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News Cycle: The Local Press, the Bicycle Craze, and the Birth of a Cycling Culture in Tucson, 1882–1910

By David Ortiz Jr.

Introduction

Prior to the invention of the “safety” bicycle, which very closely resembled the bicycle as we know it today, bicycling was a dangerous activity that required great strength, athletic ability, and perseverance.¹ The word “safety” was literal—no longer were bicycle consumers forced to choose between the aptly named “boneshaker” and the “ordinary,” bicycle designs that were extremely uncomfortable, ponderously heavy, and dangerously unsafe.² The former often

¹ I would like to thank the Arizona Historical Society, especially research librarian/archivist Ms. Perri Pyle, for allowing me access to their extensive newspaper archive that spans local newspapers from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I would also like to thank the journal’s editorial staff, Dr. David Turpie and Dr. Lora Key, for their invaluable assistance and encouragement for this project. Sincere thanks are also due the two anonymous reviewers who provided constructive criticisms and suggestions for improving the initial version of this article. Of course, any errors remaining in the article are entirely my own.

² For international, national, and state information on the introduction of the bicycle during the nineteenth century, please see Heather S. Hatch, “The Bicycle Era in Arizona,” *Journal of Arizona History* 13 (Spring 1972): 33–52; Mark E. Pry, “‘Everybody Talks Wheels’: The 1890s Bicycle Craze in Phoenix,” *Journal of Arizona History* 31 (Spring 1990): 1–18; Andrew Ritchie, “The League of American Wheelmen, Major Taylor and the ‘Color Question’ in the United States in the 1890s,” *Culture, Sport, Society* 6 (2003): 13–43; Marvin E. Fletcher, “The Black Bicycle Corps,” *Arizona and the West* 16 (Autumn 1974): 219–32; David Rubinstein, “Cycling in the 1890s,” *Victorian Studies* 21 (Autumn 1977): 47–71. For pictures and general descriptions of the boneshaker, hi-boy (or ordinary), and the safety bicycle, and prohibition of the boneshaker in the United States see Hatch, “The Bicycle Era in Arizona,” 33–52.

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rode on wooden-spoked, iron-rimmed wheels. The bikes were heavy and transmitted every single road anomaly through to the rider's hands and seat. The latter, also known as the penny farthing and hi-boy, was lighter in weight but the rider was perched on a seat often four feet or more above the ground. This made mounting, and especially dismounting, an athletic endeavor that kept women off bicycles for decades. Stopping short or maneuvering quickly on a hi-boy often resulted in the rider being hurled head-first off the bike and onto the ground. When such falls occurred, severe injury and even death were common.³

The safety bicycle was introduced in the late 1880s, and it is the innovation that put bicycling over the top in terms of broad, participatory interest and access.⁴ Several innovations combined to make the safety bicycle the dominant two-wheeled human-powered vehicle during the 1890s, the era of the "cycling craze." The explosion of interest in the United States, and abroad, is impossible to imagine without the "safety" and its attendant technical improvements.⁵ In six short years, between 1890 and 1896, the number of cyclists in the country ballooned from an estimated 150,000 to somewhere between two and four million.⁶ The innovations that propelled this extraordinary growth were two wheels of approximately the same size, pedals and crankshaft directly below the seated rider, front and rear braking, increasingly comfortable saddles, air-filled rubber tires, and greatly reduced weight aided by lighter weight materials.⁷ As the design of bicycles improved, more women and children were able to use the new machine. Women's acceptance of the bicycle and their gravitation to it as a transportation, sport, and leisure machine dramatically grew cycling during the 1890s.⁸ In fact, no single cultural change affected women's fashion as dramatically and suddenly as did the introduction of the bicycle in the late nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century.⁹

³ Hatch, "The Bicycle Era in Arizona," 35.

⁴ Pry, "Everybody Talks Wheels," 4-5; Ritchie, "The League of American Wheelmen," 16-17; Fletcher, "The Black Bicycle Corps," 219.

⁵ Rubinstein, "Cycling in the 1890s," 47-49.

⁶ Pry, "Everybody Talks Wheels," 1-2; Michael Taylor, "The Bicycle Boom and the Bicycle Bloc: Cycling and Politics in the 1890s," *Indiana Magazine of History* 104 (Sept. 2008): 215.

⁷ Hatch, "The Bicycle Era in Arizona," 37.

⁸ Sue Macy, "The Devil's Advance Agent," *American History*, October 2011, pp. 42-45; Lisa S. Strange and Robert S. Brown, "The Bicycle, Women's Rights, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton," *Women's Studies* 31 (2002): 609-26.

⁹ Hatch, "The Bicycle Era in Arizona," 42; Macy, "The Devil's Advance Agent," 44. See

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The high-wheeler bicycle (also known as an ordinary, high-boy, or penny farthing) was popular enough that boy's models were manufactured. PC 1000: Tucson General Photo Collection, Subjects-Transportation-Bicycles, #29125, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.



A group of men posing with the popular "safety" bicycles. The two on the right in the photograph were likely bike racers. Buehman Photo Collection, Subjects-Bicycles, #B13474A, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.



A woman posing with her bicycle. Invented in 1888, bikes made specifically for women did not have a top tube, which allowed women to ride with the long skirts that were prescribed for the era. Buehman Photo Collection, Subjects-Bicycles, #B109102, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

The rush of women to cycling was also a subject of great concern to a society that was still mired in traditional notions of femininity. Generally, American society, particularly men, feared the effects of women's sudden mass appearance in the public sphere. Those fears grew more acute when women combined a more public face with the athleticism and freedom that cycling promised.¹⁰ It is important to note here that cycling in the United States, even during the peak years of the 1890s, was primarily a recreational sport of urban and suburban, middle-class Euro-Americans.¹¹ This is not to say that there were no people of color cycling. There is evidence of African American cycling clubs and cyclists, but their participation in cycling here in Arizona, to which we will soon turn, is more

also Einav Rabinovitch-Fox, *Dressed for Freedom: The Fashionable Politics of American Feminism* (Urbana, Ill., 2021), 62–67 (Kindle version).

¹⁰ Strange and Brown, "The Bicycle, Women's Rights and Elizabeth Cady Stanton," 612–15; Ellen Gruber Garvey, "Reframing the Bicycle: Advertising-Supported Magazines and Scorching Women," *American Quarterly* 47 (March 1995): 66–69.

¹¹ Rabinovitch-Fox, *Dressed for Freedom*, 62–67; Ritchie, "The League of American Wheelmen," 13–17.

difficult to locate.¹² Bicycles were expensive in the early years of the cycling craze and, thus, there was a dominant class element in early cycling too.¹³

Bicycles came to Tucson in the last decades of the nineteenth century, but the “craze” really arrived in the Arizona Territory and the Old Pueblo in the early 1890s, roughly concurrent with the rest of the country.¹⁴ When bicycling came to Tucson it stirred the interest and following of the local press. This was an important development because press coverage centered on the bicycle simultaneously drove the popularity of cycling as a leisure, recreational, and sporting activity as well as underpinned a culture of sociability amongst local cyclists whatever their skill level. This symbiotic relationship supplied the local press with news and stories that helped knit Tucson’s nascent cycling culture together and, simultaneously, expanded the cycling community and the circulation figures of Tucson newspapers.¹⁵ In fact, in 1929 a historian of the advertising industry wrote, “The bicycle gave the magazine a measure of recognition as a medium.”¹⁶ Like national magazines, local newspapers followed the rise of the bicycle as their editors could not help but notice the intersection of advertising, popular interest, and consumer-driven support of everything bicycle.

The relationship between local newspapers, the only mass media of the era, and the burgeoning Tucson cycling community is the hub of the history I recount in this article. Local press coverage of nearly everything associated with the new machine reveals the mutual dependence of the press and Tucson’s bicycle community in its infancy. The interest of the local press in the bicycle’s rise

¹² Ritchie, “The League of American Wheelmen,” 16–17. See also Nathan Cardon, “Cycling on the Color Line: Race, Technology, and Bicycle Mobilities in the Early Jim Crow South, 1887–1905,” *Technology and Culture* 62 (Oct. 2021): 973–1002.

¹³ Rabinovitch-Fox, *Dressed for Freedom*, 62–63; Margaret Guroff, *The Mechanical Horse: How the Bicycle Reshaped American Life* (Austin, Tex., 2016), 39.

¹⁴ I found two of three early references for the bicycle in Tucson in the *Daily Arizona Citizen*, December 20, 1880, and September 23, 1882. I was not able to locate an article from the same newspaper announcing the arrival of rubber-tired bicycles in Tucson on September 29, 1880. See also Hatch, “The Bicycle Era in Arizona,” 33; and Pry, “Everybody Talks Wheels,” 1–5.

¹⁵ This point is made absolutely clear by Guroff as she links the increase in bike sales to the advent of consumer-directed mass magazines and advertising. See Guroff, *The Mechanical Horse*, 66–76. Sport historian Michael Oriard makes a similar argument about the late-nineteenth-century press and college football in the United States. See Oriard, *Reading Football: How the Popular Press created an American Spectacle* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1993).

¹⁶ Guroff, *The Mechanical Horse*, 68. Guroff notes that bicycle advertisements made up 10 percent of national advertising in 1898.

as a social and transportation phenomenon in Tucson was all-consuming and extended to the minutiae of the machine's arrival in the Old Pueblo. This article does not argue that the press created Tucson's cycling community. Nor was the local press successful, in terms of circulation figures, because of the cycling community's presence and advocacy of the new machine. Instead, I contend a fascinating reciprocally beneficial relationship grew between the two entities during the "cycling craze" of the late nineteenth century. That relationship fueled the rapid development of Tucson's cycling community and the development of a cycling culture in the Old Pueblo.¹⁷ It served as the foundation of the city's eventual reputation as a cycling destination. Tucson's cycling community and culture grew in symbiosis with the local press. It was bolstered by the increasing numbers of bicycles arriving in town during the cycling craze of the last decade and a half of the nineteenth century. The bicycle was a focal point of conversation in Tucson, as elsewhere, and a sociability built upon local press coverage grew around the bicycle as it made its entry into the town's quotidian life.¹⁸ How that occurred is the story told below. This history is an important founding moment of Tucson's collective past that has been largely forgotten: the creation and infancy of the city's vibrant and nationally recognized cycling culture.¹⁹

Sketching Tucson's Bicycle Culture

The extensive coverage in the Tucson press of all things bicycle assisted a developing sociability around the machine that expressed itself in individual's stories, the founding of clubs, the types of bikes

¹⁷ I define a community as the accumulation of a critical mass of individuals who enjoy and do the same activity. I distinguish between cycling community and cycling culture. There is no cycling culture until there is a community of like-minded individuals practicing bicycling. That community becomes a cycling culture when certain behaviors develop that are common to the community. Habits of practice and even a unique lexicon can develop. A cycling culture is present when that occurs.

¹⁸ By the 1890s, bicycles and their manufacture were a \$75 million industry in the United States, which spurred discussion and media coverage everywhere. See Strange and Brown, "The Bicycle, Women's Rights, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton," 610.

¹⁹ A. C. Shilton and the *Bicycling* Magazine Editors, "The Best Bike Cities in America," *Bicycling*, October 10, 2018, available online at <https://www.bicycling.com/culture/a23676188/best-bike-cities-2018/> (accessed May 11, 2022). Tucson ranked twenty-fourth out of fifty bike-friendly American cities featured in the magazine. See also Cindy Parks, "5 Reasons Why Tucson, Arizona is a Bicycling Paradise," *Travel Awaits*, available online at <https://www.travelawaits.com/2667255/reasons-tucson-arizona-is-a-bicycling-paradise/> (accessed March 10, 2022).

