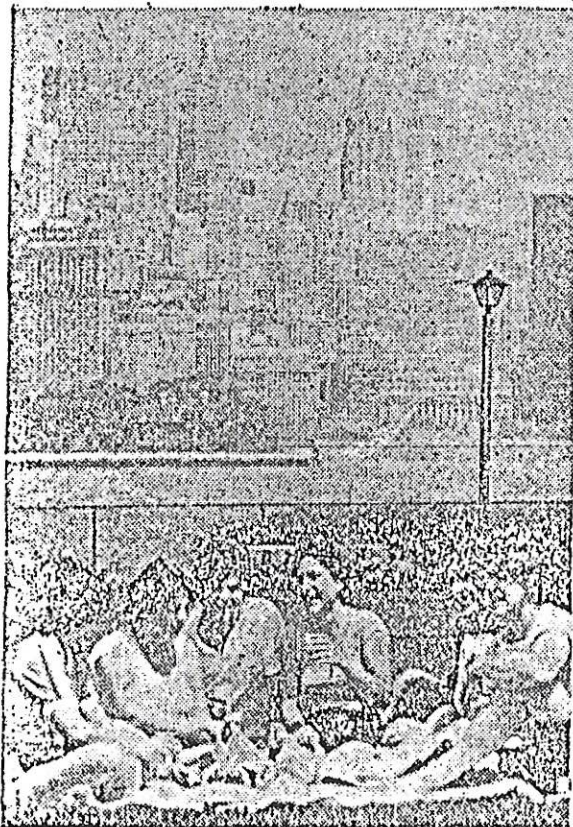


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# Liberty Park a place for Joe Everyman

By FRED KERBER



News photo by Frank Hurley

Young people enjoy a picnic in Jersey City's Liberty State Park, just across from lower Manhattan.

**ONE REACTION** by Joe Everyman when surveying a work of art is, "It's nice, but what good is it?"

Art for art's sake is not No. 1 on the priority list of the masses.

Robert Geddes, the principal architect for Liberty State Park in Jersey City, shares the same feeling.

### Shouldn't be separated

"Art and architecture should not be separated from everyday life," said Geddes, who is also the dean of the Princeton University School of Architecture and Urban Planning.

Geddes' work at New Jersey's first urban state park began in 1975. His designs call for something more than a pleasure to the eyes. He wants a site that will "contribute to people's everyday experience."

Some \$37 million of the estimated \$160 million earmarked for Liberty Park already has been shelled out for the 800-acre spot. Geddes predicts current plans will be complete in about 20 years. But he jokingly adds, the project "never" will be really finished.

"They'll always be someone else to generate new ideas," he said. "Remember, it took 40 years for Central Park."

### 20th century's contribution

Along with Central and Prospect Parks, Geddes feels that "historians will look upon Liberty Park as the 20th century's contribution to that triumvirate" of Metropolitan New York urban parks.

"It is unlike anything else in the country, anything else in the world," Geddes beams of his project.

He says the Jersey City waterfront site is "extraordinary". The panorama includes two national land-

marks — the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island — the spectacular New York skyline and the Brooklyn Bridge, which Geddes notes "happens to be one of my favorite monuments."

Geddes, a founding partner of the award-winning Geddes, Brecher, Walls and Cunningham architectural firm, also labels the "users" of the park "extraordinary."

### Identify with park

"You have local residents who feel the park is theirs. Regional New Yorkers who feel a part of the park because of its harbor site. This group includes people throughout New Jersey because the park is a major state enterprise. And last, national and international tourists because of the monuments," he said.

Geddes gave a lecture-slide presentation on the park Tuesday at the Newark Museum. His slides included current shots of "decayed and derelict land" and artists' conceptions of what's to come.

The most attractive feature may be the "Liberty Walk" — a crescent-shaped walkway extending the length of the harbor. It will be available day and night, police-patrolled, and will afford magnificent views surrounding the world's most formidable city.

Plans also call for an inland waterway for boating and swimming; a grassy area for "ethnic festivals;" a wildlife preserve for the canvasback ducks that inhabit the area's southern tip; restoration of an old train stationhouse, to be used for music and dance events; and acres upon acres of greenery, to include spots for picnic and ball fields.

As a trial run, Geddes said, some 30 acres were rushed into completion in 1975.

"We wanted to see if it would attract a noticeable crowd," Geddes said. "We made a grassy mound, nothing more."

That mound attracted 300,000 visitors the first year.