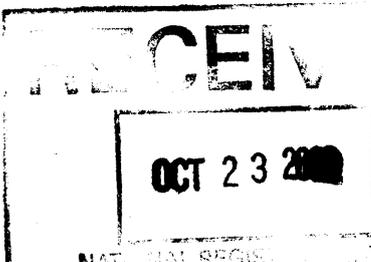


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instruction. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Palace Amusements
other names/site number: Palace Merry-Go-Round and
Ferris Wheel Building

2. Location

street and number: 201-207 Lake Avenue N/A not for publication
city or town: Asbury Park City N/A vicinity
state: New Jersey county: Monmouth County zip code: 07712

3. State/Federal/Tribal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Carly... Signature of certifying official/Title Assistant Commissioner, Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO
Date 11/22/00
State or Federal agency and bureau American Indian Tribe

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State or Federal agency and bureau American Indian Tribe

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other. (explain:)

Beall Signature of the Keeper
Date of Action 11/22/00
Edson A. Beall

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation And Culture

Historic Subfunctions

(Enter subcategories from instructions)

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant/Not In Use

Current Subfunctions

(Enter subcategories from instructions)

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation	Concrete
Walls	Stucco
	Wood
Roof	Wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is

- A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes..
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Entertainment/Recreation

Social History

Period of Significance

1888

1956

Significant Dates

1888

1895

1956

Significant Person

(Complete if criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Schnitzler, Ernest (designer)

Stout, William B. (contractor)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS:)

Primary location of additional data:

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

X State Historic Preservation Office

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

X Local Government (Repository Name:)

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

X Other (Repository Name:)

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

See continuation sheet for additional HABS/HAER documentation.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 0.90

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 584780 4452180 3

Zone Easting Northing

Zone Easting Northing

2 4

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Werner Baumgartner, President

organization: Asbury Park Historical Society

date: 4/26/2000

street & number: P.O. Box 557

telephone: (732) 988-2260

city or town: Asbury Park

state: New Jersey

zip code: 07712-

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets**Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name: Ocean Mile Development Group / Carabetta Management Co.

street & number: 200 Pratt Street

telephone: (203) 237-7400

city or town: Meriden

state: Connecticut

zip code: 06450-

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

US GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1993 O - 350-416 QL 3

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Palace Amusements, at 112 years old, is a unique surviving seashore amusements complex that represents the evolution of the amusement industry from the late Victorian period through the mid-twentieth century. It is an L-shaped complex containing five amusement areas. The original Carousel House, a 100-foot by 100-foot Victorian pavilion, was created in 1888 by proprietor Ernest Schnitzler to house a carousel and amusement hall. Building campaigns for the Ferris Wheel (1895), the Crystal Maze (1903), and the Fun House and Bumper Cars (1956) brought the Palace to its current configuration. The signature wall paintings, which include two large fun faces and a series of bumper cars, date to the last expansion. It was originally named the Kingsley Street Merry-Go-Round; by 1895, however, "Kingsley Street" had given way to "Palace," and although owners experimented with various names through the years, all contained "Palace" as the foundation. Less than one thousand feet from the beach and boardwalk, Palace Amusements occupies a large portion of the site bounded by Kingsley Street (on the east), Cookman Avenue (on the north), St. James Place (on the west) and Lake Avenue (on the south). To the south of the Palace is Wesley Lake, a boundary between Asbury Park and Ocean Grove.

The 1888 Carousel House was built for Ernest Schnitzler by contractor William B. Stout and roofer Joseph L. Seaman as a square, symmetrical structure of wood frame construction with a double hip roof topped by a raised vent. The wood floor on wood joists was supported by masonry piers over bare sand. The ground level walls originally consisted of wood panels on horizontal rails. Wood framed doors with colored glass slid along the rails. The principal building elements were wood columns, wall joists and beams, and roof purlins and rafters. The clerestory walls between the lower and upper roof were supported by wood columns. A steel rod and turnbuckle system was used for tension under the framing of the upper hip roof perimeter. One band of windows separated the lower and upper hip roofs, while another band of windows was located under the eaves of the lower hip roof. There were no partitions or finishes on the interior, leaving an exposed framing system. The roof was of wood frame construction with tongue and groove solid-board sheathing.

Today, the Carousel House forms the southeast corner of the Palace Complex (see Photo #2) and links all other portions of the building. To achieve this configuration and create access to the other sections, the west wall was removed and the wood columns supporting two of the four corners of the clerestory walls between the lower and upper roofs were replaced with wood and steel cantilevers. The only other alterations to the Carousel House were the replacement of the original wood framed sliding doors with garage doors and the replacement of the original roofing material with asphalt shingles.

Three expansions brought the Palace to its current configuration:

1. In 1895, the Roundabout (commonly known today as the Ferris wheel) and Observatory was designed by Ernest Schnitzler on a 32-foot by 100-foot lot immediately west of the Carousel House.
2. In 1903, the Crystal Maze was constructed on a 31-foot by 100-foot lot immediately west of the Ferris wheel on Lake Avenue. This two story steel and masonry area housed both a mirrored amusement and a residence; and

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3. In 1956, the Fun House and Bumper Car Building, built to the west and north, added 126 feet of frontage along Cookman Avenue and 83 feet of frontage along Lake Avenue.

The Ferris wheel area is immediately to the west of the Carousel House. Ernest Schnitzler oriented the wheel in a north-south plane so the lower portion of the wheel was enclosed while the upper portion rose high above the roof. Passengers loaded inside at ground level and discharged outside at an upper observation deck. The attraction was built by Phoenix Iron Works and replaced an original Somers wheel built on this site in 1892. Two rectangular towers supported the central hub of the 67-foot diameter wheel and also supported the observation deck and intermediate landing at the upper travel of the wheel. A series of gear teeth around the outer perimeter of one of the rims were engaged by a gear driven by a 2-cylinder reversible steam hosting engine manufactured by Ledgerwood Engine Co., Newark, NJ. The platform was removed in the mid-1920s after the wheel was converted to electric power. Originally designed with 20 cages, 2 cages were removed owing to a tendency of the cages to lock together when they rocked. The remaining 18 cages were refurbished and named after New Jersey communities located along the tracks of the commuter rail line from New York City. Although the observation deck was removed, the Schnitzler wheel remained in operation until 1988, making it the oldest operating wheel in the world at that time. This space is currently vacant (see Photo #5). The Schnitzler wheel is in storage and available for reinstallation.

The Crystal Maze, designed by architect Ernest Arend and constructed by R.E.K. Rothfritz (masonry), Israel Taylor (carpentry) and the firm of Forsyth & Boyce (plumbing), is a two story addition of steel and masonry on concrete slab to the west of the Schnitzler wheel site. The roof of steel and wood trusses supports a wood deck and cupola with operable windows for ventilation. Several bricked-up window openings are evident on all sides of the upper level. The ground floor ceiling consists of steel plates and the floor above is original tongue and groove. On the ground floor was a hall of mirrors amusement. The ground floor walls on the west, north and east have been removed to allow free passage through the Palace. The remaining upper masonry wall sections are supported by steel I-beams around the perimeter. The upper level served as the residence of the Schnitzler family. It consisted of an entrance parlor, living room, dining room, library, amusement room, pantry, bathroom, and kitchen. About 30 percent of the upper floor residence remains intact with original plaster and lath wall finishes and door and window trim. There is evidence that the support tower of the Schnitzler wheel was stabilized by steel cables tied into the structure.

