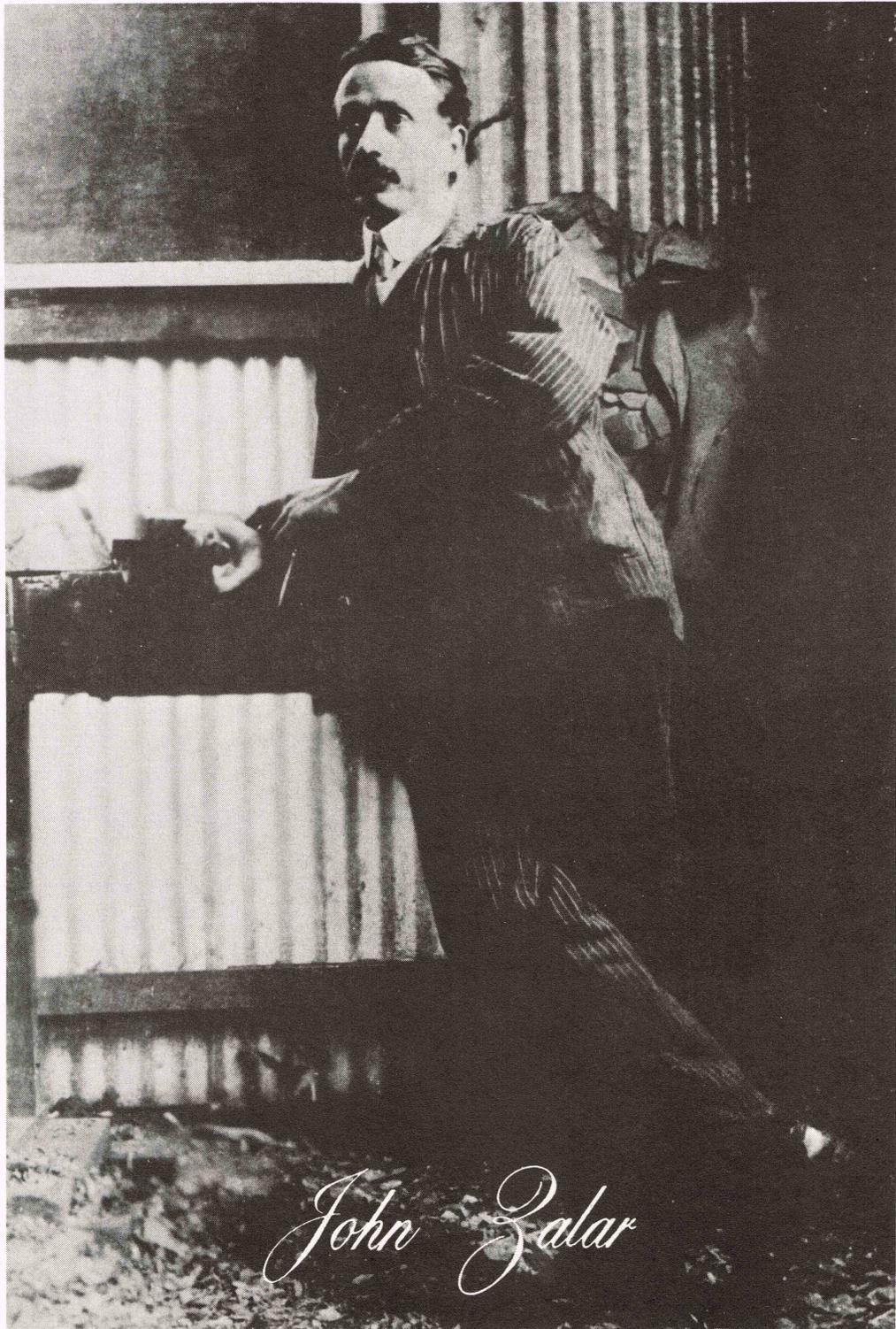


National Carousel Association

MERRY-GO-ROUNDUP

Volume 7 ● Number 2



From The Editor —

There are no words to describe the excitement I have been living with for the past eight months preparing to present this issue of the Roundup. I would like to have shared my "discovery", the Zalar family, with the NCA upon discovering them, but chose to contain my enthusiasm while the research continued. The world of carousels has been rearranged with the discovery of John Zalar. While we have yet to determine Zalar's actual contribution to the world of carousels as a carver and designer, we do know that he did not carve or design the PTC figures prior to 1916. Continuing research will hopefully provide us with that which is still unknown, the carver(s) responsible for the earlier style(s) and, just what is a Zalar. (Already we have clues about who some of the early carvers were.)

The photographs of John Zalar appearing in this issue are the only pictures of him known to exist. Now that we know what he looks like, (these photographs never having been seen before), we hope more will turn up.

Presented in this issue is only the beginning in observation of the varying styles of the Philadelphia Toboggan Company figures and the similarities between the Loeffs manufactured between 1911 and 1914 and the PTCs manufactured between 1916 and 1923. In later issues of the roundup we will cover these time periods, and others for comparison, utilizing contributions and observations from anyone interested in participating. Watch this column for announcements of specific projects.

In lieu of the Photo Census for this issue, we are presenting photographs of the rarest of Zalar's work, the horses carved completely by hand for the Philadelphia Toboggan Company during the years 1920-1923.

John Zalar gained fame as the designer and carver of the early PTC styles. Now we learn that his talents were even greater as we discover evidence that he innovated the later more elegant styles.

Barbara Williams, Editor

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The Pictorial History of the Carousel
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IN THIS ISSUE

3 Discovery: John Zalar, The Master Carver.

COVER PHOTO

John Zalar poses in the Loeff shop in Long Beach, California.

Photo courtesy of John and Geraldine Zalar

OOPS.....

Please note that the photographs 1,7,8,9,12,13,14,16,20, and 21 on pages 17 through 20 in Volume 6, Number 4 are courtesy of Shirley Rossin. All others in the '79 Conference feature are courtesy of Kevin Williams.

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DISCOVERY



John Zalar in the Looff carousel shop in Long Beach, California. Note the camel's head in the pile of parts.

Photo courtesy of John and Geraldine Zalar

John Zalar, "The Master Carver"

by

Barbara Williams

The following article, based on interviews with Sylvester John Zalar, the eldest son of John Zalar, tells us about the life of his father.

John Zalar, employed as a wood carver by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company was previously thought to have been employed by the company as one of the first master carvers, designing and carving the carousel animals.

In locating his son, we discover that up to 1910, John Zalar was not involved with the carousel manufacturing companies at all. And, from 1911 through 1914 he was carving carousel animals at the Looff factory. Not until 1916 did John Zalar go to work at PTC who was his employer until 1923.

Frederick Fried was my inspiration to search for the Zalar family and to him I am grateful. Historical Research is tedious work and more often than not is disappointing. In this case, I found the pot of gold. John Zalar is the only major carver that historians had not been able to locate. That he was told to "go west" is as close as anyone had come.

His son has had to revive 50 year old memories to provide us with the priceless information about his father presented here. I would like to express my appreciation to him and his wife, Geraldine, for their time and willingness to share their family with us.

Story continues on Page 5



Zalar and his wife, Johanna with their first child, Sylvester John.

Photo courtesy of John and Geraldine Zalar

John Zalar was a strict disciplinarian, keeping a tight control over his six children. He worked hard at his carving having little time or energy for other activities. Reading and keeping up with current events were favorite pastimes.

