

11-5

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 instructions. 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 The Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number One Marquette Drive, Marquette Park N/A not for publication

city or town Gary N/A vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Lake code 089 zip code 46403

3. State/Federal 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

State of Federal agency and bureau

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

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium  
Name of Property

Lake County, Indiana  
County and State

### 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
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	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**

NONE

### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Recreation and Culture/Outdoor Recreation

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Work in progress

### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Prairie School

Classical Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls concrete

roof terra cotta

other

### Narrative Description

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

See continuation sheets

Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium  
Name of Property

Lake County, Indiana  
County and State

## 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 a 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.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 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):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering  
Record # \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Engineering

Entertainment/Recreation

### Period of Significance

1921-1944

### Significant Dates

1921

### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

Maher, George

### Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

National Register File

Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium  
Name of Property

Lake County, Indiana  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 6 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 6	4 7 8 5 2 0	4 6 0 7 4 3 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	1 6	4 7 8 7 0 0	4 6 0 7 4 6 0

3	1 6	4 7 8 7 0 0	4 6 0 7 3 3 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	1 6	4 7 8 5 2 0	4 6 0 7 3 2 0

☐ 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 Gregory H. Jenkins/Carol Ann Schweikert  
organization Gregory H. Jenkins, Architect/DHPA Intern date November 5, 1993  
street & number 426 S. Lake Street, N. Ste. telephone 219-938-8200  
city or town Gary state Indiana zip code 46403

### 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 SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Gary, Thomas V. Barnes, Mayor  
street & number 401 Broadway telephone 219-881-1301  
city or town Gary state Indiana zip code 46402

**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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium, Lake County, Indiana

Narrative Statement of Description

The Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium is located on a spectacular lake front site on the southern tip of Lake Michigan. It is at the center of nearly five miles of unspoiled sand beaches near the original mouth of the Grand Calumet River. To the immediate south, Gary's Marquette Park spreads east and west to adjoin the Indiana Dunes National Lake Shore's west unit facilities at Milles Woods and West Beach. These park facilities are flanked by the important steel production facilities of United States Steel on the west and Bethlehem Steel on the east. The structure and its site were a gift to the City of Gary from the United States Steel Corporation in 1921.

The Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium was designed by Chicago architect George Maher as a public recreational facility for the use and enjoyment by the citizens of Gary. Bathing suit rentals, changing areas, showers, restrooms and a second floor viewing gallery were included in this lake front facility. This two-story structure is symmetrical about both its north-south and east-west axes.

The building's main structural system and primary construction material is precast concrete, an early example of a mass-produced construction system. The precast concrete included "T" shaped interlocking blocks, ornamented "T" blocks, joint blocks and sill blocks. Ornamented "T" blocks were designed so they could be used in various locations, thus reducing the number of precast molds required for the project. Reinforcing steel was added at piers and lintels for strength and support.

Roof construction consists of wood rafters and 1x8 wood planks. The barrel vaulted ceiling on the second floor is plaster suspended from the rafters with 2x4 hangers. Roofing consists of flat English glazed clay tiles with metal ridgework on the north and south ridge lines. Guttae forming a dentil molding ornament the four facades of the two-story core, just under the eaves. Small ball ornaments alternate between the guttae.

The north and south facades are almost mirror images. The central two-story portion of each is divided into three structural bays by two, two-story piers flanking two-story round columns in antis.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

---

Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium, Lake County, Indiana

The columns are capped by Corinthian capitals. One difference between the north and south facade is the first floor of the central portion. On the south facade, this area is open, but on the north, the area is closed. The entrance is found on the south facade and is gradually recessed in the wall.

Stairwells with balconies flank the center on both facades. The balconies in the stairwells are at half-story level on the south and second story level on the north. The stairs open into a covered, but open I-shaped viewing gallery. Both ends of the gallery open to expansive views. The gallery's core features ten horizontal openings high on the facade and flanked with Tuscan columns in antis. The second floor gallery is lined with two rows of Tuscan columns even with the exterior Corinthian columns. The frieze is engraved with "Gary Bathing Beach". These facades present a vertical emphasis with giant order columns and two-story square posts.

On the east and west facades of the central two-story portion are one-story walled courtyards. The exterior of the north and south courtyard facades contain three graduated recessed jambs with blind panels. The end panels on each facade contain a raised "mullion" with G inscription. The inner panels were originally doorways into the facility. Most of these as currently boarded up, but in 1955, at least one was closed with concrete blocks. The courtyards originally contained men's and women's shower areas. These facades with low-pitch roofline and one-story courtyard walls present a horizontal emphasis typical of Prairie School architecture.

The durable construction materials selected for this project have prevented its rapid deterioration from lack of maintenance. Balcony balusters and parapet caps were the first building elements to fail. In the mid 1950's, an unsightly repair replaced the deteriorated balusters with concrete block knee-walls. Parapet walls originally constructed of precast concrete "T" blocks were repaired with concrete masonry units. In the late 1960's an attempt was made to convert two storage rooms into public toilets, but the project was not completed. In the early 1970's, the building was boarded and completely closed to the public.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 3

---

**Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium, Lake County, Indiana**

Included in the property boundaries for this nomination is a section of the beachfront down to the edge of the water. By including this beachfront, the building's association with the beach and water through its historical function remains evident. The building is closely tied to its setting.

