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MERRY-GO *Roundup*

NATIONAL CAROUSEL ASSOCIATION

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The Stubbmann Carousel

Reminiscences of Catherine Stubbmann, Introduction By Barbara Williams. Photos courtesy of

Right: A view of the Stubbmann carousel building at the corner of West 6th Street and Surf Avenue. When Catherine Stubbmann joined the family, the existing Stubbmann carousel had a mirrored rim. The family had at least one other carousel, which she referred to as the Midway merry-go-round. From the Surf Avenue location, the four-row carousel with the mirrored rim was moved out onto the boardwalk by James McCullough, husband of Helen Stubbmann, and became known as the Steeplechase merry-go-round. Barbara Williams' postcard of it does not show the mirrored rim. One Stubbmann carousel burned in the 1911 Dreamland fire.



The Stubbmann carousel is among the most well known of Coney Island's historic carousels. The results of my contact over the past year with Catherine Stubbmann, daughter-in-law of Henry Stubbmann, Sr., are presented here.

Catherine shared personal reminiscences and Stubbmann family photographs, which provided new and interesting insight into the family that owned, operated, and obviously treasured its carousel.

In addition to Catherine, important contributors to this article are Rol and Jo Summit, of Rolling Hills, Calif., and Fred Dahlinger, of Baraboo, Wis. Dahlinger provided information about the band organs that appear in the Stubbmann photos; it is interesting that the organs appear with different carousels. Additional references for this article include Fried's *A Pictorial History of the Carousel* and "The Carousels of Coney Island," *Merry-Go-Roundup*, Vol. 23, No. 4.

The Summits and I sought to identify the unknown carousels in two day-long study sessions, but were unable to do so. They recognized some individual horses, however, and generously provided photographs of them to accompany this article.

Excerpts From Letters Written By Catherine Stubbmann

September 1979

"I would like to know if you have ever heard of the Stubbmann carousel in Coney Island or know where it is today? It was there many, many years ago and when the city bought the property, the ride was sold and moved. A brother-in-law bought it and I believe he sold it and I lost track of it. It was so beautiful.

"During the winter, my husband used to rebuild the broken legs from blocks of wood. It was such an art."

Catherine Stubbmann unless otherwise noted.



Left: The band organ in this 1912 photo is a French organ with 57 to 65 keys and probably a barrel organ. It also appears in the carousel photo on page 11, along with the Lake Ponchartrain horse. We could not determine whether this carousel and the one pictured below are the same.

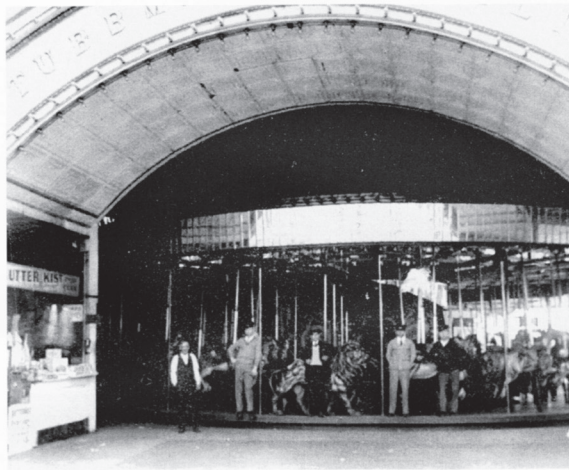


“This carousel doesn’t look like ours. Could it be the original one the lion was on?” asked Catherine Stubbmann. A different organ, a Gebrueder Bruder with 65 to 69 keys, can be seen in this photo.

Hotel Eleanor, W. 6th St., Coney Island, N. Y.



Above and right: "The carousel was located on a busy corner, at West 6th Street and Surf Avenue, yet not too noisy. On the ground floor of the Hotel Eleanor, you had the bar next to the carousel and then the restaurant where mother Gorman made delicious meals. There was a large social room for gatherings and parties, and there was a long sitting room at the rear, the width of the building, where for me it was most relaxing to sit and enjoy looking at the ocean."



