

Lamarcus adna
thompson



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

? 2009 The most influencing person in my life would have to be the inventor of the first gravity-powered roller coaster in the United States by LaMarcus Adna Thompson, also known as the “ Father of the Gravity Ride” for his Switchback Railway at Coney Island, New York City and became famous for the Scenic Railway on the Boardwalk in Atlantic City, New Jersey in 1887.

Thompson was born on March 8, 1848 in Jersey, Ohio. At the age of 12, he built a butter churn and an oxcart, and was a master carpenter by the age of 17. In 1866, Thompson graduated from Hillsdale College in Michigan.

He worked in a wagon and carriage business then made a mint for the manufacture of seamless women’s hosiery. In the early 1880s, Thompson almost had a nervous breakdown and thus sold his share in the hosiery business and returned to his first passion of inventing. Thompson was inspired by the designs of other inventors and the Mauch Chunk Switchback Railway in Pennsylvania. In 1884 in Coney Island, he had successfully built his version of the Mauch Chunk Switchback Railway, which he just simply called it, the Switchback Railway.

Within the next four years, he had built about fifty railways all over the nation and in Europe. As more sophisticated coasters were beginning to be built, Thompson’s business was starting to go downhill. So Thompson paired up with James A. Griffiths, a designer, and produced his most famous attraction the Scenic Railway in 1887. It was a rolling tour of some elaborate artificial scenery with vividly colored tableaux, biblical scenes and flora-illuminated by lights triggered by approaching cars.

This ride was the foundation of the Space Mountain of Disneyland in Anaheim, CA and other theme park journeys. Between the Switchbacks and his death on May 8, 1919, in Glen Cove, New York, Thompson had built many other scenic railways such as the masterpiece of faux-mountain and the Egyptian imagery in Venice, CA in 1910, which faced competition with his old partner James A. Griffiths. After he retired, he still patented an automatic car coupler and sold the invention to railroad car manufacturer, George Pullman. After Thompson's death his legacy still lived through the Thompson company coasters, notably the Bobs, which was later renamed the Tornado, built at Coney Island in 1926. From then on, many coasters have been built and thought of. They are very intricate designs and have to be precise otherwise someone will get hurt. There are two types of roller coasters, steel and wooden. Steel roller coasters are known for their smooth riding usually taking the riders upside down, in cork screws, etc. Some of the designs for the tracks are dwelling, figure 8, inverted, launched, shuttle, side friction, spinning and twister roller coasters.

The most popular coasters are the floorless, flying, stand-up, suspended swing, and the Virginia Reel. LaMarcus Adna Thompson has influenced me more than I realized. My dream out of college is to become a roller coaster designer and if he had never invented the Switchback Railway I probably would be pursuing another career. I hope to be as successful as he was. I have learned to still be positive and stay focused on my goals in life now because the choices I make now will affect the way my future is played out.

Like school for instance, I need to keep my grades up even though I have only one year left of high school. One bad grade could greatly decrease my

chances of going to a college of my choice rather than a college I have to go to because I have no other offers. Even if Thompson almost had a nervous breakdown he still has inspired me to keep moving forward and to find comfort in the things that I find enjoyable. Yes, he did sell his part of the business but I would rather give up my part, than to bring everyone else down with me because that wouldn't be fair to them.

I understand more now than I ever did that when you fail it's only an obstacle in your path that when you overcome it, you become even stronger than before. You become more creative and see the things in life with a totally different perspective than you would've thought of before. Now that I have grown to become a better person to find the good in everything I do and to pursue my dreams with my chin up high even though I know that I will get shut out every now and then. But that only means that greater things for me are to come in the mere future.