

Diary of a Carousel

PTC #62 at Santa Monica Pier

The city-owned carousel on the Santa Monica Pier, PTC #62, reopened to the public at the end of the summer of 1981, following a much-needed cosmetic restoration.

In contrast to the pier at that time, the carousel was like a sparkling jewel. Its building, like the others, was in poor condition, windowless and difficult for most to appreciate. In 1981, the pier no longer attracted families; quite honestly, it was a pretty scary place.



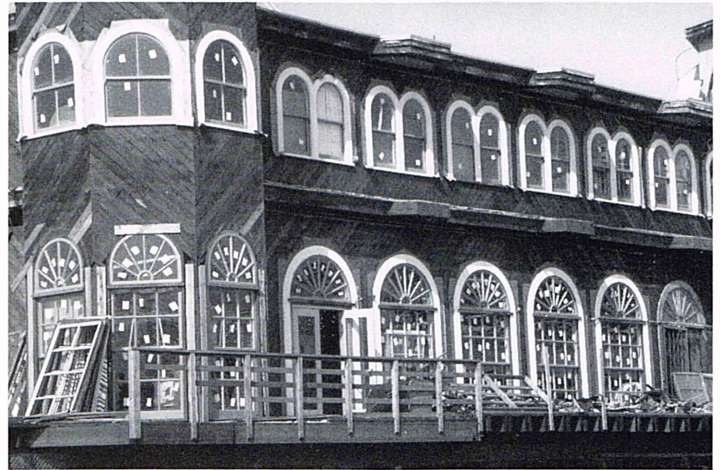
The goal of our operations staff was to reintroduce the carousel as a newly recognized prize and establish it as a valuable community resource.

As hoped, as the carousel came back to life, so did the pier.

By the end of 1984, it was a much different place. The carousel and the Hippodrome building were both completely restored, as was the superstructure of the pier itself. Renovation of the other old buildings had begun, and the pier was frequented by more children than adults.



Fall 1982. Lani (left) and George (on the ladder) remove signs from the building that said the carousel horses came from the Black Forest of Germany, a popular but untrue myth.



Spring 1983. The old stucco has been removed from the building and new windows are being installed.



Fall 1982. Helene holds a pet snake while its owner rides.

Although the pier was prettier, safer, and stronger, the carousel operators still met with predictable and unpredictable challenges daily.

For nine years, I have been trying to figure out how to share what life was like for those of us who were caretakers of PTC #62 from August

1981 to January 1985. There were so many aspects of being there, I have never been able to put it into words.

The carousel operators kept a daily log, recording the ride count and entering comments. It reflects the changing seasons, business and weather, the joys and difficulties with riders, pier life, caring for the carousel and enduring the endless renovation projects (building the pier) that surrounded us.

The boredom of slow days, the long, hot summers—crowds, sand, suntan oil, too much beer, were all endured through humor and the camaraderie of the staff.

Though cryptic at times, the log really tells it all, much better than I can.



Saturday, Aug. 15, 1981 - Opening Day - Ready, Set, Go! Ride count: 2,435.

Monday, Aug. 31, 1981 - If there is a problem with anything, especially if a horse is out of commission, let it be



Photo by Harvey Gaylin

One of the Santa Monica Pier's PTC #62 carousel horses.

known to everyone when the problem began, what the problem is, when it was remedied, and who did what. Throw the skaters and smokers out the minute they hit the front door. Ride count: 1,143.

Wednesday, Sept. 2, 1981 - We're going to have a plain-clothes policeman hanging out during the weekends. There has been a big problem with pickpockets on the pier. Apprehension outside is impossible. We've had four known incidents. Ride count: 1,045.

Friday, Sept. 4, 1981 - The

City Manager came by and was very impressed with how clean the place is and how much profit we're turning in. Ride count: 1,317.

Sunday, Sept. 6, 1981 - 98 rides, 2,713 people!

Tuesday, Sept. 8, 1981 - We are well-greased, too well. Check poles, horses, platform. Ride count: 831.

Monday, Sept. 16, 1981 - Closed at 5:20. Ride count: 134.

Tuesday, Sept. 17, 1981 - Band organ repair. No music from 2:00-3:30. Need a backup system. Ride count: 155.