As it was with the carousel carvers, the Zalar family was not prosperous. In 1920, Sylvester John, at fifteen, as the eldest son, took a full time job with the Brunswig Drug Company in downtown Los Angeles as a clerk and reduced his schooling at St. Mary's in Los Angeles to half-time. Mary Zalar, John's wife, did daywork to supplement the family's income.

Sylvester John continued going to night school and completed his education. His employment with the Brunswig Drug Company lasted 27 years, his later position being that of Traffic Manager in charge of shipping. He is now retired and lives in the city of La Crescenta.

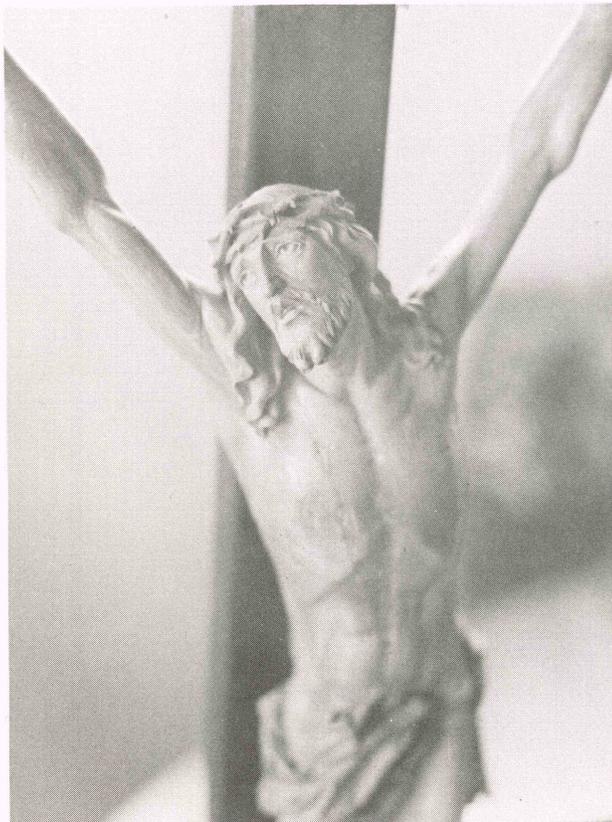
In 1928, at the age of thirteen, Elezabeth Zalar was killed in an automobile accident. Louis died in 1958 of cancer, the end result of an injury from a hit and run accident. Louise Zalar Nafziger died in 1978. Pauline Zalar Hirth and Helen Zalar Anthony live in the city of El Monte in California. Mary Zalar died on May 1, 1965.

A few years after his father's death, John sold his father's carving tools to a man who was engaged in carving reproductions of fine antique furniture for Barker Brothers, a local furniture company. The name and whereabouts of the recipient of John Zalar's Swiss made carving tools is unknown.

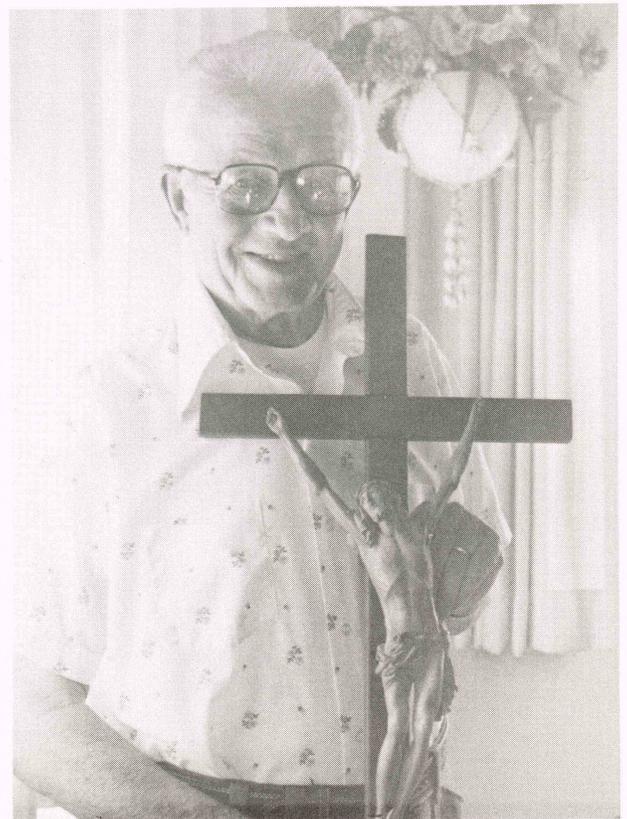


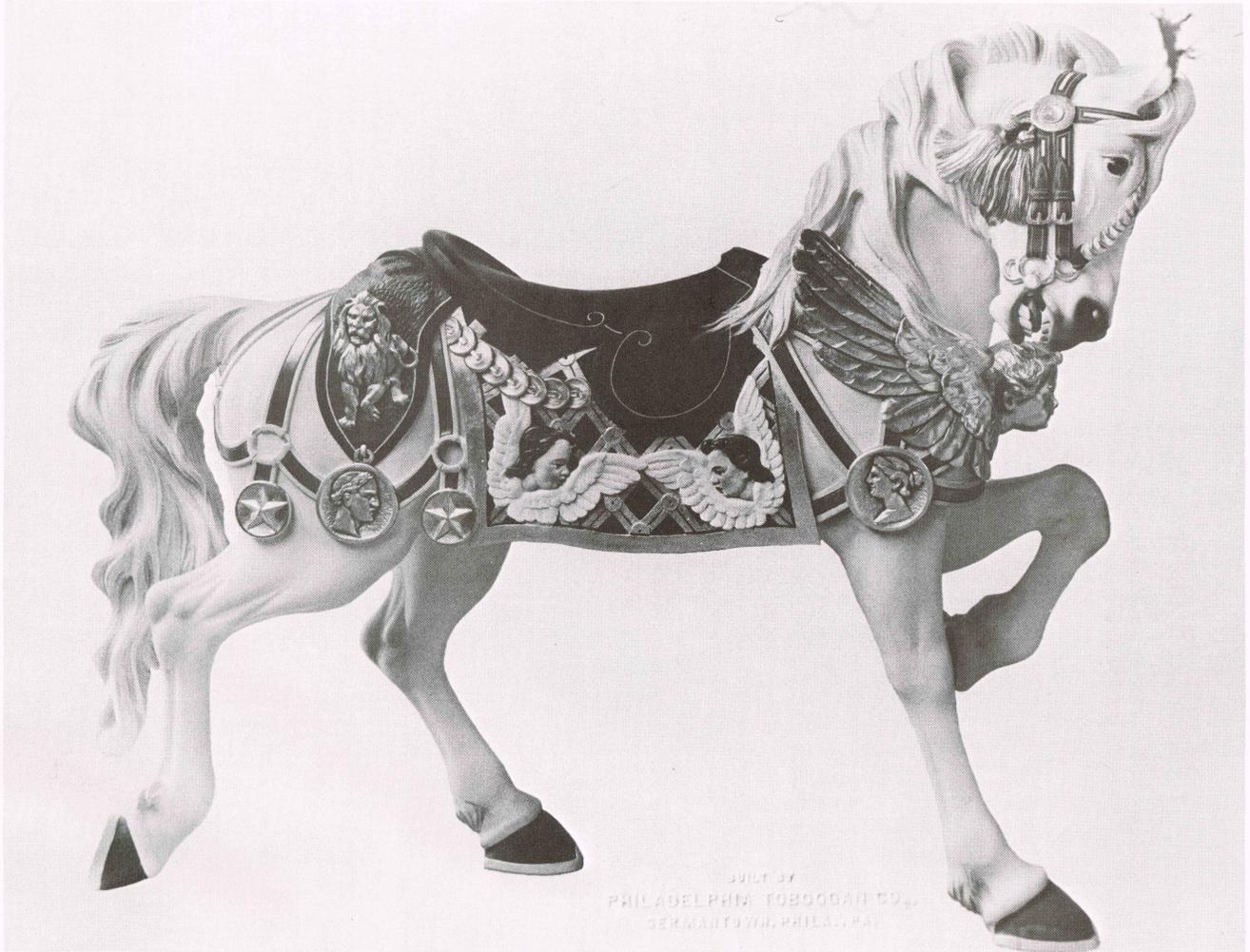
The wedding portrait of Zalar's second marriage. Zalar, seated left, with his new wife, Mary, seated right. Rudolph Rootar, Zalar's first wife's brother is at upper left. Another brother is on the right. The young lady in the center is a cousin.

