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Global Mass Culture, Mobile Subjectivities, and the Southern Landscape: The Bicycle in the New South, 1887–1920

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At the end of the nineteenth century, the modern safety bicycle and the cultures that surrounded it were global in scale. In tracing the use and adoption of the bicycle in the South, this article reveals the ways in which the everyday experiences of local culture intersected with the world. It argues that the subjectivity of riding a bicycle transformed the ways in which white southerners experienced, thought of, and imagined their region. The article contributes to two shifts in southern studies and the historiography of the New South. It brings recent discussions of the South in the world to the level of the everyday by tracing the experiences of a new technological mobility and its social and cultural worlds. In demonstrating the ways white southerners took up cycling culture, it also integrates the region into the global trends of mass culture that move beyond histories of popular culture in the New South focussed mostly on the region's relationship to the nation.

On 21 February 1893, Joseph E. Geigan of Baltimore, Maryland, a bicycle dealer and amateur racing cyclist, patented the name "New South" for his own line of bicycles modelled on the English-designed Humber. Geigan hoped to cash in on the "name made famous by Henry W. Grady, of Atlanta." The year before, Geigan, along with seven other white men, had incorporated Baltimore's 'Cycle and Athletic Association with the purpose of developing real estate along with maintaining and improving land for cycling and other athletic pursuits. The bicycle allowed these men to easily leave the city for the countryside and in doing so connected them to new landscapes for financial development. Geigan's New South bicycle venture, however, was short-lived. By May his business had gone under. Joseph Geigan was one of many New South white men who saw the bicycle as a symbol of their personal wealth and the region's industrial future based

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on a new high-tech consumer good. But as the fate of his business indicated, the future of the New South and its bicycles was often far from certain.[1]

The introduction of the modern safety bicycle to the United States' South in 1887 is an opportunity to assess the southern experience of a global mass culture, the modern subjectivities and self-fashioning it contributed to, and the knowledge of both the local region and the wider world it helped facilitate. The subjectivity of riding a bicycle transformed the ways in which white southerners experienced, thought of, and imagined their region. The bicycle and cycling were part of a culture that developed rapidly around the world between 1885 and 1892 before peaking in the United States in 1897 and ebbing and flowing thereafter.[2] Studying white southerners' embrace of the bicycle reveals the ways in which the everyday experiences of local culture in the early New South (1877–1917) intersected with global developments. Southern cycling enthusiasts in the 1890s were as likely to follow what was happening in Paris and London as they were Atlanta or New York.[3]

Black southerners also took up cycling in this period. The bicycle – initially an expensive object associated with recreation and leisure – was a status symbol for an aspiring class of African Americans who embraced the "politics of respectability." Black cyclists, however, were largely confined to the region's growing towns and cities. Given the racial dynamics of the first boom period, it would have been a dangerous calculation for black cyclists to ride their bicycles beyond city limits to explore the countryside. This is not to say that black southerners did not cycle. Indeed, a diverse and dynamic black cycling culture emerged in the South and a number of professional black racing cyclists could be found on velodromes in New York, Chicago, and Paris. However, for black southerners, the bicycle, while important to

[1] *Official Gazette of the United States Patent Office*, Volume LXII (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1893), 1820; *The Wheel and Cycling Trade Review*, 17 Feb. 1893, 42; "General Trade Notes," *Referee and Cycle Trade Journal*, Aug. 1892–April 1893; "Here and There," *Referee and Cycle Trade Journal*, Nov. 1892; and "Another Baltimore Dealer Goes Under," *Bearings*: *The Cycling Authority of America*, 26 May 1893.

[2] On the almost global simultaneity of the safety bicycle at the end of the 1890s see Paul Smethurst, *The Bicycle: Towards a Global History* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); and Ruth Oldenziel and Adri Albert de la Bruhèze, et al., eds., "Cycling in a Global World: Special Section," *Transfers*, 2, 2 (Summer 2012), 22–126.

[3] The New South was an ideological and political movement aimed at bringing northern investment and industrialization to the post-Reconstruction South. The term is now most often used to capture the transformation of southern society at the turn of the twentieth century. See C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South, 1877–1913* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951); George Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); Edward Ayers, *The Promise of the New South: Life after Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); and *C. Vann Woodward's "Origins of the New South, 1877–1913": A Fifty-Year Retrospective*, *Journal of Southern History*, 67, 4 (Nov. 2001).

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their own self-fashioning as a modern people in the era of Jim Crow, did not necessarily connect to the construction of a regional imagination and subjectivity.[4]

Around the world at the end of the nineteenth century, the bicycle and modernity went hand in hand. It had a profound effect on the experience of movement and introduced a new subjectivity based on technologically facilitated personal mobility. At the moment when old social orders were collapsing in the face of industrialization and urbanization, the bicycle became one of the most prominent symbols of personal freedom. By the middle of the 1890s in North America and Europe, the bicycle had gone from an upper-class and mostly masculine hobby to a transportation and leisure object embraced by an expanding middle class of men and women. Many Americans believed that the bicycle would lead to a radical transformation of the nation and its social order. But by the start of the twentieth century the cycling bubble had popped. The bicycle, however, while no longer representing the cutting edge of industrial technology, remained widely used.[5]

The bicycle's integration of human and machine also made it dissimilar to other contemporary vehicles. Riding a bicycle was and is an act of bodily performance. In a society like the New South that outwardly valued tradition while seeking to industrialize, the cyclist represented a particularly tricky

[4] On the politics of respectability in this period see Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994). On black cycling see Nathan Cardon, "Cycling on the Color Line: Race, Technology, and Bicycle Mobilities in the Early Jim Crow South, 1887–1905," *Technology and Culture*, 62, 4 (Oct. 2021), 973–1002; Andrew Ritchie, "League of American Wheelmen, Major Taylor and the 'Color Question' in the United States in the 1890s," *Culture, Sport, Society*, 6, 2–3 (Nov. 2003), 13–43; Lorenz John Finison, *Boston's Cycling Craze, 1880–1900: A Story of Race, Sport, and Society* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014); Evan Friss, *The Cycling City: Bicycles and Urban America in the 1890s* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 58–61; and John Bloom, "'To Die for a Lousy Bike': Bicycles, Race, and the Regulation of Public Space on the Streets of Washington, DC, 1963–2009," *American Quarterly*, 69, 1 (March 2017), 47–70.

[5] On the locally embedded relationship between modernity and the bicycle see Glen Norcliffe, *The Road to Modernity: The Bicycle in Canada, 1869–1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 32; Smethurst, chapter 3; and Ruth Oldenziel, "Whose Modernism, Whose Speed? Designing Mobility for the Future, 1880s–1945," in Robert Bud, Paul Greenhalgh, Frank James, and Morag Shiach, eds., *Being Modern: The Cultural Impact of Science in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: University College of London Press, 2018), 274–89. For recent work on the history of the bicycle and cycling in the United States see Evan Friss, "Writing Bicycles: The Historiography of Cycling in the United States," *Mobility in History*, 6, 1 (Jan. 2015), 127–33; Friss, *On Bicycles: A 200-Year History of Cycling in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019); Friss, *The Cycling City*; and James Longhurst, *Bike Battles: A History of Sharing the American Road* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015).

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experience of modernity that was variously celebrated, controlled, regulated, or even stopped. But by the end of the nineteenth century, southerners had embraced the transformative effects of the bicycle in ways that fostered a new experience and knowledge of both their region and themselves.[6]

This article builds on the new critical writing on the history of the bicycle rather than offering a comprehensive history of the bicycle and cycling in the South. In doing so, it aims to use the bicycle and the experience of cycling as analytics to understand white southerners' response to a global mass culture in the key decades of the New South's formation.[7] It addresses two recent trends in the study of the New South. The first places the region within a context broader than the nation. Nan Enstad's work on the global corporate culture of southern cigarette producers and Tore Olsson's recent review of the historiographical shift in southern history towards transnational and global approaches reveal the value of taking a perspective on the region that goes beyond the nation. The bicycle can serve as an important lens through which to view the region's integration with and embrace of the world during the period of the New South.[8]

The second focusses on the creation of a New South identity rooted in a construction of whiteness that intersected with the racial policing of consumer goods. Although historians have largely worked in the wake of Grace Elizabeth Hale, more work can be done looking at the everyday practices that contributed to white southerners' self-fashioning and how this intersected with the global trends of mass culture. Excellent work by historians such as Karen Cox has made clear the ways in which some white southerners embraced popular culture to better define their "southernness"; at the same time many of the stereotypes of "Dixie" were produced outside the region and sold to the nation.[9] What is missing from many of these analyses is the juncture of the southern local with the global. As Ruth Oldenziel and Adri Albert

[6] Harry Oosterhuis, "Cycling, Modernity and National Culture," *Social History*, 41, 3, (2016), 233–48, 236; and Oldenziel, 274–75.

