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BIKES 'R' US



CRAIG MORROW (left) and Robert Schaal specialize in buying and selling antique bicycles at Trader Jack's outdoor flea market in Collier.

Photo by David Pinchot

Massive collection leads to a bike lover's paradise



Photo by Kelsea Shea

Rare bikes cover every inch of floor, wall and ceiling space at Bicycle Heaven on the North Shore.

By Kelsey Shea

For 25 years Craig Morrow collected old bikes. He started with Schwinn Stingrays from the '60s and '70s, but as the years went on, his collection expanded. Eventually, he ended up with two houses and multiple garages full of nearly every sort of antique bike on the market.

Now after years of collecting and three months of hard work, Morrow is putting his massive collection on display in his new Northside bike shop and museum, Bicycle Heaven, which had its grand opening July 2.

Located off the North Shore bike trail in the RJ Casey Industrial Park, Bicycle Heaven will serve as a repair and rental shop and a unique stop on the trail for bike enthusiasts to check out the history of two-wheeled transportation in Pittsburgh.

Bikes will be available to rent or buy, but admission to the museum is free.

Morrow said he picked up his massive collection "anywhere from garage sales to bike shows," but one thing most of his bikes have in common is that they were found and bought in the area.

"I guess I'm a bit of a bike hoarder," Morrow said, but noted that in the 9,000 square foot space he and his bikes now occupy, there's finally room for them to all be seen.

With 1 percent of Pittsburghers commuting to and from work on bikes daily, and plenty more recreationally biking, he hopes to appeal to a large demographic.

"A couple of other cities have bike museums, so I thought Pittsburgh should too," Morrow said.

He said the idea for a bicycle shop and museum hybrid was a long time in the works.

Before the shop had a physical space, Morrow sold, bought and traded his many antique bike parts and bikes all over the world using the eBay user name bicycleheaven.

"People would say, 'You've got all these great bikes, but no one can even see them,' which gave me the idea for this," he said.

Morrow also rents some of his classic bikes to movie sets. His bikes can be seen in "A Beautiful Mind" and in this summer's "Super 8."

Inside the shop, about 2,000 antique bikes and thousands of bike parts line the walls of the renovated industrial space.

In the center of the shop are two rows of Schwinn Stingrays, the bikes Morrow originally collected. With high handlebars, a small frame and trademark colors like "Flamboyant Lime" and "Kool Orange," the Stingrays are easily distinguishable. Morrow owns 130 of them — each valued between \$800 and \$5,000 dollars each.

On the wall hang four curvy and futuristic-looking bikes called Bowden Spacelanders, which are the highlight of Morrow's collection. The Spacelanders were designed in 1948 and were the first bikes to be made of fiberglass. Originally marketed as "the bike of the future"

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New museum shows rare, unique bikes

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more than 60 years ago, the Bowdens are the rarest bikes in Morrow's collection.

"There are 38 known to exist, and I have 13 of them," Morrow said.

Morrow's collection of Stingrays and Bowden Spacelanders are both the largest in the world of their kind.

Other bikes in the museum go back much further than the Space Age, like the museum's oldest bike — Morrow's 1862 Bone Shaker. The entire bike, including the frame, handlebars and even the wheels are made out of wood.

"That's why they call it a bone shaker," Morrow said.

When asked which bike Morrow uses when he rides, he shrugs and laughs.

"Any one I want, I guess."

North Shore bike museum expands after one year

By Emily Riley

As Craig Morrow and his bike museum, Bicycle Heaven, approach their one year anniversary, they'll mark the event with a 5,000 square foot expansion that will open to the public on June 3.

Morrow, said the new space will further display the bike collection and serve as an area where the museum can hold special events.

The upper level of the warehouse provides the new space with hardwood floors, bright windows and plenty of bike hooks waiting to be filled.

The bicycle collection fills the warehouse from floor to ceiling with pieces dating as far back as 1860. Morrow says the museum is home to over 2,000 bikes, 98 percent of which he bought in the Pittsburgh area.

Morrow says this percentage stems from the city's history of steel production.

"Bikes were produced right in the city with steel from its



Photo by Kaitlin Balmert

The newly renovated space in Bicycle Heaven will be used for events.

own steel mills," said Morrow, "it is no surprise that I found so many vintage bikes in the area."

The bikes on display range from the famous Schwinn Stingrays to miniature tricycles from the early 1900s. In addition, several of the pieces have made it to big screen films such "A Beautiful Mind" and "Super 8." With a collection that began years ago before the museum space opened last summer, Morrow continues expanding despite only accepting donations from visitors rather than a flat admission price.

As Pittsburgh and the Northside become increasingly bike friendly, the museum gains more attention. Morrow says the museum's popularity over the past year exceeded his expectations.

Morrow and other staff members give personal tours to many local organizations including cycling groups, Boy Scout troops, outdoor enthusiast clubs and individuals looking to check out the biggest collection of vintage bikes in the area.

Despite the obscure location in Chateau's RJ Casey Industrial Park, Museum Manager Matt Rind said, "Strategic placement of signs on the bike trail and word of mouth has really spread the word."

Rind focuses attention on Bicycle Heaven's eBay account since the museum also serves as a full

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Bicycle Heaven expands

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service bike shop and deals antique or hard-to-find parts.

Despite its immediate popularity, Morrow has a greater vision for the museum's future.

He hopes to someday work with local youth organizations to educate the younger Pittsburgh population on bike care and repair.

In addition, Morrow hopes that Bicycle Heaven achieves eventual icon status in the city of Pittsburgh.

"I hope for the Bicycle Museum to someday be an important icon in Pittsburgh, somewhat like the Civic Arena once was," said Morrow.

Bike trails and the Bike Museum



Though the Bicycle Heaven bike museum is new (see page 9 for the full story) the bike trails on the Northside have been around for a while. The North Shore trail takes riders along the Allegheny River near the stadiums and shows off Pittsburgh's sprawling skyline. Riverview Park also has bike paths.

Additionally, the Northside has the

first on-stree bike infrastructure in the city with bike lanes, signs reminding drives to share the road and other conveniences for Northside bike riders.