

THE LOUISVILLE BICYCLE CLUB

Founded in 1897

www.louisvillebicycleclub.org

January 2012

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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!
Masters World Championships
CX Jan. 6 - 16 (Event 12-15)
AWARDS BANQUET JAN. 14

The Louisville Cyclist is a bi-monthly newsletter of the Louisville Bicycle Club.

*Please submit articles and photos to:
 David Ryan ("PaCkMaN")
 1906 Lower Hunters Trace
 Louisville, KY 40216,
 editor@louisvillebicycleclub.org,
 502-447-7814.*

Deadline for the February 2012 issue is Jan 20

Please let us know what you think this newsletter needs. After all, it's your newsletter!



Another Great Year!

by Andy Murphy, LBC President

In 2011, we continued the progress the Louisville Bicycle Club has made through the years. Whether it was working as a bike marshal at The Mayor's Healthy Hometown Hike, Bike & Paddle or working at the New Rider Clinic, the members of the LBC delivered!

Shortly after the LBC Banquet in January, 2011, Jeff White lead an intrepid group of 12 riders on the first ever "Shop-Hop." This ride started and ended at Quill's Coffee Shop on Bardstown Road and toured the bike shops in the area. Thanks to Jeff White for organizing the ride, thanks to the bike shops for their hospitality and especially thanks to the riders that braved the "snowstorm" to complete the ride!



Club members travelled to a number of out of town rides in 2011; The Redbud Ride, The Girlfriend Ride, The RAIN Ride and The Midwest Tandem Rally are just a few. 2011 was a Paris-Brest-Paris year, and a number of LBC Randonneurs made the trip to France to participate in PBP. This 1200 km ride must be completed in 90 hours. Melissa Hall wrote a wonderful first-hand account of this year's ride for the October LBC Newsletter. If you haven't already read it, check it out--good stuff! Thanks again, Melissa and congratulations to all the LBC Randonneurs!

Closer to home, the LBC welcomed a new riding series to the schedule, The Populaires. Populaires are 100 km rides that are a training ground for the full LBC Randonneurs Mondiaux Brevet Series. Thanks to Timothy Stephen and Steve Rice for their efforts with the Populaires and the regular Brevet Series.

Off the bike, 22 LBC Ride Captains took CPR Training under the tutelage of club member Bruce Heichelbech and our clean-up efforts continued for a 3rd year at Wayside Park. Club members taught with the Youth Cycling Safety Program in Jefferson County Schools. A great group of LBC



The crowd of over 9000 heads out on the Mayor's Healthy Hometown Hike, Bike & Paddle. (photo courtesy Andy Murphy)

volunteers continue to help make the Mayor's Healthy Hometown Hike, Bike & Paddle a success. The Fall H, B & P had over 9000 participants--a record! The Ride Of Silence had another successful turnout in spite of rain showers! The club participated in 2 "Connect To The Louisville Loop" events! The New Rider Clinics had

(Continued on p.2)

EMAIL NEWSLETTER DELIVERY

Notice!

As a cost-saving measure, the newsletter of the Louisville Bicycle Club is available only in electronic format beginning with March/April 2011. Please go to the website address below to sign up or change your email address for uninterrupted service.

Thanks for your cooperation.

Also, beginning with March/April 2007:
The electronic newsletter contains

COLOR PICTURES!

You can sign up to update your email for newsletter and membership renewal delivery by editing your member profile at the LBC website:
<http://www.louisvillebicycleclub.org/>

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YOUR CLUB OFFICERS (Executive Committee)

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president@louisvillebicycleclub.org

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Charlie Drexler

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The Louisville Bicycle Club is affiliated with the **League of American Bicyclists (LAB)** and the **United States Cycling Federation (USCF)**.

NEW MEMBERS

| | | | | |
|--------------|--------------------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| Askew, Edwin | 646 Shady Brook Ln | Louisville, KY | 40229 | (502) 957-2644 |
| Coomes, Greg | 3801 Karma Way | Louisville, KY | 40241 | (502) 327-7140 |

Another Great Year! (cont. from p.1)

by Andy Murphy, LBC President

record numbers graduate! Bike Louisville sponsored 2 Bike To Work Days and the LBC was out in full force to support both days! We had another successful OKHT! Construction of the Bike/Pedestrian Big 4 Bridge is underway! The USGP of Cyclocross had another successful race at Eva Bandman Park!

The UCI Masters Cyclocross World Championships are January 12th-15th, 2012

Eva Bandman Park, Louisville, KY

Many volunteers will be needed to make the World's a success. I hope you'll consider coming out to lend a hand. To volunteer, contact Whitney Vogel at whitney@usgpcyclocross.com

We had a lot of exciting stuff happening in 2011 and 2012 looks like it will be just as good! Thanks to everyone for their efforts!

Life is good
Murphy

PS On a bit of a down note, the NBL BMX Grand Nationals were held for the last time this past fall at E.P. "Tom" Sawyer State Park. NBL, the National Bicycle League merged with ABA, the American Bicycle Association to form USABMX. We're not sure what this means, but we've been told a UCI sanctioned national level event will replace "The Grands". We'll see...

NOTICES

MetroCall – 311
or 574-5000

It's been brought to our attention that not all cell phones recognize 311 as a legitimate phone number. If you have a problem on a bike path, bike lane or in a park you can report the problem to MetroCall at 311 or 574-5000. When you report a problem, you'll be given a tracking number so you can follow-up to make sure the problem has been addressed.





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SCHWINN & BH EXERCISERS

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Masters World Championships Cyclocross - Volunteer Needs

CONTACT: Whitney Vogel (502) 468-6995 - whitney@usgpcyclocross.com

Course Set Up

Eva Bandman Park

This work will be outside and volunteers should dress accordingly. Lunch will be provided onsite to our volunteers. Volunteers may be asked to place course stakes, pound wooden posts, run course tape and hang snow fencing.

There will be door prizes given away each day for volunteers completing 3 or more hours of work.

| | | | |
|------------|------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| Friday, | January 6 | 10 am – 5 pm | Vol. Needed: 10 (x 7hrs) |
| Saturday, | January 7 | 10 am – 5 pm | Vol. Needed: 20 (x 7hrs) |
| Sunday, | January 8 | 10 am – 5 pm | Vol. Needed: 20 (x 7hrs) |
| Monday, | January 9 | 10 am – 5 pm | Vol. Needed: 10 (x 7hrs) |
| Tuesday, | January 10 | 10 am – 5 pm | Vol. Needed: 10 (x 7hrs) |
| Wednesday, | January 11 | 10 am – 2 pm | Vol. Needed: 10 (x 7hrs) |

Registration

The Galt House

Volunteers will be working inside (specific location TBD).

| | | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--|
| Wednesday, January 11 | | | |
| Shift 1: | 9:30 am – 5:30 pm | Vol. Needed: 5 (x 8hrs) | |
| Shift 2: | 5 pm – 9 pm | Vol. Needed: 10 (x 4hrs) | |
| Thursday, January 12 | | | |
| Shift 1: | 8:30 am – 3:30 pm | Vol. Needed: 10 (x 7hrs) | |
| Shift 2: | 3 pm – 9 pm | Vol. Needed: 10 (x 6hrs) | |
| Friday, January 13 | | | |
| Shift 1: | 8:30 am – 3:30 pm | Vol. Needed: 10 (x 7hrs) | |
| Shift 2: | 3 pm – 9 pm | Vol. Needed: 10 (x 6hrs) | |
| Saturday, January 14 | | | |
| Shift 1: | 8:30 am – Noon | Vol. Needed: 8 (x 3.5hrs) | |

Masters World Championships event site operation

Thursday, January 12 - Sunday, January 15 (each day)

This work will be outside and volunteers should dress accordingly. Lunch & volunteer hospitality will be provided onsite. There will be door prizes given away each day for volunteers completing their shifts.

