

THE LOUISVILLE BICYCLE CLUB

Founded in 1897

www.louisvillebicycleclub.org

October 2012

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**Sat. OCT 6 - FREE
Chain Cleaning Clinic
(See p.8)**

The Louisville Cyclist is a monthly newsletter of the Louisville Bicycle Club.

*Please submit articles and photos to:
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1906 Lower Hunters Trace
Louisville, KY 40216,
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502-447-7814.*

**Deadline for the
Nov 2012 issue is Oct 12**

Please let us know what you think this newsletter needs. After all, it's your newsletter!



35th Annual Old Kentucky Home Tour

by Andy Murphy, LBC President



The 2012 OKHT started with overcast skies and rain. By about 9 am, the rain had stopped and the over 1,000 riders were on the road. SAG 1 has become the OKHT Breakfast Stop, with 20 dozen Krispy Kreme Doughnuts being consumed along with 200 delicious Mini-Muffins from **Nancy's Bagel Grounds**, all being washed down with fresh, hot **Heine Bros. Coffee!** The Spoke-N-Word Group is already working on next year's breakfast menu!

The **Louisville Water Company** really came to our rescue this year--more to the point, LBC member Tim Meyer came to our rescue! Tim is an employee of The Water Company and he made arrangements to get the brand new water hauling trailer to Lily Pike to deliver Louisville's Best "Pure Tap" water to the OKHT! Thank you Louisville Water Company and thank you Tim! Thanks also to the **American Red Cross** for staffing this stop!

The congregation of Mt. Zion United Methodist Church staffed SAG 5 on Saturday and their enthusiasm was really cool! Same at the Lincoln Homestead, where Dan Delph and



A jubilant rider celebrates as he crests Lily Pike!

(photo courtesy Craig Dooley)

the **Bike To Beat Cancer** crew handled business! Dan and his crew took the Ice Cream Stop to the next level this year, offering 6 different ice creams to our weary century riders! I might have to do the century next year, just to get one of those drumsticks!

At **OKHT-Fest**, on the lawn at Spalding Hall, the **American Red Cross** drew for the CANNONDALE CAAD 10 road bicycle that was being raffled for \$1 per chance and the winner was Sarah Wilding of Frankfort, KY. Over 3600 chances were sold for the bike, an increase of over 300 from last year! A special thanks to **Clarksville Schwinn Cycling & Fitness** for donating the bicycle and helping to make the 35th OKHT such a success! **Baptist East/Milestone Wellness Center** once again offered complimentary yoga instruction from Margie Jones--thanks Marg! Chris Cakes once again served up



(cont. on p.5)

EMAIL NEWSLETTER DELIVERY

YOUR CLUB OFFICERS 2012
(Executive Committee)**Andrew Murphy**

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The Louisville Bicycle Club is affiliated with the **League of American Bicyclists (LAB)** and the **United States Cycling Federation (USCF)**.

Don't Miss an Issue!

Keep your membership and email information up-to-date by editing your member profile at:

<http://www.louisvillebicycleclub.org/>

Thanks for your cooperation!

*Receive
Your Newsletter
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NEW MEMBERS

