

## Historical Roller Skating

# OVERVIEW

Issue No. 4

December 1982

### CURATOR'S CORNER

**Michael W. Brooslin,**  
Director & Curator

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The newsletter of the National Museum of Roller Skating is available only through membership in the museum. Minimum annual contribution is \$15. The newsletter is published 4 times a year to inform the museum's honorary members of happenings at the museum and about aspects of roller history. Although the museum cannot pay for articles, contributions by the readers are welcome. All articles, inquiries or comments should be sent to the Museum Curator.

We are proud to announce the publication of the museum's first book, THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS: AMERICAN ROLLER SKATES 1860-1910. This collections catalogue, compiled from roller skates on exhibit in the museum, is a pictorial history documenting the various styles and models of skates used during the 19th Century. Sure to become a collector's item, the book is a testament to the inventiveness of American industry. As with all of the future publications to be issued by the museum, honorary members can purchase copies of this catalogue at a reduced price - just one more benefit of membership in the museum. More information about the book, along with an order sheet, can be found at the back of the newsletter.

Several significant items have been acquired by the museum since September. From Mr. & Mrs. Dominic Rotondo we received a collection of roller skating stickers and other memorabilia dealing with the Universal Roller Skating Sticker Exchange. This superb gift was compiled by Mrs. Rotondo's father, Richard L. Harrington, a past president of the U.R.S.S.E. As with all of our archival collections, it is available for use in the museum. Remember also, another service we can provide is to answer historical research requests, so if you have questions, please drop me a note and we'll try to help out. Our thanks also go out to Mr. Red Shattuck for finding a photo of the 1st U.S. Amateur Speed Champion, Whitey Christopher, which we asked for help in locating in the June issue of the newsletter.

The museum is still (desperately) trying to find one of the old-time speed skating uniforms used by professional racers from around 1905 through the thirties. These usually had a sponsor's name on the jersey. Can anyone help?

Finally, for those of you who were looking forward to the reprints from SKATING REVIEW magazine (which were supposed to be in this issue), my sincere apologies. Because of the time required to arrange for the publication of the collections catalogue, it was impossible to include any of the reprints this time. Definitely in the next issue. The March 1983 newsletter will also contain an update on museum activities, more pro speed skaters from the Fred A. Martin Collection, and a short biography of Perry B. Rawson, the father of American roller skate dancing.

## FIELDING & CARLOS

The world renown fancy skating and novelty dance skating act of Howard Fielding and Helen Carlos dates back to the year 1908, when they gave up their individual acts and became one of the greatest teams ever to perform on stage. From that year until the late 1920's Fielding and Carlos were considered by many to be the best of the skating duos who played rinks and vaudville theatres in America.

Fielding began his professional skating career in 1902 as a single skater, giving exhibitions of fancy and trick skating. Like many professional roller skaters of that era, Fielding skated both artistic and speed events. Until 1908 he competed in all of the major professional championship races, "meeting all challenges". His final speed skating event was the World's Professional Championship of 1908 in Cincinnati, where the skaters competed for the Billboard Medal (won by Frank Bacon of Pittsburgh-see picture on p.3 of the September newsletter). As Fielding was a better artistic skater than a racer, he gave up speed skating events and concentrated on his fancy skating. During his time, the crowds who flocked to see him and packed the theatres, considered Mr. Fielding to be "one of the more graceful roller skaters in America". In common with most of his colleagues, he was billed as "Professor" Howard Fielding. Fielding also had a brother who roller skated professionally. Arthur Fielding was half of the team of Fielding and Connors, who entertained in vaudville from 1915 through the early 1920's. These two men were primarily comedic skaters.

Helen Carlos, like Howard Fielding, also skated professionally as an individual prior to their teaming up. Her artistic exhibitions earned her rave revues in the vaudville trade papers. Known as "Dainty" Helen Carlos, she was recognized by the Western Skating Association as "the greatest woman skater in America" (1916).

Based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, the pairs team of Fielding and Carlos continued to perform exhibitions across the country, in Canada, and in Europe through the late 1920's, entertaining mostly on the Keith or Orpheum circuits. Their act was known both for their outstanding choreography and for their original costuming.

