

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk Roller Coaster ("The Big Dipper") and Carousel

and or common

2. Location

street & number along Beach Street ___ not for publication

city, town Santa Cruz ___ vicinity of

state California code _____ county Santa Cruz code _____

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Recreation

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. Charles Canfield, President

street & number Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, Inc., 400 Beach Street

city, town Santa Cruz ___ vicinity of state California 95060

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder's Office, County Courthouse

street & number 701 Ocean Street

city, town Santa Cruz state California 95060

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title See Page entry in bibliography has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>1879</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Summary

The Flying Horse Carousel at Watch Hill operates in a simple shelter at the southern end of Bay Street, about 200 yards from the ocean, beside the town beach, in the quiet summer resort of Watch Hill, Rhode Island.¹ The carousel consists of 20 wooden horses ranged 2 abreast and suspended by chains from wooden sweeps. The horses all face the same direction, and come in two sizes. All are small animals, naively carved and quite plain when compared with other horses attributed to Charles W. F. Dare -- notably those on the Oak Bluffs, Massachusetts, carousel.

Shelter

The shelter is a small decagonal hip-roofed pavilion of wood frame supported by rough cobblestone columns. The structure appears to have been built, or much altered, in the opening decades of the 20th century. The original canopy was likely of canvas; the present roof is asphalt shingling. A low picket fence set on a 2-foot cinderblock base partially encloses the spaces between the piers and keeps over-eager riders out of the path of the "flying horses." The floor of the carousel shelter, originally of sand, is now poured concrete.

Detailed Data on the Carousel

Each horse is said to have been carved from a single block of wood, although the legs appear to have been carved separately, and each horse has a leather saddle and bridle and real horsehair tail and mane. The saddles, bridles, tails, and manes have been replaced several times, as is common in carousels, but the horses' agate eyes are the originals.

Each horse is suspended from the heavy wooden framing of the canopy roof by a chain connected at the rump and an iron bar joined to the pommel. The bars may have been substituted for original neck or head chains, perhaps in an attempt to steady the steeds and limit their arc. As the carousel turns, the horses swing out by centrifugal force, hence the enduring and endearing name "Flying Horse Carousel."

In addition to the horses, three double seats, or chariots, were originally included for those too old, young, or timid for "free flight." These vanished in the hurricane of September 21, 1938, which devastated the community; because it has been judged that the sweeps were too old and weak to support the weight of seats, they have not been restored to the carousel. All the horses, on the other hand, survived the hurricane and were unearthed from sand dunes nearby where the force of the wind and water had buried them. Most of the carousel housing also survived the storm.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	architecture	education	military	social/
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
X 1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		X other (specify)
				Recreation

Specific dates	Builder Architect
Carousel (1911)	Carousel (Charles I. D. Looff)
Roller Coaster (1924)	Roller Coaster (Arthur Looff)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary

The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk is the last major operating seaside boardwalk-amusement park on the Pacific Coast. It is a mixture of past and present amusement attractions that reflect 77 years of evolution of this aspect of recreation. Its intact historic remains are a carousel and a roller coaster by members of the Looff family, one of the major early manufacturers of carousels, who later built notable roller coasters. The carousel is one of the six Looff carousels that survive in the United States.¹ The "Big Dipper," or "Giant Dipper," roller coaster is one of the two large wooden scaffolded roller coasters that remain on the West Coast, and is slightly older than the other, that at Mission Beach in San Diego by Frank Prior and Fred Church. The "Big Dipper," however, was built using Prior and Church patents. The Santa Cruz coaster is the only one on the West Coast that remains the centerpiece of an active amusement park.

