



WEBFOOTER EXTRA

JANUARY 2018

A History of Skating – Make a Date for Fun



Palace of Joy Dance Hall and Skating Rink at Coney Island.

◆ A History of Skating – Make a Date for Fun – see page 2.

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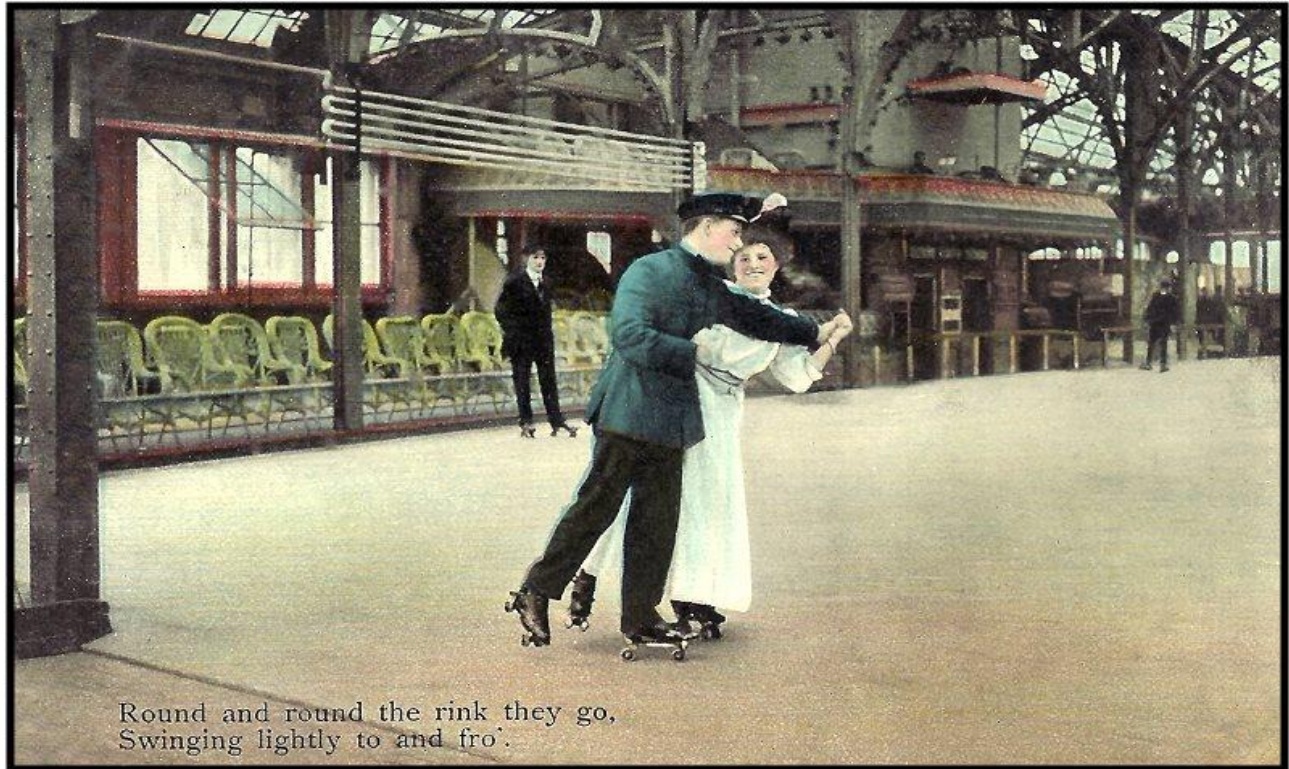
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A HISTORY OF SKATING: MAKE A DATE FOR FUN



Long before the automobile era, which made America a “nation on wheels,” roller skating was a popular indoor sport and form of recreation. This popularity only increased over the years as it became a wholesome form of enjoyment and healthful exercise.

The first recorded use of roller skates was in 1743 in a London stage performance. The inventor of this skate is unknown. The first recorded skate invention was in 1760, by John Joseph Merlin, who created a primitive inline skate with small metal wheels. In 1818, roller skates appeared on the ballet stage in Berlin. The first patented roller skate design occurred in France in 1819 by M. Petitbled. These early skates were similar to today's inline skates, but they were not very maneuverable. It was difficult with these skates to do anything but move in a straight line and perhaps make wide sweeping turns.

