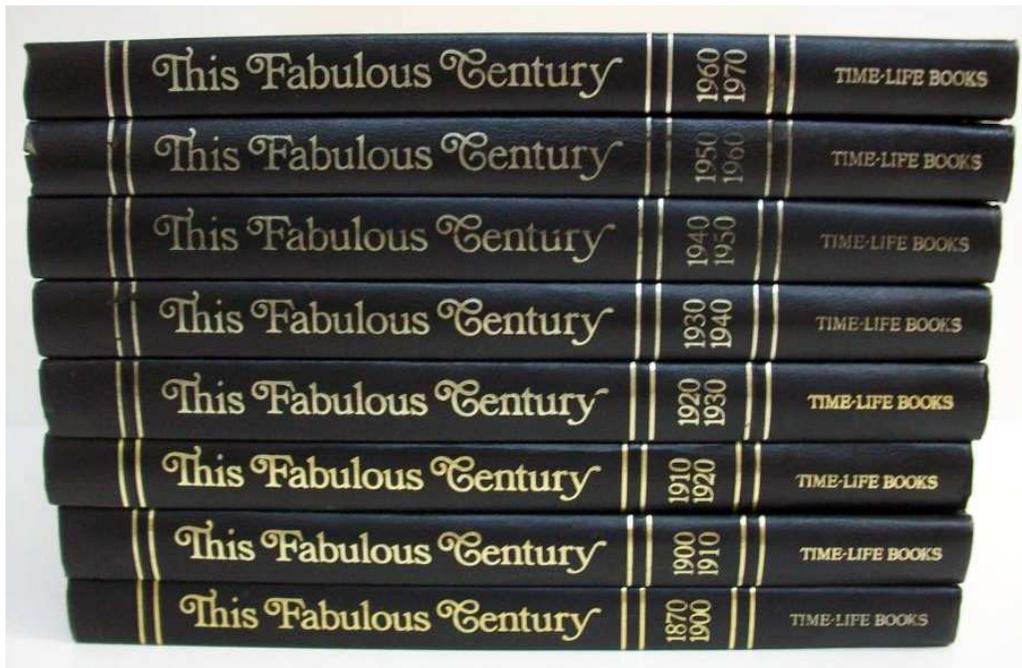


YALSA Award for Excellence in Nonfiction 2011 Speech

Sue Macy, Finalist

When I was a young adult, my favorite books, nonfiction or otherwise, were the eight volumes in the Time-Life continuity series, “This Fabulous Century.” It was the second Time-Life series my parents subscribed to. The first was about science or geography or possibly natural history. I remember lots of pretty pictures, but not many topics that appealed to my imagination.



“This Fabulous Century” was different. Each volume covered a decade in the 20th century, through 1970, with a 19th-century volume focusing on 1870-1900 added later. And each was a veritable scrapbook of social and cultural history, packed with material that allowed me to not just read about the time period, but to feel

like I'd been transported back to it. The 19th-century book reprinted ads for home remedies and trade cards for patent medicines. The 1940s book featured a six-page foldout of the insignias worn by all of America's major military outfits. The 1950s volume included a bound-in prototypical movie magazine, featuring photos and authentic stories about Liz Taylor, Rock Hudson, Janet Leigh, Tony Curtis, Debbie Reynolds, and Eddie Fisher.

In other words, these books were jam-packed with primary sources, and decades before anyone stuck the words "Common" and "Core" together, I was using them to develop a love of, and curiosity about, American history.

I thought about those books as I was deciding what to say today. And having long ago liberated them from my parents' bookshelves, I looked through them once again.

This time, though, I couldn't help but notice a similarity between those books and *Wheels of Change*. *Wheels* has ads and trade cards and posters and sheet music. It's got reprints of articles about women and cycling from the 1800s. It's even got celebrities, circa 1890, including Annie Oakley and Marie Curie. And like the "Fabulous" books, it takes a thematic look at an era in history. So I don't think it's too much of a stretch to say that the roots of *Wheels of Change* go back to my days as a teenager, eagerly consuming "This Fabulous Century."



I had been talking about writing a book with a scrapbook feel for quite a while. If we achieved that with *Wheels*, I have no doubt that a great deal of the credit goes to a lovely lady in New Jersey named Dottie Batho. Dottie (below) is the widow of Norman Batho, who late in life amassed an incredible collection of images and ephemera from the cycling craze of the late 19th century. Just like the archival material in “This Fabulous Century,” the Batho Collection helped transport me back to the era I was writing about.



I first found images from the Batho collection on the Internet, and I was surprised and pleased to learn that the originals were housed in Dottie's condo, only about an hour from where I live. The first thing I saw when I entered her home was the full-size high-wheeler in her living room, the same bicycle Norman had dismantled and shipped overseas for a month-long European cycling adventure.

