

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

AND/OR COMMON

Queensboro (59th Street) Bridge

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

11th Street and Bridge Plaza North and Bridge Plaza
South, Borough of Queens to 2nd Avenue and 59th
and 60th Streets, Manhattan

CITY, TOWN

New York

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

9th and 18th

STATE

New York

CODE

036

COUNTY

CODE

New York and Queens 061/081

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT
☐ BUILDING(S)
☒ STRUCTURE
☐ SITE
☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC
☐ PRIVATE
☐ BOTH
PUBLIC ACQUISITION
☐ IN PROCESS
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED
☐ UNOCCUPIED
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
☐ YES: RESTRICTED
☒ YES: UNRESTRICTED
☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE
☐ COMMERCIAL
☐ EDUCATIONAL
☐ ENTERTAINMENT
☐ GOVERNMENT
☐ INDUSTRIAL
☐ MILITARY
☐ MUSEUM
☐ PARK
☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
☐ RELIGIOUS
☐ SCIENTIFIC
☒ TRANSPORTATION
☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Dept. of Transportation, City of New York

STREET & NUMBER

40 Worth Street

CITY, TOWN

New York

VICINITY OF

STATE

New York

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

New York County Hall of Records

STREET & NUMBER

31 Chambers Streets

CITY, TOWN

New York

STATE

New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

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

The Queensboro Bridge is a two-span, through cantilever truss bridge. In a manner that is unusual for a bridge of this size, neither span has a suspended truss, and each is hinged directly to its counterpart. The overall length of the bridge is 4168 feet from Second Avenue in Manhattan to Eleventh Street in Queens. The main span, bridging the East River from Manhattan to Roosevelt (Blackwell's) Island, is 1182 feet in length. The lesser span, bridging the river from Queens to Roosevelt Island, is 988 feet in length. The bridge is 86 feet wide, and its height above high water is 135 feet. Built between 1901 and 1909, the Queensboro Bridge was the longest, largest and heaviest cantilever bridge ever built at the time of its completion.

The steel superstructure of the bridge stands on four piers of rusticated granite, one each in Manhattan and Queens, and two on Roosevelt Island. The bridge has two roadways, an upper and a lower deck. All roadways are of reinforced concrete, but originally consisted of steel floor beams and stringers carrying a wood deck. The bridge was designed to carry pedestrians, the Second Avenue Elevated, and trolleys. It now is limited to vehicular traffic only.

Both the Manhattan and Queens approaches consist of simple steel frame structures stiffened below the lower roadway. Only the Manhattan approaches exhibit extensive architectural treatment. The anchorages are of rusticated masonry surmounted by segmentally-arched pediments and shallow domes as they rise above the roadways. They are treated as monumental elements, and contained elevators and stairways to the trolley lines on the bridge. On the Manhattan side, the treatment of the approach continues this nonstructural stone treatment to the west of the anchorage. There is an arcade of nine segmental arches running to First Avenue, a broad segmental arch over the avenue, and three arches just to the west of the avenue. The spandrels above the arches were originally filled with an incrustation of multicolored tiles, which have since been removed leaving grey brick exposed.

Behind the arcades is a space that was designed and used as a public market. It is arranged in a uniform pattern of four bays on a thirty foot grid and is surmounted by shallow timbered vaults. The arcade is glazed in small lights with steel mullions and muntins. The glazing was added in 1918 to allow the market to operate year round. The arcade west of First Avenue is covered by the same shallow vaulting as is the market space. The vaults, known as "Guastavino Tiles" (after their builder), or Catalan Vaulting, consist of three

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New York/Queens County
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layers of ceramic tiles cemented together, with a combined thickness of about four inches. These vaults are totally self-supporting, and remain intact with only minor signs of efflorescence resulting from poor drainage of the roadways above.

The upper level roadway is supported by an exposed steel substructure, and access is via a pair of ramps running north and south at midblock. Approach ramps were added between First and Second Avenues during a bridge renovation in 1955, and were executed in a style and in materials consistent with the original approaches. The lower level is reached by two ramps off of Fifty-ninth and Sixtieth Streets and directly from street level at Second Avenue.

On the Queens side, the approaches lead from a complex of elevated highways, all rebuilt in 1955. The Queens approaches never had the embellishment of the Manhattan approaches; they are all built of exposed steel and concrete.

