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Carnival Park was once a bright and shining spot

(Editor's note: This is the 13th in a series of "then and now" articles on places and things of interest in Kansas City, Kan., compiled by area historian Margaret Landis in observance of the 100th birthday of KCK in 1986. Much of the information has appeared in past editions of The Kansan.)

(Transcriptions are presented without changes except to improve readability.)

Carnival Park was described as one of the city's greatest achievements.

Located between 14th and 16th streets on Armstrong Avenue to Barnett Avenue (the current Ward High School athletic field), the park opened May 7, 1907. It ran for about two years as Carnival Park and was then leased to a carnival for another two years.

The demise of the park is one of the cities biggest mysteries. No one seems to know exactly what happened to it and why it failed, but, according to the *Kansas City Gazette Globe*, the last scheduled (?) was Oct. 9, 1911, for the Knights of Columbus.

The Carnival Park Company was incorporated for \$ 1million. Planners announced it "would be equal in area to the White City in Chicago and that it would be larger than any amusement park in St. Louis, Indianapolis or any other large city west of New York."

It was built as a family park. "It will be strictly a temperance pleasure resort, no intoxicating liquors will be sold on the grounds."

John H. Ster, Indianapolis, the architect and designer, used the "Ionic" style of architecture. Ninety-six ornamental columns with clusters of electric lights were placed about the park for a picturesque effect. Two hundred thousands lights were used to outline the exterior of the different buildings.

The main entrance was 100 feet wide and also designed in Ionic style. The large columns were 21 feet high and the structure was surmounted by an heroic figure of an American Indian with large eagles on either side. The park, with a fence surrounding it, contained a



A night scene at Carnival Park (top) shows the tower that dominated the amusement park that was located on the grounds of the current Ward High School Athletic Field (bottom). The chute-the-chutes riding device (the chutes led from the tower) is one of the best remembered segments of the park.

dance pavillion, skating rink, band shell, wigwam restaurant and riding devices including "Shoot the Chutes," "Double Whirl," "Scenic Railroad," and a "Roller Coaster."

The "Shoot the Chutes" incorporated one of the best remembered segments of the Park: a 75 to 100-foot-tall brightly-lit tower which was "the pride of the pack management."

Landscaping included a sunken garden with lily ponds and aquatic plants, lagoons, winding board walks and flower beds. Statuary was placed throughout the park.

The Metropolitan Street Railway Company installed a special railway loop giving service directly to the park.

Several reasons have been offered for the demise of the park: a wind storm that caused the tower to fall, a fire that damaged the roller skating, the Electric Park in Kansas City, Mo., which featured a beer garden (no intoxicating liquors were sold at Carnival Park) and unpaid mortgages. The undoing was probably money.

The KCK school board purchased the property for a football field in October 1915. In July 1927 the school board exchanged the property for golf course property at 22nd and Washington. Wyandotte High School played its first football game under lights at the new field at 22nd and Armstrong on Sept. 26, 1930.

The old Carnival Park property then passed through two families to become the Ward High School Athletic Ground in July 31, 1932.