

**BLACK HISTORY IN SKATING TIMELINE**

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**1845** | John Fanning Watson raved in his *Annals of Philadelphia* about an unnamed “black Othello, who, from his apparent muscle and powerful movement, might have sprung, as did the noble Moor, from men of royal siege. In swiftness he had no competitor; he outstripped the wind; the play of his elbows in alternate movement with his low gutter skates, while darting forward and uttering occasionally a wild scream. [He] was very imposing in appearance and effect.”

**1888** | In *Outing* magazine, Calvert Bowyer Vaux recalled an unnamed skater of color performing “a feat that it is safe to say no other man in New York could then do — spread the eagle with toes together and heels out to right and left, both feet in line. He could not do many of the fancy figures then pretty generally known to the clever skaters, but no one else could get legs into the positions that he could — it was a sort of contortion act that stumped them all.”

Mabel Fairbanks



**1940** | Mabel Fairbanks embarked on a professional figure skating career. She was featured in “Rhapsody On Ice” in Havana, Cuba; USO nightclub shows in Europe; “School

Days On Ice”; George Arnold’s “Rhythm On Ice”; “Ice America”; the International Ice Festival in Bogota, Colombia; and on ice tanks installed at the Gayety Theatre and Play Room Night Club in Los Angeles. She also performed as a dancer in a floor show called “Harlem Holidays” at the Little Harlem Club in Los Angeles, wowing audiences with a dance she called the Holly-Harlem-Hula-Boogie.

**1946** | “Derby On Ice” premiered in New York. The show was to have had an entire cast of African American skaters, but after Mabel Fairbanks turned down the starring role, a skater of Latin American heritage, Venita Holquina Berea “Lucky” Petersen, took top billing.

**1947** | John Brett and Stewart Seymour presented “Harlem-On-Ice,” the first skating tour to feature a cast of African American skaters. Dolores Jackson and Jimmy McMillan were headliners. The tour was abruptly canceled after making its debut in Washington, D.C., during a vaudeville-style variety night.

**1951** | Mabel Fairbanks made her television debut on KLTA’s “Frosty Frolics.” It was the fourth-most-watched television show in Los Angeles less than two months after it premiered.

**1952** | Joseph Vanterpool was invited to give an exhibition during the finals of the Silver Skates Derby at Madison Square Garden. Vanterpool went on to appear on “The Ed Sullivan Show.”

**1956** | Mabel Fairbanks, Sterling Bough and Joseph Vanterpool starred in “Rhythm On Ice” at the historic Apollo Theater in Harlem.



Atoy Wilson

**1960** | Eddie B. Henderson won the bronze medal in the novice men’s event at the Midwestern Championships in Minneapolis.

**1964** | A race riot broke out at a skating rink in Medford, Massachusetts, when a young Black man asked to cut in on a young couple ice dancing. Ten people were injured, a bus was damaged and a police car flipped over.

**1966** | Atoy Wilson won the gold medal in the novice men’s event at the U.S. Championships.

**1970s** | African American skaters achieved success and fame performing with the major ice shows: Atoy Wilson (Ice Follies, Holiday On Ice), Leslie Robinson (Holiday On Ice, Caesar’s Palace in Las Vegas) and Gene Gant (Ice Capades).

**1970** | Richard Ewell III won the U.S. junior men’s title.

**1972** | Michelle McCladdie and Richard Ewell III won the junior pairs event at the U.S. Championships.

**1975** | Philadelphia’s Reggie Stanley won the Eastern and U.S.

novice men’s titles.

**1976** | Reggie Raiford won the novice men’s event at the Pacific Coast Championships. Bruno Jerry took the silver in novice men’s at the Eastern Championships and Kingsford Swan won bronze in junior men at the New England Championships.

**1976** | Tai Babilonia became the first biracial skater to win a U.S. senior pairs title and represent the United States at the Olympic Winter Games.

**1978** | Leslie Robinson represented the United States at the Campeonato Del Mundo De Patinaje Artístico Profesional Sobre Hielo (World Professional Championships) in Jaca, Spain.

**1979** | Tai Babilonia made history as the first biracial skater to win a gold medal at the World Championships.

**1979** | California’s Bobby Beauchamp won a silver medal at the World Junior Championships.

**1980** | Joan Campbell and Debi Thomas finished 1-2 in the novice