



Historical Roller Skating

OVERVIEW

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CURATOR'S CORNER

Michael W. Brooslin,
Director & Curator

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The newsletter of the National Museum of Roller Skating is available only through membership in the museum. Minimum annual contribution is \$15. The newsletter is published 4 times a year to inform the museum's honorary members of happenings at the museum and about aspects of roller history. Although the museum cannot pay for articles, contributions by the readers are welcome. All articles, inquiries or comments should be sent to the Museum Curator.

It is with many regrets that I am writing this, my last newsletter. I have resigned as Director and Curator of the museum as of June 15th, to accept the position of Curator at the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in my hometown of Springfield, Massachusetts. Since I came to Lincoln in 1981, it has been my pleasure to work with you to build a professional organization dedicated to preserving and documenting roller skating history. I have enjoyed meeting and knowing many of you, and will truly miss the Honorary Members who have given me their support.

During my six years, your collections donations have been overwhelming. The museum now has over 10,000 objects (skates, costumes, and other artifacts), 500 films and videotapes, 700 books, 4,000 skating programs, 2,400 magazines, 10,000 photographs, as well as the papers of many significant people and companies in the archives. Since we opened to the public in 1982, the museum has received over 23,000 visitors. We have distributed historical information through our publications, and via the media, including the Chicago Tribune Syndicate, national magazines, and the CBS Television Network. The museum has been recognized as a quality institution, with collections and information being shared with other museums such as the Chicago Historical Society, Smithsonian Institution, and the Michigan Museum of History. Regardless of my own efforts, this would not have been possible without the help and contributions from all of you, the museum's Honorary Members.

Though I shall be departing, the museum will continue to grow and operate in a professional manner. Anne Polk Diffendal of Lincoln has been appointed to succeed me as Director and Curator of the museum. Anne served as Curator of Manuscripts for the Nebraska State Historical Society here in Lincoln since 1974, and has served as a consultant

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CURATOR'S CORNER (continued)

to numerous historical societies, libraries and museums. She received her Bachelor's degree from Barry College in Miami, an M.A. in History from Emory University, and her Doctorate in History from the University of Nebraska. Prior to joining the staff at the Nebraska State Historical Society, she taught history courses at several colleges. Anne has also been a grant reviewer for several Federal programs including the National Endowment for the Humanities. A member of many professional associations, she is currently serving as Treasurer of the national Society of American Archivists. Anne brings considerable experience and expertise to our museum; in administration, collections management, and research.

During my tenure as Director and Curator, I have enjoyed the support of the museum's Honorary Members, and have appreciated the comments and help you have given to me. Through your donations and assistance, the museum has become a facility that all those involved in roller skating, and especially you as Honorary Members, can be proud of. We are fortunate to acquire someone of Anne Diffendal's qualifications and abilities to carry on the museum's mission. I hope that all the museum's Honorary Members will give Anne their support, to ensure the continued excellence of our museum.

As in past years, the museum will be open for additional hours during the USAC/RS National Championships here in Lincoln from July 24th through August 6th. Along with the "normal" 9 AM to 5 PM hours Monday through Friday, the museum will be open to the public on the weekends of July 25th & 26th, and August 1st & 2nd. Saturday and Sunday hours will be from Noon to 5 PM. If you are going to be attending the Nationals, I hope you will take the opportunity to visit and see what your contributions have made possible.

Donations continue to arrive, and the museum's collections continue to grow. Among the more notable of the recent acquisitions is the earliest known (at least to us) illustration from the "Harper's Weekly" magazine. Shown on the back cover, this picture of a rink opening was produced in 1877.

In a previous newsletter, I mentioned that "Hank" the skating bear and Rex Horton, his trainer, visited the museum a few months ago. Among the many items Rex left with us was a 1916 poster, shown at the right. This lithograph was done for the Barnum and Bailey Circus, to advertise the world famous "Pallenberg Bears," one of the "Greatest Show on Earth's" primary animal attractions back then. The poster and several of the Pallenberg Bears' roller skates, along with several modern skates used by "Hank," will be on display at the museum in the near future.



