

Trips Awheel: Where to Go and How to Get There

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To Salem, N. J. Through Gloucester and Salem Counties

A Trip Taken by the Present Writer Last Tuesday, December 14.

Our trip No. 12 to Vineland has made us familiar with our present itinerary as far as Woodbury (4 $\frac{3}{4}$ m.)

Six months have passed since we came through the place, but the condition of the main street is still and ever unimproved. The cause of so disreputable a state of things, I am told, is that the townspeople look upon their main street as part of the pike and therefore in charge of the turnpike company; and meanwhile the wayfarer supplies a practical illustration of the story of the man between the two stools.

As to riding on the sidewalk? Well, I gladly availed myself, last Monday, of a storekeeper's assurance that "of course a wheelman can use the sidewalk"; and I reached the end of the main street quagmire without being arrested as a law-breaker. I hope my adviser's statement had a more legally substantial foundation than his sense of shame for the condition of the roadway or his sympathy for a fellow creature in distress.

BRANCHING OFF THE PIKE.

At the bifurcation $\frac{1}{2}$ m. from the City Hall, where, in the month of June, we bore L for Mantua, we now turn R.

The hotel in the angle has now turned into a store. Readers of our previous trip who might look for the hostelry here as a landmark, had better take due note of the transformation. An announcement that Jersey cider may be had inside is now the only visible appeal to the traveller's patronage.

The Swedesboro road is not macadam; it is a New Jersey gravel road which may be set down, right away and without any further comment, as really good until we get to Berkeley; and it is best appreciated by those who were acquainted with its predecessor.

Unlike proverbial New Jersey, too, is that hill right in front of us; we shall have just a few like it on this trip.

This one is by no means hard. Just beyond it, we relieve ourselves of seven cents at the toll-gate, in exchange for which we pocket a ticket. (Don't dismount at the next gate; exhibiting your voucher will be sufficient).

DEPTFORD AND GREENWICH.

Right here, L to the Mullica Hill pike; R to the "Town Hall" of West Deptford Township at Thoroughfare. Perhaps you were not aware that you were journeying through Deptford. The real, original Deptford lies on the Thames some 3 miles to the southeast of London Bridge; this Deptford is about 3 miles from our Navy Yard. The old Deptford is contiguous to and west of Greenwich; this one is contiguous to but east of Greenwich. The English Deptford owes its name (originally "deep ford") to a deep ford across the Ravensbourne, at the mouth of which it is situated; our own Deptford was called after no ford at all. We showed "our" British cousins the friendly condescension of sounding Deptford "dett-ford" as they do; but while they pronounce Greenwich "green-itch," we strictly adhere to "green-witch." This is a great country, you bet!

And now, we go straight on; at the end of a mile we notice an ominous looking red track on R, going to Red Bank, and presently we are at Birch Grove hamlet (7 m.).

Keep straight on also at Mantua Grove school (7½ m.) assured as you are by the signboard that, while Paulsboro is on R and Mullica Hill on L, Berkley is one "miles" ahead.

POOR SIR WILLIAM.

It would be unfair to our fellow-citizens hereabouts to infer from this inscription that they have any intention of revolutionizing English grammar, but, how a certain Governor of the Colonial period would have gloated over this harmless slip!

It's the name of the place, variously given as Berkley and Berkeley, that reminds me of that worthy.

Sir William Berkeley, you recollect, was appointed by "the powers that were" at that date, to govern over Virginia in 1641; and his liberal notions concerning the education of the people under his charge may be gathered from his own words: "I thank God," he wrote, "that there are no free schools and printing here; and I hope we shall not have them these hundred years. God keep us from both!"

Poor Sir William! This little town had nothing to do with him anyway. It was named after Lord John Berkeley, Baron of Stratton, to whom the Duke of York assigned some of his possessions here in 1664. And here we are at said Berkley. The road from Paulsboro R to Barnsboro L crosses us at the hotel (8 ½ m.); another road branches L to Jefferson. We keep to our good gravel road.

