

BRYANT PARK

NEW YORK'S TOWN SQUARE

*A celebration of the park's rich history
and many years of transformation
into one of the most successful
public spaces in the world.*



BRYANT PARK
— CORPORATION —



WELCOME

Bryant Park is a success partly because it has broken all the rules:

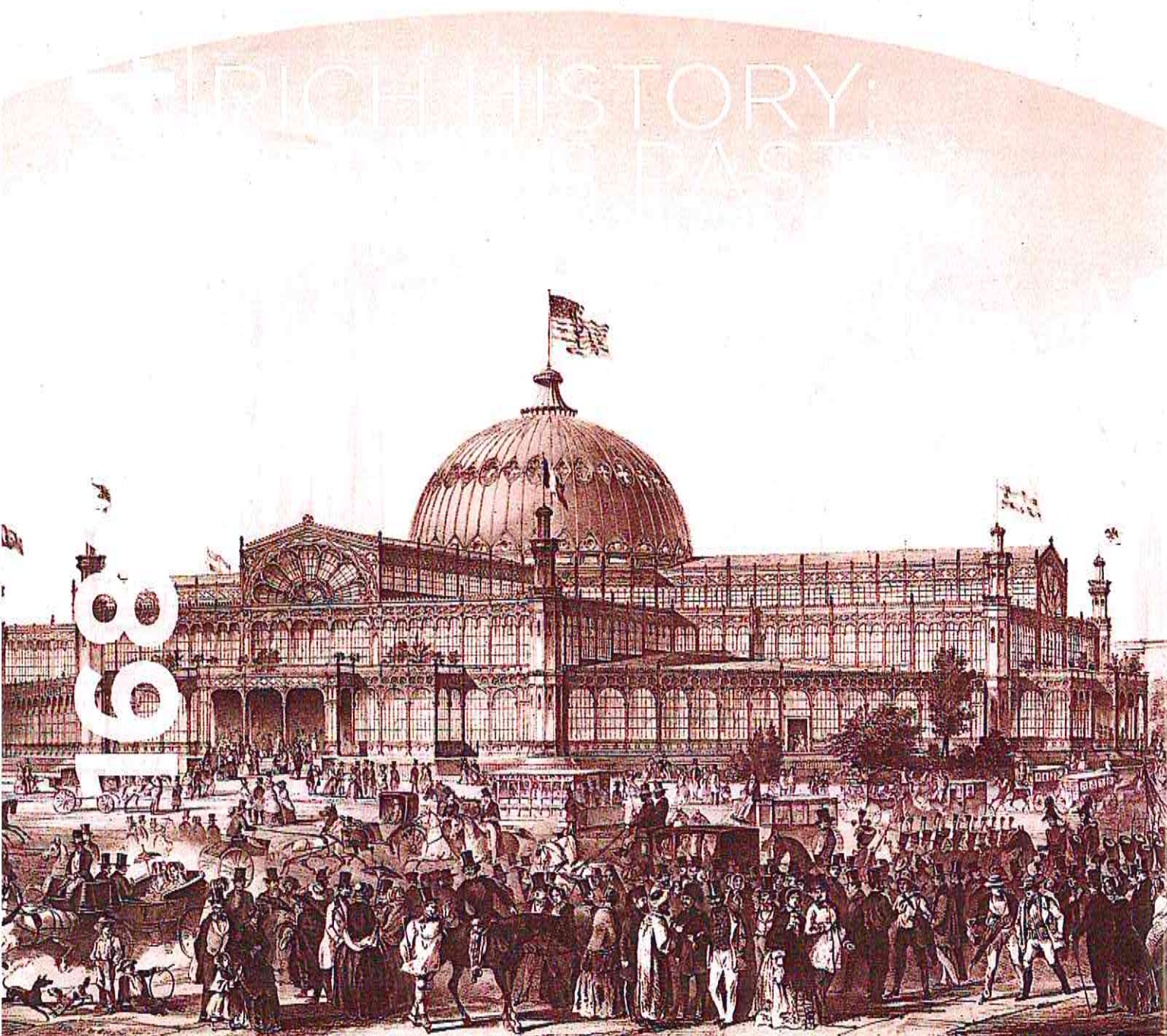
- Its very public spaces are run by the private sector.
- It trusts its visitors. 5,500 pieces of movable furniture are left out at the end of each day.
- It caters to visitors 12 months a year with an ice rink, an outdoor holiday market, fire pits, and even a continually-operating fountain in the winter.
- It is a non-union island in a union town, so it can afford to build and rebuild itself.
- It refuses to accept that it has reached its goals, ever.

Taking this often-cantankerous approach to park operations requires support from brave and patient people in high places. Over the years, we've had help from innovative mayors (especially Ed Koch, aided by his chief of staff Diane Coffey, and Michael Bloomberg); the Rockefeller Brothers, who put in our seed money; a few great parks commissioners (including Adrian Benepe, Mitchell Silver, and Gordon Davis); and some enlightened real estate owners, whose assets have appreciated wildly as a result of the efforts they've supported.

We thank these "early-stage investors" in our work, as well as the hundreds of dedicated park employees and contractors who have picked up that last piece of litter, conjured up that latest Bryant Park activity, and welcomed that latest visitor from abroad.

Bryant Park will continue to improve as the years go on, but we will pause in this book to reflect on what we have already achieved.

Dan Biederman
President, Bryant Park Management Corporation
Executive Director, Bryant Park Corporation



New York Crystal Palace for the Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations.

Reservoir Square in the City of New York, by the Association for the Exhibition of the Industry of all Nations, incorporated under an Act of the Legislature of the State of New York, the 11th day of March, 1852. The use of Reservoir Square is granted by a Greek Cross, with a Dome over the Intersection. The extreme length and breadth of the building are each 365 feet. Height of Dome to top of Lantern, 148 feet. Floor space on Ground Floor, 115,000 square feet. Galleries, 62,000 square feet.

DIRECTORS:

MORTIMER LIVINGSTON.
ALFRED PELL.
AUGUST BELMONT.
ALEXANDER HAMILTON, Jr.,
GEORGE L. SCHUYLER.

ELBERT J. ANDERSON, .
PHILIP BURROWS.
JOHNSTON LIVINGSTON, .
CHARLES W. FOSTER.
THEODORE SEDGWICK.
WILLIAM W. STONE.

THEODORE SEDGWICK, President.

WILLIAM WHETTON, Secretary and Treasurer.

Chief Architect.

Published by HOPKIN & CO. 255 Broadway New York.

*And one by one the singing-birds come back.
Within the city's bounds the time of flowers
Comes earlier.*

— William Cullen Bryant from "Spring in Town"

Opposite page: *The Exhibition of the Industry of All Nations*, also referred to as the Crystal Palace exhibition, was designed by Georg Cartensen and Charles Gildemeister. It featured 4,000 exhibitors and displayed the industrial wares and artworks of the nation. On display were mineral resources of the United States, precision steam engines, and the largest crocodile ever captured.

Below left: Inspired by the success of the *Great Exhibition of 1851*, held in the famed Crystal Palace exhibition hall in Hyde Park, London, New York's Crystal Palace was built on Reservoir Square, the area just west of the Croton Distributing Reservoir.

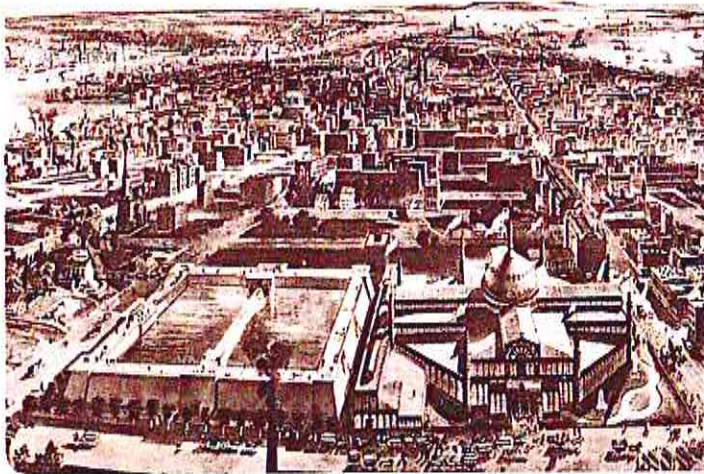
Below right: Built between 1839 and 1842 on what is now the New York Public Library site, the Croton Reservoir was one of the great engineering triumphs of 19th century America. Iron pipes transported water 41 miles to the receiving reservoir in what is now Central Park, then to the receiving reservoir here.

Bryant Park wasn't always a vibrant urban oasis at the center of New York City, but its past is incredibly rich and storied. Back in 1686, New York Colonial Governor Thomas Dongan designated the area public property. A century later, during the Revolutionary War, General Washington's troops, after being routed by the British in the Battle of Long Island, raced across what would eventually be the park's lawn.

In 1823, the city acquired the land and began using it as a potter's field. By 1840, the neighboring Croton Reservoir displaced all who were resting there. On Independence Day, 1842, the man-made, four-acre lake opened. Atop its 50-foot high, 20-foot thick granite walls were public promenades, providing panoramic views of a growing metropolis.

The city ordered a public park built next to the reservoir site, but that initial plan was never carried out. Something much grander rose in its place.

The Crystal Palace, housing the *Industry of All Nations* exhibit, was built in 1853, modeled after the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, London. A precursor to the World's Fair, the wondrous, gleaming glass exhibit hall was built in the shape of a Greek cross, with a 100-foot diameter dome. On a visit to New York, the young Samuel Clemens (who later took the name Mark Twain), wrote that the palace was "beautiful beyond description."

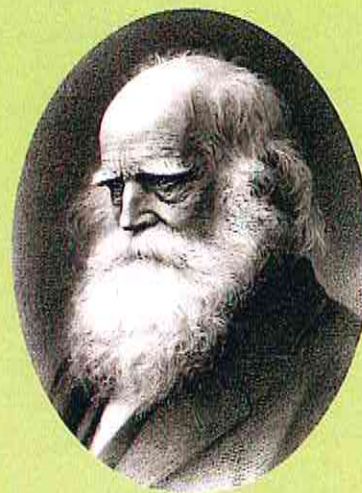
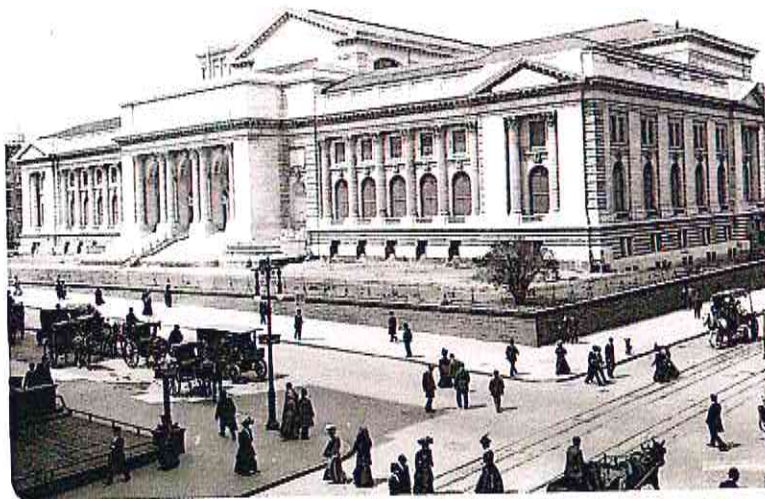


Next door, the Latting Observatory was built, a 315-foot wooden tower with views all the way to Staten Island and New Jersey. A year later, the observatory was destroyed by fire, and four years after that, the palace itself was consumed in 15 minutes by a blaze started at an adjacent lumber yard.

