

OVER 30,000 WHEELS RIDDEN IN WASHINGTON

Five Years Ago Less Than a Thousand of the Silent Steeds Were Owned in This City.

RATIO OF THE INCREASE YEAR BY YEAR

First Six Months of 1896 Has Witnessed a Remarkable Growth of the Fad.

Quaint Facts and Figures Which Go to Show that Bicycles Are the Thing of the Period.

One thousand; three thousand and five hundred; five thousand; seven thousand five hundred; ten thousand; sixteen thousand; and sixty-two thousand will be the record of sales of bikes, beginning with the year 1890 and ending with the present year of grace and whirling wheels. Thirty-one thousand have already been bought from the various dealers from January 1 to date.

It is easy to juggle with these figures and to change the idea of the "fad" or the "craze" into an indictment of insanity, but truth is better than romance. Altogether there have been sold 74,000 bicycles of the newest styles, grades and fashions. This means that people numbering more than one fourth of the whole population have at some time within the last five and a half years bought wheels, learned to ride and have joined the multitudinous cavalcade that rides the steel steed.

There was a time—so short a time ago—that even children remember it—that even a man on a new wheel was a rare bird. Their first vision, perhaps, was of the man on the old upright wheel, a way up in the air, and going in those days at what was a rate of speed far beyond the limit of safety. He was a Colossus of Bicycles on a wheel. If not on wheels, for the little one was regarded as a necessity merely to be tolerated. Expert riders even now can do fairly well on a one-wheeled bicycle, which is, nevertheless, a contradiction in terms.

BIRTH OF THE FAD.

Then there was the period when the two-wheeled bike par excellence sprang into existence. Washington is not always first in departures, but it was not long after the new wheels were invented until the asphalt boulevard was discovered to be the place designed long ago by Gov. Shepard for the modern horse.

Then there was another period. It was actually the most question in the social circle as to whether woman should be a beneficiary and patron of the eighth wonder of the world. This showed that Belva Lockwood had straddled the question long before on a velocipede, and had moved everything before her.

Nevertheless it was fully and prayerfully discussed and the old woman appeared on a wheel and then another and another and another, rising above the social horizon one at a time, as the stars come out in the purpling skies of a summer evening. This is somewhat flippant and pretentious, but it is in touch with the ideal movement about which it is being written.

There would naturally be an impression that when woman is seized with any kind of social fever it will assume a virulent form. It might be concluded from this that women would own probably one-half of the 74,000 cycles, but such is not the fact.

WOMAN'S PART IN IT.

It is perhaps slightly exaggerated to say that there are 15,000 wheelwomen in the city, but even 15,000 is an important part of the grand army. It is the picturesque contingent. It is to the picnic men on wheels what the glittering cuirassiers, or zouaves, the lightlanders, or to the monotonous color in the French and English armies.

It is a little strange to note that "the stringency of the times," for there were such stringencies between '90 and '96, if not at present, did not in the slightest degree affect the buying and selling of bicycles.

For the five years noted there was a steady increase. In '91 the sales were 850 per cent more than in 1890, and in '95 sixteen hundred per cent greater. This year they estimate a sixty-two hundred per cent. Truly the bike is running down the grade without breaks and coasting on to greater things.

Figures, while they do not lie, are yet barren of suggestion when speaking of so interesting a subject; but if any proof were wanted of the enormous success of the bicycle boom it can be found by an inspection of the bikes themselves in active service.

There are several places in the city at which the bicyclists meet unconsciously in the great afternoon tours which are usually taken to the north into the lovely suburbs. One of these places is on Capitol Hill, Second street and Pennsylvania avenue southeast. A writer from the Times took the pains the other afternoon to watch the stream of bicyclers as they passed that point, some going down the grade toward the Botanical Gardens, others north toward new Library Building, and all heading for points west and north. He counted the flyers for forty minutes, and found that the average was nine per minute. This, of course, does not mean all day, but in those, at present, delightful hours of the afternoon, when the departments are closed and the prospective tourists have dined well.

PASSING A POINT.

Another famous point of observation is at Fourteenth street and Pennsylvania avenue northwest. The average here was six per minute, but nearly all the streets running north from Pennsylvania avenue are channels for the streams that flow northward to the green fields and country roads of the suburban retreats.

At Ninth street and Pennsylvania avenue northwest the average was eight per minute after 4 o'clock.

