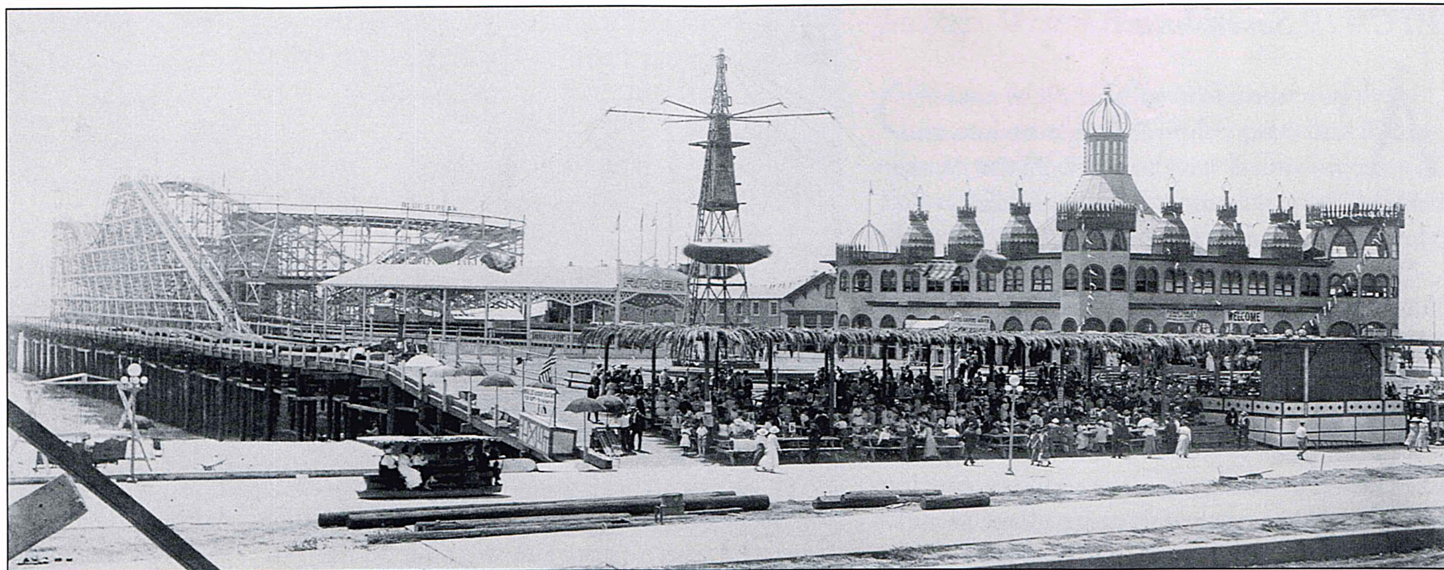


The Carousels Of Santa Monica Bay

By Barbara Williams, NCA Archivist



Above: The Loeff carousel (inside the Hippodrome), the Aerial Swing (center), and the Blue Streak Coaster were the main attractions on the Santa Monica Pier in 1916. Band concerts were held in the picnic area during the summers, and the little trolleys (foreground) shuttled beachgoers from Venice, at the southern end of the bay, to Santa Monica at the north end, stopping midway at Ocean Park.

Credit: Catherine Chauncy, courtesy of Barbara Fahs Charles.

It is fitting to pay homage to the piers and the carousels of the Santa Monica Bay at this time in history, as PTC #62—Santa Monica Bay's only remaining operating carousel—celebrates its 75th birthday this year.

Last year was historic too: 1996 marked the 80th anniversary of the opening of the Loeff Amusement Pier in Santa Monica. 1996 also marked the grand opening of the pier's new, permanent Pacific Park amusement zone. Pacific Park is an exciting return to what the Santa Monica Bay was once well known for—the most famous (and a little infamous) and grandest amusement piers ever built.

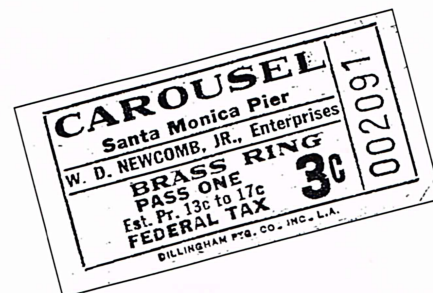
For this special issue of *Roundup*, local historian Jeffrey Stanton and I excerpted a brief history of each of the piers and their carousels from his pictorial history books, *Santa Monica Pier—A History from 1875 to 1990*, and *Venice California —'Coney Island of the Pacific.'* Because of the extensive amount of detailed information in his books, we had to greatly summarize the material and leave some chronological gaps.

Stanton's books also contain perhaps the most comprehensive collection of known historic photographs of the piers and their carousels. A few are reproduced in this issue. Fred Dahlinger, noted band organ expert and NCA member, provided the comprehensive information about the carousels' band organs.

Santa Monica's piers have gone through changes too numerous to mention, from expansion, destruction, rebuilding, ownership changes, name changes, and just the passing of time. We know nothing about some of Santa Monica Bay's carousels, we know a little about some, and a few are well documented.

The carousels we know about did not fare well. Fire consumed the two Dentzel carousels, PTC #20, the original Ocean Park Loeff carousel, and the Venice Racing Derby. Dave Bradley's Parker carousel* and Santa Monica's Loeff carousel were broken up years later. For now, we do not have a photograph of the Ocean Park Dentzel carousel, or even a description of it.

The bay's amusement piers struggled against countless adversities and eventually phased out, with the exception of the Santa Monica Pier, which is the lone survivor. And on this historic pier, PTC #62 still whirls in Loeff's Hippodrome.



*Bradley will be featured in the next *Roundup*.

The Venice Pier

Excerpts from Venice, California—‘Coney Island of the Pacific,’ by Jeffrey Stanton



Abbot Kinney's quest to build his Venice of America beach resort in 1904, on nearly worthless marshy land, was based in part on the success of his existing, adjacent Ocean Park resort.

A world-traveled connoisseur of the arts and scenic beauty, Kinney recognized the similarity between his marshy land and that of Venice, Italy. Also a broadly educated romanticist, he envisioned a beach community that would foster a cultural renaissance, an American renaissance that would begin on the shores of the Pacific.

Kinney announced his plan to invest \$500,000 to create a Venice-like city featuring hotels, cafes, theaters, and Coney Island-like amusement rides, surrounded by a large canal suitable for boating. (It is obvious that the Venice plan owed much to the Chicago World's Colombian Exposition, which was built on reclaimed lowlands along the Lake Michigan shoreline in 1893. The "city" featured a central basin, a meandering lagoon, and gondoliers who plied a canal network. A replica of a ship was "moored" alongside a pier, and a railroad shuttled fairgoers around the site.)

Final plans for Kinney's Venice showed two miles of grand and lateral canals, a clubhouse,

bowling alleys, an aquarium, a dance pavilion, a casino, and a theater. The design was innovative—it had separate areas for residential, business, and amusement districts, and all its utilities were placed underground in tunnels and connected to a central heating and electric plant.

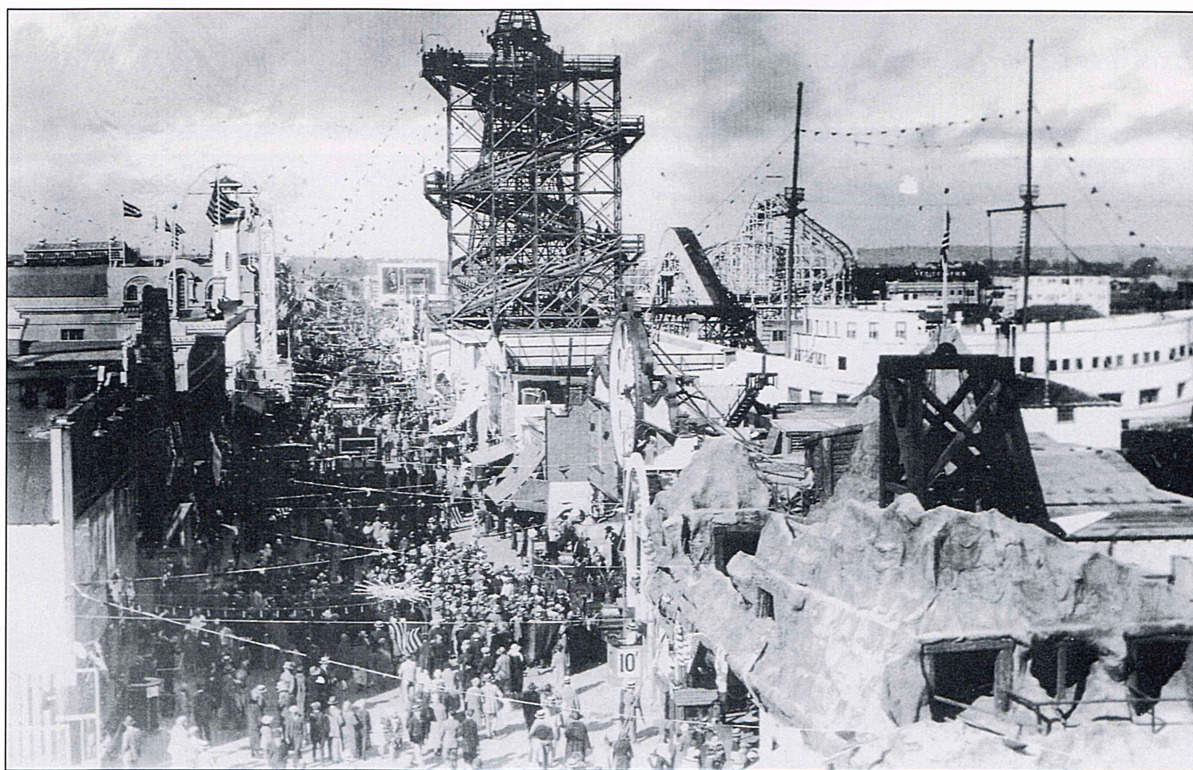
In June 1904, a building contract was awarded for a 900-foot-long, 30-foot-wide pier, with work scheduled to begin in 60 days. Building materials for Kinney's pier arrived, and the pilings, approximately 600, were floated in with the tide while men and teams dragged them up on the beach, safely behind the high-tide line.

