CHESTNUT HILL, MA -- An historical exhibit focusing on Norumbega Park, the highly popular amusement park located in the City of Newton from 1897 into the 1960s, is now on display at Boston College's John J. Burns Library. The free public exhibit, "The Robert Pollock Collection of Norumbega Park," will be on display in the Thompson Room of Burns Library through September 5, 2006.

The late Robert Pollock (1941-2004), an Auburndale native who was devoted to the history of Norumbega Park, assembled the collection, the majority of which was donated to the Burns Library by his brother Brian Pollock. Items also were donated to the Newton Historical Society.

The Burns Library exhibit, which offers a fond look back at the wide variety of activities held in Norumbega Park during its 60-plus years, is drawn from materials in the collection including brochures, pamphlets, programs from plays, dances and concerts, photographs, ads, prize cups, tickets and pins.

The essay that accompanies the exhibit is taken from a historical sketch of the park written by Robert Pollock.

When Norumbega Park was first opened in June 1897 by the Commonwealth Avenue Street Railway Company at "Auburndale-on-the-Charles," it featured "canoeing, picnic areas, an outdoor theatre, a penny arcade, a restaurant, a zoo, a carousel, and an electric fountain," Pollock wrote. It was "tremendously successful, attracting hundreds of thousands of patrons each season."

"Norumbega's success continued through the 1920s, with new attractions added frequently," he wrote. "Rides included the Caterpillar, the Bug, Dodgem Cars, Custer Cars, Seaplanes, and a huge Ferris wheel."

Over the years, improvements and additions ensured the park's continued popularity.

The original theater on the grounds – the Rustic Theatre – passed through several incarnations before finally, in 1930, becoming the Totem Pole Ballroom, which came to be known as "America's Most Beautiful Ballroom".

"Virtually every famous swing band in the country appeared at the Auburndale venue, including Benny Goodman, Artie Shaw, Harry James, the Dorsey brothers, Lawrence Welk and Ozzie Nelson. Frank Sinatra sang at the Totem Pole, as did Dinah Shore, Frankie Laine, the Four Lads and the von Trapp Family," wrote Pollock. "Music from the ballroom was broadcast nationally over the NBC, ABC, and CBS radio networks."

"The Robert Pollock Collection of Norumbega Park" on Display Now Through Sept. 5
Pollock also noted that the park's ball field was home to the Totem Pole Belles, a women's professional softball team.

The amusement park remained successful as rides and midway games were updated through the 1950s. Eventually, however, changes in musical taste, the advent of television, and ease of automobile travel combined to bring about the end of the park's viability, and the park and ballroom closed on Labor Day, 1963. Fire destroyed the remaining structures, and the property was sold to developers.

The park grounds are now the site of the Boston Marriott Newton.

The John J. Burns Library of Rare Books and Special Collections is named in memory of the Honorable John J. Burns, a distinguished alumnus of the class of 1921 who became the University's first "Friend of the Library" and one of its principal benefactors. It was dedicated in 1986, and today is home to more than 160,000 volumes, 15 million manuscripts and impressive holdings of artifacts, maps, paintings, photographs, ephemera and architectural records.

**Through September 5, 2006: "The Robert Pollock Collection of Norumbega Park," an historical exhibit of memorabilia including brochures, pamphlets, programs (plays, dances, concerts), photographs, ads, prize cups, tickets, pins et.al. of the wide variety of activities held in Newton's Norumbega Park from 1897-1963. The John J. Burns Library at Boston College, 140 Commonwealth Avenue, Chestnut Hill, Mass. Free and open to the public. Hours: Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. or by appointment. Venue is handicapped accessible. For information call: 617-552-3282.**

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