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brought into the city, and bikes in general. One Tucsonan, for example, took the city ordinance about bells to a humorous extreme by attaching an eight-inch diameter gong to his wheel, while another attached a cowbell.²⁰ The local papers also announced shop openings like Tucson Cycle Company's new store and repair shop at the corner of Camp Street and Church Plaza, occupying a room "recently vacated by Mr. Messersmith."²¹ In a similar pronouncement that revealed the social class and wealth of early participants in the bicycle craze, a group of surgeons were forming a bicycle club.²² Such announcements often included information about the types of bikes arriving in town. One article, titled "Among the Cyclers," boasted "W. F. Gibbon had a new Victor!" It went on to discuss the Tucson Cycling Club's interest in backing their "crack tandem team against all comers," and that Mr. L. Zeckendorf had a new Fowler wheel on display, the first brought to Tucson, which the local cycling community was excited about. The article noted Tucson Cycling Club's (TCC) standing twenty-five-dollar reward for arrests and convictions of bike thieves and bicycle vandalism. It also revealed the gendered basis of bicycling in the Old Pueblo when it observed that women were barred from the club. The journalist noted ladies "may organize one of their own," or be conferred honorary membership in the TCC and gain access to their club rooms, gymnasium, and other amenities.²³ Such articles contained announcements of club events beyond cycling and served to keep Tucsonans informed about the state of bicycling in the Old Pueblo. Simultaneously, they publicized the social angle associated with the new machine. The economic potential of the wheel (a popular nickname for bicycles at the time) was on full display when a reporter detailed his day spent at the Bicycle Hospital, a bike repair and manufacturing firm, and touted the city's need for more "home industry."²⁴ Even bicycle shop relocations were reported in local papers.²⁵

Human-interest stories bonded the cycling community, helping to create a cycling culture in Tucson. Individual stories appeared

²⁰ *Arizona Daily Citizen*, July 17, 1893, p. 4.

²¹ *Arizona Daily Citizen*, April 14, 1897, p. 4.

²² *Daily Arizona Citizen*, September 23, 1882, p. 3.

²³ "Among the Cyclers," *Arizona Daily Star*, April 14, 1895, p. 4.

²⁴ "Manufacturing Industry in Tucson," *Arizona Daily Star*, July 24, 1904, p. 4.

²⁵ *Arizona Daily Star*, January 29, 1907, p. 8.

in the press that called attention to the relatively new community composed of cyclists and their doings. One instance that will be familiar to contemporary Tucsonans, especially hikers, reported the rescue of a Phoenix man from the desert by a couple of cyclists after he tried to ride his bike forty-five miles from Burger's Well to Salome. The man was deceived by a cool morning and believed he could make the ride without carrying water. He was very nearly dehydrated and incoherent by the time his bike started bogging down in the desert sands. He surely would have perished if his rescuers had not happened along.²⁶

The local press frequently carried announcements about new bike purchases, the founding of new bike clubs, and club events.²⁷ In addition, from time to time, the local papers were keen on estimating the number of bicycles in Tucson and their value, especially early in the bike craze.²⁸ One June 1892 article claimed that sixteen to twenty bicycles were in constant use in Tucson for business trips "to different parts of town, and during the pleasant hours of the evening the young ladies and gentlemen form [a] picturesque group as they swiftly glide through the prominent streets of the city displaying great skill and dexterity as cycle riders."²⁹ Scarcely six months later the same paper estimated there was \$8,000 invested in bicycles in Tucson, calculating that, at \$150 per bike, about fifty bicycles were present. It noted that almost everyone purchased the high-end, pneumatic-tired, full-ball-bearing wheels models.³⁰ Meanwhile, another local paper confirmed the early estimate of sixteen bikes in Tucson.³¹ An *Arizona Weekly Star* article gushed:

Tucson probably has more wheels than any other city of its size, or near its size in the country. Any day on Congress, and the other main streets may be seen 'cycle conveying business men, clerks, mechanics, all sorts and conditions of men, to and from their work. In the evenings as cooler

²⁶ "Man Has Narrow Escape from Death: When Found on the Desert He Presented Horrible Sight, Famished for Water," *Arizona Daily Star*, April 15, 1911, p. 3.

²⁷ Examples abound in the *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, but see, for instance, July 4, 1885, p. 4; June 18, 1892, p. 4; August 6, 1892, p. 4; November 21, 1895, p. 4; December 12, 1895, p. 2; December 19, 1895, pp. 2, 4; March 24, 1898, p. 2; August 31, 1899, p. 2.

²⁸ "The Bicycle in Tucson," *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, June 25, 1892, p. 2; *ibid.*, December 10, 1892, p. 3; *ibid.*, August 26, 1893, p. 3; "Home News," *Arizona Weekly Star*, June 23, 1892, p. 6; "Bicycling," *ibid.*, August 4, 1892, p. 4; *ibid.*, June 8, 1893, p. 4; *ibid.*, September 20, 1894, p. 2; *ibid.*, June 27, 1895, p. 4.

²⁹ "The Bicycle in Tucson," *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, June 25, 1892, p. 2.

³⁰ *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, December 10, 1892.

³¹ "Home News," *Arizona Weekly Star*.

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hours come on they may be seen in couples—by three—and in flocks. Ladies, too, glide along the roads in all directions taking their evening's spin, and the whole town seems to be tending toward the bicycle as a substitute for more pretentious modes of travel. As it promotes health, and good exercise, the bicycle has probably come to town to remain all winter.³²

The author of the article asserted that the bicycle was beginning to replace other “more pretentious modes of travel” (most likely horse and carriage), introducing the class element that runs as an undercurrent throughout the cycling craze.

That kind of reporting must have encouraged more folks to look into bicycles. It also likely bolstered the egos of the rapidly growing cycling community in town. In June 1893, an unnamed bike dealer observed that bicycle use in Tucson was “something immense” and “three times as many bicycles are in use in Tucson this year as were in use last year.”³³ By September 1894, the estimate of wheels (bicycles) and their value in the city had increased to \$20,000.³⁴ People, generally, like to be associated with popular activities. This kind of reporting clearly announced bicycling was becoming very popular in Tucson. Less than a year later, one paper estimated six hundred thousand bicycles would be manufactured in the United States in 1895 and a St. Louis firm was going to handle thirty-thousand wheels, and could sell more, if the manufacturer could provide them faster.³⁵ As in the rest of the country, the bicycle was taking off in Tucson.

The local press seemingly printed every story they could about bicycles, the people who rode them, and the growing bicycle infrastructure, including tallies of the number and types of machines in town. It is not difficult to imagine cyclists building a nascent community of like-minded Tucsonans, which grew, in large part, with the support of the local press. Correspondingly, it is easy to imagine paper sales and advertising space in local papers growing as a response to current events surrounding the bicycle and its community. Finally, the interaction of press stories and cycling community events announced in the papers created opportunities for social

³² “Bicycling,” *Arizona Weekly Star*.

³³ *Arizona Weekly Star*, June 8, 1893.

³⁴ *Arizona Weekly Star*, September 20, 1894.

³⁵ *Arizona Weekly Star*, June 27, 1895.

engagement about the bicycle—a cycling culture. The word-of-mouth spread of news and information derived from local papers and members of the cycling community was a key element in community development—sociability. That sociability tightened the bonds between members of the cycling community as it grew and developed into a cycling culture. Bicycle and bicycle-related stories and announcements were a continuous presence in local papers during the 1890s. They fed the sociability of Old Pueblo cyclists, their familiars, and the collateral businesses and services that were necessary to support the new machine’s entry into Tucson’s daily life.

Women, Bikes, and the Old Pueblo

As mentioned earlier, women were a driving force in the bicycle’s rapid increase in popularity. Once invented and widely manufactured, women took to the design in droves. Initially, some people had concerns, most unfounded, about the health hazards of women on bikes, including hyperbolic worries about bicycle riding leading to an abundance of manly women.³⁶ While such concerns were being hashed out in newspapers everywhere, the sight of women riding bicycles was still novel enough throughout the bike craze to draw special attention from the press.³⁷ Tucson’s papers mirrored this trend. Not all men were concerned. Tucked in with an article about the arrival of Columbus bicycles to Mr. Chas. Milner’s shop was a tidbit about his shipment including a “ladies wheel [bicycle].”³⁸ The article goes on to observe, “Very few other exercises in which ladies can indulge are more productive to good health than bicycle riding. It is certainly fine exercise.” Early on in the bicycle craze, women made their case for a piece of the road in Tucson. The *Weekly Star* included the following in its local reporting: “The young ladies about town who are riding bicycles are registering a vigorous kick on account of the manner in which they

³⁶ Strange and Brown, “The Bicycle, Women’s Rights, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton,” 612–15; Garvey, “Reframing the Bicycle,” 68–69; and Lena Wänggren, *Gender, Technology, and the New Woman* (Edinburgh, U.K., 2017), 62–65.

³⁷ See Patricia Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers: The New Woman in the Popular Press* (Lexington, Ky., 1990), 147–73; David V. Herlihy, *Bicycle: The History* (New Haven, Conn., 2006), 200–82; Robert A. Smith, *A Social History of the Bicycle* (New York, 1972), 63–119; Guroff, *The Mechanical Horse*, 33–50; and Michael Hutchinson, *Re:Cyclists: 200 Years on Two Wheels* (London, 2018), 150–59.

³⁸ *Arizona Weekly Star*, April 14, 1892, p. 2.

are treated on the streets while indulging in their favorite sport. The girls say they do not want the whole road, but they would like just a little; so people riding along the thoroughfares of Tucson in buggies or on horse-back should bear this in mind.”³⁹

As we might expect, with more women riding came the potential for more bike accidents involving women. An article in the *Weekly Star* provides a window into the minds of nineteenth-century men reporting on female cyclists. It highlights a woman’s “embarrassing accident on Meyer Street” but marveled that she was “not the least cut up over the matter.” The woman, whose “hat as white as the snow that recently covered the old pueblo rested lightly on one side of a head of sunny curls; cheeks as clear and rosy as the dew-stained petals of a La Franc,” upon crashing immediately got up and continued on her way despite the attentions of a local baker who “flew gallantly to the assistance of the fair rider.”⁴⁰ Anyone who has ever ridden a bike has had this happen—one jumps up quickly, remounts, and exits quickly. What is notable here is the care the journalist took to describe the woman, the gallant baker, and the crisp February scene. The journalist’s nineteenth-century sensibilities show through, but so too does the still obvious novelty of women on wheels.

By 1895, there was another concern about women cyclists: their attire.⁴¹ One paper reported that a couple of Tucson lady cyclists, “venturesome spirits” who have “been threatening to don the bloomer bicycle costume,” will be encouraged by a report in the *Chicago Times-Herald*. Quoting the article verbatim, it notes the bloomer costume becoming so popular at the University of Michigan that a “Bloomer Club” was formed to champion women’s rights.⁴² In other words, the paper appeared to be normalizing bloomers for women based on their growing popularity at a noted Midwestern university. Perhaps the journalist was being tongue in cheek, mocking the secrecy of Tucson’s female cyclists when elsewhere women wore bloomers wherever and whenever they chose. While this may appear odd to our contemporary fashion beliefs,

³⁹ *Arizona Weekly Star*, April 14, 1892, p. 2.

⁴⁰ “Home News,” *Arizona Weekly Star*, February 15, 1894, p. 4.

⁴¹ On the controversy surrounding women’s attire prior to, during, and after the bicycle craze, see Rabinovitch, *Dressed for Freedom*. See also, Wännngren, *Gender, Technology, and the New Woman*, 66–67; Garvey, “Reframing the Bicycle,” 70–72; and Strange and Brown, “The Bicycle, Women’s Rights, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton,” 617–19.

