

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Resubmitted  
8/16

Manhattan Bridge  
Kings/New York County  
NEW YORK

Working No. JUL 13 1983

Fed. Reg. Date: 8/11/83 - 8/27/83

Date Due: 8/11/83 - 8/27/83

Action: ACCEPT

RETURN 8/1/83

REJECT

Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ resubmission  
☐ nomination by person or local government  
☐ owner objection  
☐ appeal

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Discipline \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: ☒ technical corrections cited below  
\_\_\_\_\_ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location \_\_\_\_\_

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property \_\_\_\_\_

5. Location of Legal Description \_\_\_\_\_

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition

- ☐ excellent  
☐ good  
☐ fair

- ☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

Check one

- ☐ unaltered  
☐ altered

Check one

- ☐ original site  
☐ moved

date \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph  
☐ completeness  
☐ clarity  
☐ alterations/integrity  
☐ dates  
☐ boundary selection

## 8. Significance

Period      Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates      Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- ☐ summary paragraph
- ☐ completeness
- ☐ clarity
- ☐ applicable criteria
- ☐ justification of areas checked
- ☐ relating significance to the resource
- ☐ context
- ☐ relationship of integrity to significance
- ☐ justification of exception
- ☐ other

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References *nominated area is more than 10 acres. Please provide 3 or more UTM reference points.*

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

## 11. Form Prepared By

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_\_ state      \_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

## 13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed *A. Byers* Date *8/1/83* Phone: *202-343-9553*

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

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

**1. Name**

historic Manhattan Bridge

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number East River, between Front Street, Brooklyn, and  
Canal Street, Manhattan

☐ not for publication

city, town Brooklyn/New York ☐ vicinity of

state New York

code 036

county Kings/New York

code 47/61

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Robert Litke, Dept. of General Services; Henry Fulton, Department of Transportation

street & number 1800 Municipal Building; 40 Worth Street

city, town New York

☐ vicinity of

state New York 10007

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. King's County Register's Office;  
New York County Register's Office

street & number Municipal Building, Joralemon Street; 31 Chambers Street

city, town Brooklyn; New York

state New York 11201; 10007

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Landmarks Preservation Commission  
title (LP-0899)

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date November 25, 1975

☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☒ local

depository for survey records Landmarks Preservation Commission, 20 Vesey Street

city, town New York

state New York 10007

## 7. Descripti 1

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☒ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved date NA

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

The Manhattan Bridge is a suspension bridge spanning the East River from the Lower East Side of Manhattan to the downtown section of Brooklyn. The nominated property includes the bridge itself, with the two towers which support it and the majestic stone colonnade at the Manhattan approach. This extends a total length of 6375 feet. The bridge is constructed of steel with two flexible steel towers from which the bridge deck is suspended by means of four spun steel cables. The total clear span of the bridge, between the towers is 1470 feet and it has a maximum clearance of 135 feet above mean high water. It is approximately 160 feet wide, has two levels for vehicular traffic, and also carries a subway line. It is not open to pedestrians. The steel towers rest upon cut-stone masonry footings, and the piers and abutments on land are massive, monumental stone constructions. The steel portions of the bridge have a minimum of decorative detail. The towers terminate in pointed arches and are surmounted by spherical finials. The design is functional and structurally expressive. The stone piers and abutments are massive structures composed of round and segmental arches with smooth rustication.

There is a sharp contrast between the purely functional design of the bridge itself and the monumental portal at the Manhattan end. The Manhattan portal is composed of an elliptical colonnade, modeled on St. Peter's Colonnade in Rome by Bernini, and a triumphal arch, inspired by the seventeenth-century Porte St. Denis in Paris by Blondel. The arch is of rusticated white granite with a central arched opening thirty-six feet by forty feet spanning the roadway. The archway is flanked by pylons ornamented with engaged obelisks embellished by sculpted reliefs of figures and ornament set above pedimented doorways. This sculpture, like the arch itself, was inspired by the Porte St. Denis and was designed by the sculptor C.A. Heber. The interior of the barrel-vaulted arch is coffered, and the enframing contains heraldic devices. A cartouche with a fantastic animal head forms the keystone. A frieze of Indians hunting buffalo is set above the arch and is the work of Carl Rumsey. The arch terminates in a modillioned cornice and a low classical attic.

The colonnade extends approximately half the length of the plaza, and the colonnade is composed of Tuscan columns resting on pedestals facing the ellipse. Behind the columns are lower rusticated piers, the outer faces of which are smooth pilasters along the outer edges of the colonnade. Slabs carved with heraldic ornament surmount the piers of the colonnade. The colonnade terminates in pilasters attached to rusticated piers at each end, and it is surmounted by an entablature and balustrades.

The Brooklyn approach (never a true portal) was originally adorned by two monumental decorative pylons that featured granite statues - female personifications of Brooklyn and Manhattan by Daniel Chester French. The pylons were dismantled in 1963 as part of a roadbuilding program and the statues were moved to the entrance of the Brooklyn Museum. In its present condition there is no formal entrance at the Brooklyn approach and Flatbush Avenue Extension leads directly onto the bridge approach.

## 8. Significant

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

**Specific dates** 1900;1906-09;1912-15 **Builder/Architect** Gustav Lindenthal, O.F. Nichols (Engineers)  
Carrère & Hastings  
(Parker-Ryan Construction Co.)

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Manhattan Bridge is a significant monumental engineering work of the early twentieth century. Built between 1901 and 1909, the suspension bridge as designed by engineer O.F. Nichols incorporated innovative features in its shallow Warren stiffening trusses and its flexible steel towers. Beaux-Arts style entrance portals designed by the prominent architectural firm of Carrère & Hastings were built to define the approaches to the bridge. Despite alleged inconsistency between its modern utilitarian form and its applied architectural embellishment, the Manhattan Bridge is significant as a transitional structure in the emergence of modern design principles and remains a prominent crossing of the East River.

