

Historical Roller Skating Overview

National Museum of Roller Skating
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Skaters enjoy a break from the war at the Arena Gardens Roller Skating Rink in Detroit, Michigan. From left to right, an unidentified enlisted man, Virginia Mount, Lloyd Young, Ann Manion, Bruce Towle, Louise Moore, and Alden Sibley.

From the Richard & Marge McLauchlen Collection (81.33.258)

Curator's Column

Dear Member,

The 1997 National Museum of Roller Skating Raffle was a success because 541 raffle tickets were sold! The grand prize winner was Kevin Cernik who was astonished with the outcome. Of the 24 winners, 16 winners were at the RSA convention to receive their prizes. Board member, Bob Bollinger personally sold over 200 tickets to win the first award for most tickets sold. A recap of the raffle winners, supporters, and ticket sellers are listed on pages 8-10.

The museum is proud to present the newest publication, The History of Roller Skating. This book covers 15 chapters of roller skating history from its inception to the present. The book was written by Trustee Emeritus James Turner in collaboration with myself as the definitive source for roller skating history. To receive your copy of The History of Roller Skating, you may either renew your membership and receive the book, or purchase a copy on page 7.

During the RSA convention, the museum Board met and is considering expanding Board members. If you are interested in serving on the museum Board of Trustees, please write a letter to the museum in care of Board President, Bert Anselmi and explain why you would be an asset to the museum. The successful candidates must show a strong commitment to the museum and have an interest in the preservation of roller skating history.

In March, the museum hired part-time Assistant Curator, Sarah Webber. Sarah recently graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a Master's in History of Science & Medicine. She will be in charge of the museum's web site, donations, and she will be researching and writing articles. Sarah's first article is featured in this month's expanded newsletter on the history of World War II relating to roller skating.

A bit of sad news includes the recent passing of Joan "the Blond Bomber" Weston. Joan was a roller derby all-star for 19 seasons from the 1950s until the 1970s.

The museum's exhibit with the San Francisco Airport & Museum has been postponed until December of this year. Although the exhibit was scheduled for only three months this summer, it will now be expanded to six months until June of 1998. The exhibit will be placed at the TWA terminal of the airport, so check it out if you have the opportunity.

I would like to thank Tony Kissing and Judy Jerue for answering the museum's wish list with speed and artistic skating outfits from past champions. All donations the past few months will be featured in the next newsletter.

Don't forget this summer the museum will be open the last two weekends in June (Saturdays, June 21 & 28, 1-5 p.m., Sundays, June 22 & 29, 12-4 p.m.). During this time, the museum will be selling back issues of skating magazines and old championship roller skating programs, call for a complete listing.

Upcoming events the museum will be exhibiting at in include USA Roller Skating's Roller Hockey Championship in Des Moines, Iowa (July 15-August 2) and USA Roller Skating's Artistic & Speed Championships in Pensacola, Florida (July 31-August 22).

To help the museum with our archives collection, I am asking our members for help. If you see an article on roller skating in a magazine or newspaper, please clip it out and mail it to the museum. This effort will certainly help increase the museum's archives collection and give you an opportunity to contribute.

Have a great summer and remember to skate safe!

Director & Curator

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Historical Roller Skating Overview is published bimonthly for members of the National Museum of Roller Skating. It is available only through honorary membership in the museum. Minimum annual contribution is \$25.00. Send correspondence and change of address to: Museum Director, 4730 South Street, P.O. Box 6579, Lincoln, NE 68506.

Roller Skating Through The Second World War



America On Wheelsl newsletter cover from May 25, 1944.

Dougherty wrote to *America on Wheels*, stating that it "would make me very happy if you would place my name and address amongst those who would like to correspond with girls or boys who skate."

America on Wheels often published not only the names of servicemen wishing to receive letters, but often letters from those in the armed forces who wrote the paper directly. Many of the letters sought news from old skating friends. Nick Valillo wrote he missed "skating and all my friends" from the Twin Cities Rink, and that he wished the "crowd would drop me a short line now and then" because he "sure would like to hear from them." Dorothy Owens wrote to say she wondered about everyone at Mt. Vernon, and that she wanted to hear from them. Eddie Marshall wrote asking to hear from his old skating buddies at the Casino. Ted Gronager asked America on Wheels to publish his address, since he wanted to hear from his old friends, but did not have their addresses. The paper, he wrote, was the "only way I can get in touch with them."

