the discipline that has perhaps gone farthest in exploring neighborhoods. The earliest modern sociology was premised on the idea that the small community was humanity's "natural" habitat, something whose very existence such early sociologists as Ferdinand Tonnies saw as threatened by industrialism (see Bell & Newby, 1973, p. 22). The earliest American social scientific exploration of modern urban neighborhoods [1], performed by the ecological sociologists of the Chicago School roughly between 1915 and 1945, observed that, once the city plan has established physical order, human behavior and belief proceed to modify it: "What was at first a mere geographical expression [changes into] a neighborhood...a locality with sentiments, traditions and a history all its own" (Park, 1925, p. 7). The Chicago sociologists sought not just to understand the physical dynamics of the city but to capture the richness of the experiences of its inhabitants (see Sennett, 1969). Of special interest to them was the "slum," the poorer, densely-inhabited neighborhood where immigrants settled.

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This was the laboratory where the Chicago school investigated a world that had sprung to life in a very short time and which was changing rapidly. Such aspects of slum life as mobility, public opinion, crime, mob violence, political alliance, the press, religion and mental disorders were seen as phenomena holding the key to a total explanatory picture of behavior in the city -- for how people adapted to their surroundings. This orientation was based on ecology in the biological sense, hence the use of such terms as "community" and "adaptation;" early Chicago-school social ecology texts in fact contain chapters devoted to such ecological processes as plant succession and animal behavior. Chicago-school social ecology also leads logically to Barker's ecological psychology, with its own (although decidedly non-sociological) focus on community.

Yet it should be noted that the Chicago sociologists were interested not primarily in neighborhoods as such, but rather in how neighborhoods fit within the order of city as a whole. One clue as to how they viewed the city is in the following passage from Park (1967):

> We may, if we choose, think of the city, that is to say, the place and the people, with all the machinery and administrative devices that go with them, as organically related; a kind of psychophysical mechanism in and through which private and political interests find not merely a collective but a corporate expression (p. 2).

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In the decades since the Chicago school's strongest influence, new perspectives on neighborhood and community, to say nothing of the radically changing nature of the cities themselves, have led subsequent sociologists to criticize the Chicago school's orientation. One important point of criticism -- one which seemed to echo the objections to ecological psychology -- was that the Chicago school's ecological approach was not truly ecological since it focused on relations among people and institutions without sufficient regard for the physical environment (see Michelson, 1976; Suttles, 1972). A different kind of criticism was represented by Castells (1977; see also Bartlet, 1987), who maintained that Park and his collaborators saw immigrants in ghettos much too narrowly as having only one role in American life, i.e., to try to fit into the existing industrial order with no legitimate recourse to changing that order to meet their own needs and wishes.

Questions on the use of the concept of community itself should not go unheeded here, for the very notion of community has had its critics. Despite its widespread and longstanding application, the precise definition of community is elusive (see Bell & Newby, 1973). Webber (1963), in an influential essay, claims that, with

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communications technology so pervasive today, community does not even have to involve physical proximity. Community may in fact be something the sociologist forces upon the cityscape, whose inhabitants may not themselves perceive the existence of the thing called "community" (Suttles, 1972). The notion of community, some have suggested, is a product of conservatism or nostalgia (Dennis, 1968; Suttles, 1972), a search for some lost mythic "golden age." Critics feel dissatisfied with the notion of community because it seems to imply a degree of self-determination and self-sufficiency which, they note, communities in an increasingly world-wide economy in reality conspicuously lack. On this issue Suttles (1972) has suggested that communities are held together not so much by personal sentiment or collective action but by "foreign relations" (p. 12) -- pressures from adjacent communities as well as from powerful external forces. One interesting comment on the narrowness of community studies, (Dennis, 1968), criticized their timid reluctance to explore extra-local explanations, that is, to look beyond the community itself to scrutinize the larger world that shapes it.

All of which gives ample reason for looking at communities by looking beyond communities. What gives a city its structure and purpose? If we take a sweeping

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historical view of the past century and a half, we may form a picture of land development and redevelopment for the purpose of industrial growth and maximization of profit, what Molotch (1983) calls a "the city as a growth machine." Mumford (1961) likewise compares the modern city to a machine for consumption and profit.

Further inquiry brings certain outstanding historical events and eras into focus. There is, for instance, the industrialization that made urban expansion possible in the nineteenth century (see Mumford, 1961), and the political base that aided the building of the necessary infrastructure (Mollenkopf, 1978) and allowed land adjacent to the growing city to be "invaded" and urbanized (Burgess, 1925). Another relevant historical fact is the reform era in American politics and, within it, the progressive era, both of which radically altered the urban political structure and introduced into city government a measure of professionalization and nonpartisanship. These developments in turn brought on the rise of modern city planning -- model tenements, parks, playgrounds and settlement houses (see Caro, 1974; Gans, 1972; Goodman, 1979; Nasaw, 1985). The great depression and the New Deal, which brought the first Federal intervention into urban problems (Mowry & Brownell, 1981) to this day give lasting shape to the cityscape. The New Deal is

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important, too, in that it led directly to such postwar planning policies as intensified "slum clearance," the 1956 Interstate National Defense Highway Act, increased rates of suburbanization, and the consequent physical and social disruption and deterioration of the urban fabric (Mumford, 1956; Mollenkopf, 1978). The resistance of citizens -- who by the 1960s were increasingly Black and Hispanic -- to the devastation and displacement of urban renewal projects is a thick chapter in the history of urban America (Gans, 1972; Fainstein & Fainstein, 1988). The fiscal crises of cities in the 1970s and the resulting austerity changed urban policy instantly and dramatically (Alcaly & Mermelstein, 1977; Tabb, 1982). In the 1980s, "tax incentives," which directed urban development to selected neighborhoods, causing uneven development -- gentrification and displacement on the one hand and abandonment and decline on the other -- further altered the cityscape and the lives of the people who inhabit it (see Gottdiener, 1986; Marcuse, 1986).

It would of course be absurd to attempt in a dissertation to scrutinize all of these developments and to expect thereby to advance significantly civilization's understanding of them. Yet these historical themes cannot be ignored. In looking at the evolution of one urban neighborhood over a century one must at least understand

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and present them as the primary shapers of the cityscape. The task of producing a more detailed investigation of the daily lives of people and their neighborhood must somehow relate to these large-scale socio-historical trends.

Children and their Neighborhoods

A basic premise of this research is that, in order to address why children today have suffered a loss of contact with their neighborhood, it is important to explore the historical development of the environments children have inhabited. The literature just reviewed relates to that task. Yet this research would be pointless without insight into how children live, and how they and have lived, within the changing setting. To gain such insight, one needs to explore several avenues of inquiry regarding children's play and development within the urban setting, as represented by the literature discussed below.

Psychologists and geographers have determined that childhood is a human being's period of most intensive geographic exploration, in which cognitive and emotional development bring about a sense of space and of place (see Hart, 1982; Tuan, 1977). A city can be a uniquely challenging and enriching environment for the developing child; this aspect was explored in Handel's (1984) life

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histories of working-class boys in one New York City neighborhood in the first third of this century:

> The playground that was New York was created out of the particular conjunction of land, water, people, buildings and transportation...Children appropriated the streets and turned them to their own uses (p. 36).

Handel's informants related how they grew and learned as full participants in neighborhood life -- not always accepted or even tolerated, but very much present nonetheless; frequently shooed away but never shut out.

For children in cities in more recent times, however, this part of life has been facing formidable obstacles. Perhaps these children, even more than their predecessors, bear the fullest brunt of what Goodman (1960) described as children's particularly vulnerable position in what he termed the "revolutions": (e.g., political, technological and social) waged by adults. Carr & Lynch (1968) reflecting on why the city seems to have lost so much of its ability to capture children's imagination, point toward one such social "revolutions," -- socitey's obsession with ordering and rationalizing the cityscape, a process that can instead render the environment monotoncus and uncompelling. Can society, Carr and Lynch wondered, restructure the city modestly but imaginatively, so that children can indulge their curiosity and need for spontaneity by exposure to what goes on? Or will society,

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fearing harmful influences, continue to shield them? Here again, historical comparison is illuminating: Nasaw (1985) has documented the lives of urban children in several American cities early in this century; their rich experience of the city was divided between economic activity (hawking chewing gum or newspapers) and street play. These children were living and learning in a harsh, unregulated environment, until the reformers (initiators of the latest social revolution then) pulled them off the streets. Parr (1967), too, observed that the widening gulf between the world of the child and that of the adult is clearly shown by how we keep children from contact with the city, and urged adults to take stock of what children were losing. One can see such concerns as well in Sennett's (1970) observation of an unfortunate trend in American city design in which complexity, ambiguity and contradiction tend to become reduced, simplified and made bland -- a trend that feeds on national affluence.

Certainly one of the most criticized of the city's attempts to shield children from the world is the playground. Goodman's (1979) historical scholarship finds playgrounds to have been premised not on fostering play and recreation but on regimenting and bureaucracizing children. Most field studies that encompass playgrounds

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as traditionally designed find them failing to attract children in appreciable numbers (Bjorklid, 1985; Carbonara-Moscati, 1985; Lynch, 1977; Medrich, 1982; Maurer & Baxter 1972), although innovative playground designs such as adventure playgrounds -- which allow children to move objects and otherwise have a say in forming the space -- are alternatives favored by children as well as designers but not always by parents (Cooper, 1970; Allen, 1968; Spivak, 1975). Parents as well as children may be disenchanted with traditional playgrounds; in England, Moore (1985) found the local playground to be the place parents most often prohibited their children from visiting.

Another, and more recent, feature in the child's experience of the contemporary city, one which has been the subject of nearly constant criticism, is the housing project. Among the earliest critics to delve into this environment's stark deficiencies was Jacobs (1961), who pointed out the mistake in the high-rise residential towers then in fashion, which remove a mother's ability to observe the child playing downstairs [2]. According to Jacobs, the optimum environment for unstructured play was the city street, with its availability of adult stoop-sitters, storekeepers and passers-by who kept bullying or worse offenses from occurring. Moreover, the

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physical limitations of small, traditional streets meant there was no readily-available out-of-the way space for such behavior to occur. Other critics have attacked the subtler, psychological violence housing projects promote in their inhabitants. Becker (1976), for example, in a large study of several multifamily housing developments of varying densities, found that children received from that environment a consistent message affirming their restriction and inferior status; for example, activities such as bicycling or using lawns or walls were all prohibited. Gaster (1991) found similar restrictiveness when interviewing adults who recalled their childhoods in a New York City housing project, and found that the children from that project appeared to have had a narrower experience of their community than those from older buildings. In one especially powerful criticism of a high-rise project -- the notorious Pruitt-Igoe project in St. Louis, since demolished -- Rainwater (1970) described how low-income mothers of black children, fearful of the violent, illegal or immoral behavior they witnessed on the project grounds, often tried to confine their children to the apartment, a tactic that lost its effect as the child grew. Yancey (1971), investigating the same housing project, detected the "atomizing" effect of the lack of usable public space and consequent retreat into the

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apartment.

The playground and the high-rise housing project, then, are two inventions in urban policy and design that have taken much of the freedom and spontaneity out of urban children's play, usually in the name of safety. We may be thankful, therefore, that children generally take advantage of a far greater array of play spaces than what is grudgingly set aside for them. Such places go by such names as "unprogrammed space" (Lynch, 1979) and "the fourth environment" (after home, school, and playground; van Vliet--, 1983), or simply "found" [3] spaces (Rivlin, 1986). Until fairly recently these spaces received little attention, since they are not controllable, as are playgrounds or schools. Yet they have gradually earned their rightful place of prominence in the field of child-environment interaction studies.

The importance of such places was recognized by Moore & Young (1978), who meticulously synthesized and discussed 34 empirical studies on children's unstructured and semi-structured outdoor play. From this they derived a typology of the child's landscape that corresponds not to the terms of the architect, planner, parent or police officer but rather to the experience of the children themselves and the landscape as they use and perceive it -- in Hart's term, "the phenomenal landscape" (Hart, 1979,

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p. 9). In this typology, a child's "breadth of experience" is related to the "depth of experience;" thus the broad but shallow "spatial realm" of a child's total experience of the environment proceeds to the "experiential depth, involvement, knowledge and affiliation" of the child's involvement with specific places or objects (p. 91). This model presents children's environmental experience along a cognitive, emotional and behavioral continuum rather than as something segmented into misleadingly discrete categories such as "street," "playground" or "yard." Methodologically it shows that, while children's total outdoor experience is much more complex than in controlled environments, it can be approached systematically and with empathy.

Still, it is worth mentioning that, with all the attention in the last 20 or so years to children in their neighborhoods, one important habitat seems to have been slighted: commercial establishments such as stores, movie theaters, bowling alleys and luncheonettes. Sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1989) has observed how young people (along with adults, incidentally) are systematically excluded from making themselves comfortable in such places by design and management practices that make these settings "hostile to the loitering, lounging, and hanging-on that are part and parcel of an informal public life" (p. 204).

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(That such environments tend to slighted in the in environmental design research for children is indicated by their absence from Moore & Young's (1978) otherwise comprehensive review).

Aside from a child's actual use of the environment, his or her knowledge of it, and a feeling of some degree of control toward it, are important issues. Moore (1985) sensibly reminds us that, although it is no better for children to feel like absolute rulers over their environments than it is for them to feel like its slaves, children's sense of control can and should be fostered. Hart (1987), addressing the issue of control, defines "environmental competence" as "the knowledge, skill and confidence to use the environment to carry out one's goals and to enrich one's experience" (p. 225). Lack of environmental competence, in the form of lack of spatial knowledge, is identified as a significant barrier to children's neighborhood use in Lynch's (1977) study of children in Central Europe, Australia, and Latin America.

From a design perspective, Moore & Young (1978) discuss the importance of children's freedom to find and build their own places, and recommend that "loose parts" such as soil, vegetation, even trash, should be

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accessible. This is supported by Southworth's (1970) study of two groups of 10-to-12 year old boys, in which he found a preference for "wastelands" such as railroad tracks, vacant lots and abandoned houses, where the neglected, unsupervised environment can be used freely. Indeed, Carr & Lynch (1968) and Moore (1985) have suggested that designers should deliberately "rough up" play areas to increase a child's manipulation of the environment -- an idea which has found expression in the movement for "adventure playgrounds", previously discussed. However, design alone may not compensate for ideological biases against a child's control over his or her environment. As Rivlin and Wolfe (1985) have documented in an historical analysis of institutional settings, children's lack of control over their environment has been an ever-present theme, no mere matter of design but something deeply rooted in the dominant political, social and economic structure into which the child becomes socialized without option.

One aspect of children's lack of control over their environment is a lack of environmental knowledge of their neighborhoods -- not just in a spatial sense but in the social sense of who lives and works there and what they do. These studies in particular shed needed light on this problem. In a piece of action research, Baldassari,

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Lehman and Wolfe (1987) sought to help children in two urban schools see their neighborhoods critically in terms of environmental and social change. These researchers learned at the outset that some of the children they encountered had very limited geographic ranges, almost no unplanned activities after school, and a very limited knowledge of their neighborhoods, with barely a clue as to its origins. Similarly, Proshansky and Fabian (1987), in a theoretical paper, called attention to place identity in urban children, that is, whether they see themselves as belonging with the environment and their difficulty in sorting out the often contradictory rules governing neighborhood life and conduct. One way certain children may come to terms with this was shown by Suttles's (1972) field study, which suggests that children who live in a close-knit "defended community" that is suspicious of "outsiders" develop an ability to function successfully within social networks, an incentive which may be lacking where such tension is absent.

Contact with nature [4] is another important facet of child-neighborhood relations. Children's contact with sand, rocks, water, wind, etc. is necessary not just because natural substances are pure and pleasing but because the child has an innate biological affinity for

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natural elements and processes (Tuan, 1978). Lukashok and Lynch (1956), in interviewing adults on their childhood memories, found such natural features as lawns, dirt, trees, hills and water to be quite frequently recalled. Similarly, Moore and Young (1978) found nature, where it is available, to be well-represented in children's experience of their environments.

Parents' rules concerning where their children may play -- based on their own environmental judgements -- are, not surprisingly, a strong force, and one that arises consistently in investigations of children's free outdoor play (Gaster, 1991; Hart, 1979; Lynch, 1977; Michelson & Roberts, 1979; Rainwater, 1970; Turrell & Biel, 1985). Hart (1979) has observed "negotiation" between the parent or caretaker and the child, which, he noted, usually set the geographical limits of the children he observed (p. 339). Parents' or caretakers' concerns usually focus on such natural hazards as rivers or woods, where present, or on social hazards, such as strangers (Gaster, 1991; Hart, 1979). In addition, parents' concerns may center on their own conception of social conditions. This can take any in a continuum of forms; for example, parents' conceptions of their community as "defended" against incursions by "others" easily filter down to their children (Suttles,

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1972), while parents in extremely low-income areas may, as noted earlier, attempt to cut their children off from the neighborhood completely.

Relevance of the Literature to the Research

Children's lack of access to their urban neighborhoods is a problem that has traceable historical precedents. But exploring the impact of urban development on children over the years leads through several intermediate levels of investigation. To investigate the problem historically, an understanding of child/ neighborhood interaction ought to be integrated with (a) a full understanding of the place under study -- in this case the neighborhood; (b) an account of how children have used and felt about that setting; (c) a critical awareness of the larger, citywide and nationwide forces that influence the neighborhood's physical and social characteristics; and (d) a link between the present and the past.

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Footnotes to Section 1.2

[1] Although today the terms "neighborhood" and "community" are used interchangeably, the Chicago school seems to have used "community" in the ecological sense of a group of interdependent organisms, which could refer to an entire city, as well as to a neighborhood.

[2] Hart (1986), pointed out further that it is just as important for the child to be able to see and hear the parent as it is for the parent to see and hear the child. And, of course, in any type of multifamily housing, not all apartments have windows facing play areas.

[3] The concept of "found public spaces," though applicable to children, does not as defined confine itself to them.

[4] I am aware that there are formidable biological and philosophical difficulties in defining "nature" and "natural." To attempt to resolve this, however, would be beyond the scope of the research, and would only serve to address a tangential issue. Suffice it to say that I would tentatively define the terms as pertaining to non-human living things, exclusive of domesticated pets; to unprocessed geological elements, such as rocks and sand; and to soil.

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1.3 Research Design

This dissertation seeks to explore environmental, social and behavioral change in one community in historical context. In order to deal most effectively with the broad range of data uncovered, the oral-historical method was combined with the documentary research. 60 informants were interviewed on their childhoods and child-raising experiences in the study area. The interview data are juxtaposed with that derived from such written sources as newspapers, government documents, maps, published histories, theoretical works and social scientific investigations and critiques. This approach is intended to provide a full, well-rounded and critical historical account.

In designing this study it was important to keep in mind that a reasonably thorough approach to the problem ought to involve the production of a descriptive, chronological narrative. Of course, that is not nearly all it ought to involve, since a large part of the product should consist of analysis. But analysis can stem only from what is uncovered in researching what happened -- in this case, what happened this century in the study area, and, in a distinctly subordinate way, in New York and urban America as a whole. Because I have found it most rewarding to relate my topic to such a broad range of

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social phenomena, the narrative does not proceed entirely consecutively but rather as an exploration of closely-related themes. The narrative thread is maintained chiefly through the presentation of the historical development of the study area; however, numerous excursions into social movements, social policy and social attitudes are undertaken in order to relate events in the study area to society in a broad sense.

Thus this research, although it involves human subjects, does not revolve around them the way an investigation of a specific sample population would, nor is it intended as an investigation of a phenomenon through such a sample. It seeks instead to identify and understand continuities and discontinuities not across subjects but across time, the frame of reference being a place and its inhabitants. In this sense the methodology loosely resembles the "behavior settings" approach of ecological psychology, in which the site itself is the sample. Yet my approach departs from ecological psychology in that it attends closely to the development of the physical environment and to the large-scale social factors that have affected it. Where ecological psychology relies heavily on direct observation, this study's historical perspective, obviously, sacrifices much of the exactitude inherent in that method in order to gain

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access to the elusive dimension of historical time.

1.4 Research Questions

The following sections outline the various levels of inquiry undertaken, the questions asked and the sources consulted.

General Guiding Questions

These are meant to inform the major themes of the research and to unite the various levels of inquiry.

(a) Although the literature strongly suggests that the urban environment has many beneficial, or potentially beneficial, features for children (e.g., opportunity for socialization; development of a sense of place; access to "natural" features, etc), urban planning, policy and design more often respond to cruder promptings, such as commerce. What, then, is the relationship between urban planning, policy and design on the one hand and, on the other, the the neighborhood as the child uses and perceives it? Put another way: how have children used and felt toward a neighborhood habitat that was formed largely without them in mind?

(b) Despite the general rule of urban development proceeding according to the laws of commerce, there have been exceptions, such as the progressive movement, the New

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Deal and the Great Society initiatives. But has urban development overall, as it has proceeded in this century, gone contrary to the neighborhood needs of the study area's children, as considered by the standards presented in the literature reviewed? If so, is this attributable to deliberate policy? To policy gone awry?

(c) Over time neighborhoods gain and lose features that may be important to children. These may be physical features such as empty lots or waterways, or organizations such as Boy or Girl Scouts or afterschool nature hikes. What did past environments of the study area have that are now lacking, and how has this affected children's use of the neighborhood?

(d) To what extent has each of various urban policies been important in shaping the study area as the child uses it? (Examples: housing policy; transportation policy; parks and recreation policy).

Specific Questions

To approach the general, guiding questions, more specific ones are needed in order to locate specific instances, issues and precedents. These include the following:

(a) How did New York City expand and incorporate formerly autonomous communities such as the study area?

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(b) What was the nature of the reform movement and how did its products -- the building of playgrounds and the institution of organized play -- affect the study area?

(c) How has regional transportation policy affected the study area's landscape?

(d) How have massive construction projects, such as those undertaken in the 1930s under the New Deal or in the 1950s under urban renewal, changed the landscape of the study area?

(e) What demographic changes occurred city that may have affected the study area?

(f) What was the fiscal crisis of the mid-1970s about, and how did this affect the relevant municipal services in the study area?

(g) How can crime and the fear of crime affect the study area?

Sources:

This phase demanded the greatest selectivity and reliance on secondary sources, including theoretical works, which were synthesized with the more local information on the study area. These were treated not as raw data for the narrative but as an heuristic contribution to understanding the context in which the study area developed. Some sources were identified in the

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second part of the Literature Review section.

Once having presented the large-scale social, political and economic context, the narrative proceeds to more specific questions on the neighborhood level. Changes were sought in the following realms:

(a) The population of the study area -- numerically, ethnically, racially, socioeconomically.

(b) The study area's relationship to the rest of the city: What phases has it gone through? (i.e., rural backwater; "invaded" and urbanized zone; "defended" ethnic community; neglected minority community).

(c) The play facilities provided for children; in recreational land and facilities for children and adults.

(d) The texture of the landscape (cluttered or open; neglected or cared for; accessible or fenced off).

(e) The use of land -- i.e. from public to private or vice versa; from agricultural to residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, or any combination of changes.

(f) Community life, i.e., activities such as parades, festivals, parks clean-ups, youth organizations.

(g) The balance between public and private amusements or recreation facilities (e.g., movie houses as compared to youth centers).

(h) The presence of adults in children's play (i.e.,

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parents, recreation staff, police).

Sources:

(a) U.S. Census statistics on population, race, ethnicity, income and age distribution.

(b) Newspaper reports from The New York Times and other citywide dailies, as well as local community newspapers.

(c) Government planning documents, such as Parks and Highway Department maps, plans and policy papers; police reports; Community Planning Board reports; volunteer organization records.

(d) Interviews with those active in running play and recreation programs for children.

Finally, questions were posed on the behavioral level. Changes were sought in the following areas:

(a) The importance of places immediately near the home -- the stoop, the sidewalk, the courtyard.

(b) The the use of facilities designated for children, such as playgrounds.

(c) Children's use of commercial establishments, such as movie houses or candy stores.

(d) Barriers to and restrictions on children's movements.

(e) Physical dangers (i.e. rivers) and social dangers

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(i.e. gangs).

(f) The use of streets for play.

(g) Children's contact with forests, rivers, marshes, animals, rocks, insects.

(i) Children's feeling of safety; freedom to take risks.

(j) Children's feeling of belonging and control; their ability to use their neighborhood environment for their own purposes.

Sources:

(a) Interviews with: people who have grown up in the study area; children presently growing up there; parents who have raised children there; and parents presently raising children there.

(b) Other personal testimony, such as previously-performed oral histories and interviews, either published or housed in archives; memoirs; family photographs and home movies.

(c) Non-personal evidence such as newspaper reports, police records, church records, youth club literature.

1.5 The Site

Inwood (Figs. 1, 2, 3 and 4), the neighborhood at the northern tip of Manhattan Island, was chosen for several reasons. One is that significant changes in its physical

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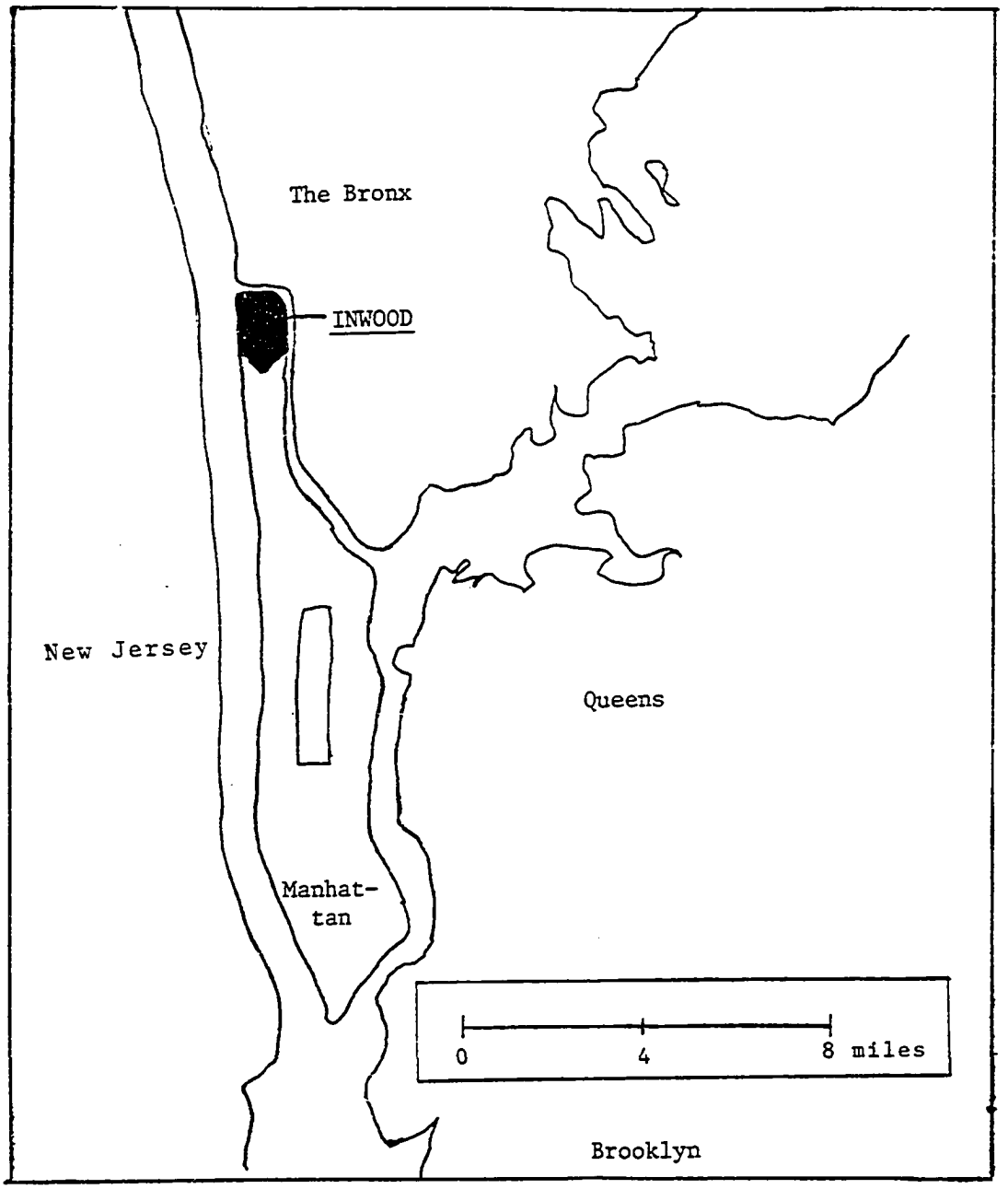


Fig. 1. Map showing Inwood and surrounding region

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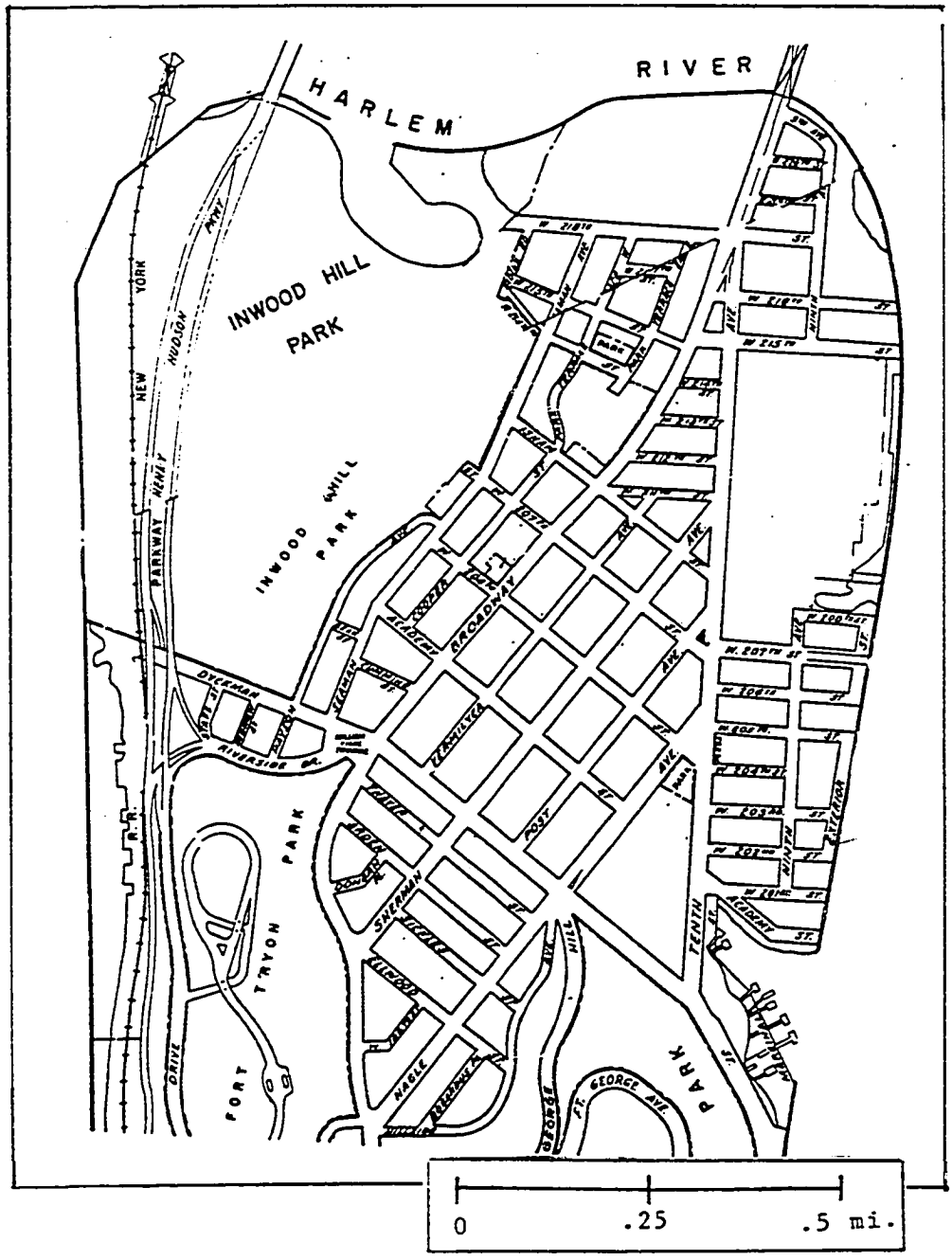


Fig. 2. Map of present-day Inwood, showing all streets. [Source: New York City Department of City Planning].

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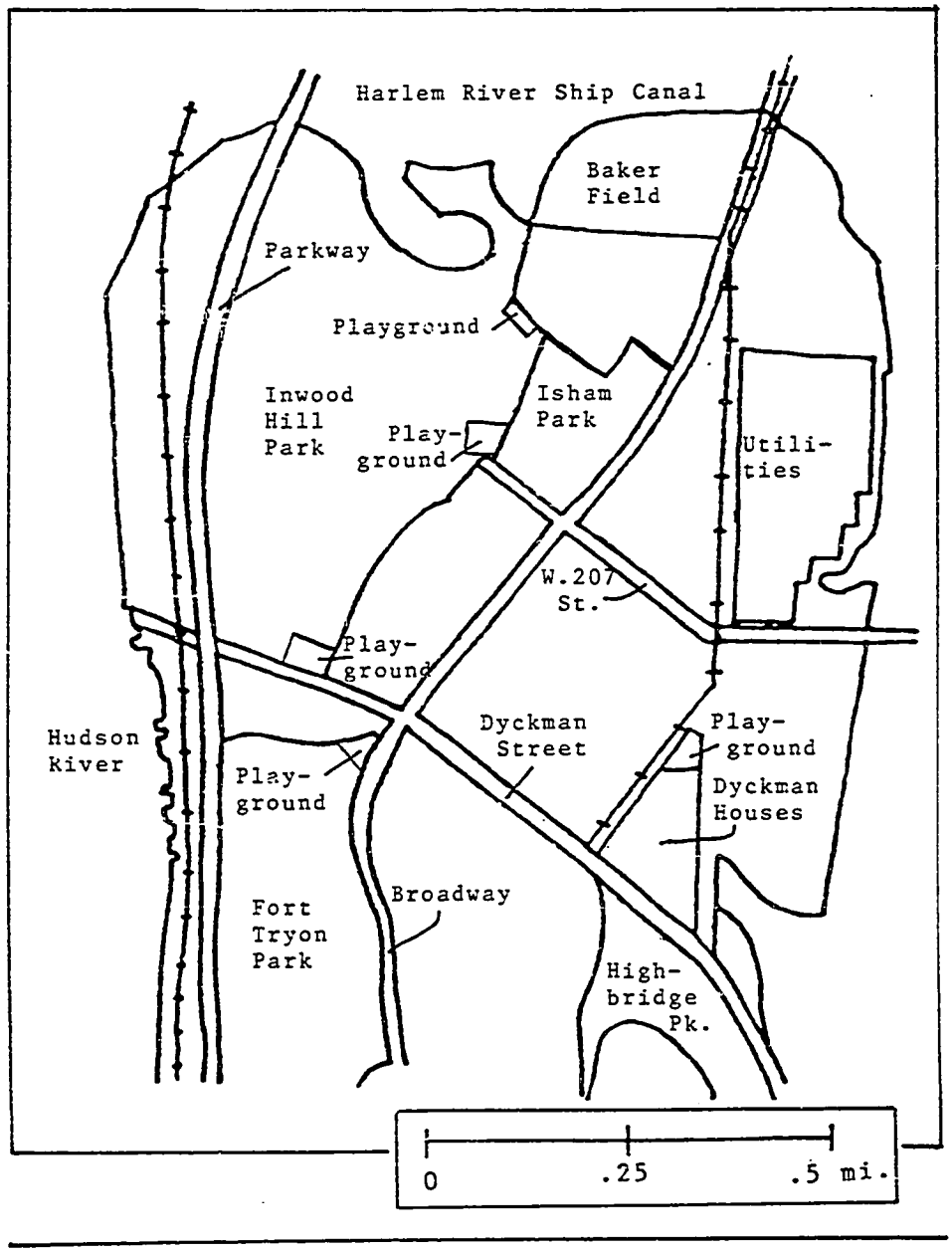


Fig. 3. Map of Inwood showing principal features.

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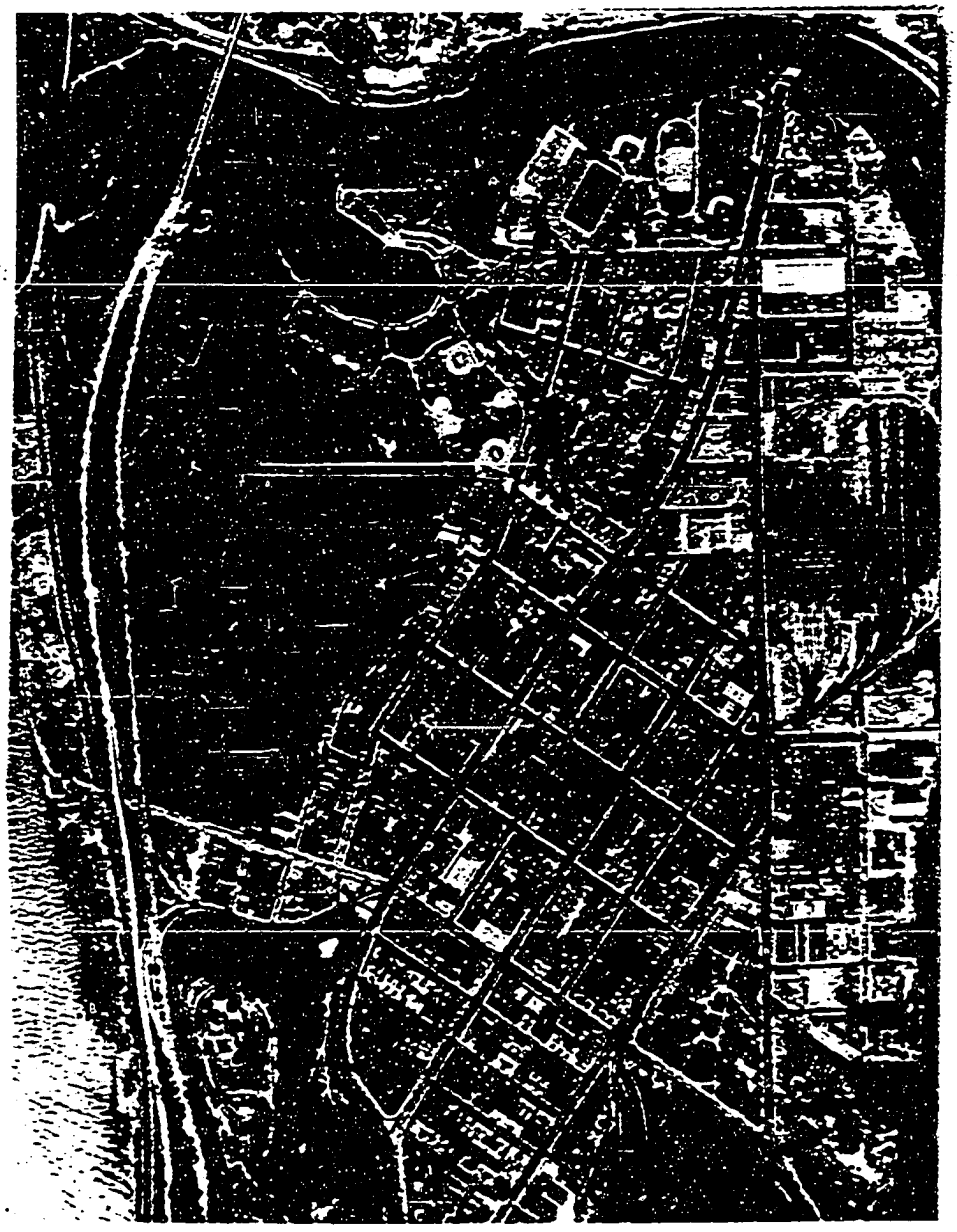


Fig. 4. Aerial view of Inwood, 1975. The neighborhood's geography is revealed: the waters of the Hudson (left) and Harlem Rivers enclose it on three sides. In the upper left is Inwood Hill Park, traversed by the Henry Hudson Parkway; below it is northern half of Ft. Tryon Park. Triangle near lower right is Dyckman Houses development; the rest of that shore is industrial. Occupying the central area are 5- and 6-storey apartment houses. [Source: The Center for Human Environments, Inc.]

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appearance and racial, ethnic and socioeconomic makeup have altered it through time but have not wholly transformed it; thus elements of the past survive into the present. Another is that Inwood is geographically well defined, being surrounded on three sides by water and on part of the fourth by hilly parkland. Inwood's extensive parkland is found mainly in its western part -- in Inwood Hill, Isham and Fort Tryon Parks. Parks on parts of the eastern and southern sides are the northern tip of Highbridge Park and the Harlem River Driveway promenade.

Except for its parks, Inwood, a mostly residential area, is densely built up, primarily with six-storey apartment houses. Utilities and light industry occupy its eastern fringe. Inwood has three public schools -- two elementary and one secondary.

Inwood remained rural and Protestant from New York's Dutch era until the 1920s, when it was rapidly built up into a working class residential district. Following World War II, a long-term population decline set in, which stopped in the 1970s. Although never an especially rich or poor neighborhood, Inwood has since the 1950s seen a decline in the income of its households. Income disparities within the community have existed for most of its urban history, as the wealthier inhabitants have lived in more luxurious elevator buildings in the heavily

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landscaped western half.

Most of Inwood's earliest urban residents were Irish, German, and Russian immigrants. The next most prominent ethnic groups were the Italians, Poles, Greeks, and Armenians. The first appreciable number of blacks in Inwood arrived in the early 1950s as tenants of the Dyckman Houses, a public housing project on the eastern side. Beginning in the early 1960s Inwood absorbed an influx of Hispanic immigrants, most of them from the Dominican Republic, Cuba and Puerto Rico. Later that decade and continuing throughout the 1980s, the Hispanic influx consisted mainly of people from the Dominican Republic. Today well over half of the population of Inwood is Hispanic.

Although endowed with an abundance of wooded parkland, Inwood had few outdoor mass recreation activities until the 1930s, when the New Deal's Works Progress Administration transformed its landscape irrevocably. The Henry Hudson Parkway was built through Inwood Hill Park, and the Henry Hudson Bridge was built to link it with the mainland. Other Parts of Inwood Hill Park were furnished with benches, pathways, lighting, sports fields, game courts and playgrounds. An old estate was transformed into Fort Tryon Park, with its centerpiece, the Cloisters, The Metropolitan Museum of

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Art's medieval collection. With the exception of the addition of public housing in the 1950s, Inwood's physical landscape has changed little since the 1940s.

1.6 Methodology

All data gathered fall into one of the following three categories:

(1) Urban policy and development

(2) Inwood's development

(3) Children's experience of Inwood.

These groups of data are related chronologically in narrative form before they are discussed analytically. The goal is to derive insights on the research problem through relating how urban environmental and social change affected and continue to affect children's experience of Inwood.

The data were sought from several sources, as discussed previously. Synthesizing the data has called for a process of selection, a focusing on what is necessary for answering the research questions. The analysis was derived from the historical record as selectively assembled and worked into an analytic narrative form. This process had four basic components:

1. Description of the historical time period under

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investigation (e.g., 1915-1930; 1930-1945) and the trends, countertrends and milestones that characterized it in terms of urban planning and social policy (e.g., for 1915-1930, metropolitan expansion and the rise of city planning, etc.).

2. An examination of the physical and social changes that took place in Inwood during a given time. This focuses not only on how Inwood was changing during that time but on how Inwood's residents may have initiated, perceived, responded to those changes.

3. Presentation of the interview results, with each informant receiving his or her own section and with substantial use of direct quotation.

4. Relating 1, 2 and 3, above, in order to come to an assessment of children's use and perception of Inwood in light of the research questions.

Synthesis of findings

Using the general, large-scale questions and hypotheses as a guide, the three levels of more specific questions are explored through the sources identified. The presentation of the findings follows the sequence

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outlined in these pages, that is, it proceeds from the general framework of historical developments in urban planning, policy and design to the specifics of their effect on Inwood and, finally, to Inwood's children. Relationships between the three levels are explored so that in the end none is presented in isolation. The basic structure of the resulting narrative is chronological.

A word on the method of composition of this dissertation -- as distinct from the methods of data gathering and analysis -- is in order. The chapters to follow relate to actual events that have transpired over historical time. The presentation of this type of data involves describing people, settings and situations in such a way that they make sense to the reader and bear a strong relationship to life as it is lived.

Although the data used here all relate to the theme of this study, not every scrap of information is intended to further an argument or lend support to a particular conception of things. In historical presentation a good many data -- entirely factual, be assured! -- will be found that provide context and apparently little else. And yet without that context historical thought would be meaningless.

The value of context is central to the debate over the

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limits to the interchangeability of the methods and outlook of social science and historiography, a debate which I cannot hope to attempt to resolve here, although I feel I must at least convey its essence. The anthropologist A.L. Kroeber (1952) encapsulated this essence as follows: historiography uses phenomena while social science dissects them.

In this dissertation I will be presenting much data whole and undigested. I will also offer interpretations, but these interpretations will not necessarily be the sole logical outcomes of the data since no writer of history can claim to produce these.

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A Note on the Interviews

Of the varied approaches to data-gathering in the research, interviewing stands out as the most uncertain, challenging and ultimately satisfying. I have spent many months locating, talking to and getting to know Inwood residents, and consider these meetings, and the data gathered from them, unique and invaluable. The fact that I have not made them the dominant feature of this dissertation is meant not to negate their relevance but rather to put them in perspective. Although this research employs the method of oral history it is not in itself an oral history. The interviews are but one part of a broad picture the author wishes obtain and present. And yet the unique qualities of oral history, which composes the bulk of the interviewing performed, deserve some elaboration.

For an historical perspective on daily life and attitudes, oral history has tremendous advantages, but also some formidable drawbacks. Although its factual accuracy is always in question, it provides a sense of the past not otherwise available. Researchers from the fields of history, psychology and anthropology have offered interesting interpretations of the validity of oral testimony.

Bradburn, Rips, and Schevell (1987), in a review of recent cognitive literature, conclude that answering

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questions about one's past is unreliable for quantitative research. Similarly, Robbins (1982) finds that parental recall of childrearing practices is inaccurate. The Freudian Ernest Schactel (1959), in his well-known essay "On memory and childhood amnesia" theorizes that, although an adult can recall childhood milestones competently, modern industrial society exerts a mechanizing influence over a person, so that the richness of autobiographical memories are "predestined to atrophy" (p. 304). Moreover, Schactel claims, what childhood memories do survive are made over internally and unconsciously, to the point where they become almost cliche`. Shopes (1986), while conducting an oral history of a working-class Baltimore neighborhood, found something similar at work: the respondents who made themselves most available to the researcher -- the talkative, outgoing ones -- generally had mostly positive attitudes toward their environments and their lives. Although there must be those with bleaker, even bitter thoughts and memories, Shopes surmised, they tend not to put themselves in the proximity of inquiring strangers.

On the other hand, anthropologists have found "life histories" to be a necessary and viable aspect of their research (Langness, 1965; Vansina, 1985), although these writers refer primarily to fieldwork with non-literate

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cultures. In the urban milieu, however, Handel's (1984) sociological life histories of working class boys demonstrates the viability of oral history for revealing the nuances of childhood in generations past. Historians practicing oral history find that it is often the only outlet for the suppressed, unheralded memory of experiences of people not famous, and for placing those experiences in the larger context of history (Popular Memory Group, 1982). The British historian Paul Thompson (1978) reminds his readers that oral history was the first kind of history, predating written documents, and as such is not easily discredited. Further, oral history is unique in that the sensitivity and interpersonal skills of the researcher will strongly enhance the findings (see Gaster, 1990).

The reader will note that the interview [see Appendix] calls for quantitative as well as open-ended responses. I have found, while conducting and reviewing the interviews, that asking for specific numerical answers helps focus the interview onto specific aspects of landscape use. Thus the numbers provided by informants, whatever their accuracy, were surrounded by considerable qualitatively valuable deliberation, conjecture and reminiscence. For that reason -- the quantitative unreliability of retrospective testimony -- I have chosen to present

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informants' interviews in as full a sense as reasonable space limitations will allow, and to forego their quantification.

The oral history presented here contains the experience of the informants in their own words it is taken from full interviews and, in many cases, brief follow-ups. Informants' responses to the author's write-up were sought through mailing each one the pages that pertain to a particular informant's interview, along with a letter of thanks, a solicitation of their comments, and a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Nine of the respondents took this opportunity to comment.

It should be noted that the interview is not of the all-embracing, life-history variety but is instead focused on a rather limited set of phenomena within the informants' experience -- much of it embedded in biographical detail that was not compellingly relevant to the research. Thus what is presented here is not a collection of excerpts from verbatim transcripts, since some editing was necessary for clarity and economy. For example, since the reader can easily know the basic structure of the interview session from the appended interview form, the interviewer's questions are in most instances omitted from the text; they are retained only

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where the presentation of an exchange of words is essential for context and clarity. In addition, since the interviews often contained a persistent probing for ages associated with memories, or for specific locations the informant has referred to, these probes are not included, although their results are incorporated into the narrative. Further still, informants' utterances frequently had to be re-ordered in the act of composing a more coherent written narrative; for example, references to a certain place or activity that may have been scattered throughout an actual interview are consolidated into a single passage in the text, with the informant's words left intact and, where necessary, the author's own supplementary or explanatory text and commentary added in order to maintain the original context in which they were spoken. Such editing is widely accepted in oral history and in other disciplines that use lengthy interviews, having been employed over thirty years ago by anthropologist Oscar Lewis' pioneering life histories of Mexican families (Lewis, 1961) and often since. Oral historian Michael Frisch (1990) contends that the presenter of oral history must "be able to abandon the pretense of literal reproduction, in order to craft the document into a form that will answer the needs of successful presentation and communication" (p. 84).

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One point of interaction between the investigator and the informants deserves some extended discussion: the post-interview informant critique. When offered the opportunity to look over and comment on my write-ups, informants commonly offered helpful minor corrections as to the spelling of proper nouns, dates of occurrences and exact locations. However, other concerns arose occasionally. For example, a few informants expressed a wish to make the document grammatically and syntactically correct. When this would happen, I would explain to the informant -- by letter or telephone -- that the nature of my investigation demands that the conversational quality of the interview (including the interviewer's occasional utterances, which are themselves far from immortal!) be retained, and I would seek to assure the informant that the reader would advised so as to make no mistake that what he or she is about to read is composed of words that were originally spoken and not written. This would suffice to allay the informant's concerns. Another of the informants' concerns was that of maintaining strict confidentiality: some fretted that certain details (e.g., parents' occupations, exact addresses, siblings' exact years of birth) would reveal their identities to longtime acquaintances (or enemies). In such cases, these rather

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extraneous details were disguised, at no cost to the validity of the data.

A more disturbing response to the write-ups -- and one found especially among the oldest informants -- was that they stressed "negative" events and feelings, and so misrepresented what was a happy childhood as one fraught with danger and fear. (This is an extreme formulation of the objection; most often it took the form of a mild undercurrent in a generally approving response to the write-up). In such instances I would point out (1) that the respondent himself or herself was given free rein to reminisce, and that the document I produced was my best effort at a faithful portrayal of what was told me; (2) that I do not want to romanticize or sanitize what I was told but rather seek to present the "bad" along with the "good"; (3) that my intention, and that of the reader, is not to render judgement on a childhood -- to pronounce it either "happy" or "unhappy" -- but to assess the environmental quality of Inwood as it affected children at different times; and (4) that if the informant would carefully re-read the document, he or she would see that (especially for these older informants) more "positive" things actually were said than "negative," and that the "negative" stands out so irksomely precisely because it was the exception rather than the rule.

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I would then ask the informant (if he or she had not already done so or volunteered to do so) to identify the objectionable remark, sentence or passage and, rather than consent to "soften" it or to have it stricken, would invite him or her to assist me in contextualizing it, through providing me (at a time and place convenient to the informant) any additional memories that would amplify or clarify its intended meaning. This would often lead to a valuable and engaging impromptu follow-up session, during which I would take pains to keep clear of any haggling over what it is proper to report and steer the conversation toward clarification. The end result, of course, rested with me as I later reviewed my notes; if I found that contradictions remained -- or that the follow-up had actually added to any initial ambiguity! -- I set out to resolve these not as a lawyer negotiates a contract but as a historian sifts critically through sources. This may not always have produced a document that projected the image the informant wished to have projected, yet I console myself (and hope I have consoled my informants) with the fact that I did all in my power to foster an open dialogue and spared neither time nor effort in hearing the informant out and making as clear as possible to him or her what I felt to be the logic of my own position.

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Does this process compromise the participatory nature of oral history? The answer would depend on whether one wants to make one's informants participants or editors. Although many oral historians act as barely-visible facillitators on the behalf of individuals, groups, communities or organizations who wish to project their own story (in certain cases paying the historian a fee), I myself was consulting people for their experiences and then working these into a creation of my own; the prefatory remarks I read to each informant prior to the interview ought to make this clear enough. Moreover, my use of pseudonyms (and my assurances to the informant of strict confidentiality) put additional distance between the informant and the finished product. If I had used the informants' real names, that would of course have changed things completely, and would indeed have compelled me to abide by the informants' wishes whether I agreed with them or not. But, as Rivlin (1992) has advised, oral history is not the same as authorized biography.

Trevor Lummis (1987), in his highly illuminating book on the aims and methods of oral history, addresses the schism that can arise between the informant's priorities and those of the researcher, and exhorts the researcher to ascertain the concrete fact rather than the summary judgement or retrospective attitude; though the subjective

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world of the informant at the time of the interview may be of keen interest to the anthropologist or psychologist investigating attitudes and their transformations, the oral historian (and, I would argue, the environmental psychologist using historical data) seeks to learn about social structure and people's lives within it in historical perspective.

In any adequate historical inquiry, the investigator seeks full insight into the views, thoughts and opinions of historical actors (whether dictators or beggars) and presents and interprets them for his or her contemporaries (see Butterfield, 1931). Oral history, however, presents a special challenge here, since, unlike in traditional history, the historical actors here are living and ready to interpret themselves! This adds a fascinating dimension to the interdisciplinarity of oral history, which applies ethnographic methods (and in the process raises many ethnographic dilemmas) to historiography. However, this dissertation is bulky enough without taking on such additional tasks, and so the considerable ethnographic riches in my talks with my informants has been suppressed so that I can instead seek riches of another sort, namely, their historical significance vis-a-vis environment-behavior relations. [Note: In order to assure maximum informant confidentiality, where

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informants appear in photographs no indication of the fact is given].

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2.0 INWOOD CIRCA 1890-1915: ANTICIPATING URBANIZATION

2.1 Introduction

In 1899, in the pages of The Atlantic Monthly, a rueful urbanist was quoted as giving this prognostication for the fate of Manhattan's last remaining expanse of undeveloped land:

> The site of a future city north of the Harlem offers a field for improvement more magnificent than that for which Nero destroyed Rome. With a Hausmann or L'Enfant in our three millions of population, the ideal city, the city beautiful and perfect, would at least be suggested, but what are we doing with it? We are plodding along on village lines, with village methods, marring with patchwork improvements that disfigure, ignoring all the teachings of the past, unconscious of all the possibilities of the future. We are laying out the new districts of Greater New York, not as the ideal city or the beautiful, or even as the city of common sense. We are merely permitting it to grow under the stimulus of private greed and for real estate speculation (Robinson, 1899, p. 772).

Seventy years after this passage appeared, it was selected by the author of a retrospective on the city planning profession (Scott, 1969, p. 30) as typifying the prevalent attitude toward urban development at the turn of the century. The City Beautiful movement then raging was to transform urban America from a crowded, planless jumble of buildings and streets jammed with harried, struggling masses, into a spacious, gleaming neoclassical paradise of magnificent boulevards and overwhelming public temples.

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Note in the quotation the references to Imperial Rome, to L'Enfant's Washington, D.C., to Hausmann's Paris and to "the city beautiful and perfect" and its contempt for "village methods" of planning and "private greed and real estate speculation."

But the passage is of interest here for an additional reason: the "field for improvement" it refers to is Washington Heights-Inwood, an area that, as the author points out, was about to be transformed forever. A scattering of lavish estates and country crossroads occupying rugged, powerful topography, the territory, comprising all of Manhattan Island above West 155th Street -- or roughly one fourth of the island's land area -- was soon to become yet another extension of the great City of New York. How this important piece of land was to be developed, though at the late date of 1899 hardly an open question, was nevertheless just far enough in the future to stir debate.

In the decades to follow, other ideas of what a city should and should not be -- how it should and should not look or function -- were to come and go, leaving their imprints on places such as Northern Manhattan. Some ideas, such as City Beautiful, would be well-meant but feeble -- faddish. Others (official abuse or withdrawal

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of social services comes to mind) would be malevolent and powerful; and a few (such as heightened citizen awareness and action) would be laudable. Many more -- because of their ambiguity and because of the ongoing debate concerning them -- would fall somewhere in the spectrum's middle region. All these ideas and movements, however, would end up affecting profoundly the lives of the city's inhabitants, including its children and how they experience their local communities.

But to return to 1899: the urbanization in store for Upper Manhattan was of the same type that had already engulfed all of the island's once-autonomous villages to the south: Harlem, Yorkville, Turtle Bay, Chelsea, and others -- each seen in its turn as a "field for improvement." For nearly a century the northward spread of the city had been transforming such communities into a more-or-less uniform built product, and with that went the eradication of all the old and idiosyncratic features on the face of Manhattan above the original Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam at its southern tip -- the estates, the orchards, the shanty towns, the farms, the hills and the marshes. This process had been set in motion as early as 1811, when the city fathers superimposed the harsh rectilinear grid of numbered streets and avenues on the

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plan of Manhattan, a framework for development so lacking in imagination that Henry James later likened it to rows and columns on a ledger page. By 1899, most of that page had been filled, the only remaining blank region on Manhattan being Washington Heights-Inwood. This northern extremity of Manhattan had, in fact, seemed so remote in 1811 that it was left unaddressed by the planners' scheme, and so its streets were not mapped out until the 1870s. in the century.

In Manhattan's nineteenth century expansion, as in those of most American cities then, the actual transformation of a given community generally would start once the extension of trolleys into it made its land exploitable. Workmen on the city payroll would then level the land and impose the street grid, preparing the ground for the builders -- primarily private builders -- who would line these arteries with houses, stores, churches, schools, saloons, warehouses and factories. Private companies provided gas, water and other utilities. This was all part of the very process that had made New York a great, pulsing, churning city, a center of competition, enterprise and opportunity and a magnet for refugees from overseas. In 1898 the city, expressly to accommodate such expansion, annexed extensive surrounding lands; these territories included the eastern part of Long Island,

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lower Westchester, all of Richmond County (better known as Staten Island) and all of the County of Kings, which of course included Manhattan's rival, the city of Brooklyn. Fused together administratively, they composed Greater New York. If New York City in 1899 was, as utopian writers subscribing to the idea of The City Beautiful saw it, an unmanageable mess built on greed, its defenders could point out that it was a highly successful mess, one that grew in size and and made fortunes. Who, in 1899, could possibly second guess that success?

And yet there was, of course, a powerful and growing minority -- called Progressives or, more generally, Reformers -- who did question the status quo of city building. Not all were as concerned with grandiose concepts of civic beauty as were the City Beautiful proponents; many were just trying to make the city minimally livable where it wasn't, especially in the older, deteriorated and horribly overcrowded districts, where providing safe drinking water and adequate waste removal was of far more immediate concern than was the dream of civic magnificence. And since this Reform movement was run for the most part by old-blood Protestants, who were focusing their energies on new immigrants who were for the most part Catholic or Jewish, their humanitarian concern was mingled with a distinctly

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conservative impulse to keep "the masses" in order -- to defuse revolution through reform (see Hofstadter, 1955; Goodman, 1979; Lubove, 1962).

Reformism also appealed to the middle class's concern for its own, more immediate physical safety: for example, Jacob Riis (1892), the Danish-born journalist and beacon of Reformism, warned that if a poor boy were left to the street and the saloon, "We have the choice of hailing him man and brother or of being slugged and robbed by him" (p. 6). Yet the simple fact that these reformers recognized that the hellish shape of the environment, and not necessarily individual endowment or choice, was to blame for the human misery of the slums was in itself a great leap forward for urban design and social policy, since until such activists mobilized poverty was viewed by most solely as a personal failing and not a social one.

In time those who were moved -- for whatever reasons -- to act to alleviate slum conditions greeted the spread of the city, and the increasing squalor of the older districts, with increasingly well-thought-out and well-financed alternative schemes, schemes they felt were more rational, orderly and humane than the prevalent unregulated growth. Where speculators and politicians saw undeveloped parcels in the path of the land-ravenous city as a commodity to be traded and exploited for profit and

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then populated with rent-payers and voters -- to fill the ledger pages, literally as well as figuratively -- the Reformers saw opportunities to build differently: wider, landscaped streets and more spacious and sanitary tenements, with spaces for people of all ages to gather, socialize, and play -- alternatives for which, they argued, the speculator need not sacrifice a fair profit (a sacrifice which the Reform movement had no intention of exacting). The Reformist idea of city building -- parks for strolling, playgrounds for more strenuous exercise, new tenements that had sufficient light, ventilation and plumbing and "settlement houses" for the "Americanization" of the immigrants flooding into the city -- was for about ninety years (the 1850s to the 1940s) a thorn in the side of those who would expand the city as they had become accustomed. By 1899, Reformism was on the brink of its period of greatest influence, just as northern Manhattan was on the brink of its urban transformation.

But Northern Manhattan, for better or worse, was of course never to become the gleaming "City Beautiful" sought by some, nor was it to be developed free of "the stimulus for private greed and real estate speculation." But this strategic part of the new cityscape was to be in many important respects different from the lower part of

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the island, and this was due in large part to the effects of the Reform movement's modifying efforts on the process of urban growth. Although any more detailed discussion of this historically significant era is beyond the scope of this chapter (instead, various relevant aspects will be discussed where appropriate), the reader should be aware that the essence of this spirit of reform -- the notion that the human environment must be planned and maintained -- should inform any understanding of the making of an American urban area, such as Washington Heights-Inwood, that was built up in the remarkable historical context of the first part of this century.

2.2 The Setting

For a child living there in the 1890s, the village of Inwood in the 1890s was a place still rural yet busily bracing itself for the wholesale replacement of that way of life. Maps of the place optimistically show it as a neat grid-work of city streets and avenues channeling through its dense, rocky hills and built over its soggy marshland -- an almost seamless extension of the downtown ledger page pattern.

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Contemporaneous photographs, however, show that nothing approaching so complete a street system had yet actually been built. Inwood in actuality was not yet a neighborhood of streets and avenues but a place of valley roads, river paths, and woodland lanes, along all of which were found farmhouses, country inns, taverns, a rural church, a country school, a privately-owned library, fishermen's shacks, and, on the scenic hill overlooking the Hudson River, opulent mansions. All of these pre-dated any thought of urbanization (Fig. 5).

A few of these old roads, however, were just beginning to be modernized -- graded, linked to new cross streets and otherwise prepared for service in an urban world. Some were being built up on mounds to a standard elevation, so that they ran over the flat, barren landscape like causeways, while others were dug out and dynamited so far below their accustomed levels that the land flanking them turned into exposed, rocky, muddy, looming chunks. If a dwelling happened to sit atop such a chunk, the occupant would have to ascend flights of wooden steps where there once had been no change in elevation worth noticing between porch and road.

Such urban changes are described in a little book by J.R. Smith (1938) written in the last years of the century

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Fig. 5. Inwood circa 1890. Looking northwest from the eastern slope of the ridge at about W. 193rd Street, the rural character is evident. Road in lower left is Broadway; road in center is Nagle Avenue. The low, sprawling structure at center probably is a commercial greenhouse. [Source: Informant].

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and published decades later. Called Springs and Wells of Manhattan and the Bronx, it shared some notes its author jotted as he rambled through Inwood and nearby places in search of the region's remaining sources of cold, clear water from directly underground (as opposed to that which was piped in from municipal reservoirs). Smith's book is of far more than geological interest, however, for in it he muses extensively on local social conditions and goings-on. One entry, on a spring he has located in Inwood, captures not only the well that had been built around it but also the mismatch between Inwood's forward-looking urban roads and its still-rural landscape and mindset (note in the following Smith's 1938 insertion of street numbers [bracketed] following his original street notations):

> May 18, 1898. Hawthorne Street [West 204th Street] and Cooper Street were built up some twenty feet above the natural level of the land with many pieces of white marble from the quarry. Cooper Street runs over the original site of this spring, but the owner of this ground insisted on having the spring preserved, so a semi-circular well of marble was built around the western side of the spring and a barrel provided (p. 139).

Another of Inwood's roads being "improved" was Dyckman Street, its main east-west artery, which ran from a landing at the Hudson River on the west to Sherman's Creek (actually a bay on the Harlem River) on the east. The

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term "ran" is not used here arbitrarily, for until 1892 Dyckman street was unpaved for its entire length and, since it was on low land, was frequently muddy; its eastern end ran directly to a large marshland. At its Hudson River, or western end, Dyckman Street was a valley that had flanking and towering over it two high hills, which themselves formed a generally north-south ridge broken by that street. Along this segment of Dyckman Street were clustered the frame houses that composed the small village of Tubby Hook, the only collection of dwellings and businesses in the vicinity; elsewhere in Inwood structures were scattered. (In the 1890s, in fact, the village of Tubby Hook was Inwood; the name Inwood was proposed only in the 1860s by a city official looking for a name that would suggest the area's rural character -- not to its residents, of course, who needed no reminder that they were living in the country, but to those who would first hear about Inwood through real estate advertisements; Calver, 1948).

Inwood's principal north-south artery, known alternately as Kingsbridge Road and Broadway, was an ancient right-of-way (it had begun as a footpath before the arrival of Europeans) that originated at the Battery and ran the length of the island before continuing to the mainland (Fig. 6). Below Northern Manhattan this road

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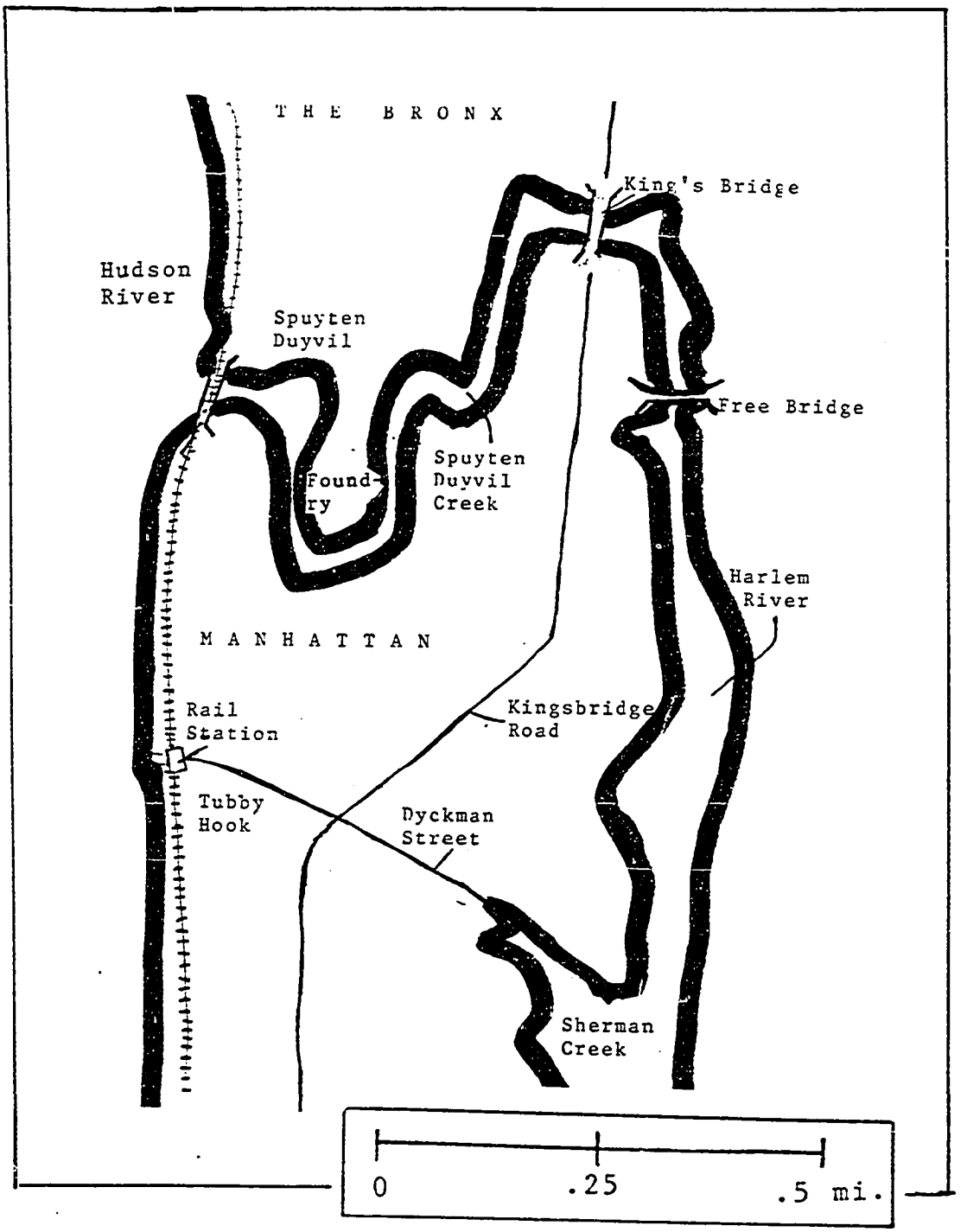


Fig. 6. Inwood circa 1895, showing principal roads and landmarks.

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still went by various old names, such as Bloomingdale Road, or simply "The Boulevard" (White, 1987), but in the heart of the city it was called Broadway, and in Inwood that name was taking over from the older one. Kingsbridge Road had been so called since it led to the King's Bridge, a 17th century span that in 1899 still connected Manhattan to the mainland. Kingsbridge was also the name of the town on the mainland, directly to the north. The name Kingsbridge was in fact so much a part of Inwood that Inwood residents had toyed with the idea of naming their neighborhood "Kingsbridge Heights" but rejected it as too pretentious; with the consent of its inhabitants the name Inwood was finally applied sometime in the 1870s -- not only to the former Tubby Hook but to the woods, farmland and marshland stretching to the east as well (Bolton, 1932a).

Topographically, turn-of-the-century Inwood was hilly on the west and flat on the east, with the exception of a large rise in its extreme southeast corner -- itself the northern end of a miles-long ridge. This eastern half of Inwood, as seen in photographs of the period, contained muddy, rutted fields dotted with farmhouses, temporary shacks and a few isolated, eerily freestanding rowhouses; it gives one the impression of land on which farming has

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been abandoned but for which new uses are imminent. Farming had not disappeared completely, yet it seems by the 1890s to have become in Inwood the exception rather than the rule.

Although the flatlands of Inwood were yielding quickly and easily to city-building, the hilly western part remained more aloof:

> This extreme northern portion of New York City is the most beautiful portion of Manhattan Island, and its natural beauties are finely brought out by the good taste and lavish expenditures of the wealthy residents. Splendid river views, rocks, forests, trees, etc., together with winding roads among elegant mansions having beautiful gardens, conservatories and other attractive and costly surroundings, make it a valuable addition to Central Park for drives and strolls. Among other fine residences is that of James Gordon Bennett, editor and proprietor of The New York Herald.

The passage is from a brochure of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company entitled, Health and Pleasure Resorts and Summer Houses Accessible by the Picturesque Hudson River Rail Road. Though published in 1871, the image it presents of Inwood's western side holds for 1896 as well. To the name of Mr. Bennett it might have added those of others famous capitalists who lived in the area in the late 1800s, many of whom were connected with the rapidly expanding department store industry:

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Eilsha Brooks (of Brooks Bros.), James McCreary (of McCreary's Department Store) and Isodor Strauss (of Macy's). Yet the vague and cliche-sprinkled prose of the railroad's publicity blurb shows that the anonymous writer was basing his or her description more on Inwood's reputation than on direct observation. Smith (1938) provides a firsthand account of the opulence of this part of Inwood:

> June 29, 1898. West of the Kingsbridge Road [Broadway] and northeast of the Isham estate, is the magnificent Seaman-Drake estate. The property contains twenty-six acres, and was formerly owned by Valentine Seaman. Its large white marble entrance arch [is] said to have cost $30,000...
>
> The grounds are a specimen of old-time gardening, laid out in the Italian style with statutes, walks and driveways. Scattered about are small pieces of marble statuary on pedestals, representing Europa, Euterpe, and other classical characters. Where the walks lead down a slope there are marble steps, with figures of lions at the sides. The dwelling itself is of marble and has ampelopsis vines trailed over its south side. By those who live within sight of it, it is familiarly called "the marble house." This mansion is said to have cost $150,000 (p. 146).

But as the railroad brochure is meant to attract riders of the resort-going set, it naturally dwells on what it deems most important to its customers, i.e. the western part of the community, Inwood at its prettiest. In reality the passenger on the Hudson River Railroad

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disembarking at the Inwood station in the 1890s would find himself or herself not up on a shady hilltop suitable for carriage riding or strolling among mansions, but down in Tubby Hook, the small, pleasant but plain valley village hugging the river, which had grown up around the station. The station itself had opened in either 1847 (Bolton, 1932a) or 1849 (Bevan, 1862). The line carried passengers from Chambers street, near the city's financial district, the eleven miles north to Inwood, and then approximately another thirty along the scenic Hudson to Peekskill, New York, stopping along the way at various resort areas. Before the advent of that railroad line, Tubby Hook had been little more than a collection of fishermen's shacks (Calver, 1948).

Interestingly, the 1871 railroad brochure, breathless from Inwood's natural beauty, fails even to mention what an 1862 guidebook had reported matter-of-factly: several large foundries were to be found in the village of Spuyten Duyvil, just across a narrow creek from Inwood (Bevan, 1862, p. 34). Obviously, foundries are not things a railroad company selling itself as a gateway to pleasure spots would gladly point out, but nevertheless there they stood, on a peninsula jutting so far south from the mainland into Inwood's indentation that they were very nearly surrounded by Inwood, and were an undeniable

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presence there. By the 1890s the "several large foundries" apparently had consolidated into one, the Isaac G. Johnson & Sons Iron Works, which had been operating there at least since the early 1860s (it had, according to Tieck (1968), supplied munitions for the Civil War). Indeed, "large" was probably an understatement in describing the foundry; "sprawling" may have been more appropriate, for the works occupied an area of about four city blocks, making it an enormous industrial facility for its time. The complex included a workers' colony, which Julia Slocum, born in 1906, the daughter of a Johnson Company accountant, recalled for oral historian Jeff Kisseloff (1989) as "like something you'd see in a frontier town, with a saloon and a few stores" (p. 224).

But Inwood life for the most part took on a quiet simplicity somewhere between the belching, grinding foundry and the elegance and the lavishness of the hilltop mansions, both of which extremes were anchored in the hurried world of national and international commerce, of the remote frenzy of downtown Manhattan. Inwood was not yet drawn into that world. The Dyckman and Nagle families, descendants of Dutchmen granted the land there in the 1600s, were still prominent landholders in Inwood, as were other, later-arriving families, such as the Vermilyeas, Seamans, Coopers, Paysons and Ishams, all of

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whom "purchased or married their way into landholding in the post-Revolutionary era" (Church of the Good Shepherd, 1962). Many of the homes of these old families still stood -- not on the highest hilltops, though, but further inland, nearer the land their ancestors had farmed. Some old families, such as the Dyckmans, had by the late nineteenth century left their humble Dutch-era farmhouses on the main roads to live in mansions on higher ground closer to the Hudson River or Spuyten Duyvil Creek.

In Inwood in the 1890s, landmarks of eighteenth-century times not only survived, but many retained their original functions. The magnificent old tulip tree standing beside a secluded cove on the Spuyten Duyvil Creek was still set in woodland and venerated as having shaded Hendrick Hudson as he came ashore to make contact with Inwood's Algonquin natives. To the east the original Nagle family burial plot, near the Harlem River, still received interments, and the old family house still stood, although the Nagles had long since left their ancestral quarters. Smith (1938):

> May 18, 1898. In 1736 John Nagle built him a stone dwelling on the banks of the Harlem River at what is now 213th St...and he built so well that the house is standing and occupied today. It is now resplendent in a new roof and suit of clapboards given it by its new owner. The house is at present occupied by a man named White. In 1861, it was a house of entertainment known as Post's Century House (p. 142).

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Other relics survived as well: some blocks west of the Nagle farm, a few roadside taverns dating to the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries still catered to those who traveled by foot or by wagon. The King's Bridge itself has already been discussed; but more beloved was the "Free Bridge" to the mainland: Built in 1757 by farmers and tradesmen led by the yeoman Benjamin Powell, it was the common man's alternative to what had long been the only affordable northern route off Manhattan, for the Phillipse family across the way imposed heavy tolls on the King's Bridge which they owned, a burden the people resented strongly (the toll was of course not in effect in as late as the late nineteenth century). Naturally, when the Free Bridge was opened, travelers abandoned the King's Bridge, forcing the revenue-deprived Phillipse family to sell off their holdings (Tieck, 1968). William L. Calver (1859-1940), in the reminiscences of Inwood which he set down in 1932, called the Free Bridge "dilapidated" and went on to describe its appearance and part of its social function in the 1890s (Calver, 1948):

> The old footbridge had never more than a narrow pathway of planking, supported upon small piles barely high enough to clear floating ice at a very high tide. Boys used it as a bathing pier, and in the crabbing season pedestrians had to pick their way through the crowds of crabbers (p. 26).

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That Inwood could be linked to the mainland by such a physically fragile (though historically enduring) structure as the King's Bridge and Free Bridge hints strongly at Manhattan's tenuous status as an island at that time. While the Battery, at the island's southern tip, faced a wide, famously deep bay, and while Manhattan's east and west sides were for their whole lengths bordered by broad, swift streams (some of which, however, were dammed to make millponds), when one reached Inwood all that separated Manhattan Island from the mainland United States was the marshy, meandering Spuyten Duyvil Creek. The Creek was so unformidable that until the 1870s, when the first efforts to make it navigable were begun, one could, at low tide, simply wade across. Because of this topography Inwood, although in a strict geological sense part of an island, was close enough to the mainland to be not so much at the northernmost outpost of Manhattan as a village within the orbit of lower Westchester county, a region that included the Johnson foundry, the town of Kingsbridge and the city of Yonkers about six miles north -- a city which, unlike the urbanized parts of Manhattan (or even such uptown areas as Harlem) Inwoodians could reach on foot fairly conveniently. The Inwood railroad station, as we have seen, was intended for people who had connections to the

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city and to Hudson Valley resorts; thus it was instead the Free Bridge that was used by the people who travelled by wagon and foot -- the farmers with their produce, the peddlers with their wares, the women shopping for clothes, the boys swimming, the people catching crabs -- and that for nearly a century and a half enabled most Inwoodians to get around the vicinity of their local community for their daily needs.

All this is by way of showing that Inwood, its anticipation of the city notwithstanding, retained enough of its rural landscape and social life to give it still-strong living ties to its former days. According to Calver (1948), the last crop of grain grown there was in 1904 while the last herd of cattle grazed there in 1892, although individual cattle persisted well into the 1900s. This of course affected children as well as adults: "In the 1890's, a legitimate excuse for an Inwood boy's tardiness at the old Public School No. 52...was that he had to drive cows to pasture" (Calver, 1948, p. 25).

2.3 Alfreda Payson Sill: A 19th Century Girlhood

The childhood of Alfreda Payson Sill gives further details of the daily life of Inwood children at that time. Born in Inwood in 1885 and raised there, Mrs. Sill at age 87 wrote a brief personal reminiscence of her childhood

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for a local newspaper (Sill, 1973; 1973a). Mrs. Sill's family associations are noteworthy in that they spanned three branches of Inwood's social makeup: the old Dutch blood, the more newly-arrived Protestant Anglo-Saxon families, and the still more newly arrived urban capitalist class. Mrs. Sill's mother, she wrote, came to Inwood from England to "visit" the McCreerys: "The McCreerys occupied a large and beautiful house on a hill overlooking the Hudson...the northernmost residence on Northern Manhattan" she recalled (Sill, 1973, p. 7). Alfreda's mother was soon hired as governess by the Dyckman family, who lived on another large estate about a quarter mile east of the McCreery mansion.

In 1883 Alfreda's mother married the Rev. George Shipman Payson, Pastor of Mount Washington Presbyterian Church, located then in the Dyckman Street valley a short distance west of the Kingsbridge Road. The Paysons lived a simple life in a rural parsonage; Alfreda's most vividly-remembered excursion out of the area seems to have been one month on Block Island, Rhode Island, a trip for which her father "managed to save enough money" (Sill, 1973a, p. 7). As a child of the local pastor, Alfreda was certainly no farm girl or fisherman's or factory hand's daughter, but neither did she live in the luxury of one of the local mansions; her status as clergyman's daughter

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seemed rather to have put her somewhere between the two walks of life, in a class by herself.

Mrs. Sill remembered her home and its grounds:

> We lived in a grove of apple trees, 60 or 70, which in the springtime were lovely in their blossoms. The meadows around our house were all open, and the view from our windows went right across the meadows to the Harlem River, where the barges went up and down to New York (Sill, 1973, p. 7).

Some indication of the communal activities of Inwood in the 1890s is given by Mrs. Sill's recollection of

> the Christmas festival at the church...In those days the festival was one of the important occasions of the neighborhood. A Christmas tree was always in front of the church decorated with great care by the ladies of the congregation, and many of the children of the congregation took part in a little performance (p. 7).

One of the outdoor amusements Alfreda enjoyed was skating with her father and brother. Inwood

> was full of small ponds which froze over in the wintertime...There was one hill...called Bolton Road. We went [sledding] all the way down to Dyckman Street and out into the middle of the street. It was not particularly safe, but my mother didn't seem to worry about us at all...The streets about our house were those of a country town, and they did not offer any great hazards for children, so that we went about the neighborhood without the slightest feeling of being menaced... (Sill, 1973a, p. 7).

Alfreda's brother, Armor (whose age presumably was close to hers, although whether he was younger or older is unclear), developed a deep fascination with railroading;

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he "often rode his bicycle up to Spuyten Duyvil to see the express trains go through." (Sill, 1973a, p. 7). One anecdote of Mrs. Sill's illustrates not only Armor Sill's love of his surroundings but also suggests how city people and city children, if not city buildings, were beginning to encroach upon Inwood, and how Inwood responded to their presence:

> By the time he was 15, Armour had become very protective of the apple orchard surrounding our house. In the early fall, boys would come out from the city in crowds to rifle the apple trees and steal fruit. My brother would sit behind the glass doors of our front porch, coatless, with his sleeves rolled up and armed with a large stick. When the boys were well up in the trees, he would burst out the door brandishing his stick and yelling insulting epithets at the boys who, frightened, scrambled down as fast as they could. Armor would try to chase them but couldn't get very far before being overcome by laughter (Sill, 1973a, p. 7).

Although Mrs. Sill was probably correct in her contention that Inwood posed no serious danger to children, we may assume that as a child she did not wander out at night alone, for the crowds of mischievous fruit-stealing boys "from the city" apparently were not the only transient troublemakers present. Inwood, it must be remembered, was a principal land route between the city and the Hudson Valley and New England, especially for those without the means to travel by train or steamboat. As Calver (1948) recalled:

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> In contrast to its daytime pastoral innocence, Inwood by night was far from safe during the '80s and early '90s. A chance-met pedestrian on Kingsbridge Road might be a resident abroad on legitimate business, but there was always the danger that northbound travellers were desperadoes fleeing from justice and southbound travellers culprits bent on hiding their identity or disposing of their spoils in the big City (p. 22).

2.4 Reshaping Inwood's Contours

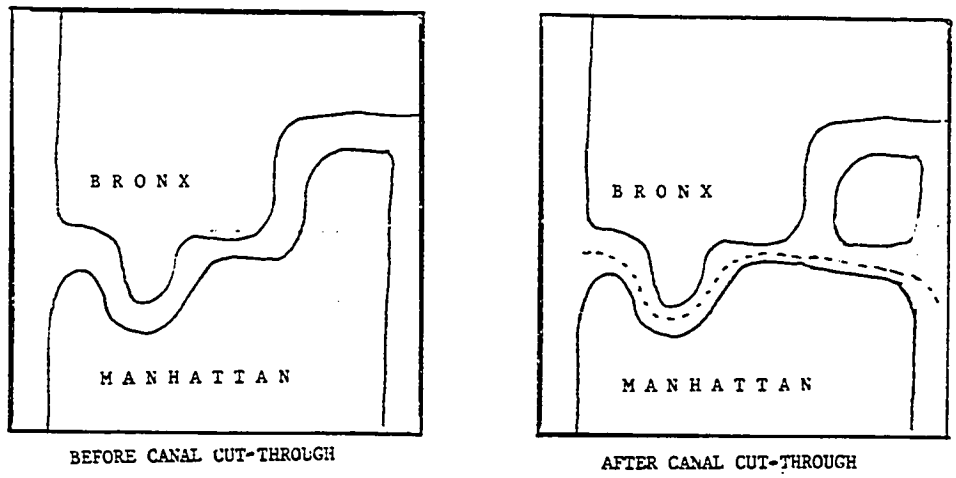
Such eyewitness recollections as those of Mrs. Sill and Mr. Calver provide some vivid pictures of Inwood's rural way of life in their time. Yet despite this pastoral continuity, the 1890s saw changes that were already propelling Inwood into twentieth century urban expansion. Surprisingly, the earliest and most dramatic changes in Inwood's physical structure were brought about not because of its flat, cleared and developable land, nor because of its picturesque wooded hills. Rather it was its strategic waterside situation.

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How this was so relates to the Erie Canal, which opened in 1825. The canal, of course, soon allowed the Port of New York to surpass by far, in both wealth and population, its rivals on the Atlantic coast, as it provided the only water route from the Atlantic to the Great Lakes and the midwest beyond. Along this vast, manmade ditch there was, however, a proposed shortcut not acted upon for several decades: the Spuyten Duyvil Creek, the unnavigable stream separating Manhattan from the Bronx, if widened and deepened, could be made navigable, creating a water route between the Hudson River and the Long Island Sound, saving ships on such a course 25 miles.

In 1895 -- 70 years after the completion of the Canal that it was supposed to serve -- the Harlem River Ship Canal opened. The canal was an enormous work of civil engineering that had the effect of changing the physical contours of Inwood, and that of adjacent communities, profoundly and permanently. By making tiny Spuyten Duyvil Creek a canal (with its shorelines remaining, however, muddy or marshy), the project of course created a new type of waterway . But the canal also changed the geography of the area, dredging a new channel and leaving part of the old Spuyten Duyvil Creek commercially superfluous (Fig. 7). In due course these stretches of the old creek were filled in and the King's

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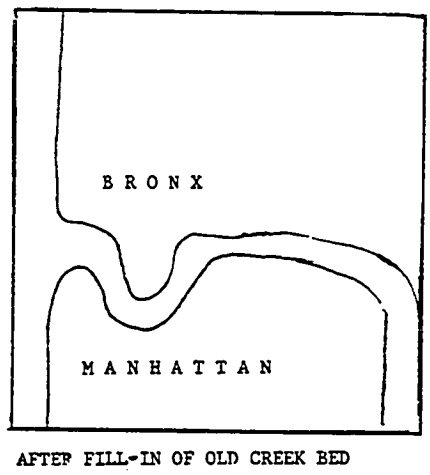


Fig. 7. Diagram series showing how Harlem River Ship Canal altered Inwood's northern shoreline.

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Bridge and Free Bridge were done away with. The Free Bridge lasted until 1911; it was 163 years old. With the advent of the Harlem River Ship Canal, not only were these historic bridges lost, but Inwood was no longer geographically and socially integrated with the villages on the mainland but cut off by a deep channel. Instead, Inwood was simply the place where Manhattan ended.

At virtually the same time that the Harlem River Ship Canal was radically altering Inwood's northern boundary, another massive public work was doing the same to Inwood's southeastern edge. But where the Canal had been a utilitarian undertaking ostensibly for the sake of national prosperity, this other project was purely local in its aim, and was intended not only for utility but for aesthetics and pleasure, although its story can claim little of either, for in it, sleepy Inwood is touched by the bitterly-fought urban design wars of America's expanding cities.

When Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's Central Park opened, in 1858, it fulfilled the dreams of early city planning and parks advocates for preserving from urbanization a large piece of land that would be developed for public access. But at that time the bulk of the city's people lived a considerable distance south of Central Park, primarily below 14th Street -- a distance of

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about two and a half miles (what are today the upper East and West sides had not yet been developed).

As the city spread north, those who could afford to kept one step ahead of the advancing buildings, living in spacious houses and keeping stables. It is not surprising, then, that from 1863 to 1866 the number of "vehicles" (i.e., horse-drawn) and equestrians entering Central Park was fully about half that of pedestrians: the figures for 1866 show about 3.5 million pedestrians, 1.5 million vehicles and 85,000 equestrians (Central Park Commissioners, 1867; Olmsted and Vaux meticulously kept entrance gate figures for the park's first few years). Since many vehicle carried more than one person, the riders most likely outnumbered the walkers. Thus, despite Central Park's conducivity to strolling, the facility, measured by its use, was at that time actually more of a driver's pleasure ground. Indeed, the scenic background of the park was a magnet for them; Olmsted and Vaux's circulation system for the park -- sunken crosstown transverse roads as well as pedestrian walkways -- made a continuous, unobstructed circuit possible. That freedom, plus the road's smooth and well-kept surface (relative to nearby roads) made it ideal not just for riding but for very fast riding.

By the 1890s, with the east and west sides of

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Manhattan developed, the share of pedestrians in the park increased accordingly. One may assume (and must assume, for with Olmsted and Vaux no longer in control, figures were no longer kept) that the horse owners, who now were to be found north of the park in still-uncrowded Harlem, became a bothersome minority to the increasing crowds of visitors from farther downtown. Although the main circuit drives of the park were meant for vehicles, strollers often overflowed onto them -- a situation that created clashes and mutual resentment.

Around 1893, the city government addressed this problem with a plan to build, at another location, a "speedway" exclusively for the fast driving of horse-drawn vehicles. It chose a site along the Harlem River stretching from West 155th Street to Dyckman Street in Inwood -- nearly the entire eastern edge of Northern Manhattan. This area had long attracted horse-and-buggy riders; the 1870 Currier and Ives print "Fast Trotters on Harlem Lane" shows that lane (later renamed St. Nicholas Avenue) filled with riders, its sidewalks packed with spectators. Meanwhile, sections of the nearby attractive bluffs above the Harlem River had begun to be acquired by the city for parkland as early as 1867 (City of New York Department of Parks and Recreation, undated).

Park-watchers welcomed the proposed Harlem Speedway

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and were pleased when its design was entrusted to the Park Board itself and not to the city's less prestigious road-building agency. This delegation of responsibility, it was assumed, would assure the Speedway all the considerable design preparation, aesthetic treatment and public-access considerations customarily devoted to a public park. However, the Park Board itself chose to handle the matter as though the Speedway were to be just another new road: a racing track, it soon revealed, was to be built against the river, and one walkway was to run parallel with it; this walkway was to be placed not on the river side, but on the leeward side. The roadway would always come between the pedestrian and the river.

The public reaction to this design was explosive. This era was after all the start of the City Beautiful movement; grandiose urban design was to eradicate the piecemeal and utilitarian building of the past. Civic design associations were aghast. A petition was delivered to the Park Board, signed by high officials of the Society of American Architects, the National Academy of Design, the Architectural League, the American Institute of Architects, the American Fine Arts Society, the Sculpture Society, and The Municipal Art Society -- all demanding that a competent landscape architect be retained for the design ("City Club," 1894). But the Park

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Board would not be moved. The Park Commissioner himself, strenuously dissenting from his own Board's action, resigned in disgust.

How, critics fumed, could the Board ignore the right of walkers to have access to the scenic banks of the Harlem, thus "throwing away an opportunity to make one of the most beautiful drives and promenades in the world?" ("The Harlem River Speedway," 1894, p. 311). The New York Times ("The Speedway," 1893) editorialized that "it is quite certain that the public will not consent to be shut out" (p. 4). Since the Speedway as designed would have benefited mainly wealthy horse-owners, class issues were brought into the debate, although not loudly; on this delicate issue The New York Times ("The Speedway," 1893) editorialized, "It is an issue between the people and a small number of persons who wish to convert public property exclusively to their private uses. If the speedway is constructed, all the people will be taxed in order to provide a place where these few persons will not be molested in driving horses at the top of their speed" (p.4). Only when the matter reached such proportions that the opponents began to take their claims to the courts did the Park Board give in. The first completed section of the Harlem River Speedway -- from Dyckman Street in Inwood south to 170th Street -- opened on a November day

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in 1897; the entire length was officially opened on July 2, 1898 ("Harlem Speedway," 1898).

Those involved in the tortuous development of the Harlem River Speedway -- the politicians, the parks advocates, the press, the riders themselves -- lived and worked in Harlem as well as points farther south. Inwood to them could not have been anything other than a sleepy town at the northern end of the road, and as far as most of Inwood was concerned the Speedway could not have been anything other than something tucked away in a remote corner. And yet the advent of the Speedway put Inwood for the first time in direct physical contact with the stormy big-city quarreling and politicking that attended the planned use of recreational space, just as the construction of the Harlem River Ship Canal was putting Inwood in contact with nationwide commerce. Before the Speedway controversy, recreational space was something that Inwoodians could take for granted. And though the Speedway itself would not undo this, the forces that gave it life -- forces that made and unmade increasingly scarce urban recreation space -- would return to influence profoundly Inwood's play and recreation landscape.

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2.5 Filling Inwood's Interior

While Inwood's perimeter was the focus of wide attention and of millions of dollars worth of construction work, its interior was slower to develop. Moreover, its first truly urban-age land usage was not one which such a staid community of farmers, industrialists and their servants would have welcomed.

A cable railway is one on which the cars are pulled along a cable originating at a stationary power source, such as an electric generator. In the 19th century electric power companies charged the cable railway companies a flat fee for their services. But since people tended to stay home on Sundays, the railways were losing a seventh of their potential total revenue. Searching for a way to lure passengers for Sunday and holiday outings, these companies hit on the idea of creating amusement parks on cheap land along or at the terminals of their routes (Griffin, 1974).

In 1892, one cable railway company found such a terminus in Inwood -- not the heart of Inwood to be sure, but on Ft. George Hill in its southeast corner, a hill that marked the northern end of the Highbridge Park ridge; that ridge began in Harlem and proceeded parallel to the Harlem River, overlooking the Harlem River Speedway. Named Paradise Park, the amusement park soon became "one

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of the most popular amusement parks in the city" (Kisseloff, 1989, p. 218). A photograph, with the words "Washington Heights, year 1900, Little Coney Island" written on its face, and apparently taken from a nearby rooftop, shows hundreds of men and women jamming the sidewalk of a curving road, spilling out into a street. Signs in front of the buildings read "Automobile Photograph Gallery" and "Human Ostrich". It is probable that what was referred to as Paradise Park was not a self-contained park under single ownership but rather a "strip" neighborhood where houses were renovated or constructed independently to take advantage of the amusement crowd, for a 1912 real estate map shows, along five or so blocks of curving Ft. George Avenue, such property-ownership designations as "pony race track," "Ferris Wheel" "Carousal" "Bandstand" "Cave of Winds" "Swings" "Tobagon" and "Music Hall." Only one property is labeled "Paradise Park."

Such early amusement parks as Paradise Park were not intended for children, but parents often brought theirs along, prompting operators to build playgrounds in which parents could, for a fee, deposit their children (an innovation which led later to "kiddie parks" [Griffin, 1974]). This may have been the case with the area of Paradise Park, although in the photograph referred to, no

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children are in evidence.

Yet a cable car line that terminated on top of a steep hill in Inwood's southeastern corner, however portentous of creeping urbanization, did not provide Inwood any satisfactory, dependable mass transit connection to downtown Manhattan, and thus was no more immediate an incentive to build up Inwood than was the Inwood stop on the Hudson River Railroad, an excursion line. All this changed, though, in 1900 when a trolley line was put through Inwood. Traveling along Broadway, it proceeded to the Bronx via a new steel bridge that had been erected in 1896 -- Inwood's first modern bridge since the erection of the railroad bridge fifty years earlier. Yet even this leap forward was just a prelude to a far grander mass transit improvement, for in 1906, the Interborough Rapid Transit Company (IRT) subway reached Inwood with a tunnel through which trains whisked passengers from Inwood all the way down to the Battery.

These transit improvements brought further assaults on Inwood's rural way of life. However, this seems to have been due (at least in its earliest stages) not to any flood of new residents but to people from out of the area looking for fun in the newly-accessible open spaces of Inwood -- visitors probably much like the boys who would

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occasionally raid the orchard of Alfreda Payson's father's parsonage at Mount Washington Presbyterian Church on Inwood's west side. One instance of such a clash of values involved the Nagle family cemetery, which served its original function well into the 1890s. In the 1890s, according to Calver (1948), "the plot was protected by a good fence and had all the appearance of a well-kept rural cemetery." But soon "the new surface railways and subsequent subway line brought to Inwood a harum-scarum class of pleasure seekers who overran the little plot, tore down the fences, and overthrew memorial stones" (p. 28).

With the new trolley in 1900, "for the first time, the moribund real estate of Inwood began to show signs of life and slowly to bestir itself," according to Inwood's Mount Washington Presbyterian Church (1932). If this was true, then the subway in 1906 helped to jolt that life to a quicker pulse. Inwood's population, negligible by city standards before 1905, had risen to 7,103 by 1915; the majority (4,386) of its new residents were concentrated in apartment buildings in the central valley, north and south of Dyckman Street and about midway between the Hudson and Harlem Rivers. This was Inwood's flattest and most easily exploitable land, and was also nearest the two subway stations, which were on its east side at Dyckman Street

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and at West 207th Street.

That almost all of Inwood's new housing was in the form of apartment buildings built after 1901 was a crucial condition for the new look and function of the neighborhood. Had its housing developed earlier, Inwood would have turned out a very different place. Before 1867, when housing codes came into existence in New York, the design and construction of the tenements that had been flourishing all over the lower parts of Manhattan were unregulated, and so a "dumbbell" configuration -- so called because each house, from a bird's eye view, took on a configuration like that of a dumbbell, the narrow "handle" being the indentations for the airshafts, proliferated (see Lubove, 1962). This meant that there were no requirements for such things as backyards, air shafts, plumbing, fire safety or ventilation. Tenements stood on standard 25 x 100 foot lots -- the very dimensions carried over from early in the nineteenth century -- dimensions intended to suit one-family houses, not crowded multi-family tenements. The battle between reformers and house builders proceeded with intensity until finally, more than three decades later, the New York Tenement House Commission of 1901 instituted sweeping reforms: Tenements could now cover no more than 70% of the lot (90% on

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corners); every room would have to have a window; and air shafts would be replaced by courts open on one side. Moreover, inspectors would ensure builders' compliance. A new era in housing was inaugurated: according to Lubove (1962), "There was no possibility now that the undeveloped northern portions of Manhattan or the Bronx would suffer the ravages of the dumbbell after 1901" (p. 134).

At the same time that tenements were being re-molded, the idea of apartment house living was slowly catching on among the middle class. Before the 1870s, this class preferred individual houses, whether freestanding or in rows, But fashions changed, and by the early 1900s the idea of living in apartment houses became so popular that even rich households were living several under one roof in their own luxury buildings (Stern, Gilmartin & Massengale, 1987; Tunnard & Reed, 1956).

The convergence of these two trends -- the abolition of the dumb-bell tenement and the complete acceptance of apartment houses -- enabled Inwood's streets to begin to be lined with large apartment buildings, many occupying several of the old 25 x 100 foot lots combined into one. These buildings were four to six storeys tall, with courtyards in front and with ample rear yards, and had other spaces between each other's wings. Hastily built to

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take advantage of a rapidly growing population, these were hardly architectural gems; they were in fact noteworthy in no architectural sense other than their departure from the worst of what Lower Manhattan had produced. Still, they were newly built under regulations that were the model of their day.

The families who moved into these new apartment houses, however, were, for the most part, not newly-arrived immigrants, nor were they those having just previously lived in the city's worst slums. Most people from the slums were Jewish or Italian immigrants, the ones most recently arrived in the country and most lacking in marketable skills or ability to speak English, while the new Inwoodians were those socially one or more (though not many more) steps ahead of the tenement-dwellers. Many were Protestant -- Anglo-Saxon, Dutch or German. Many more were second- and third-generation Irish. A smaller number were German Catholics. Most had lived elsewhere in the city, where they had learned to adapt to American urban life, before coming to Inwood (Abeles & Weinberg, 1968). In 1915 the Irish, for their part, were as an ethnic group
already well on their way to middle-class comfort and stability, having established themselves in America as long ago as the early 1800s. Irish newcomers, possessing

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by birthright one key to survival if not success -- a command of English -- generally made a smooth transition into that society. Handlin (1963) writes that

> immigrants from Ireland, like those from Germany, moved between 1900 and 1910 into a community already well-organized. There was hardly a distinction between late and early comers. For more than sixty years the movement out of the Emerald Isle had had a single character, the product of the elimination of numerous displaced peasantry. Continuity of adjustment also held Irishmen together; they made a start in the same unskilled occupations, and worshipped in the same church since American Catholicism had long since acquired an Irish cast. The last to arrive moved into well-established societies and shared places with their predecessors or their children (p. 76).

2.6 The Philosophy of Play

As Catholics flooded into Inwood, the Catholic Church prepared to receive them. On January 1, 1912, the first mass was said at the Church of the Good Shepherd, at its temporary quarters by the banks of the Ship Canal a little west of where the Broadway Bridge carried the subway to the Bronx. The new church was the nexus of the new Good Shepherd Parish, which encompassed Manhattan above Dyckman Street; the area south would be served by the Washington Heights-based St. Elizabeth's Parish. Good Shepherd was founded by the Missionary Society of St. Paul the Apostle, popularly known as the Paulist Fathers, and was Inwood's

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first Catholic church. Its first mass was a modest but promising beginning: "The original congregation that gathered...numbered one hundred and fifty souls" (Church of the Good Shepherd, 1962, p. 25).

The fledgling Church of the Good Shepherd, though, had its hands full in trying to serve the growing community's spiritual needs; it was hardly in a position to play a very active role in Inwood's rapidly changing social life. Yet since the 1880s, urban churches of all denominations had begun to regain the active community role they had not seen since the beginning of the industrialism, providing such services as schools, clinics and recreational facilities (Tunnard & Reed, 1956). In the 1890s, most boys clubs in New York City were run by one or another religious organization (Macleod, 1983), while the Protestant YMCA, established in American cities in the 1850s, was rapidly expanding its mission from that of a club for middle-class sportsmen to a service-provider; by the early 1900s, its definition of "young men" was stretched to include young boys as well (Macleod, 1983).

In Inwood in the 1910s, this social role was still filled by the then sixty-plus-year-old Mount Washington Presbyterian Church. For children, its pastor, Dr. Payson, began what he called "The Sunshine Class," while a woman active in the church formed a sewing school (Mount

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Washington Presbyterian Church, 1932). But compared with the church programs downtown, whose reach encompassed education, recreation, training and health care, Inwood's Mount Washington was still very much a rural enterprise, staffed with concerned and devoted volunteers prominent in the community rather than by professional teachers or managers. Yet its leaders foresaw a future of expanded activity, declaring

> The city is upon us with its sharp demands for virtuous strife and struggle with multiplied forms of vice. The responsibilities of this Church are greatly multiplied, and so are its opportunities for service. In this we rejoice and for this we thank God (Mount Washington Presbyterian Church, 1932; no page numbers).

The national movement toward a more socially-involved church was intertwined with a larger movement toward expanded social services in American cities, spearheaded by the reformers. A significant part of this larger movement was the play movement, whose zenith coincided with the urbanization of Inwood. Books in this vein, such as S.P. Breckenridge's The Child in the City (1970), first published in 1912, were among the first to note the often tragic incompatibility of children and automobiles. Where the trolley -- itself no small danger to children -- was on a track and was operated by a trained conductor, the automobile, Breckenridge noted, posed even more danger, as

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its movements were unpredictable and the driver was far less accountable (Breckenridge, 1970). In essence, the play movement was supposed to remove children from what were perceived as the physical and moral dangers of street play by placing them in facilities, such as playgrounds -- both outdoor and, after 1900, increasingly indoor (Cranz, 1982) -- where they would play not merely under the supervision but the direction of a trained play leader.

President Theodore Roosevelt gave the play movement his imprimatur when he declared:

> City streets are unsatisfactory playgrounds for children, because of the danger, because most good games are against the law, because they are too hot in summer, and because in crowded sections of the city they are apt to be schools of crime (quoted in Cranz, 1982, p. 80).

In 1906, the Playground Association of America was founded in Washington, D.C. (moving to New York the next year). Its mission was to assist municipalities in establishing play policies and facilities. In 1907 the first play conference was held in Chicago (Butler, 1940). President Roosevelt himself was named first Honorary President; the honorary Vice Presidency went to Jacob Riis.

Much of the play movement followed the example of another legend in reform, Jane Addams, a Chicago reformer and one of the most influential forces in the movement.

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Addams built her philosophy of play around diverting children and youths away from the temptations of city life -- the dance halls, the gambling dens, the gin mills, the back alleys. Like many other reformers, Addams was horrified that children should have such ready access to activities many adults found immoral. Recognizing that many poor children were exploited and spent long hours at factory work and thus tended to demand the same amusements their adult co-workers enjoyed, Addams was intent on competing with these places by providing facilities for socializing and sports that would be run at no profit by municipalities or by charities. This program was also supposed to "Americanize" working class immigrant youths. Thus the separation of children not so much from the streets as from unwholesome adults was one of Addams' primary objectives (Addams, 1909).

Although during the Progressive Era there was a general philosophical agreement on the need to transform play into something physically segregated from the everyday world, the question of where specifically this play ought to happen was never resolved. Breckenridge (1970) noted in 1912 an increasing acceptance nationwide of the place of children's play in parks. Yet the emphasis in parks management at that time was still tied closely with the origins of the city planning and parks

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movements, which regarded park spaces primarily as visual adornments -- artfully sculpted green expanses intended to, in Olmsted's words, "supply hundreds and thousands of tired workers, who have no opportunity to spend their summers in the country, a specimen of God's handiwork..." (quoted in Bender, 1975, p. 179). Municipal managers, however, were more often persuaded to approve parks projects on the basis of their potential for raising property values. Thus the making of parks was, in short, not a way of direct accommodation of children's play but a curious blend of high aesthetic pursuit, selfless humanitarian effort, "Americanization" and real estate promotion.

Creating play spaces for slum children, though, was another matter entirely, an unglamorous task demanding the carving of playgrounds out of environments where there was -- sometimes quite literally, as with overcrowded, windowless apartments -- no space to breathe. Backyards and rooftops had to be cleaned out and converted; school authorities had to create school playgrounds as well as find the resources to open school buildings for evening recreation programs (as was done in New York City as early as 1898; Butler, 1940); lots on which condemned buildings stood had to be secured and cleared. It was thankless work whose leaders, when compared with famous landscape architects like Olmsted and Vaux, were practically

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unknown. But they were successful: the number of American cities with playgrounds increased from 16 in 1906 to 414 by 1916 (Bowen & Mitchell, 1928).

2.7 The Beginnings of a Play Landscape in Inwood.

When the parks and play movements reached Inwood, they followed in the genteel tradition of creating pleasant green spaces. This is not surprising, as Inwood's housing was new and spacious, was occupied by people of some means, and was surrounded by large estates and scenic waterways. But Inwood's still-rural qualities owed themselves to the chance survival of some highly visible and well-appreciated remnants of the past -- farms, marshlands, spectacular estates -- and not to any coherent vision for the neighborhood's future; in fact, some were viewed as impediments to the speculators' designs. To the family living in an apartment in Inwood in 1910, the simple act of passing by old barns on the way to the subway was proof enough they were living in country. But the realtor's map of Inwood showed no barns or marshlands, only a grid street pattern criss-crossing it, the spaces between carved into lots, all slated to be filled with apartments and stores -- and all virtually unrelieved by any public open space other than an occasional schoolyard.

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Because of Inwood's newness as an urban residential area, as well as its relative prosperity and its still-abundant natural beauty, the tone for its entry into the parks and recreation world was set not by the efforts of the child welfare advocates downtown, who were trying to secure precious space where children could play safely, but by the prevailing philosophy behind the Harlem River Speedway in the mid-1890s, which, it will be recalled, centered around public access to a promenade along a scenic waterfront. Sparsely-populated Inwood had as yet no crisis as to where children could play safely. The development in parks and recreation following the Speedway to affect Inwood involved not even Inwood itself but the magnificent and lovely Palisades, the steep, rocky cliffs lining the opposite bank of the Hudson River. Limited segments of these cliffs had been quarried for such material as ships ballast since mid-century, but by the late 1890s the entire ridge was threatened with blasting to meet the demand for concrete for road and building construction (New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, Inc. and The American Geographical Society, 1971). To prevent this from ruining the Palisades, a fourteen mile strip -- from Fort Lee, New Jersey to the New York State line -- was designated in 1900. This action was due to the prodding of alarmed hikers and conservationists working under the

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authority of the newly-formed Palisades Interstate Park Commission (Stern, Gilmartin & Masengale, 1987). With the Palisades protected, Inwood, without its even asking, was insured a view of this marvelous natural wall, although it had no easy access to the park.

The next park development to affect Inwood, although not, like the Palisades, in another state and across a river, was also peripheral to the community, and was to involve the parcels of land along the bluffs that loomed over the Harlem River Speedway, land which the City had begun assembling in 1867. By the turn of the century these parcels had grown to become Highbridge Park, mentioned earlier; the name was taken from the massive, arched 1848 span over the Harlem River at West 179th Street that brought in part of the city water supply from the Croton Aqueduct. In 1895, the City began consolidating the greater mass of Highbridge Park, and by 1901 the park had been designated as far north as Inwood, reaching Dyckman Street. Establishing Highbridge Park preserved the dramatic escarpments along not only the Speedway but the extreme eastern end of Dyckman Street; on these steep, wooded slopes nothing would -- as probably nothing could -- be built.

But elsewhere in Inwood, parks efforts were beginning that would focus on issues completely contained in that

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community. The hills in its northwest section were a landscape whose beauty had earned the public's admiration for generations. And yet they were unprotected from development; the grid pierced them (on paper at least) just as it did the rest of Inwood. It would be just a matter of time before the city and the builders decided it was time to summon the resources to blast the area flat.

The first stirrings of a preservation movement for this area happened as early as 1895 when Andrew H. Green, a man prominent in parks advocacy since the days of Central Park's formation, promoted park designation in Inwood. Between then and 1912 there was, presumably, gradual, though considerable, citizen action toward designating this land as Inwood Hill Park, for it was in 1912 that the first official action was taken. That year the City's powerful, money-controlling Board of Estimate began hearing arguments for and against establishing the park. Five years later Inwood Hill Park was established.

Despite Inwood Hill's inherent fitness for park development -- its magnificent river views, and beautiful, rugged terrain -- plans other than residential development had been in store for it as well. One of these involved extending Riverside Drive -- Frederick Law Olmsted's scenic drive that began at West 72nd Street and the Hudson River and ended at Dyckman Street -- northward through

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Inwood Hill to a planned vehicular bridge -- to be called the Henry Hudson Memorial Bridge -- that would span the Harlem River Ship Canal. This would link Inwood with the Westchester County parks and parkway system, greatly increasing Manhattanites' access to parkland. In fact, the whole of Upper Manhattan, real estate development notwithstanding, was as late as the 1920s viewed by urban planners as the recreational gateway from Manhattan to the mainland via Central Park, the Speedway, Highbridge Park and Inwood's western side (Adams, 1931). A committee of local commerce-promoting organizations had rallied behind the parkway and bridge plan and had gotten the city to appropriate funds for it as early as 1905 (Hudson Memorial Bridge Committee, 1930-1931). This would have turned Inwood Hill into a setting for a scenic boulevard, and much of its wild quality would surely have been lost.

Meanwhile, a few hundred yards east of Inwood Hill, another park was taking shape. In 1912, 48 years after the Isham family moved about a quarter of a mile east of Inwood Hill, to a new house on a hill with splendid views of all the waterways surrounding Inwood, two Ishams still held the property. That year one, Julia Isham Taylor, donated a six-acre parcel to the city for parkland. In 1916, her sister, Flora, donated her own portion (City of New York Department of Parks and Recreation, undated).

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These gifts included the family mansion, which was described by Bolton (1932) as "an interesting brick and frame building of peculiar shape, having a spacious central hall with a winding staircase and gallery from which rooms extended in three wings" (p. 198), as well as greenhouses and formal gardens. Also included in the gift was a land corridor extending northwest toward the Ship Canal, which was to be incorporated as part of the new park in order to preserve the view of the canal, the the wooded hills on the opposite bank, the Hudson beyond, and the Palisades beyond that. With Isham and Inwood Hill Parks established in the west, and with the Speedway and Highbridge Park secure on the east, the direction of Inwood's parks and recreation landscape was set, just as the community was about to receive its greatest growth in population ever.

[Note: A time-line of significant events affecting Inwood, 1890-circa 1915, appears as Table 1].

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1892	Cable railway established to Inwood's southeastern corner.
1895	Harlem River Ship Canal Opens.
1897-98	Harlem River Speedway opens.
1898	Five boroughs consolidated into Greater New York.
1901	Highbridge Park along Harlem River extended north to Dyckman Street.
1906	IRT subway reaches Inwood.
1907	Playground Association of America is established.
1910	Boy Scouts of America established.
1912	Church of the Good Shepherd established in Inwood.
1912	Heirs to Isham family donate part of estate land to City for a park.
1917	Girl Scouts of America established.

Table 1. Chronology of significant events, 1890-circa 1915.

