

June 2020

Rolling Thru Time
Newsletter

The National Museum of Roller Skating



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Changes at the Museum

New Employees



Pictured: Amy Richardson

The NMRS has new employees who will divide up the responsibilities at were previously completed by one full-time curator.

Amy Richardson will handle the archivist and docent responsibilities.

She will be working parttime four days a week.

Richardson is from Lincoln, and earned a BA in English at Nebraska Wesleyan, and a MA in Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland. She said of her new assignment: "There's just such a robust community of folks

who are still dedicated to roller skating. I think a lot of folks look at roller skating as a thing of the past, but it very much isn't." Her first completed project was to research and receive approval to purchase a new archival system called CatalogIt.

As mentioned previously, Peggy Young, museum secretary, who recently retired from USA Roller Sports, will perform office management tasks and other special assignments for the museum. She is not new to the museum, having been associated with it since its beginning. She has been managing the museum's Facebook page. Now, she will be an official employee one day a week. An anonymous donor has committed to paying her salary for one year.

Museum Design Firm Will Add New Flair to Displays



*Employees of the Elmhurst History Museum.
Dan Bartlett is second from right*



Sara Pfannkuche

Dan Bartlett and Sara Pfannkuche of Midwest Heritage Resource Consultants of Chicago will design future museum displays. This couple has considerable experience working in museums, in addition to their museum consulting business. Dan Bartlett works for the Elmhurst History Museum. He designed the Chicago *Rink Rats: Capital of the Golden Age* exhibit there two years ago. He earned a technical theater degree in the 1980s, then had his own remodeling business for a number of years. In 2003 he returned to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and earned a degree in Public History and Museum Studies. His partner, Sara Pfannkuche, has also worked in museums along with currently being a professor in the University of Wisconsin Department of Anthropology and Sociology.

They will design and update displays for the museum on a needs-only basis paid by donations, including assisting with adding interactive audio/visual displays and other special projects. Staff will act as research assistants which will moderate costs. Each donor can have a plaque on the display to

acknowledge their donation. The funds for the first two displays have already been donated, the first of which will highlight roller skating during World War II.

Lincoln Day Fundraiser a Success

This year's annual Give to Lincoln Day fundraiser, sponsored by the Lincoln Community Foundation, raised \$7,693.80 for the NMRS. This amount does not include matching funds which have not been announced yet. This is an increase from individual donors of \$1,362 from 2019. This event and the RSA convention raffle are the two most important fundraisers for the museum each year. The raffle has not occurred yet this year due to the postponement of the RSA national convention.

Here is the list of donors:

Judy Graves, James Jost, Daniel Brown, Kim & Sue Wall, Robert Householder, Bob and Annelle Anderson, Keith Noll, Al Tagland, Charlene Conway, Nellie Lillie Anderson, Pauline Parks, Kristen Taylot, Noelle Metcalf, Dianne Bruan for Section 5, Alan Bacon, James Vannurden, Bob Culver, Andy Starr, Doug and Janelle Bruning, Elizabeth Korjenek, Betty Ann Danna, Marsha L Neary, Janet Jordan, Linda Miner, Cheryl Steiger, Michael Zaidman, Richard Cabral, Harry B Walker, Eric Steele, Karyn, Dave and Shawn Walden, Cort Wahlig, William Hoefler, Scott Kleiman, Vicki Handyside, Melanie Holt, Dennis Pickard, Robert Comeau, Peggy Young, Sylvia Haffke, Judith Hild-Smith, and the Roller Skating Association International.

Comments that accompanied some donations:

Elizabeth Korjenek: In loving memory of Bob and Shirley Gormly, my first coaches

Cheryl Steiger: I love that you are preserving Skating's storied past!! I miss being a competitive skater

James Vannurden: I loved representing the museum for seven years

Kim Wall: In loving memory of Marge Wall

Other Donations

Caroline Mirelli
Memorial for Omar Dunn

Bob & Annelle Anderson
Memorial for Omar Dunn

USARS Foundation
For the final donation of multi-year contributions to the project to transfer VHS videos to DVDs

