



Coney Island and a Few Ghosts

Through the Eye of a Needle

Coney Island and a Few Ghosts

Photographs Taken
with a Pinhole Camera

by Joel Kroin



Coney Island's Wonder Wheel

Coney Island and a Few Ghosts

For over a century, Coney Island, in Brooklyn, New York City, has been a renown beach and amusement area. Visitors come from around the world to take in the changing sights and sounds. The beach, the boardwalk, Nathan's Famous, the Cyclone, Wonder Wheel, and Parachute Jump draw crowds.

By taste, economy and politics, Coney Island has had times of good and times of decline. The amusement area is quirky. There has never been a centralized Operator. In seeming competition, the area is run by individuals with old culture thinking, and companies with new trend ideas. Memories of the past include historic amusement rides, classic food stands, and hand painted signs on old buildings. These conflict with the look of a modern theme park. Can a Disneyland 'Main Street' have the same flavor as historic Coney Island? Clearly it cannot. So far Coney Island has avoided complete evolution to become modern.

Coney Island has a thriving year 'round residential community where spirits have a welcome place to live. Some may call a 'spirit' a ghost. Walking around one can sometimes feel their presence, especially near older places.

On October 29, 2012, Hurricane Sandy brought a wall of sea water through Coney Island. More than five feet of water filled

streets, many feet of sand deposited, buildings and infrastructure were destroyed, and the residents lives were affected. There was stillness after the storm. Some residents left. Tourists were not around. Businesses were closed. Ghosts seemed to have gone in hiding.

Crews worked fast to bring Coney Island back to life. What could have been another decline, by the Spring after the storm the amusement area was under rapid repair. Some artful buildings and artifacts were lost forever. Some good came. Behind a flooded amusement booth a decades old Shooting Gallery was found; it was restored. The B & B Carousell, in restoration before the storm, was brought back to former glory. Nathan's Famous, badly damaged, was renovated. With rebuilding, Coney Island's ghosts again revealed themselves.

Taken with a pinhole camera, photographs of Coney Island in this book were captured in the year proceeding Sandy and the year after. Having anticipated the dramatic changes that Sandy brought in a short time would have been impossible.

The pinhole camera is a camera obscura (meaning a 'dark chamber') that can collect an image on film. The camera does not have a lens. Rather, it has an aperture which is a small hole on one side of a light-proof box. Film is positioned inside the back of the box. Millions of points of light draw through the hole forming an

apparent image on the film. (Whereas, lens cameras capture a projected image.) The small pinhole allows low amounts of light to go through, requiring exposure times from several seconds to many minutes.

Simple, the pinhole camera is ideal to capture the nuances of Coney Island. With pre-visualization and anticipation of what will happen during a long exposure time, the resultant photographs have elements of surprise. People and other objects moving during the exposure sometimes disappear. Other times images shown on the film seem to come from vapor.

Points of light stored on the pinhole camera film form a representational image. Who are we to say that the image is real or not? Is it possible, the image is a memory from something or someone from Coney Island's past? Apparent are some recorded elements of what had been recently seen. From the unexpected, who knows from where these random points originate? Real or not, can we call them ghosts or spirits?

The heart of Coney Island is its unique culture. Ever changing, saying how it will look like in the future is hard. There will always be elements of the past, if only in spirit.

Classic

Coney Island

Parachute Jump

Wonder Wheel

The Cyclone

B & B Carousell

Nathan's Famous



Parachute Jump (1939)



The Parachute Jump.
Relocated from the 1939 New York World's Fair









Wonder Wheel (1920)



"They Don't Build Them like this Anymore!
Ride Deno's Wonder Wheel Today!"



The Wonder Wheel as seen from Luna Park



Getting tickets for Deno's Wonder Wheel and Amusement Park



Boardwalk Gazebo and the Wonder Wheel



The Cyclone (1927)





The Cyclone.
A 'Golden Age' wooden roller coaster







The Parachute Jump and B & B Carousell from the Boardwalk



B & B Carousell (1919) built in Coney Island.
Restored 2013







Nathan's Famous
"Home of the International Hot Dog Eating Contest"



Nathan's Famous during restoration after Hurricane Sandy



Doggie having a doggie
at Nathan's Famous







"This is the Original Nathan's.
World Famous Frankfurters Since 1916"

Diversions

Rides

Food

Games



“Make a Wish”



Coney Island USA









Coney Island BMT Subway Station



Zoltar Fortune Teller,
a Coney Island version of the one in the movie BIG



Pete's Clam Stop











The Ghost Hole





Carousel at Deno's Amusement Park



Soar'n Eagle at Luna Park



Steeplechase at Luna Park



Parachute Jump and Luna Park entrance as seen from the Boardwalk



Luna Park entrance from the Boardwalk

On the Beach



The Beach as seen from the Pier















Selling ices on the Beach

















The Biker







Taking shade under the tree.



