



ACE *New York* MetroLINE

Serving the ACE New York City Region

Winter 2010

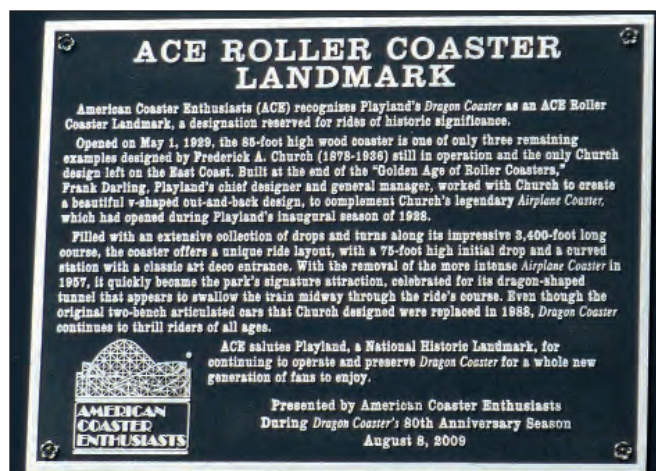


PLAYLAND PARK'S DRAGON COASTER TURNS 80

Dragon Coaster receives landmark plaque

On August 8, sixty ACErs descended upon Rye Playland to honor their historic Dragon Coaster. This 1929 Prior & Church gem, which features being swallowed by the Dragon in the middle of the ride (dark tunnel with glowing red eyes, growls and smoke) is the latest coaster to be named a Roller Coaster Landmark by ACE. The festivities began with ACE Regional Rep Colleen Whyte making a presentation that perfectly described the Dragon Coaster and its historic significance, as well as the joys it has brought to generations of families in the NY metropolitan area. This was followed by ACE President Mark Cole making the official presentation, which included reading the plaque, which finishes with these words, "ACE salutes Playland, a National Historic Landmark, for continuing to operate and preserve Dragon Coaster for a whole new generation of fans to enjoy." This was followed by Dan McBride, Deputy Commissioner of Parks Recreation and Conservation/ Director of Playland Park who thanked ACE for our support of the park and who made a few remarks in accepting the award.

Rye treated ACE very well that day. They provided us with free parking and vouchers for a meal,



Landmark plaque presented by ACE to the park

in addition to ERT. This ERT provided a rare opportunity for adults to ride on Rye's wooden kiddie coaster, with the classic junior version of NAD Century Flyer trains. Another special part of the day was the high wire act above the midway by the famous Wallenda family - featuring 10 year old Bri the world's youngest tight rope walker. Their act was absolutely amazing! And they officially acknowledged the presence of ACE during their act.

We had armbands that allowed us to enjoy all that



Who wants to ride the Dragon Coaster?



*Aerial view of the Dragon Coaster
with Super Flight to the left*

Rye has to offer throughout the day. And that included some metal coasters, and an amazing collection of flat rides including a Yo-Yo (run correctly), the best Whip in the country, very intense Music Express, and the legendary Derby Racer. Rye is also home to an historic Old Mill that snakes it's way along slowly beneath the Dragon Coaster, and 2 other classic and well done dark rides.

Quite a few ACers stayed at RYE till its midnight closing - and we had a fantastic day!

Special thanks go to Tanya Reagan, Luko Simlesa, David Finkelstein and Colleen, the regional rep team who organized the day, and Mark Cole who traveled quite a distance to be there and make the official presentation. And a very special thanks to Westchester County for having the foresight to create and maintain such a wonderful park and Rye Playland staff, headed by our dear friend Ken Puccia, for treating us so well.

"Backseat Bill" Galvin

Photos: Luko Simlesa & Playland Park

Colleen White, ACE New York City Regional Representative:

If you've ever swooped up and down, screamed your lungs out, and walked away more excited than ever, you've probably just been on the Dragon Coaster.

Today, American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE) recognizes Playland's Dragon Coaster as an ACE Roller Coaster Landmark, a designation reserved for rides of historic significance.

ACE clearly trump the Academy Awards, who missed their chance to recognize true greatness in the movies by not nominating the Dragon Coaster for it's stellar appearance in "Fatal Attraction."

Glenn Close's mania was equally matched by the coaster and her fellow riders to make one enthralling and scary scene stand out in an enthralling and scary movie!

I'm thrilled for this iconic coaster to finally be properly honored and I'm glad ACE came forward to bestow this landmark designation.

