



be *Wild Cards* for you and your group without an opportunity to visit Aces High, and you don't want to set your game before the establishment closed in the 1990s, feel free to keep it around, perhaps under new ownership. You can even make story hooks out of such adjustments: Who is the new owner of Aces High and does he or she have an agenda beyond serving the world's finest *hors-d'oeuvres* to the ace elite?

Most of the places in this section are found in (or around) Manhattan. Jokertown and its important locales are described in their own section that follows.

ACES HIGH

Hiram Worchester's fabulous restaurant Aces High occupied the entire 86th floor of the Empire State Building (the lower observation deck in an alternate New York). The restaurant opened in 1971 and closed in the mid-1990s. From the early 1970s through the 1980s Aces High was *the* most *chic* restaurant in town.

The dining areas were terraced so customers could enjoy the magnificent views of the city. The kitchen, storage lockers, freezer, rest rooms, service elevator, and offices were located in the middle of the floor. Musicians entertained Aces High patrons from a niche near the dining area. The floor was marble. The walls were covered with framed, mostly autographed, photographs of celebrities of every conceivable sort, especially aces. There was a long curved bar in the main dining room and magnificent art deco chandeliers hung from the spacious ceiling. Wide glass double doors led to the Sunset Balcony, overlooking the Hudson River. The balcony was one of the most popular features of the restaurant and flying aces often eschewed the elevators to alight there. The Aces High colors were blue and silver, and they were usually reflected in Worchester's dress and the waitstaff's uniforms.

In September 1986, the head chef was Paul LeBarre (a typically bad-tempered French chef), the maitre d' (and Hiram's good right-hand man) was a tall, slender black man named Curtis who looked splendid, elegant, and even a bit austere in his tuxedo. Peter Chou was head of security. He collected Depression glass and black belts in various martial arts and swore or raised his voice only under the utmost provocation.

Every year on Wild Card Day Hiram Worchester hosted an aces-only party that was one of the most sought-after tickets in the city. You had to be a known ace, a guest of an ace, or exhibit your ace powers at the door to get in. Claiming you time travel in your sleep would *not* get you past security.

Hiram started the celebration the same way every year: He floated to the top of the ceiling next to one of the chandeliers and offered the first toast of the evening to Jetboy, then to Black Eagle, Brain Trust, and the Envoy (but never to Golden Boy), then the Turtle, then to all the aces, living and dead and yet to come, then to the jokers, and then to the memory of those who drew the Black Queen, then the Takisians and Dr. Tachyon, and then, again, to Jetboy, "the father of us all." And then the feasting began.

Wild Card Day, 1986, was a particularly explosive gala as the Astronomer tried to murder Water Lily, working on the waitstaff, by tossing her off the Sunset Balcony. She was saved by Peregrine and Hiram Worchester, and the Astronomer was ultimately driven off, but not before Croyd Crenson accidentally blew up Modular Man in the melee.

Many aces dined at Aces High over the years. It was one of Croyd Crenson's favorite hangouts, as well as the favorite of Black Shadow (in various guises).

Aces High went into a decline when Hiram was taken as a mount by Ti Malice, and closed soon after he was sentenced to probation for the involuntary manslaughter of Chrysalis.

THE CLOISTERS

The Cloisters is located in Fort Tryon Park, near the northern tip of Manhattan Island, on a hill overlooking the Hudson River, in four acres of parkland, now abandoned and gone wild. Once a branch of the Metropolitan Museum of Art dedicated to the art and architecture of the European Middle Ages, the building was vacated by the Museum in the late 1960s and lay abandoned until it was taken over by the Astronomer as his headquarters when he became leader of the Egyptian Masons. It was protected by youth street gangs working for the Astronomer and hanging out in the surrounding park.

The Cloisters itself consists of a number of disassembled medieval European buildings put together like the pieces of a giant jigsaw puzzle back in the 1930s. Unfortunately much of it was destroyed in the raid led by Fortunato (May 1986) which cleaned out the Egyptian Masons. The underground catacombs were left fairly intact, however, and the Astronomer and his remaining loyal minions returned there to roost and to nurse their hatred until they struck back on Wild Card Day in 1986 at the aces who had attacked them.

THE COSMIC PUMPKIN HEAD SHOP AND ORGANIC DELI

Mark Meadows opened the head shop and delicatessen called the Cosmic Pumpkin ("Food for the Body, Mind, & Spirit") on Fitz-James O'Brien Street, near the border of Jokertown and the Village, in the early 1980s. The Pumpkin was tended by two clerks (Susan and Brenda), sturdy young women given to wearing CUNY sweatshirts, who looked rather alike. Mark lived above the head shop with his daughter, Sprout. There was also an extensive biochemical laboratory on the second floor adjacent to the living quarters.

During Mark's second custody battle with his ex-wife Kimberly, he got rid of the head shop accouterments, underground comics, and black light posters, and turned the Pumpkin into a New Age health food joint called the New Dawn Wellness Center (summer 1989).

EBBETS FIELD

Ebbets Field is located in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn, in a block bounded by Bedford Avenue, Sullivan Place, McCreever Place, and Montgomery Street. It is the long-time home of the Brooklyn Dodgers baseball team and was General Frank Zappa's headquarters and staging point for the Rox Campaign (September 1990).

