



## Rolling Through Time

By James Vannurden

Director and Curator

Official Newsletter of:

**National Museum of Roller Skating**

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### Who We Are

The National Museum of Roller Skating is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization located in Lincoln, Nebraska and 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.

### Curator's Corner

#### Museum Begins 35<sup>th</sup> Year of Service



When the gentlemen above founded the museum in late 1980 they dreamed of a place to house the most precious artifacts dealing with the great history of roller skating as well as a place to learn and experience this grand story.

It has taken a lot of effort over these three-plus decades to keep the museum alive and well. All of the skating artifact donations are the heart of the institution. The monetary donations whether membership, memorial, raffle, or special project kept the lights on and the doors open. The dozens of board members guided the museum through each new challenge. The ten museum directors all contributed to shaping the vision set forth by our mission statement. Each visitor fed into the demand for such a place.

Now beginning our 35<sup>th</sup> year, the National Museum of Roller Skating wants to thank everyone who supported our facility and the cause of preserving a prestigious history. None of this would be possible without the continued support of all of the museum enthusiasts. We look forward to the coming year, wondering what new and exciting opportunities await.

### New Display on the Way



This off-road Rollerblade has been part of the museum collection since 1998. Donated by the Rollerblade Company, this Coyote skate has three inflatable tires and weighs over seven pounds.

Recently the museum was contacted by the inventor of the braking system to this Rollerblade. He worked with Rollerblade in the mid-to-late 1990's to develop and patent this braking system.

He intends to donate items associated with his contributions such as inline skate articles, a promotional video, an original U.S. patent, and multiple prototypes and parts. We hope to obtain these items in the next month or two.

Afterwards an exhibition featuring a chronological timeline display (1995-1999) that documents the braking system and skate development will appear in our exhibition gallery. We hope this display helps visitors see into the process of development many companies go through in order to create the skates we love.

More information will come upon completion of the donation and its subsequent exhibition.

### New and Renewing Members

Anne Pals  
Ellie Shattuck  
Chrissy Ellis

## Featured Story Vaudeville Skating

By the turn of the twentieth century, Vaudeville became a staple of middle class existence in the United States. These shows offered respectable thrills to parents and children alike. Managers and booking agents sent their performers to the over 2,000 small theaters that sprang up across the country by 1910.

Vaudeville performers impressed audiences with high wire and acrobatic acts, dancers and singers captured their attention, comedians made them laugh, and Houdini and other magicians amazed them. Among the numerous types of acts and hundreds of performers, trick and fancy skaters became a great part of the Vaudeville circuit.

### Jesse Darling



Jesse Darling and Henry Simmons

Around the turn of the century, Jesse Darling learned to roller skate. She became so accomplished that she decided to leave her hometown of Providence, Rhode Island at a chance to perform in the large rinks up and down the East Coast. Darling left her spectators with the impression that they had just witnessed a fairy floating through the air.

The reputation of Darling grew at an exponential rate. Knowledge of her grace and beauty on skates even spread across the Atlantic Ocean. In 1909, the "Peerless Princess of the Little Wheels", as she was known in some circles, traveled to Europe. She skated her fancy act in rinks across England, France, and Germany.

Upon returning to the United States, Darling decided to team up with Henry A. Simmons to form the "Skating Bijouves". The pair traveled extensively across the United States to consistent rave reviews as one of the premier skating couples around.

## The Skating Franks



Skating Franks in 1916

Of the many accomplished roller skaters on the Vaudeville circuit after 1900, only Charles Frank could claim to be the "Dean of Roller Skaters." Frank began his skating career in the 1880s during the early years of Vaudeville, and he insisted on referring to himself as "Professor Frank". Other roller skaters deferred to his authority as a teacher of early Vaudeville skating, and many credited him with originating and developing many of the regular Vaudeville roller skating tricks.

Though popular on his own, in 1905 he added his five year old daughter Lillian to his act, transforming his one-man show into an act known as "The Franks." Lillian followed in her father's footsteps, and as she grew older became an accomplished trick and fancy skater as well. While a majority of their act relied on fancy skating, the younger Frank also performed acrobatics and skated on stilts twenty inches high.

# The ARCADE SKATING RINK

November 25, 26 and 27  
"THE FRANKS"

THE BEST SKATING ATTRACTION IN THE WORLD

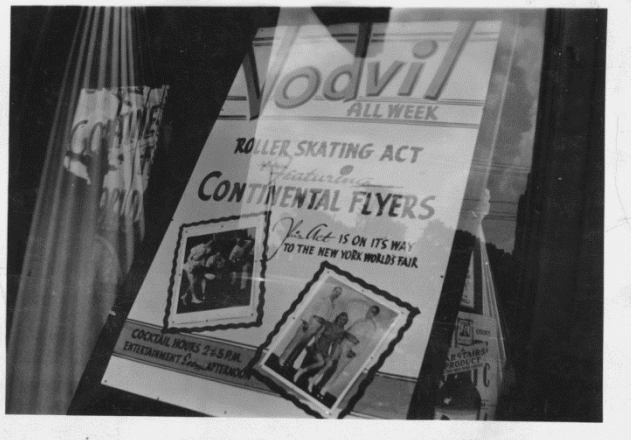
## Continental Flyers



Howard and Meta Bomier formed the group *The Continental Flyers* sometime in 1930 and began as an amateur act performing in Milwaukee, WI. After a booking agent approached them after one such performance, *The Continental Flyers* became a professional skating troupe and embarked on a traveling show.

They began work in nightclubs. Typically the duo would perform two shows per night, the first beginning around 10PM with the second following sometime after midnight. Their compensation generally ranged from \$10-\$12 per night which helped pay the bills during the 1930s economic depression.

Each act lasted 3-5 minutes in the nightclubs. When provided, orchestras played complementary music to enhance the performance. The above photo shows one of their greatest crowd pleasers, Meta holding onto Howard's neck with only one foot while he spun around in circles.



*The Continental Flyers* performed throughout the 1930s and early 1940s. Their shows took them across the midwest and up into Canada. By 1942 the couple became pregnant with their first daughter, and they retired from performing.

These are just three examples of the many roller skating acts which dotted the map during the Vaudeville era.

## Rink Sticker Collection

The museum has an extensive collection of roller skating rink stickers. Many skating rinks used to produce stickers as both an advertisement and fun way to for skaters to interact with one another, comparing the different location in which they skated. These were even traded as collectibles both informally and formally, under the Universal Roller Skating Sticker Exchange founded in 1948. Each newsletter, we will feature different rink stickers. Here are a few examples of the numerous stickers in the collection and on display at the National Museum of Roller Skating.



Thanks for supporting the museum!



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