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## The Beginnings of Cycling in Bogotá Colombia 1894–1938

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### Introduction

In the last decade, Colombian cycling has reached a new golden era. The triumphs of Colombian cyclists on the international scene have been irrefutable proof of the sporting quality of the country and of the love of Colombians for bicycles and cycling. Through the triumphs of the “*escarabajos*” (beetles) in the grand tours, and dozens of victories in stages, one-week tours, classics and competitions in different modalities such as mountain biking and BMX, sports cycling has engendered enormous support amongst fans, building upon the popularity that the bicycle has achieved in recent years in terms of mobility and transportation. This situation has led Bogotá to call itself the “*Bicycle Capital of the World*”, since it is estimated that one million bicycle trips are made daily.

However, it was not until the 1950s, after the organization of the *Vuelta a Colombia* (1951), that cycling emerged as the popular and national sport that it has become. Since then, a process of internationalization led to the debut of the “*escarabajos*” in the grand tours in the 1970s and 1980s, when Colombian teams debuted in the international peloton, and, ultimately, Luis “*Lucho*” Herrera’s win in the *Vuelta*

a España in 1987.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, a citizen movement called “*Procicla*” was demanding space for bicycles in the streets, giving rise to the Sunday *Ciclovía* of Bogotá, an urban experiment that for 50 years has closed the streets to the transit of motor vehicles for free transit of pedestrians and cyclists<sup>2</sup>.

Finally, since the late 1990s, the Bogotá mayor’s office has been working on construction under the city’s *Cycle Route Master Plan*, an ambitious plan that to date has provided the city with more than 600 kilometers of infrastructure for cyclists, thus cementing its position as the most cycling city in Latin America and setting itself up as a reference for the use of bicycles in the region. One of the objectives of this article is to contribute to the knowledge of the origin of cycling in Bogotá Colombia.

### The situation of cycling history in Colombia

1 Luis “*Lucho*” Herrera, born in Fusagasugá in 1961, he was the first Latin American cyclist to win a world cycling grand tour.

2 On December 15, 1974, the *Procicla* Collective organized the “*Great Pedal Demonstration*”, an event that closed some of Bogotá’s main streets for bicycle and pedestrian use. This event was the seed for the organization of the *Ciclovía* Dominical, which has operated uninterruptedly since 1982.

In 2021, Professor Matthew Brown published his article “*Cycling in South America 1880–1920*” in which he studied the origin of cycling in several countries in the region, and in which he criticized historians that have ignored the South American cycling experience.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, in the numerous histories of the bicycle (some of them global), little or nothing is mentioned about the adoption, use and popularization of the bicycle and cycling in Latin America. Thus, although there are no systematic works on the history of sport and particularly cycling in Latin America, in recent years case studies and particular investigations have been published on the development of cycling in some cities and regions of the continent. Academic spaces have also been opened for the circulation of research, such as the *First Latin American Congress of Sociohistorical Studies of Sports*, and the *Latin American Seminar on the History of Sports Practices*.

Studies on cycling in Colombia, in general, are scarce. Some existing works on the history of cycling in Colombia refer to the *Tour of Colombia* inaugurated in 1951 as the great initial moment of cycling in the country, omitting more than 70 years of history, during which the *velocipede* (main predecessor of the bicycle) and the bicycle itself arrived in the country in the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and subsequently spread among the upper

3 Brown, Matthew. *Cycling in South America 1880–1920*. Bogotá. *Anuario Colombiano de Historia Social y de la Cultura*. Universidad Nacional de Colombia. 2021.

classes<sup>4</sup>. Other compilations on cycling are limited to exposing dates of events and sporting exploits of cyclists from the 1950s to the present, highlighting the importance of the triumphs achieved, but omitting or neglecting the impact of social and cultural factors on the growth of the sport.

