

Trips Awheel: Where to go and how to get there

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Cycle Route 9 (1897-98 Series.)

Three Roads from Princeton to New York City (a Sequel to Trips 1 and 2)

Our Trips Nos. 1 and 2 have brought us as far as Princeton on our way to New York.

We go straight out along the main street; the road surface may not seem quite up to the standard of the Lawrenceville pike; yet what an improvement it is on what awaited us here not very long ago!

The landscape all around us as we leave the town behind us speaks well for the taste of those who first located the College of New Jersey right here.

Those two steeples on yonder height ahead of us belong to Kingston.

KINGSTON AND VICINITY.

See this bridge bearing date 1708; it spans the Millstone River; and this little town is Kingston. The large numbers of Kingstons and Kingstones and Kingtons on the map of a certain "tight little island" on the other side of the Atlantic, often reminds me of the perplexity our forefathers were in when Byrom wrote:

"God bless the King! I mean our faith's defender.
God bless, – there is not harm in blessing, – the pretender!
But who pretender is, and who is King?
God bless us all, that's quite another thing!"

Our troubles don't lie in that direction; still the legion of banners and signs that proclaim an "Imperial" this, and a "Royal" that, and a "Regal" something else in the Republic of ours, would make a Napoleonic eagle fairly shriek with delight; are we not inconsistent?

No hills in New Jersey? Well some wayfarers there are, who preserve a lasting recollection of this one at Kingston; it may be, however, this it's steepness is blended in their memory with the poor condition of the road beyond it.

Take a note, on top of the hill, of this turn R to Monmouth Junction, Dayton and Jamesburg. If you look at the map, you will see that this other turn L would lead us to the very road we shall fall into by-and-by. We had better keep straight on, although the next two or three miles are likely to tax your patience to a considerable extent; let it be a consolation to you that this is the only really poor stretch in our whole trip, and that the days of its present condition are said to be numbered.

Three-quarters of a mile beyond Kingston hill, take great care to bear L, the fork R would bring you to the old New Brunswick turnpike, and might possibly be recommended to you as the most direct road by some well-intentioned native; alas for good intentions! I did "travel" that direct road once; rode it? No, sir.

Put this hill down on your notebook as Ten Mile Run Mountain; some people call it Rocky Hill ; it is undoubtedly rocky, but the real hill of that name where Washington had one of his many headquarters and whence he wrote his farewell address to the American army, November 2, 1783, is on our left.

After a couple of miles' toiling, a tiny path comes to our assistance; the road itself gets a little better, and we strike Euington Farm (7 m) and turn R into the Rocky Hill and New Brunswick road our troubles are over, unless the weather has been wet, for we are in the red shale country.

A couple of turns R to Monmouth Junction and to Sand Hill respectively, another to Deans with Richardson's Cyclers' Rest at the corner, and here we are in Franklin Park, a favorite halting place with the coaching parties between our city and New York. We, however, have no need of changing horses, our trusty mounts will stand any number of 100 miles easy; and the attractions of this village are not such as to fascinate us.

Between the hotel and the church, that turn L would take you to Millstone; keep straight on past turns L to Blackwell's Mills and Middlebush and R to various portions of the aforesaid undesirable pike, and five and one-half miles' easy riding brings you to a bifurcation in sight of New Brunswick.

NEW BRUNSWICK.

Bear to the right, follow the trolley cars into French street, then cross the railroad X, curve into Albany street and down to the Raritan River (17 m.)

The handsome panorama which we view from the bridge reminds me that this locality was once known as "The River," nor did it acquire its present name until about 1730 when a number of German families, from the Duchy of Brunswick (or Braunschweig as they call it in the old country) settled right here. "Braunsweig" means "Bruno's cattle-shed." New Brunswick lacks the legends of Bruno and many another; none the less it has a charming location, a population of nearly 20,000 and the oldest College in New Jersey, next to Princeton University. Rutgers College, now boasting 350 students, was founded here in 1770; our own University of Pa. just beats it by thirty years.

By the way, the first railroad company ever chartered in Pennsylvania – the Philadelphia and Columbia R. R., 1823 – was very near being antedated right here. As early as 1815 the New Jersey Legislature granted a charter for the construction of a railroad from the Delaware River, near Trenton to the Raritan at or near New Brunswick; but the road was never built and the charter was forfeited.

A BILLIARD TABLE.

We climb up this sharp rise away from the river, by Highland Park, and now for an ideal ride all the way to Metuchen.