Between 1903 and 1955, there were no further expansions at the Palace. Without relocating elsewhere, the only on-site expansion opportunities were northward or westward. In both directions, expansion was blocked by hotels. The Ocean Spray Hotel, at 211 Lake Avenue, and the Newark Hotel, at 206 Cookman Avenue, thrived until the opening of the New Jersey Turnpike in 1951 and the Garden State Parkway in 1955 transformed the typical Asbury Park tourist from a hotel dweller to a day visitor. Both hotels, as well as several small boarding houses, were sold and demolished in 1955 to make way for the Fun House and Bumper Car additions. Zimel Resnick, president of the Palace, viewed the super highways as a positive development for the Palace. According to the Asbury Press (June 7, 1955), Resnick decided to expand the Palace due to a "continued influx of population in the summer...especially of teenagers looking for a good time. There simply aren't any major rides and there is a big need for them."

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The Fun House and Bumper Car Buildings, engineered by William M. Birtwell, reflect the engineering design advances that accommodated the large, clear spaces necessary to house the popular rides of the 1950s in an enclosed amusement complex, featuring 35-foot high walls with an arched roof supported by wood arched trusses. The Fun House is built to the north of the original Carousel House along Kingsley Street to Cookman Avenue (see Photo #3). The Bumper Car area is built to the west of the Crystal Maze along Lake Avenue (see Photo #1). Exterior walls of steel frame and masonry infill on concrete slab support roof trusses that span the entire space without intermediate columns (see Photo #4). The entire framing system of trusses and intermediate bracing is exposed to view. The Bumper Car trusses are oriented in the north-south direction. The Fun House trusses are oriented in the east-west direction. The most distinctive feature is the exterior artwork (see Photo #8) with moving neon which reflects the technology of the 1950s. Today, the western addition is in fair condition while portions of the northern roof are open to the elements. The interior contains remnants of several amusements and a substantially intact Fun House (see Photos #6 and #7).

The Palace closed in November 1988 due to declining business and has been vacant since that time. Deterioration due to deferred maintenance has accelerated over the past decade. The damage is primarily wood rot due to water infiltration from failing roofs. Three sections of the structure of the complex have been affected. There has been horizontal movement of the clerestory wall on the north elevation in the Carousel House, the roof over the rear, one-story section of the Crystal Maze has partially collapsed, and the Fun House roof exhibits some rafter failure. In addition to the water infiltration-related problems, the south CMU wall of the Bumper Car building has cracked and moved. An engineer with extensive experience with historic buildings concluded, upon examination of the building in February 2000, that it is salvageable and made recommendations for stabilization.

The architecture of the Palace has not remained stagnant. The trend of amusement complexes since they began to develop in the late nineteenth century has been toward growth to accommodate new amusements. Each expansion at the Palace, while slightly altering the existing buildings, did not significantly affect the features that make the buildings significant and the overall complex retains the atmosphere and associations of the original Carousel House. The Palace began as and remained a genteel center for family-oriented fun.

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NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Palace Amusements is historically significant as a trendsetter among recreation and cultural centers on the New Jersey Shore. The Palace opened as a carousel house in 1888, and although currently inactive, it is the only enclosed amusement arcade on the New Jersey shore with a surviving nineteenth-century pavilion. It housed unique and high quality amusements created by many of the nation's finest and most artistic amusement innovators, including a Ferris wheel which carried patrons from an interior boarding area to an observation deck high above roof level. Palace Amusements provided an experience that became integral to resort recreation. It specifically reflected the resort experience in Asbury Park. Its attractions produced an environment that excited ten decades of visitors, and inspired one of New Jersey's most prolific generations of songwriters and performers.

The history of popular entertainment can be traced back to the Roman circus and more recently to the pleasure gardens of Europe. The latter featured live entertainment, fireworks, dancing, games, and sometimes primitive amusement rides. It was in the United States, however, that the newly developing industrial society with its associated urbanization created an environment that would foster the rapid growth and development of the amusement industry. In the late nineteenth century, the amusement industry developed along two main paths: resort recreation and end-of-the-line trolley parks. The growth of summer resorts was a phenomenon based upon the rapid growth of population (especially in urban areas), changes in technology, and improvements in communication and transportation that made easy access to the ocean or lakes possible. Increased leisure time and social mobility produced a large new class of people seeking affordable entertainment. A history of the Wildwoods succinctly describes the resorts that developed along the Jersey Shore, "While geographically, the New Jersey Shore is a single entity, each community is a microcosm exhibiting its own unique traits. Location, proximity to major cities, the arrival of the railroad, and the attitudes and beliefs of the founding fathers meshed to give each community its distinctive appearance, traditions, and history."¹ The burgeoning amusement industry grew hand-in-hand with those resorts.

Among the earliest summer resorts at the Jersey Shore was Atlantic City, with large hotels, the first boardwalk, which opened June 26, 1870, and good rail service. By 1888, it had a small amusement pier. By 1895, the Atlantic City Boardwalk was quite racy, featuring nude portrait shows, living pictures, a bawdy phonograph parlor, and numerous exotic dancing shows from the Middle East. It also tolerated gambling, prostitution, and the sale of liquor on Sunday, as long as the violations were not too flagrant.² Another early resort was Long Branch, just up the coast from Asbury Park. Although Long Branch began in 1788 with blue laws and religious meetings, by the late nineteenth century its popularity has been claimed to have been based on "the availability of gambling, liquor, and prostitution. Despite a reputation that rivaled Coney Island in infamy, Long Branch prospered until the New Jersey Legislature made horse race betting illegal in 1894."³ By 1939 Long Branch had a boardwalk with amusements, a fishing pier and summer hotels, but overall had declined in popularity.⁴

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The most famous amusement park of all, Coney Island in New York, is actually not a single park, but rather a summer resort at which several parks developed. The course of its history was changed with the introduction of amusements, first an observation tower in 1877 and then a switchback railway, the forerunner to the roller coaster, in 1884. The enormous success of this amusement led to a proliferation of single amusements operated by different owners and eventually culminated in America's first enclosed park with multiple amusements, Sea Lion Park, in 1895, and its more famous competitor, Steeplechase Park, soon after.⁵

Some other early amusement parks, all of which grew out of summer resorts and are still in operation today, include: Lake Compounce in Bristol, Connecticut, which began in 1846 as an exhibition area for electricity but soon grew to include swimming in the lake and a picnic area; Dorney Park in Allentown, Pennsylvania, which opened as a park in 1884 but was founded as a fish weir and summer resort in the 1860s; and Cedar Point in Sandusky, Ohio, which is located near Lake Erie and opened in 1870.⁶

Many other early amusement parks, however, were a more direct result of the industrial growth of the nineteenth century, specifically the development of the electric trolley. Because trolley companies paid the same rates for electrical power whether their cars carried three passengers or thirty, they encouraged, even directly sponsored, the development of end-of-the-line parks with picnic areas, dance halls, restaurants, games and a few amusements as a way to stimulate ridership.⁷ Two early end-of-the line parks in New Jersey were Palisades Amusement Park, 38 acres owned and developed by the Bergen County Trolley Company, and Woodlynne Park in Camden, owned by the Camden Suburban Railroad. Palisades Amusement Park opened in 1898 as a simple park, but attractions were built soon after, turning it into a popular amusement park.⁸ Attractions at Woodlynne Park included a scenic railway, a merry-go-round, airship swings, and slides, as well as a shooting gallery, a photo gallery, rowboats on the lake, and refreshment stands. Activities included open air pavilion dances and an open air theater showing movies and vaudeville.⁹ Gradually, as more and more rides were added at both types of parks, amusement parks became a national phenomenon; by 1919, there were between 1,500 and 2,000 amusement parks and arcades in the country.¹⁰