Due to the above, it is considered necessary to construct an object of study based on the analysis of the origins of this practice at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Bogotá and its development in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, at which time sport in general, and cycling in particular, became popular. Eventually, cycling became a sport with wide representation on the world sports scene and the greatest reception in Colombian society. In this period, 1894–1938, it is possible to identify at least 5 main moments that frame, in general, the beginnings of cycling in the city and the arrival of the bicycle in the country:

1. **The Velocipede in Colombia (1872–1890):** The first moment is the printing of the first written records and references to velocipedes in the city of Bogotá.
2. **The arrival of the bicycle and the beginnings of cycling in Bogotá (1890–1899):** This second moment corresponds to the 1890s, during which

4 Some works on the history of cycling in Colombia are: Rincón, Fabio. *Rutas de Gloria: Historia del ciclismo colombiano* (History of Colombian cycling). Colombia: Promotora Latina de Ediciones. 1984; Duque, Rafael. *Los escarabajos de la Vuelta a Colombia* (The beetles of the Tour of Colombia). Bogotá. Editorial Oveja Negra. 1984; Rendell, Matt. *Kings of the Mountains: How Colombia's Cycling Heroes Changed Their Nation's History*. Aurum. 2003.

a bicycle trade began to consolidate in the city, the first bicycle races were organized, the first cycling clubs in the city and the country were formed, and the first velodrome in Colombia was built.

3. **The arrival of the twentieth century, the decline of cycling and the use of bicycles in Bogotá (1900–1928):** This third moment is identified with the decline of cycling in Bogotá in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Currently, this moment does not refer to or recognize cycling competitions in the city, however, in this moment, the bicycle acquired a utilitarian connotation that allowed for the exploitation of the potential of this object in other fields, such as transportation, recreation and entertainment.
4. **The reactivation of Bogotá cycling: the beginnings of amateur cycling. (1928–1938):** The fourth moment includes the organization of amateur cycling beginning in 1929, the appearance of the first stores dedicated exclusively to the bicycle trade, and the celebration of the first local competitions in the city in the 1930s, until the celebration of the Bolivarian games in 1938.
5. **The institutionalization and diffusion of cycling in Bogotá (post 1938):** With the Bolivarian games, cycling began its first phase of organization with the creation of institutions such as the national cycling association in 1936 and some departmental cycling leagues in the 1940s. With the decrease in the price of bicycles, many more people

had access to the vehicle so cycling began to be more than a hobby. It is at this time that we can trace the insertion of the bicycle and cycling into popular culture

### 1. The velocipede in Colombia (1872–1890)

There is still no exact date for the arrival in Colombia of the velocipede, the name by which bicycles were known until 1895. However, it is known that the first velocipedes arrived in the country only a few years after the formation of the first velocipede factories in England and France in the early 1870s. Colombians, especially the Bogotá citizens, began to have news about the development and use of the velocipede in Europe and the United States. Naturally, the first Colombians to have contact with velocipedes were those who were outside the country, as in the case of Nicolás Pardo who served as consul general of the United States of Colombia in the city of Florence, Italy, around 1871, and the renowned poet Rafael Pombo; both consigned in their memoirs and works, their first-hand impressions of the velocipede.<sup>5</sup>

5 In 1870, while living in New York, Rafael Pombo wrote a poem dedicated to the velocipede:

“While rider and velocipede run  
There is no greater danger, they continue  
running,  
But when you stop, don't let your neighbor  
be ready  
And the blow is tremendous.  
From what I understand here  
What a great velocipede this life is,  
Well, from the world on the wheel  
Whoever stops moving, stays behind,  
And the stop is usually a fall”.

However, in 1872, the first customs import tariffs on velocipedes, the first tariffs of any kind in the country, were established.<sup>6</sup> Initially, most velocipedes were imported directly from England, where the manufacture and trade of these artefacts was concentrated; some of these velocipedes carried the Smith & Starley Co. brand. A few years later, in 1878, one of the first velocipedes to arrive in the city of Bogotá was paraded around as part of a circus show offered by the French magician Alexander Herrmann (The Great Herrmann) and his wife Adelaide (Scarsey) Herrmann. On that occasion it was Adelaide who showed the audience at the theatre of Bogotá her ability to do stunts on a velocipede.<sup>7</sup>

In this way, the people of Bogotá gained awareness of the velocipede through news in the press and circus shows; although a decade later it would begin to be common to see velocipedes roll through the cobbled streets of the

6 Secretaría de hacienda. Estadística nacional y colección de los principales documentos relacionados con la Hacienda pública en el año de 1873. Bogotá. 1873.

