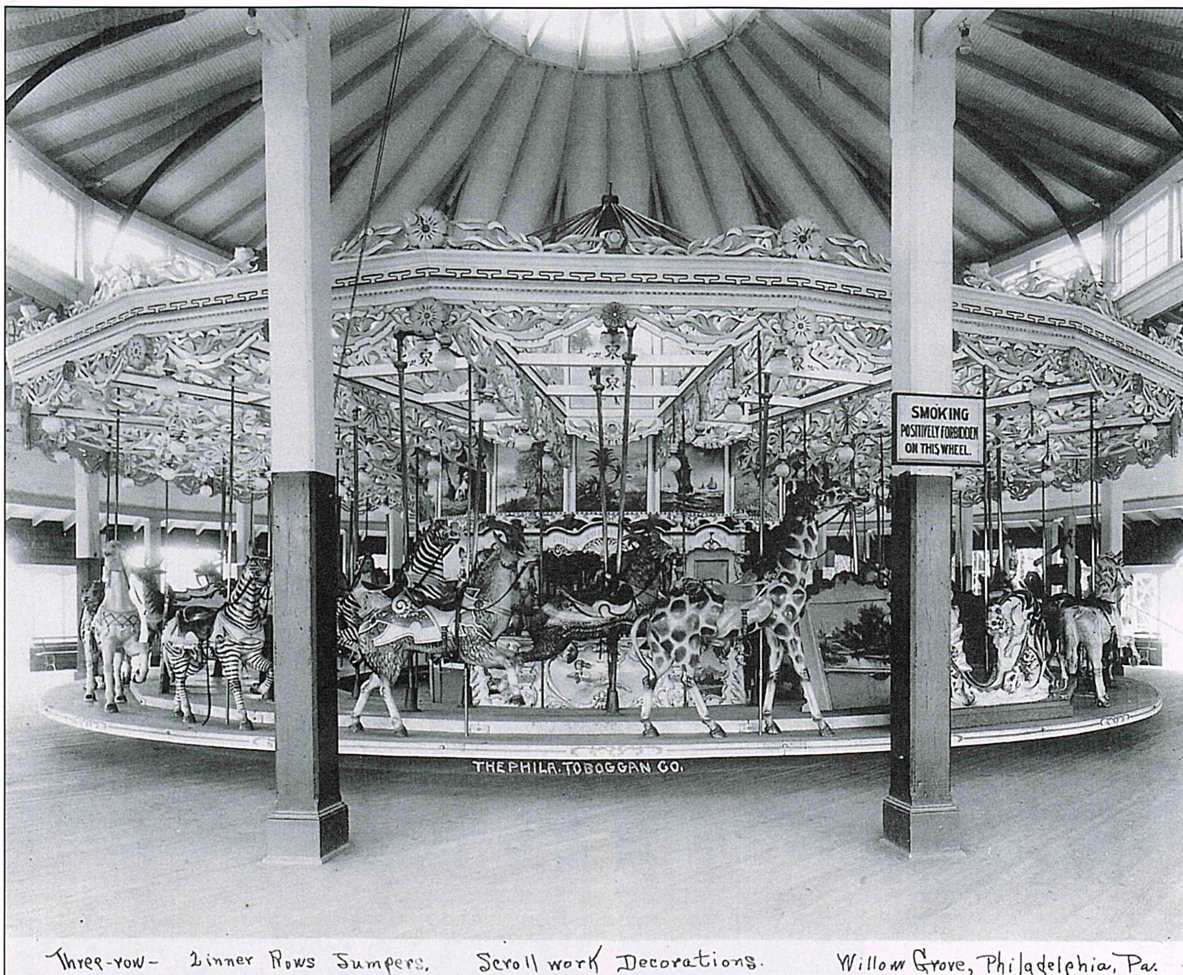


# PTC #11 Remembered

Article by Barbara Williams, NCA Archivist



*Left: PTC #11 at Willow Grove Park in Willow Grove, Pa. This photograph is not dated—it may have been taken at the time of installation, when the carousel was newly outfitted with jumping animals. The white horse is on the far left of the platform. Courtesy of Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters, Inc.*

*All uncredited photographs were contributed by Barbara Williams.*

Thinking about PTC #11 again was prompted by the contribution of a photograph of the carousel's white horse by John J. Caruso of Brooklyn, N.Y.