A series of disastrous winter storms struck the Santa Monica Bay shoreline, beginning on February 4, 1905. In the first, Kinney's new pier lost only a dozen pilings and portions of the deck. But the second fierce storm, on March 12, hit hard. His pier was practically destroyed; its scattered remaining pilings were twisted and broken.

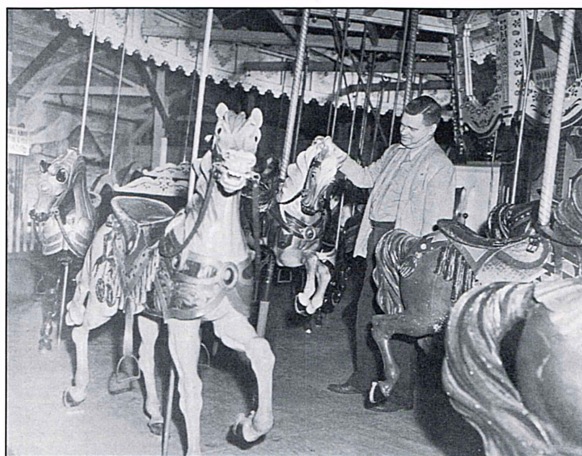
Although the damage was assessed at \$50,000, Kinney was determined to rebuild his pier quickly. He put the highest priority on getting it ready in time for his July 4 opening. The pier was completed in June 1905, and featured a 3,000-seat auditorium, a restaurant in the shape of a ship,

Above: The (Dave Bradley) Parker carousel sat outside for part of its stay on the Venice Pier, from 1928 to 1939. It also operated inside a building. In the 1933 Little Rascals film Fish Hooky, there is a wonderful chase scene where the children sneak into the building to hide and climb on the carousel. Photo courtesy of Bradley & Kaye Amusement Co.

Right: Venice Pier in the 1920s. Prominent attractions were the Bamboo Slide and Ship's Cafe. Today, as in the past, Venice is a colorful, somewhat controversial and unconventional place. Credit: Ken Strickfaden Collection, courtesy of Barbara Williams.



Below: Ted Newcomb, brother of Walter and Robert, admires PTC #62 in a much smaller building than Looff's Hippodrome at Santa Monica. This newly found photo taken on the Venice Pier, along with another recent find—a photo of the carousel in a local newspaper in 1942—confirms that the carousel came to California before 1946, as previously thought. Cumberland Park in Nashville, site of the Tennessee State Fair, closed for WWII (1941-1945). PTC #62 may have been sold in 1941, as the war created uncertain futures for carousels. Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Stanton.



and a pavilion with a bandstand. He added a dance hall the following year.

The decision to turn the Abbot Kinney Pier into a full-scale amusement zone was made in 1909. The first new major amusement attraction constructed was an aquarium, and additional attractions were moved to the pier from the old Midway Plaisance along the inland lagoon. In 1910, the L. A. Thompson Company built a one-and-a-half-mile scenic railroad on the north side of the pier.

A Ferris wheel arrived from Seattle's Yukon-Pacific Exposition in January 1911. A total of 250,000 board feet of lumber were ordered to build the new Rapids ride. On the boardwalk, attractions included Fred Church's and Frank

Pryor's Giant Safety Racer (coaster), the Captive Balloon ride, the Merryland Penny Arcade, and the Neptune Theatre.

Kinney added several small concessions to the pier's south side, including (in 1915) a Dentzel carousel relocated from the Ocean Park Pier, the world's first Noah's Ark Fun House, and the Ocean Inn Restaurant.

New pier amusement attractions were added on a regular basis during the next few years, including a skating rink, two aerial rides, a Tunnel of Love Rapids ride, a small fun house, a Captive Aeroplane, and a Virginia Reel.

On a cool night, December 20, 1920, disaster struck, as people huddled around a gas heater in one of the upstairs lodges of the dance pavilion. Suddenly the heater burst open and caught fire. By 10 p.m., the fire was out of control. The next morning, the pier was a smoldering ruin. The mammoth dance pavilion, Ship's cafe, auditorium, aquarium, and all of the amusement rides, except for the new roller coaster, were gone.

Thornton Kinney, who had taken over his father's business, announced that the pier would be rebuilt and would be even better than before.

Many of the pier's ride operators did rebuild their rides, including the Ship Cafe, Noah's Ark, the Over The Falls ride, and Kinney's Dance Hall. A second roller coaster was added, and then



Left: The c. 1915 Dentzel carousel owned by J. A. Ellis (inset) that operated on the Venice Pier, as seen in a publicity brochure. Billboard magazine, June 28, 1918, reads, "J. A. Ellis is in a class by himself when it comes to merry-go-rounds, operating the only stationary Dentzel carousel on this coast. He has a 52-foot machine in a pavilion 84 feet square." The carousel burned in the 1920 fire. Photo courtesy of Barbara Fahs Charles.

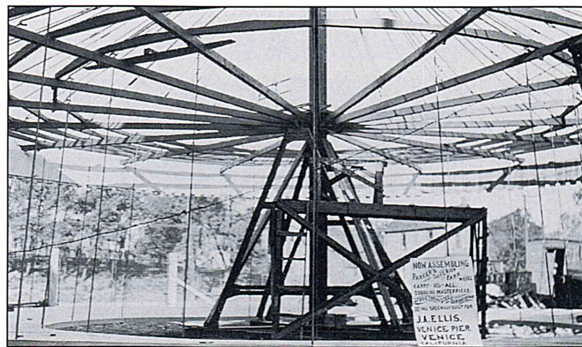
a third, in 1923. During the 1921 reconstruction, some lease space near the end of the pier was still available.

One imaginative entrepreneur planned to build a 92-foot tower on 1000 square feet of ground space. It was to contain a merry-go-round on the bottom, which would rise as it turned until it was 60 feet high. Riders would find themselves on an entirely new story. Stairs would lead to a dance pavilion with an observation balcony and roof garden 72 feet above ground.

From there, people would then have a choice of descending down a bamboo slide or riding the elevator. Although a ride like this existed in the midwest, this was one of many rides that never got built in Venice.

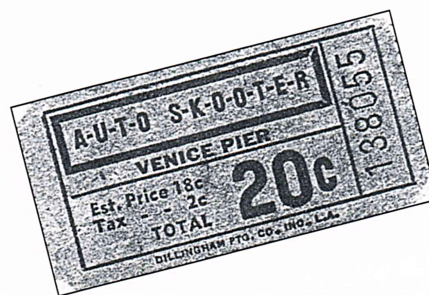
The Kinney Company's 25-year tidelands lease on Venice Pier expired on January 13, 1946, and the city of Los Angeles declined to renew the lease. (Officials had been adamantly against Venice's honky-tonk atmosphere since Los Angeles annexed Venice in 1925.)

It was ironic that the Kinney Company's gift of the beach to the city in 1921, where the pier stood, would come back to haunt it. It was a sad



Left: Ellis' Superior Park Model Four Abreast Carry-Us-All #2, in perhaps a preliminary, promotional setup. The sign reads, "Now Assembling Parker's Superior Park Model Carry-Us-All, 5000.00 Masterpiece, Structural Steel Throughout, Being Specially Built for J. A. Ellis, Venice Pier, Venice, California." Photo courtesy of Barbara Fahs Charles, C. W. Parker Collection.

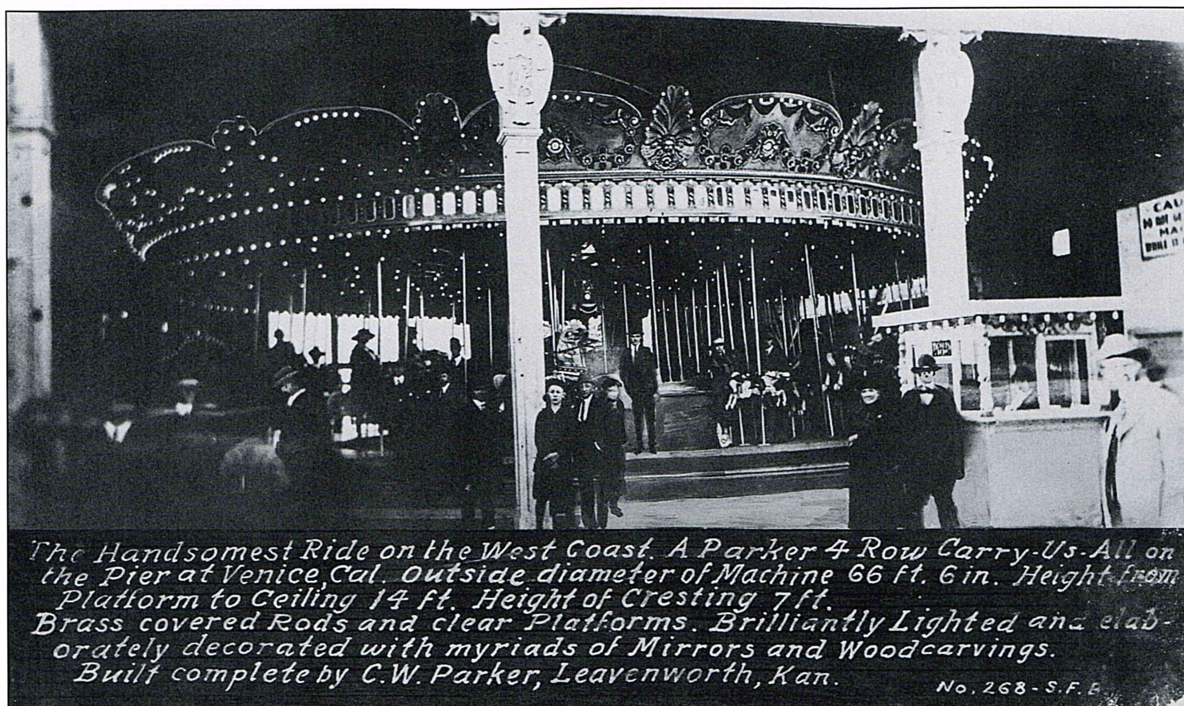
day, and the end of an era, when Venice Pier closed at midnight on Saturday, April 20, 1946.



