



Historical Roller Skating

OVERVIEW

Issue No. 16

December 1985

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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.

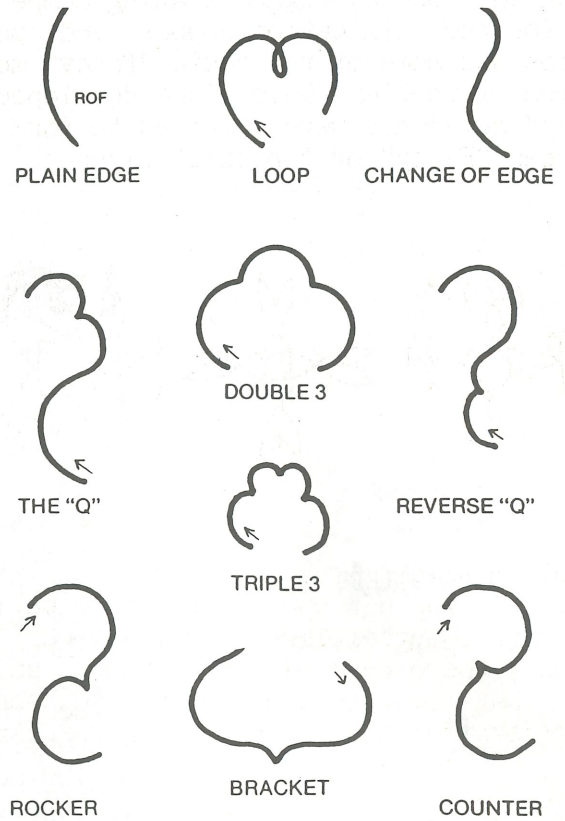
The end of another year is upon us, and with it, the season for giving. On behalf of the Museum Board of Trustees, I would like to thank all our honorary members who have given generously to support the museum's activities in the past year. Through your contributions, the museum has been able to grow, both in terms of our collections, and in how those collections items are used to educate the public about the history of our sport and industry. The collections now contain approximately 15,000 objects, 11,000 photographs and 200 feet of shelves stocked with 600 books and countless magazines and scrapbooks. In the past year over 6,000 visitors have seen the museum, including many school groups, and a further 12,000 people have learned about the history of roller skating through the travelling exhibits which were displayed at the different State and Regional Championships. Research with collections, in addition to providing stories for this newsletter, has generated articles on the history of roller skating in the Chicago Tribune, Omni Magazine, and for the CBS Network along with several syndicated television shows. An article in Smithsonian Magazine is scheduled for next Spring. All of this was made possible by your support. We would like to publically acknowledge and thank all of our honorary members listed in this newsletter for your assistance, and wish everyone a happy holiday season and New Year.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank those of you who took the time to drop me a letter either nominating, or in support of, an individual or team eligible for election to the USAC/RS Amateur Athletes Roller Skating Hall of Fame. All your letters shall be included in the information files presented to the Hall of Fame Committee in January. The three individuals or teams selected for induction into the Hall of Fame in 1986 will be announced in the March newsletter.