During the Civil War years, the land was used as a drilling site for Union soldiers. By 1870, it was finally designated a park — Reservoir Park — then renamed in 1884 in honor of civic activist, Romantic poet, and longtime editor of the *New-York Evening Post*, William Cullen Bryant.

By 1900, with the plan in place for the construction of the New York Public Library, the reservoir was relocated. The famed lions, Patience and Fortitude, took their places at the Fifth Avenue entrance.

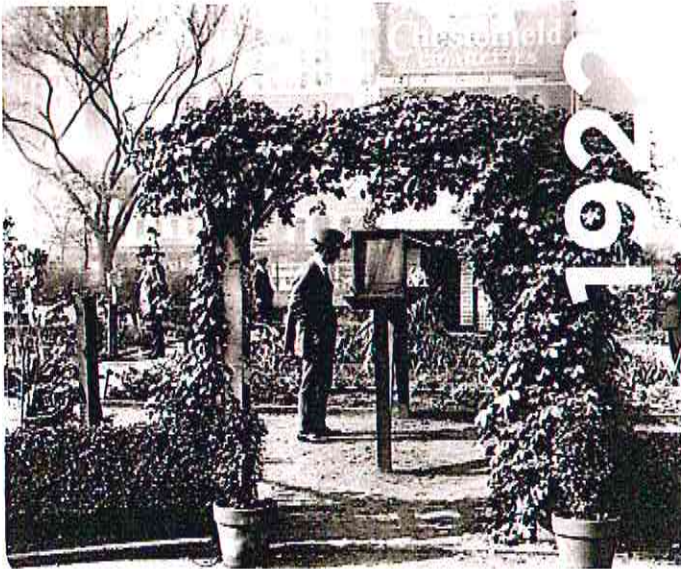
The Sixth Avenue El train clattered along the park's western border throughout the late 19th century and into the 20th century, scattering debris on passersby, but bringing more visitors to the newly built library and its neighboring park. One of the city's largest public gardens, a "Victory Garden," was placed there during World War I, which helped boost morale and grow much needed food.



William Cullen Bryant (1794–1878)

Born in a log cabin near Cummington, MA, Bryant was a poet who supported himself by practicing law. He eventually settled in New York City, where he was hired in 1825 as a magazine editor at the *New-York Review*. Two years later, he became assistant editor of the *New-York Evening Post*, the newspaper founded by Alexander Hamilton. Within two years, he was part owner and editor-in-chief, a job he held for the next 50 years. The newspaper not only provided him with his fortune, but allowed him to wield power throughout the city, state, and country. His influence helped build the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Bryant also led the campaign to create Central Park. Six years after his death, Reservoir Park was renamed in his honor.

The New York Public Library, built between 1898 and 1911 in the Beaux-Arts style, was designed by Thomas Hastings and John Mervin Carrère in collaboration with the first director of the Library, John Shaw Billings. At the time, it was the largest marble structure ever attempted in the United States. Before it could be built, 500 workers spent two years dismantling the Croton Reservoir.



Left: By 1917, World War I support efforts were creating strains on domestic food production. Food prices increased 200%, and people were hoarding limited staples. Bryant Park was home to one of New York's largest "Victory Gardens." It opened on April 13, 1918 and was located on the north side of the park, around where the ping pong tables are now.

Below: The stone "stripes" on the Library's rear façade indicate the original book stacks. Bryant Park sits in the foreground, circa 1930, ready for its Robert Moses makeover. Assisted by consulting architect Aymar Embury II, and landscape architect Gilmore D. Clarke, Moses transformed the grounds of Bryant Park from a Victorian greensward to a French Classical landscape similar to today's design.



The north half of the park was closed in the 1920s to store equipment and debris during construction on the IRT subway tunnel. In an effort to revitalize the site in 1932, the park was chosen for George Washington's 200th birthday celebration, which included a wood and plaster replica of old Federal Hall, the building on Wall Street where the first president took his oath. After the celebration ended, the replica remained, dilapidated and empty, causing the park to become abandoned by the general public.

A contest was held in 1933 to attract architects to redesign the troubled park. Queens native Lusby Simpson took the prize and under Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, the large central lawn was put in place, surrounded by formal pathways, stone balustrades, a tall iron fence, lines of London Plane trees, and large shrubbery.

Moses and Simpson envisioned the park as a refuge for weary urban dwellers. But their formal, French Classical design backfired, largely by closing the park off to the public. It was a problem that would take decades to fix.

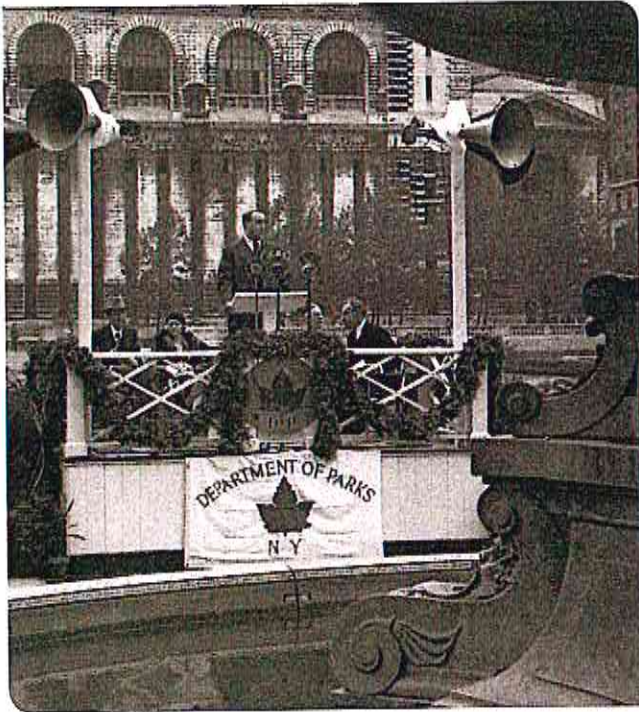


Opposite page, top left: Parks Commissioner Robert Moses speaks at the opening ceremony of the newly redesigned Bryant Park on September 14, 1934. The Josephine Shaw Lowell Memorial Fountain sits directly in front of him, creating a buffer between him and the crowd gathered that day.

Opposite page, top right: The park as it appeared during the opening ceremony, seen from above.

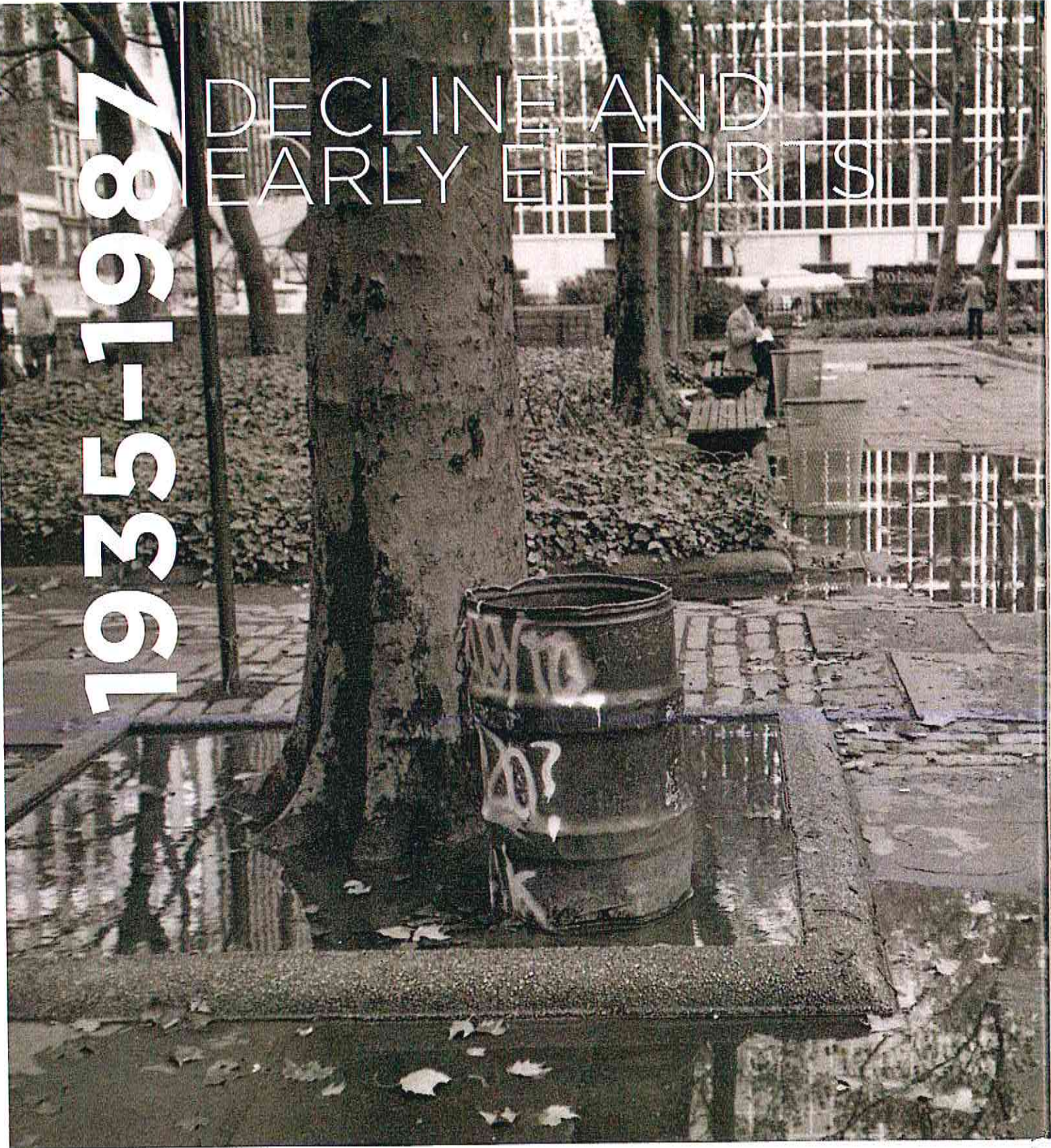
Opposite page, bottom: In 1933, the Architects' Emergency Committee sponsored a contest to redesign the park. The winning submission came from Queens-based architect Lusby Simpson, and was a classical scheme of a large central lawn, formal pathways, stone balustrades, allées of London Plane trees, and at the west end, an oval plaza containing the fountain.

Under Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, the park was completely dug up and redesigned from 1933 to 1934. The author of a 1936 *New Yorker* article remarked that in the past 14 years "Bryant Park has been closed to the public for half of that time on account they were digging in it . . ." He also called it one of the most "badgered and turned-up lots in the world."



1935-1987

DECLINE AND
EARLY EFFORTS



"Even the dope dealers are helping. If you went out and hired them you couldn't get a more villainous crew to show the urgency of the situation....It is a great moment to be seized."

— William "Holly" Whyte

Stagnant pools of water, graffiti, and loiterers filled Bryant Park in the 1970s. The park's problems were tied directly to the general decline of 42nd Street. Many intimidating park visitors were often on their way to and from Midtown Manhattan's worst block — 42nd Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues.

