

Jackson Haines: Early forerunner of freestyle skating

By James Vannurden, Director/Curator, National Museum of Roller Skating

In 1863, James Plimpton from Massachusetts set into motion a phenomenon when he patented his

first pair of roller skates. Their ease of use greatly exceeded skates of that time and launched roller skating into the national and world scenes. His 1866 model quickly became the most recognizable and widely-used roller skate in the world. Roller skating attracted many followers - kids and adults alike. One adult in particular was Jackson Haines.

Haines began his performing career as a ballet dancer. Studying in New York, he soon began stage performances in opera. He took his skills in ballet and transferred them into his skating, both roller and ice. In 1863 he utilized his skating skills in the opera *Le Prophete* by simulating ice skating on inline skates.

His different style of skating garnered him some ridicule by his peers, so he took his skills to Europe in 1864. During his first stop, in London, he gave many skating exhibitions. But London also criticized his interpretive

moves because they felt a more rigid program was best. Like the Americans, the English were satisfied with traditional figures in a more formal setting.

After his experiences in London, Haines decided to start a tour of European capitals. He began in Stockholm. While the many cities admired his skills, he finally took comfort in the arms of the city of Vienna. In this artistic area his skills thrived, and he soon became a sensation. He began instructing the population on how to dance with skates in 1865, including the ever popular waltz. His influence grew to such a point that the city founded the "Vienna School of Skating." Whereas the British school favored controlled skating, Vienna embraced a more expressive freestyle.

Haines then resumed a continental tour, skating both roller and ice.

For the most part, he skated solo acts. By utilizing costumes, ballet, and musical interpretation, Haines succeeded on captivating his audiences. He performed for all of the European courts and became close friends with Czar Alexander II of Russia. Rinks and children were named in his honor. When the first World Figure Skating Championships began in 1882, the statue awarded as a prize was made in his likeness. While attempting to return to America, Haines contracted pneumonia and died in 1875 in Finland.

To read more about Jackson Haines and other significant players in the advancement of roller skating, consider the purchase of the museum's new book *Titans and Heroes of American Roller Skating*. Contact the museum at (402) 483-7551 ext. 16. All proceeds benefit the Museum.



Jackson Haines

Trivia Question:
What skating move is named after Haines?
 The answer can be found on page 25 of this issue.

WOULD YOU WANT YOUR CHILDREN TO WEAR THEM?

A good way to do a quick check of your rental fleet is to ask yourself, "Would I want my children to wear them?" Rental skates are never the most attractive part of a skating rink, but they are one of the most important. When people visit a rink for the first time they are likely to use rental skates, and if the skates are in poor shape and do not skate well, then that person may choose not to return. School's about to start back, and now is a good time to look at the old rental rack and see if any need to be replaced or repaired.

Are they good enough and safe enough for your children?



Pacer Platinum

Southeastern Skate Supply now stocks the tan with blue version of Pacer's new Platinum rental skates. These skates feature top-grain leather boots with Cambrelle Plus linings that are bacteria and odor resistant. They also come with brass eyelets that will never rust. They are available in sizes 9J-13.

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