Friday, Sept. 18, 1981 - Here's what to save from gate for next day's startup - \$10 in quarters, \$10 in ones, \$15 in fives, \$10, one ten. Ride count: 650.

Wednesday, Sept. 23, 1981 - Man came who used to work at Rockaway Beach. 8:15 p.m. - Nobody here, going home. Bye. Ride count: 365.

Saturday, Oct. 31, 1981 - Halloween. Boo! Ride count: 1,013.

Thursday, Nov. 27, 1981 - Happy Turkey Day. Ride count: 751.

Friday, Dec. 25, 1981 - It's Christmas. Ride count: 1,133.

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Sunday, Feb. 2, 1982 - Closed, rain.

Monday, Apr. 5, 1982 -

Monday, May 5, 1982 - Memorial Day. Since today's Monday, is tomorrow maintenance day (carousel usually closed Mondays for maintenance)? Ride count: 2,952.

Wednesday, June 23, 1982 - Channel 9 (TV) is coming tomorrow. Ride count: 773.

Thursday, June 24, 1982 - pier crew still working on fire exits. 5:30 p.m. Pigeon flew in, and boy chased it out. Ride count: 749.

Tuesday, June 29, 1982 - Overcast. Visibility - Point Dume. Forecast for tonight - dark. Tomorrow morning - scattered light. Man drinking out of a tennis ball container. Upon confiscation, Ron was heard to say, "I don't know, but it ain't ten-



Photo by George Kosteva

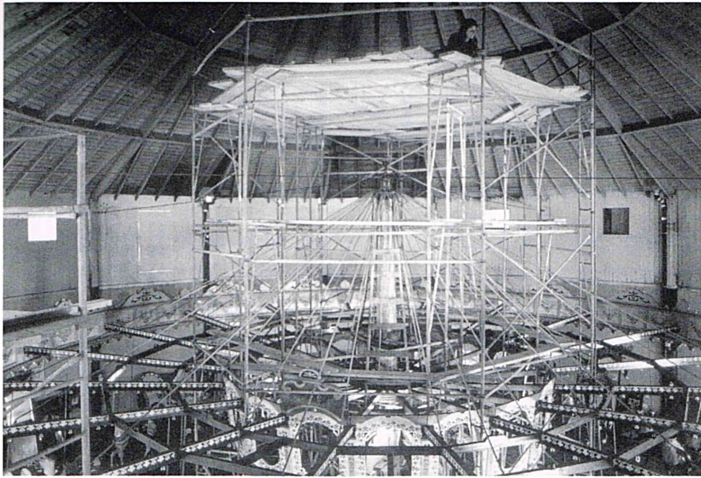
Summer 1983. Filming "T. J. Hooker," a TV series starring William Shatner, at the carousel. It was difficult to distinguish the film crew from spectators, who often snuck inside.

Chief White [Santa Monica Fire Dept.] came to ride yesterday, shut us down today for the week (Spring vacation). We need fire exits.

Sunday, Apr. 11, 1982 - 10-11 a.m. - 8, 11, 2, 4, 2, 10, 8, 12, 10. 11 a.m. to 12n. Rain, closing. Ride count: 67.

nis balls!" Ride count: 758.

[This is a wild and crazy place, compared with most carousel environments. Summer brings families, inner-city gangs, and—it would take pages to list all the different types of people



Winter 1983. Helene, atop the scaffold erected for the installation of the sprinklers.

—everything in between.]

Wednesday, June 30, 1982 - One punk band, one severe drunk, four transients, one hunk. Well, it's another slow night at the Santa Monica pier. The transient finally left. Ride count: 915.

Friday, July 2, 1982 - The band organ is working. The drummer is really hot! The bell broke. Ride count: 1,081.

Saturday, July 3, 1982 - Sun out at 10 a.m. See next page for emergency info for the 4th. There's a Navy transport out in the bay. Free tours Saturday, Sunday, and Monday. Ride count: 2,284.

Sunday, July 4, 1982 - The power on the pier has shorted out before on previous 4ths. City electrician is on call. After 4 p.m., call police. Emergency telephone numbers posted in booth. Millions of people outside. Let's get out of here before they come inside. 8 p.m. - closing. Ride count: 2,550.

[July 4 featured a city-sponsored fireworks show at the end of the pier, which attracted over 250,000 people.

