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MEADOW RIDGE PARK

As the new Meadow Ridge Park nears completion, Borough residents can look forward to many years of enjoyment. They can also look back on the several years of careful planning it took to prepare for that enjoyment.

The 23-acre tract was the last property in the Borough zoned as farmland. For many years, Lovett's Nursery grew trees and shrubs there. Developers bought the property and proposed several projects, none of which won Borough approval. The Borough purchased the tract in 1978; with roll-back taxes deducted, the effective cost was \$475,000. The State of New Jersey reimbursed the Borough \$250,000 by means of a Green Acres acquisition grant.

The Borough Council hired the engineering firm of T and M Associates, Middletown, and Thomas P. Santry, P.E. to help design the park. In December of 1979 and February of 1980 the Borough Council conducted meetings with owners of adjoining properties, the Recreation and Environmental Commissions, and the general public. The engineers made themselves available for questions, most of which concerned noise and drainage.

Developing the park will cost \$625,000. Of this, Monmouth County will pay \$79,000 for drainage and drainage engineering (Ridge Road, where the Park is located, is a County road). A Green Acres development grant of approximately \$260,000 will reduce the Borough's cost to approximately \$286,000.

Meadow Ridge Park's major features will be the three playing fields. A full-size soccer field, a full-size baseball field, and a combination soccer/softball and Little League baseball field. With support facilities, each will provide much-needed recreational space in a town that grew faster than anyone living here 30 years ago could have imagined. One mile of natural trails will please the legion of joggers, a playground will entertain the younger children.

A parking lot for 60 vehicles, with an overflow area for 40 more, a park shelter building with restrooms and storage, underground electricity and well water, and the usual benches, tables, and bicycle racks will complement the recreational features.

The engineers and the Borough — led by Councilman Hal Hyatt, former chairman of the Borough Council Recreation Committee, Councilman Lyn Callen, the current chairman, and Carol Perkins, the Rumson Recreation Commission chairman — have given much to the landscaping and drainage of the Park. They saw to it that many of the plants, most of them old nursery stock, were saved and used as landscaping. Many arborvitae, andromeda, red cedar, flowering dogwood, bayberry, and flowering crab-apple that will be seen at the Park are long-time, although transplanted, residents. Many additional shrubs and trees are to be used to screen the Park from adjoining properties and from Ridge Road. Some large trees had to be destroyed to make way for the playing fields; the wood chips from them are being used for mulch.

The engineers designed a complete drainage system. All of the playing fields have underdrain systems, and there are few impermeable surfaces to cause excessive runoff.

Several acres along Woodside Drive will remain as woodland. Although this area is not large, it supports a surprising variety of plants, including at least 18 species of trees, 15 species of shrubs, nine species of vines, as many of wildflowers, and six species of ferns. A nature trail is planned, and the schools may find it useful. (The editor notes that among the vines one may find some vigorous specimens of that hardy native perennial, *Rhus radicans* — commonly known as poison ivy. This, in his opinion, and perhaps his alone, enhances the educational value of the site, especially in view of the current trend toward what is called "hands-on" experience.)

All of this may be very interesting, some may say, but when can we start to use the Park? If all goes as planned, and there are no problems as of this writing, the Park will be finished by the end of this September. The sod must be given several months to establish itself, which means that our soccer and baseball players will have their new fields by spring of next year.



A. Hance & Son advertising cover, 1867.



J. T. Lovett Co. advertising cover, 1889.

Meadow Ridge Park, on the site of J. T. Lovett's vast nursery (est. 1878), preserves part of the heritage of the Garden State. Asher Hance established the Rumson Nurseries in 1854. The largest business of its kind in New Jersey by 1877, it was eventually purchased by Lovett, who, for many years, supplied Sears Roebuck, Newberry, Kress and other national chain stores with plants actually grown on the site of Meadow Ridge Park.

