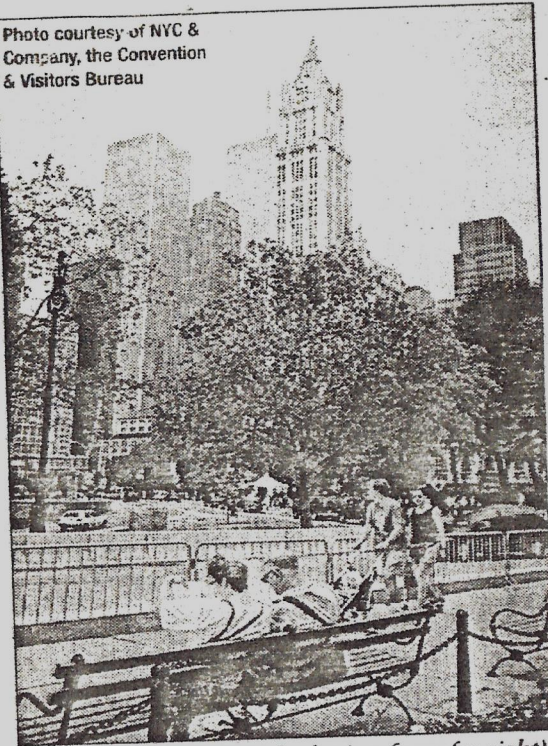


Photo courtesy of NYC & Company, the Convention & Visitors Bureau



Scenes from the city (clockwise, from far right): Lady Liberty holds a torch for the city's beauty; Ellis Island; a park's view of big business; and the World Financial Center.

Lower (but Not Slower) MANHATTAN

Barbara Ann Rosenberg
Special to the Jewish Exponent

“Downtown” is where people used to go in Manhattan strictly for bargains (Orchard Street); pickles (Delancey Street); lip-smacking blintzes (Ratners); oversized kosher-style sandwiches (the Katz Delicatessen); and to spend a few quiet hours with perhaps less fortunate relatives who never made it to the exciting life “uptown.”

But that's no more. Today, the joint is jumpin', so to speak.

Sure, there's Wall Street with its fantastic money-making potential (and, for the lucky ones, realized potential) that has had people buzzing this past year. But it used to be that when the “streets” closed and the “suits” went home to their uptown condos or country “nests,” you could roll a cannon ball down any street in the area and not hit a soul.

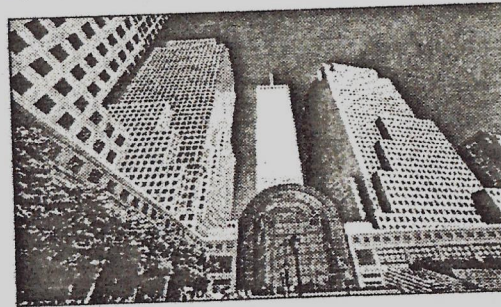
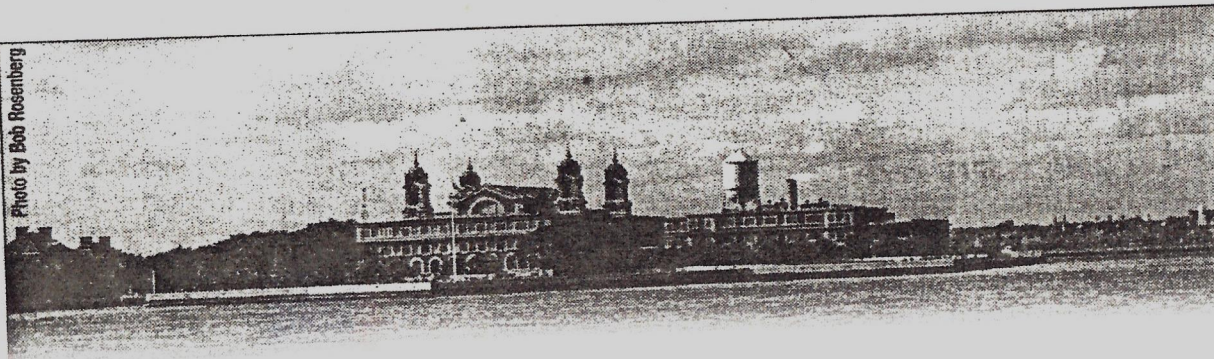


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Photo by Bob Rosenberg



Manhattan *Continued from previous page*

Again, no more.

