

The History of City Park



The Historic Carousel #72

The number of carousels built in the United States between 1867 and 1930 cannot be confirmed. Historians estimate 4,000 to 6,000 machines and 80,000 hand carved horses/animals were produced in the dozen or so factories/shops that produced carousels and related amusement devices. The golden age of carousel construction ended with the Great Depression of 1929.

In 1994, according to the National Carousel Association's census, only about 165 of the all wood, hand carved machines were operating or were undergoing restoration. Colorado claimed five of them.

Over half of the hand carved horses/animals were lost to fire or other disasters. The remaining examples of this unique form of American art are found in public displays and private collections. Two national associations promote the restoration and preservation of carousels, animals and related items.

The American Carousel revolves counterclockwise. That is why the right side, known as the *Romance Side*, exhibits the most intricate carving. The emigrant wood carvers' styles help identify the factory/shop, lead carvers and years of production.

Styles

Based on the time of manufacture, power source and market area, American Carousels are placed in three categories:

- **Philadelphia Style** —Realistic carvings with fanciful decoration.
- **Coney Island Style** —Flamboyant carving and ornamentation.

(These two styles were located in permanent urban amusement parks, on piers or in locations served by trolley lines.)

- **County Fair Style** —Smaller machines made for wagon or train transport with provisions for assembly and operation in rural areas, normally for short periods or special events.

City Park Carousel

The Pueblo City Park Carousel is a typical example of the County Fair Style. It was the 72nd carousel built by the Charles Wallace Parker Amusement Devises Company of Abilene, Kansas. Advertised as a three-abreast *Carry Us All* , it had 36 horses, 1 or 2 chariots, a ten horsepower steam boiler, band organ, organ drive and canvas top.



Factory records, now in the Barbara Charles collection, show that #72 was built in 1911 and sold for \$5,160 to Exposition and Amusement Company. Neither the address of the firm nor the owner's names have been found.

Another page of the records shows that #72 was returned to the factory in 1914—about the time C.W. Parker moved from Abilene to Leavenworth, Kansas. It was at this time, perhaps, that #72 was altered to its present composition.

The original 1911 carousel may have had two standard Parker chariots with one being replaced by a Parker Lover's Tub to produce more revenue—it required at least two tickets per ride.

The two inner rows of horses are typical pre-1915 Parker *Drop Leg* style. They have bracket holes for an earlier type of vertical movement, known as a track machine, which indicates they were carved circa 1900.

The outside row of horses was carved by Solomon Stein and Harry Goldstein in Brooklyn, New York, circa 1907. The two different sizes of horses indicate they may have been from the first and second rows of another machine. All 36 horses have metal horseshoes marked "11 worth."

Exchanging horses on County Fair Style carousels was standard practice due to usage and transport damage. Replacement horses cost an average of \$35 to \$50 in the 1920s.

C.W. Parker was well equipped to handle such exchanges. In addition to manufacturing carousels and amusement, carnival and band organ items, he dealt in used equipment and

operated four amusement/carnival trains for the county fair circuits. (The company ceased production of wooden horses in 1925 and closed in the 1950s.)

Again, according to factory records, “#72 three-abreast, secondhand,” was sold in 1914 to J.J. McQuillen, Lake Minnequa Park, Pueblo, Colorado for “\$3,075, no organ, organ drive or tent top supplied.”

The May 24, 1914 edition of the *Pueblo Star Journal* features ads with the new #72. It was the third carousel to operate at Lake Minnequa Park, near the present site of Corwin Middle School and remained there, in a protective building, until the park closed in 1939/40. During this time electric lights were added.

Additionally, handwritten notations from the C.W. Parker factory records—“Died 1937.” and “C.V. Marmaduke, Jr. Attorney, 714 Thatcher Bldg., Pueblo, Colo.”—refer to Lake Minnequa Park owner, J.J. McQuillen’s death and estate. Also noted in a repair parts order dated Sept. 4, 1941 is “see City of Pueblo Park District 2, Pueblo, Colo.”

Paul Parker, son of C.W. took over the business in 1930. In 1982 letters, he confirmed the records and identified the handwriting as that of his sister Gertrude Parker and his secretary Cecil Schenley.

In June of 1940, Park District 2 became the owner of #72. The district also acquired the Lake Minnequa Park Fun House Mirrors which were sent to the Pueblo Mountain Park Horseshoe Lodge where they remain today.

