

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Kennywood Park (Kenny's Grove)

and or common Kennywood

2. Location

street & number 4800 Kennywood Boulevard not for publication

city, town W. Mifflin vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code county Allegheny code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: recreation (amusement park)

4. Owner of Property

name Kennywood Park Corporation (c/o Mr. Carl Hughes, President)

street & number 4600 Kennywood Blvd.

city, town West Mifflin vicinity of state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds, Allegheny County

street & number County Office Building

city, town Pittsburgh state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date July 1983 federal state county local

depository for survey records Office of Historic Preservation
Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Summary

Kennywood Park is a 40-acre amusement area roughly 5 miles southeast of the city of Pittsburgh which is open to the public each year from April until Labor Day. Sited on a plateau above the south bank of the Monongahela River, nearly opposite Turtle Creek, Kennywood was begun as a trolley excursion park in 1898 by the Monongahela Street Railway Company and opened to the public in 1899.

There are now more than 35 buildings and amusement structures on the site, as well as parking areas and a picnic ground overlooking the river valley. The park is reached via Kennywood Boulevard, which passes the southwestern edge of the site. An additional 85 undeveloped acres owned by the Kennywood Park Corporation are across the boulevard. This latter area is not included in this nomination.

The following structures are the oldest remaining at Kennywood: the Casino (1898); the "Jack Rabbit" roller coaster (1921); the "Old Mill" (1926); the "Racer" roller coaster (1927); the Dentzel carousel and its shelter building (1927); the Windmill (1929); and the Noah's Ark (1936). These features, generally in the central area of the park, constitute its historic area. Kennywood's facilities have continued to evolve around them since the 1930s.

While Kennywood updates its attractions continually and the site has seen numerous changes during its history, the Park retains, to a high degree, its original combination of picnic space, landscaped grounds, a dining area, music and entertainment, and a variety of games and rides.

Kennywood's Individual Historic Features:

George S. Davidson, the engineer for the Monongahela Street Railway Company, designed the basic layout of Kennywood Park in 1898 and became its first manager when it opened in 1899. His arrangement of open-air pavilions in a triangular pattern surrounding a small central man-made lake remains basically intact. The abundant, careful landscaping, begun when the park opened, remains today and is, in fact, an attraction in itself. The grounds feature tree-lined walks, flowers in abundance, a topiary, and a floral clock (a calendar in flowers with a daily-changing date).

The Casino

Of several pavilion-type structures built at Kennywood according to Davidson's design, however, only the Casino, or Main Restaurant, remains. A large 2-story Shingle-style building with an interior floor space 72 feet by 120 feet, it originally featured arched open-air openings on the first floor and square ones on the second; it was glass-enclosed on both levels in the 1940s.¹ The

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	architecture	education	military	social
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Recreation
Specific dates	1898-99	Builder Architect	George S. Davidson	(amusement park)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary

Kennywood Park, the "Roller Coaster Capital of the World," has also been dubbed, in the words of its premier historian, "America's greatest traditional amusement park."¹ It has won such acclaim by enduring, since 1898, the multiple vicissitudes that have put dozens of its competitors out of business.

The development of Kennywood Park documents the growth and trends in the amusement industry in America, as well as the technological advances and innovations which contributed to the Park's continued success. Buildings, structures, or rides from nearly every era of its history are preserved at the Park.

Kennywood retains many of the facilities, including several rare, exceptional, and highly representative historic ones, that attracted its patrons early in the century. Yet it has always managed, over the decades, to adapt to changing fashions in a manner that has enabled it to retain its popularity.

Kennywood opened when there were scarcely any automobiles or paved roads. It has survived the Great Depression and other hard economic times, the diversion of its trade to other tourist destinations made possible by successive generations of highway construction that have bypassed Kennywood itself, and the onslaught of television on traditional outdoor recreational pursuits.

History

Thriving Kennywood Park is one of the few survivors of the "trolley park" phenomenon which boomed at the turn of the century, when street railway companies across the country, anxious for riders in the evenings and on weekends, built suburban amusement parks linked to center cities by trolley. In southwestern Pennsylvania alone, Kennywood was one of thirteen such trolley or railroad excursion parks.

Surviving the competition depended upon attracting businesses, institutions, and organizations to the Park for picnics and outings. Shrewdly managed, Kennywood soon became the largest picnic park in the region. In advertisements, it was promoted as a place both pastoral and thrilling, with amusements of all kinds in a safe, clean environment.