History

Although Santa Cruz, with its mild climate and attractive beaches, became something of a resort as early as 1865, when the first public bathhouse was built in the town, it did not attract amusement park development until after the turn of the century. In 1904, Fred W. Swanton, a great promoter, laid plans for a casino and boardwalk patterned after those at Coney Island. His Neptune Casino operated only until 1906, when it was destroyed by fire. Undeterred, Swanton retained architect William W. Weeks, who drew plans that included a new casino, an indoor swimming pool or natatorium, a "pleasure" pier, and a boardwalk. The new facilities opened in June 1907. The next year, the first "thrill" ride at the Santa Cruz Boardwalk opened; it was the L.A. Thompson Scenic Railroad, a miniature train with small "hills" of a roller coaster type that ran through the area presently occupied by the "Big Dipper."²

In 1911, the Boardwalk acquired its carousel from the Long Beach, California, "factory" of Charles I.D. Looff, one of the nation's foremost carousel carvers. The carousel, which remains at the Boardwalk, has been one of its primary attractions over the years and has carried some 60 million passengers.³

Charles I.D. Looff was one of the earliest manufacturers of carousels in the United States. He built his first carousel at Coney Island, New York, in 1876 and was probably the first person in the United States to carve carousel horses

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approximately 24

Quadrangle name Santa Cruz

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	0	5	8	7	2	5	0	4	0	9	1	1	3	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

B

1	0	5	8	8	1	8	0	4	0	9	1	4	0	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

C

1	0	5	8	8	2	0	0	4	0	9	1	2	0	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

D

1	0	5	8	7	3	0	0	4	0	9	1	0	1	0
Zone	Easting			Northing										

E

Zone	Easting			Northing										

F

Zone	Easting			Northing										

G

Zone	Easting			Northing										

H

Zone	Easting			Northing										

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James H. Charleton, Historian

organization History Division, National Park Service date October 15, 1984

street & number 1100 "L" Street, NW telephone (202) 343-8165

city or town Washington state DC 20240

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The Casino

The Casino at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk was one of several buildings constructed in 1907. As first built, it was a large 2-story wooden structure with "onion" domes reminiscent of Russian architecture. On the ocean front, it possessed a large twelve-sided feature on both floors that protruded toward the sea and ranges of arcades that sprang from both its sides and paralleled the beach front. The arcades covered the wooden boardwalk. Above the arcades, on the second level, were offices and storage rooms.

The Coconut Grove Ballroom and lobby of the Casino building were carefully restored in 1981 to a facsimile of their 1907 appearance. Large rooms were also added in a more modern design. Earlier, about 1950, the exterior had been altered extensively. The west, or ballroom, end of the complex received major concrete additions in a modern style. They displaced the arcaded section on that end, and totally altered the structure's external appearance. The twelve-sided section was done over in a stripped-down style that matched the modern additions to its west and its fenestration was altered. The arcaded section to the east, however, retained its original configuration, although much of it has been rebuilt. The boardwalk was done over in concrete at an unknown date.³

The Natatorium

This large 1907 structure with a great bowed roof retains a fair measure of exterior integrity. It is behind the eastern arcaded section of the casino complex. Its swimming pool has, however, been filled in with concrete and the structure now serves as a miniature golf course.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, "Boardwalk Features Classic Carousel," Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk News, pp. 1-3; National Carousel Association, National Carousel Association Census (Los Angeles: National Carousel Association, 1983), p. 6; "The Loeff at Santa Cruz, California," Merry-Go-Roundup, 5, 1 (Winter 1978), p. 29.
- 2 Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, "Giant Dipper to Celebrate 60th Birthday," Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk News, pp. 1-3.
- 3 Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, "The Coconut Grove: From Nostalgic Ballroom to Modern Conference Center," Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk News, pp. 1-4.

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and to make their frames. Although he did not build nearly the number of carousels that other manufacturers did, his work was noted for its quality. His early work was done in the East but at the turn of the century he moved to Long Beach and thereafter executed nearly all of his work in the West.

In 1924, Charles I.D. Loeff's son, Arthur Loeff, persuaded the Boardwalk's owners to replace the Scenic Railway with the "Giant Dipper" roller coaster. Since its opening, the coaster has carried more than 25 million riders and remains one of the most popular attractions at the Boardwalk. That same year, the first Miss California Pageant was held at the Boardwalk, and the winner went on to become Miss America.

