

June 2018

*Rolling Thru Time*  
Newsletter

The  
National  
Museum of  
Roller Skating



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**Tom Russo Contributes in  
Celebration of Historic Chicago Rink**



Tom Russo, author of *Chicago Rink Rats the Roller Capital in Its Heyday*, will be signing his book and meeting with members and guests of the Elmhurst Museum at its opening of the exhibit titled "Chicago Rink Rats," with special emphasis on the historic Elm Rink. The event is July 13, beginning at 5 p.m. for members and 6 p.m. for the general public. Russo wrote the script for the multi-panel display in the exhibit which the museum will host through November 4, 2018. The Elm Rink (1956-89) was one of 18 Chicago rinks Russo profiled in his recently released book on what he calls the Golden Age of roller skating, spanning 1937-1959 when 5,000 rinks existed across the U.S., and roller skating became the number one participatory sport in America.

The museum is making the opening of the exhibit a special day. It will set up a portable rink so visitors can lace up and skate to live music by

School of Rock, a local high school group. Participants can also hear first-person accounts from skaters and view eclectic skating artifacts.

The museum had been kicking around the idea for this exhibit for a couple of years, said Patrice Harrigan Roche, marketing and communication specialist for the museum. When Russo's book was published, it helped coalesce the idea with reality. "Everyone remembers the Elm", said Roche. In addition, other legendary Chicago skating venues will also be remembered: Arcadia, Riverview, The Savoy, and the Lombard. The museum is even sponsoring a skating night at the Lombard on August 9 from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

Dave Oberg, executive director of the museum, said the team didn't realize until they started the project just how outstanding the Elm rink was. They interviewed skaters from the Lombard rink who used to skate at the Elm. The museum was able to acquire pipes from the organ and talk with a former organist of the rink. Many of the artifacts will be offered to the National Museum of Roller Skating when the exhibit closes, added Oberg. James Turner, an original trustee of the National Museum of Roller Skating, will be speaking at the Elmhurst Museum on the history of roller skating on Sept. 30 at 2 p.m.

The Elmhurst History Museum is an award-winning regional history museum founded in 1957. The museum is located in the landmark known as Glos Mansion. The museum connects people with history by presenting an eclectic mix of changing exhibits on a broad range of history-related topics. It houses close to 15,000 three dimensional artifacts and over 500 books. The museum attempts to showcase exhibits you can't see everywhere, said Roche. They have taken their exhibits up a notch in the last 10 years, she added. The museum is located at 120 Park Ave in Elmhurst, Illinois.

*Graphic courtesy of Elmhurst History Museum*

## Annual Museum Meeting Highlights

**The annual meeting of the National Museum of Roller Skating was held at South Point Hotel and Casino on May 13, just preceding the national convention of the RSA. The following items were discussed or approved:**

- An amendment to the bylaws was approved by the board to make terms for museum officers two years. The following officers were reelected for two-year terms: Kim Wall, president; Nellie Anderson Lillie, vice president; Alan Bacon, treasurer; and Peggy Young, corporate secretary. There were no changes in museum trustees.
- Kim Wall reported on the updating of the museum's computer system. TrustWorkz will be updating the software, for a reduced fee. USARS purchased new computers recently, including one for museum use. And funds have been donated for a new scanner dedicated to museum use. The goal is to expand the museum's presence using this medium, including for students and researchers to use in exploring roller skating history.
- Kim Wall reported on the efforts of Joe Nazzaro to help the museum grow its membership. Nazzaro has produced and financed a two-page letter to everyone on his company's (Rebecca's and Roll-on) extensive mailing list to encourage museum membership. He worked with Lillie to write the document, which includes accolades of the museum from social media and other publications. It includes numerous ways one can pay for membership, including for the first time, the means to have membership renewed automatically each year unless one opts out.
- The trustees met Eric Steele, new executive director of USARS. Steele gave enthusiastic input on how he and the USARS office can continue working with the museum.

Museum Trustees at the annual museum board meeting, left to right: Randy Ray, Ed Hughes, Kim Wall, Alan Bacon, Linda Miner, Eric Steele, executive director of USARS, Dianne Braun, Nellie Anderson Lillie, Judith Young Link, Howard "Bud" Engle, Annelle Anderson, and Danny Brown. Trustees not pictured: Charlene Conway, Dominic Cangelosi, Bill Hoefler, Michael Jacques, Jim Link, and Peggy Young



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## Raffle Continues to Supply Essential Funds for Museum

The raffle at the RSA convention continued its success:

1<sup>st</sup> Place David Ramsey who received 35% of the total ticket receipts, or \$3797

2<sup>nd</sup> Place Section I who received 10% of the total ticket receipts or \$1400

3<sup>rd</sup> Place Ron Parmley who received 5% of the total receipts or \$540

Thanks to Ramsey and Parmley for donating \$700 back to the museum.

