

April 2023

Rolling Thru Time
Newsletter

The National Museum of Roller Skating



[Visit our Website](#)

Many Ways in May to Support the Museum

Raffle

For almost 40 years, the raffle has been the largest annual fundraiser for the Museum. Last year's top winner took home over \$5,000, which was 35 percent of the total revenue collected.

This year's raffle will take place at the RSA national convention at the South Point Hotel in Las Vegas April 30-May 4. Tickets can be purchased from any Museum trustee, RSA sectional director, or at the Museum's booth during the trade show. You can also purchase a ticket by contacting the Museum by phone before April 28. 402.483.7551 Ex 1203.

Give To Lincoln Day

If you don't have the opportunity to purchase a raffle ticket, you can donate to the annual *Give To Lincoln Day* fundraiser sponsored by The Lincoln Community Foundation. This fundraiser is second to the raffle each year for funds to support the Museum. Each dollar of donation is supplemented by the Foundation based on the amount of financial support each organization receives from its supporters. In addition, with a donation of \$35 or more, a one-year individual Museum membership is granted.

Donations are accepted between May 1 and May 24.

Go to www.givetolincoln.com

The Foundation prefers online donations.

There is no benefit to giving offline versus online.

If you donate to this fundraiser, but would like to give more detail to the Museum on a specific purpose of the donation whether it be for membership or memorial, for example, please email Peggy Young at the Museum.

pyoung@rollerskatingmuseum.org

The above two fundraisers result in half of the yearly revenue of the Museum, and are essential to its operation.

Golf Tournament

Have fun and support the Museum on April 30, in Henderson Nevada, at the Revere Golf Club.

The fun starts at noon, but be there early, says Frank Torries who is coordinating the event. He needs to know who is participating at least two weeks before the event.

You can contact him at 337.278.8275 or ftorries@gmail.com

Oral Interviews

A special opportunity exists to add a lasting contribution to the Museum. With a \$10,000 grant, one of the largest in the Museum's history, over 30 historical skating individuals have been interviewed. Now the Museum wants to continue this project with private donations. Over \$3,000 has already been collected. Amy Richardson, former Museum Archivist, who has training in this area, is conducting the interviews. A donation of \$50 unlocks access to the recordings. A donation of \$1,000 entitles you to submit an individual for consideration to be interviewed.

To donate visit the Museum's website at rollerskatingmuseum.org
Choose the amount and designation (oral history).

To see a short promotion video produced by Richardson that gives highlights from a few interviews, click [**HERE**](#)

The following individuals have been interviewed so far:

Annelle Anderson, Bob Anderson, Don Allen, Efforest "Buggy" Allmond, Jim Ball, Gary Castro, Dominic Cangelosi, Scott Cohen, Natalie Dunn, George Grudza, Marie Gaudy, Sylvia Haffke, Charlie Kirchner, Bob Labriola, Caroline

Mirelli, Jim McMahon, Ron Miner, Joe Nazzaro Jr, Keith Noll, Jeff Prime, Olga Soto, Bo Trotter, Carlesa Williams, Connie Wahlig, Peggy Young, Dickie Sisson, John McNeel, Ziggy Marszalek, Jennifer Rodriguez, Wayne Ramsey, and Sue and Virgil Dooley.

Museum News

Notice: Annual Museum Meeting

The annual meeting of the National Museum of Roller Skating will take place April 30, 2023 at the South Point Casino in the Cypress room starting at 2 pm.

Notice: Passing of Museum Workers

Former Museum employee Rhonda Cann and Museum volunteer Bob Culver recently passed away. They were involved with the Museum in the recent past. Peggy Young, museum secretary, who worked with them both said: "Many of you will remember her (Rhonda) as a bright light in the museum, whether you called in or saw her during a visit to the museum" and "He (Bob) was another delight to have in the building."

