

= Madge Syers =

Florence Madeline " Madge " Syers (née Cave , 16 September 1881 ? 9 September 1917) was a British figure skater . She became the first woman to compete at the World Figure Skating Championships in 1902 by entering what was previously an all @-@ male event and won the silver medal , which prompted the International Skating Union (ISU) to create a separate ladies ' championship . Syers was the winner of the first two ladies ' events in 1906 and 1907 , and went on to become the Olympic champion at the 1908 Summer Olympics , the first Olympic Games to include figure skating . She also competed as a pairs skater with her husband Edgar Syers , winning the bronze medal at the 1908 Olympics .

= = Personal life = =

Florence Madeline Cave was born on 16 September 1881 in Kensington , London , one of 15 children of Edward Jarvis Cave , a builder , and his wife Elizabeth Ann . She was a proficient figure skater , as well as a gifted swimmer and equestrienne . Madge became a regular at the Prince 's Skating Club in Knightsbridge , which had been formed in 1896 and was popular with aristocratic society in London .

In 1899 Madge met her future husband Edgar Syers , a figure skater and coach who was 18 years her senior . Edgar was an exponent of the international skating style , which was freer and less rigid than the traditional English style , and encouraged Madge to adopt this style . Madge and Edgar completed together in pairs skating events , and in 1900 finished second in one of the first international pairs events , staged in Berlin . They married in June of that year . The Syers co @-@ authored The Book of Winter Sports in 1908 .

= = Career = =

= = = 1902 World championships = = =

The World Figure Skating Championships , first contested in 1896 , was regarded as an all @-@ male event since competitive skating was generally viewed as a male activity , but there was no regulation barring women , enabling Syers to enter and compete at the 1902 Championships in London . She won the silver medal behind Ulrich Salchow , who was reputedly so impressed with her challenge that he offered her his gold medal . T. D. Richardson later wrote : " Rumour , nay more than rumour ? a good deal of expert opinion ? thought she should have won . "

Syers ' entry into the World Championships prompted the ISU to discuss the subject of women competing against men at their next Congress in 1903 . The concerns raised were that " (1) the dress prevents the judges from seeing the feet ; (2) a judge might judge a girl to whom he was attached ; and (3) it is difficult to compare women with men . " The Congress voted six to three in favour of barring women from the championships .

= = = 1903 ? 1907 = = =

Syers continued to compete elsewhere , and in 1903 won the inaugural British Figure Skating Championships , which began as a mixed competition . She won again the following year , beating her husband , who won the silver medal . She also entered the 1904 European Championships but withdrew due to injury after the first stage of the competition , the compulsory figures .

The 1905 ISU Congress established a separate ladies ' event , which was supported by strong lobbying from the National Ice Skating Association . The event was known at the time as the Ladies ' Championship of the ISU rather than a World Championship , and was staged at a different date and location from the men 's event . Syers won the inaugural event held in Davos , Switzerland in 1906 , finishing first in a field of five competitors . She won her second title in Vienna at the 1907

Championships .

== 1908 Olympics ==

The 1908 Summer Olympics in London were the first Games to include figure skating events in the programme , which were staged in October at the Prince 's Club . Syers entered both the ladies ' event and the pairs with Edgar . In the ladies ' event , Syers comfortably won the compulsory figures section , with all five judges placing her first . The official report of the Games described her as " in a class by herself " and stated that " the wonderful accuracy of her figures , combined with perfect carriage and movement , was the chief feature of the morning 's skating . " In the free skating , the report described her as having " excelled in rhythm and time @-@ keeping , and her dance steps , pirouettes , & c . , were skated without a fault . " She was again placed first by all five judges and won the title . In the pairs event Syers and Edgar finished third (of three couples) and won the bronze medal .

== Later life ==

Syers retired from competitive skating after the Olympics due to fading health . She and Edgar co @-@ authored a second book together , The Art of Skating (International Style) , published in 1913 . She died of heart failure caused by acute endocarditis on 9 September 1917 at her home in Weybridge , Surrey , aged 35 .

Syers was elected to the World Figure Skating Hall of Fame in 1981 .

== Results ==