At the bifurcation $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the Raritan, bear L; the fork R goes to Piscataway and Bonhamtown, and in the event of your going to New York by way of Staten Island (as will be suggested by and by) this looks like a more direct route on the map; it is by no means the better; what could be better indeed than this gently rolling stone pike, as smooth and easy as the proverbial billiard table.

In a few moments we have covered $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Brunswick and notice a pretty high bridge over the Pennsylvania R. R. on our left; let us go over it and down on the other side; Metuchen lies chiefly on our R., but this road leads us to an important crossing which I wish you to find without any difficulty.

METUCHEN, AN IMPORTANT CROSSING.

We pass under another railroad bridge (this time it is the Lehigh Valley Railroad) and presently come to a crossing with Craig's grocery store at one corner, where Middlesex avenue, which we have been following, intersects with the main street. Here we stop for a little consultation.

Call this town "Me-touch-en;" the name is of Indian origin, of course, and is believed to mean "greatly raised land," the general level of the township being the highest between Trenton and New York; and a charming location Metuchen proper can boast.

A number of little round trips, with not a few touches of historic interest, may be taken from this town as a centre; to-day we are chiefly concerned with three roads radiating from this very crossing and converging towards our present destination. Let us survey each of the three; the first, my great favorite, I went over on the 4th inst.

(1) NEW YORK VIA STATEN ISLAND.

We turn sharp R into Main street. As we do so, the Hotel Brunswick is pretty sure to attract our attention. Coaching parties, commercial travelers and wheelmen galore from our city have long made it their regular stopping place; some people know a good thing when they see it.

Then under the bridge at the station (here a turn L to Woodbridge, which is being piked in patches from year to year), up the rise beyond it and on as far as the crossroad by Mead's store; on R notice a post directing you to New Durham; we wheel sharp L into Amboy avenue.

The prospect ahead may be disappointing to you, especially if you happen to strike this red shale after rain; let me hasten to say that by next fall the whole distance between this and Perth Amboy will be stone-piked, and even at this date you will find one mile of it completed at the other end.

For the present we cling to our friend, the path (don't use it till we pass the last house, for, until then, it is called a "sidewalk" and is forbidden us); and with its help we make Bloomfield's Corners (23 m.), where we are joined on R by the Bonhamtown – Piscataway road we noticed on leaving New Brunswick. Straight on we keep through Ford's ($\frac{3}{4}$ m. ahead); we bear R at the bifurcation (28 m.) on the outskirts of Perth Amboy, straight on to the Hotel Central, where we bear L into Smith street, and the latter takes us down to the ferry-house in the city of Perth Amboy (29 m.).

A CYCLER'S PARADISE.

Here a ferryboat (fare 5c.) is ready every 45 minutes or thereabouts, to take us across Arthur Kill to Tottenville, S. I.

At Tottenville we go straight up from the ferry, pass various turnings, until we reach the very top of the hill, where Amboy avenue meets our road, T fashion. Turn L into it, and now prepare yourselves for another ideal ride.

Little Staten Island is, from end to end, a veritable pleasure ground; every second house by the roadside is a place of entertainment; a park of some kind or other greets you at every turn, and the smooth stone road, often bordered with old shade trees that skirts the ocean, the whole length of the island, could not be surpassed in a cyclers' Eden.

We coast down to Richmond Valley or Kreischerville and glide through Pleasant Plains and Huguenot. At Annadale (34 m.) the L fork goes to Richmond, and so does almost every turn on our L along this road; we bear R through Eltingville and Gifford's, and this next town is New Dorp.

New Dorp is Dutch, of course, for "New Village;" and by the way, "Staten" Island has nothing to do with our United "States;" it was so named by the old Dutch pioneers in honor of Their High Mightinesses the States General of the United Netherlands.

Through Garretson of Grant City we keep on the even tenor of our way to Concord (42 m.). Here at the bifurcation opposite a confectionery on R, do not follow the car track; the road R is much better.

1 ¼ m. farther, our road is crossed by Bay street, opposite Johnson's Bicycle Repair Shop; on R of Clifton; on L, Stapleton. We turn L; the traffic is heavy here, and the road very different from the one we have just left; but we are practically at the end of our Journey.

Three-quarters of a mile more and we are at the fountain in the main street of Tompkinsville, and the same distance will take us to the ferry boat.

Turn R at the fountain for half a block, L up Central avenue to where the trolley cars cross your path; follow the track R and as you do so, watch for a reddish-brown fence R, one corner of which you may see labeled "Stuyvesant Place;" follow the fence and the stone wall that presently succeeds it down to the waterside (behind that enclosure is the United States Central Lighthouse Depot), and there you are at St. George Railroad Station where you will take the ferry boat to the Battery, New York (fare 10c.).

