

Carol Ann's Carousel on the Riverfront opens

Rick Pender, WCPO Contributor

10:18 AM, May 15, 2015

1:03 AM, May 17, 2015



New riverfront attraction draws hundreds of kids.

CINCINNATI -- [Carol Ann's Carousel](#), the central attraction of Smale Riverfront Park, opened Saturday following an 11 a.m. ribbon-cutting ceremony.

Rides, which usually will cost \$2 for two-and-a-half minutes, are free on the carousel's opening day from 1 to 7 p.m. From noon to 5 p.m., visitors can enjoy free cake and ice cream, as well as street performers and other food vendors.

The carousel will be open year-round, though hours will vary by season. Through Labor Day, you can ride 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday.

The carousel is housed in a 70-by-90-foot glass structure built for it at the foot of Vine Street on a tree-lined plaza. Surrounded by playgrounds, a family-sized porch swing, gardens, boat landings, a bike path, restaurants and an event lawn, the playful merry-go-round is named for philanthropist Carol Ann Haile. Haile and her husband, Ralph, left a legacy that has been improving the quality of life in Cincinnati for a decade.

"The sparkle, whimsy and pure fun it provides are a direct reflection of Carol's sparkling personality," said Tim Maloney, the Haile Foundation's president.

The carousel was a gift to the Cincinnati Parks Foundation. The carousel project -- figures, paintings, lights and installation -- cost \$1 million, and the building housing it cost \$4.5 million. The entire project was privately funded.

A Work Of Art

The carousel is a work of art, 46 feet in diameter and 20 feet tall, created and installed by Carousel Works of Mansfield, Ohio, the world's preeminent maker of wooden carousels.

The ride features 44 characters, arranged in three rows. The figures represent many areas of life, history and culture in Greater Cincinnati. They reflect river life, sports, Cincinnati cuisine, iconic places, transportation, history, business, the arts, the seasons and folklore.

You can ride an Oktoberfest horse, a Carew Tower gorilla or a Downtown skyscrapers giraffe. Other options include a Cincinnati baseball horse wearing a Reds ball cap, a pig representing Findlay Market, Martha the passenger pigeon, the University of Cincinnati Bearcat, an Ohio cardinal, a Bengal tiger sponsored by Cincinnati's NFL team and a white tiger hearkening to the Cincinnati Zoo.

And of course, so close to the Ohio River, there has to be a riverboat.

Engaging Local Ties

Paintings by [local artist Jonathan Queen](#) decorate the ride's canopy and central axle. He's the painter of the "vegetable mural" spilling down a facade of the Kroger Building, a 2013 project of ArtWorks.

"They wanted images for the carousel that would be fun" -- in the spirit of Carol -- "so that was my guiding spirit. Originally they asked for 16 park landscapes. But I thought that would cater more to adults who had been to the parks. I wanted to add some fun to engage kids," said Queen, the father of children ranging from 9 to 17 years old.

So, he inserted the carousel's figures into Cincinnati's parks. There's an elephant flying a kite at Ault Park, giraffes enjoying a sunset from the overlook at Alms Park, a band in Washington Park with musicians who are squirrels, toads and lizards, and an owl in Lytle Park painting the statue of Abraham Lincoln.

Queen began working on the 16 landscapes in May 2013. Each comprises 30 to 50 photographs Photoshopped together with images of figures he sculpted from clay.

Celebrating Cincinnati

Working with teenaged apprentices from the ArtWorks program, Queen created a second set of 16 images to honor Cincinnati's landmarks, buildings and monuments. The images are mounted in the center of the ride, each contained in a fanciful frame supported by a pair of flying pigs.

For those interested in learning more about Queen's process, check out the exhibition "From Studio to Carousel: The Winsome World of Jonathan Queen" at [the Taft Museum of Art](#). It's on view until Sept. 6.

At 7 p.m. June 4, Queen will discuss his work at the Taft. (Call for reservations: 513-684-4515.)

Queen said he likes that the carousel brings art into the community, instead of keeping it in a museum. "What's more," he said, "it points to and celebrates our great past as a city."

Carousel Hours of Operation

Summer (Reds Opening Day through Labor Day): 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., Tuesday to Sunday

Off-Peak Season (After Labor Day through New Year's Eve): 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Wednesday to Sunday

Winter (Jan. 2 through the day before Opening Day), 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Thursday to Sunday

<http://www.wcpo.com/news/local-news/hamilton-county/cincinnati/downtown/carol-anns-carousel-on-the-riverfront-is-ready-to-roll-on-saturday>



The \$1 million carousel is housed inside a glass building on Smale Riverfront Park.



Each of the figures on Carol Ann's Carousel were hand-carved by artisans in Mansfield, Ohio, using ideas from Cincinnati residents.



Like this Reds baseball-inspired horse, each of the carousel figures celebrates a key part of the life and culture of Cincinnati.