

Rolling Thru Time
Newsletter

The National Museum of Roller Skating



Visit our Website

Museum News

New Volunteer

The Museum has a second volunteer, Izchel Quintero. She is a senior at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, majoring in English. Her goal is to apply to Library Science graduate program with a focus on archiving.

She has worked for the University's Archives and Special Collections for the last two years. Some of her many responsibilities there included scanning photos. This skill will be an asset to the Museum's goal of having more photos and documents online for its members and researchers. Her first main project will be to go through the Museum's archives and add the location of items to the Museum's new archival system, CatalogIt, for easier access. Amy Richardson, Museum archivist, is also planning on having Izchel help her on an Oral History Project for the Museum.

The Museum used to have volunteers from the University's Museum Studies Program, but that program was discontinued at the university in the early 2000s.

New Instagram

Amy Richardson, Museum archivist, has created an Instagram account for the Museum. Her goal is to highlight objects, articles, photographs, and other cultural artifacts that she comes across on a day-to-day basis when working at the Museum. She will try to update it at least once a week. She enjoys looking through old periodicals, and their content will show up along with vintage photographs. Follow the account at

<https://www.instagram.com/rollerskatingmuseum/>

Memorials and Donations

Roberta Jackson - Memorials for Jim King, Lee Mills & Al Kessenger

Harry Walker - Memorials for Grace Cassady, Frank Cernik, Ronald Roy Miner, and Pappy Winkler

S.C. Chapter of USA Roller Sports - Memorial for Marie Walker

Peggy Young - Memorial for Marie Walker

Annelle Anderson - Memorial for Roma and Barney Bowman

Anonymous - Memorial for Dennis Nichter

The following individuals have donated to the Museum's 40 for 40 fundraiser: Carolyn Mirelli, Brad Armstrong, Cecelia Kelley, Anthony Profaci, Kristen Taylor, Mary Clow, Julie Cerza, Patricia Bauler, and Annelle Anderson.

JBL Trinity, which usually buys 10 raffle tickets at the RSA convention, instead donated those same funds to the Museum's current fundraiser. Because of the cancellation of the RSA convention last year because of COVID-19, the Museum was not able to conduct its largest fundraiser.

For more information on how to donate, go [HERE](#)

THE RACE IS ON

GET YOUR SKATES ON TO HELP US



The National Museum of Roller Skating's 40th Anniversary

1980 - 2020

Please consider donating \$40 for 40 years to help support your museum of roller skating history.

Simply visit our website: rollerskatingmuseum.org and find the link to our donation page in the menu bar.

Your kind donation will help to preserve the largest collection of roller skating artifacts in the world for future generations of our global roller skating family to enjoy for years to come.

Donate with



\$40 FOR 40TH



rollerskatingmuseum.org



Rememberance of Marie Walker

WE MOURN THE PASSING OF
MARIE WALKER – Wellsville,
Kansas

January 23, 1931 – December
15, 2020

*Photo: Marie Walker (on right)
presenting 1986 Amateur of the*



As a former USA Roller Sports employee and someone happy to call Marie a friend, I was asked to write a few words on her passing for this newsletter. Words that came immediately to my mind were...sassy, smart, sweet, and nobody's fool. She had a bright smile and eyes that danced when she spoke. She was very generous with her friendship, and I am grateful to have had it. Marie was the true "First Lady of Competitive Roller Skating" as a trailblazer in the development of roller sports under the governance of the United States Amateur Confederation of Roller

Skating – USAC/RS (now known as USA Roller Sports).

- At the USAC/RS inaugural meeting on August 3, 1973, in Lincoln, Nebraska, she was elected to be the first President.
- In 1975 she became the first USAC/RS Board Chair.
- In addition to being a respected leader, she was the only woman on the USAC/RS Board until the Fall of 1977. Women having a seat at the table of our sport's governing body is now taken for granted, because of leaders such as Marie.
- Marie went on to serve on many important USAC/RS Committees (including the Executive Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Judges Committee.
- She was Chair of the original USAC/RS Artistic Technical Committee.
- In 1976 she became the first USAC/RS voting member of the USOC (U.S. Olympic Committee, now known as the U.S. Olympic and Pan Am Sports Committee or USOPC).
- For the USOC, as a representative of roller skating, she served on multiple Committees, including the Education Council, the Development/Member Committee and the important Membership Credentials Review Committee. Marie's skating participation began in 1942. The following is an excerpt from the book "Titans and Heroes of American Roller Skating", which contains more amusing quotes and insights into her personality and character.

