

## **GOING COASTAL: EXHIBITION CHECKLIST**

(numbers in parentheses refer to Parks Photo Archive negative numbers)

### **1) *Treasure Hunt Winners, Riis Park, Queens***

August 4, 1934, Alajos Schuszler/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(3619)

The Parks Department frequently staged public programs at Riis Park, especially catering to children. The winners shown here were the lucky few, among hundreds who competed, to unearth prizes after successfully solving seven clues. Other events held the same day included lifeboat, surfboard, and swimming rescue races. Later in the season the beach hosted a massive outing organized by local orphanages.

### **2) *Beach, Bensonhurst Park, Brooklyn***

Circa 1895, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(AR1128)

The rustic pavilions and bathing beach at this stretch of Bensonhurst Park in New Utrecht are long gone, replaced by the Belt Parkway and a landscaped bike and pedestrian path. In the 19th century, though many women took to the waters for health reasons, their cumbersome swimming outfits of long skirts, shirt-waists, sunbonnets, gloves, stockings or bloomers, and shoes were quite unsafe. According to one male swimming instructor who tried to swim in women's costume in 1903, "In that gear a swim of one hundred yards was as serious a task as a mile in my own suit."

### **3) *Bathing Beach and Bathhouses at Baychester, Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx***

Circa 1914, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(AR803)

At the time of this photo two beaches in Pelham Bay Park were maintained by the Parks Department, and had 1,200 lockers each. Dressing rooms and showers were free. On weekdays attendance was estimated at 2,000; on Sundays and holidays, crowds swelled to 5,000 people. As this picture demonstrates, the situation bordered on bedlam.

### **4) *Bus Stop, Riis Park, Queens***

Circa 1937-40, New York City Parks Photo Archive

Beach demographics and attendance are greatly effected by available transportation. The quartet of pictures on this wall illustrates various methods of arrival. Express bus service to Riis Park was instated after the completion of the Marine Parkway Bridge in 1937.

**5) *Railroad Crossing to Rockaway Beach at 108th Street, Queens***

October 1, 1939, Max Ulrich/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(17571)

Rail service to Rockaway Beach was established as long ago as 1869, though in its early years, ferry service remained more popular. Over the decades, rail service on Long Island Railroad, and later the subway system, improved mass-transit options. As this picture demonstrates, motorists also took advantage of new arterial parkways, and efforts were underway at this time to submerge the rail lines, eliminating grade crossings that impeded beach access.

**6) *Coney Island Concourse, Brooklyn***

Circa 1906, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(AR453)

In the mid-1870s the Brooklyn Parks Department oversaw the construction of the Coney Island Concourse, a fashionable carriage drive (though here the horse in the foreground is a commercial hauler). The Parks Board of Commissioners saw promise and danger in the Coney Island waterfront, commenting in 1880 that the area had “latent possibilities for becoming one of the most popular seaside resorts in the world [yet] some of the petty speculators minister to depraved tastes and offer cheap allurements of a flashy and questionable character...”

**7) *Bicycle and Pedestrian Path, Belt Parkway, Jamaica Bay***

December 30, 1941

Rodney McCay Morgan/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(21133)

These boys take advantage of the newly completed bike path that hugs Jamaica Bay. The bike path, connecting with the Marine Parkway Bridge and Riis Park, was the outgrowth of a plan issued in 1938 by Commissioner Robert Moses to improve bicycling facilities, and it proved a healthy way to get to the beach and experience the tidal estuaries. The success of this route has been emulated in more recently completed projects, such as the greenway around Manhattan’s waterfront perimeter.

### **8) *Rockaway Beach Extension, Queens***

July 17, 1927, Collection Municipal Archives/Queens Borough President

In the early years of publicly improved beaches in New York City, the borough presidents controlled land acquisition and improvements. In 1938, under a Charter Revision, jurisdiction was transferred to the Parks Department. This photo taken on behalf of Queens Borough President Maurice Connelly depicts the varied crowd that frequented Rockaway Beach in the roaring '20s. During the height of the 1927 beach season, the population of Rockaway reportedly swelled from 70,000 to 250,000 people.

### **9) *Vorwärts' Turn Verein Camp, Riis Park, Queens***

Circa 1916, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(AR925)

*Turn Verein* were gymnastic or athletic clubs established in New York and Cincinnati in 1848 by refugees of the unsuccessful uprising in Central Europe. These societies practiced a gymnastic system founded in 1811 by Friedrich Ludwig Jahn. Hundreds of day camping permits were issued at Riis Park in 1916, but this Brooklyn-based *Verein* group was the only organization issued an overnight permit. The site was at the "extreme eastern edge" of the park and on the bay side, presumably so as not to interfere with beach access for the general public.