Atkins, Kelly & Stedman, Abby	17019 Ashburton Dr	Louisville, KY	40245 (818) 800-0309
Clark, Dennis	5754 Alanadale Dr	Louisville, KY	40272 (502) 541-8768
Daly, Ned & Julie	118 Arterburn Dr	Louisville, KY	40222 (502) 608-0246
Davis, Hank	9901 Forest Green Blvd	Louisville, KY	40223 (502) 876-6544
English, Kathleen	110 Staebler Av	Louisville, KY	40207 (502) 592-8139
English, Patrick	83 Breckinridge Sq	Louisville, KY	40220 (502) 432-8357
Fishman, Lois	2616 Downey Dr	Jeffersonville, IN	47130 (502) 727-2001
Ford, Michelle	10600 Wildflower Woods Ct	Louisville, KY	40299 (502) 819-0304
Franks, Marsha	301 Fairmeade Rd	Louisville, KY	40207
Horvay, Andy & family	1469 St. James Ct	Louisville, KY	40208
Hudson, David	301 Ash Run Rd	Louisville, KY	40245 (502) 233-0520
Kirzinger, Stephen	1106 Col Anderson Pkwy	Louisville, KY	40222 (502) 419-4732
Kuhtik, Andrew	4004 Waterford Cir #6	Louisville, KY	40207 (908) 447-9721
Mennell, Kim	2632 Drayton Dr	Louisville, KY	40205 (502) 637-5573
Miranda, Laura	722 Jefferson Ct	Louisville, KY	40217 (502) 619-4719
Murphy-Jacob, Jean	3000 Eleanor Av	Louisville, KY	40205 (502) 454-0681
Nicholson, Lisa	306 Franck Av	Louisville, KY	40206 (502) 235-3884
Phillips, Kenneth & family	7510 Abbott Glen Dr	Crestwood, KY	40014
Ramjattan, Krishna	251 Norbourne Blvd	Louisville, KY	40207
Richter, Bryan	1405 Cadet Ct	Louisville, KY	40222 (502) 593-4459
Schreck, William	2565 Cherosen, Rd	Louisville, KY	40205 (502) 458-6470
Skaggs, Margie	425 S Hubbards Lane #267	Louisville, KY	40207 (502) 643-2186
Stauffer, Curtis & Cutler, C. Rachel	1921 Maplewood Pl	Louisville, KY	40205
Steinbock, Stuart	234 Raleigh Ln	Louisville, KY	40206 (502) 741-1309
Tillman, David	722 Jefferson Ct	Louisville, KY	40217
Upsall, Michael & Mary	1916 Eastview Av	Louisville, KY	40205 (502) 291-1547
Wagoner, Skip	1361 Trinity Park Dr	Louisville, KY	40213 (918) 695-3826
Witmyer, Keri	2825 Lexington Rd #185	Louisville, KY	40280 (661) 477-2583
Zinsious, Paul	6808 Fernhaven Rd	Louisville, KY	40228 (502) 376-7248

NOTICES

MetroCall – 311**or 574-5000**

It's been brought to our attention that not all cell phones recognize 311 as a legitimate phone number. If you have a problem on a bike path, bike lane or in a park you can report the problem to MetroCall at 311 or 574-5000. When you report a problem, you'll be given a tracking number so you can follow-up to make sure the problem has been addressed.

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35th Annual Old Kentucky Home Tour (cont. from p.1)

by Andy Murphy, LBC President

pulled pork bar-b-que and all the fixin's and Another Colour served up the most excellent musical entertainment!

After a Chris Cakes pancake breakfast, it was on the road again to the Harmony Habitat SAG Stop followed by the World Famous Cookie Stop! The **National MS Society, Kentucky-Southeast**



Doe Cummings helps a rider make it to the top of Lily Pike! Talk about SAG Support! We'll even push your bike for you!
(photo courtesy Craig Dooley)

Indiana Chapter staffed the Cookie Stop along with an army of LBC volunteers--thank you all!

Following the **Team Bag Balm SAG Stop**, the fresh fruit and whatever else the Bag Balmers offered, it was time for the ALL YOU CAN EAT PIZZA PARTY at E.P. "Tom" Sawyer State Park! We went through 200 pizzas and lots of Gatorade! At the Pizza Party, it was announced that

Sue Stroup was the lucky Volunteer winner of the FUJI Roubaix bicycle which was donated by **Parkside Bikes!** Sue graduated from our New Rider Clinic last year and has been riding and volunteering regularly ever since! Thank you Parkside Bikes and thank you and congratulations, Sue!

There are so many people to thank. First, our Sponsors. You'll see their advertisements throughout this newsletter. You can click on their ad's and visit their websites. When you're out and about, drop in and tell them **thank you for supporting the OKHT and the American Red Cross!** And the army of 150 Volunteers who made this weekend possible, stuffing registration packets, marking the roadways, working registration or SAG Stops; nearly every person you saw OKHT weekend was a Volunteer. Without their efforts this weekend would not have happened--**THANK YOU!**

SAVE THE DATE

September 7th & 8th, 2013 for OKHT 36!

