

Riding Around the Bay Area Roads



Hicks Road (Camden Side and Alamos Side)
June 16th, 2007

I loved climbing Hicks Road. It was close, challenging, and when I was younger it was a silky smooth road. Even as I got stronger I still loved coming back here. I would challenge myself to climb it faster or locked in a particular gear. There was very little traffic because there was nothing out in the area. In addition to the main climb, there are several other roads that you can turn off onto and climb until they reach a dead end or take you to nearby Los Gatos. Besides, the scenery is beautiful!



Hicks is a different place today. As more and more people move into San Jose, there is less and less space. The rich and wealthy have begun to move out of the city and into the hills. There are monuments to personal wealth are everywhere. What was once a beautiful area with soft rolling terrain is now becoming suburbia. Expensive Mercedes Benz, Audi, and Cadillac cars zip up and down the road. The saddest sight was this security camera pole. What are people thinking nowadays? Can we say, “paranoia”?



As the climb progresses, the monuments begin to thin out until they almost disappear. The quiet rural road that I remember appears and the climb kicks up in earnest. There's only thing to watch out for and that's an old cattle guard. I have known people ride over this thing and fall really hard. One woman in my old cycling club broke her neck after crashing on the cattle guard. Don't take your chances here. Slow down to gentle 10 MPH, slide back on your saddle, and lift your butt up. You'll feel like you're riding over nine little curbs!



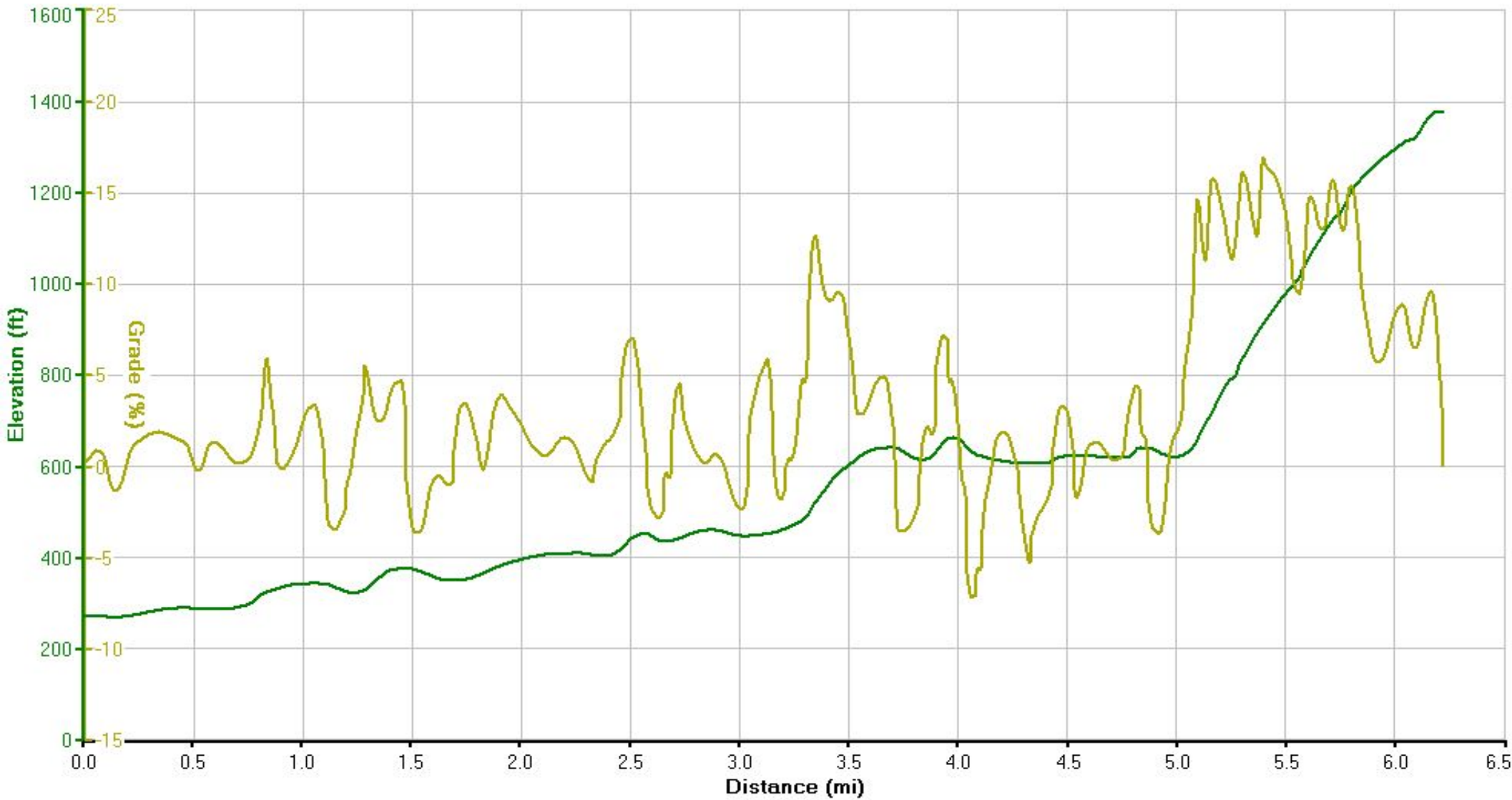
Eventually you'll reach the summit. There's a stop sign and a four way intersection. To the left and the right of the summit is an open space preserve as it's called. There are lot of old dirt roads that are used for fire services should a blaze break out. They used to be offlimits to mountain bikers but now they are open to everyone. You'll find cars parked in a nearby parking lot. Off in the distance you'll see Mount Umunhum. Yes, that's how it's really spelled. I don't know what it means but you can see an old abandoned satellite and radar base at the top. It's a relic from the cold war.



After taking a break, descend down the other side of Hicks Road to Alamitos Road. It's a steep decent with lots of hard turns and dark shadows. You won't see the potholes but you'll certainly feel them as they knock you around. Take it easy with the speed. Likewise, do the same on the decent back to Camden and watch out for those cattle guards!



Now let's look at the profiles. First up is Hicks from Camden. It starts off very gentle and belies the steep but short onslaught near the summit. The starting elevation was a scant 270 feet and the summit peaks at around 1372 feet. Over a distance of 6.23 miles, this ascent of 1102 feet gives you an average grade of 3.35%



The ascent from the Alamitos side is ridiculously short at only 1.67 miles but you gain some serious elevation in that distance. A starting elevation of 605 feet and a final elevation of 1346 feet reported by the Garmin, you get an ascent of 741 feet! That equates to a whopping 8.40% average grade!