Before the trolley era, the land which now comprises Kennywood was part of the Kenny Farm, a tract of land purchased in 1818 by Charles F. Kenny. Kenny, with his son Thomas, prospered by mining coal on the property and shipping it downriver on flatboats.²

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 40

Quadrangle name Braddock, Pennsylvania

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	7	5	9	6	8	6	0	4	4	7	1	4	9	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

B

1	7	5	9	6	8	6	0	4	4	7	1	4	9	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

C

1	7	5	9	6	1	0	0	4	4	7	0	8	7	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

D

1	7	5	9	6	1	0	0	4	4	7	1	4	9	0
Zone		Easting						Northing						

E

Zone		Easting						Northing						

F

Zone		Easting						Northing						

G

Zone		Easting						Northing						

H

Zone		Easting						Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

The holdings of the Kennywood Park Corporation to the northeast of Kennywood Boulevard (outlined on attached map).

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James H. Charleton, Historian

organization History Division, National Park Service date March 1985

street & number 1100 L Street, NW telephone (202) 343-8165

city or town Washington state DC 20013-7127

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title _____ date _____

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date _____

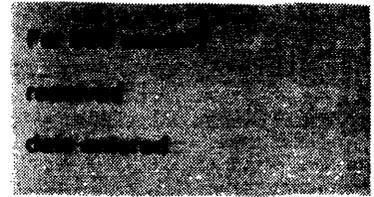
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date _____

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Casino continues to house the Park's main restaurant. The front facade, facing the lake, is 7 bays, with the 3 center ones projecting. The interior of the Casino was restored in 1971; its high pressed-tin ceiling, exposed wood beams, and slow-moving ceiling fans exude a particular charm that recalls the era of its construction.²

Roller Coasters

Kennywood's roller coasters of different types and vintages remain the Park's single most exciting attraction.³ Of 11 coasters built at Kennywood between 1902 and 1980, five are extant: the "Jack Rabbit" (1921) and the "Racer" (1927), both designed by John A. Miller, a top coaster designer; the "Dipper" (1948) and the "Thunderbolt" (1968-69), designed and built by Andy Vettel; and the "Laser Loop" (1980) designed by Intamin/Schwarzkopf. The first two qualify as historic resources.

The "Jack Rabbit" was the first Kennywood coaster to use wheels beneath the track, enabling higher speeds, higher hills, and an altogether more thrilling ride than had been possible before. It has a 70-foot double dip and tracks 2,132 feet long, which run through a ravine on the edge of the Park; the higher dip is at the top of the ravine and the lower is at its bottom. A tunnel after the first drop was removed in the 1940s and the trains were replaced in the same decade.

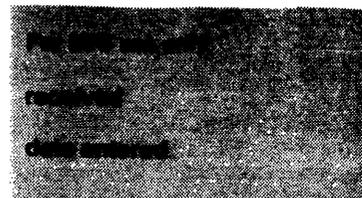
Miller's "Racer" is a twin-track racing coaster 2,250 feet in length. Its highest hill is also in a ravine. Its reverse and bank curves add excitement to the ride. In 1949, the final hill was removed. Otherwise, except for its platform facade, which was redesigned in 1946 and again in 1960, the "Racer" is intact.

The three later coasters are also leading attractions. The "Dipper" is 40 feet high and 1,650 feet long. Constructed in 1948, it was redesigned in 1951, when additional hills and track were added and new trains purchased. The "Thunderbolt," the "Ultimate Roller Coaster,"⁴ revamped the earlier "Pippin" into a fearsome coaster 95 feet high and 2,887 feet long, featuring a renowned 90-foot "final drop." The "Laser Loop," the Park's most recent coaster, includes a "loop" that is 46 feet in diameter with two inclines, the most extreme of which is 140 feet high. Riders travel its track at speeds in excess of 54 miles an hour and endure the sensation of near-weightlessness at the peaks of the inclines.

On the other hand, none of the Park's earliest coasters remain. Those coasters, of the side-friction type, had cars which held on to the track by side rails rather than wheels, and so could tolerate only gentle hills and dips. They were: the "Figure Eight" (1902-21), built by Fred Ingersoll; the "Scenic Railway" (before 1906); the twin-track "Racer" (1910-26), an early John A. Miller racing coaster; the "Speed-O-Plane" (1911-23); the "Pippin" (1924-67), another Miller coaster with a double dip; and the "Teddy Bear" (1935-47), a small Philadelphia Toboggan Company "Kiddie Coaster."