Santa Monica Bay's Parkers

Information and photographs courtesy of Barbara Fahs Charles

Right: J. A. Ellis' Parker carousel installed on Venice Pier; it is now the newly restored, highly prized Jantzen Beach carousel in Portland, Ore. Photo courtesy of Barbara Fahs Charles, C. W. Parker Collection.



Information about and photographs of what has become known as "Bradley's Parker," Dave Bradley's Parker carousel, has always been plentiful enough for us to think we knew as much as there was to know about it.

Research during the Santa Monica Bay Carousels project, however, has shown us that there is more to know about this Parker, and that other Parker carousels once operated in the Bay area. Barbara Fahs Charles furnished this information by generously sharing items from her Parker Collection; they significantly broaden the scope of known history of carousels in the area.

According to Parker factory records, a standard three-abreast carousel, #142, was leased to C. F. Townsend in Ocean Park, Calif., in 1913. The carousel was most likely brought to Ocean Park to replace the Loeff and PTC carousels that burned in the 1912 fire. For now, this is all we know about this carousel.

The Parker *Factory Purchaser* provided the company's specifications for Bradley's Parker. They also read, "A new Three Horse Abreast Carry-Us-All, #316, was purchased by G. Merritt Jones for placement in the Fun Palace, Ocean Park, Calif. It was shipped June 27, 1925."

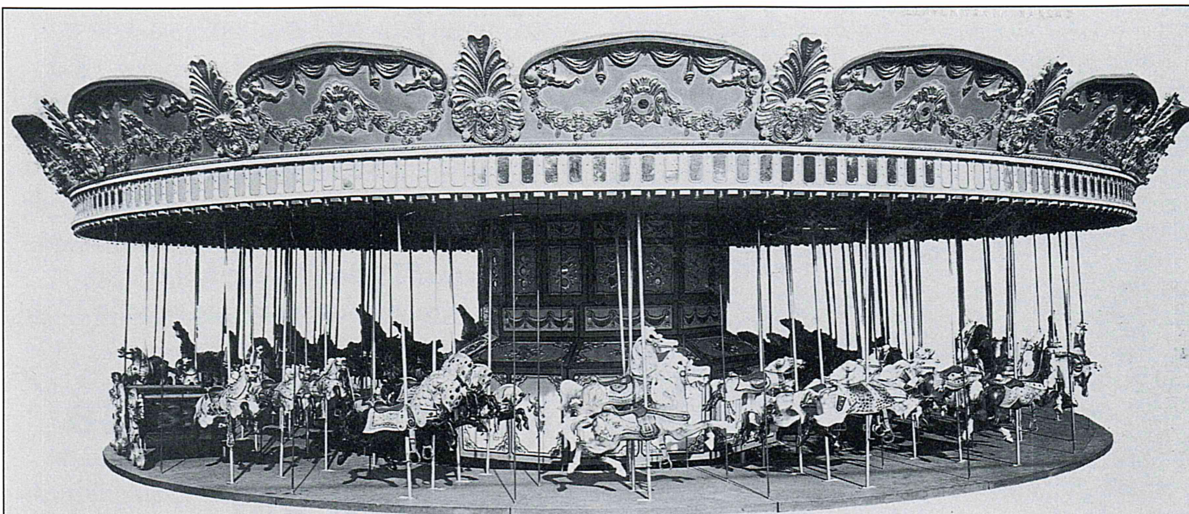
Further records describe a "Specially designed, platform diameter 40 feet, crown cresting 44 feet, 36 Superior Model Racing type horses, outside of the outside horse and inside of the inside horse jeweled. Four galloping ponies, one handsomely upholstered settee, placed behind the ponies. One elaborately carved chariot.

"All horses equipped with slide motion, attached to lower end of horse pipe, which carries the lower end of the horse pipe forward at the same time the upper end of pipe carries forward. Brass covering for horse and drop rods. 28 sections of cresting, of crown design, 14 of which are decorated with carvings. Round galvanized painted enclosure.

"Machine equipped with electric motor drive, but we did not furnish motor. Wurlitzer style 180 organ furnished. Price \$11,500."

Harry Hargrave, American Amusement Enterprises, purchased the carousel in 1929, and moved it to the Venice Pier. In 1936, he moved it into Loeff's Hippodrome on the Santa Monica Pier. Dave Bradley bought the carousel from Hargrave in 1947 and moved it to his Beverly Park in Los Angeles.

Parker factory records also document that a



PARKER'S SUPERIOR MODEL CARRY-US-ALL.

Now being built for
J.A. Ellis Amusement Co. by C.W. Parker
Leavenworth, Kans. for installation
on Venice Pier - Venice, Calif.

2881

Left: A photograph of Superior Park Model #1 was used in this promotional ad, while #2 was still under construction. The same situation occurred when the Dentzel carousel being built for Ocean Park Pier was advertised. Because it was not yet completed, promoters used a photo of the Atlantic City, N.J., Dentzel carousel instead.

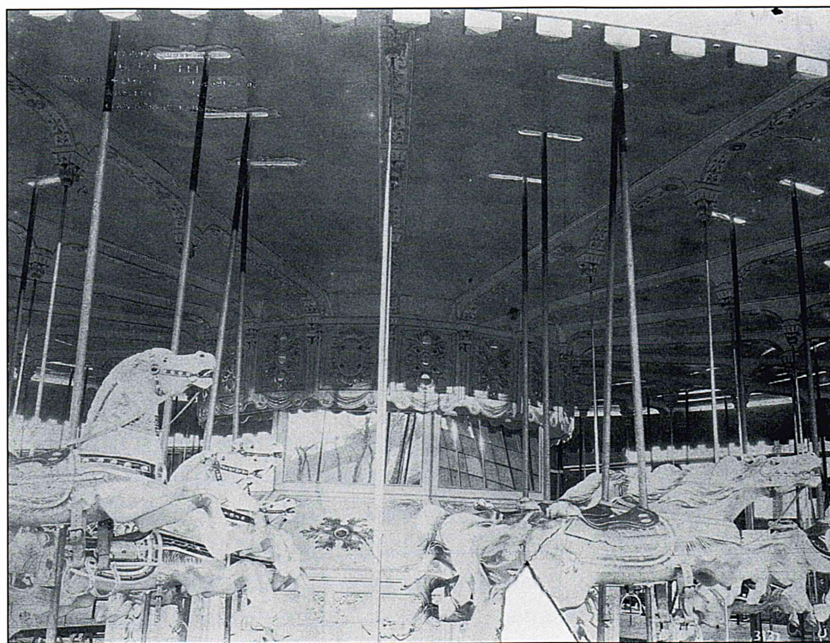
Below: Detail of the Superior Park Model #2.

Superior Park Model Four Abreast #1 was manufactured in 1921 and went to Dallas. Superior Park Model Four Abreast #2 also was made in 1921 and went to Venice, Calif.

The *Factory Purchaser* recorded the following: "J. A. Ellis Amusement Co., Venice, Calif. Superior Park Model Four Abreast #2. Shipped December 1921. Parker built organ. Taken over in 1924. Stored Long Beach, Calif., 1927. Portland, Ore., Park Janzen, 1928. Sold to Janzen in 1935."

The date of manufacture for the Parker at Jantzen Beach in Portland is assumed to be 1917. This date may have seemed to match, as another four abreast, although not a Superior Model, was manufactured in 1917. This Parker was purchased by Frank E. Layman in St. Louis, Mo. "Taken over in 1924" indicates that payments were not made, and the company reclaimed the carousel.

Included in Parker factory records is a mention of a four-abreast carousel in storage under the



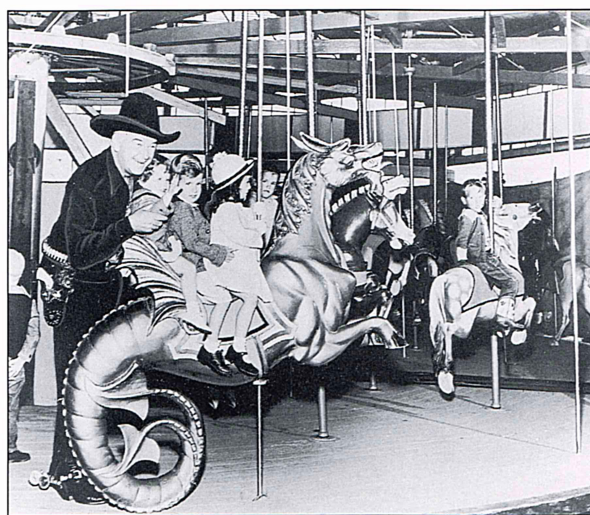
name of Fred C. Payne at 2111 East State Street, Long Beach, Calif. The entry is not dated and does not specify which particular carousel it is.