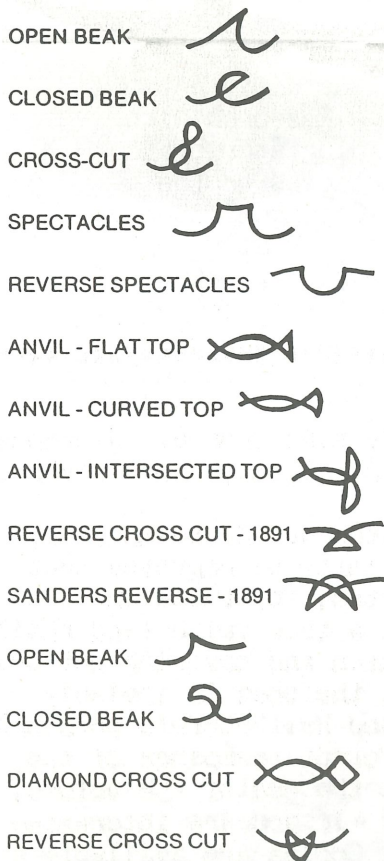
THE ORIGINS OF FIGURE SKATING - PART II

During the 1840's, two Englishmen, Mr. H. E. Vandervell and Mr. Maxwell Witham, began a project to notate all possible figures using the basic movements of that time: the edge, three, que and loop, in various combinations. During the Winter of 1860-1861, Vandervell was experimenting with a one foot turn, from inside forward to inside back. He named this move the "rocking turn" because of the rocking motion created during execution of the movement. Actually, we know Vandervell's turn now as the modern "counter" turn.

In the years between 1878 and 1881, two students from Oxford University, Mr. Monier-Williams and Mr. Pidgeon, were practicing Vandervell's rocking turn in the reverse rotation. Pidgeon called this movement the "Three Quarter Turn." Later, this was renamed the "reverse rocking turn," and Vandervell's original movement became known as the "counter rocking turn." In time, these names have been shortened, and have continued in use, the modern terminology being "rocker" and "counter" turns.



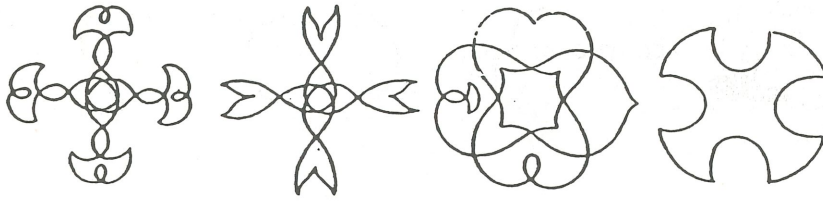
Above: The "Basic" plain figures which were developed into the modern school of figures from 1880 to 1910. Left: Basic Beaks, Cross-cuts and Anvils, used in combinations for fancy figure competitions, 1880-1910.



The "Bracket" turn was named for the shape of the figure that was traced on the skating surface (probably ice). This turn was actually invented on roller skates by Maxwell Witham sometime during the late 1850's. There is some evidence that the "Bracket" was not done on ice until twenty years later (when it acquired its name) after Witham had published a diagram of the turn along with several others in 1880.

In 1865, the American Ballet Master and ice skating champion Jackson Haines took the European skating scene by storm. His dashing style and graceful movements became the basis for modern International Style figure skating. Jackson Haines's students in Europe were the leaders in developing both figure and free style roller skating competitions, and in the organization of the first World Figure Skating Championships during the 1880's. Haines was an excellent roller skater and enjoyed performing on both ice and on rollers. He became a stage star using roller skates (in imitation of ice skates) in the opera "Le Profete" by Jacques Meyerbeer. Though better known for his free style skating, Haines was a stickler for precise figures. He believed that a skater must first master the art of figure skating before, and as a needed prerequisite for, a free skating routine.

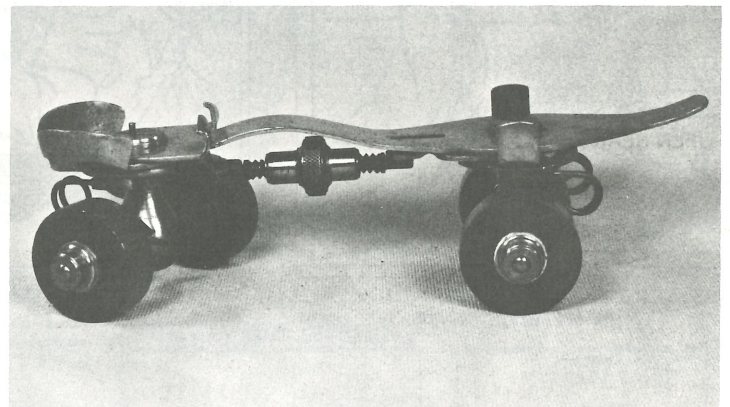
During the 1880's, figure skating competitions were conducted with basic, or school figures used for the elimination rounds, and special "fancy" figures used in the finals. The school figures and some of the basic "fancy" movements are shown opposite. The basic or school figures of that era have since developed into the modern competitive figures. The basic "fancy" movements were combined to form intricate figures. Below are shown a set of European "Fancy" or "Special" figures, used in a 1900 figure skating championship meet.



