The White Horse Pike of Camden, N. J.

Little do the thousands who now patronize this, the queen of our nearby pikes, think that until quite recently it was a woe-begone thoroughfare, as many of its close neighbors still are, and was as little frequented as they still remain.

It was an old worn-out turnpike, the owners of which were, it is said, empowered by their charter to levy toll upon travelers and yet not compelled by that legal document to spend one red continental on the repairing of the road. Needless to tell you what was the inevitable result of such a state of things, until one lucky day about three years ago. There was trouble over some bonds and the said turnpike owners expressed their willingness to “get out of the business” if they were relieved of those bonds. The hat was immediately sent round among the roadside dwellers. The turnpike people were got rid of, the contracts were given out for a new pike as far as the White Horse Inn and it was built right away, as you see it. Every one of its seven miles cost $10,000, for which the residents were assessed pro rata. By the way, the popular owner of the White Horse was inculcated over $200 for his little frontage. As his tavern was the godmother of the pike they probably thought they might as well make him pay for the christening.

HOW TO GET AT IT.

The various ways in which we may reach it have been explained here already and are plainly shown in our map of Camden city.

When the promised improvements in the streets of Camden have materialized, the most direct avenue to the pike will be Federal street (with Market street second just by a neck, not to say by one block).

At Seventh street we shall branch off into Haddon avenue, and as our attention will no longer be monopolized by the horrible cobblestones that disgrace the place now, we shall no longer pass by, unnoticed, the handsome monument erected to “our heroic Dead” by the side of the City Hall itself, as many hundreds have done ere this, no doubt.

Further on, Harley Cemetery will surely also attract more notice than it does at present. Some day drop in as you pass by and see it. Its 160 acres, 35 of which are exquisitely laid out, are well worth the visit. The most impressive sight on the grounds is probably the one that will strike your eye if you turn L round the superintendent’s office and then R through the woods until you come to a hillock, in the side of which stand a granite mausoleum with the simple inscription, “Walt Whitman”.

And when you return from your ramble among the dead, notice the bifurcation a short distance above the cemetery gates (3 m. from the ferry). Bearing L is the Haddonfield pike, branching off R is the White Horse pike.
ANOTHER WAY TO GET THERE.

This very first crossing we come to, with the Camden and suburban railway track, is the City Line.

You could reach this spot by turning R on the Mt. Ephraim cycle path at Starr’s crossing, and turning L at the first toll house (now disused save as a soft drink parlor) that you come to.

If (as was the case recently) the City Line is in poor condition, follow the Mt. Ephraim road as far as the second toll house, where you will be charged one cent; and if you turn L then you will meet us a little farther on, at West Collingswood (see map).

WHAT’S RIGHT, IS RIGHT.

On our leaving the city and crossing the line into Haddon township, we can’t help noticing a conspicuous document bidding “Cyclers Take Notice.” It is an ordinance by the Mayor and Council of the borough of Collingswood forbidding us the use of the footpaths and sidewalks and compelling us to have a lighted lamp at night. None but a hoodlum would object to the first regulation; as to the second, in this or any other municipality, it shall never be just or equitable until it is made to apply to each and every kind of vehicle on the highway. The sight of a lighted bicycle by the side of an unlighted four-wheeled wagon making its way to market in the dark of night is a piece of buffoonery so utterly devoid of wit or humor that no playwright has yet thought of introducing it into a comedy.

WEST COLLINGSWOOD AND BETTLEWOOD.

And this is West Collingswood (4 m.). On our R is Collings road leading from West Collingswood station to the toll house on Mt. Ephraim road referred to above, and to Gloucester beyond it; on L it would bring us to Collingswood proper, on the Haddonfield pike; good riding on either side.

All these were named after Rebecca Collings, the mother of the original owner, Edward Collings Knight, whose estate lies on the Haddonfield pike. See the name “Bettlewood” on that huge board? I overheard a very learned suggestion the other day (if you imagine that botanists don’t ride awheel you are mistaken) to the affect that “Bettlewood” might be a popular corruption of “Betula wood.” Between you and me, this land has no connection with the “betula” or, as dear old Lowell described it,

“The birch, most shy and ladylike of trees.”

It just bears the name of Mr. William Bettle, a considerable land owner here on our left.

BY THE PROPHET. A HILL!

Down we go to this swampy overflow of Newton Creek and up what? A hill? If you don’t believe it, read the invitation on the wall of this brand new Cyclers’ Rest, to oil up and lubricate “before you tackle the hill.”

OAKLYN, FORMERLY OAKLAND.

Barely a mile from West Collingswood lies Oaklyn, founded as “Oakland the Beautiful,” some five years ago. Oakland is so common a name that, in order to get a postoffice, they had to alter it to Oaklyn. “A rose by any other name,” etc.
Meanwhile, it still blooms as Oakland in certain strictly up-to-date maps sold to us in this year of grace. 1897.

AUDUBON.

In those trees away on our right beyond Oaklyn is Audubon Station. If you ever happen to ride up the Hudson on a vacation trip, have a look at Audubon Park, on Washington Heights, where John James Audubon, our greatest ornithologist, died in 1851.

