

## Female Cyclists: Two Essays from the 1869 *Hancock Jeffersonian*

Paige Zenovic

Under the section titled “FOREIGN GOSSIP” of the October 30, 1868, edition of *The Hancock Jeffersonian* ran what may have been the first mention of the bicycle—the “velocipede”—in the Findlay, Ohio newspaper. The brief line informs readers that “the latest Paris velocipede carries two persons and a footman to propel.” Three months later, a lengthy, front-page article called “The Velocipede” was published in the paper. The almost five-thousand-word article may have been published due to an increase of public interest in the machines. And it may have been published because the velocipede was coming to town: on the third page of the January 22, 1869, paper, the editors note the “Messrs. H. Kob, & Co., of this place, have ordered one of these machines.” The editors describe the front-page essay “The



*Nineteenth-Century Ohio Literature* pairs forgotten readings with new essays that explain them. In this installment, Paige Zenovic introduces two essays on women riding bicycles from the time when they were first being introduced to Ohio. *Nineteenth-Century Ohio Literature* is edited by Jon Miller at The University of Akron. For more information, visit <http://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/nineteenthcenturyohioliterature/>

Velocipede” as containing “much information in regard to this invention” and hope that “Its length should not prevent any from reading it, as these machines bid fair to become of practical utility, and may bring about a complete revolution in the present means of travel.”



*Masthead of The Hancock Jeffersonian. Ohio History Connection.*

“The Velocipede” is presented in full, below, as the first of two nineteenth-century readings on the subject.

As these articles evidence, the velocipede was enjoying widespread and international attention in 1869. At this time, American roads were not yet familiar with the “iron horses” that had picked up speed in a few years earlier in Western Europe. Velocipedes were revolutionizing travel. Whether it was for leisure, sport, or transportation, the use of velocipedes attracted attention and inspired the imagination.

The history of velocipedes in America is intertwined with its industrialization. As transportation improvements allowed people to travel with greater speed and ease, people were also gaining more time to pursue leisure activities (Guroff 93–94). The introduction of velocipedes into American culture was due not only to innovations from the industrial revolution, such as steel and rubber, but also from people’s desires to improve the quality of their free time (Christie-Robin 3; Guroff 93). The first rudimentary velocipede had

reached America in 1866 by a French immigrant, and in two years' time tungsten steel, a material that was used in the production of later velocipedes, was invent-

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*This store stocked a velocipede in 1869. Ohio History Connection..*

ed (Christie-Robin 3; Guroff 93). This catalyst allowed what one of the following articles called “velocipede mania” to roll in.

*The Hancock Jeffersonian* published two long articles on velocipedes in 1869, and both are reproduced below. This newspaper is perhaps only known to American literary historians for their initial publication of the “Nasby Letters” by David Ross Locke, who began working at the paper in 1861. 1869 was a notable year for the “iron horses” and the paper seemed aware of its growing popularity. In 1869, *The New York Times* reported that “no sooner does a man try a machine anywhere than out comes the exclamation of, ‘I must get me one of these’” and predicted that velocipede races would soon become popularized entertainment (Guroff 94–95).

*The Hancock Jeffersonian* was interested in this new form of entertainment and republished “The Velocipede” in January of 1869. “The Velocipede” details the history of the velocipede and the mechanics of the machine. Additionally, the article makes a passionate plea to readers to accept the velocipede as part of American society. The author of the article even claims that the use of such devices by women would have a positive impact on their overall health. In March of 1869, “Riding the Velocipede” was published. Unlike the previous article, “Riding the Velocipede” was written to entertain the readers rather than inform them of the workings and culture that surrounded the machines. This leisure-class humor piece describes a man who happens upon a cycling school in New York city. There, he witnesses men and a woman trying to master the iron horse before returning to his hotel, where he dreams of owning a velocipede for work. His dream is so vivid that he wakes up and finds himself clinging to the bedpost and straddling the footboard.

While both articles detail the velocipedes with different intentions, one remarkable aspect of both pieces is the way they describe the experience and future of women riders. When describing how female riders interact with their machines, "The Velocipede" and "Riding the Velocipede" view such an activity with perhaps different motives. Both articles make the reader aware that men regarded the invention as something by and for men. Both articles describe the velocipede, however, as something that may interest women, too. And both articles speculate about the experience women might have riding bikes. For instance, in "Riding the Velocipede," the sole female rider is introduced as such:

Among them was a solitary woman, apparently a female, dressed partially in pantaloons; her waterfall had come off, and she looked kind of demoralized. One fellow was holding her up, and I heard him ask her in gentle tones "if it hurt her much?" The others were occasionally casting shy glances at her, and looking as if they were very much amused at something that had been done.

