

WHEELS



VICKI AND BECKY RIDE AGAIN

Four fabulous—and mostly flat—Columbia County bike routes.

BY VICKI ROSENWALD AND REBECCA STOWE

A couple of years ago, we mapped out a series of bicycle rides around Claverack for this magazine. We've been venturing further afield over the years, and here are four of our favorite Columbia County rides. We really like flat rides, but geography doesn't always cooperate, and we have to deal with hills. Only one of these rides is completely easy (*The Copake Cows and Camping Ride*); the others are moderate. Mostly flat but with a few unavoidable hills. From 17 to 21 miles; they take anywhere from an hour and a half to a little over two. The last two rides include portions on dirt or gravel roads. We've indicated where, so riders with road bikes can choose alternative routes. They're all beautiful, simply because they're here.

FRUIT LOOPS (VICKI'S FAVORITE RIDE)

We think a good bike ride has three elements: little traffic, wonderful views and the possibility of a snack, because you do get hungry when you ride. This ride has all the above and another virtue: the possibility of variations that make it a little bit longer, somewhat longer, and so much longer that we can't do it, but maybe you can.

The starting point is Buckley's Corners, the intersection of Routes 9/23 and County Route 31 in Greenport. You can park and shop at the Eger Brothers farmstand, the first of many produce vendors and farms you will be passing on this trip. Ride south for a mile on Blue Hill Road (Route 31). Make a right on Route 14, which is Church Road. On your right, you'll pass Don Baker Farm, which has PYO (Pick Your Own) cherries in season, and apples in the fall. After Pleroma Farm (organic meats, raw milk, eggs and vegetables) make a left on Howe Road. There's no road sign, but there are signs for both Smith and Fix Brothers Farms. Howe Road becomes White Birch, for a reason that soon becomes apparent. At Smith Farm you can pick raspberries (while admiring Olana's tower in the distance) from late July until the first frost, \$2.50 a pint. Mrs. Smith doesn't spray the raspberries, so you can eat them right away instead of having them turn into jam in your backpack. She also has peaches, nectarines and apples. A little ahead on the left is Fix Brothers, where PYO begins with cherries in the early summer and continues all summer with peaches and apples, and you get stunning views of the countryside from the top of the hill you have to ride up to get to the trees.

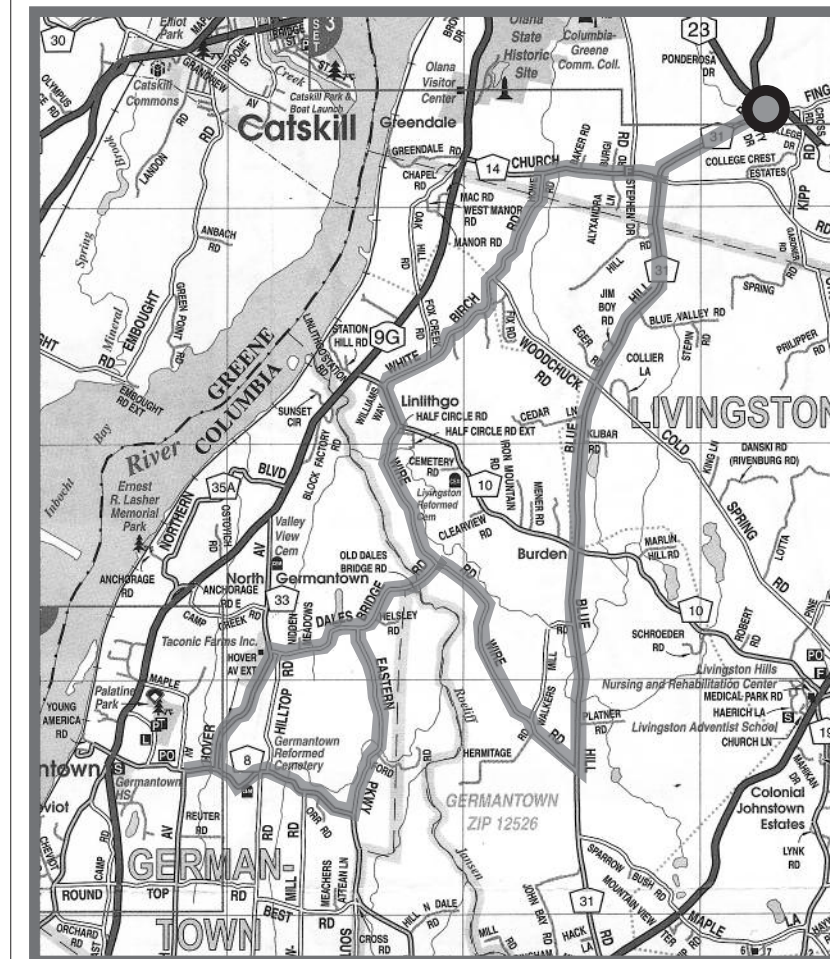
Continue on White Birch, past the recently acquired state forest on your right, until White Birch ends at County Route 10. (Again, no sign.) Left on 10 into the charming hamlet of Linlithgo, with its gray and white

