



# The Kid of Coney Island: Fred Thompson and the Rise of American Amusements

*Woody Register*

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## **The Kid of Coney Island: Fred Thompson and the Rise of American Amusements** Woody Register

A generation before Walt Disney, Fred Thompson was the "boy-wonder" of American popular amusements. At the turn of the 20th century, Thompson's entrepreneurial drive made him into an entertainment mogul who helped to define the popular culture of his day.

In this lively biography, Woody Register tells Thompson's remarkable story and examines the transformation of commerce and entertainment as American society moved into an era of mass marketing and large-scale corporate enterprise. Getting his start as a promoter of carnival shows at world's fairs, Thompson was one of the principal developers of Coney Island, where he created the majestic Luna Park. Register traces Thompson's career as he built the mammoth Hippodrome Theater in Manhattan, where he mounted many productions noted for their spectacular--and spectacularly costly--staging effects. Register shows how Thompson's fantasies appealed to the growing legions of Americans who found themselves in a world that seemed increasingly "businesslike" and profit oriented. He illustrates how Thompson aggressively marketed to adult consumers a world of make-believe and childlike play, carefully crafting his own public image as "the boy who never grew up."

Colorful, well-written, and insightful, *The Kid of Coney Island* brings to life a kaleidoscopic era in New York history as well as one of its most striking characters.

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