

The Traveling Carousel Horse

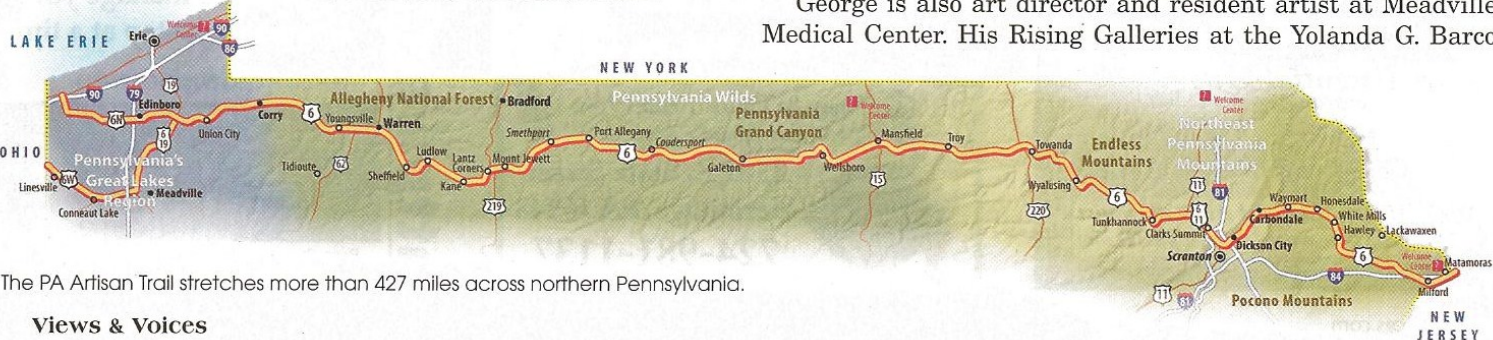
By Apryl Flynn Gilliss



The Black Armoured Horse is a replica of the original lead horse on the Conneaut Lake Park Carousel and the centerpiece of the traveling exhibit.

THE LEAD CAROUSEL HORSE, “once the centerpiece at Conneaut Lake Park,” is now gone, having been sold at auction. An exact replica of the horse, however, is making its way across the Route 6 Artisan Trail in Pennsylvania and beyond. The horse’s creator, George Nowack, of Espyville, is using the carousel horse as a magnet to draw other artists and the public to celebrate local artwork.

A member of the PA Cultural Alliance, George is coordinating the PA Route 6 Artisan Trail, which stretches more than 427 miles. His role includes coordinating the efforts of all participating galleries, museums, historical societies, individual participating artists, and heritage communities across the northern tier of Pennsylvania.



The PA Artisan Trail stretches more than 427 miles across northern Pennsylvania.

“The carousel horse is the symbolic centerpiece for a traveling exhibit which I developed as part of my improvement plan for the trail,” he said. At each stop on the tour, the horse will be joined by additional artwork by local artists.

George came up with the idea to carve a replica of the lead horse at Conneaut Lake in 2007. The horse is 6.5-feet long and 6-feet high and weighs 450 pounds. It was made from 72 pieces of wood.

George began this type of artwork in the early '90s. He is a self-taught carver in the manner of the hand-carvers of 1860 to 1910. He has carved all types of animals you would see on a carousel – from horses to giraffes.

It typically takes about six weeks for George to carve an animal, working more than eight hours a day. His wife, Carolyn, paints the carved animals, which George has sold to parks to be used on carousels and to private collectors and museums.

The traveling exhibit debuted at Conneaut Lake Park in June, then went to Corry in July and the Allegheny Artistry in Youngsville in August. In September, it will be the centerpiece of a statewide conference in Scranton. The exhibit will continue its journey across the state until June 2012, when the entire exhibit will return to Conneaut Lake Park, for the park’s 120th anniversary.

After July 4, 2012, the exhibit will travel the entire length of the United States, stopping at each state capital as a representation of the art and heritage of the PA Route 6 Artisan Trail. It will, as it travels nationwide, form the foundation for the development of a National Route 6 Artisan Trail.

At each stop along the journey, each hosting organization will stage a public opening ceremony. The exhibit consists of 63 items by 27 artists thus far. By this time next year, it will contain several hundred items.

George is also art director and resident artist at Meadville Medical Center. His Rising Galleries at the Yolanda G. Barco



The seahorse at left is an original design based on the Hippocampus from Greek mythology.



The rabbit above is carved in the manner of the Dentzel Carousel Factory, circa 1900.



Oncology Institute was so successful that his role has been expanded to the entire Meadville Medical Center. He is now working on the Women’s Diagnostic Unit and the Grove Street Surgical Unit. All the galleries are designed for stress reduction, to minimize fear and anxiety. There are also peaceful areas where patients can relax and engage in art, such as painting.

Although George’s work with the Meadville Medical Center will keep him too busy to take on any commissioned work on carousel animals for the time being, he enjoys carving.

What George likes most when carving animals is an old bonding tradition: when finished setting the glass eyes of an animal, the carver whispers a name into the animal’s ear, which is to remain a secret between them.

“Carousel animals have a life of their own,” he said. “They will live much longer than I will.” **V**

Info: www.paartisantrails.com/route6.htm