



Wheels of Change: How Women Rode the Bicycle to Freedom (With a Few Flat Tires Along the Way)

By Sue Macy

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Take a lively look at women's history from aboard a bicycle, which granted females the freedom of mobility and helped empower women's liberation. Through vintage photographs, advertisements, cartoons, and songs, *Wheels of Change* transports young readers to bygone eras to see how women used the bicycle to improve their lives. Witty in tone and scrapbook-like in presentation, the book deftly covers early (and comical) objections, influence on fashion, and impact on social change inspired by the bicycle, which, according to Susan B. Anthony, "has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world."

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Take a lively look at women's history from aboard a bicycle, which granted females the freedom of mobility and helped empower women's liberation. Through vintage photographs, advertisements, cartoons, and songs, *Wheels of Change* transports young readers to bygone eras to see how women used the bicycle to improve their lives. Witty in tone and scrapbook-like in presentation, the book deftly covers early (and comical) objections, influence on fashion, and impact on social change inspired by the bicycle, which, according to Susan B. Anthony, "has done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world."

Q&A with Sue Macy, Author of *Wheels of Change*

Q: Who taught you how to ride a bike? What did it feel like when you took your first one for a spin?

A: My dad taught me how to ride a two-wheeler. (He later taught me to drive a car.) I remember him taking me to a paved, pretty empty parking lot at a nearby park. It was a great feeling to be able to move and balance without training wheels, but I was also worried about falling. I don't think I did fall, though.

Q: Why are bikes still important to women?

A: I think that Leah Missbach Day does a great job in the foreword to *Wheels of Change* of explaining how bicycles are still important to one population of women--those in developing countries who are able to increase their mobility astronomically with the bicycles they received through World Bicycle Relief. But today in the U.S., bicycles are important to everybody. They allow people to do errands without using fossil fuels, to get great cardiovascular exercise, to see their surroundings in a whole new way. My neighborhood isn't great for cycling--too much traffic and too many hills--but I try to ride at least once a week in the spring, summer, and fall, usually stopping at a nearby farmers' market to restock on fruits and vegetables. It's a healthy way to live.

Q: What's your favorite thing about the very first bicycle models?

A: I love the ordinaries, which weren't the first models but rather the ones that started appearing in the 1870s, with the very large front wheel and the smaller rear wheel. I love the look of them; they're such a wonderful evocation of a time in history. When you see one, you're automatically transported back to that time period; but I wouldn't want to ride one. When I was visiting Dottie Batho, who contributed more than 20 images to *Wheels of Change*, I tried to hoist myself onto the seat of the ordinary that she has in her living room and I was scared to do even that. It was her late husband's bike and she said the first time he rode it, he fell head first over the front wheel and broke both his wrists!

Q: How is the bicycle going to change the future?

A: I really do think more and more people will go back to the bicycle as a replacement for cars and other types of local transportation and hopefully, towns and cities will start designating more space for cyclists to ride. The efforts of the Portland, Oregon, city government to make bicycling an integral part of daily life have been well-publicized, but even New York City has been installing 50 miles of bike lanes per year with the goal of having an 1,800-mile network of bike lanes by 2030. Cycling is a great way to get around and a great way to keep healthy.

Q: What are kids going to love most about this book?

A: Wheels of Change is a lively book full of awesome characters and its design is very appealing. I love the stories of the bicycle racers, most of whom had been lost to history until now. Their bravura and tenacity was pretty amazing. I think kids also will love the images--especially the bicycle artifacts from the 1800s--because they will help kids visual what the period was all about. Plus, there are news clips about female cyclists in every chapter, reproduced verbatim, and some of them are wild. My favorite is "Don'ts for Women Wheelers" on page 38.

Q: How has fashion evolved around the bicycle? Do you think dresses and high heels impede a woman's ability to feel completely free?

A: The advent of the bicycles in the late 1800s caused a fashion revolution for women because it made the need for comfortable, safe clothing for cyclists crucial. And once women started casting aside corsets and other oppressive fashion architecture, they realized there was much to be said for simpler clothing. I completely understand this evolution because, as a writer who works from home, I go for comfort over fashion most of the time. High heels are great for elongating one's legs, but they're a pain when it comes to moving freely or quickly!

From [Booklist](#)

Macy revisits a topic she touched on in her excellent *Winning Ways: A Photohistory of American Women in Sports* (1996) in this engaging look at the emancipating impact that bikes had on late-nineteenth-century U.S. women. The eye-catching chapters, filled with archival images of women perched sidesaddle on their "steel steeds" and racing furiously in bloomers on velocipedes, zero in on the profound ways that bicycles subverted traditional notions of femininity; according to one wary social commentator, "The bicycle is the devil's advance agent morally and physically in thousands of instances." A veteran nonfiction writer, Macy seamlessly weaves together research, direct quotes (sourced in an appendix that includes a time line and resource list), and historical overviews that put the facts into context, while sidebars expand on related topics, from "cycling songs" to standout female cyclists, including trailblazers Marie Curie and Annie Oakley. The narrow focus on cycling will open up broader thought and discussion about women's history, making this a strong, high-interest choice for both classroom and personal reading—for adults, too. Grades 6-9. --Gillian Engberg

About the Author

SUE MACY is the author of *Bulls-Eye: A Photobiography of Annie Oakley*; *Swifter, Higher, Stronger: A Photographic History of the Summer Olympics*; *Freeze Frame: A Photographic History of the Winter Olympics*; *Play Like A Girl: A Celebration of Women in Sports*; *Winning Ways: A Photohistory of American Women in Sports*; and *A Whole New Ball Game: The Story of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League*. She brings a consciousness of the history of women in sport to the story of sharpshooter Annie Oakley and carries this mythic and historic figure gracefully into modern light. She has won numerous awards and starred reviews for her books. *Winning Ways* and *A Whole New Ball Game* were both named ALA Best Books for Young Adults and NCSS-CBC Notable Children's Trade Books in the Field of Social Studies.

From the Trade Paperback edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Jeffrey Lockwood:

The book untitled *Wheels of Change: How Women Rode the Bicycle to Freedom (With a Few Flat Tires Along the Way)* contain a lot of information on the item. The writer explains the girl idea with easy technique. The language is very clear to see all the people, so do definitely not worry, you can easy to read that. The book was written by famous author. The author gives you in the new period of time of literary works. You can actually read this book because you can please read on your smart phone, or product, so you can read the book inside anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can wide open their official web-site in addition to order it. Have a nice study.

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