

PODCASTING HISTORY: HEAR UR
SEASON FIVE: CYCLE PATHS
A BIKING HISTORY OF ROCHESTER

Episode 2: The Past and Present of Sidepaths
By: Logan Hood, Shayna Cliff, Kwame Edu-Ansah and Quinn Yu

Scene: It's a brisk fall day in the city of Rochester, the wind is blowing, leaves are falling, crunching under the feet of those who pass by. Two distinct bicycles can be heard pedaling down a bike path.

SFX: BIKE SOUNDS, GEAR TURNING, WIND, CARS PASSING BY

LOGAN:

Hey girl, just headed home from my meeting with my history professor after failing my exam. Yeah I know but I just don't see about how learning about the history of biking is so important. Like yeah I use a bike now but that doesn't mean I need to know or care about why there's a bike path for me to ride on. Wait I think I see something in the road... it looks like an old newspaper.

SFX: PICKING UP A NEWSPAPER

LOGAN:

Woah it looks like it's from-

SFX: WHOOSHING SOUNDS, TELEPORTATION NOISES, music, ETC.

LOGAN:

Hey I'm Logan Hood and "You're listening to HearUR Season 5 Episode 2: The Past and Presents of Sidepaths"

Scene: The middle of the city of Rochester in 1898. Logan is standing outside on the street holding the newspaper in her hand.

SFX: church bells, horses trotting, chatter in background

LOGAN:

"What is of benefit to all, all should pay for"? Wheelmen? "October 4th 1898 that can't be" Woah I think this newspaper is from 1898.

SFX: THE NEWSPAPER FALLS TO THE GROUND

LOGAN:

Oh my god, where am I? What happened?
What am I wearing?

SHAYNA (PLAYING THE ROLE OF MARY RAYMOND):
Hey are you okay you look a little
confused. <pause> Wait a minute, you're
not from here are you?

LOGAN:

Who are you? How do you know that? What
the hell am I wearing?

SHAYNA:

Girl breathe. My name's Mary Raymond.
Everything is going to be okay.

LOGAN:

Okay I know I'm totally going to sound
crazy right now but I was just talking
to my friend about how I failed my
stupid exam on history of biking and
I'm here in what I'm assuming is 1898.

SHAYNA:

First of all, biking is not stupid and
if you think it is you're stupid. But,
yes it is 1898 and I'm pretty sure I
know why you're here.

**SFX: VOICE OF A MAN SAYING "YOU'RE OUT OF YOUR
MIND.."**

SHAYNA:

Wait, don't say anything, be quiet.

LOGAN:

Did you just call me-

SHAYNA:

Shhhhhh

**SFX: MAN SAYING "WE CAN'T EXPECT EVERYONE TO PAY THESE
RIDICULOUS TAXES RAYMOND, YOU'RE PUT OF YOUR MIND"**

SHAYNA:

Come here follow me

SFX: FOOTSTEPS WALKING

SHAYNA:

This way come on

Scene: The girls run to a sidepath away from the commotion. There is no one around. The only sounds that can be heard is the wind blowing against the trees and slight machinery in the distance paving a new sidepath

SFX: FOOTSTEPS WALKING, DOOR OPENING

LOGAN:

What was that back there? Were they talking about bike paths? And didn't you say your last name was Raymond? Who was that?

SHAYNA:

That was my dad Charles Raymond and someone he works with arguing about taxing people for sidepaths. My dad thinks that everyone should have to pay taxes for the side paths but not clearly not everyone is on board.

LOGAN:

Wait a minute, What's a sidepath?

SHAYNA:

A sidepath is a path separate from the road, that is made specifically for cyclists to ride on.

LOGAN:

(to herself) So it's basically a bike path.. I see now, I'm here to learn a lesson on why the history of biking is so important aren't I?
So what does your dad have to do with sidepaths?

SHAYNA:

My dad is known as the father of the sidepath movement. He is really passionate about having separate paths

for bikers, and even more passionate about those paths being well made. Which is why he is fighting for taxation of bikers

LOGAN:

What do you mean?

SHAYNA:

Well, in the beginning of the sidepath movement, they were making the paths using mostly gravel or cinder and they were short, cheap to make and used mostly for leisure.

LOGAN:

So y'all wanna make them bougie now?

SHAYNA:

Well yeah. Once you get a little outside the city there really aren't many paths, and the ones that are there are in a horrible condition and unable to be safely ridden on. They paid for the construction of these sidepaths by getting donations and a lot of the people who used them helped in the construction of making them, my dad included.