*Top picture: Howard Fielding & Helen Carlos, taken sometime between 1910 and 1915. Notice the high, lace-up style boots prevalent in that period.  
Bottom: Professor Howard Fielding, circa 1913. Skating through candles must have been common at that time as the museum photo collection has several other skaters performing this feat.  
Both photos from the Fred A. Martin Collection.*



### Ilford v. Ipswich

On Saturday a most enjoyable game was played on the Ilford Rink between the Ilford Hockey Club and the representatives of the Palace Rink, Ipswich. The home team, who have been playing for three years, found that the Ipswich men, although quite a young club, were able to put up a good game. The teams were: —Ilford: Goal, C. Wiedhofft; back, Leo Schilling; forwards, J. Wells (centre), T. Bellard (right), A. Barnheim (left).

Ipswich: Goal, W. Rogerson; back, E. S. D. Bury; forwards, J. Molony (left), C. Page Hunt (centre), H. Pinchon (right).

From the bully off it was evident that the visitors would have to play a chasing game, and in this they showed themselves adepts. The Ilford team were a faster lot and dribbled very cleverly. The idea of controlling the stick with one hand while pace-making is a good one, and Ipswich would do well to adopt it. The visitors played a scientific passing game, but the wings were apt to stray from their respective positions, and so some clever work by the centre was lost. Ballard was the greatest forward on the field, his turning being wonderful. Undoubtedly Ipswich's great weakness is the shooting. A hard straight shot is easier to stop than the lifting "tips" which the Ilford men were constantly sending in. Rogerson was repeatedly applauded for his fine display and was quite the hero of the match. The home men were constantly pressing round the Ipswich goal, but they found Bury a very hefty back, and though he failed once or twice, his average defense was very sturdy. Ballard put the first goal through in the first half. Ipswich

## RINK HOCKEY

brightened up after this, and both Pinchon and Hunt put in some hard, straight drives. Molony was all the time in attendance on Ballard and did his following up work with great effect. At half-time the home team had scored the only goal. The second half was more evenly contested, but Ballard put another past Rogerson with a great shot, which he put in when quite on the turn. A notable feature of the game was the excellent refereeing of Mr. Jarvis, who gave universal satisfaction. The whistle

blew with the score still at two—nil in favour of the home players. All through the game not a single bad foul was given and a cleaner game one could not wish for. A return match will shortly be played at the Palace Rink, Ipswich, and in this game the provincials will have the assistance of their regular centre, Mr. Botock. The Ilford team have received a challenge from the other Ipswich club, at the Empress Rink, and intend accepting the same.

*The account of the roller hockey match was taken from the British magazine Rinking and Rinks, issue of November 4, 1909. For those interested in roller hockey, the "Museum Update" column in the winter issue of Skate magazine contains a short history of the sport.*



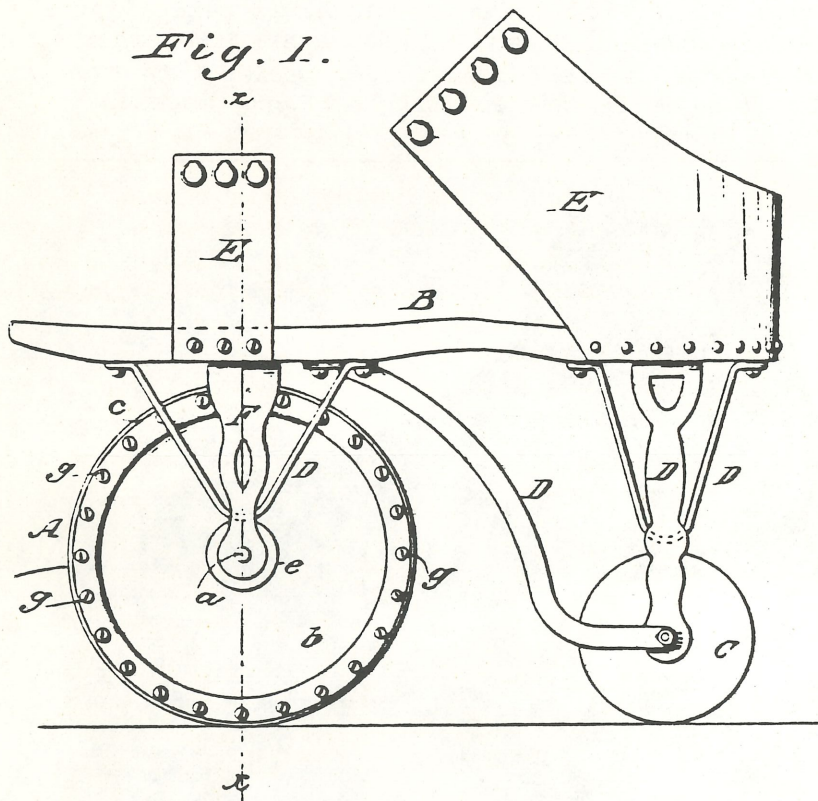
Above: A roller skate made especially for rink hockey by the Roller Skate Hockey Co. of New York during the early 1900's. Boots made by the Brooks Shoe Company.

