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By PAUL GOLDBERGER

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Robert Moses, who played a larger role in shaping the physical environment of New York State than any other figure in the 20th century, died early yesterday at West Islip, L.I. Mr. Moses, whose long list of public offices only begins to hint at his impact on both the city and state of New York, was 92 years old.

A spokesman for Good Samaritan Hospital said he had been taken there

and St. Lawrence power projects. He built all of these and more.

Before Mr. Moses, New York State had a modest amount of parkland; when he left his position as chief of the state park system, the state had 2,567,256 acres. He built 658 playgrounds in New York City, 416 miles of parkways and 13 bridges.

But he was more than just a builder. Although he disdained theories, he was a major theoretical influence on the shape of the American city, because the works he created in New York proved a model for the nation at large. His vision of a city of highways and towers — which in his later years came to be discredited by younger planners — influenced the planning of cities around the nation.

His guiding hand made New York, known as a city of mass transit, also the nation's first city for the automobile age. Under Mr. Moses, the metropolitan area came to have more highway miles than Los Angeles does; Moses projects anticipated such later automobile-ori-

Tuesday afternoon from his summer home in Gilgo Beach. The cause of death was given as heart failure.

"Those who can, build," Mr. Moses once said. "Those who can't, criticize."

Robert Moses was, in every sense of the word, New York's master builder. Neither an architect, a planner, a lawyer nor even, in the strictest sense, a politician, he changed the face of the state more than anyone who was. Before him, there was no Triborough Bridge, Jones Beach State Park, Verrazano-Narrows Bridge, West Side Highway or Long Island parkway system or Niag-

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Robert Moses

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Robert Moses in 1959 on a beam over the East River with Manhattan behind him. At left is the United Nations Building, in which he had an intermediary role.

Moses' Tactics Were Both Extolled and Criticized

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in many there were private dining rooms with chefs at the ready.

By the mid-30's, his output in the city alone had reached an extraordinary level. The Triborough Bridge, by far his biggest project up to that point, was completed in 1936, a crucial link in the Moses network of highways and regional parks. In the 1930's he built hundreds of playgrounds, 10 swimming-pool complexes, the Grand Central Parkway and the Interborough, Laurelton, Gowanus and Henry Hudson Parkways, among others. He built the Bronx-Whitestone Bridge and the West Side Highway and the 79th Street Boat Basin.

Badly Beaten in Election

The only break Mr. Moses took from his hectic building activity was in 1934, when he accepted the Republican nomination for Governor. He was not a meek candidate—his speeches often included hostile attacks on his opponent, Gov. Herbert H. Lehman. But he antagonized the voters, and lost by an enormous margin.

By the time of the election, Mr. Moses had moved sharply to the right, a political stance he was to retain for the rest of his life. Indeed, he often used his politics as a means of attacking the architecture and the planning professionals with whom he disagreed; he called Frank Lloyd Wright a man who "was regarded in Russia as our greatest builder," said that planners, in general, were "socialists" and called Lewis Mumford "an outspoken revolutionary."

But Mr. Mumford, who was never a fan of Mr. Moses, nonetheless admitted that "in the 20th century the influence of Robert Moses on the cities of America was greater than that of any other person."

Built to His Own Tastes

If Mr. Moses' politics were conservative, so were his tastes. He was a cultivated man—he could quote liberally from Shakespeare by memory—and he often filled his speeches with quotations from the English poets. Once Mr. Moses subtly insulted President Roosevelt with a reference to an obscure remark of Dr. Johnson's about how patrons frequently tried to steal credit from the real creators of works.

But so far as the shaping of his own creations was concerned, Mr. Moses had a deep distrust of the avant-garde, and he sought traditional design in the architecture he built and in the sculpture he installed in his parks. And what was built was always decided on the basis of his personal taste; architects would often report that Mr. Moses rejected nearly finished schemes merely because their stylistic quirks did not please him.

Most of Mr. Moses' public housing was designed in the bland style of such architecture in the 40's and 50's, when monotonous, sterile towers in open space were the rule for low-income residences. The care Mr. Moses lavished on the design of Jones Beach and his early parkways tended not to show itself in the architectural plans for his public housing; as with many builders of public housing, he was concerned more with order and with numbers of apartment units than with making buildings that would relate to their occupants' ways of living.

The general model for such housing was the 1920's plan for the rebuilding of Paris by Le Corbusier, which called for a city of towers surrounded by parks and divided by highways instead of traditional streets. Mr. Moses, like so many American planners, came to the Le Corbusier approach not for reasons of esthetics but for reasons of efficiency.

But Mr. Moses' architectural taste did not change substantially with other kinds of projects in his later years. The New York Coliseum at Columbus Circle is a gray brick box of the sort of undistinguished design that suggests government buildings of the 50's, and neither Lincoln Center, Shea Stadium nor the New York World's Fair have ever been considered to have made major marks architecturally.

In the 40's and 50's, Mr. Moses' activities intensified. His Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority suffered one major defeat—his plan for a Battery bridge crossing was built as a tunnel because of public opposition to a bridge blocking the harbor view. But he expanded his activities into other areas. He played a crucial role in the negotiations to bring the United Nations to New York City and to convince John D. Rockefeller to obtain the organization's

East River site; he was active on, and often controlled, the City Planning Commission; he came to dominate the city's Housing Authority, and he obtained for himself another new "umbrella" title: City Construction Coordinator, giving him authority over virtually every public construction project in the city of New York.