As the result of frequent violent crime throughout the 1970s, calls for the park's closure were frequent. The police department began closing the park with barricades at 9pm in 1973. The Parks Department consistently threatened to abandon the facility unless volunteers from the community came forward.

Hastened by its 1934 redesign, Bryant Park swiftly deteriorated. By the 1970s, it was seen as a symbol of New York City's widespread decline. The raised terrace, meant to shelter visitors from the hustle and bustle of street traffic, only had two entry points, making it difficult for the public to flow easily into the park. Fenced off by heavy balustrades, the lawn was hardly used and could barely be seen from benches situated right behind the high stone barriers. The thick shrubs surrounding the park became a refuge for drug dealers and muggers. Citizens and office workers were reluctant to walk by the park.

Bryant Park became a prime example of George L. Kelling and James Q. Wilson's "Broken Windows" theory. In their seminal 1982 *Atlantic Monthly* article, they explained that falling public spaces signal a lack of supervision, which in turn, encourages criminal activity. Crime leads to public avoidance and more neglect, which leads to more crime, setting off a vicious cycle.





To break the park out of that cycle, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund commissioned a study in 1977 by sociologist William "Holly" Whyte.

Soon after, on January 1, 1980, Bryant Park Corporation (BPC) — then called Bryant Park Restoration Corporation — was founded, with the aim to restore, program, and operate the park. The fledgling not-for-profit organization was led by Daniel A. Biederman, a young Harvard Business School graduate, Andrew Heiskell, then chairman of Time, Inc., and the New York Public Library. With the help of Whyte's report, Biederman drew up a master plan focusing on long-term improvements and a redesign of the space.

Before the plans were even finished, Biederman launched an aggressive cleanup of the park, removing all graffiti, hiring additional maintenance staff, and creating a private security team to address the high crime rate. To carry out and fund his changes more quickly, Biederman formed a Bryant Park business improvement district, called the Bryant Park Management Corporation, helping the green space become the first publicly owned park in the country to become fully privately managed. Its operations were (and still are) funded by assessments on adjacent properties and businesses, revenues from concessions, sponsorships, and income from public events. No public funds are used and no charitable contributions taken, which allows BPC to remain independent and experiment with new ideas.



In 1988, Mayor Ed Koch's office and the Parks Department approved BPC's renovation plans, which included restoring monuments throughout the park. The bronze figure of Bryant originally sculpted by Herbert Adams was rehabilitated, as was the pink granite Josephine Shaw Lowell Memorial Fountain located at the western gate. Pipes were replaced, damaged stonework was fixed, and a new center pump provided. This was the city's first public memorial dedicated to a woman. Lowell (1843-1905) was a social worker and founder of the Charity Organization Society. Charles Adams Platt designed the fountain.



Initial efforts to improve Bryant Park brought free music, dance, children's programming, classes, and concessions. Here, BPC workers clean graffiti in the park as a small crowd gathers behind them at the Strand Bookstore concession, one of the new amenities that were added by The Parks Council to bring in more visitors and encourage them to linger.

Below: On a summer afternoon, circa 1985, a crowd shares the lawn with a public art piece by Mel Chin titled "MYRRHA/P.I.A. (Post Industrial Age)." Chin was part of BPC's artist-in-residence program and his sculpture was in place through that summer and into the fall.



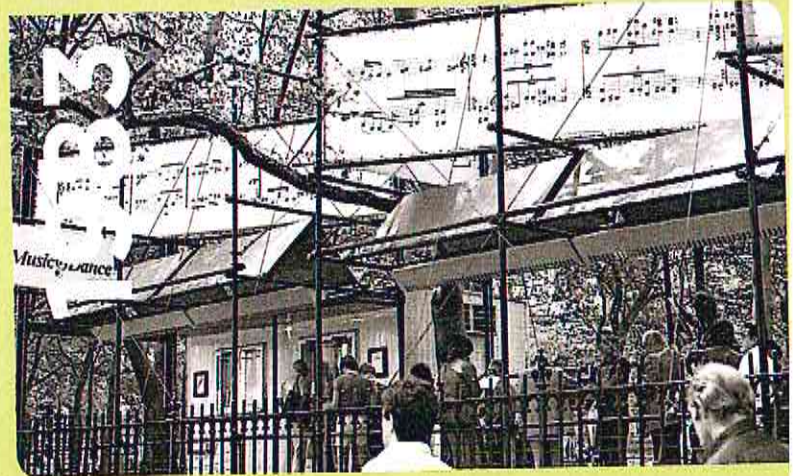
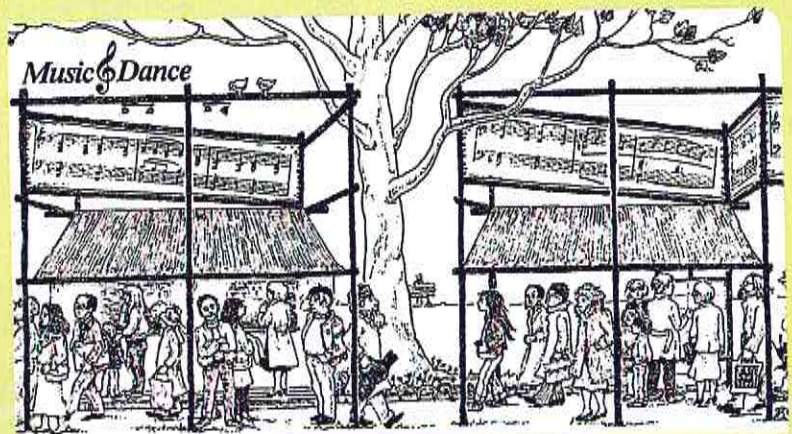
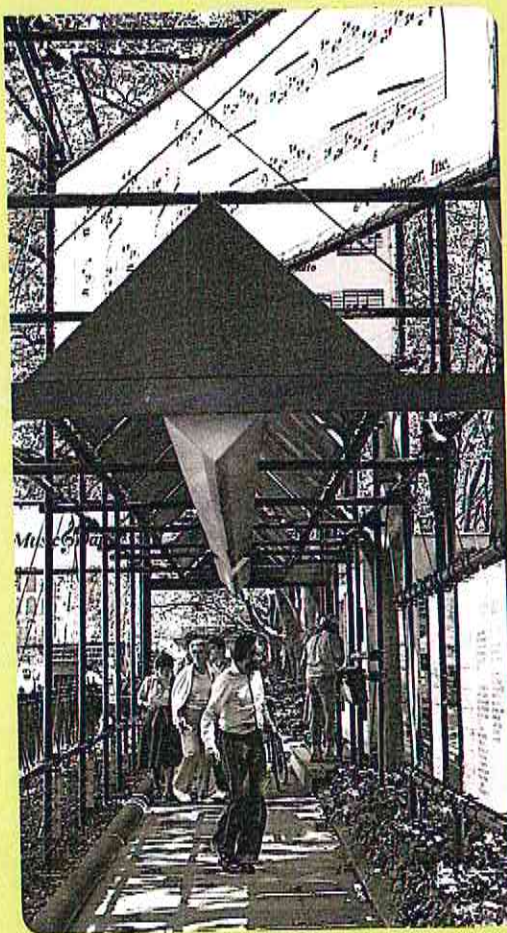
BPC staged free public events and installed temporary vendor kiosks for books and flowers in areas formerly occupied by drug dealers.

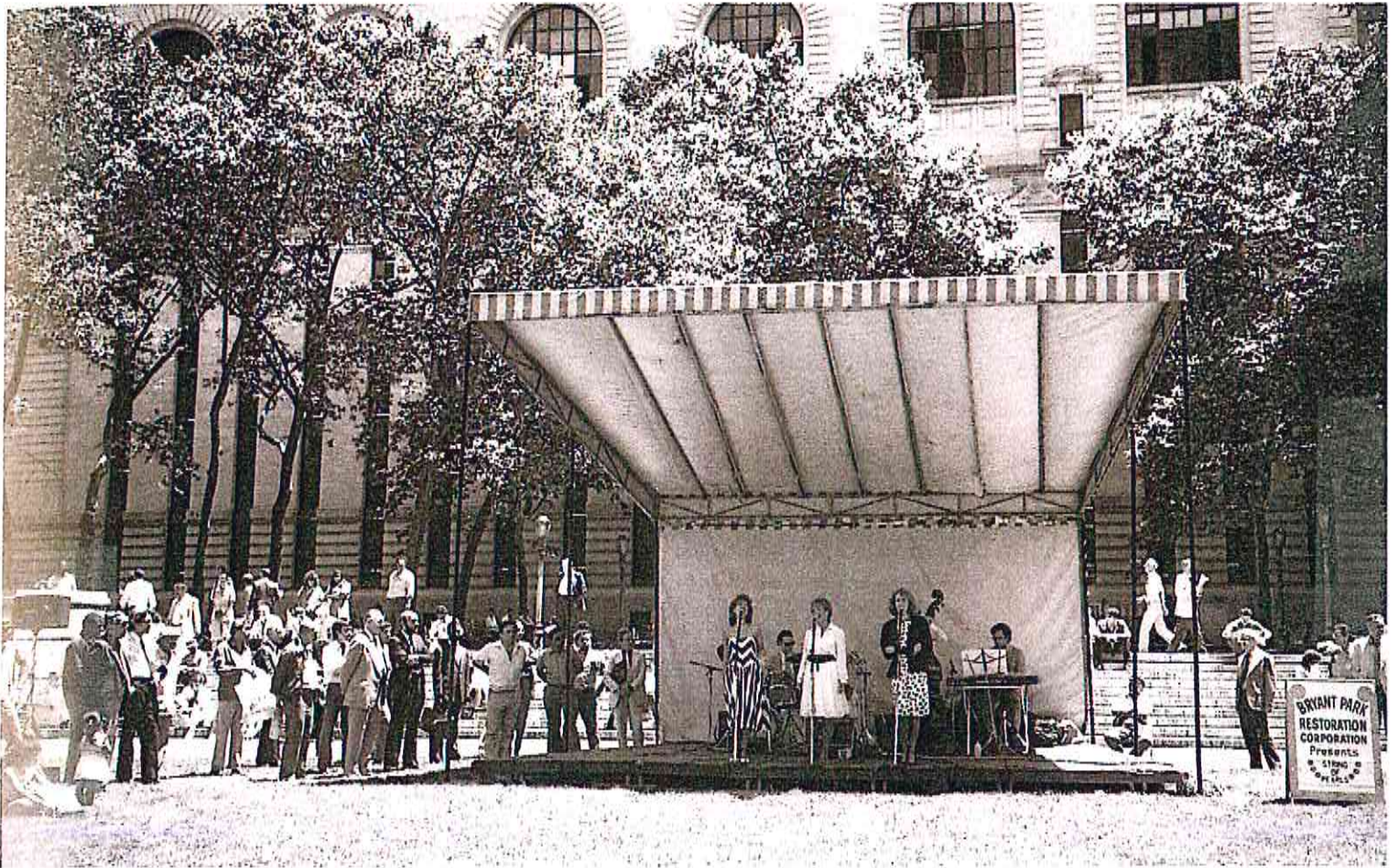
A half-price ticket booth for cultural events was unveiled. Attracted by the improvements, New Yorkers started to return to Bryant Park. In 1988, BPC began its four-year facelift to radically renovate the park.

BPC's master plan included an improved lawn, two full-service restaurants, gravel paths, major capital repairs, increased lighting, and a restoration of the park's monuments and restrooms.

