



Historical Roller Skating

# OVERVIEW

National Museum of Roller Skating  
4730 South Street  
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Lincoln, Nebraska 68506-0579  
Phone 402-483-7551

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A Publication of the National Museum of Roller Skating

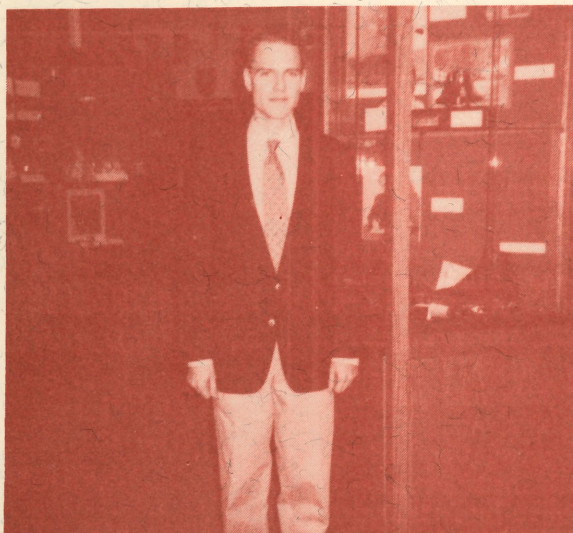
Issue No. 35



From the W.C. Ludascher Collection.

## Curator's Corner

I am pleased to introduce myself as the new director and curator for the National Museum of Roller Skating. These first few weeks have been exciting and somewhat hectic with the large amount of visitors who came through the museum due to North Central Regionals. I enjoyed meeting and talking with many roller skating enthusiasts who stopped by. I want to thank them especially for making me feel so welcome.



I also want to thank the members of the museum for their patience. I know that it has been several months since the "Overview" has been published. I set that as one of my top priorities when I took over in mid-June. I found several letters on my desk inquiring as to its status. Hereafter the newsletter will be a bi-monthly publication. I want to make sure that I stay in close contact with you.

The next few months will be a time of transition and learning for the museum and myself. I encourage you to get in touch with me if you have any comments or questions. Your support has been necessary in the past to make the museum a success. It will continue to be important in the future.

The museum is a wonderful repository for roller skating memorabilia but more importantly it documents the sport we all love. I would urge each of you to consider donating or loaning anything you have that could be of historical importance to roller skating. Give the museum a chance to show it off and let other enthusiasts share in the joy the sport has given you.

Finally, my aim with the newsletter is to keep you informed of what is going on in the museum community and to share with you,

through articles and photos, the interesting history of roller skating. Highlighted in this issue is Levant M. Richardson's contribution to the sport. If you have an interest in a certain area please feel free to suggest it as a future topic for the "Overview."

I am also including a section on some very special donations made to the museum. If you recently donated or made a contribution

to the museum and your name is not mentioned please do not take it personally. As I mentioned before the museum is going through a transition and I am doing my best to organize the stacks of material that were waiting for me when I took over. Rest assured your donation will be duly noted.

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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.

# L. M. Richardson

It is he who should have the credit of starting the present craze and public interest in roller skating. Mr. Richardson president of the Richardson Ball-Bearing Skate Company has been identified with roller skating in all its phases since 1881, when he opened and operated the exposition building at Milwaukee, Wis., as a roller rink. His equipment consisted of plain bearing "Muncie" skates manufactured by Thad Neeley of Muncie, Ind. After having successfully introduced roller skating in Milwaukee, he operated a rink at Janesville, Wis., and Freeport, Ill., coming to Chicago in 1883, and became associated with the John Wilkinson Co., a large sporting goods house, as manager of their roller and bicycle department. In the fall of 1883 the Casino Rink at Twenty-fourth and State Streets, built and operated by A. G. Spalding & Bros., was opened; also a large rink at Curtis and Washington Streets, which was erected and operated by Willoughby, Hill & Co. The attendance at both of these rinks on the opening nights exceeded 5,000 people, and Mr. and Mrs. Richardson were the attraction in exhibition fancy combination skating. He is credited with having put the first steel ball into a skate, on which a United States Patent was issued to him Dec. 9, 1884. During several years following the skating craze which prevailed in the 80's he was identified with the bicycle business as manager of the Monarch Cycle Company, severing his connection with that organization in 1898, when he organized the Richardson Ball-Bearing Skate Co., at which time he began the manufacture of "Richardson" skates, which have since become famous throughout the world. In 1902 he opened the Chicago Coliseum as a skating rink with an attendance of over 7,000 people on the opening night, which at that time was a very speculative undertaking, as there had been no roller skating during the fifteen years previous, and the daily rental for the building was \$150 and the total operating expenses averaged over \$250 per day.



