



Historical Roller Skating

OVERVIEW

Issue No. 15

September 1985

CURATOR'S CORNER

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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.

The museum was again quite busy in August during the National Championships. Thanks to all of you who were here and took the time to visit. During the two weeks of the Championships, we received over 2,200 visitors. For those of you who were here, I would appreciate hearing what you enjoyed most, and what you would like to see more of in our exhibits. Your input is also most welcome regarding the types of articles/stories covered by this newsletter. Let us know what aspects of roller skating history you would like to see more of in future issues. All you need to do is to drop me a short note with your comments and suggestions. Our address is listed at the top of this page.

We recently received information from Kenwood, a museum in London, England, that in addition to inventing the first known roller skate, John Joseph Merlin was a noted mechanical wizard of his era. Merlin (who we knew previously as Joseph) made many musical instruments, including a compound-harpsicord. Among his friends were J.C. Bach and Mozart. Known in London circles as the "Ingenious Mechanick," the man who crashed through a mirror on roller skates invented a Dutch oven, an accurate money scale, and timepieces including a "Skeleton Clock." His portrait was also painted by the famous artist Gainsborough. Our thanks to the Curator of the Ivegh Bequest, Kenwood, for this information. Kenwood held an exhibit of Merlin's works earlier this summer.



Left: John Joseph Merlin (1735-1803), portrait by Gainsborough. Picture courtesy of the Ivegh Bequest, Kenwood, London.

Continued on page 6

Editor's note: The following article is adapted from "History of Roller Skating" by James Turner. Mr. Turner is a skating teacher, historian and a Trustee of the Museum. His history book is available for \$4.00 postpaid from the Roller Skating Rink Operators Association, P.O. Box 81846, Lincoln NE 68501.

As one observes a modern figure skater preparing for competition, the questions is often raised, where and how did the sport of skating figures begin? Since the first roller skate capable of executing figures was not invented until James L. Plimpton patented his "rocker-action" skate in 1863, the origins of figures must be traced back to ice skaters.

In 1772, the first figure skating instruction book (in English) was written by Lieutenant Robert Jones of the British Army. In his short volume, he described the outside edge as being more useful for artistic movements, while the inner forward edge was said to be more functional for distance skating. Backward skating was not then practiced much, being considered quite a novelty or trick movement. One of Jones's more interesting descriptions was a figure he called the "heart"(see below). This figure did not acquire the name of the "Three Turn" until 1795. In the late 1700's, it was also quite popular to cut on the ice several other numbers: the Two, Six, Eight and Nine. This growing trend of numbering on the ice was called "figuring" or figure skating.

The "Heart"



Two



Six



Eight



Nine

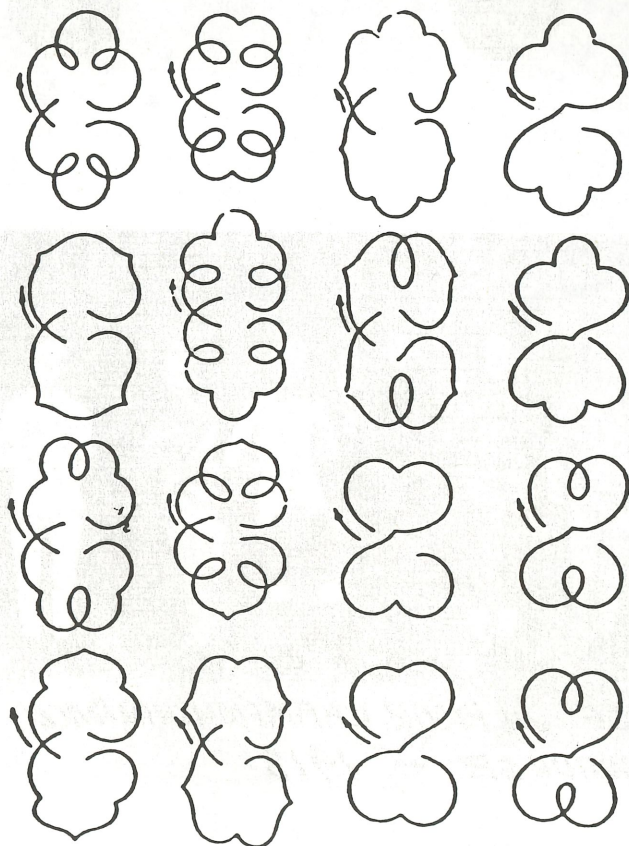


Across the English Channel in France, figure skating was highly developed by the 1780's. Several decades later in 1812, Jean Garcin, a skater and author, published a skating book titled "Le Vrai Patineur" (The Real Skater), or "How to Skate with Grace." Garcin

