

ITS Trail Committee Promotes Second Saturday Tour Event

Contributed by John Fritsche
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Low and behold, at 8 a.m. the riders gathered to start the Second Saturday Tour at the Gillespie High School parking lot. We needed it to handle all the riders. Well, maybe not. It was a beautiful warm and sunny Saturday when off we all went to explore Gillespie, Benld, and Sawyerville.

First of all, we owe a special thanks to Jim Marcacci for being our guide for the day. We started off by the old homestead that brought back so many fond memories. Then off to the site of where the "Little Dog Mine" once stood and viewed the old Illinois Traction System corridor. Remember walking the tracks? We all stopped to wish that one day this abandoned rail corridor would be a recreational trail connecting communities as it did originally. We then wound around the streets of Gillespie heading south towards Benld and Sawyerville while pointing out various points of interest, etc.

Wait a minute! What is the Second Saturday Tour? Just continue reading...

This morning people were especially friendly and waving to us and giving us the right of way, stopping to talk. We passed the local high school wrestling team's car wash to raise money. We gave them some money but didn't get the wash. Heading further south on Macoupin we met the local power company person who offered to recharge our batteries. Now we are on the Benld/Gillespie Trail and picking up the pace. We passed over where the old trestle once stood. On arriving in Benld, we went straight for the Grade School that was devastated by the mine subsidence. There is over \$20 million dollars in damage to the school. From a distance, it didn't look like there was any damage but once on site it was very apparent. One side of the outside basketball court appears to have dropped 30 inches or more.

That's enough of that and off we go to Sawyerville. We did make a small stop to look at the old ITS corridor at the Sawyerville/Benld city limits looking south. Arriving in Sawyerville, where Jim and my dad were born, Jim took us to see the Village Jail. I was raised in this area and never knew about the jail. There it was!! We saw the old entrance to the Mine, old mine houses, the works. No visit to Sawyerville is complete without stopping by the Veterans Memorial to pay our respects. We backtracked our way back to Gillespie with a stop at the Two Angels Restaurant. Great food! Jim had to leave us a little early and we all want to say a special thank you to him for being our guide on this Second Saturday Tour.

The September tour will be in Glen Carbon, Illinois starting at 9 a.m. at the Miners Park next to the Library. The October Tour will be in Mt.Olive. So again, what is the Second Saturday Tour? It is just a time that you set aside for yourself and/or family/friends on the Second Saturday of every month to walk or ride around your neighborhood or town. It is important to smile, and wave as much as possible. Oh, it is also good for your health. How long did it take? Well we left at 8 a.m. and got back at 11 a.m. Each ride has taken about three hours at a casual pace and frequent stops.

Do you know where No. 1, No. 2, No. 3 and No. 4 are located and their real names?

Next time, come and join us. You'll like it!!