I hardly knew what use to make of my “day off” this last week, when a correspondent, W. G. W., wrote to me to know if I had any recent information regarding the condition of the roads between this and Baltimore via Oxford, Pa., Port Deposit, Md., etc.

Every other means of communication between this and the Monumental City had been tried lately and found wanting; why not give a chance to the oldest of them all – the original Baltimore pike? In a trice my destination was determined upon; I didn’t get there, no; I gave up the attempt half way and was rewarded for my labor thus far by a most exquisite idyll in another direction; but I anticipate: my chitchat to-day is to cover only that portion of the pike which lies between the Schuylkill and the Brandywine.

OUT TO ANGORA.

As stated in our Cycle Map No. 5, the Baltimore pike is but the continuation outside the city of what we call Baltimore avenue within the city limits; and how to reach the latter is indicated there.

One and three-quarter miles from the Public Buildings we pass the University of Pennsylvania; ½ m. farther Baltimore avenue branches off on R; we may avoid its uninviting Belgian blocks (much better though they may be than their predecessors) by taking the next avenue, Chester avenue, and turning R into Forty-ninth street.

From Fifty-second street Baltimore avenue is macadamized to the city line, 1 ¼ m. distant; so we fly past the John K. Lee Public School, up that woody rise with Sherwood on our left, and on to the Angora Mills.

Just before we reach the mills, that road R is Sixtieth street. It would bring you to the west end of Market street, which is now asphalted from Sixty-third to Thirty-sixth streets. This is but one of several opportunities for short round trips offered along our road to-day; I propose to map them out separately at a later date, and will make no further reference to them this time.

Angora has long been known in our section for its manufactures. It’s prototype, the Turkish “Angora,” away in the mountains of Asia Minor, concerns us less now that it did at one time; we breed the goats ourselves nowadays and have Angora wool of our own.

FERNWOOD, LANSDOWNE AND CLIFTON.

Over Cobb’s Creek (4 3/4 m.); good-by city, good-by (alas) macadam. That ugly hill to Fernwood is as unsightly as ever, and the corduroy street beyond its summit shows no sign of improvement. We shall indeed be thankful when the movement recently set on foot by the Lansdowne Wheelmen for the construction of a path along here will have accomplished its purpose.
Through the crossroad at Lansdowne (6 ¼ m.) and beyond it, the road is better, but the improvement does not extend very far. At said crossing the L turn would take us to Darby and home by the Darby road.

Half a mile onward, on top of a steep descent, notice L the estate of the late Phillip J. Walsh, of our city.

Be careful as you go down this hill to Darby Creek; this hamlet is Kellyville or Burmont (as the railroad people call it). And now for a good hard climb to Clifton.

A reminiscence is conjured up before my mind by the mention of this name-- a charming picture of Clifton (Clifton, the “town on the cliff”), by the bank of the Avon, the pride of Bristol City, in Gloucestershire, England, but the wretchedness of this Clifton hill dispels my lovely dream.

SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP.

Fortunately, from Clifton village (7 ¾ m.) or better still from its neighbor, Madison Heights, our road, as a rule, is in such a condition that the ups and downs we encounter seem little more than so many mole hills to run over; just now it suffers like many others from the heavy rains we had this summer, and the top dressing is in several places entirely washed away.

You must know Springfield township has been hustling in the matter of Telford roads the last few years; you may have noticed a road R and L of us at Clifton, past the hotel; it is the Springfield road; southward it would have taken us to Darby, or better still, a branch of it would bring us to Darby by way of Collingdale Station.

And speaking of it, reminds me of Quaker Sam Lewis’ misadventures hereabouts at the time of the Revolution. His religious scruples would not allow him to join the ranks with the boys in active service, although his sympathies went a long way with them. One day he met a reconnoitering party of our Continentals along this Springfield road, down there on our L between this and Darby, and on being asked for his help he hitched his horse to a hickory, divested himself of his hat, so as to be freer in his movements and climbed up the tree to try and ascertain where the enemy lay. A body of British dragoons were actually so near that the foliage prevented his seeing their approach. He was immediately summoned down and made prisoner; after which, taking both his horse and his hat from him, they dragged him bareheaded to the city, where they threw him into the common jail.

OAKDALE AND SWARTHMORE.

We pass a couple of turnings L to Secane and Morton. This next place is Oakdale, and 9 ¾ m. from start, a signpost informs us that Swarthmore Station is 1 mile away on L: it further states that the City Hall of Philadelphia is 11 miles distant from this place; our cyclometers tell a different tale.

