

THE BIG FOUR CENTURY ROAD RACE.

The event of the Big Four was the Century Road Race, and the interest manifested in it by the natives was unusual. The tourists began to discuss the merits of the different men with much animation and intense interest from the time of their arrival in Buffalo up to and including the day of the race, and even now not a few of them contend that their own particular favorite could have won but for so and so, or if such and such had or had not happened.

In order to have all the advantage, an intimate acquaintance with the roads would give them Stone, and Corey went ahead of the tourists to Cobourg and put in two or three days prospecting the highway. Stone went over the road three times, and Corey rode to Belleville and return. The day but one before the race Stone made the forty-five miles from Cobourg to Belleville in 3h. 26m., a feat, the recital of which gave the Corey men food for contemplation.

Webber took time by the forelock and traversed the route of the race before coming to Buffalo, from which place he started an hour ahead of the tourists and rode to Rochester the same day, where he rested until the main party caught up to him the next day.

On reaching Cobourg speculation again became rife on the race and more pools were made up, the Corey men trying their best to hedge, with no takers.

Of the other contestants, Van Sicklen, Westervelt and Munger, they clung to the main body of the tourists, having a good time, and knew practically nothing of the long road that lay before them. Under the circumstances the record made by the two latter is greatly to be praised, particularly that of the Detroit man, Munger, who entered into all the sports of the trip and soon became a great favorite with the boys. Munger is an odd genius, brimming over with fun and frolic, and his pranks on the road, on train and on steamer, added greatly to the pleasure of all parties.

It was found that the course, as laid out, was short of about five miles of the requisite one hundred, and in order to obviate the difficulty a man was stationed with a flag two and a half miles from the starting point, on a wide grassy part of the road, giving ample space for the racers to turn nicely.

The tourists having got a lead of fifty miles on the ninth, were well in advance, and everything being in readiness on the morning of the tenth of July, the men were called to the scratch by Mr. Evans, editor of the WHEELMAN, at the Arlington Hotel, Cobourg, about 10 A.M. Out of the twelve entries six men responded, they being George Webber, of Smithville, N.J.; N. H. Van Sicklen, of Chicago; Frank W. Westervelt, of Springfield; H. D. Corey, of Boston; Cola E. Stone, of St. Louis, and L. D. Munger, of Detroit, Mich.

All the men appeared to be in fine condition, though Stone looked a trifle thin and wan. His weight generally is about 190 lbs., but the arduous training preparing for the event in which he was about to participate had brought brought him down to about 160. His mount is a 58-in. Rudge.

Corey rode a 52-in. Rudge Roadster. His experience with the roads led him to believe that he could do better with a trifle more drop to his handles, and the evening before he had changed forks and handle-bars with the editor of *The Wheel* to attain his object. The forks he got seemed to fit nicely, but events proved he was mistaken. In effecting the exchange he killed any chance he might have had in the race.

Webber, of course, rode his Star; Westervelt used a 52-in. Victor; Van Sicklen a 56-in. Columbia Light Roadster, and Munger appeared at the line on a 54-in. Apollo Light Roadster.

The word "go" was given at precisely 10.08 A.M., and the men started off at a smart pace, Van Sicklen leading, followed by Stone, Webber, Westervelt and Corey, Munger bringing up the rear at a respectable distance from the leaders.

This order was maintained for about a mile, when Stone went to the front setting a ripping old pace, and Van Sicklen dropped the fourth place, and Corey began to lose ground, Munger holding his own without any evident intention of trying to catch up. The leaders maintained this order to the flag, at which point Corey was a quarter of a mile to the bad, Munger having passed him still holding his relative position.

The spectators who viewed the race soon saw that something was wrong with the Boston man or his machine, as he continued to lose ground.

The flagman was rounded by the four leaders in a bunch, who started back toward the hotel at a terrific pace.