Carpenter Gothic former schoolhouse, which will be on your left as you turn right onto Wire Road.

Ride on Wire to Dales Bridge and turn right. We can only say "Be Careful!" as you go really fast downhill and across the Roe-Jan Kill, because you'll have to walk your bike up the hill on the other side. Once you've made it up and can breathe again, continue to the end of the road where you'll see the Taconic Farms complex in front of you. Make a left onto County Route 33. At County Route 8, turn right into Germantown where you can refresh yourself at Otto's Market on Main Street.

This is the mid-point of the basic ride (21 miles total if you head back now). If you want to keep riding, head on into Tivoli by continuing west on 8 to the traffic light at 9G. Make a left,

our ride. We'll meet you back at Otto's, where we're sitting at a table outside, just about ready to get back on our bikes and head east on 8. There are, alas, a few hills to deal with. Just after passing the handsome Rockefeller Homestead (on your left), you'll find the Keep Conservation Preserve, where you can take a break to watch birds and wildlife. Continue on 8 to Eastern Parkway. Turn left on Eastern (this is a very dangerous intersection, so please be careful) and ride along a lovely road that passes the Diehl Brothers vineyards and takes you back to Dales Bridge. Right on Dales Bridge and build some momentum because it's down and up this way too. At the top of the hill, turn right on Wire. Almost immediately to your right, tucked down a long driveway



and then your first right onto the wonderfully flat Woods Road. There's a dog leg at County Route 6, which you follow to the right, past Clermont (where you might want to ride in for a look at Chancellor Livingston's mansion, the beautiful grounds, view, and gardens, or the Saugerties Lighthouse across the river) and then left at the T into Tivoli.

Still not tired? You're now on your own, because we can't do it, but if you can, consult your map and continue south to Annandale Road and make a right. Ride through the Bard Campus and don't forget to take a look at Frank Gehry's Fisher Center (on your right). Annandale eventually turns into River Road and you can ride all the way to Rhinebeck, 50 miles or so round trip.

But enough about you. Back to

you will see stately Teviotdale, the 18th century Georgian home of Walter Livingston and his son-in-law Robert Fulton, of steamboat fame.

Continue on along this perfect country road. Protected forever by a conservation easement, Wire Road is an untrafficked ride with a postcard view of the Catskills to the west and the Rockefeller farmhouse to the north, surrounded by abundant corn, wheat and soy fields, grazing cattle, and long open views.

At the end of Wire Road, turn left on County Route 31. If you're up for a short detour, take your next left onto Walkers Mill Road. The bridge is closed but you can stop and admire the mill pond and the old mill before turning around and returning to 31. The other thing you can do, when you get to the next crossroads (County

Route 10) is take a left for a couple hundred yards and find a piece of industrial history in the brick building to your right, the old Burden Iron Mine.

If you're not interested in mill ponds or iron mines, then just keep pedaling on 31 through the orchards—Hopedale Farms has an honor system PYO apple concession on Klubar Road to your right—and back to Buckley's Corners and your car.

