



Rolling Through Time

Official Newsletter of:

The National Museum of Roller Skating

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The National Museum of Roller Skating is a 501(c) 3 non-profit organization located in Lincoln, Nebraska. It is the only dedicated roller skating museum in the world. We are committed to the preservation of the history of roller skating. With over 50 display cases, the museum educates the public on all aspects of roller skating, which dates back to the first patented skate from 1819.

Museum Hours of Operation: Open 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM, Monday-Friday - closed Holidays. Group tours can be scheduled by calling (402) 483-7551, ext. 16

Roller Skating Rink Operators Association (RSROA) – In the Beginning

In 1937 the Arena Gardens Roller Skating Rink in Detroit, Michigan, held the first National Roller Speed Skating Championships, where 17 rink owners formed the RSROA (Roller Skating Rink Operators Association) to promote the roller skating business and sport in America. After the final events of the



competition, operators and managers walked down Woodward Avenue to the Casa Loma Restaurant as guests of Fred Martin, the meet host. Martin, World Professional Speed skater during his youth, wanted to discuss their common problems in promoting the roller skating business of America, regulations



Fred Martin

and protection of roller skating contests for amateurs, and to act as a governing body for the sport. These men believed that if skating was to be a successful sport, it must also be a successful business. A competitive skater must have the best rink facilities, ample practice time, quality skates, and good instructors and coaches, all in addition to physical talent, to become a champion.



Vic Brown

During the meeting, Victor J. Brown, a rink owner and sports promoter from Newark, New Jersey, was elected the President and Fred Martin the Secretary-Treasurer. The group each donated one dollar and Fred Martin took the meager funds back to his office to begin the work. A single drawer in Martin's desk became the first RSROA National Office. With growth of the organization, the RSROA was moved from a rink office desk drawer to an existing office suite on the rink's second floor. Several other locations in Detroit served as headquarters from its inception through 1968, when a depressed economy produced a dramatic downturn in the city.

In the Spring of 1968 the RSA moved its headquarters to Lincoln, Nebraska, seeking a central USA location for aesthetics and operational purposes. A search committee decided on Lincoln, after giving consideration to several other Midwestern cities. Because several of its national championships had previously been held in Lincoln, the Board was familiar with the city and with its leadership. Consequently, the RSROA was presented with some attractive financial inducements that they found impossible to refuse. In 1988 the RSROA began doing business as Roller Skating Associations (RSA).

In 1993 the RSA sold its 10,500 square foot building (which included impressive printing equipment) and moved to Indianapolis, Indiana, where it is currently located.

Early History of Victor J. Brown and Fred Martin – Two of the RSROA Founding Fathers

Fred Martin, from Los Angeles, California, reigned as the professional Speed Champion of the Pacific Coast until 1910. He then went east and skated in a professional meet at



Fred Martin

the Wayne Rink in Detroit. Martin met Joseph Munch, the Northwest Champion (actually the Great Lakes States) and they began training and skating as a team. The pair entered a 24-hour race at the Riverview Rink in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which Martin won. He covered 253 miles and 12 laps setting a new World record. Martin stayed in the Midwest winning many races in Milwaukee and Chicago from 1914 to 1915. Martin then teamed up with Frank Bacon and entered the 24 hour race at the Convention Hall Rink in Washington, D.C. in March 1915. They placed second to the World Champion team of Roland Cioni and Arthur Eglington. Martin and Bacon again placed second to Cioni and Eglington in the 100 Mile American Derby that year.

Fred Martin returned to Milwaukee and became the floor manager of the Riverview Rink. People knew him as a good rink manager, and later managed rinks in Chicago and Michigan. He helped to found the RSROA in 1937 while he was the manager of the Arena Gardens in Detroit.

Victor J. Brown, from Newark, New Jersey - Vic Brown, a former jockey who had transitioned to successful sports promotions, which included night clubs, racetracks, cigarette dispensing machines in New Jersey, and roller skating rinks, exhibited a forceful personality which overshadowed and more than compensated for his short physical stature.

Remembering Newark's Only Jockey: Known as "Buddy" - by Nat Bodian - Newark has had its share of great athletes in virtually every sport, but, insofar as I know, it boasted only one jockey -- known to sports writers of his era as "Buddy."

The jockey, born and reared in Newark, reached his full height of five feet two inches in his pre-teen years and was slight of build.

Because of his size and build friends convinced him that he should become a jockey and he decided to go for it. He broke into the jockey business at Blue Grass Farms in 1912 under the management of John Maddon. He was 15 years old at the time.

He made his track debut that year at the Pimlico track in Baltimore and finished eighth in a field of eight. But he persisted and he went on to compete at all the major tracks in the United States. He also competed in Canada and in Cuba.

Two major happenings highlighted his five-year career as a jockey before entering World War I.

In 1914, in Havana, Cuba, he was in a race involving a spill that ended in disaster. One of five riders involved, a jockey named Rice (first name unknown) was killed. "Buddy" as he was known by the sports writers of the day, was knocked unconscious for 72 hours and suffered a skull fracture.

Two of the other three riders in the spill, also injured, were Roscoe Troxler, who was a winner of the 1913 Belmont Stakes, the oldest horse event in America (dating back to 1867), and Frank Robinson, who would recover and win the Belmont Stakes four years later. The other injured jockey was Larry Lyke.

The second major happening in Buddy's career as a jockey was his participation in the 1916 running of the Kentucky Derby, a highly celebrated event inaugurated at Churchill Downs in Louisville in 1875. He finished fifth on a horse named Good-Bye.

Although Buddy never finished in the big money as a jockey, he competed at all the major tracks including Havre De Gras and Empire. The Newark jockey's career ended with his entry into the Army in World War I, but it did not end his association with horses. He served in the Army as a Cavalry instructor.

Identity Revealed -The Newark jockey that the newspapers called "Buddy" was none other than Victor J. "Buddy" Brown who would later help make Newark a boxing mecca for the famous and not-so-famous by sponsoring boxing matches at Newark's Dreamland Park, which he owned.

In 1941, he built, owned and managed the New Dreamland Arena Skating Rink at 900 Frelinghuysen Avenue at Virginia Street at the Newark-Elizabeth city line. (End of Article by Nat Bodian)

...and the rest...is (roller skating) history!

A more complete history of the RSROA (RSA) and its founders can be obtained through purchase of "Our Story, Roller Skating Association International", "Titans and Heroes of American Roller Skating" by George Pickard and "The History of Roller Skating" by James Turner in collaboration with Michael Zaidman - all are available for purchase on the Museum's website.

More on the Universal Roller Skating Sticker Exchange - Most rinks offered skates and accessories for sale, rather than for rent at their skate shops. Owning your own roller skates meant you were just one step away from a snazzy metal skate case in which to carry them.

Benefactor Museum Members (\$500+)

Dan & Kim Brown	Flint	MI
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Roller Skating Association	Indianapolis	IN
USA Roller Sports	Lincoln	NE
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Gary Englund	Burlington	WA
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National Skate Distributors	Tacoma	WA
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Sin City Skates	San Diego	CA
Skagit Skate	Burlington	WA
Skate World West	Billings	MT
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