Photo courtesy of John and Geraldine Zalar



John Zalar, right, with his crucifix, the only carving of his father's that he has. Detail of crucifix, above.





Presumably this horse was designed and carved, at in part, by John Zalar. The photograph is a factory shot and bears the companies embossed stamp at the bottom. The photo has no identifying marks and the whereabouts of the horse is unknown.

Photo courtesy of John and Geraldine Zalar



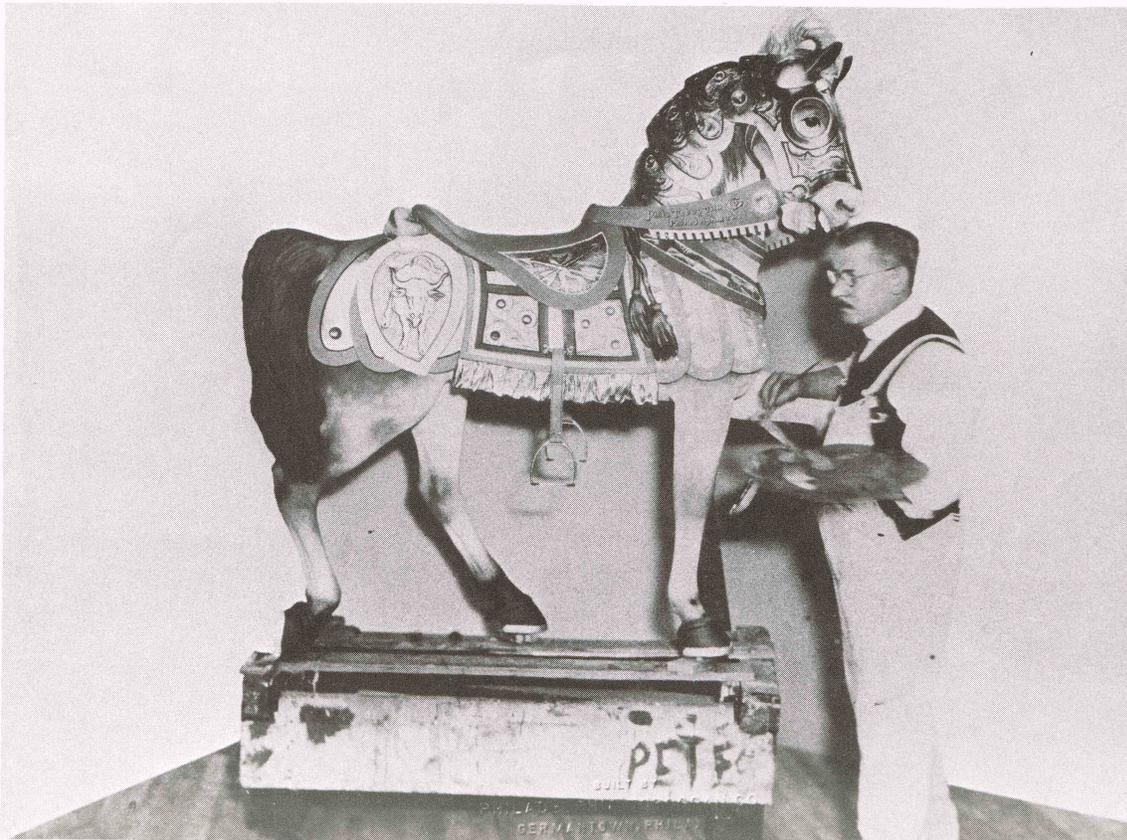
Another horse presumed to be a Zalar. It's whereabouts is unknown.

Photo courtesy of John and Geraldine Zalar



According to old records that were retained by the Philadelphia Toboggan Company until 1972 when they were destroyed, and Fred Fried's interviews with long time PTC employees, John Allen and Ray Lusse, the painter, seated in the foreground and in the photo below, is Gustav Weiss who was employed from 1907 until 1932. He was known to be impeccably neat, never, or rarely ever getting any paint on his fine clothes.

Photo courtesy of the Frederick Fried archives



This horse can be seen in the background of the photo above. It, too, is assumed to be a Zalar.