LOGAN:

Okay daddy bob the builder. But who was willing to donate?

SHAYNA:

Big companies such as Pope Manufacturing company and Overman Wheel Company. We've also held quite a few sidepath conventions all over New York including right here in Rochester to try and fundraise for the construction of sidepaths. A couple weeks ago my dad let me go with him to a sidepath convention all the way out in Utica. It was the third annual sidepath convention to be held in that location, And there were actually representatives

from 24 counties there including my dad who is the President.

LOGAN:

Well, he definitely sounds better than our president. Why were there so many people there? Isn't it like really hard to travel that far in this day and age? Like, why did they even care?

SHAYNA:

Well yes but the purpose of the side path conventions is to raise awareness and give money for the movement. It also gives an opportunity for all of the representatives to discuss amongst themselves how they can continue the sidepath movement and connect the side paths through construction.

LOGAN:

It kinda sounds like yall need Zoom.

SHAYNA:

What's that

LOGAN:

Don't worry it's after your time. So anyways these conventions?

SHAYNA:

Yeah, even though there were some sidepaths built before the movement blew up with the creation of the safety bike there were no longer nearly enough sidepaths. Plus they didn't connect and they were pretty much unrideable.

LOGAN:

What do you mean unrideable?

SHAYNA:

You see the path we are on right now?

LOGAN:

Yeah. It's super uneven and bumpy.

SHAYNA:

Would you want to ride a bike on this?

LOGAN:

Hell no, I'd feel like I'd get aches in every joint.

SHAYNA:

Now look over there.

SFX: MACHINE NOISES

SHAYNA:

Do you see that machine?

LOGAN:

Yeah, It looks like a big rolling pin.

SHAYNA:

Well that's a sidepath roller. And look at the path behind it.

LOGAN:

It's really smooth, I'd definitely ride that.

SHAYNA:

Exactly. So the cost of the path we are on right now is around \$100-\$300 per mile, and the cost of that sidepath over there is around \$2,000 to \$5,000 per mile.

LOGAN:

God damn, that's a big difference.

SHAYNA:

Yeah. But it's totally worth it, you can see that. My dad is trying to implement a taxation for all bicyclists so they can fund the creation of more sidepaths that are nice like that one and grow the sidepaths to connect one and another.

LOGAN:

How is he trying to tax the bikers? Like does everyone get taxed? Is there

some big burly guy knocking on every biker's door going "sidepath taxes".

SFX: Knocking

SHAYNA:

There are some organizations of cyclists that have an initial fee and monthly dues etc that also help fund these sidepaths. My dad runs one of these organizations called The Niagara County Side Path's League.

LOGAN:

That's a mouthful.

SHAYNA:

But my dad doesn't think it's enough. I mean you don't have to be a part of one of these organizations to ride and own a bike. He wants everyone with a bike to be contributing to the roads that they ride on, because if everyone contributes then everyone can enjoy lots of nice paths like that one, that connect to everything and they don't need to be shared.

LOGAN:

But how does he expect everyone to pay and hold them accountable to pay continuously? I know if I were someone with a bike I'd be like oh yeah I'll pay and then dip and never pay again.

SHAYNA:

Well, once someone purchases a bike they have to pay a fee, then they get taxed between 50 cents to a dollar. And if they didn't pay that tax they would risk getting their bike taken away from them.

LOGAN:

And people weren't cool with paying 50 cents? If only they knew about inflation.

SHAYNA:

A lot of people think it's ridiculous, especially those that have a bike that don't ride on the paths often. My dad tried to take the taxation to the Civil Counsel but it failed. Personally I think that we need to focus a bit more on making sure that there is inclusivity within biking before making everyone pay.

LOGAN:

Wait... Let me guess, only white men can ride bikes

SHAYNA:

Kind of it's a bit more complicated than that. Since the creation of the safety bike, the cost of biking has gone down to around \$100 to \$200. This means that it is now easier for people of the middle class to get bikes.

LOGAN:

I still feel like that's pretty expensive.

SHAYNA:

Well, it's not for poor people. I've had a bike for a while, but with the clothing I have to wear to uphold my reputation it sometimes makes it challenging to ride.

LOGAN:

This get up upholds your reputation? As what? A milk maid?

SHAYNA:

A milk maid would dream to wear this designer piece, please.

LOGAN:

Anyways what about African Americans? Segregation's a thing right?