Roller Skating During WWII

Written by Alan Bacon

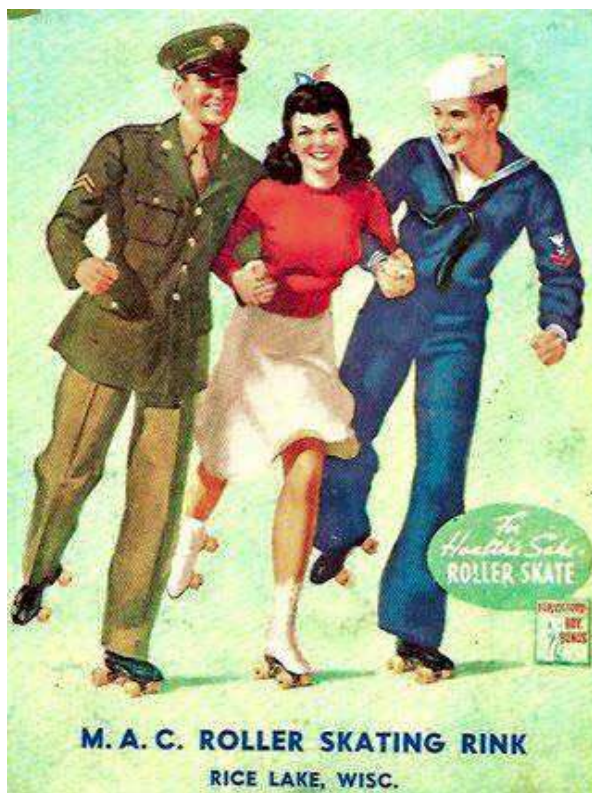


Photo courtesy of Tom Russo

Editor's Note: The reason for choosing this subject at this time is three-fold. One is to showcase the reintroduction of *Skating Review*, *Museum Newsletters* and other roller-skating publications on the museum's new website. For historical enthusiasts, spending a few hours exploring these archives is illuminating. Access to these interesting documents is a benefit of museum membership. If you have any trouble accessing the members-only page where they are stored, contact Amy Richardson at museumstaff@usarollersports.org.

The second reason is to highlight the new partnership the museum has with Midwest Heritage Resource Consultants. Their first display will be on roller skating during World War II. This article is a result of a small part of the research for this project, reviewing articles from *Skating Review* from 1941 to 1945. Research assistance provided by the museum reduces the consultant's costs.

And lastly, with the current challenges that Covid-19 has brought roller skating, this topic demonstrates that this is not the first time roller skating has endured under special circumstances, but also has survived and thrived. Knowing the history of roller skating can provide perspective for our industry and sport today.

From the pages of *Skating Review*



Photo from Associated Press

Professional skaters from Broadway's Roller Follies skate New York's 5th Avenue to promote President Roosevelt's "Save Gas" campaign, June 2, 1942

Like the recent attack of Covid-19, the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941, propelled roller skating into unique challenges. Many skaters couldn't get to a rink because of gas rationing; others, especially on the West Coast, had to deal with blackouts instituted in response to the concern of imminent invasion.

W.J. Betts wrote a *Dear Skating Review* note in Sept. of 1942: "Picture enclosed is of REDONDO BEACH ROLLER RINK, WASHINGTON, as it appears in the daytime. At night we are under the 'Dim-out' regulations and I am sure it would not be much more than a black spot on your page." Betts added though, that business was 10% higher than the previous year.

In an article in Jan. 1942 titled *Los Angeles Skates with Blackout Jitters*, Phil Irwin wrote, "The night of the first blackout, the attendance was practically nil...All rinks are prepared for complete blackouts with tar paper or heavy

black drapes or cloth over all windows and cracks." The article went on to say that rink attendance gradually grew.

But as bleak as events in the early days of the war seemed for roller skating in America, it was nothing like the challenges in Great Britain. An article in June 1941 titled *Skating News From London* stated, "George Graham (Editor of *Skating Times of London*) writes that the offices of the (Skating) Times has been bombed." An article in Nov. 1944 titled *A Summary of Roller Rinks Still Operating in Great Britain* stated, "In 1939 there were upwards of a 140 roller rinks open in this country (Great Britain), whereas now there are only just over 30 available." The article added, "The leading rinks have in most cases, been taken over for the duration (by the government for military use)."

From Great Britain just a few years prior had come the Lidstones and the explosion in dance skating, which made up 80 percent of the focus of *Skating Review* articles. The R.S.R.O.A., who sponsored the Lidstones' American exhibitions, was formed in 1937, and would be a catalyst for the explosion of dance skating during the war and the improved management of rinks.