For more information on their lives:

Rhonda Cann: [CLICK HERE](#)

Bob Culver: [CLICK HERE](#)

Donations

Dianne Braun in memory of Jean Johnson, mother of Robert and Tammy Johnson

Michigan USARS in memory of Dennis L Welsh

Memphis Figure Roller Skating Club Exhibits Roller Sports During Local Chinese New Year Gala

Written by Yan Lu, Sara Lovel

Note: This story and photos were submitted by Cort Wahlig, Museum trustee. The two photos were not part of the original story. Caroline Marelli has been a long-time member of the Museum.



Left: Coach Mirelli. Right: Unidentified club skater.

The Spring Festival, or simply, Chinese New Year, is the largest and most important annual festival celebrated by Chinese people around the world. This year, Chinese New Year's Day fell on Sunday, January 22nd, 2023, marking the beginning of the year of the Rabbit.

Since the first Greater Memphis Chinese New Year Celebration Gala was held in 2002, it has become the biggest event held annually among Memphis Chinese communities. The gala attracts thousands of people in attendance every year under the leadership of the Greater Memphis United Chinese Association. The program includes modern music, Chinese folk songs and dances, traditional Chinese musical performances, Chinese Kungfu, acrobatics, magic, and much more.

The Memphis Figure Roller Skating Club (MFRSC, TN001) is a recognized skating club by the governing body of USA Roller Sports (USARS) and American Artistic Roller Skating (AARS). Started in 1992 and led by Coach Caroline Mirelli, who is a USARS Distinguished Hall of Fame Coach, two-time recipient of the Society of Roller-Skating Teachers of America (SRSTA), and winner of the Charles Wahlig Memorial USARS Life Membership Award.

During her 66 years of coaching experience, Coach Caroline boasts a multitude of U.S.A. National Champions and world-level skaters. She spread and introduced this sport to the Asian-American community and made it more inclusive and diverse.

In this year's Chinese New Year Gala celebration, MFRSC set up an exhibition booth to introduce Roller Skating as a sport to the gala's visitors. Most people think it is for fun and party time, or maybe just a hobby if they roller skate regularly. They never heard about the organizations of USARS and RSA and think it is only for kids.

Gerald Lovel, 73 years old, skated on and distributed RSA roller skating flyers to visitors with his daughter Sara while doing their skating turns and moves in the exhibition hall of Michael Rose Theater. Gerald skates every week at East End skating Center, working on polishing his dance and figure skills, and will compete in the upcoming Heart of Memphis Meet.

Young club skaters (Jeremy Liu, Eli Liu, Max Howell, and Iris Li, who are Medal winners in USARS National Championship and American Championship 2022) have a common language with their peers when introducing this sport. Kids love to see their tricks and show interest in the East End skating rink and the Kids Skate Free program. Seeing the abilities of these skaters, young and old, shows the attendees of the Greater Memphis Chinese New Year Celebration Gala what is possible in roller skating if one is dedicated to the sport and has the proper training.

Feature Story
**Tacoma Museum Highlights
Washington State's
Roller Skating History**

Story and photos by Alan Bacon

Washington State's roller skating history is on display at the Washington State Historical Society's museum and online in Tacoma Feb. 11 – Aug. 20. It's titled *Rinks, Derbies and Disco in Washington State*. An evening ceremony occurred

on its opening day including a talk by lead curator Gwen Whiting. Much of one large floor of the Museum is host to this temporary display.

Museum Trustee Randy Ray, and Chris Ray; Gary and Karen Englund; and myself were on hand for the opening evening event. All three of our Washington state rinks loaned artifacts. The display also used copies of historic skating stickers from the National Museum of Roller Skating. As a rink owner, it was fulfilling to see our industry acknowledged in such a prestigious historical institution.



Top Left and Right: As you drive into a revitalized downtown Tacoma, you can't help but see this promo for the display. The following photos do not cover the entire breadth of the display.

Top Right: This is a grand museum, and the area devoted to the exhibit was spacious.

