

\$450K carousel tells story of Newark using 16 historic horses

Jessica Mazzola | March 31, 2016



Carousels and Carvings hand crafted the custom carousel. (Courtesy Military Park Partnership)

NEWARK — It's the history of the state's largest city, as told through 16 horses. That's the concept behind a \$450,000 custom-made carousel being installed in Newark's Military Park this week.

The grand attraction was paid for entirely via an anonymous donation to the Military Park Partnership, which completed a multi-million dollar redevelopment of the historic park in 2014 and now operates the community space. The MPP, donor, Newark Landmarks and Historic

Preservation Commission, and Carousels and Carvings – the custom carousel shop in Marion, Ohio that crafted the ride over about 11 months – collaborated with local residents during two design workshops on the unique design.

It features 16 ride-able horses that are based not only historical events, but meant to depict actual horses that played a role in the development of Newark over its 350-year history. Military Park, which dates back to 1667 and served as an actual military practice ground, "has a tremendous history," said Ben Donsky of Biederman Redevelopment Ventures, who also serves as Vice President of the Military Park Partnership.

"We were looking for a way to tell that history that was more than just putting up signs. We wanted to make it come alive."

The Founders Weekend celebration is happening in May.

The massive carousel will certainly seem larger than life when assembly wraps at the end of this week. At 20 feet tall from base to finial, the carousel has nine sections, a 26-foot diameter, and weighs between 12,000 and 14,000 pounds. The design includes eagles and other patriotic mini statues and mural panels depicting historical scenes. Each unique horse was hand-carved from original patterns and cast in fiberglass so they could withstand operating outdoors.

"There's a certain elegance about them," Carousels and Carvings owner Todd Goings said of why he thinks the children's amusement has stood the test the time.

"When they are tailored into the community like this, they have meaning."

Though the merry-go-round is not officially part of the ongoing yearlong celebration of the 350th anniversary of Newark's founding, it should be operational by the NC350 Founders Weekend Festival, happening at Military Park in May.

The carousel, which will be open to families soon for \$2 a ride, is part of the ongoing revitalization of the park, and the entire area, Donsky said. Combined with the initial renovations made before the park reopened, the opening of BURG restaurant last year, and other additions the MPP is seeking to fund, the carousel should help expand its offerings for families, he said. "We are trying to bring in more families and kids," he said. "It's part of the larger revitalization of downtown Newark."

The 16 horses in the carousel represent:

- Plow horse from Newark's historic farms
- George Washington's horse Blueskin
- One of General Phillip Kearny's horses
- Horse from the 5th United States Colored Cavalry (Civil War unit made up of freedmen, slaves, and ex-slaves)

- Newark stagecoach horse
- Newark streetcar horse
- Morris Canal tow horse
- Engine Company No 18, Newark Fire Horse
- Garbage and Recycling pick up horse
- Newark City Hospital ambulance horse
- Gen. Rosalie Jones and Elizabeth Freeman's horse Lausanne from the suffrage hike from Newark to Washington
- Newark police horse
- Mail delivery horse
- Milk delivery horse
- Weequahic Park race horse
- Goodwill Mission Cart horse