"Marie Walker, a Philadelphia area girl, discovered roller skating during a high school outing at the Chez Vous rink and recalls, 'It was really uncanny, from that night forward all I wanted to do was skate. I never looked back.' In 1942 after receiving her first pair of rink roller skates, then called 'shoe skates', to distinguish such superior equipment from a common 'clamp skate' rental, Marie soon purchased her first 'amateur card', and was thereby enrolling as an RSROA skating member. Marie continued to buy a new card every year until

1992, because she enjoyed making this a 50 year long tradition. Marie says, "If I ever was motivated to yell "I want my money back, I wouldn't get much....during the first several years, the card cost was a magnificent 25 cents!"

Marie was really someone special who gave much to her beloved sport. She will be missed by the many who personally witnessed her participation at all levels of roller skating.

By Peggy Young, Museum secretary

The Forgotten Boom:

Early 1900s produced second wave in roller skating

By Alan Bacon

Much has been written about the first boom in indoor roller skating around 1885, and later ones starting around 1935 and 1975, but little is published about the boom starting around 1905. But 20-plus years spans the first two booms, and there are some interesting differences during a time when many changes in public amusements and entertainment were taking place.

Chronicling America, a Library of Congress endeavor, makes some historic American newspapers easily accessible today. Search for "roller skating" and three dozen newspaper articles appear, starting in 1905, along with an abundance of articles from the mid-1880s, and the 1940/1950s. (The database ends in the 1960s.)

Like today when the media is filled with stories about roller skating, years from now the sheer volume of coverage will attest to the explosion of today's interest. Virtually nothing appears in the database for the decades of the 1890s and 1920s. Those articles revived my interest in finding out more about this forgotten era. I also recently discovered a book by David Nasaw called *Going Out: The Rise and Fall of Public Amusements*. Some of the following information is from that source. (It should be noted that the books of James Turner, George Pickard, Tom Russo, and others that the museum sells, are also used in newsletter features.)

The First Boom

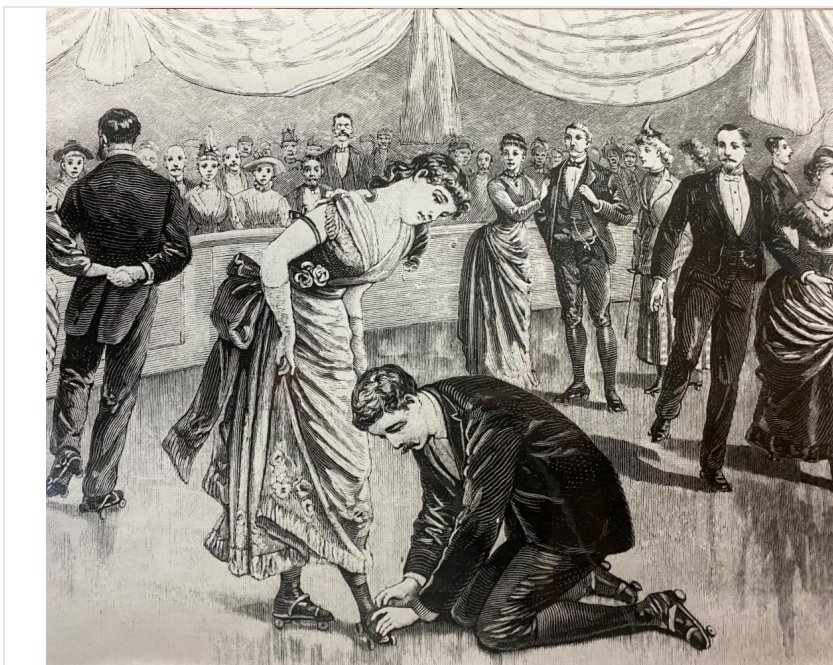
The first indoor roller-skating boom began in the early 1880s and was virtually over by 1886. While the boom's climax in 1885 is well documented, its starting date is less established. Though Plimpton revolutionized the skating scene in 1863 with his invention of the rocking action quad skate, and built the first rinks, there is little written about the extent of the industry in America before the 1880s when skating certainly exploded. The 1884 Spalding Manual of Roller Skating and the 1885 Henley's Manual of Roller Skating are just two of the half dozen major publications published then that give first-hand insight into that first boom.

