

## About Annie “Londonderry” Kopchovsky



Until 1894, there were few female sports stars, no product endorsement deals, and no young mothers with the chutzpah to circle the globe on a bicycle. Annie Kopchovsky changed all of that.

Described as “the most extraordinary journey ever undertaken by a woman,” Annie’s odyssey was reportedly set in motion by a wager made by two wealthy clubmen in Boston. Her challenge was to circle the globe by bicycle in 15 months, earning \$5,000 en route. This was not only a test of a woman’s physical endurance and mental fortitude, but also of her ability to fend for herself in a man’s world. In June 1894, Annie Kopchovsky set out from the steps of the Boston Statehouse to prove the men wrong and to score a victory for the “new woman.”

At first blush, it would be hard to imagine a more unlikely candidate for such a trip than Annie Cohen Kopchovsky, the 23-year old Jewish immigrant who pedaled out of Boston, leaving her husband and three small children behind. Yet despite having never ridden a bicycle before, Annie proved remarkably well equipped for the journey. A self-taught master of public relations, Annie was a consummate self-promoter and a skillful creator of her own myth.

Paid \$100 by the Londonderry Spring Water Company to carry its placard on her bike, the company also contracted with Annie to adopt their name as a promotion. Traveling with only a change of clothes and a pearl-handled revolver, Annie earned her way, in part, by turning her bicycle and her body into a mobile billboard, carrying advertising banners and ribbons around the world. When she returned to Boston in 1895, she had transformed into Annie “Londonderry,” the bloomer-clad, PR-savvy, international celebrity.

After the trip was over, Annie moved her family to New York where, under the byline “The New Woman,” she wrote sensational features for the *New York World*. Her first story was an account of her cycling adventures. “I am a journalist and ‘a new woman,’” she wrote, “if that term means that I believe I can do anything that any man can do.”

Though Annie became a global sensation in the mid-1890s, she has otherwise been forgotten by history for more than a century. *The New Woman: Annie “Londonderry” Kopchovsky*, resurrects Annie’s amazing journey and introduces her, for the first time in more than 119 years to American film audiences.