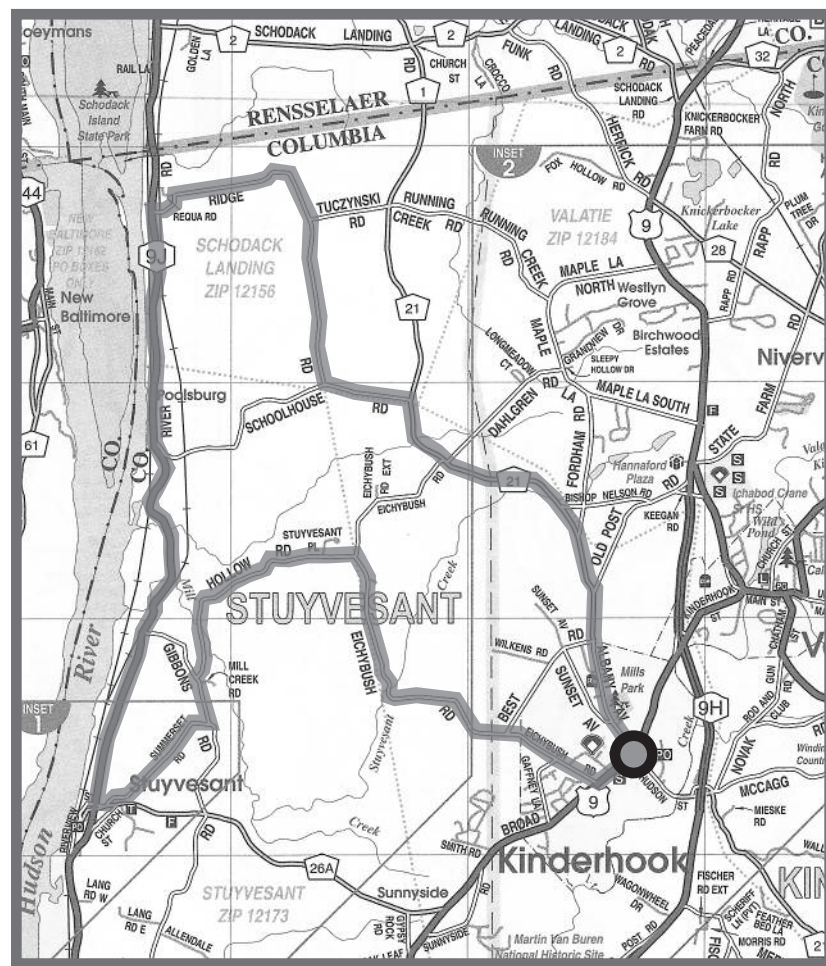
THE RIVER AND RIDGE RIDE

This 19.5 mile ride from Kinderhook to Stuyvesant and back took us about two hours. It's more hilly than we like (we had to get off our bikes three times to walk up hills), but the views are more than worth a little huffing and puffing. Bring plenty of water and maybe a snack to reward yourself when you get to the top of Ridge Road. (Although we think riding along a road with the Berkshires to your left and the Catskills to your right is a reward in itself.) Other rewards include stopping at either Bean's Place or Pi Café in Kinderhook for an afterparty.

Starting from the four corners in Kinderhook, head south on Route 9, 4/10 of a mile, passing some gorgeous historic houses, including one visited by the historically notorious Benedict Arnold, to Eichybusch Road. Turn right and go straight on Eichybusch, through rolling farmland (if you've been hankering for a farm to call your own, there's one for sale on your right) to Hollow Road, and turn left. The road is downhill most of the way, past sheep and cattle grazing in the fields and down into the cool, swampy hollow. There's a noteworthy waterfall to your left as you begin to climb back up the hill. At the top, you'll be at Gibbons Road. Turn left, but only for 3/10 of a mile. Turn right on Summerset Road, which will take you past more cattle grazing, and down a hill into Stuyvesant. At the small town park at the bottom of the hill, make a right, which will lead you to Route 9J. Make another right, onto 9J North. (If you turn left, you'll end up in Stuyvesant, where you can stop at the Riverview Café for refreshment.)

Traveling north along the river, you'll get some spectacular views: of the river itself and the cliffs on the Greene County side, and the Catskills beyond. At mile 7.7, there's a road marker on the left commemorating Henry Hudson's landing on September 19, 1609. As you travel just past this point, there's an unobstructed view across the river. And while you're gazing, don't forget to look up—you might see an eagle or falcon, cruising above the river, looking for lunch.