7 Diario de Cundinamarca. 18 January 1878.



**Figure 1.** Portrait of Agustín Carrizosa and his family. Notice a child riding a tricycle (children's velocipede) Family photo. 1881. Source: Taller La Huella. *Crónica de la fotografía en Colombia: 1841–1948. Bogotá. 1983 Page 36 (Library Luis Ángel Arango).*

city. [Figure 1] It is necessary to clarify that during the 1870s and 1880s the velocipede did not have much prominence in Bogotá, mainly due to the civil wars and military clashes that took place between 1876–1877 and 1884–1885, in the country. Also, the poor state of the roads and streets did not favour the movement of wheeled vehicles, so the use of the velocipede and the tricycle was relegated to private spaces or elite social circles.

## 2. The arrival of the bicycle and the beginnings of cycling in Bogotá (1890–1899)

Although velocipedes arrived in Colombia and some Latin American countries in the 1870s, it was in the 1880s that they began to be marketed in some of the main commercial houses of the city of Bogotá. Some hardware and miscellany stores began to import velocipedes and tricycles from England and the United States, which the children and heads of the most prestigious families in the city learned to ride. However, the price of these artefacts limited their reach, so the use of the velocipede and the tricycle was relegated to a select group of the Bogotá elite.<sup>8</sup>

Cycling appeared in Bogotá



**Figure 2.** First announcement of sale of velocipedes (bicycles) in Bogotá (Agents Camacho Roldán & Tamayo). Source: *El Heraldo*. 22 January 1895.

8 Alfonso, Julián. Pedalear la historia Los inicios del ciclismo en Bogotá 1894–1938. (Pedaling history The beginnings of cycling in Bogotá 1894–1938). Bogotá. Universidad Autónoma de Colombia. 2019. p. 22

and in Colombia in general in the 1890s, when the so-called Safety bicycle began to be imported. With the beginning of this decade, some news and other reports began to arrive about the running of some cycling competitions and related accomplishments, a situation that stimulated the introduction of the bicycle into the city and the appearance of the first “velocipedists,” as those who rode the cobbled streets of the city on their velocipedes were known. Towards the end of 1893, there were already some bicycles in the city and towards 1894 the city newspapers reported the novelty of seeing the “velocipedists” riding through the streets, platforms, parks and public squares. In 1894, the first bicycle races in Colombian history were held in the city of Bogotá within the framework of the national holidays on July 20.<sup>9</sup> Most of the city’s newspapers covered the spectacle in which only four sprinters participated, one of them on a high-wheeled velocipede.<sup>10</sup> The novelty of this race aroused an enthusiasm for the bicycle that led to the first attempts to build a velodrome and to establish a cycling club in the city.<sup>11</sup>

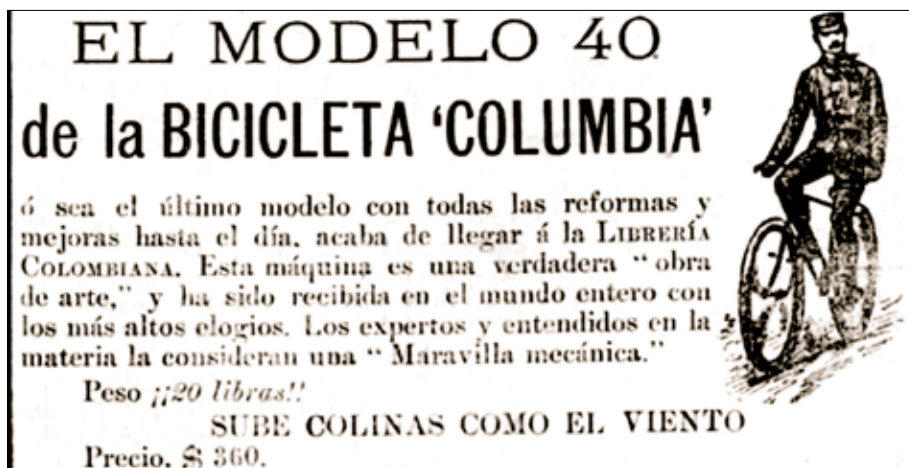
## 2.1 The bicycle trade in Bogotá

By 1895, a bicycle market of various brands and origin began to be established. In January of that year, Salvador Camacho Roldán,

