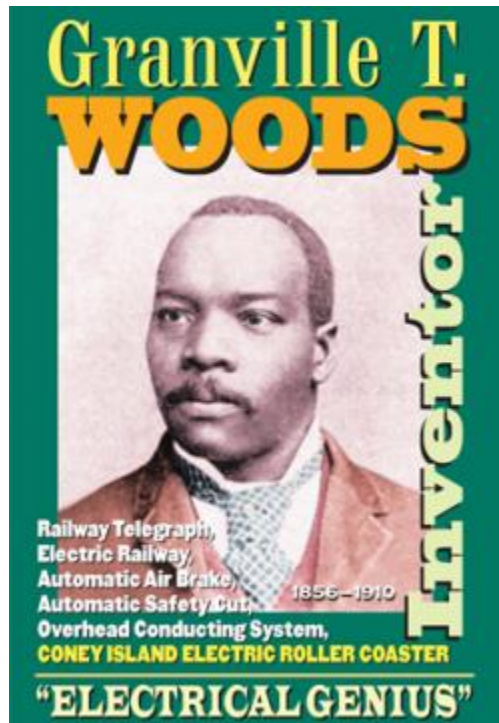


# Did you know?

Granville T. Woods Invented the Electric Roller Coaster!



Sum-summer-time! Time for picnics and swimming and if we're lucky...amusement parks and roller coasters! How many of us have spent joyous and terrifying moments on those amazing rides?

Did you know that a Black man was responsible for the fun? Granville T. Woods introduced the "Figure Eight," the world's first electric roller coaster, in 1892 at Coney Island Amusement Park in New York.

Woods had earlier patented a railroad improvement that allowed electricity to power trains without using batteries or exposed wires—which he modified to power the ride at Coney Island. Another of his inventions, The Synchronous Multiplex Railway Telegraph, patented in 1885, improved communication on the nation's railway system by allowing telegraph messages to be sent from trains to railway stations. This innovation helped prevent accidents by, for the first time, enabling dispatchers to pinpoint a train's location!

In the 1880's, the *Cincinnati Commercial Gazette* wrote, "Mr. Woods is one of the foremost electricians of the country and his many inventions have shown an amount of skill and dexterity in dealing with the most potent and mysterious of all forces, which places him in the front rank of inventors also."

Because of his brilliance and prolificacy, he was sometimes called "The Black Edison." This is probably more of a compliment to Edison than Woods. As a Black man, Woods encountered much resistance to his inventions because many whites believed a Black man could not have come up with creative innovations. Rivals took advantage of this attitude, and some of his patents were stolen outright by competitors such as Thomas Edison. Woods was forced to defend himself in court against Edison multiple times. He eventually won them all. After one of Woods's court victories, Edison tried to hire Woods to work for him at his Edison Company. Woods refused.

\*This Youtube video further explains the invention of The Figure Eight.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4LJ1-R7WOM>