



*The*  
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# All Jane's Carousel Needs Now Is a Place to Spin in DUMBO Once Upon A Time... And Once Again, PTC #61 From Idora Park to Brooklyn



Jane Walentas (above) worked for 22 years to enjoy this moment.

Photos by John Caruso

## By John Caruso

Special to *The Carousel News & Trader*

After 22 years and a lot of work, patience, determination and love, PTC 61, or as it has become commonly known in the New York City area, "Jane's Carousel," has been completely restored, assembled and is on view in the DUMBO (Down Under Manhattan Bridge Overpass), area of Brooklyn near the East River and between two of New York City's most historic bridges; the Manhattan and Brooklyn bridges.

Even though it's only open for viewing until a permanent home is found, visitors will be absolutely astonished by this magnificent piece of Americana meticulously restored to its original condition by Jane Walentas and her competent staff.

This story started in the early '80s when Jane's husband David was the designated developer of the waterfront area between the Brooklyn and Manhattan bridges. The architect of this project was Benjamin Thompson, whose many projects include among them Fanueil Hall



John Caruso visiting the carousel.

in Boston. After some discussion of what was to be included it was decided that a carousel would be a perfect touch to add something special to the already spectacular



Manhattan skyline in the background . Jane met with noted carousel historian Fred Fried and with his help began the search for just the right carousel. After seeing several, she heard about a carousel that was being auctioned in Ohio. Jane and her husband David attended the auction and decided this was the one. After all the figures were auctioned, the carousel was offered as a whole unit. Fortunately for Jane hers was the only bid and the rest, as they say, is now part of carousel history.

The carousel was dismantled and transported to New York City, where it was put in storage until the park plan materialized.

Unfortunately, due to politics, the project never happened, which meant plans for the carousel became uncertain as well. These new developments however didn't stop Jane's intentions for the future of her carousel. Dur-



*At a reception in Jane's studio held during her restoration, she allowed visitors to sit on the lead horse.*



*One of the chariots restored to original paint.*

ing that time Jane was always working in some way on her carousel. Either she would be working on it in her studio in Manhattan, or she'd take a small pony out to her country house and work on it there, always with the hope that someday the carousel would be up and running. Being an artist herself, Jane decided to learn all she could about the art of carousel restoration.

Over the years she met with such accomplished carousel restorers as Will Morton, and Rosa Ragan. She also visited carousels they had been involved with, including PTC #6 and the Pullen Park Dentzel in Raleigh, North Carolina. Every step of the restoration was approached with caution and assuredness, from choosing the paint colors all the way down to the small jewels used on the mirrors on the rounding boards. Not one small detail was overlooked. Even the small pinstripe design on the saddles were carefully detailed. The spectacular chariots were stripped down to the original paint, revealing beautiful designs on the back, and on the nonromance side of them.

Instead of painting them she chose to keep them just the way they were found.

I have visited Jane's studio, now in DUMBO, numerous times over the past four years. Each time I was amazed to see more and more of the horses being brought back

*Cont. on page 26*







PTC #61 on display in Brooklyn

Photo by John Caruso



to life. They seemed to be waiting to go back to work on what they were originally made for, that is an operating carousel. Many carousels have been bought as a whole unit only to be re-sold and broken up later on. Jane's Carousel has made the full circle, from being saved to being meticulously and lovingly restored, and finally to being put back together again looking as good, if not better than when it came out of the Philadelphia Toboggan Factory back in 1922.

Even though we can't ride it, for the time being just being able to see it and know it's still exists is thrilling in itself. When I hear the word art, many different ideas come to mind, but in almost every form it's a visual experience. When you see this carousel, I'm sure you will agree, it is most definitely a work of art.