Left: The roller hockey team of the Wayne Rink, Detroit MI, 1911-12. Included among those pictured are Walter Sutphen, Herb Carter, Bert Randal, Stanley Keyes, Walter Osmun and George Rictmiller.



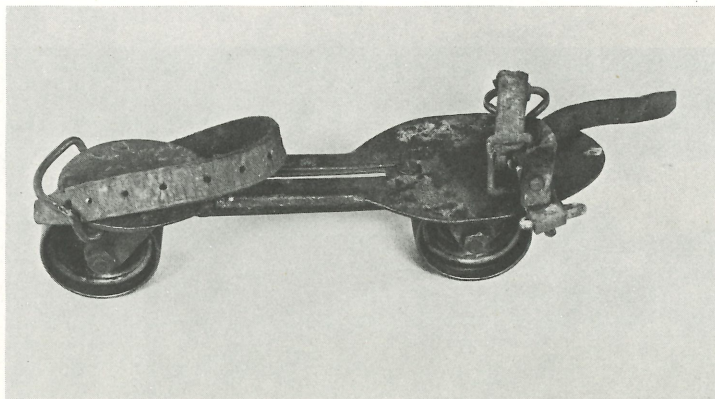
## Two & Three Wheel Roller Skates, Part II

As with the 3 wheel skates illustrated in the last issue (#3, September) of the museum newsletter, most of the many 2 wheel skates were invented so as to make maneuvering on rollers easier, and to enable skaters to turn as gracefully on rollers as on ice skates. They allowed those who were able to maintain their balance to accomplish many tricks and figures. Unlike the 3 wheel skate, many of these models were made for ice skaters to train on during the summer months. A few roller skates are still made for this purpose today. In addition to their use in trick and artistic skating, 2 wheelers were worn for speed skating. Like the 3 wheel models in the previous issue, most of these skates were of the clamp-on or strap-on variety. The only shoe skate with 2 wheels we have discovered is the German "Terra-Glide" skate shown on the opposite page. The museum is constantly looking for additional 2 and 3 wheel skates, and patents or photos of these models for our collection. If any of the readers have run across 2 or 3 wheelers, we would appreciate hearing from you.



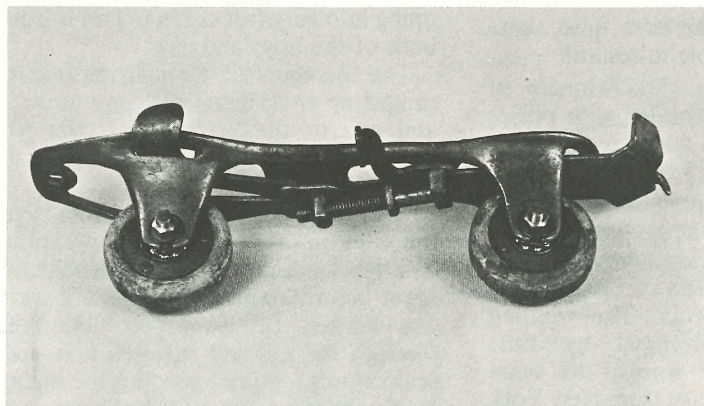
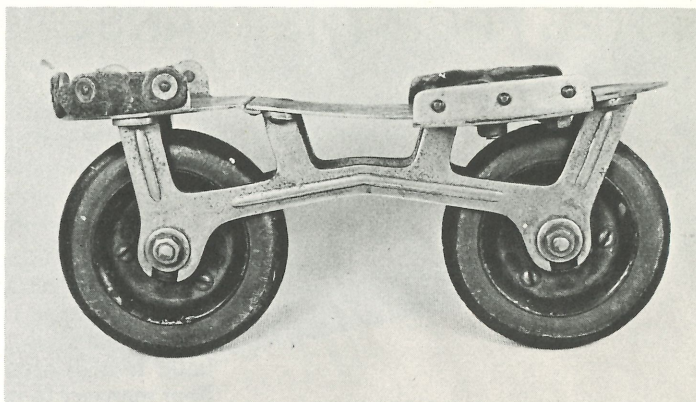
*This roller skate was patented by E.F. Johnson on July 8, 1884. Similar in design to the Spaulding skate on the next page, the wheels on this skate were rubber, with leather for better traction. A lever which runs from the front truck to the rear wheel allows the latter to turn slightly. It is not known whether this 2 wheel model ever went into production.*