Below, right: A closer look at the Southern Belle as a jumper on the Stubbmann carousel.

October 15, 1998

"Once the carousel left our family, we never saw it again. Through the years, I would tell my grandchildren all about it and also how we got the lion and how beautiful it was.

"Last week, now that we know where it is, my granddaughters and two of my sons finally got to see it. I was so sad when I saw it.

"The beautiful lion was painted dark brown, the horses were solid white and the saddles were red or blue. But if you looked real close, you could make out the designs on them of yesteryear. My granddaughters loved it, but my sons knew how upset I was. When we got home and I was alone, I cried. They were once so beautiful.

"Then, I began to realize that after all these many, many years, they were still around to make children happy riding them and they will remember how much fun they had years from now. My grandchildren finally saw and rode on Grandpa's horses.

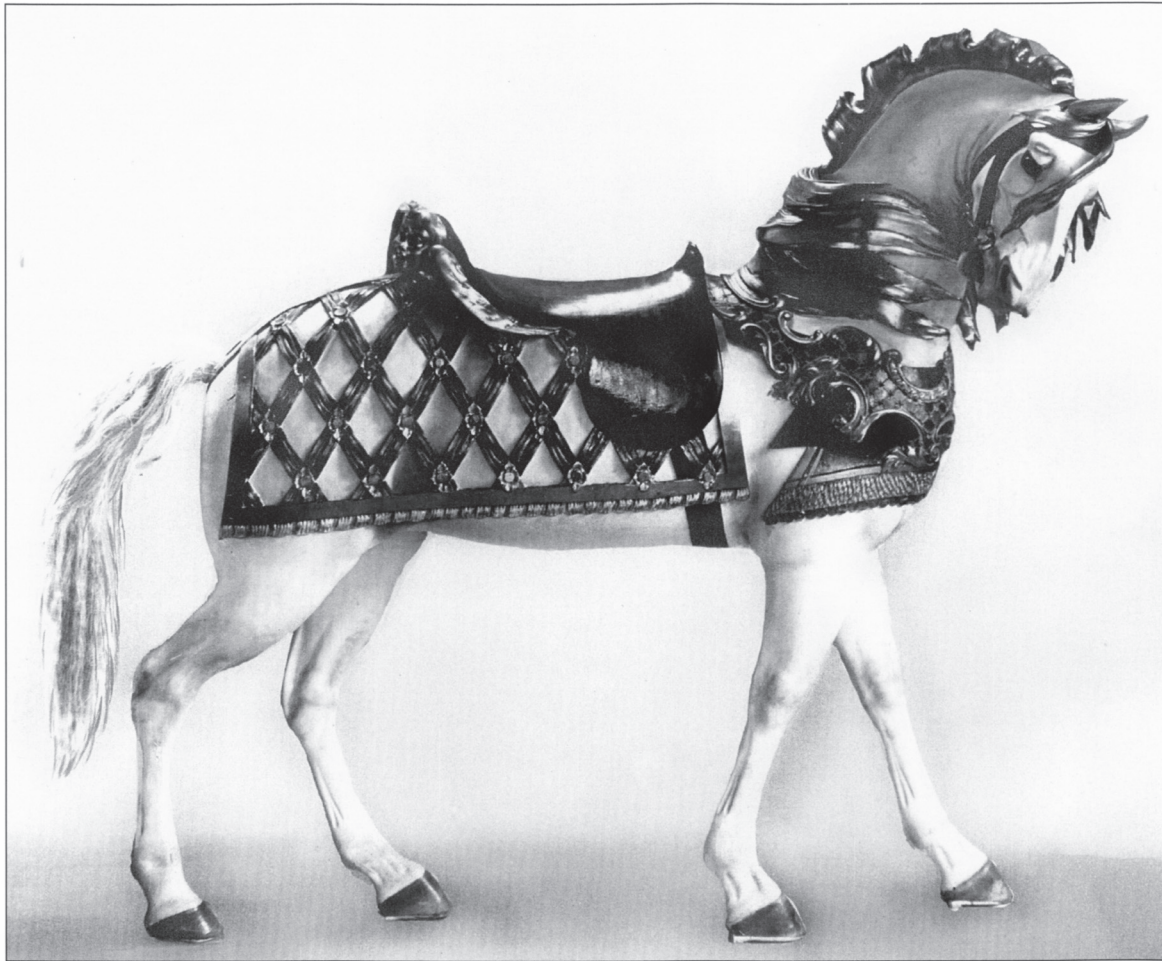
"This was the Stubbmann family's life and business. I'm sure if it was possible, with all of the Stubbmann grandsons, it would still be with our family."