was concerned very much with having the correct style and posture, as well as the image produced on the ice. In his volume Garcin described thirty-one figures, giving them colourful names such as "Pas de Huit" (ROF figure eight), "Reverence" (spread eagle), "La Courtisane" (OF three), "Nymphe" (OB eight), and the "Jump de Zypher" (a jump of three). Garcin also invented a roller skate in 1828. The basic design was a wood plate with small wheels down the middle in an in-line arrangement. Garcin built a large gymnasium and opened it as a rink, and began to encourage ice skaters to switch to rollers during the warm weather. Unfortunately, his skate, called the "Cingar" (Garcin's name spelt backwards), was not easy to use. There was no action, and with the straight alignment of the wheels, edges were almost impossible. Garcin was forced to close his rink after a short period of time in the late 1820's. Figure skating however, continued in its development.

To be continued in the next issue.

Left: Several of the Compulsory figures used for the 1897 Austrian Championships.



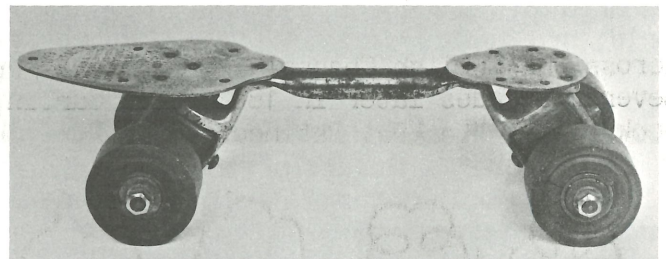
ROLAND CIONI: THE EARLY YEARS

Though there are relatively few skaters today who have every heard of Roland Cioni, most who do remember him as a coach of artistic skating whose pupils nearly dominated the National Championships in the 1940's and early 50's. However, from 1913 to 1917 he was the number one ranked professional racer in the world. Cioni was "Mr. Speed," being acknowledged as one of the greatest, if not THE greatest speed skater the sport has ever known.

Roland Cioni was born in Norristown, Pennsylvania, in 1896. He started skating in amateur speed competitions at the age of six, and in a few years had become the talk of the skating world on account of his speed in sprint racing. In 1910, Roland joined the Professional speed skating circuit, and although he didn't win every race, finished consistantly high, placing second to fourth, gaining a reputation as one of the best new skaters in professional racing.

Cioni became a member of Harley Davidson's Professional Speed Skating Troupe, which was organized in St. Louis, Missouri in January 1911. The tour of this group, known as "Harley-Davidson's World Champions" began in February of that year and covered all of the 48 United States. Along with racing between the members of the troupe, these speed skaters challenged all comers from the local towns in exhibition races. Together with Cioni in the group were Harley Davidson, Jesse Carey, Fred Tyrell, Louis Sibenolar, Jack Fotch and Fred A. Martin.

Photos - Top: Cioni, taken during the late Teen's and autographed for Fred Martin in 1921 (81.33.24; Fred A. Martin Collection; Gift of Mr. & Mrs. Richard McLaughlen) Middle: The John Jay Young model 999 "Hy Spede Racer," the skate used by Roland Cioni in capturing the World Championships (81.9.4; Jesse Bell Collection; Gift of Mr. Bert Anselmi) Bottom: A 24 hour race at Milwaukee's (WI) Riverview Rink, 1913. Cioni is second from left (82.45; F.A. Martin Collection; Gift of Rose L. Martin)



In 1912, the Davidson speed skating show dissolved, and each of the racers went their own way. For Cioni, it was just the beginning of an illustrious career. In addition to sprint match races, Roland started to skate in the endurance or marathon races, just then becoming popular in the United States. He soon showed that he had the staying power in addition to speed. In a 24 hour marathon contest held in March of 1913 at Milwaukee's Riverview Rink, he placed second to Fred Martin in the race. Along with Cioni and Martin in the competition were such notable speed professionals as Frank Bacon, Jesse Carey and Frank Bryant (see picture on the previous page).



