

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received APR 24 1986  
date entered

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

Substantive Review JUN 6 1986

1. Name

historic Herschel-Spillman Two-Row Portable Menagerie Carousel

and/or common Story City Carousel

2. Location

street & number North Park, Story Street & Grove Avenue not for publication

city, town Story City vicinity of

state Iowa code 019 county Story code 169

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Story City Greater Community Congress

street & number c/o Ms. Susan Doolittle Larson, 840 Grand Ave.

city, town Story City vicinity of state Iowa 50248

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Recorder's Office

street & number Story County Courthouse

city, town Nevada state Iowa 50201

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved

date portable object, to present  
permanent site 1982.

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Story City Carousel (1913), housed in a twelve sided pavilion with cupola in North Park, Story City, features twenty-nine figures, including an "Uncle Sam" chariot, such uncommon animals as pigs, chickens and dogs, and an original Wurlizer 105 band organ. The carousel is wood framed with steel supportive elements. Fragile surviving materials include a cloth backed set of murals which covers the working center of the machine.

The carousel measures thirty feet across and is twelve to fourteen feet high at the center. Its revolving outer ring, propelled by an offset central electrical motor, is centered on a central pivot shaft. A cog drive wheel is propelled by the vertical drive shaft, these two being stabilized and separated by a wooden beam. Four angled steel tubes radiate from the central shaft and stabilize it. Two similar support columns hold the drive shaft. Tie rods and turn-buckles reinforce these central elements. A wooden base supports the whole, with angled corner supports. Fifteen rotating horizontal driveshafts, supported by two sets of wood "pillow blocks", square in section, turn cranks which cause the various riding units to rise and fall. Sixteen radiating main support beams form the fifteen bays of the rotating ring. Pairs of hung rods support the suspended platform. Each bay is floored with wood planking over paired rounded beams.

Two sets of tie rods, radiating from the top of the central shaft, connect with the ends of the radiating beams at either side of the revolving ring, forming a truss, and thereby supporting the whole. An outer decorative frieze, with decorated shields which feature carved wooden mythical gargoyle heads separate each bay, capping the outer ring. There are sixteen of these heads, with four types.

As originally constructed, the carousel had no permanent cover over the superstructure and minimal electrical lighting. Period photos indicate that the cover was held above the rotating driveshafts by short angled projecting wooden poles. These produced a tent-like roof profile. Spear tip finial caps on the posts apparently secured the canvas. Period photos indicate that a striped pattern, with stripes diverging from the center, was commonplace. A canvas awning cover was discarded some years ago when it became unserviceable. The original lighting consisted of bare electric bulbs, two per bay, around the perimeter. Two electrical motors, thought to be original to the unit, power the carousel and the organ. A painted canvas frieze covered the lower part of the central revolving core. Ceramic pendants underscore the metal frame which supports this frieze.

The carousel figures are of considerable interest. They are carved in poplar wood. They consist of two chariots (one an "Uncle Sam" chariot with an Uncle Sam profile behind and an eagle up front), a whirling tub (also called a "lovers tub", of European origin it is thought), ten pairs of horses, and single pairs of pigs, dogs and chickens. These special sets are of special interest. These sets are matched in size except for the pigs, that pair consists of a little and a larger pig. The animals are set up with a traditional spacing, with pairs of "specials" being separated by two pairs of horses and a chariot. The order of assembly is not fixed, there being no original instructions surviving. The key consideration is that of blending the colors of the animals. The inner pictorial

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frieze features scenes of cowboys, nature, and Indians. The outer freize, with a rectangular scene in each bay, features natural scenes only. Between each bay is a carved painted face on a wooden shield.