He found the image in a frame in a gift shop, asked if he could have it, and generously sent a copy to the NCA Archives. I recognized the style as early PTC, noting the rather unusual trappings, but didn't recognize the horse. The scrollwork on the portion of the carousel's upper rim, which was visible in the photo, also was familiar.

I pulled the early PTC photos from the Archives, and there in a photograph of PTC #11 was the horse and the fancy rim. But, the horse was not on the carousel when I visited it in Las Vegas prior to 1976. And it is in a much different style than the horses I saw on the carousel.

That was enough to spark my curiosity. But, as often happens during historical research, I ended

up with more questions than answers.

Seeing PTC #11 in Las Vegas could be summed up in one word—heartbreak. It was obviously a grand old carousel, stuck in a destructive situation. It did survive and was rejuvenated for a brief, last fling as an operating carousel before the animals were sent their separate ways.

Many thanks to those who contributed to this article: Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters, Inc., John J. Caruso, and Fred Dahlinger.

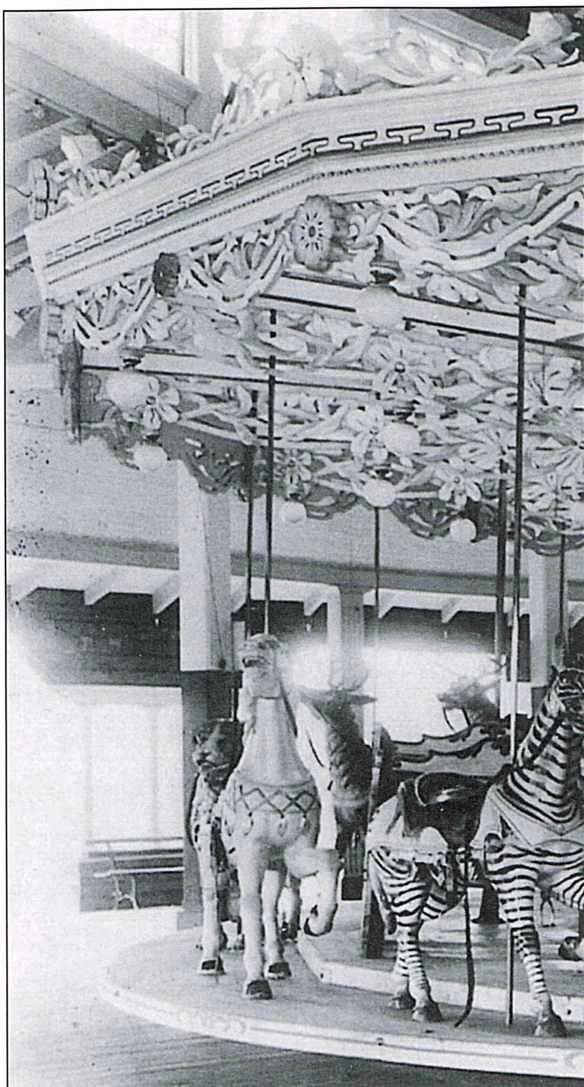
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Las Vegas, Nevada, is situated in the middle of a vast, windswept, barren desert. It is a harsh place, dry and at times unbearably hot, with nighttime temperatures that can plunge below freezing. This world-famous oasis of gambling casinos lures millions of tourists annually, who



*Left: Behind the white horse is a dog. These animals were not on PTC #11 in the 1970s; it had a single-level platform at that time.*

*Right: The horse on the far right also is a departure from the style of the outside-row horses that were on PTC #11 in later years. Photos courtesy of Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters, Inc.*



come to satisfy the irresistible opportunity to win, or more likely lose, enormous sums of money.

