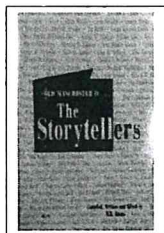


Excerpt from

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*Storyteller: Anna McGuire
from The Manchester Herald, 11/16/66*

THE PEDALLERS

By the latter part of the nineteenth century, the materials and design of the bicycle had improved to such an extent that cycling had universal appeal. It became a popular mode of transportation for Manchester residents who used it for practical purposes as well as pleasure.

Factories such as the E.E. Hilliard Co., Bon Ami Soap Manufacturers and Cheney Bros. erected long racks for the parking of employees bicycles during the work day. Everyone pedaled to work.

The enthusiast devoted Saturday afternoon to a pleasure trip, touring the country side alone or with friends, for incredible distances. Bicycle clubs were organized. Bicycle racing became a popular sport in Manchester.

The bicycle industry became "big business" in Manchester, as repair shops and agencies for the sale of bicycles and equipment were established to meet this new transportation medium.

North Enders recall, with nostalgia, Mr. J.P. Ledyard and his bicycle shop of the early 1900s. It was located in the rear basement of the Balch and Brown block on Depot Square. The entrance to J.P.'s thriving repair and sales business fronted an alley undistinguished even by name.

J.P.'s was the center of community life. Here, North Enders met in the evening ostensibly for bicycle repairs, purchase of parts and accessories, and to negotiate for a new bike. In reality, the shop, like the old country store, provided the men with a meeting place to debate the burning political and governmental issues of the day for the habitués were civic-minded residents interested in Manchester's progress.

East side business and professional men speak with warm affection of "Bill" Green and his bicycle shop on Spruce Street. Mr.

Green started his bicycle repair business in the early 1900s and for 40 years serviced bicycles, adding motorcycle and automobile repair to his line as these types of vehicles became popular. It was quite by accident that he entered this career.

He could not afford the expense of having his own bicycle repaired. Experimentation convinced him that his own skill could serve him. The second stage found him correcting damages to his friends' bicycles. The final stage was the opening of his own business.

During his long career, he worked on bicycles of all-wood construction: frames, wheels and spokes.

He recalls vividly the throng of Cheney employees who depended on their trusty bicycles for transportation to work. These vehicles were so necessary to daily living that over-night service was a must. The bicyclist left his damaged cycle at the shop at the end of the day's work and picked it up next morning on his way to work. South Enders claim ownership of Mr. Maurice J. Madden, who opened a bicycle repair shop in 1903 in the Cheney block at the corner of Main and Charter Oak Streets; and later, as Manchester residents became motorcyclists and automobilists, moved to the Johnson block on Main Street. Here, he founded Madden Bros., for the repair and sale of all three types of vehicles with emphasis on the Nash car agency.

He was, perhaps, Manchester's earliest and most successful bicycle racer. Yesterday's bicycle racing fans tell wonderful tales of his skill in distancing all competitors: local, state and national.

Mr. Madden and his friends frequently pedaled from Manchester to Worcester, Mass., participated in a road race in that city, and pedaled back to Manchester, all on the same day. Sometimes, as he rode through a small community on the outskirts of Manchester after dark, on his lightless bicycle, he was stopped by a constable. The constable, recognizing this noted racer, did not arrest him; instead he lent him a lantern to hang on his handle bar for the safe return to Manchester.

Mr. Madden's prowess was not a mere bit of luck. He practiced constantly on dirt lanes at Woodland Park, on rough rutted roads, and on his home trainer. He drew an enthusiastic crowd at Cheney Hall whenever he gave exhibitions on his trainer. This mechanism must have been the prototype of the modern bicycle reducing machine.