Frederick A. Church, a famed coaster designer, created the Dragon Coaster, which made it's debut on May 1, 1929. In 1957, the coaster became Playland's signature attraction. Celebrated for its dragon-shaped tunnel, the Dragon Coaster is the crown jewel of Rye Playland. Today, it is one of only three examples of Church's work that remains in operation, and is the only Church design to reign on the east coast.

I am honored to be here to celebrate the Dragon Coaster's induction into the ACE landmark family and I thank you for the opportunity to give this coaster its long overdue recognition.



*Wallenda family performing one of their
amazing acrobatic acts*



*ACE NYC Rep Colleen White with ACE President
Mark Cole and Playland Park Director Dan McBride*

William H. Reynolds Dreamland

William H. Reynolds was born in Brooklyn, in 1867. Reynolds's father was a successful builder. As a schoolboy, William earned money by working for his father, cleaning up after the workmen were done. Reynolds's father was the kind of person who used to pay his bills when he felt like it, and in the business he was known as "good, but slow". William showed his business sense by making an agreement with the companies his father did business with, to get a rate of 2% discount on all bills that he saw were paid promptly on the first of the month. With William taking care of the payments, his father was entirely willing to pay the bills on time. Before, he simply hadn't taken the time to bother. Within a few months William saved \$200.00.

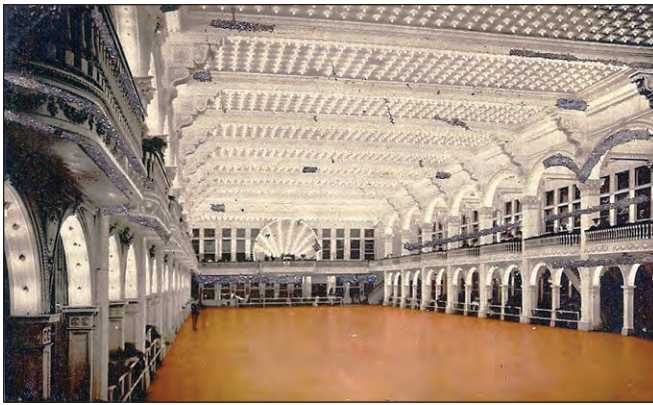
Soon after, he told his father that he was going into business. His father laughed, stating, "Where was the capital?" William showed him his bank book. It was not long before William had a shingle hanging out at the corner of Reid and Lafayette Avenue in Brooklyn stating, "William H. Reynolds Real Estate Broker." At the end of the first year, he had accumulated something like \$40,000. Besides being in the real estate business, he developed communities, the first being the "Bedford" section of Brooklyn, where he began to build houses worth anywhere from \$15,000 to \$20,000. It is here that he became a very successful businessman in the Brooklyn reality market. The houses sold extremely fast, which gave him enough capital to build homes inexpensively. His father said, "Billy, I can't keep up with you any more." The parent who had seen his son sweeping shavings only a few years before, confessed he was being outdistanced. So, the younger Reynolds told his father to close his shop and come work for him, and he did.



Twilight at Dreamland. View of the park taken from the top of Shooting the Chutes showing the majestic 375' tower that was designed after the tower in Seville, Spain, however, it was built on a much grander scale. On the right side of photo is Fighting the Flames and the Iron Tower, which was 300' high. On the left side of photo, behind George C. Tilyou's Ferris Wheel in the background, is Luna Park.

In developing the Bedford section, he made \$500,000. He then turned his attention to the east side of Brooklyn and started buying up land which nobody wanted to touch due to a title war that was going on. He thought the titles would have to be cleared soon, and they were. He was appointed New York Senator from 1894 - 1895. In 1898, he developed "Borough Park," building over a thousand homes. After that, he operated extensively in Bensonhurst and West Minster Heights.

In 1904, he opened up Dreamland amusement park in Coney Island, at a cost of 3.5 million dollars. It was constructed in less than 6 months. It was the only known instance where a place of entertainment of its magnitude was completed within such a short time. This also included the demolishing of any existing buildings that were on the property. There were thousands of workers and mechanics who la-



The interior of Dreamland's grand ballroom; once the world's largest ballroom, where thousands of people could waltz to a live orchestra on any given night. Photo circa 1904

bored night and day. The park opened on May 14, 1904. The most impressive way to arrive at Dreamland would have been by steamboat. The tower is incredibly more impressive and majestic when seen from the ocean. As the steamboat approaches Dreamland's Iron Pier your over whelmed by its massive 375' beacon tower. In 1904 it was one of the tallest structures in the United States, even taller then any building in N.Y.C.. The tower stood in the center of the park, and its overall presence with its 100,000 electric lights dominated all of Coney Island. It was also used as an observation tower. Elevators took people up to the top, giving them a spectacular view of Coney Island. "Shooting the Chutes," a flat bottom boat ride, was another major attraction in Dreamland. The ride itself was actually constructed in the ocean and descended over the

beach into the park's saltwater lagoon. Dreamland was an architectural masterpiece.

