

The Early History of Cycling in Illinois



2016 Illinois Bicycle Summit
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An Illinois History Refresher

1818 Illinois admitted as a state to the Union
1837 Chicago incorporated as a city
1867-1869 Velocipede riding schools in Chicago and Bloomington
1868 U.S. Velocipede fad begins, velocipedes mentioned in Chicago Tribune
1870 Chicago population: 298,977.
1871 Great Chicago Fire
1872 First Montgomery Ward Catalog Published
1879 (Sept. 1) Chicago Bicycle Club founded, G+J begin production in Chicago

“As a social revolutionizer it has never had an equal. It has put the human race on wheels, and has thus changed many of the most ordinary processes and methods of social life. It is the great leveler, for not ‘til all Americans got on bicycles was the great principle of every man is just as good as any other man...fully realized.”

Scientific American, June 27, 1896 p. 391

Some Early Illinois Bicycle Statistics

- 1879- Chicago Bicycle Club Founded (second oldest in the U.S.?)
- 1891 Chicago's Pullman bicycle race attracts an estimated 100,000 spectators
- “Two-thirds of this country's output of bicycles and accessories comes from within a radius of 150 miles around Chicago” *The Chicago Bicycle Directory*, 1898.
- 1900 Census of Manufacturers lists 60 Illinois manufacturers whose principal product was bicycles. Chicago City Directory listed 300!
- Total product value of these manufacturers was nearly \$9 million or 28% of the national total

How did I settle on the history of bicycling in Illinois as a research topic?

- Pre-Sabbatical Research / Literature Gap
- Lifelong cyclist
- Lifelong Illinoisan
- History major (undergrad)
- Masters in Library and Information Science
- Archival experience: Smithsonian and U of I archives
- Great stories, but so what?



Boneshakers / Velocipedes

- Pierre Michaux, Paris
- Circa 1863
- Pierre Lallement brings one to Connecticut in 1866
 - Patents the design in 1867
- Major innovation was pedals attached to the front wheel
- 1868 the Hanlon Brothers acrobatic team add velocipedes to their touring show.
- 1868 Velocipedes begin appearing in Illinois
- Riding schools become popular
- 1868-1869 first real bicycle craze hits America

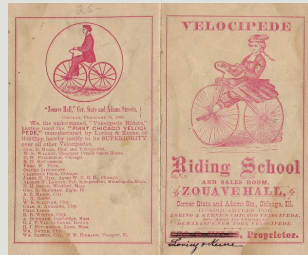


http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hanlon_Brothers_Bicycle_Hit.jpg

Loring and Keene

"This velocipede is manufactured by Messrs Loring & Keene of Chicago Illinois and has become very popular in that city and throughout the West....its price is \$130. (Goddard, 1869, p. 62)

Loring and Keene are listed as machinists in an 1869 city directory



Gormully and Jeffery Timeline

- 1879 G+J begins production in Chicago
- 1880 Thomas B. Jeffery received a license from Pope to make bicycles with front wheels up to 42"
- 1884 Gormully & Jeffery Manufacturing Company appears in City Directory
- 1884 Catalog: Ideal Bicycle, under license from Pope Mfg. (38-50")
- 1887 Rambler Safety
- 1900 Sold to American Bicycle Company



1887 G&J American Safety

Early velocipede racing and performing in Chicago.

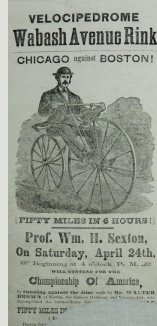
Edith Shuler, 1869

"Championship of America"

First true American 6-day race, Exposition building, 1869



MISS EDITH SHULER, of Chicago, winner of the 6-day race, at the Exposition building, Tuesday Evening, April 20, 1869. Admission - 50 Cents.



Safety Bicycles

- 1885 Rover Safety Bicycle (England)
- Chain-driven rear wheels
- Mechanical advantage of various gear ratios
- Roughly equal (then equal) wheel sizes
- 1887 U.S. manufacturers produce safeties
- Dunlop pneumatic tires in 1888.
- Faster, safer and cheaper than ordinaries.
- Get ready for the boom!



