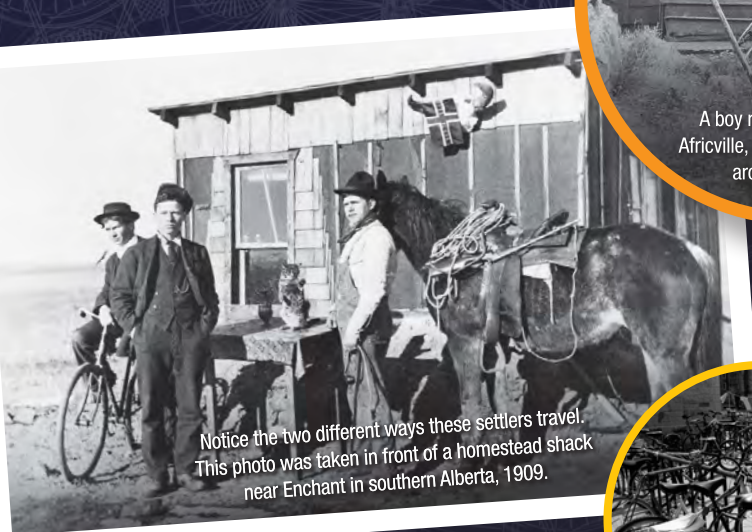


OUT AND ABOUT ON A BIKE

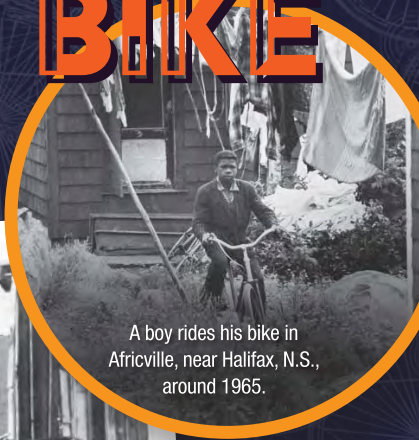
Since bicycles first arrived here, Canadians have used them to do lots of different things.



Notice the two different ways these settlers travel. This photo was taken in front of a homestead shack near Enchant in southern Alberta, 1909.

GOING PLACES

Before cars, the only ways to go farther and carry more than you could by walking were horses and bicycles. Bikes were cheaper and more practical, especially for people who lived in towns and cities. They were also handy for farmers and others who needed to travel into town from the country. And even after cars and trucks became available, bikes were still the most affordable way to get around. Until Canada's bigger cities had public transit like streetcars or buses, bikes were the easiest way to get to work or school or visit friends in another neighbourhood.



A boy rides his bike in Africville, near Halifax, N.S., around 1965.



With so many people riding bikes by the 1890s, a new thing started popping up in towns and cities: bike racks.

MESSAGE SENT

Picture a time without email, texting or even telephones. How would a business send important information across town? If you sent a telegram across the country, how would it get to the right person? The answer for many years was the bicycle messenger. Messengers usually worked for a company, often the big railways. They hired cyclists to deliver messages received at the train station's telegraph office. Bike messengers were busiest from the 1890s until the end of the Second World War.



Canadian Pacific bicycle messengers in Calgary, around 1942.



Railway messenger boys in Alberta, early 1900s.



These cyclists, pictured in 1900, delivered messages for a Montreal telegraph company.

Toronto's H.T. Baily bike messenger service started in 1880 and ran 24 hours a day. It is often described as the first company of its kind in North America.



A young man delivering newspapers in Vancouver, 1940s.

At first, many bicycle messengers and delivery people were teenagers and even children. By the 1920s, most provinces had laws to ensure kids were in school instead of working. Kids could still earn money doing part-time jobs like delivering newspapers.

DELIVERED TO THE DOOR

Starting in the 1880s, many stores in Canadian towns and cities had cyclists to deliver items to customers' homes. Cycle couriers also carried letters and parcels. Customers could order milk and other groceries from stores like the one at right delivered to their homes via bicycle. In 1932, Canadian company CCM even developed the Light Delivery Bicycle, which had a heavier frame and a basket. As more people got their own cars and services like mail and public transit improved, there was less need for cycle deliveries. By the 1980s, though, bike couriers became a common sight once again in big cities, where they could often deliver packages and envelopes faster than cars. Email and online transfers have reduced the need for paper documents, but couriers still exist. The rise of food delivery apps over the past decade means that today, Canadian cities are full of couriers like the one shown at right, often on e-bikes zipping around from restaurants to customers' homes.



Police in many places still use bikes, just like this constable in Vancouver's Stanley Park in 1899.

In the late 1800s, dozens of Canadian hotels offered special rates for people on cycling vacations.



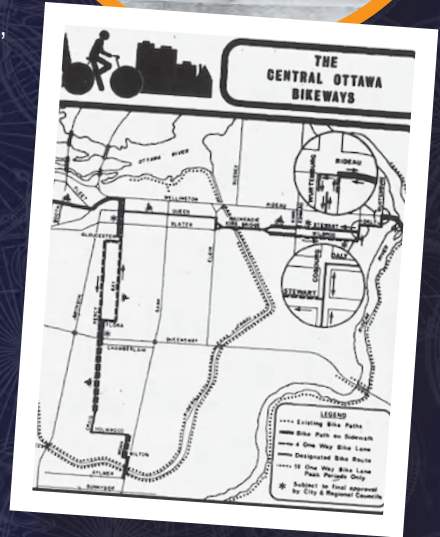
Cycling outings were a rare time when young men and women could be together without someone supervising them.

FUN AND EXERCISE

For more than a century, lots of people rode bikes to work, or for work, and still do. But just like today, folks of all ages loved cycling in their spare time. From the early days of the ordinary bike, people formed clubs to go out cycling together. Some even had their own uniforms. Members of these clubs also often worked to get better roads, signs and safer conditions for cyclists. Some clubs published maps or guides to good cycling spots. There were clubs in cities like St. John's and Winnipeg, and in small towns like Truro, N.S., and Fort Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan. The first in Canada was the Montreal Bicycle Club, started in 1878. The first national club was the Canadian Wheelmen's Association, formed in Ontario in 1882. It later changed its name to the Canadian Cycling Association. Some touring clubs stayed fairly close to home, while others cycled long distances. Other clubs focused on organizing races.



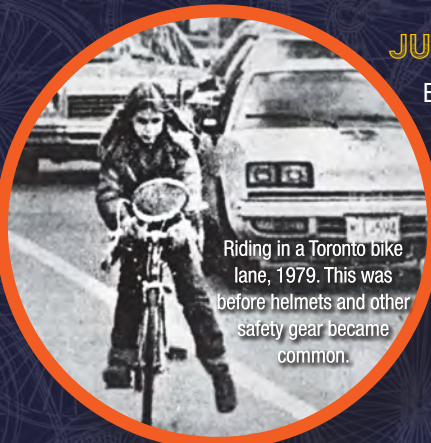
Members of the Montreal Bicycle Club in 1885.



Special events for kids were especially popular from the 1950s through the 1970s, although they still happen in lots of Canadian communities. Kids decorated their bikes for parades and took part in competitions. In some places, local police hold bike safety events for kids.

JUST FOR BIKES

Ever since cars became common, roads have been dangerous places for cyclists. In 1973, car-bike crashes killed more than 175 cyclists in Canada. Around the same time, a stronger push started for separate bike paths away from roads, and special lanes for bikes on some streets and highways. Although there have been bike paths in some areas since the late 1800s, there are now thousands of kilometres of trails all over Canada.



Riding in a Toronto bike lane, 1979. This was before helmets and other safety gear became common.