*Photos courtesy of
Barbara Fahs Charles,
C. W. Parker*

Hoppyland

By Barbara Williams, from Venice, California—Coney Island of the Pacific, by Jeffrey Stanton

Right: Hopalong Cassidy (William Boyd) poses with some young fans at Hoppyland. The rides were brought to Hoppyland from Celeron Park in Jamestown, N.Y., by Harry Illions, son of M. C. Illions. Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Stanton.



After the closing of the Venice Pier, the Kinney Company confidently made plans for a new amusement park to be located elsewhere. But it was financially strapped, and local developer Charles Lorman instead announced plans in May 1947 for a \$2.5 million park on a 70-acre tract.

His Ocean View Amusement Park would include the 17-acre Lake Los Angeles, which he would develop as an aquatic sports center. The park would have an elaborate midway, roller coaster, merry-go-round, children's rides, bowling alleys, and a skating rink.

Another developer, Earle Charleton, replaced Lorman and scaled down the project significantly. In 1950, Charleton's Venice Amusement Park, Inc. developed Venice Lake Park, a kiddie park, on the site.

The kiddie park featured the Little Dipper (a 35-foot-high PTC junior coaster), a two-train, mile-long miniature railroad that circled the park, several pony tracks, a lagoon boat ride, Zeppelin and Whirlwind aerial rides, a Tilt-a-Whirl, and Octopus and Scooter rides.

In 1951, William Boyd, better known as Hopalong Cassidy, joined Charleton as a business partner. Their new and improved 80-acre park opened as Hoppyland on May 26 that year. It featured picnic grounds, baseball diamonds, horse-shoe pitching lanes, a lake for swimming and boating, and nearly 20 thrill rides. A kiddieland area featured a miniature merry-go-round, Ferris

wheel, sleigh ride, airplane, pony cart, and auto rides.

Hoppyland also devoted a large share of space to live pony rides. Thirty horses and ponies walked three tracks: a ring for small children, controlled by sweeps; a track where bigger kids rode free-running mounts; and a quarter-mile pony cart ride around Goat Mountain. The park, unfortunately, wasn't popular and closed in 1954.

The Incredible Creature from Culver City

By Barbara Williams

In 1980, as chairperson for the NCA conference in Santa Monica, I put together a souvenir booklet, *The Flying Horses—A Pictorial History of Southern California Carousels*. It included an article about the possibility an early PTC carousel may have been located in the Culver City area.

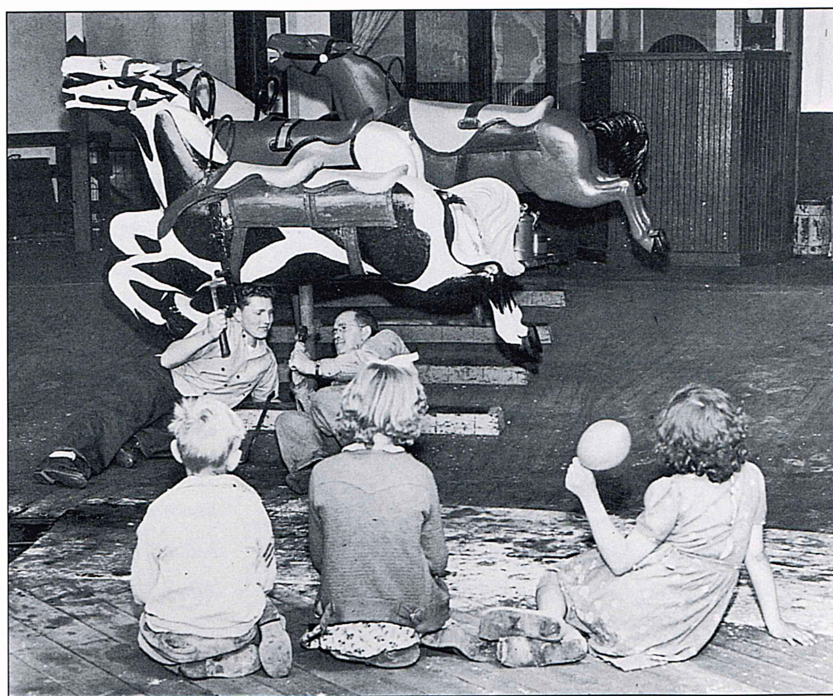
The photograph used with the article showed a boy climbing on a large E. Joy Morris sea monster on a PTC carousel. Rol and Jo Summit made a copy print of the original from a stereopticon belonging to Fred Fried. They graciously shared it with me; all consented to its use in the booklet.

In 1987, Jeff Stanton located this photograph of Hopalong Cassidy, confirming that the sea monster was on the carousel at Hoppyland in Venice, which is adjacent to Culver City. While it was wonderful to confirm that the sea monster in the stereopticon is indeed the Hoppyland sea monster, the stereopticon raised new questions. Its copyright date is 1923. The images are actual film footage from Culver Pictures, an early-day film studio in Culver City. The boy represents Skippy, a popular comic strip character in the 1920s. So where was the carousel in 1923? And where was it from then until 1947, when Hoppyland opened?

The frame of the carousel is not typical of PTC, yet the horses, 1911ish in style, are. There isn't a match for this carousel in PTC's census of its numbered carousels.

The Great American Racing Derbys

Excerpts from Venice, California—Coney Island of the Pacific, by Jeffrey Stanton



Above: At the closing of Venice Pier in 1946, the rides were dismantled and sold. Here workmen are removing the Racing Derby's horses, in a publicity photo that probably was intended to shame the powers-that-be who closed down the pier. Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Stanton.

In 1913, the Steeplechase Amusement Company leased space at the end of Venice Pier for a giant four-track "Steeple-Chase" and "Derby Racing Coaster."

The company's promoters set up a demo booth on the pier to sell stock in the company at 85 cents per share. The huge ride, if built, would feature a simulated horse race in which customers would ride mechanically driven horses along a gentle roller coaster-style track. It was never built, apparently because the promoters did not sell enough shares.

In 1916, Tom Prior and Fred Church leased space on Ocean Front Walk between the two Fraser Pier (Ocean Park) entrances. Their plan was to introduce a new concept in amusement park rides, a racing carousel. They called their ride "The Great American Racing Derby."

The inside portion of the ride was a standard carousel with 62 jumping horses and menagerie animals. However, the outside rim of the 72-foot-diameter machine featured 40 racing horses, grouped four abreast in 10 distinct races. The horses, which were set in six-foot-long tracks, moved back and forth as the ride rotated, sometimes moving ahead to gain the lead, other times suddenly falling back.

The ride would slowly gain speed until it reached 25 to 30 mph. Then the bell signifying victory for each of the lead horses would ring, and the ride would slow to a stop. The winners of each race would receive free repeat rides.

It was impossible to determine ahead of time which horse would win, as the cables that moved the horses back and forth criss-crossed beneath the platform. The cable pulling the outside horse in one row might be pulling the second-row horse out in the row ahead. A "Danger" sign restricted the ride to older children, but it was very popular among young jockeys, even at an expensive 15 cents for one mile race.

Prior and Church scheduled the ride to open July 4, 1916, but delays in manufacturing the custom horses at the Parker factory, in Leavenworth, Kans., prevented its completion until February 4, 1917. Their instinct that the public was in love with racing proved correct, and they began manufacturing Racing Derbys for other amusement parks throughout the country.

A few months after the Derby opened, Prior and Church became involved in a dispute with the city of Santa Monica and threatened to demolish the Derby's building. Instead, they vacated the building and sold the ride.

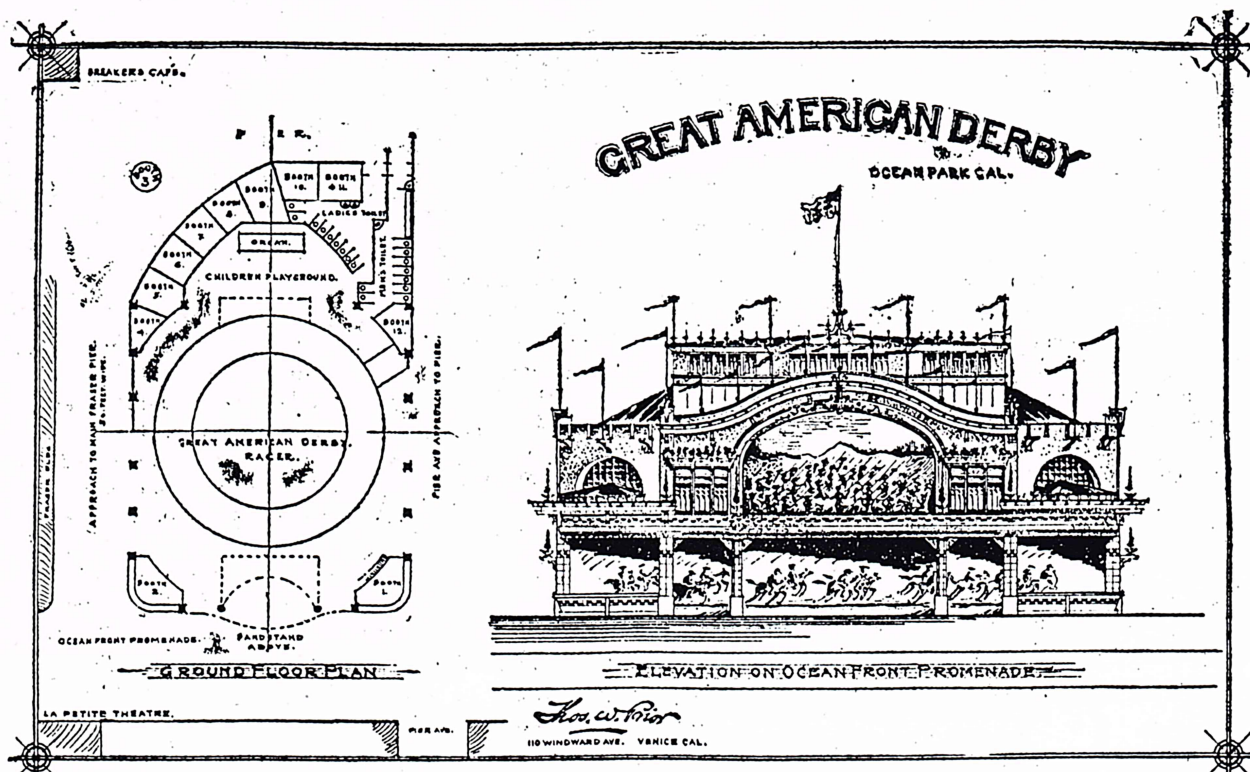
The same year, Prior and Church installed a Great American Racing Derby on the Venice Pier. It was a larger machine, 315 feet in circumference with 64 horses in rows of four set on the racing rim. The design was much more efficient, with no inner carousel. The outdoor ride, set up under a tent, was an immediate success.

