

## Historical Roller Skating

# OVERVIEW

National Museum of Roller Skating  
4730 South Street  
P.O. Box 6579  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68506-0579  
Phone 402-483-7551

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### MUSEUM RE-OPENS IN GRAND STYLE

The National Museum of Roller Skating re-opened its doors April 5, 1991, with a special VIP showing of the new exhibit hall, and new collections. The museum officially closed its doors to the public at the old location, 7700 "A" Street last October. The collections, display cases, and archives were moved the end of December to the museum's new home in the building purchased and renovated by the U.S. Amateur Confederation of Roller Skating at 4730 South Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Making the weekend truly special was the visit by the Plimpton family. Miss Elizabeth Plimpton was our honored guest, along with her brother, Robert Hall Plimpton, and his two daughters, Edie Plimpton Reynolds, and Jan Plimpton, and his two grandchildren, William and Katie Reynolds.

Mike Brooslin, former Director of the museum who is now with the Basketball Hall of Fame, was also present for the re-opening.



**Miss Elizabeth Plimpton and William Reynolds.**

Because of the larger exhibition area, sixteen new display cases have been added. These cases were given to the museum by USAC/RS. The "old" display cases were given to the museum by the RSA. The museum is extremely grateful to these two organizations for their continued support of our operations.

The new exhibit hall is a wonderful space with 40 exhibit cases filled with nearly 1200 different models of roller skates. (The museum began 10 years ago, with only 16 pairs of skates.) The cases are highlighted with graphic documentation of the history of the skate as invention; as well as a history of the sport and the people involved in it, along with roller skating as entertainment, recreation, and an integral part of American life.

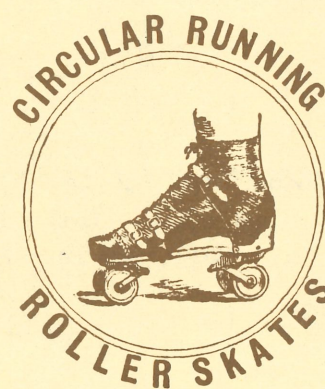
The move and its planning stages have taken a number of months of intensive work, but the results are definitely worth it. Visitors to the museum will be astounded at the depth of the collection. The museum is an exciting, interesting place, with a very complex story to tell. The honorary membership of the museum should be very proud of what their support has provided and preserved. We hope that each and every one of you will be able to visit it and see what your support has done for roller skating.

## MUSEUM ACQUIRES PLIMPTON, LUDASCHER COLLECTIONS

The collections of the National Museum of Roller Skating took a giant leap with the acquisition of the James Leonard Plimpton collection of skates, artifacts and historical papers. Miss Elizabeth Plimpton of Newton Center, Massachusetts made the generous gift to the museum on September 25, 1990. Miss Plimpton's grandfather, James Leonard Plimpton, is the acknowledged father of modern roller skating. His invention of the circular running skate in 1863 enabled skaters to steer the roller skate by leaning the body to the right or left--a feat that was impossible on the versions of in-line skates that preceded Plimpton's invention.

The skate was so successful and roller skating became so popular that many inventors of the 1870s immediately developed guidable skates of their own. Plimpton sued these manufacturers for patent infringement and won his suits—thus preventing their continued manufacture.

The skates acquired in the Plimpton collection include many of these "infringers" both American and English, and many of them bear Plimpton's own labels as to manufacturer and patent date.



In addition to the skates, the museum acquired a wonderful resource for its archives, the Plimpton Papers. A large portion of the papers includes the patent infringement suit papers, both from the United States and English Courts.

The gift also included papers and artifacts of Henry Richardson Plimpton, Miss Plimpton's father, and son of James Leonard. Henry Richardson Plimpton invented a ball-bearing device for wooden wheels.

This collection is an outstanding resource for the museum, filling in many of the "missing pieces." The papers have already proven invaluable as we have been able to identify skates we had in the collection previously, and identify skates we would like to acquire.

We feel extremely fortunate in being chosen as the proper place for these wonderful treasures and we wish to thank Miss Plimpton for her most generous and deeply appreciated gift.