After the mid-1880s boom, most of the 1890s was a disaster for indoor roller skating. Why is always a difficult question to answer with any certainty. In 1886, the safety bike was invented, which did for bicycling what Plimpton's invention had done for roller skating, making cycling easy and enjoyable.

During this bicycle boom, like the earlier skating boom, only the well-to-do had the time and funds to participate. Bicycling boomed in the 1890s including with women, but died suddenly for adults by the end of the decade, and for the next 70 years, became known as just a kid's activity.

In her book *The Mechanical Horse*, Margaret Guroff examined the common belief that the advent of the automobile led to the demise of adult bicycling; however, she disagreed and claimed that for some unexplainable reason, the elites who had led the bicycling boom just got tired of it and moved on.

In addition, by the 1890s Vaudeville had cleaned up its act, which meant women and families now attended. Women now comprised one-third to one-half of the audience. Professional baseball was also gaining in popularity, though it did remain primarily a male outing at that time because it included alcohol and gambling. Now, indoor roller skating had competition that it didn't have in the mid-1880s.



An example of the well-to-do class of skaters that dominated the first boom in roller skating in the 1880s. Museum archives

The Second Boom

In the second "craze," as almost every early 1900s article attested, journalists included their memories from the first boom. Many articles stated without doubt that the country hadn't seen indoor roller skating in 20 years. "The craze that it was twenty years ago was nothing to the craze it is on this second visitation," said *The San Francisco* in 1906. "Washington (DC) is in the throes of a fad which bids fair to outrival the bicycle fad of ten years ago," said *The Washington Times* in 1907. "For 20 years skating in America was practically unknown so far as the public rinks was concerned," said the *El Paso Herald* in 1907.

Why a second boom?

Technological change has been important to skating history. If Plimpton's invention created the first boom, Levant Richardson's sparked the next one in 1905. He patented and widely introduced steel ball bearings in skates. (There were others who also had made some contributions.) This was the most important technical innovation in roller skates after Plimpton's. Though the patent came in December 1884, and sometimes it's assumed to have had an impact on the mid-1880s boom, it seems unlikely that his innovation became widespread by 1886, the end of the uptick.

Richardson focused his attention from 1886 to 1898 on his duties at the Monarch Bicycling Company in Chicago. When that company moved on to automobiles, Richardson returned to roller skating and formed his roller-skating manufacturing company in 1898. What the Wright brothers bicycling manufacturing team did to revolutionize air flight in 1903, Richardson did for skating. Richardson's background helped: he not only had owned rinks in the first boom, but was a fancy skater himself who sometimes performed in rinks. In the early 1900s newspaper ads or articles mention of roller skates always emphasized steel ball bearings. "Good floor, Richardson ball-bearing skates," said a 1913 advertisement in The Sentinel Record of Hot Springs, Ark.

Another leader was Patty Harmon from Chicago, sometimes labeled "the father of roller skating." He influenced the Chicago Skate Company, formed in 1905. When the Ware brothers showed Harmon one of their early designs for evaluation, Harmon threw it back and told them to make it better. Both the Richardson and Chicago Skate Companies became the most important skating manufactures in the first half of the twentieth century; they both formed during this 1905 boom period. Richardson, Levant, Harmon and the Wares all worked out of Chicago, a town exploding with immigrants and industrialization.

Coverage of both booms highlighted the health benefits of skating. Also, both booms attracted the social elite. "The morning hours (in the rink) are generally utilized by the more exclusive society people," said the El Paso Herald in 1911. "Especially in the morning do the girls make the largest showing, since there is less to do on the social program," said the Los Angeles Herald in 1906.

