



The Lakeside Park Antique Carousel in St. Catharines is a working antique carousel featuring horses, goats and other animals. It costs only a nickel to ride.



Young and old alike enjoy riding on the carousel.
THIS PHOTO & BELOW BY MIKE DAVIS.



A night to remember: this young couple took a spin on the carousel before heading off for their prom night last June.

Five-Cent Delight: The Antique Lakeside Park Carousel

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except where noted

What can you get for a nickel these days? In Lakeside Park, Port Dalhousie, near St. Catharines, there's a wonderful antique carousel that still costs only five cents to ride. One of only five complete, operating antique carousels in southern Ontario, Lakeside Park Carousel is irreplaceable and a treasure. It is protected by a building with large doors that open wide to the outside.

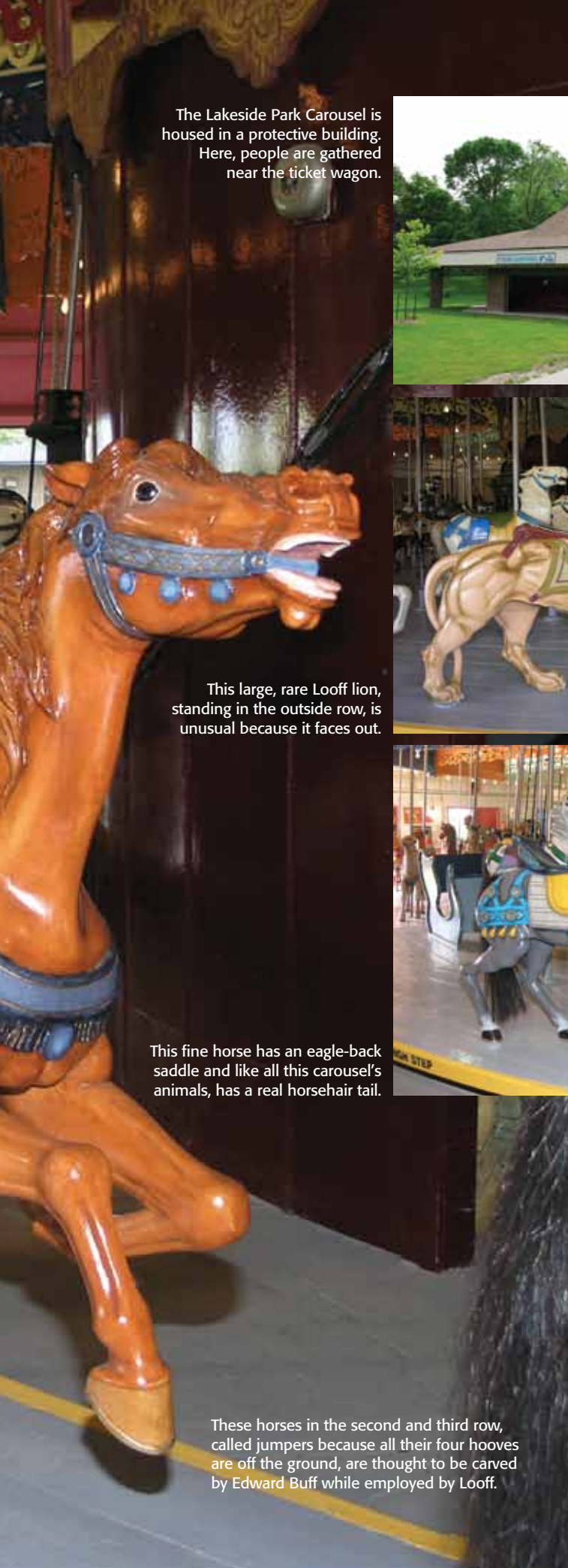
The carousel is a large park-model, four-row menagerie carousel featuring animals and chariots to ride on. There are two chariots and 68 animals: 56 horses, four camels, two giraffes, four goats and two lions. The animals have real horsehair tails.



Trip Tips

To get to Lakeside Park, take QEW to Ontario St. in St. Catharines. Follow Ontario St. to Lakeport Road.

The park is also near Port Dalhousie Harbour, making it accessible by boat.



The Lakeside Park Carousel is housed in a protective building. Here, people are gathered near the ticket wagon.



children and adults stand patiently in line to take the first ride. It is not uncommon to see them with strings of five-cent tickets exiting the ride and hurrying back to the queue for another ride.


“It’s such a fun place,” says William Ellis of Mississauga, visiting with his family. “Lots of families and children. The location along the lake is very special. The carousel is beautiful with many different animals. Carousels are great fun.”

