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Pedaling to Lunch: Bike Rides and Bites in Northeast Ohio

Stan Purdum

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Pedaling to Lunch

OHIO HISTORY AND CULTURE

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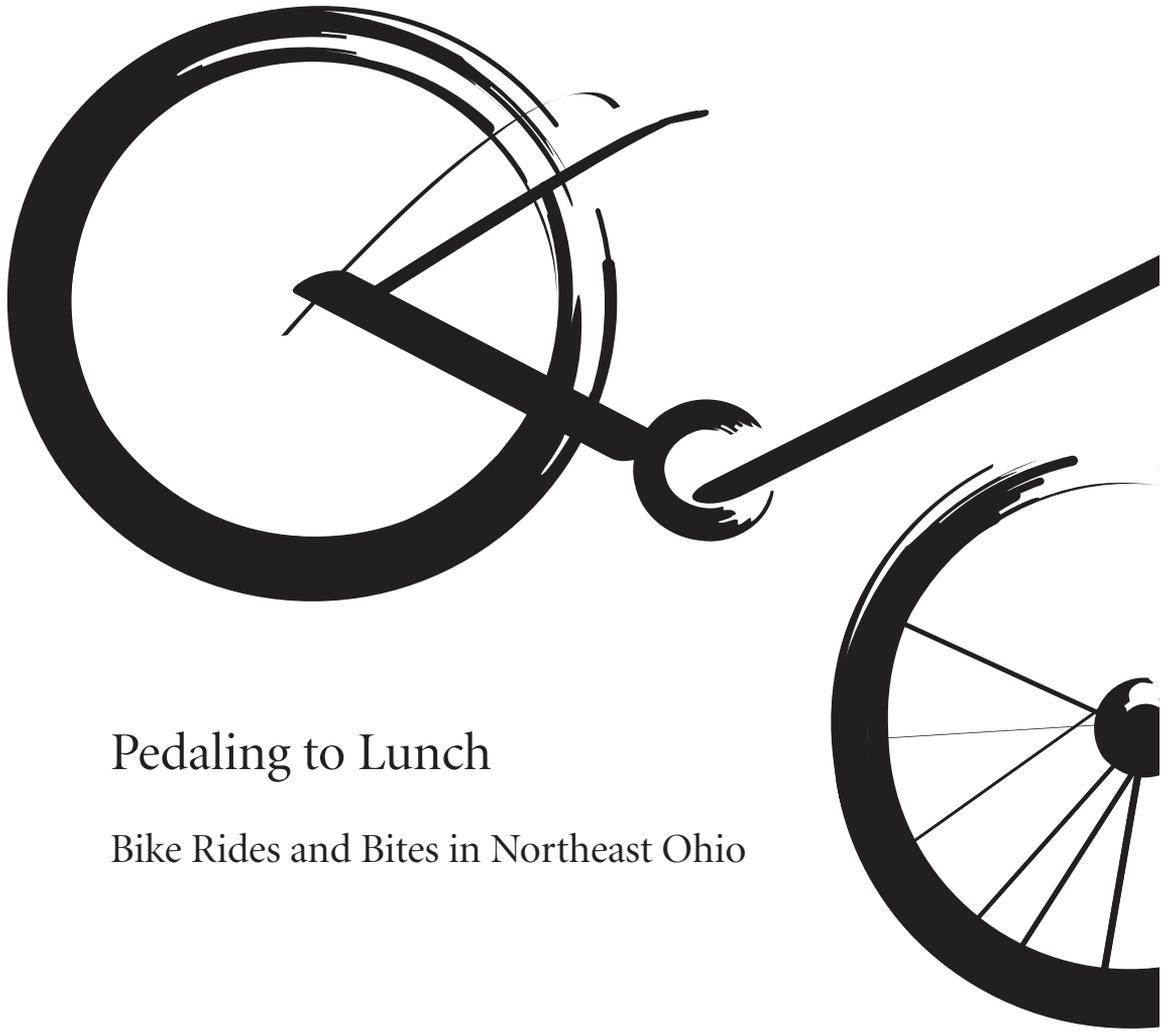
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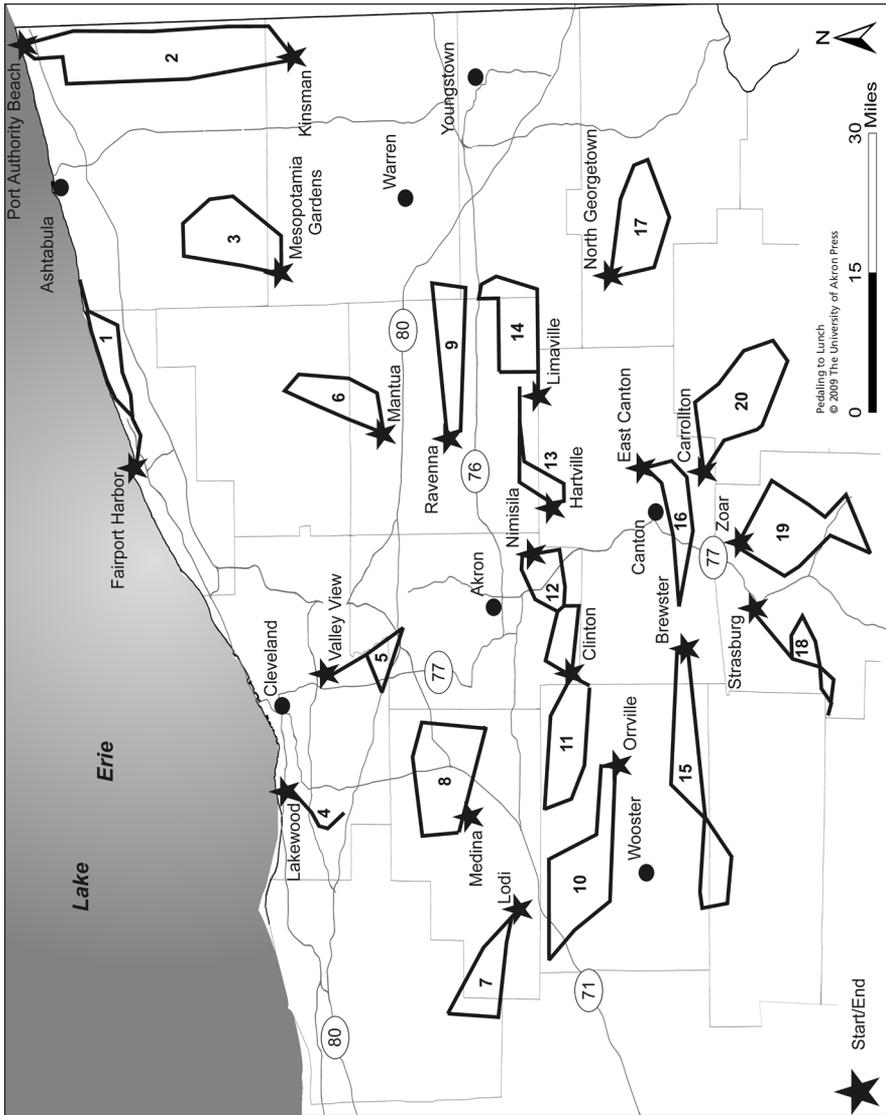
Bike Rides and Bites in Northeast Ohio