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3. INWOOD CIRCA 1915-30: FROM COUNTRY TO CITY

3.1 Introduction

To students of American urban life, the year 1920 stands as a milestone in American demographic history. The Census of that year revealed that, for the first time in the country's history, the number of people living in urban areas surpassed the number not living in such places (Bradburn, Downs & Small, 1982). In 1850, by contrast, only one in five Americans had lived in urban areas (Mollenkopf, 1983). It was also around 1920 that population in these urban areas' central cities reached their highest degree of concentration (Mollenkopf, 1983); from then on, although the urban population as a whole would continue to increase, it would disperse from the core areas into newly-developed outlying areas. To observers of the urban scene, these Census findings confirmed that the United States, a tremendous area with a frontier until only recently seen as endless, suddenly found itself a truly urban nation.

Inwood's new accessibility swept it briskly into this urban growth. In the five short years between 1915 to 1920, Inwood's population had nearly doubled; then, between 1920 and 1930, it nearly tripled. Put another way, where Inwood had about seven and a half thousand

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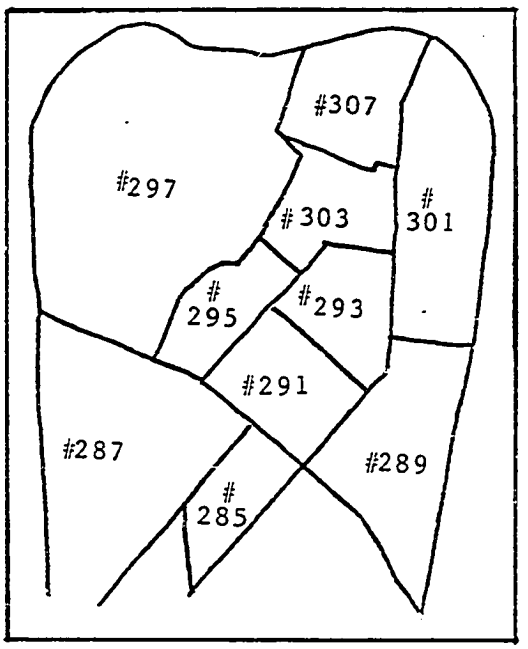
residents in 1915, by 1930 it had over thirty-eight thousand, an increase of over 600 percent (Fig. 8).

Perhaps one development during the 1920s that made Inwood even more attractive as a residential neighborhood than it had been before was the condemnation of the huge Johnson & Sons Iron works. The peninsula on which it jutted southward into Inwood was wreaking such havoc with navigation that "The high hopes held out for the development of commerce on the Harlem River have never been realized" ("Awards $3,275,000," 1926, p. 3). The city's solution was to remove it. The foundry's operations thus ceased in 1923. However, the peninsula itself and its decaying plant remained until well into the 1930s (Tieck, 1968). With the foundary idle, industry in and around Inwood from 1923 on was confined to the area east of the elevated tracks over Tenth Avenue, while the lands around the western side, due to the preservation of the New Jersey Palisades as well as to the closing of the iron works, were dedicated to residential and recreational land uses.

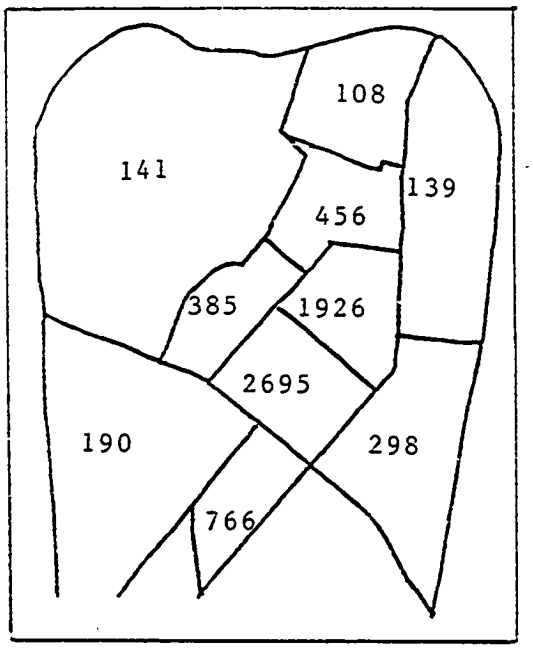
3.2 Neighborhood Streets and Neighborhood Identity

It was also during the 1920s that Inwood's street pattern went from plan to reality. These streets, in both how they were laid out and how they were named, defined

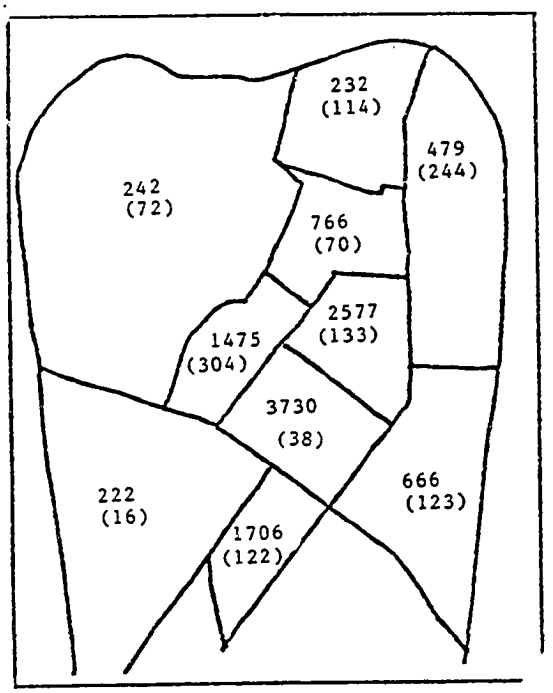
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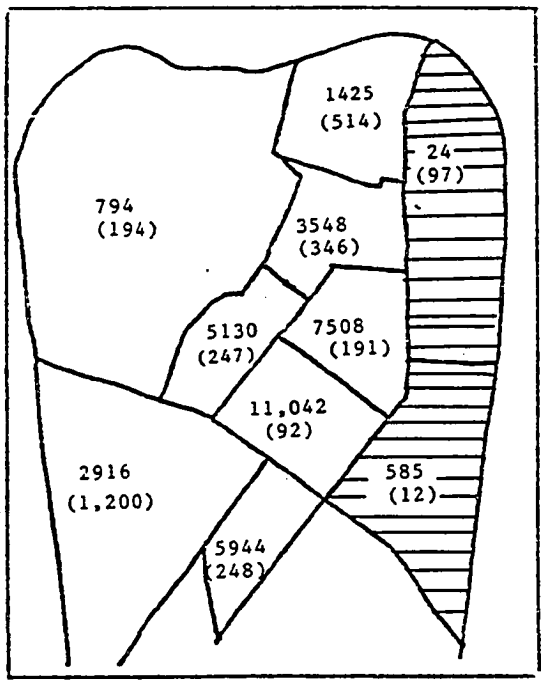
Inwood census tract guide.



1915



1920



1930

Fig. 8. Map series showing population by census tract, 1915, 1920 and 1930. Numbers in parentheses are the percent of change since previous census. Shaded tract indicates a decrease since previous census.

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Inwood, Manhattan's newest neighborhood, as a distinct enclave. East of Inwood's rugged, undeveloped western side, a grid of streets and avenues became firmly established in all sections. Inwood's extreme eastern side (west of Tenth Avenue) was laid out in numbered streets and avenues as a seamless extension of Manhattan's grid -- although these were merely nominal and not physical extensions of the rest of the city's arteries, since Sherman Creek and Highbridge Park prevented there being a continuous stretch. But soon about a third of these streets -- from West 208th Street to West 215th Street east of Tenth Avenue -- were wiped off the map in the 1920s when they were taken over by the subway company to make way for a large storage yard for its trains. What was then left of the eastern part of Inwood was an area of train yards, garages, power plants, coal docks and scattered homes.

The pattern for the layout of the rest of Inwood, however, was set for the most part not by the city's overall grid but by extrapolating from the intersection of Broadway and Dyckman Street -- interestingly, the area's two oldest roads, pre-dating the grid plan of 1811. Here, new cross streets ran parallel to Dyckman Street while new Avenues ran parallel to Broadway.

In keeping with Inwood's identity as a residential

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enclave, this central area rejected most numbered streets and avenues for named ones, and the City named them after former local landholders (e.g., Nagle, Seaman, Vermilyea, Isham, Sickles and Post) -- a notable departure from the precedent set elsewhere in Manhattan. Moreover, a grid based solely on the intersection of two purely local streets meant that many of Inwood's streets and avenues originated and ended within the community, providing the opportunity to make certain these locally historic names became a permanent part of Inwood and no other community. It also provided the opportunity to lay out these central valley streets in a distinct way: although where topography didn't interfere they would be unvaryingly rectangular, the blocks thus created were much larger than blocks conforming to the traditional grid. For example, the distance between Dyckman Street (the equivalent to 200th Street) and West 204th Street was a single block, not four; from there to West 207th Street was also one block, not three. Meanwhile, streets in Inwood's northwestern section, near Isham Park -- where estates still stood their ground against the encroachment of urbanization -- were given names to reflect the more expensive apartment houses (and even a few private homes) that were beginning to be built there: Park Terrace East and Park Terrace West reflected a certain exclusivity.

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Inwood's streets, then, in both their naming and their layout, marked the community as a distinct enclave: not merely the place where Manhattan came to its northern extent, but the island's very crown.

3.3 The Real Estate Boom

Inwood's building boom became even more intense in the 1920s with the anticipated opening of the Independent (or "IND") Subway's Eighth Avenue line. (In 1927, in fact, a new Catholic Church Parish, Mary Queen of Martyrs, was established between Dyckman Street and 190th Street -- the area served by St. Elizabeth's Parish -- in anticipation of increased population). This new subway line was to serve Inwood's western side, with a stop at Broadway and Dyckman Street and a terminal at Broadway and West 207th Street (with an entrance as far north as 211th Street). This new subway, unlike its less modern counterpart to the east, featured roomier cars and express service, and, since it was laid out on the high ground of Inwood's western side, was not an elevated but underground. The modernity and unobtrusiveness of this new line, coupled with the preservation of the green expanses of the Inwood Hill and Isham areas, would ensure that the western part of Inwood would be developed with more expensive apartments than had been built in the east.

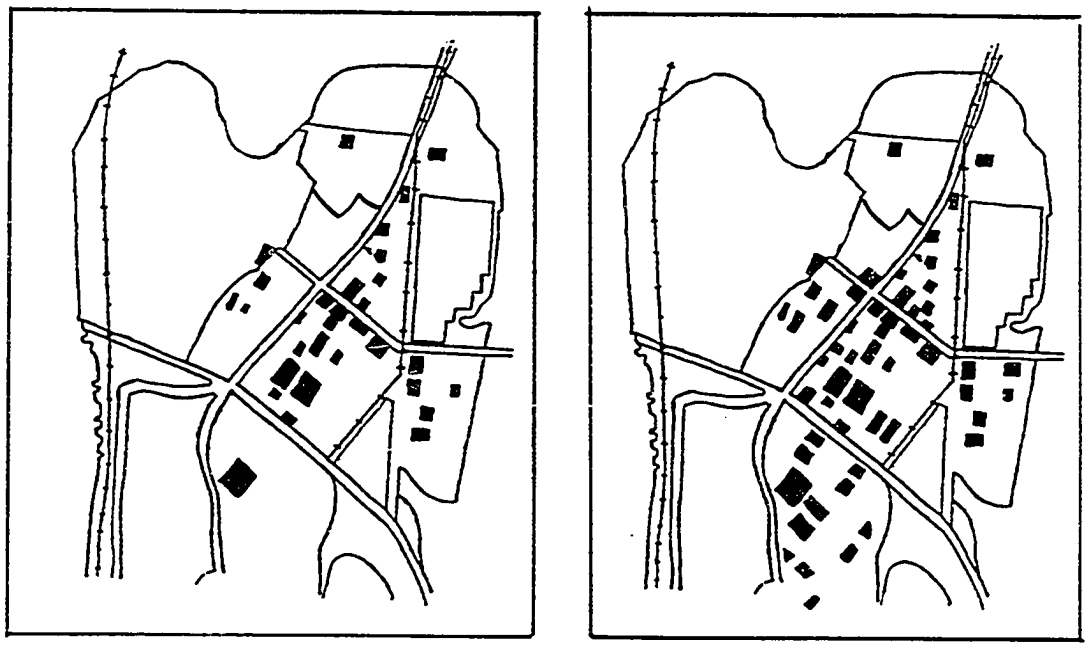
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Real estate development in Inwood in the twenties was frantic (see Figs. 9 and 10); builders could barely keep up with demand. One realtor told a reporter that his management firm had no vacancies at all ("New Bank" 1927), while another boasted "where one family moves there are fully a dozen to fill the place" ("New City," 1926). According to one news item ("Buildings Replace, 1925),

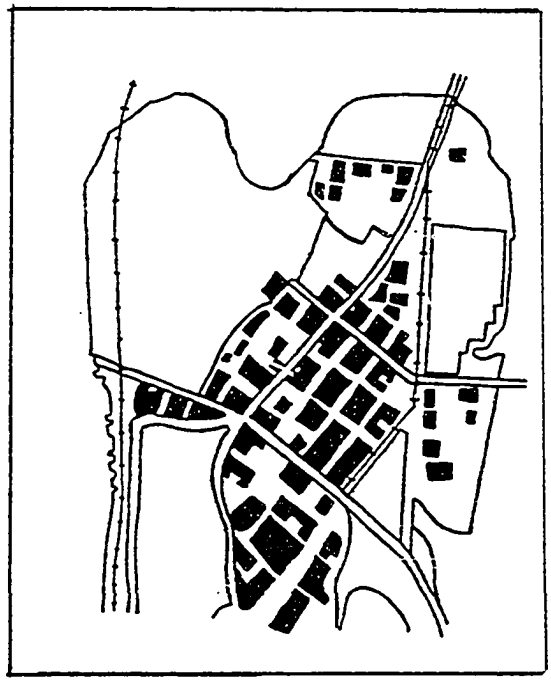
> so eager are certain families to settle within the shadow of Inwood Hill and near the historic waters of Spuyten Duyvil that tenants have actually moved into some of the new houses before they were satisfactorily finished. A case in point, at the present time, is that of the large house known as Post Lodge on Post Avenue just below 207th Street, into which three or four families moved a week ago although the front portion of the house is still in a somewhat chaotic condition. (P. 16).

Where a generation or more earlier the building of Inwood's new streets had meant blasting through rock or building up low-lying land, this work was now shifting toward the building lots that these thoroughfares were intended to serve (although street building continued in spots; in the late 1920s the Mount Washington Presbyterian Church and its grounds -- including the apple orchard so beloved by Alfreda Payson Sill and her brother Armour -- were razed for a street extension). An exception to this construction, however, was the old Dyckman farmhouse, a seventeenth-century building standing somewhat

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1912 1921



1930

Fig. 9. Map series showing approximate location of apartment buildings, 1912, 1921 and 1930. Frame dwellings and industrial structures are not indicated. [Source: Manhattan Land Book, New-York Historical Soc.].

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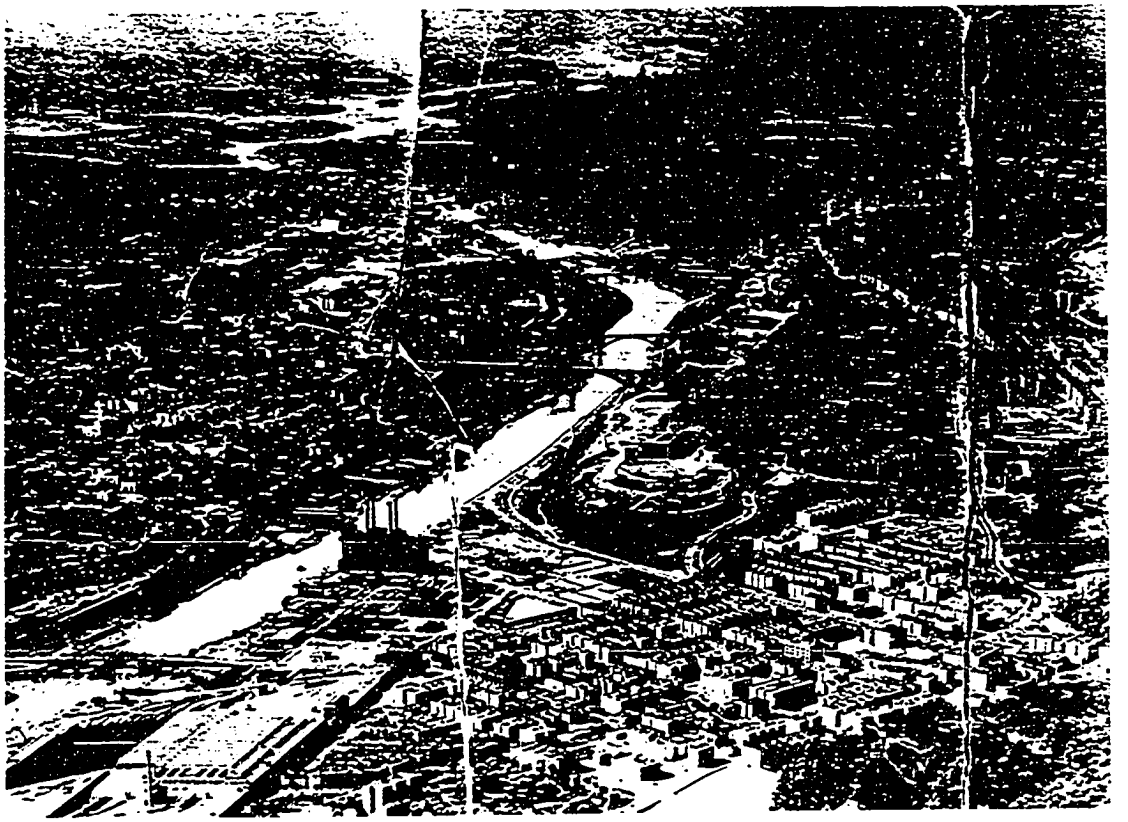


Fig. 10. Aerial view of Inwood's central valley area, looking southeast, circa 1933. This section has been completely built up. The mound at center is Ft. George Hill, northern terminus of Highbridge Park. Waterway is the Harlem River. [Source: The Bronx County Historical Society].

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dilapidated but intact on Broadway and West 204th Street. A few years earlier, two descendants of Inwood's first Dyckmans had bought the house and surrounding property (which, presumably, they or their family had earlier lost control of), renovated the house, furnished it with family heirlooms, and in 1915 presented it to the City as a gift for use as a museum and park (Church of the Good Shepherd, 1987). Just as the earlier preservation of the Isham Mansion and grounds within Isham Park had given some assurance that a highly-visible relic of Inwood's days as an enclave of nineteenth-century estates would remain, the Dyckman house would stand as a monument to Inwood's even more distant Dutch era.

On the east side of Inwood, however, the historic Nagle burial ground, like the Kings Bridge and Free Bridge a generation earlier, was not similarly spared. Bolton (1932) describes its condition just before it was destroyed to make way for the new rail yards:

> Part of this little burying ground may still be seen, in a deplorably neglected and disgracefully abused condition, its headstones and monuments willfully uprooted and broken in pieces by boys educated in our public schools.
>
> Efforts were made years ago by the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society to secure this little God's acre from destruction, and to preserve it as a small park. But the numerous heirs of the original grantees could not agree upon this course, and so the place has been left to neglect and ruin. (P. 198).

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Thus the noble rescue of the Dyckman House was an isolated instance, as little else from Inwood's rural era was preserved. The spectacle of the remnants Inwood's natural and cultural heritage being swept aside was captured in the following lines appearing in The New York Times ("Upper Manhattan", 1926). It is worth quoting at some length as in it news of valuable land changing hands several times and culminating in a large real estate development is mixed with a nostalgia for disappearing rural scenes. There is also present an awareness that, with Inwood urbanized, Manhattan itself will become urbanized, ending a process begun nearly three centuries earlier:

> Old residents of the Inwood section have watched with more or less interest during the last few days the demolition of one of the few remaining landmarks which dated back half a century or more ago to the days when the most northerly end of Manhattan Island was restricted to fine homes, large estates and broad acres of farm land. The old building which has just disappeared from view occupied a commanding site on top of the lofty cliff overlooking Broadway and Dyckman Street, one of the busy traffic centers in upper Manhattan.
>
> The house, with the large property surrounding it, had long been owned by the Ganz estate and was sold last year by the Dyckman Street brokers, Vols and Maas, to operators, who recently sold it to the building firm of Finkelstein & Schwartz. Preparatory to clearing away the rocky eminence the new owners have torn down the

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> ancient mansion, a frame structure of ample dimensions, which overlooked on the south the older wooden edifice of the Inwood Presbyterian Church, a familiar landmark for three-quarters of a century.
>
> On the site will be erected a large theater, a six-story apartment house and two taxpayer buildings. The cost will represent $1,500,000 or more and it will be one of the largest building operations in the Dyckman and Inwood areas, where apartment house construction has been unusually active during the last three years (p. 16).

And yet, apparently, not all of Inwood's housing stock was uniformly desirable, for tucked away near the end of another news report ("Buildings Replace," 1925) is the observation that

> practically all the new houses provide larger rooms and more conveniences than was the case half a dozen years ago. Kitchenettes are unknown...there are vacancies and many of the older houses have felt the effect of the new buildings. (P. 16).

Thus even while Inwood's building boom was peaking, and while families were grabbing new housing as it became available (and sometimes even before then), there was, among the apparent homogeneity of Inwoodians' homes, an emerging subgroup of already-obsolescent housing considered less desirable.

Dyckman Street and West 207th Street were designated Inwood's principal shopping streets. Although other cross

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streets would have stores both on the corners and extending down the streets a few doors, these two arteries were being filled with "taxpayer" structures, and their respective street walls were becoming lined with continuous store frontages. Business in building and renting these was as brisk as was the housing construction ("New Bank," 1927).

The shopkeepers of Dyckman Street and 207th Street sought to cater to a clientele that was prosperous but not profligate, as is reflected in the tone of the advertisements in the Good Shepherd Church bulletin (Voice, 1927): "Sall Agapito Announces His Electric Shoe Repairing and Shoe Shining Parlor, 241 Sherman Ave., near 207th St. High Class Service, Reasonable Prices;" "Inwood Taxi Service Co., Cadillac Limousines, Taxicabs, Touring Cars To Hire For All Occasions, 494 West 207th Street;" "Aroma Coffee Shop; Coffee Roasters, Tea Importers, Luncheonette Service; 605 West 207th Street, Near Broadway; Fresh Roasted Coffees Scientifically Blended, High Grade Teas, Our 'Long Expected' Blend Highly Recommended; Prompt Deliveries." At least one of the businesses aimed as well for the children of its customers: the advertisement for the Lorraine Food Market, with "A Crew of 10 Courteous Butchers to Serve You" included this notice: "Special Attention Given to

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Children."

3.4 Community Gardens

Rapid as Inwood's transformation was, it did ironically provide a brief interlude during which agriculture staged an unlikely comeback -- only this time without the presence of Dutch or English farmers. Before the mid-1920s, Inwood's new apartment houses stood not shoulder-to-shoulder but separated by "vacant" lots containing large outcroppings of rock -- sometimes reaching higher than the buildings themselves -- that were too expensive for builders to clear right away. Other buildings stood in fields awaiting further construction but which were, for the time being at least, lying undeveloped.

Inwood apartment dwellers did not look on these open spaces as potential development sites, however, but as a resource to be enjoyed immediately, and so they planted gardens there. These apparently served as more than a way to provide incidental recreation while supplementing the family diet, but seem to have served as informal outdoor socializing areas, as parkland was concentrated on Inwood's western edge (and in fact no parks at all were built in the central valley area). The New York Times recalled these impromptu gardens as they were passing from

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the scene ("Buildings Replace," 1925):

> Many of these little gardens were attractively laid out, some had seats, others awkward efforts at Summer houses, in the shade of which the temporary tillers of the garden sat in the evening with their neighbors. These things gave the locality an atmosphere of rural, simplicity and genial friendliness (p. 16)

Since this central part of Inwood lacked parks, these gardens, for certain needs, were better than parks could have been. Where parks -- even the most accessible -- are, for most people,some blocks away, these were just outside one's doorstep. And while parks were subject to rules and regulations -- no walking on the lawns, or no access after a certain hour -- these gardens were watched over by the users themselves, who could make their own informal rules. Furthermore, where park benches are uniform and stationary, in their gardens people brought out their own chairs as well as other objects -- even made "awkward attempts at Summer houses." This spontaneity, this mixing of rewarding work and simple play, must have made these gardens prized features of Inwood indeed. One imagines men in shirtsleeves, women in house slippers, children barefoot -- all chatting, arguing, joking, perhaps eating and drinking -- enjoying their new homes, far from the urban clamor, with an informality probably unknown in such formal garden settings as Isham Park.

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Although by the late 1920s the gardens were disappearing, there was still at least one working farm left and, amazingly, there were no plans to build on it. This farm stood a little north of Inwood's central valley, close to the Broadway Bridge. Josephene Benedetto Bliani, who grew up on that farm recalled it for oral historian Jeff Kisseloff (1987):

> Our farm had very good soil. We had the best corn. They were small because there wasn't a lot of room, but they were round and delicious. We raised all different kinds of vegetables. We had tomatoes, corn, lettuce, and string beans. We had pear trees and peach trees, and we had chickens, rabbits and a goat. We rented a horse when we had to do the plowing. My parents earned their living selling the eggs, vegetables and fruit.
>
> Chickens were nasty and dirty. I stayed away from them, for sure. My brothers did most of the farm work. I helped sell the vegetables from the farm stand. Everything was cheap. The eggs were fifteen cents a dozen. Corn was a dozen ears for a quarter. Tomatoes were five cents a pound. String beans five cents a pound -- very cheap, but delicious.
>
> It was just a farm. It wasn't a very big farm -- only a city block. From 213th to 214th and from Tenth Avenue to Broadway. For me it was just a place to live. We moved there in 1924, when I was three. My father was an ice man until the Frigidaires came in and that went kaput. That's why they took the land.
>
> Our house didn't have any electricity or gas or anything. We had to bring everything in. Our friends had to build a bathroom inside... (P. 222).

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3.5 Population Movement

During the 1920s, the Irish Catholics who were becoming Inwood's dominant ethnic group were joined by an increasing number of Eastern European Jews (Bayor, 1978; Lendt, 1960). According to Bayor (1978), betweem 1923 and 1930 the percentage of Manhattan's Jews living in Washington Heights and Inwood jumped from 4.5 percent to over 22 percent.

The Irish and Jews apparently did not mix well; Bayor (1978) reports that the Irish -- who, like the Germans, had struggled long to overcome discrimination -- deeply resented any competition from Jews or Italians. But with such desirable neighborhoods as Washington Heights and Inwood at stake the Irish did not follow the usual pattern of abandoning their neighborhood as new arrivals changed its ethnic character, but merely consolidated into their own turf (as Jews did into theirs) where once they had been fairly randomly dispersed. In this process "various streets and houses became either predominantly Irish or Jewish as both groups migrated into the area during the 1920-1940 period" (p. 154). (Bayor points out further that the twenties were a time of marked ethnic and religious intolerance).

The polarization of the Jewish and Irish Catholic

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populations was aided by the opening of the Independent Subway in 1932, which provided a larger field in which it could take place. The newer and more luxurious buildings beginning to crop up on Inwood's western side soon housed most of its Jewish population, although Jews by no means constituted the majority of Inwood's residents as a whole (Lendt, 1960). The superior quality of these new buildings almost certainly made housing location a class-defining feature of Inwood.

The emerging spatial segregation between Catholics and Jews was paralleled by the placement of their respective houses of worship. The Church of the Good Shepherd moved into its permanent home in 1914. Situated on the west side of Broadway at the south corner of Isham Street, it lay on the higher ground within the wealthier western half of Inwood; however, it faced eastward, looming over the flat expanses of apartment houses of the Parish's valley. For the Jews, there was no comparably imposing structure in Inwood; most of the organized Jewish cultural life of northern Manhattan was centered around Washington Heights, where such Jewish cultural institutions as the Yeshiva University were located. Inwood was on the fringe of Uptown Manhattan's Jewish influence -- a place where some Jews lived but not necessarily the place where they would worship in public.

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3.6 The Play Movement and Inwood

The play movement, as discussed earlier, had begun shortly after the turn of the century as a highly moralistic crusade that sought to order, safeguard and "uplift" slum children. It went hand-in-hand with other such ultimately influential social reform movements as improved housing standards and the abolition of child labor, and coincided with a the greatest influx of immigrants in U.S. history. The social conditions it addressed were by all measures urgent: lack of light, air, and plumbing; the exploitation of children by the factory system; and the physical dangers and "moral corruption" of the streets.

But the play movement changed with the times, and in the 1920s times were changing rapidly. Much of the work of the reformers had already been accomplished: a quarter of a century of tenement house legislation had led to a new generation of improved housing; public disapproval of child labor had led to a drastic reduction in working children (see Nasaw, 1985); parks and parkways for active recreation were no longer a crusader's cause but an accepted part of the urban and suburban landscape. Finally, play itself had become a recognized ingredient of urban life: the concept of urban playgrounds had gained wide acceptance as the number of American cities with playgrounds increased from 414 in 1916 to 748 in 1925

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(Bowen & Mitchell, 1928). But their elaborateness increased even more than that number would imply, as the national cost of maintaining these facilities had jumped spectacularly -- from one million dollars in 1906 to twenty million dollars in 1925 (Bowen & Mitchell, 1928). When it came not just to playgrounds but all community recreation activities and facilities, the sum spent by cities rose from just over seven million in 1920 to over thirty million in 1929 (Butler, 1940). The play movement was so successful that the social critic Stuart Chase (1928) could write:

> The Puritan ostracism died hard, indeed it is not yet altogether dead, but from Rousseau to John Dewey, one champion after another has come forward to insist upon the beauty, the necessity, nay, even the utility of play, until now the battle is for all intents and purposes won. (P. 335).

Of the societal faults on the reformers' agenda but not fully conquered by them, many were being taken care of by the nation's rising prosperity, or else were lost sight of in the decade's "extravagant and conspicuous consumption for those who could afford it" (Rivlin & Wolfe, 1985, p. 129). In addition, with the influx of immigrants tapering off, the overcrowding of a generation earlier had eased, and assimilation proceeded apace; in 1921, 1924 and 1929 Congress passed laws sharply limiting the immigration from from Europe, and imposing strict

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literacy and self-sufficiency tests (Nevins & Commanger, 1966). Although in America in the 1920s there was, to be sure, still plenty of poverty and misery, this seemed to be diminishing and not, as in the 1900s, threatening to swell until they exploded into anarchy.

In the public discourse of the 1920s, concepts of "prosperity" and "normalcy" took over from the previous righteous fervor -- a change in tone that was reflected in attitudes toward play. Rather than introduce play programs in the poorest neighborhoods, the public accepted a new concept, community recreation -- municipally-sponsored social centers, community gardens, pageants and parades -- which were viewed as indispensable to any healthy community, regardless of its wealth (Butler, 1940). Thus the play movement's long-held conviction that play and recreation should be a public responsibility and not something to be left to private operators of what were disparagingly called "amusements" was being put into practice on a large scale at last.

When it came to children's play, however, one of the play movement's earliest tenets remained intact: playgrounds were to be at all times closely organized and supervised by trained play directors. No mere janitor or unobtrusive dispenser and collector of equipment, the play leader was presumed to be a professional; one contemporary

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manual on the subject went so far as to suggest the following qualifications (Bowen & Mitchell, 1928):

> It is not too much to say that the play teacher is more important than the playground itself (p. 380)...the subjects of Rhetoric, Literature, Public Speaking, History, Sociology, Psychology, Science, Government, Education and Vocational Guidance should form an integral part of the play director's education. (P. 387).

Municipal administrators, in addition to focusing on play and recreation facilities, increasingly turned their attention away from the alleviation of human crowding and toward such matters as the alleviation of traffic congestion (Hancock, 1967). In this and other respects, urban planning -- meaning all aspects of the reorganization of urban and suburban space and of the behavior expected of the people within it, including the play and recreation movement -- largely shed its overtones of moral rectitude, civic beauty and protection of the poor from the worst onslaughts of unfettered capitalism in the home, workplace and neighborhood. The profession became instead a handmaiden of business expansion. In keeping with this trend, play began to be seen not so much as path away from vice and toward moral uplift but as a means of exercising one's muscles (or at least of getting out of one's home to watch others exercise theirs), getting fresh air, filling in one's leisure time and, above all, spending money on sporting events and equipment

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(including automobiles, for "motoring" was considered a form of play, not commutation).

Perhaps owing to this new consumer-oriented nature of play, the play movement began to go beyond children and to embrace adults: sports, for instance -- both participant and spectator -- became wildly popular. In another development that involved such commercialism, movie houses proliferated between 1900 and 1920 as they were never to do again (Nasaw, 1985), and, moreover, were no longer necessarily associated with penny arcades but became ever larger and more plush -- "palaces" for family entertainment. (To make movies more suitable for family viewing and to avoid censorship, Hollywood toned down the "sex" scenes; Dulles, 1965).

Inwood's play and recreation landscape, although more a product of the consumerist attitudes prevalent in the 1920s than those of the reformism of the 1910, did not, interestingly, conform very closely to the standards of either. For example, Inwood did not follow such key precedents of the Reform era as the segregation of adults and children, or the primacy of organized, supervised, noncommercial play, although its three schools did have the mandatory play-yards (Fig. 11). Inwood's community gardening, for example, was not anything that could be self-consciously labeled "play," but rather was something

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Fig. 11. Children bundled up against the cold in an Inwood schoolyard, 1920. They are clustered around what appears to be a see-saw, one of the few pieces of playground equopment available in public spaces then. [Source: Informant].

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that was a logical extension of the kitchen or the parlor, although it almost certainly served as play whether or not adults recognized it as such. Its parks were of course open to users of all ages free of charge; but its other recreation facilities were commercial enterprises charging a fee. Its movie houses, for example, located on both Dyckman and 207th Streets, were large, new and modern. There were also a commercial swimming pool called the Miramar,

opened for business on 207th Street near the Harlem River, and the Dyckman Oval, an all-purpose outdoor recreation complex set up near the intersection of Dyckman Street and Nagle Avenue. Next to the Dyckman Oval were the Hamilton Tennis Courts, which were flooded over in winter and used for ice skating. Ray Jardine, who grew up in Inwood in the 1920s and in 1978 reminisced for an Inwood newspaper reporter (Levine, 1978) recalled the area of the Oval and the courts in the following terms:

> The Black Yankees played there [in the Dyckman Oval], there was auto racing, boxing and all sorts of events. Next to it was the Hamilton Tennis Courts. Right in that area I remember a outdoor garden restaurant, sort of like a poor man's Tavern on the Green. There were live bands and dancing that seemed to go on all night. (P. 1).

The Dyckman Oval and the "outdoor garden restaurant" remind one of a type of informal community recreation area

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and gathering place that was disappearing from the scene; Paradise Park, it will be recalled from a previous chapter, with its old-time amusement arcades, was demolished by the 1920s, and the George Washington High School was built on the site.

Children's play in Inwood in this decade was notably unstructured, with few public facilities or organized activities. The Chamber of Commerce, in fact, (MacCoy, 1926) noted that children were playing in the streets in conflict with automobiles, and that police frequently had to break up their games:

> Unfortunately, for the young children of the community, its open lots are being turned into a mushroom growth of apartment houses. There are a few playgrounds which were secured after constant and insistent appeals to city authorities, it is true -- but not all of these have the necessary equipment. (P. 27).

In fact, the most elaborate playground in Inwood seems to have been not a public facility but a private one appended to an apartment house and intended to fill what had already been recognized as a pressing need. Curtis (1917) noted the need for play areas just outside the doorstep to accommodate children too young to travel to the playground unescorted. Similarly, Cranz (1982) writes that one tactic of the play movement in the slums was to tear down backyard fences between buildings and convert the new spaces into play lots. In Inwood, with the

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empty-lot gardens becoming extinct, the designers of at least one new apartment house made an attempt to compensate for the area's lack of formal play space by using the comparatively generous (relative to the slums) areas to be found among its post-1901 buildings:

> The new house opened in the Spring at 201-211 Sherman Avenue, between 204th and 207th Streets, is almost full, helped, no doubt, by the recognition by the builders that families in the Dyckman section are likely to have children, and for their amusement an excellent playground, with swings and a miniature sliding chute, has been laid out in the rear yard. This is the only house in that locality which has thus far recognized, in so practical a manner, the fact that young children must play and have healthy amusement of some kind ("Buildings Replace," 1925, p. 16).

3.7 Establishing Landscape for Play

For thirty years Inwood's physical make-up had been determined by the vicissitudes of various city-shaping forces: the routes of canal engineers, the dealings of real estate speculators, the gifts of wealthy families, and the advocacy of concerned individuals. It is no surprise, then, that no overall park, play or recreation policy or design coordinated Inwood's landscape as far as that vital aspect of life was concerned. Despite the already-impressive array of parks to be found in and near Inwood by the 1920s, there still was no true public mass recreation facility. The walkways of the Harlem River

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Speedway were designed for scenic strolls, not mass play (i.e., high-volume, active working-class usership); Highbridge Park was simply a wooded, rocky escarpment without lawns or facilities; Isham Park, though open to the public, still was as it had been when it was a private estate, with an elegant mansion and formal gardens -- suitable for a stroll but not for active play; Inwood Hill Park had only recently been designated a public park and, although lovely and inviting, was, in terms of its capacity to receive hordes of visitors, little changed from the time when it was private property. Inwood, which just a generation ago had been open land where one could ramble among orchards and meadows, sampling water from springs and wells, was now ill-equipped for the recreational needs of its new population.

Palisades Interstate Park

It was therefore not an Inwood or even a Manhattan park that served Inwoodians en masse but the Palisades Interstate Park. In 1915 a ferry was established to run between the foot of Dyckman Street and Englewood, New Jersey, which lay just across the Hudson. The run was established both to provide access to the park, and the mainland beyond, from the east and to give commuters on the mainland a new route to Manhattan's business

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districts, which they could now reach via the ferry and Inwood's subways (Adams, 1983) [1].

The ferry, whose passenger fare was three cents (increased sometime later to five cents) was extremely busy: In 1930 it carried nearly a million passengers and over 1.2 million vehicles (Adams, 1983). This overnight transformation of Dyckman Street from backwater to transportation hub for people enjoying their new mobility at last put an end to the semi-autonomous enclave of Tubby Hook, and produced some visual incongruities, as noted by a New York Times reporter ("Inwood, the Wild," 1924):

> There are old houses on Dyckman Street; they have cupolas, some of them, and lace frills done in woodwork, and they look down somewhat disapprovingly on the knickered hikers scurrying to the Palisades ferry at what once was (and may still be on some legal document) Tubby Hook. (P. 2).

The changes reached as far east as Dyckman Street and Broadway:

> The increasing popularity of the Dyckman Street Ferry for motorists and its use also by thousands of young people from all parts of the city during the warm weather to reach the open spaces of the Interstate Palisades Park on the New Jersey shore make Dyckman Street one of the live uptown thoroughfares. The junction of Broadway and Dyckman Street is also the terminus of the northern extremity of Riverside Drive, and is one of the most congested traffic points in the city on Saturdays and Sundays, although traffic is always heavy there every day in the week ("Upper Manhattan," 1926, p. 16).

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It is interesting to note that so many recreationists would leave Inwood, or pass through it, in order to reach a wooded, waterside place. While this attests to how much open land Inwood had lost, it also suggests the new popularity of mass recreation, which required modern facilities. The experience of being across the river, and the facilities provided for visitors, was recalled by longtime Inwood resident Rose Creel (1981):

> Here were pavilions with tables and benches for picnickers. Many people of different nationalities came with exotic smelling food, radios and sometimes musical instruments to make their music for singing and dancing.
>
> It was a place clean enough to go diving and swimming. Fishermen sat on the rocks with their crab baskets and many a good catch they had. In the spring the shad boats came and the fishing was good. (P. 7).

With respect to access to large areas for hiking and swimming, the ferry put Inwood in a favored place. Since the archipelago that forms the New York metropolitan region had yet to be linked by vehicular bridges such as the George Washington, and by vehicular tunnels such as the Lincoln, for the growing number of motorists there was no alternative to the ferries. The popularity of the automobile, coupled with the public's pursuit of recreation, made these boats slow and crowded (according to Adams [1983] automobiles initially were pushed on and

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off the boats by hand, since a backfiring engine would have startled the horses). Inwoodians, in contrast to their fellow New Yorkers, were lucky in that they could simply walk and not drive to their own neighborhood ferry, pay the passenger fare, and arrive after a short, pleasant ride at a park that took their fellow passengers hours and considerably more money to reach.

The Harlem River Speedway

The rise in popularity of the automobile was changing Inwood's recreational landscape in other ways as well. Over on its east side, the Harlem River Speedway was coming under attack by critics who objected to its exclusion of the automobile. As early as 1912 real estate developers and local business organizations, viewing the Speedway as a potential motor parkway serving Inwood, convinced the courts to rule against the horse riders' monopoly (McGuiness, 1973). But their victory did not translate into action for some years and it was not until October 12, 1923 that the Harlem River Speedway -- its dirt surface paved over -- became the Harlem River Driveway, and was opened to motor traffic ("Harlem Driveway opened," 1922). The Speedway, the product of such passionate civic debate, had lasted barely a quarter of a century. Three and a half years into the new route's

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existence, The New York Times could report that the new, vehicularized "Speedway" (not "Driveway" -- the old name was to stick for many years) had spurred further real estate growth along Dyckman Street ("Upper Manhattan loses landmark," 1926).

Baker Field

In the fall of 1923 Inwood became the site of another type of modern mass recreational facility when Columbia University built its Baker Field football stadium on the bank of the Harlem River Ship Canal just west of Broadway -- the site where, eleven years earlier, the Church of the Good Shepherd had held its first Mass. College football had gained enormous popularity in the twenties, when seating capacity increased nearly 150 percent nationally (Steiner, 1933). Initially criticized for its savage roughness (Harvard dissolved its team for this reason in 1884), the game's rules had been changed in 1905 to make it more palatable, and it soon became a craze (Steiner, 1933). Although college football facilities were private places not for use by the public (except, of course, as paying spectators), some outside the college establishment did manage to profit through other means: Chase (1932) noted wryly that "Speculators reap a magnificent reward at every big game, selling $2 tickets to prosperous butter

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and egg merchants for $100 -- more or less" (pp. 349-350). Baker Field, although a private entity, would provide Inwood's children a new attraction.

Isham Park

Three blocks south of the private Baker field a park was taking shape that was very much a public issue. Isham Park, the Isham heirs' gift to Inwood the previous decade, had become the regular place for crowds to gather for such outdoor community events as a baby parade, a June walk and Fourth of July celebrations -- events that fit with the park's green, gently-sloping, tree-shaded lawns, crowned by the familiar old mansion with its gardens and greenhouses (Figs. 12 and 13). But the Isham heirs had donated only a portion of their estate to the City; the remainder had been sold to a real estate operator. Although this new owner allowed continuous public access to the property, the park users had become so accustomed to having run of the entire former estate that when plans were announced for the construction of apartment buildings on part of the old estate "it was," according to the press, "decried by many that the spacious lawn of one of New York's prettiest parks should be cut in two and buildings should encroach on so fine a public playground ("Would preserve park," 1924). The park advocates got

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Fig. 12. Sisters pose in Isham Park, 1920s. This and the following figure show why the place was considered a garden in which children could not engage in active play. [Source: Informant].

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Fig. 13. A girl poses shyly in Isham Park, 1920s. At rear is the caretaker's cottage, formerly an Isham family residence. [Source: Informant].

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their way: the owner offered to sell the land to the City, and the City promptly bought it.

The Cloisters

While Inwoodians were prodding the City to acquire the additional land for Isham Park, yet another park project was underway. Although this too involved an old estate, it was to be so complicated and expensive that community sentiment was never a factor; in fact, this project was to be not a local green space but an international attraction.

It began in 1914, when the American sculptor George Gray Barnard built what he called a "cloister" on a the ridge along the Hudson River south of Dyckman Street -- approximately on line with West 190th Street (Stern, Gilmartin & Mellins, 1987). Barnard stocked his "cloister" with medieval sculptural ornaments he had scavenged from the French and Spanish countrysides, buying them cheaply from peasants who over the centuries had incorporated ruined fragments of medieval churches into their village walls and homes [2]. This heist was Barnard's way of becoming solvent once again, for a scandal over his commission for the new state capitol building in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania had put him in debt.

Barnard's "cloister" was popular with art critics and

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with the public, and in 1922 he put it up for sale. The place caught the eye of John D. Rockefeller, who in 1925 bought it for $650,000 and donated the sculpture to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Stern, Gilmartin & Mellins, 1987). Rockefeller had been notably active around that hill in other respects as well, for about a decade earlier he had bought the C.K.G. Billings estate, which occupied the site immediately to the north of the "cloister," on the ridge that ended just south of Dyckman Street. Rockefeller also bought two adjoining smaller estates -- the Sheafer and the Hayes. Although he had offered to give the entire assemblage to the City as early as 1917 for the creation of a park, the City had refused (City of New York Parks and Recreation, undated). Apparently the City viewed responsibility for these fifty acres as too expensive a proposition: the extensively landscaped estates were, after all, far larger than Isham Park and were being watched anxiously by civic groups fully expecting the site, complete with its gardens and carriage drives and its sweeping views of the Hudson, to be developed to the highest design standards (see Adams, 1931). Unlike Inwood Hill, this tract could not be left largely untouched for people to enjoy whatever happened to be there until the City got around to developing it.

By 1923, the City was beginning to regret its refusal

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of Rockefeller's 1917 offer ("City," 1925) and in 1925 it formally asked him to renew it (City of New York Parks and Recreation, undated), which Rockefeller did -- under the condition that the City develop the tract as a museum to house the sculpture he had bought for the Metropolitan, as well as other sculpture. Again, the city balked, but this time a compromise was worked out: Rockefeller would build the new "Cloisters" museum and a surrounding public park at his own expense, and would present it to the City when completed; in return he would get land on Manhattan's East River for his Rockfeller Institute. Rockefeller even accomplished something the City of New York could probably not have done even if it had wanted to: in order to preserve the view west from the Cloisters and its park, a view which included the New Jersey Palisades, he bought several miles of the New Jersey Palisades ridge and donated it to the Palisades Interstate Park authorities, who, as discussed earlier, already had responsibility for protecting the cliffs themselves but had not acquired their crest. Inwoodians were thus assured that, when the sun would set over the river, it would touch down on treetops and not on factory rooftops.

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Inwood Hill Park

Impressive as the Cloisters and its park were destined to become, and despite the famous names associated with them, the crowning achievement in the formation of Inwood's play landscape lay just ahead. The first stirrings of a movement for the designation of Inwood Hill Park, as discussed in the previous chapter, had by 1917 resulted in that park's designation. But that action had protected only about sixty acres, embracing the westernmost ridge and northern promontory -- land that was, according to the press, "very steep and of little use to visitors" ("Inwood Park Plan," 1923, p. 10). Nearly a hundred acres more, comprising a secluded ravine and the eastern slope, still untouched by modern roads and other urban development, remained in the hands of about thirty private owners, and this land would have to be condemned and added to the existing park in order for Inwood Hill to be a full park and not, like Highbridge Park, merely an attractive wooded bluff.

For another five years parks advocates and historic preservationists pushed hard for the inclusion of this other tract. Along the way they broadened their support, so much so that in 1923, on the eve of land acquisition hearings before the Board of Estimate, representatives from a strikingly diverse coalition of supporters indicated their commitment, a contingent that included the

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Parks and Playgrounds Association, the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, the Washington Heights Taxpayers' Association, the Inwood Board of Trade, the City Gardens Club of New York, the Inwood Civic Club, the Museum of the American Indian, the City History Club, the Harlem Chamber of Commerce and the Parents Association of P.S. 52 in Inwood ("Inwood Park Plan," 1923). Different groups emphasized different reasons for the park: play leaders focused on its usefulness for play and recreation; business leaders its role in the extension of Riverside Drive; historical societies its importance in Native American culture and the American Revolution; and scenic preservationists its unspoiled natural features. The park idea was so popular that at the hearing itself, of the over 100 people attending, only one spoke against the proposed park. The Board, obviously swayed, voted to approve ("Ready to Extend," 1923).

The expanded Inwood Hill Park, then, was to be more than a park; it was to be a play area, parkway, nature preserve and living museum all in one. With the McCreerys and many other estate-owners having long ago moved on, the hill could no longer be viewed as merely a scenic, wooded backwater offering glimpses of opulent private mansions and sweeping views of the Hudson, and so new identities for it were emerging. However, no one fighting for the

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park seemed interested in speculating publicly on the inherent incompatibility of these often-divergent visions; yet this confusion was to have profound effects in the decades ahead. Let us then examine each of these ideas in some detail.

Inwood Hill Park as a Parkway Setting. As outlined in a previous chapter, when around 1900 Inwood Hill was first proposed as a park it was to have Frederick Law Olmsted's Riverside Drive extended through it. This road was to have proceeded to the hills of the West Bronx and to Westchester beyond via a new bridge. This would of course have extended Riverside Drive considerably; presently as it approached Dyckman Street it curved eastward (following the western edge of the Billings estate) and merged with the busy intersection of Broadway and Dyckman Street. Although this design prevented the Drive from becoming a dead end, it did empty its traffic onto commercial streets and took the traveler out of a park setting (although only only temporarily; by going east along Dyckman Street a short distance, a rider or walker would reach the Speedway, which one could then take south).

If the formidable gap that was the Harlem River Ship Canal had not separated Inwood Hill from the Bronx in the first place, it likely that, in keeping with Olmsted's

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highly stylized park design philosophy, Inwood Hill would have been transformed in the nineteenth century into a pleasant but wholly man-made facility. Now, however, with Inwood Hill Park expanded, it was fully expected that the Riverside Drive extension and Bridge plan was still very much alive. The Regional Plan Association (RPA) -- an influential businessman's association well-financed and well-staffed with professional planners and analysts, and concerned primarily with the future traffic needs of the New York Metropolitan region -- went considerably farther in its projections: its proposal for Inwood called, incredibly, for not one but three vehicular bridges between Inwood Hill Park and the mainland: one hugging the shore, one on its eastern edge, and one in between the two (Adams, 1931). (The RPA sought in addition the extension of Dyckman Street over the Harlem River via a new bridge; Adams, 1931).

Despite these wild expectations, by the mid-1920s, other uses for the lovely Inwood Hill were being publicized as well -- uses that did not necessarily relate to traffic movement. These are discussed in the following chapter sections.

Inwood Hill Park as a Play and Recreation Area. During the height of the civic rallying behind Inwood Hill Park's

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extension, in 1923, the press ("Inwood Hill Park," 1923) reported that

> Civic associations and property owners in [Inwood] are calling attention to the park as a safe place for little children to play. No automobiles or other vehicles may be found in that great wooded park and children may roam from one end to the other without fear of being run over. (P. 1).

Well before Inwood Hill was made a park, it had going through it two winding, unpaved, ungraded roads, one near the Hudson River shore and one on the ridge. These were of course necessary, as there were houses dotting the area, and their existence was not questioned. However, these roads were too steep and irregular to accommodate the automobiles of the period (one anonymous informant who grew up in a mansion in the park told me that she had to walk down to Dyckman Street to catch the school bus). Even after Inwood Hill Park was designated, these houses remained occupied, and the roads remained open. The above quotation underscores a concern that, for the sake of children's safety, these roads not be made usable by automobiles, that automobiles not be allowed to take over the park, and that Inwood Hill remain a sort of traffic-free zone, in contrast to the bustling streets just outside its borders. Bolton (1932) was to echo this expectation when he wrote of Inwood Hill Park:

> In fact, this is, by its topography, a pedestrian and not a driving park, and

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> there should be no driving in it except by those who drive to the park and not through it, who come to stay in it for the peace and security in the open air that it affords. Through traffic should be excluded, provision for it should be made outside the park, not through it. One of the serious modern problems of the city parks is the reconciling of the rights and comfort of those on foot and those on wheels, for these rights seem, to a greater or lesser extent, to conflict. (P. X).

Yet plans were in the works that would alter the park dramatically, providing, in addition to the through vehicular access just discussed, extensive level areas for sports. In two large operations the tons of rock and mud excavated to tunnel under Upper Manhattan for the new Independent subway line were to be dumped in watery areas of the park, then smoothed out and landscaped. One such operation was extending the shoreline above Dyckman Street westward, grafting an entirely new section onto the park (Fig. 14). The other was filling in the southern bank of the Ship Canal where it swept southward between Inwood Hill and Isham Parks; this was to unite the two parks with an expanse of green lawn [3]. As these two plans make clear, Inwood Hill Park -- whatever its eventual policy regarding automobile access and pedestrian rights -- was to be more than just a place for wandering through the woods, but was slated to become a mass recreation facility on the order of Palisades Interstate Park.

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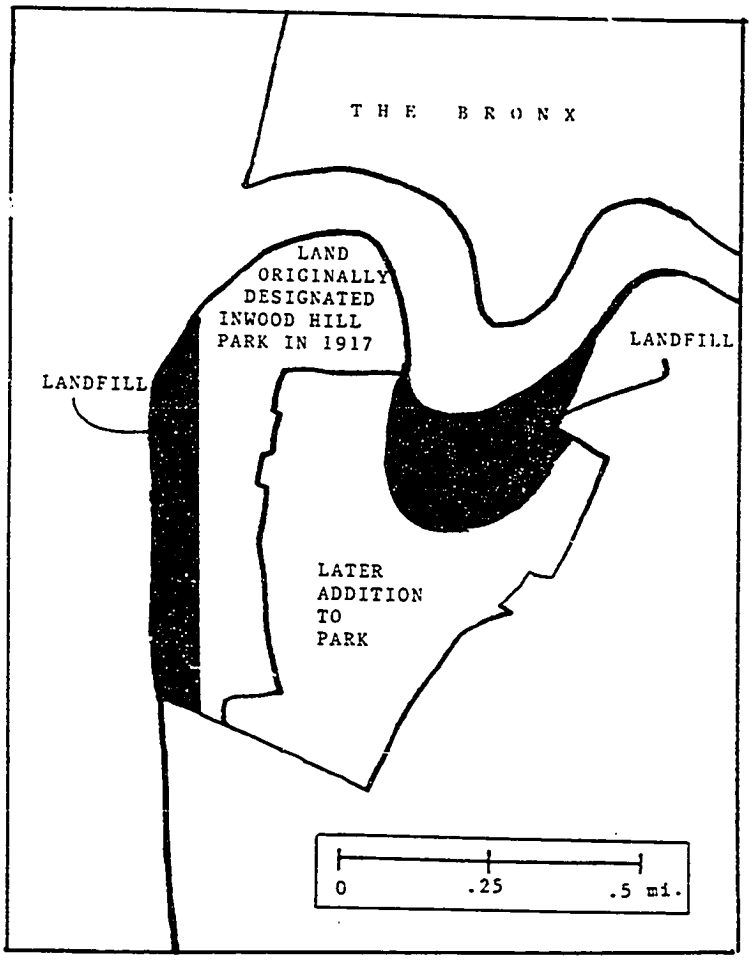


Fig. 14. Landfill work in progress in Inwood Hill Park in the 1920s.

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Inwood Hill Park as a Natural Scenic Wonder. Inwood Hill Park in the 1920s was by no means pristine wilderness. For one thing, its forest was second growth, having been completely cut down during the American Revolution (Barlow, 1971). For another, the hill had been inhabited continuously since. But in the century and a half since the Revolution, Inwood Hill's forests regenerated and matured, and although its rugged terrain had preserved itself from any development other than a score of large houses: Inwood Hill remained a fairly rugged, solitary place. It was in appreciation of this landscape -- lovely, geologically and botanically significant, but hardly primeval -- that the head of the Playground and Recreation Association, on the eve of the public hearings on extending the park, remarked:

> The natural beauties of this territory have been preserved in a most extraordinary manner. It is almost incredible that there should be so near the heart of the great city a stretch of woodland preserving to such an extent its original characteristics ("Civic Bodies," 1923, p. 8).

Other commentaries likewise stressed not only the hill's natural splendors but the unlikeliness of its having survived on Manhattan Island at all. This aspect of Inwood Hill Park thus was precious not only for what it was but where it was; it would stand as a symbol that,

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after three hundred years during which urban Manhattan advanced northward, turning wilderness and countryside into city, it never reached this spot, and never would.

Inwood Hill Park as Museum. With Inwood Hill now a public asset, its later nineteenth-century identity as a wealthy private enclave receded into its proper perspective -- i.e., a brief episode in the history of a landscape that encompassed eons. As a result, the park's role in Native American life was being brought increasingly into focus. Its onetime occupancy by its first inhabitants, the Algonquins, and their legendary sighting of Hendrick Hudson's Half Moon and subsequent meeting with the explorer under a still-standing tulip tree, was used by park activists to give the hill a strong historical identity (the City Parks Commissioner went so far as to propose that the State's replica of Hendrick Hudson's ship, the Half Moon, be moved from its home in Albany and permanently moored in the Ship Canal ["Inwood Park Plan," 1923]).

But reminders of Native American life were not limited to legend, for the park contained a group of small caves which actual Native Americans had inhabited. The hill's role in the American Revolution was also brought to the public's attention as a strong attraction: Hessian, or

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German mercenary troops fighting for the Crown, having ousted the Patriots from Fort Washington, encamped there for several years (during which time they inflicted their near-total deforestation).

Of these two compelling historical developments, one pre-historic, the other patriotic, it was to be the hill's extended role as the home of Native Americans, rather than its brief supporting of troops, that was to be most enthusiastically recalled and promoted. In the years during which Inwood Hill was being considered for enlargement, Reginald Pelham Bolton had been leading well-publicized excavations of the Native settlement. The Algonquin village of Shorakappock was being excavated and analyzed and the relics unearthed donated to the American Museum of Natural History ("Civic Bodies," 1923). From the pits were hauled arrowheads, stone hammers, awls and middens (Peet, 1926). Inwood's children were invited to join this discovery: in June, 1923, for example, Boy and Girl Scouts, wielding picks and shovels, spent days in the park unearthing arrowheads and military uniform buttons ("Inwood Hill Park," 1923).

These excavations, then, were to be more than a professional's work site, which unavoidably would have carried an aura of public inaccessibility. Instead, they were made part of an ambitious and completely

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publicly-oriented visitors' center and educational showpiece, called the Indian Life Reservation (Fig. 15). A cottage standing in near-ruins by the cove near the tulip tree -- built very early in the nineteenth century and last used by people who came to the banks of the Ship Canal to fish -- was selected to house this facility. The cottage then was remodeled to house a small library on Native American topics; there, unearthed relics would be displayed behind glass. The cottage's large porch was restored for visitors to rest on (Bolton, 1932; "Inwood's tulip," 1928). A nearby pottery, in operation since the days when Inwood Hill was private land, was selected as the site where potters (not Native American) were to offer classes in which "Groups of children gather to learn the pleasant work of plastic art" (Bolton, 1932). In the cottage there were also to be quarters for a live-in caretaker. Meanwhile, the tulip tree itself, showing signs of weakness and age, received expert care from the Park Department's Forestry Bureau, which fortified the ground at its base and filled the cavities in its limbs. This attention was not something entirely new, as the Parks Commissioner had helped raise private funds for a protective fence even before the tree had become public property (Bolton, 1932).

Inwood Hill Park's close association with Native

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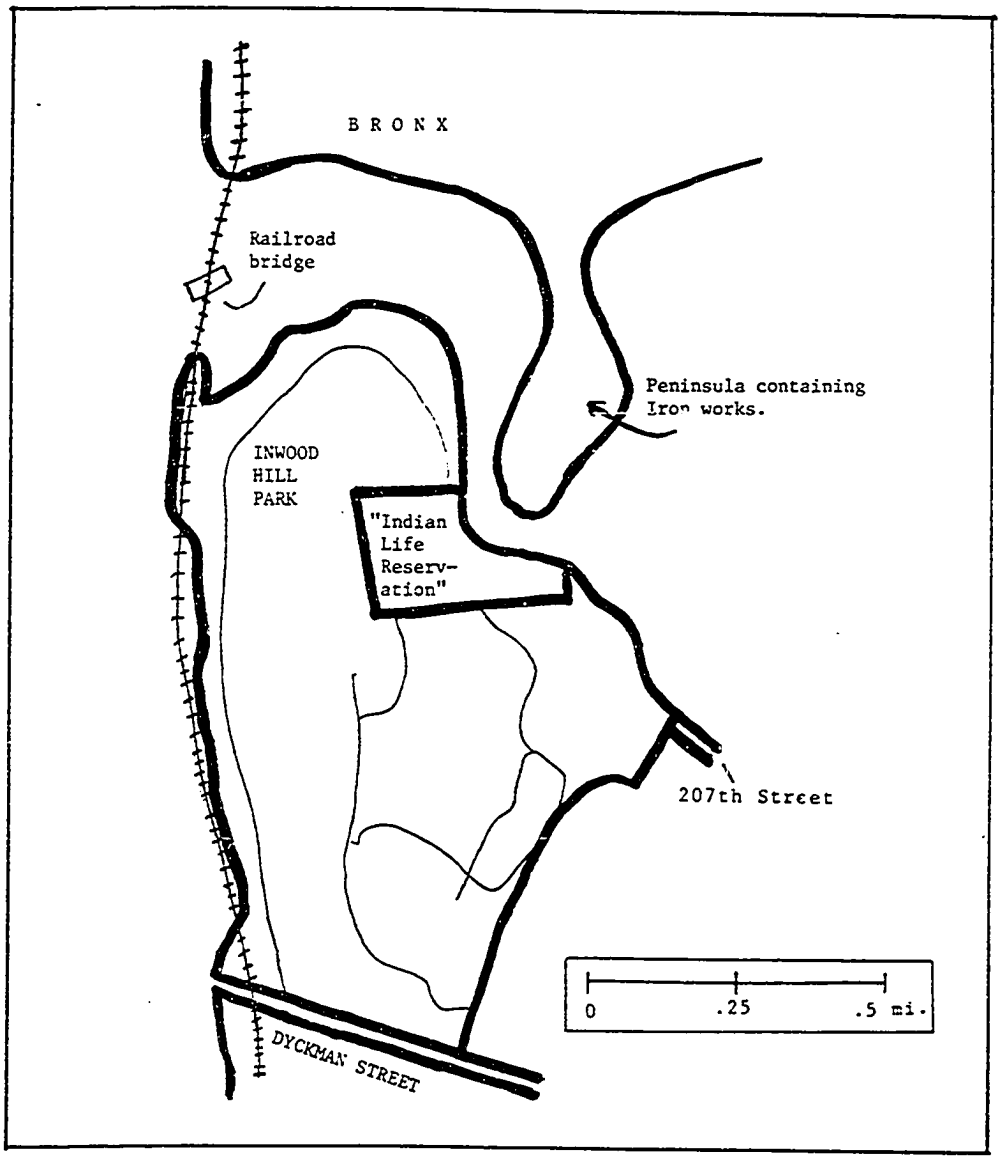


Fig. 15. Map showing Inwood Hill Park circa 1927.

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Americans was such a well-publicized feature of the place that the opening day ceremony, on May 8, 1926, was as much a celebration of the "Indian" as it was of the park, and, far more than was the case with any other park ever opening in Inwood, children were addressed specifically as important beneficiaries of the new facility. Filling the park that day were not only the usual gathering of city officials and local boosters, but Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Campfire Girls; the press estimated that of the thousand spectators present "the majority were children, attracted no doubt by the announcement that Indians would be present" ("Indians Help," 1926). Bolton, who ran the day's program, declared that it was fortunate so many children were present, since the restoration of the ancient village of the first inhabitants of Manhattan Island was designed, among other things, to show that the American Indian "was not always brandishing his tomahawk and twanging his bow and arrow, but that he followed the peaceful pursuits and was of a generous and loyal disposition" (p. 1).

The ceremony's organizers, in fact, were not content just to celebrate "Indians" -- they imported the real thing, according to the press ("Indians Help," 1926). Several chiefs and princess from the United States and Canada were present, including Chief Lone Wolf, "a

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Carlisle football star and graduate chemist" who kept a laboratory in New Haven, Connecticut, where he "made original Indian medicines by modern formulas." Also there was Princess Chinquilla, whose "native costume, glistening with beads, thrilled every youngster on the hillside. The boys organized an escort for [her]. Led by Boy Scouts, they took her on a sightseeing tour of the caves." Later that day the Princess "chanted an invocation of the Great Spirit of Mother Earth."

The Indian Life Reservation, with its staff draped in its colorful regalia, soon became the focal point Bolton and other supporters had hoped it would become. Mary Devlin, who raised children in Inwood in the twenties, recalled visiting there for oral historian Jeff Kisseloff (1987):

> I used to take my children to Inwood Hill Park every day. There was a big spring right by Princess Naomi's shop. I would bring my empty milk bottles, fill them with spring water, and bring them home. It was so fresh.
>
> Princess Naomi was lovely. My children were crazy about her. She had a little museum with trinkets and things. On Labor Day weekend, they had powwows every year. The Indians came from all over, and they pitched their tents. Then the men would put up a platform, where they did all their dances, and they had indian contests. (P. 233).

Note in the above Mrs. Devlin's passing reference to the the Reservation as "Princess Naomi's shop." Since

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operating the Reservation obviously cost money -- money that apparently did not come from the government -- the enterprise entailed some commercialization. Robert J. Flood (1971), in a reminiscence published in an Inwood newspaper many years after the fact, recalled that "Princess Naomi...operated a souvenir shop where she sold not only small items of Indian craft but ice cream and candy as well" (p. 3). One may also assume that the pottery classes were not offered free of charge, and, in addition, that the pottery's products were for sale. Indeed, the whole existence of the "Indian Life Reservation," rather than introducing a sort of aboriginal simplicity and integrity to Inwood Hill Park, seems to have complicated feelings, meanings and attitudes toward it and toward Native American identity. Gloria Miguel was a girl when her family took part in the "Indian" life of Inwood; decades later she recalled the experience for Kisseloff (1987), which is worthy of extended quotation:

> My mother's tribe was the Rappahanock of Virginia, part of the Algonquin. That tribe was one of the first to be wiped out, so she knew very little about them. My father's tribe is still going very strong. His was Cuna, from Central America. His Indian name was Eagle Eye. My name, translated, was Bright Moon.
>
> We all participated in the powwows in Inwood Hill Park. They used to get a big crowd that came from miles around. I didn't like going up there for powwows. I was uncomfortable with anything we did for show. My father was a seaman, and then he

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worked as a longshoreman in Brooklyn. My parents retained their culture at home, but in order to make money, they did things that I would not do now...

When I went up to Inwood, it was like a big spotlight on me. I went along with my family because they took me, but I was very shy about it. I didn't want people to look at me or take photographs of me. It wasn't until later that I realized that my background was something to be proud of and that those people were just ignorant.

We went up on the subway. The powwows were on Indian Day, September 25. All the Native Americans living in New York City would come. I remember Crazy Bull, Sitting Bull's grandson, used to come around and participate.

The ceremonies weren't always authentic. It's according to who does it. They had one where they exchanged blood to make blood brothers, and they would have peace-pipe ceremonies. Now, you have to have a chief conduct the ceremonies. But, as I said, in those days it was more for show.

They also had a ceremony where all the men would get in canoes and paddle down the river. When they landed on shore, they would shake hands with people dressed like Peter Minuit. There was also an old mock ceremony that we used to have. We had an old friend who was Frenchman, and he liked Indian people. He would let them hang him as a white man.

Each man had a solo dance. My father would do a hunter's dance. A man called Sharpshooter would do a spear dance. He was Hopi. He did a beautiful dance. Someone else would do a deer dance. His name was Little Moose. There were two brothers called Two Bear Earl and something else, and they were from the rodeo. They did tricks with ropes. A man named Swift Eagle did most of the singing.

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> I had a North American outfit that my mother made for me. It was a little dress made of cloth with some fringe on it. I had moccasins and a beaded headband. It was just a show outfit. It wasn't from the background of my people. Since my parents did this for show business, they dressed according to what the show was. They both had authentic costumes at home. I just sat in my costume and watched.
>
> With the powwows, they were grasping onto the culture, trying to be proud, in their way. That moment was there for them before going back to welfare and their own neighborhood. It was their way of holding on. (P. 234).

Whatever the seriousness or authenticity of the Native American presence in Inwood Park, it appears to have been strongly intended to influence children's use and perception of the place. The frequency with which Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Campfire girls are mentioned in conjunction with "Indian" activities in the park suggests that these particular children had a contact with the park that was largely filtered through these organizations, which had begun to play a strong role in channeling children's play into organized activities, many of which apparently were not actually play at all but rather ceremonial, as shown by the Mount Washington Presbyterian Church's (1932) description of its troops:

> Boy Scouts were organized under the most competent leadership of Mr. Thomas Harris Cole. Our boy scouts were honored on several occasions with the charge of ushering at the grandstands at the Public Library on Fifth Avenue. Girl Scouts were organized under the Captaincy of Mrs.

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> Lillian Shelp, with Mrs. Knight and Mrs. Scase as lieutenants. Lily of the Valley Troop of Girls Scouts, numbering over fifty girls, was a banner troop. Two of our girls were chosen for committee from Manhattan Council, to present flowers to Mrs. Harding on one of her visits to New York. (No page numbers).

When Inwood boys and girls were exposed to Inwood Hill Park as Scouts, what type of experience were they taking part in? Some explanation of that organization is in order.

The Boy Scouts began in Great Britain in 1908 under the inspiration of Lord Baden-Powell (1857-1941), who, according to a recent critical biography (Rosenthal, 1986), sought to allay British fears of a declining empire by "fashioning an institution intended to produce efficient recruits for the empire for generations to come" (p. 3). It was thus a movement premised on militarism and colonialism. However, after World War I, in which so many Scoutmasters and former Scouts were killed, this aspect of the organization was dropped (Macleod, 1983).

The Boy Scouts of America, on other hand, was begun primarily as a woodcraft movement. It gained popularity in the late nineteenth century, just as the Native American culture had been so beaten back as to be the proper subject for popular glorification and museum preservation. The popularization of woodcraft in the United States is credited to Earnest Thompson Seton

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(1860-1946), who, unlike Baden-Powell, was not a military commander but a wealthy expert in woodcraft devoted to inculcating in boys a reverence for the ways -- material and spiritual -- of the Native American (Rosenthal, 1986). Also unlike Baden-Powell, Seton's scouting ideal was not concerned with patriotism, piety or organized religion.

Seton, however, was more a guiding spirit than a founder of a national scouting organization. Instead, the Scouts were a mixture of Baden-Powell's vision and that of Seton himself; hence the Boy Scout Manual's codification of the philosophy of woodcraft and the instilling of patriotism and religious observance.

The Boy Scouts of America was established in 1910. After a slow start, it gained tremendous popularity: by 1916 it had 200,000 members (Peterson, 1984), and had obtained a Federal charter, granting it "formal protection to the name, insignia and terminology" of scouting (Peterson, 1984, p. 88) [4]. By 1930, membership had more than tripled, to 630,000 (Steiner, 1933). By 1927 the Girl Scouts of America were also becoming a strong force, having reached an enrollment of 168,000 (Girl Scouts of the USA, 1987), while another group, the Campfire Girls, likewise increased theirs by 117 percent during the same period (Steiner, 1933).

It is necessary, in order to shed further light on

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what kind of organization Inwood's Scouts were involved with, to bear in mind that in the 1920s the Boy Scouts were in a period of transition. During the Reform Era, urban boys' organizations tended to fall into one of two categories: for poor boys there were the "boys clubs," staffed by volunteers and usually housed in any available shelter -- such as schools or churches -- and were intended mainly to provide whatever it could afford in order to lure boys off the streets for a few hours of play in assured supervision and safety. For the middle- and upper-class boys there were what Macleod (1983) calls the well-financed "character-building" organizations (such as the YMCA), which had their own facilities and professional staff, and whose members were expected to acquire the manners and outlook appropriate to men of their class.

At its founding, and for a decade afterward, the Boy Scouts of America fell decidedly within the middle-and upper-class "character-building" category. But in the 1920s it was beginning to broaden its base: in 1927 it formed what it called its "interracial services" to bring blacks and whites together. It was also branching out from the inner cities to rural areas (Peterson, 1984). Thus the Scouting movement was no longer making any pretense of exclusivity but was seeking to involve any boy willing to join.

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It would seem, then, from these background sketches of the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, that the Inwood children who took part in Scouting were involved in experiencing Inwood Hill Park as part of a fairly new social experiment, one in which urban children were taught an authorized version of what it means to be connected with the land as well as an American citizen. They were also part of a fresh, vigorous and confident movement that was among the first to channel large numbers of children nationwide into programs of organized exposure to natural environments. The child who visited Inwood Hill Park and its Indian Life Reservation under the Scout's auspices saw the place under these terms and was probably given little opportunity to enccunter the place on his or her own.

The Character of Inwood Hill Park

Inwood Hill Park's Indian Life Reservation took up just a small area of the park's total area. What, then, did the place as a whole look and feel like? Officially Inwood Hill was a park; but did it serve as one? The answer is elusive, for it seems that Inwood Hill was more a bit of preserved countryside than public parkland. A reporter (Peet, 1926, February 7) wrote:

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> Entering the park today...one travels a path that contrasts strangely with the city pavements a few blocks away. Bolton Road, like a country lane, winds steeply up hill between rows of venerable trees and past residences and gardens that are the last outpost of rural New York. (P. 8).

The hill's still-inhabited mansions lent it an air of exclusivity, and the frequent "Private: No Trespassing" signs certainly contributed to such an impression (Levick, 1924). The City was renting these houses to tenants on a month-to-month basis, collecting income and slowly drawing up plans for the park. It was generally understood that the mansions would have to go -- eventually. The experience of walking among these houses was recorded by another reporter (Levick, 1924).

> There are houses as old as one could wish -- great houses with twenty rooms and cupolas, too, and stables to them, and ballrooms that have never seen an electric light. Seven or eight country homes and mansions built in spacious days, in that time (and now as well) housing noted names. Here, behind hedges or set in a grove of ancient tuliptrees, you may find the last of Manhattan's country dwellers. (P. 2).

But not all of the hill's structures were residential. According to Bolton (1932) the park included the House of Rest, which "shelter[ed] so many helpless sufferers" (p. 176); the House of Mercy, which "benefited and educated hundreds of neglected girls and children committed to its

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care by the City courts" (p. 176); and, facing the north side of Dyckman Street, Jewish Memorial Hospital (formerly the Magdalen Benevolent Society) a public hospital.

The institutional tenants and the mansion-dwellers were not the only occupants of the park whose days were seen as numbered. In the cove of the Ship Canal was a colony of houseboats. The houseboaters resisted the city's efforts to evict them, but they were gone by the late 1920s or early 1930s. Reginald Pelham Bolton, who had worked to shape the park thus far, had strongly opposed the presence of the boats (Bolton, 1932).

Bolton (1932) also informs us that large areas of the park were despoiled by various forms of vandalism, including dumping. In order to prepare the site of the "Indian" Reservation he and other volunteers had to "clear up the area then littered with tons of waste materials, bricks, timber, iron-work, broken glass, ash cans, furniture, parts of automobiles and boats, and bedsprings" (p. 3). Of the visitors to the park in the 1920s, Bolton wrote: "Unfortunately, the majority leave papers and other refuse behind them, and a smaller number leave broken bottles as mementoes of their visits, a form of misdemeanor which should be sternly repressed" (p. xi). There was, according to him, no police presence or other government protection for the park in the 1920s:

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> Its splendid forest, including the great Tulip Tree, oldest living object on the island of Manhattan, lay open to the raids of despoilers of trees, plants and flowers; its invaluable remains of aboriginal existence were buried and inaccessible...its shores covered with rubbish, its woods littered with waste objects (p. xi).

In the absence of government protection, Bolton and the Dyckman Institute, a venerable local cultural organization, organized their own patrols and surveillance.

It would seem from all the evidence that Inwood Hill in the 1920s was a place of contrasts, a place in transition offering a wide range of sights and experiences that could not have been present if the place had had a single, coherent purpose and identity. Its jumble of of land uses (residential, park, institutional, commercial), the disparities in how it was kept, its potential dangers -- all probably made it a very informal place, a place not designed for visitors but nevertheless a place that anyone could wander into, gaze at the mansions, get lost in the woodlands, view the Hudson's splendor, walk along the shoreline (stepping around discarded fences or automobiles), watch a houseboater caulk a window, look beyond the boat to the dormant hulk of the Johnson Iron Works, wave to a passing train

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conductor, nod hello to an Indian Princess, and leave. It was a park waiting to become a park; or it was everything a park should be.

With Inwood Hill designated, the last major recreation facility for the community had been established, and with it the spatial pattern for how outdoor play was to develop in Inwood. The Cloisters and its park would be formal and would attract visitors worldwide; Isham Park would be formal as well, but more Inwood-oriented; Inwood Hill Park would be a "wild Place" with "Indians;" the Speedway would be a highway adorned with benches and a view; Highbridge Park would preserve scenic hillsides; the Dyckman House would show visitors relics of Inwood's lost Dutch heritage; eastern Inwood would be industrial, dominated by the train yards; flat central Inwood would have rows of apartment houses; hilly western Inwood would be wealthier. The streets were wide and filled with cars; the shops new and expectant; the churches receptive. This was the play landscape of Inwood as of 1930.

[Note: A chronology of significant events affecting Inwood circa 1915-1930 appears as Table 2; a map showing local landmarks relating to children's play during that time appears as Fig. 16].

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Year	Event
1915	Ferry service from Inwood to New Jersey begins.
1917	Land for Inwood Hill Park acquired.
1920-30	Two movie theaters opened on Dyckman Street and one on 207th Street.
192(?)	Miramar Pool opens on 207th Street near the Harlem River.
1923	Harlem River Speedway opened to automobiles
1923	Columbia University's Baker Field opens.
1923	Inwood Hill park expanded by land acquisition.
1923	Paradise Park amusement area closes.

Table 2. Chronology of significant events, 1915-circa 1930.

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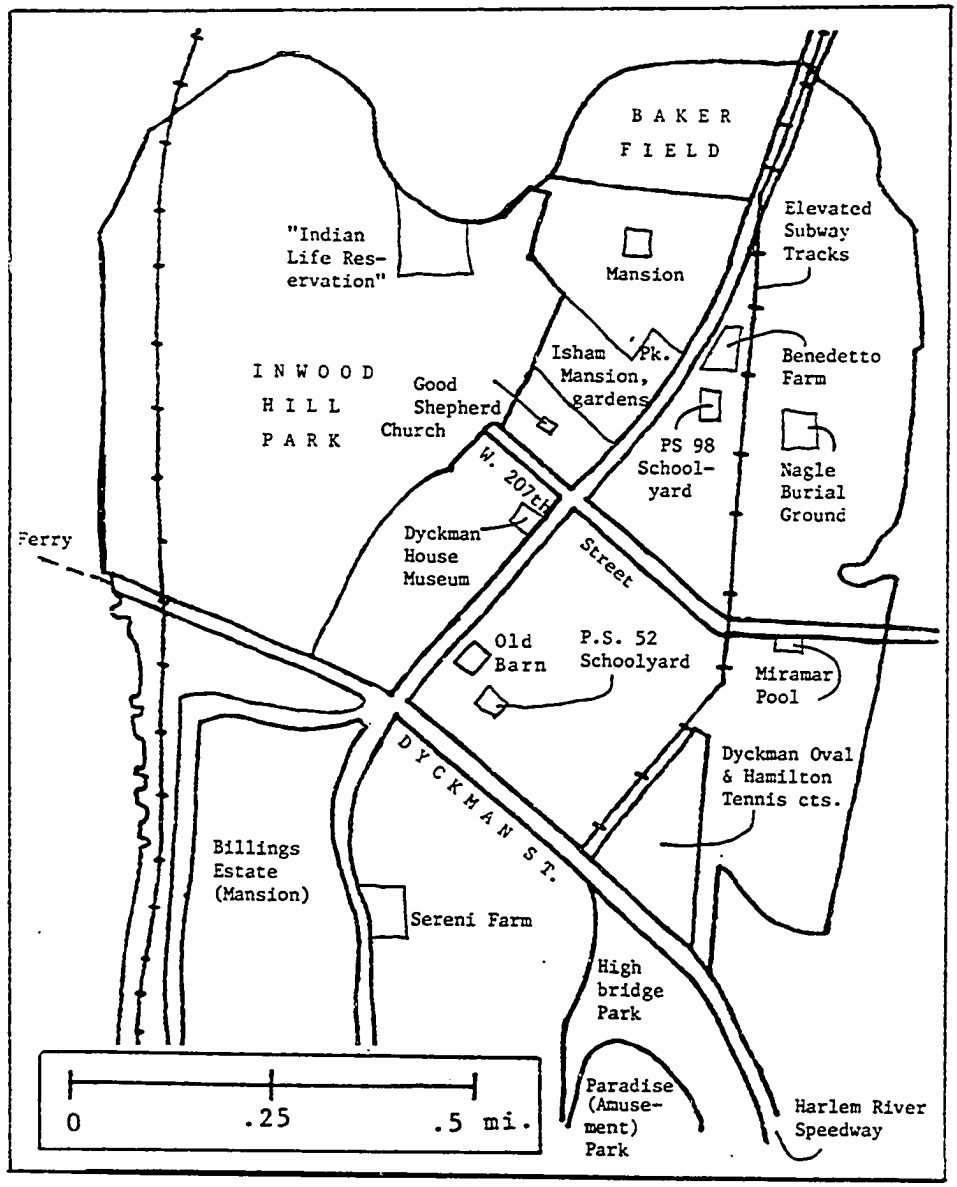


Fig. 16. Map showing landmarks relating to children's play as existing between 1915 and 1930.

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Footnotes to Section 3.7

[1] Oddly, the Inwood station of the Hudson River Railroad, located right at the ferry point at Dyckman Street, closed in 1917 as passenger service (but not freight service) was eliminated on that line. The number of passenger trains running three at that time had been cut to three a day (Bolton, 1932a). Hudson Line trains were rerouted to the east bank of the Harlem River; Inwood was no longer among the resort areas it still served.

[2] The enraged French authorities passed legislation barring the export of such national treasures, but not before Barnard had slipped his plunder into the United States (see Stern, Gilmartin & Mellins, 1987).

[3] The Isham family property had extended several yards into the water which landfill had converted to lawn. The official boundary between Isham and Inwood Hill Parks in their new configurations thus was fixed in accordance with that boundary. That this lawn area was now shared by both Inwood Hill and Isham parks was a distinction discernable on paper only; to the average user of that lawn, this vestigial boundary was of course utterly meaningless, and so he or she rightfully regarded the parkland to the west of Seaman Avenue as Inwood Hill Park and that to the east as Isham Park. In these pages, that commonsense boundary will obtain.

[4] The charter also served to protect the Boy Scouts of America from competing movements' appropriation of their name or regalia (see Peterson, 1984).

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3.8 Inwood Children's Experience

[Note: Note: for the locations of informants' homes, see Fig. 17].

Dorothy Palmer (b. 1909)

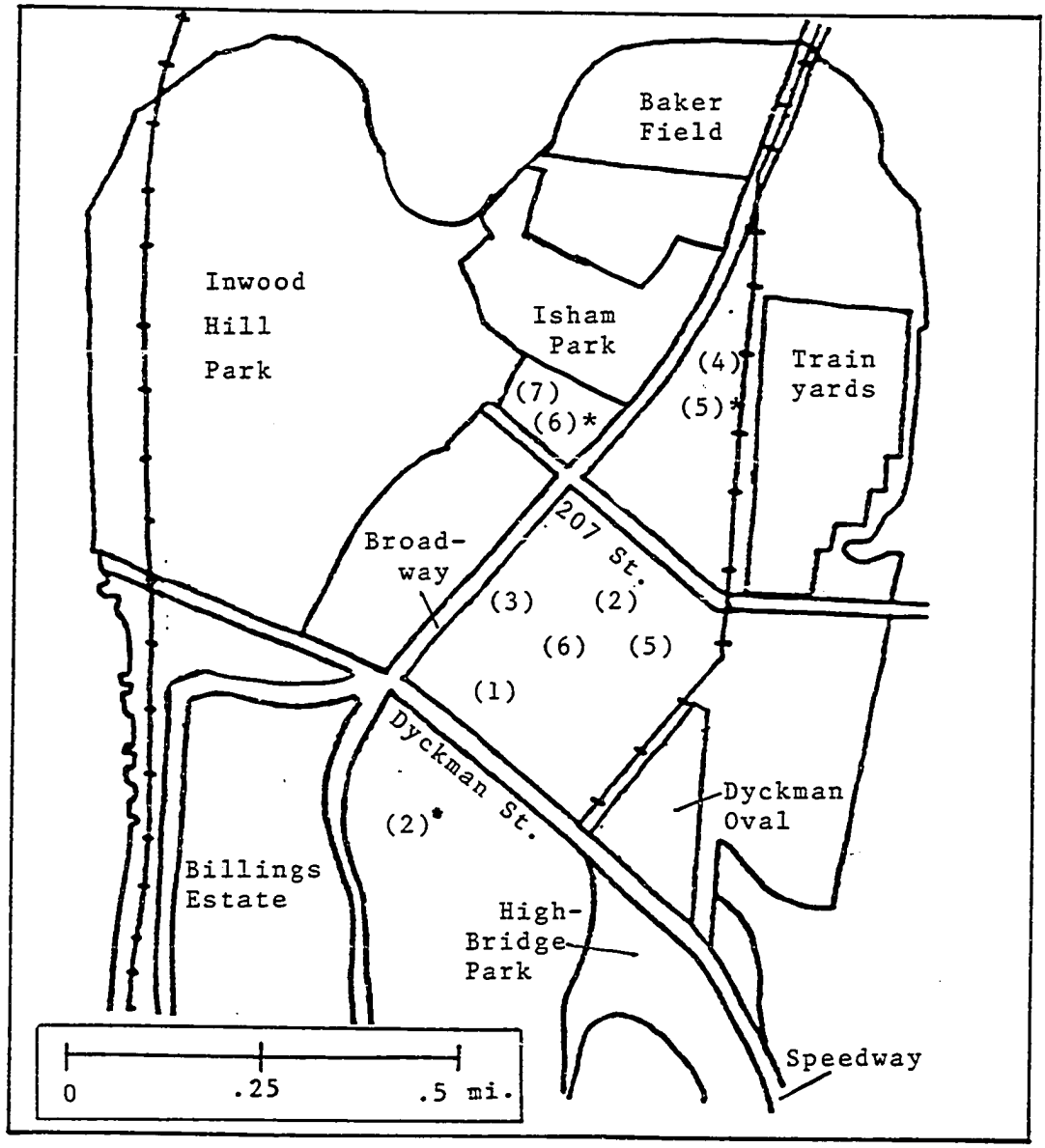
Dorothy was born in Inwood. Her father was a court clerk, her mother a housewife. They, Dorothy and Dorothy's grandmother lived in an apartment house on Sherman Avenue between Dyckman and Academy Streets, in the heart of the Inwood valley. Their building stood isolated on its plot -- the first structure built in the vicinity:

> We lived in the first group of houses that I believe was ever built in Inwood. I think there were five. For a long time there was nothing between the Harlem River Drive and our house. In the beginning my father worked up by the Harlem River Canal. I know that our apartment was very high, and faced north, and I remember my mother would put a lamp -- I think it was a kerosene lamp -- in the window, and he would see that. This would be around 1912.

Asked to share memories of her childhood beginning at age five, Mrs. Palmer responded:

> I can go back before I was five; I can go back to three [1912]. My grandmother used to take me to what is now the Harlem River Drive. And at that time it was a harness racing track. And there was a wall, maybe about three foot high, along the walk, and there were benches and trees. And I used to watch the harness racing. I would sit on the bench with my doll and I would watch the harness racing. My grandmother

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(1) Dorothy Palmer
(2) Irma Goodwin
(2)* I. Goodwin (2nd residence)
(3) Peter Dongan
(4) Elsa Brady
(5) Rose Mulligan
(5)* R. Mulligan (2nd residence)
(6) Fred Tarzian
(6)* F. Tarzian (2nd residence)
(7) Mary Miller

Fig. 17. Map showing where informants lived, 1915-30.

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would take me there quite often.

Dorothy was first allowed out of the apartment building alone at age six or seven (1915-1916). At first she could not go beyond the stretch of pavement directly in front of her apartment window, out from which her mother could watch; but a short time later she was able to go farther. There were no playgrounds; among her favorite places were the vacant lots. Although these were numerous she most enjoyed the one on West 204th Street between Sherman and Post Avenues. Reaching this entailed a walk of one-and-a-half long blocks north on Sherman Avenue to West 204th and then one block east to Post Avenue. Dorothy enjoyed this lot because it contained rocks:

> I used to do quite a bit of climbing on rocks. It was always a rocky area. They were always blasting there when they built apartment houses. And I always came home with bloody knees from climbing on the rocks. The rocks were quite high; I'd say they were a storey-and-a-half high. One group was on 204th Street between Post Avenue and Sherman. There was a lot of blasting of those rocks going on to build apartment houses.

Sometimes Dorothy and her playmates would dig around in the lots to see what they would uncover: "We found Indian machetes, skulls, everything. Dad took them down to the [American] Museum of Natural History." She made such journeys alone, to this and to other vacant lots, beginning at age seven (1916). She lost interest in

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playing on the rocks when she was ten (1919).

Dorothy lived midway between Inwood Hill and the Speedway. Inwood Hill became a park when she was eight years old. Did she visit either of them?

> Inwood Hill Park didn't exist then! It was all private homes. Very lovely homes, too. One house boarded animals, and we would leave our dog there when we went on vacation. It was a very beautiful area at the time.

When she was ten (1919), Dorothy could go alone to "Snake Hill," or St. Nicholas Avenue, a very steep and winding road that led from its intersection with Nagle Avenue and Dyckman Street (an intersection which also had the IRT elevated running overhead) up to Paradise Park. Dorothy would go part of the way up the hill and slide down to the bottom. Traffic was no worry.

Not all lots were either built up with apartment houses or undeveloped. At Broadway and West 193rd Street Dorothy would stop and watch a farmer at work. Named Sereni, he raised vegetables and kept goats and pigs. Other rural relics remained as well: on Dorothy's own block was a barn, which she thinks may have been abandoned, and on the northeast corner of Academy Street and Sherman Avenue was a horseback riding academy. Although Dorothy did not ride, she would go there to watch the horses grazing.

Evenings, the adults and children of Dorothy's

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building would bring chairs to the roof and sit around "fraternizing." Often there would be kite-flying as well. Children, however, were not permitted to go to the roof alone.

By age twelve, Dorothy's experience of her part of Inwood had broadened and deepened:

> At twelve we stayed pretty much in the area in which we lived. Oh, we'd go to Dyckman Street, we'd go to 207th Street. Not for the stores -- they didn't have stores then. We would just go.
>
> Dyckman Street had quite a few lots, empty lots. Next to the first house in our group -- our house was north, toward Academy Street -- but the first house, near Dyckman Street, there was a barn there and it was there for years. And we used to go in there a great many times. We used to save our little allowance and at the end of the week buy some kind of cookies and cake, and we would go into this barn, and with our legs hanging over the edge, we'd eat all these cookies. That was on the side. Our parents didn't know what was going on.
>
> Q: Would they have objected?
>
> Oh, yes! Eating cookies all day by the dozen!
>
> Q: How about going into the barn -- would they have minded that?
>
> No, no. I do not believe it was occupied.

Asked if there was any place in Inwood she disliked as a child, Mrs. Palmer answered no; nor was there any place she found dangerous or scary, or a special place she went when she wanted to be alone. On the last item, she added

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that she needed no such place.

Irma Goodwin (b. 1913)

Irma was born to Armenian Parents and lived in Inwood throughout her childhood, starting on Academy Street near Sherman Avenue, then moving when she was nine to Thayer Street near Sherman Avenue, one block south of Dyckman Street. Her family consisted of herself, her parents, and her brother, who was two years older than her.

Mrs. Goodwin remembers little about her first address except for a farm:

> On Academy Street and Sherman Avenue there was a little farm. We lived right across the street; I'll never forget it. There were cows, goats, sheep.
>
> Q: Did you play with the animals?
>
> No, no, no! Anyway, the farmer used to live in it -- the farmer and his wife. Real farmers living in the city!
>
> Q: Did you know the farmers?
>
> No, we never got to know them. They kept to themselves.
>
> Do you remember how you felt when the farmers left?
>
> We felt sad. I think the whole neighborhood was sorry. Because you felt that that's a landmark there.

When she was nine (1922) Irma and her family moved to Thayer Street. By then she could go farther afield, although she had to tell her parents where she was going.

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The Billings estate was one block to the west of her new home; however, children were allowed there only in groups and only by appointment with the local public school. Nevertheless, Irma used the lower, sloping land of the estate, which was within a stone's throw of Broadway. She would sled there in the winter.

Irma visited the Indian Life Reservation at Inwood Hill Park only a few times. She recalls it as a place of "Indian remains, igloos" -- a place that was in fact a little frightening. "We didn't have too many of them" Mrs. Goodwin says, almost gratefully, of the Native Americans themselves; then she completes her judgment of their enterprise: "Anyway, it was like a tourist thing."

Playing near home, Irma would stay on the sidewalks and would not use the back yards or alleyways. When asked why, she replies:

> We weren't encouraged. We were always told bad people were there. And our mothers would say to the girls, "you never know how the boys are," they would say. At that time boys were supposed to be good, but you never knew."

Elements of danger, dislike and distrust also found their way into Irma's experience of Inwood. There were the ubiquitous dynamiting areas, which were posted with warning signs. Irma also regarded the east side of Inwood warily, describing the industrial areas near the Harlem River as "a dumpy kind of place," and characterizing that

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general area in these terms:

> More than the west side, the east side was more of a danger. The hill leading to George Washington High School [St. Nicholas Avenue] always had people who were homeless, who were bums. I didn't like that place.

Peter Dongan (b. 1918)

The Dongans moved to Inwood from West Harlem in 1925. The family at that time consisted of eight-year-old Peter and a fifteen-year-old half brother. Peter's father was an accountant. His parents were "Scots-Irish," -- Scots who settled in Northern Ireland. As such, Peter, unlike most of his playmates, was not Catholic but Protestant. This made him feel slightly different:

> I was aware of religious differences. I was a non-Catholic in a Catholic neighborhood. And the Catholic boys were aware of it, too, since they would not see me at Mass on Sundays.

The Dongans moved into an apartment house on Academy Street between Broadway and Vermilyea Avenue, in Inwood's valley. Across the street was PS 52; an adjoining area was taken up by "bungalows," or temporary structures to accommodate the influx of new pupils.

Both of Peter's parents worked, giving him abundant free time in the late afternoons and evenings: "I was a latchkey child." To fill his free time he started frequenting the local public library, which was housed in

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a nearby storefront. He had, however, no restrictions placed on him as far as where in Inwood he could go, and so when not in the library he spent his play time outdoors. He recalls no playgrounds:

> The streets were our playgrounds. We did not engage much in playground games or play on the school premises. In fact, they may have even locked the school playground when school was not in session -- I don't remember exactly. Most of our games were street games.

There was a favorite vacant lot on Broadway and Academy Street, just up the block from home; Peter found goldenrod growing in it and "not too much garbage." This particular lot, since it was on Broadway, had a billboard -- a feature not necessarily present on the lots on the side streets. An empty lot, especially when shielded by a billboard, would make an ideal cookout area:

> One of our activities was to steal potatoes from the baskets of the food stores and take them around the corner to the empty lot, gather some scraps of wood, and roast them. To this day I can still remember one of the Irish kids saying in his thick brogue, "Now get some pey-per fer th' foyre."

Mr. Dongan remembers the Independent subway being built along Broadway. Although an underground subway, the method of construction used was not tunneling but trench-digging and covering. He does not remember playing there himself, but does recall other boys going in and out of the trenches. He describes this elongated construction

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site as "an attractive nuisance."

When he was ten (1928) Peter decided it was time to begin filling his free time constructively:

> To keep from playing aimlessly, I started selling magazines door to door. In those days it was common for a magazine circulation manager to drive around neighborhoods like Inwood, and they would stop at a game that was being played and the kids would gather around, and they would say "would you like to earn extra money selling magazines?" and some of the kids would say yes. You could win a bicycle or some perfume for your mother, et cetera, et cetera. The manager would enlist the kids right then and there, on the street. Usually it was the Saturday Evening Post.
>
> I sold Collier's, a competing magazine. I would receive fifty copies, for which I paid something like two and three-eighths cents, and sold them for a nickel apiece. I got from Collier's a canvas bag to carry them in. I didn't have much of a work ethic, though; I wouldn't hesitate to stop work and go out to play a game.

Delivering magazines put Peter in frequent contact with a part of Inwood he had not explored before: its rooftops. He found that the most economical way to cover the four- to- six- storey walkups on his route was to enter through the front door, proceed from floor to floor to the roof, then cross over to the next building and work his way down to street level, where he would repeat the process.

Peter did not linger on the roofs. This was due perhaps to some frightening incidents he witnessed there,

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which he recalls vividly:

> Once on a roof I saw a man had a white undershirt on, blue pants, and he had a gun in his hand! He went to the edge of the roof and he started to fire over the side at someone going down a fire escape. Well, it turned out that this fellow was a cop, and he had been at home sleeping, when somebody attempted to break into his apartment through the fire escape window. So he came up to the roof to get a good shot. I think the guy got away.
>
> Another time crossing the roof, I saw a young woman hanging clothes, and an older woman who was sitting at the edge of the parapet, and the older woman fell over the edge. Well, the younger woman let out a shriek and ran downstairs. This was a five- or six-storey building. And when I looked over the edge, I saw the fallen woman, all bloodied, trying to raise herself on her elbows.

Elsa Brady (b. 1914)

Elsa was born in Inwood. She lived on West 213th Street between Broadway and Tenth Avenue -- a little north of Inwood's central valley -- with her parents and a sister, who was eight years younger than her. Elsa's father was a corrections officer, her mother a housewife. Three of her grandparents had come from Ireland.

Elsa was first allowed out alone without supervision at age six (1920). Once out she had to stay in front of her building, except when she was sent directly across the street on an errand to the Benedetto land -- one of the last, if not the last, of Inwood's farms:

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I could look out my window and see the farm. It took up a city block. When your mother asked you to get vegetables, you just ran across the street. My mother would watch as I went. I used to go around the farm with Mrs. Benedetto, picking the vegetables I needed -- stringbeans, tomatoes, everything that you would want. In later years they were bringing produce in -- they didn't farm right up till the end -- but when I was a girl it was all grown there.

Q: Did you ever pick vegetables without Mrs. Benedetto or someone from the farm with you?

Not as a rule. Once in a while, maybe. But usually you just trooped -- trotted along.

Q. Did you play on the farm at all?

No. They had a family, a big family, so you couldn't just go in and have the place to yourself or anything.

Q. Was the place fenced?

It was, but there was a path going through it, which you could enter on Tenth Avenue and go out further on. You could cut through. The path stayed parallel to the sidewalk on Tenth Avenue, so cutting through didn't save you two seconds, but everybody just used it anyhow. I would go there and get corn husks. I'd take them home and make dolls out of them.

When she was a little older, Elsa could go to the empty lot on her street: "There was a nice hill and the little kids could sleigh ride down that hill because it didn't go out into the street or anything."

One block south of Elsa's home, on 213th Street between Broadway and Tenth Avenue, was the construction

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site for PS 98:

> I remember when they were building PS 98, and we would go there, jumping around everywhere. We had a grand time there. They had piles of dirt and everything. One day the boys had locked the night watchman in his little shed. We were just little girls, we didn't have anything to do with it. We were playing. But the watchman was banging the door to get out, probably just trying to get us to let him out. But we got so scared we ran, because you were afraid of the policemen in those days. We ran in the house and hid under the stairs, the five of us. And someone said we'd better say a prayer.
>
> Q: After that, did you ever go back to the construction site to play?
>
> Sure, after a few days. Kids forget these things.

When Elsa was a little older and PS 98 was completed, there were summer recreation programs held in the schoolyard:

> You could go in and play volleyball. This was maybe one or two days a week. They had someone there to supervise. And then you could go in and use the showers.

Across Tenth Avenue, beyond the elevated tracks, was the Nagle family cemetery, located within a large zone soon to be razed to build subway train yards. This was one of Elsa's favorite play spots:

> The stones were very old, it was a nice old cemetery. You would wander around; it was a place to play. One day one of the kids came out, he thought he had a bat -- it was a leg bone. I used to pick violets; the most beautiful violets grew there. There was an old lady living nearby, and she loved violets. I was

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> probably about six years old at the time. And I can remember her saying "where did you get them? I've never seen such beautiful violets!" and I used to say "oh, a nice place."
>
> Later on, when they were about to build the subway yards there, they were digging up the bodies. But coming up with the bodies was jewelry. So they put up fences and even posted guards to keep people out while they finished.

When she was 10 (1924), Elsa could cross Broadway to Isham Park, which contained her new favorite sledding spot: Park Terrace West, the winding road that bisected the park. Her name for this hill, though, was not Park Terrace West but (like other informants' name for Ft. George Hill) "Snake Hill." She enjoyed the rest of the park year round, though:

> There was a beautiful big house up there. It belonged to the Parks Department. And the fellow who lived there, he had a very big position with the parks, he didn't do any work around there -- he worked downtown.

But Isham Park was not used exclusively for spontaneous play; Mrs. Brady's most vivid memories of it are when it was used for planned events for adults and children:

> They used to have band concerts in the summer, and they would be on the porch playing; everyone would come up. Your parents would take you. It was the only time you went on the grass -- you didn't go on the grass when I was a kid! I mean, everything was taken care of.

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Being old enough to reach Isham Park without adults also meant exploring other areas in the northwest area of Inwood:

> We used to go hunting for haunted houses. There was an estate up there near Isham park, near the top -- where a large garden apartment complex was built later -- between Park Terrace East and Park Terrace West. As I remember, the Dwyers were in it; we used to call it the Dwyer estate. And I don't know why, but we used to think it was haunted, and we were great for going up. We were so brazen.
>
> One day we rang the bell, and of course were ready to run. But they knew -- I guess they heard us girls talking, giggling -- and one of the men came to the door with a big white sheet over his head, and did we run!

A year later (1925), Elsa had gone farther afield and found a new spot:

> When I got a little older -- say, eleven -- we used to go down to the old Billings Estate, where the Cloisters is now. They used to have that big mansion down there. Well, you know how steep those rocks are going down to Riverside Drive. Well, we used to slide on cardboard all the way down to the drive. When you got home, your mother would say "what happened to your clothes?" but of course you never told her the truth.
>
> We used to hunt haunted houses there, too. The estate wasn't used at that time, but they had guards posted around it.
>
> Q: Then you didn't really get to explore the estate itself, only the lower part of the hills. Would you have liked to if there hadn't been guards?
>
> Oh! but we did go up there and explore! We always found our way into places.

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In addition to her ramblings through Inwood, Elsa used several established local outdoor recreation facilities, such as the Miramar pool, which she visited with friends frequently; the Dyckman Oval, which she visited most frequently in winter, when the Hamilton Tennis Courts would be flooded for ice-skating; and the playground along the southern edge of Isham Park, directly across Isham Street from Good Shepherd School, which she attended. This playground, which was used extensively by Good Shepherd pupils before and after school and during their afternoon break, consisted of "monkey bars" set atop the flat rocks near the sidewalk. It was the only outdoor play equipment Elsa recalls from her childhood.

Most Saturdays Elsa enjoyed the movies, either on Dyckman Street or 207th Street. The features, as she remembers them, were geared toward children: comedies, romances and westerns. Most of the audience consisted of unescorted children. Going to the movies meant the opportunity to be waited on in a store:

> When we would go to the movies, I wouldn't get a candy, I would go to the delicatessen and get a pickle. And I remember there was an elderly Jewish man there, he was very nice, very patient, because I would go "I don't want <u>that</u> pickle, I want <u>that</u> one." I had my eye on the biggest one in there. I think most storekeepers were nice.

Occasionally, Elsa would accompany her family and

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their friends to Inwood Hill Park's northern shoreline, where they would swim in the Spuyten Duyvil Creek. The Johnson iron works, in operation until she was nine, lay just across the channel of the Ship Canal, and the men would swim out to it and back. But Inwood Hill Park's shoreline, although convenient to the home, was not regarded as the optimal outdoor swimming location; for that, the party took the ferry to Palisades Interstate park:

> That was a day's outing. Your mother would make your lunch. They had bath houses, and as you went swimming there was a nice beach. Unlike in Inwood, Interstate was more like a beach. Inwood was not developed as a beach; there, you wore your suit under your clothes, then after swimming, you would have to somehow get yourself dry, or else just stay wet. But over at Interstate they had the bath houses. And they had picnic tables, which you didn't have over here in Inwood.

Rose Mulligan (b. 1917)

The Mulligans moved to Inwood in 1923, when Rose was six, settling in an apartment on 124 Academy Street near Vermilyea Avenue. Mr. and Mrs. Mulligan were Irish-American, and both worked. The family consisted of Rose, her parents and a sister who was one year Rose's junior. Mrs. Mulligan has few memories of this location, however. The next year the family moved about five blocks north, to 212th Street and Tenth Avenue, near the elevated

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tracks, and stayed there for three years. In 1927, they moved again, this time to Inwood's extreme northwestern residential area, the corner of Seaman Avenue and West 218th Street, a little south of Isham Park and across the street from Baker Field.

Rose was first allowed out to play without supervision shortly after moving to her first Inwood address on Academy Street -- at age six (1923). Although she played mainly on the sidewalks in front of her building, she made frequent use of empty lots near her house. The ones she remembers best are those near her second residence, at 212th Street near the elevated. These she remembers as having not only hills for sledding, but trees:

> In the warm weather, the girls would settle down in the lots -- there was one right next door on 212th Street -- and sew dolls clothes in the shade. You'd bring out lemonade or something. It was a very restful time, there was no distraction. We would also build huts with scrap wood, and the boys would "protect" them -- you know, from the "bad guys." The girls would sew curtains for the windows.

At age seven (1924) Rose and her sister were going by themselves to the Dyckman Oval to ice skate on the frozen-over Hamilton Tennis Courts:

> I hated to skate. Maybe my arthritis was starting then. I would hug the pot belly stove, and my sister would say, "you have to skate! Mom says!" and I'd say, "I don't want to skate! I hate it! My feet hurt me! My ankles hurt me! Leave me alone!"

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Rose and her sister also took the ferry across the river by themselves, after church on Sundays, although Mrs. Mulligan is not clear as to how old they were when they did this. The church they attended was Good Shepherd, which she describes as having little impact on her play activities:

> I remember Good Shepherd as being more religion-centered rather than social-centered. There may have been social programs for older people, but not for children.

When she was six (1923) and lived on Academy Street, PS 52 was nearby, yet Rose played in the schoolyard there only occasionally. It was the same for PS 98, which was very near her second residence, on West 212th Street. Occasionally in these play areas a man would expose himself. Rose was alert to such acts or their possibility:

> My mother would tell us if we were walking home from a girlfriend's house at night, to walk in the street, not on the sidewalk, because she said someone could grab you, like from the bushes. There was no real danger of getting hurt from cars.

When at the age of ten Rose and her family moved to Seaman Avenue and 218th Street, her play changed markedly. She left behind for good her old play places east of Broadway and became closely familiar with Isham park.

> That park was like a flower garden. It was tended by a caretaker who lived in a lovely cottage there. We had all arbors through the walks, and in June there was

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> roses that I remember very well. Except for the real wintertime, there were always flowers. Pretty walks -- that's all that I remember it being. There was nothing else to do. You couldn't really play there, it would be out of place. At least in front of the house you could play games.

The location of her new home, of course, also put her in close touch with Inwood Hill Park:

> We would run around the woods, playing Indian, or go and look at the water. It wasn't even called a park, Inwood Park -- it was just "the woods." We used to go to see the Indians. I never went alone, though. I was always scared of the Indians. But I did enjoy playing in the caves with my friends, and I did often stop to look at the tulip tree.
>
> Q: Did you ride your bicycle in Inwood Hill Park?
>
> No, it was impossible to ride it there. There were no paved paths like there are now, only dirt paths. You wouldn't really ride a bicycle there. But I would ride my bike down to Dyckman Street, and then to Riverside Drive.
>
> Q: When you would walk through the park, did you ever go as far as the Hudson River?
>
> No, the Hudson was inaccessible.

Asked if there were places she disliked as a child, Mrs. Mulligan said that there were. She disliked certain streets because of the people who lived there: "There was just a different class there."

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Fred Tarzian (b. 1917)

The Tarzians moved to Inwood in 1925 and settled on Vermilyea Avenue between and Academy and West 204th Streets. The family consisted of eight-year-old Fred, his three-year-old sister, his mother, step-father and uncle. Two years later another half-sibling of Fred's -- a brother -- was born. Both Fred's mother and stepfather were from Armenia. The Tarzians were poor. The father had lost his job due to illness and Mr. Tarzian is unclear as to how the family supported itself.

When not helping his parents by taking care of the younger children in his family, Fred had complete freedom to "go anywhere and play all over Inwood" when he moved there. His favorite play places were the nearby empty lots:

> In one there was a tremendous hill -- maybe a seven- or eight-storey hill. This was bounded by 204th Street on the south, 207th on the north, Sherman Avenue on the west and Post on the east.
>
> Other empty lots had hills and valleys, too. Since there were a lot of empty lots, we played there mostly. There was a lot of wood and old trees around, and we would make fires and cook potatoes, which we called "mickies," and so we had these roasted potatoes which were delicious. We would also use old crates to make go-carts, and race them down the street. I had a hammer. Used to make all kinds of things. I had a grand time making things. At that time the vegetable stores, the grocery stores, used lots of wooden boxes. That's where we got our boxes.

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These empty lots were rapidly being filled with apartment houses. Yet Fred saw the change in the landscape not as a loss but as an opening for new adventures:

> Q: Did you feel that your play areas were disappearing when everything got built up?
>
> Well, I didn't think about it a lot. We still had a lot of room to move around about. In other words, we ran up and down the buildings where the hills used to be. There were no locks on the doors downstairs, no locks on the doors to the roofs. You could go from roof to roof.
>
> I liked the idea that new buildings were going up all the time. I liked to watch the construction. When they built the Independent subway, the workers built a shaft from Broadway to Vermilyea Avenue along Academy Street, where I lived. When the subway tunnel was dug and the tracks were not yet laid, I used to go walking through it. There was nothing but mud. I walked under Broadway all the way from Academy Street to Dyckman.
>
> Many of the workers were blacks. They were tall men, well-built, and I was so happy to volunteer to be their water boy! They would work very hard, and they loved to drink water. And I loved watching the water being drunk! I would run back and forth, bringing them water. They -- and maybe I -- helped build that subway.

The boys on Fred's block were from a strikingly diverse ethnic population:

> We had Australian, we had Chinese, we had Jewish, we had Indian, we had a New Zealander, we had a Japanese and a Czechoslovak, and we all got along nicely together. But however on the other side of the street the boys were mostly Irish and German.

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The schoolyard of PS 52, just up Vermilyea Avenue from Fred's home, attracted him and his playmates during the summer:

> In the schoolyard they had a summer program where children could play games in the schoolyard and there would be instructors there to show them how to play different games and supply them with games. They also taught you how to make baskets -- basket-weaving and things like that.

Vermilyea Avenue contained another summer activity as well:

> During the summer the firemen on Vermilyea Avenue would put out a shower -- rig it up over the sidewalk -- and the children would -- in the middle of the street the children would put their bathing suits on and run under the shower to keep cool.
>
> However, I couldn't do that because I didn't have a bathing suit. (By the way, that was also why I couldn't go to the Miramar Pool. That and the fact that I of course could never afford it. But I did go there and look through the fence). Anyway, since my friends and I had no suits, we eventually found out that up at PS 98 next to the gym there was a shower room. So we would go there instead, take off all our clothes, turn on all the showers, and run all around. It was so wonderfully cool! We were so happy because we had no suits or money to go to the private pool.

There were few obstacles to winter play activities on the street, however:

> The snow would be plowed -- there weren't too many people who owned cars in those days, so the snow plows would shove the snow to one side and we would build forts. And we would have forts maybe six or

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> seven feet high. We would have snowball fights across the streets.

Spaces between buildings did not figure very prominently in Fred's use of his environment. He gives this reason:

> The backyards were the superintendents' the janitors' domain. And if you went there, you really just ran through. Sometimes there were dogs there. And if there weren't dogs there, you just ran through. You were like an interloper.

When Fred was about twelve (1929), his family moved to 207th St and Seaman Avenue, to a building that abutted Inwood Hill Park:

> When we moved, that changed everything. I didn't go back to Vermilyea -- wait, I think I did once, and found the boys were beginning to hang around, going to beer gardens, smoking, so I never went back again. Moving near the park was the best thing my mother could have done. She was one smart lady.

The move of a mere three blocks had put Fred in touch with a completely new setting in which he delighted. Although his family had gone to Inwood Hill Park for an occasional picnic, Fred now had daily contact with the place. One day he built a raft and carried it down to the shoreline of the Spuyten Duyvil Creek, where extensive construction was going on -- the work that was dumping the earth from the subway excavations. In a part of the creek that had been blocked off by rock, Fred put in his raft and floated for a while. The spot was also used by boys

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for swimming, but Fred did not join them:

> Swimming Spuyten Duyvil Creek was a pretty dangerous thing to do. Every once in a while we would have a drowning, where they would try to swim from the Manhattan side to the Bronx side. The current was so fast there that it was dangerous to swim when the tide was strong going in or out. If you swam when the tide was not changing you had a pretty good chance of getting over there if you were a good swimmer. But it was a dangerous thing to do.

Fred ranged the entire park:

> There were a lot of people living in the park in private houses. They may have been considered squatters or they might have been legitimate. One building was an outdoor classroom for children taking painting lessons. The City built that. There was also a red brick building, which was like for confinement for wayward girls, and was a red brick building, which was very gloomy. It was a horrifying-looking place with iron bars on all the windows, but it was located on the highest point in Inwood Park, which overlooked the Hudson River, which had a fine view, and eventually it was torn down.
>
> In addition, there was a man -- also an Armenian -- who lived all alone in the park -- a hermit. But he wasn't really a hermit, he was a very sociable man. He lived in a one-room little house, a house he had built. He had several beehives and he would collect the honey and sell it to the people who came up there. He would also collect grape leaves and sell them, and a lot of the neighborhood knew about him.
>
> Q: How did you get to know this man?
>
> Well, by walking through the park. It also happens that I'm Armenian, too, and so I was able to converse with him in Armenian as well as English. He also had

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several cats, which was -- he had pets and was a very nice man. He had several fingers missing from one hand, but he was a very competent, sociable person.