During the 1930's Depression and 1940's wartime travel restrictions, the Boardwalk's business went into eclipse. The Natatorium, which had featured water shows including daredevil diving and water ballet (and served as a location for swimming instruction) also drew fewer patrons, especially after 1942, when local officials curtailed the more spectacular stunts for safety reasons. The Casino, with its Cocoanut Grove Ballroom, however, was at the height of its popularity, attracting celebrity performers of the "big band" era.

In the 1930s, names such as Paul Whiteman, Artie Shaw, Benny Goodman, Buddy Rogers, Xavier Cugat, Vincent Lopez, and Glen Gray adorned the marquee. In the 1940s, Gene Krupa, Dick Jorgen, Tommy Dorsey, Freddy Martin, Russ Morgan, Merv Griffin, Lawrence Welk, Kay Kyser, and Harry Owens packed in large crowds of servicemen from nearby military installations, drawing up to almost 4,000 people in an evening.

Although the big band era faded in the 1950s, orchestras such as those led by Billy May, Les Elgart, Hal McIntyre, and Si Zentner continued the dances at the Cocoanut Grove. The emphasis switched to teen dances in the 1960s, with a few contemporary artists; vocalists, including Nat "King" Cole, Sonny and Cher, the New Christy Minstrels, and the Four Freshmen, appearing. Following a renovation in 1965, the ballroom was used mostly for private events with very few public dances, but did enjoy something of a renaissance during the "big band" revival of the late 1970s.⁴

The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk remains a popular "family-style" attraction and includes an array of facilities that permit visitors to sample several generations of amusements. It is a rare survivor of a vanishing breed, the old-style amusement park.

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FOOTNOTES

- 1 This conclusion was reached by study of the Loeff-related entries in National Carousel Association, National Carousel Association Census (Los Angeles: National Carousel Association, 1983), passim.
- 2 Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, "Behind-The-Scenes Facts," pp. 1-2.
- 3 Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, "Boardwalk Features Classic Carousel," Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk News, pp. 1-3.
- 4 Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, "The Cocoanut Grove: From Nostalgic Ballroom to Modern Conference Center," Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk News, pp. 1-3.

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National Carousel Association. National Carousel Association Census. Los Angeles: National Carousel Association, 1983. (Mimeographed.)

Page, Charles Hall and Associates, Inc. Santa Cruz Historic Buildings Survey. San Francisco, 1976.

"Santa Cruz," Merry-Go-Roundup, (October 1978), pp. 9-11.

"Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk," Amusement Park Journal, 4,3 (Fall 1982), pp. 22-23.

Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk. "Behind-the-Scenes Facts." 2 pp. (Fact sheet, ca. 1983.)

_____. "Boardwalk Features Classic Carousel," Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk News. 3 pp. (Press release, 1984.)

_____. "The Cocoanut Grove: From Nostalgic Ballroom to Modern Conference Center," Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk News. 4 pp. (Press release, 1984.)

_____. "Giant Dipper to Celebrate 60th Birthday," Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk News. 3 pp. (Press release, 1984.)

_____. "The Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk: California's Only Remaining Beachside Amusement Park," Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk News. 6 pp. (Press release, 1984.)

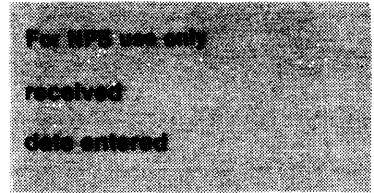
_____. "Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk Fact Sheet," Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk News. 3 pp. (Press release, 1984.)

"The Loeff at Santa Cruz, California," Merry-Go-Roundup, 5, 1 (Winter 1978), pp. 29-31.

"The West Coast Boardwalk," Amusement Park Journal, 2, 1 (March 1980), pp. 35-37.

