



Rolling Through Time

Official Newsletter of:

The National Museum of Roller Skating

4730 South Street, Lincoln, NE 68506

(402) 483-7551 ext. 16

 @rollersk8museum

Prepared by Peggy Young

Bi-Monthly

March 15, 2016

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 display cases, the museum educates the public on all aspects of roller skating, which dates back to the first patented skate from 1819.

Museum Hours of Operation: Open 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM, Monday-Friday - closed Holidays. Group tours can be scheduled by calling 402) 483-7551, ext. 16

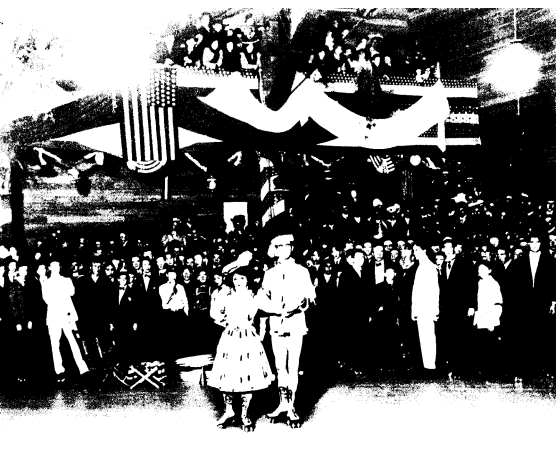


THE GLORIOUS SKATING VANITIES - The Skating Vanities (1942-1956) are known by anyone who has an affinity for the history of roller skating. It was simply a glamorous and exciting time for those who performed in this touring roller skating revue, patterned after "Holiday on Ice" and other similar ice productions. And, if you know the history, Gloria Nordskog (shortened to Nord) was the blond teenager from Santa Monica, California, who became the counterpart to ice skating's Sonja Heine in this roller skating production.

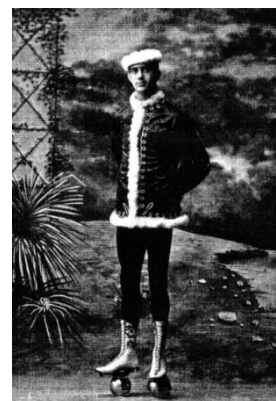
But are you familiar with the Roller Follies? Have you heard of the Great Rexo and how he ultimately played a part in how the Skating Vanities began?

The Great Rexo was a headliner vaudeville skating attraction, already having attained 15 years of stage experience by the turn of the 20th Century. Edward W. Smith was known the world

over as the Great Rexo (and later the act was known as the Great Rexos when his wife joined the act as shown below in 1907).



Born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, he put on his first pair of skates in 1881. In 1885, after he won the Championships of Grand Rapids, he formed an act and toured with a vaudeville troupe called the Rexfords. He adopted the name "The Great Rexo" and was known by that name the remainder of his vaudeville career, until vaudeville began to die out in the 1920's, when talking movies and then radio replaced performances in popularity and as a cheaper means of entertainment. He put away his grease paint and "Great Rexo" costumes. After managing roller skating rinks for a time, went on to work as a newspaper man in Chicago.



With a reawakening of the sport of rink roller skating, he decided there was a need for a publication to further encourage its growth. The first issue of "Skating Review" debuted in 1940. Full of photos of recreational and competitive skaters, Ed Smith produced a monthly publication that covered everything, everywhere there was any roller action. While touring the country to promote sales for his new magazine, Smith caught a Los Angeles lounge act of the future Skating Vanities star Gloria Nord. He approached her to tour the Midwest, and with the company of her mother, gave exhibitions in rinks, theaters and cafes, acting as the goodwill ambassador for the "Skating Review".

Sport Promoter Harold Steinman caught her performance at one such exhibition in Chicago and promptly offered her star billing in the new roller skating revue he was organizing. Harold Steinman ran into problems getting headline acts from the ranks of amateur skaters, most of who refused to give up their amateur status and their chance to compete in local and national competitions. In addition to recruiting people with at least some roller skating show talent, Steinman also hired former vaudeville jugglers, acrobats and comedians whom he set about training to roller skate. With a troupe of 60 performers, he began production of the first original musical extravaganza on roller skates. The "Roller Follies" opened in Baltimore on Jan 7 1942, and played to sell-out crowds as it toured the east coast. Many experienced roller skaters were, however, critical that the show lacked professionalism. Apparently Steinman and his backers agreed, for the cast took the summer off to revise and strengthen their skating performances. And, Gloria Nord said that she talked Steinman into dropping the show's original name "Roller Follies" because she thought it misled the public into thinking they were paying to see roller derby, the contact sport featuring roughhousing skaters jamming on a track. And of course, the rest is more history that we will continue within our next newsletter.

