

**OCEAN PARKWAY, Borough of Brooklyn**

The property bounded on the north by the south side of Church Avenue, on the west by the western curb line of the western side road of Ocean Parkway, on the south by the north side of Seabreeze Avenue, and on the east by the eastern curb line of the eastern side road of Ocean Parkway.

Landmark Site: The land containing the above described property.

On October 8th and November 26, 1974, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held public hearings on the proposed designation as a Scenic Landmark of Ocean Parkway and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. The hearings had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. There were no speakers in opposition to designation. The Commission has also received many letters and other expressions of support in favor of this designation. A total of twenty-four witnesses spoke in favor of designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Ocean Parkway, the first road of its kind built in the United States, established a new concept in road building. The road is about six miles long and stretches from Coney Island to just south of Prospect Park. It evolved from an idea expressed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux in their 1866 preliminary report to the Park Commissioners of Brooklyn on their plans for Prospect Park. Under the section entitled "Suburban Connections", they suggested that the shaded "pleasure" drive on the western side of Prospect Park be extended from the park to the ocean. The road should be "of a picturesque character . . . neither very straight nor very level, and should be bordered by a small belt of trees and shrubbery."

This very simple scheme was further elaborated two years later in the 1868 report by Olmsted and Vaux in which they coined the word "parkway." Their parkway plan was, to a certain extent, influenced by Baron Haussmann's Avenue Foch in Paris and Unter den Linden in Berlin, but they considered their parkway an advancement over these boulevards.

Olmsted and Vaux proposed that a mall, similar to the one on Unter den Linden, be divided down the center by a road to be used for "pleasure-riding and driving." The normal traffic roads which provided access to the houses fronting the parkway were to run along outside the malls. There were to be walks with space for benches and rows of trees along both sides of each road.

On May 11, 1869, an Act was passed in the New York State Legislature (amended in 1872) giving authority to Brooklyn Park Commissioners to "lay out, open, and improve a public highway or avenue from Prospect Park, in the City of Brooklyn, towards Coney Island."

Construction of the Parkway began in 1874 and was completed to Kings Highway in 1875. The extension from Kings Highway to Coney Island began in 1876 and was opened on November 11, 1876. The cost of construction was borne entirely by the owners whose property lay within 1,050 feet on either side of the Parkway. It was not until 1882, when legislation was passed, that these property owners received compensation for their loss. Under the terms of this law, Kings County paid two-thirds of the cost while the property owners paid the remaining third.

The 210 foot-wide parkway was divided into: a central roadway 70 feet wide, two malls 20 feet wide, two side roads both 25 feet wide, and two sidewalks each 15 feet wide. Originally, the Brooklyn Parks Commission had control over an extra 30 feet on either side of the parkway. Within this extra area "no buildings or other erections, except porches, piazzas, fences, fountains and statuary shall remain or be at any time placed; which space on each side of the avenue, and in addition thereto, shall be used for courtyards only, and may be planted with trees, shrubbery, and otherwise ornamented, at the discretion of the respective owners or occupants thereof; but such an ornamentation shall be under the direction of the said Park Commissioners . . ."

The Parkway is lined with deciduous trees (maple, oak, sycamore, elm and some ginkgo trees) and is provided with benches, playing tables and a bicycle path all of which are heavily used by nearby residents. A bridle path on the eastern mall provided pleasure for countless citizens for many years. For many people in Brooklyn, Ocean Parkway is the only large, open space with trees and grass that is readily accessible to them. Because Prospect Expressway merges with Ocean Parkway at Church Avenue, the central roadway can no longer be considered a "pleasure drive." But the original intention that the parkway should also serve as a promenade and green belt for the residents of the neighboring communities has, to a great degree, been realized.

#### FINDINGS AND DESIGNATION

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the landscaping, the planning, and other features of this Scenic Landmark, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that Ocean Parkway has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, Ocean Parkway was the first road of its kind built in the United States, that it established a new concept in road building, and that it is a large open space with grass and trees that serves many residents of Brooklyn as a promenade and green belt.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 63 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Scenic Landmark Ocean Parkway, Borough of Brooklyn, which consists of the property bounded on the north by the south side of Church Avenue, on the west by the western curb line of the western side road of Ocean Parkway, on the south by the north side of Seabreeze Avenue, and on the east by the eastern curb line of the eastern side road of Ocean Parkway.