

# Historical Roller Skating OVERVIEW

National Museum of Roller Skating  
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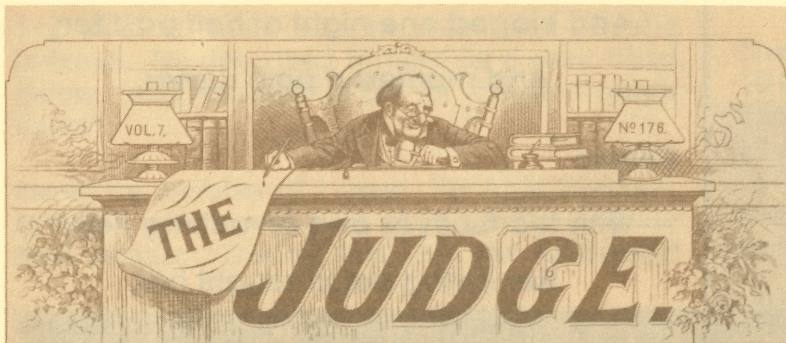
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## KNIGHT OF THE ROLLERS

In the 1880s a scandal of sorts was reported in the local papers--that being young, wealthy heiresses eloping with their father's coachman. However, with the advent of the roller skating craze, the coachman was replaced in the hearts of these young ladies, by their roller skating teachers, or "professors" as they were known. The illustration from THE JUDGE, shown here, is a contemporary illustration that the museum has now reproduced as a post card. The article accompanying the picture included these insights--"within the last year the majority of the population has mounted itself on little wheels...Every little town in the country has its skating rink--many of them more than one, and they all find patronage and make money....  
...These rinks generally contrive to have a few professional "mashers" in attendance, who teach the young ladies how to stand erect...and even elope with such of them as seen worth it...The "mashing" days of the coachman are over; he is nowhere beside the festive knight of the rollers. The divine accomplishment of the hour is his--he can preserve his equilibrium on a set of little wooden wheels, and gyrate round a barn without measuring his length on its dusty boards."



ENTERED AT THE POST OFFICE AT NEW YORK AS SECOND CLASS MATTER. COPYRIGHT 1891 BY THE JUDGE PUBLISHING CO.  
Price NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 28, 1895. 10 Cents.



The competition for the attention of young, wealthy ladies between coachmen and roller skaters was immortalized in this song written by Gene W. Knight.

## COACHMAN VS POLO RUSHER

The maid was young the maid was fair

And many lovers sought her,

Her father was a millionaire,

And she his only daughter.

No suitor that the maiden met

To dream of love but taught her

Until in Cupid's silken net

Her father's coachman caught her.

*Chorus:*

The maid was young, the maid was fair,

And many lovers sought her;

Her father was a millionaire,

And she his only daughter.

Then anxiously she passed the days,

Elopement contemplating,

Until she caught the skating craze,

And took to roller skating.

She threw the coachman over then

To him it was a crusher,

And eloped one night at half past ten

And married a polo rusher.

*Chorus*

With tearful eyes and an aching heart

Her loving papa sought her,

Resolved that money should do its part,

To return his lovely daughter,

And now at home she grieves no more,

For the dashing polo rusher,

Content to abide forever more,

With the best of friends a mother.

*Chorus*

TO  
H. M. WILLIAMSON.  
DENVER, COLO.

THE SKATING CRAZE

COACHMAN  
VS  
POLO-RUSHER

Song and Dance

BY  
GENE W. KNIGHT.

LYON & HEALY.  
COR. STATE & MONROE ST.  
CHICAGO, ILL.

KNIGHT-McCLURE MUSIC CO.  
DENVER,  
COLORADO.

Copyright 1885 by Gene W. Knight.

In 1886 roller polo was considered "one of the best governed and most scientific games in the world of sports." (Midwinter Greetings, Newsletter of Institute Rink, Boston). A National League of Roller Polo was inaugurated in 1886 and rules compiled by Prof. Field, were adopted. At this time, The National League of polo players was one of the strongest sporting organizations in America, including over 100 members.

## PERSONALITY FROM THE PAST – A POLO RUSHER

Harrison Fry of Richmond, Indiana became a professional polo player in 1907 in San Francisco, the year after the earthquake. He was interviewed by Dave Gerwig for THE PAL-LADIUM-ITEM, newspaper in Richmond, Indiana (Wed., Jan. 16, 1974 when he was 85).

He started out as a rusher. Each team had five players, two rushers (who were expected to do most of the scoring), a halfback, a goaltender, and a center.

Fry liked to rush, and he also liked playing defense. He described himself as a good-sized fellow, "and you had to be, for it was a rough sport".

He was a member of a team, the ASM Seeders, in 1917 which was part of the Indiana State Polo League. During this time the Richmond

team carried on a great rivalry with Muncie. Apparently one of their games was witnessed by more than 1,000 spectators.

Mr. Fry recalled that the tempo of roller polo was very fast, with few interruptions. "There were times when polo was stopped for a foul, but never for very long.

Polo was rougher than football. Referees allowed contact; what they didn't permit was holding an opponent with your hands or touching the ball in any way."

Mr. Fry, in an interview with his son, said that the equipment they used for roller polo consisted of a ball, similar to a baseball. It had a wound cord center and a 1/4 inch hard rubber cover.

