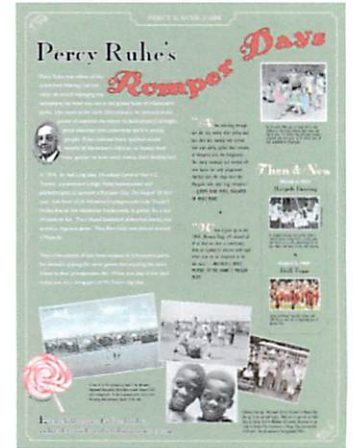


PARK PICKS  
by  
FRIENDS OF THE ALLENTOWN PARKS

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*Impressionism is the newspaper of the soul.*  
- Henri Matisse (1869-1954)  
French artist, printmaker, sculptor

**Percy B. Ruhe Park**

For many of us, mention Percy Ruhe Park and there is contemplative silence. However, mention Alton Park and everyone knows that it is located on the south side of Allentown. What few people realize is that the park itself is named after the "Father of Allentown's Playground System," Percy B. Ruhe, and the name of the neighborhood development across from the park is Alton Park. Each year the Alton Park Youth Association keeps Percy Ruhe Park abuzz with baseball and softball games as well as a host of other wonderful sports and recreational activities. Percy Ruhe would be quite pleased.

A native Allentonian, he was a graduate of Allen High School, a 1901 graduate of Muhlenberg College, associated with *The Morning Call* since 1899 and in 1910 was promoted to newspaper editor. Ruhe was a canoeist and quite active in promoting river carnivals in the city.

He was a patron of the arts, and in fact, was one of the organizers of the then-called Kline-Baum Art School. Another of his passions was the Lehigh County Humane Society (LCHS) where he worked diligently to stamp out cruelty to animals. Ruhe was elected president of the LCHS in 1921, a post he held until his death in 1962.

His activities didn't stop there. He led the committee to save historic Bogert's Bridge and utilized his position at the newspaper to promote other worthy causes to improve the quality of life in Allentown. And, as with Georg "Buck" Boyle (see *Park Picks*, February 21, 2011), Mr. Ruhe's focus was on youth and providing Allentown youth with as many recreational opportunities as possible.

He served on the executive committee of the Lehigh County Boy Scout Council. He was one of seven individuals who helped establish the Industrial Arts and Vocational program at Allen High School. Ruhe and his wife helped organize the city's first playground, Fountain Park, in 1912 which led the development of numerous playgrounds throughout the city. And, it was Ruhe who convinced General Harry C. Trexler to establish "Romper Day," an activities-choked event held at the end of the summer playground season. ("Romper Day," established in 1914, continues today.)

Percy B. Ruhe (1881-1962)  
Photos courtesy of the Allentown Department of Parks and Recreation

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Truly a man of many interests and accomplishments. To commemorate his contributions, a bronze bust of Ruhe was sculptured by Allentown sculptor Michael Iacocca Giacco and placed in the park, however, several years ago the bust was stolen. Fortunately, the Ruhe family maintained the mold and a replacement is currently in process.

Percy Ruhe Park, a 27.5-acre recreational complex, contains four baseball fields, one volleyball court, one basketball court, two handball courts, three tennis courts, a playground, and lots of open space to rest and relax. What a fitting tribute.

*Material on Percy Ruhe was graciously provided by retired Morning Call reporter Richard Cowen and his wife Constance.*

**Remembrance Trees at Percy Ruhe Park**

The **Allentown Parks and Recreation Master Plan** for Percy Ruhe Park recommends the planting of additional trees to provide shade and improve the aesthetics of the park. The Remembrance Tree program of **Friends of the Allentown Parks** is one way in which you can help. For more information please contact us.

Learn how you can help make Allentown's great park system even better. For more information: [www.allentownparks.org](http://www.allentownparks.org). To become a member or volunteer please contact us.

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