The steel superstructure shows considerable aesthetic treatment. It is entered from either end through a monumental arch which has a massive bronze plaque in the place of the keystone. The original engineer's conception was considerably altered by the architect and supervising engineer to give it a more graceful and monolithic profile. The steel towers are surmounted by ornate steel finials.

At the bridge plaza on Second Avenue, there are two kiosks of the original five (one has been restored and moved to the Brooklyn Children's Museum) that led into the trolley station below grade. These kiosks are built of cast iron and terra cotta tile, with Catalan Vaulting for the soffits. The iron is especially well detailed with complex Beaux Arts ornament. Near the corner of Fifty-ninth Street and Second Avenue stands one of the original two electroliers, built of heavy bronze in a distinctly Beaux Arts style. The other half of the pair is in storage in the trolley barn below awaiting restoration. These elements were designed by the architect as fitting compliments to the design of the approaches and the bridge itself. Another particularly interesting decorative element occupies the east wall of the market space, and is a fountain given to the market in 1919 by the Municipal Arts Society. It is of carved stone, and includes a mosaic by Edwin Blashfield.

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structor must be associated with the scientific constructor at every step."³ Lindenthal commissioned Henry Hornbostel, president of the Beaux Arts Society of America, an "architect of considerable originality"⁴ in spite of his rigid adherence to the principles of the Beaux Arts style. He made many additions and basic changes to the preliminary work of the engineers, making the steelwork of the cantilevers more appealing and creating a unique series of approaches in Manhattan. His work was well received, and Montgomery Schuyler found that "the (Queensboro Bridge) shows as distinct an advantage upon the Brooklyn Bridge as the Williamsburg (a particularly unpopular East River bridge completed in 1903) shows a retrogression."⁵ Lindenthal's practice of involving an architect from conception through completion proved so successful that it became almost universal practice thereafter.

The Queensboro Bridge was also built as symbol of the unification of the City of New York. The boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens, Manhattan and Staten Island became part of New York in 1903. Until then, only Roebling's Brooklyn Bridge joined any two boroughs. The Queensboro, along with the Manhattan and Williamsburg Bridges, were quickly built soon after unification, all being completed by 1909, as a physical affirmation of the consolidation.

The bridge was built with special features. Beneath the Manhattan approaches, Raphael Guastavino, the famed engineer/contractor, built a 47,000 square-foot public market surmounted by his unique Catalan Vaults. The market space, the bulk of which lies in the western portion of the block between First and York Avenues, was used until 1936 as one of the grandest of the city's public markets. It remains in use as a storage space for city trucks. The space has been called one of New York's great architectural secrets,⁶ and is surely a testimony both to the civic spirit that built a major municipal gathering place as part of a utilitarian structure, and the skill of Guastavino, Hornbostel, and Lindenthal.

³Montgomery Schuyler, "Our Four Big Bridges," Architectural Record, Vol. XXV, p. 155.

⁴James Van Trump, "Henry Hornbostel: The New Brutalism," Charette, Vol. XLVI, No. 5, pp. 9,19.

⁵Montgomery Schuyler, op. cit., p. 154.

⁶Paul Goldberger, Interview, January 25, 1977.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 26

QUADRANGLE NAME Central Park

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1, 8 5, 87 4, 00 45, 1, 25, 5, 0
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C 1, 8 5, 88 8, 80 45, 1, 16, 6, 0

B 1, 8 5, 88 9, 10 45, 1, 17, 2, 0
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D 1, 8 5, 87 3, 80 45, 1, 24, 8, 0

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Bounded on west by Second Avenue in New York County; on east by Eleventh Avenue. The bridge is eighty-six feet wide.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
New York	036	New York	061
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
New York	036	Queens	081

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Huntley Gill, edited by Elizabeth Spencer-Ralph

ORGANIZATION

NYS Parks and Rec., Div. for Historic Preservation

DATE

10/11/78

STREET & NUMBER

Agency Bldg. #1, Empire State Plaza

TELEPHONE

(518)474-0479

CITY OR TOWN

Albany

STATE

New York

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL xxx

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 Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation

DATE

10/20/78

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

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES	1909	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Gustav Lindenthal/Henry Hornbostel
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Queensboro Bridge is significant as an urban artifact, as an important engineering achievement and as a civic symbol.

