

RIDE REPORT: MIDSTATE MADNESS. MAY 7TH-8TH 2016

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It's mad I tell you. Totally insane. It has been raining for 8 days now; not light rain, not intermittent rain, but a steady down pouring which has caused people to turn towards the dark side. Chins are pulled tight against chests and there are no smiles left. Does the sun still exist? But wait....there is a glimmer of optimism.....the forecast calls for the rain to finally let up.

THERE ***IS*** HOPE AFTER ALL.

Richard, an art teacher, finished his day at school on Long Island and pointed his rental car south, braving the Friday rush hour to escape the congestion of New York City. He made good time, all things considered, and arrived here for warm left overs at 8:30 PM (thanks Lynn). Steve, a local investment banker, finished counting the bank's money, spent a final night at home and arrived here for breakfast at 7:45 AM on Saturday morning.(again, thanks Lynn). We drank our coffee and ate our eggs, then killed as much time as possible by discussing ride strategies, loading bikes, and watching the weather channel. We dragged our feet until 9:30 or so and decided that the only way we were going to get out of this rain was to **RIDE** out.

We left in a light drizzle, our eyes and hopes pinned to the skies. Could they possibly be brightening ever so slightly? We zig-zagged west, paralleling route 1 through farm country for 25 miles, passing an Amish man driving a 4-horse-drawn wagon with iron wheels that clattered loudly against the asphalt. In the back his son sat on a pile of wet hay watching we 3 crazy “English” ride by in the rain on antique motorcycles. We stopped briefly at the longest covered bridge in Lancaster County: The Pine Grove Bridge which joins Lancaster and Chester Counties as it



spans the east branch of The Octoraro Creek right next to a scenic waterfall and an ancient hydro-plant. A half dozen Amish buggies passed through the double trusses while we smoked little cigars and marveled at the fact that the rain had actually stopped falling, though no one was taking off their rain gear just yet.

The bridge has a two-span, wooden, double Burr arch design with the addition of steel hanger rods.

I assure you that Richard generally opens his eyes while riding, if not for pictures.





Just a few miles past the bridge, including a short stretch of gravel road, we stopped at the home of Robert Fulton of early steam boat fame (above)



Less well known perhaps is Robert Edison Fulton, Jr who was related to both famous inventors and an avid, maybe somewhat mad motorcyclist. In 1932, at age 23, he rode around the world solo and unsupported on a Douglas motorcycle. He took many pictures and wrote a book about his travels: *One Man Caravan*. **IT'S GOOD!**

Twenty-five more miles and the rain was definitely done though some clouds -4- persisted. We got a bird's eye view of the changing sky from The Pinnacles, a high cliff above the Holtwood Dam, beneath the high tension wires. We were close to packing our rain gear away but still not quite convinced.





LEFT: Steve, over-looking the Susquehanna.

From The Pinnacles we rejoined River Road north, following the mighty Susquehanna over hills, around many sharp curves and under the high tension wires. The still wet roads demanded our full attention and moderate speeds while affording splendid views of the river and the surrounding countryside. Soon we entered Columbia, PA where our

route provided a fine look at the longest multiple arch re-enforced concrete bridge in the world (over a mile). The Columbia-Wrightsville Bridge is an engineering landmark. The Pennsylvania section of the American Society of Civil Engineers noted that it is "a splendid example of the graceful multiple-span, reinforced concrete arched form popular in early

20th Century highway bridges in the United States." The bridge is designated State

Route 462 and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is also a Historic Civil Engineering Landmark and a part of the historic Lincoln Highway, America's first transcontinental auto route.



By this time our tummies were growling and we *found* Prudhomme's Lost Cajun Kitchen where we parked up and decloaked. Hot soup chased out some of the morning's chill and spicy crawdad's (AKA Mudbugs) handled our hunger. Once a stopover for Bootleggers and Gansters, this historic 1800's hotel is a known haunt and featured on the cover of "Ghosts of the River Towns" by Rick Fisher. Several different paranormal investigative groups have returned many times to document inexplicable visual and audio happenings.