Former employees of America on Wheels showed their loyalty by writing to America on Wheels to find out about their former work friends and other news from the roller rink. In 1943 Marcel A. Judge, along with another former Casino Arena employee in his unit, Eddie Fahoury, wrote to America on Wheels expressing their desire to hear from friends at the rink. Elmer Ferry, a

During World War II, many young men and women wrote home not only to their families, but also to their roller skating friends, skating magazines, and their hometown roller rinks. Seeking pen-pals and information from their skating friends, the letters they sent and those they received helped to ease the homesickness caused by separation from family and friends. Meanwhile, those who remained behind, the skaters, rink managers, skate associations and manufacturers, united behind the war effort to help bring home the enlisted skaters.

When America went to war in 1941, it disrupted the lives of the entire nation. Before the war ended in 1945, over 11 million men and women would serve in one branch of the armed services. Few families remained directly unaffected by the war through not having a son or daughter, cousin or grandchild, in the armed services.

Those who enlisted or were drafted into the armed services attempted to maintain ties with their civilian lives through continued contact with friends and family back home. Soldiers wrote numerous letters home, and received on average of fourteen a week from their friends and family. Many roller skaters tried to maintain contact with their skating friends back home through correspondence with other skaters, rinks, and skate magazines. The organization America on Wheels helped in this effort by publishing in their magazine enlisted men and women's names and addresses who requested

roller skating pen-pals. Some expressed the desire to hear from any stateside skater. William

A sticker picturing enlisted men enjoying their leave skating with a woman at a rink from the Muffler's Roller Rink in Morris, Illinois. Gift of Roy E. Claudin. (85.56)





One of the America On Wheels pin-up girls, Mary Galpin, June 1944.

former instructor at Mt. Vermon, wanted to know why his rink was not "getting more dope together for the paper." He wanted them to get more information into the paper to let servicemen "know how things are at the rink."

America on Wheels sent a copy of their paper to former employees and asked their stateside readers to send a copy to a friend in uniform once they finished reading it. Servicemen expressed joy in receiving America on Wheels because, as James R. Bushee wrote in 1943, he liked reading "about my friends I had to leave to serve in the army." John Frawley enjoyed reading America on Wheels because he missed his friends back home and it was "swell to read about them." Al Beck, stationed somewhere in New Guinea, wrote to America on Wheels, expressing thanks for the paper. It brought back "lots of pleasant memories" for him.

Roller skating often proved a bond between those in the service, something they could share fond memories about together. Gerald E. D'Amour discovered a copy of *America* on *Wheels* one night on the bunk next to his, and struck up

a conversation about roller skating with his fellow serviceman. Jerry Orhan commented in a letter to the paper that America on Wheels was "read by the fellows in my hut," and they all talked about "the good times we had" roller skating before entering the service.

When skaters in the service obtained leave time, they went to roller rinks. But no rink compared to the one at home they sorely missed. Ed Gwozdziewicz wrote that while Denver had three rinks, none compared to his hometown rink, the Perth Amboy Skating Rink in Pennsylvania. Phil Pinto wrote that though he had been "around the world a little" and visited many rinks, the America on Wheels rinks remained "tops." Walter Frost went to Birmingham, Alabama on his leave, and visited a "nice little rink there," but complained that "the use of powder on the floor was unknown and the music was recorded."

In many of the letters published in *America on Wheels*, servicemen expressed their longing for the old times at their hometown roller skating rink. James D'Amato wrote that he missed "the good old times I used to have at your rink, the St. Nicholas Arena." Writing from the southwest pacific, Lloyd W. Ruch bemoaned the fact that there were no rinks near him, and he longed "to see and hear the whirl of rolling feet." However, they felt they had a job to do in the service, and though Frank W. Olszewski wished he "could be skating at the rink right now," his job was in the army at the present.

Many expressed in their letters the desire for the war to end so they could resume their old life, a life with skating at the center,

A Chicago Roller Skate Company sticker in support of the war effort.