Swarthmore was once known as West Dale, the home of our famous painter, Benjamin West (1728-1820), he who painted the popular scene of Penn’s treaty with the Indians; indeed it is said that one of the Friends whom he portrayed as escorting Penn on that occasion was his own grandfather. The Friends named the place Swarthmore after Swarthmore in England, where the first meeting house on record was erected in 1689. The college founded here by Hicksites is well known to you, of course. Ask for the “West House” when you come here. I wonder if the Penn Treaty Wheelmen of our city have every paid this place a visit?
WHAT THERE IS IN A NAME.

Take care of this long rough hill going down to Crum Creek, an unusual name in this part of the country, but quite a common one in New York State, where it was introduced by the Hollanders. “Crum,” “Crom” or “Krom” is or was good Dutch for “hooked” or “crooked,” hence Crum Creek in Fulton country and Croumhorn Mountain in Oswego county, and Crumpond in Westchester county, and many others, among them Gramercy Park, with which you may be familiar, in New York city.

The connection between “Crum” and “Gramercy” may not strike you as self-evident, perhaps; and it is surely funny enough to interest you. On the site of what is now Gramercy Park there stood a hill, the shape of which, in some way or other, suggested to the early Dutch settlers the idea of a hooked knife, and there and then they styled it “Krommessje” (“hooked knife”). The strange part of the story is that during the British regime which followed the Dutch in New York, the sensible “Krommessje” became corrupted into the senseless “Gramercy,” and the latter still holds at the present date.

AT WALLINGFORD.

Right here on Crum Creek (11 ½ m.) was the old-time Walling’s Ford Mill, the original nucleus from which Wallingford spread out to the Providence road.

And how is this hill for practice in climbing awheel? It is the last of its kind we shall have to-day; and you should have known it just four years ago, before the road was telforded.

Presently (12 ½ m.) our path is crossed by the Providence road, which we might take to Chester and home by the Chester pike, if we wanted a 32-mile round trip.

Let us follow the trolley across it into East Washington street, Media; don’t ride inside the tracks; the vitrified bricks are uneven, even the loose mud road by the side is more acceptable.

MEDIA.

Yonder conspicuous building among the trees is the Court House; for, as you are aware, this is the county seat of Delaware county, a borough with close upon three thousand in habitants, a beautiful location, pure air, pure water, etc.; yet, so far as we are concerned, there is a little black speck in the bright picture.

We poor cyclists are in ill odor in this locality. You have read in these columns the latest edict issued against us a couple of weeks ago – re-issued, I should have said, for it is but a rehash of a former one, which, for the dear sake of Media, we had hoped would never be resuscitated.

In accordance with this ordinance, it is apparently lawful for any number of farmers’ wagons to monopolize at one time the entire breadth of the thoroughfares of Media; it likewise seems equally permissible for any number of buggies to do the same; and there is nothing to show that any number of people on horseback, on mules or on donkeys might not enjoy the same privilege, but no two cyclers may travel abreast the streets, roads, lanes or alleys of the borough of Media, although as a matter of fact two bicyclists riding abreast do not take up more than five or six feet of the roadway, and would often be contented with four, if they could get them. Nay more, the invalid, the lame or the cripple may not propel himself or be propelled in a “vehicle moved by hand or feet” along the said highways if he be accompanied by a friend astride a cycle of any kind, but he apparently may be escorted by as many
friends as he will if they but ride a quadruped of any species, the patient, though ungainly camel not excluded. Man, poor little man!

“Drest in a little brief authority
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
As make the angels weep, who, with our spleens,
Would all themselves laugh mortal.”

By the way, “media” means “middle” in Latin, as you remember. When the site for this borough was being laid out, the commissioners sought out the exact centre of the county and found it to be a point in a small lake still extant within the present borough limits, and the place was accordingly christened “Media,” the “centre” town.

THE OLD-STYLE BALTIMORE PIKE.

At the corner of Washington street and Orange street, in the centre of Media, we are 13 ½ m. from start. We keep straight along Washington street, which is practically the old Baltimore pike; and before we cover a quarter of a mile from the centre of the town we are made aware of the difference between the modernized pike, such as the one we have followed thus far, and the old-fashioned rough-and-tumble thing known to our fathers by the euphemism “a pike.” Its unbroken series of hills makes it toilsome enough west of Media; the old-style clay and stone material of which it consists renders it exceedingly unpleasant to us and absolutely uncyclable after rain.

Be careful as you go down this loose, steep hill to Ridley Creek, and on the other side of the stream, avoid that turn L to Elwyn.