⁴² “The Bloomers Are In It,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, June 8, 1895, p. 3.



A woman posing with her bicycle while sporting the clothing of the era. Buehman Photo Collection, Subjects-Bicycles, #B109474, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

it was a serious matter during the bicycle craze because femininity was tied to a host of social markers that included appropriate attire, behavior, comportment, and physical exertion. The outcry and subsequent national and international debate about women and bicycles reflected concerns about the existing gender order and fears,

originating with men, about the equalizing of the sexes.⁴³ In Tucson, this debate seemed to manifest in a particular scrutiny of female cyclists via direct quotations from national or big-city publications.

In “The Athletic Side of Woman’s Bicycling,” which warned that a woman should be subject to a law to never ride a bicycle “after a distinct feeling of weariness comes over her,” the exaggerated concern for women’s health was expressed. The article, quoting *Harper’s Bazaar*, described the supposed strain on the nervous system if women rode too far from home. It warned of “a severe headache or some more serious indisposition” as a possible outcome of female cyclists riding too far. Such notions echo social concerns about the presumed delicacy of the female anatomy. It laid the blame for said condition squarely at the feet of the female cyclist who failed to “prescribe for herself a certain distance before starting out, which was not to be exceeded under any circumstances.” The article recommended no more than two rides a week of less than ten miles each for an “ordinary woman.” It gave further instruction to the female cyclist that “if she does not feel fresh and in a glow when she stops, she may be certain that she has ridden too long.” Further, it distinguished between the typical fatigue experienced through healthy exercise and “weariness which comes from too much exertion and straining of the nerves and muscles.”⁴⁴ The journalist exposed nineteenth-century sensibilities, this time in the absence of any medical opinion or study. He also sketched the gendered nature of Tucson’s cycling community in its infancy. No journalist would have dared publish a similar article admonishing men about cycling and overexertion as masculinity presupposed physical prowess and the mastery of machines.⁴⁵ Women had a lot more to overcome when it came to riding a bicycle—social stereotypes about femininity, public appearance, appropriate attire, and physical ability were subject to vigorous local and national debate, as women adopted the bicycle as their own.

Whenever and wherever women rode bikes they were the subject of major scrutiny. One 1894 article in the *Weekly Star* noted a

⁴³ Strange and Brown, “The Bicycle, Women’s Rights, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton,” 616; Garvey, “Reframing the Bicycle,” 72–80; Wänggren, *Gender, Technology, and the New Woman*, 71–74.

⁴⁴ “The Athletic Side of Woman’s Bicycling [sic],” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, July 6, 1895, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Guroff, *The Mechanical Horse*, 27–32; Andrew Ritchie, *Early Bicycles and the Quest for Speed: A History, 1868–1903*, 2nd ed. (Jefferson, N.C., 2018), 5–11.

late-night ride by a local woman who donned a divided skirt as she “dashed down Pennington Street at record-breaking speed.”⁴⁶ She, reportedly, was so fast as to be unidentifiable, even in “bright moonlight.” It then proceeded to mock her for having a “mania” to ride so attired and “sneaking about after dark,” especially in light of the fact that such clothing was commonplace in many “leading Eastern cities.” The journalist wondered why she did not simply ride in the daytime. The more comfortable bloomer costume was the crux of the matter, as it challenged long-established female public attire. However, some journalists were convinced of the excessively prudish nature of this public debate. Noting the daytime appearance of a female cyclist in a divided skirt and the public sensation it created, one local journalist wondered about all the fuss. He observed that “enthusiastic wheelmen” believed that such attire would become commonplace for “lady cyclists” as they enjoyed the healthy exercise “derived from wheeling.” In his opinion, the novelty of such attire had to wear off, “then a young lady attired in the much-discussed bloomers will attract no attention at all.”⁴⁷ In Tucson, this debate occurred as the rapid rise in the number of bicycles on the city’s streets was increasingly noteworthy. “There are more bicycle riders of both sexes in Tucson, than in any town of twice its size in the United States,” the *Star* noted in March 1895. “It seems that the fad is steadily increasing instead of decreasing.”⁴⁸ With increased bicycle riding came closer scrutiny of women riders appearing in the public sphere.

This controversy was repeated nearly everywhere bloomers appeared as female cycling attire indicated there was something more at play here than female attire. Women’s fashion of the 1890s demanded an insect-like figure of an hourglass. Women’s bodies were coerced via corsets, stays, girdles, and other forms of attire that would ensure that a woman, if she could ride a bike at all, would do so uncomfortably. The bicycle had facilitated women’s entry into the public sphere in unprecedented numbers. The social change that movement signaled prompted a reactionary backlash, primarily from men. Most journalists at the time were men, thus reinscribing public space as male. The controversy over bloomers provided

⁴⁶ *Arizona Weekly Star*, May 24, 1894, p. 2.

⁴⁷ *Arizona Weekly Star*, November 29, 1894.

⁴⁸ “Cycling Notes,” *Arizona Weekly Star*, March 14, 1895, p. 1.

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The safety's popularity was reflected in photographic portraits of people with their bicycles. Here an Asian American woman poses with her bicycle in a Tucson studio. Buehman Photo Collection, Subjects-Bicycles, #B5772, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

a misleadingly easy scapegoat upon which to piggyback that rein-scription. Not all journalists saw the threat in the clothing change. Eventually, bloomers prevailed and prompted a whole women's fashion redesign that focused on comfort and recognized that women could be athletic and that clothing could facilitate it.⁴⁹ As a parting shot, one local paper quipped: "Bloomers are said to be coming to the front. To look at them on a clothesline it is not easy to tell which way they are coming."⁵⁰

Into this elixir of articles that, generally, stereotyped women and to underscore the traditional beliefs about female emotional balance and health, one article had, peripherally, to do with the bicycle. It had much more to do with the continued male fears of an expanding women's presence in the public sphere. It seems an elderly family friend of the Chases had died as a result of injuries from a bicycle accident. The deceased gentleman, Mr. Davis, lived in the rear of the Chase home and their twenty-two-year-old daughter was "greatly attached" to him. His death was a "great shock" to the daughter who, then, attempted to take her own life in her shocked and grief-stricken state. In the aftermath of the tragedy, the Chase family's daughter attempted suicide via .38 caliber revolver. Her "insane grief" prompted the attempt, but the bullet "grazed the brain" and she was alive in critical condition. Earlier, after the news of the friend's death, the young woman, complaining of a headache, had phoned a drug store wanting relief from a "severe toothache." The druggist denied her request. The journalist could not uncover what drug was ordered, but guessed that it must have been a poison. Since she could not acquire it, the journalist presumed she turned to "more desperate means." Fortunately, her parents were both in the house, heard the shot, found their wounded daughter, and immediately phoned for medical help, which arrived quickly. She was reported to be "resting easily" but still in critical condition.⁵¹

It is not accidental that the newspaper chose to focus on a young woman, whom they portrayed as hysterical over the death of her friend. The reaction she had to the friend's death fits neatly

⁴⁹ Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers*, 147–73. See also Rabinovitch, *Dressed for Freedom*, 62–67.

⁵⁰ *Arizona Weekly Star*, December 12, 1895, p. 3.

⁵¹ "Young Woman Is Crazy with Grief, Attempts to Commit Suicide with a .38 caliber Revolver at Her Home on Fifth Avenue," *Tucson Citizen*, September 19, 1906, p. 4.

into the expected behavior for a young woman in the nineteenth century. Her grief was described as “insane,” underscoring the young woman’s emotional delicacy. In other words, such descriptions play into the stereotypes of expected female comportment that the bicycle was helping to destroy. That the bicycle plays a pivotal role in the story, after all it was the vehicle of death, is important to the underlying motive of the author: protecting the public sphere from the emotional presence of women and protecting women’s “delicate” sensibilities from the rough-and-tumble atmosphere of that same public sphere.

Nearly everywhere women rode a bicycle they caused a stir. The journalists of the era, overwhelmingly male, and the society at large were inclined to deploy various stereotypes to reinforce the traditional gender relations binary: the public sphere is for men, the domestic sphere is for women. Women on bicycles were seen as an inversion of the prevailing gender order. The bicycle inspired confidence in women and was integral to providing them with a real sense of freedom and independence from restrictive Victorian-era social norms. This debate, as evidenced above, did not fail to reach Tucson.

Bicycles, Cyclists, and the Law in Tucson

As bikes began to appear in greater numbers on Tucson’s streets, concerns arose about regulating the behavior of cyclists, especially at intersections. In fact, in response to the city ordinance requiring bells at intersections some cyclists took their compliance to the extreme.⁵² The *Arizona Daily Citizen* reported that the bicycle ordinance was “being carried out faithfully and occasionally ludicrously by Tucson riders. All have bells. One man put a large gong on his wheel eight inches in diameter. Another had a cow bell. The racket of bells at crossings is now enough to provoke a petition to have them suppressed.”⁵³ But not all Tucson riders were complying. Although no arrests had yet been made by September 2, 1893, according to one paper, the police were keeping lists of “known

⁵² *Arizona Weekly Star*, July 13, 1893, p. 4. A new bicycle ordinance was set to go into effect on Friday. The paper was dated Thursday.

⁵³ *Arizona Daily Citizen*, July 17, 1893, p. 4; *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, July 22, 1893, p. 3; *Arizona Weekly Star*, September 14, 1893, p. 2. There were reports of three cyclists being fined seven dollars each for exceeding the speed limit of six miles per hour and failing to ring a bell at each intersection crossing.



Union Park velodrome grandstand, east of downtown Tucson. This was likely a practice session as the grandstand was typically filled on race day. Buehman Photo Collection, Subjects-Bicycles, #B68772, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

violators” from which to make arrests shortly.⁵⁴ Indeed, the arrests did proceed and the reporter lauded law enforcement, noting that “Policeman Roche spied two Tucson young men . . . riding faster on Meyer Street than the ordinance permitted.” Both men paid a fine of seven dollars, and another rider was coming up for a hearing on the charge of “rounding a corner without sounding a bell.”⁵⁵

In what eventually became common practice for Tucson newspapers, the local U.S. marshal, in this case Marshal Robert Paul, was quoted in the press saying that arrests were going to rise if Tucson cyclists continued to disregard the rules (bells at intersection crossings) after a child was struck by a cyclist and “knocked nearly senseless,” further noting that it was a misdemeanor offense with which “comparatively few of the bicycle riders comply.”⁵⁶ This was important as Tucson papers observed a marked increase in the number of bicycles in town. One paper boasted, though with no

⁵⁴ “Local News,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, September 2, 1893, p. 3.

⁵⁵ *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, September 16, 1893, p. 4.

⁵⁶ *Arizona Weekly Star*, June 7, 1894, p. 4.

Birth of a Cycling Culture in Tucson



Velodromes, like the one at Union Park in Tucson (pictured here), were popular mass-spectator gathering places during the 1890s. Standing fourth from the left is champion rider Fred Graves. Buehman Photo Collection, Subjects-Bicycles, #B111388b, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

supporting facts, that “there are more bicycle riders of both sexes in Tucson, than in any town of twice its size in the United States. It seems that the fad is steadily increasing instead of decreasing.”⁵⁷ Even if exaggerated, such growth meant that bicycles were going to have to be regulated for the safety of pedestrians and riders as nineteenth-century streets were not yet restricted to automobile use. In fact, the streets of many towns and cities across the country were locations of urban sociability that could be populated by any combination of the following: strolling adults, children playing, people riding horses, horse-drawn carriages, horse-drawn delivery vehicles, bicycle riders, trolleys, and automobiles.⁵⁸ In that urban context Tucson newspapers must have felt obliged to serve as the mouthpieces of local law enforcement where bicycle

⁵⁷ “Cycling Notes,” *Arizona Weekly Star*, March 14, 1895, p. 1.

