



Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame

15 West Third Street - Jamestown, NY 14701

April 2024

Fenton Bicycles

Chautauqua Sports Hall of Fame emeritus director Denny Lundberg is the retired owner of the Cycle Shop in Jamestown. The Cycle Shop was incorporated in January 1924 and operated out of several locations. The business was originally organized by Rudolph Lundberg, Ludwig Anderson and Axel Pearson. Rudolph Lundberg took over the operations in 1925. In 1949, Harry Lundberg and his sister, Margit Jones, acquired the business. Harry Lundberg's son Dennis, acquired Mrs. Jones interest in 1962 and entered into partnership with his father.

In 1965 the corporation purchased the former Nelson Department Store annex building at 100 East Second Street at the foot of Pine Street and expanded into four stories of operation. In 1976, Dennis Lundberg acquired his father's interest and became sole owner and president. In 1977, the Cycle Shop was designated developer of the present location at 10 Harrison Street and erected a 16,000 square foot building to house its expanded operation. In 2002 the business was acquired by its present owners, Gary Evans, Randy Marsh and Steve Deyo.



Denny Lundberg recently made a unique donation to the CSHOF. It was a bicycle plate from the Fenton Metallic Manufacturing Company of Jamestown, NY. What was this company? Did they build bicycles? Anything else? Curiosity was piqued.

Research revealed that the Fenton Metallic Manufacturing was organized in 1888. It made metal office and vault furniture and related metal fixtures. It was reorganized as the Art Metal Construction Company in 1900 and renamed as simply Art Metal in 1959. It was one of Jamestown largest employers until the Jamestown plant was shut down in 1971. Cummins Engine occupies the former Art Metal building in the Town of Busti.

Fenton Metallic Manufacturing was one of many companies who parlayed their existing business (in this case metal office goods) into bicycles when the 1890s bicycle boom began. Fenton produced bicycles and cycling parts beginning in 1894 and ceased manufacturing those items when the bicycle boom ended in 1898.



FENTON WHEELS

ARE
Unquestionably high grade.
Made of the finest materials.
Beautiful in design.
Light running.

HAVE
The Fenton Adjustable Handle-Bar.
Built-up Wood Rims.
Southard's Cranks.
Perry's Chains.

WILL
Challenge comparison. Sell on their merits.

RELIABLE AGENTS WANTED. CORRESPONDENCE WITH DEALERS SOLICITED.

Fenton Metallic Mfg. Co.
MENTION THE BEARINGS JAMESTOWN, N. Y.

Bicycling boomed in popularity in the United States during the 1890s. This was the “Golden Age of the Bicycle.”

The 1890s were known as the golden age of bicycles for several reasons. First, during this time, bicycles became more affordable and accessible to the general population. This was largely due to the invention of the safety bicycle, which had two wheels of the same size and a chain-driven rear wheel. This design was much safer and more practical than earlier models, making cycling a viable mode of transportation for more people.

Second, the late 1890s saw a significant increase in the number of bicycle manufacturers and retailers. Prices were going down due to mass production. Between 1890 and 1900, the bike industry increased from 27 manufacturers to more than 300. In 1896, which was the peak of the craze, it was estimated there were more than three million bicycles in the U.S. Additionally, the growth of the bicycle industry spurred innovation in other areas, such as the development of better roads and the creation of cycling clubs and organizations.



Third, the late 1890s saw a cultural shift towards health and fitness. Cycling was seen as a healthy and enjoyable activity, and many people took up cycling as a way to stay active and improve their overall health. This cultural shift was reflected in the media of the time, which often portrayed cycling as a wholesome and positive activity.

THE FIRST AND ONLY
SPECIAL SALE
OF
FENTON BICYCLES
COMMENCES TO-DAY,
SATURDAY, JUNE 11th,
AT 350 BROADWAY, NEW YORK,
(Formerly occupied by E. S. Jeffrey & Co.)
WITHOUT REGARD TO FACTORY COST.
The FENTON BICYCLE represents the BEST materials, the BEST
workmanship, the BEST finish and mechanical skill and devices ever
brought together in producing a bicycle in this or any other country.
EVERY WHEEL GUARANTEED.
THE FENTON METALLIC MANUFACTURING COMPANY,
Jamestown, N. Y.
Bicycle Polo Every Afternoon from 3 to 4 o'clock on Fenton STOCK Wheels.

Finally, the bicycle craze was meaningful for women. Both Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton are credited with declaring that "woman is riding to suffrage on the bicycle," a line that was printed and reprinted in newspapers at the turn of the century. The bicycle took "old-fashioned, slow-going notions of the gentler sex," as *The Courier* (Nebraska) reported in 1895, and replaced them with "some new woman, mounted on her steed of steel." And it gave women a new level of transportation independence that perplexed newspaper columnists across the country. From *The San Francisco Call* in 1895:

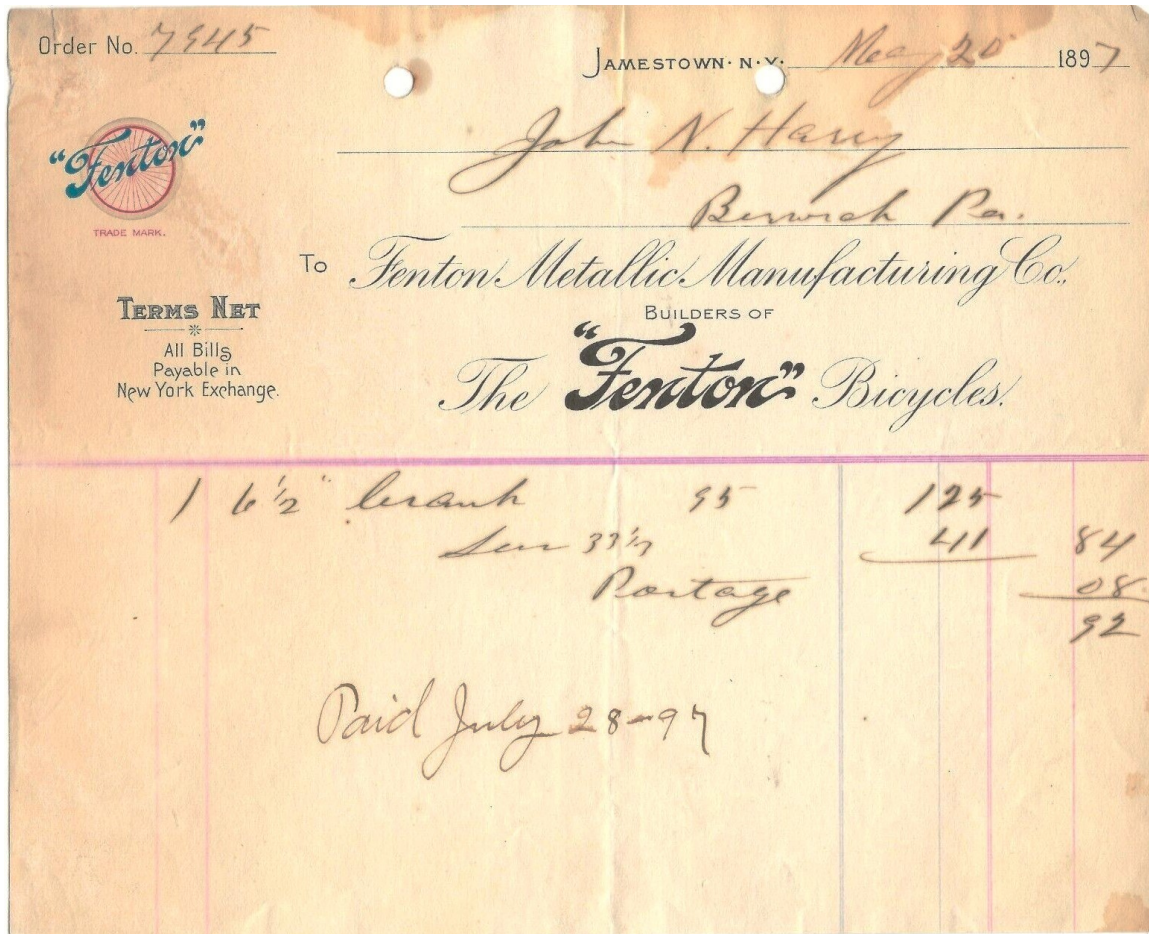
"It really doesn't matter much where this one individual young lady is going on her wheel. It may be that she's going to the park on pleasure bent, or to the store for a dozen hairpins, or to call on a sick friend at the other side of town, or to get a doily pattern of somebody, or a recipe for removing tan and freckles. Let that be as it may. What the interested public wishes to know is, Where are all the women on wheels going? Is there a grand rendezvous somewhere toward which they are all headed and where they will some time hold a meet that will cause this wobbly old world to wake up and readjust itself?"

The bicycle, as a new technology of its time, had become an enormous cultural and political force, and an emblem of women's rights. "The woman on the wheel is altogether a novelty, and is essentially a product of the last decade of the century," wrote *The Columbian* (Pennsylvania) newspaper in 1895, "she is riding to greater freedom, to a nearer equality with man, to the habit of taking care of herself, and to new views on the subject of clothes philosophy."

Bicycle-riding required a shift away from the restrictive, modest fashion of the Victorian age, and ushered in a new era of exposed ankles—or at least visible bloomers—that represented such a departure from the laced up, ruffled down fashion that preceded it that bicycling women became a fascination to the (mostly male) newspaper reporters of the time.



Overall, the combination of affordable and practical bicycles, a competitive market, a cultural shift towards health and fitness and the empowerment it gave to women made the 1890s the golden age of bicycles.



The stickpin (left) is topped with an aqua colored celluloid button and is decorated with a red wheel in the center. The button reads "I admire/Fenton/Bicycles." The Fenton Metallic Company of Jamestown, New York produced this souvenir pin advertising for Fenton bicycles around 1896.

Special thanks to Denny Lundberg for his donation that revealed a forgotten part of the sports history of Chautauqua County.

Lundberg, now retired and living in Balston Spa, NY served on the CSHOF Board of Directors for 30 years including terms as President and Vice-President.