Just around the bend after crossing Mill Creek, you'll see (on your left), the entrance to the Nature



Conservancy's Lewis A. Sawyer Preserve, one of only five freshwater tidal swamps in New York State. There is a half-mile boardwalk leading through the swamp, with interpretive signs, which we always find helpful, as we both tend to forget things these days.

After the preserve, you'll climb a short hill, at the top of which is a spectacular view of Schodack Island State Park, sitting in the middle of the Hudson. Watch for Ridge Road on your right. Ride (or walk) up the hill and follow the road as it curves to the right, then up another hill and onto a nice long flat piece of road through residential areas and farmland, with those stunning views of the Catskills on your right and the Berkshires on your left.

Continue on Ridge Road until the stop sign at Schoolhouse Road. Make a left and ride 7/10 of a mile to Route 21. Make a right onto 21 and take it back into Kinderhook Village.

THE COPAKE COWS AND CAMPING RIDE

If you think farm animals are an essential element of country living, this is the ride for you. It's replete with cows, pigs and chickens. And if you're a camper, you can pitch a tent or rent a cabin at Taconic State Park or park your RV at Oleana or Waubeeka Campgrounds.

At 17 miles, this is our shortest and flattest ride, G-rated and suitable for the entire family. It's easy. Really. If you've ridden the Harlem Valley Rail Trail and are ready for something a little more challenging—but only a little—this is a good next step. It's also a very good ride for people

without bikes (or who have guests without bikes) as it starts at the Rail Trail in Copake Falls, adjacent to Bash Bish Bicycle, where you can rent bicycles by the hour or the day (www.bashbishbicycle.com).

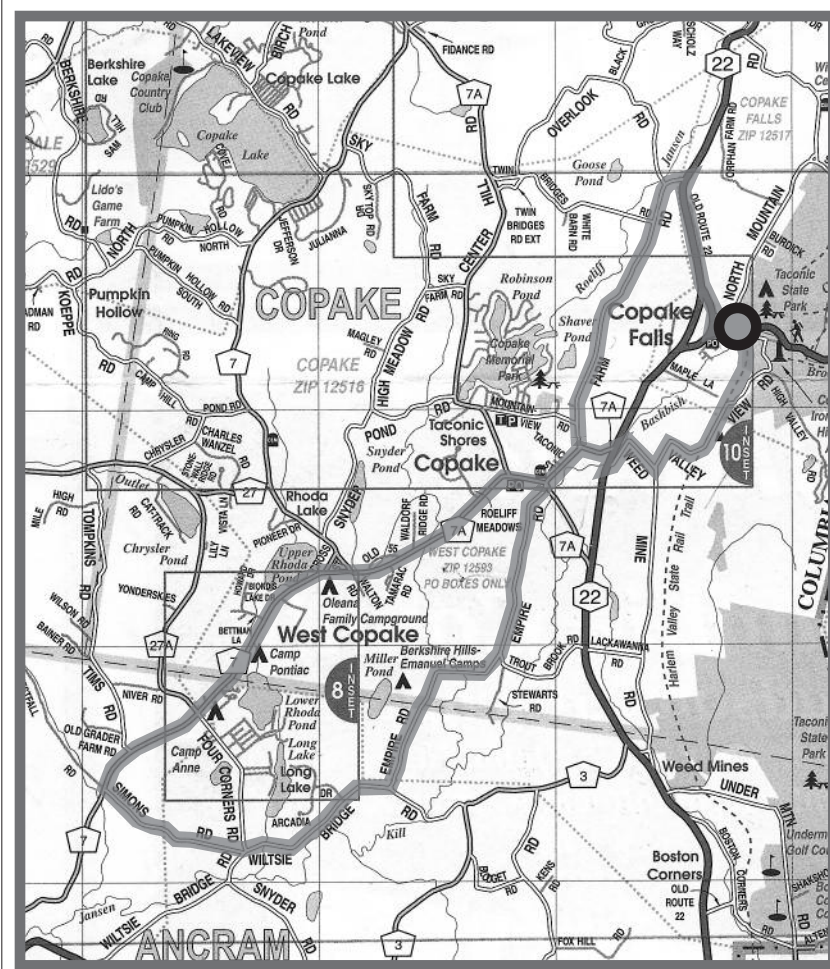
Head south on the Trail until it turns briefly onto Valley View Road, which is partially dirt. Instead of turning left to continue on the Rail Trail, keep riding on Valley View down the hill and through the open pasture and hay fields until you reach Weed

Mine Road. Turn right on Weed Mine which will take you to Route 22.

