

"Bicycling Photo Essay"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

Bicycling has been a popular leisure activity since the late nineteenth century when organizations such as the Cycling Ramblers organized events. In 1887 the group had 15 uniformed members and was organized like a militia company of its day. Westminster jeweler A. H. Wentz was the Captain and John H. Cunningham was his Lieutenant; I. S. Weaver was the organization's bugler.

Today a group of intrepid bicyclists will attempt to repeat a popular activity from the early days of bicycling, the "Century Ride". To complete a century, a cyclist had to finish a journey of 100 miles on a single day. A description of a 1898 Century Ride to Wrightsville, Pa., was the subject of my September 28, 1997 column. Cyclists in the 1897 ride had to complete the 106-mile round trip in less than 16 hours. Today's event is part of the "Carroll Historic Bicycle Ride" which takes place at the Westminster City Park and benefits youth and bicycling. In addition to the 100 mile century ride, the event features 10, 25, 50 mile rides.

The Historical Society owns several images of local bicyclists who invariably posed with their favorite mounts. These images capture the spirit of early bicycling in the days before paved roads and the advent of the automobile.

Photo caption 1: Joseph Krichton's Cyclorama on Liberty St. in Westminster offered Rambler bicycles, accessories and repairs. Krichton also sold Kodak camera supplies many of which were purchased by cyclists who snapped images of long rides throughout the region. Two new safety bicycles, still in their wooden shipping crates, appear in front of his store. Krichton also took professional photographs including this image of his establishment taken in 1899. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Mrs. Harvey Lockard.

Photo caption 2: Carroll County's preeminent bicyclist, John Cunningham (1867-1966) was photographed with his high wheel bicycle by Bachrach & Bro., of Baltimore, in July 1886. He wore a uniform like outfit consisting of a soft brimmed cap, short jacket, breeches, stockings and leather shoes. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.

Photo caption 3: This unidentified 1890s image of a bicyclist bears a similarity to John Cunningham. He was photographed by P. S. Weaver of Hanover, Pa., with his safety bicycle equipped with a lantern for evening rides. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.

Photo caption 4: This unidentified cyclist posed in c1910 with his safety bike for an amateur portrait somewhere along a county road. The circular pin on his left lapel probably signified membership in a bicycling club such as the Cycling Ramblers. Amateur photography and bicycling became closely related activities by the late nineteenth century. Historical Society of Carroll County collection.

Photo caption 5: A couple passes Keefer's Market at 86 E. Main St. in Westminster in this early twentieth century view. Although the slow film speed caused a blurred image, the photo clearly shows the enjoyable and dangerous side of bicycling. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Mrs. Frank Thomas.