



The
Carousel

News & Trader

July 2011
Vol. 27, No. 7
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**Geauga Lake 4-row Illions
now Worlds of Fun Carousel**

**A Look Back at Harry Illions -
His Lifetime in the Showbiz**

Armitage Herschell Genealogy

Brooklyn Eagle MGR Snippets

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1895 Loeff Carousel. Last operated at Asbury Park

A huge 4-row with 78 replacement animals.

1925 PTC. Last operated Kiddieland in Melrose, IL

3-row carousel with an amazing 16 signature PTC horses.

1900s PTC Carousel

Last operated by the world famous Strates shows. In storage awaiting restoration.

1900s Loeff Carousel

Huge 4-row menagerie carousel. Has been in storage for years, awaiting restoration.

1900s PTC Carousel

Rare 4-row unrestored carousel great for community project. Priced to sell. Restoration available.

1927 Dentzel frame from Rock Springs, WV

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1880s Herschell–Spillman Steam–Operated Carousel

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1900s Dentzel Menagerie Carousel

All original animals. Currently up and operating looking for new home.

1900s PTC Carousel

A huge 4-row with all original animals. Restored and ready to operate.

1920s Dentzel Menagerie Carousel

All original animals. Deluxe trim. Currently in storage. Videos of it operating at its last location.

1920s Dentzel Carousel

Another huge 4-row machine, just like Disneyland's, with 78 replacement animals.

Allan Herschell Carousel

30 horses. New sweeps and platforms. Set up for outdoor use. Located on East Coast. Up and running; ready to go.

1920s Spillman

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ON THE COVER:



July, 2011
Vol. 27, No. 7

Most recently known as the Geauga Lake Carousel, this beautiful ride is now the Worlds of Fun Carousel in Kansas City. The 4-row Illions was built in for the Sesquicentennial in Philadelphia in 1926. The carousel would spend time in Alabama and Coney Island as well.

Kate Blakley photo

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From Dan's Desk

Message from the publisher,
Dan Horenberger

What Really Matters...

I'm sure all who know them know by now that they survived just fine – as best you can through a disaster like this. Their home and personal belongings gone forever, but the most precious, their lives and their children, survived.

I'm speaking of long, long time friends of the carousel world, Don and Ruth Snider. Shortly after we went to print with the last issue, the next wave of deadly tornadoes hit the mid-west. Those who knew them were immediately concerned for the Sniders. A map on Google showing the destruction path of the twister showed the Sniders' home spared by a mere 4 city blocks. The map however, was wrong. Here is the news as it came later that day, thanks to Dawn Brasington, who was persistent in finding out about her dear friends and shared her good news with the community as soon as she heard, by sending this email.

I hope the Sniders don't mind us sharing their story of survival. It is inspirational, heartwarming and might help us all gain perspective on what is really important in life.



From Dawn Brasington:

"I'm not sure if all of you know Don and Ruth Snider of Joplin, MO. They have been early members of NCS & ACS - wonderful people, dear friends. When we heard of the terrible tornado we immediately tried to e-mail, call, cell phone, etc. But to no avail. They lived at Jefferson & 26th St. - just 4 blocks from the St. John Hospital which was in the path of the tornado. We knew their home had to be destroyed, but we could not reach them. We made call after call trying to get through.

"Finally just about an hour ago Ruth picked up her cell phone and I heard her voice. They were alive. Their house is totally gone – wiped clean. She was at a meeting about an hour away when she heard the news. Don was in the house. He had a few minutes to get into the bath tub – and he lived through it – completely covered with trash, glass, debris – but he made it. Ruth drove home from the meeting in the storm, trying to find her neighborhood, but everything was gone, she couldn't find the street. She knew Don probably didn't make it – but when she rounded the corner he was standing outside in the rain – and then she fell apart.

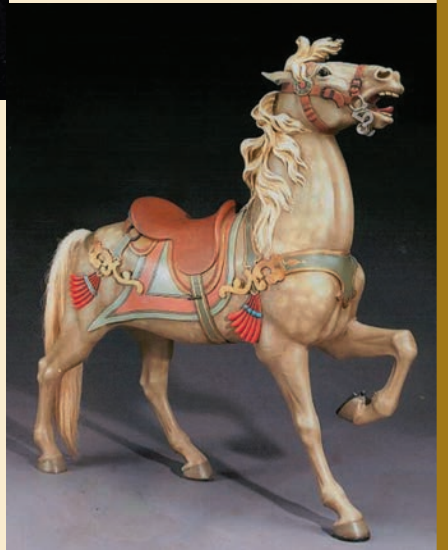
"Their son and his wife and kids live nearby, and they also made it - so Don and Ruth are staying with them at this time. Another church friend has an empty garage and they will move some temporary furniture and a bed into that. I asked if they needed money, but she said on top of the debris they found their check book, wet, but ok ... plus they have credit cards ... but everything else is gone. They are still trying to digest this and the terrible destruction in their minds and many of their neighbors, friends have been killed.



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"After we stopped crying we started laughing at the situation. While I was talking to her, Don was taking a shower; and he had taken a bottle of wine in with him!

"I asked about horses. She said they had just sold one for \$10,000 – but by now it was probably in Oklahoma (not via any shipping service). They found part of a Parker up the street. It's hard enough to watch the destruction on TV, but having dear friends who live there has been really a terrible experience, especially when you can't get any confirmation as to their well being. Thank God they made it through.

"I'm just sending this e-mail to those that might have known them; and at least it's good news. But to think that in a blink of an eye your home is totally gone – nothing left – just gone, is really too much to comprehend."

– Dawn & Buck, May 24, 2011

Special thanks to Dawn and Buck for persevering and sharing the good news, and our thoughts and prayers to the Sniders, their family, friends, and the entire community.

SPECIAL EVENT:

Dare Horses Return to Gillett for a July 10 Ice Cream Social



The Dare horse that started the story in the August, 2010 CN&T. Behind the horse is the flying alligator chariot. Leah and Pete Farnsworth photo

GILLETT, WI – The 1878 style Charles Dare carousel horses that appeared in the August, 2010 CN&T article, "Zippel Park, Charles Dare, and Gillie Godard and Co., Gillett, WI," are taking a trip. The Gillett Area Historical Society will be having an Ice Cream Social on July 10, 2011. On their website, www.gilletthistorical.com, they show that the featured attraction this year will be Leah and Pete Farnsworth with the matching pair of old Dares and a chariot. They are from the carousel that was in Zippel Park in Gillett until it went into storage in 1944. Gillett is about a three hour drive from Milwaukee, and less than an hour west of Green Bay, WI. Leah and Pete are looking forward to sharing the Dare story with the people from Gillett, and also hope to meet any carousel enthusiasts that live in the area.

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Notes from Marianne...

By Marianne Stevens
Carousel Historian, Co-Author of "Painted Ponies."

Marianne Stevens poses on her prized Looff carousel while at Shoreline Village in Long Beach, CA, in the 1990s.



How to Poop off \$1m

I've had a bee in my bonnet ever since I heard that someone gave the city of Boston \$1 million to put a carousel on the Greenway and they decided to purchase a fiberglass carousel with lobsters and sea creatures instead of horses. I heard that they said they didn't want an old carousel that would break down all the time. Did they ever consult with any carousel experts about it? That would seem to be a thing to consider if someone gave you a million dollars to do something specific with -- consult an expert or two -- but to my knowledge none were ever contacted, none that I know anyway -- and I think I know most of them, if not all.

The great city of Boston, that city full of history, is in effect going with a fiberglass machine. Did they ever look around at the amusement parks that are still in business in the area? There is Canobie Lake just north of the city, Six Flags in Agawam to the west, and Lake Compounce in Connecticut, "America's Oldest Amusement Park." Each of these parks have carousels over 100 years old. Nearly every major amusement park in the country operates an antique carousel -- even Disney. These people are in business to make money and would not put up with a machine that was always breaking down.

A graceful, lovely old carousel and band organ would surely be a meeting place; a place for social events, birthday parties, and weddings, etc. It would be a place to build



The carousel at Canobie Lake Park in Salem, NH, was built in 1898; operating at the park since 1906. The carousel has carvings from Looff, Dentzel and Stein & Goldstein. Along with the 33 horses are a lion, a deer and a goat.



The 1909 Mangels-Illions carousel at Six Flags NE has 68 horses, a lion, a tiger and two deer aboard.

new memories and celebrate old ones. They are missing the point completely in Boston. A vintage carousel with new gears and innards could last another 100 years. I doubt that a fiberglass carousel would be around then. These hand-carved horses that have suffered 100 years of cowboy, indian and soldier wannabes can take the punishment that fiberglass can't.

And \$3 a ride? Any successful carousel operator today will tell you can't try to make your money off of rides. Even 25 years ago when I ran my Looff in Long Beach, we were lucky to pay the electric bill with ticket sales. We made our money on t-shirts from our gift shop and other concessions; popcorn, hot dogs, sodas and souvenirs. But, in order to make these profits, you need a carousel and an atmosphere that people want to linger around, not one that they go three blocks out of their way to go around because they have four kids and it's \$3 a ride.

Please Boston, don't make a mistake that will cost you down the line -- go with something that the community can embrace and that is full of history and will last another 100 years -- a vintage machine.

(NOTE: There is just one amusement park in New England not operating an antique carousel, Quassy Amusement Park in CT. To this day, the owners say their biggest regret ever is selling their antique E. Joy Morris carousel. In all, there are 18 antique carousels currently operating in New England, and one carousel museum.)

A mermaid carved into the saddle back of one of the horses on the 1893 Murphy/Looff/Carmel/Stein & Goldsein carousel at Lake Compounce. The carousel and its 48 horses, and one goat, have operated at the park since 1911.



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Spillman



1924 Spillman Tiger From the Lincoln Park Carousel in Los Angeles.
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Dentzel - Muller



ca. 1905 Dentzel-Muller Stander From the Mexican Muller Carousel
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Stein & Goldstein



Stein & Goldstein Western Jumper. Elaborately detailed trappings.
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Looff Prancer



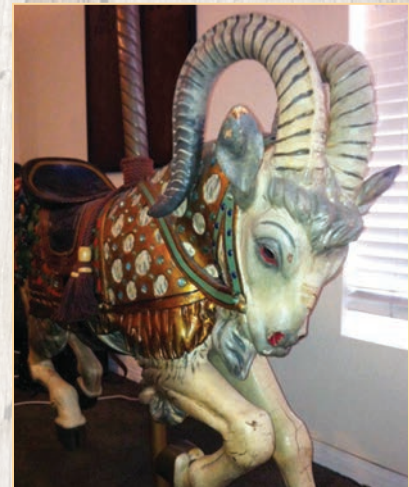
Fully Restored, ca. 1895 Looff Prancer. Most of the original paint intact. \$5,900

Mangels-Illions



W. F. Mangels/Illions "Children' Delight" Coney Island Street Carousel. ca. 1910. A true museum piece. \$110,000

Looff Ram



1910-'12 Looff ram from Redondo Beach in early Looff park paint. \$45,000

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Riding With The Rabbit

By Richard Concepcion

Where Have All The Horses Gone?



Lakewood Park

Among my collection of children's books featuring carousels is a story written in the 1970s titled "Where Have All The Horses Gone?". In a melancholy way, that is a question that always enters my thoughts whenever I visit a spot where there used to be a classic carousel.

