

## Odd and Unusual Cycling Photographica

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The purpose of this presentation is to help illustrate variations of historic cycling views that led to today's contemporary cycles and social environment. Sixty-five images had been selected from my collection for presentation at the 28th ICHC, and ten of these images have been selected as representative examples for publication in the Conference Proceedings. These photos may appear unusual today, but they illustrated some of the developments which were contemporaneously meaningful, unusual, and historically important yet seemingly commonplace then. One needs to keep in mind that sixty-five images (let alone the ten shown here) do not come anywhere near to doing justice to the two hundred years of cycling history that we are celebrating this year 2017.

The vast majority of cycling photographs illustrated cyclists in generic scenes, either in a studio or outside. Early velocipede images from the 1860s were, in most cases, taken with "wet plate" cameras. This meant the photos had to be developed at that location soon after the shutter was snapped as the development process had to be completed while the chemicals used were wet. By the 1870s the vast majority of photos were taken with dry plate cameras. That process allowed the images to be developed in a different location and even on a different day. By the 1880s photography had become a huge industry and the majority of images were Albumen Figures mounted on Cartes de Visite <sup>1</sup> or Cabinet Cards <sup>2</sup>. Less common examples of photographs such as Ambrotypes, Tintypes and Cyanotypes were in use at various times

from the 1860s to 1900.

Selected images show how the camera recorded cycling with different flavors (i.e. unusual machines, attitudes, places, etc.). The images were chosen for their historical significance and viewing pleasure. One could easily comment that virtually all images fall into the category of "illuminating history," except that these photos show aspects of cycling history that are rather uncommon.

As for the images, the reasons for selection are discussed with each example. Technical aspects are also documented. ●

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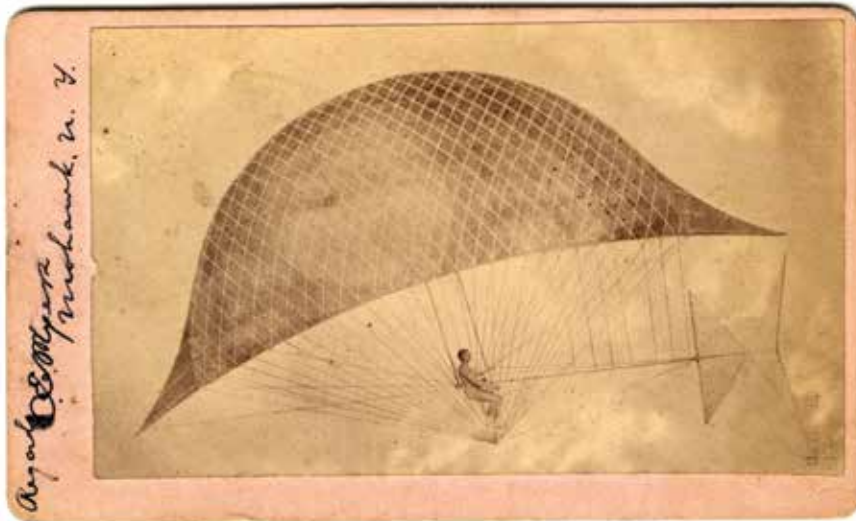
<sup>1</sup> The size of a Carte de Visite was generally about 4-1/4" x 2-1/2".

<sup>2</sup> The size of Cabinet Cards was generally about 6-1/2" x 4-1/4".



**THEY ARE HERE, THEY ARE THERE, THEY ARE EVERYWHERE** A native of the Caroline Islands (Pacific Ocean) is photographed holding his safety bicycle. On a donkey is a mustachioed Caucasian man dressed in a white 'official looking' outfit with a peaked "Thomas Stevens" style hat: quite a thought provoking scene. The Germans governed the Caroline Islands from 1899 until the Japanese inva-

sion of 1914. At the time of the photograph, one would have anticipated that the native would be on the donkey and the gentleman on the bike. Selected to show the world wide usage of cycles in even the remotest of places. 6-1/8" x 4-1/4" unmounted Gelatin Printed-Out Paper print. Photographer unidentified. Circa 1910. The Caroline Islands.



**COME WITH ME UNDER MY FLYING MACHINE** Ariel balloon with a rider positioned below. Selected because of the unusual manumotive mechanism which used hands and feet that activated a propeller at the front. As per the text description, this “drags forward the kite to which it is attached, while the waste air from the screw is thrown backward against the kite’s under surface to aid in buoying it up.” This image illustrates the principal of a velocipede mechanism being adapted for a purpose other than that of land transport. One can readily enjoy the text “and mechanical principles embodying the latest discoveries in the mysteries of flight”. 4-1/8” x 2-1/2”. Albumen Carte de Visite. No photographer identified. Circa 1875. Mohawk N.Y. USA.