Stan Purdum

Varsha Balachandran and Dan Von Holten
RESEARCH ASSISTANTS



THE UNIVERSITY OF AKRON PRESS
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Twenty rides around Northeast Ohio. Numbers correspond to the ride number.

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Disclaimer: Cycling can be dangerous. Neither the producers nor publishers of this book assume any liability for cyclists traveling along any of the suggested routes in this book. At the time of publication, all routes shown on the maps in this book were open to bicycles. The routes were chosen for their safety, aesthetics, and pleasure, and were deemed acceptable and accommodating to bicyclists. Safety on these routes cannot be guaranteed. A cyclist is responsible for his or her own safety when riding the routes in this book and is responsible for the unforeseen risks and dangers that might occur.

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

I am a veteran of long bicycle rides. The year I turned fifty, I pedaled across America, from coast to coast. Five years later, I rode my bicycle the length of U.S. Route 62, from Niagara Falls, New York, to El Paso, Texas. I may yet take more extended bicycle journeys, but in the meantime, I have enjoyed exploring the byways closer to home. I live in Northeast Ohio, and my part of the state is loaded with scenery every bit as impressive as places I rode out west. Granted the scale is different, but the natural beauty of Ohio, especially when one gets off the main thoroughfares, is often grand.

This part of Ohio is filled with low-traffic back roads, small villages, and a wide variety of geography, from the relatively flat lands of Portage, Trumbull, and Geauga counties to the profusion of steep hills and sweeping vistas in Carroll, southern Stark, and Tuscarawas counties. The region also includes Ashtabula County, with its seventeen covered bridges, and Holmes County, with its many Amish farms, one-room schoolhouses, and horse-drawn buggies. Other counties in the quadrant have their unique and interesting sights as well.

What's more, some of these out-of-the-way places offer glimpses of the Buckeye State's history. On the routes described in this book you can see the site of an experiment in utopian communal living, a place where a colony of Native Americans was massacred, a "hollow" that was occupied by characters so notorious that lawmen refused to enter it, remnants of two canals and the historic Lincoln Highway, the childhood home of famed attorney Clarence Darrow, a couple of museum villages, and more.