However, the expense was justified, as the attendance was exceedingly large. This was the beginning of what has since become a very popular sport throughout the world. Several of the largest and most successful rinks in America and England have been operated under the supervision of Mr. Richardson, including the Chicago coliseum, Music Hall, Cincinnati; Mechanics' Pavilion, San Francisco; Manhattan Rink, Denver; Sheffield and New Brighton, England, and Havana, Cuba. Mr. Richardson is a New Yorker by birth, but a Westerner by virtue of long residence, having lived in Chicago for thirty-three years. He was born in Jephson County, New York, in 1853.

*(Taken from  
Skaters History  
on Ice and  
Roller Skating  
Chicago,  
1916.)*

**HARLEY DAVIDSON**  
World's  
International Champion  
Speed Skater

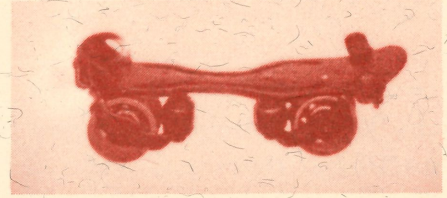
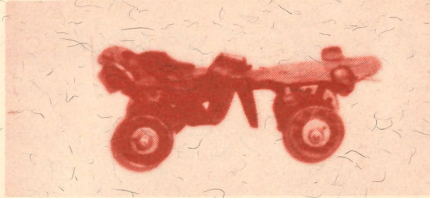
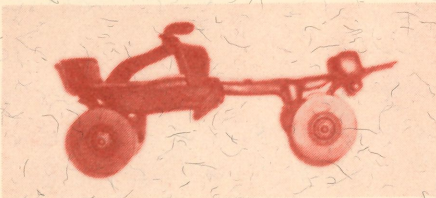


**WORLD'S RECORDS**  
Held by Harley Davidson, all of which  
were made on Richardson's Skates:

1 mile (banked track)	2 min. 37 sec.
2 " " "	5 " 25 " "
1 " (flat track)	2 " 42 " "
2 " " "	5 " 40 " "
3 " " "	8 " 44 " "
4 " " "	11 " 26 " "
5 " " "	14 " 15 " "
10 " " "	31 " 26 " "

See Read Prof. Davidson's testimonial on page 35.

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Above, from left: Richardson skates circa 1900-1905, gift of Mr. Earl Brainard; Richardson skates with aluminum wheels from 1908 (with the exception of the aluminum wheels--these skates are essentially the same as the 1884 model), gift of Alfred W. Kish; Richardson skates patented September 1905, gift of Alfred W. Kish.

## RICHARDSON BALL BEARING ROLLER SKATES



Style No.		Price Per Pair
500.	Maple Roller, size 2x1 1/4 inches.....	\$8.50
502.	Fibre Rollers, size 2 1/8 x 7/8 inches.....	6.15
504.	Steel Rollers, size 2x3/4 inches.....	5.75
505.	Aluminum Rollers, size 2x3/4 inches.....	8.50
506.	Aluminum Rollers, size 2 1/4 x 3/4 inches.....	8.64
507.	Aluminum (D'Vorak) Rollers, size 1 3/4 x 3/4 inches.....	8.90
508.	Aluminum (Kennedy) Rollers, size 1 1/4 x 1 inches.....	9.25

Made only in sizes 5 to 8.

Full nickel finish, wide steel carriers, specially designed cones, hardened and hand polished.

## RICHARDSON RACING SKATES

Have Held All World's Records Since 1885

Always the Best—Now Better—As Carefully Made as a Watch

They embody all of the most essential features which we have introduced in connection with the manufacture of our racing skates during the past fifty years, including one piece steel bushings, long neck cones, wide tread roller carriers, chrome nickel steel axles (full thread), and extra-quality red rubbers.

All parts are produced from the finest material obtainable and accurately machined.

Bushings and Cones are hand polished after hardening, which eliminates all tool marks and makes

the bearing surfaces as smooth as a mirror.