November 12, 1998

"The lion story was really something. My father-in-law loved playing cards and when he had the chance, he would meet his friends at a restaurant on Ocean Parkway for pinochle. Before he left, he would be told what time dinner would be, and not to be late.

"When it was near time to eat, and he wasn't home yet, my mother-in-law sent my husband, Henry, Jr., then a young boy, to get him. Henry, Jr. was told to tell his mom that he, Henry, Sr., would be home as soon as the game was over. He said he never saw his mother so mad.

"After dinner, Henry, Jr. was sent again to get his father. He told him to tell his mom he would be home as soon as he won the lion. Hours



Above: The Southern Belle as a stander.

Below: This horse is seen, center, in the top photograph of the Stubbmann carousel on page 7. Photos courtesy of Rol and Jo Summit.

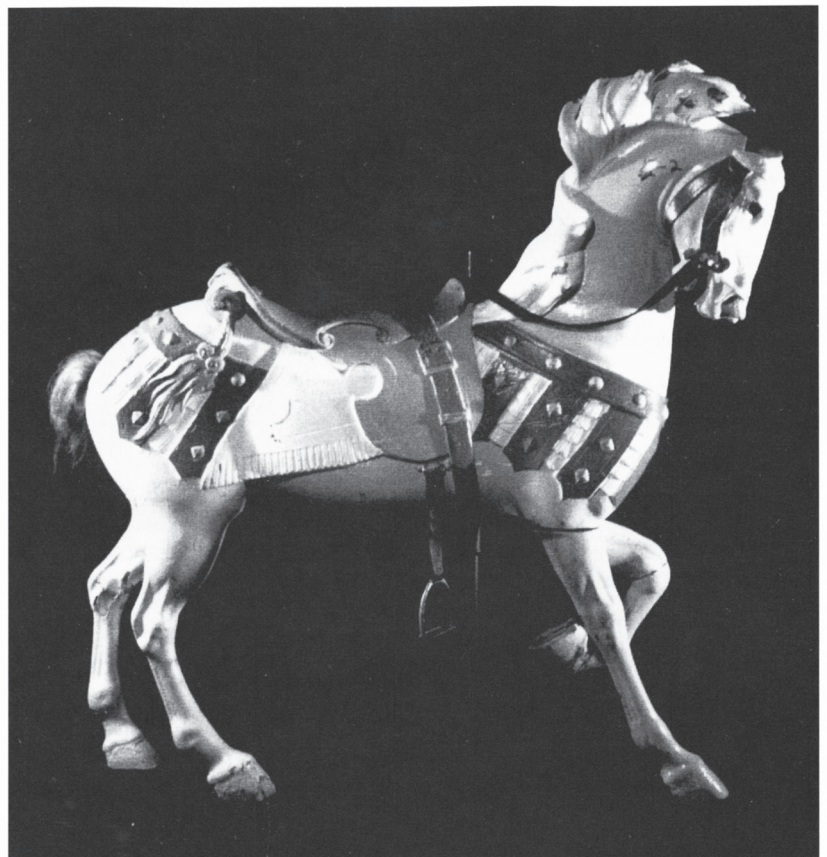
passed and they all went to bed. The sound of voices woke Henry, Jr. at daylight. His mom was yelling and his father looked terrible but was smiling because he had won the lion.