Eddie Marshall wrote that he wanted "this thing to get over with, so that I can skate when I want to and where I want to." Phil Pinto looked forward to skating in the "AOW rinks when this is all over." James D'Amato was always "thinking of the day when I return and continue all the fun I used to have" at the St. Nicholas rink.

Americans who remained at home served their country in ways other than in the armed forces. People across the country took part in war bond drives, participated in government rationing of food and household products, and many went to work in armament plants. Those in the roller skating community were no exception. Skaters worked and prayed, as did all Americans, for the day to come when the men and women who had "laid aside their precisions and detachables to pilot planes, work submarines, man battleships, tanks, and guns" to help "rid the world of the dictatorial beasts," would "soon return to the thing they loved most—a roller rink and the good friends they left behind."

Until such a time, however, roller skaters who remained stateside during the war wrote to skating friends in the service to keep them informed about their civilian

roller skating community. Through reading America on Wheels, stateside skaters learned the addresses of skating friends in the armed forces. The paper encouraged its readers to write to some of the desiring roller skating servicemen, regardless of whether they knew them personally. Flo Sykes, a cashier at the Perth Maboy Arena, reportedly spent all her free time writing to skaters in the service.

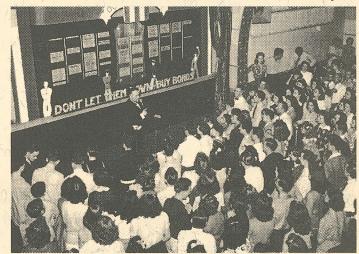
The roller skating community on the home front helped the men and women overseas through a multitude of efforts, from writing letters to holding war bond drives. Skaters were bombarded with requests to buy war bonds through ads in the skating magazines, on rink stickers, and at the rinks themselves. In 1944, America on Wheels rinks gave those who bought war bonds two complimentary tickets to any AOW rink with the purchase of each bond. Skaters were encouraged to "Buy a Bond for a Boy!" at rinks across the country, many with booths set up to take bond orders. The eight participating America on Wheels rinks together raised \$21,424 in the 1944 war bond drive. Skating clubs supported and sponsored war bond drives, and often skating celebrities such as Gloria Nord participated.

Roller skaters at home further supported the war effort by giving to relief organizations such as the Red Cross. In 1944, the organization America on Wheels cooperated with the Red Cross by dedicating the week of March 26 through April 3 as "Red Cross War Fund Week." The group encouraged all skaters to donate to the Red Cross, for no matter whoever or wherever "your

boy is" the "Red Cross is at his side!"

Groups worked to boost the moral of soldiers. America on Wheels sent its former employees a box of candy and cigarettes every month, published their pictures in the paper America on Wheels, reported on a number of their former employees in the armed forces, and published pictures of roller skating girls for pin-up posters. In 1943, the group reached out to all servicemen, issuing 50,000 free tickets to the United Service Organizations for distribution to soldiers good for free entry to any America on Wheels rink.

Rink managers further supported the war effort by cooperating with the Defense Department. Those rinks in areas deemed sensitive, such as the Redondo Beach Roller Rink in Washington state, complied with the war imposed "dim-out" regulations. Rinks prepared for complete blackouts by covering all windows with tar paper or heavy black drapes, causing the buildings to look abandoned from the outside. Black-outs occurred on the coast, much to the distress of skaters and rink operators. In Los Angeles,



Fred Martin speaking to a crowd of roller skaters before the Arena Gardens World War II Honor Board, a listing of enlisted skaters. From the Fred A. Martin & Richard McLauchlen Collection. (81.33.51)

skaters sat in the dark at the Rollerbowl Roller Rink during one of the first blackouts held in January 1942. Though devoted skaters still patronized their favorite rinks, many altered their previous schedules and went during the day time, as evening black-outs meant no automobiles were allowed on the streets and people feared being stuck in a rink all night if a black-out were called while they skated. The fear of blackouts at rinks located on the coast caused the Roller Skating Rink Operators Association to hold their 1942 Nationals in Memphis, Tennessee. The organization chose the rink in Memphis because it precluded "the possibility of blackouts, as the city being so centrally located is certainly practically bomb-proof." Three years later, the RSROA canceled Nationals in accordance with a request made by the US Office of Defense Transportation, probably as an effort to conserve fuel which came under strict rationing in late 1942.

