

SANS SOUCI PARK

AMUSEMENT PARK

WHEN?
1893-1970

WHERE?
Hanover Twp., PA.



EVENT
Popular amusement park

40

VOCABULARY
Dodge-ems

Oh, the memories of summer fun! Our area was home to many parks with and without amusements and rides. Larger parks, Angela Park in Drums, Rocky Glen in Moosic, Hanson's at Harvey's Lake, and Sans Souci in Hanover Township were flanked by dozens of smaller parks. Each had their fans and things to do. This article will focus on Sans Souci Park now the site of Hanover Jr./Sr. high school.

Sans Souci comes from a French terms that means "without care" (Ciesla 9). The first name, however, was Hanover Park. Opening on July 4, 1893, the park would grow into one of the best attractions in our area. The name changed in 1905 to Sans Souci. Tens of thousands visited each day to enjoy the nationally known Bear Cat rollercoaster, carousel, restaurant, swimming— eventually in an Olympic size pool-- and to take part in the wide variety of rides like the Wild Mouse, the Spook House or one of the other seventeen rides by 1968 (Ciesla 167). Amusements like the Penny Arcade (Ciesla 9), the Dodgems or Bumper cars, shooting gallery or watching competitions like skeet shooting piqued the interest of the visitors. The baseball field where the Sans Souci Smilers played on Sundays was usually quite busy with a grandstand built for several hundred onlookers (Ciesla 20). Picnics were popular too, as was a miniature golf course and the kiddie rides.



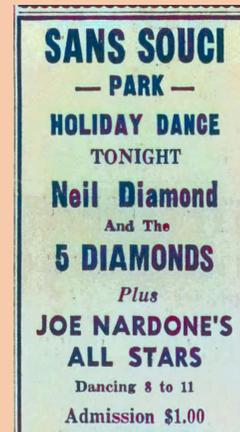
People came to the park on foot after walking miles to get there. Others rode in horse and buggy in the early days. Canal boats as well as steamboats on the Susquehanna also brought people. Trolleys, horse-drawn and later electric, helped to transport the crowds to the park. Trains and automobiles took over the transportation as the other methods gave way to modernization. Over 500,000 people attended the park in the summer of 1956.

The park always had something to continually attract people. Parades, fireworks, special days like Miners Day or one of the many ethnic days such as Polish, Slavic, Irish, Italian, Lithuanian days appealed to many. Speakers like Mother Jones who addressed the crowds about child labor in the coal industry in 1900 and Father Curran who was instrumental in the anthracite strike of 1902 congratulated the miners on their victory in the strike.

One of the largest attractions was the dance pavilion which provided entertainment from local bands as well as national acts. Ever popular farmer dances and polka bands such as the

Kryger Orchestra drew many to the dance floor. The Lee Vincent Orchestra, Joe Nardone and the All-Stars, Mel Wynn and Rhythm Aces, The Bouys, and Eddie Day and the Nitetimers drew huge crowds. National acts such as Chubby Checker and his hit "Let's Do the Twist", the Four Seasons, Freddie Cannon, Tommy Dorsey, Dion and the Belmonts, Guy Lombardo and His Canadians, Neil Diamond, were some of the more than 200 acts that performed on the stage (Ciesla 106-110).

Charles Ciesla in his book *The History of Sans Souci*, provides insight as to why the once thriving park closed. As the various ethnic groups became more Americanized and merged together, those special days stopped. People now travelled to Atlantic City, Great Adventure or Disney. Taxes and insurance costs were rising as the crowds were dwindling. The young labor that had been cheaper to employ in the early days had now grown older and left for higher paying jobs. The older workers now with families to support wanted higher pay and benefits. Television, drive-in theaters, and the fact that playgrounds and parks were in many township also kept people from traveling. So, it is no surprise that Sans Souci would have to close down (Ciesla p.163).



ONLINE RESOURCES

[Lost Towns TikTok](#)

PRINT RESOURCES

Ciesla, C. Charles. *A History of Sans Souci Park*. Self-published. 2001.