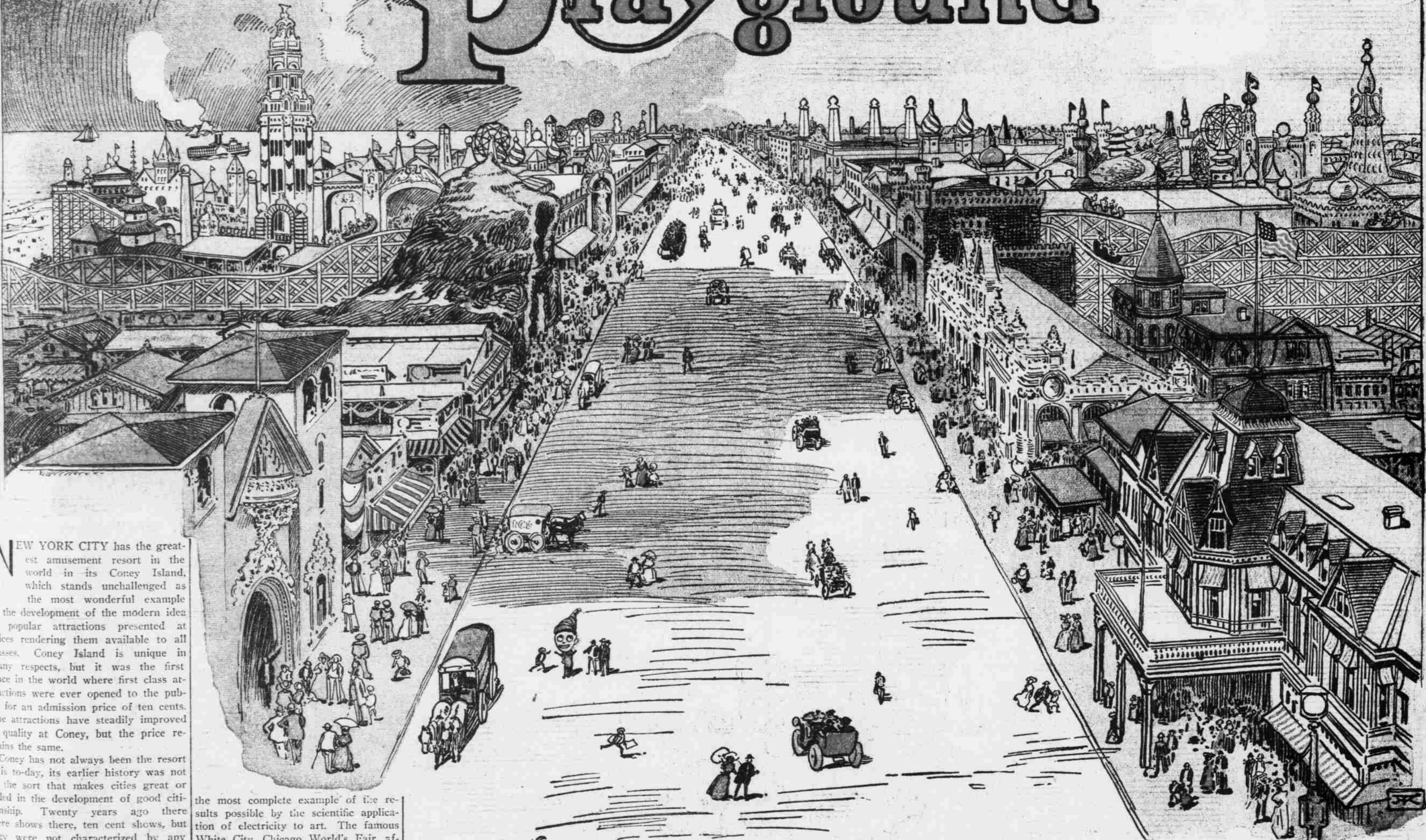


THE NEWS-HERALD

MORGANTON, N. C., THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 1907



America's Greatest Playground



NEW YORK CITY has the greatest amusement resort in the world in its Coney Island, which stands unchallenged as the most wonderful example of the development of the modern idea of popular attractions presented at prices rendering them available to all classes. Coney Island is unique in many respects, but it was the first place in the world where first class attractions were ever opened to the public for an admission price of ten cents. The attractions have steadily improved in quality at Coney, but the price remains the same.

