



Roosevelt Island (Images of America)

Judith Berdy, Roosevelt Island Historical society

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Roosevelt Island captures the fascinating and sometimes curious history of an island located halfway between Manhattan and Queens in the East River. In 1824, the city of New York purchased Blackwell's Island, later Welfare Island, as a site for its lunatic asylum, penitentiary, workhouses, and almshouses. In the years that followed, the island was a temporary home for several of New York City's famous and infamous. William Marcy Tweed, better known as "Boss Tweed," was imprisoned at the penitentiary in the 1870s. Mae West was incarcerated in 1927 at the Workhouse for Women after her appearance in a play called Sex. After many institutions were closed or relocated, Welfare Island was virtually ignored until 1973, when it was reborn as Roosevelt Island, which is now a model planned community and thriving home to almost ten thousand people.

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