“Henry Jr. died in June 1984 and left me with five handsome sons. My oldest is 51 and he remembers his dad’s carousel. The others never saw it, only saw pictures and heard stories and asked questions, “How come there’s a lion instead of a horse?,” “How come the wooden horses had real hairy tails?,” “Where did you get them?” They didn’t care too much for that story.

“Mr. Carmel’s house was very close to Surf Avenue. A Carmel carousel is still in Coney Island, the B&B. It belonged to a relative of the Stubbmanns, Willie Bischof. He has since passed away and I heard it was sold to James McCullough, Jr. and then someone else. Jim’s father was my brother-in-law through marriage to Helen Stubbmann.”

January 25, 1999

“I have old pictures of carousels. My grandchildren had never seen them and when I showed





Top, left: "My beloved father-in-law, Henry G. Stubbmann, knew many of the children who came to ride the horses, even in the winter when it had snowed like in this photo. In the left of the picture, you can see a child on a horse, and the horse just before it was the one I loved the most. It had a long saddle cover and carved on it was the head of a man that looked like Lincoln to me (1939)."

Note: On the right in this photograph is a Gebruder Bruder band organ with 65 to 69 keys. The organ also shows in the carousel photograph on page 7. On the left is a larger Gebrueder Bruder organ, now at Flushing Meadows in Queens, N.Y. Originally it had a large female figure with a raised torch on the front, with two angels positioned on the facade over the figure.

Above, left: "These are the bar doors I was referring to. After a few drinks and dares, someone would run in and try to jump on while the ride was going (not dated)."

Top, right: "Meta Stubbmann, wife of Henry Stubbmann, Sr. on the famous lion (1939)."

them to them, they couldn't believe them.

"I tried to tell them as much as I could remember and they thought I must have had a great childhood, being able to go on rides any time I wanted to and the Mardi Gras. They asked about Luna Park, the circus, the rides.

"For the first time in years, I had their undivided attention for hours. They just sat and listened."

February 5, 1999

"I am very pleased to send you these pictures of time gone by. Since I became a member of the family in the '40s, there isn't too much I can tell you about the old pictures, except that carousels have been the way of life for the Stubbmanns.

"As the family grew, all had jobs to do, either on the carousel or at the hotel. After my husband and I came back (from the Air Force), I was a ticket seller and my husband took care of the ride, as did Helen. I can remember the brass always being shiny bright. It took hours, rubbing the cleaner on and taking it off.

