

The Janesville Cycling Scene



Sunday outings were the standard for the “cycle boys” in the 1890’s. Riding high wheel bikes the well-to-do members of the community were often seen in area parks and parades. The name Janesville Velo Club originated in this era.

You older readers may remember the start of the “modern” cycling phenomena in the early 1970’s. The Janesville Gazette dutifully covered the event with an article titled The Cycling Craze is Here on September 9, 1972.

In this article retired banker Ken Barriage was nominated as the city’s cycling champion. He has ridden his 10 speed Schwinn as far north as Albion and as far east as Whitewater Lake.

Ken further reports his favorite route is Kennedy Road to County M, then via M and Hurd Road to Indianford or up Pine Road to Newville. Ken’s favorite route is still used today, it is funny how little things change over the years.

By the 1980’s and possibly earlier a group of riders began a Tuesday race training ride. The ride originated from a number of locations on the north side of Janesville and followed Ken Barriage’s favorite route to Indianford. In later years a Cambridge route was added. This ride still exists as the Tuesday “A” team ride leaving Wal-Mart. This ride serves as the training ride for the Michael’s Cycles Team.

At the same time a traditional Wednesday night time trial was held west of Janesville on County M. This gave the local cyclists an opportunity to train for that aspect of cycling. The current “A” team rides still host an occasional time trial at the same location.

By 1991 a second ride originated in Janesville, the Tuesday night Haacks ride – named after a local bike shop that served as the starting point. This ride was started by Charlie Davis and continues today as the Tuesday “B” team ride leaving Palmer Park. Davis was also a leading force behind the Saturday dawn ride.

Cycling became formalized in 2000 with the formation of a group of riders as the Janesville Velo Club. After a season of riding, Paul Braun organized an annual banquet that was held in October of that year. At that banquet grew the first set of officers. The summer of 2001 saw added rides in a Thursday “B” group, a constitution approved at the annual meeting and a web site www.veloclub.org . Starting in 2002 the club offered a Women’s Ride and a beginner’s ride but most exciting, the first club jersey.

By 2004 the club issued its second rendition of the jersey, now offered 11 rides per week with a “C” ride being added for those desiring an easier pace. Membership stood at over 60 riders and some rides have contained 25 or more participants. This year the club took over the Kathy Belling Memorial Ride and renamed it the Ride for the Arts.

Mountain bikers organized in Janesville and began their association with the Rock Trail Coalition. Thursday night rides became a part of the velo club schedule. The “A” ride left their ride start at Wal-Mart and joined the other rides departing from Palmer Park. In 2006 a group of local riders organized a Cyclocross race at Gibbs Lake County Park, this race became affiliated with the velo club.

The Michael’s Cycles Race Team affiliated with the velo club in 2007 and the club became a member of USA Cycling. The club continues to support, encourage and sponsor cycling in Rock County.

Club Presidents:

Paul Braun 2000-2004
John Merz 2004-2005
Laura Baker 2005-2006
Ken Pearson 2006-present