Because it sparked both violence and gridlock, 1985 was the last year for the pier celebration.]

Monday, July 5, 1982 - Yesterday, WOW! Beautiful day, no-one would ever know last night happened.

The pier is clean, the sky is clear. Big, burly bikers on pretty ponies are not compatible. Ride count: 2,287.

Saturday, July 10, 1982 - Band organ isn't working. Yes, you have to pay for the baby, too! Ride count: 3,051.

Thursday, July 15, 1982 - Rat stowaway on small boy. Removed it and spent 3 1/2 minutes with a rat wrapped around my neck. Ride count: 967.

Friday, July 16, 1982 - Star Date: 82716-1242. Ride count: 1,144.

Sunday, July 18, 1982 - Carrie Fisher here, rode twice. 9 p.m. - All staff totally burned out. Ride count: 2,751.

Tuesday, July 20, 1982 - Yesterday we cleaned all 749 light bulbs, today they went out. Ride count: 964.

Saturday, July 24, 1982 - Commutator problems (no lights). Closing early. We will only be able to operate days. Closing time, 7:30 p.m. Ride count: 197.

Tuesday, July 27, 1982 - Tape player can't rest on main beam in central housing, too much vibration. Tapes being eaten. Old drive is back on band organ. Don't get caught in the "killer" belt. Ride count: 1,050.

Wednesday, July 28, 1982 - Backhoe demolition shaking

building so badly, possible danger to machine and building. City says close. Ride count: 992.

Friday, July 30, 1982 - Commutator arcing. Be careful. Ride count: 1,199.

Sunday, Aug. 1, 1982 - A lady thought this was a Ferris wheel. Ride count: 2,754.

[There were lots of fashion and product ads, but one sticks out in my memory. The model on one of the horses was nude, with a fan blowing her long hair. She

Kidder here. Ride count: 1,260.

Thursday, Aug. 19, 1982 - Little elves (operators) came in last night, moved all of the machinery (original brake) out of the central housing area. Ride count: 889.

Friday, Aug. 20, 1982 - It's so hot. 1,000,000 expected at the beach this weekend. 6:30 p.m. - it's getting hotter. Ride count: 952.

Wednesday, Aug. 25, 1982 - The man of my dreams



Photo by Barbara Williams

Summer 1994. The center pole is leveled and the guy wires are adjusted and tightened.

didn't know the building was all windows—but she managed without too many spectators.]

Friday, Aug. 6, 1982 - Band organ died, 3:35 p.m. Margo

came and went. Ride count: 936.

Thursday, Aug. 26, 1982 - "Isn't it interesting, everyone has their own personality out here," said an elderly

tourist. Dean Stockwell here. Ride count: 1,052.

Monday, Sept. 6, 1982 - CBS Morning News is here. Ride count: 2,431.

Saturday, October 9, 1982 - Big fire in Simi Valley. Sky in Malibu is all smoky. Boa constrictor in booth while family rides. Ride count: 1,531.

Saturday, Oct. 30, 1982 - It's cold. It's wet. It's lonely. It's Saturday. 2 p.m. - closing. Ride count: 227.

Tuesday, Dec. 21, 1982 - Slow day. One drunk, two lunatics, several chocolate-soaked children and no cute men. Ride count: 255.

Saturday, Dec. 25, 1982 - Merry Christmas! Ride count: 932.

Tuesday, Dec. 28, 1982 - Lots of gear noise. Went up to check and lube. Listen. Ride count: 864.

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During the months of January through May of 1983, the log is without comments, a comment in itself of those difficult months.

Weekdays, the operators worked on the renovation of the carousel. The main projects included breaking down the central housing, removing the standers to treat the dry rot in their legs and reposition them to minimize leg damage, steam-cleaning the central supports, gears, and cranks, replacing the bull gear bearings, installing new step-ups, and balancing and

refinishing the platform.

The massive renovation of the carousel building also was underway—new sprinklers, stucco, windows, plumbing, wiring, interior and exterior lighting, paint, a floor, and a security system.

It rained much of the time, and in January and March, two huge storms hit the pier, threatening to bring it all to an end. The pier, in part, survived. The carousel, renewed and reassembled, did, too.

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Wednesday, May 25, 1983 - Every nut in the world was here today! Ride count: 471.

