

October 2020

Rolling Thru Time
Newsletter

The National Museum of Roller Skating



Visit our Website

Museum Highlighted on National TV

CBS Sunday Morning with Jane Pauley aired a piece on roller skating Sept. 25. The middle third of the program dealt with the history of roller skating, including footage from the National Museum of Roller Skating. This program was great national exposure for roller skating, its history, and the Museum. Peggy Young, who was featured in the Museum segment, said it was the best national exposure the Museum has ever had, and was excited to be able to contribute to such a well-done production.

View the program [HERE](#)

Museum Fundraiser!

THE RACE IS ON

GET YOUR SKATES ON TO HELP US



The National Museum of Roller Skating's 40th Anniversary

1980 - 2020

Please consider donating \$40 for 40 years to help support your museum of roller skating history.

Simply visit our website: rollerskatingmuseum.org and find the link to our donation page in the menu bar.

Your kind donation will help to preserve the largest collection of roller skating artifacts in the world for future generations of our global roller skating family to enjoy for years to come.

Donate with



\$40 FOR 40TH



rollerskatingmuseum.org



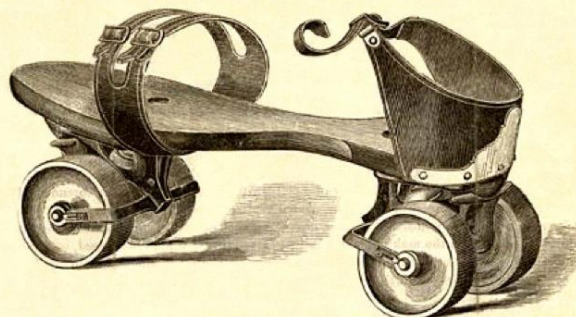
Established in 1980

THE

National Museum of Roller Skating

The museum's grand opening to the public was on April 13th, 1982.

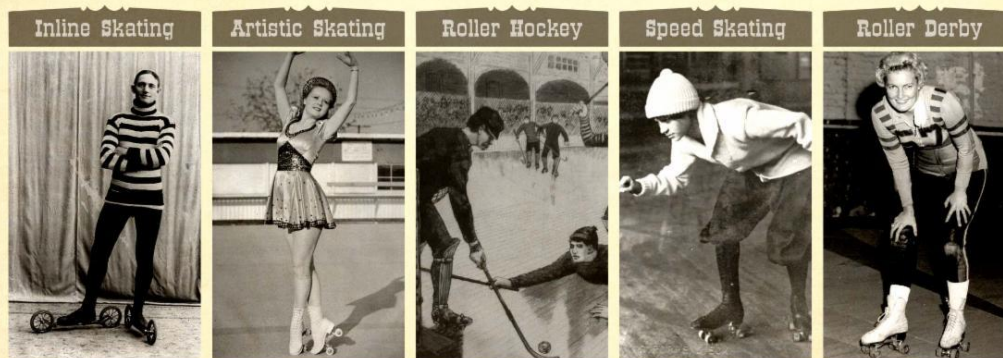
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA.



The National Museum of Roller Skating provides the public with an experience to reflect and understand the sport of roller skating and its history. With exhibits containing artifacts dating back to the early 19th century, the museum presents roller skating throughout the years.

The Museum houses the largest collection of roller skating items in the world and also houses the National Roller Skating Archives which contains publications and information on the people, objects and events connected to roller skating's history.

The building is shared with USA Roller Sports, the national governing body of roller sports. The historical building was formerly used by Lincoln Telegram and Telegraph Company as a utility warehouse.

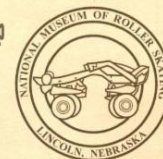


Visit our website for more information about us, our exhibits and our online gift shop

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF ROLLER SKATING

4730 South Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68506

rollerskatingmuseum.org



In honor of the 40th Anniversary of the National Museum of Roller Skating incorporation we invite you to donate \$40 (or more!) in honor of this special occasion.