The restaurant scene is exploding, the nightlife is fantastic, and there are retail bargains galore at places like Century 21, a shopping hot spot where (if you push your way inside) there are terrific things to buy — at terrific prices.

And we haven't yet begun to consider historic sites like Battery Park, where mostly foreign folks and out-of-towners line up in droves to visit the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, many in search of their roots.

The best — bar none

In addition to the restaurants, there are the bars — including the one dubbed "The Greatest Bar on Earth" on the 107th floor of the World Trade Tower, surely the noisiest. This lively beyond-belief room has a view to the ends of the earth, it seems.

Aside from the endless variety of drinks (you just can't stump the bartenders there, no matter how hard you try with all manner of requests for exotica), there is real food to be had: burgers, sushi, steaks and, befitting an upscale setting like this, a beluga caviar service for \$65.

One glitch — it costs \$15 to take the elevator up to the bar when there's a band playing. But you can amortize your investment by having a dinner at Wild Blue, just down the hall in the same building, or traipse a bit farther and dine in Windows on the World at the very top.

Enough to eat? Head back down to street level, cross the road and head for Battery Park — during the day, that is — to begin your island adventure.

We're not talking the Caribbean, but the two tiny islands just off the shore, Lady Liberty's home and Ellis Island, only a few minutes from one another.

The ultimate torch singer

Peek at the Statue of Liberty up close, if that turns you on, or climb the many, many stairs to the observation platform and have a look around from a different vantage point. Then, head back to the main land, because there's plenty more to do.

Among the highlights there is the Jewish Heritage Museum that opened in 1997 in a hexagonal, tiered-roof building, just across the harbor from Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. It has a core collection of more than 2,000 photographs, 800 artifacts and 24 films.

It features exhibitions on Jewish life before, during and after the Holocaust. As a major destination for school groups, the museum recently welcomed its 100,000th student visitor.

Then, for a complete change, stroll through the World Financial Center to enjoy its gorgeous atrium and nifty retail. Head back "inland" to check out the immense crush of would-be buyers of top-flight designer merchandise at Century 21. If you can fight your way through and you are an unusual size (like 2, 3 or 4 — at least that's unusual from my point of view!), you stand a chance to snag a wild bargain.

Or head for the handbag department, where people have been known to pick up a sample of Prada or Ferragamo or Fendi — for a proverbial fishcake. Men can do equally well on clothing and haberdashery in the bargain department.

Or, getting into an entirely different realm, make



Nice day for a stroll on the Esplanade.

an appointment and head to the Gold Vaults at the massive iron-gated Federal Reserve Bank for an understanding of where the gold that backs 80 world currencies are stored.

You descend several stories below ground (to bedrock, actually), through serious security measures to iron-barred cages, where you are exposed to large, super-secured vaults in which you can see (but not touch) gold bars piled up like so many shoe boxes.

Then, spend \$10 to pick up \$1,000 in paper money, shredded into tiny pieces and neatly packaged into a small cylinder. The shredded currency is worth nothing, actually, but makes a terrific gift for the right person.

"Here's a grand, kid," you can say with impunity when you hand it over to a child or grandchild. "Don't spend it all in one place."

Move on to the Fulton Fishmarket, even farther downtown. See an endless variety of fish that has entered the states from all over the world, waiting to be sold

to hotels and restaurants.

And for an unusual treat, cross the road to a very untouristy but delicious historic little eating place called Carmine's Tavern, a favorite of many of the fishmongers, where you can get whole fresher-than-fresh fish, baked, broiled or steamed — with a side of spaghetti — not "pasta," but honest-to-goodness spaghetti, with a sauce like somebody's Italian grandmother used to make: slow-simmered for hours, rich and delicious.

Since you're unlikely to finish all there is to do in lower Manhattan in one day, it's fun to linger in one of the two nifty Marriott hotels, located just two blocks apart and nearly next door to the World Trade Center.

You can walk to just about all the places in this fascinating part of the city without stop-and-go taxi rides between attractions.

All in all, the experience is varied and satisfying, and gives an entirely different point of view of our great neighboring city. **DE**

■ Got some bucks to make a buck? Pick up some shredded money at the Fed. ■