

## Historical Roller Skating

# OVERVIEW

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

April 1992

A Publication of the National Museum of Roller Skating

Issue No. 32

### ROLLER SKATING UPS AND DOWN

Roller skating, especially the falls encountered when one is trying to learn to skate, has been a subject of cartoonists, artists and writers since roller skating's inception. The first stories we have are those tongue-in-cheek episodes of Merlin skating through the mirror on his skates, as well as the lady in the ballet skating off the stage into the base drum. Everyone can identify with the skater falling on his backside, and com-

miserate with his pain; and it never fails to generate a smile.

From a Hartford (CT) newspaper, probably sometime in the 1870s: (J. L. Plimpton Archives)

### ROLLER RINKTUMS

They joined hands, he and she, and their young faces glowed with pleasure as they glode around the arena in long, swinging, graceful curves, on the swiftly rolling skates. "Dearest," said he, "how delightful is this! What rapture would it be to glide along the pleasant paths of life's journey and at last sit --ugh!--here at your feet!" He rose, by her help, a sadder, wiser--and a shorter man by the length of three of his vertebrae that had been driven



**W.C. Ludascher  
Collection**

together. "Have you rapped your --spinal column, dear," said she, as she helped him to his seat.

In speaking of the roller skating a reporter of a city daily truthfully says:

"The whole combined makes one grand social gathering such as is never seen at any other place, for while some are pleasantly chatting, others are gliding by on those almost noiseless rollers and perhaps another may be helping a friend who is temporarily "off his base."

Truthfully--except in one respect. It is not when your friend is "off his base," my boy, that he needs your help. It is when he has temporarily struck on his base emphatically enough to drive his spinal column up into his back hair that he needs your helping hand.

He to she, as they glide arm in arm: "Got a conundrum for you: Why are these skates like a part of the GLOBE press?"

She didn't tumble. "Because they'r ink rollers."

"Got another: Why are they so easily managed here and unmanageable elsewhere?"

She stumbled on this, too.

"Because they'r inkontrollable only."

"She to he: "Why for the same reason are they like you?"

Then he slipped up. "Because they'r inkompetent."

Then he glode along with a far off, mediative gaze, unmindful of what was before him till he tumbled--over a bench onto his head.

## The Skater--A Fragment

(After Tennyson)

He claws the air with swinging hands;  
In the spacious home of militia bands,  
Held up by eager crowds, he stands.

A sickly tremor o'er him crawls;  
He vainly seeks supporting walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

### 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 \$5 or more receive their choice of the official Museum patch or pin.

- PIN  
 PATCH

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

- Individual - \$15  
 Family - \$15  
 Associate Patron - \$100  
 Patron - \$250  
 Benefactor - \$500 or more

Check or money order enclosed payable to the National Museum of Roller Skating.

Paid by VISA.

Paid by MasterCard.

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Exp \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please charge my card for 12 monthly payments of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ each (min. of \$10 per month).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