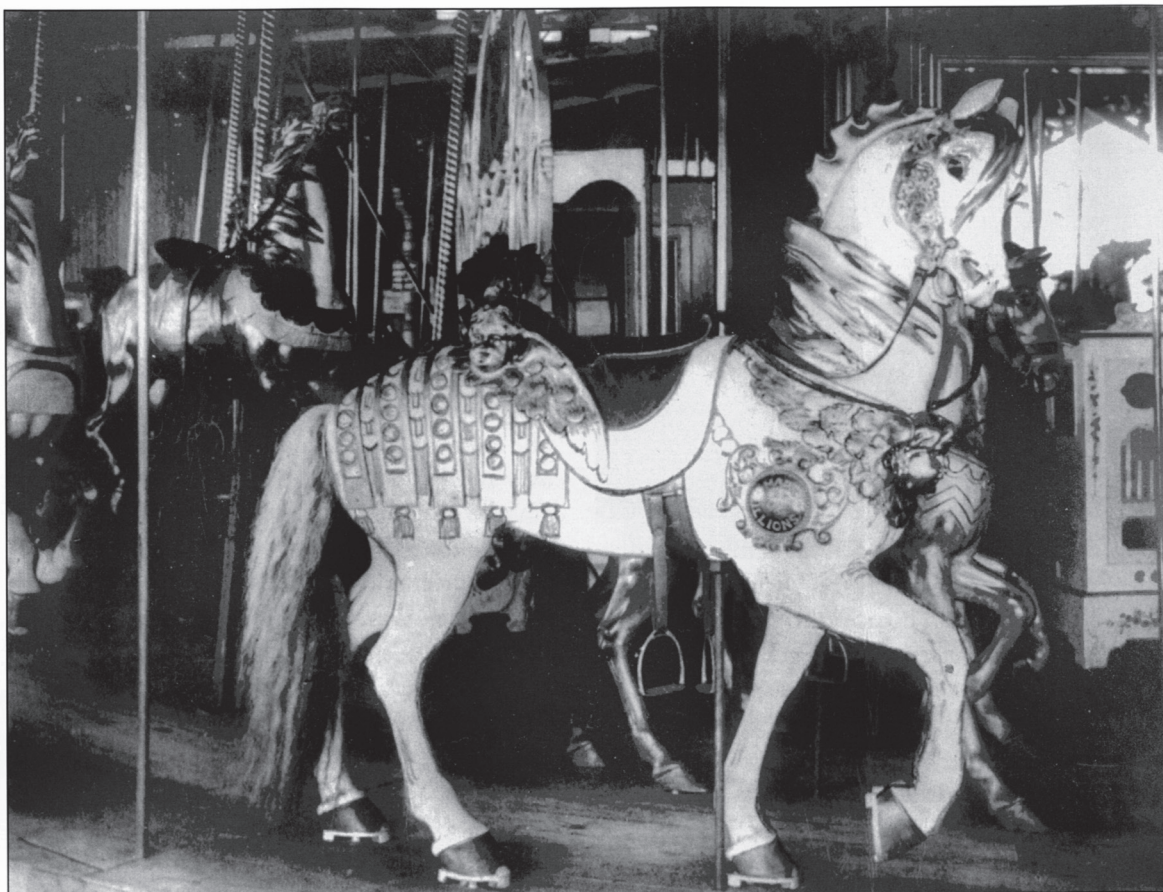
"Work was never ending. The winter was for repairing the horses and the organ and for repainting. Everything was in perfect condition by the time it was going full time.

"Coney's Mardi Gras was the busiest and worst sometimes. People were at their happiest, having fun, covering each other with streamers and confetti—sometimes you found it in your mouth. In the very early morning, some who had a wee bit too much to drink would dare one another to jump on and off the carousel because they saw the ticket takers do it with such ease.

"Try as you could to stop them, you always had one who would take the dare, resulting in a trip to the Coney Island Hospital.



Top: "This undated photo is neither the Stubbmann carousel with the mirrored rim nor the carousel with the earlier style 'teardrop' center panels. The 'German Uhlan' standing horse, left, was later on the Lake Ponchartrain carousel in New Orleans."



Left: The "German Uhlan" horse. Photo courtesy of Rol and Jo Summit.

About The Front Cover

Three horses from the Stubbmann carousel are seen in the Illions paint shop photo, taken c. 1910. They are the "Southern Belle" (left, behind the horse in the foreground), the "Tournament Horse" (in primer, far left at the rear of "Southern Belle"), and the "Russian Cossack" (in primer, head raised and behind the "Southern Belle's head").

According to Rol Summit, the Feltman-Stubbmann carousel was assembled for the 1964-65 World's Fair. It went into operation in 1965. Flushing Meadows in Queens, N.Y., was the site of this fair. Photo courtesy of Rol and Jo Summit.



Above: "I know there was a Stubbmann brother involved in the beginning . . . could it have been the carousel in this picture?"