Tickets in the Park

In 1982 a structure was built at the park's northwest corner for a Music & Dance Half-Price Ticket Booth, offering bargain tickets to the day's events at concert halls throughout the city. The booth was meant to draw visitors to the park during off hours and on weekends, and throughout the winter months when the park was devoid of any positive human activity. In 1984, 45,000 discount tickets were sold.





An expanded public events program included jazz, classical, and dance concerts, and walking tours. The increased activities in the park drew visitors from the neighborhood and workers from surrounding buildings.



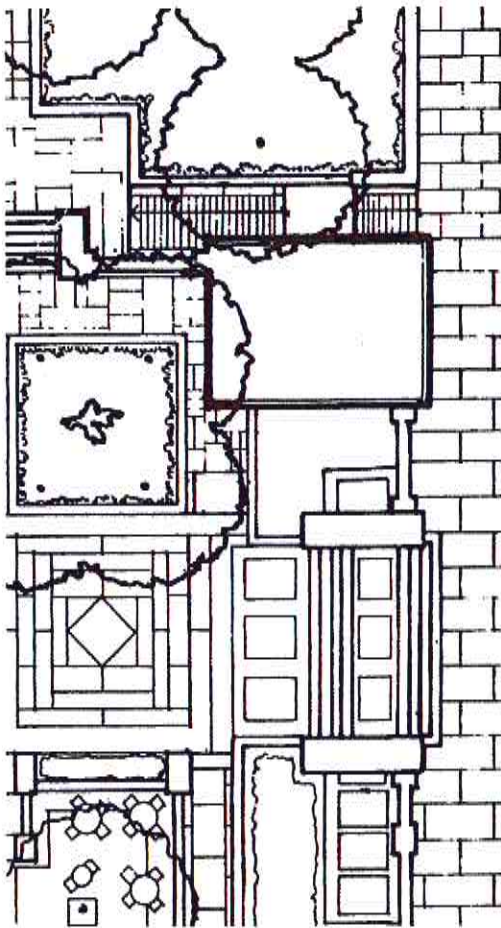
2007-0001

RENOVATION AND REDESIGN OF AN ICONIC PARK



"A chunk of Manhattan's West 42nd Street has been redeemed, turned from a dodgy, underpopulated void into a genteel oasis..."

— *TIME* magazine, from its "Best Design of 1992"



Bryant Park Corporation assumed day-to-day management of the park on March 1, 1988 and embarked on a massive renovation. In all, the corporation raised \$18 million for the park's redesign from private donations, a bank loan, risk capital from concessionaires, and the City of New York. The New York Public Library contributed not only a junior loan, but also the real estate expertise of its chairman throughout the 1990s, Marshall Rose.

Drafted by Hanna/Olin Ltd., the company's vision included opening up the park: new entrances for better access from the street; an enhanced formal French garden design; and improved and repaired paths and lighting.

Fixtures were created to match the original lighting designed by Carrère and Hastings decades before. This time, white light would replace the park's pervasive yellow glow. The company believed white light would increase pedestrian visibility and deter crime, although it cost a bit more.

Under the plan, construction crews removed the large iron gates and shrubbery and replaced the lawn, as part of the Library's 30-foot excavation of the site to build 84 miles of underground stacks. Balustrades were also opened up, making the terraces more inviting to pedestrians and workers from the buildings surrounding the park. The two existing entrances to the park were enlarged and four more entrances were added.

Connecting the Park to the Street

In the summer of 1983, the city approved BPC's plans for a park redesign. Access points to the park were widened and four more were added to open up the park to pedestrians and create a more welcoming environment. New stairs and paths were added and shrubbery was removed.

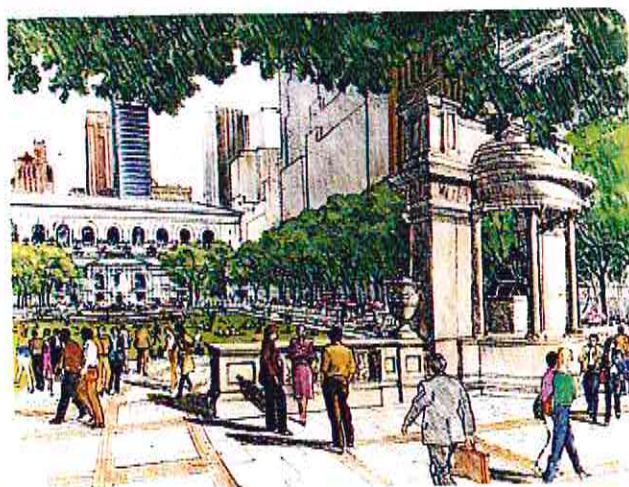
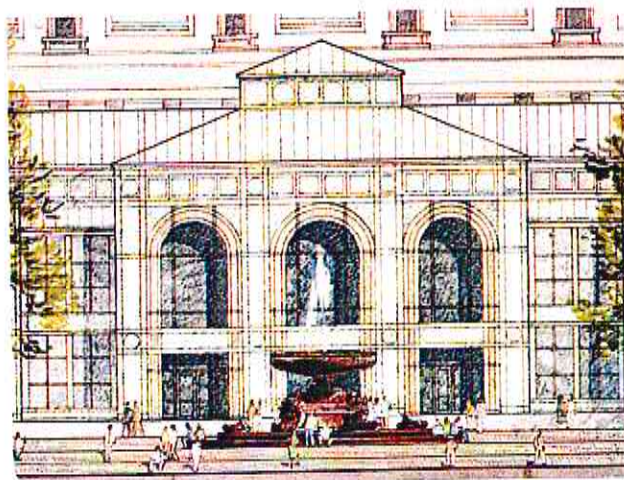
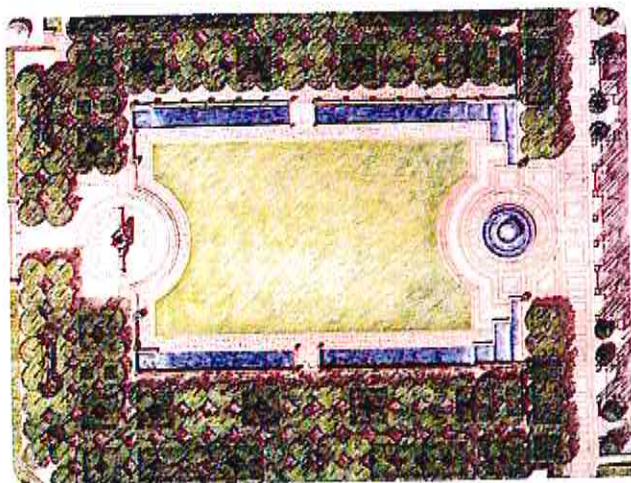
A RANGE OF VISIONS OFFERED

Design Submissions

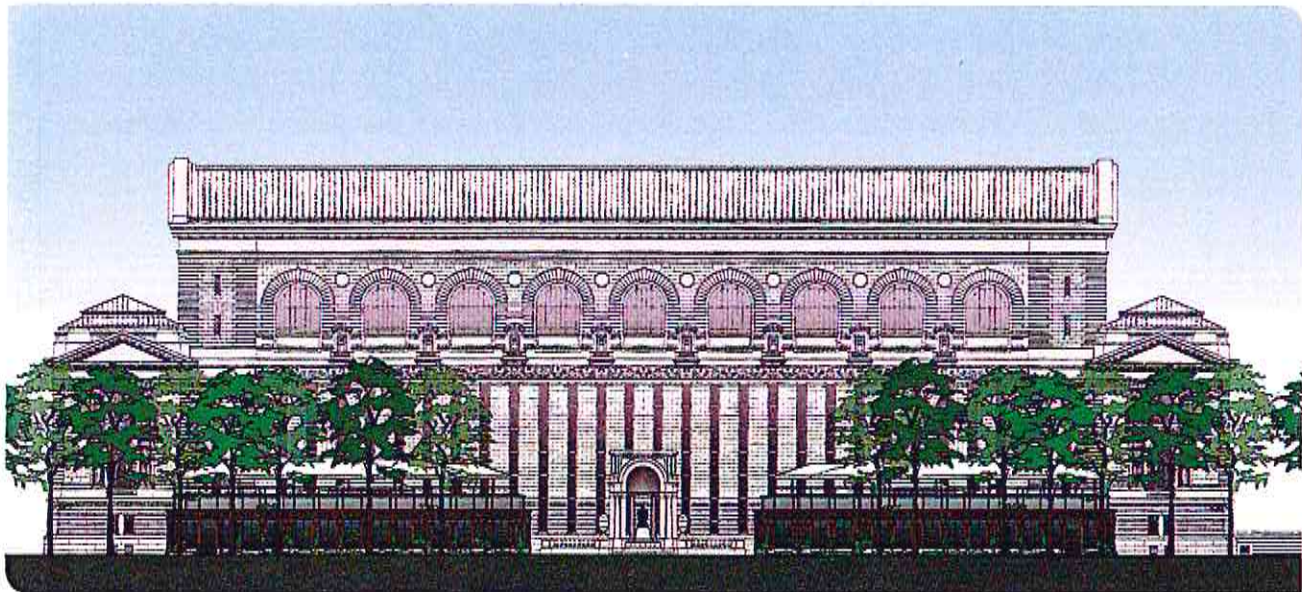
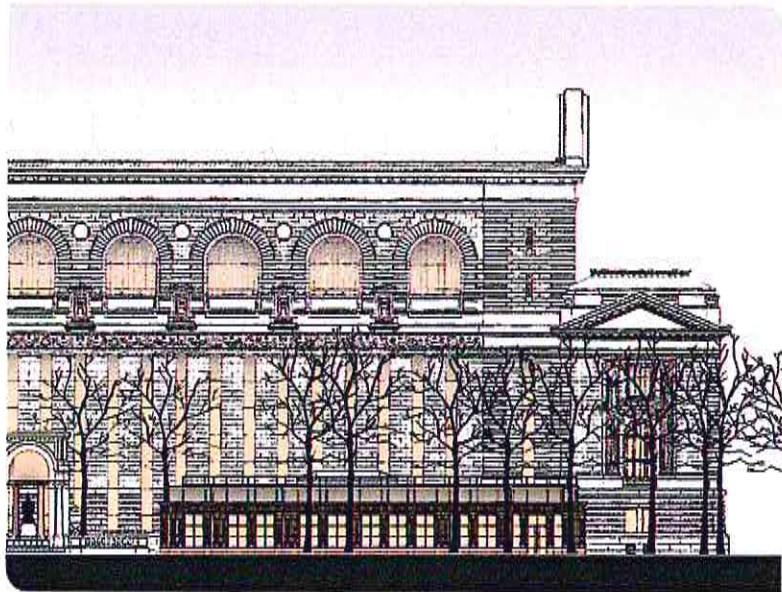
Rejected plans for the restaurant and park design included a proposal from Warner LeRoy, then the operator of Tavern on the Green in Central Park. Top left: A reflecting pool would have surrounded the lawn.

Top right and bottom left: A plan for a large restaurant inspired by the Crystal Palace was scrapped because of its size, but also because it would block the rear façade of the New York Public Library, which was considered historically significant and unusual for a Beaux Arts

building. The vertical lines on the rear façade represent the Library's original stacks. Bottom right: The rendering that became reality, by landscape architecture firm Hanna/Olin, leaving the Library back wall intact.