Photo courtesy of John and Geraldine Zalar

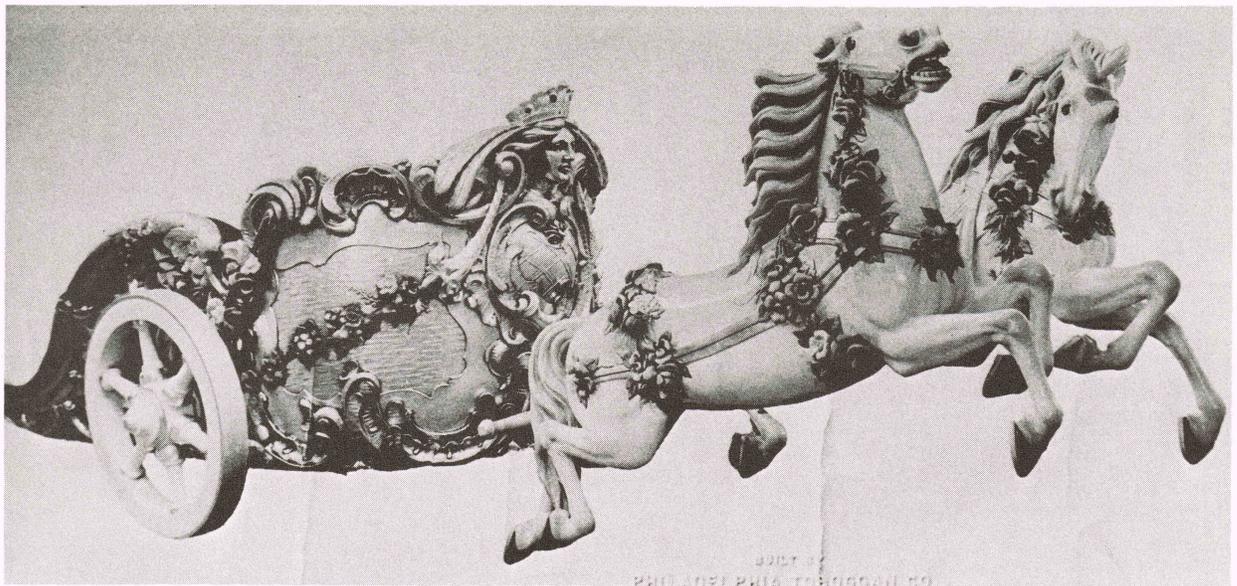
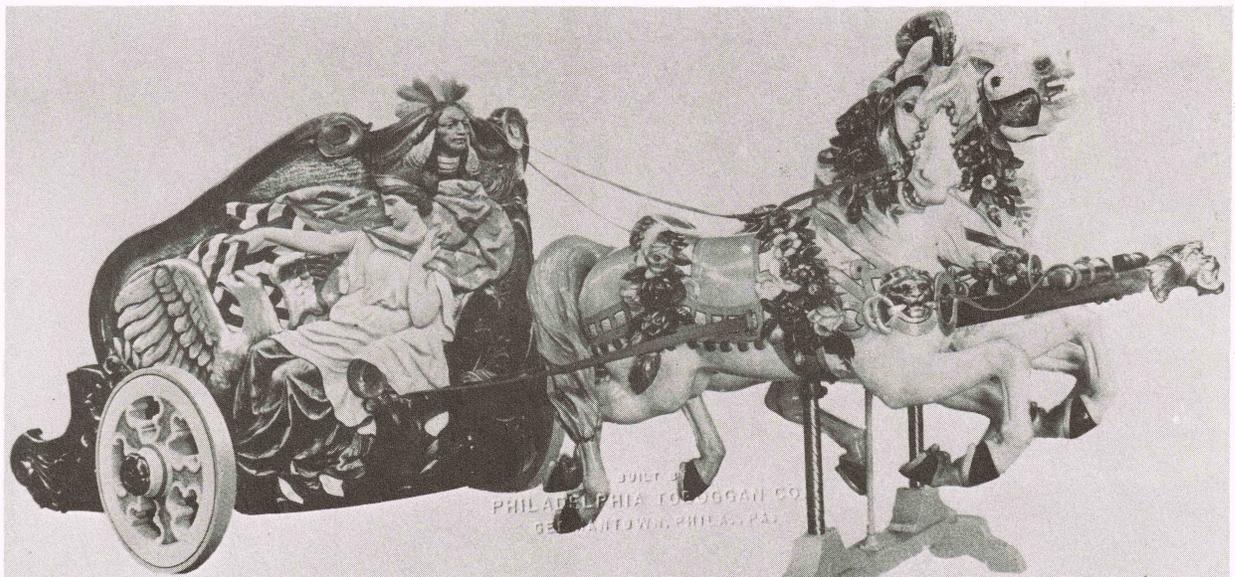


