

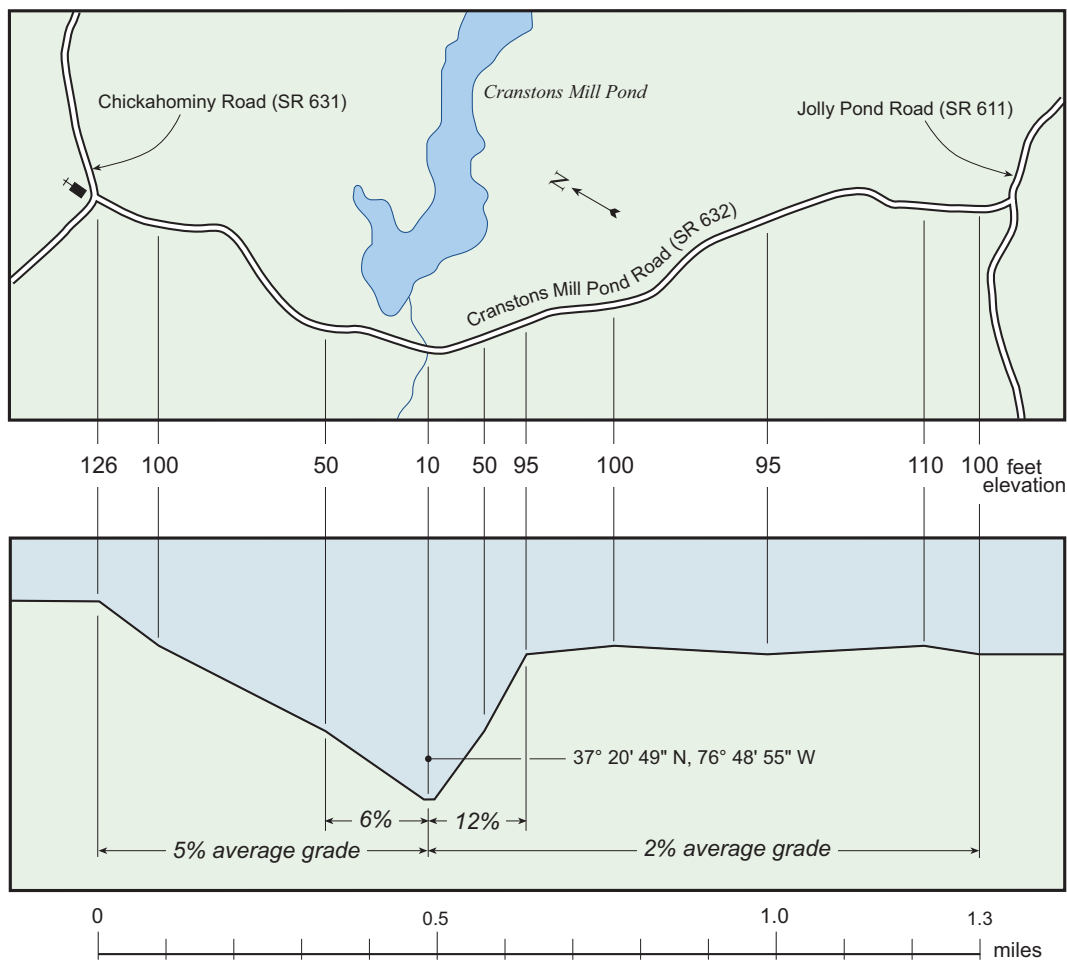
Williamsburg Area Climbs

**Michael Kaspareck's hill profiles
from the pages of the "Flying Wheel,"
the newsletter of the Williamsburg Area Bicyclists.**



The author field-checking a percentage grade

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Carwash Hill

Much of the Williamsburg area topography can be described as a broad upland dissected by stream erosion. “Riding hills” around here generally means descending to a creek bed and climbing back out of it.

Cranstons Mill Pond Road (SR 632) near Lightfoot is no exception. Better known among local cyclists as Carwash Hill, it leads riders down to a creek and back up. The road profile shows that the climb from the creek to Jolly Pond Road is very different than the reverse climb from the creek to Chickahominy Road.

The climb up to **Jolly Pond Road** starts with a short and steep 12% grade jumping from 10 to 95 feet elevation in just 800 feet. Then it flattens and even contains a slight downgrade section. Average grade for the entire 0.8 mile climb is a surprisingly low 2%.

