



# THE LOST HISTORY



## Taylor

continued from page 1

Indiana State Museum.

During his youth, though, his accomplishments were worldly. His first professional race was a six-day race of endurance, where competitors rode as many miles as possible in six days and six nights, stopping only for eating and napping.

Major Taylor would race for eight miles, sleep for one, and logged 1,732 miles. After his loss, he focused on his sprinting skills to great success.

When White race organizers in the South barred him from the tracks, his hopes at a U.S. championship were sidelined for several years.

He set the standing-start 1-mile record at age 19 at 1 minute 41 seconds. He'd later knock that down to 1 minute 19 seconds. While those records no longer stand, there is considerable argument among cycling circles about the role that new technology plays in reaching faster and faster speeds (the un-paced world record is held by Sam Whittingham, who hit 82.33 miles an hour. With a special vehicle to cut wind resistance down to zero, Fred Rompelberg reached 167 mph using just the power of his two feet in 1995 at the Bonneville Salt Flats).

But in his day, Major Taylor was a force to

be reckoned with. He became the American sprint champion in 1900. In 1901, he defeated European champions and then raced across Australia and New Zealand. He retired in 1910 at age 32. He self-published his autobiography, "The Fastest Bicycle Rider in the World," in 1929.

Tolman says some promoters pushed the "White vs. Black" aspect of the competition, but Major Taylor didn't overtly turn his success into a political stump speech about race or want to be a spectacle reminiscent of a side show.

"He didn't get on his soapbox during his racing career," Tolman said. "He let his legs do the talking."

### ENDURING LEGACY

Every year, the Major Taylor Association holds the George Street Bike Challenge for Major Taylor. It is a steep, two-block sprint where the man himself used to train in Worcester. Racers pedal up the 24 percent grade hill one at time, battling the clock.

When White race organizers in the South barred him from the tracks, his hopes at a U.S. championship were sidelined for several years



Aside from installing the Major Taylor and memorial at the Worcester Public Library (see photo on page 9), the association is heavily invested in the use of the man's story as an educational tool.

Working with several retired Worcester public school teachers, Tolman says the association developed a school curriculum designed for grades 3 and 4 and for middle school. She says teachers in 27 states have used the curriculum. While many teachers use the curriculum during Black history month, one teacher uses it March to talk about the importance of good sportsmanship. The curriculum is available for free from the association's website [http://www.majortaylorassociation.org/mtc\\_urric.shtml](http://www.majortaylorassociation.org/mtc_urric.shtml).

'Major Taylor was utterly alone. They ganged up on him. They'd literally push him into the fences and not even give him a chance'

See TAYLOR on page 9



Black history belongs to all of us. It's not just other people's stories from the past. It's how these stories are passed down, reflected upon and used to start new chapters. In our schools, in the workplace and in the community, new leaders are taking a stand and creating positive change every day. This shows us that Black History is alive and well. And this is why we celebrate. Wells Fargo honors Black History and all pioneers of progress.

[wellsfargo.com](http://wellsfargo.com)

© 2011 Wells Fargo Bank N.A., All rights reserved. Member FDIC. (435-419\_01072)

Together we'll go far