Lonely Lifeguard





On the Boardwalk



Nathan's Famous on the Boardwalk







Auntie Anne's Pretzels on the Boardwalk



Nathan's Famous and Wonder Wheel as seen from the Boardwalk



Place to Beach Bar on the Boardwalk



Coney's Cones on the Boardwalk





Summer sunning at Lola Star's Gift Shop on the Boardwalk



Paul's Daughter bar on the Boardwalk





Ruby's Bar and Grill.
"A Coney Island Tradition Since 1934"



Spring sunning in front of Ruby's on the Boardwalk



Waiting for tickets for Dino's Wonder Wheel and Amusement Park





The Parachute Jump and PTB Bar



The Parachute Jump, Coney's Cones, Paul's Daughter and Wonder Wheel from the Boardwalk





The Pier before Hurricane Sandy.
It was destroyed by the storm. Rebuilt 2013.



Boardwalk Mural at the New York Aquarium



The Restoration (2012)





The Musicians



The Gathering



Matilda



Winter sunning in front of Child's Boardwalk Restaurant



Child's Boardwalk Restaurant (1923)

Down the Boardwalk
at Brighton Beach
("Little Odessa")



Tatiana Restaurant
on the Brighton Beach Boardwalk







Volna Restaurant
on the Brighton Beach Boardwalk



After Hurricane Sandy

Revival



Washed up on the Beach by Hurricane Sandy













Beach restoration after Hurricane Sandy





Sand deposited in the Coney Island community by Hurricane Sandy





Sand deposited on the Boardwalk by Hurricane Sandy



Cleaning-up the Boardwalk the Winter after Hurricane Sandy



Pete's Clam Stop the Winter after Hurricane Sandy



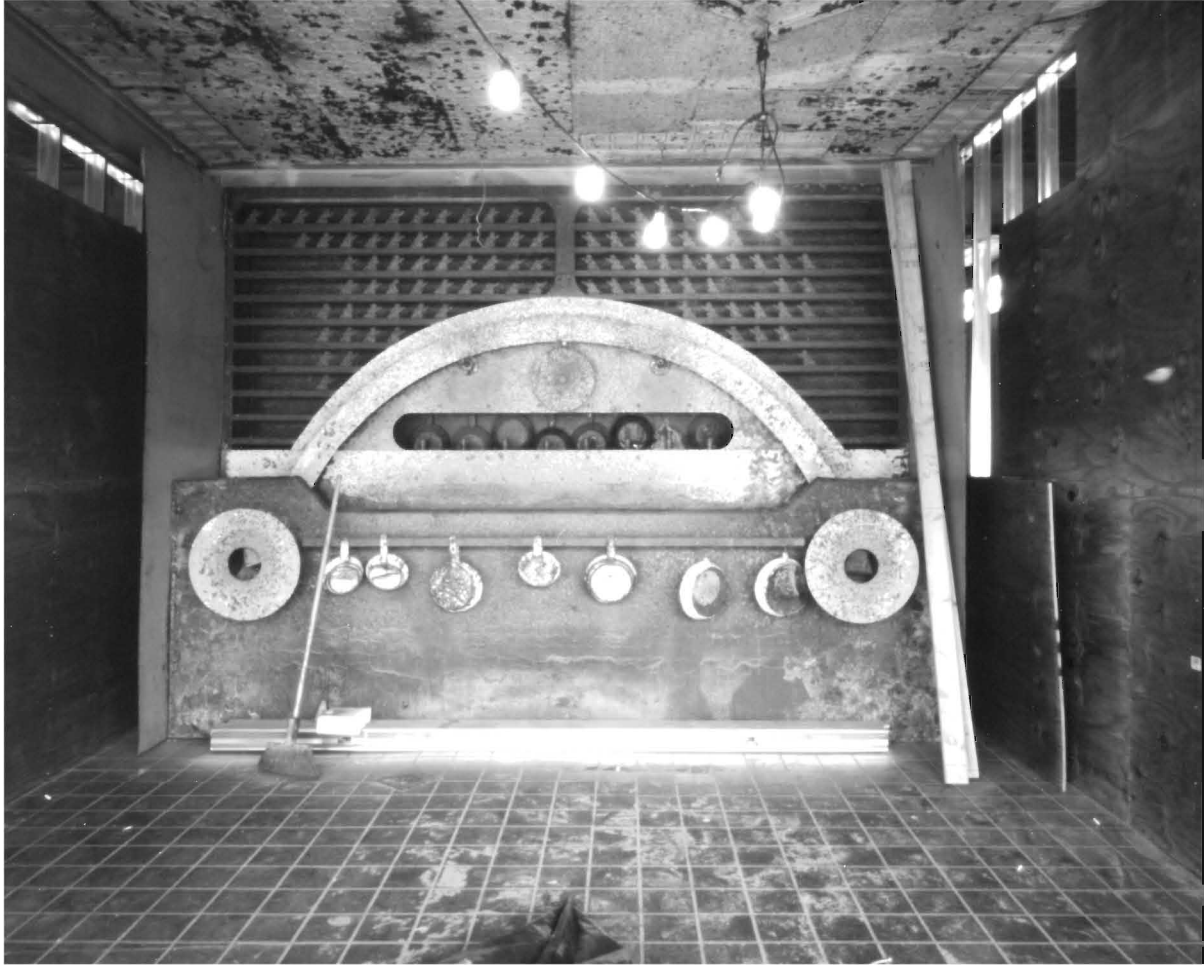
Nathan's Famous original location was flooded and destroyed by Hurricane Sandy. Restored 2013.