9 El Heraldo. 22 July 1894.

10 El Telegrama. 22 July 1894.

11 Alfonso, Julián. Los Velódromos en Bogotá. Los espacios del ciclismo en la ciudad 1894–1951. (The Velodromes in Bogotá. Cycling spaces in the city 1894–1951). Bogotá. Revista Gráfica. 2024. p. 49.



**Figure 3.** Columbia Model 40 bicycle advertising notice. Source: *El Heraldo*. 22 September 1895.

a renowned Colombian politician and journalist, imported through his commercial house “Librería Colombiana” the first batch of Columbia-branded bicycles directly from the Pope Manufacturing Company, Hartford, Connecticut, USA. [Figure 2] A few months later Camacho Roldán offered for sale Columbia bicycles of various models, including the renowned “model 40” [Figure 3] and the tandem version, Hartford bicycles, Queen city bicycles for children and spare parts such as flash-lights and cyclometers, among other things.

Between 1895 and 1899 the bicycle market grew considerably. During this time, at least a dozen brands of bicycles in men’s, women’s, children’s and tricycle models were imported into the country. Brands included Indiana, Excelsior, Humber, Townend, Águila, Cleveland, Eagle, Columbus, Monarch, Premier, Oriel, Singer, Trent, Warwick, and Sterling, among others, imported by agents such as Antonio Samper Uribe and Andrés Parra, and by commercial houses such as Fernandez & Concha and

Stern & Frankel, among others.<sup>12</sup> [Figures 4 & 5]

## 2.2 The beginnings of cycling in Bogotá

Since 1894, attempts at associations between velocipedists, later, cyclists, were promoted in cities such as Bogotá, Medellín and Bucaramanga. By 1895, the “Club Ciclista Bogotano,” the first cycling club registered in Colombia, had been created.<sup>13</sup> A year later, we have record of the existence of “Club Ciclista Colombiano,” based in Bogotá, and “Club Ciclista de Medellín, and, in 1898, “Círculo Ciclista de Bucaramanga” and “el Sport Club,” of Bogotá, were formed.<sup>14, 15</sup> These groups, clubs and cycling societies were the main expression of the social function that the bicycle was acquiring in the country and were made up of prominent merchants, politicians,

12 Ibid., p. 46.

13 El Correo Nacional. 25 July 1895.

14 El Heraldo. 30 June 1898.

15 Alfonso, Julián. Los Velódromos en Bogotá. Los espacios del ciclismo en la ciudad 1894–1951. (The Velodromes in Bogotá. Cycling spaces in the city 1894–1951). Bogotá. Revista Gráfica. 2024. p. 50.



## VELOCIPEDOS

*Premier* con llantas dobles labradas (Dunlop-Welch).  
*Singer* "modèle de luxe" con llantas dobles labradas } La mejor llanta conocida en Inglaterra.  
 (Dunlop-Welch).

*Remington* con llantas Dunlop.  
*Aguila* para hombre, *ruedas de aluminio*, llantas dobles Gormully, ó sean las mejores conocidas en los Estados Unidos.  
*Aguila* para señora, *ruedas de aluminio*, con guarda barro y guarda cadenas de aluminio.  
*Aguila* para niños, también con llantas neumáticas y ruedas de aluminio.