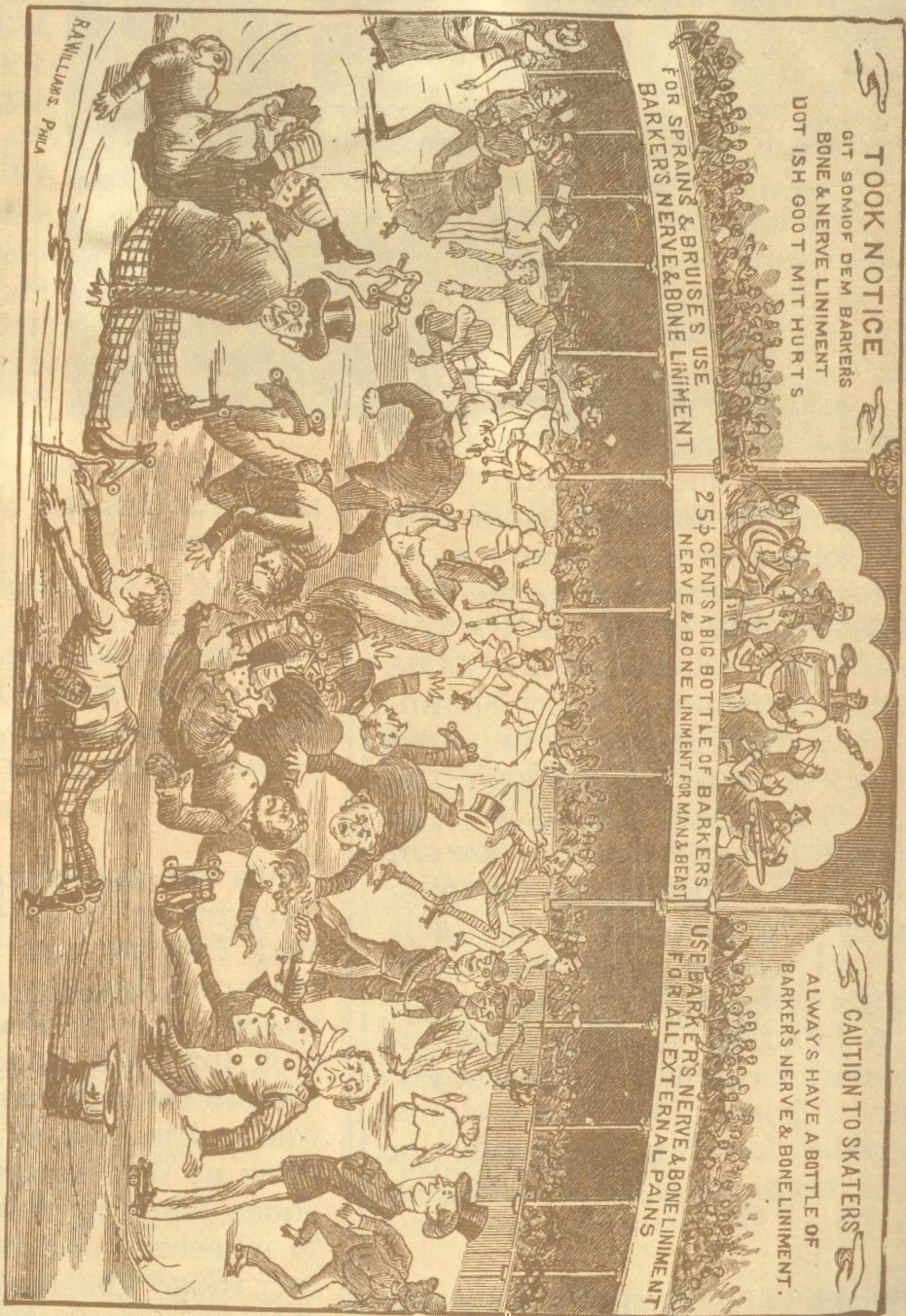
Address \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: National Museum of Roller Skating  
P.O. Box 6579, Lincoln, NE 68506

**All contributions are tax-deductible.**

Mont Alto, Pa., in a correspondence, says: "I had a horse that sprained his pastern joint and was so lame I could hardly get him out of the stable. A friend of mine told me about Barker's Nerve and Bone Liniment, which I got, and it cured him."



**THE GREAT DEMORALIZING ROLLER-SKATING RING.—A DOWNFALL GUARANTEED.**

The above illustration depicts an immoral downfall, but if, at any time by misstep, you should fall down and sprain your limb, or cause a bruise, the great subduer of pain, Barker's Nerve and Bone Liniment, the great liniment for man and beast, 25 cents gets a big bottle.

They were standing at the front gate. "Won't you come in the parlor and sit awhile, George, dear?" "No, I guess not," said George, hesitatingly. "I wish you would." "I went on, it's so very lonesome. Mother has gone out, and father is upstairs groaning with the rheumatism in his legs." "Both legs?" "Yes." "Then, I'll come in a little." The old gentleman heard about Barker's Nerve and Bone Liniment for rheumatism and is cured, and George don't call since the old gent has the use of his both feet.

