

Trips Awheel: Where to Go and How to Get There

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Cycle Route 3 (1897-1898 series)

The New Road to Atlantic City.

N. B.—For brevity's sake, R is used in these Trips Awheel for "right," or "on the right;" L for "left," or "on the left," and X for "crossing," or "crossroads."

To enjoy a trip awheel to Atlantic City, "first catch your hare," that is, first catch some such day as last Tuesday with a regular gale blowing from the N. W.; if you break records under such circumstances your performance will be no credit to you, of course; but if you be "on pleasure bent," it will prove an exquisitely delightful experience and a source of pleasant memories for after-enjoyment.

By way of inducing others to "go and do likewise" at the first opportunity let me add that, at a low calculation, we coasted on and off for more than 20 miles out of 59, on that aforesaid Tuesday.

THEN AND NOW.

The idea of coasting to Atlantic City! The young cyclist little knows how ludicrous the very words would have sounded a short time back to the older members of the wheeling community. Is he aware that, a few years ago, the recognized route to Atlantic City (and how few patronized it!) lay through Gloucester, Woodbury, Mullica Hill, Woodstown, through 11 miles of sand to Deerfield, thence to Bridgeton, Millville, North Dennis, Seaville, Beesley's Point (by boat to) Somer's Point and thence at last to Atlantic City—a tedious circuit of 100 miles from the Public Buildings, rendered necessary by the fact that the direct road, south of Hammonton, was practically closed to us and a veritable terror even to horse drivers?

In order to obviate this during the summer of 1894 I boomed the "short-cut route" to the shore, which left the wagon road at Hammonton, and followed the narrow sand-and-gravel gutter by the side of the Reading Railroad track, all the way to Pleasantville, reducing the distance to practically what it is now —58 miles. Alas, no sooner had our wheels begun to roll the path smooth and hard than a fresh bed of clinkers was laid on the track; a quantity of these fiendish clinkers seemed to make it their business to roll off the track on each side, and there was an end to our path.

Just then somebody suggested another way of crossing the sandy desert, via Gloucester, Woodbury, Mantua, Barnesboro, Pitman Grove, Glassboro, Clayton, Franklinville, Malaga (the last 10 miles having mostly to be walked), Buena Vista, Richland, Mizpah, May's Landing, McKee City, Pleasantville, in all 66 miles, mostly of sand. Those who survived the ordeal of that route could be counted on the fingers of one's hands, and were still praying for its sponsor, Veteran H. McAllister, when last heard from.

Last year we had resigned ourselves to the inevitable and had adopted a 78-mile detour as the only chance left us to wheel to the sea; it followed our present route to Hammonton (see map) and there struck out by way of New Columbia, Batsto, Green Bank, Wading River, New Gretna, Port Republic, Smithville, Oceanville and Absecon.

This season a new state of things had come into existence which our wildest dreams did not anticipate. True, the royal avenue that now invites us to Philadelphia-by-the-Sea and which was first mapped out and described in the Inquirer last fall is not quite complete yet; a missing link is still wanting between the stone road which ends at Berlin and the new gravel road that connects Hammonton with Absecon, but the excellent condition in which these two roads are should be more than sufficient to make us bear patiently the discomfort of the few intervening miles.

THE START.

The White Horse pike is our first objective point. The readiest way for us Philadelphians to strike it ought to be through Camden, and our cycling brethren across the Delaware are doing their utmost to secure us at least one decent passageway across their city; until they have succeeded, however, and while giving them full credit for their noble endeavors, I consider it a duty to advise every cyclist to shun Camden's horrible pavement and to take the ferry at the foot of South street direct for Gloucester. Pine street takes you almost down to the ferry house—take care you don't go headlong into the Kaighn's point ferry, next door to it—and ask for an excursion ticket; the return half is available at any time in any number of years.

Just one block above the Gloucester ferry house, turn R into Jersey Avenue, which, after a short stretch of Belgian blocks, merges into the Woodbury pike. At the toll-house (about 1 m.) give your destination as the Blackwoodtown road or Browning's lane, and you will be mulcted to the extent of only one cent for using the Woodbury pike as far as yonder railroad crossing.

Immediately beyond the latter, turn L down a new, smooth stone road, (this is Browning's lane), straight on, past Bell Mawr Station (3 ½ m.) and across the Blackwoodtown road, a quarter of a mile ahead.

Beyond this point the roadbed is not macadam; none the less it is quite good and brings us comfortably by Lawnside railroad station to the White Horse pike at a point a little above the colored church, north of Greenland and 6 m. from Gloucester ferry. Take this church with its tiny cemetery as a landmark for future reference. We turn R into the pike, of course.

