

RIDE REPORT: THE PINNACLES, May 6-7, 2017

This ride was timed to coincide with the monthly “Gathering of the Bikes” in Ephrata, PA, on the first Sunday of the month. Ephrata is also noteworthy for having been the former seat of the Mystic Order of the Solitary, a semimonastic order of Seventh-Day Dunkers, who built the Ephrata Cloister, which attracts tourists to this day. For me, the bikes have always been more interesting than the Dunkers.

We were a group of five. I was the ‘outsider’: the remainder of the group consisting of Eric and his three sons, John, Michael, and Chris. Exemplary sons, they had arranged this exclusive RetroTour as a 60th birthday present for their Dad. This family grew up riding together. The boys started young, off-roading on weekend excursions with Eric. I was totally stoked to make this a family get together to remember, and pleased as punch to have the opportunity to use our shared passion for motorcycling to put them together for a weekend.



**The Chosen Ones:
(right to left)**

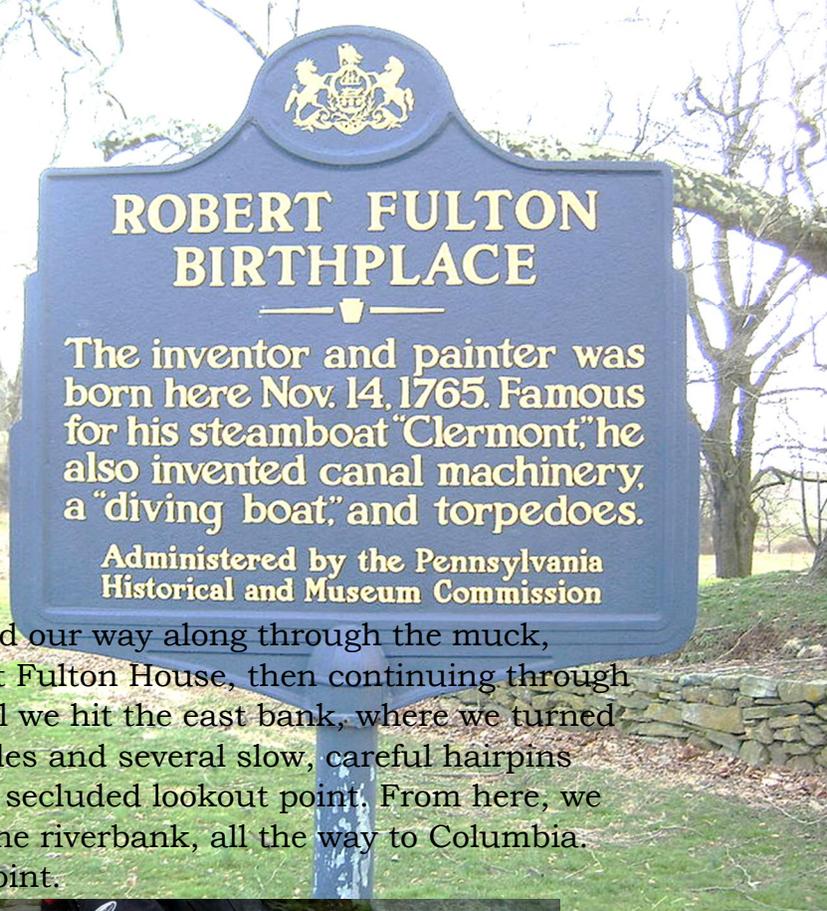
- '75 Ducati 860GT**
- '76 Kawa KZ750B1**
- '79 Moto Guzzi V50**
- '76 Yamaha RD400**
- '74 BMW R90/6**

The weather was not looking good: intermittent cool rain was predicted for most of the weekend. We girded ourselves with appropriate rain gear, and after dragging out breakfast to wait out a spat of heavy rain, set about loading up.



Everyone was being extra cautious on the wet back roads as we navigated west, through moderate rainfall, heading for the Susquehanna River, and The Pinnacles. I nearly lost the plot when a car slowed unexpectedly in front of me and I squeezed a bit too much on the Brembo double discs of the 860GT, momentarily locking the front wheel on a slick spot.