It was almost 2 years ago that the country lost another legacy amusement park, this one in the suburbs of Chicago. Kiddieland in Melrose Park, IL, was the home of PTC #72 which was purchased intact at auction following the closing of the park. The historic carousel is presently offered for sale to any new place that would preserve the ride. Some have even suggested returning this carousel to one of its previous venues, where its former home amazingly is still standing, even 80 years after the ride left for Illinois.

I was astonished to learn the pavilion that sheltered PTC #72 at its prior location in Waterbury, CT, continued to exist. With the help of a friend living in that part of the state, I went to Lakewood Park to see for myself. Lakewood ceased to be a functioning amusement park in the early 1950s, nearly two decades after the carousel left, and has since been converted to a public municipal park. Today the park is in a rather sad, rundown condition, located at the edge of an urban community, with only the carousel pavilion as a forgotten reminder that there indeed once was an amusement park on this site. Instead of sheltering galloping wooden horses, the structure now only protects picnic tables and the neighborhood families that dine on them.

As I strolled around the pavilion, I tried listening for the



This photo shows how precarious the survival of such outdoor historical artifacts like this can be. Apparently someone was grilling food on this wooden table when it caught fire with the flames reaching the eaves of the carousel pavilion. It could have been much more serious and possibly destroyed the entire pavilion, leaving no more remnants of what was once Lakewood Amusement Park.



The Lakewood Park carousel pavilion was of a classic Philadelphia design, with its domed roof.

past echoes of a band organ and maybe horses' hoofbeats but could only hear the present-day laughter of kids, who were not there enjoying a ride, but having a birthday party around several of the picnic tables.

Making this trip to Lakewood and seeing this spot reminded me of other places I've known where classic carousels used to turn, both well-pronounced like where PTC #72 was here in Waterbury, and other places where they vanished without leaving a trace. Here are pictures of some of the places I know of where there used to be a historic carousel:

New Jersey Shore

The New Jersey shore was home to many hand-carved carousels in years past. At the resort town of Ocean City is this busy video/game arcade (*below*), which has been somewhat modernized both inside and out – but, very obviously used to house a carousel. Does anybody know what ride used to be here?



The inside of this Ocean City arcade shows a carousel roof.

A couple of blocks up the boardwalk is Playland's Castaway Cove, which used to host a Carmel-Borelli carousel in this rather utilitarian structure (*shown above*).





A Carmel-Borrelli carousel once operated in this building, now home to Playland's Castaway Cove. The carousel is also listed as having Stein & Goldstein figures and was dispersed in 1982.

The carousel was dispersed in 1982 and replaced by a fiberglass carousel just outside the building on the park's expanded deck with games now occupying the old carousel's spot inside.

Even further up the Ocean City boardwalk are the attractions owned and run by the Gillian family. This water park used to be the location of Gillian's Fun Deck, which had a wooden Allan Herschell carousel until the deck was moved inside their adjacent Wonderland amusement park and the ride sold off.

Heading down to the lower portion of Cape May County, the Wildwoods has had most of their rides piled onto its amusement piers for decades. The Sportland Pier, originally owned by the Ramagossa family in North Wildwood had its own set of rides through the 1980s, including a Stein & Goldstein carousel.

In the '70s, the Ramagossas began importing Venetian carousels built by Bertazzon from Italy, and retrofitted the S&G carousel frame with a Venetian decor and trim. Eventually the wooden horses were replaced with fiberglass replicas by Bertazzon too, and then all the rides closed when the pier was sold. Only a Go Kart track replaced the rides on the pier, and for over 25 years after it stopped turning, the center-pole from the old carousel (*shown below*) remained standing on the deck parked off to the side until only a couple of years ago.



The center-pole from a dispersed Stein & Goldstein carousel still on the Sportland Pier years after the horses had gone.



This ornate building attached to the old Casino in Asbury Park housed PTC #87, the last PTC carousel built. The horses were sold off in 1984. The 1930s mechanism still operates at Family Kingdom Amusement Park in Myrtle Beach.

Perhaps one of the most striking examples of a vacated carousel location, coupled with a nearby unassuming spot, lies in Asbury Park on the upper shore. This long-faded resort town has been striving to make a comeback in recent years, but is doing so without the benefit of its amusement attractions. The most visible sign of this is the ornate carousel pavilion attached to the remains of the Asbury Casino. It housed the very last carousel built by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company.

Along with the carousel, the casino housed an arcade, bumper cars and fun house through the 1980s. These spaces now stand dark and idle, though the carousel pavilion is sometimes used for theatrical presentations in season.

Literally across the street, was Asbury Park's other carousel, the Loeff/illions/S&G mixed ride at Palace Amusements, also closed in the late '80s. The entire indoor amusement park, dating back almost a century, was completely demolished and is now just a fenced-off vacant lot awaiting redevelopment.



Looking across the Palace Carousel site directly towards the Casino carousel pavilion. This may have been the last place in the country where two major hand-carved carousels were so close to each other. I remember very well riding on both carousels and gazing out at the other while they both turned.



A minor league ball park for the New York Mets occupies the space that was once the great Steeplechase Park.

Back home in New York City, a century ago the absolute creative center for carousels was Coney Island. From here rides were shipped out all over the country, mostly from the Mangels factory. And quite a few built here spent their first years of operation right in the neighborhood, so to speak. Historian Jeffrey Stanton has listed over two dozen classic carousels that have played in Coney Island during the past 100 years, some of which turned in several different spots at the resort before either moving onward to other places near and far, being destroyed by fire, or broken by piecemeal sale. Yet, for all of those carousels that had been at Coney Island throughout history, none have left any visibly identifiable marks today such as those I've described earlier in New Jersey and Connecticut. So it is only by memory or recorded documentation that I can point out some of the old carousel locations here.

George C. Tilyou's Steeplechase Park was the longest surviving historical amusement park in Coney Island until it closed in 1964. The indoor Pavilion of Fun had housed the massive El Dorado carousel from Germany and the front lawn of the park had a Prior & Church Derby Racer, while the famous Steeplechase ride itself wrapped around the pavilion. After Tilyou's park was closed and demolished, and following a failed attempt to build housing on the site, Norman Kaufman ran a few carnival rides on the site during the



The approximate site of the Stubmann Illions carousel at the Southeast corner of the Steeplechase Park site.



The storefront home of the B & B Carousel from 1932-1984.

1970s that included a portable Spillman carousel. The City of New York then took over the land as a public park, and cleared it out. Eventually a baseball stadium would rise here to provide a home for the farm club of the New York Mets, and that is what occupies the historic site today.

At the Southeast corner of the Steeplechase Park site, the former Stubmann carousel carved by Illions had been relocated from Surf Avenue and turned here, replacing another carousel that burned. Some of its horses, along with the carousel frame, went to the New York World's Fair after Steeplechase closed, but for nearly 30 years, the concrete slab that supported the carousel, complete with the service pit, remained plainly visible at this boardwalk location. Eventually, this section of the walk was refurbished and the baseball stadium and adjoining soccer field were built.

Next door to the Coney Island subway terminal, an empty niche was the location of an Illions carousel during the 1960s that was previously several blocks to the West. The carousel was then broken up, and in the '70s there was a water slide on the lot, then a flea market, and finally construction storage for subway station rehab. It's now vacant.



Vacant lot near the subway terminal, once home to an Illions.

A couple of blocks to the East on Surf Avenue is the storefront that had been the home of the Carmel-carved B&B Carousell since 1932. It was the last hand-carved carousel left in Coney Island and the last amusement ride on the North side of Surf Avenue. Perhaps the only remaining indication that something special used to be in this building is the pyramid skylight on the roof. The City of New York purchased the carousel in 2004 and after restoration by Carousels & Carvings in Ohio, it will be returned to Coney Island, possibly next year, and placed on the boardwalk adjacent to the Parachute Jump tower.

In the shadow of the Cyclone, Coney Island's last wooden rollercoaster, the McCullough family ran another Carmel-carved carousel on Surf Avenue through the 1940s, until the location was annexed by the New York Aquarium for their parking lot. Today the carousel is elsewhere in Brooklyn at Prospect Park.



The site of the new Luna Park in Coney Island, sans carousel, buttoned up for the off season.

Perhaps Coney Island's most famous carousel was the fabulous Feltman, part of the famous beer garden and restaurant complex of the same name that entertained fun-seekers for generations. The site became the home of the modern Astroland Amusement Park in the early 1960s, which moved the carousel towards the middle of the block for a couple of seasons before dismantling it and selling the classic ride to a firm that would erect it at the New York World's Fair. Today, that carousel still turns at Flushing Meadows Corona Park in Queens, with the outdoor frame and some of the horses from the former Stubmann carousel. Meanwhile, Astroland would continue to operate until 2008 when the land was sold to a private developer. A year later the city would purchase the site, and presently it is leased for ten years to a subsidiary of Zamperla Rides, who last year opened the new Luna Park – without a carousel.

Some of you may be aware that I'm also somewhat of a train buff, sometimes exploring or otherwise walking along former routes of rail lines, both deep in the heart of the city as well as out in the countryside. I think about the crowds of people that used to travel along these now-abandoned lines during the course of many years, following these paths of which some are still clearly marked today, while others having been long obliterated. For me, noting the former site of a vintage carousel is pretty much the same thing, albeit with a much smaller footprint and road to follow.

*To Dagne Schoenbach
Rest in Peace
Sweet Lady,
We all Miss You
Marianne Stevens*

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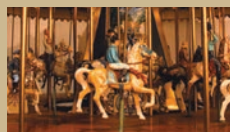
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Carousel Calendar

SPECIAL EVENTS

Through - Dec. 18, 2011

Sandwich, MA. *Flying Horses.* Special exhibit featuring carousel figures and carousel history. The museum also hosts an operating historic Loeff carousel and is where the NCA was officially founded in 1973. Additional activities for children and families and other surprises are planned. At the Heritage Museum and Gardens. For information, call (508) 888-3300 or www.heritagemuseumsandgardens.org.

July 25, 2010

National Merry-Go-Round Day. The little known holiday was created to honor the 1871 carousel patented by William Schneider of Davenport, IA, considered the inventor of the modern carousel according to the U.S. patent office. Of the thousands of beautiful carousels carved in the late 1800s and early 1900s, there are less than 200 operating today. It's a great time to support your local carousel.

Through Sept. 30, 2011

Auburn, CA. *A Leap of Imagination.* Display of carousel figures from the collection of Sue and Mark Hegarty inside the Treasury Room in the Historic Courthouse. The 19 carousel animals include English, German, French and Mexican carvings. Among the American figures are a beautiful Carmel Borelli jumper, very early Loeff and Dentzel prancers, a flag Parker and a standing camel by Daniel Muller. Figures by Illions, H/S, Armitage Herschell and a Carmel stander are also included. The Museum is open from 10-4 daily except holidays. Admission is free. For additional information, call (510) 889-6500.

Sept. 21-25, 2010

Denver, CO. *NCA 2011 Carousel Convention: Hoofbeats in the Rockies.* Visit six historic carousels and see the Aspens turn color. Visit www.nationalcarousel.org for information.

Nov. 14-18, 2010

Orlando, FL. *2011 IAAPA Attractions Expo.* Orange County Convention Center. Visit www.iaapa.org.

COAA AND AMICA BAND ORGAN RALLYS

July 30-31, 2011

Olcott Beach, NY. COAA Organ Rally. Bring your band organ, big or small, or just stop by and enjoy the music. For info, contact Dan Wilke at (716) 825-7266 or visit www.olcottrally.weebly.com, or www.coaa.us.

