

Family-Owned Property Opens May 6 With New Additions

109 Years And Counting: How Sweet It Is At Quassy Amusement & Waterpark

MIDDLEBURY, Conn. – Something old is new again at Quassy Amusement & Waterpark here as the landmark property opens for its 109th season on Saturday, May 6.

The park will officially unveil Bella & Bessie's Sweet Shoppe & Pizzeria, located on the site of the former popcorn stand in the heart of the iconic lakefront venue.

What's special about the new retail outlet is something quite nostalgic. The park acquired taffy-making apparatus dating back to the 1920s and will fire up the refurbished machinery to produce its own homemade sweet treats.

In addition, Quassy will introduce two new rides: Skipper's Clippers pirate ships and Up, Up & Away balloons. Both interactive children's rides will be located at the lakeside kiddieland area.

"Needless to say, it's been a busy offseason for us," park President Eric Anderson said of improvements. "We started on the new building shortly after closing last fall and announced the acquisition of the two rides in November during our annual trade show in Florida."

Honoring Two Women

"The family (owners) really gave it some thought when it came to naming the new building," Anderson said of the process which started after it was determined the old popcorn stand would be replaced.

Considering the park's heritage and 80 years of family involvement, the owners decided the new structure would be called Bella & Bessie's Sweet Shoppe & Pizzeria.

Bella was Vasiliki Bolakaki, who came to the United States in 1927 with her new husband, John Frantzeskakis (Frantzis). They were accompanied by another married couple and close friends, George and Vasilias (Bessie) Terezakis.

The women spent many of their first days in the U.S. at Lake Quassapaug, which had a small amusement facility overlooking the sparkling lake.

That same year John Frantzis and business partner Mike Leon purchased the Chocolate Shoppe in downtown Waterbury, Conn., only a few miles from Lake Quassapaug.

It was in 1937 that John Frantzis, Mike Leon and George Terezakis, who had worked as concessionaries at the summer property, purchased Lake Quassapaug Amusement Park.

Leon remained involved in park operations until his death in 1958. The Terezakis family eventually sold its interest in the park to Eric Anderson and his wife, Emily (Frantzis).

Today, Quassy remains a "family affair" as it is fully owned by the Frantzis and Anderson families with Anderson and George Frantzis II overseeing daily operations.

The new store will have other sweet treats such as cotton candy and candy apples along with popcorn and other novelty food items. Quassy will also offer homemade pizza with a variety of toppings in the new structure.

This season will mark the first time the iconic park has made its own taffy.

Adults Can Ride, Too

While considered children's rides, both of the new attractions at the lakefront will also accommodate adult riders.

"That feature, plus the interactive elements incorporated on both rides made them ideal fits for us," George Frantzis II said of the rides. "The up and down motion of the pirate ships (Skipper's Clippers) are controlled with joy sticks while music and a variety of sounds add to the experience."

The Up, Up & Away balloon baskets have spinning action controlled by the riders. This marks the third straight year Quassy has introduced new rides within the park.

More Laser Action

The Quassy Quest Laser Maze, added as a special attraction inside the redemption arcade in 2012, will receive a major update this year with the addition of a Beam Buster® program from developer Funovation of Longmont, Colo.

"This will add another dimension to our popular laser maze," Anderson said of the upgrade. "Beam Buster is exactly as it sounds: you try to break as many beams of light as possible during the allotted time. The more you break, the better your score."

The laser maze will continue to offer its traditional programming as well, which has different levels of participation as players attempt to maneuver through a field of lasers without breaking a beam of light.

"The new feature will be more thrilling for youngsters and those young at heart," the park official added.

Opening Weekend

May 6 and 7, opening weekend at the park, will feature a \$45 carload special in support of the Greater Waterbury Campership Fund, which helps send underprivileged children to summer camp. The offer is valid for up to 10 persons safely seated in one car and includes the parking fee.

Rides will operate 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. both days with Quassy's annual egg hunt for prizes at 3 p.m., Sunday, May 7. The park has supported the Campership initiative for decades.

Splash Away Bay waterpark and Quassy Beach open for the 2017 season on May 27.

About Quassy

Quassy's rides include the award-winning Wooden Warrior roller coaster, Reverse Time, Frantic, Music Fest, Yo-Yo super swings, Free Fall 'N' Drop Tower, Grand Carousel and more.

The park also has a restaurant, redemption arcade, games, and live entertainment and hosts numerous special events.

Season passes are on sale now at the park office and through the Quassy website at www.quassy.com. Company picnics, school fieldtrips and other catered events are also being scheduled through the park office at (203) 758-2913.

Quassy is located at 2132 Middlebury Road, Route 64, in Middlebury, Conn., on the shores of Lake Quassapaug.

For a complete operating schedule and calendar of special events, visit the Quassy website.

Quick Quassy Facts:

Since 1937: This year marks the 80th season the park has been owned and operated by the same family.

Top Coaster: Since its debut in 2011, Quassy's Wooden Warrior roller coaster has been rated among the top 50 wood coasters in the world, according to coaster and theme park experts.

Popcorn Stand: The original popcorn stand, the second-oldest structure in the park, was built in 1925 and demolished in the fall of 2016 to make way for Bella & Bessie's Sweet Shoppe & Pizzeria.

Skipper's Clippers: This new decorative ride is from SBF/Visa Group of Italy and is from the company's mini jet catalog. Quassy has three major thrill rides from the supplier: Free Fall'N drop tower, FRANTIC and Reverse Time.

Up, Up & Away: This ride is from Zamperla of Italy and a production model known as the Samba Balloon. Quassy has two other Zamperla rides: Galleon Pirate Ship and Crazy Cups.

Trolley Park: Quassy is known as a "trolley park" – once owned and operated by the electrified rail company that serviced the lake. Before The Great Depression of 1929 there were more than 1,000 such parks in the nation. Today, fewer than 12 remain.

Skipper's Clipper is one of two new rides at Quassy Amusement & Waterpark this season. It is shown here during November's International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA) Expo in Orlando, Fla., before making its way to Connecticut. (Quassy photo)

Up, Up & Away is one of two new rides added at Quassy Amusement & Waterpark in Middlebury, Conn., this year. (Photo courtesy Zamperla)