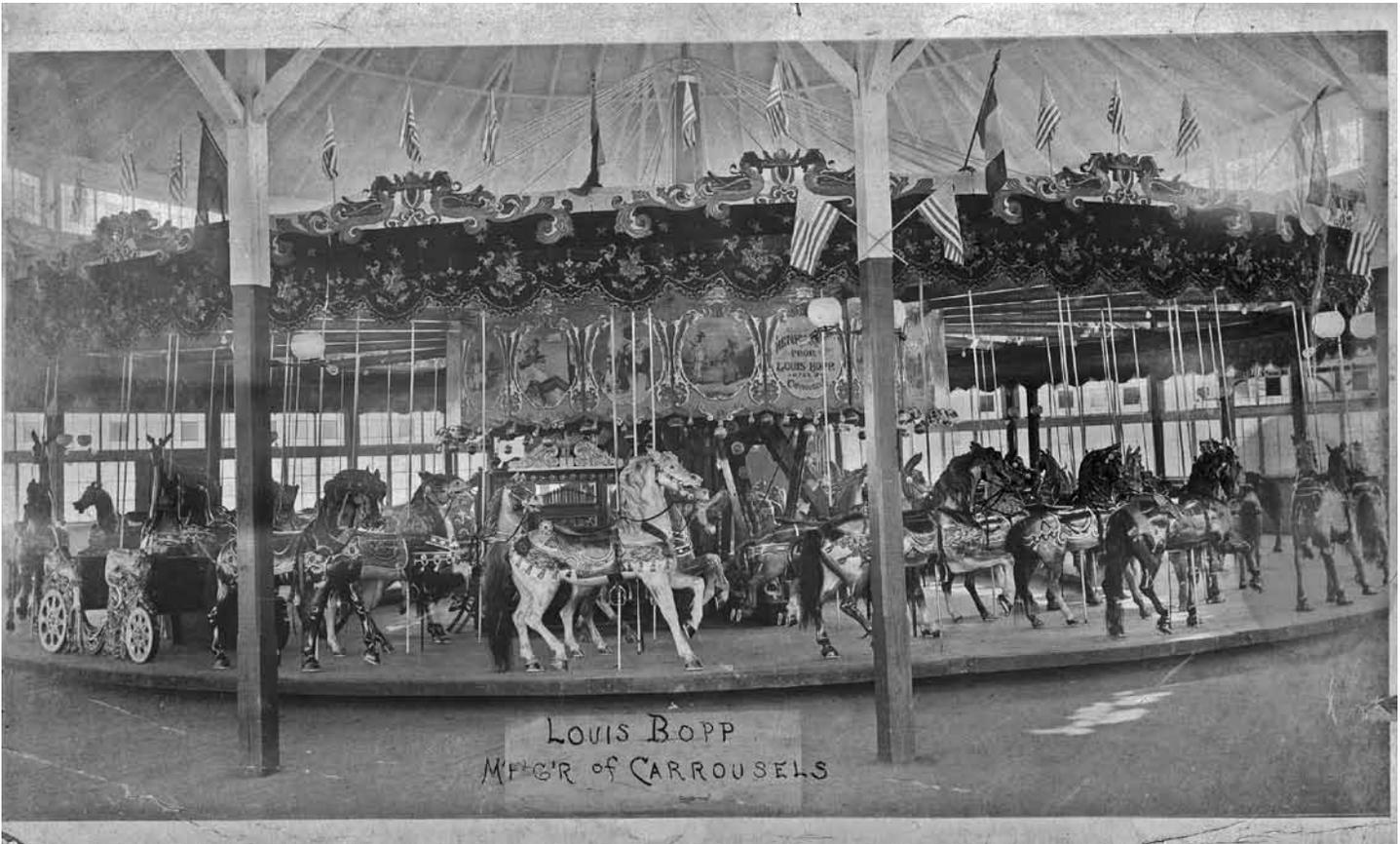

From Sulzer's Harlem River Park to Krause's Halfmoon Beach

History of Mascot on the 19th Century Louis Bopp-Charles Looff Carousel



The Kolb's Louis Bopp-Charles Looff carousel at Sulzer's Harlem River Park. The 45-star American flags suggest a date for the photograph to be between July 4, 1896 and July 3, 1908, the flag's official period of adoption. Photograph provided by the Sand Lake Historical Society; originally donated to the SLHS by Robert Kolb.