Life is good
Murphy



Larry Preble stylin' on one of the "Ordinaries" from the stable of Carson Torpey. (photo courtesy Andy Murphy)



Happiness is a full Bike Parking Lot in Bardstown!
(photo courtesy Andy Murphy)



The ALL YOU CAN EAT PIZZA PARTY at "Tom" Sawyer saw 200 large Papa John's pizza's consumed!
(photo courtesy Andy Murphy)

Labor Day Hike, Bike & Paddle

by Andy Murphy, LBC President



The Mayor's Healthy Hometown SUBWAY Fresh Fit Hike, Bike & Paddle Labor Day 2012 edition went off under threatening skies which turned into intermittent light rain showers. While not as big a crowd as the Memorial Day H,B & P, the crowd was still estimated at well over 5,000. Nearly 200 LBC members rode the ride, with many of them serving as Bike Marshals, as they have for many years. Thank you all for your continued service! Doe Cummings and my wife Laurie aka Ms. L, drove a SAG Wagon filling in for me. I really needed to get out on the bike and they both took pity on the poor old grey headed dude, who just wanted to ride his bike--THANK YOU!

Life is good
Murphy



Riders mingle on the Great Lawn before the start of the Mayor's Healthy Hometown Hike, Bike & Paddle.
(photo courtesy Andy Murphy)



The start of the Mayor's Healthy Hometown Hike, Bike & Paddle is a crowded affair! (photo courtesy Andy Murphy)

A Sunday Cruise

by Andy Murphy, LBC President

Ms L and I recently took a Sunday afternoon cruise on The Belle Of Louisville. As we were rolling down the river, we noticed the Sunday 2 PM LBC ride traveling down River Road. What a crowd! It was really cool to see the ride from the deck of the Belle. I'm not sure why, but it just seemed cool.

On our way back down river, we saw the progress that's been made on the Indiana end of the Big 4 Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge. Indiana Officials say the ramp on their side of the bridge will be done by Spring, 2013. This information page on Wikipedia has some interesting history on the bridge; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Big_Four_Bridge I look forward to being able to traverse the Ohio River on a bridge that isn't the 2nd Street Bridge. This story; <http://brokensidewalk.com/2012/08/02/with-big-four-bridge-to-open-next-year-jeffersonville-park-unveiled/> includes an animation of the proposed ramp and park in Jeffersonville, IN.



Sunday afternoon Heine Bros. Ride from the deck of The Belle Of Louisville. (photo courtesy Andy Murphy)



Support structure for Indiana ramp from the Big 4 Bridge is in place.
(photo courtesy Andy Murphy)

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Clean That Chain!

by staff

On Saturday, October 6th, we will have a free chain cleaning and lubrication class at the Yellow Lot at Waterfront Park at 12 noon. Proper drive-train maintenance is important to keeping your bicycle in good working condition and this class will show you how to do it. We'll provide rubber gloves, rags and lubricant. You provide the dirty chains and the desire to clean them!

New Rider Clinics Continue To Grow

by staff

This past August 27th, the Louisville Bicycle Club graduated 37 students from our Bowling Boulevard New Rider Clinic! These students follow the curriculum of the League of American Bicyclists, Traffic Skills 101. This is the biggest graduating class anyone could remember! The tire repair class had 49 people attend! For the year, we had a total of 62 students graduate from the 3 classes.

We will again offer the Traffic Skills 101 classes next year starting in May. Keep an eye on the LBC Ride & Event Schedule for the exact dates.



Education VP David Wittry (front)
with the Fall 2012 New Rider Clinic graduating class.

[Click to enter!](#)

University

A proud member

Best New Ride Competition

by Charlie Drexler, LBC VP Touring

Since the Best New Ride Competition ends with the October Touring Schedule, I thought that I would provide a list of submissions for the competition. Below is a list, as I have it at this point. As a club member you may also nominate a ride for the competition. If you know of a new ride that you enjoyed during this touring season, you may make a nomination thru the month of October. Please email me (touring@louisvillebicycleclub.org) before the end of October, if you would like to make a nomination. Before the end of the year, the Touring Committee will choose the Top 3 within each category and then the winner of the competition will be determined at the clubs Annual Banquet in January. You will want to be at the Banquet to vote for your favorite new ride.

Information on the Best New Ride Competition can be found at the following link:

<http://www.louisvillebicycleclub.org/Resources/Documents/NewRideCompetitionFinal.pdf>

Thanks,
Charlie

Current Entries for the Best New Ride Competition:

<= 35 Mile Category:

32-Mile AIR Ride (Alternative Iroquois Ride)

RC: Vicky Dobbs.

