

STATEN ISLAND PARKS

A Special Collection in

The Archives and Library of

THE STATEN ISLAND MUSEUM

75 Stuyvesant Place, Staten Island, New York 10301

Arranged and Described by

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## PROVENANCE:

The materials in the eight cubic-foot boxes constitute a storage group for researcher needs of materials on parks generated by William T. Davis and other founders of the Institute. The Walter Kerr papers on the Institute's parks policy are official, but the majority of the other papers were individually created and are not related to the Institute except insofar as they influence present-day policy.

The storage group in fact was brought together because of researcher demands for such a collection, so great has been the interest in parks history in the past 15 years.

The Davis materials were incorporated early into the parks history and therefore stayed in this group. However, it is necessary to refer researchers to the Davis Collection (26.wtD) itself for additional materials organized by Mr. Davis especially in the "Davis Notebooks" series.

Cross-referencing will also have to be indicated after the final arrangement of the Institute's own Archival Materials is completed: especially those record groups referring to the Bird Sanctuary, the Davis Refuge, High Rock Park Nature Conservation Center, Reed's Basket Willow Swamp, Blue Heron Pond, and other park areas administered by the Institute.

## SCOPE & CONTENT:

The Staten Island Institute of Arts and Sciences has been traditionally involved as a sometimes official, sometimes unofficial watchdog and advisor for the open spaces and parks on Staten Island. When the Natural Science Association of Staten Island (the original name of the Institute) was founded in 1881, the purpose was to record the natural history and history and antiquities of the county of Richmond. In pursuing these purposes, members of the organization soon recognized the need to protect rare plant species, beautiful views, and provide "healthful recreation" for the community."

The first enunciation of the Association's policy occurred publicly in 1895 at a regular meeting in June, which was later recorded in the Association's *Proceedings*. Founders of the Association, notably Dr. Arthur Hollick and William T. Davis, continued to be a part of site-selection and administration of the young park system.

Davis had made specific notes as to site selection and had collected and annotated clippings which bore out his beliefs that a wide variety of parks were needed: parks which could provide playgrounds, playing fields, swimming pools, picnic areas, and golf courses, but also parks which would be natural parks, and would lend themselves to quieter pursuits: bird watching, botanizing, astronomy, and walking and hiking.

This collection is arranged in five subgroups: Philosophy, Planning and Policy (folders ppp 1-23), range from 1895 to 1960 and include Davis manuscripts and annotated articles and clippings tracing the development of the Staten Island park system to 1960. The second subgroup, Park Association of New York City, contains the correspondence between Mr. Davis and the Park Association, and a collection of the tours sponsored by the Park Association on Staten Island (1929-

1960, folders PA 24-44). The bulk of the collection falls into the subgroup Parks on Staten Island which is arranged alphabetically by park name, including proposed parks. It can be found in folders: Pks 45 through 126 (1897-1980). The fourth subgroup Gateway National Recreation Area (Staten Island Unit) is in effect a storage group for the excessive materials generated by the establishment of the National park in three areas on Staten Island and contains a fairly complete selection of all special studies initiated by the proposal, including original studies, the research for which were done at the Institute and published studies done elsewhere.

The last subgroup is a collection of materials related to parks in other boroughs of New York City, New York State Parks (upstate), interstate parks, and National Parks not on Staten Island (City, State & Federal Parks, CSF 1 – CSF 14).

The scope of the majority of the collection (142 folders in 8 boxes), is Staten Island the park system for Staten Island, 1895 to the present.

Gail Schneider  
Archivist

STATEN ISLAND PARKS COLLECTION

Box Inventories:

Box 1/9	Folders 1-23	Philosophy, Planning, Policy: letters, reports, rules and regulations, schedules, maps	1895-1960
Box 2/9	Folders 24-44	Park Association of New York City: Davis Letters and Correspondence	1924-1944
Box 3/9	Folders 45-63	Parks on Staten Island (arranged alphabetically by name) Archaeological through Davis (letters, reports, maps) (same materials are found through folders 3-6 and 8)	1923-1970
Box 4/9	Folders 64-85	Parks on Staten Island (arranged alphabetically by name) Faber-High Rock	1916-1970
Box 5/9	Folders 86-101	Parks on Staten Island (arranged alphabetically by name) Olmsted-Serpentine Art & Nature Commons	1922-1979
Box 6/9	Folders 102-117	Parks on Staten Island (arranged alphabetically by name) Silver Lake-Wolfe's Pond	1897-1965
Box 7/9	Folders 118-126	Annotated park clippings	1919-1968

Box 8/9

Folders  
126-142

Gateway National Recreation Area  
(Staten Island Unit)

1968-1980

Box 9/9

Folders  
1-14

City, State, Federal Parks: reports,  
work contracts, programs, publications  
on State & Federal Parks

1917-1970