Palace Amusements developed in the summer resort tradition rather than the end-of-the-line trolley park tradition. The nature of the town, however, dictated that while generally following the growth trends of the summer resort amusement industry, Palace Amusements would remain unique, keeping its attractions under one roof rather than becoming a large outdoor park filled with ever larger rides, and catering to a family crowd rather than becoming a racy, lowest-common-denominator attraction. The atmosphere of Asbury Park was closer to that of Ocean City, also founded on religious principles, than Atlantic City and the environment created for the patrons at Palace Amusements was more closely related to that at Olympic Park near Newark, New Jersey, a park near a trolley line where potential customers were assured in a 1905 newspaper article, "Olympic Park will not be a Coney Island, but rather a place for pleasant family excursions.... Women and children can stroll through Olympic Park at any time without fear, assured of safety by police protection provided by the management. All unsavory elements will be excluded."¹¹

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Asbury Park was established by James A. Bradley, the owner of a New York brush company, who purchased 500 acres of land north of the Ocean Grove Methodist Camp Meeting Association in 1871. Bradley laid out streets, public spaces, and parkland prior to selling off lots. Bradley was himself a Methodist, and many of the early lots were sold with deed restrictions prohibiting liquor on the property. He retained ownership of the waterfront property, but opened it for public use. He constructed an orchestra pavilion at the center of the mile-long stretch of ocean front, and public baths and piers at the south end. Bradley promoted his new town, which he named for Francis Asbury, founder of Methodism in the United States, with full-page ads in the newspaper he started, the *Asbury Park Chronicle*. Before the railroad was extended from Long Branch to Ocean Grove and Asbury Park in 1876, Bradley even sent a coach to meet the train to bring patrons to the new resort. Bradley's efforts paid off and the town grew in size and renown. As early as 1883, Asbury Park had 600,000 visitors between June and September. By 1887, the town was a top tier summer resort that had several smart hotels and all of the conveniences that the late nineteenth century had to offer, including electricity, pumped artesian well water, gas distribution, a centralized sewer and drainage system, one of the earliest telephone systems in New Jersey, and the first electric street car in Monmouth County, NJ, which also happened to be only the second in the nation.¹²

It was in this environment, cosmopolitan yet with the heavy Methodist influence to dampen the impulse toward ever gaudier display, that Ernest Schnitzler opened his Palace just over the border from Ocean Grove. Schnitzler's advertising in the 1890 Asbury Park City Directory reflects the genteel, family-oriented, temperance atmosphere that contrasts so sharply with nearby Long Branch, "Refined Amusement for Ladies, Gents, and Children. Polite Attendants. First-class Soda for sale in the Building."¹³ An 1895 advertisement boasted a "separate parlor and reception room for ladies."¹⁴ The building itself was a four-sided Victorian pavilion with sliding multi-colored glass doors; according to a contract signed between Schnitzler and contractor William B. Stout on January 31, 1888, it was to be constructed with the reuse of lumber "that came out of the building known as the Rink and on the premises as far as possible."¹⁵ The basic design of the carousel pavilion was repeated at Olympic Park c.1905,¹⁶ while similar pavilions, some octagonal or almost circular, are visible in early photographs of other nineteenth-century amusement parks. The carousel pavilion at Chicago's Riverview Park, for example, combined a six-sided clerestory with a square lower roof and a round cupola.¹⁷

The key to the significance and popularity of the Palace — which enabled it to survive while nearly all US amusements from the late 1880s gave way to housing projects, shopping centers and parking lots (including New Jersey amusements in Atlantic City, Bridgeton, Wildwood, Pitman, Cape May, Hoboken, Ocean Grove, Lake Hopatcong, North Bergen, Belleville, Newark, Burlington Island, Long Branch, Camden, Bayonne, Irvington, Cliffside Park, Pennsville, Ocean City and Trenton)¹⁸ — was the quality of its attractions.

When it opened in 1888 at the northwest corner of Lake Avenue and Kingsley Street, the Palace's premium draw was its carousel, crafted by Charles Loeff, considered to be the first of the great American carousel builders and the creator of the Coney Island style. Best known for his realistic horses, Loeff's carousel at the Palace was one of about 40 built during his career. Following a fire in 1910, it was extensively rebuilt by a Coney Island engineer, William Mangels, who commissioned carvings from the M.C. Illions shops at Coney Island and other prominent wood carvers. The wooden carousel is a four-row machine which rotates on a steel frame. It has a capacity of 78 passengers. It has 620 lights and

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original beveled mirrors in the center-pole housing. The rounding boards around the top perimeter are embellished with elaborate copper plaques decorated with scrolls, leaves and ladies' heads, and oval frames for scene painting.¹⁹

Assured almost immediately of the success of his carousel, proprietor Schnitzler soon turned to a visionary set of plans that would forever distinguish the Palace from its competitors. In 1892, George Washington Gale Ferris had used mechanical technology for the first time to create a 264-foot passenger wheel for the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Half a continent away, Schnitzler embellished the idea with two unique features: he devised a wheel combined with an observation tower and housed the lower portion inside a building. When finished in 1895, Schnitzler's patented roundabout and observatory (No. 544,866) rose from a loading platform inside an expanded Palace up through the roof, where passengers could debark, climb a short flight of iron stairs to the top of the observatory, and enjoy spectacular views of Asbury Park, Ocean Grove, adjacent resorts and the Atlantic Ocean.²⁰

Schnitzler's was not the first wheel in Asbury Park. That honor belonged to Atlantic City inventor William Somers, who had built three 50-foot wooden wheels in 1881-82, one in Atlantic City, one in Coney Island, and one in Asbury Park. Somers' Asbury Park wheel, however, couldn't match the unique features of Schnitzler's wheel and tower, so it was taken down and moved to Baltimore as Schnitzler went about constructing his wheel in the first Palace expansion, just west of the original Carousel House.²¹ Schnitzler's newest attraction was front page news in Asbury Park's newspaper *The Daily Press*. In a June 19, 1895 article titled "Schnitzler's Famous Resort: The New Pleasure Wheel Described and Other Improvements Noted" the *Press* states: "Ernest Schnitzler's amusement palace, when finally completed, will be one of the sights of Asbury Park. The Merry-go-Round has always been a leading feature of the Park, but the addition this year of the new iron observatory will make the establishment one of the most complete of its kind in the world." It goes on to predict that at night the wheel will be a "brilliant spectacle. Each of the rims are illuminated with 150 electric lights in color, or 300 together. The tower will be illuminated with 80 lights, and on the tower and wheel there will be over 500 lights."²²

Although currently disassembled, the Palace carousel and Ferris wheel are both in storage, available for a return to the Palace. The Ferris wheel is the oldest surviving Ferris wheel in the world; by 94 years, it has outlasted George Washington Gale Ferris' masterpiece, which was destroyed by dynamite in 1906.

The Crystal Maze addition, designed by architect Ernest Arend and built 1903, contained a hall of mirrors on the ground floor; while not distinctive to the Palace, the maze was representative of a popular East Coast attraction at the turn of the century.

