United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic

and/or common Parachute Jump

2. Location

Southwest corner of the block between Surf Avenue
the Boardwalk, West 16th Street and West 19th St.

3. Classification

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>military</td>
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4. Owner of Property

name Mr. Gordon Davis, Commissioner, Dept. of Parks & Recreation

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Kings County Register's Office

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Landmarks Preservation Commission

has this property been determined eligible? Yes No

date July 12, 1977

depository for survey records Landmarks Preservation Commission, 305 Broadway

city, town New York state New York
7. Description

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<td>original site</td>
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<tr>
<td>fair</td>
<td>unaltered</td>
<td>moved</td>
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<tr>
<td>good</td>
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Parachute Jump at Coney Island, sometimes referred to as the Eiffel Tower of Brooklyn, was first constructed for the New York World's Fair in 1939.1 In 1941, the structure was dismantled and reassembled in Steeplechase Park in Coney Island. Located midway between West 16th and West 19th Streets along the Riegelmann Boardwalk near the base of the old Steeplechase pier, the Parachute Jump towers over the other rides and amusements lining the Coney Island waterfront.

In order to construct a tower that would support twelve drop points for the parachutes and yet resist wind pressure, the Parachute Jump was designed as an intricate structure of steel framing and bracing. The result was a gossamer web of steel work rising 250 feet above the ground, tapered in the middle to allow for proper clearance, and topped with a crown of radiating arms 120 feet in diameter. The flared bottom of the tower is enclosed by a concrete base structure which gives the appearance of weight to this otherwise airy structure. The drop point for each parachute is at the end of each cantilevered arm and attached to these end points are octagonal subframes. From each subframe, guidelines are suspended to hold the parachute open and guide the participant safely to the ground.

The Parachute Jump was described in the Official New York World's Fair Guide Book:

Eleven (sic) gaily-colored parachutes operated from the top of a 250-foot tower; enable visitors to experience all the thrills of "bailing out" without hazard or discomfort. Each parachute has a double seat suspended from it. When two passengers have taken their places beneath the chute, a cable pulls it to the summit of the tower. An automatic release starts the drop, and the passengers float gently to the ground. Vertical guide wires prevent swaying, a metal ring keeps the chute open at all times, and shock-absorbers eliminate the impact of landing. One of the most spectacular features of the Amusement Area, this is also a type of parachute jump similar to that which the armies of the world use in early stages of training for actual parachute jumping.2

Although Steeplechase Park was closed down in 1964, the Parachute Jump remains as a beacon for airplanes and ocean-going vessels.

1The text of this report was taken almost in its entirety from the New York Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation Report, Parachute Jump (LP-0922), July, 1977, by Marjorie Pearson.

8. Significance

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<td>Recreation</td>
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Specific dates 1939, 1941

Builder/Architect Michael Marlo & Edwin W. Kleinert (Coney Island)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Although conceived as an amusement for the New York World's Fair of 1939, the Parachute Jump is also a splendid feat of engineering and an object of great beauty. In 1941, it was moved to Coney Island, and today it serves as a reminder of Steeplechase Park, the largest and most popular of the Coney Island amusement areas. The Parachute Jump is undoubtedly the only structure of its type to remain standing.

The Parachute Jump is an excellent example of a form which follows its function and also achieves a beautiful end result. The problem was to design a high, upright structure capable of supporting twelve drop points from which parachutes would descend along guidelines with proper clearance from the central upright. This high, central, upright had to be capable of resisting wind pressure and of permitting the dropping of any number of the twelve parachutes at different points and at different times, a condition which could produce an imbalance of stresses at the head. To meet these requirements the upright or tower portion is flared outward at the base to give it lateral stability. The radiating arms at the top are counterbalanced cantilever trusses extending out at the top of the tower and connected to a ring base. An inner circle of trusswork, which is coupled to the tower at the top, is integrated with the cantilevers and provides stability. To further stabilize the arms laterally they are all interconnected at their outer ends by a light peripheral trusswork. The drop point for each parachute is centered beneath the end of each arm. Octagonal subframes are attached to these end points; from each subframe are suspended eight guide lines to hold the parachute open.