**TOOK NOTICE**  
 GIT SOMIOF DEM BARKERS  
 BONE & NERVE LINIMENT  
 DOT ISH GOOT MIT HURTS

**BARKERS NERVE & BONE LINIMENT**  
 FOR SPRAINS & BRUISES USE

**25 CENTS A BIG BOTTLE OF BARKERS**  
 NERVE & BONE LINIMENT FOR MAN & BEAST

**CAUTION TO SKATERS**  
 ALWAYS HAVE A BOTTLE OF  
 BARKERS NERVE & BONE LINIMENT.

**USE BARKERS NERVE & BONE LINIMENT**  
 FOR ALL EXTERNAL PAINS

Bulk Packages of Barker's Horse, Cattle and Poultry Powder put up expressly for dairymen, horse, cattle and poultry raisers and other large users of condition powders. Large size, each box equals 13 regular size packs and sells at the price of 10 packs. Small size, each box equals 6½ regular size packs and sells at the price of 5 packs. Our powder is never sold in bulk to be weighed out, but only in the

## CURATOR'S CORNER

Last issue of *Historical Roller Skating Overview* published a list of all honorary members of the museum. This list needs to be clarified. This was a list of all individuals who contributed financially to the support of the museum in the last year, and did not necessarily include those individuals who have contributed to the museum by donating artifacts. A listing of Donors to the museum's collections will be published in the next issue of *OVERVIEW*.

The National Museum of Roller Skating has been extremely fortunate in having the services of two special people this past year. Eric Abbott helped to re-install the exhibits in the new location and get ready for the opening. In doing so, we discovered he had a talent for cleaning old roller skates, so he worked for two months cleaning the Plimpton collection. A hundred years of dust and grime removed revealed the beauty of these skates, some of which are almost like sculpture. Eric has a real affection for the museum; and he is definitely missed.

Helen Siefken is a very special lady who walked in off the street one day and offered to volunteer her services to the museum. Through her help, much of the backlog of filing was accomplished, and we were able to begin an inventory. These are the kinds of tasks that are difficult to get around to, and her help was truly appreciated.



This spring, the museum was fortunate to obtain the services of Linda Plock, a talented lady who helped clean and spiff up the exhibits and create some new ones so that the museum will be ready for Nationals! Linda never misses the Regionals or Nationals when they are here in Lincoln, so she has a genuine interest in and love for skating. I know that

those of you who will be visiting the museum this year will enjoy the results of her work.

The museum received a donation of skate keys from Mrs. John Hotchkiss. With her permission I am passing on a portion of her letter. She writes:

"With the "boom" in blade skates I said "oh grow up" When I was 10 or so in New York City we had "two wheelers" that clamped by key onto our regular shoes....one wheel under the ball of the foot, the back under the heel. A strap around the ankle to hold them on. (This was in the 1930's). Mothers didn't like them as they squashed the toe area of shoes, when tightened by key. Boys had "4 wheelers" and occasionally 2. However those who skated with 2 were considered "sissys"...They did not turn into ice-skates interchanging blades for wheels. The backs were metal and leather or just metal with a strap running through. We often had a pad on the strap to prevent ankle cutting. Also had knee pads but preferred badges of honor named scabs from scrapes!"

For those of you who are unable to travel to the museum, I would like to take this opportunity to tell you about one of the displays we have here. We are proud to feature roller skating's involvement in Special Olympics. All of the items in this display were donated by Phyllis Bebko. The highlight of the display is a letter of appreciation by George Bush. This was a highlight of a tour we gave to a group of handicapped children, one of whom participates in Special Olympics in track. After seeing the museum, he was eager to try roller skating--he said he'd like to compete in Special Olympics as a skater as well!

## VIDEO PROJECT

We are still seeking funds for a "History of Roller Skating" video. If you are interested in being part of this project, please send your check in to the museum, with a special notation that it is to be used for the video project.

