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The Bicycle

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The **Bicycle**

Als die industrielle Revolution ins Rollen kam, wurde auch der Wunsch der Menschen größer, schnell von A nach B zu kommen. Die Zeit war reif für die Entwicklung des Fahrrads, das schnell zum Transportmittel für die Massen wurde.

The history of the bicycle and that of the the horseless *carriage* mirror one another. Together they represent ways that the poor and the wealthy *achieved* freedom of motion. The early 19th century saw all kinds of new steam-powered vehicles. At first, steam carriages *competed* with locomotives, but railways won that battle because they made transportation inexpensive in a way steam carriages couldn't.

People wanted to be free to travel roads as they pleased. The new dream of rapid movement had to be *individualized*. If the answer wasn't the steam carriage, then maybe it could be the bicycle. Between 1816 and '18, Scottish, German, and French makers all came out with primitive bicycles.

Those early bikes *seated* a rider between a front and a back wheel with his feet touching the ground so he could *propel* himself with a walking motion. But that form of bicycle dates back to *antiquity*. We find images of them in renaissance *stained glass*, Pompeian frescoes – even in Egyptian and Babylonian *bas-reliefs*.

Around 1839 another Scottish maker, Macmillan, added a feature when he built his hobbyhorse bicycle. It was a pedal-operated *crank* to drive the back wheel – a lot like the pedal-operated *chain drive* on your bike. But the idea didn't *catch on* back then. It was 1866 before pedals appeared. Then it was on the front wheel, like the *tricycles* we rode as children.

Bicycles took off after the front-wheel pedal appeared. But there was a problem: The bigger the wheel, the further the bike would move on each turn of the pedal. That led to the dangerously unstable bicycle you've seen in so many Currier and Ives prints – the one with the huge front wheel and the tiny back one. In its developed form, it was called the ordinary bicycle, but it was *nicknamed* „penny-farthing“ because its wheels looked like large and small coins.

Not till 1885 did the tricky ordinary give way to the so-called safety bicycle. That's the technical name for the modern bike with two equal wheels, the back one driven by a *chain* and *sprocket*. The safety bike had a lot in common



coach

reached

replaced

battled

pay for

*see list

placed

push

ancient times

*see list

*see list

*see list

*see list

become popular

*see list

called by the pet name

*see list

*see list

*see list

with MacMillan's hobbyhorse design from forty-six years earlier. It *displaced* the ordinary and became the basic bike design ever after.

So modern bikes entered the twentieth century along with the new gasoline automobiles. They freed people who couldn't *afford* cars. Now they too could go where they pleased. And, oh, the sense of freedom we felt as children when we got our first bikes! They let us fly like the wind and go where we wanted. They were wonderful things. ■

Prof. Dr. John Lienhard, University of Houston

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<i>achieve, to</i>	erreichen
<i>afford, to</i>	sich leisten
<i>antiquity</i>	Altertum
<i>bas-relief</i>	Flachrelief
<i>carriage</i>	Kutsche
<i>catch on, to</i>	sich durchsetzen
<i>chain</i>	Kette
<i>chain drive</i>	Kettentrieb
<i>compete, to</i>	wetteifern
<i>crank</i>	Kurbel
<i>displace, to</i>	verdrängen
<i>farthing</i>	Viertelpenny (Münze)
<i>individualize, to</i>	individualisieren
<i>nickname, to</i>	mit Spitznamen nennen
<i>propel, to</i>	antreiben
<i>seat, to</i>	platzieren, setzen
<i>sprocket</i>	Ritzel, Zahnkranz
<i>stained glass</i>	Glasmalerei
<i>tricycle</i>	Dreirad