Inspired by the Century of Progress Exposition of 1933-34 in Chicago, New York planned a world's fair to take place in 1939-40 in Flushing Meadows. The emphasis of the fair was on the future and how new developments in technology and merchandise could contribute to a better life for the American citizen. Because of the large site, the fair was divided into seven zones. One of these, the Amusement Zone, was placed around Fountain Lake. Even here there was emphasis on the future, as was noted by August Loeb of the New York Times:

The Fair's stress on the future is accented even in the rides. There will be a big roller coaster to be sure and many of the other rides that go with all fairs. But there will also be a stratoship, an aerial joyride and a Parachute Jump which will give one a chance to join the "Caterpillar Club" in safety by descending in a parachute from a 250 foot tower.1

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: Less than one acre
Quadrangle name: Coney Island, N.Y.-N.J.
Quadrangle scale: 1:24000

UMT References

A 1 8
Zone Easting Northing
C
E
G

B
Zone Easting Northing
D
F
H

Verbal boundary description and justification
The nominated property occupies Borough of Brooklyn Tax Map Block 7073, Lot 1 and is roughly 518 x 861 feet in size.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

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<th>code</th>
<th>county</th>
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</table>

11. Form Prepared By

Holly Huckins, Research Consultant for
Joan R. Olshansky, National Register Coordinator

Landmarks Preservation Commission

Contact: Elizabeth Spencer-Ralph
518-474-0479

305 Broadway
(212) 566-7577

New York

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state [x] local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89–665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Director, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau

[Signature]

[Date: 2/20/80]

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

[Signature]

[Date: 9-2-80]

Keeper of the National Register

[Signature]

[Date: July 34, 1980]

Attest:

[Signature]

[Date: April 7, 1980]

Chief of Registration
The Parachute Jump also captured a place in the popular imagination all over the country when it was featured in advertisements by the Life-savers Candy Co. Following the close of the fair, it was acquired by Edward F. and George C. Tilyou, operators of Steeplechase Park in Coney Island. Steeplechase Park had been founded in 1892 by their father, George C. Tilyou (1863-1914), who later opened six more amusement parks around the country. Because of his efforts, Coney Island became the largest and most popular amusement area in the city. He especially promoted Coney Island as a place for family recreation. Steeplechase Park, which expanded greatly in size from the original steeplechase race track, was the forerunner and inspiration of both Dreamland and Luna Park, also at Coney Island. A prolific inventor, Tilyou devised almost all of the rides and other amusements in the park.

After an extensive fire at Coney Island in September 1939, Parks Commissioner Robert Moses hoped to remove many of the amusements and retain Coney Island solely as a beach with an extended and improved boardwalk. The improvements were complete by 1941, but the amusements remained. The Parachute Jump was erected in Steeplechase Park that year under the direction of architect Michael Mario and engineer Edwin W. Kleinert. It was an especially popular attraction during World War II when Coney Island attracted thousands of visitors. In 1943, the New York Times observed that: "While sailors on holiday like the water scooters in Luna, for paratroopers, the towering parachute jump in front of Steeplechase, is apparently 'a must'."^2

In 1964 Steeplechase Park closed; the twenty-five acre site had been sold for a housing project. The buildings and the rides were demolished, but the Parachute Jump still remains, towering over the boardwalk.

^2Burton Lindheim, "Coney Island was a War Boom," New York Times (June 27, 1943), Section II, p.4.
Parachute Jump

CONTINUATION SHEET Kings County ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1


**Property**  Concordia Pump

**State**  NY - Kings

**Working Number**  2-29-80  700

---

**TECHNICAL**

- Photos: 1
- Maps: 2

---

**ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN**

Determined eligible in 1977. Significant as 1 of only 3 structures known to have survived from the 1939 world's fair, and its association with the amusement parks at Coney Island. In '39 the pump was among numerous exhibits/features designed to express the new modern in technology (in the case of the pump: engineering, etc.