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Kennywood's Carousel

Kennywood's large hand-carved 4-row Dentzel merry-go-round was installed in 1927; it is the third at the Park.⁵ This carousel was one of the last of its size and type to be built before the Depression, which virtually ended the production of such custom-made merry-go-rounds. Originally intended for use at the Philadelphia Sesquicentennial celebration of 1926, it is 54 feet in diameter. It features 64 horses (50 jumpers and 14 stationary), 1 lion, 1 tiger, and 4 chariots. It incorporates the 1916 Wurlitzer model 153 band organ that was on the preceding carousel at the site.

The carousel was completely refurbished in 1975-76; each animal was stripped, sanded, and repainted to original coloring by art students from Carnegie-Mellon University. The present carousel shelter building dates to 1927; it was constructed specifically to house the new and larger carousel.⁶

Other Historic Structures

Kennywood's "Old Mill" is a virtually complete 1927 rebuilding of a modified wooden structure dating from 1901. In the latter year, it was rebuilt in sheet iron and its channel was lengthened to accommodate 25 boats. Its interior exhibits were most recently changed in 1974.⁷

The "Windmill" is a 1929 facsimile of one at Coney Island, Ohio. Originally on an island in the lagoon, it was moved to its present site, near the main entrance, in 1939.⁸

"Noah's Ark" (1936), one of the most famous of the Park's symbols, is both a boat and a building, perched atop a miniature Mount Ararat. It rocks back and forth and contains a rippling floor and has other disconcerting features. It was last renovated in 1969.⁹

Demolished Features

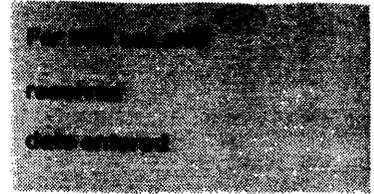
Other structures and attractions drew the public to Kennywood over the years. Among the vanished features are those described immediately following.

The 2-story Dance Pavilion, one of the original Park structures, served a variety of functions until it burned in 1975.

The Bandstand, constructed for Kennywood's second season in 1900, was one of the Park's longest-lived features. It burned in 1961. Commissioned by W. Larimer Mellon, Andrew Mellon's nephew, who was then president of the Monongahela Street Railway Company, the Classically designed structure featured a 30-foot high proscenium arch.¹⁰ During its history, especially during the "Big Band" era, the bandstand welcomed a host of entertainers, bands, and choral groups.

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An athletic field measuring 400 feet by 400 feet, with a total seating capacity of 2,000, served Kennywood in 1900-25. In the latter year, the field was replaced by a 350-foot by 180-foot swimming pool. At one end of the pool, a Classical-style pavilion housed a grandstand seating 2,500; on the pool's other three sides, a 25-foot-wide artificial beach was created with 20 railroad carloads of white sand. The pool operated until 1973, when leakage from coal mine subsidence beneath the pool forced its closing.

Footnotes

¹This description is an edited version of Christina Schmidlapp's 1983 Pennsylvania Historic Resource Survey Form, supplemented by data as noted below.

²Charles J. Jacques, Jr., Kennywood, Roller Coaster Capital of the World (Vestal, N.Y.: Vestal Press, 1982), p. 181.

³Charles J. Jacques, Jr., "Kennywood's Roller Coasters." (Pamphlet.)

⁴Robert Cartmel, "The Quest for the Ultimate Roller Coaster," The New York Times, June 9, 1974.

⁵Charles J. Jacques, Jr., "How Kennywood Got Its Dentzel," Merry-Go-Roundup 9, 4, pp. 9-14.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Charles J. Jacques, Jr., Kennywood, Roller Coaster Capital of the World (Vestal, N.Y.: Vestal Press, 1982), pp. 7, 45, 136, 172.

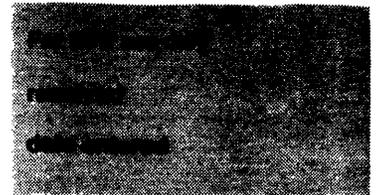
⁸Ibid., p. 45.

⁹Ibid., pp. 93-94, 97, 162.

¹⁰Pittsburgh Bulletin, March 31, 1900.

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In 1898, the Monongahela Street Railway Company leased a part of the Kenny's property known as Kenny's Grove and began constructing an amusement park. On the advice of financier Andrew Mellon, who held an interest in the company, the name "Kennywood" was chosen for the new park, capitalizing on the area's already established reputation as a public picnic spot. In the beginning, the park drew its patrons largely from the surrounding working class population, who worked mostly in the mills of the Monongahela "Steel Valley."³

The Monongahela Street Railway Company managed the Park only until 1900, when a merger created the Pittsburgh Street Railway Company. Not very interested in operating the Park, the conglomerate leased Kennywood to various companies for several seasons, then reluctantly reassumed management for two seasons, and, finally, in 1906, signed an agreement with Andrew S. McSwigan, Frederick W. Henninger, and A. F. Meghan by which the latter would manage the Park. The McSwigan and Henninger families continue to be active in its management today; they finally acquired full title to the land in 1971.⁴

Significance of Individual Features at Kennywood

Kennywood notably displays the work of John A. Miller, who has been dubbed the "greatest name in coaster design." Miller's "Racer" at Kennywood is the only surviving single-track racing coaster in the United States. His "Jack Rabbit" there is also a rare survivor.