The fancy figures were never that popular to do on roller skates as on ice skates, as the intent of that era was the picture of the tracings left upon the ice, rather than the execution of the movement. To a large extent, figures were looked upon as an "art" form rather than as a competition. However, figures were indeed important to the developing sport

of roller skating, as the figure competitions were often used for inventing new jumps and spins. It was not unusual for a competitor in the finals of a skating meet to be given the option of doing either a special figure or a free skating exhibition. By the turn of the century, there were 41 basic figures used in competitions by the International Skating Union. Since that time, several turns have been added ("mohawks") in American competitions, however figure skating meets remain much the same as they were in Europe over 80 years ago.

Right: A skate designed exclusively for figure skating by William A. Leggo of Montreal and Francis C. Ireland of Quebec in 1876, and patented May 29, 1877. The springs which press against the axles keep them horizontal and at right angles to the longitudinal axis of the skate so long as the skate is in an upright position. When the skater leans his foot to the right or left, the axle will move in such a manner as to take the skate in that direction (84.46.11, Van Roekel Patent Model Collection; Gift of G.B. Van Roekel).

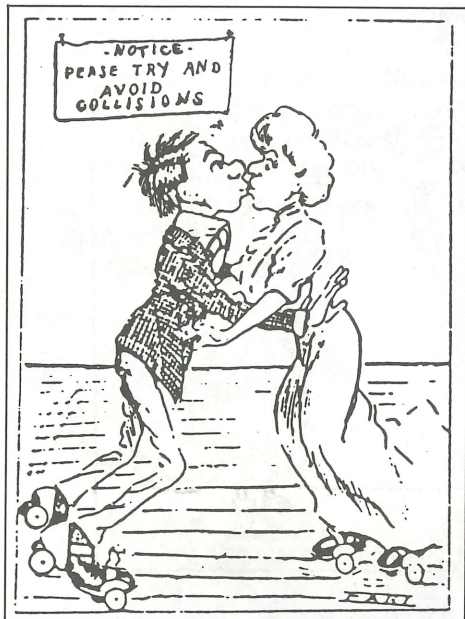


Book Review: *Schaatsen en Schaatsenmakers in de 19e en 20e eeuw*, by A.C. Broere. Rijksmuseum voor Volkskunde, Arnhem, Holland, 1985. 80pp., Black & White illustrations, paper covers.

We recently received a copy of "Schaatsen en Schaatsenmakers" (Skates and Skate-makers), written by the museum's Honorary Member A.C. Broere. Although it is to be regretted that this little volume covers only Dutch ice skates and not roller skates, for those who are interested in the parallel development of ice skates, this book is a true value (and really compliments the museum's "First Fifty Years" book). Written in Dutch and covering not only skates but also skating advertising and the manufacturing process, the book is lavishly illustrated with objects from both the Rijksmuseum's collection, and Mr. Broere's personal collection. Very informative is the section dealing with the different stampings of the various manufacturers. There is an English summary of the text at the end of the volume, and all of the captions to the illustrations are in Dutch and English. If you are interested in ice skating along with rollers, this volume should not be missed. Copies are available at a cost of \$10.00 (including shipping) from the author: A.C. Broere, Dr.Schaepmanstr 5, 6941 CH Didam, HOLLAND.