August 27-28, 2011

Middlebury, CT. Quassy Amusement Park annual COAA Organ Rally. Bring your band organ, big or small, or just stop by and enjoy the music. For info, contact Ron Gustafson at (203) 758-2913, ext. 109, ron@quassy.com or visit www.quassyrally.weebly.com, or www.coaa.us.

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Fax to (818) 332-7944
or email to roland@carouselnews.com.

Annual Go 'Round For Historic Steam Carousels



1894 Norman & Evans in Mt. Pleasant, IA, (left);
1920s C. W. Parker in Rollag, MN, (above).

Please check with events before making travel arrangements.

July 16-17, 2011

Schenevus Fireman's Carnival

ca. 1906 Herschell-Spillman • Schenevus, NY

Operates annually during the Fireman's Carnival event on the third full weekend of July. Contact Fire Department for details. For information, call (607) 638-5656.

July 23, Aug. 20, Sept. 10, Oct. 8

19th Century Willowbrook Village

1894 Armitage Herschell • Newfield, ME

Operates one Saturday each month from May through October at the 19th Century Willowbrook Village living museum. Carousel runs every 30 minutes from 10:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. For information, call (207) 793-2784 or visit www.willowbrookmuseum.org.

August 6-7, 2011

The St. Vincent De Paul Parish Seminary Picnic

1905 Herschell-Spillman • Perryville, MO

Operates annually during community event on the first full weekend of August. Carousel operates Saturday noon to 11 p.m.; Sunday noon to 9 p.m. For information, call (573) 547-4591 or visit www.perryvillemo.com.

August 21, 2011

The Church of Assumption

1890s Armitage Herschell • Redford, NY

Operates during the annual Redford Picnic which started back in 1955. Carousel viewing available on Saturday. Rides on Sunday from noon to 6 p.m. For information, call (518) 293-6259 or visit <http://folklore.tauney.org/rvsp/redfordcarousel.html>.

September 1-5, 2011

Midwest Old Threshers Reunion

1894 Norman & Evans • Mt. Pleasant, IA

Operates during the annual Midwest Old Threshers Reunion, celebrating its 60th anniversary this year. For information, call (319) 385-8937 or visit www.oldthreshers.org.

September 2-5, 2011

Western Minnesota Steam Threshers Reunion

1920s C. W. Parker • Rollag, MN

Operates during the annual W. MN Steam Threshers Reunion which dates back to 1954. For information, call (701) 237-0477 or visit www.rollag.com.

Time Travel and the Brass Ring as Don Diffine Explores his Carousel Roots A Merry-Go-Round Genealogy About The Armitage-Herschell-Spillman Companies



Armitage Herschell Co. letterhead/logo. Photo from the Fraley/CN&T archives

By D. P. (Don) Diffine, Ph.D.

As reported on October 15, 2007

It has been said that if tombstones told the truth, most of us would wish to be buried at sea. Not necessarily. The economic historian in me loves a good story which personalizes our collective biography. This is a narrative of the very human experience of some of my ancestors, raising families, making a living, launching an enterprise, and helping to build a country along the way, too.

My great grandfather, Charles Diffine, Sr. (born 1858), of Alsace-Lorraine, France, was the son of Frederick Diffine, an artist who designed and manufactured stained glass cathedral windows. Charles Diffine, Sr., married Josephine Borius (born 1859), whose father served in the French army as a veterinarian. Charles Diffine, Sr., became a taxidermist and later a shoe manufacturer and retailer. He and Josephine Diffine emigrated to America in 1881.

Specifically, they departed France by steam ship, were processed at Battery Park (near the present World Trade Center site), traveled up the Hudson River and Erie Canal to Buffalo, NY. This was five years before the Statue of Liberty was erected in New York Harbor (1886) and 11 years before Ellis Island (1892) was opened to immigrants. At the



time of the 1881 transAtlantic voyage, Josephine Diffine was pregnant with the fourth of what would be 12 children. Only eight

1890s Armitage Herschell in Redford, NY, operates once a year on the third Sunday in August.



The Herschell "family tree" on the walls of the museum.

would live to adulthood. Their second oldest child was Charles Diffine, Jr. (born in France, 1879), who was destined to be my grandfather.

Earlier, in 1856, in Manchester, England, manufacturer James Wilson (1834-1921) married Mary Armitage (1832-1902). James and Mary Armitage Wilson sailed to America in 1857. Mary Armitage Wilson's machinist father, James, and her uncle, Isaac Armitage, moved to America and Buffalo, NY, with their families in 1864, as the American Civil War was concluding.

Mary Armitage Wilson's younger brother, James, became the first President of the Armitage Herschell Company in North Tonawanda, NY, in 1872. On July 20, 1882 in a double ring ceremony, James and Mary Armitage Wilson's son, David Wilson (1857-1889), married Cora Turck. That same day, David Wilson's youngest sister, Charlotte, married George C. Herschell, co-founder of the above mentioned Armitage-Herschell Company.



The Herschell-Spillman built steam carousel in Schenevus, NY, has Armitage Herschell horses aboard.

Over the next century, the Armitage Herschell Company and its successor enterprises (Herschell-Spillman, Spillman Engineering and the competing Allen Herschell Co.) operated in North Tonawanda, NY. They manufactured and shipped around the globe the following: steam engines; carrouseles (merry-go-rounds) which were initially steam powered; a V-8 engine for the Austin Climber automobile; Liberty engines for World War I aircraft; and a variety of advanced amusement park rides. Along the way, the company acquired select assets for the carrousel pipe organs, the paper band music rolls from the Wurlitzer Company, formerly headquartered in Buffalo.

But I digress. In 1901, Mary Edna Wilson, granddaughter of Mary Armitage Wilson and older daughter of David and Cora Wilson's four children, married Charles Diffine, Jr., in North Tonawanda, NY, (15 miles from Niagara Falls). Charles and Mary Edna Diffine had three children: Everett Willard Diffine, 1903-1989; Leonard Diffine, 1907-1987 (childless); and Marion Diffine, 1913-1995 (childless).

Aunt Marion once spoke of being a small child and that she used to "...visit and walk by this nifty plant and see them carving and painting the figures."

Everett W. Diffine married Lucille Rose Cory in North Tonawanda, (1924). They had six children: twins Mary Lou (1927-2001) and Betty Ann (1927-); Charles Jerry, III (1934-); Marian Susie (1937-2001); Everett, Jr. (1938-); Donald Paul (1942-). The Everett W. Diffine family migrated from North Tonawanda, to Long Beach, CA, in 1933 for the duration.

I, Don, grew up regularly riding the carousel at the Long Beach, California Nu-Pike and prized that occasional brass ring. Quite recently, I learned of the Herschell-Spillman Company (the Spillmans were Herschell's in-laws) and the Allen Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum, as a result of a March 28, 2006 feature article, "THE FINAL STRETCH" in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* and also through www.carrouselmuseum.org. The article described a near-hundred year old carousel, with 40 horses and four chariots built in North Tonawanda, NY. It was being renovated for



The Allen Herschell Carrousel factory ca. 1930s; now the home of the Herschell Carrousel Factory Museum.

a museum in Little Rock; some of the refurbished horses were to be displayed at the Clinton Library in April, 2006. [This would be referring to the "Over-the-Jumps" carousel now operating permanently at the Little Rock Zoo.]

A former Allen Herschell Company curator, Elizabeth Brick, penned the following:

The history of the carrousel is the history of the first amusement ride the public experienced and the first ride manufactured in large quantities. The carrousel traces its origins back to the Middle Ages when the most primitive of wooden horses were used as training devices for young men learning to carry armor, use weaponry and dream of becoming knights. Over time the carrousel's purpose changed.

First seen in the United States after the American Civil War, by the 1880s, it was on its way to becoming a recreational device—the first thrill ride. Initially intended only for adults, it was considered a dangerous and reckless diversion, an amazing mechanical wonder that traveled at the astounding rate of 8-10 mph (an outrageous speed at the time.) There were public pleas from

clergy and local officials as carrouseles passed through their towns, asking residents not to ride because they were endangering their health and possibly corrupting their morals.

On the weekend of October 12-13, 2007, and at my own expense, after attending the 2007 Students In Free Enterprise (SIFE) World Cup Competition in New York City, I took a side trip to Buffalo, and North Tonawanda. There, I met with an Allen Herschell Factory/Museum Board Member, their director, and their curator. Touring and exchanging documents, we discussed the Armitage Herschell Company's founders, my great, great, great uncles.

1905 Herschell-Spillman in Perryville, MO, operates during the Seminary Picnic, Aug. 6-7 this year.



The identification plate on the Schenevus, NY, carousel.



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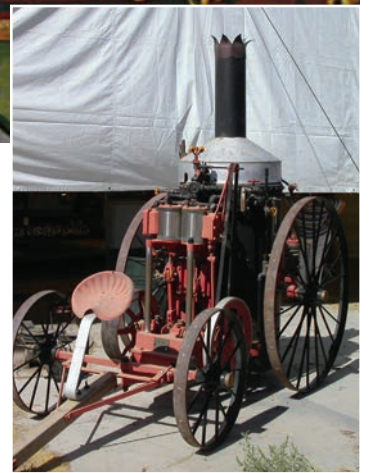
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Marcus Charles Illions - From Fairground Art to Legendary Master Carousel Carver



Reprinted courtesy of Tobin Fraley from "Carousel Animals"

Similar to other master carvers, Marcus Charles Illions learned his craft at an early age, but unlike many other carousel craftsmen, Illions's 1878 journey to the New World was not his own choice. His first years in Vilinius, Lithuania, were filled with the constant fear of displacement that was faced by the vast majority of Eastern European Jews living under the rule of the czar. So when one of Marcus's uncles discovered that the nine-year-old was about to be conscripted into the Russian army, he sent him to apprentice as a wood-carver in the relative safety of Germany.

Within a few a few years, Marcus was sent to England, where he continued his apprenticeship under the tutelage of C. W. Spooner. Spooner's most important client was a man named Frederick Savage, the pre-eminent carousel manufacturer in England. Savage's carousels, or "gallopers," as they were known, were world famous, and Spooner's shop employed a great many craftsmen to keep up with the demand for hand-carved fairground art.

According to Illions's great-grandson, Michael Pease, the young apprentice continued his westward journey when he was



The c. 1911 "Southern Belle" shown on pgs. 142-143 in "Painted Ponies". Marianne Stevens restoration/collection. Harry Bartlett photo



Roland Hopkins photos

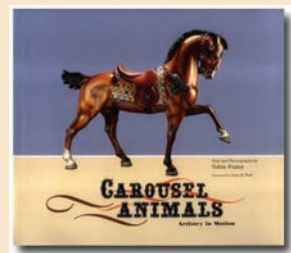
The "American Beauty" rose horse (left photo, far left) and other outside row horses from the last of the three Supremes built by M. C. Illions and the last remaining intact. Shown here at Brass Ring Entertainment in Sun Valley, CA; the carousel is undergoing a complete museum quality restoration.

placed on a ship bound for America. Savage had promised the delivery of a carousel and several circus wagons to an amusement entrepreneur in time for the opening of an exhibit and carnival. Spooner's production was behind schedule, so the young carver, still an apprentice and therefore expendable, was given strict orders to finish the carving by the time the ship reached New York. For the next two and a half months, Illions worked in the hold of the sailing ship as it made its way across the Atlantic, finishing the job before docking in New York Harbor.