By William Benjamin, Ph.D.,
with Barbara Williams, and Lourinda Bray
Special to The Carousel News & Trader

Efforts to conserve “Mascot”, an early Looff Stander, following his being extensively damaged in a house fire, were chronicled in an article in the December 2008 issue of *The Carousel News and Trader*. The desire to learn more about Mascot's history and perhaps identify the carousel upon which he worked led to an extensive collaborative effort between myself, Barbara Williams and Lourinda Bray. Together, with additional individuals in the carousel and historical society communities and descendants of the carousel's owners, we have discovered new historical details of the carousel, spanning the eight-decade working career of Mascot.

The Beginnings of the Search

At first, the only lead available for learning more about the history of Mascot was a caption associated with a black

and white photograph of him in *Fairground Art* by Geoff Weedon and Richard Ward. This caption indicated that Mascot was on a carousel at Ava Park, Albany, NY.

During Mascot's conservation effort, Lourinda and I had discussed the possibility of learning more about the history of Mascot and his carousel. Lourinda contacted Barbara to determine if she knew anything about an Albany merry-go-round. Coincidentally, Barbara had previously done research on the carousel at Averill Park, also known by some as Ava Park. Her research was spawned by an article in the September/October 1999 issue of *Reminisce* magazine written by Robert Kolb, a descendant of the carousel's original owner. Thus, a collaboration was born between Barbara, Lourinda and myself that would begin to piece together the history of the carousel. Later in our research, I would also be in touch with Robert Kolb and his brother, Henry (Hank).

Hank Kolb provided important, additional, detailed information about the Louis Bopp-manufactured carousel that began its life at Sulzer's Harlem River Park, New York City.



This close up of Mascot from the previous photograph shows his distinctive whorl-like pattern mane on the Sulzer's Park carousel.

The carousel was subsequently moved to New Rensselaer Park, Lansingburgh/Troy; Ford Park, Green Island; Crystal Lake Park in Averill Park, Sand Lake; and finally to Halfmoon Beach, Crescent; all located in New York.

Our research project took a giant leap forward with the discovery of a set of photographs of the carousel when it was at Halfmoon Beach. They were located by Fred Dahlinger at the Lansingburgh Historical Society (LHS) while doing research of his own. He generously shared them with Barbara. Subsequently, Lourinda obtained additional Halfmoon Beach photographs from Marianne Stevens. These photographs allowed the identification of Mascot, together with 58 other animals on the carousel at Halfmoon Beach.

According to Robert Kolb, now age 74, and his brother Hank, 79, their family had an extensive role in the New York City area carousel amusement business in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Their great-grandfather, Henry Kolb, and his two sons, Edward and Frank, who took over the business in 1901, were proprietors of carousels in a number of privately owned parks.

Sulzer's Harlem River Park

Sulzer's Harlem River Park was one of many commercially run parks in New York City during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Herman Sulzer was given the land by his father in 1878 and managed a park on the premises that is shown on Sanborn historical fire insurance maps as early as 1879. The park was located between 126th and 127th Streets and Second Avenue and was adjacent to the Harlem River. An extension of the elevated train along Second Avenue to the Harlem River, including a station at 127th Street, was completed in 1880 and provided ready access to the park for city residents. Sulzer's was a site at which ethnic associations, churches, trade unions and athletic clubs held festivals, often attracting crowds numbering in the thousands. The site also had a large building which housed a casino, restaurant and meeting rooms. Several articles about such gatherings in early editions of *The New York Times* have provided important clues as to the establishment of a carousel in Sulzer's, as well as the presence of other amusements in the park.

We don't know when the Kolbs first installed a carousel



Sulzer's postcard of the new casino building postmarked 1908. The carousel was removed from the park when the original casino burned. William Benjamin Collection

at Sulzer's Harlem River Park. However, a carousel was reported at the park in an article from *The New York Times*, dated July 5, 1882, entitled "Irishmen On Their Muscle," which describes the day's activities at Sulzer's.