SHAYNA:

Yeah, so African Americans can buy bikes but they can't be in the same clubs or organizations as white people. I've heard of a couple African American biking clubs in a place called Boston. But everyone is technically allowed to ride a bike if they can afford it.

LOGAN:

Woow. Biking, what a luxury.

SHAYNA:

For some it is. For most though it's pointless, like if you are working for 12 hours a day you aren't going to want to bike in the few hours you have off. Unless biking is your way of transportation to get to and from work, or to and from school in the case of young men. But leisurely biking is more for the Middle and Upperclass folks.

LOGAN:

Oh how the tables have turned.

SHAYNA:

What do you mean? Is biking a poor people thing now? Wait, how do you not know all this stuff about the sidepaths and the sidepath movement. Is it no longer a thing anymore?

LOGAN:

You could say that. But it appears as though you're going to get to see for yourself. God I can NOT wait to get out of these clothes, how many layers do I have on right now? 74?

SFX: MAGICAL NEWSPAPER CRINKILING SOUND

SHAYNA:

Momma always says beauty is pain and don't complain. You're telling me you don't wear a hoop skirt and corset everyday?

LOGAN:

Wouldn't be caught dead in one. Just wait until you see our clothes. You're gonna have a conniption.

SFX: CRINKLING OF NEWSPAPER

LOGAN:

Ahh Climate Change, Gas prices are rising again and Trump is running for 2024, October 4th 2022 sounds just about right.

SFX: TELEPORTATION SOUNDS, WHOOSHING, ETC.

Scene: The city of Rochester in 2022. Shayna and Logan are teleported back to where Logan left. There are traffic noises and people chattering.

SFX: CAR HORNS HONKING

SHAYNA:

Woah. What are those things and why are they so fast and everywhere, and where is all the grass, what am I wearing? Why is it clinging to my legs? And this blouse? Why is my mid drift showing? How unladylike. What is a Forever 21?

LOGAN:

Welcome to the 21st Century. See I told you you'd love the clothes. So as you can see cars kind of took over the world and we drive them everywhere we need to go. Yay pollution, boo earth.

SHAYNA:

So those big tin cans are cars? I mean I've heard of them before in my time but they looked nothing like this. And they're hurting the environment? And no one rides bikes anymore? What happened?

LOGAN:

No people still ride bikes but not as many as should be. And honestly, People look down on those who ride bikes

because they can't afford a car. I'm not really too sure exactly what happened to the sidepath movement (to herself) although I probably should know. But I do know someone who might.

SHAYNA:

Who?

LOGAN:

His name is Professor Longhurst, he's a professor at the University of Wisconsin.

SHAYNA:

We're going to travel all the way to Wisconsin? Sheesh that will take weeks. Well maybe not in one of those fancy cars. I'm so excited for the cheese though.

LOGAN:

No. Not a chance, I'm lactose intolerant. Remember when I said y'all needed zoom for the sidepath conventions so you didn't have to travel that far? Well you're about to witness it first hand, but don't think too hard about how it works, again it's after your time. We'll just have to walk right across this bridge and right into the library where we can meet him on my laptop. Remember, you're from 2022 not 1898.

SHAYNA:

Okay, I got this. My acting skills are amazing.

LOGAN:

Oh lordy I can't wait

SCENE: THE GIRLS ARE IN THE LIBRARY ON A ZOOM CALL WITH JAMES LONGHURST, AUTHOR OF BIKE BATTLES. THE LIBRARY ISN'T TOO BUSY BUT SMALL CONVERSATIONS CAN BE HEARD IN THE BACKGROUND

SFX: TYPING ON KEYBOARD, TALKING IN BACKGROUND, DING FOR CONNECTING CALL

JAMES:

I'm James Longhurst. I'm a professor of history at the University of Wisconsin in Lacrosse, Wisconsin. Uh, and I'm the author of Bike Battles. The history of Sharing the American Road.

LOGAN:

Hello Professor Longhurst, this is my friend Mary and she would like to learn a bit more about why the sidepath movement ended.

SHAYNA:

Yes, I am a teenage girl from 2022 for sure

LOGAN:

Uhh, what happened to the sidepath movement? Why did it die down and why don't you hear about it anymore?