After the LeRoy plan was rejected, BPC hired Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer (now called H3) to design four kiosks and two restaurant structures. These renderings show the winter elevation of what would later become the Bryant Park Grill (top image), and summer elevation of the Grill and Bryant Park Café (bottom image), a more casual, outdoor extension of the restaurant proper.



To attract even more visitors, plans were drawn up for an on-site restaurant. An early proposal, submitted by Warner LeRoy, included an enormous restaurant reminiscent of the Crystal Palace. Local preservationists and activists opposed the plan, and eventually accepted in its place a subtler design of twin structures submitted by Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer. The Bryant Park Grill opened in 1995 along with the more casual Café, to solid reviews and crowds of patrons.

Biederman insisted that inexpensive, movable chairs be placed throughout the park, to allow the public to create their own space and customize their park experience. With movable chairs, visitors could position themselves in the sun and turn as it turned, or seek shelter in the shade to read a book from the library. Skeptics feared the chairs would simply be stolen.

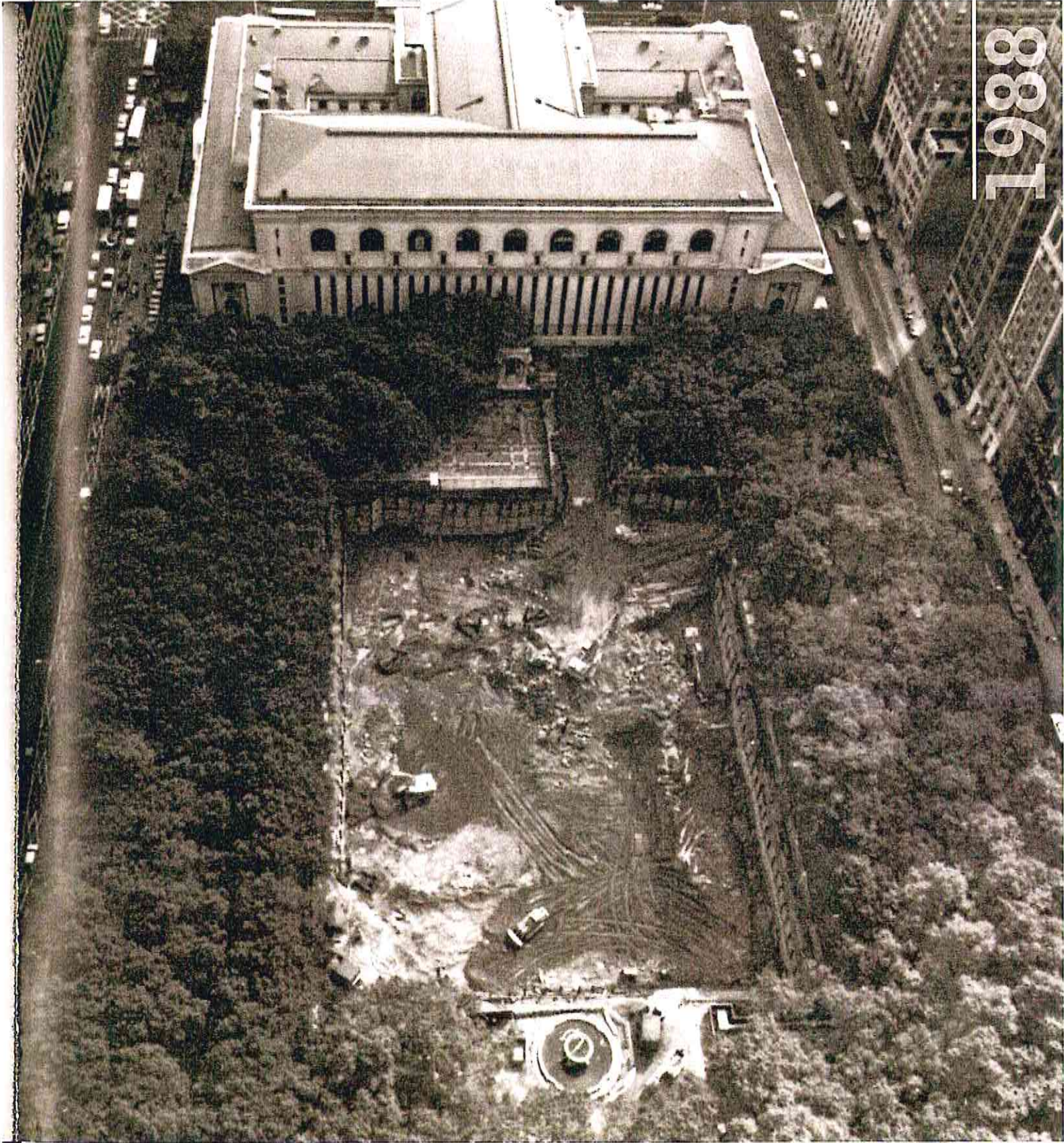
In another first for New York City, a town in dire need of public toilets, BPC renovated the restrooms at Bryant Park. They had been closed for 35 years. Park managers knew that if the park was to host crowds of visitors, they would need a civilized comfort station. Fresh flowers, shining tiles and fixtures, and a constant attendant were added, to the delight of New Yorkers and tourists alike.

Right: Concurrent with Bryant Park's facelift, the Library embarked on a large construction project of its own: the addition of 120,000 square feet of library stacks beneath the surface of the lawn. The excavation for the two-story stacks began in July 1988. Requiring a 30-foot excavation in the center of the park, the finished stacks accommodate up to 3.2 million books and 500,000 reels of microfilm, doubling the Library's storage capacity. The stacks are connected to the main library by a 62-foot long tunnel. Additionally, there is a fire escape on the west side of the Bryant Park lawn, disguised by a dedication plaque.



An aerial view of the park before any changes were made. The much-maligned shrubbery, which was eventually removed, can still be seen in this photo.

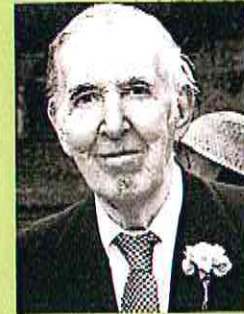
886T
1988



In keeping with Biederman's call for color and classic simplicity, horticulturists planted 2,000 perennials in the 300-foot gardens on the border of the lawn. For the partial opening of the park in 1991, 400 white molded plastic chairs were purchased. Few were stolen.

By the time Bryant Park officially reopened in 1992, its reputation took a 180 degree turn. That May, *The New York Times* architecture critic Paul Goldberger commented, "Where once the park was the home of derelicts, drug dealers and drug users, it is now awash with office workers, shoppers, strollers, and readers."

As part of the redesign and revitalization of the park, graffiti was removed from many of the park monuments, including the fountain. Additional maintenance crews were hired. Members of a specially formed "hospitality crew" were added to the park at all times. The park's managers were charged with treating every square foot of the park with the same care that hotel managers treat their lobbies. As soon as a piece of paper or trash hit the ground, it was scooped up.



William Hollingsworth Whyte (1917–1999)

William Hollingsworth "Holly" Whyte was born in West Chester, PA, to a railroad executive. He attended Princeton University but then enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1941, serving on Guadalcanal. "We needed a map, and I offered to make one," he once reminisced. "Gathering the data and going on patrols taught me a lot about the value of close observation."

After the war he joined the editorial staff of *Fortune* magazine, training his keen eye on corporate communications and culture. His 1956 book, *The Organization Man*, established him as an important author and urbanist. *The New York Times* called him "a scholar of the human habitat, specifically as a close observer of street life and urban space." He taught, planned, and spent years observing what New Yorkers do on the city streets.

When the Rockefeller Brothers Fund commissioned a study to help save Bryant Park, they turned to Whyte to write it. His recommendations, brought to life by Dan Biederman, embodied his recipe for successful public space: open it up, make it easy to walk through, admit the sun but provide shade and greenery, offer movable seating, provide trash disposal, toilets, food vendors and performers, and keep it clean and trim.

1992



Dan Biederman speaking at the Bryant Park dedication ceremony in 1992. Holly Whyte is the man seated at the very bottom right corner of the photo. "We think this is the top small park experience," Biederman has said, "on par with Luxembourg Gardens in Paris, St. James Park in London, or the Temple of Heaven in Beijing."



1993-2018+

BRYANT PARK TODAY AND TOMORROW



"Last year, after a glistening, nine-million-dollar, five-year overhaul by the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, it reopened. Now it's safe, as beautiful as a Seurat, and lovingly used."

— The New Yorker

Welcome to New York's town square. Bryant Park Corporation's primary goal was to transform the park from an underused, dilapidated public space into a beautiful, culturally rich, and comfortable year-round destination for all visitors. The park, once a dangerous and depressing place, is now crime-free and is one of the most visited public spaces in New York City.

From the start, BPC believed that successful programming aimed at all income levels and ages would create a devoted group of daily visitors, whether they were coming for lunch from an office building across the street, or traveling from another neighborhood for a particular event. The company knew that through their participation in park culture, visitors would develop a relationship with the space, investing in its well-being, evolution, and future.

By studying daily usage patterns, conducting frequent visitor counts, and continually introducing new ideas, BPC is able to keep improving on an already successful model. Visitor counts have increased from almost zero in the late 1970s to 12 million per year in 2018.

Whether they're here to play ping pong, watch a film, go ice skating, or simply pull up a chair and read a book, visitors know they've arrived at an oasis in the center of it all.