And a lot of the men of the neighborhood would like to go up to his house in the late afternoon when they came home from work, and they would build a fire outdoors, and they would cook their evening meal up there, which was very nice, and sometimes they would share it with me.

And at that time there was a little bungalow in the center of the park, near the Indian caves, along the shore, and the bungalow was partially a museum of Indian artifacts. There were also uniforms from the Revolutionary War as well as muskets, bows and arrows, and there was a pot bellied stove there.

In the wintertime I loved to go down there in my snowshoes, take my shoes off and put my feet up on the pot bellied stove, and sit and read books from their early American library. They had a lot of James Fenimore Cooper books which I read and the people who lived there were a Cherokee Indian Princess. Her name was Naomi, and she lived there with her son. His name is Bill Kinnidy -- K-I-N-N-I-D-Y -- and he was a professional boxer. And sometimes in the late evening when he got home from work he would put a punching bag out on the trees and he would practice punching the bag.

Q: How did you find this place? Did you just -- ?

Well, all you had to do was just walk into the park. And you couldn't miss it. There was a spring nearby. We would always go down and fill up our cider jugs with water and take it home and everybody that visited us would love to drink from the sparkling clean water. The spring had fixed above it what looked like a tree trunk, and there was another Indian that

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> lived there, he was from Colombia, his name was Emilio Diaz. He was like a worker in the park. In the fall, on Sundays, he would have me clean the paths of fallen leaves and I would earn fifty cents. He would build what looked like tree trunks in the park, but on one side there would be a large hole. This was for garbage disposal, and he would burn the garbage in there. And he made them out of chicken wire and he would plaster and he would stain it a nice brown so it would look like a tree trunk.
>
> Also, there was a tree there easily a couple hundred years old. It was supposed to have been there when Henry Hudson sailed his Half Moon up the Hudson River, and he was supposed to have landed at that spot. There is now a plaque there.
>
> Now, I really enjoyed visiting these Indians. All my friends, in fact, considered them to be my relatives, and whenever I would go down to visit them, they would say "you're going down to visit your aunt and uncle." I loved them. They were very nice to me, they were humanistic type people. If you know anything about American Indians, you know they were very humanistic.

Not all people to be found in Inwood Hill Park were humanistic, however. Mr. Tarzian recalls one isolated, but chilling, encounter:

> On one occasion I was walking up there where the homes were and I met two boys who were also exploring the park and as we kept walking we saw a gang of boys running toward us and one of them I recognized from Academy Street. We didn't run away even though they were running toward us. But we should have run because they caught up to us and tied us hand and foot. They took us into a -- one of the buildings, and they took us upstairs above an old carriage house.

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Q: Was this building abandoned?

Well, it was a carriage house, basically. It was not a living accommodation, so there were other houses nearby, but this was some distance away.

So they tied us to a loft up against the beams of the building and they started to beat us with sticks and clubs and things like that. Finally, the other boys with me had a little money, so they let them go. But they kept me there for hours until it got dark, beating me up. Then finally they let me go. I ran home. I ran to my father, but my father didn't know what to do. And, actually, he did nothing. So I was very disappointed so I felt, he's my father, he could do something. But actually, there was nothing he could do.

Q: Did that incident change the way you felt about the neighborhood?

No, no. It had nothing to do with the neighborhood. It was just, you have to be more careful as to the kind of people you feel you can trust. You can't trust everybody. And you really can not. Because this is not a wonderful world where everybody is trustworthy. A lot of unscrupulous people around. But also a lot of good people around.

Mary Miller (b. 1918)

The Millers moved to Inwood from Harlem in 1918, settling on Academy Street near Post Avenue. The family at that time consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Miller, Mary and one grandparent. In 1926, a cousin, Margaret, then an infant, joined the family permanently and the two girls grew up together "like we were sisters." That year the

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newly-expanded Miller family moved to Isham Street just west of Broadway in order to be nearer Good Shepherd School. These were also directly across the street from Inwood Hill Park. Mr. Miller, a postal employee, was from rural Pennsylvania and had converted to Catholicism from Protestantism. Mrs. Miller was second generation Irish-American.

Mary was allowed out to play unsupervised at age six (1926), when her family moved to Seaman Avenue, and could go "anyplace." This meant she could ride her tricycle around the block, or play in either of the empty lots flanking her apartment building:

> One of the lots had rocks two storeys high. Another had rocks in the back but was flat in front. We played there every day, mostly on the flat area, not on the rocks. At the corner of 207th and Seaman there was a billboard about two storeys tall. And I had a cousin who was a walking terror -- she used to walk along the tops of the billboards and my mother used to have a heart attack!

By about age ten (1928), Inwood Hill Park was the play area Mary used most. In the winter she would sled down the hills that began at the foot of 207th Street, which was a dead end where it abutted the park. But she enjoyed other parts of the park as well:

> I used to go up in the woods with my grandfather. He would tell what were all the types of trees we were seeing, explaining the leaves and everything, show us which berries you could pick. There used to be raspberries, strawberries,

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> blueberries. You could get pails and pails of berries in the woods. And I remember we used to bring them home and my mother would stew up the berries and put them over vanilla ice cream.
>
> Up in the Indian house, that was where the Indian Princess Kennedy lived -- Naomi, I think her first name was. Now, my grandfather and her were very friendly. And my grandfather used to have tea with her. Naomi had a son, John, and he built all the rustic fences that were in the park. And outside their house there was this spring. We used to bring some home. That water was so pure, so delicious.
>
> Near Indian Road there used to be this old house -- I don't know whether it was a house or a barn or what -- made of stone. Of course, there was nothing inside. And we called it the haunted house. We used to scare one another, run in and out, all the crazy things kids do, play hide and seek.
>
> I remember when Columbia would play the Army or Navy team at Baker Field, and the visiting team would march up Seaman Avenue right along the park. Beautiful sight, marching so perfect and straight.

Isham Park was also close by and Mary frequented it as well; in addition to the June walks and the baby parades, during which the place would be crowded with baby carriages, she used the park for free play:

> We used to go sledding down what we called "Snake Hill," which is really Park Terrace West. You'd slide down to Isham Street. And if you were really brazen, you would continue all the way down to Broadway, as far as you could go, all the way to Vermilyea, sometimes all the way to Sherman. Everybody did it. I never heard about anyone getting hurt. The priests used to do it.

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> There was a section of Isham Park just across Isham Street from Good Shepherd School, and that part had a playground with equipment and everything. Just in front of it was the rocks of the park, which we could climb up and down. Since the play area wasn't fenced, we used to go back and forth from the rocks to the equipment. On the rocks you would use your imagination. Imagination was everything when we were kids: one rock would be a chair, a couch. The rocks would be our houses, our apartments and everything.
>
> They used to close off Isham Street afterschool so the kids could jump rope and skate.

In the summer Mary would go to the Miramar Pool often since "it was only a quarter." But there was another option closer to home:

> In back of one of the buildings they built a wall, it was like a square. And in the summertime they would fill it with water, and since it was on private property, not just anybody could go. But I had a girlfriend who lived in that building, and she would let me in. You had to go in through the cellar.

When she was around eleven (1929) Mary would go to the shopping area on 207th Street on either side of Broadway: Woolworth's was between Vermilyea and Sherman; Macy's Ice Cream Parlor was on Broadway; Koestler's Department Store also was on Broadway, and had pneumatic tubes, which fascinated Mary; Fay's restaurant, which Mary's mother recalled from its Harlem branch was nearby; Mr. Leavitt's grocery -- where Mary would bring an empty can to be

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filled with milk, and where Mr. Leavitt would note the purchase in his credit ledger -- was nearby. Saturdays Mary would go to the movies, usually the Loews Dyckman on 207th Street, which was so popular with the children that sometime later, when the theater was undergoing renovation, its owners set up seating, a screen and a projector in a nearby empty lot. There was even a commercial lending library:

> You could buy books there, but you could also borrow books. It was a small little store. And I was always an avid reader. And the man who ran it was Karl. I can still see him if I close my eyes: he was very, very tall, over six feet, I would say, with blond hair. The public library at that time was in a storefront on Sherman Avenue. I belonged to that, but they didn't have enough to suit me.

Despite what would appear to be Mary's considerable freedom of travel within Inwood, there were some restrictions, as Margaret would usually accompany her whether she wanted her or not: "She sort of cramped my style." Moreover, Mary's parents were "overprotective" when it came to Mary going all the way east to the Dyckman Oval; she was not allowed to do this without an adult. The parents' concern apparently was not unfounded:

> There was a time I went to dancing school. Tap dancing lessons I took! This was all part of growing up in those days -- you had to "do something." So I went to tap dancing school around the corner on Broadway.

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One time I went up to the dancing lesson, and when the class was over -- I don't know, I must have been slow changing my clothes or my shoes or whatever -- and everybody else was gone. And I saw this guy go over and lock the door. And this was not our regular dance instructor, this was another man. And he, uh, he started smiling at me, talking to me.

Something in my head clicked -- and I was only ten or eleven years old! -- that this man was up to no good. And I took the tap shoes I had in my hand, and I went over by the big window, and I said to him, "if you don't open that door, I'm going to beat on this window with these shoes, and all my father's friends are down there on the corner, and they'll come up here after you!" Of course, I had no idea who was really down there.

Well, he opened the door and he let me out! And I ran home screaming, crying like a maniac. My father, my grandfather, my uncles, they were all there and ran over to the dance school, but the guy was gone, so they spoke to the owner of the place, and there were of course apologies. But that was the end of my tap dancing days!

And then there was another time we were assigned by the school -- we were graduating so I must have been twelve -- to go around and check flowers, the price of flowers. We went to all the different florists. And I remember one florist, he was over down by the elevated, by Tenth Avenue. And I remember he was pinning flowers on us and as he was pinning them on he was giving each of us a little...rub.

So, like I say, things like this just happened; just no one talked about it. Also, we'd be playing by the school, and some man would be sitting on the bench across from us exposing himself. This is nothing new.

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3.9 Discussion

The data, both written and oral, for the years 1915-30 suggest strongly a time when when Inwood offered children a rich variety of local play settings to which they had ready access; some of these are pictured in Figs. 18, 19, 20, 21 and 22. There were, however, significant limitations to this access, and these will be discussed later in this section.

Although Inwood's play settings were many, they were not intended exclusively for children's use. Some, such as vacant lots, were transitory by-products of Inwood's still-incomplete urbanization, while others were established community recreation facilities which children shared with adults. This latter category of settings included commercial establishments (e.g., movie houses or the Miramar Swimming Pool) and facilities that were free and public (such as parks). The few settings and activities that were intended especially for children's play (e.g., the playground near Good Shepherd School, or modest, seasonal supervised schoolyard play programs) were limited in scope, allowing no active child's play to revolve around them alone. Taken together, all of these types of places and activities -- coupled with children's general freedom by age ten to explore the entire neighborhood and thus get to them -- offered a

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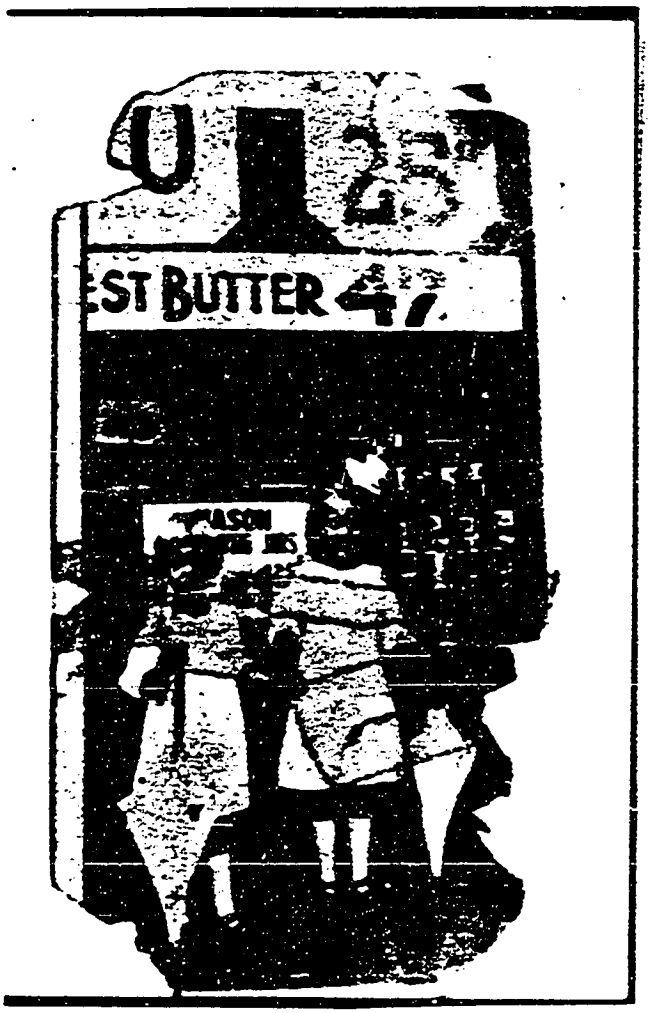


Fig. 18. Children pose before an Inwood grocery, 1930s. The proliferation of businesses beginning in the 1920s along Inwood's main streets provided a setting for play that was perhaps more refined than empty lots or woodland, as is suggested by these white-clad children's white parasols. [Source: Informant].

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Fig. 19. Street scene, 1930s. Two relatively new features of Inwood's landscape can be seen: automobiles lining the curb and, at bottom right, the disarray of construction in progress. The sawhorse and debris suggest street paving in progress. [Source: Informant].

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Fig. 20. Three girls draw pictures in a doorway, 1920s. Although stationary and sedate for the moment, girls as well as boys became absorbed in a variety of considerably more active pursuits in their community. [Source: Informant].

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Fig. 21. Three girls pose in a weedy lot on Seaman Avenue, 1930s. At rear is the west facade of Good Shepherd School, site or organized sports activities that contrasted so markedly with the free and imaginative play that took place within such empty lots. [Source: Informant].

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Fig. 22. Two very young children playing on the sidewalk next to their home. In a few short years they may be exploring the nearby woods unsupervised. [Source: Informant.

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well-balanced and accessible play landscape.

Although the Play Movement was supposed to remove commercialism from children's play, the fact was that for a child to take in the full range of settings and activities Inwood had to offer, he or she had to have some pocket money. Despite Inwood's apparent status as a middle class place, admission charges for recreation did seem to be a significant barrier to frequent use of such places, and for some children this precluded access entirely. Swimming offers one example of an activity that required spending money: although Inwood was surrounded on three sides by water, use of that resource for swimming was not practiced widely, since facilities were not provided near it. Nineteenth-century swimming areas such as the Spuyten Duyvil Creek were not used widely since they had been altered substantially by the construction of the Harlem River Ship Canal. Although for a nickel one could take a ferry ride to the Palisades Interstate Park for swimming in the Hudson, this was an option chosen mainly by families for daylong outings, and not by children, either alone or in groups, looking for a swim. The Miramar pool was another admission-charging swimming facility not accessible to all, while small, communal efforts such as the backyard swimming pool recalled by

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Mary Miller, though free, were open only to building residents and their guests. The shower hose set up by the firemen on Vermilyea Avenue was a thoughtful service frequently provided in the era before playgrounds featured wading pools for children. (They may also have been intended to provide sweltering children a legitimate alternative to opening fire hydrants; Katz, 1992). However, Fred Tarzian's lack of a swimsuit, preventing him from taking advantage of this service,shows that poverty could diminish play access even more than one might assume.

Other local recreation facilities, such as the Dyckman Oval and the movie houses, although magnets for children looking for fun, nevertheless likewise excluded children without money. Local stores were yet another environment to which children could have access only as paying customers, and it seems children used these mainly for running errands for their parents and not as places to linger (children's treatment at these businesses by the proprietors or their employees tended, however, to be considerate and even indulgent). In addition to getting oneself served at stores and at movies and such, having pocket money could also buy one's freedom from bullying captors, as Fred Tarzian's brutal experience attests.

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Of the play areas that did not charge admission, the vacant lots in particular provided a convenient and informal setting that, despite the litter to be found in them, preserved patches of Inwood's natural topography. The convenience inherent in these spaces was a product of their sheer numbers, which all but ensured that every child had one near the home. Indeed, these lots were so common that children could pick and choose the ones that suited them: rocky ones for climbing, shady ones for relaxing, billboard-shrouded ones for roasting a pilfered "micky." The debris left in some could be made into clubhouses or go-carts, or used as fuel. For those children newly allowed out unsupervised, these readily-available lots provided an important transitional space for those between the age when they had to play on the block and later ages, when they could go farther. Their lots were spacious and unruly enough to be satisfying, yet close enough to the home not to involve trips off the block.

Children living in the flat gridwork of Inwood's central valley did not have parks close at hand, and so tended to experience them as they experienced Palisades Interstate Park -- i.e., in family groups. Dorothy Palmer's visits to the Harlem River Speedway with her

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grandmother suggest that this linear facility was a place for watching the horse-riders -- the user group for whom the Speedway was designed -- and not an informal, accessible play space. Similarly, Isham Park, a preserved patch of Inwood's estate culture, was the focus of events requiring such a manicured setting -- e.g., picnics, band concerts, having one's picture taken, or gazing at well-tended gardens and greenhouses. In this setting "romping" was unthinkable. (Park Terrace West, or "Snake Hill," which did indeed snake through Isham park, was, however, popular for sledding).

Turning now to Inwood Hill Park: this seems to have been a complex place containing many fragments of Inwood's history and offering children many opportunities as well as restrictions. Its mansions were pleasing to the eye but detracted from Inwood Hill's feel as a public park. Abandoned houses there, however, took on the reputation of "haunted houses," which children could marvel at and explore. Springs were a thoroughly inviting natural feature.

Children's response to the "Indians" was mixed, ranging from Irma Goodwin's and Rose Mulligan's clear dislike to Mary Miller's strong fondness to Fred Tarzian's love, trust and belonging; Fred was even allowed to join the "Indians" in their maintenance work and get paid for

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it. The "Reservation's" function as both visitor center and living quarter gave the new park an ambiguous image -- welcoming yet, in a sense, private; moreover that facility's educational mission is unclear, although its ability to delight children (most children, at any rate) is apparent. The garbage dumping and other vandalism which Reginald Pelham Bolton cites does not seem to have been a factor in children's experience of the place.

Children living nearest Inwood Hill Park had by far the greatest access to it. Mary Miller, growing up across the street, had frequent contact with the park from an early age and felt quite at home throughout it. Both Rose Mulligan and Fred Tarzian moved to apartments near the park only after age ten and after having lived in the Inwood valley, and the move transformed their play patterns. For Rose, Isham Park's formal gardens and greenhouses were her newly-frequented play spots, while Fred began to spend his play time almost exclusively in Inwood Hill Park.

Organized, supervised play and recreation programs, although they did exist in Inwood, apparently were secondary to unstructured play or commercial play, and tended to be either seasonal (such as supervised summer play in the schoolyards) or, if year-round, confined to

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such weekly gatherings as Scouts. It is interesting that the only known children's playground in Inwood was found not in its park-starved central valley but rather at the edge of Isham Park directly across the street from Good Shepherd School, as an accessory to the school. This playground was thus a de-facto school playground for a parochial school that had no space for a yard of its own (and which appeared to offer no indoor recreation programs to girls). Its existence attests to the great influence of the Good Shepherd Church in local affairs. The public school playgrounds, on the other hand, although supervised in summer, appear to have lacked any type of permanent equipment; the volleyball mentioned by Elsa Brady would have required only temporary nets.

The Inwood environment, well suited to play though it was overall, still was far from free of obstacles and barriers. Girls especially had their movements curtailed by the presence, both actual and potential, of deviant men (or in Irma Goodwin's case, of sexually aggressive boys). Such strategies as walking in the middle of the street to avoid the bushes, avoiding the "bums" on the eastern edge of the area, saying "no" to men who offer candy, and a readiness to run for help characterize girls' conduct

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and suggest that freedom of movement within Inwood did not go hand-in-hand with universal trust in strangers.

Restrictions that applied to both boys and girls, though less severe than those applying only to girls, are still noteworthy: Use of back yards and alleyways was very infrequent, and for this the presence of dogs and the proprietary concerns of building superintendents was given as a reason by Fred Tarzian, while, again, sexually aggressive boys was the reason given by Irma Goodwin. Bullies, rather than deviant men, were most likely an obstacle for boys more than for girls.

The guarding of private property was also very much a part of the Inwood landscape. Guards at the Billings Estate, however, couldn't prevent Elsa Brady from sneaking around there, and the lower parts of its hill were available for sledding apparently without one's having to sneak, while the night watchman at PS 98, as recalled by Elsa Brady, was an object of pranks by boys. The guards posted to prevent looting during exhumations at the Nagle Cemetery present a striking image: a neglected spot valued by Elsa for digging up odd objects and for picking violets was turned into something so valued solely for its lucre.

Roofs were not used for play but for passing from

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building to building, and Peter Dongan's recollections of the gunfire and accidents he witnessed there may indicate one reason for their limited usefulness.

Relics of Inwood's fading rural days were of much interest to its children. The mansions -- now occupied by transients-- became mysterious "haunted houses;" this effect may be due as well to their having contrasted so sharply with the new landscape of boxy apartment houses and gleaming storefronts. Interestingly, the Dyckman House, preserved as a museum, although it may have provided such fuel for the imagination, does not seem to have been inspiring to these informants. The old Nagle family cemetery, equally historic, was abandoned and received no upkeep, yet provided opportunities for exploration and digging before it was scavenged and then obliterated. Although the working farms, such as the Benedetto farm recalled by Elsa Brady, the Sereni farm recalled by Dorothy Palmer, and the farm recalled by Irma Goodwin, were not used for play, children presumably could enter on legitimate business and on the farmers' terms, as Elsa did. (Dorothy, however, did eat cakes in an apparently abandoned barn).

Construction sites were a magnet for both boys and

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girls. Despite the frequent roping off of areas during blasting, as recalled by a few informants, these were generally accessible to children. Elsa Brady played among the construction materials on the site across the street from her apartment building but did not make nearly as frequent use of the completed schoolyard. Fred Tarzian not only found easy access to the subway tunnels under construction but put himself to work on it with the crews.

Peter Dongan's employment as a door-to-door magazine seller at age ten put him in contact with his neighborhood in a way somewhat different from those of others interviewed, since he spent much of his free time climbing stairs and knocking on doors, paid not for his time but for his sales. The rooftop scenes he witnessed -- the attempted robbery and subsequent shooting and the woman falling over the edge -- were things that most Inwood children probably would not have the opportunity to witness since they apparently did not spend much time on rooftops. Nasaw (1985) has documented how, of the considerable number of occupations open to boys from 1900 to 1920, hawking newspapers offered the most enjoyment, autonomy and street learning; after 1920, however, social reform made the life of the newsboy less independent and adventurous. Peter's afterschool rounds, confined to his

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relatively quiet residential district and not to such raucous places as Herald Square or South Ferry was but a vestige of the rampant child labor of the pre-1920 era of boy laborers and entrepreneurs. It gave him autonomy and income without exposing him fully to massive urban crowds. Moreover, his lack of a "work ethic," as shown by his readiness to put aside work to join a game, shows not only how he integrated work and play, but which one he was in a position to feel was the more important.

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4.0 INWOOD IN THE NEW DEAL - WORLD WAR II ERA, CIRCA 1930-45

4.1 Introduction

To talk about the Inwood of the 1920s was either to lament or marvel at how quickly its rural past was yielding to the forging of an optimistic new urban neighborhood. To talk about Inwood as it entered the 1930s and proceeded through the early 1940s, however, was to discuss a completely urban neighborhood entering maturation (Fig. 23). The new IND subway under Broadway began service on September 9, 1932 (Fischer, 1976), bringing to Inwood not only more people but new and modern businesses. One was the Capitol Coffee Shop on Broadway which by 1941 was open for business 24 hours a day. One or two doors down from it Gristede Bros. opened a supermarket, while on Sherman Avenue the A & P Company opened a "self- service market."

Other signs of modernization were evident: on May 17, 1939 at Baker Field the Columbia-Princeton baseball game was televised by the National Broadcasting Company (N.B.C.) -- the first televised sports event in American history ("Baker Field," 1973). Good Shepherd Church was modernizing: having outgrown its simple wooden building set in its yard, the congregation was replacing that

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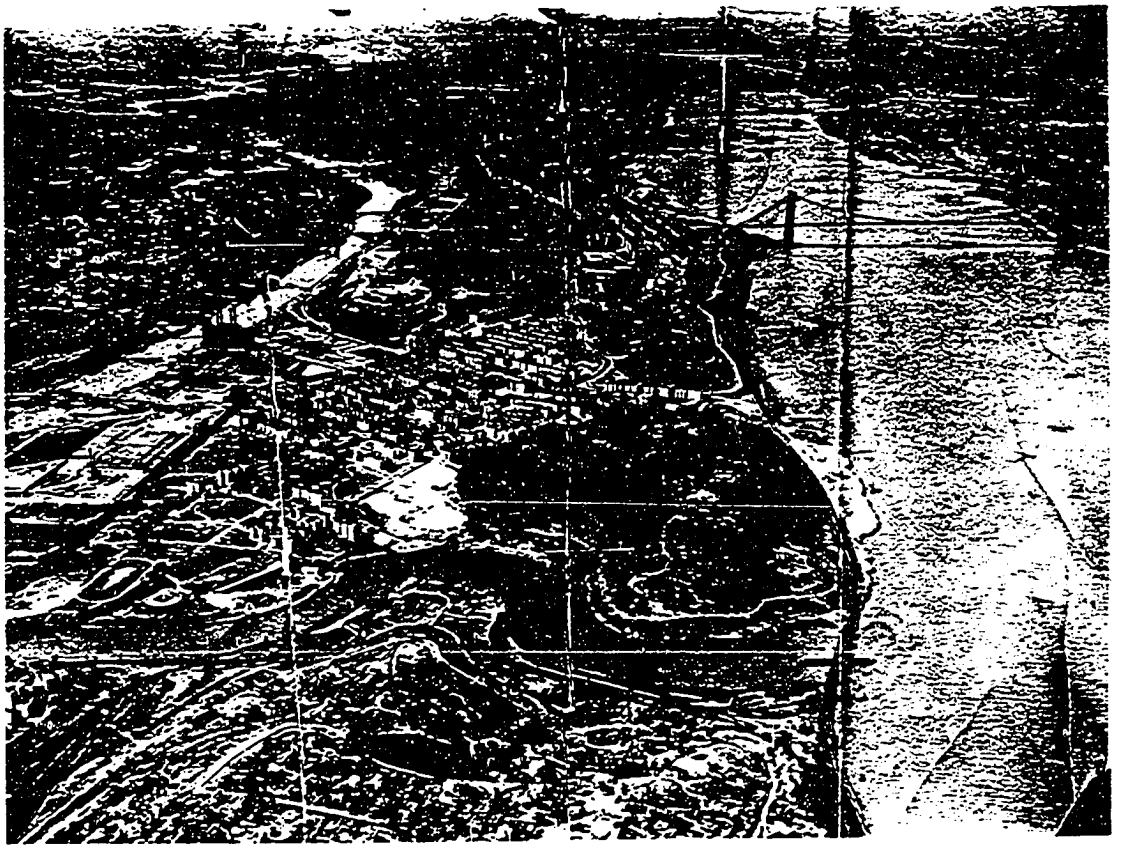


Fig. 23. Aerial view of Inwood, looking south from over the Bronx, circa 1933. The large mound at center is Inwood Hill Park. Much of the new housing is nestled between it and the Highbridge Park ridge beyond. The white spots of land on either side of Inwood Hill Park are where landfill is being applied. [Source: Bronx County Historical Society].

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structure with a newer, larger and far more imposing stone building, one which loomed over Inwood's central valley. The Mount Washington Presbyterian Church summed up Inwood's new face as early as 1932:

> Recent years have wrought great changes at Inwood. The last decade especially covers its transformation from village simplicity to metropolitan complexity and confusion. (No page numbers).

Statistics from the U.S. Census attest to this condition. Inwood's population increased from nearly 39 thousand in 1930 to nearly 51 thousand in 1940, a gain of 31 percent (Table 3). This increase, although not as spectacular as the 162 percent gain seen during the 1920s, did put the the number of Inwoodians near its limit, as it was never to rise much higher. The number of children aged five to 14, however, didn't keep pace with the increase in the total population, a phenomenon that was most likely a result of the great depression. The number of such children increased from 5,549 in 1930 to only 5,874 in 1940 -- an increase of less than five percent, a negligible gain considering the great increase in residents generally. Where children in this age range composed 14.3 percent of Inwood's population in 1930, they composed only 11.6 percent in 1940. Inwood was certainly growing, but even so its children must certainly have

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Year	Population	% Change
1915	7,553	---
1920	14,784	96
1930	38,767	162
1940	50,711	31

Table 3. Population trends, 1915 to 1940.

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been becoming less in evidence amid this final burst of growth.

4.2 The New Deal, the New Play and Inwood

The great stock market crash of 1929 shook the capitalist world. Occupying the same island as Wall Street and sitting a mere eleven miles north of it, Inwood was, of course, shaken as well. Along the Hudson River homeless people set up tents (Kisseloff, 1989). Peter Dongan, who as a boy in Inwood sold magazines after school, and whose testimony was presented in the previous chapter, recalls witnessing hardship:

> I developed an acute awareness of the great depression in Inwood. I have vivid memories of seeing people's possessions carried out of their homes and deposited on the curb, and usually without terribly much preparation. The Sheriff would appear and say "you're evicted" and there was no time to pack. So you would have a rather tearful scene, with people sitting on the sidewalk amidst their belongings.
>
> It was a practice for people to go around the neighborhood and ring doorbells and say "we've been thrown out of our house," and collect a dollar here, a dollar there, whatever people could give, and get themselves moved back in again.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal program for national economic and social recovery, in which government was to become unprecedentedly active in organizing and overseeing national affairs, was also to

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affect Inwood profoundly. The term "New Deal" originated with Roosevelt's June, 1932 acceptance speech for the Democratic Party presidential nomination in Chicago, in which he pledged to reverse the depression (Zinn, 1965).

The New Deal's economic strategy -- instituting shorter work hours, recognizing labor unions and establishing social security -- certainly provided crucial help to Inwoodians, although probably no more or less so than for, say, Iowans or Californians. For these facets of economic justice were linked to the New Deal's work in banking, finance, insurance and the like, and to its stimulation of business activity and investment. But the New Deal also had an environmental commitment (its Civilian Conservation Corps, or C.C.C., for example, was among the first of its programs; Zinn, 1965). This represented an intensified interest on the part of the federal government in park construction, play, recreation and leisure, as well as its initial foray into national urban policy. It was in this second, environmental respect that Inwood was to be changed distinctively by the New Deal.

The New Deal was in many ways the final achievement of the reform movement that had begun in the mid-nineteenth century. During the height of its activity (1933 to 1939) the New Deal was to achieve to an astounding degree the

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centralization and professionalization of government and its removal from the wheelings and dealings of local politics -- something the reformers had long clamored for (Mollenkopf, 1978). In urban affairs, the New Deal was activated by four principal acts of Congress under which four separate bureaucratic entities were to assume substantial control over national resources. These were the Public Works Administration (P.W.A.), established through one of the sections of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933; the Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.), established by the Emergency Relief Appropriations Act of 1935; the P.W.A. Emergency Housing Division, (which later became the U.S. Housing Authority (U.S.H.A.) through the Housing Act of 1937; and the Federal Housing Administration (F.H.A.), established by the National Housing Act of 1934. According to Mollenkopf (1983) "through these legislative titles, the federal government began all the basic activities which we have come to call 'national urban policy'" (p. 65).

The impact of these programs on play and recreation was staggering: Through September, 1937, the W.P.A. undertook over twelve thousand parks and recreation projects costing over one half billion dollars; this represented six percent of the total WPA outlays for that period (Butler, 1940). In the fall of 1937, fully 16,000

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youths were put to work by the National Youth Administration on parks and recreation programs, a force that represented 13 percent of that program's total force (Butler, 1940). A partial breakdown of this effort in terms of actual facilities completed is given by Boyle (1963): "10,000 tennis courts, 3026 athletic fields, 2261 horseshoe courts, 1817 handball courts, 805 swimming pools, 318 ski trails and 254 golf courses" (P. 43).

As this list clearly shows, the New Deal philosophy of parks, play and recreation was oriented directly toward active recreation -- chiefly competitive sports, but embracing also such activities as hiking (for national parks were greatly expanded). By 1930, the forty years' momentum of the play movement, coupled with great economic expansion, had done its work; most people in the Unites States had progressed from regarding play as something to be had by carving precious time from an overwhelming workday or work week, to incorporating it into their daily, weekly, or yearly plans. Indeed, the "play" movement had taken a back seat to such concepts as "recreation" and "leisure," terms which connoted not the childlike spontaneity of games but well-planned and well-equipped pursuits. A telling example of this can be found in the name changes of the Playground Association of

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America: founded in 1907, it changed in 1929 to the Playground and Recreation Association of America; one year after that, it changed its name again, to the National Recreation Association (Butler, 1940). Although in the 1850s -- the times of Olmsted and Vaux's design of Central Park -- journalists would refer to that park as "a playground," and where as recently as the mid-1920s the same term could be used for Inwood Hill Park, by the 1930s the word "playground" became the term for only one thing -- a fenced, roofless patch of ground set aside and equipped for children to swing and slide in. Adults (often with children in tow) "pursued leisure" and "sought recreation" but no longer played. Play was for children.

Changes in design and in public taste went with changes in the goals and attitudes of the play, recreation and leisure professions. Notions, already weakened during the prosperous 1920s, of play and recreation as tools for "character building," "moral uplift," or "Americanization," as well as the idea that parks were for gentle pursuits such as strolling and gazing at scenery, were, during the New Deal, discarded almost entirely. New York was perhaps the first large city to embrace this change fully and eagerly (Cranz, 1982). Among the planners and administrators who operated within the framework of the New Deal there was an understanding that

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play and recreation were legitimate pursuits in their own rights and an awareness of the daunting public task of accommodating them (see Cranz, 1982; Cutler, 1988). The shorter work week legislated by the National Recovery Administration (N.R.A.) and the still-declining rate of child and youth employment served to increase pressure on government to make sure that community recreation facilities offering physical exercise were readily available. It could no longer be left for advocates of the poor to argue the case for play and recreation before indifferent local politicians, or for churches, synagogues and charities to try to muster whatever services they could (see McGill, 1944). As Eugene T. Lies (1932, December 3) of the National Recreation Association, wrote in a landmark essay in the Sunday New York Times:

> The policy of laissez-faire apparently is no more workable for leisure than it has proved to be for industry and business. Community and governmental action had been found to be necessary either to create or restore opportunities for recreation (p. 3).

During the six short years of New Deal, New York City was to reap an enormous share of federal funds (it captured fully one seventh of the budget of the W.P.A.; Reiss, 1989), much of it for play, recreation and leisure programs and facilities. The City would have its parks landscape completely overhauled and substantially expanded

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through land acquisition and landfill, for parks were to account for the greatest expenditure of its W.P.A. funds (McGill, 1940). As it happened, Inwood was to be the site of one of the era's most significant projects in New York City, and for a large portion of the population that used its parks, the neighborhood would never again be even remotely as it was.

4.3 Inwood Hill Park Transformed

In 1932, as Inwood Hill Park was on the verge of being turned from surplus land into a recreation facility, Reginald Pelham Bolton (1932) wondered:

> What shall be done with this unique piece of land to make it as useful and accessible to the people as possible without serious damage to its present character? For if ever there was a site that suggested its own treatment it is this. It could be leveled off and smoothed down at vast expense and filled with straight or meandering walks and drives and smug lawns and "scrubbery," but it would resent such treatment by becoming banal and uninteresting, dull and commonplace. (P. x).

Bolton was not alone in his apprehension. In the years since Inwood Hill Park's designation in 1917 and expansion in 1926, park- lovers -- both those who lived in Inwood and those who didn't -- had reason for concern over what direction the park would take in becoming a finished

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product. At the time of the stock market crash of 1929, Inwood Hill Park was changed only slightly from what it had been thirty years earlier. Steep dirt roads hostile to cars, and the mansions alongside them, still were its dominant non-natural features. Facilities were lacking; steep, rugged areas remained secluded, and visitors could fill their cider jugs from any of several springs. True, the landfills along its western and eastern edges were changing the place by creating flat recreation areas, but the interior remained in a suspended state.

A Parkway and Bridge

By 1931 the suspense was over. Even before the New Deal, the depression had not hindered public works projects, and the plan for a vehicular bridge carrying a motor parkway over the Spuyten Duyvil Creek was made final by the City that year, as part of the ambitious West Side Improvement project. This initiative was designed to turn the west side of Manhattan north of 72nd Street into a finished park and parkway zone,

The route of the parkway as it approached the proposed Hendrick Hudson Memorial Bridge was to be through the heart of Inwood Hill Park, and the bridge was to leap from its bluff to another in the Bronx across the Canal. Unlike the old railroad bridge below,

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it would be so high as never to have to be swung or drawn open to let ships pass.

In 1931, in preparation for construction, most of the park's structures -- 97 in all -- were either removed or destroyed (City of New York Parks and Recreation, no date) (Fig. 24). In December, under a massive relief program, one thousand heads of households -- "men with families or dependents who were facing destitution" -- were given jobs preparing the way for the bridge and highway ("Park Project," 1931, p. 20). According to a Park Department official, these workers cut dead trees for firewood for the needy, made clearings, and created or repaired trails. The work was intentionally crude; the object was to put people to work quickly and, in the words of the official, to "open up the way for landscaping later on" ("Park Project," 1931, p. 20).

Public reaction to the plan for the park was fiercely negative, however. Early in 1931, the Park Association of the City of New York, learning of it, wrote a letter of protest to Mayor James Walker, noting that the "invasion" of a 100 foot wide highway would take about nine and a half acres from the park, and that "traffic relief" -- both in Inwood Hill Park and in other parks -- was no justification for it. The Association also reminded the Mayor that the demolition of the park's old structures,

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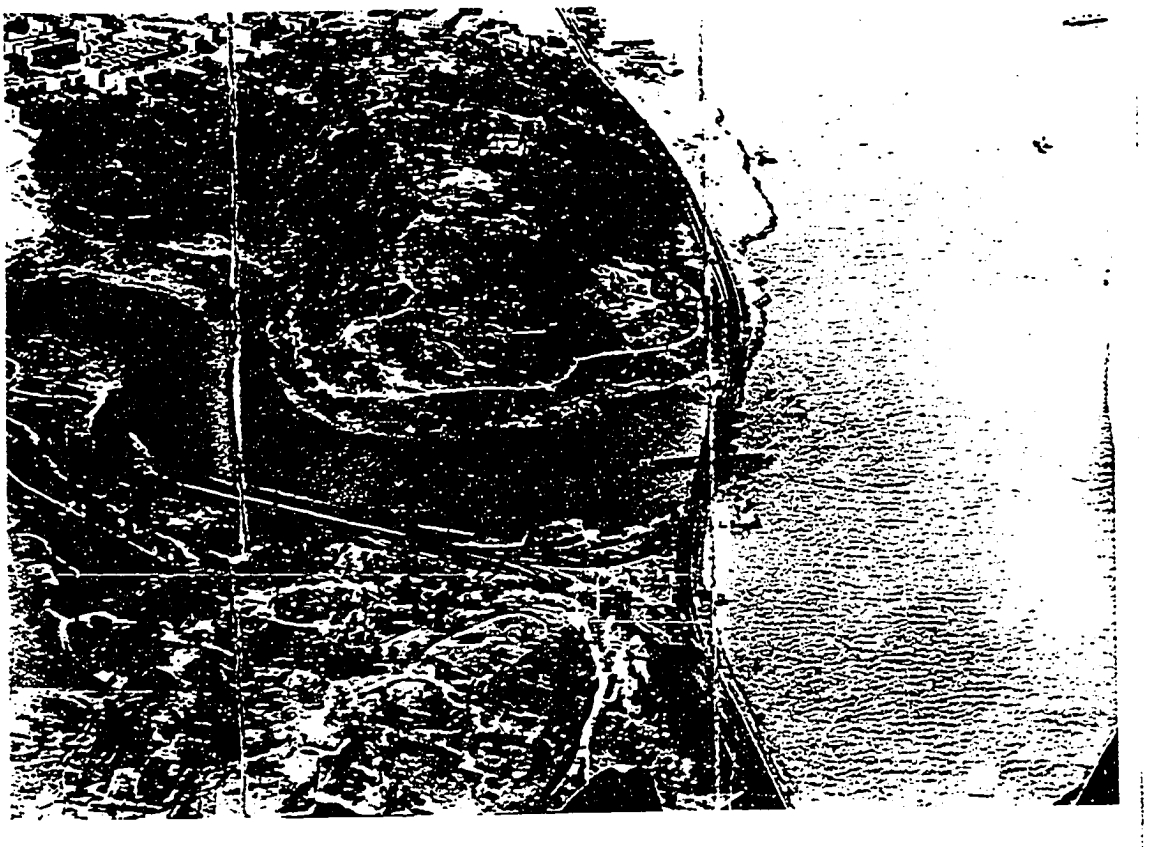


Fig. 24. Aerial view of lower Riverdale (Bronx) and Inwood Hill Park, top, circa 1933. Many of the park's mansions appear to have been cleared. Soon the Henry Hudson Parkway will be cut through the forest and the Henry Hudson Bridge erected to the left of the railroad bridge at center. [Source: Bronx County Historical Soceity].

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promised from the start, was intended originally to aid the preservation of the parks woodlands, and not to clear a right-of-way for a "huge highway" ("Highway Opposed," 1931).

For the next five years the parks advocates were to be in constant bitter conflict with government over the future of Inwood Hill Park. This had two closely related parts: disagreement over the placement of the parkway and disagreement over the future look and function of the park as a whole. On the issue of the parkway, opponents argued that far less destructive routes were readily available. One of these would have had the parkway built directly over the New York Central tracks by the Hudson River, as provided for by an officially overlooked prior agreement between the City and the Railroad ("Highway Opposed," 1931). Another would have had the road take up a strip of relatively flat land along the park's eastern edge and cross the Harlem River Ship Canal via a drawbridge (Caro, 1974). Critics also saw rough and careless handling of the park's natural landscape at the hands of the work crews. A brief article that appeared in The New York Times captures the tone of this debate ("Charges Inwood Park," 1932), and for that reason is worthy of somewhat extended quotation:

> A controversy over whether the Park Department's efforts to make a modern park of Inwood Park were "defacing" the park

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> and "laying waste to its natural beauty" or "making a natural woodland" of the area broke out yesterday between Arthur Schweider, a member of Inwood park Local Park Board 250 and Walter Herrick, Commissioner of Parks...
>
> Mr. Schweider, an artist, of 80 West 40th Street, who said his complaints were shared by other artists and residents in the vicinity of the park, charged that old trees had been cut down, sections of sod torn up and beautiful hedges, which formerly enclosed the old mansions in the park, removed to destinations that could not be learned.
>
> "Only one old tree was cut down and that would have died within six months," Mr. Herrick said. "The only sod taken up was that in the strips laid out for woodland trails."
>
> Mr Herrick asserted he had inspected the work done on the project and was certain the park was not being defaced. The complaints probably came from artists disturbed by the workmen, he said. (P. 19).

If the parkway and bridge opponents thought they could get the City to listen to them, they were mistaken. Although the near-ruinous financial troubles of the West Side Improvement provided a momentary reprieve, by 1934 not only had it been resurrected, but the rules of the game changed completely. No longer were critics dealing with something so loosely-assembled and politically vulnerable as the City of New York; they were confronted instead a monolithic force, one man: Robert Moses (1888- 1981).

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According to several sources (e.g., Caro, 1974; Cook, 1961; Lowe, 1967), Moses, through his masterly manipulation of state and local government legislation, had created for himself a position of control over public works in New York City that was virtually absolute.

By 1934 Moses had assumed control over every aspect of the West Side Improvement: he was not only the City Parks Commissioner but Chairman of the Henry Hudson Parkway Authority (the name of the Hendrick Hudson Memorial Bridge had been simplified to the Henry Hudson Bridge), which Moses himself had created. The existence of the Parkway Authority was due to a peculiarity in state government that since 1921 had allowed it to create such Authorities in order to perform specific construction and administrative functions wholly outside the consent and oversight of the voters and their elected officials. As an Authority chairman, Moses was no mere administrator carrying out government policies -- policies which were, after all, the inevitable result of countless squabbles and compromises. He was instead a visionary who used the machinery of government brilliantly to execute public works projects as he -- and he alone -- saw fit. Moses' reputation as "the man who cut red tape" and "the man who got things done" was well-deserved. Whether what he actually got done was even worth doing was a matter of

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dispute.

A landscape mandated by Moses had two main distinguishing elements: a preponderance of active recreation facilities over simpler passive recreation in natural or naturalistic surroundings, and a deference to the rights of the motorist over the pedestrian or mass transit rider, both of which concepts were inherently threatening to Inwood Hill Park. (Another element -- a consistent robbing of blacks of anything but a minuscule share in his public works -- was present consistently as well; Caro, 1974). Handsome, well-connected, sharp-tongued and deceiving, Moses was far ahead of his time in insulating his actions from any entanglement public debate scrutiny.

In 1934 Moses was evicting the last human occupants from Inwood Hill Park, including the houseboaters and the Jewish Memorial Hospital. When the houseboaters sought a delay, Moses dismissed them in the following terms: "We're working in a congested city, not going through cornfields. If we listened to every request for a delay we'd never get anywhere" ("Parks Comes First," 1934, p. 23). By 1935, Moses had hundreds of relief workers in the park clearing the right-of-way for the road and bridge, and civic organizations faulted his failure to consult them. One member of such a group asked rhetorically "Is

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Commissioner Moses the only wise man in the city?" ("Moses Defends," 1935, p. 17). In one instance, the opponents of the road and bridge

> demanded that Moses hold a public hearing on his plans, and threatened to file a taxpayers' suit to obtain an injunction if he did not agree to hold one. Moses agreed. He set a date two weeks away. And then, during those two weeks, he cut down hundreds of trees for the right of way (Caro, 1974, p. 548).

According to Caro (1974), Moses, an impatient man under any circumstances, was especially anxious to fix the route of the West Side Improvement since he was in a scramble to justify its necessity to its potential financiers. In the entire Improvement project, Inwood Hill Park's road section and bridge anchor were close to the final link; Moses had built so elaborate a financial plan for it that the slightest tremor would, he felt, doom it. Moses's Henry Hudson Parkway Authority, like all public Authorities, financed its projects through issuing bonds which were offered to large private investors, who could be rewarded handsomely once the facility had produced sufficient revenue. This of course meant that the investors would have a very large and direct say over specific design decisions -- far more so than was typically the case with projects funded through the City's coffers. Although publicly Moses offered several reasons for not revising the route, his main thrust was financial;

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he told a reporter: "Anybody attempting to finance a low-level bridge competing with the present [free] bridge would be a fool. The bankers wouldn't look at him" ("Moses Defends," 1935, p. 17). To satisfy investors, Moses reasoned, the Henry Hudson Bridge would have to make a grand exit from Manhattan -- via a bluff that was some distance from the free bridge and high enough over the water for all boats to clear; bankers did not think that motorists would pay a toll for a drawbridge when a free drawbridge lay just a few football fields' lengths away.

Moses worked on the West Side Improvement, including the Henry Hudson Parkway and Bridge, with characteristic efficiency and zeal. His rapidity, which was certainly a factor in his disarming of his opponents, was almost beyond comprehension; according to Caro (1974):

> The speed with which the West Side Improvement was driven to completion was symbolized by the construction of the bridge that carried the Henry Hudson Parkway over Broadway at 253rd Street in Riverdale [the Bronx], a job that would normally have required at least a year to complete. The legislation authorizing construction of the bridge...was signed at 1PM, May 1, 1935. At 5PM that same day, Moses opened bids on the job and let the contract; at 7AM the next morning, laborers were working on the site; one midnight a few weeks later, while most Riverdalians were asleep, six seven-foot-wide steel spans that would hold the roadbed of the bridge rumbled up Broadway on huge flat floats pulled by tractors and at 5:55 AM the last rivet securing them in place over Broadway was set; when Riverdalians went to work the

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> next morning there before them was a bridge where none had existed the night before (p. 550).

Given this level of performance, it is not surprising that the Henry Hudson Bridge -- an elegantly simple steel arch connecting two wooded bluffs -- should have been opened to traffic only about four years after Moses took charge -- December 12, 1936.

That done, however, public attention turned toward the planned re-shaping of Inwood Hill Park -- the future look and function of which was still uncertain, and which was the focus of strong public emotion. This was especially so when it came to the historic cove and tulip tree. One citizen wrote to The New York Times (Hacker, 1936, November 14), that the shoreline along the cove with its "unique terrain and historical tradition," where the tulip tree still stood, should be preserved as a natural shoreline and not altered with landfill (Fig. 25). The writer cited with alarm the news he had heard telling of the old and ailing tree being slated to be cut down and its stump converted into a "rustic table," and urged that it instead be left "until the last sign of life fades from it, and even then it should be further preserved even artificially in the same location" (p. 18).

Five days later the newspaper published Moses's

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Fig. 25. Aerial view of section of Inwood (landmass at top), circa 1933. The peninsula at center right is the site of the former Johnson foundry, cleared of its structures. Canal straightening will leave it as an island, following which it will be attached to Inwood Hill Park. Baker field (with its baseball diamond, football stadium and running track) is at left. Near the upper right is the historic cove, site of the "Indial Life Reservation," soon to be obliterated by encroaching landfill from the east. [Source: The Bronx County Historical Society].

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response (Moses, 1936, November 19), in which he claimed that

> we are not reshaping Inwood Hill Park. When I became Park Commissioner I found 4,000 relief workers (of whom, incidentally, 400 were watchmen) engaged in veneering the fine wooded slopes of Inwood with so-called "improvements." Their ravages were stopped and the men reassigned to productive work...The woodland has, to a large extent, already been restored to something like its former natural beauty...I don't know where Mr. Hacker obtained his information that the old tulip tree is to be cut down. As a matter of fact, years of neglect combined with its recognized age have nearly done for this old tree. There is no intention of cutting it down while any life persists, and foresters of the Park Department believe that the spark of life can be kept in it at most for three or four more years. When it finally dies, you can be assured that the stump will not be converted into a rustic table. We do not plan to preserve the tree artificially after it dies, as naively suggested by Mr. Hacker. The petrified forest is interesting in Yellowstone Park, but will have no counterpart at Inwood Hill. (P. 24).

The last word in this particular exchange was had by a third letter writer (Norse, 1936):

> With the advent of Mr. Moses, it was hoped the ravages at Inwood would be stopped. His statement that "the woodland has, to a large extent, already been restored to something like its former natural beauty" is indeed farfetched...Does he really believe he can construct a parkway and bridge; have a large force of untrained eliminate "retaining walls, steps and path systems;" relocate and add numerous paths, and, at the same time "restore natural beauty"?...The historic cove and last bit

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> of original shore on Manhattan Island must be preserved as a natural memorial to Henry Hudson and the Indians -- there are parkways and other "recreational land" that will serve as memorials to Robert Moses. (P. 26).

Despite the acerbity of this exchange, protests had all but stopped. Moses had worn down the opposition or, more accurately, by ignoring it (or, when it suited him, by tricking it) had allowed it to exhaust itself. The next year, when a second deck was being added the bridge and an additional approach road in the park prepared, there were no protests, despite the presence in the park of what The New York Times described as "a thick brown scar run[ning] over the hill and through the woods. Trucks clamber up and down the steep slope and steam shovels are at work" ("Widened Parkway," 1937, p. 21). A third of a century later Moses was to recall the entire protest movement for Inwood Hill Park in the following flippant anecdote (Moses, 1970):

> In the path of the Henry Hudson Bridge approach in Inwood Park there was a huge, old, decayed tulip tree, said to have been there when Columbus discovered America and to have overlooked the Half Moon when Henry Hudson sailed up the river. There were other trees, many decrepit. In the middle was a kiln where an Indian princess taught ceramics under dubious auspices. She had a son who didn't work. Both were on relief, and the relief checks were delivered to the princess at a mailbox fastened to a tree. The hullabaloo about disturbing the princess, the kiln, the old tulip tree, and other flora and fauna was terrific. Among the protestants were

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> parlor conservationists who manifestly had never climbed Inwood Hill and who regarded stopping the parkway and bridge as a holy cause and a romantic escape from boredom. (P. 187).

In the years ahead, however, these lazy, unworthy "Indians" would revisit the place they had briefly reclaimed as home (Figs. 26 and 27).

One day in the early spring of 1938 a New York Times reporter visited Inwood Hill Park (which was still far from finished) to note its changes and speculate on its future (Graff, 1938). Greatly increased flat areas for recreation was one change he noted; access to the landfill area between the railroad tracks and the river, which contained baseball diamonds and a promenade along the river, was another; this was provided through two underpasses -- one beneath the southbound roadway and one beneath the northbound -- as well as by a pedestrian bridge over the tracks (Fig. 28). Until the construction of this access system, the only way to get to the new section of the park had been from the extreme western end of Dyckman Street. But, according to the reporter, despite these modern "improvements" the park as a whole retained "the homely charm of some rough woodlot on the outskirts of some small town, and the neighborhood children use it in much the same way...There are nearly 200 acres of cliff and woodland where a dog can slip his

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Fig. 26. An "Indian" entertains in Inwood Hill Park on festival day, late 1930s. No longer a resident in the park, he is standing on landfill at the park's north end. At upper left soars the new Henry Hudson Bridge. [Source: Informant].

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Fig. 27. An "Indian" entertains at festival at Inwood Hill Park, late 1930s. [Source: Informant].

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Fig. 28. Pedestrian bridge, Inwood Hill Park. To make the landfilled active recreation area along the Hudson River accessible from the woods, this structure was built over the railroad tracks. [Source: The Center For Human Environments, Inc.].

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leash or a small boy revert to the primitive" (p. 1). The reporter noted also that the "Indian 'curio' shop" was gone and that he tulip tree was dead, and predicted that Inwood Hill Park "undoubtedly will lose some of its careless, rugged qualities in the process of becoming more useful to the city's Sunday strollers" (p. 1).

The final phase in the makeover of Inwood Hill Park was to be ambitious and dramatic, and so was in keeping with the changes made so far. In 1938 the Harlem River Ship Canal was finally cut through the southward-jutting peninsula that until 1923 had supported the Johnson foundry (Tieck, 1968). However, the tip of the peninsula, being south of the canal's route, was left an island, with the waters of the canal flowing to the north and those of the old Spuyten Duyvil Creek to the south. In 1939 Moses built westward from Inwood Hill Park to within a few feet of the island, then had the two land areas linked via two very short parallel bridges; this formed an arc, the leeward side of which became a sheltered lagoon, flushed naturally through tidal action (hence the two small bridges). There, in more or less the same waters from which Moses had evicted the houseboaters, was planned a

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yacht basin with an adjoining parking lot for boat owners, which would be reached by extending West 218th Street westward, over one of the new bridges (see Fig. 29). Meanwhile, more fill -- from apartment house construction -- was added to the shoreline; the historic cove was obliterated ("New Yacht Basin," 1939).

Inwood Hill Park was overhauled according to a principal by which it would be shorn of all the structures and original shoreline contours that had characterized it for a century or more. Its cultural relics were no less brazenly removed: the only buildings there now would be playground comfort stations and the toll plaza of the Henry Hudson Bridge. "Indians" and other off-beat attractions had no permanent place in the new Inwood Hill Park.

Isham Park -- Inwood Hill Park's smaller, less rugged neighbor to the east -- also was soon remade according to this policy: In the 1940s the Isham mansion within that park, which had sheltered the generous family that donated the park and later witnessed Inwoodians in their Sunday clothes having strolls or pageants, was demolished in order to reduce the cost of the park's upkeep (City of New

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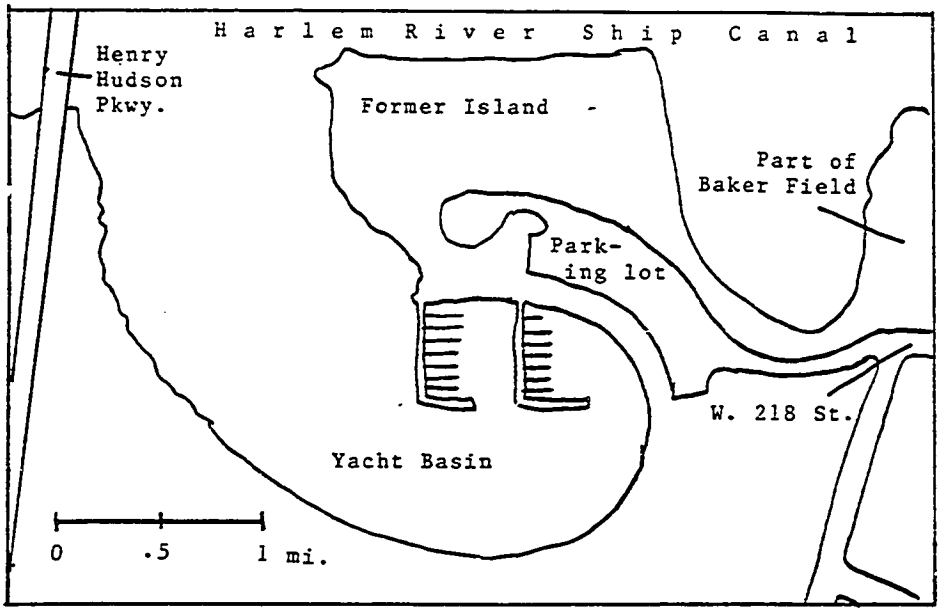


Fig. 29. Map showing former island as grafted onto the northern shoreline of Inwood Hill Park, 1939,

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York Parks and Recreation, no date). However, the gardens and greenhouses remained, and remained well-kept.

The completion of the transformation of Inwood Hill Park coincided with the completion of the New Deal itself: beginning in 1939, national attention turned increasingly toward developments in Europe and Japan. With the United States' entry into World War II in 1941 no additional New Deal initiatives were brought forth.

New Playgrounds

One of the New Deal's effects on play in New York City was to increase vastly the number of children's playgrounds there. Where in the early 1930s there had been 119 playgrounds in New York City, toward the decade's end there were 374 (Caro, 1974). Inwood itself had gained four new equipped playgrounds: three in Inwood Hill Park and one in Fort Tryon Park. None of these, significantly, was located east of Broadway; however far-reaching the New Deal was, funneled through Robert Moses it did not go so far as to condemn for playground development any building lots in Inwood's central valley (of which there were still many empty in the 1930s).

Instead, the New Deal's impact on Inwood's recreational landscape was focused only on land already

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designated as parkland -- including that which was underwater and which had to be filled in to be of use. Moses, however, apparently was not slighting Inwood's less-affluent on his own, but was merely following the general philosophy of the New Deal; this much was argued forcefully at the time by the author and urban planner Henry S. Churchill (1943), who praised the New Deal's impact on cities as creating "spectacular affairs, like Hausmann's boulevards," yet also damned them as "circuses and cake, but no bread, leaving the great living areas of the city virtually unaffected" (p. 85).

Inwood's four new playgrounds formed a string from 215th Street near the Harlem River Ship Canal to the intersection of Broadway and Riverside Drive, just south of Dyckman Street (Fig. 30). On the north was a small play area that came to be known as the "Indian Road Playground," since it was near the intersection of Indian Road and West 215th Street. This was the smallest and most simple of the four, and apparently it had no comfort station. At the western end of Isham Street and proceeding south to the dead end of 207th Street was what became known as the 207th Street Playground, built as part of an area of handball and tennis courts there. This area had a comfort station, park worker station and refreshment stand. At the Northwest corner of Payson Avenue and

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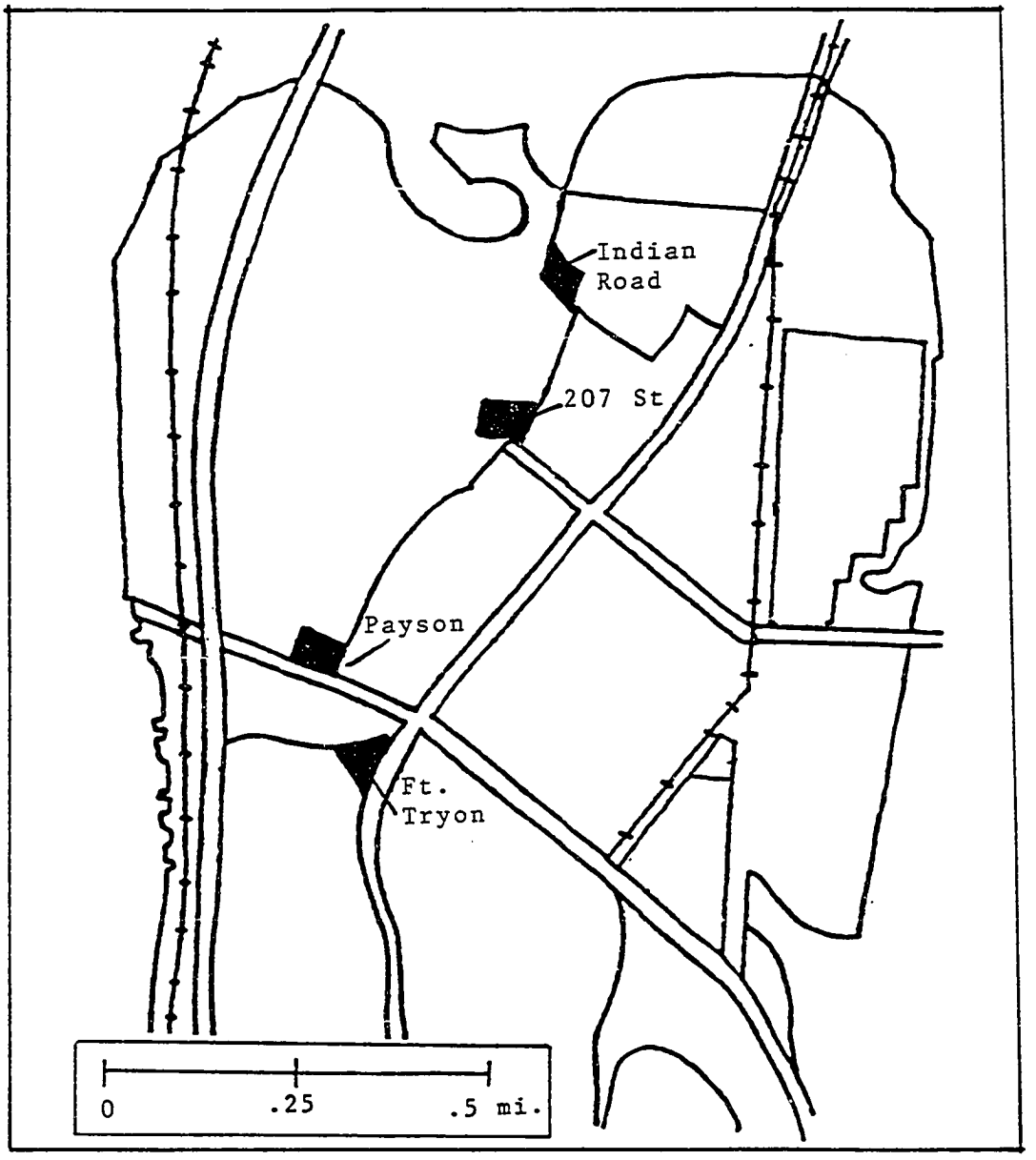


Fig. 30. Playgrounds built in Inwood as a result of the New Deal in the 1930s.

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Dyckman Street was built Payson Playground, which was larger than those at Indian Road and 207th Street. The largest of Inwood's new playgrounds was the one built as an appendage to Fort Tryon Park, on an irregular piece of land formed by the intersection of Broadway and Riverside Drive. This contained a comfort station, beyond which stairs of hewn stone lead to the wooded areas of the park (Payson Playground, by contrast, was wholly enclosed in a fence and had no such access to the woods just behind it). This playground also featured sprinklers for children, a playground feature which Caro (1974) claims had never appeared in playgrounds before the New Deal.

What characterized a New Deal playground under Robert Moses? Cutler (1988) notes two main distinguishing features in Depression playgrounds in general: the presence of a play supervisor and a strict separation of play areas from such natural features as plants and rocks. Caro (1974) describes the Moses formula for playground design in New York City in the following terms:

> A standard Park Department playground design was evolved and architects were given little leeway to deviate from it...These designs were banal, containing for the most part nothing but benches for mothers and standard "active play" equipment -- swings, seesaws, jungle gyms, wading pools, slides -- for children. The equipment was surrounded by fences that only a mother could love: either dreary chain link or high, black bars that made the playgrounds look like animal cages. And they were set in a surface that even a

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> mother had to hate -- a surface cheap to lay down and easy to maintain (that's why Moses' engineers had selected it) but hard on the knees and elbows of little boys and girls who fell on it. Comfort stations, squat and unadorned, looked like nothing so much as concrete or brick pillboxes. A neighborhood committee might request some particularly desired facility -- a bocci court, for example, for an Italian neighborhood -- but few substitutions were permitted. (Pp. 487-488).

Inwood's four new playgrounds apparently fit Caro's and Cutler's outlines to the letter. The playgrounds at Payson Avenue and at 207th Street certainly had play leaders present, although it is unclear whether the others did, too. In terms of their design, these four areas also conformed fairly closely to the New Deal pattern: All were devoid of natural features other than shade trees, and all were fenced off from surrounding natural areas of woods, grass and rocks. The architectural plans for Payson Park -- the most detailed surviving for any Inwood playground of the time -- reveal a square patch fully fenced off from the surrounding rocks and grass by a seven-foot-high iron pipe fence. The comfort station, however, unlike those of 207th Street and Fort Tryon Park, was part of an unusually elaborate and attractive stone house having space for indoor games or classes (Fig. 31).

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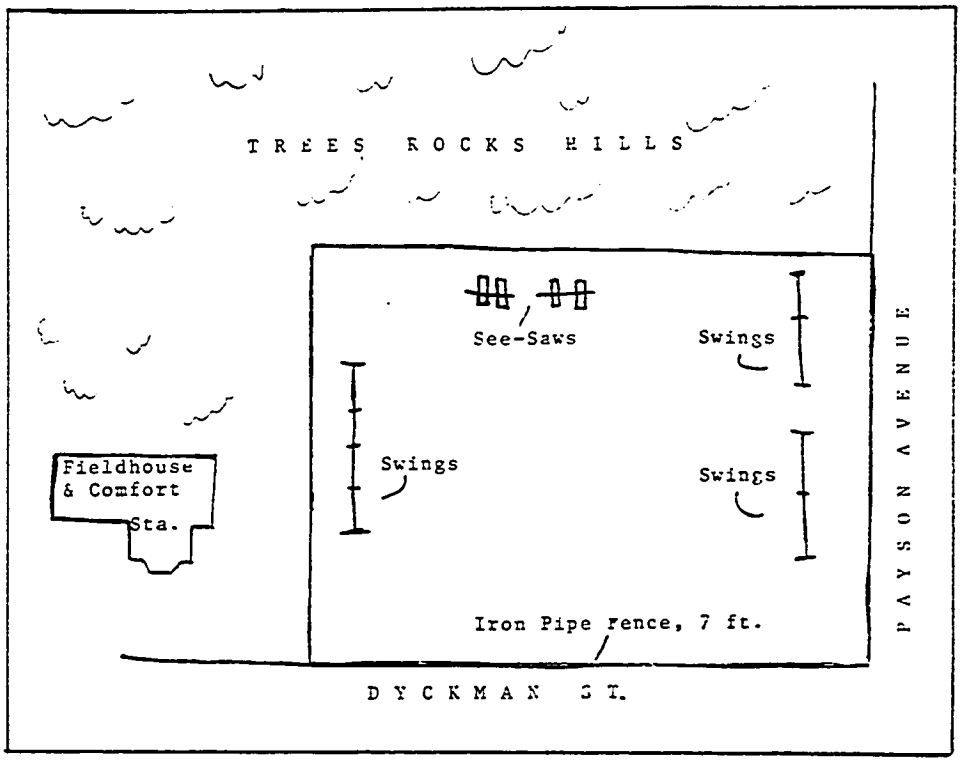


Fig. 31. Diagram of Payson Playground.

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4.4 Fort Tryon Park

Although Inwood Hill Park under the New Deal may have been "tamed for the Sunday stroller," the elaborate elegance of Fort Tryon Park made it resemble a jungle in comparison. Fort Tryon Park, unlike its neighbor, had gone directly
from a private estate to a privately-financed public museum and park; it had never housed month-to-month tenants, hermits or houseboaters, nor had it hosted solitary nature lovers or park advocates. Thus its transformation never aroused the emotion and protest that focused on Inwood Hill. Few besides its fabulously rich owners could have had many memories of ambling through the former estate or otherwise harbor any feeling that the place was in any way theirs.

The Cloisters and Fort Tryon Park were completed in time to be written up by contributors to The Federal Writers' Project (1939) in the book The WPA guide to New York City. The Guide wrote that the park

> is one of the most beautiful public parks of America -- landscaped with trees, lawns, terraces, rock gardens, paved walks, and many benches, all cleverly ordered in harmonious composition. The precision of its design is explicitly urban. The views from its heights are perhaps the finest Manhattan offers, for they sweep mile after mile of the Hudson and the Palisades, and, to the east, range across the lowlands of Inwood. (P. 302).

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The reporter, mentioned earlier, who visited Inwood Hill Park on a spring day in 1938 (Graff, 1938), also visited Fort Tryon. He found that park to be "in marked contrast" to Inwood Hill. The park's management, he noted for instance, was so concerned that the behavior of visitors should be proper that it posted a sign reading:

Let no one say, and say it to
your shame
That all was beauty here before
you came

Noting the presence of tea rooms, band stands, keep-off-the-grass signs and baby carriages, as well as "bans on dogs, roller skates, bicycles and unduly high spirits," the reporter concluded that "children and dogs do have more fun on Inwood Hill" (p. 1).

Meanwhile, in the valley between Inwood Hill and Fort Tryon Parks, cars and walkers still travelled to the end of Dyckman Street to catch the ferry to Palisades Interstate Park. Dorothy Menkin described her enjoyment of this ride in the 1930s to oral historian Jeff Kisseloff (1989):

> We loved the ferry. Sometimes, we paid one fare and went back and forth on the ferry all night. Nobody minded. We

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> danced. We had ukuleles, kazoos, and the men were singing. Sometimes we went to the Palisades and made a fire and stayed all night. I got home at six o'clock one morning. (P. 235).

The renovation of Inwood Hill Park and the completion of Fort Tryon Park came at a fortunate time for Inwoodians looking for play and recreation areas like the one accessible to Inwoodians via the ferry -- i.e., parks with benches and comfort stations, for on May 21, 1942, the ferry to Palisades Interstate Park, its equipment dilapidated, stopped running (Adams, 1983). A private operation, the ferry was not part of the New Deal's program for a public landscape.

4.5 The Catholic Youth Organization (CYO)

We turn now from the major developments in Inwood's outdoor landscape to its organized programs for children and youths. The years 1930 to 1945 were a time when play and recreation became a significant local feature in Inwood and elsewhere. Certainly, clubs for boys and for girls, in which young people took part in sports, crafts or a program of "character building," had been in existence in America since the mid- nineteenth century. However, the overt Protestantism of many of them, such as the Boy Scouts of America and the YMCA, deterred Catholics, a situation that persisted well into the 1920s

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(Macleod, 1983). Although the settlement houses provided organized recreation to many Catholic children, there was no centralized, prestigious national organization specifically for them.

This began to change after Pope Pius XI's 1929 encyclical, entitled "Christian Education and Youth," which urged supervision of all aspects of Catholic education, including recreation (Reiss, 1989). The very next year Chicago Auxiliary Bishop Bernard J. Sheil acted on this Papal imperative by founding the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) to address the Church's anxiety that the Protestant organizations were instilling their own brand of religiousity on young immigrants. Interestingly, Bishop Shiel gained public and ecclesiastic support for the C.Y.O. by portraying it to non-Catholics as a deterrent to juvenile delinquency and to Catholic Church officials as a lure to increased devotion (Riess, 1989). Clearly, play and recreation programs in the 1930s and 1940s were premised on many considerations aside from the needs of the children themselves.

The Catholic Youth Organization reached New York in 1936, when Patrick Cardinal Hayes of the Archdiocese of New York called for it in a pastoral letter in which he thundered against a vague enemy of youth. Probably he was alluding to both Communist and Fascist youth movements in

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Europe. His letter read in part:

> Youth is the hope of the world. Upon youth the future must be builded. Today in many nations youth, as never before, is being organized, regimented and zealously trained, not always in honest fashion nor always for holy ends. The world realizes that any investment in the care and training of the young pays surer, higher and wider dividends than any other work on earth. Apostles of discontent, growing daily more numerous and aggressive, openly avow their purpose of stealing our young and training them to anarchy and atheism. They offer much to youth, so much as to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Their zeal is a challenge to us. We cannot sit back and leave the field to them. We must care for and protect our own. We must be watchful shepherds. (Quoted in Archdiocese of New York (1986), no page numbers).

Inwood's Good Shepherd Church needed no such exhortation, as it had already begun organizing play and recreation for its younger parishioners. Although the parish bulletins do not mention the C.Y.O. until 1943, the church and school nevertheless were developing some well-organized extracurricular athletics for youths even before then. The earliest reference to these appeared in 1931, and refers to the Good Shepherd Athletic Club ("Good Shepherd Athletic Club," 1931):

> After a rather quiet summer the Athletic Club is once again in full swing and headed for another successful year. The clubrooms are seething with activity and every one is up and doing. The basketball games and dances which are our main attraction this coming season got under way last Wednesday night. The opening game with St. Ann's Shamrocks was quite

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thrilling...(P. 3).

The girls of Good Shepherd, it should be noted, were not relegated to cheerleading or serving as dance partners, for they had a basketball team of their own. They also had Girl Scouts: in 1943 the parish bulletin reported "We have two fully registered troops and hope to have two more shortly. We have been fortunate in having capable young women volunteer to assist us as leaders" ("Good Shepherd Girl Scouts," 1943, p. 29). The same report mentions that the troops had been "assisting at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, aiding in salvage work, making rosaries for the men in the service and altar linen for the use of the chaplains" (p. 29). The bulletin two years later ("Girl Scout Activities," 1945) reported that the troops then operating -- now numbering six -- met weekly in the school for "arts, arts and crafts, dramatics, sports and games, the out-of-door, and war service programs" (p. 31). However, it also noted that "We are urgently in need of aid to carry on the scouting program...there are vacancies for both men and women on the Troop Committees..." A year and a half later the bulletin was imploring adults to volunteer: "It is easy. All you have to do is to have a little love for children -- in other words, to be Christlike" (p. 29). Despite the apparently chronic shortage of adult volunteers,

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excursions were held: two troops

> enjoyed week-end camping trips to Camp Westover, Pearl River, during the summer. The girls were shown how to cook over a camp fire. They participated in a program of swimming, hiking, folk dancing, singing, signaling and games. These week-end trips were under the supervision of Licensed Campers, Leaders and Life Guard." ("Girl Scouts," 1946, pp. 21-22).

The one mention of the CYO for this period is in a photograph caption reading "CYO Champions" (Fig. 32). It shows a group of boys and three grown men posing not in a gymnasium but outdoors, presumably in Inwood Hill Park. In it the smiling boys, arms on teammates' shoulders, heads cocked in odd directions, look relaxed, even motley. They are in baggy play clothes; there are no uniforms other than the team undershirts worn by only six, suggesting an absence of regimentation.

4.6 The Young Men's - Young Women's Hebrew Association (YM-YWHA)

The C.Y.O. of Good Shepherd Church had a counterpart in the Young Men's-Young Women's Hebrew Association (YM-YWHA) of Washington Heights, one of the Jewish institutions in the Washington Heights-Inwood area that pre-dated the arrival of the German-speaking Jewish refugees. Founded in 1854 by wealthy German Jews and established then in the German enclave of Yorkville on

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Fig. 32. A C.Y.O team from Good Shepherd School poses in Inwood Hill Park, 1943. [Source: Church of the Good Shepherd].

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Manhattan's upper east side, the Association was intended as a Jewish counterpart to the Protestant YMCA -- meaning it would aid and help assimilate newly-arrived Jewish immigrants (Reiss, 1989).

One YM-YWHA branch was established on West 159th Street in lower Washington Heights in 1917. By 1937 this had in place a well-organized and well-attended program of activities. According to one report (Ribakove, 1937), its Junior Department (for children under 14) that year reported ping-pong tables, a game collection, crafts and painting rooms. In addition, clubs were formed in cooking, sewing (both of which were open to both boys as well as girls), chemistry and stamp collecting. Weekly movie showings drew crowds of a hundred. There was a "Junior Orchestra," a "Rhythm Band," and, somewhat curiously, "a Folk-Singing Club that became an Operetta Club" (p. 44). During the spring the nature study group took "long walks" (p. 44), while other outdoor activities included hikes and trips to such New York City attractions as the Bronx Zoo, the New York Aquarium at the Battery, and the modern Daily News building on East 42nd Street. Religious training was of course a part of the program: According to the report, "During Chanukah, the candles were lit and the blessings sung in the lobby by a different junior member each day of the holiday" (p. 44).

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The atmosphere of the "Y" seems to have been informal and the activities flexible; in the Junior Department activities were

> carried out by, for and with the juniors and each child may make a free choice to attend whatever activities interest him. New clubs are constantly being formed as a need for them is expressed. Established activities are modified to fit the needs, interests and abilities of the component members. (P. 43).

In the early 1940s an annex to the "Y" was opened in the basement of a synagogue on Vermilyea Avenue in Inwood; this lasted only through the decade, however. Although no documents pertaining to this facility are known to survive, and while people with direct experience with it could not be located for this study, The Y's current Executive Director, Martin Englisher (1991), relying on memories of past conversations with those who were involved with it, says that the Vermilyea Avenue annex followed the liberal educational philosophy of the main facility, and that the activities offered there included Boy Scout troops, arts and crafts, and probably others as well. As the basement in which it was housed had no gym, athletic space was borrowed from nearby PS 52 on Vermilyea Avenue and Academy Street. Its summer programs, according to Mr. Englisher, were especially popular:

> The "Y" had the first day camp in Inwood. We would use Highbridge Pool [which was a free Municipal pool; the Miramar was not used], or else take trips out of the city.

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> I once saw some films someone took of these trips; there were busloads, I mean busloads of kids.

4.7 A New Jewish Population and Anti-Semitism

The advent of Fascism in Germany in the 1930s had an effect on Inwood well before the entry of the United States into World War II. Jewish refugees from Hitler's Germany began entering Washington Heights in the mid-1930s, settling in its newly-built western areas, chiefly along the residential ridge immediately south of Fort Tryon Park. The influx was greatest between 1938 and 1940, when western Washington Heights took on an identity as a German-Jewish enclave, although many non-Jews settled there as well (Lowenstein, 1989).

This transition was, however, neither easy nor automatic, as landlords and their agents were at first not eager to rent to the refugees, whatever their financial means. However, with the depression having weakened the real estate market, the new and somewhat luxurious buildings of Western Washington Heights and Inwood had vacancy rates sufficient to enable the refugees to get leases. This expanding Jewish population soon leapt across Dyckman Street into Inwood. According to Lowenstein (1989), in late 1937 a German-Jewish organization called the Prospect Unity Club advertised that its 207th Street

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sport field was "in the heart of the German Jewish neighborhood" (p. 49).

Although Jewish families had been a part of the Inwood scene fairly early in its housing boom (1923 onward) and while Jews and Catholics, as discussed in an earlier chapter, gravitated toward their own respective buildings or blocks, there had apparently been no significant incidence of overt anti-Semitism. This changed, however, with the arrival of the refugees. The refugees certainly made more obvious targets for anti-Semites than had the more long-established Jews, as they differed from them in significant ways. The refugees tended to be well-educated members of the urban middle class who moved directly from such cosmopolitan cities as Frankfort into the modern, elevator-serviced buildings of upper Manhattan -- a fact which brought resentment even to fellow Jews, many of whom reached uptown, middle-class status only after enduring one or two generations of toil and discrimination in the slums downtown. A significant portion of these more established Jews, who took pride in how well they had assimilated themselves into American culture, were also somewhat embarrassed by the refugees' preference for maintaining an obviously strong sense of their cultural identity, and felt that the refugees perpetuated stereotypes of Jewish clannishness and arrogance (Lendt,

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1960). By the 1940s the refugees had established -- primarily in the Heights but also in Inwood -- a well-organized social, religious, and cultural network of synagogues and community centers, while food shops along Broadway began to stock German kosher delicacies.

The elective residential segregation of Jews and non-Jews in Washington Heights-Inwood noted by Bayor (1978) and discussed in a previous chapter, had its parallel in the two groups' respective religious and social organizations. According to Lendt (1960) "very little cooperative contacts existed between the Irish and Jews in the decade prior to World War II;" however, Lendt continues, "Contacts did exist between the small Protestant groups and the Jews" (p. 73). One important obstacle between the Jews and the Irish was political rather than religious: the Jews generally supported the New Deal policies of the Roosevelt administration while the Irish generally opposed them as socialistic (Lendt, 1960).

The German-speaking Jews who emigrated to Washington Heights and Inwood in the 1930s did so at a time of tightly restricted immigration to the United States, a process (discussed in the previous chapter) that began in the 1920s. In the 1930s and 1940s New York City, like the rest of the United States, was witnessing an unfamiliar

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rise in the proportion of U.S.-born citizens to foreign-born citizens and residents. However in Inwood (and, presumably, in Washington Heights) that process did not obtain: according to the U.S. Census, foreign-born residents made up 29 percent of Inwood's population in both 1930 and 1940, while during the same span of time the percentage of foreign born in the City as a whole declined from 33 percent to 28 percent. Inwood's countering of this trend may reasonably be attributed to the influx of German-speaking Jews.

By the late 1930s a simmering anti-Semitism in Washington Heights and Inwood erupted in violence. Kisseloff (1989), in a prefatory note to his oral history of Northern Manhattan, reports the existence of a "Buy Christian" billboard standing on Dyckman Street (p. 219). Kisseloff also obtained the following account from Adina Bernstein, who moved to Washington Heights in 1936 when in her mid-teens:

> The Irish who lived up here were very anti-Semitic. Any Jew who walked on Dyckman Street on a Saturday night, you didn't come home with a whole head. It was a very, very ugly Father Coughlin area, and it lasted, I'm sorry to say, way into the early '40s.
>
> I remember there was a movie I wanted to see at the Alpine [Theater]. I was walking along Dyckman with one of the guys from Yeshiva. Two got on either side of him and shoved from side to side, "The Jew

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> Boy! The Christ Killer!" It was an ugly time. Kikes, sheenies, whatever. It was a constant problem. They fought back, but they were outnumbered and they were ready for you. They had the rocks, the water. They were aching that someone would come down, so we just stayed away. (P. 244).

What does Ms. Bernstein mean when she says of Dyckman Street "It was a very, very ugly Father Coughlin area"? Father Charles E. Coughlin, was a Roman Catholic priest in Chicago who rose to national prominence in 1938 with his anti-Semitic and anti-Communist radio broadcasts (Bayor, 1978). In New York City he inspired the formation of the Christian Front, whose members would stand atop soap boxes on street corners rallying passersby with their sloganeering. By that time, Coughlin had lost his middle-income following and was leading mainly angry lower-income adherents. Coughlin's mixture of anti-Communism and anti-Semitism is exemplified by his

radio address on WMCA in New York on November 20, 1938, following the Kristallnacht pogrom in Germany, in which he applauded such anti-Semitic violence as protective measures against Communism.

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Coughlin and his Christian Front did not act in a vacuum. Bayor (1978) calls the Christian Front Coughlin's answer to a suggestion by Pope Pius X for a vigorous organization to inject a decidedly Catholic viewpoint into public discourse. Moreover, New York's Catholic Church officials did not condemn Coughlin's statements: Francis Cardinal Spellman, the newly-appointed Archbishop of New York, challenged to repudiate the Christian Front, remained silent (Bayor, 1978).

One of the Christian Front's original rallying points was the rectory of the Roman Catholic Church of St. Paul the Apostle, located on West 59th Street in Manhattan. The Paulist Fathers, in fact, were singled out by foes of the Christian Front as its primary supporters (Lendt, 1960). Inwood's Good Shepherd Church is Paulist as well; there is, However, no indication that Good Shepherd hosted or aided Christian Front members, although in its failure to condemn Coughlinism that church followed in the footsteps of the city's Catholic hierarchy as a whole. Paulism, moreover, seems to be an unlikely ally of Coughlinism: it is one of the more modern and sedate varieties of Roman Catholicism, having arisen not from bloody European religious strife but amid the relative religious tolerance of mid-nineteenth century America. The Congregation of Missionary Priests of St. Paul the Apostle

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was founded in 1858 by New York City-born Isaac Hecker, who had converted to Catholicism fourteen years earlier (Dolan, 1985). Paulsim stands in contrast with the much more common devotional Catholicism, which portrays God as, alternately, a fearsome punisher of unredeemed souls and beneficent worker of miracles. Paulism takes a more contemplative, spiritual and mystical view of God; the Paulist is supposed to nourish the soul through divine contemplation (Dolan, 1985).

Whether or not Good Shepherd was in any way involved with the Christian Front or other Coughlin-inspired movements, in fact one of the three locations for the Front's first three rallies, during which "agitators harangued large crowds" was the corner of Sherman Avenue and Dyckman Street, in the heart of the parish; the other two locations likewise were places where Jews and Irish lived near one another (Bayor, 1978. p. 155).

Involvement of Children and Youths

Interestingly, when the anti-Semitic diatribes in Washington Heights and Inwood proceeded to action, the phenomenon quickly metamorphosed into a crisis involving children and youths. Synagogues (and in some cases Protestant churches) were painted with swastikas, or their windows were smashed. This was done primarily by children

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aged six to thirteen. In the final three months of 1943, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith reported that "Ant-Semitic hoodlums have desecrated virtually all synagogues" in Washington Heights and Inwood ("Washington Heights Vandals," 1943, p. 3). Organized, named gangs of children and teenagers were implicated as well. In Washington Heights, The Amsterdamers, who wore "lumberjackets with their club names on them" were cited by local residents ("Post Exposure," 1944, p. 3), while in Inwood the Shamrocks, centered around Dyckman Street and Sherman Avenue, created a climate of fear.

Of greatest concern to parents and clergy was of course not the vandalism but the physical attacks on the children. Typically, a gang would approach a lone Jewish boy and ask him if he was Jewish; if the boy answered yes, they would beat him and take any money he might have. Investigators with the Anti-Defamation League compiled over fifty affidavits describing vandalism, verbal threats and assaults. One such affidavit read in part:

> Another rabbi declared that on the afternoon of Dec. 2, a horde of boys poured into Fort Washington Av., between 162nd and 163rd Sts, shouting: "All Jews get off the street!" He said an eight year old boy who did not leave quickly enough was "then attacked, beaten and left lying on the sidewalk in an apparently helpless condition." ("Washington Heights Vandals," 1943, p. 3).

During this crisis the Police Department was

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criticized roundly for not taking such incidents seriously. Victims and witnesses reported cases where police, when summoned, arrived, after a delay of hours, only to make a few brief notes and then leave, with no follow-up. (Elsewhere in the affidavit the police were said not to have responded to telephone calls for help, and that only after an hour and a half did a patrol car arrive -- but only as a matter of routine cruising and not in response to the calls). However, the negligent patrol officers were simply following the lead of their commanders; at a meeting that a "protective group" consisting of local religious leaders managed to wrest from a reluctant Police Department, the Police representative insisted, "We are unduly criticizing the present generation for being delinquent," adding that the attacks were "nothing to get excited about." The 180 community leaders attending, including "25 Negro ministers, 14 Catholic priests and many Protestant ministers and rabbis" declared the meeting a complete failure ("Washington Heights Vandals," 1943, p. 3).

The literature on this episode treats Washington Heights and Inwood as one community. Yet if one attempts to disaggregate the data, it is interesting how, despite the documented existence of strong ant-Semitic words and actions in Inwood, pre-teenagers there, both Jewish and

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Catholic, seem to have avoided close involvement with the crisis while those of Washington Heights did not. Such expressions of prejudice as Inwood's "Buy Christian" billboard, its street-corner hate-preachers and its resident gang, the Shamrocks, although ugly and intolerant, were of a different category from incidents where eight-year-old boys were beaten and robbed. Although parks in Washington Heights were frequent scenes of attacks, the only such incidents in an Inwood park seems to have been one where gangs of young men 18 and 19 years old -- numbering as much as fifty -- descended on two presumably Jewish Park Department watchmen at one of the recreation offices at Inwood Hill Park in the dead of night, taunting and threatening them (New York City Department of Investigation, 1944). While reports of attacks on children by other children in Washington Heights are frequent reports of such attacks in Inwood are not present.

Although it would seem implausible that Inwood's children carried on free of the unconcealed intolerance that certainly existed in the community, and while their play patterns may have been affected by the atmosphere it created, they were, apparently, able to play in their streets and parks without encountering any of the kinds of headline-making incidents that were so frequent just

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blocks to the south. A 1946 sociological study (Saenger & Shulman, 1946) was to attribute this to Inwood's superior physical and social conditions:

> Moving from south to north, the area becomes increasingly less congested, more stable, there are more parks and recreation facilities and, by and large, conflicts between different ethnic groups diminish. (P. 25).

The problem that Inwood and Washington Heights were dealing with in 1943 and 1944 was new not only to those communities but to the country as a whole. The year 1943, in fact, marks the beginning of the era of the "juvenile delinquent," that is, of intense public anxiety -- often reaching the pitch of hysteria -- over a rebellious and sometimes law-breaking sub-culture among youth. Sociologists and historians have linked the rise of this sub-culture to the lack of supervision of youth during World War II and, both during and after the war, to something historically quite unprecedented: a marketing drive, fueled by increased mass communications (primarily record disks and comic books), that promoted new and, to most adults, startling dress (e.g., "zoot suits"), slang, music and attitudes toward family, school, authority and sexuality (Gilbert, 1986). Although so-called antisocial behavior by children and youths -- truancy, stealing, gang membership, prostitution -- had been present in American

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cities since tremendous urban growth in the nineteenth century, the phenomenon as it surfaced in the early 1940s was strikingly different in that it was no longer something confined to the poor areas where the tensions of the daily struggle for existence could do psychological harm; rather, they had become something that flourished in middle class areas such as Inwood [1], something which was fed not by poverty but by restlessness and boredom.

This new middle-class delinquency, as manifested in the anti-Semitic vandalism and assaults in Inwood, brought quick results. Moreover, the allegations of police negligence became as much as a scandal as did the acts themselves. Although there is no available evidence of police being punished, an immediate crackdown on the vandals and others led to the first significant arrests, including those of fifty members of the Shamrocks. But the matter was hardly left at the mere restoration of order. Rather, the City and local community leaders, in the hope of preventing any recurrence, adopted an intensely sociological approach. This process began in January, 1944 with the release of the New York City Department of Investigation's 170-page report on anti-Semitic aggression in Upper Manhattan and throughout the entire city. Aside from documenting 31 cases of assaults and vandalism and blaming the police for its

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negligence, the report provided, in simple, matter-of-fact police-blotter prose, profiles of individuals and families involved with the acts, probing into such matters as school performance, church attendance, housing conditions, employment or lack of employment and marital relations. The transmittal of anti-Semitic feeling from adults to children -- the intense propagandizing as well as the casual remark -- was emphasized throughout. On the release of the report, the city's Commissioner of Investigation said that it "for the first time focused the spotlight of public attention and official knowledge upon the vandals rather than upon the victims" ("Anti-Semitism report," 1944).

For Washington Heights and Inwood the next step for community leaders was to work with the City to bring the tensions and their causes so completely into the open that the entire community would be forced to confront them. This process got its start in 1944 when the Shamrocks were brought before Magistrate Anna Kross. Kross took the unusual step of dealing with the defendants not as accused criminals but as symptoms of a community malaise and, using their case as a springboard for community therapy and organizing, suggested that the accused and their families meet with clergymen (apparently no grudges were borne against the City's Catholic leadership for its

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craven refusal to condemn Coughlinism before violence broke out). Kross then oversaw the formation of the Washington Heights and Inwood Citizens' Committee for Youth (Saenger & Shulman, 1946) and the Washington Heights Interfaith Committee (Lendt, 1960). These initial efforts soon expanded into Youth Aid, a group composed of Catholics, Jews and Protestants. Youth Aid's singular achievement was to assemble 3,000 children and youths 15 and under (exactly 1,000 each from the area's three main faiths, all attending by invitation) at the Loew's theater at 175th Street and Broadway for a rally also attended by prominent rabbis, priests ministers and lay people. (It was at this rally that the New York Catholic establishment for the first time formally repudiated anti-Semitism).

But beyond this symbolic show of mutual tolerance, some more enduring changes came to Upper Manhattan. The area took its first critical look at the situation of play and recreation for children and youths. A City College study team (Saenger & Shulman, 1946) conducted a survey and analysis of, and recommendations for, the play and recreation needs of Northern Manhattan (defined as the area north of West 135th Street). Among its findings on Inwood were that only one-third of Inwood's parents surveyed felt that supervision of children was necessary at all. However, one-fourth of Inwoodians felt that the

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neighborhood lacked sufficient settings for play and "entertainment" and cited the denominationalism of the recreation spaces as a factor in this; Jews were perceived to have the best facilities. As many as 27% of Inwoodians felt that their community "was not a good place to live," a figure that was, however, considerably lower than those for the other sections of Washington Heights.

Many of the report's other findings pertained to Northern Manhattan as a whole and not to any particular neighborhood, and it is thus impossible to say how well they applied to Inwood. Nevertheless, since they included Inwood, these findings are worthy of discussion. Parents who had indicated that there were enough play spaces for their children were asked which places their children frequent. The distribution of their responses was as follows: parks: 45%; church or synagogue activities: 22%; playground and street: 16%; community centers: 11%; school or nursery: 06%. According to this breakdown, community centers and church or synagogue activities were frequented by a third of the children, a fairly substantial number; had such a survey been done a generation earlier, the figure almost certainly would have been considerably lower. The report also found that when children played together, 28% percent preferred to be indoors -- again, a significant minority (those who preferred the outdoors

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composed 70%). Finally, fully 42% of the children surveyed preferred organized activities (for spontaneous play it was 56%).

In addition to the survey of area residents, the City College report also described the ongoing programs set up to guard against future problems. City College itself, for example, started a training programs and academic courses in playground leadership, social work and community organizing. The College also coordinated

> community projects in which students have augmented their classroom work by a series of living experiences which have included operation, under expert supervision, of a large public playground, a workshop arts and crafts project, an interracial Scout troop, an intercultural veteran-civilian neighborhood discussion group, and a program of trips and excursions for school children. (P. ii).

The era of concerted organization of children's play in Inwood had indeed begun.

[Note: a chronology of significant events affecting Inwood circa 1930-45 appears as Table 4; a map showing local landmarks relating to children's play during that time appears as Fig. 33].

Footnotes to Section 4.7

[1] When considering the scarcity of middle-class juvenile delinquency prior to the 1940s it is necessary to bear in mind that, generally, the farther one goes back in American urban history, the smaller the size and importance of the middle class itself becomes.

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Year	Event
1929	Stock Market Crashes.
1931	City begins clearing structures from Inwood Hill Park.
1932	IND subway extended into Inwood.
1933-41	Period of New Deal's highest level of activity.
1936	Henry Hudson Parkway and Bridge extended through Inwood Hill Park.
1936	Catholic Youth Organization (C.Y.O). established.
1938	Fort Tryon Park opened.
1938-40	German-Jewish influx into Washington Heights and Inwood.
1939	Southern tip of former Johnson Iron Works peninsula attached to Inwood Hill Park.
1940s	YM-YWHA annex established in Inwood.
1940s	Isham mansion destroyed in order to cut costs.
1942	Ferry to New Jersey closes.
1939-43	Anti-Semitic attacks in Washington Heights and Inwood.
1944	Sociological study of Washington Heights and Inwood finds lack of organized play and recreation facilities.

Table 4. Chronology of significant events, 1930-45.

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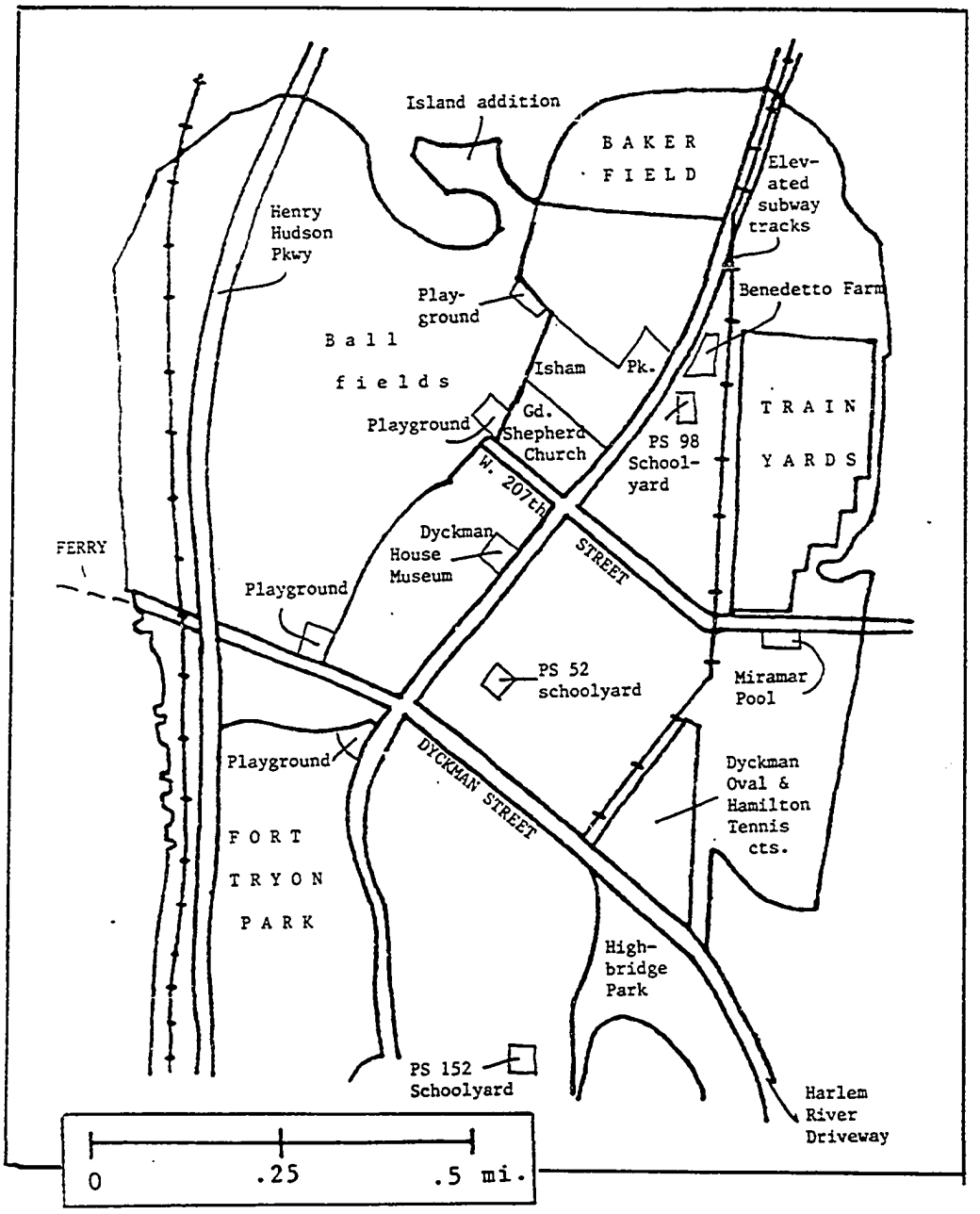


Fig. 33. Map showing landmarks relating to children's play, as existing between 1930 and 1945.

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4.8 Inwood Children's Experiences

[Note: For the locations of informants' homes, see Fig. 34].

Margaret Miller (b. 1926)

Margaret is the younger cousin of Mary Miller, whose childhood was discussed in the previous chapter. For the reader's convenience, her family background is presented again below.

The Millers moved to Inwood from Harlem in 1920, settling on Academy Street near Vermilyea Avenue. The family at that time consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Miller, Mary and a grandfather. In 1926, the year Margaret was adopted, the family moved to Seaman Avenue south of Isham Street in order to be nearer Good Shepherd School. They were also then directly across the street from Inwood Hill Park.

Until about age ten (1936) Margaret spent much of her time outdoors with Mary, who took her to such places as the abandoned lots on Seaman Avenue between Isham and 207th Streets, the stores on 207th Street and the Miramar Pool. She would, however, go to Inwood Hill Park alone or with her grandfather. She had a fondness for Inwood Hill Park as it was before the New Deal and Robert Moses

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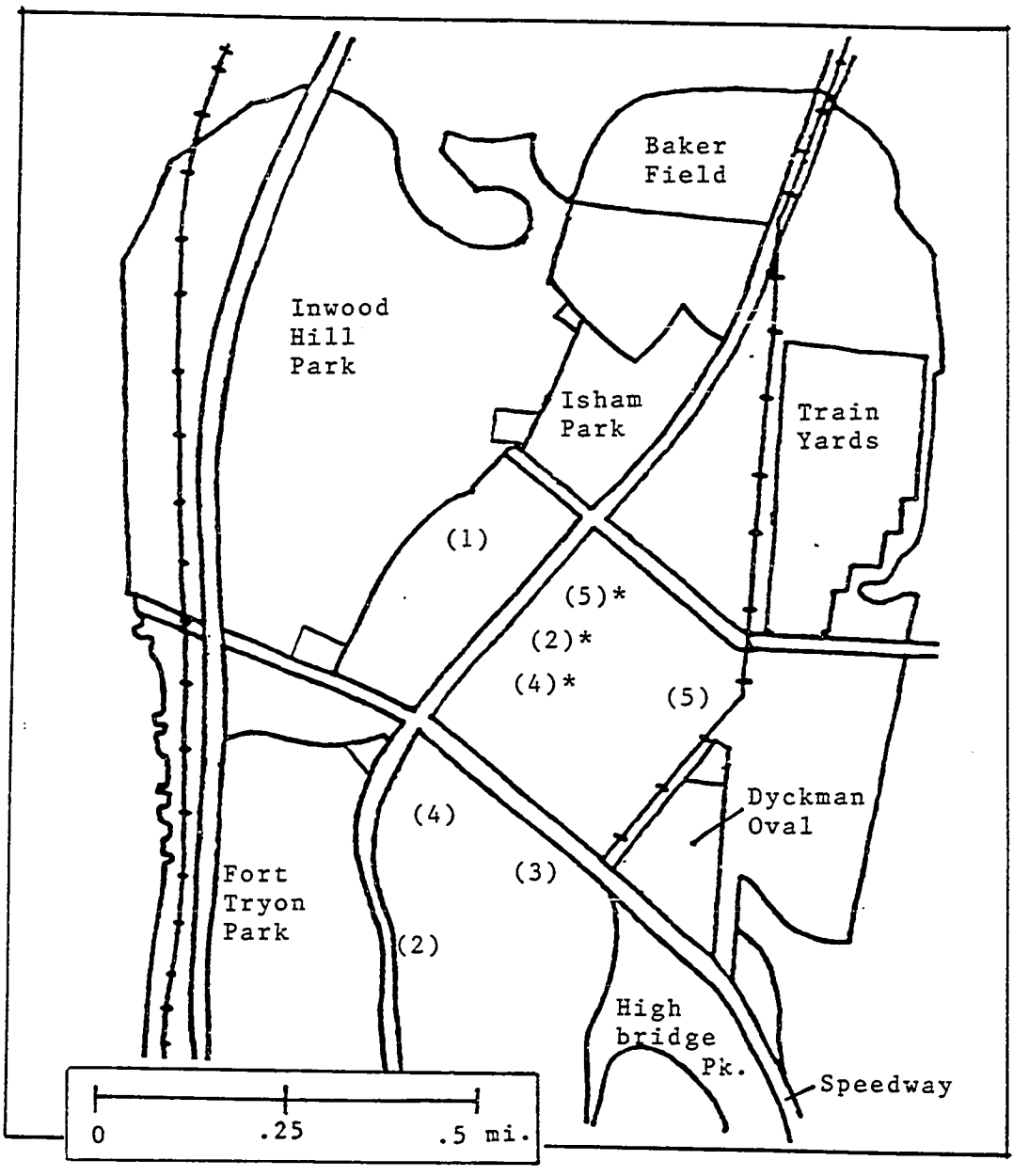


Fig. 34. Map showing where informants lived, 1930-45.

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altered it:

> I liked Inwood Hill Park when it wasn't a real park, just woods. There were no benches. If you wanted to sit you brought your own chair. I would go there when I wanted to be alone.
>
> When my grandfather would take me along on one of his visits to Princess Naomi, she would serve milk and cookies and show her collection of Indian artifacts. Where the Indians lived in the park, it was like a museum, but not just everyone could go in anytime, because it was their home. She was so pretty, with the long black hair and braids. She was always dressed in Indian clothes.
>
> On Indian Day they would have pow-wows. They would walk on nails and we could never figure out how they did it; they would even let you feel the nails. Then they would do their dances, a rain dance or a war dance, and then they would explain each dance. They would come for the weekend. Tents would be set up -- tee pees -- and they would stay there for the whole weekend.
>
> My grandfather knew every spring in the park. And they were not right by the path -- sometimes you had to do a bit of climbing to get to them. And when he would get rheumatism, he would send me to get some for him, and I knew the spots to find them. Then when they re-did the park, they got rid of all the springs. I often wondered, if he had lived long enough, I bet he could have found springs they missed.

Apparently not lacking pocket money, Margaret would take advantage of the available commercial recreation facilities:

> In summer we went to the Miramar pool every day, all day. They sold sandwiches and soda. We'd bring our own food, though

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> -- it was cheaper that way -- but we'd buy cold drinks there. There was no rowdiness allowed there. You obeyed the rules. They put you out if you didn't. Even if the boys would just run, out they'd get put! So no one really disobeyed, because if you were put out, there went your quarter.

When she was eleven and twelve (1937-38) Margaret had the freedom to go to various places along Broadway and in the Inwood valley; she recalls two: one commercial, the other educational:

> There was a bike rental place on Sherman Avenue. I was about eleven when I first rented one. And the first time was the hottest day of the year! I rode and rode for hours in the woods, and I got home and my mother said, "go upstairs and wash, your face is purple! Then sit down and cool off -- then take that thing back!"
>
> I went to the Dyckman House museum very frequently from about age ten to eleven. There was free admission. I loved looking at all the old clothes and furniture -- dolls, too. They had those ropes at the doorways to each of the rooms, though; you could stand there and look, but you couldn't go in.

Margaret, like her cousin Mary, has memories of frightening encounters with men in her neighborhood:

> I've always been afraid of Oriental men. That's because when I was five, I was sitting by the curb and my mother was in he kitchen just inside -- we had a private entrance right off the street. And this Oriental man, he was well dressed, I remember that. And he wanted to know where Cooper Street was, and I pointed and said "right down the street." And he says, "Oh, if you come with me I'll buy you candy." and I said, "No, I'm not allowed." So he says, "Oh, come on, I'll

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> get you something real pretty if you come with me." And he was a really well dressed man. And my mother looked out and saw that something was was wrong, so she says to my grandfather, "Pop, something's wrong, some man's trying to get Margaret!" So he ran out, and the man spotted him, and he took off up Seaman, got in a car and drove away.
>
> Another reason I was afraid of Oriental men, one time I went to the Chinese laundry to pick up the shirts -- we had a lot of men in our household -- and the man wanted me to go in the back with him. I was about ten, I guess. And thank God I said no. Later on he was caught doing something to somebody in back of his store, and I heard that after that he hung himself.

Although Margaret could visit places east of Broadway either alone or with Mary, her parents preferred that she not go to the movies alone but have Mary or some friends along; the relaxation of that rule led to another frightening experience for Margaret:

> The only time they let me go to the movies by myself, I was about twelve. Before then I would go with my friends or my sister. But I was a big girl, I wanted to see this picture and no one else did. My mother didn't want me to go, but my father said I could. So I felt real important going to the movies by myself. I went in, and I'm sitting watching the movie, real fascinated -- I can't even remember what the movie was -- and this guy came up, and I could feel his knee against my legs. So I decided I would step on his foot as hard as I could, and I did. But he didn't stop, so I ran home. And my mother sees me and she immediately knew something was wrong. So that was the end. From then on my father would go with me. He might fall asleep in the back row, but at least he'd be right there if I needed him.

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Lillian Marino (b. 1927)

Lillian spent her first ten years on Arden Street, half a block east of Fort Tryon Park, with her parents and three siblings: a sister two years her senior, a brother two years her junior and, later, a brother nine years her junior. Her father was a cab driver. When Lillian was ten her family moved to a building on the corner of Vermilyea Avenue and Academy Street. The family ethnic background was Italian.

Most of Lillian's play took place on the block:

> We were able to go out and play in front of the house -- I must have been about seven -- seven or eight [1934-35]. But you see, we were all together, me and my brother and my sister, and we had all our friends, and there were friends a couple of houses down, and we'd all get together on the block and play kick-the-can, hide-and-go-seek, hopscotch. And we'd play in the courtyard. My mother's window faced the courtyard in back of the building. Every once in a while I would have to cut through the basement to get to the back and call up to her to let her know I was alright.

Most of Lillian's play when she lived on Arden Street took place on the block in the company of her friends and siblings, a setting she describes as her favorite, recalling with special fondness the large snowfalls:

> In the winter there'd be a lot of snow -- not like now, but <u>real</u> snow. And we'd pile it up and make a fort, have snowball fights, and we'd be out till nine or ten o'clock when it snowed.

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An exception to playing on the block would be when she would run an errand for her mother at the German delicatessen on a nearby corner, something which she began to do at age eight (1935).

Fort Tryon Park was under construction until close to the time the Marinos moved away from Arden Street, but when it did open, Lillian and her siblings went there only on Sundays -- not for play but for strolling:

> That was a Sunday thing to do, going to Fort Tryon Park. And I have to tell you, the park was well kept. You could not walk on the grass -- walk! There was a "parkie" there who made you behave. Even the ladies' room had a matron. I would love to go the concession stand and get an ice cream.

Weekends, in fact, were the only time Lillian would play beyond the block. Then, her entire family would take the ferry to the Palisades, or she and her siblings and their friends would venture to the newly-completed Payson Playground at the southeastern corner of Inwood Hill Park (however, they did not go any further into the park itself). Another family event would be to attend an occasional carnival at the Dyckman Oval.

By the time the Marinos moved to Vermilyea Avenue and Academy Street (1937), Lillian, now ten, spent somewhat less time on the block but still did not venture beyond it more than occasionally:

> When I lived on Vermilyea I was part of a big group of kids from my building and the

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> building next to it. And we were a lot of children -- a lot of children. And we would play on the sidewalk -- we'd roller skate, play tag, jump rope like crazy, jacks and all that stuff.
>
> Q: Were there any places your parents told you not to go?
>
> No! I mean, we didn't go anyplace! We were always right there.

P.S. 52, which was at the same intersection as her home, and which she remembers as having a children's garden, was a place she played in only occasionally. Lillian did not own a bicycle but rented one:

> Around the corner on Academy Street there was a bike rental place. I'd rent one every couple of weeks. I would just ride around, not all the way around the block, just up and down.
>
> I was not very adventurous. But then, when I was about twelve (1939), my mother thought that bike riding was not for young ladies, so I couldn't ride anymore. I missed riding, but in those days you didn't argue with your parents.

Each week Lillian and her siblings and their friends would go to the Loews Dyckman theater on 207th Street two blocks north of the block, where they would sit in a special children's section attended by a matron. In the warm months Lillian and her playmates would go to "tar beach" -- the roofs of their buildings.

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Phillip Little (b. 1928)

Phillip was born in Inwood and lived his entire childhood there in a building on Nagle Avenue near Dyckman Street. The family had seventeen members: Mr. and Mrs. Little and their fifteen children. Ten of the children were boys, of which Phillip was the youngest; of his five sisters, four were older than he. The eldest child, a boy, was born in 1913. [Note: this interview was conducted in 1979 by a researcher with the City University of New York's Center for Human Environments, Inc. Due to slight differences between the interview form used then and that used later, neither Mr. Little's ethnic background nor his parents' occupations were asked, nor could he himself be located when the present author assumed responsibility for this study].

Phillip was first allowed out by himself at age six (1934), under the condition that he be accompanied by a sibling, that he tell his parents where he was about to play and that he return home by five o'clock. By age eight (1936) he was playing outdoors unsupervised. Although he was not allowed to cross streets, he did so anyhow, crossing the busy intersection of Nagle Avenue and Dyckman Street, in the shadow of the elevated, and was drawn to the Harlem River Speedway. His favorite place, however, was the Dyckman Oval, which every weekend had

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events such as baseball games, horse shows, boxing and "midget auto racing," which he would attend with his siblings and friends. He would also play "curb ball" against the pillars of the elevated train over Tenth Avenue.

In the summer, Phillip would accompany his brothers and sisters and their friends to the Miramar Pool, which he remembers more for its basketball hoops, volleyball nets and monkey bars than for the pool itself. The schoolyard at PS 52, at Vermilyea Avenue and Academy Street, had monkey bars as well, which he would use either alone or with other children. However, the schoolyard had no other equipment, and he used the open spaces where the boys would play baseball, stickball and football.

Beginning at age eight Phillip would rent a bicycle from a nearby shop; although there were no restrictions on where he could go by bicycle, he had to tell his parents in advance where he intended to go, just as he had to when on foot. When he would go to any of the local movie houses, Phillip was usually with his siblings or adults, such as his parents or those of his friends.

At age 11 or 12 (1939-40) Phillip began to branch out in his range:

> By the time I was twelve I could go anywheres. There were always other people around. Each family took care, and wherever we went my mother and father knew where we were going.

