

# CONEY ISLAND HISTORIC DISTRICT TOUR



## Proposed Buildings for Landmark Designation

1. Shore Theater
2. Nathan's Famous
3. Henderson's Music Hall *threatened demolition*
4. Shore Hotel *threatened demolition*
5. Herman Popper Building
6. Child's Restaurant/ Coney Island USA
7. Bank of Coney Island *threatened demolition*
8. Grashorn Building *threatened demolition*

## Current Landmarks in Coney Island

9. The Cyclone
10. Deno's Wonder Wheel

--- 2009 Rezoning Boundary

--- Proposed Historic District

Coney Island was once the most extraordinary place in New York – the Playground of the World. Today, a cohesive district of historically significant buildings remains and together these buildings tell the story of how Coney Island became the world's greatest amusement area.

Though some of these buildings have been altered insensitively over the years, they still represent the history, legends, and memories of the world's greatest amusement destination during its most significant period of development, from the 1880s through the 1920s. As a collection, they create a unique sense of place that embodies the history and the spirit of old Coney.



Coney Island Theatre Building,  
Surf and Stillwell Aves., Coney Island, N. Y.



Past:



Present:

1

### Shore Theater 1301 Surf Avenue

**Built: 1925**

Designed by noted theater designers Reilly & Hall Architects, the Shore Theater's fireproof construction, great height, and capacity to seat an audience of 2500 brought a new sense of permanence to the seasonal amusement area. Originally a Loews Theater, it provided space for both live performance and movies, helping to make Coney a year-round destination by the end of the 1920s.

Past:



Present:



2

### Nathan's Famous 1308 Surf Avenue

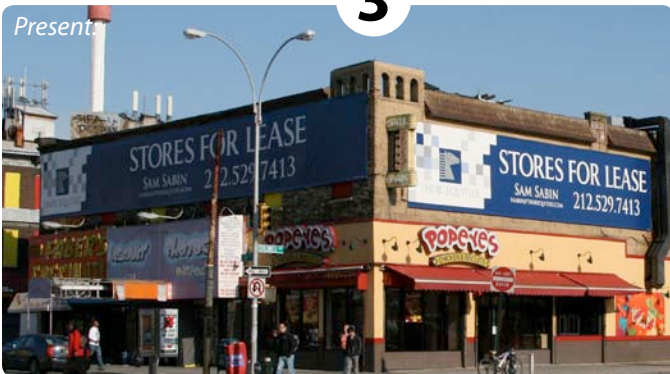
**Built: ca.1920**

In 1916 Nathan Handwerker opened his hotdog stand at the location. Nathan's is often considered to be the first fast-food restaurant and is known throughout the world. The original Nathan's is still owned and operated by the Handwerker family and is one of Coney Island's, if not New York City's, most iconic sites.

Past:



Present:



3

### Henderson's Music Hall 3001-3023 Stillwell Avenue

**Built: 1899**

Henderson's was one of Coney Island's great performance theatres, producing vaudeville acts that were on par with those found in Manhattan's theater district. It was here in 1907 that the public was first introduced to the performers Harpo, Groucho, and Gummo Marx.



Past:



Present:

4

### Shore Hotel 1228 Surf Avenue

**Built: ca. 1903**

The wood-framed Shore Hotel is one of Coney Island's oldest buildings. Historically it housed a series of small-scale hotels and amusement uses that were common at the turn of the century and a great deal of its architectural ornamentation remains including the cornice with garland details and the pediment on its Henderson's Walk façade.





5



Past:

Present:

**Herman Popper Building 1220 Surf Avenue  
Built c. 1904**

The neo-Classical Herman Popper building was built around 1904 and was originally a distillery for Popper, the well-known liquor wholesaler in Coney Island, therefore contributing to the Bowery's turn of the century reputation as a rowdy and sinister place. It later became a tavern run by Popper and his brother.



Present:

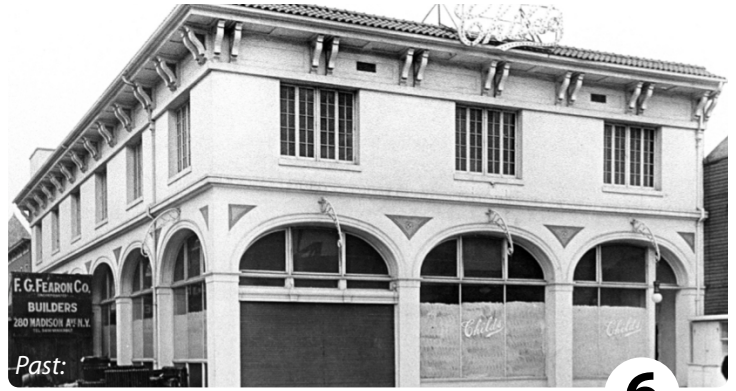
7



Present Interior:

**Bank of Coney Island  
W. 12th St. at Surf Ave.  
Built: ca.1923**

The neo-Classical Bank of Coney Island building served as a bank until 1990, at which time it temporarily became a wax museum. The building is currently vacant, but retains its original façade ornamentation and much of the original interior is intact.



Past:

6



Present:

**Child's Rest. / Coney Island USA Building 1208 Surf Ave  
Built: 1917**

The original Child's Restaurant on Surf Avenue was a family-friendly oasis at a time when Coney was more raucous than respectable. Later it was home to the Blue Bird Casino and to David Rosen's Wonderland Circus Sideshow. The sideshow tradition continues with current owner, Coney Island USA, which has overseen the restoration of the Spanish Colonial Revival building.



Past:

8



Present:

**Grashorn Building 1104 Surf Avenue  
Built: c. 1889**

The Grashorn has the distinction of being the oldest building remaining in the amusement district. Originally housing a hardware and grocery store, it adapted to specialize as a purveyor of hardware needed by ride operators maintaining the amusement parks. Several Second Empire elements, like the mansard roof, are still visible beneath the modern materials.

**Save Coney Island** is working with other Coney Island and preservation groups has proposed the creation of a Coney Island Historic District to protect these buildings. **Save Coney Island** believes that Coney Island's historic buildings should be restored and reused as a historic core around which a new and exciting 21st-century Coney Island, with attractions such as Luna Park, can thrive.

**In May of 2010, Thor Equities threatened to demolish four of Coney Island's historic buildings and replace them with a strip of low-rise chain retail.**

It is a miracle that any of these buildings survived the fires, storms, and urban renewal projects that have shaped Coney Island over the years. It would be a shame to lose these rare survivors, just as Coney is being revitalized.

**Here's what you can do:**

**Call or Email:**

Mayor Mike Bloomberg (311)  
City Hall, New York, NY 10007  
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/mail/html/mayor.html>

Coney Island's City Council member  
Domenic Recchia (718-373-9673), [recchia@council.nyc.ny.us](mailto:recchia@council.nyc.ny.us)

Brooklyn Borough President  
Marty Markowitz (718-802-3700), [askmarty@brooklynbp.nyc.gov](mailto:askmarty@brooklynbp.nyc.gov)

The Landmarks Preservation Commission  
(212-669-7817), [comments@lpc.nyc.gov](mailto:comments@lpc.nyc.gov)

**...and tell them:**

- Preserving and reusing Coney Island's historic buildings is essential to its successful redevelopment.
- A historic district should be created to maintain the visible connection to Coney Island's incredible past.
- Stop Thor's plans to demolish Coney Island's historic buildings.
- They need to act now, before it's too late!

