

Small Categories Series

Bicycles

This category has always struck me as being “cute,” in a rather whimsical way—antique Bicycles, Bicycles built for two, unicycles, etc.

The bicycle actually evolved from a little wooden horse with a fixed front wheel, which was invented in France in the 1790's. However, you could only maneuver this bike with your feet because there weren't any pedals and the fixed front wheel prevented it from being steered. It was improved in Germany in 1817, when Baron Karl von Drais developed a steerable front wheel to replace the fixed one. He called this a "dandy horse." In addition to this, in 1839, the first pedals were introduced by Kirkpatrick Macmillan, a blacksmith from Scotland. Many of the old bikes had very large front wheels, because it was believed that the bigger the front wheel, the faster the bike.

In England, in the early 1880's, the "safety bicycle" was invented. This particular bike, which would become the model for the modern bicycle, had a chain, sprocket driving rear wheel, and equal sized wheels. The years that followed saw a development of pneumatic tires (1880's) , two and three speed hub gears (1890's), and derailleur gears (1899). The derailleur gear was the last major innovation of bicycle design until the 1970's. At that time bicycles became more aerodynamic and they made use of more unconventional frames.

There really are Bicycle collectors, but I don't know of any currently, and I have no collection stats.