**10) UPPER LEFT: *Jolly Bathers, Midland Beach, Staten Island***, circa 1907-1915; **LOWER LEFT: *Come on In the Water is Fine, South Beach, Staten Island***, circa 1907-1915; **UPPER RIGHT: *Beach and Dining Terrace, Orchard Beach, the Bronx***, circa 1940-45; **LOWER RIGHT: *Scene at Midland Beach, Staten Island***, circa 1908. Postcards from collections of Staten Island Institute of Arts & Sciences (UL, LL, LR), and Adrian Benepe (UR)

At the end of the 19th century, private developers transformed Staten Island's Midland and South Beaches by adding hotels, bathing pavilions, theaters, beer gardens, carousels and ferris wheels. The most famous of Staten Island's Coney Island-style amusement parks was Happyland Amusement Park, which opened at South Beach in 1906. Though the boardwalk thrived throughout the 1910s and 20s, fires, water pollution and the Depression took their toll on the beachfront resort area and the crowds eventually disappeared.

**11) UPPER LEFT: *Tilyou's Boardwalk, Rockaway Beach, Queens*, circa 1907-1915; LOWER LEFT: *One of the "Sisters" I Met at Rockaway Beach, Queens*, circa 1907-1915; UPPER RIGHT: *The Hermit and His Home, Far Rockaway, Queens*; circa 1907-1915; LOWER RIGHT: *Midland Beach, Staten Island*, circa 1898-1907. Postcards from collection of City of New York/Parks & Recreation.**

As early as the 1830s the Rockaway Association, a group of wealthy New Yorkers, built exclusive resorts along the beach. The 1890s to World War I were the heyday of amusement parks such as Tilyou's at Rockaway and the Casino at Midland Beach. The opulence of these pleasure palaces is in stark contrast to the hermit who has established a provisional home at the water's edge.

**12) *Commissioner Robert Moses and Officials, Jones Beach, Long Island* August 6, 1934, Alajos Schusler/New York City Parks Photo Archive (36501.1)**

As part of an inspection tour meant to assure a wary public that the waters were clean, Robert Moses, an avid swimmer, returned to the scene of his first triumph in creating a beach for the masses. As Long Island State Parks Commissioner, Moses oversaw the design and construction of Jones Beach, just beyond the City's limits, which opened in 1929 (75 years ago this year). A massive public-works project dredged sand from the ocean floor to create a beach where none had been. Nautical details infused the design of the bathing facilities and even the uniforms of employees who worked there. This design theme influenced decorative elements later used at Riis Park, Rockaway and Orchard Beach, among other city beaches.

**13) UPPER LEFT: *\$5.00 Reward If You Can Find Me at South Beach, Staten Island*, circa 1907-1915; LOWER LEFT: *Boardwalk and Beach at South Beach, Staten Island*, circa 1907-1915; UPPER RIGHT: *Happyland Park, South Beach, Staten Island*, circa 1907-1915; LOWER RIGHT: *A Busy Day at South Beach, Staten Island*, circa 1940-45. Postcards from collection of Staten Island Institute of Arts & Sciences.**

As these postcards attest, South Beach, Staten Island, was thronged with crowds rivaling its better-known counterpart, Coney Island.

**14) UPPER LEFT: *New Aquarium at Coney Island, Brooklyn*, circa 1957; LOWER LEFT: *Dragon's Gorge, Luna Park, Coney Island, Brooklyn*, circa 1910; UPPER RIGHT: *Approach to Pavilion, Orchard Beach, Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx*, circa 1940; LOWER LEFT: *Luna Park at Night, Coney Island, Brooklyn*, circa 1907.** Postcards from collection of Adrian Benepe.

Luna Park, designed by Frederick Thompson and Elmer Dundy as a living fantasy, opened in 1904. After World War II, as the local amusement park industry declined, the New York Aquarium was relocated from Battery Park in an effort to sustain Coney Island as a tourist destination. In the 1930s, at Orchard Beach, the City tried to create an expansive and welcoming ambiance, down to manicured flower beds at the parking field approach.