ELLIS ISLAND ("THE ROX")

Ellis Island is located in New York Harbor north of Liberty Island. Only 32 acres in extent, it was largely created by landfill, and is located mostly in Jersey City waters, with a bit slopping over into New York City territory. The ensuing jurisdictional squabble is one of the main reasons it was an attractive target for the original joker squatters.

Ellis Island was where the government once processed immigrants to the United States. The island's main building is the old administration building, surrounded by a number of lesser structures. The administration building is six stories of brick with limestone trim and longer than a football field. Copper-domed observation towers stand another 40 feet high on each of the building's corners. This building became the center of Bloat's domain, which he transformed into the Crystal Castle.

Bloat and his band of squatters arrived on Ellis Island in the fall of 1988. Bloat erected a mental barrier, "Bloat's Wall," about a mile and a

half around the island, making it difficult, if not impossible, for unwanted visitors (cops, for example) to approach. Such uninvited sightseers suffered sharp physical discomfort, including nausea, severe body pain and spasms, and white noise buzzing in their ears. If they persisted in coming too close they ultimately lost consciousness. The only way to approach the Rox safely was passage with the joker Charon.

Ellis Island got the nickname The Rox, as well as an unsavory reputation as a refuge for teenage gang members, in late 1989. Lost in jurisdictional limbo between the National Park Service, New Jersey authorities, and New York City, eventually all police just stopped going there. Depending on who you listen to, the Rox was either a refuge where jokers help one another or a gaping wound where the worst of those touched by the wild card gathered. One thing was sure: Death was common and varied there. Makeshift dwellings clung to and between the islands' decaying buildings, which scarcely provided enough room and shelter for all the immigrants. Bloat ultimately used his wild card abilities to create an extensive cavern system under the Rox, providing more room for joker refugees and their allies, the Jumpers.

Bloat's powers, as well as ordinary rebuilding efforts, transformed the old administration building into his hybrid Disney/Escher vision of a medieval castle, and ultimately transmuted his Wall into an actual physical obstacle reaching out to the nearby Jersey shore and south to Liberty Island, encompassing a disturbingly altered Statue of Liberty.

The authorities made two half-hearted attempts to roust the squatters off the Rox, but then finally got serious. General Frank Zappa headed the Rox Campaign, including Army, Air Force, and Navy units (such as the battleship *New Jersey*) as well as two teams of aces. Bloat and his allies proved no match for the combined government forces. Fortunately, before the Rox was ultimately deluged by a tidal wave raised by the angry Turtle, the aboriginal Australian shaman Wyungare, aided by a team of wild card mystics, managed to translate the Rox and its inhabitants to a safe alternate dimension (September 1990), a fact very few people actually know. So far as most are concerned, the Turtle's wave washed the Rox clean, leaving virtually nothing behind.

THE FAMOUS BOWERY WILD CARD DIME MUSEUM

Located on Bowery Street, the Famous Bowery Dime Museum was converted to a Wild Card Museum (and those words added to its title) in the early 1960s. It was originally a rather small and non-politically correct establishment, with exhibits tending toward the sensational, if not the downright tawdry (for example, 20 jars of "monstrous joker babies" pickled in formaldehyde, and a diorama depicting a purported Jokertown orgy). Some exhibits did have educational value, including a newsreel about the Day of the Wild Card, and waxwork displays of Jetboy and the Four Aces.

When Charles Dutton purchased it he classed the joint up a bit. There are still many waxwork figures (most sculpted by the Oddity's artistic persona), but other dioramas are animatronic robots, and there is a selection of artifacts of true historical interest (for example, a succession of the Turtle's shells).

Additional dioramas include: the Great Jokertown Riot of 1976, Earth versus The Swarm (June 1987), the Astronomer's Wild Card Day attack on Aces High, and the Syrian debacle from the WHO-sponsored world tour. After the Rox Campaign a Bloat diorama was added (1990). Single figures in 1986 included Dr. Tachyon, resplendently dressed in an outfit donated by him to the museum, Peregrine, who maintains her smoldering sensuality even in wax, Cyclone, Hiram Worchester, and Chrysalis.

After the Rox Campaign, Dutton found a fourth burned-out Turtle shell in the street in front of the museum and added it to the collection (September 1990).

Admission was 25 cents in the early 1960s, \$2 in 1986, \$2.50 in 1987.