The female rider's attempt to ride the velocipede seems to be sexualized; she is described as looking "demoralized" after a ride. Her hair has come undone, a man whispers "if it hurt her much?," and other men find amusement in following her situation with "shy glances." It appears that something intimate, and perhaps sinister, has taken place.

While "Riding the Velocipede" may make a tongue-in-cheek reference to bicycle riding as a kind of sexual experience for women, there were additional concerns that the riding of a velocipede was an activity unbecoming of a Victorian woman. In "The Velocipede" the au-

thor declares that “the two wheeled velocipedes, or bicycles as they are styled, are intended for the male sex only, and are by far the swiftest machines.” He suggests that women choose to ride the slower three-wheel op-



*A racy image. Tobacco advertising, 1874. Library of Congress.*

tion instead or try their luck on the poduscaphe (a rudimentary human-powered watercraft) despite the very real risk of tipping the pedal boat over and getting wet.

This sexualization of the female rider was a common viewpoint of many males during 1869. The velocipede offered women the opportunity to be mobile, to be outside, and there were fears that many conservative men had about woman having access to such freedom (Christie-Robin 2; Guroff 110). Concerns were raised about how the unsupervised travel could lead to “wanton behavior,” about how the physical exertion of riding would be more than what a woman could afford to put out, and about how the seat would teach a woman to masturbate (Guroff 111). The velocipede and its female rider was bound to cause much controversy during this time period, and these fears were being expressed to the readers of *The Hancock Jeffersonian* in 1869.

*Note on the First Text*

“The Velocipede” has been faithfully transcribed from the January 22, 1869, *Hancock Jeffersonian*. The article was originally published in the *Chicago Times* on December 31, 1865, with no author indicated in either paper. A few edits were made for the comfort of the modern reader such as deleting duplicate words, fixing capitalization errors, and the addition of punctuation at the end of several sentences.

## THE VELOCIPEDE.

“Nothing is at once invented and perfected,” says an old Latin maxim, the truth of whose application was made manifest in the early history of the velocipede. Like all things of earth it had its forty years in the wilderness. It first made its appearance in Paris and received notice to the following effect in the *Journal de Paris*. The date of the *entree* was July 27, 1789. It was stated that a certain vehicle, invented by M. M. Blanchard and Massurier—the former the celebrated aeronaut—was exhibited in rapid motion in the Place Louis XVI on July 27, 1789, in presence of many members of the French academy and a large concourse of spectators.<sup>1</sup> At the front of the machine was the head of an eagle with outspread wings, to which was attached to the apparatus with which the driver directed its movements. Behind him was seated an individual who gave an impetus, more or less rapid, to the machine by pressing his feet alternately on the ground. He sat down or stood at discretion, with his legs half concealed in a sort of box, where the springs that communicated movement to the machine were evidently placed. The inventor subsequently transported the vehicle to Versailles, and exhibited its capabilities in the presence of Louis XVI, Maria Antoinette and their court. There is nothing to show why this experiment failed, but it is to be supposed that it had its defects.

The second appearance was in 1808, and public exhibitions were made of its workings in the Jardin du

1. Marie Madeleine-Sophie Blanchard, a French balloonist. In 1814 she performed for Louis XVIII, who named her “Official Aeronaut of the Restoration.” She was the first woman to be killed by an aviation accident.



Luxembourg, but without success. At the time it was mounted on very low wheels, and the rider had to support himself by placing his feet directly on the ground. Such a mechanism was of course rudimentary, and the result was that the invention was extensively ridiculed and caricatured, and in these archives only do any traces of the first experiments made with this machine in the garden of Luxembourg exist.

But the modern railroad locomotive was also sneered at and caricatured, and so was the modern steamboat. And the early inventors, who sought to make the world wiser, were called disciples of the black art, and friends of the devil. And more, they were socially ostracized; they were hooted at and stoned by the mob, and sometimes burned at the stake. But they never ceased scheming and planning, nor was the velocipede to stop here. Twenty years after its first exhibition the velocipede re-appeared in Paris. This time, a public functionary, one M. Drenze, perfected the machine of twenty years before, and again exhibited it in its improved form. M. Drenze secured the rider's point of support upon the axletrees to the two wheels instead of the ground, and this created the actual modern velocipede. The inventor, who belonged to the administration of postoffices, also formed the further idea of proposing this machine for the use of rural postmen, as being of greater availability in the matter of speed and promptness, and at the same time causing them less fatigue. The plan was adopted, but, unfortunately, just in the winter season, when difficulties existed in the way of locomotion. The wheels slipped about in the hard sand without advancing, and the enterprise was once again considered a failure. At this late day, it would have been suggested

that it was only necessary to iron the wheels, or suspend the use of the vehicle during the winter. But the French Government disliked innovation, and dropped the velocipede.

