



F.M. Ingalls, In the field - the U.S. Army Bicycle Corps, 1897.
Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield
Library, University of Montana, 73.0031.

Edward H. Boos, Bicycle Corps crossing a creek, 1897.
Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections, Mansfield
Library, University of Montana, 672.239.

**Edward H. Boos, People gathered around the Bicycle Corps,
c. 1897.** Courtesy of Archives and Special Collections,
Mansfield Library, University of Montana, 672.271.

Horses are loud and expensive, and in the 1890s, the U.S. Army began to look for an alternative form of transportation. In 1896, General Nelson A. Miles, stationed in Chicago, approved a plan for 2nd Lieutenant James Moss to test bicycles as a replacement for the Army's horses. Moss was an avid cyclist and leader of the 25th Infantry, a segregated, all African American unit stationed at Fort Missoula, Montana.

Chicago-based Spalding Bicycle Company loaned the Army specially designed bikes in exchange for using the Corps in advertising. The bikes had strong steel frames and rims, more durable tires, rubber-covered chains, and seats designed for comfort on long rides. Assisted by Private John Findley (who worked at Imperial Bicycle Works in Chicago before enlisting), the Corps trained for three weeks and then took three trips throughout the West, the longest spanning nearly 2,000 miles between Missoula and St. Louis.

Moss believed the tests with the Spalding bikes to be a success: the Corps traveled twice as fast as cavalry or infantry units at $\frac{1}{4}$ the cost and effort, even when faced with very challenging weather and terrain. Despite this, no further training or development occurred until the early part of the 20th century, when bicycles were eventually utilized by the Army during World Wars I and II for supplemental transportation.