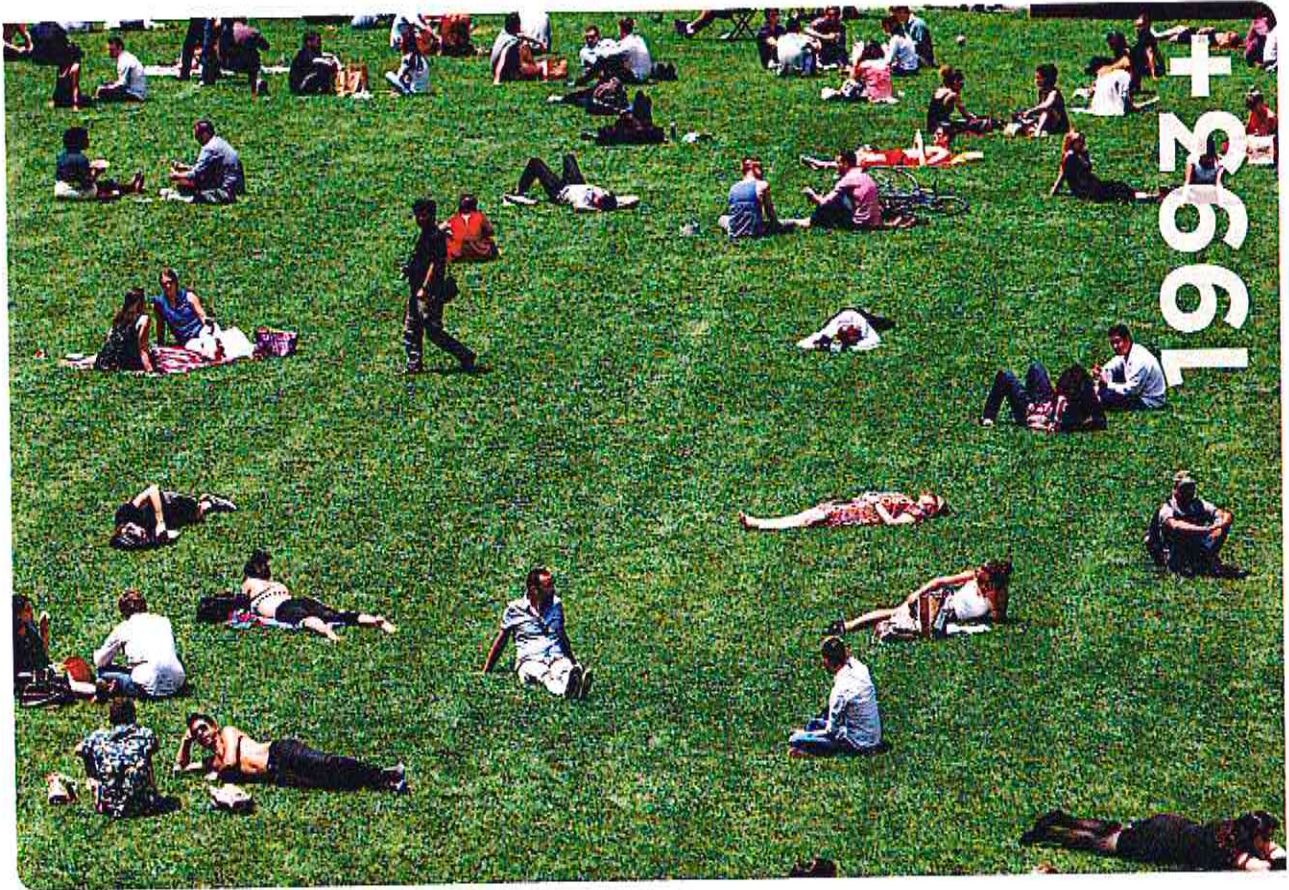
OPENING UP THE EXPERIENCE



Access to the Lawn

When first discovered, nestled in its canyon of skyscrapers, it's like an oasis — a refuge of peace and calm. Since the redesign, with the removal of the shrubbery and opening up the balustrades, the Lawn has become an integral part of the park's personality.





Planted with a rye/fescue/bluegrass mix, the Lawn is as large as a football field, or, 1.1 acres. BPC puts incredible effort into keeping it green all season long. It's a lot of work to maintain the Lawn, since it remains open and in use for a multitude of park programs: summer movie nights, yoga classes, and square dancing — each of which causes wear and tear to the green jewel of Midtown.

This work is complicated by the fact that the park has a new lawn each year. The fresh sod laid every spring always brings its own set of quirks and inconsistencies. Staff must "re-learn" the Lawn each year in order to keep it looking fresh. To track the progress of the Lawn's upkeep from day to day, an aerial photograph of it is taken each and every morning. All this work pays off, since crowds return day after day.

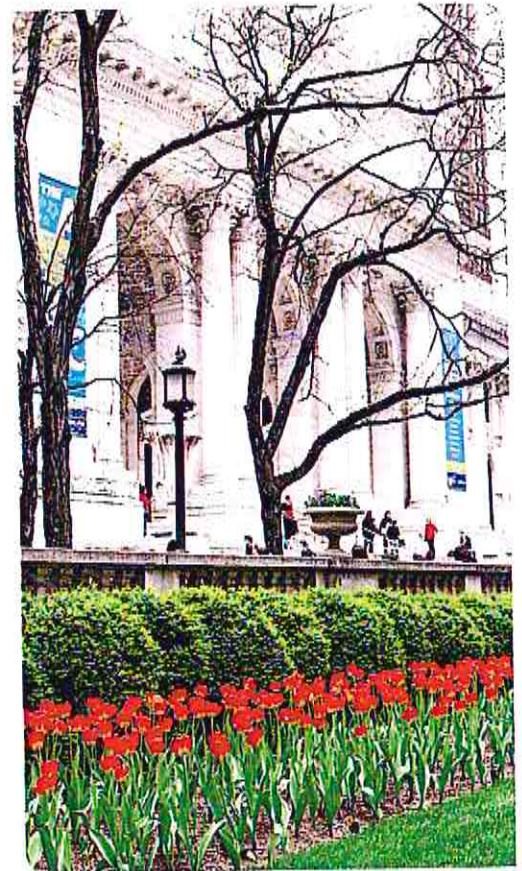


HORTICULTURE

Six flower beds border the park's lawn to the north and south — three on the shady south side and three on the sunny north. They are planted seasonally with 20,000 bulbs and 100 species of woody shrubs and herbaceous perennials.

In 2011, the horticulture team renovated an area along the 42nd Street perimeter near Fifth Avenue by reconfiguring the bluestone to better accommodate tables and chairs. At the same time, they installed new planting beds, whose corners are punctuated with boxwood, leaving room for seasonal flowers like begonias in summer, and evergreens like *Chamaecyparis* and *Pieris japonica* for fall planting. Though the changes are subtle, they have proven very effective, with many more people enjoying the area.

Even when the temperature drops, the horticulture team is hard at work. Before the leaves fall from the trees, autumn is heralded by the rich tones of chrysanthemums in the park. These hardy blooms are perfect as the weather cools, as they tend to withstand lower temperatures than other flowers. They can be seen spilling down the stairs at the Sixth Avenue entrance to the park, or mixed in with plantings held over from the warmer months in front of the Bryant Park Grill.



Opposite top: Begonia BabyWing White fills the park's planters. 100,000 daffodils, naturalized since 1995 in ivy beds, bloom each April. Sometime around the first frost, the staff removes the annuals, replacing them with various evergreens, to keep the entrances and plazas welcoming through the winter months.

Opposite bottom: Spring tulips bloom in Bryant Park's gardens, which extend to the front of the New York Public Library along Fifth Avenue.

Right: There are 75 species of plants, 22 Honey Locust trees, and 200 majestic London Plane trees, planted during the Robert Moses renovation and brought in from his Queens-based nursery. This is the same species found at the Jardin des Tuileries in Paris, helping to contribute to the European feel of the park. BPC's Maureen Hackett carries this aesthetic throughout the park in her elaborate seasonal horticulture program.



GETTING COMFORTABLE

Seating in the Park

A chair is a chair is a chair. But not in Bryant Park. The green bistro chair has become not just a staple of the park, but its signature icon. Today, 4,500 of them grace the park's lawn and terraces.

It all began in 1977 when William "Holly" Whyte, inspired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art's outdoor chairs, recommended movable seating for the park. "...A wonderful invention, the movable chair," he wrote. "Chairs enlarge choice: to move in the sun, out of it; to make room for groups, move away from them...If you know you can move if you want to, you feel more comfortable staying put."



Top Left: Activist/poet Muriel Rukeyser gives a reading in 1969, long before the chairs arrived. Top Right: With a lack of abundant seating, visitors resorted to using the balustrades as benches, which is bad for the stone and is now against park rules.

In 1991, BPC tasked a summer intern with finding inexpensive, sturdy, and easy to clean chairs. Five models arrived for testing. The winner was a nameless molded white stacking armchair, and 400 were purchased at eight dollars apiece. Back in those days, chairs left overnight were usually found undisturbed the next morning, except on Mondays, after a weekend without watchful maintenance staff. Even a 15-foot construction fence didn't deter a few determined thieves. Despite a few losses, the first season ended with most of the chairs still in use.

Soon after, BPC replaced the white chairs with green iron and wood bistro chairs purchased from the French company Fermob. Each year, as crime continued to decrease, the chairs remained in place. They are now used daily by people from all walks of life. The chairs have become an example of what Bryant Park is all about: invest in the community and the community will invest in you.

1992



Over the years, more seating options have been added, including a footstool, a chair with built-in table and cup holder, and seating cushions.



Above: An average lunchtime scene in Bryant Park. The largest lunchtime count ever was 10,514 people on Saturday, December 27, 2014. It is one of the most female-friendly public spaces in the United States, with daily visitors comprised of approximately 53% women and 47% men.

Left: The park's restroom, with its fresh flowers, spotless tile and fixtures and constant attendants. It was a finalist in America's Best Restroom contest in 2010 and received the 2008 Downtown Achievement Award by the International Downtown Association.

LUNCH IN THE PARK

The park occupies 9.6 acres (including the New York Public Library building), and on sunny days around lunchtime, every square inch is filled with a happy visitor carrying a brown bag or buying a sandwich. About 12 million people come to the park every year, with 45,000 to 60,000 on a fair-weather weekday. To keep track of how many people come and go, BPC instituted daily counts at 1:15pm and 6pm.

Part of the draw is the outdoor café and food kiosks. The board of BPC, led in the 1990s by Michael Fuchs of HBO, insisted that an array of food options and price points be available to appeal to a wide range of visitors. From Bryant Park Grill to the more casual kiosks, there's something for everyone. BPC ordered 800 French café tables to match the bistro chairs to accommodate the scores of brown bags and take-out orders.

As the only public green space in Midtown Manhattan, the park acts as the front and back yard for office workers, commuters, nearby residents, and tourists.

According to architect Hugh Hardy, who worked on the redesign of the park, "the best thing about it is the diversity of the people who use it."

Below left: Elegant *al fresco* dining at the Bryant Park Grill, which opened in 1995 along with the Bryant Park Café. Both restaurant structures were designed by Hugh Hardy as part of the redesign.

Below: Since 2002, Bryant Park has provided 24-hour WiFi to approximately 500,000 users each year. The park was the first public space in the U.S. to offer free WiFi.



AN EVOLVING ENVIRONMENT



Bryant Park's design is carried over into the smallest details. From signs to kiosks to litter receptacles, the park has a holistic nature-based feel mixed with a dose of the original French Classical design. Following standards set by the great parks of Paris (the Luxembourg Gardens, Monceau, and the Tuileries) Bryant Park's accents have an elegant but accessible feel. BPC's design inspiration comes from observing how the public uses the park, identifying problems and opportunities, and utilizing those insights to create innovative public space solutions.

The newsstands (left), which have evolved over the years, reflect those ideas — classic, yet contemporary, and blending in with the environment. The holiday market kiosks (below) are made of lightweight aluminum frames and polycarbonate windows that can be used to build many different sizes

of boutiques. The design of the kiosks was inspired by the Crystal Palace from 1853, where Bryant Park is now located.

A series of large illuminated street signs (opposite) are installed around the park, making the neighborhood safer and easier to navigate. Pedestrians, bus passengers, and car drivers can easily read the six-inch high typeface and locate themselves at a glance. LEDs installed within the aluminum frames illuminate the street name at night with a soft glow. The signs also feature outlines of London Plane leaves over a green background.





BPC's Ignacio Ciocchini drew inspiration from plants, flowers, and nature for the design of the park's litter receptacles and recycling system. The trash can (above right) became an accent in the park's environment, rather than a piece of furniture hidden in a corner. The design is a visual reminder to people that diligent garbage disposal and recycling have a direct and positive impact on not just the park, but on the planet itself.

The park's sign system (below right) details regulations and guides park users to amenities and programs. History panels feature highlights of the park from 1686 to the present. The design is contemporary but references the park's architecture, and complements the neighborhood, which features a mix of old and new architectural styles.



KEEPING IT SAFE AND CLEAN

From trimming the trees to wiping down each table, BPC continues to maintain the attention to detail that first spurred the transformation of the park.

Early security measures at the park were enhanced by support from the New York Police Department. In the early 1990s, the NYPD used the "broken windows" theory to combat the increased presence of crime and graffiti in the subway system. That theory, carried over into Bryant Park by BPC's Richard Dillon, proved that a clean, well-lit, and heavily populated public space sends the message that an area is watched, cared for, and enjoyed by millions.