Dreamlands Ballroom located on the pier was the largest in the world at 25,000 square feet. Can you imagine the orchestra playing the waltz, 1,000's of people dancing to it, the sweet smell of the salt water, along with the cool ocean breeze made it the most popular ballroom in Coney Island. Adjoining the beautiful ballroom, (also on the pier over the water) was a restaurant as large as the ballroom itself, accommodating thousands serving the finest of cuisine only equal to Manhattan.

Some of the attractions in the park were, "The Leap -Frog Railway", which was on its own pier with a track leading to no where. There were two separate enclosed trains that would race towards each other on the same track. Once they met, one would pass over the top of the train, while the other was passing underneath it. Each car was only around five feet in height and held 32 passengers. The ride operated from 1904 to when it burnt in the 1911 fire. Another attraction was "Fighting the Flames", a re-enactment of fire and rescue used to entertain and educate. It consisted of a city block of assorted stores, buildings and a hotel. The scene opens with the hotel on fire with screaming people trapped inside. The alarm rings and the firemen jump from their beds, slid down the brass poles and race to the fire. As they arrive so does the battalion chief. The flames, discovered on the first floor quickly begins to engulf the rest of the building. The trapped people are forced to the roof of the building were they ultimately jump into nets to their safety. The fire



This grandeur entrance to Fighting the Flames was adorned with 12 life size figures of firemen. (1904)



Interior view of the Fighting the Flames attraction in 1904.



The shoreline view of the Leap-Frog railway on left side of photo, an experimental train ride and the only one known to be built. The Dreamland Bathing Pavilion advertised hot & cold salt water baths. Circa 1904

is put out, and the city block is saved only to ready for the next show. For the 1907 season, Dreamland changed the name of the attraction to the San Francisco Earthquake which occurred in April of 1906.

In 1906 Dreamland introduced the Hippodrome. It was a race track that was built around the lagoon and was said to be the largest hippodrome track in the world. The show began with a parade of Roman soldiers and performers. It featured such sporting events as real Roman chariot races drawn by two and four horses abreast. Another featured race was Roman soldiers each having two horses abreast would stand with one foot on the back of each horse as they raced around the track. Another form of racing was the flats and hurdle races by professional jockeys as they race for a winning purse making for a more exciting and thrilling horse race.

In 1908, "Over the Great Divide" a third rail roller coaster replaced the Fighting the Flames attraction. It was a scenic type roller coaster that traveled through the Rocky Mountains. Even though Fighting the Flames was a large attraction, for a roller coaster its space was inadequate. However, a third rail coaster was designed to fit in the space. This type of coaster is different from the usual gravity roller coaster, as each train has its own electric motor along with a motorman. Because of its ex-

tremely tight turns and small hills the motormen controlled the speeds of the train by accelerating at the appropriate times to make it as thrilling a ride as possible.

Dreamland also offered you a chance to go "Coasting Through Switzerland", a miniature realistic replica of Switzerland designed and owned by Thomas J. Ryan. It was a sled type roller coaster that toured through the ice covered Alps and villages. You would see the majestic peaks of Mount Blanc and the Matter Horn. Your journey takes you through quaint villages of Switzerland, seeing the unique system of the electric illumination of the beautiful sunrise and sunsets. You felt the cool breezes of the Swiss Alps, accomplished by fans blowing across dry ice, making this not only a truly wondrous attraction but also a fa-

vorite on those extremely hot summer days.

The park also offered in 1904 the finest wild animal acts in the world, the "Bostock Animal Arena". Frank C. Bostock known as the "animal king" came from a family of animal showmen since 1805. He started out small, but his talent of working with animals made him a true international showman as he took his Hippodrome of animal acts to Paris, London and New York. He would perform daily with his wild animals for over 15 years, however, when he could no longer perform he became the teacher for many men and women who then created their own



Over the Great Divide scenic railway roller coaster. Photo 1904

act, many performing at the Bostock arena. Shortly before the fire of 5/27/1911, that destroyed the entire park, Frank Bostock had sold his entire of Dreamland animal acts to Colonel Ferrari. Unfortunately for Colonel Ferrari, he suffered a total loss of his investment, the park burnt down the opening day of the 1911 season.