⁵⁸ See Peter Norton, *Fighting Traffic: The Dawn of the Motor Age in the American City* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011).

and pedestrian safety were concerned.⁵⁹ Thus, the warnings continued, periodically, in all the local papers from 1893 to 1911.⁶⁰ The ordinances also continued and were adopted in other cities, like Nogales, Arizona, where the fine for riding without a bell was an attention-grabbing twenty-five dollars!⁶¹ All of this occurred against a background of bicycles becoming more affordable. One article quoted “machines of standard make” as retailing for about thirty dollars in New York City.⁶² One would have to imagine that Tucson prices would follow suit eventually once supply exceeded demand.

Demand there was. This prompted one paper to speculate about the popularity of the two-wheeled machine. After deciding that the popularity of bicycle riding was not due to low cost, speed, luxury, or spending time outdoors, the paper observed that bicycles made apparent to us our own “powers of locomotion.”⁶³ The paper waxed poetic, exclaiming, “Astride of it magnificent distances become insignificant” and “what a glorious feeling of freedom comes over us when the countryside, smiling and gay, brings to the rider a sort of contagious happiness.” The journalist noted the independence of self-locomotion and the pride of being able to say, “I did it!”⁶⁴ Hyperbolic exclamations aside, the bicycle provided a level of freedom to the individual rider—including women even though they underwent more scrutiny for their attire—that was unparalleled in any other transportation machine of the time. That feeling translated into manufactured surplus and fueled falling prices that were observed in Tucson by 1898.⁶⁵ The *Old Pueblo* was hailed because “probably no city in the west is as fortunate in respect to good bicycle roads as is Tucson. One can ride for miles around the city and up and down the beautiful valley.”⁶⁶

⁵⁹ “A Bicycle Collision: Dr. Pease Painfully, If Not Seriously Injured,” *Arizona Weekly Star*, August 29, 1895, p. 3.

⁶⁰ “Bicycle Pointers,” *Arizona Weekly Star*, June 13, 1895, p. 4.

⁶¹ *Arizona Weekly Star*, July 4, 1895, p. 2. The author of this article quipped “now to see it enforced.”

⁶² “Bicycles Become Cheap,” *Arizona Weekly Star*, August 15, 1895, p. 4.

⁶³ *Arizona Weekly Star*, September 26, 1895, p. 1.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Arizona Weekly Star*, May 12, 1898, p. 4. The article noted bicycles sold for as low as \$5, others at \$13.95, and high-grade bikes for \$19.95 and \$22.50. It noted that the Sears, Roebuck and Company had an 1898 bicycle catalogue in exchange for the coupon attached to the article.

⁶⁶ *Arizona Weekly Star*, June 1, 1899, p. 4. It is also true today thanks to the bicycle-path loop that goes around the city and has offshoots that venture into other parts of the valley.

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Newspapers catered to the burgeoning cycling culture by announcing “quite a number” of Tucson bike riders take morning jaunts between 5:00 and 6:00 a.m. and “think nothing of a run of 15 miles before breakfast.”⁶⁷ The early morning ride, a necessity in the Sonoran Desert summers, was commonplace by 1894. To further the development of the city’s cycling culture and the increasing number of first-time riders, the *Weekly Citizen* printed a nearly full-column article of cycling don’ts. The article, taken from the *New York World*, was surely half serious and half tongue-in-cheek. The admonitions ranged from don’t ride on the sidewalk to don’t ride with a black sweater in the summer with nearly every basic serious (don’t forget your toolkit) and silly (don’t try to make dents in a two-ton truck with a twenty-three-pound wheel) directive in between. Three of the twenty-six directives concerned bloomers, one encouraging women to wear them and one prohibiting “harsh” criticism of bloomers.⁶⁸ The article made public the unwritten understandings of the city’s bicycle culture and provided a basic primer for new riders in the Old Pueblo.

In Tucson, as elsewhere, cycling was initially an exclusive avocation. The *Daily Arizona Citizen* made this observation in 1880: “The small boy who hasn’t a bicycle to roll through our streets has lost all interest in the once absorbing marble and top, and divides his time equally between enjoying the patrician who does own one and in scheming how he may join the ranks of the fortunate.”⁶⁹ It is hard to miss the reference to the cost of a bicycle in the early days, the eventual reduction of which ended the bicycle craze by 1898. It is also notable that, perhaps, the first bicycle club in Tucson was proposed by a group of surgeons.⁷⁰ When bicycle manufacturers began overproducing their product and cutting its cost to push sales further, the novelty and class exclusivity of the machine was shattered. All over the country, including Tucson, 1898 marked the end of the bicycle craze as bicycle sales plunged and a very large percentage of the more than six-hundred bicycle manufacturers in the United States closed that year.⁷¹

⁶⁷ “Local News,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, August 18, 1894, p. 3.

⁶⁸ “Wisdom to Wheel Riders: A Great Many Dont’s for the Novice and the Old Timer,” *New York World* reprinted in *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, July 6, 1895, p. 3.

⁶⁹ *Daily Arizona Citizen*, December 20, 1880, p. 3.

⁷⁰ *Daily Arizona Citizen*, September 23, 1882, p. 3.

⁷¹ Guroff, *The Mechanical Horse*, 116.

Later, in the first decade of the twentieth century, Tucson's press maintained its interest in the city's bicycle culture, though it was reduced in frequency. By then thefts had become so common that "a penitentiary charge will be placed against any who are caught in the hope that the practice may be broken up." In this instance the victim was named and particulars about his bike were made public, including the location of the alleged theft (Congress Street).⁷² This level of proposed corrective punishment mimics the seriousness of those meted out for cattle rustling and horse theft. In fact, thefts were so common in the early twentieth century that journalists, a harbinger of opinion columnists or editorialists, published citizens' suggestions for prevention. Vic Hanny thought it would be wise of Tucson's City Council to require cyclists to pay for an annual license and bear a tag as automobiles were required to do. The article went on explaining the benefits of such a system, and "Mr. Hanny suggested that a license fee of one dollar would not work a hardship on any bicycle rider. If the wheels were registered it would undoubtedly put an end to the game of wheel stealing. It has been frequently stated that if some of the bicycle thieves were given sentences to the Yuma penitentiary it might also break up the crime, but thus far none of the thieves have been caught by the officers."⁷³

In 1906, the *Citizen* reported that a bike-theft ring was operating in Tucson, an organized gang of thieves. There was suspicion of certain people and some believed that boys were being paid by adults to steal the bikes, after which the adults altered the bikes and sold them as they were, practically speaking, indistinguishable from any other standard bike. The article suggested that Tucsonans were growing so weary of the thefts and the incompetence of the police that they were going to take matters into their own hands. This was petty crime, but a particularly annoying one as "most of the wheels are worth less than \$50, bicycle stealing is not a penitentiary offense. However, it is universally believed that if the officers were to arrest any of the thieves and a sentence of six months on the county rock pile were imposed it would have a good effect."⁷⁴ All of this talk eventually resulted in a citizen, Joe

⁷² *Tucson Citizen*, January 16, 1906, p. 4.

⁷³ "Suggests Tags for All Bicycles: Would Stop Wheel Thefts in This Way as Police Seem Unable To Do It," *Tucson Citizen*, April 6, 1906, p. 8.

⁷⁴ "Bicycle Thieves Still Operating: John B. Wright Is the Latest Victim of the Organized Gang of Petty Stealers," *Tucson Citizen*, April 7, 1906, p. 9.

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Bauxbaum, claiming that he caught one of the alleged thieves, Jose Carpio, in possession of Bauxbaum's bike immediately after noticing it was gone. Carpio was held on \$250 bond awaiting the action of the grand jury. One article noted, "Bicycle stealing is a penitentiary offense. A law making such a theft a felony was enacted by the last Legislature and was occasioned by numerous wheel thefts in various cities."⁷⁵

The problem of bicycle theft continued into the following year, but the police were quicker with arrests. The arrests bring attention to the issue of class and ethnicity in Tucson. Each of the three persons arrested for bike theft—Jose Carpio, Jose Bacasaria, and Juan Verdugo—had Hispanic surnames.⁷⁶ Because bikes were not yet broadly affordable in the early twentieth century, they were an attractive object to steal, disguise, and resell. Discriminatory pay scales kept working-class Mexican Americans from earning as much as their Anglo counterparts. Thus, police may have profiled young Mexican American men as potential thieves believing they could not afford a bike. Later, when another Mexican American man, Francisco Cabrerias, was arrested for allegedly stealing a bicycle from Alberto Moreno, the point seemed to be underscored.⁷⁷ In fairness, Mexican Americans, like Antonio Espinoza, had their bikes stolen and these thefts were also reported in the newspapers, just notably less often.⁷⁸

Thefts were a chronic topic of interest for the local papers. In one April 1908 incident, a good neighbor and heroine, Mrs. R.B. Savage, thwarted a bike theft. Since bike theft had been made a penitentiary offense, the number of thefts had decreased significantly.⁷⁹ However, thefts did not cease, and some were particularly loathsome to Tucsonans' sensibilities. One report noted the "absolutely heartless" nature of bike thieves as a five-year-old boy had his bike stolen from the curb just opposite the Windsor Hotel on South Meyer Street. "With tears streaming down his cheeks, he told under-Sheriff Meyer who happened to be passing by, of the

⁷⁵ "Alleged Bike Thief Finally Arrested: Offense Is a Felony and Wheel Thieves Stand Chance of Going to Yuma," *Tucson Citizen*, July 20, 1906, p. 8.

⁷⁶ "May Put End to 'Bike' Thefts: Party Charged with Stealing a Bicycle Is Found Guilty after a Trial by a Jury," *Tucson Citizen*, May 6, 1907, p. 4.

⁷⁷ "Charged with Bicycle Theft," *Tucson Citizen*, January 26, 1909, p. 5.

⁷⁸ "Lost Bicycle," *Tucson Citizen*, March 1, 1909, p. 8.

⁷⁹ "Scared Away Bike Thief: Neighbor Frightened Burglar Away from the Hohusen House," *Tucson Citizen*, April 29, 1908, p. 6.

disappearance of the wheel. The officers have instituted a vigorous search and hope to recover the wheel.”⁸⁰

The interest in bicycle culture also manifested in descriptions of skill and fascinating accidents that took place. In one instance, the reporter interviewed a visitor to Tucson who was struck by the skill of local cyclists. “Tucson certainly has a hardy lot of bicycle riders,” the sojourner commented.

I’ll venture to remark that there is not a day in the year when bicycles are not ridden. Yesterday when the mud was two or three inches deep, the bikes were out and going through the thickest of the mud. Several weeks ago when the ground was snow-covered, there were several riders out, pushing through the snow, and the strange thing is, too, that they did not fall off their wheels. Anyone but an expert mud rider would take a tumble if he undertook to drive a wheel through the mud.⁸¹

In February 1906 some kind of “terrific terrestrial disturbance” on Congress Street took place just before noon in Tucson, “which rattled the coin in banks, jarred windows, and tumbled chimneys.” According to the *Citizen*, “Excited merchants and businessmen pushed to the doors expecting to see yawning holes where the earth had cracked open. Instead they saw John Beck picking himself up. He had been riding his wheel on Congress Street when a heavy board was blown off a roof and struck him on the right side of the head. He was badly jarred, but fortunately escaped serious injury. He was knocked off his wheel.”⁸²

In another instance of the human fascination with accidents and a harbinger of many encounters to come, a short article reported about a woman failing to stop her automobile in front of a sporting goods store on Congress Street and careening into a hitching post on the sidewalk. The woman was shaken, not injured. Three bicycles leaning against the hitching post were completely destroyed. The woman’s husband was close by and immediately paid a fair replacement price to all three cyclists.⁸³ Already by 1911 we can see that automobiles were beginning to appear more frequently

⁸⁰ “Child’s Wheel Is Stolen,” *Tucson Citizen*, May 8, 1908, p. 8. Unfortunately, this is an element of Tucson’s bike culture that has plagued our city’s bicycle community into the present. It is especially common in and around the University of Arizona campus.

