

KATY BIKE TRAIL ACROSS MISSOURI
(Missouri, Kansas & Texas Railroad)

October 13-19, 2011

The Katy railroad originated in Fort Riley, Kansas in the mid-1890's. It has a very gradual grade from Clinton to Sedalia that flattens once the trail hits the Missouri River Valley. The train ceased operations from Sedalia to Machens in 1986 with passenger trains stopping in 1957.

There are three towns named after presidents along the trail: Calhoun, Jefferson City and Washington. Many of the towns were named for the investors of the railroad.

Edward and Pat Jones of Callaway County donated \$2.2 million to transform the old rail tracks into the longest "rails-to-trails" recreational path in the nation. This trail along with many others across the States is part of the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy. One half of it follows the exploration by Lewis and Clark up the Missouri River. The 1993 flood damaged 75 of the 126 original miles delaying the completion date of 1994 to 9/1996.

The trail is covered in limestone chat that is locally quarried. Without rain, the trail is compact and solid. With rain, the chat becomes muddy with a very soft consistency throwing the bike around when riding. The trail drains and dries quickly.

I was born 60 years ago in Callaway County so I wanted to ride the Katy Bike Trail this year to celebrate. Logistics were a problem until we found The Independent Tourists. They arranged a flexible tour with accommodations and luggage transportation. They also referred us to Katy Bike Rentals for bike rental. We chose the rest of the itinerary. The book, "The Complete Katy Trail Guidebook", by Brett Dufur provided historical information as well as helpful information about the trail.

The rented bikes arrived at the Hampton Inn on 10/12. Since we were visiting my father in Warrensburg (30 miles away), Steve drove to Clinton on 10/13 to change out our bike peddles and, in general, check out the bikes. The rental bikes were Fuji bikes with 21 gears. Mine weighed 35 pounds, and Steve's weighed 55 pounds before food and water. Steve carried all of our daily gear including food and extra water.

The plan was to ride the trail during the fall colors. We did see some colors, but Missouri had a very dry year resulting in less color than normal. The trees had more color closer to the river.

We also observed the dry weather by the cracks in the trail and very low creeks. The cracks ranged from 3-6 inches wide. Luckily, we all missed the cracks in the trail.

The trail is relatively flat, but the flatness of the trail is very tiring since peddling is required continuously. There was no coasting! We did plan the ride from west to east to help with the ride. There is a decline of 100 feet per mile once you join the river with winds generally from the west.

Steve and I met John and Carolyn Crilly in Clinton the night of 10/13. John and Carolyn brought the tire pump so Steve and I borrowed their pump every night. We planned to leave the next morning around 9 am.

Our first day of travel (10/14) was from Clinton to Sedalia. This stretch of the rail preceded Booneville by three years and Franklin to Machens by 25 years. During the railroad heyday, coal, pottery, flour and baby chicks were exported from this part of rural Missouri.

Leaving Clinton, aka the Baby Chick capital of the world, we biked from the Hampton Inn to the MK&T Wagoner Park. This is presently the western most point of the Katy Trail. Eventually, the trail will connect to the Kansas City area.

The weather was wonderful this day—neither too hot nor too cold with bright sunny skies. We leisurely biked enjoying the scenery.

Ten miles down the road was our 1st rest stop—Calhoun. We looked forward to these rest stops providing local history. Calhoun was considered Jug Town. The exceptional clay in this area resulted in 6 pottery companies during its heyday.

Windsor was our lunch stop for the day. We decided on a local restaurant—Raymond's. The people were friendly. We had a nice rest while enjoying a lite lunch. Two notable things in Windsor are: the "Spirit of '76" caboose No. 76 located at the trailhead, and the man who created cherrios for the General Mills Company lived in Windsor.

We climbed back on the bikes to start the arduous climb to the highest point on the trail—955 feet. It wasn't difficult, but it was fun stopping at the highest point sign for a picture.

Our next trailhead was Green Ridge. Agriculture is the primary economy in this area. The storage of grain grown in the area changed during 1840 through 1870. Grain storage became vertical with grain elevators. The construction material varied from wood to concrete or tile.

Our first day on the trail was about to end as we peddled into Sedalia passing the state fairgrounds. We arrived at the Sedalia depot intrigued with the old pianos

with signs asking for refurbishment. This is considered home to Scott Joplin who is best known for "The Maple Rag". Steve and I decided to use his music for this video.

After reading the signs and looking at all of the pianos at the depot, we peddled to the Bothwell Hotel for the evening. The historic hotel is located on the square. As we entered the hotel, we found many bikes in the formal lobby with the original crystal chandelier. For dinner that evening, we ate in the hotel restaurant.

From the Hampton Inn in Clinton to the Bothwell Hotel in Sedalia, we biked 43 miles in 4 hours and 38 minutes.

