



# *A Ride on the Little Miami Trail*

*An Adventure with C*

*August 2018*

*Bob Hillery*

# *An Adventure with Colin*

I still have "dreams" about long-distance bike rides but certainly can't face anything unsupported and have never had someone capable or willing to accompany me. However, at a breakfast discussion earlier in the summer, it was suggested that C might be willing to act as my sag wagon - even across country if need be! We decided to test the idea with something a little less challenging and were looking at a three day, two night run from home. Scheduling conflicts and weather conditions eventually cut that back to one night away with me cycling from home to Springfield, OH on one day and returning via the same route (the Little Miami Trail) the following day. So, Sunday August 5 was the designated day for the 60 mile ride north to Springfield.

I dropped off an overnight bag at the Shepards' as we drove home from church and then got into my biking gear. It was about 11:45 when I left home on a very hot and humid day, with temperatures predicted to exceed 90F - or a "real feel" of 100+. Actually, riding wasn't too bad but any stop - for a traffic light or short break - was to instantly be immersed in a sauna with no relief from the heat and humidity. I was fortunate, however, that any breeze was from the SW so that was in my favor for the entire journey.

I joined the Little Miami Trail at Kings Mills, after cycling up Kings Island Drive and then down the steep hill to the river and the trail. From there to Morrow (total distance about 15 miles) I went non-stop and at a very respectable pace. Similarly, from Morrow to Corbin, where again I had a short break, I averaged almost 15MPH. The trail is a converted railroad line so obviously the grade is very modest so maintaining a good speed is not too difficult.

After perhaps 30 miles (half way) I started to feel a little tired and found myself pedaling a little less and free-wheeling a little more. I still maintained speeds of 12MPH or better but I felt less fresh and found myself counting the miles (even 1/2 mile) to my planned major break at Xenia. Xenia was at the two thirds point (40 miles) and I reached it in three hours, for an average speed of 13MPH.

Xenia is where several Ohio trails come together so is a major stopping point for many cyclists and walkers. I found a place to put my bike and found some shade under a tree to re-coup a little and send texts home and to my sag wagon. I felt that my pace would slow a little for the final 20 miles but I projected being at the Holiday Inn, Springfield between 5:00 and 6:00 so I gave a window for which to aim.

Leaving Xenia, I soon was on town roads and kept wondering whether or not I was headed for the correct trail to take me northeast. Fortunately, I had my phone with the route already planned so I was able to minimize the effects of a slight error and was soon on Trail 3 headed for Springfield. The trail here was wide, well shaded and much more quiet than the heavily populated section from home to Xenia. So, the road was fine but I was feeling quite tired and was sure my pace was falling. The slight detour added to my concern (although not much to the mileage) and I once again started counting the miles down as I made my way towards Springfield. Eventually, about ten miles out and especially when I passed Silver Springs (about 7 miles from my destination) my legs seemed to get a new lease on life and I felt that my pace improved. A gentle downhill slope in many spots and a good tail breeze certainly helped.

I noticed that I was cycling through more and more wet patches on the trail, evidence of showers that had passed through the area. Indeed, there were a few ominous dark clouds all around and I began to wonder whether I might experience a rainy period. As things turned out, it stayed dry but cloudy all the way to the point where I left the trail on the final mile to the hotel.

I checked in at 5:30, about 5 3/4 hours after I had left home and having covered exactly 60 miles. I re-

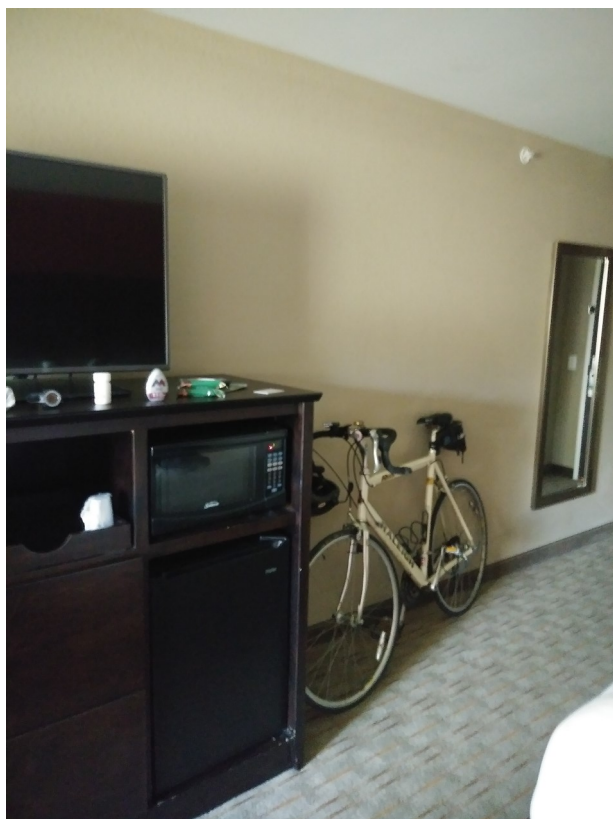


ceived a text from C saying that he too had arrived but apparently was driving around Springfield on a Pokemon search. About 6 C picked up the key to his room and we agreed to meet for dinner at 7pm.

I bathed and called Molly before dinner. My support and I opted for a local Mexican restaurant which was perfectly adequate and I was back in my room by 8pm. C, however, planned another Pokemon hunt so we went our separate ways with an 8:30 appointment for breakfast arranged. I worked on this diary but was probably asleep well before 9. Day one of two accomplished and I felt sure that tomorrow would be a somewhat longer day - with the thought of the climb from the river valley to complete my journey home.

