

Carousel Conundrum

VINTAGE VIEWS

By Tim Mosher

Tavistock and District Historical Society

Local agricultural fall fairs have a very long history in the area. Only four years after the settlement was founded in 1848 the annual tradition started as the Frieburg Fall Fall as that was Tavistock's name at the time. Then it became the Inkerman Fair when the community was renamed in 1855. Only two years later it was renamed a third time because of the possible confusion for the post office and local businesses with like-named communities in other parts of Ontario and has been Tavistock since 1857. Precisely why 'Tavistock' was chosen isn't firmly established as it too has a namesake, a very old town of 13,000 in south-west England. The majority of early settlers in our community though were German and Scottish - not English.

Since the first settlers arrived here, agriculture has been the long-established mainstay of the area and the residents organized

the first annual shows to collaborate and improve the quality of their livestock and crops. Today it seems odd that the first fair is thought to have not have been held in what today is Tavistock, rather, it seems it was near Strathallen, south of Hickson in 1852. Then, seven acres were acquired from the farm of Adam Mohr on the south-east side of town and was named Queen's Park to honour Queen Victoria. The property has improved steadily with the addition of a wide variety of facilities: three arenas were constructed one-by-one, a bandstand, a ball diamond and children's playground equipment were installed over many years. The tall, stone park gates were dedicated in 1929 as the official entrance at the corner of Adam and Maria Streets, rededicated in 2017.

Was the photo of the carousel taken in Queen's Park, Tavistock? To date, no one knows for sure because it's an enigmatic image, its precise location isn't known, no one in the picture is identified and the date that it was taken was not recorded. It's very likely to be a local photo because the camera equipment was very large and cumbersome at the time using big fragile glass negatives.

Curiously, between the two pairs of carved wooden horses' legs is some partially obscured illegible lettering probably of the



(JOHN LEMP; LSC SCAN #0184)

This 1908 photo from an elevated viewpoint shows split rail fences in the distance, a commercial fence on the edge of the fair grounds behind the tents including its advertising, a wind mill on the right and a good size crowd in their Sunday finery. There were no mechanical amusements yet, like carousels.



(PHOTOGRAPHER UNKNOWN; LSC SCAN #0220)

It's difficult to know where this carousel was because the surroundings have few clues. The building behind on the left has a board and batten-type wall and the building on the right has a returned eave and very pale clapboard. Very few of both are currently in Tavistock.

carousel maker's name. Above that is a series of circular 'speakers' undoubtedly for music. It appears that the horses couldn't move up and down like modern carousels, as the mechanics for this aren't present.

Like usual when the date of a photo that includes people isn't known, their fashions can narrow this down. The steam press was invented in the 1880s so men's pants up to this time didn't have creases; note how none of the pants have creases. The width of neck ties changes almost by the decade; it's easy to see that they're extremely wide here and surprisingly even the boy on the left is wearing a tie, all with early Windsor knots. The lad's knickerbockers and the straw boatmen and bowler hats are all hints regarding the date and everyone is wearing a hat (more popular then than now) all pointing towards the 1890s. Then ask yourself,

what's not in the photo? No one is smoking, nor has a snack or drink in hand, no bare arms or legs, no strollers or bags and there's no visible litter. Oh, how times have changed. I estimate the picture was taken circa 1895.

If a reader suspects that they know where the picture of the carousel was taken, or recognizes anyone, please contact me at my email address below to let me know.

The Tavistock Fall Fair brings the community together to celebrate, collaborate and initiate new ideas, products and services. And where else can you get 'dentists' delight': candy floss?

Last week's History Mystery: The photo was of Governor General John Hamilton-Gordon stepping off the train at the station in Tavistock to give a brief address to the townsfolk gathered there. The question was considering that electricity didn't arrive until 1911 in Tavistock, why are there

wires and poles in this photo that was taken fifteen years earlier? The correct answer was sent by Phil Schaefer of Tavistock: these wires were used for telegraph and telephone.

This week's History Mystery: When this photo was taken, cameras didn't have the ability to stop a subject's motion to create a sharp image, as they can today. What strong hint in this picture tells you that the carousel was fully stopped to take this photo? Note: It's not because there's no blur in the moving carousel because there is a small amount of blur caused by the wind in the leaves in the top, centre and on the right. This question is open to all ages. Send your answers to tim_mosher@hotmail.com with your first and last name and the name of the community where you live, or your rural route number. The deadline for answers is next Tuesday at 9 am.

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