25-Mile Thurman Hutchins Ride (Avoids Iroquois Ride)

RC: Ron Dobbs.

16-Mile Urban Triangle Ride RC: Jackie Green.

26-Mile Trailer Park Ride RC: Gil Crenshaw.

28-Mile Childplace Ride RC: Kirk Roggenkamp and Cathy Hill.

31/20-Mile Valley View Hill Jam RC: Randy and Gloria Davis.

15-Mile Derby Clock Ride RC: Dirk Gowen.

>35 Miles and <=65 Mile Category:

42-Mile Commiskey Gravel Ride RC: Timothy Stephen.

51-Mile Battle of Corydon Loop

RC: Cathy Hill and Kirk Roggenkamp.

63-Mile Cedar Lake Metric Century

RC: Mary Ann and Richard Heckler.

50-Mike Scrabble Road Safari RC: Michael Crawford.

>65 Mile Category:

Currently No Entries

Entries for Ride Summaries submitted to Newsletter:

Richard Heckler - written for the Cedar Lake Metric Century

y Hospital

Trauma Institute

Member of **U OF** Health Care

A Bridge To Somewhere

by Andy Murphy, LBC President



Life is good.

On August 28th, there was a “topping out ceremony” and press conference on the Big 4 Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge, when the last concrete slab was put in place on the deck of the bridge. These concrete slabs are like the sub-floor that the finished surface of the pathway will go over. In addition to Mayor Greg Fischer, Waterfront Development Corporation Chairman David Karem and Metro

Council Representatives Vicki Aubrey Welch and David Tandy, local luminaries Joe Ward, Kirk Kandle and Rick Lyons were on

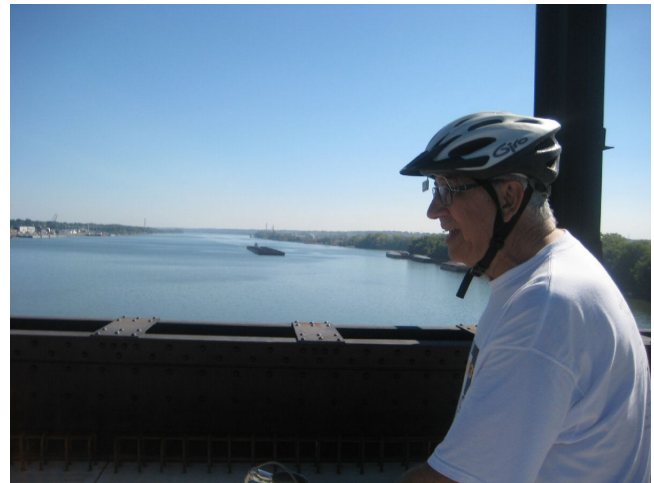
hand to celebrate the occasion with the construction crew.

The bridge is on schedule to open to the public in December 2012. The ramp on the Indiana side is scheduled to open in Spring, 2013.

During the ceremony, the replicas of the Niña and Pinta were cruising the Ohio River under the bridge. It was really cool to see these ships on the water and I couldn't help but think what a view we'll have of the Ohio River once this bridge is open. Sunset from the bridge will really be a sight.



Rick Lyons going where no bicyclist has gone before!



Joe Ward making his way across the bridge--what a view!



The crew that's bringing the Big 4 Bridge to life--thank you!

(photos courtesy Andy Murphy)



The Pinta exploring “The New World” of Waterfront Park!

LBC Commuters Group

by Andy Murphy, LBC President



Life is good.

As of September 14, 2012, 67 members of the Louisville Bicycle Club Commuters Group have registered 28,334.96 miles. We would like to thank everyone who takes the time to commute, then logs their mileage.

If you'd like to join, go to My Cycling Log here; <http://www.mycyclinglog.com/> Register -IT'S FREE-and click on the

Louisville Bicycle Club group, then click on JOIN. Remember, WE'RE ONLY TRACKING COMMUTER MILEAGE.

If you decide to join the group, you should only log rides that are legitimate commutes--trips that you could've taken by automobile but chose to ride your bicycle. Please don't log training rides or mileage accrued on LBC rides. Riding to and from club rides would count as a commute, but not the mileage on the ride itself.