We looked forward to seeing the Missouri River on day 2 (10/15) of our ride. This was the longest day of the ride. The first rest stop this day was Pilot Grove about halfway to the evening's destination. We decided to have lunch there. We checked out a burger place, but the line was out the door. We decided to go to Casey's for lunch. This is a gas station with a convenience store. We purchased our sandwiches and went back to the trailhead to eat our lunch on the picnic table. It was very pleasant.

We continued our ride heading for Boonslick country. This area is named after Daniel Boone's sons. In 1805, Nathan and Daniel Boone made salt. Sixty pounds of salt were produced from boiling 300 gallons of the salt water.

Prior to arriving in Booneville, we crossed I-70. At Booneville, we crossed the Missouri River. This is a new bridge with a protected bike path on the southbound side of the bridge. This would be the first of many bridges crossing the Missouri River on our ride.

New Franklin evolved after the town of Franklin sank to the bottom of the Missouri River during the 1820 floods. This area is known for four trails, the Lewis & Clark Trail, the Katy Trail, the Santa Fe Trail and the Boonslick Road, all passing through town.

A jewel on the trail this day was the Pearsons clay tile elevator located between New Franklin and Rocheport. We had to stop and look at this structure. Two boys were seated on a bench in front of the elevator. John asked them if they had gone into the elevator. They replied yes, but it was several years ago. We don't know the age of the elevator, but it had not been used in many years.

Another interesting feature of the trail this day was the 243-foot-long train tunnel built in 1893 as we entered Rocheport. One hundred years later during the 1993 flood, four feet of water stood in the tunnel.

This tunnel is also famous for the movie, "Sometimes They Come Back", by Stephen King.

The Manitou Bluffs (Burlington Limestone) located around Rocheport are considered sacred by several Native American tribes in the area. There are documented pictographs located on the bluffs. Reference to these pictographs is found in Lewis and Clark's papers.

Two historical facts regarding Rocheport are: 1) the 1840 State Whig convention supporting Harrison's presidential campaign, and 2) later in that decade, 57 steamboats made 500 landings at Rocheport.

We continued our ride to our accommodations for the evening. We arrived at the Yates B&B after biking 51 miles in 5 hours and 8 minutes. Our host was a neighbor of Edward and Pat Jones when he was a child.

Upon arrival our host asked if we had reservations for dinner. It was homecoming for MU just 15 miles away so most restaurants were booked. We said no so he kindly checked availability for dinner reservations while we showered.

The closest restaurant was totally booked so our host provided a ride to Les Bourgeois located along the Missouri River. They were not taking reservations, but we could relax on the patio while waiting for a table with the estimated wait time of 1 hour. We ordered appetizers along with salads with protein while we waited for the table. It was very pleasant on the patio. We were able to watch the sunset along the Missouri River. We were so full with our salads and appetizers we nixed our call when the table was available. We called the host who came and picked us up.

This was a popular B&B, and it was totally booked with the MU homecoming. We learned Brad Pitt went to MU for a little while. He had also booked at this B&B, but cancelled the reservations.

We had a lovely 2-course breakfast the next morning (10/16). It was very heavy, but it did fuel us for the ride. We were ready to hop on the bikes as soon as breakfast was over!

We retraced our steps back to the trailhead to begin the journey to the state capitol. Now that we were biking along the Missouri River, many interpretive signs for the Lewis and Clark expedition were along the riverbank. In this general area of the cliffs, an old MK&T explosive bunker was spotted.

We passed a train spur developed into a recreational path outside of Rocheport connecting it to Columbia. We continued past this spur not wanting to add mileage to our travels.

During this day's peddling, we rode through the Eagle Bluffs Conservation Area that includes 1,200 acres of wetlands. We hopped off our bikes to look for the Pierced Rock Natural Arch. With all of the foliage it was hard to spot, but we did see a thin strip of blue sky.

Shortly after we spotted the natural arch, Carolyn and I started peddling. We left Steve and John in our dust! Steve and John hopped on their bikes shortly after we started, but we didn't see them until after Boathenge. They had spotted a hiking trail up the cliff shortly after the natural arch. Steve and John decided to take the hiking trail. They had wonderful views of the surrounding countryside.

Soon we passed Boathenge. Scott Melton, aka Catfish, loved fishing. During his life along the river, he acquired an assortment of boats. His landlords didn't want young children to hurt themselves on his boats. After great discussion, the plan was to plant the boats much like the Cadillac Ranch in Amarillo, TX.

Since this was the hottest day of the ride, I had an empty water bottle. I was wondering where the men were when they caught up with us. Steve was holding my spare water in his hand passing it off to me as he rode past. We were all having fun and enjoying the views and ride.