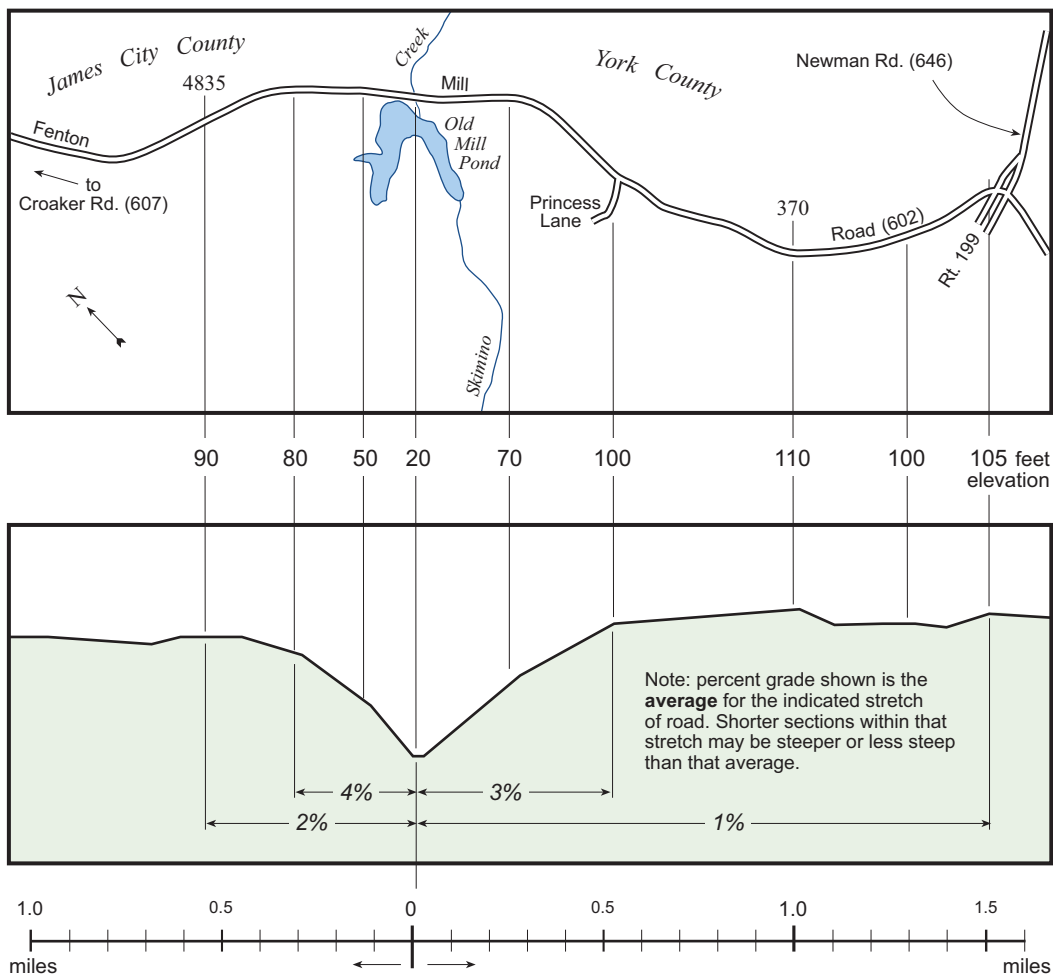
The climb up to **Chickahominy Road** starts with a 6% grade rising from 10 to 50 feet elevation in 950 feet. It flattens a bit after that, then gets slightly steeper for the last 500 feet. The average grade for the entire 0.5 mile climb is 5%. Unlike the climb to Jolly Pond

Road, there are no sections that vary much from the average grade.

If you’re a bit competitive, you learn quickly that the climb up to Jolly Pond Road favors riders who can rapidly recover from intense cardiovascular efforts. Once over the 12% section, the rest of that climb is gentle. Rapid recovery will allow you to accelerate on that easier section to get away.

The climb up to Chickahominy Road favors riders who can sustain a good effort over a longer period of time, and know how to pace themselves. A measured effort at the bottom followed by increasing intensity and speed all the way to the top at Chickahominy Road might work to drop your friends on this climb.

Why the name *Carwash Hill*? Late 20th century cyclist’s lore had it that people living nearby washed their cars in the creek. It’s much more likely that a solitary, slightly delirious bicyclist once thought he saw someone washing something that looked like a car at the bottom of the hill, then told his tale to embellishers.



Fenton Mill Road

You first have to descend if you want to climb these two hills on **Fenton Mill Road** (SR 602) between Lightfoot and Croaker. It's like eating dessert first, but that's how you get to almost every climb in our area.

