



Carnival Park Photograph Collection (KSCOLL 5)

The Carnival Park collection is comprised of 17 historic photographs and newspaper clippings about the park from the early 20th century.

Descriptive Summary

Creator: Unknown

Title: Carnival Park Photograph Collection

Dates: Approximately 1907

Size: Two boxes, 20 folders

Location: Kansas Room, 2nd floor workroom, closed stacks

Administrative Information

Restrictions on access: Unrestricted access.

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Additional physical form available: Digital images available on the [Kansas Room Digital Collections](#) page.

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Location of originals: Kansas City, Kansas Public Library, Kansas Room closed stacks

Acquisition information: Unknown.

Citation note: (Identification of the image, Kansas Room – Special Collections, Kansas City, Kansas Public Libraries)

Collection Description

This collection consists of 17 vintage black and white photographs, ca. 1907, by A. T. Russell, Business Photographer, Kansas City, Missouri. Photographs are 7 ½ " x 9 5/8", mounted on cardboard.

The original inventory list and various newspaper clippings about Carnival Park and its history are also included.

Historical Note:

Carnival Park was a public, family amusement park located on 13.5 acres between 14th and 16th, the east and west, and Armstrong and Barnett Avenues to the north and south. The park operated from 1907-1911. During its relatively short life span, Carnival Park was described as one of the greatest achievements of the city. The recently opened Intercity Viaduct used it as an inducement to ride the streetcar -- a cool ride on a hot summer's night. Located at what is now the Ward athletic field, the park opened May 7, 1907. It operated for approximately two years as Carnival Park and was then leased to a carnival for another two years. John Steen, the park's architect, filled the area with flowerbeds, statues, and winding walkways. The Lagoon, spanned by a bridge, was another prominent feature and provided a somewhat wet ending to the "Shoot the Chutes" ride. "Shoot the Chutes" also incorporated one of the best-remembered segments of the park: a very tall, brightly lit tower and "the pride of the park management". The demise of Carnival Park is one of the City's biggest mysteries. No one seems to know exactly what happened to it and why it failed. Some attribute the failure to the fall of the tower due to a high wind. A roller rink adjacent to the tower was damaged by fire. Joseph T. Carey Sr., the son of Thomas Carey, a co-owner of the park, believes a great extent of the problem was caused by the prohibition of serving alcoholic beverages.

Some of the highlights of Carnival Park:

THE BAND SHELL - Two concerts given every day featuring the "finest and best-known bands in the nation". Programs varied to include something for everyone.

THE WIGWAM - A covered restaurant featuring a full line of soft drinks and food at reasonable prices. The park also took pride in the quality of their dishes and service.

SKATING RINK - Featuring a gallery capable of holding 500 spectators, the rink was 64 by 143 feet with a surface of white maple.

THE CAROUSEL - "An elaborate affair with animals of all sorts for the youngsters to ride." It also had seats for young ladies and their mothers and the movement was smooth and steady.

SCENIC RAILWAY - The ride was exciting without being nerve-wracking. The dark tunnel at the end of the ride was said to be a great attraction for young lovers.

HALE'S TOURS - This was the invention of a Kansas City fire chief, George C. Hale. Patrons sat in cars that appeared to move while watching scenes of foreign countries. One of the tour's highlights was the weekly change of sights.

THE LAUNDRY - Designed to resemble the much-utilized service, patrons of the ride were loaded into a tub of a gigantic washing machine, put through the ringer and after wandering through a blind alley, were sent barreling down a chute where a crowd of amused spectators usually waited to greet the riders less-than-dignified arrival.

THE DOUBLE WHIRL - This consisted of six miniature Ferris wheels revolving perpendicular to each other and circling its enclosure simultaneously.

FIGURE EIGHT - A roller coaster whose patrons were seldom satisfied with one ride. The park was also quick to declare the efforts that were undertaken to make this ride as safe as possible.

Arrangement Note

The items are arranged to correspond with the original inventory. Newspaper clippings and original inventory are housed in folders 21 and 22.

Scope and content note

The photographs feature some of the main architectural structures in the park, including shelters, theaters, rides, and performance and refreshment areas. Some photographs feature the large crowds of visitors that the park attracted.

Images 12, 14, 19 missing per annotated inventory.

Collection Inventory

BOX 1

Folder 1

Entrance to roller skating rink

Cardboard fragment from photograph with photographer's information

Folder 2

Entrance to Wizard – admission ticket booth

Folder 3

Crystal Laundry – admission ticket books

Folder 4

Crowd watching a performance inside building

Folder 5

Entrance to Hale's Tours of the World – admission ticket booth

Folder 6

People gathered on stage

Folder 7

Crowd on boardwalk

Folder 8

View within park

Folder 9

Entrance to 3rd Degree – admission ticket booth

Folder 10

View within park from corner across from 3rd Degree

BOX 2

Folder 11

Night scene showing roller coaster tower (chutes)

Folder 13

Tables and chairs under a roof with small stage

Folder 15

View from tower of chutes with car and passengers ascending

Folder 16
Ferris wheel

Folder 17
Water and boats in foreground, crowd facing Hale's Tower of the World (view of lagoon, boats and boardwalk with crowd)

Folder 18
View of grounds with benches, pavilion in the background

Folder 20
Table and chairs on roofed walk – refreshment counter at one end – Meyer's Ice Cream signs

Folder 21
Copies of various newspaper clippings about Carnival Park

Folder 22
Original collection inventory list and four photocopies

Processed by Anne Lacey, Kansas Collection Librarian, May 2018