⁸¹ “Chatter of the Streets: Side Lights of the Old Pueblo,” *Tucson Citizen*, February 7, 1906, p. 8.

⁸² *Tucson Citizen*, February 28, 1906, p. 4.

⁸³ “Auto Makes Scrap Heap of Bicycles,” *Tucson Citizen*, December 23, 1911, p. 8.

on the roads of American cities and this type of collision escalated with the rise of cars on city streets. There was not yet a widespread American driving culture from which automobiles came to be seen as the only legitimate users of American roadways. That came with the National Conference on Street and Highway Safety in 1924. Collisions between cars and bikes have risen ever since.⁸⁴

The chronic complaints about cyclists and the light and bell ordinance carried into the new century, too. The city ordinance requiring a bell and lantern was, apparently, difficult to follow or cyclists were particularly resistant to it as complaints and warnings appear repeatedly in the local papers.⁸⁵ The local newspapers seemed to relay the concerns of Tucson's law enforcement as well as its citizenry. One violator pleaded ignorance of the law but was arrested nonetheless, one of five arrested that week for violating the city ordinance.⁸⁶ The ordinance imposing the use of lamps and bells on bicycles for safety was promulgated in the very early days of cycling in the city, but sporadic enforcement allowed the cycling community to flaunt the rule, which became

⁸⁴ Angie Schmitt, *Right of Way: Race, Class, and the Silent Epidemic of Pedestrian Deaths in America* (Washington, D.C., 2020), 70–71. According to Schmitt, in 1924 future president Herbert Hoover headed a National Conference on Street and Highway Safety in the aftermath of years of pedestrians being killed by automobiles on the streets of U.S. cities, which until that time had been shared spaces with no preferred users. Auto-industry groups were overrepresented at the conference, and they came up with a set of rules and regulations that limited pedestrian access to roadways to crosswalks, making automobiles privileged users of the roadways. The effect was nearly immediate and devastating to all other users of roadways, including cyclists, motorcyclists, and trolleys. The U.S. Department of Commerce backed the model rules when they were released in 1927. By 1930, the rules had been adopted in many American cities and jaywalking laws proliferated everywhere. See also Jeff Mapes, *Pedaling Revolution: How Cyclists are Changing American Cities* (Corvallis, Ore., 2009), 34–36. As early as 1887, cyclists won important recognition on the roadways as vehicles with the same rights and responsibilities as automobiles. This is true in all of the fifty states, with some slight variations. But that designation makes little difference when a car driver believes the road belongs to them and has a 4,000-pound vehicle backing up that belief. In other words, until American driving culture, and the attitude of drivers that goes with it, is altered to fully recognize the equal rights of other users of the roadways in our country cyclists will continue to be killed by drivers. See also Peter Norton, "Street Rivals: Jaywalking and the Invention of the Motor Age Street," *Technology and Culture* 48 (April 2007): 331–59. Norton argues that a revolution took place on American roadways between 1910 and 1930 that, essentially, identified automobiles as the preferred and primary users of American streets and that other users (pedestrians, cyclists, street cars, etc.) were regulated and relegated off the streets so they could be clear for cars.

⁸⁵ "Brevities," *Arizona Daily Star*, February 27, 1907, p. 8; "About Town," *ibid.*, October 25, 1907, p. 7; "Another Busy Day in the City Court: City Recorder Tells Vagrants to Resume Their Journey—Others Plead Guilty," *ibid.*, October 31, 1907, p. 8; "Complains of Bicycles," *ibid.*, November 6, 1907, p. 7.

⁸⁶ "Did Not Know Law but Must Pay Fine: Contractor Pleads Ignorance, but That Is No Excuse—Busy Day in City Court," *Arizona Daily Star*, November 26, 1907, p. 2.

part of the city's cycling culture. Periodically, then, the city would go through enforcement phases to "encourage" compliance.

On October 29, 1908, the *Tucson Citizen* reported a police crackdown on bicycles violating the ordinance. That evening eight arrests were made, mostly young men, and all were brought before Judge Treat who promptly fined them three dollars for a plea of guilty, adding that the fine would be raised to five dollars and the ordinance enforced to the letter. The newspaper noted that cyclists should heed the warning.⁸⁷ At least one Tucsonan did not heed the warning as a young clerk was arrested, on a borrowed bike no less, and appeared before Judge Treat with no money to pay the fine. The unfortunate man's wife was in the hospital with typhoid-pneumonia and his expenses were steep. The judge allowed him to go on his honor that the fine would be paid.⁸⁸ City officials tried to enforce the law throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. The haul for the city treasury increased commensurate with the number of violators, some of whom forfeited their bail.⁸⁹

Another sign of the times was automobiles being fined for violating the same ordinance and using the same terminology as applied to cyclists: scorches or scorching, indicating the high rate of speed at which the violator, whether on bike or automobile, was traveling at the time of the violation.⁹⁰ The law did not spare the young. Although no age was given, one article reported "a small boy" arrested and fined for riding on the sidewalk.⁹¹ In the next couple of years, the *Arizona Daily Star* published sixteen articles that pertained to warnings about, rewriting of, violations of, and confrontations about the city ordinance.⁹² The issue was so serious that, at

⁸⁷ "Put Lamps on Bicycles," *Tucson Citizen*, October 29, 1907, p. 8.

⁸⁸ "Hard Luck," *Tucson Citizen*, October 30, 1907, p. 5.

⁸⁹ "Failed to Appear Forfeits His Bail: Another Man Is Arrested for Riding Bicycle at Night Without Lamp," *Arizona Daily Star*, February 9, 1908, p. 8.

⁹⁰ "Fined For Wheeling Against City's Laws: Ordinances Regulating Operation of Vehicles to Be Strictly Enforced in Future," *Arizona Daily Star*, February 28, 1908, p. 8; "Legal Notices," *ibid.*, February 7, 1909, p. 5.

⁹¹ *Arizona Daily Star*, February 16, 1909, p. 7.

⁹² *Arizona Daily Star*, March 5, 1909, p. 7; "Officer Shot at Bicyclist Who Peddled Away from Him," *ibid.*, April 25, 1909, p. 8; "Judge Raises Fines For Bicycles," *ibid.*, April 27, 1909, p. 6; "Thought Cop Was Hold-Up and Drew Gun," *ibid.*, April 28, 1909, p. 8; *ibid.*, May 6, 1909, p. 8; *ibid.*, May 12, 1909, p. 7; "Bicyclists Who See the Officers First: Are Practicing the Art of Sidestepping by Walking at Critical Times," *ibid.*, May 21, 1909, p. 8; "City to Invoke More Stringent Measures: Small Fines Do No Good in Bicycle Cases, Says City Attorney," *ibid.*, May 29, 1909, p. 3; "Will Go After Bicycle Riders," *ibid.*, June 12, 1910, p.

times, it involved police shooting at cyclists and pedestrians shooting at police, mistaking one for a thief as the officer tried to apprehend a young boy who was riding his bike *without lights on*.⁹³ The ordinance was so disliked by cyclists that some engaged in trickery, stepping off their bikes and walking them if they saw police so they could avoid a citation.⁹⁴ Yet, despite further warnings and newspaper articles citing more stringent enforcement, the violations continued.⁹⁵ This, no doubt, prompted the city to rewrite and reprint the ordinance, now Ordinance no. 366, amending Section 1 of Ordinance 82 of the city of Tucson, entitled “Regulation of Bicycles” that dated back to July 1893.⁹⁶

Still, within five months of it being passed, the *Arizona Daily Star* published two more articles warning cyclists not to ignore the new ordinance.⁹⁷ Tucsonans had a tough time obeying established rules governing the new machine they were taking to in increasing numbers. Their disobedience was, perhaps, a function of the western spirit of individualistic independence, a slightly misplaced resistance to any perceived infringement upon their freedom. Whatever the root cause, the press repeatedly tried to provide warnings about rules infringement and subsequent rules enforcement by Tucson’s authorities. That reporting, as in the coverage of Tucson’s bicycle culture and women on bicycles, helped to knit the bicycle community together, assisting in the creation of a cycling culture. Whether law breakers or law abiders, press coverage prompted conversation within the bicycle community and outside it. In the process, all of this was the foundation for a growing sociability developing around the mechanical horse, the new machine that demanded its place

8; “Bicycle Riders in the Police Court,” *ibid.*, July 29, 1910, p. 5; *ibid.*, November 12, 1910, p. 4; “Bicycle and Automobile Man Must Obey: City Marshal Will Enforce Ordinances Requiring Bicycle Bells and Limiting the Speed of Automobiles,” *ibid.*, January 22, 1911, p. 8; *ibid.*, February 7, 1911, p. 2; “Legal Notices: Ordinance no. 366,” *ibid.*, February 19, 1911, p. 7; “Light Up or Go to Jail Is New Order: Ordinance Requiring Bicycles to Carry Glim Is Ordered to be Enforced,” *ibid.*, May 12, 1911, p. 8; “Wants Bells Attached to All Bicycles,” *ibid.*, July 13, 1911, p. 5.

⁹³ “Officer Shot at Bicyclist Who Peddled Away from Him,” *Arizona Daily Star*; “Thought Cop Was Hold-Up and Drew Gun,” *ibid.*

⁹⁴ “Bicyclists Who See the Officers First,” *Arizona Daily Star*.

⁹⁵ “City To Invoke More Stringent Measures,” *Arizona Daily Star*; “Will Go After Bicycle Riders,” *ibid.*; “Bicycle Riders in the Police Court,” *ibid.*, November 12, 1910; and “Bicycle and Automobile Man Must Obey,” *ibid.*

⁹⁶ “Legal Notices: Ordinance No. 366,” *Arizona Daily Star*.

⁹⁷ “Light Up or Go to Jail Is New Order,” *Arizona Daily Star*; “Wants Bells Attached To All Bicycles,” *ibid.*

on Tucson's streets and in the hearts of citizens of the Old Pueblo. That sociability found its greatest propellant in Tucson's newspaper coverage of bicycle racing.

Bicycle Racing and Tucson's Bike Race Scene

In the 1890s, bicycle racing became immensely popular around the world, including in the United States, and velodromes popped up around the country to accommodate this rapidly growing, new spectator sport, which drew crowds as large as forty thousand people in some places.⁹⁸ There were distinct categories of bicycle racing that attracted different audiences: one-day and multiday indoor events run at velodromes (circular banked tracks of varying lengths with grandstands for spectators) and longer distance outdoor races where stamina played as important a role as speed for the competitors. Fans were attracted to the speed and skill exhibited by the racers, and there may also have been some attraction to the potential for crashes—something that has been known to appeal to spectators of other types of racing events.

Outdoor events were, typically, run over some course or roadway for one day and varied in length from relatively short races of under twenty miles to lengthier endurance races of one hundred miles or more. In these races the skill of the rider was paramount, but luck was a factor in the outcome as well. The ability to avoid crashes and punctures combined with the rider's physical condition and bike-handling acumen often had a direct bearing on the outcome of a bike contest. One puncture or crash could seal the fate of a rider—the difference between winning, finishing, and not completing a race. Since races increasingly had cash prizes, the object was, obviously, to win, but finishing high enough to earn some prize money was a serious consideration as well.