## REMEMBER THE HUNT IS ON!

The National Museum of Roller Skating is on a treasure hunt for old and rare skates. If you have an artifact that you think may qualify, please let the Curator know.

**Treasure Hunt!**

Join the Museum on a Treasure Hunt!

The National Museum of Roller Skating is on a treasure hunt! We are looking for the rarest/oldest, and/or most unique skate that is donated to the museum between May 1, 1991 and April 30, 1992.

A plaque will be given to the donor who comes up with either the most unique, or oldest or rarest skate. All donors of skates will be given a year's honorary membership to the National Museum of Roller Skating.

To help you on your search we have prepared a "Wish List" of roller skates that we have knowledge of, but do not have in our extensive collections. Among them are:

- Pennie Parlor Skate, circa 1860
- Cingar Skate, French, circa 1828
- "Vollto" skate, English, circa 1823
- "Woodward" skate, English, circa 1852
- Skate manufactured by Cornelius
- Victor & Banner skates
- The Raymond Skate, circa 1884
- Pollitt Skate
- Malcolmson Skate (English, 1870s)

National Museum of Roller Skating  
4710 South St., P.O. Box 6579  
Lincoln, NE 68506 Phone 402-483-7551





*Mr. Rikki Klanden with rare doll.*

## NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ROLLER SKATING BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

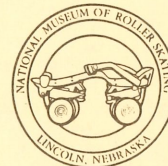
Bert Anselmi, President, Pontiac, MI  
 Robert Bollinger, Portland, OR  
 Frank Cernik, Omaha, NE  
 Marvin Facher, Short Hills, NJ  
 Chester Fried, Vice-President, South River, NJ  
 Charlotte Groves, Marysville, WA  
 Mills Lynn, Charleston WV  
 Joe Nazzaro, Jr., Euless, TX  
 Bruce Pearson, Belleville, IL  
 George Pickard, Secretary-Treasurer, Lincoln, NE  
 Gordon Van Roekel, Temecula, CA  
 Charles Wahlig, Newark, DE  
 Richard G. Young, Warwick, RI.

### Trustees Emeritii:

Michael Brooslin, Springfield, MA  
 James Turner, Milwaukee, WI

### Director and Curator:

Barbara Sorenson



*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, P. O. Box 6579, Lincoln, NE 68506.

## MUSEUM RECEIVES RARE DOLL

The National Museum of Roller Skating has been given a rare and beautiful doll dating from the 1890s.

This doll was manufactured by Armand Marseilles in Germany. The doll has oversized wooden thread spools for roller skates.

A "trade card" advertising Belding Bros. Thread was produced in the 1890s that depicts this doll, and a reproduction of the card is manufactured by Dover Publications, and is featured below. This doll is now on display in the museum.



## HELP WANTED!

### The Roller Skating Museum

#### NEEDS YOU!

Do you have a skating story to tell? The National Museum is currently working on a special project to collect as many of these special stories as possible. One of the most fascinating experiences at the museum is listening to visitors talk about their roller skating memories.

It is an obligation of the museum to collect and preserve the history of roller skating, and because of this commitment, I am especially seeking stories of meeting one's future mate at the rink; "special" rinks that you have skated in--and what made them special; and memories concerning rink organists.

As you are aware, rink organs and rink organists are rare now, but we still have your fond memories of skating. Any memorabilia that you might have, especially photographs of the rinks, indoors and out, would also be greatly appreciated.

In a related matter, I have received a request from a writer who is collecting unusual marriage proposals. *Will You Marry Me* by John S. Clayton, will feature 100 unique marriage proposals. He is particularly interested in any proposals in which roller skating played a major role.

Please send the stories to me and I will forward them to Mr. Clayton.

#### Reproduction of Trade Card

## THE MOTORIZED ROLLER SKATE

One of the more unique and unusual items that came in this year was a motorized roller skate invented, patented and donated by Anthony Pirrello.

