

Industry Inversion

UNIVERSITY OF LOUISVILLE



THRILL

THEMED RIDES INDUSTRY
LEADERS OF LOUISVILLE

WELCOME TO INDUSTRY INVERSION

Welcome to Industry Inversion, a student-led newsletter run by the Themed Rides Industry Leaders of Louisville (THRILL@UofL). Students with THRILL at the University of Louisville contribute articles on industry events, announcements, park reviews, engineering deep dives, and more. THRILL is a non-profit Registered Student Organization at the University of Louisville focused on the amusement industry, roller coasters, engineering, and everything in between.



Hersheypark

Image source: Groupon, The Hershey Story
- Hershey, Pennsylvania

KEEP IN TOUCH!



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Upcoming Competition For THRILL

Written by Gracie Egner, Freshman
Mechanical Engineering Major

For our first competition since the formation of THRILL in Fall of 2026, the group hopes to compete in the Engineering Ride Competition hosted this year at Hersheypark in Hershey Pennsylvania (see left). The Ride Engineering Competition (REC) is a competition where students work in teams to design and develop a themed amusement ride. Teams combine engineering, creativity, and storytelling to create a ride experience similar to that at full scale.

THRILL has chosen to tackle this challenge by dividing the group in four main teams: mechanics, systems, structure, and theming.

The Mechanics Team will focus on the design of the roller coaster train, including systems such as the wheels, axles, and other mechanical components that allow the train to move safely along the track.

The Systems Team will be responsible for designing the roller coaster's braking system. This year, the REC requires that block zones be incorporated into the roller coaster.

The Structure Team will focus on the safety and structural support of the roller coaster. This includes ensuring that the ride can safely support the train and withstand the forces experienced during operation.

Lastly, the theming group will work on the ride's aesthetics and overall look. This team will create an immersive experience for riders by incorporating visual elements and storytelling into the ride. So far, the Theming Team has chosen a scary theme based on a Louisville legend: the Pope Lick Monster (see page 3).

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THRILL Member Spotlight

Written by Preston Koeninger, Freshman Mechanical Engineering Major

My name is Preston Koeninger, and I am the Founder and President of THRILL. For years, I have been fascinated by how roller coasters work, and as that passion grew, I decided I wanted to make a career out of it. This led me to intensive research, connecting with industry professionals, and even touring Gravity Group, a roller coaster manufacturing facility in Cincinnati. As college drew nearer, I knew engineering was the path that would give me the tools and knowledge to succeed in this industry, and the University of Louisville had the program to get me there. When I arrived on campus, I noticed something was missing: a group dedicated to roller coaster engineering and the amusement industry. The more flyers I hung up and the more conversations I had, the more people I met who would enjoy and find benefit in a group like THRILL. While THRILL is still young, I see enormous potential, not only in the group itself, but more importantly in the individual members.



PRESTON KOENINGER

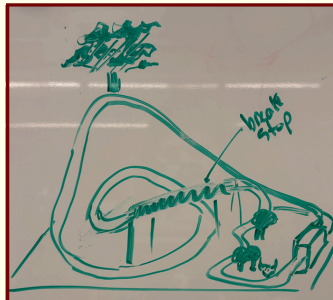
In our first month, THRILL has already accomplished more than I could have ever imagined. We have registered a team for the national Ride Engineering Competition next spring, lined up multiple guest speakers with more to come, planned a facility tour at Kentucky Kingdom, and now officially published our first issue of Industry Inversion!

Engineering, Design, & Art

Written by Gracie Egner, Freshman Mechanical Engineering Major

All Art by Sofia Brumm,
Middle/Secondary Education History
Track

Here at the University of Louisville, we are combining the engineering design process with artistic



Original Sketch by Sofia Brumm



Concept Art by Sofia Brumm

expression. After discussing what the theme should be for the upcoming Ride Engineering Competition (REC), the group decided to theme the wooden coaster on local cryptid, the Pope Lick Monster. The process so far has involved making rough sketches on whiteboards, and transforming it into real concept art. Our next step was creating physical models using aluminum foil and clay. These models are just prototypes of what will be displayed on our finished model.