The Roller Skating Rink Operators Association further complied with war rationing by limiting the issues they put out of their magazine, *Skating Review*. The association combined their September and October issues of the magazine in 1942 as an effort to help conserve "printed matter not directly linked with the war." Few Americans remained unaffected by the war rationing efforts, whether it was fewer issues of their skating magazines, or limits on sugar, coffee, and canned fruits and vegetables, or on household appliances and tires for their cars.

Manufacturers across the country either converted to producing war materials or limited the production of items not in the war interest but which used material necessary for that effort. Manufacturers in the roller skating business united behind the war effort, some even converting from the production of skates to armaments. Conversion into defense plants, however, meant shortages of skates, parts, and boots, resulting in the rationing of these products along with numerous others. In 1944, the

manufacturer Hyde Athletic Shoe Company advertised its "Hyde New Un-Rationed Roller Shoe" in *Skating Review*, informing skaters that no ration ticket was needed to secure the white or black skate boots, a definite plus for those skaters who had patiently taken care of their old, worn skates due to the war-imposed limitations.

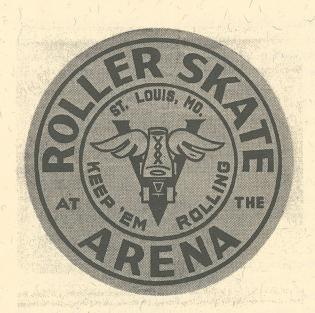
On August 4, 1942, one of the large skate manufacturers, the Chicago Skate Company, stopped producing skates, concentrating instead solely on war materials production. After that date, the War Production Board General Iron and Steel Conservation Order went into effect, prohibiting the use of iron or steel in any products not designated for war use. From 1943 until 1945, the Chicago Skate Company manufactured bomb fuses, not skates. In an advertisement in 1942, the company told skaters to care for their skates, to make them "last until it's over—over there."

Some rinks suffered during the war from a decline of patrons. Gasoline rationing meant few drove to rinks, as leisure driving by early 1943 was prohibited, and many rinks not accessible by public transportation closed. The paper America on Wheels published in July 1943 a list of bus information for skaters "conserving on gas and tires for Victory," but who still desired to go roller skating. However many rinks, like the Redondo Beach Roller Rink in Washington state reported an increase in patronization, in "spite of so many of our former skaters being in the service and working in the Aircraft and shipyard industries, three shifts a day, shortage of gas." W. J. Betts, of the Redondo, stated that the increase came from more women patronage. "They can skate by themselves when they can't dance alone," he wrote.



Nancy Parker, age 6, and another roller skater buying bonds to support the war effort at the Arena Gardens in Detroit, Michigan. Gift of Rose Martin. (86.21.18)

Women, as Betts wrote, skated without their enlisted male partners. In November 1943, Skating Review wrote about Margaret Rose, whose husband had been serving overseas for two years, and who took up roller skating to cure her loneliness. Rose also felt, and according to the magazine so did many other women, that through roller skating, she not only reduced the pang of loneliness, she also gained mental and physical fitness. The magazine further wrote that women need not feel ashamed or uncomfortable about skating with servicemen on leave other than their husbands or sweethearts, for they were "helping some man in Service to spend a pleasant evening of recreation conducive to maintaining his morale." A navy warrant officer, Earle Hutchinson, seconded this opinion. In a letter published in Skating Review, Hutchison asked women not to "give up roller skating just because your husband, sweetheart, or skating partner has joined the Armed Forces and you find most of your interest

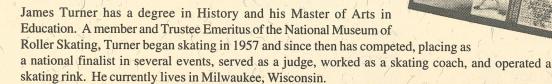


in the sport has left with them." He implored women with experience and no present partner to continue to skate, to become a skating partner for an evening of a man on leave. He reminded women that when their own partners obtained leave time, "the first thing he wants to do is go skating," and that hopefully a woman with a man of her own in the service would be his skating partner for the night. He ended by asking women to "help some other girl's partner and keep in practice for when 'He' comes back."

