Priests of Pallas Collection (SC44)

Introduction

This collection contains items relating to the annual Priests of Pallas festival held in Kansas City during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The events were comparable to Mardi Gras in New Orleans and the Veiled Prophet celebration in St. Louis. This is an artificial collection created from items that were originally classed in the library’s holdings.

Descriptive Summary

Title: Priests of Pallas Collection  
Dates: 1887-2007  
Size: 8.9 linear feet, 9 boxes, 1 map drawer  
Collection Number: SC44

Donor Information

Found in collection

Citation Note

Priests of Pallas Collection (SC44), Missouri Valley Special Collections, Kansas City Public Library, Kansas City, Missouri.

Administrative Information

Related Collections: Additional items and information relating to the Priests of Pallas may be found in Missouri Valley Special Collections local history collections. These include: Vertical File - Priests of Pallas; Manuscript File - Bryan, Craig; Photograph Collection (P1); Mrs. Sam Ray Postcard Collection (SC 58); Missouri Valley Special Collections Postcard Collection (SC13-1); Frank Ford Photograph Collection (P4); William Weber Collection (SC133); Native Sons Scrapbooks Microfilm Collection.

Biographical/Historical Sketch

The Priests of Pallas organization was founded in 1887 by a group of businessmen known as the Flambeau Club. These men designed a festival based on the mythology of the Greek goddess Athena meant attract agricultural and industrial commerce, as well as general popular interest, to downtown Kansas City. The festival drew large crowds on both a local and national scale – including notable figures such as William Jennings Bryan and President Grover Cleveland. Highlights of the festival included parties, masquerade balls, and parades featuring elaborate floats. While the themes, costumes, and floats of the Priests of Pallas changed over the years, a Kansas City resident was always chosen to portray Athena and oversee the events. The festival usually took place during the first week of October from 1887 to 1912 (excluding
1901), and then again in 1922 and 1923. The tradition was discontinued in 1924 due to increasing costs and diminishing profits.

In 1894, the Karnival Krewe was introduced to be held in conjunction with the Priests of Pallas festival. Led by a character known as "King Ki Ki," the Karnival was intended to be similar to New Orleans' Mardi Gras festivities with parades and parties. However, boisterous and riotous crowds forced the Karnival to be discontinued in 1903.

The annual Priests of Pallas masquerade ball was briefly revived between 2005 and 2007 as a fundraiser for the Jackson County and Westport Historical Societies.

**Scope and Content Note**

The collection is arranged in seven series according to item type or subject, and therein chronologically. Materials from the 21st century revival of the Priests of Pallas are in a separate series. Oversize items are located in a map cabinet.

**Series 1: Historical materials, n.d.**

Items in this series provide information on Priests of Pallas events. Included are lists of annual parade themes and official souvenirs.

**Series 2: Official programs, 1888-1900**

This series contains official programs produced for the Priests of Pallas parades. These programs feature illustrations of parade floats in booklets and on posters, as well as names of individuals on the executive committees. They also contain advertisements from sponsors and businesses, the majority of which include pictorial images of buildings.

**Series 3: Souvenirs, invitations, and programs, 1887-1910**

This series contains items produced by the Priests of Pallas organization to commemorate the festival. The series includes elaborate and colorful souvenirs, invitations to balls, dance cards, and programs from events. There are also two sets of illustrated postcards from 1908 and 1910 that depict the parade floats of those years.

**Series 4: Karnival Krewe materials, 1895-1896**

Materials in this series relate to Karnival Krew activities, held in conjunction with the Priests of Pallas festivals. These items include advertisements, schedules, badges, an official program from 1896, and decorative envelopes. A Karnival Kewe parade poster from 1900 can be found in Series 5.

**Series 5: Posters, viewbook, and news clippings, 1887-1910**
This series contains posters, a viewbook, and news clippings relating to Priests of Pallas events. Most of these items feature illustrations or photographs of parade floats. The viewbook contains photographs of prominent artwork and buildings of Kansas City in 1899. Also included is a poster for the Karnival Krewe parade of 1900.

**Series 6: Modern Priests of Pallas revival materials, 2005-2007**

Items in this series relate to the Priests of Pallas masquerade ball that was revived from 2005 to 2007 as a benefit for the Jackson County and Westport Historical Societies. These materials include an official program, ball invitations, photographs of the 2005 ball, and a sponsor request form.