"The children amused themselves by taking rides on the merry-go-round, there was dancing on the platform, and several athletic games were announced to take place."

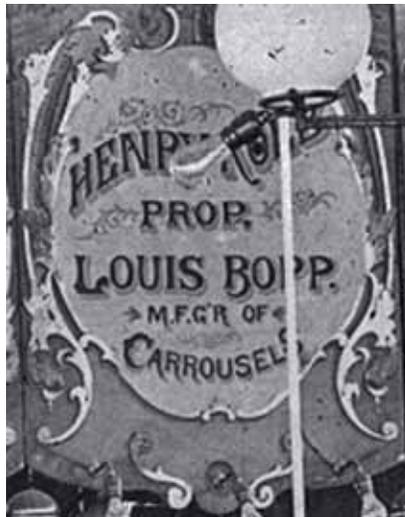
A more extensive description of a carousel at Sulzer's was found in a *The New York Times* article from September 14, 1891, entitled "A Great German Festival, Harvest Home Festival at Sulzer's Park."

After mentioning that, "...the wives brought an assortment of children who were permitted to drain the last drops in the beer mugs because they were very good children, and because of the harvest-home festival, and because everybody was happy and chatty and indulgent toward everybody else...", the carousel is described, "And there is the carrousel, where for 5 cents one may gallop smoothly around the ring till he falls off his steed. What a menagerie is brought under the control of the carrousel keeper! For the babies, parents, and grandparents mount fearlessly the backs not only of horses but of camels, rhinoceroses, lions, giraffes,

and tigers, and prance about as unconcernedly as though the only creature near them was a fireside cat."

The article goes on to describe other activities including dancing, a self-styled King of Astrology, a man cutting silhouettes, a Punch and Judy show, a shooting gallery and a bowling alley.

The period photograph of the Kolb's carousel while at Sulzer's opens this article on page 13, yet it isn't certain that the 1891 *New York Times* article quoted above is describing the carousel in the photograph. For example, there is no evidence from the photograph that the carousel had animals that "galloped," as this photograph shows all standers. The photo also shows no signs of tigers or rhinoceroses,



Enlargement of a panel from the photo on page 13 shows Henry Kolb's ownership of the Louis Bopp-manufactured carousel.

Wanted--Carrousel
EXCLUSIVE PRIVILEGE, LONG LEASE.
 Must be First Class Machine. Satisfactory terms to proper party. Apply to **G. T. BOAG, Manager,** HARLEM RIVER PARK, - 127th STREET and SECOND AVENUE, N. Y. CITY

Want ad for a "Carrousel" to replace the Kolb carousel at Sulzer's Harlem River Park from the July 9, 1910 issue of *The New York Clipper*.

although perhaps the writer was referring to elephants for the latter, if this was indeed a description of the Kolb carousel. The presence of the 45 star flags dates the photograph to as early as July 4, 1896. How long it was in place prior to photograph being taken isn't known.

According to Fred Dahlinger, Louis Bopp is first known as an owner-operator in the early 1890s and likely didn't manufacture carousels for other owners until after that time. Thus, since we don't know the precise year of installation of this Kolb-owned carousel at Sulzer's, for the timeline, we have proposed that it was most likely established in the park during the late 1890s.

(Lourinda will be publishing an article in an upcoming issue of CN&T that will provide an in-depth description of the Bopp carousel in the Sulzer's photograph. It should be mentioned here that Lourinda, Barbara and I believe that the animals on the carousel are a composite of animals attributed to the Looff factory. How Louis Bopp obtained them for assembly into the carousel is not known.)

A fire destroyed the original casino building at Sulzer's in 1907. A new, much larger building was completed by 1908. However, the "golden era" of the park seems to have passed by this time and the Kolbs relocated their carousel to a succession of Albany, NY, area parks. We believe the carousel was moved out of Sulzer's Park after the casino fire in 1907. Support for this is found in several historical fire insurance maps of the park and other information that has been uncovered.