[7] For examples of the new analytical approach to cycling history see Friss, *Cycling City*; Longhurst; and Tiina Männistö-Funk and Timo Myllyntaus, eds., *Invisible Bicycle: Parallel Histories and Different Timelines* (Leiden: Brill, 2019).

[8] Nan Enstad, *Cigarettes, Inc.: An Intimate History of Global Capitalism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018); and Tore Olsson, "The South in the World since 1865: A Review Essay," *Journal of Southern History*, 87, 1 (Feb. 2021), 67–108. A recent forum appraising the "New Southern Studies" centred on the push to understand the region within a global framework. See Brian Ward, Coleman Hutchison, David Gleeson, Sarah Robertson, Natalie Ring, Sherita Johnson and Benjamin Wise, "Forum: What's New in Southern Studies – And Why Should We Care?" *Journal of American Studies*, 48, 3 (Aug. 2014), 691–733.

[9] On whiteness and the southern experience of mass culture see Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South* (New York: Vintage Books,

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de la Bruhèze note, the bicycle, along with the sewing machine, was an early example of "the process by which a globally distributed product is tailored locally to fit local laws, customs, and user preferences and cultures."[10] The modern safety bicycle timed perfectly with the rise of the New South and provides a way to examine how white southerners engaged with the globalization of mass culture at the end of the nineteenth century.

Recent insights in geography and science and technology studies on cycling's contribution to both cartographic knowledge and modern subjectivity also allow us to get to grips with the South's experience of industrial modernity. In particular, historical geographer Christine Dando has demonstrated the intersection of cartographic knowledge and the creation of feminine cycling subjectivity in the 1890s. Dando argues that the bicycle was "not just a means of moving through the world but transforming humans' experience of it." At the end of the nineteenth century, a new mass culture of mobility changed Americans' "relationship with their landscape," creating "the need for not only new products but also new knowledges."[11] Likewise, Australian historian Georgine Clarsen has explored the co-development and integration of technologies of reproduction (the Kodak) and mobility (the safety bicycle) to produce new "grammars" of power that interpreted Australia's settler colonial landscape and the indigenous people who inhabited it.[12] Building on Dando and Clarsen's insights, this article argues that southern white men and women participated in the production of a new "geographic knowledge" embedded in the social and cultural worlds of the bicycle that helped define the contours of a "new" South.[13]

At the end of the nineteenth century, industrial pursuits sought to create a more perfect "human–machine interface."[14] As the human body was increasingly thought of as a thermodynamic engine, the bicycle proved to be "a very

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1995); and Karen Cox, *Dreaming of Dixie: How the South Was Created in American Popular Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

[10] Oldenziel and de la Bruhèze, 24. See also Tiina Männistö-Funk, "The Crossroads of Technology and Tradition: Vernacular Bicycles in Rural Finland, 1880–1910," *Technology and Culture*, 52, 4 (Oct. 2011), 733–56.

[11] Christina E. Dando, "Riding the Wheel: Selling American Women Mobility and Geographic Knowledge," *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 6, 2 (2007), 174–210, 176, 182.

[12] Georgine Clarsen, "Pedaling Power: Bicycle, Subjectivities and Landscapes in a Settler Colonial Society," *Mobilities*, 10, 5 (July 2014), 1–20, 8.

[13] Dando, 201. On cyclists' contribution to and interpretation of Gilded Age "cultural and natural geography" see Robert L. McCullough, *Old Wheelways: Traces of Bicycle History on the Land* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 2–3, 58.

[14] Joel Dinerstein, *Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology, and African American Culture between the World Wars* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), 10–12.

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efficient device for converting physical energy into movement," notes historian Harry Oosterhuis: "Serving simultaneously as rider, engine and passenger, cyclists were in complete control of their vehicle, and in this respect it was extremely unlike using the other modern mode of transport, the train." In doing so, suggests anthropologist Louis Vivanco, the bicycle creates a uniquely "temporal fusion or assemblage, between human and machine." The bicycle introduced a new subjectivity to the masses and created a new type of embodied human, the cyclist.[15] Cycling was an immensely sensorial experience that elicited an emotional response by the first and only American generation to learn to ride a bicycle as adults. Riding a bicycle created moments of what Jane Bennett has described as the "sensuous enchantment" of modernity: the "strange combination of delight and disturbance." By balancing and taming the bicycle, white southerners demonstrated and projected their mastery of industrial technology through self-discipline by formulating a new mobile subjectivity.[16]

The modern experience of movement was shaped by technology and mediated by a variety of social, cultural, and economic forces. The city street, itself a global and imperial technology at the end of the nineteenth century, was experienced in profoundly different ways if one was on foot, on a horse, in a wagon, on a bicycle, or later in an automobile. Humans know, sense, and interact with their surrounding world in different ways of moving that are shaped by patterns of social and cultural relations that produce their own "distinctive social relationships, identities, and local cultures." While the sensorial experience of riding a bicycle is nearly universal, the meanings of these feelings are socially and culturally produced and understood within time and space. The sensual experience of the bicycle, then, is a perfect opportunity to understand the meaning of a new mobile southern identity at the end of the nineteenth century rooted in global cultural forces.[17]

[15] Oosterhuis, 236; and Louis Vivanco, *Reconsidering the Bicycle: An Anthropological Perspective on a New (Old) Thing* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 11–12. On ideas surrounding the body and thermodynamic law at the end of the nineteenth century see Anson Rabinbach, *The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity* (New York: Basic Books, 1990), 52.

[16] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), xi; Oosterhuis, 238; and Justin Spinney, "A Place of Sense: A Kinaesthetic Ethnography of Cyclists on Mont Ventoux," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 24 (2006), 709–32, 712–15, 717. Gallo has recently explored the question of the urban park system and the formation of New South subjects, including cyclists, in Louisville. See Steven Gallo, "A Central Park of their Own: Public Parks and the New South Movement, 1865–1920," PhD dissertation, University of Nottingham, 2021.

[17] Vivanco, 12, 14, 42; and Spinney, 713. On the global construction of American streets in the nineteenth century see I. B. Holley Jr., "How Asphalt Paving Came to the Urban United States," *Technology and Culture*, 44, 4 (Oct. 2003), 703–33, 708. On the social construction

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THE GROWTH AND LIMITS OF CYCLING IN THE NEW SOUTH.

The modern safety bicycle – diamond frame, wheels of equal size, and chain drive – arrived almost concurrently across the nation. The experience of cycling, then, was both uniquely southern and universal. In June 1887, only two years after its first production in Coventry, England, an English-made safety arrived in Louisville to glowing acclaim.[18] Although most bicycles sold in the South were from northern or English manufacturers, a small domestic industry took root in the middle of the 1890s. Louisville's McCurdy Manufacturing Company, like sewing machine manufacturers across the industrialized world, transitioned to bicycle production in the 1890s, showcasing their "Southern Bicycle" at the Metropolitan Cycle Show held in Madison Square Garden. In Birmingham, Alabama, Iron City Cycle produced a twenty-two-pound commuter, while Loosely Cycle boasted a fifteen-pound racer. An investor in Atlanta pledged $75,000 to build a factory with a manufacturing capacity of four thousand bicycles a year. By 1896, Atlanta Machine and Bicycle had a capitalization of $100,000 and three hundred employees. In addition to factories, hundreds of southerners made their living as bicycle mechanics.[19] The cycle industry required intense specialization and flourished not in heavy industrial centers but in areas with a long history of skilled craftsmen such as the English West Midlands and the Connecticut river valley.[20] Far removed from popular images of Dixie, the region's bicycle manufacturers and entrepreneurs marked the South's participation in a global high-tech consumer culture.

