

# FRISCO HILL & DESOTO PIKE ROADS

During the early 1880s, bicycles had gained popularity in America & bicycling clubs began springing up in Jefferson and St. Louis Counties.

Members of the Frisco Cycling Club, found the hill to be too difficult with all the loose gravel, and had to dismount to walk their bikes up the steep path. They decided to fill their pockets with stones as they walked; then used these small stones to form the words "Frisco Hill" at the top of the hill. Despite the challenge, the riders were so impressed with the scenic, hilly ride that they spread the word & others were soon making the trek, turning this into a popular route for cyclists.

George Lang, Jr., reported in a 1906 Jefferson County Record article that during the 1880's, three bicyclists made the first ever trek on their bikes from DeSoto to St. Louis over the DeSoto Pike (aka Old LeMay Ferry) Road.

Members of the Missouri Bicycle Club learned about the forty-mile zigzagging route from a DeSoto dentist when he had purchased a bicycle from a shop Cola Stone managed. Stone, a member of the cycling club, then convinced two other members, Charles E. Duryea and Hal W. Greenwood to accompany him on a ride which started at 4 a.m., beginning at Gravois Road, through Fenton and House Springs, then on to Morse Mill. The riders then followed a horse trail to Hillsboro. It took eleven hours to reach DeSoto by this route, requiring them to spend the night at Hillsboro.

The article goes on to report of two competitive cycling groups in St. Louis: the Missouri Bicycle Club and the St. Louis Cycling Club. "The famous match race between Hal Greenwood and Percy Stone in July 1887 was undoubtedly the hardest fought cycling contest ever seen in this country. At that time an intense rivalry existed between the Missouri Bicycle Club and the St. Louis Cycling Club".

Stone, representing the former club rode a bicycle with a larger front wheel known as the Ordinary, and Greenwood, representing the latter club, rode a Star bicycle sporting the smaller front wheel. Beginning at 5 a.m. from the Missouri Bicycle Clubhouse located at 31st and Olive Streets, the two gentlemen set such a fast pace that the other members who accompanied them were left behind long before the Meramec River was reached. Stone led by a mile at the river, but Greenwood caught up by the time they reached Frisco Hill. Lang wrote, "Cyclists and automobiles nowadays marvel at the skill of any one who dares descend those steep hills without the use of the brake, but they cannot form the slightest conception as to how these two riders on high bicycles ever rode down those hills all the way to DeSoto at full speed without a single fall."

In the end, Greenwood won, arriving in DeSoto just five minutes before Stone. The total ride took four hours and twenty-three minutes—a record held by him for many years. Discovering Greenwood's victory in reaching DeSoto first, Stone decided to stop. Unfortunately for Greenwood, believing Stone was hot on his heels, he'd already headed back toward the St. Louis – keeping up the same pace all the way to the clubhouse!