One year later, on March 25, 1914, Roland Cioni won his first World Professional Speed Skating Championship at the Palace Rink in Detroit, Michigan. During 1915, Cioni successfully defended his title against the best speed skaters in the country, including Fred Martin and Jesse Carey. Cioni's picture soon appeared in newspapers throughout the world, and crowds packed Madison Square Garden in New York, and every other important racing center when it was announced that he would be competing. In April of 1916, Roland again defeated all his competitors, and retained the World Professional title for a third consecutive year, the first time any racer had accomplished this feat. In 1916, Cioni was actually co-champion at the World meet held at the Riverview Rink in Chicago. Roland's partner in the team competition, Arthur Eglington of England tied Cioni in total points (at that time, the overall champion was determined by points scored. For each race, points were awarded for placing first through fifth, and then the total points were added together to determine the World Champion).



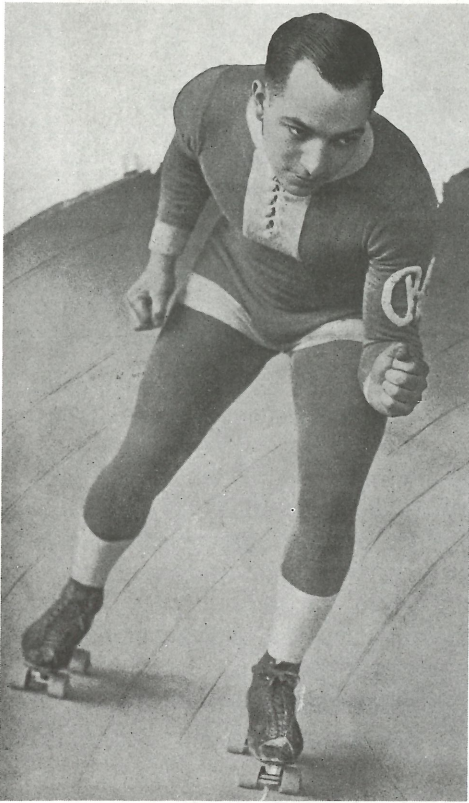
For the next five years, Cioni continued to dominate the professional circuit, winning additional World titles from 1917 through 1921. After 1914 when he first won the world title, Roland Cioni went undefeated in individual competition until his retirement in 1921 after capturing eight straight World titles.

Photos - Top: The Harley Davidson Professional Speed Skating Troupe, 1911. From left to right: Jesse Carey, Roland Cioni, Fred A. Martin, Jack Fotch, Harley Davidson, Fred Tyrell, and Louis Sibenolar. Bottom: Participants in a two mile professional race held in St. Louis, Missouri, during 1911. Standing at each end of the group are the owners of the Jai-Alai Rink, known as the Winter Garden Rink in the 50's, where the event took place. From left to right standing are: Louis Sibenolar of Oklahoma City, Rodney Peters of St. Louis, unknown man, unknown, unknown, Jack Fotch, Harley Davidson. Seated, second row: Fred A. Martin, Fred Tyrell of Chicago, Midge Sherman and Louis Bradburry of Kansas City, Jesse Carey of Philadelphia. Seated on floor are: Roland Cioni, unknown man, and Ray O'Neill of St. Louis.

Cioni teamed up with Arthur Eglinton to form one of the fastest and most durable teams of the Professional Era. In 1915 and 1916, the duo consistently won endurance races, setting many distance records. Skating alone, Roland set a record in the 100 mile timed marathon on a flat track in Washington, D.C. during 1916.

Along with his talents on the track, Cioni was quite knowledgeable about rink operations. He became a rink manager in September 1916 when Chicago's Dreamland Rink first opened, and began to teach skating in 1919. With his wife Margaret, Roland became a full time skating instructor in 1936, and taught at Hackensack, New Jersey and White Plains, New York. He joined the staff of the Park Circle Rink in Brooklyn in 1942 and became an SRSTA member. The Cionis turned out National Champions by the dozen until their retirement. Roland Cioni passed away in September 1959. He was posthumously elected to the Roller Skating Industry Hall of Fame on February 5, 1963.