HUMOROUS ROLLER SKATING

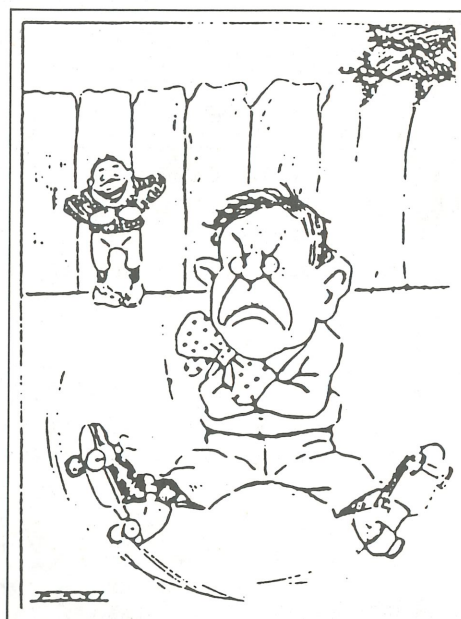
The sport and pastime of roller skating has always gathered quite a bit of attention from the media, and has been poked fun of, from the 1880's to the present day. Much of the exposure the sport and industry has generated in the newspapers was in the form of cartoons and amusing anecdotes, depicting how roller skating was perceived (correctly or incorrectly) at the time. During the 1880's, the famous cartoonist Nash, who worked for the popular "Harpers Weekly" drew several caricatures using roller skating as a theme. This was later picked-up by the artist S. Earl in his "Roller Skating Craze" series (below). One can still occasionally find a roller skating cartoon in today's newspapers, in series such as "Dennis the Menace." The following are but a small selection from the drawings of Nash, Earl and others, along with a humorous short article on the "Roller Skating Craze" of 1883 which originally appeared in the Massachusetts newspaper "Hood's Item."



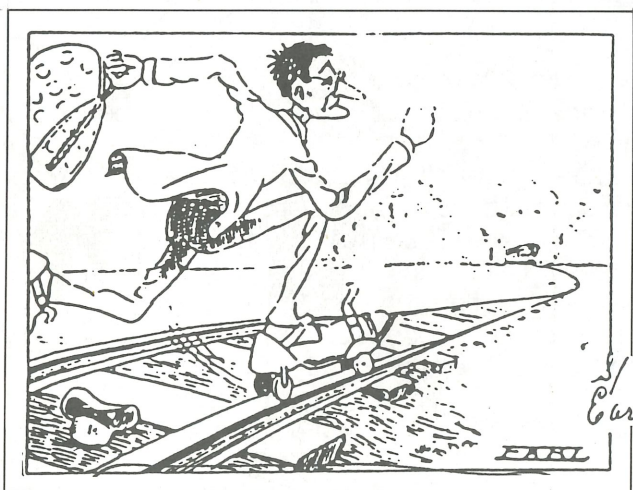
ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN
EVEN WITH EXPERTS