There will be no LBC Awards associated with the Commuter Program. There will be no “Winner” for most Commuting Mileage. We appreciate folks commuting and taking the time log their rides.

They Have Attached Wheels To Their Legs

by Carson Torpey

I received my copy of [The Wheelmen Magazine](#) in mid July and there was an article about the Hanlon brothers of Britain written by Gary Sanderson. The Hanlon brothers were acrobats who in 1868 incorporated the velocipede into their act and eventually made improvements to the velocipede so that it would handle better in their routines. Included in the article was a schedule of their appearances in 1867 through 1869 and lo and behold Louisville was listed twice! It was the second appearance in December 1868 that is of importance because they were not using the velocipede at the earlier time.

A velocipede is a machine with two wheels, usually wagon wheels made of wood with an iron tire which are joined together by a iron reinforced wood frame. The front wheel steers independently and most importantly has pedals and cranks to propel the vehicle. As time went on, wire replaced the wooden spokes and steel tubes replaced the iron and wooden parts making a lighter machine. Rubber was also used for the tire. You may see one of these original machines at the Howard Steamboat Museum in Jeffersonville, Indiana.

After reading the article, I went to the Louisville Free Public Library to view the 1868 newspaper microfilm and indeed the Hanlons did perform here Monday December 7, 1868 through Saturday December 12, 1868. There were ads in the paper each day and a paragraph reviewing the previous day's performance.

Here is what the Courier-Journal, Dec. 7, 1868, said about the Hanlon brothers as the velocipede is concerned:

It may not be generally known to our readers that the Hanlons, who, with their "Transatlantic Combination" appear at Weisinger Hall tomorrow (Monday evening), are the inventors of the present application of the principle upon which velocipedes of all descriptions are now constructed. Such is the fact. They have established manufactures and salesrooms in New York, in London, Paris and other cities on the continent, and also hold letters of patent thereon from English, French, Austrian, German, Prussian, and American governments.

That a marvelous change is destined to be wrought in locomotion by the introduction of this simple, cheap, and novel vehicle no one will deny: the velocipedists have stolen a march on the coming flying man; for while he is busy adjusting wings with which he intends to navigate the clouds, they have attached wheels to their legs enabling them to skim the earth with the speed of a swift trotting horse.

Every alternate Sunday or so, velocipede races have taken place in the environs of Paris at St. Cloud, Vincennes, Enghien, Patin, and elsewhere. Mounted ---, upon these flying horses amateurs dash along the crowded



FIGURE I. THE FIVE HANLON BROTHERS (left to right): George, William, Edward, Frederick, and Alfred) in ca. 1870 following the death of their brother Thomas in April 1868.

(photo courtesy Gary Sanderson, [The Wheelmen Magazine](#))

thoroughfares of the capital, while adept, at the risk of their lives, drive their velocipedes of two wheels – one directly in front of the other, along the narrow stone parapet at the side of the Seine and down the hundred and one steps of the Trocadero; rising up in their seats, lying down on their backs, letting go of the handle of the vehicle, and throwing both legs over it while performing those daring feats.

The composers of Galignant's Messinger and other newspapers go to and return from work on velocipedes. Several of the following clerks of the Bank of France have

begun to use them. The public schools too are to have professional lectures on the new method of locomotion and to teach the youth of France how to manage the willing steed. Meanwhile the Prince Imperial has been furnished with a "velocipede luxe" mounted on rosewood and aluminum bronze.

The newspapers call upon the Government to order a supply of velocipedes to save the working legs of the rural postman and the messengers attached to the provincial telegraph bureaus and advise a number of the vehicles being furnished to infantry regiments to enable outposts to reconnoiter and communicate rapidly with the main body of the army. Some carried away by the enthusiasm ask why a [unit] of light cavalry mounted on velocipedes should not be instituted. It is suggested too, that life boat crews on thinly populated coasts should be provided with velocipedes by means of which a more rapid assembly of them in time of need might be --- and more-over --- and country doctors and --- who cannot afford the expense of a horse should travel out on the new vehicle.

There are various style of velocipedes. The two wheeled are called bicycles and the three wheeled tricycles, used by the ladies - capable of passing a carriage going at full throttle.

