

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Broad Ripple Park ("White City") Carousel

and/or common Children's Museum Carousel

**2. Location**

street & number 5th floor, Children's Museum, Meridian St. at 30th St. \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Indianapolis \_\_\_ vicinity of

state Indiana code county Marion code

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	___ public	___ occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
___ building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	___ entertainment	___ religious
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	___ in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Recreation (carousel)

**4. Owner of Property**

name Mr. Peter V. Sterling, Executive Director, Children's Museum

street & number P.O. Box 3000

city, town Indianapolis \_\_\_ vicinity of state Indiana 46206

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. N/A

street & number

city, town state

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title National Carousel Association Census has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes  no

date \_\_\_ federal \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date 1956; 1975

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

### Summary

The Children's Museum carousel began its career in Indianapolis in 1917 as a composite, apparently assembled by the Mangels-Illions Company, using its mechanical equipment and Dentzel Company animals. The most historic elements of the Children's Museum carousel are its pre-1900 animals, which include the following: one lion, one tiger, three goats, three giraffes, three reindeer, and 31 horses of different sizes. Eighteen of the animals are "jumpers." Of the total of 42, 41 are the Dentzels used on the carousel during its historic residence (1917-56) at Broad Ripple Park. The single missing horse has been replaced by a compatible Dentzel.

As is explained in the Significance statement of this study, the 1917 Mangels mechanism was not available when the restoration of the carousel began in 1975. A substitute Mangels-Illions was used.

The Children's Museum Carousel operates in the southwest corner of the fifth floor of the museum's modern building, which is presumably the largest museum building in the world designed exclusively for children. The carousel is housed in an interior pavilion, which, though it is of modern construction, represents a composite of the designs of several historic carousel pavilions.<sup>1</sup>

### Additional Data

The "borrowing" or "trading" of parts was a relatively common practice among carousel manufacturers when they needed to fill orders in a hurry. Mangels-Illions likely obtained the animals from a pre-1900 Dentzel carousel and installed them on their own mechanism, when the carousel was ordered for the "White City" amusement park in Indianapolis. The animals' history prior to 1917 is not known.

In keeping with the pattern used by Mangels-Illions, and in accord with historic photographic evidence on the carousel's appearance, the carousel was restored with animals in alternating rows of jumpers and stationary animals, three abreast. The animals in the outside row have jewels; although they were not manufactured with jewels, they were decorated in that fashion when in Broad Ripple Park.

The animals are mounted on the substitute 40' diameter Mangels-Illions mechanism, which is perhaps close in appearance to the original. In reassembly of the carousel, the exterior scenery, on the large outside rim panels, was painted by a Pennsylvania artist, using other carousel art as models. The outside mirror frames and decorative carving above them are also replicas. New scenery was fabricated for the interior in the museum's shops.

The carousel's band organ is a 1919 "Special Carousel Organ" (Model 146B) that long operated on a carousel at an amusement park in San Francisco. This style of organ was produced strictly for carousels of that period. The interior of the organ was rebuilt in 1976, before installation.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	architecture	education	military	social
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
X 1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
X 1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		X other (specify)
				Recreation
<b>Specific dates</b>	pre-1900; 1917 (See <b>Builder Architect</b> below)	Dentzel (animals)	Mangels-Illions (mechanism)	(carousel)
<b>Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)</b>				

### Summary

The wooden carousel at the Children's Museum in Indianapolis, although it incorporates other elements, is one of the three earliest carousels that is virtually intact in terms of its Dentzel menagerie animals. Its closest contemporary, coincidentally also in Indiana, at Logansport, has not been as finely restored. Logansport is dated variously between 1900 and 1903 though it may predate 1900; the Children's Museum's animals probably antedate 1900 although their history cannot be documented prior to 1917. The only older extant Dentzel is that at Meridian, Mississippi, which may date as early as 1885-89, but is more likely from 1892-97.

### Dentzel Carousels

Although extant carousels by other manufacturers included in this study are of earlier date, these three earliest Dentzels are fine representatives of the mature carousel work by this important manufacturing family. The Dentzels' work has been praised for the artistry of its carving and described as "the finest built." This characterization especially applies to their work up to 1910.<sup>2</sup>

The Dentzels have been credited with giving the carousel industry in America its real start. Gustav A. Dentzel, a young German immigrant, began building carousels in Philadelphia in 1867. Parts of his first American carousel, it appears, were imported from his father, who manufactured carousels in Kreuznach, Germany. The family continued in the business in Philadelphia until 1929.<sup>3</sup>

Of an unknown total number of carousels manufactured by the Dentzel company, certainly upward of a hundred, some 21 (including the 3 mentioned above) still exist.<sup>4</sup> The integrity of several of the survivors has been marred by replacement of animals with those by other manufacturers. (Two Dentzels [1905-15 and 1921] at Cedar Point, Ohio, are described in a separate nomination of that great amusement park; the Dentzel [1927] at Kennywood Park, in W. Mifflin, Pa., near Pittsburgh, is similarly treated.)