Turn right onto 22, and almost immediately turn left onto 7A into the hamlet of Copake. Turn right at the clock and leave town on Route 7A, admiring Langdonhurst Farms, the first of several dairy farms you will be seeing, on your right. A bit further on, 7A turns into Route 7 at the Oleana Campground. Pass Upper Rhoda Pond on your right, then Camp Pontiac and Lower Rhoda Pond on the left. You can take a water break here to share fond (or not-so-fond) memories of sleepaway camp.

At 7.5 miles, turn left on Simons Road. This soon turns to dirt, so if you are on a road bike, you will want to turn off Route 7 earlier, at Four Corners Road, to avoid ruining your tires, and rejoin the route later. On Simons you'll ride past a vast swamp on your left and then come around a bend to see the beautiful "1799 Barn" on your right. Pass two more dairy farms and turn left at a T onto Wiltsie Bridge Road, where you will drive right through a farm, with cows on all sides. At 8.5 miles, turn left onto Empire Road, riding through the wide flat valley of the Roeliff Jansen Kill. You'll be riding toward the Berkshire Ridge, and have a great view as you head back to Copake. If you need refreshment, you can stop at Dad's for drive-up ice cream, without even getting off your bike!

Continue past Dad's on 7A, to Farm Road on your left. Go straight on Farm Road passing Waubeeka Campground and ride through rolling farmland until you reach 22. On your right is Pigasso Farm, famous for pas-



sured poultry. (If you have a basket, you can buy a chicken.) Turn right on 22 and go 8/10 of a mile before bearing left onto 344, back into Copake Falls. Once there, you can take a jump in the Ore Pit Pond in Taconic State Park, or bike on up 344 to the trail head for Bash Bish Falls and take a walk through the woods to the Falls. If you're with the kids, and you feel they need a history lesson, take them over to the Copake Iron Works.

THE ART AND HISTORY RIDE (AKA THE RIDE OF MANY BATHROOMS)

