

Trips Awheel: Where to Go and How to Get There

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Cycle Route No. 42 (1897-1898 series).

The Old Second Street Pike: A 22-Mile Ramble to Oxford Church and Home via Ogontz and the Old York Road (A Trip Taken by the Writer on Jan. 10)

Here is a pleasant 22-mile ramble through some of the rural portions of our city, which may prove acceptable to the many whose leisure hours are limited and who are thereby denied the pleasure of roaming

“Wherever whim or fancy steers.”

I found it enjoyable even this last week (Jan. 10); judge of it for yourself.

We ride up North Broad street and have an opportunity of seeing the brand-new mid-road shelters now provided by our fatherly municipality for the greater security of wayfarers afoot.

SUNVILLE.

On a level with Westmoreland street, we strike Rising Sun lane on R (3 ¾ m.)

“Sunville” was a little village on the Germantown road, described as being “3 miles from Philadelphia, at the fork formed by the Willow Grove turnpike.” Small as it was, it contained some 60 years ago no fewer than four taverns, three of which had the sign of “The Rising Sun.” Need the origin of Rising Sun lane be sought any further?

No wonder that, located as it was at so important an intersection, it became the starting point from which the mileage was reckoned throughout this section; watch for the abbreviation R. S. (Rising Sun) on any old-time mile stone you may come across on your roads.

The Broad street end of Rising Sun lane and its surroundings would be absolutely unrecognizable to any Philadelphia who might have been away from home for a couple of years past; unfortunately he would not have to go far to find unmistakable signs of its identity.

RISING SUN LANE (OLD STYLE).

No sooner do we strike Thirteenth street than we bump as of yore over our old friends, the Belgian blocks, and when we have crossed Twelfth street and leave Old York road on our L, we face Rising Sun lane proper in its almost its unimproved primitive ugliness.

Did we not know that better things await us ahead, the present condition of this lane would be sufficient to keep us away from it altogether. Until the realization of long promised changes, do not come this way after rain or snow, at this season of the year.

Let us hasten through old Franklinville, past the new eastern prolongation of Erie avenue (what a boon that avenue will be when it is completed!), past Butler street (our former outlet to Nicetown lane and

Frankford when right of way was permitted us across yonder railroad track on R); we cross Fifth street (4th) and can now ride with comfort.

See the North Philadelphia Stock Yards on L? Fifty acres of ground and 30 pens, with a total capacity of 90 carloads of cattle; a car may hold from 18 to 20 head, you know; and 1000 head per day can be handled easily. Before Western shippers cut into it, there was an immense business done here; with the decrease in the cattle line, a rise in the property valuation has taken place, and it is not unlikely that the stockyards will soon disappear to make room for factory sites.

Do not run down this hill without giving a passing glance at Greenmount Cemetery on R, with its 100 acres of well-laid grounds.

This creek at the foot of the descent is Wingohocking; it comes all the way from Mt. Airy to join Tacony Creek here on our R.

A short climb, and we strike the bifurcation of the new Second street and the old Second street pike at Wyoming avenue.

WYOMING IN PHILA.

Who has not heard of Gertrude, "whose beauty was the love of Pennsylvania's shore," Gertrude of Wyoming.

"On Susquehanna's side, fair Wyoming!
Although the wild flower o'er thy ruin'd wall
And roofless homes, a sad remembrance bring
Of what thy gentle people did befall;
Yet thou wert once the loveliest land of all
That see the Atlantic wave their morn restore."

And who, that once read Thomas Campbell's poem, can fail to recall, at the merest mention of Wyoming, both Gertrude and the Oneida chief, Outalissi.

"Trained from his tree-rock'd cradle to his bier,
The fierce extremes of good and ill to brook
impassive – fearing but the shame of fear --
A stoic of the woods, a man without a tear."

BEFORE THE CONSOLIDATION.

This place is Feltonville; does the multiplicity of these hamlets remind you of the condition of our old city, not 50 years ago?

Just think of the territory which now composes the city of Philadelphia being then divided into 8 municipal corporations, 6 boroughs and 13 townships – and these so independent of each other that a criminal breaking the law on one side of a given street had but to cross over to the other side of the said street to feel perfectly safe from his pursuers.

The riots of 1849, or rather the utter inability of the authorities to quell the rioters, led, as you know, to the consolidation of the city and county of Philadelphia and many of our most familiar place-names

within the city (Kensington, Richmond, Spring Garden, Germantown, Moyamensing, Passyunk, etc.) are the relics of these self-governing corporations.

A SIGE-GLANCE AT HARROWGATE.

A short distance above the Feltonville fork, crooked Fisher's lane crosses our path; on L it would bring us to Logan station on the Old York road; on R it meanders to Asylum pike connecting en route, with Harrowgate lane.

Talk of old-timers! Was there any place in this section so famous as Harrowgate, when in 1787, the poet broke forth "to praise the streams of rural Harrowgate," the sans-pareil of watering places.

"Their min'ral mixture can the soul inspire
To soaring odes or to the tuneful lyre.
To pensive minds a soothing medicine prove,
Nay, blunt the pangs of unsuccessful love.
Their num'rous virtues please beyond compare.
They cure the sick, add beauty to the fair;
And ruin'd health of age or youth repair.
Let England Bath's or Buxton's charms relate.
We Philadelphians praise sweet Harrowgate.
Though Bristol, Abingdon and all combine,
Still, lovely spot, the eclat shall be thine."