Photo courtesy of John and Geraldine Zalar

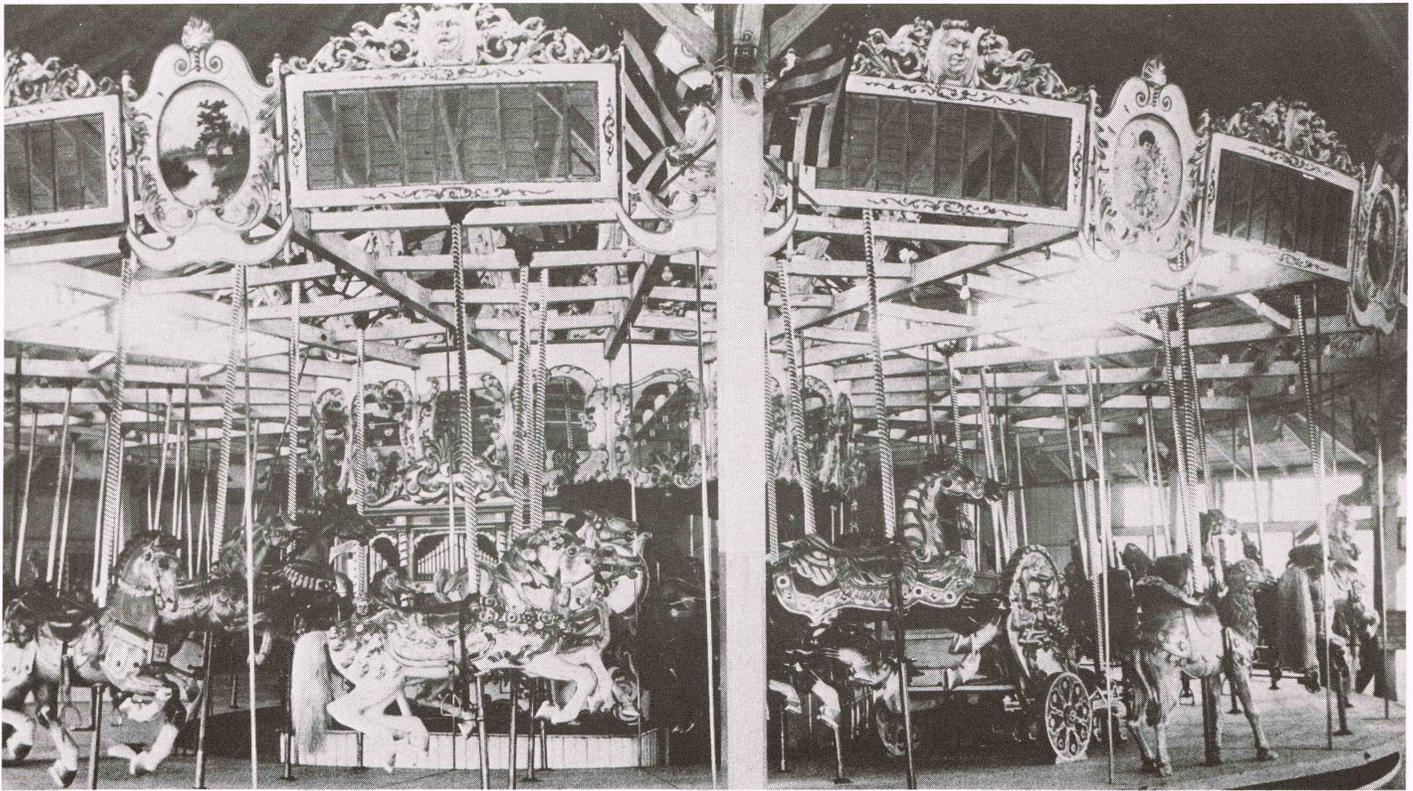


Photo courtesy of the Frederick Fried Archives



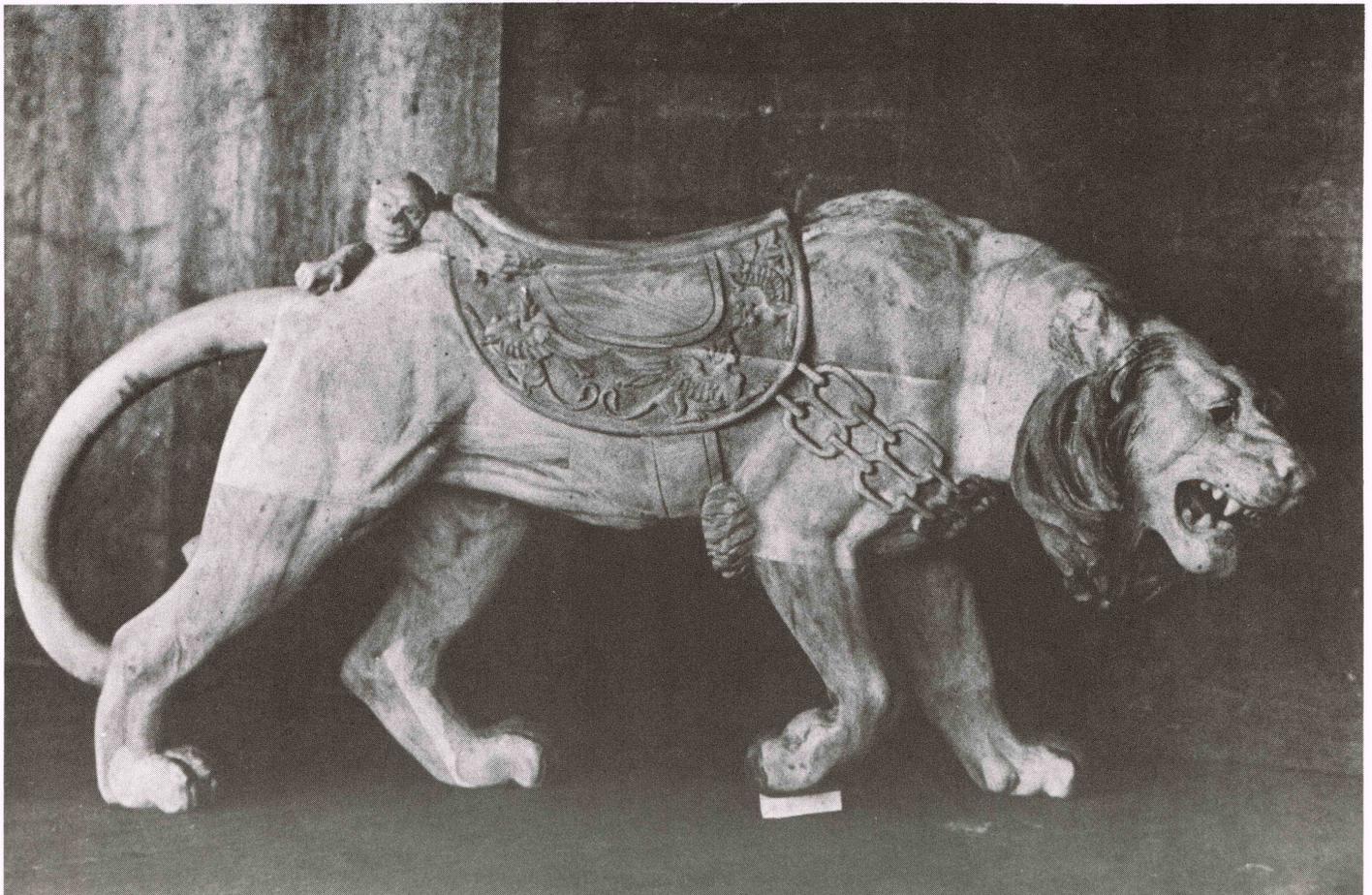
The top and bottom photos were retained by John Zalar, perhaps for comparison of the earlier and his later style. The photo in the center shows the chariot set on the completed carousel. The whereabouts of the later chariot set is unknown.

Photo courtesy of John and Geraldine Zalar



The Looff carousel at Crescent Park, Rhode Island. This carousel was manufactured before Zalar was employed by Looff but the horse immediately behind the post in the center has facial features similar to later PTC's suggesting it may be a Zalar horse added later. (Compare this horse's face and neck angle to the PTC horses on page 16, bottom.)

Photo courtesy of John and Geraldine Zalar



The tiger from the Looff carousel in Spokane, Washington. This, one of a kind figure was carved in 1909 which is prior to Zalar's employment with Looff. Zalar may have retained this photograph of the tiger out of respect for its magnificence.

Photo courtesy of John and Geraldine Zalar



PTC #, 1918, originally installed at the Cincinnati Zoo, now at Marriott's Great America, Park in Santa Clara, California. It is not premature to conclude that John Zalar designed and carved at least in part, the outside row horses on this machine.

Photo Courtesy of the Frederick Fried Archives

JOHN ZALAR - - A PERSPECTIVE

by

Barbara Charles

The cronology which we have for John Zalar is still very sketchy:

- 1902 Arrives in the United States, settles in Brooklyn and works for the city of New York.
- 1911 He begins to work for Looff in Riverside, R.I.
- 1914-15 He works for Looff in Long Beach, Calif.
- 1915 He returns to Brooklyn after the death of his first wife.
- 1916-20 He works for PTC in Philadelphia.
- 1920-24 He returns to California and continues to carve for PTC, shipping the figures East.
- 1925 Zalar dies.

But as minimal, as it is, some old assumptions have to be questioned or revised and some new ones formed.

Very simplistically, PTC styles break into three styles-- the early menagerie period (1904-1907), the all-horse "high-eye" style (1908-1916), and the more naturalistic, later period (1917-1933). For a long time, the early menagerie animals and/or the "high-eyed" horses have been assigned to the chisels of John Zalar. Given what we now know about Zalar's cronology, that is obviously impossible, but we don't know who did carve these styles. All we have is a clue as to how the confusion probably happened. At least by 1912, there was a carver at PTC named Len Zoller. While we don't know if he was there earlier, it would be quite understandable if decades later when Frank Carretta and John Allen (both of whom joined PTC after Zalar was no longer carving) were interviewed, these two such similar names became confused and ultimately fused into one.

What now is evident is that the advent of the naturalistic late period coincides with John Zalar joining PTC. From the photographic evidence Barbara Williams has assembled, it can be assumed that Zalar brings this style with him from his time in the Looff factory. In fact, Zalar now appears to have initiated this style and many of the PTC figures from the late teens carved by Zalar. In fact, in my opinion, it is unlikely that Muller carved any of these figures.

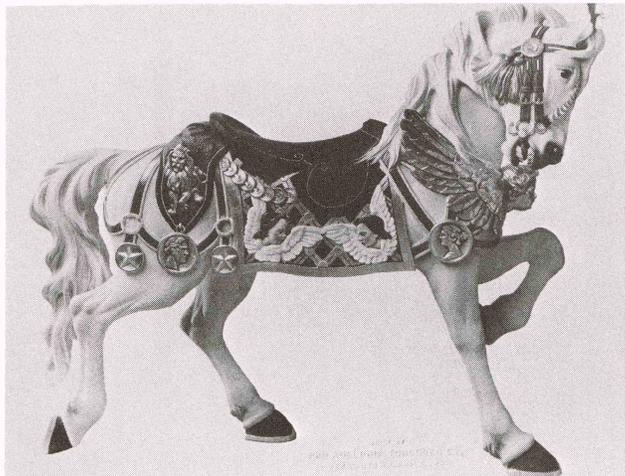
But while Zalar now appears to be terribly important in making a major style change at PTC, how important is he to the Looff designs? Probably not nearly so influential there.