At the velocipedes salesrooms of the Hanlon Bros. No. --- Broadway, New York may be daily seen crowded with both sexes inspecting and --- one of the various styles of velocipedes while upon the Central Park of a pleasant morning, the wives, daughters, and children of the wealthy merchant, the clergyman, - in fact all classes, assemble to engage in the novel, exhilarating and harmless occupation of velocipeding their jaunty costumes, smiling faces, and rapid speed forming one of the most animating and mirth provoking scenes imaginable.

Surely there is something new under the sun and the worthy brothers Hanlon are destined to transmit to posterity, not only a reputation for being the most daring gymnasts of their time, but also the more enduring honor of conferring upon mankind the benefit of speedy and safe locomotion, in the cheap and simple shape of the velocipede.

On Thursday Dec. 10, the paper reported that every seat in Weisinger Hall was occupied even with the frigid outdoor temperatures, the day's high being only 12 degrees. Finally there was a report of the Hanlons using the velocipede in their act.

The velocipede is a wonder in itself and seeing it is well worth the while at the performance. It is introduced by

AMUSEMENTS.

WEISIGER HALL

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Commencing Monday Evening

DECEMBER 7

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WILLIAM,
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JULIUS,
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Transatlantic Combination.

Now making their Farewell Tour of the United States.
In addition to the attractions presented by the HANLON BROS., they have the honor to engage the following European celebrities:

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The daring young French Artist and Champion of the World upon the

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Who will perform his blood-chilling leap of

180 feet thro' mid-air.

Turning a somersault in his tremendous aerial flight.

Accompanying the HANLON BROS.

Mr. JAMES BLAMPHIN,
Europe's greatest Harpist;
Miss KILLY THORNE,
The accomplished Comedienne and Vocalist;
Mr. ALFRED H. HEDGWICK,
Concertist and Solo Singer;
Messrs. SYLVANI and BENEDET,
Girotrapez Artists.

Admission - Down stairs 25 cts. reserved seats 50 cts.
extra up stairs 75 cts.

The Hanlon Bros. offer for the sale of secured seats to all D. P. Foster's meat stores No. 70 Main st.
Sale of seats commences Thursday forenoon, Dec. 2.
Doors open at 7 o'clock; commence at 8.

SPECIAL HANLON MATINEE for schools and families, Saturday afternoon, Dec. 11.

E. F. RENDALL,
Boston Manager.

Hanlon Brothers performance ad
(photo courtesy Carson Torpey)

Fredrick Hanlon, and is made to perform all sorts of gyrations, showing it to be perfect for the purpose designed, and will doubtless - it is intro-, early become a familiar acquaintance and a - mode of locomotion among us.

They Have Attached Wheels To Their Legs (cont.)

by Carson Torpey

The Hanlons finished their performances, which were quite successful, on Saturday, Dec. 12. Before leaving Louisville they signed the firm of J. Sues and Son to sell their velocipedes throughout the Commonwealth. Mr. Julius Sues and son Charles operated a variety store at 78 and 117 Fourth Street.

In the spring of 1869, there appeared an advertisement in the Courier-Journal for the grand championship of Louisville velocipede races, to be held Friday evening, April 23. The event was held in the new Glover's Hall which was mainly used as a roller skating rink. It must have been a sight to see the velos "speeding" around the wooden track with their iron tires making all kinds of noise. Here is the follow up results from the newspaper, Saturday April 24, 1869:

One of the largest and most fashionable audiences ever assembled in our city met at Glover's Hall, on Seventh street between Walnut and Chestnut, last night to witness the velocipede contest for the championship of Louisville. There were ten entries for fast riding. Mr. Claudius Duvall Jr. having made the half mile in 2:45 ½ minutes was declared the winner, and received a handsome silver goblet. There were six entries for slow riding. Mr. Thomas Todd making the round of the hall in four minutes thirty-five seconds was declared the winner and received a beautiful silver cup. Mr. Bristow's fancy riding, one of the feats of which was that of eating his supper while riding, without the use of the tiller, was particularly noticeable.

