

Around the World on 2 Wheels by Peter Zheutlin (2007)

Annie Kopchovsky [Londonderry for the trip] made up a story that a wager was made that a woman couldn't ride a bicycle around the world as Thomas Stevens did a decade before [13,500 miles in 3 yrs]. Annie was caught up in the depression [1893-1898], women suffrage & world exploration at the time. She was to start without any money, earn \$5000 along the way, check in at several cities & return within 15 months to earn \$10,000.

On 25Jun1894 she began her journey from Boston in a full Victorian dress & traded one form of drudgery for another. She wasted a month in NYC & more time going to Chicago before leaving on a steamer to Europe. She wanted to quit in Chicago, but got a lighter bike [from 42# to 21#] & advertising contracts. The hopes of millions of women were riding on her handlebars.

Josiah Slocum set out in a homemade 37' boat to be the 1st to sail solo around the world (1895-1998) [46,000 miles]. Nellie Bly in 1890 traveled around the world in 72 days in response to Verne's book. The newer safety bikes [as opposed the high-rider] were the rage of the 1890's that gave the common man [or woman] more freedom.

In Chicago she realized she needed to make changes [bloomers, then pants]. She heads east back to NYC, took a steamer to France [11/24-12/3], another steamer across the Mediterranean [1/20-2/5], through the new Suez Canal, steamer to Japan [2/5-3/4] then SF [3/9-3/23]. She skipped her ride from Bombay to Calcutta to make up lost time.

She had a bike accident on Niles Canyon Rd, Sunol, CA, but made it to her lecture in Stockton, CA on 4/11. She broke her arm in Iowa.

She was in NYC Jul & Nov94; Chicago Sep94; France Dec94-Jan95; Hong Kong Feb95; SF 23Mar95-9Apr95; San Jose 4/18, Salinas 4/25; Paso Robles 4/30; Los Angeles 5/18-28; Riverside 5/30; Yuma 6/14; El Paso 6/29; Albuquerque 7/14; Santa Fe 7/19; Colorado Springs 8/9; Denver 8/12-20; Omaha 8/24-31; Cedar Rapids 9/8; Chicago 9/12; & returned to Boston 24Sep95.

She worked the media to give the world what they looked for: a female cycling heroine. She was a woman with great charisma, self-confidence & persuasiveness. The French loved her & also in Saigon. Her Achilles tendon was inflamed, but it sounded better when she told them she was attacked. She loved the attention & was making money along this adventure.

She returned to the Jewish family she abandoned only to send her kids to a Catholic boarding school. Her daughter [Mollie] became a nun & was disowned. Some 50 yrs later Annie's granddaughter [Mary] found out she had an aunt & wrote her. The letter helped heal the wounds Annie caused [Mollie died 2 months later].

Books: Around the World in 80 days (Jules Verne); Around the World on a bicycle (John Stevens)