**15) *Bathing Beach and Bath Houses, Orchard Beach Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx***

Circa 1914, New York City Parks Photo Archive (AR802)

Today the quaint rowers of the early days at Orchard Beach have been supplanted by more contemporary styles, and a new kayak launch at the beach permits people to ply the waters of the Long Island Sound.

**16) *Surfers and Rockaway Beach, Queens***

August 1970, Daniel McPartlin/New York City Parks Photo Archive (57332.0)

Though considered the quintessential West Coast sport, surfing also has an avid following in the East, and in New York City the best action is at Rockaway. In the late 1960s surfers were at odds with local community leaders representing other beach users, and Parks Commissioner August Heckscher stepped in to mediate. In 1967 Heckscher designated three special surfing zones. After investigating claims that the surfers were unruly, he declared surfing to be a “legitimate and very beautiful sport,” and commented that “...it is apparent that the surfers are well-mannered persons and include among them a considerable number of charming youngsters.”

**17) *Beach Regulations Signage at Orchard Beach, the Bronx and Rockaway Beach, Queens***

1964, 1968, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(32726, 32726-II; 33265)

In the 1930s and 40s, as part of an overhaul of municipal beaches, Parks placed signs admonishing the public against the exercise of deviant behavior. On May 23, 1968, at Rockaway Beach August Heckscher jubilantly removed the last remaining “No” sign and announced in its place the installation of signs at City beaches “gaily colored” with a mustard background and bright yellow stylized sun with the words “Yes, Enjoy” emblazoned across the top. In smaller type, rules and regulations were still posted.

**18) *Rockaway Lifeguards, 7th Lifeguard Olympics, Orchard Beach, the Bronx***

August 1985, Daniel McPartlin/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(42359/1-1A)

Lifeguard tournaments at the city’s beaches date back to 1938. The tradition was temporarily revived by the Parks Department in the late 1970s, and later discontinued because of safety concerns (potential lack of coverage during the event). These tournaments offered an opportunity for those charged with the public’s safety to demonstrate their athletic and physical prowess, as well as life-saving skills. On this day 105 male and female lifeguards competed, including 21 of the best lifeguards from each of the four boroughs with beaches, as well as 21 lifeguards from the Manhattan pools. The Rockaway contingent shown here was victorious in the all-round team category--an appropriate honor, since they face the strongest ocean surf on the job.

**19) *Brighton Beach Lifeguard Olympics, Coney Island, Brooklyn***

July 24, 1991, Calvin Wilson/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(60957/6)

Urban legend has it that during World War II, a Parks official, facing lifeguard shortages, circulated an internal memorandum asking whether trained dolphins might be recruited to fill the staffing gap. Here these athletic human lifeguards strike a pose not unlike their marine mammal counterparts.

**20) *Rockaway Beach Lifeguards (Four Group Views Illustrating Attendance Population Density), Queens***

1946, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(24839, 24841, 24842, 24843.1)

These four groupings of lifeguards were used to illustrate overcrowding in an official beach report issued by the Parks Department. The popularity of the beaches was threatening to undermine maintenance and civic order, and Commissioner Moses observed that “a small percentage of troublemakers can hardly be detected in the masses jammed together under inhuman pressure for space.” The lowest density, at Orchard Beach, was calculated at 1,100 bathers per acre of sand, and at the high end at Rockaway Beach, at 4,800 bathers per acre. This information was used to advocate for the expansion of beach facilities.

**21) *Lifeguards, Rockaway Beach, Queens***

August 28, 2003, Spencer Tucker/New York City Parks & Recreation  
(65375/15)

During the era of Parks Commissioner Robert Moses (1934-1960), Parks developed a rigorous lifeguard training program that continues to this day. In 1969 the Parks Department waived height and weight requirements and recruited its first female lifeguards. To qualify for the training course, participants must be at least 16 years old, able to swim 50 yards in 35 seconds (a State Health requirement), and have a minimum vision of 20/30 in one eye and 20/40 in the other. The standards for beach lifeguards are even more stringent than those for pools. This year the Parks Department will hire about 1,000 lifeguards, more than half of whom will be assigned to the City’s beaches. In recent years the City has recruited lifeguards from as far away as Eastern Europe.

**22) *Lifeguard Signal, Riis Park, Queens***

September 28, 1938, Max Ulrich/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(15215)

Here one lifeguard signals a command to the next. Flag signals were developed as a swift and effective way for the lifeguard corps to communicate in the era before electronic communication. Today the lifeguards use walkie-talkies combined with old-fashioned whistle signals.

