

## I Rode The Carousel Circuit – Greater Binghamton, N.Y.

By Lois Krupinsky

While attending the AACA National Spring Meet, June 28<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup>, in Binghamton, NY, Helen and Jerry Gordon, and John and I spent Friday on the Carousel Circuit. We had fun.

Between 1919 and 1934, George F. Johnson, a shoe manufacturer and great benefactor, donated six beautiful carousels to the local parks. Mr. Johnson felt carousels contributed to a happy life and would help youngsters grow into strong and useful citizens. And, he believed that carousels should be enjoyed by everyone, insisting that the municipalities never charge admission for the magic rides.

The six carousels were manufactured by the Allen Herschell Companies of North Tonawanda, N.Y. While riding, you can still hear the music of the Wurlitzer Band Organs. The beautiful horses are jumpers. There are also gorilla chariots, and even a pig and a dog. Remarkably, of the 150 wood-carved carousels remaining in the United States and Canada, six are in the Greater Binghamton area with two in Binghamton, two in Endicott, one each in Johnson City and Endwell. All six are on the New York State Historic

Register, as well as the National Register of Historic Places.

Our carousel riding began on Friday morning with the three most distant carousels. These carousels are located in local parks, some of which are now in city neighborhoods as the area has built up around them. The parks are meticulously maintained with the carousels themselves enclosed in circular buildings. Even today, rides are free on these beautiful carousels from a by-gone era. As you ride each carousel – you can stay and ride as much as you want – you receive a colored card proving that you rode that carousel. We collected our three cards for the Highland Park, G.W. Johnson Park, and West Endicott Park rides.

During our morning rides, we stopped at an ice cream shop and the owner told us about the area. He mentioned that we had to try the “spiedies”, a local food specialty. These are cubes of meat – at one time lamb and goat – but now chicken or pork, which are marinated and grilled. We had lunch at a shop that specializes in spiedies and tried both the chicken and pork spiedie sandwiches. They were great.

Our afternoon was spent riding the remaining three carousels at Ross Park, Recreation Park, and C. Fred Johnson Park. After collecting our last three cards, we turned in all six at the final carousel. *Each of us received a commemorative pin, which had the image pictured on the left inscribed on it.* All of us wore the pins throughout the weekend. Of course, I brought our pins home and added them to my carousel collection.

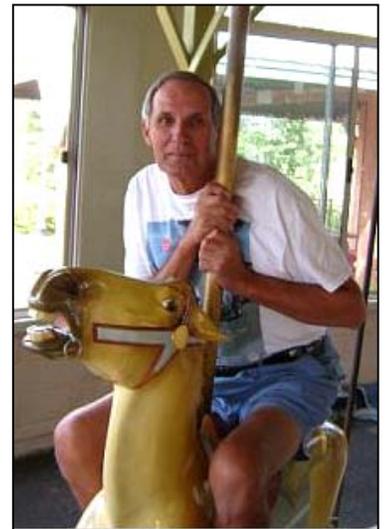
Also, I was fortunate to win one of the raffles at the car meet. It was a beautiful carousel music box, which I added to my collection. This was a fun weekend – a carousel adventure, a nice AACA national meet, and a trip to a beautiful area of the United States.



*Above: Helen Gordon is acting like a kid enjoying one of the carousel rides*



*From top left: John & Lois Krupinsky, Jerry & Helen Gordon, Lois on a pony, and a carousel view with ponies and décor.*



*John Krupinsky riding one of the ponies, which has an unhappy look*