The major Looff style change from the more primitive early figures to the elegant later ones coincides with the removal of the operation from Brooklyn to Riverside, R.I., in 1905. The first carousel known to have been made in Riverside was installed at Luna Park, Seattle, Washington (later moved to Whitney's in San Francisco) in 1907--four years before Zalar joins the staff. From the little we know of Zalar's cronology, we have to assume that prior to joining Looff he never carved carousel figures. Since there is not a major style change around 1911 (only a real increase of production with the manufacture of the Redondo Beach machine, the Long Beach, Ocean Park and Santa Cruz machines all completed in 1911) we have to assume that Zalar worked under and learned from the other Looff carver(s). He obviously learned well and took those skills with him to PTC.

While this new information about Zalar helps to clarify and make obvious a PTC style change in the mid-1910s, it also must make us painfully aware of how little we know about the personnel in these major carving shops. We will have to continue to research and study the early period of PTC to discover the genius who was at work there. We also have to learn considerably more about the Looff factory. From the evidence we already have, we can assume that Charles I.D. Looff, Sr. was the primary early stylist. But who effects the changes that happen with the move to Riverside? We don't know. That two will take considerably more study.

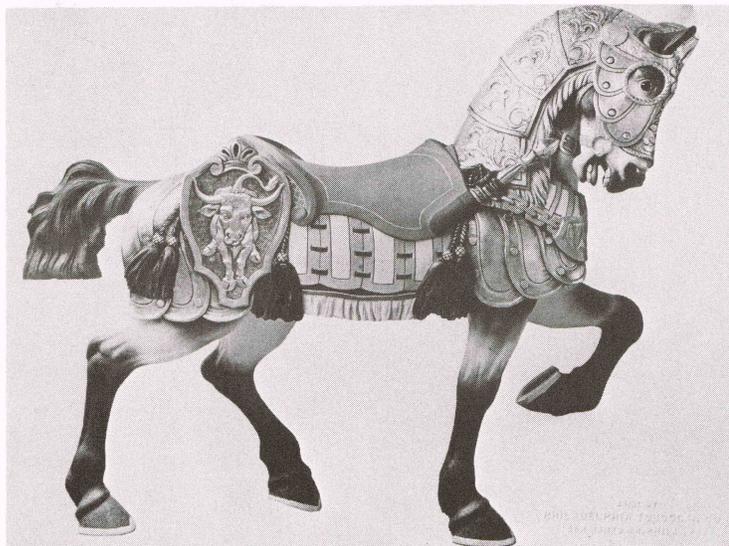
In Comparison

Now knowing the John Zalar carved carousel figures for both the Loeff and Philadelphia Toboggan Companies, it is of particular interest to note the features found on the Loeff and PTC animals during the years Zalar was employed as a carver.

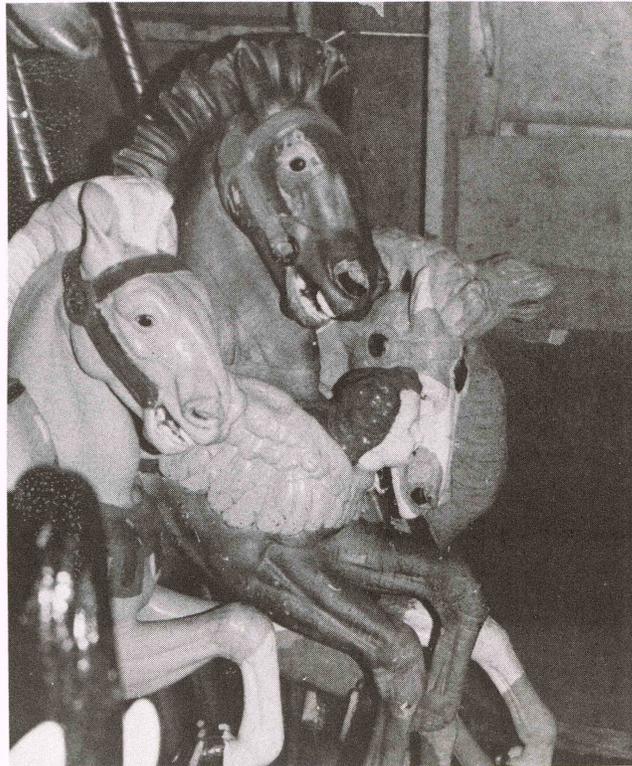


Loeff horse, circa 1912, from the collection of Rol and Jo Summit.

Photo courtesy of Rol and Jo Summit



The armour on the heads of these horses appears to be identical.



Loeff figures from the New London, Connecticut, broken up in 1976.

Photo courtesy of Rol and Jo Summit

Strikingly similar decorations, the angels with extended wings and the lions on the heraldic shields, are seen here on both Loeff and PTC figures. Also compare the decorations on these figures with those on the horse pictured on page 15, of Volume 5, Number 1 of the Roundup.



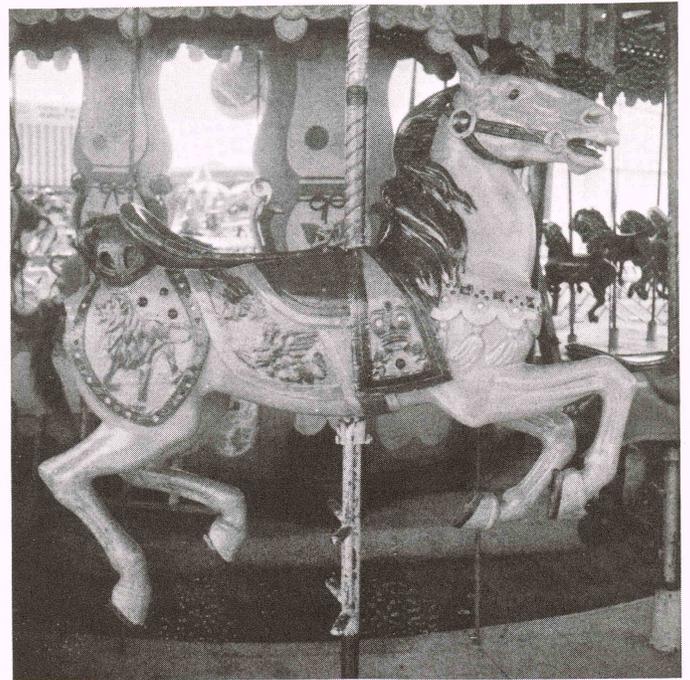
PTC #46, 1918 at Disneyworld, Orlando, Florida.

Photo courtesy of Rol and Jo Summit

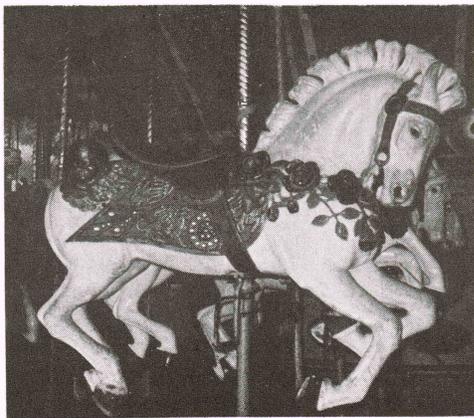


Detail of horse from PTC #45, 1918 at Marriott's Great America Park, Santa Clara, California.

The mythical creatures on the saddle blanket of the Looff horse are nearly obliterated with age and wear, but the keen resemblance to the same creatures on the blanket of the PTC horse is still obvious.