On Sunday, the paper carried an article about a riding school in New York. This makes it look like velocipeding was about to take off but within six months it was all over, at least in New York City and then the rest of the country. The bikes were heavy and not dependable for longer distance riding. The economy also slumped in late 1869 due to the price of silver which was being sold off by France to settle war debts and firms in the USA trying to corner the market. By the end of the year dealerships closed with lots of unsold inventory, and velo halls and schools also closed their doors. In Europe the evolution of the velocipedes continued and resulted in what we now know as the penny farthing or high wheel bicycle.

I have yet to find an ad or announcement of Mr. Sues having received or selling any velocipedes but there was an ad that ran almost daily through the month of March 1869 offering a three wheeled velocipede for sale. There was also an ad from a Cincinnati firm selling velocipede wheels.

If you would like to see an original velocipede, there is one at the Howard Steamboat Museum. It is not on display but just ask to see it and you will be directed to its location.

Velocipede Wheels!
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(photo courtesy Carson Torpey)

Velocipedes.

We understand that J. Sues & Son, of this city, have procured the sole agency for the sale of the celebrated Hanlon velocipedes in Kentucky. In a short while, no doubt, these unique vehicles will come into general use throughout the Commonwealth.

(photo courtesy Carson Torpey)



William Hanlon & velocipede

(photo courtesy Gary Sanderson, [The Wheelmen Magazine](#))



Carson Torpey, a sort of modern William Hanlon, at the Howard Steamboat Museum (photo courtesy Carson Torpey)

Tandemonium #13: The Bike

by Dave Spittler

Have you seen our chainring bolt? That's right, we lost a chainring bolt somewhere on the road to Bardstown. If you found it, you can keep it: we got another one on Sunday morning. But perhaps I should have added that to the list of things to check on tandems. I used to regularly check every bolt on my bikes for tightness. Loose bolts can cause havoc if they fall off fifty miles from the middle of nowhere. Somehow, I got out of the habit, but that was a mistake.

And while we are kicking the maintenance can down the road, let's visit another gremlin that I forgot to mention in an earlier column: chain stretch. Normally chain stretch is unimportant until the chain is completely worn out because the rear derailleur has springs that take up the "extra" chain. But most tandems have TWO chains, not one, the second chain being the one on the left side of the bike that connects the Captain's crankset to the Stoker's crankset. This chain has no visible means to take up chain stretch, so a chain that is stretched just hangs there waiting to jump off of the sprockets at the worst possible moment. (To find out what happens if the Captain is out of the saddle when that chain pops off, google "David Millar biffing his bike". I know, I said that before, but it bears repeating, doesn't it?)

Any bike mechanic who knows tandems knows how to adjust the stretch out of a transmission chain. (There is generally an egg shaped "eccentric" around the front bottom bracket that can be rotated to accomplish this-if you have the right tools.) But somebody has to look at that chain, notice that it is bouncing and sagging and take it in to the mechanic because there is trouble.

If you have been reading my "Tandemonium" articles, you might have wondered when I was going to get around to the bike itself. So far, you might have thought, the articles have been about team building, the duties of the two riders, bike handling, and just a bit on maintenance. The true bikies out there are not going to be satisfied. How can I have any credibility if I don't get into hardware? When are we going to talk bike specs, they ask.

This column is as close as I am going to get to talking about hardware. To me, the bike part has always been the easy part: the part that wasn't all that hard to figure out. I have always had a bike or two (or three). Every bike I ever got was the best that I could afford at the time. All of them were special only to me and had parts and pieces that were common to a bike of that caliber at the time it was purchased. That is ALL BIKES, tandem or single. Sure, I wanted to feel and look good on my new bike and, of course I upgraded some components, but I have never been much of a gadget wonk: my favorite stuff is the stuff that just works, not stuff that makes people go "oooh!" and "aaah!"

What I am going to attempt here is a little guide to the person who is about to buy his or her first tandem. If you are that person, I know that you have questions and I am going to try to anticipate some of those questions (sort of) and answer them.

The single bike buyer often has to wade through a dizzying array of choices in the search for the perfect bike. This is much less true for the tandem buyer. In the first place, the number of tandem manufacturers is very limited and the number of models available from each manufacturer is limited as well. Tandems are more expensive and more difficult to make and they are harder to sell: the market for tandems is much smaller and more specialized than the single bike market, but price pressure is basically the same.

