

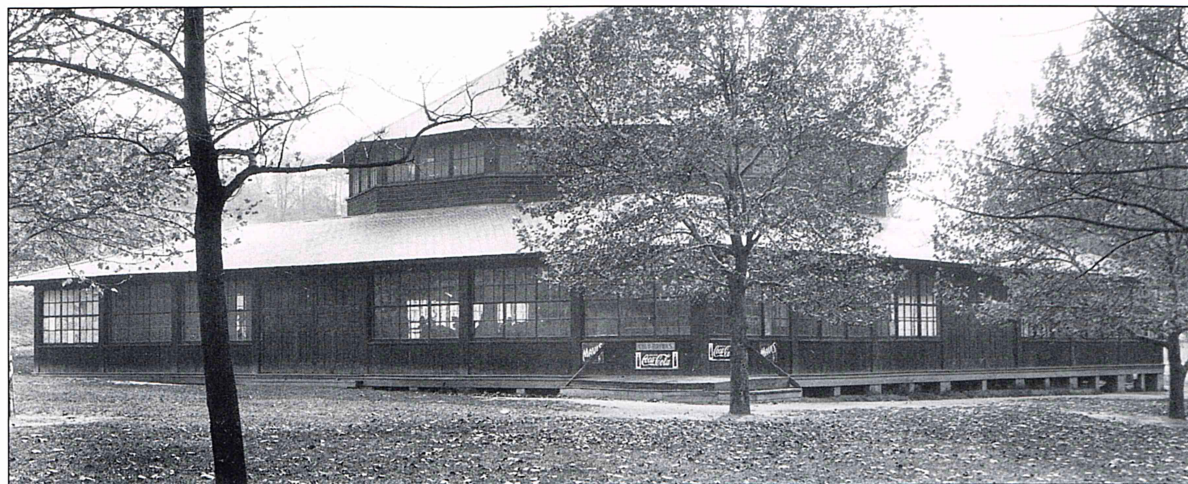
Philadelphia Toboggan Company #23

By Barbara Williams, NCA Archivist

Work began on the Schenley, Riverview, and Grandview carousel buildings on August 4, 1912. They were completed on October 15. Like the carousels, the buildings were identical. After they were inspected, it was decided to add 16-foot extensions on all sides of the buildings, making them 94 x 94 feet in size.

The Riverview Park carousel building was torn down in 1961 to make way for a new recreational facility. It had been empty since the 1940s, and was used only as a picnic shelter.

Photograph courtesy of the Pittsburgh Library, Richard Bowker Collection.



Who doesn't love a treasure hunt? Especially when you know you are going to find something. You just don't know what.

Last year, when Brian and Elinor Morgan received eight boxes of material sent to the NCA by Fred Fried, they put in a couple of all-nighters going through the contents. In an early morning call after one of these sessions, Brian told me that they had found something important.

It was a letter to Fred from NCA member Richard Bowker, written in 1989, which read, in part, "About the question you asked me when I first met you as a new member of the NCA back in 1975 . . . did I have any information on the city of Pittsburgh's PTC carousels? . . . All I knew was that there was one in Schenley Park and one in Riverview Park. After some research, I discovered that the third one was in Grandview Park, overlooking the city from Mt. Washington . . . and, at long last, a photograph [of PTC #23] has surfaced!"

One of the other boxes that Fred sent contained a picture of PTC #23 and an article about it. So far, no photos have been found of the other two carousels.

Fred Fried's listing of PTC carousels in his *Pictorial History of the Carousel* lists three carousels, PTC #s 23, 24, and 25, as Pittsburgh's. There are no other details.

Charles J. Jacques Jr., in his *Amusement Park*

Journal (Vol. 5, No. 4), in "The Carousels of the Philadelphia Toboggan Company," identifies the three parks in Pittsburgh, but until now, no other details were known about these mystery carousels.

Information about these carousels, extracted from an annual report for the Pittsburgh Bureau of Parks, includes the following information:

"Our new merry-go-rounds, erected and put into use during 1913, are located at Schenley Park, Grandview Park, and Riverview Park. Although they were completed on November 14, 1912, they did not open to the public until July 4, 1913.

"Each carousel is 50 feet in diameter, with 46 animals, consisting of lions, tigers, deer, giraffes, ostriches, kangaroos, goats, and different kinds of horses. These are all artistically carved and have the same shape and size as live animals. There are also four double-seated chariots with front and back seats entirely closed.

"Each carousel is decorated with 18 carved shields in the outside rim, with 18 mirrors mounted in curved frames. Music for each carousel will be provided by an organ of the concert type, with snare drum, bass drum, and cymbals. One hundred fifty yards of cardboard music, interchangeable among organs, was supplied with each organ.

"Before the carousels were opened to the public, a thorough speed test was made, which showed a speed of 14 miles per hour at the outside edge of the platform. This was considered

excessive, and the speed was reduced to approximately 8 miles per hour.

"These carousels became so popular soon after they were opened, that it was decided to build toilet rooms for men and women and a lunch counter in the Schenley and Riverview buildings.

"The installing of these merry-go-rounds, for the purpose of making our parks more attractive and popular has, I believe, met with the entire approval of the public and will be greatly appreciated in the future."

Ironically, the discovery by Richard Bowker of the photos and information about these three PTC carousels of 1912, raises more questions than it provides answers.

The carousels were identical, stationary, menagerie machines, made well after PTC ceased producing menageries (PTC #14 of 1907 was previously considered the last menagerie).

The animals on each look as if they could be carved by E. Joy Morris. However, the tiger in the foreground is unlike other Morris tigers (PTC bought out Morris in 1903, acquiring a large cache of animals). But PTC's #23, 24, and 25 were manufactured nine years later.

Did PTC keep three carousels' worth of

menagerie animals around the shop for this length of time? And, why would the city of Pittsburgh buy stationary carousels in 1912, when they were obsolete, having been replaced by the "new style," with jumpers? Information from Tobin Fraley shows that Daniel Muller also bid on installing these three carousels.

The carousels cost \$4,940 each, which was below the asking prices for similar PTCs of the same time period. For example, PTC #12, built in 1906, a stationary menagerie carousel with 46 animals, listed at \$9,000. PTC #14, built in 1907, a 50-animal menagerie carousel with jumpers, listed at \$8,000. PTC #27, built in 1913, a portable carousel with 44 horses, all but two being jumpers, listed at \$7,800.

Perhaps because the city of Pittsburgh was buying three carousels, PTC put together the stationary machines using the leftover Morris animals, figuring the exotic animals would compensate for the lack of jumpers.

PTC #23 is not what it was originally.

While the horse in front of the tiger is like PTCs of the period, it has an oddly shaped head, pinched nostrils, and a closed mouth. Some of the other horses are PTC-like, and others aren't. The menagerie animals include deer, giraffes, and goats, and the contract with PTC lists ostriches—which PTC did not make. An animal to the far left is much taller than the others and appears to have a long neck. Perhaps it's an ostrich. The frame is like those of PTC's earliest carousels.

PTC #23 is plain and open in the center, as stipulated in the contract, to enable the operator to see the entire carousel at all times.

Photograph courtesy of the University of Pittsburgh Library, Richard Bowker Collection.