Although other Dentzel carousels might have been included in this study, it has been noted that the company's later work showed the effects of mass manufacture.<sup>5</sup> Even these standardized specimens are now so rare that they might be deemed worthy of consideration. A large percentage, however, of all remaining Dentzel carousels have been repeatedly moved or greatly modified.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1

Quadrangle name Indianapolis West

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	<u>16</u>	<u>571221610</u>	<u>4406890</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Only the carousel

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title James H. Charleton, Historian

organization History Division, National Park Service date February 13, 1985

street & number 1100 L Street, NW telephone (202) 343-8165

city or town Washington state DC 20013-7127

# 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 \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date \_\_\_\_\_

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date \_\_\_\_\_

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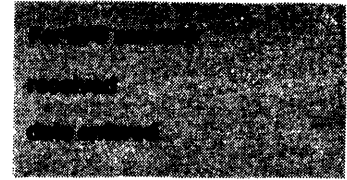
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Footnote

- <sup>1</sup> This description is based on information in Dwight Crandell, "The Children's Museum's Carousel," Merry-Go-Roundup 8,2, pp. 17-19, as well as onsite inspection of the carousel.

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History of the Children's Museum's Carousel<sup>6</sup>

Key elements in the Children's Museum's carousel, i.e., the animals, are those of the carousel which operated in Broad Ripple Park in northern Indianapolis from 1917 to 1956. The animals, however, appear to be pre-1900.

The carousel was brought there in 1917 to be part of an amusement park known as White City, owned by the Union Traction Company. In 1922, the Broad Ripple Amusement Company purchased the park and renamed it. A giant roller coaster, baseball diamonds, a football field, cinder track and bath houses were other features. At first, the carousel was housed in a large enclosed building near the pool. In 1927, the park was sold to Oscar and Joseph Baur who removed many rides and added new attractions such as the Temple of Mystery, Huffman's Auto Speedway and Dodge 'em Cars. The ownership again changed in 1938 when William McCurry acquired it. He moved the carousel to the children's playground and housed it in a domed pavilion without walls.

By the time McCurry sold the park to the city in 1954 the amusement rides had all but disappeared. By 1956 deterioration was such that the pavilion collapsed on the carousel, destroying its sweeps and mechanism. Except for the animals, which the city stored in a warehouse, the rest of the carousel was junked.

In 1965, the Children's Museum acquired two of the Broad Ripple carousel horses for display. Later on, in 1969, the museum acquired all of the others, with the exception of three reindeer and two horses, and put them in storage. Many were in poor condition.

When the museum decided to move into a new building it was felt that two or three animals would be displayed and the rest sold to benefit the museum. With that in mind, Mrs. Mildred Compton, the museum's executive director, went to the first National Carousel Roundtable at Sandwich, Mass., in the fall of 1973 to find buyers. Instead, she returned to Indianapolis convinced that the museum should restore the carousel and put it in operation as a permanent exhibit.

Restoration of the carousel, in 1975-78, was a time-consuming and expensive project. The remaining animals, except for one, were finally located. A Mangels-Illions carousel mechanism was delivered in November 1975 and erected. A whole new platform was constructed and covered with indoor-outdoor carpeting. Work on the animals was so extensive that it was not until the fall of 1977 that the last of the restored animals was put on the carousel.

Changes have been made to make the carousel durable and reliable in daily operation. Added bracing was installed, and the mechanism belt drive was exchanged for a fluid drive. The animals are periodically "touched up" in the museum's conservation lab. The Children's Museum's Carousel accommodates about 200,000 riders a year. The modest fee charged goes to insure its continued maintenance.

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Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>These conclusions are based on a compilation of data that appear in National Carousel Association, National Carousel Association Census (Los Angeles, California: National Carousel Association, March 1983), passim, which were rearranged chronologically for this study and supplemented by data appearing in successive issues of Merry-Go-Roundup, a periodical of the National Carousel Association.

<sup>2</sup>Frederick Fried, "The Dentzel Carousel, A Condensed History," Merry-Go-Roundup 8,2, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-5.

<sup>4</sup>National Carousel Association, op. cit.

<sup>5</sup>Fried, op. cit., p. 8.

<sup>6</sup>This history has been compiled from the accounts in Dwight Crandell, "The Children's Museum's Carousel," Merry-Go-Roundup 8,2, 16-19; and Nancy Kriplen, Keep an Eye on that Mummy (Indianapolis: The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, 1982), pp. 185-193.