This drawing is from the 1906 Los Angeles Herald. The title describes the resurgences of roller skating, like most sources of the time, as a "craze."



The same 1906 article went on to describe in detail the appropriate women's attire for skating, depending on the time of day. "A favorite style for evening wear is a silk or velvet Dutch dress (which is a princess, cut with low neck and shoulder straps), worn over a frivolous little guimpe of some sort, chiffon, lace or silk." No mention of men's skating attire was included.

The only 1890s article available was written in 1896 and foretold the coming boom. It was titled "Roller Skates Again: Signs That the Craze is Coming Once More" in the Little Falls Minn. weekly. "New York's Four Hundred have made golf and bicycling fashionable and are now reviving the once popular pastime of roller skating."

Unlike the 1880s, by 1905 the debate had been settled: it was not improper for women to appear at a skating rink. Instead, those with a critical eye now set their sights on other new venues. Much more concern now existed about women going to darkened dance halls that served alcohol. By contrast, roller rinks didn't offer alcohol or have unlit corners. Complaints also appeared regarding the contents of the new Nickelodeon movies.

Women had already changed expectations during the first boom in skating during the 1880s, and during the bicycling craze of the 1890s. (A lack of acknowledgment exists by historians on the role that roller skating played in the mid-1880s in the revolution of commercial entertainment, especially involving women. Much is written about the role of women in the bicycle craze, but little concerning the roller-skating boom.)

Though the elites still led the way, a broader section of society seems likely to have participated in this second skating boom. In 1907 the Rock Island, Ill. Argus stated "(skating) is as prevalent in the Ghetto as along Grand boulevard." It went on to mention skating was popular in the "Italian districts." During this period people of different social classes were beginning to socialize together in new public entertainment venues like skating rinks and amusement

parks. Nasaw's book outlined part of that reason as the profound technological and social changes in the U.S. from 1885 to 1905.

Growth had exploded in urban areas. Real incomes had substantially increased. The number of low-level white-collar workers, such as clerical and sales personnel, including women, had increased dramatically. These workers, more than blue collar laborers, frequented commercial amusement establishments, and the desire for a shorter work week and leisure time were becoming reality.

In addition, another large wave of immigration had occurred. Second-generation teens and young adults saw attending public entertainment venues from Vaudeville shows to amusement parks as a means to become Americanized and to escape the tediousness of their job—and the eye of their parents. Though Nasaw unfortunately didn't discuss roller skating, it certainly seems likely that these changes would have affected the second boom in skating too. Both the supply and demand of entertainment choices had greatly increased.

The most profound technical change by 1905 was the electrification of the city, argued Nasaw. Incandescent lighting was much brighter than gas light. It not only lit up the streets for improved security, but marquees that enticed the patrons that now filled the streets. It also created a much safer indoor environment. Also, it vastly improved urban trolley transportation, replacing the horse-drawn car.

Another major difference in the second boom that became apparent in reading these newspaper articles is the explosion of outdoor skating that is mentioned less in the first boom, especially among children. Certainly, the arrival of the automobile, which led to paved roads, was a major factor. But this new toy for adults was deadly for kids. In New York alone, 106 children were killed outdoors on skates in a 10-month period, most from skating in the streets. City councils debated whether to ban skating on sidewalks, but everyone agreed that children, skates, streets and automobiles didn't mix. By 1905, kids were attending Nickelodeon storefronts by themselves, and the new movie houses by the 1910s. They now could enter a roller skating rink by themselves, already knowing how and ready to skate.

The Aftermath

This second boom was over by WWI. Charlie Chaplin's 1916 silent movie *The Rink* might have been its last public hurrah. The 1920s was the worse decade for indoor skating in the 20th century. Why again? Poor management is always cited as a reason. The 1910s brought the dance craze accompanied by upbeat, ragtime music, then the jazz age of the 1920s. It may have been that the younger generation now preferred the new sounds of ragtime and jazz over John Sousa marches played by live orchestras or carousel sounding tunes on band organs. It wouldn't be until the mid-1930s that indoor roller skating in what is known as the Golden Age of skating would explode again, with the new, widely popular pipe organ beat. (And in the mid-70s boom, the disco beat.)



rinks was popular in the early 1900s. It played carousel-like music using paper rolls, like the then popular player pianos. These devices were less expensive than an orchestra that dominated the first boom in skating in the 1880s. Museum archives

Another avenue for indoor roller skating continued at the widely popular amusement parks of that era. Unfortunately, most books on the history of those parks include very little about the rinks. Thanks to Fred Martin, though, the museum's archives include information about professional speed and Vaudeville skaters of the early 1900s.

