

The Two-Wheeled World of George B. Thayer

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The author alludes to many important developments. The society's early leaders held contesting visions, with one group favoring a restricted membership that conferred social status and recognized cultural attainment, while others advocated a more democratic society with an open, dues-paying membership. The latter concept won the day. That, in turn, led to the issue of state funding. The first directors, Lyman Draper and Reuben Gold Thwaites, disagreed: Draper wanted the society to be self-sustaining; Thwaites looked to the state for funding. Thwaites's triumph helped to make the WHS different from "its older more conservative sisters in the Eastern States" (22). Another relationship established by Thwaites also contributed to the society's distinctiveness. Recognizing that most of the users of the library were University of Wisconsin students and faculty, he chose to "hitch the Society's star" (23) to the rapidly growing university. That was mutually beneficial, as the WHS library became the university's American history library.

In time, as its rich library and archival resources increased, the WHS focused on serving the needs of scholars. The founding idea of serving as the people's society faded but never disappeared. Beginning with the tenures of the post-World War II directors—Kenneth Alexander, Clifford Lord, and Leslie H. Fishel Jr.—the WHS reconnected with this important aspect of its past. These leaders committed to making the WHS more accessible to the state's residents. Historic preservation, a new *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, greater involvement with local historical societies and communities, and, above all, the development of an extensive historic sites program, brought the society closer to its roots: the general public. The library and archives significantly bolstered the society's public presence by catering to genealogists and history buffs. The WHS has again embraced both its scholarly and public roles.

The Two-Wheeled World of George B. Thayer, by Kevin J. Hayes. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015. xv, 257 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$28.95 hardcover.

Reviewer James Whiteside is a retired history professor and the author of *Old Blue's Road: A Historian's Motorcycle Journeys in the American West*.

In his 2002 book, *An American Cycling Odyssey, 1887*, Kevin Hayes chronicled the cross-country bicycle adventure of newspaperman George Nellis. In *The Two-Wheeled World of George B. Thayer*, Hayes follows with the biography of a very different, and more prolific, bicy-

cling tourist who also crossed the United States and then followed up with tours of eastern Canada and Europe.

Born in 1853, George Thayer was the son of a Connecticut textile mill owner. Thayer had several careers—as a grocer, a journalist, and, eventually, a lawyer—but his lifelong avocation was adventure touring. Too young to serve in the Civil War, Thayer thought of tourism, especially on a bicycle, as his moral equivalent of the challenge and excitement of going to war. (In his middle and senior years, actual military service during the Spanish-American War and as a civilian volunteer in post-World War I Europe disabused him of that notion.) Thayer also was a lifelong devotee of physical fitness. Bicycling combined his passions for touring and fitness in a single activity.

Thayer acquired his first “wheel,” a velocipede, in 1870. He used his “boneshaker,” with its steel-rimmed wooden wheels, for three years to deliver groceries and for short day tours, but then quit riding for ten years. Thayer’s bicycle touring career began in 1883, when he bought a high-wheeled “ordinary” bicycle. His rides around Connecticut expanded into neighboring New England states. By 1886, he had set his mind on a cross-country adventure.

Thayer left his Connecticut home in April 1886, bound for San Francisco. Unlike George Nellis, whose 1887 cross-country tour aimed for a speed record, Thayer took his time, reaching San Francisco in August (almost two months longer than Nellis’s journey) and arriving back home in October. Unlike Nellis, who was determined to cross the country entirely by bicycle, Thayer often dismounted and rode trains when the terrain was not to his liking or to meet some self-imposed deadline. Like Nellis, Thayer paid for his trip in part by writing dispatches to his hometown newspaper. (When he ran low on funds, he stopped in Des Moines, Iowa, and peddled peanuts on the street.)

Hayes uses Thayer’s accounts to describe the thrills and perils of nineteenth-century bicycle touring. Dogs, skittish horses, hills, and muddy roads were banes of the cyclist’s life but were made up for by long downhill stretches and the kindness and camaraderie of farmers, hoteliers, and fellow cyclists encountered along the way. Where Thayer’s own narrative proves to be too sketchy, Hayes supplements it with accounts by other contemporary cyclists. Thayer’s and other cyclists’ accounts are the real heart of the book, enabling Hayes to analyze late nineteenth-century cycling more successfully than in his previous book.

Thayer’s adventures are well contextualized in an American (and European) culture undergoing rapid transformation from a rural to an urban society. Social and cultural themes of class, gender, and the im-

pect of technological change, among others, are illuminated through the lens of cycling and cycling culture. Lively writing and thorough research in original sources make *The Two-Wheeled World of George B. Thayer* a worthwhile addition to the literatures of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sports and cultural history.

Moments of Impact: Injury, Racialized Memory, and Reconciliation in College Football, by Jaime Schultz. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2016. xiii, 198 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.00 hardcover.

Reviewer S Zebulon Baker is associate director of the University Honors Program at Miami University in Ohio. He received the State Historical Society of Iowa's Throne-Aldrich Award in 2014 for his article, "'This affair is about something bigger than John Bright': Iowans Confront the Jim Crow South, 1946-1951," published in the *Annals of Iowa* (Spring 2013).

Jaime Schultz's *Moments of Impact* is, at its center, a study of the processes through which historical memory is generated and subsequently put to use. She focuses her critical gaze primarily on the latter—particularly how the racialized violence visited upon three African American football players at Iowa universities in the first half of the twentieth century was later appropriated by those institutions to commemorate notions of progress beyond those outrages and to absolve the present of its own sins. Warning her readers against “utopian visions that posit some post-racist, post-racial society,” Schultz scrapes away the patina of myth and legend that encrusts the historical memories of the three athletes in question—Jack Trice, Ozzie Simmons, and John Bright—to understand how and why Iowans have chosen to remember—and forget—them and their injuries, as well as what those choices reveal about the ways Iowans engage with their racial history (146).

Like many other athletes of color in the early twentieth century, Trice, Simmons, and Bright fell victim to injuries that revealed a deliberate attempt by their white opponents to target them, or treat them roughly, because of their race. On October 6, 1923, in a game at the University of Minnesota, Trice sustained a broken clavicle in the first half, and then was cleated in the abdomen in the second, causing severe internal bleeding. After an excruciating train ride back from Minneapolis to Ames, he was checked into the student infirmary at Iowa State, where he eventually died. Eleven years later, Minnesota was again the perpetrator of so-called “rough tactics,” this time against Simmons in their game at Iowa City, which so infuriated Hawkeye supporters that threats of retaliation against the Gopher team and its fans were made