One article in Dec. of 1944 listed some of the competitive skaters who had given the ultimate sacrifice, including the Senior Men's National Champion of 1942, Kenneth Chancellor Chase Jr. In a lighter note, a caption for a photo in April 1943 of Nate Steinberg, one of the owners of Queens Rink, Long Island, stated, "he has lost weight since getting out of his chair at the office and getting into a uniform. A lot more rink operators may lose their waistline before the year's over."

One issue in Oct. 1945 titled *From Our GI's All Over the World* included letters to the editor of servicemen stating how much they missed skating and their thanks for receiving *Skating Review*. In a proclamation by Fred Freeman, President of the R.S.R.O.A., titled *To the Girls and Boys in the Service of Our Country*, he stated, "The same rulings that qualified you for the championships of 1943 will again qualify you when freedom has been preserved."

Despite the challenges, over 3,000 rinks flourished in the United States during the War and would grow even more after the war's end. Some rinks were hurt by the gas rationing, but others like those on the west coast of Washington state, hosted the service men and women who came through on their way to the Pacific front. In Detroit, Fred Martin said the Arena Gardens welcomed 17,000 members of the armed forces as guests of the club. In industrial cities like Chicago, most rinks were serviced by public transit, and the war jobs brought more disposable income and a need to relax through entertainment and exercise from the stresses of work and war.



Photo from museum collection

Fred Martin at the Arena Gardens, collecting scrap metal for the war effort.

New skates were almost impossible to obtain during the war. An article in July 1942 titled *Fifteen Cents a Month To You From The Chicago Skate Company* said the "The Chicago Roller Skate Company will stop making roller skates altogether and devote 100% of their facilities to the manufacture of war materials." But the company did not forget skaters and continued to advertise in *Skating Review*, which kept the magazine's price down to 15 cents when it otherwise would have increased to 25 cents. A Chicago company ad said "A little better care and a little oil now and then and your Chicago roller skates will last until IT'S OVER-OVER THERE." Another Chicago ad said "We are 'All-Out' to Win the War Keep Physically Fit Ready to Serve".

Being physically fit was important, and the federal government recognized the role roller skating played during the war. The March 1942 cover of *Skating Review* featured John B. Kelly Sr., President Roosevelt's appointee as Head of the Physical Fitness Division of the Office of Civilian Defense. He stated, "Skating is one of the sports sponsored by your government because those who are engaged in this sport are better fitted to prosecute the war. The Office of Civilian Defense is organizing a national skating project to build physical fitness."

An article in Nov. 1943 titled *Skating A Sure Cure for Loneliness* stated, "There are easily a million young women in America today who are suffering constantly from loneliness; either a husband, sweetheart, or a steady boyfriend, is serving in the Armed Forces. To girls without an absorbing

leisure hour hobby these are truly troublesome and lonely times.” The article continued with a story about a woman whose husband had been away in the service for two years. She began to regularly roller skate at a newly opened rink near her house and found skating a great diversion from the long nights without her husband.



Photo from the Library of Congress

Workers delivering messages at Douglas Aircraft

The war's end brought service men and women back to their home rinks. In the Pacific Northwest Bob Bollinger returned to The Oakes in Portland, OR, Pat Pattison to Redondo Beach, WA, and a new arrival to the Pacific Northwest, Joe Nazzaro (Sr.) to Southgate in Seattle, WA. An article in Dec. 1945 titled *Minutes of First Meeting Washington Chapter of the RSROA* stated, "John (Eisenzimmer) has plans for a new rink in the thriving district of Yakima (WA), where his wife has carried on the rink business during his absence." This scenario was repeated in every section of the country.

Annual Trustees Meeting Highlights

April 26, 2020 via webinar

Amy Richardson, new museum staff member, was introduced. She gave her background and a description of her tasks.

Kim Wall, museum president, reported that the RSA was pleased with the new signs utilized at their 2019 Convention. These signs were from the Elmhurst History Museum's display of "Chicago Rink Rats."

Wall said the new Museum website is up and running with an improved format, including the online store. He said the museum's Facebook posts by Peggy Young, museum secretary and employee, have been interesting with good history.

Alan Bacon, museum treasurer, said that the Museum accounting is up to date with the help of Janet Pavilonis and Young. The museum now uses QuickBooks for its accounting.

Bacon said that the 2019 raffle was the best in recent history. He stated that when USARS National Championships are not in Lincoln, souvenir sales and income from the donation box are down.

