



# LONG HAMMER RIDE OF THE MONTH

## DUTCH FLAT, CA

By: Steve Ward

*"Let there be no doubt, the ride to Dutch Flat is tough. There, you've been warned. However, I once observed a 75-year old man who was undergoing chemo therapy complete the route." - Scott McKinney*

Nearly any trained rider who puts his or her mind to finishing can do it. You don't need to be a double century rider, a sadist, a masochist or any other manner of freak. All you need is a good riding base and the will to go.

If you have aspirations of being über strong on the Sierra Century or another long ride this summer, this ride will build your climbing base in a hurry.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of the ride is the destination. Dutch Flat is nearly the end of the road where bikes are concerned. It's also the only gold-rush town that never burned (a rarity, I'm told). Many residents of Dutch Flat still live in wood houses built by real 49ers.

The Dutch Flat ride was introduced to Cycle Folsom by Scott McKinney who refers to the ride as: "Not Flat, Dutch Flat". With nearly 10,000ft of climbing his point is obvious. Scott provided a ride description that included the following snippets:

*"...The ride to Dutch Flat is a series of leg-melting grades that lead to an old mining town above Colfax."*

*"...we'll parallel Interstate 80 and pass through Gold Run before descending into the lost village of Dutch Flat. But wait, the climbing isn't over. The 20% grade from the front door of the 150-year old store/rest stop gets your attention after the lunch stop."*

*"...The final run in to Folsom will follow Auburn-Folsom road. If you have anything left, feel free to hammer."*

As Scott pointed out during the ride, although there are an endless number of climbs to make along the way, including Baxter Grade and Norton Grade, there is no signature climb, and no single climb was longer than 20 minutes. It does all add up though as I burned over 7,000 calories doing this ride.

It was a gorgeous early spring day in the foothills of the western Sierra Nevada's where I, along with an enormous number of other riders from Cycle Folsom, gathered at our regular ride start location overlooking the American River near the historic railroad turning block that marks the terminus of the first transcontinental railroad.

And just a boxcar further down the river lies the historic Folsom Power House, the first long line transmission electrical plant, delivering power by cable to Sacramento some 30 miles down the American River.

At 8:00am the sun was warming my face, a sensation unfamiliar to our early morning rides since sometime around November of last year; we would be riding in shorts and short sleeve jerseys for the first time in over three months.

The forecast was for mid-to-upper seventies; a forecast for fair weather that brought the fair-weather riders out of their winter hibernation. Our normal winter rides consisted of anywhere from two to twelve riders depending on the conditions. Today, however, was the first great riding day of the year and everyone with a bike was going to be out taking advantage of a perfect day.

In spite of a ride description that included words of impending doom such as "...a series of leg-melting grades" combined with hard stats such as: one hundred and twenty miles with over eight thousand feet of climbing, riders who have not turned a pedal since before Halloween were pimped-out in new spandex and ready to ride.

Much of this ride occurs along historic Route 40, the Lincoln Highway, which much like the railroad was another transcontinental first – the first transcontinental highway. When Interstate 80 was built for the 1960 Olympics at Squaw Valley, the towns along Route 40 became back road towns; lost from the main arteries of commerce, but preserving their historic charm.

They have narrow streets and their buildings and homes retain the architecture from a previous century. You get the feeling you're passing through an episode of the Andy Griffith Show and you're reminded of the simple life; the worries of work, and the stress of life melt away leaving you free to venture through the corners of your mind like the sweet smell of Aunt Bea's pies wafting on the windowsill.

As the miles built up and the elevation increased, wafers became wafflers and by mile 20 the ride was reduced to four riders. For those turning back, it was going to be a 40 mile ride for their first day out, which is a good and commendable effort.

Curt, Scott, Derek and I began working together, climbing up the roads that lead through Meadow Vista and on to Colfax; each rider rotating to the front and doing the work for a period of time before the others rode through, and in turn, did their share of the work.

By mid-day we were making our final descent into Dutch Flat, a little village secreted away into the past and hidden from view until the very moment you arrive; and then suddenly, there you are in midst of something very unexpected.

I felt as if I were stepping into a post card; it seemed most appropriate that when I dismounted from my Specialized Allez Comp road bike that I should tie it up to the hitching post. You'll never convince me otherwise, I swear I heard the cleats mounted to the underside of Curt's riding shoes jingling like spurs as he strode bow-legged into the little store on Stockton Street.

We took a few extra minutes rest in Dutch Flat to enjoy the scenery, read the historic markers and ride up and down both of the streets in town. We were interested to learn that Mark Twain used to lecture at one of the buildings in town that was now being used as a community center.

This town must be spectacularly beautiful in the fall; the tall spire on the town's little white church indicating the heavens above. The dramatic elevation changes providing unusual views, the perspectives changing in kaleidoscopic fashion as you move from place to place. This ride will definitely be on the ride schedule in November; one can only imagine that Dutch Flat will be adorned in the fullness of its splendor at that time of year.

There was a seriously steep, but thankfully short climb getting out of Dutch Flat. At that point we had achieved the highest point in the ride. We still had close to another three thousand feet of climbing to do, but for the most part; we were getting ready to do a lot of descending. We worked our way back down to Colfax, then proceeded to parallel Interstate 80 westbound along the roads that pass through Weimar, Applegate, and Clipper Gap before arriving in Auburn.

We had a bit in our teeth, we were pulling hard and riding fast, but there was still some gas in the tank when we arrived in Auburn. You may recall the call to arms given by Scott from earlier in this story:

*"...The final run in to Folsom will follow Auburn-Folsom road. If you have anything left, feel free to hammer."*

Hammer? No way, we were feeling good. Our group had done the work over the winter; we spent 12 weeks doing long, steady, distance rides to build our aerobic engines, and then transitioned to rolling hill work before transitioning again to hill repeats and big hill climbs.

Again I say, hammer? Absolutely not. It was time to break out the Long Hammer - we Long Hammer-ed the final 18 miles averaging a hair better than 30mph between Auburn and Folsom.

That's my story; 113.46 miles – 9,925ft of climbing – 6:22:49 ride time. That's Long Hammering!

What's your Long Hammer story?

## Statistical Summary

Summary Data		
Total Time (h:m:s)	7:08:24	3:46 pace
Moving Time (h:m:s)	6:22:49	3:22 pace
Distance (mi )	113.46	
Moving Speed (mph)	17.8 avg, 48.2 max.	
Elevation Gain (ft)	+9,925 / -9,931	
Avg. Heart Rate	154 bpm	Zone 4.3
GPS Signal Quality	Excellent	<a href="#">GPS+Barometric Altimeter</a>

