

# Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

## The Jantzen Beach Carousel Rides Again

### New Exhibition at the Oregon Historical Society

When the Jantzen Beach Amusement Park opened on Hayden Island on May 26, 1928, it was termed the “Coney Island of the West.” At 123 acres, “Portland’s Million-Dollar Playground” was the largest amusement park in the United States at the time. The opening weekend of the park drew 40,000 people who enjoyed a variety of rides and attractions, including a roller coaster and four swimming pools.

However, perhaps the most iconic feature of the park was the Jantzen Beach Carousel. Added to the park in July of that year, this impressive four-abreast carousel built by C. W. Parker was originally designed for the J. A. Ellis Amusement Company for installation on the pier in Venice, California. Measuring more than 66 feet in diameter and standing nearly three stories high, the carousel featured 72 beautifully hand-carved horses. Today, it is the last Parker Superior Park Model carousel known to exist.



PHOTO BY EVAN KIERSTEAD

One of the beautiful galloping horses from the Jantzen Beach Carousel

When the amusement park was demolished in 1970 to make way for a shopping center, the carousel became the centerpiece of the mall, drawing delighted children and adults for the next 40 years. However, as the character of the shopping center changed to make room for more “big box” stores, the pavilion that sheltered the car-

ousel was torn down and its fate seemed uncertain. While it might have been sold off piecemeal, fortune shined on the carousel’s future when the owners of the Jantzen Beach Center donated the carousel to Restore Oregon, a statewide, nonprofit historic preservation organization, where it has been carefully stored since 2017.

OHS, in partnership with Restore Oregon, is now very proud to present a vibrant multimedia exhibition curated by Barnett & Solomon. The Odyssey of the Historic Jantzen Beach Carousel, on view now

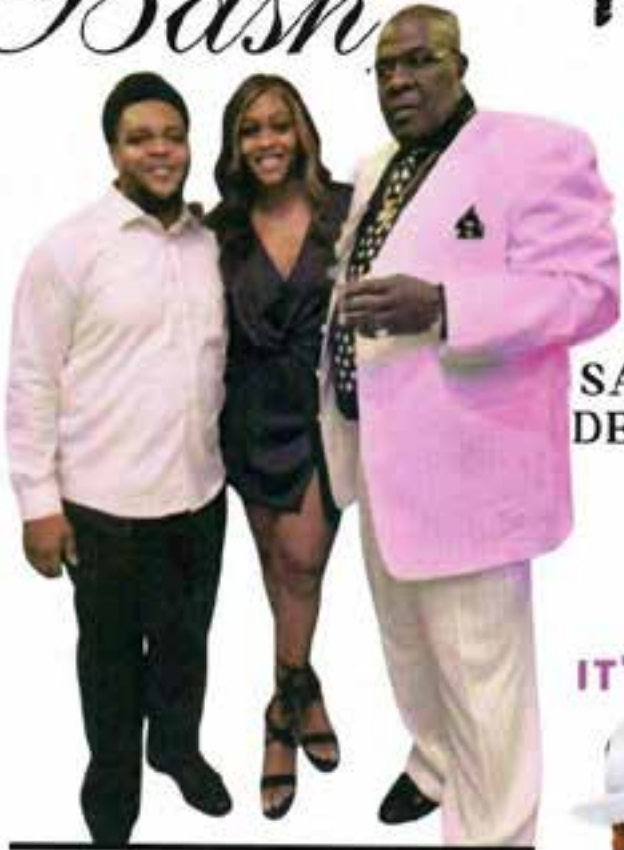

through April 30, 2023, shares the fascinating history of the park and features four of the carousel’s beautiful horses — two of them fully restored and on display for the first time in over a decade. Visitors will also enjoy historical photographs, objects, videos, and a gallery of stunning hand-printed silver gelatin photographs by architect and heritage documentarian, Harley Cowan.

“Restore Oregon is delighted to have participated in the creation of this exhibition over the past two years, and to have loaned many of the historic photographs and objects that help tell the 100-year story of the Jantzen Beach Carousel,” said Stephanie Brown, Jantzen Beach Carousel Project Manager at Restore Oregon. “We are equally thrilled to share a behind-the-scenes look at the historic preservation process, and to celebrate the work of our talented team of artisans. Our hope is that all who visit this exhibition, whether they already love the Jantzen Beach Carousel or are discovering it for the first time, will enjoy this chance to learn about its history, craftsmanship, and the special place it holds in the hearts of generations of Pacific Northwesterners.”

The Oregon Historical Society’s museum is open seven days a week, Monday–Saturday 10am–5pm and Sunday 12pm–5pm. Admission is \$10, with discounts for students, seniors, teachers, and youth. Admission is free every day for OHS members and Multnomah County residents.

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