



Historical Roller Skating

OVERVIEW

Issue No. 20

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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.

Another year has passed, one which was most successful for the museum; both in terms of our growing collections, how the collections have been used for publications, and to provide answers to the many questions we receive. The museum also had a good year financially, especially with Federal grants. We would like to publicly acknowledge and thank all of the Honorary Members listed in this newsletter for your generous support in the past year. Your help was instrumental in helping the museum grown and expand. We would also like to wish all of you a happy holiday season and New Year.

Thanks to all of you who sent in nominations or recommendations for the USAC/RS Hall of Fame. Your letters will be brought to the attention of the Hall of Fame Committee. Those skaters selected for the Hall of Fame will be announced in the March newsletter.

By now all of you should have received a flyer on our museum merchandise "special" sale, only for Honorary Members. You may have noticed on the "flip" side of the flyer the museum has quite a few old "Skating News" magazines and rule books. If you would like a list of what is available, please contact me. Please specify if you are interested in the books, the magazines, or both. I will send you a current listing with prices and ordering information. There are a limited number of copies of both books and magazine issues, so "first come - first served."

For those who might have lost a newsletter or just recently became an honorary member, we have the following newsletter back-issues in stock: No. 4, 8, 10, 11, 13 through 19 and the "Chicago" special issue. These are available at no charge while the supply lasts.

Continued on next page

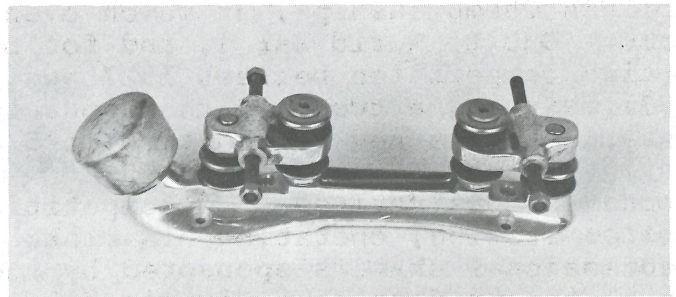
CURATOR'S CORNER (continued)

In November, Chester Fried of South River, New Jersey, and James Turner now of Racine, Wisconsin, were elected to the Museum's Board of Trustees. Chester, an authority on roller skating memorabilia, and Jim, a noted skating historian and author of "History of Roller Skating in America," were two of the museum's founders and rejoin the Board after a one year absence. Also in November, Marvin Facher, George Pickard and Bill Ludascher were re-elected to the Museum's Board of Trustees.

Last year, the museum held a benefit raffle to raise funds at the 1986 RSROA Convention & Trade Show. The museum is again holding a raffle in 1987, with the drawing for cash prizes scheduled for Thursday, May 14th during the RSROA Convention. Beginning in December, Museum Trustees and Volunteers will be selling raffle tickets for \$50 each. 500 tickets have been printed, with one in every 16 tickets a winner. \$10,000 in cash will be given away, with a top prize of \$5,000. There are 14 second prizes of \$250, and 15 third prizes of \$100. Ticket purchasers need not be present to win. Revenues from the raffle will be used to support the various programs of the museum, and will help to fulfill the conditions governing the Federal grant recently received by the museum. If you are interested in obtaining a raffle ticket, either for yourself or for a group, contact a Museum Trustee or call or write me here at the museum.

At Thanksgiving time, the museum had a most interesting visitor - "Hank" the roller skating bear, who was passing through with his trainer, Rex Horton. Mr. Horton graciously presented the museum with two pairs of Hank's skates, which will be on display in the museum shortly. We hope to have a short article on roller skating animals in the next newsletter.

Thanks to Museum member Tony Knox, we recently received several important additions to our skate collections. Mr. Knox also informed us that the skate shown below might possibly be a "Zephyr" model skate (not to be confused with the Chicago Skate Co.'s "Zephyr" model street skate), made in the 1940-1941 period. The skate has 90 degree action, and a hollow section between the trucks (painted red on some of the examples we have, bronze in others). If you have any information on this "Zephyr" skate or the firm which made it, please contact me.