Indoor races at the hundreds of velodromes that sprung up around the country (including two in Tucson—at Union Park and Carrillo Gardens) were by far the most popular form of bicycle racing, owing to more spectators, more consistent conditions, more action, and more prizes and prize money. As with outdoor

⁹⁸ Herlihy, *Bicycle*, esp. 376–400; Jim Fitzpatrick, "A Glimpse at Australia's Cycling History," in *Cycling Futures*, ed. Jennifer Bonham and Marilyn Johnson (Adelaide, Australia, 2015), 27. See also Ritchie, *Early Bicycles and the Quest for Speed*, 94–95, 102, 116–17, 121, 128–29, 141–62.

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A young man posing on a fixed-gear racing bike in typical racing attire. Buehman Photo Collection, Subjects-Bicycles, #B114162, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

racers, there were different distances and variations (one-day or multiple-day events). The velodrome itself was often constructed of wood, but later concrete construction came into its own. The velodrome races were popular and it was not unusual to have in excess of one thousand people attending. Several thousand people attended at the larger velodromes in the country's largest cities, like the one in Madison Square Garden in Manhattan. As with seemingly all sporting events, wagering on outcomes was also a popular pastime.⁹⁹ Betting on riders or outcomes certainly intensified crowd interest.

There were also women's bike races and female professional cyclists, though their story has only recently come to light.¹⁰⁰ Female professional bike racers had a regular grand circuit of cities, predominantly in the eastern and Midwestern United States. They raced for prizes and prize money, just like their male counterparts. Their racing dates back to the high-wheel era and one of the first female road races took place in Bois de Boulogna Park in Paris in 1868.¹⁰¹ Tucson's population grew from just over 5,100 to just over 7,500 between 1890 and 1900. It was probably too small to offer the kind of prize money that would have attracted professional women racers to venture across the Mississippi. Thus, while the freedom offered by cycling was enjoyed by men and women alike, Tucson's bicycle racing culture was exclusively male.

Much of what transpired with bike racing on the national scene, except for female bike racing, was reflected in Tucson. Bike races were commonly reported in the local papers. Long-distance, endurance-type races and velodrome track races were reported and followed regularly. Gambling was also a common pastime associated with bike racing. In fact, during the early years of Tucson's honeymoon with the bicycle, challenges and gambling played a significant role in helping the bicycle find its place in the city's life and culture. In one instance, a local paper published a challenge

⁹⁹ Nathalie Lagerfeld, "America's Short, Violent Love Affair with Indoor Track Cycling," Atlas Obscura website, September 27, 2016, <https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/americas-short-violent-love-affair-with-indoor-track-cycling> (accessed April 1, 2022).

¹⁰⁰ April Streeter, *Women on Wheels: The Scandalous Untold Histories of Women in Cycling* (Portland, Ore., 2021); Roger Gilles, *Women on the Move: The Forgotten Era of Women's Bicycle Racing* (Lincoln, Neb., 2018); M. Ann Hall, *Muscle on Wheels: Louise Armaindo and the High-Wheel Racers of Nineteenth-Century America* (Montreal, 2018); and Isabel Best, *Queens of Pain: Legends and Rebels of Cycling* (London, 2018).

¹⁰¹ Streeter, *Women on Wheels*, 17.

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offered by a cyclist to a rematch of a race against a roller skater. The cyclist, J. H. Kelner, lost the first time, but it must have been at a shorter distance as the cyclist seemed confident of winning at a longer distance. The wager was not insignificant, the race was five miles for fifty dollars or twenty-five dollars per side, and the date was set for Saturday, June 4, 1887.¹⁰²

By the time race day came the newspaper was eagerly hyping the affair: "Don't miss the great race at the Rink tonight, \$100 wagered on the result." The article went on to emphasize admission of twenty-five cents, Kelner's mile time on his bicycle, and that it was the last night of the season. It promised it would "take fast skating to best this," meaning Kelner's time of three minutes and forty-seven seconds.¹⁰³ The *Daily Star* told its readers the results of the race the following Monday: "The race between Kellner [*sic*] and Alexander Saturday evening was won by the latter. If the measurement is correct they made five miles in eighteen and one half minutes. The race was exciting throughout, and if Mr. Kellner had not received two falls would have been very close."¹⁰⁴ The reader can almost feel the journalist lamenting the cyclist's loss. More important, the active advertising and extensive coverage of the race convey the sense of excitement the insertion of the bicycle brought to Tucson's local culture. Practically, it was an absurd challenge. In the Tucson imaginary, it was not. In fact, it was a race between the two most prominent forms of human-powered transport available at the time. It was a further incursion of the wheel into human culture.¹⁰⁵ It was a test to find where the newer technology, the bicycle, would fit in the daily life of the Old Pueblo.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, bicycles increasingly competed for precious road space, a pressure that continued into the second decade of the century. But bicycle racing still managed to carve out a space in the newspapers of the day and, presumably, in the imaginations of Tucsonans. Races in town were

¹⁰² "A Challenge to Jno. Alexander," *Arizona Daily Citizen*, June 1, 1887, p. 4.

¹⁰³ "Don't miss the great race at the Rink tonight, \$100 wagered on the result," *Arizona Daily Citizen*, June 4, 1887, p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Arizona Daily Star*, June 6, 1887, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ There is double-meaning here. "Wheel" was the nickname given to bicycles by cyclists and those who wrote about cycling and cyclists. It also, of course, signified the actual technological "wheel," the round object that operationalized both inventions, the roller skate and the bicycle, and the means through which they contacted the Earth and propelled their respective operators forward.

common, especially during holidays, and one such Fourth of July race on Stone Avenue was reported with large, bold print.¹⁰⁶ The race was organized and run by W. L. Reid and “witnessed by an enthusiastic crowd of celebrators.” The paper reported the winner, other top racers in order of finish, and the prizes awarded.¹⁰⁷ The holiday bike race theme continued later in the year when the paper announced, on the last day of the year, that a New Year’s Day bike race would take place, entirely in town, with the Post Office as the start/finish line.¹⁰⁸

As the bicycle faced more competition for road space it became symbolic of a quickly vanishing era. Automobiles and motorcycles were coming. The bike, like the horse that it displaced, was itself being eclipsed by motorized transport and the human fascination with technology and speed. Races on holidays underscore how the bicycle had become a part of Tucson’s quotidian culture and became an object of nostalgia. That “enthusiastic crowds” could still be drawn to a bike race in 1912 pointed to the bicycle’s hold on human emotion and to humans’ fascination with athletic endeavor, even as its heyday had clearly passed. The bike’s days as a primary transportation device were already behind, much like the horse in urban and suburban spaces. But the place of each in human culture and our imagination was idealized and memorialized by their role in racing, a role that both the horse and the bicycle continue to star in today.

In addition to races, Tucson journalists were fascinated with, and followed closely, trips made by bicycle. For example, on May 14, 1892, the *Arizona Weekly Citizen* announced that C. H. Milner and J. C. Hayden were about to begin a trip to Nogales, Arizona, a distance of sixty-four miles, and return the same day. Readers were, no doubt, comforted to learn that the men “don’t expect to work themselves to death as they intend the trip more for pleasure than for a feat.”¹⁰⁹ That leisurely trip was transformed into a long distance race of seventy-five miles for which the paper predicted racing records would be established. Newspapers boasted that a Nogales man first suggested the race and would be one of the participants. A Phoenix man agreed to promote it, but the race lacked

¹⁰⁶ “Bicycle Race Has Exciting Finish: Winner Rides 18 Miles Around Speedway in 58 Minutes,” *Tucson Citizen*, July 4, 1911, p. 4.

¹⁰⁷ *Tucson Citizen*, July 4, 1911, p. 4.

¹⁰⁸ *Tucson Citizen*, December 31, 1911, p. 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, May 14, 1892, p. 3.

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a leader in Tucson to “manage the affair, set dates, arrange prizes, rules, etc.”¹¹⁰ The next edition of the paper touted the number of participants and from whence they hailed, the proposed dates of the great race, its distance, start time, the procedure for timing the race, and the location of the finish in Tucson. The paper also noted the great interest in the race, all over the territory, due to the quality of the field.¹¹¹ Over the next five issues of the paper the date was set; the field was reported by name; and the starting hour, prize money, and race results were reported, including a race post-mortem by the victors.¹¹²

All that news ink clearly conveys the importance of the event and the importance of the bicycle to Tucson culture. As the paper reported the event curiosities and quirky details found their way into the reportage. One journalist remarked, “Gum by the ton will be chewed by the riders, to keep throats moist, and every known and unknown device for getting along will be brought to a test.” Tourism was not neglected as “the race should bring a great many people to Tucson accompanying their friends who enter.”¹¹³ The paper also used the attention gathered from the reading public to promote more events, like a race at Union Park velodrome with a sixteen-year-old prodigy as its star attraction.¹¹⁴ There was also controversy about the finish as the Phoenix favorite and heavy betting favorite was a Mr. Brown, but Mr. Wilson, also from Phoenix, led by a wide margin about four miles outside town. When informed that he was the leader, Wilson thought he had been in pursuit of another rider who made a wrong turn on the course, he backed off and allowed Brown to catch and pass him for the win, thus preserving the Brown betting money of which, we can only surmise, Wilson had been a contributor. Despite the finish, the race had been a great success, but not without some bad blood between the Phoenix riders and the Tucson participants.¹¹⁵

Bike racing at the velodrome was also a very spectator-friendly event that commanded a great deal of press ink. An article titled

¹¹⁰ *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, May 26, 1894, p. 1.

¹¹¹ *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, June 2, 1894, p. 1.

¹¹² *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, June 2, 1894, p. 3; *ibid.*, June 16, 1894, p. 4; *ibid.*, June 23, 1894, p. 1; *ibid.*, June 23, 1894, p. 3; *ibid.*, June 30, 1894, p. 3; *ibid.*, July 7, 1894, p. 1; July 14, 1894, p. 1.

¹¹³ *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, June 6, 1894, p. 3.

¹¹⁴ *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, June 23, 1894, p. 1.

¹¹⁵ “Where Does the Merit Lie?” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, July 7, 1894, p. 1.

“The Bike Races,” for example, touted the events going on at Tucson’s Union Park velodrome. The *Weekly Citizen* noted, “One of the most interesting events that has ever occurred on the Union racetrack took place yesterday.” The article described the distances run on the velodrome’s half-mile track, age groups of participants, and winners of each event. There were a variety of distance events for men and a half-mile event for boys under sixteen.¹¹⁶ Races at Union Park were covered regularly, indicating the attention such events drew and the public demand that they be held and reported on.¹¹⁷ The paper endeavored to provide enough anecdotal material about each race to satisfy both readers who had, and had not, attended. On September 4, 1894, the paper noted, “The citizens of Tucson were present at the track in large numbers, and one of the most pleasant features of the occasion was the large attendance of ladies, who enjoyed the novelty of the bicycle races immensely, and are anxious for the future events in this line that are promised by the association.” In the same edition, the paper reported “a colored champion,” unnamed, who tested his legs in the half mile race for boys under twelve. There was even gambling on the boys’ race.¹¹⁸ The first November edition of 1894 gushed about Tucson riders training for a two-day Phoenix race over Thanksgiving dubbed a “Grand Diamond Racing Tournament” because nearly all the prizes were diamonds. There were thirteen different race categories, ranging from one-mile novice and one-mile open to one-mile handicap open and two-mile open, with first through third prizes offered in each race that were predominantly diamonds, though gold badges, pearl pins, racing tires, and bicycle lamps were sprinkled into the offerings.¹¹⁹ Two weeks later the paper again reported on the big race and two Tucsonans, Eddie Johnson and Fred Graves, who had committed to the event. The race was important as “it is intended further to make a good meet in Tucson for Christmas and bring some of the Phoenix riders to Tucson.”¹²⁰ As we can see the bicycle community in both cities was vibrant and their nascent rivalry continued to grow.

