



The History of Knoebels

In 1828, Reverend Hartman Henry Knoebel purchased a plot of land in central Pennsylvania, known then as “Peggy’s Farm.” That land was eventually passed down to his grandson, of the same name. There, the younger Henry developed a lumbering and sawmill business.

Running through the center of the land, Roaring Creek, drew the attention of local townsfolk looking for a place to relax and cool off on hot summer days. While the locals enjoyed creek side picnics and jumping off the covered bridge into the swimming hole below, Ole Hen saw opportunity. He offered to feed and care for the horses parked on his farm for a mere 25¢.

The swimming hole soon sparked an idea for the enterprising Henry. In November of 1925 he began construction on large pool, in the same location where the Crystal Pool resides today. On July 4, 1926, Knoebels officially opened. That same year Henry also opened a restaurant on the grounds, and featured a steam-powered carousel operated by Philadelphia businessman, Joe Gallagher.

From the beginning, families wished to spend time in Knoebels’ forested beauty. Many families built cottages along the banks of Roaring Creek, several of which remain today. Others camped on Knoebels’ grounds, but it wasn’t until 1963 that Knoebels introduced its first six official campsites. Since that time the campground has grown to encompass over 550 sites and 57 log cabins. In 1996, Knoebels also acquired the nearby Lake Glory Campground.

In 1938, Knoebels purchased the steam-powered carousel from the Gallagher family, but as Knoebels continued to grow, it soon became clear that a larger carousel would better suit Knoebels’ needs. George Kremer originally built Knoebels Grand Carousel in 1913, and renowned and skilled craftsman, Charles Carmel, carved the horses. It was purchased from Riverview Park, in Rahway, NJ in 1941. With the acquisition of the carousel, came the addition of two organs, an 1888 Frati and Co., and an early 20th century organ by Ge-

bruder Bruder Co. A beloved tradition, Knoebels remains one of only a handful of places where guests can still catch a brass ring and earn a free ride on the carousel.

In 1960, Pete Knoebel, made plans to honor his late father, Henry, with the purchase of the Pioneer Train. Henry had long dreamed of installing a small train to take riders through the woodlands that surrounded Knoebels. Purchased from Allen Herschell Co.'s Miniature Train Division, the track stretches a pleasant 1½ miles through the backwoods of the park, where riders can appreciate all sorts of wildlife from squirrels and rabbits, to even the occasional deer.

Knoebels has endured its fair share of natural disasters beginning with the devastating flood on June 22, 1972. Floodwaters reached 24 of the park's 25 rides in the aftermath of Hurricane Agnes, but remarkably, the park was operational only 9 days later. Plans were soon made to celebrate the park's triumphant return, with the addition of the Haunted Mansion. Designed and built mainly by park staff, the famed dark ride opened in 1973.

Following Knoebels' 50th anniversary in 1976, it became clear that it was time for a major addition. In 1977, Knoebels introduced its first roller coaster. The steel Jet Star was transplanted to Knoebels after a year of operation at Coney Island. The first of its kind in Pennsylvania, with a top speed of 40 mph, the coaster thrilled park-goers through the 1992 season.

In that time Knoebels continued to grow and expand. By the 1980s Knoebels had grown to be the largest park without a major wooden roller coaster, a distinction they didn't enjoy. Originally built in 1947 as the Rocket for Playland Park, in San Antonio, Texas, the Phoenix was, at the time, the largest roller coaster to ever be moved from one park to another. Many doubted that such a venture would be financially, or logistically successful. Knoebels proved doubters wrong and the Phoenix officially opened on June 12, 1985. A favorite for many, the Phoenix consistently places in the Top 10 Wooden Coasters.

A now prospering amusement park, Knoebels introduced its first water ride in the summer of 1990. With the help of O.D. Hopkins Associates of Contoocook, New Hampshire, Knoebels developed the Giant Flume. Honoring the natural beauty of the valley, the flume was built to preserve as many trees as possible, providing riders a quick way to cool off with a bit of shade and a pleasant splash.

Then, in 1998, Knoebels embarked on a whole new project; the in-house design and construction of a wooden roller coaster. Inspired by Elitch Gardens' famous Mr. Twister, the Twister was designed by Knoebels' own John Fetterman. Under the direction of Leonard

Adams, local tradesmen were hired for the construction of the ride, which opened on July 24, 1999. Different from the Phoenix, which is known for its out-and-back design and features numerous bunny hills, the Twister weaves within itself and features a large double helix.

Dry since the flood of 1972, Knoebels saw waters rise above the banks of Roaring Creek in 1976, 1996, 2004, 2006, and most recently 2011. While the flood of 1972 had long been the flood by which Knoebels measured all floods, the flood of 2011 is now marked as the worst in Knoebels history. On September 7, 2011, the banks of Roaring Creek and Mugs-er's Run rose several feet above flood level. Although the marker fell a few inches short of the flood of 1972, the damage far exceeded that year. Waters spread further and reached into areas never affected before. Yet, with the help of a dedicated and determined staff and community, the park was able to reopen a mere 10 days later.

In 2007 Knoebels became an even more complete resort with the addition of Jepko's Three Ponds Golf Course. The course had been owned and operated by the Jepko family since it first opened with 9 holes in 1959 and was expanded to 18 holes in the ensuing years. The addition of the course made sense because of its location next to the park and the potential to integrate it into guests' visits. The sale to a new division of Knoebels, K4G, representing fourth generation members of the family became official January 16. The course was renamed Knoebels Three Ponds.

Just as the Haunted Mansion was built after the 1972 flood, the 2011 flood was followed with addition of another dark ride. Formerly known as the Golden Nugget at Hunt's Pier in Wildwood, NJ, Knoebels reintroduced the ride as the Black Diamond. Previously themed as a gold mine, the slow paced roller coaster now meanders through coal mining scenes inspired by local landmarks and legends and officially opened in October 2011.

For the 2013, Knoebels announced that it was adding the park's tallest ride. At a towering 148 feet, the new Stratosfear stands well above the park's former lofty feature, the Giant Wheel. The ride, built by ARM Rides of Ohio will offer thrill seekers a beautiful view of Knoebels' valley before dropping the riders at incredible speeds.