Inventors continued to work on improving skate design. In 1823, Robert John Tyers of London patented a skate called the Rolito. This skate had five wheels in a single row on the bottom of a shoe or boot. By 1857, roller skating had gained enough momentum to warrant the opening of the first public skating rinks. The Strand, London and Floral Hall had these first roller rinks.

The first four-wheeled turning roller skate, or quad skate, with four wheels set in two side-by-side pairs (front and rear), was first designed, in New York City by James Leonard Plimpton in 1863. The skate contained a pivoting action using a rubber cushion that allowed the skater to skate a curve just by pressing his weight to one side or the other, most commonly by leaning to one side. It was a huge success, so much so that the first public roller skating rinks were opened in 1866, first in New York City by Plimpton in his furniture store and then in Newport, Rhode Island with the support of Plimpton.

Early roller rinks varied greatly in size and type, both indoor and outdoor. Many consisted of simple wooden platforms that sometimes doubled as dance floors or ballrooms. While primarily an activity of eastern cities, a few enterprising individuals toured the rural areas of the Midwest and South with wagon-loads of roller skates. These entrepreneurs went from town-to-town, often in conjunction with circuses or carnivals, renting out skates and using whatever locally-available surface as an impromptu rink.

The design of the quad skate allowed easier turns and maneuverability, and the quad skate came to dominate the industry for more than a century. In 1875, a roller skating rink in Plymouth, England held its first competition.

William Brown of Birmingham, England, patented a design for the wheels of roller skates in 1876. Brown's design embodied his effort to keep the two bearing surfaces of an axle, fixed and moving, apart. Brown worked closely with Joseph Henry Hughes, who drew up the patent for a ball or roller bearing race for bicycle and carriage wheels in 1877. Hughes' patent included all the elements of an adjustable system. These two men are thus responsible for modern roller skate and skateboard wheels, as well as the ball bearing race inclusion in velocipedes—later to become motorbikes and automobiles. This was arguably the most important advance in the realistic use of roller skates as a pleasurable pastime.

The toe stop was first patented in 1876. This provided skaters with the ability to stop promptly upon tipping the skate onto the toe. Toe stops are still used today on most quad skates and on some types of inline skates. In 1877, the *Royal Skating* indoor skating rink building was erected in rue Veydt, Brussels.

By the 1880s, roller skates were being mass-produced in America. This was the sport's first of several boom periods. Micajah C. Henley of Richmond, Indiana produced thousands of skates a week during peak sales. Henley skates were the first skates with adjustable tension via a screw, the ancestor of the kingbolt mechanism on modern quad skates.

In 1884, Levant M. Richardson received a patent for the use of steel ball bearings in skate wheels to reduce friction, allowing skaters to increase speed with minimum effort. In 1898, Richardson started the Richardson Ball Bearing and Skate Company, which provided skates to most professional skate racers of the time, including Harley Davidson (no relation to the Harley-Davidson motorcycle brand). The design of the quad skate has remained essentially unchanged since then, and remained as the dominant roller skate design until nearly the end of the 20th century. The quad skate has begun to make a comeback recently due to the popularity of roller derby and jam skating.

In 1900, the Peck & Snyder Company patented an inline skate with two wheels. In 1902, the Chicago Coliseum opened a public skating rink. Over 7,000 people attended the opening night.