The major stumbling block for growing cycling in the South, however, was its roads. Confined by poor roads, southerners could be an intensely parochial people. In 1895 a cyclist from Indiana noted that southern "wheel people" greeted him with enthusiasm but rarely accompanied him beyond their town limits, "showing that they had intimate knowledge of their [poor quality] highways."[21] It is hard to overstate how bad American, but especially

of the city street see Peter Norton, *Fighting Traffic: The Dawn of the Motor Age in the American City* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 1–4.

[18] "Kentucky Notings," *The Wheel: A Journal of Cycling and Recreation*, 22 April 1887, 397; and "Kentucky Kronicles," *The Wheel: A Journal of Cycling and Recreation*, 17 June 1887, 582.

[19] McCurdy Manufacturing Co. (Louisville, KY), Records, 1888–1950, Correspondence, 1888–19033, Mss BB M133, Folder 1, Filson Historical Society, Louisville, Kentucky (hereafter FHS); "Iron City News," *Southern Cycler*, March 1895, FHS; "The Georgia Metropolis," *Southern Cycler*, Aug. 1895; "The Georgia Metropolis," *Southern Cycler*, 10 June 1896.

[20] Bruce Epperson, *Peddling Bicycles to America: The Rise of an Industry* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2010), 30.

[21] Tom W. Winder, *Around the United States by Bicycle* (Elmira, NY: Tom Winder, 1895), 8.

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southern, roads were at the end of the nineteenth century. As one scholar notes, by the end of the nineteenth century "no significant investment in either the construction or maintenance of the public road had been made since the Jefferson administration." Successive American Presidents vetoed federal funding for roads. Public ways were viewed as a state issue often passed on to local communities and municipalities. Cash-strapped towns and cities did the bare minimum to keep up their roads, paving with brick, wood, and cobblestones. In rural areas, local farmers were responsible for the road that ran the length of their property, funded through levies paid in cash, but more often in minimal labor. Most farmers viewed roads as a part of nature at the mercy of the weather in which they only had a small role to play.[22]

In order to encourage cycling by improving the nation's roads, bicycle manufacturers combined with the nation's largest cycling organization, the League of American Wheelmen (LAW), to organize the Good Roads Movement that published its own illustrated magazine, *Good Roads*. By 1898, the LAW was printing and distributing over a million copies of *Good Roads* a year and advocating for a radical expansion in government responsibility by using taxation to pay for road construction and maintenance.[23] LAW divisions across the South pushed the good-roads agenda at the local and state level. The *Southern Cycler*, the only periodical devoted to cycling in the South in this period, focussed on Louisville but frequently published reports from across the region on the quality of roads. In Atlanta, the Good Roads Club had five hundred members, including Georgia governor William Yates Atkinson and other prominent cyclists on the executive committee. By 1897, the club had secured a six-lap indoor velodrome, a four-mile bicycle pathway, and twenty miles of newly paved roads. The club was also an early advocate for the use of convict labor, the majority of whom were black prisoners, to build public road infrastructure. The *Southern Cycler* encouraged wheelmen to support

[22] Andrew Vogel, "Hamlin Garland's Roads, the Good Roads Movement, and the Ambivalent Reform of America's Geographic Imagination," *Studies in American Naturalism*, 5, 2 (Winter 2010), 111–32, 113, 114; and Christopher Wells, "The Changing Nature of Country Roads: Famers, Reformers and the Shifting Uses of Rural Space, 1880–1905," *Agricultural History*, 80, 2 (Spring 2006), 143–66, 143. On the South's extremely poor roads see Tammy Ingram, *Dixie Highway: Road Building and the Making of the Modern South, 1900–1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 16.

[23] Albert A. Pope, "State Legislation Needed for Our Highways," *The Cyclist*, Feb. 1890, 5; Arthur A. Dean, "The Lesson of Our Country Roads," *The Cyclist*, Feb. 1890, 6; and Kerry, "Massachusetts," *The Cyclist*, Feb. 1890, 10. See also Robert A. Smith, *A Social History of the Bicycle: Its Early Life and Times in America* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1972), 11; Longhurst, *Bike Battles*, 62–63; Friss, *Cycling City*, 82–87; and Bruce Epperson, "Failed Colossus: Strategic Error at the Pope Manufacturing Company, 1878–1900, *Technology and Culture*, 41, 2 (April 2000), 300–20, 308.

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the use of convicts in road building and avoid the sticky issue of local taxation. In 1893, Kentucky cyclists waited eagerly for the outcome of a bill that would put the state's "idle convicts" to work on turnpikes and roads for the benefit of bicycles. Across the South, white cyclists were some of the leading voices in road and street improvement as well as for the use of forced labor to bring about these improvements.[24] In doing so, they created a world in which technological leisure was made possible by exploited black labor for white benefit, setting a disturbing precedent that would continue across the twentieth-century South.[25]

Although urban cyclists in the South used the technology for the utilitarian purposes of mobility, cycling was first and foremost a leisure pursuit in the United States and best experienced outside city limits. As a symbol of the modern and industrial New South, however, the region's urban cyclists were not entirely welcome in the countryside. Horses and mules were easily spooked by the arrival of a bicycle, while planters and croppers resented the intrusion of middle-class urbanites from places like Nashville, Louisville, and Atlanta. Although tension between city and country grew across the nation at the end of the century, it was keenly felt in the South. In the hotbed of populist activity and the People's Party, the region's farmers responded viscerally, sometimes violently, to the bicycle's arrival. It not only represented an intrusion of the city, but was, initially, a symbol for the destruction of an idealized form of rural life.[26]

In June 1897, a Kentucky farmer drove a prominent cyclist off the road with his wagon before whipping and beating the man. Such violent incidents led some southern cyclists to suggest that they should ride armed and be prepared to defend themselves and protect their "rights forcibly, if need be."[27] The tension between cyclist and rural citizen was not to last, however, as farmers turned their attention to a more dangerous menace on public highways, the

[24] "Cycling Gossip" *Southern Cycler*, Nov. 1894, FHS. See also "Good Roads in Hardin," *Southern Cycler*, Nov. 1894; "E. L. Evans, from Louisville to Atlanta" *Southern Cycler*, Dec. 1895; "The Trade in the South," *Southern Cycler*, Dec. 1895; "The Georgia Metropolis," *Southern Cycler*, 10 Jun. 1896; "Convicts Making Good Roads," *Southern Cycler*, 10 April 1897; Thomas H. Martin, *Handbook of the City of Atlanta: A Comprehensive Review of the City's Commercial, Industrial, and Residential Conditions* (Atlanta: the Southern Industrial Printing Co., 1898), 95; "Proper Employment of Convicts," *Southern Cycler*, 10 May 1897; "On Lookout Mountain," *American Cyclist*, 15 May 1894, 297; and "News from Everywhere," *American Cyclist*, 15 May 15 1893, 246.

[25] On convict labor and "good roads" see Alex Lichtenstein, *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South* (London: Verso, 1996).

[26] Friss, *Cycling City*, 131.

[27] "A Brutal Assault," *Southern Cycler*, 10 June 1897; "A Case for the Courts," *Southern Cycler*, 10 June 1897.

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automobile.[28] By 1907, former Populist firebrand Tom Watson could even report glowingly of a speech by Theodore Roosevelt in which the President believed that easier access to the "bicycle and the telephone" would spur "effective intellectual, political and economic life" for the South's farmers.[29] During the first decades of the twentieth century, what was once thought of as a symbol of crass and modern life had become a quintessential rite of passage for many rural adolescents and adults.

Like much of the world in the 1890s, the South embraced the technology and cultures of the bicycle. In the early years of the boom, dealers had to be salesmen, builders, mechanics, and instructors rolled into one, while many bicycles were sent north to be repaired for the simplest breakdown. By 1895, larger southern towns and cities could boast of upwards of twenty bicycle agents, many of whom were highly leveraged and shortly collapsed, leaving only those with strong capital resources. Even by the end of the 1890s, the South was still noteworthy for its lack of specialty bicycle shops, with most sales conducted from hardware and general merchandise stores in larger centres, while druggists in small towns tended to sell bicycles (Figure 1). Despite these drawbacks, the bicycle trade was still considered profitable in the South and a trade magazine predicted continued growth. In 1894, the *American Cyclist* reported that Charleston, South Carolina had three hundred cyclists with a $5,000 cement track, Savannah had seven hundred cyclists and a $12,000 track, while Atlanta could boast of over a thousand cyclists. For southern manufacturers in the region's growing New South cities, the bicycle projected the region's industrial modernity. And while there was an initial resistance to the bicycle both by governments seeking to regulate citizens and by southerners in the rural hinterland, by the end of the century the bicycle was utilized across the South. In doing so, white southerners embraced a new mobile subjectivity rooted in the personal consumption of technological products.[30]

[28] "It is the rich class that has the autos," complained a farmer in Alabama at the start of the 1910s. See letter to the editor, M. Johnson (Owassa, AL), "Autos' Should Pay for Use of Common Highways" *The Jeffersonian*, 26 May 1910, 6. See also Ingram.