Deseando, con sobra de razón y de justicia, que los velocipedos *no sean privilegio exclusivo de los ricos*, hemos resuelto importar bicicletas con todos los requisitos de una buena máquina: solidez, rigidez, resistencia, elasticidad y suavidad; pero sin detalles de lujo, y hemos logrado ponernos de acuerdo con los fabricantes en *sacrificar la utilidad del primer año á fin de hacerlas conocer*, circunstancia *excepcional* que nos permitirá darlas á \$ 200 (!!!). A pesar de su bajo precio *no vendrán con llanta sencilla de pegar con pasta al aro (rim)*, sino con llanta doble, de primera calidad, de quitar y poner **CON LAS MANOS** sin ayuda de instrumentos ni de soplete, y de remendar interiormente, como la Dunlop ó la Gormully.

**GRAN SURTIDO DE REPUESTOS, ACCESORIOS y objetos especiales para ciclistas**, como *linternas, trompetas, capitas de caucho, polainas, ciclómetros, foetes y porta foetes, cascabeles, cachuehas, aceite especial para lubricar y para linternas, carrieles de viaje, etc. etc.*

### LA CHAQUETA ROJA

Calle Real, números 227 y 227 bis.—Bogotá. 25—12

**Figure 4.** Commercial advertisement for sale of velocipedes of different brands, in the "La Chaqueta Roja" store, located on the Real de Bogotá Street. **Source:** *El Conservador*. 7 March 1896.

**STERN & FRANKEL**

Unicos agentes en Colombia de las afamadas bicicletas

**Cleveland**

Especialidad en bicicletas para carreras,

Gran surtido de joyas finas.

BOGOTÁ  
CARRERA 7ª, NUMEROS 448 y 450



## PARA LAS CARRERAS DONDE ZALAMEA HERMANOS

encontrará usted:

Gualdrapas, Fuetes, Estribos de aro, Frenos, Polainas, etc.

### SPORTSMEN!

Vengan á ver el más bonito bote que aquí se ha traído (único que nos queda).

El más completo surtido de escopetas, revólveres, cápsulas, fósforos, tacos y demás enseres para cacería, lo tienen

**ZALAMEA HERMANOS** (Plaza de Bolívar).

CABALLOS DE CARRERA	PARAGUAS
Torres & Roldán, carrera 7ª, número 532, compran por recomendación uno ó dos buenos caballos de raza del país, años y no mayores de ocho años.	La persona que dejara uno el 20 en la Tribuna del Hipódromo, puede acudir por él á la Agencia de Infantería & Borda.
5—2	FEDERICO RIVAS PRADE AGENTE Y COMISIONISTA Calle 13, número 000
POLO PONNEIS	LOS CANJES DE "EL SPORT" deben enviarse á la Administración del periódico, que se halla en la Agencia de Infantería & Borda, alameda, Parque de Santander, acera Sur, número 23.
Caballo pequeño, que no mida más de un metro 35 centímetros de altura, compra Bernardo Espinosa.	<b>LLAVES</b>
10—2	Se perdieron unas el día 20 en el Hipódromo se aplica á la persona que las haya encontradas se sirven presentadas en la Agencia de Infantería & Borda.
ARNESES	<b>IMP. DE "LA LUZ"</b>
Buenos pero baratos se necesitan unos en la Agencia del Hipódromo.	
REPRODUCTORES	
Venden una superior y no caro, Torres & Roldán, carrera 7ª, número 532.	
5—2	

**Figure 5.** Commercial advertisement for Cleveland brand bicycles in the American jewellery Stern & Frankel. **Source:** *El Sport*. 13 August 1899.



**Figure 6.** Bike crews in Usaquén in 1897. **Source:** *El Sport*. 15 August, 1899.

businessmen and representatives of the elite of notable professions. [Figure 6]

In general, these clubs had a short existence, had among their ideals the promotion of the use of the bicycle for its beneficial impact on health, the construction and improvement of the roads, the realization of walks and bicycle races and the creation of traffic regulations governing the behaviour of cyclists through the streets, ridges, malls, parks and public squares of the city. In addition, the clubs promoted the construction of structures consistent with the practice of cycling (velodromes), an effort that resulted in the construction of the Central Velodrome and the Gran Sabana Racecourse in 1898. This velodrome had a 530-meter track and was the first velodrome in the country, hosting the first bicycle racing seasons organized by the Sport Club between 1898 and 1899. The most select of Bogotá society and the first generation of Bogotá cyclists participated in these races. The Central Velodrome also was the scene of the first public appearances of women on bicycles in the city.<sup>16</sup> [Figure 7]