ROLLER SKATING

A wholesome exercise enjoyed by thousands daily at the

Exposition Skating Rink

Nineteenth and Washington Streets

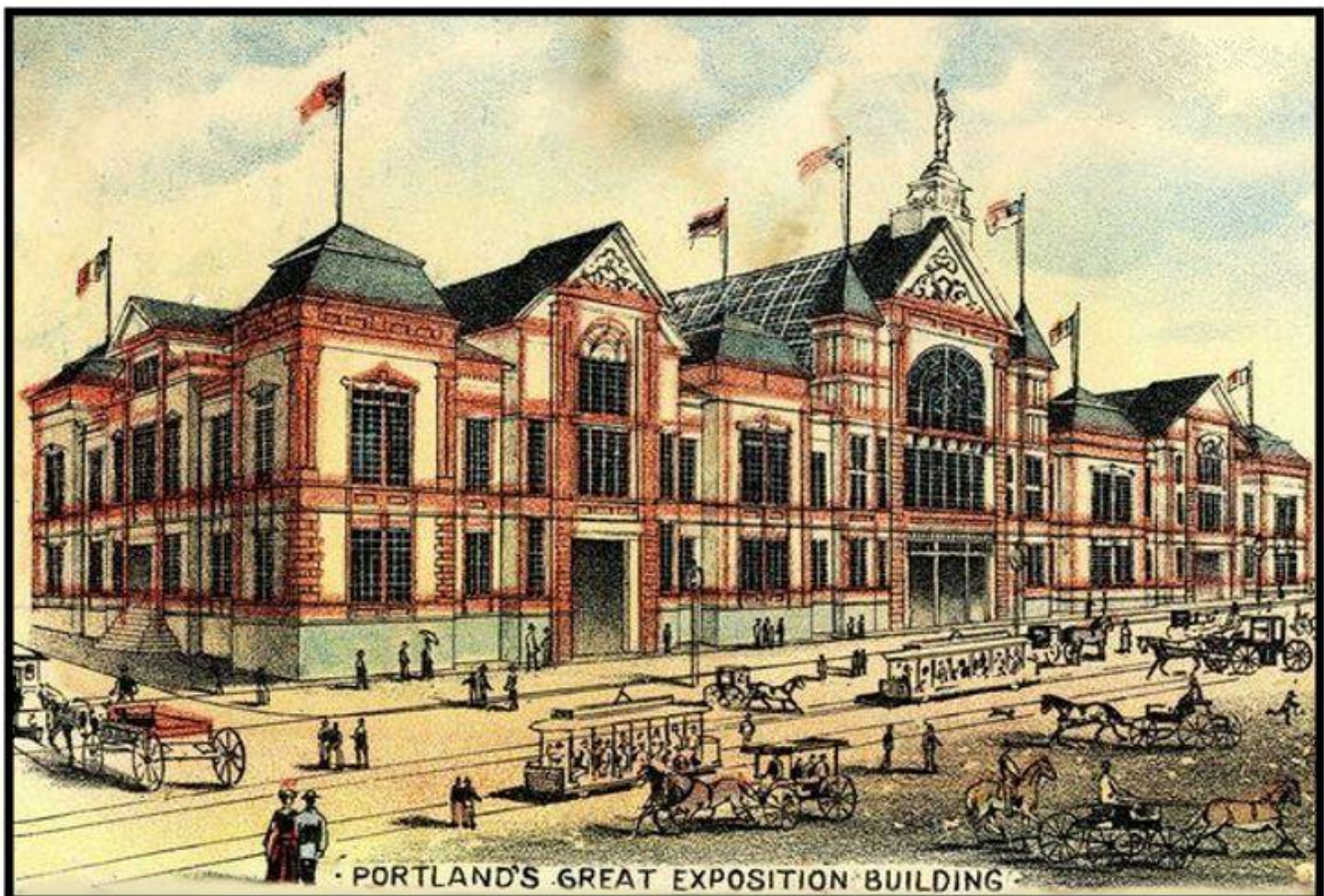
Band Music every afternoon 1 to 5 and evenings 7 to 10

Rink open mornings to beginners 10 to 12

LEARN TO SKATE

One of the earliest known skating rinks in the West opened in the Amusement Hall of the North Pacific Exposition Building at Nineteenth and Washington streets in Portland on December 18, 1905.

The North Pacific Exposition Building, built in 1888, was located at Washington Street (now Burnside) at Southwest 19th Avenue. The building was home to an annual industrial exposition in addition to horse shows and other major city events. Portland's first flower show was held there. At one time, the building housed the Pacific Dental College. An athletic field in back of the building eventually evolved into Multnomah Stadium and today's Providence Park. In 1910, the Exposition Building was destroyed by a massive fire that saw the death of at least one man and 150 horses and it leveled seven city blocks.





William (Pop) Brown and his wife Ethel moved to Portland from Seattle in the late 1930s to open the Imperial Roller Rink, "Portland's Finest and Only Downtown Roller Rink." They had opened the Southgate Roller Rink in South Seattle in 1937 and when they moved to Portland, their son Roy remained in Seattle to manage the Southgate Rink.