[29] "Need of More Famers, Says President Roosevelt," *Watson's Weekly Jeffersonian*, 27 June 1907, 7.

[30] "On Lookout Mountain," *American Cyclist*, 15 May 1894, 297. On the extent of cycling in the South see "Harry H. Hodgson," *American Cyclist*, June 1890, 75; "Riding a Nightmare," *Wheel and Cycling Trade Review*, 21 Oct. 1892, 15; "Snap Shots of Southern Cycling," *Southern Cycler*, April 1895; "The Georgia Metropolis," *Southern Cycler*, 10 June 1896; "'Way Down South in Dixie': Past and Present in the Land of Cotton, Cinnamon Seed and Sandy Bottom," *Wheel and Cycling Trade Review*, 3 Aug. 1899, 23–24; Melville O. Briney, "Flash Back to Fontaine Ferry 54 Years Ago Today," *Louisville Courier-Journal*, 10 Aug. 1950; Dale A. Somers, "City on Wheels: The Bicycle Era in New Orleans," *Louisiana History: The Journal of the Louisiana Historical Association* 8

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Figure 1. "Group of men and children with bicycles in front of the B. L. Malone grocery store, probably in New Decatur, Alabama," 1898. 7N/A/5c, Box 4, Scrapbook 1, Ellen and C. J. Hildreth Collection, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

SOUTHERN CYCLING AND MOBILE SUBJECTIVITY

In its initial social articulation, cycling was a way for southern white men to confirm their ease with modernity, strengthen class bonds, and assert a new masculinity rooted in strenuous activity. For southern white women, the bicycle was a technological agent for liberation. At the same time, the very public act of cycling created new opportunities for surveillance that led to self-adjustments in women's appearance and bodily comportment. In each case, a new sense of selfhood was formed through the act of cycling that led white southerners to new interpretations of themselves and their region.

Cycling clubs could be ostentatious in their displays of wealth. The Southern Wheelmen's clubhouse in New Orleans was a four-story brick structure set back from St. Charles Avenue. It featured a basement with a billiard room and storage for seventy-five bicycles. The ground floor had a secretary's office, reading room, and parlors. The next two floors had a variety of games rooms as well as guest accommodation. The club was organized as a limited company with an initial offering of $50,000 divided into two thousand shares of twenty-five dollars each. Membership was limited to six hundred. The Piedmont Cycle Club of Atlanta consisted of one hundred members,

(Summer 1967), 219–38; Joe Ward, "Bicycling," in John Kleber, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Louisville* (Lexington: University of Press of Kentucky, 2001), 88–89, 88; and Smith, 14.

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including the "leading bankers, merchants and professional men" of the city. Club membership gave exclusive access to a private four-mile cycle path. Brick cycling clubhouses could be found in many cities across the South and spoke to the elite pretensions of cycling in the early 1890s.[31]

Beyond class status, the bicycle was also a way for southern middle-class men to assert a masculinity through sporting prowess. Cycle racing was an intensely competitive and popular sport in the South. For a region often stereotyped by its slowness, racing proved that southerners could not only embrace but be on the vanguard of this new world of modern speed. Louisville claimed to have built the nation's first quarter-mile outdoor track specifically for cycle racing, held the first outdoor race illuminated by electric light in the world, and boasted the fastest three-lap cement track in the nation. "There doesn't seem to be anything unreasonably slow in all that," bragged the *Southern Cycler*.[32] The race track at Fontaine Ferry would become a winter training spot for some of the nation's best cyclists. Nationally significant tracks could also be found in New Orleans, Atlanta, Savannah, Charleston, Memphis, Jacksonville, and Bellaire, Florida. In the spring of 1895, the first southern bicycle series, the Southern Circuit, opened in Knoxville and attracted top riders from around the nation. Thousands of southerners routinely turned out to witness the spectacle. Demand was so great in Memphis that the city constructed a cement track with a capacity for ten thousand spectators, while Jacksonville created a segregated section at its track to cater to the increasing number of black cycling fans.[33]

As the cost of the bicycle rapidly declined across the 1890s, the popularity of racing also shifted downwards. By 1896, southern divisions of the LAW were concerned that professionalization would attract less gentlemanly riders, threatening bicycle racing's status as an expression of white middle-class masculinity. Central to this was the question of Sunday racing. Although southern cycling officials were concerned with the spiritual and moral issues that arose with racing on the Sabbath, their primary concern was that "the attendance at Sunday events would be drawn almost entirely from a class that would

[31] "The Southern Wheelmen," *Southern Cycler*, Nov. 1895; and "Georgia Jottings," *Southern Cycler*, 10 April 1897. On class and cycling see Friss, *Cycling City*, 42.

[32] "Are We Slow?" *Southern Cycler*, Dec. 1894.

[33] "Zimmerman Returned from the South," *American Cyclist*, 1 Jan. 1894, 632; "Way Down South in Dixie," 24; "The First Broadside," *Southern Cycler*, May 1895; "Among the Cracks," *Southern Cycler*, 10 May 1896; "Sport at Memphis," *Southern Cycler*, 10 Nov. 1896; "No Title," *American Cyclist*, 11 Sept. 1896, 623. The bicycle's association with class status, speed, and modernity pre-date by a good decade what Hall has found was the case for the early automobile in the South. See Randall Hall, "Before NASCAR: The Corporate and Civic Promotion of Automobile Racing in the American South, 1903–1927" *Journal of Southern History*, 68, 3 (Aug. 2002), 629–68.

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attend at no other time, and could contribute nothing to the respectability of the sport."[34] For similar reasons, the southern LAW was against the physical brutality of the Six-Day Race: a race in which a pair of cyclists, competing against other pairs, pedaled around a velodrome for six days nonstop. The pair that covered the most distance won. The Six-Day was the cycling discipline that best captured the Western world's obsession with labor, energy, and fatigue. The riders were described as "human cycling machine[s]" that seemed to blur the line between technology and humanity. Fatalities from exhaustion and crashes were not uncommon.[35] "Cycle racing," noted the *Southern Cycler*, "thanks to the elevating influences of the L.A.W., has heretofore been a comparatively clean and high-toned sport, and it would be a great misfortune for it to degenerate into the brutality of prize fighting or the corruption of horse racing."[36] Bicycle racing, but especially the Six-Day, sought the limits of what the body could do and be in the industrial age. White New South men attempted to navigate this new world of modern speed, while retaining a masculinity rooted in the legacies of plantation culture. In doing so, they negotiated an uneasy alliance between human and machine.

The most famous southern cyclist of the period was Robert "Bobby" Walthour Sr., who worked his way up from an Atlanta bicycle messenger to be one of the wealthiest athletes of the time, racing and residing in both the United States and Europe. Born in 1878, Walthour had deep roots in the South. His ancestors had migrated to Georgia from Austria in the eighteenth century, become plantation owners, and established the town of Walthourville in 1795. In the middle of the nineteenth century the Walthour family had helped construct the first rail line between Atlanta and Savannah. Throughout his successful career, Walthour's southern identity played a central role in his racing persona. In 1903, he teamed up with Memphis-born Benny Munro to form the "Dixie Flyers" and throughout his career Walthour would be known as the "Dixie Flyer" in both the American and French press.[37]

Walthour first made a name for himself by winning the 1901 Madison Square Garden Six-Day, where ten thousand people watched him and his partner, Archie McEachern, race to victory. Walthour ascribed his victory to

[34] "Sunday Racing," *Southern Cycler*, 10 Nov. 1896.

[35] Smith, 137.

[36] "The Six Day Race," *Southern Cycler*, 25 Dec. 1896.