### 2.3 The first Bogotá cyclists

The most skilled Bogotá velocipedists and cyclists of the 1890s made themselves known in the bicycle racing seasons held in the Central Velodrome between July 17, 1898 and August 1899. Most of these cyclists belonged to families of merchants, politicians, and businessmen who had the ability to acquire the bicycles that were just beginning



**Figure 7.** *Parade of cycling ladies in the Central Velodrome in 1899. Source: El Sport. 17 September 1899.*

to be imported into the country. Some of them became aware of cycling when abroad, a few years before cycling was practiced in Colombia. Such a one was Benito Zalamea [Figure 8], who travelled to the United States in 1892 to complete his university studies and knew of cycling first-hand after joining various cycling clubs such as the League of American Wheelmen<sup>17</sup> and the Hartford (Connecticut) Wheel Club.<sup>18</sup> Zalamea participated and won some victories in various competitions between 1892 and 1896 in the United States. He participated in events ranging from the Great Relay Bicycle Race between Boston and Chicago in 1892, to track cycling in contests alongside the great star of the moment, Arthur Zimmermann. In addition, this first generation of cyclists was made up of great personalities of the time, such as Ernesto Duperly (importer of the first car to Bogotá), Roberto Mc Douall (a recognized poet), Alfonso López Pumarejo (former President of Colombia), Leo Kopp (founder of the Bavaria brewery),

<sup>17</sup> The Bicycling world & L.A.W. bulletin. 2 September 1892.

<sup>18</sup> El Sport. 8 July 1899.



**Figure 8.** *Portrait of Benito Zalamea in the mid-1890s with the United States flag tied around his waist. Source: Private archive of the Zalamea family*

Manuel Pombo (brother of the poet Rafael Pombo), and representatives of the Samper, Mallarino, Gilede, Uricoechea, and Fernández families, among others.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. The arrival of the twentieth century and the decline of cycling in Bogotá. (1900–1928)

In August 1899, the last racing season at the Central Velodrome

<sup>19</sup> Alfonso, Julián. Los Velódromos en Bogotá. Los espacios del ciclismo en la ciudad 1894–1951. (The Velodromes in Bogotá. Cycling spaces in the city 1894–1951). Bogotá. Revista Grafía. 2024. p. 52.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 53.



**Figure 9.** Photograph of Prospero Tobón. Medellín, 1905. Source: *De Memoria. Revista del Archivo de Bogotá. No.1* September – November, 2012

ended with a parade of young ladies and a battle of flowers. Two months later the Thousand Days War began, a civil conflict that lasted until 1902, and plunged the country into a deep economic crisis and resulted in the definitive separation of Panamá. The social unrest generated by this war, and the increasing popularity of the car after it began to be imported to Bogotá in 1903, contributed to the loss of interest of Bogotá fans in cycling; those fans turned to focus on sports such as football, golf, and tennis. As a result, cycling clubs disappeared and the velodrome track was abandoned over the years.

However, although cycling as a sports practice was overshadowed, the use of the bicycle did not decrease; on the contrary the number of bicycles imported into the country increased considerably. It is estimated that at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were at least 600 bicycles in Bogotá, while in 1905 about



**Figure 10.** Bogotá Cycling Police Section. Source: *El Gráfico. 20 December 1913*

3,526 bicycles were imported to Colombia<sup>20</sup> During the first decades of the twentieth century, several streets of the city were torn up for the construction of the sewage system so the use of the bicycle began to be viable, at least in the city, which was why some people of notable professions began to use the bicycle as a means of transportation. This resulted in the appearance of the “cyclist” as a road actor. [Figure 9] Thus, in 1912, the first Traffic regulations appeared in Bogotá that regulated the use of any kind of vehicles on the streets of Bogotá, including the bicycle.<sup>21</sup> In addition to its use for transportation, the bicycle starred in shows at events such as bullfights and on national holidays, and also was a favourite gift of the wealthy of Bogotá to their children. Furthermore, in 1912, the bicycle squad of the Bogotá Police [Figure 10] was created in order to patrol the city more effectively.