The times below are subject to minor changes.

Parking

Shift 1: 6 am – 2 pm Vol. Needed: 5 (x 8hrs x 4d)

Onsite Check/In

Shift 1: 6:30 am – Noon Vol. Needed: 4 (x 5.5hrs x4d)
Shift 2: Noon – 4 pm Vol. Needed: 2 (x 4hrs x4d)

Course Guards

Shift 1: 8 am – 12:30 pm Vol. Needed: 14 (x 4.5hrs x4d)
Shift 2: Noon – 5 pm Vol. Needed: 14 (x 5hrs x4d)

Tidy Team

Shift 1: 8 am – Noon Vol. Needed: 2 (x 4hrs x4d)
Shift 2: Noon – 5 pm Vol. Needed: 2 (x 5hrs x4d)

Course Repair

Shift 1: 9 am – Noon Vol. Needed: 2 (x 3hrs x4d)
Shift 2: Noon – 6 pm Vol. Needed: 2 (x 6hrs x4d)

Course Tear Down

Eva Bandman Park

Sunday, January 15 4:30 pm – 6:30 pm Vol. Needed: 20+ (x 2hrs)
Monday, January 16 10 am – 5 pm Vol. Needed: 10 (x 7hrs)



CYCLING TEAM
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Club Officer Candidate Statements

Candidate for President Andy Murphy

My fellow cyclists,

I am writing this statement, asking for your continued support as President of the Louisville Bicycle Club. It has been my pleasure to serve the club as President the past two years. I've stayed active within the bicycling community, continuing to sit on the Bike Louisville Education/Encouragement Committee and The Louisville Loop Advisory Committee. I've enjoyed working at the clubs' New Rider Clinic this past year and volunteering at the various bicycle races around the region. Our adoption efforts continued at Wayside Park. We've been successful in getting the Louisville Loop "Loop Watch" training program launched. Throughout the year, we were involved with Metro Parks at several "Connect To The Loop" events. We're currently working with Metro Parks to develop a partnership with the Portland Community Center, so we can get the neighborhood kids in Portland on bicycles.

If the membership of the club sees fit, I would like to continue these efforts and more in 2012 and I humbly ask for your support.

Thank you for your consideration.

Life is good
Murphy

Candidate for Secretary Dianna Palmer (Decker)

To the LBC voting members,

I have been rewarded greatly by being an LBC member, ride captain, and volunteer. Now, I offer to contribute to this club as your LBC Secretary. If elected, I pledge to do all tasks that are required of that office – maintain the club membership, by-laws and club minutes. I also promise, if elected, to remain true to the purpose of this club. Since its founding in 1897, the purpose of the Club has been to promote recreation, health and mobility through cycling and cycling-related activities. These are the first words of the LBC by-laws. As a member of the Executive Committee, if elected to the office of Secretary, some of the ideas I would suggest and support are:

- The creation of a continual resource for the Club to be able to give bicycles to people in the community who need them (perhaps a volunteer "bicycle recycling" team that regularly picks up and repairs old bikes to give away).
- Awards given at the annual banquet that promote cycling outside the Club.

- A Club effort to reach out to recruit youth to cycle (perhaps LBC volunteers adopting a school to regularly talk to students or maybe demonstrate cycling gear... sponsoring a youth mini Cyclo-Cross event... challenging local youth to ride bicycles as much as they play video games maybe with some kind of incentive etc)
- A Club effort to seek out and apply for grant funding (as a non-profit organization for promoting health and/or cycling).
- Expansion of the LBC website to include additional member-generated interests (useful ideas like "101 ways to recycle bike tubes", member experiences of various bicycle equipment, a forum for "newbies", LBC FAQ's. etc).

If you think my serving as Secretary would benefit the LBC, I humbly ask for your support.

Respectfully submitted,
Dianna Palmer, AKA Dianna Decker

Candidate for Treasurer Mark Rougeux

I would like to offer my candidacy for the position of Treasurer. As Jody is stepping down, I'd like to thank her for filling this position the last 6+ months after the office was vacated.

While I am not an accountant by profession, I do have some relevant training and experience that I think would be helpful, including: business degree with a minor in accounting from UK and an MBA in finance from UNC-Chapel Hill; board member and president, McLean Little League (VA), an 1100 member organization; treasurer of homeowner's association for the past 13 years (no one else would take the job); and 22 years experience with Quicken and other financial software.

I have been a member of the LBC for 2 years. This is a terrific club, with many wonderful people, and I have greatly enjoyed being a part of it. I would like to help continue this club's tradition of greatness.

Last spring I posted on the listserv that I believed candidates for the Executive Committee ought to say something about their "riding philosophy", so that the membership has an idea of where the candidate stands. So here goes: "I believe that ride captains are the lifeblood of the club and should be encouraged, affirmed and acknowledged. As a member of the Executive Committee, my philosophy would be: the more rides, the better. Riding is the primary reason we exist – whether fast, slow, short distance or long. It's all good."

I hope you will come to the banquet in January. I would appreciate your support.

Club Officer Candidate Statements *(cont.)*

Candidate for VP Advocacy John Cummings

I am a candidate for VP-Advocacy. If elected to this position by the membership my intentions are to continue to promote bicycling much in the same manner that I have for the past several years. That is by continuing mentoring new cyclists encountered during club and non-club rides along with continuing to provide assistance in the New Riders Clinics, SAG support during the Mayors Hike and Bike events, working with the Jefferson County Public Schools Bike Smart program and volunteering my time and efforts whatever I'm needed to during the OKHT.

I intend to expand my efforts to further promote and protect the rights of bicyclist by attending, along with Murphy, bicycling related meetings with the local governments.

Candidate for VP Education David Wittry

My name is David Wittry and I am submitting my name for nomination to the position of Vice President of Education. I have been a member of the Louisville Bicycle Club for more than 10 years and I have been involved with the new-rider classes for most of that time. For the last two years I have conducted the new-rider clinics at Iroquois Park in addition to working with Tom Armstrong with his classes. I am also a Licensed Certified Instructor of the League of American Bicyclists.

I look forward to the opportunity of serving and teaching new riders.

Candidate for VP Racing Travis S. Kerns, Ph.D.

I first started cycling in 2007 in order to lose weight and return to athletics after a long hiatus. Joining the LBC in 2007, I quickly started finding friends and met Mark Luking. He encouraged me to try the "racing thing" with Team Louisville and I did so beginning with the racing season of 2008. I've been racing since that point and have competed in approximately 75 races. I've also served Team Louisville in various leadership capacities since 2008, including VP of Racing in 2010.

Travis S. Kerns, Ph.D.

Candidate for VP Touring Charlie Drexler

My name is Charlie Drexler and I would like to continue to serve the club as VP of Touring. I would also like to thank the Executive Committee and the Club for the support that they have shown to me during my short term.

With that in mind, I would like to introduce myself to those who may not know me. I am a native of Louisville and have lived here my entire life. I am a 57 year old male and I am employed as VP, Operations/ Engineering at Ky. Association of Electric Cooperatives. I run a small manufacturing plant here in Louisville that manufactures distribution transformers.