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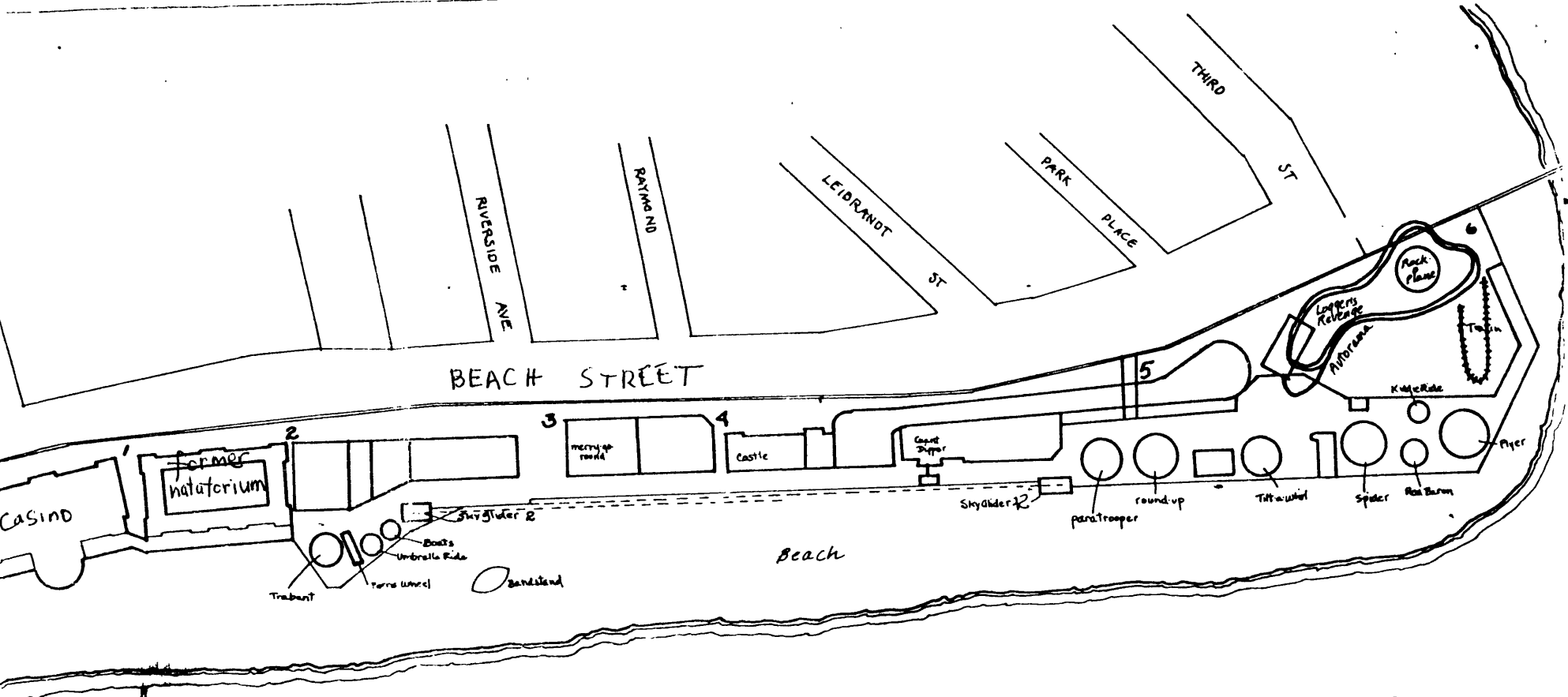
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Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

Because of the proximity of the roller coaster to other amusement facilities, some movable, at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, it is not easy to draw a boundary that would exclude impinging on other resources. The carousel, which is not adjacent to the roller coaster, is housed in a non-historic structure and may not historically have remained on its present precise site, although it has remained within the amusement zone since it was brought to the Boardwalk in 1911. Therefore, for convenience's sake, the boundaries assigned are those indicated on the attached map, which are those of the entire amusement zone at the boardwalk. These boundaries are, roughly speaking, Beach Street, on the north; the San Lorenzo River, on the east; the sea, on the south; and the east edge of the the Boardwalk's parking lot, on the west. The only structures that are presently judged to contribute to the historic significance of the property, however, are the "Giant Dipper" roller coaster and the 1911 Looff carousel.



SANTA CRUZ SEASIDE COMPANY