“Three times and out,” is the old saying, but not so much with our subject. A few years on, and, undiscouraged, the velocipede appeared a third time, and again in an altered form—this time being a little carriage upon three wheels, and propelled by the hands of the rider. This machine did not succeed on account of the difficulty of guiding it, and the fatigue it caused the guider. It is a well-known fact that the muscles of the legs can be used much longer than those of the arms, and, acting upon this hint, all good velocipedes are so arranged that the action of the arms is merely complementary to that of the legs. This failure was the result of not attending to this fact.

“The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine.” Science and improvement move like the tortoise, but still they move, as Galileo said of the world. When a pebble is dropped in the water your eye loses the ripple. But that little splash has displaced every drop in the stream, and the water you see before you has been completely changed. The velocipede as it has been exhibited thus far was an idea dropped into the mind, and that idea must grow, and the mind must be revolutionized before its work ends. In the presence of success who is so bold as to laugh. Ridicule falls harmless before the iron armor of prosperity. And the velocipede succeeded. Paris, where it was hooted at and frowned down, now lifts up the prostrate work, and the thing despised yesterday is the idol worshipped to-day. It is the poetry of justice, and the two share the

triumph. The thoroughfares of Paris are thronged with countless riders on the strange creature, and the public have warned the velocipede votaries that they must carry their lanterns on their vehicles to avoid accidents. The mania has spread to all classes, and to the suburban cities of the capital. In St. Cloud, Vincennes, Enghien, Pantim; in Bordeaux, Marseilles, and the other principal cities, the people are all riding this economical species of iron horse, which requires no feed, harness, stable, or groom to care for it.

The velocipede and velocipede mania has reached America. It struck New Orleans many years ago. But the inhabitants of that benighted burgh thought it might be the "yellow jack"<sup>2</sup> in disguise, and gave it the cold shoulder. Time passed, and all Europe was ablaze with enthusiasm and astride of their favorite steeds. When the mania reached here, it found us deep in the mysteries of "planchette."<sup>3</sup> With true popular fickleness, the "many-headed multitude" dropped the mystic symbol, and vaulted into the saddle of the velocipede. New York, Philadelphia and Chicago are all infected.

New York, the Paris of America, is, in this instance, emulous of her model. Divines, lawyers, preachers, and editors have mounted their iron steeds with the same vigorous enthusiasm they mount their favorite hobbies. Beecher has left off worshipping himself and is doing penance on the velocipede; Dana is practicing for an aeronaut in the same machine; and Greeley is getting one ready for the next lecture season. Reporters are mounting them and galloping around Gotham

2. Refers to a disease typical of the time period (yellow fever).

3. Refers to the teardrop-shaped device, usually with a small window in the body, used to maneuver about the Ouija board.

after items. Bennett is fast becoming an expert in this line of horsemanship, with that idea of escaping from the horse-whippings which are threatened him at every corner.<sup>4</sup> And to finish the record, the ladies are entering the lists in the pleasures and excitement of the new style of horsemanship.—Velocipedes are to be met in every street and in the parks, public and private.

Philadelphia, staid and quakerish, has adopted the velocipede with but little less enthusiasm than New York. Forney<sup>5</sup> is practicing, and so are the young swells and bloods of the town. The ladies here are also catching the fever, and the broad thoroughfares of the rectangular city bid fair to rival New York and their exhibitions of the new order of equestrianship.

Chicago, alert and awake, is not to be outdone in anything, and velocipedes are becoming a matter of everyday occurrence on our streets. Our tradesmen and merchants are beginning to lay them in for sale, and, as the fever is catching, by the time the season opens we will see them becoming among our regular institutions. If they are to prove a success, there is no city and surrounding country better adapted to their use than this; a city perfectly level, and its surrounding country perfectly flat, are elements for the use of this machine best calculated to test its merits.