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Phillip, who had used Inwood Hill and Fort Tryon Parks hardly at all, began what was to become a sporadic use of this part of Inwood. He would go to Inwood Hill Park about three times a month, and to Fort Tryon Park only once or twice a month. A few times he and some other boys took the ferry to Palisades Interstate Park and camped overnight, and did the same in Inwood Hill Park. Occasionally they would fish at the western end of Dyckman Street near the ferry. Nearby, at Baker Field, when Columbia hosted a game Phillip and his friends would sneak in. Phillip found one part of Inwood scary: The old houseboats and boating club buildings Sherman Creek just north of the Speedway.

Phillip became exposed to the world of work at age eight:

> After school I was out shining shoes, working, helping the family. Then during the weekends, played in the parks, went to see ballgames over at the Dyckman Oval. You had sports in the neighborhood. I played a lot of football. Not too much baseball, but football I was in. Monday nights they kept the schools open and you'd play in the gyms. At Broadway and Academy the Pepsi Cola Company opened up a canteen for young people.

"As far as I knew, the city didn't have any recreations except for the city parks. You had the swimming pool -- the Miramar. We went to the movies, went to see all the kiddie shows. There was always a grownup, or my brothers,

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sisters. It was no problems. All the children that grew up in this neighborhood were fine. You never had to worry about anything. There was always my brothers, there was always older people around that took care of you. The people in general in the neighborhood, they would watch youse."

> I started to learn how to cook when I was eleven years old, in a delicatessen. Then I started working in other stores. I had experience dealing with the public. The only time I did anything was on the weekend, because I was always working and on Saturdays I'd be working, so Sundays would be my recreation time.
>
> Q: Was that usual at the time?
>
> I would say yes, most of the children would be working. And Saturdays, Sundays, they'd go wild, have a good time. Not get into trouble! There was no drinking or anything else. You'd play games and this and that. There were dances at PS 52. It would be a good time, but there's no way in describing it, what each individual calls a good time.

Nick Sarabalis (b. 1928)

Nick and his parents lived on Sherman Avenue above Dyckman Street until he was five, when the family moved to Vermilyea Avenue near Academy Street. Three years later they moved again, this time to Sherman Avenue below Dyckman Street. They remained there even though Mr. Sarabalis wanted to move the family to an apartment on Park Terrace West in the considerably more affluent part

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of Inwood; Mrs. Sarabalis had insisted that the family stay on Sherman Avenue, where Nick's playmates lived. The family ethnic background was Greek.

Nick was permitted outdoors to play unsupervised at age five (1933) but had to remain in front of the building. He would play on the sidewalk, or a few feet into the street as "there were virtually no cars." Nick was, however, at that time forbidden to cross any streets.

In a year or two (1934-5), Nick was crossing Academy Street to play ball games with friends in the schoolyard of PS 52. This was the extent of Nick's range until about age eight (1936), when the family moved to Sherman Avenue. There were two candy store at opposite corners of Sherman Avenue and 204th Street where Nick would hang out. There were also two empty lots nearby, one at Nagle Avenue and 204th Street, another at Sherman Avenue and 207th Street, both of which Nick frequented. These lots had "white rocks" in them -- grey or buff-colored outcroppings with abundant crystals that made them sparkle -- which were high enough to climb. He also began frequenting the Miramar Pool in summer.

By age seven (1935), Nick had run of the valley area and beyond, and his description of the play that went on there suggests that there was somewhat of an adversarial quality to it:

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We were unlimited in the area we could play. We would be known as the Sherman Boys, fellows up by the park would be known as the Seaman Boys, fellows on Vermilyea Avenue would be known as the Vermilyea Boys.

The guys I would hang out with, we called ourselves the Golden Greeks. We were all sons of Greek immigrants, and our fathers were all furriers. Not that we were clannish or anything; it's just that the Greeks stuck with the Greeks and the Irish stuck with the Irish, and that's just the way it was. This was the precursor of the gangs, as they're now called. And that was our territory. Not that we were rowdies or delinquents.

Q: Were there any ethnic tensions?

If there was, we would have fistfights, and that would be it. But we would more or less just play stickball in the schoolyards, where there were wide open spaces around PS 52 on Vermilyea and Academy, until they started building quonset huts there for the overcrowding. So we played on Sherman, which was a wide avenue.

There were no cars -- very, very few cars during the thirties. Remember: that was the depression. And it was a big family within that area, within that confined area. Sports were primarily our forte. Not organized, but sandlot, all sandlot. We didn't have Little League. We didn't get involved in any of the organized sports programs around -- that was for sissies. We'd play in Inwood Park, Payson Park, all around. The beauty of Inwood was it had parks all around.

On the streets and sidewalks, we would have wood around, and we would build carts. And I remember lower Sherman and upper Sherman were on the outs, so we'd all face off in a sort of joust. You know, carts against carts, and whoever had the strongest carts would win.

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At about age eight (1936) Nick began going to Inwood Hill Park after school almost daily. Although from earliest childhood his parents had taken him there for picnics and for the yearly "Indian pow-wows," Nick had until then not explored it for himself. In the winter there would be sledding in the woods, on "Dead Man's Hill," and the activity would spill over to the hills of Isham Park. But Nick enjoyed Inwood Hill Park year-round:

> It was your typical Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer type of childhood. There was Inwood Hill Park; once you're in there, you're lost. I mean, you could be a thousand miles away. There were caves, and we would find artifacts. There was Dead Man's Hill, which we would sled down -- at the bottom were two big trees, and you would have to maneuver yourself around them not to get banged up. I would go to the park with friends, or when I wanted to be alone. It was an wild type of place.
>
> Q: Even though there was the highway running through it?
>
> Oh, the highway was way down on the other side of the hill! We would play in the middle portion, so there was no contact with the highway at all.

When he was twelve (1940) Nick began attending dances given at PS 52 and at Good Shepherd Church. He was aware of two youth gangs, the Shamrocks and the Marathons, but does not recall there being any disturbances involving them, either at the dances or elsewhere.

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Louise DeLonghi (b. 1928)

The Delonghis moved to Inwood in 1932, where Louise's father became the superintendent in a building in which they lived at Tenth Avenue near the corner of 205th Street, in the shadow of the elevated train. When Louise was ten (1938) they moved to Vermilyea Avenue near 207th Street, where her father held the same occupation. Mr. DeLonghi was of Italian descent, Mrs. DeLonghi of German.

Louise was playing outside alone by age six (1934) at which time she was not allowed to go beyond the block. Her mother was an alcoholic and so Louise preferred to be out of their basement apartment as often as possible. Her father, although present in the neighborhood much of the time, provided no ongoing supervision.

On the block was a vacant lot:

> I remember getting deathly ill from eating rotten chestnuts from that lot. There wasn't even a chestnut tree there or anything; someone probably just came by and dumped a bunch of chestnuts, and we ate them and someone called an ambulance. I was about five. I mean, no one said not to eat them, so we just ate them. I don't eat chestnuts to this day!
>
> We kids would roast potatoes there too; our mothers would give us the potatoes, and grownups probably helped us light the fire, too, because I don't think we would have known how. But we played in the street probably more than the lots. We were always out in the street, we were allowed to be there because it was safe to be out.

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Although sledding figured prominently in her childhood, Louise did not find accessible any of Inwood's hilly land for this; however, her block sufficed:

> I had a sled. I was about eight or nine when I got it [1936-37]. Years ago we used to get a lot of snow, much more snow than we get now. And we used to get big, tall things of snow on the street, and we used to go up and down these big mounds of snow. I don't know if I ever went up to the park -- I don't think I ever did go up to the park. Because Seaman Avenue and those areas near the park was far removed from where I lived. I never ventured far afield.

The wooded part of Inwood was inaccessible to Louise not just for sledding but for all play activities, as the following exchange illustrates:

> Q: What parks did you play in?
>
> Not any, really. There were play areas around 207th Street and the park, but that was far removed, that wasn't any place I could go to play.

When she was seven (1935) Louise was given a bicycle and could go slightly farther from home than before:

> I had a small two-wheeler when I was about seven, and then I got a larger one when I got a bit older. I would ride it on Tenth Avenue there -- you know, where there are long blocks under the el. No getting off and on the street, so you could ride back and forth. And not many people there to get in the way.

When Louise was ten (1938) and living on Vermilyea Avenue near 207th she continued to spend most of her play time on the block ("everyone just hung around in front of

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the building, it was the big thing"), but began branching out more play places. There were no empty lots there, but her new home was considerably closer to the shopping strip on 207th Street, which included the Loews theater which she she frequented:

> That's another thing I used to do: from when I was ten till I was a teenager they used to change the movie feature on Monday or Tuesday, and then again on the weekends. So I'd go down Dyckman Street on Tuesday and then on the weekend I'd go to the one on 207th. So I'd be constantly going to the movies. I was there all the time.

There were also ice cream parlors which Louise frequented after school. In addition, she and a girlfriend would on occasion wander up to Park Terrace West and frighten themselves looking at the "haunted house." At this time Louise began spending some time outdoors in Inwood with her parents: once in a while her mother would take her roller skating along the Harlem River Driveway, which was a place she was not allowed to go to on her own. Also, she and her father would swim near the railroad bridge at Inwood Hill Park, which also was a place where she could not visit on her own. Louise did not participate in any organized play programs -- not because these weren't available, but because, as she puts it, "I was a loner."

Louise preferred to stay on the block and not to go

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around the neighborhood, something her parents expected of her:

> Q: If you <u>did</u> feel like going elsewhere in the neighborhood, did you feel that you could have?
>
> I never -- never thought about it like that. It was just something I didn't feel like doing.
>
> Q: Did you ever ride your bike beyond the block?
>
> Well, I never went to the park -- well, once I went to Inwood Park on my bike. Some friends took me. I was small, about seven, I think, and they took me up there and they left me there. And my mother was looking for me and my father was looking for me, and my father caught me crossing Seaman Avenue, and they took me home, and I don't want to tell you what happened! I got a nice big beating after that.
>
> Q: Were there places your parents would tell you not to go?
>
> I never thought of it that way. There were just places I never went. What I mean, I didn't say where I went or where I didn't, I just went. And if they didn't know where I was when they came looking for me -- crossing the street with no supervision -- my mother would be beside herself, she didn't know where the heck I was. But they never actually told me beforehand "don't go here, don't go there" because I knew what was on their minds.

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4.9 Discussion

The years 1930 to 1945 were pivotal for Inwood, a time when its landscape and social structure emerged from the tremendous flux and growth of the 1920s and '30s and began to settle into something resembling a finished product. The upheaval of the first third of the century -- the laying out of streets, the building of apartment houses, the construction of subway lines, the development of recreational land -- had provided a framework for development which by the early 1940s was supporting a socially more complex community. In just fifteen years Inwood had gone from a neighborhood comprising a still-raw landscape and a fairly tranquil social life to one that was completely built up and which contained modern recreation facilities.

But this was also a period of alarming disturbances in Inwood's social life, a time when its residents were pushed ever closer together physically but divided by ethnic tensions and in which a measure of peaceful coexistence was lost.

The character and availability of children's play places during this time changed markedly as well. In the 1920s Inwood offered children such play places as the lawns of a former estate (Isham Park), a neglected, wooded

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hill dotted with old mansions and with a rugged shoreline (Inwood Hill Park), numerous empty lots near their homes, sidewalks on which to play, and, for those with spending money, stores, the Miramar Pool and movie houses to visit. (Serious obstacles to play in the 1920s consisted mainly of occasional incidents of sexually deviant men who would menace girls; on this there seems to have been a persistent undercurrent of wariness among girls).

By 1945 the landscape and social milieu had changed greatly: the flavor of estates and mansions had been almost completely erased; the haphazard quality of Inwood Hill had been undone; three permanent playgrounds had been introduced; the empty lots were less numerous, and recreation programs were becoming recognized as an urgently needed response to alarm over ethnic prejudice that had taken hold.

If the events of 1930-1945 could be worked into any type of pattern or theme, it would be that while Inwood's physical landscape was standardized and stripped of much of its richness and diversity, its social life became fragmented and distressed. The transformation of Inwood Hill Park was a drastic change even for a community that was itself the product of rapid blasting, filling, paving and building; it also illustrates the overall decrease in the complexity of Inwood's physical environment. Before

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the New Deal and Robert Moses, Inwood Hill Park was an informal, uncoordinated place where people lived, worked and played. People there tended gardens, entertained guests, made fires, collected berries and spring water, sold "Indian artifacts," dreamed about what the place would look like ten years hence. By 1938, however, Inwood Hill Park was an environment much simplified: a highway took cars back and forth between Manhattan and the mainland; woods with paved foot trails provided areas for hiking; ample peripheral lawn areas were designated for sports; playgrounds served children. Not only was this change dramatic, it occurred with complete and intentional immunity from local input. Inwood Hill, although in many ways improved and made more accessible, was no longer Inwood's back woods but was instead a regional recreation facility.

Nor was the decline in the diversity and complexity of Inwood's physical environment limited to Inwood Hill Park. The filling in of most of what remained of Inwood's empty lots robbed the place of much of the variation its children had found so attractive. The transformation into train yards of the several square block area lying east of the elevated train -- an area which had contained the rustic Nagle cemetery -- was another blow to the diversity of the area. Contrast, for

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example, Margaret Miller's visits to the Dyckman House Museum in the 1930s, in which she gazed at re-created rooms from behind ropes, with Elsa Brady's romping freely within the Nagle cemetery in the 1920s (see previous chapter). Empty lots and old, rundown and obsolete buildings of course are not meant to remain that way, but are only awaiting the right moment for restoration, development or redevelopment. Yet while they lasted these served an important function for children, providing them with overgrown, neglected areas that were not far from home. When Inwood's stores and apartment buildings no longer dotted the area but formed continuous street frontages, the speculator's vision of Inwood was finally complete, but the play needs of children went unmet, and the loss of those serendipitous play spaces went uncompensated. This was most true on the long, straight streets in Inwood's central valley -- Nagle, Post and Sherman Avenues -- which, when no longer punctuated by empty lots and occasional rock outcroppings, resembled not so much streets as long, monotonous alleys.

The reduction in play space that increasingly afflicted the Inwood valley persisted despite massive New Deal intervention into the reshaping of Inwood's western landscape. This was in keeping with the New Deal's urban agenda; the New Deal program did not provide anything like

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a coordinated neighborhood-level blueprint for play and recreation, one which would have addressed Inwood as a unit, including the valley section. Instead, the New Deal merely sought to turn a rough facility -- Inwood Hill Park -- into a finished one and, in the process, to usurp part of it for a parkway and bridge. Thus the changes the New Deal brought were not spread evenly throughout Inwood so not all children benefited from them as fully as they ought to have. If that had been the program's intention, then at least an adequately-sized park -- perhaps a quarter of a block square -- could have been built on empty land remaining in or close to the central valley.

Inwood's schoolyards were not touched by any New Deal-initiated improvement, nor did they receive federal funds to make them better play places, and so they remained (except for the monkey bars recalled by Phillip Little) bare of equipment. Nick Sarabalis's recollection of "quonset huts" there to offset school overcrowding suggests that schoolyards were spaces that the City Board of Education kept in reserve for whatever purpose they might conveniently serve, not among the first of which, obviously, was children's access to play.

Fort Tryon Park presented Inwood with a splendid, even breathtaking public park. However, the rigid code of conduct there was intended to warn visitors that they

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could not regard the place as their back yard. Although this was similar to the code of conduct that obtained in the 1920s around Isham Park's mansion, lawns and formal gardens, in Fort Tryon there was one crucial difference: Inwoodians had regarded Isham Park as their own collective backyard, and treated it with utmost respect, a respect inculcated strongly in the children, as seen in the previous chapter. Fort Tryon Park, on the other hand, was not Inwood's park but in essence still its donor's -- John D. Rockefeller's. True, the tract was no longer Rockefeller's land, but it would always be Rockefeller's gift, and gifts of course often carry their implicit terms of ownership. If in Fort Tryon Park decorum did not arise spontaneously from the users' appreciation, then the management would enforce it. Baker Field is another facility to which Inwoodians had no claim as community space, although children could regard this not as an insult but as a challenge, and sneak into games, as Phillip Little did.

What was the impact of the main developments of the 1930s on Inwood's Physical landscape -- Inwood Hill Park and the Cloisters -- on children's play? Here it is difficult to base one's assessment on the interviews presented in this chapter, since these new facilities did not open to the public until most of these informants were

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ten or eleven. Still, a few valuable insights may be derived from the informants here. It is apparent, for example, that children in the central valley area generally had severely limited access to these western areas. Of all the informants, the earliest and most frequent contact with Inwood Hill Park was enjoyed by Margaret Miller, whose home was directly across the street from it. Her proximity allowed her to develop an intimacy with the woods and to resent the elimination of its rough qualities through the New Deal's reshaping of it. Of the four other informants, all of whom lived in the valley area, only Nick Sarabalis enjoyed sustained contact with Inwood Hill Park. Unlike Margaret, who resented the park's transformation, Nick took the place for what it was, ignoring the parkway and taking advantage of the woods as well as the new playing fields of the newly-added flat areas. Neither Lillian Marino nor Louise DeLonghi had any contact with Inwood Hill Park and, for Lillian, playing in Fort Tryon Park was constrained by its strict rules, while the new playgrounds in that area were of no use for day-to-day play as they were "far removed" from her home east of Broadway. Phillip Little's access to these parks was only occasional, although this may have been due less to any range restriction than to the fact that his work as a shoe shine boy and, later, as a

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delicatessen cook, kept him in the busy, more commercialized center of Inwood.

For children in the valley area, commercial establishments were as important a part of their use of their community as in the 1920s. Bicycle rental stores, the Dyckman Oval, the ferry, the Miramar pool and the movies continued to provide the primary alternatives to the far more common play on the block. Phillip Little's use of play equipment at the Miramar suggests that that business had begun to reach out for children's patronage; but even while doing so it required children to behave in a way that was compatible with the adult patrons, as is indicated by Margaret Miller's recollection of its strict rules of conduct. Nick Sarabalis's use of candy stores for hanging out is the first mention of such a business, and suggests that during the depression the "hi-class" image so many of Inwood's stores strove for in the 1920s was wearing off and that informal businesses, where children could feel comfortable and spend their money for themselves and not just run errands for their parents, were becoming more common.

For children growing up in Inwood between 1930 and 1945, contact with nature was diminished considerably from what it had been during the previous fifteen years, when

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farms were not uncommon, vacant lots (including those that were tilled by community gardeners) were numerous and the landscape in general far less settled and ordered.

Margaret Miller, who lived directly across the street from Inwood Hill Park, had virtually unlimited access to the springs she and her grandfather found there (although this took place just before Robert Moses' transformation of the topography had hidden or sealed these). The only other informant who experienced sustained contact with nature within that park was Nick Sarabalis, who, while avoiding the Henry Hudson Parkway, played in the caves of what was, he felt, a "wild" place. The remaining three informants, however, as mentioned above, were not in contact with Inwood Hill park, the neighborhood's largest natural area.

Since all informants but Margaret lived east of Broadway, was their general lack of contact with nature offset in any way by an availability of nature somewhere other than in Inwood Hill Park, somewhere closer to their homes? The answer is yes, slightly. Phillip Little went fishing in Inwood's waters, but did so only occasionally (no doubt his work schedule interfered with his doing this more often). Lillian Marino got "deathly ill" from eating chestnuts she found dumped in an empty lot, which suggests that some natural objects were available near home but

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also that playing with these could bring dire consequences. Lillian's use of fire to roast potatoes -- during which an adult would be needed to start the fire -- suggests that fire was an available natural element for her, although not one over which she herself necessarily had control. Nick Sarabalis found near home "white rocks" to climb. Louise DeLonghi appears not to have had access to nature, although she did make extensive use of her block and seems not to have regretted it.

All this indicates that access to nature depended to a degree on access to Inwood Hill Park, the place to which nature had been relegated.

Among this group of informants, parental restrictions were most pronounced in the play of Lillian Marino and Louise DeLonghi, both of whom lived east of Broadway and both of whom, not insignificantly, were girls. Interestingly, neither girl was given explicit warning or instructions concerning how far they could proceed or specific places or situations to avoid. Yet both understood that wandering beyond the block and adjacent streets would go against their parents' wishes. Just as noteworthy is the fact that neither girl felt that these implicit restrictions deprived her of full enjoyment of Inwood: Lillian's comment that no restrictions were needed

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as "we didn't go anyplace, we were always right there" -- which can apply to Louise as well -- suggests that the immediate surroundings (i.e., the block and adjacent streets) were rich enough in activities to obviate any thought of going farther afield. By contrast, the two boys were far less restricted than were these girls. Phillip Little had to tell his parents where he intended to go but lied in order to go where he pleased, while Nick Sarabalis mentions no restrictions.

Inwood, as we have seen, offered a smattering of organized, supervised play and recreation programs, the augmentation of which was not urgently considered until after the anti-Semitic incidents of 1943. It is not surprising, then, that none of the informants during this period took part in such programs. Nick Sarabalis' dismissal of such programs as "for sissies" reveals what probably was for boys a common attitude toward these programs at that time.

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5.0 CIRCA 1945-60: BEGINNINGS OF NEIGHBORHOOD DECLINE

5.1 Introduction

In the spring of 1950 a class of fifth graders at Inwood's PS 152, on Nagle Avenue below Dyckman Street, put together, under the supervision of their teacher, a history of their community, titled The Dyckman Valley, Yesterday and Today (Boys and girls in a fifth year class of Public School 152, Manhattan, 1950). This slim, mimeographed paper dutifully recounts the episodes in Inwood's progress from Algonquin land to urban community: the oyster shell middens, the Dutch farmers, the Revolutionary war battles, the opulent mansions, the clanging trolleys, the bustling stores and the teeming apartment houses. The saga is told rather matter-of-factly, providing the names, dates and locations associated with each event, and there is no hint of the children's response to learning of it.

Toward the last pages, however, there is to be found some speculation on Inwood's future, and from this one gets a clue as to how these children felt toward their community:

> We would like to take a little look into the future. We hope for changes that will make this an ultra-modern neighborhood. We would like to have the lot on Hillside Avenue in back of our

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> school made into a playground...We, the children in P.S. 152, Manhattan, hope that a big wing will be added to our school. People whom we have consulted have told us that they would like smaller classes with about twenty children in each class. They also told us they would like more trees on the sidewalks. On the corner of Dyckman Street and Nagle Avenue we think there should be a tremendous library and a children's theatre. Some people have told us that they would like to have free concerts in Fort Tryon and in Inwood Hill Park in the summer. Playgrounds should be built for each apartment house. We are pretty sure that the elevated subway will be torn down to make our area more beautiful. Tenth Avenue will then be a wide sunny street, and the people living in the houses along Tenth Avenue will have a pleasant, quiet place to live (no page numbers).

Although hardly the portrait of a neighborhood in dire distress, this passage does suggest that all is not rosy in Inwood in 1950: classrooms are crowded; the schoolyard lacks play equipment; the elevated train tracks create shadows and noise suggestive of a slum; Fort Tryon and Inwood Hill Parks in summer could use concerts in order to liven things up; a "tremendous" new library -- with a theatre -- is needed; and Inwood's playgrounds should be near every residence and shouldn't just line the western part of Inwood. Moreover, these are subtle problems, things only local residents would notice; a casual observer would most likely see instead block after block of fairly new apartment houses and stores between wooded ridges (Fig. 35). Nevertheless, in 1950 much would be

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Fig. 35. A view of Inwood in 1949, looking northeast from the eastern slope of Ft. Tryon Park. This Photograph was taken deliberately from the same angle as that of Fig. 5., taken half a century earlier, in order to show the contrast. [Source: Informant].

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required to make Inwood "an ultra-modern neighborhood." Fifteen years earlier such a dissatisfied view would have been hard to come across.

Other evidence of the state of Inwood around the early 1950s likewise hints at a neighborhood in decline. A letter to the editor of The New York Times (Atwood, 1947), for example, complains that Inwood Hill Park is no longer the jewel Robert Moses had intended: "A far-ranging jungle of tall and well-assorted weeds, it has been neglected since the beginning of the war" (p. 22). Although there were still "pow wows" held in the park every September -- on the landfill that had obliterated the historic cove the event was less elaborate: the visiting "Indians" no longer set up their tee pees for a stay of a weekend but instead -- as Mary Connoly (1991), who grew up nearby in the 1950s recalls -- arrived for a stay of only an hour or so: "They would do a little war dance, maybe give out some trinkets -- not an all-day thing." At the other end of the park, the ferry, which had been out of service since 1942, was back in business in 1948 but back out of business for good in 1951. According to Adams (1983), "Cessation of service came about more because of dilapidation of equipment than from any lack of traffic" (p. 138). In 1940 the City had promised Inwood that it

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would build a new library building; the present library was still housed in a storefront on Sherman Avenue. The new library (minus any "children's theater") was finally opened in 1952 ("Local Library," 1972). Meanwhile, on Broadway and 214th Street, the Benedetto farm faced its last days; as Josephene Benedetto Billani recounted for oral historian Jeff Kisseloff (1989):

> The owner of the property didn't want to sell it. He just wanted to make sure the property was being taken care of. But when he passed on, the property was passed on to his niece, who was married to the party who sold it. Before that, when they started raising the rents too high, they cut half of it and made a a parking lot on one half. Then they sold it in 1954 and that was it. (P. 233).

U.S. Census data corroborate the signs of neighborhood decline to which these bits of neighborhood information allude. Inwood's population peaked with the 1950 Census, which counted 53,118 people; in 1960, it was down to 51,823, a decrease of three percent. But a look at figures for certain individual Census tracts shows a pattern of selective decline: in tracts bordering the segment of Dyckman Street between the Payson Playground on the west and Nagle Avenue on the east, the decline was in the range of 10 to 14 percent (Fig. 36). While some decrease in population density may very well have lifted the quality of life in such a built-up neighborhood as Inwood, these sharp, sudden declines are more indicative

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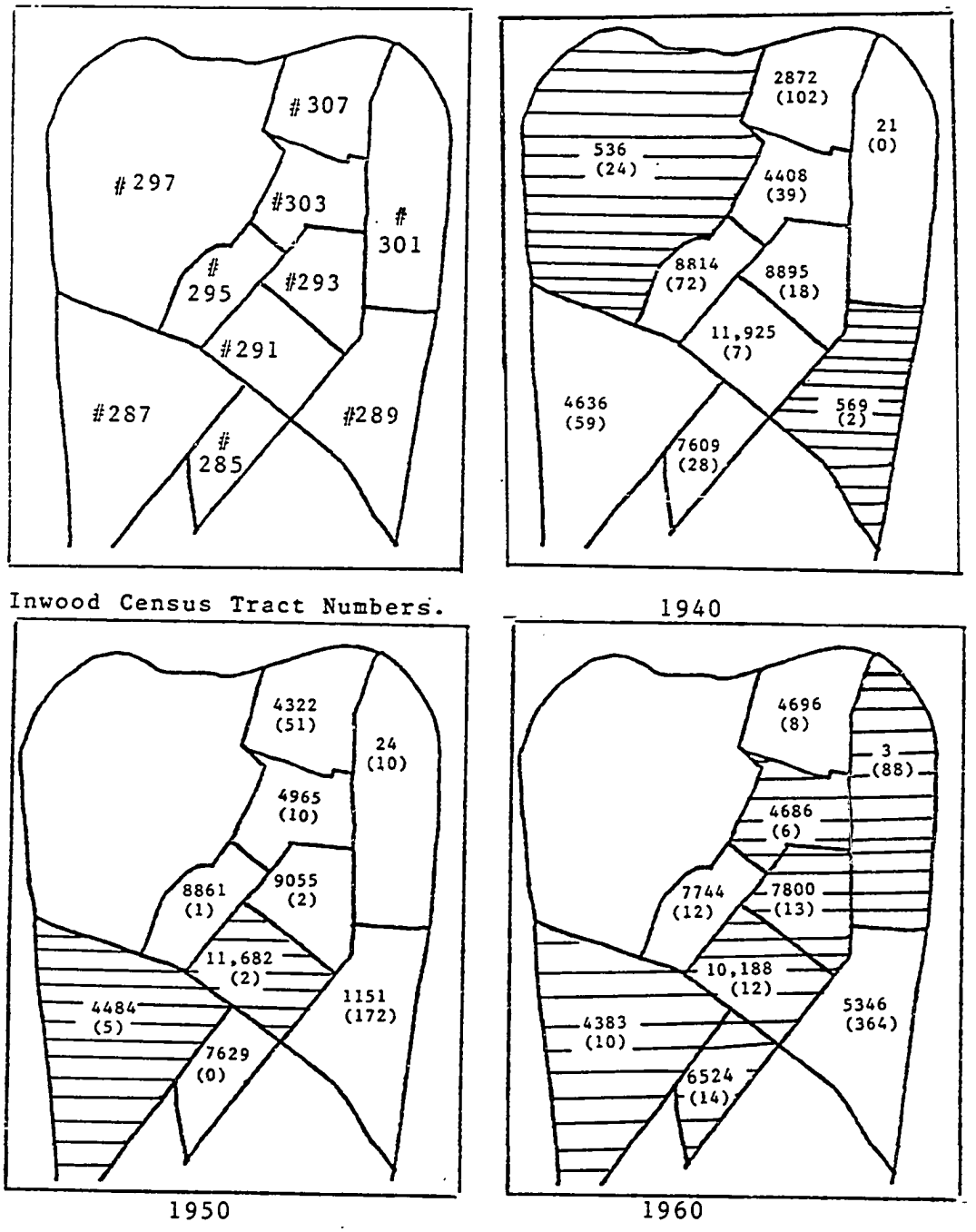


Fig. 36. Map series showing population in 1940, '50 and '60 by census tract. Numbers in parentheses are percent changes since previous census. Shaded tract indicates a decrease since previous census.

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of neighborhood instability.

Income statistics show another aspect of the decline. Those who did remain in Inwood in the 1950s were poorer than those who had left. In 1950 the median income of families in Inwood was 118% of the citywide average; by 1960 it was 107%. In 1950 no Census tracts in Inwood showed a median income of less than 100% of the citywide average, and many of its tracts were comfortably above it; by 1960, two tracts were below the citywide average, and several others were very near it (Fig. 37). According to the Brookings Institution (Bradburn, Downs & Small, 1982) most U.S. cities in 1950 were overcrowded and so could have benefited from some controlled population decline in order to make them more livable: Downs (1977) has identified a "life cycle" of urban decay in which it takes 40 to 60 years for a neighborhood to pass through successively lower-income groups until it is the home to those whose incomes are not enough to maintain the structures as before. Inwood in the 1950s was just entering that period. Unfortunately, then, Inwood's population decline was not an achievement but rather something foisted upon it.

In addition to decreasing rates of population and income, the make-up of Inwood's families was stagnating: there was little turnover in residence and new families

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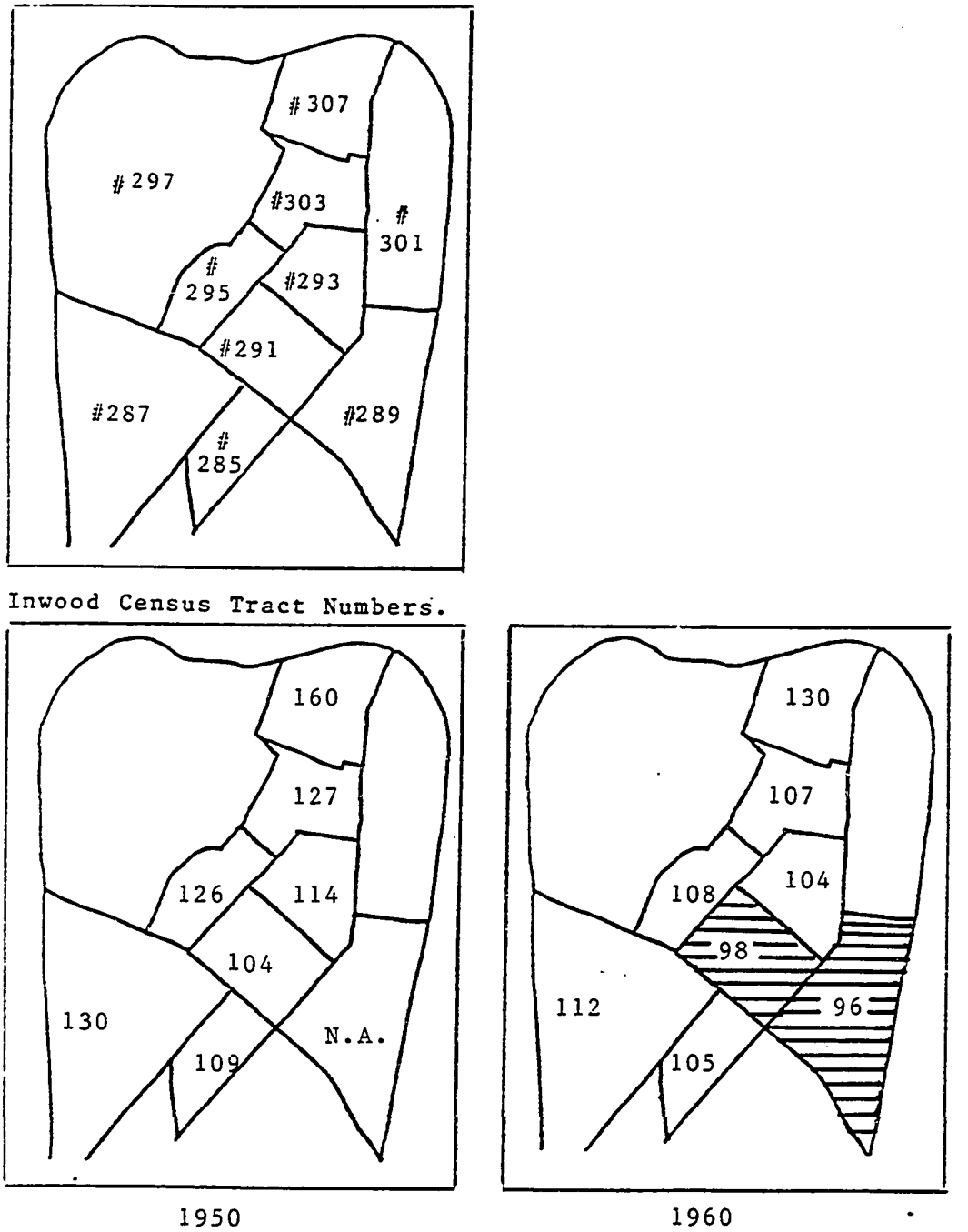


Fig. 37. Map series showing median family income, 1950 and 1960 by census tract. Numbers represent tract's income as a precentage of the citywide average. Shaded tract indicates a precentage below 100.

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were not coming in and replacing those who were leaving. This is reflected in Inwood's foreign-born population: according to the U.S. Census, in 1950, 28.4% of the population was foreign-born, a figure well above the citywide average of 22.6%; however, by 1960, Inwood's figure remained at 28.4% even while that of the city declined to 19.7%. Since there was no discernible influx of any foreign population, such statistics suggest strongly that Inwood was retaining much of its aging foreign-born residents who had arrived prior to the United States' immigration restriction policies of the mid-1920s. Additionally, parts of Inwood -- primarily in its central valley -- had lost a significant portion of their populations of children aged five to 14: in the entire area west of Nagle Avenue, for example, there were 6,510 children in 1950 but only 5,308 in 1960, a decrease of over 18%.

What was happening to Inwood between 1945 and 1960, and why?

5.2 Postwar Anti-Urban Policy

Reformers since the mid-1800s had focused their criticism of the urban environment on the slum -- its lack of sanitation, light, air and recreation space. They sought the improvement of slum conditions primarily

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through such limited measures as settlement houses and the reorganization of spaces between the buildings and, additionally, through their vigorous promotion of government-mandated construction standards and zoning laws affecting buildings yet to be built. In short, their goal was to intercept the making of further slums.

As the reformers were working strictly on a local scale, they could not reasonably fathom the wholesale razing of the existing slums and their replacement with a new and radically different environment. Even the New Deal, with its bold, vast, centralized involvement in the reconfiguration of cities, did not undertake anything like large-scale replacement of old and dilapidated neighborhoods (although a few impressive, though modest, public housing projects were completed); rather, it focused on parks and parkways that could be built on the periphery of urban land -- along rivers or on landfill -- as embellishments and beautification intended primarily for putting the unemployed to work and for experiments in transforming the physical basis of society.

After World War II, however, this was to change completely. At that time, under the Housing Act of 1949, the federal government began planning a massive assault on the slums. The government, according to its new policy, would not try to rehabilitate the slums; would make no

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distinctions between housing that was squalid and barely-inhabitable and that which simply needed some added investment to improve its physical quality and social life. Rather, as historian Sam Bass Warner (1970) later pointed out, the object was to ignore what precisely was going on in the slums themselves in order to get at the land underneath them. To accomplish this

> The federal government would be harnessed to the most expensive task, clearance and parcel assembly, while the city would contribute by using its planning offices and its powers of eminent domain, and by constructing supporting services and organizing local support. (P. 243).

Although in 1954 the terms of the Housing Act were renewed to permit rehabilitation, municipalities tended to avoid such comparatively delicate work and so continued with wholesale demolition. Robert Moses, as Construction Coordinator for New York City, for his part sternly forbade such a change in approach there (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1988). Another alternative -- using already-vacant land for new public housing -- although allowable by the Federal government was not encouraged by it (Abrams, 1955).

These operations, representing the essence of urban policy during the late 1940s and 1950s, went under the general name "urban renewal" and the more specific one of "slum clearance." The program focused tremendous

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resources on "urban blight" -- meaning the urban areas built around factory production before the depression, areas that were falling out of favor in the public mind (Mollenkopf, 1983). The primary legislative vehicle for this new emphasis, the 1949 Housing Act, "committed the nation to providing 'a decent home and suitable living environments' for every American family, set public housing production targets, and created a new and powerful mechanism for transforming land in the central cities" (Mollenkopf, 1983, p. 79). Urban renewal, despite its newness and boldness, was to follow the reformist precedent of working through "an alliance of those seeking reform and those seeking profit" (Glazer, 1965, p. 178).

New York was among the first cities to jump on the urban renewal bandwagon. In 1949 Robert Moses won from the State Legislature the authorization to form the Committee on Slum Clearance Projects (CSC), which Moses himself would head. Moses then canvassed the city's "elites" -- chiefly, the real estate executives and university Presidents -- for their support and for suggestions as to how to address their needs (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1988). From then through the early 1960s many areas of the city -- some of them perhaps unsalvagable slums but many simply old neighborhoods occupying land that the government wanted -- were razed to make way for

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office buildings, university campuses, "civic centers" and expressways. Between 1949 and 1957 the amount spent on urban renewal in New York City was $267 Million -- more than twice the combined figure for every other municipality in the nation (Caro, 1974).

With such an intensive focus on the slums, one would think that they alone were the root cause of the city's problems -- problems that went beyond strict matters of sanitation or physical comfort and touched on unemployment, crime, fiscal problems, education and traffic congestion. There is, however, much evidence that they were far from the root cause, for slums, in their hundred-year history in New York, had never in themselves imperiled the city's overall survival as did New York's postwar ills: slums, as an outgrowth of corruption, carelessness and greed, surely made millions of people miserable, but they actually helped rather than hindered the city's economic engine; hence the supreme resistance on the part of the business interests to change them (see Churchill, 1962; Mumford 1961: Lubove, 1962).

By 1945, as in 1895, slums were not a cause but a symptom of urban ills. Yet as such they represented a well-acknowledged villain against which postwar reformers could rally support. The real problems of postwar urban decline were were of course more elusive; some of these

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were alluded to above. However, there was one additional factor that public policymakers missed almost entirely: an influx of many of the nation's poor and unskilled workers and their families to the major cities after the war. An unprecedented numbers of black [1] Americans left the south following the mechanization of agriculture there -- a process that had actually begun during the war, when manufacturing centers such as Brooklyn and Detroit attracted migrants from the rural south seeking factory work. Between 1940 and 1960 the number of blacks leaving the South was nearly four million (Cloward & Piven, 1975). Between 1940 and 1950, when the total population of American cities with over 50,000 residents increased by 5.9 percent, the number of blacks inhabiting them rose by 62.4 percent; for whites the increase was a mere 2 percent (Abrams, 1955). Meanwhile, the Puerto Rican influx was increasing, too: between 1950 and 1960 the Puerto Rican population in New York City increased by 149 percent, to 613,000 (Hall, 1965).

Unfortunately for these newcomers, however, New York in the late 1940s was no longer a manufacturing center. It was at that time instead beginning a long and permanent decline in such employment and a corresponding increase in office work in government and in expanding corporations. The higher educational requirements for such jobs, in

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addition to prevalent racist attitudes in housing, education and employment, meant that the arriving blacks and Puerto Ricans would have extreme difficulty finding jobs, and thus many resorted to public assistance.

The response of government to this impending crisis -- of job-seekers without job prospects -- was one of almost unimaginable incompetence, even malice: it pretended the blacks and Puerto Ricans flooding into the cities -- people leaving their homes for reasons utterly beyond their own control and unaccustomed to the urban world into which they were being propelled -- merited no attention, and so it omitted them from redevelopment plans. It was certainly not that the new arrivals were not noticed. In fact, in 1947 The New York Times, unwittingly fueling what had become a citywide panic, estimated that 600,000 Puerto Ricans were already living in New York City -- despite the fact that the actual figure was about 150,000 (Handlin, 1959). Rather, there was an official unwillingness to incorporate minorities, who not only did not generally get urban renewal's benefits but indeed were continuously uprooted from wherever they would manage to settle by the urban renewal bulldozer. Blacks, although comprising only ten percent of the nationwide population, comprised 75 percent of those evicted for urban renewal (Abrams, 1955). In New York City, blacks comprised half of those evicted

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for urban renewal, while only five percent of the new structures were occupied by blacks (Hall, 1965). Racial and ethnic minorities, however, were not alone among the evicted. Between 1946 and 1956, fully 320,000 New Yorkers were evicted from their homes to make room for urban renewal projects (Caro, 1974).

The federal government for its part adhered to a policy of strict separation of races (Abrams, 1955; 1965), which municipalities generally followed: public housing until the early 1950s was targeted toward areas where only whites lived and avoided locations where it might serve the expanding minority populations. As the decade progressed and these housing developments lost many of their white working-class residents to the suburbs, municipalities began using the vacated apartments to house families receiving welfare, leading to the transformation of many housing projects into concentrations of the poor and the jobless, who, for reasons just discussed, were disproportionately black and Hispanic (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1988). As public housing became increasingly a program that housed racial and ethnic minorities, the City lost interest in its housing goals and pursued a more radical shift from housing the poor and middle-class to land acquisition for the government- subsidized expansion of corporate headquarters, hospitals and universities

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(Mollenkopf, 1983).

Although, in terms of the health of the nation's cities, such policies as these may seem not merely unjust but foolish and ultimately suicidal, they were actually sacrificial, for at that time the idea of efficient, coherent cities began to be abandoned so that suburban dispersal could take place. The very idea of a suburb, in fact, had changed significantly. From the pre-war idea of a place politically and culturally subordinate to the city where some of the wealthier people who work in the city could live in pleasant, semi-rural surroundings, suburbs had become a region where not only the population but industry could relocate, a process of dispersal that was haphazard, space-wasting and a far cry from the regional planning and garden city concept still championed by such writers as Lewis Mumford.

This new planning orientation had begun as early as the New Deal, when urban theorists, noting that central city concentration had peaked over a decade earlier, regarded cheap suburban land as the future location for urban dispersal -- and congested urban land as hopelessly obsolete. Consequently, the Federal government began to target its housing subsidies toward the suburbs (Jacobs, 1961; Mowry & Brownell, 1981). The historian Oscar Handlin (1959) appraised the effects of this policy on the

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cities in the following terms: "Only those too fixed in their ways to break familiar neighborhood ties or too old to hope for a change in career remained in the earlier centers of settlement..." (p. 67).

The rise in automobile use after the War made suburbia's full realization possible. The parkways built during the 1920s and 1930s (such as the Henry Hudson, which whisked passenger cars through Inwood against a scenic backdrop) had enabled the dispersal of residential land use. But the expressways of the 1950s -- also heavily subsidized by the federal government -- were designed to accommodate trucks, and so aided the flight of industry to the suburbs. Thus, after the war, industry as well as higher-income households could leave the city, their places to be taken by the poorer blacks and Puerto Ricans with limited access to the now-dispersed jobs. The result, of course, was a declining urban tax base and an inability (no longer just an arrogant unwillingness) on the part of cities to provide adequate services to a population in which such services were in sharp demand. Between 1950 and 1960 more than three-fourths of the national economic growth in metropolitan areas took place on the cities' fringes or in the suburbs (Abrams, 1965). This dispersal of jobs and residences was aided incalculably by the 1956 Interstate and National Defense

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Highway Act, which, under the pretense of improving motor transportation in preparedness for a feared Soviet invasion, set a multi-decade goal of linking all the nation's population centers with high-capacity roadways. By the end of the 1950s Lewis Mumford (1961) could write "Under the present dispensation we have sold our urban birthright for a sorry mess of motor cars" (p. 509).

Yet throughout the 1950s urban renewal proceeded virtually without hindrance even by the voluminous criticism it attracted; indeed, it was seen as the only way (or at least the only federally-financed way) to make cities serve what were projected as the needs of the late twentieth century: adequate shelter, a viable business climate and a modern look. The interests of business and the people were supposed to be met simultaneously and for the betterment of all concerned; or, as Glazer (1965) summarized:

> The planners and advocates of public housing were trying to improve the environment of slum dwellers and the overall pattern of the city in terms of amenity and efficiency. The commercial and financial interests were trying to maintain the level of business and property values in downtown areas, jeopardized somewhat by an increasingly poor (and, incidentally, nonwhite) central-city populace. Both groups wanted to stem the rapid flow of the more prosperous citizens to the suburbs and hoped this could be done by remodeling the cities physically. The mayors, confronted with the increasing costs of urban government and threatened by the decline

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> of property values and tax revenues, shared this hope. They saw in urban renewal the solution to the economic decline of central-city areas and an opportunity to build monuments and generally beautify cities (pp. 178-179).

The urban policies of the 1945-1960 era, however, did none of these things. The new housing projects were architecturally and socially sterile and soon became the object of their occupants' (and larger society's) hate and fear (Jacobs, 1960). In 1957 a City report on law enforcement in public housing stated that, in terms of crime, "In some of the projects...the situation is so serious as to be potentially explosive" (City of New York, Office of the Mayor, 1957, no page numbers). Jacobs (1961) discerned that most youth gang members in New York City were residents of the new housing projects (both pre- and post-war) and declared:

> The myth that playgrounds and grass and hired guards or supervisors are innately wholesome for children, and that city streets, filled with ordinary people, are innately evil for children, boils down to a deep contempt for ordinary people. (P. 82).

Meanwhile, commerce and industry continued to colonize the suburbs and the middle class continued to flee there as well; government became more costly as social problems multiplied and the "monuments" and "beautification" schemes turned out to be monstrosities.

The urban renewal approach, it became increasingly

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clear, belied any thought of "renewing" cities in the sense of bringing out and fostering the human benefits inherent in that mode of civilization, benefits that had been carelessly lost or ignored. Urban renewal instead sought the destruction of cities as they had come to be known and mandated their replacement with instant, untested blandness. However, as long as the necessary money, technology and will were there to accomplish large-scale changes, the changes were made swiftly while the opportunity lasted; there was no time for second thoughts or for conservation. Old was bad and new was good; as Mumford (1968) wrote:

> For most Americans, progress means accepting what is new because it is new, and discarding what is old because it is old. This may be good for a rapid turnover in business, but it is bad for continuity and stability in life. Progress, in an organic sense, should be cumulative, and though a certain amount of rubbish-clearing is always necessary, we lose part of the gain offered by a new invention if we automatically discard all the still valuable inventions that preceded it (p. 93).

Inwood in 1950 was in many ways a place about to be "automatically discarded." As the children in its PS 152 correctly surmised, it was not an "ultra-modern community," nor was it even headed in that general direction, and even the reasonable expectations for their

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community they so optimistically articulated were not be realized. For the children in that class bound for college and careers, Inwood was unlikely to be the place where they would choose raise their own families. Nothing within the realm of urban policy in the 1950s was going Inwood's way: highways, not subways, were to get revenue [2]; single-family home owners, not renters, would get tax subsidies; suburban public schools would have baseball diamonds and swimming pools, while Inwood's would continue to have the same bare, paved schoolyards. The 1950s were a time when Inwood's possibilities were becoming ever more limited.

Footnotes to Section 5.2

[1] In the five years (1987-92) between the inception of this dissertation and this writing, the term "African American" has gained swiftly in popular usage (and somewhat less so in scholarly usage) at the expense of "black". Yet whether it can be said to have moved significantly toward replacing "black" is of course not certain. Moreover, none of my black/ African American informants (all of whom I interviewed personally) identified themselves as "African American," but rather used "black." I have therefore chosen to use that term in these pages.

[2] Inwood did benefit indirectly from one highway project. This occurred when, in 1955, the Major Deegan Expressway was built. This artery is located across the Harlem River from Inwood and parallels Broadway. This facility spared Inwood much local truck traffic, which until that year had to use Broadway. (Trucks and other commercial vehicles were of course barred from the Henry Hudson Parkway by law).

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5.3 Urban Renewal Comes to Inwood

In their history of Inwood, the boys and girls in a fifth year class of Public School 152, Manhattan (1950) note a new development in their midst:

> Near the school the city is building a housing development called the Dyckman Houses. It is on Tenth Avenue, from Dyckman Street north for two blocks and east along the Harlem River. In order to put up these houses the workers had to take away a row of small garages, a gas station, some tennis courts and a large parking lot. The parking lot had been used for a baseball park until the seats were removed to make way for the cars. The housing project has its own heating power and each house is fourteen stories tall. (No page numbers).

The site the children refer to is of course that of the Dyckman Oval and the Hamilton Tennis Courts, where two generations of Inwood children had ice skated and watched baseball, boxing and "midget auto racing." Apparently by 1950 its function as a community recreation center had faded considerably, its owners having given over much of the space to automobile parking. The land on which it stood, consisting mostly of the filled-in bed of Sherman Creek, differed greatly from the rock-solid land to the west, and so until that year it had been spared heavy construction and was awaiting the day when sufficient investment could be made for its development.

In 1949 the New York City Housing Authority, a builder with tremendous resources derived from urban renewal,

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chose that site for a new development. As a target of urban renewal Inwood was among the more fortunate urban neighborhoods in that it could accommodate so large a development with no displacement of present tenants. Thus Inwoodians could be thankful for not being among the 320,000 New Yorkers (Caro, 1974) evicted from their homes to make room for urban renewal projects.

From what can be known about Inwood in the year 1950, it would seem that any large outside investment in the neighborhood could have been best targeted toward its aging housing, and schools, its small library, its antiquated transportation and its meager play facilities. But that approach would have run counter to the philosophy of urban renewal, which ignored the existing neighborhood context and sought instead to impose its own order. No one scanning Inwood in 1950 could have seriously prescribed as a solution for its emerging problems the erection of housing for approximately 4,000 new residents without corresponding improvements in its existing housing and in services. Unfortunately for urban neighborhoods at the time, the premise of urban renewal was not to scan neighborhoods to address their needs but to scan the city map for possible sites for badly-needed housing.

Officials of the Church of the Good Shepherd apparently felt that this impending influx would not be in

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their best interests. In 1949 Francis Cardinal Spellman, Archbishop of New York, approved the creation of a new parish in Inwood, to be called St. Jude's, and the dividing line between it and Good Shepherd was fixed at Sherman Avenue. This action not only split Inwood into three parishes (the Parish of Mary, Queen of Martyrs, it will be recalled, lay south of Dyckman Street), but split what had been Good Shepherd into two parishes that were grossly unequal. Good Shepherd would retain the higher-income sections near Inwood Hill and Isham Parks (essential to its survival, since the parish was chronically in debt), while St. Jude would encompass the older, more tired buildings in the eastern part of the valley (including those in the shadow of the old elevated train), and a large industrial area -- as well as a public housing project whose tenants' incomes by law could never be high.

The reason given by Good Shepherd for the split has been that the the parish could not accommodate the additional numbers (Church of the Good Shepherd, 1962; 1987). While this seems plausible when considered at face-value, a full consideration of the issues makes it seem unlikely for that to have been the whole reason. Despite the precedent of Parishes being carved out of Parishes in anticipation of large population increases (as

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when, in the 1920s, the Parish of Mary Queen of Martyrs was carved out of what had been Washington Heights' Parish of St. Elizabeth), Good Shepherd Church had, after all, gladly accommodated far larger influxes of parishioners between 1912 and 1940 than anything expected from public housing in the 1950s. Moreover, the approximately four thousand newcomers to Inwood were just as likely to be Jews or Protestants as Catholics, and so would not necessarily overburden the parish. And even with the new housing project, the overall population of Inwood, as it turned out, actually declined between 1950 and 1960, as discussed earlier in this chapter, cancelling out, in strict numerical terms, any need for a new parish. Any competent demographer in the 1940s could have advised Good Shepherd officials that, in the decade ahead, their community was likely to lose, not gain, population.

But it must have been evident to all concerned that public housing would bring in a different type of Inwoodian -- one who secured an apartment through the impersonal procedure of placement on a city roster due to financial need and not necessarily motivated by an aspiration to live according to the community's established -- and still well-respected -- way of life. The possibility that this perception obtained among Good Shepherd Parishioners is enhanced by the fact that by 1950

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public housing projects -- once orderly and immaculate additions to the cityscape, whose tenants had to have passed through an elaborate screening process -- were already taking on a reputation as rough places, places where the poor were warehoused and where crime bred (Plunz, 1990). Racism (indications of which will be discussed in this chapter) may have been a factor as well, since in many neighborhoods like Inwood public housing would be the first vehicle for introducing the first appreciable number of black residents.

The fledgling Parish of St. Jude was duly established. To get it started, Good Shepherd Parish had donated $100,000. After a year or two of holding Mass at a movie house on 207th Street, the congregation built its home at the corner of Tenth Avenue and 204th Street, in the shadow of the elevated train [1].

The Dyckman Houses opened in March, 1950. Its seven buildings contained 1,167 apartments, of which about two-thirds were four-room units (New York City Planning Commission, 1969), indicating that the development was intended primarily for families of moderate size. At a height of 14 storeys for each of its seven buildings, the Dyckman Houses represented the new generation of public housing: Uniform high-rises set among lawns. This design

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came to be known by architects and planners as the "tower-in-the-park" (Plunz, 1991). This new design was noteworthy and experimental, for earlier projects in the city had contained a mix of heights with the highest usually no more than seven storeys (Plunz, 1991).

As was typical of public housing, no commercial establishments were included in the Dyckman Houses, and so residents did their shopping on Dyckman Street and along Nagle Avenue, although milk vending machines were placed in the lobbies. Front doors to the buildings were left unlocked during the day; at night they were locked and residents had to use a key, since there was no intercom system, according to Eloise Whitehurst-Carrington (1991), who has lived in the Dyckman Houses since they opened and who is today President of the project's Tenants' Association.

The Dyckman Houses' brick, casement-windowed towers were set among lawns criss-crossed by concrete paths studded with benches (Figs. 38 and 39). Playing on the grass was prohibited and a transgressor's parent would learn of infractions ultimately when the fine of $1 or $2 was added to the rent bill. The development, in fact, had no public play space, either indoors or outdoors. Play space, set aside on a triangular area immediately to the north, were opened shortly after the project's completion.

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Fig. 38. View of Dyckman Houses. Although taken in 1975, this view, as well as the following one, shows a scene that could not have been much different from the 1950s. The chain-link fence and post-and-chain lawn guard that flank the girl suggest the repressiveness of this environment toward play. [Source: The Center for Human Environments, Inc.].

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Fig. 39. A girl plays at the Dyckman Houses, 1967. Benches, immature trees and hulking towers characterize the environment. The lawns beyond the bench are inaccessible to this girl. [Source: Informant].

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This facility was under the management of the New York City Parks Parks Department and was open to all children. The unnamed playground (later named for Msgr. Kett of St. Jude's Parish) contained standard equipment, including swings, a sand box, handball courts, a comfort station and a wading pool. It was the first public playground in Inwood ever built east of Broadway.

In 1954, with modest Housing Authority funds, the Dyckman Community Center was established in several basement rooms (State of New York Department of State, 1954). There, children's activities were limited mainly to arts and crafts (Carrington, 1991). Betty Neubort (1975) a neighborhood activist who lived with her husband and two sons in the Dyckman Houses until 1960, described her involvement and assessment of play and recreation programs there in the 1950s:

> The Dyckman Houses had facilities for community activity. I became part of an active parent group, which organized a summer day camp, scouting, a teen age canteen as well as arts and crafts programs. For a few years we were successful with these programs by enlisting participation of church leaders, the Chamber of Commerce of Dyckman Street, an the neighborhood clinical facilities of the Jewish Memorial Hospital. (No page numbers).

At any given time in its existence the Dyckman Houses were home to well over a thousand children. One of the first, and certainly the most famous, was the basketball

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superstar Kareem Abdul-Jabbar (Lew Alcindor). In his autobiography (Abdul-Jabbar & Knobler, 1983) Abdul-Jabbar recalls episodes from his childhood there. These are worthy of some extended quotation.

> My parents and I moved into the Dyckman Street projects in the Inwood section of Manhattan in 1950. It was city-owned middle-income housing and, although the City Housing Authority offered us another apartment on the Lower East Side, my mother waited a year and a half while the projects were being built so we could be in there first. It was a better neighborhood, she insisted.
>
> New York City, then as now, was divided into neighborhoods with distinct cultural identities. North of Dyckman Street was Irish, south was Jewish, and the projects were this little multinational enclave east of the elevated train tracks that ran north-south on Nagle Avenue. Only about fifteen percent of the projects were black, and the bunker mentality that now rules New York had not yet evolved. As a kid, I played with anyone who was around. We had English neighbors, and Scandinavians, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, gypsies. The people who lived right above us were Russian, had emigrated to America right after World War II, the Diviatkins. The old man had me up there an hour one day trying to teach me to pronounce his name. (Pp. 4-5).
>
> I used to get my ass handed to me on a regular basis. On the New York streets where I was growing up, if you didn't know how to fight you were in big trouble, and I just didn't have the instinct. I was always bigger than the kids my age, so they didn't bother me, but there would be guys two and three years older who felt called upon to kick my ass at every opportunity. They were just bad, mean, streetwise nine-year-old boys ready to go for the kill. (P. 1).

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> The summer after fifth grade I had my bike, and I'd ride all over. I was playing Little League, and to get up to Inwood Hill Park where the fields were, I had to go through Good Shepherd Parish. Good Shepherd had been one of only two Catholic Churches north of 181st Street, but when the projects were built they couldn't -- or wouldn't, I've never been sure which -- accommodate the new arrivals, and so St. Jude's was built. St. Jude's territory was the projects at Good Shepherd's back end, so St. Jude's had the new development's blend of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Good Shepherd was almost one hundred percent Irish. I would be riding up there to play baseball, and these Irish kids would be chasing me yelling "Nigger! Nigger!" Once I had to swing my bike chain and plow through a whole crowd of them. There weren't any gang fights but you had to be ready for these people. (Pp. 21-22).
>
> I loved summer in the city. St. Jude's ran a day camp, and each year I would swim and play softball and romp around with my friends. (P. 21).

These excerpts present a very mixed picture of what it must have been like to grow up at the Dyckman Houses. It is not that Jabbar's statements are self-contradictory so much as they suggest the multiple layers of truth that must have attended young Lew Alcindor's perception of his community. For example, there was, according to the text, no "bunker mentality" present and so young Lew played "with anyone who was around." Yet Inwood was "divided" ethnically (except for the Dyckman Houses, which were integrated) and Lew would "get his ass handed to him" -- and not just by the occasional bully but "on a regular

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basis." Also, the text refers to "the New York streets where I was growing up," implying a ghetto such as Harlem, when in fact young Lew's building sat among the well-policed lawns of a brand new housing project that was "a multiethnic enclave." And though young Lew presumably suspected (and resented the possibility) that St. Jude's parish was established as a separate entity because its parishioners were not uniformly Irish Catholic, he found St. Jude's summer recreation programs so fulfilling that he "loved summer in the city." One can surmise from a critical reading of what Abdul-Jabbar chose to reveal that whatever the considerable joys Inwood provided a shy (and oversized) black child in the 1950s, the indignities and terrors were seldom a safe distance away.

Footnotes to Section 5.3

[1] Contrary to the wishes of the fifth graders of PS 152, this segment of elevated train, consisting of three stations in Inwood, was to remain firmly in place. With the demolition of Manhattan's Third Avenue levated in 1956, Inwood gained the decidedly unfashionable distinction of possessing the last remaining functioning elevated subway trackage on the island.

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5.4 The Juvenile Delinquent and Inwood

As discussed in the previous chapter, children's involvement in juvenile delinquency in 1943 -- the violence, vandalism and membership in gangs -- had alarmed not only upper Manhattan but the city in general. These incidents, which were part of a national trend, had led to some public questioning of the customary approach to the issue of youth and crime. The prevention of juvenile crime until then had been relegated largely to private organizations such as the Boy Scouts of America, the Girl Scouts, the YMCA, YM-YWHA and Catholic Youth Organization, all of which were expected to recruit children and youths and to attempt to socialize them. Those children who did commit crimes or who otherwise got into trouble with the law were left to the police and the courts, where they were subject to removal to jails, camps or reformatories.

But after the incidents of 1943, and continuing through the decade, community leaders, clergy, the courts and the police determined that in Inwood a more coordinated program was needed, one that would not make strict and arbitrary distinctions between "good" and "bad" children. Instead, they reasoned, it should make some attempt to understand the law-breaking child's milieu, and with that insight attempt some type of rehabilitation that would treat the child without removing him or her from the

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home, church, school and community. Such a new approach, moreover, would not emphasize devotion to a specific religious denomination. In short, a new approach would have to be more sociological, involving parents, teachers, clergy and social workers. (In Inwood this approach had its beginnings in the 1944 "interfaith rally" in Washington Heights, during which adults pledged to pay closer attention to unsupervised children and youths). At the same time, the practice of offering supervised recreation programs to deter children from crime would be retained -- in fact, expanded along with what was provided by private organizations.

In New York as in many other cities, this social work approach was combined with law enforcement. Throughout the 1950s the City -- primarily through its Police Department -- established a large bureaucratic apparatus for dealing on many levels with children and youths. This at various times encompassed within the Police Department alone the following programs: the Police Athletics League (PAL), the Youth Aid Division, Youth Squads, the Youth Division (which included the Youth Investigation Bureau, the Youth Patrol Bureau and the Youth Records Bureau), the Gang Intelligence Unit and the Runaway Unit (New York City Police Department, Youth Aid Division, 1975). Thus during the immediate postwar years

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the police had, as always, primary responsibility for governmental dealings with children and youths involved with crime or living on the margins of crime; secondary responsibility was given to the New York City Youth Bureau (later renamed the Youth Board), established in 1947 and intended to coordinate city youth policy (Smith, 1973). But there was an important difference between the Police Department's approach in the 1950s and previous ones, for the breadth and variety of its programs and procedures were expanded greatly.

Examples of this shift were easily read: the Police Athletic League (P.A.L.), for one, established as a private, voluntary organization in 1936, was in 1945 chartered by New York State and made an official part of the Police Department, thus making recreation for the first time an official police responsibility and, in addition, giving PAL a permanent staff as well as somewhat more dependable funding. Standard PAL activities have been listed as follows: "baseball, football, hockey, weightlifting, karate, Play Street programs, play centers, track and field events, Broadway shows, visits to museums, ballet lessons, music, dance and drama, tutoring, dances, Thanksgiving and Christmas parties, bands and outings to professional sports events." (New York City Police Department, Youth Aid Division, 1975, p. 10).

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But the Police Athletic League's informal preventative approach, patterned as it was after nineteenth-century boys' clubs, was but one in a variety of police approaches that encompassed surveillance, warnings, record-compiling and arrest. Since only a tiny fraction of children actually commit crimes, many during the 1950s came into contact with the police through what was known officially as the "Juvenile Report investigative process" and which on the streets was known as "getting a JD card." The process worked as follows: A police officer dealing with a child or youth suspected of an infraction (excluding such classifications as felonies or sex crimes) would have the option of making an arrest or compiling a report. If a report was made it would be followed by a home visit by the Youth Aid unit of the Police Department (female officers were assigned to girls and younger boys). The report was then distributed among school authorities as well as to a network of social service agencies. This tactic was supposed to distinguish between childlike mischief and true "juvenile delinquency." As the Police Department described it (New York City Police Department Youth Aid Division, 1975):

> In essence, the overall objective of the Juvenile Report investigative process is to identify and separate those children whose behavior indicates an immaturity and possible bad judgement concomitant with youthful excess energy, from those whose repetitive police contacts ultimately

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> point to a pattern of incipient delinquency. Inherent in this objective is a just society's desire not to label "criminal" the child who thinks and acts as a child. (p. 6).

This process of dealing with children and youths was novel not only to the police but to the youngsters themselves: it presented the suspected juvenile delinquent with the prospect not necessarily of jail but of something with much less precedent in the history of children's play: having a police record that would be shared with parents, teachers and clergy, who, armed with the latest sociological techniques, would converge on the child. With this process, however, nothing pertaining to the child's alleged infraction would have to be substantiated or proven; police would have merely to take down a child's name, and the stigma (or badge, according to one's crowd) of having a police record would result. Thus a child who had every intention of leading a law-abiding, even exemplary life, when tempted to break minor rules such as those against climbing trees, playing ball in a building courtyard or sneaking into an abandoned house, would have to consider not merely the highly unpleasant prospect of a ten-minute harangue from a short-tempered cop, but a lingering entanglement in an unfathomable bureaucratic process.

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One common anti-delinquency tactic used in the 1950s was to try to channel into organized sports gatherings of youths that might otherwise form gangs. However, in Inwood (and perhaps in other neighborhoods) both forms of association -- gangs and legitimate clubs -- existed simultaneously. Jim Dolan, one of the informants whose childhoods will be presented later in this chapter, was an observer of the gang scene in Inwood during the 1950s. In his recollection, gangs and sport were nearly inseparable:

> Blocks would band together. The Shamrocks, they were just hoods. Usually gangs started as an offshoot of a team. In other words, if you got jackets and played football, see, there'd be gangs. Every so often The Daily News would publish a map of gangs in upper Manhattan -- Harlem, Washington Heights.
>
> Around the Dyckman Street area there was a gang called the Alley Cats, who had bright orange jackets. On Dyckman Street you had a gang called the Eagles. Post Avenue had a gang called the Satans. All these were football teams. They'd be in a game, and all of a sudden, something would happen and they'd wind up in a fight, a gang war.
>
> The dominant gang was the Inwood Rams. They were the only ones who went into it in a big way and kept it. They had midgets, juniors and seniors. They had green jackets with yellow on 'em and it said Rams Inwood on 'em. At 218th and Seaman there was a gang called the Longhorns, and they were a gang, but I don't remember them having gang wars. Rather, they were just a gang that played football. Everything was an offshoot of the football teams. I guess if you got beat on the field, you wanted to take it out somehow.

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> After a while it got so that, I guess, the cops got pressured to break up the gangs, so if they saw anyone with a jacket, they gave him a hard time.

From its first appearance during World War II until the late 1950s the national alarm over juvenile delinquency had focused not so much on actual crimes as on the emerging youth culture and its perceived subversiveness that, it was feared, could easily lead to crime: slang, posture, dress, drugs, sexual promiscuity, gangs, rebelliousness, boredom, movies, comic books and popular music. Crimes commonly associated with juvenile delinquency tended to be no more serious than vandalism, assault, or car theft; rarely if ever did it come to murder.

That perception began to change in 1957 when, on a summer night in Highbridge Park in Washington Heights, Michael Farmer, the fifteen-year-old son of a fireman, was killed in a fight between the Jesters and the Egyptian Kings, which were rival gangs. Michael, who walked with a limp as a result of having contracted polio as a child, could not run away as fast as his fellow Jesters when they began losing, and was stabbed twice in the chest. Weapons brought into play that night included "gravity knives," a metal dog leash, military belts, a fishing weight and a machete ("14 Boys," 1957; "4 Youths Held," 1957; Barrett, 1959; "Youth, 15, Killed," 1957). Unlike the anti-Semitic

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incidents of 1943, racial and ethnic bias were reportedly not factors in the killing, although it was noted that other gang clashes in Washington Heights involved whites fighting blacks from the expanding northern reaches of Harlem (Barrett, 1959).

Although in violent situations human life is vulnerable, the deliberateness of the highly-publicized Farmer killing created more than the usual stir throughout the city. There was, however, no youth rally, as there had been in Washington Heights in 1944; by 1957, apparently, it was deemed unwise to assemble thousands of youths -- no matter how carefully selected -- in one location, even for a collective affirmation of harmony. Instead, on the third week following Michael Farmer's killing -- the day on which seven youths implicated in it were indicted for first-degree murder -- Mayor Robert F. Wagner, according to the press, held "an old-fashioned town hall type of meeting to find out what the city could do about its juvenile delinquency problem" ("14 Boys," 1957, p. 1). The list of participants at this event included many of the officials and religious and community leaders involved in one or another way with delinquency prevention, and it was impressive: the Chief City Magistrate, the Deputy Police Commissioner, the Chairman of the State Youth Commission, the Executive Director of

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the Youth Board, the Superintendent of Schools, the acting presiding judge of Domestic Relations Court, the Executive Director of the Protestant Council of the City of New York, the Director of Catholic Charities, a representative of the Board of Rabbis, the Executive Director of the Lennox Hill Neighborhood Association and the Executive Director of United Neighborhood Houses. There was, however, no mention of any children or youths participating; in this sense the meeting was not merely "old fashioned" but dismayingly backward.

During this four-hour meeting 30 people spoke (out of 129 who had requested permission to speak) on a variety of proposals. Interestingly, most dwelled not on the inadequacies of the existing approach to juvenile violence (i.e., recreation programs plus social work) but on the fact that these programs were inadequately funded; most of those present said that more police and Youth Board workers were needed. In this line of thinking Manhattan Borough President Abe Stark led the way, proposing that $3 Million be spent "to provide recreation and guidance facilities for 100,000 youngsters not now included in organized youth activities" which would "use all existing facilities, services and personnel of public and voluntary youth agencies and would augment their activities" ("14 Boys," p. 1). This of course represented not a new

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direction in addressing the problem but a reaffirmation of the soundness of the existing approach through an admission that that had not been adequately financed. The one notable exception to the prevailing unimaginativeness, however, was the proposal to create "work camps" for youths in rural areas, in which inmates would enter "on a voluntary basis to escape dangerous environments and to learn good work habits," an idea that was quickly given quite serious consideration by the Youth Board ("Youth Board," 1957, p. 29).

But there was also a less drastic proposal worth noting, one that involved neither an augmentation of past approaches nor a resort to shipping youths out of the city: "Sending more social workers, psychiatrists and religious leaders into the streets and meet the kids <u>where they are and not where they should be</u>" as one news item put it ("14 Boys," 1957, p. 1. Emphasis added). It was this approach, combined with a massive police presence, that as used on Washington Heights following the Farmer murder.

A year and a half after the murder, a reporter (Barrett, 1959) visited the area and produced a magazine piece highly praising the success of the Youth Board workers (eight in all) assigned to Washington Heights, men working in the midst of a general citywide crime increase.

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The Commander of the 34th Precinct, which covers Washington Heights and Inwood, praised this effort in the following terms:

> Working this way, real close, with the Youth Board man, we've got our fingers on the pulse, we get the signs of unrest much faster than we did before, we get to places in time now to stop trouble before before it really gets started. We get their gripes, too. And some of them got some some mighty legitimate gripes. We know more now about the kids, the kids know more, now, about the rest of us, the community. All around, things are much better now in Washington Heights. (P. 69).

As a result of the response to the Michael Farmer murder, juvenile delinquency declined in Washington Heights and, in all likelihood, in Inwood as well. But how effective overall was the City's approach to juvenile delinquency during the 1950s? One clue is to be found in the arrests made of people under 16 during that period: In 1950 there were 3,424 such arrests; in 1959 the figure had more than tripled -- to 11,365 (Gilbert, 1986).

As far as Inwood itself was concerned, juvenile delinquency rates increased there during 1954, 1955, 1956, and 1957, just as it had for the city as a whole (Table 5). But there was a precipitous and lasting drop beginning in 1958, the year that intensive police patrol and Youth Board work was introduced to Washington Heights; this runs counter to the citywide trend and suggests that Inwood (which shares the 34th Precinct with Washington

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Year	J.D. Rate* (City)	J.D. Rate (Inwood**)	Inwood as % of City Rate
1953	23.3	18.0	77
1954	28.1	25.0	89
1955	30.4	23.3	77
1956	36.1	27.1	75
1957	38.9	30.1	77
1958	46.2	23.8	52
1959	40.0	24.8	62
1960	42.3	26.8	63
1961	43.0	22.3	52
1962	47.0	21.5	46
Avg:	37.5	24.3	65

* Calculated by dividing the number of offenses committed by people aged 7-20 by the total population in that age bracket and then multiplying the quotient by 1,000.

** Excludes area south of Dyckman Street and includes Census Tract #309 in the Bronx.

Table 5. Juvenile delinquency in New York CIty and in Inwood, 1953-62. [Source: New York City Police Department].

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Heights) was in its way greatly affected by the Michael Farmer murder and its aftermath, and so may also have been the focus of increased police vigilance and Youth Board efforts. Thus while from 1954 to 1962 the citywide "JD rate" doubled, for Inwood it increased only slightly. It is also quite possible that, during this time of intense scrutiny of youthful behavior, the atmosphere for children's play was somewhat repressive.

5.5 The Increasing Organization of Play

By 1960 the situation with recreational facilities in Washington Heights and Inwood, as described in Lendt's (1960) clinically-oriented social history of Washington Heights and Inwood, was somewhat grim: although Youth Aid workers from the Police Department did hold regular meetings with local community leaders, during which they attempted to identify priorities for recreation and other social services, there was, Lendt concluded, still a need for "greater integration of effort and a wider base of community support" (p. 120). One problem mentioned was that the roster of agencies dealing with children and youth had not changed substantially since the 1930s and were inadequate:

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> The YMCA, YM-YWHA, and the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) are active in providing youth activities within the immediate vicinity of the respective organizations. These activities are somewhat limited. Some new structures have been built, but a number of the buildings are temporary structures and the operating hours are irregular. Equipment and trained personnel are in chronic short supply (p. 120).

Boy Scout troops, Lendt noted, had been expanded, but "From a general knowledge of Boy Scout activities...one can conclude that this organization appeals mostly to boys from higher income families" (p. 121). In the end Lendt was not optimistic on the effectiveness of recreation anyway, questioning the "proposition that directed activity in sufficient quantity will preclude anti-social activities...[O]ne could be more hopeful...if one could have some assurance that recreational activity attacks the causes of juvenile delinquency" (pp. 120-121).

Lendt is perhaps correct in writing that the need, if any, for local play and recreation programs had outpaced availability and had caused disarray among local play professionals. Indeed, the expansion of youth programs during the 1950s certainly did not live up to what the "interfaith rally" of 1944 and the Mayor's "old-fashioned, town hall type of meeting" of 1957 would seem to have promised. (One must in addition bear in mind that Lendt

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is referring to all of Manhattan above West 135th Street; wealthier Inwood probably fared somewhat better).

Still, Lendt's skepticism notwithstanding, many of the changes in the city and in Inwood between 1945 and 1960 had created an environment in which children's play had become increasingly adult-organized and supervised. In Washington Heights and Inwood, concern over juvenile delinquency had, after all, led to several developments that seriously dampened children's unstructured play. These included (1) the increased police involvement; (2) a recognized need for more supervised recreation programs; (3) The Dyckman Houses, where outdoor play already was severely limited by design and policy, and was in addition subject to the scrutiny of a special Housing Authority police force; (4) a community center for indoor play in the Dyckman Houses; (5) the creation of St. Jude's Parish and the additional school and recreation center that came with it; and (6) the continued presence of the Scouts, CYO, the YM-YWHA and Little League Baseball (the last of which arrived in Inwood in 1950). This array of policies, activities and facilities was considerably broader in scope than anything existing in Inwood before 1945 -- no matter whether some of the longer-established organizations failed to keep up with the times, i.e., to become more professional or to secure permanent quarters

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or sufficient equipment. But of the increasingly adult-directed nature of children's play in Inwood this is just a bare outline; what is known about these activities and facilities in Inwood? How did they operate?

In 1956 the YM-YWHA merged its Washington Heights and Inwood operations into a single site in Inwood, on Nagle Avenue below Dyckman Street. With that move Inwood had its own permanent "Y" recreation center (rather than the limited facility that had been housed in temporary quarters as an annex to the main facility in Washington Heights). This facility differed from most others in that it catered to children as young as preschool age. According to Martin Englisher (1991), its present Executive Director, the "Y" during the late 1950s provided both afterschool programs and summer day outings, for which children had to be registered in advance. The afterschool programs operated for only two or three days per week, and the sessions lasted for only about two hours. Earlier in the 1950s this organization had acquired a camp in Pearl River, New York (perhaps the one the Good Shepherd Girl Scouts had used in the 1920s) which from then on was to be well-utilized by members, although outings were held also at such rural public parks as Tolman Mountain Park or Bear Mountain State Park. The increase in highways during the 1950s made bus trips to

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such destinations much more practical than previously, when day trips were much rarer and took place primarily within the city. According to Mr. Englisher, about three-quarters of the children attending the "Y" during the 1950s were Jewish and the rest were mostly Irish, blacks and Greeks. Boys and girls did not play together in its programs until age twelve.

A previous chapter discussed how, in the 1930s, the "Y" operated according to a philosophy that allowed the children themselves to shape their play and educational activities. During the 1950s this tradition appears to have carried on, only with the difference that structure within the afterschool programs was de-emphasized. As Mr. Englisher explains:

> Basically, you could do anything you wanted. Say you liked to open and close doors -- no reason, you just like to open and close doors --you could say to the teacher, "please let me borrow your keys" and you would get them. Or say you wanted to scream -- just scream, for no reason. Well, you could just stand there and scream and no one would get alarmed.

In stark contrast to the "Y"'s indulgent approach to recreation, the C.Y.O. developed into an organized and regimented center of team sports. By the mid-1950s basketball -- not, as in the 1940s, football -- was its predominant sport, played indoors in the gymnasium of Good Shepherd School. In 1955, the Parish reported that it had

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six basketball teams, including a junior girls' team (the only one of the program's six teams that was undefeated as of January, 1955). Meanwhile, the junior boys' team had reached its capacity of 40, and so the overflow was organized into four teams called the Special Sunday Afternoon League ("CYO," 1955, p. 16). The popularity of the program is reflected in this observation appearing in the Parish magazine:

> But the pride of this year's teams, however, is their spirit and turnout. The visiting teams have noticed it and remarked upon it. This is particularly true of the two Junior teams and the Met girls' team. The junior and Met girls not only have their full quota each of fifteen players, but another fifteen more girls who attend every game to cheer them on, dressed in dark skirts, white blouses and their blue and white Good Shepherd CYO sweaters. They make a very impressive picture at each game. The players themselves are the envy of all the other Parish teams, with their blue and white satin uniforms and white warm-up sweaters. (P. 16).

It is interesting to note in the final sentence such revelations of gang mentality as the emphasis on superior uniforms and the arousal of envy among rivals.

Good Shepherd had, in addition to the CYO, an active program of Boy Scout, Girl Scout, Brownie and, presumably, Girl Scout activities. In these, patriotism, camping, sports and, above all, Catholicism were freely mingled in a program that was diverse and highly ritualistic. The

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Catholic emphasis of Good Shepherd's Scouting activities was in complete accordance with the aims and policies of both the Church and the Scouting organizations; in fact, Pope Pius XII sent "a letter of approval and encouragement" to the World Jamboree of Scouts, held at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Canada in September, 1955. In it His Holiness wrote "May the fervent faith of Our beloved Catholic Scouts, then, shine among all their brothers.." In addition, a "Catholic Committee of Scouting," composed of Bishops, had been operating for some years ("Boy Scout Ideal," 1955, p. 25). The Boy Scouts of America, for its part, offered as one of its most prestigious honors the Ad Altre Dei medal, which was won, among intense competition, by a Good Shepherd boy in 1954 ("Boy Scouts," 1955).

Cub Scouts (a program for boys aged eight to ten) of Good Shepherd had their own round of activities, which included an annual Halloween party, a fall outing, a baseball league, "Midget Hockey" played in Inwood Hill Park three days a week, and a Quarterly Communion Breakfast after 8:00 Mass ("Cub Scouts," 1955, p. 28). There were also two Brownie Scout troops at Good Shepherd as of 1960 ("Brownie Scouts," 1960), whose activities included indoor sports such as basketball and outdoor activities that included a cookout at Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx, a visit to the "Indian caves" in Inwood Hill

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Park, to museums and "a pilgrimage to the shrine at Notre Dame Parish" ("Brownie Scouts," 1960, p. 25).

Good Shepherd's sports offerings did not remain Inwood's sole outlet for for organized sports (at least for the boys), for beginning 1950 Inwood gained a large and well-organized outdoor sports program that was neither city-run nor church-affiliated. That year four boys' baseball teams were formed to compose the Inwood Little League, the first such league in New York City and only the second in the entire state (Bunce, 1964). This was accomplished through the volunteer efforts of a few local men acting under the sponsorship of three local civic organizations. Sometime later the number of teams was increased to eight (Bunce, 1964), and in 1955 the practice of holding annual Little League parades through Inwood was begun (Pitkowski, 1991).

Since Little League baseball, like the Scouts and the CYO, was a national organization that had a great bearing on many children's experience of Inwood, provision of some background on it is in order. According to Frommer (1989) Little League was begun in the summer of 1939 -- the same year as the establishment of the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, N.Y., and of the observance of the centenary of the game itself. The league was intended to provide

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organized baseball for younger boys; prior to the establishment of Little League, such boys generally were kept out of organized neighborhood games because these tended to be for either older boys or adults.

The greatest growth of Little League baseball occurred after the war: by 1947 there were 60 teams in 15 leagues in two states (Pennsylvania and New Jersey); by 1949, there were 867 teams in 197 leagues playing in over twelve states; by 1953 there were 2,800 leagues in all 48 states. By 1955 it had 4,000 leagues. In 1953 Little League Magazine began publication, and in 1959 President Dwight D. Eisenhower proclaimed the second week in June to be National Little League Baseball Week (Frommer, 1989).

Little League baseball, significantly, was during this explosive growth not entirely a backyard phenomenon. It had, in fact, a devoted corporate benefactor in the U.S. Rubber Corporation, which in 1949 provided the funds for the establishment of a national headquarters and the position of a salaried Commissioner of Little League Baseball. According to Fine's (1987) critical analysis of the program, this corporate sponsorship, coupled with the tremendous growth of Little League participation during the 1950s, gave rise to an internal struggle within the directorship over whether the league "should remain a somewhat disorganized, romantic, altruistic venture or

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whether it should be run as a corporation" (p. 7). The matter was settled decisively in favor of corporatism.

Fine informs us further that the rise of Little League baseball was hardly unpredictable -- indeed, that it was the eruption of a long-suppressed idea in organized preadolescent sport. Professional recreation directors in the 1930s had rejected organized competitive sports for preadolescents as developmentally unsuitable; however, as interest in sports was constantly growing, the public sought to circumvent the professionals' boycott through the establishment of private, community-based sports leagues, of which Little League was the culmination.

When Little League was established as a large, centralizing force in realizing this ambition, respect for the mores of individual communities was scrupulously practiced. Community involvement was a main ingredient in Little League's philosophy: Mothers would sew numbers on their boys' uniforms; local businesses would pay for those uniforms as well as sponsor the purchase of equipment, while fathers would volunteer as coaches. According to Fine:

> The Little League organization is tied into a network of other social institutions: schools, churches, families, governments, businesses. Although one rarely thinks of these other social institutions while boys play, they have their effects. One way in which he presence of these institutions is taken into account is through the timing of

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> games and practices. Little League games are timed so as not to interfere with regular school or church time...[L]eagues do not play on Sundays....fathers are not expected to alter their work schedules to coach their sons or to see them play. The integrity of the family is also supported by rules giving coaches the right to have their sons on their teams and (typically) keeping brothers together on the same team (p. 17).

An important additional point is raised by Fine: within the elaborate organizational structure of an average league (e.g., board of directors, committees) there was no formal procedure for surveying the players themselves in order to elicit their ideas, address their concerns or consider their suggestions. Thus Little Leaguers as a rule are expected to be active only as players in a rigidly-ruled game; in all other aspects of the vast machinery of the organization their passivity is assumed. For Inwood, the implications of this philosophy, as indicated by the high popularity Little League enjoyed there, meant further erosion of spontaneous, unsupervised outdoor play for many boys.

[Note: A chronology of significant events affecting Inwood circa 1945-60 appears as Table 6; a map showing local landmarks relating to children's play during this time appears as Fig. 40].

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Year	Event
1949	Congress enacts Housing Act. Postwar urban renewal planning begins.
1949	St. Jude's Parish established.
1950	Dyckman Houses open.
1950	Little League baseball organized in Inwood.
1954	Dyckman Community Center established at Dyckman Houses.
1954	Benedetto farm goes out of business.
1956	Congress authorizes the Interstate and National Defense Highway Act.
1956	YM-YWHA established permanently in Inwood.
1957	Michael Farmer, 14, stabbed to death in Washington Heights. Increased police presence.

Table 6. Chronology of significant events, 1945-60.

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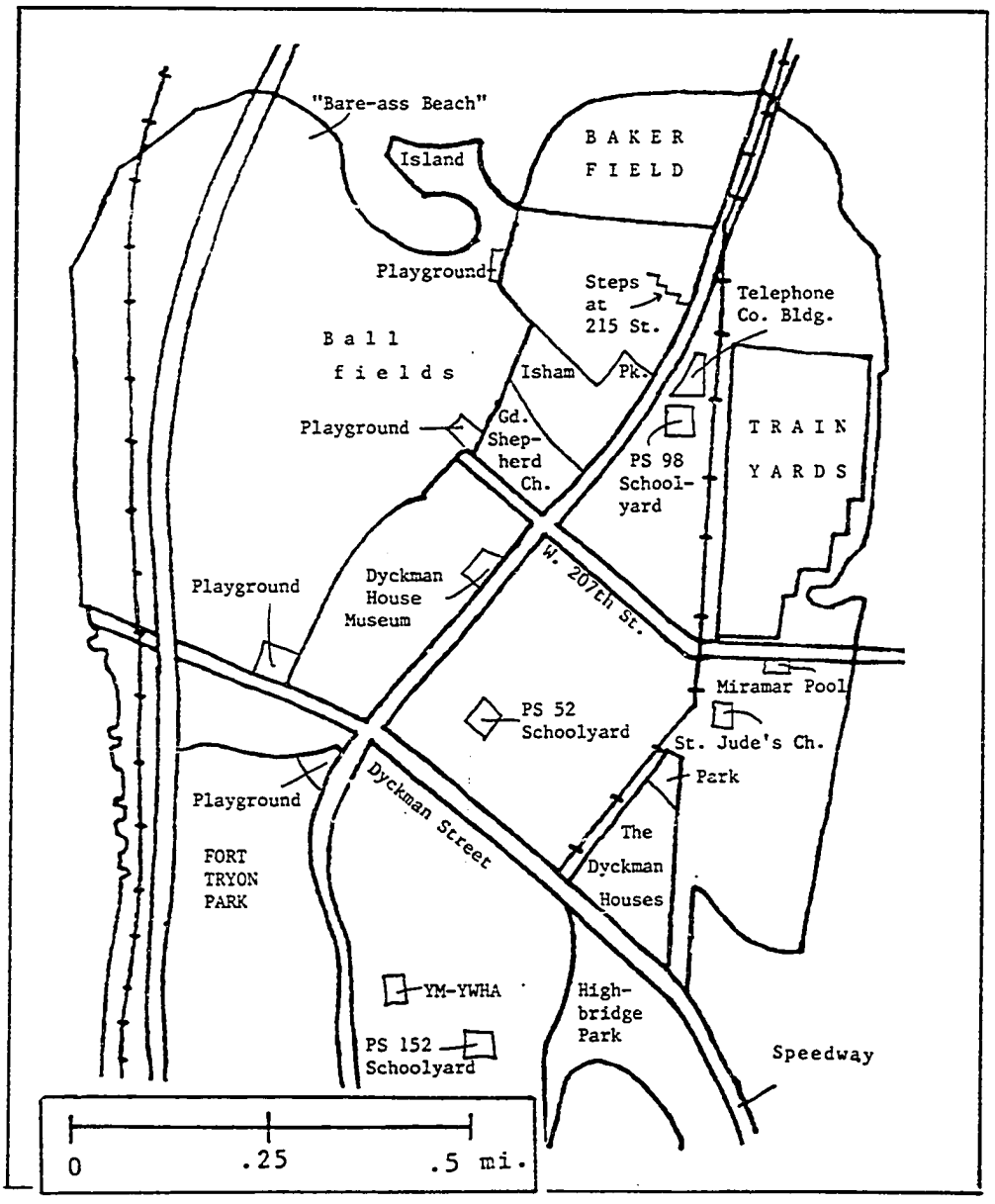


Fig. 40. Map showing landmarks relating to children's play, as existing between 1945 and 1960.

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5.6 Inwood Children's Experience

[Note: For the locations of informants' homes, see Fig. 41].

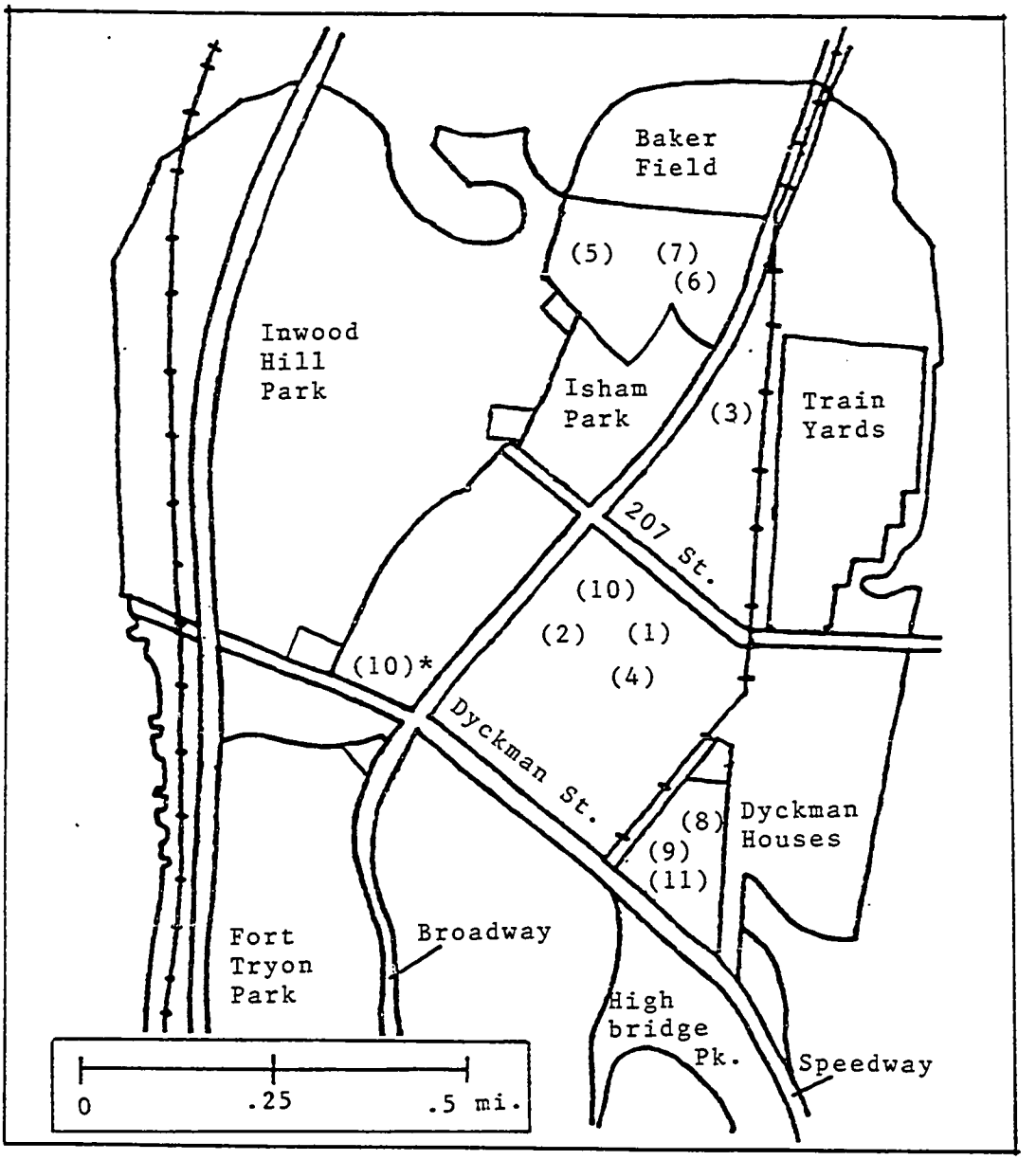
Bill Byrne (b. 1937)

The Byrnes moved to Post Avenue and 204th Street in 1940, when Bill was three. Bill was the first of seven children: in 1938 a sister was born and another followed in 1942; a brother was born in 1943 and third sister was born in 1950 (his two remaining siblings were born after Bill turned twelve). Mr. Byrne was in the food preparation business. The family ethnic background was Irish.

Bill was first allowed out to play unsupervised at age seven or eight (1944-45); until age 12 he had to get his mother's permission to go beyond the immediate vicinity of the building: "I couldn't just wander off." As it happened, his favorite play space throughout his childhood was next to his apartment house:

> In the back of the building there was a sort of yard, with dirt on the ground and a tree in the middle. Me and my friends, we'd play there a lot, with the dirt. But there was also a fence in the back and beyond the fence there was an empty lot where there were tall rocks -- "white rocks" we called them. We loved the white rocks. We also called them "sugar rocks" because they were crumbly -- you could grind and break off bits and play with

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(1) Bill Byrne
(2) Jim Dolan
(3) Peggy Gleason
(4) John Shannon
(5) Stephen Hecht
(6) Gregory Nelson
(7) Theresa Delonghi
(8) Tim McMahon
(9) Pierre Knapp
(10) Paula Byrne
(10)* P. Byrne
(2nd residence)
(11) Mabel Madigan

Fig. 41. Map showing where informants lived, 1945-60.

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them.

> Now, there was a hole in the fence or something, and when you went through you'd be in the white rocks. That was where I played most of my childhood. In the winter you could sled there, too.

To a somewhat lesser degree, Bill would play in front of the building:

> I built a scooter and a pair of skates with junk that was lying around and would go up and down the sidewalk. And we'd play marbles in the gutter. There weren't really many cars.

Some hint as to why Bill played primarily on the white rocks lies in his characterization of the area of the Inwood valley where he lived:

> You might say my area was kind of rough. There were a lot of dock workers living on Post at the time. I remember hearing of a murder there once. And over on Sherman between Academy and Dyckman was what was really the closest thing to a slum in the area -- rundown buildings, not well-kept. It was mixed -- Irish, Germans, Jews, Italians. But it was seedy. Us kids called it "Bedbug Row."

At age 10 (1947) Bill began visiting places beyond the block and the white rocks, such as the Dyckman Oval, then in its last years of operation, where he would watch men's baseball games or attend the yearly carnival. Saturday mornings at the same ages he and some friends would go the Alpine Theater on Dyckman Street, where admission was 12 cents; they went less frequently to the Loew's Inwood Theater on the same street since its admission was a less

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reasonable 25 cents.

Bill would sometimes sled down the bottom part of Fort George Hill; at the bottom, before its busy intersection with Nagle Avenue and Dyckman Street, the Sanitation Department would dump piles of cinders, which Bill assumed were there for children to sled into rather than into traffic.

Also at age 10 Bill began to visit Inwood Hill Park, where he would find shells and see garter snakes and rabbits. Occasionally he would walk across the Henry Hudson Bridge to the still-rural corner of the Bronx that lay on the other side. The freight railroad was a sight that pleased him:

> I can remember sittin' down over there, waving to the engineer, countin' the cars. There'd be 100 cars! All of them would have names from lines out west.

However enjoyable and memorable Inwood Hill Park was, Bill went there only once or twice a month, and so the white rocks, the yard, the street comprised his daily play sites.

Jim Dolan (b. 1939)

Jim was born into a large family: there were his parents, a brother born in 1931 and four sisters, born in 1932, 1934, 1935 and 1943. The family lived on Vermilyea Avenue between 204th and 207th

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Streets. [Because this interview was conducted in 1979 by a researcher with the Center for Human Environments, Inc. who used a slightly different interview form, and because the informant could not be located when the present investigator took responsibility for this study, the occupation or occupations of the informant's parents is not known; nor can it be learned for certain what was Mr. Dolan's ethnic background, although the interview suggests that it was Irish].

Jim was first allowed to play on the street unsupervised at age six (1945). For certain games the streets made an ideal setting, since traffic was limiting smaller children's ability to cross streets:

> We used the block as sort of an island for Ring-O-Leerio. You'd hide anywhere around the island -- around the whole block -- without crossing the street. If you crossed the street you were out of bounds. You see, that was so the <u>little</u> kids could play. But you could cut through the back alleys, <u>et cetera</u>, to get from place to place.
>
> The game was: one group of guys would go out to catch the other group, and when they catch you they bring you back to the den. Now, you'd be in the den until one of your people would sneak up on it -- preferably it would be a guy bigger, who could go into the gutter and not be tagged by the little kids, who weren't allowed go there. Also, a bigger guy, because he could go into the street, could sneak behind a row of cars to reach the den. But since this big guy never would cross the street, he was technically still on the island always like the rest of us. This went on from after dinner till dark.

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Jim attended Good Shepherd School. Until fourth grade school sessions were half days, leaving long afternoons free for play. Good Shepherd played an important role in Jim's upbringing: "You were Roman Catholic and everything revolved around that. Everything was the school and the church, you see." Sports were almost an obsession at Good Shepherd; not only was the CYO active there but spectator sports played an important role:

> During World Series time, you could bring radios to school, the Brothers would allow it. You'd do your work and when a game came on, you could hear it in every room. I guess the Brothers felt it was easier that way, and they wanted to listen too.

Although Jim was not involved in the CYO, he did play roller hockey daily on the play street directly in front of the school, which was closed to traffic during school and afterschool hours. In the autumn there would be daily touch football games afterschool in the fields of Inwood Hill Park. Jim and his friends would occasionally go to a game at Baker Field; however, between games the locked gate would prevent from using the field for their own play. When Jim and his friends wanted to play a ball game closer to home, they would use the schoolyard of PS 52, which was a block and a half south on Vermilyea Avenue, and which was usually available for the use of smaller children: "There was some kind of rule that if you were over sixteen you couldn't be in the schoolyard."

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Although there were no major restrictions on where Jim could go or what he could do, there was a sense of being supervised in one way or another:

> Each parent watched each kid. Everyone lived on the block and everyone had a family, and that way it kept you good, you see. Even if you were off the block -- say you were in the park or something -- a grownup who knew you would be on the bench, and they'd see you, so if you broke a window, it would get back to the block who did it.

Beginning at age eight (1947), Jim would visit Inwood Hill Park routinely, either alone or with friends. However, he would enter the woods only with friends. One of the boys' activities there was to build forts out of rocks and tree branches; another was sledding:

> We'd build the forts and play in them for hours. And we'd sled down Dead Man's Hill in the woods, too. We'd go only when it got dark. We weren't afraid -- it wasn't a fear thing. We just got out by dark.

For a time the focus of Jim's and his friends' visits to Inwood Hill Park was the recreation workers' station:

> There was a man, a black man, who was a park man. Now, his name was either Lloyd or Floyd. He was like the athletic man there. He would issue the balls and whatever other park facilities they had then. And I remember as a kid -- I don't know whether it was summer or what -- he made us "Junior Park Men." Yeah. We were supposed to go up and patrol the woods. He gave us, you know, buttons or something. We were supposed to make sure no one set fires there.

Although Lloyd (or Floyd) may well have been simply

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devising a way to keep the boys out of his hair, his deputizing gave them the opportunity to feel responsible for their park. This feeling of belonging in Inwood Hill Park, however, contrasts interestingly with Jim's experience of Isham Park: "That was a walking park. There was no way you could play there."

Jim's contact with the waters surrounding Inwood took place at the western foot of Dyckman Street:

> There would be black men fishing for eel and in September there'd be striped bass. We would go to the edge of the water with bottles and catch killies. When the ferry stopped running we'd go out onto the old pier and go crabbing.

Peggy Gleason (b. 1940)

The Gleasons moved to Inwood in 1942, settling in an apartment on 213th Street between Broadway and Tenth Avenue. The family then consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Gleason, Peggy and a sister born in 1934. Mr. Gleason, a pattern-maker in the garment trade, was Irish and Mrs. Gleason was Jewish. Mr. Gleason had a serious heart ailment and died in 1951. Mrs. Gleason had taken a part-time clerical job at a Midtown department store shortly before her husband's death, and afterward worked there full time. Peggy would therefore do house chores and prepare dinner after school, but "still had time to play."

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Peggy could leave the building to play in front at age four or five (1944-45). Although neither her parents nor her sister would necessarily supervise her, she felt as though she were being supervised nonetheless:

> If your own parents were not outside on the block, there would be a neighbor. There was so much activity on the block. There was always some Irish yenta hanging around. People were at their windows, conversing on corners, coming and going. Everyone knew everyone else. That doesn't mean that everyone liked everyone else, but everyone at least knew everyone else.

From ages six to twelve (1946-1952) Peggy and her friends would play hide-and-seek in the alleys and through the buildings' basements. One apartment building on the block had a particularly large courtyard where they would play as well. Although Peggy felt "different from the other kids" because her parents were of different religions (in addition to which she attended public school while most of her friends attended parochial school at Good Shepherd), most of her activities took place in the company of these other children. Saturday mornings, for example, she and a group of friends would see a double feature at the Loews theater on 207th Street. On a daily basis she would play on the block ("we had no playgrounds, only the block") where she would roller skate or socialize; in the cold weather the children would retreat to the building hallways to swap comic books.

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The shopping strip on 207th Street was four blocks south of where Peggy lived, and although her parents had some reservations on her going there alone, they allowed it:

> Once when I was seven [1947] I wanted to go to Woolworth's on 207th but nobody else around wanted to go. So I said to my parents "Let me go! Let me go! I'll be alright!" So they let me go. From then I could go to the movies or the stores on 207th Street alone if I had to, but I was supposed to at least try to find someone, like a friend, to go with me.
>
> Q: Did your parents tell you to be careful, to watch out for certain things when you went alone?
>
> Well, my mother would tell me things like "don't take candy from strangers," things like that.

Although Peggy could travel four blocks south to 207th Street, she was until age ten (1950) prohibited from traveling more than a half block west. 216th Street between Broadway and Park Terrace East, although legally a city street, was so steep it was developed instead as a stairway. Since the escarpment between Broadway and Park Terrace East runs seven blocks, these steps are the only direct westward route to be found between the point just north of Isham Street and 218th Street. Peggy, however, was prohibited from using these stairs, and so was effectively cut off from reaching the higher ground of Inwood's northwest corner, where Isham and Inwood Hill

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Parks are close at hand. In fact, Peggy did not go to Inwood Hill Park without adult supervision until she was fourteen (1954), though she had gone there frequently with her father for sledding, kite flying and sunbathing; she never went into the woods, which she found "frightening."

Although the Benedetto farm was just across 213th Street from Peggy's home, it did not figure very prominently in her play activities; it appears to have become more fenced-in than older informants have recalled:

> It was run by an old Italian couple who lived in a small wooden house and farmed a small field. They had a produce stand on Broadway. You couldn't play there. The farmer would chase you away if you went in. And there was no real way to go in easily because there was a fence around it. I remember they had a fruit tree, and the boys would go in and try to steal fruit.

Halloween trick-or-treating was popular with children in the neighborhood, but Peggy's father would not allow his daughters to take part in that ritual:

> Q: Why didn't he let you go trick-or-treating?
>
> He really didn't like the idea of, really, begging. Instead, he would throw a costume party for the kids.
>
> Q: So it wasn't that he was afraid for your safety.
>
> That may have entered into it, too. I think it was a combination of both.

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John Shannon (b. 1940)

John grew up on Academy Street at the corner of Vermilyea Avenue with his parents and two younger siblings: a sister born in 1942 and a brother born in 1945. Mr. Shannon was a clerk in a shipping company. The family's ethnic background was Irish.

John was first allowed out unsupervised at age eight or nine (1948-49) and was allowed to play in front of the building. However, very shortly afterward he was branching out:

> Across the street there was the schoolyard, P.S. 52, and we'd go there for softball, basketball mainly. That was just us kids playing. In the summer in the schoolyard they had organized ball games. We'd be out there from 9 in the morning to 7 in the evening. In the winter we'd sled there.

At age 10 (1950) John was using such commercial recreation facilities in the Inwood valley area as the movie theaters on Dyckman Street and on 207th Street and the Miramar pool, although he did not use the pool often since he spent his summers at his family's summer cottage in the Catskill mountains. John's parents prohibited him from crossing Broadway unless it was for the purpose going to and from Good Shepherd School, which he attended; during school hours there would be a crossing guard posted. This meant for John that he could not go to Inwood Hill Park. However, at age 11 (1951) he found a

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way around the prohibition:

> By going down into the subway entrance at 207th Street on the east side of Broadway, you could walk across the part of the concourse outside the turnstiles, where no fare was required. The tracks were down one more level below, so they didn't get in your way. And you'd come up on the west side of Broadway without ever dealing with traffic.
>
> This was about the time I got my first bicycle. I rode it around the PS 52 schoolyard, but then I wanted to take it to the park, so I started carrying it through the subway the same way.

Having mastered this maneuver, John was soon spending most of his play time in Inwood Hill Park:

> Inwood Hill -- that was my favorite place to be. I'd be there every day, playing basketball, baseball, football. PAL -- that's the Police Athletics League -- would sometimes organize these games. In the winter I'd sled down Dead Man's Hill there in the woods. I was on the Good Shepherd track team and we'd have practice there after school. Now, near the old railroad bridge was a place we called "BAB" That was for "Bare Ass Beach." Guys would go there, swim in their underwear, or climb up onto the bridge and go fishing. Also, we'd also go fishing at the end of Dyckman Street.

In marked contrast to the western parks, Inwood's east side was for John a place to avoid:

> I disliked St. Jude's Parish -- you know, Nagle Avenue, the Projects. It was too concrete for me, there was not enough space. Also, I was a Good Shepherd boy, and St Jude's was the rival. It could be dangerous there, too. On Nagle Avenue and Dyckman there was this bar. People from out of the neighborhood used to go there a lot. There'd be fights.

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Yet even with what he perceived as the roughness of part of Inwood, and although he spent a considerable part of his time at sports, John had four places he liked to go when he wanted to be alone: The woods, the public library in the storefront on Sherman Avenue, Good Shepherd Church and the Dyckman House Museum.

By age 12 (1952) John had found an afterschool job, which prompted him to use his bicycle to ride to more distant places:

> On the corner of Vermilyea and Academy was a candy store. I'd help out there after school and sometimes on Sundays I'd stuff papers. And the man who owned it was a lovely man -- Ernie was his name, and his daughter lived in Washington Heights, at about 185th Street. And he would give me carfare to go down there to get his dinner there every night and bring it back in a bowl, and I would take the bus down again. And I figured out a way to keep the transportation money by getting a basket for my bike and put his dinner in it. Ernie knew. But he always gave me the money.

Michael Hecht (b. 1946)

The Hechts lived on Seaman Avenue near 215th Street in the extreme northwestern part of Inwood, directly across the street from Inwood Hill Park and around the corner from Isham Park. Michael was the eldest of three children: his siblings were a brother born in 1944 and a sister born in 1955. Mr. Hecht was a salesman; Mrs. Hecht

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was a homemaker until 1954, when she resumed a career as a registered nurse. The family's ethnic background was German.

Michael was first allowed to play unsupervised at age eight (1954), when he played on the sidewalk in front of his building. He soon found a new play space:

> Between 214th and 215th there was this empty lot with trees and little hills. I started going there when I was about ten (1956). And I remember when they started building something there, that created a lot of new hills, and we had a lot of fun just jumping up and down those dirt piles.

Michael found rooftops and basements scary and so he avoided them, and it was difficult to play in the courtyards and alleyways:

> Our reputations with the supers -- as I think back, we probably were decent kids, but the supers had us written down as a bunch of punks because we would play these games and they would always try to kick us out. And it was our own building, where we lived! They'd say, "Ya can't play here, you're gonna break the window, go to the street, go somewhere else." You could use the alleyways only quickly, for shortcuts.

Other places where Michael later felt unwelcome were the playgrounds in Inwood Hill Park. Although he did not use these as a young child, he and friends would wander into them when he was eleven or twelve (1957-58); When they did this, parents of the young children would become alarmed and order them to leave or else call park

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attendants or police to eject them.

Michael's first visit to Inwood Hill Park without his parents or his brother occurred when he was ten (1956), and this was for Little League practice (he was in the same league as Lew Alcindor). From then on Michael used the park's playing fields extensively for sports, tossing a football around or using the concrete bleachers as a backdrop for stickball. Closer to 207th Street there were basketball and handball courts, but he did not use these often since he had access to the ones in Good Shepherd's gym. After school at Good Shepherd, Isham Street would be closed to traffic and Michael would play there with his schoolmates. He was especially fond of stickball and began using one lightly-trafficked street for this:

> We played thousands of stickball games on 218th Street, near Baker Field. The cops would come and put on their flashers. This shows you how times have changed: here we are, 10, 12 years old, I don't know -- they'd turn on their flashers and stop the game, take the stick, and that was the end of the game. We even figured out ways that the outfielder, his job was to signal when the cop cars came. I mean, we were big criminals, right? So when a police car came, we would see his signal, and we would run into the basement of a nearby building and hide. And when the cops passed we'd start the game again. When we were a little older and I guess a little more brazen we asked the cops "why ya takin' these sticks?" and the cops would say "they're weapons." "Well, OK," we'd say, "but my mother's going to be mad because that's her broomstick."

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Stickball games in the Inwood valley area attracted his attention but not his participation:

> They had monumental stickball games down there in the schoolyard of PS 52, over on Vermilyea Avenue, but we didn't get involved in that. It was just two different neighborhoods. They grew up where they grew up and we grew up where we grew up. It was like a different city down there.

Michael's use of the woods of Inwood Hill Park was extremely limited. When he was nine (1955) and had begun sledding on his own, his parents prohibited him from using it either on the streets or in the woods, restrictions which still applied when, a year later, he began riding a bicycle. To Michael, the woods were a place where older boys drank beer and set fires, or where police would occasionally issue "J.D. cards." Although Michael was aware of other boys going to swim at "Bare Ass Beach" he himself never did this, fearing polluted water and possible drowning (he had heard cautionary tales of drowned boys).

For Michael, as for other respondents, Baker Field was an attractive yet forbidding presence, a place with which children could not freely establish sustained contact yet one which they could hardly resist exploring:

> Back then, when Columbia played -- I don't know how they got away with this -- they would make everybody move their cars off of Seaman Avenue and said "No Parking Today." And then they would park the people coming to these games, angle

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parking. You'd see Connecticut plates!

Then I remember when they would play Army or Navy -- very exciting, because they would allow no parking at all, and the Navy or Army would march right up Seaman Avenue to the stadium. You know, the midshipmen. They'd begin at Good Shepherd and march right up. Then Columbia got so bad the Navy wouldn't even play them.

We'd sneak into Baker Field to play baseball in the lower field -- they had their baseball diamond in the lower field, their football in the upper. We'd sneak in to play down there. Now, you might say "why the heck ya doin' that? You got Inwood park!" But the fields in Inwood got crowded and you liked playing on a professional diamond. We'd play for a while and then the guy would kick us out.

Gregory Nelson (b. 1942)

The Nelsons moved to Inwood when Gregory was a few months old. They settled in an apartment on Park Terrace East, near the southern terminus of that street -- abutting Isham Park. Mr. Nelson was a university professor. Gregory's ethnic background is Jewish/Protestant, i.e., his mother was Jewish and his father Protestant.

Gregory was first allowed out alone to play at age "five or so," (circa 1947) and could play either in front of the building or in the corner of Isham Park that was directly across the street:

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> It was dirt -- packed, beaten earth with many trees, and it was a marvelous play area because it was in sight of my mother's apartment, which was on the third floor, so we were basically always watched. I wasn't allowed to cross the street by myself, but there were always older men on the street, and you could ask one of them to cross you, although there weren't many cars in 1947. We'd even play in the streets. The traffic was very, very light since it was a dead end. There'd be a car maybe every fifteen minutes. And very often we'd call up to our mothers: "Mom! Throw me down a piece of bread!" or they'd call down that lunch was ready.
>
> There was this No Ball Playing sign in front of our building, which meant the courtyard as well. But we'd always violate it and be chased out every once in a while, either by the neighbor who was there and didn't like the noise of the pounding of the ball, or the superintendent or the porter. Anyway, some mothers would <u>like</u> that their children were playing there in front of the building or in the courtyard because it was totally safe, but some people didn't like it. It was a source of conflict.

By age seven (1949) Gregory was allowed to play out of his mother's sight and was not given any instructions on where he could or could not play. He began then to venture farther into Isham Park:

> Isham Park was filled with huge trees. All the walkways were lined with shrubs, which were neatly clipped. There were extensive flower beds along the walkways, which were crushed gravel.
>
> Q: Did the neatness of the park inhibit you in any way as far as playing the way you wanted to play?

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> Not at all, not at all. We made little branch forts and little leaf forts, dug tunnels for our toy cars. We'd sled there in the winter. We felt interactive with the place. This was not a prissy park, though the parkies -- the park workers -- both in Isham and in Inwood park, too, would come down on you if you were doing something wrong -- like breaking branches or trashing something. Basically they'd chase you away.
>
> There was also a greenhouse, a huge greenhouse. Of course, everything looks huge when you're a child, but it was big -- I'd say about fifty by thirty. And right next to it was the potting shed, which was probably about ten feet wide and fifteen feet long -- a dark, damp, musty thing, with rows and rows of clay pots. We'd go into that shed and play -- the door was left open. It was pretty rudimentary -- just a couple of tables, long benches. There was some vandalism -- kids would go there and smash pots, though I don't recall myself actually doing that. But there were never any smashed windows or anything.
>
> There were two gardeners working there, a Scotsman and his assistant, and they were also responsible for maintenance. One night there was a terrific fire and the greenhouse burned down, and then they came with bulldozers and took down the potting shed and cleared the place. The quality of the personnel rapidly declined after the burning of the greenhouses. The gardener and the other guy were gone, and they had a half-wit -- literally a half-wit -- as the new parkie, an assistant parkie, cleaning up trash and things like that.