<http://www.earlybicycles.com/wordpress.com/2010/09/11/safety.jpg>

High Wheel / Ordinary / Penny Farthing

- 1870-1895
- Logical evolution of the velocipede
- If you want to go faster you need a wheel with greater circumference
- Brakes!
- Metal wheels with wire spokes and hard rubber tires
- 35-45 pounds
- Somewhat difficult and dangerous to ride
- Bicycle racing becomes popular and drives innovation
- Why Ordinary?



<http://www.memorialhall.muse.edu/collections/temple/jefferson-4233>

How Big was the Bike Boom of the 1890s in Illinois?

1890s There were 500 bicycle clubs in the U.S. (Chicago had 50 with 10,000 total members)

1896 "over 5000 men and women rode to work in downtown Chicago" (Epperson, 55)

In 1896, 100,000 people attended Chicago's third annual bike show featuring 225 exhibitors"

By 1897, it was estimated that 300,000 Chicagoans — 1 of every 5 Chicagoans — were riding bikes.

In 1898 the Fair Department Store was selling 1,000 bikes a day from its massive store on State Street.

The Chicago Bicycle Industry as Told by City Directories

Year	"Bicycles"	"Bicycle Repairers"
1890	13	
1895	144	52
1900	300	123
1905	41	75

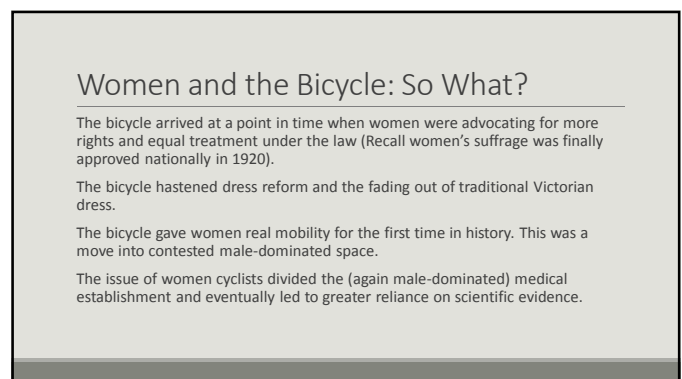
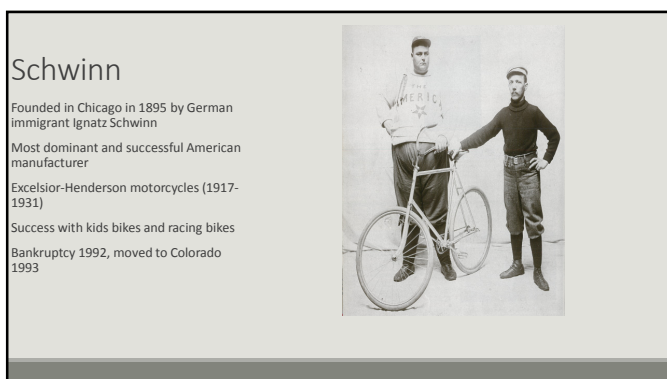
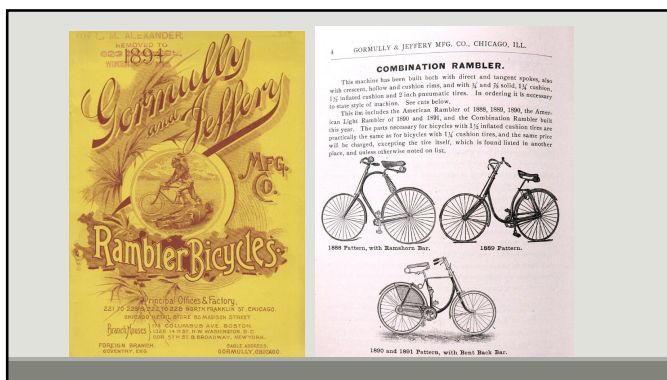
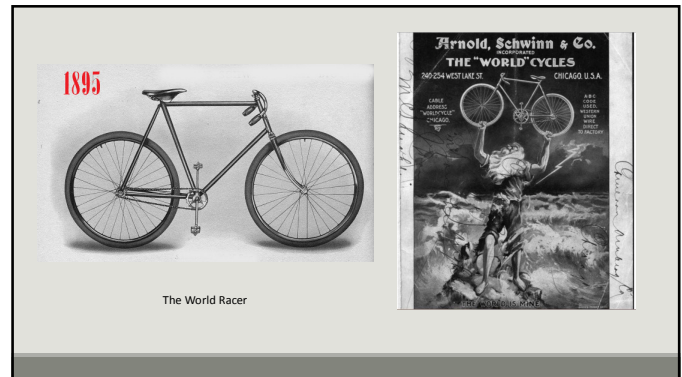
Currently I have identified nearly 400 individual bicycle manufacturers from 1868-1915!