*This skate was one of the few cooperative ventures in roller skating during the early 20th Century. A joint design and production effort of the Richardson and Mahrenholtz companies, this model could be adjusted lengthwise by sliding the central bar. The metal wheels are attached to the plate without cushions. Manufactured about 1905.*



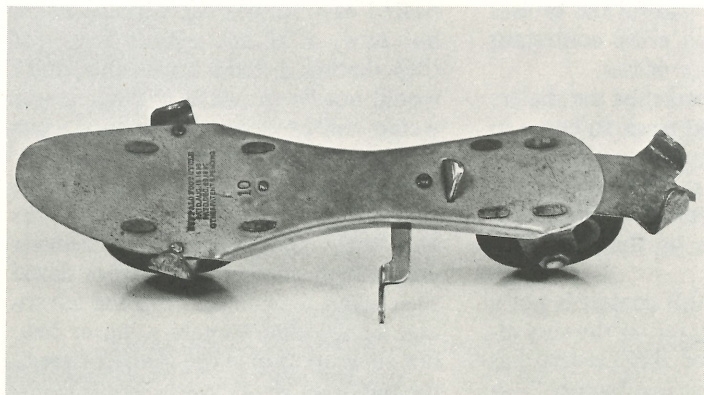
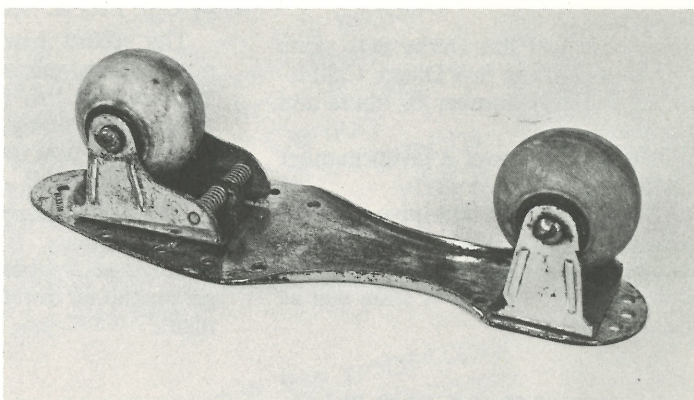
All of the skates pictured here and in the first part of this article are on exhibit in the museum. We are grateful to the following individuals and organizations for the donation and loans of these objects: Mr. Al Kish, Mr. Bert Anselmi, Mr. Richard Young, Mr. Chester Fried, Gallery Collections, the Chicago Roller Skate Company, Mr. & Mrs. Richard McLauchlen, and the Chicago Historical Society.

One of the earliest 2 wheelers, made in 1876 by the A.G. Spaulding & Brothers sporting goods firm of New York City. Due to the height of the plate from the bottom surface of the wheels, this model required an exceptional degree of balance for use. The rubber wheels are attached so that they can be quickly removed by just loosening the nuts. Originally, there were leather straps attached to the metal heel and at the instep for securing the skate to the boot.



Speed skate patented on December 28, 1897 by Levant M. Richardson (profiled in the last newsletter). While similar in design to the White skate below, the Richardson features a cut-down plate, reducing the weight of the skate. This made it more effective for racing. This particular skate was used by Oscar Nauman of Detroit when he won the 1906 Michigan State Amateur Speed Championships.

A German 2 wheel roller skate known as the "Terra-Glide" skate, manufactured sometime during the late 1940's. The composition wheels are attached directly to the plate without a rocker mechanism. However, the front wheel can turn slightly because of the action of the spring, located at the rear of the front truck.



The "Buffalo Foot Cycle" manufactured by the S.M. White Co. of Cleveland, Ohio, in 1897. This skate has a quick release lever attached to both the heel and toe clamps under the plate. It adjusts by a screw device similar to the one on the Richardson 1897 speed skate above. White also made this skate with leather straps instead of the clamps.