At the same age at which he was using Isham Park frequently (1947 on), Gregory began exploring Inwood Hill Park's woods, and began sledding there, with friends, at

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age seven (1949). However, it was a series of informal guided tours he attended that would leave a strong memory:

> There was a man on the block, Mr. Wrinkle. I guess it was spelled just W-R-I-N-K-L-E. He was an absolute treasure. He was ancient. And he would take the kids form the area on daylong hikes -- into Inwood Hill Park -- at least once a year. He'd bring frankfurters and we'd build a fire -- he'd show us how to build it -- and have a wiener roast. He'd also take us fishing in the river near the Henry Hudson Bridge. He was always around as a counsel. His purpose was not to supervise us, since we didn't really need that, but just to broaden our horizons.
>
> Q: With Wrinkle, did you find yourself exploring the park to a greater extent than you would have done on your own?
>
> No. Less, actually. Because he stuck to the paths. And he'd always stop to show us things. He'd show us the caves, and then there'd be a weiner roast.

Boys living on Park Terrace East had an ongoing organized activities in addition to the hikes:

> We were in a touch football team, and we played against other teams. There must have been some formal organization, since we had uniforms. I played center, our team was the Park Terrace Bulldogs and my number was 22 since I was born on the 22nd of March. Other teams had uniforms, too. I was eight, nine, ten years of age (1950-52). We'd play down in Inwood Hill Park. But I can't recall much more than that. I wasn't into sports.
>
> I was with the Scouts, down in the Presbyterian Church on Vermilyea. I had already been hiking in Vermont and Wyoming, so the Boy Scouts were really no big deal. We basically did our typical Boy Scout things. I had my uniform and studied the manual and everything. The

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> men who ran it were reputed to run things strictly by the book, and I guess that was true. We went out up to the local Boy Scout camps, overnight camping.
>
> Q: Did you use Inwood Hill Park at all as scouts?
>
> No, not that I recall. There was no integration of local parks. The only time I remember going to Inwood Hill Park in uniform was going to dedicate the plaque for the site where Peter Minuit and the Indians traded Manhattan for trinkets.

The northwest area of Inwood where Gregory lived was the last to be fully developed, and there were still a few empty lots remaining:

> A few houses north of my building it was an undeveloped area. There were these incredible rock formations -- it was sedimentary, grainy. It was crystalline and we used to think it had salt. You could break it off. You'd see outcrops all over the place.
>
> These lots were free and open, and it was wonderful in the sense that nobody would chase you out. It was a dump -- people would dump things there: tires, things like that. You could do all sorts of crazy things. For instance, you could play with fire. We first learned that oil burned. If you take an oil-soaked rag, you could set fire to it. And using a long stick or a knife, you could throw that rag in the air and watch it. I tried once and burned my finger. Here's the scar.

Columbia University's Baker Field was four blocks north and, even though there was no shortage of open space near home, it drew Gregory and his friends:

> Baker field was very important to the area. That was big-time football. You

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have to remember that back then pro football was not famous. Pro football became famous in the end of the fifties. We knew how to sneak in. I was six, seven, eight when I started [1948-50]. Once, when there wasn't a game, I snuck in and was caught. The guy just took down my name and kicked me out.

We'd play on the stands, which were made of wood -- very rough boards. We'd climb up the underside of the bleachers. It was criss-crossed with wooden frames, it was a forest of wood you could climb up. It was pretty daring since it was fifty feet up. And of course they'd kick us out when they caught us.

Baker Field was fenced, but we knew where all the holes were, because we had all those days free to explore. And then on game day, there'd be guards and cops, but that didn't stop us because we knew where the holes were and of course they didn't. And during a game, once you're inside nobody gave a damn. That was a great adventure.

You were aware that Baker Field was an institution, not an institution of the neighborhood but that it belonged to somebody far away. If you got caught there the guys couldn't just say "Hey, I'm going to tell your parents," because they didn't know who you were. So the guys who worked there <u>had</u> to be nasty. That was the only thing they could use against you.

Spaces between and under buildings buildings became for Gregory important play areas:

Nothing was closed off or locked. The alleys were supposedly off-limits, but kids would go there all the time. We would run around all the back areas. We'd cut through, jump over fences, stop to play. Grownups would sometimes yell "Get out of here! What the hell are you doing here!" We'd just laugh.

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> The cellar door in the courtyard was always open. The garbage room was on the left, the full, walk-through basement was on the right -- beautifully cool. Then there were washing machines, storage rooms, things like that.
>
> The row of houses in which mine stood were built into a steep hillside, and there was this hole in the foundation which we discovered when I was eleven or twelve [1953-54]. And we discovered we could crawl through it into the buildings' sub, sub basements. It was a real piece of daring burrowing, it was really incredible. That space was originally filled in, but it must have eroded away, leaving a hollow space. Once we scurried down under number 30 and came up at number 10. That was a <u>big</u> discovery.

Toward the Inwood East of his small, relatively wealthy corner of Inwood Gregory had developed a cautious attitude:

> I was disinclined about going down into Vermilyea, Sherman Avenue, into the working class area. I was about six or seven when I'd first be going down below, visiting friends [1948-49]. Gangs started to be a factor there in the '50s -- '52, '54. But that didn't really affect me because I was more drawn to the parks near my home. The gangs would occasionally make use of Isham Park, but they never excluded us, or interacted with us much.

Though unaffected by the gang culture of Inwood, Gregory was once accosted by a local youth:

> Now, I was the victim of a crime once in Isham park -- I must have been ten or eleven [1952-53]. A juvenile delinquent, a kid who ran away from home and needed money, stole his father's bayonet. Now, I know he was a juvenile because he was later caught, and I testified at his trial. And he held me up for five cents,

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> pointed the bayonet at me. I had five pennies on me. And I proceeded to school and told the teacher, who called the police. He was just robbing kids everywhere. I think he must have been 15, 16 maximum.
>
> But, overall, bullying was not a big deal. Occasionally bullies would come up to my area from down below, but not a lot. Part of it was, we had a lot of older kids in my area who were friendly with me, young men who had just returned from the war. Plus my area was pretty insulated from the rest of the city. I was once beaten up by a bully right in front of my building, but usually the men in the area would take care that things like that didn't happen.

For Gregory the extreme east side of Inwood -- where there were few or no residents -- although no great attraction, still was more inviting than the more close-by valley area:

> When I was about eight or nine [1950-51] we would go down by the bend in the Harlem River, east of the Broadway Bridge. There wasn't much there -- some coal docks, some lumber yards. I was never much interested in it, though. But some kids would swim in the river.

At 216th Street and Park Terrace East was the top of the stairs leading down to Broadway (the ones Peggy Gleason was not allowed to climb). Though Gregory lived not at the bottom but a the top, these steps were a barrier for him as well:

> Going down from Park Terrace East to Broadway was what we called the City Steps -- two parallel concrete stairs. And on top was this little area with benches where we would play. And there were always ladies sitting there. You'd always

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> have to watch yourself because these were nice ladies there, so as you got older you had to be more "couth."
>
> The steps were too steep for me as a little kid, so I didn't use them to go up and down until I was eleven [1953]. I would cut through Isham Park instead. The steps were just ugly and they kept on going and going. It was quite a haul up those steps. A little kid gets tired.

Theresa DeLonghi (b. 1949)

Theresa is the daughter of Louise DeLonghi, whose childhood was presented in the previous chapter. Theresa lived on Seaman Avenue near 215th Street with her parents and two brothers. One brother was her twin and the other had been born in 1946. Mr. Delonghi worked as a printer. The family ethnicity was Italian.

Theresa was first allowed outdoors unsupervised at age six (1955) and began playing on the sidewalk in front of her apartment building. This remained her primary play area until age ten (1959), when she began using several other places. These included an empty lot:

> It was shaped like an "L" and connected Seaman Avenue on one side and 215th Street on the other. There were boards blocking the Seaman Avenue side, so you had to climb. When I was a little older I would try to learn how to smoke there -- me and my friends lighting up and seeing how. I had a doll carriage and I would have cigarettes hidden between the little doll sheets. I would kiss the boys there, too. It had rocks, large rocks for climbing. Also, people would burn their Christmas trees there.

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Alleyways provided another play area and facilitated movement, allowing passage throughout the entire city block bounded by Seaman Avenue, 214th Street, Indian Road and 215th Street. Sledding generally took place on the sidewalk or a short distance into Inwood Hill Park. Theresa did not visit the woods but did occasionally go as far as the plaque commemorating the landing of Peter Minuit and the significance of the great tulip tree that reportedly had shaded him; there, at the edge of the woods, was a "fresh spring" which Theresa enjoyed. By the yacht station on the island that Robert Moses had severed from the Bronx, Theresa would catch "guppies" in the shallow water. The island's perimeter was lined with piles of large rocks as breakwaters, and she would climb down these to reach the water as well.

Theresa joined the Brownies at age seven and graduated to the Girls Scouts by age 10 (1959). Each Saturday the troop would take a field trip to a different site, such as the Palisades Amusement Park in New Jersey.

Theresa "disliked" only one place in the neighborhood, although from her description she does not appear to have disliked it at all:

> There was this haunted house on Park Terrace West and 215th Street, an old, old, old house. I don't know what we thought -- was there a witch there? But there was an old man there. We used to tease the hell out of him. We tormented him. They demolished the house when I was

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about twelve [1961].

Tim McMahon (b. 1949)

The MacMahons moved into the Dyckman Houses in 1953, three years after they opened. The family at that time consisted of Tim, his parents, two older brothers and two older sisters. A brother and two sisters were born subsequently. The eldest sibling was born in 1941 and the youngest in 1955. Mr. McMahon was a career employee of the U.S. Army who had taken his family along with him to several posts around the country, and continued to be stationed at various posts after the family moved to the Dyckman Houses. The family ethnicity was Irish.

Tim's first impression of the Dyckman Houses was that it looked institutional: "I can remember our first day there. I looked around and it looked so new that I asked my mother if this was the school I'd be going to." By age five (1954) Tim was playing on the grounds just outside his building and by eight he could "go pretty much anywhere."

The Dyckman Houses' rules of conduct, although rigid, were not all-inhibiting:

> Back then you couldn't -- well, you weren't supposed to be riding bikes on the grounds, playing on the grass. They had signs saying Keep Off. We did it anyway. When you got caught you would get a $5 fine and your parents would take care of you so you might not do it so often

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anymore.

> They used to have the housing guards assigned directly to the project. You had the same guards working there so they got to know you. When I lived there we had a cop name was Sam; if you got caught on the grass, you could run away from him all you want, but he still knew who you were. And he'd either give you a break or he'd give you the fine. That's all it took: if you was to see him coming, all you'd have to do is stop so he wouldn't see you messing up.

The only two officially-recognized public play and recreation facilities for the Dyckman Houses -- the Dyckman Community Center and the playground just to the north of the Houses -- did not attract Tim:

> The Community Center used to have ceramics -- make an ashtray or something and put it in the fire. We'd only go down there when it rained.
>
> The park with all the equipment we called 'The Big Park.' It had sprinklers in summer -- they didn't build a pool til later. They closed the gates at ten at night, but everyone climbed over anyway. They had the park house with the comfort station. You could go in and get a basketball, checkers, chess; if you went in for shuffleboard, you could get that. But you would have to leave something. If you had a basketball and you wanted to play checkers, you would have to leave your ball, or you would leave something like your house key. I didn't go there a lot. Sometimes I'd stand around watching the grownups play chess, and I learned how to play.

Tim's favorite play spaces were located not in the Dyckman Houses but just beyond them. One such place lay

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just across the long stretch of Dyckman Street that formed the Houses' southern border. This area formed the northern end of Highbridge Park -- a high, wooded rocky escarpment without paths:

> Across Dyckman Street, near Nagle, there was this flat area near the sidewalk where we would play ball. Behind it there was trees and boulders where we would burn our Christmas trees. Back in the woods was a cliff -- must be a good hundred feet -- which we used to climb up and down.
>
> And then there was also an underground spring coming from up top, and where it came out on bottom we used to race there on Saturday mornings and build dams -- pull up the grass, soak it in the water so it got like seaweed and stopped the water. And you'd want to be the first one there, because whoever made his dam the highest up the hill held up everyone else's -- they'd have no water to wet their grass. And the idea was to build up enough water so when you opened up you'd wash everyone else out. And that water was so fresh we used to drink it.
>
> And there was plenty of trees with crabapples, too. I don't know why we never got sick on them. We'd eat them all the time and some of them were nice size apples. Some guys would pull and eat onion grass. You got to be eight years old [1957], everyone was across the street there, 'cause, like, at home you couldn't play on the grass.

Enjoyment of nature, however, was not the only value of the area:

> If you walked closer to the Harlem River along Dyckman you came to a flat area near the Drive. That was a place we played ball. Well, there was this lumber yard nearby we used to sneak in at night -- not a lot, but we would do it. Now, where we

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> played ball was this tree that always got in our way. Well, one night we went in and we stole this big two-man saw, went down there and cut the tree down. And the Park Department took it away.

Tim and his friends also found their way to the Harlem River Driveway:

> We'd play down by the seawall. I must have been ten to thirteen [1959-62]. And there'd be this manhole -- we'd take off the cover and climb down it and it was all archways, viaducts. You'd be underneath the seawall. And the Circle Line boat would come by and it'd splash the shit out of you.

Southwest of the corner of Dyckman Street and Nagle Avenue was a hilly area through which ran Hillside Avenue and Fort George Hill (formerly St. Nicholas Avenue). This was yet another play areas just outside the bounds of the Dyckman Houses:

> It was like this sliver of land, between Fort George Hill and Hillside Avenue, and there was this building foundation that was abandoned. Someone would tell us that they started building a hospital there once but stopped because they didn't have the right technology, it being a very steep hill.
>
> Anyway, this foundation was dug deep, about seven storeys, and there was like beams going across the top and we'd walk on them, sit around the edge of the foundation bullshitting and stuff. I was about eight, nine, ten [1957-59].
>
> The rest of that area between the roads was boulders and trees, and we'd throw those -- you know, we'd call them "itchy balls" or "archie balls" -- and we'd throw them at the cars. Sometimes they'd get out and chase you, but you were a kid and

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> you were fast, so you'd run right up the hill.

Although Tim's use of Dyckman Street and other commercial strips was not extensive, the place did serve certain functions:

> I was eight or nine [1957-58] and a bunch of us would get together some change and go to Dyckman Street and buy a pack of Newports and a roll of violets to get rid of the smell from our breath. We didn't inhale but, you know, you'd go to the woods and you'd puff on them, that was it.
>
> We'd go over to the movies. We'd go to the ones on Dyckman on our own. With the RKO on 207 my mother would drop us off and pick us up. Saturdays mostly -- rainy Saturdays. I remember being ten [1959] and bringing my birth certificate to prove I was under 12 -- 'cause I was big. There were the cartoons, which was great. Thirty cents you get two movies and I don't know how many cartoons and you could stay all day. None of this watch-one-movie-and-they-throw-you-out.

The fact that Tim's mother escorted him and his siblings and friends to the 207th but not to the Dyckman Street movie houses does not mean that 207th Street was out of his range:

> When I was about nine [1958] we'd go up to 207th, the last stop on the A train. And you might jump on the back of the train, ride there on the outside to 168th Street. We'd do stuff that, if our parents found out, they'd kick your butt.

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Andre Knapp (b. 1951)

Andre lived his entire childhood at the Dyckman Houses with his mother and father. Mr. Knapp was in the civil service; Mrs. Knapp worked at Macy's. The family's racial/ ethnic background is black.

Andre was allowed out of the apartment at around age seven:

> We'd be in front of the building -- kids in groups -- and we'd play in these little playgrounds they had in front of each of the buildings. Not big playgrounds, just little things to climb on. My mother would be watching from the window, so I always stayed out in front. The parents had some kind of network for knowing where each other's kids were by using the telephone and keeping track of who was where.

When he would play outdoors Andre's parents required him to stay within the boundaries of the Dyckman Houses at all times; he could leave only when accompanied by groups of other children. With such groups he would occasionally go to the "Big Park," i.e., the playground and basketball courts just north of the Houses, but for this he would always be with other children, as he would be when sledding on "Snake Hill" (Fort George Hill), which he began to do when he was eleven (1962).

Andre would use the Dyckman Community Center frequently after school and, later, in the evenings:

> They had different activities timed for different aged kids and I'd be there, I'd say, every day. Right after school was

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> for the youngest kids; and then, in the evening, it was a center for the teens. In the summer there were day trips -- I remember going up to Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx. Sometimes we'd go to the side of the Harlem River Driveway and just play touch football. Weekends the place was closed.

When Andre was ten (1961) he joined Little League:

> Every weekend we'd go over to Inwood Hill Park for the games. Practice was after school. You'd go over in a group with your teammates, not alone. I remember there was a crossing guard on Broadway.
>
> Q: As long as you were over at Inwood Park, did you get into the woods?
>
> Sometimes I went into the woods, but not often.

Places Andre found dangerous were in fact located in the vicinity of Inwood Hill Park: he would occasionally play on the freight railroad tracks and bridge that ran through the park, as well as along the rocks that led to the water. Both of these he found dangerous.

5.7 Inwood Parents' Experiences

Mabel Madigan

When the Madigans moved to the Dyckman Houses in 1950 they were among the first tenants in their building. The family at that time consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Madigan and two-year-old Curtis. In 1953 George was born. Mr. Madigan worked for the New York City Transit Authority. The family ethnic/ racial background is black.

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Mrs. Madigan recalls the routine of the earliest instances of letting her sons play on the project grounds without her supervision:

> The projects had everything for play. We had the the grass, the benches. When they were very young -- about five for Curtis and four for George -- they could go down and they were confined to stay right in front of the door. And I couldn't even look out because my windows faced the wrong way, and I would, you know, go across to my neighbor and look out her window and look down. I was on the sixth floor. And I'd holler down to them, let them know I'm worrying about them. And, you know, sometimes they would come around and call up the building to me, just to let me know -- like "are you still there?" or something. I used to paste a little figurine -- like a stuffed bunny rabbit -- to the apartment door so they'd find it when they came back.

By age nine Curtis and George were each playing out of their mother's sight, both within the Dyckman Houses grounds as well as in peripheral areas such as the Harlem River Driveway, the "Big Park" just north of the Houses, and the flat area across Dyckman Street and Near Nagle Avenue. In the winter they would sled along the bottom parts of Ft. George Hill, which Mrs. Madigan could see from her window.

Within a few years the boys were going to Inwood Hill Park and areas near it:

> Later, I never had to take my kids around because when they were like eleven years old [1951-54] they would go to Little League. They'd meet at the project and the coach would take them over there to

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> play baseball. And they got familiar with the parks, and they would ride their bikes there. So I never really had to take them around. They would go down to the Speedway, too.
>
> Later, when they were in the Boy Scouts, they knew the neighborhood, knew where Dongan Place was. They both must have been around twelve. They knew all the places because they knew all the other kids that lived there, and their parents would call and say could they spend the afternoon, and this is how my kids knew the neighborhood completely.

Such use of the neighborhood was necessary for these two active boys as the rules against playing on the Dyckman Houses' grounds tended to be strictly enforced:

> Back in the 'fifties we had a security man. He didn't have no gun. He had a stick, he had a whistle and he had a nice blue uniform. He knew the kids. And he used to move the kids. My kids were no angels -- ha! They would ride the bicycle even though there were rules. Up to nine you could ride your bike on the grounds, but once you got to the two wheelers you had to ride on the edges. And my kids could not run or play football in the project grounds. That's why they used to go to all the places outside the projects.

One place Curtis and George did not go on their own was the Miramar Pool:

> The Miramar -- you had to go in there with an adult. They didn't just let children come in. Because, I mean, it was more like a country club, you know. It was really beautiful. I didn't have to go because there was always some volunteer to take the kids. I never went in. But you could walk past, look in and see your kids in there, 'cause they had these gates.

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As a black parent in a community undergoing the first stirrings of integration, Mrs. Madigan was aware of some of the pressures this brought to her children:

> When we moved in, it was like a migration. It was like integrating the neighborhood. My son -- my oldest, Curtis -- was always the first black: in his kindergarten class, in his day camp at St Jude's, see. They always got along. But he was a fighter, he knew how to take care of himself.

But the integration of the Dyckman Houses had, for Mrs. Madigan, turned into disintegration by the late 1950s:

> It was going according to your income, and when you upgrade your income, they had to kick you out. And when they kicked you out, this other, low class would come in and they were real <u>obnoxious</u>. Till it got to the point where my sons would hang out with their friends in the parks. They didn't hang out in the projects anymore.

Organized play was a big part of Curtis' and George's play:

> When my kids came up they <u>had</u> things. They had afterschool centers at the school -- they'd call me and tell me that they weren't coming home, they were playing basketball. Or they would just play in the playground at P.S. 52. And then they had certain days when they would have something for the kids at the library. They went to overnight camp with the Boy Scouts, they went to camp with the Lutheran Church -- that's St. Matthew's. They'd be away for three weeks, four weeks -- for as much as I can afford it -- and then the rest of the summer they'd go to day camp at St. Jude's. You had to pay, but it wasn't that expensive that you couldn't; lots of kids went. Here in the

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> projects they had competition days. My sons would win statues, plaques -- running, football, basketball. And they had dances for the teenagers. Until that new group started coming in and then -- zilch.

Paula Byrne

Paula Byrne is the mother of Bill Byrne, whose childhood experiences are presented earlier in this chapter. Mrs. Byrne's other children raised during the 1945-60 period are: Karen, born in 1938; Helen, born in 1942; George, born in 1943 and Lisa, born in 1950. Her two youngest children are Mary, born 1958 and Genie, born 1960. Until 1952 the Byrnes lived at the Post Avenue address where Bill grew up. That year the family moved to an apartment on Seaman Avenue at the corner of Dyckman Street in the western part of Inwood.

Although Mrs. Byrne does not recall the ages at which her children were allowed out to play unsupervised, she does provide this telling anecdote:

> Two of my children were in the Well Baby clinic at Columbia Presbyterian -- that was where they would select babies without any particular problems for checkups, tests, skull measurements. Change their food, whatever. Cost fifty cents.
>
> Well, they advised that we let our children out at two! They said that it was better for them and why not? They said the trouble was with the mothers: what could possibly happen to a child two years old, letting them out on their own? They said that they should mingle with all

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> the other children. And I lived three flights up!
>
> Well, my objection was that they could run into the street. They said "no, the children are too smart." But, you know, they're not that smart sometimes.

Mrs. Byrne's children played "mainly" on the block -- on bicycles and off -- until about age twelve, with occasional excursions to such off-the-block places as Snake Hill (Ft. George Hill), which was primarily a sledding attraction. The "Speedway" was off limits unless Mrs. Byrne herself was leading.

Post Avenue traffic worried Mrs. Byrne and so she did not allow her children out alone; instead she made sure they were in groups consisting of siblings or other playmates. Even so, her children were "always watched" -- either by herself or by a neighbor (during World War II, Mrs. Byrne says, the absence of many local young men prompted neighbors to pay special attention to the children, since "the older boys" were not around to provide a general sense of security). Supervising her children was important to Mrs. Byrne; For instance, when she lived on Post Avenue she did not allow her children to play in the alleyways since they were "too hidden." Fortunately, there was a readily-available alternative::

> On the corner of Post and 204th was the white rocks. The rocks must have been two storeys high and were powdery. The girls would rub one against the another and make sugar and flour and stuff and they would

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> play house. They would do their own thing because their mothers would watch them either from their windows or from the backyards.

Asked if there were any places beside the alleyways and the street she found dangerous for her children, Mrs. Byrne responded:

> There was one incident I remember. There was some guy down on Nagle Avenue -- sort of remote -- and he looked very strange. Did you ever see a snake looking fascinated just before it strikes? I just remember that happening twice, and someone would scream out and then he would take off or whatever. I don't know if they were going to do something bad to the kids. And the kids never knew anything happened.

When the Byrnes moved to their new home on Seaman Avenue there was a noticeable difference between their new milieu and that which they had left. For example, most of their new neighbors had smaller families, hired maids and owned pianos and cars; they seemed to look askance at the new arrivals from Post Avenue:

> They looked at us like we were Gypsies or something! It took some time for them to warm up to us 'cause I guess they thought we were going to wreck the place. My kids saw their new neighbors -- how they played in the playground instead of the street, and always with their parents! -- and said "What sissies!" They played a lot rougher on Post.

The differences between the two addresses extended to other areas of comparison; Mrs. Byrne points out that Karen's bicycle -- which she had owned for some time and

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which she had taken with her from Post Avenue -- was stolen "almost immediately" after the move west when she left it unattended.

At the time of the move (1952), Helen was ten and George was nine. Although these older children could play on the street in front of the building, Lisa, then only two, spent almost all of her outdoor play time from then on in the building's courtyard, which, aside from being unusually large (about 60 feet by 30 in the author's estimation), had trees and lawns and was elevated several steps above street level. The family's apartment window faced this area.

Mrs. Byrne would take her youngest children to Payson Playground, which was one block to the west: "You would go to Payson Park with your child after school and you couldn't find a place to sit down." In this playground, mothers taking their children was the general pattern, as "it was a rare child that was not there with their mothers."

Although Mrs. Byrne felt that her children could play safely within the courtyard, she did not let them go into the basement, the door to which was unlocked:

> Anyone walking down Dyckman street could get into that basement, so I didn't want my kids there. One time, though, we had a resident bookie down there. I remember because it was near the baby carriage storage room. Much later on there were some weird people just hanging out there

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> -- possibly deranged. The bookies were fine in comparison! They never even looked at you. They were safe.

5.7 Discussion

Between 1945 and 1960 children's access to play in Inwood became somewhat inhibited by the convergence of several trends. This affected both Inwood's physical setting and social structure. One of the most important trends as we have seen, was the development of the suburbs at the expense of urban neighborhoods, which were left to decay. This process began to erode Inwood's population, leaving behind poorer residents and fewer children. There was, in addition, a new public wariness or intolerance of unsupervised children -- an attitude that culminated in the emotion -laden public uproar that followed the murder of Michael Farmer in 1957. This restrictive attitude was writ large in urban renewal, which imposed an inflexible, arbitrary spatial order for children. Urban renewal also brought to Inwood an abrupt and unmediated racial and cultural integration which Inwoodians were not wholly prepared to except and served not so much to integrate Inwood as to make clearer than ever the division of the community between the poorer (and now racially-mixed) east and the wealthier, predominantly

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white western part. These changes put numerous strains on children's contact with the neighborhood while providing few new opportunities for free, unstructured play within it.

Although the reform movement (and, within it, the play movement) had ended with the New Deal, important aspects of it carried over into the 1950s and affected children's play. The play movement's long-held goal of removing children from the streets and from the lure of commercial amusements -- as well as the concomitant goal of channeling children into bureaucratically-structured programs -- became more firmly entrenched in Inwood with such developments as the new, full-scale YM-YWHA facility, Little League baseball, a housing project and a the new St. Jude's Church with its recreation programs.

And yet the increasing availability of organized play and recreation programs did not lead to a wholesale shift from free play to organized play. Rather, it presented an alternative to such still-strong attractions as the streets, the parks and such commercial establishments as the movies or the Miramar Pool. On the basis of the interviews, in fact, these programs did not make a strong impression on Inwood's children, and the children themselves tended to regard them with none of the fondness

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they, as adults, revealed regarding spontaneous play. Although many of the informants recalled being involved in such activities as Boy Scouts, Brownies, Police Athletics League sports and Little League baseball, few had memorable events to recall from those experiences. Since these children also had ready access to non-supervised activities, these programs, scheduled to occur weekly or twice-weekly, commanded only a small part of their time and attention. Consequently, the bulk of the children's energies was still being directed toward the older, more traditional forms of play.

It is interesting, however, to note that some of these programs -- most notably Scouts and Little League -- demanded the payment of a fee, thus almost certainly excluding certain children (much the way a movie house admits no one who does not pay). Ironically, these fee-charging programs, contrary to the goals of the play movement, actually elevated the importance of money as an entree to play, for the fees they imposed were for a continuous involvement (e.g., in a troop or a team) and not simply on a pay-as-you-go basis, as were such facilities as the the Miramar Pool or the Hamilton tennis courts. Thus, during this block of time, certain elements of play were becoming part of a steady financial commitment; no longer loose change funneled into the

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pocket of a theater owner or other recreation or amusement operator in exchange for an afternoon's fun, but a steady flow of funds in support of large bureaucracies.

The advent of the Dyckman Houses stands out as a sudden and extreme shift toward supervision and organization in play -- a postwar development placed within a pre-war landscape. In place of the informality of the Hamilton Tennis Courts and Ice Skating Rink and the Dyckman Oval, there was now looming over Inwood this closely-supervised, tightly-regulated project -- a place where children played a little nervously under the scrutiny of police and guards, and where the Community Center offered supervised play.

Looking into the Dyckman Houses, though, provides one's first look into the experience of black children in Inwood at a time when blacks were just becoming a significant presence there. From the information at hand it would appear that the priority given to organized, supervised play was most applicable to these children -- children who were newcomers to the neighborhood, who were not necessarily made to feel welcome, who had no recourse to courtyards, alleyways and sidewalks and who, perhaps most significantly, lived a long way from the parks along the Hudson River. Of the Dyckman Houses children

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discussed here (i.e., Lew Alcindor, Andre Knapp and Mabel Madigan's sons) all appear to have taken part in organized, supervised programs to a higher degree than did their white neighbors. Tim McMahon was an exception.

It is interesting to note that, of all the informants whose experiences are represented in this chapter, all three of those who are associated with the Dyckman Houses -- Tim McMahon, Andre Knapp and Mabel Madigan -- mentioned any of Inwood's five playgrounds. (The only non-Dyckman Houses informant who mentioned playgrounds is Paula Byrne, who lived a stone's throw from Payson Playground). For Dyckman Houses residents, the "Big Park" (i.e., Msgr. Kett Playground) was invariably part of children's experience. Children not living in the Dyckman Houses, by contrast, did not mention playing in either any of the playgrounds located near them, such Ft. Tryon, Payson, 207th Street or Indian Road. Even children living within a block or two of such playgrounds -- such as Michael Hecht, Gregory Nelson and Theresa DeLonghi -- did not mention them. Where these children lived, streets, alleyways, empty lots, lawns and woods all were used to the exclusion of these playgrounds, while the Dyckman Houses -- a setting with few riches for children and surrounded by such formidable features as high escarpments, an industrial area and a treeless stretch of the valley area -- fostered

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the use of the one available playground.

In decades past Inwood's residents had taken extraordinary measures to preserve woodland and open space in the knowledge that parkland would in time constitute the only neighborhood open space. The loss of the Benedetto farm certainly removed the last spot of openness and greenness in the valley area. Yet it is important to remember that the farm was something to be looked at but not played in, for it was fenced, private property. How was access to nature affected in the period 1945-60?

The nine informants whose childhoods are presented in this chapter had -- in surprising contrast with their predecessors in the time period immediately preceding -- fairly ready access to natural landscapes and natural elements. Interestingly, most of this type of activity took place not in the woods or along the shoreline of of Inwood Hill Park but in a much wider variety of settings. But before exploring this variety, let us first turn our attention to the role of Inwood Hill Park.

Three informants had no access whatsoever to the woods. Among them were Peggy Gleason and Theresa DeLonghi, the two girls in this group. Although these children's sex may have played an important role in this omission, each girl was in a different situation: Peggy,

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an east-of-Broadway girl, was forbidden by her parents to ascend the formidable stairs at 215th Street and so was effectively cut off from the verdant Park Terrace area as well as, of course, the woods and shoreline beyond. Peggy's play thus was centered on the busy block where she lived. Theresa, on the other hand, lived directly across the street from Inwood Hill Park and was fond of nature -- a fondness she was able to indulge without going into the woods. (Instead she caught "guppies" in the cove of the yacht basin and drank from a "fresh spring" at the edge of the woods). Although apparently never specifically warned against entering the woods, and carrying no identifiable fear of going there, Theresa simply did not go there. Michael Hecht, who lived no further from Inwood Hill Park that Theresa did, is the third informant who did not venture into the woods. Yet unlike Theresa, Michael did have explicit parental prohibitions against doing so, which he obeyed, and instead found a place of rocks and trees in an abandoned lot near home.

This phenomenon -- of children visiting Inwood Hill Park but not entering the woods -- is something we had not encountered previously. Before 1945, according to other informants, the reason for a child's not going to the woods would be that his or her range did not reach to the park's boundaries at all; but once a child did manage to

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reach Inwood Hill Park, the woods were a natural place for him or her to spend at least some time. What we are seeing in the 1945-60 period is the new, open areas of the park apparently beginning to eclipse the woods as the dominant attraction of Inwood Hill Park for children.

Children who did enjoy sustained contact with Inwood Hill Park's woods included Bill Byrne, who, although going there only twice a month beginning at age ten, found shells, snakes and rabbits there. Similarly, Jim Dolan built forts and scouted for fires there; at the water's edge he watched as men caught eels, and he himself caught "killies." John Shannon used Inwood Hill Park's "Bare Ass Beach." Significantly, all three of these boys found their way to the park from their homes east of Broadway.

When not in Inwood Hill Park, children still found chances to engage themselves with nature. Often this would occur close to home: Bill Byrne, for example, played extensively in the "white rocks" behind a fence to the rear of his building, which he would reach by climbing a tree. Michael Hecht, as mentioned earlier, used a nearby empty lot. Gregory Nelson did the same, playing among rocks and experimenting with fire in an empty lot near home. For these boys, nature was not confined to Inwood Hill Park.

Tim McMahon's extensive use of natural areas presents

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an interesting story, for he had access to natural elements equal to that of children who played in Inwood Hill Park, something unusual for a child living so far to the east. But Tim and his friends, barred from access to satisfying play in the Dyckman Houses, made the steep, wild northern edge of Highbridge Park, which lay just across Dyckman Street, into their own place -- a decidedly unregulated and unsupervised place in which the boys could play with grass, rocks and water, ranging over the hill. Andre Knapp, however, living in the same housing project and at the same time as Tim McMahon, apparently had no such close contact with natural elements. He was instead drawn into such supervised activities as Little League baseball, as were Mabel Madigan's two sons. Again, this suggests a new prominence in organized play in Inwood generally and for children in the newly-built Dyckman Houses in particular.

Obstacles, barriers and restrictions on children's play came in many forms; some of these were new while others surely were not. Fear of crime -- a consideration for even the earliest informants in the 1910s -- apparently was not a major concern among the children in this period, although Paula Byrne, a mother, was wary of possible child molesters, while Mabel Madigan, another

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mother, felt disgust toward what she perceived as the "obnoxious" newer, poorer tenants of the Dyckman Houses.

To the children, however, it was quite often uniformed personnel and not law-breakers who inhibited play to a considerable extent. In addition to the Dyckman Houses guards and Housing Police, City patrolmen would break up stickball games in the affluent northwest section; parks maintenance workers in Isham and Inwood Hill Parks barred tree-climbing; Columbia University employees barred or ejected local children from Baker Field. In addition, building superintendents by this time were a persistent discouragement to play.

The ways in which children had to arrange their play around these authorities was something quite new in the experience of children in Inwood, and reflects how, for the first time, the sight and sound of children playing on streets, in parks and in courtyards was something an adult could feel justified in frowning on. Previously, it had been such clearly designated places such as Isham or Ft. Tryon Parks where children and adults knew (and agreed) that rough-and-tumble play was not allowed. But between 1945 and 1960 this prohibition had spread to several other places, and was aimed not at the general public but at children specifically.

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An emerging theme in children's use and perception of Inwood -- one that was beginning to curtail their movements -- was the racial and socioeconomic gap between Inwood's eastern and western halves. For example, John Shannon was "a Good Shepherd boy," and although he lived in the valley area (in fact, a mere block from the border line between his parish and St. Jude's) he had developed a dislike for his "rival" parish -- a feeling that it was "too concrete" and "dangerous." Gregory Nelson, who lived on secluded Park Terrace East, although not influenced by inter-Parish rivalries, nevertheless felt that descending into the valley area could be dangerous, although he visited friends there anyhow (interestingly, the two incidents in which he was bullied both took place not in the valley area but very near his Park Terrace East home).

Inwood, once an entity with shadings of income variations, was becoming instead visibly -- indeed, quite tangibly -- segmented according to geography, class and race. This new reality became an increasingly important consideration in where children chose to play and which places they thought it wise to avoid.

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A

A STUDY OF AN URBAN COMMUNITY AND ITS CHILDREN, 1890-1991

By

SANFORD GASTER

VOLUME II

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Psychology in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1993

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6. INWOOD CIRCA 1960-1975: A TIME OF CRISES

6.1 Introduction

In 1960 a class of Inwood fifth graders issued a sequel to their predecessors' 1950 community history, The Dyckman Valley (The boys and girls in a fifth year class in PS 152, Manhattan, 1960). The children adopted the old title for the new edition, in which they presented anew the saga of Inwood's history from Algonquin village to urban community. Toward the last pages of this slim mimeographed document the authors add to the research findings their own reflections on Inwood present; but where ten years earlier the authors had presented an elaborate wish-list of things that would make Inwood "an ultra-modern community," in 1960 expectations were decidedly more modest:

> The children would like a part of Fort Tryon Park flooded in the winter for ice skating. Some people have told us that they would like to have free concerts in Fort Tryon Park and Inwood Hill Park during the summer. Modern street lighting should be installed in the entire area. (P. 45).

These three desired items suggest much about how Inwood had changed by 1960: the wish for ice skating in Fort Tryon Park was almost certainly a consequence of the replacement of the Dyckman Oval and Hamilton Tennis Courts (which, as we have seen, had been flooded over in winter

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for skating) by the Dyckman Houses; the nearest ice skating facility was now just over a mile into the Bronx -- too far for Inwood's children to casually drop in. Although these particular children could still go to the Miramar Pool, that facility would be out of business by the late 1960s. The wish for concerts in the parks confirms that no longer were bands playing for the public on the lawns of Isham Park [1]. Finally, the feeling that Inwood's street lighting was antiquated and inadequate strongly suggests a new awareness of crime.

Although in their publication these fifth grade authors, like their 1950 class predecessors, took pride in Inwood's heritage, they were writing at the start of a time when community tensions were developing -- tensions that would dwarf those Inwood had seen thus far. The period 1960 to 1975 was one in which the changes begun toward the end of the Second World War -- population loss, inter-ethnic and -racial tensions, falling family income, deterioration of housing and parks -- would overtake and alarm Inwood, and would appear especially severe to those who had known the place in earlier times.

No longer, moreover, the changes be something slowly seething below a superficial continuity; rather, they became the principal marks of Inwood's very

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identity and self-identity. In 1960, for instance, the sociologist Lee Lendt could write that, although Washington Heights-Inwood "is significantly different today than it was fifty years ago...our respondents continue to view it as they would like to believe it is: a white, middle-class community" (p. 69). By 1970, however, refusal to acknowledge change had turned to pessimism. The political scientist Ira Katznelson (1981), who was an eyewitness to many of the happenings in Washington Heights and Inwood in the late 1960s and early 1970s, wrote that by 1970 "longtime residents of northern Manhattan rarely spoke of their community in assertive, confident tones. More often, they resorted to metaphors of decay, associated most frequently with racial change" (p. 98).

Demographic Changes

Both Lendt and Katznelson, in characterizing this new era in upper Manhattan, mention race as a factor in how longtime residents viewed the changes taking place there. They also show how residents feared that, should the area become identified with poorer, non-European people, the result would be a disruption of continuity in public services and social order. In Inwood, the issue of race was tied in with that of language and culture as well, as "old timers" (people whom the historian Garry

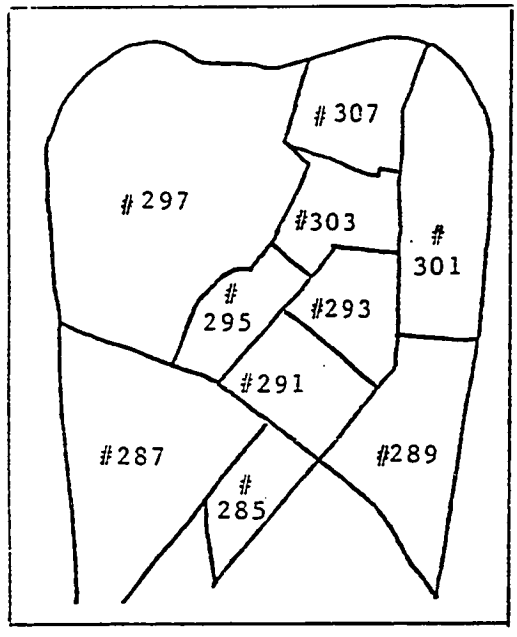
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Wills has characterized poignantly as those who arrived not yesterday but the day before yesterday) became concerned about the Spanish-speaking people as well as the blacks who were moving into the area in increasing numbers.

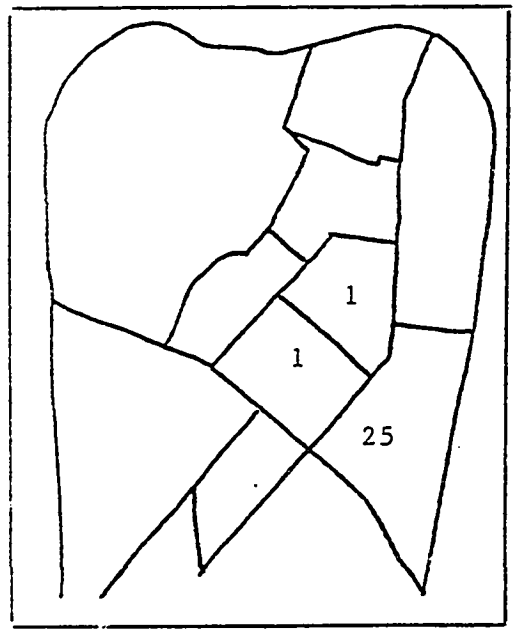
There can be no doubt that Inwood's minority population was indeed growing rapidly. By the mid-1960s the older white, non-Hispanic [2] residents could no longer ignore this reality. The proportion of of black people in Inwood doubled between 1960 and 1970 -- from 3.2% of the population to 6.4%. (In 1940, by contrast, "nonwhites" had constituted less than one-third of one percent of Inwood's inhabitants). Furthermore, by 1970 blacks were not only more numerous locally but were more spread throughout the community: where in 1960 the overwhelming majority of Inwood's blacks had lived in the Dyckman Houses, by 1970 they were well represented in several nearby Census tracts (Fig. 42).

The local Hispanic population grew even faster: with the 1960 Census, the combined numbers of people born in Mexico and in Puerto Rico (the only indicators of Hispanic identity available in that census) were shown to have comprised 1.2% of Inwood's population -- a conservative figure since it of course discounted Hispanics born anywhere else, including the United States; by 1970,

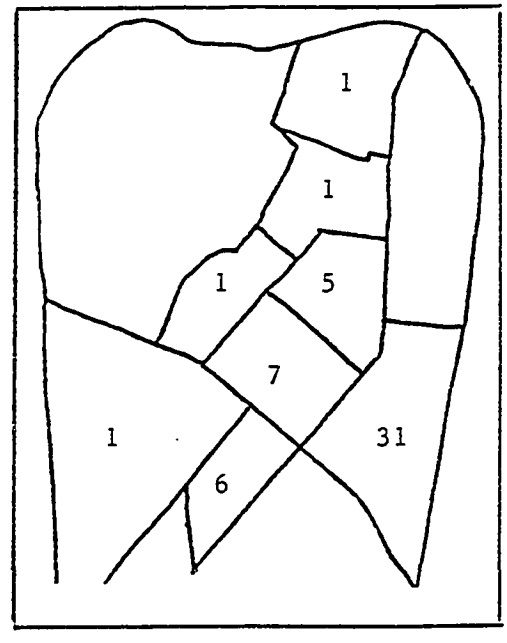
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Inwood Census Tract Numbers.



1960



1970

Fig. 42. Map series showing distribution of black persons, 1960 and 1970, by census tract. Numbers represent percentage of tract's population that was black. Percentages below 1% are not shown.

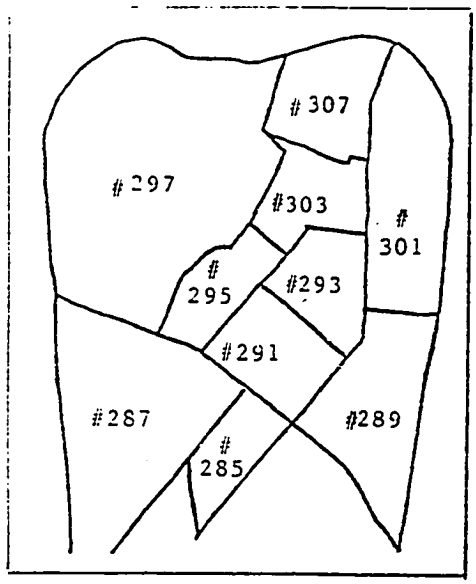
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however, people falling under the category "persons of Spanish language" (a more inclusive definition of an Hispanic) comprised 16.3% of Inwood's population, and in certain tracts Hispanics composed a far larger percentage even than that. For example, in tract #291 Hispanics accounted for fully 35% of the inhabitants in 1970 (Fig. 43). Yet even this 1970 figure is conservative, since the U.S. Bureau of the Census failed to take into account illegal immigrants (see Katznelson, 1981, p. 100).

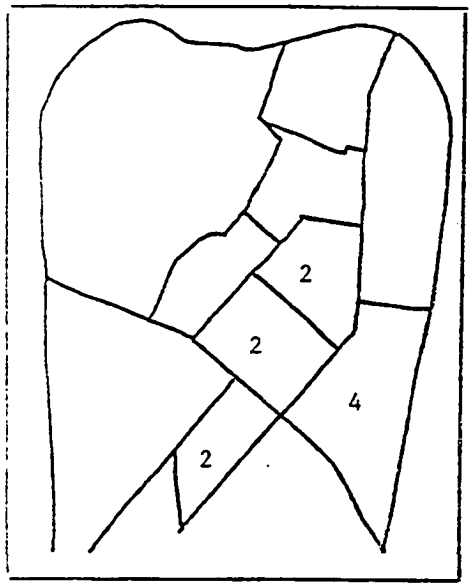
Overall, the racial and ethnic changes in Inwood in the 1960s, even by these conservative official statistics, must have been startling to a community that had so recently had almost no minorities: where in 1960 fewer than one in twenty Inwoodians was black or Hispanic, by 1970 nearly one in four was.

Inwood's more established residents tended to regard the Hispanic newcomers as foreigners with perplexing ways. Although such judgements are purely subjective, it is worthwhile to keep in mind not so much how the the Hispanics themselves may have differed from the non-Hispanics, but rather the important ways in which the process of their immigration to the United States differed from the earlier European passages. One way in which Inwood's swelling Hispanic community was different was that, whereas such

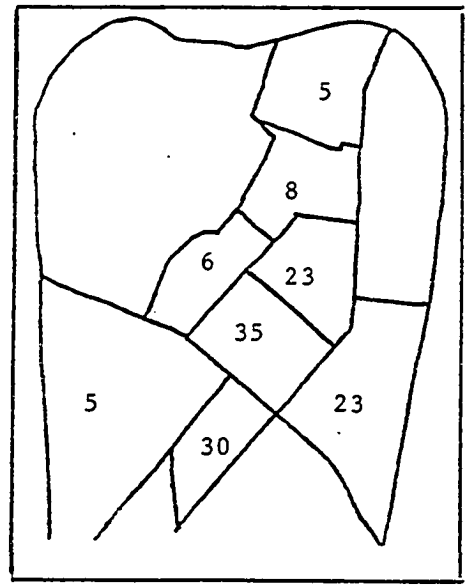
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Inwood Census Tract Numbers.



1960



1970

Fig. 43. Map series showing distribution of Hispanic residents, 1960 and 1970. Numbers represent percent of tract's residents who were Hispanic. Percentages below 1% not shown. [Note: for the 1960 Census, "Hispanic" is defined as "born in Mexico or Puerto Rico;"for 1970 Census it is defined as "persons of Spanish language"].

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European immigrants as the Irish, Jews, Italians and Greeks had arrived in Inwood after having lived elsewhere in the city before acquiring the means to move to so desirable a neighborhood as Inwood, the Cubans, Dominicans and Puerto Ricans entering Inwood in the 1960s often settled there directly from their homelands. This represented a notable change for a community once seen as a place for families actually to aspire to move into. This is not to suggest that Hispanics as a group took any less pride in their community than was the case with the "old timers" (and, indeed, there is every reason to believe that Hispanics generally were awed by its large buildings and vast parkland), but only to point out that, in the housing market of the time (at least east of Broadway) landlords had decided it could be most profitable to forego the customary method of tenant selection and instead to turn apartments over to eager newcomers. An additional factor distinguishing the Hispanics from the "old timers" was the fact that the Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, coming not from Europe but from a part of North America, and having arrived in the age of air travel, were able to retain close ties to their homelands well after resettlement -- visiting them, keeping up with village events, perhaps even owning property there and using their American dollars to build a

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house to return to some day [3]. Finally, many non-Puerto Rican Hispanics, because of increasingly strict immigration laws were not citizens, and illegal immigrants of course have compelling reasons for not taking an active role in community. For all of these reasons, and doubtless many others, Hispanic life in the United States tended to have a transient nature, one which contradicted centuries of tradition in which immigrants to the United States travelled across oceans and settled with the knowledge that the journey was most likely final.

Among many Cubans, apparently, Inwood and Washington Heights were viewed merely as a way-station to a better neighborhood and a better life elsewhere in the United States (which, of course, was not an attitude they had invented, for, as was shown in the previous chapter, the more affluent whites had been leaving Inwood well before Hispanics had arrived). One study (Cohn, 1967) surveyed Cuban immigrants in an area of Washington Heights a little over ten blocks south of Inwood and found that "many Cubans feel that there is a great deal of fluidity of movement to other parts of the United States, and, idealistically, to Cuba, and they feel that they are going to move within a few years and therefore do not wish to become involved in community affairs" (p. 5).

Whether Inwood's Hispanics shied away from community

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involvement or whether they were shut out of such participation remains a question that unfortunately cannot be answered here. Evidence suggests that the truth falls somewhere between the two extremes. Some of the more established Inwoodians, for example, attempted to set up lines of communication with their new Hispanic neighbors. One such early effort was the formation, in 1968, of the Inwood Civic Council. According to the community activist Betty Neubort (1975), the Civic Council, working through the local churches, "had some contact with the new-comers from the Hispanic community. We helped them with their housing complaints and tried to involve them in community affairs. There were some church-sponsored block parties and fiestas" (p. 2). Good Shepherd Church for its part, alert to the fact that many of the newly-arrived Hispanics were practicing Catholics, held "open houses" in 1964 and 1968; in 1969 the first Spanish language mass was held there and a year or two later the church bulletins began to be issued in both English and Spanish (Church of the Good Shepherd, 1987).

By 1971 the issue of Hispanic involvement in community affairs was still an important local issue. One local resident offered to the community at large the Hispanics' point of view (Cerrato, 1971, April):

> Those of us who are active in community affairs are frustrated when invitations are extended by various organizations to

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> the Spanish population and find little response and participation. It is necessary to appreciate that most of the Hispanos are engaged in a struggle for survival to keep their families intact on a day-to-day basis. They have literally no time or energy left for anything else...
>
> ...Despite these hardships, among their own people Hispanos are extremely community-minded. Their concern and desire to help one another is a life-giving force within their own community. If we could improve the social, educational, recreational and cultural environment, in time with increased communication and growth of mutual trust, the Hispanos will make their contribution to Inwood. (P. 3).

When Hispanics moved into the midst of non-Hispanics, what actually transpired? How was daily life affected? One clue at least is linked to environment: European immigrants had relocated from one temperate climate to another; Hispanics, however, had arrived from the tropics, where climate and culture gave the conduct of daily life its own pattern. An Hispanic (presumably Puerto Rican) writing in 1961 on "A Puerto Rican in New York" observed that

> New York is pulsing with music from candy stores and the "Bodega Hispana," the local grocery that specializes in tropical vegetables and staples of island cookery. The Puerto Ricans live with music, a constant reminder to them that their homeland is a place of imagination and joy and deep traditions amidst its poverty and swamps. (Diaz, 1961, p. 383).

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Similarly, in an essay on Puerto Ricans in New York entitled "Not foreigners, but foreign," the sociologist Ivan Illich (1976) summarized this dislocation in these terms:

> But the new immigrant from the tropics knew no winter, and the home he left was a hut IN which you slept but AROUND which you lived with your family. The hut was the centre of his day's activities, not their limit. To come to a tenement, to need heat, to need glass in your windows, to be frowned on for tending to live beyond your doors -- this was all contrary to a Puerto Rican's traditional habits. (P. 34).

This tendency "to live beyond your doors" was not in itself completely new to Inwood. Inwoodians had, after all, in the 1920s taken up shovels and rakes and cultivated empty lots, setting up tables and chairs there, and had used rooftops for socializing. But some of the Hispanics' ways of using community space sometimes took on forms that irritated not only the older Inwoodians but some of the Hispanics themselves. Repairing cars in the street, for example: by 1975 a few of the blocks below Dyckman Street near Nagle Avenue had become illegal car-repairing strips, operated either out of storefronts or, more informally, by Hispanic men who would repair cars for a modest fee. A local newspaper reported (Cusik, 1975):

> A 30-year resident of Arden St., who remembers watching sail-boat races from the Speedway (now the Harlem River Dr.)

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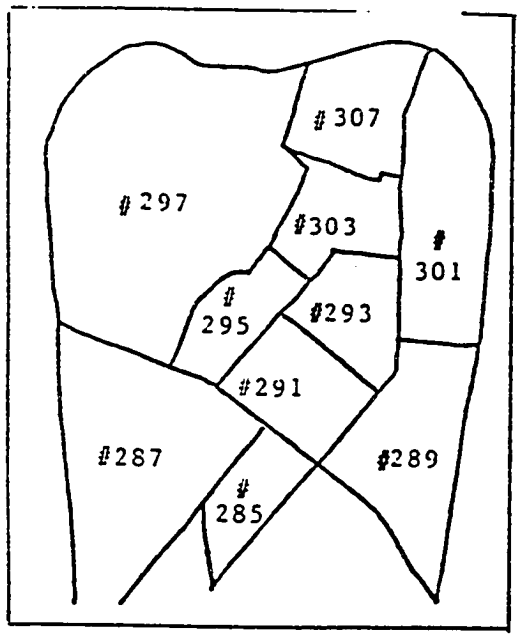
> says the neighborhood has deteriorated the last 10 years with new families moving in.
>
> "You never would have seen people fixing their cars at all hours and playing loud music and throwing everything into the street. It's very depressing." She would like to move, but cannot afford it (p. 10).

As Inwoodians re-evaluated the proper conduct of daily life there, the community continued to experience the decline in population and income that, of course, pre-dated the arrival of large numbers of Hispanics. Inwood lost eight percent of its population between 1960 and 1970, at which year it stood at 47,584 -- the lowest since the 1930 Census. The drop affected every census tract but one, #291, in the heart of the valley area and traditionally the neighborhood's most crowded area, as well as the place of greatest Hispanic concentration.

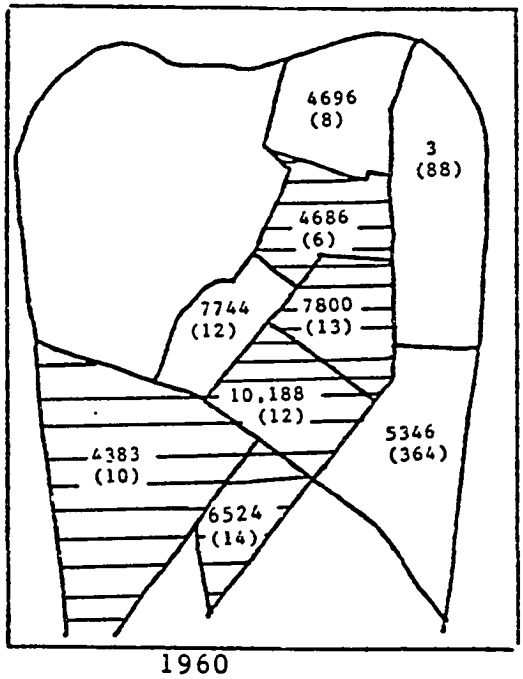
The overall population decline even reached Inwood's exclusive northwestern residential section, where losses of eight percent and ten percent occurred. Tract #287, south of Dyckman Street and west of Sherman Avenue, suffered the severest decline -- thirteen percent. The tract containing the Dyckman Houses declined ten percent (Fig.44).

In terms of family income, the decline seen between 1950 and 1960 continued through 1970, when Inwood's median

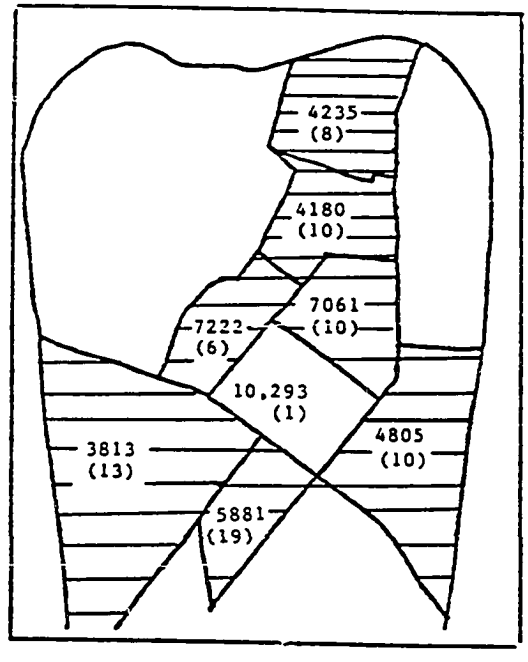
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Inwood Census Tract Numbers.



1960



1970

Fig. 44. Map series showing population in 1960 and 1970 by census tract. Numbers in parentheses are percent changes since previous census. Shaded tract indicated a decrease since previous census.

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family income fell for the first time to below 100% of the citywide average -- to 98 percent. This decline is best illustrated by the fact that in 1960 Tract #289, which contains the Dyckman Houses, had the lowest median family income in Inwood; by 1970 the thee tracts immediately to the west of it had median family incomes considerably lower than that, while the Dyckman Houses' residents' income remained fairly stable (Fig. 45). Interestingly, Inwood's four westernmost tracts suffered only modest declines in income in the 1960s (and in once case registered an increase), so that Inwood's overall income decline was borne primarily by the traditionally poorer tracts to the east. The 1970 census shows a wider gap between the incomes of those living within the four eastern tracts and those in the four western tracts. The class distinction between east and west Inwood was increasing notably.

The distribution of children within Inwood changed significantly as well in the 1960s. Although in 1970 the percentage of Inwoodians who were between the ages of five and 15 remained virtually unchanged from what it had been in 1960, their distribution did change, and in significant ways: in the westernmost Census tracts, this population either declined or remained stable, while in the Dyckman Houses it declined precipitously (Fig. 46). But in the

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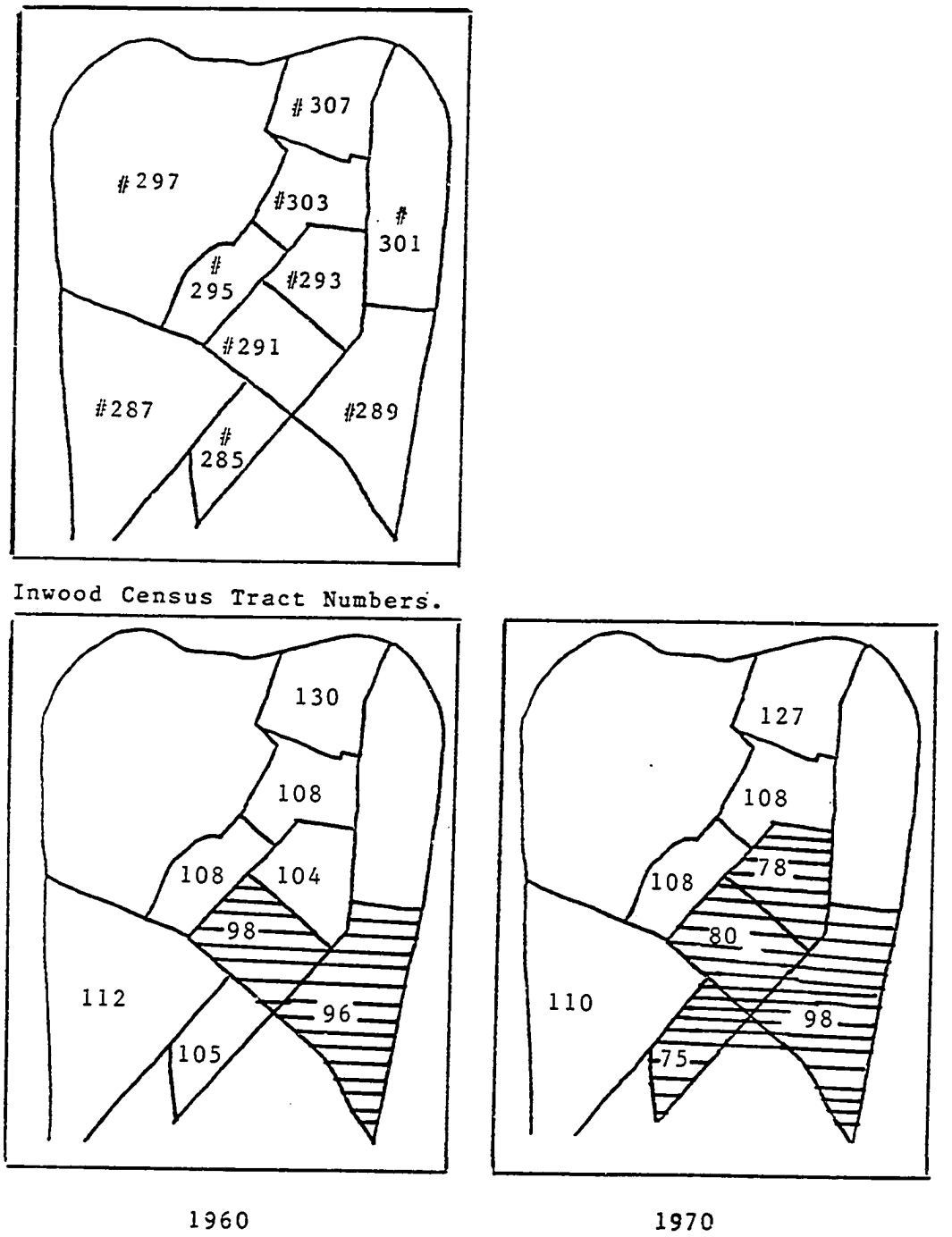
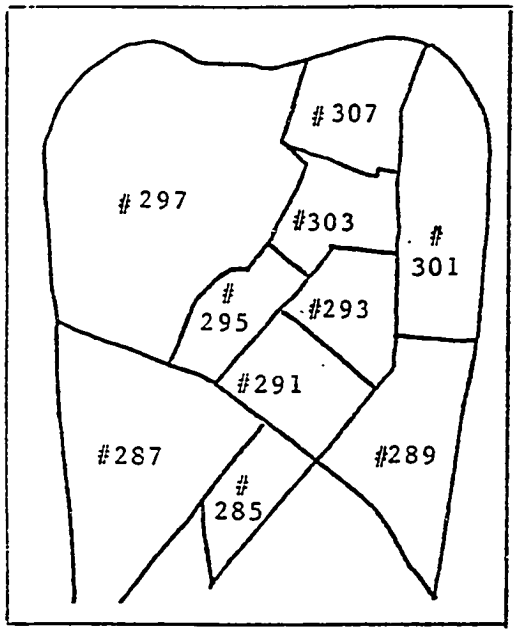


Fig. 45. Map series showing median family income, 1960 and 1970, by census tract. Numbers represent census tract's income as a percentage of the citywide average. Shaded tract indicates a percentage below 100%.

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Inwood Census Tract Numbers.

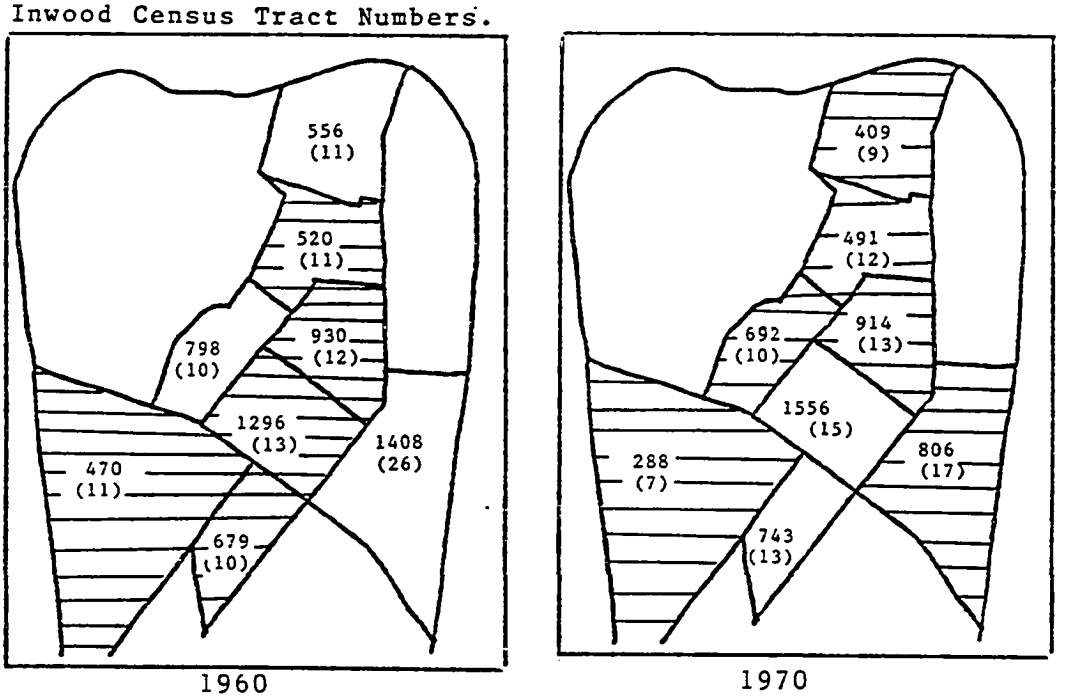


Fig. 46. Map series showing distribution of children aged 5-14, 1960 and 1970, by census tract. Figures in parentheses are percentage of total tract population that are children. Shaded tract indicates a decrease, in actual numbers, since previous census.

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three tracts of the central valley area -- Tracts #285, #291 and #293 -- the number of children in this age range increased greatly. These tracts are of course the ones most physically isolated from the parks, playgrounds and other recreational facilities and open spaces along the Hudson and Harlem Rivers. The consequences for children's access to these parks could not have been favorable to children living there.

Housing Quality

With Inwood's decline in population and income, and with its transition from a mostly white to a mixed neighborhood, the condition of its housing became a concern. Well over ninety percent of Inwood's housing had been built before World War II and, with the notable exception of the Dyckman Houses, postwar construction was slight. One exception, however, was the development, between 1960 and 1963, of four high-rise, New York State-funded cooperative middle-income towers. These were built into the sliver of steeply-rising, rocky woodland between Fort George Hill and Hillside Avenue. The buildings together had about eight hundred units and contributed somewhat to the number of newer housing units in Inwood -- especially units lying east of Broadway -- although blacks and Hispanics generally could not afford

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to buy these new apartments. Although it was fortunate that these units could be built without having to relocate existing tenants (as it was fortunate that the Dyckman Houses could be built on landfill), their construction simply added to the number of buildings in Inwood while the number of people continued to decline and the older buildings continued to deteriorate. Further, the construction of such developments as this and the Dyckman Houses destroyed open spaces and views that perhaps should have been preserved; indeed, local activists had tried to thwart them since they would have been visible from Ft. Tryon Park's scenic lookout points -- not all of which looked west toward the New Jersey Palisades.

Concern over the quality of Inwood's older housing was mounting. Lendt, in 1960, referring to all of Washington Heights and Inwood, wrote gloomily:

> Thus far, Washington Heights [and Inwood have] not been blighted by the growth of wide-spread slums. This condition, however, will not last for many years. Many sections east of Broadway are on the threshold of irreversible deterioration, and the continued [outward] movement of older ethnic groups...could indicate that more areas would be left to the inevitable process of deterioration. (P. 98).

The passage is as noteworthy a revelation of a mood as it is an impartial assessment of a state of affairs. The use of the words "irreversible" and "inevitable" reveal a certain uneasy prediction for Inwood's future. This is

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probably due to the fact that, although the statistical data of the time did not in themselves give cause for alarm, the trend was clear: decay was present and significant decay was forthcoming. Abeles and Weinberg (1968), using 1960 Census data, calculated that of Inwood's 31,556 housing units, only 1,359 were classified as "deteriorating"; the rest were "sound"; none were "dilapidated" (p. 34). But since there were in evidence no efforts to reverse deterioration, its acceleration could reasonably be forecast.

As Katznelson (1981) noted, many if not most "old time" Inwoodians regarded with bitterness the deterioration of certain familiar qualities of their community, and that they found this attributable to the sudden and vast increase in the minority population. Yet it must be emphasized again that this new population -- one with few housing options -- moved into a community already in distress.

Throughout the 1960s concern over housing conditions in Inwood deepened. In 1963 community leaders were requesting City funds for rehabilitating seriously deteriorated housing on Vermilyea Avenue ("Vermilyea Av.," 1963). In 1969 the New York City Planning Commission wrote of Washington Heights-Inwood: "a general shabbiness has crept over much of the district" (p. 154). Abeles and

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Weinberg (1968) ascribed the deterioration to interrelated problems -- problems which, they surmised, had nothing to do with the race or language of the community's newcomers but rather with greed, municipal neglect and poor planning:

> The older structures are showing signs of advancing neglect as a result of changing real estate economics, the normal aging of poorly-maintained buildings and, increasingly short-term ownership objectives. For the new minority group tenant the result is a lower level of services than was provided to the former residents.
>
> Except for a few streets, such as Post Avenue, the decline of individual buildings has not yet affected entire sections of [Inwood], although as the process continues, much of Inwood could be influenced. A lessening of housing qualities has coincided with inattention to the public environment, manifest in broken sidewalks, treeless streets, and other evidence of inadequate municipal housekeeping. [Inwood] exhibits the featureless block facades, unimaginative site planning and visual monotony endemic to most parts of the Heights (p. 17).

The situation by 1975, although worsening, was not bearing out the dire predictions of the early-and mid-1960s. A 1975 study by students at the Yale School of Architecture contained the observation that

> Landlords in the area, many of them large firms, undoubtedly view the influx of Dominicans and other Spanish-speaking people as a sign of neighborhood decay and have begun to disinvest by reducing maintenance expenditures to maximize their short-term profit.

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> ...If a landlord feels that the influx of a black and Spanish-speaking population means neighborhood decay, he will lose faith in the prospect of long-term return and seek to maximize his short-term profits. (Quoted in "Predicting," 1975, p. 2).

Obviously, the Yale planners were not as alarmed at the prospect of blight as earlier writers had been, noting that few properties were in tax arrears and that there was no evidence that landlords were yet "divesting" -- an extreme recourse in which the landlord withdraws investment completely, usually while still collecting rents. Inwood's housing, in short, survived the 1960s and early 1970s damaged but still intact (Fig. 47).

Streets and Street Life

But even with limited housing deterioration there came a decline in the quality of Inwood's main retail streets. A 1972 letter in a local newspaper (Taft, 1972):

> What about dirty and greasy sidewalks...on 207th Street, Dyckman Street and Broadway and so forth, and in particular in front of eating places...? Maybe we can have a semblance of the days when people enjoyed a walk along these very same streets. (P. 2).

Indeed, dissatisfaction with the shopping streets reached beyond the individual resident and to the business people. Chain stores such as Woolworth's were leaving the area and an increase in robberies made many of the remaining

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Fig. 47. View of 204th Street, looking east toward Tenth Avenue (with elevated subway), 1975. Although by this time the area had a rather forlorn look, it did not succumb to the wave of devastation that ruined other neighborhoods at that time. [Source: The Center for Human Environments, Inc.].

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merchants reluctant to stay open at night (Glass, 1971). This exodus, however, allowed Hispanic businesses to make inroads, and by 1975 these were "well distributed throughout the neighborhood" ("Predicting," 1975) -- as were Hispanic shoppers: The Dyckman Houses mother and community activist Betty Neubort (1975) wrote at that time that "Today, on Dyckman Street, around an in the stores, one hears mostly Spanish spoken. The sounds of bongo drums is often heard and there is a drastic change in the appearance of the streets" (p. 3).

By 1975 Inwood's shopping streets had lost many of their older establishments, such as drug stores, restaurants, bakeries, butcher shops and delicatessens. This was due no doubt to a number of factors, such as the aging of proprietors, the changing nature of retail business (e.g., from butcher shops to supermarket meat counters; from drug stores to discount stores), as well as to the fact that a significant part of Inwood's population now had less to spend and had different tastes.

But the nature of these streets changed in another way as well: their value as places of entertainment for children was severely diminished. From the the 1920s to the early 1970s Inwood had had three movie theaters; by the early 1970s two had closed -- the Loews Dyckman on 207th Street and the Loews Inwood on Dyckman Street --

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leaving only the Alpine Theater on Dyckman Street. The Loew's Dyckman had had a long, slow decline: with attendance dropping, the theater began featuring live rock-n-roll shows, only to stop these as the young audiences became destructive (Little, 1975). By 1975 the theater was dark and a State Supreme Court judge, acting on a petition brought to him by tenants of a nearby apartment building, ordered the owners to correct such hazardous conditions there as overflowing garbage and an infestation of rodents, and to seal the building so that people could not enter (it was charged that drug addicts were gathering there). The owners of the building commented at the time that they were working on plans to demolish it and build outdoor tennis courts, but these never materialized ("Judge Orders," 1975). Meanwhile, the Alpine, even with its immediate competition eliminated, was not faring well: that year it lowered its admission price from $2.50 ($3.00 on weekends) to $1.50 at all times ("Alpine Theater," 1975). The Alpine's manager pointed out that not only was competition from television hurting business, but that such small neighborhood theaters as his could not afford to meet distributors' high fees for the latest productions, adding "This is not the richest area around. The people don't spend that much on entertainment" (p.2). But while Inwood's shopping streets

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may have been shuttered and shunned at night, the vacancy rate as of 1975 was only 2% and merchants were highly organized ("Predicting," 1975).

Still, Inwood's troubles brought it some curiosity-seekers from other parts of the city. One January day in 1972 a New York Times reporter (Corry, 1972), seeking a glimpse at how Inwood had deviated from its long-held reputation as a middle-class stronghold, paid a visit, spending some time at the Burton Supply Company, a 207th Street hardware and housewares store. Gauging the changes, the journalist observed the following:

In many ways Inwood hadn't changed:

> Some sections look as if they had been lifted out of somewhere in Brooklyn, from Bay Ridge or Flatbush, say, in the nineteen-thirties. There is a feeling of time stopped, of being in an urban backwater...couples still stroll on Seaman Avenue...A bar still sells glasses of beer for 15 cents and shots of rye for 50 cents. (P. 57).

But in the Burton Supply Company the changes were obvious:

> Once, Henry E. Marcus, the owner, sold only the most expensive paint. Now he sells cheaper paint, but he sells far more of it and to more people. Once, he carried $40 lighting fixtures and costly cabinets. He no longer does, stocking cheaper things, but his business is prospering...
>
> Not long ago, the superintendents of Inwood's big apartment houses were true

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> mechanics who could fix nearly anything. Moreover, they could order things they wanted by phone.
>
> Now the superintendents are more likely to be unskilled. About half of them seem to be Spanish-speaking, the rest are Irish, with a great many of the Irish holding city transit jobs, too. (P. 57).

Meanwhile, in the store itself, the relationship between vendor and customer had become strained:

> Pilfering is a growing problem, and has been for perhaps 10 years. Mr. Marcus has hung mirrors so that he can see into the small hidden corners of the store, and he plans to remodel in a way that will discourage pilfering.
>
> Meanwhile, it goes on, apparently practiced by people of every age, and now with a new variation. For years, Mr. Marcus simply made cash refunds to customers who returned an article. Lately, however, people have wandered in, picked up an item off a wall or shelf, and then walked up to the counter and said they were returning it.
>
> Consequently, Mr. Marcus now asks for a sales slip before he makes a refund. Even this does not always discourage cheaters, however, and the other day a man dressed as a woman walked in, picked up a $5 tool, and tried to get a refund on it. (P. 57).

Pilfering, however, was a minor annoyance in a community that felt it was experiencing crime for the first time. The newspaperman continues,

> As seen through the store, the middle class in Inwood is fearful, perhaps unduly so, of crime. By any statistical measure Inwood is one of the least troubled neighborhoods in the city, although the store now sells more gates, chains and

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locks than ever before.

> "We had these heavy four-foot chains that cost $5," Jeffrey Marcus said. "We didn't think they'd move at all, but they sold out. People are afraid of getting robbed or mugged. The shopping centers are empty at night." (P. 57).

The anecdotal evidence contained in this article captures a new mood prevalent in the neighborhood. In the mid-to-late 1960s crime surfaced as a community issue, as it had in the 1940s and 1950s, and again became Inwood's main concern. An item in a local newspaper ("An Overdue Lashing," 1964) a decade earlier had reported:

> In recent weeks Inwood has had its share of violence. A 3-year-old was criminally assaulted by a maniac sex offender. Young teen-age girls have been raped by teen-age boys. Just a few weeks ago a woman in the Ft. Washington area was assaulted by two teen-age hoodlums....A man has been roaming the streets making obscene overtures to elementary school boys and girls. So far, the police have not been able to apprehend him, but they have many complaints on file. (P. 2).

Throughout the early 1970s the local newspapers were sprinkled with stories of muggings, rapes, store hold-ups and other assaults of residents and merchants in their buildings, businesses and on their streets (although there are very few that involved children). The public reaction to this condition was described in 1971 in a local newspaper editorial ("Safety," 1971):

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> Inwood may not be one of the city's high-crime areas, but the amount of crime that does occur here is worrying and even frightening a lot of people. There is a growing feeling that the streets and hallways are unsafe at night, with the result that fewer citizens venture forth after dark and more merchants are closing shop earlier. Inwood may become a nocturnal ghost town before long (P. 2).

In its increase in crime during the 1960s, Inwood, of course, was not creating a trend but merely following. National statistics show that crime in the United States began increasing in 1962 or 1963 and continued to rise unabated until about 1975. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (Suro, 1991), between the early 1960s and mid-1970s the national murder rate more than doubled, as did the burglary rate, while the rape rate nearly tripled, the robbery rate nearly quadrupled, and the rate of aggravated assault more than quadrupled.

The problem of crime in Inwood in the 1960s was different from its precedents. Where the earlier outbreaks of crime had been suppressed through a combination of citizen involvement and increased police involvement, this time the problem became more amorphous and elusive. Although youths were again singled out as the primary offenders in petty crimes, the troubling activity did not center on any specific issue such as anti-Semitism or inter-gang conflict. And where in the past the problem had been far greater in Washington

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Heights than in Inwood, now Inwood bore its share.

The New York City Youth Board's juvenile delinquency figures for 1966 (New York City Youth Board, 1967). show that, in the area above Dyckman Street, people between seven and 20 years old committed 236 offenses, which led to 121 arrests and 125 "referrals" -- meaning contacts established between the offender and a social service agency. This was the highest rate of offenses since 1956, the year before the crackdown brought on by the murder of Michael Farmer. Although this was a significant increase, it was from a citywide perspective quite modest, as Inwood's offense rate was less than half of the citywide average. (During the 1950s, by contrast, it had averaged approximately three quarters of the citywide average). Yet this statistic -- even had it been widely known in Inwood -- would probably have given scant consolation to its worried residents.

A new factor in concern over juvenile behavior was drugs, and some programs -- sadly underfunded -- struggled to address it. In the summer of 1970 Inwood's first "drug education and rehabilitation program" opened on 207th Street west of Broadway, called Our Place, Inc. (Sawyer, 1971) and began issuing a monthly newspaper called The Rap. Our Place had begun on a Good Shepherd Priest's suggestion that Inwood try to address local concerns

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aroused by the recent fatal overdose of an Inwood Junior High school student. The chairman of the center told a local reporter "Parents in this community are busy hanging out in bars and don't give a damn about their children. I tell them they're guilty of negative consent; they're silent, apathetic. The community needs a brain physic" (p. 3). Members of Our Place counted 107 bars in Inwood; one member commented "Kids 12 years old drink quarts of beer in the park until they're stoned" (p. 3).

In 1971 a local newspaper reported the existence of another drug treatment program at Junior High School 52 (formerly PS 52). School authorities, however, denied that this indicated any serious drug problems among the students: "In over three years at the school, [the Assistant Principal] has not seen any mainliners on heroin. Most of the students who have come to him are 'experimenters' with pills, marijuana and wine" (Goldberg, 1971, p. 6). That year the school's treatment program was closed (Fisher, 1971), although at about the same time another one opened in a storefront on Sherman Avenue ("New Lease," 1973), called the Inwood Youth Clubhouse. Closed in 1972 for lack of funds, it reopened in 1973; its new director, Howard Fields, a black man who had once played professional football, told a reporter "We hope to provide programs for youths nine to 19, where they will have a

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sound program of remedial education, recreation, vocational training and summer experience" (p. 1).

Meanwhile, heroin use was reported to be flourishing in Inwood. A local newspaper estimated 200 heroin addicts in Inwood, most of them "middle class" (Grossman, 1971, p. 1). At a small playground recently built on the southeast corner of Dyckman Street and Nagle Avenue, in the shadow of the elevated train, there allegedly was a drug "marketplace" where "at a regular time each day, a black car with New Jersey license plates would drive up and pick up money" (p. 1). Sniffing glue apparently was a concern to adults: The New York Times reporter who visited Inwood in 1972 (Corry, 1972) wrote that "Children as young as 8 and 9 try in vain to buy glue at the Burton Supply Company and they are knowledgeable about names and prices" (p. 57).

By the mid-1970s the changes in the quality of life in Inwood -- intercultural friction, declining incomes, crime and drug abuse -- had taken their toll on Inwoodians' attitudes toward their community. There was a feeling that the place had become dirty, unpleasant and dangerous. In a survey conducted by Columbia University (Friedman & Golding, 1974), the "most frequently mentioned important problem" was "fear of crime" (p. 25). Other problem

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categories commonly mentioned included "kids, gangs," "dirty streets, sidewalks," and "dirty, messy, dogs" (p. 25). In a previous chapter it was related that, in 1946, 27 percent of Inwoodians said that their community "was not a good place to live;" this 1974 study found that fully 48 percent of Inwoodians wanted to move out of their neighborhood.

Footnotes to Section 6.1

[1] Ironically, Inwood need not have been so deprived. In 1960 the Parks Department listed 23 parks throughout the city in which it was sponsoring such events as "name band dances...square dances, Shakespeare theater, fireworks, chamber music and barber shop quartets." However, no park in upper Manhattan was included in this program (New York City Department of Parks, 1960, no page numbers).

[2] In these pages I use "Hispanic" instead of the geographically more specific "Latino." Although Inwood's Hispanics are almost exclusively Latin American (as opposed to Iberian), my Hispanic informants (all of whom spoke to me in English; I am not proficient in Spanish) referred to themselves as "Hispanic."

[3] This option, of course, was not open to Cuban immigrants, whose emigration, in light of the United States government's hostility toward the Cuban revolution, tended to be final, although Cuban expatriates could still dream of return to their homes should the government of their adoptive nation succeed in bringing down the Communist Cuban leader Fidel Castro.

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6.2 Federal and Local Urban Policy, 1960-1974: A Brief Overview

Changes in Inwood in the 1960s went beyond the skin color or native language of some of its inhabitants. Rather, they affected Inwoodians' conception of what their neighborhood is and challenged them to participate in shaping it. One reason for this challenge was that Inwood -- as well as many other neighborhoods that were becoming home to the less well-off -- was experiencing a decline in the quality of life (poor parks maintenance, inadequate police protection, etc.) even as its residents' hopes were being raised as to what could be done by an array of new Federal programs. How specifically Inwoodians responded to the changing dynamics of urban life is the subject of Section 6.3; this section is offered as the context for those actions.

Postwar urban development projects and policies, as discussed in the previous chapter, emphasized the construction of large-scale municipal and regional facilities: first highways and public housing and then, increasingly, grandiose downtown government complexes, sports arenas, "civic and cultural centers," and the expansion of such prestigious institutions as medical centers, universities and foundation headquarters. It did

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not seek to integrate physical planning and social planning, nor did it extend to such issues as health care or employment training, nor did it concern itself with the actual preferences and patterns in how people actually lived their lives. These omissions amounted to what the urban historian Sam Bass Warner (1970) condemned as "the neglect of everyday life."

By the early 1960s the failures of this approach had become too large, too well-documented, too publicized and, to the nation's leaders, too embarrassing to ignore. Middle class whites were colonizing the suburbs and exurbs (where, despite the heavy federal subsidy given to middle-class home-owners, public housing was almost nonexistent). These homeowners commuted to the central business district or else worked in the increasingly numerous suburban office complexes. In being lured to abandon the central cities these people, in the 1960s as in the 1950s, left those who were either too poor, uneducated, elderly or stubbornly resistant to trend to leave the city to be joined by newly-arrived blacks and Hispanics.

Significantly, the physical presence of the new minority population did not translate into corresponding political representation for them, as local political organizations did not change in order to represent the

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newcomers as it had generations earlier when the newcomers were Europeans. Blacks and Hispanics, in addition, having received inferior educations and experiencing discrimination in housing and employment, did not take part in the rising national prosperity of the times. Between 1950 and 1965, New York City, while losing 1.5 million white residents, gained 1.25 Million blacks and Puerto Ricans who were given no entree to the comfortable middle-class life portrayed as the national norm (Cloward & Piven, 1974).

At the same time, the very scale of the spatial reorganization of the inner cities, in which large areas were disrupted for urban renewal projects, left a significant population that was not only poor but, because of massive displacement, often transient, confused and alienated. In all the flux of the 1950s and early 1960s -- the razing, building and redistributing of many elements of the physical environment and the rapidly changing nature of work, technology and education -- this population constituted, in what was still society's geographic core but increasingly on the fringes of its concerns, a swelling population that took no part. The inner city had completed its transformation from a gateway to a dead end.

Given such conditions, it us understandable that there

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should have been rebellions [1] in poor city neighborhoods. According to Castells (1983), between 1964 to 1968 there were "at least 329 important riots involving thousands of black people, which took place in 257 American cities leading to 50,000 arrests, 8,000 injured and at least 220 killed..." (p. 50).

Had the inhabitants of the inner city all simply sat motionless and silent, it is quite possible that, despite their suffering, they would have captured little or no attention from a nation so fond of its affluence. But the inner-city people were of course far from motionless and silent. Rather, they became restless and resentful; there was, in addition to the rebellions, an increase in crime, disease, and hopelessness. It may be asked: Why did the black citizens [2] -- because of their sheer numbers in many neighborhoods -- not simply improve their local environments? One answer to this would be that, though the blacks and Hispanics had moved into areas that were being vacated by whites, they were not moving into voids -- places they could have re-made according to the wishes of their inhabitants. The ravaged neighborhoods were "abandoned" only in the sense that their traditional occupants had gone away; these places still were integral to local and even national political and economic interests, and the buildings the poor inhabited, as well as the land

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underneath them, still were the legal possessions of others. Under such constraints, the wishes of the new inhabitants of the old neighborhoods were not translatable into concrete changes.

This condition was uppermost in the minds of federal policy-makers in the early 1960s. In 1961, just a few months into his term, President John F. Kennedy mounted his "New Frontier" campaign for conquering such mounting social problems. Whatever reasons -- humanist or alarmist -- the President had for undertaking this reform crusade, political reality was an ever-present prod, for Democrats, however little they delivered to blacks, nevertheless needed their allegiance to win against the Republican party (Cloward & Piven, 1974). Thus the President's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Crime was established by executive order, followed by the Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Offenses Control Act, which authorized $10 million for programs. This committee, along with associated federal legislation, wrought a bold change in governmental approach to delinquency (Marris & Rein, 1969). While the environment had long been recognized as a strong factor in delinquency, now, for the first time, there would be not only recognition of that fact but federally-coordinated and -sponsored programs (paralleled by pre-existing programs of the Ford

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Foundation) to actually change it. This action was soon bolstered by the Economic Opportunity Act, which channeled more funds into the effort. In 1963 the Community Mental Health Centers Act released $150 million for mental health stations (Cloward & Piven, 1974). The key ingredient in these programs was to be community involvement; a series of new bureaucratic structures would be built, in which all relevant participants, governmental as well as non-governmental, would participate.

When, following the assassination in 1963 of President Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson assumed the Presidency, there was scarcely a moment's pause in the direction of the New Frontier, although the slogan was altered. In his 1964 commencement speech at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Johnson unveiled his Great Society program. In inspiring tones he told the American people:

> The Great Society rests on abundance and liberty for all. It demands an end to poverty and racial injustice...But that is just the beginning.
>
> The Great Society is a place where every child can find knowledge to enrich his mind and to enlarge his talents. It is a place where leisure is a welcome chance to build and reflect, not a feared cause of boredom and restlessness. It is a place where the city of man serves not only the needs of the body and the demands of commerce but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community...It is a place where men are more concerned with the quality of their goals than the quality of their goods. (Quoted in Gettelman &

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Mermelstein, 1967, p. 16).

For the next five years the Great Society issued a barrage of legislation and spawned a profusion of bureaucracies. A large part of the effort's early stages was vested in what the President had termed in his 1964 State of the Union Message a "war on poverty." The intention, as he put it, was nothing less than "total victory" -- to sweep away barriers to education, health and employment to those millions "on whom the gates of opportunity have closed" (quoted in Gettelman & Mermelstein, 1967, p. 181). One new initiative, Community Action Programs (CAPs), was to channel federal funds and technical advisors directly to community-based activist organizations, which were expected to have the most intimate knowledge of community problems and thus be the best executors of planning their eradication. "Maximum feasible participation" of the poor themselves, addressing the problems of their immediate communities, was to be the philosophical backbone of Community Action Programs. Nearly $1.2 billion was appropriated in the first two years of C.A.P. (Stoloff, 1967).

In just five years the Kennedy/Johnson New Frontier/Great Society changed the nature of federal urban policy. The physical devastation of urban renewal would be less widespread; social planning would go from being a

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nonentity to a rallying point, and community activists' status went from that of unrecognized and barely-tolerated outsiders to invited participants. The magnitude of the undertaking is detailed by Mollenkopf (1983):

> The New Frontier/Great Society years worked a revolution in federalism which was almost as profound as that of the New Deal. In 1960, the federal government had forty-four grant programs sending about $3.9 billion annually to the big cities. By the end of the Great Society, over five hundred grant programs delivered $14 billion to urban areas, and momentum carried that figure to $26.8 billion in 1974...While the Great Society spent only half in real terms than what the New Deal had pumped into a Depression-era economy, its spending sharply contrasted with the previous Republican period and dramatically expanded federal urban programs...(p. 93).

That the Great Society was large is obvious; equally obvious was that it was a failure, as the national economic chaos and ever-growing social inequality of the 1970s, 80s and (thus far) 90s amply demonstrate. What were its shortcomings? Perhaps the most penetrating criticism of the Great Society, offered by the social critic Paul Goodman (1967) was also the most sweeping, and questioned not its goals but the society which made it necessary:

> ...when [President Johnson's] oblique eyes become dreamy and his voice avuncular on the theme of our national greatness, I am insulted by his pretension.

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> Do not misunderstand me. When the President speaks of trying to dissolve hard core poverty, assuring equal rights, opening to every child the opportunity for an education, or coping with the blight of the cities, I assent...But that is not the program of a great society but of any decent society. It should be urged modestly and executed resolutely. There is no cause for fanfare in doing justice where we have been unjust, conserving where we have been vandals, and spending for neglected public goods what a small country like Denmark or Holland provides as a matter of course. (P. 513).

A more common and detailed line of criticism of the Great Society (e.g., Cloward & Piven, 1974; Fainstein & Fainstein, 1988; Katznelson, 1981) has advanced the idea that, as it evolved, the Great Society program became corrupted by urban politics-as-usual. The program sought initially to harness the energy of the emerging radicalism of the 1960s and channel it into public works. These works would in theory remake the physical environment of poor communities and set the poor (especially the young) on a life course that would consist of a completed education, the acquisition of marketable skills, the procurement of decent homes and the raising of stable, self-sufficient families -- in short, a law-abiding path that would pose no threat of alteration to the structure of a capitalist society. (The Great Society, significantly, did <u>not</u> seek to discover whether the inner-city poor would have cared to rethink and remake

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their communities along lines that they may have seen as beneficial to themselves). Yet even this dubious premise was never realized, for the Great Society was manipulated by the local political structures of the cities -- as a way to keep power away from minorities. As Cloward and Piven (1974) discerned, the premise of the Great Society -- that "pathologies" of the "ghetto" were the root cause of urban crises and were susceptible to "scientific cures" -- ignored the fact that there was a significant constituency that profited from those very conditions (recall how Inwood's venerable Burton Supply Co. prospered as a result of increased sales of cheap house paint and of locks and gates to nervous Inwoodians -- to use but one minuscule example). Moreover, according to Cloward and Piven, the Great Society did not attempt to get at the root of the class, ethnic and racial hostilities that were part and parcel of cities' troubles, but instead attempted to gloss over them with an ostensibly futuristic and paternalistic web of programs that was itself a cover for the neutralization of radical elements in society. When for example the federal government funded neighborhood organizations, these entities still did not receive crucial cooperation from City Halls, thus turning them into federally-funded agitators with limited influence on local community issues. (Indeed, such agitation, when it

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occurred at all, was often the only hopeful sign of change, for far more often the federal funds would end up in the hands of local vested interests to shelter themselves from the demands of the poor while appearing to minister to their needs). The poor were in fact thwarted from forming coherent and effective community organizations. The "maximum feasible participation" promised by the Community Action Programs thus turned out to be a bitter hoax (Stoloff, 1967).

New York City, according to Fainstein and Fainstein (1988), made comparatively judicious and humane use of the confusing and self-contradictory Great Society programs -- an assessment borne out by the fact that New York was spared the devastation that resulted from the rebellions in the Watts district of Los Angeles in 1965 and Newark in 1967. When the Model Cities bill was passed, for example, New York was among the first to participate, and it went beyond the federal mandate, establishing ancillary programs in education, job training, daycare, health care, recreation, housing code enforcement and housing maintenance; participation of the affected populations was in many ways substantial. Fainstein and Fainstein (1988) attribute this modest success to the Mayoral administration of John V. Lindsay, a liberal Republican

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who sought to share more local power with minorities than was the case in other large cities.

Lindsay was elected in 1965, when the Great Society was in its youth and had not yet become an object of ridicule. In its first term the Lindsay administration created a system of municipal programs which, like those of the Great Society, were numerous and named in such a way as to inspire in the electorate -- especially in the form of neighborhood organizations -- the feeling that the government was listening to its needs and seeking its participation: Neighborhood City Halls; the Urban Action Task Force; the Neighborhood Action Program; the Neighborhood Conservation Bureau; Borough Improvement Boards; Operation Better Block, Mobile City Halls, etc. This list composed much of what in New York City was commonly termed "neighborhood government." The political scientist Ira Katznelson (1981), as mentioned earlier, was present in Washington Heights and Inwood in the late 1960s and early 70s, just as the programs of Johnson and those of Lindsay were at the critical juncture that would determine their success or failure. In his analysis of those years, Katznelson takes a considerably more negative view of this era than do Fainstein and Fainstein, and argues that efforts to include the poor and minorities in local decision-making in Washington Heights and Inwood had

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only one objective: to preserve the traditional local leadership, which was in the hands of middle-class whites who had lived in the community for decades (i.e., the "old" upper Manhattan), while allowing the participation of the rapidly growing (and increasingly militant) minority population (i.e., the "new" upper Manhattan) only to the most limited degree and only on the terms of the entrenched interests. In Katznelson's interpretation, class divisions, which were threatened by the emergence of programs giving voice to the poor and the nonwhite, were resolutely defended against insurgence, and the political "trench system" -- meaning politics-as-usual -- was thus perpetuated. Furthermore, the fragmentation (officially called "decentralization") of the functions of municipal government into neighborhood units effectively thwarted any city-wide grassroots movement for the cause of economic and social equality.

Katznelson presents his thesis through an analysis of several components of urban policy and a synthesis of their cumulative significance. For example, freeing education and other municipal services from their formerly strict, centralized nature and dispersing them among neighborhood-level organizations

> not only absorbed the energies of insurgents, it also transformed their protests and rendered them harmless. These institutions did so by reconnecting the disaffected to political life and in

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> this way making them part of the regular, legitimate political process. And they did so by fragmenting issues into community-size components, thus separating community from community, and one set of concerns, such as education, from from other policy areas. Once activists joined in this new version of the game of city trenches, they lost their ability to challenge the urban system and, in time, their capacity to lead popular constituencies. (Pp. 179-180).

Another way of putting this would be to say that those who sought to change the system were "co-opted."

Two programs in particular were, to Katznelson, representative of the failure of the urban programs to involve all citizens in any substantive way. One was the Neighborhood City Hall concept, intended to address community concerns on a wide range of issues and to marshall municipal resources to address them. Washington Heights-Inwood had its own such Neighborhood City Hall. However, these forums focused only on such comparatively non-controversial (although hardly, as Katznelson implies, trivial) issues as litter baskets, parks permits for special events, potholes and bus routes. More fundamental "hot" issues, such as the police, the courts, the schools and housing, were ignored. Another program Katznelson observed, the Urban Action Task Force, was crafted specifically to introduce immediate measures in order to head off possible civil disturbances; this was done by providing a forum for community residents to air

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their grievances and for these to reach City Hall (i.e., the one downtown). But in Katznelson's analysis this program, like the Neighborhood City Halls, provided only a flimsy and ephemeral solution:

> The UTAF also conducted a very long list of summer activities, including bus trips, the distribution of free tickets to New York Yankees baseball games, visits to the New York Jets football training camp, a jazzmobile, a program of movies in the street, the registration for senior-citizen half-fare bus tickets, and the management of a small temporary swimming pool. Explicitly aimed at keeping angry people busy to prevent disorders, such programs were very different in their carnival character from alternatives that were not provided: legal services, preventive medicine campaigns, information about welfare, tenant and Social Security rights, and tenant and block organizing. (P. 141).

The Great Society and the Lindsay programs ended by the early 1970s. President Johnson's Republican successor, Richard M. Nixon, elected in 1968, had no urban agenda comparable to the scope of the Great Society, and so the programs drifted to halt. A federal moratorium on housing subsidies was declared in 1972; The ambitious Model Cities effort was defunct by 1974 (Fainstein & Fainstein, 1988). In 1973 the dynamic but ultimately ineffectual Mayor Lindsay was voted out of office and the Mayoralty was won by Abraham D. Beame, an obscure fiscal manager and Democratic Party functionary. Both the nation

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and the city were now facing economic decline and possible ruin, a fact which government -- Federal and municipal -- decided would take precedence over the moral dimension of governance and citizenship. In the wake of the tempest of 1960s the urban condition was still one of decay, only that decay was now going unaddressed.

Footnotes to Section 6.2

[1] Although the press and most works in history and social science describe the show of violence by urban blacks in the 1960s as "riots," there is a compelling case for calling them instead "rebellions;" this has to do with the fact that blacks were not acting blindly but had specific concepts of social reforms in mind (see Zinn, 1980).

[2] Mass rebellion in the inner cities during this decade occurred among blacks (who, generally, were provoked by the police; see Hersey, 1968; Ryan, 1971) and not Hispanics. Although Hispanics shared with blacks many of the indignities and oppressions attendant in minority status, the extent of Hispanic rebellion was negligible compared to that of blacks (non-Hispanic whites, it should be noted, took part in the violence to a significant degree as well; Ryan, 1971).

[3] It should be pointed out that the rink was placed so as to be near the one overpass built over the tracks in the 1930s, while underpasses led pedestrians under the Henry Hudson Parkway; the rink could of course also be reached from the southern end of Dyckman Street. But this by no means dismisses the strong likelihood that children on occasion would rather cut across tracks than climb an overpass.

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6.3 Neighborhood Organizing and Children's Environments

The failure of the Great Society to foster sustained and effective community participation in neighborhood issues did not mean that such participation did not happen; it meant merely that it did not always happen through the channels established by the federal government and urged upon local administrations. Beginning in the 1960s urban residents organized themselves to press for changes in their community environments. In New York City, according to Fainstein & Fainstein (1988), "The tide of neighborhood organizing had swept the city in the 1960s and 70s and left behind an estimated 15,000 block associations, three dozen community development corporations...and over 1,000 housing groups" (p. 186).

Community organizing in Inwood did not have any single circle of leaders or political agenda. It was instead diffuse, as one would expect from what was by then a diverse community. Yet not all voices in the community were heard. Hispanics, for example, for reasons discussed earlier, did not project an organized presence in Inwood during this time. Consequently, the part of Inwood where they were concentrated -- the central valley area -- did not enjoy the benefits such organization was to win in the mostly English-speaking areas such as the Park Terrace

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area or the Dyckman Houses.

Community organizing, of course, did not arrive in Inwood in the 1960s out of nowhere; indeed, the movement had some notable precedents there, as we have seen. The pedestrian path along the Harlem River Speedway owed itself to a coalition of voluntary associations throughout the city; the establishment of Inwood Hill Park in 1917 and its enlargement in 1925 were a result of both local and citywide public pressure; the doubling of the area of Isham Park in the 1920s came about only after local residents had rallied against plans for developing half of the old estate as apartment houses; in the 1930s citizens vigorously opposed (albeit unsuccessfully) Robert Moses's grand designs for the Henry Hudson Parkway and Inwood Hill Park; in 1944, following incidents of anti-Semitic attacks, Inwood and Washington Heights rallied in support of programs for youths, as they did once again in 1957 following the murder of Michael Farmer.

Community organizing in the 1960s was to have much in common with those episodes. In the era of the Great Society, as before, Inwoodians made many attempts to initiate, improve or control local play and recreation facilities, and although they did not succeed in perfecting this environment, they did change it

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substantially. The chief difference between such local efforts in the 1960s and those of earlier generations was that the newer efforts were not only far more common but more enduring. Past citizens' efforts had targeted specific and finite issues that, it was felt, could be addressed and settled: creating or extending a park, rerouting a highway, supervising youths. Community organizing in the 1960s was not to be so ad hoc. It was instead a sustained movement, composed of many different groups pursuing their own causes, a movement that required continuous effort and shifting strategies and which brought, with its rewards, innumerable frustrations.

Recreation opportunities for children and youths was something high on community activists' lists of issues. Between 1965 and 1973 there were, aside from the drug prevention centers mentioned earlier, at least two efforts at establishing new youth centers in Inwood -- both of them unsuccessful. Yet these are worthy of note for what light they shed on Inwood's priorities.

In 1965 several activists went to considerable lengths to found an ambitious youth center on Sherman Avenue near Dyckman Street, in the heart of Inwood's treeless central valley ("Youth Center", 1965). It was to serve 1,000 youths and house the activities of the Boy Scouts, Girl

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Scouts and Little League, as well as teen and adult programs. The organizers sought funds from foundations and from the federal government, which they appeared on the verge of getting (a solicitation drive toward 25,000 households, however, had gotten only 1,000 responses). However, disagreements among the organizers, which they took to Washington to be settled, killed the prospects for funding, and by October the project was dead. The local newspaper editorialized that this bungled opportunity was especially unfortunate since

> During the past summer, there were serious incidents involving youngsters of different ethnic backgrounds and in several instances youth have been hospitalized. The Youth Center program was geared to combat this situation -- via educational processes and group work methods. ("The Inwood Youth," 1965, p. 8).

In 1971 a different group sought to establish -- again, on Sherman Avenue -- a center for such services as childcare, afterschool homework assistance and evening activities for teenagers and adults; but this effort became mired in City regulations and ran into difficulty securing funds ("Seek Youth," 1971).

Although the central valley area of Inwood did not succeed in securing a permanent youth club or youth center directly in its midst, some transitory events and play programs did visit from time to time under City sponsorship in conjunction with local civic groups.

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(These probably were a feature of what Katznelson (1981) referred to as "carnival" events designed to avert civil disturbances). One such program was the City's Neighborhood Action Program, which sent into Inwood "mobile recreation units" -- equipped variously as "puppetmobiles," "skatemobiles," "cinemamobiles" and "sportsmobiles" ("Traveling," 1973, p. 7). Also, the Parks Department and Chamber of Commerce had Dyckman Street closed to traffic on a summer Sunday for a rock concert ("Child In Time," 1973). There were doubtless other such events. In addition, a true carnival -- and an extremely popular one -- was held yearly on St. Jude's Church's grounds -- a fundraising effort which lasted weeks and included a ferris wheel, food and raffles of automobiles and color television sets ("St. Jude's: Carnival," 1972; "St. Jude's Bazaar," 1973). As enjoyed and as necessary as these events were, however, they cannot be counted strictly as having arisen directly from local citizens attempting to address community needs.

A more successful citizens' effort to form some lasting sort of youth club, without the need for grants or overhead, got underway in 1971 in the northwestern corner of the neighborhood. A local man had approached a group of children or youths (their ages were not given) who were hanging out near Park Terrace West, and suggested that

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they meet with the Inwood Civic Council (a group mentioned earlier in the context of events bringing together English-speakers and Spanish-speakers) ("Park Terrace Youth," 1971). The "Kids," described by the local newspaper as "hippies" and "dropouts" soon held, under the Civic Council's sponsorship, their first "Happening," presumably in Isham Park (p. 3). This group of young people then formed what they called the "Park Terrace West Youth" and combined elements of both club and carnival, undertaking that summer several projects and events. In May, for instance, they held an Earth Week celebration, during which 40 youths and ten parents, wielding tools lent by a group called Volunteers for the Parks, cleaned the "Old City Steps" leading from Park Terrace East to Broadway, at both the head and foot of which they planted flowers under the advice of the Wave Hill Center for Environmental Studies, an environmental education park in a wooded area of the west Bronx overlooking the Hudson ("Earth Week," 1971). In June there was a jazz concert in Isham Park sponsored by Park Terrace Youth, in cooperation with the Inwood Civic Council, with additional help from the Mayor's Urban Action Task Force and the Youth Services Agency's office of Special Services (Storey, 1971); this was one of 200 concerts given around the city that summer. (The children

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who in 1960 were in a fifth year class in PS 152 and wrote The Dyckman valley (who reported that the community wanted concerts in the park) would have been about twenty-one in 1971; those who were still around had finally gotten their concert, perhaps the first outdoor concert in Inwood since the 1920s). All of these developments suggest that organized recreation could and did occur, at least during the warm months, fairly spontaneously and with a minimum of overhead and administrative expenses, in the open air of a public park.

There are some interesting contrasts between the efforts centering around Sherman Avenue and those around Isham Park. On Sherman Avenue, in an environment of buildings and streets with no open space, the goal was to find a space that fit within that setting, i.e., one with street frontage and owned by a private landlord. This was a job requiring capital, organization, self-promotion and some luck in order to locate, renovate and maintain the structure and to run its programs. A few blocks west, however, children and youths could gather semi-formally in an immediately-accessible (although Parks Department-governed) public open space for warm-weather activities that they themselves played a major part in bringing about. The funding requirements for such events, moreover, were scant and the events could be one-shot

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rather than requiring continuous effort, and the wealthier and better-educated families there almost certainly had the knowledge and the means to find sponsorship for such events, which could thus be undertaken light-heartedly. The Sherman Avenue efforts, by contrast, were deprived of immediate public space and so were forced into an all-or-nothing situation. Without suitable space they came to nothing. Once again, access to the western parks was crucial to children's access to outdoor play.

A third component of community initiative in play and recreation emerged at the Dyckman Houses. In this relatively modern, planned and highly-organized environment, communal space was readily at hand. Further, a single City agency -- the New York City Housing Authority -- served as landlord to about 1,500 families, so that citizen organizing amounted to tenant organizing and any policy changes would immediately affect the lives of thousands and could be challenged collectively. A 1962 "profile" of the Houses published in a local newspaper ("A Profile," 1962) presented the following facts on tenant participation: Tenants had organized the Dyckman Tenants' Council in 1961 and were publishing a newsletter; tenant-management communication was excellent; the community center was thriving; care of landscaping was "meticulous" and "outdoor showers for the kiddies" were

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provided in summer (p. 6).

An early issue of the tenant newsletter, Dyckman News, reveals that tenants had held a meeting with the Captain of the 34th police precinct on traffic safety at the corner of Dyckman Street and Nagle Avenue ("That tight little island," 1962). In addition, an editorial expressed fear that the crime plaguing other housing projects could reach the Dyckman Houses, and contained a plea to fellow tenants to press the Housing Authority for changes in police protection ("Editor's Corner," 1962).

There was also a report of a debate over whether a lawn area should be paved over for a playground; on this matter one tenant (Tyrell, 1962) opposed the idea vigorously:

> Observe the tremendous efforts being made to keep lawn and trees in shape. the labor, the seeding, clipping, trimming, clipping, cutting and spraying...I know from experience how easy it is to convert a green lawn into a concrete dustbowl...(P. 8).

Other tenants agreed:

> It was argued that such construction would mar the beautiful landscaping of the refreshingly green lawns of the Dyckman Houses. The increased noise of children playing ball and other games would make living more difficult for tenants...in addition to the possible hazards of a broken window or two. (P. 8).

The solution proffered was to convert into a playground the strip of vacant, level land, between Dyckman Street

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and the cliffs of Highbridge Park, directly across Dyckman Street from the housing project, to include a sitting area near Nagle Avenue and a ballfield at the wider part near the Harlem River Driveway. A fence would run the entire length of the open edge (Elkin, 1962). This suggestion was carried out, in modified form, a few years later when the facility was built (Whitehurst-Carrington, 1991). It did not occupy the entire block, however, but was confined to the segment near Nagle Avenue, and consisted of a small playground and adjacent sitting area. Oddly, the fact that this new facility was across busy Dyckman Street from the Dyckman Houses had not hindered it's realization, despite concerns over traffic safety for children; even the playground, built years earlier, lying just north of the Dyckman Houses was contiguous with the project and not separated from it by a wide, two-way street.

By the early 1970s life in the Dyckman Houses had deteriorated in many ways. A local news item (Glass, 1971) reported that "Purse snatchings, holdups at knifepoint, children being followed and drug abuse" were significant problems (p. 1). However, tenants formed a patrol, which had an immediate impact on some of these problems. Still, other problems persisted:

> ...muggers, loiterers and drug addicts have disappeared from view...However, things are still thrown from windows, boys still urinate in the elevators and children sometimes use the halls as an

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> extension of the playground (Glass, 1971, p. 3).

Interestingly, in the above passage, children's unregulated play is lumped together with acts of vandalism; the Housing Authority's policy of suppressing spontaneous play was not questioned by that reporter, making it seem possible that it was not questioned by the Dyckman Houses' tenants themselves.

Despite these complaints the project's Dyckman Community Center, which organized activities for children, continued to operate and even to expand: In 1971 the tenants sought to enlarge its scope but, gaining no additional funds from the Housing Authority, had to apply for State funding. They were successful and the center was able to establish a summer day camp program (Whitehurst-Carrington, 1991). The newsletter continued to be published and "basketball clinics," led by professional players, were held at the courts north of the Houses ("Nate Archibald," 1973). Furthermore, maintenance workers were no longer the only ones carrying shovels and rakes through the Dyckman Houses grounds, for by 1975 the tenants were doing their own gardening; that year their butterfly-shaped planting won the Housing Authority's 13th annual community gardening contest ("Dyckman Houses," 1975). It seems that, despite the crime and vandalism over which they had only limited control, the Dyckman

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Houses's tenants helped prevent their housing project from becoming an a barren and alienating place.

As Inwoodians, with varying degrees of success and failure, acted to establish new programs and facilities for children and youths, local citizen efforts with a different focus were in progress. These efforts concentrated on the larger parks on Inwood's west side, with special attention to Inwood Hill Park. This movement's emphasis, especially during the 1970s, was not always on increased programs or facilities; rather, it was more of a preservation and restoration movement that sought not just funds for modest improvements or routine maintenance but something more ideological -- the freedom of Inwoodians themselves to make modifications and decide what these parks stood for.

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By 1965 the deterioration of Inwood's large parks on its west side had begun to attract publicity. That year the 34th precinct began receiving complaints of "drunks," "vagrants" and other "undesirables" in many of upper Manhattan's parks ("To Rid," 1965). Among the complaints were those of "drunkards who acted offensively in the presence of women and children," "broken bits of whiskey bottles scattered in play areas" and of "panhandlers who made vigorous appeals for handouts..." (p. 4). Two years later a letter to the editor of The New York Times (Shchreiber, 1966) complained of vandalism committed by youths at night: "Wooden benches are systematically destroyed. Even their concrete footings are broken. Lightposts, drinking fountains, iron and wood railings, toilet and shower facilities are ruthlessly destroyed" (p. 42).

In 1967 a group of Inwood mothers who lived on and around Seaman Avenue, "disgusted with the facilities of the Inwood Hill Park" according to a local news item, formed the Inwood Parents Association ("Parents Urge," 1967). Their first order of business was to prod the Parks Department to improve the playground along Seaman Avenue between Isham and 207th Streets, specifically in terms of supervision and supplies:

> They want a building constructed in the park for indoor recreation. Said Association President Norah Richley of 610

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> West 204th St., pointing to a group of 10 year olds, "if we don't catch them now and get them headed in the right direction, we can forget them when they are 15 or 16 because then it is too late. By that time the park will be just a place to hold beer parties.["]
>
> The parents want a full-time park supervisor and a recreational staff to distribute what little play equipment the park has. There is one knock hockey game for several hundred children. A complaint of the parents is that the supplies are distributed from the storage building which is usually closed. The building also serves as a dressing room for the maintenance men (p. 2).