Columbia held one more attraction, though time was running short (pun intended). Our final stop was just a few blocks from Prudhomme's: The National Watch and Clock Museum. OK, we were not really all that interested in horology but we thought it might be fun to get a quick look and maybe even ask "Do you happen to know what time it is?" The proprietor was actually quite accomodating and besides the time he gave us a good idea of what was inside and invited us to return when we had more...errr...time. From the museum we made our way across the river on route 30, jumping off at the first exit, just a mile down the highway from whence we serpentine west, paralleling 30 on tiny country lanes including another short stretch of dirt road which led us to our next stop: The Haines Shoe House.



I first spotted the house from a distance and it really looked weird, definitely catching the eye, which is exactly what Mahlon Haines intended when he had the house built in 1948, on a hill, so it was visible from the Lincoln Highway below. It was originally intended as a giant bill board of sorts to promote Haines Shoes. Mr Haines was a fascinating gentleman and entrepreneur

extraordinaire. The guided tour provided many fascinating insights into his life and career as well as a thorough look at the insides of the 5 story house. PLUS, they had delicious ice cream for sale though we were too full to partake.



From the Shoe House we followed a route intended to thread the needle between developed areas like Carlisle, York and Harrisburg as we proceded northwest. The convoluted route took us through some very attractive countryside while one or two wrong turns were easily corrected. Ultilmately we made our way across Waggoner's Gap on a road guarenteed to make one's heart beat a little faster, regardless of road speed, as it surmounts the ridge that forms the north side of Cumberland Valley. The views from the top are most sublime.



Another stop for ice cream and a stretch; this time I had to indulge, and as the hour was growing late we made a bee line for the Millersburg Ferry. The oldest continuously operating ferry service in the USA begins its operating season on May



first but after the recent heavy rains I was fairly certain that the paddle wheel boat would be tied to the dock. Still, we picked up the pace a little, running route 850 east to pick up 34, a direct shot to route 15 southbound. The ferry entrance is on the northbound side and to save 5 miles we u-turned illegally by crossing over the concrete barrier after waiting until there was no traffic for miles in either direction. This got us to the waiting ferry just in time to roll straight on for its final trip across. ***We nailed it!***



We had the ferry all to ourselves.

On the east side of the river, Millersburg was hopping on a Saturday night. We turned south and followed the river to arrive at the only motel around and checked in. The Red Rose Motel: we didn't expect much and it certainly lived up to our expectations. It wasn't so bad really but it certainly could have been a bit cheaper, all things considered. The sign in each room said "Persuant with the 2008 Pennsylvania Clean Air Act, this is a NON-SMOKING room" yet the rooms reeked of tobacco. A few miles further south was Denny's Lenny's Restaurant: the kind of place where meatloaf is a safe bet. I opted for spagetti. Should have gotten the meatloaf. Back at the motel after dinner we tailgated, drinking gin, whiskey and/or Captain Morgan's Coconut Rum from classy stainless steel flasks and smoking fine cigars provided by Steve. Thank-you Steve.



For Sunday morning no alarms were set. We woke up slightly hung over at around 8 or 8:30 and slowly re-packed and loaded the bikes. We set off north along the river, greatly enjoying the non-existent traffic on a long stretch of road that followed the river and gave fine views to our left. Did I mention that the sun was now out in full force? Very, very pleasant! At a gas stop by the junction of 225 we met and chatted up several locals who were obviously classic bike fans. RetroTours business cards were duly distributed and we headed east on 225 to Shamokin to pick

up 125 south: one of PA's funest roads, and we had it all to ourselves. Thirty miles and I couldn't say how many curves later we stopped in Pine Grove for brunch. Motrin and aspirin was consumed while we waited for our hangovers to subside and for a table to open up. Even out here in no-man's land a thirty minute wait was required on this Mother's Day but the breakfast was very good and we were in no rush.

Next we aimed south and made excellent time as we kept riding for several hours with no stopovers. As we got closer to home I realized that we were way ahead of schedule and began exploring some side roads, meandering to the left and right before regaining the main route: 897. This pleasant wandering about nevertheless brought us ever close to home and we made a final stop by the railroad tracks for a group photo. In the end we covered 180 miles on Saturday and 170 on Sunday.



The weather was pleasant all day Sunday: warm and sunny. All of our rain gear and cold weather gear was packed away and the ride was just fantastic: perfect. At home around 3:30 we took our time unloading the bikes, then had some snacks while watching MotoGP. What a great way to cap off the weekend! Lynn made us a delicious meal, thanks very much Honey, and we said our goodbyes and began planning the next ride. You should consider joining us methinks.



THE SMILES SAY IT ALL.