¹¹⁶ *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, September 4, 1894, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, September 4, 1894, p. 4; *ibid.*, November 10, 1894, p. 4; *ibid.*, November 24, 1894, p. 4; *ibid.*, December 8, 1894, p. 4.

¹¹⁸ *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, September 4, 1894, p. 4.

¹¹⁹ “Bicycle Tournament,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, November 10, 1894, p. 4.

¹²⁰ “Tucson Wheelmen,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, November 24, 1894, p. 4.

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The first December issue of 1894 followed up on the Union Park races from the previous day.¹²¹ The paper also allowed more space to tout the exploits of local Tucson cyclist Fred Graves who took home some prizes and set a couple of records at the races, impressing a “crack California rider” while doing so.¹²² Union Park cycling events were very popular and details of the races there were frequently printed in all of Tucson’s newspapers, especially holiday races or track races between Phoenix and Tucson riders.¹²³

Race coverage was not limited to man versus man on machine. Occasionally, the living vehicle the bicycle had replaced, the horse, was the racing opponent.¹²⁴ One cyclist, Albert Shock, who was famous for setting the long-distance world record at Madison Square Garden by covering 1,600 miles in 142 hours, was able to find a match. In February 1895, the papers reported the results of the races: cyclist Albert Shock defeated the horses of Neff and Soldini, Tucson horse breeders.¹²⁵ These types of races must have had value as partisans of each type of transportation could likely be counted on to pay to attend the competition. Races between bicycles and horses resulted in occasional personal race challenges. Such was the case when Santiago Lorano wagered \$100 his horse could beat any Tucson cyclist in a twenty-mile road race to be run by September 16, 1894. The ride was from Olive Camp to Tucson and Tucsonans Kirk Hart and Joe Scott quickly accepted the wager.¹²⁶ Unfortunately, the parties could not agree on all of the particulars and the race never happened.¹²⁷

Coverage of racing was a regular occurrence in newspapers, not just those held in Union Park. Many races were run on local Tucson streets and less formally organized than those that took place out at the velodrome. One of these was a ten-mile race run by the Tucson Cycling Club. It was an intimate affair as seven men

¹²¹ “At the Park: Good Races on Bicycles and Between Horses—Successful Occasion,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, December 8, 1894, p. 4.

¹²² “Graves Wins Some Prizes,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, December 8, 1894, p. 4.

¹²³ *Arizona Weekly Star*, October 25, 1894, p. 4; *ibid.*, November 8, 1894, p. 2; *ibid.*, November 15, 1894, p. 2; “Among the Cyclers,” *ibid.*, November 22, 1894, p. 4; “Thanksgiving Day Sport,” *ibid.*, November 29, 1894, p. 4; “At Union Park,” *ibid.*, December 6, 1894, p. 2.

¹²⁴ “Bicycle Champion Here: Albert Shock, Long Distance Man, Willing to Race Against Horses,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, February 2, 1895, p. 1.

¹²⁵ *Arizona Weekly Star*, January 31, 1895, p. 4; *Arizona Weekly Star*, February 7, 1895, p. 4; “The Bicyclist Won,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, February 9, 1895, p. 2.

¹²⁶ *Arizona Weekly Star*, August 30, 1894, p. 2.

¹²⁷ *Arizona Weekly Star*, September 13, 1894, p. 2.

started the race, some handicapped most probably owing to skill level.¹²⁸ But the race was not definitive as it was to be run six times, one per month, with the cyclist who scored the most victories taking away the permanent first prize.¹²⁹ Results from these more informal races were given equal attention to those reported from Union Park.¹³⁰ Race announcements were also moments when Tucson journalists became local partisans, especially if there were contestants from Phoenix.¹³¹ The huge December 1895 cycling meet at Tucson's Union Park received complete coverage in the *Arizona Weekly Citizen* with assessments of the competing riders, especially those from Phoenix; complete race results with coverage, in some detail, of each race and its results; and announcement of Arizona's champion rider: none other than Fred Graves of Tucson.¹³²

In 1895, as the bicycle craze was riding towards its peak, news came of a new track to be built at Carrillo Gardens and another, perhaps a refresh, at Union Park.¹³³ By 1896, the completion of the new velodrome at Carrillo Gardens offered another location for Tucsonans to quench their thirst for bicycle racing. A large crowd attended, despite inclement weather and they were treated to excellent races featuring Tucson's best riders, including Arizona champion Graves.¹³⁴ As the craze began to peak, races were reported in increasing detail filling many more column inches than even the prior year. Even if attendance was down the races and results were reported, often with snippets of the action described, as well

¹²⁸ *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, June 8, 1895, p. 3.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, August 3, 1895, p. 1.

¹³¹ "Look Out for the Cyclers," *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, December 14, 1895, p. 3; and "Cycling," *ibid.*, p. 3. The first article announced races set for December 24-25 at Union Park to which cyclists from all over Arizona were sending delegations. Prizes were gold medals for first place, silver for second, and bronze for third, and the paper expected many visitors to the city for the race as a result of Union Park's designation as "one of the best third mile tracks west of the Rocky Mountains" because it was "beautifully graded and smooth as a floor." The second article announced sales of bicycles to certain buyers, a New Year's bike meet, and the aforementioned event, now slated for December 25-26. Several of the "crack" riders would come from West Texas and New Mexico, as well as all over the Arizona Territory. However, the only riders named were the nine men coming from Phoenix to race.

¹³² "Cycle Notes," *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, December 28, 1895, p. 1; "Territorial Bicycle Meet," *ibid.*, pp. 1, 3.

¹³³ *Arizona Weekly Star*, July 25, 1895, p. 4; *ibid.*, August 1, 1895, pp. 2, 4; *ibid.*, August 8, 1895, p. 2; *ibid.*, September 26, 1895, p. 2; *ibid.*, October 3, 1895, p. 4; *ibid.*, October 10, 1895, p. 2.

¹³⁴ "The Bicycle Races," *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, April 18, 1896, p. 3.

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as postrace cycling attractions such as trick-riding exhibitions.¹³⁵ This expanded coverage sometimes occasioned multiple articles in the same paper edition.¹³⁶ The reporting in June 1896 included an assessment of cycling interest that noted Tucson was the only southwestern town from “Fort Worth to Los Angeles” that could put on circuit races of quality. It observed sharply that as the number of riders in Phoenix went up, interest in cycling races went down, while quite the opposite was occurring in the Old Pueblo as recreational riders were increasing as was interest in bicycle racing.¹³⁷ Articles of general cycling interest occasionally appeared on the front page as when “Of Interest to Bicycle Riders” devoted a half-column paean to Morgan & Wright’s double-tube bicycle tire. It was surely a key component for Tucson cyclists given the abundance of flora that punctures bike tires in the Sonoran Desert.¹³⁸ Articles like this revealed the reciprocal relationship between the local press and Tucson’s cycling culture and the vitality of the latter.

In addition to bicycle races, regular club rides were covered with great frequency. These could be as simple as a party of ten taking a moonlight jaunt to Fort Lowell and back or a more organized club ride to Agua Caliente with an overnight stay.¹³⁹ Sometimes these articles referred to club rides with geographical terminology only another Tucsonan or, perhaps, someone in the general vicinity would recognize as when a journalist reported on a ride to “the bat cave by train.”¹⁴⁰ Club races were also reported on with great detail, often providing blow-by-blow coverage of the most interesting races and very frequently commenting on attendance.¹⁴¹

During the bicycle craze the newspapers in Tucson delighted in the extraordinary cycling feats of ordinary Tucsonans. The *Arizona Weekly Star* reported that Mr. E. M. Thayer was the first cyclist to

¹³⁵ “Bicycle Meet: A Treat for Lovers of Real Sport, Races Worthy [of] the Name,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, June 6, 1896, p. 1.

¹³⁶ “Broken Idols: Amateur and Coast Records Mangled and One of the World’s in the Balance,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, June 6, 1896, p. 1; “The Tucson Races: Interest in Cycling Confined to the Ancient Pueblo,” *ibid.*, June 6, 1896, p. 3. See also “Bicycle Races: An Interesting Program for Tomorrow” and “The Bicycle Races,” *ibid.*, September 19, 1896, p. 1.

¹³⁷ “The Tucson Races,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*.

¹³⁸ “Of Interest to Bicycle Riders,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, September 19, 1896, p. 1.

¹³⁹ *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, September 7, 1895, p. 4; *ibid.*, September 14, 1895, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ “Tucson Cyclists,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, September 19, 1896, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ “Olympic Club: An Interesting Meet Yesterday,” *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, September 5, 1896, p. 4.

make the trip to Mammoth, a small town in Pinal County, by bike, arriving there in nine hours and returning in six hours.¹⁴² The journalist could not help but add some opinion: “had the road been in good order he would have made at least 1 hour better time” and for a little color added, “The fact that Thayer is a democrat accounts for his good speed.”¹⁴³ Column space was sometimes filled with the exploits of non-Tucsonans as well. The *Arizona Weekly Star*, for example, published an article about Misters Dick and Jesse Holmes who were cycling from Tucson to their home, in New Jersey, via tandem bicycle.¹⁴⁴ The fascination with tandem riding was repeated in a later paper when Mr. C. A. Barnhart and W. Linkletter were reported riding one to Mammoth and back, walking the last few miles into town with a puncture and having covered 104 miles on roads “not in the best of condition.” The men, apparently, had a good time as they collected “several rattle snakes’ rattles . . . brought back as mementos of the trip.”¹⁴⁵

Cycling news of any sort found a voice in Tucson’s local newspapers. In one instance, some local cyclists discussed organizing a club and two young men “talking seriously” about a run to Phoenix.¹⁴⁶ Club organizing by local cyclists appeared in three out of four *Arizona Weekly Star* editions in August 1893.¹⁴⁷ In late September a trio of locals biked out to and back from Olive Camp, a mining camp near Sahuarita, Arizona, approximately twenty-one miles southeast of Tucson.¹⁴⁸ Another pair of Tucson cyclists, or wheelmen using contemporary parlance, had just ridden into town from Nogales, Arizona, in seven hours. One expressed a desire to ride in bigger competitions and long-distance races so that he could win enough prize money to build a tavern in Tucson.¹⁴⁹ That opportunity was coming as a Nogales-to-Tucson seven-five-mile bike race was announced, including “several miles of sand” and about thirty riders expected to compete. The article also noted, “It will be a race for blood and more than one rider will drop out along

¹⁴² *Arizona Weekly Star*, October 20, 1892, p. 2.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ *Arizona Weekly Star*, May 24, 1898, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ *Arizona Weekly Star*, August 31, 1899, p. 2.

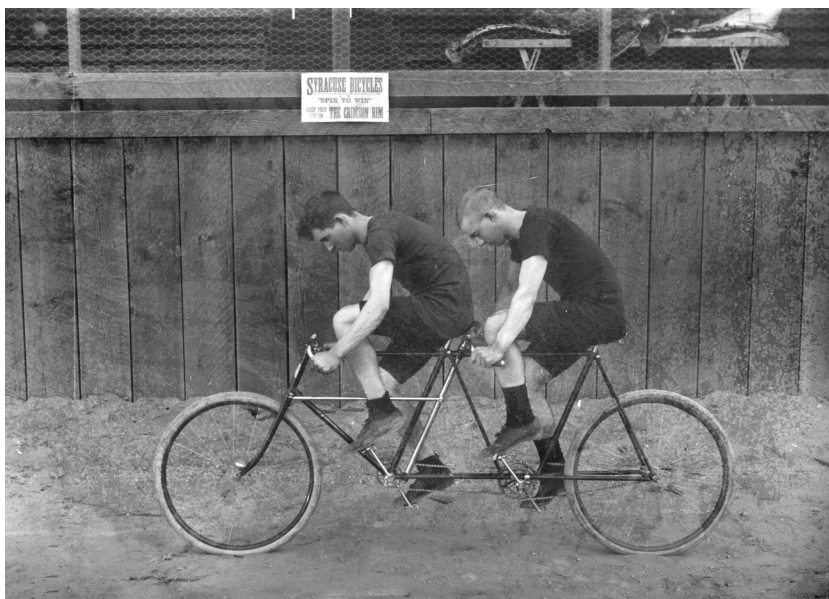
¹⁴⁶ *Arizona Weekly Star*, July 27, 1893, p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ *Arizona Weekly Star*, August 10, 1893, p. 2; *ibid.*, August 24, 1893, p. 4; *ibid.*, August 31, 1893, p. 2.