JAMES:

And then the problem is that these places are now paid for out of user fees. And as the golden age of bicycling fades, the bicycle boom and it's a fad, uh, nationwide, uh, as that fades, there's fewer users and so there's less money coming in. And so the side path, um, movement sort of loses steam. And then it, it's absolutely erased when the Good Roads movement, which is an attempt to convince people to pave and engineer road surfaces. This is before the automobile and the Good Roads movement finally gained some success in state legislatures. And when that happens, the engineers take the, uh, dirtroad and the sidepath next to it and they paved both of them together. And so the sidepaths that were built, get erased underneath the new road surface. The widened engineered paved. And so in places like Rochester, or um the twin

cities where sidepaths are actually built, they disappear.

SCENE: THE ZOOM CALL HAS ENDED THEY ARE NOW OUTSIDE

SHAYNA:

So basically the sidepath movement ended because of the same reason my dad is fighting for now?

LOGAN:

Yeah I guess people didn't want to pay that tax and there wasn't enough funding and once the car became affordable enough, they built roads right over top of the sidepaths.

SHAYNA:

So all this work he is doing right now is for nothing? I really can't believe those cheapos couldn't afford the small price he asked them to pay.

LOGAN:

Well I mean if you look at it that way, yes. But there's actually a lot of bike paths in Rochester. They're used mostly for leisure but there are quite a few in the city that connect to important places such as the University of Rochester campus, the hospital and so on. For example, I take a bike path every day to get from my off campus apartment to class and to work as well. It is so much cheaper and easier to afford than these crazy gas prices and trying to find parking.

SHAYNA:

So you're saying you're poor right?

LOGAN:

I mean I'm in college so I'm far from rich

SHAYNA:

But isn't That what your mom and dad
are for right?

LOGAN:
Oh shut up. Let's go look at a bike
path or something.

SHAYNA:
So, where are these bike paths?

LOGAN:
They are all over the city. My personal
favorite though is the bike path that
travels alongside both sides of the
Genesee river. I'm from the countryside
and there's a lot of trees and grass
surrounding the path so it barely feels
like you're in the city and reminds me
of home.

SHAYNA:
Okay country girl. My dad has been
talking about building a sidepath along
the Genesee river for years, he says it
will be so pretty and useful, I guess
eventually he does. I would love to go
see it.

LOGAN:
Come on this way. It's right around the
corner.

**Scene: Genesee Valley Park, leaves are falling, bikes are
passing, people are chattering in the distance.**

SFX: DOGS BARKING IN DISTANCE, WALKING ON GRASS

SHAYNA:
Wow, this is beautiful. Especially on a
day like today. Do you ride here often?

LOGAN:
Watch it I have a boyfriend. I do
usually ride on this trail for leisure
and I try and come as often as I can.

Sometimes I walk my dogs as well, but they like to say hi to everyone and I do not.

SHAYNA:

It's really cool, although you people look at those glowing devices far too much, I know it's after my time so I don't need to get it but...

LOGAN:

You're an old lady

SHAYNA:

You watch your mouth I'm like 200 years older than you. Which means I'm far wiser.

LOGAN:

So a really old lady. I actually happen to know a thing or two about this trail as well. Learned it in my history class.

SHAYNA:

Oh yeah?

LOGAN:

Yeah, it connects diverse neighborhoods, which I know wasn't a thing back in your day. It also connects 3 waterfalls, 8 bridges and 11 parks, all of those parks have their own network of bike paths as well.

SHAYNA:

Oh wow look who knows her history

LOGAN:

Well you know my generation is really good at memorizing and regurgitation.

SHAYNA:

Lovely, so there is a decent amount of bike paths in Rochester?

LOGAN:

Yeah. I know it's like a topic of conversation right now that building more bike paths is important and people are advocating for it.

SHAYNA:

Why are they now? If the sidepath movement ended, what is making biking popular again?

LOGAN:

Honestly probably the fact that gas is over \$5 a gallon, or maybe the horrible carbon footprint that we are leaving on this earth. But I do know someone who's been in Rochester for quite some time and should know a thing or two about it.

SHAYNA:

Really who?

LOGAN:

His name is Roger Levy, he owns the bike repair shop in college town. He also was a UofR alum.

SHAYNA:

Alright let's pay him a visit

LOGAN:

Okay but remember you don't need to announce that you're from 2022, he is just going to assume that.

Scene: Bike repair shop

SFX: BIRDS CHIRPING, CALM MUSIC, BELL RINGING, TEA POURING

ROGER

I'm Roger Levy. I've owned this store
for 37 years.

LOGAN:

How do you feel about the way that
Rochester has set up for side paths now
versus when you went to University of
Rochester?