I joined the club in 1991 and remained a member thru 1998. For personal reasons, I let my membership lapse and then rejoined in 2005 and have been a member since that time. In the 1991 thru 1998 time frame, I ride captained many times and earned a red ride captain jersey in 1993 as well as completed my first OKHT century. Even though I let my membership lapse, I continued to ride. Since 2005, I have worked to rebuild my riding abilities and have since completed 5 club centuries. The Louisville Bicycle Club and the Mad Pups are all part of the reason why my skills and distance has improved over the last 6 years. I have benefited in many ways by being a club member. I would like to continue to give back to the club and I would like to continue to do the job of VP of Touring.

My vision for my role for the VP of Touring is the following:

- Louisville has a diverse population. The Touring Program should nurture and encourage rides across the entire metropolitan area.
- I will work with the other Executive Committee members and work to promote the goals of the club's leadership.
- During my short term, I have worked with the Touring Committee to review the Touring Program Guidelines and the development of new ideas to promote the Touring Program and to nurture and develop rides across the entire area.
- I will continue to work with the Touring Committee to complete a Ride Captain Training Program. A Training Program will foster a continuous supply of upcoming new ride captains and will assure a vibrant touring program for many years. Also, it can help provide a source for future club leaders.
- Help ride captains promote new rides that they add to the schedule.
- Look for ways to use the touring program to promote commuting.

In closing, I have good organizational/computer/technology skills and feel that I could help move the Touring Program forward.

Respectfully, Charlie Drexler

LBC Annual Awards Banquet – January 14, 2012

Please join your cycling friends at the LBC Annual Awards Banquet to reminisce on the year's activities, acknowledge our volunteers, celebrate our achievements, and elect club officers for the upcoming year.

The banquet will be held again at:
Big Spring Country Club
5901 Dutchmans Lane
Saturday, January 14, 2012.

Cost is \$10 per person for the buffet dinner.

6:00 p.m. - Reception and Cash Bar
7:15 p.m. - Buffet Dinner
8:00 p.m. - General Meeting, Awards, and Election of Officers for 2012
10:00 p.m. - Adjournment

To provide an accurate count of attendees, we must receive your reservation(s) by Sunday, January 8.

To RSVP online, please visit:

<http://www.louisvillebicycleclub.org/Banquet>

To RSVP by mail, send a check for \$10 per person to:

Louisville Bicycle Club
Attn: Banquet RSVP
P.O. Box 35541
Louisville, KY 40232-5541

Club Officer Candidate Statements (*Last and Least*)

Candidate for VP Communications
David "PaCkMaN" Ryan

Others may promise you dis, dat and de udder ding. As the only full-term incumbent running for re-election, I promise more of the same, only better! I haven't heard any complaints. Oh, yeah, there was THAT one, but they always say THAT.

Have I made any serious gaffes? Don't answer...

Seriously, I will continue to try to put out a quality newsletter (now monthly at my suggestion), build on other channels of communication, such as the website. (Kudos to Barry Lockett, credit where credit is due.)

If re-elected, I also will continue to promote in the Executive Committee every issue related to cycling that comes to me from within or without as I believe I have done since being first elected in 2007. Thank you all for your continued confidence.

Tandemonium #5

by Nita Bernat

Ok...I've waited for someone...anyone to join in and write something...anything pertaining to tandem riding. I guess everyone is out to lunch.

I will continue to raise the awareness of all the ridiculous and fun things that go hand in hand (play on words) with riding a tandem.

Riding a tandem is hard work. We ride hard, play hard, and brake hard. I mean we break just about every component on the bike hard. Let me see....there was the chain ring, the cassette, the brake pads, the cables, the wheel, the rims, and last but not

least the handlebar. Did I forget anything? I have just about replaced every moving part and then some that are not moving.

Did I mention my collarbone? That was the most expensive. Did I also mention that this is all just the cost of riding fast, having fun, experiencing many miles of great sights, sounds and friendships. Did I mention how healthy and strong it makes you feel or the fact that you can eat just about anything you want. I can't decide if this is an expensive sport or a great value for the dollar... considering all the benefits.

Oops...gotta go...pick my bike up from the shop.

LBC Commuter Program Report

by Andy Murphy, LBC President



After nearly 12 months, 64 members of the Louisville Bicycle Club Commuter's Group have logged a total of 54,927.87 miles. I would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to commute, then log their commuting mileage. If you would like to join the LBC Commuter Group, go to My Cycling Log here:

<http://www.mycyclinglog.com/>

You have to register, it's FREE, then click on the Louisville Bicycle Club Group. When you get to the LBC page, click on "Request Membership". Keep in mind, if you decide to join the LBC Commuter Group, we are only logging commuting mileage. PLEASE DO NOT LOG LEISURE RIDES,

TRAINING RIDES OR MILEAGE ACCRUED ON CLUB RIDES WITH THE LBC GROUP. Riding to and from club rides counts as commuting, but not the mileage on the ride itself. Also, when you log a ride, make sure you select "Commute" and "C02". This helps My Cycling Log calculate how much money has been saved in gas by our commuting activity and how much CO2 we haven't put into the atmosphere.

There will be no LBC awards associated with the Commuter Program. There will be no "Winner" for most commuting mileage. We appreciate people commuting and taking the time to log their rides with our group.

Life is good
Murphy

University

A proud member

Touring Fun

by Charlie Drexler, LBC VP Touring

Happy New Year! and have a Great Holiday Season!

The Executive Committee has approved three items that are the result of a lot of hard work by your Touring Committee.

Updated Touring Guidelines - I will post this to the club's website before the Annual Banquet and I will provide a brief summary of the changes at the banquet and in the February newsletter.

Rider Responsibility Guideline - This will soon become part of the Schedule and outlines some very basic guidelines for riders.

Finally, Be sure to come to the Annual Banquet to hear about something new for the upcoming Touring Season. I am very excited about this and I think that you will be too!

On a fun note, over the years as I have gone on solo rides around the city, I frequently stop and check out places and things that catch my eye as I am riding past. As I began to pay more attention to my surroundings on these solo rides, I found that I learned a lot about our city and found myself taking many more side trips along roads that I would not have normally used. As I began to think about this over the last month, I thought that periodically, I would include a photo from out and about Louisville and ask - Do you know where this is? So here is the first photo. Do you know where this was taken? Who is the Artist that created this handrail? I will also start a thread in the Members Forum, where you can answer these questions or learn about the this item.



Where??? (photo courtesy Charlie Drexler)

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Making Friends with Mr. Tuffy

by Dr. Larry Preble

“Whoa! How did that happen?!” I had never seen anything like it—not the hole, of course; I had seen those before. This one was big, about a quarter inch in diameter in the front tire, but even this was not without precedence. No, what was truly astonishing is that this large hole went all the way through the tire, but the tube had not burst, even under full pressure! We were standing in the Yellow Lot downtown waiting to start the Thursday Morning ride. “Nita, I’m going to have to change out that tire before we go anywhere.”

Ever since I had a front tire blowout doing 30 mph on a tandem, I’ve been more diligent in checking for tire damage before beginning a ride. That blowout on the Mammoth Cave century ride was still painfully fresh in my memory. It had been just over a month prior and had cost my riding partner a broken clavicle.

That time, it had been a sharp object in the road which caused the blowout. The tire flopped around so violently that steering was like skating on ice. I managed to get the bike slowed to less than 10 mph before the front wheel became so unstable that ditching was unavoidable. I had a choice of falling left onto the pavement or right onto a soft grassy embankment—I chose the grass. What I thought was a fairly gentle slide through the grass left neither a scratch on the bike nor on me, but my poor stoker hit the embankment hard enough with her right shoulder to snap her collar bone in two. To her credit, Nita’s only request at the hospital after the accident was that I not give up on riding the tandem. With that kind of spirit, how could I deny her request? Even so, I was feeling some “survivor’s guilt.” It may have been an unavoidable accident, but I couldn’t help but feel the weight of responsibility.