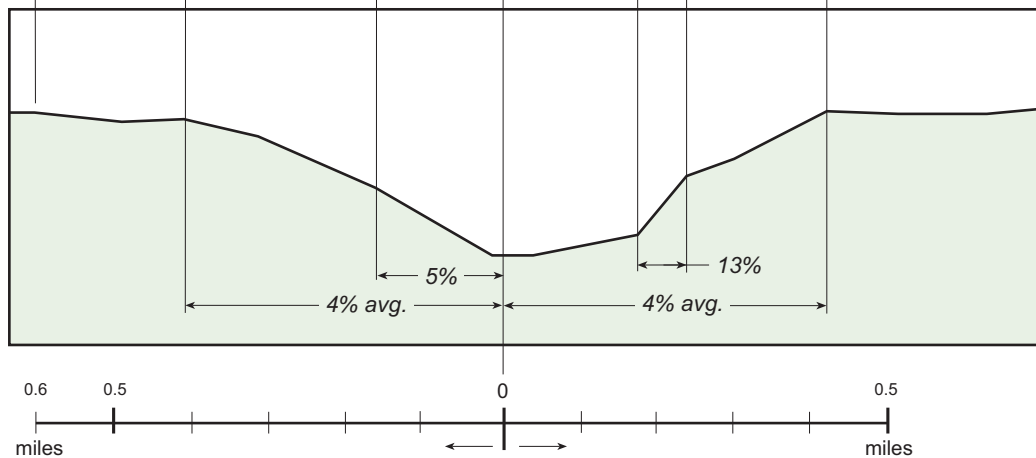
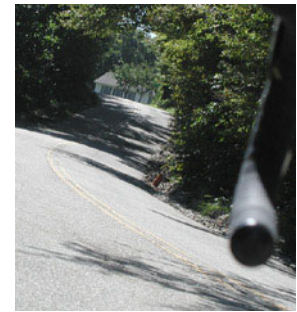
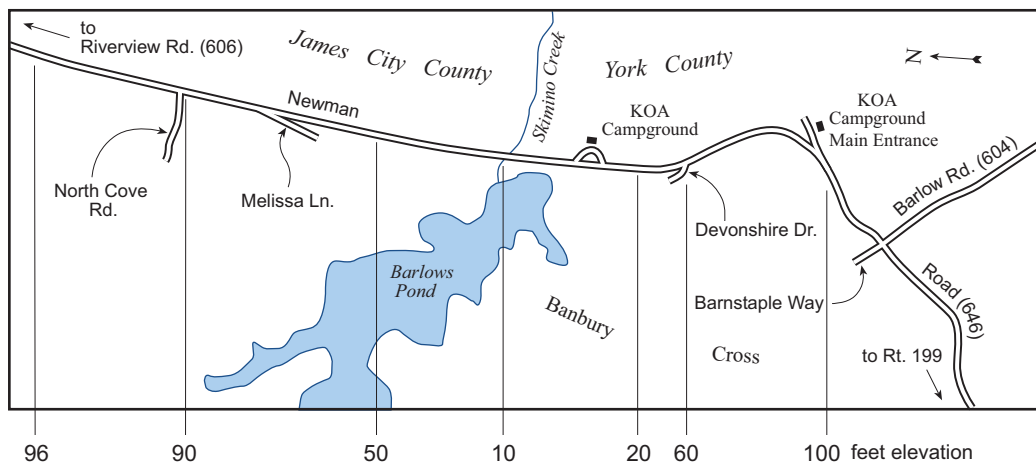
The bottom of the climbs is marked by **Skimino Creek**, which for its entire length is the boundary between York county and James City county. The creek starts in the Williamsburg Pottery Factory, crosses under Rochambeau Drive, Interstate 64, Fenton Mill Road, and Newman Road . It then flows through Skimino and Camp Peary before emptying into the York River.

The **James City climb** towards Croaker Road starts with a 0.3 mile section at 4%, then flattens until you reach the top at house number **4835**. Look for the numbered mailbox on your right or a white picket fence on your left. The entire 0.56 mile climb averages 2%. When you're at the bottom, you think you can see the top. You can't, because the flatter part of the climb hides behind the steeper one. So save something back to finish this climb strong.

The **York County climb** towards Newman Road and Rt.199 is unusually long for this area. It contains 1.0 mile of steady climbing in its 1.5 mile total length at a gentle 1% average grade.

The climb begins at Skimino Creek with a 0.5 mile section around 3%, the end of which is the **Princess Lane** intersection. Look for the green street sign on your right. Once past Princess Lane, the climb becomes a 0.5 mile false flat until you reach a crest at house number **370**. Look for the mailbox on your left. Once over the crest, there's a short downhill, a flat section and a short uphill until you reach the end of the entire 1.5 mile climb at Newman Road/Rt.199.

To gauge your fitness, every so often see how fast you can ride from the county line sign at the bottom up to the 1.0 mile mark at house number 370. The climb is nicely sheltered from the wind, so your times will be fairly consistent. (If you're drawing Social Security, 3:30 is not bad). Once over the crest, sit up, zip up your jersey, and enjoy the brief 0.2 mile descent.



Note:
Grade percentages shown are averages for the indicated sections of the climb. Short distances *within* these sections may be steeper or less steep than the averages shown.

Know Your Climbs: Campground Hill

To climb this well-known **Newman Road** (SR 646) hill in York county, you first descend its counterpart in James City county—exactly like the Fenton Mill Road hill profiled in September’s Flying Wheel.

Just before you get to **Campground Hill** (also known as KOA Hill), you cross **Skimino Creek**. For its entire length, the creek is the boundary between York county and James City county.