Even more cautiously, we then picked our way along through the muck, pausing for a short break at the Robert Fulton House, then continuing through fertile Peach Bottom farm country until we hit the east bank, where we turned north along the Susquehanna. Five miles and several slow, careful hairpins later, we pulled in for a short hike to a secluded lookout point. From here, we would follow scenic River Road along the riverbank, all the way to Columbia. It had been raining lightly up to this point.



***“NOT ALL THOSE WHO WONDER ARE LOST”
However, those who wonder in the rain eventually get wet crotches.***

Seriously though, it wasn't so bad. The rain was mostly very light, and our riding gear allowed us to get wet slowly enough that it was tolerable, only just.

And the view, even obscured somewhat by the misty conditions, was, as always, uplifting.



WHERE EAGLES SOAR

By now, everyone was adjusting to the strange bikes and less than ideal conditions and riding well. We were damp and cold, but focusing on lunch at the John Wright restaurant, which is in a repurposed silk mill from a previous century. That's cool, but the location also happens to be at the base of a mile-long bridge, uniquely constructed of multiple preformed concrete arches, and with a fascinating Civil War story behind it.



THE WRIGHTSVILLE BRIDGE WAS A PIVOTAL POINT IN THE CIVIL WAR.

Due to our delayed start, we hit the restaurant a bit later than planned. We



***UNSETTLED WEATHER & A LINCOLN HIGHWAY
ROADSIDE ATTRACTION***

desperately needed a break, but the kitchen was officially closed between lunch and dinner. I did some fast talking and the maitre-de agreed to let us order from the bar, which turned out to be perfect. We shucked our gear into a corner and ordered from the short menu. For dessert, we suited back up and rode 10 miles to the Haines Shoe House, arriving just in time for the last tour of the day, and ice cream, of course.

Our final stop for the first day was in Annville, where our unusual overnight accommodations awaited. Thomas, like me, is originally from New England, and you can tell the moment he opens his mouth: no 'Rs' come out, only 'ahhhs'. He has been working feverishly for months, refurbishing an old duplex built in the 1940's. There are bedrooms all over the place, radiant heat in the floors, and importantly for us, a clothes drier in the basement. Not only did he let us use the laundry facilities to dry our wet gear, Thomas even lent us dry shoes for walking into town for dinner at the Batdorf Restaurant. After a hearty meal and an adult beverage or three, we were feeling much better, and settled in back at our cozy abode for a great night's sleep. One thing about Annville: it's quiet.



Another thing about Annville: it's just a hop, skip and jump from Ephrata. On Sunday morning we rolled our bikes down the hill and started them away from the neighbors. The roads were still damp, the air still misty, as we made our way to the American Legion Post which hosts the monthly Gathering of the Bikes. Breakfast inside is all you can eat, but the smorgasbord of motorcycles and such is more impressive, even on a sparsely attended, rainy day, this early in the season. We wandered about looking at machinery for a good hour.



We left Ephrata, still in the relentless 'light' rain (maybe more like 'moderate' at this point), and began to angle towards home.





A wrong turn had us dead reckoning through Amish country where we were treated to a unique spectacle: a large Sunday prayer gathering let out just as we passed through one village and we were suddenly amid hundreds of covered, horse-drawn buggies heading home in the rain. We picked our way through the pack and regained the route, making a final stop at Hopewell Village, where iron castings were made during Colonial times, and the restored, functional equipment is on display. Charcoal is still made on site from the surrounding woodlands, and a diverted creek drives a massive waterwheel to stoke the furnace. It's amazing what folks were able to do with such primitive technology, though I suppose the same will be said for us someday.

We were a bit cold, a bit wet, and a bit tired. Challenge is in the nature of adventure, and we had survived an enjoyable, if arduous, weekend ride, soggy perhaps, but no worse for wear. Now we focused on the hot, home-cooked meal waiting for us at home. Ironically, the rain finally abated, and the sun came out about 20 minutes from the end of our weekend. Regardless of the weather, I enjoyed my time with this delightful family and I hope that fond memories of Dad's 60th will be with Eric, Mike, Chris, and John for years to come. I would love to see them all again for his 65th, if not sooner.

I promise that next time, the sun will shine upon us.