My riding partner couldn’t wait to get back on the tandem. Unfortunately, the standard upright position offered by her Santana Sovereign made it too painful for her, but there was another option: Nita also owned a “Rans Screamer,” a bright yellow recumbent tandem that offered a semi-reclining position and handgrips down by her hips where she could comfortably ride in the stoker position with no pressure on the shoulders. After clearing it with her orthopedic surgeon, she eagerly took to the rear seat on the Rans Screamer. “Are you sure the Santana tandem shouldn’t have been called the ‘Screamer?’” I asked. “Hopefully, there will be no screaming on this bike.” So began the long weeks of recovery.

At the Yellow Lot, with a new hole in the Screamer’s front tire but with the tube still under full pressure, I needed to let the air out to remove the tube. As I yanked the tube out, something else came spiraling out with it, something I had never seen before. It was a long strap of slick, tough, black plastic, sandwiched between the tire and the tube. I called my friend Perry over. Perry rides 10,000 plus miles a year and has seen almost everything. “Hey Perry, what the heck is this thing?!”

“That’s a tire liner. I have used them when riding really rough roads over long distances. They don’t weigh much and offer a lot of protection against flats.” I had never heard of such a thing, but it obviously had worked. The gaping hole in the tire hadn’t even faded the liner. Only the tire had to be replaced, so the tube was reusable. Apparently, the previous owner of Nita’s recumbent had installed the liners. We never even knew they were in there.

I was intrigued. “Perry, if I wanted to buy some of these for my other bikes, what should I look for?”

“One brand name is Mr. Tuffy. Some of the bike stores carry them.”

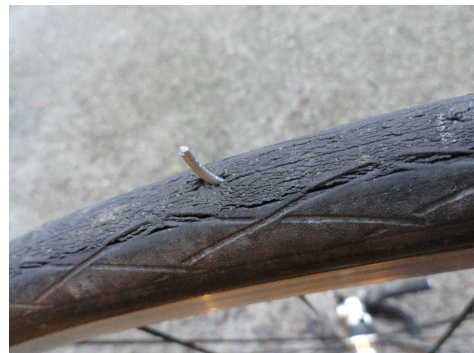
I went on-line and read the reviews. I also talked to the local bike shop personnel to ask their opinions. I would have thought the opinions would be a slam-dunk in favor of tire liners but was surprised to find some controversy. Of course, many thought tire

liners were great, but some folks, mostly racers, were opposed to carrying extra weight in their tires, so I checked the specs. The liners only weigh 32 grams for the ultra-light version, seemingly a small price to pay. Besides, long distance endurance riding is my specialty, not racing. Others claimed that if you installed them wrong, they could rub the tube and perhaps actually cause a flat. “Hmm, something to consider,” I agreed. Eventually, I decided to give it a try and bought liners for every bike I ride.

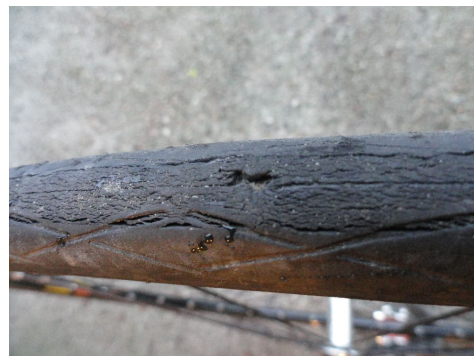
That was June, 2010. That may not seem so long ago, but I am an avid rider; in that 18 months I’ve logged 14,529 miles. So, here’s the startling fact: in 14,529 miles of riding, none of my tubes have had punctures. I have had a valve stem break off (from old age, I think) while pumping the tires in the parking lot, but that doesn’t really count. On the road, my tubes have survived everything from tacks, to piercing bits of wire, to shards of broken bottles and even embedded road cinders—Indiana uses those nasty cinders in the wintertime to increase traction on slick roads, but they have the consistency of ground glass!

People ask if I think they should buy the liners. Really, that depends on the rider. If you don’t get many flats, why bother? I also doubt that tire liners would protect from extreme sidewall damage or from a pinch flat. So, avoid those potholes and keep the tires inflated to the proper pressure. If your specialty is high performance sprints over the short haul, perhaps tire liners are not for you. Thirty-two extra grams in a tire might make a difference.

But, I ride rough roads in all kinds of weather. I don’t much care to hold up a group while changing a flat on a century ride, and there’s nothing much more miserable than fixing a flat in the freezing cold or in the rain. In 18 months, I have worn out a few sets of tires but have reinstalled the same old tubes along with the same tire liners. You could say, I’ve made friends with Mr. Tuffy.



Wire pierces the tire on my Trek 2000, but it’s still fully inflated! (photo courtesy Larry Preble)



This tire is toast, but is still holding 120 psi. (photo courtesy Larry Preble)



Mr Tuffy tire liners (photo courtesy Larry Preble)

Prince Wells: A Louisville Phenomenon

by Carson Torpey

Prince Wells was one of those individuals who was in the right place at the right time and was able to take advantage of it to earn fame and fortune or at least to make a living from it.

During the time of the high wheel bicycle, Prince Wells was a teenager and naturally took to riding the big wheel. He was a professional racer on both the road and the track. He also became nationally known as a trick or “fancy rider” of the high wheel, unicycle, and wagon wheel, and performed stunts and tricks at bicycle meets and on stage. As the age of the high wheel came to a close, he married, had a daughter and opened a bicycle store selling the safety style bicycles. When sales of bicycles began to wane about 1900 he began selling automobiles where he stayed until his retirement.



William Prince Wells with Bike
(photo shared courtesy Phillis Chappell)

William Prince Wells was born in Bloomfield, Kentucky, a small town about 35 miles southeast of Louisville on January 18, 1866. His parents ran the general store in town. Within a few years the family moved to Louisville where he started school. By age 14 he was working for a dry goods firm in 1880. It was during this year that the first recorded century ride of 104 miles took place. Two riders, Orville Anderson and Henry Schimpler, rode their high wheel bikes from Louisville to Frankfort and back, a distance of 104 miles, on December 23, 1880, finishing in the dark and in a snowstorm. These two riders were members of the Falls City Bicycle Club, the club which Wells would also join.

Three years later Prince Wells, age 17, along with Percy Bettison broke the Kentucky century record with a ride of

120 miles from Louisville to Springfield, Ky., and back. *Outing* magazine in 1883, volume 3, reported:

“And now the road record of Kentucky made two years ago (108 miles) by Messrs. Orville Anderson and Henry Schimpler, is said to have been broken on Sunday November 18, by Messrs. Prince Wells and Percy Bettison, both young men of Louisville and members of the Falls City Club. The distance covered was 120 miles; riding time 15h. 27m.; time lost 3h. 27m.; total time 18h. 53m.; average distance travelled per hour, 8 miles.”

The *Boston Globe* also made mention of this record.

“On Sunday, November 17, Prince Wells and Percy Bettison, the two youngest members of the Falls City Bicycle Club of Louisville, Ky., rode 120 miles, completing the distance in about twenty hours, including all stops. Wells was mounted on a fifty-inch Expert and Prince on a fifty-inch Standard. This is the best record yet made by a Kentucky rider; but it is doubtful if that distance will remain the record for many weeks, as a number of the other members are preparing to attempt to make 150 miles within the next twenty-four hours.”