## FOR SALE



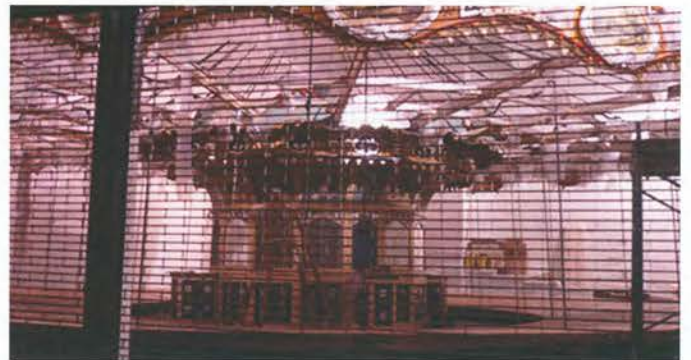
1896 Dentzel Prancer\*

*Dentzel Prancer, with natural horsehair tail and glass eyes. This authentic wooden Carousel Horse has been repainted by renowned artist Marge Swenson\* in typical Coney Island "glitz," using translucent glazes over 23-k gold and silver leaf. Marge has been restoring carousel horses since 1974. This dapple-grey wears a saddle that has been painted and "textured" to look and feel like fine old leather.*

\*Authenticated by Margaret H. Swenson; Publisher, Historian, Consultant and featured in her magazine "Carousel Art", issue 29, page 48.

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## Jane's Carousel



The carousel was open for limited viewing in gallery space at 56 Water Street, Brooklyn, NY where it has been set up temporarily as part of the restoration process. It was necessary to re-assemble the structure and machine, install and test all the parts, mechanical and electrical systems, and finally mount the horses and chariots. Unfortunately, the space is too small to allow the public to safely ride. Hopefully, someday the carousel will have a permanent home in a wonderful new carousel pavilion in Brooklyn Bridge Park for the children of DUMBO to enjoy for generations to come. The carousel is currently closed for the holidays. For information on when carousel may reopen for viewing, you can call Jane at 718-222-9666 or email her at [jane@janescarousel.com](mailto:jane@janescarousel.com).

# Restoring An American Treasure...



Photo by John Caruso

**By Jane Walentas**

*Special to The Carousel News & Trader*

It's hard to believe that I spent 22 years working on the restoration of PTC #61. I guess time flies when you're having fun! When asked to write about the restoration, I realized, in retrospect, that the work was actually done in three phases.

The first phase was research and discovery. I spent many years scraping through layers of park paint to reveal the original factory paint and stencil designs that embellished the carousel. I disciplined myself to work on everything but the horses until I perfected my technique and learned more about the carousel. I took it piece by piece and was astonished by the huge amount of design I uncovered. I was able to document my findings with careful tracings, color matches, photographs and detailed drawings. I had just completed a masters degree in Fine Art at NYU, after having worked for many years as an art director in advertising. I believe that the recent academic experience enabled me to be extremely thorough and precise in my research and early documentation. After I had recorded every available bit of information, I sent all the pieces (sweeps, rounding boards, shields, platform, etc.), in batches, to be chemically stripped, as I couldn't



Photo by Corinne Nelson

possibly hand scrape them all. Most of the paint was very fragile--impossible to have saved. As the sections were returned to me from the stripper, my carpenter made many necessary repairs and primed everything in white paint. None of those pieces were touched again for close to 20



Photo by Corinne Nelson

years. They sat in storage, as the project languished.

The second phase, and definitely the longest, was the attempt to discover, document, and possibly preserve the original paint on the 48 horses and two chariots. I spent years, mostly alone, scraping the many layers of park paint to reveal the original palette and beautiful carvings. I had hoped to be able to keep the horses in their factory paint, but was eventually convinced that it was not possible. Much of the paint was fragile and the surface of most of the horses was rough and needed too much repair to have been left as they were. Once again, I did precise matches of the factory colors, and traced, drew and photographed everything I uncovered. I worked scraping paint off the horses, sporadically over the course of about 16 years.

When I began the third phase, I moved into a new studio in June, 2004. It was large enough to accommodate the entire carousel, in pieces, and a full working staff. When I moved into that studio, I had only two people working with me - one full time, one part time, and the only piece painted was one small pony. I hired two more people and we began to move full speed ahead.

