

BOONE TRACE MOTOR CYCLE RUN
UPPER HALF/NORTH TO SOUTH

July 23, 2011

The first, ever in history, organized and sanctioned Harley-Davidson motorcycle run down the Daniel Boone Trace took place on July 23, 2011, leaving the Lexington dealership at 9AM on that Saturday morning. So everyone that participated (headcount 29) made a little history of their own. The road captains did a phenomenal job of keeping everybody together on this fairly tedious trip in spite of my apprehensions as the leader. Every time the group got a little broken up, I would look back and see William Hensinger talking in his mic with a cigarette sticking out of his mouth, and the next thing I knew we were all together again.

It was more of a laid-back ride at a bit slower pace than the club usually takes, ripping through the countryside, so that everyone could take in the scenery and the sense of Daniel Boone traveling along The Trace on his horse. Most of the riders seemed to really enjoy the run, and I'm in hopes that it will become a favorite that will attract even more bikers.

I'm writing this piece as a hyperlink, so that I can give some more detail of the trip without cluttering up the newsletter. This way, you can also get some more information about The Trace, as well as the history that goes along with it; and hopefully we can together stir more interest about this fascinating little road. I would love it if any of you would "catch fire," become interested in it, and begin taking friends of your own down the trail.

Boone Trace is the path that Daniel Boone and 30 "axemen" blazed from Long Island on the Holston River (now Kingsport, TN), through the Cumberland Gap to Boonesboro, Ky in 1775 (that's 236 years ago!) for the purpose of bringing settlers into Kentucky. He had been hired by Richard Henderson, the owner of the Transylvania Land Company, to mark the trail with the intention that settlers would be brought in and sold land at a considerable profit. It didn't work out that way, but the road was opened.

To understand the historical significance of "The Trace", it's important to know the mind set of the people at the time. The Revolutionary War was in progress in the east (Declaration of Independence 1776, remember?) while Daniel Boone was blazing the trail in the west (Kentucky was considered the western frontier at the time). There was a great desire of the people to break from the tyranny of the British and go west to the land of opportunity. A settler could either go down the Ohio River by water or along the mountains or through the Cumberland Gap by land. The big problem there was "The Wilderness", a scary, mysterious and dangerous place to be, full of Indians, wild animals and many hazards.

The Trace was the first such road to bridge the wilderness and basically told the entire world that a person could cross the wilderness, survive and succeed. After the path was opened, 200,000 settlers travelled along it moving west. History literally "turned" with the opening of that little road, and even the basic spirit of America to dream, seek, achieve and triumph was born at least in part because of it. That "american dream" exists even today, so the historical significance of The Trace is huge. And now, believe it or not, we still have the opportunity to travel along that same historical route on our bikes or other

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means and sense the excitement and wonderment Boone and all those daring people must have experienced.

The actual Boone Trace was just a dirt bridle path not even large enough for a wagon in 1775 but eventually evolved into a wagon road (the Wilderness Road), then the State Rd, then US 25 which was extended from Michigan to Florida (known as Dixie Highway) and ultimately I-75. So in a way, you can say that I-75 evolved out of a horse path (which amazes me!). We have back-tracked to the oldest smallest paved roads that are closest to the original dirt trace as possible for our motorized run, so at times we are directly over it or criss-crossing pretty close, and at other times a good distance off, but generally along the route.

Daniel Boone followed the buffalo trails to make his own trail, and the buffalos followed creek-beds and ridge lines while they meandered in search of food and salt licks. So The Trace pretty much follows a waterway all the way to the Gap, switching from one to another making for a beautiful and interesting ride. We made the ride from north to south, or backwards, since Daniel and the boys cut the trail south to north in 1775. Of course, it can be done either way, and we only did the top half on this run ending at Levi Jackson State Park south of London in one day.

We departed the dealership and headed down Winchester Rd to Cleveland Rd which is somewhat historical in its own right (I'll leave that one for you to figure out.). Entering the town of Athens, there are two right-angle zig-zag turns. At the second zag, Gentry Rd leads to Boone Station in about 1/2 mile where Daniel Boone and his family lived for about four years. We didn't stop there because of the difficulty in a turn around with a large group, but we encouraged riders to return on their own to check it out sometime. We then turned down Athens-boonesboro Rd to Boonesboro, technically not part of The Trace which stops at the fort, but undoubtedly was used by Daniel Boone when travelling back and forth from Boone Station to Boonesboro after the fort was established.

