

Troop 49 – The Pathfinders
Washington Crossing Bike Trip
June 6-7, 2009

This weekend's trip went very well. Prior to departing, we worked out the juggling of cars and shuttling drivers after the ride. We also decided against departing Friday night. This worked out well as there was much rain in the area on Friday evening.

We departed at 8:00 AM on Saturday morning, and drove to Bull Island State Park (NJ) which is near Frenchtown, NJ arriving at about 10:30. We parked the cars there, and explored the island, riding our bikes throughout the camping area. There is a newer visitor's center, and a footbridge from the island across to the Pennsylvania side. There is one section of the campground which is currently closed. This area has been prone to flooding in recent years.

After exploring the Island, we headed south on the Delaware & Raritan Canal towpath. The trail is made of packed, fine gravel. The morning started with cloudy skies. The clouds thinned out as the day went on, and by the end of the day, we had sunny blue skies. We made great time all day, riding the first stretch from Bull Island to Stockton, NJ. We stopped in Stockton by 11:00AM, and took our first break. There is an old train station (now a deli) with picnic tables along the towpath. It made for a nice place to rest and hydrate. We saddled up and headed south toward Lambertville.

The next part of the trail went from Stockton to Lambertville. The path remained the same until just north of the US Route 202 underpass. At this point, the trail turned to a grassy path. Along this part of the trail, we were paralleling old train tracks. We stopped to get a group picture by an abandoned boxcar that was covered with graffiti. We arrived in Lambertville by noon, and stopped for lunch. By now, the trail was back to the packed gravel. We took an hour to explore the town. Scouts ate their lunch or stopped in to a luncheonette to buy it. On the way back to the bikes, we found a game store which sells all of the different types of games we learned to play on our game night program earlier this year.

By 1:00, we were back on our bikes, and headed south towards Titusville. One of the planned stops was to visit a flea market which operates on weekends along the route. This stop was suggested by a scout (and his dad) prior to departing who had been there before. The 2 lead scouts probably should have waited for the rest of the group before departing the trail to visit the flea market, as it was not right along the bike path. They were far enough ahead, and the next scouts in line did not know where to stop, so they kept riding past it. The result was that we had stretched out a bit farther than we would have liked. We had a "tenderfoot" scout now in the lead, and he rode past the Washington Crossing Bridge, and was headed toward Trenton. Ed went forward to gather up the younger scouts, and Rob waited for the scouts who had stopped. There was a little bit of a scramble to get everyone back together, but it had little impact on the overall progress.

At Titusville, we crossed the bridge to Washington Crossing, PA. As you enter Pennsylvania, you are in the park. The first building that you see is the historic inn where George Washington headquartered as the continental army prepared to cross over and attack the British & Hessians in Trenton. We rode to the visitor's center, completing 15 miles of riding. The park employees took care of checking us in for camping, and we got tickets for the 3:00 PM tour. The tour included visiting the boat house, where they store the boats used each year by the reenactment group that crosses on Christmas. We visited the inn and two houses which were built by the family of one of Washington's lieutenants who was from the area and eventually purchased the land near the crossing.

By the end of the tour, Mr. Nedds had arrived to pick up the day trip scouts, and drove Rob up to Bull's Island to pick up his car. We drove back to Washington's Crossing, and all bikes and scouts got a ride to the campground area, which is about 5 miles north of the park. (We were not able to bike this part, because the PA Canal path is currently closed) The Scout camping area is between the Delaware Canal (PA side) and the River.

We picked a site that was right up the steep bank of the Delaware. It was a grassy area, with a pavilion (with electric and lights!) We set up camp, and the scouts worked hard on getting a fire started. Much of the wood was wet due to the recent rain. Dinner was Tacos, with cookies for dessert. We sat around the campfire, and one by one the scouts (exhausted from the trip) retired to their tents. There was another scout troop there as well as a Cub Scout pack, but we were far enough away that there was not much interaction.

At about 4:45 AM Sunday morning, the early birds started chirping. By 7:00, the scouts were getting up, and we had some light breakfast, packed up the dew covered tents, and headed for home. We stopped back in Lambertville to the game store, and picked up a couple of games to bring on future camping trips.

All agreed that this area has so much potential for future trips. In addition to where we stayed, there are campgrounds at Bulls Island SP (NJ) and Tinicum Park (Bucks County Park).

Submitted by Rob Dente, SIC for the trip.