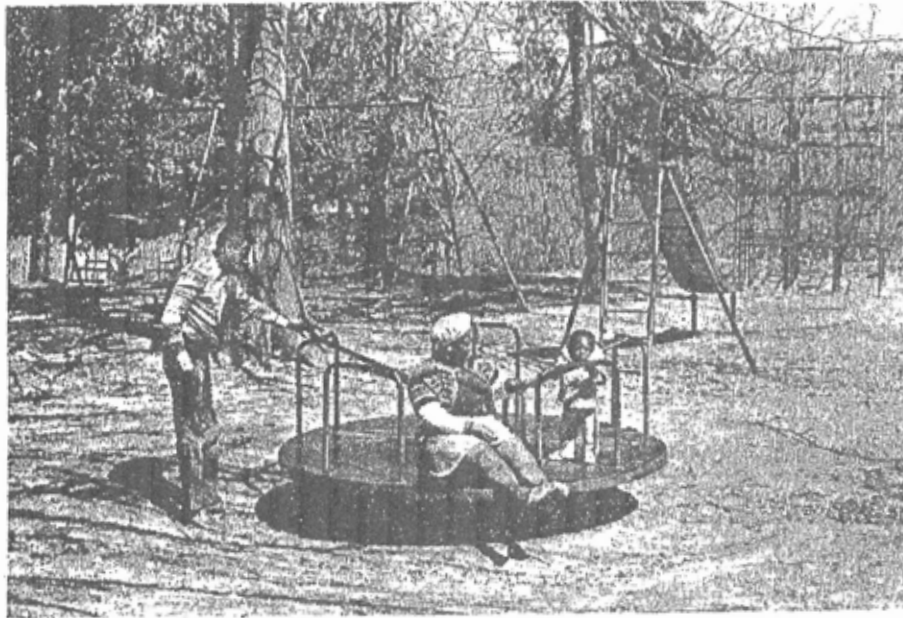


*Riverside Park Pavilion, a scene of beauty and neglect.*



*Enjoying the play area*

## Riverside Park has hit the skids

NEW LONDON — In better days, Riverside Park was the city's most popular picnic ground.

It was 36 acres then, with its commanding view of the Thames River.

Almost half this area was subsequently absorbed by Coast Guard Academy expansion.

The park rivaled Ocean Beach, before the 1938 Hurricane, as a place to spend a Sunday afternoon.

More recently, it has fallen into general disuse. The city's middle class abandoned it for Ocean Beach and it became a park for the less advantaged, who live along its borders.

It no longer enjoys the prestige of other city parks. Riverside is included in a \$2.4 million parks improvements plan, but it ranks at the bottom of the priority list. Officials expect to run out of federal funds before the city gets to Riverside.

The Parks and Recreation Department uses Riverside for summer recreation programs and it was a site for day camps financed under the Model City program.

Vandalism at the park led to pressure to relocate a firemen's statue there to a site at North End Firehouse. Another argument for moving the statue is that nobody sees it where it is.