

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0668303

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAY 5 1978
DATE ENTERED DEC 1 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Lake Compounce Carousel
AND/OR COMMON Lake Compounce Carousel

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER W of Southington on Lake Avenue
CITY, TOWN Southington VICINITY OF Fifth - Ronald Sarasin
STATE Connecticut CODE Hartford CODE 03

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Julian Norton et als
STREET & NUMBER Lake Avenue
CITY, TOWN Bristol VICINITY OF CT 06010 STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Southington Land Records, Town Hall
STREET & NUMBER Main Street
CITY, TOWN Southington STATE Connecticut

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
DATE
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
CITY, TOWN STATE
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

—EXCELLENT
 GOOD
—FAIR

—DETERIORATED
—RUINS
—UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
—ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
—MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Lake Compounce is a 2,000 foot long crystal clear lake located in a rural section of the northern part of the Town of Southington, Connecticut, a few feet south of the Bristol town line. On its northern shore is the Lake Compounce Amusement Park. The park is entered by a long, straight drive which gradually descends for half a mile from Lake Avenue to the level of the water. At the foot of this drive is the carousel, across the street from the roller coaster.

The carousel is housed in its own wooden building (Photo 1), dodecagon in shape, with a tall, flared roof rising to a point surmounted by a flag pole. The exterior walls, which are built from narrow, vertical, beaded boards, have fenestration consisting of a horizontal row of glazed windows about three feet high broken by wall sections on a proportion of two to one. Above this band of windows is a second row of lights one pane high. The roof, which has flared eaves supported by brackets, rises in two stages with the change in pitch marked by a molding.

Inside the building, under a complex roof truss system (Photo 2), the carousel on its 45 foot diameter platform has ~~eighteen~~ rows of riding positions (Photo 3). Sixteen rows are made up of horses three abreast (Photo 4). In the remaining two rows two of the horses are displaced by chariots and in one of these rows the remaining animal is a goat. Thus, the total is 49 horses, two chariots, and one goat.

The horses have different appearances and demeanors in part because they are painted various colors and in part because they ^{are} carved in different manners. Some horses are showing their teeth and smiling and are known as "Happy Horses." Others have their manes flying in the wind forward and backward simultaneously. Still others have their heads up with a fiery look as though they were pulling chariots and are said to have Roman noses.

At the edge of the revolving platform and at each riding position are brass poles incised with a helical pattern. Inside the revolving platform, around a wooden center pole, is the Wurlitzer Model No. 153 band organ complete with bass drum and cymbals (Photo 5). Surrounding the organ and power source for the carousel on a circular screen which separates the organ and mechanical apparatus from the revolving platform are landscape pictures known as the "scenery," here depicted with strong Japanese influence (Photo 6). Also of decorative importance is a frieze or valence of pressed metal supported above the perimeter of the revolving platform (Photo 7). It is executed in a classic-inspired design based on the anthemion and is picked out in bronze paint.

The carousel is in a satisfactory state of maintenance and is regularly used as one of the attractions at the amusement park. The land on which the park is situated has been owned by the Norton family since 1684. The amusement park dates from 1846 and is considered to be the nation's oldest amusement park under continuous management. Facilities have been considerably altered and enlarged as required by changing conditions over the years.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

MAY 5 1978

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Amusement
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1890/1911

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Looff/Murphy

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The turn-of-the-century carousel at Lake Compounce Amusement Park is significant because it has been maintained in its original condition without alterations or additions, and without removal of any of its features. It is an unspoiled example of the craftsmanship that went into a once widely popular form of entertainment, now rare. The horses, brasses, and scenery appear today as they did originally; nothing has been added; nothing has been taken away.

Its Wurlitzer organ is the model sold as standard for this operation and is an appropriate companion to the carousel itself. The carousel, with its organ housed in the original building constructed for the purpose, is an unusual example of Americana.