Photos - Left: Publicity photograph of Cioni, taken around 1918 (82.22.5; Gift of Mr. Al Kish). Competitors at the 1920 U.S. National Speed Skating Championships, held at the Summit Park Rink in Akron, Ohio on August 15th. Roland Cioni is seated on the bench, fifth from left, wearing a "Miller Tire" jersey. Fred Martin, wearing a "White City" jersey, is third from the right on the bench (82.22.4; Gift of Mr. Al Kish).



Speed Skating Records Set by Roland Cioni:

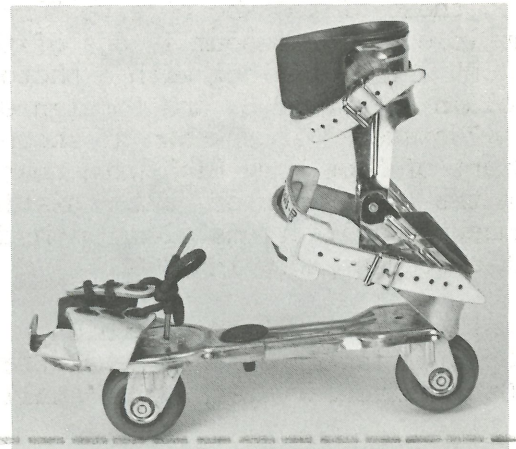
- 5 mile distance - 13 minutes, 25 seconds, set on the banked track of the Riverview Rink, Chicago, 13 April 1916.
- 10 mile distance (banked track) - 29 minutes, 20.6 seconds, set at the Riverview Rink, Chicago, 13 April 1916.
- 100 mile individual marathon - 7 hours, 10 minutes and 15 seconds, set at the American Derby Race, Convention Hall, Washington, D.C., 27 March 1916.
- 24 hour team endurance, banked track - 304 miles and 5 laps, set with Arthur Eglinton at Madison Square Garden, New York City, 16-17 March, 1915.
- 24 hour team endurance, flat track - 254 miles and 6 laps, set with Arthur Eglinton at the Palace Rink, Detroit, 26-27 February 1916.

CURATOR'S CORNER (continued from page 1)

The museum will once again be doing the research on possible candidates for election to the USAC/RS Amateur Athletes Hall of Fame in 1986. We would welcome your nominations and recommendations of skaters who you feel should be considered. The 1986 USAC/RS Hall of Fame requirements are: the individual or team must have contributed significantly to the sport as an amateur skater; these accomplishments must be of an innovative or an exceptional nature, and must be of a lasting duration; and the individual or team must have retired from active competitive skating by the end of the 1980-1981 season (ending with the 1981 World Championships). The museum does not make the determination as to who is elected to the Hall of Fame; we only furnish information on possible candidates to enable the USAC/RS Board of Directors to make the best possible selections. However, information on eligible skaters and nominations are most welcome. Simply send a letter to the museum, stating who you wish to recommend. In your letter you must state why you feel the individual or team is worthy of this honor, and list a summary of their accomplishments and contributions to the sport. All recommendations and nominations received by 1 January 1986 will be included in the information provided to the USAC/RS Board of Directors prior to this coming year's election.



A "brace" of skates recently acquired by the museum. At left is the Kennedy roller skate, manufactured in 1909 (L84.134.8; W.C. Ludascher Collection). On the right is the modern "Rools" skate, made in West Germany during the 1970's (85.29; Gift of Beverly Maulucci). Both skates have a hinged metal bar attached to the plate to provide added ankle support.