Roller skating provided a means for those who remained on the home front to ease their loneliness, to help win the war through supporting the war bond drives at their local rink, and helped them look forward to the future when their roller skating friends, sweethearts, and spouses returned. Skaters in the armed services fended off loneliness through maintaining ties with skating friends back home and by receiving letters from home telling them much appreciated news from their roller skating community. Enlisted skaters looked forward to the day when the war ended and they could resume their civilian skating lives. Roller skating provided a way for those in the service and for those at home to look forward to their future after the war as well as support each other during the war.

The History of Roller Skating

A definitive source, *The History of Roller Skating*, by James Turner in collaboration with Michael Zaidman explores roller skating from its inception to the present. Chapters focus upon speed skating, artistic skating, and roller hockey, as well as roller rink music and skating costumes. All aspects of the history of roller skating, including vaudeville performances, the popular 1940s and 50s skating act the Skating Vanities, and skating associations, are covered in this informative, lively book. With over 150 photographs from the National Museum of Roller Skating expanding the text, *The History of Roller Skating* is a must for anyone who has been skating for years or just beginning, and for those simply interested in one of America's most popular and enduring sports.



Michael Zaidman, Director and Curator of the National Museum of Roller Skating, earned his Master of Arts in Museum Studies from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Order your copy of The History of Roller Skating today! Either renew	w on the form on page 11 or send in your money for an		
exclusive member price of \$15. Non-member's price is \$20.			
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Membership Quiz

The first five members who correctly identify the answer will win a T-shirt from the museum. Please mail your entries to the museum and specify T-shirt size. The

questions are: ¹⁾When was roller skating introduced to the Pan Am Games? ²⁾ Who won the 1991 Men's & Women's Free Skating Championships at the Pan Am Games? Mail your answers to the museum. Good luck!



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Raffle Results

The 1997 museum raffle at the Roller Skating Association convention at Bally's Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas, Nevada this past May 14 was a great success! 541 tickets were sold passing last year's mark by 33 tickets. The following is the list of the winners and the winning ticket sellers.

Raffle Winners	Tickets Sellers	1997 Ticket Seller	rs List
1. Renee Harris, Skateheaven	(\$100)* Zaidman		
2. Pat Collins & Bill Stevens		Name	Tickets Sold
3. Donald Dillon (\$100)	Bollinger	Bob Bollinger	202
4. RSA Section #4(\$100)*	Carson	Bert Anselmi	65
5. Arthur Durand (\$100)	Bollinger	Mills Lynn	59
6. Kathi Deitz (\$100)*	Bollinger	Mike Zaidman	40_
7. Elaine Minch (\$100)	Zaidman	Frank Cernik	32
8. Anne Pals(\$100)**	Pals	Edmund Young	17
9. Stardust Skate Center (\$10	Bollinger	Charlotte Groves	
10. Arthur Eversman, Jr. (\$10		Rick Carson	13
11. Connie Wahlig (\$100)	Wahlig	George Pickard	. 11
12. Frank Nugent (\$100)*	Bollinger	Budd Van Roekel	
13. Ohio Chapter RSA (\$100	Bollinger	Charles Wahlig	10
14. Dawn Marquis (\$100)*	Young	Gary Englund	9
15. RSA Staff A-0138 (\$100)	* Carson	Larry Lawrence	9
16. Bob & Shirley Gormley (\$	Bollinger	Bill Steigner	9
17. Don Perkins (\$250)*	Anselmi	Annelle Anderson	n 7
18. Peter Parker (\$250)*	Bollinger	Bruce Broyles	5
19. Bill Acklus (\$250)*	Bollinger	Anne Pals	4
20. Daniela Gonzalez Flores	(\$500)* Lynn	Joe Champa	3
21. RSA Section #11 (\$500)		Roger Cobb	(3)
22. Lanny's Skate Specialities		Bill Johnson	3
23. Brenda Zaidman (\$1000		Jerry Shores	3
24. Kevin Cernik (\$5000)*	Cernik		
			1 111 (1

^{*}At convention

^{**}Gave money back to museum



Bob Bollinger and Mills Lynn look on as the winning raffle ticket is drawn.

And several others who sold less than

three tickets.

The National Museum of Roller Skating is pleased to thank the following donors who bought 1997 raffle tickets. Without the support of friends like these, the museum would not flourish. We thank you all! If there is a number listed by the name, that is the total number of tickets purchased.

