depository for survey records

city, town

OMB No. 1024-0018 Exp. 10-31-84

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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received

state

date entered

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms Type all entries—complete applicable sections Name historic Looff's Hippodrome and or common Santa Monica Amusement Pier Carousel Building (Looff's Amusement Pier Carousel Location 276 Santa Monica Pier street & number not for publication Santa Monica vicinity of city, town California Los Angeles state code county code Classification Category Status **Present Use** Ownership _ occupied _ agriculture ____ district _X_ public _ museum _x_ building(s) ____ private _ unoccupied commercial _ park X work in progress ___ structure _ both educational _ private residence __ site **Public Acquisition** Accessible entertainment _ religious __ object ___ in process _X_ yes: restricted _ scientific _ government __ being considered ____ yes: unrestricted _ industrial _ transportation _ military X other: Recreation (Carousel) **Owner of Property** name City of Santa Monica street & number c/o Pier Manager, 276 Santa Monica Pier ___ vicinity of city, town Santa Monica state California **Location of Legal Description** courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Building Department, City Hall 1685 Main Street street & number Santa Monica state California city, town 90401 Representation in Existing Surveys title has this property been determined eligible? None date state _ county

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
excellent X good fair	deteriorated ruins unexposed	unaltered $_X$ altered	X original site	

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance Summary

Looff's Hippodrome, or Santa Monica Pier Carousel Building, is the most intact element on the former "Looff Pleasure Pier," that was built in 1916 abutting the original Santa Monica Municipal Pier (1905). The Hippodrome is a 2-story frame structure that was designed to house a Looff carousel emplaced there the same year, but which was later sold. A different carousel is now in the building.

Additional Description

The Hippodrome Building rests on a portion of the former Looff Pleasure Pier, which abutts the original municipal pier. A square structure, it features octagonal 3-story towers at the corners with seven bays intervening between the towers. Each bay includes an arched opening on the lower level and paired arched windows above. Over the second, fourth, and six bays on each side decorative semi-domes or finials were originally positioned. The openings on the first floor originally permitted free access to the carousel on the interior; they were closed at an unknown date to limit traffic. The corner towers contain restrooms and other conveniences for visitors.

The second level of the Hippodrome contains a series of offices and storage areas, built around the large interior space that shelters the carousel. Crowning the structure is a giant tent-like roof that culminates in a clerestory capped by a bulbous tower similar to the onion-shaped dome commonly found on Russian churches.

The vertical members (exposed wood beams) of the frame of the Hippodrome's plain interior converge at a peak over the central space where the carousel is installed. Except for non-historic railings and benches and the paint scheme, the interior of the Hippodrome is largely unaltered.

The original Looff carousel was removed from the Hippodrome in 1939; the present carousel, Philadelphia Toboggan Company #62, was installed in 1947. Until 1977, the structure was used for a variety of other purposes and underwent relatively minor alterations. In the latter year, a local group of carousel enthusiasts undertook restoration of the carousel. Since the carousel's restoration was completed in 1981, they have continued to operate it as a tourist attraction.

The Hippodrome has also recently been restored by the City of Santa Monica, the current owner of the building, as part of a master plan to revitalize the pier for recreational use by the community and tourists.

FOOTNOTE

l The correlation of present physical appearance with historic photographic views has been performed by Raymond Girvigian in his study, "Santa Monica Carousel, A Restoration Report" (Pasadena, California: May 27, 1983).

B. Significance

prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 X 1900–	Areas of Significance—C archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic agriculture architecture art commerce communications		law literature military music	re religion science sculpture social humanitarian theater transportation X other (specify) Recreation
Specific dates	1916	Builder Architect Ch	marles and Arthur	(carousel
Statement of S	ignificance (in one paragi	raph)	Looff	shelter)

Summary

Looff's Hippodrome (Santa Monica Amusement Pier Carousel Building) is a rare intact example of an early shelter structure built to house a carousel in an amusement park. It is one of only two such structures that remain on the West Coast. Its location on an amusement pier adds to its novelty, and it is also the principal intact historic element of the formerly extensive collection of amusement facilities at the Santa Monica Amusement Pier (Looff's Amusement Pier). The carousel presently in the Hippodrome is not, however, the Looff carousel originally installed there in 1916, when the Hippodrome opened, but is a Philadelphia Toboggan Company specimen that dates from 1922 and was emplaced in the Hippodrome in 1947.

History

Charles I.D. Looff and his son Arthur were well-known carousel crafters, roller coaster builders, and amusement park operators, who worked primarily on the West Coast after the turn of the century, although Charles' career had begun at Coney Island in 1876. Their center of operations on the West Coast was their factory in Long Beach (now largely demolished). One of their early carousels (1911) and a roller coaster (1924), at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, and a carousel and its shelter at East Providence, Rhode Island (their headquarters before moving to Long Beach) are described elsewhere in this study.