**ARCHEOLOGIST**

After 1941 the pump functioned as part of Coney Island Park, one of the 3 major parks which together established Coney Island's reputation as an 

---

**HAER**

- Inventory: _____
- Review: _____

---

**REVIEW UNIT CHIEF**

Accept 8/14/80

---

**BRANCH CHIEF**

Accept 8/14/80

---

**KEEPER**

I am concerned about the degree of opposition to the proposed project. However, arguments are based on economics and degree of determinations. None do not appear to be claims that the structure has deteriorated seriously since 1977 when we previously reviewed it. Hence, I think the previous decision on application for NR status should stand. Accept 8/14/80

---

**National Register Write-up**  2/2/82

**Send-back**  ______

**Federal Register Entry**  2/2/82

**Re-submit**  ______

**Entered**  8/24/80

---

United States Department of the Interior - Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
The Parachute Jump is significant for its association with the World's Fair, as an example of a method of construction, which it retains despite now being free of its association with Coney Island. The State has argued that while somewhat deteriorated it retains its structural integrity and the photographs with this appearance.

C. Shull
9-2-80
PARACHUTE JUMP
Riegelmann Boardwalk, Coney Island
Brooklyn, New York  Kings County
Photo by: David Bishop, 1979
Neg. at: New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.
View of Parachute Jump Looking northeast.

SEP 2 1980

FEB 29 1980
TO BE RETAINED FOR OPEN SPACE USE (HUD GRANT)
(as appraised in application)
Steeplechase - 88,000 sq.ft.
Cyclone - 7,400 sq.ft.
Mr. Stephen Faicho  
Project Review Coordinator  
Division of Historic Preservation  
Office of Parks and Recreation  
Agency Building No. 1 Empire State Plaza  
Albany, N.Y.  12233

Dear Mr. Feicho:

Subject: Steeplechase Parachute Jump  
Open Space Land Project: OSL-53-DL  
City of New York, N.Y.

Pursuant to 24 CFR 800.4(e)(2) of the "Procedures for the Protection of Historic and Cultural Properties in Accordance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act," etc., this office hereby requests your consultation with respect to the application of the National Register Criteria to the Steeplechase Parachute Jump.

EHUD funded Open Space Land project OSL-53-DL, as revised, proposes the development of a passive open space sitting and picnic area around the Steeplechase parachute jump. The Steeplechase site including the jump was previously acquired under this grant. No redevelopment or demolition of the actual parachute jump is contemplated with federal funds.

We wish to establish whether this structure appears to be eligible for National Register listing. In order to acquaint you with the property I am enclosing a Building Structure Survey Form Completed by the City, a photograph of the structure and copy of the open space plan map indicating the location of the structure. In our opinion, the structure does not meet the National Register Criteria set forth in 24 CFR 800.10.

If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Ginger Mocomber of our staff at 212-399-5397.

We look forward to hearing from you within two weeks from the date of this letter. If we have not been contacted by this date, we will assume that the State does not consider the parachute jump to meet National Register Criteria.

Sincerely,

Joseph Monticello  
Area Director

cc: CF, Mocomber, Kaplan, Speirs, Skurnick

David Vancor - DCP, Brooklyn Office

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SEP 30 1976

HUD-713 (7-74) 3rd edition OFFICIAL RECORD COPY  U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT
November 29, 1976

Mr. Joseph Monticciolo, Area Director
Department of Housing and Urban Development
666 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10019

Attention: Ms. Ginger Macomber

Re: Steeplechase Parachute Jump
Open Space Land Project: OSA-83-DL
Kings County

Dear Mr. Monticciolo:

It is the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Officer that the Steeplechase Parachute Jump meets the criteria for listing on the National Register because of its role as a visual landmark, because it is one of only three structures known to have survived from the 1939 World's Fair, and because of its contribution to recreational history (World's Fair and Coney Island). Built for the 1939 World's Fair whose theme was "The World of Tomorrow," the structure was one in a complex of exhibits and structures which were intended to express the most modern in technological achievements.

The Official Fair Guide Book described the ride as "one of the most spectacular features of the amusement area," going on to describe "eleven gaily-colored parachutes operated from the top of a 250-foot tower" enabling the visitor to experience "all the thrills of 'bailing out' without hazard or discomfort." Built during the initial period of commercial air travel, it offered the average citizen a chance to experience and respond to the relatively new sensation of flight.