A1 Entertainment (2) Bill Acklus (2) Roger & Dolores Adam Andy Anderson Andy & Kristi Anderson Andy & Gayla Anderson Annelle & Bob Anderson Cindy Anderson Gayla & Kristi Anderson Nellie Anderson & Friends Nellie & Robert Anderson Nellie Anderson Bert Anselmi Anselmi Grandchildren (4) Kurt Anselmi

Arrow Janina Bacich Kevin Baker (3) Jim Barr John Bax Bob Beach Jack Becker Peggy Beeghly Ann Behan Anna Bennett Larry Billings Big Wheel Skate John Bing (2)

Lynn Anselmi

Teresa & Tony Anselmi

Louis Armbruster (5)

Eleanor & Wilbur Bing Joy Blake Dennis Bobek Dianne Bollinger (2) Ed & Barbara Bolton Peter Boo **Bob Boston** Wayne Bowie Keith Brainard (2) Robert Braun Jerry Breen

Dan Brown (2) Kim Brown (2) Keely & Kara Brown LR Brown Bruce Broyles Joel Broyles Les Buell Keith Burchell

Jackie Brezney

Keith Broda (2)

Clint Briggs

Jodie Burden Joe Burke Lester Burkett/Barb English Carol Caldwell (2) Ed Caldwell (2) Warren Campagna Daniel & Sheila Campbell Mary Margaret Cambbell Stan Cantor (2) Bill Carlson

Charlene Conway Conway & Friends Maurice & Barb Cooper Toni Costianes Steve Cottrell Leita Couey (2) Jeff & Leita Couey Northwest Cousins John Creten (2) Mable Creten



Frank Cernik and Bert Anselmi are shown selling raffle tickets at the RSA convention.

Buckee Carlson Rick Carson (2) **Bob Castro** Gary Castro (2) Lance Castro Cernik Groupies (2) Diane Cernik Frank Cernik (3) Kevin Cernik (2) Phyllis Cernik (3) Scott Cernik Champa Kids Joe Champa (2) Nick Champa John & Ruth Chrien Evelyn Cobb Chris Cohen Tommy Colgan (2) Pat Collins

Pat Collins/Bill Stevens Don Conine

Ron Creten Betty Ann Danna (2) Kathi Dietz (2) Ken Derrick **Beverly Dice** Robert Dill (4) **Donald Dillon** Anthony DiPietro Ed Disser Evard Dodge Virgil & Sue Dooley Natalie Dunn Fries Leslie Dunn Meyer Arthur Durand (2) John Durnye Rob Egan

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Cathryn Ganaway

Robert Michael Golovich (2)

Susan & Gray Fudge

Marti Emery

Patty Emery

Randy Engbrecht

Daniela Gonzalez Flores Bob & Shirley Gormley **CK** Gravitt Sonny Grenier Curtis Groves (2) Charlotte Groves (3) Dianne Groves **Judy Groves** Sheri Hack Jim Hafner Paul Hakim (2) James Hall Don Hall Lori Hamilton Lonnie Hannah Ed & Roger Hansen Dale Hanson Judy Harkelroad **Gary Harrington** Melinda Harris

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Pepsi

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Mills & Betty Lynn (3)

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Museum Media Sightings

Denver Post, May 20 edition; U.S. News & World Report Great Vacation Drives Guide; Weekly Reader, May 9 edition; Rinksider, July/August issue; RIM News, July/ August issue; Roller Skating Business July/August issue; SpeedSkating Times, May/June issue; US Roller Skating, June issue.

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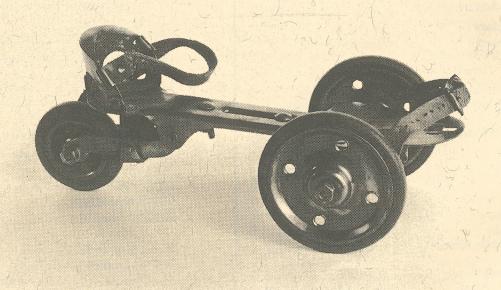
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Another Museum Artifact

This three-wheeled model roller skate with two wheels placed at the front, was manufactured by the Hiker Manufacture Company of Toledo, Ohio in the early 1900s (81.5.28).

A gift from Alfred Kish



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