

# Historical Roller Skating

# OVERVIEW

National Museum of Roller Skating  
4730 South Street  
P.O. Box 6579  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68506-0579  
Phone 402-483-7551

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A Publication of the National Museum of Roller Skating

Issue No. 43



# CURATOR'S CORNER

I am proud to announce the publication of the new museum book, *The Evolution of the Roller Skate: 1820 - Present*. The book includes over a hundred and forty photos documenting the museum's vast collection and includes chapters ranging from "The History of In-line Skates," to "Odd and Unusual Skates." It is an exciting step for the museum which is seeking to broaden its role in documenting the vast history of roller skating. A more specific description of the new book is included in this month's "Overview" as well as an order form for your convenience.

Other exciting news! The National Museum of Roller Skating will be featured in the April issue of *Smithsonian Magazine*. For the 25th anniversary edition Smithsonian has decided to highlight (among other things) some smaller museums for their readership. A reporter has already visited the museum as well as two photographers who conducted an all day photo shoot for the magazine. I will let you know when the magazine appears on newsstands in the spring. Be sure to watch for it!

Speaking of the Smithsonian, I am currently negotiating a loan for a few of the important roller skates from their collection in Washington, D.C. While their collection is quite small, they do have several skates that are of extreme historical significance such as two of the earliest skates known to exist from the early part of the 19th century.

In other museum news, we have received the second half of the Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) which is \$2,500. This money is specifically earmarked for improving the museum's photo collections care. It will provide for improvements in the housing of our photos by allowing us to purchase more acid-free envelopes, steel flat files for large prints and posters, and environmental monitoring equipment to allow us to gauge the humidity and light levels in the museum more effectively. All of these improvements in our collections care help the museum fulfill its goal of providing the best possible environment for preserving the heritage of roller skating.

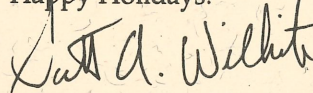
Three new displays are in the works at the museum. The first will look at the history of the Roller Derby. This is an often overlooked part of roller skating history but I have had enough visitors ask about it to merit its own display. Likewise, for many of the people involved with roller skating, the roller disco era, with its distinctive fashions and music, is a period that deserves little elaboration. Yet for many of the visitors of the museum, the lack of a roller disco exhibit is glaring. Finally, a display featuring the RSROA/RSA is also on the drawing boards. I hope to include a number of photos of older rinks and various other items as well.

Speaking of the RSROA, this issue of the "Overview" highlights the early history of the organization. The information contained in the enclosed article was culled from several sources, but most notably the April 1962 issue of *Skate* magazine which was devoted to the then 25th anni-

versary of the RSROA. Subsequent issues of the "Overview" will continue to highlight the history of the Roller Skating Rink Operators Association of America.

Finally, the December "Overview" features a special section for ordering items from the museum's store (just in time for the holidays)! Included is a special membership offer which will truly be "the gift that keeps on giving" for some lucky individuals. Turn to pg. 4-5 for more details.

Happy Holidays!



Scott A. Wilhite  
Director & Curator

## MUSEUM MEMBER QUIZ

What was the original name of the "Skating Vanities," the first big professional touring roller skating show?

The first correct answer submitted to the museum by mail will win one copy of the new book, *The Evolution of the Roller Skate: 1820 - Present*. The answer, and the winner, will be announced in the next issue of the "Historical Roller Skating Overview." Good luck!

## NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ROLLER SKATING BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

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Historical Roller Skating Overview is the newsletter of the National Museum of Roller Skating. It is available only through honorary membership in the museum. Minimum annual contribution is \$15.00. All inquiries, comments should be sent to the Museum Director, 4730 South St., P.O. Box 6579, Lincoln, NE 68506.

# Highlights of RSROA History

**1937** - During the first organized national speed meet held at the Arena Gardens, Detroit, Mich., seventeen rink operators gathered together on April 2nd to form the RSROA . . . Each man contributed \$1 to establish the original treasury of the Association . . . Victor J. Brown of Newark, N.J., was elected the first President and Fred A. Martin of Detroit was named Secretary/Treasurer . . . A single drawer in Fred Martin's desk at the Arena Gardens was the first RSROA office . . . Betty Lytle became the first American to earn a Silver Figure medal.