[37] "News of the Wheelmen," *Jersey City News*, 22 July 1901, 4; "The Dixie Flyers in Long Race," *Augusta Chronicle*, 7 Dec. 1903, 1; "Sporting News," *Lehi Banner* (Utah), 31 Aug. 1905, 7; "Bobby Walthour Enters," *Newark Evening Star*, 10 Jan. 1914, 9; "Bobby Walthour in Optimistic Vein," *Newark Evening Star*, 14 Nov. 1914, 17; "Cyclisme," *Excelsior: Journal illustré quotidien*, 20 Aug.1915, 9; "Succès de Walthour," *L'Auto-vélo*, 25 Aug.1915, 1. See also Peter Joffre Nye, *Hearts of Lions: The History of American Bicycle Racing*, 2nd edn (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2020), 54, 93.

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his good physical condition, his ability to take on liquid food while riding, and his "foreign" competitors using too many performance-enhancing drugs at the start of the race. For his part Walthour stayed clear of the low levels of strychnine routinely administered to riders, although he made sure to mention that he took advantage of the natural cocaine and caffeine found in his home state's Coca-Cola to help keep him awake. Over the course of the six days he claimed to have slept for ten minutes at a time for three hours in total. Walthour was one of the preeminent human motors of the day, holding multiple world records in a variety of disciplines. So spectacular and popular was Walthour's feat that the Orpheum Theatre in Brooklyn paid him $300 to ride a home trainer onstage for three miles every afternoon and night (Figure 2).[38]

Not the languid southerner found in the day's popular culture, Walthour's physical ability, self-control, and ease at modern life made him one of the most famous athletes of the Gilded Age. In the 1902 season alone he brought home $25,000 – roughly $810,000 in today's dollars.[39] At the 1903 Madison Square Garden Six-Day, Walthour was described as the "pride of the South," sustaining the best of "southern traditions."[40] At other times, northern papers suggested that he fared poorly in cold weather due to a predisposition for the "warmer climates" of the South.[41] Part of Walthour's appeal relied on maintaining an air of southern middle-class respectability and honor in an increasingly working-class and professional sport. Walthour would later credit his success to two things: "the physical development received in the Y.M.C.A. and … the clean, moral life, urged upon me through its influences."[42] Although a messy divorce in 1920 later undermined some of his claims to respectability, during Walthour's time as one of the most famous cyclists in the world, he never strayed far from his identity as a white southerner.[43]

Bicycle racing reveals the southern elite's and middle class's paradoxical relationship with industrial modernity. On the one hand, the bicycle race was celebrated as a test of southern manhood's suitability for the modern world, while on the other hand there was a lurking fear that the same factory rhythms that

[38] "Bobby Walthour at Home," *Atlanta Constitution*, 24 Dec. 1901, 5. For a biography of Walthour see Andrew M. Homan, *Life in the Slipstream: The Legend of Bobby Walthour Sr*. (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2011). On the Western world's obsession with labor and fatigue see Rabinbach, *The Human Motor*.

[39] "Sporting Notes," *Savannah Morning News*, 16 Jan. 1903, 3. Inflation data from Ian Webster, "CPI Inflation Calculator," at www.officialdata.org/us/inflation/1902?amount=25000 (accessed 14 Jan. 2022).

[40] "Bethesda Boy was Supreme in Speed and Strength," *Savannah Morning News*, 13 Dec. 1903, 9.

[41] "Stinson Defeats Nelson," *New York Tribune*, 20 April 1901, 5.

[42] "Los Angeles' Grand Institution, the Y.M.C.A.", *Los Angeles Herald Sunday Magazine*, 20 Feb. 1910, 42.

[43] Nye, 93.

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Figure 2. Atlantan Bobby Walthour was one of the premier "human motors" of the era. In this photograph dating from January 1914, the sheer exhaustion of racing a Parisian Six-Day is written on his face. As a member of the "Dixie Flyers," Walthour was one of the best-known southern sporting figures in the world at the turn of the last century. Courtesy Gallica, bibliothèque nationale de France.

made the bicycle possible could disrupt this gentlemanly ideal rooted in the fiction of Dixie. By the start of the twentieth century, southerners and the LAW would lose their fight to keep the sport of cycling respectable, while automobile racing provided a new avenue for the South's elite to demonstrate their modern speed and wealth.[44] Southern white men, however, were not the only ones to embrace the bicycle to affirm their class and modern status. White women were also drawn to the bicycle's revolutionary potential to transform gendered expectations and expand mobility.

Women around the world embraced the bicycle as way to push into public spaces and make claims on the ownership of their bodies. Cycling, however,

[44] Professionalization was a transatlantic concern across the sporting world. See Roberta J. Park, "Physicians, Scientists, Exercise and Athletics in Britain and America from the 1867 Boat Race to the Four-Minute Mile," *Sport in History*, 31, 1 (March 2011), 1–33, 5. In 1902 the *Constitution* published a full-page article on the domestic respectability of the city's bicycle champion. See "Pretty Home Life of Young Bobby Walthour, Atlanta's Wonderful Bicycle Champion," *Atlanta Constitution*, 18 May 1902, 16. On the South and automobiles, see Hall, "Before NASCAR."

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was a public performance rooted in class identity. Most women cyclists in the 1890s continued to wear Victorian dress instead of bloomers and, as the sheer amount of innuendo and risqué and even pornographic bicycle advertisements and photographs can attest, although liberating and empowering, the public nature of cycling meant that women remained firmly within the gaze and often control of men.[45] Such objectification and surveillance did not stop southern women from exercising and developing their own forms of agency, however. The bicycle gave the South's society women a heretofore unprecedented independence outside the home and cycling was a form of pleasure and performance. The Atlanta "ladies cycle club" had four hundred members and their own clubhouse on Peachtree Street. Nor was the phenomenon confined to major cities; in Meridian, Mississippi women led the boom (Figure 3).[46] In 1938, Hattie Thomas of Barbour County, Alabama told a WPA interviewer that she had ridden her bicycle every day for forty-three years. Her first bicycle in 1895 had given her independence and allowed her to find employment first at the telephone office and then as a reporter. At the age of sixty-five she continued to cycle to work at the Bland Coal and Transfer Company, doing a "man's job," while using her bicycle on the weekend to spend time with her grandchildren and commune with nature.[47]

The bicycle also gave athletically inclined southern women a chance to prove their physical ability. On a Saturday in November 1895 a Louisville businessman organized a group ride that featured several local women. One young woman, identified as a "Miss R—," outrode her male companions. At the first big test, Blind Asylum Hill, she pulled away from the pack. Later, because of

[45] On cycling's relationship to women's liberation see Anne-Katrin Ebert, "Liberating Technologies? Of Bicycles, Balance and the 'New Woman' in the 1890s," *ICON: Journal of the International Committee for the History of Technology*, 16 (2010), 25–52, esp. 41; Ellen Gruber Garvey, "Reframing the Bicycle: Advertising-Supported Magazine and Scorching Women," *American Quarterly*, 47, 1 (March 1995), 66–101; and Nicholas Oddy, "Pipe Dreams," International Cycling History Conference, Mannheim, Germany, 2017. As Rabinovitz makes clear, middle-class female pedestrians governed their behavior as new public and sexual objects. See Lauren Rabinovitz, *For the Love Pleasure: Women, Movies, and Culture in Turn-of-the-Century Chicago* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998).

[46] "The Georgia Metropolis," *Southern Cycler*, Aug. 1895; "A Southern Cycling Girl," *American Cyclist*, 14 Dec. 1894, 140. Birmingham and Memphis also had women-only cycle clubs. See "Birmingham Budget," *Southern Cycler*, Nov. 1895; "Tennessee Trade," *Southern Cycler*, 25 April 1896; and "Old Kaintuck, Mississippi Mention," *Southern Cycler*, 10 April 1896.

[47] "Eufaula's Rambling Cyclist," Unique Southern Personalities, Miss Hattie Thomas, 334 Barbour Street, Project #4454, Federal Writers Project, WPA, Interviewer Gertha Courie, 30 March 1938, 1–6. "Life Histories" Barbour County, 1937–1939, Box SG022775, folder: WPA Alabama Writers' Project, Life Histories, Barbour County, Alabama Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, AL.