Three projects were undertaken in 1992 to begin restoration of the building. First, the structure was re-electrified. Existing bronze light fixtures were restored and remounted in their original location. Second, repair of the roof was begun. The missing clay tiles are being replaced with duplicates made in original molds by the original manufacturer. Gutters and flashing in their original configuration and material have been reconstructed using precast concrete pieces for new molds. The size and shape of balusters no longer extant were calipered from historic photographs.

The current work in progress is part of a long range master plan to restore the project to its original exterior appearance. Remaining historic material accounts for more than 95% of the existing project. Work done to date has helped to protect the structural integrity of the project.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium, Lake County, Indiana

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium is a significant example of early twentieth century architecture under Criterion C. An ingenious engineering design, the structure is composed of numbered, engineered, precast concrete modules in an attempt at standardization of building components. Designed by noted Chicago architect, George Maher, this unique building is a clear illustration of the stylistic conflict and transition from "Prairie School" to "Neo-Classical" architecture. The imposing use of symmetry, scale and detail are of high artistic value. Under Criterion A, the Aquatorium was an important civic monument, fulfilling in part the need to provide outdoor recreation to Gary's masses.

George Maher was born in Mill Creek, West Virginia, on December 26, 1864. A contemporary of Frank Lloyd Wright, he entered private architectural practice in Chicago in 1888. In 1901 he became a member of the AIA and was elected a fellow in 1916. Maher was associated with the Prairie School through his persistent search for an American style. His new designs did not develop into styles, but rather lent themselves to duplication and repetitive usage. He did create a consistent series of ahistorical designs favored by the public and influential on other architects. Maher's projects were frequently published by the Inland Architect and News Record increasing his influence on Midwest architecture.

Maher designed a number of residences and commercial buildings in Chicago including Watkins Medical Co., Winona Savings Bank, Kenilworth Club and Northwestern University Gymnasium. Also active in urban planning, Maher proposed major planning improvements in Hinsdale, Illinois, Glencoe, Illinois and Gary, Indiana. The first two-thirds of his thirty-eight year career were his most successful. Like most Prairie School architects, his career drastically declined after 1914. Public interest moved on to other styles, but these architects found it difficult to adjust.

One of Maher's later designs, Gary Bathing Beach is a mix of styles showing the clear transition occurring during this time as well as his divergent interests. Although devoted to the creation



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

---

Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium, Lake County, Indiana

of a "democratic" and original style, he led a public crusade for the preservation of the classic "Art Museum" built for the Columbian Exposition of 1893. The Aquatorium presents elements from two different styles in addition to using classical detailing in a newer material. Maher, however, was not able to adjust to his career decline and in 1926, at age 62, he committed suicide.

The construction of the Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium in 1921 is significant in the context of 1920's construction in Gary, Indiana. Founded in 1906, the physical manifestation of Gary's wealth was directly related to the success of the United States Steel Corporation. By 1920, the United States Steel was successful. Between the end of World War I and Black Friday, 1929, many of Gary's landmarks were constructed including the City/County, gateway Park Complex, Gary National Bank, Hotel Gary, Memorial Auditorium, Model Building, Parry-Barr Building, and the Tribe of K Headquarters (These are included in the Gary City Center Historic District nomination). Each of these buildings represents a huge expenditure of capital. Each structure illustrates the change in scale from utilitarian to monumental and each moves stylistically to the "more modern" neo-classic and revival styles of the early Twentieth Century. The Aquatorium is the only recreational building of this group, the only one employing both neo-classic and Prairie School architecture and the only important, non-industrial structure to occupy the lake front in Gary.

Under Criterion A, the Aquatorium is also significant for its function in the community. The growing population of Gary during the 1920's needed a public recreational facility. Most of the large structures built during this time were for industrial use. This structure was not a private facility serving only a small percentage of the city's population. It was a public facility serving the masses of the people of Gary. This development of Gary's lakeshore into a recreational park (reputed to have been planned by Jens Jensen) followed national trends which recognized the benefits of public parks and healthy outdoor recreation. Civic structures in Gary, such as City Hall and the Courthouse also reflect this interest in "City Beautiful" urban planning.

Despite its evident decay, the artistic value and high integrity of the structure are obvious. From the monumental neo-classic

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 6

---

**Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium, Lake County, Indiana**

columns on the north and south facades to the axially symmetrical vaulted gallery on the second floor, enough of the original detail remains to assure visitors that they occupy the work of a master. Still occupying its beachfront setting, the structure reveals its historic function as a recreational facility for beach-goers. One is clearly able to picture the structure filled with the sounds of people enjoying the sand, sun and water. Repairs to the structure are relatively minor and have not diminished the overall appearance or public appreciation of this landmark.

After the abandonment of the Gary Bathing Beach Aquatorium by the Gary Park Department in 1976, the building remained without a benefactor until the founding of the "Chanute Aquatorium Society". The Society's stated policy and goal is to restore the building to its original exterior appearance in complete accord with the guidelines of the Department of the Interior for the renovation of historic structures. They hold a 99-year lease on the building from the Gary Parks Department.