The expansion of Palace Amusements coincided with a significant change in the political environment in Asbury Park. In 1903, the Asbury Park City Council finally convinced James Bradley to turn the waterfront property over to the city, essentially marking the end of his control over the town he started and an easing of the Methodist influence. The city turned to noted landscape architect and planner Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. for recommendations and subsequently tore down the orchestra pavilion and bathhouses and piers anchoring the two ends of the boardwalk, replacing them with the Fifth Avenue Arcade at the north end and the first Casino building at the south end. These buildings performed the same

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general recreation functions as the earlier buildings.²³ The trend in Asbury Park shown by the consultation with Olmsted, the new buildings replacing the old, and the expansion of the Palace was an effort toward retaining Asbury Park's image as an attractive resort with the types of recreation people were seeking. These improvements also coincided with the construction of two new amusement parks even larger and gaudier than Steeplechase Park and Sea Lion Park up the coast at Coney Island. Since most visitors came from northern New Jersey and New York, this most likely provided an incentive to Asbury Park to make improvements to keep its patrons.

Asbury Park continued to be a popular summer resort throughout the early twentieth century and Palace Amusements flourished with it. Visitors came by rail and Asbury Park held pageants and exhibitions to attract them, with family oriented activities like baby parades, the crowning of Queen Titania, and the Cavalcade of Progress.²⁴ Schnitzler owned Palace Amusements through the mid-1920s, when he sold it to August Williams. Williams' success with Palace Amusements led him to expand by leasing space in the second Casino building, built in 1929 (after the first Casino building burned down). Since he lacked the space to expand on the same block with the Carousel, Ferris Wheel, and Crystal Maze buildings, Williams installed new rides in the Casino building directly across the street, including another carousel, which was installed in 1932.²⁵ In 1938, Williams sold Palace Amusements to Edward Lange.

Amusement parks did not fair well in general during the Depression; by 1935, only 400 amusement parks survived, down from a high of over 1,500. Palace Amusements, then, was one of the minority that continued to endure. Lange and his son George continued to operate Palace Amusements through the end of the Depression and World War II, which also hurt the industry through loss of patrons and cutbacks due to rationing. The National Amusement Park Historical Association and other sources claim a brief rebound in the popularity of amusement parks after World War II, followed by a decline blamed variously and in combination on television, urban decay, desegregation, the near complete replacement of the trolley industry with automobiles, and suburban growth. Palace Amusements escaped that decline, perhaps protected by its status as a premiere amusement center in the seaside resort of Asbury Park, as well as its independence from trolley travel.²⁶

In 1955, national trends and local events once again influenced the expansion of Palace Amusements. The age of the large theme park dawned with the opening of Disneyland, while the opening of the New Jersey Turnpike and the Garden State Parkway increased the mobility of the population surrounding Asbury Park from New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania, especially teenagers. With the baby boom in full swing and the summer population increasing, the owners of the Palace expanded once again.

As with Charles Loeffler and the original carousel in 1888, some of the best known and most creative amusement artists in the world infused the Palace with excitement and fun during the mid-twentieth century. Foremost among them were Leon and William Cassidy, founders of the now defunct Pretzel Ride Company in Bridgetown, NJ. Pretzel built over 1,400 dark rides worldwide, two of which – the two-story Orient Express and the single-level Haunted Castle – were installed in the Palace. The facades of both rides remain; due to ride upgrades at other parks prompted by technological changes and insurance considerations, there are no other original Pretzel rides in New Jersey that remain essentially untouched since

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Monmouth County, NJNational Register of Historic Places
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the mid-1950s.²⁷ On the exterior, the additions housing the two dark rides, together with the Fun House, played on the name of the complex — each facade was designed to look like a palace.

Rides of other nationally prominent firms installed in the Palace following the 1956 expansion include: Chance Rides Inc., of Wichita, KS (Olympic Bobs), Alen Hershell of North Tonowanda, NY (Twister), W.F. Mangels Co., Coney Island, NY (Whip), and the Eyerly Aircraft Factory, Salem, OR (Rock O Plane). Some of the challenges in the two-story Fun House designed by the Philadelphia Toboggan Co. (which was famous for its carousels) are unique to it and remain remarkably intact with only minimal water damage. The 1956 expansion brought the number of rides to 22, alongside mechanized figures, games, and wheels of chance.

The Fun House and Bumper Car Buildings were decorated with original artwork painted on the Lake Avenue, Cookman Avenue, and Kingsley Street walls by designer Worth Thomas.²⁸ The scenes included people riding bumper cars, the names of the attractions in offbeat scripts, and the neon-lit grin of the "Tillie" image. Amusements impresario George Cornelius Tilyou, founder of Steeplechase Park at Coney Island, New York, introduced the first fun face logo in 1897, and so successfully integrated the "Steeplechase Face" throughout his park that most other amusement entrepreneurs followed with designs of their own.²⁹ The Palace face, nicknamed "Tillie" in honor of Tilyou, bears a striking cartoon-like resemblance to the Coney Island promoter. Through the years, Tillie confused on-lookers with a look that was simultaneously amusing and haunting, and which intrigued the knowing and unwary alike to further explore the area. No other fun face from the mid-1950s exists that so directly pays homage to Tilyou.

During the 1960s and 70s, Asbury Park experienced a decline that affected Palace Amusements. At the same time, a new generation of musicians came of age that would immortalize the Palace in popular music. Bruce Springsteen referenced the Palace in his 1973 song "Fourth of July, Asbury Park (Sandy)," the title track to his 1975 album *Born to Run*, and his 1988 album *Tunnel of Love*. The Tillie image was used on Springsteen's tour t-shirts in 1973 and 1988, bringing the image to the attention of a huge worldwide audience. In Springsteen's work, the Palace is synonymous with the Asbury Park experience, showing that the Palace continued to be a reflection of the town's environment throughout the twentieth century. Asbury Park was also the home of several other New Jersey popular musicians, leading to a later use of the Palace as the Asbury Park Rock 'n' Roll Museum.

Palace Amusements began as a typical nineteenth-century amusement parlor, housed in a clerestory pavilion, a building type common to picnic groves and developing amusement parks, and catering to families. The carousel's 70 hand-carved animals — horses, camels, goats, giraffes, and deer, along with four cherubs and two chariots — enchanted the children, who enjoyed the band organ's music and colored lights. Schnitzler filled the growing demand for thrill rides and amusing attractions with the installation of the unique Ferris wheel and observation tower that was partially housed in an expansion to the pavilion and with the construction of the Crystal Maze. When Asbury Park once again changed and became a day trip resort, Palace Amusements changed with it, expanding to provide the thrills the teenagers of the 1950s were searching for. Even as it modernized, however, Palace Amusements referenced its amusement park roots with the Tillie image. In the more recent past, Palace Amusements was part of Asbury Park's late twentieth century incarnation as a minor Rock 'n'

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Roll mecca. The Palace meets National Register Criterion A: Association with Events. Palace Amusements represents the larger trend in the resort amusement industry as amusements evolved from summer resort attractions and end-of-the-line transit sites to indoor amusement centers and theme parks. It also contributed to and reflects the evolution of Asbury Park as a Jersey Shore summer resort. The Palace also meets National Register Criterion C: Distinctive Characteristics, typical or atypical of a style. The Palace qualifies for its nineteenth-century pavilion, a typical building type for picnic groves and amusement parks around the turn of the century. It also qualifies for the unique features of the Ferris wheel building. The remaining portions of the Carousel Pavilion and the Ferris Wheel Building are important links to the architecture and construction techniques of late nineteenth-century amusement houses.