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OPENING**

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ROLLERDROME
SANDY AT 52nd

**Wednesday
Feb. 28th**

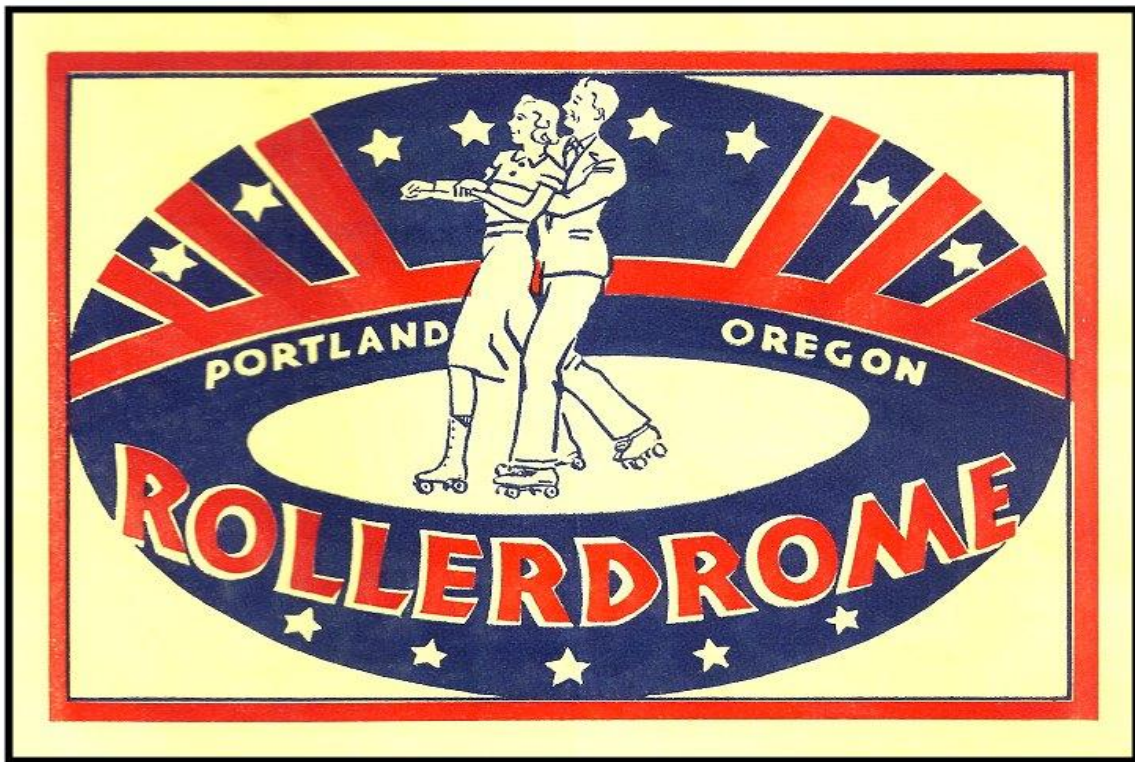


The Northwest's Finest Skating Rink!



"MAKE A DATE FOR FUN!"

The Northwest's finest skating rink, the Rollerdrome at 52nd and Sandy, held their official opening on February 18, 1938.



The post-World War II baby boom also saw a boom in roller rinks across the United States. Having a roller skating birthday party became something of a rite of passage for American children. Roller rinks in the United States underwent significant changes in the 1970s. New plastics led to improved skate wheels—ones providing a smoother, quieter ride—and easier-to-maintain skate floors.



The Disco craze from popular 1970s culture led to another increase in the popularity of roller rinks—or roller discos, as some became. Gone were the staid lighting and old-fashioned organ music as a generally older clientele was replaced by younger people skating under mirror balls and special lights to disco beats. The end of the Disco Era and the advent of inline roller skates hit the roller rink industry hard, with many rinks closing.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, Rollerblade-branded skates became so successful that they inspired many other companies to create similar inline skates, and the inline design became more popular than the traditional quads. The Rollerblade skates became synonymous in the minds of many with "inline skates" and skating, so much so that many people came to call any form of skating "rollerblading."

For much of the 1980s and into the 1990s, inline skate models typically sold for general public use employed a hard plastic boot, similar to ski boots. "Soft boot" designs were introduced to the market about 1995, primarily by the sporting goods firm K2 Inc.

However, as had happened throughout history, most rink owners adapted and survived the economic storm. Roller Derby, once considered virtually dead, has seen a rebirth in popularity in the early 21st century with amateur and semi-pro teams forming leagues nation-wide. Many rink owners support this activity, along with roller hockey, speed skating and roller figure skating contests.



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