History


The carousel has operated at Port Dalhousie since 1921. According to the National Carousel Association census records, the carousel was located at Hanlan’s Point, Toronto before coming to Lakeside Park. Other resources indicate the previous location of the carousel to be the former Scarborough Beach Park, Toronto. Further research is needed to determine the prior history of the Lakeside Park Carousel.

Lakeside Park began in the early part of the 1900s as a beachside attraction. By the 1920s, when the current carousel was installed, the park was a thriving mid-size amusement park then owned by the Canadian National Railway. The park was accessible by trolley lines and ferry service. It’s believed that more than a quarter of a million people crossed Lake Ontario in steamships to visit Port Dalhousie on weekends. The park offered a roller coaster and other amenities of a typical amusement park. The park operated until the 1960s, when Port Dalhousie and Lakeside Park were incorporated into the City of St. Catharines.

After the park closed, and with the threat of the carousel leaving St. Catharines, a local effort to keep the carousel in the area was started, spearheaded by Dorothy Crabtree of St. Catharines. \$20,000 dollars were raised



This large, rare Loeff lion, standing in the outside row, is unusual because it faces out.



This fine horse has an eagle-back saddle and like all this carousel’s animals, has a real horsehair tail.



One of the lions is a replacement carving for the original which was stolen in the 1970s. The theft seems to have occurred when the carousel was in temporary storage.

Painted rounding boards and scenery panels along with elaborate Victorian-style sweep embellishments make this an unusually decorative carousel. A Frati mechanical band organ, operated by paper rolls similar to a player piano, provides music for the carousel.

Before the doors to the carousel building open in the morning,

These horses in the second and third row, called jumpers because all their four hooves are off the ground, are thought to be carved by Edward Buff while employed by Loeff.

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to buy the carousel which was donated to the City of St. Catharines. It has owned and operated it since then. One of the stipulations was that the price of a carousel ticket would always remain five cents.

The carousel was dismantled in the 1970s and placed in storage. In 1981 the current building was constructed and the carousel was restored. In 1999 the Friends of the Carousel was formed.

“What the Friends do is restore the characters to their original beautiful state, with safety as the first priority and beauty second,” says Bonnie Cameron, president of the Friends of the Carousel. “Beside the characters, we have also restored other areas, such as the four chariots. Our woodcarvers hand carved 20 new scalloped edges located at the top of the mural, and restored and painted 20 shields. They also hand carved an outside horse and a lion. Carving the lion was one of the group’s best efforts, because it replaced the lion that went missing in the late ‘70s. The glue that keeps us together is our love for the carousel and our want of keeping the dream alive.”

There are currently 20 active members of the Friends. To become a Friend of the Carousel, call 905.688.5601 ext 1570.

“Individuals find the area of restoration they prefer,” adds Cameron. “One does not have to be a painter or carver to be welcomed.”

Mechanical maintenance and repair is performed by certified maintenance personnel from the City of St. Catharines.



This standing giraffe with raised head has

Other Antique Carousels

Four additional antique carousels operate in southern Ontario, offering a sampling of the different carving styles produced by carousel manufacturers:

- ◆ Riverside Park, Guelph – c1920s Spillman Engineering 3-row portable model, menagerie
- ◆ Roseneath Fairgrounds, Roseneath – c1906 C.W. Parker 3-row portable model



Carving Details

The National Carousel Association census lists the Lakeside Park Carousel as having been built by Kremer's Carousel Works of Long Island City, New York, in 1903. Many of the animals on the carousel were carved by Charles I. D. Loeff of Brooklyn, New York. The Loeff animals are early 1900 carvings. Included on the Lakeside Park Carousel are horses carved much later by Marcus Charles Illions, a Loeff employee, as well as horses from the Herschell-Spillman Company of North Tonawanda, New York.

Today, the carousel is one of fewer than 175 operating antique wood carousels in all of North America, and one of just nine in Canada.

The carousel operates from Victoria Day to Thanksgiving and can be rented for birthdays and special events from the City of St. Catharines at 905 688 5601 ext 1927.

"The carousel is a historic gem," says Carolyn Askeland, recreation supervisor with the City of St. Catharines. "The story behind it is really fascinating because it shows what this landmark means to the community. Best of all, it's only five cents a ride, so everyone can continue to enjoy what really is a wonderful attraction." **EV**

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appliquéd mirrors and tassels.

- ◆ Centreville Island, Toronto - c1910 Dentzel 3-row park model, menagerie
- ◆ Canada's Wonderland, Vaughan - c1928 Philadelphia Toboggan Company 4-row park model

For more information about carousels and carousel history see the National Carousel Association website: <http://nationalcarousel.org/NCAcensus.html>.