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7. National Amusement Park Historical Association, "The Amusement Park Industry: A Very Brief History" (Online, Available from World Wide Web: <<http://www.napha.org/history.html>>, copyright 1999), cited 4 August 2000.
8. Chris 2003, "Palisades Amusement Park: Cliffside Park, Bergen, NJ" (Online, Available from World Wide Web: <<http://www.defunctparks.com/parks/NJ/palisades/palisades.htm>>, copyright 1999 Joel W. Styer, updated March 10, 2000), cited 4 August 2000.
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20. Norman Anderson, *Ferris Wheels: An Illustrated History* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1992): 148-151.
21. Anderson: 148.
22. "Schnitzler's Famous Resort, The New Pleasure Wheel Described and Other Improvements Noted," *The Daily Press* (Asbury Park, NJ, June 19, 1895).
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Monmouth County, NJ

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GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

NW cr Lake Avenue and Kingsley Street
Building lines of Block 130 Lots 1, 2, & 8 in the City of Asbury Park

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Palace Amusements.

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FORM PREPARED BY (Additional Contributors):

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Name/Title: Bob Crane, President
Organization: Save Tillie Inc.
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Telephone: 301/989-2392

Date: May 10, 2000
Name/Title: Gregory A. Raymer, President
Organization: Historic Preservations, Inc.
Street & Number: 11827 Brook Road
City or Town/State/Zip: Golden, CO 80403
Telephone: 303/642-3087

Date: May 10, 2000
Name/Title: Christopher M. Flynn
Organization: Historian and Researcher
Street & Number: 150 Lawrence Avenue
City or Town/State/Zip: Ocean Grove, NJ 07756
Telephone: 732/775-8948

REVISIONS PREPARED BY:

Date: August 25, 2000
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Organization: Westfield Architects & Preservation Consultants
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City or Town/State/Zip: Haddon Heights, NJ 08035-1706
Telephone: 856/547-0465

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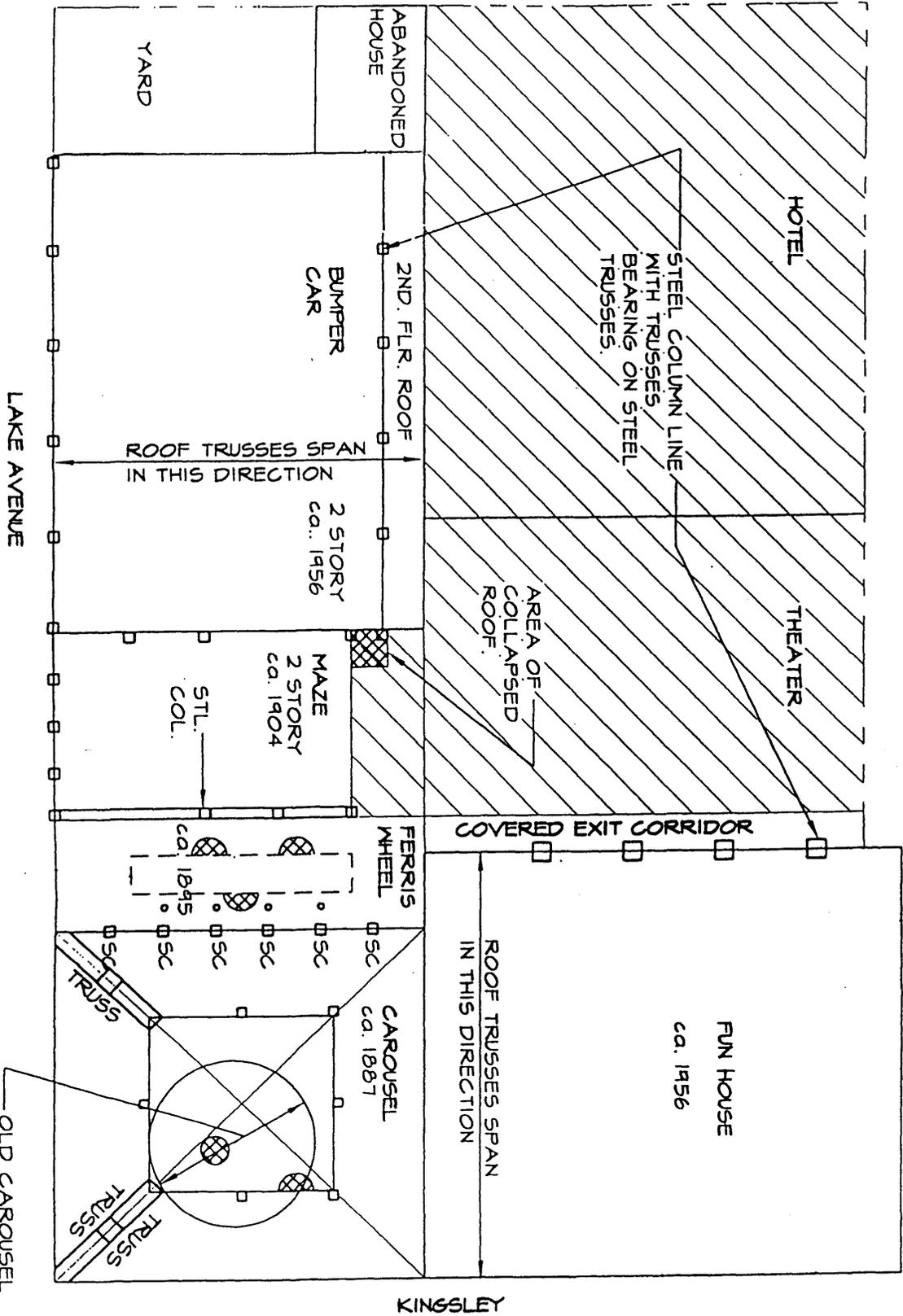
ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION, PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs #1-7 by Mike Neuhaus, 524 Brighton Avenue, Suite 9N, Spring Lake, NJ 07762.
Negatives on file at this location.

Photograph #8 by Milton Edelman, 200 Ocean Park Avenue, Bradley Beach, NJ, 07720.
Negative on file at this location.

- #1 Lake Avenue facade, looking east: Bumper car area (left), Crystal Maze (center), original Carousel House (right) (May 1999).
- #2 Facade of original Carousel House, southeast corner of Lake Avenue and Kingsley Street (March 2000).
- #3 Facade of 1956 Cookman Avenue addition, northeast corner of Cookman Avenue and Kingsley Street (September 1999).
- #4 Interior of Carousel House, looking southeast from the northwest corner of the Fun House (June 1999).
- #5 Ferris Wheel loading area, from the west interior of the Carousel House (June 1999).
- #6 Fun House attraction, along the west wall of the 1956 Cookman Avenue addition (June 1999).
- #7 Fun House view looking east, from the top of the stairway in photograph #6 (June 1999).
- #8 1956 Cookman Avenue facade, with neon, at night, northeast corner of Cookman Avenue and Kingsley Street (Summer, 1962).

St. JAMES PLACE



LAKE AVENUE

KINGSLEY

TO WESLEY LAKE



Scale of Feet

COOKMAN

ST. JAMES

AVENUE

LAKE

AVENUE

WESLEY

LAKE

ST.

KINGSLEY

Boundaries of Nominated Property Lot 2

Boundaries of Nominated Property Lot 1

Boundaries of Nominated Property Lot 8

LEGEND
 ———— Curb
 ———— Sidewalk
 ———— Building Line

Note:
 Block and Lot Lines
 Extend to the Curb



SITE PLAN

Date: May 2000

RECEIVED

MAY 9 2000

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFI

Palace Amusements
Monmouth County, NJ

201-207 Lake Ave.