In America, Illions found employment carving carousel figures for a blacksmith named Theodore Unger, who was branching out into the carousel business. By the late 1890s, he was working for William Mangels, the American equivalent of Frederick Savage. Mangels's Carousel Works, located in the Coney Island section of Brooklyn, produced a variety of carnival rides and carved amusement facades. Illions was a highly skilled and prolific carver and Mangels used his talent to full advantage, giving him the most complex carving work.

Eventually, Illions grew weary of watching Mangels profit from his work, so in 1909, he opened his own shop. His reputation as an excellent carver had already been established at the Mangels shop, so orders for his carousels were soon keeping him very busy. Over the next 20 years, Illions created some of the wildest and most animated

"Carousel Animal" by Tobin Fraley is available at www.carouselstore.com





Photograph from "Carousel Animals" courtesy of the Carousel Archives.

Marcus Charles Illions, left, and his son, Harry, aboard their medium-sized Monarch I carousel. The Monarch was small enough to be used as a traveling machine and fancy enough to hold a permanent location.

carousel horses ever produced. Flying manes covered in gold leaf, exotic armor, and fiery expressions became Illions's trademarks. The untamed look of his horses fit so well with the image advertised by the amusement parks of Coney Island that no less than 11 Illions carousels were operating in



This signature show horse by Illions would eventually ride a carousel.
Courtesy of the Summit Collection

the Coney Island area at one time. As the business grew, Illions's sons entered the business and the name of the company changed to M. C. Illions & Sons. Despite the company's size, Illions still carved all of the heads of the outside row horses himself.

Illion's drive to create and desire to succeed were extraordinary. His carving skills were legendary throughout Coney Island, and his prolific output was part of the reason that he stayed so involved with the carving process. Although Illions was commissioned for other carving projects, he is best known for his carousels. In the 1920s,

the demand for carousels faded. Illions, as with most great artists, took the decreasing demand for his work personally. Along with other great carvers, he did what he could to stay busy by repairing existing carousels, but the era of the great carving shops had ended.



The only Illions tiger on an operating machine is shown here at Six Flags New England in Agawam, MA. The carousel was last restored by Barney Illions in 1986-'87.

the demand for carousels faded. Illions, as with most great artists, took the decreasing demand for his work personally. Along with other great carvers, he did what he could to stay busy by repairing existing carousels, but the era of the great carving shops had ended.



National Carousel Association 2011 Events



2011 NCA Convention • Hoofbeats in the Rockies
September 21 - September 25, 2011*
The Timbers • Denver, Colorado



Visit Six Historic Carousels • See the Aspens Turn Color
Marvel at Purple Mountains Majesty and Amber Waves of Grain

Wednesday, September 21 - Welcoming Hoofbeats
Opening Ceremonies, Presentations and Fun Surprises

Thursday, September 22 - Hoofbeats Heading South
1925 Allan Herschell • Cheyenne Mountain Zoo • Colorado Springs
1911 Parker #72/S&G • Pueblo City Park • Pueblo

Friday, September 23 - Hoofbeats Heading East
PTC #51 Elitch Gardens • Denver • Endangered Species • Denver Zoo
PTC #6 Menagerie • Kit Carson County Fairgrounds • Burlington

Saturday, September 24 - Hoofbeats Heading West
1908 Parker Menagerie • Lakeside Amusement Park • Denver
1910 Loof/Harrison Menagerie • Nederland

Sunday, September 25 - Hoofbeats Heading Home
Closing Ceremonies, Presentations and More Fun Surprises

**Dates of Convention Firm. Itinerary is tentative and could be subject to change.*

Visit www.NCA-USA.org for more information.

The 85-Year-Old Four-Row Illions Carousel was Restored by Carousel Works

From Sesquicentennial to Geauga Lake, now Worlds of Fun in Kansas City, MO



Built as a rush order for the country's 1926 Sesquicentennial celebration in Philadelphia, decorative elements from the Illions Supremes, under construction at the time, were borrowed for this special machine. Photo by Kate Blakley

By Roland Hopkins

Special to The Carousel News & Trader

KANSAS CITY, MO – This spring, Worlds of Fun Amusement Park opened the family friendly Planet Snoopy, representing \$8 million in expansion and improvements to what was previously known as Camp Snoopy. The highlight and centerpiece for this new and improved family fun area is the 1926 four-row Illions carousel from the now defunct Geauga Lake Amusement Park in Ohio.

This is extremely exciting news for carousel lovers young and old all over the world, as it always is when one of the few remaining hand-carved treasures gets a restoration, or new location, or both.

It all started for this rare carousel we'll guess some time in 1925 when M. C. Illions & Sons got an order for a carousel for the country's Sesquicentennial celebration in Philadelphia. It's curious that Illions would get the order, with major carousel manufacturers, William Dentzel and Philadelphia Toboggan Co. right there in Philly. It is also doubtful that any of them, Illions, Dentzel or PTC would know at the time that they would be building their last carousels. With the Great



From Geauga Lake to Worlds of Fun, as of May 28, 2011, the 1926 Illions carousel spins again. WOF photo

Depression looming just ahead, orders for new carousels at all three great manufacturers would soon be nil.

Was Illions chosen by the Sesquicentennial organizers for his carving prowess or was he a third choice with



Kate Blakley photos

The Illions horses from Geauga Lake lined up at The Carousel Works in Mansfield, OH, awaiting restoration.

Dentzel and PTC unable to produce the machine for some reason? We'll likely never know. Undoubtedly, a four-row machine would have been requested to handle the volume of the event, but what other specifications were there, if any? Certainly, the organizers would want as fancy a machine as they could get, and Illions would want a machine he could be proud of to show off his carving talents.

At the time the order came in from Philadelphia, M. C. Illions & Sons was in production of his finest carousels. Referred to fondly by Rudy Illions as the "triplets", these three machines would be dubbed the Illions Supremes. With a fast-track construction schedule, (as the country's 150 birthday party would wait for no carousel), the Illions factory used everything at its disposal to complete the four-row machine,

including figures and trim from the yet to be completed Supremes. It is likely this fact, especially some of the fancy trim, that led some to believe that this four-row Illions was a Supreme. In my opinion, it is not. It is however the one and only Illions "Sesqui". We'll get back to all of that in a bit.

In 2007, Geauga Lake Amusement Park [Cedar Fair] announced the end of the amusement portion of the facility (the water park would remain and expand). Beyond the overall sadness of losing yet another great old historic amusement park, this one after 119 years, there was immediate concern for the two greatest elements of the park: the historic 1925 *Big Dipper* roller coaster and the 1926 Illions carousel. Unfortunately, the world famous wooden roller coaster would join the other rides in the auction. The carousel would not.



Painting the elaborately hand-carved band organ facade.



There is no shortage of decoration on the carousel.



Stripped down 85-year-old horses ready for fresh paint.

Worlds of Fun 2011 Expansion

Although so much of our carousel history is fascinating, the most important history of any machine to me is its history today. For the four-row Illions, which I will join Rudy Illions in calling "Sesqui", today's history is pretty exciting. The 1926 antique wooden merry-go-round has rejoined the ranks of just over 150 or so other hand-carved wooden machines surviving in an operational capacity today. Originally, it was the Sesquicentennial carousel, then the Gauga Lake Illions, and it is now the Worlds of Fun Illions carousel. Unlike some major U. S. cities who can disregard our historic carousels as "old machines that break all the time", those who know a little something about carousels, like U. S. amusement park operators, know the value of these precious machines. For Cedar Fair Entertainment Co., which owns and operates a dozen amusement parks in the U. S. and Canada, there was no questioning whether to keep or sell the 1926 Illions. The only question was which park would be the recipient of the classic merry-go-round.



Even the first layers of paint involve detail.



The more layers added, the prettier the horses get.

The winner of the Cedar Fair/Illions raffle would be Kansas City's Worlds of Fun. With most folks in the carousel world still in the dark as to its fate, the 1926 Illions was sent to Ohio and The Carousel Works for restoration. Meanwhile, Cedar Fair sketched the ride into its plans for an \$8 million improvement and expansion of the Camp Snoopy kiddie/family area at Worlds of Fun.

Unveiled Memorial Day weekend, the new Planet Snoopy now boasts 20 family friendly rides, shows and attractions including seven new rides designed especially for families to ride together. At the center of this multi-million dollar expansion is the historic 1926 Illions carousel. The antique ride was installed this spring, looking as sparkling and new as any ride

in the park. I think it is safe to say that the 64 (85-year-old) jumping horses will be among the most popular new additions to the park. And soon enough, if not already, the ponies will be the favorite of all rides in the park new or old.



A jeweled outside-row jumper; shown left in paint from Gauga Lake, and above restored by Carousel Works.

Kate Blakley photos





1926 Illions 4-row "Sesqui"
Worlds of Fun, Kansas City, MO
Kate Blakley photo



The Geauga horses were in pretty good shape.

Geauga Lake Amusement Park

No story on this historic carousel would ever be complete without mention of Geauga Lake. It was home to the Illions carousel for 70 years, from 1937 through to the closing of the amusement park in 2007. Though the carousel and elaborate facade would survive, the band organ was lost to fire in 1952. According to the Geauga Lake Today & Forever website (www.geaugalaketoday.com), the park was originally known as Picnic Lake and Giles Pond in the 1800s. In 1888, a 75-room hotel, The Kent House was built, establishing the park beyond a picnic gathering spot. The first ride was said to be a steam-powered carousel in 1889. The first carousel was followed by a roller rink, a photo gallery, a billiard hall and a bowling alley.

In 1925, new ownership came in and added the *Skyrocket (Big Dipper)* roller coaster. The John Miller designed wooden thrill ride was 2,680 feet long and 65 feet tall. Other classic rides would join the coaster, including a Dodgem, a Tumble Bug, a Whip, a Hey Dey, an Aerial Swing, an auto speedway, a carousel and a new swimming pool. In 1926,



This jumper shows its age a bit at the seams.



Kate Blakley photos

With gold leaf and jewels, the way Illions intended.

the park got national attention as Johnny Weismuller set a new world record for the 220-yard freestyle in their new pool. Weismuller would, of course, go on to Tarzan fame.

In 1937, the park would upgrade its carousel by acquiring the four-row sesquicentennial Illions which had moved from Philly to Alabama for a brief time, and then back to Coney Island. Illions himself would oversee the preparation of the ride for its new home at Geauga Lake.

In the post-war 1940s, the Aerial Swing was upgraded to Rocket Ships and more rides were added, including a Caterpillar and Ferris wheel. A major fire in 1952 destroyed the bowling alley, roller rink and much of the dance hall, as well as the band organ stored in the hall.

The park continued to grow and add rides through the 1950s and '60s and in 1972, new ownership introduced the Gold Rush log flume, a hint of the water park to come. More new rides followed in the 1970s, including major roller coasters and in 1980, the park began restoration of the historic *Big Dipper*. The 1980s, '90s and



Carefully repairing 85-year-old wooden fingers.



Wooden seams are easily repaired.



Aged gold leaf or just gold paint on this Geauga jumper?

even early 2000s would see continued growth and expansion of the park until dwindling attendance led to an abrupt closing of the century-old amusement park in the fall of 2007. The majority of the rides, sans the carousel and those previously removed and relocated, were put up for auction in June of 2008.

Sesquicentennial Carousel or What's In A Name?

Some things in history are absolute with photographic or other documented evidence, while most things in history are not absolute and never will be. Since M. C. Illions & Sons would cease production of carousels after the "triplets" and "Sesqui" were completed and with no new orders coming in, there would be no printed material in the way of brochures or catalogs to absolutely confirm any naming of the last four machines.

