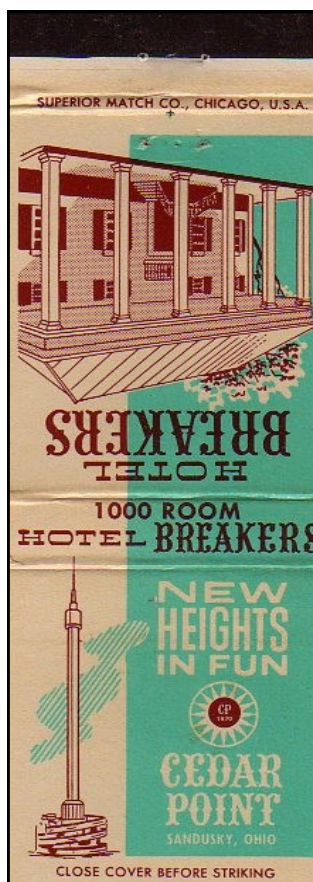
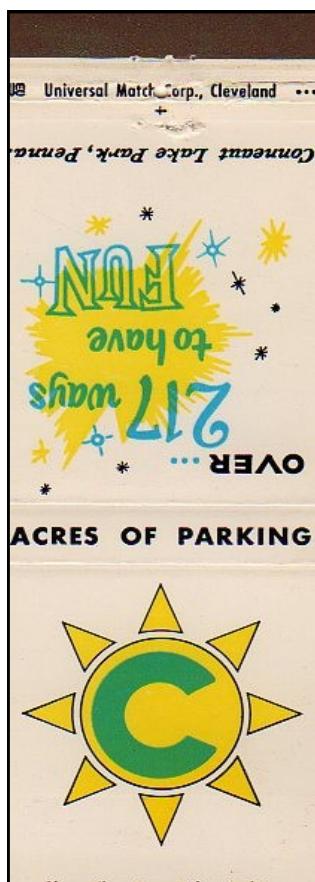


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Collecting Amusement Parks

by
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The concept of Amusement Parks goes back farther than you would think. From 1550-1700, "Pleasure Gardens", as they were first called, began to appear in Europe. These were the first permanent areas set aside specifically for outdoor entertainment. The attractions included fountains, flower gardens, bowling, games, music, dancing, staged spectacles and a few primitive amusement rides. In 1650, large ice slides, supported by heavy timbers, became popular as a wintertime diversion in Russia. Small wooden sleds used iron runners to glide down hills in St. Petersburg were quite elaborate. These simple amusements were the



forerunners of today's roller coasters. In 1846, the first looping gravity railway was exhibited at Frascati Gardens, in Paris, France. The French called the device Chemin de Centrifuge.

In 1875, Coney Island, Brooklyn, NY, with the completion of the first railroad to it, rapidly became popular as a seaside resort. The attractions included Cabaret entertainment, Vaudeville acts, Melodramas, Fortune tellers, games, and rides such as small carousels. In 1884, LaMarcus A. Thompson introduced his Switchback Gravity Pleasure Railway at Coney Island, the first true roller coaster in America. Chicago's Columbian Exposition, in 1893, introduced the famous George Ferris Giant Wheel. A true wonder of then modern world. Also introduced at the Columbian Exposition was the Midway Plaisance (or White City Midway). The ornate building facades and brilliant electric lights dictated amusement park design for the next 60 years. Chutes Park in Chicago opened in 1894, becoming the first amusement park to be enclosed and charge admission. After relocating in 1896, Chutes Park closed in 1908. The park served as a model for Sea Lion Park at New York's Coney Island.

By 1910, more than 200 amusement parks were operating throughout the U.S., but between 1915-1920 many parks closed, due to the public's increased mobility caused by the invention of the automobile, and interest in new attractions such as motion pictures. That was temporary, though, because the 1920s became the golden age of amusement parks. Many larger cities had as many as six. Many of the best roller coasters of all time were built during this period. With the Stock Market Crash and Great Depression of the 1930s, many more parks closed. Rationing and scarcity of supplies during WW II further hampered the growth of amusement parks...And then Disneyland, considered the nation's first theme park, opened in 1955! [<http://napha/nnn/Default.aspx?tabid=69>]

As with almost all categories, the vast majority of covers available here are front-strikers, and very few recent covers, if any, are being issued for the usual reasons. Disneyland/DisneyWorld, is the most heralded

park in this category, and Disney has certainly put out a string of covers and boxes stretching over some 50 years. There are at least 400+ of these, just be themselves.

Still, as an Amusement Park collector, myself, (as part of my Famous Places collection) I always like the covers from the older parks that aren't around anymore, some of which are pictured here. The older ones are 20-strikes, whereas many of the post-1976 era covers are 30-strikes. There are a few 40s, as well.

There is no listing on this category, although the late Hank Northam had a Disneyland listing in 1994, and Joe DeGennaro had 385 DisneyWorld./Epoc covers listed in July 2005.

As to actual numbers of what might be out there for you, Ellen Gutting, NV, reported having 240 as of September 2000, but keep in mind that most collectors keep the Disney covers separated out as a different category.