Another phase of the people in motion on wheels is to be observed on the street cars. A few nights ago a passenger on the cable cars counted 169 bicycles coming south while the car was going from M street to U street northwest. It is a one, good, and straight run from M street to the rise of Meridian Hill, and this stretch is a favorite with the little barks

of the water in places, among a lot of women who thought it would serve as a substitute for polo, and now it has got over to this side. Two or three persons have laid out special courts for it up in Westchester county in New York, and the learned women wheelers of Boston are rather enthusiastically adopting it at their summer resorts. Of course you can realize that no ordinary tennis courts are large enough for one to pedal about in with comfort. If it is remembered that the dimensions are trebled and in England it is considered no drawback if the ground slopes a little, but of course the surface must be perfectly smooth. Tart courts are quite out of the question and the best of them is asphalted. That is expensive, however, unless there is a club to meet the costs and in private grounds just the plain foundation for the good American dirt court serves perfectly.

"Naturally the net is extended and broadened, but as well it is stretched at least three feet above the ground. In the right position it should reach as high as the shoulders of the ordinary woman when sitting in her saddle. The reason of this is that a soft china silk such she binds around her waist and by sewing one end, in the form of an open-mouthed bag, she keeps her rubber balls there handy for serving—with her right she winds her racket, which is made of light wood with a handle double as long as one used for tennis. Some women use a featherweight racket, made a good deal like that for lacrosse, and by the end of the handle and a stout strap, this fine long bat is tied to her wrist.

THE WAY TO PLAY.

"Now as to the game: Two, four or six persons can play on one set of courts, where the rotation is to receive balls that fly beyond the limits of the court and if she can recover and drive back such balls, before they touch the ground, the point is not lost as in other games of tennis. She must send it back into her partner's courts and let them manipulate it on, but if she can direct it straight over the net into the opponent's courts she wins a point for her side. When not actively looking out for these flying balls her duty is to regain those hopelessly lost and restore them to their partners' courts, to take practice, care she doesn't intrude one inch inside the boundaries of the courts. For infringing this law she can be ruled out of the game by her partners' opponents.

"Miscellaneous remarks, as they circle round the courts, by serving six balls, according to the usual rules of tennis. They wheel around as they serve, in order to preserve their balance and then, desistently maintaining their course by the left hand on the bicycle's handle bars, dart, circle, turn double, half and run in their efforts to keep the ball going. All of the six balls are played upon. That is, if one player can place every one, or five, or four of her balls correctly on serving an entire game is played out on every ball and a seeking contest for every ball that falls falsely in the service. With the privileges of serving and driving either over or under the net, you can see larger opportunities are given to her in this game of tennis every point gained is a point earned toward the sum total of the final score. They tried to introduce that ruling very often in the palmy days of regular tennis, but the authorities always frowned it down. Now the bicyclers have made laws of their own and the good pastime of tennis is like to return to a larger and more vigorous popularity than ever before.

"Women who have tried it pronounce bicycle tennis the most amusing, amusing and exhilarating sport possible. There is just enough danger of trouting collisions and exercise both for lungs and muscles, with skill and wit, agility and discretion required to inspire enthusiasm and energy. It is impossible to play bicycle tennis unless you know all about your wheel, and it is just as impossible to play it without shouting orders to your outside player, confusion to your opponent and triumph over your good strokes; just as it is difficult to get through without some lively tumbles, rapid onslaughts into the net and high-pitched denunciations of the umpire's rulings. But bruised, defeated, breathless, and exhausted you will cling to your decision that as an outdoor game it is almost without parallel," concluded the narrator, mauling her fresh-pumped wheel. "I do honestly think it is a cure for the old, old, old ailment of bicycling."

MILICENT ARROWPOINT.

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But both have long been dead;
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She'd want a wheel instead.
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season at one of the English watering places, among a lot of women who thought it would serve as a substitute for polo, and now it has got over to this side. Two or three persons have laid out special courts for it up in Westchester county in New York, and the learned women wheelers of Boston are rather enthusiastically adopting it at their summer resorts. Of course you can realize that no ordinary tennis courts are large enough for one to pedal about in with comfort. If it is remembered that the dimensions are trebled and in England it is considered no drawback if the ground slopes a little, but of course the surface must be perfectly smooth. Tart courts are quite out of the question and the best of them is asphalted. That is expensive, however, unless there is a club to meet the costs and in private grounds just the plain foundation for the good American dirt court serves perfectly.

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"Well, for me it is a question of the solemn truth or wretched fiction," said the girl in lively looking gait stockings, as she pumped away earnestly and persistently at her hind tire. "It's too serious a matter to have to chance, and I must not run any possible danger of wrinkles I am going to join a bicycle tennis team.

"It was an eminent face specialist who frightened me about the wrinkles. She didn't know even my name, occupation or special predilections, but directly I took off my veil in her operating chair the other morning she calmly asserted that I had been riding too much. When I insisted on hearing how she knew I had been wheeling at all, she just handed me a powerful hand glass and began to point out the almost imperceptible indications of fine creases about my forehead, between the eyes and around the mouth and nose. It requires only three to six months wheeling, she told me, to fix those hair-line creases into long indelible wrinkles. I had just taken a private heart-breaking vow never to touch the pedals again when she cheerfully suggested that I counteract the effect of the bicycling by alternating or combining it with some other out-door sport.