In 1915-16, the Looffs constructed the "Looff Pleasure Pier," over the waters adjacent to the existing 1000-foot Santa Monica Municipal Pier, which had been advertised since 1905 as the "largest concrete pier in the world." Over the next few years, they built an impressive and popular set of attractions. These included the Hippodrome Building with its carousel of their own construction (1916); the "Blue Streak" roller coaster (ca. 1917); a giant rotating swing ride, known as the "Aeroscope"; the Bowling and Billiard Building (ca. 1917); and the La Monica Ballroom (1924), a vast structure of eclectic Byzantine, Persian, and Mission Revival motifs that accommodated 5,000 dancers. The Looff pier also featured picnic shelters and electric trams.3

Looff's amusement pier was accessible by electric trolley from Venice and downtown Los Angeles. Its attractiveness and ease of access were also enhanced when the main Santa Monica pier was rebuilt in 1921, widened, and extended to nearly 1600 feet. All the Looff facilities remained to the south of the landward end of the city's pier. 4 Looff sold his interests in 1924.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10.	Geographical	Data		·		
Acreage of nominated propertyLess than 1						
	gle name <u>Beverly Hills</u>			Quadrangle scale 1:24,000		
UT M Ref	erences					
A 11 Zone	3 6 1 9 1 0 3 7 6 4 Easting Northing	01910	B Zone	Easting Northing		
c			D			
E			F			
G			н			
Verbal	boundary description and just	tification				
	Only the Hippodrome buil	lding				
List all	states and counties for prope	erties overlappin	g state or co	unty boundaries		
state		code c	ounty	code		
state		code c	ounty	code		
11.	Form Prepared	By				
(414						
name/titl	e James H. Charleton					
organiza	tion History Division, Nat	ional Park Se	ervice da	te November 2, 1984		
street &	number1100 "L" Street, NV	J	tel	ephone (202) 343-8165		
city or to	wn Washington		sta	nte DC 20240		
12.	State Historic	Preserv	ation (Officer Certification		
The eval	uated significance of this property	within the state is	S :			
	national s	tate lo	cal			
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 National Park Service.						
State His	storic Preservation Officer signatu	re				
title				date		
	For NPS use only					
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register						
				date		
Keep	er of the National Register					
Attes	t:			date		
Chief	of Registration					

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The height of the Santa Monica Amusement Pier's popularity was from 1924, when the La Monica Ballroom opened, through World War II, before the freeway system (begun only in 1939) made more distant coastside attractions and new inland theme parks, such as Knott's Berry Farm (1940) and Disneyland (1955), easily accessible to the burgeoning population and tourist trade of Southern California. The pier's popularity persisted into the 1950s, and the La Monica Ballroom became the first in the nation to televise its programs.⁵

The "Blue Streak" roller coaster, on the other hand, had survived only until 1931. The La Monica Ballroom was demolished in 1968. Today, other than the Looff pier itself, only the Hippodrome, the Bowling and Billiard Building, now used as a gift shop, and one minor structure survive. The Bowling and Billiard Building, which once featured early automatic pin-setting machinery, has been extensively altered on the interior; for that reason it is not recommended for inclusion in this nomination. Likewise, the Looff Pier and the Municipal Pier have both been so modified that they cannot be said to possess clear historic integrity.

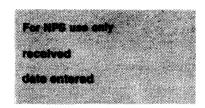
The Carousel

The Carousel presently in the Hippodrome is Philadelphia Toboggan Company #62, a 3-row carousel that began its career in Cumberland Park, in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1922. It was emplaced at Santa Monica in 1947.8 As an intact carousel by a first-rate manufacturer and of the general period represented by the Hippodrome, its presence contributes to the integrity of the structure, since it maintains the building's historic use. The interior of the Hippodrome is, furthermore, being restored to its original appearance to provide an approximation of the historic setting of the former carousel.

On the other hand, the carousel is not the original Looff carousel that was manufactured for the Hippodrome. And, of itself, as a rather typical example of Philadelphia Toboggan Company carousel work in the early 1920s, it is, while quite attractive, not exceptionally early, rare, or unusually distinguished. It was, however, featured in the film "The Sting," and is well known from its appearance in other films and a host of television series episodes.

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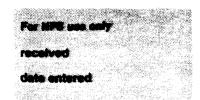
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FOOTNOTES

- 1 Raymond Girvigian, "Santa Monica Carousel, A Restoration Report" (Pasadena, California: May 27, 1983), p. 4.0-3.
- 2 Ibid., pp. 2.01-2 and 2.01-10.
- 3 Ibid., pp. 2.01-7--2.01-9 and 2.01-17.
- 4 Ibid., pp. 2.01-9 and 2.01-15.
- 5 Ibid., p. 2.01-17.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid., p. 2.01-13.
- 8 National Carousel Association, "National Carousel Association Census" (Los Angeles, California: National Carousel Association, 1983), p. 6.
- 9 The basis for this conclusion is a review of all the Philadelphia Toboggan Company entries in the "National Carousel Association Census" and the list of the Philadelphia Toboggan Company carousels in Charles J. Jacques, Jr., "The Carousels of the Philadelphia Toboggan Company," Amusement Park Journal, 5, 4 (1983), pp. 36-37.

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- . "Santa Monica...not without pier," Merry-Go-Roundup 5, 1 (Winter 1978), pp. 13-15.
- . "The Carousel on the Pier," Merry-Go-Roundup, 10, 4 (Winter 1984), entire issue.