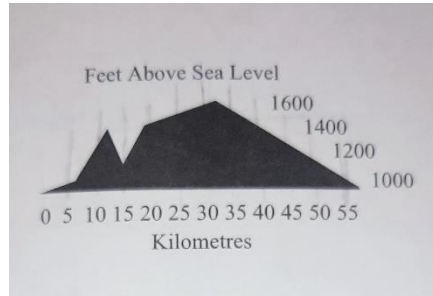


Back Road Manitoba Bicycle Ride, August 19th and 20th.

Bert, Judy, and Jacques arrived in Miami, Manitoba on Saturday, July 19th to spend a couple of days roaming the hills of south central Manitoba. The goal was to explore some of the rides described in the Cycling Back Road Manitoba book by Wayne Petty.

Altamont



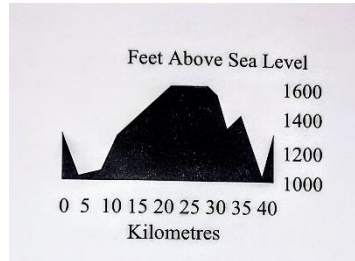
Saturday's ride involved a ramble south and west from Miami for about 10 km before heading north and west to Altamont. We stopped briefly to explore an old church. If there had been a village here at some time, this was the only trace remaining. By the time we reached Altamont, about 35 km later, we were seriously ready for a break (although only Judy appeared to be visibly suffering) due to the 60 km/hr north west wind. We sat on the porch of the "Little Pub that Can" in Altamont,



population 50, and ate the lunches we packed before going in for a beer. As we talked to the barkeep, a man who appeared to be the local barfly wandered in (the barkeep had his beer opened before he'd closed the door behind him). He greeted us with "I have a surprise for you", followed up with "the wind has changed direction". To our relief, he was wrong, and we had a glorious 20 km ride back to Altamont with the wind at our backs, switching about half way to a section of the Trans Canada Trail that was in pretty good condition.

We arrived back at the campground in Miami and set up our tents. Di and Spirit joined us, and we cooked supper, then took in the concert in the park.

Birch



Sunday morning dawned with much more favourable winds! We packed up our bikes and drove to the Birch Ski Area. Di and Spirit rambled the hills of the ski area, while Jacques, Bert and Judy unloaded bikes and did a quick downhill before starting a long climb. Wayne Petty says of the ride “If you’ve never visited this area before it will be hard to believe that you’re in Manitoba, farmlands, wooded ravines and breath taking views all come together in an area of only a few square miles”. We didn’t have the long uphill stretches of the day before (although, Saturday’s challenge was probably more about wind than hills—the road to Altamont didn’t seem like the same road on Sunday!) but we had lots of fairly steep ups and downs.



We stopped for lunch at the old church in St. Lupicin (now a museum). I hadn’t realized that we were in Jacques’ home area, and that two of his brothers were buried in the small cemetery behind the church. From here we wound our way back to the Birch Ski area.



Although the ride was all on gravel roads, they were as nearly perfect as gravel roads can be for riding, with hard surfaces, little loose gravel, and hardly any traffic.

I look forward to cycling some more of “back road Manitoba”.