# NOTES FROM THE TRANSCONTINENTAL ROLLER DERBY

*The following articles first appeared in the October 1, 1935 issue of Richardson Rinkster*

At noon, on August 13th, 1935, at the Coliseum, Chicago, Col. Leo A. Seltzer's Trans-Continental Roller Derby got under way, with twenty-five teams and two solos entered. The teams consist of a man and a girl. Fourteen of these teams were sponsored by local and national business concerns. The object of the Roller Derby is to skate from New York City to San Diego, California, following the Lincoln Highway. All the skating, of course, takes place right in the Coliseum, where a banked track, fourteen laps to the mile, has been provided. The skaters are given eleven and one-half hours daily to make the stipulated jump, and the daily distance has averaged something like one hundred miles at this writing.

"The following rules govern the contestants:

The object of this Derby is to skate from New York to San Diego, California, in the least number of hours and minutes.

Skaters must travel a given number of miles daily in 11½ hrs.

All laps and miles that have not been completed in the 11½ hours will be doubled. Remaining laps are then to be made within 1½ hours or team will be disqualified.

At all times the colors of every team must be represented on the floor. In the event one member of the team is injured or for some other reason is not on the floor the partner skating in her or his behalf must make two laps to the other teams' one.

If the representative of any team should be late in coming on the floor, through over-sleeping or any other fault, it shall become the duty of the floor manager to penalize said team the laps he deems it in his judgment to inflict.

If one member of the team gets cracked up and is incapacitated the other member of the team must skate till the partner is able to resume.

Six sprints daily. The winners of these sprints are rewarded with purses offered by Col. Leo A. Seltzer, sponsor of the Derby.

It is to the advantage of a team to steal a lap in a jam at anytime they are able, as the stolen lap gives the team that many minutes less on the schedule in reaching California. The winning team will be adjudged by time schedule. In other words, the team completing the mileage from New York to San Diego in less time than any other team will win the final award offered by Col. Leo A. Seltzer.

The record from coast to coast is now 69 days, made by Bill Henning. It appears that this record will be shattered many, many days by the speedy contestants now on the floor of the Coliseum track."

The Roller Derby has received very good publicity from a number of Chicago newspapers and the promoters go on the air for fifteen minutes each night.

Several sprints take place daily, both afternoon and evening, for prizes offered by the management and by the spectators. After completing 776 miles there were 19 teams left in the race and one solo girl. After 1510 miles were completed there were 16 teams left and one solo boy. At the 2055 mile mark there were 13 teams left and one solo girl. At the present writing, at the 2424 mile mark, there are 12 teams left and one solo girl.

It is interesting to watch the development of the skaters as they go along. Some who were not so good at the start are now coming along nicely and developing into very fast skaters. This is true both of the boys and girls.

The members of the starting teams ranged up to 45 years for the "boys," and one of the "girls" was over 60 years of age. She carried on for several hundred miles.

Injuries and exhaustion have caused the withdrawal of several contestants. The worst injury to date happened during a jam at about the 950 mile mark. Joe Kleats, or team No. 24, fell through the rail and suffered a severe scalp wound. After spending the night in the hospital, he was back on the floor the following day at starting time. The accident occurred just a few minutes before closing time, so that Joe's partner was able to carry on and keep the team from being disqualified.

Among the best known contestants entered, all of whom are still in the running, are, girls, Ivy King, "Speedy" Cooper, Clara Scholl and Clarice Martin. Boys, Joe Laury, Wes Aronson, Joe Kleats and Joie Ray. The latter is the well-known long distance runner, member of several Olympic Teams and holder of many records on the track.

## A SPECTATOR'S VIEW

Though lacking the extreme danger and gruesome tragedies so often occurring in horse, cycle and auto racing, there is still sufficient danger to the skaters—when, by the extreme exertion of their own individual effort they endeavor to out-do each other—to give the spectators an intense thrill. The bruises acquired by everyone of the participants in their sprints and spills will attest that this is not merely a test of physical endurance like the insipid

walking or dancing contest, but is also a test of skill and courage, the ability to "take it," however painful the bruises and hard luck which every contestant has experienced more or less.

