



An American Tour: 44

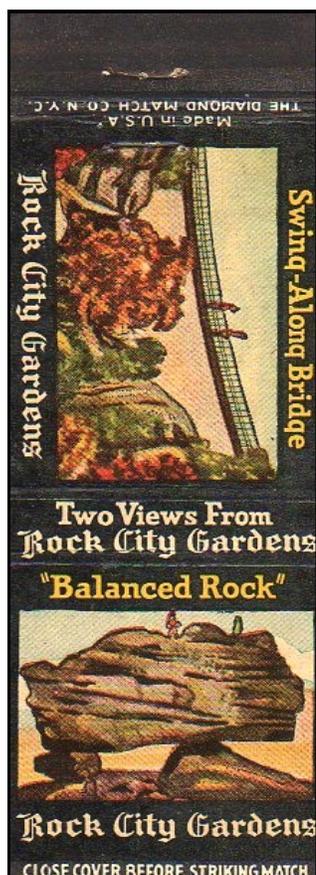


Chattanooga's Rock City

Rock City Gardens' history as a world-famous tourist attraction dates back to the days of the Great Depression, but its history as a geological marvel of nature reaches back several million years before that. Historical evidence shows that Native Americans inhabited Lookout Mountain. It was in 1823 that two missionaries arrived in the area to minister to the Indians.

By the time the Civil War reached the slopes of Lookout Mountain, more and more people had discovered what was already being called "the Rock City." The man who would eventually make Rock City a household name was Garnet Carter. Carter had tried and succeeded at a number of business ventures before hitting on the idea of developing a residential neighborhood on the top of Lookout Mountain. Launched in 1924, the new community was to be known as Fairyland. In order to appease those who were clamoring to play golf, Carter responded by fashioning what is now recognized to be the nation's first miniature golf course. Because of its popularity, Carter decided to franchise this miniature golf concept all over the United States; hence, the origins of Tom Thumb Golf.

His wife, Frieda, had begun a project of her own. The 700 acres of Fairyland also encompassed the legendary Rock City, and Frieda set out to develop this property into a rock garden to end all rock gardens. Garnet realized his wife had something there that lots of other people might be willing to pay to see. The rest, as they say, is history.



Rock City officially opened as a public attraction on May 21, 1932. Carter enlisted the help of a young sign painter named Clark Byers, who was hired to travel the nation's highways and offer to paint a farmer's barns in exchange for letting him paint three simple words: See Rock City. The distinctive black-and-white signs appeared as far north as Michigan and as far west as Texas. The advertising soon began to produce the desired effect and, by the close of the 1930's, more travelers than ever had seen Rock City Gardens.

Each year, more than half a million people visit the attraction to enjoy the many natural splendors that abound. Over the years, several features have been added to the original attraction, including the popular Fairyland Caverns and Mother Goose Village, the Cornerstone Station, as well as a myriad of shops and restaurants. In addition, annual events such as the Rock City's Enchanted Garden of Lights during the holiday season bring guests in by the droves. And the gardens Frieda so lovingly planted have also grown through the years to include more than 400 different species of native wildflowers, shrubs, and trees.

As Rock City Gardens is nearing our 80th year of operation, it has become a true American icon.

[<http://www.seerockcity.com/pages/Our-Story/>]