Bottom Left & Right: Some of the historic skates displayed. The far right quad skate is my Sure-Grip Jogger I won at National Skate Distributors trade show in Tacoma in 1977. This was perhaps the premier outdoor skate of the late 1970s with its revolutionary urethane wheels. The front, far left inline skate is my 1960s Chicago inline skate my father bought me when I was a kid. Scott Olsen would modify this design to create the Rollerblade company in the 1980s.

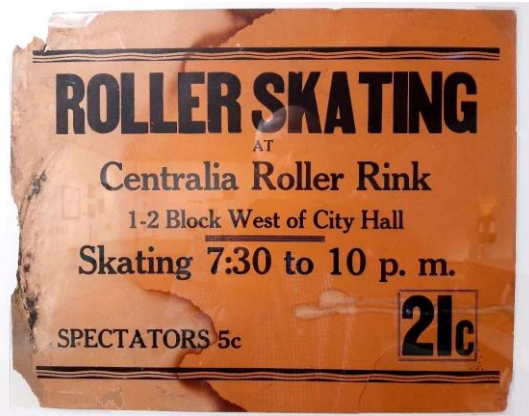
Several Washington state rinks were featured, beginning with Seattle's Pavilion rink of 1871. Other highlights were Rays' Centralia Rollerdrone (1907), the second oldest continually operating roller rink in the U.S., the Betts/Pattison's rinks in Redondo Beach (1937) and Federal Way (1979), and Pop Brown's Southgate rink in Seattle (1937). Of these last four rinks, only Redondo Beach is no longer operating—it burned down in 1951. Washington may have the most pre-WWII rinks still operating of any state in the country. Other classic Washington rinks that are still operating: Pattison's North, Spokane (1941); Lynden Skateway, Lynden (1946); Skateland Fun Center, Union Gap (1948); Rollarena, Richland (1953); Harborena, Hoquiam (1953); Hollywood Roll, Soap Lake (1953); Lynnwood Bowl and Skate, Lynnwood (1956) and Marysville Skate Center, Marysville (1956).

During the research phase of the exhibit, I had some interesting discussions with the Museum's head curator. We speculated about how Plimpton's skates were transported to Seattle in 1971 when Seattle had a population of 3,000: by ship or wagon train? She also found rinks operating in Seattle and Tacoma during the 1890s, when few rinks existed after the collapse of skating in the mid-1880s, roller skating's first boom. We speculated that the frenzied years of the Yukon Gold Rush must have sparked interest in entertainment while Seattle population was greatly expanding. (I suggested she view the roller skating scene in the 1980 movie *Heaven's Gate*, filmed in Montana, to see the possible atmosphere those 19th century Washington rinks might have had.)

I was impressed by the work that went into a temporary exhibit such as this one in such a short amount of time. Museum staff, who usually don't have specialized knowledge about the content for these short-term displays, have to gather and evaluate the information, and find additional artifacts not in their museum's permanent collection, in time for the displays to be built. In addition, promotion for the exhibit has to be designed and distributed. It was only a few weeks from my initial conversation with the head curator in her early period of research, to when I delivered some artifacts and saw the displays being built. As I was examining the displays, their designer mentioned his nervousness on seeing someone who has a background in the subject matter because they are always concerned if they got the story right.

As I surveyed the displays, I couldn't help comparing them with the Elmhurst History Museum (near Chicago) roller skating display that occurred a few years ago. I remember at that time thinking, "What if more museums around the country would do this?" Well, it has occurred again, and hopefully in many more museums to come. I also thought about the first time I visited the