**Series 7: Artifacts, 1906-2005**

Items in this series include artifacts that were produced as official souvenirs of the original Priests of Pallas festivals. These souvenirs were popular annual features of the festival as they were made in limited quantities and the molds were broken after production. This series contains two small enamel trays, a porcelain desk holder, a metal thermometer, a metal bud vase, and a cut glass box. These items are dated with their respective years, and feature an image of Athena with the phrase "Priests of Pallas" or the initials "P.O.P." Also included is an undated bronzed cup with depictions of city buildings that may have been an unofficial souvenir of the festival.

**Collection Inventory**

The notation "MC" indicates the materials are located within a map cabinet. Items with an "OS" notation are located within an oversize box.

**Series 1: Historical materials, n.d.**

f. 1  Lists of parade themes

**Series 2: Official programs, 1888-1900**

f. 2  Official Program, 1888 (2)
f. 3  Official Program, 1889 (4) (MC)
f. 4  Official Program, 1890 (4) (MC)
f. 5  Official Program, 1891
f. 6  Official Program, 1892 (4)
f. 7  Official Program, 1893
f. 8  Official Program, 1894 (2)
f. 9  Official Program, 1895 (4)
f. 10 Official Program, 1896 (2)
f. 11 Official Program, 1897
f. 12 Official Program, 1898
f. 13 Official Program, 1899
f. 14 Official Program, 1900 (2)
Series 3: Souvenirs, invitations, and programs, 1887-1910

f. 15  Patroness of Art souvenir, n.d.
f. 16  Myth of Pallas Athene souvenir, n.d. (OS)
f. 17  Illustrated Priests of Pallas Trades and Parade Paper, 1887 (OS)
f. 18  Grand Ball invitation, 1887
f. 19  Grand Ball invitation, 1888 (3)
f. 20  Dance card, 1889 (OS)
f. 21  Souvenir with faces, 1889 (OS)
f. 22  Souvenir with flags, 1889 (OS)
f. 23  Souvenir with envelope, 1891 (OS)
f. 24  Seashell souvenir, 1891 (OS)
f. 25  Ball invitation, 1894
f. 26  Dance card, 1897
f. 27  Dance program, 1898 (OS)
f. 28  Dance card, 1899 (OS)
f. 29  Epperson's Megaphone Minstrels program, 1905 (OS)
f. 30  Ball invitation, 1906
f. 31  Souvenir postcards, 1908 and 1910 (MC)

Series 4: Karnival Krewe materials, 1895-1896

f. 32  Karnival Krewe parade route, 1895 (3) (OS)
f. 33  Karnival Krewe advertisement, 1895 (2) (OS)
f. 34  Karnival Week advertisement, 1895 (2) (OS)
f. 35  Karnival Krewe badges, 1895 (2)
f. 36  Official Karnival Krewe Program, 1896
f. 37  Karnival Krewe materials, 1896 and n.d. (OS)
f. 38  Karnival Krewe envelopes, n.d. (4)

Series 5: Posters, viewbook, and news clippings, 1887-1910

f. 39  Supplement parade posters, 1887 (4) (MC)
f. 40  Supplement parade posters, 1888 (3) (MC)
f. 41  News clipping, 1885: Kansas City World Pictorial Section, 1898; Karnival Krewe poster, 1900 (MC)
f. 42  Viewbook of Kansas City, Carnival Week, 1899
f. 43  News clippings, 1909 and n.d.
f. 44  News clippings, 1910 (OS)


f. 45  Official Program, 2005 (2)
f. 46  Ball invitation, 2005 (2)
f. 47  Ball photographs and artist statement, 2005
f. 48  Ball invitation, 2006 (3)
f. 49  Sponsor letter and form, 2006
f. 50  Ball invitation, 2007
Series 7: Artifacts, 1906-2005

1. Two enamel trays, one blue and one green, 1906
2. Porcelain pencil holder, 1907
3. Thermometer, 1911
4. Bud vase, 1924
5. Cut glass box, 2005

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This is not a comprehensive index. Included are names of individuals who are acknowledged in the collection materials for organizing or participating in festival events, as well as prominent sponsors. Entries for businesses, buildings, and locations feature a pictorial image unless otherwise noted.

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