

Remarks of Morris Pesin before Jersey City
Commission Meeting, Tuesday, June 17, 1958

Mayor and Commissioners of Jersey City:

In view of the forthcoming tercentenary celebration of Jersey City, I am offering you gentlemen, for your serious consideration a project that could dramatize the most important event in the long history of our city. I offer this plan to you because its realization can be accomplished only with your sanction and efforts.

Jersey City is situated a little over 2,000 feet from America's greatest monument and symbol, the Statue of Liberty. Virginia has its Monticello and Williamsburg, Massachusetts its Plymouth Rock, Washington D.C. its Mt. Vernon. Dozens of cities in America are associated with a national shrine symbolizing the struggle for freedom and the story of America's greatness. We have here at our own doorstep America's greatest shrine, the Statue of Liberty, and we have failed to realize its potentialities. With proper planning and vision we can utilize this monumental symbol of freedom to make Jersey City take its rightful place among America's great historical cities.

The actual plan is as follows:

1. Construction of a causeway connecting the Statue of Liberty to the mainland in Jersey City, approximately 2,500 feet distant.
2. Establishment at this point in Jersey City of a suitable park to be known as Liberty Park.
3. Setting up of a parking area for visitors to the statue and the park itself.
4. The possible establishment of a museum with a motif portraying the contributions of immigrants of all nationalities to the building of America.
5. There may also be included a religious shrine as a symbol of our religious freedom.

As to financing:

1. The causeway should be undertaken by the U.S. Department of Interior so that millions of Americans, because of quick, land accessibility, may take advantage of the great experience of visiting the statue.
2. The State of New Jersey should be induced to undertake the construction of the park because:

- a. Hudson County has never been favored with a State Park as have other counties.
- b. The benefits to the New Jersey Turnpike should be tremendous since people from all over the state and the nation would spend hundreds of thousands of dollars in tolls on the Turnpike which now has an exit near the proposed park and causeway.
- c. The entire project would be an attraction to tourists from all parts of America to visit the State of New Jersey. The benefits to New Jersey's resorts and toll highways would be great.
- d. The New Jersey Department of Conservation and Economic Development should be called in to assist in the initial studies.

The benefits to Jersey City would be enormous.

1. Jersey City as the "City of Liberty" because of this project would overcome many years of unfavorable publicity and misunderstanding.
2. The fame and prestige of Jersey City, nationally and internationally, would soar.
3. The realization of this project would give a needed civic lift to many of our residents.
4. Jersey City would be a stopping place for visitors from all over America rather than a "going through" place.
5. Attention of the nation would be focused on the great waterfront of Jersey City adjacent to the project. The possibilities of its development would be brought to the forefront.
6. Last, but not least, the celebration of our tercentenary would coincide with the 75th anniversary of the Statue itself. The celebration would have great historical, social and cultural meaning if this project could be realized.

This plan is only the basis for further study. We have nothing to lose and all to gain in an attempt to bring about its realization. With concerted effort on the part of civic-minded citizens, organizations and our public officials, there could be a good chance of success.

I want to make it clear that we are not going into competition with New York City. We do not intend to replace New York's Ferry ride to the Statue. We feel that we can, through our plan, service additional millions of Americans who, because of the want of better access to Liberty Island, are deprived of one of the greatest experiences in American Democracy, to wit, a visit to its greatest shrine.

Yes, there will be many obstacles--political, financial, technical, etc.--but some of America's greatest achievements came about as the result of an idea coupled with the efforts of public officials with vision and civic pride. I ask that you gentlemen create a study commission to explore the feasibility of the plan itself and to devise a plan of action.

If this project can be realized, this administration will be credited with bringing about one of the major achievements in our long municipal history.