Sheet: Manufacturers Spreadsheet

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Sheet: Manufacturers Spreadsheet

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Roads Were Not Built for Cars!

Good Roads Movement

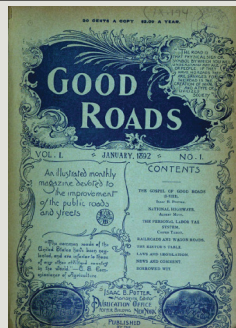
1889 League of American Wheelmen: committee on Improvement of the Highways.

Distributed 20,000 free copies of a pamphlet on road building

In 1898 10,700 men and women rode bicycles to work in downtown Chicago.

Illinois was one of the first states to establish a road commission. On May 15, 1903, the General Assembly of Illinois passed "an Act to provide for the appointment of a Good Roads Commission, and to make an appropriation therefore."

Advocated for (and succeeded in) building dedicated bicycle paths and sidepaths



The Chicago Bicycle Lobby!

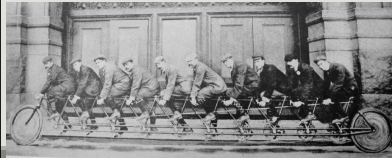
-Mayoral Election of 1897

-Carter Harrison II seeks the wheelman vote

-Campaign slogan: "Not a champion cyclist, but the cyclist's champion."

-Conservative estimate of 75,000-100K Chicago Cyclists

-Won the election and rewarded his constituents with a bicycle path along Sheridan Road from Edgewater to Evanston.



THE GOSPEL OF GOOD ROADS.
A Letter to the American Farmer.
By Albert Pope.
Copyright, 1891, by A. B. Pope.

Gospel of Good Roads: A Letter to the American Farmer: 60,000 free copies distributed in 1891

Good Roads Magazine Published by L.A.W. in 1892

Albert Pope (Columbia Bicycles) helped establish a large Good Roads exhibit at the Chicago World's Fair (1892).

In 1892 a 4/5ths of a mile long "Monster Petition" to establish a national Road Engineering and a Road Department was signed by 150,000 businessmen and seventeen Governors and sent to Congress.

Carlton Reid <http://www.cyclistsinthechurch.com/the-monster-petition>

The "wheelman vote" was sought after in the 1896 Presidential election.



NEW YORK AND CONEY ISLAND CYCLE RACE
TWO-STEP.
J. T. PAULL.

The California Cycleway, opened in 1900, was an elevated, lighted tollway built specially for bicycle traffic to connect the cities of Pasadena and Los Angeles.

1894 5.5 mile Coney Island Cycle Path estimated 10,000 on first day. Had to be repaired and resurfaced one month after opening due to traffic volume, had to be widened after 6 months.

Seattle had 20 miles of dedicated cycle paths by 1899.

1898 Great sidepath proposal from Chicago to Minneapolis. 530 miles long. (Smith 206-220).

The Church vs. the Wheel

In the 1890s cycling divided many churches

Sunday cycling was keeping people out of churches and was viewed as desecrating the Sabbath

Some clergymen were ousted from the parishes for supporting cycling.

Cycling gave young people—particularly young women—new independence. This undermined Victorian Christian values.

Some churches and Christian organizations embraced cycling to attract people and for evangelism.



BIKES IN THE CHURCH

The Rev. Jenkin Lloyd Jones
Makes an Innovation.

HE WILL CHECK WHEELS.

Cyclists Can Attend All Souls' in
Peace of Mind.

MINISTERS ARE WITH HIM

Storage Rooms Likely in Many Houses
of Worship.

RAPID TRANSIT TO SALVATION

