Like most inventions, the bicycle has gone through a lot of changes. On this page are:

Four bikes from the 1800s:

Hobby Horse / 1818
Velocipede / 1869
"Ordinary" Bicycle / 1886
"Safety" Bicycle / 1898

Look closely at all the details. Which bike is least like bikes today? Which seems the most modern? You can find some clues by doing this crossword puzzle.

1. Tires
2. Chain
3. Wire
4. Wood
5. Pedals

Answer to bike order, top and then left to right: "ordinary," velocipede, hobby horse, "safety." Answer to crossword: 1. Tires, 2. Chain, 3. Wire, 4. Wood, 5. Pedals. So what's the deal with that giant wheel on the "ordinary"? The size of the wheel made the bike go faster—one turn of the pedals took the rider farther than a smaller wheel would. But the "ordinary" was dangerous—the rider sometimes went flying over the handlebars. On the later "safety" bikes, the two wheels were again the same size. The little third wheel of this 1898 "safety" was not for safety, however. It was a kind of shock absorber.

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