The figures are secured on the platform by "under animal scissor supports". These predate the "telescope" support system. Relatively little is known about the structural history of the carousel. The carousel retains an impressive proportion of original materials. The organ, wooden structure, figures, the rounding boards and gargoyles, and even the canvas mural around the inner core are original to the machine. Even the whirling tub is thought to pre-date 1938 when the city purchased the machine. It is however an apparent addition to the range of figures. Electrical lights were added as part of the 1982 restoration. Surface conduit and strings of lights trace the rides superstructure. The 1982 restoration effort focused upon the figures. Relatively little work had to be done with the rest of the machine.

In its restored state the central support elements are painted red, the revolving metal components a light blue. The bodies of the riding figures are shades of gray, black, chestnut and white (some dappled), trim is executed in brighter colors.

The restoration work was thoroughly done. Loren and Joann Barker of Roland did the work. Research was conducted prior to beginning the work. Considerable experimentation was done to find a suitable range of paints for the project. The figures were completely stripped (it was assumed that earlier refurbishings had removed original paints and colors) in a stripping tank. Neither the use of a water-based dip tank nor the removal of original colors is generally recommended. Unless the stripper is completely neutralized, the wood deteriorates to a soft putty-like consistency. The figures were disassembled prior to stripping. Missing and deteriorated portions were reproduced in poplar wood. Some horses are nearly fifty percent new wood, but generally speaking, only the more fragile parts had to be replaced.

The figures were reassembled (Mohawk Epoxy Putty for joints and joining old materials, 3M Woodworkers Glue for joining old and new, and "Real" Wood filler by Leach Products, Inc. for filling) and cavities filled. The figures were soaked in boiled linseed oil. Sherwin Williams products were used in the painting. Each figure was brush primed twice with "Kilz" flat primer. After sanding, two spray coats of primer with an intervening sanding followed. A base coat was then sprayed on. A high-gloss enamel "Ken-Lustre" was used for the colors. Red, yellow, blue, black brown and a tinting white base colors were used to produce all of the colors. Colors matched original hues whenever possible.

Shading was done using an air-brush. Finally, the sealing and finishing process included using "First Step" liquid sand paper, "Pro Mar" a sanding sealer, a rubbing down using #M Scotch Bright Pads, and finally Sherwin Williams Polyurethane varnish.

The original design on the sweeps and spreaders (the support beams), the use of American

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Flags on the "Uncle Sam" Chariot, and the outer frieze scenes and stenciling patterns were revealed during the stripping effort. The Wurlitzer 105 band organ was restored to playing condition by a firm in Des Moines. A yellow stenciling ornaments the red colored sweeps and spreaders. An estimated forty hours of work was required to strip and repair a single figure. Painting, in stages, required an additional two weeks of work.

The sheltering pavilion (1982), included in the nomination, consists of a twelve sided polygon, which is structurally based on curved laminated wood beams. These beams join in a central metal hub above the carousel and mirror its own structure. A cupola tops the whole. The building exterior is light brown in color with white trim. Each bay has a double door panel or working opening. Two working double doors provide access on opposite sides. The interior wall consists of an unpainted composition woodchip sheathing. A concrete floor, poured in triangular sections, visually underscores the linkage of shelter and carousel.

## 8. Significance

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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) recreation

**Specific dates** 1913 **Builder/Architect** Herschel Spillman Company (Builder)

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

This 1913 Herschel-Spillman 2-row Portable Menagerie Carousel, known locally as the Story City Carousel, is the only complete and restored example of its kind in the country. The carousel retains its complete hand-carved "menagerie" of horses, pigs, chickens and chariots. Several of these figures, most notably the "Uncle Sam" chariot, the pig and chicken pairs, and the lovers tub, are quite rare, especially in association with their original sets of figures. The machine's use of an under-animal scissor support system dates it to an earlier and simpler technological phase of merry-go-round development. The very survival of this very fragile and rare resource is due to the fact that it has been owned and maintained by the Greater Community Congress of the City of Story City since 1938. The recent complete restoration of the carved animals and the provision of a protective shelter at considerable labor and expense by that community indicates the value placed on this community symbol.