Chicago, as is her wont, is not to be beaten even in velocipedes, and comes to the rescue with a machine

4. Henry Ward Beecher was a well-known clergyman and author; Charles A. Dana was editor and part owner of the *New York Sun*; Horace Greeley was the founder of the *New-York Tribune*. James Gordon Bennett, Sr. and James Gordon Benent, Jr. were both publishers of the tabloid *The New York Herald*.

5. John Weiss Forney founded the independent Democratic newspaper, the *Philadelphia Press*.

which differs from any other extant, not only in its general appearance, but in its motive power. This Chicago velocipede has three wheels, two behind and one in front. The hind wheels are considerably the largest, being four feet and two inches in diameter, while the front wheel is only two feet and one-half. The front wheel is for the purpose of guiding the machine, and is connected by a lever with the body, and reaching within convenient distance of the seat, a straddle runs up from the axle of the front or guiding wheel, about a foot from the tire, which is surmounted by a lamp. This velocipede is propelled by spring-power, which works as follows: On the axle of the hind wheels is fastened a pinion, which is operated upon by a cog wheel, five times its size in diameter. Fastened to each side of this large cog-wheel is a dog, which works into a ratchet, upon the hub of which ratchet is fastened the centre of the springs. The other end of the spring is fastened to a rod of iron, which runs through the body of the velocipede. These springs are made of the very best English spring steel, two inches wide, one-tenth of an inch thick, and nine feet long, and when wound up their power is estimated at over 3,000 pounds each. Immediately outside of the spring, and in the ratchet hub, is fastened one of the treadles. The large cog-wheel and ratchet work loose around the shaft on which they are placed. The treadles are two feet long, and reach from the ratchet shaft to within convenient distance for the foot of a person occupying the seat. On the end of each treadle is a slipper to keep the foot from being shoved forward. By an ingenious contrivance the wheels can be thrown out of gear, so that the velocipede, even under full headway, can be turned around within a space of fourteen feet.

The seat has the appearance and general characteristics of a buggy seat, and can carry two persons with ease. It was designed for the use of ladies only, but can be used by anybody. The grand feature of this Chicago velocipede is, that it is worked by spring power, and that the springs can be perpetually wound up by simply using treadles alternately. It only takes one-fourth the power to wind the springs that the springs exert in unwinding. By pressing upon the treadle with the foot the ratchet is turned, on which is placed the spring, which of course is thereby wound. It differs from the Alton invention in this, that the springs are being continuously wound by the alternate treadles, and this can always be kept in motion; while the Alton invention runs only a mile and then stops to be wound again. This Chicago invention has been tested and all who have seen it are sanguine of its success. The cost of one of these machines will be about \$100.

Velocipedes are of various kinds. Some have two, and other three, and even four wheels; all have either pedals or rests on which to place the feet, and usually either brakes or levers regulate the speed.

#### THE TWO-WHEEL VELOCIPEDES.

The two-wheeled velocipedes, or bicycles as they are styled, are intended for the male sex only, and are by far the swiftest machines.

They are usually of wrought iron, and have pedals or reels attached to the front and large wheel, and the working of which, by a light movement of the feet, gives the requisite impulse to the vehicle. The saddle is poised upon a bar iron, suspended a few inches above the top fore wheel. The hands rest on a handle in front of the machine, which, working on a pivot, serves as a

balancing pole, the equilibrium being preserved by giving a slight twist to this handle. The brake, which at once stops the revolving motion of the wheel, is applied by means of a sharper twist.

#### THE THREE WHEEL VELOCIPEDE.

The three-wheel velocipede, or tricycle, is easier to guide and safer to use than the bicycle. Its speed, however, is less rapid; still it can be made to pass a carriage at full trot.

As the fair sex largely patronize the tricycle, the seat is more commodious than that of the bicycle, having sides and backs of wicker, and a horse hair cushion to sit upon. The hind wheels, though large, are light, and revolve with facility. The fore wheel, which is smaller, serves to guide the machine, being acted upon by means of the handle, which causes it instantly to turn in the direction indicated by the rider. The pedals are shaped like slippers, which facilitate the movement of the legs, and at the same time admits of the foot being disengaged instantaneously. The movement required to impel the machine is a perfectly natural one, analogous to that of walking. That is, it requires but the slightest pressure of the foot, and produces no unusual fatigue to the leg. In addition to these advantages, the largest three-wheeled velocipedes have a bar which follows the line of the eccentrics<sup>6</sup> attached to the pedals and fits on the axles. By assisting the movement of this lever, the speed of the vehicle is considerably increased, and a simple pressure against it checks the rotary movement of the wheel and stops the progress of the machine. This lever is, in fact, both a means of impulsion and a brake.