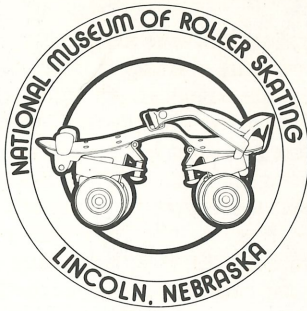
Anyone who has watched the skaters rounding the banked track to come to the flat side track can see that it requires great skill in speeding to avoid a dangerous fall—even the most skillful have had bad spills on this most difficult track.

The outcome of this contest is not a cut-and-dried affair, for, as the very efficient announcer of this contest has remarked, "anything can happen"—a

bad fall may disqualify the best skater.

At the opening of this contest it appeared easy to pick the winning team, but now, after about four weeks of their skating, I find it impossible, and I would not be surprised if the outcome would still be uncertain up to the last hour or the last few miles.

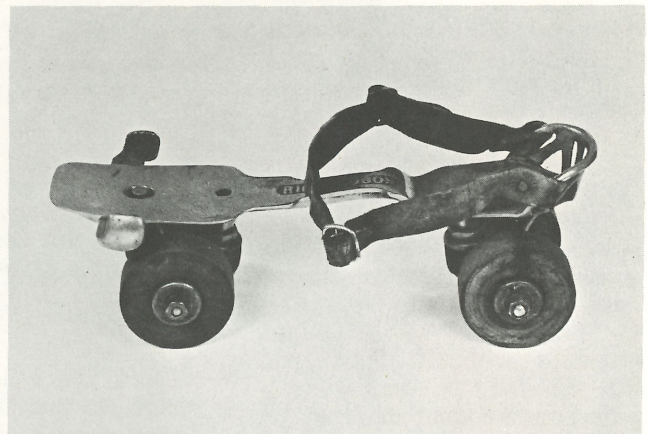
I am particularly impressed by the apparent good nature of the skaters and their sportsmanship. Whenever one of their number is injured or dazed after a fall they do not take the advantage of speeding to gain a lap or two, but slow up to give the injured time to recover.—*W. F. Becker.*



## The First Fifty Years: American Roller Skates 1860 - 1910

A catalogue of the antique roller skates on display in the museum, this pictorial history traces the development of American roller skating from its origins through the Nineteenth Century. The catalogue contains over 50 photographs of unique and unusual skates which document the technological advances that laid the foundation for modern roller skating.

The museum is offering this publication for sale at \$6.00 each. Honorary members of the museum may purchase copies of the book at the reduced rate of \$5.00. You may use the form below to become an honorary member of the museum, and purchase the catalogue at the members' price.



The first and only book of its kind, this pictorial catalogue is lavishly illustrated, and is sure to become a collector's item in the future. Don't delay, order your copy today.

Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ copies of THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS at \$6.00 each (\$5.00 for honorary members of the museum.)

Please enroll me as an honorary member of the museum at the following level:

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|--|------------|
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Benefits of membership include the museum pin, membership card, certificate of recognition, reduced rates on museum publications, and the quarterly historical newsletter.

Please make all checks payable to National Museum of Roller Skating.

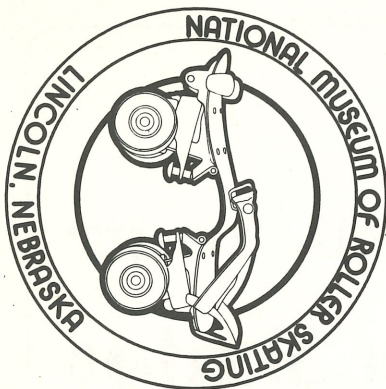
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*"THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS: American Roller Skates 1860-1910"*

The first book to be published by the museum, this pictorial history documents the many odd and unusual roller skates of that era on exhibit in the museum. The catalogue is available to honorary members of the museum at a reduced price.

*TWO & THREE WHEEL ROLLER SKATES, PART II*

The conclusion of the article begun in the September issue of the newsletter looks into different models of 2 wheelers.

*THE TRANSCONTINENTAL ROLLER DERBY*

Unlike the events staged in the late 50's and the 60's for television, the Roller Derby began in 1935 as a truly competitive sport, with skaters whose names were linked to championship level speed skating.

*RINK HOCKEY*

A look at a 1909 English match, and the team of the Wayne Rink in Detroit, Michigan.

*VAUDVILLIANS*

Fielding & Carlos, the team that reigned supreme in the circuits toured theatres from 1908 through the "Roaring Twenties".