Interestingly, important links between 1905 and 1935 booms highlight the importance of this 1905 era to roller skating history. A few of the rinks built in the early 1900s (but not the 1880s) still existed in the 1930s: Oaks Park (1905) in Portland, Oregon; and in Chicago: Chicago Coliseum (1900), Riverview (1904) White City (1905), and Madison Gardens (1906).

In addition, certain individuals were also crucial links. The Chicago Coliseum (1900) was opened by Richardson, a risky investment as the first rink in Chicago (and maybe the entire country) since the 1880s boom. The Riverview (1904) was opened by Harmon. Many famous speed exhibitions of the early 1900s took place there. Later he built the Chicago Stadium in 1929, which became used for roller derby starting in 1935 and the Skating Vanities in 1942. Earl Van Horn, known as the father of dance skating and labeled number V in George Pickard's book *Titans and Heroes*, was a manager of The Oaks in the 1910s. After performing in Vaudeville with his wife Inez, they opened the Mineola rink in 1934.

The Bollingers, eventually owners of The Oaks, with Bob Bollinger labeled a Hero in Pickard's book, were also links between the two eras. The Oaks was built by an electrified trolley company. It may have been the first rink to install

a pipe organ in the 1920s, much earlier than any other. (Richardson passed in 1918 though his company continued.)

Another connection between the two eras was the former professional speed skaters of the early 1900s such as Fred Martin and Rodney Peters that later became rink operators. In a 1921 article in the Ogden Standard, it mentioned that Peters was elected secretary of a new but now long-forgotten skating organization called the National League of Roller Skating Associations. One of its goals was to improve rink management. Peters would become, along with Fred Martin, one of the original 17 rink owners in 1937 who formed the RSROA to improve rink management. It was formed in Martin's rink in Detroit and he became its first secretary/treasurer; Peters become its second president.

Fads Can Come Back

It's funny how a craze will come,
Then turn around and go
Roller Skating hit this town
'Bout twenty years ago.
And then the habit up and died,
It calmly passed away;
And after twenty years the skates
Came back on us, full sway

-From The Day Book, Chicago, Ill., 1913.

STAY CONNECTED

The National Museum of Roller Skating | (402) 483-1465 extension 203

director@rollerskatingmuseum.com

4730 South Street, Lincoln, NE 68506

www.rollerskatingmuseum.com



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 displays cases, the museum educates the public on all aspects of roller skating, which dates back to the first patented skate from 1819.

Copyright: *Rolling Thru Time* is published throughout the year by the National Museum of Roller Skating.

Copyright 2018 by the NMRS. Written permission from the museum is required for reproduction of any part of this publication.

Rolling Thru Time welcomes stories, art and photo contributions. These works selected for publication may be edited to conform to size and other requirements. Opinions expressed by the authors are not necessarily those of the museum. Correspondence concerning articles is welcomed. Statement of fact and opinion are the responsibility of the authors alone.

Officers and Trustees:

President: Kim Wall; Vice President: Nellie Anderson Lillie; Treasurer: Alan Bacon; Secretary: Peggy Young.

Other Trustees: Annelle Anderson, past president, Danny Brown, Dominic Cangelosi, Charlene Conway, Howard "Bud" Engle, Bill Hoefler, Ed Hughes, Michael Jacques, Judith Young Link, Jim Link, Linda Miner, Randy Ray, Jeanne Sincavage, Andy Starr, Eric Steele and Tina Robertson Winkler.

Trustees Emeritii: Bob Bollinger, Michael Brooslin, James Turner, Scott Wilhite and Mike Zaidman.

Writer/Editor of Newsletter: Alan Bacon; Copy Editor: Joy Bacon; Graphic Designer: Kelsey Bacon.

