

Trips Awheel: Where to Go and How to Get There

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Cycle Route No. 27 (1897-98 Series)

The Blackwood Pike and The New Road to Glassboro. With a Possible Round Trip Combining the Two, and Suggestions for Shorter Ones.

Two nearby New Jersey roads have been frequently mentioned of late among our cycling community, the Mt. Ephraim or Blackwoodtown pike and the new road from Westville to Glassboro.

The former has been holding out to us the bright promise of an A1 cycleway, with a path on each side, a royal avenue to Grenloch Park, etc.; and meanwhile a portion of it has been largely used by us to avoid the horrors of Haddon Avenue, Camden, on our way to the White Horse pike.

The construction of the latter and its recent completion have been watched with keen interest by travelers to Glassboro and points south thereof, as it saves them from the toll and ups and downs of the Glassboro and Mantua pike.

I ran over both of them this week, and, by making a connection between Fairview and Blackwoodtown (see map), I described a little round trip which may "come in handy" for my readers some day.

A number of other short round trips may be made by combining these two main roads, and still more by adding the White Horse pike in the network.

TO GLASSBORO (NEW STYLE).

We take the South street ferry to Gloucester, as we have done before; ride out Jersey avenue, tell the tollgate keeper our destination is Westville, and the two cents we give him constitute our only toll expense as far as Glassboro.

We pass our popular Browning's lane on L. and we are in Westville in a trice (2 m.). That branch R would take you to Washington Park and the Paulsboro, and (by subsequent turn R) to Red Bank, where the battle of 1777 is to be commemorated on the 21st. of the month; and it may be you have often come to Newbold, yonder on R also, to enjoy a little skating in winter.

The main pike goes ahead to Woodbury, as you can remember (see Trip Awheel No. 12); we take the L fork; that is where our new road begins, and a good little stone road it is; wants a little watering just now; who or what has not felt dry, of late?

Half a mile out a turning L invites you to Almonesson; don't take it even if you wish to go to that place; you can do better by coming straight along for 2 ½ miles more to this other crossing, distinguished at present by a trolley track and a lonely chimney standing among a wreck of brick and stones; where, if you turn L, you'll strike Almonesson at the end of 1 ½ miles. Woodbury lies also 1 ½ m. away from us but on R.

At the X, 1 3/4 miles farther, your love of the straight line would surely not induce you to keep right ahead into that sandy track. The signpost says it would bring you to "Tanyard 2 1/2 m." Does not that modest poster, with the two single words "Dress Making," look quaint in this uninhabited wilderness of sand, grass and brush?

A VERY FAIR VIEW.

We follow our good road to the left; from dead level as it was at starting, it now becomes rolling, and when we read the old-style "Six Points," we are not surprised at its more modern designation. "Fairview," a very fair if not extensive view, encircled by a pleasing girt of woods, presenting itself to us at this point (8 3/4 m. from Gloucester ferry).

Should you wish to make this your turning point for home, take the second of the two turnings on L., or, better still, wait for us until we run to Glassboro and back here again.

A GRAND FINISH.

The road we have been following was part of old Woodbury road to Cross Keys; see it making a bee-line for the latter from this point; we bear R and just glide into Hurffville (11 1/2 m.).

Turnings to right of us, turnings to the left of us, to Sewell and Barnsboro, to Grenloch and Turnersville, and Five Points bue ne'er a one to use awheel, I fear.

See those boys coasting down the hill from yonder church? There was very little riding and considerably less coasting in this vicinity, just a few months ago, before the road was stoned. Little Hurffville looks all the neater, too for this smooth and trim thoroughfare.

How is this for a New Jersey hill, confronting us as we leave the village? Why, the surface is so smooth we almost pass this turn to the ubiquitous Five Points without noticing it; it would have been no great loss anyhow.

By the way, would not the enormous number of Five Points we meet in our rambles suggest that the Chinese element was not altogether absent among those who first laid out this big country of ours?

Five is held the luckiest of all lucky numbers, you know, in the so-called Celestial Empire.

