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## **Bicycle Touring**

While there has been some good scholarship on bicycle racing (Nye's *Hearts of Lions* and Ritchie's *Major Taylor*), there has been little work done on early bicycle tourists. Although they were not necessarily competitive in a narrow sense, a number of these early riders used the bicycle to extend the possibility of long distance travel as well as challenge their own capabilities.

Shortly after the introduction of the 'ordinary' (the early bicycle with a large front wheel with pedals connected to a backbone with a small rear wheel) in 1869 in England and 1876 in the United States, people began riding it further and further. *The Outing*, a late nineteenth century journal devoted to sport, chronicled those early riders and their feats. First riders ventured from city to city within a limited geographic region. Then they began riding between distant cities, until in 1884 Thomas Stevens became the first wheelman to complete a transcontinental ride, from San Francisco to Boston, in only eighty four days of travel, either riding or walking. Since he never intended to conclude his ride in Boston, he gathered the necessary financial resources from Colonel Albert Pope, who introduced bicycle manufacturing to the United States, and sailed to England, where he began his around the world bicycle tour. Nine hundred and seventy-one days after leaving, he returned to San Francisco.

Soon after Stevens' return, others began attempting his same feat, some successfully and others with disastrous consequences. This paper examines those who undertook the challenge of long distance bicycle touring. What motivated this interest? What obstacles were faced? How did the public react to these individuals?