Repairs were made. Cracks and badly worn surfaces were filled with fillers and epoxies. The horses were then lightly sanded, and a coat of fine quality shellac was applied to create a barrier between the old fragile paint and the soon to be applied new paint. There were a few major necessary repairs to be made. One missing glass eye needed to be restored and several broken legs and feet had to be created and replaced. A sculptress who worked with me was experienced with casting, so rather than carve new legs, she cast them from the other horses and molded them in a lightweight but strong resin material. We then affixed them with epoxy and stainless steel rods for strength.



Part of the restoration crew takes a proud break.

Simultaneously, while all the horses were being prepped, we began to move ahead on many "fronts" to finish the entire carousel. I hired several more artists and we proceeded to mix paints, based on the color palette from my early findings, and carefully recorded their formulations. We had all the stencil designs I'd uncovered and traced years ago, transmitted digitally. Hundreds of stencils were then cut by a studio with a laser cutter. We did prototypes of six different horse skins - black, white, dapple grey, chestnut, palomino and "paint". We tested various metallic leafs and settled on the leafing plan. Finally, we began the actual process of painting, stenciling, leafing and top-coating everything - all the rounding boards, shields, sweeps, 48 horses and two chariots.

We used Japan paints as the under-coat on the horses, the solid color trappings, and all the pieces and sections of the entire carousel. Artists oils were used as glazes over the Japan paint on the horse skins, saddles, and all the decorative trappings. The delicate striping, flourishes and monogramming on the bridles and saddle blankets were done by a "pinstriper" who details fancy cars. Finally, each horse had five coats of varnish applied with a mix of Behlen's W.W. Restoration Varnish and Mc Closkey's Heirloom Oil Base Varnish #0007 flat. The result is a strong finish with a beautiful satiny sheen.







*Your chariot awaits...*

I had tested fragments of old leaf from the carousel and found that it was all aluminum, often with a glaze or wash of gold to simulate gold leaf. After leafing the first pony with aluminum, I decided to try palladium, which is very expensive but far richer and more beautiful than aluminum. It looked so spectacular I decided to use that on the horses. I experimented with many products, old and new, to achieve the “golden” look that PTC used over the aluminum leaf. I was not happy with any of the results and finally decided to use pure gold leaf instead. I knew this was a major deviation from the original but it seemed to make no sense to cover beautiful, expensive palladium (more expensive than gold), to make it look like “imitation” gold. I used several different golds and in a few instances, even copper, to achieve a variety of effects. Only the horses were leafed in precious metals, everything else was done in aluminum and imitation or “Dutch” gold. Besides the cost of the material being far less, the application of the non precious metals is a lot easier. I made the decision not to varnish the leaf on the horses because I prefer the natural shine of the precious metals. In time, I think the leaf will develop a warm patina, and could easily be re-leafed.

The studio became a little factory, with horses undergoing various stages of prepping, painting and leafing. I put each horse platform on rubber wheels, so we could easily move them around the studio. I also invested in small mechanical lifts, which we outfitted with poles to mount the horses. Those proved extremely useful when painting and leafing low areas or undersides of the horses, as the horses could be easily lowered and raised. We set up long factory-type tables to paint, stencil and leaf the huge rounding boards, rims, sweeps and panels. We worked as a total team.

In the end, I decided to try to leave the two beautiful chariots in old paint. The “Cherub” chariot was in excellent condition, but the “Liberty” chariot had much of its paint blistered off from the heat of a devastating fire that had occurred at Idora Park. After scraping it down, it was in-fill painted just enough to cover the bare areas, and looked amazingly beautiful. After scraping off the park



Photos by John Caruso

paint, the garlands of flowers and “Dutch Ladies” on the inside and back panels were also in fine enough condition only to be in-filled. I was concerned about how the chariots in original paint would look with the newly painted horses. They look just fine together. I’m really very happy with that decision and end result. It was a huge effort, but well worth it.