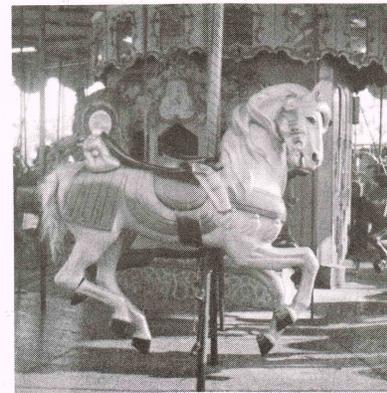


Looff, manufactured in 1916, seen here at Belmont Park, San Deigo. Broken up in 1978.



Looff, 1912, from the Redondo Beach, California machine.

Note the similarity in the angle and muscle tone of the head and neck of these two horses. Also not the "cauliflower" mane on the PTC horse that is more characteristically associated with Looff.

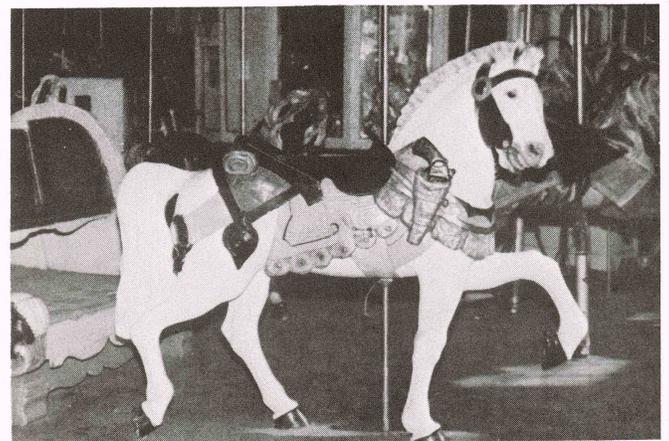


Looff, 1911, at Long Beach, California. This carousel is now in storage.



PTC #49, 1919 at Clementon, New Jersey.

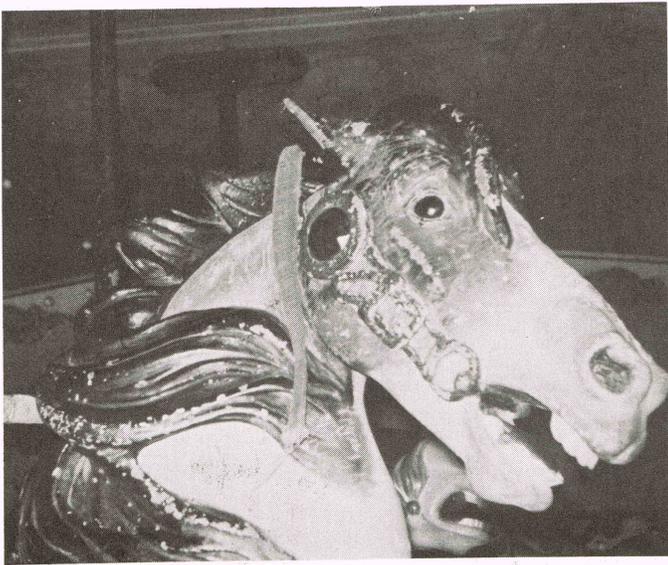
Photo courtesy of Rol and Jo Summit



PTC #49, 1919 at Clementon, New Jersey.

Photo courtesy of Rol and Jo Summit

While the western pistol on the PTC horse is crudely carved and oversized, it still closely resembles the pistol on the Looff horse.



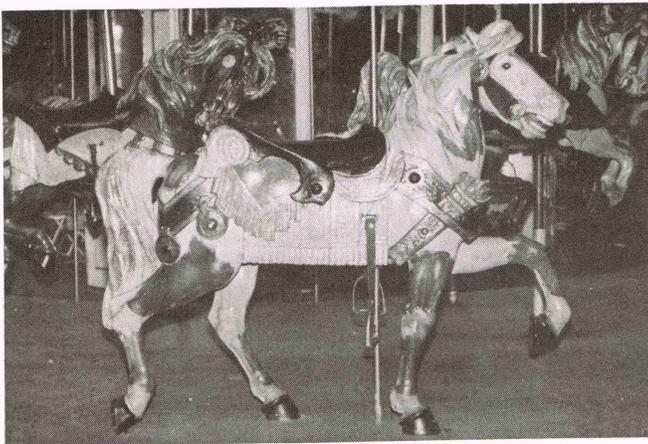
Looff, 1912, from the Redondo Beach machine.

The features and proportions in the faces of these two horses are identical.



PTC #45, 1918 at Marriott's Great America Park, Santa Clara, California.

Note the similarity of the PTC crescent and star decoration with the same type of decoration found on a Looff horse pictured on page 78 of the Time-Life Encyclopedia of Collectibles Volume that contains the feature *Carousel Animals; Creatures of Fantasy*.



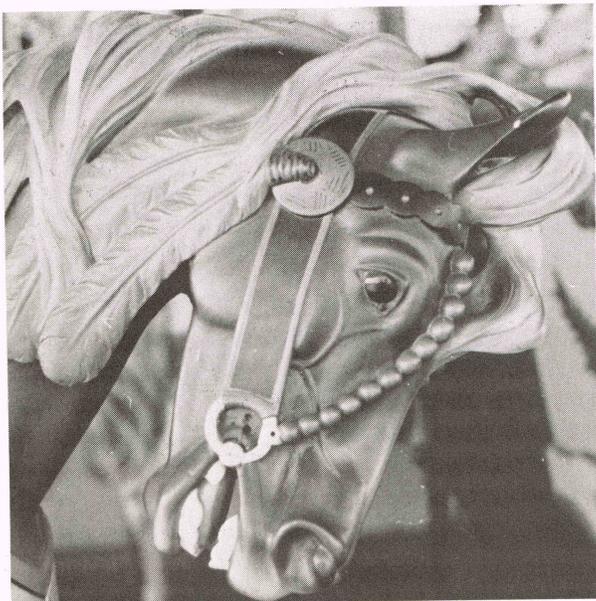
PTC#49 at Clementon, New Jersey.

Photo courtesy of Rol and Jo Summit



PTC#46, 1918 at Disneyworld, Orland, Florida.

Photo courtesy of Rol and Jo Summit



PTC #45, Santa Clara.