NW cr Lake Ave. and Kingsley St.

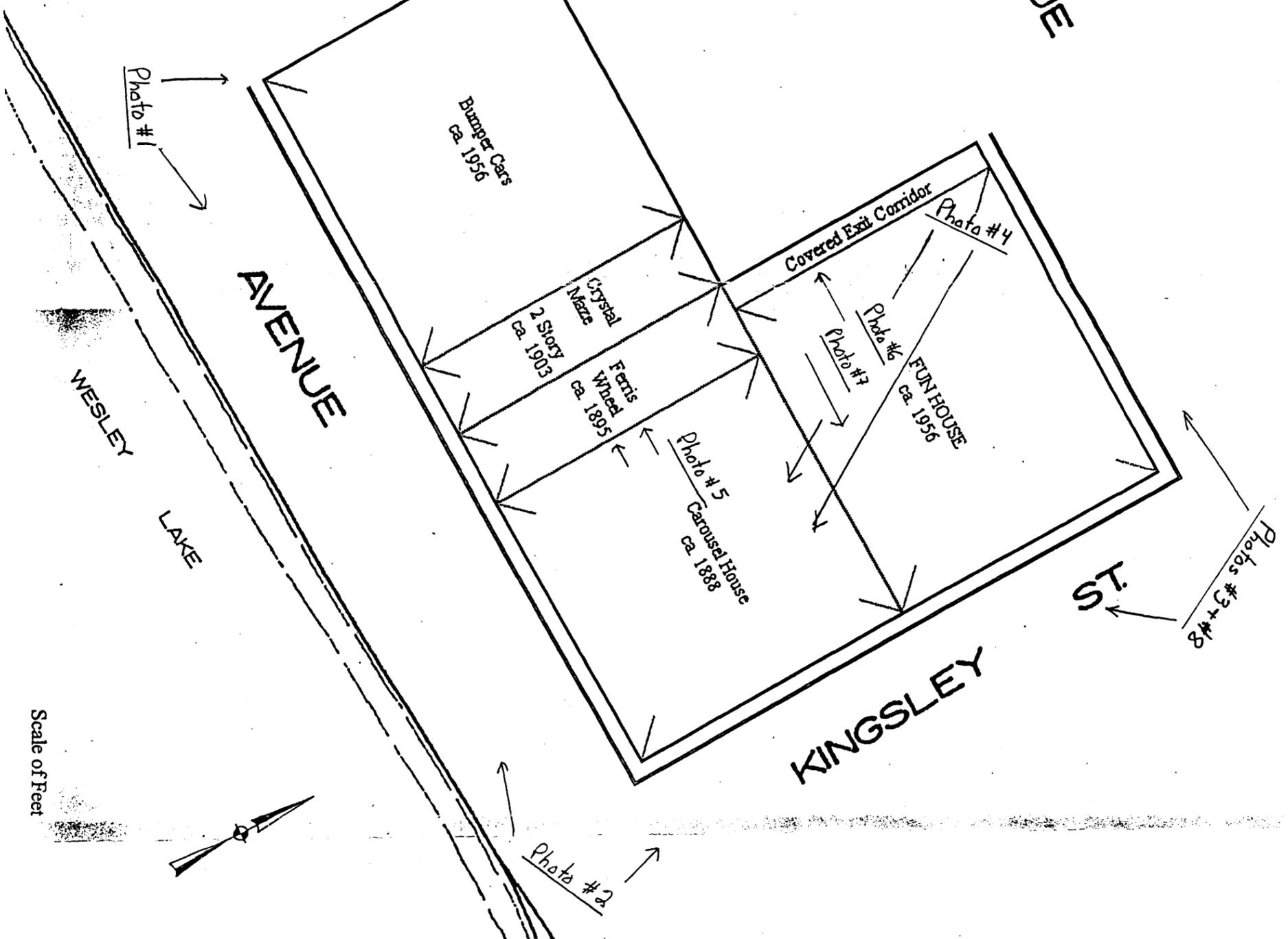
Block 130 Lots 1, 2 & 8
in the City of Asbury Park

Prepared by: Bob Crane
12606 Billington Road
Silver Spring, MD 20904

LEGEND
 --- Cab
 --- Sidewalk
 --- Building Line

COOKMAN
 ST. JAMES
 AVENUE

LAKE



FLOOR PLAN

Date: May 2000

RECEIVED
 MAY 9 2000
 HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Palace Amusements 201-207 Lake Ave. NW or Lake Ave. and Kingsley St.
 Monmouth County, NJ

Block 130 Lots 1, 2 & 8
 in the City of Asbury Park

Prepared by: Bob Crane
 12606 Billington Road
 Silver Spring, MD 20904

3)

LESLIE HOTEL

WEST END HOTEL
(SUMMER)

KING

ASBURY

AV.

ST JAMES PL.

2

HOTEL PLAZA

5

COOKMAN AV.

S. W. PIPE

KINGSLEY

213

LITTLE ASBURY HOTEL

ASTOR HOTEL

THE PALACE
MERRY GO-ROUND

ST JAMES PL.

OCEAN SPRAY HOTEL

BELLEVUE

LAKE

PL.

100

E. W. PIPE

City of Asbury Park
Ocean Grove, Neptune Township

L a k e

Sanborn map

1930

l e y

DRIVEWAY

FA

TH

TH

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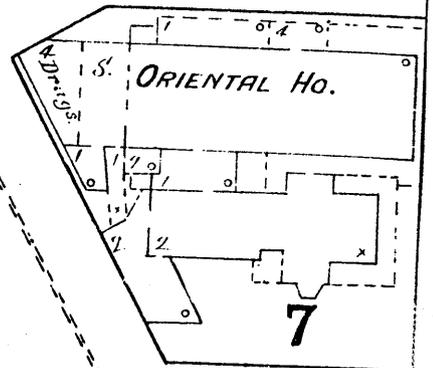
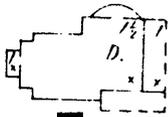
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HOTEL