In narrating the rides, I not only describe routes for cycling and sights, but also tell of my experiences actually pedaling these

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loops. I've done so intentionally so you get a feel for what bicycling beyond neighborhood boundaries and in less than ideal weather conditions can be. I rode on beautiful days, but also when I had to contend with very high and low temperatures, strong headwinds and variable road conditions, including melting snow. I've ridden in light and heavy traffic, travelled on city streets, country roads, and state highways, encountered unexpected pavement variations, found interesting objects on the roadside, and pedaled like mad to keep up with a faster rider. This range of experiences (and more) contributed to my memorable and enjoyable rides. Similar adventures can be part of your cycling stories as well, especially if you don't limit your trips to "perfect" days.

One thing the rides include, as the book title suggests, is lunch, roughly at the midpoint of each loop. That came about because I have always preferred to have a destination when I cycle. I've ridden plenty of excursions with no stop scheduled, jaunts simply for the fun and exercise of being out on the bike, but I enjoyed even more treks where a lunch stop was on the itinerary. There was also a practical reason: When I stopped to eat, I was able to ride longer distances. Of course, I could always have carried a lunch with me, and occasionally I did, but I like to dine in the little eateries off the beaten track as much to get the flavor of the place as the taste of entrees.

That said, this book should not be considered a directory to fine dining. The food is tasty in every one of the restaurants I suggest, and a few, such as the Spread Eagle Tavern in Hanoverton and Des Dutch Essenhaus in Shreve are outstanding, and but in most cases, the places chosen offer "everyday" fare, down-to-earth and filling, but not always epicurean, delights. In planning this book, I could have selected great restaurants and then figured out routes to include them, but my goal was always to find great rides and then locate acceptable lunch stops on those circuits. The fact that many of these cafes and diners are in small

towns, where the need is simply for a place to get a bite to eat, often dictates the kind of menus available. In some cases, quite aside from the chow, being in the restaurants themselves are interesting experiences, such as in Sunrise Café in Geneva-on-the-Lake or in the Steel Trolley Diner in Lisbon.

I did have a couple of rules when picking lunch locations, however. First, I stayed away from fast-food and chain restaurants simply because such places give not the flavor of the community but the flavor of the franchise. And second, I did not pick any place where a person would feel unwelcome dressed in bicycle shorts or sporting “helmet hair.”

Because these restaurants are located in small towns, they face the same problems of other businesses in low-traffic places, and can change their hours of operation without warning or even go out of business, so I have provided the phone number for each of them so that you can call ahead to verify that they will be open when you arrive.

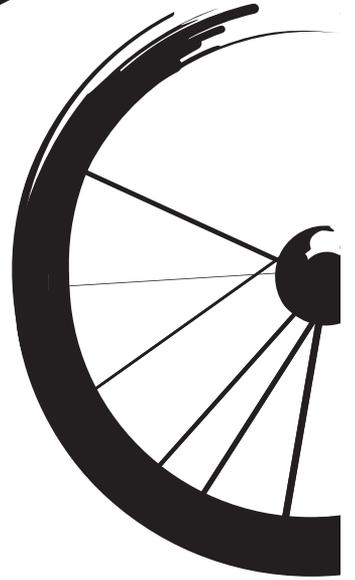
In the event that you don't care for my selected eateries, several of the lunch-stop communities have other restaurants, and you may wish to sample them. Yet another option is to start the ride in the lunch-stop community and eat in the start-end location, which is possible on all but a couple of the rides.

In the end, of course, this book is not a guide for dining but a ticket to ride. Whether you stop for lunch or not, these are interesting routes that will give you miles of pleasure in Ohio's great outdoors.

Happy riding!



Before You Ride



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Cycling is fun. Unless you want to become a professional cyclist, weekend riding doesn't require a lot of expensive or fancy equipment, and almost anybody in reasonable health can pedal around. The following advice will make your cycling safer, more enjoyable, and more comfortable.

Safety

Always wear a helmet. While falls are not common, a good-quality helmet will spare you serious head injury. Several years ago, I was rolling downhill on a country road when my map suddenly blew out of my front pouch. Without thought, I hit the brakes hard to stop and retrieve it. I flew over the handlebars and tumbled several times on the gravel of the road's shoulder. My bike ended up with bent handlebars and a damaged rear wheel. I got a pulled thigh muscle, numerous cuts, scrapes, abrasions, and bent glasses. My head, however, was okay, but only because the helmet took the blow—a blow so hard that my helmet split. It “died” and I didn't. I was sore, but I was able to straighten the bent wheel and ride home.