The bridge was designed by Gustav Lindenthal, "one of the great men of American bridge engineering,"¹ and his bridge was the largest and heaviest cantilever bridge ever constructed to the time of its completion in 1909. The successful completion of the bridge was noted throughout the world, since cantilever bridges had fallen into disrepute with the collapse of the Quebec bridge in 1907, two years before the completion of the Queensboro. Also unusual was the fact that the bridge was built as a "through cantilever," in which the bridge's roadways pass through its supporting trusses rather than sitting above them, as was more common. In addition, the Queensboro is unusual in that it has no suspended spans -- that is, hinged spans supported by cantilevered trusses -- it is hinged only in the center of each river crossing. The Queensboro "epitomizes the exuberant vitality of American structural art perhaps better than any other large bridge.... (It) may, from the point of view of style and engineering, be said to represent the culmination of nineteenth-century American bridge design."²

Another unique aspect of the bridge is that it was the first to involve an architect from its conception onwards. "Mr. Lindenthal had the conviction that the common method of bridgebuilding, whereby the structure is designed by an engineer, and afterward, if at all, an architect invoked to give it such form and comeliness as may still be practicable, was a radically wrong method..... the artistic con-

¹David Plowden, Bridges: The Spans of North America. The Viking Press, New York; 1974. p. 180.

²Ibid., p. 179.

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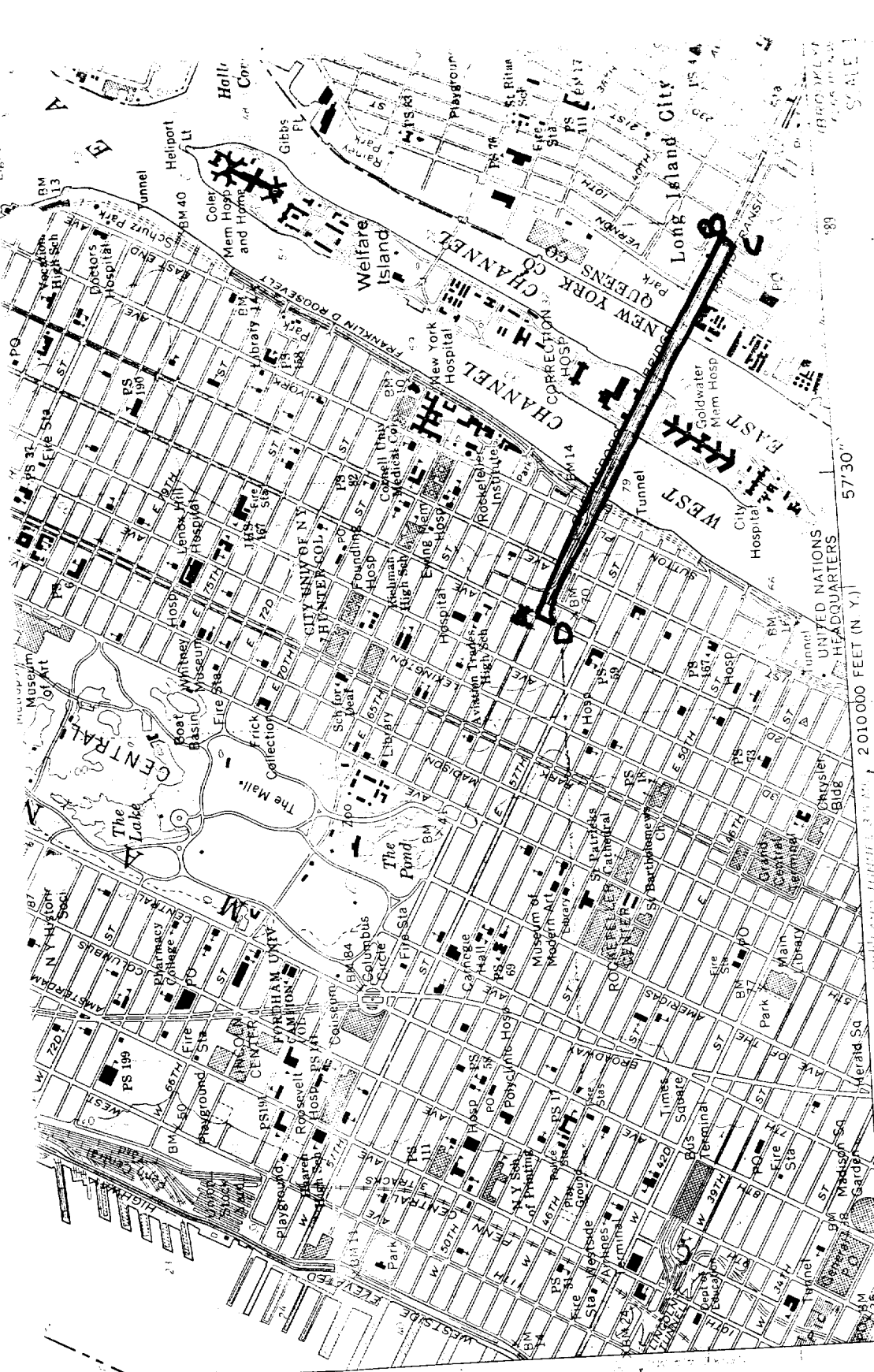
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Schuyler, Montgomery. "Bridges and the Art Commission." Architectural
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----- "Our Four Big Bridges." Architectural Record.
March, 1909. Vol. XXV, pp. 147-160.



