

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 Highland Park Dentzel Carousel & Shelter Building

and or common Same

2. Location

street & number Highland Park _____ not for publication

city, town Meridian _____ vicinity of

state Mississippi code 28 county Lauderdale code 75

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 checked="" 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input checked="" 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 City of Meridian

street & number City Hall, Box 1430

city, town Meridian _____ vicinity of state Mississippi 39301

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Chancery Clerk
Lauderdale County Courthouse

street & number 500 - 21st Avenue

city, town Meridian _____ vicinity of state Mississippi 39301

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Statewide Survey of Historic Sites has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date August 26, 1977 _____ federal state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records Mississippi Department of Archives and History

city, town Jackson _____ vicinity of state Mississippi 39205

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved date 1909
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Summary

One of the primary features of the city of Meridian's Highland Park is its Dentzel Carousel and shelter, which have occupied their site in the park since the park opened in 1909 at the end of a city streetcar line. The Highland Park Dentzel carousel is a stationary (No. 102) carousel approximately 30' in diameter with two animals abreast; it is smaller than the standard 2-abreast, which was 42' in diameter.

Its shelter is a rare surviving carousel building from a Dentzel blueprint,¹ rectangular in shape with a clerestory over the carousel's position within it.

Carousel²

The 28 hand-carved animals, secured by brass poles to the wooden platform, include a lion, a tiger, 2 deer, 2 antelope, 2 giraffes, and 20 horses. The outer ring displays more elaborate carving. Two double-seated chariots, ornamented by scrolls and flowers, bring the seating capacity of the carousel to 36.² All stations are of brightly painted carved wood trimmed with gold. The animals have been painted over the years; their restoration is being performed in stages and they are otherwise in good condition.

The carousel is further ornamented with three tiers of "scenery" containing 64 original oil paintings. Above the outer ring of animals, at the end of the 16-spoke rafters, are 32 oil paintings on wood. Sixteen are large views of animals ranging from chickens to buffalo, framed in a long cartouche of painted scrolls. Between these and over each animal is a smaller landscape painting set in a frame of gilded wood scrolls. Much of the mechanical equipment and structural members are concealed by two inner tiers of paintings. The upper tier features 15 genre and landscape scenes of Europe and the Middle East painted in oil on canvas. On the sixteenth panel is the advertisement: "G. A. DENTZEL BUILDER of the LATEST IMPROVED CARROUSEL [sic] 3635-41 Germantown, Pa." Both paintings and advertisement are framed in wood with painted scrolls. One scene in the upper tier has been repainted. Below are 16 canvases which have been painted over in red, white, and blue, with eagle decals applied over the alternating white canvases. These too were originally small landscapes.

A deck of wide planks forms the riding platform, which is raised 12" off the floor and encircled by a 4" metal rim. The floor is suspended by iron rods from a large circular ring which in turn is supported by tension rods and heavy 10" x 10" wood struts from the central post. The carousel is powered by a large electric motor connected by a canvas belt to a flywheel and horizontal drive shaft with a clutch and cam gear. A vertical steel shaft with a large wheel gear is connected to the cam gear. The clutch and a spring-loaded brake are operated manually, using levers. All of the machinery dates at least to the early 20th century. The original carousel pipe organ fell into disrepair years ago and was supplanted by recorded music provided by a modern phonograph and amplifiers.

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
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Recreation (carousel pattern)

Specific dates carousel c. 1892-99
shelter 1909

Builder Architect Carousel (Dentzel Carousel Corporation)
Shelter (Dentzel Carousel Corporation)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary

The wooden carousel in Highland Park in Meridian, which may be as early as 1885-89, although it is more likely from 1892-99, is probably the oldest of the three earliest Dentzel menagerie carousels that are virtually intact. Its closest contemporaries, both in Indiana, are the Children's Museum carousel in Indianapolis, probably pre-1900, which has been finely restored--though it is not a pure Dentzel--and that in Logansport, only partially restored, which is generally dated between 1900 and 1903, although it may predate 1900. All three have been moved, those in Indianapolis and Logansport relatively recently; the Dentzel in Meridian arrived there in 1909, and it is the only one still in the "shelter," or carousel house, that it occupied historically.¹ The carousel house is a rare survivor, built from a Dentzel blueprint.

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 1910.²

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, in present Germany. The family continued in the business in Philadelphia until 1929.³

Of an unknown total number of carousels, certainly upward of a hundred, manufactured by the Dentzel Company, some 21 (including the 3 mentioned above) still exist.⁴ 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 study 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.⁵ 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

Acree of nominated property less than 1

Quadrangle name Meridian South

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	6	3	3	8	3	8	5	3	5	8	3	2	5	10
Zone		Easting					Northing							

B:

Zone		Easting					Northing							

C

Zone		Easting					Northing							

D

Zone		Easting					Northing							

E

Zone		Easting					Northing							

F

Zone		Easting					Northing							

G

Zone		Easting					Northing							

H

Zone		Easting					Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Only the carousel building and the carousel within it.

