

The Loft at PTC

By Barbara Williams, NCA Archivist

When it came to carousels, Fred Fried was a visionary pioneer of enormous proportion.

He saw them as wondrous works of art on the verge of spinning into oblivion as 25-cent rides, most of which had fallen into terrible disrepair, when he wrote *The Pictorial History of the Carousel* in 1964.

By 1973, Fred had co-founded the National Carousel Roundtable (now NCA) for the purpose of pulling together potential devotees who would work together, preserving the wooden carousels. It was a "cause" he was passionately devoted to.

In his documentation on the E. Joy Morris Company, published in *Roundup* in 1989, he included a passage describing a visit to PTC and his ascent to the shop's loft.

While Fred found PTC to be rich in heritage, with lots of historic photographs and company records in the files, there seemed to be nothing in the shop to indicate that PTC had ever made carousels (PTC's modern-day product was then "Skee-Ball," a bowling-like arcade game).

Fred longed to find something, a remnant, anything of PTC's carousels. When he went up into the loft that day in 1963, he had no idea that he would come upon the treasures that lay there. As he told me many years later, it was one of the most thrilling experiences of his life.

The following excerpt from Fred's article is a treasure. Through his description and photos, 33 years later, we can experience his visit to PTC's loft.



During our luncheon break, after a full morning copying ledger entries in the basement vault, I asked John Allen what was in the loft overhead. He replied that he hadn't been up there in more than 20 years, but to satisfy my curiosity he offered to hold the ladder if I wished to look around.

A ladder was brought, and the hatch was pushed up and over. I was greeted by a gallery of marvelous and familiar sections of rims, chariots, legs, heads, etc. Light from the large sectional glass windows made the sight appear as the opening of an ancient sculptural tomb long forgotten.

Horse legs were intermingled with tails; heads of various periods and a winged cherub shared a corner with a curled-beak sea serpent. At the other end were three whose function was not then apparent. I sweated and shook with excitement.

As the shapes and forms were called down to John Allen, we matched them to the carousels. Fortunately, I had a loaded camera slung around my neck, allowing me to take ten photographs. Mr. Allen called up to me to see if there was a "seahorse." There was none.

Upon my return to earth, I asked Mr. Allen about the "seahorse" that was not there. He replied that it was there last time he was up, and had been there long before he came to the firm. He had been told it was a carving model made by Charles Leopold for the company when they just started.

The italicized portion of this article has been excerpted from E. Joy Morris and the Evolution of the Philadelphia Toboggan Company, by Frederick Fried. Merry-Go-Roundup, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1989.

Fred Fried found a disarray of unpainted, unused, incomplete parts in PTC's old loft. With the 10 exposures he had left in his camera that day, he captured the beauty of the carvings in their hideaway.

Photos courtesy of the Frederick Fried Archives.

