

Ride Report: Bill's Old Bike Barn June 10th & 11th, 2023

We are a group of five. We were polled by email, and based on our preferences, 7 bikes were prepared:

Fred S..... Landenburg, PA	1983 Suzuki GS550E..... 8,772 miles
Sean M..... Mohnton, PA	1976 Moto Guzzi 850T3..... 26,327 miles
Jon S..... Huntington beach, CA	1976 Honda GL1000..... 18,844 miles
Justin C..... Reading, PA	1978 BMW R100/7..... 30,296 miles
Joel S..... Kennett Square, PA	1979 Moto Guzzi V50..... 32,387 miles
	*1975 Ducati 860GT..... 39,873 miles
	*1977 Yamaha XS750..... 27,150 miles



As we arrive for breakfast at 7:15 on Saturday morning, we each choose one bike, first come first served. *The Ducati and the Yamaha would stay behind as back-ups.

We enjoy a hearty breakfast and get acquainted with one another. Fred is a retired ultra-marathoner who works at the 'The Last Chance Garage', where antique cars are reborn. Of course, he chose the GS550; he owns 2 himself. Jon is a 'Hondroid': retired from American Honda. Of course, he chose the GL. Justin is a sort of real estate mogul who wrenches part time at Reading Cycles. I am Joel. Sean is a very private person who shuns being photographed. Whichever bike we choose is the one we start out on, but we plan to rotate through them all, switching off every 75 miles.

We load our chosen bikes and have wheels rolling by 9:15. We breeze through the edge of the borough of Kennett Square, then head due north, following freshly paved, curvy roads to Hopewell Furnace: a restored site where castings for metal stoves and other iron ware were produced in colonial times. After a short exploratory break, we continue on our northerly quest and ride through the Dreibelis Covered Bridge. Spanning Maiden Creek, the bridge was built in 1869 of Burr Arch Truss construction, 168 feet in length, and 14 feet wide. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1981 and restored in 2000.



After exploring both sides of the creek, we resume the scenic sweepers of 143N then turn off in Lynnport to ascend the Eastern Continental Divide. On the far side of the switch backs and hairpins we find our lunch stop in Snyders, 100 miles from home, where we sit outside on the porch and enjoy the company of like minded individuals along with some good food. After lunch we switch bikes and head for the next stop.



Next stop: The Pioneer Coal Tunnel in Ashland. Here we descend into the mine for a guided tour explanation of old school mining which was once the lifeblood of this region, followed by a short ride on Old Lokey: the adjacent steam locomotive. On the way out of town we cruise past Centralia: a borough and near-ghost town in Columbia County, PA. The population has declined from 1,000 in 1980 to five residents in 2020 because a coal mine fire has been burning beneath the borough since 1962. All real estate in the borough was claimed under eminent domain in 1992 and condemned by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and Centralia's ZIP Code was discontinued by the Postal Service in 2002. State and local officials reached an agreement with the then seven remaining residents on October 29, 2013, allowing them to remain in Centralia until their deaths, after which the rights to their houses will be taken through eminent domain. As of 2021,

only 4 residents remain, making Centralia the least-populated municipality in PA.

Backtracking slightly, we pick up a 35 mile long section of 339 which curves past gigantic windmills and follows a lovely cut between two high ridges to bring us to our motel in Mifflinville. Following check-in, showers, and perhaps a phone call home, we ride about 5 miles to the Bandits Roadhouse restaurant, a biker friendly establishment with large portions of good food. And beer. After dinner, back at the Super 8, we notice a group of about 15 bikers that has arrived and made camp close to our rooms. Super loud exhausts make an impression as more riders arrive, and this looks like an annual gathering of good friends. Music blares forth and there are little kids running around and everyone is having a real good time. Our fears of a troubled night disappear when the music turns off at 10:30 and things settle down.

Following his illustrious career with American Honda, is it any wonder that Jon prefers the Wing?





On Sunday morning, we make do with the meager ‘breakfast in a bag’ on offer from the motel, then complete a 40 mile loop that includes mountain roads and more covered bridges, including the “Twin Bridges of Paden”, built in 1850. The loop terminates at Bill’s Old Bike Barn, where Bill and Judy graciously allow us to enter and explore before the official opening hour. One could visit this moto-emporium dozens of times and never see it all. Much more than just bikes, the magnitude of the collections inside is staggering; words and even photos cannot convey the feeling.



An hour and a half later, our senses are overloaded, and it's time to hit the road again.



Remarkably, Bill and Judy live inside their museum.

The ride home from Bill's is special. We pass through some coal country on major routes then stop for a 'cuppa' at the Shamokin Dunkin. Suitably refreshed (jacked up?) we tackle challenging PA125 which always delights with scores of sharp bends as it wends its way up and down two small mountains. As we pass near Reading, closing in on Kennett Square, a spur of the moment plan develops. Justin has related how he and his wife recently acquired a "petting cow". This is a 'genetically engineered' mini-moo, no larger than a medium to large size dog. People actually pay money to pet these adorable creatures. A slight route deviation gets us to the small farm near Justin's house where April meets us with their new pet. She (the mini-moo) really is very cute and pet-able. Just look at Fred's grin:



PARTING SHOT



LEFT TO RIGHT: Joel, Xxxx, Justin, Fred.

PHOTO CREDIT: Jon



~Folk art at Paden bridges~