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Figure 3. "Photograph of Florence Timmerman with a new bicycle," Lanier County, Georgia, 1900. Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, Ian006.

the dust created by the group, she moved to the front and dropped her fellow cyclists. "On went the flying figure not noting that gradually the worried riders in the rear were falling further behind," reported the *Southern Cycler*. After fifteen miles they reached their destination and, "without the vestige of discomposure in countenance or disarrangement of a lock of hair, she hoped they had enjoyed the ride, and with a winsome smile asked how they 'liked the pace.'" While it is obvious that the young woman enjoyed putting her male companions in discomfort, their unease with her abilities and disturbance of physical and social norms is also clear. Her name is hinted at but not given and the reader is reassured that she "attended all religious services the next

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day" but that "no one would ride with her back that Sunday afternoon after church."[48]

The dual nature of women's cycling – of freedom and surveillance – is apparent in a regular feature of the *Southern Cycler* in which women cyclists were celebrated for their independence but also monitored. "Among the Bloomerites" was written "By One of 'Em" and details the "pioneering" women of the South who took up cycling in the 1890s. Bettie Todd, a Louisville socialite, was the first to wear bloomers and was quickly joined by the upscale St. James Court crowd. Todd was celebrated for her bravery, and her choice to don rational clothing led to "Louisville ladies, finding the bloomer a sensible, comfortable costume … adopted it generally, thus deriving more pleasure and enjoyment from riding." Other women took to wearing even more comfortable, yet revealing, clothing. Mamie Dely cycled through Louisville wearing a "short skirt" that reached just below her knees, her shins and ankles covered by brown leggings. Although women cyclists first appeared on the streets of Lexington, Kentucky in 1891, four years later the presence of bloomer-wearing cyclists could still attract "all the boys [to have] a peep at them." Leering men in Lexington led the prominent women of the city to form their own cycle club as a matter of protection in numbers. "For some time past many ladies have desired to ride," noted the *Southern Cycler*, "but fear of becoming unpleasantly conspicuous has deterred them."[49] The sexual objectification and harassment of women cyclists meant that they needed to bound together for their own safety. Southern women could be so conspicuous on their bicycles that they were named in national magazines. Such was the case of "Miss Tangier of Atlanta … [a] vigorous healthy looking southern girl" who had only been riding a bicycle for a month and was already an accomplished hill climber and public proponent for bloomers and rational dress.[50] The bicycle has rightfully been celebrated as an agent for feminine liberation. At the same time, similar experiences as in Lexington where women were subjected to increased male surveillance no doubt limited the extent of women's participation.

The sexualized dynamics of cycling ensured that for many southern clergy and upholders of Victorian values, bicycles competed with mail order catalogues as the means by which the outside world corrupted the South.[51]

[48] "Among Our Friends," *Southern Cycler*, Nov. 1895.

[49] "Among the Bloomerites" *Southern Cycler*, Nov. 1894; "Among the Bloomerites," *Southern Cycler*, Dec. 1894; "In the Bluegrass Capital," *Southern Cycler*, May 1895; "In God's Country," *Southern Cycler*, July 1895.

[50] "A Southern Cycling Girl," *American Cyclist*, 14 Dec. 1894, 140.

[51] Ayers, *The Promise of the New South*, 169, 316. The bicycle initially divided clergy in the United Sates; see Michael Taylor, "Rapid Transit to Salvation: American Protestants and

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In the 1890s, the bicycle was understood as a technology of mobility, but also of sex. From Germany to England to the United States, male medical doctors solemnly debated not only the possible damage done to a woman's reproductive organs but also the likelihood that cycling was sexually stimulating and could lead to deranged sexualized women.[52] In the South's major cities, bloomer costumes were initially viewed as an immoral and unwelcome intrusion of sexualized northern fashion. The *Atlanta Journal* suggested that the city should adopt a by-law, as had Chattanooga, that outlawed women wearing bloomers. The *Atlanta Constitution* was more sanguine to the coming of the bloomer but still believed that women should "exercise prudence in the extreme" when cycling.[53] In 1901, James Avirett, in his memoir of life in the Old South, singled out the bicycle as second only to divorce as a sign of the corrupting influence of the modern world on southern life. The bicycle's transformation of the woman cyclist was social, cultural, and corporeal: "how far the bicycle has robbed the young ladies of this age of graceful form and motion, I know not," complained Avirett.[54]

Although the bloomer panic soon subsided, clergy members were not necessarily wrong in believing that cycling led to unchaperoned social time and courtship. In June 1893, for instance, Robert Bissett of Maysville, Kentucky wrote to his friend James Adair that he had purchased a bicycle (a Waverly) and that his very first journey was to see a young woman named Hortense, before asking if James had heard from "Lizzie," who was angry that "everybody is crazy here over bicycles." By July, Lizzie's anger had subsided but she was still concerned that James was willing to cycle to see her in the summer heat. Such courting, facilitated by the personal freedom of the bicycle, took place throughout the South and opened up new worlds for the region's young adults. Bicycle advertisements often pushed this narrative by hinting at the sexual possibilities of cycling with images of young men and women cycling alone into a nearby forest away from prying eyes.[55]

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the Bicycle in the Era of the Cycling Craze," *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 9, 3, (July 2010), 337–63.

[52] Garvey, 74–75; Ebert, 36–37.

[53] Royal Daniel, "The World of Wheels," *Atlanta Constitution*, 11 Aug. 1895, 8; "Bloomers and Bicycles," *Atlanta Constitution*, 8 Aug. 1895, 6; "A Dangerous Fad," *Fayetteville News*, 26 July 1895, 5.

[54] James Battle Avirett, *The Old Plantation: How We Lived in Great House and Cabin before the War* (New York: F. Tennyson Neely Co., 1901), 181, 192.

[55] Letter from R. J. (Robert) Bisset to James C. Adair, Maysville, KY, 23 June 1893, Adair-Downing Family Papers, 1854–51, 1 cu. Ft. Mss. A191, Folder 5; and letter from Elizabeth Downing to James Adair, Maysville, KY, 14 July 1894, Adair-Downing Family Papers, 1854–51, 1 cu. Ft. Mss. A A191, Folder 7, FHS. In the United Kingdom the bicycle has been credited for expanding the gene pool as it increased the mobility of isolated villagers and farmers in rural areas. See William Manners, *Revolution: How the Bicycle Reinvented Modern Britain* (London: Duckworth Overlook, 2018), 161–62.

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By the start of the twentieth century, bicycles and bloomers came to be accepted by some of the South's middle-class and elite women. It proved that they were of the age, integrated with a global mass culture, and at ease with the speed of modernity. The initial fear of bloomers was as much a fear of the outside as it was propriety. For the South, the bicycle intensified internal divisions between those who wished the region to remain traditional and those who embraced the symbols of modern life rooted in conspicuous consumption. When a member of the Alabama legislature introduced a bill in 1896, quoting Deuteronomy, that would ban women from "wearing bloomers, tights, shirt-waists, or other articles of men's apparel," he was labelled "old fashioned" and "backwoods." The *Southern Cycler* dismissed the state congressman as someone who had never been to a "big city" nor "to a town of even the size of Montgomery before." For the many men and women of the South's towns and cities the bicycle was a technology that helped foster a new mobile subjectivity and embraced the bicycle as a symbol of a modern New South that participated in the fashion and trends of global mass culture.[56]

CYCLING AND THE SOUTHERN LANDSCAPE

When urban cyclists pushed into the countryside they created real and mental maps of the southern landscape. With roads of such poor quality much of the South was restricted to local knowledge. Locomotives might connect towns to cities but the places in between and the quality of the roads were largely unknown to outsiders. Tom Winder – an adventurer who cycled the circumference of the United States for the *Buffalo Express* – recommended that cyclotourists in the South "stay by the railroad tracks" in order to not get lost.[57] Faced with poor roads and conditions for cycling, the South's cyclists played an important role in mapping, understanding, and reimagining the region at the end of the nineteenth century, helping urban cyclists to create "psychogeographies" of the rural South.[58] The cyclist's cartographic knowledge helped assert a new urban authority over the rural countryside. Mapmaking produces as much as it represents a landscape and is therefore a technology of power and rule alongside other more explicitly violent tools

[56] "Truthful Tells His Troubles," *Southern Cycler*, 3, 5 (10 Dec. 1896). See also, the *Atlanta Journal* quoted in *Moulton Advertiser* (Alabama), 17 Dec. 1896, 2.

[57] Winder, *Around the United States*, 85.