Mr. John Hayek, editor of the magazine "Merry-Go-Round Round Up", who attended the dedication of the Story City Carousel in 1982, has identified this machine as the only restored example of a portable carousel to be found in this country. Mr. Charles Walker, National Carousel Association, Atlanta, considers the Story City Carousel to be especially noteworthy, being "...an early example of the Herschel Spillman carousels constructed at North Tonawanda, NY. The under-animal scissor supports are unusual and would suggest early mechanisms. I know of no other machine representative of this period as most have been destroyed. It is also rare to have on-board menagerie animals still on the same machines. The community should be commended for the preservation and the construction of the building to house the machine. The band organ is the heart of the carousel and it is rare to find the organ still with the machine."

The first "merry-go-round" or "Steam Riding Gallery" was built in 1882 by the Armitage-Herschell Company in North Tonawanda, New York. Allan and George Herschell formed the firm with James Armitage in 1876. This firm went bankrupt in 1900, and became the Herschell-Spillman which existed until 1920. Its partners included Allan Herschell, Ida Spillman Herschell, E. O. Spillman, Lewis Payne, and Guy White. The Story City carousel, produced in 1913, is representative of their "Two abreast model". Allan Herschell retired in 1911 but started his own company in 1915. Herschell-Spillman became Spillman Engineering in 1920, and these two firms competed until Spillman Engineering was bought out by its competitor in 1945. Allan Herschell Company finally became Chance Manufacturing in 1970 and was relocated to Kansas. All American made carousels were produced either by the series of New York firms or by one firm in Kansas City. Two musical manufacturers, Wurlitzer and the North Tonawanda Musical Company, produced the band organs for the machines.

The wood carvers who produced the menagerie animals were even more transient than were the builders of the carousels. Particular carving styles were associated with specific firms, periods, and individuals. For example, the Herschel-Spillman "Traveling Style Horses" c. 1903-20 differed from those of the Armitage-Herschell firm in that they had "...softer expressions; short flowing manes; carved and glass eyes; long flat saddles." The artform

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 9-2.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Story City

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	5
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 Zone 

4	5	1	5	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

 Easting 

4	6	7	10	6	2	10
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 Northing

B 

--	--

 Zone 

--	--	--	--

 Easting 

--	--	--	--	--	--

 Northing

C 

--	--

 Zone 

--	--	--	--

 Easting 

--	--	--	--	--	--

 Northing

D 

--	--

 Zone 

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 Easting 

--	--	--	--	--	--

 Northing

E 

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 Zone 

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 Easting 

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 Northing

F 

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 Zone 

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 Easting 

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 Northing

G 

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 Zone 

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 Easting 

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 Northing

H 

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 Zone 

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 Easting 

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 Northing

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beg. at the N.E. corner Lot 1, Block 6, Fairview Park Addition, thence 60 feet East to the point of beginning, thence South 50 feet, thence East 100 feet, thence North 100 feet, thence West 100 feet, thence south 100 feet to the point of beginning. All of said area located within North Park. Includes pavilion and

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries** carousel within.

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Iowa State Historical Department  
Office of Historic Preservation

date April 18, 1986

street & number E. 12th & Grand Ave.

telephone 515-281-4137

city or town Des Moines

state IA 50319

# 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 Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date April 18, 1986

### For NPS use only

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

*William B. Bushong*  
Keeper of the National Register

date 6/4/86

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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which is represented by these carved animals poses a direct threat to the survival of intact carousels. Collectors have long sought individual pieces. Museums have contributed in the same way, making entire original menagerie sets quite uncommon. The Herschell-Spillman Company produced the following range of carved menagerie animals: camel, cat, chicken, deer, dog, frog, giraffe, goat, kangaroo, lion, mule, ostrich, pig, rooster, stork, tiger, zebra and horse.

