

Biking St. Andrew's Parish

LOOKING BACK ON OLD NEWS ARTICLES ABOUT BICYCLING WEST OF THE ASHLEY IN THE LATE 19TH CENTURY

By Donna Jacobs | Contributing Writer

"A Wheelmen's Retreat. A Club House In St. Andrew's Parish For the Cyclists" is an intriguing headline from the January 4, 1897 edition of The News and Courier discovered while researching "Pleasure Grove" (the subject of a future West Ashley Flashback). A few months earlier in the April 20, 1896 edition of the Evening Post, the headline read "A Picnic on Wheels. Mr. Bicaise Will Entertain His Pupils in St. Andrews".

This idea of cycling from peninsular Charleston to the "country" was gathering momentum at this time, presumably due to the construction of the "New Bridge" across the Ashley River. This toll bridge was a wooden structure built in 1889 by the Charleston Bridge Company. The previous bridge across the Ashley River had been destroyed to prevent Sherman from entering Charleston during the Civil War.

Due to the randomness of this discovery and the limited scope of information about cycling during this time, I thought it might be fun to repeat the content of both articles for the modern residents of St. Andrew's Parish, West Ashley, who have been working diligently toward bike/pedestrian access to peninsular Charleston.

A PICNIC ON WHEELS. MR. BICAISE WILL ENTERTAIN HIS PUPILS IN ST. ANDREWS:

"The great bicycle picnic, which Mr. L.W. Bicaise has prepared for his bicycle pupils and friends, will take place tomorrow. The cyclists will assemble at 9:30 am, at the Hibernian Hill and will ride in a body across the bridge into St. Andrew's Parish Pleasure Grove, where the jessamine twines and with the violet perfumes the air with its gracious fragrance, will riders of the

CHARLESTON BRIDGE COMPANY.

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This graphic of the "New Bridge" was featured in the 1889 publication of the Charleston Bridge Company entitled "A Little History of St. Andrew's Parish and its Adaptability to Early Truck Farming, Dairy Farming, Stock Raising, and Other Purposes."

'silent steed' disport themselves on the soft green carpet of velvety moss.

"The picnic is given by Mr. Bicaise to the pupils of the Charleston Riding Club. Mr. T.J. Delany is chairman of the ladies committee and Mr. E. A. Bissonette of the gentlemen's and together with Mr. Bicaise have been untiring in their efforts to make a success of the day's entertainment. Refreshments have been provided and a band of music in attendance will lend joy to the occasion.

This is the first picnic a la cycle given in this part of the country and aside from its other delightful features, its novelty will attract a large crowd of cyclists, and the merry clang of the bell will wake the echoes of the forests with its lively music."

A WHEELMEN'S RETREAT. A CLUB HOUSE IN ST. ANDREW'S PARISH FOR THE CYCLISTS:

"The Cabin Cycle Club is an organization recently formed among the some prominent wheelmen of

Charleston. The club has erected a house in St. Andrew's Parish at which the members may rest and refresh themselves on their runs into the country.

"The building has been erected in the heart of the beautiful woods on the banks of the Ashley river just beyond Pleasure Grove. It is a convenient and comfortable structure and will be a delightful resting place to the riders. The house is not yet entirely completed but it was formally opened several evenings ago which a ride by lantern light and a small dance in which the members and their friends engaged.

"The place will be fitted with lockers where the wheelmen may keep accessories to their outfit and tables and chairs will be arranged for their comfort so that they may rest themselves and partake of refreshment after their runs. The membership to the club is limited to fifty.

"The road approaching the house leads off from the shell road and is a much better bicycle path than are the majority of the roads in the country around Charleston. The building of this house supplies a long felt want to weary cyclists longing for a comfortable place of refuge."

Thus the intrigue of the early history of St. Andrew's Parish continues with a new twist of cycling to the country of the Parish from downtown.

Have any stories of cycling in St. Andrew's Parish? Contact Donna at westashleybook@gmail.com