

# Paint Creek Out N Back

**Overview:** This is an out and back route, and would be considered a WV flat ride, however, there are enough ramps along the route to give your legs a workout. This ride starts at the Paint Creek Exit of I-77 and follows Paint Creek up stream to the town of Pax. The alternate starts on State 61, near the Kanawha River and the town of Pratt. I generally start at the Paint Creek Exit (PCE) to eliminate the traffic on the lower 6 miles of the route. From the PCE you will have minimal traffic between there and Mahan, and very little between there and the mine near Mossy.

As you ride up Paint Creek, it is hard to imagine, that a 100 years ago, it was lined with houses and mines (41) along its entire length. You will ride thru ghost towns like Bedford, Detroit, Morton, Tomsburg, and Burnwell. The county highway maps still indicates the communities of Whittaker, Greencastle, Burnwell, Collinsdale, Coalfield, Milburn, and Westerly, but in some locations, not one house

**Location:** This ride is located in Southern Kanawha and Western Fayette Counties. It can be accessed by Interstate 77 or state route 61..

**Start:** The start is at the Paint Creek exit park-n-ride on I-77 (West Virginia Turnpike) - Exit 74. Alternate start location is at the intersection of Co. 83 and State Route 61 just before entering the town of Pratt.

**Getting there:** From Charleston, take I-77 South to exit 74, Paint Creek Exit. **Alternate:** Take Chelyan exit and follow Route 61 South to junction with Co.

## General Route Description

**Paint Creek Park n Ride to Mahan:** This section is a slightly rolling, double lane road. After 2 miles there is a small park on the right with a pit toilet. From here, you continue gradually climbing along the East

side of Paint Creek. Shortly before you reach Mahan, you will cross over Paint Creek. Mahan is small community with an exit ramp from I-77. There used to be a convenience store there, but it is now closed.

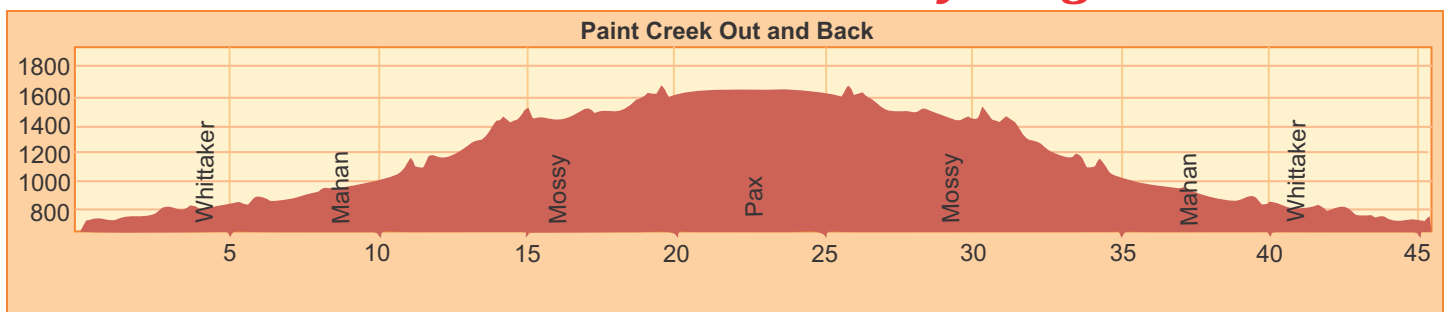
**Mahan to Mossy:** From Mahan you begin on un-striped pavement and a couple real climbs. This section was designated a WV Scenic Byway with new pavement put down in late 2015. Look for some historical signs along the route. You will pass under and over I-77 on this section. **There is one open grid, medal deck bridge on this section.** Watch for the informational sign just past the bridge. At 14.7 miles, you arrive at the only remaining active mine on Paint Creek. For the next 1.3 miles to Mossy, you need to be on the lookout for coal trucks going and coming from the WV Turnpike. The road between the mine and Mossy is wider. Arriving at Mossy, there will be a convenience store on the left. This is just past where you make a **right turn** onto Co. 23, which takes you to Pax. If you stop at the store, look for the picture of Elvis Presley. The owner was in the service in Germany with Elvis. Has nothing but good to say about Elvis.

**Mossy to Pax:** You leave Mossy on a narrow paved road, that requires vehicles to get over on the gravel berm to pass. At 28.5 miles you pass the intersection where you can go left to Plum Orchard Lake, but you want to continue straight. From this intersection, the road has been paved and widened in 2015. Arriving in Pax, you will find a convenience store. This is where you turn around.

**Return:** At Pax, you turn around and retrace your route to the start. Though there are a some short ascents going back, you will enjoy the overall downgrade heading back.