(photo shared courtesy Phillis Chappell)

Prince Wells: A Louisville Phenomenon (cont.)

by Carson Torpey

The next year 1884 he began racing. He took part in a bicycle tournament in Louisville. In front of 2500 spectators Prince Wells won the event's second race with a time of 3:03 ½, probably the half mile. During the winter of 1885 Wells turned professional and began travelling the country. One of his first stops was at Galveston, Texas. The Galveston Daily News reports:

March 26, 1885:

"Prince Wells, a professional bicyclist from Louisville, Ky., arrived in the city yesterday evening and is registered at the Beach... Prince Wells, the champion expert bicyclist of Louisville, Ky. has arrived in the city and will commence an engagement at the Beach rink this evening. He is a man not over eighteen years of age and is remarkable expert upon the bicycle. Among other feats performed by him he takes the instrument apart and rides outside of the large wheel without the guide".

March 27, 1885:

"Mr. Prince Wells the boy champion bicyclist of Louisville, Ky., appeared at the rink last night for the first time, commencing an engagement of three nights. Master Wells is only eighteen years of age and among some of the marvelous feats he performs upon his beautiful machine, none is more difficult or rare than the riding of the one wheel, which he does by taking the machine apart and riding the large wheel, which requires a remarkably accurate equilibrium. His balancing feats are wonderful, he being able to sit upon the machine at rest for seemingly an infinite length of time, a feat much more difficult than keeping it in motion. He mounts the bicycle standing with one foot in the saddle and does many fancy balancing tricks with the bicycle mounted upon two ordinary chairs. Master Wells, besides being a trick rider, is something on speed, and this evening he proposes to beat the time made at the Beach rink some months ago by the champion bicycle riders of the world"

March 29, 1885:

"Mr. Prince Wells, the young bicyclist of Louisville, Ky. concluded his brief engagement at the rink last night. After his expert exhibition riding, he speeded the rink course a distance of a mile or about seventeen laps around the area of the rink making the distance in 4 minutes 8 5/8 seconds." The article does not say how his time compared with the 'champions bicycle riders of the world'."

At the 1885 bicycle tournament held in Louisville May 30 and 31 he did not race as there were no professional races. He did however delight the crowds with an exhibition of trick riding especially riding only the bicycle's big wheel. The Louisville Courier-Journal May 31, 1885 wrote:

A Louisville Professional

"Prince Wells next gave an exhibition of trick and fancy

riding. Wells is a Louisville boy, and has lately joined the ranks of the professional wheelmen. He is an expert rider, and accomplished a number of most difficult feats. He rode an unicycle one-quarter mile in 1:20 4-5. He is one of the best wheelmen in the country, and received much applause."

"The feat of riding a unicycle, or a machine with one wheel, is very difficult."

"PRINCE WELLS has only been riding three years. Other bicyclists consider him a phenomenon."



(photo shared courtesy Phillis Chappell)

Later in June racing at the LAW Indiana regional meet at Indianapolis, he set the half mile record at 2m. 50s. And in October, riding a Champion bicycle, he lowered the time to 2m. 45s. while attempting to better the mile record. He finished riding the mile in 5m. 15s., which bettered an earlier attempt of 6m. 45 1-2s In September and October, Wells travelled giving exhibitions of his fancy riding. He made stops at St. Joseph, Michigan and performed in the St. Joseph Rink, Logansport, Indiana, and Ft. Wayne, Indiana at the Princess Rink, where he teamed up with Ralph Freidberg. Admission was only 25 cents. Wells must have been a sight dressed in blue tights and black patent leather shoes. A feature of his act was a sort of bike striptease where he would remove parts of the bicycle one by one, without dismounting, until all that remained was the big wheel.

The year 1887 was equally as busy. Using his skills at trick riding, Wells attacked the ten mile unicycle record. He attempted the feat at New Orleans, Louisiana on May 16. Riding on the St. Charles Avenue asphalt he set a new record 1 hour, 24 minutes, and 58 ¼ seconds. Not one to rest on his laurels, also in Indianapolis, Prince broke the ten mile unicycle record as the Piqua Daily Call notes: "Indianapolis Aug. 8 - On the grounds of the Athletic Club yesterday, Prince Wells, the wheelman, lowered the record of ten miles on the unicycle from one down to fifty-nine minutes and forty-five seconds. The ten miles were made without a dismount." Travelling to nearby Columbus, Indiana, Wells took the half mile and one mile unicycle records with times of 3:00 ¼ for the half mile and 6:45 ½ for the mile.

Prince Wells: A Louisville Phenomenon (cont.)

by Carson Torpey

Toward the end of the season, Wells travelled to Mitchell, South Dakota to compete in the professional bicycle races held during the fair. The Mitchell Daily Republican September 27, 1887 announces:

“The following are the young men who will compete in the professional races besides W.J. Healey of this city: Prince Wells, Louisville, Ky; S.W. Conklin, Omaha, Neb; Percy W. Stone, St. Louis, Mo. And Grant Bell, Minneapolis, Minn.

Prince Wells, who came Sunday afternoon, besides being a fine racing man is also the champion trick bicyclist and one wheel rider of America. He will enter all the professional races during the fair and if arrangements can be made our citizens and visitors will be treated to the most skillful and daring trick riding that has ever been witnessed. Mr. Wells holds all the world's records from one to ten miles on the bicycle and is the first man who has succeeded in carrying another person on his shoulders while riding but one wheel of the bicycle. He stands as the greatest fancy bicyclist now in the United States. He will ride the unicycle or large wheel of his bicycle down Main Street about 7 o'clock this evening.

All the amateur and professional races will be honest and “for blood” contests. Each man will strive to win not only for his own pecuniary benefit but to place the machine he rides to the front. The machines used will be the Victor, Columbia, Champion, Rudge, and Star, the five principle makes of bicycles of today and the riders are as envious of the well-doing of their respective wheels as of their own reputations as racing men. Unlike horse, foot, and other methods of racing, the contests will not be marked by bad feelings but be as friendly as they will be close and exciting. These professional races will be as good as can be seen in the country.”

The October 13th issue of the Mitchell Daily Republican gave a good report of the first day's races.