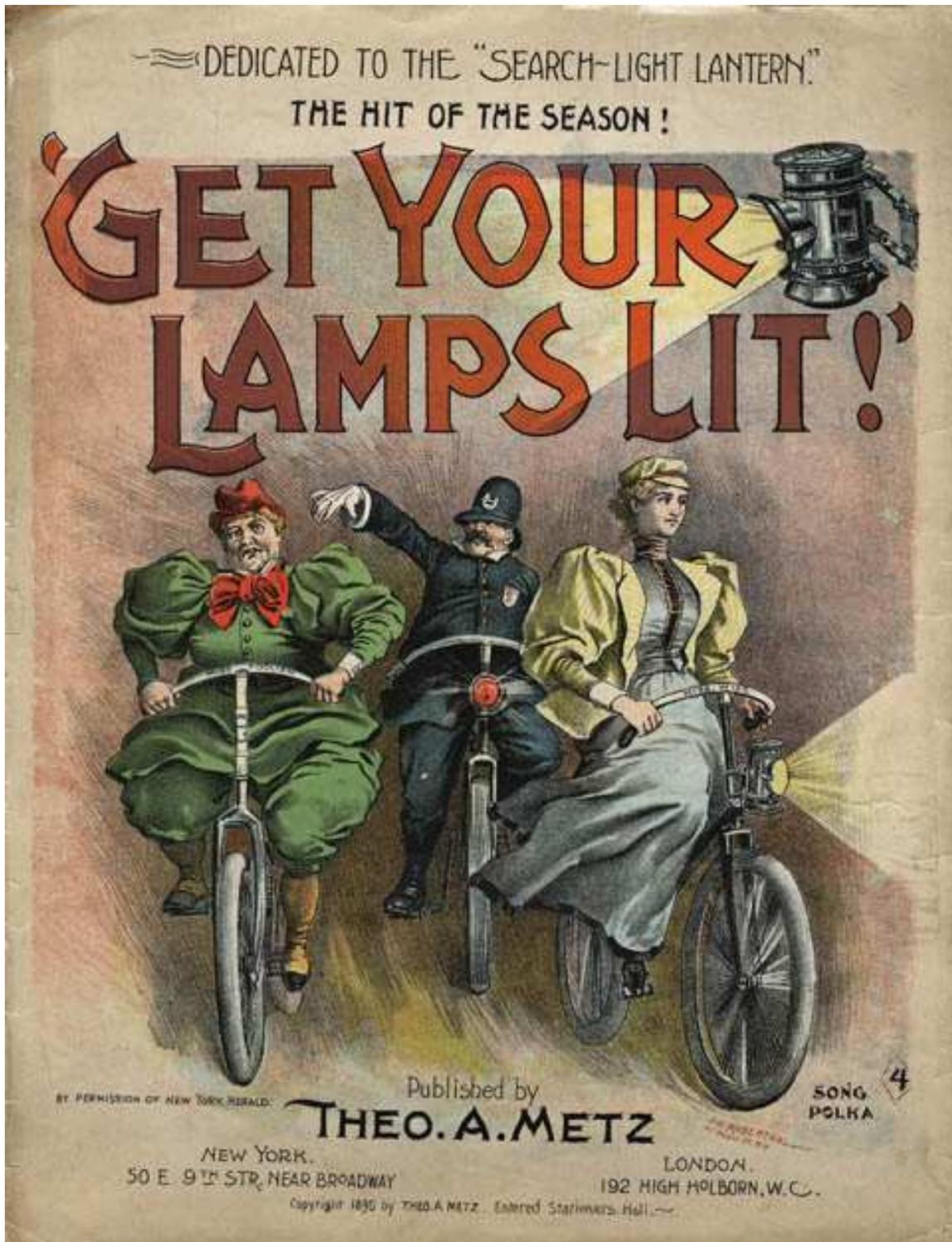
Then there was Norman's study, which was lined with loose-leaf notebooks full of plastic sheets holding scores of advertisements, cigarette cards, cigar box labels, paper dolls, sheet music, and other ephemera celebrating the bicycle. Dottie



apologized that she had already sold most of his pins and knickknacks, but said she was pleased that we'd be digitizing part of Norman's collection for posterity. We spent five hours doing just that. Dottie had a large scanner and I had brought my 8 x 10 model, and together, we made high-rez. scans of 84 items.

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When I was at Dottie's, she mentioned the annual bicycle auction in Copake, New York, which was scheduled for April. I checked the catalog online and, after dozens of antique bikes that I couldn't afford, I saw postcards, photographs, and other ephemera that seemed promising.



When the time came I went and won seven items, including two century medals—for riding 100 continuous miles—and two photos I'd never seen before.





What's more, at the auction a woman named Beth Emery overheard me talking to a friend about *Wheels of Change*, and she invited me to visit her in

Connecticut to see her collection of images of early women cyclists. It was a case of being in the right place at the right time, but that seemed to happen over and over with this book.

Another stroke of luck was having a wonderful group of people working on *Wheels of Change* alongside me. I firmly believe that *Wheels* would not be receiving this honor from YALSA if it didn't look so great. So I have to thank the design team at National Geographic, and especially my comrade-in-arms, designer Marty Ittner, for their amazing work on *Wheels*.

I also have to thank Jennifer Emmett, who's been my editor on five books at National Geographic, and is always encouraging and reassuring and most important, calm. And publisher Nancy Feresten, who has built an enviable nonfiction publishing program with creativity and integrity. And all the other folks at Geographic and elsewhere who helped to produce and champion this book.

I am honored to have been a finalist with Karen and Steve and Susan and Marc & Marina in what was a very good year for nonfiction, and I really appreciate YALSA's work in spreading the word about our books. I want to thank my friend, Ginger Gascon, a former player in the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League, for surprising me by flying down from Chicago to be here today. And finally, I want to thank my parents, who encouraged me by buying "This Fabulous Century" so long ago and who still encourage me today.