*Copyright by Dale Porter, 2016  
May be downloaded and reproduced  
for personal, non-profit use only.  
May not be posted on another  
website without author's permission.*

[www.cyclingscenicwv.com](http://www.cyclingscenicwv.com)



# Paint Creek Out N Back

[www.cyclingscenicwv.com](http://www.cyclingscenicwv.com)

## From Paint Creek Exit I-77:

**Length:** 45.7 - Or Less  
**Climbing:** 2,488 Feet  
**Rating:** 3.5  
**Climbing per Mile:** 54  
**Beginning Elevation:** 720 Feet.  
**Ending Elevation:** 1630

- 0.0 0.0 Start - Park-N-Ride
- 4.1 4.1 Whittaker
- 8.2 4.1 Mahan - Interstate access.
- 11.5 3.3 Medal Deck Bridge - Caution
- 14.7 3.2 Mine Entrance on right.
- 16.0 4.3 I-77 Exit comes in from Right.  
Continue Straight.
- 16.2 0.2 RIGHT onto County 23. Store straight ahead on left.
- 19.3 3.1 Road to Plum Orchard Lake come comes in from left.
- 22.7 3.4 Pax. Store.
- Turnaround Point
- 29.5 6.5 Left on 612 Store on right.
- 35.0 5.5 Medal Deck Bridge - Caution
- 37.5 2.5 Mahan
- 45.7 8.2 Finish

## From Pratt:

**Length:** 60.8 - Or Less  
**Climbing:** 2,600 Feet  
**Rating:** 4.3  
**Climbing per Mile:** 43  
**Beginning Elevation:** 640 Feet.  
**Ending Elevation:** 1630

- 0.0 0.0 Start - Intersection of and near Pratt.
- 6.2 6.2 Paint Creek exit of I-77
- 10.3 4.1 Whittaker
- 14.4 4.1 Mahan - Interstate access.
- 17.7 3.3 Medal Deck Bridge - Caution
- 20.9 3.2 Mine Entrance
- 25.2 4.3 I-77 Exit comes in from Right.  
Continue Straight.
- 25.4 0.2 RIGHT onto County 23. Store straight ahead on left.
- 28.5 3.1 Road to Plum Orchard Lake comes in from left.
- 31.9 3.4 Pax. Store.
- Turnaround Point
- 38.4 6.5 Left on 612 Store on right.
- 43.9 5.5 Medal Deck Bridge - Caution
- 46.4 2.5 Mahan
- 54.6 8.2 Paint Creek Exit I-77
- 60.8 6.2 Finish



- Bike Route
- Alternate Bike Route
- I-77 - I-64 - WV Turnpike
- ◆ Mileage Points
- 8.2 Mileage Between Points
- Start Direction
- - - County Line

**Getting there;** From Charleston, take I-77 South to exit 74, Paint Creek Exit. Alternate: Take Chelyan exit and follow Route 61 South to junction with Co. 83, Paint Creek Road.

*Copyright by Dale Porter, 2016  
 May be downloaded and reproduced for personal, non-profit use only.  
 May not be posted on another website without author's permission.*

# Paint Creek information sheet.

Compiled by Dale Porter

When riding Paint Creek, it is hard to imagine that it was a densely populated area in the early 1900's and the creek was lined with coal mines. Few traces remain after you travel the first few miles from the Kanawha River. The last active deep mine closed years ago. Initially, the railroad provided the only access to the area. A road was later constructed that used the creek bed in some places. Now the four lane interstate provides distracting noise as you ride up the valley.

The first major Mine War was fought in the



TIPPLES AND INCLINES  
PAINT CREEK COLLIERIES COMPANY

Paint Creek, Cabin Creek areas. In 1912, 7,500 miners worked the numerous mines that lined the streams. An estimated 35,000 people lived

along Paint and Cabin Creeks. One estimate was that at least fifty men died violent deaths in the strikes.

The Kanawha River mines were unionized with the exception of Cabin Creek and for some reason, Paint Creek miners were paid \$0.25 less per ton than other union miners. When negotiating for a new contract in 1912, they requested the adjustment to surrounding miners. The operators refused and a strike was called on April 18, 1912. Cabin Creek miners also went out for the right of union coverage. In addition to a union wage, the Cabin Creek miners wanted a check weightman to see that they were credited with the actual amount of coal they mined. In May, the mine owners brought in 300 Baldwin Felts Detective Agency guards to break the strike.

“The first move of the operators was to evict all strikers from their company-owned houses. The coal companies owned all the land on both sides of the creeks for a distance of twenty miles or more; and upon their autocratic command the guards loaded the miners' meager household goods into freight cars, hauled them across the boundary line of the company property, and dumped them along the railroad tracks. Other guards, armed with high-power rifles, herded men, woman, and children into groups, like so many cattle, and rove them down the valleys and off the company property.