Harrowgate, in the words of a newspaper, became "a sort of local Saratoga where the fashionables of the day resorted to quaff the medicinal waters (sometimes mingled with something stronger), and to be entertained and edified with such sights and things as may of right be indulged at fashionable watering places."

Where is all its grandeur now?

OLNEY AND VICINITY

Olney greets us on top of another rise 6 ½ miles from start. Olney Lane, right and left of us, is, like Fisher's Lane, a circuitous link between Old York road and Asylum pike.

Olney in England is in Bucks; this one is not so many miles from our own Bucks, either. The original "Oln-ey" designated a "Holly meadow," holly trees don't strike the traveler particularly right here; but what's the matter with those find old trees on either side of our pike as we go down to Tacony Creek?

And how is this for a nice smooth pike, and in winter too, save for the Belgian blocks with which each one of the bridges we cross is paved?

"Tacony" is Indian, of course; at least it is the modern adaption of an Indian name which I have seen spelled "Tawocawomink" in ancient records, and which is supposed to mean "uncleared forest;" Wingohocking, on the contrary, is said to signify "place for planting."

A quarter mile beyond the creek, opposite Crescentville station on L, is the Asylum pike we alluded to a while ago; it is the main avenue to the Friends' Insane Asylum, one of the oldest insane institutions in this country, if not the very oldest (founded in 1811), hence its name. It also skirts Mt. Vernon cemetery

and the burial grounds of the Knights of Pythias, "Greenwood Cemetery." It was, and is still with some a favorite cycleway from Philadelphia to Frankford but is considerably longer and hillier than the Nicetown Lane route (see Trip No. 1)

LAWNDALE.

That reservoir on L, the Wentz Farm reservoir, is a noticeable landmark; here we are in Lawndale, a little more than eight miles from start.

Did you ever drop in to see the Lawndale Wheelmen? You will find them on the main road here on R, a couple of blocks' distance from the postoffice; they'll be glad to see you.

Notice Martin's Hill road at the very next bifurcation beyond the Lawndale Wheelmen's club, with a yellow-painted house in the angle of the fork; we may have to come back to this point by and by. The left branch goes to Cheltenham and the Red Men's Home. By the way, should any old-time wheelman chance to stray into that yellow house for a cigar or a drink of ginger ale, he might be surprised to be greeted by the man who was the first to help us along Nicetown Lane by constructing a good path for us the whole length of his property at a time when any man who rode to Frankford on an ordinary, took his life in his hands. Maybe we didn't feel grateful to old man Keissler then!

OXFORD CHURCH.

Nine and a half miles from start we reach Oxford Church village. On right we have the Oxford turnpike to Frankford; straight on, our present road would take us to Fox Chase, less than two miles ahead.

Shall we make this our halting place? Go round here on the Oxford-Frankford pike, and you will find a historic gem, if you are fond of such.

With the exception of Christ Church on Second street, this Oxford church is the oldest place of worship in Pennsylvania, its congregation having met on its present site since 1695, more, therefore, than 200 years ago. The spot had previously been occupied by a log meeting house and school belonging to the Society of Friends and they donated it to the members of the "Church of England," as Episcopalians were then denominated.

A communion chalice presented by Queen Anne, of England, in 1707, is still one of the cherished treasures of the church. Another highly-prized relic is a large Bible bearing the inscription: "The gift of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Lands to the Trinity Church of Oxford, October 6, 1740."

The red and black bricks with which it was built were brought over from England, as you might guess.

By the way, one of its modern rectors was a brother of President James Buchanan, Rev. E. Y. Buchanan.

ACROSS COUNTRY TO OGONTZ.

And now, at the time when you make your pilgrimage to this time-honored shrine, Township Line (see map) may not look very enticing to you – it seldom does, unless under exceptional weather conditions. If so, retrace your course to the Yellow House, turn R, pedal away through Cheltenham, (see map) and we shall join hands again by and by; this happens to be a Red Letter day for Township Line and we are going to explore it.

My! This red clay must be "choice" when soaked with rain or snow; it must be bad to Ryers station, and considerably worse beyond it; luckily we have less than one mile of it; then we are joined from L by the Cheltenham road; and we fall into the modernized and telfordized Church Road of our forefathers; for, the stretch of Township Line we have just travelled is really the southeasterly extremity of the Church Road that you read of in our Revolutionary annals and which owes its name to the fact that it led from Oxford Church to St. Thomas Church in the White Marsh Valley (See Trip 19).

And now if you enjoy a hilly ride, over a beautifully smooth road through rural scenery enhanced here and there by all the luxury of up-to-date residential architecture, you will have plenty of it for the two miles that separate us from Ogontz. Of villages proper, we encounter none; we barely touch the northern extremity of Cheltenham; Ashbourne we leave $\frac{3}{4}$ mile on our L, when we pass by the mills on Tacony Creek, and we strike Ogontz near the creek, about 3 miles from Oxford Church, say 12 $\frac{1}{2}$ m. from start.

HOME ON THE YORK ROAD.

On our R the Old York Road (Cheltenham and Willow Grove Turnpike if you like) would take us to Jenkintown and Willow Grove as on our Trip 6.

Let us turn L and follow the same itinerary homeward as we did then. We shall not find the pike at the present date in as good a condition as we did last May (although we shall be charged exactly the same amount of toll) but these 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles will prove even now easy riding; and this 22-mile trip will supply one more illustration of the many possibilities of our cycling district.

A.E.