"Try something," she said; "that will lift your eyes off the unconsciously steady and frowning simulation of the road, before you, that will bring your arms into free play and raise up your chin. Bicycling is routine sport. Give a woman ten miles of good road and away she will spin, her face drawn up in a knot, her body inflexible, her lips tightly shut, too interested, short of breath and intent on her road to speak, laugh or even change her expression and the result is natural, wrinkles; quick, deep, ugly fellows, hard to rub out and rapid in reappearing." Do you see I have been warned in time and in order to at once keep up my wheeling and maintain my youthful smoothness of brow and chin I've taken to bicycle tennis."

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Does bicycling bring wrinkles? That was the question hotly discussed by a little knot of women, resting on a log by the roadside the other day. Some of them were plainly alarmed at the suggestion as to whether the wrinkles should be allowed to interfere with the day's run or not, and a feeble minority of one remained openly defiant and skeptical.

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"It was an eminent face specialist who frightened me about the wrinkles. She didn't know even my name, occupation or special predilections, but directly I took off my veil in her operating chair the other morning she calmly asserted that I had been riding too much. When I insisted on hearing how she knew I had been wheeling at all, she just handed me a powerful hand glass and began to point out the almost imperceptible indications of fine creases about my forehead, between the eyes and around the mouth and nose. It requires only three to six months wheeling, she told me, to fix those hair-line creases into long indelible wrinkles. I had just taken a private heart-breaking vow never to touch the pedals again when she cheerfully suggested that I counteract the effect of the bicycling by alternating or combining it with some other out-door sport.

"Try something," she said; "that will lift your eyes off the unconsciously steady and frowning simulation of the road, before you, that will bring your arms into free play and raise up your chin. Bicycling is routine sport. Give a woman ten miles of good road and away she will spin, her face drawn up in a knot, her body inflexible, her lips tightly shut, too interested, short of breath and intent on her road to speak, laugh or even change her expression and the result is natural, wrinkles; quick, deep, ugly fellows, hard to rub out and rapid in reappearing." Do you see I have been warned in time and in order to at once keep up my wheeling and maintain my youthful smoothness of brow and chin I've taken to bicycle tennis."

THE COURT.

Even the skeptical girl under a brown veil demands to know something of this game. "Oh it is a new thing," explained she of the golf stockings. "It originated only this

season at one of the English watering places, among a lot of women who thought it would serve as a substitute for polo, and now it has got over to this side. Two or three persons have laid out special courts for it up in Westchester county in New York, and the learned women wheelers of Boston are rather enthusiastically adopting it at their summer resorts. Of course you can realize that no ordinary tennis courts are large enough for one to pedal about in with comfort. If it is remembered that the dimensions are trebled and in England it is considered no drawback if the ground slopes a little, but of course the surface must be perfectly smooth. Tart courts are quite out of the question and the best of them is asphalted. That is expensive, however, unless there is a club to meet the costs and in private grounds just the plain foundation for the good American dirt court serves perfectly.

"Naturally the net is extended and broadened, but as well it is stretched at least three feet above the ground. In the right position it should reach as high as the shoulders of the ordinary woman when sitting in her saddle. The reason of this is that a soft china silk such she binds around her waist and by sewing one end, in the form of an open-mouthed bag, she keeps her rubber balls there handy for serving—with her right she winds her racket, which is made of light wood with a handle double as long as one used for tennis. Some women use a featherweight racket, made a good deal like that for lacrosse, and by the end of the handle and a stout strap, this fine long bat is tied to her wrist.

THE WAY TO PLAY.

"Now as to the game: Two, four or six persons can play on one set of courts, where the rotation is to receive balls that fly beyond the limits of the court and if she can recover and drive back such balls, before they touch the ground, the point is not lost as in other games of tennis. She must send it back into her partner's courts and let them manipulate it on, but if she can direct it straight over the net into the opponent's courts she wins a point for her side. When not actively looking out for these flying balls her duty is to regain those hopelessly lost and restore them to their partners' courts, to take practice, care she doesn't intrude one inch inside the boundaries of the courts. For infringing this law she can be ruled out of the game by her partners' opponents.

MILICENT ARROWPOINT.

MARY.

Mary had a little lamb,
But both have long been dead;
If Mary were alive today,
She'd want a wheel instead.
—Somerville Journal.

THE COURT.

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A MARYLAND BOY.

Policeman James A. Duvall is a sporty, handsome looking young man in his natty military costume, including gait stockings and a nobby looking hat. He is twenty-nine years of age, and was born in Prince George county, Md., near Upper Marlboro. Mr.