In my mind, the name of the WOF machine is not, by far, the greatest mystery attached to it – then again, I don't believe it ever had a name. Greater mysteries to me would



Another of the jumpers looking in pretty good shape.



This light brown horse is contrasted by the fiery saddle.

be: Why was the machine a rush order when Philadelphia was awarded to host the nation's 150th birthday celebration five years earlier in 1921? Why was this rush order for a



The open pavilion has a nostalgic feel. WOF photo

grand carousel awarded to M. C. Illions, a Coney Island builder, instead of one of the two most prolific carousel builders in the world at the time; both located in Philadelphia, Dentzel and PTC? A lesser mystery is why do we know the machine went to Birmingham, AL, but don't know where or why? One can only assume in moving such a big machine so far, it was simply a placement that did not turn out as profitable as promised.

When stories of the carousel going to Kansas City and Worlds of Fun began to surface, each author subsequently borrowed from the previous author such catch phrases as "the most famous and reproduced carousel in the world", "one of only five Illions Supremes ever built" and



Restored rich brown horse set off by gold leaf and pastels.



The original band organ was destroyed in a fire at Geauga Lake in 1952, which also claimed the roller rink, bowling alley and much of the dance hall. The beautifully carved organ facade was stored elsewhere, and spared from the flames.

WOF photos

“one of only two operating Illions Supreme carousels”.

I’ve never known what was meant by “the most famous and reproduced carousel in the world”. As the editor of *The Carousel News & Trader*, I couldn’t begin to suggest what is the most famous carousel in the country, let alone the world. As far as the most reproduced, as *CT&T* publisher, Dan Horenberger points out, the most reproduced carousel in the world would have to be Dentzel, with hundreds of fiberglass look-alike machines all over the country and even the world. The Illions American Beauty rose horse may be the most photographed and recognizable carousel horse in the world, but the WOF Illions does not have one of those figures.

If this were one of five Supremes built, I’m not sure which one is the fifth as none of the stories specify this. I myself am guilty of running a story by another author in 2007, when the Geauga Lake closing was announced, touting this carousel as one of five Supremes. I was new to the carousel world then and didn’t give the statement much thought. Unfortunately, like many editors, there is simply not enough time to check every fact in every story. One can only hope that the story’s author has done that. And if it was a Supreme and one of the last two operating, I guess that would make Gilroy Gardens, CA, carousel the other, though that is

only original to the mechanism, with fiberglass replacement figures. Gilroy is a beautiful machine and it’s wonderful that the 1920s Illions mechanism is still working, but I would be hesitant to compare a machine with all fiberglass replacement figures to a machine with all of its original 85-year-old hand-carved wooden figures.

I’m not sure when or by whom the 4-row Sesquicentennial Illions from Geauga Lake was first called a Supreme. From a common sense stand point, it makes no sense at all to give a 4-row, 64 horse carousel the same name as a 3-row, 48 horse carousel. That aside, the machines commonly referred to by many carousel experts as the three Supremes, were specifically designed by Illions to be his finest work and the ultimate expression of his carving tastes and talents. The 1926 4-row machine was a rush order, not a pre-design, and being built to special order, there would really be no catalog name for the machine at all.

A small handful of carousel enthusiasts, experts and historians are lucky enough to have known Barney, Rudy and even Harry Illions before they passed away. Buck Brasington, who graciously loaned us a number of photographs for this issue, knew Harry Illions long before he [Buck] knew anything about carousels.

Among the most respected carousel experts in the world,



The carousel is beautiful from any angle, even up.



A row of four brown jumpers not showing their age.



The green area behind the new carousel pavilion will likely host its share of picnics and parties. WOF photo

Rol and Jo Summit were friends with both Rudy and Barney Illions. It is mostly through Rol and Jo's transcripts and memories of discussions with the Illions boys that we know much of what we know today of M. C. Illions' history.

Apparently, the three "triplets", as Rudy Illions fondly recalled them, were already in production when the order came in for the Sesquicentennial carousel. Production of the 4-row machine for the nation's birthday would supersede production of the three 3-row machines. Parts and pieces already built or carved from throughout the shop would be used for this machine as time was a factor. Among those borrowed parts and pieces were some elements already prepared for the "triplets" in production.

In the most recent group deliberations over this, Rol and Jo were kind enough to dig deep into their cellar of information and retrieve hand-written transcripts of conversations with Barney and Rudy.

It is true that Illions did use, in previous seasons of production, the term Supreme "to designate his largest and/or fanciest machines, with lesser productions called Superior, Superb and Standard."

According to the Summits, M. C. Illions' first catalog



As a horse lover himself, M. C. Illions carved life-like yet elegant and ornamental figures. Kate Blakley photo



The varied expressions make each horse a potential favorite.

claimed the Mangels-Illions built for Willow Grove to be an Illions Supreme. Much later, a December 1925 catalog touts the 1924 Chafatino carousel as a Supreme. Yet, whatever they were called in a catalog, none of these machines even come close to sharing the similarities of the three, preconceived 3-row machines all in production concurrently in 1925. Each of the three 3-row "triplets" had both jumpers and standers and had the same elaborately carved trim – and each carried one American Beauty rose horse. Probably the only reason they were not of identical size and scale is that the first had its diameter squeezed to fit between the piers of The Bobs Coaster and the last had a slightly shorter center pole to fit inside of the Prospect Hotel.

In continuing to beat a wooden horse, the Summits' notes show both Rudy and Barney referring to the three 3-row machines as the "triplets" and the "three jewels". Rudy also referred to them as being "Supremes", though never as "The Supremes", precluding there being any others.

The Sesquicentennial machine is referred to by both as either that, or Geauga Lake, where it was at the time, and then even by the nickname "Sesqui" in a few conversations, which I think is my favorite and the best of all solutions. You could call the Worlds of Fun carousel a Supreme, but that would never make it alike with the other three, and the Illions boys never referred to it as such, it seems.

Personally, I like the Illions "Sesqui" if it must have a name. It is not only catchy and distinct, but there is most certainly only one Illions "Sesqui", and there will only ever be the one.

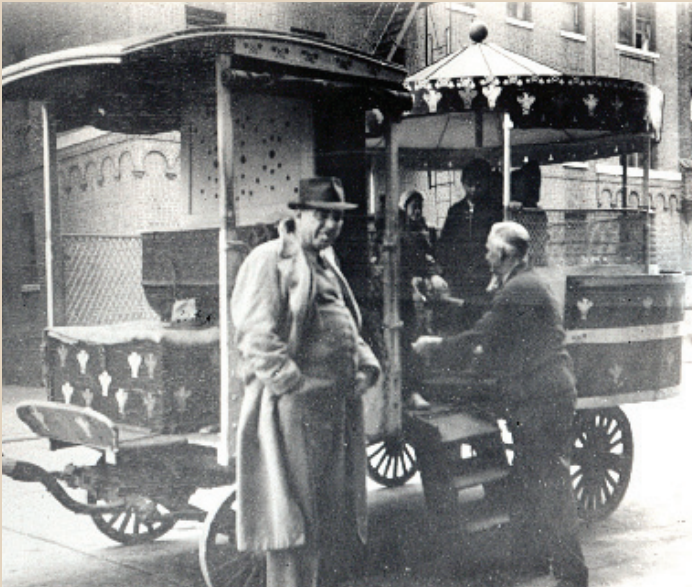
Still, Rol Summit says it best, "whatever they might be called, those last three combination (stander and jumper) machines were the pinnacle of Illions' artistic and structural evolution. No need to quibble."

Whatever you may choose to call it, do yourself a favor and get out and take a ride on "Sesqui" if you get a chance. It is most certainly a working piece of art, living history if you will – a one of a kind carousel.

For information on Cedar Fair's Worlds of Fun in Kansas City, visit www.worldsoffun.com.

Close Ups: Reprinted courtesy of Billboard Magazine, February 5, 1949

Harry Illions's Life in the Showbiz



Harry Illions, front, next to a small street carousel.

By Hank Hurley

"Billboard Magazine" February, 1949

Reprinted courtesy of "Billboard Magazine" archives via Google Books, www.books.google.com

Harry A. Illions's life story reads like a who's who of outdoor show business. The owner of Celoron Park, Jamestown, NY, and New Liberty Park, Buffalo, has been in the business 46 years and in that time has been, in one way or another, in the carnival, fair and park end.

In 46 years, Harry has been a lot of places, seen a lot of things and met many people. As a result, he spins many an interesting yarn.

Originated Many Firsts

Give Harry credit for quite a few "firsts" in show business. For instance, the Laugh-in-the-Dark and Magic Carpet, as they are today, were his ideas. Harry also originated the 5-cent day for kids at A Century of Progress, Chicago, in 1933. That, Harry admits, came thru necessity, he says, that is "so closely related to the mother of invention."

As chairman of amusements for A Century of Progress, one of Harry's many jobs is to stimulate business. When the World's Fair opened, Harry recalls, business was slow. Money wasn't too plentiful that year, as everyone will recall, and business, as far as rides and concessions were concerned, was slow.



Harry and the scale model salesman's sample that his father would take to the trade shows. The miniature four-row "Supurba" was purchased by Disney at auction and is now on display at Disneyworld in Florida.



Harry Illions, the venerable showman.

"The board of directors of the fair, headed by Major Lohr, decided that something had to be done, and quickly, about business," Harry said. "They called a lot of us into a meeting and asked what could be done. I suggested that Fridays be 5-cent day for kids. Let everything, rides, pop, hot dogs and everything else go to the kids for 5 cents," Harry told the board.

Needless to say, many ride operators and concessionaires didn't jump at this suggestion. "Too cheap," most of them said. "We won't make any money."

"You're not making any money as it is," Harry told them. "The way things are now, a kid comes out with a dollar—if he is lucky enough to have a dollar—and it's gone before he knows it. He goes home and tells his parents and friends, "You can't have any fun at the fair; everything costs too much."

Celoron Park History



From www.btinternet.com/~jsptraining/index.html telling the history of the Broadhead and other ancestral families presented by John & Frances Pickles.

In September 1893, the Broadhead family purchased a piece of swampland in Celoron, at the southernmost end of the lake. Their intention was to fill in the swamp and create an amusement park. The multitude of visitors assured the venture's profitability, and, by this time, in addition to the steamboat fleet which carried tourists around the lake, electric trolley rails were being extended along the shore. The Broadheads opened Celoron Park, which was soon known as the Coney Island of Western New York.

The rides included the Phoenix Wheel, acquired from the Atlanta Exposition, which was as high as a five-story building, run by electric motors, and could carry 200 persons. In addition, visitors could ride the merry-go-round and roller coaster, and find all manner of amusement at the penny arcade. The zoological garden contained all kinds of wild and domestic birds and animals. Baseball fans rooted for their favorite teams at the ball park. Babe Ruth once visited the park and proceeded to hit balls into the lake.

A fountain, lit by colored lights, stood in the center of the park, flanked by benches and an open air band shell where the Celoron Gold Band and others played Sousa marches and other favorites.

Indoor entertainment was available in the large theater built over the water where high-class vaudeville acts, theater companies, and light opera companies, music companies played to standing-room-only audiences. In 1924, the ornate theater was converted to a dance hall, the first of the two Pier Ballrooms. The structure burned in June 1930, but was immediately rebuilt and gained a national reputation during the big band era when crowds from all over came to see such artists as Rudy Vallee, Cab Calloway, Stan Kenton, the Dorsey Brothers, Guy Lombardo, and Vincent Lopez.