The trend of the larger-than-life themed casinos of today began in the late 1960s with the introduction of the Circus Circus Casino, which was constructed in the shape of a huge circus tent. Inside, aerialists performed, gamblers steadied themselves on spinning platforms, circus music blared, and the overall atmosphere was reminiscent of the collective images, sights, and smells of the circus. Outside, in front of the casino, was another unique feature—a genuine carousel was part of the casino's revolving marquee. Philadelphia Toboggan Company #11 was that carousel.

PTC #11's stay in Las Vegas was fairly short, from 1967 to 1976. But it was devastating for the carousel. Subjected to triple-digit summer temperatures, the wooden animals split and warped in the outdoor setting. Layers of blistered paint peeled off and littered the platform like confetti.

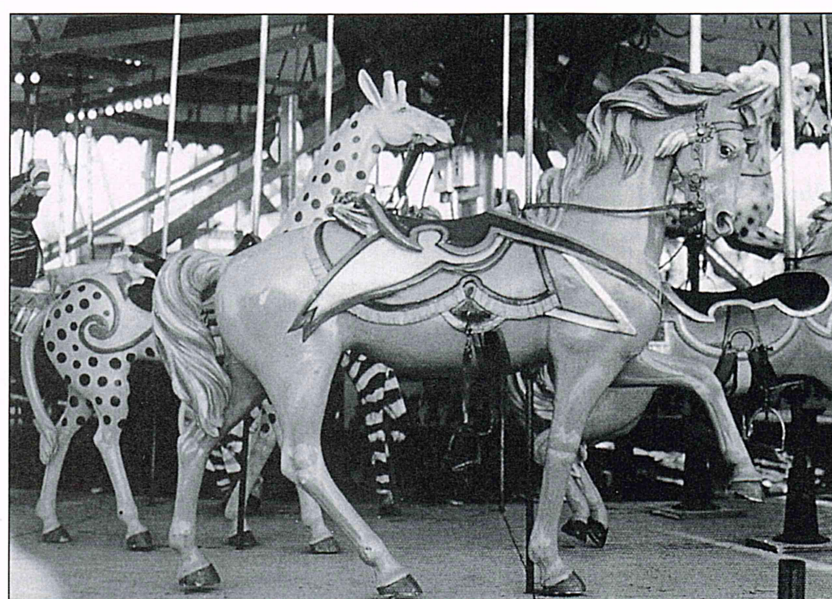
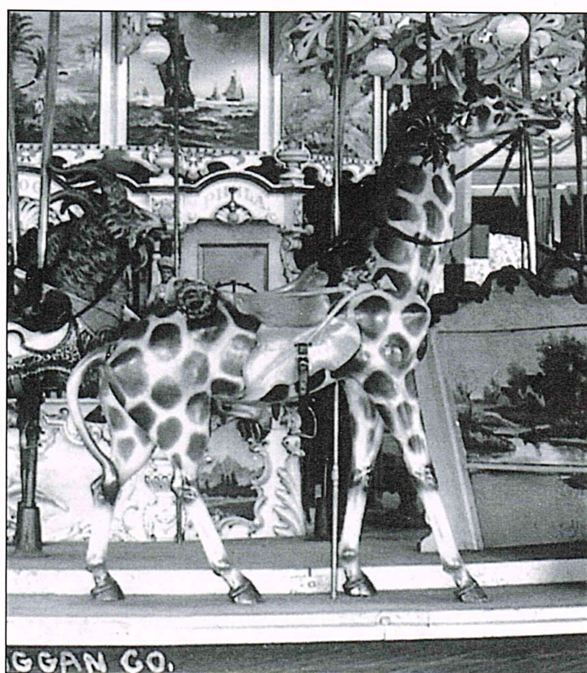
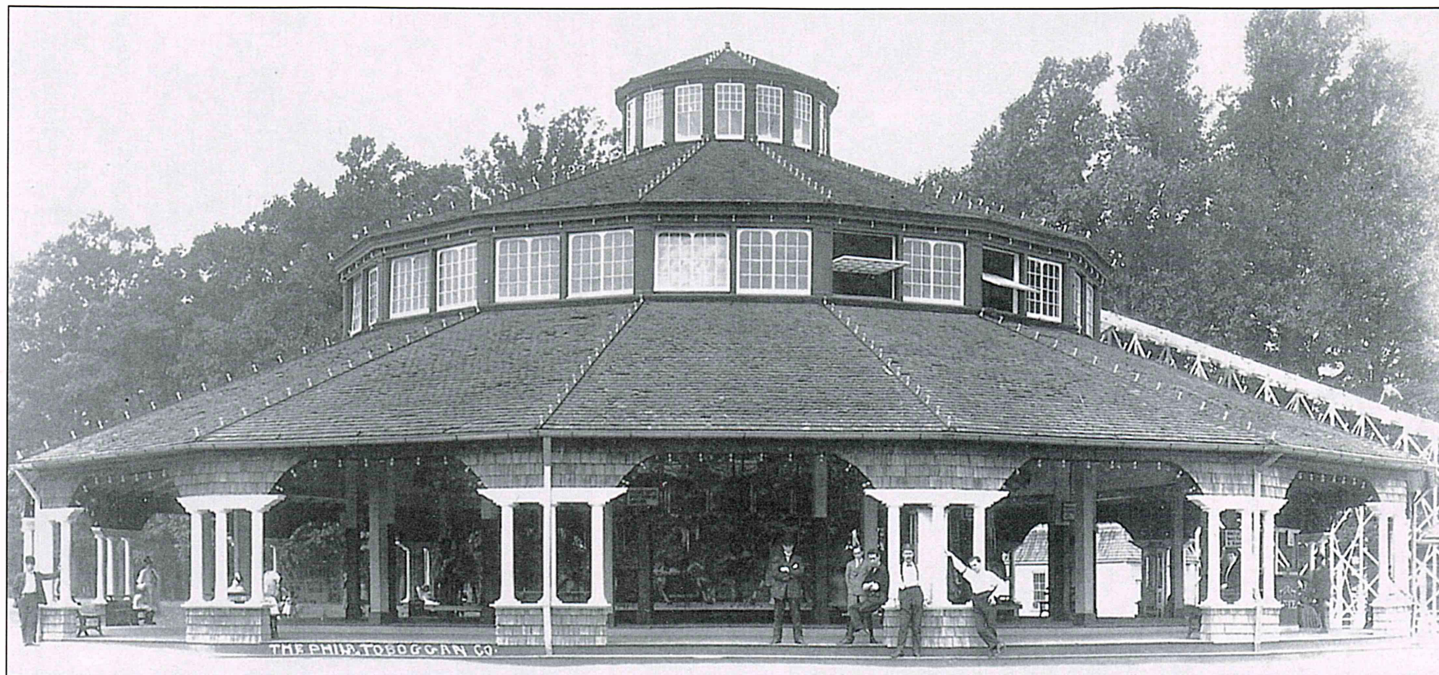
Spray from nearby fountains drenched the animals each afternoon as the west winds blew in from the desert. Vandals stole loose legs and collapsed sections of the platform in an attempt to jar the by then inoperable carousel into motion.