Homeless, hungry, and ragged, the strikers and their families found shelter in caves, tents, and improvised shacks, on privately owned lands. Day and night, month after month, stretching into more than a year, these starving human beings huddled in their filthy unsanitary quarters, and were fed by the miners' union. The children were denied access to public schools because they had moved out of their school districts; while the strikers could neither approach the post office nor travel roads on the creeks without permission form the coal operators, because they were on

company-owned land.”<sup>1</sup>

The owners constructed pill boxes manned with high powered rifles and machine guns and started bringing in replacement workers, attracting new workers with adds like “STEADY EMPLOYMENT AT GOOD WAGES IN THE MINES OF WEST VIRGINIA, NO STRIKES, FREE TRANSPORTATION.” Once they arrived, they became virtual prisoners of the companies.



Mother Jones (82 years young), a union organizer soon arrived on the creeks. With union funds, the miners purchased 6 machine guns, 1,000 rifles and 50,000 rounds of ammunition. The mine guards suffered the first casualties when two were ambushed. One was killed, and the other was wounded and had a narrow escape, when doctors at the hospital in Montgomery showed them the corpse of another man when they came looking for the injured guard.

Assaults and sniping were common in the area, culminating in the battle of Mucklow (on Paint Creek) where newspapers reported four mine guards and twelve miners were killed. On Sept. 1, 1912, 6,000 armed miners gathered at the head of Cabin Creek. On Sept. 2, the Governor declared martial law. The military (national guard) quickly confiscated 1,872 rifles, 556 pistols, 6 machine guns, and 225,000 rounds of ammunition.

The military were clearly on the company side. Under the first martial law rule, 66 people were tried and convicted of various offenses. Most received short jail terms, but a few strike leaders were sent to the penitentiary for long terms. By Oct. 15, 1912, the area had quieted down and martial law was lifted. After their



military duty, many soldiers accepted employment as mine guards.

After the military left, the sniping began again and soon the miners controlled the area around the river and prevented trains from going up the creeks. On November 15, the Governor issued the 2nd martial law proclamation. The mine guards left company employment to rejoin their military units. Military court was reestablished, and crimes allegedly committed outside of the area and time period of martial law were prosecuted. Persons were often arrested one day, tried the next, and on their way to the penitentiary the day after. Sometimes as many as 30 persons were tried at once.

To protect the strike breakers being brought into the creeks, the C&O RR had its Huntington

shops prepare an armored train. “On the night of February 7, 1913, Boner H. Hill, Sheriff of Kanawha County, six of his regular deputies, and fourteen mine guards headed by Quinn Morton, a Paint Creek coal operator, boarded this train at Charleston for the Paint Creek strike zone. The Sheriff’s purpose was to serve a warrant sworn out by Morton for the arrest of that aged and elusive,



but always culpable, criminal, “John Doe,” whom the coal man charged with ‘inciting a riot.’

As the darkened train moved into the tent village of the strikers at Holly Grove, which was strung out along both sides of the railroad track, the machine guns began spitting fire and death as the coal operator and his mine guards opened fire with high-power rifles from the car windows. --- one miner was killed and a few wounded.”<sup>1</sup>

On March 4, 1913, Governor Henry D. Hatfield, M.D. , a nephew of Devil Anse Hatfield, took office as Governor. The next day he took his medical bag and visited the creeks. He found Mother Jones sleeping on the floor she was being confined in, suffering from lobar pneumonia with no medical treatment. The Governor spent two days in the valleys. “A few days later they unwisely sent to the Governor a delegation of operators, headed by Charley Cabell, to protest against any further conciliatory efforts by him.

There second mistake was in assuming that they could continue to give orders to the new Governor, as they had to his predecessor. Cabell began by sharply questioning the wisdom of the Governor’s visit to the strike area. Quickly the Governor gave him a clout on the side of his head that sent him sprawling into a corner, and then ordered him from his office.

Turning to the rest of the delegation, the Governor said: ‘Gentleman, you are not giving the orders now, you are taking them - - - If you and your workers can’t agree on the terms of a settlement, than I shall dictate the terms, and both sides will accept them. I will give you a few days to try and settle this strike with your employees.’

<sup>1</sup>

The Governor set the strike terms. Paint Creek miners got their \$0.025 per ton increase and Cabin Creek works won union recognition, check weight man and the right to shop at non company owned stores. The Governor also disapproved all pending sentences of the military courts, including the conviction of Mother Jones and paroled all military prisoners sent to the penitentiary and various county jails before he assumed office.

<sup>1</sup> Bloodletting in Appalachia, By Howard B. Lee, West Virginia University, 1969

Other books that provide information on Paint Creek and the mine wars are: King Coal, The West Virginia Mine Wars - An Anthology, History of the West Virginia Coal Industry, Law and Order vs the Miners, Work Relations In the Coal Industry: The hand-Loading Era, 1880-1930, Struggles in the Coal Fields.

*Copyright by Dale Porter, 2016  
May be downloaded and reproduced  
for personal, non-profit use only.  
May not be posted on another  
website without author’s permission.*