



THE CROWN JEWELS OF GREATER NEW YORK



Heat and humidity, the Twins Horrible, are doing their worst in the city, but thousands find coolness and comfort in the Coney Island surf

THE CITY OF FUN

Coney Island's Summer Traffic Keeps Switchboards Busy

THE city is in the throes of a heat wave. Blistering, sweltering temperature and clammy humidity turns the world of diligent workers, competent housewives and quiet stay-at-homes into a perspiring army of eager comfort-seekers, fleeing the oven-like confines of city homes, offices and shops for the cool waters and the refreshing breezes of the beaches.

To Coney Island on the crest of a heat wave go hundreds of thousands of city-dwellers. From stuffy tenement and crowded street come the droves of jaded old folks and happy youngsters, eyes bright with the joy of anticipation and youthful exuberance of spirits little affected by the torrid spell.

Watch 'em as they leave the subway and El stations and trek down to the boardwalk and the beach. The big family predominates. Here is the buxom matron with a baby in arms and a shy little girl dragging at her skirts, while a few yards

ahead two small boys are having their difficulties carrying by their joint efforts a big carpet bag con-



Acrobatic bathers pull a stunt worthy of Mr. Keith or Mr. Poli and any of their palaces

taining the family lunch, bathing suits and sundry other odds and ends considered necessary to promote the maximum comfort and enjoyment of a day at the beach.

In another group is a big, straight-limbed girl with the blue eyes and flaxen plaits of the Slav. Obviously she is the big sister of the freckle-faced boy and the two smaller girls tripping along at her side, and while still in her teens the firm grip she has on the sleeve of the younger brother indicates that she has assumed something of a mother's duties for her family.

A group of whooping boys come tearing down the wide street waving their swimming suits as they run. More decorous in their demeanor, but none the less eager to reach the cool waters, come four girls of the high school age, arm in arm, carrying neat little bundles holding their swimming suits.

Here is a tired-looking mother from the East Side, pushing a per-

ambulator containing a very young baby. A patriarchal old gentleman with the hirsute adornments and philosophical eye of the rabbi ambles benignly along with a swimming-suit and towel over his arm. Two city firemen, uniforms open at the neck, seek relief after a sweltering night of duty.



Above—The famous boardwalk in the off season



Left—The same promenade when New York City goes down to the sea on boardwalks

All sorts and varieties from all sections of the city, they come. Their Mecca is the broad strip of beach with its numerous bath-houses. Amusement parks are neglected, and about the only concessions doing their usual thriving business are those stands where the succulent "hot-dog" is purveyed and the ice-cold pop dispensed. During the heat of the day the chief attraction is the beach where thousands court cool comfort in the waves. Nor is this comfort denied those of the most slender purses. At the municipal bath-house, one of the largest and best equipped of its kind in the world, thousands are lined up at the entrance each morning during the hot spell, and particularly on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays.

Other bath-houses are crowded to capacity and the heterogeneous mass of humanity on the beach and inside the safety limits in the water

prescribed by the ropes make a colorful spectacle with bathing suits of all shades and all extremes from the gaudy green and yellow stripes to the quiet navy blue or gray.

As the sun goes down, throwing long shadows on the boardwalk, other thousands pour out from the city. These are no pleasure seekers, however. The duties of the day leave them little time for enjoyment of sea-bathing. They come to seek the necessary slumber to equip them for their work of the following day. Some bring pillows, cushions and blankets to spread under them on the soft sands; others use newspapers, while many a coat rolled about a pair of shoes provides a pillow. The big blue canopy of the sky is their only roof, and their alarm clock is the red eye of the sun which comes peeping out of the sea with the dawn.

This is Coney's peak season. In addition to the hundreds of thou-

sands seeking the cooling dip in the ocean there are those who come to enjoy the fireworks displays, to take in the many rides in the amusement parks and to enjoy all the fun and entertainment which this fairyland of hectic music and dazzling lights offers. Then there is the summer population, the bungalow residents who form a large part of the summer population of New York's biggest playground of the people. Conservative estimates give Coney credit for a total of 500,000 visitors daily in the peak of the heat and vacation season. Take any crowd of half a million souls and place them at any given point and you have a sizeable community, requiring all modern conveniences. It can be safely said that the summer rush to Coney Island places a bigger burden on the telephone service than any other agency of public service.

Coney Island's regular colony of summer residents themselves bring an increase of telephone traffic which is enormous and requires the service of additional telephone operators. Added to this summer traffic comes the peak traffic with the rush of the daily visitors particularly on fireworks and gala nights and during the heat wave periods.

The nature of this super-peak traffic is indicated by the fact that approximately one out of three of all the calls made at the rush periods come from the coin-boxes, and so high has been the calling rate at certain times that even with a full compliment of extra operators and as many as 100 working at the Coney Island switchboard it has often been necessary to route certain of the busiest coin-boxes through the Esplanade central office for service. Throughout the entire season, independent of heat waves or big celebrations, there is a jump in traffic over Saturdays and Sundays.

"Don't wait supper, mother," is one of the most common messages transmitted by telephone in the hot days when the afternoon visit is ex-

tended to the evening. Similarly the people who decide to stay on the beach all night when the heat fails to abate with the setting of the sun usually want to telephone their homes to acquaint solicitous friends and relatives with their whereabouts.

From a normal average daily traffic of 15,000 calls in the winter the number of daily calls handled through the Coney Island central office during the vacation months jumps to a daily average of 34,000 in July and 31,000 in August, although on an exceptionally busy day 48,000 calls have been completed. While Coney Island has a busy hour in the morning between ten and eleven, similar to that experienced generally in the telephone system, there is a busier hour between seven and eight in the evening when as many as 4,000 calls are sometimes made. On Saturdays this peak traffic often continues unabated from seven in the evening until after midnight.

The Sheepshead central office is similarly affected in a lesser degree by the summer seasonal traffic. Probably no more exacting requirements are asked of any telephone

operators than those 130 efficient young women who form the summer staff for the Coney Island switchboard.

Comments by those who know Coney Island and its many problems are invariably favorable to our operators. From the desk sergeants in the police court, where the friends and relatives of lost children are located mainly through the agency of the telephone, to the executive head of the Coney Island Chamber of Commerce and from the numerous officials and business men in between come frequent expressions of admiration for the fine courteous quality of service rendered.

It is remarkable that while a heat wave brings a peak in telephone traffic the same condition also occurs when a thunderstorm comes along to chase the pleasure-seekers and bathers in from boardwalk and beach. Here again it is the telephone which enables the Coney visitors to acquaint their friends at home with changes of plans due to an unexpected storm.

A typical instance of this was a recent Saturday night when one of the most severe electrical and rain storms in the history of the resort broke early in the evening at a time when beach, boardwalk and amusement parks alike were crowded.

With the rush for shelter came a similar rush for the telephone pay-stations, and long queues of people waited at every spot where telephone service was available. As a result of this exceptional service demand, the Coney Island switchboard was illuminated through the entire night with a flood of signal lights comparable in sustained brilliancy to the gayly-lighted entrance to Luna Park or Steeplechase.

Telephone service, however, was equal to the demands upon it, and telephone operators were on the job throughout the night as usual to meet exceptional service requirements.



Just one of "those things" in the amusement park at Coney, with some youngsters getting the thrill of their lives out of it. Timid ones —this way to the old-fashioned merry-go-round!