But Prior remained at odds with politicians who imposed restrictions—especially against games of chance, thought to be bad for business. This was hard to fathom, as the ride had 211,993 customers from June 1 to Sept. 16. The Racing Derby burned in the December 20, 1920, fire.

In 1921, Venice Pier reopened with an even larger Prior and Church Great American Derby than the previous ride. Its 56 horses each had double saddles to accommodate couples or a parent and child. This Derby ride remained on the pier until it closed in 1946.

RACING DERBY TO BE GEM OF BEACH

COMPLETE RESORT IN ITSELF, IS DESCRIPTION



Activity seems to be the watch word on the Ocean front at Ocean Park. The new racing Carroussel, the "Great American Derby," which Col. Prior, of the "Race Thru the Clouds," and his associates are placing on the sand lot fronting the broad walk at the foot of Pier avenue, has all its concrete foundations in, and work upon the building proper will begin within the next few days.

In the meantime, machinery which must of necessity be brought from the east, has been ordered, and should there be no delay in delivery, the new racing ride should be open to the public for the 4th of July.

First in World.

The above cut represents the beautiful front of the new building, and its ground plan. The ground plan shows the excessive size of the new racing carroussel, which will be 74 feet in diameter—the largest one so far built, being not over 54 feet high. Therefore, the new ride will be unique in more than one way—being the largest in the world and being the first racing carroussel ever erected.

Upon the front of the beautiful building will be a band stand, from which all sorts of municipal events may be handled, and upon which the municipal band of Ocean Park and Santa Monica will probably discourse its sweet music; the band stand itself however, being large enough to contain any musical organization in the country, as it is over 30 feet in width, extending back in a semi-circle, with a beautiful band shell at its back.

Play Room.

The ground floor of the building, in addition to the space occupied by the racing carroussel, will contain a splendid play room for the children, and it is the intention to have this fitted up with easy chairs, where mothers may sit in the afternoon, while their children play upon the rugs, and listen to the music from the 89-piece organ which Co. Prior purchased while east some months ago. This musical instrument will be the finest and largest in California, and will discourse its music at intervals between the playing of the municipal band, so that the

up-to-date, popular musical numbers will be consistently played for the people of our bay district.

Facing the broad walk on each corner of the building will be two beautiful booths, containing everything that the children and others might wish in the way of confections, etc., and in the incline leading to the Ocean Park pier, will be a series of ornate and beautiful booths, offering all sorts of things to the public. In fact, the "Great American Derby" location will present an amusement village within itself.

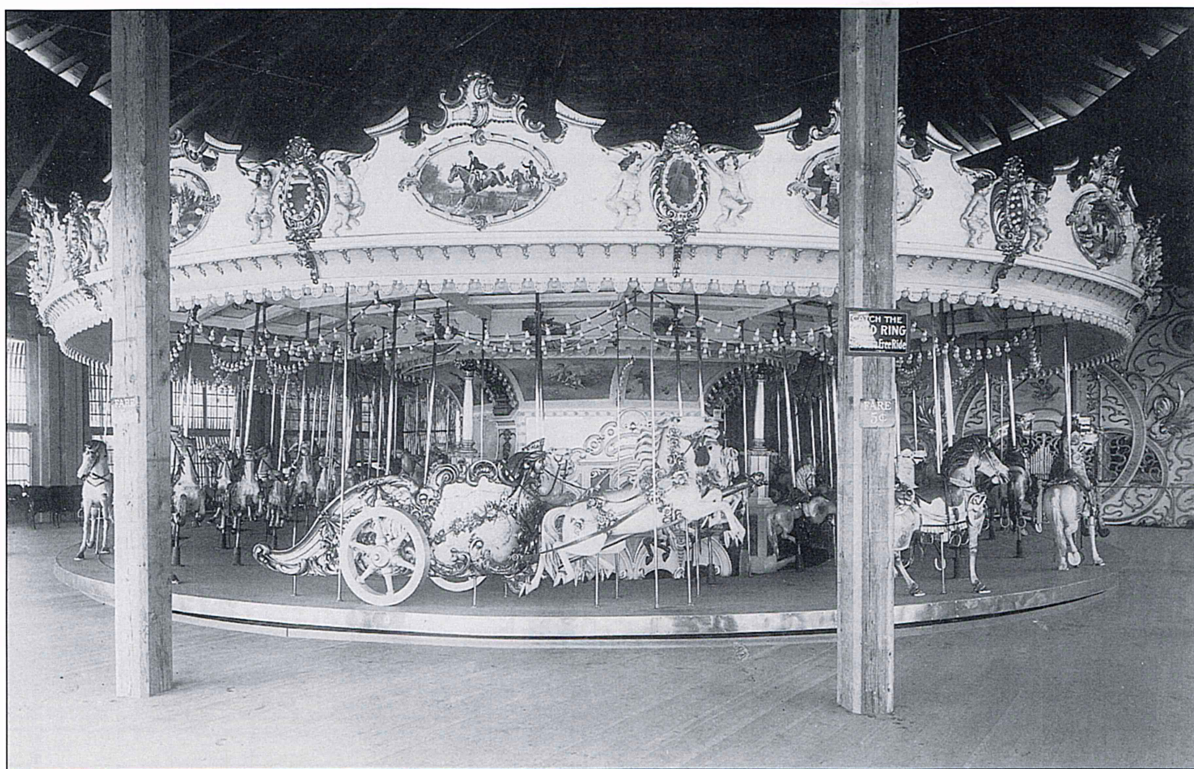
Let Public In.

When asked if the public were going to participate in the proposition, Col. Prior said that he and his associates would probably permit the placing of about \$15,000 worth of stock in the enterprise to the people of the bay district, who might wish it, it being his idea that the local people interested even in a small way in the amusements worth while, constitute themselves the best boosters of the beach.

The Ocean Park Pier

By Barbara Williams, from Venice, California—Coney Island of the Pacific, by Jeffrey Stanton

Right: PTC #20 had a very short life. Built in 1911, it burned on Sept. 3, 1912, on the Ocean Park Pier. The 52-foot-diameter, five-row carousel had 82 horses: four inner rows of jumpers and an outside row of stationary horses, including two stationary (jumping) horses harnessed to the carved "Peace" and "War" Roman chariots. The chariots were upholstered, with spring seats and tufted plush. Each seated nine. Total seating capacity was 100 passengers. The carousel was built for Asbury Park, N.J., but deemed too flashy by church-influenced park officials. PTC offered the carousel to the park at cost—\$30,000—but it still was unacceptable. PTC finally sold the ride for only \$16,500 to Alexander Fraser, developer of Fraser's Million Dollar Pier in Ocean Park. Photo courtesy of Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters, Inc.



On Venice Park's opening day, July 4, 1905, Ocean Park had a celebration of its own; it dedicated its new \$150,000 bathing pavilion, a huge salt-water plunge. Developers weren't going to let Ocean Park become a second-class resort.

Architects prepared a plan to add a semi-circular Horseshoe Pier at Ocean Park that would incorporate two smaller recently built piers. A few amusements already operated on the nearby beach—a small tented carousel and a ferris wheel. The public, however, was much more interested in Venice Park.

Ocean Park's investors then entered the competition for the tourists' amusement dollars in a more substantial manner. They talked of building a Coney Island-style amusement area, which they could build either on the nearly completed \$40,000 Horseshoe Pier or on the south side of the pier in Santa Monica. But the only entertainment feature to open in the spring of 1904 was a roller skating rink that occupied a portion of the newly completed auditorium.

In 1910, Alexander Fraser, one of Kinney's old partners, formed the Fraser Million-Dollar Pier Co. (named after the famed Million Dollar Pier in Atlantic City, N.J.). His aim was to build the world's largest amusement pier in Ocean Park.

It would be 300 feet wide and extend 1,000 feet into the ocean. It would have a dancing pavilion, a 110-foot-diameter revolving cafe, a Thompson Scenic Railroad, a Palace of Mysteries, a carousel, a Mountain Roll Railroad, a Trip to Mars ride, vaudeville and scenic theaters, and a Baby Incubator exhibit. The Loeff family was building an ornate carousel in the Hippodrome building, on the site of the old Toboggan Railway between the Dragon Gorge and the casino. It was a 50-foot-diameter pit machine with horses four abreast.

Opening day was June 17, 1911. Tens of thousands of people attended a gala two-day event. Additional attractions debuted later that summer and into the fall season. A second hippodrome also opened, featuring an ornate PTC carousel.

Tragically, fire broke out in a restaurant's basement on Fraser's Million Dollar Pier at 5 p.m. on



September 3, 1912. A strong afternoon sea breeze fanned the flames. Sparks leapt 200 feet high and fell like a fiery bath over the flimsy painted canvas and light wooden grill work adorning the pier's attractions. Nearly 1,000 panic-stricken people were trapped on the pier as flames consumed it.