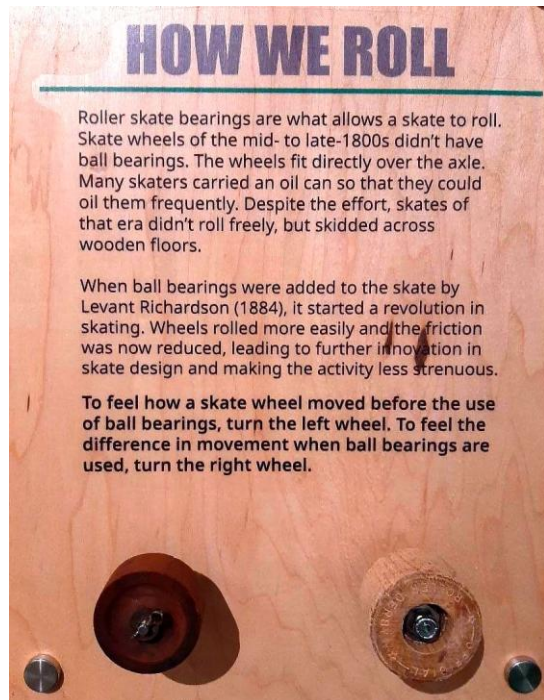
National Museum of Roller Skating. I had studied history, but knew little of roller skating history, even though I was born into the business. I naively thought, "What could there be to roller skating history?" That day I was totally blown away by what I saw in Lincoln. And I hope as others who might be ignorant of skating history view this new exhibit, they too will come away with a greater appreciation of roller skating's contribution to American culture.



Washington is also home to the Centralia Rollerdrome, the second longest continually operating roller rink in the United States. The Rollerdrome was built in 1904 as McNitt Hall in Centralia, but by 1907, had been renamed the Maplewood Rink, possibly for the wood from which the floor was made. In the 1950s, the name changed again to the Centralia Rollerdrome. It remains a roller-skating rink to this day.

Above Left: Artifact and caption of the Rays' rink

Right: These are two examples of displays that may be given to our Museum in Lincoln at the end of the exhibit





The Redondo Skating Arena, around 1940.

In the summer of 1936, the Betts family converted a dance pavilion at the Amusement Park in Redondo to a roller rink in just four days. That rink became the Redondo Skating Arena. With little experience in managing a rink, owner Wes Betts hired Aubrey King as janitor and manager, but King was also tasked with rink-specific jobs such as "skateroom man," "floor man," and "organ tender," while daughter Evelyn, age 13, sold tickets and concessions.

To learn more about managing a rink, Wes and his wife Lauree joined the Roller Skating Rink Operators Association (RSROA). Traveling to competitions and other rinks, the Betts brought new ideas back to Washington, one of which was the unpopular idea to maintain rink floors by banning all metal wheels. Other innovations like the addition of professional instruction were much more popular and brought new skaters to the rink. Professional skater (and son-in-law) Pat Pattison eventually took over management of the rink.

The Redondo Skating Arena was a beloved community institution for many years until the rink was destroyed by a fire in 1951. The blaze was so massive that the flames could be seen for miles and represented a tremendous loss, including a pipe organ valued at \$100,000 which included parts from various other pipe organs including one from the Egyptian Theatre in Seattle. Members of the extended Betts-Pattison and King families founded other popular and well-loved Washington rinks in later years, including Pattison's West (Federal Way), Pattison's North (Spokane), and Tiffany's Skate Inn (Puyallup).

OLYMPIC DREAMS

One rink in Washington State produced perhaps more Olympic medals than any other—Pattison's West in Federal Way. Founded and operated by the Pattison family from 1979 until its sale to El Centro de la Raza in 2022, this rink was a destination for inline speed skaters like Joey Mantua.

Olympic speedskaters Apolo Ohno, J.R. Celski, and Aaron Tran got their start roller skating at the rink. Transitioning from roller skates to ice skates gave them an advantage – skating inline on a rink floor is different than ice. The skates are heavier and don't glide as ice skates do, so when switching from inline to ice, years of resistance training on rink floors meant that the skaters could go even faster than several of their counterparts without a background in roller skating.

Pattison's Team Xtreme, the inline speedskating team started by Mike Pattison and run by Mike and later his son, Darin, was where Ohno, Celski, and Tran started their competitive skating careers. It also produced numerous national and Northwest skating champions, ranging in age from 5 to 55 years old.



Top Two Photos: Betts' Redondo rink and narrative.