GOVERNOR'S ISLAND MAXIMUM SECURITY PSYCHIATRIC UNIT

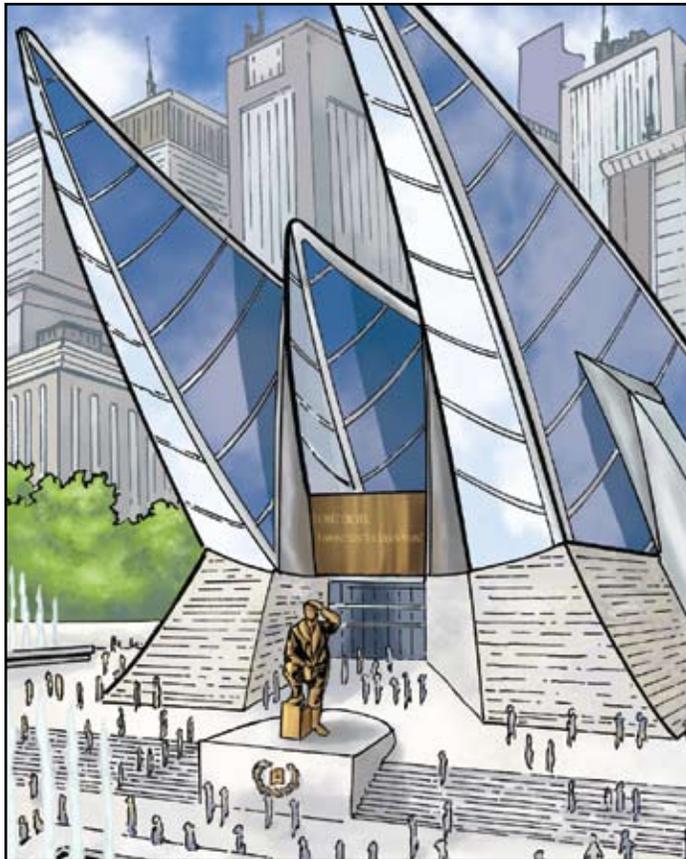
This maximum security prison is located on a 172-acre island, approximately half a mile from the southern tip of Manhattan, near the Brooklyn shore. It shares space on Governor's Island with a Coast Guard Station and a National Monument containing ruins of historic fortifications.

It was the site of a massive jailbreak engineered by Croyd Crenson in the summer of 1994. At the time many of the guards and supervisors at the facility, which housed rather harmless (if eccentric) wild card aces and jokers as well as authentic dangerous criminals, were low-level Card Sharks.

JETBOY'S TOMB

Do you know the answer to the children's riddle, "Who is buried in Jetboy's Tomb?"

Jetboy's Tomb is a sprawling edifice of steel, glass, and marble overlooking the Hudson River and New Jersey beyond in downtown Manhattan (where, in another universe, buildings called the Twin Towers once stood). It fills the entire block where pieces of the JB-1 came raining down on September 15, 1946.



The tomb's huge flanged wings curve upward as if the structure itself were about to take flight. A full-sized replica of the JB-1 hangs from the ceiling. Jetboy's last words are inscribed above the doors, each letter chiseled into black Italian marble and filled with stainless steel: "I can't die yet. I haven't seen *The Jolson Story!*"

The plaza around the tomb is also marble. In it stands a 20-foot-tall steel statue of Jetboy, looking out over the West Side Highway and the Hudson River beyond, the metal of it taken from crashed planes. It was completed by the early 1960s, perhaps earlier.

In addition to being a draw for tourists (especially on Wild Card Day, the anniversary of Jetboy's death), Jetboy's Tomb is a popular landmark for giving directions and also as a late-night meeting place for conspiracy-minded wild cards, or those with a sense of the dramatic. It also tends to be a magnet for anti-wild card protests and violence, emblematic of the release of the virus on Manhattan.

LIN'S CURIO EMPORIUM

Lin's Curio Emporium was a high-class Chinese art shop on Mulberry Street in Chinatown (mid-1970s through late 1980s). It was well-known in the art world for its rare antiquities and also in the drug world, where its clientele could pick up whatever they wanted in the way of illegal pharmaceuticals. It was a front for the Shadow Fists.

Sui Ma could often be found there until her death.

ST. DYMPNA'S HOME FOR THE MENTALLY DEFICIENT AND CRIMINALLY INSANE

St. Dympna's is an old charity mental hospital taken over by Cardinal Contarini as Allumbrado headquarters in New York City. (Though he stays at the Waldorf-Astoria when he's in town.) It's a sinister, creepy building with many odd stories associated with it. It dates back to the mid-1800s when it was run by a nursing order of the Roman Catholic Church. It was closed in the 1970s.

Most of the patients stayed in the large dormitory-like rooms on the first floor, segregated according to sex. The private rooms on the second floor were reserved for affluent paying patients and the third floor was reserved for staff use and an infirmary. No one ever said much about what went on in the dungeon-like cells of the basement.

Among the perhaps apocryphal tales associated with St. Dympna's is one dating back to 1957, when an ace-powered psychopath escaped from the oubliette. He slaughtered 37 patients in the dormitory before a mysterious patient from the second floor—one who'd been catatonic for nearly a decade—suddenly awoke and stopped the carnage. This patient seemingly drained the psychopath's mind, then escaped St. Dympna's in an unknown manner.

TOMLIN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Tomlin International—or simply "Tomlin," as locals and frequent users refer to it—is one of the two major airports in New York City. It's located in Queens, on the western end of Long Island. It's named for Robert Tomlin (Jetboy).

YANKEE STADIUM

Yankee Stadium, located in the Bronx, is the home of the New York Yankees. The stadium scoreboard is one of Jay Ackroyd's favorite places to pop people when he's pressed for time and needs a ready-made location.