6. Refers to an eccentric, a circular disk fixed to a rotating axle

### THE PRICES.

The prices of velocipedes range according to their arrangement.—Those that are imported into this country, range from \$80 to \$125. Of course this is exclusive of those numerous etceteras, such as a grease-box, india rubber cushions for the iron bar in front of the machine, on which the legs rest, and the like.

### THE SPEED

attained by the swifter kind of velocipedes, averages from 12 to 13 miles an hour; adepts find no difficulty whatever in accomplishing 50 miles within five hours, without once alighting from their vehicle. It is recorded that a couple of amateurs making a tour through part of France, challenged each other as to which could perform the greater distance within 24 hours. One gave in after having accomplished 87 miles; the other went on until he made 123 miles in the allotted time.

### THE LABOR TO WORK IT.

It should be understood that, in impelling a velocipede, the limbs are not constantly in motion, as on level ground; when the impetus is at the average rate, or when the machine is descending an incline, the feet may be removed from the pedals and the legs may be placed on the bar fixed in front of the velocipede for this purpose. A slight impulsion given from time to time suffices to keep up the speed.

### THE ASCENT.

The ascent of any incline greater than 1 in 25 is said to be impracticable. When the rider, therefore, encounters a hill of more than average steepness, he has to dismount and lead his velocipede by the hand, which it is said can be done with almost the same ease as in carrying an ordinary walking stick.



AMERICAN MANUFACTURE.

The manufacture of this locomotive novelty has now commenced in this country. Americans, with their usual fertility of invention, have begun to improve on the French model as above given, and when these improvements will end, the archives in the patent office at Washington can only foreshadow. New York, Philadelphia and Boston have already started shops for their manufacture, while it is expected that Chicago will soon do the same. The French models are not only expensive, owing to the peculiar shape and construction of the iron frame, and consequent difficulty of forging it, but are heavy, owing to all parts being solid, and no effective provision has been made for the removal of any part that may be broken or worn out.

AN IMPROVED VELOCIPEDA,

recently patented in New York city, overcame all the before-mentioned objections to the French model. The reach or frame of the New York velocipede is tubular, and thereby great strength and lightness are secured. The bearings are all of composition, or gun metal, and so attached that when too much worn out they may be replaced by others, which are interchangeable, like the parts of sewing machines and fire-arms. The hub of the binder wheel is hushed with composition or gun metal; and the axis is of peculiar construction, constituting in itself an oilpot by being made tubular and closed at either end by a screw, on the removal of which it may be filled with lard oil. This oil finds its way out to the bearing as fast as required, through two or three fine holes made for the purpose in the axle. Another important feature in the American velocipede is the arrangement of the tiller or steering handle, which is brought

well back and sufficiently high to require the rider to maintain an erect position, with his arms well back and hands well separated, thus keeping the chest well expanded, and allowing free play of the lungs. The stirrups also differ from the Parisian model. These stirrups are three-sided with circular flanges at each end; and as they are fitted to turn on the crank-pins, the pressure of the foot will always bring one of the three flat sides into proper position. These flat sides are roughened to prevent the foot from slipping, and are so shaped as to permit the use of the fore part of the foot and bring the ankle joint into play, and thereby relieve the knee considerably, making the propulsion much easier than when the shank of the foot is used exclusively. The cranks are made adjustable, to suit different persons and different kinds of roads and inclines. The saddle is supported on a spring, giving an elastic seat. The brake is exceedingly simple and effective, being composed of a block of hard wood attached to the under side of the back part of the saddle, which is shaped to form a good brake or rest for the lower part of the back of the rider. The spring of the saddle being adjusted to suit the rider, the break-block clears the face of the hind wheel until it is required to be used, and then a pressure forward against the tiller with the hands, and backward against the after part of the saddle with the back, instantly compresses the saddle spring and brings the brake into action on the wheel. Several firms are now engaged in the manufacture of this patent in New York. Their price is about \$80.