Roller Skating Rink Operators Association (RSROA) – In the

Beginning– We have been featuring a few of the RSROA founders in recent newsletters. Below is a photo that includes several of them when they were competing as professional speed skaters circa 1910-20. The group includes Harley Davidson, Roland Cioni, Fred Martin, Jesse Carey and Rodney Peters (who we have not previously mentioned).



RSROA Founding Fathers

Frank Bacon, Philadelphia, PA
 Victor Brown, Newark, NJ
 William H. Carpenter, Providence, RI
 Alfred M. Dexter, Niagara Falls, NY
 Robert Fisher, Traverse City, MI
 Donald Groesser, Traverse City, MI
 Harold F. Jennison, Bay City, MI
 Alfred W. Kish, Toledo, OH
 Charles McCormack, Chicago, IL
 Jules Mahl, Chicago, IL
 Fred A. Martin, Detroit, MI
 Rodney R. Peters, St. Louis, MO
 Jonathon Riggie, Pontiac, MI
 William F. Sefferino, Cincinnati, OH
 Jack Shuman, Huron, OH
 Earl Van Horn, Mineola, NY
 Earl J. Von Hagen, Columbus, OH

While the professional speed roller skating circuit could be lucrative, many skaters became rink managers to supplement their racing incomes or when they retired from competition. Fred Martin managed the White City Roller Rink in Chicago and the Columbia Skating Palace in Ft. Worth before going to the Arena Gardens rink in Detroit. Rodney Peters managed the Delmar Gardens, San Souci, and Paladium rinks in St. Louis.

When I (Peggy Young) first began to take the notes at the Board Meetings of the Roller Skating Rink Operators Association (now known as Roller Skating Associations, International), Al Kish was still attending the meetings.



While I do not have a lot of his early history to share at this time, I can tell you that he wore a whistle around his neck, which he tooted from time to time. I am not certain if he was indicating his approval, disapproval or he was tired of the conversation, but it brought a smile to everyone's face. If anyone can share the early history of Al Kish or other founders, please do so and we will include it in this newsletter. The photo on the left is of Al Kish and William "Cap" Sefferino, both RSA founding fathers.

Preserving our Past for the Future - National Museum of Roller Skating Raffle - Ticket Price \$50. Three prizes will be awarded based on the total amount sold. First ticket drawn receives 5% of total ticket sales. Second ticket drawn receives 10% of total ticket sales. The third and final ticket drawn receives 35% of the total sales. Total prizes are 50% of ticket sales.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ROLLER SKATING 2016 RAFFLE	
Please print or type	
Purchaser	_____
Address	_____
City/State/Zip	_____
Phone # () _____	_____
Email	_____
Ticket Seller	_____
Ticket Number A-001	
PRESERVING OUR PAST FOR THE FUTURE	
Price \$50. Three prizes will be awarded based on total amount sold.	
First ticket drawn receives 5% of total ticket sales.	
Second ticket drawn receives 10% of total ticket sales.	
The third and final ticket drawn receives 35% of the total sales.	
Total prizes are 50% of ticket sales.	
Drawing to take place, Wednesday, May 4, 2016, at the RSA International Convention, Rio All Suites Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, during the President's Dinner.	
Ticket holders need not be present to win. All proceeds benefit the museum.	
	
The National Museum of Roller Skating is a publicly supported, charitable organization.	



The drawing will take place, on Wednesday, May 4, 2016, at the RSA International Convention, Rio All Suites Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada, during the President's Dinner. Ticket holders need not be present to win. To purchase a raffle ticket, please contact the museum and provide your name, address, phone number, email address and payment of \$50 per ticket. All proceeds benefit the museum.



As Members of the National Museum of Roller Skating, your Support is Essential. Thank you for enabling the preservation of the rich history of the sport, business and recreation of roller skating.

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