THE WHITE HORSE PIKE.

This fine highway is such a cyclers' paradise that we must give it a special map and description of its own later on; to-day, we shall just hustle through the first half of our trip to the sea, if you please.

This first village we come to presently is Greenland, with Magnolia on our right; notice the commencement of the Cyclers' Rests and Wheelmen's Retreats that will border our path all the way to the shore.

And the road is so easy that in a few minutes we are at the White Horse Inn, the favorite resort of thousands of cyclists throughout the year. Kirkwood is the official designation of the

postoffice and R. R. station, but, with us roadsters, the White Horse is the popular name of the place. It is 9 m. from Gloucester ferry and 11m. from Camden ferry.

One mile farther is another rendezvous for many a short club run, Laurel Springs. Follow this nice pike, of course; several of those uninviting turnings R and L will come under our notice when we come this way again for a leisurely ramble; the country is not quite flat hereabouts, but who cares for such rises with such a surface to ride over?

After a little meandering by the side of a cemetery, our road is crossed, T fashion, by the Haddonfield and Berlin pike; we bear R into Berlin and when our cyclometers register 14 ½ m. from start, our stone road comes to an end, at the present date.

THAT MISSING LINK.

Between this town and Hammonton is where the missing link to which I have alluded already is still sadly wanting.

Bearing L at the bifurcation lies a wretched waste of sand that stretches its ugly length towards Hammonton by way of Waterford; straight on before us is the old original Camden pike, through Wilton and Blue Anchor, with which we are all familiar; it is not anything like a racing track, but desultory efforts have been and are being made to improve it. It is said that \$5000 would be sufficient to repair it thoroughly, whereas it would take from \$12,000 up to make the Waterford road; the residing population and the daily traffic along the old road are considerably greater than along the Waterford wilderness, the distance is shorter and in spite of all this an unseemly wrangle has been going on for the past year as to which of the roadways would get the State appropriation. Strange (isn't it?) how public money is juggled with when personal interests are at stake?

Until the matter is satisfactorily settled let us make the best we can of Hobson's choice; it's only a little over 12 miles to Hammonton, anyway; and the sidepath on the left of the road is quite enticing; follow it, past this bicycle repair shop L, and further where it crosses and recrosses the road; why, here we are at Wilton already; notice the crossing at McCully's "Wilton Hotel," L to Medford, R to Williamstown, but don't try either for pleasure alone.

The roadway is improving in the section, yet the path is your best friend; cling to it for the present.

Look out for that nasty black cinders railroad X at Cedar Brook Station (about 20 miles); if you are not familiar with it and with the short rise beyond it, it will repay you to walk these few yards.

BLUE ANCHOR (OR ANKER?).

Less than 23 miles from start we reach the Blue Anchor Hotel, and long before we get to the top of the hill we can hear Landlord Crowley proclaiming it from the housetop that his doors are open to wheelmen "at any hour of the day or of the night that they choose to pull the latchstring;" and some of us know this is no bluff, either. By the way, I have an idea that the blazing blue anchor on that sign is a huge fake, do you know? I rather guess the original article was not an anchor at all, blue, green or yellow, but an old-fashioned big-bellied "anker," a

measure greatly used both by our English and Dutch forefathers and containing from 8 to 10 gallons of brandy, rum, etc. How does the suggestion strike you?

Right here at the hotel, take care to bear L; the R fork might possibly take you to Weymouth and May's Landing—not awheel, however.

The hollow just past the hotel has, for years, been responsible for a great deal of very loud and highly reprehensible language, among all kinds of wayfarers I fear. I have Road Overseer Hunter's word for it that its improvement in one shape or other is now only a question of a few days. A vote of thanks to Mr. Hunter!

As we emerge from the woods a couple of miles farther, beyond Winslow Inn, you may remark a hamlet on R away from the road. It is what is left of the once prosperous village of Winslow, the location of some of the earliest glassworks in this country.

The station on L is not Winslow, but Winslow Junction—an important connecting centre for Northern New Jersey and New York. For the cinder path L and the clay path R beyond the railroad tracks we are indebted to the employees of the brickyard here on R. Such friends as these are worth having.

Beware of a treacherous railroad trench half a mile further; listen for approaching trains as you draw near it; seeing them in time to save yourself from them is out of the question.

A mile ahead, at Rosedale Station (27 m.), cross the railroad track to the left and turn R alongside of it, immediately after, when a mile of a comfortable path brings us to an important X, marked Thirteenth street.

HAMMONTON.

In front of us stands a considerable building, the Fruit Growers' Union store, R to Folsom 3 m., L to Atsion.