Weston Betts was one of the first RSROA board members, and was in the first group of Life Members in 1951.

Bottom Two Photos: Pattison's West legacy.

Another first family of speed skating, the Petersons from the Tacoma Roller Bowl around the late 1970s/early 1980s: Tom, mother and coach Skip, and sister Linn.

Roller skates were used in Washington before it was a state. Although it is uncertain when the first pair of skates came to the state, newspaper articles report that a businessman named Kennedy opened The Pavilion, a Seattle rink on Front (now 1st Avenue) and Cherry Streets on October 21, 1871.

Plimpton roller skates were provided to skaters. At the time, inventor James Plimpton required that rink owners license the rights to use his skates in their operation. He granted exclusive rights to his skates in Washington Territory two months later to John Pinnell in December, presumably after Kennedy had closed The Pavilion.

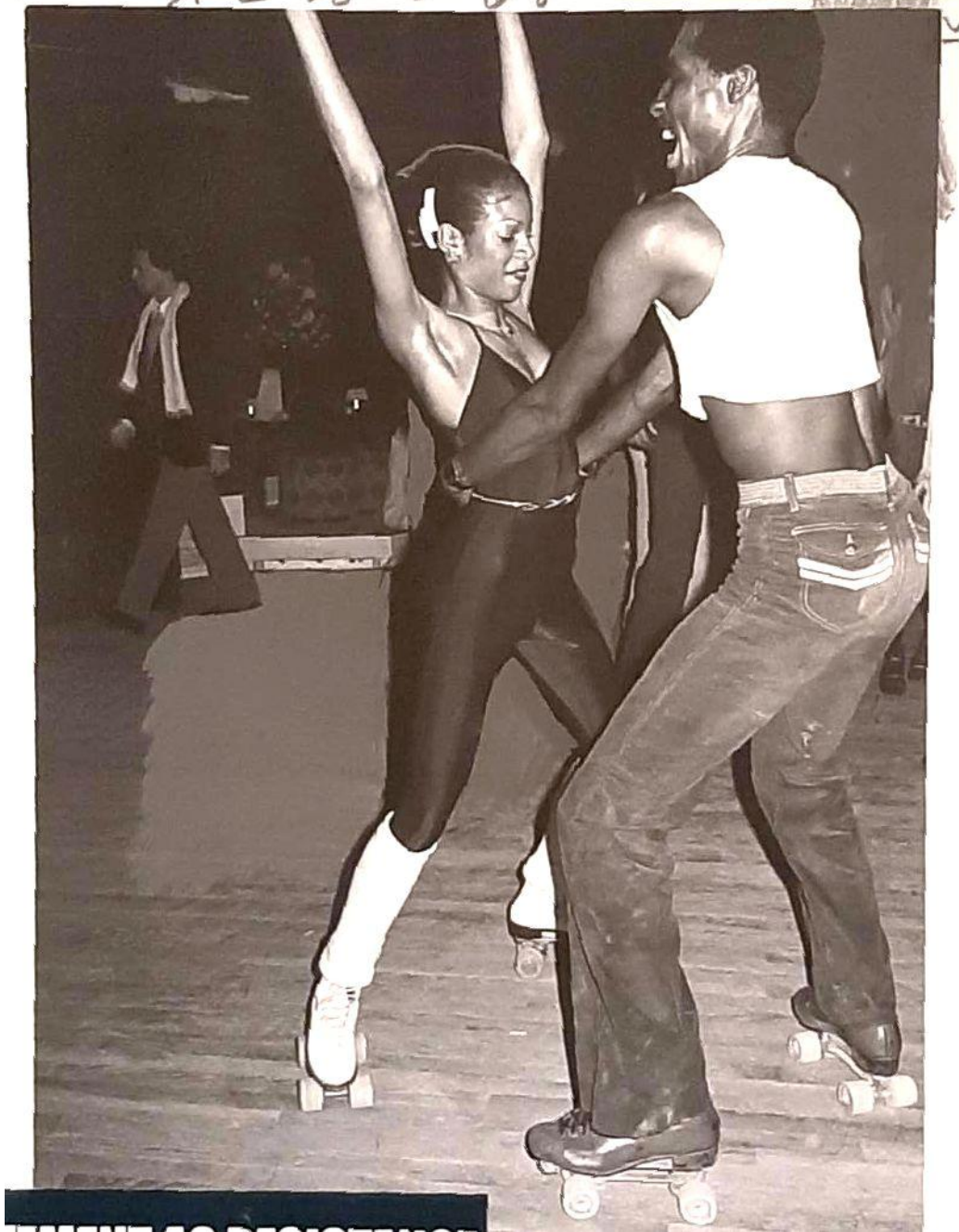
Uniting Cities

In 1889, the relationship between Washington cities Spokane and Cheney was strained after a battle over which city would be the seat for Spokane County. What kept the two cities connected was a roller-skating rink. Cheney held the region's first roller rink, housed in a downtown warehouse. Spokanites would board the Northern Pacific train that went west in the evening, ride to Cheney, and skate for several hours. In early morning, they would catch the train coming back from Seattle for the return trip home. An unnamed skater remembered those times in the *Spokesman Review*, "The rink was a fad, you might say, a craze, for little, big, old and young had the fever ... There was such a demand for skates that many people paid a week ahead of time for them to be reserved."

ROLLER DERBY

Roller derby's revival started in Austin, Texas, in 2001 as a woman-only sport. The sport was revised to be played on a flat track, rather than the banked track of the past. Games or "bouts" often included staged fights and loud music. Skaters created dramatic personas and wore costumes and face paint to match.

The sport came to Washington three years later. Lilly Warner visited Austin in 2003, then decided to start a Seattle league with two friends Rahel Cook and Katie Merrell. By 2004, the Rat City Rollergirls (now Roller Derby) had been formed, named for the neighborhood in which they played, White Center or "Rat City." Roller derby soon traveled across the state with leagues emerging in Tacoma, Spokane, Ellensburg, and Bellingham, among others. Washington leagues now compete both statewide and nationally, winning multiple titles.