The skates that Mr. Fry used were Henley's 1910 model rink skates (manufactured in Richmond, Indiana). They cut off the clamps and straps and bolted the plates to work shoes, adding layers of rubber from car tires around the toes to stop the ball or puck from catching under the wheels.



*Richmond,  
Indiana  
Roller Polo  
Team--Mr.  
Harrison Fry  
Bottom Row,  
right.*

## CURATOR'S CORNER

As indicated in the leading article the National Museum of Roller Skating now has post cards available. We have two designs, both in color, taken from graphics in our archives. The first is "The Coachman Eclipsed" as shown on the cover. The second, a charming Victorian lady, is shown below. We are selling the post cards for 50 cents each.



On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those individuals who have helped the National Museum of Roller Skating this past year with their financial donations. You are the lifeblood of the museum!

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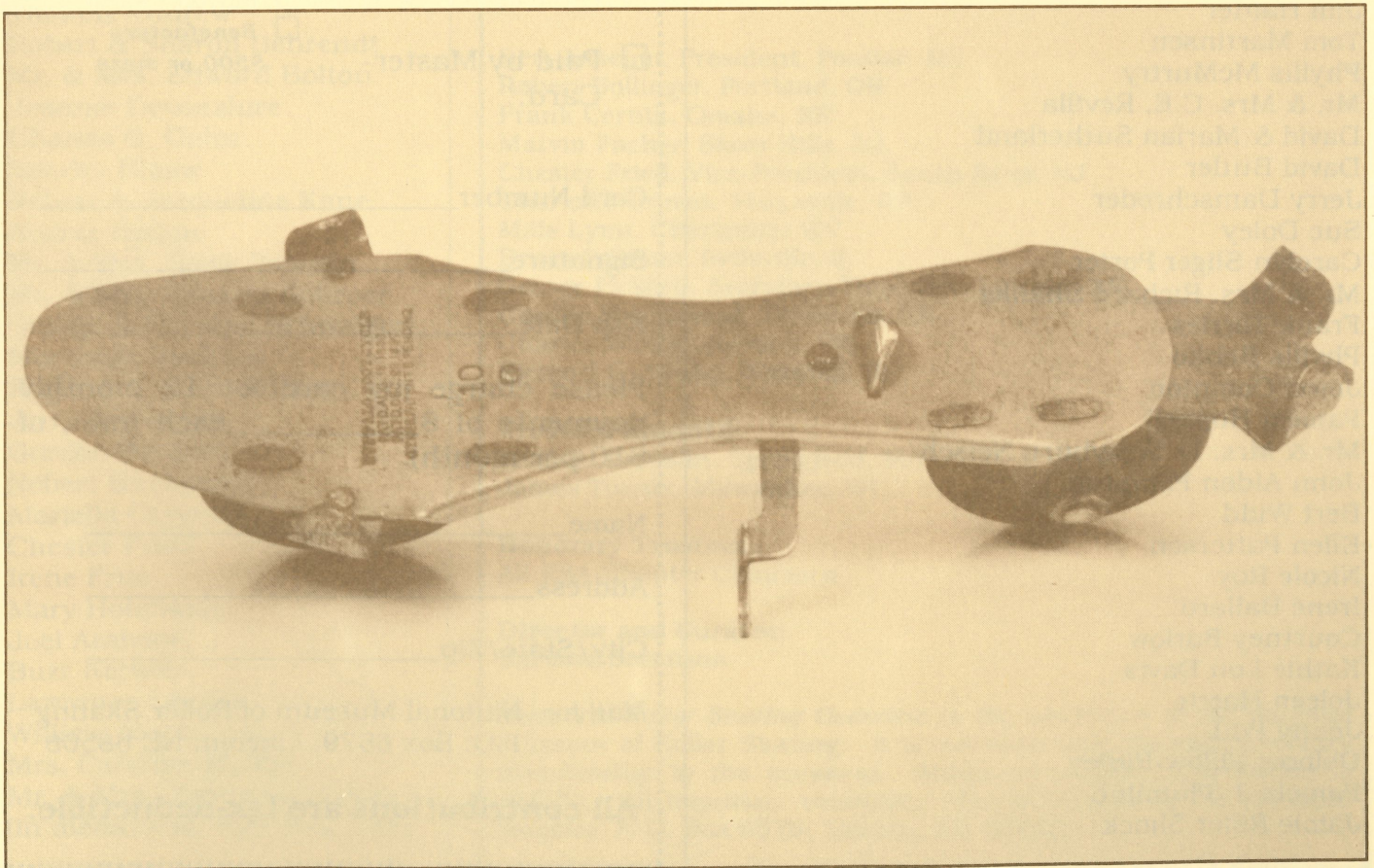
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## BUFFALO FOOT CYCLE

One of a number of roller skates used for roller polo was this "Buffalo Foot Cycle" manufactured by the Samuel M. White Company of Cleveland, Ohio in 1897. Both the heel and toe clamps are attached to a quick release lever. Another version of this skate with a leather heel strap and toe clamps was also made. This skate has rubber wheels.

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Contributors of \$5 or more receive their choice of the official Museum patch or pin.

Contributors of \$15 or more become Honorary Members of the Museum and receive a Museum membership pin, official identification card, the quarterly newsletter, and free admission whenever they visit the Museum.

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Professional  
Polo Match  
as played on  
Foot Cycles.  
The W.S. Cleveland Model.

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