We crossed the Kentucky river and could have circled around a replica of Fort Boonesboro on Hwy 627 but skipped it that day because of an event going on, and proceeded to the actual fort site about a mile away at Boonesboro park. Sycamore Hollow is very close to the fort site there and is the location used by Boone and his men when they first arrived and camped. It was considered too low and likely to flood, so Richard Henderson made them move to higher ground for the permanent fort site when he arrived a couple of weeks later. That site is called the "primitive campground" at the park if you happen to be a camper, and there is a marker there that tells the story.

After a brief stop to look at the markers and a restroom break, we began our great adventure down The Trace. Hwy 388 out of Boonesboro is one of the areas where The Trace is very close to the actual paved road staying close to Otter creek until the creek and The Trace split off at Redhouse. A rule of thumb along The Trace is that if you are traveling on a small winding road with a creek on one side and a hillside on the other and the road in between, then you are likely to be very close to The Trace. Just into the

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trees on Hwy 388, there is the Hart Cemetery used by people at the fort on the right and the foundation of the Hart House (looks like a pile of rocks) on the left built in 1781 (only six years after Boone arrived). It was the first house built outside of the fort once things stabilized. Hart was killed by the Indians in that area a few years later, however. About a half mile further down on the right is the Lisle house sitting back in the trees also built about that time.

Just before coming into the little town of Redhouse is the actual "Redhouse" sitting up on a hillside to the left on a beautifully landscaped piece of property. It is, in fact, "red" and easily recognizable. It was built in 1810 and is on the National Register of Historical Places and served as a stagecoach stop between Richmond and Boonesboro once they became established. It also represents a marker of The Trace. The Trace splits off to the left from the road at Redhouse following Otter Creek and the railroad.

Speaking of railroads, it's amazing how often they are nearby going down The Trace. Apparently when the railroad engineers came along to put in the tracks, they obviously planned and engineered the most optimal route for a railroad to go which happened to coincide with The Trace in many places. It's as if the buffaloes knew where the railroads should go!

Hwy 388 rises out of Redhouse along a wide open ridge-line, and Otter Creek and The Trace can be followed about a half mile off to the left in a beautiful scenic valley. Then we had to get on the bypass around southeast Richmond in some traffic, crossing The Trace a couple of times according to old surveys and then left onto Hwy 421/25 turning right at Duncannon Rd to the Golden Leaf subdivision where Twetty's Fort is located. The road captains did a great job getting us through that difficult part smoothly. We swung through the parking lot of an old folks home who had been told we were coming. We hoped we might put on a little show for them, but none of the folks were out on the porch just at that time.

There is about a 200 foot walk from our parking place to Twetty's which nobody seemed to mind too much. It was if they were taking it all in and imagining Boone's route coming through there. That site is where he and his axemen were attacked by Indians while camped there. Captain Twetty was shot in the knees but didn't die immediately, so a small log shelter was built around him for protection. His slave, Sam, was killed instantly and fell into the fire, possibly being the first black man ever killed in Kentucky. Twetty's bulldog temporarily saved him from immediate death but was tomahawked and killed by the Indians too. This site is owned by the city of Richmond and scheduled to become a park, but it is also important because it marks The Trace.

We then headed down Hwy 421/25 south to Blue Lick Rd which is a beautiful run winding around Joe Lick Knob and other hills on a small road. Some say it is not technically part of The Trace, but some do, and it was definitely used by Boone and others for travel at that time. It makes too pretty of a ride not to be part of our bike run. It leads into Berea by way of Hwy 595 to Chestnut Street and left onto Boone Street which

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becomes Slate Lick Rd. This short stretch is dead on The Trace following Brushy Fork of Silver Creek to Hwy 25.

Just after the Rockcastle county line where Hwy 25 goes between the rocks at Boone's Gap, we went left onto the Old State Rd by way of McCullum Rd winding under a railroad tunnel which began one of the most tedious but interesting segments of the ride. The Old State Rd is basically a very narrow and winding one lane road following the Roundstone Creek bed very close to The Trace. It is only 4-5 miles long and takes about 25 minutes, but it requires some real concentration to stay on the road and be alert for oncoming traffic.