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 James H. Charleton, Historian

organization History Division, National Park Service date October 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:

date

Chief of Registration

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Representation in Existing Surveys (cont.)

Title: National Register of Historic Places (Highland Park)

Date: 1979

Depository for survey records: National Register of Historic Places

City, Town: Washington

State: DC 20013-7127

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Carousel House³

The carousel house was begun in 1909 in anticipation of the arrival of the city's newly acquired Dentzel carousel. Apparently built from a Dentzel blueprint, it is a rectangular building approximately 70' x 75' with 22' high board-and-batten exterior walls.

The exterior massing is distinctive in appearance with a low, square, main block and an octagonal central section with a steep pyramidal roof with clerestory windows. The clerestory is about 40' in diameter and lights the interior with 32 six-light stationary sash hung horizontally. The peaked roof of the clerestory conforms to the octagon. The clerestory is carried on eight wooden columns encased in pressed tin simulating square fluted columns raised on pedestals.

At the center of the east, west, and south elevations, below small gable extensions at the eaves, are large entrances with double doors and four-light transoms. The north elevation has a large central window (now covered with plywood) with an identical gable. Originally the south elevation was open on both sides of its entrance, lighted either by glass or open lattice. The openings have been closed and a relatively new window unit appears to the west of the doorway. Similar window units symmetrically flank the center doors of the east and west elevations and the center window of the north elevation. A shed roof has been applied across the south elevation and is supported by slender steel columns.

Inside, the original mosaic tile floor with a large snowflake pattern in green, yellow, terra cotta, and white is intact. A high paneled wainscot of painted oak encircles the large interior space. On the south wall, a new concession stand has been built, replacing the original soda fountain. In view of the original open design of the south wall, it is probable that the soda fountain was intended to serve patrons both inside and outside. The carousel house has recently (1983-84) been restored, using a combination of city funds and a small National Park Service grant.

Footnotes

¹The description of the standard 2-abreast and the carousel building appear in "Catalogue of Caroussels and Organs" (Philadelphia: G.A. Dentzel, c. 1885), unpaginated.

²The description of the carousel combines the data that appears in the Highland Park National Register nomination (1979), prepared by Gregory B. Free and Susan Perry of the City of Meridian Department of Parks and Recreation, and in Mendel, Mesick, Cohen, and Waite, Architects, "Highland Park Comprehensive Preservation Plan" (Albany, New York: 1981), unpaginated.

³The description of the carousel house was prepared from the sources listed in Note 2. Onsite inspection in September 1985 revealed the extent of progress on restoration.

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The Meridian Carousel

In addition to its other merits, the Meridian Dentzel carousel is one of only two extant 2-animal abreast Dentzels. It is also one of the few in the United States that retains most of its original "scenery" oil paintings.

Meridian's Dentzel was a second-hand machine sold to the city when it was establishing Highland Park in 1909. It was installed in the carousel house in the northern part of the park near the streetcar station in that year, and has been a feature of the park ever since. The park began as a "pleasuring ground" in a Victorian mode, and evolved into a more modern facility featuring organized and active sports in the 1930s. The carousel, however, unlike a number of other facilities in the park, has remained intact and in place.⁶

Footnotes

¹These conclusions are based on a compilation of data that appears 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. Sources for data on the other two carousels appear in the individual examinations of them elsewhere in this theme study.

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

³Ibid., pp. 3-5.

⁴National Carousel Association, op. cit.

⁵Fried, op. cit., p. 8.

⁶Sources for this data are those cited in Note 2 of the Description section of this study.

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Bibliography

"Catalogue of Carousels and Organs." Philadelphia: G.A. Dentzel, c. 1885.

Charles, Barbara. "Merry-Go-Round," Smithsonian Magazine 3 (July 1972): 40-47.

Fried, Frederick. A Pictorial History of the Carousel. New York: A.S. Barnes, 1964.
Pp. 51-58.

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

"Information Wanted!" Merry-Go-Roundup 9, 3, p. 22.

Mendel, Mesick, Cohen, and Waite, Architects. "Highland Park Comprehensive Preser-
vation Plan." Albany, New York: 1981.

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

Meridian [Miss.] Star, April 28, 1908; April 28, 1909.

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

Sketch map of Highland Park, showing location of Carousel Shelter.
 (Mississippi Department of Archives and History, 1978)

