

THE DETROIT WHEELMEN.

BY P. N. JACOBSEN.



WHEELING has attained a height of popularity in Detroit heretofore unknown. The vilest of cedar block pavement in the last stages of decay on the principal streets until recently retarded that natural growth in wheeling interest that almost all American cities experienced during the last few years.

Until about a year ago, when asphalt was laid on four of the principal streets, cycling was confined entirely to a few enthusiastic riders, who forgot the hardships of three to five miles of rough riding to the city limits in the pleasures of a spin on the graveled roads beyond. Now Jefferson avenue, leading east, Lafayette west, and Cass and Second north, may be seen daily thronged with wheelmen.

Although this general improvement in the city pavement has been a great factor in the wonderful increase in cycling, there is another which has been equally potent in this respect, and that is the existence of a large and active wheel club.

A year has scarcely passed since this club, active in cycling as well as socially, was formed, yet it is now in a position to properly entertain visiting wheelmen, and when visiting other cities to have a representation creditable to a city of such importance as Detroit. The formation of the club resulted in a concentration of all cycling interests in the city into one large vigorous organization under the name of the "Detroit Wheelmen."

Rapid recruiting soon swelled the membership roll to the present figure, 150, making the club the largest in the State and one of the largest in the League. The club is now located in its comfortable quarters at No. 64 Washington avenue, and a more convenient location could not be found. It is within a block of the Grand Circus Park, the usual rendezvous of the wheelmen, and near the centre toward which the streets of the city, Boston-like, converge. This location makes the club house conveniently accessible from all parts of the city. Wash-

ington avenue is one of the widest and prettiest avenues that Detroit can boast of. It is the handsomest of those leading from the park, and being a short street has none of the objectionable features of a thoroughfare. On one side of the walk is a wide boulevard and on the other well-kept private lawns. A triple row of trees line the avenue on each side. Ancient maples along the edge of the boulevard almost join their wide-spreading branches over the centre of the street and the walk is completely shaded in summer. The many pretty flowery lawns, together with the absence of all fences, add greatly to the general effect.

The club house is a two-story brick, which has been converted at considerable expense into a most cosy and comfortable resort. In uniformity with all the residences on this avenue it stands twenty feet back from the sidewalk and twice that distance from the street. Directly



A. H. GRIFFITH, PRESIDENT.



B. J. HOLCOMBE, FIRST VICE-PRESIDENT.

in front of the house stand four of the largest maples on the avenue, lending shade and seclusion to the place. The general entrance is from the first story. A neat veranda runs along the front of the house, forming a pleasant loitering place for the few members who prefer a chat over a cigar before a spin to the "Pointe."

On the first floor is a large parlor, which also serves as an assembly room. This is artistically decorated with trophies won by the club on the road and track and mementoes of pleasant tours made by the members. On this floor also are the directors' room, secretary's office, bathroom and coat closets, and on the next floor are the billiard and pool room, card room and committee room. The house is lighted throughout by electricity and the rooms are handsomely furnished.

As soon as the "Detroit Wheelmen" was organized the unanimous choice of the club fell upon Mr. A. H. Griffith to fill the presidential chair. The older members appreciated Mr. Griffith's long experience in cycling affairs and the younger wheelmen saw in him the energetic official and rider.

That the choice was well made is evidenced by the prosperity of the club and the solidity of the foundation on which it now stands. It is owing to the untiring efforts of Mr. Griffith and his able assistants that the Detroit Wheelmen has become the successful club it is.

He was no sooner elected to the presidency than he explained to the members how to make their gatherings popular and enjoyable, and now whatever movement in wheeling circles is originated by Mr. Griffith or meets with his support is a foregone success. His motto is "that a failure is nothing more than a header from a wheel; a sudden stop, a drop, but up and at it again." His energy seems unlimited, and his enthusiasm on any subject in which he is interested unbounded.

As a presiding officer he never allows a meeting to become dull. He is a fluent speaker and brightens his comments and suggestions, even in the usually prosy routine business of a meeting, with apt illustrations, drawn from a fund of anecdote gathered in his extensive travels. He no sooner proposes a plan for benefiting or improving the club than he finds willing hands to carry it out, as the members have reason to know that he himself will be the first to volunteer for the most arduous part.