In 1976, PTC #11 was sold to the Reithoffer Shows, a Florida-based ride company. Reithoffer redesigned the machine drive and trailer-mounted the center to make the carousel portable for transport on the carnival circuit. In 1977, 71-year-old PTC #11 was sold for the last time as a whole carousel, and the animals were dispersed.

While the facts about the carousel's last days are known, there is much confusion about its earlier life. Sources list various locations and dates, and none of them are consistent.

Laura Grauer, archivist at PTC, only lists Willow Grove Park, in Willow Grove, Pa., as a former location, verifiable by PTC's inscribed photographs (PTC's historical photographs are not dated).





Other locations associated with PTC #11 are Cape May, N.J., Bluegrass Park (later Joyland Park) in Lexington, Ky., and Coney Island, N.Y. not necessarily in that order. To add to the confusion about PTC #11's previous locations, these seem to become combined with PTC #9's.

The PTC inventory in *Amusement Park Journal: The Carousels of the Philadelphia Toboggan Company*, lists: "1925 - #9 in shop (PTC), now #74R; 1929 - Old #9, formerly #74R, now #86R to Joyland, Ky."

However, an article in the *Louisville Courier* mentions PTC #11 as having been at Joyland

from 1928 to 1962. And a letter in the NCA Archives from Mrs. C. A. Powell reads, "In 1916 the carousel [#11] was sold to Bluegrass Park [Joyland] in Lexington near my hometown of Baris, Ky." Dates for PTC #11's other assumed locations are equally inconsistent.

There is repeated reference to PTC #11 as having been sent back to the factory in 1923 for conversion from a stationary carousel to a jumping machine. If that date is accurate, then the PTC photograph of the carousel at Willow Grove was taken in 1923 or later, as the photo clearly shows jumping animals (PTC traditionally took photos of its carousels at the time of installation). So Willow Grove could not have been its original location. Was it Coney Island, or was it Cape

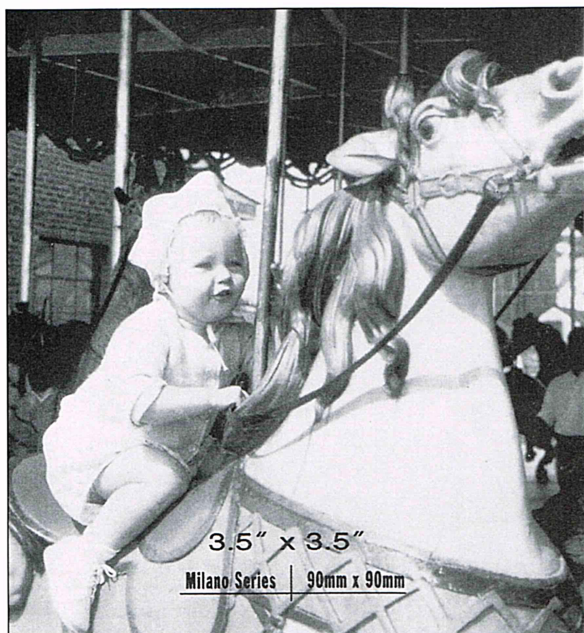
*Above: The octagon carousel building at Willow Grove.*

*Left: The outside-row giraffe in this factory photo from Willow Grove was not on the carousel in Las Vegas. Photos courtesy of Philadelphia Toboggan Coasters, Inc.*

*Right: PTC #11 at a Reithoffer Show in 1976, its last year of operation. Courtesy of NCA Archives.*



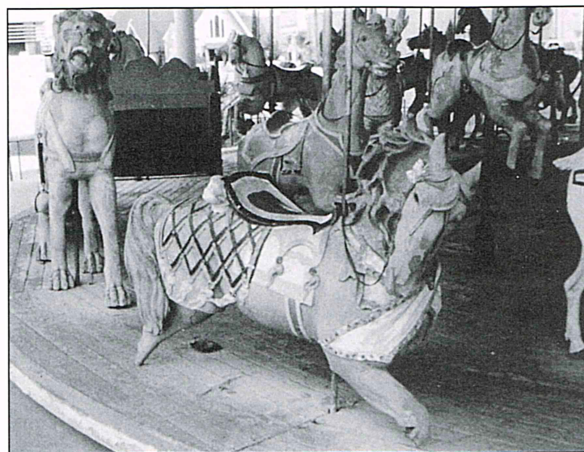
*Top left: It is difficult to tell when this photograph was taken. Judging by the baby's clothing, it could be as early as the 1920s or as late as the 1940s. The carousel is in an outdoor location; it is not the same setting as the Willow Grove photograph. Courtesy of John J. Caruso.*