Top Two Photos: Information about two of Washington's 19th century rinks.

Bottom Two Photos: The title of the exhibit is *Rinks Derby & Disco in Washington State*. Modern derby came to the state early, and has become very popular.

Two skaters in Seattle during the disco era: A style or styles of skating that became known as roller disco that had been developed primarily in the African American community exploded across the country in the late '70s, including Washington State.



In 1937, Ethel and William “Pop” Brown made the decision to turn their dance hall into what is now the Southgate Roller Rink in Seattle. For years, Pop closed the rink every night by reading this poem he had written for the skaters to them:

*It's not the size of the rink that counts,
Or the style of the clothes you wear,
But the friendly smile that you pass around
Instead of a vacant stare—
So when you skate on the morrow,
We know you'll stop and think
Of the pleasant time you had last night
At Seattle's Friendly Rink.*

When rinks close, the impact to their communities is more substantial than just the loss of a physical structure. Families grow up around rinks, sharing memories across generations and teaching their children to skate where they themselves learned. They are unofficial community centers. Rinks are places where people form friendships, fall in love, and can be a safe space to gather. The loss of a rink is also a loss for the community that surrounds it.

Top Photo: Some humorous postcards from the second skating boom starting in 1905 that the Tacoma museum had in its archives.

Second Photo: No historic roller skating display would be complete without these rinks stickers. This display was made from copies of rink stickers from the National Museum of Roller Skating, which received credit.

Bottom Two Photos: Two memorable statements. The first one is by Pop Brown, the fourth president of the RSROA. The second is one that best sums up the significance of the exhibit and the emotions when meandering through it. The exhibit was more than just about rinks derby and disco, but the contribution roller skating has made and continues to make to American culture.

STAY CONNECTED

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4730 South Street, Lincoln, NE 68506

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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