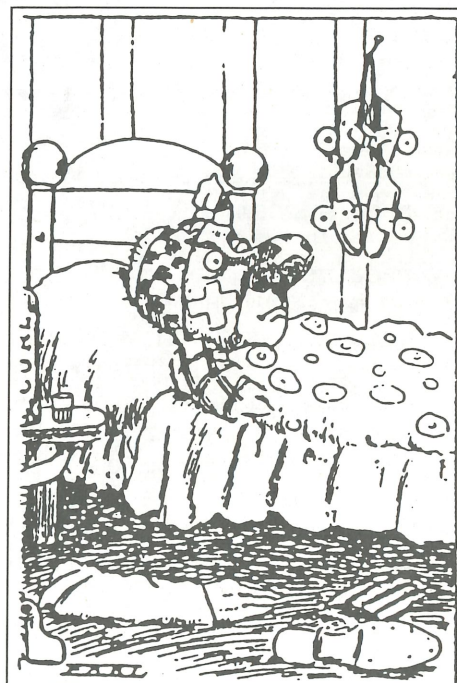
I'LL BE UP AS SOON
AS POSSIBLE



EXCEEDINGLY INCOMPATIBLE
WITH MY DISPOSITION



THERE IS MORE THAN
ONE WAY TO GO



LAI D UP FOR REPAIRS

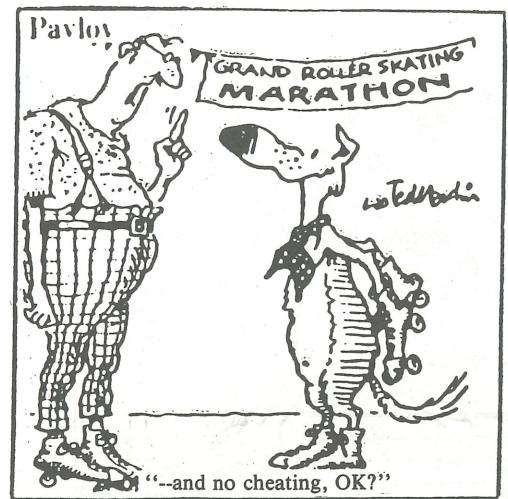


THE ROLLER-SKATE MANIA.

A DRAWING BY THE FAMOUS CARTOONIST, NAST
From *Harper's Weekly*, 1885



YOU JUST CANT SIT AROUND WAITING FOR IT TO SNOW - LET'S GO ROLLER SKATING!



...and no cheating, OK?"

The Roller Skating Craze Back in '83

Here's a newspaper item clipped from the "Hood's Item" of that day which gives some indication of the universal popularity of roller skating back in the 1880's.

Peter Brown left Brockton, Mass., about three years ago, and last week he returned, and just as he was strolling down the street of his native town, he met a farmer by the name of Smith, who was not prosperous when he left, and lived just outside of town. Brown was surprised to see the granger attired in a dress suit, with a silk hat, and a big diamond pin blazing on his shirt front, and he inquired:

"Been to a funeral today?"
"Why bless you, no."
"No? I see you have on your best clothes. Are you farming yet?"
"Farming? Well, I should say not. I am running a roller skating rink down here."
"Where is your son Jim?"
"Oh, he's running a rink in Hartford."
"And your daughter Liz?"
"She's skating under the management of Tim Jones in a Boston rink."

"And your wife?"
"She skipped out with Professor Meechin, an instructor that I hired when I opened the rink."
"Is Reverend Longersman preaching here still?"
"No, he resigned from the ministry and is now a rink instructor."
"Who's preaching in his place?"
"Nobody."
"Nobody? What's the matter?"
"Church turned into a skating rink."
"You don't say!"
"Yes, true as preachin'."
"Where's Bill Beck, the groceryman?"
"He went out of the business a year ago. He's got the ice cream stand at my rink."
"Pshaw! Where's Aunt Sally Bacon and Deacon Schultzer?"
"Why dang it all, they're traveling around visiting rinks doing the old man and old woman act on skates. I tell you they're good."
"Is anybody left in the town who does not skate?"
"Yes."
"Where are they?"
"Up in the cemetery on the hill."

Dennis the Menace



"WILL YA BAKE ONE BISCUIT A HALF HOUR LONGER, MOM?"

A sincere thanks to all of the Museum's Honorary Members for their contributions during the 1984-1985 season. Your support is most appreciated, and has made the Museum a success.

