



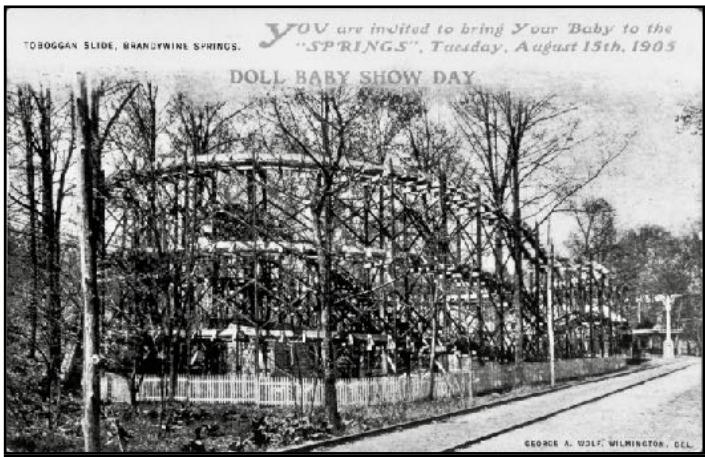
# THE ARCHWAY

*Newsletter of the Friends of Brandywine Springs*

Vol. 29 No. 2. Mary Lou Lawlor & Angela Evans, Editors Summer 2022

## The Toboggan Slide by Mark Lawlor

Our Brandywine Springs “Toboggan Slide” roller coaster was a “side friction” roller coaster built in 1890. But what does that mean? What did it look like and how did it work?



1890 Toboggan Slide Brandywine Springs Park,  
1905 Photo      Photo from FOBS collection



Leap the Dips built in 1902.      Photo by Mark Lawlor  
(present day)

By todays standards, it was a very slow and rough ride. The rider's car would be towed to the top of a three-story tall chain hill, and would then go around a long oval structure three times powered only by gravity. The riders' cars had no steering at all. The cars had 5" wheels on the bottom, and 4" wheels on the sides. The side wheels would roll against the short side walls to make the car turn. So it only turns because it hit the wall repeatedly. The side walls were made of 2 x 12's which needed lots of supports. When we look at old photos of the ride, we see many wood triangles, which were the outside supports for the side walls. These supports, called “yokes”, were under the track and extended out on both sides. The yokes were 4 x 4's about 8 feet long with a wood triangle on each end.

There is a roller coaster almost exactly like this one still running in Lakemont Park, Altoona, PA. It is the 1902 “Leap the Dips” roller coaster, and is the oldest still operating roller coaster in the world. Google it for “youtube” videos. Mark and Mary Lou recently photographed and measured the ride's footprint and found that the ride is 85 feet wide at the back end curve, and 202 feet long. Because of the way that the cars turn, any old coaster of this type would need around 85 feet to make a “u-turn” (a 180 degree turn). Other measurements show that the cars were 37" wide running on a 44" wide track, allowing the cars 7" to float or wander between the side rails. The highest part of the ride, the top of the chain hill, was 41 feet tall (over 3 stories tall), and the structure's posts in the ground were about 10 feet apart in the direction running parallel to the ride. At the end of both rollercoasters were the brakes, which were long boards that would rub against the bottom of the cars. The ride operators had long stick controls for the brakes. The longer, first main brakes were always up or on until the operator lowered them by hand, and the second shorter brakes were always off unless the operator pulled them on. The cars on both rides had no seat belts or lap bars-just a grab bar in front of the rider. A woman trying to grab her hat died on the Brandywine Springs ride in 1891. The management installed signs which read “Passengers must keep their seats at all times”.

Some slight differences between Leap The Dips and our Toboggan Slide are that Leap the Dips is a ‘figure-eight’ ride with the chain hill on the outside of the oval, but our Toboggan Slide was a long oval ride with the chain hill inside the oval.

(continued on page 2)



Photo of the Leap the Dips Coaster showing the three levels of track.

Photo by Mark Lawlor

**Continued from page 1...**From studying these dimensions and our old photos from Brandywine Springs, we can now start to look for any remaining footers to mark the site of our roller coaster. We already know of two remaining footers near the back end of the ride. We hope that those two footers will guide us to more footers. We recently cleared the brush from the search area and installed small flags to approximate the footprint of the ride. We know that the front end of the ride itself was about 15 or 20 feet back from the boardwalk, giving room for riders to line up, get on, and get off the ride. We know from photos that the ride ended on the east side, closer to the creek and carousel. The ride started on the west side closer to the "Rifle Range". The chain hill was on the southwest side of the long oval, close to the back end of the "Rifle Range". The ride was long enough that the back end of the structure went partway up the bottom of the "Cedars hillside" (the park boundary is halfway up that hill).