Bryant Park's low crime rate is credited to the park's security team. Each security officer is trained to be helpful and friendly to park patrons and to respond immediately to any problem that arises. A minimum of two security officers are on duty 24-hours a day.

A large and dedicated sanitation team regularly picks up trash, sweeps the sidewalks, and maintains the restroom. The staff kicks into high gear after major events to make sure the park is ready for the next day's crowd.

Once an eyesore and danger to the surrounding community, Bryant Park has become a marketing tool, with many property owners referring to it as their front or back yard. Within two years of the park's 1992 re-opening, the leasing activity on Sixth Avenue increased by 60 percent. Surrounding real estate values have risen steadily and street-level businesses thrive. Buildings named "One Bryant Park," "5 Bryant Park," and "7 Bryant Park" are prime examples of the growing prestige of the park, with businesses eager to brand themselves with its name.





READING ROOM

The New York Public Library opened the original Reading Room in August 1935 as a response to the Depression-era job losses in New York. With nowhere to spend their days and few job prospects, out-of-work businessmen and intellectuals flocked to the "Open Air Library" where they didn't need money, a valid address, a library card, or any identification to enjoy the materials.

From 1935 to the time it closed in 1944, the Reading Room consisted of several benches, a few book and magazine cases, and a table with an umbrella for the five librarians who ran it. Most of the books were from the Library's circulation, but all magazines and trade publications were donated by publishers or individuals. No cards were required — patrons were simply asked to sign in and out.

After seeing an archival photo of the Reading Room, Biederman decided to resurrect the idea in 2003, adding a full roster of literary events, including poetry and nonfiction readings. Today's Reading Room is defined by custom-designed carts with an extensive selection of books, periodicals, and newspapers; programs at lunchtime and after work; and kid-sized carts and furniture for children. All are available to everyone for free, without any need for cards or identification.

Bottom left: The original Reading Room operated every day except Sunday from mid-morning until mid-evening. When it rained, the books and periodicals were quickly put in a large water-proof chest and readers and librarians took cover. The Reading Room was closed in 1944 due to an increase in jobs and the onset of World War II.

Bottom right: Beneath the gaze of businessman/philanthropist/abolitionist William Earle Dodge (1805-83), Reading Room activities unfold every day in a program established by BPC's Paul Romero. Celebrity author readings, writing workshops, and book club discussions are all free of charge.

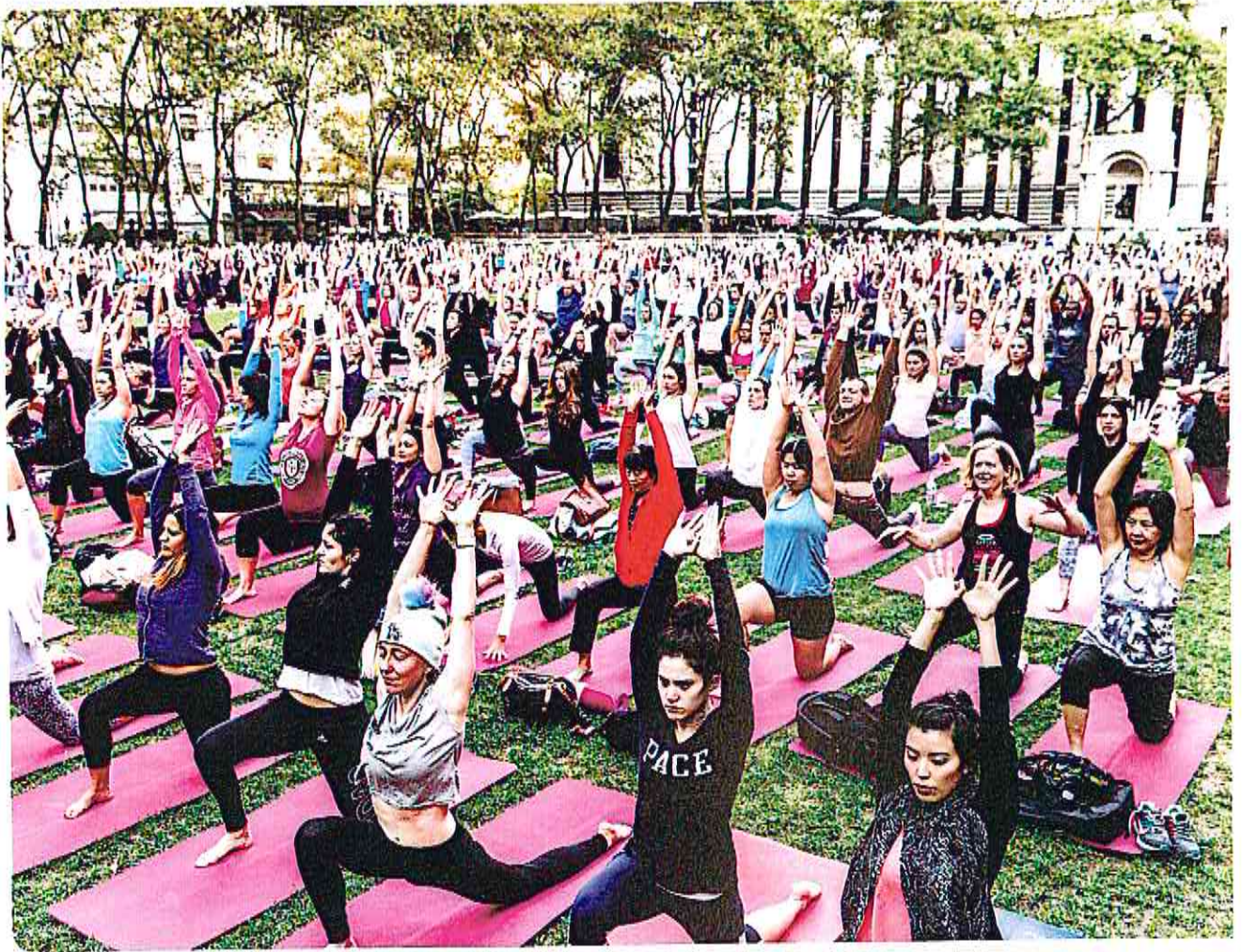




Above: Under the London Plane trees, thousands of New Yorkers have flocked to the Reading Room's vast offerings, which range from simply reading a free newspaper in the shade to enjoying a reading from a Civil War historian. Movable furniture helps create an intimate reading and writing environment.

Right: Children's programming at the Reading Room includes story time, games, and music. Special kid-size furniture and carts of children's books are available as well.





Opposite: Expert instructors lead all levels of yogis for free, with mats provided by BPC sponsors. For ping pong, tables are located in the northwest corner of the park. Monday to Friday during lunchtime, Piano in Bryant Park features world-class pianists like Terry Waldo performing ragtime, blues, and contemporary jazz.

Below top: Furnished with swings, stools, tables, and umbrellas, the Southwest Porch is a special outdoor lounge where visitors can relax free of charge.



EVERY DAY IN THE PARK

At Bryant Park, it's all fun and games. Because of the park's commitment to varied programming for all tastes and age groups, there's something for everyone, with over 1,000 free public events, cultural performances, and activities each year. To keep these park activities free to the public, BPC works to attract partners and producers.

You can watch chess grandmasters battle or play a game yourself. There are over 50 games to choose from, including backgammon, checkers, and Scrabble. Free classes include juggling, fencing, knitting, yoga, tai chi, and more. Broadway in Bryant Park, featuring casts from popular musicals, is presented at lunchtime once a week for one month in summer.

Ping pong hosts weekly tournaments, during which table tennis novices and masters compete for the title of champion.

For the youngest set, there's Le Carrousel, which operates year-round and can be booked for birthday parties. Fourteen animals revolve to the sounds of French cabaret music. On the carousel grounds, kids can also watch a magic or puppet show.

For a more relaxing activity, there's always that age-old New York City pastime of people watching.



BRYANT PARK MOVIE NIGHTS

It's become one of those quintessential New York summer rituals. Every Monday night, Bryant Park Movie Nights attracts as many as 10,000 people for each of 10 movie screenings.

At 5pm sharp, a BPC employee shouts: "The lawn is now open!" Picnickers, some of whom have been waiting for hours, are standing at the ready, blankets in hand. Then it's ready, set, run to get a spot. Shortly after sunset, the show begins on the screen.

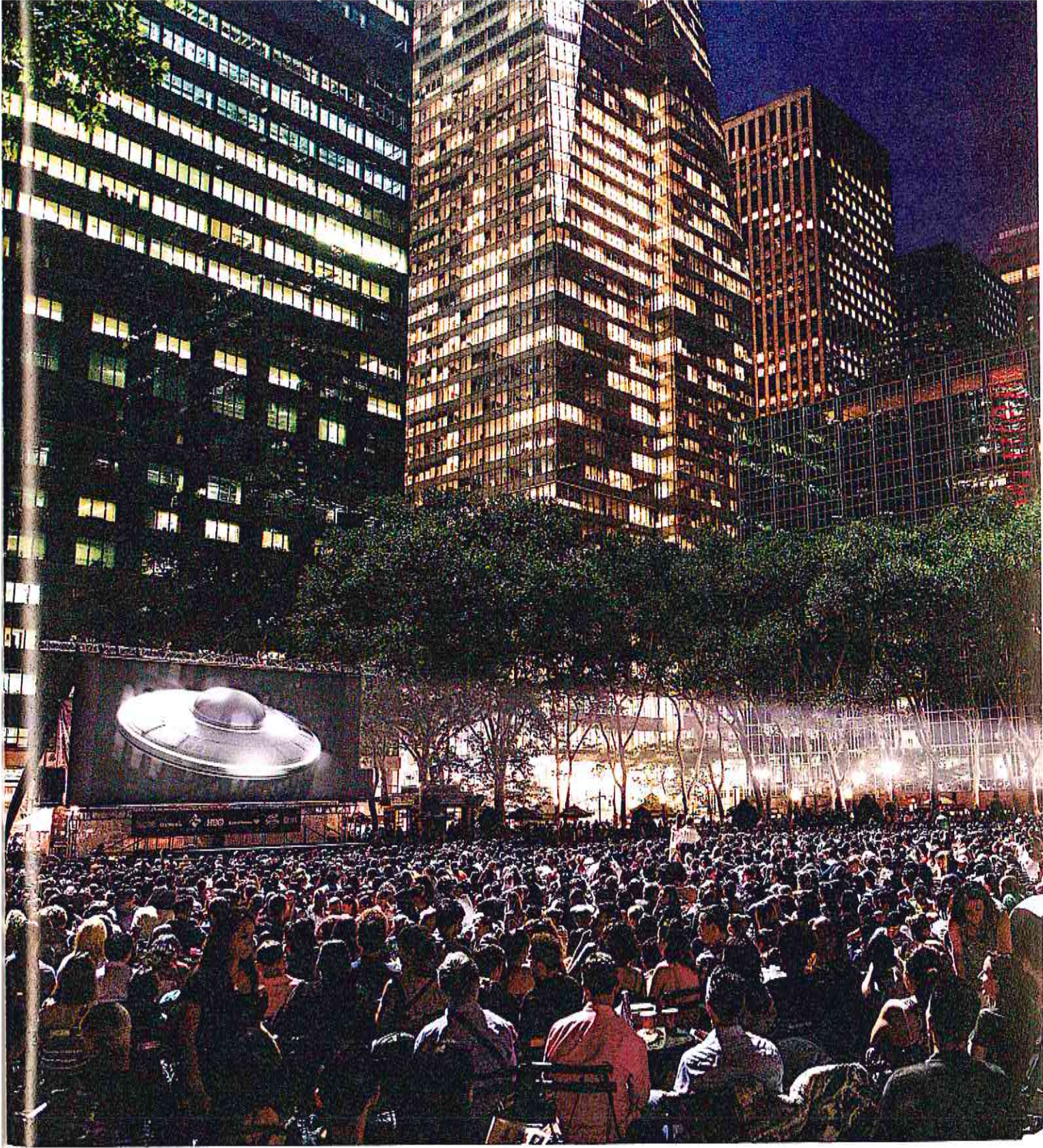
The event got its start in 1993 when Bryant Park partnered with its neighbor, HBO, to produce a movie series kicked off by a screening of *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Later that summer was a showing of *King Kong*, celebrating the film's 60th anniversary.