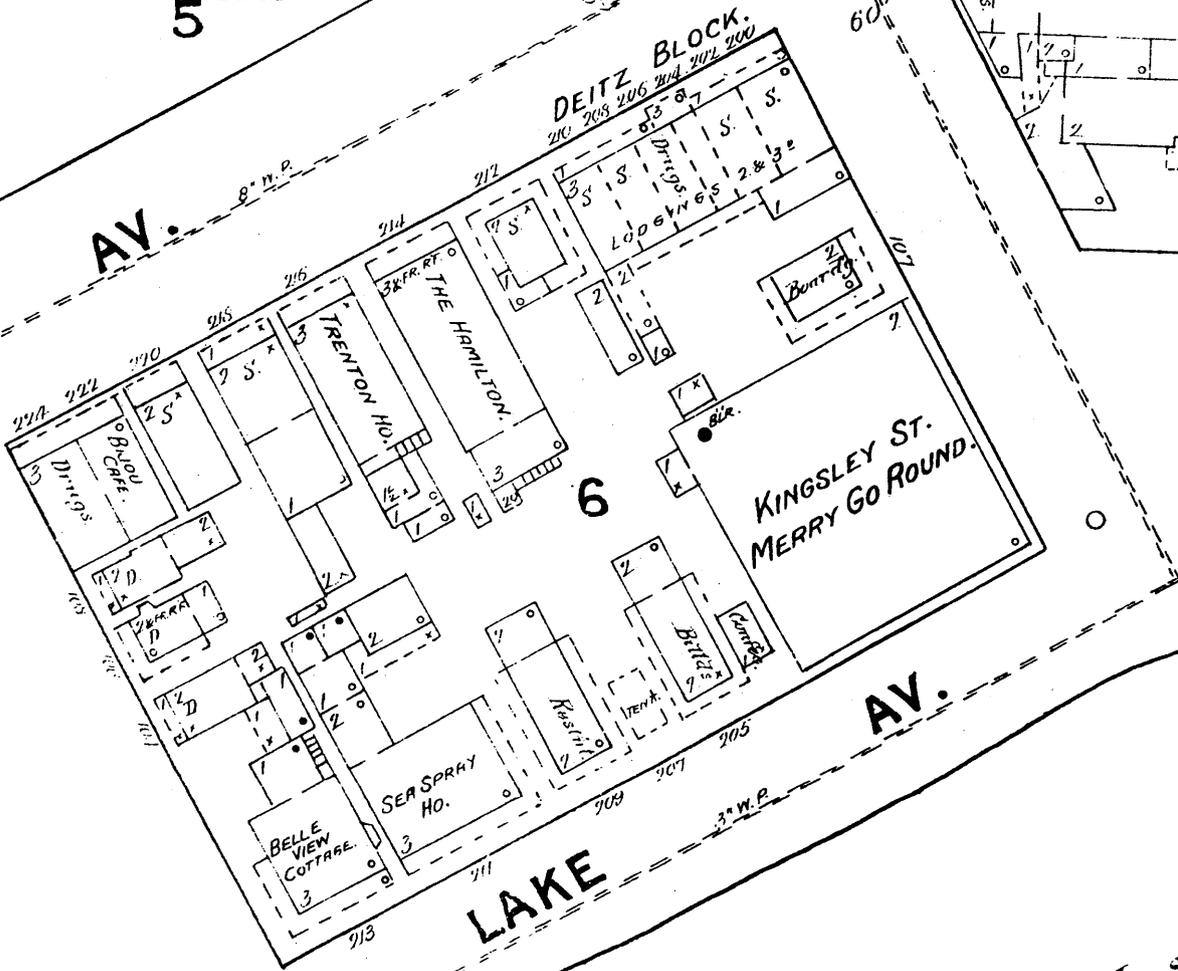
WEST END HOTEL

ASBURY

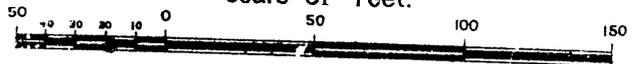
AV.



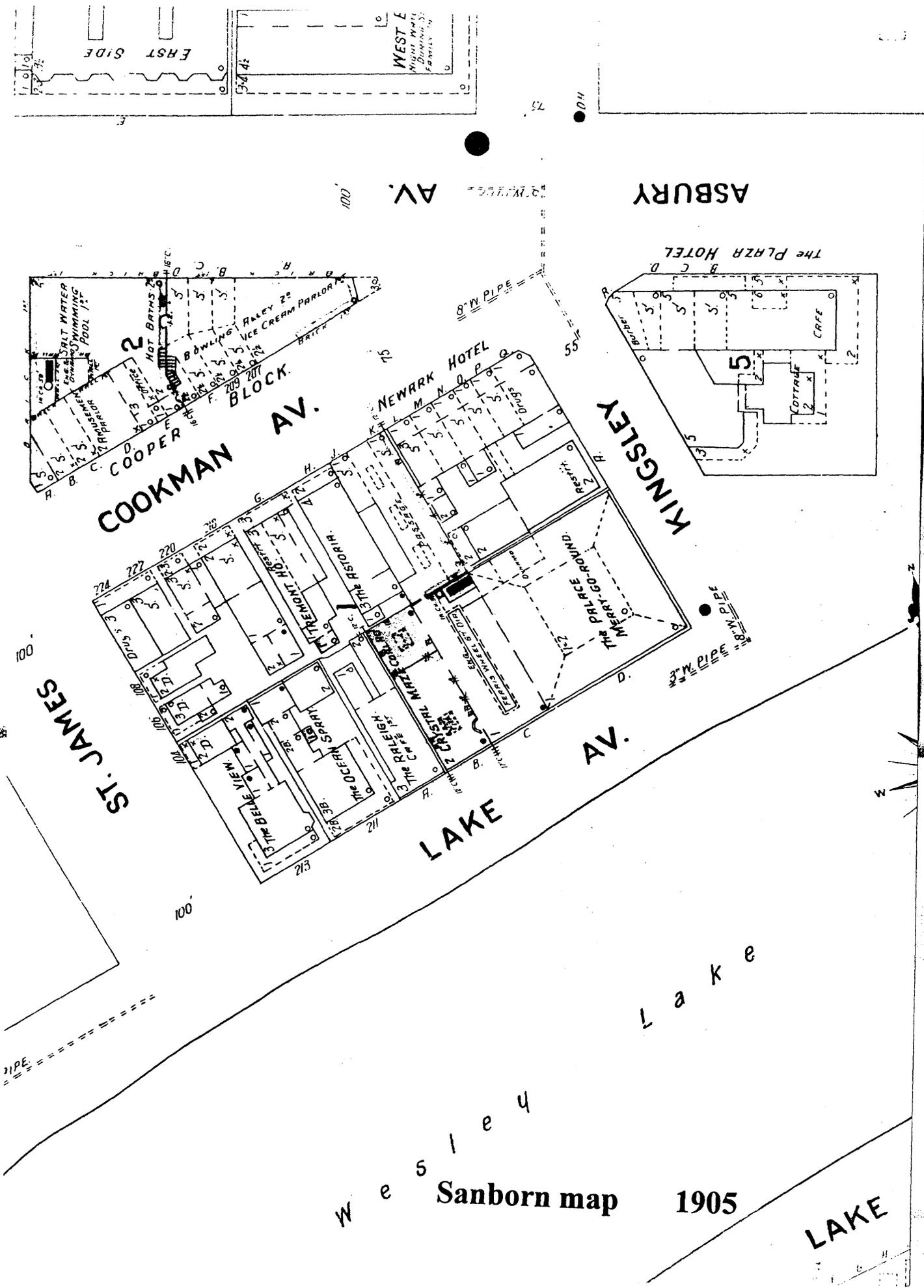
AV.



Scale of Feet.



Sanborn map 1890



Sanborn map 1905

LAKE

L a k e

LAKE

AV.

KINGSLEY

COOKMAN AV.

ASBURY

AV.

