

Willis Castle Memorial Photograph Collection

The photographs in this collection highlight city facilities and programs primarily during the mid-20th century.

Descriptive Summary

Title: Willis Castle Memorial photograph collection

Dates: circa 1920-1950, bulk 1940s-1950s

Size: 2 boxes, 56 folders, 340 photographs

Location: P6

Administrative Information

Restrictions on access: Unrestricted access.

Additional physical form available: Photographs have been digitized.

Acquisition information: Gift, August, 1977, by Joseph Dostal.

Citation note: Willis Castle Memorial photograph collection (P6), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Collection Description

Biographical/Historical note

This collection of photographs was named in honor of Willis Castle by the donor. Mr. Castle was employed by the city of Kansas City, Missouri as Superintendent of Markets and Broadway Bridge from 1974-1977. Many of the photographs have "Dept. of Welfare" stamped on the back.

Scope and content note

The Willis Castle Memorial Photograph Collection is a large collection containing 340 black and white photographs and one postcard which are arranged alphabetically by subjects selected at the time of processing by the processor. Most all are 8" x 10". The images are local in content and cover the years circa 1920 to 1950, with the majority taken in the 1940s-1950s. The donor, Mr. Dostal, was Superintendent of Markets and Broadway Bridge for the city of Kansas City at the time of the donation. Many of the photographs were once a part of the Kansas City office of the Department of Welfare.

A number of local photographers are represented. These include Anderson, Montgomery, PhotoView, Tyner and Murphy, Louis Putnam, Howdy Williams, Warner Studios, Harkins Commercial, etc.

Much of the content focus of the collection is on people and activities, especially neighborhood and children's activities. There are a number of photos of the City Market, Municipal Auditorium, various parks (activity oriented), and numerous primarily unidentified street scenes. City officials of the time are found in many of the views. There apparently were no negatives accompanying the photographs when they were donated. All the photographs are available for viewing online.

Collection Inventory

Photograph Subject Listing

- **Baseball** - 16 photos - Includes baseball action scenes, awards presentations, Municipal Stadium, 3&2 League, etc.
- **Bridges-Broadway** - #1-4 - Distance views as well as photos taken from on bridge looking south.
- **Bridges-Hannibal** - #1-2 - Prints of original pictures taken at time of bridge opening.
- **Businesses** - #1-2 - Includes a photo of the Palace Garage, Monark Filling Station, and Perky Bros. Transfer and Storage Co.
- **Camps** - #1-3 - Groups of children both African American and white in unidentified camp settings.
- **Camps-Camp Lake of the Woods** - #1-4 - Primarily dining hall scenes.
- **Camps-Cardiac** - #1-9 - Children in various camp-type activities, i.e. horse back riding, canoeing, etc.
- **City Market** - 82 photos - Includes aerial views, construction of the city market, special events held there, and general views.
- **City Officials** - #1-12 - Includes mayors, city manager (L.P. Cookingham), city council members, different boards or commissions in different settings.
- **Community Centers-Lykins** - #1-2 - Includes an adult dance and a children's Indian event.
- **Community Councils** - #1-9 - Groups at community centers, luncheons, performing in skits. Also includes one picture of the seal of the Association of Community Councils.
- **Disasters-Fire** - #1-2 - Remains of what appears to be a home damaged by fire.
- **Farm Scenes** - #1-6 - Various scenes both in the field and farm.
- **Junior Officer's Program** - #1-26 - Scenes of programs sponsored by group, awards given, as well as group scenes of children in program from various schools. City officials in many scenes, including Mayor William Kemp.
- **Kansas City, Missouri-Downtown Views** - #1-6 - Mostly photos taken from rooftop perspectives, taken from all directions.
- **Mayor's Youth Conference** - #1-9 - Primarily scenes of adults on planning committees, etc. Includes Mayor Kemp.
- **Miscellaneous** - #1-8 - Various photos that fit no particular category in the collection.

- **Municipal Auditorium** - #1-16 - Shows both arena, Music Hall, lobby area, basement, etc.
- **Municipal Farm** - #1-3 - Outside views of the farm.
- **Music** - #1-7 - Includes Municipal Orchestra and music scenes.
- **Parks** - #1-13 - Includes various types of scenes from the following parks: Ashland, Belvidere, Blue Valley, Budd, Loose, Penn Valley, and Swope.
- **Playground Festival** - #1-8 - Children performing at Municipal Auditorium arena.
- **Residence-Interior** - #1 - Corner of a dilapidated home, shows cook stove.
- **Riverfront Area** - #1-5 - Scenes of crane and barge at river's edge.
- **Sawmill** - #1-4 - Both inside and outside of what appears to be a sawmill operation.
- **Special Events** - #1-5 - Includes hobby shows, crowding of queen, etc.
- **Street Railways** - #1-5 - Electric streetcars and tracks plus a photo of a streetcar stop.
- **Street Scenes** - 59 photos - Scenes of streets, sidewalks, fire hydrants, houses and businesses, most all not identified as to street name. Does include some on Brookside and a Leeds area scene. Shows older sidewalks, wood and stone as well as some brick streets. Most appear to have been taken to show a problem in street or sidewalk construction.
- **Swimming** #1-3 - Scenes from Women's National AAU Swimming Meet, August, 1944, at the Swope Park Pool and a city-wide swim meet at Penn Valley pool, 1944.
- **Utilities-Electric** - #1-6 - Views of a small electric sub-station perhaps, location unknown.
- **Youth** - #1-7 - Youth in various activities like playing marbles, dancing, at playground, etc.
- **Oversize Photographs** - New York Life Building, "Halls-A-Poppin" at Music Hall (1947), Electric Association of Kansas City at the Hotel President (1945), City Market.

Processed by Special Collections Librarian Sara Nyman, 1991.