Outside the regular attractions of wheel club life he has instituted a number of interesting features, among which may be mentioned the establishing of a fund to defray the expense of placing memorial tablets on all historical points in and around the city and the holding of Sunday afternoon half-hour talks on various topics of general interest. The placing of the tablets is to be taken care of by a committee of the club members and rapidly pushed. By this means all points of historical interest plentiful in the "City of the Straits," will be brought before the notice of the visitor and enhance the pleasure of his tour. In the memories of the residents, too, the traditions attached to these spots and the opening chapters of the history of old Fort Detroit will be revived.

The work is most commendable, its accomplishment will be a benefit to the community in general, and will stand as a monument commemorative of the good work of the Detroit Wheelmen and of the energy of their president.

The tablets will bear inscriptions reciting the event connected with the spot.

The first has been placed on the Art Museum, and reads:

On the ground now occupied by this building stood the home of Gen. Hugh Brady, U. S. Army, one whose life was spent in the service of his country.

BORN JULY 29, 1768.
DIED APRIL 15, 1851.
D. W. 1891.

thus preserving the memory of one of America's illustrious generals. This tablet is of marble, engraved with black letters. The next tablet will be placed on the Michigan Exchange, as this building now stands on the spot once occupied by the gate of Fort Detroit, through which the wily Indian chief Pontiac entered to carry out his "short gun conspiracy."

The afternoon talks the president inaugurated by an entertaining talk on his travels in France during the troublesome times of the Franco-German war, relating amusing incidents as well as describing pathetic scenes that occurred from the time he entered Paris as a member of the Garde Mobile until the capitulation of that city. He has continued the popularity of these half-hour talks by topics of general interest and having them treated by practical men.

When the listeners are let into the mysteries of the making up of a modern newspaper and instructed in the means by which the graceful curves of the "winning yacht" are obtained by such experts as Mr. W. Buell, of the *Detroit Free Press*, and Mr. F. A. Ballin, manager of the Detroit Boat Works and designer of some of the fastest craft on the lakes, their attention cannot but be held. Each Sunday afternoon the capacity of the club parlors is taxed to its utmost by an attentive audience, composed of members and invited guests, testifying to the popularity of this entertaining and instructive, though novel, attraction of bicycle club life.

These two features are worthy of especial mention, as they are undoubtedly original to the Detroit Wheelmen and are illustrative of the numerous resources of President Griffith. The numbers of inquiries received from all parts of the country relative to the success of the half-

hour talks goes to show that it is a vexed question among many of the clubs as to how Sunday can be properly and at the same time enjoyably spent at the club house. These talks are undoubtedly a solution of the problem.

Mr. Griffith is director of the Detroit Museum of Art, and the esteem in which he is held by the management and patrons of that institution is freely expressed. He was re-elected to the presidency of the Detroit Wheelmen for 1891, and is now busily engaged superintending the arrangements for the meet to be held on July 16, 17 and 18.

The other officers of the club elected for this year are: B. J. Holcombe, first vice-president; Robert T. Deacon, second vice-president; George S. Mackay, secretary; L. W. Schimmel, assistant secretary; Fred. S. Ekliff, financial secretary; W. T. Watson, treasurer; A. E. Sutphin, assistant treasurer, and F. L. Abel, captain.

Before passing to them mention must



EN ROUTE.



CAPTAIN F. L. ABEL.

be made of Mr. W. E. Metzger and Mr. Fred. Case who ably filled the positions of vice-president and treasurer during the past year.

During the president's absence on his trip East last fall Mr. Metzger was called upon to fill the president's chair and take charge of the management of the club. So well did he fulfill the charge that every plan previously proposed was carried out to a successful issue. Mr. Metzger has been interested in wheeling for several years and has taken an active part in all the movements of any importance. He sometimes uses a safety, but his favorite mount is a star wheel. He declined a renomination to any office in the club on account of increased business interests which demand all his time, but continues to assist in the management as one of the board of directors.

During the first year of a club's existence there are crises to be met and overcome, when the most careful management of the finances becomes of vital importance. The Detroit Wheelmen was not an exception to this general rule, and to Mr. Fred. Case, who filled the position of treasurer during the past year, is due the full credit of the successful financial management during that critical period. Mr. Case is among the most enthusiastic wheelmen of the city and a most untiring rider. His first and only mount is of the safety type. He declined a re-election to any of the active offices of the club, satisfying himself by acting on the board of directors.

Among the first to become interested in wheeling in Detroit was Mr. B. J. Holcombe, present first vice-president of the club, and on the roll of members of the first bicycle

organization is found his name. He is undoubtedly, among active wheelmen, the one of the longest standing in the State and to him would justly belong the title of the "Old Roman" of the Michigan Division.