Sunday, June 5, 1983 - Summer staff - Please remember to turn off main switch for machine and lock up tickets and all keys. Ride count: 2,738.

Wednesday, June 8, 1983 - The scaffolding came down off the front of the building today. It looks great. Ride count: 446.

Wednesday, June 15, 1983 - 5:45 a.m. - two people in building, observed by Harbor Patrol. 10 a.m. - discovered our cash box pried open. Ride count: 757.

Thursday, June 16, 1983 - The man of my dreams has still not returned. Ride count: 792.

Tuesday, June 21, 1983 - First day of summer. Cool, overcast. pier crew, electricians, plumbers, etc., etc., etc., in. Ride count: 950.

Wednesday, June 22, 1983 - Fire on pier outside building. Worst one yet. Sprayed with



Photo by Barbara Williams

Spring 1984. Shandra paints a horse by available light, as there was no electricity upstairs then.

extinguisher, but still lots of smoke. SMFD went under pier. Fire's out. Scary. Ride count: 916.

Friday, July 1, 1983 - Bracing for the 4th. City engineer in to check new work, old work, no work. We have permission to close early. Ride count: 910.

Saturday, July 2, 1983 - pier (storm) rubble is being hauled away. Alessandro from Australia and Jamie of Pacific Palisades got married on the carousel this evening. Ciao! Ride count: 2,187.

Sunday, July 3, 1983 - Muggy, hot. Fire Dept. in, preparing for the 4th. I guess we passed inspection, they didn't shut us down. Ride count: 3,180.

Monday, July 4, 1983 - Whew! Ride count: 2,794.

Saturday, July 9, 1983 - Another fire. Flames and everything. Engineers and SMFD came. Ride count: 2,525.

Sunday, July 10, 1983 - Warped doors, backward drift of carousel and shifted and pinched central housing



Photo by Barbara Williams and George Kostava

Summer 1984. A happy day. The carousel is ready to reopen at the end of the season. We celebrated by taking each others' pictures. Shown here (L to R) are Mitch Cohen and Gordie Pine.



If steeds could talk . . .

panels all indicate some significant building movement. Ride count: 2,891.

Friday, July 15, 1983 - Open at 10:10 a.m. today because we had to get the pigeon out first. Ride count: 1,185.

Saturday, July 23, 1983 - The days are getting l-o-n-g-e-r. "T. J. Hooker" shoot on Monday, 8/1, 7 a.m. If you are coming to cover, be prompt. Ride count: 2,248.

Thursday, July 28, 1983 - MTV here. Three-hour dinner party on one of the benches. Ride count: 907.

Friday, Aug. 5, 1983 - There are only two rolls of tickets left. It is very, very, very hot. Ride count: 1,322.

Tuesday, Aug. 9, 1983 - Iggy Pop rides the carousel. John Lithgow and family, too. Ride count: 1,327.

Thursday, Aug. 11, 1983 - The red jumpers have developed a problem with the crank gear mounting and will have to be roped off for the remainder of the summer. It is important that these horses not be ridden. Ride count: 1,180.

Thursday, Aug. 18 - Hot, humid, drizzling. It's kind of raining now. Raining pretty hard, doubt if we'll make it

'til 9 p.m. 5:15 p.m. - close. Ride count: 594.

Thursday, Aug. 25, 1983 - Altercation in front of the carousel building between two women. A knife was displayed. The boyfriend of one punched the other one. Five patrol cars came. Ride count: 1,055.

Tuesday, Aug. 30, 1983 - Do not use the band organ. Repairs on Saturday. Ride count: 1,412.

Wednesday, Aug. 31, 1983 - Chocolate brown middle pony named "Traffa" by Sabrina, 3-1/2, who rode him three times in a row. Ride count: 1,093.

Friday, September 2, 1983 - Ed F. was here. He was here last in summer of 1981. Said, "No carousel is the same as this one." People from Fairground Society of England here. Ride count: 1,178.

Monday, Sept. 5, 1983 - Labor Day. Stopped the ride to remove a gentleman who was riding between two jumpers with his feet in the step-ups. Ride count: 2,846.

Friday, Sept. 10, 1983 - Two nuns in full habit riding jumpers! Ride count: 2,846.

Saturday, Sept. 17, 1983 - Ray Bradbury came for a ride. Ride count: 1,116.