**1938** - An organized system of skating proficiency tests was developed by the RSROA . . . Perry Rawson was named Dance Committee Chairman . . . Rawson traveled to England to study dance skating in that country . . . The International style of skate dancing in this country resulted from the trip . . . The RSROA became a member of the Amateur Skating Union . . . The first RSROA skating manual was published. It consisted of only 36 pages.

**1939** - The first national figure skating championships were held at the Arena Gardens, Detroit . . . The first national dance championships were held at Mineola, New York . . . The dances skated included the "Chicken Scratch," the "Old Style Two-Step," and the "American Promenade." Rodney R. Peters of St. Louis, Mo., was elected RSROA President.

**1940** - The first combined national Championships were held at the Public Auditorium, Cleveland, Ohio . . . Walter Stokosa of Detroit, the nation's first Senior Men's Figure Skating Champion, successfully defends his title . . . The RSROA institutes its own program of commissioning judges . . . Victor J. Brown who served as President in 1937 and 1938 was re-elected to the office . . . "Skating Review," a national roller skating magazine, was published . . . A three-week professional skating teachers' school was conducted at the Arena Gardens . . . Some seventy professionals from around the country attended the school.

**1941** - Five Senior Men's speed records were set at the American Championships in Cleveland . . . Melva Block won the first of her two Senior Ladies Figure Skating Championships . . . Fred H. Freeman of Boston, Mass., was elected to his first of three successive one-year terms as RSROA President . . . The RSROA staged the American Roller Skating Carnival for the New York Journal American at Madison Square Garden before a capacity crowd of 18,000 spectators . . . Much national publicity resulted from this giant roller skating extravaganza which featured RSROA skating champions.

**1942** - The "Skating Vanities" made its debut in Baltimore with Gloria Nord in the starring role . . . Fours skating was added to the competitive schedule of the American Championships . . . Stating the Amateur Skating Union was not in sympathy with roller skating, the RSROA re-

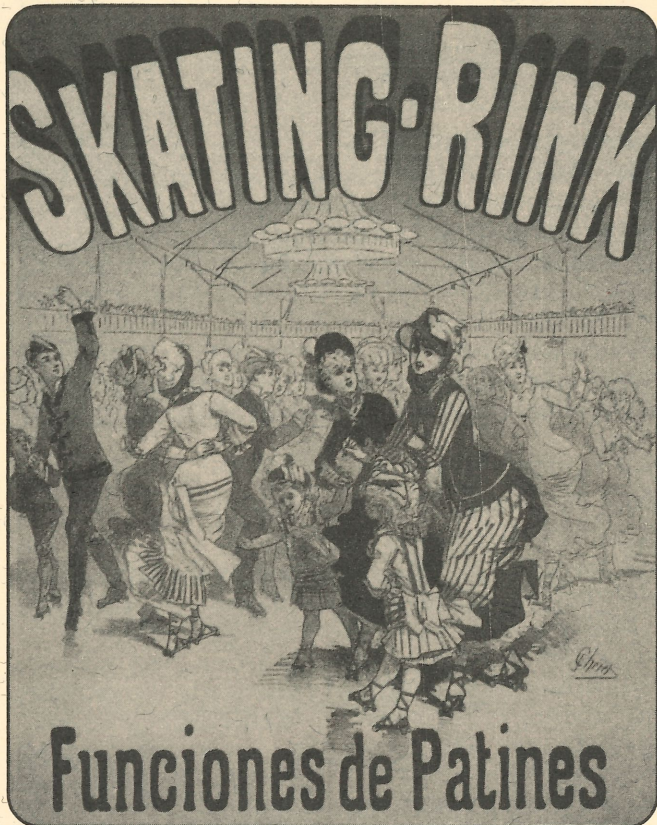
signed on March 13th from the ASU . . . In a poll conducted by the "Skating Review," the Death Spiral was named the most daring and difficult pairs movement of the year . . . The RSROA Board of Control made plans for the formation of an Amateur Athletic Guild, exclusive to the sport of roller skating . . . Roller Skating Teachers were certified by the RSROA as associate members . . . Written judges commission examinations were instituted . . . "Skating Review" was adopted as the official publication of the RSROA after several years of service in an unofficial capacity.