IMPROVEMENTS.

One mile takes us to the centre of Clarksboro, at the X by Sickler's Hotel, where we meet another road from Paulsboro R to Jefferson L.

A few yards from the corner L, old St. Peter's Church is an object of venerable attraction; this time two years ago you may possibly have read newspaper accounts of the celebrations then held in honor of its 125th anniversary.

Of the road we had to face from this town to Swedesboro, just eighteen months ago, I wrote at that time, as follows:

“What are to do now? The typical New Jersey road lies before us -- a mass of sand right across the roadway, and seldom a path save where we must not use it. We make the best of it through Mickleton, and up and down hill, past a number of crossings to Gibbstown and Bridgeport on the right, and to Mullica Hill and Harrisonville on the left, etc. * * * and think it a treat to wheel at last over the smooth surface of the main street of Swedesboro.”

MICKLETON.

From that description you would hardly recognize the comparatively easy road which even now, in mid-December, takes us on to Mickleton (10 ¼ m.). By the way, don't dismount at the toll-house here; they don't want your ticket.

“Mickleton” means “large town,” you know. Of course you have heard the old Scotch proverb. “Mony a little makes a muckle” (a number of small things make up a large aggregate). Now, Chicago is admittedly larger than this village; but, as compared with smaller localities, Mickleton is quite a place, and a time-honored one at that.

Did you ever take notice of Mickleton Hall as we passed through? Well, less than half a mile beyond the hall observe that remarkable stone house on L. The very style of its architecture would make you look instinctively for a date upon its walls; and with half an eye you can read up there. “S. Tonkin. May, 1819.”

This, however, is the date of the latest re-building of the woodwork of the house after it had been burnt down a couple of times during the last century. As to the massive stone frame now standing before you, it must have been the work of some of the earliest settlers along this highway.

As to Tonkin, the name is not unknown in this part of New Jersey; see Tonkin's Island on the Delaware, west from this spot on the map; and have a peep at the island itself next time you pass the mouth of Raccoon Creek on the Steamer “Republic.”

SWEDESBORO.

We run by Poplar Grove School (13½ m.) and on to Raccoon Creek, where we give up our toll ticket, and enter the ancient town of Swedesboro.

Ancient? Yes, sir; it was the first settlement made by the Swedes in this township, and that's why it is called Swedes' Borough. It is duly marked on the map made by Lindstrom, in 1654; subsequently it was known as Raccoon, the name of the creek on which it lies, but popular favor ultimately restored its original designation.

As compared with the town itself, the church which you may notice on R, bearing the date 1784, is quite a young thing.

A well-paved street, pleasantly bordered with trees, takes us right through Swedesboro. At the fork, by the hotel, bear L or you will go to Auburn (Sculltown); and here an avenue presents itself to you which, for width and smoothness, would be a credit to any city.

All this comfort, alas! comes to an end a mile farther at old Battentown. Here take care to turn L again; straight on you would go to Sharpstown (nearly six m. distant), and R to Centre Square or Nortonville.

Apropos of ancient places, "Sharpstown" reminds me that Thomas Sharp was one of the three rangers appointed for this county as far back as 1688. Philadelphia was six years old then; what a time those rangers have had!

INTO SALEM COUNTY.

From this point on riding is not so pleasant, although an improvement on what it used to be when the road was put down as A4 in our former road books. Anyhow, it's only a matter of 3 miles till we come to that green marl hill by Old Man's Creek, and things are brighter with us once more.

Old Man's Creek is also known as Gloucester County Creek, it being the county line. It is said that "Oldman's Creek" is only an English corruption of the Dutch name of the creek "Alderman's Kill." On the other side we are in Salem County. Do you know that these two counties were formed seven and five years respectively before Philadelphia was laid out?

Point Airy Station (21 m.) may strike you as not undeserving its name if ever you come to it when a fresh breeze blows from the Delaware.

