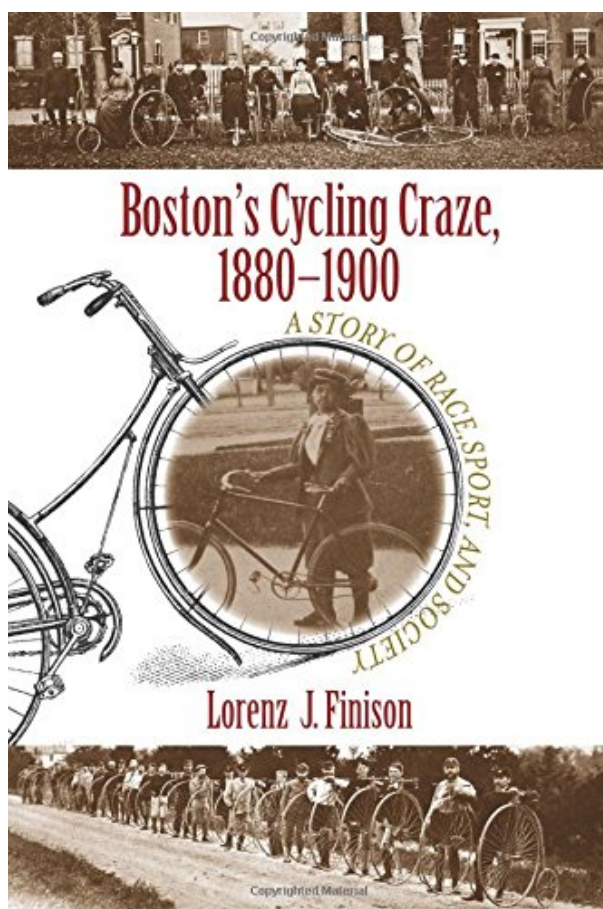


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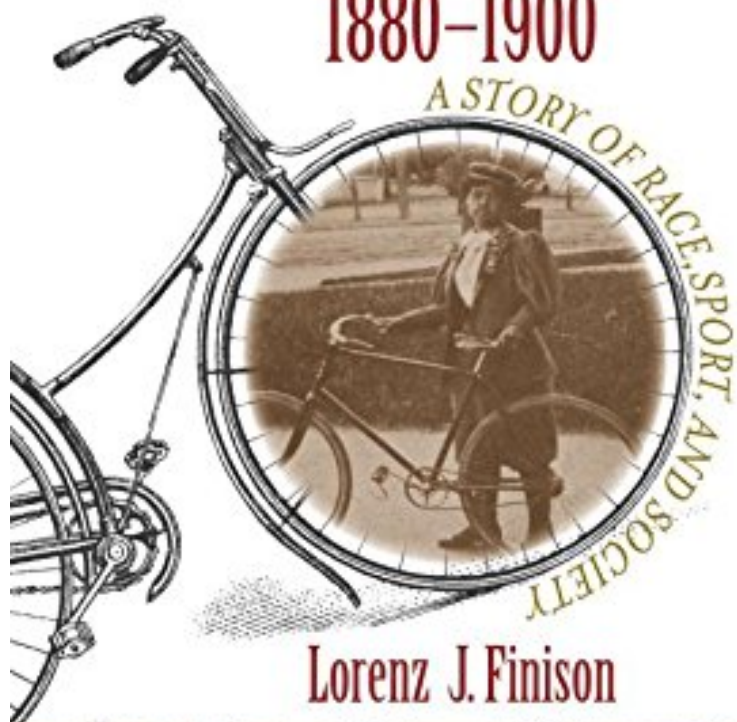


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From 1877 to 1896, the popularity of bicycles increased exponentially, and Boston was in on it from the start. The Boston Bicycle Club was the first in the nation, and the city's cyclists formed the nucleus of a new national organization, the League of American Wheelmen. The sport was becoming a craze, and Massachusetts had the largest per capita membership in the league in the 1890s and the largest percentage of women members. Several prominent cycling magazines were published in Boston, making cycling a topic of press coverage and a growing cultural influence as well as a form of recreation.

Lorenz J. Finison explores the remarkable rise of Boston cycling through the lives of several participants, including Kittie Knox, a biracial twenty-year-old seamstress who challenged the color line; Mary Sargent Hopkins, a self-proclaimed expert on women's cycling and publisher of *The Wheelwoman*; and Abbot Bassett, a longtime secretary of the League of American Wheelman and a vocal cycling advocate for forty years. Finison shows how these riders and others interacted on the road and in their cycling clubhouses, often constrained by issues of race, class, religion, and gender. He reveals the challenges facing these riders, whether cycling for recreation or racing, in a time of segregation, increased immigration, and debates about the rights of women.

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3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

A delightful and thought provoking history of cycling in 19th century Boston

By Joe Consumer

Excellent book with lots of interesting history about the Boston cycling craze of the 19th century. Slightly mis-titled, it's main focus is actually on racial prejudice and gender attitudes and cycling in this time period. The book's facts all jibe with local lore and family history (my grandparents grew up at the turn of the century in the local neighborhoods the book focuses on).

I learned a lot of great local history and cycling nuggets that I can't help boring my non-riding wife and friends with. I definitely recommend this book to cyclists interested in history.

You should also check out Charles Stevens' "Around the World on a Bicycle". Then sneak in to the Harvard Club of Boston on Commonwealth Ave. for a toast to Albert Pope - it used to be Albert Pope's house!. Quite a crib. Pope was a (or the) major driving force of all things bicycle in Boston. Afterward take a stroll through Mt. Benedict Cemetery in West Roxbury to honor the grave of Pierre Lallement, considered by many to be the inventor of the bicycle (unless you are Italian in which case you know for a fact that it is Leonardo DaVinci, or unless you are British and are rather positive it was actually James Starley, or unless you are Scottish and reckon it was Kirkpatrick Macmillan,...)

I look forward to meeting the author some day and sharing a ride out to South Natick.

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