

# SPEAK OF THE DEVIL

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The Tilden Park Merry Go Round, built in 1911, has been delighting East Bay riders for 75 years.

## 'Round We Go

Take a spin through history on the beautifully restored Tilden Park carousel.

BY LINDA LENHOFF

When friends from out of town come to visit—especially if they have little ones in tow—surprise them with a visit to the Tilden Park Merry Go Round. The carousel is more than a trip back to our best childhood birthday parties: It's a piece of history, quite literally in our own backyard, and it is celebrating 75 years in the East Bay this year.

Built in 1911 by the Herschell Spillman Company, the restored merry-go-round moved to Berkeley in 1948, after spending some time in Los Angeles's Griffith Park and other spots in Southern California. The ride hosts a Noah's Ark—full of unusual and well-tended animals, including 22 wood horses, 17 aluminum horses, 17 other

creatures, and 2 chariots. You'll find a proud lion, a happy chicken, a towering giraffe, a roaring tiger, a sea griffin, and more, so prepare to race five-year-olds to your favorite creature—especially if you want to ride the most popular: the cat and the dog. Or search for Rosie, the lead horse from 1911, on the outside of the three rings—you can spot her by the deep pink rose on her mane. The two toads are dressed as dapper Mr. Toad from *The Wind in the Willows*.

How does the merry-go-round keep going? The East Bay Regional Park District acquired the carousel in the 1970s and supports the restoration of the animals and the chariots. Eight years ago, the Kwasnicki

Family—Steve; Doreen; their son, Sean; and their daughter-in-law, Diana—took over running the place and in 2020 began to repair damaged areas, including the antique horse carriages. Steve did the woodwork and Diana the painting, restoring the menagerie to the 1970s pastel palette.

Once you're in the saddle, remember to hold on tight: The merry-go-round has nine speeds, though they're only allowed to pump it up to level four: 9.5 seconds per revolution. Steve reports that when he rode it as a child, one of the early operators used to "crank it up much faster." Ah, the good old days. [tildenmerrygoround.org](http://tildenmerrygoround.org).