Thursday, Sept. 29, 1983 - Kurt Russell rode. It's raining. Ride count: 197.

Saturday, Oct. 15, 1983 - Cool and cloudy. Nobody on beach. Ride count: 1,032.

Sunday, Oct. 30, 1983 - Joan Baez here. Asked her if rumors that she lived upstairs are true. She said she lived in Venice and visited friends here. Ride count: 1,169.

Sunday, Nov. 13, 1983 - A break in the rain. Watch out for people with PEP - Pre-Existing Problems. Ride

count: 2,125.

Thursday, Nov. 24, 1983 - Thanksgiving. 4 p.m. - rained out. Ride count: 563.

Monday, Dec. 19, 1983 - Very foggy. Ridership dwindling to a trickle. Ride count: 308.

Tuesday, Dec. 20, 1983 - Mass quantities of police (blue and incognito) swarm two people in front of carousel building. 45s flashing in the sun, and we aren't talking vinyl discs. Ride count: 324.



Friday, Jan. 1, 1984 - Some little nipper wanted and got the first ride of 1984 - Kimberly - Congrats! Phil Collins rode. Ride count: 1,035.

Sunday, Jan. 8, 1984 - Superman rode. Ride count: 550.

Sunday, January 22, 1984 - Super Bowl Sunday. Started out real slow. Now, at 2:48 p.m., we're talking madness. Ride count: 1,822.

Sunday, Jan. 19, 1984 - Nine sets of twins in. There must be a convention. Ride count: 631.

Saturday, Feb. 4, 1984 - Warm, good crowd. Bab's head caught in the temporary fence. Beautiful sunset. Ride count: 567.

Sadly, the log of our last year at the carousel is not to be found. I remember the year well and know that it was more of the same and then some.

The four years were filled with constant transition—nothing was static or serene. Most of the projects relating to the carousel and the building were finished, but not without a major hitch.

Because the contractors for the renovation of the

interior of the ground floor did not complete the work until the end of the summer of '84, the carousel was closed for all but the last two weeks. (We opened on the last weekend of the Los Angeles Summer Olympics.)

The opening day of the 1984 season, a Saturday, coincided with the Men's Marathon, which ran quite close to the pier. Friends of the Santa Monica Pier Carousel handed out balloons to all the children and foreign guests who visited the carousel that day. Many of these balloons were prominent in crowds lining the course in television coverage of the Marathon.

As fall turned to winter, we realized that it was time for us to move on, so each of use could pursue individual endeavors.

The last days as operators were truly sad for us. Riders who came often and had become friends came to bid us farewell.

The tears came when the lights went out on our last day, for it was then time to say goodbye to the horses.



I'd like to thank the following people. Without their support and dedication, there would be no lovingly restored carousel.

Fred and Mary Fried
Rol and Jo Summit

John Hayek

Dave Bradley

Dan Horenberger

Brian and Elinor Morgan

Friends of the Santa

Monica Carousel

And my fellow operators, Harvey Gaylin (photographer), Shandra Beri (singer, musician, and actress who appeared in "Roxanne"),

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Gordie Pine (student and musician), Helene Forman (graduate student), George Kosteva (carpenter), Mitch Cohen (graduate student), and Lani Wormley (artist).

And all of the rest of you who lent moral support—you know who you are.



The Santa Monica Pier's Philadelphia Toboggan Company carousel is significant both historically and because of the cooperative effort that continues to ensure its preservation.

The Mayor, City Council, City staff (including managers,

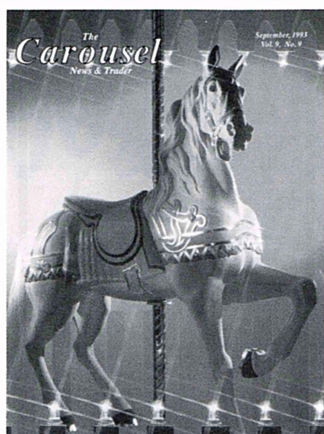
plumbers, electricians, engineers, and others), independent contractors, the "Friends of the Santa Monica Pier Carousel," and the operations staff worked cooperatively to renovate the carousel and the Looff Hippodrome carousel building.

The success of this project is a tribute to the persistence of Barbara Williams and Harvey Gaylin, who managed the project, and to all who believed in it and refused to give up hope, and to the dedication of the workers.