ROGER:

Oh, it's much better. It's needed. When
I was at school 50 years ago, we didn't
have half of this traffic.
And now, uh, the street that I'm
located on, when I was a little boy it
was all farms. So we've really grown
very fast and unfortunately a lot of
the growth is outward and the city is
being hollowed out. So the big crowds
we used to see downtown are not there.
And you know, we have a lot of group
rides where we just ride random rides
around the city and you know, people
are very happy to see large groups of
cyclists.

LOGAN:

Do you think that there's a change in
the amount of cyclists from then to
now? Like, have you ever seen an
increase in people's cycling?

ROGER:

Yeah.

LOGAN:

Or a decrease?

ROGER:

Yeah,

LOGAN:

an increase?

ROGER:

I think I was about one of 10 cyclists when I went to the university and uh, there's bike- .

LOGAN:

It's interesting that, why do you think that there's been such an increase? Which, cause obviously like, you know, cars.

Roger:

Yeah, I think that um, the generations younger than myself are just smarter, you know, and they wear helmets, you don't have to force them to <laugh>. A lot of people my age wouldn't. And a lot of people of my generation, as soon as they got a car, they'd never dr-drove a bike again. But I think a lot of them are returning to it. And so that's a large part of my business and they'll bring in an old bike that's a racing bike and I'll convert it to a comfort bike.

SHAYNA:

So, the older generation that you were just talking about that has kind of gotten back into bicycling, what do you see they use it more for? Like do they use it more for recreational activities or solely transportation? Cause you use it solely for transportation?

ROGER:

Well, both.

SHAYNA:

Well yes, but

ROGER:

And they do have a fair amount of transportation cyclists. They were uh, not at all focused on toys or racing, which is what a lot of people born in the fifties and the forties, you know, they were either racing or you know, as I say, they outgrew their cycling as soon as they got a car or a license and people thought it was kid stuff. You know, bicycles were classified as toys for a long time by the trade commission.

SCENE: OUTSIDE THE BIKE SHOP WALKING DOWN COLLEGETOWN. CARS PASSING BY AND NOISES OF TRAFFIC.

SHAYNA:

I guess my dad did have an impact after all, even if it wasn't what he was hoping for.

LOGAN:

Yeah sounds like once cars became popular again beginning to turn to biking as a source of transportation again

SHAYNA:

At first when I saw it here I was shocked and a little sad to see that cars had taken over and my dad's work had been for nothing. But it sounds like biking is becoming popular again, and girls can even bike too with these fancy pants. What do you call them?

LOGAN:

Those are leggings.

SHAYNA:

Leggings. Interesting.

LOGAN:

But you're right, I mean hopefully my generation can pick up where your dad left off and use the foundations that he built to revamp the sidepath movement. I'm definitely going to pass my exam now and maybe there will be a bike path movement in our future.

SHAYNA:

That would be pretty cool, hopefully it doesn't get taken over by some even more advanced tin cans

LOGAN:

Oh it probably will, isn't that just how life works. But just like with the sidepaths, remnants of the history will remain.

Hey look, I think it might be time for you to head home.

SFX: TELEPORTATION SOUNDS, CRINCLING NEWSPAPER

SHAYNA:

You're right. Hey look, someone from my hometown was riding his bike and got hit by a train, the gossip is going to be so good. September 16th 1898, sounds like home.

LOGAN:

Hey you never told me about how you knew I wasn't from 1898 when you saw me

SHAYNA:

Oh that's a story for another time, tootles.

SFX: TELEPORTATION NOISES, WHOOSHING, MUSIC, ETC.

LOGAN:
I guess we'll never know.

Scene: End credits of podcast

LOGAN:
HearUR is a podcast created by students at
The University of Rochester.

SHAYNA:
Our sound designer and engineer for
this episode was Kwame. Our lead
researchers were myself, Shayna and Quinn,

LOGAN:
and our episode producer was me, Logan.

SHAYNA:
We'd also like to thank Roger Levy and
James Longhurst for their interviews.

LOGAN:
And our music was provided by blue dot
sessions.

SHAYNA:
A special thank you to HOPR Bike share
for providing bikes for the HEAR UR
team this season.

LOGAN:
The executive producers are Thomas
Fleischman and Stephen Roessner. And,
be sure to check out the other episodes
of HearUR Season Five:
Cycle-Paths at HEARUR.COM or
wherever you get your podcasts.

SHAYNA:
Thank youuu

LOGAN:
Thank youuu