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Crandell, Dwight. "The Children's Museum's Carousel," Merry-Go-Roundup 8,2, pp. 16-19. (This article duplicates part of the typescript "The Children's Museum Carousel History" that Crandell prepared in 1981. The latter was also consulted.)

Fried, Frederick. "The Dentzel Carousel, A Condensed History," Merry-Go-Roundup 8,2, pp. 3-8.

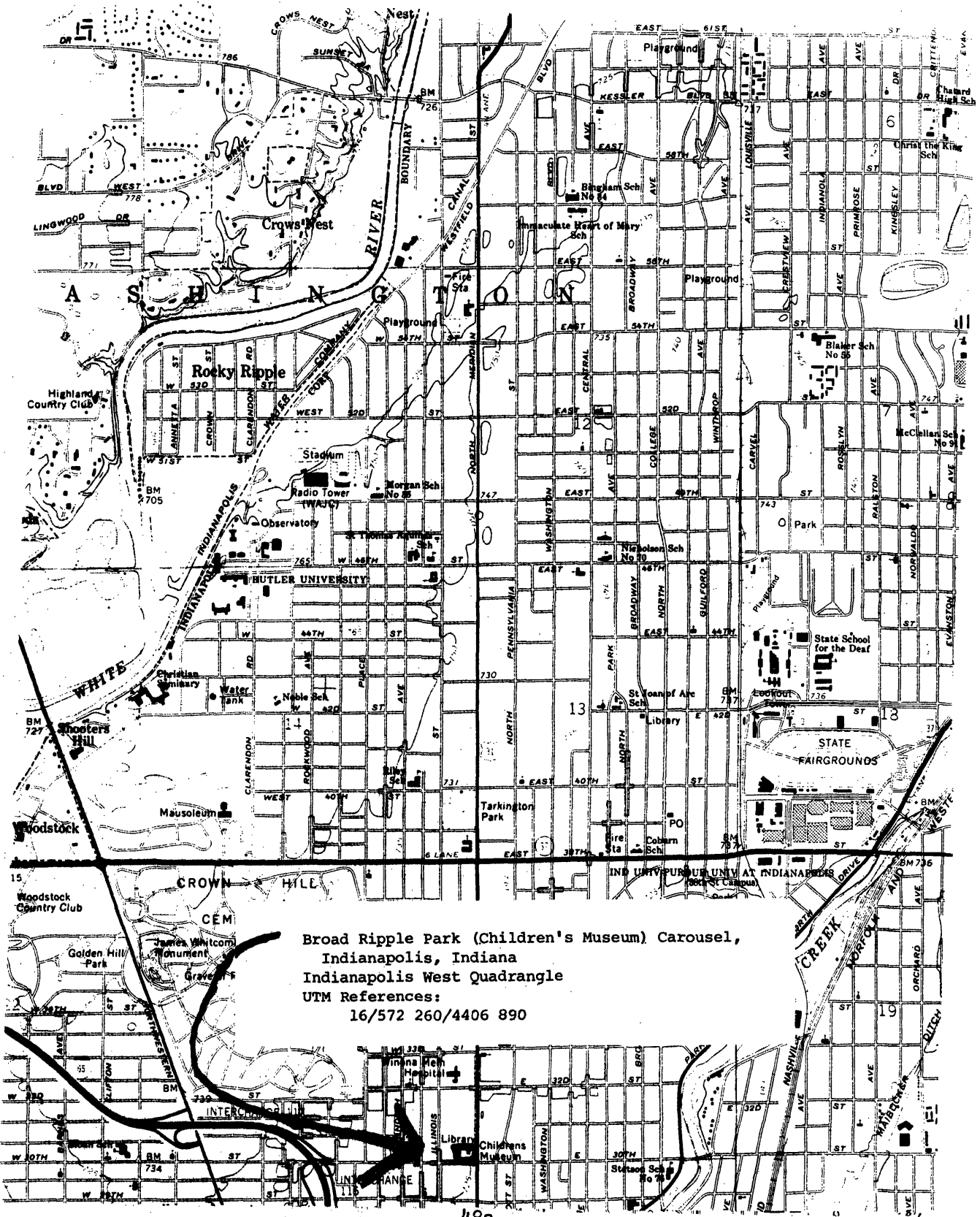
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Maxwell, Margaret M., ed. "The Children's Museum of Indianapolis." Indianapolis: The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, 1983. 24 pp. (Information pamphlet.)

Mendelsohn, Ink. "Carousels Caught in Vicious Circle," Smithsonian News Service. May 1981, March 1982. 8 pp. (Press packet.)

National Carousel Association. National Carousel Association Census. Los Angeles, Calif.: National Carousel Association, March 1983.





Broad Ripple Park (Children's Museum) Carousel,  
 Indianapolis, Indiana  
 Indianapolis West Quadrangle  
 UTM References:  
 16/572 260/4406 890