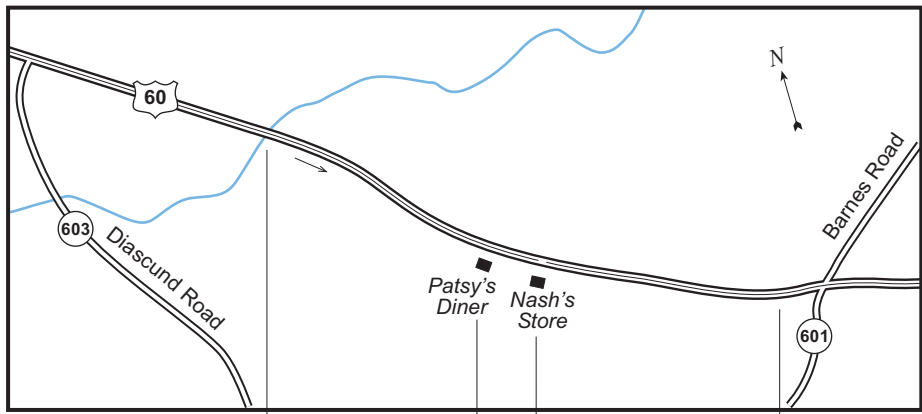
The 0.46 mile climb starts at the KOA Kampground sign with a gentle rise from 15 to 20 feet altitude. But then you hit a short but steep 13% climb from 20 to 60 feet altitude in just 320 feet. At Devonshire Drive (0.24 mile point), you’ve done the steepest part of Campground Hill and are now riding up a much flatter part of the climb. But keep something in reserve: at the start of the gentle right-hand turn towards the top of the hill, the grade kicks up a bit again. Normally, that wouldn’t be much of a problem. But if you’re doing this climb at any kind of speed, you’d still be recovering from your 13% effort at that time. With your heart pounding, it really hurts to have the grade

steepen again, no matter how slightly. You’ll be over the top at 0.46 miles, just past the main entrance to the campground. Campground Hill’s tricky: it’s not a simple climb that you can sprint over with brute force, even though it looks that way when you first see it.

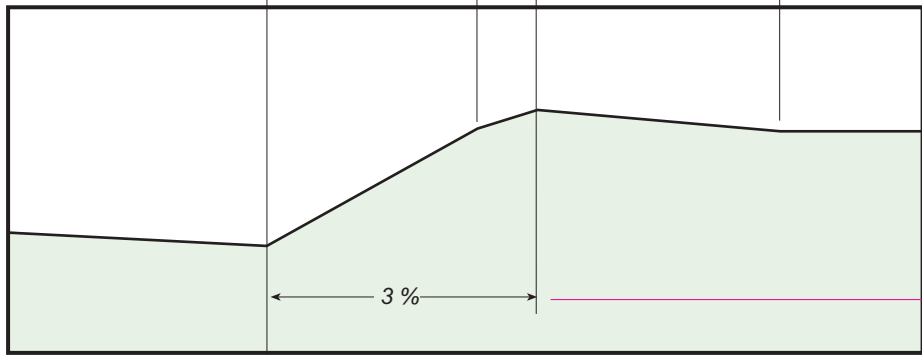
To compare, the steepest section of the Tour de France L’Alpe d’Huez climb is 11%; its average grade is 7.8%. But L’Alpe d’Huez is a 9 mile climb—relentlessly longer than our Campground Hill.

The 0.42 mile **counterpart climb** in James City county towards Riverview Road is straightforward. It starts with a 5% section, then flattens to 4% at the 0.16 mile point and then to 3% at Melissa Lane before going over the top at North Cove Road at 90 feet altitude. To stretch the experience, hammer on up to the 96-foot altitude crest at the 0.6 mile point, just past the entrance sign of Chandler’s horse hay farm.

Want more climbing? At Devonshire Drive or Barnstaple Way, turn into the **Banbury Cross** subdivision and do the three short, but brutal climbs you’ll find in there.



30 100 110 100 feet elevation



0 0.5 1.0 miles

**KNOW
YOUR
CLIMBS**



Note: Grade percentage shown is an average for the indicated section of the climb. Short distances *within* that section may be steeper or less steep than the average grade.

Historic Diner Hill, Lanexa, VA

During the latter part of the previous century, a large number of area cyclists met Sunday mornings at the South Henry Street courthouse and suited up for what was known as bike wars. The route was easy to follow: Williamsburg-Charles City-Providence Forge-Williamsburg, run basically on Routes 5, 155, and 60.