Today we ate lunch along the trail provided by our hosts at the Yates B&B. There weren't too many options so we were very glad and appreciative for their sack lunches.

We headed into Jefferson City over the new (opened 4/8/11) very busy bridge. It was an interesting bridge for bikes. It consisted of many levels built like a stairwell in tall buildings. The turns were right angles. This bridge is both for bikes and pedestrians.

Our accommodations that evening were in an old mansion built in the 1800's called Cliff Manor B&B Inn. The total mileage to the B&B was 39 miles and 3 hours and 25 minutes.

During the late 1800's, Judge Krekel was the owner. During the refurbishment of the mansion, an underground tunnel from the basement of the home to the Missouri River was discovered. The use of this tunnel is still an unanswered question for the current owners. Speculation is Judge Krekel had an exit route if a quick exit was required. He worked at the Capitol within easy walking distance.

We arrived a little too late to see the Capitol; however, we did walk past the outside on our way to dinner that evening. We also had views from our rooms of the Capitol and the Missouri River.

The Capitol during river trade was located in St. Charles. As the population moved westward, the Capitol was moved to the center of the state.

Watching the weather forecast for the next day, we asked our host for the earliest possible breakfast. He assured us that would be fine.

On Monday, 10/17, we hopped on our bikes quickly. We wanted to beat the rains! We crossed the new bridge again heading for Hermann known as the Rhineland area.

Because of the anticipation of rain, we peddled as fast as possible. Our husbands peddled with their wives urging them to keep the momentum. Steve was also carrying my rain gear so I didn't want to be too far from him.

A very technical and fashionable item in our rain gear is the beautiful clear plastic shower cap we all wore for 3 days. I didn't take mine off the helmet until arriving at the hotel in St. Charles.

Our first quick stop was at Tebbetts. The large grain elevators heralded our arrival. There is also a shelter in Tebbetts resembling a youth hostel.

Mokane was the next quick stop on our trip. It essentially is a bedroom community for Fulton and Jefferson City. The name stands for: MissOuri, KANsas, and Eastern.

We passed Standing Rock along the trail. There are two mysteries regarding this large boulder: 1) the origin of the rock, and 2) the person marking the flood levels on the rock. Markings on the rock indicate the water levels of 7 major floods in the area: 1903, 1923, 1935, 1943, 1944, 1947, and 1993. The 1947 flood was one of the worst in 100 years. During that flood, one-half of the homes in Mokane flooded and all of the populace were evacuated.

Again this was a day of very few options for lunch, so our kind host packed sack lunches for us. We needed some nourishment along the trail so Portland was a good place to have a bite of lunch. Not much is in Portland along the trail; however, a beautiful scenic view of the Missouri River with a bench was sufficient. There are several pictures in our video of this scenic spot.

Jumping back on the bikes, we quickly passed through Bluffton. Along the trail, the 200-foot-high bluffs were on our left with the river on our right. These bluffs are some of the highest points along the Missouri River.

George Hussmann, famous in the wine world, envisioned the north side of the Missouri River the type of land for grapes. Hussmann developed the town, and in the first year, 18 varieties of grapes were planted. Hussmann platted and sold lots in Bluffton naming all of the streets after a type of grape.

As we rode through Bluffton, we watched the rain clouds inch closer. At this point, we knew we could not stop—we had approximately 15 miles left to ride.

Steve and I were a little ahead of John and Carolyn. We decided to take the spur cutting a little mileage off the route. We were hoping John and Carolyn would do the same since we could see the lightening. We felt a few sprinkles as we made our last

few feet on the limestone chat. We turned onto the paved bike trail for the bridge to Hermann. The rain started with a vengeance. We were wondering about John and Carolyn, but all of a sudden, they were on the bridge. They had missed the bike trail, but they were passing us just on the other side of the barrier.

After biking 47 miles in 4 hours and 24 minutes, we arrived at Captain Wohit Inn drenched. We had to dry our gear with just space heaters and hair dryers that night. Hot showers felt great along with the hot coffee and hot tea.

Luckily, the rain stopped before we walked to dinner in downtown Hermann.

In 1836, the German Settlement Society of Philadelphia settled Hermann hoping for the "Second Fatherland". At the turn of the 19th century, it was the 3rd largest wine producer in the world and 2nd in the United States. The German roots continue, but prohibition destroyed the wine industry. It is now attempting to bring back this industry.

After the drenching we received on the 17th, we awoke on the 18th in anticipation of another rainy day. Our unspoken plan was again to start as soon as we could and ride like the wind.

Today (10/18) our first rest was over 16 miles. We quickly stretched our legs and ate a quick snack at the trailhead of Treloar. We also were able to read the interpretive signs at the trailhead.