20 Dirección General de Estadística. Estadística anual de la República de Colombia (Annual statistics of the Republic of Colombia), 1905 p. 439.

21 Concejo Municipal de Bogotá. Acuerdo 54 de 1912. Reglamentario del tráfico general en la ciudad. Bogotá. 1912.

As we can see, during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the bicycle began to be used for different purposes, such as recreation and entertainment.

#### **4. The reactivation of Bogotá cycling: the beginnings of amateur cycling. (1928–1938)**

The 1920s were particularly special in the development of cycling in Colombia for several reasons. By the 1910s the bicycle had reached small and medium-sized cities around the country and in 1915 with the inauguration of the Pacific Railway, bicycles began to arrive in the country through ports located on the Pacific Ocean, such as Buenaventura and Tumaco. This commercial dynamic generated a favourable climate for the use of bicycles in cities such as Cali and Palmira, where cycling competitions began to be organized in the mid-1920s. It was precisely in Cali that several cycling clubs were formed in the late 1920s, and where much of the country’s cycling activity was concentrated.

In addition, during this decade Latin America was the scene of so-called “Raids,” feats that consisted of travelling enormous distances aboard the different vehicles that humanity had



**Figure 11.** Max and José Eidelmann in front of the Alcyon Warehouse, the first bicycle shop in Bogotá in the 1920s. **Source:** Nathan Eidelmann Family Archive. Taken from: Martínez, Enrique. *Haciendo comunidad, haciendo ciudad. Los judíos y la conformación del espacio urbano de Bogotá. Bogotá. Universidad Nacional de Colombia. 2010*



**Figure 12.** Rafael Borda with Alfonso Reina, winners of the Bogotá–Tunja–Bogotá resistance race in 1929. **Source:** *Revista Cromos. 7 December 1929.*



**Figure 13.** Participants of the Departmental Cycling Championship in 1931. **Source:** *Revista Cromos. 19 December 1931.*

developed up to that time (cars, motorcycles, airplanes, bicycles); there were even those who risked walking to get to New York from South America. News and references from cyclists who arrived in Colombia, from Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, etc., on the way to New York were common. At the same time, the first stores dedicated exclusively to the sale of bicycles appeared in Bogotá.<sup>22</sup> [Figure 11]

<sup>22</sup> Two of the first stores specialized in bicycles in Bogotá were the Almacén El Sport and the Almacén Alcyon dedicated to the sale of bicycles and motorcycles from the French brand Alcyon.

These stores, along with some of the main newspapers in the city organized the first races, cycling again making an appearance on the Bogotá sports scene.<sup>23</sup>

As of 1929, newspapers such as *El Tiempo*, *El Espectador*, *El Nuevo Liberal*, *La Razón*, *Mundo al día*, and *El Gráfico* organized bicycle races in response to the decline of this sport in the city. Some short

<sup>23</sup> Alfonso, Julián. *Los Velódromos en Bogotá. Los espacios del ciclismo en la ciudad 1894–1951.* (The Velodromes in Bogotá. Cycling spaces in the city 1894–1951). Bogotá. *Revista Grafía*. 2024. p. 55.

distance races were organized as well as endurance races of more than 60 kilometres, which later became known as “doubles”. The first of these endurance races was the Bogotá–Tunja–Bogotá race held at the end of November 1929. The race was organized by the newspaper *El Espectador* and was well received by the Bogotá and Tunja public.<sup>24</sup> [Figures 12 & 13] This race was succeeded by the Double to Chia (1930), the Double to Zipaquirá (1931), the Double or Vuelta

<sup>24</sup> *El Espectador*. 29 November 1929.