Photo of Leap the Dips Coaster showing the Chain Hill.

Photo by Mark Lawlor



← **Left Photo** of the Leap the Dips Coaster at the end of the ride. Brake boards can be seen under car.  
Photo by Mark Lawlor

← **Almost matching Photos!!** →

**Right Photo** of the Toboggan Slide at Brandywine Springs Park showing the end of the ride. Brake boards can be seen under car.  
Photo from Sunday Edition Phila. Inquirer, June 25, 1911.



Photo of the Lead the Dips Coaster car showing the bottom and side wheels.

Photo by Mark Lawlor



RIDE ON THE TOBOGGAN



Photo of the Leap the Dips Coaster showing the "Yokes" Triangle shaped supports, sidewalls, and some of the "Leap the Dips" leaps.  
Photo by Mark Lawlor





Ed and Mark present the history of the Dentzel Carousel to the tour participants. Photo by Angela Evans



Mark, Mary Lou and "Martin the tiger" stand on the carousel platform site in front of the center pole.

Photo by Angela Evans



Martin stands on the outside row of the carousel platform site next to the new photo location sign.

Photo by Angela Evans

### **The Brandywine Springs Historic Express**

*On Saturday May 21st, FOBS hosted the Wilmington and Western Railroad passengers for a tour of the history of Brandywine Springs Park. The Doodlebug departed from Greenbank Station at 10am and the passengers were lead from the entrance archway through the amusement park on a historic journey guided by Ed Lipka and Mark Lawlor.*

*Visitors were treated to a special display at the carousel location. Mark and Mary Lou Lawlor placed their fiberglass reproduction carousel tiger on the area of the carousel site to demonstrate an animal's position on the platform of the carousel. It's been 100 years since a carousel animal has stood on the site of the Brandywine Springs carousel!!*

*Information about park history and the Friends of Brandywine Springs was provided by Mary Lou Lawlor and Angela Evans at a display table of photos, artifacts, brochures and newsletters.*

*This day was a wonderful opportunity to tell the park story to the 48 passengers from the train and the many park visitors that were curious about our display.*



Angela and Mary Lou await the arrival of visitors to the park.  
Photo by Diane Timchak

### **2022 Meeting Dates**

**held at the Cedars Methodist Church  
Maple & Harrison Avenues  
7:00 pm**

**August 14th, Sept. 11th, Oct. 9th, Nov. 13th  
and Dec. 4th**



# Back to Nature... A pair of frogs soaking in the Chalybeate



## **Welcome New Members**

**Kevin Giles  
Abby White  
Pierce Armstrong**

Thank you to Abby White & Pierce Armstrong for sharing the items at our June meeting that they collected while exploring the grounds and waterways of BSP...Thank you to Ed Lipka for hosting the Visitor Center...Thank you Sarah Dougherty for updating our Facebook page...

Questions, comments or suggestions  
contact Mary Lou Lawlor  
[mllawlor@verizon.net](mailto:mllawlor@verizon.net) or Angela Evans  
[angy.e8811@comcast.net](mailto:angy.e8811@comcast.net)

**This & That** .... Thank you to the grounds crew: Klaus Abele, Don Richard, Mark Lawlor, Angela Evans, Diane Timchak, and Jim Egnor...Larry Anderson prints of the Entrance Archway and the Amusement Park are available by calling Mary Lou Lawlor 302-994-8929...Native plants are growing on the pollinator island...

### **Friends of Brandywine Springs**

**P.O. Box 5323 Wilmington, DE. 19808-0323**

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## **President : Ed Lipka**

**Vice President : Mark Lawlor**

**Secretary : Mary Lou Lawlor**

**Secretarial Assistant : Angela Evans**

**Treasurer : Diane Franklin**

## **Board of Directors**

**Bob D'Onofrio**

Scott Palmer

Klaus Abele

**Sarah Dougherty**

**Richard Gillis**

Website : [www.fobsde.org](http://www.fobsde.org)

**See all these photos in color at [www.fobsde.org](http://www.fobsde.org)!!**



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