

Baker Street *Elementary*

PRESENTS
"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"



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THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON
A046 -- THE NEW WOMAN CYCLIST -- FEBRUARY, 2022





WELCOME TO TOPIC # 046... TODAY, WATSON AND
I WILL BE LOOKING AT CYCLING IN THE
SHERLOCKIAN STORIES...





VIOLET SMITH, THE SOLITARY CYCLIST WHO SOUGHT MY ASSISTANCE, REPRESENTED THE NEW TYPE OF SINGLE WORKING WOMAN WHO EMERGED AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.





SARAH GRAND COINED THE TERM 'THE NEW WOMAN' IN 1894 TO DESCRIBE THE INCREASING NUMBER OF WELL-EDUCATED AND SELF-SUPPORTING WOMAN WHO EMERGED AS THE SOCIAL CLIMATE AND DEMOGRAPHICS SHIFTED.





**AT THE END OF THE 1800s, APPROXIMATELY HALF
OF THE WOMEN AGED 20-40 WERE UNMARRIED AND
OUTNUMBERED ELIGIBLE MEN.**



WITH LITTLE PROSPECT OF EVER BECOMING A WIFE, WILLIAM RATHBONE GREG ESTIMATED THAT ABOUT 300,000 OF THEM WERE DOOMED TO LIFE DEVOID OF MARRIAGE AND CONSISTING INSTEAD OF 'CELIBACY, STRUGGLE, AND PRIVATION.'



DESPITE GREG'S INSISTENCE THAT WITHOUT FULFILLING THEIR ROLE AS WIFE AND MOTHER, MANY OF THOSE IN THIS AGE GROUP FOUND NEW PROSPECTS OPENING TO THEM...



...AND THE BICYCLE WAS BOTH A SYMBOL AND A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO THEIR NEW-FOUND FREEDOM.



**TOWARD THE END OF THE CENTURY, TWO MAJOR
IMPROVEMENTS TO THE BICYCLE MADE THEM BOTH
SAFER, MORE COMFORTABLE, AND OVER TIME,
MORE AFFORDABLE...**



...THE 'SAFETY BICYCLE' WITH TWO EQUAL-SIZED WHEELS AND A CHAIN-DRIVEN REAR WHEEL, AND THE PNEUMATIC TIRE, TRANSPORTATION.



WHILE BOTH WOMEN AND MEN FOUND THESE INNOVATIONS TO THEIR LIKING, THIS NEW FORM OF MOBILITY HAD A MUCH GREATER IMPACT ON WOMEN.



VICTORIAN ETIQUETTE PROSCRIBED WOMEN, PARTICULARLY THOSE OF THE MIDDLE CLASS, TO A VERY LIMITED SET OF 'RESPECTABLE' ACTIVITIES VISITING, ATTENDING CERTAIN CULTURAL EVENTS, SUPPORTING CERTAIN CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES, AND SOME RECREATIONAL OUTINGS.



BICYCLING EXTENDED WOMEN'S GEOGRAPHIC AND SOCIAL BOUNDARIES. THEY WERE ABLE TO TRAVEL FARTHER AND INTO AREAS NOT PREVIOUSLY VISITED, AND POSSIBLY UNACCOMPANIED.



THIS DESIGN, HOWEVER, REQUIRED DIFFERENT CLOTHING, AND LED TO ADDITIONAL FREEDOM IN THAT ARENA AS WELL.



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AT A TIME WHEN SHOWING HER ANKLE WAS ENOUGH TO MARK A WOMAN AS A PROSTITUTE AND LADIES ONLY RODE SIDESADDLE MANY DONNED PANTALOONS OR BLOOMERS, PERMITTING THE WHOLE LOWER LEG TO BE VISIBLE (ALTHOUGH COVERED BY WOOLEN STOCKINGS OR BOOTS).



BIKES AND BLOOMERS

Kat
Jungnickel

Victorian Women Inventors and
Their *Extraordinary* Cycle Wear

THE VOLUME OF FABRIC USED IN THIS FASHION,
HOWEVER, PROVED AS GREAT, OR GREATER,
HINDRANCE THAN SOME SKIRTS.