to Usaquén (1935), the Double or Vuelta to Chapinero (1936), Double to Facatativá (1936), Double to Tocancipá (1937), Double to San Miguel (1939) and some track cycling competitions, such as the first Departmental Cycling Championship held in 1931. These competitions aimed at reviving the love for cycling that had lived at the end 19<sup>th</sup> century. [Figures 14 & 15]

## 5. The institutionalization and dissemination of cycling in Bogotá

With the celebration of the doubles, fans developed a fondness for the sport as a new generation of cyclists, who participated aggressively in the race schedule, and fiercely contested each race, appeared on the scene. In the mid-1930s, the first of a new generation of sports clubs began to be organized in the city, after the minimal existence of some clubs at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These new clubs brought together



**Figure 15.** Roberto Osuna Considered the best cyclist in the country in the early 1940s by the Bogotá press. Source: *El Tiempo*. 4 May 1942.



**Figure 14.** Participants of the Tour of Zipaquirá in 1944. Source: Gonzales Family Archive.

middle-class youth around sports such as football, athletics, basketball and cycling, so it soon became necessary to create institutions that promoted sports and grouped the activity of the different clubs. In 1936 the Cycling Union of Cundinamarca was created as a section of the National Physical Education Commission and two years later<sup>25</sup>, by decree 2216, associations of some sports, including cycling, were created, with a view to organizing the first Bolivarian Games held in Bogotá in 1938, in celebration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the city.<sup>26</sup>

The games were the occasion of Colombian cycling's first international event and tested its mettle against Ecuadorian, Venezuelan and Peruvian cyclists. For the occasion, the stadia Alfonso López Pumarejo and Nemesio

Camacho El Campín were opened, places that became the home of cycling practice in the 1940s, until the construction of the “Primera de mayo” velodrome in 1951. Additionally, the first departmental cycling leagues such as the Cundinamarca, Atlántico, Santander and Valle del Cauca Cycling League were constituted in the 1940s.<sup>27</sup>

During the 1940s, new races, such as the Vuelta a Soacha, the Vuelta a Mosquera, the Vuelta a Funza, and longer distance competitions such as the Double to Girardot, the Double to Chocontá, Double to Villapinzón, Double to Tunja, organized by the Cundinamarca cycling league, appeared on the local calendar. In these races, the “Aces” of the cycling city were called out as the best cyclists of the time. Some of these cyclists had a marked role in

25 *El Tiempo*. 8 June 1936.

26 Morales, Manuel. *Impossible Roads: Cycling Landscapes and Cultural Representation in Colombia, 1930–1958*. University of California San Diego. 2018. p. 130.

27 Alfonso, Julián. *Los Velódromos en Bogotá. Los espacios del ciclismo en la ciudad 1894–1951. (The Velodromes in Bogotá. Cycling spaces in the city 1894–1951)*. Bogotá. Revista Gráfica. 2024. p. 64.

the institutionalization of cycling and some of them, like Guillermo Pignalosa, José Galindo, Mario Martínez and Efraín Forero (First Winner of Vuelta a Colombia) were participants in the organization of the first Tour of Colombia in 1951.

The popularity of the bicycle and the practice of cycling was reflected in the organization of the National Cycling Championship in 1946, participation in the second Bolivarian Games in 1947 in Lima Peru [Figure 16], the Cycling Tours of Bogotá in 1948 and 1949, the gold medal obtained by Colombian cyclists in the Central American and Caribbean Games held in Guatemala in 1950, the organization of the Vuelta a Colombia in 1951, the Quito – Pasto international race, between Ecuador and southern Colombia in the same year, the construction of the Santiago Trujillo Gómez Velodrome in 1951 and the Medellín velodrome in 1954, and the organization of regional competitions such as the Vuelta a la Costa, the Vuelta a Santander and the Vuelta a Cundinamarca in the 1950s and 1960s.

As we can see, the process of diffusion of cycling began at the end of the 1920s and the important moments of that process are the organization of the first races in the 1930s, the organization of local cycling in 1940 and the popularization of cycling in the 1950s when it became the national sport.

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**Figure 16.** Colombian cycling team at the 1947 Bolivarian Games in Lima Perú. **Source:** Gonzales Family Archive.

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