

Trips Awheel: Where to Go and How to Get There

Philadelphia Inquirer, December 26, 1897, p. 36

Cycle Route No. 39 (1897-1898 series)

Improved Roads in Near-by New Jersey. A 25-mile Ramble Ending at Burlington

Taken by the present writer within the past week.

Every additional mile of good road constructed over this broad land of ours is a factor in her prospective wealth and welfare, the relative importance of which none but the thoughtless or the prejudiced can fail to appreciate.

New Jersey has been for some years past, and is still, steadily transforming her proverbial "bottomless sands" into luxurious highways and their once uninhabitable surroundings into thriving realities.

Within the last week or two another stretch of stone road has been added to the network of pleasant cycleways outside of Camden city. Let us run over and see it; and at the same time if you will we shall take a look at the progress of the improvements along the Delaware River road and strike Burlington that way.

A correspondent from Gloucester, a novice in cycling, asked me the other day if he could not take a run to Bristol without coming to Philadelphia or following our Route No.1 through Frankford and Holmesburg. Our Route No. 15 showed how to do so from Camden along the Burlington pike; the new road we are going to visit to-day supplies him with a very direct avenue to the Burlington pike, without any detour through Camden.

Notice on our little map three roads starting eastward from Gloucester. The most southerly is Market Street, which falls into the road to Haddonfield, whence Burlington could be reached in circuitous and not over pleasant way. The middle one strikes the White Horse Pike near Audubon. The most northerly is the one that concerns us.

Taking the ferry house as a starting point, turn L into King street; it is not very smooth except for a block in front of W. Thompson's residence and grounds; but, as you know, an ordinance was passed last week, permitting us to ride on the sidewalks in the city of Gloucester.

Keep on as far as the Welsbach Light works, turn R into Essex street, and it will lead you to the bridge over the creek and into Collings' road. Its upper end is in a very primitive condition still and the lower extremity of Collings' road is not much better in wet weather or at high tides; but it will only take you few minutes anyway to reach the Mt. Ephraim pike; and there we shall join you by and by.

FROM CAMDEN AS A STARTING POINT.

The street improvements through Camden have not materialized yet, of course; so we bump it as best we can up Copper street and out Haddon avenue, as usual.

Starr's Crossing, otherwise Tenth street and Haddon avenue is $1\frac{3}{4}$ m. from the ferry, and the Mt. Ephraim avenue cycle path is there awaiting us on R.

We must expect to find it a little rough at one or two of the crossings at this season; this notwithstanding, what a boon it is to us.

The city line is reached and crossed 31-3 m. front start; and now, if you be fond of skating, take note of the various branches of Newton Creek that cross this road.

This first one, the North Branch, is the only one we shall see on this trip; but whenever you feel inclined that way, you will find both Newton Creek proper and its southern branch a short distance ahead, this side of Mount Ephraim.

By the way, Newton sounds more English than plain New Town, don't you know? For all that, when this place was first settled by Mark Newby and Thomas Thackara in 1682 (you pass through the property of the Thackaras to this day every time you turn off from the Woodbury pike into Brownings lane) they called it New Town, and very naturally, to distinguish it from Gloucester, which had been founded before it.

FRAGRANT GLADES BY NEWTON CREEK.

And this reminds me that on that south branch was the famous Chalybeate Spring that made Gloucester so favorite a resort long before its modern palmy days.

It is now 120 years and more since Nathaniel Evans, of Haddonfield wrote:

"Sequester'd from the city's noise
Its tumults and fantastic joys
Fair nymphs and swains retire
Where Delaware's far rolling tide
Majestic winds by Glo'ster's side
Whose shades new joys inspire"

And further, while rehearsing the manifold attractions of the place, he says:

"Or whether o'er the fields we trip
At yon salubrious fount to sip,
Immured in darksome shade;
Around whose sides magnolias bloom
Whose silver blossoms deck the gloom,
And scent the spicy glade."

Think of this poetical description next time you travel up this road.

ON COLLINGS' ROAD.

For the present we don't go any farther south than this tollgate (4 m.) where so many pennies were collected from us this past season for the privilege of using this portion of the Mt. Ephraim pike as means of access to the White Horse pike. For the nonce, as you have doubtless read, no toll is levied on us until the courts have decided on its legality.

Our Gloucester friends are awaiting us here at Collings' road, and unimproved Jersey trail on R, a stone road on L.

