

a brief history of the...

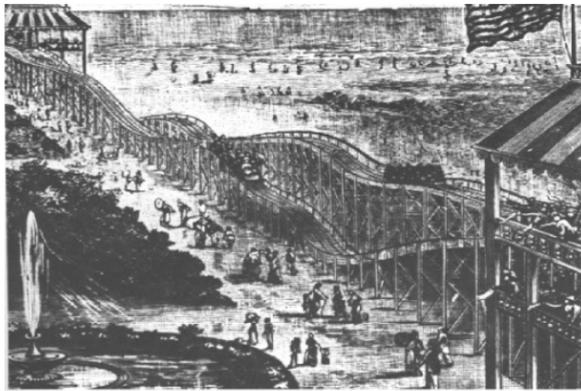
ROLLER COASTER

The changes in technology and transportation that precipitated the industrial revolution led to massive changes in population density and urban culture. Suddenly there were huge numbers of people seeking fun and escapism during their off-hours. When the first roller coaster was built, it combined the world's train fascination with this need for amusement and retreat. It was an instant success that sparked imitation and invention.

Throughout 1880-1930, ride designers explored two different goals for the rider experience: thrill or amusement, a tension ride designers still explore today. Some would prefer Thompson's leisurely, immersive Scenic Railways and others would prefer sheer speed and thrills, but all were interested in experiencing the world in new ways. Although the Golden Age of Roller Coasters ended with the Great Depression, these rides continue to soar to new heights and capture the imagination of thrill seekers today.

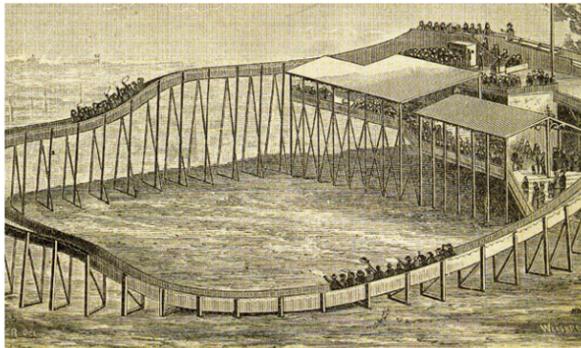
1884 ● LaMarcus Thompson debuts his "Gravity Switchback Railway", the first purpose-built roller coaster at Coney Island in Brooklyn, New York on June 16, 1844.

It had two fifty-foot tall towers and two train tracks with subtle wave over a wooden structure six hundred feet long, with bench-like cars, facing sideways, so riders could take in the scenic, seaside view.



1884 ● Charles Alcock introduces a new roller coaster to Coney Island.

He improved upon Thompson's ride by making track a continuous loop.



1885 ● Phillip Hinkle debuted the "first modern roller coaster." He incorporated a hoist onto a looping track that would lift cars, with riders inside, up a tall hill. This initial climb generated faster speeds and an emotional tension that is still a hallmark of roller coaster design today.

1885-1920 ● A period of rapid experimentation. Adventure and instability characterized the early 20th century as technology advanced and demand for new thrill experiences increased.

1895 ● First looping roller coaster, "Flip Flap Railway."

1920s ● This period is known as the **Golden Age of Roller Coasters** due to the sheer number in existence and centrality to American leisure.

1927 ● The "Coney Island Cyclone" opens on June 26. It is one of the few coasters from this period still operating.



by the numbers

6 mph highest speed of the 1884 Gravity Switchback Railway

60 mph The Coney Island Cyclone's fastest speed in 1927

145 mph the record smashing speed reached by "Formula Rossa" in 2010"

\$15,000 the modern equivalent of Thompson's daily profits from the Railway

1,500 the estimated number of roller coasters operating in the US during the 1920s.

663 the roller coasters operating in the US today