Miller was the most prolific designer of coasters in the United States, with more than a hundred to his credit; he also advanced the technology of the field by developing patented designs for deep dip, racing, bob, and third-wheel coasters. The third-wheel coaster was an especially important innovation because it permitted greater speed, deeper dips, and more extremely banked curves than had been possible hitherto.⁵

Two other structures at Kennywood are of extreme rarity. The "Noah's Ark" is the last of its type in the country. The "Old Mill" is one of only two of its vintage still operating in the United States. (The other is at Playland in Rye, N.Y., a property also proposed for National Historic Landmark designation as part of this study.)⁶

Footnotes

¹Interview, Charles J. Jacques, Jr., December 11, 1984.

²Charles J. Jacques, Jr., Kennywood, Roller Coaster Capital of the World (Vestal, N.Y.: Vestal Press, 1982), p. 1.

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³Ibid., pp. 1-5.

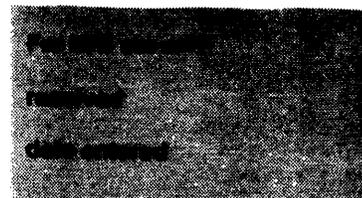
⁴Ibid., pp. 16-17, 168.

⁵Charles J. Jacques, Jr., "John A. Miller, The Greatest Name in Coaster Design, Part I," Amusement Park Journal 5, 1(Spring 1983), pp. 17, 18, 23.

⁶"Open for the Season," Amusement Park Journal 2, 1 (March 1980), p. 33.

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"Open for the Season," Amusement Park Journal 2, 1 (March 1980), pp. 33-34.

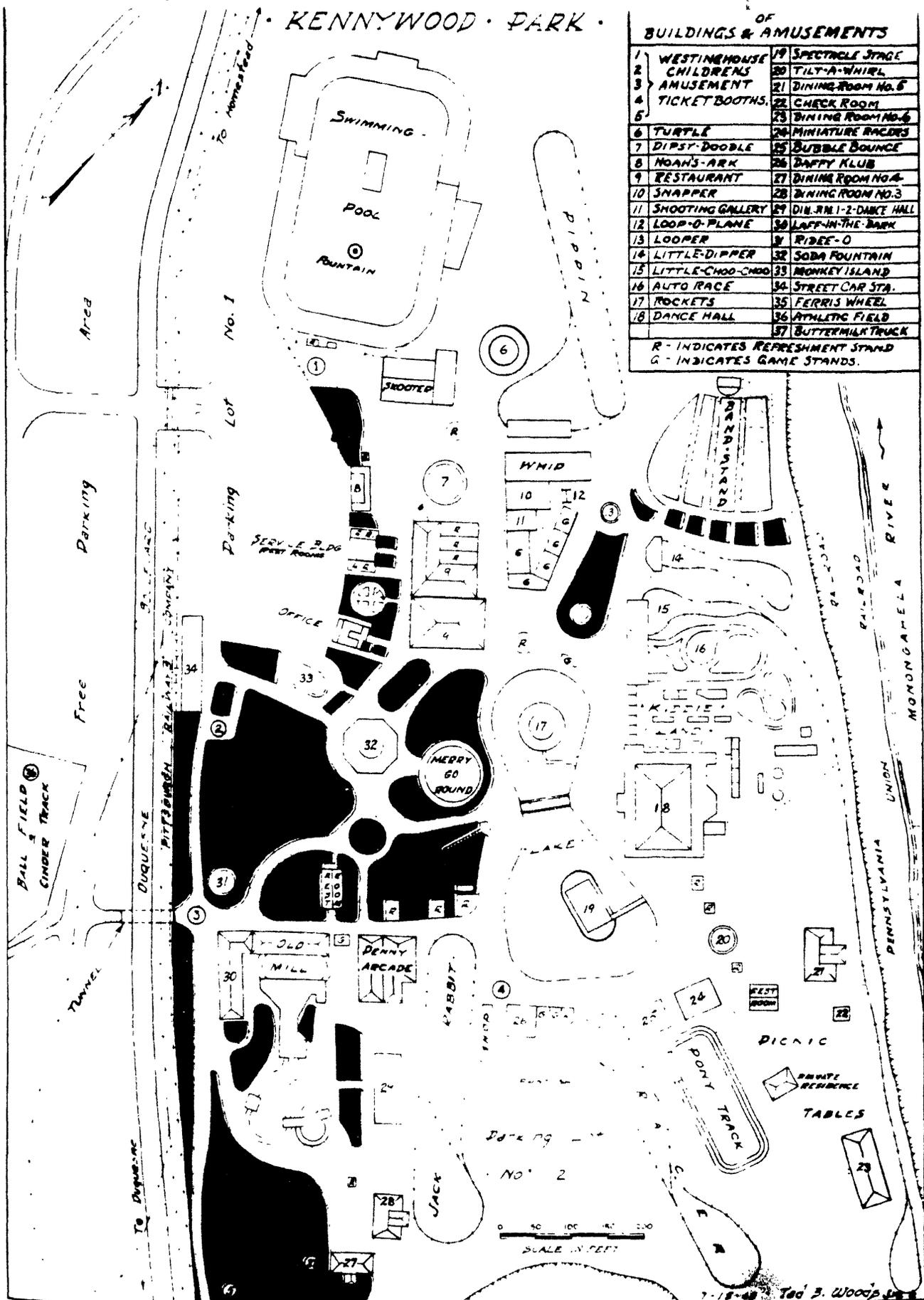
Salsbury, Elwood. "Amusement Parks, 1890-1930: The Evolution of Our Industry," Amusement Park Journal 2, 1 (March 1980), pp. 23-27. (Reprint of a talk originally presented at the 12th Annual Convention of the National Association of Amusement Parks [1930].)

