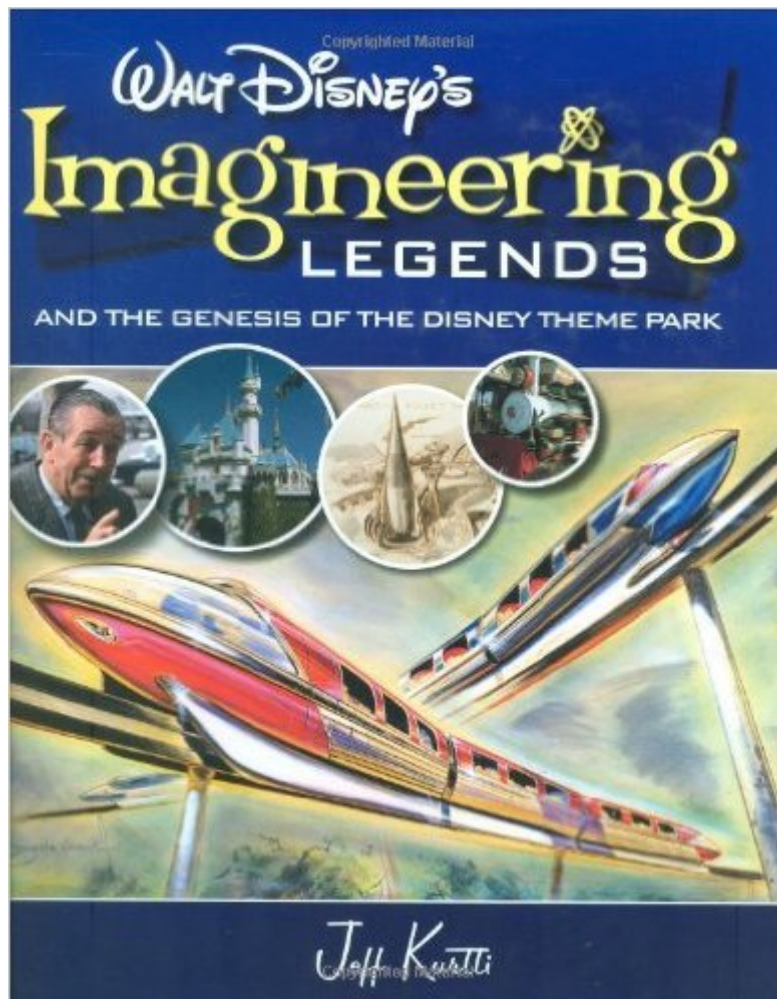


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# Walt Disney's Imagineering Legends And The Genesis Of The Disney Theme Park



## Synopsis

Fifty years ago, Walt Disney utterly transformed the concept of outdoor entertainment venues from tawdry carnivals and seedy amusement piers called "amusement parks" to an entirely new destination that would come into common vernacular as the "theme park." Although Disneyland was the inspiration of one man, Walt did not achieve this history-altering concept on his own. Using his innate talent for combining disparate skills and personalities, he assembled a creative team that blended imagination with engineering. Walt called this group his "Imagineers." Walt Disney's Legends of Imagineering and the Genesis of the Disney Theme Park introduces a core group of the originators of Disneyland and the other Disney parks. It explores their individual relationships with Walt and each other, their creative breakthroughs and failures, and their rivalries and professional politics. This candid narrative of their lives and contributions to a very special form of entertainment illustrates why, half a century later, their work continues to be vital and important to millions of people every day, and all over the world. Lavishly illustrated throughout with rare and never-before-seen artwork and photographs, Walt Disney's Legends of Imagineering and the Genesis of the Disney Theme Park will further enrich the reader's appreciation of the exceptional talent behind Disneyland's creation and ongoing evolution.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have always been a huge Disneyland fan, but only begun delving into the history for the past 2 years, so I would consider myself somewhat of a newbie amongst the die-hards. This book's

