

Wednesday then, Wednesday now!

Back in the first half of the last century the Bike Shop was on Michigan Avenue just west of Livernois. The shop was a partnership between Mike Walden and Gene Portusi. During that era the Wednesday ride began at Woodward just north of Six Mile and would go to Pontiac where often we would stop at the Vernor's store that existed there at that time.

The Mike Walden, Gene Portusi era ended in 1951 on less than amicable relationships. Mike's bike shop then moved to Livernois just south of Six Mile Rd, across from U of D. The Wednesday ride then began at the shop or at Seven Mile just west of Woodward. The ride often went to Pontiac but also sometimes went north on Adams and at some point onto the unpaved Squirrel Road where we would get our bike handling training riding over a gravel road.

As the Fifties gave way to the Sixties the ride began going to Royal Oak and picking up riders that met at the Train Station at 4th and Main. Later in the Sixties Mike moved the shop to Madison Heights on John R just south of 11 Mile Road. About that time the Royal Oak Library was completed and the parking lot west of the Library became the meeting place for the Wednesday ride. About that time TJ Hill oozed into the leadership of the Wednesday ride. The course was not yet refined at that point so far as reaching Cranbrook was concerned as some roads were not paved such as Benjamin between 13 Mile and Normandy.

Mike and others had created a signed bike route that north and east toward Bloomer Park. I used some of that route then began stair stepping toward Cranbrook until we had a decent 25 mile route between those two points.

I do not recall the date when Mike moved the shop from Madison Heights to Hazel Park on John R north of 9 Mile Road. The Royal Oak Wednesday ride continued and grew in numbers. Meanwhile the East Side Wednesday ride began from the Cadieux Café with Jim Smith as leader and also grew as years passed.

In the early 70's Lone Pine Road was paved west of Telegraph and I began running side trips across Lahser and Telegraph. There were still gravel sections near Inkster and Middlebelt along Lone Pine. By the mid 70's these sections were paved and I kept adding to the route until we had a 50-mile course between Royal Oak and the Lone Pine Orchard Lake intersection.

When I thought I had the course refined I went out and painted arrows at each of the turns of which there were 156. The course also included 39 hills. The extended course became the Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday route. There were many refinements to the route thru the 80's as new streets became paved.

Sometime in the 80's Dan Klinkhammer decided to create a Wednesday ride closer to home for him and thus the Northville Wednesday ride began and continues to this day as do those from Royal Oak and the Cadieux Café.

In 1991 I decided it was time to explore America more intimately and turned over the reins of the Wednesday ride to Leonardo Gianola. From his time forward most are familiar with who is running what on Wednesday wherever it is you decide to ride on that evening.

TJ Hill