The 88 miles (to use round figures) that we have covered constitute undoubtedly the easiest route from Philadelphia to New York.

The great objection to the two others is that both land you at Newark, ten miles from the end of your ride, Jersey city; and the condition of those 10 m. is such that even local wheelmen are in the habit of covering the distance by train.

(2) NEW YORK VIA PLAINFIELD AND ELIZABETH.

This is the longest route (practically 100 miles to Jersey City), but an excellent ride as far as Newark.

At our crossroad at Metuchen, we turn L; 1 ½ m. out, turn L again by the side of a soft-drink parlor and after 4 m. of easiest pedaling we are in Park avenue, Plainfield; at the end of the avenue (29 m.), wheel sharp R (L to Dunellen and Boundbrook); and our course is direct, past the handsome station at Netherwood and on thro Fanwood to Westfield.

Here, at the railroad, turn sharp R by the church and straight out to Cranford (36 m.).

Did you ever remark what a number of place-names commencing with "Cran" occur in certain sections of the map of Great Britain? The large flocks of cranes with which some of those districts abound every year (the marches of Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire for instance) account for the naming of not a few localities; our "Cranford" right here is quite unconnected with the Gruin genus of the bird kingdom. It was originally Craneville and was so christened after an early settler named Crane.

We follow our good pike in it zigzagging through the village and out of it over the Rahway River.

Aldene, Roselle and Lorraine are passed in quick succession. The latter was started about the time that Lorraine was annexed to the German Empire, some twenty-six years ago; hence its designation.

Of El Mora and Colonia we just get a glimpse, and we strike Elizabeth at the intersection of Broad street with Westfield avenue almost 41 m. from Princeton.

ELIZABETH, NEWARK.

The name of Sir George Carteret must be familiar to you in connection with the early history of this State. It was after his wife, Lady Elizabeth, that this place is named. This city was incorporated as a borough two years before Philadelphia was founded; indeed this was the first settlement made in New Jersey by Englishmen, for the land was purchased from the Indians by a company styled the Elizabethtown Associates, as early as 1664.

We turn L into North Broad street, follow the trolley track and watch for the Boulevard, a wide macadamized thoroughfare on our R, which takes us direct to Newark (46 ½ m.).

Of the balance of our journey through the swamps of the Passaic and the Hackensack, I would rather say nothing more than what I have already stated; who knows what the future may have in store for us?

(3) NEW YORK VIA RAHWAY AND ELIZABETH.

For a third route radiating from our aforementioned crossing at Metuchen, we keep straight along Middlesex avenue, in the direction of the finger post, which tells us that Rahway is 6 ¾ m. away.

No stone road here, alas (although it is looming on the golden horizon we are told); it's a case, for the present, of path-riding by the side of a shale road.

One mile out, a post invites you to make a detour R towards Rahway; don't do so; both roads meet again presently, and ours is the better of the two; I ought to have said "the less bad" of the two, perhaps, for as we near Menlo Park (24 ½ m.) it becomes very poor indeed.

Half a mile beyond Menlo Park, bear R under bridge (there is no post; L to New Dover) and immediately beyond the bridge turn L.

Here and there the roadway improves and is rideable in places, as we pass Iselin Station (26 ½ m.), but these fitful gleams of sunshine are so unreliable that we feel relieved when at the end of another couple of miles we reach an important railroad crossing, run across the tracks and turn L, by the side of them into Rahway.

At the Second Presbyterian Church in the city of Rahway (29 ¾ m.) follow trolley cars; turn L with them at Trinity M. E. Church, then R across railroad tracks, past the postoffice and on to their present terminus opposite Lambert's Hotel. All this is good riding, but cannot be compared to what awaits you when you turn sharp R at the hotel (straight on you would go to Westfield) and face towards Elizabeth.

This portion of the trip I traveled, six weeks ago, and even at that early date the road literally swarmed with cyclists; and no wonder.

At the Wheatsheaf Hotel (33 ½ m.) a signboard still proclaims that this was the Third Relay point of the Tri-State 150 mile relay race of June 8, 1985.

Two and half miles ahead we bear R on Belgian blocks under a railroad bridge, and a quarter of a mile further we strike Broad street, Elizabeth, turn L into it and soon reach its intersection with Westfield avenue (36 ½ m.) when we started for Newark in the preceding route.

A.E.