217 tickets were sold this year, down slightly from the 234 tickets sold in 2017. No winnings were donated last year, so with this year's donations of \$700, the museum came out slightly ahead of 2017, with a net \$5425 from ticket sells after prizes plus \$700 donation for a total of \$6125.

Top buyers this year with 10 or more tickets were the Ramseys, JBL Trinity, Verna Quaranto, and Dominic Cangelosi. RSA sections 1,2,4,5 and 10 also bought tickets.

The top seller this year was Nellie Anderson Lillie. Close behind was Cort Wahlig. Other top sellers were Dianne Braun, Danny Brown and Ed Hughes. Wahlig was the top non museum trustee seller.



The RSA again donated space for the museum to have a booth at their convention. Retail sales of \$454 were over double last year's with the new selection of T-shirts leading the sales. Also popular was Tom Russo's new book, *Chicago Rink Rats*. Copies were

donated to the museum for resale.

*Pictured: Gary Stang, owner of Skateworld in San Diego, CA is holding up a popular tee-shirt at the museum booth. Helping man the booth is Dorothy McDonald and Bud Engel.*

## Bowling Tournament Strikes Success!

**The first ever museum bowling fundraiser brought 38 people together for a night of fun and camaraderie in the upstairs bowling center at South Point. Linda Miner, museum trustee, was in charge of registration. No national bowling champions were spotted, but lots of cheers were heard when pins unexpectedly toppled. The museum netted over \$500 dollars!**



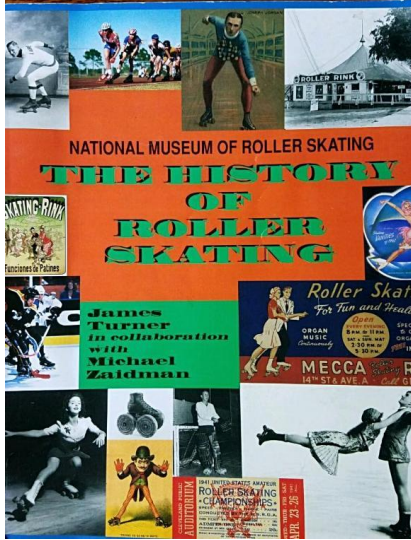




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## Feature: How the Roller Skating Museum Got Started

by James Turner



### Editor's Note:

A variety of voices are encouraged to submit information and articles to this newsletter (Send to [director@rollerskatingmuseum.com](mailto:director@rollerskatingmuseum.com)). This month's readers have the pleasure of two contributions. The first is by James Turner, the only surviving original museum trustee. I met him by phone a few months ago. We talked for an hour about the history of skating, and I asked him if he would write some articles for the newsletter. He is no longer in rink management, but is back in the high school classroom. He still teaches competitive skating in Milwaukee, and JB skating in Chicago. He will be doing a presentation on the history of roller skating at the Elmhurst History Museum on Sept. 30 at 2 p.m.

-Alan Bacon

*James Turner's book can still be purchased at the museum. See the museum's website. James Turner, second from the right, next to his good friend Chester Fried on far right.*

When I was in college in 1969 at the University of Maryland, I wanted to write a paper on the history of roller skating for a history research project. The professor turned down my proposal, saying that there was no information on that subject. He was right!! Finding out about the history of roller skating became a hobby of mine. I lived in Washington, D.C. and I was a high school history teacher at that time. During school vacations I would go to the Library of Congress and check out all of the books on roller and ice skating. You must read the books there as only Congressmen can check out the books from their collection. I did that for three years and took notes. In 1973 I started writing up all of the stories I had found and this became my first book.

George Pickard found out what I was doing and he used his influence to get RSROA (Roller Skating Rink Operators Association) to publish my book, *The History of Roller Skating* (1975). I was given the Teacher of the Year Award in 1975 for my contribution to the sport of roller skating.



Chester Fried from New Jersey and Dick Young from Connecticut both had large collections of skating history and memorabilia. Chester, Dick and I started a group called the Roller Skating Historical Society to promote roller skating history and to try and start a museum of roller skating, using their collections as a starting point. The three of us went to Lincoln and met with George Pickard to see if he would be able to help us. He was very interested in the museum project and he contacted several other people that he thought would be interested and would support the idea of a roller skating museum. He got the RSROA Board of Directors to donate a room for the museum at the National Office in Lincoln. The founding fathers and first board of directors of the Museum were George Pickard, James Turner, Chester Fried, Dick Young, Burt Anselmi, Bob Bollinger, Marvin Facher, and Michael Brosslin the museum curator. The museum opened in 1982.

Over the following years people have donated many historical artifacts to the museum's collection. The granddaughter of James L. Plimpton, the inventor of the modern roller skate, donated the patent model collection of his famous skates to the museum. Bob Bollinger of Portland, Oregon, donated oak cabinets for the museum displays and other artifacts. When USA Roller Skating (USAC) and RSROA split into two associations, George Pickard went with the competitive association (USAC) and the museum followed him to the present location on South Street in Lincoln, Nebraska.