On Monday I awoke a little before 7:30 having slept soundly – and almost the clock round. As C and I met for breakfast, it was revealed that he had spent an additional two hours Sunday evening scouring the city of Springfield for Pokemon Go “characters”. Despite a lengthy explanation, I am still confused as to exactly how these characters appear on one’s phone (“randomly generated” I am told) and even less convinced of the benefits of finding them and adding to the collection. Presumably one must be at least a Millennial to comprehending this electronic game, and how seriously it can be played.

After breakfast, I changed into my cycling gear, we checked out of the hotel and said our goodbyes as C headed towards the expressway and I found my way back to the trail. It had occurred to me that I had taken no photographs on my northbound journey (and hence had no proof of the accomplishment) so I determined to right this on the return, starting with a picture of my overnight companion (the bike) and my “sag wagon” and its driver.



I was soon back on the Little Miami Scenic Trail and, despite a little soreness from yesterday’s ride and legs that complained for a while, soon got into stride and felt that I was making reasonable progress. In fact, almost every time that I glanced at my speedometer I saw speeds in excess of 15MPH and often of 17 to 20 – this into a slight headwind. With my intention of documentation in mind, I stopped first at the 5



mile marker and vowed to do the same at 10 and subsequent similar intervals for the entire journey. As it turned out, the breakpoints were more determined by points of interest along the route rather than a specific mile point but I was able to capture the essence of the Trail and just how beautiful and interesting a ride it can be.



This trail – and several others in Ohio and throughout the country – is part of the “Rails to Trails” network in which abandoned railroad routes have been paved to make an easy (essentially flat) path for cyclists, walkers and others (including the often reckless skateboarder). This particular trail hugs the Little Miami National and State Scenic River and is generously shaded by trees which often create a covered ceiling to the path. The only breaks to this format are occasional open areas in which one rides through corn fields, or a handful of hamlets at major road intersections, many of which provide refreshment and even overnight accommodation.



The connection to the old railroad has not been lost, however, and the volunteers and professionals who maintain the trail have done an excellent job in providing a reminder of days gone by. Most of the stations along the route still exist and many have been converted to provide rest stop facilities, ranging from restrooms to small exhibition or information



centers. I talked briefly with one gentleman who clearly had been part of this project since its inception and he told me that the particular station outside which we talked had been “moved” when it was announced that trains were no longer to follow this path. Why exactly the move was necessary was unclear as the station now stands right next to the trail as one would expect it did when parallel tracks passed by. An interesting aspect of the transition (“move?”), according to my source was that the doorways and some other aspects of the old station had to be widened or otherwise altered to accommodate the requirements of the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act). Somehow the requirement to provide wheel chair access along a trail used almost exclusively by cyclists and walkers is a little incongruous, but maybe that’s just me – or government inflexibility! In any event, we who use the trail owe a debt of gratitude to those who had the foresight and the drive to make it all happen.

There are several stations and other railroad memorabilia along the route, including a very impressive and well-maintained covered bridge over the “tracks” north of Xenia. Xenia Station itself is a fine brick building which sits at the intersection of four major Ohio trails.



I wondered if it also was a railroad cross-road in its day. With all the amenities available along the route, there really is no need to leave it except perhaps to see some of the older buildings in the small towns along the way. I did this in Yellow Springs and Spring Valley and – seeking an easy calorie fix around lunchtime – I left the trail to visit a McDonald’s in Waynesville.







*Fine Covered Bridge over the “Rails”*



*Morrow—Almost Home!*

Waynesville and Morrow (where I also stopped and where the trail goes right along the main street of the town) are close enough to home that I have visited them both on many occasions. On these shorter rides from home I would usually take the country road to either town and return via the trail. On this day, reaching these places meant that I was within striking distance of home and the only “difficulty” between here and there was the necessary climb out of the river valley to Mason.

I chose to leave the trail at the Lebanon extension turn-off and follow Columbia Road up a short but steep hill (into the wind) to King’s Mills. From there it should have been an easy coast down King’s island Drive (along yet another new bike path) but the wind had increased significantly and I had to work hard just to make headway. There were a few spots of rain and some ominous clouds but I managed to reach my driveway at home just as the first large drops of a heavy shower hit – and I arrived home dry!

I had felt that I maintained a better pace on the return journey but my GPS watch said otherwise and I was actually just a little slower on the southbound leg. I can only attribute this to the slight headwind (although until I emerged from the valley it didn’t feel bad), the fact that I made several stops and – probably mostly – the five miles of generally uphill roads to the “finish”. Nevertheless, I maintained an average speed of 12MPH for the entire trip and felt good at another milestone accomplished – with the aid of, and special thanks to, my sag wagon!



# LITTLE MIAMI SCENIC TRAIL

## LEGEND

- Parking
- Picnic Area
- Wheelchair Access
- Canoe Access
- Restrooms
- Pay Phone
- Bike Trail
- Interstate Interchange
- Roadway
- Point of Interest
- Connecting Trails
- Proposed Connecting Trails

Distances on Little Miami Scenic Trail	
Milford to Springfield	68.96 miles
Milford to Morrow	21.90 miles
Morrow to Corwin	14.20 miles
Corwin to Spring Valley	7.00 miles
Spring Valley to Xenia	6.68 miles
Xenia to Yellow Springs	9.81 miles
Yellow Springs to Springfield	9.37 miles