200,000 FEET
(N. Y.)

Central Park
QUAD

QUEENSBORO
BRIDGE, NEW
YORK COUNTY
AND QUEENS
COUNTY

A EASTING
51871400
NORTHING
45121550

B EASTING
51881910
NORTHING
45111720

C EASTING
51881880
NORTHING
45111660

D EASTING
51871380
NORTHING
45121480

40° 45' 74° 00'

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Revised in cooperation with New York
Department of Transportation

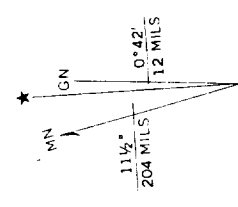
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and New Jersey Geodetic Survey

Planimetry by photogrammetric methods and from USC&GS Charts T-4567,
T-5089, T-5264, T-5278, T-5448, T-5449, T-5451, T-5452, T-5453, T-5458,
and T-5778. Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1954 and planetable surveys 1956

Revised from aerial photographs taken 1966. Field checked 1966

Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 226, 274, 745,
746, and 747 (1966). This information is not intended for navigational purposes

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grids based on New York coordinate system, Long Island zone,
and New Jersey coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18, shown in blue
Landmark buildings are shown



CONTOUR INTERVAL
DATUM IS MEAN
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN
FOOT REFLECT THE MEAN RANGE OF THE
SURFACE SURVEYED IN THE
4 FEET IN THE HIGHEST RANGE

UTM GRID AND 1966 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS



Queensboro Bridge, New York
Courttyard, Queens County
Photo by: H. Gill, 1977
Neg. at: Baldwin and
Associates, 1 West 72nd
New York, NY

View: General view of the
bridge approach on Man-
hattan. Photo #1

Queensboro Bridge, New York
Courttyard, Queens County
Photo by: H. Gill, 1977
Neg. at: Baldwin and
Associates, 1 West 72nd St.
New York, NY

View: General view from
Manhattan. Photo #2



Queensboro Bridge, New York
Courtyard, Queens County
Photo by: H. Gill, 1977
Neg. at: Baldwin and
Associates, 1 West 72nd St.
New York, NY

Photo #3

View: span over the East
River and piers on
Roosevelt Island.

Queensboro Bridge, New York
Courtyard, Queens County
Photo by: H. Gill, 1977
Neg. at: Baldwin and
Associates, 1 West 72nd St.
New York, NY

View: The piers and bridge
on Roosevelt Island.

Photo #4



Queensboro Bridge, New York
Courtyard, Queens County
Photo by: H. Gill, 1977
Neg. at: Baldwin and
Associates, 1 West 72nd St
New York, NY

View: Detail of bridge

Photo #5

Queensboro Bridge, New York
Courtyard, Queens County
Photo by: H. Gill, 1977
Neg. at: Baldwin and
Associates, 1 West 72nd St.
New York, NY

View: Exterior of vaulted
marketplace,

Photo #6



Queensboro Bridge, New York
Courtyard, Queens County
Photo by: H. Gill, 1977
Neg. at: Baldwin and
Associates, 1 West 72nd St.
New York, NY

View: Under the bridge on
Manhattan side.

Photo #7