Peers is the next town along the trail. It is located close to La Charette and Charette Creek (we crossed the creek). These points were mentioned in Lewis and Clark's journals. Normally, the Missouri River is 3 miles away from Peers; however, in the 1993 flood, the river covered the door of Peers Store.

Marthasville was a French village in 1766. Daniel Boone arrived in this area in 1799 signifying the continued western movement. Lewis and Clark passed through this area in 1804.

Daniel and Rebecca Boone were originally buried on a knoll above Toque Creek. Their remains were moved to Kentucky in the 1840's. A monument was established at the original burial site.

Again we watched the rain clouds on our ride to Augusta. We arrived at the trailhead in Augusta with steep climbs to our B&B for the evening. We arrived at Swan Haven Inn after riding 37 miles and 3 hours and 57 minutes with just a little drizzle.

After hot showers, our host provided transportation to the center of town for dinner. With unexpected smoke in a restaurant, we found a table located close to a

door that we opened. The open door provided some relief from the smoke along with the smokers exiting the restaurant.

With rain again forecast on 10/19, we rode with our spouses the last leg of the trip. This stretch consistently ran along the river. With the flooding this past spring, the river had just opened a few weeks before for river traffic.

Our first rest stop was Matson. Daniel Boone was one of the original settlers in the early 1800's. Just a short distance down the trail is Defiance.

Defiance is a cute town with an ice cream sign on the trail. On a hot summer day, I would have definitely stopped. Steve stopped at the bike rental shop to verify our pick up the next day. As Steve stopped, I continued on the bike trail; however, I stopped at a detour. I didn't want to go off course along with wanting to be close to my rain gear.

Our final stop before we reached St. Charles was Greens Bottom Trailhead. Nothing much is around with the exception of the signage. We knew we were getting close to St. Charles. There was a little river traffic on the Missouri River.

We also went under a conveyor belt of a gravel company. They were dredging the river for gravel with operations on land. Before we knew it, we were riding along Frontier Park.

The large sculpture of Clark, Lewis and his dog, Seaman, could not be missed. We continued to ride along the trail checking out the rest of the park. It was a beautiful setting along with facilities housing a pavilion. We retraced our path looking for an entrance to the main town.

The historic downtown is still very quaint with cobblestone streets. Cute stores are in the old buildings. The Popcorn Shoppe was spotted as we rode Main Street. Upon the return toward the hotel, The Popcorn Shoppe was checked out. A medium bag of popcorn was purchased. We stuffed it into the pannier on Steve's bike and headed for the hotel.

When we arrived at the front of Country Inn and Suites, Carolyn and John were cleaning their bike tires. The hotel provided rags to dry the tires. The hotel allowed us to store our bikes in one of their secure meeting rooms. We rode our bikes 3 hours and 11 minutes covering 30 miles the last day.

This was the only day of the trip that we beat our bags. Each couple went to their rooms to wait for the luggage. About 10 minutes later, Steve called the front desk. We were informed John and Carolyn were delivering our bags and getting some popcorn. We all sat in our room having popcorn for lunch.

Steve called his cousin to let her know we had arrived, and we would be ready to see them whenever they could make it to the hotel. Originally, Marilyn and Al were planning to join us on the ride. Marilyn broke her wrist, and they had to cancel.

Al, Marilyn, Steve and I walked to the original state capitol. Then we went to a coffee/tea shop to visit.

John, Carolyn, Al, Marilyn, Steve and I had dinner that evening to celebrate and share stories of the trip at “Mother-in-Law’s Restaurant”. This establishment had remained in the same location under the same management for 30 years. We enjoyed the food along with the mother-in-law serving. To celebrate we all had decadent desserts.

The first game of the World Series was in St. Louis that night. They went the full 7 games with the Cardinals winning the title.

The last stretch of the eastern trail just opened—St. Charles to Machens. We assured Marilyn and Al that we would come out to ride that portion of the trail with them.

The next morning (10/20) at 9 am our shuttle arrived to take us back to Clinton. One stretch of the road the shuttle normally takes was going to be closed for roadwork the next week. They wanted to check out an alternate route so they went through Warrensburg. Steve asked them if they would drop me at the Veterans Home that was maybe a mile off the route. They didn’t mind at all plus it didn’t take very long.

One great accomplishment for Carolyn was riding more than 30 miles in any one day along with a full week of rides longer than 30 miles. She did great!

The rest of us had done longer rides but this ride was very tiring because of the flat bike path.

I completed one of my goals for my 60th year. It was great!

SONGS IN THE VIDEO BY SCOTT JOPLIN

MAPLE LEAF RAG, ENTERTAINER, ORIGINAL RAG, FIG LEAF RAG,
THE CHRYSANTHEMUM, HELLIOTROPE BOUQUET, FELICITY RAG,
WALL STREET RAG, RAGTIME DANCE AND THE CASCADES