**23) *Lifeguard Tournament, Coney Island, Brooklyn***

August 2, 1950, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(26721)

The first annual Lifeguard Tournament was held by the Parks Department in 1938. In the finals there were six eight-men teams representing Rockaway Beach east and west, Jacob Riis Park, Coney Island, Orchard Beach and South Beach. Each year the winning squad took home the “Mayor’s Trophy.” In recent years the tradition was briefly revived.

#### **24) *South Beach Boardwalk, Staten Island***

September 1, 1940

Rodney McCay Morgan/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(19029)

This photograph captures the seemingly endless vista north of the newly built boardwalk. In 1935 the South Beach boardwalk was vested to the City, and over the next two years was improved under the Works Progress Administration. The Parks Department (which gained control in 1938) demolished deteriorating music halls, carousels, shooting galleries and an earlier boardwalk, and replaced them with this new boardwalk and related beachfront facilities. South and Midland Beaches, known collectively as the Franklin D. Roosevelt Beach and Boardwalk have undergone extensive reconstruction and improvements in recent years including a new grand entrance plaza ornamented with sea creatures, state-of-the-art playgrounds, and a new fishing pier.

#### **25) *Bathing Pavilion, Riis Park, Queens***

April 16, 1937, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(12401)

Riis Park stretches for over a mile on the western section of the Rockaway Peninsula. The original bathing pavilion was built in 1932 and could handle up to 8,000 users. In 1934, Commissioner Moses announced plans to upgrade Riis Park with a \$1.7 million investment, including this new bathing pavilion, a new parking field, pitch-'n-putt golf course, and a 40-foot wide mile-long boardwalk, completed the year this photograph was taken. Moses found the former pavilion too close to the high water mark, and oversized in comparison to the parking field capacity. The handsome new bathhouse designed by Parks' chief architect Aymar Embury II and his team used an economical style of simple structural planes and a palette of materials including brick, limestone and granite. Embury's building elegantly complements to the seaside setting. Since 1974 Riis Park has been part of the federal Gateway National Recreation Area; currently the National Parks Service is in the latter stages of a \$20 million rehabilitation of the historic bathing pavilions.

#### **26) DISPLAY CASE, from rear left, counterclockwise:**

*New York City Beaches*, parks report, 1946; *Great Kills*, parks improvement report, 1949; *Coney Island Improvement*, parks report, 1954; *The Improvement of Coney Island, Rockaway, and South Beaches*, parks report, 1937; *Brooklyn Borough President Riegelmann opens Coney Island Boardwalk between West 5th and 17th Streets*; photograph, December 24, 1922; *Piece of Coney Island Boardwalk* inscribed for 80th

Anniversary, May 22, 2003; *Coney Island of the Mind*, Whitney Museum of American Art, exhibition catalogue, 1989; *Dreamland Arts Club*, Creative Time Coney Island public art project announcement, 2004; *Pelham Bay Park*, parks history guide, 1986; *Building Orchard Beach*, parks history guide, 1986; *Seahorse Sculpture for Midland Beach*, 2002; *30 Years of Parks Progress*, beach chapter, 1964

**27) Rockaway Boardwalk, 78th Street, Queens**

Circa 1938-39, Max Ulrich/New York City Parks Photo Archive (15934)

Construction of the boardwalk at Rockaway began in 1927, and over the decades it has been expanded and improved. Though use significantly subsides in the off-season, as beachfront businesses suspend operations, it remains a place where visitors and residents alike can stroll and inhale the sea breezes of the Atlantic.

**28) Coney Island Boardwalk at West 8th Street, Brooklyn**

January 6, 1940, New York City Parks Photo Archive (17969)

Coney Island's days as a pleasure ground date back as far as the 1920s, when private interests established hotels along the shore. From the 1890s to World War I, amusement parks sprouted along the beach, and the BMT subway connection completed in 1920 brought crowds. The famous boardwalk was opened with great fanfare on May 15, 1923, and was realigned and rebuilt as part of overall improvements by the Parks Department between 1938 and 1941. Today measuring 2.7 miles from West 37th Street to Corbin Place, the boardwalk contains 1.3 million boards held together by 15.6 million screws.

**29) Sanitation Crew, Riis Park, Queens**

1941, New York City Parks Photo Archive

It takes a battalion of workers to keep the beaches clean and free of debris. Here a caravan of parks workers, dressed in maritime attire, perform the daily trash removal after the hordes of beach goers have departed for the day. Today, on a hot summer day at Coney Island, five to six tons of garbage may be hauled out. On July 4, 2003 the figure was an astounding 14 tons.

