

VIEWS OF THE PAST



The History of Kansas City, Kansas in pamphlet series

Series 6: "CARNIVAL PARK" (Part 1)

Sponsored by the Kansas City, Kansas Bicentennial Commission



The spot pictured here shows just one of the reasons residents of Kansas City had for spending Sunday afternoons in the park.

CARNIVAL PARK

In 1907, a vacationer in Kansas City, Kansas could have his photograph taken at Carnival Park "and by the time he has visited another concession or watched a vaudeville act, his pictures will be ready for delivery." The photographs were processed in the form of a postcard and they gave the visitor the perfect way to communicate with his friends back home.

The postcards were just one of the many "new" ideas that were incorporated in this early amusement park in our city. During its relatively short life span, Carnival Park was described as being one of the greatest achievements of the city. The recently opened Inter city Viaduct used it as an inducement to ride the streetcar -- a cool ride on a hot summer's night.

Located between 14th and 16th streets on Armstrong Avenue (the current Ward athletic field) the park opened May 7, 1907. It ran 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 flower beds, 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.

These were 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 were 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 their 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 CAROUSAL

"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 nervewracking. 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

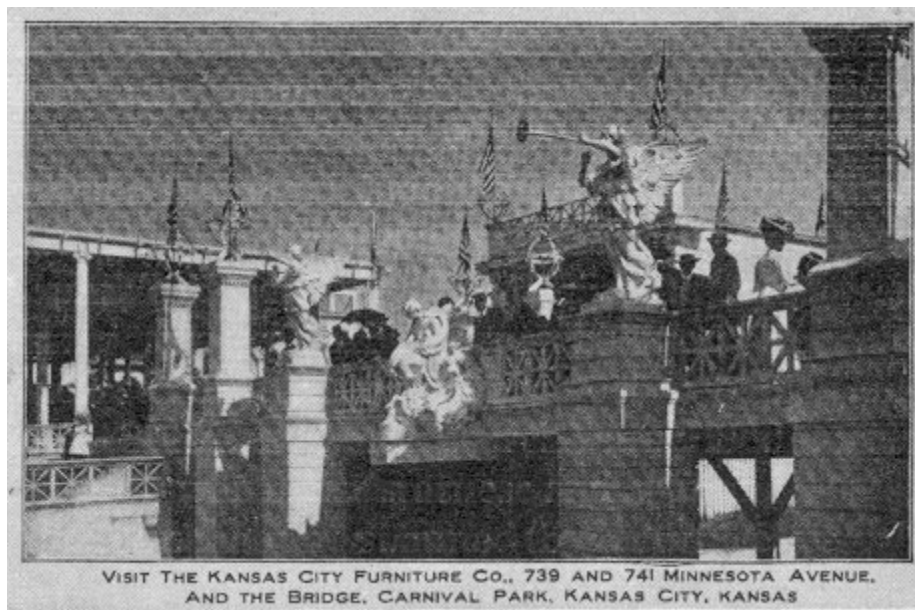
Designed to resemble the much utilized service, patrons of the ride were loaded into

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.

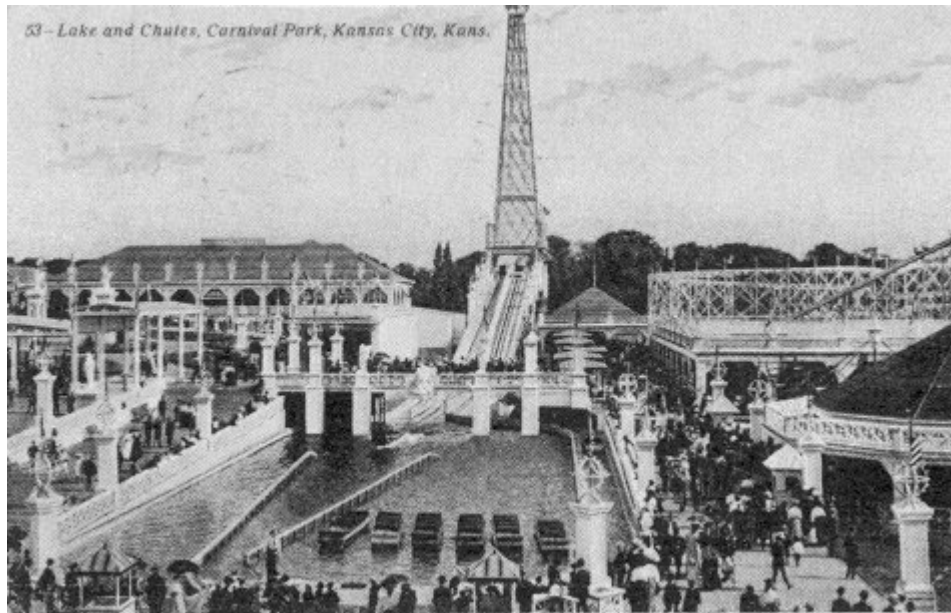
THE DOUBLE WHIRL

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.



The bridge which spanned the Lagoon (like the rest of Carnival Park) was intricately decorated with gargoyles and wood carvings typical of the time.



This overview of the center of Carnival Park gives some idea of its popularity. The tower that is pictured was part of one of the park's more exciting rides. A fire and the tower's eventual collapse is one of several theories given for the park's demise.



A photograph taken from one of the walkways is another example of Carnival Park's beauty. The low admission fee brought in many people who just strolled, and the variety of rides gave entertainment to the more daring of the park's patrons.