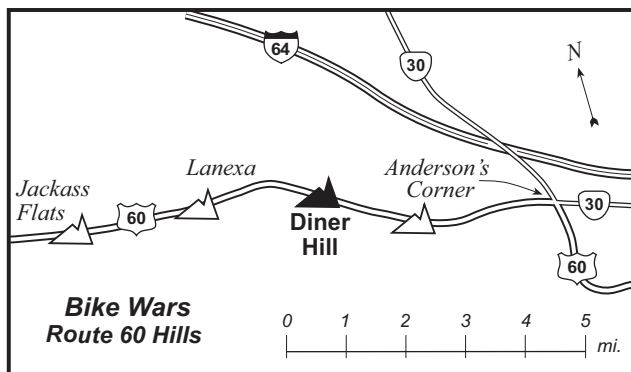
On Route 60 just out of the 'Forge, the pace shot up from fast to insane for the flat 5-mile stretch to Jackass Flats. There the hills began, and what was left of the

peloton came apart. Stragglers desperately tried to make the *pro forma* regroup at Anderson's Corner.

Lanexa's **Diner Hill**, halfway between Jackass Flats and Anderson's Corner, became a notorious bike wars climb, perhaps only because it was more easily identified than the other, similar Route 60 climbs. It was named after Patsy's Diner near the top of the hill. The huge sign that shouted "Patsy's Diner" then, only reads "Patsy's" now, and someone painted a picture of a tantalizing ice cream cone at the top of the sign.

The 0.52 mile, 3% climb gently starts a few feet after you cross a creek 0.4 miles east of the Route 60-Diascund Road intersection. As the grade gradually steepens, you begin to see Patsy's and might think that the diner marks the crest. It doesn't—you need to climb another 0.1 mile until you get to the median cut at now defunct Nash's Store to go over the top.

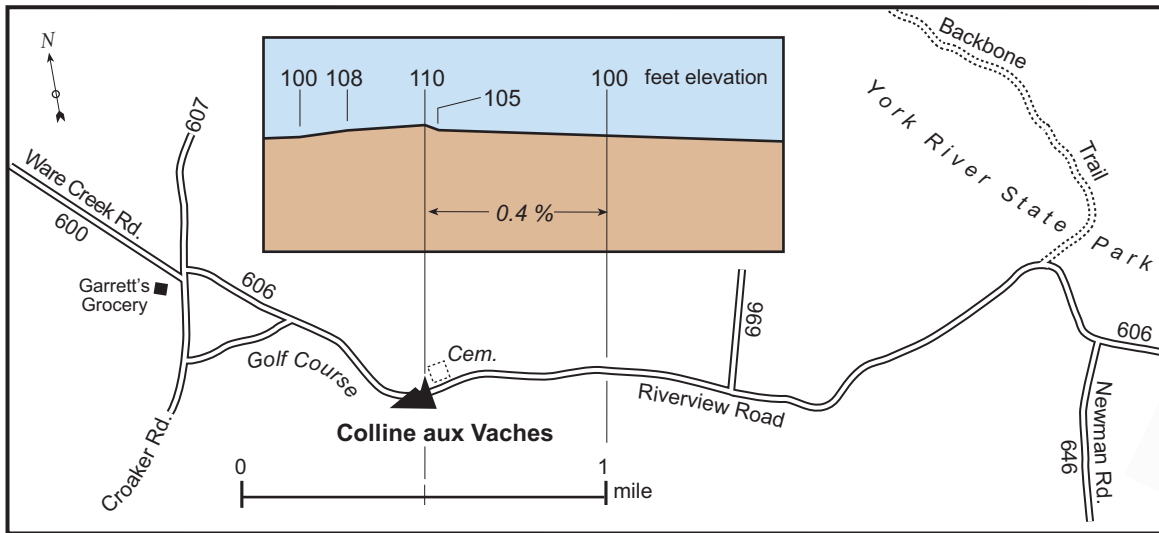
At a mild 3% grade, Diner Hill's not a sit-down-and-twiddle-up kind of hill. It wants to be attacked at speed in a larger gear, so you'll suffer as you go over the top. Try it, it's fun.



