

# A Carousel of Memories

## Segment One Run Time: 21:50

### Overview

The romance of the amusement park carousel has provided memories for generations. Unfortunately, what once were seventy parks located in Eastern Pennsylvania in the twentieth century, is now a mere three. At the peak, Carsonia, Central, Willow Grove, Bushkill, Dorney, and Willow Parks were enjoyed by Valley citizens and excited tourists. The industry began as a way to relieve the summer heat, and with the invention of electricity, amusement parks flourished alongside the trolley industry.



Each park had an individual flair. For example, Solomon Dorney started his namesake park from a fish hatchery. Carsonia Park was known for its theater and steam locomotive. Willow Grove Park rang out with the rhythms of Sousa as the “music capital of the world,” and Bushkill Park housed one of only twenty brass-ring merry-go-rounds in the nation. In the midst of this entertainment craze, Pendora Park, a rival of Carsonia, burnt down in a mysterious blaze.

### Discussion/Questions

1. The video explores the competition between Carsonia and Pendora Park until the mysterious fire. Explain the speculation involved in the fire at Pendora Park.
2. Discuss your attire at amusement parks. Compare this to that of the early 1900s.
3. Although the depression hurt the carousel industry, how did the Great Depression benefit amusement parks? Would you consider Tom Long an entrepreneur? Explain. What qualities do you think entrepreneur should possess?
4. Explain the relationship between the trolley industry and the amusement park industry due to the invention of electricity.

### Activities

1. In a group, brainstorm the stereotypical attractions at an amusement park. Name four uncommon features at Willow Grove Park.
2. With a partner, create a brochure detailing the history, feature attractions, address if still open, and/or downfall of one of the following parks: Carsonia, Central, Willow Grove, Bushkill, Dorney, and Willow.

## Spotlight: Carousels

Historically, aspects of carousels first appeared in the 12th century; however, they were not named until the early 19th century during the reign of Louis XIV in France. In the earliest stages of the ride, the carousel functioned as a test for Arabian horsemen. In order to assess the riders' skills, two men had to hurriedly toss a scented clay ball back and forth. As the game evolved, a wheel, a pole, and wooden horses circling the pole were added. The goal of the test was to lance a miniature brass ring from an outside wheel.



Although the concept of the carousel originated in Europe, specifically France, craftsmen immigrated to America and created even more exquisite machines in the 1900s. These carousels had music, glass mirrors, and lighting. Also, above and beyond the traditional horse, the tradesmen crafted lover's seats, gondolas, as well a variety of new animals not seen in the traditional French invention. Furthermore, the first horse behind the chariot was given the name "Lead or King Horse."

Sadly, the reign of the carousel lasted a mere twenty-five years, and an industry that peaked at over 7,000 dwindled to only 300 due in great part to the Great Depression and mother nature. Originals can still be found in parts of New York or California. Lastly, The New England Carousel Museum in Bristol, Connecticut, The Herschell Carrousel Factor Museum in North Tonawanda, New York, and The Sandusky Merry-Go-Round Museum in Sandusky, Ohio offer further exploration.

## More information

<http://history.amusement-parks.com/dorneycaro.htm>

## Academic Standards

A Carousel of Memories is specifically designed to address the Academic Standards for History as set forth by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. This program supports the successful achievement of standards 8.3 United States History as defined under grade 12 measurement criteria:

8.2.12

B. Identify and evaluate primary documents, material artifacts and historic sites important in United States history from 1890 to Present

C. Identify and evaluate how continuity and change have influenced United States history from the 1890s to Present