About half-a-mile from the flag they met a farm wagon with two horses in front and a mare and a colt hitched behind. The mare saw them coming, and commenced to prance about in a most unpleasant manner. Stone, who was first, went by safely on the fly. Webber went down into a ditch on the left of the team and clambered up beyond. Westervelt jumped off and ran along the side of the road on the grass for a hundred yards before he could get on to the road again. Van Sicklen attempted to pass on the edge of the road, but as he got abreast of the horses behind, the mare gave a snort of terror, and backing against him, shoved him off into the ditch, where he sprawled ingloriously and damaged his wheel so badly that he was obliged to withdraw from the race. Munger jumped off and ran his wheel by on the grass, while Corey, finding it impossible to make the borrowed forks work satisfactorily, joined Van Sicklen, his partner in misfortune.

Meanwhile Stone, profiting by the mishap, had gained an eighth of a mile on Westervelt and Webber. At the starting point both men, after some decidedly warm work, had caught him and began the long stretch of 95 miles straightaway in a bunch.

Here Webber lost ground a little, but managed to cling to the leaders, who cut out some tough running for the next five miles. As they neared Wicklow, Webber found the pace too hot and fell back, while Stone and Westervelt continued their mad career for ten miles farther, when the Springfielder had found the strain too much for him, and striding a steep hill, Stone got clear away.

It should be mentioned here that, owing to the fact that numerous attempts to repair the highway, all in an uncompleted state, had put the first twenty-five miles of the road, mostly up hill, in very bad shape.

Munger, who had been plodding steadily along now began to pick up and crawled up on Webber. As they neared Brighton, a team backed down on Webber and caused him to take a genuine header, bending his handle-bars and twisting the backbone of his machine.

Munger, who was in sight, soon came up and offered to help the Star man repair his damaged steed, but the latter refused to avail himself of the generous tender, and Munger, going for all he was worth, passed Westervelt and landed in Brighton, 28 miles out, at 12.05, just five minutes behind Stone. Westervelt passed at 12.15, and Webber, having made his wheel rideable, was timed at 12.35.

At Trenton, Stone was told that Webber was just behind him, and this caused him to strike out at a high rate.

During the afternoon the rain had fallen in floods in advance of the racers, consequently the roads between Belleville and Napanee were in a frightful condition, and the boys were obliged to literally ride in running water. Stone reached Napanee at 4.08, Munger at 4.28. Webber about one hour behind him.

At Napanee, Stone was met by Lindell Gordon, of St. Louis, who coached him to Kingston, 25½ miles, in about two hours, were he arrived the winner of the race at 6.36, completing the hundred miles in exactly 8h. 28m. The record is 8h. 6m.

Westervelt kept second place until eighteen miles from Belleville, when he played out entirely and gave up the contest.

Munger was met at Belleville by J. W. Vivian of the Charlestown (Mass.) Bicycle Club, who coached him to Napanee, where he was taken in hand by Gideon Haynes, Jr., of Boston, who urged him on and brought him up to within six minutes of Stone, when the Detroit man gave up all hopes of beating him and, holding his place, came into Kingston at 7.08½, his total time being 9h. 0½m.

Meanwhile Webber, having mounted his racing wheel, waiting for him at Napanee in charge of C. H. Chickering, of Smithville, started off at a lively rate with Chickering as a pace-maker. The pace-maker was a wreck inside of ten miles, while Webber, keeping on arrived at Kingston at 7.14½ p.m., making the 25½ miles in 1h. 45m., a total of 9h. 6½m.

So ended the first straight-away century road race on this continent, and in many respects the most remarkable race ever run. The repairs and the rains had made the course, naturally one of the best, in many places almost unrideable, and the tourists who passed over the route were astounded at the time made. The achievement is one over which St. Louis and her pet rider can justly feel highly elated.

—:0:—

Mr. J. A. Muirhead, better known as "Jack," has returned from the Northwest with the 7th Fusiliers.