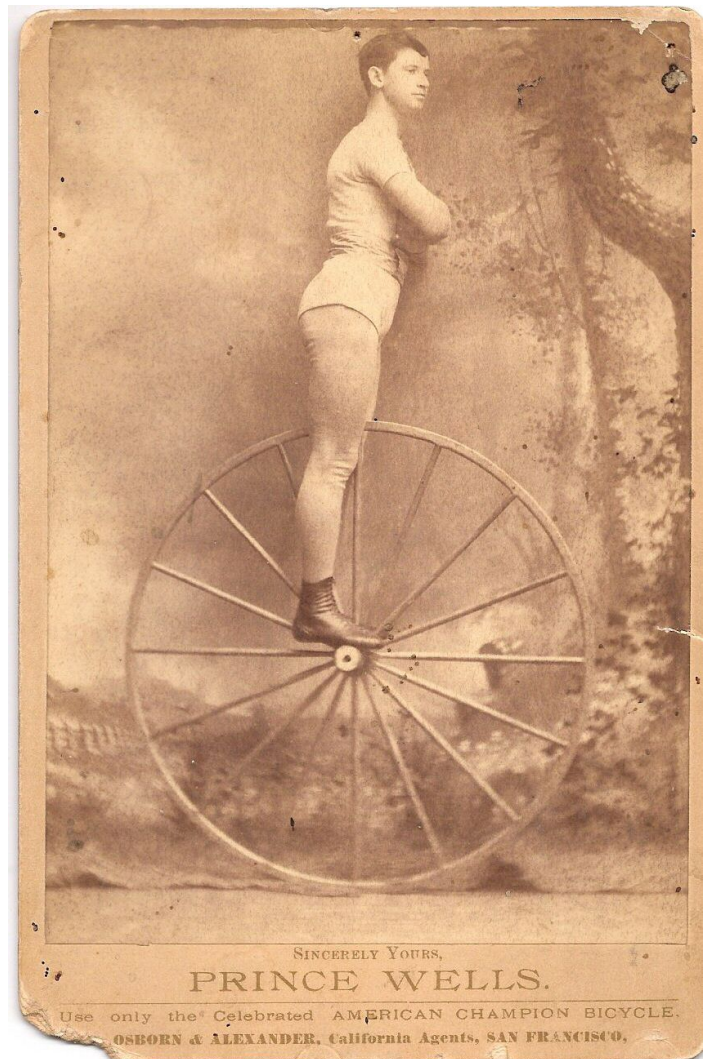
“The one mile professional, best two of three came next with Grant Bell, Percy Stone, Prince Wells, and W.J. Healey at the scratch. They rode closely bunched and at a rapid gait. The finish at the home stretch was exciting to the extreme. Healey going to the front with one of his invincible spurts, but missed his pedal just as he crossed the line and took a fearful tumble, smashing his racer, trapping Stone who was close behind him into a headlong dismount and a buckled wheel. Both men were severely hurt but neither disabled. Bell and Wells managed to pass the wreck in safety and score third and fourth places respectively. Time 3:01 1-5.

When the second heat was called, Stone and Healey came bravely to the scratch notwithstanding their painful sprains and bruises. Healey took the lead, Grant Bell as usual, falling comfortably to the rear. There was but little change in position, all putting in neat work near the close. Bell and Stone had a hard race for first place on the home stretch but

Stone put in one of his timely spurts with great success and won the heat. Time 3:01.

The third heat was run with more caution, but as before the riders kept close together lead by Wells. On the fourth lap Bell made a magnificent spurt and went to the front winning the last heat and second money in the race. Stone took first and Healy third. To an outsider it looked as though Wells was subject to a combination of unfavorable circumstances, but will no doubt show his superiority over these in the following races.

Prince Wells, the invincible trick cyclist of America, will give a grand bicycle, unicycle, and wagon wheel performance in front of the grand stand at 11:00 a.m. Mr. Wells is said by the American press to be pre-eminently the finest and most skilled athlete in his peculiar line in the United States Mr. Wells most noted tricks are mounting the bicycle placed on chairs, tables, etc., riding on an ordinary buggy wheel, and standing still on one wheel on a table, riding down stairs, etc. He will also ride one half mile on the unicycle or one wheel. He is the only ten mile unicycle record holder and this performance alone puts him at the head of his profession.”



(photo shared courtesy Phillis Chappell)

Prince Wells: A Louisville Phenomenon (cont.)

by Carson Torpey

Wells fared a little better on the second day of racing. The day started with the one fourth mile profession race, with three heats, with Healey, Bell, Wells, and Stone. Wells won the first heat followed by Stone, Healey, and Bell who dropped out of the race. Heats two and three were won by Stone with Wells second and Healey third and riding a replacement bicycle, his having been damaged during the previous day's racing. Next came the one mile handicap with the hometown favorite Healey beating Bell and Wells in that order. The final race was the five mile professional dash and Bell took the \$25 first place prize, Stone the \$15 second place, Wells the \$10 third place prize and followed by Healey.

Prince Wells trick riding was so well received that he was re-engaged to a repeat performance the next day where he also was to race the fastest trotting horse a distance of a half mile as well. Judging from the applause he received, the crowd crowned him the prince of trick riders as they amazed at his buggy wheel riding and his fast unicycle half mile.

After the tournament, the racers stayed on a few extra days just long enough to have an impromptu tournament. "The next was a quarter mile dash between Stone and Wells. Wells took the lead in the start and spurted all the way around. Stone failed to recover the ground lost in the start and lost the race. Time, 40 1/4, the best ever made on this track." said the Mitchell Daily Republican on October 2. The Ft. Wayne Sentinel also made note of the feat in their November 11 issue.

Wells continued travelling toward the western part of the country, toward Seattle in particular. From the tournament program:

"On July 5th, 1888, the Queen City Cycling Club holds Seattle's first bicycle tournament featuring riders from all over Washington Territory and Oregon. Participants include Prince Wells whose skills as a fancy rider is well known throughout the union. Prince Wells was brought here at "great expense" as a celebrity cyclist. We Guarantee You a Fine Day of Exciting Sport."

Unfortunately the results of the bicycle tournament are not known. Wells must have liked this area of the country because he stayed here about two years and even opened a business selling bicycles and tobacco products. The year before he had been offered a spot with the Wilson and Rankin minstrels which he refused, citing troubles in the company. But he did, however, eventually perform on stage. He performed at the first performance at the new Standard Theater in Portland. "The act of Prince Wells on the bicycle, cycle, and ordinary carriage wheel was in itself worth the price of admission" said the Oregonian on August 8, 1888. Wells shared the stage with Hungarian instrumentalists, the comedy act of Ross and Miss Fenton, Clifford and Hickey's knockabout, and a clever boxing bout by Kelly and Murphy. He was still performing there a year and a half later.

The Tacoma Wheelmen Bicycle Club newsletter of June 1998 shares a bit of the club's history with a story from over a hundred years ago:

"As we move into the summer season of cycling, I would like to share some highlights of the "Glorious Fourth" of 1889 in Tacoma. The local wheelmen... began the day with a ride out to American Lake. Twenty-three riders made the trip, including two women who accompanied the party most of the distance on the ladies safety bicycle, and astonished

some of the old time riders by the ease and grace with which they handled their wheels.

The afternoon brought a hill climb and various obstacle races over heavy planks and blocks of wood. The hill climb began at Pacific Ave. and went up 11th street. The winner was determined not by speed, but by how far up the hill the rider could go. Each rider had three chances to test himself. The winner was Prince Wells, the owner of the Prince Wells' Cigar, Tobacco, and Bicycle shop, then located on St. Helen's. He made it about 25 yards beyond Market St.. His closest competitor was E.I. Halstead who slipped in a sand hole just as he reached Market St., forcing him to dismount.

Prince Wells also thrilled the crowd of spectators later in the day with his demonstration of "fancy riding on his bicycle, unicycle, and buggy wheel." The evening ended with a Japanese lantern parade down Pacific Ave. Each cyclist attach from four to seventeen lanterns to their bicycles. Not surprisingly, Prince Wells and E.I. Halstead each managed to attach a full seventeen lanterns to their bicycles."



Prince, Rosina & Princess Wells
(photo shared courtesy Phillis Chappell)

Prince Wells: A Louisville Phenomenon (cont.)

by Carson Torpey

The year 1890 was a transitional year for Wells. He was now married and he and Rosina would soon have a daughter, Princess Wells born in 1892. He applied to the League of American Wheelmen to be reinstated as an amateur and moved back home to Louisville, Kentucky, where he opened a bicycle store. Soon after moving back to Louisville, Wells became ill. According to *Sporting Life* magazine; "Prince Wells is confined to his bed with an attack of typhoid fever at his home in Louisville during the past week but he is now able to be around again."