At this X keep straight on, as straight as the crooked intersection of the roads will allow you. Keep the railroad track on L as far as the station; cross it there and wheel R into the very first road beyond it; there is but one house between the two.

Hammonton (28 ¼ m.) is quite a town in its way and the center of one of the busiest fruit-growing districts in the State.

It seems to have been the site of an Indian settlement in days ago, if we may judge from the petrified canoe, the hatchet and other relics discovered in the vicinity in the course of last year. We may have leisurely look at the place some day.

THE NEW GRAVEL ROAD.

To-day we are curious to see the much-talked-of new county road constructed from this place to Absecon last summer and fall. Why some people keep calling it a bicycle path I fail to understand; a bicycle "path" varying in width from 60 to 100 feet seems a kind of novelty.

It was completed, unfortunately, just in time to be cut up by rough usage during the winter, and those of us who travelled it a month ago must have been sadly disappointed at its appearance; since then, however, Contractor Bartilucci has had it scraped and rolled over, and it is just now in excellent condition.

Who would think that this was the very section (between Hammonton and Elwood) that compelled us, up to this very year, to go 20 miles or more out of our way in search of a path seaward.

Three-quarters of a mile beyond Hammonton Station we notice L the entrance to the local race track, and a short distance farther we get a peep at one end (not the prettiest) of Hammonton Lake.

A little farther still, the old road made a slight detour; you may see it there, a narrow sandy lane, on your left; the contractor of the new one comes from a country where the first road makers in Europe demonstrated, ages ago, that the shortest link between any two given points is the straight line, and he seems to be a close imitator of his ancestors; see how remarkably straight we journey henceforth.

Two and a half miles out, that lane through the woods would bring us to Da Costa Station; this other, R also, three-fourths mile farther goes to East Hammonton. Right here a Cyclers' Hotel is about being erected, which will be "owned, managed and controlled by cyclists, for cyclists."

And six and a half miles from Hammonton Station we reach Elwood at a crossing, L to Batsto, R to Weymouth.

EGG HARBOR CITY.

Travellers can't complain of lack of hotel accommodation on Sunday in the next town on our itinerary, for as a matter-of-fact Egg Harbor City keeps her roadside houses wide open on every one of the seven days in the week.

Let me recommend an out and home trip to this hustling little city, as good preparation for a full century run. It is forty miles, in round numbers, from Gloucester ferry; those eighty miles will just do to start training with, and will make up a pleasant trip besides.

At the X opposite Zimmer's American Hotel the turn L goes to Lower Bank or to Green Bank; R to May's Landing; we keep straight on.

That large new building R is a public school; it is not in every town of this size you can see so much interest shown in the cause of education.

Close by, R also, are well-known fair grounds. Don't you think there will be just a few wheelmen here at the September Fair this year?

ON TO ABSECON.

We spin merrily along and can't help noticing, en passant, that the gravel supplied for our road by the various localities is not always of the same quality. Can it be that the "cent wise and dollar foolish" system is still in vogue in certain small corners of this planet?

If there be variety in our road material, there is but little in our surroundings; but we are only too thankful to have such an easy ride, and we gladly waive and rest.

Germania and Cologne are close by on our right; and here we are at Pomona (45 m.). The ancient Roman goddess of fruit trees must feel quite at home among the truck farms of New Jersey.

Note turn L to Port Republic 5 m., and R to May's Landing.

A sign by the side of the school R tells us that the highway we are travelling on has been christened Agassiz avenue, a delicate compliment to the world-known Swiss naturalist and professor at Cambridge, Mass., who died some time before our Centennial Exhibition. Take care you refrain from sounding the z in that name or you would find a silent rebuke in the inscription on another road sign that we passed by at Elwood, where Agassiz is phonetically spelled "Agassey."

Less than 6 miles ahead, a conspicuous notice warns bicyclers to "keep off the sidewalk under penalty of \$5." This is Absecon if you please; yonder is Absecon Creek; that road converging from L with our own comes from Tuckerton, Barnegat, Tom's River, etc.; we may take it some day on a coastwise ramble to Asbury Park and Long Branch.

We bear R over the creek; the pike from this to Pleasantville is usually in good condition; at the end of 2 ½ miles, opposite Dr. Friek's pharmacy in Pleasantville, we turn sharp L across the meadows, and if the next five miles are somewhat bumpy we think the less of it as we are so near our destination.

At the end of this turnpike turn L into Baltic avenue for a couple of blocks, then R into Missouri avenue, and you strike Atlantic avenue, the main thoroughfare of Atlantic City, at the corner of the Reading depot, having covered in all a distance of 59 miles from Gloucester ferry to [this] very spot.