But by the 50's, while Mr. Moses' remarkable energy was far from exhausted, many of his ideas—which had not changed substantially in all the years he had been active—were no longer convincing. He lost a bitter battle in 1959 with Joseph Papp, head of the New York Shakespeare Festival, over permitting free Shakespeare performances in city parks. And community protests occurred over the route for his Cross Bronx Expressway, which required the demolition of at least 1,500 apartments in a one-mile stretch alone.

Mr. Moses did not bow to the Bronx protests; he refused to switch to an alternative route that would have taken away only a few dozen buildings. But the fight was seen by many observers as an early chink in Mr. Moses' armor.

A smaller, but more successful, protest had been mounted by well-to-do residents of West 67th Street in 1956 against a Moses scheme to replace a tree-filled play area in Central Park with a parking lot. The event was a severe blow to Mr. Moses' image: the man who began his career as a champion of parks was being attacked as a destroyer of them.

At the same time two more Moses-conceived projects—a mid-Manhattan Expressway and the Lower Manhattan Expressway—began to run into snags. Ultimately they would never be built at all. Neither would another favorite Moses scheme that came up against the objections of a later generation of environmentalists, his plan for a bridge to cross the Long Island Sound between Rye, N.Y., and Oyster Bay, L.I.

Mr. Moses' reputation was also damaged by the Manhattantown urban renewal scandals of the 50's, in which private developers, to whom the city had sold tenements at a reduced rate with the understanding that their sites would be cleared and new housing erected, simply continued to operate the tenements, milking them for high rents.

While Mr. Moses was never himself charged with profiteering, associates of his were implicated in the scandals. And connected to the scandal was a growing public resentment of relocation of tenants from slum clearance sites—a process that Mr. Moses was also in charge of.

The Manhattantown scandals also gave Mr. Moses his first major taste of press disapproval. Most of the city's newspapers had been staunch Moses supporters over the years, and editorial support for Moses park and highway projects had played a significant role in keeping the public, and hence the state's politicians, on Mr. Moses' side in many a controversy. But editorial writers were taken aback by the urban-renewal scandals, and the nearly universal support that Mr. Moses had been receiving was sharply curtailed.

He did nonetheless get an enormous amount of housing actually built in those years—as well as start other slum-clearance projects that would have almost total public support, such as the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts on the Upper West Side. But the urban renewal scandals were perhaps his most serious setbacks, and in 1959 an opportunity arose for a graceful exit: the presidency of the 1964-65 New York World's Fair was offered to him.

The fair was Mr. Moses' last major accomplishment, and it was done in typical Moses style, with lavish public relations and elaborate new buildings. The fair was not, however, a total success either esthetically or financially, and Mr. Moses' dream of converting its Flushing Meadows site into an elaborate permanent park had to be scaled down considerably.

Mr. Moses had been required to give up all of his official positions with the City of New York in 1959, when he assumed the presidency of the fair. He lost most of his state jobs in 1962, when Governor Rockefeller, to Mr. Moses' surprise, accepted his resignation, which had been offered merely in protest over a disagreement.

His last significant hold on power was lost in 1968, when the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority was merged into Governor Rockefeller's new Metropolitan Transportation Authority. Mr. Moses was offered the role of "consultant" to the new agency, which permitted him to maintain his offices, secretaries and chauffeurs, but gave him no real power.

And thus, quietly, the active career of one of the nation's most powerful public officials came to an end. Mr. Moses' name was virtually a household word, not only in New York but also around the nation, first as a fighter for parks and open space and later as a name that had come to symbolize the sweeping, total approach to urban renewal that he favored.

In 1915 Mr. Moses married Mary Louise Sims, a secretary at the Bureau of Municipal Research, his first place of employment. They had two daughters, Barbara Olds of Greenwich, Conn., and Jane Collins of Babylon, L.I.

After his first wife's death in 1966, Mr. Moses married Mary Grady, who had been a staff member at the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority. The Moseses lived at 1 Gracie Terrace in Manhattan and in a small house in Gilgo Beach, L.I., which they had obtained years before when Mr. Moses first began to lay out the park and parkway system of Long Island.

A funeral service will be held at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Bay Shore, L.I., at 11 A.M. tomorrow.

A Sampler of Quotations by Moses

There are people who like things as they are. I can't hold out any hope to them. They have to keep moving farther away. This is a great big state and also there are other states. Let them go to the Rockies.

There should be no social bar to promotion from the lowest to the highest place—but let us not fool ourselves. When we have made every possible provision for the encouragement of early promise, when we have prepared every child as far as possible for its suitable vocation, the subordinate employees of the government who are fit to rise above the ranks will be few and far between.

If the end doesn't justify the means, what does?

The important thing is to get things done.

As long as you're on the side of parks, you're on the side of the angels. You can't lose.

Nothing I have ever done has been tinged with legality.

The City Builder must have an odd mixture of qualities. He must have a basic affection for his community, he must hate what is ugly, barren and useless. He must have an instinctive dislike for things which are built and run wrong. He must have a healthy contempt for the parasite, the grafter, the carpetbagger, the itinerant expert, the ivory tower planner, the academic reformer and the revolutionary. He must have the barge captain's knowledge of the waterfront, the engineer's itch to build, the architect's flair for design, the merchant's knowledge of the market, the local acquaintance of a political district leader.

No Tammany man can rise above the local machine. Governor Smith achieved that distinction, but Albany is a long way from the Bowery.

Dozens of cars zoom or crawl through Riverside Park and down the West Side Highway and view the matchless, unspoiled Palisades. By comparison, the castled Rhine is a mere trickle between vine-clad slopes. I wonder sometimes whether our people, so obsessed with the seamy interior of Manhattan, deserve the Hudson.