The entire carousel was rewired. The old porcelain sockets (1200 of them), were all replaced. The original mirrors had all been removed and saved, but, unfortunately, during all those years in storage, some were broken and a few others badly deteriorated. The small round bevelled mirrors on the bridles were all missing. New shaped and bevelled mirrors were made, some re-silvered, and finally, hundreds of mirrors, most of them original, were reinstalled on the carousel. Most of the jewels, lost over the years in the park, were replaced, and the PTC brass tags were stripped, machine polished and lacquered--looking again, like they were right out of the factory.

Amazingly, this third phase was the quickest and went remarkably smoothly. There were very few instances of problems or uncertainties. I think all those years of research and extremely careful documentation paid off in the end. There was practically no guess work. Everything was very clear. I had created an excellent “road map” to





Photos by Corinne Nelson

guide the color palette, designs, look and feel of the carousel. Also, I had a talented, enthusiastic staff, tremendous support from my husband David's real estate company, and a lot of valuable precedent established by earlier excellent carousel restorations.

The carousel was reassembled this fall, seemingly magically, by Todd Goings who did the most meticulous, amazing job. It is now up in a gallery space, open for viewing and running for special events only while it waits to be placed in its permanent home, hopefully in a beautiful



Jane's paint cart. It may get a well earned rest, but it's doubtful it will ever be fully retired.

## IDORA PARK, YOUNGSTOWN, OH

1897 • The Youngstown Park & Falls Street Railway begins rail service on Youngstown's south side.



1899 • Terminal Park opens on May 30. The new amusement park features a dancing pavilion, theater, merry-go-round, and bandstand. A contest is held to pick the area's most popular school teacher. Jessie Coulter, who placed second, chooses Idora as the permanent name for the Terminal Park.

1902 • Idora acquires its first roller coaster, a Figure-Eight Toboggan Slide built by Frederick Ingersoll of Pittsburgh.

1910 • A new ballroom opens, replacing the original pavilion.

1914 • The Dip-the-Dips, the park's second roller coaster, is constructed by the T. M. Harton Company of Pittsburgh.

1920 • The Firefly coaster replaces the Figure-Eight Toboggan.

1921-30 • Rex Billings introduces 3-cent kiddie day and becomes nationally prominent in the amusement park industry.

1922 • Idora purchases a magnificent new carousel from the Philadelphia Toboggan Company. It is their 61st carousel. PTC also constructs a fun house on the park's north end.

1924 • The local Idora Amusement Co. buys the park from the Penn-Ohio Power & Light Co.

- A new swimming pool opens.
- The Lillian Desmonde Players open at the Idora Theater.
- The Dip-the-Dips is remodeled and becomes the Jack Rabbit.

1930 • The PTC Wildcat replaces the Firefly.

1933 • Heidelberg Gardens opens. This restaurant is located in the original dancing pavilion built in 1899.

1948 • Silver rocket ships replace the airplanes on the Circle Swing. The swimming pool closes at the end of the season.

1949 • Park ownership changes again.

1951 • Kiddieland opens on the site of the swimming pool.

1953 • Dan Ryan introduces record hops at the Idora ballroom.

1955-56 • The ballroom is remodeled. The ornate towers are removed from the exterior.

1968 • The Rapids is re-themed and renamed The Lost River; the fun house becomes the Whacky Shack.

1974 • New rides include the Spider and Yo-Yo.

1982 • The owners put Idora Park up for sale but get no offers.

1984 • A fire hits the park in April, though the park opens in on time. In August the owners the parks closure. At the October auction, a New York City couple buys the carousel intact.

1985-94 • Mt. Calvary Pentecostal Church buys the Idora property. A fire destroys the old Heidelberg Gardens, Kooky Castle, fun house, and Helter Skelter bumper car buildings. Mt. Calvary loses the property in a foreclosure auction. Mt. Calvary buys the Idora property for a second time.

1999 • The Mahoning Valley celebrates the 100th anniversary of the founding of Idora Park. *Idora Park: The Last Ride of Summer* by Rick Shale and Charles J. Jacques, Jr. is published.

