

Salem Willows

Chelmsford's Arthur Emerson visited Salem Willows in 1891 and took two spectacular images seen below. Both show the huge steeped pavilion located near the beach at the end of Fort Street. The roller coaster was located between Fort and Columbus streets, and is enlarged here.

- The Salem Willows Park is a 35 acre waterfront site was designated a city park in 1858 and is named for the original white willow trees that were planted there around 1800.
- In 1877, the Naumkeag Street Railway Company began "running horse-drawn trolleys to Salem Willows. It also started acquiring land for a planned amusement park", according to Jim McAllister in the News.
- The park opened for business in 1880 and was immediate popular. The major attractions were the Willows Pavilion, originally home to a skating rink and restaurant. Popular bands like Salem Cadet Band played outside at the Willows Park Theatre. The water chute at the intersection of Fort and Columbus Avenue was popular. People were carried up to the top of a tall slide in small "boats" and then sped down a long track into a pool of water below.
- Charleshurst Ballroom which opened in the 1920's, was owned by Charles Schribman. This nightspot attracted big bands from around the country and was one of the social centers of the North Shore. Duke Ellington was just one of the famous jazz performers to play there.
- One of the most popular eateries was Chase's Willow House which opened in 1874. Other restaurants were Ebsen's and Downing's and [Swenbeck's](#).
- A fixture at the Willows is [Hobbs'](#) popcorn and ice cream stand. Everett Hobbs and Wilbur Eaton began selling popcorn in the mid 1880's at a concession in the pavilion. They are still in operation, as the fourth generation of Hobbs' continue to sell salt-water taffy, homemade ice cream and popcorn.
- In 1870, one of the most popular rides was Brown's Flying Horses carousel. Joseph Brown, a native of Bavaria, was an expert woodcarver who carved all the animals by hand. The carousel was first manually turned, then replaced later by a real live horse, then by a steam driven engine for its five minute trip. This was a fixture for seventy years until Brown's son-in-law passed away and the horses were sold in 1945 to Macy's Department Store for their Christmas display.
- Thrill seekers gravitated toward the water chute at the intersection of Fort and Columbus avenues. Patrons were hauled up to the top of a tall slide in small "boats" and then sped down a long track into a pool of water below. The atlas in the Reference room from 1897 indicates where that ride was located.
- A new carousel was installed in 1993, with repainted cast aluminum carousel animals to replace the ones that were sold.
- One of the most famous restaurants at the Willows, the Chase House burned down on July 15, 1952. The 78 year old building was gone in a 20 minute spectacular blaze which started at midnight.
- A popular sandwich at the Willows is the chop suey sandwich, sold at Lowe's and the Willow House, where this American specialty with immigrant roots has been a mainstay in many coastal towns with amusement parks since the 1940's.
- Parking meters were added by the city to the parking spots in 2006 to offset the upkeep of the park.
- A popular [Horribles Parade](#) is staged every July 4th by the Willows' residents from Juniper Point ever since the late 1940's. It is a mix of patriotism and parody. Members of the Wilson family march in Wilson's Band every year.
- [Juniper Point](#), a tight-knit neighborhood next to the Willows, is on a portion of the Salem Neck on the Salem harbor side. Probably named for its juniper trees. Built up with mostly summer homes, the houses are now occupied year round.
- The Salem Willows Yacht Club was formed in late 1932, using the boat house and landing float formerly the property of William Remon. They are still an active club today.
- The Salem Willows bandstand was dedicated in 2013 to Bob Hayes, 92 years old, who has played trombone with the North Shore Concert Band since 1939.

Source: http://www.noblenet.org/salem/wiki/index.php/Salem_Willows







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