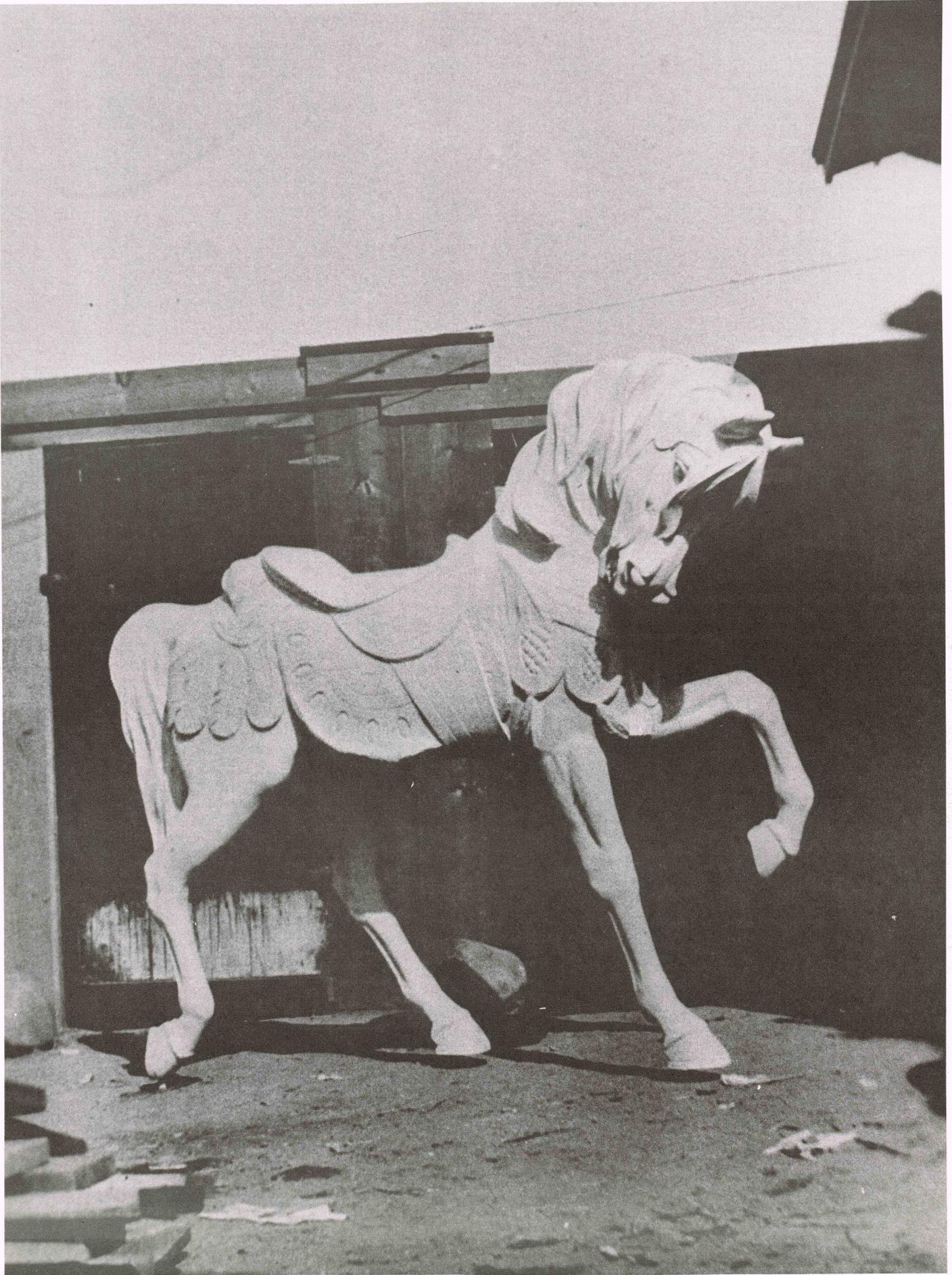
PTC #46, Disneyworld

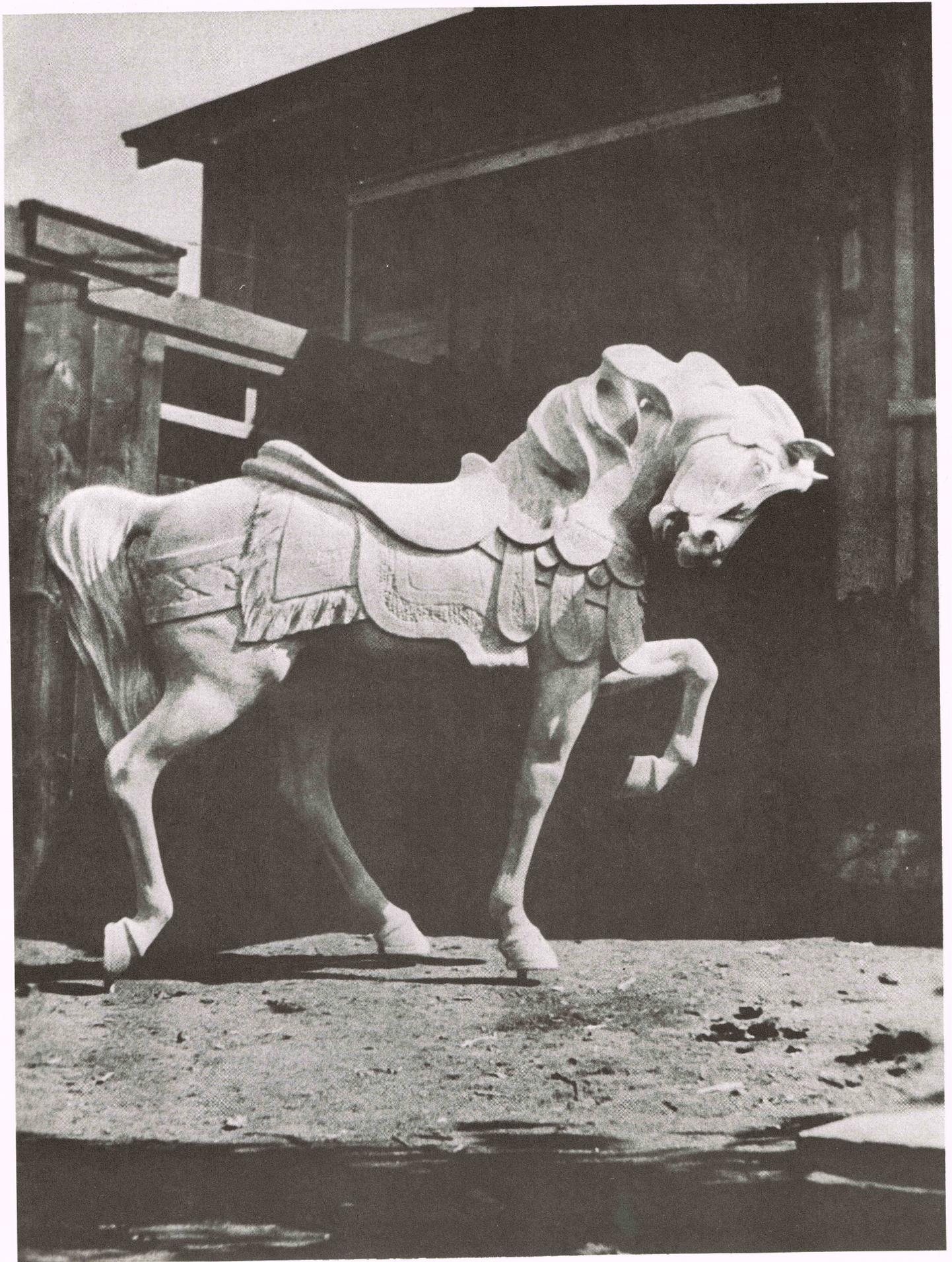
Photo courtesy of Rol and Jo Summit

The figures on the carousel at Disneyworld are attributed to Daniel Muller. Certainly the horse, Left, has a more serene expression than the one on the right, but the features are similar.

*Oh, Great White Horse, I'm here again,
I'm stretching, reaching, climbing
up to your back.
Solid, not supple,
You glitter with diamonds and emeralds.
Beneath the paint I feel your body move
and together we soar.*

The Carousel Horses on the following pages were carved completely by hand by John Zalar in his workshop in the backyard of his home in California for the Philadelphia Toboggan Company during the years 1920 to 1923. Their whereabouts is unknown.









The Art of John Zalar

These magnificent artworks were created by John Zalar in his native homeland, Austria. It is not known if they survived the great wars.

All photos courtesy of John and Geraldine Zalar