Seven years after Wells retired from racing, an article appeared in *The Home* magazine's April 1897 issue. The article concerns itself with an account of the trick rider William Hoeffler another fancy rider of the day. The article concludes with:

"This series of articles could not properly be concluded without the mention of Prince Wells of Louisville, Kentucky, who was formerly one of the great riders of the high wheel, both as a racer and as a trick performer, and who is now a leading patron of wheeling in the bluegrass state. He too started his career early in the eighties, and has successfully been a roadracer, an amateur on the track, and a professional trick rider. He is now in the wheel business at his home and has been reinstated as an amateur by the League of American Wheelmen."

Prince Wells opened his first bicycle store at the corner of Third and Walnut and quickly moved to Fourth near Guthrie which was at the heart of Louisville shopping at the time. *Sporting*

Life 1891 mentions the store, "Prince Wells, 629 Fourth Avenue, has been a leader this season: the brands sold are Featherstone pneumatic, the American Rambler, the Kenwood, the Warwick, and the Ormonde. In addition he will handle a number of cheaper wheels. Prince Wells can talk bicycles by the hour, he is generally interesting. He has been an expert cyclist the last ten years. A specialty is made of difficult repair work. Bicycles are also rented." After a few years he bought a building across the street from his bike store. The building still stands, but now selling wigs. The Prince Wells name, which was also the store's logo, is carved in stone on the building's façade and serves to keep his name alive whether ones knows his story or not.

When not selling bicycles, Wells tried his hand at inventing. *The Newark Daily News* January 30, 1895 reports:

"Prince Wells has applied for a patent on a nickel-in-the-slot machine for inflating pneumatic tires. This is quite a novelty and has never been introduced before, although it has been thoroughly tested by Mr. Wells. The machine will be placed in front of any cycle agency, and by dropping a nickel in the slot a rubber tube with a universal connection, can be drawn out about three feet. When it is at full length, it releases a lever, and by pressing a button the air is turned on and the tire is inflated. The air is stored in a reservoir, which is filled by hydraulic pressure. This machine will be sold at a medium price and will be a great savings to agents and a convenience to the riding public. The machine is so arranged that it is impossible for a small boy to tamper with."



Prince Wells' Bicycles at 629 S. 4th St., Louisville
(photo shared courtesy Phillis Chappell)

Prince Wells: A Louisville Phenomenon (cont.)

by Carson Torpey

Wells tirelessly worked to promote the bicycle and cycling. The New York Times January 27, 1895 reported that a meeting was held at Madison Square Garden by a group of veteran cycle tradespeople and journalists to form the Veteran Cycle Trade Club. Wells was one of the vice-presidents. Back in Louisville, he was president of the local cycle board of trade established by twenty bicycle dealers on December 27, 1896. He also served on the board of directors of the Independent Cycle Club of Louisville. When the Louisville area cyclists decided to bring the LAW national meet to the city, he served on the board of the '96 Club, which was formed to lobby the LAW.

He also worked more hands-on with local rides. In 1893 he was an assistant marshall for a club ride of 250 riders going out Louisville's Southern Parkway to Jacob's Park. Once there he and other bike dealers assisted in providing lunch to the riders. That day the city decided to forgo the practice of watering the dirt road to keep down the dust so that the riders would not have to ride in the mud! And out at the Fountain Ferry Track velodrome, Prince assisted with the races by holding up some of the racers at the start.

Being such a busy man, one would think he never had time to ride for himself. A paragraph from Sporting Life says that "Tom Lane and Prince Wells left for Corydon (In.) this morning. Both rode hard tired machines and in long trousers. From Corydon they will go to Leavenworth then to Cannelton and return by boat." This is a nice "little" ride of about 50 miles.

Beginning in 1892, Wells began a series of successful bicycle races. On June 24 of that year the first race consisted of a "big road race" of about 10 miles. The riders left the Auditorium Amphitheater Track and proceeded down Southern Parkway to Jacob's Park and return. A crowd estimated at 1000 lined the course. An afternoon rain turned the course into mud causing nearly everyone to wreck. Tires blew, riders hit ruts and fell, a crank was bent, and riders lost control and ran into the crowd. The winner was Louisville's 'Southern Champion', Tom Jefferies. A crowd of 500 watched the track races later that afternoon. The race series continued through 1897.

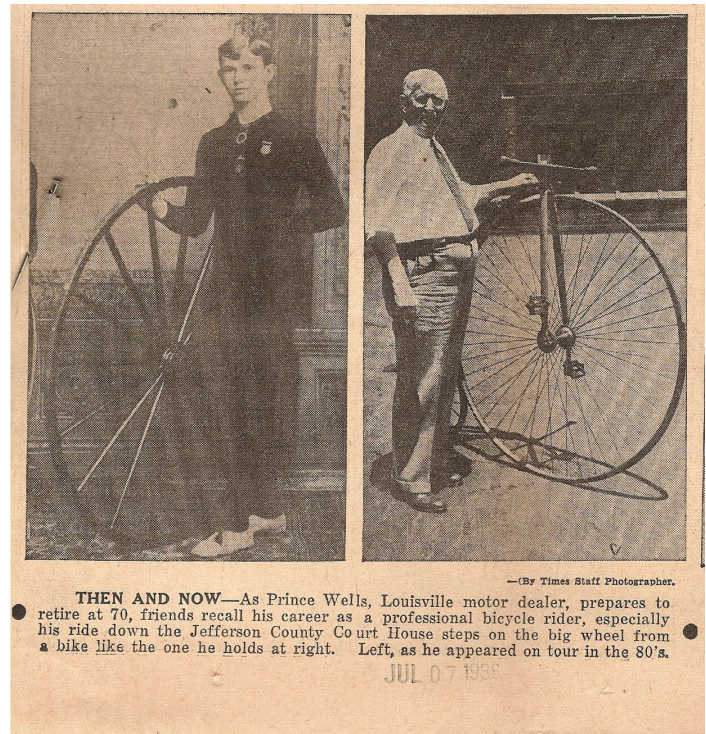
The bicycle business continued at least until 1905 although sporting goods were now added to the inventory. The bike store is missing from the 1906 Louisville city directory. Prince Wells had turned his attention away from the bicycle business when he became the first automobile dealer to open in Kentucky, the year was 1901. The Rambler was the main brand of bicycle he was associated with, so the Rambler was also the line of automobile he carried. He founded the Louisville Automobile Club and was its first president in 1903 and he served as a director of the Kentucky Automobile Club. He opened the auto dealership just two blocks down the street from the bike shop and several years later he moved to another building which bears his name and is still in use.

Wells' competitive spirit was still alive as The Horseless Age October 20, 1909 confirms, "The Louisville Reliability Contest

held by the Louisville Automobile Club was run from Louisville to Winchester Saturday October 8 and returned to Louisville the next day. Prince Wells was driving Rambler #3 tied with August Ropke driving Rambler #12 and both finished with perfect scores. It was determined in a runoff that August Ropke's car had suffered a dent and Prince Wells was declared the winner."

Most Louisvillians are familiar with the story of a car dealer (Prince Wells) who was asked to prove how powerful his cars were. In order to prove the power of the car, he took the customer to the brick hill on Peterson Avenue, in which the bricks are set on edge at an angle to help slow the vehicle, and proceeded to climb the hill with the car in reverse and thereby making a sale! The hill is still much the same as it was in Wells' day, though it has been rebuilt, it still makes for a noisy and slow ride even today. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

Later in life Wells was vacationing in France when he slammed a taxi cab door a little too hard and the glass broke. The driver called a gendarme. Since Wells didn't speak French, he handed the gendarme his business card and the gendarme mistook the white haired, distinguished looking Prince Wells for the Prince of Wales!



