

The Children's Museum of Indianapolis

CREATED IN 1925. MOVED TO CURRENT LOCATION IN 1946.

The History of the Museum

The Children's Museum of Indianapolis was founded in 1925 through the stewardship and inspiration of Mary Stewart Carey. After visiting the Brooklyn Children's Museum, she was determined to create a museum for the children of Indianapolis. With the help of several civic-minded women and contributions from children in nearby neighborhoods, the first museum collection sprang to life. The initial homes

The museum moved to its current home at 30th and Meridian streets in 1946. Community activities at the museum increased during the '50s and '60s, bringing greater attendance, more collection contributions, and the need for further expansion.

By 1971, the museum was among the first two dozen museums in the country, and the first in Indianapolis, to be accredited by the American Association of Museums. In 1976 it expanded and became the world's largest children's museum at 225,000 square feet, a designation it proudly continues to hold. Additions in 1983 included a new restaurant, more storage space, and a new loading dock. In 1984, the museum's collection nearly doubled in size with Frank and Theresa Caplan's contribution of more than 50,000 toys and folk art objects collected from 120 countries around the world.

In 1987, the museum began a series of renovations, including the addition of a 20,000-square-foot atrium entrance and Welcome Center with North America's largest water clock as its centerpiece, SpaceQuest® Planetarium, increased classroom space, and new galleries for changing exhibits.

In 1996, renovation of the science gallery and the addition of the Cinedome™ theater provided yet another opportunity for children to learn in a unique environment.

In 1997, The Children's Museum received a generous \$40 million gift from the estate of Enid Goodrich to help young people share her love of learning for many generations. The museum also received the National



of the museum included a carriage house on Indianapolis' Old Northside and the Garfield Park Shelter House.

The museum received additional assistance when The Children's Museum Guild was formed in 1933. This organization of volunteers continues to contribute time, money, and service toward the museum's success. The Guild created the first Haunted House in 1964, a successful annual fundraising event that still thrives today.

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Award for Museum Service from the Institute for Museum and Library Services for its commitment to the surrounding neighborhood and the Indianapolis community. In 1998, The Children's Museum was voted the nation's No. 1 children's museum by readers of *FamilyFun* magazine, recognizing it as not only the world's largest, but also the best. That same year, the museum store, restaurant, and parking facilities were renovated and expanded to meet the needs of visitors.

In 2004, the museum welcomed more change with the transformation of Cinedome™ theater to *Dinosphere: Now You're in Their World®*, as well as the addition of a 293,200 square-foot parking garage. In 2006, *Fireworks of Glass*, a permanent glass sculpture installation designed by artist Dale Chihuly, was added.

In 2007 *The Power of Children: Making a Difference* opened. The exhibit examines the stories of three children—Anne Frank, Ruby Bridges, and Ryan White—who became heroes of the 20th century by overcoming hatred, racism, and fear. The exhibit offers children and families opportunities to discuss difficult topics and learn how today's children can make a difference.

Museum updates in 2009 included: *Take Me There: Egypt*, the current Welcome Center, renaming of the previous Welcome Center to the Sunburst Atrium, the Skywalk over Illinois Street, installation of the *brachiosaurs*, the creation of Anne Frank Peace Park and its limestone Wonders sculptures, and renovations to infoZone and the Museum Store. In 2011, the museum opened its newest permanent exhibit, the \$4.3 million *National Geographic Treasures of the Earth*.

Today, The Children's Museum welcomes more than 1.25 million visitors annually. It has a combined full- and part-time staff of over 280 employees and houses numerous temporary and permanent exhibits in 11 galleries. The museum offers more than 4,000 programs and activities each year and maintains a collection of more than 120,000 artifacts.

Every year, museum staff members serve as eager consultants to children's museums being developed throughout the United States and around the world. As it continues to pioneer the museum and education worlds, The Children's Museum of Indianapolis looks to the leaders of the 21st century, specifically the children it is serving today, for guidance and vision.