strength is its encyclopedic all-in-one format (although as Lannie's excellent review points out, there are a few glaring omissions such as Alice Davis), the wonderful photos/illustrations (many are new to me, with a few familiar ones), and the excellent design that is featured throughout. Each chapter features a different skill/talent for the Imagineers, such as: \*The Prototype Imagineers (Harper Goff, Ken Anderson, Herbert Ryman, and Sam McKim) \*The Executive Suite (Richard F. Irvine & Bill Cottrell) \*The Model Shop (Fred Joerger, Harriet Burns, and Wathel Rogers), and many more. The common thread throughout the book is obviously Walt himself; his talent for putting all of these geniuses together and challenging them to do things they'd never attempted before created the magic that is now Disneyland and WDW. Walt fostered the creative and "can-do" environment that allowed The Haunted Mansion, Pirates of the Caribbean, it's a small world, and the Jungle Cruise to become the beloved attractions that every guest rushes to experience over and over again. To quote Tony Baxter from the book: "I found it interesting to see that when Walt was alive he was able to pull everyone together, and I think that was his great talent: to be able to get everyone to work together in harmony." This quote is in the section of Claude Coats, and refers to the fact that Marc Davis (characters) and Claude Coats (the environment/background) created magic together on Pirates of the Caribbean, even they didn't necessarily get along with each other.

In my work I'm at Walt Disney World every week, and the more I research it the more impressed I am. It is a place of boundless imagination. After Walt Disney's original vision, the bulk of the creative work has been in the capable hands of the Disney Imagineers. This book profiles 30 of these Disney artists and engineers. Although you could argue about the list (I'd love to see Mary Blair, but I guess her role wasn't really as an Imagineer) you can't argue with the depth of the research. Within each profile, Kurtti has gathered not only anecdotes, reminiscences and quotes, but also photos and sketches. The best photographs show the Imagineers at work, painting and sculpting and model-making. The conceptual art is the most fun; you can see Bill Martin's conceptual layout for the Peter Pan attraction in Disneyland, and Rolly Crump's concept sketch for the Enchanted Tiki Room. I do wish more current Imagineers were included, especially the visionary Joe Rohde, the chief architect of Disney's Animal Kingdom. But then again he's not a Legend. Maybe in a sequel, Jeff? The design of the book is a little loose for my taste, with some clunky typeface choices and layout. Several of the photos are not rectangles, but rather circles or other shapes, and many are reproduced too dark, at least in my copy. But overall the book is an excellent resource -- and makes for fascinating reading -- for any Disney fan. Jeff Kurtti is also the author of SINCE THE WORLD BEGAN: WALT DISNEY WORLD: THE FIRST 25 YEARS. Here's the chapter list: Foreword:

Growing Up With Imagineering, by Martin A.

This has been an eagerly anticipated book in the Disney community. Since their inception with the creation of Disneyland, the Imagineers have always been the architects and dreamers of Walt's visions. Many of the names that you read about in the book will be familiar to Disney enthusiasts; as the name of the book implies, these are the legends of Disney Imagineering. Jeff Kurtti is a well-known and much-admired name in the Disney community. He has written many seminal works on the history of the theme parks, animated films, characters and theater. *Since The World Began* is one of his more treasured books. Jeff is also known for his work on several award-winning documentaries and as a consultant for film and theater. Currently, he is working with the Walt Disney Family Museum. The late Bruce Gordon served as editor on the project and his talents are seen throughout the book through the layout and design. Bruce was the author of *The Nickel Tour*, *Walt's Time* and *The Art of Disneyland* (with Jeff). In an interview with Didier Ghez, Jeff talks about the motivation behind the book: The inspiration for Walt Disney's *Imagineering Legends* was John Canemaker's *Walt Disney's Nine Old Men*. I say inspiration, since my book comes nowhere near the depth and erudition of John's great work, but the inspiration was to create a work that would familiarize people with the core team of creative people within the initial development of Disneyland. The animation group, as a rule, is more familiar to people, and the Imagineering group is less well-known, the history of how they came together is much less documented.

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