Perhaps the top three American tandem manufacturers are Santana, Cannondale and Co-Motion. All make wonderful tandems that are more than suitable for the serious cyclist. (Trek and Burley both made very nice tandem road bikes, but I am told that neither company makes them today.) There are a number of foreign manufacturers who make tandems, many of whom offer less expensive starter tandems like my old Motobecane or Doc Barron's Gitane. There is a website listing of known tandem manufacturers but it appears to be dated as it lists both Trek and Burley.

http://tandem-fahren.de/Mitglieder/Christoph_Timm/builders.html

In my experience, most manufactures have just one basic frame in several sizes. Most of the difference in better models is in components. Many of these components are the same components that you find on single bike and are known to experienced cyclists.

There are, however, two spec points that the tandem buyer needs to think about long and hard before handing over that credit card. The first of these is sizing.

Getting the right size tandem is a challenge because you are trying to buy a machine that fits two riders, not one. If both riders are not comfortable, it is unlikely that the ride will be enjoyable for either rider. It is a bad idea to buy a bike that fits one rider well and "almost" fits the other rider.

The good news here is that tandem manufacturers are apparently aware of how difficult it is to size two riders on one bike and so many tandems are much more forgiving than single bikes due to shorter down tubes and longer seat posts. This is especially nice when a bike is purchased with only one rider clearly identified. Tandems offer social advantages and are sometimes purchased by single people hoping to find someone to ride with or even blind people who hope to find a sighted Captain. The second specification worth studying is brakes. Because of the bigger size and weight of a tandem, good, solid brakes are important. My old Motobecane had two sets of side pull brakes to which we added a third set to bring the bike up to just this side of adequate. The Cannondale that I am currently riding has two sets of cantilevered brakes. These work very well but they require new brake shoes frequently and must be adjusted regularly as the pads wear down. The other possibility

(cont. on p.16)

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Tandemonium #13: The Bike (cont. from p.14)**by Dave Spittler**

is disk brakes. I have never had the pleasure of riding a bike with disk brakes, but those who have them swear by them. Side pull brakes just don't work very well on tandems and should be avoided. If you are going to ignore this advice and buy a bike that has side pull brakes, it might be good to ask if it can be upgraded to disc brakes later.

A new tandem should be purchased at a local bike shop. In the last article, I referred to some of the worst mechanical problems that tandem owners can encounter, many of which will require a trip to the bike shop, so make sure that the shop that you buy from is one that you are comfortable with. This shop should have all (or at least most) of the components that are particular to tandems like longer cables and cable guides and at least one mechanic who is experienced with tandems. If your favorite bike shop isn't that into tandems, it is best to ask around and find one that is.

There is also a selection of used tandems available. Some used machines have been ridden hard, but some are almost new. Auction sites like eBay always seem to have tandems for sale, some almost new at attractive prices. Sometimes bikes are available because their owners upgraded or just don't ride anymore. Some are available because the couples who bought them had trouble riding together. The below quote from a recent eBay offering tells a familiar story.

"Bought this bike 6 yrs. ago with the idea that my wife and I would love riding together.STUPID,STUPID,STUPID. We now have our own little pet name for it. DIVORCE ON WHEELS. It's been hanging in my garage for the past 6 yrs,collecting dust, it's a top of the line bike worth over \$4000.00 new, has campy record shifters and derailliers.has clippless petals in front and std petals in back. The back crank arms adjust position for people w/short legs. Overall great bike for a couple w/sound and loving relationship that they are tired of and would like to TEST... Bike is in great shape hasn't had over 100 miles put on it."

Note that, while the seller gave us quite a lot of information about the bike and the state of his marriage, he had nothing to say about frame size. A note was added at the bottom of the description that attempted to address this shortcoming but it described stand over height in inches. From what I have seen, the people who are trying to sell pre-owned tandems don't give you decent sizing or any information at all. If they do give sizing information, it is often untrustworthy so you have to ask for clarification.

One other source for tandems is a custom frame builder. I have never been rich enough to even think about going this route, but I have met people who spent the money and were very satisfied. As I implied, this is an expensive route to go, but if you require a special tandem, perhaps where the Captain is shorter than the Stoker, this might be the only route to go.

But however you acquire that tandem, take your time, ask questions, figure it out before you hand over that credit card. Anyway you slice it, a tandem is expensive: best make sure that the bike you buy is a bike that you and your partner can be happy on for a long time.

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