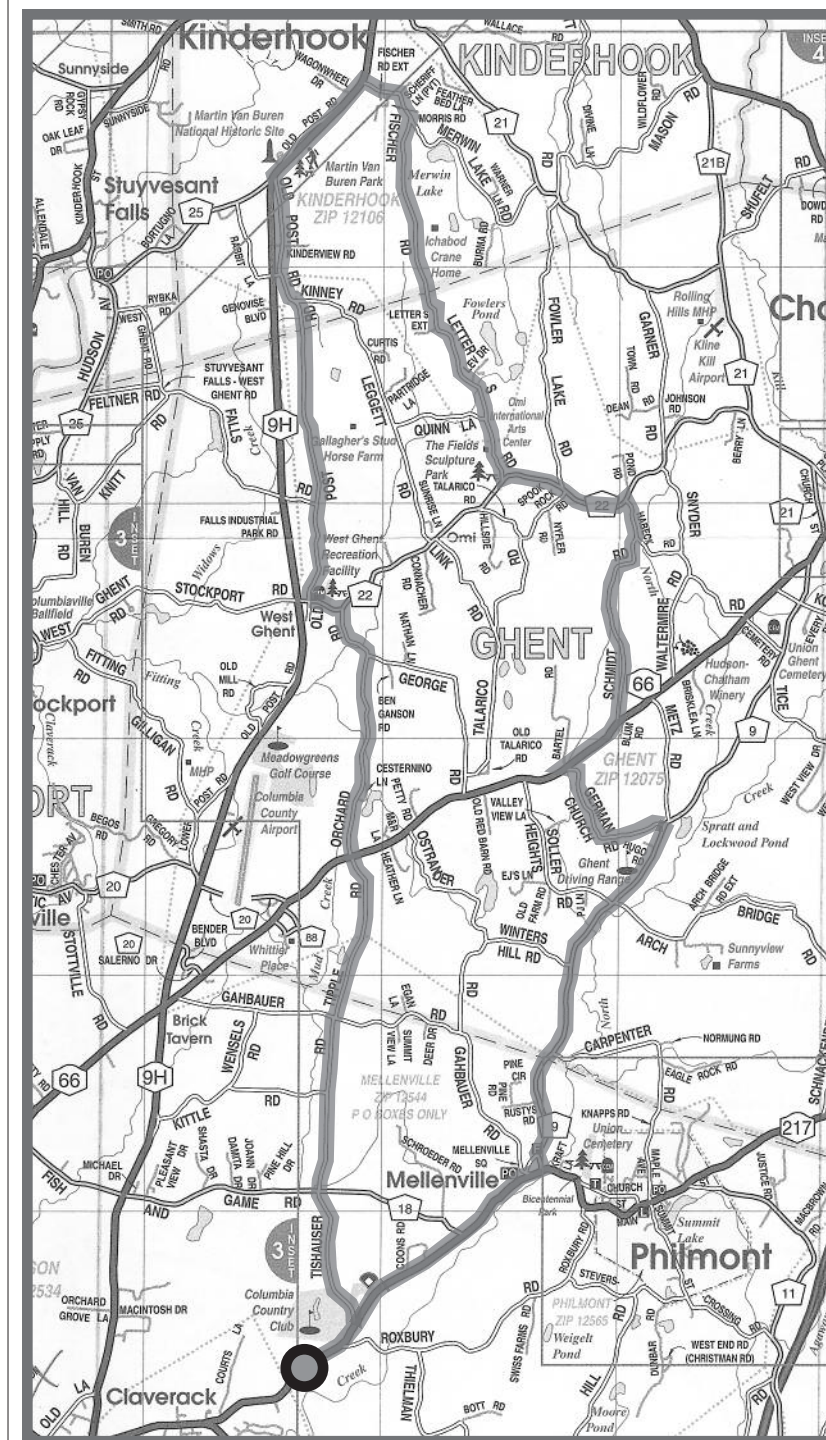
This is a really great ride, with something for everyone: a little 19th century history, some art, beautiful countryside, a farmstand with a petting zoo, and lots of public restrooms.

We met in the parking lot at Ockawamick School on Route 217 in Claverack, and headed north on Tishauser Road, an easy downhill ride that cuts through farmland and offers a long, unobstructed view of the Catskills. When you cross Gahbauer (which isn't marked), Tishauser becomes Tipple and you are now in Ghent. Open farmland turns into cool shady stretches through woods, leading to Route 66, continuing straight onto Orchard Road. Orchard ends in a T at George Road. Make a left and follow George as it rises along an open field that was dotted with massive bales of fresh hay the day we rode.

George ends at County Route 22. Go left and make a decision when you reach the West Ghent Reformed Church. Are you hungry? Do you need a bathroom? If so, continue to Route 9H, and make a left. Less than a mile on your right is Love Apple Farm, where you can get (depending on the calendar) fresh cherries, raspberries (black and red), blackberries, currants, apricots, peaches, nectarines, plums, pears and apples (many varieties). Also homemade Mexican food, apple cider donuts, and slices of homemade pie, ice cream and drinks. You can pick your own fruit, and you can also get your animal fix for the day at the petting zoo. We made friends with a goat who was eating an apple tree.

If you want to forge ahead without a pit stop, then make a right on Old Post Road before you get to 9H. There is a brief stretch of hard-packed dirt road, so road bikers may want to cut over to 9H earlier. Everyone else head straight on Old Post until it stops at 9H. You will see Lindenwald, the home of our eighth President, Martin Van Buren, across the road on your right. There is a bathroom and water cooler at the visitor center, also books, brochures, videos, First Lady Playing Cards, and coloring books, for anyone who is getting a little fidgety.

Head north on 9H to Fischer Road and make a right. Immediately on your right is organic Katchkie Farms,



owned by Great Performances, a Manhattan catering company known for its 100-Mile Menu. Fischer then twists and turns through farming and residential areas until it turns into Letter S (our favorite road name). Letter S is a nice curvy downhill ride, which ends back on 22. To your right, you'll see a few big white heads sticking out of the grass at the Fields Sculpture Park of Art Omi. Turn right to the Charles B. Benenson Visitor Center & Gallery (Thursday to Sunday, 11-5) to see the gallery, get a map of the Sculpture Park (7 days, dawn to dusk), use the bathrooms, or visit the café.