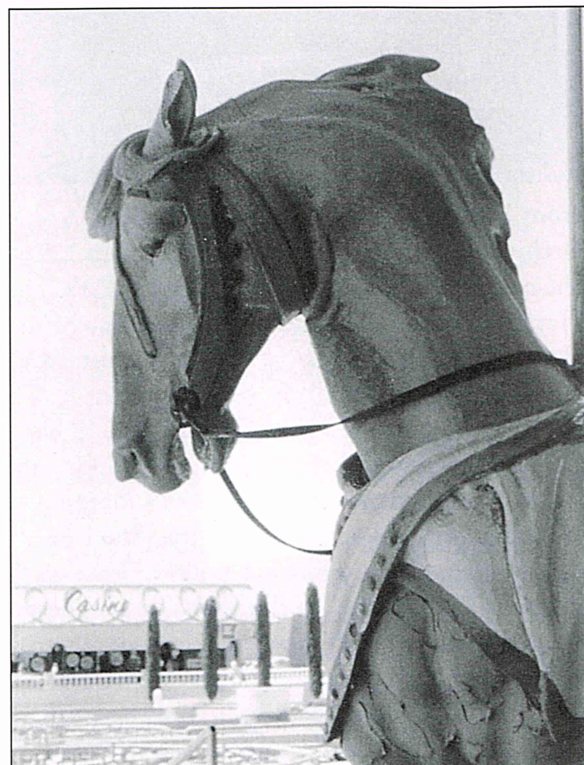
*Top right: The giraffe survived Las Vegas, legs intact. The forward section of the platform has begun to collapse.*



*Middle left: One of the two Illions horses suffered dramatic damage and was left in this position for several months.*



*Bottom left: The other Illions horse on PTC #11 was an earlier style.*



*Bottom right: An inside view of the later Illions horse and the Carmel jumper.*

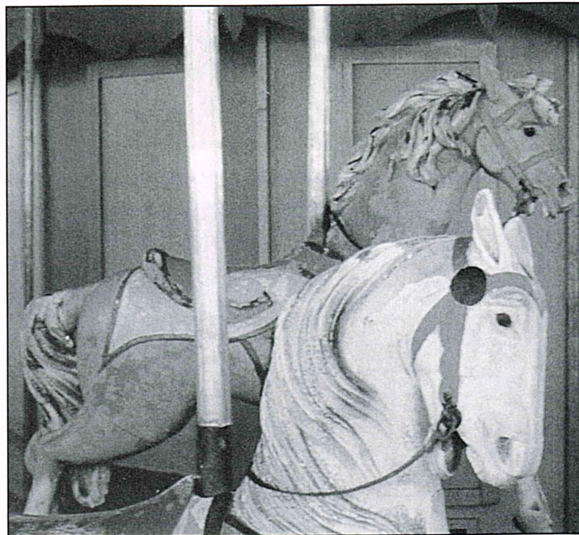
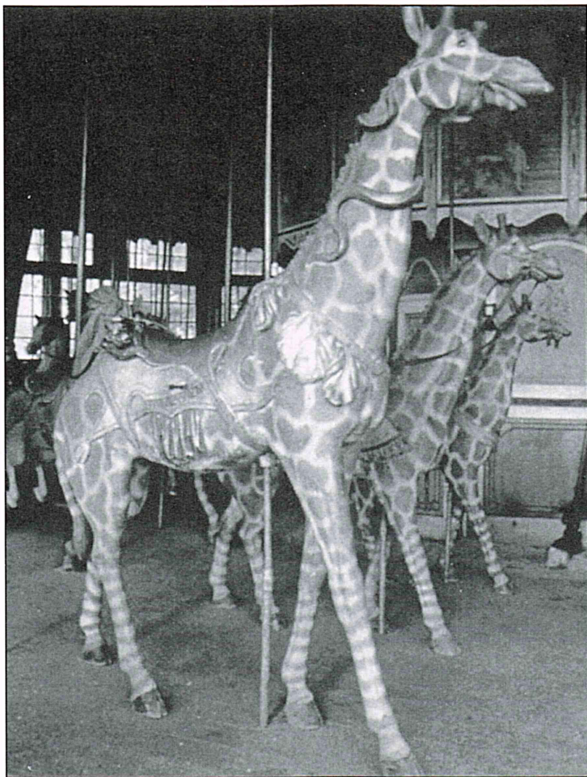


May? *Amusement Park Journal* lists PTC #11 at Cape May in 1931 . . . which doesn't fit, either.