Postcard view of the carousel at New Rensselaer Park ca. 1915. Barbara Williams collection



Postcard of the entrance to New Rensselaer Park post-marked 1910. William Benjamin collection

A circular carousel structure depicted in the same location within the park can be seen in 1891 and 1896 Bromley and Sanborn fire insurance maps, respectively. Yet, the structure is no longer present in the 1909 Bromley map. A different carousel building appears in the 1911 Sanborn map. A "want ad" in the July 9, 1910 edition of *The New York Clipper* solicits for a carousel to be placed in Harlem River Park.

A new carousel was located rather quickly it would seem, as a carousel, along with a Ferris wheel, swings and an Old Mill, are described in the September 2, 1910 edition of *The New York Times* in an article entitled "Tom Foley's Picnic Day, Women and Children from Second District to be at Sulzer's Park."

By 1920, business was falling off at Sulzer's Harlem River Park due to the introduction of Prohibition on January 16, 1920, as well as the growing industrial development in the area.

William Randolph Hearst bought the land and converted the site into his Cosmopolitan Studios. Once again, the property was ravaged by fire. In 1923, costumes, scenery and stored artwork were destroyed at the studio. Hearst re-located his film production company to Los Angeles the following year. Today, the original Sulzer's Park location is the site of the New York City Second Avenue Bus Garage with a capacity for 400 buses.

New Rensselaer Park

Following the refurbishing and conversion of the stationary carousel by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company, (information provided by Robert and Hank Kolb), to include jumpers on alternating 2nd and 3rd rows, the Kolb's relocated the carousel in 1908 to New Rensselaer Park in the Lansingburgh section of Troy.

The 42-acre Rensselaer Park originally opened in 1867, was updated and reopened in 1908 as New Rensselaer Park, and closed by 1920, when the property was converted to housing sites. The United Traction Company ran a trolley from Troy that stopped at the park. An advertisement from

'THE NATURAL PLEASURE PLACE'
 NEW RENSSELAER PARK,
 TROY, N. Y.
OPENS DECORATION DAY
 SATURDAY, MAY 30
 "A Grove of Natural Beauty Transformed by Man to a Veritable Fairyland."
 A proper place for all in search of healthy rest and recreation.
Free Shows Going On All the Time
 Band Concerts Every Afternoon and Evening
All Kinds of Fine Dance Hall, Monster Carousel, Exhilarating Roller Coaster, Stupendous Circle Swing, Box Ball Alley, Touring Car, Cupid's Coaster, World of Wonders and 50 other attractions.
Healthy Amusement
 An Ideal Pleasure Park run for the Amusement of the People.
SPECIAL POLICE FORCE, making it safe for ladies and children to attend at any time without fear of being molested.
THOUSANDS OF ELECTRIC LIGHTS
A Veritable Fairyland at Night
\$500 Fireworks Display Decoration Day
 Reduced Rates on Boston & Maine RR. direct to Park.

1908 advertisement from *The North Adams Evening Transcript*.



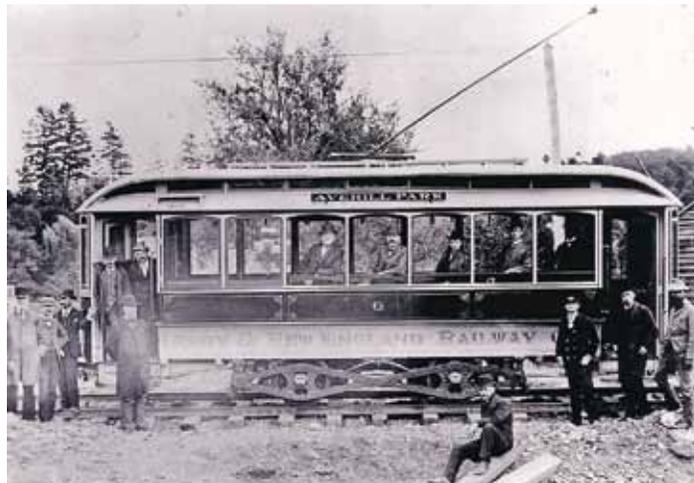
Carousel building at Crystal Lake Park ca. 1920s.
 Photograph by Gene Baxter, courtesy of the Lansingburgh Historical Society and Fred Dahlinger.

the May 27, 1908 edition of *The North Adam Evening Transcript* shows that a “monster carousel” was one of many attractions at the park at that time.