In 1968 and 1969, the Inwood Parents Association, sometimes working with the Inwood Civic Council, got the Parks Department to institute several changes in Inwood Hill Park: in their battle against alcohol consumption, they got the Department to ban drinking in Inwood Hill and Isham Parks, had an 11PM curfew imposed and campaigned to enforce the drinking age requirement among local businesses (whom they also urged to sell all beverages in cans instead of glass bottles). When the Parks Department informed the groups that the new park rules could not take effect until signs were ready to be posted -- which was likely to take several weeks -- the parents painted and posted their own signs. They also succeeded in having a sprinkler installed in the playground near 207th Street (previously only the Fort Tryon Playground had had that feature), instituted a twice-weekly summer "tennis clinic"

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for children, had benches repaired and secured $25,000 toward the construction of indoor community space in Inwood Hill Park ("Editorial," 1968; Malcolm, 1969).

By midsummer, 1969, the success of citizen organizing for Inwood Hill and Isham Parks had attracted the attention of The New York Times (Malcolm, 1969). At that time the Inwood Civic Council had 125 members involved in virtually every aspect of Inwood Hill Park's planning upkeep. In addition to pressing the Parks Department for more frequent garbage pickups, members hired ten youths to make repairs and held a cleanup day that rid the park of a ton of garbage and over 3,000 discarded cans. Some members began routinely carrying shopping bags to the park to pick up trash they would find. Other local groups got the Parks Department to put a fence around children's swing areas and to install rubber matting there.

For its part the Parks Department adapted to the new climate of public participation. In 1966 it had established a Community Relations Division and in 1969 it was in the process of appointing a "special liaison officer to meet with community groups who have specific ideas..." (Malcolm, 1969, p. 27). One Department official commented that, because of the well-organized Inwood community, "we don't even install a minipool these days without checking the community first" (p. 27).

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Beginning in 1971 the Inwood Civic Council and the Inwood Parents Association had to share the stage with a new group, The Friends of Inwood Hill Park, which, as part of a a new group called Inwood Community Action, took public concern and involvement into new directions. Its "Statement of Aims" (Wolf, 1971) complained of litter and the destruction of benches and water fountains, and acknowledged the problems faced by teenagers with few legitimate places to gather. But the Friends proposed going beyond the by-then familiar route of pressuring Parks Department bureaucrats to build an indoor youth center or to crack down on drinking, and instead favored forming a "youth program...to reach those kids who are doing damage to the park" (p. 2). Along these lines, the Friends proposed "Publicity and education" programs "to acquaint the public with [the park's] ecological, geological and historical features" (p. 2); it would do this by involving local schools, churches and synagogues in its efforts. The group also reached beyond the customary realm of past parks movements by piercing boundaries of city parks, seeking, for example, to obtain Columbia University's consent for supervised use of its track and other facilities "by the people of Inwood" (p. 2).

One of the first actions of the Friends of Inwood Hill

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Park was to survey that park's condition. Its findings: benches were broken and thrown into the river; pavement condition was poor; only two of the six water fountains worked; trash was more abundant than it probably had been since before Robert Moses scoured the place clean.

> People are not only dropping litter casually in the whole park; they are actually bringing garbage from their home and using the park as a dump...[The surveyors found] several baby carriages, a washing machine, chairs, tables, bicycles, tricycles, shopping carts, and in one of the Indian caves, a mattress (p. 2).

The Friends of Inwood Hill Park also noted damage to the forest ecosystem: automobile oil, which employees of the Henry Hudson Bridge were discarding at the toll complex parking lot, was seeping into the soil, as was oily runoff from the bridge itself. In addition, the surveyors found extensive soil erosion, exposed roots and clogged drainage conduits. It was these problems -- more than broken benches or litter -- that the Friends said needed addressing.

The Friends' drawing attention to the ecological significance of Inwood Hill Park wrought what turned out to be a lasting change in how the public used and perceived the place. The Earth Week celebrated by the Park Terrace West Youth, mentioned previously, with its clean-up and planting, and with its collaboration with the conservation center at Wave Hill, had been an outgrowth of

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Earth Day in 1970, an event celebrated nationwide. Earth Day has been widely credited as the start of a resurgence in the American environmentalist movement and paid special attention to what citizens could accomplish in their own communities. In the wake of Earth Day -- and in the absence of a solution to the problem of the neglect or vandalism of Inwood Hill Park's now thirty-year-old play facilities -- more and more hope was invested in the timelessness of Inwood Hill's natural environment. Benches and drinking fountains, it was now thought, could be perfunctorily repaired and then summarily broken, then repaired and broken anew in an endless, futile cycle; but the regeneration of a forest or meadow was an act of nurturing life itself, wherein human conduct and natural processes work in concert. Not since the days of the "Indian Life Reservation" was the ethos of respect for the land celebrated so vigorously at that park. (The "Indians," incidentally, continued their annual visits; Fig. 48).

With this new direction new concerns and priorities arose, a state of affairs that was reflected in a quick succession of events: proposed construction of additional active recreational facilities, to be located on "The Island" -- as it had come to be called -- that housed Robert Moses' (apparently never-used) yacht basin

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Fig. 48. "Indian" festival, Inwood Hill Park, 1960s. Although the "reservation" was banished by Robert Moses in the 1930s, this event persisted for generations. [Source: Informant].

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shed, were called into question as potentially harmful to the migrating waterfowl that rested in the silted basin ("A Moment," 1971). (Later when a regulation Little League Baseball diamond was built there, "furious" nature-lovers demanded that the unused depression-era parking lot be sodded over, which it eventually was; Birch, 1973). Parks Commissioner August Heckscher, strongly impressed with the capacity of the would-be yacht basin to attract wildlife (and admitting to feeling guilty for having recently authorized the installation of lighting there [see Heckscher, 1974]), had Inwood Hill Park declared a wildlife refuge (Wolf, 1971). When a pair of wild swans visited the park area and were splattered by vandals' paint and injured by a fishhook, the police, ASPCA wardens and Baker Field staff rushed to their rescue (Wolf, 1971). A member of the federal Urban Corps, a college student enrolled in that program, canvassed Inwood, Washington Heights and part of the Bronx by bicycle to assess the condition of its woodlands, as part of an effort which flowered into a reforestation "master plan" for those areas and which involved the collaboration of the City's Neighborhood Action Program, the Community Board, and the Center for urban and Environmental Studies at Brooklyn Polytechnic Institute ("Neighborhood Action," 1971). The idea of Inwood Hill Park as a natural

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educational resource became so entrenched that by 1975 it had its own Park Warden, who wore a "Smokey-the-Bear" hat and performed such community services as planting Norway Spruce seedlings on Conservation Day ("Greening," 1975).

All these developments amounted to a remarkable change in mood: the woods of Inwood Hill Park, reduced by Robert Moses to mere scenery to be glimpsed from the window of a speeding passenger car had since World War II been neglected and damaged; with the new spirit of community organizing, the place was again a magnet for the people of Inwood and elsewhere to become involved -- in much the same way that, four decades earlier, Reginald Pelham Bolton had led cleanups and archaeological excavations there. Times had changed, to be sure: In 1972 the Community Board -- the conservative protector of Upper Manhattan tradition (see Katznelson, 1981) -- "In one of its more striking recommendations...urged more vigorous public use of the parks through such activities as camping 'courtships' and 'lovemaking'" (Blumenthal, 1972).

Yet all did not go smoothly all the time, as was shown by one dispute that lasted years. This began when the nature-minded members of the Friends of Inwood Hill Park had a sustained stand-off with the more facilities-oriented Inwood Parents' Association. In 1971 the Parents Association petitioned the Parks Department

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for a rink for roller hockey -- a game of growing popularity -- somewhere in the park. The Parks Department was rumored to have been considering the island area for this. News of this prompted vehement opposition from the more ecologically-minded Friends of Inwood Hill Park (Wolf, 1971). The rancorous standoff dragged on; in the meantime the 130 members of the Inwood Roller Hockey Association,

> philosophical after long years of reverses and defeat, resigned themselves to illicit street games, cul-de-sacs full of broken bottles and puck-swallowing gutters, and the part-time use of tennis courts at Isham Street and Seaman Avenue. (Birch, 1973, p. 9).

However, even the tennis players soon objected to the boys' use of the court (Kushner, 1973), which was just as well since the tennis net posts posed hazards to the skating children ("Hockey Buffs," 1973). Still, the tennis courts were more desirable to the Hockey Association than were the streets, and so the battle lines shifted; it was now between the hockey players and the tennis players. The hockey players attempted without success to find alternative space. When for instance their Association tried to get the Police Athletics League to close Arden Street -- a short, elbowed, block-long street -- to traffic at certain times, the PAL said that that could not be done ("Hockey Buffs," 1973). When the

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hockey players asked the Board of Education for permission to use the schoolyard of PS 152 -- offering to raise its own money for nets and floodlights -- the Board, citing matters of liability, refused.

Late in June, 1973 -- just days after schools let out for the summer -- the Community Board voted to approve an alternate location for the rink (emotions ran so high that some present shed tears; Birch, 1973). The site chosen was a patch of the flat depression-era landfill lying between the freight railroad tracks and the Hudson River. Yet even this did not please everyone: an adult member of the Inwood Roller Hockey Association (Lang, 1974) wrote to the local newspaper that "a roller hockey rink at this site is useless...this site by the Hudson is dangerous and out of reach of the kids" (p. 6). Meanwhile, the secretary of the Hockey Association told a reporter that the fence along the freight line was down and thus players could wander onto the tracks. The Central Railroad, for its part, having declared bankruptcy in 1971 (although it still ran trains over the tracks) flatly refused the hockey association's request that it repair the fence, and defied it to sue. The secretary called the compromise location one that served "only to placate a bunch of tennis players" (Birch, 1973, p. 9) [1]. That the roller-hockey episode generated such enormous amount of

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community tension shows how hard it was for children and parents to organize games outside established recreation programs, and shows how dismayingly legalistic and bureaucracizing the procurement of recreational space had become.

Yet confrontations over play occurred far less often among residents than they did between residents and the City. Truck and automobile access to the island area of Inwood Hill Park was the subject of one such battle. In late spring of 1971, according to a local news item, "18 irate mothers and their crawling, climbing kids invaded the 34th Police Precinct headquarters demanding action about the cars" on this island (Noble, 1971, p. 1); "Afternoons, this tranquil island is a haven for carefree children but this safety is constantly jeopardized by the reckless invasion of bewildered drivers looking for the West Side Highway and belligerent workmen who speed around..." (p. 1). The police promised the mothers and their children that a temporary barricade and flashing light and, eventually, a curb would be installed. When summer was nearly over, two "barriers" (saw horses, presumably) were placed across the roadway in what was apparently a publicity event ("Mothers Win," 1971). However,

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> When the hoopla subsided and the police took back the barriers for other "official functions," replacing them with what was [sic] described as "two mangy, rotten boards" some mothers lifted stands from another precinct. This midnight commando caper sealed off the road and ensured their children's safety once again. (P. 5).

Similarly, when the city announced the digging of a large trench for sewer construction, which was to run through the park, local parents held meetings with the city agency responsible for the project, in which they aired their concerns over the reckless tendencies of truck drivers who were soon to be swarming the park. From this confrontation, the parents obtained certain assurances, such as that only construction supervisors would be allowed to park their personal cars in the park. The parents also sought to turn this disruption into an opportunity for environmental education and children's participation, stressing their children's right to learn from the act of construction itself:

> In a further attempt to mollify the community, "the [City] will ask the contractor to provide such incidentals as peep-holes in the fence and samples of rocks, lights on the basketball court, and permission for school children to decorate the fences. (P. 4).

In the community organizing of the 1960s and early 1970s even Fort Tryon Park and the Cloisters -- once impeccable, almost elite presences in Inwood -- were drawn

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in. As early as 1968 a social and environmental study (Abeles & Weinberg) had suggested:

> ...public automobile access should be eliminated...Now, on pleasant week-ends, the beautiful atmosphere of Fort Tryon Park is engulfed by the sheer volume of cars moving and cars parked. (P. 98).

The idea of restricting cars got off to a slow start, however, and it was not until late June, 1972, that a rule was put into force banning cars on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Sundays in order to permit bicycling ("Fort Tryon," 1972); autumn traffic closing times were set at Sunday mornings only ("For Bicycles," 1972). In 1975, for the first time, a live classical concert, featuring the American Symphony Orchestra, was held in Ft. Tryon Park ("Performance,", 1975.)

By far the most conspicuous instance of citizens affecting Fort Tryon Park and the Cloisters was the annual, one-day Medieval Festival there, a cultural event calling attention to Medieval life and lore. The Fourth Annual Medieval Festival in August, 1974, featured, among other attractions, jousters on horseback, "The Markland Medieval Mercenary Militia," a court jester, "Russel the clown," a "dry herb booth," "Dr. Quackenbush and his Traveling Medicine Show," a Spanish dancer, hand-made puppets, the Pascack Chamber Orchestra Society and a photographer "who will photograph visitors in authentic

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armor and chain mail" ("Hear Ye!," 1974).

The Medieval Festival's organizers, seeking to make the event more than a one-day experience, instituted an "Outreach" program, run by an organization, Community Environments, Inc., which obtained state, federal and private funding. The "Outreach" component was intended to involve local children in workshops where, under the leadership of experienced craftspersons, they prepared many of the festival's props, such as banners, costumes, puppets and murals. Funding from the local Community School District enabled the establishment of a 20-week afterschool program ("The Cloisters," 1974).

Another important barrier to fall before the tide of community organizing was the one surrounding Baker Field, Columbia University's private sports center, which had come to be seen as an increasingly stodgy, alien and unwelcoming facility -- a place from which children were chased away and where anyone unconnected with the University was not welcome. Symbolic of this image was Michael Hecht's recollection (see previous chapter) of the way local residents' cars were ordered off nearby street during games so that Columbia could have parking for its guests. But the citizens' movement sweeping Inwood Hill Park had begun to change matters by the early 1970s (perhaps the Baker Field staff's assistance in rescuing

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the injured swans in Inwood Hill Park, mentioned earlier, had broken the ice). A 1971 local news item, accompanied by a photograph of Baker Field's ornate iron gate (closed), capped with a cast-metal image of the crown and flanked by two statutes of snarling lions, and with the caption "OPEN, LION, OPEN!" tells of a hopeful meeting between the Friends of Inwood Hill Park and a Columbia official (Flood, 1971). The Friends' proposals included use of the field house for Inwood Community Action meetings; supervised use of tennis courts, track and field facilities and soccer and football fields by local youths; reduced admission for Inwoodians to games and the formation of a "neighborhood grievance channel" (p. 1). A Columbia official responded that the University would discuss proposals that (1) did not ask Columbia for money; (2) ensured the protection of University property and (3) would not hinder Columbia's own access to its facilities. Clearly, some of the Friends' proposals (such as reduced admission for Inwoodians) ran counter to Columbia's stipulations and it is doubtful that they were carried out. However, things did change in time: In late 1972, for example, Columbia announced that it would no longer ban parking on local streets in anticipation of games (Vincenzi, 1971). By 1973 the Harlem-Inwood Junior Tennis Development Program had access to Baker Field's indoor

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"air dome" courts ("Columbia," 1973, p. 11). Community pressure had reached a compromise with Ivy-League exclusivity.

The week, early in 1973, in which Lyndon Baines Johnson died, the Heights-Inwood newspaper published an editorial that was less an obituary for Johnson than a sort of tentative obituary for the Great Society itself ("Opinions," 1973). After faulting the former President (Johnson had been out of office for four years) for escalating the Vietnam War, but praising him for his support of civil rights, the editorial concluded on a note both resentful and hopeful:

> When we look around us, from the vantage point of North Manhattan, "The Great Society" is still a dream. Crime, racism, pollution, poor housing -- these problems are as real as they were during the Johnson Administration. If peace becomes a reality, this country can get back on track in more deliberate pursuit of the Johnson Dream.

Inwood emerged from the Great Society era a poorer, dirtier and angrier place than it had been in 1960, and by the mid-1970s there was ample reason to equate it with the state American civilization itself -- as a grand disappointment, or a betrayal. Katznelson (1981) was correct: The people of Upper Manhattan were indeed thwarted from remaking their community from the ground up

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-- if indeed that was ever their goal. But even so, Inwoodians had taken a large measure of control over how their environment looked and how it worked, a participatory movement that for several decades had been missing from their community life.

Footnotes to Section 6.3

[1] It should be pointed out that the rink was placed so as to be near one of the overpasses built over the tracks in the 1930s, while underpasses led pedestrians under the Henry Hudson Parkway; the rink could of course also be reached from the southern end of Dyckman Street. But this by no means dismisses the strong likelihood that children would on occasion rather cut across the tracks as the quickest way there.

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6.4. New Directions in Traditional Organized Play

During the 1960s and early 1970s, as demographic and social change were adding new opportunities and obstacles to children's play, Inwood's more traditional organized play and recreation activities -- those that had been present in Inwood a decade or more -- continued to operate. Some of these changed with the times -- or, rather, they were forced to do so.

One thing affecting children that had not changed substantially since the 1950s was the syndrome by which the problem of "juvenile delinquency" was inadequately addressed: recreational programs and facilities were proposed, but few came to fruition. There continued to be sporadic violence among juveniles throughout the community; for example fights erupted between black and white youths in and near the Dyckman Houses ("Inwood Racial Tension," 1966) and, in at least one instance, youths harassed children on their way from the Nagle Avenue YM-YWCA ("Children Menaced," 1967). Although reports of further specific incidents are hard to come by, the City's Youth Board (City of New York, 1967) did in fact depict Inwood as on the verge of serious trouble:

> Many of the ghetto youth problems have spilled over to new neighborhoods. Areas such as Bushwick and Inwood are suffering change and decay, and as they decline youth problems increase. These communities have few social agencies or community centers, and the established

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> institutions such as schools and churches have not developed mechanisms for meeting these new problems (p. 11).

In Inwood, the City instituted few if any programs, while, as the previous chapter section discussed, citizens' efforts to form their own youth programs were concentrated in the Dyckman Houses and in Inwood's western parks, and so did not have a stabilizing presence in the central valley area. This was so despite repeated complaints against children and youths creating mischief lodged by Inwood merchants and despite repeated promises by the city to provide more recreation programs (Cusick, 1975; Mannheim, 1975).

Significantly, the rise in complaints against Inwood youths coincided with an administrative reorganization within the Police Department that in 1972 had resulted in the elimination of "Youth Patrols" (New York City Police Department, 1975). At the very same time, the Juvenile Report Process -- the product of the middle-1950s that was designed to have a chilling effect on children and youths who might commit any infraction -- was weakened substantially: a 1970 lawsuit (Cuevas vs. Leary), brought against the Police Department by parents of children and youths on whom Juvenile Reports had been compiled, was decided in the parents' favor (New York City Police Department, 1975). The ruling had found that the old

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report system violated "Constitutional rights to due process and privacy" (p. 6). It is not surprising then, given the absence of arbitrary and heavy-handed legal methods of Juvenile Reports, as well as of any effective alternate strategy for addressing the issue, that youth offenses should have increased beginning then.

The Catholic Youth Organization and Little League Baseball, for their parts, continued their sports-oriented missions, and local Catholic organizations played a large role. But where the CYO remained much as it had been during the 1950s -- a vehicle for Catholic interschool competitions -- Little League by 1975 had grown impressively: in 1964, for instance, the organization gained considerably in national and international prestige when it was awarded a federal charter, the only sports organization to hold one. According to Fine (1987),

> This charter makes all revenue to the Little League tax-exempt, since the organization is a quasi-governmental agency. The charter also requires that Little League must shape its mission to the needs of the United States Government (particularly in dealing with foreign leagues), hardly a serious constraint for this moralistic and patriotic organization, and an annual financial and philosophical report must be filed with the Judiciary Committee of the House of Representatives.(Pp. 6-7).

Since 1950, the year it reached Inwood, Little League

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had enjoyed great popularity, as indicated by the parades marking the opening of the season, which were held every May since 1955 (Pitkowski, 1991). Although such events as a Little League parade are reminiscent of small-town social life, by the early 1970s Inwood Little League had begun to lose a bit of that aura; Sam Pitkowski (1991), active in Inwood Little League since the mid-1960s, recalls:

> Williamsport [the seat of Little League Baseball's administration] sees Little League as a small-town thing. But it's not really that way in Inwood anymore. Kids used to shake cans on street corners to raise money, but sometime in the late sixties or early seventies they had to stop that. Crime.

Another, more publicized blow to the old-fashioned image that Little League had cultivated came in 1974, when girls demanded full participation. Although Little League girls' softball teams had been in place for some time, girls were barred from the more popular hardball play. These girls therefore decided to play a different kind of hardball: organized protest. During the registration for the 1974 season of the Washington Heights Little League, ten or eleven girls "staged a low-key yet serious demonstration" (Pierce, 1974, p. 7) (no protests were reported to have taken place against the Inwood Little League). In this demonstration, the girls reminded the registrars that the rule barring them had been struck down

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as unconstitutional by the New Jersey State Supreme Court. The registrars, "politely, if not without some amusement" turned the girls away nonetheless (p. 7). Later that year, though, the Little League administration changed its policy and began admitting girls to tryouts with the boys (Frommer, 1989). (The Catholic Youth Organization, which offered a much wider variety of types of games than did Little League, continued to organize boys and girls into separate teams. There is no readily-available evidence of protest on that practice).

Scouting had changed as well by the early 1970s; this was primarily as a result of a study by the sociologist Daniel Yankelovich which the Boy Scouts of America's National Executive Board had commissioned. Highly critical of the program, Yankelovich stated that it lacked relevance to the needs of boys (Peterson, 1984). Accordingly, the Scouts administration changed its focus in order to make scouting, according to Peterson's (1984) admiring history of the organization, "flexible enough to meet their needs and desires everywhere -- in the inner city, suburb and rural regions, rich and poor, black and white" (p. 195). The main reform Peterson cites was the establishment of "Operation Reach," which was to carry an anti-drug message to scouts.

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In Inwood, Boy and Girl Scouts continued their traditional activities while adding a few that reflected changes in both American culture and in Inwood's social life. In 1972, for instance, an Inwood troop opened a recycling center ("Scouts Open," 1972). For this, a nearby church had provided a site while the Environmental Action Coalition, a non-profit group concerned with promoting ecologically benign waste disposal, helped the troop remove the recyclable material to the appropriate facilities. The next year the Dyckman Post of the Jewish War Veterans organized a Cub Scout pack ("New Cub Pack," 1973), whose inaugural event was a "Spanish fiesta" (p. 3). The list of the names of the organizers of this event contains well over a dozen names, of which about half appear to be Jewish and half Spanish. Meanwhile, Inwood's parks -- in contrast to the precedent set since the 1950s -- were used for scouting activities, as when in 1976 one Boy Scout troop hiked five miles along the "Revolutionary War Historic Trail" ("Scouts Follow," 1975, p. 7). Yet although scouts were rediscovering Inwood's parks, Inwood's the streets apparently were another matter: when, in 1974, a Girl Scout troop announced that it would hold a bike-a-thon along the ridge above the Harlem River Driveway, a police escort was part of the scheduled procession ("Girl Scouts," 1974).

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Although there were significant changes in Scouting, by no means had things been turned upside down. The Good Shepherd Cub Scout pack continued to pursue religious activities, and in 1975 the Parvuli Dei medal was conferred upon 21 scouts ("Area Cub Scouts," 1975). A Girl Scout bowling league held games at the Inwood Lanes on Academy Street and other Girl Scouts participated in a tennis competition at Baker Field (Protsko, 1974). Finally, "Indians" were a strong attraction for scouts, as of course they had been when Boy Scouts swarmed around Princess Naomi at the opening day ceremonies at Inwood Hill Park in 1926 -- only now the setting was different: In 1974 a Girl Scout troop met "Indians" from several tribes at a festival, which was held not outdoors by a giant tulip tree but at the Museum of the American Indian at 155th Street and Broadway (Protsko, 1974).

Children's programs at the Young Men's - Young Women's Hebrew Association continued to provide as much flexibility and freedom as possible while offering psychological guidance. In 1962 its Junior Department (ages 6-11) listed "friendship groups" arts and crafts, physical education ("low and high organized games"), painting, drams, music, painting and drawing ("Program," 1962). The "Y's" description of its philosophy at that

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time, while somewhat jargonistic, nevertheless shows that it aimed to be more than a recreation center:

> The programing emphasizes peer group relations, the learning of new skills, with a major stress on learning to relate to others as well as adults. The program is structured to achieve social growth and fulfillment as an individual. (P. 6).

According to the YM-YWHA's present executive director (Englisher, 1991) the directorship and its policy remained constant throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. Beginning in the 1960s, many Cuban and Puerto Rican children joined the Jewish, Black, Irish and Greek children that had composed its population in the 1950s.

All of the above evidence would seem to suggest strongly that Inwood's supervised recreation programs had not -- as was hoped for in the mid 1940s through the late 1950s -- become greatly expanded to the exclusion of free play. Yet they did not become obsolete and forsaken. They seem instead to have remained viable alternatives -- supplements to rather than replacements for children's neighborhood experience.

[Note: A time-line of significant events affecting Inwood circa 1960-75 appears as Table 7; a map showing local landmarks relating to children's play during that time appears as Fig. 49].

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Year	Event
1961	President John F. Kennedy announces "New Frontier" social philosophy.
1963	Four high-rise cooperative towers constructed in Inwood.
1964-68	President Lyndon B. Johnsen's Great Society program of social reform introudces large anti-poverty programs with stated intent to foster community participation.
1965	Complaints of "drunks" and vandals in upper Manhattan parks.
1965, 67	Massive rebellions by blacks in the Watts section of Los Angeles, CA and Newark, NJ, respectively.
1967	Inwood Parents Association formed. Focus is on parks and playgrounds.
1969	First Spanish language mass said at the Church of the Good Shepherd.
1970	Census reveals that at least 25 percent of Inwood's residents are either black or Hispanic.
1970s	[Early in the decade], two of Inwood's three movie theaters closed, leaving only the Alpine on Dyckman.
1970	Earth Day celebrated.
1970	Inwood's first drug education and rehabilitation program opened.
1971	Friends of Inwood Hill Park formed. Focus is on community participation and environmental education.
1972	New York City Police Department revises rules relating to accused juvenile delinquents.
1974	Girls allowed to join Little League.
1974	Survey finds 48 percent of Inwood residents want to move out of the community.

Table 7. Chronology of significant events, 1960-1975.

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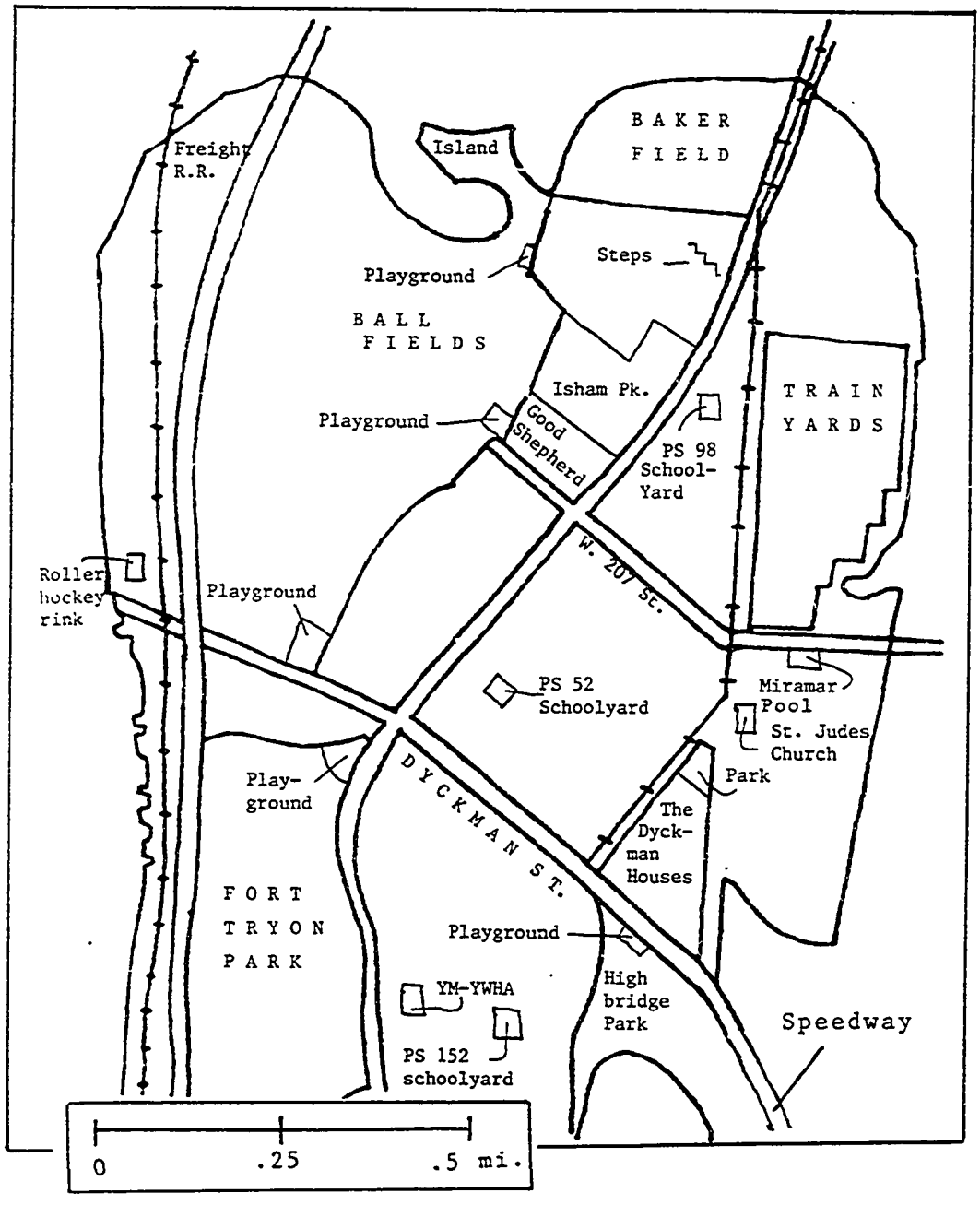


Fig. 49. Map showing landmarks relating to children's play, as existing between 1960 and 1975.

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6.5 The 1975 Data Collection Effort

The reader may recall from the Introductory chapter that this investigation has its roots in a pilot study conducted by a research team, dispatched by the Center for Human Environments, Inc., in which the present author was not part. Much historical data collected then has been reorganized and used in the preceding pages. However, it is only with the 1960-75 period that the results of certain workshop sessions, which were held in 1975, become relevant here [1]. These data provide an invaluable glimpse into the state of Inwood's children's access to their community at that time, and provide, in addition, valuable material for an intriguing interlude before we proceed to the oral historical material.

Working with pupils of PS 98 on West 212th Street, the researchers used mapping exercises to assess their geographic knowledge of Inwood. These consisted of informants being shown an 8 1/2 x 14 photocopy of a black-and-white aerial photograph of Inwood and given marking pens of differing colors with which to annotate them. During such a session, the child was asked a series of questions regarding his or her activities within Inwood: places visited alone; places visited with other children or with older children; places parents prohibited

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the child from visiting; and places visited only with special parental permission.

What I have chosen to present below is not a summary of all possible findings from these exercises but rather an extraction of those that are relevant to this dissertation. I render these into a series of tables. My selectivity vis-a-vis these 1975 findings stems primarily from some basic differences between the original intent of the Inwood research and that of this dissertation [2], differences which have led me to exclude from my tables certain of my predecessors' analytical categories (although these may be referred to in passing). In order that the reader may know as far as possible the spirit in which the data collection was done, however, I will take this opportunity to give an overview of the original intention and an outline of my own application.

First, the work done in 1975 emphasized routes and "wayfinding;" this dissertation, however, is concerned with destinations [3]. Thus, where the research team in 1975 regarded a visit to a candy store immediately prior to a visit to Inwood Hill Park as a stop along a route to a destination, this dissertation would regard both the store and the park as destinations in their own rights, for in these pages the use of a commercial establishment (or, for that matter, of a youth center or schoolyard) is

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of equal interest as a romp in the woods [4].

Second, I chose not to attend closely to references to the category of "range with other/ older children," for although many informants did indeed enlarge their ranges considerably when traveling with a sibling or friend over the age of twelve, I believe that that kind of activity is quite different from the child-initiated and-directed experience that has been the focus of this dissertation. At the same time, informants' use of Inwood in the company of children who, like themselves, were twelve and younger, tended not to affect range to a degree that need concern us here.

Third, references to "Places Parents Do Not Allow You To Go" virtually always consisted of the rivers, the trafficways and the train yards; no more explicit mention here of these is needed; however, when a forbidden place other than these three has been mentioned, I discuss it in the text as an exceptional instance rather than present it in table form.

Finally, I do not quantify data regarding the important distinction between "Free Range" and "Range with [Parental] Permission;" such permission, I found, rarely extended a child's overall range, but rather allowed him or her to visit a specific location within his or her established range. Although this in itself is certainly

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an intriguing phenomenon, the reasons for the necessity of parental permission in these cases is, unfortunately, often not apparent from the data collected. However, cases in which parental permission did actually lead to range extension will be mentioned in the text as they come up.

Discussed below are the results of the three mapping exercise sessions held. There is one each for first, third and fifth graders. The following categories are ones I have formulated for the present analysis:

> Far- Ranging. Range encompasses a diversity of widely-spaced areas, e.g., from the valley area to Inwood Hill Park or vice versa; or from the Dyckman Houses to Broadway or beyond (or vice versa).
>
> Mid-Ranging. Child ranges within the general realm of the home e.g., around the Dyckman Houses grounds and Msgr. Kett Playground, perhaps to a store just beyond Tenth Avenue; or within the valley area bounded by Broadway and Tenth Avenue; or in the Park Terrace/ Isham Park/ Inwood Hill Park area (but not Ft. Tryon Park, which is across Dyckman Street), including commercial and residential streets west of Broadway. (Explicit references to access to the woods of Inwood Hill Park itself will receive special attention).
>
> Near-Ranging. Range is restricted to the immediate area of the house (front or rear); there is no crossing streets or going around corners.
>
> Non-Ranging. Child does not leave the home unescorted.

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Table 8 shows the distribution of results for the first graders [5]. It is hardly surprising that no child in this group had a range that could be categorized as "Far Ranging." Yet it is interesting that three first graders should have ranges categorizable as "Mid-Ranging."

One Mid-ranging boy who lived on Vermilyea Avenue and Academy Street, in the heart of the valley area,was allowed to go two blocks north and two blocks east of home; with special permission he was allowed to go as far as the Dyckman Houses (the closest area containing grass, shrubs and and adjacent playground). Another first grade boy, living on Post Avenue near Dyckman Street -- also in the heart of the valley area -- was allowed to cross the street and go a short distance around the corner. Finally, a girl living on Cummings Street (a short street linking Seaman Avenue and Broadway, one block north of Dyckman Street) was allowed to cross the street; with special parental permission she was allowed to go Payson Playground, which lay one block east and one block south of her home.

If we consider the four Near-rangers along with these three Mid-rangers, we are struck by the fact that, of the twelve first graders in the sample, fully seven were allowed to play outdoors alone. In addition, girls are well-represented among them. Thus within this (admittedly

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	Range			
Sex	Far	Mid	Near	Non
Boys (N=7)	0	2	2	3
Girls (N=5)	0	1	2	2
Total (N=12)	0	3	4	5

Table 8. Frequency distribution of first-grade informants' geographical ranges, 1975. [Source: The Center for Human Environments, Inc.].

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small) sample are to be found children who (with permission) travel two blocks or more to reach playgrounds -- a significant finding indicating that in the year 1975 five-to-six-year old children's access to Inwood retained a surprisingly good measure of its former vitality.

For the third graders, the distribution shows markedly higher ranges than for the first graders (Table 9). Far- and Mid-ranging children account for over three fourths of this 18-child group, with Far-rangers outnumbering the Mid-rangers.

The direction in which the Far-ranging third graders traveled was uniformly from the valley area to the Inwood Hill/ Isham Park/ Fort Tryon Park area. Six of these seven children lived east of Broadway (most of them in the vicinity of Post Avenue, although one lived as far east as the Dyckman Houses). Because of this imbalance in the sample between children living east of Broadway and those living west of Broadway, one is prevented from learning whether children living near the western parks ventured any considerable distance eastward. But, clearly, a good number of children living in the valley had ready access to Inwood Hill and Isham Parks.

These Far-ranging third graders were fairly evenly split between boys and girls -- yet another indication of

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	Range			
Sex	Far	Mid	Near	Non
Boys (N=9)	4	4	0	1
Girls (N=9)	3	3	3	1
Total (N=18)	7	7	3	2

Table 9. Frequency distribution of third-grade informants' geographical ranges, 1975. [Source: The Center for Human Environments, Inc.].

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the freedom of travel this group of children reported to enjoy.

Of the six Middle-ranging third graders, all lived east of Broadway and remained within a few blocks of their homes, without crossing Broadway.

Children in this Mid-ranging category were similar to their Far-ranging counterparts in that they were equally split between boys and girls.

Near- and Non-ranging children comprised a mere four of the 18 third-graders consulted. Among them there is close parity between the sexes; clearly, the data for first- and third- graders suggest that girls were no more sheltered than were boys.

The only Near-ranging child whose range increased due to parental permission was a girl who was allowed, with permission, to visit an uncle's store three blocks south of her home on Post Avenue near Dyckman Street.

The 20 fifth graders present a more complex picture than either the first or third grade groups. Fully half of these children were Far-ranging and a quarter were Mid-ranging (Table 10); thus the preponderance of them had significant unsupervised access to Inwood (but not without increased restrictions, as we shall soon see). The remaining one-quarter were all Non-ranging (oddly, there

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	Range			
Sex	Far	Mid	Near	Non
Boys (N=10)	3	3	0	4
Girls (N=10)	7	2	0	1
Total (N=20)	10	5	0	5

Table 10. Frequency distribution of fifth-grade informants' geographical ranges, 1975. [Source: The Center for Human Environments, Inc.].

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happened to be no Near-ranging children in this group); that this many children should have been Non-ranging is indeed surprising, as, judging by the very small percentage of Non-rangers found in the third grade group, one would have expected few if any fifth graders to fall under this category.

It is striking to note how, even in these small cells, with these fifth graders the parity between the sexes (which was seen among the first and third graders) has shifted considerably in favor of the girls, who comprise fully 70 percent of the Far- and Mid-rangers and only 25 percent of the non-rangers.

In the discussion of the third-graders, it was noted that there were not nearly enough third graders living west of Broadway to have allowed an assessment their contact with areas east of Broadway. Although that problem persists somewhat with these fifth graders, it is more mild now, as we have here three children who lived west of Broadway and who were Far-ranging: two girls and a boy. Did they take advantage of attractions east of Broadway? To a degree, yes: all ranged over a considerable stretch of the western parklands and nearby residential and commercial streets (the boy, incidentally, mentioned the woods, while one of the girls strongly implied using them); yet these two also crossed Broadway

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for specific purposes, such as visiting a candy store or movie house. Thus, for these two children, Inwood east of Broadway undeniably held certain attractions.

Of the seven other Far-ranging fifth graders, the variety of the places they visited was impressive, especially so for the five girls among them, all of whom ranged from the Dyckman Houses/ Msgr. Kett playground area to, at least, the eastern edge of Inwood Hill Park; some even went as far as the Cloisters, the "Island," Payson Park and the Hudson River. As for the two boys, they went from their homes in the central valley to Inwood Hill and Isham Parks, but not eastward to the Dyckman Houses area.

Three of these ten Far-ranging fifth-graders could extend their ranges with special parental permission. One was allowed to go to the Harlem River; another into the woods of Ft. Tryon and Inwood Hill Parks; a third was allowed to go to Msgr. Kett Playground -- despite the fact that he needed no special permission in order to visit the more distant Inwood Hill Park.

Even with their considerable freedom to use and experience Inwood, these Far-ranging fifth graders reported traveling under parental restrictions to a degree not seen among any other group or grade. Seven of the ten had restrictions beyond the obvious ones concerning rivers, roadways and railyard. For example, one girl who

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lived in the valley area was forbidden to go into stores because "they think you're stealing" (presumably "they" meant the storekeepers and not the girl's parents); this girl was also prohibited from going to "the old house where a child was thrown off the roof." Another girl, who lived on 218th Street and Park Terrace West, was prohibited from going to the PS 98 playground; another, who lived on the same block, had the same prohibition, only under the less stringent condition that she avoid the place when it was "late." This girl was also prohibited from visiting the train yard. One girl, who lived on Academy Street and Vermilyea Avenue, was prohibited from going "all the way back in the backyard -- a lot of men go back there." A boy was prohibited from walking onto any of Inwood's bridges or going to the woods of Inwood Hill Park (a prohibition which he made seem unassailably sound by terming the woods "the mountain").

The five Mid-ranging fifth graders were geographically fairly well-distributed: two lived and played in the Park Terrace area, two lived and played in the Dyckman Houses and one lived an played in the valley area. Both of the children living in the Park Terrace area were able, with special permission, to increase their ranges east of Broadway (in one instance all the way to the Harlem River). Of the two boys living in the Dyckman Houses, one

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was able, with special permission, to visit a friend on Seaman Avenue. The remaining two played fairly close to home.

Parental prohibitions on the ranges of these Mid-ranging fifth graders were comparable to those applying to their Far-ranging counterparts.

Fifth graders were the only Non-rangers (of all grades) to have had any range all under special parental permission or, if not that, to offer reasons for their confinement. Of the five, two (both girls) could, with special permission, venture outside and remain near the home. The others could not. One such child, a girl, explained "I can't go away because I'm a girl growing."

Taken together, these three mapping exercises present a rather encouraging picture of children's access to Inwood at the close of the 1960-75 period: girls' access was comparable -- quite possibly superior -- to that of boys, which in itself was considerable; children living east of Broadway had fairly ready access to Inwood Hill Park and vicinity (which, presumably, meant access to nature); children living west of Broadway were not cut off from using the much more commercialized eastern part; there was no mention of Inwood's emerging drug problem and there was only one reference to serious crime. Only two

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themes -- the frequency with which children were instructed to avoid the schoolyards and the existence of a substantial number of generally Non-ranging fifth graders-- hint that, for these children, Inwood was in certain respects no longer the carefree, highly accessible childhood habitat it had been.

Footnotes to Section 6.5

[1] Although the year 1975 straddles the 1960-75 and 1975-90 time periods, I have chosen to include these data here rather than in the following chapter. Although it is true that the children discussed here spoke in the year 1975 in the present tense, one must bear in mind that they had begun their childhoods in the 1960-75 time period and thus were, in 1975, products of it.

[2] In the following paragraphs I justify my reasoning for dismissing certain analytical categories from quantification based on my own mental tabulations; hence such terms as "virtually all" and "few" rather than "96 percent" or "7 percent," respectively. I chose instead to reserve the latter level of specificity for discussion of those things I do consider to be close to the heart of the matter -- which is, of course, children's unescorted access to places within Inwood.

Thus although the 1975 study contains much interesting material, I have refrained from any extended analysis of data that do not lend themselves readily to a general statement that would relate closely to the aims of this dissertation. This, after all, is all that a brief chapter section such as this could hope to encompass. I say this with all due respect for the vision, quality, patience, and methodological sophistication of the Center for Human Environments researchers. (I say this also with full knowledge of their effectiveness and caring -- for example, fully 16 years after these exercises were conducted, Mark Shapiro, still serving as the principal of PS 98, fondly and vividly recalled for me the great benefit the researchers brought to his school). I have, with Dr. Hart's full approval, used his generously-granted access to this fragmentary raw data not in the service of the earlier project's praiseworthy purposes but for the furtherance of the aims of this dissertation.

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[3] The reason for the earlier research's heavy emphasis on routes was due to its strong focus on access to a single destination -- Inwood Hill Park and its woods. In fact, U.S. Forest Service funding was sought diligently, although unsuccessfully, according to the research team's records of correspondence.

[4] In reviewing the data I found wayfinding to be of only minor importance in an environment such as Inwood. Routes tended to be direct and predictable, linear and angular -- in stark contrast to the swirls and loops that Prof. Hart had found in his soon-to-be-completed developmental study of children's geographic knowledge and experience in a small Vermont town the results of which he was then writing (see Hart, 1979).

[5] The reader, if her or she notes that these tables represent the first quantification of raw behavioral data to appear in these pages, may ask with some justification why the same was not done for the data for 1915-30, 1930-45, etc. I will begin to answer this by expressing the hope that the reader, having come this far into the dissertation, has been shown that I place utmost value not on the behavioral phenomenon at hand but on its context; indeed, "context" may be an inadequate term for social phenomena such as those that relate to children's access to Inwood, for it unavoidably hints that context plays a subordinate role to something that may be called "the main phenomenon;" my own view is that historical context is an object of investigation in its own right.

Although it would perhaps be interesting to view the behavioral (i.e., the oral historical) data for Inwood from 1915 to 1991 at a single sweep, in table form, and although in doing so the scanning eye of the reader may detect "trends," these would be meaningless insofar as historical understanding as I conceive and apply it here is constituted. Experience tells me that whenever one presents tables, discussion invariably turns to "the story behind the numbers." But with the present highly qualitative and personal investigation of Inwood, the lives of the informants are presented individually, with each time period containing only a small cluster of informants. These informants do not lurk behind numbers (which in their case would be an absurdly disfiguring cover); they are instead standing before the reader, freestanding, offering up data in their own words.

On the folly of relying for insight on the abstraction of historical data, the renowned historian Herbert

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Butterfield (1931) has written:

> The value of history lies in the richness of its recovery of the concrete life of the past. It is a story that cannot be told in dry lines, and its meaning cannot be conveyed in a species of geometry. There is not an essence of history that can be got by evaporating the human and the personal factors, the incidental or momentary or local things, and the circumstantial elements, as though at the bottom of the well there were something absolute, some truth independent of time and circumstance. (P. 68).

I do find, however -- as of course do many other researchers -- that historical quantification is necessary and valid when the subject immediately at hand consists of broad social trends involving large samples -- such as is found in census data (on which I of course rely here extensively). In such cases, it is indeed essential to "get behind the numbers" and rummage around, so that the numerous human qualities to the facts being discussed do not get reduced to "a species of geometry."

However, quantification of behavioral data derived from small samples, when <u>within</u> (not between) historical time frames -- something which I do in this chapter section with the 1975 mapping exercise data -- is another matter, for here the historical context remains somewhat constant. This use of quantification is most called for primarily when the necessary qualitative data for specific phenomena is either lacking (as with these 1975 exercises) or where the full presentation of such data would exceed reasonable space limitations (as with my own published work regarding Inwood -- see Gaster, 1991).

It appears, then, that the fullest and most effective presentation of historical data is not something that fits neatly within the customary limitations of social science; the act of providing a well-rounded historical context thus has the misfortune of being both a luxury and a necessity.

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6.6 Children's Experiences

[Note: For the locations of informants' homes, see Fig. 50].

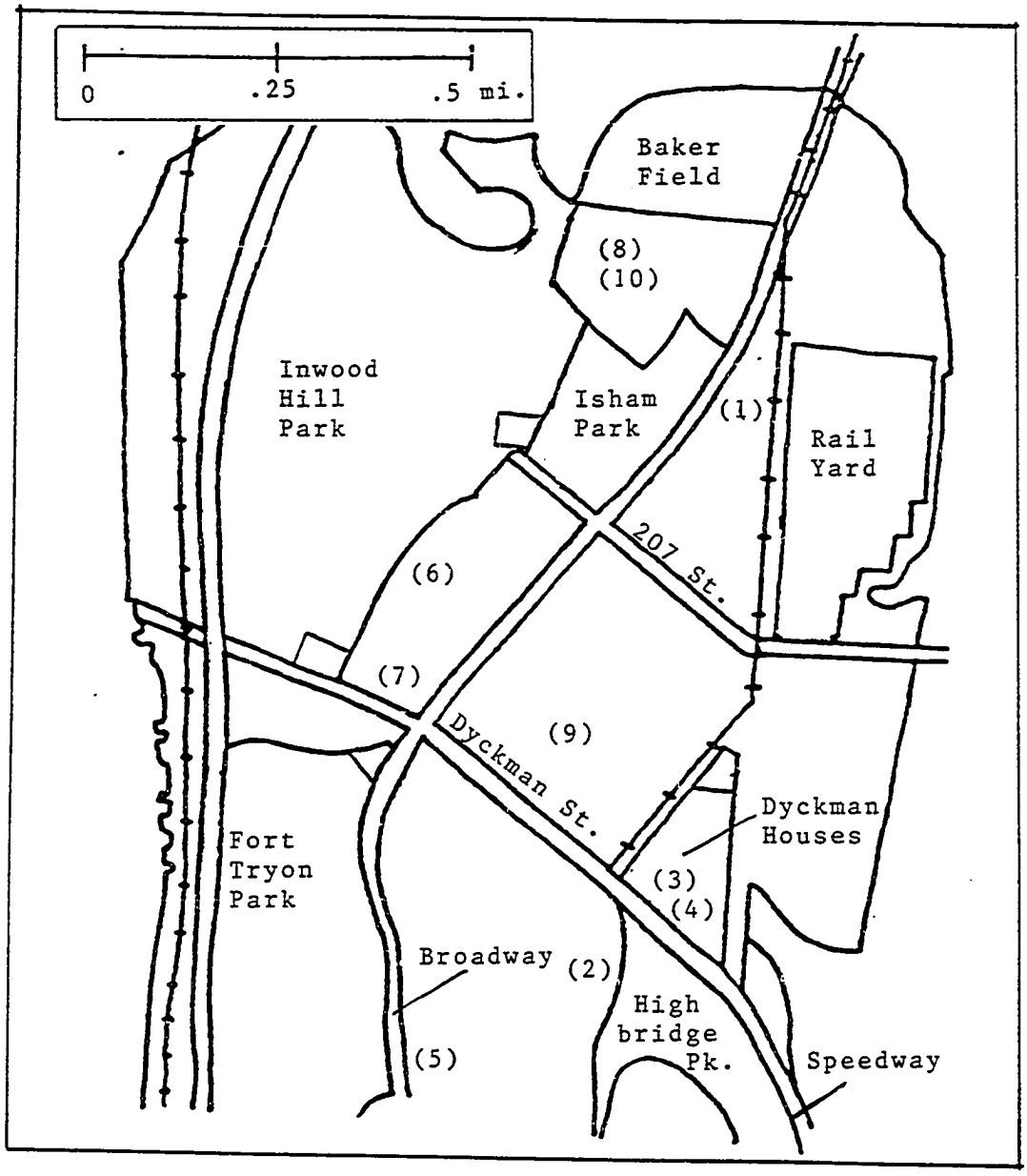
Jim Kennedy (b. 1952)

Until about age five (1957) Jim lived on 213th Street between Broadway and Tenth Avenue; that year he and his family moved out of state. In 1960 they returned to Inwood and settled in an apartment on the same block where they had lived earlier. Jim's father worked variously as a tool and dye inspector, a private investigator and a bartender. His mother worked in clerical positions and as a waitress. The family also included a brother, born in 1942. The Kennedys' ethnic background is Irish.

Jim was allowed out to play unsupervised before 1960, when he and his family moved back to Inwood, and upon his return his only restrictions were that he not cross Broadway and that he return home "when the street lamps went on." He would play mostly in the vicinity of this block:

> There were always kids on the block. On a nice Saturday afternoon, at the top of the block they'd be playing ring-o-leevio, something like that. And the boys would be playing stickball in the middle of the block. Girls would be playing down in the parking lot. Just always tons of kids around.

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(1) Jim Kennedy
(2) Rebecca Weiss
(3) Earnest Vanderveer
(4) Denise D'Arcy
(5) Howard Berg
(6) Kevin McArdle
(7) Tracy Byrne
(8) Greg Demes
(9) Brenda Arias
(10) Tim Walsh
(11) Bruce Friedman

Fig. 50. Map showing where informants lived, 1960-75.

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The parking lot referred to is that which had recently replaced the remaining open land once part of the Benedetto farm. Apparently, when the land was sold in 1954 not all of it was developed. Still, Jim and his friends reacted strongly when the last remnant of farmland was paved over:

> The phone company bought the farm from the Beneddetos and they built a telephone company building. And then they started building the parking lot on the farm area. And we were so distraught that whenever they would pour cement for the parking lot and go away to let it dry, we would chop it up. We made it very difficult for them to build that building there.
>
> Q: This may sound like an insensitive question, but, later on, did you at least take advantage of the finished parking lot as a play area?
>
> We did that. Yeah, they would open it up to us after all the cars would leave, and that turned out to be pretty good. We would play touch football there; it was a lot safer than the street. But I recall them stopping us from doing that after a while.

Until age nine (1961), most of Jim's play took place on the streets and sidewalks, although street games were not to be carried into front courtyards for long:

> In the courtyards you could play curb-ball. You usually got away playing that for about an hour before someone chased you away.

Jim's block was a short one, as are most blocks between Broadway and Tenth Avenue north of 211th St. In

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that area of Inwood, Broadway sweeps eastward to meet the straight line of Tenth Avenue; the two roads converge at 218th Street. Since 213th Street is of little use as a through street, traffic there is light. At the western, or Broadway end of 213th Street is the foot of Isham Park's eastern slope, which ends in a five-foot wall put up early in the century (at the time that Broadway was graded); at the eastern, or Tenth Avenue end of 213th Street is the IRT elevated train structure. 213th Street is not level but sloping, with the elevated occupying the low end. For Jim and his friends, all these conditions made 213th Street ideal for stickball:

> You hear about stickball and everyone talks about being a "two sewer man." Well, you weren't a two sewer man on my block -- you had to hit it onto the el. It looked like a home run, too, 'cause it would just go up there, either stick up there or bounce around and come down.

On 212th Street, just a block south of Jim's, stood PS 98 with its schoolyard. But to Jim and his friends, that one-block separation made an important difference:

> I never considered playing in that schoolyard a fun experience because that was a different street and a different group of guys, and you were always getting in battles over who was going to play, who was going to use this yard, who was going to play basketball -- you know. You had your own turf, they had theirs, and you knew if you hung around you'd get into a fight about something.

At age nine (1961) Jim's parents allowed him to cross

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Broadway unescorted in order to reach Good Shepherd School; before then, he would have "one of the older boys" take him across. Now, however, with Jim's new freedom to cross Broadway, the parks there were open for him to enjoy (he had never gone the other way, i.e., east of Tenth Avenue, because he considered that area to be dangerous). As Isham was the park nearest his block, Jim began to extend his range by by playing there -- sledding on the slope leading to Broadway on flattened cardboard cartons. But he learned the dangers of this when he witnessed a friend break his back after dropping the full five feet from the abrupt end of the slope onto the sidewalk of Broadway.

Jim would use the playing fields of Inwood Hill Park for ball games but would seldom go into the woods, which he found frightening; he also feared losing his way once there. Jim also found the caves frightening, but would go reluctantly on expeditions there with friends. During these adventures, "someone would find a rock with a point and swear it was an Indian arrowhead." However, Jim was not afraid of swimming in the Harlem River Ship Canal at a spot other generations of boys had found:

> We swam in the river. We had a beach, B.A.B., for Bare Ass Beach. I was 10, 11, 12. [1962-64]. We called it a beach because I think there was a patch of sand ten-by-ten.

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Throughout his childhood Jim's mobility was somewhat hindered by his mother's prohibition on his riding a bicycle, forcing him to ask other boys if he could ride theirs. (Mrs. Kennedy's anxiety stemmed from the fact that her brother had been shot while on a bicycle. Interestingly, when the Kennedys were at their summer house in the Rockaway area of Queens, Jim could ride a bicycle with her full consent).

It was mentioned earlier in this chapter that by the early 1970s some who were addressing Inwood's emerging drug problem were resentful of the fact that adults seemed to spend so much time in the community's numerous bars. However, bars, to Jim (perhaps because his father worked as a bartender) were not only benign places but served as safety stations for children and adults:

> That was a big part of the culture there, drinking. If there was trouble or something, you ran right to the bar and, you know, you either got your dad or one of your dad's friends, or the bartender would help you out or something.
>
> You always went to the bar if there was a problem. If anything was going on -- if there was big kids from another block bullying somebody, if there was a car accident -- anything! -- you saw someone getting burglarized, a bum sleeping in your hallway.
>
> I don't know what went on there at two o'clock in the morning when they all got drunk, but I knew that in the middle of the afternoon, on a Saturday, it was always a very wholesome atmosphere, as I remember it. Everybody was nice and

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> friendly. It didn't seem to be a falling-down-drunk, dingy, gin-smelling type of situation.

Aside from the woods and caves, and Inwood's industrial area -- all of which he feared to some extent -- Jim had just one place he simply disliked:

> I have no idea why, I just hated going down to Dyckman Street. It was like too far a trip. It was like a different world. I didn't know anybody there, I didn't know what was going on there, I didn't like it, I hated it.

Rebecca Weiss (b. 1952)

In 1960 the Weisses moved into Inwood Terrace, the new middle-income cooperative high-rise completed that year at 99 Hillside Avenue, the first of four towers to be built on the hilly strip of land between Hillside Avenue and Ft. George Hill. The family consisted of Rebecca's parents and a sister born in 1955. Mr. Weiss was a high school teacher. The family ethnic background is Jewish.

The Weisses had moved to Inwood Terrace from lower Washington Heights, where Rebecca had not been permitted out of the apartment without supervision because her parents feared danger. At 99 Hillside, however, the building itself, including its small patch of outdoor space, was a play place in its own right:

> When I moved here it was a new building. There was a new playground; the parents had gotten together to make the playground a playable place. We played a lot of tag,

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> a lot of ring-o-leevio. We played a lot of ball games, A-my-name-is-Alice -- a lot of that. And jump rope.
>
> The playground equipment was arranged so that you could sit around and talk. And there were different levels. There was a king-of-the-mountain seat and you could look down on this plexiglass doughnut that the rest of us could sit on. And there were cylinders that you could race from, and do different things on -- climb in and out of and race on top of it. It was really skillful.
>
> There were kids on every floor. "Inwood Terrace," that's our formal name, but it was "Stork Terrace." There were so many kids within 99 Hillside Avenue that when I was nine there were 13 nine-year-olds! I didn't have to play with any eight-year-olds or any ten-year-olds -- because there were 12 eight-year-olds who were playing together.
>
> We played in each other's houses. We played in the playground that was part of the building. We had a community room, and there the house was abuzz! They were always playing. We had terrific Halloween parties every year. There was a kids' choir. It was a very rich life here. After every vacation they'd have slide shows.

To a lesser extent, Rebecca and her friends from Inwood Terrace would play on the nearby streets and other areas:

> We used to make go carts. The guys would get the materials somehow, the girls would get involved in painting them. They were fun. There was a whole group of us. And not just kids from the building, there were kids from the neighborhood, too. I must have been 9, 10, 11, 12 [1961-64]. We'd go on Hillside Avenue right in front of the playground. And they were fast, they were fun. My first feminist ire -- my hackles were raised when I wanted to <u>build</u> it and the boys said, No, you're a

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girl, you can't build it.

We played across the street in the schoolyard of 152 -- P.S. 152. And my parents had a window facing 152 so they could just look out and see us. So we went down around together on the streets, but not very much. Because we ran on the sidewalk and in the playground, and in 152 we played squash against the wall. There were four separate courtyards -- five, six separate courtyards where there could be large games without interfering with people who were playing there. I can remember marching bands practicing there. It was wonderful.

There was no play equipment or anything at 152, just open space for running, no trees or anything. And every Sunday the adults would come and play softball there. And when you had a bicycle you could go bicycling there, roller skating there.

Q: Did you play there more often there than in the playground of your building?

No, No, I played in the playground much more than in 152. I'd say for every nine times I was in the playground. I was three times, two times at 152. In our playground -- that was our home. It had a low fence, all our friends from the neighborhood could come there, directly from the street, they wouldn't have to go through the building.

Q: Rebecca, I recall that there's a kind of upper area in back of the playground, going up the hill -- sort of a rocky area. Did you play there?

We didn't. There was nothing to do there, really. It was dirt, some plants. But we used to go under the fence to the foundations where they were building the other co-ops on the top of Ft. George and we'd play in the foundation. We stopped that when one of our schoolmates -- we got word that he died on the foundation, fell off the foundation. We had been told,

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> Don't go up there, it's dangerous. But that was it; after that we didn't play there anymore.

Although very active in using play spaces in and around her building, Rebecca had only the most limited contact with Inwood's parks:

> Q: Did you ever get to Ft. Tryon Park when you were nine to twelve [1961-64]?
>
> That doesn't really stick out in my memory. I suppose we went -- mostly it was my mother saying, Come, let's take a walk in the park. We'd sled there in the winter, just me and my friends.
>
> Q: How about Inwood Hill Park?
>
> My mom would take us for walks. That was a little scarier. It was dark and it was unfamiliar territory, very natural, winding paths. You know, kind of like fairyland, and in fairyland you had witches. And it was far. You know, that was the top of our neighborhood.

Winter would attract Rebecca to Ft. George Hill:

> We'd sled on Ft. George Hill, a group of kids. The streets were filled with snow banks, it was fun -- fun, fun, fun. We wouldn't go all the way up Ft. George Hill, just enough to get a good slide.

Inwood's shopping streets were another occasional destination:

> On Dyckman Street there was a bowling alley. And there were two movie theaters we always went to. I'd go in a group of kids. And the library on Broadway was great. I would take out books until I couldn't even hold them in my hands and read, read, read.

Programmed activities played a part of Rebecca's

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experience of Inwood, although among these she had distinct preferences.

> I belonged to the Girl Scouts, which met across the street at 152 once a week -- once a month -- something like that. We'd do Girl Scout projects to earn badges. And it was very good -- you know, girl scout beliefs, morals and ethics. It was mostly indoors, in the school There was some kind of Girl Scout camp that I didn't get involved in.
>
> I went to the Y a little bit. Didn't really like the Y that much. The people there, the leaders, the staff -- I usually found them to be mean. I didn't like the smell of it. It was just oppressive there.

Dangerous and scary places found their way into Rebecca's experience of Inwood:

> Q: Did you go to the roof of your building?
>
> The roof wasn't available. Occasionally we went up there, but it was scary.
>
> Q: Were there any places you thought were dangerous?
>
> The projects. Now, I belonged to a Girl Scout troop that met at 152, but when they had to move to the projects, my father said I had to quit. I was in fifth or sixth grade [1962-63], and I wasn't allowed to go to the projects. And I was so sad! He made it seem like at night the projects were dangerous. And, I guess, two girls going into the projects at night, well... But it wasn't just that it was the projects, it was that it was three blocks away instead of just across the street.

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Bruce Friedman (b. 1953)

The Friedmans lived on Park Terrace East near 215th Street. The family consisted of Bruce, his parents and a sister born in 1948. Mr. Friedman was a concert conductor. The family ethnic background is Jewish.

Bruce was first allowed out unescorted at age five (1958), when he could play in front of the building as his mother watched from the window. By age six (1959), however, he was crossing 215th Street and proceeding down Park Terrace East and into Isham Park. Although he would go there alone, "sometimes my mother would send my sister to check on me -- see if I was stuck up a tree or something."

Isham Park became Bruce's favorite play space. He preferred its open lawns to nearby playgrounds: "Playgrounds? Those were things they stick up on the roofs of the projects and expect the kids to have a good time. Not for us!" The closest Bruce found himself to playing in a playground was occasional use of a discarded tire tied to a tree in an empty lot near home. His preference for Isham Park persisted despite the considerable constraints placed on children there; for example, when at the age of seven Bruce got his first bicycle, he found that that riding was not allowed in Isham Park, and so he he rode on nearby sidewalks instead.

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Such rules puzzled him:

> I didn't know what that park was for! There was no ball playing in Isham Park, which no one of course listened to. I mean, that was the most ridiculous thing in the world, no ball playing in a park!
>
> Every once in a while the cops would come around and chase us out. Now, we were far from being juvenile delinquents! But once a cop car came and the cop came out and said he was going to give us J.D. cards. For playing ball! I mean, we were big criminals, ten-year-old boys playing ball! Well, I think we got out of it -- someone came out and told them we were Boy Scouts or something, and they let us go. Strange!

And yet there could be times when the presence of a cop would not have been entirely unwelcome:

> There was a gang in the park called the Kingsmen. Them and the Benedettos. Everyone was afraid of them. Well, they were there once and they called me a Jew Boy. They were about five feet away from me. It was scary. I would avoid certain parts of that park because of those gangs.
>
> Q: Did your parents warn you about crime?
>
> No, I think they were more concerned about cars than crime.

By age nine (1962) Bruce had branched out into a few other activities. He had begun "hanging out" with friends at the corner of Park Terrace East and 215th Street -- to the accompaniment of a portable radio (he would go to the same spot without his friends whenever he wanted to be alone). Bruce also began going down the stairs that connected Park Terrace East to Broadway, as well as

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joining in games at the schoolyard of PS 98 nearby. Another place he liked was Baker Field -- in the days before the relaxation of Columbia University's exclusionary policy:

> It held a fascination for us -- probably because it was forbidden. You know, no big deal because the team was terrible. But it was -- somehow, the announcement coming over the loudspeaker on a fall afternoon. You know, so-and-so carried the ball three yards, tackled by Kowalsky -- you know, somehow that would lure us there. We would try to sneak around the Pinkerton guards.
>
> Another thing we did was sold tickets -- you know, ask people for tickets and sell them. There'd be people from, like, Andover -- you know, Americans! We weren't used to seeing people like that, and they weren't used to seeing people like us. They weren't accustomed to being accosted for, you know, "extra tickets! extra tickets!"

However, one place Bruce never went to was the river edge, which he found dangerous and frightening.

By age twelve (1965), Bruce had the freedom to go anywhere he pleased in Inwood, although Hebrew School and Little League (which he joined that year) kept him busy after school. Little League provided him a new diversity of playmates:

> It was a different crowd than the one I usually played with, because kids from the public schools played together, and the kids from the parochial schools played together, but in the Little League everyone played together. Even so, it was mostly parochial school kids, since the neighborhood was mainly Irish. I got to

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> meet those kids and they got to meet me. It was good, it was good -- kind of a common denominator, you know.

Earnest Vanderveer (b. 1954)

Earnest was raised in the Dyckman Houses, where he lived with his father, mother and brother, who was born in 1952. Mr. Vanderveer worked as an electrician with the subway system. The family ethnic/ racial background is black.

Earnest was first allowed outdoors without adult supervision at age six (1960), when he and his brother would play in front of their building. Checkerboards and configurations for bottle-cap games were stencilled on the concrete pavements, but Earnest preferred the smooth (though unstencilled) slate surfaces also present. The front doors of the buildings were unlocked, allowing Earnest and his playmates to move freely between the pavement, stoop, lobby and stairs. Stairs were preferable to the lobby since adults, who openly discouraged play in indoor public areas, did not go there often.

Until age eight (1962) Earnest spent most of his time on the Dyckman Houses grounds -- except for times when he would go to "The Big Park" (i.e., Msgr. Kett, the playground immediately north of the Dyckman Houses, which of course was accessible without his having to cross

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streets). Earnest was not especially drawn to the afterschool activities of the Dyckman Community Center, however.

As Earnest reached this age, rules began to intrude into his play; for example, playing hide-and-seek in the shrubbery was discouraged:

> There used to be a cop -- Sam the Cop. This was his beat. It wasn't like later, where there weren't cops permanently assigned to the projects. You knew Sam and he knew you. And if you were on the grass he'd say "hey, get of the grass or I'll give you a ticket."
>
> If you were chronic, you'd get a fine, and then the Housing Manager would be calling you down to the office, busting the parents' chops, saying, "Look, your child is always on the grass." When my mother wanted to take us on a picnic, we couldn't use the project grounds, so we'd go to this kosher deli, get some food, and sit on the grass in this area right across Dyckman Street.

The only time Earnest and his brother would leave the Dyckman Houses's grounds unescorted was in winter, when they would go toward Fort George Hill to sled. They did not use the street called Fort George Hill itself (Earnest had once seen a child run over by a car there when sledding down that street into the intersection with Dyckman Street and Nagle Avenue). Instead he used the small, gentle slopes on the north side of Dyckman Street between the flat area he and his family used for picnics and the rocky escarpment of Highbridge Park. However,

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after age ten (1964) Earnest and his brother could no longer use that area for sledding since a playground and sitting area (discussed in a previous section) were built there.

By age eight or so (circa 1962) Earnest had gained considerable freedom of travel:

> After I was, you know, eight, nine, my parents were not on my back about things. Even though they wanted me to be careful and all that, you know, it was like "be back at a certain time" not "stay in front of the building."

One of the places Earnest would go then was the playground across Dyckman Street and the rocks beyond, where he and friends would play "war games." By age ten (1964) Earnest was playing these games several blocks west -- in Fort Tryon Park:

> We'd pretend that the Cloisters was like a fortress. We went there a lot. We knew the park like the back of our hands. We knew all the little paths to cut through and like that. It was definitely my favorite place growing up. We'd go into the museum, too. Nobody asked us for admission money or anything.

When he was about eight (circa 1962) Earnest's mother signed him up for Little League; Earnest, though, "wasn't into it" and soon dropped out. However, scouting, which he began also at eight, appealed to Earnest greatly. His troop, which was composed of other boys from the Dyckman Houses, would meet weekly at the Mount Washington

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Presbyterian Church, two blocks west, on Vermilyea Avenue near Academy Street. A gymnasium was available there which was used for such competitions as the "Olympics" between the Dyckman Houses troop and that of Good Shepherd Church. Earnest would also march in uniform in local parades. Although he was "the littlest one" in the troop, Earnest became Patrol Leader, developing "nature skills" and leading walks through forests in such places as Alpine, New Jersey and participating in overnight camping there (Inwood Hill Park was not used either for walks or camping). In the summer there would be two-week camping trips to Upstate New York.

When Earnest was ten or eleven (1964-65) his parents bought him a "super-deluxe, five-speed stick shift with the butterfly handlebars," which he would ride around the perimeter of the Dyckman Houses (the grounds themselves being off-limits to bicycles) as well as to such favorite places as Ft. Tryon Park. Although he enjoyed nature and had begun to go to Inwood Hill Park, Earnest was "not too crazy about the woods." His parents, although having warned Earnest to stay away from the freight tracks, did mention the woods; staying clear of that part of the park was Earnest's own decision.

Earnest's encounters with boys who lived in the streets just west of the Dyckman Houses could be

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unnerving:

> Q: Were there kids in the neighborhood you were afraid would hurt you?
>
> Nah! I didn't really have a lot of physical fear like that. One thing was, like maybe at night -- it was like a turf kind of thing, because, hey, maybe I don't look that dark but, hey, I'm black, and maybe if you went up on Academy Street you might run into a bunch of, you know, Irish boys who were -- well, maybe they had their own turf and maybe they'd try and mess with you some.
>
> But, you know, as far as the whole physical thing of being afraid -- nah, I wasn't like [in a dramatically fainting voice] "No, I'm not going there!" It wouldn't be that way. But I'd be mindful that, hey, maybe, you know...I'd stay alert, and if I felt that there <u>was</u> anything coming up, I'd just be ready to run!
>
> Halloween, kids would fill a sock with chalk, crush it and hit you with it. Usually on St. Patrick's Day. I didn't...I didn't like St. Patrick's Day that much because, you know, they're running around, want to paint you green. You know, they're drinking the beer, want to beat your ass. So, you know, I wasn't too keen on St. Patrick's Day.

<u>Denise D'Arcy (b. 1957)</u>

Denise D'Arcy was raised in the Dyckman Houses, where she lived with her mother, father and two sisters, one of whom was born in 1945 and the other in 1946. Mr. D'Arcy was a laundry worker and Mrs. D'Arcy was a nurse's aide. The family racial/ethnic background is black. [When asked

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if she would object to the interview being tape-recorded, Ms. D'Arcy said she would. What follows, therefore, is based on the interviewer's notes].

Denise did not play outdoors unsupervised until age eleven or twelve (1968-69). Her exposure to the neighborhood until then had taken place only in the company of her parents, who would take her on walks along the Harlem River Driveway as well as to the public library, the Alpine Theater on Dyckman Street and picnics in Inwood Hill Park. At age nine (1966) Denise joined a local Girl Scout troop and her parents would escort her to and from the meetings. As a Girl Scout Denise would spend a part of each summer at Girl Scout camp.

When she was permitted to play outdoors unescorted, Denise had to remain in front of the building, where her parents could watch from their apartment window. Play was difficult, as the rules were strict: for example, she could not go on the grass, and when she would bring her roller skates from her apartment to the front of the building (where she was allowed to skate) she had to carry rather than wear them until she was outside. Denise also played hopscotch there -- her favorite game. There was a small play area near the entrance of her building that contained segments of concrete "tunnels" in which she would play as well. She could leave this limited area

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only with permission and only when traveling with other children in large groups. With such groups she would go to the Alpine Theater, the "Big Park" (i.e., the playground immediately north of the Dyckman Houses) or to the Bronx for roller skating, all of which she did frequently.

Howard Berg (b. 1956)

The Bergs lived on Hillside Avenue near Nagle Avenue, at the southern extremity of Inwood. Howard had one brother, born in 1952. His parents were local shopkeepers. The family ethnic background was Jewish.

Howard was playing outdoors at "a very young age":

> My father ran a store -- housewares, Venetian blinds, things like that -- in the building, on the Nagle Avenue side. He was always right there, so technically I was always supervised. So I'd play in front of the store. And I could go pretty much anywhere because all I had to do was check into the store where my mother and father were and let them know where I was going.
>
> I had a bike very young -- I can't tell you how young, but it was young; it had three wheels. And the block was a triangle -- Hillside, Bogardus and Nagle -- and I would go around and around and around. And it was on a hill, so it was like physical activity to go up and down. I don't remember ever riding in the street -- like, to Dyckman or anything. I think that was one of the cardinal rules my parents set down: You could ride in the sidewalk but not cross the street, and you can't be in the gutter. Which was fine.

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When he would play in one place, Howard stayed near his building:

> There was this alleyway in front of the building which we made into our punchball place. It was narrow but we made use of it. It had this little 45-degree-angle concrete slab we used to slide down in winter. And I remember some of the older people who didn't want us to play would pour water on our heads.

Much of Howard's experience of Inwood centered around the Nagle Avenue YM-YWHA's children's programs:

> Most of my summer hours were structured around the Y. I started going there at nursery school -- three, four, five years old (1959-61). It was my parents' decision: 'Here you are, go.' From Kindergarten on it was afterschool, including day camp in the summer. So I was in that building twelve months of the year.
>
> What it did was it exposed me to kids from other parts of the community, other types of kids that I would not have met up with otherwise. Specifically, I remember meeting up with a number of Greek kids who I knew very little about, a number of black kids that didn't live in my building. And I always <u>wanted</u> to go there, it was not like "you have to go to the Y."
>
> Mostly the Y's activities were right at the Y. We used the outdoor play areas there, the roof, the gym, woodworking, what they called clubs -- in-room type of stuff, you know, <u>play</u> -- ping-pong, board games, a little bit of arts-and-crafts, which boys didn't like but got pushed into doing once in a while.
>
> In the summer there was the day camp at Pearl River. They had taken us to State parks, such as Tolman Mountain, but there were too many inner-city kids there and

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> there was too much trouble, so the Y stopped going there sometime when I was twelve or so [circa 1968]. Because of this overcrowding at Pearl River we stayed in the city one day a week and we did city trips. They took us around on the subway.

Beginning at age eight or nine (1964-65) Howard began a job as a delivery boy, through which he extended his range and learned about his neighborhood:

> I worked for the butcher next door, delivering meat for as little as two pennies or a nickel, since I was already entreprerneurially inclined from my father. Also, it was a way for him to get rid of me.
>
> I asked the butcher if I could work for her, and she would send me as far away as Fairview Avenue and Bennett and 187. But it started early, with my just delivering on the block. I could have been eight or nine (1964-5) and did it until 13 (1969), extending my area as I went along.
>
> After a while I didn't want to go to the people who gave under a nickel since I figured I was worth a nickel. Also, there were places I was afraid of going, so I'd check the list for places like that. Fairview had some spooky buildings. The hallways seemed to me too dark. And there were certain stairwells in walkups. I just didn't want to do it. It was the beginning of a feeling that there was some kind of threat out there to watch out for.

By age ten or eleven (1966-67) Howard was using certain local parks and playgrounds:

> Before age ten or eleven we wouldn't go to Fort Tryon a lot since there were about 150 kids in the building -- there were so many kids that there was no need to go far from the building. But later we'd play on the hill at Ft. Tryon Park. There was one specific part that we used to go to a lot,

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> too -- an old, empty little stone house halfway up the hill from Broadway. We'd just hang out there. It was also one of the great hills for sledding. The only thing was, the entrance going to Broadway. You didn't want to slide out to Broadway, which I remember once seeing someone do.
>
> Sometimes we would go to the sprinklers in the playground at Dyckman Street and Broadway. Or we would go to the one at Fort Washington Avenue at about 190th Street -- just south of the Cloisters. We'd go into the subway station at 190th and take the elevator up. You didn't have to pay your fare or anything to use it. It was a dark elevator. We got to know the elevator operator. We would do that often.
>
> We didn't go to Inwood Hill Park. Living this far south of it, I didn't really get to it.

Although, as mentioned earlier, Howard occasionally felt potential danger as he made his rounds as a delivery boy, his first face-to-face encounter with dangerous people was a defining moment for him:

> At age 11 (1967) I had my first experience of being stopped and approached for money. It made me very aware of, like, this new thing in the world, which was, someone was going to invade my space, want something from me and maybe...
>
> The first time it happened I was coming from school at noon and there were these high school kids. It was a dollar and I gave it up. The second time was when I was exploring with some kids from the Y, walking down Dyckman Street very late at night, like 12 at night. It was a very long story with a bunch of drunk guys with a gun, and it was not a very pleasant experience, but it began to give me new realities about what was going on, what one had to be careful of. It made me

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> aware that there were bad guys and that you gotta be street savvy. I felt that I had street smarts early, so I was not particularly afraid.

Having decided not to let the threat of danger affect his use of Inwood, Howard continued to use it freely. Dyckman street, with its stores, restaurants and commercial recreation places were a frequent destination:

> We went to three different theaters. Movies were a big thing -- there were a lot of theaters here. I started going very young, with my brother and later with just friends. The funny thing was that in all these theaters they had matrons who -- even if they had seats for ten thousand people -- would make all the kids sit in one aisle, and they would stand there with the flashlight, so it became less fun. After a while we began challenging them, saying "why do you make us sit all bunched up in a row when there's all these empty seats?"
>
> Bowling was a big thing. We were all into bowling, we were like bowling crazies. It was <u>the</u> great recreational thing to do besides play outside. There were a lot of bowling alleys, but the main bowling alley I used was on Dyckman Street between Broadway and Sherman Avenue, and it was up the stairs. It was great. We went like every Saturday bowling. It was cheap -- like 50 cents for two games and the shoes. The other bowling was on Academy near Broadway, which wasn't as nice. It was smaller.
>
> I can just, like, mentally walk back thirty years ago and I can almost name for you the stores on Dyckman between Nagle and Broadway and what significance there was for each of those things. I could walk over and there was places to go in and eat, places to get an ice cream, places to get a kosher frankfurter -- you know, with everything on it -- places to

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go bowling, all these different places. Or I'd be sent to different places by my parents. And none of these places were in my mind bad; they were all fine and nice and nobody on the street would bother me. And that was the key shopping strip, where you could go, where you could recreate of sorts.

Q: did you feel these shops were welcoming to kids?

Nothing's welcoming to kids, not at all. Nobody was. It's amazing. The one place we practically lived in was a kosher delicatessen on Broadway and Dyckman, and we'd go there on the way to bowling on Saturdays. And they would yell at us before we even sat down. And I remember as a kid saying -- I always had a big mouth -- "my money's just as good as anybody else's!" And our way of getting back at them was to leave a tip of a penny and cover the table with mustard. But they would let us back in because even though we were kids we had money.

And I remember a card store where they had toys and gifts and stuff, which kids would love, and they would always say "don't touch anything." And I can remember saying as a little kid, 'Mister, how can I buy the card if I don't touch it?' And then there was this guy in the candy store -- and I'm like a kid from nine generations of candy stores in this city -- and he would say 'you can't stand and look at the candy' and I'd say 'how can I pick it out if I don't look at it?'

Finally, one of the most famous places was Freddie's candy store on Nagle, off Ellwood. And this guy owned this place that -- I didn't know it at the time, but it was a bookie joint as well as a candy store. And he had a box that said anything in it was a penny; you can get really great candy for a penny. And most kids I knew used to steal it -- I don't think I ever did, though. Years later, I ran into this Freddy and we started

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> talking about kids stealing that candy -- but it wasn't news to him! He told me 'the reason I didn't care if kids stole candy for a penny was, that way you're not going to steal something worth a dime.'

Kevin McArdle (b. 1958)

The McArdles moved to Inwood in 1963 and settled into an apartment on Seaman Avenue at the Corner of Payson Avenue (the building had entrances on both streets), abutting Inwood Hill Park. Mr. McArdle worked as an officer with the New York City Department of Corrections. In 1968 Mrs. McArdle resumed work as as a sales representative at the telephone company office on Broadway near 213th Street, a position she had held before Kevin was born. The family ethnic background was Irish.

From ages five to ten (1963-68) Kevin's parents did not permit him to leave "the block" when he would go out to play. The block to which Kevin was confined was the area on the Payson Avenue side of his building, abutting Inwood Hill Park, which was a satisfying play space for a number of reasons: for one, Payson Avenue had less traffic than Seaman Avenue; for another, his mother could observe from a window.

> We'd mostly play football on the street. There was this wall lining the other side of Payson, a stone wall about five feet high, with benches in front you could use to get up. When you were up it was mostly pretty thick woods, the trails were all further in.

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> Now, in the woods there were these walls, two levels. They were from some old buildings or something. I wouldn't go past that second wall. I thought it would be dangerous, didn't know what would be there. My mother would always tell me that there were these wild animals there -- raccoons, packs of wild dogs -- unless she was just saying that to keep me out of there. Well, we'd stand in the woods, pretty close to the street, and throw dirt bombs at the cars. Sometimes someone would get out of the car and start to chase us, but we just hid in the woods.

At age ten (1968) there was a clear change in Kevin's play pattern:

> My mother went back to work with the phone company. My parents figured that by then I was old enough to work the locks. It's not like she was working downtown, 'cause she was right there at the phone company and of course I had the number.
>
> At that age I started going to the handball courts a lot, over at 207 and Seaman. I'd play there or just hang out on the steps going into the woods. You could say that was my main hangout.
>
> Q: Were there any places you disliked as a child?
>
> No. Can't say there were any.
>
> Q: Besides the woods, were there any places you thought were dangerous?
>
> Those were the places I liked! When I was twelve and older, we'd go down to the freight tracks near the bridge that went over to the Bronx, and there'd be all these freight cars. And when they'd move we'd hop on a minute and then get off. I guess that was pretty dangerous.
>
> Q: Were there any places you thought were scary?

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Scary? Well, there was this old house on Cooper between 204th and 207. It was empty, old, kind of spooky. We didn't play in it or anything, just looked it from the street.

Q: Were there any places you went when you wanted to be alone?

There's one place I can think of. Sometimes I'd go into the woods. It was kind of up on this rock where you could see the sunset over the river. That was beautiful. I'd bring a beer. Wait -- I was older when I went there, a teenager, and you're looking for five to twelve, right? I didn't go to the rock that young, there wasn't really any special place before the rock.

Tracy Byrne (b. 1960)

Tracy Byrne is the sister of Bill Byrne (b. 1937) and the daughter of Paula Byrne, both of whose experiences are presented in previous chapters. The youngest of seven children, Tracy grew up in the building on Seaman Avenue just north of Dyckman Street into which her family had moved in 1952. When Tracy was growing up there was only other child remaining in the household, a sister who was born in 1958.

Since her building had a central courtyard that was landscaped, enclosed on three sides and elevated several steps above street level, Tracy began her outdoor play in that space and used it exclusively for what was probably several years:

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> When I was very young we had to stay inside the courtyard where my mother could see it. We played jump rope, tag, relay races.
>
> I don't remember how old I was when I could go out to the sidewalk -- beyond my mother's view. Maybe ten years old or something [circa 1970]. Basically we had to stay on the block -- go around corners sometimes, but not cross any streets. We had to be in before dark and we had to stay on the block. It was that way until I was fourteen.

Tracy's exposure to areas of Inwood beyond her block were limited and were supervised. For example, although Inwood Hill Park's Payson Playground was one block from her apartment building she did not wander over there on her own:

> My mother used to take us to Payson Park practically every day. I never went alone. I was the kind of kid who always liked to hang around my mother and father. They didn't force me to stay with them, and I liked their company.

Having a bicycle prompted Tracy to play beyond the immediate vicinity of her building:

> I remember the Christmas when I got this big red bicycle. It was the most exciting thing I ever got! To teach me to ride they would take me down Dyckman Street to the Hudson River. I must have been maybe seven.
>
> When I was eleven, twelve [1971-72], I got a blue one. We used to have relay races around the block, me and the other kids. It was just up and down Seaman -- well, no: Seaman, Cummings, Broadway, Dyckman. It was a fairly big block.

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Q: Would your mother be supervising?

She'd check once in a while. She'd lean out the window, "Just checking," she'd say. Some kids' parents didn't really care what their kids did, but I felt I had a mother that did.

Ms. Byrne has one unpleasant memory of her Inwood childhood:

At the end of Dyckman Street, in the park, there'd be these concerts for kids. I was like twelve and up [1972 and later].

Well, there'd be a lot of kids coming down from the Bronx and there's be trouble. Like fights. And I remember, at that time, the cops -- they were all like new cops, not the familiar ones we knew. The City was experimenting, assigning cops around the precincts -- so they didn't get too familiar with local people, I guess. And I remember the cops handled things badly -- were a little rough with the kids. It got to be a wild sort of event that I didn't go to anymore. Then they stopped the concerts.

Steve Garcia (b. 1964)

Steve Garcia was raised on 215th Street between Broadway and Tenth Avenue. The family consisted of himself and his parents. Steve's father worked in a restaurant. The family ethnic background was Cuban. [Note: the tape recording of this interview was defective and so could not be listened to, nor could the respondent be located for follow-up. However, based on written notes, the interview appears to be of sufficient

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completeness to merit presentation].

Steve was first permitted out to play unsupervised at age ten (1965). By then he had spent considerable time outdoors in Inwood with his parents, during which the family had gone sledding in Isham Park and ridden bicycles in Inwood Hill Park. When he was first allowed out unsupervised, Steve would mainly play stickball and touch football in the street on which his building stood.

Soon, however, Steve was climbing the steps at the foot of 215th Street to visit Inwood Hill Park. He was especially drawn to the handball and basketball courts near 207th Street, where he would take part in games coordinated by the Parks Department. He was too old to play in the children's playgrounds by then, and had not liked playgrounds even when his parents had taken him to them when he was younger. At age twelve (1972) Steve and his friends would wander as far as the freight tracks in Inwood Hill park and steal such items as crates of fruit from the idling boxcars. On one such raid he took a factory-new moped.

Another place beyond his block that Steve liked to visit was an area of vacant lots, which he could reach if he followed his street (215th) east until it met the Harlem River. The Sanitation Department would dump sand and gravel in open piles there and he liked to play in

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these.

Steve disliked the area of the Dyckman Houses, as there were to be found people of "different backgrounds." Nor did he like the central valley area of Inwood -- Academy Street or Vermilyea Avenue -- since the children there were mainly Dominican and he had observed them scrawling graffitti and "mugging old ladies."

Steve preferred to be off the streets and engaged in organized programs, such as those he found at the game courts in Inwood Hill Park. This was a preference his parents encouraged strongly: "My father always told me: Son, there's nothing for you on the streets."

Greg Demes (b. 1966)

The Demeses lived on the west side of Broadway between 204th and 207th Streets. The family consisted of Greg, his parents and two brothers, one born in 1968 and one in 1971. Greg's father owned a local business. The family ethnic background is Greek.

When Greg was between six and ten (1972-76) and was living on Broadway, he could play in front of the building:

> We'd play in the courtyard right below the window. Our mother'd be able to keep an eye on us -- my parents were very protective. We used to play skelly -- you know, with the bottle caps. We used to draw the lines on the floor and the super used to get mad at us.

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Q: Did that stop you?

No. We'd also play with our spaldeens. We used to play off the wall, stuff like that. People would bother us to go away once in a while. We'd break windows once in a while. Part of growing up, I guess.

The rear of Greg's apartment building faced one of the few lots in Inwood on which the rocks had not been blasted away and on which, consequently, nothing enduring had been built. For Greg, this was a special place:

There was "the jungle," we called it. I must have been ten to twelve [1976-78]. It was all wild and overgrown: bushes and everything, ten feet high. We used to play everything there. We used to be able to climb into the trees, and they were so overgrown with vines that you could actually hide in the trees and make a bed about ten feet, twenty feet up, and just hang out there, read comic books. You were in your own little world there.

Q: How did you find this place?

We saw a hole in the fence in the back area of my building. If you see a hole in the fence, you know there's got to be something worthwhile through it.

Greg's father enrolled him in Little League:

I started Little League at eight or nine [1974-75] -- whenever it is you can start. I was in the farm teams. My father got involved at that time, too. He used to go down just about every week, every Saturday morning he'd go down there with me and stay down and help out. He wasn't a coach until I was thirteen, but he was always active, always there.

Little League was my life. It was all I wanted to do is play baseball. Couldn't wait for the games. I looked forward to practice as much as the games. I always

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liked my coaches so it was easy.

When he was ten (1976) Greg was crossing Broadway to bounce a "spaldeen" against the wall of the Post Office at the corner of Vermilyea Avenue and Academy Street:

> It had a wall, just a blank wall, no windows or doors.
>
> Q: Couldn't you have used the handball courts at Inwood Hill Park?
>
> Yeah, but one of my friends lived right across the street from that Post Office, and it was just one of the things we used to do.

Greg would be extremely cautious as he crossed Broadway:

> Broadway's always been a terrible street, cars screaming by. I remember I used to sometimes just watch people get hit by cars. A couple of times I just saw an old lady just get...crushed. So my mother never let us cross in between. We always had to go to the corner. You know, "Cross at the green, not in between."

At age eleven (1977) Greg began going to the woods and caves in Inwood Hill Park and, in winter, sledding in Isham Park. With friends he would go fishing "once in a while" at the Hudson River at the end of Dyckman Street.

Greg found several places in Inwood dangerous. His parents had told him to beware of the freight tracks in Inwood Hill Park as well as the water's edge, and so he avoided these places. Inwood east of Broadway was another place he considered dangerous:

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> East of Broadway the element got worse, you know. So it was always a little bit riskier. You just knew it. Different people.
>
> Q: How so?
>
> Not Irish people! When I was about eleven there was this record store on 207th going east a little. There was always and extra "be careful" from my parents when I went down there.
>
> Also, I stayed away from Ft. Tryon Park. Muggings. That was the word at least: you get mugged if you go to Ft. Tryon Park. I never was mugged there, but the fear was there.

By the time he was twelve (1978) Greg had decided that Inwood was not a good place to live:

> I started looking around, seeing kids doing drugs. Then we moved to Westchester.

Tim Walsh (b. 1966)

The Walshes lived on 215th Street and Indian Road, in a building abutting Inwood Hill Park, until 1975, when the family moved to 218th Street and Seaman Avenue, across the street from both Inwood Hill park and Baker Field. The family consisted of Tim, his parents and two older brothers, one born in 1963 and the other in 1965. Tim's father was a college professor. The family ethnic background is Irish.

Tim first left his apartment building to play unaccompanied at age eight or nine (1974-75), when the

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family had moved to 218th Street and Seaman Avenue. He would play in the building's courtyard or in the playing fields across the street at Inwood Hill Park; at other times he would play roller hockey or go skateboarding in the street in front of the building. In winter he would sled in Inwood Hill Park, on the gentle slopes a few dozen feet from Seaman Avenue:

> All the time in the winter we'd go sliding down the hills in Inwood Hill park. Originally with my family, then alone or with friends -- starting about age seven [1973] I guess.

While doing these things Tim remained for the most part "within shouting distance from my mom at the window." Exceptions would be when he would play in basement areas of his building, including the laundry room, or when he would visit Baker Field:

> Baker Field was right across and we used to sneak in. I was in third grade, fourth grade [1974-75]. I 'd be with my brothers, kids around the block, whatever.

When Tim would play with with his older brothers during this age they would use the woods:

> We had a clubhouse in the woods when I was in fifth grade. My brothers and some other friends. It was basically just a cave that we laid logs in front of.

At other times, they would play on the "blue mountain" in Isham Park -- a large, blue plastic outdoor sculpture that invited climbing. They would also sneak into Baker Field

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to use its running track.

At age twelve (1978) Tim began going alone beyond "shouting distance" of his mother. He began spending considerable time "deep in the woods," and found a favorite place in a cliff overlooking the Hudson River, where he would go occasionally to be alone. In the woods he would climb steep, rocky hills, which he found to be dangerous -- although the danger would occur to him only after he had finished playing on them.

Tim went to Good Shepherd School, which, of course, is just across Seaman Avenue from the Park. Inwood east of Broadway remained somewhat of a mystery to him:

> There were certain areas I didn't go just by habit. I had no reason to go down, I didn't have any friends in certain areas. Like, say, St. Jude's: I didn't know where St. Jude's was for the longest time, not till well into high school.

Brenda Arias (b. 1966)

Brenda Arias's mother brought Brenda, an infant son as well as her own mother to Inwood from the Dominican Republic in 1966. They settled on Post Avenue north of Dyckman Street. The grandmother found work as a seamstress in a factory while Brenda's mother established an informal daycare center in her apartment for fellow Dominican immigrants. In 1977 Mrs. Arias married the superintendent of the family's new building.

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Brenda's first exposures to Inwood were memorable for her:

> My first experiences were always with my mother and my brother. And we all sort of discovered together since she had just arrived in the country. It's not like she was familiar with the neighborhood. And our first discovery was really Ft. Tryon Park, which is gorgeous because we would go all the way up there, and there's like a long way up till that traffic circle and up there was the Cloisters.
>
> We would do this for about two years because my mother just fell in love with the place. She liked the woodsy part and she liked to introduce us to the open air, the tranquility, and just the beauty. But me and my brother, we were younger and we were thinking about the the swings and the see saws! So she would take us to the playground area near Broadway and Dyckman and then the woods. And it was fun, because there were always new places to go to. It's a huge park. We would stay about four or five hours, just trek the whole thing. And there were all these views -- the Hudson River, New Jersey. If you came to the other side, the view was of uptown Manhattan. This went on till she got married, when I was eleven [1977].
>
> We did this mostly on weekends. Afterschool, she had her little nursery, and parents didn't come to pick up their babies till five or six. So I played in the nursery. I was very fortunate, I grew up with a lot of kids, my age and under.
>
> The nursery was kids up to five or so. There was no maternity leave or anything in the factories where these women worked. It was like a survival thing: where would these women go if it wasn't for the nursery? A lot of daycare centers wouldn't take them. We're talking two months old and three months old.

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Playing outdoors without supervision began for Brenda at age nine (1975):

> I was allowed to go out alone -- just out into the street. It was right directly in front of the house, right outside. My mother couldn't see me, but we'd keep in touch. I'd run inside. Plus the neighbors -- I mean, these are people that share the language.
>
> We'd play hopscotch, jumping rope, double dutch. We'd skate. The boys would be playing, I don't know, stick baseball? Stickball? In the summer we would do a very urban thing and open the water hydrant. And then the cop would go by and close it and that would be the end of that.

Brenda did not use any places unsupervised beyond the immediate vicinity of her building. The playground near the Dyckman Houses was a place to visit only in groups:

> We used to go over to that park over at 204th and Nagle, over by the projects. I think it's part of the projects. There was this pool we used to go to, and there were swings and slides. We'd be in a group, always with someone older supervising. I also have a couple of relatives around here who I grew up with, an older cousin. She would take me and some friends.

When she was eleven Brenda found herself playing in front of the building less often than she had before:

> My mother told me, 'Don't go into alleys.' But when I was eleven and my mother married the super we moved to the basement, and I would play right outside in the yard. Friends would come down with bicycles. It was very safe in the sense that she was right here, we were in the yard, so it's not like she had to worry about a car running us over or anything.

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> So we'd ride our friends' bikes -- we didn't have our own -- and, like, jump rope. You know, it was a yard. We had a separate entrance.

Brenda was under almost constant supervision and, consequently, one would not expect her to have had a special place to be alone:

> Q: Was there any place in Inwood you went when you wanted to be alone?
>
> I wasn't allowed. I just didn't do that.

6.7 Discussion

In the years 1960 to 1975, children's play and recreation within Inwood took place in an increasingly anxious, mistrustful atmosphere, one in which Inwoodians struggled to cope with rapid and often unwelcome change. There were several aspects to this: the sudden shift in Inwood's population from predominantly-white to a much more diverse makeup created divisions between what were perceived as "old" and "new" Inwood. With minorities beginning to form majorities in the central valley area, and with this area increasingly a refuge for low-income residents (and, incidentally, for ever greater concentrations of children), landlords began neglecting their properties and the City began shirking its responsibilities, all of which served to perpetuate a

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cycle of decay. As this occurred, the disparity in family income between the valley area and the western area became more and more pronounced. Throughout this time Inwood's problems, especially those afflicting the valley area, went largely unaddressed as the Great Society, with its promise of "maximum feasible participation," never reached Inwood's growing low-income population.

As Inwood declined, its streets and their commercial establishments lost much of their attractiveness for children. Robbery, mugging, sexual assault, drug dealing and drug abuse surfaced as serious concerns, as they had done in the country as a whole. In addition, the streets became dirty, depressing and devoid of attractions for children. Such longstanding establishments and facilities as movie theaters and the Miramar Pool began to go out of business, while others developed a mistrust of those who walked through their doors. Similarly, Inwood's parks were -- except for grassroots action -- neglected, although trash and physical decay apparently were causing more alarm than was crime.

Decline in the parks was countered with some success by a vigorous grassroots movement in the neighborhood's western part, one which was paralleled at the Dyckman Houses but, unfortunately for Inwood, not in the rapidly-changing valley area. Where community organizing

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did occur, though, it put local residents (in spite of their occasional factionalism) in substantial control over their local parks -- not that they had to wrest such control from an unyielding government; rather, organizers stepped in to fill a void that had been left by the city as it shrunk from its responsibility for park maintenance. The resulting void was, moreover, one which the city readily acknowledged having left and which it was only too glad to have citizens fill -- as long as community demands for funds remained minimal. The mobilizing of the 1960s and early 1970s brought to Inwood the first steps toward dealing decisively with the problem of diminishing play opportunities -- a problem it had fretted over since the mid-1940s but had never quite conquered. Citizen organizing also set in motion what appears to have flourished into an enduring campaign for better parks and playgrounds.

How did children's access to Inwood fare under the conditions of the 1960s and early 1970s? The mapping exercises discussed earlier in this chapter suggest that children coped quite well and continued to enjoy substantial neighborhood access. On the other hand, curiously, the interviews with people who grew up in Inwood in this turbulent time show limitations and

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restrictions to an extent not seen in the childhoods of their predecessors. Let us work toward a resolution of this apparent conflict by examining each data set in its turn, beginning with the oral history interviews.

Girls' access to Inwood seems to have been especially problematic. Four of the interviews for this chapter focused on girls' childhoods: Brenda Arias, Tracy Byrne, Denise D'Arcy and Rebecca Weiss. These four came from different backgrounds and lived in different housing situations: Brenda from a single-parent, Dominican immigrant household living in the valley area; Tracy from a large, long-established Irish-American Inwood family living near Inwood Hill Park; Denise from a black family living in the Dyckman Houses and Rebecca from a Jewish family living in the condominium tower on Hillside Avenue. All except Rebecca had practically no unsupervised contact with Inwood and rarely left the immediate vicinity of their homes unescorted; some were not even allowed out of the apartment alone until age eleven. (Rebecca Weiss, the exception, still played mainly within the fenced-in playground of her building but frequently went beyond -- although never as far as Fort Tryon Park). These girls' severe limitations seem to be something new to their generation.

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Silence sometimes can speak volumes, and these girls' lack of access to unsupervised play and recreation in Inwood is an eloquent statement of their limited opportunity to use their neighborhood. But for insights into what barriers or discouragements more adventuresome children encountered (beyond the few mentioned in the 1975 exercises), we must rely instead on the boys' histories. Virtually all had negative feelings and experiences in their contact with Inwood; for, while the girls escaped unpleasant neighborhood experiences through simple lack of contact, the boys continued to play outdoors unsupervised and met annoyances, discouragements, barriers and some violence.

In Jim Kennedy's experience, for example, there was: traffic along Broadway too formidable to be crossed; the telephone company that locked him and his playmates out of the company parking lot; turf quarrels that kept him from the schoolyard of PS 98; the frightening quality of woods of Inwood Hill Park; and Dyckman Street, which for some reason he "hated." Earnest Vanderveer, who is black and who lived in the Dyckman Houses, was quite wary of the threatening "Irish boys" on Academy Street. Howard Berg found certain buildings too risky to enter on his meat delivery rounds; he felt also that the merchants on Dyckman Street were unfairly harsh to children, and was

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once confronted by an armed youth. Kevin McArdle, although living just across a quiet street from a wooded area of Inwood Hill Park, did not explore the woods since his mother warned him that dangerous wild animals roamed it. Steve Garcia, who came from a Cuban background, disliked the valley area for its Dominican children, who, he says, "mugged old ladies;" in addition, Steve, like his father, disapproved of street play. Rebecca Weiss, the only female interviewee who got around on her own, was barred by her father from attending Girl Scout meetings after dark at the Dyckman Houses. Bruce Friedman was inhibited by gangs and by the still-strict rules of conduct in Isham Park, as well as by the J.D. card-issuing police who would enforce those puzzling rules. Greg Demes, who lived on Broadway's west side, was frightened by the heavy traffic on that artery and, to some extent, by the people living on the other side. Only Tim Walsh, living in the secluded northwestern corner of Inwood, had no reported obstacles or barriers, although even he seems to have been dimly aware that St. Jude's Parish was a place to avoid.

Do the strong indications of distress in children's access to Inwood during this period, as suggested by these oral history interviewees, flatly contradict the rosier

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picture presented by the 1975 mapping exercises as discussed in an earlier chapter section? And, if so, which does one believe -- the direct testimony of children or the judicious recollections of adults? Although we may not actually solve such a riddle here, we may take certain things into consideration that affect these varied data, and thus resolve at least some of the most glaring points of discrepancy.

For one thing, it is necessary to consider that the 1975 exercises sought to ascertain range, while the oral historical interviews sought to cull a broad spectrum of experience, feelings and attitudes in considerable detail. Further, the 1975 exercises focused on the theoretical maximum allowable geographical range a child may have had at the moment of the exercise; the oral histories, on the other hand, prompted the informants to render large blocks of experience into a norm, or a more habitual realm of access (although, of course, anecdotal data were most welcome). What can be the significance of these distinctions? For one thing, it is true that a child responding to the investigators in 1975 could, without stretching the truth, have been encouraged to emphasize the outer limits of his or her range (projecting a message such as "Look how far I can go! I'm such a big kid, right?") and not the more mundane daily pattern.

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Meanwhile, the adult oral history informants, speaking fully one generation after the fact, and well-informed as to the present problem of crime, may wish to play down their ranges (projecting a different kind of message, such as "My parents were competent, concerned people who did not let me wander; I was a good kid and obeyed").

As for the prevalence of environmental discouragements and obstacles in the oral historical data and their relative scarcity in the 1975 exercises, it would seem plausible that such unpleasant things tend to emerge during the course of a full interview; they may tend not to surface readily in a child's mind -- as things incidental to questions of range or even of parental prohibitions.

All of this is offered to show that the differences between the two data sets may owe themselves largely to factors extrinsic to matters of accuracy. They may owe themselves instead to such things as their varying aims, or their varying historical-retrospective contexts, or to the widely varying developmental capacities of the two sets of informants. The differences are not necessarily due to each data set's respective approximations of literal truth.

Since the 1975 project was discussed at some length and since, in addition, its findings have been addressed

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above, the remainder of this discussion will concern itself with the oral history interviews for this chapter.

One of the hallmarks of children's experience of Inwood to emerge from the informants' testimony is the prevalence of discouragements, obstacles and barriers to play. Outstanding among these is the frequency with which fear or disapproval of other groups of people -- as opposed to physical dangers -- came into play. Inwood was not merely becoming a place of "us-and-them," but a place of multiple "us's" and "them's." To a black boy in the Dyckman Houses such as Earnest Vanderveer, the "them's" were the "Irish boys" who "want to beat your ass," while for Greg Demes, a Greek American, the area east of Broadway was to be approached with caution since the people there were "not Irish" -- presumably meaning Hispanic; for the Cuban-American Steve Garcia, the Dominicans who he says "mugged old ladies" were a disgrace; for Rebecca Weiss, a Jewish girl growing up in a condominium tower, the lower-income Dyckman Houses -- which, as we know, contained by far the neighborhood's greatest concentration of black families -- were a place her father did not want her to go after nightfall. This suggests strongly that the "us-versus-them" mentality worked both ways.

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Children in this period differed from their predecessors also in their generally strong liking for organized play and recreation programs. Whereas in the past attendance in these tended to be something short-lived and a bit perfunctory and unmemorable, children between 1960 and 1975 who did participate tended to become involved seriously and wholeheartedly. Earnest Vanderveer, although rejecting Little League, was very active in Boy Scouts, which drew upon a wider spectrum of a boy's capabilities than athletic ability, and he even took a leadership role; Howard Berg developed a close fondness for the programs at the YM-YWHA; Steve Garcia had an unequivocal preference for organized recreation (such as the ball games the Parks Department organized in Inwood Hill Park); Greg Demes was exposed to Little League by his father -- who soon became a League coach himself -- and, in Greg's own words, "Little League was my life;" Denise D'Arcy was in the Girl Scouts and went to Girl Scout camp in the summer; Rebecca Weiss, although rejecting the YM-YWHA, enjoyed Girl Scouts tremendously, believed in the "beliefs, morals and ethics" it espoused and was saddened when her father forbade her to attend after the meeting place was moved to the Dyckman Houses.

It is worth recalling that the older informants,

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appearing in the previous chapter, who attended these or other programs in the 1940s and 1950s, did not praise the programs nearly as highly as those who were involved with them in the 1960s and early 1970s. Apparently, these programs had taken on greater importance as the quantity and quality of unsupervised play opportunities declined.

Children's contact with natural landscapes and with natural landscape elements -- rocks, trees, water -- became less frequent and less sustained in the 1960-75 period, despite the fact that Inwood still had its abundant woodland and open waterfront areas. Where in previous decades children commonly went fishing or crabbing, swam in the rivers, collected berries and crabapples and drank from springs, children in this period did not. No informant mentioned swimming in the rivers, eating fruit or drinking spring water -- in a sense, tasting their environment. Only one (Greg Demes) mentioned fishing, but he did not begin doing that at age eleven, and even then did so only "sometimes." There also appears to have been considerably less rock-climbing during this period, a situation which probably was due to the increasing scarcity of empty lots, in which rocks often had been the chief attraction. In this time period, for example, Tim Walsh climbed rocks in the woods of

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Inwood Hill Park near home, and Earnest Vanderveer climbed rocks in Highbridge Park near his home; but these two were the only mentions of such activity. Tim and Earnest were also the only two informants to have ranged through entire parks -- Tim building forts in Inwood Hill Park and finding a cliff on which to be alone and Earnest playing "war games" at Fort Tryon Park (which, incidentally, had by then apparently lost the exclusive and genteel quality that children had once found inhibiting). The remaining informants merely played around the edges of these wooded areas without venturing into them.

As a final word on children's contact with nature, it is interesting to note that Brenda Arias's mention of her enjoyment of the scenic views of the Hudson and the New Jersey Palisades, which were to be had from the summit of Ft. Tryon Park (albeit, for Brenda, always in the company of her mother) is the first mention of such an appreciation of this important part of Inwood's allure to appear in this entire investigation.

Children's use of local stores and other commercial establishments declined substantially in the latter part of the 1960-75 period, according to the experiences of the informants. However, regarding this there seems to be a split in their ranks. Of the twelve whose

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childhoods are presented in this chapter, the six born in 1957 or earlier enjoyed ready access to such places, while the six born in 1958 and after had almost none.

Of the six born in 1957 and earlier, there were: Jim Kennedy, who saw local bars as safety stations; Rebecca Weiss, who used bowling alleys and movie theaters; and Howard Berg, who ran errands for a local butcher, went bowling, attended movies and patronized local delicatessens and candy stores. Still, this use was hardly trouble-free: Jim Kennedy, as mentioned earlier, "hated" Dyckman Street since it was devoid of attractions for him, while, again, Howard Berg encountered with defiance shopkeepers' strong resentment of his presence. Furthermore, the three remaining informants born in 1957 and earlier -- Bruce Friedman, Earnest Vanderveer and Denise D'Arcy -- made no mention of such commercial establishments.

Turning to children born in 1958 and after, the single mention of a commercial establishment was made by Greg Demes, whose trips to a record store on 207th Street east of Broadway were cause for a few extra cautionary words from his parents. Apparently this facet of the Inwood landscape -- places where goods and services are bought and sold -- was yet another local feature that was fast receding from children's experience of their neighborhood.

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7.0 INWOOD CIRCA 1975-1991: DESPAIR AND HOPE

7.1 Introduction

By far the greatest changes Inwood experienced between 1975 and 1991 were not physical or institutional but demographic, having to do with population, race, ethnicity and income. In all of these characteristics Inwood changed not only dramatically but in ways much different from those seen in the 1960s and early 1970s.

The population drain, for example, had abated. In the 1960s, when Inwood was experiencing its second consecutive decade of population decline, population loss was feared as a formidable threat to the quality of local streets and housing. But population loss began to slow considerably after 1970 and then, after 1980, reversed dramatically: between 1970 and 1980 Inwood lost a mere three percent of its population and by the 1990 census had gained an impressive 12 percent. Thus Inwood's population in 1990 -- 51,909 -- was higher than at any time since 1950, and was slightly above that of 1960 (Table 11). Unfortunately, however, the increase was not spread throughout the community but was concentrated within the core of the valley area --that is, farthest from the best quality housing and from parks (Fig. 51).

The stabilizing population numbers notwithstanding,

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Year	Population	% Change
1960	51,823	-3
1970	47,584	-8
1980	46,251	-3
1990	51,909	+12

Table 11. Population trends, 1960-90.

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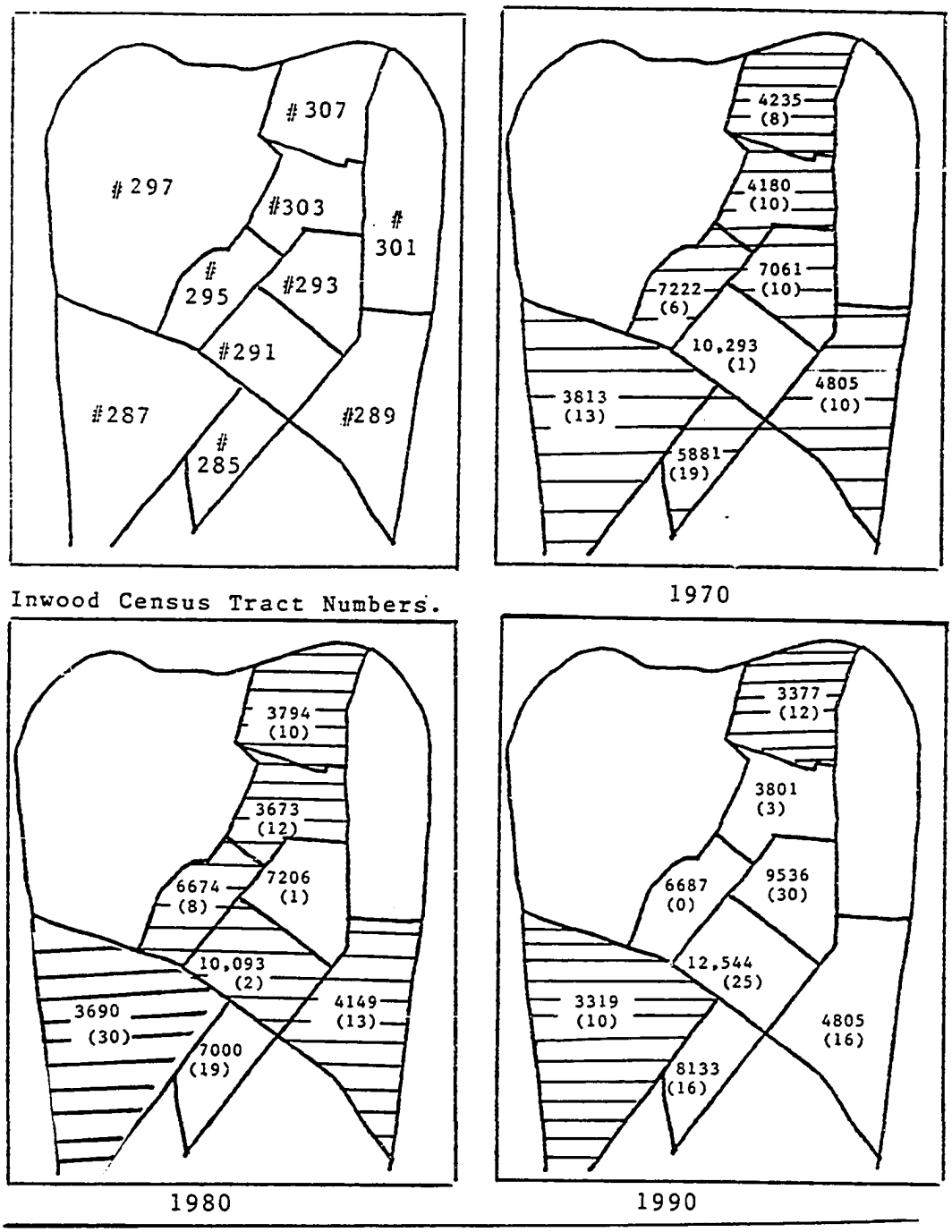


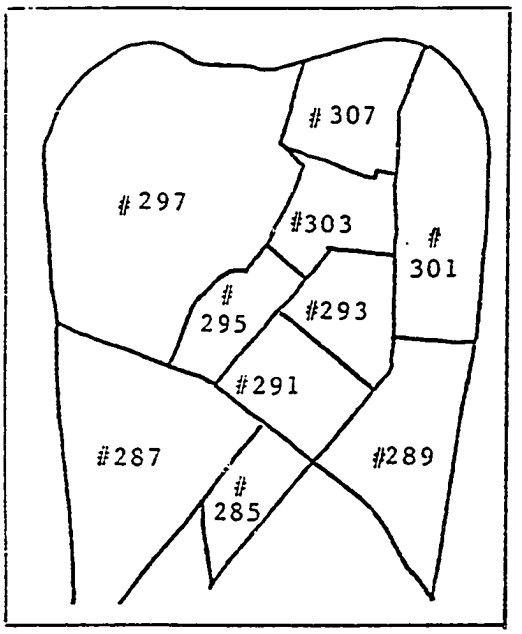
Fig. 51. Map series showing population, 1970, 1980 and 1990. Figures in parentheses are percent changes since previous census. Shaded tract indicates a decrease since previous census.