While people were crowding the museum during Nationals, several important donations for the museum collections were received. We would especially like to acknowledge the gift of the old RSROA "R.L. Hudson Challenge Trophy," awarded to the National Novice Mens Champions from 1941 to 1953, donated by Robert W. Gormley. The museum also received a pair of 1880's nickel plated Winslow skates (in their original box) from William Thomas, a pair of 1883 Winslow clamp-on skates from Roy Williamson, a late 1940's large rink poster donated by the Golden Skateworld West Club of Richmond, Virginia, a 1890 pressed glass roller skate from Mack and Beverly Harris, and a huge sticker scrapbook and a 1940's club jacket (Chief City Skateland, Pontiac, IL) from Roy Claudin. Also during the National meet, the museum was given a jacket signed by all of the U.S.A. World Artistic Team members, courtesy of Cecil Davis. Earlier this summer, the museum acquired a pair of 1950's Hodge Brothers skates, donated by Joe and Nancie Nemanich. Though our collection continues to grow, there are still many items which the museum would like to acquire. If you know of where we might be able to find any of the items on the following "want list," please drop me a note.

- *1910 Henley "Club" or roller polo skates
- *Vaudeville costumes or photos, 1890-1930
- *Pre-1950 roller skating rink photos
- *Scrapbooks, photos, costumes or other items from Professional Speed Skaters, 1890-1930
- *1950's Anagnost roller skates
- *British "Hamaco" skates, 1950-1970
- *Films/tapes of old Gold Skate Classics
- *Club/rink patches, pins or post cards
- *1950's Roll-Away Co. "Commander" skates

The museum is also trying to find information on U.S.A.R.S.A. proficiency test Gold Medalists from 1959 to 1971. If anyone can provide the names of those skaters who won ARSA Gold Medals during those years, and the type of medal (dance, figures, etc.), we would appreciate hearing from you.

By now all of you should have received a flyer announcing publication of the museum's reproduction of an 1870's French roller skating rink print, created by the artist Jules Cheret. This numbered, limited edition lithograph will be available only as long as our supply lasts - it will not be reprinted. Although the holiday season is still three months away, these lithographs would make excellent gifts for both skaters and non-skaters alike. You can obtain additional order forms by writing the museum.

Looking for an old SKATE magazine or RSROA rule book? We have quite a few surplus copies of both available for purchase. Our extra SKATE magazines go back to the 1940's, while the surplus rule books include the 1943 "RSROA Tests & Competitions" book (the "General Rules of that era), in both hardcover and paperback. The museum also has a few copies left of Perry Rawson's "Skate Dance Diagrams" (all in mint condition) from 1942, along with a supply of National Championship programs from 1967 to 1979. Just drop us a note stating exactly what you are looking for, and we will let you know if we have the particular book or magazine available and the price. Lastly, back issues of the museum newsletter are also available to the museum's honorary members.

For those of you who receive "Omni" or "Newsweek" magazines, don't be suprised to see an article on the museum in one of their upcoming issues. The museum will be featured in a short article (along with a photograph) in either the October or November "OmniAmerica" column in both U.S. and foreign editions of "Omni." The content and issue of the article in "Newsweek" is unknown at the present time. Anyone who watches the television show "The Start of Something Big" with host Steve Allen might have caught the segment in late July on the beginnings of roller skating. The short 3 minute spot featured photographs from the museum's collections along with the story of John Joseph Merlin crashing through the mirror at a London party in 1760.

Lastly, a grant from the Chicago Roller Skate Company has enabled the museum to produce a "Special Issue" of this newsletter, outlining the history of that firm. 1985 is Chicago's 80th Anniversary year. You shall be receiving this special issue within the next month.

HELP PRESERVE ROLLER SKATING'S PAST & FUTURE

___ Please send me ___ museum patches at \$5.00 each.

___ Please send me ___ museum pins at \$5.00 each.

___ Please send me ___ copies of THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS at \$6.00 each (\$5.00 for honorary members of the museum.

___ Please enroll me as an honorary member of the museum at the following level:

___ Individual/Family	\$ 15.00
___ Donor	\$ 50.00
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National Museum of Roller Skating.

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P.O. BOX 81846
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA 68501**

Benefits of membership include the museum pin, membership card, certificate of recognition, reduced rates on museum publications, and the quarterly historical newsletter.

December 1985:

The Origins of Figure Skating - Part II

Skating Cartoons in the 19th century.

Left: Roller Skating from department to department in the Washington, DC, general post office, 1937 (80.0.19; Library of Congress Collection).

Look for the Chicago Roller Skate Company Special Issue in October.



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