The auditorium with its two Moorish towers served as a convention hall in the summer and as an ice-skating rink in the winter, attracting hundreds of skaters every winter. In 1896, an estimated 8,000 persons thronged the auditorium and the park to hear the "Silver-Tongued Orator," William Jennings Bryan, deliver a Presidential campaign speech in his unique and well-known style.

Outdoor movies became a popular attraction in the 1920s. The small projection booth was in the center of the park, and the projectionist got a round of applause from the audience when he climbed into it. The Celoron Park season opened on Memorial Day, and, if the weather was good, several thousand persons enjoyed the first picnic and rides of the summer. The 4th of July always featured special acts and fireworks, and some years drew record-breaking crowds of 20,000 to 25,000 persons.



Harry was taking part in a community fundraiser.

Kids' 5-Cent Day

One concession doing a big business at the fair was Ripley's Believe It or Not attraction, of which C. C. (Cash-and-Carry) Pyle was the manager. The concession and ride men told Harry that if he could get Pyle to agree to letting kids into his spot for 5-cents, they'd go along with the plan.

"I wasn't too sure I'd be able to get Pyle to agree," Harry said, "because there really was no need for him to cut prices. But I was desperate and told Pyle my plan. He thought for a minute and then said, 'Will this help you, Harry?' I told him it would save my life and the lives of other concession and ride men. Pyle agreed and the rest of the boys went along.

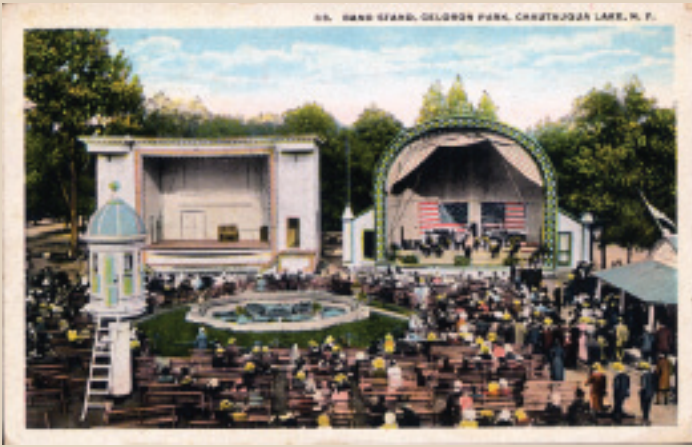
"Business boomed, but there was a fly in the ointment." It wasn't serious, but it had a humorous twist and really was the cause of changing the 5-cent day from Fridays in 1933 to Thursdays in 1934.

"We really drew the kids in 1933 when we started the 5-cent day, but one day we received a call from the Chancery office of the Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago.

"The father in charge told me that the various parish priests in Chicago and environs were being bombarded by Catholic kids because they couldn't take advantage of the 5-cent price on hot dogs and hamburgers on Fridays."



The Magic Carpet ride at Celoron Park.



Celoron Park Bandstand (on right of postcard below) was built 1894 moved 1896 to this location. Open Air Theater built around 1913. Photo courtesy of jamestownrolley.org.

Harry and the priest had a good laugh about it, but the day was changed to Thursday the next year. "The only reason we didn't change it the first year was because all our advertising was out and kids and their parents by that time were used to Friday as the 5-cent day," Harry said.

Family Business

Getting into outdoor show business was no accident for Harry. His father was a wood carver by trade and as a youth in England, had made show fronts for Frank C. Bostock, who was bringing his shows to America. The elder Illions came to the States with Bostock and a short time later was married. On July 4, 1892, Harry Illions was born.

At the age of 10, Harry got his start in show business, working after school and in the summer as a ring boy for his father at Coney Island, NY. His dad was intent on Harry learning to be a wood carver, but this didn't appeal to Harry, and instead he decided to learn the steam fitting trade. He kept at that in the winter, but in the summer, he was back in show business operating the merry-go-round at Coney Island and helping his dad with other rides.

Harry kept up this system—working as a steamfitter in the winter and as a ride man in the summer—until March 28, 1916, when he married Minnie Marker in New York. A daughter was born to the union, Christened Jeanette J. Illions. She is now Mrs. Otto T. Bierwagen and resides in El Cerrito, CA. Mrs Illions died in 1939 in San Francisco.



Celoron Phoenix Wheel 1896 -1952. Purchased from the Cotton States Exposition in Atlanta GA. Dismantled and shipped to Los Angeles County Fair Grounds, Pomona CA. Photo courtesy of jamestownrolley.org.

Joined Old Wortham Shows

Following the war, Harry went to work as a foreman of the Frolic ride on the old C. A. Wortham Shows, remaining at that job until 1922, when the show closed in Dallas.

Following the close of the Wortham Shows, Harry received a wire from the late Hyla F. Maynes, telling him that she had invented a ride called the Caterpillar and asking Harry to take it on the road. Harry and the Caterpillar joined the Con. T. Kennedy Shows and the following year Maynes invented the Dragon ride, putting it on the Johnny J. Jones Exposition.

In 1926, Harry purchased a half interest in the Maynes rides and that partnership lasted until 1934 when Harry bought the business, consisting of nine rides. The following year, Harry went into partnership with R. L. Bogan, of the Greyhound Management Company. This partnership lasted a year.

He had rides with Royal American Shows in 1936 and 1937 and in 1938 moved into Rex Billings's Belmont Park, Montreal, where he operated his rides. It was at Belmont that Harry "invented" the Magic Carpet and Laugh-in-the-Dark as they are today. He continued his operation in Belmont Park until 1943, but had rides at various shows and in various parks scattered thruout the country.

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The Illions Supreme from the Prospect Hotel would be inside this carousel building at Celoron Park.

Buys Celoron Park

"It was in 1943 that I decided to put all my rides in one spot," Harry said. "I looked around for a suitable spot and found just what I was looking for at Celoron Park in Jamestown."

Today Illions has 20 major rides, six kiddie rides and other amusement devices that go to make up a modern park, including Pier Ballroom, which seats 1,500 persons. He values his property, 23 acres in all, at \$900,000. Celoron's skating rink, Illions said, is valued at \$70,000 alone.

Harry married Florence Lusse, one of the owners of Lusse Bros.' firm in 1941. Mrs. Illions still is active in the management of that concern.

Late last year, Harry decided to expand and he purchased New Liberty Park, Buffalo, which will open this spring under his management.

A great club member, Harry belongs to numerous organizations, including the Masonic Lodge, the Variety Club of Dallas, Showmen's League of America, National Showmen's Association, National Association of Amusement Parks, Pools and Beaches (NAAPPB) and various business and civic groups in Jamestown.

POSTSCRIPT NOTES: Not long after this article appeared in the Feb. '49 Billboard, Harry Illions would move



From Coney Island, to Celoron Park in NY, the Illions Supreme would operate in So. California through the late '70s.



The last of the three Illions Supremes was built for the Prospect Hotel in Coney Island, with dimensions shaved slightly.

the Supreme carousel and many of his other rides to the west coast. Harry would set up at Pomona Fairgrounds, CA, in 1952. The Illions Supreme carousel would remain operating at Pomona until the late 1970s. The spectacular carousel is now on it's second private owner since leaving Pomona and is undergoing a complete restoration.

I think it is most interesting to note how little is mentioned of the elder Illions in this article. The story is, of course, about Harry, and not his father, but it is a story of the amusement business. Marcus Illions is not even mentioned by name, let alone Company. He is mentioned as a woodcarver only, and we know he had at least one carousel that Harry worked at, but that's it about Marcus in this article. It doesn't even mention that the elder Illions ever carved a single carousel horse, let alone full, grand carousels. Was it so obvious that Harry's father was the great M. C. Illions, carver of carousels among the finest ever made? Was M. C. so known that he was left out of the article so as not to overshadow this piece about his son? Or, was it just not a big deal in 1949, not even really thought about or deemed worthy of note that Harry's father carved carousel horses and full carousels?



Kiddieland at Pomona with the race track just behind it.

Harry Illions photos courtesy of the Dawn and Buck Brasington Collection

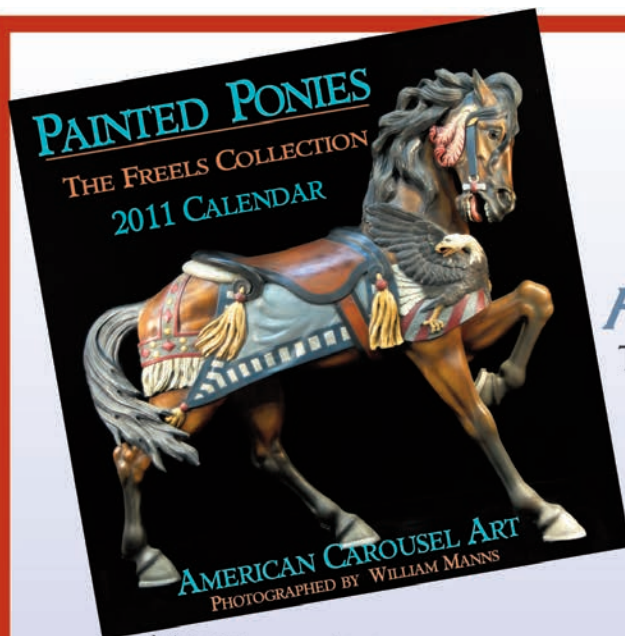
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Bought Unseen as Allan Herschells, Jon Abbott Acquired Three Rows of Illions

1915 Illions from the Olesen Bros. Carnival Portable, Gone Full Circle



A 1920s Illions carousel, photo circa 1950s-'60s. A gift from Jon Abbott. All photos from the Leah and Peter Farnsworth Collection

By Leah Farnsworth

Special to The Carousel News & Trader

Around 1915, a three row Illions carousel with all jumping horses was made for the Olesen Brothers Show. The carnival traveled around the country by railroad. This was one of very few portable carousels made by Illions, and it was mounted on a railroad car. After years of travel, the carousel was sold to a park in Flint, Michigan.

In 1970, a wind storm caused another ride to fall and damage the machinery and scenery panels. The owners put the horses in storage, where they stayed for eight years. In 1978, the owners decided that it was time to sell the horses, rather than put them on another carousel. The horses were then advertised without mentioning the carver, but as wooden carousel horses. I was told at that time that the park had an Allan Herschell carousel.



Outside row jumpers in park paint, 1978.

Jon Abbott photo



Outside row jumper in park paint, 1978.

Our friends, Jon and Barbara Abbott, owners of Carousel Corner in Clarkston, Michigan, read the ad. Jon knew that the amusement park had an Allan Herschell carousel. Thinking that he was going to purchase three rows of Herschells, he made an offer based on their value, without seeing them. The offer was accepted, and in 1978 Jon and Barbara Abbott purchased all of the horses from Rod Link and Glen Wade.

On a weekend trip, Irene McMahon and a friend drove from Indianapolis, Indiana, to see the Abbott's carousel horses which were for sale. Jon was awaiting the delivery of what he believed to be a group of Allan Herschell horses. When the ladies arrived, they rode with Jon to a building where the horses were about to be unloaded. Years later, Jon and Irene have since told me how excited Jon was, as one jeweled Illions after another came out of the truck. Jon had not known that the Allan Herschell carousel horses had not been for sale.

The outside row horses each had forty to sixty jewels on them. The legs were made of oak, and most of them had metal bands along the legs for support. They had about six layers of paint on them, and wore a coat of very fancy park paint. Before she left, Irene picked out two horses, and told Jon that she would soon let him know which one she would take. In the Fall 1978 sales brochure from Carousel Corner, Jon had already stamped SOLD across some of the horse photos, including number 21, which Irene had returned to purchase. She named the horse "Marcus", and this is his story.