**1943** - The ranks of amateur skating champions was reduced by enlistments in the armed services . . . A controversy developed over the adjustment of the action of the skate. Perry Rawson favored flexible trucks as opposed to the loose and rigid skate action schools of thought . . . Former RSROA skating champion Melva Block was featured in a roller skating number in the movie, "Private Miss Jones" starring Judy Garland . . . "Roller Skating Vanities" appeared in the 20th Century Fox movie, "Pin-Up Girl" which starred Betty Grable . . . American Championships were held at the Arena Gardens, Detroit.

**1944** - The RSROA staged a gigantic roller skating benefit show for Infantile Paralysis at Madison Square Garden . . . Playing to a capacity audience, the show featured roller champions from the Eastern United States, supported by the exhibitions of RSROA teachers. The show was acclaimed a great success . . . William T. "Pop" Brown was elected to the first of the four consecutive terms as President of the Association . . . Ensign James Costigan of the U.S. Maritime Service and Ruth Crouse won the Senior Dance title at the National Championships . . . Arthur Russell won the Senior Men's Figure Championships.

**1945** - The RSROA begins publication of its own magazine, "Skating News" . . . The National Championships were cancelled at the request of the Office of Defense Transportation . . . Fred Bergin was appointed Dean of the RSROA Teachers' College which was the beginning of the Society of Roller Skating Teachers of America . . . Another polio benefit was staged by the RSROA at Madison Square Gardens. Over 900 skaters participated in the show . . . Harry S. Truman, new President of the United States, appeared on the cover of "Skating News" . . . The United States Federation of Amateur Roller Skaters was founded as the amateur affiliate of the RSROA. Dr. Keith Kahn was elected chairman of the USFARS Board of Governors . . . Rora M. Hodder succeeded Fred Bergin as Chairman of Judges, Test and Competition under the new RSROA framework . . . The intermediate division was introduced in all classes of art skating. Service amputees skated at Vic Brown's New Dreamland roller rink, Newark, N.J., as part of a physical therapy program started by Brown and the RSROA.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT ISSUE . . .  
From the April, 1962 issue of SKATE.