THE RIVERVIEW RINK

The Riverview Rink in Milwaukee, although sometimes confused with the skating rink of the same name in Chicago, was the home of many of the professional speed skating champions during the 1900-1920 era, many of whom have been profiled in past museum newsletters. We recently ran across the photo of the Riverview in 1912 shown at right. The following account is taken from Fred Martin's scrapbook. In 1912 the Riverview was managed by former Speed Champion Joe Munch (see below). According to Martin, the operation of this rink in the Teens was better than many rinks in the 1950s (Martin worked for Munch for seven years, and felt that much of his knowledge of the rink business was due to his apprenticeship at the Riverview). Ward's seven-man brass band (sponsored by the rink as many of the larger rinks were then doing) never failed to fill the large 85 x 210 foot floor with skaters. The rink also had a 30 foot lean-to on the river side, an open veranda 30 feet by 200, an aisle 8 feet around the back and a deep band shell to stage events. On the land side, there was another 8 foot aisle and 20 feet of raised seats the full length of the rink. Along the front was a balcony with service rooms (skate room, check room and mens' and ladies' lounges) beneath. Directly on the river side was a 35 foot soda bar and stock room. The rink operated most of the year, roller skating from September through May, and three months of summertime dancing. As is shown in the picture, the river which flowed next to the rink froze quite solid, so with roller skating indoors and ice skating outdoors, the Riverview Rink was a popular winter place in Milwaukee. Though the rink was closed and torn down quite a few years ago, we are not sure when. We would appreciate hearing from anyone who can add to our information on the Riverview, which in its heyday, was one of America's most famous rinks.



Pictured at right is Joseph W. Munch, champion skater of the Northwest from 1905 to 1913. Joe won the Northwest Professional title in 1905 at Minneapolis, and successfully defended the championship annually until defeated by Frank Bryant of Duluth in February 1913. Munch won a medal each of the years he was champion, the most prominent of which was a diamond studded gold medal won in Milwaukee in December 1909. During 1908 and 1909, Joe was a competitor in most of the pro races, including the annual finals held in Chicago and St. Louis. After losing his title to Bryant, Munch devoted most of his time to managing both professional skaters and skating rinks. He was the business manager for Allie Moore and Fred Martin, both champions in their own right. Munch left the Riverview Rink in 1916, but continued to manage professional speed skaters into the 1920's.



THE EVOLUTION OF AMERICAN STYLE DANCE, by James Turner

All that was known of skate dancing in America in 1938 was the result of the tour of the English Champions James and Joan Lidstone (inducted in the USAC/RS Hall of Fame in 1984) and Billy Watson, or from Perry B. Rawson's interpretation of ice skaters. So, how did the American style of dance evolve? As in most areas of history, there were many contributing factors, not the least of which was the Second World War (1939-1945), which involved most of the countries that participated in competitive roller skating.

The Lidstones and Watson toured America giving skate dancing exhibitions in late 1938. Less than a year later, in September 1939 hostilities began in Europe (the United States did not enter World War II until December 1941). The principle roller skating countries in the late 1930's were England, Germany and Italy, now fighting instead of skating against each other. The German skaters were basically figure and pairs teams, the British primarily in skate dancing, and the Italians involved mainly in Speed Skating. All three nations, along with Belgium, Holland, Portugal and Spain had been involved in rink hockey. Many of the Europeans were ice skaters in the winter, and roller skaters in the summer. This was because the rinks were mostly outdoor concrete areas which were flooded and frozen during the winter months. The British did have indoor roller rinks and there were more English skaters concentrating strictly on rollers, although some were also ice skaters like the Germans. The Lidstones were the European dance champions, however their style of skating was not at all like ice dancing. They had a more upright posture, and a smoother flow to their strokes than the normal ice and roller skate dancing team. Jimmy Lidstone attributed this to the fact that he and his sister were not basically figure skaters as the majority of the German skaters were; they worked primarily on dance skating with just a small portion of their training devoted to figures.

