**Address for the 2016 Riverton Century Bicycle Race**

We owe a deep debt of gratitude to Riverton native Rob Gusky for rescuing the Tri-State Relay Race from the dark recesses of history and restoring it to its rightful place in the annals of cycling. Now known as the Riverton Century, plans for the original June 1895 Tri-State Relay Race called for the event to run between New York City and Philadelphia, about 150 miles, but the Quaker City’s morality ordinances, commonly known as the Blue Laws, forbid racing of any kind on city streets. The completion of the Riverton Athletic Association’s quarter-mile bicycle track during the year before the relay race made our riverfront town the principal contender for the event’s revised terminus, rather than Philadelphia’s recently rebuilt Baker Bowl Baseball Park on North Broad Street. The Tri-State Relay Race involved a number of well-seasoned riders cycling between six relay points in sets of three cyclists, with five riders **competing** on the last leg. The first trio left from the steps of the New York Times building in Manhattan, rode to and crossed the Barclay Street Ferry to Jersey City and cycled to Little Falls, just outside of Paterson. From there, the second trio departed for Morristown, riding over, as one newspaper reporter stated, “the superior roads of Jersey.” The riders continued in relay fashion across the state to Trenton. The final group of cyclists, now five in number, departed Trenton and began the final relay leg to Riverton. As riders C.W. Krick, Simpson Standeven, M.S. Paige, F.M. Dampman, and A.S. Fuller, the five men traveling on the last leg, continued their trek, they found the roads in Burlington County to be “atrocious in places, and simply bad taken as a whole.” Some things never change! Krick reported, “It was about as bad a stretch of road as I ever rode over.” As the cyclists continued their ride, “Hundreds of ’bike’ riders, male and female, were out all along the route through lower New-Jersey, the men frequently acting as pacemakers, as well as pilots, over short stretches of country.” Meanwhile, the crowd in the Riverton Athletic Association track grandstands grew restless as they watched two local cyclists race. When reports detailing the first glimpse of the relay riders reached the stands, the spectators stood up and yelled, “Get off the track” to the local racers. Those attending the day’s activities included a very large contingent of fashionably dressed ladies.

Women have always maintained a keen interest in cycling and the mix of riders in today’s Riverton Century uphold the long legacy of female cyclists.

If you think the first Tri-State Relay Race was an all-male event, you would be wrong! Twenty-two-year-old Abbie Rollins resided in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and worked as a stenographer and typist for the city’s Parson & Blish architectural firm. Born in New Jersey, Abbie represented her home state in the first leg of the relay race, riding with two men from the Times building to the ferry and then on to Little Falls. She was reportedly the first woman cyclist to ever take part in a race of this type. Abbie obviously loved cycling, for a brief newspaper article mentioned that she was with a group of riders traveling between New Brunswick and Plainfield about two months after the relay race. Approximately five miles from Plainfield, she suffered a burst pneumatic tire. Another cyclist attempted to perfect a repair with chewing gum, the only substance readily available, but it did not hold. George K. Parsell, an architect working in the same office as Abbie, offered her a seat on his bicycle handlebars. She accepted the offer and deposited herself there. She found the ride quite comfortable and, **as** the would-be couple entered Plainfield, people flocked to the sidewalks with their mouths open as Parsell and Abbie rode by.

Abbie left the cycling world in November 1901, when she married the Rev. Howard Rutsen Furbeck, who had received his pastoral training at the Reformed Theological Seminary in New Brunswick. The couple had one son and four daughters. Abbie accompanied her husband to the various churches he served until his death on October 16, 1917. She continued to care for her children and then lived for many years with her son, Howard Rollins Furbeck Sr., until she died on March 12, 1961.

I thank you for your kind attention.