That turn R into Mantua just a few yards farther is not inviting; nor is that one L to Cross keys, 1/2 mile ahead.

This other one on R (11 3/4 m. from start) looks better; it would take you to Pitman Grove, but it has been stoned only for a short distance; anyhow the Grove is but a few minutes' ride from here.

We pass on, leave this pretty lake ("Trout Mill Lake," I have heard it called) on L., and 1 1/2 m. farther we are at the hotel crossing in the centre of Glassboro!

The route from this point to Vineland and Cape May has been described in our trips Nos. 12 and 14.

THE CONNECTING LINK.

Now, if you please, we will jump back to Fairview, and take the road south of the house in the angle on our R, which we pointed to on our L when we came down awhile ago.

Be prepared for any kind of riding you may get, for a couple of miles at most. This is one of the old-style New Jersey sand roads, with here and there a spasmodic attempt at graveling. It is not the kind of highway that you would select for a pleasant ride pure and simple, but as a link between two other thoroughfares (as in our present trip). It is quite acceptable; and in a case of emergency, when the spur of necessity smoothes down many a rugged spot, it would prove a welcome means of intercommunication awheel.

Two miles from Fairview, when you find the roadbed modernized, do you see the picturesque ravine on your R, with a broad stream at the bottom? That is Big Timber Creek.

This hamlet is "Good Intent," a name of good omen, if nothing else. The road on L this side of the creek leads to Almonesson, Woodbury or (as a resident informs me) "most any place you want to go to."

In spite of that, however, we must turn out back to it, cross the creek, climb up the hillock beyond it and across the railroad tracks, for our destination is Blackwoodtown (lately curtailed to "Blackwood"), and we strike the centre of it, at the hotel, exactly 2 ½ m. from Fairview.

MT. EPHRAIM AND BLACKWOODTOWN PIKE.

For the benefit of readers who may not follow the itinerary of the round trip suggested here, it may be convenient if the description of the third side of our proposed triangle began at the start of the pike in Camden; I therefore adopt this latter plan.

As shown in our Map. No. 21, the Mt. Ephraim pike begins practically for us at Starr's crossing on Tenth street, Camden. It would be impracticable for us wheelman had not our brethren in Camden constructed by the side of it the good, roomy cycle path now at our disposal.

We thank them mentally for their meritorious labors, and spin away, past the Camden Cemetery and the little Quaker Meeting House on L, past Evergreen Cemetery on R, to the city line, where the pike strictly starts.

Here L to White Horse pike, R to Kaign's Point. We pass by the old tollhouse until we strike the second (not practically the first), where hitherto we paid 4 centers for the privilege of journeying to Blackwoodtown. What will be the result of the case now pending, as regards to the company's right to charge us toll, the future will tell.

I spoke of skating in connection with Newbold awhile ago; doubtless you know this fine sheet of water, Northmount Lake, so-called, here on R. Keep an eye on it, next winter. It's just 5 ½ m. from Camden.

MT. EPHRAIM.

The hill before us is Mt. Ephraim, which gave its name to the village on its summit.

This crossroad, by the hotel 6 ½ m.) might be made the turning point of other little round trips than the one we are now engaged upon.

(1) Are you bound for Gloucester? It is but two miles from this point; turn R, pass by the railroad station, and where the road bifurcates at Jackson House, take the right fork; good riding all the way. It would be much shorter coming to Mt. Ephraim this way (via Gloucester ferry) than the way we came, of course.

(2) If Westville is your destination keep L at Jackson house; the road is poor, but the path will enable you to get there. Don't confound Browning's lane, which you will come across a mile and a quarter from here with the Woodbury pike at Westville; go straight on.

(3) Should you care for an eighteen-mile round trip take the L road. A continuous footpath will take you to the railroad bridge above Haddon Heights Station and 100 yards farther you will strike the White Horse pike.

There is a healthy look about this little Mt. Ephraim. By the way, does not its Hebrew name convey the meaning of "abundant increase, fertility," and the like?

Away we go down this hill and up the next, and past the Henning M. E. Church on our left, and on to this other little toll gate, where you recognize R and L of us the Browning's lane mentioned repeatedly in our previous trips

TO RUNNEMEDE.

