

Eastern Washington Steeple Chase Sites – Day 1

So far, 2010 has not been an easy-as-pie Steeple Chase and Wing Washington year for me. Oh, I've had rides, but I have also been plagued by surprises, changes, and just bad luck. I have longed for a good, long ride with good weather and lots of sites, and I got a couple of those days in late February.

If you count the Bonus site, there are technically 11 Steeple Chase sites in Eastern Washington. There are also a dozen or so Wing Washington sites. So I had to carefully chart a route that would get me a good number of sites in the two days (one day there, another back) I was taking while my wife and daughter had a weekend together.

For my first day, I had planned to go to the 140-ish miles to Vantage, then down to Mattawa (getting a WW dam on the way), then over to Selah for a church, down to Toppenish for a mural, then down to Grandview for another church, over to Prescott for a WW Post Office, and then down to Walla Walla for both another church, and a Wing Washington site, too. Then hustle over to Colfax to stay the night, and get an early start on another day of riding.

My Friday was working out well: clear skies, no rain. OK, it was a bit chilly (high 30's, low 40's), but what else could you ask for in February? My ride over I-90 to Vantage (to get the Ginkgo Petrified Forest for Wing Washington) was easy. I've also started a new activity to make me slow down and enjoy my rides. I plan to send post cards of the places I'm visiting to members of my GWTA club staff, thanking them for their work. It makes me stop, look for post cards, talk to shop keepers, and find a Post Office so as to get the cards stamped from the location. A little thing, but slows me down a bit, and helps me meet people and learn more about the areas I'm visiting.

After Vantage, I'm off south on Hwy 243, stopping for a picture of a dam at Wanapum, and then to Mattawa for the Our Lady of the Desert church. My GPS waypoint is off, but I've been here before, so I know where to go. Very pretty church, with a great big yard. A parishioner takes my picture, I pray for the church, and I'm off again. Funny thing, though: the GPS has me going East through the fields rather than west and down the Columbia. Well, I'm always up for an adventure, and I follow the new-to-me road down to intersection of 243 and 240, and then over Hwy 24 to the Yakima area, on my way to Selah. It's only 68 miles, and I'm really enjoying the ride.

The Selah Open Hearts Baptist Church is north of town, and housed in a Grange Hall. I have difficulty getting a good picture of the Grange, so I take a better one of just the sign for the church. Do a quick prayer, and I'm on the road for a mural in Toppenish.

Toppenish is the "City of Murals". There is no particular one you need for Wing Washington, but I chose one I had seen before and liked. I stop for gas and a post card, and find a place for lunch to write up my card and eat. Then I'm off for Grandview, just 25 miles south.

The Valley Life Baptist church in Grandview has a modern structure, big parking lot, but the sign is awkward to get a picture with the bike. Oh well, I drive on the sidewalk, walk across the street and take a picture. Very nice, too. I say my prayers, look at my map, and I'm off to my next stop in Prescott, a little over 85 miles away. I take I-82 through the Tri-Cities, then 124 through Eureka and the host of small farms and vineyards to Prescott. The Postmaster (a lady, actually) takes my picture, and I'm off to Walla Walla, just 20 miles south.

Walla Walla's St Patrick Catholic Church is tall and beautiful, but the end-of-the-day sun makes getting a picture with the sign difficult. I settle for a street picture, with the very tall steeple. Now THIS is what a Steeple Chase site should look like! It is a busy street, but nobody stops to talk to me whom I could ask to take my picture, so again I say my prayers and I'm off across town to the Fort Walla Walla for the Wing Washington picture.

My plan has me going 100 miles from Walla Walla to Colfax, because I have a place to stay there, and it's less than an hour from the next Steeple Chase site I want to get the next day. I only ride for about 15 minutes in darkness, so I'm happy. I've finally had a good, full day of riding and getting sites without rain!

Jerry Weltner





SELAH HEIGHTS
GRANGE
1916

Open Heart
Baptist Church

Sunday Wednesday
10:30am & 6:00pm 7:00pm

584