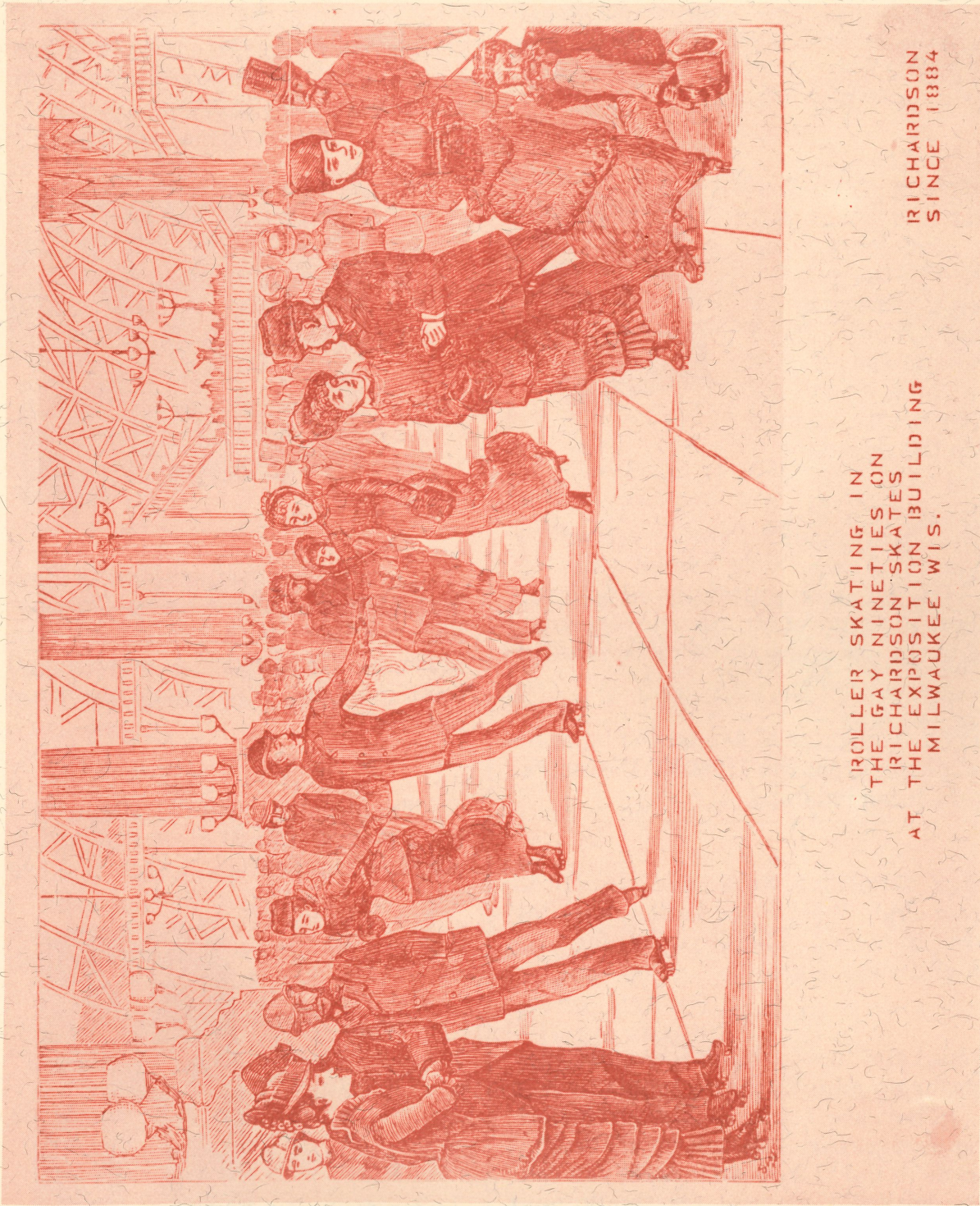
The foot plate is made from the finest quality of saw steel, and the rollers are produced from the best hard maple obtainable and our method of securing bushings in rollers eliminates the possibility of their coming loose.

We put the first steel ball into a skate

roller in 1884, and the first world's record made on ball bearing rollers was made on the Richardson, by K. A. Skinner, of Boston, Mass., June 17, 1885.

All world's records held by Harley Davidson, J. A. Snowden, K. A. Skinner, Frank Delmont, Fred Martin, Frank Bryant, Raymond Kelly, Arthur Eglington and Rollie Birkhimer were made on Richardson Skates and they are used and endorsed by all the great skaters throughout the world.