**30) *Beach Clean-Up, Riis Park, Queens***

May 7, 1949, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(25920)

Nature as well as man leaves debris in its wake. Here a clean-up crew rakes up the seaweed that has littered the beach.

**31) *Filling Operations, Marine Park, Brooklyn***

April 16, 1952, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(27306)

The City uses sand-pumping machines like this one to create or replenish the city's coastal beaches. Marine Park embraces the westernmost inlet of Jamaica Bay. From its acquisition as a public park in 1917, and during subsequent expansions, until the 1950s much of the former wetland estuaries were filled in, undermining the area's ecology and causing invasive phragmites (a common water reed) to flourish. Recent efforts by the City and Federal authorities have sought to help renaturalize portions of this area. At Coney Island the United States Army Corps of Engineers has launched a \$110 million, 50-year project to mitigate beach erosion. In the first phase, completed in 1996, 35,000 cubic yards of sand were added to the beach.

**32) *Plane Pulls "Keep Your Beach Clean..." Message, Coney Island, Brooklyn***

July 9, 1994, Simon Benepe/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(61188/10)

The gargantuan task of keeping the beaches clean and useable demands a multi-pronged attack. In addition to ground signs clearly instructing beach goers on appropriate conduct, here the Parks Department, with the support of local businesses on you "You Gotta Have Beach Day," takes to the air to convey a similar message to those more inclined to lie flat on their backs.

**33) *Beach Shop, Orchard Beach, Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx***

September 10, 1940, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(19084.2)

This concession was part of the general improvements made at Orchard Beach between 1934 and 1936. The facility was built by the City, but leased by competitive bidding to a private operator.

**34) *Bathers at Outdoor Café, Orchard Beach, Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx***

Circa 1938-9, Max Ulrich/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(16046)

The design and layout of Orchard Beach were conceived as a complete experience, where visitors could avail themselves of a variety of concessions encircling a large veranda set back from the hot summer sun. At the center of the mile-long crescent beach are colossal bathing pavilions evocative of the *Trocadero* in Paris. The terraced area facing the Long Island Sound is home to food outlets and shops. A \$3,350,000 city capital project, completed in 1998, renovated the bathhouse facades, roofs and terraces, and additional landscaping improved the ambience.

**35) *Coney Island Food Concession, Brooklyn***

Circa 1940, Max Ulrich/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(19102)

The Parks Department took over management of several municipal beaches, including Coney Island, in 1938. The agency tried to shut down many of the honky-tonk establishments which operated along the boardwalk, and even underneath. As part of this effort, in-house Parks designers created new standardized, streamlined refreshment stands, such as the one seen here.

**36) *Boardwalk Food Concession Carretina, Riis Park, Queens***

Circa 1940, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(19108)

**37) *Concession Building, Coney Island, Brooklyn***

Circa 1940, New York City Parks Photo Archive

**38) *Surf Shop and Concession Wagon, Riis Park, Queens***

Circa 1940, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(19109)

When the Parks Department made improvements to the beach and boardwalk, it also monitored the concessions to be sure they were well stocked, attractive and properly maintained. And if they earned more revenue for the City, that didn't hurt either. Here the mobile concession cart evokes the styles of the day.

**39) *Food Concession Interior, Rockaway Beach, Queens***  
Circa 1940, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(19113)

As this picture and the one below illustrate, beach restaurant facilities were combined into a seamless indoor-outdoor experience

**40) *Food Concession Patio, Rockaway Beach, at 106th Street, Queens***  
Circa 1940, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(19119-II)

**41) *Men's Volleyball, Coney Island, Brooklyn***  
June 30, 1945, Ben Cohen/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(24245)

Not simply a recent phenomenon, beach volleyball has been a popular sport at city locales for more than 60 years.

**42) *Women's Beach Volleyball, Astroland, Coney Island, Brooklyn***  
August 11, 2002, Spencer Tucker/City of New York, Parks & Recreation  
(64932/300)

The final day of the eighth annual Citywide Beach Volleyball Tournament in 2002 featured some of North America's top players. Set against the backdrop of Astroland and Steeplechase Park, fierce competitors drew a crowd of onlookers. Nanette Banzon and Jane Linn of New York City won their 5th citywide tourney, and took the \$1,000 prize. The women's amateur division was won by Brooklyn's own Masha Mosenzhnik and Olga Roudovski. The high standard of play was a far cry from the inter-borough girls volleyball tournament held in Central Park in 1940, and the participants displayed extraordinary athleticism and physical conditioning.