[58] Thielmann has argued that the bicycle was the mobility technology par excellence for land surveying and producing "psychogeographies" in this period. See Tristan Thielmann, "The Bicycle at the End of the 19th Century: An Instrument of Land Surveying and Mapping," *Proceedings of the International Cartographic Association* 2, 129 (Tokyo, Japan, 14–20 July 2019), 1–9.

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of suppression.[59] For a region that had long been under the sway of a planter elite, the move towards city and town was a significant change and the popularity of cycling played no small part in the South's shifting political landscape.

Southern divisions of the League of American Wheelmen published roadbooks that outlined which roads to take and which to avoid. In 1896, a Kentucky cyclist finished the most "complete" road map ever created for the state. It contained four hundred routes leading to every part of Kentucky, as well as new routes from Cincinnati to Louisville and Louisville to Mammoth Cave. Three years later, in 1899, the "Jolly Good Fellows" compiled a master map of road cycling routes in the vicinity of Louisville. When cycling maps indicated whether "good" roads were "level, rolling, hilly, or very hilly" and whether the surface was "dirt, macadam, or gravel," they not only were descriptions of physical and topographical reality but also helped the South's urban cyclists conceive of and occupy the rural in-between spaces of the region.[60]

Articles on cycling trips in the South often devolved into reports on local road conditions, as was the case of E. L. Evans and A. W. Edwards's thousand-mile bicycle ride from Louisville to Atlanta and back for the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition on behalf of "Kis-Me Gum and Higgins' Shoes." Evans's account of their trip reveals the ways the urban cyclist produced regional knowledge of the rural hinterland, bringing with them, in addition to the bicycle, products of mass culture and industry: chewing gum and factory-made shoes. In his recounting, each section of the journey through Kentucky, Tennessee, and Georgia is compiled with detailed descriptions of road quality and topography. Far from alone on their journey, Evans and Edwards meet other cyclo-tourists from across the Midwest and the East Coast heading to the great southern exposition. Along the way the South's rural population was rendered as part of the landscape and behind the times. Whether it was when they frightened a team of mules driven by a black driver heading into Bardstown or when they complained of the poor fare they received at rural inns and public houses, Evans was sure to

[59] Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 77–83. On cartography and meaning as well as early cycling maps see Dando, "Riding the Wheel," 196; McCullough, *Old Wheelways*, x–xi, 77–84; and James R. Akerman, "Introduction," in Akerman, ed., *Cartographies of Travel and Navigation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), 1–15, 2; and Akerman, "Twentieth-Century American Road Maps and the Making of a National Motorized Space," in ibid., 151–206, 159–60.

[60] "Road Book of Kentucky," *American Cyclist*, 7 Aug. 1896, 456; Webster Galaxy, "Bicycle Road Map of the Bluegrass Region of Kentucky" (Louisville: W. G. Hamilton & Co., 1899), Rare Pamphlet 917.695 G289 1899, FHS.

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emphasize his sophistication and authority rooted in both his whiteness and his town credentials.[61]

At the height of the boom in 1896, Louisville real-estate developer Lewis A. Walters penned an unpublished travelogue of a journey to the Blue Grass region. Walters was like many white southern cycling enthusiasts. He was part of a rising class of men who had profited from the expansion of the region's urban centers at the end of the century.[62] His trip began only after he had read in a LAW roadbook of the beautiful scenery to be found in the nearby Blue Grass region. For men like Walters, cycling was a sensuous experience that reaffirmed a relationship to the southern landscape. Indeed, despite being from Louisville, Walters had never been to the Blue Grass region until prompted to by his new enthusiasm for the bicycle. Leaving Louisville at the height of spring, Walters took a train to Harrodsburg, where he spent the night before cycling to Pleasant Hill, the site of an active Shaker community, returning the way he had come. As he cycled into the countryside his senses were elevated in a way that condemned the urban life he was, as a real-estate developer, responsible for creating. Walters believed that the bicycle created a "new existence" for humanity. The journey was therapeutic as the "cares of the city [were] laid aside for the peace of the country, all the hurry and wild energy is wooed into quiet contemplative contentment." The enhanced sensory experience of cycling separated the city from the country but also created a sense of meditation. Walters's emotions, however, were not simply another therapeutic panacea for the ills of modernity. For Walters, as for many first-time bicycle users at the end of the nineteenth century, cycling led to a more contemplative sense of self and produced a visceral connection to an idealized landscape.[63]

Every weekend, urbanites cycled into the countryside, making clear a demarcation between their modernity and those viewed as left behind. Armed with their Kodaks, cyclists' photographic reproduction went hand in hand with mapmaking and were ways in which a cartographic knowledge of the southern landscape was constructed and produced, making it an ideological extension of the city (Figure 4).[64] These men and women were in the process of fashioning new

[61] E. L. Evans, "From Louisville to Atlanta," *Southern Cycler*, Dec. 1895.

[62] On the rise of the urban South's "new men" see Don Doyle, *New Men, New Cities, New South: Atlanta, Nashville, Charleston, Mobile, 1860–1910* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

[63] Lewis A. Walters, "Awheel through the Blue Grass" (*c.*1896), Walters Lewis Allahwyn, 1868–1951, Additional Papers, 1891–1941, Travel Memoirs of Lewis A. Walters, MSS A W232b, Folder 13, FHS. On the bicycle as a means to escape the city for therapeutic purposes see Friss, *Cycling City*, chapter 6, "Riding for Recreation and Health," esp. 117–36.

[64] On photography, cycling, and power in this period see Clarsen, "Pedaling Power," 8; and Norcliffe, *Road*, 252-253.

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Figure 4. "Winder, 1893. Members of the Ramblers, a bicycle club, out for a ride." Georgia Archives, Vanishing Georgia Collection, Brw100.

power arrangements over the region's traditional political base. Many believed that the 1895 Cotton States and International Exposition – the great celebration of southern industry and the New South – would be the turning point for the region. The exposition was to be "an educator to the masses," proving that the bicycle was not a "fad" and would showcase the South as a "veritable wheelman's paradise [for] northern riders to come and spend the holidays in the land of sunshine and flowers." In the minds of many, cycling was a key symbol of the New South and represented a transformation of southern society.[65]

For New South boosters, political and social change was as much about a personal transformation as it was a program for northern investment and industrialization.[66] They were not unlike their northern counterparts, who adopted a "therapeutic worldview" at the end of the century to assuage the feelings of weightlessness that accompanied modernity.[67] For many urban

[65] "The Trade in the South," *Southern Cycler*, Dec. 1895. On the 1895 Cotton States exposition and the New South see Nathan Cardon, *A Dream of the Future: Race, Empire, and Modernity at the Atlanta and Nashville World's Fairs* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), esp. chapter 1.

[66] K. Stephen Prince, *Stories of the South: Race and Reconstruction of Southern Identity, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 100.

[67] Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 56.

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southerners, cycling represented a solution to this problem. On the one hand, it was a luxury good at the forefront of modernity; on the other hand, its need for self-control and strenuous effort made it a curative device that addressed the neurasthenic nature of modern life, or, as suggested by a cycling pamphlet distributed in the South, a civilized way to "retain a little savage in us."[68]

When cyclo-tourists came from outside the South, however, they focussed less on the region's landscape or developing urban worlds than on the region's people and their supposed backwardness. Many cycling commentators noted that southerners had in fact more than a "little savage" left in them. For Tom Winder on his 274-day circumnavigation, the South was like entering a foreign space and time compared to the speed and modernity he believed his bicycle represented. In Louisiana, he noted that African Americans' raised platform houses reminded him of the "pictures one sees of the South Sea islanders." In Virginia, he described a landscape of "deserted farms" and "worn-out" land. In Georgia, his bicycle opened up spaces for him to scientifically observe the local population using the language of the new science of racial anthropology. He reported to his readers that the "Cracker is born, not made," and should be considered a separate "species of humanity." The advances made by rural whites were not a real change, according to Winder, instead country whites were more like an "educated parrot." His journey also gave him an opportunity to assess and analyse the "Wiregrass" and "Mountain" "types" of "Crackers." Black southerners also did not escape Winder's northern gaze and his chapters on the South relied on the racist stereotypes of the minstrel stage in its descriptions of black life. White and black southerners, of course, would have bristled at Winder's characterization of them, especially as both groups had, by the middle of the 1890s, embraced the bicycle as a key symbol of their modernity.[69]

Likewise, *Outing* – the national outdoors magazine that began life as *Wheelman* – included travelogues of journeys to the South alongside more far-flung places like Europe, Asia, and Africa. In these stories the urban cyclist marks their modernity against a primitive South with the same language as cyclists describing their voyages overseas. One such journey was that of Hellen Huntington, who, along with her girlfriend and two male companions, rode a tandem bicycle through northern Georgia. Cycling intensified the

[68] Curran Pope, *The Bicycle: Its Uses in Health and Disease* (Boston: Pope Manufacturing Co., 1894), 4, 10, Pamphlet 796.6 P825, FHS. On the white middle class adopting "uncivilized" characteristics to shore up their manliness see Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[69] Winder, *Around the United States*, 7, 73, 83, 90, 93–94.

