

Playland Dipper

The coaster pictured below is the Dipper that used to operate at Playland off of Bitter Lake in Shoreline, WA from 1930-1961. The photo was taken on Safety Patrol Day around 1948.



Photo courtesy: Museum of History & Industry, Seattle (MOHAI), PEMCO Webster & Stevens Collection. PI25804

Playland and Carl Phare

Playland was situated on Bitter Lake in Shoreline, WA, a suburb north of Seattle. The Giant Dipper was a Carl Phare creation and was well loved by enthusiasts. According to the Seattle PI, the park was "amongst Seattle's longstanding attractions that drew crowds to its carousel, roller rink, fun house, log chute and roller coaster, between 1930 and 1961, when the park finally closed."

Playland had previous owners (The Washington Amusement Company) prior to when Phare purchased the park. Due to the onset of the depression, the park ended up an economic failure. Phare moved from Portland to Seattle to help resuscitate the park. "He took over the lease of the park and operated Playland with a succession of partners for the next 30 years."

After a successful opening year in 1930, Playland became Carl Phare's park. It was his 'baby' so to speak since he and his family owned and maintained it and lived right next to it. He spent much of his time looking after the rides as well as maintaining the park making certain patrons were happy and enjoying themselves. Some days he could be seen operating the Dipper coaster running three trains simultaneously with John Happeniemi, the coaster's best ride operator. He just simply loved the park.

Though the years brought many happy patrons to the park, the early 1960's initiated the onset of suburban growth that threatened Playland's future. The Seattle World's Fair was another threat that ultimately led to the doom of the park due to fear of competition. People in neighboring areas were also complaining about how neglected the park was getting and unsafe the rides were. The park ultimately met its demise after the 1960 season.

Unfortunately, due to illness, Phare was not able to fight for his beloved park and passed away in 1962. Thus, the Dipper became another endangered Northwest coaster. What remains now is Bitter Lake Community Center which is located near the site of the Dipper.

Other Northwest coasters designed by Phare:

Jantzen Beach Dipper - Operated from 1928-1970.

Playland Wooden Roller Coaster - Opened in 1958 - is currently operating and has a positive future.

Phare also designed and worked on coasters at Coney Island and in Southern California prior to settling in the northwest. His dream and passion was simply to design roller coasters.