Mr. Holcombe has always held an office in the club to which he belonged, and very few are honored with so long and varied an experience in that line. He makes a most impartial presiding officer and his perfect knowledge of parliamentary law makes his decisions on points of order invaluable during a heated debate. His views, based on experience, seldom fail to have a most salutary effect on the sanguine proposals of the more impulsive members. He holds a life membership in the League of American Wheelmen, presented as a token of appreciation of his long and faithful services. Although he met with a most serious accident by a fall from his wheel, in which he fractured his arm, he has not forsaken his first love and still rides the ordinary bicycle.

In a club so recently organized as the Detroit Wheelmen some of the offices must necessarily be filled by those whose names

are comparatively new in the cycling world. Such is the case with the secretary and treasurership for this year. Mr. George S. Mackay, as secretary, and Mr. T. Watson, as treasurer, are both holding office in a wheel club for the first time, but the care and energy they have so far displayed are a guaranty that the increased responsibilities during a League meet year will be well taken care of.

From his long experience as commander of one of Detroit's crack companies, Cant. F. L.



FRANK WHELDEN, "JUDGE."



GUS. JONES, CHAMPION HALF MILER, MICHIGAN.



W. E. METZGER, FORMER VICE-PRESIDENT.



FRED. CASE, FORMER TREASURER.

Abel is well fitted to fill the position of captain of a wheeling brigade and will no doubt introduce some of the wonted military precision in the movements of the club when on parade. The energy with which he has assumed the command bespeaks success to the club on the road and track and a long tenure of office. Among other improvements he has instituted a new and satisfactory mode of promotion among his subordinates. Each lieutenant will be promoted according to the number of men he turns out in his

the name of Mr. Gus. Jones. During the two years he has been racing he has made an enviable record and is now the half-mile champion of Michigan. Out of seven races he entered during he past season he won five firsts and two seconds. At Cleveland he won the mile open handicap, in which the nearest competitor had twenty-five yards start. Although Mr. Jones is considered a short distance rider he finished first of the scratch men in the Pontiac-Detroit road race and failed by only a quarter of a



A COSY CORNER IN THE CLUB HOUSE.

division at the club runs. Captain Abel is one of the few who do not allow the winter season to interfere with his enjoyment of the sport and is one of the hardest riders in the city. He affects the safety type of bicycle. He is assisted by four lieutenants, Messrs. Geo. Thorne, A. Allen, Chas. Lawson and H. Dickinson, two for the ordinaries and two for the safeties.

At the top of the list of members who have won trophies for themselves and renown for their club on the track stands

second of making the best time over the course. His racing mount is a fifty-three inch ordinary.

A list of the active spirits of the Detroit Wheelmen would be incomplete without the correspondent of the club, Frank Whelden, whose spicy notes from Detroit under the title of "Judge" have entertained many readers of wheel literature during the past year. He did not allow them to forget the fact that the meet was to be in Detroit in "1891." That Detroit is to be honored with the meet is due in a



C. H. SMITH.

great measure to his efforts. Mr. Whelden made his first essays in wheeling on an ordinary, but forsook it in time for a star. One of the notable undertakings in connection with the meet is a tour, under the auspices of the Detroit Wheelmen, from Niagara to Detroit. This will be under the management of Mr. C. H. Smith, one of the most active members of the club. The route chosen will take the tourists over some of the finest of the graveled roads of Upper Canada and afford them glimpses of some of its most picturesque scenery.

The start will be made from Niagara Falls on the morning of Tuesday, July 9, and the first night's stop made at the pretty town of St. Catharine's, eighteen miles. Next day the route lies across the Welland Canal, the connecting waterway between Lakes Erie and Ontario, along the road that skirts the south shore of Lake Ontario, past Grimsby Camp Grounds, the Chautauqua of Canada, to Hamilton for the night, thirty-three miles. Fifty-four miles will be the next day's ride, taking the party to Woodstock, over a pretty rolling country and through several of the manufacturing towns of Ontario.

Woodstock is one of the most athletic cities of the Dominion. All the sports find enthusiastic devotees here, and the championships of Canada in the various branches have been held by competitors from this city. An early start next morning will enable the tourists to make with ease the second longest day's ride of the tour, being fifty-two miles to London.

The fine gravel road leading from London to Sarnia, over a pretty country, will make the next day's fifty-nine miles, the longest day's ride of the tour, seem short. The party will then cross the river through the railway tunnel, just completed, and stop at Port Huron for the night.

