

21st World Olympic Collectors Fair

by Craig Perlow

For only the second time since the IOC created and organized this event in the 1990s in Lausanne, Switzerland, the 21st World Olympic Collectors Fair (WOCF) was held in the United States – in Lake Placid, NY – from 11 through 13 September 2015. The venue was the historic 1932 Jack Shea Rink at the Olympic Center where 62 collectors from 16 countries reserved 86 eight-foot tables on which to display their Olympic items. Everything from one-dollar pins to medals selling for tens of thousands of dollars were available and buying, selling, and trading activity was brisk amongst the hundreds who attended the Fair during its three-day run. The following countries were represented: BRA, CAN, CHN, FRA, GRE, JAP, LAT, LIT, NOR, RUS, SVK, SWE, SWI, TUR, UKR, and of course, the USA.

The venue for the 21st World Olympic Collectors Fair was made all-the-more special by its proximity within the Olympic Center to the 1980 Olympic Rink -- now known as the "Herb Brooks Arena" -- where the "Miracle on Ice" occurred on 22 February 1980. It was there that a young group of mostly-collegiate ice hockey players from the USA defeated the mighty Soviet Union 4-3 in a semi-final game, then went on to win the gold medal with a 4-2 victory over Finland in the final. Needless to say, many of the Fair attendees made the short walk to this historic arena which is still in use today.



The World Olympic Collectors Fair featured 62 collectors from 16 countries trading and selling.



The town of Lake Placid with barrel vaulted roof of the 1932 Jack Shea arena in the background.

The largest foreign delegation to the Fair came all the way from the People's Republic of China and consisted of 14 individuals -- 4 of whom represented the China Sports Museum in Beijing.

This passionate and knowledgeable group of collectors made their presence known by purchasing a large number of items from many table holders including Participants' badges/medals, IOC Session/Olympic Congress badges, and Award medals. It is now clear that the Chinese are becoming major players in the hobby of Olympic Memorabilia and will be an important force for many years to come.

The weekend of the Fair itself was preceded by a full day of interesting and informative events on Thursday, 10 September.

In the early afternoon, Jonathan Becker, Chairman of the Organizing Committee for the 21st WOCF, hosted a tour of the 1932 and 1980 Olympic Winter Games venues which today are managed by the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA). Included were Whiteface Mountain (Alpine Skiing), Mt. Van Hoevenberg (Biathlon, Nordic Skiing, Bobsleigh, Luge, and Skeleton) and the Olympic Ski Jumping Complex at Intervale which is located just two miles from the center of town. The final stop on the tour was a nearby visit to Mill Pond. It was there that a local boy, Charles (aka "Chick") Jewtraw (USA), got his start as a speed skater, and subsequently became the

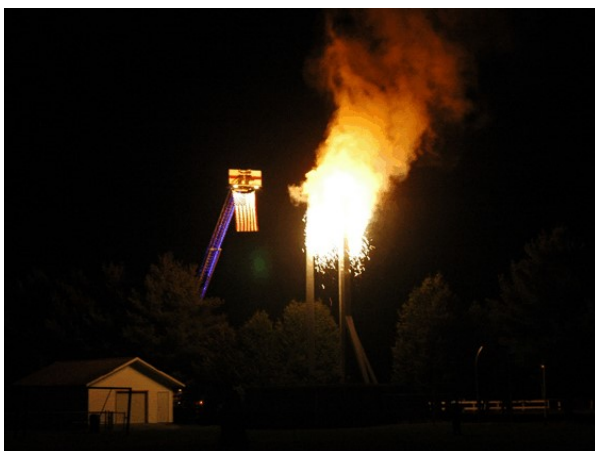


A 1930s era German-made four-man bobsled, on display at the Mt. Van Hoevenberg Olympic Sports Complex

first Olympic Winter Games Champion in the Men's 500m event in Chamonix in 1924. A granite marker dedicated on 9 July 1983 near the edge of Mill Pond commemorates Mr. Jewtraw and his achievement.

In the early evening, there was a reception at USA Luge Headquarters where participants were outfitted with helmets and helped to slide down one of three frozen indoor start ramps under the supervision of Gordy Sheer (USA), Men's Luge Doubles Silver Medalist in Nagano in 1998. Thankfully, no one was injured, but suffice it to say that some rides were smoother than others!

Later in the evening, with the assistance of the Lake Placid Fire Department, the Olympic Cauldron was re-lit at the Fairgrounds just outside of town where this venerable icon has stood since the 1980 Olympic Winter Games ended. The Master of Ceremonies for this spectacular event was James Morganson,



Relighting of the 1980 Olympic Winter Games Cauldron during the Fair's opening ceremony

Code Enforcement Officer for the Town of North Elba (where the cauldron is actually located). Other dignitaries on the stage included James McKenna, CEO of Lake Placid's Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism, Craig Randall, Mayor of Lake Placid, Stéphanie Coppex, IOC (Olympic Foundation for Culture & Heritage), Jonathan Becker, Chairman of the Organizing Committee for the 21st WOCF, Donald Bigsby, President of the (Host) Olympin Collectors Club, and James Greensfelder, former Chairman of the Organizing Committee for the 17th WOCF (which represented the debut of this event in the United States in Chicago in 2011).

Other highlighted events in the Olympic Center during the weekend included a reception in the 1932/1980 Lake Placid Olympic Museum on Friday evening, the 11th; a general meeting of the newly-formed Association



The 1980 Olympic Winter Games Ski Jumping Complex at Intervale

Internationale des Collectionneurs Olympique (AICO) on Saturday morning, the 12th; and finally, a reception in the Lookout Gallery followed by a dinner with 115 attendees in the Edelweiss Room on Saturday night. The Olympin Collectors Club, which served as the Host Club for the 21st WOCF, had its annual meeting on Sunday morning, the 13th, and the Fair officially ended later that afternoon.

All in all, this was a very well-attended and memorable event which will hopefully return to the United States again in the not-too-distant future.