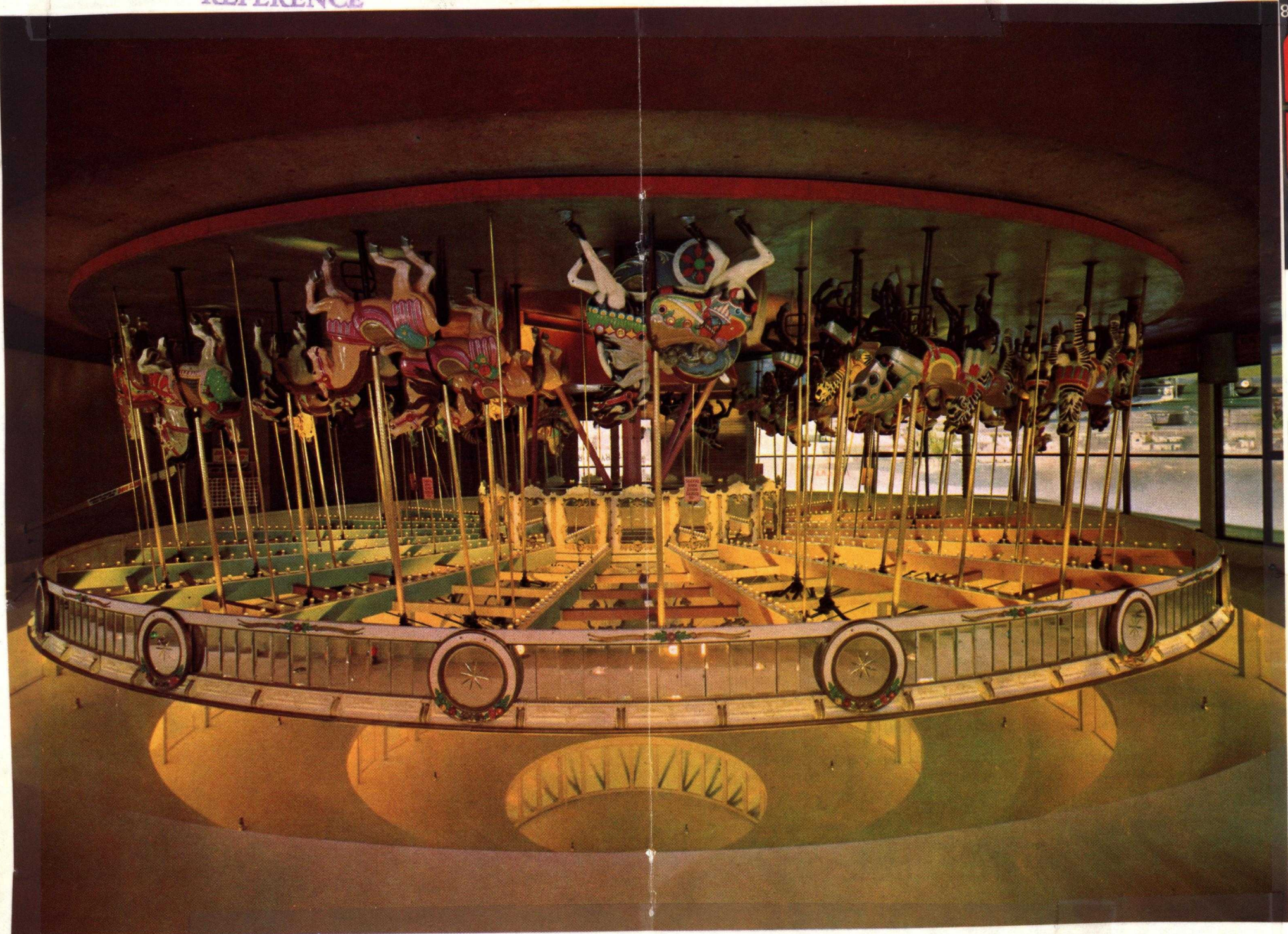


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MONTEREY SAVINGS

SANTA CRUZ,
CAPTIVA
CAMPUS

by Ted M. Taylor

Boardwalk

Streaming sunlight glints from polished mirrors, sculpted decorations, and gleaming brass poles smudged by tightly grasped fingers. As music blares from the band organ, riders on brightly painted horses lean across the edge of the revolving platform. They grab metal rings from a mechanical arm and hurl them at the gaping mouth of a large painted face in the corner.

Adults standing behind the guard rails and seated on low gray benches, register expressions of joy, nostalgia, and parental obligation.

For who can resist a child's wish to ride on the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk merry-go-round, which has carried generations of amusement park visitors since 1911.

The Panama Pacific Exposition held in San Francisco four years later popularized a replica of the carousel. The attractions were created by I.D. Loof, perhaps the greatest carver of merry-go-round horses.

The Boardwalk carousel has 62 dramatically hewn horses and zebras. Often with flared nostrils and waving manes, the horses appear to move even when not in motion. Each of the animals bears the artist's trademark, a single rosette carved on its breast.

The Danish-born Loof came to the United States in 1870 and worked in a New York furniture factory as a woodcarver. He spent most of his spare time carving horses, and installed his first merry-go-round at Coney Island in 1875. Subsequently, he moved his factory from New Jersey to Rhode Island and then to Long Beach, California.



Since the Santa Cruz attraction opened, Loof's animals have carried nearly 55,000,000 riders for a total of some 60 circuits. The merry-go-round originally cost \$18,000, an exorbitant price during a time when one could buy a T-bone steak with mushrooms for 25 cents.

Loof's art died with him, but his Boardwalk works are safely housed in a special pavilion built in 1967 at a cost of \$150,000.

Santa Cruz Seaside Company officials, which own and operate the carousel, believe that it is probably the last in the United States using rings, and patrons receiving a gold ring still get a free ride.

Recently, while the ring dispenser was being repaired, attendants received numerous complaints, not as expected, from children, but from adults who missed the opportunity for a free ride.

As unique as Loof's horses is the musical accompaniment provided by the 342-pipe German Ruth Band Organ made in 1894. Wurlitzer record rolls are still available for the instrument, and sound artists have often recorded the organ music as background for their presentations.

In 1959, an expert took three months to replace some of the worn organ parts. Men with such skill are rare today, and a serious problem would occur should the organ need major repairs.

The merry-go-round operates over 200 days a year, and the Boardwalk is open daily through September 5. So why not take the family for a spin on Santa Cruz' only revolving art gallery.