RODNEY R. PETERS, Champion Speed Skater and Rink Operator

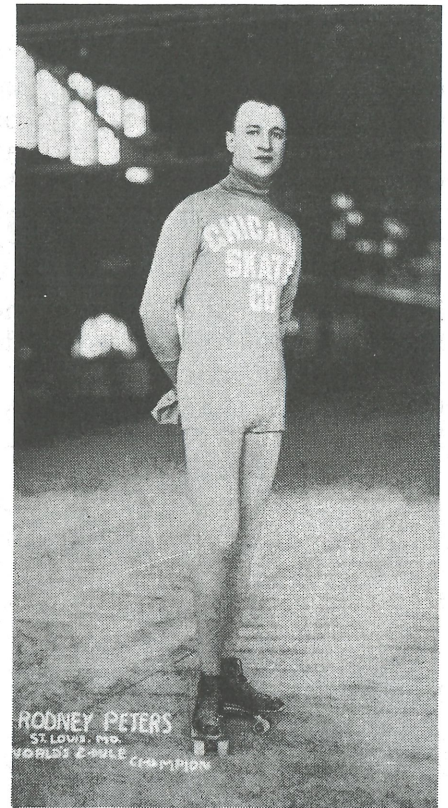
According to Fred Martin's scrapbook, Rodney was one of the most colorful skaters of the period. Peters started roller skating at the Crescent Rink in his hometown of St. Louis, Missouri. He began racing as an amateur (then the training ground for the great professional speed skaters) in 1907, and competed in the first World Amateur Championship meet at the Jai

Continued on next page

Rodney Peters (continued)

Alai Rink in St. Louis in 1908. Later that year Peters won the prestigious Harmon Cup at the World Championships held at the Riverview Rink of Chicago. Regular readers of this newsletter may remember Paddy Harmon as the sporting goods distributor who rejected Walter Ware's (Chicago Roller Skate Co.) first 3 wheel skates. Rodney then began an extensive tour of the country, skating "challenge" races against anyone and everyone. During this tour, Peters won and then defended the one mile championship at Pittsburgh, establishing a world record on a flat track with a time of 2 minutes, 46.4 seconds.

In the last part of 1909, Rodney traveled to Europe to compete in International Championships. In a meet held at Earl's Court Rink in London, he defeated Allie Moore, the best American racer, and Charles Wilson, Champion of England at that time. During his European tour, Peters won every race he entered, both in England and France. In 1911, Rodney returned to the United States to compete in the Championships races in St. Louis. He skated against all the top skaters in America, including Harley Davidson, Roland Cioni, Midge Sherman, Fred Tyrell, Fred Martin and many others.



In 1912, Peters took over the operation of the Delmar Gardens Rink in St. Louis, and soon became a successful businessman. He opened the Sans Soucci Rink in St. Louis in 1913, followed by the Palladium Rink in the same city in 1914. During these years, Rodney remained active in speed skating, racing in events all over the country. In 1916 he again entered the World's Championships, at which event he set a new record time for the mile race. Due to World War I, and for business reasons, Peters retired from active competition between 1917 and 1920. He jumped back on the track in 1921, winning a two mile championship race at the Palladium Rink, and establishing a new record time of 5 minutes, 48 seconds.

Rodney Peters retired from competition in 1922, but remained active in roller skating, operating his rinks in St. Louis. He coached many of the professional skaters sponsored by the Sans Soucci and Palladium rinks until the professional circuit folded in the depression. When Leo Selzer began the "Roller Derby" in 1935 (as a marathon skating contest), he assisted St. Louis skaters train for the event at the Coliseum Rink, a facility which he had opened in the late 1920's. Rodney also lent his talents to developing young amateur skaters. Peters was the coach of Lloyd "Whitey" Christopher, who became the first Official United States Amateur Mens Speed Skating Champion at the races held at the Arena Gardens in Detroit during April 1937. Along with Fred Martin, Vic Brown and others, Rodney was one of the original 17 "founding fathers" of the RSROA, and served as the Association's second President in the 1939-40 year. In 1941, Rodney Peters retired from the roller skating business for good.

COMPETITIVE ARTISTIC SKATING - FOURS

Fours skating is essentially what the name implies - four skaters performing a routine together. The Fours event was an outgrowth of combination figure skating on ice in the 1920s. Basically, a fours team is two pairs teams, doing mirror-image routines. The team is required to execute singles, pairs and specialized fours movements during their performance. Championship calibre fours teams were usually a combination of two outstanding pairs teams, however many fours teams were formed to assist and help developing singles or pairs skaters.

The first major Fours competitive event was skated at the RSROA National Championships of 1942, held in Detroit, with Dorothy Law, Louise Moore, William L. Martin, Jr., and Alden Sibley of the Arena Gardens Skating Club emerging as the winning team. Though neither of the two sets of skaters were champions as pairs, in 1943 Bill Martin developed into a National Senior Pairs titleholder with a different partner, Margaret Williams. Bill McMillan, one of the most outstanding SRSTA Teachers (inducted into the Roller Skating Industry Hall of Fame in 1963), was the pro of this fours team. McMillan was one of the early innovators in fours skating.