Through generous donations by Mr. & Mrs. Gordon Van Roekel, Mr. & Mrs. Charles Wahlig, Mr. & Mrs. Bert Anselmi, Mr. Robert Bollinger, Nazzaro Enterprises, and Sure-Grip International Company, the museum was able to acquire much of the W.C. Ludascher Collection. This diverse collection represents years of acquisition by Mr. Ludascher of Eddington, Pennsylvania. The collection consists of many rare and unique skates, among them, the Petibled skate, the first patented roller skate dating from 1819.



*Robert Hall Plimpton and Mr. Robert Bollinger*

Also included is a Ritter Road Skate, a unique contraption that looks like a small bicycle that dates from 1897. The collection also included an original Cheret lithograph from 1876, and two beautiful oil paintings depicting 19th century roller skating. Many, many photographs, graphics, cartoons, advertisements, and magazine covers were also part of this collection. The Ludascher Collection complements the Plimpton Collection—enabling the museum to document the skate as invention, and roller skating's total integration with American life. The museum and its Board of Trustees are grateful to these wonderful Friends for bringing this unique and outstanding collection to the museum.



*William Reynolds stands before a portrait of his Great-great Grandfather, James Leonard Plimpton.*

## MUSEUM INITIATES NEW MEMORIAL PROGRAM

The Board of Trustees has inaugurated a new memorial program here at the National Museum of Roller Skating. The program involves memorial plaques being installed in the museum to honor individuals whose lives were dedicated to roller skating.

The first memorial plaque established at the museum is dedicated to Frank Datillio in loving memory by the A.R.O. Proceeds from this program will be used to further the activities of the museum. For more information about this program, please contact the museum's director and curator.

### NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ROLLER SKATING BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

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Historical Roller Skating Overview is the newsletter of the National Museum of Roller Skating. It is available only through honorary membership in the museum. Minimum annual contribution is \$15.00. All inquiries, comments should be sent to the Museum Director, P. O. Box 6579, Lincoln, NE 68506.

## MUSEUM SEEKING DONATIONS FOR NEW VIDEO

The museum wants to produce a special video highlighting the collections of the museum and telling the story of the history of roller skating. Funds are needed to do this. Frank Cernik, Omaha, Nebraska, has kicked-off this drive with a generous donation. If you would like to be part of seeing this happen, please send in a check to the museum specifying that the money is to be used for this project. We are currently getting bids on how much it would cost to have this video professionally produced. Wouldn't it be nice to have our own video tape similar to the wonderful "Civil War" series recently shown on PBS? This tape could be used by libraries, schools, rinks, clubs, anyone interested in skating and in the history of the sport.

## LET'S GO ON A TREASURE HUNT!

Know of any unusual or rare skates? The museum is looking for additions to its collections. A Treasure Hunt is being undertaken to find unique skates for the museum's collections. This hunt begins with this announcement and will continue until May 1, 1992. A special plaque will be given to the individual who finds and donates the most unique or rare roller skate.

All donors will receive honorary membership in the museum for a year, and receive a museum patch or the Museum's book, *The First Fifty Years*.

Watch out for those old skates at garage sales, flea markets, and antique shops and shows!

## MUSEUM WISH LIST

To help you on your treasure hunt, the museum would love to acquire any of the following:



The Victor Club Skate, manufactured by the Victor Skate Works, Richmond, Indiana, circa 1880s. This skate had a steel plate with a molded arch, adjustable toe clamps and leather heel straps.



The Banner Skate, manufactured by the Banner Skate Works, Richmond, Indiana was very similar to the Victor Club Skate but a cheaper model.



The Raymond Skate, manufactured in Boston, MA, came on the market in the 1880s shortly after Plimpton's patents expired. It was adjustable with toe and wooden wheels.



The New Era Skate Company produced a skate in 1884 that had a patented safety cap over the wheels. It was produced by F. P. Baker & Company of Boston.



The Brighton Skate, patented by Malcolmson, was one of the famous skates that Plimpton sued for patent infringement in the 1870s. It is an English skate, as is Eldridge's patent Reversible Wheel Rink Skate, circa 1870s.

There are a number of others out there, as the Penney Parlor Skate that would immensely add to the museum's documentation of the development of the roller skate. What can you find?

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We thank you all so very much! Because of you we are able to provide a great service to the skating community and to the general public. Much of the very fragile history of roller skating has been preserved for your enjoyment and for the education and pleasure of generations to come. THANK YOU!

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