We turn sharp L run across the railroad tracks at West Collingswood, and strike the White Horse pike as we have done before at the crossroad (5 m.) where a toll house used to stand in the good old time when you had to pay cash for the pleasure of sticking in the sand or the mud of that pike.

KNIGHT'S PARK AND BROWNING'S ROAD.

A few whirls of your wheel now bring you to elegant little Knight's Park (marked K. P. on the map) on our left. Our present road makes a beeline for Collingswood on the Haddonfield pike, while Newton Lake is on our right.

Sharp on L along the park is the beautiful new stone road that has brought us around this section today, the metamorphosed Browning road of Auld Lang Syne.

What think you of its smoothness? You can enjoy it without any intermission for three full miles from this point. Be careful when you cross the Camden and Atlantic Railroad track just beyond the park: its rails are treacherous.

We cut across Haddonfield pike $5\frac{3}{4}$ m. from start. Beyond it on R lies the estate of Edward Collings Knight, after whose mother (Rebecca Collings) Collingswood and Collings' road were christened.

And this is our old acquaintance, Cooper's Creek, and, on the other side of it, the estate of the Browning family to whom this "Browning's Road" is indebted for its name.

AT THE MARLTON PIKE CROSSING.

The Marlton pike now crosses our path; that straight road which joins us from L just before we reach the X is Kaighn avenue; no crow could fly straighter from this to Kaighn's Point ferry; what a short cut would be for us, in an emergency, if its surface was more ridable!

No trip along the Marlton pike has been published in these columns this season, primarily because our space for trips has been unavoidably curtailed, but independently of this, because the pike really offers no return for the toll charged for its use. The future may prove more propitious.

Endeavor to locate this crossroad from the indication I have just given, for there is no sign post here.

What's the matter with inquiring your whereabouts at the house standing in one of the angles? Well, I guess you had better not! Don't you see that philanthropic warning "KEEP OUT" staring you in the face near the side entrance?

We keep straight through and spin away. Is not this truly a lovely road! Right here, they must have raised it some 5 feet above its original level; and do you see the remnant of the tiny path along the fence on R, our only friend in these parts until the other day? Good-bye little path, and thanks for past favors.

ACROSS MERCHANTVILLE.

Presently our Browning road becomes Wellwood Avenue; we enter the boundaries of Merchantville borough. This most unlovely thoroughfare we strike (8 m. from start) is the Moorestown pike, this portion of which is locally designated West Maple avenue.

Wellwood avenue goes on to Wellwood station, just one-tenth of a mile the other side of the pike, and there merges into a typical New Jersey woods sand track.

We turn R into West Maple Avenue and feel much relieved by a police officer's assurance that it will be "fixed up" next spring. At present it is a disgrace to comely Merchantville.

Let's get away from it as fast as we can. Here is center street (8 ½ m.); we turn L into it; it is not asphalted to be sure, but it's all right.

Almost ¾ m. out, we bear L into the Cove road: R would bring us back to the pike, opposite the popular Church road which affords so welcome a means of access to Moorestown from Merchantville, in spite of the detour it necessitates.

ALONG THE BURLINGTON PIKE.

Watch for the very first X we come to, or you will be bound for the River Road and Fish House. Here is our former friend, the Burlington pike by which we traveled to Burlington on our trip No. 15; let us wheel R into it for a while.

It is in good condition for this time of the year, and we have no trouble to run along, across the Pennsylvania railroad, down to Pensauken Creek past Parry postoffice and on to the tollgate at North Pennsville crossroad or Five Points.

TRAVELERS' EXPENSES (OLD STYLE).

As I turned L here, last week, and pedaled merrily along this beautiful road toward Palmyra, the thought of the 4 cents I had just left with the tollkeeper and of the general expenses incidental to travel reminded me of an old-time ordinance passed by the Court of General Sessions held at Gloucester in 1742, which I had stumbled across a few days previous.