In addition to being a crowd pleaser, the fours event was quite popular with the skaters. In 1947, the Intermediate (now Junior) and Novice (now Sophomore) divisions were added to fours national competition, and in 1954, a Junior (now Freshman) national title. There were quite a few great all-around individual and pairs skaters who did well in fours during the first ten years of the event. Among the names in the list of National Fours Champions are Pat Carroll, Norman Latin, Jay Norcross, Bob LaBriola, Nancy Kromis, Bill Pate, Gail Locke, Johnny Matejec, and others.

In 1952, a fours team from Middleton, Ohio, won the Intermediate (now the Junior) division. They are credited with the invention of the "fours pendulum swing spin" during that year; a movement which became a standard item in fours routines. Known as the "Fabulous Fours," the team was made up of Frances Recher, Gary Houck, Maxine Dorn and Billy Sticklen, and was taught by noted pro Ray Hough. Although not invented by this team, the "Circle Pass Over" lift (similar to the pairs' "Pass Over") was brought to a degree of perfection by the Fab Fours. After defeating the 1952 Senior National Champions (Kromis, Locke, Pate & Matejec) at the 1953 Great Lakes Regionals, disaster struck. The day before the 1953 Nationals, Billy Sticklen was killed in a plane crash near Cleveland. Dorn retired the following season,



At top left are Houck, Dorn, Hough, Recher and Sticklen. Bottom left, the "Fabulous Fours" in action during 1953.

so Recher and Houck teamed up with Robert Clary and Marilee Olson to recapture the National Senior Fours crown in 1954.

Among those who were members of Championship fours teams in the early 1960s were USAC/RS Hall of Famers David Tassinari and Michael Jacques. In the mid 1960s, Fours became extremely popular on the West Coast. From 1967 to 1975, California skaters dominated the fours event, usually placing two of the top three senior teams at Nationals. The leading pros in fours during that period were Tom Panno and Jim Pringle, showing superior knowledge and innovation in the event through the number of champion teams they produced.

Richard Toon of San Leandro, California, skated on more senior fours championship teams than any other person (six times). Other familiar names to grace the winners platform in this period were Judy Jerue and Dennis Collier. Pictured at right are the 1972 Senior Fours Champions: Toon, Jerue, Collier and Karen Marshall. Teams from San Leandro had won five consecutive senior fours championships when in 1972, Louis Stovall and the team from Long Beach broke their string. Stovall, with partner Vicky Handyside, went on to capture the 1973 FIRS World Pairs title in November.



The field for the fours events were never as large as singles, figures, pairs or dance, however some of the best pairs and singles skaters also skated fours. Among the names in the competitive records are many national champions in other senior events, including Tommy Lane, Ron Jellse, Michael Glatz, Ruth Heesman and Ken Trotter, Sue Welch, Diane Kern, and Nancy Lou Johnson. There are also many lower division champion fours skaters who later became Senior champions in other events; Rob Wollard and Carol Stout, Laurene Anselmi, Rob and Gail Robovitsky, John Gustafson, Robbie Coleman and Pat Jones, and Jane Puracchio Butera.

Due to a shrinking number of entries, the fours events at Nationals was reduced to only two divisions (Senior and Novice) in 1967. There were many problems in developing a fours team; finding four people with compatible personalities and with close levels of skating proficiency, and more importantly, getting the team together for practice while working around four different individuals' schedules. After the 1975 United States Championships, the fours events were dropped from the national meet because of a lack of participation. You can however, still see fours skating at the Gold Skate Classic, in shows, and in exhibitions.

(Editor's note: My thanks to Jim Turner, the author of "The History of Roller Skating," from which this article has been adapted.)

A sincere thanks to all of the Museum's Honorary Members for their contributions during the 1985-1986 season. We are grateful for your support, which allowed the museum to grow and progress this past year.

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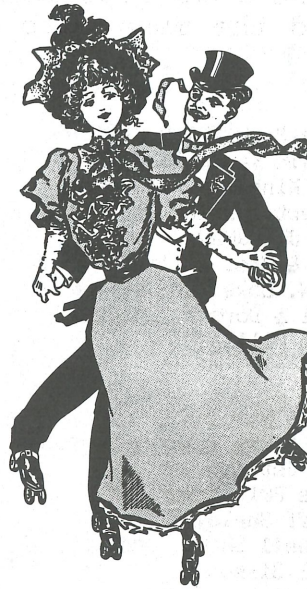
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Left: The 1966 Senior Fours
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