On October 27, 1980 some of the greats of roller skating took the step to ensure our incredible history was to be preserved for generations to come. Bert Anselmi, Robert Bollinger, Marvin Facher, Chester Fried, George Pickard, Dick Young and James Turner held the vision to bring us to where we are today. To walk into the Museum is to see our sport and industry come alive with amazing and important artifacts and stories to entertain the masses.

Join the Fund Raising Committee in helping to keep the vision flourishing on this grand occasion for 40 years. We look forward to the next 40 years.

From the full committee: Nellie Anderson Lillie, Charlene Conway, Tina Robertson Winkler, and Andy Starr.

Donations

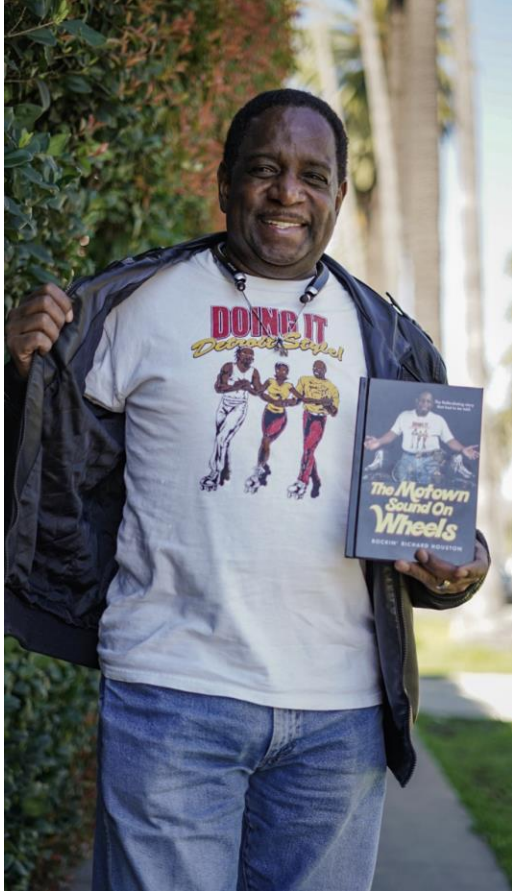
Kim Wall and Annelle Anderson made a donation on behalf of the memory of Frank Cernik for a name plate for him on the memorial plaque in the Museum. Frank was a trustee of the Museum for many years, and a great supporter. In 2013 he matched the amount of tickets sold at the RSA President's Dinner. Frank was a resident and rink owner of multiple roller skating rinks in the Omaha area.

A donation was made in memory of Pappy Winkler, husband of Museum Trustee Tina Robertson Winkler, by Annelle Anderson.

The first \$40 for 40 years donation was contributed by the South Central Region.

The Mowtown Sound on Wheels **By Rockin' Richard Houston**

Book Review and Interview by Alan Bacon



Richard Houston's book illuminates the moves, the music and the community of roller skating. His life-long passion for skating is evident throughout his 53-page, 2018 skating memoir.

Houston began indoor roller skating at the Arcadia rink in Detroit, Michigan, as an 11-year-old in 1962. He's still skating today in addition to serving as an ambassador for the sport. It's difficult to say what was more important to him, copying the moves of others that have become known as the Detroit style, skating to the Motown beat, or cherishing all of the community of friends he has gathered over the years. In the book's Epilogue he lists 18 moves of his and other Detroit skaters. He recalls countless people by name he has meet over the years, even as far back as the '60s, including comments on their skating abilities. Throughout the book he intersperses the importance of

the Motown beat and sound to his skating style.

"How the music made me feel is what enabled me to think up moves and practice them until I was expert at them.... When rhythm and music are blended together just right, you pour out your soul on wheels....The sounds of Motown were magical." *(excerpted from various sections)*

His uncle Buster was the manager at the Arcadia, where Houston eventually became an employee. He practically lived at the rink growing up. He describes traveling to over a dozen rinks in the Detroit area with his group of friends; at the end of one rink's session, they would head to another.