The portable steam "Riding Gallery" could be disassembled and transported in three large wagons. An eight horse team could draw the lot. The first wagon carried the menagerie animals, each wrapped in a protective blanket. the second wagon carried machinery, the platform, and the larger chariot seats. The final wagon carried the superstructure and engine. Railroad transportation was the preferred mode of travel. In later years two large truck-like wagons could be mounted on a single flat car. Herschell-Spillman granted area monopolies to "sole agents." These family firms would sometimes own multiple machines and would be on the road throughout the year save during the winter months. One such agent, "Davis Brothers Auto Merry Go Round", Los Angeles, advertised on their wagon covers "Special Attention Paid to Picnics & Celebrations", indicating that these firms did not merely appear at major fairs alone.

The early history of this carousel's wanderings is unknown. The machine was manufactured by the Herschell-Spillman Company in North Tonawanda, New York in 1913. Designed for temporary set-up and use, it undoubtedly played an active role in a range of fairs, celebrations and gatherings over a broad geographical area. It was eventually owned by Mr. P. T. Gifford, of Iowa Falls who brought it to Story City every other year for the fourth of July. The city alternated with Eldora each year. In 1938 the usual arrangement fell through and the city negotiated to buy the carousel. Gifford by that time was advanced in age and had created a working model farm on a truck which he took from fair to fair. The Greater Community Congress of Story City raised the \$1,200 purchase price. Audley Moulin was then president of the GCC. Thereafter the carousel was used annually, through the summer, usually exposed to the elements. It was last so used in 1976 when it was determined to be too deteriorated for further use. Legs were missing, paint pitted and faded.

The Greater Community Congress, longtime owner and operator of the carousel, was organized in 1907 and has worked to promote city growth since that date.

The carousel was stored in a local grain elevator until 1981 when the Greater Community Congress determined to both restore and shelter the amusement relic. The pavilion, designed by Butler Manufacturing Company, cost \$63,000. Ground was broken at North Park in March 1982 for the twelve-sided structure. Rain hampered construction, footings were poured by April 21, carpentry work raced along in May. The carousel was assembled the night before the dedication. The carousel restoration, proceeding apace, cost half again as much. The carousel was completed and sheltered in time for the June 1982 local "Scandinavian Days" celebration. The carousel was dedicated on 4 June 1982. An auction of

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first rides netted \$5,700 in additional funds at the ceremony. The carousel operates three months a year in its new location. During the winter it is dismantled and stored within a heated storage area within the pavilion.

The Story City Carousel is considered to be the best preserved example of the smaller type of portable merry-go-rounds. Other known examples include the following:

Burlington, Ilitch Gardens, Colorado: A larger machine, three rows of animals per bay. This is the only machine that retains its original color on its animals.

Riverside, Rhode Island: Larger machine, 50' diameter.

Greenfield Village, Michigan: A Herschel-Spillman, a larger stationary machine.

Philadelphia, Tobagon Park, a 1906 stationary machine, 50-60' diameter.

Oakland, Tilden Park, California: Larger stationary machine.

Flint, Michigan: Larger 1917 Herschel-Spillman machine.

None of these other examples have been restored and they all represent the larger stationary type of carousel with three rows of animals.



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Fried, Frederick. A Pictorial History of the Carousel. South Brunswick, NJ: A. S. Barnes, 1964, pp. 12, 14, 16, 17, 22, 91, 212.

"Early History of Story City's Commercial Club: The Greater Community Congress." The Story City Herald 1940 Anniversary Number. Story City: October, 1940.

Phone Interview, Susan D. Larson with Mr. John Hayek, editor, "Merry-Go-Round-Up", January 1986.

Phone Interview, James E. Jacobsen with Mr. Charles Walker, Conservation Chairman, National Carousel Association, Atlanta, January 24, 1986.

Letter, Charles Walker, National Carousel Association, to James E. Jacobsen, January 29, 1986.

Restoration report, Story City Carousel, Joann and Loren Barker, Roland, Iowa.

"An Iowa Town Has a Coming Out Party." Merry-Go-Roundup. 9:3 (1982), pp. 7-15, 32.