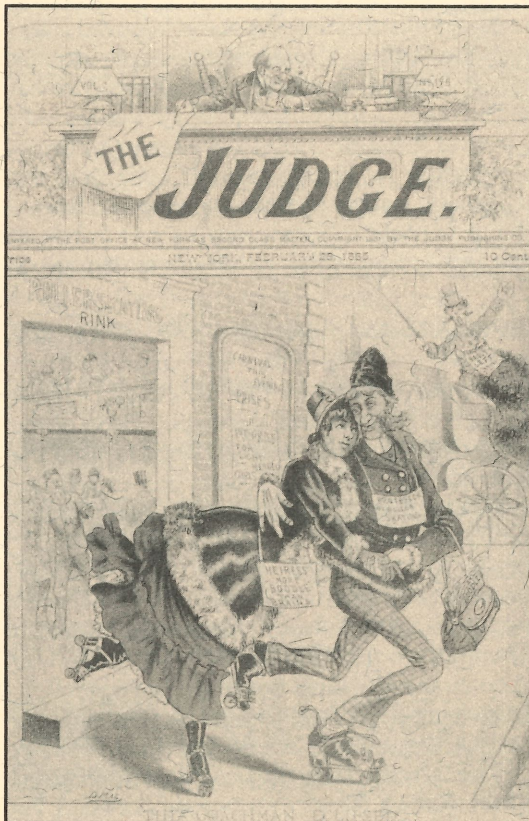


Cheret Lithograph

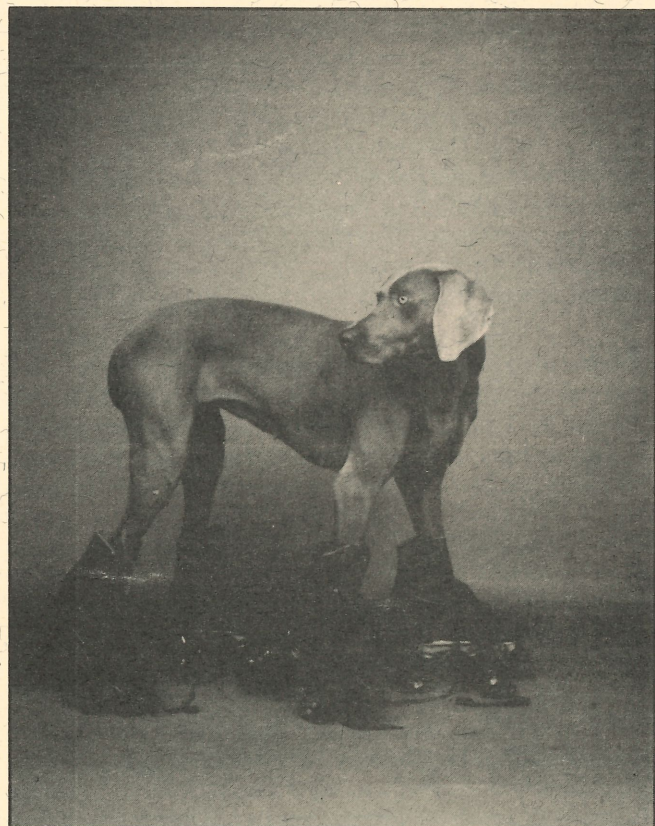


Post card with Parisian roller skater from the 19th century

All original productions are in full color.



Post card taken from the "The Judge," a 19th century illustrated newspaper.



William Wegman's "Roller Rover."

# Give the Gift That Keeps On Giving!

## With this special membership offer to the National Museum of Roller Skating.

For only \$25 you can give some lucky individual:

- ❖ **One copy of "The Evolution of the Roller Skate: 1820 - Present"**  
Featuring chapters covering: The Early Roller Skates, The Plimpton Era, The History of In-line Skates, The First Manufacturers, International Skates, The 20th Century, and more. The book is 150 pages with photos taken by professional photographer, Randall Harbuck.
- ❖ **PLUS: One-year membership to the museum**  
Includes a subscription to the "Historical Roller Skating Overview" (something to look forward to all year round!) and an official honorary member I.D. card.

### Other special items available from the National Museum of Roller Skating:

- ❖ A lithograph from the 1870's created by Jules Cheret, the "father of poster art." Cheret was commissioned to produce "Funciones de Patines" (Skating Parties) for a Paris rink. This 19th century depiction of roller skating is a must for roller skating enthusiasts of all ages.
- ❖ The NEW National Museum of Roller Skating Mugs! The mugs are Cobalt Blue with the museum logo emblazoned in Gold.
- ❖ Museum Pins and Patches! Great gifts for aspiring and inspiring skaters.
- ❖ Photographer William Wegman's famous "Roller Rover" on a postcard.
- ❖ Museum Postcard sets! The perfect gift for those of us with many penpals.

### Order Form

Qty		Total Price
_____	Special gift membership @ \$25 each (be sure to specify address for "Overview" delivery plus address for book recipient)	_____
_____	"The Evolution of the Roller Skate" @ \$10 each	_____
_____	Cheret Lithograph @ \$17 each	_____
_____	NEW Museum Mugs @ \$6 each	_____
_____	Museum Patches @ \$5 each	_____
_____	Museum Pins @ \$5 each	_____
_____	NEW William Wegman "Roller Rover" postcard sets - 10 card pack @ \$7.50 each	_____
_____	Museum Postcard sets 20 card pack @ \$5 each	_____
Grand Total of Order		\$ _____

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Remember that the Patron Memorial Plaque still has spaces available for individuals who have made contributions to our roller skating heritage. This could include everyone from rink owners to athletes. A one-time fee of \$250 will place a person's name on the memorial which is permanently on display at the National Museum of Roller Skating. For details contact the director.



*Some medals and trophies on display at the museum. Do you have trophies you would like to donate?*

**WISH LIST:** *The museum needs a VCR!* The current model we are using (which is the size of a suitcase and does not have scan capability) is on its last leg. Does anyone have a video player that they would be willing to donate? Call the museum 402-483-7551.

## Be a Part of History

The history of roller skating is fragile. Once it is lost, it may never be regained. Help the National Museum of Roller Skating preserve the rich history of our sport by joining one of our special membership categories listed below. Future roller skaters will thank you.

Contributors of \$15 or more become Honorary Members of the Museum and receive a Museum membership pin, official identification card, the newsletter, and free admission whenever they visit the Museum.

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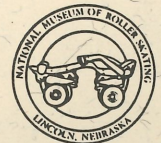
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