Since then, free outdoor movies have sprung up all over the country.

Bottom left: Just blankets, plus a picnic and 10,000 of your closest friends.

Bottom right: Because of the series' vast popularity, moviegoers at Bryant Park come well prepared to grab a prime spot.







Left: Rangerstown came to Bryant Park in May 2015, bringing a mini skating rink, hockey clinics, alumni appearances, and a large-scale live viewing party of the 2015 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs. Rangers fans came by the thousands to cheer on their team against the Tampa Bay Lightning in Game 3 of the Eastern Conference Finals.

Top right: Barnum's Kaleidoscope, a one-ring circus featuring flame-shaped Art Deco lamps and red velvet seats, visited the park in 2000.

Bottom right: For 17 years, Bryant Park was the home of New York Fashion Week, featuring some of the greatest moments in recent fashion history: P. Diddy's Sean John premiere, Bill Blass' retirement farewell, and Liza Minelli belting "New York, New York" while wearing Halston.

Far right: Grammy Award-winner Usher performed songs from his 2008 album, "Here I Stand." Good Morning America concerts were held at the park and broadcast live on ABC on Friday mornings.



WORLD-CLASS VENUE

Every now and then, a large-scale event transforms Bryant Park into a premiere world-class venue. In keeping with BPC's innovative business model, these corporate-sponsored showcases secure funding for the park's upkeep and activities. BPC works to maintain a high standard for events in the park and ensure that most are open to the public.

One example is the Good Morning America Summer Concert Series, staged at the park between 2002 and 2008, featuring such legendary acts as U2, Kanye West, Miley Cyrus, and Prince.

One of the longest running events was New York Fashion Week, which was held twice a year from 1993 to 2010 on park grounds. In spring and fall, stars of the fashion industry pitched giant white tents and sent their latest designs down the runway on the backs of the world's most famous models.

In October of 2013, T-Mobile lit the park in its signature pink as three-time Grammy Award winning recording artist Shakira performed to launch the mobile provider's latest product. An estimated 8,000+ attendees were treated to the free concert on the Lawn under the stars.

The summer of 2015 brought tennis fever to Bryant Park, with Tommy Hilfiger transforming the park's lawn into a stadium just one week before the U.S. Open. Legendary designer Hilfiger was on site with Rafael Nadal to announce the tennis superstar's new ad campaign. Nadal served and volleyed with supermodels including Chanel Iman and Hannah Davis, all under the watchful eye of celebrity Chair Umpire Jane Lynch.



THE PARK IN WINTER

A Year-Round Experience

For most outdoor spaces, winter is a time to hibernate and wait for the first signs of spring. But not in Bryant Park.

The park's holiday market has graced the park since 2002. This European-inspired open-air market features local and international artisans.

One of the nation's busiest, Bryant Park's ice rink has been the centerpiece of the park's winter season since 2005. Skeptics said BPC could never build and operate a free admission skating rink, but with help from partners, the 170' x 100' rink became an instant hit. Alongside the rink is a seasonal pop-up eatery with great views of the park.



At the Southwest Porch, visitors can enjoy fire pits and heat lamps every evening, a perfect invitation for a toasty outdoor happy hour, even as the weather turns colder.

To kick off the holidays, a festive event is held to celebrate the annual lighting of the park's Christmas Tree. Live music and world-class figure skating take place before the tree's tens of thousands of lights are

flipped on. Previous shows have featured celebrity actors Jane Krakowski and Danny Aiello, as well as world-renowned skaters including Adam Rippon, Johnny Weir, Nancy Kerrigan, Brian Boitano, Meryl Davis, and Charlie White.



PHOTO CREDITS

Cover: Photo by Colin Miller.

Cover fold-in flap open:

Bryant Park at lunchtime. ©Vincent Laforet for The New York Times.

Tai Chi on the Fountain Terrace. Photo by Jane Kratochvil.

Foreword: Photo by Angelito Jusay.

Rich History: Stories Past

- p. 4: The Crystal Palace, New York City, [1853]. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-PGA-03602.
- p. 5: The Crystal Palace and Croton Distributing Reservoir. New York Public Library.
- p. 5: Croton Distributing Reservoir. New York Public Library.
- p. 6: The New York Public Library, [1910-1915]. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Detroit Publishing Company Collection, LC-D4-70675.
- p. 6: William Cullen Bryant, Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-pga-00073.
- p. 7: Demonstration garden in Bryant Park, [1922]. Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-USZ62-120463.
- p. 7: Bryant Park, [1930]. New York Public Library.
- p. 8: Bryant Park excavation work along Sixth Avenue, March 6, 1934. Photo courtesy of the New York City Parks Photo Archive.
- p. 9: Park opening and dedication ceremony with Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, September 14, 1934. Photo courtesy of the New York City Parks Photo Archive.
- p. 9: Overhead of the park opening and dedication ceremony, September 14, 1934. Photo courtesy of the New York City Parks Photo Archive.
- p. 9: Overview of the park looking east, [1937]. Postcard courtesy of Dan Pisark.

Renovation and Redesign of an Iconic Park

- p. 16-17: Bryant Park site plan, 1987. Courtesy of H3.
- p. 18: Top left and right, bottom left: Design plans from the Warner LeRoy proposal, 1986. BPC Archives.
- p. 18: Bottom right: Hanna/Olin landscape rendering of Bryant Park, 1986. BPC Archives.
- p. 19: Bryant Park restaurant plans, winter and spring elevations, 1987. Courtesy of H3.
- p. 22: William Hollingsworth "Holly" Whyte at the Municipal Art Society's Annual Meeting held in Bryant Park, June 25, 1992. Photo courtesy of the Municipal Art Society of New York. Photo by Steven Tucker.

Bryant Park Today and Tomorrow

- p. 24: Bryant Park Lawn from the Upper Terrace. Photo by Colin Miller.
- p. 25: Josephine Shaw Lowell Memorial Fountain. Photo by Colin Miller.
- p. 25: 40th Street Allée looking east. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 26: Bryant Park Lawn looking northwest toward Sixth Avenue, 1936. Photo courtesy of the New York City Parks Photo Archive.
- p. 27: Enjoying the Bryant Park Lawn. Photo by Colin Miller.
- p. 28: Flowers in an urn on the park's marble balustrade. Photo by Colin Miller.
- p. 28: A visitor smelling a lily near the Lawn. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 28: Tulips in bloom along the Fifth Avenue Terrace in front of the New York Public Library. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 30: Muriel Rukeyser poetry reading presented by the Academy of American Poets, 1969. Photo courtesy of the New York City Parks Photo Archive.
- p. 30: The first movable seating in the park, 1991. Photo by F. N. Kinney.
- p. 32: A crowded Lawn at lunchtime. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 32: Bryant Park restrooms. Photo by Jane Kratochvil.
- p. 33: Enjoying free WiFi access. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 33: Dining al fresco on the roof of the Bryant Park Grill. Photo by Colin Miller.
- p. 36: Security officer surveils the park. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 37: Sanitation employee at work. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 38: The New York Public Library outdoor reading room then called Bryant Park Library at Central Building, 1940. Copyright: Bob Leavitt for Today magazine.
- p. 38: A Reading Room overlooked by the William Earl Dodge monument. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 39: The Reading Room. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 39: Children enjoying a Halloween event. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 40: A yoga class on the Lawn. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 40: Two visitors play ping pong. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 40: A piano concert at the Upper Terrace. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 41: Participants learn the basics of fencing on the Fifth Avenue Terrace. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 41: A family takes a spin on Le Carrousel. Photo by Jane Kratochvil.
- p. 42: A sea of blankets at a movie screening. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 42: Movie goers get ready to grab a spot on the Lawn. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 43: Thousands enjoy a movie on the Lawn. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 45: Barnum's Kaleidoscope, 2000. Photograph courtesy of Feld Entertainment, Inc.
- p. 46: The Christmas Tree lit up for the season. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 46: Skaters on the rink. Photo by Colin Miller.
- p. 47: Bryant Park in winter from above. Photo by Angelito Jusay.
- p. 47: Shoppers browse the holiday kiosks on the 42 Street Allée. Photo by Colin Miller.
- p. 47: Posing for free photos with Santa. Photo by Angelito Jusay.

All other photos by Bryant Park Corporation.

BOOK DEVELOPMENT

Originally published in 2012 as a 20th anniversary publication. Reissued and updated June 2018.

Izzie Diexel, Project Editor
Helen Stapinski, Writer
Anne Kumer, Tricia Lewis, and
Eric Mueller, Editorial
Russell Design and
Bryant Park Corporation,
Design
Printed by Versa Press

Bryant Park Corporation
5 Bryant Park
Suite 2400
New York, NY 10018
bryantpark.org
shop.bryantpark.org

BRYANT PARK BY THE NUMBERS

200 London Plane trees line the northern and southern sides of the park. **22** Honey Locust trees add to the leafy canopy.

4,500 movable chairs, and **1,000** tables provided for visitors' comfort.

Approximately **12,000,000** people visit the park each year. On a weekday in nice weather, **20,000** to **30,000** park users enjoy the park.

The park's beloved lawn occupies **1.1 acres**, approximately the size of a football field, and is resodded once each year with grass grown in New Jersey.

1,000,000 visitors per year take advantage of the elegant public restroom facilities.

1,000+ free public events, performances, and activities each year. Bryant Park Movie Nights hosts an average of **6,000** at each of the **10** movie screenings.

Le Carrousel delights children all year round, with **14** whimsical animals and **1** chariot.

In winter, Bryant Park hosts over **3,000,000** visitors each season. The rink entertains more than **300,000** skaters, and the holiday market, modeled after Europe's *Christkindlmarkts*, offers **150+** merchants housed in distinctive kiosks.



MAP: BRYANT PARK TODAY

Attractions

- 1 Ping Pong
- 2 Petanque
- 3 Putting + Kubb
- 4 Chess + Games
- 5 La Carrousel
- 6 Art Cart
- 7 Reading Room

Features

- A Fountain Terrace
- B Lawn
- C Upper Terrace
- D New York Public Library, Schermerhorn Building
- E Fifth Avenue Terrace

Food and Drink

- 8 Bryant Park Grill
- 9 Bryant Park Café
- 10 Breads Bakery
- 11 Veggies + Dinges
- 12 Le Pain Quotidien
- 13 Southwest Porch
- 14 Joe Coffee Company

Monuments

- 15 Josephine Shaw Lowell Fountain
- 16 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
- 17 Gertrude Stein
- 18 William Cullen Bryant
- 19 William Earl Dodge
- 20 Benito Juárez
- 21 José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva

- 2 Subway
- 3 Wheelchair Access
- 4 Restroom