KENNYWOOD PARK

OF BUILDINGS & AMUSEMENTS

1	WESTINGHOUSE CHILDRENS AMUSEMENT	19	SPECTACLE STAGE
2	TICKET BOOTHS	20	TILT-A-WHIRL
3	TURTLE	21	DINING ROOM NO. 6
4	DIPST-DOOBLE	22	CHECK ROOM
5	NOAH'S-ARK	23	DINING ROOM NO. 4
6	RESTAURANT	24	MINIATURE RACERS
7	SHAPPER	25	BUBBLE BOUNCE
8	SHOOTING GALLERY	26	DUFFY KLUB
9	LOOP-O-PLANE	27	DINING ROOM NO. 4
10	LOOPER	28	DINING ROOM NO. 3
11	LITTLE-DIPPER	29	DIN. RM. 1-2-DANCE HALL
12	LITTLE-CHOO-CHOO	30	LAFF-IN-THE-BARK
13	AUTO RACE	31	RIDEE-O
14	ROCKETS	32	SODA FOUNTAIN
15	DANCE HALL	33	MONKEY ISLAND
16		34	STREET CAR STA.
17		35	FERRIS WHEEL
18		36	ATHLETIC FIELD
		37	BUTTERMILK TRACK

R - INDICATES REFRESHMENT STAND
G - INDICATES GAME STANDS.



This map shows the layout of the Park as of July 15, 1948.

"KENNYWOOD" - 1980

LOCATION of BUILDINGS & AMUSEMENTS

1 UNION WELFARE	20 PLAYDIUM
2 ASSOCIATION BOOTHS	21 PICNIC PAVILION No.6
3 PICNIC HQ'S.	22 SPACE ODYSSEY
4 LASER LOOP	23 SERVICE CENTER
5 CINEMA 180	24 PASTIME
6 TURTLE	25 PICNIC PAVILION No.4
7 NOAN'S ARK	26 PICNIC PAVILION No.3
8 MAIN RESTAURANT	27 PICNIC PAVILION Nos.1&2
9 LE CACHOT	28 TILT-A-WHIRL
10 THINGS	29 KENNY ARCADE
11 CATER PILLAR	30 KANGAROO
12 FERRIS WHEEL	31 BAYERN KURVE
13 ROLL-O-PLANE	32 ENTERPRIZE
14 HOOT-N-HOLLER R.R.	33 PARATROOPER
15 PICNIC PAVILION No.8	34 CUDDLE-UP
16 MONONGAMELA MONSTER	35 FOUNTAIN COURT
17 SUPER ROUND-UP	36 CALYPSO
18 BONALZA	37 PICNIC PAVILION No.7
19 PICNIC PAVILION No.5	38 LOOP-O-PLANE

R - Indicates Refreshment Stands
G - Indicates Game Stands