Ford Park and Crystal Lake Park in Averill Park

In a July 10, 1978 *Troy Record* article we learned, from Steve Krause, the next owner of the carousel, that the carousel was moved from New Rensselaer Park to Ford Park, Green Island, NY, a town just across the Hudson River from Troy, before being moved to Averill Park. Even though we have added Ford Park to the timeline, we have found no additional information about the carousel at this location. Ford Park opened in the fall of 1922, so we have placed the carousel in the park beginning at that time.

Robert Kolb has indicated that the carousel and the building were moved to Crystal Lake Park Amusements in Averill Park, located in Sand Lake, NY, around 1926. Since



Averill Park Trolley. Photograph provided by the Sand Lake Historical Society

New Rensselaer Park in north Troy closed in 1920, it is indeed possible that the ride was located at nearby Ford Park during the interim period, as stated by Mr. Krause.

Through the Kolbs we learned that the carousel was moved the 20 miles to Averill Park via the United Traction Company trolley line. The trolley company was no longer providing public transportation at this point, so perhaps it was contracted with specifically to move the carousel.

Hank and Robert Kolb have provided a wealth of history about the carousel during its time at Crystal Lake Park. Crystal Lake was referred to as “the upstate Coney Island” and as a teenager Hank Kolb worked there at the carousel from the late 1930s to the mid-1940s. Based on his accounts, Crystal Lake Park was owned by the Wagstaff family. His grandfather, Edward, rented the property and paid a portion of the ticket proceeds to Mr. Wagstaff.

Rides at Crystal Lake were 5 cents each or six for 25 cents. Hank would play two 78-rpm songs per ride on a Victrola record player. Hank admitted that he would often give “pretty young girls” free rides. In the mid-1940s ticket



Crystal Lake Park Amusements in Averill Park ca. 1950s. To the right of the carousel structure is the building that housed various games. Further right is the Wagstaff’s (owners of the park) summer home. Also seen to the left of the carousel are a Ferris wheel and other amusements that were added in the 1950s. The Everet family owned the house in the foreground. Chuck Everet worked on the carousel for Edward Kolb in the early 1940s, but was a casualty in World War II.

Photograph provided by the Sand Lake Historical Society, clarified by Dan Castle, son of Rich Castle, and description provided by Hank Kolb.

***Interior view of
the carousel at
Halfmoon Beach.
Note the unusual
metal rounding
boards.***

**Photograph by Gene Baxter,
courtesy of the Lansingburgh
Historical Society
and Fred Dahlinger.**



prices were raised to 8 cents.

The carousel had a total of 58 figures and two chariots at this time. Like his father before him, Edward Kolb had names for many of the horses. The names were usually painted in small block letters, which also explains the continuation of Mascot's name for an extended number of years.

"Kitty" and "Five Star" were the names of two of the horses, according to the Kolbs. Edward often painted the saddles red, which accounts for the remnants of red paint discovered on Mascot's saddle during conservation.

According to Hank the carousel had a "Ring Game," an arm filled with rings with an occasional brass ring. Riders on the outer figures would pull out the rings and return them to a bushel basket. The rider that pulled the brass ring would win a free ride. Hank recalls picking up many rings that missed the basket

Hank Kolb relates that Crystal Lake Park had a number of entertainment attractions during the 1940's. One building housed a variety of games including a ring toss and a milk bottle game. An ice cream parlor and a dance hall that opened on Saturday nights for round and square dancing were also present. A hot dog stand and restaurant were adjacent to the bathing beach. Many church, fireman and Odd Fellows picnics and clambakes were held at the park. The amusement park did well financially until 1941.

As with so many parks, once World War II began, business decreased considerably. Robert recalls that in 1945, shortly after the war, Edward Kolb decided to sell the carousel to Steve Krause for \$3,500.

Rich Castle of Waterford, NY, age 69, worked for Steve Krause on the carousel at Crystal Lake Park in the 1950s. Rich recalls that there was a Wurlitzer band organ at the carousel that was broken at the time. According to Steve

Krause, Jr., a son of the last owner, during this time, the music was provided first by 78-rpm records and then 45s. The drapes seen in the early Sulzer's photograph were no longer present, but the central housing panel paintings, as well as the Henry Kolb/Louis Bopp sign and the building's stained glass windows were intact. Two spare horses were kept in a shed to replace any that were broken during use.