The fire spread to the adjacent Dragon Gorge Scenic railroad. As it crossed Ocean Front Walk (the boardwalk), tongues of flame reached through the windows and set fire to the interiors of apartment houses and various businesses. The fire totally destroyed the pier, all of the amuse-



ments, and five square blocks of hotels and businesses. The loss was set at \$2,500,000, little of it was covered by insurance.

On January 25, 1913, Fraser announced he would build a fireproof pier out of reinforced concrete. He rushed it to completion, opening on May 30, 1913. It lacked the thrill rides of the

Above left: The fine building constructed for PTC #20. PTC dodged (selectively underexposed) the photo so the carousel would show. Photo courtesy of Frederick Fried Archives.

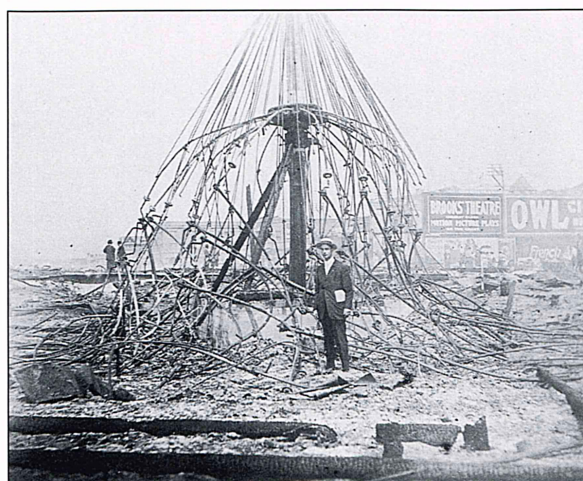


Above right: The Loeff carousel on the Ocean Park Pier in the early 1950s. Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Stanton.

Left: The photograph misidentified as the Ocean Park Dentzel carousel. Courtesy of Frederick Fried Archives.

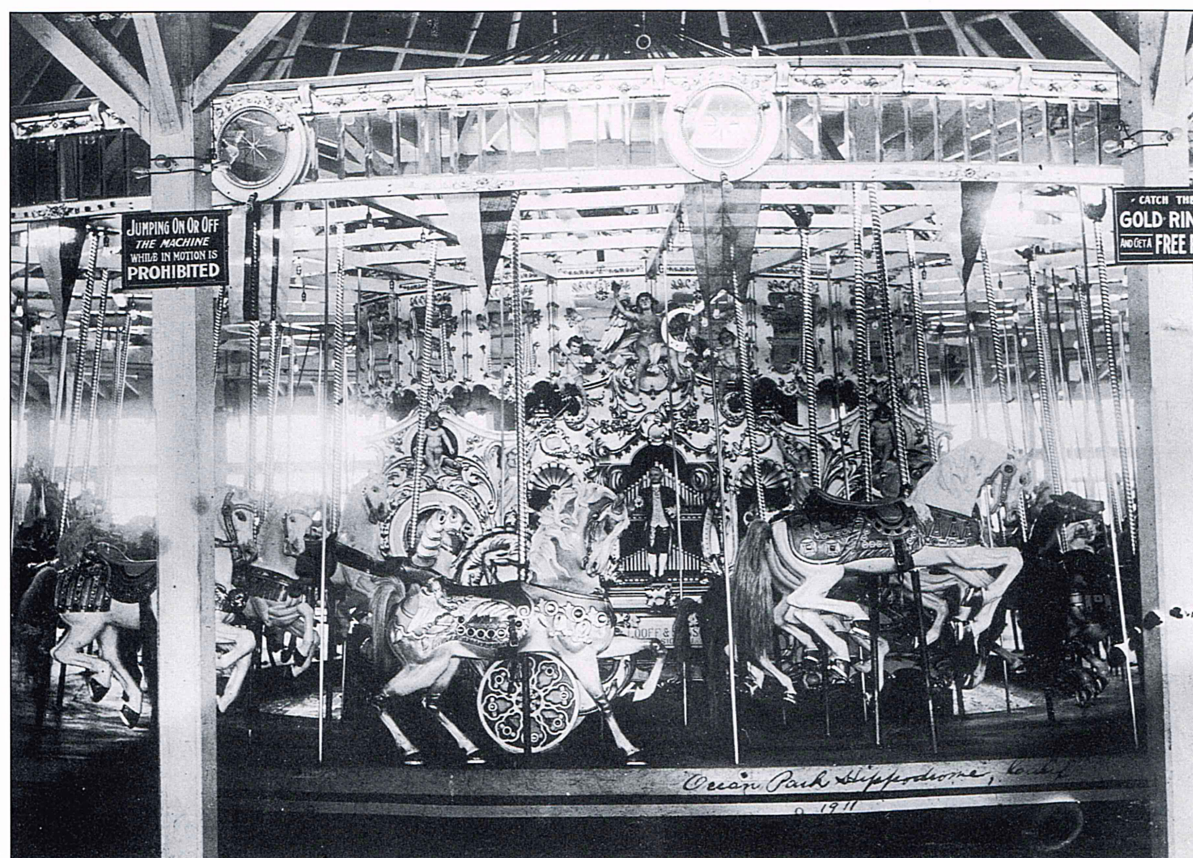


Above: Sept. 3, 1912, at the beginning of the Ocean Park Pier fire. Looff's Hippodrome is just to the right of the woman in white in the foreground. Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Stanton.



Right: A grim scene: the Ocean Park Looff carousel after the fire. Credit: Wilda Looff Taucher, courtesy of Barbara Fahs Charles.

Below: Looff's show-piece carousel and its magnificent band organ, brand new in 1911. Credit: Wilda Looff Taucher, courtesy of Barbara Fahs Charles.



first season, but it earned its share of tourist dollars.

By the spring of 1914, competition began anew between the Venice and Ocean Park piers. Promoters managed to raise enough capital to begin construction of the Ben Hur racer on the Ocean Park Pier. The three-in-one project contained a big racing coaster designed by William Labb, a 7,000-seat bandstand, and a 56-foot-diameter carousel within the structure.

Ocean Park amusement interests suffered a setback when a fire broke out in the Dance Pavilion at 1 a.m., December 25, 1914, and consumed half of the lofty Ben Hur racer. The fire was thought to be arson. A concessionaire saw two men in a boat rowing away from the pier shortly before the fire spread, but nothing was ever proven.

By 1920, Ocean Park Pier's owner, Ernest Pickering, was planning big things for the "Coney Island of the Pacific Coast." In an attempt at one-upsmanship over Venice Pier, he doubled the size of his pier to 400,000 feet. Construction began in March on the expansion and five new rides were added, including William Dentzel's beautiful 72-animal carousel.



Above: Miraculously, some of the Loeff carousel horses survived the Ocean Park Pier fire on September 3, 1912. They lie on the beach in this remarkable photograph used on souvenir postcards. The message on this card, dated Sept. 11, 1912, reads, "Dear Mother, Regards from what is left of this place. Eddie." The beach is littered with items from the fire, and children and a dog explore the scene. The top of the center pole and overhead support rods can be seen above the letter "c" in the inscription on the sand. The rides in the distance are on the Venice Pier.

Courtesy of Barbara Fahs Charles, C. W. Parker Collection.



Another disastrous fire early in 1924 consumed both the Pickering and Lick piers. The fire was believed to have started at 9:30 a.m. in the Ritz Cafe kitchen, but that didn't explain how the fire spread so rapidly. Some thought rubbish was set ablaze beneath the pier near the restaurant. All of the pier's rides and concessions were completely destroyed.

Plans to rebuild the pier at a cost of \$3,000,000 were announced, and work, at least on the Lick Pier side in Venice, began one week later. The Ocean Park part on the north side faced delays and didn't open until August 1925. The combined piers featured two roller coasters, two fun houses, two dance halls, two carousels, a bamboo slide, two theaters, and a dozen smaller rides and attractions. The pier was lengthened one last time in 1929 to hold a chutes ride, the only water slide, and a pool built over the sea on an amusement pier.

Ocean Park Pier entered a period of renovation just after World War II and kept the area's amusement tradition alive, however, the popularity of the old-fashioned amusement piers waned. Teenagers and young adults with families stayed indoors to watch television or drove their cars to outdoor movie theaters for entertainment.

In 1951, bandleader Lawrence Welk was hired to play at the pier's Aragon Ballroom. Local tele-

Left: Loeff's Hippodrome at Ocean Park and (at far right) the entrance to the Dragon Gorge Scenic Railway, which had individual concession stalls along the boardwalk frontage. Credit: Wilda Loeff Tauscher, courtesy of Barbara Fahs Charles.

The Philadelphia-made ride, along with its mechanical organ, cost \$22,500.

In 1922, Charles Lick leased the old Great Western Pier adjacent to the Pickering Pier's south side. He installed a roller coaster, Ferris wheel, and Dodgem to complement his Bon Ton Dance Hall.

Above: The building to the right of the kiddie swing housed the Dentzel carousel.

Below: Looff's Hippodrome at Ocean Park faced out onto the boardwalk. This postcard was tinted to look like the ocean was at the end, but the view is looking down the boardwalk toward Santa Monica.

Postcards courtesy of Barbara Williams.

Some of the Amusements on the Pier, Ocean Park, California.



800 - Ocean Front, North from Pier Avenue, Ocean Park, California.



vision station KTLA was persuaded to telecast the program; its first televised show was May 2, 1951. "Lawrence's Champagne Music," live from the Aragon Ballroom, became a popular national television show.



