



The Road Apple Rally mountain bike event began by accident. In July 1981 two Farmington physicians Bill Cumberworth and Cliff Clark were talking about the Glade, on Choke Cherry Canyon area north of town. Bill said that they had a horse trail ride competition every October in the Glade and would cover 10-12 miles per day. Cliff said he and some bike friends rode fat tire 5 speed cruisers in there and could cover 10-12 miles per hour.

They decided to put the two together that fall. Word went out to Bikers in the Four Corners about the event. A 25 mile course over single and double track was laid out for the bikes. The horses did a 10 mile loop. The two shared a mile or two of trail. It was staged from the old Browning Park on the La Plata river. Twenty-five bike riders showed up, some on 3 or 5 speed home made cruisers, a few single speed cruisers and a few BMX'ers.

The bikers took off five minutes before the horses. Jeff Norman from Durango, Colorado splashed back across the river 2 hours 12 minutes later on his single speed, the winner. The first horse trail rider got back late for supper.

It happened every October since then and has become the oldest mountain bike event on the planet earth. What's the secret? Many fat tire events started before the Road Apple Rally, such as the Romp Stomper in Santa Rose, California. The secret is cooperation and community. The Road Apple Rally has never had a large Corporate Sponsor, and gets no money from anywhere other than entry fees.

People and organizations in the Farmington and Durango area contribute time, materials and equipment for the event. The local BLM office and the City of Farmington Administration have worked tirelessly with the Velo de Animas bike club to do it. So you see, the sum of the Road Apple Rally is greater than all the people and parts that make it up.

(The Early years)

1981-1985. The Race was held the third Sunday in October. It was staged, started and finished at the Browning camp on La Plata River in west Farmington . The course took the riders down the La Plata river and went north up the west Glade Ridge down and around Farmington Lake then westward across Glade and followed itself back to Browning camp.

The majority of riders were from Durango, Farmington ,Cortez and Gallup. A few people from Phoenix, Albuquerque, and Denver started showing up in 1984 and 1985.

The Road Apple Rally was one of the first races sanctioned by Norba after it's founding by Glenn Odell in 1983.

Jeff Norman won in 1981 and 1982. A fellow by the name of Ned Overend won in 1983-- the first race he ever entered.

The women started racing in 1984 and Schwinn rider Mary Lee Atkins won it. She also won in 1985 and 1986. Some of the other well known riders from that era were the Cook Brothers, Steve and Don from Crested Butte, Robert Gregorio from Durango, David Kinsey from the Farmington area and Lisa Muhich from Durango.

In 1981 and 1982 the post race celebration was at Browning Camp, and in 1983 through 1989 it was held at "Cliff Clark's Place". Beer and BBQ and Camaraderie in unlimited supply.

(1986-1991 The Middle years)

By 1986 the event had grown to around 150 riders each with two or three supporting friends. The porta pottys were full, parking was iffy and horse people and bikers were elbow to flank. We needed flushing toilets, big parking and a large open staging area.

The "start/finish" was moved to San Juan College's north parking area. The gym was open for rest rooms, water and changing clothes. With extension cords we had electricity to the registration and finish area to run computers. Tents, tables, chairs, cords, banners, a Huffly toss, slow bike race (only 10 feet--last one to put a foot down wins), radio remotes, TV cameras; a real line happening.

A Citizen ride or Tour was started for all the folks who wanted to ride not race. A young fellow named John Tomac showed up to give Overend, Norman, Miller, the Cook Brothers, and Greg Herbold some competition.

1990 was the only year this was held in September. This was done because the first UCI Mountain bike world championships were happening September 14th and 15th at Purgatory ski area north of Durango, Colorado. The 1990 Road Apple Rally was held Sunday, September 8th.

Teams from all the European Countries, Central and South America, Australia and Canada showed up. Ken Terry, the Road Apple announcer, got quite a workout pronouncing German, French, Russian, Scandinavian, Mexican and Brazilian names. 1990 was also the closest most exciting finish ever. Tomac, Overend, Price went off the front midway through the race as they pulled out of the glade up on to the La Plata ridge and back into the Glade. They hung together the eight or so miles along the ridges and back into the Glade. John Tomac and Ned Overend dropped Daryl Price up Hood Mesa.

The final half mile was paved corning into the College with a hard left onto the last 100 feet to the finish line. Ned Overend's road racing savvy paid off as he sucked John Tomac's wheel into the turn and then launched his sprint, beating Tomac by less than a bike length.

The crowd was going crazy and the video of the sprint made the 10:00 clock news in Albuquerque and Las Cruces, New Mexico. The post race party at Clark's continued but the neighbors were complaining.

(1992-Present The Mature years)

By 1992 Farmington had expanded its neighborhoods far enough that the city Fathers decided to build a highway by-pass north of town, cutting the trail from the College into the Glade.

Tom Taylor, the Mayor and long time Road Apple Rally rider said it was not practical to close the flow of traffic. He suggested moving the staging area to the new Lions Wilderness Park Amphitheater. It has flushing toilets, running water and electricity, commercial cooking and serving facilities, and a large covered area with tables and chairs.

The Road Apple Rally has become an event-- not just a local race. An old time single speed class was started in 1993 by Robert Conyors, pro 1980 frame, 26 inch wheels, single piece cranks and 36 spokes per wheel.

Greg Herbold tapes eight extra spokes onto the chain stay to stay legal. Two or three single speed riders like John Tomac, Greg Herbold, or Bob Gregorio always finish in the top 20 for overall time beating some pros and most of the top elite and expert riders. Bob has raced 17 of the 18 years and his son races as well.

The citizens tour is a gentle 8-12 mile loop and camaraderie. Live classical guitarist, Fashion Bike show, punch, cookies and fresh flowers are found somewhere on the town trail.

After the 2000 Road Apple Rally the organizers petitioned the City of Farmington Parks and Recreation Department to take over the operations of the Road Apple Rally and in 2001 the City of Farmington took over the operation of the Road Apple Rally.

On October 2, 2010 the Road Apple Rally will be 30 years old, we hope to see you at the oldest continually run mountain bike race in the United States on the first Saturday of October.