

# Bear Mountain State Park: A Legacy of Conservation



Palisades Interstate Park Commission



Palisades Interstate Park Commission



Orange County Historical Society

**FAR LEFT** The strategic building of recreational facilities such as roads, group camps, and lean-tos throughout Bear Mountain and Harriman State Parks allowed more people than ever before access to nature.

**ABOVE** Bear Mountain Inn, on the National Register of Historic Places, has been called one of the “finest examples of rustic Adirondack architecture in America.” In the early 2000s the Inn was renovated and restored to its original grandeur.

**LEFT** Edward H. and Mary W. Harriman championed natural resource conservation in the Hudson Valley. Bear Mountain and Harriman State Parks are part of their legacy.

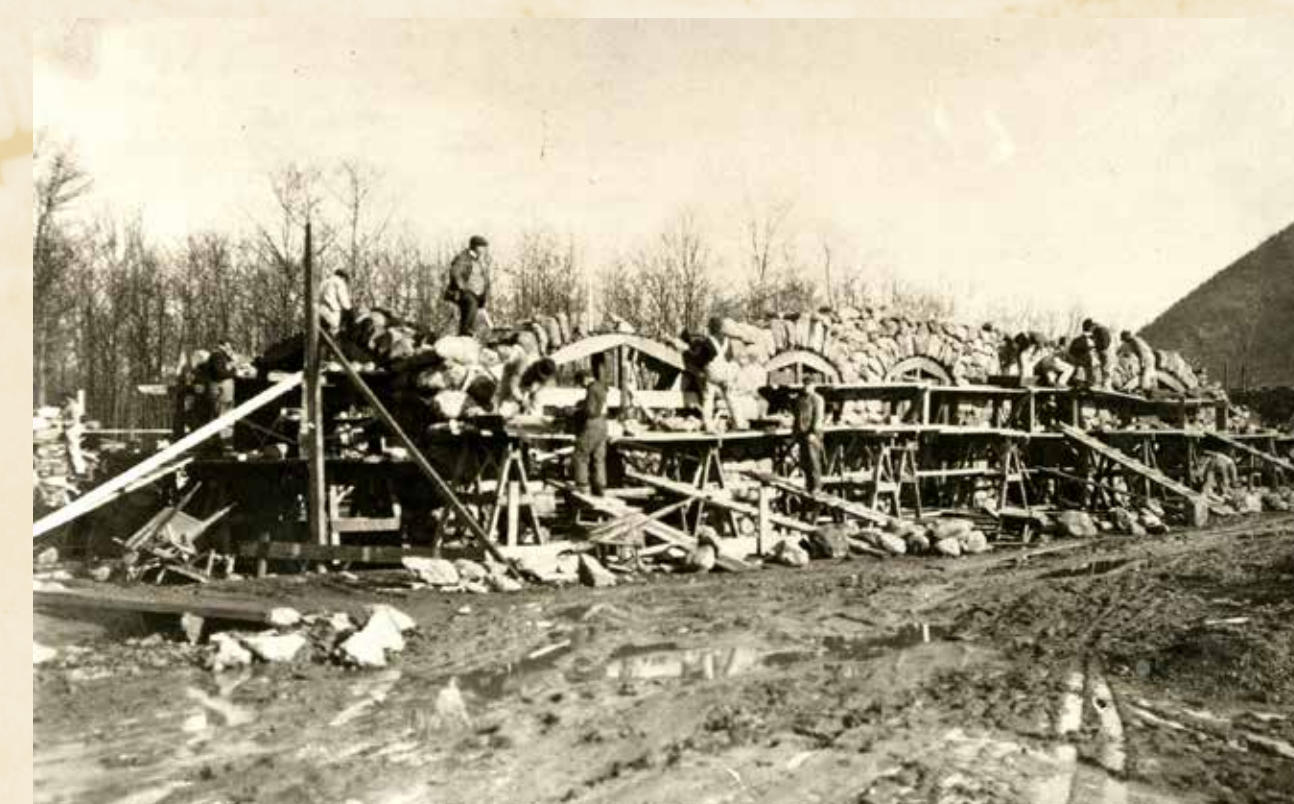
## BUILDING NATURE PARKS FOR PEOPLE

Parks preserve and celebrate nature, but they are not entirely natural. Hundreds of workers – led by Major William A. Welch, the first general manager of Harriman-Bear Mountain – built roads, lakes, youth camps, and recreational facilities throughout these two parks. In 1913, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC) formalized a group camp program – the first in the nation – that introduced thousands of urban children to nature. In 1915, the Bear Mountain Inn opened and served over 100,000 guests its first year. Bear Mountain and Harriman State Parks were a huge success, with hundreds of thousands of visitors arriving year after year, first by steamship from Manhattan and Yonkers, and later by bus and car. Today, 3.5 million people annually visit these parks, which are still managed by PIPC and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.



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In the Park's early years, people arrived at Bear Mountain from Manhattan, Yonkers, and New Jersey ports via steamboat. Today, bus lines serve visitors arriving from New York City and beyond.



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Bear Mountain Inn, completed in 1915, has played host to countless guests, dignitaries, and celebrities seeking a rustic respite. In the 1930s and '40s, the Inn even served as training headquarters for the Brooklyn Dodgers, New York Giants, and later the New York Knicks.



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The Palisades Interstate Park Commission created the first group camp program in the nation, introducing people to the joys of being in the woods.