¹⁴⁸ *Arizona Weekly Star*, September 28, 1893, p. 4.

¹⁴⁹ *Arizona Weekly Star*, May 10, 1894, p. 4.

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The bicycle ridden by C. A. Barnhart and W. Linkletter would have been a sturdier version of this racing tandem. Buehman Photo Collection, Subjects-Bicycles, #B111386, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson.

the road, for there is a great difference between road racing and track racing.”¹⁵⁰

Head-to-head racing also earned column space in local papers. One such example was the ten-mile “race for blood,” between two locals, described in detail, from the San Xavier church to the Episcopal church and upon which much wagering took place.¹⁵¹ Practice rides were even reported as the *Arizona Weekly Star* detailed one cyclist’s ride from Nogales to Tucson in six and a half hours in preparation for the June 29 event.¹⁵² This was a big event, the first, in what was hoped would be annual, territory-wide bicycle competitions hosted by Tucson, and it drew much local press coverage.¹⁵³ Meanwhile, simultaneous reporting was done for the many local road and Union Park track races that occurred while

¹⁵⁰ *Arizona Weekly Star*, May 31, 1894, p. 4.

¹⁵¹ “A Race for Blood: Fred. Whomes Rides From the San Xavier Church to Tucson in Thirty-One Minutes,” *Arizona Weekly Star*, June 7, 1894, p. 2.

¹⁵² *Arizona Weekly Star*, June 7, 1894, p. 4.

¹⁵³ See, for instance, *Arizona Weekly Star*, June 7, 1894, p. 4; *ibid.*, June 14, 1894, p. 2; *ibid.*, June 21, 1894, p. 2.

planning for the Nogales-to-Tucson race occurred.¹⁵⁴ Some of the cycling news, reported alongside racing stories, was of the more humorous variety: one-hundred-mile track races where the contestants' heads would "likely be swimming" by the time the short course was circled four hundred times; a gentleman riding out to visit the Tohono O'odham to engage them in political discussion succumbing to three punctures and having to walk his bike back to Tucson "in just three hours"; and an article excerpted from the *Detroit Free Press* covering a moment in the ongoing debate about horse versus bike.¹⁵⁵

Never far from the race reporting was the stoking of the nascent cycling rivalry between Phoenix and Tucson. An *Arizona Weekly Star* article played this angle while announcing a February 22, 1895, race in Phoenix that called out that city's best rider and his recent narrow victory over two of Tucson's best. The article meant to drum up attention and attendance, no doubt, by pointing out, "If they [the Tucson riders] compete in the forthcoming contest they will make things warm for the Salt River valley folks. The last races taught them that it is a great thing to be on the track on which they are to race some time before the events in which they compete come off." There must have been some pre-race shenanigans and the article did note that the Tucsonans were not in "extra condition at the time," but it underscores the mileage newspapers hoped to get by playing up the Tucson versus Phoenix sporting rivalry.¹⁵⁶

It was the bicycle's hey-day and news of racing and rides was what the late-nineteenth-century public wanted to see. It seemed that as the bicycle was working its way into quotidian life in Tucson it became a focal point of human sociability. The arrival of the bicycle was a cultural kin of that other quintessential nineteenth-century American pastime: baseball. While there is very little kinship between cycling and baseball in terms of the sporting acumen and pace of each sport, there is a close resemblance of the two sports centered around sociability. A baseball game is a veritable laboratory of human sociability. Baseball fans, of course, follow the game, but its pace is slow and the action is momentarily

¹⁵⁴ *Arizona Weekly Star*, June 6, 1894, p. 4; *ibid.*, June 14, 1894, p. 4; *ibid.*, June 28, 1894, p. 4; *ibid.*, July 19, 1894, p. 2.

¹⁵⁵ "The Cycling World," *Arizona Weekly Star*, August 23, 1894, p. 4.

¹⁵⁶ "The Crack Wheelmen," *Arizona Weekly Star*, January 31, 1895, p. 2.

intense with relatively longer periods of inaction or very limited action. During those periods baseball fans talk to each other, to those around them, to the friends and family that came with them, to the concessions staff, or to other people in the concessions line. Many fans, myself included, talk to the players and umpires as if they can hear and respond to our quips and criticisms. The ballpark is a place where spontaneous communication between humans takes place. People are relatively free to express themselves there in the company of other human beings. That is sociability.

Bicycle racing, especially at the velodrome, shared this conduciveness to human sociability with the ballpark. Although the action at the velodrome required more constant attention than a baseball game, there were many moments during and between races where spectators could and did talk to one another about what they were watching, their own bicycling habits, or their opinions about any number of topics. The velodrome, like the ballpark, was a place where human interaction naturally occurred. This was possible at outdoor, long-distance, endurance-type events as well. More analogous to baseball, the outdoor bicycle road race saw spectators congregated around the start/finish line. But spectators could also be found, where topography and weather permitted, sprinkled in groups at various places along the course. Where people gather they will converse with one another, especially when there is a shared experience or interest to provide a conversation starter. Cycling, like baseball, provided the space and opportunity for human interaction to take place.

Gambling, as mentioned above, added another catalyst to sociability centered on the bicycle and bike racing. Take a moment to think of the contemporary venues for gambling on sports like horseracing, football, baseball, soccer, bike racing, and a myriad other single and multi-event sports. The people who frequent such places have wagering, as well as the sport they are betting on, in common, at the very least. Such mutual interests provide countless conversational opportunities. It was no different during the nineteenth century and, in fact, may have been easier as gambling was legal in most places in the United States, and certainly in the territories, until about 1910. Newspapers, as we saw above, even reported active wagers and their outcome to their readers on a regular basis. The fact that a bike race had money wagered on the result was

employed by the paper as an additional enticement for its readers to come to the velodrome, pay their admission, and see the result themselves. In other words, both racing and wagering were news.

In the late nineteenth century, a great deal of newspaper ink and typeset was spent on the bicycle and its relationship to humanity as a machine, a harbinger of the future, a freedom device, and a mechanism of sociability.¹⁵⁷ Before it could arrive at that point the bicycle had to be tested, had to find a space in the daily life of humanity. In essence, the bike had to prove its worth. Contests like the cyclist versus roller skater affair not only provided Tucsonans with entertainment but also worked to cement the place of bicycles in local culture.

Conclusion

Tucson's cycling community was born in the bicycle craze of the late nineteenth century, during the mid-1890s. It was built on a symbiotic relationship between the local media (in those days newspapers) and the growing community of cyclists in Tucson. Newspapers were integral to the development and growth of Tucson's bike community by their attentiveness to cycling and all things bicycle related. During that era, local papers surely reaped the benefits of selling more copies and acquiring more business advertisers in their classified sections. Though the size of local newspapers and the space they devoted to advertising was beyond the scope of this project, both markedly increased during the twenty-five years from 1885 to 1910. The many cycling and cycling-related businesses that existed at the time surely employed the newspapers and word of mouth to generate interest in their products as well as revenue for their stores. The local press's primary contribution was the assistance it gave to the growth, development, and perpetuation of the bicycling community, and the cycling culture it spawned, in the Old Pueblo.

From the arrival of the first bikes in Tucson, local newspapers printed stories on everything associated with the bicycle. This essay has provided a glimpse of that interest in cycling. The complete story is yet to be told. As the press discussed the bicycle, cycling clubs, cycling laws, gender and class issues around bicycling,

¹⁵⁷ Herlihy, *Bicycle*.

and bicycle-racing infrastructure, it was simultaneously providing space for and activating human sociability built around its intense focus on this amazing new machine. Sociability, with help from the local press, coalesced the bicycle community at the time and sustained it through the lean years of cycling that were to come. Historian Benedict Anderson once wrote about imagined communities created and sustained by newspapers and, later, other forms of media.¹⁵⁸ His idea was that nationalism and the knitting together of a national culture depended upon simultaneous ideas of belonging to a nation-state by people living within its borders and abroad. If people could read or otherwise hear about the lives of other citizens sharing a similar experience to theirs, it acted to bind them together as a community from which a culture could grow. In Tucson, during the period discussed above, such a community of cyclists was created. However, it was active and real as much as it may have been imagined. The local press assured Tucsonans of a steady flow of news and information about the bicycle and the people who rode, raced, sold, manufactured, and regulated them.

As the bicycle continued to be a focus of media coverage, human sociability developed around it. Local papers spent a great deal of column inches discussing every aspect, seemingly, of this machine and the individuals and groups of people enmeshed in the local bicycle community. We saw an example of that community in the admonishment by the press of local Tucsonans who had not behaved well in their competition with Phoenix cyclists. The journalist scolded cyclists about their behavior because it reflected poorly on the city, those associated with staging the race, and Tucson's cycling culture. Such an article would have been wholly unnecessary had there not been an established cycling community and culture built on sociability.

After the cycling craze of the 1890s, the popularity of the bicycle rose and fell for a great many years. Bicycles never again dominated the streets, or the press, as they did in the 1890s. Automobiles, motorcycles, trucks, and other non-human powered vehicles populated the streets of American towns and cities and squeezed the bicycle out along the way. But the bicycle community survived. Why? I have suggested that, in part, its survival was a product of

¹⁵⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1998).

the sociability that created and nurtured a cycling culture in the hey-day of bicycles during the 1890s. That sociability is present in Tucson's cycling community today and sustains such popular bicycle cultural events as the Tour de Tucson and Cyclovia, among others. But that is another story for another day.

I close with a short confession. I am a cyclist. Perhaps like most Americans, I picked up bicycling as a young person (in my case, in the 1960s). I temporarily abandoned bicycling as a teenager when finding, buying, and maintaining an automobile or borrowing one from my parents became paramount. As a late bloomer returning to university to complete my education, I commuted to and from campus and revived my boyhood love of the bicycle. My graduate school years—the late 1980s and early 1990s—found me bicycling to campus and taking long jaunts along the coast or in the hills of southern California. But it was not until I moved to Tucson that I became a cyclist. Anyone who rides a bike here knows the Old Pueblo is especially conducive to cycling. Its climate and open spaces are a natural invitation to ride whether your pleasure is road, mountain, or gravel/adventure riding. I have commuted twenty-eight miles round trip from my home to campus since 2010 and average around six thousand miles a year by bicycle. I regularly ride in century rides (one hundred miles minimum) in Arizona, New Mexico, and California. In 2017, I rode my bicycle solo across the United States from Astoria, Oregon, to Yorktown, Virginia, from the Pacific to the Atlantic. I have met an uncountable number of people through cycling—and have firsthand experience with the sociability prompted by participation in cycling culture. The bicycle, along with the cycling community and its culture I discovered in Tucson, is deeply woven into the fabric of my life. As a historian, I like to think that some of that is an inheritance bequeathed to me, and all cyclists in Tucson, by the nineteenth-century Tucsonans who made cycling a part of the Old Pueblo's cultural makeup.