His first journey outside Detroit was to Washington State with the Air Force. He brought along his skates, of course. One day he almost got caught being at the base's skating rink when he was supposed to be somewhere else.

His travels would eventually take him to Los Angeles to appear on The Gong Show, twice, where the host, Chuck Barris, gave him the nickname Rockin'. While there he met up with his skating friends from Detroit who had moved to LA. Those skating bonds had remained. The skating community is a tight community, said Houston.

After LA, he went to New York and skated with Bill Butler and Cher. Butler began skating earlier at the Arcadia in 1945, so Houston didn't know him in Detroit. He greatly admires Butler, who is credited with inventing Roller Disco in the 1970s at the Empire rink in Brooklyn, New York. Houston was inspired by Butler's 1979 book *Jammin*, the first to illuminate his style of skating, he said. Houston said about the skating style called Jammin, that it's more than a sport, it's the art of roller skating to jazz, R&B or disco.

Butler commented in his book about musicality that "you must keep the beat," and "when you control the wheels, that you are free to let the music control your body."

Today, Houston's skating journeys have led him to Skate Parties across the United States, where he skates, gives interviews and sells books. You can see those interviews on YouTube, along with his performance on The Gong Show and other rink demonstrations. He hopes to promote skating internationally to take what he learned at the Arcadia around the world.

In my phone conversation with him, Houston continued with his passion for skating. We talked about the 1960s at the Arcadia. One topic was the Be-Bops contests that were held at the rink, which gave kids like him a chance to perform and be recognized. Rink culture celebrated performing in the center of the rink to try new moves and seek recognition. Some rinks also held demonstrations for session skaters.

His uncle used a management technique that is not available to rinks today: any attempt at fighting would result in having to put on boxing gloves in his office and swing until things were worked out. The community respect for his uncle brought 1,000 people to mourn his death at his reception.

Houston and others in Detroit still teach young people today in the Detroit style. These kids can't wait to turn 25 and be able to skate in the adult sessions, he said. He is also promoting skating groups of young people to perform.

He explained the difference between the faster JB style of skating in Chicago to James Brown music, versus the slower glide in Detroit to Motown classics. He said Detroit uses toe stops rather than toe plugs. The boots are tied up tight all the way to the top. He went on to celebrate other regional skating styles around the country, something not new, but receiving wider publicity today. Those regional styles and expertise were occurring when he was growing up, he said.

Despite some closing of rinks, he is optimistic about the future. He has many ideas to help roller skating, from another book he is working on, to promoting the creation of a movie and a Broadway production featuring the Detroit and other regional skating styles.

No matter what music or style a skater prefers, Houston helps skaters reflect on the basics of what has made skating so appealing to so many over many decades: being with friends, and moving to the beat.

The Arcadia Ballroom and Skating Rink



Photo of Arcadia's Skelly's Skate Shop in the 1950s. The gentlemen selling the skates is Nelson, said Houston. He is with Miss Skelly, whose had a skating plate named after her, added Houston. Both of them were still working the skate shop when Houston was skating there in the 1960s. (No other information accompanied the photos.) Arcadia's interior photos courtesy of George Pickard.

The Arcadia Ballroom opened in 1912 as one of the largest ballrooms in the country. Like many dance halls in this era, it was turned into a skating rink in 1941. The building was demolished in 1972.

Tom Russo's book, *Chicago Rink Rats*, listed the Arcadia in Detroit, along with Arena Gardens in Detroit, the Empire in New York, and Cleveland's Rollerode as four of the 10 "flagship" rinks outside of Chicago in the "Golden Age of Roller Skating" from 1937-1959.

"Strong personalities distinguish flagship rinks from others as they carved out a niche to work the national stage and maintain a spirit but cooperative edge over local competitors," Russo wrote. A flagship rink "stroved to excel, carving out a unique niche as a neighborhood family-oriented recreational venue."