Go straight up that hill in front of you, Black Horse Hill is a name to conjure with among teamsters in this part of the country; and it will be a good mile and a quarter before you see the end of it. Near the summit, on L, are the grounds of the Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children. I do hope no feeble-minded cyclist would ever dream of coasting down this hill!

As I gazed on those grand old trees last week my front wheel went into a deep rut and landed me (on my feet, thank you) by a patch of luscious blackberries. I left some after me – green berries; look for them is your taste lies that way, 100 yards above the gate entrance.

THE BLACK HORSE.

A short plateau, just to enable us to take breath; then another little rise, and we strike the Black Horse Inn (15 m.).

Getting up here may mean work, but what air we breathe on this height, 483 feet above the tide level! See that door step on the east side of the hotel? It’s on a level with the dome of the County Court House in Media. There is a knoll beck of the hotel yonder, whence you can see the ships sailing along the Delaware and Billy Penn on top of the Public Buildings, and -----, but we must be off.

This turn R is the West Chester road, we might avoid some hill climbing by using it for a short distance and describing three sides of a quadrangle (see map) and striking the pike again by way of Lima Postoffice. It’s hardly worth while.
LIMA AND WAWA.

That road L goes to Chester (6 m. off); we keep straight on and maneuver down this steep hill just for the fun of climbing up again to the Lima cross road.

Here R to Sycamore Mill (3 m.) and Newtown Square on West Chester pike (4 m.); L to Glen Riddle, 1 m. and to Village Green 3 ½ m., and all the way to Marcus Hook.

We run down grade to genteel little Wawa, and across Chester Creek, and up hill again for a change.

Don’t take that turning L to Chester Heights; as a rule, along this route, follow the telegraph posts, using your own discretion, of course, when it is evident that they run in a contrary direction to your destination, as in the case of that other turn L to Chester Heights on top of that other hill 20 m. from start.

This section might well be described M on our route coupon; the hill that brought us here recalls nothing so much as a veritable mountain road.

“CONTINENTAL” PAPER MILLS.

That the roads are so uninviting is all the more deplorable as the country has all the picturesque charms that would attract the traveler; but there are other features of interest in this part of Delaware county besides the beauties of nature. Did you know that right here, on our left as we reach Ivy Mills X, much of our old Continental paper currency was made, in what was (and is still, for it is still standing) the second paper mill established in the province of Pennsylvania (1729)? The first of them was erected by Sam Rittenhouse in 1690 on Paper Mill Creek near our own Wissahickon. The turn R by the store would take you round to the more modern Glen Mills, 1 ½ m.

CHEYNEY’S PATRIOTISM.

Just a half a mile farther on, opposite school, a sign tells us that Cheney Shops are 2 ½ m. on our right.

It was Thomas Cheyney, you recollect, who first brought to Washington on the Brandywine the information that, contrary to his expectation, a numerous body of the British army had crossed the river at Jefferis’ ford. It was, then, unfortunately too late to avert the disaster that ensued; yet Cheyney’s patriotism amid so much personal danger is worthy to be remembered.

MORE HILLS AND CLAY.

Half a mile down hill we pass by the Concord Flour Mills at Markham Station L; we climb up the hill on the summit of which is the Maplewood Institute and a moment later we strike Concord or Concordville.

The name of this Concord township was bestowed upon it, historians tell us, to commemorate the congenial feeling for which the early settlers were noted. Were you ever in Concord, Mass.? There it was the friendly spirit in which the purchase of the land from the Indians was accomplished that was intended to be placed on record.

At the fork near the postoffice we are joined from L by the Chester road, and at Charles-St.-Johnson’s Hotel our cyclometers register 21 ¼ m.

ON TO CHADD’S FORD
Painter’s Crossroads are about 1 ½ m. ahead. There we have Wilmington, 10 miles off on our left, and West Chester, 7 m. R via Dilworthtown. This last place reminds me that Charles Dilworth was one of the three commissioners appointed in 1780 to divide this county from Chester county.

A mile beyond this X a sign points to the well-known Kaolin Works 1 ¼ m. on our left. The deposits of clay from the decomposition of feldspar that are found both here and in Chester county are called Kaolin, as you are aware, or China clay; indeed, that funny-looking “Kaolin” is only our way of “getting round” the Chinese “Kao-Ling” (“High Ridge”), the name of a range of hills in the Celestial Empire, where this clay is also found.

Chinese clay or any other clay, a long down grade brings us, not without plenty of dust in our bearings, and elsewhere, to Chadd’s Ford, the historic battlefield by the bank of the Brandywine, 23 m. from P. B.

A.E.

P.S. – Next Sunday’s route coupon will be made to include this section of the trip.