**WHAT WAS AROUND COMES BACK AROUND** Man and lady each with their 1890s safety bicycles getting ready to go out for a spin. The man’s bike has a canopy covered children’s buggy attached. Note the spring suspension. There are two children in the buggy. The background shows a shop selling Barnes Bicycles with the proprietor’s name: E. J. Thibault. This buggy for children predated the very popular model developed in the 1970s. Cabinet Card is 6-1/2” x 4-1/4”. Photographer is Sunbeam. Circa 1900. Oakland, Cal., USA



**NOW LETS GO OVER THIS AGAIN ...AND AGAIN** A front facing velocipede era tricycle with a revolving crank drive. Rider faces towards the two small front wheels while seated on a tractor style saddle. The rear driving wheel was actuated by pedals attached to the axle between the front two wheels by a complicated mechanism, and steering was accomplished by the rear wheel that was turned by handlebars that were attached under the seat and linked to the top of the rear wheel’s fork. An example of a highly odd and unusual tricycle. 4-1/8” x 2-1/2” albumen photograph by W. A. Robinson. Circa 1878. Chicago, Illinois, USA.



**THE END OF AN ERA** Sirett's Cycle Works of Bicester in Oxfordshire: a look at an example of a 'modern' Crypto Bantam #2. Can you imagine being the scrap dealer who was called to pick up the obsolete 'junk' stacked at the back (a mid-1880s tricycle & a hard tired safety). This photo affords the opportunity to view the clothing that was worn

by people who worked at the shop. Note the aprons on some of the men. All the men (not the youth) wore similarly matching caps. The photograph captures a microcosm of time in the post hard tired safety era. 8-1/4" x 6" gelatin print. No photographer identification. Circa 1897. Bicester, England



**(left) A RACE TO THE FINISH** A humorous scene of a gentleman sporting a bowler hat on a child's rocking horse 'racing' against a cyclist on a high wheel who seems intent on winning the race. Note the cyclist has a pistol in his back pocket. Illegible signage probably added significantly to the humor at the time. Note the stand behind the cyclist which was a standard prop used in photo studios of that time to assist in keeping people and objects still. The bicycle is an American Light Champion made by Gormully & Jeffery in Chicago, Illinois. There is a hub lamp. A highly unusual social scene totally based upon humor. Albumen Cabinet Card. Size is 4-1/4" x 6-1/2". This photograph was taken by Louis Rudolph circa 1887. Chicago, Ill. USA

**(right) I AM NOT A BLOOMER GIRL** Studio image of a lady with her "hard tired safety". Note the mounting stance of her foot's placement at the back of the rear triangle. She is not wearing "bloomers", but rather she is wearing tapered slacks (called plus fours) that were commonly identified as male attire. Yet she is very feminine (note her long flowing hair and her lovely blouse). An interesting fashion statement with an uncommon view of fashion at the time. Size is 2-1/2" x 5-1/4". No identification of either the photographer or the country of origin. Tintype (aka Ferrotype). Circa 1889. Likely USA.





(above) **A NIGHT RIDE ON MY FACILE** A cyclist is portrayed getting ready to mount his Facile bicycle at night. The gentleman has a C. T. C. member's badge on his right breast. The bicycle has two bells of which one is a Stop Rumble Bell. The Facile has a lit "hub lamp". The photographer who developed the image was quite clever, and the rays of light emanating from the hub lamp would be difficult to portray. This is a studio shot with the painted backdrop showing the moon during a night ride. This image is very unusual and exemplifies the photographer's skill and imagination. Albumen Cabinet Card photograph taken by A. J. Eustace. 4-1/4" x 6-1/2". Circa 1886. Reading, England.

(below) **ROW, ROW, ROW YOUR TRIKE, GENTLY DOWN THE PATH.** The lady is relaxed while sitting on her quadricycle in an outside environment. She is a Victorian fashion statement with her matching ruffled cap and dress, high button shoes, and gloves. A highly technical and innovative cycle is illustrated. This mechanical wonder is propelled by a combined rowing and levered pedal principal. A highly unusual vehicle that well suits the definition of "odd". 3-3/4" x 5-1/2" albumen photo. Unmounted. No photographer's identification. Circa 1883. No location identified but acquired in England.



(left) **TRANSITIONALLY YOURS** Illustrated is a group of riders from the Velocipede Club of Lyon which was one of the earliest Velocipede Clubs in the world. There are ten members with cycles and two without. Bikes include a traditional "velocipede"; several "transitional wood, or wire, spoked 'open head' high wheel bicycles. Note the formal attire and the one rider balancing on the saddle. Selected because of the scene, clothing, outside location, and exceptional variety of early bicycles. Size of mount is 12-1/4" x 9". Size of image is 7" x 5-1/2". Albumen photograph. Joguet pere & fils. Circa 1872. Lyon France.