There is a little historical episode connected with the old mansion there and with Philadelphia, which you may possibly not have heard of. When Professor Morse was laying his first telegraph between this city and New York in 1843, the first time the wire was carried across from the Jersey terminus at Fort Lee to the New York shore, it was brought in a rowboat to Audubon Park, opposite Fort Lee, and the instrument was temporarily set up in the laundry of Audubon's residence. And it was from that spot that the first telegraphic message ever sent from Manhattan Island was flashed along the wire to Philadelphia.

AN OLD INDIAN TRAIL.

Three-quarters of a mile from Oaklyn is pretty Orston; and half a mile ahead is an important crossing.

The Haddonfield pike is at present so unfit for travel that this L turning, right here, is the favorite way to get to Haddonfield from Camden.

One and a quarter miles of a good, roomy sidepath will take you right into the town.

The turn R over that high bridge makes straight for Mt. Ephraim, whence Gloucester may be reached.

This now cyclable road was originally an Indian trail going from Burlington all the way to Salem, and was laid out as a highway 200 years ago. Some people still call it by the name it was given, the King’s Highway.

BROWNING’S LANE.

Passing by an unimportant crossing in sight of Barrington flag station – R to Clement’s Bridge, L to Haddonfield – we come to another important turning R, opposite a soft drink saloon and repair shop conducted in a former election booth. It is Browning’s lane; don’t call it Browning road: it will lead to confusion. There is a road of that name (see map) which traverses the vast estate of the Brownings, and goes from Colling’s road northward across Marlton pike, and on to Merchantville on the Moorestown pike.

This Browning’s lane has been our great plank of salvation, since the Camden streets have become absolutely impracticable, as it enables us to reach this pike comfortably from Gloucester, as per our Trip No. 3.

That hamlet away from the pike L is Snow Hill; this church and burial ground R form a useful landmark, hereabouts, as helping the stranger to locate Browning’s Lane.
The two crossings at this next place, Greenland, have self-explanatory signboards for which we are thankful, even though one of them spells Woodbury with an “e.” At either of them the turning R would take us to Magnolia.

MAGNOLIA.

Who would have told old Botanist Pierre Magnol (A.D., 1638 – 1715) that his slightly altered name would become so familiar to us, thousands of miles away from his sleepy native city of Montpelier, in the South of France?

By the way, did you ever hear that the Indians used the magnolia leaf “as a tea to produce sweat; the berries put into brandy, cured consumption and was a good bitters; the bark of it was used for dysenteries; it could cure old sores by burning the wood to charcoal and mixing the powder of it with hog’s lard.” Gabriel Thomas said so in 1689.

ON TO THE WHITE HORSE.

On the top of the next rise, two roads branching off to our right, a short distance from each other, converge almost immediately into a road to Chew’s Landing that I would not recommend to pleasure seekers.

And now a nice, level stretch takes us to the well-known White Horse Inn, the Mecca of so many short pilgrimages awheel (eleven miles from Camden ferry, or nine miles from Gloucester), and the first popular halting place on the road to Atlantic City. The name of the postoffice is Kirkwood, but with us the place is now, and will probably always be, the White Horse.

A FORMER DETOUR.

Time was – so few months ago that some Philadelphians are still unaware of the change-when we had to make a detour here to get to Berlin, as the road straight ahead was unfit for cycling.

If you ever wish to go round that way for curiosity, or to vary your route, go right through Landlord Davis’ yard and down his lane until you strike the road, which starts from the pike here at the corner. Turn L past Kirkwood Station; just beyond it turn R around the mill (avoiding the Glendale road on L) and use your discretion about riding on the road or on the path as opportunity serves. This lake on your right belongs to Lakeside Park.

A couple of miles farther you come to Lucas’ paint works. Do not pass them, you would strike the road to Haddonfield. Turn sharp R down a red-clay road, across the railroad tracks, round the works L and sharp R again.

This is Gibbsboro. From the top of that hill ahead you will have quite a picturesque view (for this part of New Jersey), and the road from that point to Berlin was improving greatly when something still better was provided for us right here within the last eighteen months.

THE WHITE HORSE AND BERLIN PIKE.

This something better was the direct continuation of the new White Horse pike, and how many thousands have enjoyed its comforts during those eighteen months!
One mile of easy gliding takes us to Laurel Springs, the rendezvous of many a club run. Adjacent to it Overbrook is springing up.

At the foot of this next hill we turn L away from that sandy track which gives you an idea of what the pike was like in its former days; it is the old direct road to Clementon.

If you want to go and spend a day in the woods and by the lake at Clementon, keep on the pike a little longer; and beyond the top of this next hill you will notice a big poster showing you the way along a newly graveled road R to Lakeside Hotel; take that road, and at the foot of it you will be half way between the said hotel on R or Louis Ederle’s on the hill on L.

It seems but a few moments until we strike Berlin, as per our Trip No. 3, and there for the present is the end, not only of the prolonged White Horse pike, but, for the immediate present, of all good roads this side of Hammonton.

The future, however, is bright with promises. We shall see that they will bring forth.

A.E.