2001 • A fire of suspicious origin destroys the Idora Ballroom (built in 1910).

2001 • The Wildcat and Jack Rabbit coasters are demolished.

2002 • The Youngstown Playhouse presents *Idora Forever!*, a nostalgic musical comedy based in part on *Idora Park: The Last Ride of Summer*.

Special thanks to the authors of "*Idora Park: The Last Ride of Summer*".

# A Look Back at Idora Park (1899-1984)



Historical photo above courtesy of Kelleher, Russell and Young

Like many terminal parks in the post-war years of the early 20th century, Idora looked to the addition of a Grand Carousel to be the centerpiece of a redesigned “family” destination.

Indeed, Idora Park got itself a beauty in the Philadelphia Toboggan Company’s 1922 production of what was then simply known as #61.

**I**dora Park began its life as Terminal Park at the end of the Park and Falls Street Railway Company line. The company acquired a lease on a seven-acre plot of land next to Mill Creek Park and Terminal Park officially opened on May 30, 1899. In the first year of operation, the park built the Casino Theater (it later became Heidelberg Gardens and the Crazy Horse Saloon, until a fire in 1986). The park also had a bandstand, swings, drinking fountains, picnic tables, and rest rooms. An electric merry-go-round also graced the property. This first merry-go-round featured a menagerie of stationary animals carved by Gustav Dentzel of Philadelphia, PA.

To this day, confusion surrounds the name “Idora Park”.



Photo courtesy of the Barbara Williams archives

***The legendary Fred Fried at Idora Park during the 1981 NCA Convention.***

A contest was held for the most popular teacher in the Youngstown area in June of 1899 and the Youngstown Vindicator reported on Nov. 25, 1899 that second place winner, Jessie Coulter, chose the name. The paper also



**Additional photos of PTC #61 at Idora Park during the 1981 NCA Convention (above and below), courtesy of the Barbara Williams archive.**

reported the name Idora to be Indian and was the original name of Lanterman's Falls (in Mill Creek Park). An early press release by the Street Railway Company said it was called Idora "after an extinct tribe of Indians which once dwelt within its borders." A widely reported rumor states that Idora Park is a contraction of "I adore a park".

Idora Park continued to thrive and in 1910, built the dance pavilion/ballroom, skating rink, Traver circle swings (later becoming the Rockets and sold at the auction in 1984), photo gallery and a new coaster, the Dip-the-Dips



**A vintage postcard from Idora Park.**

by T.M. Harton (this coaster was remodeled in 1924 and renamed the Jack Rabbit).

Idora faced continual competition not only from larger parks like Cedar Point, but also smaller parks like Conneaut Lake Park. As the trolley lines dwindled and the automobile became more available people took longer trips. While parks like Cedar Point, Kenywood and Geauga Lake continued to expand, Idora Park was land locked on its 27 acres. Idora continued to add rides such as the Wildcat coaster, the Rapids and Kiddieland, but to no avail. The park outlasted a number of trolley parks, but was finally put up for sale in 1982.

In the Spring of 1984 the park, still on the market with no takers, was busy getting ready for opening day when a fire broke out. Low water pressure from the park's only operating fire hydrant made controlling the blaze near impossible. The flames roared out of control from the Lost River, to the park office, to the Wildcat. In less than an hour, the office, eleven concessions, the Lost River and about a third of the Wildcat were gone. Nearly fifty firefighters, including a dozen who were off-duty, finally controlled the blaze and kept it from spreading to other parts of the park, including the PTC carousel. Idora opened on schedule that season, but it would be their last. Everything was put up for auction on October 20-21, 1984 conducted by Norton Auctioneers of Coldwater, MI.



**Historical photo of Idora Park in 1959, courtesy of Kelleher, Russell and Young. They have a documentary DVD on Idora available on their website among others at [www.amusementparkmemories.com](http://www.amusementparkmemories.com).**