Using the Lidstones as a guide, but also adding his own techniques, Perry Rawson was the most influential person in the early development of the American Style of dance skating. Rawson's idea was that a dance team should have power, but must not let that power show by violent pushing. He developed the American style of parallel progressive stroking, whereby a team could move around the skating floor in a smooth, almost effortless fashion. In 1939 and 1940, Perry convinced some of the leading members of the RSROA Teacher's College (now the SRSTA) this method was more suited to roller skates, and that roller skaters should avoid copying or imitating the ice skaters' techniques when these techniques were not suited to the roller skate. Some other aspects which formed important differences in the American Style were upright posture, smooth stroking, very little bouncing, heel to heel aim in mohawks, and the border dance baseline concept.

Some of the earlier dance teams, including many who competed for the U.S. National Championships, were quite slow in going through the dances. One of the couples to improve upon this were Bettie Jennings and Clifford Schattenkerk of Seattle, Washington (inducted into the USAC/RS Hall of Fame in 1983), who introduced a smooth flowing program with speed. This development continued during the war years and afterwards. By 1947, the "fast" style of skate dancing had become accepted throughout the country, and Jennings and Schattenkerk won their first National Senior Dance Titles.

Top: James and Joan Lidstone who introduced skate dancing to America. Bottom: Bettie Jennings and Cliff Schattenkerk, the 1947 RSROA Senior Dance Champions.

During World War II's six years, American skaters were isolated from the Europeans, and the development of dance in America occurred without outside influences. Another factor was the RSROA vs. AAU dispute which came to a head in 1942, resulting in a lack of communication between RSROA skaters and ice skaters. By 1948, the American Style of skate dancing, introduced in 1938 and developed by RSROA Professionals and champions, was quite different from ice dancing in America, or from European roller skate dancing.

After the war, the European skaters began competing again. Using the European style, USARSA and European skaters dominated the FIRS Worlds (first held in 1947), while RSROA skaters using American Style dance were dominant in the World Roller Skating Congress meets (also first held in 1947). Differences between USARSA skaters using what is now known as "International Style" and RSROA skaters using American Style continued until the two groups merged to form USAC/RS in 1972. On ice, skate dancing was included in the World Championships in 1952, with the competition consisting of three parts: Compulsory, Original Set Pattern, and Free Dance. Ice Dancing did not become a Winter Olympic event until 1976.

In 1964, the RSROA introduced Free Dance to help prepare skaters for the World Championships. The World Congress had disappeared, and RSROA skaters were getting ready to compete in FIRS World meets. Free Dance was set up as a separate event however the top Senior dance teams were usually able to win placements.

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AMERICAN STYLE DANCE (continued from previous page)

David Tassinari and Patricia Fogarty from Norwood, Massachusetts, won the first three years of the Free Dance event, and generally set the style for following competitions in Free Dance. Linda Gyenese and Michael Crickmore, the 1969 and 1970 Free Dance champions at Nationals, introduced the "novelty style" routine, combining serious steps with humorous movements.

Even though the RSROA teams were excellent dancers, with few exceptions (notably Tassinari & Fogarty and Adolph Wacker & Linda Mottice) they did not excel in world competition during the 1960's since the "American Style" of dance was not acceptable to the European dominated judges panels at the World Championships. Therefore, in 1970 a USIC (United States International Competition) event was instituted at the National Championships. This new event was open to the Senior skaters, and to skaters who had passed their RSROA Gold Medal Proficiency Dance Test. The USIC event was a competition based upon European and World Meet rules, designed to pick the best candidates for world competition, not necessarily the American Style Dance Senior champions. For example, the dance team of Baba Brooks and Bill Graf, who won the USIC dance in 1970, had never placed in Senior American Dance. They received fifth place at the World Championships in 1970, which was an excellent result for a team making their first world meet appearance. Beginning in the 1960's and continuing until the merger which formed USAC/RS in 1972, the United States World Team was composed of skaters from both the RSROA and the USARSA. Generally speaking, the USARSA dance teams placed higher before the merger because they were trained in the European, or "International Style." In 1972, the USIC competition was revised into the Senior "International Style Dance" event at the National Championships, and in 1981, the name "Senior" was dropped in favour of "World Class." Regardless of international competitions and style, the "American Style" of skate dancing first begun in 1938, has remained as an important event at the National Championships, and has retained its popularity among United States skaters.

