



8 3/4" panoramic postcard of the Nativity scene at the Parthenon, Nashville, Tennessee, c. 1950s.

The Parthenon Nativity Scene (Nashville, Tennessee)

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There are always wonderful memories of Christmases past even though time has rendered the details a little less clear. Some are traditions that were celebrated at Christmas year after year. There are many from Middle Tennessee that will recall visiting the Nativity Scene at the Parthenon in Centennial Park in Nashville.

The Nativity Scene at the Parthenon was first installed for Christmas 1954. Donated by Fred Harvey of Harvey's Department Store in Nashville, it was 280 feet long, 75 feet deep and filled with colorful lights. The scene could be viewed by driving around the Parthenon along the park road. The Nativity Scene was a regular feature every Christmas through 1967 when age and disrepair forced the Christmas tradition to end.

The Parthenon - a full-scale replica of the ancient Parthenon in Athens, Greece - was built as the Fine Arts Building for the Tennessee Centennial Exposition of 1897. The exposition celebrated 100 years of Tennessee's statehood. Centennial Park with the Parthenon as its centerpiece was created in 1902 from the 200 acres that served as the Centennial grounds. On December 31, 2001, a celebration was held to mark the completion of the Parthenon's seven-year restoration.

Although the Nativity Scene has been gone from the Parthenon for many years now, it will remain a memory to be cherished.