

Finding Aid to the C.W. Parker Amusement Co. Collection, 1896-1956

Summary Information

Title: C.W. Parker Amusement Co. collection

Creator: C.W. Parker Amusement Co. (primary)

ID: 115.8000

Date: 1896-1956 (inclusive); 1900-1928 (bulk)

Extent: 0.1 linear feet

Language: The materials in this collection are in English.

Abstract: This collection contains correspondence and various ephemera related to the C.W. Parker Amusement Company, a manufacturer of amusement devices from Leavenworth, Kansas. The bulk of the materials are dated between 1900 and 1928.

Repository:

Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play at The Strong
One Manhattan Square
Rochester, New York 14607
585.263.2700
library@museumofplay.org

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Use: This collection is open for research use by staff of The Strong and by users of its library and archives. Though intellectual property rights (including, but not limited to any copyright, trademark, and associated rights therein) rights have not been transferred, The Strong has permission to make copies in all media for museum, educational, and research purposes.

Custodial History: The C.W. Parker Amusement Co. collection was part of the original estate of Margaret Woodbury Strong. The papers were registered by The Strong under Object ID 115.8000 and were contained in one folder.

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Processed by: Nicole Pease, March 2017

Controlled Access Terms

Personal Names

- Parker, Charles Wallace, 1864-1932
- Parker, Paul D.

Corporate Names

- C.W. Parker Amusement Company
- C.W. Parker (Firm)

Subjects

- Abilene (Kan.)--History
- Amusement ride equipment industry
- Amusement rides

- Carousel
- Carry-Us-All
- Ferris wheels
- Merry-go-round
- Leavenworth (Kan.)--History
- Midwest history and culture

Historical Note

The C.W. Parker Amusement Company was a Kansas-based amusement rides manufacturer from 1892 until 1955.

Charles W. Parker entered the amusements business in 1882, establishing a lucrative shooting gallery next door to a saloon in Abilene, Kansas. After Parker purchased a second-hand Armitage-Herschell carousel in 1892, he officially founded the C.W. Parker Amusement Company in Abilene. The company expanded rapidly, and by 1900 manufactured a wide variety of amusement rides and attractions; these included Parker's signature "Carry-Us-All" (a name he created as a derivative of "carousel"), shooting galleries, military band organs, cylinder pianos, carved wagon show fronts, mechanical and electrical shows, and the railroad cars which transported the company's products. Parker believed that carnivals should be clean, moral, and instructive as well as entertaining, and his carnival companies bore the distinctive "Parker's Seal of Cleanliness" stamp. By 1908, the C.W. Parker factories claimed to be "the largest establishment of its kind in the United States, devoted exclusively to the manufacture of amusement devices." In 1911, the company moved to a bigger factory in Leavenworth, Kansas, where it remained in operation until 1955.

Over the course of its existence, the C.W. Parker Amusement Company produced approximately 1,000 carousels. As of 2017, fewer than 20 of these carousels are still in operation.

Collection Scope and Content Note

The C.W. Parker Amusement Co. collection contains materials from 1892 through 1956, with the bulk of the papers dated between 1900 and 1928. This collection contains business cards, envelopes, order forms, letterhead, blank leases, a blank agreement of payment, original and reproduced letters, tickets, articles, logos, ride descriptions, a flier, a postcard, and other ephemera. Additional scope and content information can be found in the Contents List section of this finding aid.

The C.W. Parker Amusement Co. collection has been arranged into four series. The collection is housed in one archival document box and one oversized folder.

Related Materials

The Brian Sutton-Smith Library and Archives of Play holds multiple trade catalogs and newsletters (*The Bedouin: Published for the Traveling Show Man*) produced by C.W. Parker.

System of Arrangement

Series I: Administrative papers, c. 1896-1920 and n.d.

Series II: Correspondence, 1927-1928 and n.d.

Series III: Descriptions of rides, n.d.

Series IV: Miscellaneous/ephemera, 1912-1956 and n.d.

Contents List

Series I: Administrative papers, c. 1896-1920 and n.d.

Scope and Content Note: This series contains administrative papers from the C.W. Parker Amusement Company, including blank checks, business cards, envelopes, order forms, letterhead, blank leases, and a blank agreement of payment. (A reproduction of one letterhead is in this folder while the original has been retained in Box 1, Folder 3.)

Box 1

Folder 1 Administrative papers, c. 1900-1920 and n.d.

Series II: Correspondence, 1927-1928 and n.d.

Scope and Content Note: This series houses original and reproduced correspondence regarding the inquiry, purchase, and quality of C.W. Parker Amusement Company rides as well as a letter regarding the sale of the company. (Some of the letters appear to be incomplete.)

Box 1

Folder 2 Correspondence, 1927-1928 and n.d.

Series III: Descriptions of rides, n.d.

Scope and Content Note: This series holds descriptions of C.W. Parker Amusement Company rides including the Superior Model Parker Wheel, Standard Export Model Two Abreast Carry-Us-All, Flying Boats, Flying Horses, Jolly Mixer, and Q Style Carry-Us-All.

Box 1

Folder 3 Descriptions of rides, n.d.

Series IV: Other ephemera, 1912-1956 and n.d.

Scope and Content Note: This series contains ephemera (including tickets, articles, photograph prints, logos, a flier, postcard, and scorecard) for the C.W. Parker Amusement Company. The oversized folder holds a large sheet of newsprint with amusement photographs printed/overlaid on top of the paper's text.

Box 1

Folder 4 Other ephemera, 1912-1956 and n.d.

Oversized

Folder 1 Miscellaneous photograph prints, n.d.