

The Story of **BICYCLES**



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Words in **bold** appear in the glossary.

History of Bicycles

They take us places. They help us exercise. They entertain us. What are they? Bicycles! Bicycles are used by all kinds of people. They are everywhere, all over the globe.

Today, there are more than 1 billion bicycles in the world. Denmark has more bikes than cars! But how did bicycles begin?



In 1817, a German man named Karl von Drais invented the horseless carriage. It had two wheels but no pedals. So how did it move? Riders pushed their feet on the ground.

This machine was known by many names. The velocipede. The hobby horse. The running machine. No matter what it was called, it led to what we now think of as the bicycle.



People riding hobby horses



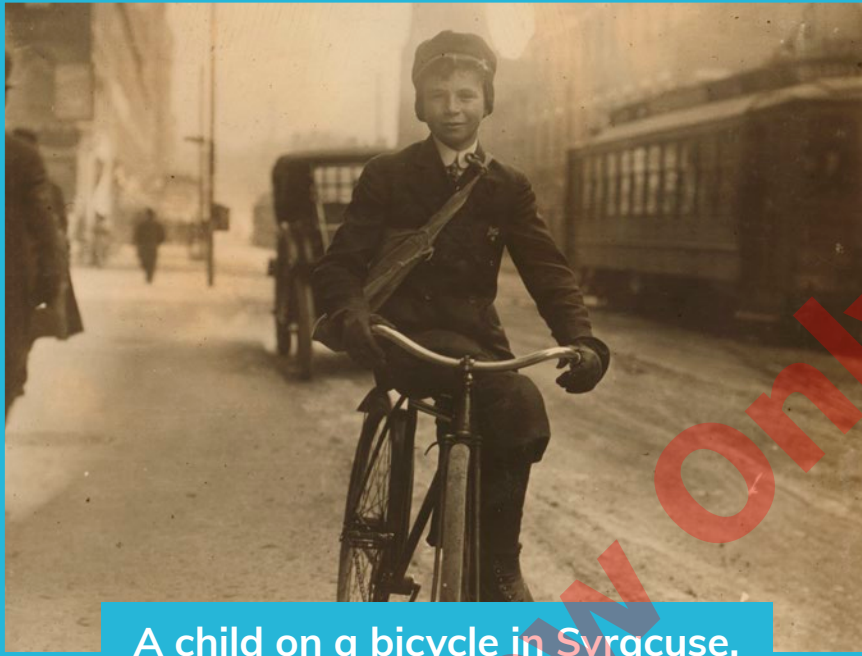
A man on a hobby horse (left)
and a boneshaker (right)

In the 1860s, the bicycle changed. Many French inventors tried new things. They added pedals to their models. These were the first machines to be called bicycles. They were also called boneshakers because the ride was so bumpy.

In the 1870s and 1880s, many inventors designed bikes. Eugène Meyer and James Starley gave bikes bigger front wheels. These bikes were called penny-farthings. They were fast and **stable**. People raced them.



William Martin won a New York race riding a penny-farthing in 1891.



A child on a bicycle in Syracuse,
New York, in 1910

But riders felt penny-farthings were not safe. Other inventors added safety features. They made the wheels the same size. They gave bicycles chains.

In the 1890s, the bicycle business in the United States took off. Bikes were affordable and easy to fix. This made bicycling very popular.

By 1912, bikes were used for different things. People rode to work. They also rode for fun. Riders were young and old. Bikes were similar to how we know them now.



The son of Scottish inventor John Dunlop rode one of the first bikes to have air in the tires.