Could it be that the assigned R (rebuilt) numbers for PTC #9 and #11, 86R and 68R respectively, were transposed at some point in the carousel's historical records, thus this confusion? Perhaps.

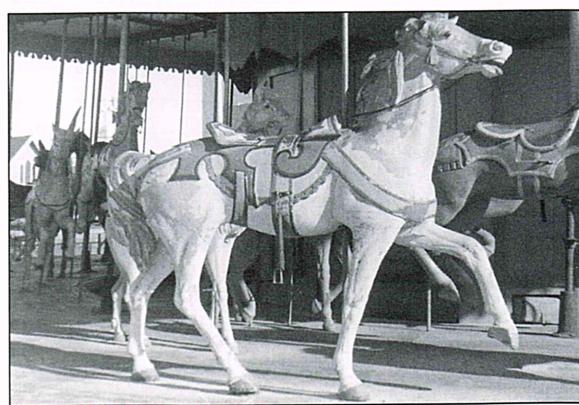
More questions about PTC #11 arise upon scrutiny of PTC's photograph of PTC #11. And



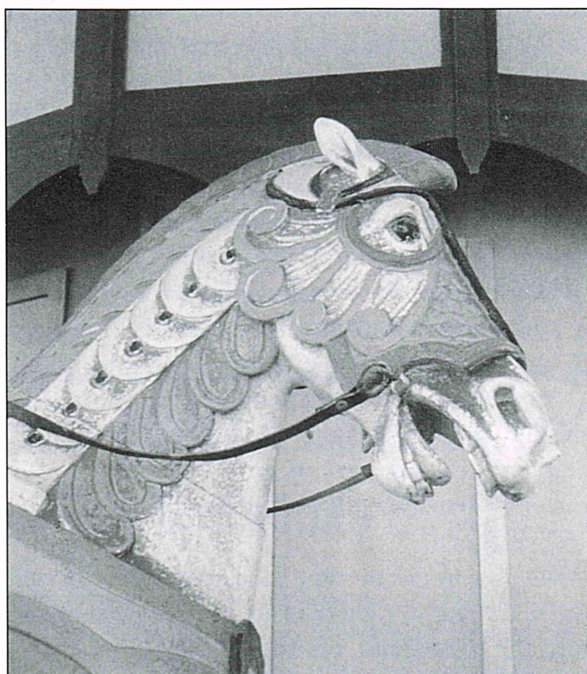


*Top left: A comparative photograph of giraffes from PTC #6 in Burlington, Colo. PTC #11's animals were no less grand; they just weren't as lucky. Courtesy of NCA Archives.*

*Topright: The Stein & Goldstein jumper. There also were two Dentzel prancers.*



*Bottom left: Another later, smaller stander, this armored horse's shading is actually dirt.*



*Middle right: In the 1970s, the eight outside-row PTC horses were all similar in style and pose. PTC #11 had 10 outside-row standing horses (including two Illions), 12 second-row horses, and 13 third-row horses. In all, there were 48 animals, including one lion, one tiger, three goats, two deer, two camels, two giraffes, one donkey, and one zebra.*



a comparison with NCA Archives photographs of the carousel while in Las Vegas and with Reithoffer Shows reveals that the animals in the photograph of the carousel at Willow Grove are not on the carousel in the later photos. What happened to these animals, and at what point did the carousel acquire the animals from other manufacturers—Illions, Carmel, Dentzel, and Stein and Goldstein?

PTC #11 did not survive long enough to come full circle and still be with us as a restored and

prized carousel. As can be seen in the comparative photographs, its animals were no less grand than those on PTC #6, the pride and joy we covet.

The carousels' paths merely took them in different directions, thus the contrasting ultimate outcomes.

*Bottom right: Refurbished and repainted, PTC #11's goat began a new life with the Reithoffer Shows. Courtesy of NCA Archives.*