



## Rolling Through Time

By James Vannurden, Director

Official Newsletter of:

**National Museum of Roller Skating**

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### Who We Are

The National Museum of Roller Skating is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization located in Lincoln, Nebraska and 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.

### Curator's Corner

#### Derby Donation



This men's roller derby uniform was recently donated to the museum by David Jones on behalf of skater Evan Jones who recently passed away. The jersey constitutes the museum's first male roller derby uniform in our collection. Using the number 68, Jones went by the roller derby name of "Batwing." Special thanks to the Jones family on their donation.

### Museum Holiday Hours

#### Thanksgiving



For the Thanksgiving holiday the museum will be closed Thursday, November 26 and Friday, November 27.

#### Christmas



While the Christmas holiday hours are not quite set yet, the museum will be closed Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

#### New and Renewing Members

Enid Busser  
Nadine Meis  
Sin City Skates  
Stephanie Creswell

## Featured Story

### The Development of the Toe Stop

The following prose came from the December 1983 issue of the museum newsletter, written by then director Michael Brooslin:

*The first documented toe stop appeared in the late 1880s. The forerunner of the present day toe stop was part of a parlour skate patented by Cyrus W. Saladee on May 16, 1876.*



Saladee Skate, 1876

*The next step in toe stop development was the invention of an adjustable length stop, incorporated in a skate designed by Dominucus Brix in 1884.*

*A few years later, J.A. Yarger invented a skate with "brakes." This model, patented on January 5, 1886, had a thumbscrew to adjust the length of the stop, which was made of molded rubber.*

*Nothing more of toe stops is heard of until 1908. In that year, a rather unique skate with stops at both the heel and toe was patented by T.M. Ferguson on September 9. In the drawing of this skate, the stops appear to be an additional set of wheels mounted to the trucks.*

*Also in 1908, a stop appeared which was quite similar to modern toe stops in design. John Hohenadel of Philadelphia patented a skate on July 28 which utilized a rubber cushion attached to the plate at the toe.*



Toe Stops

*None of these early inventions caught on with the major skating manufacturers however, and most skaters were left to make their own toe stops.*

*Most skates of the 1930s and early 1940s lacked toe stops- something which most of us today take for granted. It was standard procedure in those days for speed skaters to push off the start line on the flat of their skates, in a "duck walk" position. There was widespread feeling among the speed skaters that a toe stop was a hindrance rather than a help. Artistic skaters however were of a different opinion.*

*As freestyle roller skating became more sophisticated, the desire for toe stops grew. The lutz, flip and mapes jumps required the use of a toe stop to duplicate the action of the rake of an ice skate. Early freestyle skaters executed jumps by tapping the side of the skate wheel when taking off. Only the most expert of skaters could do this. During 1939, Walter Stakosa of Detroit's Arena Gardens won the National Men's title with his performance of single mapes and flip jumps on skates which did not have toe stops.*



Walter Stakosa practicing

*During the early years of competitive skating, individuals began to improvise "rakes" for their roller skates. Bob Ryan became the first champion to use them, when in 1941 he won the Senior Men's Figure & Free Skating title at Nationals. His stop was the most widely used of its time- a rubber shoe heel nailed to the sole of his boot at the toe. Because the Figure and Free Skating events were a combined title (unlike today's separate events), the toe stops were used only during the freestyle, and removed for the figure competition.*

*Freestyle skaters and their instructors saw in the toe stop a way to bring the sport of roller skating up to the level of expertise shown by ice skaters.*

*As the number of "do-it-yourself" toe stops increased however, so did the rink operators opposition to them. This was because it was not uncommon for the rubber heels to break off or wear down, exposing the nails or*



bolts, sometimes resulting in gouging or damage to the hardwood skating surfaces. Throughout the early and mid-1940s, the operators' fear of floor damage was the basis for a major controversy in roller skating.

This controversy came to head in 1947 when the United States Federation of Amateur Roller Skaters ruled that toe stops would not be allowed during that year's competitions. This action resulted in a storm of protest from both skaters and teachers, with several of the professionals being thrown out of that organization due to their disagreement with the Board's decision. In December however, the Board reconsidered, rescinded the ban on toe stops and reinstated the professionals.

This controversy might still be raging today if not for the efforts of one man. The single most important person in the development of the modern toe stop was Eli Fackler, an engineer by profession who was also the coach of Delores Molla, a top Senior division skater.

For her use, he invented a number of different models of toe stops. His first design was a flat horseshoe shaped aluminum plate which fit around the front hanger of the Snyder skate. It had a rubber stop which screwed into this bracket. Unfortunately, the plate had a tendency to break. Fackler solved this by gradually building up the front of the bracket where the stress was the greatest. Eventually, he did away with the horseshoe mounting bracket, and in late 1947 began casting a skate plate which had an extension to the front hanger into which the bolt with the rubber stop could be screwed.

Until the 1950s, toe stops were still a rarity. Due to Eli Fackler, commercial toe stops began to be manufactured, sold as optional equipment at an extra cost. But as more and more skaters desired toe stops, the manufacturers made it a standard feature, with most companies following Fackler's lead in casting it as part of the front hanger or plate.



Museum Display on Toe Stops

## Rink Sticker Collection

The museum has an extensive collection of roller skating rink stickers. Many skating rinks used to produce stickers as both an advertisement and fun way to for skaters to interact with one another, comparing the different location in which they skated. These were even traded as collectibles both informally and formally, under the Universal Roller Skating Sticker Exchange founded in 1948. Each newsletter, we will feature different rink stickers. Here are a few examples of the numerous stickers in the collection and on display at the National Museum of Roller Skating.



Thanks for supporting the museum!



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