The design of the Manhattan Bridge, the third bridge built across the East River, aroused considerable controversy. After the triumph of Roebling's Brooklyn Bridge (1867-83), the Williamsburg Bridge (1896-1903) was considered quite ugly. The nineteenth-century schism between "unscientific" architects and "inartistic" engineers had become apparent. The popular practice of calling in an architect to "beautify" the exterior of a structure that had been designed without regard for aesthetic principles was vehemently attacked by architectural critic Montgomery Schuyler and architect Henry F. Hornbostel. They found an ally in engineer Gustav Lindenthal who, on becoming bridge commissioner in 1901, had early designs for the Manhattan Bridge redone and engaged Henry Hornbostel as architect. The new design, considered by many an advance in artistic engineering, involved the use of eye-bar chains in place of cables, a structural system whose feasibility was disputed. Although the design engineer favored the new system, city officials favored the proven cable construction and appointed George Best as the new bridge commissioner and Carrère & Hastings as the new architectural firm. They continued the enlightened approach of their predecessors, restudying the Hornbostel designs in 1904, and incorporating them where possible into their own designs. Carrère & Hastings also worked closely with the engineers of the Bridge Department, then under chief engineer O.F. Nichols. The bridge was formally opened to traffic on December 31, 1909.

Carrère & Hastings drew up preliminary plans for improving the Manhattan approach to the Manhattan Bridge and in 1912 presented fully developed plans for an elliptical plaza, culminating in a monumental arch and colonnade, to the New York City Art Commission. The approach was designed to accommodate eight lanes of tracks for both subways and surface railroads, while providing for other vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Landscaped areas adjacent to the plaza completed the ensemble.

Although the appropriateness of the classical arch and colonnade as a gateway to a modern steel suspension bridge has been criticized as inconsistent, when its plans were published in 1913 the New York Times hailed it as the "most artistic treatment of a bridge entrance attempted on this continent." This architectural treatment was chosen to emphasize the importance of this bridge as a gateway from Manhattan to Brooklyn.

(See continuation sheet.)

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Carrère & Hastings, who had studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, were well prepared to design buildings and civic monuments in this eclectic style. The success of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago inspired the "City Beautiful" movement at the turn of the century, which favored neo-classical architecture set in great civic centers, linked by wide avenues and incorporating formal parks. In New York, this interest in civic beautification led to the establishment of the Municipal Art Society and a New York City Art Commission with powers of review over public buildings and works of art, and to the introduction of the New York Improvement Plan of 1907--the city's first general urban plan since the Commissioners' Plan of 1811. Primarily aesthetic in orientation, the 1907 plan recommended incorporating plazas, parks, and wide vistas at major transportation intersections.

A huge circular plaza was designed to connect the entrances to the Brooklyn and Manhattan Bridges from which traffic would radiate out onto principal streets. Although the plan was never implemented, its precepts are evident in the design of the Manhattan Bridge approach and the approaches to the other East River bridges that were redesigned during this period under an ambitious program of improvements undertaken by bridge commissioner Arthur J. O'Keefe. For O'Keefe and many of his contemporaries, bridges were an ornament to the city, and he felt that the construction of these plazas would "mark an era in aesthetic treatment of the entrances," hitherto neglected in this country.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 16 acres

Quadrangle name

UMT References

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

A 

1	8
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5	8	4	8	9	0
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4	5	0	1	7	0
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B 

1	8
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5	8	5	6	3	0
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4	5	0	5	7	0
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C 

1	8
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5	8	5	6	8	0
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4	5	0	5	7	0
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D 

1	8
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5	8	5	7	9	0
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4	5	0	7	5	0
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E 

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F 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** The nominated property has an eastern terminus at a point near the intersection of Sands Street and Flatbush Avenue Extension in Brooklyn, spans the East River and has a western terminus at Canal Street and the Bowery in Manhattan. The total length, including the Manhattan approach is 6375 feet. (See Continuation Sheet)

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

state	New York	code	036	county	New York	code	61
state	New York	code	036	county	Kings	code	47

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Raymond W. Smith, Program Analyst

organization Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau date September 1982

street & number Agency 1, E.S.P. telephone (518)474-0479

city or town Albany state New York 12238

## 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Allen R. Casare*

title Deputy Commissioner and Counsel

date

7/16/83

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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Continuation sheet    Manhattan Bridge  
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Condit, Carl. American Building Art: The Twentieth Century. New York: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Department of Bridges. City of New York. Annual Reports, 1905-1915.

New York City Art Commission. "Improvements of the Manhattan Plaza of the Manhattan Bridge." Exhibits 63-AW through 63-DS. 1912-1916.

Pinco, C.N. "Plaza Improvements of the Manhattan Bridge, New York City." The Cornell Engineer, 1915.



**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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Manhattan Bridge

Continuation sheet New York County and

~~Kings County,~~

New York

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The property is indicated on the attached maps. (Manhattan Map Scale 120 feet to one inch; Brooklyn Map Scale 60 feet to one inch). Maps are not included for the middle section of the bridge that spans the East River.

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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Continuation sheet	Manhattan Bridge New York County and Kings County, New York	Item number	11	Page	2
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FORM RESEARCHED AND PREPARED BY:

Nancy Goeschel  
Landmarks Preservation Commission  
20 Vesey Street  
New York, New York 10007

September 1982  
212-566-7577