Mr. Pirrello designed this beautifully machined engine that propels the skates in 1958. Although the skates are extremely economical and efficient, they were never a commercial success. The skates the museum received were Mr. Pirrello's prototype and the museum is extremely fortunate to have acquired this most unique display.

These particular skates are powered by a power pack which weighs approximately 19 pounds and is strapped onto the wearer's back. The clutch, accelerator and engine cutoff switch is located in a hand-held unit, and if the controls are dropped the power automatically disconnects. If power is not required, the power can be shut off and the skater can use the skates in a conventional manner.

In addition to sporting uses and promotional purposes, the skates were designed to be used by supermarket carry-out boys, messenger services, cheap transportation for college students, and military purposes. The skater could go up to 40 miles per hour on these skates, which get 330 plus miles to the gallon.

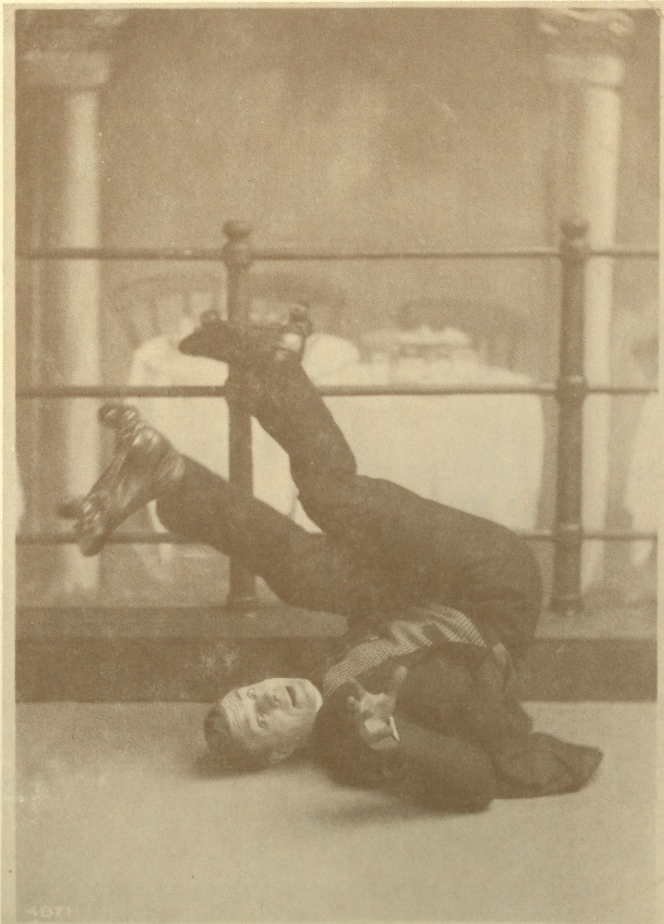
## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Frances Romain suggested that readers to *Overview* might like to read about where old champions are today. I suggested that we start with her.

**Frances Romain** and her husband-partner, Bill were the 1963, 64, and 65 American Esquire Dance National Champions. Today, Frances Romain Rothenberg has just recently moved from Olympia Fields, Illinois, to Long Boat Key, Florida. She has recently retired from being a Medical Records Hospital Administrator for 24 years. She would love to hear from "any and all" her address is:

Frances Romain Rothenberg  
561 Birdie Lane  
Long Boat Key, FL 34228.

## W. C. Ludascher Collection



AT THE SKATING RINK

*Are we down-hearted?  
I don't think!*



**Baby Laurita**  
**(16 months old)**  
**Gift of Dick and Marge McLauchlen**

*Baby Laurita  
16 months old  
Eugene,  
Oregon*

**4730 South Street**  
**P.O. Box 6579**  
**Lincoln, NE 68506-0579**

**ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED**

**BULK MAIL**  
**U.S. POSTAGE**  
**PAID**  
**LINCOLN, NE**  
**Permit No. 545**