Coney has not always been the resort it is to-day, its earlier history was not of the sort that makes cities great or aided in the development of good citizenship. Twenty years ago there were shows there, ten cent shows, but they were not characterized by any attempt to elevate the public or amuse the better classes. At one time it was essentially a tough resort where crooks thrived and politically it was the rottenest of Brooklyn's many disgraceful districts. The public and an improved public sentiment is largely responsible for the changes that have been wrought, but much can be credited to a new generation of amusement producers who have selected Coney Island as a headquarters.

Fire and the Courts have assisted in the change, for several great conflagrations wiped out the worst section of the place, and the courts sent corrupt police officials, who aided in the corruption of the place, to Sing Sing. But all the fires and all the courts could not have accomplished as much as Thompson & Dundy wrought when they opened Luna Park's gates to the public, and set an example in producing attractions of real merit surrounded by artistic structures from designs by architects of national repute.

From a place where many people went, but were careful to refrain from mentioning the fact, it is now a place where everybody goes and talks enthusiastically of the visit for weeks afterwards. The enthusiasm is warranted for at Coney Island can be seen

the most complete example of the results possible by the scientific application of electricity to art. The famous White City, Chicago World's Fair, afforded a splendid spectacle, the Buffalo Exposition marked another advance, but at Luna Park and at Dreamland the builders have brought the art of electrical illumination to the highest degree of perfection it ever has known. Combined, they have been classed as the eighth wonder of the world, and the distinction is merited.

When Luna Park was built it was said it never would pay its owners, and the undertaking was certainly a great risk as it involved the expenditure of nearly two million dollars before a single cent was paid in at the gate. But the people came and Luna Park has been made bigger every season, and it has created a new standard in the amusement world. When the builders of Dreamland announced their intention to build another great amusement resort, almost at Luna Park's doors, persons, who thought they knew, said there was no room for two great places at Coney Island, but time has demonstrated that there is no limit to this respect, for these two great spectacles have paid dividends that seem almost fabulous, and they have helped build up a number of minor attractions.

The only amusement places that suffered by their presence were the tough places, and the halls where questionable

shows had prospered. The clean attractions have made good, and the public has been awakened to the opinion that clean attractions of real artistic merit were what they wanted. In Luna Park and in Dreamland there has never been an attraction offered for public favor that depended on a questionable feature to make it a paying proposition. Many of them have been of the type that breeds patriotism and a love of home and country and all of them relied on some new and novel idea in the development of the great sciences for its most striking features.

The great events in the world's history have been kept to the fore, and in all this has been an element of education

that is too important to be ignored. The conceptions of genius have found an opportunity at Coney Island, and art and science have been called upon with lavish hands to make every detail appear in its best light.

The greatest spectacle of modern times was probably the Indian Durbar at Delhi, when the wealth and splendors of the Empire of India was marched in review in honor of the coronation of King Edward. Thompson and Dundy realized the universal interest in this event and at Luna Park presented a copy of the spectacle which for completeness in every detail and accuracy of reproduction excited the praise of the artistic world and elicited

applause from hundreds of thousands of delighted people who nightly filled a vast amphitheatre devoted to the spectacle.

Just what this feature of one season at Luna Park cost its producers may never be known, but they made it pay and constantly improved and elaborated it during the seasons it was produced. Attractions on the order of "Creation" and "The Deluge" cost a small fortune, and the original production of "Fighting the Flames" required the services of a regiment of men, women and children. The fire fighting force was led by one of the most famous of New York's fire chiefs, and under his charge a body of trained athletes gave the most realistic and spectacular performance of its kind that was even given.

While Thompson & Dundy's Luna Park and Dreamland have been doing their work in the reformation of Coney Island, their efforts would have been seriously impeded if it had not been for the presence of the number of attractions covering a somewhat smaller space, but embodying all of the elements of novelty and ingenuity that characterized the best features of either Luna Park or Dreamland.

Principal among these attractions is Mr. E. J. Austen's "Johnstown Flood," which has been one of the real features of Coney Island for several seasons. It was first produced at the Buffalo Exposition and later removed to Coney Island. Mr. Austen is one of the pioneers among amusement producers of the present generation. In 1885, he brought out that wonderful and realistic pano-

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