Arrival of the carousel at Lake Compounce was announced as a page one news item by the Bristol Press for 15 May 1911. "TEN THOUSAND DOLLAR CAROUSEL ONE OF THE NEW FEATURES" read the headline of the story about the park's opening day for the 1911 summer season. This coverage of the day by the Bristol Press provides a firm date for acquisition of the attraction by Lake Compounce and, in fact, is the only documented information thus far at hand concerning the carousel. Further information and analysis of the machine's background is provided by the knowledge and recollections of the Norton family, long time proprietors of the park, and by William Herbert Long from his forthcoming biography of Charles I.D. Looff (1852-1918), fabricator of carousels.

Long considers that Looff was a major producer and innovator in the field of carousels. The Looff factory was located in Riverside, Rhode Island, on the site of the present Crescent Amusement Park. Here was manufactured the Lake Compounce Carousel, probably about 1890, like all carousels of the period, it is a stationary model, that is, the horses did not go up and down.

At the turn of the century came the important innovation of the mechanical arrangement to make the horses go up and down. Tim Murphy, who had worked for Looff, thereupon set himself up in the business of converting stationary carousels, now obsolete, to the moving carousels for which there was a demand. He reworked machines originally made by Looff and others by installing the jumping mechanism and generally remodeling them. The Lake Compounce carousel was purchased from Murphy and shipped from Savin Rock, Connecticut, where Murphy is thought to have had his shop. Murphy also operated a string of carousels up and down the east coast.

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bristol Press, 15 May 1911.

Letter from William Herbert Long to Richard Norton dated 19 June 1977 giving information from Long's forthcoming biography of Charles I.D. Looff.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1/4 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	673010	4611580	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David F. Ransom, Consultant

7 August 1977

ORGANIZATION

Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

59 South Prospect Street

TELEPHONE

203 566-3005

CITY OR TOWN

Hartford

STATE

CT 06106

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer and Director,
Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE 5/1/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST *William Loewenich*
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 12/12/78
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
DATE 12/10/78

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Lake Compounce Carousel

CONTINUATION SHEET Significance

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 1

The outer rim of pressed tin on the Lake Compounce carousel and the inner rim mix of decorations and "scenery" are nearly identical to other Murphy remodellings of Looff carousels which have been documented. Moreover, half of the horses are of Looff origin. These are identified as the "Happy Horses," so called because they seem to be smiling in the manner associated with Looff's work. In addition, they have wreaths with leaves at their chests, another Looff characteristic, which strengthens the attribution.

The balance of the horses are a mix of the work of Stein and Goldstein of Coney Island (the fiery steeds with Roman noses and buckles and roses at their chests) and of a carver named Carmel about whom little is known (the horses with manes blowing in both directions -- Photo 8). These horses date from about 1910. The mix and age of the figures is typical of Murphy's remodelling of other early Looff carousels. Some of the horses have their original paint, adding to the authenticity and museum quality of this installation.

In recent years amusement parks have faced increasing competition for patronage. Simultaneously, the value of individual horses from carousels as collectors' items has grown substantially. Individual horses have sold for as much as \$2,000. Such prices present strong temptation to dismantle carousels for profit, but at Lake Compounce continuing family proprietorship has assured the integrity of the carousel.

With all carousels an important part of the attraction is the organ. The Wurlitzer model No. 153 band organ which is at Lake Compounce was regarded as good for its purpose because it was medium size, not so complex as to cause maintenance problems, and loud. Shutters over the source of the sound open and close automatically as called for by the music to provide more or less volume as needed. Date of the organ is not documented. On the one hand, the Norton family has no recollection of a new organ ever being purchased, suggesting that this one may have arrived with the carousel in 1911. On the other hand, Wurlitzer is known to have manufactured this model into the 1920's, so it may be later than the carousel itself.

This Looff carousel, modified by Murphy, with its Wurlitzer band organ, and housed in the building originally constructed for its arrival in 1911, is an excellent example of an amusement form as it existed at the turn of the century.