As Barbara so aptly put it, "Preserving history and creating wealth in the form of joy and happiness is an opportunity not to be missed. Get involved; save your carousel."



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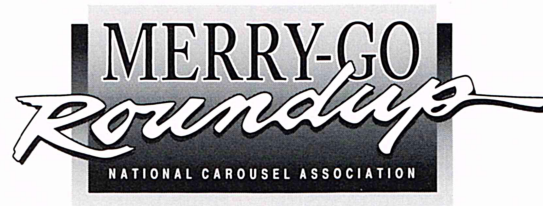
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Commentary

By Brian Morgan

During the late 1970s, I often visited the Santa Monica Pier for lunch, and would take a few minutes to also visit the carousel.

In those days, it was a dark, gloomy place with most of the windows boarded up and limited lighting. However, the splendor of the horses was evident.

Toward the end of that period, the city bought the carousel with the intention of restoring both the carousel and the building as the centerpiece of a revitalized pier. I continued my frequent visits to the pier during the restoration, peering in anxiously through the windows and a partially opened door to monitor its progress. On one of

these visits, I met Barbara Williams.

Barbara is widely recognized as an activist in the "Save the Pier" movement in 1973. Ever since, she has been a force to be reckoned with by anyone who dares to threaten her beloved carousel. She was instrumental in persuading the city to restore the carousel, and she volunteered as an operator when no one else qualified could be found.

Barbara and her friend, Harvey Gaylin, operated the carousel from August 1981 through January 1985—a difficult period for the pier.

Many difficulties had to be overcome, as the carousel had been poorly maintained and operated for many years. In these early days, there were many mechanical difficulties and heightened gang activity, as well as frequent long closures while the interior and exterior of

the building were being restored. Then, in 1983, the pier was partially demolished by the El Niño storms.

Only someone with Barbara's knowledge and dedication could have solved all these problems while developing operating procedures—and respect for the carousel—which are still in place today. As far as Barbara was concerned, there was only one way of doing things on her Santa Monica Pier carousel. The right way.

Many of these challenges were mentioned in the operator's logbook maintained by Barbara, Harvey, and their crew, as well as many of the lighter, boring, and crazy moments.

The full story of the carousel restoration can be read in the Winter 1984 *Merry-Go-Roundup*, which was dedicated to Barbara.

Kit Carson PTC

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The Association hopes to repaint the white portion of the interior of the carousel building, the wood trim on all the doors, and the concrete apron between the platform and the outer wall.

Members are researching what it will cost to reproduce the decorative design on the outer rim and to restore the original decorative blocks for the outer rim lights. Currently, the lights are mounted on replicas of the original blocks.

Local support

The total cost of the two-year restoration was \$135,000. Approximately two-thirds of this amount was provided by challenge grants from the Boettcher Foundation, the Gates Foundation, and the Colorado

Historical Society. In addition, the Association received more than \$45,000 from local supporters, which made it possible to receive these large grants.

During 1993, nearly 28,000 people rode the Kit Carson County Carousel, most of them between Memorial Day and Labor Day, when the carousel operates from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. daily. The rest visited off-season, with tour groups or to participate in the "Carousel Christmas," event. During this event, the Wurlitzer military band organ plays holiday music and visitors enjoy free rides and refreshments.

For more information about PTC #6, contact Jo Downey at (719) 348-5325.

Fred Fried Donates Documents

Fred Fried has donated three cartons of documents and papers from the Fred and Mary Fried Archives to the NCA. In addition to other carousel-related writings, this generous donation includes all of Fred's correspondence, memorabilia, newsletters, and other writings pertaining to the NCA. Most of this historically important information was not previously in the NCA Archives.

"The collection includes news clippings and correspondence between the founders of the NCA, leading up to and including the first convention in Sandwich, Mass., in 1973; similar documents from the second and subsequent conventions, including the Flint convention and the

important 10th anniversary convention in Providence, R.I.; and a wealth of communications among the members of the Executive Committee, including the background and events leading up to the departure of those persons who left the NCA to form the ACS.

It also includes a large collection of correspondence and minutes of the Conservation Committee, of which Fred was the chairman.

The NCA is protecting these documents from damage. After they have been sorted and organized, they will be listed and catalogued, then added to the NCA archives.