—(By Times Staff Photographer.)
THEN AND NOW—As Prince Wells, Louisville motor dealer, prepares to retire at 70, friends recall his career as a professional bicycle rider, especially his ride down the Jefferson County Court House steps on the big wheel from a bike like the one he holds at right. Left, as he appeared on tour in the 80's.

Then and July 7, 1936 at 70. (photo shared courtesy Phillis Chappell)

And finally from the Courier-Journal July 12, 1938:

"Prince Wells Car Dealer Dead at 72

Funeral services are being arranged Monday night for Prince Wells 72 a business and civic leader here for many years, who died at 5 am Monday at his home 1480 S 3rd

following an attack of indigestion. He retired two years ago from the automobile business in which he had been engaged since the days when motor cars were an oddity in this city.

A charter member of the Louisville Automobile Club and an organizer of the Louisville Automobile Dealers Association, Mr. Wells erected the first building in the city devoted entirely to the motor industry. That was located at 538 S. 4th. Later he moved to another 4th Street location south of Broadway and then to a building on 3rd.

Started at 3rd and Walnut

A native of Bloomfield, Ky. Mr. Wells was educated in Louisville schools. At the time when bicycles of the low wheel type were replacing the old high wheelers, he started a bicycle business at 3rd and Walnut.

For eight years ending in 1890, Mr. Wells was a professional bicycle racer and rode competitively in many of the larger cities of the country.

An ardent golfer, he was on the Big Springs Club last Saturday and Sunday. Two months ago he and Mrs. Wells returned from a four month stay in California.

Besides his wife, Mrs. Rosina Wells, he is survived by a daughter Mrs. George W. Briggs of Beverly Hills ,CA. a granddaughter, Ethel Wells Briggs, and a sister Mrs. HC Stinton of Ermont, Ark.”

Prince Wells’ final resting place is in Louisville’s Cave Hill Cemetery where, just like his bike and auto dealership buildings, one can see his name engraved in stone.

This article was inspired by two events of the summer of 2009. At the Macanaw Island meet, Colin Bohosh showed his bike to my wife and I His high wheel bike was bought in Louisville many years ago and had once belonged to Prince Wells. Two days after returning from the meet an old bike appeared on Craig’s list which I was able to purchase. It turned out to be a American Rambler from 1892 sold at the Prince Wells store! Just as Colin wanted to know more about Mr. Wells so did I.

And finally I would like to thank Ms. Phillis Chappell, the great grand-daughter of Prince Wells for sharing the wonderful photographs of her famous relative. Besides the photographs she also has the large front wheel from the bike on which Prince rode down the Jefferson County Courthouse steps, about fourteen steps!

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Do you have something you want to share with your fellow club members?

Send us an article and photos for the newsletter! We can accept hand-written manuscripts, hardcopy print-outs or articles on disk (Word documents preferred), or e-mail.

Send them to David Ryan (Packman), VP Communications (see cover for addresses) or hand them to any club officer.

The Louisville Bicycle Club reserves the right to edit all submitted articles.

See cover for deadlines.

The newsletter is sent by email only. Please notify Barry Luckett, club secretary, of email address changes.

Bethlehem*by Melissa "Puddle" Hall*

While the sun shows promise of shining brightly all day in a cloudless, blue sky, it promises no warmth, a cruel mockery of the hot and demanding sun of summer. Like the strange transformation that occasionally happens when something huge happens and a person you thought you knew turns into a stranger right before your very eyes, sometimes it is hard to believe it is the same star. It is cold outside this morning, and a part of me wishes I had not signed up to captain a ride. It would be nice to fix a cup of coffee and laze about the house in pajamas for awhile. But it is December, and my December rides are a tradition: Puddle's Christmas Breakfast Century and the Bethlehem Century. The Christmas Century last week-end went well and drew a record crowd due the unseasonably warm weather. But will anyone show for Bethlehem when it is in the teens outside and the weatherman says it will not get much warmer?

With the current economic woes and talk of shutting down small, rural post offices, it is likely that this will be the last year for mailing Christmas cards from Bethlehem, Indiana. The thought saddens me and hardens my resolve to ride despite the cold even if nobody else shows. I would not want to miss this last opportunity. As so many first times are special, last times are perhaps more so, maybe because so very often we do not know that they are the last time. Sometimes I think about what my last ride will be like and whether my riding will end from age, injury, or indolence. Will I know ahead of time, or will it just stop without my suspecting it is ending, like the memory I have of my mother telling me I had gotten too big to be rocked and read to before bedtime and to get up those stairs or suffer the consequence. I didn't see it coming, this loss of connection, our special time together, and it hit me like a stone. I will miss the solace of the wind caressing my face and the feel of the road and the companionship of the people I call friends. I will miss the sound and feel of rain on my helmet and the feel of the sun mercilessly beating down upon me and the myriad sights that bring me such delight. And I will miss Bethlehem. I mustn't let cold weather force me to miss an opportunity unless the weather threatens worse than today, a day that turns out to be spectacular for riding.

In 2010 I rode Bethlehem alone the day before it was scheduled as snow was predicted for the scheduled day and I needed to get my December Century in. It is no big deal, this mailing of Christmas cards so that they have a Bethlehem stamp. I wonder how many people even notice. But still I relish this tradition of sending love, thoughts, and best wishes in the form of a card. Perhaps it is the memory of my mother, sitting instead of working around the house for once, addressing stacks of Christmas cards to friends and family, wishing them happiness throughout the holiday and in the coming New Year that makes this so special to me. Perhaps it is just because it is part of Christmas, and I love Christmas. There are few things better than the thought of the house being full of family, the smell of pine mixing with the smell of freshly baked cookies caressing us while music and gentle laughter wafts softly throughout the house.

There is nothing better than the thought of snuggling together to watch the traditional shows that delighted me as a child, a delight I passed on to my children. There is not much in life better than Christmas despite the sadness that can suffuse the holiday season at times. I love the traditions, the traditions that were established by those that came before me and have been combined with those that I created for my family. So many people fail to recognize the importance of traditions. And the Bethlehem ride has become one of my newer traditions since the children grew up and left home, a tradition that prepares me for their sweet return, however transient.

"Spiritual and religious traditions, when shaped by the feminine principle, affirm the cyclical phases of our lives and the wisdom each phase brings, the sacredness of our bodies and the body of the Earth." - Patrick Wynn

My fears of nobody showing are unfounded. Perhaps it is a fear that haunts all ride captains. And it has happened to me before. Not often, but once or twice. I don't know why I even worry about it. It doesn't hurt or mark me in any way. It doesn't mean that I am a "bad" ride captain or that nobody likes me or that nobody likes my route. But it is my nature to worry, thus one of my children's moniker for me: mother hen. Mark Rougeux, John Larson, Steve Rice, and Jim Whaley show up to ride the century. Three others that I do not know show for the 60 mile route. We have a good day, or at least I do. Despite the varying cycling abilities, the century riders stay together for most of the ride and nobody seems to mind my laggardly pace. It always surprises me how patiently people moderate their pace for me at times. Steve Rice even gets to see Santa Claus, a sight the rest of us miss. But then, that is the thing about Santa: he is magical and comes and goes unseen. By the time people read this, he will have disappeared for another year leaving only memories of the traditions that I cherish iced with the people that I love and are important to me. This is the true gift of Christmas: the memories. <http://randomthoughtsofapuddle.blogspot.com/>