

UNIONVILLE LOOP

RIDE NOTES:

Farmland, woods, a still-standing windmill, hamlets of Mt. Salem, Rockport; Unionville and Minisink, NY.

DISTANCE: 9.5 mi.

ELEV GAIN: 697 ft.

This ride starts at the small town park in Unionville, NY less than a mile from the Wantage border. From the town of Sussex, drive on Rt 284 approximately 7.5 miles into the town of Unionville. Cautiously, turn left to enter the very small town center. The town park is immediately on your left, next to the Unionville Village Office and across from the pizzeria.

0.0 From the pocket-sized town park, turn left onto Main St.

0.3 Bear right onto Pine Hill Rd.

0.4 Look for the unmarked cemetery in the back of the field on your left. Almost all of the markers in this small cemetery are simply-carved fieldstones with no names, dates or epitaphs.

You are in the town of Minisink, NY which, until 1768, was claimed by New Jersey. Minisink comes from the word Minsi or Munsee, the

northern clan of the Lenni Lenape Native Americans.

1.2 Echo Farm

Most old barns were made of wood. Not this one! Stop to enjoy the beauty of this working farmstead. If you're biking at milking time, you may have to stop for the cows to cross the road.

1.8 Waterloo Mills

Bear left to stay on Pine Hill Rd. Look for the historical roadside marker.

1.9 Turn left onto Goodridge Rd.

2.0 The structure on the right was a one-room schoolhouse.

2.4 Cross Rutgers Creek.

To add a half-mile, a hill, and a scenic spot to stop by the creek, turn right on Mitchell Lane just over the bridge. At the top of the hill, turn left on Myers Rd. The loop will return you to Goodridge Rd not far from the spot you left it.

2.9 Barn Cupola

The cupola atop a barn roof performed an extremely important function: ventilation. In an area where hay is stored, air circulation is vital.

Accurate sketches of cupolas, barns, and farm structures can be found in many of the books authored by Eric Sloane (my favorite: *An Age of Barns.*)

3.1 Welcome to New Jersey.

Goodridge Rd in New York turns to Goodrich Rd in New Jersey. You can make up your own scenario as to how the township folks in New York turned Goodrich to Goodridge, or (more likely) vice versa!

3.4 Turn right onto Mt Salem Rd.

3.4 Make an immediate left onto Rockport Rd.

There are 13 individually-named geographic regions in Wantage Township. You are now bicycling through Rockport.

4.3 Turn right onto Unionville Rd.

4.5 Pass a swamp.

This is a favorite spot for birders.

5.3 Wolfpit Farm

Although it does not have its original form, this residence was once the Wolfpit one-room schoolhouse. For pictures of the Wantage one-room schoolhouses, check out the book *Then*

and now: Forty Years in the Schools of Sussex County. Our public library has a copy.

- 5.7 Proceed straight onto Wolfpit Rd (Unionville Rd bears right down the hill.)
- 6.0 Bear left to stay on Wolfpit Rd.

When the white settlers first arrived in New Jersey, wolves were a native species. Local municipalities offered bounties for wolves until they were eradicated. Supposedly, pits were dug and an animal's carcass would be thrown in. Hungry wolves would jump into the pit where they would be shot. Thus, the origin of this road's name.

- 7.5 Turn left onto Quarry Rd.
- 8.3 Notice the wagon roadway in the field on your left. Look down this lane--it leads to a copse of tall trees, a spruce dominating. This is a local cemetery. The flat field here was once a horse racetrack.
- 8.4 Windmill!

When I moved to Wantage in '73, there were still a number of these standing. Now they're as rare as hen's teeth. Wind power is nothing new. Before electricity, farmers harnessed nature's power to pump water into their barns for thirsty cows.

8.8 Look for the Appalachian Trail Crossing

The AT begins at Springer Mountain in Georgia and continues 2,200 miles to Mount Katahdin in Maine. Most “through hikers” hike north, leaving in the spring and finishing in the fall. Most of those hikers pass through New Jersey within a few weeks on either side of the Fourth of July.

9.0 Turn right onto NY County route 36.

You are back in New York.

9.4 First Presbyterian Church of Unionville

It’s worth a quick stop to study the stained glass and belfry. Just a few hundred feet further, Our Lady of the Scapular also has an attractive belfry.

9.5 Arrive back at the Unionville Town Park

Aside from the pizzeria right in front of you, there’s also a great general store in town. Continue straight and carefully cross the street for Horler’s Store. If you’re so inclined, continue a bit farther to a local tavern, just past the firehouse. At the firehouse, stop to admire the old-fashioned fire gong, and picture a local townsman hitting that metal ring with all his might to alert his neighbors of a fire!