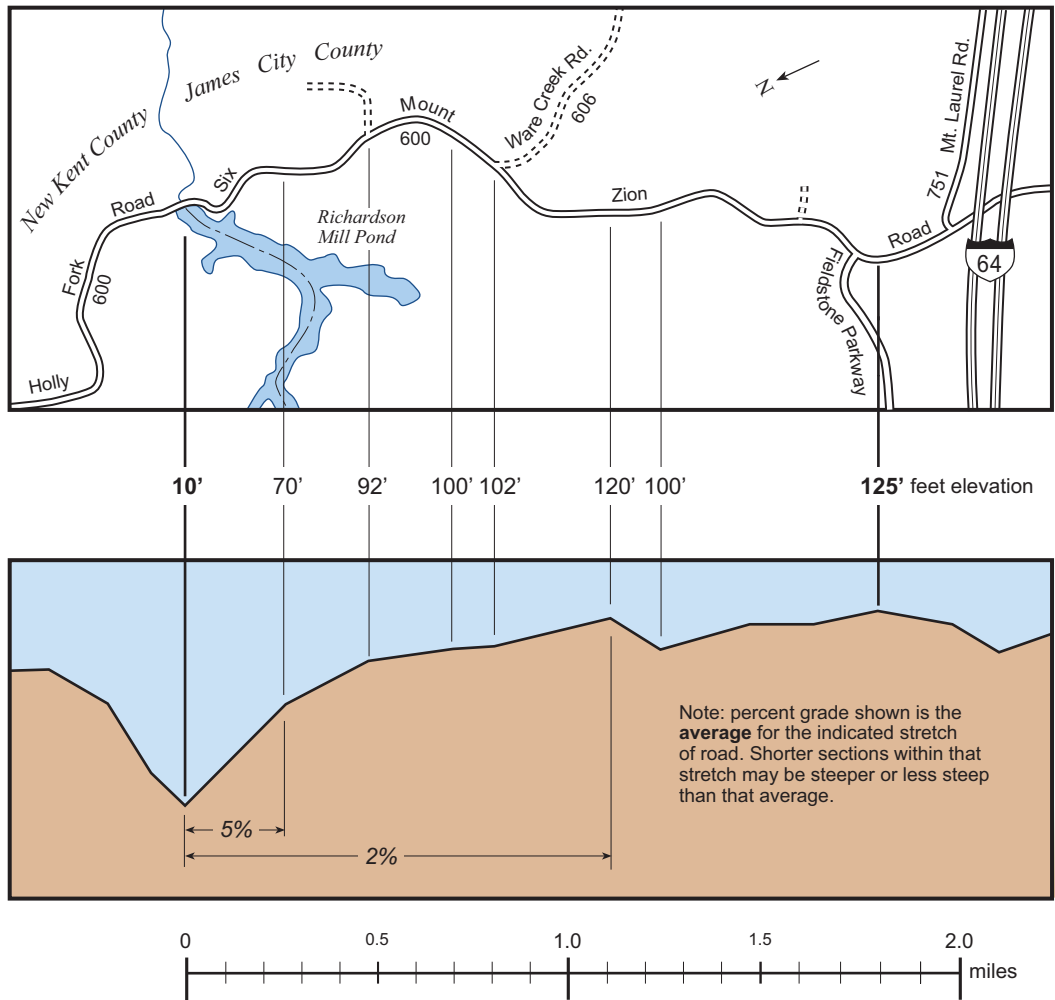
Know Your Climbs: *Colline aux Vaches*, Route 606



You'll encounter this bump riding west on Riverview Road (Rt. 606) just before you reach the Kischiak Golf Course on the left side of the road. Mysteriously, it's a difficult little hill. Perhaps it's the westerlies always blowing against you there, or the cows laughing at your exertions. The 0.5 mile, 0.4% average grade 'Cow Hill' starts with an almost imperceptible upgrade. But before you're over the top, you need to push a little harder up a very short, but steeper section just after you pass the sadly overgrown Scandinavian cemetery on your right. Then it's a gentle 0.2 mile descent, plus 0.5 miles of almost flat road to Garrett's Grocery (closed Sundays).



KNOW YOUR CLIMBS



Stonehouse Hill on Six Mount Zion Road (Route 600)

This 1.85-mile climb, like several others in our area, starts at the New Kent/James City county line, which runs in the middle of Ware Creek and Richardson Millpond here. State Route 600 changes its name at the county line from Holly Fork Road to Six Mount Zion Road. Just after you cross the dam, there's a relatively steep section. After that it's a mix of slight uphill and almost flat sections. About at the halfway point, Stonehouse Hill offers a short, downhill section on which you can recuperate, pick up some speed or launch an attack if someone needs to be gotten rid of.

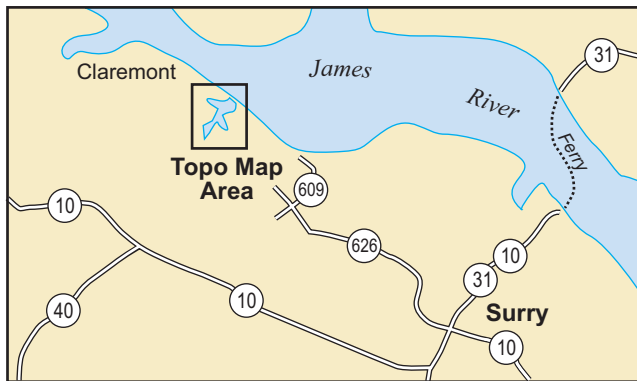
- Mile 0.00/10' elev. Start at county line on dam
- Mile 0.26/70' elev. Steeper section ends
- Mile 0.48/92' elev. First crest at cabled dirt road
- Mile 0.79/102' elev. Intersection Rt. 606 (dirt stretch of Ware Creek Road)
- Mile 0.80/102' elev. Short uphill
- Mile 1.08/120' elev. Downhill section starts

- Mile 1.75/123' elev. Intersection Fieldstone Parkway
- Mile 1.85/125' elev. Top of hill
- Mile 2.00/98' elev. Intersection Mt. Laurel Rd. (751)