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differences between themselves and what they saw. The rural southern landscape was unfamiliar, populated with "rough log shacks, with queer little box attachments." At a plantation a "whole family, or rather tribe … gathered to inspect our wheels." At a religious camp meeting, Huntington and her cycling companions – who were in complete control of their bodies and machines – compare themselves to the "wild" and "frantic" gestures of the participants.[70]

The bicycle in the South cut both ways. On the one hand, cycling confirmed the region's modernity and embrace of global trends, while on the other hand it opened up space away from towns and rail lines for both northerners and urban southerners to confront the South's supposedly primitive and problem status within the nation. At the end of the nineteenth century, the bicycle marked a radical departure in human movement. This rupture produced a strong sense of difference between the cyclist and those they encountered. It magnified the different ways in which rural southerners lived their lives and reified the position of urban whites atop a contingent social and racial hierarchy dependent on familiarity with new industrial technologies. In this way, cycling was paradigmatic of white southerners' struggle to define their region in the face of an expanding national and global culture rooted in the world's industrializing metropolises.[71]

THE SOUTH AND GLOBAL MASS CULTURE

White southerners' cycling subjectivity and regional knowledge were not created in a vacuum, however. The global nature of cycling culture meant that many white cycling enthusiasts were keenly aware of what was happening beyond the South. The southern elite had enjoyed European sojourns since the antebellum period, but in a world of global mass cultures, middle-class white southerners, if not actually travelling to Europe, became interested in cycling cultures outside their region and nation. When southern cycling enthusiasts picked up the latest issue of the *Southern Cycler* or any of the national trade periodicals sold in the region, they not only participated in the imagined

[70] Hellen F. Huntington, "Wheeling in North Georgia," *Outing*, Jan. 1898, 381–83. For cyclo-tourists, the camp meeting was a frequent example of the South's rural practice and appears in a number of stories. See George H. Streaker, "Cycling over an Old Virginia Pike," *Outing*, Nov. 1899, 147–52; J. B. Carrington, "A Bluegrass Cycling Tour," *Outing*, June 1894, 199–205; and John B. Carrington, "Through Virginia Awheel," *Outing*, June 1896, 204–8, Aug. 1896, 344–49.

[71] On the South as a problem see Natalie Ring, *The Problem South: Region, Empire, and the New Liberal State, 1880–1930* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012), esp. chapter 1.

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space of the region and nation but also took part in the global culture of the bicycle. Southern cyclists, then, often operated at the intersection of the local and global.

Throughout its short print run the *Southern Cycler* maintained a London correspondent to report on cycling events and trends in Europe. Louisville-based racing cyclist Thomas Dewhurst's first report back from London was coverage of the Stanley Cycle Show and the question of bloomers, which were "not very common here among lady riders." A month later, he reported on London's new cutting-edge cycling track at Herne Hill, while the magazine covered the controversial introduction of bicycle taxes in Britain and Austria, along with a report of a new velodrome in Italy. Dewhurst would keep up his regular reporting before returning to the South in the summer of 1895 to race the season in Kentucky.[72] By the following year, the *Southern Cycler* had a permanent English representative based in Derbyshire, T. Thyne Millar, and had increased its publication to twice a month. It also expanded its coverage beyond the Continent. In Mexico City, Tom Crump, a former resident of Louisville working for Victory Cycles and the American Photo-Supply Company, sent reports back to the *Southern Cycler*. In much the same way as the bicycle was representative of southern modernity, Mexico City's status as one of the most "modern … cities of the world" was, according to Crump, "indicated by the interest displayed in the bicycle."[73] Most of the magazine's attention, however, remained on Europe, with reports of a French cyclist's death during the three-hundred-kilometer Le petit marseillais road race, a racing cyclist from Memphis heading to Europe to test his skills, and further reports from London's cycling showcases sent back from Dewhurst. Such reporting fueled southern cyclists' global imagination.[74]

For a few white southerners such imaginations became a reality. In the summer of 1921, Walter Newman Haldeman II, the son of the *Louisville Courier-Journal*'s editor and grandson of a Confederate navy officer, spent two weeks cycling from Leamington Spa across the West Midlands and then on to north Wales. On the journey he observed differences between the growing culture and industrial significance of the United States and the

[72] Thomas B. Dewhurst, "Dewhurst in England," *Southern Cycler*, Jan. 1895; Dewhurst, "Dewhurst Visits Herne Hill," *Southern Cycler*, Jan. 1895; Dewhurst, "New Notes," *Southern Cycler*, Feb. 1895; Dewhurst, "Homeward Bound," *Southern Cycler*, Feb. 1895; and Dewhurst, "From Our English Correspondent," *Southern Cycler*, May 1895.

[73] "Mexican Merrymakers" and "Among Our friends," *Southern Cycler*, 2, 8 (10 March 1896).

[74] "Road-Racing Accident in France," *Southern Cycler*, 3, 2 (26 Oct. 1896); "Sport at Memphis," *Southern Cycler*, 3, 3 (10 Nov. 1896); Dewhurst, "Our Tommy Takes a Trip," *Southern Cycler*, 3, 7 (10 Jan. 1897) (misprinted as 1896).

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fading power of Britain. The bicycle allowed him to move beyond the curated tourist trail of the rail line, and he noted that England was "not so clean" as it first appeared with the "flies thick in all village inns," but conceded that most English villages were nicer than his southern ones. However, the "British slowness so much talked about is an actual fact," and everywhere he went he heard "America's songs [and] rags." In Wales, he was surprised that many of its inhabitants continued to speak Welsh, a language Haldeman believed was "primitive, and a little barbaric." For Haldeman, the two-week cycling journey through the heart of Britain was a revelation and an important personal step as an American and a southerner. It confirmed his sense of the United States as the future and Britain as a place of the past. A somewhat awkward conclusion, given that his home region of the South was thought of as a national problem that needed to be fixed often with the same tools of empire that the British had employed around the globe.[75]

Extraordinary technologies, like the bicycle, quickly become ordinary and mundane. And yet they can have a lasting influence on both human perception and the social and cultural worlds produced by new ways of knowing and being. As much as the southern experience of the bicycle reflected local practices and traditions, southern cyclists connected to a global mass culture. Across crucial decades in the New South's formation, the safety bicycle went from an astonishing innovation to an "everyday technology." In doing so, cycling can be a lens through which we can view the South's integration in a larger world of mass culture and technology at the turn of the twentieth century.[76] In self-fashioning a mobile subjectivity, southern white men and women embraced a transnational and transregional phenomenon that integrated their local experiences with the world. Initially a symbol of wealth and status, the bicycle came to occupy a place in the urban South's imagination as it pushed its influence into the rural hinterland. Cycling opened up the South's rural spaces to city life and expectations. Rather than being removed from the trends of modern mass culture, white southerners in towns and cities embraced the transformative nature of cycling and adopted a global worldview that contradicts the perception of the region's peripheral status both within and outside the nation at the end of the nineteenth century.

[75] "Letter from WH II to Florence (Mrs. Chalres Baird Price), Angel Hotel, Ludlow. 6 Aug. 1921"; and "Letter from WH II to Father. Hand Hotel, Llangollen, 12 Aug. 1921," Haldeman Family Papers, 1843–1959, MSS H159, FHS. On the South as a problem and empire as a solution see Ring, 3–6, 10–11.

[76] David Arnold, *Everyday Technology: Machines and the Making of India's Modernity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013); and Norcliffe, *Ride*, 254–55.

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