Thought it became a roller rink in the 1940s, like many rinks, it hosted nationally known entertainers like Mary Wells, The Temptations, and Ike and Tina Turner. Like the nearby Arena Gardens, it also hosted wrestling matches. (When my parents operated my family's rink in the 1950s and 1960s, they too hosted nationally known entertainers such as Fats Domino (1957) and the Drifters (1963) along with many other Pacific Northwest rinks; my parent's rink also had wrestling matches.)

Amy Richardson, the Museum's archivist, discovered a Detroit Free Press article from September 19, 1941, covering the Arcadia's conversion into a roller rink. Richardson was also instrumental in pulling the photos of the Arcadia from the Museum's archives with the help of the Museum's new cataloging system CatalogIt. Below is the content of that article.

Arcadia Rink Holds Preview



Photo from Historic Detroit archives.

"The new Arcadia Roller Rink, reputed to be the most luxurious roller skating rink in America, will hold its Grand Preview Opening Friday under the management of Orville W. Godfrey, who also operates the Madison Gardens and Edgewater Park roller rinks in Detroit. The new Arcadia, located at 3527 Woodward, at the Charlevoix Crosstown Line, was formerly the famous Arcadia Ballroom, patronized by several generations of Detroiters.

Since being taken over by Godfrey, Arcadia has been provided with a new maple floor, specially built for roller skating; a glass-enclosed broadcasting

studio on the stage, where are located the Hammond electric organ, solovox and nova-chord, which will provide skating music this winter. The entire building has been freshly redecorated. In addition there is a private rink under the same roof for the figure skating club, a special rink for beginning skaters, and special accommodations for skate-shoe owners.

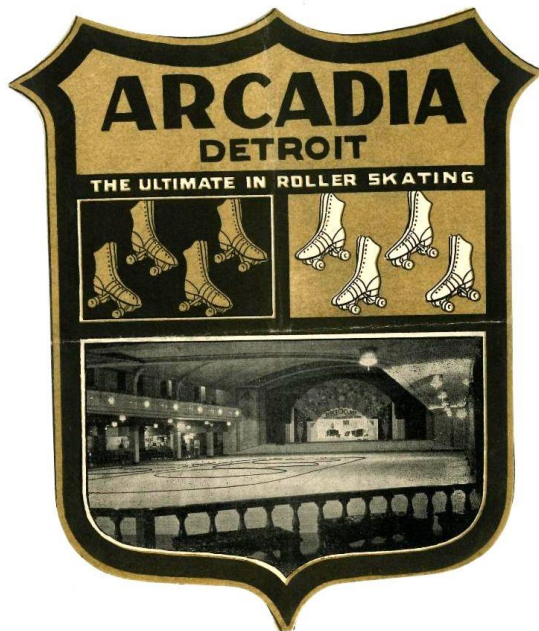
Skating sessions at the Arcadia this winter will be held nightly from 8 o'clock until midnight, with Sunday matinees from 2 until 5 o'clock, and kiddies' matinees on Saturday from 1:30 until 4:30 o'clock."





*All interior photos of the Arcadia are from the 1950's. No other information is available.
Photos courtesy of George Pickard.*

George Pickard at the Arcadia



George Pickard, former Executive Director of the RSROA, a founding Trustee of the Museum, and Secretary Treasurer of the Museum for many years, was born in Detroit in 1930 and began recreational and competitive skating at both the Arcadia and the Arena Gardens, which were less than a mile and a half away from each other on Woodward Avenue. (Woodward Avenue was arguably the first concrete paved road in America in 1909. It is the only urban route on America's 99 National byways. One author labeled it as "a Road to the Heart and Soul of

America.")

To read more about the historic Woodward Ave click [**HERE**](#)

According to George Pickard's oral interview conducted by Indiana University in 2001 for the museum, the Arcadia played a central role in his introduction to roller skating.

Below are excerpts from that interview:

"I skated at the Arena Gardens. I lived within walking distance of the Arena Gardens and two other rinks in Detroit that were along Woodward Avenue."