**43) *Group Calisthenics Leaders, Riis Park, Queens***  
August 4, 1935, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(6181-82, 6185-87, 6191)

Rather than simply vegetate on the beach, visitors were encouraged to stretch and build muscle tone each day at 11:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m. and 4:00 p.m., in group calisthenics led by Parks recreational department supervisors.

**44) Soccer Players, Orchard Beach, Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx**  
May 23, 1989, Simon Benepe/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(60558)

These frolicking soccer players at Orchard Beach were early arrivals on the day when the summer lifeguards were sworn in for duty.

**45) Jungle Gym, Riis Park, Queens**  
July 4, 1937, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(11982)

Jungle gyms were a standard feature of the several hundred playgrounds built by the Parks Department in the 1930s. As part of the comprehensive program to overhaul the city's beaches, adjacent recreation facilities were installed for children and adults. The newly expanded and rebuilt Riis Park opened to the public on June 25, 1937. The day before this photograph was taken, the Marine Parkway Bridge opened and, combined with the new parking field, greatly increased the attendance of those arriving by automobile.

**46) Line at Drinking Fountain, Riis Park, Queens**  
Circa 1937-40, New York City Parks Photo Archive

**47) Hawaiian Dancers, Coney Island Beach Opening, Brooklyn**  
May 26, 2000, Malcolm Pinckney/City of New York, Parks & Recreation  
(63749/2)

Each year the city celebrates the opening of its beaches, especially that at Coney Island, with appropriate pomp and circumstance. On this occasion the beach opening was launched by a miniature volcano spewing smoke followed by a Hawaiian dance performed by 21 pre-schoolers.

**48) Nuns on Beach, Riis Park, Queens**  
August 27, 1934, Alajos Schuszler/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(3781)

The 260-acre property for Riis Park was acquired by the city in 1913, and in 1914 the beach was named for Danish-born photo journalist and social reformer Jacob August Riis (a Queens resident). Not just a retreat for scantily clad sun worshippers, Riis Park proved to be a lure for this more decorously clothed gathering of nuns.

**49) *Roller Skaters (Gertrude Schank and Sally Zorn),  
Rockaway Beach Playground, Queens***  
July 29, 1942, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(21727)

This exuberant pair of roller skaters makes use of the new play area built adjacent to the beach.

**50) *Fireworks, Coney Island, Brooklyn***  
August 4, 1964, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(32015)

The weekly spectacle of fireworks over Coney Island has thrilled visitors for decades. Today, there is a fireworks display on the beach every Friday night at 9:30 during the summer, sponsored by Astroland, Deno's Wonder Wheel Park, Turkey Hill and KeySpan Park (home of the Brooklyn Cyclones).

**51) *Three Men at Beach, Coney Island, Brooklyn***  
August 11, 2002, Spencer Tucker/City of New York, Parks & Recreation  
(64932/129)

**52) *Overcrowding at Coney Island, Brooklyn***  
Circa 1946, New York City Parks Photo Archive

This photograph was taken to illustrate a Parks Department report that advocated post-war expansion of the City's beaches in response to skyrocketing attendance. Coney Island was said to be the "hardest to operate properly," as it drew (and still does draw) by far the largest numbers of beach goers.

**53) *Aerial View of Coney Island, West 17th Street Pier,  
Steeplechase Park, Brooklyn***  
June 10, 1947, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(25208)

This aerial view of Coney Island on a crowded day also includes the famous pier at West 17th Street, first built by George Tilyou in 1904 as part of Steeplechase Park. New York City acquired the pier in 1921, and Parks assumed jurisdiction, along with the beach, in 1938. The structure has been rebuilt on four occasions, most recently in 1994 after most of the pier washed away in a northeaster storm in December 1992. Now used for fishing and strolling, the pier was named in August 1994 for local leader Pat Auletta.