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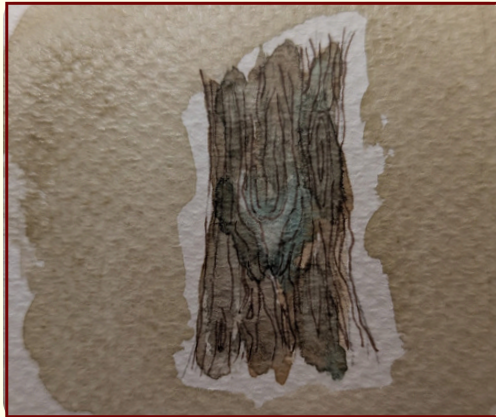


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Louisville Legend: What is the Pope Lick Monster?

Written by Gracie Egner, Freshman Mechanical Engineering Major



Goat Motif in the Trees- Concept Art
Painted by Sofia Brumm

The Pope Lick Monster is a creature from Louisville, Kentucky, said to live near the Pope Lick railway trestle. According to local legend, the monster is a goat-like creature with human features. Stories claim that it uses hypnosis to lure people onto the railroad tracks so that they cannot escape. Although there is no evidence that the monster actually exists, the legend has become a well-known part of Louisville's history and local folklore.

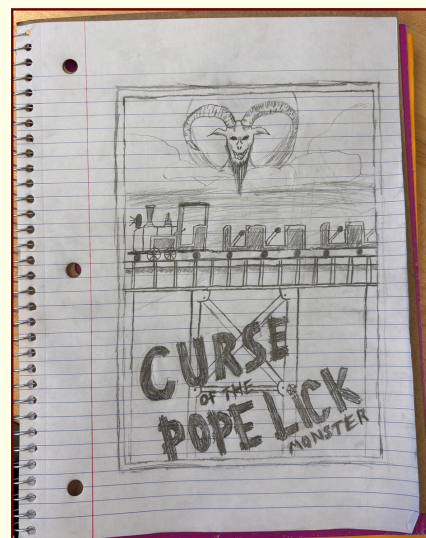
The legend is believed to have originated in the early 20th century. Over time, stories about the creature spread throughout the Louisville area, creating several different versions of its origins and abilities.

The combination of the monster's unusual appearance, mysterious behavior, and the real dangers surrounding the railroad trestle has helped the story remain popular. Today, the Pope Lick Monster is one of the more recognizable legends associated with Louisville.

This Louisville legend is THRILL's main inspiration for this year's Engineering Ride Competition (REC). In addition to a working model rollercoaster, THRILL is working to create an immersive atmosphere, inspired by Disney's use of environmental storytelling within their parks. The team in charge of this feat, THRILL's Theming Team, has chosen to weave the legend of the Popelick Monster into the ride using goat motifs, along with a Pope Lick Monster figure at the end.

The team has already begun developing concept art and ideas for decorations, props, and elements that will bring the legend to life throughout the ride. By incorporating this into the environment, the THRILL theming team hopes to create an experience that feels completely immersive.

This experience through THRILL is a very valuable one. Not only does this theme give THRILL's Theming Team firsthand experience working on the theming of an attraction, but it also allows them to pay homage to the city they call home and draw so much inspiration from. By combining hands-on experience with a piece of Louisville folklore, the team is able to display their city with pride in an unexpected way: with the help of a local legend.



Curse of the Popelick Monster Poaster-
Concept Poster Drawn by Zac Jacobs

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Your Home Park: A Conversation with Kentucky Kingdom's James Atkinson II

Interview by Vice President AJ Wyckoff and Secretary Micah Shively. Edited by President Preston Koeninger.

James Atkinson II grew up in Louisville and calls Kentucky Kingdom his home park. He started there as a ride operator in 2023. Now in his fourth season, he's the park's Marketing and Sales Coordinator, and he's a lifetime passholder. Atkinson spoke to THRILL members at ESSRB earlier this semester. This fall, AJ and Micah caught up with him at the park during Pumpkins at Kentucky Kingdom to talk about the fall lineup, his favorite coaster, and why UofL students should make the short drive over. This interview has been lightly edited for length and clarity. The full interview can be viewed on THRILL's social media at @thrill.uofl.