SOME FORWARD-THINKING CYCLING AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS ADVOCATES WENT SO FAR AS TO DISPARAGE THE CORSET AND DISCOURAGED ITS USE AS WELL.





IN THE END, THE MAJORITY OF WOMEN CONTINUED TO WEAR SKIRTS AND CORSETS WHEN CYCLING.





Illustration by Rockwood, New York
CLOOMER COSTUME

BICYCLE MANUFACTURERS DEVELOPED A NUMBER OF DEVICES TO HELP MAINTAIN THE WOMEN'S MODESTY, BUT NONE WERE TRULY EFFECTIVE.



*DESPITE GREG'S CONCERNS ABOUT WOMEN'S
MARITAL PROSPECTS, THE SITUATION WAS NOT
AS DIRE AS THE ONE HE PAINTED.*



**THE RISE IN EDUCATED WOMEN LED TO A RISE IN
THEIR INVOLVEMENT WITHIN THE WORKFORCE.**



MANY SINGLE WOMEN MOVED INTO PROFESSIONAL POSITIONS SUCH AS SECRETARIES, TEACHERS, GOVERNESSES, ETC. AND WERE ABLE TO LIVE INDEPENDENTLY, WITHOUT THE SUPPORT OF A FATHER OR HUSBAND.



**IN ADDITION, WOMEN HAD A LARGER POOL OF PROSPECTS
FROM WHICH TO CHOOSE... COUPLES NO LONGER HAD TO
LIVE IN THE SAME VILLAGE OR NEIGHBORHOOD.**





THEY WERE ABLE TO TRAVEL OUTSIDE SUCH AREAS
TO MEET, OFTEN UNCHAPERONED.



*SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WAS COMMON ENOUGH TO
BE IMMORTALIZED IN THE HARRY DARCE SONG
'DAISY BELL' AND HER BICYCLE 'BUILT FOR TWO.'*



MISS SMITH DISPLAYED THE ASPECTS PHYSICAL FITNESS, FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT, AND SELF-SUPPORTING INCOME THAT MIGHT HAVE LABELED HER AS 'A NEW WOMAN,' WITH THE EXCEPTION OF HER MARITAL PROSPECTS.



WHILE SOME NEW WOMEN MIGHT NEVER RECEIVE AN OFFER OF MARRIAGE, SHE HAD THE CHOICE OF THREE (ALBEIT WERE TWO UNDESIRED).



*ALL THE SAME, SHE HAD THE FREEDOM TO REFUSE THE
TWO UNWANTED ONES, AND THANKS TO YOU,
RETAINED HER INDEPENDENCE TO MAKE THAT CHOICE.*



SO, WE HAVE COMPLETED TOPIC # 046 IN OUR SERIES...

IN TOPIC # 047, WE WILL BE LOOKING AT THE CLERGY DURING THE VICTORIAN PERIOD.



ORIGINAL SOURCE MATERIAL FOR THIS TOPIC:

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- [HTTPS://VICTORIANIST.WORDPRESS.COM/2015/04/13/CHAINS-OF-FREEDOM-THE-BICYCLES-IMPACT-ON-1890S-BRITAIN/](https://victorianist.wordpress.com/2015/04/13/chains-of-freedom-the-bicycles-impact-on-1890s-britain/)
- CLARE S. SIMPSON, "A SOCIAL HISTORY OF WOMEN AND CYCLING IN LATE-NINETEENTH CENTURY NEW ZEALAND."
- [HTTP://WWW.TELEGRAPH.CO.UK/LIFESTYLE/WELLBEING/DIET/8419028/BICYCLES-THE-CHAINS-THAT-SET-WOMEN-FREE.HTML](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/lifestyle/wellbeing/diet/8419028/bicycles-the-chains-that-set-women-free.html)



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"THE LIFE AND TIMES IN VICTORIAN LONDON"

IS CREATED THROUGH THE INGENUITY & HARD WORK OF:

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