Location

The carousel was situated southwest of the main gate of City Park until 1951. It had no protective building and was surrounded by play equipment built by the Lamar Company of Pueblo. In the 1940s, Johnson Electric converted #72 to electricity. Since there was no electric service in the area, the carousel’s power switch was placed at the main gate of City Park where the street car line ended, now Calla Avenue.

In 1951, the carousel and a new playground were installed north of the zoo pens. The carousel operated there until 1983 in conjunction with the Kiddie Rides that were purchased in 1955. This area is now the park playground.

Restoration

From 1940 until 1972, the carousel received good maintenance; the horses were repaired and repainted each winter and stored above the paint shop. But in 1972, the Parks Department carpenters and painters were reassigned and the carousel began to deteriorate.



A private collector, in late 198, offered to purchase the armored horse. This triggered the Department's research into the carousel's value and generated considerable public concern.

Pueblo Citizens, in a series of community meetings, decided they wanted to keep #72 operating in City Park rather than sell it, make it into a museum exhibit or replace it with a modern plastic carousel.

The leaders of the group organized the Carousel Restoration Committee and requested permission to solicit private contributions. City Council sanctioned the project and the committee went to work.

The Carousel operated with some Horses missing while funds were being raised. The Rose Horse Trio was restored first and presented to the City Council in 1981. Colorado Governor Richard Lamm unveiled the Armored Horse Trio during a Chamber of Commerce breakfast, helping to maintain interest in the campaign.

The City Park Carousel was listed on the National Register of Historic Places by the U.S. Department of Interior in April, 1983. Concern for the safety and protection of the restored horses prompted efforts for a protective building and a third move of the carousel in City Park.

It became the focal point of the Kiddie Rides and the grand opening was held May 24, 1985—exactly 71 years after #72 opened at Lake Minnequa Park.

The names of the individuals, organizations, trusts and foundations contributing over \$250,000 to save the carousel are too numerous to list. Members of the Pueblo community provided more than that amount—in time, talent, materials, and in-kind services.

The restoration was supported, both financially and with expertise, by very special friends in Colorado and across the nation. Nostalgic moment, experienced by individuals and families associated with the carousel were generously shared.

Carousel conservator Will Morton of Lakewood, Colorado, restored the horses and chariot. The Pueblo art community, as its donation, provided the carvings and artwork for the building, rounding boards and interior frames and the City of Pueblo provided invaluable assistance. Without these many people, rallying to help the Carousel Committee during this five-year project, the dream—our dream—would not have come true!

Band Organ History

Turn-of-the-century skating rinks, carousels, dance halls, fairs, carnivals, theaters and resorts were richly filled with the lively, measured music of the band organ. This loud-voiced pipe organ is equipped with percussion devices. It is mechanically operated using pre-arranged music on perforated cylinders, books or rolls, much like a player piano. A remarkable machine, it dominated the entertainment centers until replaced by the amplified phonograph around 1928.

Less than 10,000 band organs—often confused with the very different steam whistle circus calliope—were built in the United States. The first was by Eugene deKleist in 1891 in North Tonowanda, New York.

In 1858, Franz Rudolph Wurlitzer arrived in Cincinnati, Ohio. He came from Germany where his family had built musical instruments. He and his sons soon became the leading instrument manufacturers and retailers in this country.

Wurlitzer purchased the deKleist factory in 1908 and by 1935, had 18 different styles of band organs in production. They discontinued the instrument in 1939.

City Park Carousel Band Organ

The fate of #72's original band organ (not included in the 1914 purchase) is unknown. Records and tapes proved music for the carousel from 1940 until a community fundraising effort made the purchase and restoration of a band organ possible.

The City Park Carousel Band Organ is a 1920 Wurlitzer "Old Style" 146 Military Band Organ. Wurlitzer sold 29 of these organs—the most of any style shipped that year—for \$1,025 each. Serial #3293 was in a group of 10 sold to the Herschell-Spillman Carousel Company of North Tonowanda.

It was installed in a Washington D.C. area carousel where it remained until 1972 when it was acquired by a collector near Chicago.

The Committee purchased #3293 and restored it at a cost of approximately \$25,000. It was dedicated May 24, 1989 in celebration of the 75th anniversary of the C.W. Park #72 Carousel.

The Instrumentation consists of:

- Bass and snare drums, one cymbal, sixteen octave violin pipes which are outside and visible.
- Three wooden trombones, three octave stopped basses, fifteen wooden trumpets, fifteen stopped flue pipes, sixteen violin pipes and nine open pipes, all inside.
- Three open bass pipes, ten stopped accompaniment pipes and sixteen stopped melody pipes at the bottom.
- Three stops—one for trumpets, one for stopped flute and one for inside violin.