

# Bicycle Heaven Museum and Bike Shop



Craig and Mindy Morrow stand beside one of the bikes made for the Pee Wee Herman movies. It's a great conversation starter when visiting the museum.

By Liz Lutwick

On my last visit to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, I learned about a bicycle shop that I was told that I should visit. Being a novice bicyclist, I was sure that I didn't need more equipment. I had spent enough money getting started and I thought all I needed now was practice.

But oh well, I was going to the North Shore bike trail following the river that would take me past the Casino in downtown Pittsburgh. I would be very close to this shop called Bicycle Heaven Museum. When I first learned of the name I thought is it a bike shop or a museum? Either one, I was up for it.

I was a little intimidated by the area that I was traveling. Then I thought to myself that I had watched too many movies about factories on the waterfront, so I said self, get over it and venture on into the unknown. I'm so glad I did.

When I mentioned factory, the museum is located in the RJ Casey Industrial Park. At one time the building being occupied by Bicycle Heaven was an Allis-Chalmers factory. After doing a little research on Allis-Chalmers, I learned that they did more than make tractors. In Pittsburgh, the company produced transformers. In 1953 the Pittsburgh Works employed 3000 people and sales exceeded \$3,000,000. It was quite a feat for that time.

This brings me back to the bicycle shop (and by the way it is both a museum and a bicycle shop). The entrance to the shop wasn't very large. Just a regular door but once inside the place was gigantic. And there wasn't a place that didn't have a bicycle or a bicycle part from

some time and place. It was breathtaking.

Let me tell you a quick little story. I grew up on a farm and the only bicycle I had ever seen was my mother's. It was stored in a garage with no tires and was all rusty. Well I decided that I wanted to learn to ride it. I got it out with no tires and at 6 years old I learned to ride it. Finally my parents decided that I should have tires. It was on cloud nine.

So in the museum the first thing that I looked for was a bicycle that looked like the first one that I had ever ridden. And yes, one very much like that first bicycle was hanging on the wall. Its vintage was around 1930, which was about the time my mother was riding a bike. That certainly brought back sweet memories.

I finally met the man that put this all together. His name is Craig Morrow. He always had an admiration for bicycles but that wasn't what started this whole thing. He worked in an automobile body shop and found that the dust and paint fumes were not conducive to good health. So he had to leave that business and for a while he stayed at home. At this time he started fixing bicycles for children in the neighborhood. Bicycle parts seem to accumulate and purchasing more parts to fix bicycles added to the soon to be collection.

The bug had bitten him. He started to buy old bicycles at sales. He became known for buying bicycles and giving advice on the value of old bicycles. One thing for sure, he treats his customers fairly. This statement was reiterated by each of his employees.

One of the most unique bikes that I saw was the Bowden Spacelander. And back



The Bowden Spacelander exhibit is one that no one passes by without stopping. This model was only made in 1960 but it was an incredible bicycle.

in 1960 (the only year that it was produced) it probably did look like something from another planet. An all-fiberglass frame, it was really incredible.

One bike that has always fascinated me is the one with the gigantic wheel in front and one small wheel in back. It looks like it would be so hard to ride. Yes, there is a high-wheeler on display, as well as an 1863 Shire Boneshaker. It was so interesting to see the progression in bicycle development. Let me tell you that we have come a long way.

While talking to Craig, I found it quite interesting that movie companies call him to rent bikes that fit the era of a movie. He said that Russell Crowe rode one of his bikes in the movie *A Beautiful Mind*. That's not all; from my understanding Pee Wee Herman had several bikes made for him. One of those bikes is in the museum.

Even though Craig's passion is bicycles and he started the shop, there are others involved in a big way. His wife, Mindy, stands beside him and helps with the museum. A good friend, Matt Rind, from the 'Orange Crate' years, spends a lot of time at the shop doing many tasks and taking care of customers. And then there are two bicycle mechanics that work in the bicycle shop, Jon Passauer and Tom Souzer. It's not uncommon for Craig to walk by a bicycle being repaired and offer his advice on the repair. Cathy Larder helps in the office and also offers information about the bicycles.

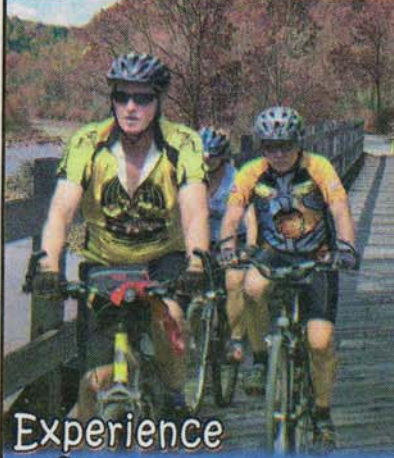
An interesting bicycle was one that both the back and front wheel moved as if they could go in different directions. I understand that this bike didn't last long on the market since it didn't prove to be a safe

ride.

Keep in mind that the building that houses Bicycle Heaven was once a large factory. When taking a tour of the muse-


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