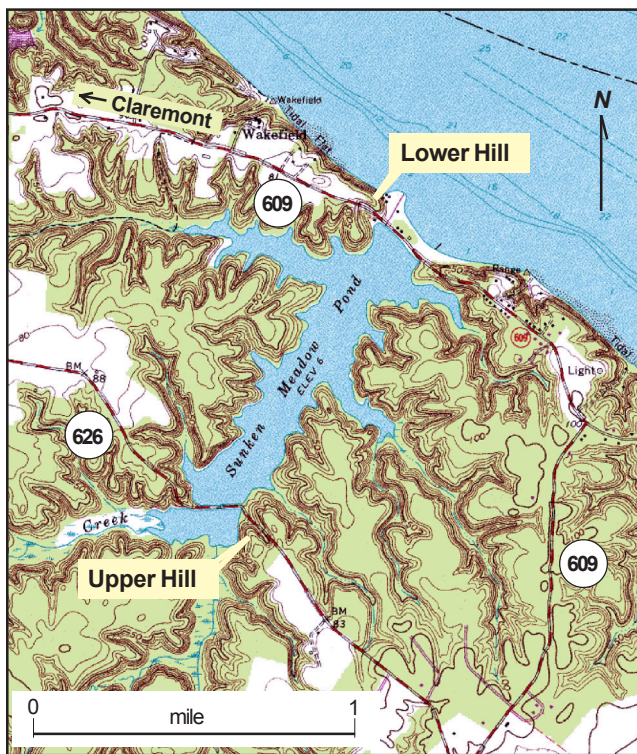


Start of Stonehouse Hill—time for a downtube downshift.

Sunken Meadow Hills: Less Steep, But More Difficult



Take the free ferry across the James River and explore the Sunken Meadow Pond area for a great half-day tour.

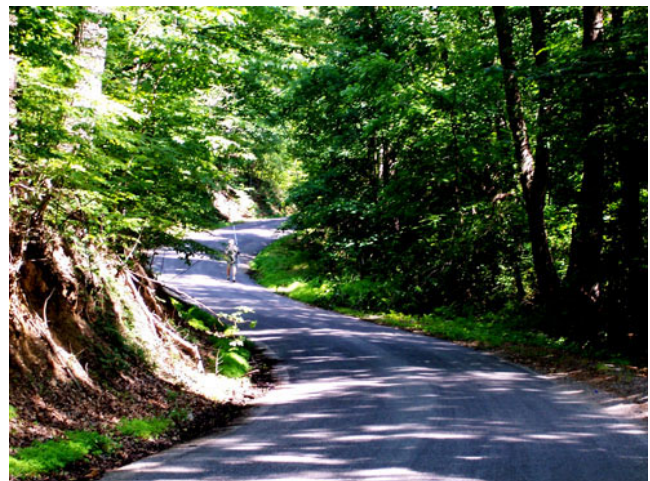


Sunken Meadow Pond (top) and run-up to the Upper Hill, lined by huge trees (right). A beautiful place.

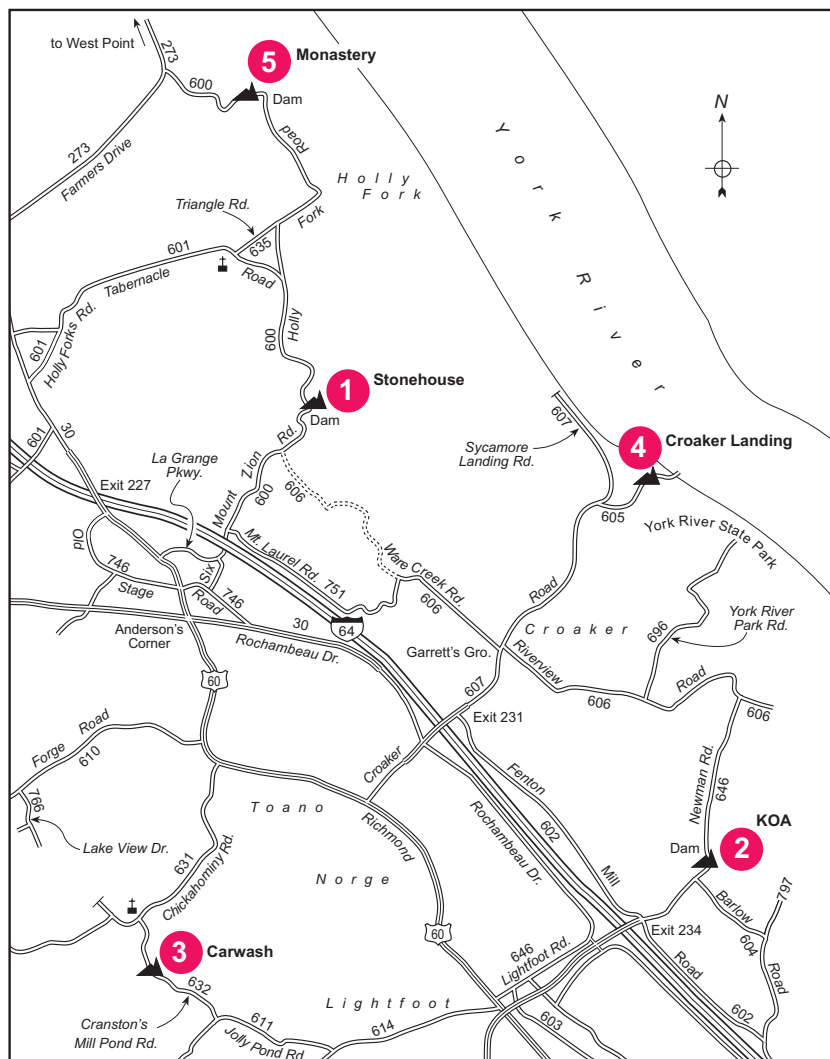
For many years now, WAB members have cycled across Sunken Meadow Pond over in Surry County. The pond, about 2 miles from the center of Claremont, is at 6 feet elevation and is surrounded by a relatively flat upland at an average 90 feet elevation. Riding towards Claremont on Rt. 609 (Sunken Meadow Road), cyclists descend 0.3 miles, cross the pond and then climb the 0.2 mile long *Lower Hill*. Riding away from Claremont on Rt. 626 (Beaverdam Road), cyclists descend 0.4 miles, cross the pond, then climb the 0.3 mile long *Upper Hill*.