#### AN ILLINOIS VELOCIPEDA.

This prairie country, almost as level as a parlor floor, will afford a future range for the use of velocipedes un-

rivalled. And it is not strange that our citizens are paying no inconsiderable attention to the machine. Mr. B. E. Lowe, of Upper Alton, has invented a velocipede by which it is claimed he can climb the steep hill between Upper and Lower Alton.<sup>7</sup>

#### RULES FOR MANAGEMENT.

The following rules for the guidance of beginners have been drawn up by one of the most skillful Parisian amateurs, and are here submitted for the benefit of Chicago novices:

Run beside your iron horse, leading it, as it were, with you hand, so as to familiarize yourself with its movements; this will be an affair of a few minutes merely. Then commence practising with it on a slope, and, after mounting it, let it move forward of its own accord, while you occupy yourself in studying the effects produced by the inclination which you give to the balancing pole or handle of the machine. When you thoroughly understand the action of this, place one foot on the pedal, and follow its movements without assisting them. The difficulty with beginners is to restrain the unnecessary expenditure of muscular force; they ordinarily perform ten times the labor that is requisite. Next repeat the experiment on level ground, having both feet on the pedals, and working them alternately with scrupulous regularity. Speed is obtained by simply accelerating this movement. After an hour or two's practice, the tyro<sup>8</sup> will be able to accomplish a distance of 30 to 40 yards without running the risk of an upset. Should the machine incline on one side, all that is necessary to

7. Alton is a city on the Mississippi River in Madison County, Illinois, United States, about fifteen miles north of St. Louis, Missouri.

8. Beginner or novice.

be done is to remove the foot on the same side from the pedal, and place it on the ground. This can, of course, only be accomplished when the velocipede is of moderate height, which, by the way, is the proper kind of machine for beginners to make their first essay with. To alight, both feet are raised from the pedals at the same instant, which has the effect of slackening the speed of the machine; the feet are then placed simultaneously on the ground, without the handle being let go.

#### PARISIAN USE OF VELOCIPEDES.

Velocipede races are getting to be fashionable in Paris, and are patronized by a much better class of people than is usually found congregated at a race course. The officials turn out *en masse*.

The accounts are graphically described in Paris papers, from which the following features of the races are compiled:

The racing ground is all marked out with flags, and there is certain to be a large cluster of banners flying from the starting place, near to which scores of the jockies of these iron horses are exercising their docile steeds. There is no coursing as with horses. The moment of starting arrives, and the competitors are drawn up abreast with as great a distance between each as the width of the course will allow. At the grounding of the starter's flag, legs work up and down with a surprising amount of energy, like the piston of a steam engine.

At these races the average length of the course is 1,800 metres—nearly a mile and an eight. At Engheim this distance was traversed (a portion of it being over a stone-paved road) in four minutes and twenty-five seconds by a velocipede with two wheels.<sup>9</sup> At Vin-

9. 14 mph (1.125 miles / 0.79 hours)

cennes, the same distance took five minutes forty-five seconds respectively to accomplish, two-wheel velocipedes only competing. Greater speed was attained at St. Cloud, where the course of a mile and a half, with an incline of three in a hundred for a third of the distance, was traversed in four minutes and fifty seconds; whereas the final race at Vincennes, over a level course of nearly two miles, took nine minutes and ten seconds to accomplish.

#### A FURTHER NOVELTY.

A further novelty is offered in the velocipede line in the shape of a marine machine, called the poduscaphé, or *velocipede marin*. This machine is formed of a couple cannoes covered with canvas and joined together with two iron bars, between which is a padelle-wheel put in motion by means of two pedals placed at the extremity of the arc. These machines may be constantly seen in action on the lake at Enghein and even on the Seine itself opposite the Tuilleries. The inventor is sanguine that these machines will eventually attain the same rate of speed as the land velocipede already accomplishes. Quite recently an enterprising amateur offered to wager \$10,000 francs that he would cross the channel between Boulogne and Folkstone (30 miles) on a velocipede marin within the limit of three hours—wind and weather permitting.

The prizes are not given at these races for speed alone, but are also accorded to those who occupy the longest time in traversing a specified distance, a far more difficult proceeding than accomplishing a mile in a few minutes, as, when going at a snail's pace, it is almost impossible to preserve the proper balance, and

velocipede and riders are usually both capsized. In a contest of this character at Vincennes, over a course of 160 yards in length, out of six experienced amateurs who started only two arrived at the winning post. The prizes given at the foregoing contests have been usually gold and silver medals and silver cups; now and then, however, money prizes of 500 francs are awarded. Several efforts have been made to induce the fair sex to compete in these races, but hitherto without success, although they are ready enough to engage in a contest with any casual cavalier whom they may encounter on his velocipede in Bois de Boulogne.