After reading the Fall, 1982 *Carousel Art Illions* issue, I began to look for an Illions horse to buy. I didn't like what I could afford, and could not afford what I liked. As winter came around, I expanded my list of people to call. I had a



"Marcus" for sale, 1978. Irene McMahon photo

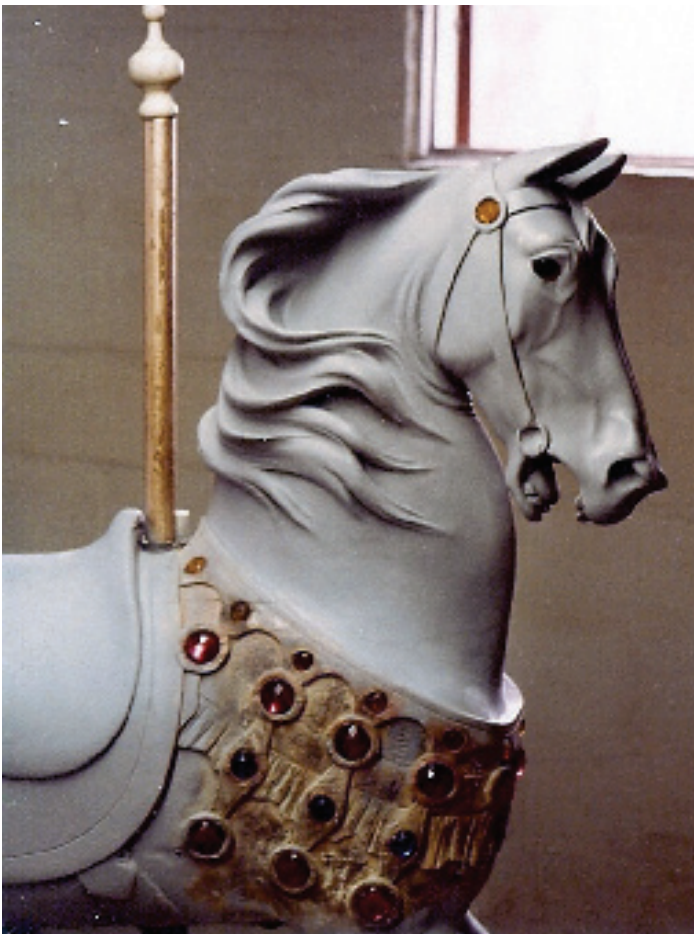
nice talk one day with Jon Abbott, and about a month later he returned my call. The lady who had bought one of the best of the outside row Illions from him now wanted to sell it and buy a standing PTC or Dentzel.

He had neither for sale. He gave me her phone number, and I called her. We then exchanged photographs.

In February, 1983, Pete and I drove to Indianapolis, Indiana, with a roached-mane Dentzel outside row stander from Fairyland Park, Kansas City, Missouri, in the back of the motor home. We returned home with "Marcus", who now had been stripped, and most of the horse was in primer. His restoration was almost complete.

I finished the restoration in Fall, 1984, and he was painted by Peggy Seehafer while I was rushing to finish restoring seven more horses. They were all going into The Grand Avenue Mall Christmas display in downtown Milwaukee, WI, for two months. In 1985, I was asked to bring 20 figures to display at the mall. Of the horses that we had on display during November and December, "Marcus" was the real crowd pleaser.

The Waukesha County Historical Society was about to open a newly renovated large area of the museum in 1989. They were looking for a new short-term educational display to attract people. At that time there were many fake carousel animals for sale in south-eastern Wisconsin. I didn't know about the museum search when I dropped in one day to offer to loan them one or two real carousel horses, which could be used to educate people as to what real antique carvings are, and what to look for. I met Jean Penn Loerke, the director, and by the time I finally went home, I had



"Marcus" during restoration, 1982. Irene McMann photo

promised to loan the museum eight horses, posters from carousels, and other related items for the months of June through August. Over the summer months, many teachers came through and wanted to come back and bring a class through when school started, so we extended the exhibit through September.

"Marcus" represented the Coney Island style, outside row, and the children loved his gold mane. His photo is included in the article about the museum display that is in *The Carousel News & Trader*, September, 1989. "Marcus" also shows up on the Illions time line near the back of the *Painted Ponies* book as the 1920 Illions carving style.

Photos of other Olesen Brothers carousel horses can be found in the July/Aug. 1982 issue of *Carousel Art* magazine, showing two outer row horses, and a partial photo of the carousel (courtesy of the Abbott Collection). This photo was later sent to us as a gift from Jon. The caption stated that the Ferris wheel fell on the carousel; Jon said that it was the sky ride that fell. I have no proof, either way. The heavily jeweled armored horse that is shown in the July/Aug. 1983 "Armored Horses" issue of *Carousel Art* magazine was also from this carousel, and is called a 1915 horse. The Abbott's restored horse from this carousel is shown in the Illions chapter in *Painted Ponies* as a 1915 carving.

After reading the George Schott ads in *The Carousel News & Trader* magazine during 2003, we began exchanging phone calls. After I had sent photos and the history of



Christmas display, 1985. Pete Farnsworth photo

"Marcus", we agreed to a sale. On January 4, 2004, I sent "Marcus" off for one last display. This time he will ride the Illions Grand Carousel in Maine when it is completed. His active retirement has ended, he returns to a carousel and his "life" has come full circle.

I am grateful to Irene McMahon and Jon Abbott, two very special friends. They shared their stories and their photos that have helped me to write this story.



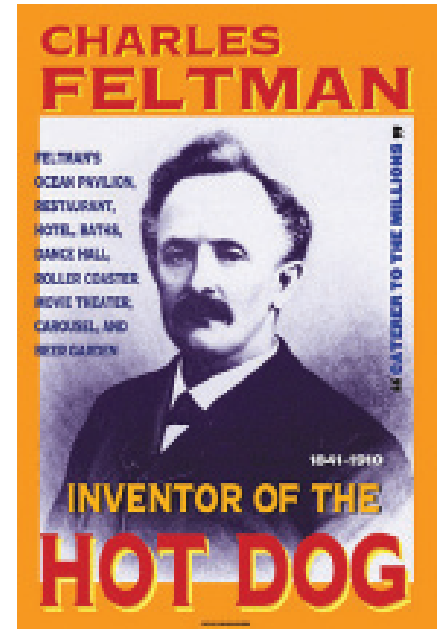
Our farewell photo, with dolls and antique cart, 2003. Leah Farnsworth photo

Venerable Newspaper Offers Historical Gems on Merry-Go-Rounds and Their Makers

Carousel History Through the Eyes of “The Brooklyn Eagle”



Feltman's Restaurant along Surf Avenue - 1890's. Courtesy of Jeffrey Stanton, www.westland.net/coneyisland/articles/food.htm.



Coney Island Archives photo.

By Peter Malia

Special to *The Carousel News & Trader*

In 1841, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* began a remarkable publishing run of 114 years without ever missing a single issue. That spectacular run provides a rare daily glimpse into Brooklyn's storied past, including a sometimes newsy, often boastful, and occasionally less-than-merry accounting of the legendary Coney Island carousel industry. From fires to fearful accidents, noisy band organs to furious neighbors – and even a starring role in a celebrated murder – the carousel story as told by *The Brooklyn Eagle* is unvarnished, as-it-happened history.

A Carousel of Injuries

The first published mention of a merry-go-round in Brooklyn sounded on a sour note. On June 23, 1859, the *Eagle* reported that a young lady from Brooklyn “was badly injured last evening at Jones' Wood, her ankle having been jambed [sic.] between the platform of flying horses and seriously injured.”

Injuries, great and small, continued to plague the carousel industry right through the Coney Island heydays. A week after proudly reporting that “the two-story grand American carousel now being constructed for Charles Feltman will be the largest in the world” (likely Charles Loeff's double-decker carousel), the *Eagle* ran an update on May 17, 1885 acknowledging that Feltman's wife had been thrown from the machine, knocked unconscious and breaking her left leg in the process. If the name Feltman does not ring a bell, he is credited to be the inventor of the hot dog on a bun. True or not, those little sausages made him a multimillionaire and a Brooklyn legend.

Legend or not, bad luck continued to plague Feltman's carousel. On February 9, 1886, the *Eagle* reported yet another fall, this time by a young lady, who also broke her leg. Controlling the speed of the Feltman merry-go-round continued to be a real challenge, it seems. In July, 1890, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* noted that a 15-year-old girl from Bay Bridge had joined the list of the Feltman fallen when she was spun off the carousel, only this time without suffering any serious injury beyond one heck of a scare.

Cornellus McClellan of Manhattan, on the other hand, suffered a different fate aboard the Feltman carousel. According to the August 16, 1887 edition of the *Eagle*, a well-oiled McClellan “grew boisterous at Feltman's Ocean Pavilion and broke a number of globes about the carousel,” the paper reported. And tongue firmly implanted in cheek, the reporter continued: “He was taken in by Officer Tazuey to sleep off his glass breaking frenzy and brace up for trial.”

As dangerous as Feltman's carousel appeared, it was certainly not the only merry-go-round that posed problems for its riders. The Canarsie carousel, for instance, traveled so fast that a young lady attending to a child aboard a pony had her hat and hairpiece blown off. “The woman confusedly whipped out her handkerchief and covered her head,” reported the *Eagle* on August 13, 1895, “till she had recovered her hat and her hair.”

George Tilyou, owner of the famed Steeplechase, was sued for \$25,000 when a “quite stout” woman got onto a wooden horse with a young girl in her care. Before she could settle in, the carousel started up with a jolt, throwing the portly lady from the horse, badly injuring her leg. The trial, reported the *Eagle* on May 8, 1900, ended in a “hung jury.”



Feltman's Carousel. Photo courtesy of *The 1964-65 New York World's Fair website*, www.4nywf65.20m.com.



Coney Island's Luna Park opened in May of 1904 and burned completely to the ground in May, 1911.

FIRE! FIRE! Arson?

While carousel historians have documented many of the great fires that plagued Coney Island and other major amusement parks around the country after 1900, *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* accounted for dozens more fires that occurred in the last quarter of the 19th century. Once again, Charles Feltman's bad luck continued to plague the hot dog king.

In March, 1895, a flash fire destroyed Feltman's Trivoli Hall at an estimated cost of \$40,000 (*Brooklyn Eagle*, March 12, 1895). He vowed to rebuild. Two months later, a huge fire swept away three blocks of Coney Island, threatening the destruction of the massive Feltman's Ocean Pavilion on Surf Avenue and caused an estimated \$300,000 - \$500,000 in total damages to the amusement area.

Brooklynites blamed the City of New York for the slow response of firemen and their huge losses. The fire danger actually grew worse over the 1890s, as Coney Island seemed to suffer devastating fires every spring. A Looff carousel was destroyed in a South Beach fire in 1896 (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 6, 1896). The following June, the *Eagle* reported on the loss of the H. Dauber Carousel Works to a fire that completely wiped out the company (*Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 19, 1897). Still another Looff carousel was lost on May 26, 1899, when the *Eagle* reported that Coney Island's worst fire to date destroyed or damaged a large swath of Surf Avenue, including Feltman's carousel; no doubt the very Looff machine that would soon be restored by Marcus C. Illions and William F. Mangels.