I also suggest using a flashing taillight on overcast days and after dark. A headlight is a good accessory, too. Many of these and other items are reviewed in *Bicycling* (www.bicycling.com).

Mechanical Problems

Being prepared for minor mechanical problems will make your day of riding more enjoyable. If you keep your bike properly maintained to begin with, you are unlikely to have any problems major enough to derail your ride. And unlike a car, most of the things that can go wrong mechanically on a bike do not actually prevent you from continuing your journey. A broken spoke or two, a squeaky bearing, or even a broken shift-cable will rarely force you to stop. However, a flat tire will, literally, deflate your progress.

To prevent tire trouble, start out with good tires inflated to the pressure recommended on the tire itself. Since flats can occur nonetheless, I carry a spare inner tube, a set of three tire levers (the “spoon-shaped” tools for removing a tire from the rim to install the new tube), and a small air pump that mounts to my bike frame. (Alternatively, you can use a CO2 cartridge system for re-inflating the tire.) Since my wheels can be removed from the frame by opening quick-release levers (a common feature on most newer bikes), I need no other tools for dealing with a flat. If your wheels are attached to the frame with axle nuts, you’ll have to carry the appropriate-sized wrench to remove the wheel.

Additionally, I carry a small combination Allen wrench (hex key) set that enables me to adjust any bolt on the bike, though I seldom have to use it. I also take along a chain-breaker tool for chain repairs, though I don’t consider that essential for most riders. In the unlikely event of a broken chain, your best recourse may be to use your cell phone to call a friend for a ride. All of these tools come in small combination sets that can be found at bicycle shops.

Clothing

Prior to riding, I usually check the local forecast so I am aware of the temperature, wind speed and direction, and amount of sun I will encounter. This allows me to dress appropriately and avoid taking extra layers of clothing. If the weather conditions will be changing, I might have to take off one layer or bring an additional layer.

I recommend bicycle shorts for all rides (under other layers on cold days), but in warm and dry weather, you can get away with T-shirts and other everyday garments. Many riders don’t cycle in colder weather, but if you do, it is wise to dress in layers and wear clothing made of the performance fabrics that wick moisture away from your body. The standard advice for cold

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weather riding is to think in terms of three layers: a base layer of wicking fabric, a middle layer of insulating fabric, and an outer layer of wind-breaking fabric. That advice is fine as far as it goes, but in practice, it is not precise enough to ensure comfort at different temperatures. Depending on the temperature, you may need to don two or three insulating layers between the base layer and the outer layer.

The best way to determine what you need to wear on cooler days is trial-and-error coupled with a little record keeping. Trial-and-error is not difficult if you have some arrangement on your bike to stash extra clothing, such as a rack, a pouch, or saddlebag. Then just take a bit more clothing than you think you are likely to need and see what actually keeps you comfortable. Unless your memory is exceptional, however, the key is to keep a written record of the temperature and the required number of layers. In my experience, for every five degrees the temperature drops below 65, I need to add a piece of clothing—long sleeves, gloves, a skull cap, an additional pair of socks, etc.

Comfort

The single most important item for comfort on long rides is a properly fitted saddle. Fit is far more important than padding. You can find saddles that feature lots of padding and that feel great for short neighborhood rides. But on longer hauls, the padding compresses and doesn't feel nearly as good. Saddles come in different widths, different material, and are structured differently for men and women. You might need to experiment with a few saddles, and some bike shops even have loaner saddles you can try. Personally, I've found that the classic leather saddle works best for me.

After you've chosen a saddle, have it properly adjusted. A professional at a local bike shop can do this for you, or you can also find instructions on the Internet or in your user's manual. Saddles need to be set for the proper height, tilt, and distance

from your handlebars. You can find information on choosing and adjusting saddles at www.bicycling.com and other websites.

To stay comfortable during your ride, buy bicycle shorts. Shorts are important because they have a little padding, provide support, and are designed to reduce friction, rubbing, and to wick away moisture. Follow the manufacturer's instruction on proper wear.

Take at least two water bottles on rides. I usually fill one with a sports drink. I also carry an energy bar because cycling burns lots of calories. In hot weather, I take along pretzels to replenish my body's sodium level.

With attention to these few matters, you are all set for great adventure on northeast Ohio's byways.

Here are a few websites to check out:

Adventure Cycling Association

www.adventurecycling.org

League of American Bicyclists

www.bikeleague.org

Ohio Department of Transportation

www2.dot.state.oh.us/bike

Pedestrian and Bicycling Information Center

www.bicyclinginfo.org

Sheldon Brown's Bicycle Technical Info

sheldonbrown.com