It finally comes out at Roundstone where we got back onto Hwy 25 down to Renfro Valley where we had a nice lunch at the Historic Lodge Restaurant. Just south of Roundstone was the little town of Wildie where The Trace becomes inaccessible and not picked up again until south of Livingston on Hwy 490.

After lunch and a little rest, we gassed up at a Shell station and headed into "The Wilderness". We had to go through Mt Vernon and turn left onto The Wilderness Road (marked on a street sign) where Hwy 150 intersects Hwy 25. Then on down to Livingston to Hwy 490 following the Rockcastle River where the ride becomes remote, and there really is a sense of the wilderness.

This segment is a fairly high-speed run with nice curves, and we came to the little town of Oakley, the historical Old Hazel Patch (different from the newer one) which represents the famous fork in the road where Benjamin Logan and other explorers split from route of Daniel Boone and headed west towards Crab Orchard, Stanford and Danville. Their route then evolved into the legendary "Wilderness Road" which was the path that most of the 200,000 settlers used over the 20 years after Boone Trace was opened.

At Hazel Patch is a marker in front of the Mount Carmel Church erected by the DAR in 1915 marking The Trace but also with a stone on top on which is carved "D Boon". Whether this in fact was carved by Daniel Boone is up for some debate but is still quite interesting. Also, nearby is the Wood's Blockhouse marker on Hazel Patch Creek which identifies the location of the oldest permanent building in the wilderness as well as the fork in the road. Daniel Boone picked up Hazel Patch Creek at this location and proceeded north while Benjamin Logan followed the curve in the creek to the west along another famous trail called Skaggs Trace where he later established Logan's Station in Stanford.

We then turned onto Hwy 1394 to Hwy 30 and then Feltner-Steer Rd (known as Old Hog Rd because hogs used to be herded down that road on the way to Richmond- don't you just love it?). There is a marker at that corner stating "Boone Trace 1775-1795" which is one of a set of markers placed in Laurel county at the 150th anniversary of the founding of Kentucky in 1942 (Kentucky was founded in 1792). The other set of 14 markers of The Trace were placed by the DAR in 1915 and are all along the way.

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This led to Hwy 638 which is very close to The Trace past another marker at Sam Black Rd, around the southeast side of London by way of the Hal Rogers Parkway and Hwy 192 to 229 south to the Levi Jackson State Park which is one of the two sites along The Trace where a person can get out or off of their vehicle and literally walk on the dirt path of Daniel Boone. It is a short walk of about 15 minutes and leads to the McNitt cemetery where members of a family of 24 that were massacred by the Indians are buried. That event was probably one of the worst of many disasters occurring along The Trace due to the dangers of travel at that time. Three people survived the massacre, one being a pregnant female who climbed in the hollow of a tree and had her baby, the site being marked at the park.

That ended our one-day run down the top half of The Trace with the other half planned for later this year or next spring. The lower half is even more spectacular running between the Cumberland Mountains, through the tunnel at Middlesboro and along the mountain range on Hwy 58 to Martin's Station about 10 miles over into Virginia. Here was a fort that was the last stop for settlers where they gathered before setting off into the Wilderness and leaving civilization behind. You can imagine the excitement and apprehension they must have felt. Nearby also, is a marker representing where Daniel Boone's son, James, was killed by Indians in 1773.

I felt that the ride was successful and want it to become an established run that others will want to do. Also, there is a major effort to revive, restore and preserve The Trace once and for all time. The Boone Society has become actively involved and now has an official three-phase plan to do just that involving park and state officials, legislators, educators, chamber and tourism people, etc. to accomplish that goal. The Harley motorcycle run now becomes part of this effort as well, and I would appreciate any feedback you might have on the bike run, such as any suggestions or criticisms you might have to make it better. Please feel free to contact me at:

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I'm also on Facebook but really don't know how to use it very well yet.

Ride hard or stay home! (quote from Wild Hogs)

or

Stay safe or don't go! (quote from Fox)

John Fox