"I was motivated by my classmate Dale Godfrey who went to school with me and was in my class room. His father owned another roller rink, the Arcadia, a converted dance hall on Woodward Avenue. I used to go over there and skate occasionally, rent skates."

"Until I graduated from high school, I spent all my waking hours in the rink."

"Since there was so much activity within that area between the Arena Gardens and the Arcadia. Until the Arena closed in 1953, I kept switching back and forth between the Arena and the Arcadia because of teachers. . . I skated at the Arcadia and I skated at the Arena until the Arena closed. That's how I really got started in the sport."

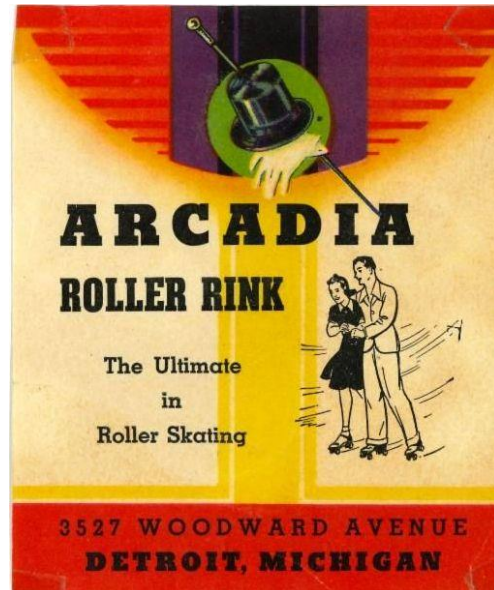
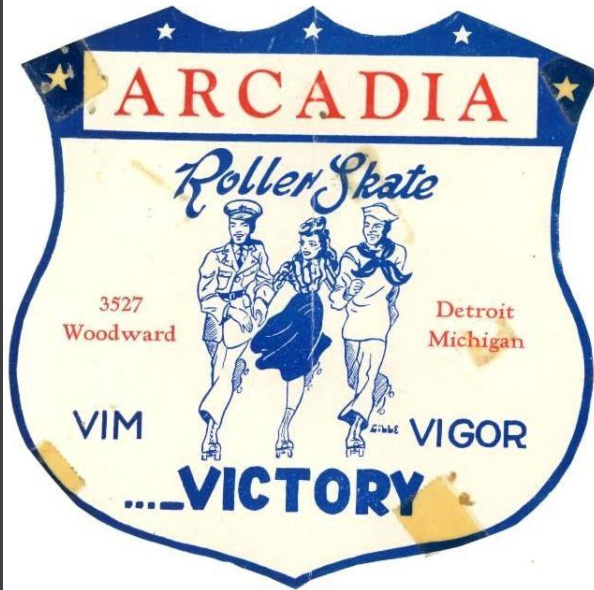


"I was kind of in between jobs (since returning from the navy in 1953) and I was offered a job as a skating coach at the Arcadia. My coach, Rose Martin, was leaving the Michigan area and was going out to Washington State. . . I taught at the Arcadia and at another rink in the Detroit area, the Dearborn Rollercade. I did that for about four years. Then the Arcadia was going to be closed because they were going to build a freeway spur through the area where they were at. They were going to connect one of the Detroit freeways. That was kind of poetic because that's the reason that the Arena Gardens had closed back in '53; they built a freeway right through it... So I took a job at the Cleveland Rollercade which was one of the biggest rinks in the country and was the site of several previous national championships." (Many urban roller skating rinks were lost to the building of the interstate highway system in the 1950s and 1960s)

As noted in the photo caption, these photos of the Arcadia's interior were donated to the museum by George Pickard.

For more information on the Arena Gardens, you can purchase the museum's published book *The Allure of the Rink* by Sarah Webber. The Arena Gardens

was where the RSROA was formed in 1937 by 17 rink operators, including Fred Martin, manager of the Arena Gardens.



STAY CONNECTED

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www.rollerskatingmuseum.com



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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