We keep straight ahead. You should have seen this road the last time but one that I traveled it, two winters ago, and slid and slipped and yanked my way for three-quarters of a mile to Runnemede, through a regular slough of despond. Would you believe it, seeing us spinning along now?

At the crossroads in this hamlet of Runnemede the turning R goes to Woodbury (5 m.), and the other L to Haddonfield (3 ½ m.) Both roads look utterly uncyclable.

In this direction, on L. is a steep hill where Indians dwelt within memory of local residents still alive a few years since; and, strange as it may seem, they called it "Irish Hill." On the right were little hamlets – Marpool and Wilmington; then the railroad company came and christened the locality at large Runnemede. I would be curious to know what association of ideas brought King John into this section of the globe!

CHEW'S LANDING.

A short distance farther a fair-looking road branches of L to Greenland and a bad one R to Clement's Bridge.

Presently we run down the old landing on Timber Creek and up the hill to Chew's Landing Hotel.

This village grew up around the "Landing" at the head of navigation on Timber Creek, and in the early days of our national troubles no more influential friend of the American cause was there in the said village than Aaron Chew. It now commemorates his name. A body of British dragoons once surrounded

the tavern right here on the hill, for the sole purpose of capturing him. In this they succeeded; and Aaron Chew was send off to the prison ships in New York, but unlike so many others, he survived the unspeakable horrors of his imprisonment, returned to his New Jersey home when the war was over, and, to his dying day, deemed it his "religious" duty to do "all harm and mischief" to King George and his adherents.

Here at the crossroads (10 ½ m. from start), the road goes straight on to Clementon (the best way to get there was indicated in our Trip Awheel No. 5); the turn L would take us to the White Horse pike, about three miles away (an old sand road, slowly yet perceptibly improving in patches, and with the exception of possibly a couple of dismounts, rideable on the whole at the present date).

BLACKWOODTOWN AND GRENLOCH.

Let us follow this gravel road on R. One and one-half mile of easy ups and downs will bring us to Mechanicsville.

Here at the store L to Brown's Ville, 3 m. and to "Pt. Pleasen" (as the sign has it), 3 ¾ m.; R to "Woodbery" (official spelling, likewise); and ¾ mile farther we reach the crossing by the Blackwoodtown Hotel, which we struck from Fairview, in the first part of this trip.

The road to Glenoch I have not gone over this season; the path was easy riding when last I used it. The park is practically 15 miles from Camden.

FAIR PLAY AND LAW.

Every other portion of this trip I did go over this week; and one thing I noticed en passant, which I cannot refrain from jotting down here.

I took this run in the early hours of last Tuesday. When I struck the Glassboro Hotel, with its tightly closed shutters, I took it for granted that some illness in the family was the cause of its unusual appearance. By and by, however, an unwonted stillness around the Blackwoodtown Hotel attracted my notice, and when I reached the Chew's Landing Hotel the sight of its closed door led me to make inquiries, whereupon I then found out for the first time (pray excuse my blissful ignorance of politics) that Tuesday was a special election day throughout the State of New Jersey.

Well, now, I speak disinterestedly in this case, for in my cross-country rambles I am absolutely independent of all State or municipal liquor regulations, carrying, as I usually do, my liquid supplies in a pocket flask; what its contents are I could not state right here without getting into trouble with the advertising manager of The Inquirer – but I sincerely pity the temperate traveler who sallies forth unprepared on a hot and dusty day and finds that he cannot obtain whatever beverage he may be accustomed to, because the law so wills it on that particular day in the ward, township, county or State which he happens to traverse.

That ninety-nine out of one hundred human beings should be debarred from the "use" of any wholesome drink because forsooth one besotted individual out of the one hundred "abuses" it' does not tally with my notion of honest fair play. I am candid to confess, as Friend Shakespeare has it,

“In your nice sharp quilllets of the law Good faith, I am not wiser than a daw,” but when it comes to a matter of justice I really believe I am there.

A.E.