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Inwood continued to get poorer. The 1970-1980 decline in income was the most severe that Inwood had ever seen: in those years the median family income fell from 98 percent of the citywide average to 75 percent [1]. In 1970, the percentage [2] of Inwood's population (excluding the area below Dyckman Street) with incomes below the federal poverty level was twelve; by 1980 the figure had jumped to 26 percent -- a gain of 160 percent [3] (Presbyterian Hospital, 1983). Income in all of Inwood's census tracts but one -- # 307, in the northwest corner, embracing Park Terrace East and West -- experienced precipitous declines in income (Fig. 52). By 1980, families in <u>all</u> tracts (except for the still-exclusive #307) had incomes well below 100 percent of the citywide average. Moreover, for tracts in the central valley area, the figure hovered around a mere 55 percent, a disparity that points to the still-widening economic gulf between eastern and western Inwood. To illustrate this further: in 1970 families in the eastern four tracts had incomes that were 73 percent of the corresponding combined figure for that of four tracts to the west; by 1980 that figure had fallen to 62 percent [4].

The number and distribution of children throughout Inwood also changed markedly between 1970 and 1980. Between 1970 and 1980, for the city as a whole, the

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Inwood Census Tract Numbers.

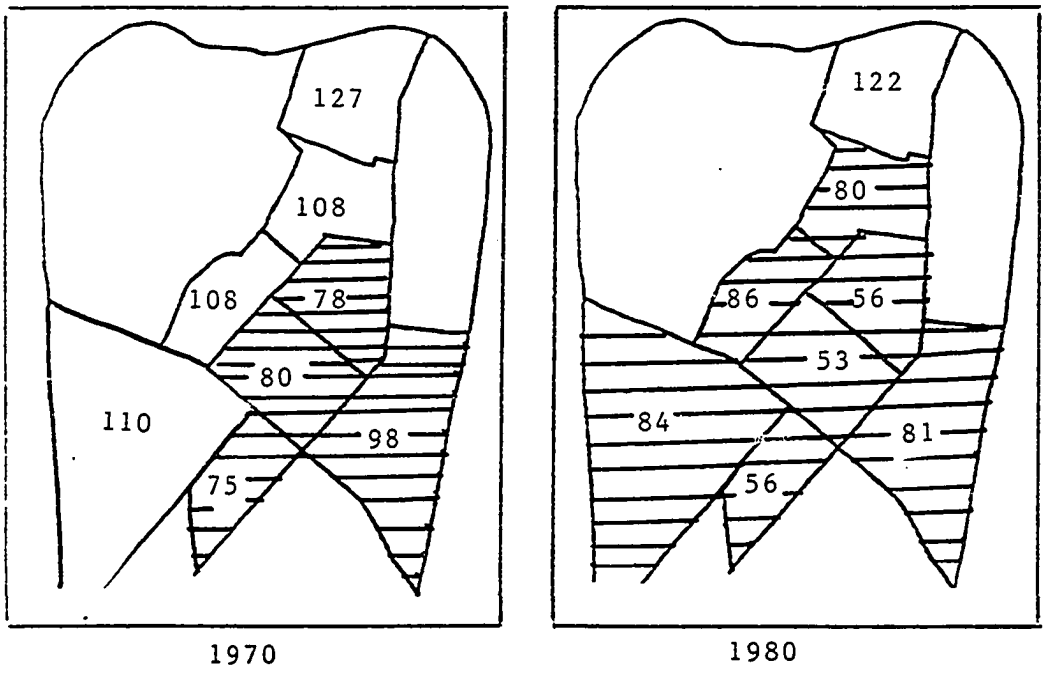


Fig. 52. Map series showing median family income, 1970 and 1980. Numbers represent census tract's income as a percentage of the citywide average. Shaded tract indicates a percentage below 100.

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percentage of residents between five and 14 years old declined from 15.9 to 10.7; however, in Inwood the change in ratio was reversed -- Inwood's children increased from 12.4 to 13.0 percent of its population. Although, given Inwood's slight population decrease between 1970 and 1980, the gain in the actual number of children in this age range was only negligible, these figures nevertheless point to the fact that, from a citywide perspective, Inwood had become a place where children were concentrated to a degree 30 percent higher than was the case throughout the city.

Even aside from their actual numbers, the distribution of children within Inwood changed significantly, as they became ever more concentrated in the central valley area than they had been before: between 1970 and 1980 the census tracts in the northwestern area lost considerably in terms of the percentage of their residents who were children, while tracts in the central valley had slightly increased concentrations (the tract containing the Dyckman Houses remained fairly stable in this regard) (Fig. 53). Thus one more trend seen in the 1950s and 1960s continued into these later decades: an increasing number of Inwood's children lived in the part of Inwood farthest away from the neighborhood's parks and playgrounds.

Inwood's black population, after having increased

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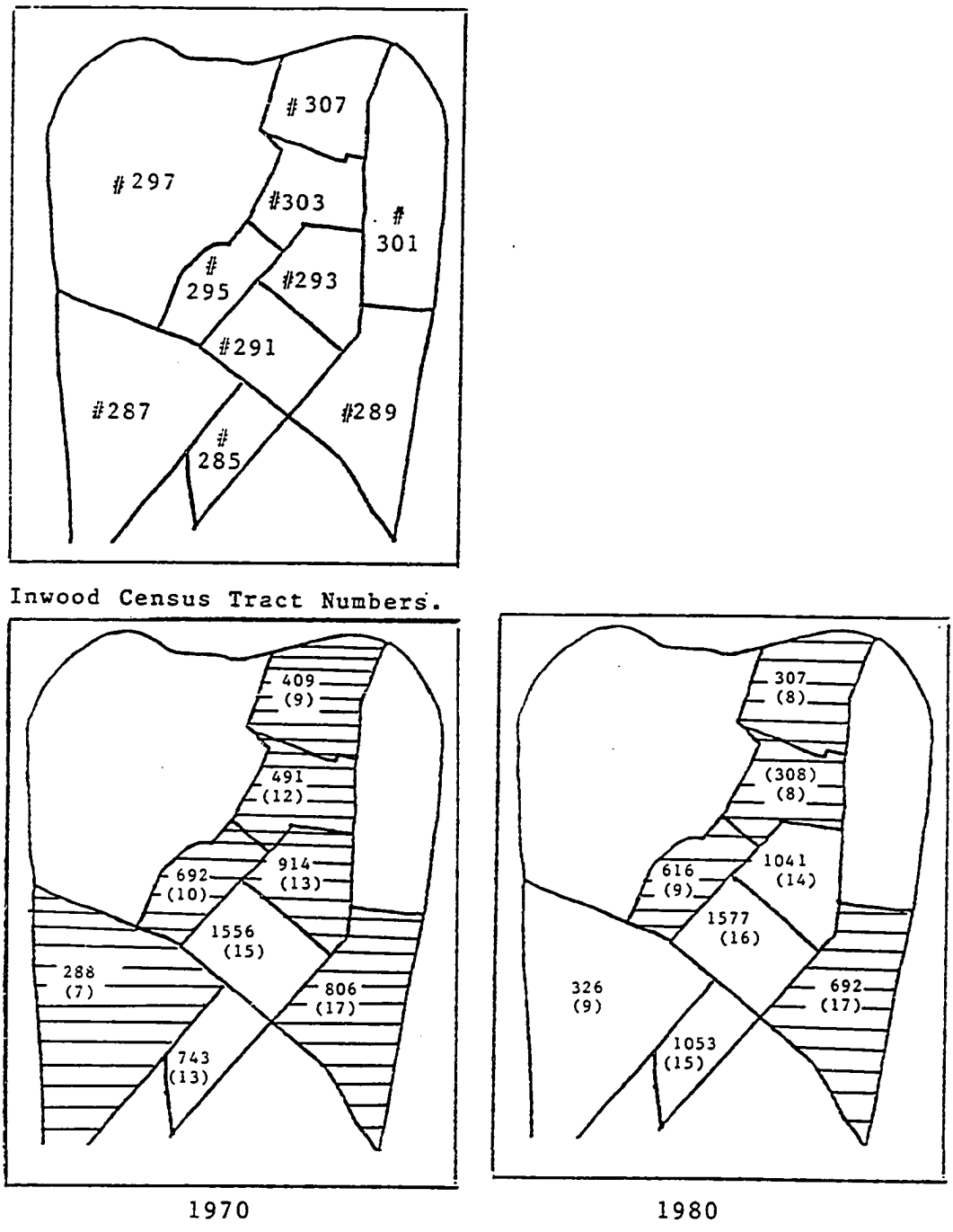


Fig. 53. Map series showing distribution of children age 5-14, by census tract. Numbers in parentheses are percentage of tract's population that are children. Shaded tract indicates a decrease, in actual numbers, from previous census.

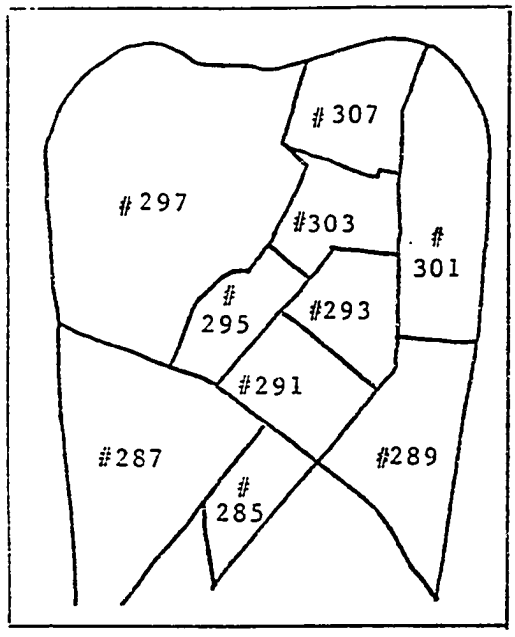
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between 1970 and 1980, actually decreased between then and 1990. In the tract containing the Dyckman Houses, the black population peaked in 1980 at 42.2 percent, then declined to 35 percent in 1990. By 1990 the tract with the second highest concentration of blacks was #307 -- in Inwood's most exclusive area -- where the figure for 1980, as well as for 1990, was ten percent and over; elsewhere in the neighborhood, blacks by 1990 represented less than 6 percent of the population (Fig. 54).

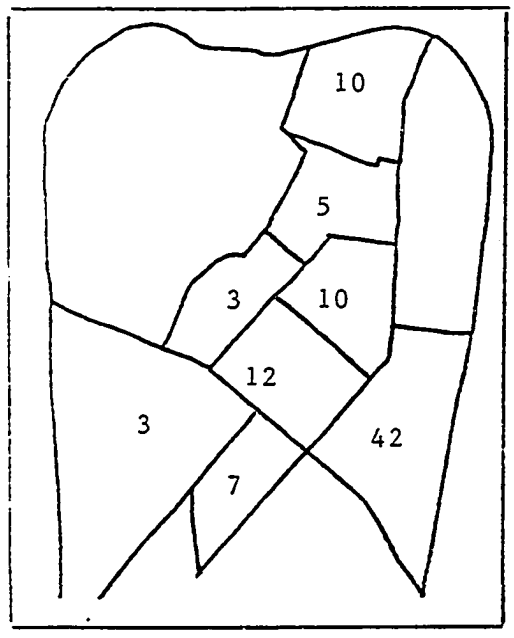
Certainly one of the most outstanding features of Inwood's demographic changes between 1970 and 1990 was the great increase in the number of Hispanic people living there. The percentage of Inwoodians who were Hispanic jumped from 16.3 in 1970 to 52.0 in 1980, and then to 67.5 in 1990. By 1980 the central valley had become well over half Hispanic, while bordering tracts were approaching that mark; ten years later the valley area was roughly 85 percent Hispanic, while most of the bordering tracts were near or beyond the 50 percent mark (Fig. 55). By 1990 the only census tracts that did not have an Hispanic majority were those immediately to the east of Inwood Hill Park -- again, in Inwood's most exclusive areas.

However, Hispanic residents of Inwood, as of the 1980 census, were considerably poorer than their non-Hispanic neighbors, whether black or white. That census found 37

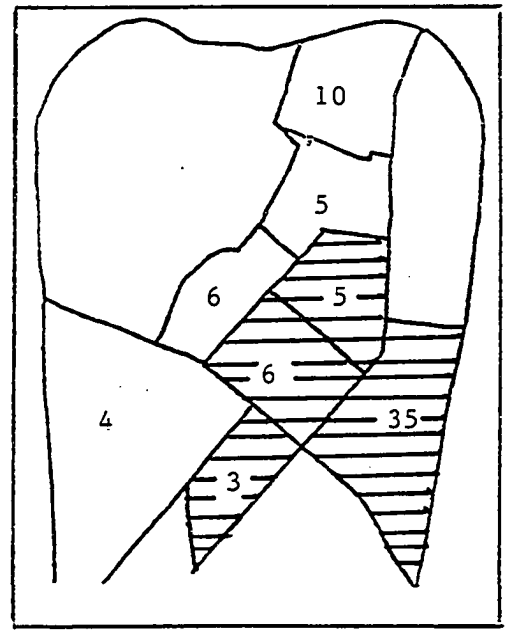
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Inwood Census Tract Numbers.



1980



1990

Fig. 54. Map series showing distribution of black residents, 1980 and 1990. Numbers represent percentage of tract's residents who were black. Shaded tract indicates a decrease, in real numbers, since previous census.

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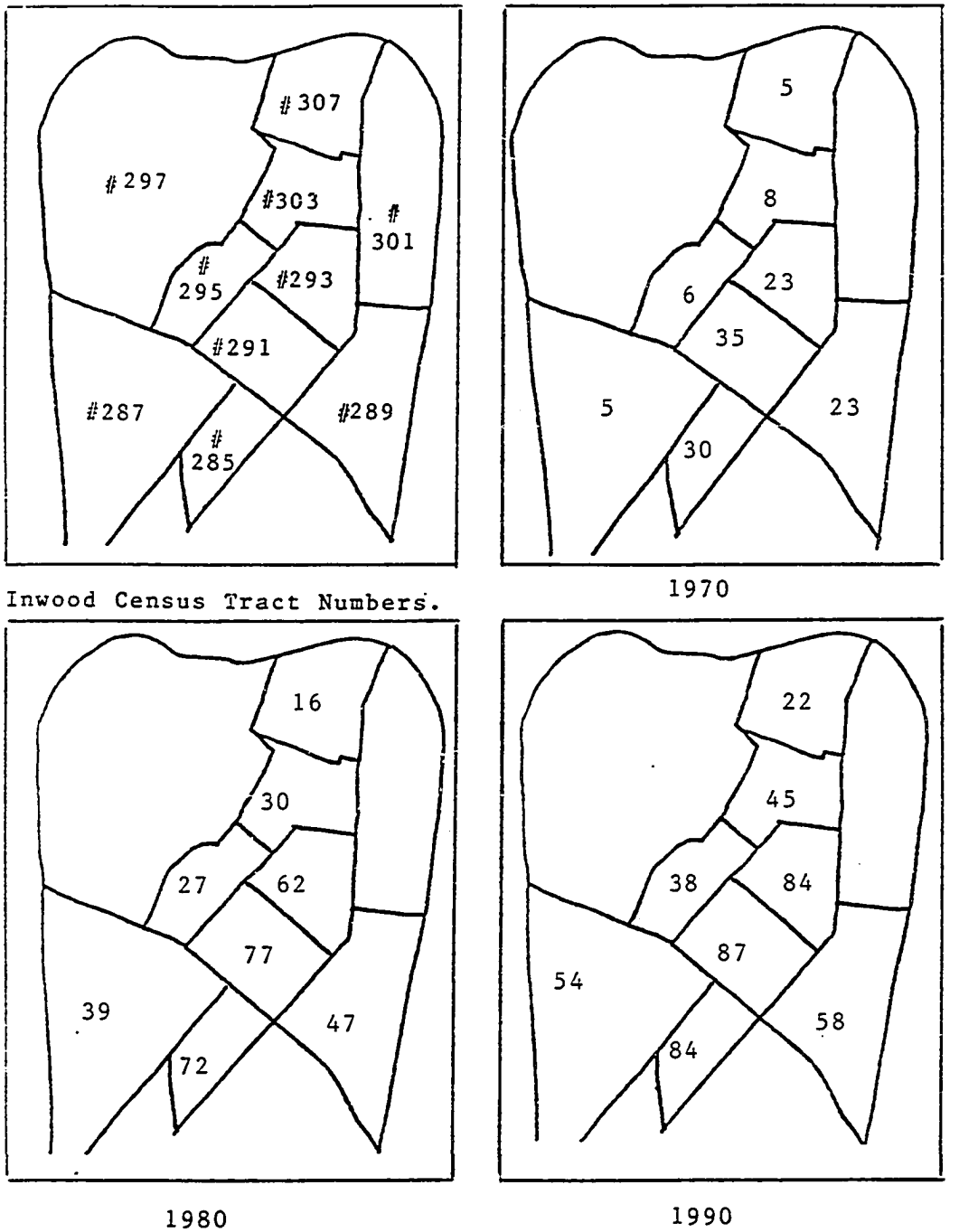


Fig. 55. Map series showing distribution of Hispanic residents, by census tract, 1970, 1980 and 1990. Numbers represent percentage of tract's population that was Hispanic.

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percent of them to have incomes below the federal poverty level; for whites, the percentage was 17 percent; for blacks, 22 percent.

In 1976 the Hispanic-American Alliance of Washington Heights and Inwood estimated that immigrants from the Dominican Republic had become the area's predominant Hispanic sub-group (Severo, 1976). The following section looks more closely at this population.

Footnotes to Section 7.1

[1] 1990 Census figures for income on a census-tract level were not available at this writing.

[2] All figures are rounded to the nearest whole number.

[3] During the same period, the city as a whole had a significant but far less remarkable jump: from 15 percent to 20 percent.

[4] 1990 Census figures showing breakdown by age and by census tract were not available as of this writing.

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7.2 The Dominicans in Inwood

What brought Dominicans to New York City? How are they faring? The first significant migration to the United States from the Dominican Republic occurred in the mid-1950s and increased substantially after 1961 (Hendricks, 1974). The year 1961 also was the one in which the Republic's dictator, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Molina (commonly called simply "Trujillo"), was assassinated, ending a dictatorship that had lasted almost uninterrupted since 1931, when the United States Government had helped install him. After Trujillo's death, the Dominican Republic's restrictive emigration policy was rescinded and a large exodus followed (Pessar, 1982). In 1965, U.S. troops descended on the Republic to support reactionary elements seeking to unseat Juan Bosch, a popularly-elected liberal. The year 1965 was also the one in which the United States revised its own immigration policy to increase vastly the number of immigrants from Latin America as well as from Asia. By 1980 there were 169,100 Dominicans in the United States, of which 127,000 lived in the New York metropolitan area (Pessar, 1987).

From the beginnings of mass Dominican immigration to the United States, single Dominicans newly arrived in New York tended to stay for a time with established households, a practice which commonly lead to crowding.

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These newly-arrived families would tend to concentrate in areas already heavily-settled by fellow Dominicans; this apparently was due in large part to Dominican fathers' concern about the Americanization that the children would undergo if they were to grow up isolated from non-Dominicans (Hendricks, 1974). (Pessar [1987] has noted Dominican fathers' increased involvement in matters of child-rearing fathers once they have emigrated).

The extended family is the primary social unit in the lives of Dominicans, both in the Dominican Republic and in the United States (Hendricks, 1974; Pessar, 1982), a fact often not accounted for by the United States's immigration policy, which fosters "family reunification" but fails to account for relatives beyond the nuclear family (Pessar, 1982). Contrary to the precedent set by the European immigration that peaked in the 1920s, women, and not men, comprise the majority of Dominicans emigrating to the United States (Gurak & Kritz, 1982). Nearly all of these women have family or extended family members residing in the United States upon arrival (Pessar, 1987) from whom they can draw assistance; nevertheless, fully 55.7 percent of Dominican women had received public assistance in the year prior to a 1981 survey (Gurak & Kritz, 1982). Dominican mothers depend on accessible extended family members to care for their children when at the job; one

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option some use is to send the children back to family members in the Dominican Republic (Hendricks, 1974). The problem of child supervision is compounded by the fact that 37 percent of Dominican households are headed by single mothers (48 percent live in nuclear families, and 13 percent in extended families; Gurak & Kritz, 1982).

Dominican parents, both in their homeland and in the United States, discourage their children from street play (Hendricks, 1974); when children do play outdoors they do so in groups of mixed ages, as the older children are expected to take responsibility for their younger siblings. Girls especially are watched closely and are expected to remain close to home. Parents are even more protective of adolescent daughters, as it is thought that if one should lose her virginity she will be unsuitable for marriage:

> When adolescent Dominicans attending school in New York discussed personal problems with me, girls almost invariably spoke about the overprotectiveness of their families and the elaborate ruses devised to escape their ever-watchful eyes...
>
> ...A frequent criticism by parents of life in New York dealt with this issue of children expected to be loosened from tight parental control, and consequent failure to follow idealized Dominican norms of respect; disrespect was equated with "being American." (Hendricks, 1974, p. 100).

Contrary to popular assumption, Dominican immigrants

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to the United States tend not to come primarily from poor rural areas but from the island's "middle strata" (Pessar, 1987). Of the women immigrants, fully 76 percent grew up in urban areas (Gurak & Kritz, 1982), and 30 percent were employed prior to emigration.

The strong Dominican presence in Washington Heights and Inwood has been symbolized since 1981 by the annual Dominican Day Parade, which proceeds along Amsterdam Avenue, which is a few blocks west of Highbridge Park. The parade attracted 40,000 people in 1981 and 100,000 in 1982 (Georges, 1984). In 1982 the Dominicans began holding an annual "Trinitaria" festival, commemorating the Republic's independence from Hati; in 1984 this festival attracted, by one newspaper's estimate (Trei, 1984) 400,000 people. Dominican activity on a more day-to-day basis consists of the 125 formal associations established in New York City as of 1984, of which 90 were in Upper Manhattan (Georges, 1984). The flowering of these voluntary associations redresses somewhat the political oppression found on the island, as social clubs had been prohibited by the Trujillo regime and by the repressive Dominican government installed by the United States in 1965 (Georges, 1984).

By 1981 many businesses in Inwood that had once been owned by Cubans and Puerto Ricans had come to be run by

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Dominicans. According to the Hispanic-American Inwood Chamber of Commerce, these businesses were concentrated on 207th Street, Sherman Avenue north of Dyckman Street, and on Dyckman Street itself; many of the Cubans and Puerto Ricans who had initially helped give Inwood's shopping streets a Hispanic character have been moving out of the neighborhood (Goodman, 1981).

Dominicans, however, were not the only new population to settle in Inwood in significant numbers since 1975. The following section discusses one other significant new local element.

7.3 "The Yuppies Are Coming"

So read the title of an editorial in an uptown Manhattan newspaper in 1984 (Perkins, 1984), warning residents of upper Manhattan that well-off apartment hunters were seeking bargains in uptown's "isolated" neighborhoods. This new attractiveness of upper Manhattan had happened rather suddenly; just three years earlier, The New York Times (Ivins, 1981) had, in the following terms, dismissed the idea that such a place as Inwood could attract yuppies: "it is a section where people do not roller-skate plugged into a tape-cassette, there are no hanging plants in the bars and the perils of gentrification are still a few years off" (p. B1).

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But change was swift: the next year the same newspaper, in an article intended specifically for apartment-hunters, entitled "If you're thinking of living in Inwood" (Wade, 1982), portrayed the recent opening of "a carrot cake bakery" on the corner of 214th Street and Broadway as a prelude to Inwood's inevitable transformation:

> The arrival of trendy carrot cake among the rugelach, black-and-whites and jelly doughnuts favored by old Inwood supports the belief that some new people are filtering in, looking for reasonably priced pleasant places to live, where commutation is not a day's work. (P. 9).

In the above, "yuppie" may be substituted for "some new people. "Yuppie," of course, is short for "Young Urban Professional," a somewhat derogatory, yet more often simply tongue-in-cheek term for a new type of city-dweller that began to appear in working-class urban neighborhoods throughout the United States in the late 1970s and 1980s. When "yuppies" would concentrate in a certain area enough so that rents rose, businesses began selling carrot cake rather than doughnuts, and non-yuppies were otherwise made to feel no longer welcome, the process was known as "gentrification" -- a term that pre-dated "yuppie" by nearly a generation, having been coined in England in the 1960s (Gale, 1984; Smith & Williams, 1986).

Gentrification began to attract serious study around

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1975, when urban planners noticed a trend consisting of "the gentry" moving into traditionally blue-collar, working class urban neighborhoods (Gale, 1984). Who were "the gentry"? Planning studies have shown that they were indeed young, urban and professional: a white man or woman living within a small household, aged from the mid-twenties to mid-thirties (which was considerably younger than the average U.S. household-head), "comfortably middle income," college-educated and employed in a professional capacity (p. 120). The "gentry," although able to afford houses in the suburbs, chose to live in the city for its vibrant social life and its architectural and historical richness.

The phenomenon of yuppies in older neighborhoods caused numerous social dilemmas, chief among which was displacement. According to Marcuse (1986), in the 1980s there was "very substantial gentrification in New York City, displacing (directly, indirectly or through chain effects) between 25,000 and 100,000 persons a year..." (p. 172). Displacement followed from the fact that landlords favored the gentry over longtime tenants, in the faultless arithmetic reasoning that larger profits come from tenants and buyers with higher incomes. Although rent-protection laws ostensibly guarded the rights of existing tenants, legal loopholes existed; if exploiting these failed, or if

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the landlord decided not to bother with legalities, he or she would not infrequently simply withhold services or would simply hound low-income tenants from their homes, sometimes violently; resort to murder was not unheard-of (Schanberg, 1981).

City administrations encouraged gentrification on the simple assumption that it was the solution to the housing divestment and consequent abandonment that threatened many older, working-class neighborhoods. Gentrification was seen as all the more embraceable since ostensibly it obeyed the laws of the "free market" -- this despite the fact that the trend was wholly dependent on massive government planning and on public subsidies in the form of tax forgiveness. Indeed, urban economic analysts such as Marcuse (1986) concluded that such assumptions were indeed false, that gentrification did not rush to the scene of abandonment in order to blunt its damage the way penicillin flows through the bloodstream toward an infection; rather, they theorized, it acted opportunistically, creating further abandonment in its wake if that would serve its purposes; if one may carry the biomedical metaphor a one step further, gentrification was no medicine for the sick organism of the city but rather a parasite feeding on the remaining healthy tissue. Hence the paradox, so painfully apparent during the

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1980s, of some neighborhoods -- or sections of neighborhoods -- undergoing renovation and gentrification while others became depopulated and forsaken. These co-existing, mutually-reinforcing extremes of regeneration and decay created starkly uneven urban pattern; as Gottdiener (1986) observed:

> ...although redevelopment has been successful, it has assumed an uneven social form. Our metropolitan centers are really two cities: The one that goes to work is reserved for the affluent and the tourists; the other, which languishes in unproductive social forms, is reserved for the working poor, minorities, and the urban underclass. This contrast is quite graphic, as anyone touring our central cities can attest, and represents an extreme crisis of inequality produced by the uneven nature of city growth. (P. 280).

Just as the valley area of Inwood had been highly susceptible to abandonment and decay in the 1960s and early 1970s, its western area became susceptible to gentrification in the late 1970s and '80s, leading to what Gottdiener refers to as "uneven growth." This western part of Inwood of course had several advantages: large, moderate-rent apartments, extensive parkland, express subway service and access to major highways. But although gentrification certainly touched Inwood, it did not transform it as it had other neighborhoods, and it did not affect all areas of Inwood evenly [1]. Let us examine

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briefly Inwood's flirtation with full-scale gentrification.

Inwood's gentrification was largely confined to the area of Broadway, especially north of 215th Street, along Seaman Avenue, Park Terrace West and Park Terrace East -- streets which contain the larger and more modern elevator apartments very near Inwood Hill and Isham Parks. Augmenting the desirability of this already-attractive area was the opening, in 1988, of a new hospital on what had been vacant land at the extreme eastern part of Baker field, near Broadway. This brought doctors, physicians' assistants and other highly-paid medical professionals to the area. In 1987 the local State Assemblyman's office reported 30 cooperative conversions completed in Inwood and estimated 30 more expected, nearly all of them west of Broadway (Waite, 1987).

Did gentrification force an exodus of long-time Inwoodians and thus disrupt life there? It seem unlikely that this was the case, although displacement is difficult to assess sociologically as there exist no standard criteria for its measurement (LeGates & Hartman, 1986). One clue to the severity of the situation is in the fact that in 1987 Washington Heights and Inwood were designated by the city as an area in which low-income residents were at special risk not merely of losing their present

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apartments but of becoming homeless altogether, and social services were increased to serve such "at risk" people there (Daley, 1987). Yet it is not at all clear that the problem being addressed was nearly as prevalent in Inwood as it was in Washington Heights; such large-scale programs tend to regard the two neighborhoods as one (they do, after all, comprise a single Community District and Police Precinct).

Whether or not large-scale displacement occurred in Inwood, it is certain that Inwood's western section experienced if not a flood then at least a notable increase in new residents who, in contrast with those among whom they were settling, were affluent enough to afford to pay whatever the market demanded for cooperative apartments. In 1980 the director of the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development's Neighborhood Preservation office, on 207th Street, said that her agency's policy was one of "trying to renovate for the people living here, so that basically we don't disturb the neighborhood" (Weinstein, 1981, p. 1). But seven years later the State Assemblyman's office (which, unlike a citywide agency, is accountable to a bloc of voters in a much smaller area) contended that "The newest breed of Inwood entrepreneur...is the speculator who buys an apartment building not to collect rent or even to

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convert it to a co-op, but just to vacate as many of its apartments as possible and then sell it to a converter" (Waite, 1987, p. 9).

As ominous as this sounds, a review of newspaper articles on Inwood's cooperative conversions shows a preponderance of buildings converted according to "non-eviction plans," i.e., in which renters are given the option of buying their apartments or remaining under familiar rental terms. In addition, there was no indication in neighborhood newspaper reports throughout the 1980s that landlord harassment of tenants was a significant problem there. (This, however, would not preclude the possibility of press self-censorship). Thus, although Inwood's western areas did experience some measurable degree of gentrification, it most likely did not become heavily gentrified. Of the growing income disparity, discussed above, between the eastern and western parts of Inwood, gentrification appears to have been a contributing factor, although not a major cause.

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Footnotes to Section 7.3

[1] The previous section discussed the growing income disparity between the eastern part of Inwood and the western that occurred between 1970 and 1980, which was due, of course, not to any increase in income for those living on the west (for all census tracts experienced a decline) but to the fact that income on the east was falling at so much faster a rate. Unfortunately, 1990 income statistics were not available at this writing. Yet it would be interesting to see what an income-distribution map would look like according to the 1990 Census, since conversions of rental buildings to cooperatives (i.e., where each individual apartment is a separately-owned and -traded commodity) did not become commonplace in Inwood until after the 1980 Census.

7.4 Fiscal Crisis and Community Organizing

Gentrification was embraced by municipal governments as a way to infuse older, low-income neighborhoods with cash from the newly-arrived, higher-income households, who spent their earnings on housing and on goods sold in local establishments oriented toward their needs and tastes. Meanwhile, in the mid-1970s cities began experiencing their most severe financial crises since the great depression and had begun countering them with massive reductions in services. This in many ways made individual affluence -- such as that of "yuppies" -- almost a precondition of a reasonably safe and rewarding urban life.

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April, 1975 is a crucial month in the history of American cities. It marks the abrupt end of the New Deal-Great Society liberal experiment (which, to be sure, had been wretched and hobbling since the late 1960s) and the ascendancy of rigid conservatism in American urban government. That month, in the midst of a severe national recession, several major commercial banks announced that they would no longer lend to the City of New York. The city was $13 billion in debt (Zevin, 1976) and billions more in municipal bonds were due for payment. Yet because of the banks' decision, the city could not borrow to pay its bond-holders. The city was going bankrupt. Thus was born New York's "fiscal crisis," which would in time be replicated in all of the nation's large cities.

This new crisis in urban government is distinguishable from earlier ones chiefly by the degree to which it was addressed not by elected officials but by business interests. Before April, 1975, of course, these interests had been lending money to the city freely and at maximum interest (Newfield & DuBruhl, 1977); but then, fearing that the City was borrowing too heavily and spending irresponsibly (primarily on social programs, they decided to use their ultimate control over the flow of cash to change city policy. In the months before the banks' cut-off, city policy-makers for their part chose to

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ignore the impending disaster, and so had no response planned. When the lenders closed their doors on the City, the result was a panicked scramble on the part of

to regain the privilege of borrowing, which of course is not a strong position from which to haggle with one's creditors. With such a mood prevailing, decisions on the allocation of funds for services -- e.g., schools, hospitals, parks and police -- were taken instantly and drastically, with an air of inevitability and with far more attention paid to the balance sheet than to their social consequences.

There is, however, strong circumstantial evidence that the fiscal crisis was about more than dollars and cents; ideology almost certainly played a major part, as corporate interests had decided that spending on social programs had gotten out of hand. According to one critic (Boyte, 1980):

> when the downturn hit in 1974, with inflation continuing at double-digit levels, business reacted with what Bank of America V.P., Walter Hadley, called "sheer fear." Meanwhile, all remnants of liberalism vanished from internal corporate rhetoric. Organizations like the Conference Board issued warnings about the looming crisis in western civilization. Business managers took up 1930s-style rantings against "equalitarianism," the welfare state, even democracy itself. And with alacrity, the corporate solution to the nation's economic crisis came into focus: in the new "age of limits" the nation's wealth was in dire need of distribution --

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upwards. (P. 13)

"Fiscal austerity" -- a policy of triage toward city services -- began almost immediately. Roger Starr (1976), an influential conservative writer on urban affairs, in a manifesto appearing in the Sunday New York Times Magazine under the title "Making New York Smaller," went so far as to propose a policy of "planned shrinkage," in which the city's population would be allowed to decline to whatever the job market would bear; those remaining would be herded into high-density districts. Following this, the depopulated areas would be bulldozed and all services withdrawn -- at a substantial savings to the City treasury, Starr argued.

Similar modes of thought dominated the debate over how to "rescue" New York. Although nothing as bold as "planned shrinkage" came to pass (Starr himself called it politically unpalatable), what did ultimately come to pass was a "shrinkage" on piecemeal basis, but with the same goal of maximum austerity. To re-enter the financial market and to be allowed to borrow once again, the City had to show its creditors that it was serious about cutting spending [1] and so it did indeed cut spending. Toward this end, two initial steps were taken when in August, 1975 the Metropolitan Transportation Authority increased fares for New York City Subway and bus riders,

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from 35 cents to 50 cents and in October the City laid off hundreds of thousands of its workers. The following June, tuition was imposed at the historically tuition-free City University of New York. Further cuts were assured.

With the new conservative mood, the imperative of austerity was drilled into the citizenry. Typical of the suggestions and exhortations circulated at the time was the following passage from an editorial in The New York Times ("State of the City," 1975):

> The only realistic course is to cut spending to levels that the city can afford -- and that means reducing personnel and services far more drastically than the Mayor has so far suggested, and clamping a lid on civil service wages and fringe benefits. The essential first step would be to put a freeze on all new hiring and to suspend negotiated pay increases -- amounting to some $600 million in the new fiscal year -- as the Citizens Budget Commission has recommended. The only -- but less desirable -- alternative is wholesale firings. (P. 26).

The full title of the editorial is "State of the City: Fiscal shock." The use such terms as "shock" "drastic" and "clamping a lid" was one way by which the public was put on the alert that it had better brace itself for a sharp curtailment of public spending.

But were service cuts the only option? Most likely they were not. Newfield and DuBruhl (1977), for example, documented the ways in which the City ignored some obvious

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ways to reap windfalls -- perhaps amounting to billions of dollars. These measures included pursuing tax delinquents (especially large commercial real estate owners) and addressing widespread fraud among contractors and concessionaires with whom the City did a large volume of business. Another possibility was for New York to claim its fair share from the federal government: Professor Seymour Melman (1977) of Columbia University, a relentless critic of Pentagon wastefulness, argued that by 1973 New York State's residents and businesses were paying annually to the federal government $7.5 billion more than they were receiving from Washington -- a sum which, he noted, exceeded New York City's total debt. Meanwhile, Melman continued, states such as Texas and California -- the centers of military production -- were reaping surpluses. The fiscal crisis, Melman concluded, was a test for New Yorkers:

> ...the pressure on the New York City government and on the people of New York City derives finally from the decision of the Federal Government...to test the degree to which the people of this city are prepared to suffer a massive decline in living standards. (P. 186).

Although investigative journalists and academic critics attempted to expose as myth the idea that the the fiscal crisis was something operating with mathematical logic and historical inevitability, the City and its new

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private-sector partners not only made massive cuts but made them in areas where they would have the most immediate and visible effect on New Yorkers' lives (such as the transit fares and tuition imposition just mentioned) and thus, as Melman predicted, inculcated in the people a sense of crises and a mood of lowered expectations. Although American cities had been going through rough times since the early 1950s, the fiscal crisis changed the terms in which the problems were defined. According to one researcher (Henig, 1986):

> The definition of the urban crisis and the language with which it is discussed have changed. The urban crisis of the 1960s was a moral and political crisis. Its issues were framed in terms of "justice," "equality," "democracy," and "civil rights." Although these concepts have complicated intellectual referents, their emotional message is direct, simple, and intense. They appeal to ideas that are familiar and they carry a strong prescription for action.
>
> Today's urban crisis, in contrast, is debated in more technical terms. Its dimensions are discussed in terms of bond ratings, investment tax credits, infrastructure, business climate, and efficiency. To many Americans, these terms are unfamiliar and forbidding. The message they carry is that these are complicated matters, that decisions should be deferred to those with expertise. The shift from a moral to a fiscal crisis moves us toward a shrinking of the realm of governmental activities acknowledged to be political, in the direction the Progressives set half a century ago. (P. 236).

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A significant factor in the fiscal crisis, both in New York and elsewhere, was the sudden reduction in federal funds following the stagnation in or elimination of many Great Society programs after 1974. Between 1981 and 1991, such aid declined from about $23 billion to around $9 billion (in 1982 dollars) ("The war against the poor," 1992). This statistic is suggestive of why city city policies during the 1980s looked toward gentrification to raise badly-needed revenue.

The fiscal crisis, despite its ravages, did provide one rallying point for community activists. As Zinn (1980) writes, the explosion of local organizing in the 1960s and early 1970s entered the post-Veitnam mid-1970s with a full agenda:

> The mass movements of the sixties had disbanded, but they left behind, all over the country, hundreds of thousands of people who were forming into small local groups and battling on a hundred issues, in different ways, for health, safety, peace, equality, and economic justice. Many of them were veterans of the war movements of the sixties; many others were young people new to social action. Altogether they constituted a formidable nationwide movement not unified in structure but sharing a common purpose, to protest against Establishment policies, to work for new ways of living (p. 563)

Inwood, which with Washington Heights had traditionally exerted strong community leadership,

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suffered from the fiscal crisis but found ways to mitigate some of its effects. For example, Inwood responded swiftly to the twin threat of housing abandonment and arson, which in the 1970s had reached crisis proportions in many parts of the city. In 1977 upper Manhattan Community Board members worked with Police, firefighters and housing officials to form the Inwood Arson Task Force (Holcomb, 1977). New York City had laid off slightly more than ten percent of its firefighters by then, which left just 8,000 to respond to 4000,000 alarms per year. (In 1939, by contrast, there had been one-fifth more fire fighters to respond to only one tenth the number of alarms; Susser, 1982). The Inwood Arson Task Force used community groups to "funnel information about events that may be forewarnings of arson -- such as the fact that a small business owner is liquidating his stock or failing to restock his store -- to the fire marshal's office" (Holcomb, 1977, p. 1). One Fire Department battalion chief told a reporter that he was concerned about an increase in "major-alarm" fires in Inwood, adding "We are noticing a change in Inwood, but it's subtle" (p. 7). Also, a fire marshal assigned to work with community groups in the area said "what we have is a pretty stable area changing pretty rapidly" (p. 7). Certainly Inwood's close geographic proximity to the South Bronx -- then

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being literally engulfed in flames, much of it due to landlords who then reaped insurance windfalls -- worried many, and at the same time fire protection became an explosive citywide issue (Jonnes, 1986). Susser (1982) has analyzed how a small, poor Brooklyn neighborhood took extraordinarily militant actions to force the City to reverse its decision to close the local firehouse -- a highly exceptional instance. In Inwood, no such militancy apparently was needed; fire stations there were not threatened with closure, and Inwood, although singed, never joined the ranks of neglected city neighborhoods that burned during the 1970s.

There were many other instances after 1975 in which Inwood escaped devastating budget cuts or, when it couldn't escape them, organized to offset their harm. Hours at the Inwood branch of the New York Public library were cut to 36 per week in 1975 (down from 60 hours per week in 1971; Ragsdale, 1975) but the library was spared subsequent severe cuts. The afterschool program for elementary school children in PS 98 on 211th Street was cancelled in 1976 (Hentoff, 1976) but the nearby community center of the Dyckman Houses remained in operation. At the Dyckman Houses there were only two maintenance men in January, 1979, but the Dyckman Tenants Association complained loudly and so by June two more were added.

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However, police protection at the Houses had been sharply curtailed -- to one passing Police Department patrol car every eight hours plus one Housing Authority police officer stationed there nights (Goodman, 1979). This was indeed a change from the days, discussed in previous chapters, when "Sam the Cop" would issue fines to juvenile rule-breakers whom he knew by name. Meanwhile, the small playground across Dyckman Street that tenants had organized to have built had, by the mid-1980s, fallen into disuse and decay, although the much larger and more heavily-used Msgr. Kett Playground remained intact. At some point in the 1970s a "kiddie pool" was installed there (Fig. 56) -- just a few hundred feet from the site of the old Miramar Pool, which in the late 1960s had been replaced by a supermarket.

It was neither luck nor stubbornness that allowed Inwood to escape devastation so narrowly following the fiscal cutbacks. Rather, it was through organizing. Washington Heights and Inwood in 1979 were lauded by Mayor Edward I. Koch, a staunchly pro-business politician then in his first year in office, for their extensive "self-help" efforts, i.e., local development groups composed of community leaders and local lenders who targeted specific problems, especially housing (Fowler,

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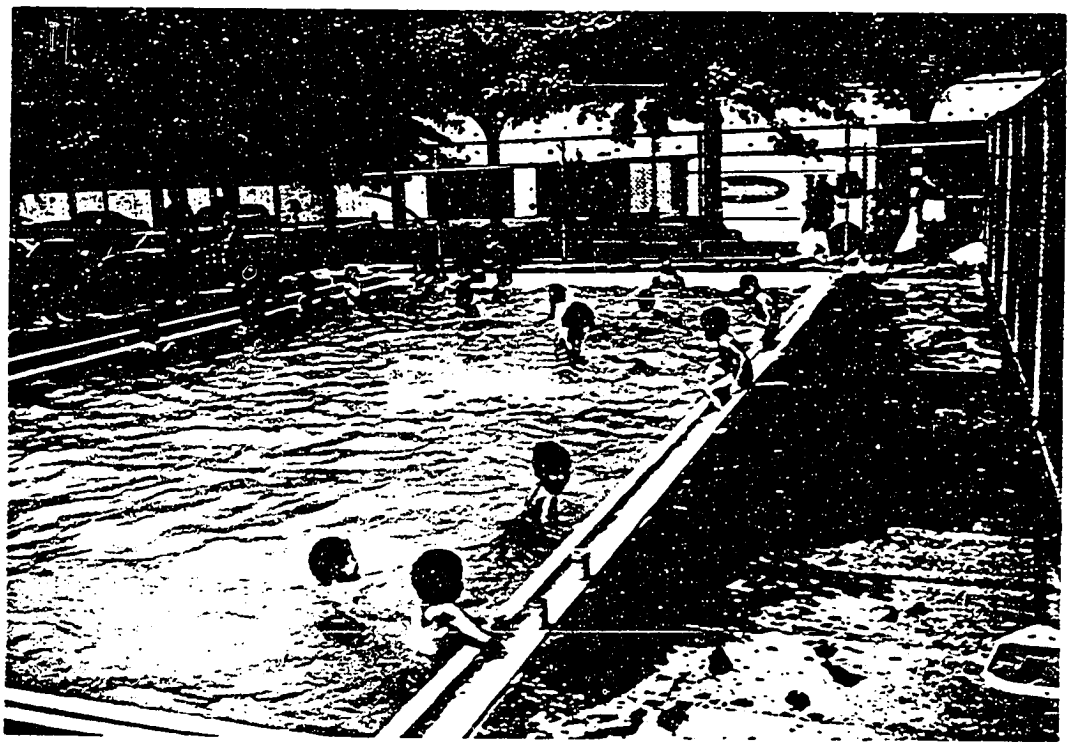


Fig. 56. Swimming pool, Msgr. Kett Playground (also called "The Big Park"), near the Dyckman Houses, early 1970s. Taken a few years after the demise of the Miramar Pool. This facility was built at a time of heightened tenant actism. [Source: The Center for Human Environments, Inc.].

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1979). At least one of these "bootstrap efforts," in which the City would contribute funds to citizen initiatives that involved "public and private interests working together," was active in Inwood at that time.

Such "bootstrap efforts" worked according to a single principle: making it more profitable for landlords to improve their buildings than to abandon them. Typically they employed such tactics as aligning a consortium of banks to make short-term loans and to provide low-interest mortgage assistance. Also present were federal subsidies and city tax-abatement programs for those aggressive and well-organized enough to apply for them (Weinstein, 1980). Washington Heights and Inwood, in fact, were considered models of public/private housing rehabilitation: between 1977 and 1981, according to The New York Times, "more than $100 million in City, state and Federal funds ha[d] gone into housing in Heights-Inwood through such programs as tax abatement for rehabilitation, participation loans and landmarks preservation subsidies" (Ivins, 1981, p. B1).

On a more grassroots level, a group of Inwoodians, seeking to prevent the serious deterioration of still-viable buildings that had not found their way into rehabilitation programs, in 1978 founded the Inwood Preservation Corporation. This organization's mission was to help tenants organize in obtaining such basic services

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from their landlords as heat, hot water and security, according to Maria Sabeta (1991), a mother of two and an organizer with the Preservation Corporation, which maintains an office in Inwood.

The Impact on Play Environments

Such community efforts as those just described attest to the fact that Inwood, like so many urban neighborhoods responding to the fiscal crisis, spent an inordinate share of its energies simply trying to structure itself in such a way as to fend off physical devastation. Given such strain it is not surprising that many of the smaller, less headline-making aspects of urban decay should have gone without sufficient attention. For although Inwood's housing was given special care and heavy investment, areas of the public environment not under the direct control of private investors languished. Cuts in the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, for example, did not arrive until 1978, but when they did they were severe: by 1984 expenditures were down to about $145 million from a peak of roughly $190 million in 1978, and the number of full-time employees had dropped from about 5,500 in 1978 to fewer than 4,000 in 1983 (Gold, 1991). In upper

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Manhattan, four of the fourteen laborers assigned there were laid off, as were two of five rest room attendants ("She Was," 1975).

Between 1975 and 1991 there were no additions to or major alterations in Inwood's public outdoor play spaces. Rather than experience improved play environments, Inwood fought an uphill battle just to maintain its traditional ones. In the summer of 1978, for example, a writer to a local newspaper (Anonymous, 1978) complained:

> I am one of many concerned mothers who would like to complain about the sand box in Payson Park. It is the dirtiest and most unhealthy sand box around. The Parks Department has not replaced the sand in years, not to mention cleaning it. Because of broken bottles and glass, it is hazardous to our children. (P. 6).

Meanwhile, across the street, at the Fort Tryon Playground, conditions were no better: by 1980 it had "[b]roken slides, broken fences, boarded up bathrooms, a filthy sandbox, a broken seesaw and monkey bars..." (Nash, 1980, p. 3). The protective fence around the swings was falling down and, as late as the end of July, the sprinklers had not been turned on. All this was brought to the attention of a reporter by a local mother who used the same playground as a child and who took her own children there. She compared the state of the park to what she remembered from her own childhood:

> First of all the playground and the whole park were kept very neat, you didn't see

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> any broken slides. Everything was kept in repair in the summertime and you always had showers [i.e., sprinklers] on the weekends. The playground looked so nice that when we made first communion we took our pictures over there. (P. 3).

A remarkable sequence of events followed the publication of the news item. The Inwood mother took her complaint to the local State Assemblyman, while an official of the State Senator's office made "some well placed calls." Soon, the principal supervisor for Upper Manhattan's parks fired one worker, forced the resignation of another and reassigned still others. When the new workers for Fort Tryon playground arrived, the materials were waiting for them (Nash, 1980). The sprinkler was turned on for the first time that summer; the sandbox was cleaned; the swings were repaired; a newly-arrived see-saw was about to be installed and repair of the fencing was to begin soon.

Beginning in the mid-to-late-1970s, the scope and intensity of community organizing that had begun in the middle-1960s increased greatly as Inwoodians formed new organizations that sought to improve the safety, beauty and cleanliness of their parks, sections of those parks, or their individual blocks. These groups generally used a combination of tactics: physically caring for the parks (e.g., clean-ups and block parties); working alongside city parks and sanitation workers; undertaking projects

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that involved modest funding from the City, private foundations and local businesses; and putting pressure on the City to improve service in a certain area. The City and its agencies, for their parts, welcomed and encouraged these groups through regular meetings with them, coordinating City work with volunteers' work and, on occasion, supplying equipment, manpower or funding. The City also made such gestures of recognition as awarding certificates of merit and holding such events as "Dress Up Your Neighborhood" contests. The official message to the community groups was in essence: "We cannot afford to meet the needs of residents; you tell us how best to direct our limited resources, we'll do our best -- but you must pitch in to help close the gap." Following are a few examples of these efforts.

One of the first groups to be formed after the municipal near-default was the Isham Area Community Association, which began in the fall of 1975. In a little over a year it had over a hundred members in a "quadrant" that took in the area between 207th and 218th Street west of Broadway and east of Inwood Hill Park (Pearsall, 1976). One of the Association's first efforts was to initiate "block patrols" in the evening; another was to prod the City to repair the steps at 215th Street connecting Park Terrace East and Broadway below (p. 7). The Association

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also worked with another new group, the Isham Park Restoration Program, Inc., to build a garden in Isham Park. According to one participant (Schwartz, 1976):

> The garden originally was barren of top soil and furrowed by erosion caused by rain storms; roots of trees were above ground and trees were falling one by one. The ground was saturated with dog urine, covered with their feces, and littered with rubbish.
>
> IPRP developed this barren and abused terrain into a community garden, a Youth Horticulture Workshop, a Senior Citizen garden activity and an annual community festival providing cultural and social activities for everyone in the community. (P. 9).

Two years later the Isham Area Community Association had received a Parks Preservation Award from the Citizens Committee for New York City to enable it to repair park benches. In addition, it was then planning, in conjunction with the Seaman North Block Association, a "paint-in" (meaning, presumably, painting park benches) (Schiller & Horton, 1978, p. 2). Meanwhile, the Seaman North Block Association formed the Inwood Hill Clean Team, which was composed of five teenagers who were paid to clean the park and hand out plastic garbage bags to picnickers. These youths were paid by the block association, the Park Terrace Block Association, Con Edison and Citibank. The senior laborer in Inwood Hill Park remarked of the youths, "We're glad to see them.

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We're interested in community involvement. It makes us feel we're not working alone" (p. 18). The Seaman North Block Association also threw parties in Inwood Hill Park, which featured races and other games for children ("The Seaman North Block," 1979). In 1980 the Association was raising money, through block parties and private foundations, to replace play equipment at the playground at Indian Road, and by the late 1980s a group called Friends of Indian Road playground was concentrating exclusively on that facility.

When a local newspaper would run an article on these projects and events, children would often be in evidence in the accompanying photographs and interviews, and occasionally the children themselves would take a leading role in some sort of community effort. One such instance was the group of five children, each about nine years old, who planted and nurtured flowers in the front courtyard of their Seaman Avenue building ("The Children," 1979); another was the group of twelve-year olds that cleaned out a littered empty lot flanking the rear of the Dyckman House museum (McCune, 1981). According to a reporter, "To them, the lot is a garden. [It] could be a place for geological study and is a haven for cats, birds and even squirrels" (p. 2).

Although Inwood's northwest corner had by far the

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highest concentration of community organizing, some blocks east of Broadway also organized, and in newspaper reports on these Spanish surnames appear frequently. Residents of Post Avenue, Inwood's most rundown street, organized the Post Avenue Block Association in 1978 ("Keeping Post," 1978). That summer, adults and children from the Dongan Place Block Association -- inhabiting that small, elbow-shaped street across Broadway from Fort Tryon Park -- painted twenty benches along Broadway ("Having," 1978).

What was probably the most significant activity in Inwood's eastern section, however, got started in the summer of 1979 when the East of Broadway Coalition was formed. This was composed of "delegates" from "block groups" on Nagle and Lower Sherman Avenues, and from Ellwood, Arden, Thayer and Sickles Streets (Goodman, 1979, p. 1). The Church of Our Lady Queen of Martyrs, on Arden Street, was the base from which the Coalition conducted clean-ups and supplied trash barrels to local merchants. Their first meeting was attended by a Joseph Rodriguez, a "Self-Help representative of the Sanitation Department," who later told a reporter: "Some [participants] didn't speak English; some didn't speak Spanish...I translated. They moved fast. Six block associations were formed as a result of that meeting" (p. 1). Significantly, the

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formation of a group choosing to emphasize that is "East of Broadway" was not only the first use of such a designation as a point of pride, but indicates that east-of-Broadway people were ready to enter the arena of community organizing.

One of the oldest local parks advocacy groups functioning in the 1980s, the Friends of Inwood Hill Park, discussed in the previous chapter, saw the formation of a sister group, the Friends of Fort Tryon Park. This group held clean-ups as well as "weeding, gardening and storytelling sessions" (Hoffman, 1985, p. 6). (The Medieval Festival, however, was suspended in 1975 due to budget cuts; it was revived in 1981 and in 1990 attracted 90,000 people; Reeder, 1991). In 1987 the Parks Department, citing community demand (although not specifically mentioning the Friends group), announced that it would ban vehicular access to the park on nights and on weekends (Pier, 1987). The problem with the cars, according to news reports, was not that they posed a physical hazard to pedestrians but that people were pulling into the parking lot and playing their powerful car stereo systems at extremely high volumes (Harper, 1983).

Perhaps the largest and most ambitious community

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project in Inwood was the Inwood Hills Parks Alliance (later renamed the Inwood Heights Parks Alliance). The Alliance enlisted the support of several block associations and local elected officials in order to set an agenda not just for Inwood Hill but for all Northern Manhattan parks. Their concentration was on staffing, maintenance and security (McGuire, 1981). The Alliance later branched out into environmental education, using the boathouse on "The Island" in Inwood Hill park as an Urban Ecology Center for local school groups (City of New York, Parks and Recreation, no date), which had a staff paid out of city funds (Lane, 1991). (The Friends of Inwood Hill Park continued to lead walks through Inwood Hill Park; see Hoffman, 1985). This represented the first facility in the park intended for nature studies since the 1930s, when the "Indians" last maintained their small museum and gift shop. However, the Alliance's activities were open only to school groups and not to children who just happened to wander in.

Environmental education, in fact, became one of the most publicized features of Inwood Hill Park, and was certainly the most enduring outgrowth of the citizen organizing that began in the middle-1960s. Although the park's ballfields continued to swarm with people during the warm months, its natural ecology attracted a following

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deeply devoted to its geology, woodland, grassland, insects, birds, mammals and estuarine life (the Hudson is actually an estuary as far north as Inwood and well upriver, according to season). Robert H. Boyle (1987), a noted expert on the Hudson River's history and ecology as well as on sport, extolled the environmental education programs that the Inwood Heights Parks Alliance was conducting. In a profile of Miguel Padilla, a bi-lingual naturalist with the Alliance, Boyle described the richness of the biological communities to be found at the northern edge of Inwood Hill Park -- the last remnant of marshland on the island:

> Among the animals he has found are blood worms, sand worms, soft-shell clams, grass shrimp, sand shrimp, ribbed mussels, horseshoe crabs, blue-claw crabs, green crabs, Atlantic squid, Atlantic sturgeon, bluefish, striped bass, Atlantic mackerel, canvasback ducks, loons, cormorants, ospreys, big brown bats, house mice, Norway rats, and raccoons, which come down from the park at night to feast on the clams and crabs at low tide. (P. 13).
>
> There are also some reminders of city life: empty crack vials; headless chickens and goats and sheep that were sacrificed by cultists, and the carcasses of pit bull terriers that were apparently thrown into the river after they were killed in a dog fight. (P. 13).

Environmental education's success as a community effort in Inwood Hill Park was aided by the general public acceptance of environmental education. Aside from its

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obvious educational value, environmental education fit in well with several trends in both parks management and attitudes toward children outdoors in urban areas. In terms of parks management, environmental education attempts to teach children to appreciate parks as living things and not as mere facilities and, at the same time, relieves pressure on management to maintain expensive man-made areas. For example, a lawn that is unmown for months can be seen as an environmental education resource as it reverts to a meadow and attracts various plant, insect and animal species; or a neglected ornamental lake or pond that has become choked with "weeds" can be used as an example of a wetland -- no longer merely a mirrored surface but a window into an ecosystem (Fig. 57). In terms of adult attitudes toward children, environmental education exposes one to the environment in a closely controlled and supervised setting where risk of bodily harm is minimized. Finally, environmental education is in most cases run as a local rather than a centralized effort, such efforts usually being initiated by local activists and carried on largely through the work of local volunteers and so claiming only minimal public money. Thus environmental education fit well into an era when small-scale, citizen-run programs were strongly encouraged by municipalities.

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Fig. 57. View south from "The Island," Inwood Hill Park, 1975. This marsh-edged body of water -- once intended as a yacht basin -- has for about 20 years provided superb opportunities for environmental education in Inwood. [Source: The Center for Human Environments, Inc.].

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By the early 1980s environmental education had become so accepted that the New York City Parks Department established its Urban Park Rangers Unit. Uniformed rangers began to lead "interpretive" walks -- both for school groups and individuals and families -- in City parks. In Inwood Hill Park the rangers supplemented the Parks Alliance's programs, not only by leading walks but by taking part in an environmental education activity that pre-dated the existence of contemporary environmental education by four decades -- helping organize the annual Native American Day festival (Luther, 1987) -- formerly the "Indian" festival.

Inwood -- especially, but not exclusively in its wealthier western half -- weathered the fiscal crisis. It did so with great effort but with much success. Even the Hispanic population and others living east of Broadway -- a group that had traditionally been absent from community leadership -- inserted itself into the picture. The substantial withdrawal of municipal services Inwood suffered would almost certainly have made its streets and parks extremely unpleasant or even unusable; yet Inwoodians, both English- and Spanish-speaking, building on a precedent they had begun the previous decade, took responsibility for their blocks, their housing project and

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their parks. Their actions became indispensable to the livability of the community. Faced with a shrinking city budget, they took "self help" -- the only option that the Mayor, the Governor and the business interests presented them them as viable -- and applied it, to their collective benefit.

Footnotes to Section 7.4

[1] The State of New York had contributed money to the city after President Gerald R. Ford flatly refused to do so.

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7.5 Organized Play and Recreation Programs

Throughout its urban history Inwood's play and recreation programs tended to be low-budget operations dependent on volunteerism and modest government and private funding. They thus endured the fiscal crisis and continued to evolve. Between 1975 and 1991 the five organizations that had provided such programs in Inwood in previous generations -- Boy and Girl Scouts, Little League baseball, the Young Men's-Young Women's Hebrew Association, the Catholic Youth Organization and the Dyckman Houses Community Center -- provided the bulk of Inwood's organized activities (only one additional recreation program was added). Inwood's enlarging child population, as well as its mounting social problems, did not bring about anything like a revolution in supervised play and recreation programs.

Beginning in the mid-1970s the Boy Scouts of America began to make several changes in its structure in order to adapt to the changing realities of urban life (Peterson, 1984). At that time it eliminated woodcraft and camping from its programs and focused instead on such things as urban hiking, "how to tackle community problems" and "assisting parents in everyday life" -- all with an emphasis on "personal development" (p. 196). In 1981 it

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instituted its "Hispanic outreach" program to better attract this growing urban constituency. In 1982 it inaugurated its "prepared for today" program, aimed at latchkey children five to eleven years old who were issued a workbook that sought to help them "to learn how to cope with tasks around the home and with danger on the street" (p. 220). In addition, the Boy Scouts of America instituted programs geared toward working single mothers. The organization, however, never shed its religiousness, and as late as 1991 atheist scouts were being expelled for refusing to utter the word "God" when reciting the Scout pledge ("Cub Scouts," 1992).

In Inwood in 1991 there were 100 Cub Scouts, according to Boy Scouts' Hispanic Outreach specialist, Angel Concepccion (1991). There was, he added, a need for more adult leaders, especially Hispanic ones, as most leaders were white. Mr Concepccion noted further that many parents did not bother to even meet the leaders of their children's troops.

However, Inwood's troops were striving to make more use of the local community: in 1991, there was overnight camping in Inwood Hill Park -- not in the woods, however, but on "the Island," where, in Mr. Concepccion's words, "it would be safe." Still, this appears to be the first time ever that the park was so used.

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The Catholic Youth Organization, like the Boy Scouts, began to change its tone in the mid-1970s, only while the Scouts became more pragmatic, the CYO became somewhat vague, even mystical. In 1975 the United States Catholic Conference issued a manifesto entitled "A Vision of Youth Ministry" which, according to the CYO (Archdiocese of New York, 1986) transformed the organization:

> There was a change in emphasis; we no longer spoke of services and programs, but in terms of ministry for youth. We began to speak in terms of relationships[,] not programs. New terms such as Word, Worship, Creating Community, Justice, Guidance and Healing, Advocacy and Enablement were added to the CYO vocabulary (no page numbers).

Whatever the CYO directorship felt should be the organization's guiding principles, in Inwood the CYO still meant what it always had -- sports. According to Matt Gaynor (1991), a Good Shepherd School instructor who runs CYO programs there, the program is active two afternoons per week and involves children from eight to thirteen years old in soccer, softball, basketball and football; soccer and softball are co-ed, while basketball and football have separate boys' and girls' teams.

Significantly, participants in Inwood's CYO program must be Good Shepherd School students; this is for insurance reasons. One season several years ago Good Shepherd received a painful lesson when it suspended its

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policy of excluding non-Good Shepherd students. Although the change enabled the program to draw more heavily from the resources of the secular Police Athletics League (PAL), non-students, as it turned out, were not covered by Good Shepherd's insurance policy. The resulting legal troubles stemming from sports injury claims forced Good Shepherd to go back to its former exclusionary admission policy, although PAL continues to provide uniforms and equipment.

The Young Men's-Young Women's Hebrew Association (YM-YWHA) on Nagle Avenue had 45 children enrolled in its afterschool programs in 1991 -- down from a peak of about 100 in 1970, according to Nadine Silverstein (1991) who directs children's programs there. Since the Y charges an enrollment fee, many parents have begun instead to take advantage of free afterschool programs in Washington Heights and Inwood, such as those at the public schools or at the Dyckman Community Center [1]. In summer, enrollment at the Y has remained steady at about 150 and most of the children in its programs are from the area immediately near the "Y," i.e., from Inwood below Dyckman Street and from upper Washington Heights. Children are brought to the Y directly from school by Board of Education school buses; another bus later takes the

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children to their doors. According Executive Director Martin Englisher (1991), beginning in the late 1970s the "Y" expanded its programs from a few short hours two or three times a week to five days a week; preschoolers may attend for the entire day. This has been made necessary, he says, by the rise in the number of working mothers.

About half of the children enrolled in Y programs are Jewish and half are Dominican; programs are in English only, so that bilingual children often find themselves translating for their Spanish-speaking monolingual playmates where necessary. Another change that came in the 1970s had to do with the nature of the programs themselves: where before the mid-1970s children filtered into whatever activities they chose, now parents sign their children up for specific activities in advance. Concern over lawsuits has hindered the programs: In the last ten years liability insurance costs have increased tenfold, taking money away that would ordinarily have been spent on equipment and personnel; recently, at the request of the insurance company, the Y's trampoline was removed (Englisher, 1991).

The Dyckman Community Center in the Dyckman Houses has continued with few changes since 1971, the year it first sought and obtained funding beyond the modest sum the

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Housing Authority, provides according to Eloise Whitehurst-Carrington (1991), a Dyckman Houses tenant activist and one of those who helped expand the center in 1971. Funding now comes from City and State agencies. The Center is open to children from within the Dyckman Houses as well as those from outside, and is free. For children of six to twelve the program during the school year consists of homework tutoring performed by teenagers who are paid through the Minority Youth Development Program of the City's Community Development Agency. If on a given day children finish early, they are taken for the remaining time to play at Msgr. Kett playground. The summer day camp program consists of daily trips aboard chartered buses; these may take place in State Parks or in places within the City, such as the Bronx Zoo or the Empire State Building; occasionally they will go to Inwood Hill Park or the Cloisters. This program is free but parents' donations are sought.

About four hundred Inwood children play in the Inwood Little League, at a cost to each of $50 per season, according to Jack Loughlin (1991), an employee of Little League who works with Inwood volunteers in coordinating its activities. About 60 percent of the players are Hispanic; a very small percentage are girls, perhaps no

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more than when the League began admitting girls in 1975 (that year eight girls -- all with Irish surnames and all students at local Catholic Schools -- joined the League; "The Game's the Thing," 1975). According to Mr. Loughlin, a rising proportion of the players during the past decade are from female-headed households and, he feels, act toward him and toward their coaches as though they were in need of a "father figure."

One major development within the Inwood Little League occurred during the 1990 season when, for the first time, it was allowed tournament use of the Ivy League baseball diamond at Baker Field, according to Greg Apostle (1991), a local business owner who raised three sons in Inwood and is today a Little League coach. For this privilege, the League had to post a $500 bond against damages and volunteers had to provide security services as well as after-game clean-up. The arrangement has been successful.

The one major addition to Inwood's play and recreation programs has been Inwood Community Services (ICS), begun in the late 1970s a storefront near Good Shepherd Church. In 1980 it was re-established as an independent entity. The break with Good Shepherd was amicable and done solely to enable ICS to qualify for a wider array of funding (Inwood Community Services, no

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date).

ICS is in essence the sort of non-denominational, centrally-located youth center that local volunteers had attempted, without success, to establish ever since the anti-Semitic attacks of 1943, when sociologists criticized Inwood's existing network of youth programs as being overly identified with specific religious denominations. As its name implies, ICS provides not only play and recreation programs (over 800 youths participated in baseball, floor hockey and "lounge night" in 1985) but counseling and tutoring, including English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) and, for older youths, career counseling.

According to its assistant director, Bonnie Grant (1991), ICS does not have a gymnasium and so uses the one in P.S. 52 (it offers no outdoor programs). Sports are offered there two evenings a week for children in fifth through twelfth grades. Children and youths participating in this must be registered in advance. Some of ICS' newer programs include its "Get Centered" mental health clinic, which offers individual and family therapy in English and Spanish, and the Intensive Care Management Program, which assists children and youths between ten and 18 years old with pending court appearances.

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Footnotes to Section 7.5

[1] My repeated attempts, throughout fall, 1991, to arrange interviews with any of those in charge of afterschool programs in three of Inwood's public schools were unavailing.

7.6 Major Deterrents to Play

Even with the energy and resourcefulness with which Inwood addressed its problems between 1975 and 1991, the neighborhood and its people suffered greatly. Many of the incipient problems of the past period -- crime, drugs, municipal neglect, class polarization -- became intense and frightening. These were problems not as conquerable through community organizing as were decrepit parks. Boys and girls, to be sure, continued to play in Little League and buy ice cream on Dyckman Street the library continued to lend books and the trees in Inwood Hill Park remained standing. But within this continuity life in Inwood had been degraded, disfigured. Founded on massive private investment and public works -- foundations which had been eroding since the 1940s -- Inwood by the 1970s, as we have seen, seemed near physical and social exhaustion. Although by the late 1980s it had emerged from the worst ravages, it had paid a price.

On Inwood's streets -- and especially those in the central valley area -- some important long-standing play and recreation places were lost. The Alpine theater on

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Dyckman Street, was one: The last of three in Inwood, it switched to an all-Spanish language format in an effort to attract business before switching back to English (Egan, 1980), and closed its doors permanently in 1984. On Cooper Street Inwood lost the last of its vacant lots; actually, the site was hardly vacant since, according to geologists, it had been occupied, for 365 million years by a thirty-foot-high rock (Purnick, 1986). It also had been occupied, it will be recalled, frequently by Greg Demes (b. 1964), who, as he described in the previous chapter, liked to go there as a child to be alone. This city-owned plot was put up for sale over the objections of community groups who wanted to build a youth center there. Instead it was filled with a row of small attached houses.

The Demise of Schoolyards and Other Spaces

In the 1980s Inwood's schoolyards were virtually eliminated as play areas. Overcrowding in the public schools had forced principals to seize these spaces for classroom space and to assign any space left over to teachers to park their cars (which, the teachers complained, were no longer safe on Inwood's streets). P.S. 52, on Vermilyea Avenue and Academy Street, in 1990 had 1,800 children in an aging building designed to accommodate only a thousand (Hancock, 1990). To catch

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this overflow squat, corrugated metal-sided "mini-schools" were erected hastily in the schoolyard while the remaining space was converted into a parking lot. P.S. 98 on 211th Street followed the same course (Garcia & Canter, 1988). At P.S. 152 on Nagle Avenue below Dyckman Street, home in 1950 and 1960 to the optimistic fifth grade authors and up-daters of The Dyckman Valley, most of the schoolyard was taken over by "mini-schools" as well as permanent building additions ("No Playground," 1985), leaving only a small surplus space. Although intruding into schoolyard space was by no means an unheard-of practice during times of school overcrowding (informants Peter Dongan and Nick Sarabalis recalled "quonset huts" in PS 52 in the 1920s and 1930s, respectively) the apparently-permanent loss of all three yards at a time of diminished access to play areas for children in the central valley area can only be considered a severe blow.

Social Fears

What was perhaps the only conscious effort at providing a profit-making storefront amusement area for Inwood's children was of questionable value and ran afoul of Inwood parents' fears for their children's safety. Around 1980 the owner of a grocery store on 207th Street partitioned off "a secluded area in back of the store

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installed four video game machines (Callaghan, 1981 p. 3); in this area there was no attendant nor any other form of of supervision. Parents of children attending Good Shepherd School became alarmed, contending that children using this arcade were losing money in defective machines; when the management would refuse refunds, children would vandalize them. Soon, according to a news report, "parents began worrying about the danger this situation could pose since it seemed to provide a perfect setting for any seedy characters to prey upon the children" (p. 3).

Prominent among the "seedy characters" the parents feared were drug dealers. Parents and Good Shepherd staff mounted a campaign against the grocery store, ultimately forcing it to remove the games. In December, 1981 the City announced its own campaign against video game arcades citywide, promising to close any that were found outside certain commercial zoning districts, most of which were at the outskirts of the city, in such places as Coney island ("Dyckman Street Arcade," 1981). Of the 66 arcades the City listed as not complying with zoning laws, one was located on Dyckman Street.

Homelessness returned to Inwood in the 1980s after a half-century's absence, making its parks seem that much

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less a place for children. In 1981 the Fort Washington Armory on 168th Street was converted into a shelter in which nearly 1,000 men from throughout the city were housed nightly (Bloom, 1988). This made upper Manhattan one of the city's magnets for the homeless. At the same time people in Washington Heights and Inwood were in increasing danger of becoming homeless themselves; the rising rents and falling incomes prompted the City to declare Manhattan above 155th Street a place where a significant number of families receiving welfare were at serious risk of losing their apartments and thus of becoming homeless (Daley, 1987).

In 1983 one homeless man began living in a cave in Inwood Hill Park. An intelligent, sensitive man, the father of four, musically gifted and apparently having suffered a mental breakdown, he had lived in the cave for six years when in February, 1989, he was shot through the forehead (Rimer, 1989). Police were unable to produce a motive or a suspect. During the final months of this man's life, the City's Parks Department had proposed new rules designed to push the homeless out of all city parks (Hevesi, 1989). These rules included curbs or prohibitions on loitering, begging, leaving belongings unattended, washing clothes and erecting structures. When advocates for the homeless protested these rules, the

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Parks Department revised them to eliminate rules intended specifically to rout the homeless.

Violence

Of all the changes, physical as well as social, which a neighborhood can experience and which make it inhospitable to children, it is difficult to conceive of anything more serious than violent crime or the fear of violence. This problem, although always present in Inwood to some degree, and having become a serious concern only in the late 1960s, began to figure far more prominently in children's experience of Inwood. Between 1975 and 1991 Inwoodians were given ample reason to think of their neighborhood not just as a place where rapes, robberies and muggings are known to occur, or as a place where marauding teenagers occasionally got out of hand, but -- especially beginning in the late-1980s -- as a place where deadly, random adult violence can spring up anywhere at any time, and not just in the shadows of night but in broad daylight.

Beginning around 1985 upper Manhattan experienced a wave of drug-related crime, in which armed dealers sold openly from apartments and on the streets. According to the authorities, the drug area centered around (but was not limited to) 175th Street and had "evolved into a

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retail center for the cocaine trade in the metropolitan area" (Kerr, 1986, p. A1). (175th Street is where the George Washington Bridge connects Manhattan with New Jersey, and many of those arrested in drug raids were middle class suburban whites; Faber & Terry, 1989). The problem became so severe that in 1986 the police designated upper Manhattan as the site of an intensive arrest drive and in just six weeks made over 1,000 arrests and confiscated more than 70 handguns (Kerr, 1986). However, in the heavily Dominican areas where the drug activity was most intense, residents, many of them illegal aliens, were reluctant to call the police for fear of both the dealers' retaliation and the authorities' constant threat of deportation (Gross, 1986).

Although Washington Heights was in far worse shape than Inwood, Inwood nevertheless was battered by crime. Following are descriptions of some of the major crimes and crime-related themes in Inwood itself between 1975 and 1991.

In mid-July, 1977, Inwood achieved the unwanted distinction of being the scene of the killing of a police officer in the line of duty. The officer was shot with his own revolver while struggling with a man who had just held up a luncheonette on Tenth Avenue and 204th Street, under the elevated (Saxon, 1977. That same month, during

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the citywide blackout, looters ransacked stores on Post and Nagle Avenues, while people on rooftops fired guns at random (no injuries were reported) in what a reporter described as "sniper fire" ("What Happened," 1977).

In the spring of 1981 residents of the area around the 207th Street entrance to Inwood Hill Park complained of "hallways littered with needles, of well-dressed white men who pull up by the park in limousines and deliver drugs..." ("The 207th St. Connection," 1981, p. 4). Drugs allegedly were easily available at the nearby handball courts. On Vermilyea Avenue a place called "The Red Door" was said to dispense "reefer and cocaine" after two knocks, while a candy store on 207th Street near the elevated was reported to sell marijuana. A police captain dismissed these residents' worries, saying that "kids with radios" were making residents fearful but for the most part were not involved in drugs ("The 207th St. Connection II," 1981, p. 3).

Eight years later, however, the police were not so dismissive. In May, 1989 Inwood was again the scene of the shooting death of a police officer, this time a Sergeant (Sullivan, 1989). Plainclothes police had been making a drug raid on an apartment on Sickles Street when a woman inside -- a suspected drug dealer -- fired as they burst into her bedroom. The woman's lawyer defended his

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client's actions, citing the fact that she "lives in a neighborhood where robbers shout they are the police at the door, then rob you once they get in" (p. B3). In another incident, a team of undercover officers of the United States Drug Enforcement Agency, conducting a "buy and bust" operation involving $60,000 worth of cocaine in an alley on Sherman Avenue near Broadway, fired at and wounded one of the suspects as he drew a gun and took aim ("Federal Agent," 1989).

In the summer of 1987 a 14-year-old boy from the Bronx, playing in "a midnight war game" in Inwood Hill Park, stalked a man who, in turn, fired a 12-gauge shotgun loaded with buckshot, injuring the boy ("Boy Playing," 1987).

Two summers later, at the Bakersfield supermarket, a grocery store at 218th Street and Indian Road, the proprietor, a 29-year-old native of Puerto Rico, was shot in the back and killed in an apparent robbery attempt (Wolff, 1989).

In the McDonald's fast-food restaurant on Dyckman Street in May, 1989, according to a newspaper report, "a man, who was believed to be in his 30's, got up from his table at about 10:55 P.M., walked to where three young men were eating, drew a pistol and began shooting at them;" A 17-year-old youth from Post Avenue was killed and his

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cousin wounded ("One Killed," 1989, p. 20).

In late July, 1991, the badly decomposed body of a girl aged three to five years was found in a plastic picnic cooler beside the Henry Hudson Parkway, near Dyckman Street. Police determined that she was malnourished and had been sexually abused ("Girl's Decayed Body," 1991). Police had no leads until some weeks later, when they tentatively linked the crime to five polaroid photographs found on a roadside in New Jersey. These photographs each showed a "girl having oral sex with a man whose face was cropped out of the picture." The girl in the photograph was thought to resemble computer-generated composite photographs of what the girl found may have looked like when she was alive.

Lastly, in October, 1991, two sisters, 12 and 17 years old, spending an evening at home with a 14-year-old friend, were raped in their Inwood apartment while the sisters' parents were out for the evening. The rapists, armed with a semiautomatic pistol and a knife, had forced their way into the apartment (Gonzalez, 1991). A news article, in which the father of the sisters is interviewed, is worth quoting at some length:

> Like hundreds of his fellow Irish and German neighbors who once packed the apartments along Inwood's wide and sloping streets, the father could have made his own getaway decades earlier, when the neighborhood changed and became a haven for Hispanic families...

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But the girls' father, who moved to Inwood as a teenager and married a neighborhood girl, was committed to raising his children in the same apartment where he grew up, and remained one of perhaps four of what he called "American" families in the building. It was important they develop a sense of acceptance and open-mindedness toward other ethnic groups, he said.

"I felt my children needed to get to be a part of New York," he said, his voice redolent with the broad, easygoing cadences of his native Bronx. "Why should we run if they can stay here and be a part of it? I grew up in a mixed place in the Bronx, until it was ripped up."

He has been active in community groups over the years, helping establish and run an athletic club for neighborhood youths until a recent schedule change at work cut into his spare time. He also volunteered to work with disadvantaged and homeless people.

His neighbors agreed with him that while the building has been untouched by serious violence in the past, some of the nearby streets had changed for the worse since the advent of crack. Sometimes, strangers would enter the building when the lock on the front door was broken and lie in wait for possible robbery victims in the stairways.

The father lamented the drug dealing that has scared people off some nearby streets at night, and he said the local police precinct was too overworked and understaffed to grapple with the problems.

In the face of this, he said he and his neighbors were determined to forge a sense of community despite ethnic differences. "It's a neighborhood trying to stay together," he said. "Nobody is against anybody. It's a little difficult, but people are trying to do so. Otherwise I would have moved a long time ago."

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> Competing for attention in the crush of emotions since the crime is the nagging thought for him that perhaps the time has come to give up on the neighborhood. Of course, he said, this could have happened anywhere, but given his modest salary as a doorman, he cannot move to just anywhere.
>
> "Where to you go, what do you do?" he asked. "We tried to have an open mind. You try to hold a job, but at the same time the economy tells you where to live" (p. B3).

For this parent, crime was something that invaded his neighborhood, his building, his apartment and, ultimately, the bodies of his daughters. Yet for every parent whose child was a crime victim there were thousands who, whatever their fondness for the place, with perfect justification regarded Inwood as a place of needles, crack vials, knives, bullets and rapists. For the Inwood children and their mothers whose voices are presented in the following chapter, these conditions cast a long, frightening shadow.

[Note: A chronology of significant events affecting Inwood circa 1975-91 appears as Table 12; a map showing local landmarks relating to children's play during that time appears as Fig. 58].

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Year	Event
1975	Major commercial banks announce that they will not lend money to the City of New York.
1976	The Hispanic-American Alliance of Washington Heights and Inwood estimates that Dominicans constitute the area's largest Hispanic sub-group.
1978	Severe budget cuts within the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation begin.
1980	Census reveals Inwood to be 52 percent Hispanic.
1980s	Gentrification of Inwood's northwest corner.
1980s	Inwood's three schoolyards used for parking, mini-schools or construction.
1981	Inwood-Heights Parks Alliance organized. Emphasis on environmental education.
1984	The Alpine, Inwood's last movie theater, closes.
1990	Census shows Inwood to be 67.5% Hispanic.

Table 12. Chronology of significant events, 1975-91.

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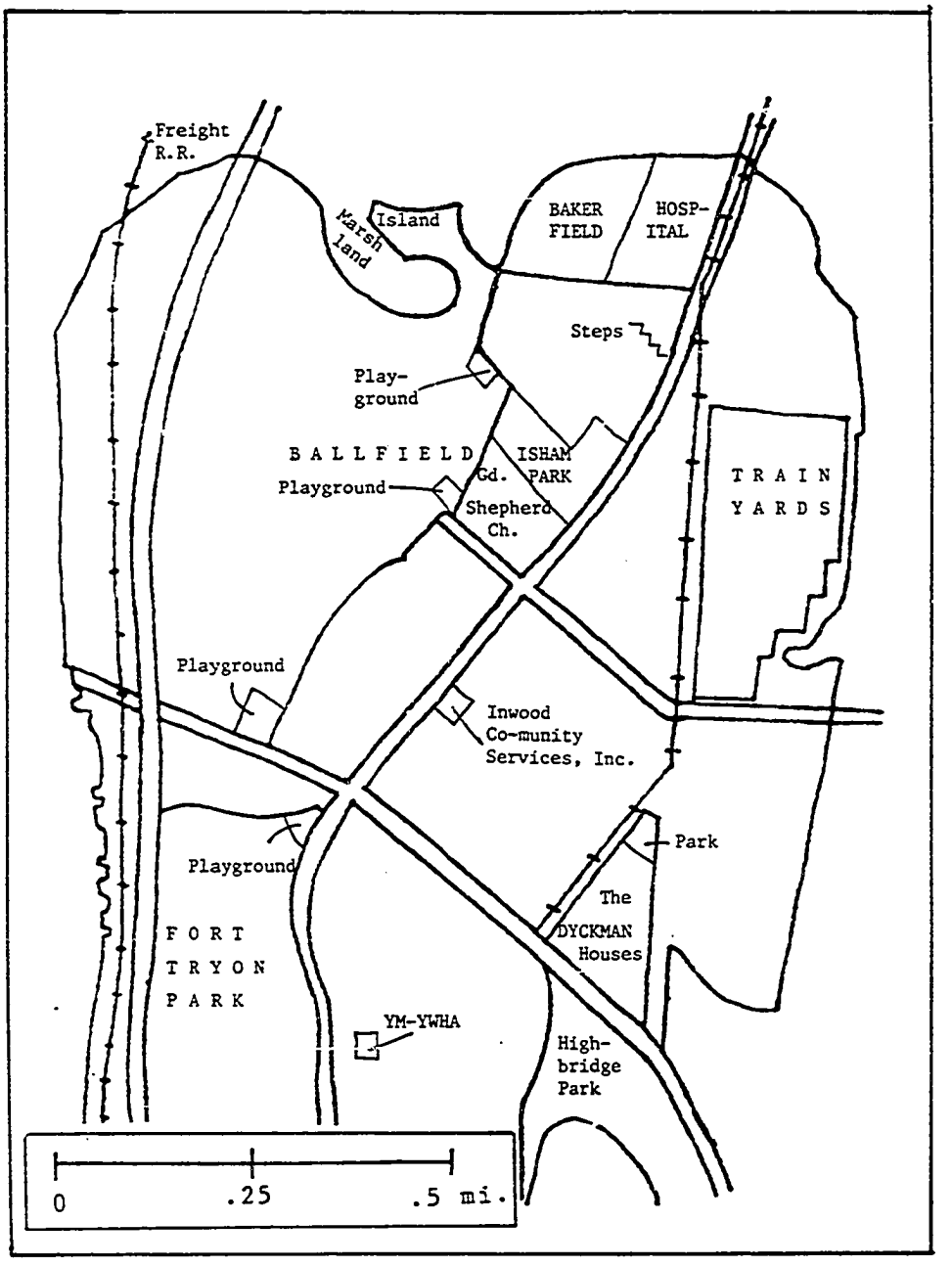


Fig. 58. Map of landmarks relating to children's play, as existing between 1975-90.

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7.7 Inwood Children's (and Parents') Experiences

[Note: for the locations of informants' homes, see Fig. 59].

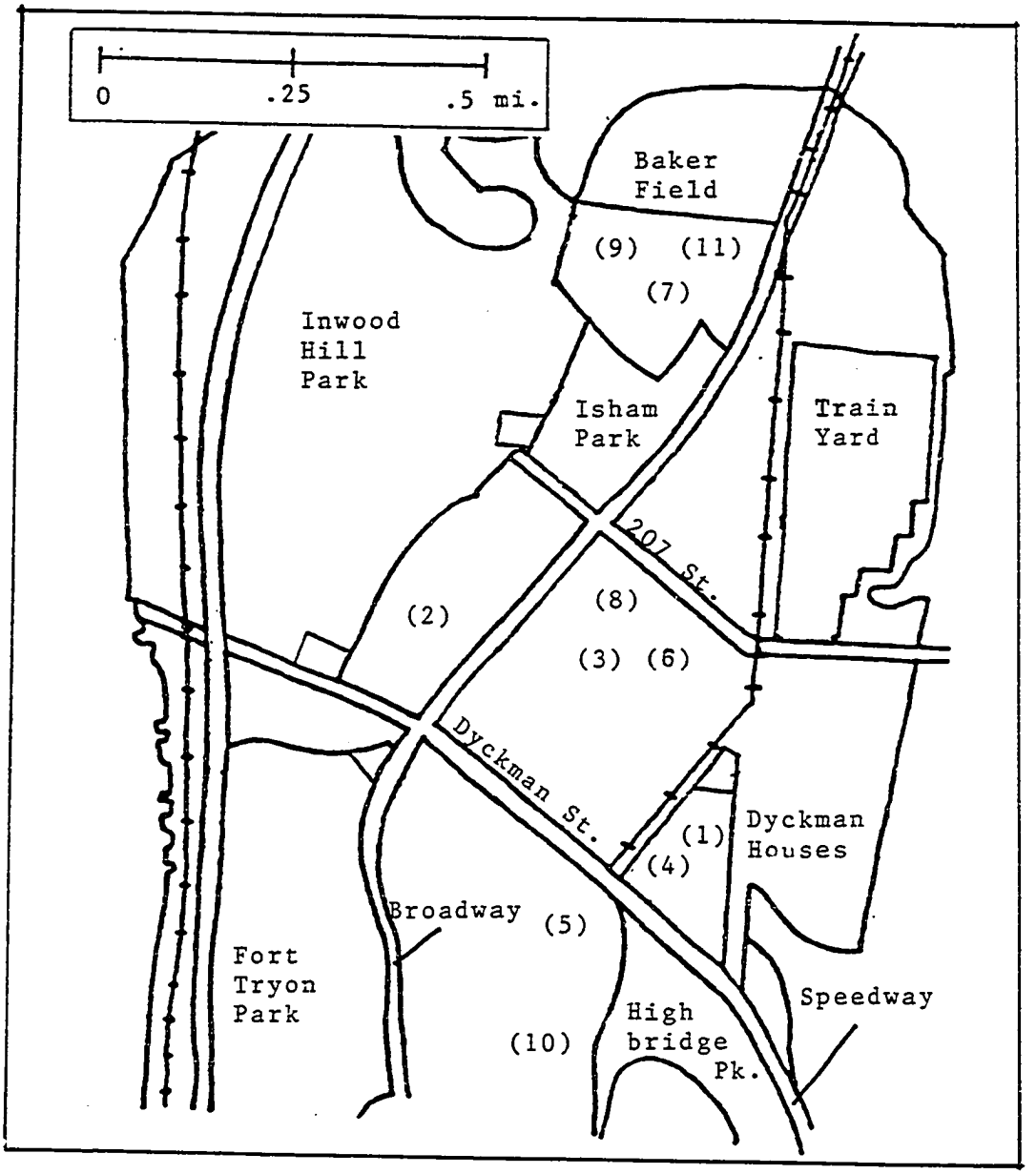
Shanice Kensington (b. 1971)

Shanice moved to the Dyckman Houses when she was four (1975), and grew up there with her father, who worked as a mechanic, her mother, who worked as a crossing guard, and a sister born in 1976. The family's ethnic/ racial background is black. The interview took place in 1991, when Ms. Kensington was twenty.

Shanice was first allowed outdoors to play without her parents when she was ten [1981]:

> I'd go out and play 'round the projects, near the buildings. We used to run on the grass, play on the grass, play relay races, but we tried not to get caught there. They wouldn't let us, but we did it anyhow. I got a bike and would ride around the outside, the edge of the project.
>
> I wasn't supposed to go to Inwood Park, but sometimes me and friends, we would sneak. My mother didn't let me hang out at Inwood Park till I was twelve, thirteen. Usually we used to go to, like, the caves and the bridge where the trains used to run at, down there. We used to throw rocks, see who could throw the farthest. We looked in the water, see fishes. That bridge they had there -- the one that had the train tracks -- that was scary, 'cause there was holes between the wood and you could see the water, but you couldn't fall through or nothing.

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(1) Shanice Kensington
(2) The Del Toros
(3) Maria Linares and Albert Pena
(4) The Nunezes
(5) Paul Angelo
(6) Jerry Adames
(7) The Brennans
(8) The McMullins's
(9) Fogarty/Murphy
(10) The Greenwalds
(11) Mendes, Connoly

Fig. 59. Map showing where informants lived, 1975-91.

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With or without permission, going to Inwood Hill Park was an occasional event at best, and Shanice spent most of her time around the Dyckman Houses grounds or at Msgr. Kett playground ["the Big Park"] immediately to the north.

> The big park, that was my favorite place. You could swing and stuff. When we wanted to use our sleds, we would go to the side of the building to this little hill, this concrete ramp thing going down to the basement. It would get all nice and icy and we'd slide down it.
>
> I used to go to the Dyckman Community Center every day after school. They had games and dance class.

To Shanice, Inwood Hill Park, unlike the familiar Dyckman Houses, could be a mysterious place:

> Q: Were there any places in Inwood you thought were scary?
>
> Well, Inwood park when it got dark. You could hear all the crickets, it would be nice and quiet and you'd be listening, scared. And then one of your friends would all of a sudden jump on you and say "boo!"

Diane Del Toro (b. 1972)

Diane Del Toro, born and raised in Inwood, lived on Seaman Avenue near 204th Street from age four (1976) onward. The other members of the family were her father, who worked as a truck driver, her mother, who worked as a receptionist, a sister born in 1975 and a brother born in

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1984. The family ethnic background is as follows: her father is Hispanic and her mother is Italian-American.

Diane was first allowed to play outdoors without supervision when she was seven [1979]:

> We just went in front of the building, or in the courtyard -- play kick-the-can, jump rope, tag, don't-step-on-the-cracks. My friend lived right across the street so we'd play right there in front. We'd just go up and down the block and around the corner, but we never went all the way around the block. We were on the corner, and my mother's window faced the front and side of the building.
>
> When I was seven I learned to ride a bike and I would go up and down the block, but not around the corners -- on the bike and on the roller skates, too. My mother and father never really told me not go around the block, that really was just my choice. I just didn't want to.
>
> My friend and I would play in the alley behind the building. Our building and the building next to us, they had a connecting alley. And a friend of mine lived in the basement of the next building, so we'd play there, and we'd play hide and seek. But it was scary there when it got dark.
>
> Another scary place was this empty lot on Cooper Street, with this great big rock. I went there once with a lot of friends when I was ten and I didn't like it up there. It was real spooky. All the trees were around, you couldn't see much. So I never went back there.

At ten years of age [1982] Diane could cross Seaman Avenue and proceed the one long block north to Inwood Hill Park:

> My favorite place to go was in the park, around the baseball fields, the softball

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> fields, and I could go there myself. With my mother and my little sister we went sledding on the slope that goes down to the water. There'd always be a lot of people there. If it got cold and my mother wanted to take my little sister home and I wanted to stay, I could, but not for very long.
>
> I liked to go to Isham Park, too. They used to have this big blue thing, it was like a slide. It had all these things you could climb up and slide down. We called it The Blue Blob. I used to like to go there, because we didn't go there very often, so when we did, it was fun. I would always go with my parents only.
>
> Q: Why wouldn't you go alone, or why not more often?
>
> There were hardly any people up there, and we knew a lot of people at Inwood Park, so most of the time we'd be there, not Isham.

Although she enjoyed the lawn areas of Inwood Hill Park, Diane did not use the woods:

> When I was younger than 13 I always stayed where there were people, not in the woods. There were always things being told me: "Oh, something happened in the woods," or "there's a crazy man up there," or wild dogs. I believed these, of course. Most of them were true.

Maria Linares (b. 1974) and Albert Pena (b. 1975)

Maria Linares and Albert Pena are cousins who grew up in the same building on Post Avenue near Dyckman Street. Maria lived with her parents, both of her grandmothers, and a brother born in 1969. Her father worked in a brewery and her mother worked in a doctor's office.

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Albert lived with his parents and a sister born in 1961. His father worked at a gas station and his mother worked at a clothing shop. The family ethnic background of both Maria and Albert is Dominican. They grew up spending much time together; as Albert put it, "We're cousins, but it was more like we were brother and sister." The two were interviewed together in 1991, when Maria was 17 years old and Albert 16.

Both Maria and Albert attended the day nursery run by Brenda Arias's mother (see previous chapter) in her apartment on Post Avenue. Thus they spent nearly all of their play time in the basement apartment in which the nursery was housed, as well as in the adjoining back courtyard. When they got bicycles at age eight, that is where they rode them.

Neither Maria nor Albert was allowed to play outdoors unsupervised until age eleven [1985-6]. By that time, however, they had developed considerable familiarity with the neighborhood through going for walks, picnics and sledding in Fort Tryon and Inwood Hill Parks with older relatives. They would also get taken to the Alpine Theater nearby on Dyckman Street (until it closed in 1984) and to Payson and Fort Tryon playgrounds. Albert remembers some tentative steps he took before age eleven

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toward unsupervised use of then neighborhood:

> One of the biggest things was, like, being old enough to be allowed to go out and do little errands for your parents and stuff. I guess they figured that I knew the neighborhood, where everything was. I'd just get what I had to get and go right back. But if I met a friend on the way I might stop and play.
>
> I remember when these stores burned down on Dyckman Street at the corner of Post, and they cleared it. I was about nine, I guess [1983], and I would go there and walk around awhile, maybe bring a ball, and my grandparents would be on the street, talking to friends or something. So it was like I was playing on my own, but I was in the middle of this big open area and my parents were like half supervising me, half doing what they were doing.
>
> Also, I remember that if I asked permission, I could go up to the roof. Sometimes when we were, like, ten we would go up to the roof and play around, without permission.
>
> Maria: Definitely without permission! If my mother found out, she'd flip. You can see that they do drugs up there.
>
> Albert: Yeah, it's a quiet place, they can do whatever they want up there, do drugs and all that. But it wasn't that way when we we were kids. Now, it's too dangerous. People who have cable TV don't even go there to fix their wires or anything.

At age eleven, Albert had considerable freedom to travel around the neighborhood while Maria was somewhat more restricted.

> Albert: I would go to Fort Tryon a lot, just walk around the paths, see the view. Inwood Hill, too, had these great paths, and I would go up to the caves, which I

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didn't really go into because they were sort of frightening. One summer -- I think it was when I was eleven -- I enrolled in this summer tennis program in Inwood Hill Park, spent the whole summer learning how to play. I really enjoyed that.

My parents didn't worry about where I went after I was eleven. They'd say "go wherever you want, just tell us. But don't let me just see you hanging out on the streets." They'd say "It just doesn't look right hanging out on the streets. You're wasting your time, you should be doing something else." And my grandmother didn't like me on the streets because of all the danger and all.

Maria: I could go to the stores on Dyckman and to the playground at Ft. Tryon. I didn't really go into the park itself.

My parents wanted to know where I was. It was like: If you go somewhere, just let us know who you're with, call us when you get there, let us know when you come back. Sometimes they'd drop me off like at a friend's house and pick me up later.

Q: Did either of your parents warn you of dangers around the neighborhood?

Maria: I remember being ten and my mother telling me to be careful of this and that. You know, with the men, the older men. Like, when I walked, not to walk alone, to walk with friends. Even during the daytime.

Albert: My parents always told me to, like, be careful of people following you, like that. People who might offer to give you things. They told us this quite often. You see, when they first came here, when they were teenagers, this neighborhood was very quiet, nobody bothered anybody. When they came here this was a neighborhood where everybody knew everybody, everybody would smile, say Hi, how are you doing? Then it changed.

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Q: Have you ever been hurt or threatened around Inwood?

Albert: Those kinds of things you don't see. I never saw anyone around here get hurt. I've heard about it, yes, but I haven't seen it or anything.

Q: Was there any place you thought was dangerous?

Albert Yes, when we were younger and would go to Inwood Park with relatives. You'd be riding your bike down Snake Hill; there'd be these curves you'd have to watch out for, and also people to avoid. That was pretty dangerous.

Q: Were there any places you thought were scary?

Albert: Again, when we were younger, there was like this cave there and it was dark.

Maria: We'd dare each other to go in there, but nobody would, because as kids we were too scared.

Q: Were there any places either of you went to be alone?

Albert: There wasn't really any place for me to go to. I guess when I needed to, I was alone up here, in my head.

Maria: Yeah, I guess there's not many places to be alone around here.

The Nunezes

The Nunez family consists of Carmen Nunez and her four daughters (born in 1974, 1978, 1983 and 1986), the elder two of whom are interviewed below. A son, born in 1967, lived with the family until about 1986. Ms. Nunez is a

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single mother who has raised her children on her own at the Dyckman Houses, where she has lived since 1973. She is Puerto Rican and works as a receptionist. The two daughters interviewed are Rose-Ann, born in 1974 and Lisa, born in 1978. The interview was conducted in 1991, when Rose-Ann was 17 and Lisa 13.

Rose-Ann (b. 1974). Rose-Ann was first allowed out to play unsupervised at age eleven [1985]. Prior to then her exposure to Inwood came as a result of playing with her brother, who would take the girls as far as the waterfront of Inwood Hill Park. After age eleven she began going to a few places without her brother, but still spent a considerable time with him:

> After school, we used to go back to the school, 152 on Nagle. I used to, like, go there with my brother, play handball, stuff like that. 'Cause before they moved in the mini-school there, there was this big, open space, there was this nice breeze and everything. They used to have trees there, it was a big open yard, right? People used to bring their dogs there, bring frisbees. But then they built the mini-school.
>
> With my brother we used to do a lot of stuff. We would sneak into the pool at the Big Park [Msgr. Kett Playground] in the night time. We weren't the only family that did it, there were others, too. It was nice, nighttime at the pool. The boys took up pliers and put a hole in the fence. We could do anything we want. In the daytime there was too many restrictions -- "You can't do this, You can't do that." Nighttime was much

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better.

> We'd also go to the movies on Dyckman Street, till they closed the place down and put in the McDonalds. I think they did that in '84 or something. I remember the last movie we saw there: "Tough Turf."

When Rose-Ann was eleven and was first playing outdoors without her brother, she would walk or roller skate around the Dyckman Houses grounds, or go to "The Big Park." Although she did not leave these areas by herself, she could do so with her sister, who was four years younger than her:

> Me and my sister, we'd go to the stores on Dyckman and, like, on Post, to get candy, go to Carvel and stuff. And we'd take our roller skates to the playground at Fort Tryon. We wouldn't actually skate over to there, but we'd carry them and put them on there.
>
> Sometimes we'd go the roof, me and my sisters. You could see the stars; we'd bring binoculars. You could also see things like the train going by or the cars going over the George Washington Bridge.

Lisa (b. 1978). Although Lisa was allowed out to play unsupervised at age eleven, she rarely did so:

> I never liked going out by myself. I always liked going with my sisters, my mother and my brother.
>
> We would go in front of the building, me and my sister and my friends. We'd play "School" and stuff like that. Sometimes I would go to the Big Park, but mostly me and my friends would just walk around the projects.

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On Nagle Avenue they used to turn on the pumps -- the hydrants -- in summer, and we used to go there and play, guys used to throw us in the water and stuff. Sometimes we used to aim the water into the cars, get the drivers real mad.

Maybe when I was, like, twelve I started going around more by myself -- around the projects. I'd go to the Big Park and swing -- you know, stand on the swing, go real high. That was my favorite place to go. And I remember when I was twelve I got skates, soft wheel skates, and would ride around the projects. And I'd go to the Dyckman Community Center. They had a knock hockey set and dolls and a dance class. But not on Saturday-Sunday, `cause it was closed.

Carmen Nunez.

I grew up downtown, on Stuyvasent Square. There was the park right there and I would go there anytime I wanted. But you've got to be very careful bringing them up in a neighborhood like this. This is a very high-crime area and it's drug-infested. There are five or six crack houses in the projects.

Q: What kinds of changes have you seen since you moved here [in 1973]?

When I first moved here this was a beautiful neighborhood. It was clean. You didn't see no garbage in the street. The people were mostly Irish -- let's see, there were Irish, Italian, more people of that kind.

Q: Here in the Houses or in the surrounding area?

Here in the Houses. Then the Hispanics came from Santo Domingo, and that's mainly what we have up here now.

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They had rules in this building that you couldn't skate to your apartment, you had to change into your shoes and walk to your door. That's how strict the rules were. You couldn't be in the hallways with bikes, skates -- what do you call them? -- skateboards and all that. Now you can ride in the development, but you couldn't then, it was really strict.

If you could go back to the way it was before and have that neighborhood back, I would be more than happy to let my little ones play outside. But we don't have that kind of neighborhood anymore.

Q: Rose-Ann and Lisa said that they were allowed out when they were eleven --

They were watched. They were always watched. I had friends out there who would always keep an eye on them; if I couldn't make it outside, they were there. They were watched. Also, when my older daughters were little, I used to live on the second floor, facing the front, and you could see out, and they could go out even alone. Now we live on the top floor and I can't see down as good, so my younger ones, they go down only with one of the older ones.

You see, this neighborhood is, you don't know what could happen one minute to another. You know, all the -- what's that park called? Not Dyckman, but Ft. Tryon -- there were cases of rapes, of children being thrown down and stuff like that. So, like, if my little girls go it's got to be both together, because if something happens to one, one will be able to find help or whatever.

Since, like, the mid-eighties, there's been this increase in noise, radio playing, bottles breaking, shootouts -- I hear shootouts. I stopped letting my girls go to the roof.

You know what they used to have here? A milk machine. You need milk in the middle

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> of the night, you could just go downstairs and pay for it an take it upstairs. Not anymore. They had to take that out. That's also when they started breaking into mailboxes and everything, so they put in new mailboxes. They put in double doors you have to get in with a key. We didn't have no keys for downstairs in the early seventies. It used to be you could come in and that's it.
>
> When Rose-Ann was a baby [mid-1970s], there was mainly white, American people in this neighborhood, very peaceful, older people. Like maybe in their sixties, seventies. They'd be in the hallway and if they'd see one piece of paper, they'd pick it up. That's how they were. They were always, "Hello," "Good morning," "Good afternoon," "Good evening," whatever. They would hold the door for you, so friendly. I miss that.
>
> Now there's so much fear. Overnight! You know, I haven't lived here very long. 18 years is not a lot. But when I first moved here it was so clean and everything. That's what hit you. I liked the decency, I liked the quietness. I liked it that way. I don't like this rowdy business, the shouting, the breaking bottles, the music blasting all hours of the night. I feel sorry for kids growing up here now.

Paul Angelo (b. 1980)

Paul is growing up in an apartment building at the corner of Nagle and Hillside Avenues, just below Dyckman Street. He is being raised by his father and grandmother (his parents were divorced before he was five). Paul's father works as a stagehand and his grandmother as a part-time bookkeeper. The family ethnic background is

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Italian. The interview took place in 1991, when Paul was eleven. His grandmother was in the room during the interview and participated at times.

Almost all of Paul's exposure to Inwood has been in the company of his father or grandmother. His father takes him to Inwood Hill Park and to the unused railroad bridge, as well as to Ft. Tryon Park for sledding. More often, however, they drive to suburban parks. In Inwood, Paul's grandmother takes him to meet the Parks Department's Urban Park Rangers for scheduled walks through Inwood Hill Park. Both he and his grandmother estimate that they have done this 25 times. Usually, Mrs. Angelo would walk Paul to within a block of the meeting spot, at which point he runs to meet the group; they would meet at that spot when the walk was over and go home together.

Paul had begun going outdoors to play just two months before the interview; his first (and so far, only) destination was the high-rise cooperative building at 99 Hillside Avenue:

> I have a friend who lives in the big building, 99 Hillside and I can go there by myself now. I just cross Hillside Avenue and follow Hillside to the building -- it's like a block. Then I get buzzed in and and see my friends and we go to the playground they got there, with the fence around it.
>
> Q: Do you ever go to the stores around here?

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No.

[Mrs. Angelo]: He refuses to go for me. He went once or twice, though. Just got the paper.

I can play outside if I want, but I just don't want to. I get bored living here.

Q: Why?

Because you can't go out to the parks or anything.

Q: What do you think stops you?

Crime.

Q: How about playing down in the alley of the building, not in the streets?

You can't. The idiotic super keeps his dogs down there. Pit Bulls.

Q: Do you have a bike?

Yeah, but I don't ride it here. I ride it when we take it in the car and go somewhere else.

Q: Is there anything about the neighborhood that makes you not want to ride your bike around it?

Too many people, and the sidewalks are all cracked up and everything. Glass all over the sidewalks. And the drivers -- some drivers turn in real fast. And some drivers park on the sidewalk. A little.

Jerry Adames (b. 1978)

Jerry is growing up on Post Avenue near Dyckman Street, where he lives with his parents and a sister born in 1972. His mother sells clothes in a local store and

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his father is on the maintenance crew of a Midtown Manhattan exhibition hall. The family ethnic background is Dominican. The interview took place in 1991, when Jerry was 13.

Jerry first began playing outdoors unsupervised at age ten [1988]:

> My mother didn't want to, but my father said "Let him out, the other kids will think he's a wimp." So I'd go out on my bike, but usually my sister would be with me. I'd go 'round the apple -- that means 'round the block -- and not cross any streets. I could ride in Inwood Hill Park, but my sister, she'd have to take me. In the park I could, like, ride around, even where she couldn't see, but I wasn't allowed to get there by myself because of all the streets to cross, all the cars.
>
> Like even now, I can't go to Inwood Park by myself. I have to lie -- like, tell my mother I'm going with a friend and, like, his grandfather or something is taking us. Otherwise I can't go. Or I can go with my grandfather. He takes me there and let's me do whatever -- ride my bike around the fields. Then I go back to him and we walk home together.

The baseball diamonds have been Jerry's favorite place in Inwood, and when he can find a way to go there he will try to join in a Little League practice game:

> I'm not in Little League. My parents didn't sign me up for Little League. But my friend Dave is and sometimes his coach lets me play awhile. But then some other coach comes and starts saying to him "Oh, you let him in the game without paying!" I don't like to get embarrassed, like I'm trying to play for free.

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Jerry finds few play opportunities close to his apartment building:

> I went to karate school around the corner. I got out of that. They teach the same things over and over and over. I like Inwood Park better.
>
> Once we went around lighting smoke bombs and throwing them in the stores on Dyckman. Once one of the stores was a friend of my mother's. I didn't throw it, someone else did. Once, another time, I was cutting school, I was walking down Dyckman and some, like, teenagers wanted me to do crack. I said "No!"
>
> We used to play football in, like, the courtyard of my friend's building. Sometimes the super would chase us so we would go on the sidewalk. Then when we got big, like twelve, the courtyard was too small anyway so we just would play it on the sidewalk.
>
> I went to the roof a couple of times to fly a model airplane, but I don't go too often 'cause you don't know who's up there. You know, when it gets near Halloween, kids, teenagers, stash all sorts of stuff up on the roof. I'm not talking little stuff; they put sinks and stuff. Then on Halloween they throw it off. Once on Halloween I was standing on the sidewalk and a toilet seat went through the window of a car.
>
> You can't play in the alleys. Too much garbage. Also, people throw things. There was this kid, and he was hanging out in the alley, and someone threw a TV set out the window, and it ranked off his arm and he was hurt. So I don't go there. It's dangerous. Also, people are coming in and out all the time. They're strangers and you don't know what they're going to do to you.

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The Brennans

The Brennans live on Park Terrace East, a few doors from Isham Park. The family consists of Joanna Brennan, her husband, who is an ironworker, and their three sons: Joey, born 1980; Jimmy, born 1982 and Billy, born in 1986. The family ethnic background is Irish. Mrs. Brennan, Joey and Jimmy were interviewed. The interview took place in 1991, when Joey was eleven and Jimmy nine. Mrs. Brennan was present for the interviews of her sons.

Joey (b. 1980). Joey describes his initial unsupervised play experience and the extent of his range as of the time of the interview:

> I could go out and play by myself when I was nine or ten [1989-90]. I went down in front of my friend's building and we set up a little stand and we were selling lemonade. He lives on Seaman Avenue. Now I go to the candy store on 207th and Cooper and get candy and stuff.
>
> Also, I have a friend who lives on Seaman Avenue and Payson Avenue. That's the farthest I can go alone. And they have this garden that people who live around there are planting, and sometimes I go down there and help work in the garden. There are two volunteers who work there and they're trying to get more volunteers to help. I helped them with watering -- they'd turn on the hydrant and we'd bring water over in buckets, because there's a lot of plants there.
>
> Q: Do you go there a lot?
>
> No, I go there very little times.
>
> Q: What about places nearer the home, where you go more often?

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> Well, on this block, further down the block, there's this little wall at the top of the steps, and I play curve ball there with a lot of my friends. It's called the City Steps. They go down to the street. I don't go all the way down. When we're playing tag or manhunt, I don't go down farther than the second flight and hide. We play checkers on top, too.
>
> I go to Isham park a lot. My friend will come up and we'll play a lot of different things. We play tag, soccer, baseball, all kinds of stuff.

Joey explains some of the strategy involved in planning his unsupervised use of his part of Inwood:

> Sometimes we're with grownups, sometimes without. I got a bike for my eighth birthday. I guess at first my mother would just, like, stand there and let me go up and down the block. Then when I was about ten I could take it where they wouldn't be watching. I would go with a friend, just up and down the block. Later on, I could take it to the park. Like, if my mother was sitting in the playground, I could go outside the playground, take it to the baseball fields. And I'd have to go back and check with her.

Inwood Hill Park figures prominently into Joey's daily play, and he has developed a close familiarity with living things there:

> After school I just go to the playground, Indian Road. And sometimes I go to that little marsh down the hill from there. And there's a lot of trees to climb there. I saw a turtle, a snapping turtle.
>
> Q: Sounds like you like the marsh.
>
> Yeah, we see turtles, feed ducks, swans and other waterfowl. We catch fish. We made our own fishing poles with sticks and string and we got paper clips for hooks.

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> Last summer we caught tiny, little fish. Just yesterday it was Sunday and me and my friend were fishing down there. We were down there for, like, all day, and we had gone biking also, all around the playground, all around the park.
>
> Q: Did your mother know where you were?
>
> Well, I was at my friend's house, and we left a note for his mom just in case my mom called to see where I was.
>
> Q: Did you go to the woods?
>
> No, I'm not allowed to go the woods by myself.

As his keen interest in park wildlife would indicate, Joey has participated in the environmental education programs of the Inwood Heights Parks Alliance:

> Last year I was in this nature program and we were learning about the park. They just taught us mostly about the park and we'd go every day to, like, a different part of the park and learn about that part. It was, like, every other day after school. And we went up into the woods and went by these rocks that had been there for so many years, the rain had like washed them down smooth. Sometimes we see pheasants and once I found a pheasant feather.

The final three questions of the interview brought thoughtful responses from Joey:

> Q: Are there any places in Inwood you don't like, or were there any you didn't like when you were younger?
>
> [After a long pause]. I guess...the handball courts at 207th Street -- like, a lot of that area. It's a dead end, sort of, and there's handball courts. I really don't like the dead end. I guess it's just dirty. And a very loud place. I

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don't like loud places. There are a lot of people and a lot of cars there.

Q: Do you think there are any places in Inwood that are dangerous, or did you find places dangerous when you were younger?

I guess by the river. I stay away from the river.

Q: How about scary places?

The woods. I remember the Indian caves, there was one with a long tunnel. And I walked right in, it was pitch black, and I walked right into a spider web, and I didn't like walking in there. I was with my friends and my father.

Q: Was there any place in Inwood that you go when you want to be alone?

I like going into trees a lot. I like going into the tops of the trees. In back of the Indian Road Playground there are these trees planted in like a square shape. And down by the marsh there's like this big tree that my brother has just found, and he told me about it. And I like going there. The trees are slightly at a slant, so it's easy to climb up. I started doing this when I was young.