The Baby Incubators exhibit was established by Dr. Martin Arthur Couney, a pediatrician from Paris. When he first introduced his incubator technology in the 1890's it was not excepted by the medical community. He then introduced it at the International Exhibition in Berlin in 1896. He eventually found his way to America and Coney Island. In 1903 it was featured in Luna Park. In 1904 he moved his entire facility to Dreamland where he was able to have street access, giving him a year round operation. The incubator building looked like a two story old German farmhouse, as Dr. Couney did not want it to look like a hospital. It was a practical, educational and life saving instrument. Eventually the medical industry started sending their premature cases to him, recognizing that his incubator technology was a life saving device of the future. After the fire of 1911, he moved to a few other locations in Coney Island eventually ending up back in Luna Park in 1941. Throughout his career 8,000 premature babies were handled by Dr. Couney of which 6,500 babies survived.

In 1904, Samuel Gumputz was the manager of Dreamland. One of his jobs was to visit World Fairs and other exhibitions to bring back new and unique attractions to Dreamland. While visiting the 1904 St. Louis World Fair, he purchased the attraction "Creation" for the 1905 season. It was not just the entrance, but also an attraction. This allowed Reynolds to have the greatest entrance to any amusement park ever. "Creation" was the largest illusion ever constructed in its time. It was the story of creation from the first book of Genesis. The journey began with a boat ride around the "Big Blue Dome", where people would see the spectacular illustrations on the works of God. In the "Great Dome," the 6 days of the creation of the world were presented. At first, there was a watery waste, then land appeared. Last man and woman was created and the "Garden of Eden." On the 7th day, God rests.

With this new attraction, Dreamland started to add other biblical attractions, including "Hell Gate,"



The entrance to Hell Gate shown here in 1905. A fire would start here on May 27, 1911. The fire would, ironically, ultimately destroy this Biblical-themed amusement park.

an attraction based on an ancient and very human dread, that of the whirl pool. Passengers board boats as they begin to swirl around terrifying waters of a 50 foot whirl pool carrying the boat to the center, where the slope suddenly dips and allows them to slip beneath the outer rims of the spiral into a subterranean canal where you will see scenery of rocks, reefs and shipwrecks from the bottom of the ocean. Another biblical attraction was "The End of the World", where Gabriel blows his trumpet, the earth quakes and the people fear that the end of the world is very near. Dreamland conducted an experiment called "Midget City". It was a laboratory on social behavior. The society of 300 midgets had their own government, police and fire department, along with their own rules.

Unfortunately, on May 27, 1911 which was to be the opening day of the season, at approximately 1:30 in the morning workers accidentally knocked over a bucket of hot tar which started a fire in the "Hell Gate" attraction, ultimately destroying the entire amusement park. It was the biggest fire in New York State history to date.

In 1907, at the age of 40, William then spent 10 million dollars to develop Long Beach. He had approximately 3,800 lots, with each house costing at least \$7,000. He then built Reynolds Channel and the Long Beach Hotel.

William Reynolds passed away on October 14, 1931, at the age of 63.

Paul & Nancy Brigandi

Local park information

Adventureland

2245 Route 110, Farmingdale, NY 11735

Phone: (631) 694-6868

Opens March 27!

Adventurers Family Entertainment Center

1824 Shore Parkway, Brooklyn, NY 11214

Phone: (718) 975-2748

Opens March 28!

Boomers! Family Fun Center

655 Long Island Ave, Medford, NY 11763

Phone: (631) 475-1771

Opens March 27!

Cyclone at Coney Island

834 Surf Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11224

Phone: (718) 265-2100

Opens March 28!

Deno's Wonder Wheel Park

3059 Denos Vourderis Place (Formerly W 12th St),
Brooklyn, NY 11224

Phone: 718-372-2592

Opens March 28!

Krazy City

Palisades Center, West Nyack, NY

Phone: (845) 353-5700

Open all year!

Playland Park

Playland Parkway, Rye, NY 10580

Phone: (914) 813-7010

Opens May 8!

Victorian Gardens

Wollman Rink, Central Park, Manhattan, NY

Phone: (212) 982-2229

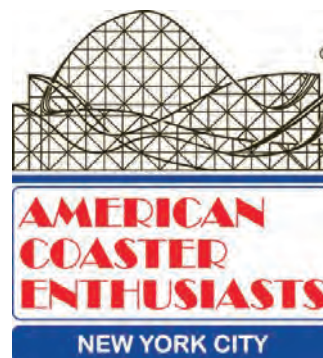
Opens May 29!

Splash Splash Waterpark

2549 Splish Splash Drive, Calverton, NY 11933

Phone: (631) 727-3600

Opens May 29!



Regional Website:

www.ACEonlineNY.org

National Website:

www.ACEonline.org

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