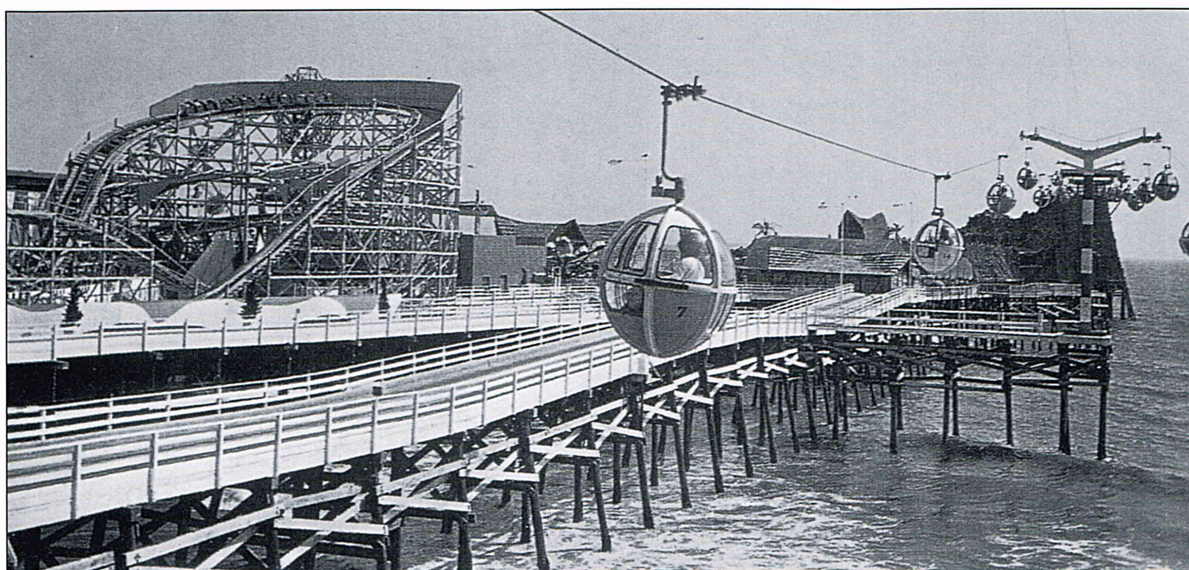
Pacific Ocean Park

By Barbara Williams, from Venice, California—Coney Island of the Pacific, by Jeffrey Stanton

Top: The Ocean Sky ride at Pacific Ocean Park. Postcard; courtesy of Barbara Williams.

Left: The entrance to the South Sea Island Banana Train ride at the end of the Pacific Ocean Park pier. Postcard, courtesy of Barbara Williams.

Right: The Loeff carousel at Pacific Ocean Park, c. 1960. Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Stanton.



In 1956, CBS and the Los Angeles Turf Club took a lease on the (old) Ocean Park Pier. They proposed to build a \$10,000,000 nautical theme park to compete with Disneyland. The best amusement park designers and Hollywood special effects experts designed innovative new attractions for the park.

Like Disney, they found corporate sponsors to share the expenses of some of the exhibits. To save money, they renovated old buildings and incorporated six old attractions into the layout—the merry-go-round, roller coaster, Toonerville Fun House, Glass House, twin diving bells, and Strat-O-Liner ride. They called the new park Pacific Ocean Park.

The 28-acre park was decorated throughout in a pastel sea-green-and-white modern look. An all-day admission cost 90 cents, less for children.

The opening day, July 28, 1958, drew 20,000 curious people and dozens of Hollywood celebrities. During its first six days, the site outperformed Disneyland in attracting customers.

Plenty of old-fashioned thrill rides lined the Ports O' POP midway. Foremost was the Sea

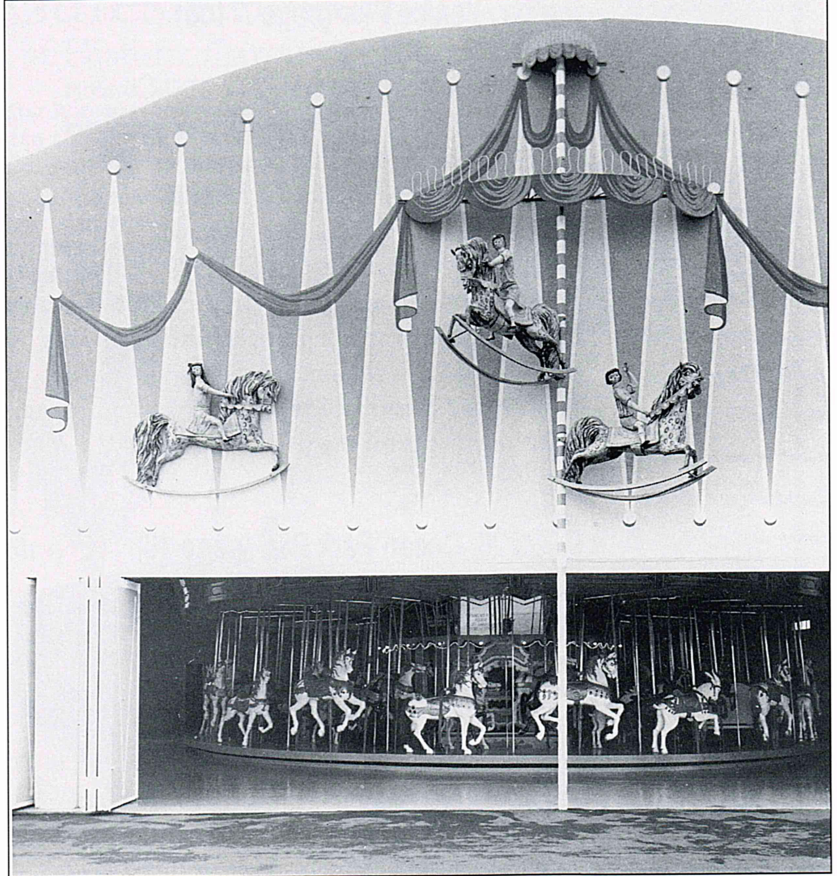


Serpent roller coaster. It came from the old pier, but now was painted in an array of gaudy colors. The Whirl Pool was a huge centrifuge; it pinned customers to the wall, then the floor dropped out. The old Strat-O-Liner ride became Mr. Dolphin, and the Flying Fish became merely a "wild mouse."

By the time POP closed for more construction and remodeling in January 1959, it had attracted 1,190,000 visitors. But the second season's attendance wasn't nearly as good. The park closed in October for the winter, then announced a month later that it had been sold for \$10,000,000.

The park adopted a new admission policy to attract more customers: \$1.50 for adults and \$1.00 for children. Unfortunately, it still continued to lose customers. But POP was in a run-down, seedy part of town. Nearby streets were littered with bums and winos who accosted park visitors for money.

The park, too, had trouble maintaining its operation and had to skimp on maintenance. Rides were often broken, and the rough ocean elements added to its deterioration. In 1963,



POP and some adjacent property was sold for \$7.5 million and later that year resold for \$2.5 million.

In 1965, Santa Monica began its Ocean Park urban renewal project, involving wholesale demolition of nearby buildings and the closing of streets leading to the park. Customers called from nearby phone booths to complain that they could see the park, but couldn't figure out how to get there. Finally, at the end of the 1967 season, POP's creditors took action and forced the park into involuntary bankruptcy.

The park closed on October 6, 1967. Proceeds from an auction on June 28, 1968, resulting in the sale of the 36 rides and 16 games, were used to pay off creditors. The pier's dilapidated buildings and structure remained until several major arson fires gutted them. Final demolition took place the winter of 1973-74.

With POP gone, the long era of the Venice and Ocean Park amusement parks ended.

Left: The South Sea Island ride area two years after Pacific Ocean Park Pier closed. Photo courtesy of D. R. Stappenbeck.

Right: The exterior of the Looff carousel building, decorated with papier-mâché figures made by movie studio artists. Much of the park's decor was too fragile for the harsh seaside weather; it deteriorated rapidly. Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Stanton.

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The Santa Monica Pier

From The Santa Monica Pier—A History from 1875-1990, by Jeff Stanton



Above: An early track carousel on the beach, far right, is dwarfed by the 125-room Arcadia Hotel, built in 1887 at the North Beach resort, Santa Monica. Credit: Historical Collections, Security Pacific National Bank, courtesy of Barbara Fahs Charles.



Left: Most likely, the steam-powered track machine was Santa Monica Bay's first carousel, at North Beach in 1898. Photo courtesy of The Santa Monica Library.

Right: The carousel operated both on the beach and at a nearby park. Photo courtesy of The Santa Monica Library.

The growth of Santa Monica and its need to dispose of sewage became the primary impetus in building the Municipal Pier. Construction started in May 1908.

The building contract called for a 1,000-foot-long, 35-foot-wide reinforced concrete pier, 21 feet above the mean high tide. Specifications called for a wood deck covered by asphalt. Work was expected to take six to seven months, but went much longer, and the pier didn't open until September 1909.

In 1916, Charles I. D. Loeff purchased beach frontage next to the Municipal Pier for \$50,000. Loeff had a remarkable reputation for building quality amusement projects. He said he chose Santa Monica to build his amusement pier because "the bathing beach at Santa Monica is well known as one of the finest on the Pacific Coast, it attracts the highest class of people, and transportation facilities afforded are unequaled."