Some of these bicyclers believe that at least one hill leading up from the pond is steeper and more difficult than anything our Williamsburg area has to offer. Because cyclists have been known to exaggerate (“the older I get, the faster I was”), the WAB survey team was called in to either substantiate or refute this belief. Well, Williamsburg sinks Sunken Pond on percentage. KOA hill at 15% maximum grade easily tops the maximum grade of Sunken Meadow *Lower Hill* and *Upper Hill*. Precise measurements established the Rt. 609 *Lower Hill* maximum grade at 9%, the Rt. 626 *Upper Hill* maximum grade at 13%.

But here is where it gets interesting. While the numbers say “not so steep,” riding up these hills is, in fact, quite difficult. The *Lower Hill*, we think, is difficult because it’s a long and unrelenting 9%, unlike the quick-and-dirty KOA jump-up. And no doubt, the *Upper Hill* is harder to climb than anything on our side of the James River. We *know* what makes the *Upper Hill* so heart-breaking: there’s a long 9% run-up before you get to the 13% stair step. Then you get to do it all over again with another long 8% run-up to the *second* 13% stair step—cruel and unusual, indeed.



In Search of Higher Numbers: Maximum Grades of 5 Climbs



Under the “Know Your Hills” header, we’ve described local noteworthy climbs and listed their percent grade. But because that’s an average figure for the entire hill, it’s not an impressive number. That disappointed some of our readers, while others wondered if we knew what we were doing.

To remedy that, we’ve sent out the WAB surveying team to find the steepest grades in the upper James City/lower New Kent county area—no matter how short. This involved a field check with a clever device, consisting of a rod with a carpenter’s level affixed to it. The device is placed on the road at the steepest part of the hill. One end of it is raised until the level reads exactly horizontal. Then vertical rise is measured at the 200cm mark of the rod. Percent grade is rise divided by run multiplied by 100.

For example, if our vertical measurement reads 30cm, the hill’s percent grade is

$$30 \div 200 \times 100 = 15\%.$$

The team measured maximum grade of the 5 climbs shown on the map.

Maximum Percent Grade Rankings

- 1. Stonehouse: 15%** maximum grade. Short climb just past Richardson’s Millpond dam, riding north on Holly Fork Road.
- 2. KOA: 15%** maximum grade. Climb just past Skimino Creek dam, riding south on Newman Road.
- 3. Carwash: 14.5%** maximum grade. First part of the climb, riding southeast on Cranston’s Mill Pond Road.
- 4. Croaker Landing: 13%** maximum grade. Beginning of the climb on Rt. 605 up from the boat launch/fishing pier parking lot. (There’s a very short 14.5% grade in a right-hand turn 0.3 miles up the road from the first crest of Croaker Landing hill).
- 5. Monastery: 11.5%** maximum grade. Climb about 150 yards after crossing Goddin’s Pond dam, riding west on Holly Forks Road.

Note: Jolly Pond hill just west of the dam was not checked because Jolly Pond Road is officially closed in that area.



On Croaker Landing Road (Rt. 605), a WAB surveying team member takes the vertical dimension reading on the level rod. Even for the short distance of 200cm (about 6 feet), it’s plain to see that the road is climbing.

The surveying job is not without its hazards. Good hearing and quick reflexes are needed to get out of the way of speeding cars cresting the hill.