Electric Park

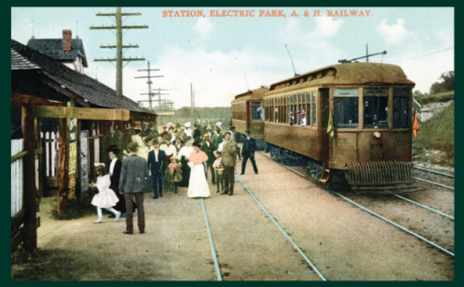
In 1900, electricity was a novel source of power and light. This was also the dawn of the golden age of amusement parks. Electrified passenger rail line operators, some of whom generated their own electricity, created "electric parks" as destinations on their lines to boost ticket revenues through increased weekend ridership.

▲ SHOOT THE CHUTES
One of Electric Park's main attractions was this early form of waterslide or flume. Riders took a sixty-foot plunge into Kinderhook Lake on flat-bottomed boats riding on rollers. The chutes doubled as a toboggan run in winter. Source: Gobrecht family.

FERRIS WHEELS ▶
Electric Park had two Ferris wheels, a large, steam-powered one outside the gate that cost five cents to ride, and an electrically powered one on an island in a lagoon inside the park. Source: Gobrecht family.

Electric Park at Kinderhook Lake

In 1901, the Albany & Hudson Railway & Power Company Railroad opened "Electric Park" where the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail now runs past the east shore of mile-long Kinderhook Lake. The forty-acre park, illuminated at night by hundreds of colored electric lights, was billed as the largest amusement park between New York City and Montreal. Admission for trolley riders was free with a forty-cent round-trip ticket. Visitors enjoyed rides on Ferris wheels, a roller coaster, carousel, waterslide, and farm animals. Entertainment included orchestras and tasteful vaudeville shows, and activities included bowling, dancing, and wintertime skating.



▲ TROLLEYS TO THE PARK
A rail line conductor ushers an excited crowd across the tracks after a forty-minute trip from Albany. The rail line was powered by a third rail except in areas of heavy foot traffic like Electric Park. Source: Nassau Free Library.

◀ FUN ON LAKE AND LAND
Electric Park offered milder forms of entertainment including boating, fishing, picnicking, swimming, and promenading in flower gardens, on landscaped walks, and on the park midway. Source: Milestone Heritage Consulting.

▲ ROLLER COASTER
In 1907, Electric Park added a roller coaster to the park's amusement rides, which included Ferris wheels, a carousel with a calliope, and rides on ponies, donkeys, and goats. Source: Milestone Heritage Consulting.

Popularity and Decline

Electric Park was a popular recreation destination for upper Hudson River Valley residents for fifteen years. Summertime weekend daily attendance of ten thousand visitors was common. The rail line ran park-bound trips every half hour and added a second parallel track in 1909 to handle traffic between the park and Albany. Park popularity began to wane during World War I, when competition from new forms of entertainment like silent films and the freedom of movement offered by the automobile drew people away from amusement parks. Electric Park closed its gates after Labor Day weekend in 1923, and the land was sold for house lots.

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