

KEEPING UP APPEARANCES

After 60 years and generations of riders, the carousel was in dire need of refurbishment. With the support of a State Historical Foundation grant in 1998, the restoration process began with removing decades of varnish and paint to reveal the original color scheme, creating hand-drawn “maps” of each horse’s original color scheme, fixing broken aluminum legs, sanding out nicks and scratches, and carving near perfect matches to replace broken bits of ears and noses. The shields and paintings in the carousel’s center panels were also cleaned and restored to preserve the original paint applied by artists in the 1920’s.



ABOVE: 2015 - Before refurbishment.

To complete the project, the carousel’s decorative paintings were also restored, the structure was rebuilt, the lights were rewired and all the mechanical parts (poles and control mechanism) were reworked.



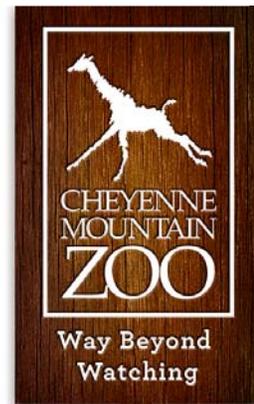
BELOW: After refurbishment.

Upon completion, the beautifully restored carousel was moved to a prime location in the heart of the Zoo and housed in a custom-made pavilion to protect against the elements.

The restoration work was done by Will Morton, a Colorado-based restoration specialist, who later mentored and helped train Rand Hood, the specialist who later completed the carousel’s 2015 refurbishment.

Historic ALLAN HERSHELL CAROUSEL

circa 1925



THE CAROUSEL COMES TO THE ZOO

Spencer Penrose, founder of Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, became aware of the carousel after seeing it at The Century of Progress Fair in Chicago in 1933. Correspondence reveals his determination to acquire the unit from the Allan Herschell Company in North Tonawanda, New York and his enthusiasm to bring it to the Zoo in 1937.

The carousel was installed at the Zoo near the top of its developed property shortly before Mr. Penrose established the zoological park as a non-profit in 1938. It stands today as one of the few remaining structures of the “original” Zoo. It was moved to its current location in 1998 following major restoration work.

Due to normal wear and tear from many thousands of enthusiastic riders, the Zoo engaged in a second restoration project in 2015 to refurbish the horses and chariots. The project was funded in part by grants from History Colorado and the National Carousel Association.



ABOVE: In spring 1950, Rough Riders from the Pikes Peak or Bust Rodeo posed on the Zoo's carousel for a photograph to promote the upcoming rodeo. *Courtesy of The Colorado Springs Gazette.*

BELOW: Modern-day Rough Riders promote the Rodeo.



CAROUSEL'S CONSTRUCTION

The Zoo's carousel represents a distinct style - a portable, two-abreast, county-fair style with animals constructed of wood with metal legs. As a portable unit, the carousel was designed to be taken apart and moved despite its total weight of seven tons. In fact, the carousel could be broken down using basic hand tools in just eight hours so that it could travel.



The carousel is approximately 36 feet in diameter, and features 20 jumping horses arranged in two rows, and two stationary chariots. The body and heads of the horses are carved of Eastern yellow poplar and the legs are cast aluminum. The unit was originally powered by a 10-cylinder gas engine, but now runs on electricity. The rounding boards contain scenes and images featuring mountain landscapes, sailboats and a Viking ship. The center panels also depict mountain scenery and the Allan Herschell name. Both the center panels and the rounding boards are lighted. The paint on the center panel of the rounding board is original factory paint, which according to a restoration specialist is quite rare. A Stinson organ provides the music that attracts riders from throughout the Zoo.

The Zoo's style of carousel is also different from the five other historic carousels in Colorado which are all fixed location, larger and fully wooden-animal carousels. In September 1997, the carousel was listed in the State Register of Historic Properties, with areas of significance noted as entertainment and engineering.