The road to be taken next morning winds along the green, sloping banks of the St. Clair River, which are usually dotted at this time of the year with the white tents of the fishing and canoe clubs camping here. Below St. Clair the route leads back from the river to the famous mineral spring town of Mt. Clemens, forty-five miles. By noon the next day—Wednesday, July 15—the party should reach Detroit, leaving a half day in which to rest before joining in the pleasures of the meet. Mr. Smith has made special arrangements for the comfort of the ladies on the tour, and a large number of them are expected to enjoy this outing.

A feature of interest at a meet of wheelmen is the bicycle exhibit. There is to be one under the auspices of the club of more than usual magnitude. They have secured the Detroit Kink, the largest building suitable for the purpose in the city. The lower floor has been divided into twenty-four compartments for the different exhibitors. A booth opposite the entrance of the hall will be reserved as the L. A. W. and Detroit Wheelmen headquarters, and nearby will be a bureau of information. In the upper gallery will be a number of smaller compartments for the exhibition of bicycle sundries. On one side of the gallery will be the speakers' platform and on the other the orchestra stand. All wheelmen and visitors in general will be welcome. All arrangements are being rapidly perfected by the active chairman of the committee in charge, Mr. A. F. Peck.

The afternoons of Friday, July 17, and Saturday, July 18, have been set aside for the races. These will take place on the mile track of the Detroit Driving Club, who are under contract to have the same in

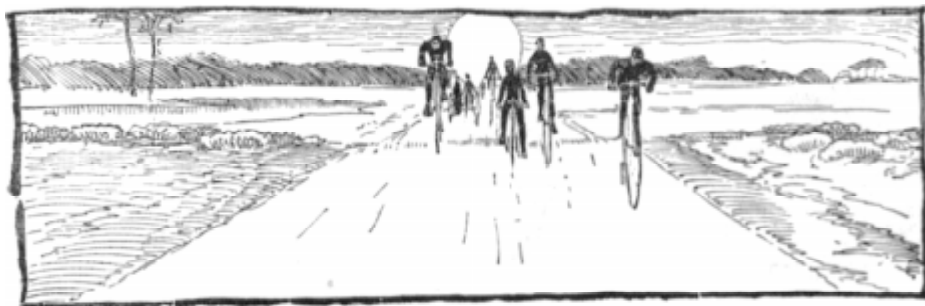
perfect condition. As chairman of the race committee Mr. Joseph Bressler is putting forth every effort to make this feature of the meet a grand success and to give the spectators of this district their first opportunity of seeing races between the fastest amateurs of America. The national championship races have been secured to be run on these days.

The programme will, no doubt, include an excursion by steamer across Lake St. Clair to the Flats (the Venice of America), a fish supper at one of the noted club houses, and return by moonlight the same evening.

The wheelmen of Detroit have never

been in a position better qualified to shoulder the responsibilities of holding the annual meet of their national organization than they are at present, and they are anxious to show that they can uphold the reputation of the city for hospitality.

There is not a stauncher member of the L. A. W. than the Detroit Wheelmen. Since the day of its organization it has been a League club, and continues to be so, fully realizing the advantages of membership in one of the purest and most powerful athletic organizations of America—the League of American Wheelmen.



THE WHEEL.

THE wheel, the wheel, the glorious wheel!
 So dear thou art, like flint on steel,
 Our thoughts of thee strike sparks of
 flame,
 And other joys are dull and tame!
 Like flight of the sea-skimming gull,
 As light and free and wonderful!
 Thy motion noiseless is; thy gait
 As that of pale horse mounted fate,
 And famed Kentucky's swiftest steed
 Is laggard to thy whirling speed.
 No other pleasures can like thine
 Stir youthful pulses as with wine;
 No other joy so sweet and pure;
 No woman's glances so allure;
 Nor worldly fame, nor love can steal
 Our hearts from thee, thou glorious wheel!

THE wheel, the wheel, the glorious wheel!
 Happy thy worshippers when they feel
 The wind's caress on sun-tanned face,
 When swiftly flying in the race,
 Or, still as owl's wings of down,
 Gliding like swallow through the town,
 Watching the maiden's raptured glance
 Or slothful manhood's envious lance.
 On country lanes to speed along
 Where sounds the plaintive thrush's song;
 Where brook and meadow gently meet
 And the cool woodland shadows greet;
 Where rills from hidden mountains burst
 To quench the tired traveler's thirst,
 Is joy as great as man can feel—
 The praise is thine, thou glorious wheel!

CLAIR DINSMORE VALLETTE.