It regulated “the rates of Liquors and of Eatables for Man, and Provender and Pasture for Horses, to be open’d and kept by all the Public House Keepers, Inn Keepers, or Tavern Keepers in the County of Gloucester for the following year.” I am tempted to jot it down, right here, as a curiosity; here it is:

	s.d.
“Every Pint of Madera Wine.....	1.0
Every Quart Bowl of Punch made of Loaf Sugar and good Rum and ffresh Limes.....	1.6
Every like Bowl of Punch made with Lime Juice	1.4
Every Quart of Mirabo made of Muscavado Sugar ...	0.8
Every Quart of Metheglin	1.0
Every Quart of Cyder Royal	0.8
Every Quart of Egg Punch....	2.0
Every Quart of Milk Punch...	0.8
Every Quart of Cyder from 1 st of September to 1 st of Jan’y	0.3
From 1 st of Jan’y to 1 st of Sept...	0.4
Every Quart of strong Beer	0.4
Every Jill of Brandy	0.6
Every Jill of other Cordial Drams	0.5
Every Jill of Rum	0.3
Every Breakfast of Tea, Coffee or Chocolate	0.8
Every Breakfast of other Victuals	0.6
Every hot Dinner or Supper Provided for a single Person, With A pint of strong Beer or Cyder, Each	1.0
Every Cold Dinner or Supper With a pint of strong Beer or Cyder each	1.0
Every Night’s Lodging, each Person	0.3
Stabling every horse, each night, and Clover Hay enough	0.8
Stabling each Night and other Hay enough	0.6
Every night’s Pasture for a Horse	0.6
Every two quarts of Oats, or other Grain	0.3.”

THE RIVER ROAD.

In a very few moments we glide to Palmyra on the Delaware River road (14 m.). On our left, towards Camden, this River road is still practically uncyclable; we turn R, and congratulate ourselves on the ease with which we reach Riverton (14^{3/4} m.)

Here, however, we are confronted with one of the missing links that we are bound to meet here and there, for years to come, in the network of our improved thoroughfares; and we gladly avail ourselves of the sidewalk on our L.

Did you observe the name of that street L, as we passed it? Fulton street they call it; poor John Fitch would hardly take that as a compliment; it was one of his steamboats that ploughed the waters of the Delaware right here between Philadelphia and Burlington 107 years ago: while Fulton’s “Clermont” never made her trial trip from New York to Albany until 1807. Was a man ever a prophet in his own country!

A POOR STRETCH OF THREE MILES.

A new iron bridge is being constructed over Pompeston Creek (15 m.); and our sidewalk now changes to a narrow sidepath.

1^{1/2} mile farther, we find the road barred; and the warning "Bridge Off" suggests our turning off R towards the Burlington pike again; the prospect of this detour is not pleasant; let us keep on and chance it; it's likely enough that if they are repairing the bridge over yonder Swede Run, there will be scaffolding enough of some kind to enable us to walk over, and we can carry our mounts on our shoulders; that's a decided advantage that we cyclists have.

See, our expectations are realized; the bridge is almost completed; and had it not been so, the railroad bridge by the side of it would have taken us across the stream.

Apropos of this, was not that a singular notion that the early Romans and other ancient races entertained regarding bridges? They believed, you recollect, that the building of a bridge was an offense and an injury to the river god because it saved people from being drowned while wading or swimming across the river, and thereby robbed the god of a certain number of victims that were his due.

It is pretty evident that "nous avons change tout cela" as they say in Tonquin.

What a pity that we have not changed this wretched sand track, too. Here is a little flag station by the side of it (17 ½ m.), that has no name on its front. Ashamed to let itself be known amid such surroundings, I presume; no wonder! On the railroad timetable, it is known as Birmingham. Its British namesake would be proud of it!

THE GOOSE HONKS HIGH AGAIN.

Luckily, half a mile is all that now separates us from Riverside, and there we met civilization again.

At the Riverside station (18 m.) turn L; R would take you to Fairview or to Bridgeboro' on the Burlington pike.

The wide creek that we cross on this commodious bridge is the Rancocas, with Delanco on its northern bank.

Keep straight on and follow Burlington avenue round that bend R where a friendly post says "Beverly 3 m."

Three miles of excellent riding, and we are in Beverly. This new stone road is not quite finished into the town, as you see, but it is very nearly so; many thanks, Beverly, for this improvement.

The location of this Beverly by the river side reminds me of Beverly's Ford in Virginia. A sharp encounter was the cavalry fight that took place there during the civil war, when the Federals, were badly beaten by Stuart and his 12,000 men. It was a case of 4 to 3, however; and even at that, Stuart paid dearly for his victory.

How one's imagination travels, to be sure! The nearest wayside incident takes it away to ancient Rome; the next one carries it to Virginia. But are you not of opinion that therein lies one of the great boons of cycling, the immense relief of breaking away from your everyday rut, your everyday train of thoughts, sensations and the rest of it? I am.

This, however is no time for philosophizing. Here we are at Burlington, at the end of 25 miles. Several things well worth seeing here, and various ways to return home are suggested in our Trip No. 15.

A. E.