After 15 years, the museum had discovered many new things about the history of roller skating from donations, more research, and the museum newsletters. My first book had sold out so I re-wrote my book, *The History of Roller Skating* (1997), and with the help of Michel Zaidman, the curator at the time, I used photos from the museum along with my text. I gave my copyright to the museum to help them raise money through book sales. After my first book was published in 1975, I realized that a main source of information was from Skate Magazine issues going back to 1938 when RSROA started competitive figure roller skating in the United States. George Pickard had a complete collection of these magazines that he saved from a dumpster when the Association moved from Detroit to Lincoln in the 1960's. He later donated these to the museum. I contacted friends from all over the United States and they loaned me partial collections of magazines. I collated them and took them to the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. The librarian who helped me with this project was Donald Wisdom, a great name for an Library of Congress Librarian. He took the Skate Magazine issues (1938-1975) and put them on microfilm for everyone to use in roller skating research in the future.



I have been involved in Roller Skating since 1957 as a competitor, judge, teacher, rink operator, and coach. It has been a life-long passion for me. Helping to start the National Roller Skating Museum is one of the best things I could have done to help promote the sport of roller skating. I would like to thank everyone for their continued support of the Roller Skating.

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## Feature: Wooden Wheels and Powdered Floors

By Marie Walker

Editors Note: The second article is by Marie Walker. Walker is listed as a Titan in George Pickard's book, *Titans and Heroes of American Roller Skating*. In his book Pickard said Walker received her first pair of boot skates in 1942. She became a respected leader in the area of judging. "She was invited to take a position as a member of the first USAC/RS Board of Directors. She was initially the only women member." She was presented with USARS Life Membership in 1992 and "was installed in the USARS Distinguished Service Hall of Fame for her contributions to the federation and to roller skating."

-Alan Bacon

*Pictured: Marie Walker, right, presenting 1986 Amateur of the Year award to Maggie Eng*



**It is my hope that every single club in the USA has made a contribution—however small—to the museum, to maintain and enhance the story of your heritage. None of this history can be lost, and nor should any of the wonderful material on view at "our museum". Skaters should all make at least one trip to the museum, MUST make at least one trip, in their lifetime!**

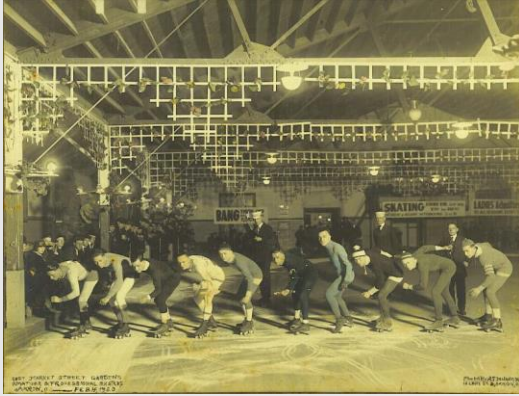
**May I add something to that understanding of our heritage? Listen up, each and every skater, coach, volunteer, and operator, to the story of:**

### **WOODEN WHEELS AND POWDERED FLOORS**

Not so very long ago, indoor roller skates came equipped with wooden wheels. Wheels that went “flat,” so every skate shop in every rink had a machine that allowed them to quickly grind down your wheels and make them nice and round and smooth again! By and by, the wheels would become so small they had to be replaced with new ones. If you were a competitive skater, that meant new wheels several times a year, whether for Artistic (figures,) Speed, or Hockey. And oh boy—the NOISE. The noise during a crowded session was deafening. You had to shout to be heard!

And then, the floors. The rinks used fine maple floors, but there was not such a thing as a coating to give them shine but no slip. So, what to do to keep the skaters from killing themselves on slippery floors, on their wooden wheels? Why, powder the floors, of course! The operator would have a chalk-like substance generously sprinkled all over the floor, on both sides of the barriers, and then brushed in. Of course, when the doors were opened and the skaters all took to the floor, the powder was soon floating around in the air, and the floor was slippery. So, the floor would be cleared half way through the session, and more powder would be generously sprinkled. Oh, swell. You left the rink with a lovely layer of powder on your hair and on your clothes, and you carried with you the “rink perfume.”

Just imagine how much harder it was to race, or to play a fast game of hockey, or to do the dances and the spins and jumps, under those conditions. Please give credit to your “ancestors” who managed to do technically excellent Quicksteps and for the lady to sail around lifted high overhead with her partner hoping to keep his footing in Pairs—please know how much you owe everyone involved for going onward and building one of the finest sports, and for a long time, probably the most successful sports in America. Be proud of your heritage, and honor the past while you forge the future. I support the museum, and all of you must do so, too.



East Market Street Gardens 1920.  
Pictured are the wooden wheels and trail of powder on the floor, just before the whirl of powder will permeate the air once the race begins. Wooden wheels and powder would still be in use decades after this picture was taken.



Today, much has changed besides wooden wheels and powdered floors: inline skates, coated floors, helmets, style of uniforms and more.

## STAY CONNECTED

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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.

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