Shively: *What does the fall season have to offer at Kentucky Kingdom?*

Atkinson: The fall season brings Pumpkins at Kentucky Kingdom. This is our fifth year having it. When Herschend Family Entertainment purchased the park in 2021, they really wanted more family events, so Pumpkins came in 2022 and Christmas at Kentucky Kingdom followed in 2024. This is also the first year we're home to the original Jack O'Lantern Spectacular, and it's included with admission. You don't pay extra. Twenty five phenomenally talented local carvers carve over 5,000 pumpkins by hand. We drained one of our two lazy rivers, which is a little more than a quarter mile long, and after dusk every night we're open, you walk the pumpkin trail around it and take it all in. All the rides are included too. You can ride Wind Chaser, Lightning Run, and the new Flying Fox at night. We have great food. My favorite is probably the pumpkin spice deep fried Oreos, and as you can tell, I've had enough of those already. Something new this year is a costume parade, where the little kids get to parade around the park. That's what we have to offer, and there's a lot more I could go on and on about.

Wyckoff: *You mentioned some of the rides Kentucky Kingdom has to offer. What's your favorite?*

Atkinson: This is an easy answer for me. My first title here was ride operator on Wind Chaser in 2023, and it's my favorite coaster. I'd have to check my log, but I hit 2,726 lifetime rides on it during Louder Than Life, which we're also open for. That's my ride. Every twisting corner of it. I operated it, and now I help people film on it and talk about it. It's one of the smaller RMCs, but as a wise man once said, a small RMC is still an elite ride.



Wyckoff and Shively Interviewing Atkinson



Pumpkins on Display at Kentucky Kingdom's Jack O'Lantern Spectacular

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Shively: Without saying too much, what is one reason to get excited about the upcoming season?

Atkinson: This upcoming season has a lot going on. Pumpkins at Kentucky Kingdom featuring the original Jack O'Lantern Spectacular is continuing. Kentucky Kingdom and Hurricane Bay are both on the same admission and open at the same time. Christmas at Kentucky Kingdom is coming up. There's so much to look forward to, and you can bet on it being a pretty great season next year at Kentucky Kingdom.



THRILL's Executive Board Testing out KY Kingdom's roller coaster, Lightning Run

Wyckoff: Why should UofL students pay Kentucky Kingdom a visit, or maybe even buy a Gold Pass?

Atkinson: If you're at Louisville, or you're part of THRILL at UofL, you should really pay us a visit. We're your home park, and we're here for you. I was on campus about a month ago handing out free tickets to students at the Student Activities Center. The Kingdom has your back. I just graduated from college, so I know midterms and finals are tough. The best thing that got me through them was roller coasters, flat rides, and being around thousands of people who are all here for a common goal: creating memories worth repeating. It's maybe a five to seven minute drive from campus, maybe even less. Every season pass, whether it's Gold, Diamond, or Silver, comes with free parking and unlimited admission from the start of May all the way through the first week of January.

September in Review: What Comes Next?

Written by Gracie Egner, Freshman Mechanical Engineering Major
As the month of September comes to a close, members of THRILL are already taking action on the upcoming Ride Engineering Competition (REC) as each team begins brainstorming, researching, planning, and prototyping.

This month, THRILL has enjoyed working on REC, listening to speaker James Atkinson II, and welcoming new Executive Board (E-Board) Officers. Additionally, our E-board had the wonderful experience to attend Kentucky Kingdom's Jack O'Lantern Spectacular, allowing our Executive Board the chance to network with industry professionals and experience the event firsthand.

Looking forward to October, THRILL hopes to fill the month with events and experiences (see left), with more new events to come!

OCTOBER EVENTS

Oct. 10- Cardinal Preview Day Tabling

Oct. 13- Guest Speaker Dennis Spiegel-
5:00 P.M. Ernst Hall 103

Oct. 15- Speed School Fall Festival-
4:00-6:00 P.M.

Oct. 17- Speed Maker Faire Tabling

Oct. 22- Coasterville: Rollercoasters
101- 6:00-8:00 P.M. Ernst Hall 103

Oct. 24- Kentucky Kingdom Facility
Tour