#### THE LAST PHASE OF THE MACHINE.

As if to show what may be done when the human mind is all ablaze upon one subject, and that what is beneficial in one part of the world by a slight alteration may be made of equal service in another, another phase of the velocipede mania is opened up. It is this: It is stated that a Dane has changed the rim of the wheel and has given it the form of a skate's iron or runner, so that a very high rate of speed may be obtained on the ice. A box behind the rider's seat enables him to carry a good load with him. This phase of the velocipede is said to be growing in favor in north Europe.

#### CONCLUSION.

The above are the outlines and phases of an excitement—nay, a mania—which is not only agitating this country, but is sweeping like wildfire over the whole civilized world. There must be something in this matter, or it would not have struggled so long for success to at last partially attain it. There is no doubt a principle

in all this hubbub, and a great want yet remains to be satisfied in the world. We have horse and steam cars, and steam boats, but there is still a vacuum, and horse flesh cannot supply it. There is travel to be done where cars do not run, and where horse-locomotion would be impossible. Is not the velocipede just the thing desired? Whether for business or pleasure, whether from necessity or exercise, does it not seem to fill that vacant chair which vain chimeras have attempted to sit in for ages? May it not be a revolution? And revolutions once commenced can never go backward. If the thing is possible, if a velocipede, having the powers attributable to the machines at present in vogue, is within the range of human ingenuity, is not this the age of all others in which it could be best tested?—This is the age of invention—the era of mechanics. The professions stand with cap in hand, while the builders and workers take all the honor and profit. It is the age of iron. If this velocipede is a bubble, it will soon be pricked, and its emptiness shown. If there is the atom of a principle in it, brains will scheme and hands will work until it is fully developed. If it is a success in any one of its numerous forms, it will be in all—whether on land or in the sea, whether with one wheel or six.

Once a success, its merits firmly established, and the velocipede would become a national institution. The broad prairies of the West are just the places to afford it ample scope, and we would see repeated here the extravagances that occur in Paris. Races would be the order of the day, and we would fairly live out of doors.

And another grand benefit that would result from these machines would be the out-door exercise it would give the ladies and children. The working of their velocipedes would so cultivate the muscles and expand the chest that consumption and dyspepsia would, in a few years, be hardly known among us. A journey of ten or twenty miles or so on a velocipede would be a trifle, even in the most remote and out-of-the-way districts, and would cost only the effort mounting the iron steed. And then no hostler to feed it, no groom to rub it down, no harness to hold it, no halter to try it, no stable to shelter it, no noises to frighten it, no spavin,<sup>10</sup> no losing wind, no shoeing, no limping, no stopping to drink. Its nerves never wear out. You do not need to examine its teeth when you buy it; you needn't care who sired it; whether its blood Morgan or plebeian, or both. You needn't ask if it be gentle, if it will shy,<sup>11</sup> or whether it follows the carriage, or only goes under the saddle.

It is a dumb thing; but of inestimable service. Once brought into general use, and the price for a velocipede would range so low that it would be within the means of all to purchase one. The beggar might then own his immortal horse, and the crippled soldier, as he moved swiftly around, could laugh at the way in which he was cheating his crutches. And, perhaps, for the idea has been thrown out, our soldiers might hunt the Indians on the plains with the velocipede. Think of it! A velocipede regiment making a charge on the Utes and Cheyennes,<sup>12</sup>

10. Refers to a disorder of a horse's hock joint.

11. Refers to an equestrian term in which the horse moves suddenly to being frightened.

12. Native American tribes in the west.



and “paling the ineffectual fires”<sup>13</sup> of Balaklava<sup>14</sup>; or a velocipede battery rushing right up to the breach which itself had made, and using 400 pound guns as we now use pistols! Well, time will tell.

*Note on the Second Text*

“Riding the Velocipede” has been faithfully transcribed from the March 19th, 1869, *Hancock Jeffersonian*. A few edits were made for the comfort of the modern reader. For instance, in the first sentence—“I have just returned from New York, and I am happy to say that while there I had the pleasure of feasting my eyes upon the velocipede”—the word *feasting* was *easting* with an unclear letter. In the second paragraph, a period was added at the conclusion of the sentence that begins with “It is an elephant,” as the original mark had faded or was never present. The next edit is a more perplexing one. In the final paragraph, the original text read “Of course my mind was mostly occupied, during the balance of the day, thinking of the velocipede.—About 11 o’clock, more or less, P.M., I retired to my virtuous couch, and was soon in the arms of Orpeous.” After looking into the term *Orpeous*, I concluded the author misspelled *Orpheus*. Still, this mistake leaves questions about the author’s knowledge of Greek mythology. Finally, “sane nm” was corrected to *sanctum*.