Below: "Yes, that's me up on the horse and my sister-in-law, Helen McCullough, in 1947."

Top, right: "Henry G. Stubbmann, my father-in-law."

"I was seven years old when my family moved to Coney Island and as bad as the Depression was, it was still a fun time. The ocean to swim in, the rides, games to play, and Luna Park, where we went the most. There was a circus in it where if you could stay on a real horse for a minute, you would win a prize.

"I have a menu for the Midway Stubbmann Brothers Hotel and Restaurant. A porterhouse steak was 75 cents, a lobster salad was 40 cents and the chicken salad cost the most at one dollar. A martini was 15 cents and a mint julep was 25 cents."

April 14, 1999

"From interesting bits of information, there were two carousels, one belonging to Henry Stubbmann and one to one of his brothers.

"The Midway Stubbmann Brothers carousel



was destroyed in a fire and the new one was built. I know there was a wax museum that was destroyed near our place in a fire. Seems fire destroyed many beautiful things, especially Luna Park. That was a child's wonderland. I know it was mine.

"The menu I wrote of is very old and it's called 'The Midway Stubbmann Brothers.' It has a hard cover and has one page of food and another for drinks. The inside of the cover has advertising as to where the food came from.

"When we visited the [Stubbmann-Feltman] carousel, I noticed the organ is not the one I remember. Ours had a figure of a band leader with the baton moving in time to the music and it had angels around it."

August 17, 1999

"I am sending a picture of our boat so you could see how talented my husband was with wood, from fixing horses, building houses and rebuilding boats and his sons are just like their dad."

August 27, 1999

"Each time I receive your letters, it takes me back in time and wonderful memories fill my mind. Coney Island—how lucky I was to have lived there as a child! I keep taking pictures out



and wondering who the people were and there's no one left to ask.

"The photos I sent showing the carousel with the mirrors is the one I knew. (You can't see the mirrors in the one with the awning and the ticket booth near the lion.)

"As for the picture of the bar, I know it's old because I can't remember the little signs near the ceiling or all the tables and chairs. But, the bar is the same as are the glass doors. Speaking of mirrors, how well I knew them. They also had to be cleaned along with the brass."

November 12, 1999

"You asked about how my family came to live near Coney Island. We moved from New Jersey when I was seven years old. We had gone to Coney Island for a day, and for my brothers and sisters and I, it was beyond our wildest dreams.

"I remember we were crying when we had to go home. Can you imagine five kids getting on the subway trains with jelly apples and cotton candy crying our eyes out! My mom loved it too, so my dad transferred his job to Brooklyn.

"We didn't live near Ocean Parkway. We had one school, P. S. 100, so everyone went to it. Perhaps the children of Mangels, etc. of our age went there too, but I can't remember. That was the early 1930s."

"The members of the Stubbmann family would have been proud to be in the National Carousel Association's archives. I am proud of carrying on the name of the family as are my five sons."



Above, left: Eric Stubbmann with his grandmothers, Elaine Rotondi (left) and Catherine Stubbmann (right) at graduation time.

Top, right: "This family picture was taken in 1945, celebrating my mother-in-law's birthday. From left to right are James McCullough and his wife, Helen Stubbmann; Walter and Marie Stubbmann; Charlotte Stubbmann; Bernard Goldman and his wife, Eleanor Stubbmann; Meta Stubbmann; Henry Stubbmann and Sam Blum, who was Henry's best friend. Myself and my husband, Henry Jr., are not in the photo, as he was in the Air Force and I was with him."

Above, right: "Our family spent more time on water than we did at home. In the 1960s, we picked up a wreck of a boat and rebuilt it from top to bottom. It was named 'The Five Sons' in honor of our children. My husband took good care of it as he did with the horses. It took us safely out to sea and gave us happiness and joy. My oldest son, Richard, picked this photo of his dad to send. They always went fishing the first Saturday in January, no matter how cold it was."

