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Nunley's Carousel is located on Charles Lindbergh Blvd., Garden City.
Photos by Christy Hinko

CENTENNIAL SPIN

Nunley's Carousel celebrates more than a century of enchantment

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Nunley's Carousel, a cherished jewel of Long Island, offers a vivid ride through both history and joy. This iconic carousel, originally built in 1912 by the Stein and Goldstein Artistic Carousel Company, is not just a merry-go-round—it is a portal to a bygone era, a carefully preserved piece of Americana that continues to enchant visitors of all ages.

The story of Nunley's Carousel begins more than a century ago, when it was first crafted with its elaborate decorations and hand-carved figures. The craftsmanship evident in the carousel is a hallmark of the golden age of carousels in America, a period when these rides were not just amusement park staples but also works of art. Each of the carousel's 41 horses, and one lion, are masterpieces of wood-carving, adorned with real glass eyes and aglow with vibrant, hand-painted colors. As it spins, the ride is accompanied by the traditional music of a Wurlitzer organ, enhancing the nostalgic experience.

Originally located at Nunley's Amusement Park in Rahway, the carousel became a beloved fixture, spinning memories for countless visitors until the park



Nunley's Carousel
Photos by Christy Hinko

closed in 1995. The closure could have marked the end for this historic carousel, but thanks to community efforts and historical preservationists, it was saved from auction and dismantlement. In a testament to its significance and the fondness it engendered, it was restored meticulously and relocated in 2009 to its current home adjacent to the Long Island

Children's Museum in Garden City. The restoration process was no small feat. Each horse was carefully stripped of layers of paint, revealing the original designs and colors which were then lovingly replicated. The mechanical parts were overhauled to ensure the carousel could continue to operate safely

and smoothly, allowing it to offer rides just as it did a century ago. The attention to detail in the restoration ensures that each ride on Nunley's Carousel is as magical as it was in the early 1900s. Today, Nunley's Carousel stands not just as an attraction but as an educational resource and a nostalgic remnant that offers a glimpse into the past. It

serves as a reminder of the simple joys of yesteryear and as a celebration of the enduring appeal of traditional amusements in an age dominated by digital entertainment. Schools and families visit, drawn by both the fun and the learning opportunities it provides about local history and the art of carousel making.

For many Long Islanders, the carousel is wrapped up in personal history. Generations of families have ridden its painted horses, creating a tapestry of memories that connect the past with the present. It is common to hear visitors recount stories of their parents or grandparents who shared the same joyous rides decades ago, underscoring the carousel's role as a generational link.

Nunley's Carousel continues to spin today, a testament to the community's commitment to preserving its cultural heritage and to the timeless allure of its craftsmanship. Whether it's the thrill of the ride, the artistry of the figures, or the nostalgia it evokes, Nunley's Carousel remains a beloved destination, cherished by all who come to revel in its circular dance. It stands not only as a piece of history but as an ongoing celebration of joy and community spirit on Long Island.