Halfmoon Beach

The Kolb/Bopp carousel remained at Crystal Lake Park until 1960 when, according to *The Troy Record* article, it was moved by U-Haul truck to Crescent, 20 miles northwest of Averill Park.

Halfmoon Beach opened in the early 1930s and featured a dance pavilion, carnival-type games, pool tables and food service according to an article entitled "Summertime Fun" by John L. Scherer, Curator of Popular Entertainment, New York State Museum, *Merry-Go-Round*, 29: 4.

An advertisement from 1968 also touted, in addition to the "giant carousel," swimming, boating, seaplane rides and an orchestra. As seen in the photograph of the build-



Krause's Halfmoon Beach carousel. Photograph courtesy of the Sand Lake Historical Society



Brightly painted saddle on lion at Halfmoon Beach. Courtesy of Marianne Stevens, ca. 1978

ing housing the carousel at Halfmoon Beach, the distinctive stained glass windows are no longer present, having been replaced with colored Plexiglas. By this time, the price of a ride on the carousel had increased to 25 cents. It can also be seen in interior photographs that many of the animals' saddles had been painted white. According to Robert Kolb, who visited the carousel in the 1960s, Krause had painted some of the figures in "loud chartreuse colors," as can be seen in the accompanying photograph from Marianne Stevens.



Krause's Halfmoon Beach advertisement from *The Troy Record*, August 21, 1968.

ing photograph from Marianne Stevens.

The availability of the series of interior photographs has allowed us to identify all 58 of the figures on the carousel – 39 horses, 5 goats, 3 camels, 3 giraffes, 3 lions, 3 elephants



Mascot on the Halfmoon Beach carousel and a similar pose following conservation.

and 2 teddy bears – plus two chariots, and to place them in their proper configuration on the 50 ft, 20-section platform.

The configuration and a number of the photographs will be presented in an upcoming article about the Halfmoon Beach carousel.

The carousel at Halfmoon Beach stopped serving patrons by 1976 and was bought by Gray Tuttle in 1978. Gray sold the figures to various collectors. However, considering that this "carousel treasure" had a working lifespan of more than 75 years and was likely enjoyed by several million patrons, it had a very successful existence. It certainly continues to live in many people's memories and family experiences.

Contributors:

1. Gene Baxter; photographer of the Halfmoon Beach carousel
2. Fred Dahlinger; Halfmoon Beach photographs; information about Fort George; Sulzer's band organ and Louis Bopp; historical and editorial review
3. Kathy Sheehan and Stacy Draper, Rensselaer County Historical Society; park history and Sanborn Maps (Collection Lansingburgh Historical Society, Troy, NY)
4. Lansingburgh Historical Society; photographs of Halfmoon Beach carousel
5. Judy Tuttle and Gray Tuttle; late history of the carousel
6. Marianne Stevens; Halfmoon Beach carousel color photographs
7. Mary D. French and Andrew St. J. Mace, Sand Lake Historical Society; Sulzer's, Averill Park and Halfmoon Beach photographs; selected interior photograph negatives of Halfmoon Beach from Charles Viens
8. Richard and Dan Castle; Averill Park and Halfmoon Beach carousel history
9. Robert and Henry Kolb, great grandsons of original carousel owner; family and carousel history
10. Steve Krause Jr., son of the last carousel owner; carousel history
11. Warren Broderick, Sanborn maps of Sulzer's Park and early Rensselaer Park maps researched by his mother Frances Broderick, a former historian of the Lansingburgh Historical Society.

Historical Time line for the Louis Bopp Carousel*

Sulzer's Harlem River Park, Bronx, NY
ca. late 1890s-1907



New Rensselaer Park, Lansingburgh/ Troy, NY
ca. 1908-1920



Ford Park, Green Island, NY
ca. 1922-1926



Crystal Lake Park Amusements in Averill Park, Sand Lake, NY
ca. 1926-1960



Krause's Halfmoon Beach, Crescent, NY
1960-1978

*Dates and locations are based on information from owner's descendants, newspaper articles and historical data as referenced in the text.