Bacon said that income from Give to Lincoln Day will be down this year. Raffle money raised at the RSA Convention reaches the Museum through G2L. The virus has postponed the convention.

Bacon reported funds for the video transfer account are accounted for. The Foundation has paid the balance of their commitment to the project. Wall had previously committed the Museum covering excess cost, if any, to complete this.

It was reported Young does now work for the Museum, approved at up to eight hours per week overseeing financial record keeping and other office responsibilities, including special projects and overseeing Richardson. An anonymous donor has generously committed to cover Young's first year employment expense. A motion was passed to accept Young's employment as reported to the Board by Wall, recognizing she also serves as a Museum trustee.

Wall recently visited the Museum and found numerous costumes are fragile. He would like to find sponsors to cover the cost of constructing several hermetically sealed cabinets.

Wall suggested the Museum set up a separate investment account for reserve funds, making them harder to access. Wall asked Michael Jacques to be the Chair. A motion was passed to set up a Special Investment Account Committee.

There was some discussion on having a virtual skate-a-thon to raise money. Annelle Anderson, museum past president, suggested since this is the Museum's 40th year, we may be able to promote donations of "\$40 for 40 years." Nellie Anderson Lillie, museum vice president, noted on Facebook that retired skaters have been reminiscing over old videos of skating competitions. Lillie suggested the Museum should have a FundRaising Committee. A motion was approved to form a FundRaising Committee chaired by Lillie.

Wall noted that the staff needs some guidelines on what can be accepted in way of donations. Lillie reported during one of her last conversations with

George Pickard, he said, as far as skates, there is very little we need unless brand new and cutting edge. Wall suggested we could make items available for sale if we have too many. And we could also create traveling displays for meetings.

Wall informed that Richardson had done research on a new program to track our collection, and recommended CatalogIt. It would be able to accept the existing collection that is on Excel via an upload. It is a cloud-based system that can be accessed remotely. Wall believes the program could also be used to establish a more accurate valuation of the museum collection for insurance purposes. A motion passed to purchase it.

Wall applauded Bacon and his daughters for getting Museum newsletters published on a regular basis.

A Membership Committee was established in 2019. Ed Hughes, museum trustee, reported he talked to RSA section officers and encouraged them to promote the Museum in their meetings.

Tina Robertson, former RSA president, was approved as a new Museum Trustee. Cort Wahlig, current RSA vice president and future RSA president, was welcomed as a new Museum Trustee representing the RSA.

A motion was passed to re-elect the following officers for two-year terms: Kim Wall - President, Nellie Anderson Lillie - Vice President, Alan Bacon - Treasurer, Peggy Young - Secretary.

Prior to the meeting, Bacon sent the Trustees a proposal to hire Dan Bartlett, the designer who produced the Elmhurst History Museum's exhibit on roller skating. Bartlett could design and update displays for our museum on a needs-only basis paid by donations, including assisting with adding interactive audio/visual displays. Wall suggested he could also provide guidance on acquiring sealed cabinets. Richardson and Young would help him with research. Each donor could have a plaque on the display that would acknowledge their donation. The funds for the first two displays have been donated, one by Bacon and another by an anonymous donor. The motion to hire Dan Bartlett passed.

Anderson suggested researching grant opportunities from the Lancaster County Visitors Improvement fund, the organization that financed the sign in the front of the museum.

Lillie stated JBL will donate \$500 to the Museum, because of the Trustee meeting taking place this date.

The next meeting will take place at the RSA Convention.

These are highlights of the minutes that were submitted by Peggy Young.

The following Trustees participated in the webinar:

Kim Wall, Nellie Anderson Lillie, Alan Bacon, Peggy Young, Annelle Anderson, Danny Brown, Dominic Cangelosi, Charlene Conway, Bud Engle, William Hoefler, Ed Hughes, Michael Jacques, Linda Miner, Randy Ray, Andy Star, Eric Steele, and Cort Wahlig. Guests included Amy Richardson and John Fearnow.

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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Officers and Trustees:

President: Kim Wall; Vice President: Nellie Anderson Lillie; Treasurer: Alan Bacon; Secretary: Peggy Young

Other Trustees: Annelle Anderson, past president, Danny Brown, Dominic Cangelosi, Charlene Conway, Howard "Bud" Engle, Bill Hoefler, Ed Hughes, Michael Jacques, Judith Young Link, Jim Link, Linda Miner, Randy Ray, Andy Starr, Eric Steele, and Cort Wahlig

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