**54) *Manhattan Beach, Brooklyn***

Pencil rendering by Davis, circa 1955

Collection of City of New York, Parks & Recreation Map File

(B-PV-251-1)

The community of Manhattan Beach was created in 1877 by real-estate developer Austin Corbin as a self-contained summer resort situated on 500 acres of former salt marsh. An upper-class clientele stayed at the Oriental and Manhattan Beach hotels, and was treated to concerts led by composer and bandmaster John Philip Sousa (who composed a Manhattan Beach March). The rise of amusement parks brought on the demise of the hotels, and the community was reinvented with residential development that started in 1907. The portions now occupied by a public beach were acquired by the Federal government in 1942 as a Coast Guard and Maritime Training Station. Eight years later the land was turned over to the City as a way to alleviate the “inhuman overcrowding” at nearby Coney Island. An additional 24 acres were acquired in 1954, and the combined property was improved and opened in 1955, though never connected by a proposed boardwalk to Coney Island and Brighton Beach. This rendering gives a sense of the proximity of the dense, urban planned community to the shorefront.

**55) *Parachute Jump and Beach Scene, Coney Island, Brooklyn***

Circa 1965, New York City Parks Photo Archive

(32366)

The landmarked Parachute Jump was first built as an amusement ride at the New York World’s Fair of 1939-40, and relocated to Coney Island (in Steeplechase Park at 18th Street) in 1941. Amid safety concerns, the ride was terminated in 1968. In 1991, the City stabilized the structure. The City completed a \$5 million restoration of the Parachute Jump in cooperation with the New York City Economic Development Corporation.

**56) *Boy in Sandcastle, Coney Island, Brooklyn***

June 29, 2002, Spencer Tucker/City of New York, Parks & Recreation

(64871/134)

Even amid the crowds at Coney Island, it is possible to find moments of solitary joy.

**57) *Sandcastle Contest, Coney Island, Brooklyn***

July 26, 1994, Simon Benepe/New York City Parks Photo Archive

(61206)

These children were eager participants in sandcastle contests held simultaneously this day at Coney Island and Midland Beach on Staten Island, as part of Parks’ *Summer Fun in the Sun* program. Equipped with shovels and pails, children and adults fashioned a variety of castles, creatures and even the Parks Department’s own leaf logo.

**58) *Eclipse, (Almost) Citywide Dance Festival, Coney Island, Brooklyn***

August 6, 1988, Tom Brazil/Dancing in the Streets

On a hot summer day when ocean swimming was prohibited due to medical waste in the water, Jim Provenzano's dance *Eclipse* provided a welcome diversion. Seventeen men in white shorts performed various synchronized maneuvers for 45 minutes. Sponsored by Dancing in the Streets, the festival also included performances by Overfoot Dance Company, Elizabeth Streb, Urban Bush Women, Doug Elkins, Betsy Hulton and Dancers, and the American Double Dutch League.

**59) *Mermaid Parade, Coney Island, Brooklyn***

June 22, 2002, Mario Favetta/City of New York, Parks & Recreation (64862)

Since 1983 the annual Mermaid Parade has established itself as a worthy addition to the bawdy traditions of Coney Island. The parade takes place each year in late June. In this picture Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz gets in the spirit of the event.

**60) *Rolling Cart Concession, Coney Island, Brooklyn***

September 15, 1940, Max Ulrich/New York City Parks Photo Archive (19105)

The Ocean Rolling Chair Company ran this concession from the boardwalk's opening in 1923 until the mid-1960s. In the off-season, the chairs were stored under the Wonder Wheel. The price was \$1 an hour for two people.

**61) *Sea Turtle Sculpture Maquette, Midland Beach, painted resin, Michael Browne designer, 2002***

This maquette was designed as a sculptural feature of the improvements to Midland Beach completed by the City in 2002.

**62) *Beach Inspection with Mayor Lindsay, Rockaway Beach, Queens***

June 1973, Daniel McPartlin/New York City Parks Photo Archive (41116/18)

Mayor John V. Lindsay is joined by Parks officials and what appears to be a representative of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, as they inspect the beach and boardwalk following storm damage the previous year. On June 3, 1973, *The New York Times* noted, "There may be fewer bathers in the Rockaways this summer, not because sand and surf are becoming less popular, but because erosion has forced the closing of 13 blocks of the peninsula's seven-and-one-half-mile-long beach." The next year the Army Corps commenced an extensive beach-protection program.

**63) Storm Damage, Rockaway Beach, Queens**

February 10, 1972, Daniel McPartlin/New York City Parks Photo Archive (40881)

Man's efforts to create a coastal paradise are continually undermined by the fury of nature. A major winter storm on February 3, 1972, devastated the Rockaway Beach shore, and limited access to the beach for several subsequent seasons.