One of the most celebrated fires of all, however, involved renowned carousel builder Charles W. F. Dare, whose carousels at Martha's Vineyard and Watch Hill are the two oldest operating merry-go-rounds in the United States.

"A destructive fire broke out in the two story toy and hobbyhorse factory of Charles W. F. Dare, Nos. 68 and 70 Kent Street, Greenpoint, at 9:40 last night," noted the intrepid *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on December 10, 1874. The factory was completely destroyed with \$13,000 in lost stock. Dare was later charged with arson by the insurance company and suffered

through prolonged legal proceedings that destroyed his business and ended in a jury trial in 1878. Once the evidence was heard, the jury deliberated all of three minutes before finding Dare innocent, reported the *Eagle* on April 12, 1878. Dare, it seemed, was falsely accused by a disgruntled former employee and his factory was actually torched by a jealous rival, who was never apprehended.

Murder Most Foul

Someone who actually was arrested on August 6, 1881, and charged with raping and poisoning the beautiful Jennie Cramer of nearby New Haven. The "someone" were the Malley boys from the wealthy Malley family in that town. During the course of their sensational trial, the Savin Rock Flying Horses in West Haven, CT, came to play a pivotal role in the case of "Whodunit." Several witnesses swore they saw the trio and another girl, allegedly a New York call girl, riding the Flying Horses on the night Jennie was murdered. Some even testified they overheard Jennie "exclaiming in fear and said she was paralyzed," reported *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* on May 17, 1882. The case went viral and the *Eagle* – like so many other dailies – was smitten. Over the next several months, the paper filed several updates on the Cramer-Malley murder trial until the Malley boys were finally acquitted... but not before widespread rumors accused the wealthy Malley family of paying off the jury. True or not, the *Eagle* bared its chauvinist underbelly on

September 22, 1881, when it analyzed the Flying Horses testimony as follows: The "talk of fainting and dizziness on the flying horses is so common an occurrence among women, one would suppose," the *Eagle* said, "that half a dozen of them on that very evening might have said the same thing, word for word."

Carneys, Warblers and NIMBYs, Oh My

Aside from constant grouching about bad weather, blue laws, and fighting New York's efforts to collect operating license fees, the most frequent complaints about carousel operators involved excessive noise and their threat of attracting "the wrong elements" into town.



Elm City announcement. U.S. National Library of Medicine.

One Long Island country club, the *Eagle* reported on July 24, 1898, was beside itself when a “flying horses” operator opened for business playing only two tunes that blasted out over the airwaves – “Get Your Money’s Worth” and “Break the News to Mother” over and over again for an entire season. [This operator was Sulzer, see *CN&T* June 2009]. Add to that the sideshows of squealing, smelly, performing pigs and boisterous Sunday baseball games, where the crowd “yells and swears and takes on dreadful,” and you have the makings of one unhappy country club!

Sometimes, things even got out of hand entirely. Two competing groups nearly came to blows when the tunes of Myer’s carousel drowned out the Tyrolean Warblers of the Consumers Brewing Company, who were brought in especially to entertain employees and customers at the brewery’s annual “Little Germany” fair. Infuriated by the carousel’s lack of cooperation in turning down the volume of its organ, the offended brewers threatened to tear down the carousel, then piled up their belongings in 30 company wagons and rode off into the sunset.

Local residents, it seems, began to resent all the noise, blight, and annual crowds that Coney Island attracted to their neighborhood. As early as 1901, *The Brooklyn Eagle* reported on July 13, that the appearance of carousels “were followed year by year by others of less innocent character, until every devise is found by which men, women and children are despoiled of purse and character.”

Others criticized the shoddy architecture and construction of carousels and the shabby outbuildings they attracted (*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 28, 1902). One writer went so far as to suggest that the near seasonal fires at Coney Island were the result of poor construction and not bad luck.

The Race Card

While African Americans provided much of the workforce at American amusement parks and resort hotels, they were forced to contend with blatant discrimination if they wanted to enjoy the beaches and parks themselves. While the annual West Indies jubilee at Hanft’s Myrtle Avenue Park was wildly popular among all New Yorkers each summer, African Americans were banned from riding some of the carousels except on certain days of the week right up into the 1890s and beyond. Famed carousel carver, Charles Looff, went so far as to advertise that fact on a large placard outside of his carousel on Narragansett Pier in Rhode Island. That infuriated the local workers, who boycotted the carousel. Looff defended his actions, reported the *Eagle* in its July 31, 1899, edition, because “the Northern, as well as the Southern, element objects to meeting negroes at his pavilion.”

Looff then went on to admit that he “would prefer to cater to negroes if he could so altogether, as they are better spenders than white folk,” reported the *Eagle*. “But as he cannot do this, he is willing to surrender two nights a week to them separately, even if they do stay away, in order that they cannot say they were entirely barred.”

In the end, Looff apparently moved the Narragansett Pier Carousel to Syracuse, NY, (*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 1, 1900) and he eventually moved his factory to California in 1910. His granddaughter, Helen, and her husband, Charles Simmons, stayed behind to run the Crescent Park Carousel in RI, which is now a designated National Historic Landmark.



Library of Congress photo

As the photo reads; “Orphans going to Coney Island, 6/7/11”.

Not All News Was Bad

There is an old saying among journalists that “if it bleeds, it leads.” While *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle* certainly catered to that principle in giving its readers what they wanted, it also had a fair share of “feel-good” stories, too. In August of 1873, for example, the paper happily reported that some 300 orphan boys from the Randall Island Orphanage were ferried over to Coney Island one summer morning for a dip in the surf. “The boys doffed their clothing – there were no strangers there yesterday and no bathing clothes were needed,” the article said. “At the tap of the drum three hundred naked youngsters plunged into the billows.” After 15 minutes, the boys were summoned ashore with a whistle, “and two hours were thus spent in rambling along the beach, collecting shells and pebbles, or riding the flying horses.” (*The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 16, 1873).

Beyond the countless millions who enjoyed riding one of Coney Island’s many carousels through the years, one more snippet merits retelling. It involved an address that the Reverend Daniel H. Overton, pastor of the Green Avenue Presbyterian Church, delivered to a large YMCA gathering on June 24, 1900. A *Brooklyn Eagle* reporter was there to record the event for the next day’s edition.

“Mr. Overton took for his subject ‘What to Hold Fast To and What to Let Go Of,’” reported the *Eagle*, noting that the minister secured his topic on a recent trip to Coney Island. “He saw a sign on the carousel which said, ‘Hold Fast,’” the reporter wrote. “He said there were many things to hold fast to in this world, slippery steps to be climbed and dangerous curves to be rounded. All through life comes the warning cry, ‘Hold fast.’”

Come to think of it, the good Rev. Overton may have seen that very sign on the famed – and fast – Feltman carousel.

Peter J. Malia is a historian based in Monroe, CT. To help commemorate the 20th anniversary of The New England Carousel Museum, NECM, he recently authored Flying Horses: The Golden Age of American Carousel Art, 1870 - 1930 (ISBN: 978-0-9825468-2-6), available through The Connecticut Press at www.connecticutpress.com, Amazon.com or call 203-268-6784. The book is available as a limited signed collector’s edition and a portion of its proceeds benefit the museum.

CAROUSEL CARVER: Carving Carousel Figures and Heirloom Rocking Horses

Ed Hepp of South Cambridge, NY



One of 50 heirloom rocking horses carved by Ed Hepp.

SO. CAMBRIDGE, NY – Rocking horse and carousel figure woodcarver, Ed Hepp, will participate in the Open Studios of Washington County.

On July 16 and 17, 2011, 15 professional artists will open their doors for a juried biennial Open Studios of Washington County, offering a glimpse into their creative lifestyles, and a unique opportunity to purchase great art directly from their studios. Washington County, NY, is home to a rich, vibrant artist community where farmhouses, barns and old factories have been converted into studios where artists paint, sculpt, carve and create works of art that are exhibited throughout the U.S. as well as internationally.

Artist's Biography:

Ed Hepp is a self-taught woodcarver, currently specializing in the creation of animals. He has carved 50 rocking horses, with his first created in 1992. A trip to Oberammergau, Germany, gave Ed the opportunity to observe some great carvers at work, which led to the greater detail that he now carves into his pieces. The Washington County Open Studio Tour of 2007 inspired his carving of carousel reproductions. His interest has now broadened to other animals – the hare and the dragon.

His carvings are completely hand-made from start to finish, beginning with a sketch, then working with the wood, and creating the details as he carves. Blocks of selected hardwoods are first glued into a rustic form, just as old-time Carousel masters did. The rocking horses are roughly carved into one of several historic designs. Then his imagination takes over. Adzes, chisels and files bring the horse to a refined shape with the breed of the horse, blanket, and trappings emerging during the carving. Each piece is hand sanded to create a supple equine form and to prepare it



Recently completed carousel hare reproduction.

for painting. After carving, he paints, signs, and numbers each piece. Horses receive beautiful hand painted patterns and styles, natural manes and tails, leather tack, and forged stirrups. Mostly bass wood is used for the figure, with legs and rockers often carved from black walnut or maple. All woods are aged and dried. However, wood is a living material, and over time, the wood will marble and develop a rich patina.

Each selected wood compliments the others, granting the rocking horse strength and longevity. Each Cambridge Rocking Horse is 28 inches tall and 40 inches long. The rockers are approximately two inches tall and slightly longer than the horse itself with the final dimensions of 30 inches tall, 47 inches long, and 12 inches wide.

Ed's work has received prior attention in *The Carousel News & Trader*, and his horses have appeared as art sculptures in shows, decorate distinguished homes, and are in collections throughout the U. S. and the Philippines. Regionally, one of his horses can be seen at Bailey's Cafe in Saratoga Springs, NY. He has also restored a full size carousel horse.

Ed attended Paul Smith College in the Adirondacks of New York State, served in the Army with the 82nd airborne, and spent his professional career as a surveyor. In addition to his carving, Ed is a lifelong falconer – flying peregrine, gyr and gos hawk. He makes all associated falconry furniture, from leather hoods and gloves to turned parquet or segmented perches. He has also worked as a fly tier for Orvis. Ed's Cambridge Rocking Horse studio is located at 97 County Route 74, South Cambridge, NY, or visit them at www.cambridgerockinghorse.com.



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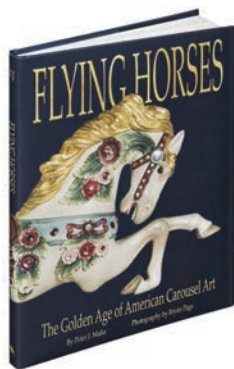
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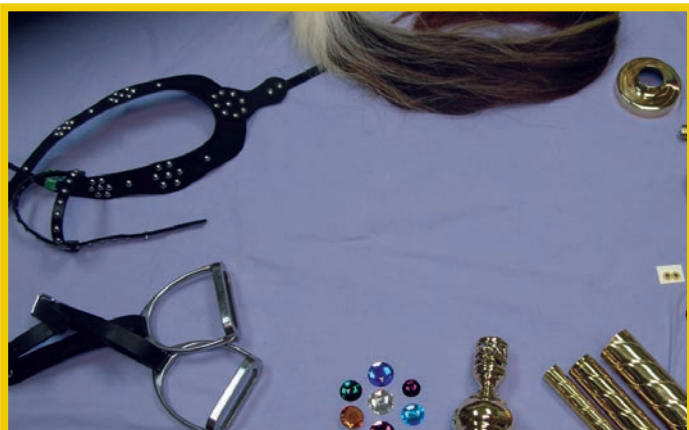
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