

= Giant Dipper =

The Giant Dipper is a historic wooden roller coaster located at the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk , an amusement park in Santa Cruz , California . It took 47 days to build at a cost of \$ 50 @, @ 000 . It opened on May 17 , 1924 , and replaced the Thompson 's Scenic Railway . With a height of 70 feet (21 m) and a speed of 55 miles per hour (89 km / h) , it is one of the most popular wooden roller coasters in the world . As of 2012 , over 60 million people have ridden the Giant Dipper since its opening . The ride has received several awards such as being named a National Historic Landmark , a Golden Age Coaster award , and a Coaster Landmark award ; it has been ranked annually in Mitch Hawker 's Best Wooden roller coaster poll .

= = History = =

The Thompson 's Scenic Railway was built on the site of Giant Dipper in 1908 as the longest roller coaster in the United States . In October 1923 , manager R.L. Cardiff and Walter Loof began negotiations to build a new ride to replace the Scenic Railway . The price was set at \$ 50 @, @ 000 , \$ 15 @, @ 000 more than the Scenic Railway . In January 1924 , the permit to build the Giant Dipper was granted to Arthur Loof . He wanted to create a ride that had " the thrill of a plunge down a mine shaft , a balloon ascent , a parachute jump , airplane acrobatics , a cyclone , a toboggan ride , and a ship in a storm . " The Scenic Railway began to be demolished in January 1924 to make room for the Giant Dipper . It took 5 months to demolish the Scenic Railway and construct the Giant Dipper . The actual construction of the Giant Dipper took 47 days . The ride opened to the public for the first time on May 17 , 1924 . The ride had a few incidents over the years in which three people have died .

In 1974 , the ride received a new coat of paint with Victorian @-@ style architecture around the station . In the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake , the Giant Dipper was almost completely untouched . The ride was closed for about a month to be inspected . The park held a benefit for victims of the earthquake . In 2002 , the ride celebrated its 50 millionth rider . Ten years after the 50 millionth rider , the park celebrated the Giant Dipper 's 60 millionth rider on July 27 , 2012 . The park gave out trivia coasters leading up to the event . The 24 riders that were on the train when it hit 60 million riders received a hoodie among other prizes .

The Giant Dipper was built by Arthur Looff and designed by Frederick Church . It required 327 @, @ 000 feet (100 @, @ 000 m) of lumber , 743 @, @ 000 nails , and 24 @, @ 000 bolts to construct . The lumber was provided by Homer T. Maynard Lumber , and the 70 horsepower motor , which is still used today , was provided by Santa Cruz Electric . The concrete was done by T.F. Costello , and the steel work was done by Berger and Carter .

= = = Fatalities = = =

The first death on Giant Dipper occurred four months after it debuted , on September 21 . A 15 @-@ year @-@ old boy fell from the ride while standing up near the end of the ride . The emergency brake was applied , but the boy fell head first onto the track and was crushed by the roller coaster train . Other fatalities also occurred in 1940 and 1970 . Several modifications have been made to the trains as a result .

= = Ride experience = =

After departing from the station , the train immediately enters a tunnel . After going through some drops and turns in the tunnel , the train emerges at the base of the lift hill . Once climbing 70 feet (21 m) to the top , the train drops 65 feet (20 m) , reaching a top speed of 55 miles per hour (89 km / h) . The train then rises up into a banked turn to the left . Riders then go through two hills next to the lift hill followed by a turnaround that is positioned over the tunnel at the beginning of the ride . The train then travels over three small hills situated next to the lift hill followed by another turnaround

. Riders then go through three more small hills and enter the final brake run .

= = Characteristics = =

= = = Trains = = =

The Giant Dipper currently operates with two trains with six cars per train . Riders are arranged two across in two rows for a total of 24 riders per train . The trains were built by Dana Morgan from D.H. Morgan Manufacturing . When the Giant Dipper opened , it ran with three trains , each with ten cars . Over time , the trains have been redesigned several times with changes to the restraint system . However , they are almost unchanged since they opened . The trains have changed colors several times since the ride opened .

= = = Track = = =

The wooden track is approximately 2 @, @ 640 feet (800 m) in length , and the height of the lift is approximately 70 feet (21 m) . The track is colored red with white supports . When built in 1924 , 327 @, @ 000 feet (100 @, @ 000 m) of lumber was used . The track is inspected every two hours .

= = Legacy = =

In the early 1970s , the Giant Dipper became the last " classic roller coaster " between Vancouver , British Columbia and San Diego , California . It is only one of three Church rides to still operate . The other two are Dragon Coaster at Playland Park and Giant Dipper at Belmont Park . It is one of the only roller coasters that are still operating from what ACE calls the " golden age of roller coasters . " Other than being the oldest roller coaster in California , the ride is also one of the oldest roller coasters in the world .

= = Reception = =

Since the Giant Dipper was one of the first roller coasters in existence when it opened , many people were concerned about the safety of the ride . Loof , as well as a local newspaper , insisted it was " virtually impossible " for the cars to leave the track because of the makeup of the trains and track . Although several incidents happened on the ride , none were related to the integrity of the track or trains . Many people call the Giant Dipper the icon and crown jewel of Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk as well as one of the nation 's most exciting roller coasters . It is considered to be the signature ride of the park .

The Giant Dipper is referred to in the song " Big Dipper " , from the 1996 album The Golden Age by David Lowery 's band Cracker . The ride also appeared in many television commercials and movies , including The Lost Boys , Sudden Impact , The Sting II , and Dangerous Minds .

= = = Awards = = =

On February 27 , 1987 , the United States National Park Service recognized the Giant Dipper as a National Historic Landmark along with the Looff Carousel .

It was awarded the American Coaster Enthusiasts Golden Age Coaster award in June 1994 . The 1920s is often considered the " golden age of roller coaster construction " so the award recognizes the roller coasters that still remain today . It is only one of two roller coasters to receive this designation , the other being the Giant Dipper at Belmont Park . Giant Dipper was also awarded the ACE Coaster Landmark award on May 5 , 2007 at the 100th anniversary of Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk . It won the award for its innovative track design , unusual curved station and for being

one of the ten oldest operating coasters in the world and one of only three remaining examples of Frederick Church 's work .

= = = Rankings = = =