**64) Park Workers Remove "Waters Polluted" Sign, Coney Island, Brooklyn**

June 1976, Daniel McPartlin/New York City Parks Photo Archive (41658/6)

In addition to soil erosion, storm damage, litter, public safety and overcrowding, water quality is a constant concern, and is monitored by various City, State and Federal environmental agencies, as well as the Health Department. Periodically, medical waste, oil spills and run-off from storm sewers make a beach temporarily unsafe for swimming. In 1976, high levels of pollutants and sludge from local waste-treatment plants contaminated coastal waters, forcing the City and Long Island to shut down numerous beaches, which wreaked havoc on the tourist industry. Here beaming park workers remove the signs posted after one such episode.

**65) Environmental Education Program, Coney Island, Brooklyn**

August 4, 2001, Malcolm Pinckney/New York City Parks Photo Archive (64416/23)

In addition to frolicking urbanites, the local ocean waters contain a rich variety of marine life. For a number of years, beginning in the late 1990s, the Urban Park Rangers, in cooperation with the New York Aquarium for Wildlife Conservation ("Friends of Fishes" collective) and Pan Aqua Diving, organized a coastal ecology program at Coney Island near 8th Street. Descending beneath the water's surface with scuba (self-contained underwater breathing apparatus) gear, they hauled up and shared with a hearty band of enthusiastic program participants a variety of spider crabs, blue-claw crabs, horse-shoe crabs, starfish, mussels and other creatures, before releasing their catch back into their natural habitat.

**66) Mayor LaGuardia and Parks Commissioner Robert Moses, Orchard Beach, Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx**

July 25, 1936, New York City Parks Photo Archive (8943)

Mayor Fiorello La Guardia and Parks Commissioner Robert Moses (in white suit at right) preside over the ceremony which inaugurated Orchard Beach. The ambitious

\$8-million project added 115 acres of land by importing white sand from the Rockaways in Queens and Sandy Hook, New Jersey, to join Rodman's Neck and Hunter Island. The improvement included a 90,000-square-foot bathhouse with a restaurant and other concessions, a 50-foot-wide promenade parallel to the shore, a 1,400-foot-long and 250-foot-wide mall, and a massive parking field. Though the project was not fully completed until 1938, the beach opened to the public on July 25, 1936. More than 18,000 people attended the opening-day festivities, which featured fireworks, music from the Police Department Band and a diving exhibition. It was a marvelous week for Bronx swimmers, as Crotona Park Pool had opened the previous day.

**67) *Bathers at Orchard Beach, Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx***

Circa 1938-39, Max Ulrich/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(16041)

**68) *Orchard Beach, Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx***

Circa 1938-39, Max Ulrich/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(16024)

Here, from the vantage point of the boaters and waders at the water's edge, one can view (almost like a mirage) the gigantic Art Deco-styled bathhouse in the distance.

**69) *Orchard Beach Aerial View, Pelham Bay Park the Bronx***

1937, New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(13334)

From the air, facing south (with City Island at upper left), the artificially created crescent-shaped beach, connecting the mainland to what was formerly Hunter's Island, is an impressive sight.

**70) *Bronx Triathlon, Swim Competition,  
Orchard Beach, Pelham Bay Park***

September 18, 1988

Malcolm Pinckney/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(60393)

The first Bronx Triathlon (organized by New York Triathlon) was in 1986, and was discontinued in the early 1990s, though the Bronx Biathlon just celebrated its 20th anniversary. The competition shown here consisted of a half-mile swim, followed by an

18-mile bike ride on the Hutchinson River Parkway, and finished with a three-mile run within Pelham Bay Park.

**71) *Orchard Beach, Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx***

July 11, 1937, Max Ulrich/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(12263)

**72) *Woman Evicted From Bungalow, Inspection Tour, Orchard Beach, Pelham Bay Park, the Bronx***

June 11, 1934, Alajos Schuszler/New York City Parks Photo Archive  
(3332)

Early in the 20th century, several park areas in the vicinity of Pelham Bay in the northeast Bronx became popular for camping and bathing. They included tent colonies and primitive wooden bathing bungalows at Hunter Island, Rodman's Neck and Eastchester Bay. By 1908 there were more than 200 bathhouses, and by 1914, as seen in the picture on the adjacent wall, summer crowds on Sundays and holidays were estimated at 5,000. By the late 1920s attendance had grown dramatically, and at times the rudimentary accommodations were overwhelmed by the huge numbers of people flocking to the shore. The City Island Civic Association expressed concerns about the permit-letting procedures, and a few years later, under Commissioner Moses, the City moved in to clean up the chaos. Here a disgruntled bungalow tenant is ousted by park security and police.