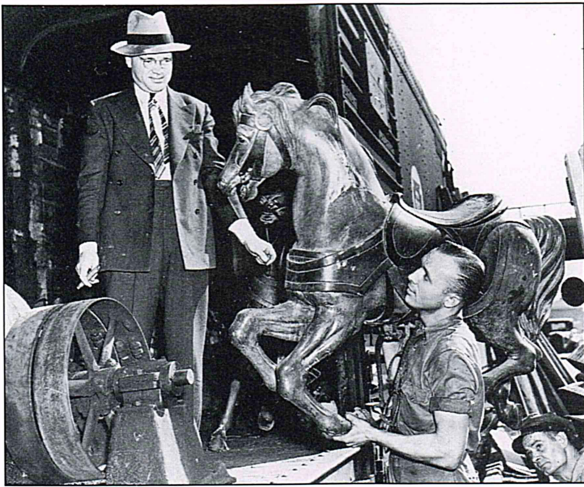
Charles Loeff didn't waste time in starting the mammoth project. He began buying all of the available creosoted wood pilings in Southern



California, including salvage pilings from the Long Beach wharf, which was being dismantled. Loeff and his two sons, Arthur and William, arrived on March 13, 1916 to supervise construction. On March 27, Loeff made a formal written application to the City Council for a 20-year pier franchise.

Loeff announced he had purchased a racing coaster that had been erected at the San Diego Exposition the previous year. In his factory, the world's largest circle swing was being fabricated. The two-story amusement building at the foot of the pier, which would house one of his carousels, would open by mid-June.

Loeff's Hippodrome was architecturally designed to be the most prominent building on the pier. The massive, 100-foot-square, two-story



building was a mix of California, Moorish, and Byzantine styles. Four imposing octagon-shaped towers, the largest 36 feet high, were built at the building's corners, and an enormous domed cupola rose 65 feet, far above the roof line.

Rows of large-high-arched windows on each side of the building's four sides served as doors and flooded the interior with light. A beautiful, brand-new, three-row menagerie carousel operated on the ground floor when the building opened on Saturday, June 10, 1916. It had goats, giraffes, and camels, in addition to horses. The ride was so popular that by fall Loeff extended the platform and added an outer row of 24 horses to make it a four-abreast merry-go-round.

Meanwhile, the Blue Streak racer was methodically reassembled from blueprints. It was a compact coaster, 550 feet long by 110 feet wide and 60 feet tall. The 2,500 feet of track for each train included six loops and 24 dips.

Loeff's pier was much more successful than he hoped, and he continued to add attractions. His bowling and billiards building next to the Hippodrome opened in 1917. He opened a multi-story walk-through fun house called "What Is It?" A larger picnic area, supplementing the one provided in the center of the roller coaster, was added next to the carousel on the inland side.

Cutthroat competition began between the Santa Monica Bay piers in 1920. Ernest Pickering doubled the size of his Ocean Park Pier, and the Kinney Company upgraded their Venice Pier. Businessmen tried to negotiate with the Loeff



Above left: Robert Newcomb (left) helps unload his brother Walter's new carousel, PTC #62, which came to California from Tennessee. The Auchy brake, designed and patented by PTC founder Henry Auchy, is on Newcomb's left. Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Stanton.

Above right: PTC #62, c. 1928, at Cumberland Park in Nashville, its original location. Many have searched for years for such a photo; Brian and Elinor Morgan found the negative for this one, courtesy of Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters, Inc.

family to build additional attractions on the Santa Monica Pier. The Loeff Pier at that time was a rather unexciting place; the family's dream of making its pier a modern amusement center failed with the death of Loeff in 1918. On February 26, 1923, the family announced they would sell the pier.

The pier's new owners, the Santa Monica Amusement Company, expanded the pier's attractions, calling it the Santa Monica Pleasure Pier. They built a new roller coaster and the La Monica Ballroom, which could accommodate 5,000 dancing couples within.

In 1943, the Pleasure Pier was sold to Walter Newcomb, who managed the pier under a lease agreement. Business was helped by the elimina-

Right: Next page.

Page 31, lower right:
*The Loeff carousel on
 Santa Monica Pier,
 c. 1920. While this is
 just a snapshot, it is
 an excellent photo,
 showing the stenciling
 patterns and the
 activity in loading the
 carousel. Behind the
 boy with the check-
 ered cap, the edge of
 the carousel's band
 organ can be seen.*
*Photo courtesy of
 Jeffrey Stanton.*

*Right: Santa Monica
 Pier, comprised of the
 long narrow section of
 the Municipal Pier,
 right, and the shorter,
 wider section of the
 Loeff Pier, with
 buildings and rides,
 left, as seen in the
 early 1920s. Credit:
 History Division, Los
 Angeles County
 Museum of Natural
 History, courtesy of
 Barbara Fahs Charles.*



tion of the Venice Pier, forcibly closed in 1946. (He had operated the merry-go-round and the Venice Fun House on the condemned pier).

While Newcomb was occupied with removing his attractions from the Venice Pier, he found a buyer for the Parker carousel located in the Hippodrome building. His 1922 PTC #62 carousel was moved from the Venice Pier into the building; he had purchased the carousel for \$25,000 from an amusement park in Nashville. The new carousel opened on June 27, 1947, after a two-month renovation by Rudy Illions.

In the mid- to late 1960s, while the general public was becoming disinterested in Santa Monica's Newcomb and Pacific Ocean Park piers, avant-garde artists and musicians were becoming fond of the (by this time) dilapidated Newcomb Pier, and particularly the carousel.

The apartments above were rented by writers, actors, and ordinary people. But, by the summer of 1971, the city leaned toward building a new pier. The city manager came up with a fantastic plan to build a 35-acre island off Santa Monica. Both the Newcomb and Municipal piers would be removed. Due to public opposition, the island

project was defeated, as was the plan to tear down the old pier.

After years of proposals, negotiation, and community protest, a developer was chosen to rebuild the Santa Monica Pier's new Fun Zone.

Pacific Park opened in May 1996 with a 85-foot-tall "Pacific (Ferris) Wheel" and a tame, 55-foot-tall "West Coaster" roller coaster. Other rides include a rocking boat, bumper cars, and several kiddie rides.

Restoration of the Santa Monica Pier Carousel and Loeff's Hippodrome

By Barbara Williams

From 1980 to 1984, PTC #62 and Loeff's Hippodrome underwent a precedent-setting carousel and historic carousel building restoration. While the concept of refurbishing the Santa



Left: Looff's grandiose Hippodrome didn't look very grand in this photo, taken by carousel operators in 1982 as the last official image of the building in its unrestored condition. Renovation began the next day, which involved removing the scraps of wood used to fill in the empty windows and replacing them with sturdy plywood. The plywood remained in place while the new window frames were being constructed. Photo courtesy of Barbara Williams.

Monica Pier was still in the planning stage, the city began upgrading its beloved carousel. The total cost of the completed project came close to a million dollars.

Cosmetic improvements to the carousel required stripping, repair, and repainting of the horses, repainting the frame, recreating a number of stencil patterns that had been covered with paint, stripping and refinishing the platform, replacing beveled mirrors for the central housing panels, and adding new brass poles and upholstery for the chariot seats. The mechanical work involved steam-cleaning the overhead gears, straightening the cranks, installing a new commutator, cleaning and replacing some of the telescopes, and redesigning and installing a new pole mounting system for the jumpers.

The restoration of Looff's Hippodrome began with new foundations under the pier and new floor supports, followed by extensive structural repairs. The building received a new roof, new exterior stucco, new window frames, tempered window glass, new wiring, new exterior and interior lighting, a five-level sprinkler system, a new floor, and a multi-level alarm system. It was paint-



Left: The Santa Monica Pier carousel building in 1972. Photo courtesy of Robert Kerstein.

ed throughout, including the interior of the dome.



Right: Walter Newcomb poses proudly with his new carousel. Another photo of PTC #62, taken at Cumberland Park in Nashville, its previous location, is too dark to reproduce. It shows the carousel originally had scenery paintings instead of mirrors in the upper central housing panels. Photo courtesy of Jeffrey Stanton.

Above, right: Portrait of Charles I. D. Loeff, taken for use in conjunction with publicity for his new amusement pier at Santa Monica. Credit: Los Angeles Public Library, courtesy of Barbara Fabs Charles.

The carousel's Wurlitzer band organ also was restored, with funds from the non-profit support group, Friends of the Santa Monica Pier Carousel, as was the carousel itself.

The NCA visited PTC #62 during its 7th annual conference, in Santa Monica in 1979, and again during its 17th conference (San Diego-Los Angeles) in 1989. In 1987, Loeff's Hippodrome was designated a National Historic Landmark.



The Pacific Ocean Park Carousel

By Barbara Williams

Following the devastating fire of 1924, the Ocean Park Pier was rebuilt, and a Loeff menagerie carousel was installed. It operated continuously and was one of the old attractions incorporated into Pacific Ocean Park. POP opened in 1958, with the carousel under the guidance of Rudy Illions, son of M. C. Illions.

When POP closed in 1967, the Loeff carousel was one of the few rides immediately removed (most of the remaining rides stayed on the defunct pier for the next five years and were sold for scrap). It then went to Spanaway Park in Spanaway, Wash., near Tacoma, where it ran for 10 years. It was put in storage after vandalism and weather damage forced the park's closure.

Duane and Carol Perron, of Portland, pur-

chased the carousel in 1980, and a volunteer-based restoration began.

In 1982, the Perrons placed their carousel in the Willamette Center in downtown Portland, where it operated until 1986, sporting animals from other Loeff carousels in addition to its own, as a "rotating museum of Loeff's work from earliest to latest styles, c.1880-1914." Later that year, the Perrons' moved it to Carousel Courtyard.

In 1992, the carousel was shipped to Ohio for 'Ameriflora '92,' an international floral exhibition held in Franklin Park in Columbus, Ohio. At the conclusion of Ameriflora, the carousel went back into storage and remained there until May 10, 1997; it resumed operation at the Media City Center mall in Burbank, Calif.

The three-row, menagerie carousel (56 animals in all) was originally located at Fair Park in Dallas. Estimates of its date of manufacture range from 1905 to 1916.