Q: How high do you climb?

[Mrs. Brennan]: Too High!

Well, there's one near the street I climb, and when I get as high as I can I'm at the same level as the second floor. When I climb I stay a long time. I look around. Sometimes I take a drawing pad and draw. I look down at the branches and draw the tree.

Jimmy (b. 1982). At the time of the interview, Jimmy had recently begun to play unsupervised in the immediate

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vicinity of his building:

> I started going out with Joey when I was seven or eight [1989-90], and could go out by myself when I was nine. I'd just ride my bike up and down the block. Also, I'd go to Isham Park or to the City Steps. In Isham we'd play tag on the grass or on the rocks. Sometimes I go in and there's, like, this very short bike trail. It's like a dirt path and then it turns to cement. When I go to that park I usually stay at the part that's near the house.
>
> On the sides of the building entrance are these little spaces, like courtyards, only they don't go anywhere. Sometimes if the super's not looking there's, like, two little walls and I climb on them sometimes but you're not supposed to. When the super sees us on them he says "Get down from there." He's told us many times to get down. If you're making a lot of noise -- like screaming -- the neighbors can hear and they yell at us sometimes. When that happens we go to the City Steps.
>
> There's this little alleyway that I don't like. It's a really short alley and I'd be going through with my father or my brother. And if you walked into it there's, like, entrances to the backs of other buildings. And, like, a lot of supers have dogs and they let them out in those parts. And they have like these really big dogs and they bark at you a lot and when I was younger it really scared me. The sound of the dogs barking would bounce off the walls and it was really loud.
>
> There's a little garden in Isham Park where they plant flowers. It's right across the street from my house and I go there sometimes with a pad and pencil and draw the flowers.

Joey has access to Inwood Hill Park through an informal association of parents who live nearby:

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> Sometimes I go to the fields at Inwood Hill Park by myself, with my mother or father's permission. It depends on who's already down there -- what kind of day it is. Like, if its nice and there are a lot of people out. If you know people are going to be out, then it's OK. It's like when other adults are going to be there. They've got to be there. Like, my friend's mother knows my mother. My mom's friend will call and say she's going to the park with her kids, and ask if my mom wants to go. And if she doesn't, and my brother doesn't, and I do, I'll just go down there and meet them. Sometimes I'm there before them. They'll come down and see me playing.

Besides the noisy alleyway mentioned above, there was only one other part of Inwood toward which Jimmy feels negatively:

> Like, on certain streets there's no stop sign and you really just have to wait till there's no cars to cross. At these spots the cars just zoom on by and they don't even watch where they're going. And at another spot there's a stop sign but people just keep on going through and it's really dangerous.

Joanna Brennan (b. 1958).

> I grew up on Seaman between 204th and 207th. I was allowed to go out at a much earlier age than my boys. I was basically on my own from about the time I was six [1964] -- even earlier than that. I cam remember being four and five in front of my building without an adult. I wouldn't even dream of letting my youngest out by himself. I could even go to the park myself. My mother would watch me from the 3rd floor window and walk me across Seaman Avenue, and then I could walk up, around the dead end of 207th Street and to the handball courts there.

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I would like my children to have the freedom I had as a kid, but then again there are certain advantages to having the parent there. For instance, my kids know things -- like the marshes -- that I never knew about. I don't remember there being all of the wildlife that they see now in that marsh. That may be because there wasn't an adult around to say "look!"

I remember going into the woods, but also being forbidden to go up there. I don't think my children would do that. I think they're too scared. I think we have taught them to be afraid. Actually, I don't think my parents said "Don't go the woods because it's dangerous, because there could be somebody up there." I think my parents were more concerned like, "don't go up there, you might get poison ivy." You know, something like that. The may have been afraid that there might be someone up there -- they just never told us that.

You know, I didn't allow Joey to go to Inwood Hill Park alone until just yesterday -- literally yesterday. Before that, when they'd go without me or my husband, I would call a friend to make sure she could meet them there, and if she couldn't, I'd follow them there myself. Now Joey can go alone, but I'm not sure about the place. It's pretty safe, I guess, but it's like...A son of one of my friends got knocked off his bike in the park and they stole the bike -- in broad daylight, with his parents around.

Q: How about Isham Park?

That's closer. They could go there alone younger, but they have to stay at the top part, near the building.

Q: How old do you think your kids would have to be before they could go -- say, in pairs -- into the woods?

Never!

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The McMullins's

Elizabeth McMullins is a single mother who is raising her two children on Sherman Avenue near the corner of 204th Street. Ebony was born in 1978 and Sean in 1984. Mrs. McMullins works as a school bus matron. The family ethnic/ racial background is black. Mrs. McMullins was present for the interview of Sean.

Sean (b. 1984). [Note: at the time of the interview, the author had met Sean three times. These meetings took place when the author visited the room in P.S. 98 where a Cub Scout troop -- of which Sean's mother was troop leader and in which he himself was enrolled -- met weekly. Although in that time the interviewer and Sean got to know one another by name, and while by the third meeting Sean seemed quite comfortable in playing tag or making small talk, he became quite shy when he complied with his mother's request to sit down and talk about his play experiences. The interview consisted the following brief exchange after which Sean resumed playing].

Q: Where do you like to play, Sean?

Dyckman Park.

[Mrs. McMullins]: He means the projects.

Q: Oh. [To Sean]: Inside or outside?

Inside.

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Q: What do you do?

Play.

Q: Play what?

They got pool.

Q: Do you go a lot?

Yeah.

Q: How much?

Everyday.

Q: Do you ever play outside?

No.

Elizabeth McMullins. Except for of occasional trips to the playground in Inwood Hill Park at 207th Street, Mrs. McMullins spends little time outdoors with her children, preferring that they be part of organized, supervised, indoor programs:

> I take Sean to the Dyckman Center four days a week at 3:30, soon as I get off my shift. He'd been in a latchkey program at P.S. 98 from 3:30 to 6:00 but they didn't do one-on-one help with the homework, which is why I like Dyckman, because they do that. The latchkey, that was just like regular school. Also, they started giving me the runaround with those Board of Education programs, being sent all over town. They kept telling me that Sean couldn't be in the program because of overcrowding, so I decided to go outside.

Mrs. McMullin's strong conviction that her children should be in organized activities has prompted her to

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invest considerable energy in leading them herself; however, she has been met with obstacles:

> I met the Cub Scout recruiters at PS 98 in 1989 and got involved. In this neighborhood we really don't have nowhere for the kids to really -- no recreation area for the kids. Most people live in these apartment buildings, and they always be going down, hanging around in the streets. There's a lot of shooting in the neighborhood, a lot of drugs. They shoot and they don't care who stands around. They got a beef and they start shooting, and sometimes kids have gotten hurt.
>
> Most of the time I keep my kids in the house. It's not a great neighborhood at all we live in. You have to be on the watch, keep your eyes, and pay attention to your kids in this neighborhood.
>
> So I met the recruiters and started doing the Cub Scouts. I wasn't doing nothing but working, so I said I want to get involved in something, not just working and coming home, just a routine. So then I started saying, well, maybe I can get something started at PS 98.
>
> It's not too often that parents in this community gets involved, you know. So I thought, let me see what I can do, if I can get enough parents to go along with me on this thing then maybe we'd have a place for our kids to go, not just to school and coming home, you know.
>
> In the beginning I had a few parents who said they would stick with me through the whole thing, but they didn't. So I managed going through this whole thing myself. I started out with 45 Scouts and it ended. See, we only take the kids that go to 98, and a lot of them graduated to other schools. And, you know, a lot of parents just show no interest in their kids. Oh, yeah, if you throw a party they all come, but to start to do something to stick with, they fall behind. I've had to

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> fight with the school to keep the Scouts here; some say it doesn't help with school. I had to go to the Principal office and explain to him what the Cub Scouts is all about.
>
> Q: What did you tell him?
>
> I told him, you know, that it helps them take responsibility, to become strong young men, so that they can depend on themself -- not just say "I can't do this," "I can't do that." We teach them we can do it.

Although Sean does not go out unsupervised at all, Ebony's access, even at thirteen, is highly limited:

> She don't go out alone. After school she goes to the Dyckman Center. She don't go out alone except to the local store.
>
> Q: Do you worry about her going to the store alone?
>
> Well, my window faces the store, so I can see her going into the store, I can see her coming out. I give her about ten minutes, then I hear the buzzer ringing. She started doing this last year, when she was twelve.
>
> Wherever she goes, I'm telling her I'm timing her. I want to know when and how long you're going to be, and come back when I tell her to come back. She getting older, she wants to be wild.
>
> Q: Do you think there's anything that your children have in Inwood that you didn't have as a child?
>
> I grew up in Harlem, 125th Street. What trouble they had there was nothing like what we have up here. When I wanted some recreation, there was basketball, pool, volleyball. And if you lived in a project, there was always a recreation center to go to. But here, I don't live in the project, so I have to go out of my

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> neighborhood, to another neighborhood, cross streets and stuff just to get to the Dyckman Community Center.
>
> Q: Do you think there's any advantage to living here instead of Harlem?
>
> Uh, to tell you the truth, I wish I was living back there. It's no different. I would go back. Because I'm used to that neighborhood, I grew up down there, I know what to expect. Around here, you don't know who you're talking to. It's scary.

The Del Toros

Josephine Del Toro and her husband are raising four children in an apartment on 204th Street and Seaman Avenue. (The childhood of Diane, the eldest, appeared earlier in this section). The other children are Jane, born in 1975, Danny, born 1984 and Nina, born in 1987. Mr. Del Toro works as a mechanic. The family ethnic background is as follows: Mrs. Del Toro is Italian-American and Mr. Del Toro is Hispanic. Mrs. Del Toro was present for the interview of Danny.

Danny (b. 1984). At 7 years of age, Danny had just a few months earlier begun to go to certain places in Inwood on his own:

> I go out on the block a lot. Down in front of the building, play with my friends. There's a door to the basement and we go there, play freeze tag. And I go to the candy store.

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Q: Where's the candy store?

It's on Broadway and 207.

Q: Do you go alone?

Yeah. Or with my friend.

Q: How old's your friend?

Same as me.

Q: Do you go to Inwood Hill Park without your parents or your big sisters?

No, just with my mom and dad.

Q: Do you go to the woods?

Yeah, but I don't like it.

Q: Why?

Because you can't see nothing, you just see a bunch of rocks and trees.

Q: Did you go to the caves?

Yeah, they smelled. Smelled like a dog went in there, like a shit.

Q: Do you think any place in Inwood is scary?

The caves.

Josephine Del Toro.

Danny was, like, six-and-a-half when I let him go downstairs to play in front of the building. He'd ride his bike up and down the block, like he does now. My two daughters were the same age when they went down. They got bikes when they were five and were riding them in front when they were six. The only difference, really, between them and Danny is when they were little there were a lot more kids on the block. Now, when Danny goes down there

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aren't that many.

Danny goes to the bodega at 207th and Broadway, and he has to cross Cooper to do that. Now, I know he told you that he goes alone sometimes, but he has to go with a friend -- not necessarily an older child, but somebody. And he always has to tell me before he can go there. Mostly he goes with his father. He crosses streets on his own, though: he has a friend across the street and he goes there without any help. When it came time to let Danny cross streets, I felt he was ready, just like my older ones, when I felt they were ready. I play it by ear. I go by how confident they themselves feel.

I was aware that my older daughters went and played hide-and-seek in the basement, even though I told them not to. And I know Danny goes, too. It's just this space with laundries and some garbage cans. It's warm in the winter since the boiler's there and I guess that attracts them. It's labyrinthine down there and it's not really a safe place and the kids are instructed not to play there. Number one, there are people living there in basement apartments. Number two, there could be strangers there.

I also knew that my older girls were climbing the fences in the back yards, going from one to the other. I don't know if Danny does that. It's not something I would tell them specifically not to do, but I don't think I would approve. Sometimes they get bored playing on the street, so they play in the courtyard, but then the super chases them out.

Danny goes to a nature class given by the Parks Alliance. There are a lot of programs, events in the neighborhood that we try to take advantage of. For instance, there's the Medieval Festival at the Cloisters. My husband and I take the kids. It's definitely for the tourists, though. There's a minimum of local advertisement. Sometimes I don't hear

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> about it until the day before. At the same time it's something you don't want to miss. The Native American festival too: there's very little local publicity. I ran into a lot of neighbors who said to me there "Gee, they really should have told us about this. I just found out yesterday."

Martha Fogarty and Coleen and Claire Murphy

Martha Fogarty and her husband are raising two of Mrs. Fogarty's daughters from a previous marriage: Claire Murphy, born in 1981 and Coleen Murphy, born in 1983. Mrs. Fogarty works as a registered nurse in Inwood and Mr. Fogarty works for the New York City Department of Health. They live on 215th Street a few doors from Inwood Hill Park. The family ethnic background is Irish. The interview took place in 1991, when Claire was ten years old and Coleen was eight.

Claire Murphy (b. 1981). Claire was first allowed to play outdoors unsupervised at age eight (1989), when she would go to the Indian Road Playground and to the sloping lawns beyond:

> I'd go to the playground or the hills. We'd play games and stuff. I was, like, only allowed to go to the park [i.e., the playground] and that was it. I'd ride my bike there, but I don't anymore because it's broken. But, like, my mother didn't want me to go anywhere on it because my friends, they were riding their bikes around and these kids knocked them off and took their bikes.

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Q: How did you feel when your mom told you she didn't want you to ride your bike around anymore?

I didn't care because I didn't want somebody to take my bike.

Q: How about the Island? Can you go there by yourself?

Well, sometimes. Like, if I'm with my friends I can.

Q: And how old are your friends?

My age.

Q: How about places that are closer to home?

Yeah. Like, we play in the courtyard. Sometimes I just go on the block, walk the dog and stuff. And if it gets really cold or rainy or something we all go to the basement.

Q: What's the farthest you go in Inwood without grownups?

To Broadway. Well, like, me and my sister, we went to have breakfast. Sometimes to get there we go through Isham Park, and sometimes we just go around it. Sometimes we go to get pizza, sometimes to the Golden Rule [a diner on Broadway near Isham Street]. We go weekends, like after church. 'Cause, like, my mom works and she says, "Go to religious instructions and then after that, go to breakfast."

The woods and the edges of the lagoon in Inwood Hill Park are things with which Claire has some contact, but with a certain restraint:

Q: Are there any places your mother tells you not to go?

The woods. And sometimes the Island. She lets me go there sometimes if I'm with my

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friends.

Q: Do you ever go right up to the water?

Yeah, on the rocks. And, like, sometimes try to see fishes.

Q: Do you think there are any places that are dangerous?

Maybe the woods. Or maybe near the water. But I'm not going to fall in because it's really shallow. But the little kids go. The woods are dangerous because there's like homeless people and stuff up there.

Claire is involved in some organized sports, which take place just a few yards from her door:

I'm in Little League. Also, every Wednesday we play soccer. The kids just get together, and the parents are there. I go to Little League every Saturday and we have practices once a week. I've been in it this year and last year.

Q: Are there any other girls on your team?

On my team? No. But on other teams, there's like my sister and a lot of my friends.

Coleen Murphy (b. 1983). Coleen had recently begun going outdoors alone; or, more precisely, she travels unescorted between home and an area where she is supervised:

Now I go out alone sometimes. But, like, my aunt's at the park a lot. So I just go out and play with the kids. The place I go is under construction [the Indian Road playground was undergoing renovation at the time of the interview]. There's a hole in the fence and I go through. On the other side there's, like, dirt mounds. They're making a new park.

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Q: Where else do you like to go?

You mean in the park?

Q: Yeah.

Well, I like the park on the island. Sometimes we just have picnics or I go with my friends and we -- we don't go fishing but we just tie a stick and see if we can catch anything. Or I ride my bike down there with my parents, or sometimes I go out before them and I just ride.

Q: Do you ever go to the woods?

Yeah, I used to always go.

Q: Who were you with when you would go?

My friends. We had a clubhouse in the woods, and we played up there a lot.

Oh, so you'd go into the woods, just you kids, and you'd have your clubhouse?

Q: Yeah. It's right near the grass. Well, they cut it down. Before, we had a better one, but all the trees were cut down, and then we used to go in and climb all over those sticks.

Q: Was this far into the woods, or just a little bit into the woods?

Well, it's just like a little. The woods, where it starts, that's where our clubhouse was.

Playing near her building, or making short trip around the corner to the grocery store on 218th Street near the park, does not entail supervision by parents or relatives:

We play right down there in the courtyard. Play sometimes ball. We just throw that ball around and just, like, throw it against the building. When it rains or, like, when it's really cold we play in the basement, and my friend plays with her

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> dolls and I play with my G.I. Joe or something like that.
>
> I go to the store alot. It's called Murray's and it's on the corner [of 218th Street and Indian Road]. But when it's summer and the ice cream truck comes I don't have to.

Coleen's experience of the park so near her home has not been unblemished:

> Q: Are there any places in Inwood you don't like?
>
> Well, not now. But, like, before, I didn't like the Island. Because there was this guy and he had a doberman pinscher. And they asked him to, like, put him on a leash, and he just started cursing and he just pulled out a knife and started throwing it around.
>
> Q: Did you ever see that man again?
>
> Yeah, one day I was walking my dog and I saw him on the hill so I just ran back in my building.
>
> Q: So that made you not like the island?
>
> Yeah. But I got over it.
>
> Q: Are there any places your parents tell you not to go?
>
> Well, like, the dock on the Island. They say you shouldn't go there, I guess because it's dangerous. Like, if you fall in you'd probably never be seen again. And also, like, it's polluted and everything. It's, like, if you fell in you would sink and, like, nobody would be able to save you.

Coleen, like her older sister, has participated in supervised recreational activities:

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I used to go to Girl Scouts at Good Shepherd. And I go to Little League. This is my second year.

Q: Was it your idea to go to Little League, or was it your mom's or dad's?

Well, I wanted to go to Little League, and my mom just let me. And, like, a lot of kids in my building go. My best friend. And, like, in Inwood I think they had that for a long time.

Q: Yes, about forty years. How about Girl Scouts? You say you used to go but not anymore. Why?

'Cause there was a girl I didn't like there. She's in my class and on my bus and I hate her.

Martha Fogarty (b. 1944).

I grew up on Vermilyea Avenue. It was more heterogeneous than it is now and the different cultures got along. In the last ten years it's become mostly Dominican. When I grew up there I learned about different cultures. For instance, I learned about the Holocaust.

I was out playing at three years old [1947]. When I was Claire's age [1954], we used to live up in those woods! We used to make fires, toast marshmallows. I mean, we were tomboys, we were always out. There were groups of us, we would just play and play and it was great. It's not like we were street urchins. Everyone went on to get their engineering degrees, their nursing degrees.

There was no anonymity like there is today. Mothers were always watching you. Like, today, my girls can be in the Golden Rule and say to somebody, "Hey, Fatso!" and get away with it. But I could never have done that. They would report it, and you would be in such trouble!

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Mrs. Fogarty has certain anxieties toward her children's fairly recently-acquired freedom of travel:

> My husband goes absolutely crazy when I let them out by themselves, but they have to start. They can go to the Golden Rule after religious instruction and come home. I give them about an hour after the Golden Rule, then they have to be back. Of course, then they can go out again, to Indian Road Playground and around there. They know many of the adults around there, the other parents.
>
> I knew that raising kids in Inwood would be different from my childhood, but I hadn't anticipated just how much different. Abduction is a big worry. A man once tried to lure the son of a friend -- a beautiful blond boy -- into his car. And there was a girl on Cooper Street visiting from Puerto Rico who was abducted and found dead weeks later.

Even taking advantage of Inwood's structured, supervised activities can be a problem:

> Coleen was badly injured in Little League. She was hit in the eye by a line drive. I was there. It was pretty serious. She's had some permanent structural damage.
>
> Q: But she still plays.
>
> Oh, yes. She was back in the game after two weeks.
>
> They also go on walks given by the Urban Park Rangers, and the Indian festival. Indians are a big thing around here, you know. Actually, the girls are a little burned out on Indians, so they told me "Please! No more Indians!"

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The Greenwalds

The Greenwalds live at 99 Hillside Avenue, in one of the cluster of four high-rise, cooperative towers built near Highbridge Park between 1960 and 1963. The family consists of Alice and Saul Greenwald and their sons: Josh, born in 1980 and Ethan, born in 1982. Mr. Greenwald is a school teacher. The family ethnic background is Jewish. The interview took place in 1991, when Josh was eleven and Ethan nine. The boys were interviewed together. Their mother was present and joined in frequently.

99 Hillside Avenue, as discussed in the previous chapter, has a small, fenced play area adjacent to it, which is furnished with benches and in which a few trees grow. Both Josh and Ethan had first been allowed to go there unsupervised a year before the interview. To the boys, this is "the playground" or "the park":

> Josh: We like to play downstairs alot. We have a lot of friends in the building, so we go downstairs to the park and usually play basketball, baseball. The gate has a lock and you need a key. See, if there wasn't a gate, anyone could just come in.
>
> Ethan: They also have, like, this ping-pong room, but we aren't allowed to go there because it's, like, for older people. It's downstairs, near the lobby.
>
> Mrs. Greenwald: Some senior citizens requested it. And although they said that the kids in the building could come, they don't really encourage it. There has been some conflict about sharing of space between the kids and the seniors -- for instance, in the playground.

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Ethan: One old lady told us that the playground was for her and that we should just play in the corner. She said, "Would you please play over there? I want to sit."

Josh: Me and my father, we put up this tire as a basketball hoop and left it there so we can use it. And there was this guy -- he didn't even live here, he was just visiting -- he took it down. He said it was dangerous or something. And our friend, Kareem -- he's sixteen -- he told the guy that we're allowed to play, and they started arguing, and the guy started cursing at us, and he took the tire and threw it over the gate. We went and got it.

Mrs. Greenwald: I think there's some sort of loose rule -- I don't know who follows it -- that you have to be nine to use that playground without parental supervision.

The schoolyard of PS 98 is directly across Hillside Avenue from the Greenwalds' building:

Q: Do you play in the schoolyard?

Mrs. Greenwald: I would never let them play unsupervised in the schoolyard. Of course, now there's not too much schoolyard left because of all the construction, but it just frightens me that someone could snatch them, someone could abuse them, older kids can taunt or torment them. I just don't know what's hanging out there. Even though I can see it from my window, I can't just jump out of the window and help them.

Ethan: The old people in the building say, "Why can't you play across in the schoolyard?" But it's bad there. There's all sorts of punks there.

Josh: There are gangs. They, like, beat up on littler kids.

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Q: Do they ever make trouble for you?

Josh: Yeah, once they tried to beat us up and my mother called the police. It was last year. We walked up from the bus stop [on Nagle Avenue]. They followed us here, all the way to our building.

Ethan: They hit us.

Mrs. Greenwald: Josh and Ethan weren't even alone! They were with the mother of a schoolmate! She told them to go away and they just started cursing her out.

Josh: We didn't hit back because there was a lot of them. Another time we were in the playground and they came up to the fence and started shooting water guns at us. So we got our own guns and started shooting back. And we really wet them, soaked them. And they said they were going to get us back.

Mrs. Greenwald: And there was a time they were throwing glass bottles over the fence. I think the controversy is the separation. There have been many times when parents here feel badly that there are kids outside there who can't come in, even though they live in the same neighborhood. But I understand why the building keeps them out. Insurance-wise, if for no other reason.

Ethan: One of the kids' father's a drug dealer. They say he's in the Hell's Angels. He takes off his muffler and rides around.

Playing in places other than the building's fenced-in space, or going out on errands, for the Greenwalds requires thought and planning:

Mrs. Greenwald: They go to school on west 70th St. The bus leaves them off at Nagle Avenue, near the Y, which is about four blocks away. Recently I've been letting them go to the bus stop and letting them

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come home by themselves.

Ethan: And we get pizza!

Mrs. Greenwald: Well, that's when we discuss it first. They can make little stops on the way from the bus, but we have to discuss it beforehand, in the morning before they go. They would never just go for pizza and leave me wondering where they are.

Josh: Now we're allowed to go down to Dyckman Street alone, if I take my brother. The store's on Dyckman, and it's a magazine stand and I get my comics there.

Q: Do you tell your mom before you go?

Josh: Yeah. We're not even allowed to go down to the playground without telling her. But if she's not home we leave a note.

Ethan was hit by a car once, near Fort Tryon Park. And my mother saw it and she screamed. The car hit him and threw him but he didn't break anything, wasn't even cut.

Q: Was your mother stricter after that?

Josh: No, not really. I remember after that, my mother was going to let him go down to the pizza store by himself. And I said "Mom, you can't let him. He just got hit." And she said, "You're right."

The Greenwalds experimented with organized recreation programs in Inwood, but found it impractical:

Ethan: We used to be in Little League, but then we stopped. We liked it a little, but we had to get up early on Saturdays and go over. And then our mom slipped a disk in her back, and it was like, "Should we go? Shouldn't we go?" So we didn't.

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> Mrs. Greenwald: When my kids were in Little League, it was very disorganized. The coaching was horrible. They'd keep them sitting there watching until it was their turn. It was a mess. It just turned us off. They have friends who have gone, but when you get to be Josh's age, the practice gets more intense. Practice is like two or three days a week, like four to six in the afternoon, and we just feel schoolwork comes first. Those kids don't even start to do their homework until eight at night! My kids are in bed at eight at night to get the bus in the morning.
>
> Q: Was there a problem with them walking to Inwood Hill Park and back?
>
> Mrs Greenwald: Oh, they wouldn't! We had to schlep them back and forth, and that was the big problem.

Although a separate interview was not conducted, Mrs. Greenwald shared some thoughts on raising her children in Inwood:

> I grew up in Seagate, Brooklyn [a private community of single-family homes], which was like a small town. You could walk around in the middle of the night and no one would bother you. I was born in 1949, so we're talking the fifties. Seagate had its security patrol. My neighbors knew me. If my mother called around, a neighbor could say, "Oh, I just saw her pass a while ago," or something.
>
> The history of this building is, when it opened in 1960 there were tons and tons of kids, and they would all use the neighborhood parks and play areas. But then they grew up and the senior citizens sort of took over the public areas of this building.
>
> Then a new generation of kids came in -- like mine -- and we felt we really needed space here for kids to play, right on the

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premises. And we're lucky -- we were the first of these four co-ops blasted out of rock on the hillside, and when they built our building they also blasted out a small, flat adjacent area for recreation. When they built the other buildings, they didn't spend the money to do that, so they don't even have small playgrounds.

I've always tried to take my boys to places that are clean, and the parks around here are not clean. There's so much glass around. When they were toddling around, it was so easy for them to get hurt. And, say we're in Fort Tryon Park, we can't let them go off even if we can still see them, because there's just too many unsavory people also using the park, so it made us nervous. Now that they're this age, we wonder if we were overprotective. But it wasn't just us, it was all he parents we knew. And that's why the playground here has become such a refuge.

I used to take them to the playground at the Dyckman Houses, but we had to stop because it got too rowdy. Kids would fight over the slides. It's just not the element that you get here in this building. It just wasn't a fun kind of thing. And it's just the usual thing -- my kids don't look like those kids.

Q: Do you think that your kids have anything in Inwood that you missed in your childhood?

Well, they have their sense of community within the building. But it's the building; I wouldn't say it's Inwood. It's a community here in the building; everybody is a shareholder. But this building could be plunked anywhere.

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Lucy Mendez, her daughter Kathy and Kathy's playmate Wendell Connoly

Lucy Mendez, her second husband and Kathy (b. 1984), her daughter from her previous marriage, live on Park Terrace West near 215th Street. Wendell Connoly, born in 1983, is the son of a couple with whom Mrs. Mendez and her husband are close friends, and he often spends his playtime in the Mendez household. Mr. Mendez is a restaurant owner. The Mendez family background is Hispanic and Wendell's is Irish. The interview took place in 1991, when Kathy was seven and Wendell eight. Kathy and Wendell were interviewed while Mrs. Mendez was in the next room.

Prior to the interview, the author had met the children twice during visits, during which they and the author got acquainted. They focused briefly and attentively for some questions, but after about ten minutes were overcome by fits of giggling, at which point the interview was ended and the children took the interviewer on a tour of their play room, where rocks from Inwood Hill Park were on display.

Kathy Mendez (b. 1984).

> Q: Do you ever go out alone to play?
>
> I can go down to the front of the building and wait for my mom. Then we go out.
>
> Q: Do you go anywhere else without your mom?

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> I can go to my friend's house if I ask. It's down the block. Also, I can go to the commissary. It's across the street, in Wendell's building. It's right inside, in the lobby, and they sell milk and candy and stuff.

Not surprisingly, Kathy does not go to Inwood Hill Park unescorted, but does go with adults, and has some strong feelings toward it:

> Q: Are there any places in Inwood you don't like?
>
> I don't like going to the train tracks. One time, I crossed them and when my other foot crossed, and I was on the other side of the tracks, a train went by. I hate that place. Gives me the creeps. Gives me the willies, too. Also, there are homeless people living down there. Also, I once saw a skeleton coming out of the ground!
>
> Q: Are there any places you go when you want to be alone?
>
> The Indian caves. We go and bring back rocks and shells. Also, my daddy's pajamas.

Wendell Connoly (b. 1983).

> Q: Do you go out alone to play?
>
> I go around my building. I can go to the lobby and to my friend's apartment. And I go to the commissary. It's in the other [adjoining] building. You don't go to the street, you walk across the [court]yard. My uncle lives in that building. I live on the top floor and he lives on the top floor, and you can get there by the roof.
>
> Q: Do you use the roof without a grownup?

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No, with my dad.

Q: Is there any place in Inwood you go when you want to be alone?

The Indian Caves. Also, my favorite hideout.

Q: Where's your hideout?

Why should I tell you?

Lucy Mendez. Mrs. Mendez discusses the northwest corner of Inwood where she lives:

The neighborhood's very tribe-like. Everyone watches everyone else's kid. If they see one alone they ask where the parents are, what are they doing. You see a kid crossing a street without looking, you yell at him. You know: "Where do you think you're going, Missy? I didn't see you looking both ways!"

We do things around the community. We go to Baker Field almost every game during the season and cheer them on. We go to the Native American Festival. The kids were in the Inwood Heights Parks Alliance's summer education program for like six weeks. I think it cost something like $35.

I'm with the Friends of Indian Road Playground. That playground had gotten pretty crowded with the influx of families with young children. This was about '85. So we started spring cleanup, equipment painting, fundraising for new equipment, rake up broken glass. We put up a fence around a grassy little area to keep the dogs out, for the younger kids. The Parks Department wanted to take away the sandbox, but we agreed to supply the sand and maintain it. It's always been a toddler-oriented park. We're trying to get it rebuilt to one that will accommodate older children.

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> I take the kids to the 207th Street playground when it's hot. But otherwise it's not that great a place -- needles and glass in the sandbox, not enough shade. Also, I don't get the sense that over there there's a real playground community like we have here.
>
> When we first arrived here in 1984 a lot of the old Inwoodians -- the Irish who raised their kids here -- thought the parks were just fine. You know, "It was good enough for my kids. What's wrong with it now?" And then, all these young upstarts started coming, complaining, tearing things up. There was a whole resentment of the yuppification of the place. But now things have calmed down.

7.8 Discussion

Inwood's most recent period saw it unfairly and unnecessarily battered by the fiscal crisis and weakened further by poverty, violence, drugs and fear. The fiscal crisis caused a withdrawal of government services just at the moment when an influx of poorer, Spanish-speaking residents was swelling the central areas -- those farthest removed physically from play and recreation areas. This problem, as it affected children's access to Inwood, touched residents from many walks of life, but was especially acute for the newer, Dominican residents, who not only carried a tradition of tight control over their children's movements but found themselves faced with an uncertain and often menacing new environment.

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In the midst of these serious problems, the play environment of children retreated ever farther from the public realm, until unsupervised play outside the home, as it existed for previous generations, became almost alien. As this went on, such traditional play areas as alleyways, woods, commercial establishments and schoolyards no longer served children as they once had; often, they served them hardly at all. This was due to such play areas and destinations becoming extinct (as with empty lots or movie houses), unusable (as with alleyways and schoolyards) or no longer realistically accessible (as with wooded areas). This loss of habitat, coupled with the much-elevated place in the lives of Inwoodians of crime and the fear of crime (and wariness toward the homeless as indicated in several children's comments) made it appear that the long, slow decline in children's access to Inwood, which began shortly before 1945 and which had accelerated during the 1960s and early 1970s had, by 1991, approached the point of collapse.

Such a conclusion appears to be supported by the interview data for this stretch of time, which differs markedly from that of the 1960 to 1975 period. One important difference is that now instances of extremely constrained access to the environment occurred not just in a few cases but in many and, moreover, occurred among boys

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as often and as severely as among girls. Maria Linares and Albert Pena are an example of this. Of these two cousins, who are of about the same age, neither began playing outdoors unsupervised until age eleven; here, then, the boy's experience is in that important sense as restricted as the girl's (although Albert did have slightly more freedom of movement than did Maria). Eleven-year-old Paul Angelo is another example of a boy with little or no unsupervised access to Inwood. Seeing no reason to play outdoors, and plenty of reasons not to (e.g., parked cars and broken glass on the sidewalks, pit bull terriers in the alleyways), he prefers to stay indoors; even his Grandmother has difficulty coaxing him outdoors. When Paul does go out alone, he goes directly to the fenced-in playground at the home of his friends at the cooperative apartment building on Hillside Avenue. That same private playground is also the primary play setting for the Greenwald brothers -- Josh, 11 and Ethan, 9 -- who play outside its confines only for short trips and only after consultation with their mother. These four boys' constraints are at least as severe as those governing girls such as Rose-Ann and Lisa Nunez who, until age eleven, never left the Dyckman Houses grounds without their teen-age brother.

There seems to be in many of the interviews in this

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chapter an air of surrender to the potential dangers that had become inherent in outdoor play; this is apparent when, for instance, a parent does not allow the child out except under a very limited set of circumstances, or when a child himself is a afraid to go out. Yet certain other respondents took deliberate steps to avoid suppressing, ignoring or giving up on this type of activity; instead they re-defined what it meant to have unsupervised, unstructured access to Inwood, and set about getting the most they possibly could from the limited opportunities and resources available. This is to be seen with the two Brennan boys, with the the daughters of Martha Fogarty, and with Lucy Mendez and her daughter, Kathy; Lucy Mendez describes the area around Park Terrace West where she lives as "tribe-like," with parents watching out for unattended children, while children such as Joey and Jimmy Brennan and Claire and Coleen Murphy know that, when they go to Inwood Hill Park alone, they can look around the lawn areas to find certain adults with whom their parents have arranged to be present. Such arrangements as these allow these children the freedom to explore limited parts of Inwood Hill park, i.e., those in the vicinity those lawn areas. In the relative safety of these places, they can climb trees, step down rocks to the water, build a clubhouse at the very edge of the woods -- and do so not

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only with with considerable freedom, but also with a responsible adult reassuringly within sight. Although such arrangements surely depart from the definition of unsupervised access to public play environments as used so far, they represent an interesting compromise between supervision and non-supervision.

Yet it will be noted that the three more fortunate families mentioned above live in the wealthiest section of Inwood. Indeed, never were socioeconomic circumstances as great a factor in children's access to Inwood as they were between 1975 and 1991. Just as wealth became increasingly mal-distributed within Inwood, so did access to play. For those families (usually those headed by single mothers) unable to take the necessary measures and precautions for exposing their children to their neighborhood environment with care and discretion, their children's access suffered accordingly. This unfortunate situation seems to obtain more for families in the poorer, eastern part of Inwood.

Among the informants the distinction between those children who had the freedom to play outdoors unsupervised and those who did not corresponds fairly neatly to that between children living west of Broadway and those living to the east. Indeed, it is difficult to speak of the Inwood of the the years 1975 to 1991 as even single neighborhood, so great had the differences in income and

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environmental quality between the western and eastern parts become (Fig. 60). The class division between these areas of course goes back to the early 1900s, when mansions graced Inwood Hill and presided over the lordly Hudson while tenements and coal docks lined the Harlem River shoreline, and it continued through the 1920s, when elaborate, elevator buildings were constructed near Inwood Hill and Isham Parks while simpler, walkup structures were built in the valley area. But successive urban trends since World War II -- suburbanization, urban renewal, the Hispanic influx, the fiscal crisis and gentrification -- had by the 1980s created what were in essence two very separate Inwoods, and the inequality between them can be seen definitively and quantitatively in the income statistics and in their respective children's access to the neighborhood as suggested by these interviews. One measurement of this condition, at once simple and revealing, is the ages at which respondents living in these respective areas were allowed to play outdoors unsupervised: east of Broadway, the ages at which this occurred were ten and eleven; west of Broadway, six, seven, eight and nine. For the children interviewed who live on the east, therefore, childhood contact with the community is almost a misnomer, as it did not begin almost until adolescence.

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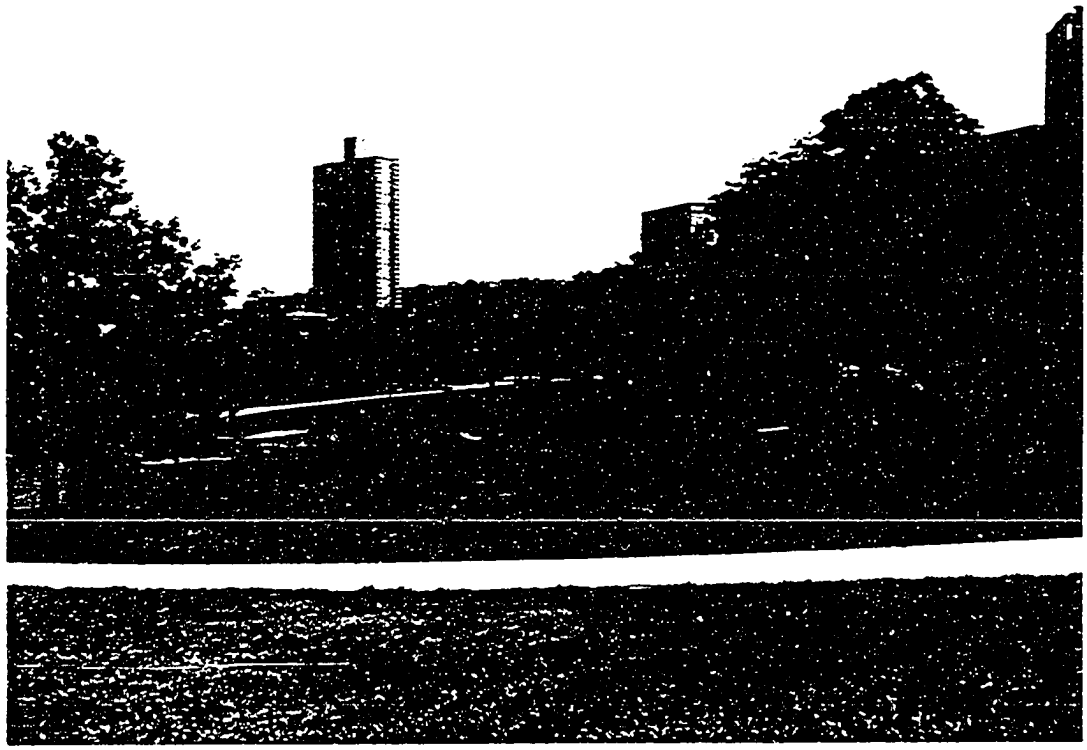


Fig. 60. The lawn area in Inwood Hill Park, near Indian Road, 1975. Just steps away from Inwood's wealthiest families, this space has evolved as one of the favored spots for un- and semi-supervised play -- for those fortunate enough to live near it. (Tower in background is in the Bronx). [Source: The Center for Human Environments, Inc.].

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The history of Inwood's children's use of their community, as presented in previous chapters, has suggested strongly that, throughout the course of Inwood's development, children living nearest Inwood Hill Park had play opportunities that children living east of Broadway either had to wait until a slightly later age to reach unescorted, or did not have at all. Such opportunities consisted of access to such landscape features as woodland, extensive lawn areas and waterfront areas. And yet in those former times children living east of Broadway were not excluded simply because they did not have a magnificent park at their doorstep. Children on those lower-rent, more urban streets merely made their play space in the treeless blocks where they happened to live, using the sidewalks, courtyards, schoolyards and, where present, vacant lots until the age (usually before eleven) when they could reach Inwood Hill Park. The freedom of unsupervised outdoor play for them thus was not an all-or-nothing situation.

In the 1975-1990 period, by contrast, proximity to Inwood Hill Park -- and the fact of living on the relatively affluent, tranquil and socially cohesive streets abutting it -- seems to have become not just an enhancement to children's access (especially access to

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nature) but almost a prerequisite to any access to Inwood. Local community groups' staunch defense of Inwood Hill, Isham and Fort Tryon Parks from the effects of budget cuts is a clear indication of these parks' importance for this function. Children living east of Broadway, with no destination comparable to Inwood Hill Park, were essentially left with nothing (unless they went against their parents' wishes and sneaked off to Inwood Hill Park, as both Shanice Kensington and Jerry Adames did). Parents of these children, despite their obvious concern for their children's play and their willingness to seek solutions, had no public play environment so large, permanent, attractive and well-known as Inwood Hill Park around which to rally.

It is worth noting that, based on the interviews performed, even during these recent troubled years in Inwood the role of the neighborhood's playgrounds -- i.e., Indian Road, 207th Street, Payson, Ft. Tryon and Msgr. Kett -- seems not to have increased significantly. As in earlier decades, when barriers to children's access to their community were considerably less formidable, these planned, circumscribed places remained marginal to the experiences of children aged five to 12. (In the Dyckman Houses, where reliance on Msgr. Kett playground has always

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been strong, informants were not appreciably drawn to it more strongly during the 1975-90 period than they had been earlier). Although these facilities -- as in the 1960s, when their deterioration was lamented loudly -- were the foci of considerable community-based citizen action, their role seems to have remained that of "kiddie parks" beneath the notice of children five to twelve; this seems to have obtained even while alternatives were diminishing.

Interestingly, the sharp decline in children's use of public places for play does not seem to have bolstered participation in organized, supervised recreation programs. Rather, Inwood's traditional organized programs appear to have continued much as they had in the past, and even to have deteriorated and shown some problems not seen in interviews covering previous decades. (The increasing economic distress of the residents of Inwood doubtless plays a large role in the troubles of these voluntary organizations). In Little League, for example, parents' failure or inability to pay the required fee can cause children to be excluded, as Jerry Adames was, while the long walk to Inwood Hill Park can be a factor as well, as it was for Josh and Ethan Greenwald. After 1975, the image of Little League as a unifying, small-town type of program seems to have become less and less applicable to so troubled and stratified an urban community as Inwood.

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(Claire and Coleen Murphy's participation in Little League suggests, however, that -- despite Coleen's serious head injury -- aside from the obstacles to participation just mentioned, the simple fact that a player is a girl at least no longer caused a stir).

With scouting, Elizabeth McMullins's frustration as a mother trying to maintain a troop despite what she perceives as widespread parental apathy, buttresses the grim assessment given by the area's Hispanic Outreach specialist (cited earlier in this chapter) and suggests that the Boy Scouts of America's stated goal of attending more closely to low-income urban children and their families runs counter to the organization's traditional reliance on the involvement of parent volunteers. This is a dilemma that the organization seems to have trouble resolving, at least in Inwood. Of the two children interviewed in this chapter who were involved with scouting, neither had much to say about the experience.

More popular and more satisfying than either Little League or Scouting as an afterschool or weekend activity, apparently, is environmental education, which for many children had become the primary medium through which they came into contact with the waters, woods and caves of Inwood Hill Park (for by this time use of the woods

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without supervision had become quite out of the question) (Fig. 61). To grasp the importance of such programs one need only think of Paul Angelo, the boy living by the elevated train who does not like to play in his neighborhood but who eagerly and repeatedly attended walks in that park led by the Urban Park Rangers; or the appreciation for Inwood Hill Park's marshes that Joey Brennan developed as a direct result of his participation in afterschool programs of the Inwood Heights Parks Alliance. Several other children benefited similarly. But here, again, access is a problem, especially for children living east of Broadway, who tended not to be involved with environmental education. While it is true that Inwood Hill Park is well-suited for environmental education -- a fact known decades before the term was even coined -- one wonders whether children's alienation from their community could have been alleviated through applying the environmental education principle imaginatively to such eastern areas with natural, cultural or historical importance as Highbridge Park, the Harlem River Driveway, the subway lines or even the Dyckman Houses or the stores along Broadway, Dyckman Street, Nagle Avenue, etc. Inwoodians, although having made impressive progress in environmental education, seemed to have stopped short of educating about unconventional aspects of

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Fig. 61. View of Inwood Hill Park's woods, 1975. Despite its almost complete non-use by unsupervised children, the place remains attractive and ecologically viable due in large measure to community groups' conservation efforts. [Source: The Center for Human Environments, Inc.].

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the built environment. Inwood's children have lost contact not only with their woods but with with their neighborhood stores and other businesses, with their Harlem River, with their rooftops and alleyways, and with their vacant spaces; they require a reintroduction to all of these things.

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8.0 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

8.1 Introduction

It has long been a truism that most social science dissertations work up to a conclusion or set of conclusions, a crowning chapter where hypotheses are evaluated, causes identified, random events fit into a system. It would therefore not surprise me to learn that even the most sympathetic of my readers has been looking forward to a Conclusion chapter that would sum things up -- spell out clearly just where all of the narration and detail have been getting us. I do not intend to disappoint such a reader; but I do think it would be wise to preface my conclusions.

Since this dissertation is rooted not just in the social sciences but in the humanities, I insert here a statement on what I see as the relationship between historical scholarship and social science and how this relationship may affect the conclusions themselves. As I wrote at the outset of this work, I did not turn to history as a means of understanding children's access to their neighborhoods because that would be the cleanest, quickest way to go about it. I did it because I felt that historical scholarship provides a dimension to the problem not available otherwise. In other words, the very

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historicity of my findings is as important to me as are their purely social scientific ramifications, and so I must here treat both.

In approaching the present investigation I have refrained from constructing anything like an elaborate theoretical justification for my treatment of historical data, and have instead adhered to the quite commonsense view that historical narrative, if it comes with a good dose of analysis, can contribute to an understanding of children and their neighborhood. Of course, in designing, executing and writing this dissertation I was acutely aware of the pitfalls of mingling historical scholarship with social science -- and not just the well-known methodological ones, either, but those that go to the core of the value of any historical treatment of a subject (some of the most basic of these I have discussed in the Introduction). But I did not think it necessary to let my concern for the most effective employment of historical theory and method lead me to throw wide open to questioning every fact I presented and every interpretation I arrived at. I have striven instead for a kind of cogency in reasoning that would let me get on with the task of relating what has happened to Inwood and its children while extracting some meaning from it. What meaning, then, can historical research give to social

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science?

The answer, if there is an answer, would center not so much on the subject matter (past vs. present) as on the treatment of the subject matter. Various thinkers since Renaissance times have said in various ways that where science renders the world into abstractions (i.e., laws, models, causal chains), history tries to imagine and convey it intact. Theoreticians of science such as Descartes have used that characterization to ridicule history while humanists such as Goethe have used it in high praise.

To convey the world intact is to present contextual detail effectively; the following quotation, to be found in Huizinga (1984), is one I am especially fond of:

> ...knowing in the historical sense rarely means indicating a strictly closed causality. It is always an understanding of contexts. (P. 39).

Similarly, when investigating human conduct (a task which social science and historical scholarship share) one finds that the differences between historical knowing and social scientific knowing are no less formidable. A widely-held view on this difference was put succinctly by Mandelbaum (1977), who pointed out that historians, unlike scientists (including social scientists), seek to understand human conduct under specific conditions or contexts; they do not seek laws applicable to all humans in all situations (if

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they did this they would render context meaningless to their purposes). Thus where science tends to view the unique, or ideographic, facts of everyday life as an aberration from a nomothetic norm, historical scholarship seizes upon that very uniqueness and seeks to understand it as it stands.

This very basic distinction would seem to put a wide gulf indeed between the aims of history and of social science. Yet few thinkers since early in this century have with any plausibility suggested that history serve merely as a chronicle of unique events (meanwhile, such comparatively recent innovations in social science as ethnography have helped to temper some of the abstractness of science by validating description as a research tool). Few also would deny that historical inquiry degrades itself or at any rate falls far short of its potential, when it is devoid of analysis. Thus the challenge of the historian -- and, by extension, of the social scientist who deals with historical data -- has been widely recognized as that of going beyond chronicling events and toward using the understanding of past events in the service of addressing social problems or sets of problems (for an exploration of this challenge, see, for example, Cahman & Boskoff, 1964).

Historical analysis and social science therefore have

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many distinctions that surely are worthy of extensive exploration and clarification. But the difference overall as it concerns us here is not one of kind but of degree: the degree to which each uses the past at all. (By this I do not mean to embrace all of the tremendous variety of differences in aims and capacities between these two branches of knowledge; I wish merely to to point out what I think is their main point of contrast within the limited realm in which their respective aims and capacities overlap). For example, had I made the topic of this dissertation "Problems of Children's Neighborhood Access Today" I would still have had to address or at least acknowledge things that transpired before today. Whether I would therefore have discussed things that happened yesterday or in 1890 is immaterial insofar as I would still be performing historical research and presenting historical data. The fact that I have instead fashioned my approach through highlighting historical data rather than a present state of affairs does not radically alter the investigation, for the research problem remains fairly constant even though it is stated and addressed differently. "Past" and "Present" do not exist in separate spheres of reality but along a temporal continuum, along which modes of thought must alter themselves in order to make sense of things; so it is with

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"History" and "Social Science."

Here, however, is what I wish to stress: since in historical analysis the method of data collection tends to be more eclectic than in social science, its insights tend therefore to be more tentative and its analysis and conclusions more open-ended. Because insights in history tend to be more tentative they must, in order to be appreciated, be presented descriptively and in full context; in most cases they cannot, as in a clinical experiment or social survey, be offered up as "results." This is not a deficiency on history's part but rather a necessary trade-off that one encounters when using historical data or engages in historical reflection; it is, moreover, something no thinker apparently has been able to avoid -- not even the historical quantifier. No one has been able successfully to pare history down to its essentials to the extent where context is lost, for in history context is such an essential.

In this dissertation I have striven to resist the temptation to hide behind historical scholarship's enigmatic nature and to resort to the discredited (but not quite abandoned) nonanalytical "scissors-and-paste [1] variety of historical scholarship. I have tried instead to understand and apply historical data in the service of analysis. Yet because this dissertation is not a

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methodological quest but an historical investigation of a problem in environmental psychology (an undertaking, I might add, with few precedents in that otherwise interdisciplinary field) some conceptual and methodological issues must remain unresolved here.

Thus what I offer here are not hard conclusions but what I hope are rational truths buttressed by the research performed. I also hope to make connections between these and the understanding of children's access to their neighborhood. It is my wish that the discussion of the implications for further research and action be grounded solidly not in abstract laws but in social reality, a reality the author and reader, having together taken a patient look into a bewildering mass of particulars, can share.

Footnotes to Section 8.1

[1] The phrase is R.G. Collingwood's and is quoted in Fischer (1971, p. 3), although Fischer does not name the specific work of Collingwood's; the full citation is as follows:

> Scissors-and-paste historians study periods; they collect all the extant testimony about a certain group of events, and hope in vain that something will come of it. Scientific historians study problems: they ask questions, and if they are good historians they ask questions which they see their way to answering.

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8.2 The Social System and Children's Access to Their Neighborhood

One vexing problem (or is it a seductive challenge?) attending children's lack of access to their communities is that it does not defy clear-cut solutions so much as it lacks clear definition as a problem. This intractability becomes apparent if we compare the problem with others in environmental planning, design and management. Let us take as examples lack of access to public facilities on the part of disabled persons, and lack of access to job sites on the part of those who cannot afford to own automobiles.

All socially concerned people would agree in principle that the disabled should have access to public facilities and that people who cannot find work near home should not be jobless simply because no dependable public buses or trains depart from their districts early each morning and arrive at the gates of the exurban factory in time for the eight o'clock whistle. In these matters the question comes down to how much (if anything) society is willing to invest in order to remedy such problems.

For example, to accommodate the disabled will we renovate all public facilities, or some, or none? To facilitate jobs for the poor, will we build a rail connection to the factory, or establish a public bus line,

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or give or lend a community group funds to organize its own van shuttle service, or -- to take another approach -- will we try earnestly to subsidize the creation of unskilled industrial jobs within the reach of mass transit? Or will we do nothing? (That in reality all of these options have been tried -- although in piecemeal fashion -- does not, of course, detract from the fact that society does indeed consider such matters seriously). And what do we do if all of our best efforts bring benefits but fall short of the mark -- if we discover that the disabled need not only equal access but special seating, lighting, etc, or that the newly-employed, in order to live decently, need not only jobs but daycare, flexible shifts or family leave? Do we dismiss these new concerns and congratulate ourselves on our limited accomplishments or do we strive for more? Naturally, the answer to these follow-up questions are no more easily arrived at than were the original measures now seen as inadequate.

Such policy and design decisions surely would be contingent on public attitudes as played out in what is commonly called "the political arena" -- i.e., laws, bills, referendums, policies, directives, polls, etc. (the use of which terms -- however democratic-sounding -- is not to take for granted the appearance, encouragement or even toleration of the views of the affected population).

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But at the very least, the problems themselves are fairly inescapable, and can be stated in simple terms of access -- of linkages between a population and a desired locus. One can go further and say that the population to be served needs to be helped so that it can be made more self-reliant. Money, moreover, could not only be applied directly to the swift amelioration of these problems but, if applied honestly and intelligently and without ulterior motive, would likely solve them wholly. In addition, and in keeping with most social problems, the wealthier one is, the less likely is either of these problems to affect one personally in the first place -- although one may well remain wedded passionately to the cause (perhaps even more so than one's less-uncompromising low-income comrade-in-arms -- but that is yet another story).

Now consider children's access to their communities. Can its relationship to the problems just discussed be anything other than distant cousins? I think it can not. For one thing, linking children and their communities is not universally recognized as a worthwhile goal. Moreover, even in the days when children had almost wholly unfettered access to their communities, they did so not in the fulfillment of social goals -- whether vague or specific -- but as one virtually-unnoticed by-product of other goals. What goals? Goals of power, artistic

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expression, political or social reform, social conflict, grandeur, profit, prestige, competition -- in fact, any motivation one may list that affects the environment. Children's access to their urban environment came into the spotlight of social policy and design only when its eradication was seen as necessary to what has been conceived as social progress.

There is a multitude of reasons why today necessity often dictates that we not expect children to have access to their urban environment. The finer distinctions and subtler shadings between these reasons are immaterial here, but the basic categories can be sketched: these would include objections such as that children's contact with their communities as they exist today would be either immoral ("Kids should be watched nowadays!") or premature ("Let's get street crime under control first!") or, of course, expensive ("It's the parents' responsibility, not the taxpayers'!). Additionally, the self-reliance issue is especially problematic, for when it comes to children's access to their communities one is prevented by convention from declaring "the more access, the better." Each objection, however, would indicate a lack of potential public consensus on this matter, a lack that seems likely to persist.

Another mark of the elusiveness of the problem of

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children cut off from their communities is its peculiar relationship to social class. Wealthy families can buy their way out of (among many things) the necessity of their children's encounter with a diverse, stimulating, nurturing neighborhood. They can do this through, for example, withdrawal into comfortable, spacious apartments, out from which they may venture only with adequate mental or physical preparation; or they can retreat to the suburbs. But, crucially, these families cannot buy their children's way <u>into</u> a healthy engagement with healthy urban communities; that would be impossibly beyond the reach of their wealth and influence, for the preconditions lie not within their "purchasing power" but in the lives, minds and actions of a great many fellow city-dwellers and their governing institutions. Withdrawal into the home and the family unit is, then, the desired, realizable goal for many, even for those who know what they -- and, more importantly, their children -- are missing. That is why, when we talk about children's lack of access to their community, we are not talking about something that can be "solved" by any means whatever, let alone through either policy or design. We can approach the issue only through being sensitive to the totality of influences on the environment and behavior; children's access to their communities therefore is not a subset of some general

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problem of access that concern environmental psychologists but is rather a prism through which many problems are refracted.

A social problem, obviously, must be seen as such by a substantial number of people before it can be addressed. Children cut off from their communities faces formidable barriers in public perception before it can be so addressed. However, readers of this dissertation, unlike many members of the public at large, may need hear no further argument that the problems addressed here are indeed problems; let us then turn to the problem's context.

One important premise of this research is that an urban neighborhood as a childhood habitat must be looked at with a broad view, one that takes in a variety of overlapping historical, social, demographic, political and economic phenomena. Thus the contention of Rivlin and Wolfe (1985) -- that children's environments must be seen not as a stimulus but rather as a system -- applies well to an investigation of a neighborhood. This dissertation has been in part an attempt to address that need through placing one neighborhood within the historical context of urban development. I have taken this approach also in an attempt to address Moore's (1987) criticism of

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environment-and-behavior studies as paying too-close attention to behavior at the expense of the environment. To look at and to understand a neighborhood as it affects children -- its buildings, schoolyards, streetscapes and parks, its rules of conduct (official or simply understood) -- it is therefore necessary to take a critical view of the social processes and institutions that influence it.

Seen through this lens, children's access to Inwood's public environment unaccompanied by adults has existed in the margin of these large-scale social processes, a margin that has become slim indeed. Inwood, as a product of twentieth-century urban expansion and development began as the proud beneficiary of these forces but then, when urban development began to go awry, became first their unwanted surplus and then their victim. As this progressed there was a gradual divorce between the child and the neighborhood. As one follows Inwood's history as an urban entity -- its growth, development, decay, efforts at self-preservation and partial revival -- while also following how children have used the environment during that time one is struck by how the resiliency and resourcefulness of these children were increasingly tested as their environment responded to the enormous external pressures of social change as well as by the almost heroic

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way these children have risen to this challenge.

Inwood's earliest years as an urban community certainly showed it at its greatest hospitality to play. Its landscape was varied, open and, to children and adults alike, highly interesting for its wealth of historical associations. Such features as the "Indian Life Reservation" and the Dyckman House Museum sought to foster such associations (Fig. 62). Meanwhile, the farms, estates and the rural cemetery, although not designated as museums, had the same general effect. Schoolyards were for free or supervised play, according to the season. For other recreation or amusement the flat, cheaper land on the east and other marginal land was used for such inexpensive activities as the Miramar Pool, Dyckman Oval, Hamilton Tennis Courts, Paradise Amusement Park and Baker Field, all of which, with the exception of Baker Field, were open to adults and children for a modest sum. Dyckman and 207th Streets and Broadway contained Inwood's modern conveniences for sale or hire: stores, bike rentals, movie houses. The Hudson River ferry and the Harlem River Speedway gave access to the rivers.

This happy meeting of landscape elements -- the old and the new, the free and the commercial, the rural and the urban -- was largely incidental. When urbanization, immigration and transit extensions combined

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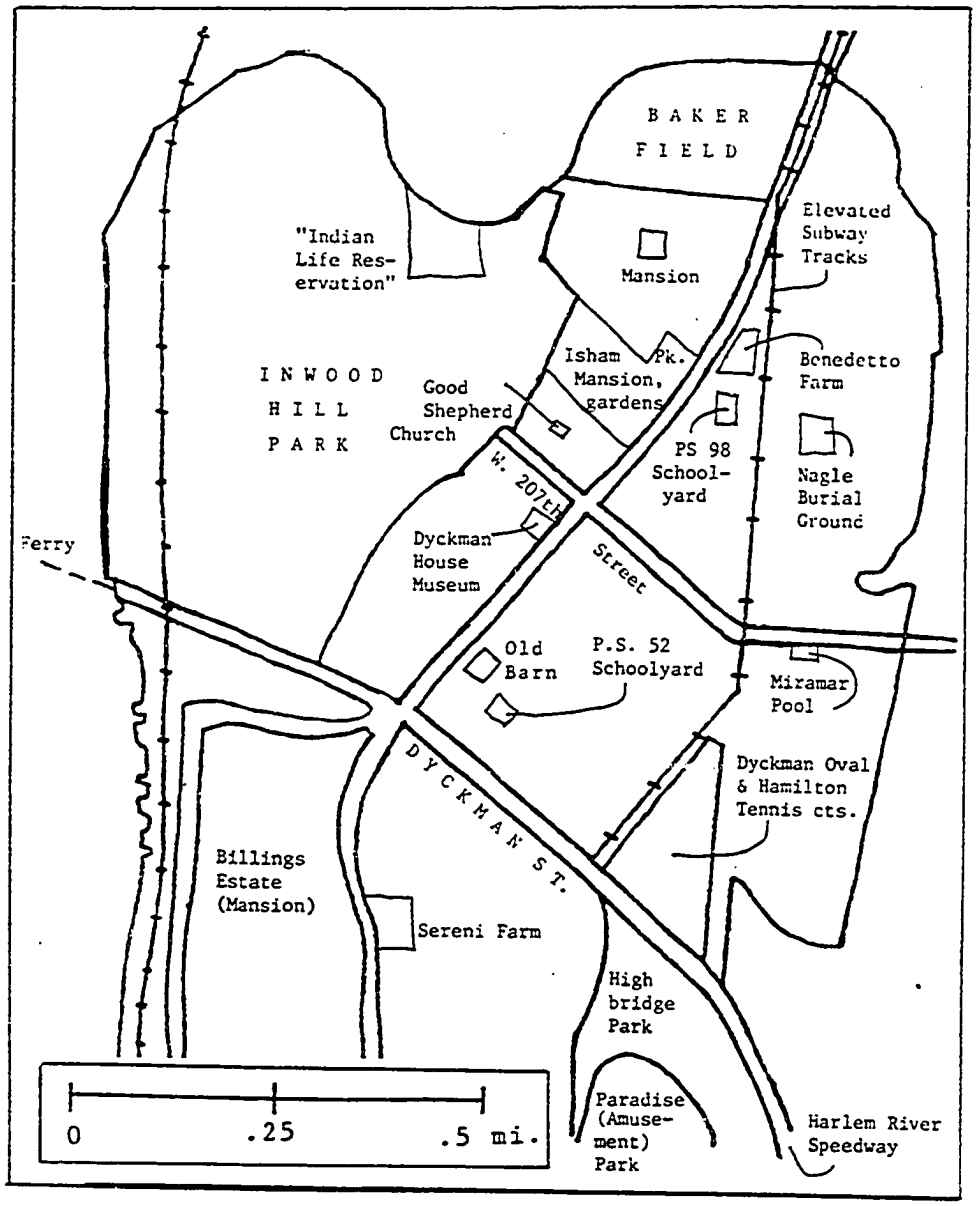


Fig. 62. Map showing landmarks relating to children's play as existing between 1915 and 1930.

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to transform Inwood from a rural backwater (although with pockets of industry) into an urban neighborhood the intention was not to create a successful landscape for children's play but rather for real estate speculation (the builders, in fact, went little further than satisfying the minimum legal requirements recently imposed on their trade). At the same time, however, Inwood's natural topography, historical significance and river vistas became strong attractions for the parks movement (as distinct from the much more child-centered play movement, which was used to working in the tight spaces downtown and thus did not get actively involved in the use to which such a large tracts of undeveloped land as Inwood Hill Park would be put). The parks movement worked to set aside land that would otherwise surely have been used for the housing that was fast becoming Inwood's pre-eminent land use. These seemingly contradictory trends -- the parks movement and real estate speculation -- converged to create a desirable residential district.

From the standpoint of children's access to outdoor play this setting worked impressively, providing both the excitement of an environment being created right before the children's eyes and the spaciousness and tranquility of substantial remaining unbuilt tracts of land in which to wander alone or with friends. But, again, this

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era -- the time of children's widest spectrum of opportunities to experience and explore their surroundings -- was never meant to last, and was instead a step in Inwood's evolution toward a tidy and rather unexceptional modern neighborhood, a place of quiet streets lined with stores and apartment houses. Only its unique geographical situation between the Hudson and Harlem Rivers, and its unusually generous expanses of surrounding parkland, set Inwood apart from any other neighborhood of the era.

Soon enough, however, before the great depression could interfere, the building activity was largely complete (Fig. 63). Inwood's flawed geographical structure -- flawed because it left large stretches of its central area without play space other than schoolyards -- had become permanently fixed. Beginning then, most of the things Inwood's children were to value most -- farms and farm buildings, rocks, empty lots -- were legacies from the pre-building-boom years, and many of these were prone to eradication with time (and did indeed drop from the scene one by one). And yet the new play features and facilities gained were awe-inspiring. In Inwood Hill Park alone were added three new playgrounds, ballfields at both its eastern and western edges resting on landfill, and a small island was made accessible through bridges. The New Ft.

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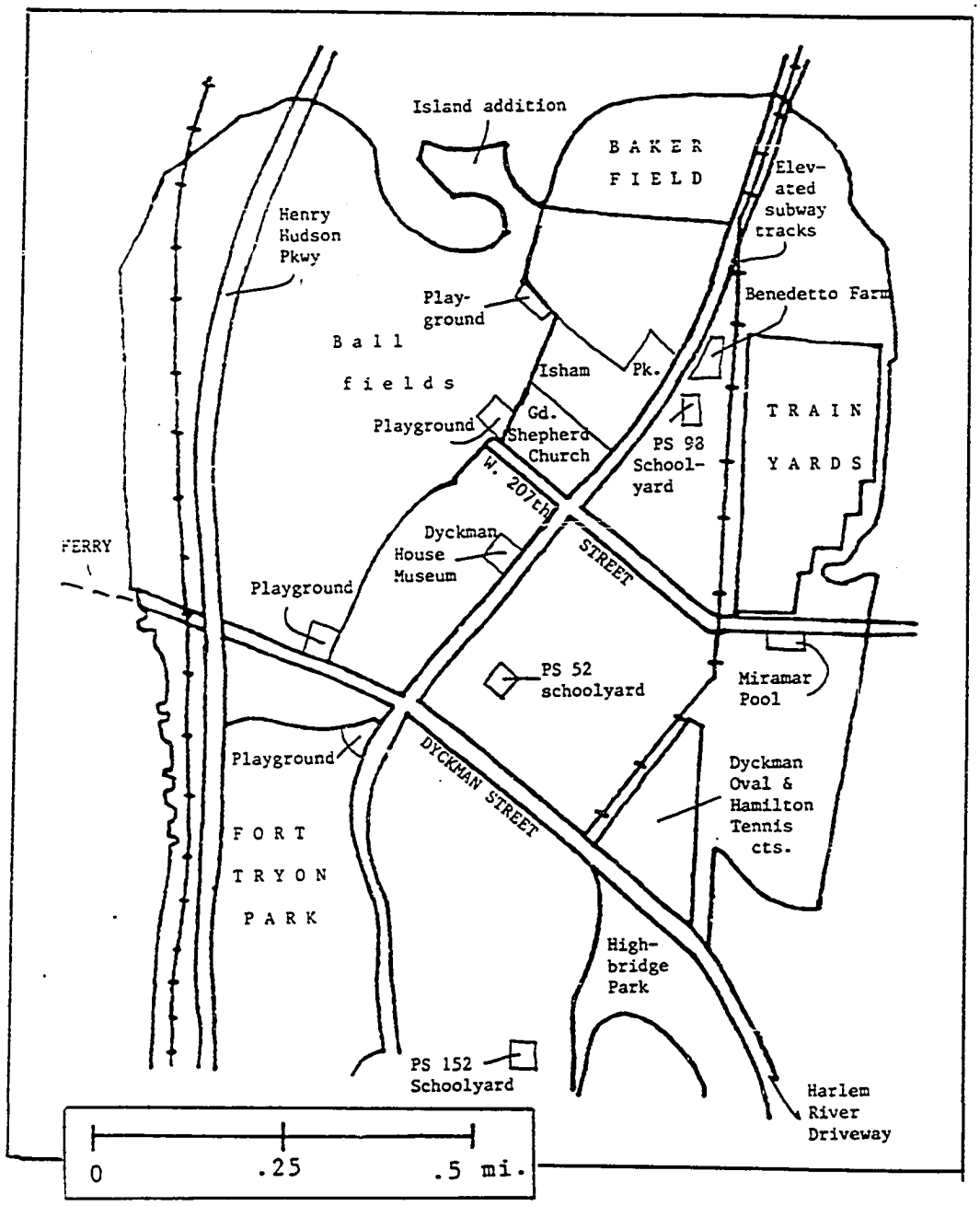


Fig. 63. Map showing landmarks relating to children's play, as existing between 1930 and 1945.

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Tryon Park, tamer and more elegant and touristy, also contained a playground. Although Paradise Park went out of business, the Dyckman Oval, Hamilton Tennis Courts and Miramar Pool remained. The shopping arteries retained a variety of goods and services of interest to children.

Although in the build-up Inwood in the 1930s and 1940s children still found plenty of play opportunities, new forces, physical and social, and all of them arising from outside the community, began working against that. Automobiles inhibited children's mobility -- beyond the block and, certainly, across the geographical and socioeconomic divider that was Broadway; the New Deal, which had transformed Inwood Hill Park, nevertheless scoured the woods of many of the things children found interesting, such as people and houses. The playgrounds the New Deal introduced apparently never were imaginatively enough conceived to attract children over the age of five, although the nearby sports playing field were popular with boys (and, beginning in the 1970s, with girls). In the 1940s, as Inwood approached its peak population density, anti-Semitic reaction to German-Jewish inroads briefly created an atmosphere of near-terror (while in Washington Heights, as we have seen, the terror was more than just near).

Immediately after World War II the nascent trends of

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the previous era coalesced, to Inwood's overall misfortune. One harmful development involved ill-conceived government intervention, this time in the form of urban renewal. Although it did not get to wreak its usual physical havoc here, urban renewal did lead directly to the administrative and, later, psychological division of the community between the white and more affluent Good Shepherd Parish and the poorer, racially-mixed St. Jude. Meanwhile, the Dyckman Houses, Inwood's new public housing, imposed a sterile, regimented environment into which moved Inwood's first appreciable number of blacks -- new residents who generally were not welcomed by the "old" Inwoodians. Suburbanization drained the numbers of these longer-established Inwoodians while the political structure prevented the newer, poorer residents from effective participation in shaping their community. These changes were beginning to deplete the range of available children's places. Fig. 64 shows a landscape that, as far as play space is concerned, is highly institutionalized, dominated by playgrounds, schoolyards, churches and the YM-YWHA. The Miramar Pool and the commercial establishments (including the movie theaters) alone remain from a time when children could find recreation not as objects of professional supervision (although in these establishments children had been held

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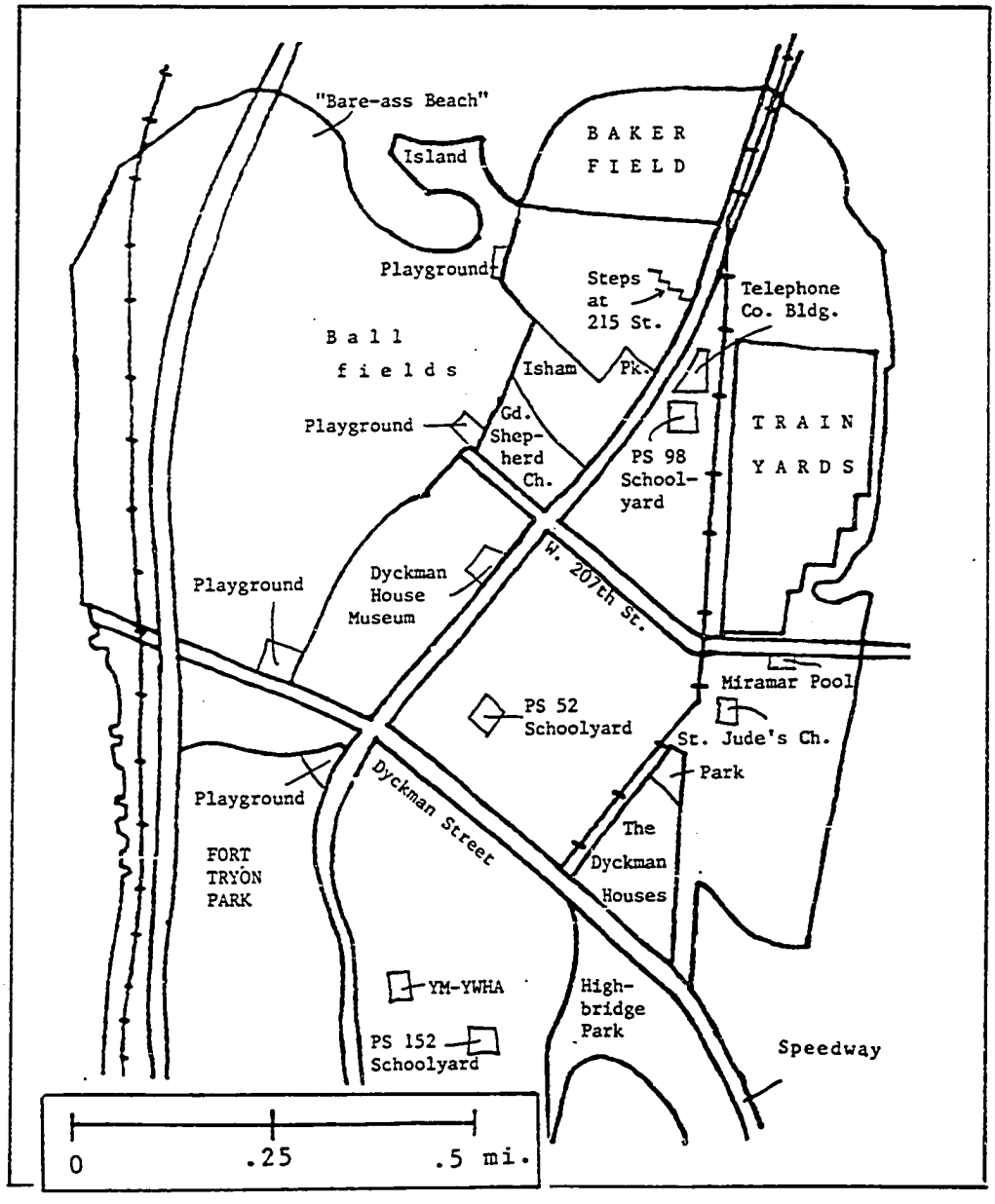


Fig. 64. Map showing landmarks relating to children's play, as existing between 1945 and 1960.

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to high -- perhaps too high -- standards of decorum) but more as independent residents choosing for themselves which activity to engage in. To complete the picture, the Benedetto farm is replaced by a small utility building.

With the great demographic upheaval of the 1960s, when the number of low-income black and Hispanic Inwoodians jumped dramatically, this scant offering was what greeted the new arrivals (Fig. 65). The wave of community organizing that swept urban America that decade resulted in some additional changes to Inwood Hill Park (such as the roller hockey rink and the environmental education center near the marsh) and to the Dyckman Houses (such as the small park across Dyckman Street from the project) but these for the most part had little effect on the central area of Inwood lying between Broadway and the elevated subway at Tenth Avenue.

Beginning in the mid-1970s the fiscal crisis not only diminished services but came in tandem with a campaign, undertaken by the City and business leaders, to lower any expectations on the part of the public that an adequate level of municipal services could ever be restored. Gentrification created further community divisions, while a crime wave intensified residents' fears for children's safety. The ravages of these developments can be seen in Fig. 66, which shows a landscape shorn of its historical

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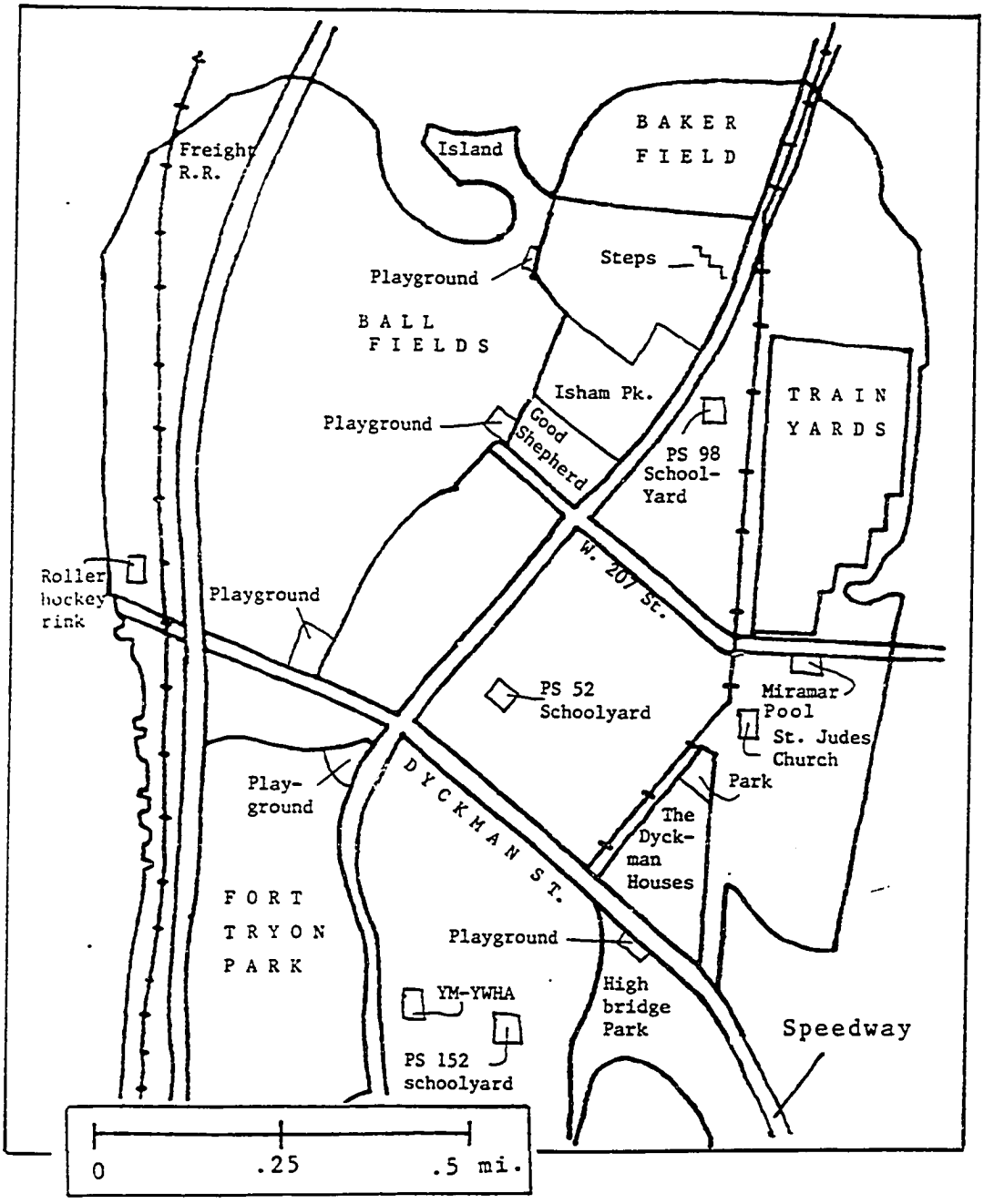


Fig. 65. Map showing landmarks relating to children's play, as existing between 1960 and 1975.

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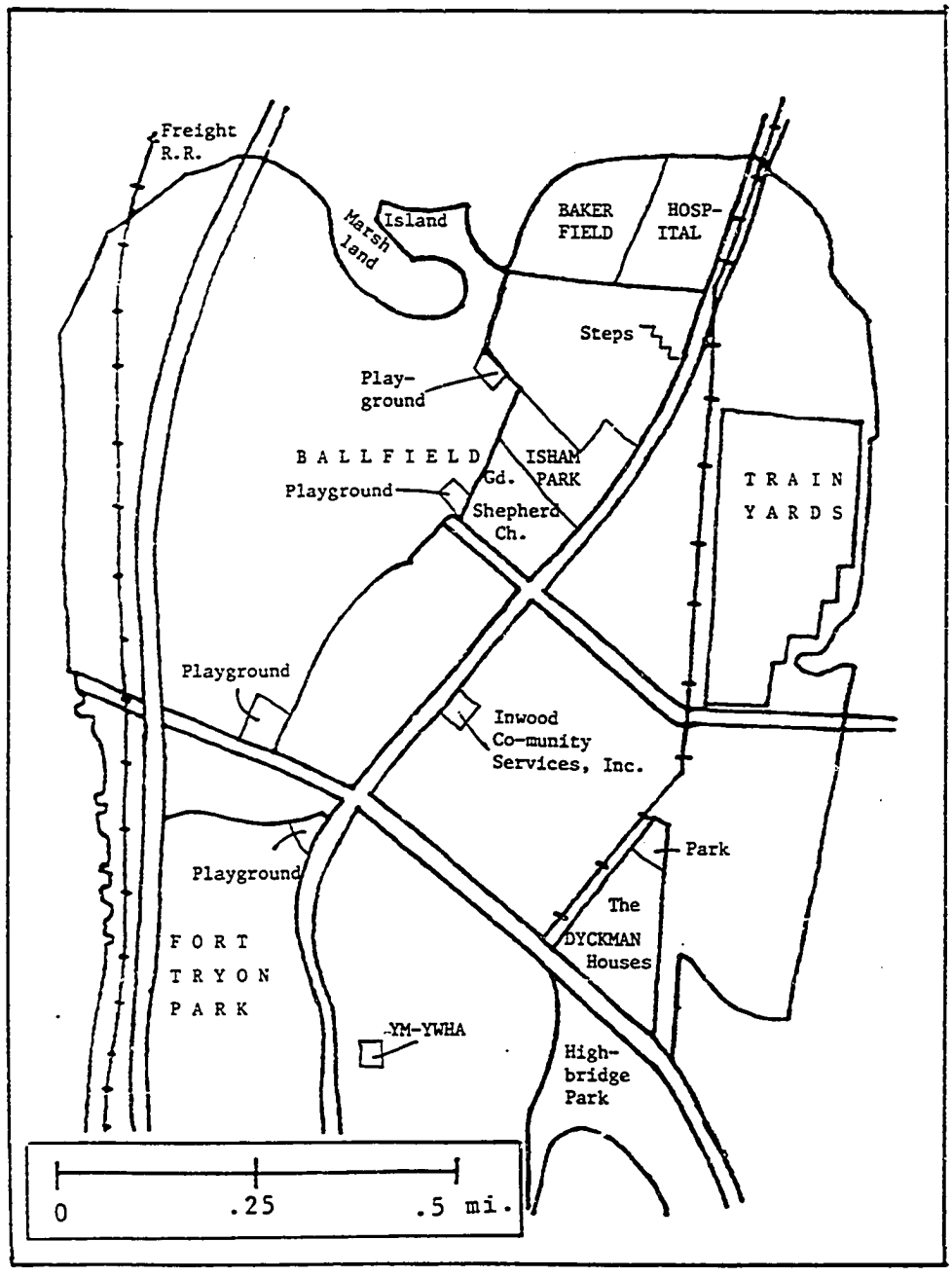


Fig. 66. Map of landmarks relating to children's play, as existing between 1975-90.

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richness of play settings. Only the Marshland near the island at the north end of Inwood Hill Park, used for environmental education but also for children's independent exploration, suggests any positive new development in children's unstructured play. In the geographic center of Inwood, however, the advent of Inwood Community Services, Inc., an organization providing only highly-structured and closely-supervised indoor sports, attests to the degree to which play has become divorced from the community's street life.

An urban neighborhood is not just a spatial pattern of buildings, streets and stores which the child negotiates, but an historical product (although never a finished product). Children's play in public spaces in the neighborhood is seldom a direct product of these large, city-shaping forces but much more often is their by-product. The environment's effect on children in this important area of their lives is unintended and therefore one must constantly ask, as I have tried to in the foregoing chapter, what society was trying to achieve that led, inadvertently, to a particular children's environments becoming extinct, unusable or unreachable.

A human environment that is a means to certain questionable ends rather than an end in itself fails to

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serve humanity. Charles Abrams (1965), contrasting American cities with their older, deliberately crafted and more tradition-bound European counterparts, wrote:

> The state of the American physical environment is a residuum -- of what is still left of nature's blessings, of what speculative profit has allowed to emerge, and of what the elements have not taken away...America's cities are a profusion of recencies -- of the speculative urge, of the procession of industrial superinventiveness, of a subordination of natural beauty to utility and profit, and of the assault by industry's most recent contribution -- the automobile. (P. 289).

This dissertation's introductory section referred to Paul Goodman's (1960) thought-provoking thesis that children bear the fullest brunt of the social revolutions brought on by adults. This seems to apply quite directly to children this century as they have and have not used the public places in Inwood. Turn-of-the-century urbanization and its long-term aftermath -- which we are confronting to this very day -- is one such progression of societal revolutions that I have addressed here. It provides the overarching theme for the physical and social growth, decay and partial revival of Inwood. Yet beneath this arch are to be found several sub-themes, social movements that have operated within this general context and which have affected Inwood, changing its physical and social structure. Some of these are discussed in the remaining chapter sections.

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8.3 The Role of Organized Play and Recreation Programs

Much valuable scholarship (e.g. Fine, 1987; Goodman, 1979; Macleod, 1983) has argued or implied that, for the last hundred years or so, organized play and recreation programs have greatly influenced children's play in the United States. Most conclude that these have contributed to the decline of free, unsupervised play in American cities.

In Inwood, however, the impact of these organizations has been notably limited. As discussed in an earlier chapter, play programs were not common in Inwood in earnest until the 1950s, when its social problems had become well-recognized; this was fully half a century after the heyday of the play movement. Although the rise and continued success of such entities as Scouting, the YM-YWHA and Little League Baseball have generally had a profound influence on how society views children's play in the neighborhood context, in Inwood the great majority of children have not participated directly in such programs, and their high national and, later, international prestige almost certainly have helped to influence -- or enforce -- the bureaucratic and regimental attitudes toward play that had crept into Inwood after World War II.

And yet, ironically, these programs may hold potential for rapprochement between urban children and their

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neighborhoods. The children's play and recreation movements most active in Inwood have been some of the world's most well-known and well-organized. Yet by their ideologies they have set themselves up in opposition to free play in the neighborhood (despite their frequent calls for community cohesion and involvement), aiming instead to "get kids off the streets" -- as though these organizations and "the streets" were rival businesses vying for customers rather than alternatives containing their respective and mutually-enhancing (not mutually exclusive) strengths and shortcomings. Can these organizations help put children in closer touch with their communities?

There are, I believe, two ways in which to view these play and recreation organizations vis-a-vis their role in the community. One is as alternative environments -- a sort of shield from the unpredictability and possible danger of free play; this would make them sort of service providers from outside the community. Another is to view them as community resources -- voluntary organizations devoted to community action and not outposts of absentee central administrations. These organizations, to their credit, have striven to be just such community resources; however, they seem willing to serve in such a capacity only on their own terms and not on those of the

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communities in which they operate (nor, where a community has not articulated its concerns, does it solicit its ideas). These organizations draw on the community for their power (in the form of dues and fees), while of course the community (i.e., a church or group of parents) invites them in to begin with. What may benefit the community most, however, would be if their respective roles were to be reversed, i.e., if communities were freer to to adapt these organizations to their own needs. Or, at the very least, these organizations and the community at large should strive for a minimum of physical separation, i.e., the use of public outdoor space for their activities should be fostered.

Might not the missions, resources and organizational capacities of these organizations, then, be better applied if they were redirected toward making street play an integral part of a child's involvement with the program? Although, as we have seen, these programs have made occasional forays into actually using the neighborhood -- camping in Inwood Hill Park, for example, or holding a street festival or a cleanup, or Little Leaguers heralding baseball season with a parade (to the rattling of donation-cans or otherwise) -- there is little or no ongoing effort to foster sustained links between children and the community. (The 1972 revisions in the Boy Scout

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handbook, as discussed earlier, promised this, but it appears, at least in Inwood, not to have carried it out). Most of these programs set up exclusive areas (e.g., Inwood Hill Park's baseball diamonds, school gyms, church basements) in which an activity or set of activities is performed. While there is certainly nothing inappropriate in confining baseball games to baseball diamonds, basketball games to basketball courts and scout drills to large, lighted rooms (especially if held into nightfall), in this practice there is of course very little opportunity for exposure to the neighborhood.

The example set by environmental education -- a movement in many ways apart from Boy Scouts et al but with the shared goal of providing children with worthwhile activities -- could probably be followed profitably even by these more conservative and better-established organizations. Environmental education, as stressed in a previous chapter, puts environmental experience and knowledge at the center of its mission; it seeks to forge links between the child and the environment rather than erecting barriers between them.

Environmental education in Inwood, however, despite its success and its great potential, has problems of its own to overcome. For one thing, as I have stressed in previous chapters, to reach all Inwoodians it will have to

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break out of the verdant hills of Inwood Hill Park and sow its seeds farther east. It would also have to resist the temptation to become exclusionary by, for example, requiring registration of children as a condition of their attendance (or it should resist any such requirements its funding sources may try to impose on it).

Furthermore, environmental education in general would have to be seen not just as an adjunct to the school curriculum but as a catalyst for children's independent experience of their community. Ward and Fyson (1973), in Streetworks: The Exploding School, their seminal work on environmental education (which focuses on Britain), extoll in the following terms the idea's potential for fostering a more democratic environment:

> What should our aim be in environmental education? To educate for mastery of the environment: nothing less than that. We are in the early stages of moving from a formal democracy to a participatory democracy, in which people cherish their environment because it is theirs. (P. 3).

Ward and Fyson, however, pin almost all of their expectations for environmental education on school reform. Now, in the United States -- and certainly in Inwood -- school children remain separated from their communities during the school day; at three o'clock they are released into a rich and complex neighborhood (which is not necessarily to say a welcoming and nurturing one) about

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which they have been given little or no opportunity to focus critical thought. (We hear often that in especially violent neighborhoods the public schools are regarded as "safe havens;" that is doubtless so, and it only reflects well upon these schools; but although they are safe havens from crime, these schools need not be safe havens from critical thought -- unless that in itself is seen obliquely as criminal, or at least unsavory, as it often is under conditions of siege). With social reform it is worthwhile always to keep in mind that certain lofty goals -- such as full employment, a low crime rate or racial equality -- are worthwhile things to fight for only in the long run while one strives for inextricably related but more immediately-attainable victories in the short run. School reform happens to be such a long term goal; environmental education is one of the more immediately-attainable related short-term goals. Environmental education cannot wait for school reform.

Fortunately, it has not been waiting idly, in Inwood or elsewhere. Since the mid-1970s community organizations have set up environmental education operations not as part of the public schools system but as separate entities; these maintain close ties to the local public school but remain wholly outside of their administrative structure. (Environmental education centers such as the one on Inwood

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Hill Park's "Island" do, however, rely on a steady stream of children in school groups, and are paid by the schools or the children themselves accordingly).

Perhaps it is all for the best that environmental education has not been taken over by the public school authorities; as things are, environmental education remains much more of a local community enterprise than do the public schools (which, in theory, are supposed to be community organizations, the failure of which to materialize after two decades of "decentralizaion" is scandalous). Perhaps this official separation between public education and environmental education can beget an additional benefit: adapting environmental education to play as well as to education. Education as defined by school system bureaucrats consists of pedagogy, not play. Because pedagogy is regarded as essential, and because most urban schools are struggling to provide what are identified as essential, play is pushed out of the realm of the child's school experience. Certainly, then, play as used in this dissertation -- unsupervised exploration of the neighborhood -- falls far indeed outside of the recognized realm of education as it affects Inwood.

Suppose, then, that environmental education were to align itself more with play than with education; suppose it were to stop regarding itself as an "open air

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classroom" -- in fact, to shed any analogy with the classroom and begin to concern itself with fostering in children the kind of environmental knowledge that will allow them to become, as Ward and Fyson urge, masters of their environment. If any organization in Inwood is today poised to take such a step, it is its environmental education program, and not the Scouts, nor Little League, nor the Dyckman Community Center, nor the Police Athletics League, nor the Catholic School Basketball Association, nor the YM-YWHA children's programs, nor Inwood Community Services nor the Catholic Youth Organization -- nor, most certainly, the public school. Perhaps if environmental education can manage to take this step these organizations will follow its example.

8.4 The Importance of Local Resident Initiative

Transforming traditional organized play and recreation programs into vehicles for increased child-neighborhood engagement ties in with the issue of resident [1] participation in community planning and management. Parents and children adapting to neighborhood change -- i.e., attempting to make things easier and safer for children -- is one thing; changing the urban scene itself in ways that will benefit a community is quite another. The view, stressed earlier, that Inwood and its people have been alternately battered and buoyed by events within

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the larger social sphere should not be taken as dismissive of individuals and community organizations as potent agents of fundamental change. People -- even those suffering under the most overtly repressive of governments (which, as of 1992, though, Inwooders are not) are filled with goals and dreams which they nurture, and in so doing seek not only to alter the environment but send strong signals to the power structure outside the community (Castells, 1983; Wapner, Kaplan & Cohen, 1973; Zinn, 1980).

Still, most community activism tends not to contain such radical imperatives. Most, in fact, follow Sennett's (1978) characterization of the phenomenon as premised on a rather politically and culturally conservative leave-us-alone attitude; or as Kevin Lynch (1972) put it:

> More often than we like to admit, we are not engaged in changing the world to some determined end. We are adapting -- responding to outside forces beyond our control, seeking to survive, to preserve something, to maintain some desired level of performance. (P. 199).

How much control have Inwooders had over children's environments there? How successful have they been, whether in remaking the settings of their lives or simply in "maintaining a desired level of performance"?

Nearly any component of the environment with which a child may come into contact while using his or her

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neighborhood has been subject to sudden change in form, function and meaning. This is a process in which children (and often parents as well)have almost no say; they can remain and endure them (as most do), or, if they have the means, they can move away. Usually these environmental and social changes do not just alter local features but remove them from a child's experience completely: a street used for sledding becomes a conduit for a stream of cars, or an empty lot becomes a building,or a schoolyard becomes a school extension. Things vanish: a giant tulip tree, a farm, some tennis courts, a movie house.

Interestingly, such change is far from universally ill-regarded by the children. But even as certain play features and settings are lost or transformed, the child uses them differently, or seeks alternatives: a large rock used for climbing is replaced by a building, and children race up and down its stairs; a playground is under renovation, and children play in the sand and gravel piles; a historic cove is obliterated by landfill, and generations of children frolic on the lawns created on it; a movie house is abandoned, and children find their way inside the dark, cavernous space; a farm is paved over, and children, however upset over the loss, nevertheless take advantage of the smooth surface of the parking lot for games; traffic makes crossing a certain road

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dangerous, and so a child, sometimes lugging a bicycle, goes underneath it by way of a subway concourse. Left reasonably alone, then, Inwood's children have coped with loss and change within their environment.

Yet this adaptability has been tried beyond all reasonable limits. There has come a time when inhibitions caused by the loss of play opportunities are so compounded by social barriers that children's use of their neighborhood has plummeted. This, as we have seen, is manifest in a decades-long progression of loss of habitat and in the prevalence of social attitudes that frown upon play. One indirect indication of the loss of access to the neighborhood can be seen in the changing nature of parents' restrictions: before 1975 children regarded parents' restrictions either as abstract, unfathomable or unquestionable laws to be wholly internalized, or else as minor obstacles to be stealthily overcome; in neither instance, however, would the child routinely be made by the parent to understand the reasoning behind a given restriction. After 1975, however, we see a completely different process at work: children and parents are now full partners in environmental assessment and, often, in the devising of strategies for coping. Children since 1975 tend to know exactly what it is their parents worry about (perhaps the parents, and the media, drill it into

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them since they feel that today so much more is at stake), and they worry as well. Frequently these children worry more than their parents do; at any rate, we see very little straining at the leash.

Under the stressful conditions that obtain today, the neighborhood cannot make its unique and historically-rooted contribution to a child's experience. Yet what the evolving city has extinguished can be at least partially revived through conscious effort and planning. Some of the time and effort many Inwood adults volunteer in order to involve themselves in community government -- the Planning Board and its committees, church and synagogue groups, PTAs -- might be applied more directly toward making Inwood more accessible to children.

It is obvious from the data that many parents in Inwood would rather spend the time and effort necessary to make outdoor play possible than seek alternatives that are costly (e.g., private programs) or dispiriting (e.g., confinement to the home). They seem, moreover, well aware of the historical aspects of this problem; indeed, in recalling their own childhood experiences (most of which have been urban) they regard this missing part of their children's childhoods not just as a lack but as a loss. A few pages earlier I discussed the elusiveness of public

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recognition of the problem of children's access to their communities, something which may be restraining action. And yet if the children and parents interviewed here are in any way representative of urban children and parents in general, then we may say that at least this significant (although insufficiently heeded) segment of the public-at-large has -- in their private thoughts, at any rate -- shown an acute awareness of the problem. Yet can they take any action -- that is, beyond the ones we have investigated, e.g., telephoning a friend and asking her to keep an eye on the child, or otherwise tailoring their daily behavior to account for the new inconveniences of free outdoor play; or putting a stopwatch to a child's trip to the corner store; or else organizing in order just to prod the government to provide routine maintenance of parks? Where would they begin?

Restoring Inwood's three large schoolyards would be an obvious first step in such a process, and would, in addition, likely bring tremendous benefit to much of the area east of Broadway, which is of course the area of greatest need. Contentious and expensive as this undertaking would doubtless be, it would bear upon what is perhaps the biggest planning mistake and most glaring injustice to children that Inwood has endured. During their long lives these schoolyards, although paved

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and often featureless, were physically and visually accessible, surrounded by homes and businesses. Their loss has been a severe blow. Therefore, if school overcrowding persists and the need can be forecast for the "mini schools" that have usurped Inwood's schoolyards, then engineering studies should be performed in order to ascertain whether additional floor space could be build onto extant buildings. Meanwhile teachers and administrators could be encouraged to take mass transit to Inwood's schools; after all, these schools are well-served by bus and are today no farther a walk from subway and many bus lines today than they were in 1940.

The loss of trees and rocks in the area east of Broadway -- another great and early casualty of urbanization -- is another problem that might be redressed. This might be feasible by incorporating such features into any re-introduced schoolyards; or, in a highly unusual and experimental action, they might be installed between buildings (imagine cops and robbers stumbling in the night over rocks and roots placed in the alleyways!) Difficult as achieving this would be, it does have the advantage of demanding not something new that opponents could deride as "pie-in-the-sky," but the return of something of which children of the community have been robbed.

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It may be argued that, since the schoolyards had become shunned and dangerous by the mid-1970s, restoring them would be an invitation for their their attendant problems to revisit Inwood. But this need not come about if the restored schoolyards are things produced and valued by the community and not seen simply as barren, surplus space. Further, if the necessary community effort and cohesion could be maintained to effect so great a change, one can anticipate that those responsible for their establishment will not allow such a schoolyard to be the victim of neglect or of a land-grab.

An initiative to restore Inwood's lost schoolyards would not be out of line with what Inwood has fought to accomplish in previous times. Inwood certainly has a rich history of community activism toward improved environments for children (although the area east of Broadway, for reasons discussed earlier, has been a late comer to this scene). Thus a considerable portion of this dissertation has focused on the ways in which the adults of Inwood have mustered the will and the resources to resist or harness large-scale trends that would have determined for them how their neighborhood would look or function -- and, by extension, what type of place Inwood would be for their children. As Inwood began showing signs of official

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neglect, parents and others had to become increasingly vocal and visible as mediators between children and the extra-local forces that had once made the neighborhood a place to be proud of but which were now transforming it into a place to lament, loathe or flee (or wish one had the means to flee).

Yet such action, necessary and laudable as it is, nevertheless has focused on isolated community facilities (a park, playground, youth center, Baker field or, as I have just proposed, schoolyards). A further step ought to be taken: viewing Inwood as a system of related spaces and facilities for children, with the problem stated as not just the maintenance of these entities (which fall under a maddening diversity of jurisdictions, both public and private) but as a problem of children's total access to a variety of them.

Today, even those children who, with their parents, have developed ways to get out of the home and enjoy a particular setting, such as a corner of Inwood Hill Park, tend to focus on that one setting -- a situation favoring those fortunate families who live no more than a few doors from such assets as Inwood Hill Park. For example, a child living one block from Inwood Hill Park and one block from a candy store on Broadway or Cooper Street may be allowed to go to one or another of these places with

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permission, but probably is not permitted to integrate a park visit with a stop at the store. A similar situation seems to obtain at the Dyckman Houses, where use of Inwood outside the development is viewed as an excursion.

In reviewing Inwood's history, one is struck by the misfortune of Inwood's failed efforts to secure storefronts to house children's and youths' hangouts in the central valley area (which were to be for ages nine and up), the momentum for which was most intense between the early 1960s and early 1970s. Such refuges could well have provided legitimized destinations for children -- places accepted by parents, each containing a supervisor who is accountable to local parents groups and, presumably, equipped with a telephone through which a parent could contact his or her child in an emergency (today's technology could even allow for multiple lines, perhaps at a low, corporate-subsidized cost). However, the much more circumscribed youth center concept that has instead evolved -- i.e., borrowed indoor institutional space, open during limited hours and days and housing primarily organized sports activities in which the child must be pre-enrolled -- although logical -sounding for reasons of liability insurance and such, nevertheless deny a child ready access to his or her neighborhood's streets (and opportunity to retreat from them without having to return

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immediately home). The present approach reinforces the "off the streets" mind-set. The "hang out center" concept of the 1960s and early 1970s, by contrast, attempted to make hanging out less dangerous; the order of the day now is to suppress hanging out outright.

Unfortunately, Inwood, for the time being at least, has given up on the notion of alternative, community-initiated children's settings and has instead entrusted that function to the tried-and-true resources, i.e., Little League or scouting (the Dyckman Community Center is unique in that is under direct tenant control; but it is little more than a "rec room" buried deep within windowless basement warrens). The adventure playground concept, for one -- a program relying on community involvement in children's access to play that has arisen in response to the dangers of unsupervised play -- has not been tried in Inwood, nor, one might add, in many other places in the United States.

In this climate of opinion, children's access to their neighborhood is reduced to either a matter of a parent dealing with a service-provider or with his or her own child; this obtains although Park Terrace area parents may watch out for each other's children, or informal nurseries may be formed out of sheer economic necessity among hard-working but impoverished Dominican parents. Yet in

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neither of these sub-communities is there activism consisting of families banding together to ease their children's passage into and through the neighborhood through self-advocacy. A number of reasons can be offered for this, such as -- to use an example from the present research -- the way the urban power structure tends to co-opt and neutralize citizen advocacy, or simply an attitude of resignation among parents, a feeling that such access for children is a lost cause or a thing of the past; or there is a desire to move from Inwood altogether (in which case, why acclimatize the child to the place?). Here, again, the very strong terms in which parents complain of their children's lack of access suggests there is a potential for strong community action, despite these obstacles.

If such action seems too formidable, I can at least identify one omitted ingredient which if added may help: children's participation in community planning and design, for which there exists hardly any historical precedent in Inwood (and Inwood is hardly alone) and so has not been treated in these pages. Certainly, if community participation remains problematic, then children's participation remains more problematic still: virtually no child under twelve heads a household, votes or chooses where and with whom to live. Few children in these ages

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form voluntary associations, attend community meetings or read or write for newspapers. Their lack of participation, however, is due not to developmental limitations but rather to adults' failure to apply the appropriate methods for eliciting their insights and opinions (see Hart, 1987; 1992).

However, the possibility that parents and children, working with designers and policy makers, can make a contribution to children's improved access to play is suggested by a recent study of the South Bronx conducted by the Children's Environments Research Group at the City University of New York's Graduate School (Hart, Iltus & Mora, 1991; for a more general treatment see Goleman, 1992). In this path-breaking effort (pathbreaking because it includes children in planning and design not of a controlled facility but of a high-crime urban neighborhood), parents and children in the local community provide such professionals with detailed information on their movements, preferences and fears. Moreover, the CERG study suggests (as do the parent interviews presented in these pages) that parents and children are willing to observe bounds and follow elaborate strategies in order to enjoy outdoor play safely. As pointed out earlier, if these residents put so much effort into avoiding danger, why not encourage them to channel their energies into some

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lasting environmental change?

But for Inwood's voices to be heard they need to speak up loudly so that they reach beyond sympathetic advocacy planners and into the halls of power. Katznelson (1981) has documented how such activism and decentralized government was subverted in the 1960s by anti-insurgent forces. One might argue that children's environments do not require insurgent tactics or its attendant mind-set. However, the reality suggests otherwise. A recent study (Center for Social Policy, 1992; see also "Report," 1992) found the following:

(1) Nationally, the number of children living in poverty increased 22 percent during the 1980s. [Another study found that the increase since 1970 was fully 33 percent; Steinberg, 1992].

(2) From 1979 tc 1990 the median income of families with children fell by five percent (adjusted for inflation).

(3) The average income of families in the bottom fifth income bracket fell 12.6 percent from 1979 to 1990, to $9,190, while the average income of families in the top fifth bracket increased 9.2 percent between the same years, to $79,000.

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(4) "American families" the report continues, "typically have less time to devote to the supervision, education and care of their children than they did two decades ago. These families are both time and money short" (p. 9).

Was there ever more of a need for local communities to clamor for better treatment than now, in the wake of the 1980s?

Footnotes to Chapter 8.4

[1] To use the more familiar term "citizen participation and control" in referring a community containing so many non-citizens as does Inwood, would be insensitive as well as inaccurate.

8.5 Postscript

As I write these words, signs are everywhere that an increased worldwide attention to such matters as the inner cities, the environment, education and children has arrived. Positive action may not be far behind.

The collapse of the Soviet Union, for example, has raised quite reasonable expectations here that pressing domestic needs take political precedence over militaristic

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illusions. That, coupled with the dismal state of the economy since the late 1980s, has revived calls for massive public works on a scale reminiscent of nothing less than the New Deal. The acquittal of several white Los Angeles police officers in the severe beating of a black motorist, Rodney King, and the ensuing violent rebellions in black neighborhoods (often directed at Korean-owned businesses) in that city (and, to a lesser degree, elsewhere) have revived national interest in urban decay and economic justice to a degree not seen since the L.A. rebellions' parallel, the urban rebellions of the 1960s. Environmentalism is gaining acceptance: just a few years ago, to be an environmentalist meant to harbor fanatical ill will toward the human race; today, being an environmentalist is completely accepted -- provided, of course, one does not carry one's convictions past a certain ill-defined point, beyond which one becomes an "environmental extremist." Sadly, however, disputes involving such issues are resolved more and more not as a result of social discourse but in litigation. This is not surprising. In the absence of social policy, it was perhaps inevitable that we in the United States should have resorted to piecemeal confrontation; the result is that we now look to our courts of law not for findings of fact, nor for the interpretation of fact, nor even for a

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legal perspective on social policy -- but for social policy itself.

But it is children's issues that appear to be leading the pack of social problems until so recently ignored. This concern has not, significantly, focused on the urban environment (let alone the neighborhood). In keeping with tradition, it focuses instead on the home, e.g., child abuse, the national rate for which quadrupled between 1970 and 1990 (Steinberg, 1992); or single parenthood (or, as an alternative to that, gay or lesbian partner parenthood). The other emphasis is, of course, on the public school system (which private entrepreneurs are now claiming that they alone can operate successfully). Perhaps if these now-separate realms of social concern -- i.e., the inner cities, the environment and children -- can hold their ground in the public mind, then thought -- whether historical, utopian, critical, pragmatic or any other -- may then pass freely among them, to be reinforced by action.

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APPENDIX

Sample of Instruments; Interview Form: Children

[Note: Tense and person will be suited to the interviewee. This is not a replica of the form].

Thank you for granting me this interview. I am talking to you because I am interested in people who have been familiar with the Inwood neighborhood for many years. I am mainly interested in Inwood as a place for children and young teenagers. Since you spent all or part of your childhood in Inwood, you may have valuable insights.

My purpose is to discover the different ways the outdoor environments of city neighborhoods are used by youngsters, and how the situation may have changed over the years. The information I hope to get from you will contribute to a study I and other psychology students are conducting at the City University of New York. This card will explain my affiliation more fully.

I will be taking notes during this interview. But because it is hard to listen while writing, I would like also to tape record our talk. I assure you that the information you share with me will be kept confidential. I will use the tape only to supplement my notes, and it will be heard only by my professor and myself. The notes I take will be seen only by students involved in the study.

I will start by asking you about your childhood in Inwood. Please be as detailed as you can in your answers, and take as much time as you need to think.

If at any time during this interview you wish to stop, please tell me and perhaps we may continue it at some other time. I want you to enjoy talking about the place where you grew up.

1. When did you first come to Inwood?

2. Where in Inwood did you live?

3. Approximately how old were your parents when you were born?

4. How many children were there in your household?

5. Who were the adults in your household?

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6. What did the adults in your household do for a living?

7. Childhood, like life in general, can be different people of different cultural backgrounds (such as Italian or Black or Dominican). Do you mind if I ask what is your cultural background?

8. What was it like growing up on _____St? Begin with your earliest memories. What kinds of things did you do, and where did you do them? [Probe for ages].

9. Now I would like you to tell me what it was like when you moved to _____St.

10. About how old were you when first allowed to play outdoors?

11. Where were you allowed to go?

12. At the age at which you started school, where were you allowed to go either alone or with children?

13. When you were twelve, or when you were starting junior high, where were you allowed to go, either alone or with other children?

14. Did you own or use a bicycle as a child?

15. How old were you when you began using it?

16. Where were you allowed to go on it?

17. Where were you not allowed to go on it?

18. Where did you most like to go on it?

19. Did you own or use a sled or a set of skates?

20. How old were you when you began using them?

21. Where were you allowed to use them?

22. Where were you not allowed to use them?

23. Where did you most like to use them?

24. On a typical weekday, with fair weather, what portion of the day after school did you spend outdoors as compared to indoors?

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25. On a typical weekend day, in fair weather, what portion of the day did you spend outdoors as compared to indoors?

26. Which outdoor places in Inwood did you like the most?

27. I'm now going to list off some outdoor places. For each one, please tell me whether you used it as a child, and, if not, why. I'll also be asking what you did there and how old you were.

    sidewalks
    streets
    playgrounds
    parks
    vacant lots
    water's edge
    yards and alleys
    other

28. Where there any places in Inwood you disliked as a child?

29. Where there any places you thought were dangerous?

30. Where there any places you thought were scary?

31. Was there a special place you went when you wanted to be alone?

Interviewer's comments:

Sample of Instruments; Interview Form: Parents

[Note: Person and tense will vary accroding to whether the parent is currently raising children in Inwood, and the number of children raised. This is not a replica of the interview form.

1. When did you first come to Inwood?

2. Where in Inwood did you live?

3. How many children were there in your household?

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4. Who were the adults in your household?

5. What did the adults in your household do for a living?

6. Childhood and childraising, like life in general, can be different for people of different cultural back grounds (such as Italian or Black or Dominican). Do you mind if I ask what cultural background you are from?

7. Were you yourself raised in Inwood?

8. [If "no" to 33] Where were you raised?

9. Can you think of anything positive about your experience of your childhood environment that you think your children may have lacked? If so, what were they?

10. Can you think of anything negative about your experience of your childhood environment that you think your children may have avoided? If so, what were they?

11. What was it raising children on _____St? What kinds of things did you do with your children, and where did you do them? [Probe for ages].

12. Now I would like you to tell me what it was like when you moved to _____St.

13. About how old were your children when first allowed to play outdoors?

14. Where did you allow them to go?

15. At the age at which they started school, where did you allow them to go, either alone or with children?

16. When they were twelve, or when they were starting junior high, where were they allowed to go, either alone or with other children?

17. Did they own or use a bicycle as a child?

18. How old were they when they began using it?

19. Where did you allow them to go go on it?

20. Where were they not allowed to go on it?

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21. Where did they most like to go on it?

22. Did you own or use a sled or a set of skates?

23. How old were your children when they began using them?

24. Where were they allowed to use them?

25. Where were they not allowed to use them?

26. Where did they most like to use them?

27. On a typical weekday, with fair weather, what portion of the day after school did your child spend outdoors as compared to indoors?

28. On a typical weekend day, in fair weather, what portion of the day did your children spend outdoors as compared to indoors?

29. Which outdoor places in Inwood did your children like the most?

30. I'm now going to list off some outdoor places. For each one, please tell me whether your child used it, and, if not, why. I'll also be asking what you and did there and how old they were.

    sidewalks
    streets
    playgrounds
    parks
    vacant lots
    water's edge
    yards and alleys
    other

31. Were there any places in Inwood you <u>disliked</u> for your children?

32. Were there any places you thought were dangerous for them? Were there any places you thought were scary for them?

33. Was there a special place you knew of where they went when they wanted to be alone?

Interviewer's comments:

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The Inwood Advocate. Publisher: Inwood Community Action, for which group this newspaper was the organ. Published between 1971 and 1973(?). The orientation, as the title suggests, was progressive (its inaugural editorial hailed "Fellow citizens of Inwood"). The emphasis was on community organizing, youth, Inwood Hill Park and ecology. Significantly, its pages contained no advertisements. To my knowledge, it was the only newspaper devoted wholly to Inwood, and not to all of Upper Manhattan. Several issues are available at the New-York Historical Society.

Heights-Inwood. Publisher: Barry Dunleavey. Published between 1973 and 1981. The emphasis, as its nonpartisan title suggests, was on everyday occurrences, and not on crime and scandal; thus it provides a wealth of detail on the daily lives and long-term trends of Upper Manhattan and its inhabitants in an understated manner devoid of shrillness, editorializing or sensationalizing (representative headline: "207th St: Undergoing deterioration or just change?"). At one point it published a section in Spanish. A set (except for the first two volumes, which I obtained from the publisher) is housed at the New York Public Library, Ft. Washington Branch, Local history Section. (These battered

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copies are wrapped in dusty garbage bags and bound with twine).

The Uptown Dispatch. Publisher: Linda Garcia. Published since 1984. I can discern no coherent editorial policy, which seems to run the gamut from radical to reactionary. To my knowledge, it is the only local newspaper whose publisher has a Spanish surname. Often it features detailed coverage of local Dominican affairs. The issues I cite are those I obtained myself during visits to Inwood; I know of no library that contains back issues. The publisher is said to have a collection, but I have not been able to establish contact with her since 1989, when I had been a contributor (see Gaster, 1989). When I last traced her, Ms. Garcia was operating not from her usual storefront editorial office but from borrowed space -- with no direct telephone service -- in a Washington Heights church.

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