

1880's High Wheel Bike at Paine-Gillam-Scott Museum

PGS is proud to have a High Wheel Bike on display for a limited time. The bike is an original 50" "Columbia Expert" and is representative of those ridden by the St. Johns Bicycle Band (SJBB). The Bicycle Band entertained citizens of Michigan at social events and political rallies from 1886-1891. The members were offered a job in Ringling Brothers' circus as their parade band, but declined because many of their parents would not consent to the travel involved. The band consisted of an average of twenty young men from the St. Johns and Clinton County area.

The St. Johns Bicycle Band had its debut when the idea was still new on November 23, 1885, at the Diamond Rink, a new St. Johns roller skating facility. The Clinton Republican on November 26, 1885 reported: "George Rhodes has organized a new band from the members of the St. Johns bicycle club, called the "Bicycle Band". And it made a successful debut at the Diamond Rink Monday evening. Every member is a bicycle rider, and should no infantile disease carry it off before the daisies bloom again, our citizens may witness the novel sight of a brass band discoursing sweet music from the saddles of their steeds of steel as they glide up and down the avenue. St. Johns has the only bicycle band in the world, so far as we have returns." The line-up for the Memorial Day Parade on May 31, 1886 showed the St. Johns Bicycle Band in the lead as the march went from Clinton Ave., then east on Walker St. to the cemetery. They also led the 4th of July Parade that year.

The antique bike is on loan from Randy Oleynik of Carleton, Michigan, a member of the Wheelmen Bicycling Club. In 1992, the Wheelmen Club recreated the original St. Johns Bicycle Band (SJBB). They performed as a bicycle band one time at the American Brass Band Festival. The W. P. Cyclone High Wheel Bicycle Band, organized by Frank Stasa and Randy Oleynik, is a spinoff of the recreation band, and continues to ride the High Wheel Bikes playing brass instruments.

For more information about the Wheelmen, please go to the website. <http://www.thewheelmen.org/default.htm>

For further information, please contact the Museum at 989-224-2894 or visit our website at pgsmuseum.com