A mile farther, two roads L converge with our own from Mullica Hill and Harrisonville respectively; we bear R over the bridge and enter Woodstown. It has grown considerably since Jackanias Wood first settled here on Salem Creek in days ago.

Go straight through at the X, $\frac{1}{4}$ m. from the bridge; bear L another $\frac{1}{4}$ m. farther near the Pilesgrove Library (this is Pilesgrove township); and at the X by the First National Bank pause a moment.

AN ALTERNATIVE AT WOODSTOWN.

The turn L goes to Pole Tavern and does not interest us just now. The turn R would take us to Salem; but the continuation of our present road, straight on, is the better of the two for nine months in the year (there is more clay, I am told, in its gravelly material), although it is one mile longer.

If you choose, or if you be compelled to take this, turn R, bear L at the first fork you will meet; I have never seen a sign-post there; the reason may be that both roads become one again $2\frac{1}{2}$ m. further; but the L branch is the better, and keep straight on at the school house ($26\frac{1}{4}$ m.). We shall join hands by and by.

For, with your permission, we shall keep straight on at the aforesaid National Bank.

SOME ZIGZAGGING.

Over the creek we bear R as if going to the Almshouse (L to Daretown 5 m.) and in a minute we come to an intricate X, fortunately (in one sense) well supplied with signs.

The road coming from Sharptown R to Yorktown L cuts right across our own, while two others branch off in front of us, one slightly R and marked "Salem, 9 m." the other slightly L and marked "Alloway, 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ m."

We take the latter (not the Salem road; if you do, you'll be sorry).

Do you observe how some of these signs have "Yorktown" spelt, with an e after the k? The fact is, the place has no connection with York or its historic duke; but with a family named Yorke, a representative of which settled hereabouts as far back as 1685. And, by the way, Thomas Yorke, the ancestor of the present American Yorke family, became the partner and afterwards the son-in-law of Ironmaster John Potts, the founder of Pottstown, to whom reference was made in our Trip No. 18.

We spin merrily along, passing all turnings for a couple of miles. Those houses in the woods, with an unmistakable "colored" look about them, constitute the outskirts of Bushtown.

Now watch for the very next crossing (24 $\frac{1}{2}$ m.), where sign says: L. Yorktown 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ m; straight on, Alloway 4 $\frac{1}{4}$ m.; R, Salem 7 m.; and turn sharp R. The elbow we describe is what we have to pay for this good road; is it not worth it? These ups and downs are exhilarating, too.

At the fork, up this first rise in the hamlet, keep R; a mile further, at a kind of T crossing, we naturally turn L; and 29 $\frac{1}{4}$ m. from start we fall into the shorter road from Woodstown, to which we alluded before.

If this is a specimen of the condition of that short road throughout its entire length, right glad may we be that we gave it a wide berth.

Luckily, Swedes Run is but a short distance ahead; and on the other side of it an oyster-shell road is awaiting to take us to the end of our trip.

SALEM IN SIGHT.

This hamlet around the forge L (30 $\frac{3}{4}$ m.) is Welchville at your service. About a mile beyond Welchville we come to another "goose foot" (as such triple convergencies are called in some European countries); two roads join us R, one from Pennsgrove and another from Sharptown; and an L. A. W. finger sign informs us that we are only two miles from Salem.

And sure enough, an easy ride takes us to Clayville, on Fenwick Creek; we cross the stream, ride into Salem along Market street, and at the intersection of the latter with Broadway, our cyclometers register 34 miles from start.

“Salem” is the Hebrew for “peace,” and the name was bestowed on this place by Fenwick, ‘way back in 1675, as indicative of the peaceful aspect it then bore. The town was first settled by a number of English families from New Haven, Conn. The first glassworks in America are said to have been erected here; this very store on R, at the corner of Market and Broadway was first started by William Cattell 150 years ago; indeed in Salem and vicinity may be seen more old buildings than in any other part of New Jersey. Bear this in mind when you have an opportunity to make a stay in this town or county. We shall be here again some day.

A.E.