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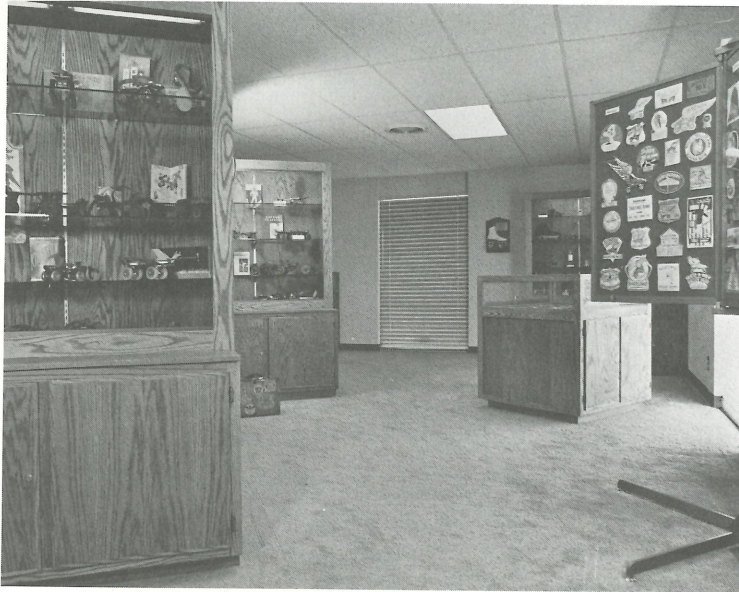
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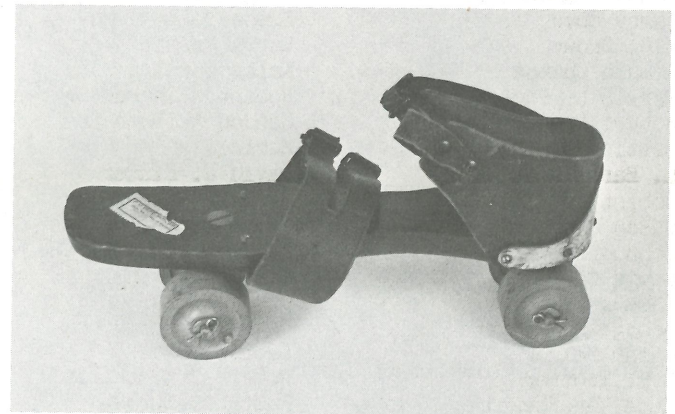


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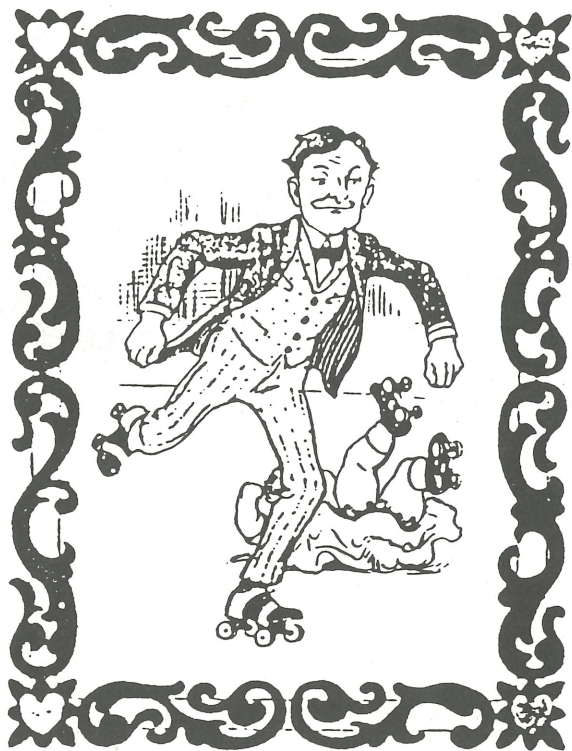
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Coming in March 1986:

The 1986 USAC/RS Amateur Athletes
Roller Skating Hall of Fame Selections

The "Tricycle" roller skate; an idea
from the 1880's

Left: "The Skater," a cartoon
from the turn of the century

THE SKATER

*You think of course, that you can skate,
But you are only second rate.
You sprawl around the rink, and few
Escape a bump or fall from you.*

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