Nathan's Famous waiting for customers during restoration after Hurricane Sandy



The Winter after Hurricane Sandy



Antique Shooting Gallery.
Restored 2013.



The Shooting Gallery was found behind another game booth after Hurricane Sandy

Coney Island Memories



Grill House on the Boardwalk.
Removed 2012



TACOS & TORTAS SMOOTHIES

FRESH JUICES FRUIT SALAD

SOFT AND HARD
ICE CREAM
ITALIAN ICES

HEALTHY JUICES *Gulf View* PIRA COLADA

CONNY PARK
THE PLEASANT HOTEL

ICE CREAM *Gulf View*

CONNY ISLAND
Steppichase

ICE CREAM
SOFT ICE CREAM
TO RASPBERRY CHOCOLATE SPRINKLES

FREE
FRIDAY
MILKSHAKES





Denny's Ice Cream.
Last season 2012



Astrotower.
Removed 2013





Paul's Clam Bar. Restored as Paul's Daughter (2012).
Roof Character lost during Hurricane Sandy. Astrotower removed 2013



Kiddie rides.
Removed 2012

Coney Island's Past, Present and Future

Long before European settlers came to the New World, the native people came to the small place now called Coney Island. They fished, hunted, lived, played games, and likely relaxed on the beach. The Europeans followed with the same interests. From the 1800's people came to the island for entertainment and the beach. Economic times and fad caused a roller coaster of extravagance and decline.

Coney Island has had a long history of interest by the public. No matter what the present condition, people have always been drawn by recent and long ago memories of good times. People want to see and enjoy what drew others. Visiting Coney Island, now and in the future, one can and will sense the ghostly presence of the distant and recent times.

The Photographer

Joel Kroin has been using 35mm film cameras since the 1960's. His art photographs have continued to be in black and white. Over the years, out of need, he has used digital cameras for commercial jobs. His influences for tonal quality and content have been classic photographers like Adams and Weston. In 2010 he constructed his first pinhole camera using a coffee pot. Soon he advanced to a simple wooden box. He has reached back to his 35mm experience for techniques. He found it relatively easy to compose images of nature; things pretty much stay where they are during the exposure time.

Going to Coney Island for over two years, its ever-changing happenings have continued to inspire him. Using a pinhole camera has been a challenge. Long exposure times make it difficult to take traditional photographs of people. Using patience and anticipation, he likes to capture on film 'ghost' images of people.

Quoted from the New York Botanical Garden's 'Plant Talk' Blog:

It's a delicate patina that defines Joel Kroin's photographs. Each black and white image takes on the small specks, blurs, and aberrations of antique film not far off from how they first appeared when the method was developed in the mid-19th century. (March 13, 2013)

Because of the nature of pinhole photography - the length of exposure and the time it takes to create an image - moving things often "ghost" in the final result. Of course, Joel assures us these are real ghosts and he's just a recording medium for their presence, so we're going to let the images speak for themselves here. For your peace of mind, no, we don't have the Ghostbusters on retainer. (May 10, 2013)

The Photographs

Pinhole wooden camera (lensless):

Lensless Camera Mfg (modified). 75mm (medium wide angle)

Pinhole .013" (.33 mm), approx. f/230

Film: Ilford Ortho Plus. Orthochromatic copy film

Black and white. 4x5 sheet film

ISO 80. Exposures: Day: 30-70 sec., Night: 3-6 min.



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