Right: David Tassinari and Patricia Fogarty from Norwood, Massachusetts, the first RSROA National Senior Free Dance Champions in 1964. David and Pat successfully defended their Free Dance title in 1965 & 1966.

Editors Note: In addition to being one of the founders of the museum, James Turner is the author of "The History of Roller Skating," published by the RSROA. Copies of this booklet are available for \$4 each by writing the RSROA at P.O. Box 81846, Lincoln NE 68501. A Gold Medalist in dance himself, Turner has been a long time member of the SRSTA. Jim is currently a Museum Trustee, and his articles have been in previous newsletters.



MUSEUM RAFFLE AGAIN A WINNER

The drawing for the Museum raffle was held in May at the RSROA Convention in Las Vegas. The raffle is an important event for your museum; the \$15,000 raised helps to fund our publications, exhibits and collections care. The following were this year's prize winners.

\$100 winners - R.E. Trotter, Athens GA; Marjorie Wall, Ft. Wayne IN; Eddie Smith, Pulaski VA; Charlie Santoro & John Maddocks, Norwood MA; Herb Bale, Niagara Falls NY; Henry Morefoot, Upperco MD; Richard Jones, Brick NJ; the Roller Skating Association's Office Staff Pool; Irene Nazzaro, Menlo Park CA; Walter Turnbull, Dover OH; Dale Pritchard, Portland OR; Richard Maulucci, E. Hartford CT; Harry Walker, Ft. Worth TX; Richard Weiner, Ridgewood NJ; and Charles Wahlig, Newark DE. \$250 winners - Eugene Fridblom, Bridgeton MO; Jim McMahan, Danville IL; Eric Englund, Everett WA; John Muse, W. Des Moines IA; Rick Porter, Cheyenne WY; Barry Bruce, Germantown MD; Charlotte Groves, Marysville WA; Pamela Gerig, Plantation FL; Charlie Santoro & John Maddocks, Norwood MA; George Schweigert, Monmouth IL; Walter Vanhorn, Mills WY; Jerry Derrick, Charleston WV; Irwin Rosee, Morganville NJ; and Susan Loos, Canton MI. Grand Prize \$5,000 winner - Joe Champa, Lexington KY.

Thanks to all who participated by purchasing tickets. I would like to extend a special special thanks to those who assisted me with the raffle, without whose help the event could not have succeeded: Robert Bollinger, Bert Anselmi, Marvin Facher, Richard Young, George Pickard, John Maddocks, Mills Lynn, William Kelly, Ed Young, Vic Riccobono, Harry Walker, Annelle Anderson, Joe Nazzaro, Jr., John Nazzaro, Bettie Jennings, Jim McMahan, Jim Wall, Eric Englund, Charlotte Groves, Bruce & Barbara Pearson, Jim Means, Mike Fleming, Joe Champa, Darryl & Lois Harper, Bill Grice, Dick Mensik, Frank Cernik, David Schafer, Mary Thomas, L. R. Brown, Lew Quintin, Jr., Debbie Torries, and Robert Fuhst.

Though there were 30 individual winners of cash prizes, the real winner of the raffle was the museum which raised additional funds to carry out its mission for the benefit of all involved with roller skating.

Your tax-deductible contribution will enable the Museum to serve the roller skating community. Donors receive a certificate recognizing their contribution. Your help is important; it does make a difference.

Contributors of \$5 receive their choice of the National Museum of Roller Skating

Pin or Patch (please specify)

Contributors of \$15 or more become honorary members of the Museum. Benefits include the Museum pin, a wallet-size membership card, free admission to the Museum, and the quarterly newsletter.

Please enroll me as an honorary member of the National Museum of Roller Skating.

- | | |
|--|------------|
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