In 1941 the jump was moved to Coney Island and became part of Steeplechase Park. Steeplechase was founded in 1897 by George Tilyou and operated by that family until the 1960's. Steeplechase was the first of the three major parks to open and of them it survived the longest. In 1939, Steeplechase covered 15 acres and featured a pavilion, ballroom and 31 rides. Today the parachute jump is the only major surviving object from that park and stands in close proximity to the center of the existing amusement area.

For many years the jump was the tallest structure on Coney Island, readily seen from land, sea and air. It thus became an important visual landmark, both as a recognized navigational point and as a highly visible symbol of Coney Island. This status is retained to a great degree today.

Sincerely,

F.L. Rath
Deputy Commissioner for
Historic Preservation

SJR:mr
# TELEPHONE REPORT

Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

**PROJECT:** Parachute Jump

**To/From:** Ann Covell

**Address:** NYC Parks

**Staff Member:** J. Hunt McClelland

**Division:** 772

**Date:** 8/29/88

**Phone:**

## REPORT

Condition of Parachute Jump.

Ann called NYC Landmark Commission and learned that the jump is in fair condition. It hasn't been used since before B.O.E. or experienced any major damage other than normal deterioration since it was determined eligible. It is intact and standing. State believes integrity is definitely there.
# ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

**STATE**  
**NEW YORK**

**Date Entered**  
SEP 2 1980

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**Also Notified**

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>State Historic Preservation Officer</th>
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<tr>
<td>Honorable Jacob K. Javits</td>
<td>State Historic Preservation Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorable Daniel P. Moynihan</td>
<td>Mr. Orin Lehman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honorable Stephen J. Solarz</td>
<td>Commissioner</td>
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For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.
**TELEPHONE REPORT**

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**NAME OF PERSON PLACING/RECEIVING CALL**

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<td>R. Luce</td>
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**DATE**

(August 1971)

**TIME OF CALL**

AM

PM
IDENTIFICATION
1. BUILDING NAME(S): Parachute Jump (Steeplechase)
2. COUNTY: Kings TOWN/CITY: Brooklyn VILLAGE: 
3. STREET LOCATION: Boardwalk

DESCRIPTION
8. BUILDING MATERIAL:
   a. clapboard □  b. stone □  c. brick □  d. board and batten □
   e. cobblestone □  f. shingles □  g. stucco □  other: steel

9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:
   a. wood frame with interlocking joints □
   b. wood frame with light members □
   c. masonry load bearing walls □
   d. metal (explain) light steel framework
   e. other

10. CONDITION:
   a. excellent □  b. good □  c. fair □  d. deteriorated □

11. INTEGRITY:
   a. original site □  b. moved □  if so, when? 1941
   c. list major alterations and dates (if known): moved from 1939 World's Fair to present site

12. PHOTO:
   See attached xerox copy of photo

13. MAP:
   See attached map
14. THREATS TO BUILDING: a. none known □  b. zoning □  c. roads □  
d. developers □  e. deterioration ☑
f. other: ____________

15. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY: 
a. barn □  b. carriage house □  c. garage □  
d. privy □  e. shed □  f. greenhouse □  
g. shop □  h. gardens □  
i. landscape features: ____________
j. other: ____________

16. SURROUNDINGS OF THE BUILDING (check more than one if necessary):  
a. open land □  b. woodland □  
c. scattered buildings □  d. densely built-up □  e. commercial □  
f. industrial □  g. residential □  
h. other: amusement parks, beach and boardwalk ____________

17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS:  
(Indicate if building or structure is in an historic district) 
Structure is a highly visible symbol of the amusement area, but is inoperative and is not in a historic district

18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE (including interior features if known):  
None (except for deteriorated condition of structure and site)

SIGNIFICANCE  
19. DATE OF INITIAL CONSTRUCTION: 1939

ARCHITECT: ____________

BUILDER: ____________

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:  
Various opinions have been given by different groups concerning the architectural/historical importance of the structure. The issue is controversial.

21. SOURCES: ____________

22. THEME: ____________