



## Q-Lines

# Richard Munch

## National Roller Coaster Museum

The (US) National Roller Coaster Museum & Archives (NRCMA) aims to



discover, preserve, interpret and share the historical heritage of the rollercoaster. The ultimate goal is to make these artefacts accessible on a permanent basis to all those who love rollercoasters and amusement parks. For the time being, a temporary exhibition is on display at Dollywood in Tennessee, while the rest of the collection is in preservation at the NRCMA storage facility in Texas. Here historian and American Coaster Enthusiasts (ACE) founder member Richard Munch (pictured) discusses the NRCMA mission.

### Cedar Point cars added to collection

When Cedar Point's Anton Schwarzkopf Wildcat Coaster was removed in 2011 and then, a year later, Disaster Transport (formerly Avalanche Run) was retired to make way for the Ohio park's 16th rollercoaster (Gate Keeper), management was keen that the history of these iconic attractions should be preserved, so they called the National Roller Coaster Museum and Archives. In late 2012, ride vehicles from both attractions were shipped as the latest additions to

the NRCMA facility in Plainview, Texas. Each ride shows a snapshot of time and technology on the history of fun.

#### Why did you decide to found the NRCMA?

The concept behind the National Roller Coaster Museum & Archives was born in the late 1980s, by a group of concerned individuals who were members of the American Coaster Enthusiasts. They realised it was time to collect and preserve the historical heritage of the rollercoaster and other park attractions, as well as the history, for present and future generations. They also began planning for an actual facility – the museum. The present NRCMA board was established in 1999, made up of individuals from all aspects of the amusement industry including parks, ride manufacturers, historians and collectors.

#### What are some of the highlights of the collection?

We have rolling stock (cars) from about 30 coasters. The most significant are the Texas Giant, Disneyland's Matterhorn, a full train from Elych Gardens' Mr Twister and the Big Bad Wolf from Busch Gardens. We have also collected artefacts from Six Flags Great Adventure, Cedar Point, Hersheypark, Worlds of Fun, Lakeside Park (Denver), Morey's Piers, Six Flags Great America and more. The collection includes two dilapidated Prior & Church cars. We also have the last remaining intact section of the Texas Cyclone from Astroworld in Houston, Texas.

#### What's on your "most wanted" list?

Good question! Actually, *anything* historic. We would like to eventually have a scenic railway car, although none are thought to exist in the United States. Right now we keep our fingers on the pulse of the industry, especially when a park closes or an attraction is removed that has some historic importance. At this point, however, we are running out of storage, not to mention the cost of moving larger items across the country to the archive repository in Texas.

#### Does your scope extend beyond coasters?

Absolutely. For instance, board member Jeff Novotny purchased the Sellner company in 2011, and that collection is now in the archives. We have plans, models and artefacts from a variety of rides, including two flume boats from SeaWorld in San Antonio, Texas.

#### What sort of support have you had from the industry?

We have been fortunate to have some of the most historically minded individuals interested in our goals. This includes Dick Knoebel, Tom Rebbie, Walter Bolliger, Linda and Gary Hays, and several other important donors. Cedar Fair and Six Flags have both been exceptionally generous in donating cars

from several of their recently defunct coasters. We are certainly blessed to call these park owners, manufacturers and operators our friends. The future looks bright as word spreads of our project.

#### Is there a danger that you become a dumping ground for equipment that parks no longer want, and do you turn much away?

So far that hasn't been the case. We have accepted just about everything offered, although much of what we acquire has been donated. We have had several collectors attempt to sell items to us, but depending on the cost, we typically only accept donations. In the future I assume we will have to be more selective, but at present we are interested in anything in respect to the industry and its rich history.

#### What has been the reaction from the general public (as opposed to enthusiasts) to the exhibit at Dollywood?

It has gotten good reviews from both the public and the enthusiasts. Nearly 30,000 visitors toured the exhibition on a limited basis last season, and we feel good about the second year in 2013, as it will be open longer with more content. One visitor remarked that touring the exhibit was like being a kid in the candy store – there was so much to see.

#### How sustainable do you believe the museum would be as a permanent tourist attraction?

We look at it in several ways. We want to protect the history and make it accessible through park exhibits and research opportunities. Establishing a permanent museum is a major goal, which will only happen by raising capital, or finding a corporation or contributor willing to support such an endeavour. We see that a new carnival museum has opened, and are aware of the many carousel museums across the country. There is no doubt that we will have a facility to call home in the next few years. We also know content and location will be critical for it to be sustainable. 📍

To see some of the items in the NRCMA collection, or to make a donation, visit [rollercoastermuseum.org](http://rollercoastermuseum.org)