After visiting your favorite sculptures (we like the Dirt Man, which we consider to be both intellectually challenging and quite handsome), get back on 22 and head west (left from the parking lot). Take the second right at Habeck, and bear right on Schmidt. There are some moderate hills on this route, but nothing you can't handle. Schmidt takes you back to Route 66, turn right, past Great Grazin' Angus Acres (they'll let you

visit and sell you grass-fed beef) and turn left onto German Church Road. This is a great road despite the fact that it's all dirt and gravel, and there's no church. There is, however, an old cemetery and lots of cows, and you get to ride right through the middle of a pasture. Nice.

German Church ends at County Route 9. Turn right for a blissfully flat ride ending in Mellenville Square where you turn right on 217 to take you back to Ockawamick and your car.

VICKI ROSENWALD and her husband bought new bikes and a house on Stone Mill Road in 2003. In her other life, she is an oncology research nurse in NYC. Becky and Vicki have been pedaling and talking since they met in 2004.

REBECCA STOWE is the author of three novels, and numerous short stories and essays. After thirty years of writing, editing and teaching, she has changed course and returned to graduate school to study Animal Behavior and Conservation.

RIDING FOR A CAUSE

Want to enjoy the beauty of Columbia County on your bike and do some good in the world at the same time?

THE HARLEM VALLEY RAIL RIDE

This *Bike New York* ride offers five route choices ranging from 20 to 100 miles. (To view the routes go to www.bikenyork.org/rides/hvrr/ind ex.html.) All routes begin with a ride on the Harlem Valley Rail Trail (www.hvrt.org) starting in Millerton, and then meander through New York, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, depending on the route. Becky has ridden the 30-mile route twice, and recommends it enthusiastically. There are some hills steep enough to force you off your bike, but you won't be alone. The great thing about this ride is the good will and high spirits of the participants—you've got hardcore road bikers, kids on no-speed clunkers, and disabled riders on specialized bikes they pedal by hand. Afterwards, there's a big party at Eddie Collins Memorial Field in Millerton. A portion of the proceeds goes to the Harlem Valley Rail Trail Association; the rest, to the East Coast Greenway Alliance and Recycle-a-Bicycle, among others.

COLUMBIA LAND CONSERVANCY'S COLUMBIA COUNTY BIKE TOUR

2009 was the inaugural year for CLC's Bike Tour, which offered two routes through northwestern Columbia County—one at 50K and one at 100K. We opted for the 50, but pulled a Rosie Ruiz (you may remember her from the 1980 Boston Marathon) and cut across Schnackenberg Road in Philmont, stopped at the Dairy Queen in Ghent for refreshment, and continued back through Chatham to the starting point on Rock City Road along a flatter route. However, we loved riding through New Concord, even if it nearly killed us. The ride was really beautiful, just very, very hilly. We have it on good authority that next year's ride will have an easier option for riders with less...um... stamina. To view the routes, go to www.clctrust.org

NORTHERN COLUMBIA TRIATHLON

The Northern Columbia Triathlon, held in August, includes a biking segment of approximately 19 miles. This year, for the 5th annual triathlon, the bike route went from Queechey Lake to the Kline Kill Airport in Ghent. We can't tell you about the route, because we didn't do it, but we greatly admire everyone who did, and we think maybe it's something we should shoot for in the future. All proceeds go to the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. For more information, and to see the bike portion of the route, go to www.northerncolumbiatriathlon.com.

THE COLUMBIA COUNTY CANCER RIDE

The Columbia County Cancer Ride (www.columbiacountycancerride.com), now in its third year, offers three routes: 10, 25 and 50 miles, all in the Chatham area. To see the maps, go to www.columbiacountycancerride.com/cancer Ride_008.htm#Links. We haven't tried it, but intend to go for the 25 mile ride next year.

Money goes to either the Lance Armstrong Foundation or the American Cancer Society. Funds donated to the ACS are placed in a restricted account designated for Columbia County, so your dollars stay here to help your neighbors.

MAPS
SCALE: ONE INCH = 1.5 MILES
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