The First Best Skate—The Best Skate Today



ROLLER SKATING IN  
THE GAY NINETIES ON  
RICHARDSON SKATES  
AT THE EXPOSITION BUILDING  
MILWAUKEE WIS.

RICHARDSON  
SINCE 1884

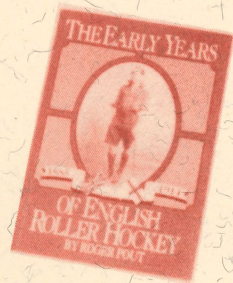
From the W.C. Ludascher Collection

# Museum Notes

## English Roller Hockey Book Published

Congratulations are in order for Roger Pout who recently published his book The Early Years of English Roller Hockey: 1885-1914.

The book is a fine account of the beginnings of the game and would be a worthy read for anyone interested in the subject. Included is a chapter on "American Roller Polo" which might also be of interest. Thanks also to the author for the donation of a copy to the museum.



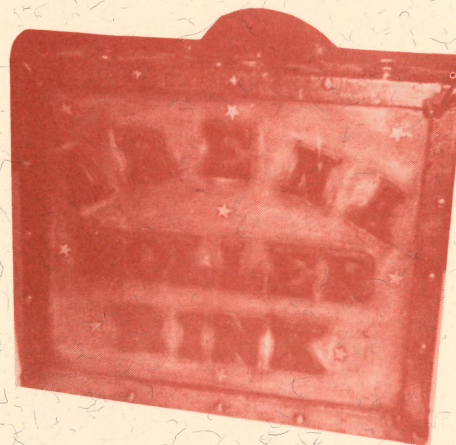
Seth S. Scott made a donation in memory of Kenneth Sherman who passed away recently. The Museum gratefully accepts Mr. Scott's gift in honor of Mr. Sherman's contributions to the art and sport of roller skating.

Terry J. Scroggins of Arena Photography donated photos from the 1992 North Central Regional Championships.

Other donations were made by: Brad Brandner, Craig Weeks, Joe Trolley, and Ray and Doris Rendfrey. Thank you all for your support of the museum.

I would also like to thank Ray and Peggy Hankins for stopping by the museum this past month. They are celebrating their fiftieth wedding anniversary and will be visiting all 50 capitals in the U.S. to raise money in conjunction with McDonald's for the Ronald McDonald House. Ray and Peggy met in a skating rink and Ray performed during the 1940's. Their visit made my day.

A belated acknowledgement goes out to Charley Schroer for his donation of this wonderful wood skate case, some Roscoe toe stops, and a pair of Chicago clamp on skates with a quick release in the heel.



For all of you Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle fans (I know you're out there!) check out the Summer issue of the TMNT magazine. The Museum is featured in a section entitled museum madness. A pair of vaudeville skates is pictured.

Thanks also to Kim McDonnell for donating a pair of stained glass windows from the old RSROA office.



## PATRON MEMORIAL PLAQUE ESTABLISHED

A Patron Memorial Plaque has been established at the National Museum of Roller Skating. This handsome oak plaque has space for 48 individuals who have contributed to roller skating. Friends and family can donate a one-time fee of \$250 to the museum to have an individual's name placed on the memorial which will be permanently displayed. In addition to the name, the life span, city, and state will be included. E. W. Ramsey is to be the first name inscribed on the plaque. If you wish to place someone's name on the Patron Memorial Plaque contact the museum director.

### Benefactors, Patrons, and Associate Patrons of the National Museum of Roller Skating:

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Robert Campbell  
Bettie Jennings  
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Robert and Joan LaBriola  
Jenner and Delores Vincent

## Be a Part of History

The history of roller skating is fragile. Once it is lost, it may never be regained. Help the National Museum of Roller Skating preserve the rich history of our sport by joining one of our special membership categories listed below. Future roller skaters will thank you.

Contributors of \$5 or more receive their choice of the official Museum patch or pin.

Contributors of \$15 or more become Honorary Members of the Museum and receive a Museum membership pin, official identification card, the quarterly newsletter, and free admission whenever they visit the Museum.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Check or money order enclosed payable to the National Museum of Roller Skating. | <input type="checkbox"/> PIN                        |
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|  | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor - \$500 or more |

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**All contributions are tax-deductible.**



Next Issue: Skating Vanities and more . . .

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