13. Refers to the line “The glow-worm shows the matin to be near, / And ‘gins to pale his uneffectual fire” from *Hamlet* (I.V.90–91).

14. A Crimean city made famous for the Battle of Balaclava during the Crimean War as the location of the suicidal “charge of the light brigade.”

## RIDING THE VELOCIPEDA.

I have just returned from New York, and I am happy to say that while there I had the pleasure of feasting my eyes upon the velocipede. As regards the moral character of this new beast of prey, I have come to the conclusion that the exercise is very interesting so long as you are riding the velocipede; but when the velocipede takes a notion to ride you, I can not conscientiously assert that there is not anything particularly exhilarating in it.

The morning after my arrival in the city I was walking around, looking for elephants and other insects when, as I was passing a building on the corner of Broadway and an ample stand, I heard an unusual commotion up-stairs. 'It is an elephant,' thinks I to myself and up I went. On arriving at the head of the stairs, I opened the door of the room from which the noise proceeded, and walked in. There for the first time, I sweetly gazed on the comical actions of the skittish little cuss which I afterward found out was called a velocipede.

About a dozen individuals were present. Among them was a solitary woman, apparently a female, dressed partially in pantaloons;<sup>15</sup> her waterfall<sup>16</sup> had come off, and she looked kind of demoralized. One fellow was holding her up, and I heard him ask her in gentle tones 'if it hurt her much?' The others were occasionally casting shy glances at her, and looking as if they were very much amused at something that had been done.

15. Refers to a type of loose trousers.

16. Refers to a hairstyle that was popular during the period. In a waterfall, the hair was tucked in a low bun at the back of the head.

I turned to a man near me, who seemed to be a sort of master of ceremonies, and asked him what was the matter with the woman?

'Velocipede,' he said, with a very Frenchified accentuation.

'She what?' said I, not exactly understanding him.

'Ve-loc-i pede,' he repeated in measured accents.

'Did they catch her in the act?' I whispered.

At this a bystander took pity on our mutual misunderstandings, and informed me that the person was talking to was a French gentleman who had crossed the broad and briny deep on purpose to teach illiterate Americans how to ride horseback on a wheelbarrow, and that he couldn't understand English every fluently.—Also that the young lady was a strong-minded female who had been determined to conquer the velocipede or die in the attempt; that she had inserted herself into a pair of pantaloons expressively for the occasion; that she mounted the velocipede with a valor that did honor to both sexes she represented; but that the thing got the upper hand of her the first move, which accounted for the disordered state of her clothes.

After this satisfactory information, I took a general survey of the apartment. It was filled with velocipedes in various stages of growth. Here was one man riding a velocipede; there was a velocipede riding another man. A third fellow had got the thing under control that with a little effort he could fall off on whichever side he pleased which is a very desirable stage of the process—it makes your clothes wear even.

For the benefit of those who have not seen it, or a picture of it in the illustrated papers, I will attempt to give a brief but accurate description of this new and

useful animal; the velocipede, in its natural state, when in motion resembles the posterior circulator of two ambitious wheel-barrowers climbing a race up a greased ax handle.

Of course my mind was mostly occupied, during the balance of the day, thinking of the velocipede.—About 11 o'clock, more or less, P.M., I retired to my virtuous couch, and was soon in the arms of Orpheus.<sup>17</sup> And dreamed a hideous dream.—Methought I was a local editor. I dreamed I had bought a velocipede—on credit, of course—to enable me to gather news more rapidly than would otherwise be possible. I dreamed I was seated in the editorial sanctum, when a rumor reached me of a hideous murder in the upper part of town. How lucky that I had a velocipede—saddled, bridled, and near at hand. I flung myself upon its back, and started. No, I didn't start, for—horrors of horrors!—the thing wouldn't go! What was the matter? Had my velocipede gone back on me? Was it bulky? Were my contemporaries and competitors to get ahead of me in obtaining the particulars of that item? Perish the horrible thought! I did everything in my power to start my velocipede, but all in vain; I could not budge the thing an inch. With one despairing effort I shouted, "On to Richmond!"—and woke up. I found myself a straddle of the foot board of the bed, with my arms around the bedpost, endeavoring to induce them to carry me to the scene of the imaginary catastrophe. It is perhaps unnecessary to remark that after I woke up, no more than before, the bedpost wouldn't go.

17. Orpheus refers to the legendary Greek hero with supreme musical talent. It may be that that author of the article is confusing his Greek mythology around, because the Greek figure of dreams is Morpheus and not Orpheus.

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