EAST SIDE

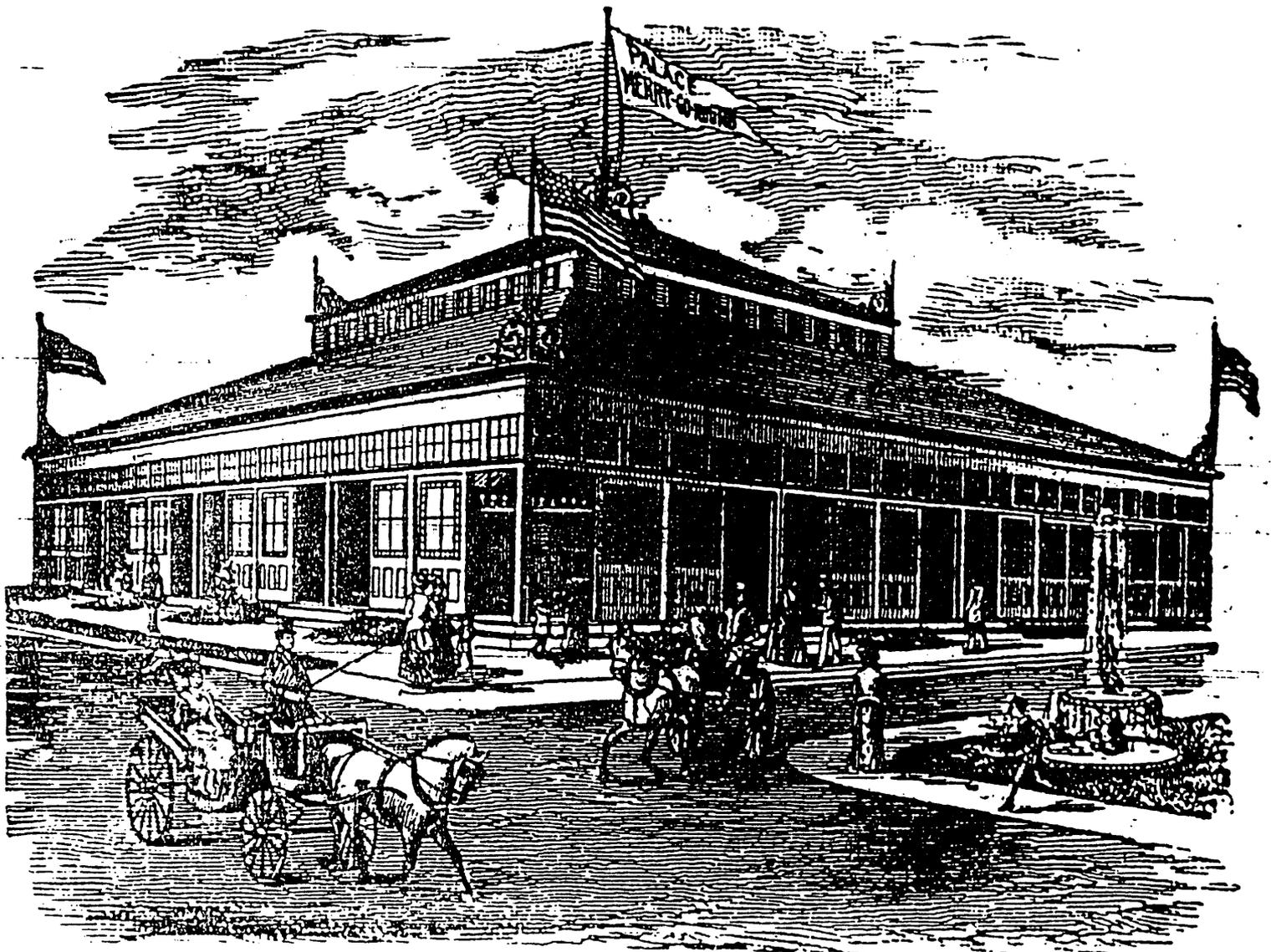
WEST E

W e s t e r n

Palace Merry-Go-Round

Cor. LAKE AVE. & KINGSLEY ST.

E. SCHNITZLER, PROPRIETOR



The Finest Place of the Kind in the World

SEPARATE PARLOR AND RECEPTION ROOM FOR LADIES

ADDITIONAL ITEM Number 2:

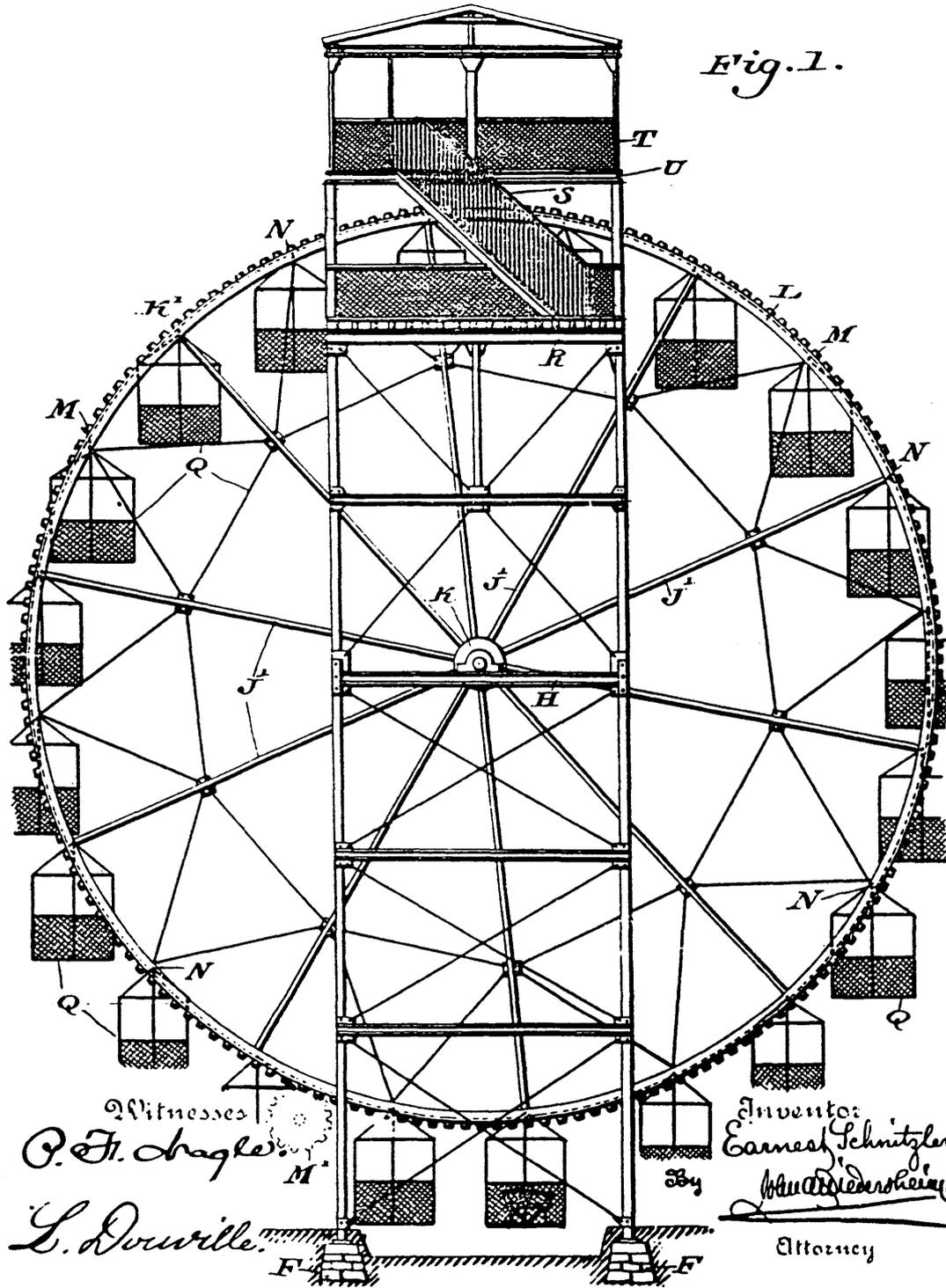
Line Drawing Advertisement: Palace Merry-Go-Round Building

The Daily Press [Asbury Park, NJ] Aug. 24, 1895

E. SCHNITZLER.
ROUNABOUT AND OBSERVATORY.

No. 544,866.

Patented Aug. 20, 1895.



ADDITIONAL ITEM Number 3:

Ernest Schnitzler's Roundabout and Observatory

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