

# ***Canada and the Northeast United States***



***May 2016***

*Bob and molly Hillery*

*This road trip was set up primarily to visit friends in Canada and the Northeast United States but we also built in a few additional days for sightseeing on our own.*

*First, we visited Bill and Monica who now live about 30 miles from Ottawa, Ontario. We have known them since our college days (I roomed with Bill for a couple of years) and when we lived in Syracuse we visited them quite frequently (or they came to our house) when Elizabeth and their two boys were very young. We have kept in touch over the years and have managed to spend some time with them every few years.*

*Next, we met Jay and Gordon who live in Massachusetts and whom we first met on a cruise in Southeast Asia about five years ago and we have done one additional cruise with them—and have two more vacations together in the planning.*

*Finally, we went to see Cathy who lived across the street from us when we had our first house in the US in Liverpool, NY. Cathy and her late husband David and Molly and I were constantly getting together and our oldest children (Elizabeth and Christen played together as toddlers. Again, we have kept in touch over the years and it is always good to visit—although this was the first time without David.*

*So, two friends of over fifty years, one approaching fifty and two much more recent acquaintances—but all great to be with and to catch up on our respective lives and families.*



## ***Northeast, May 2016***

### **Thursday May 5**

We left home at 10:30 and drove with just one stop in Bowling Green for coffee, arriving in Port Huron, MI soon after 5pm. The traffic was fine for the first half of the journey but northern Ohio and, particularly, southern Michigan seemed to have almost non-stop road works, hence we had quite a bit of slow driving. However, the weather was fine and we briefly hit 70F before the temperature dropped into the fifties again as it got dark.

We found a rather nice restaurant on the river in St Clair, about 12 miles from the hotel and had a good meal overlooking the St Clair River dividing Canada from the US. We returned to the hotel and retired about 10 pm.



### **Friday May 6**

We were up about 7:30 and went to the local Bob Evans for breakfast. We then finished packing and took the bridge to Canada, passing through the border with minimal delay - but far more questions than we usually get entering any other country.

The drive east was via London and then on Highway 401 passing to the north of Toronto. This 20 mile stretch was slow (as it always seems to be) but we were at a brand new Courtyard in Markham shortly after 1pm. We checked in, found a local Italian restaurant that looked good for dinner and then relaxed for the afternoon.



The meal at the Italian restaurant was very good and was accompanied by a pianist for part of the evening, after which he picked up a guitar and went table singing. All in all a very pleasant evening.



### **Sunday May 8 (Mother's Day)**

We were up soon after eight and had breakfast at home and sat around Bill and Mon's dining room table for about three hours simply chatting.

At 1pm we had a reservation at a local cafe for a brunch. This was specifically for Mothers' Day, of course, so was crowded and, indeed, we wouldn't have got a reservation had it not been for two of Bill and Mon's neighbors. They had made the reservation some time back and then found they had a conflict so offered it for our benefit.

The buffet was plentiful and had the usual combination of lunch and breakfast fare, including an omelet station which I really enjoyed - along with the dessert table!

We spent over two hours at brunch and then returned to the Wallaces' home for the rest of the afternoon and evening, throughout which we continued our reminiscences and catching up. Shortly after 4pm, Bill suggested a walk so he and I went on a local trail through the Ferguson Forest for the best part of two hours on what was now a cool but sunny afternoon.



Dinner tonight was a light combination of breads and cheeses - and wine.

### **Monday May 9**

After breakfast we went for a short drive to cross the Rideau Canal and the Rideau River at a point where there were several osprey nests. Bill claimed to have seen the head of one bird in a nest but the rest of us had to take his word. However, the short visit was very pleasant, although a cool wind made us want to keep it brief so we went for a coffee at a local cafe in Kemptville.



We then returned to their home and said our farewells after a very nice two day visit during which we caught up on each other's lives once more and had some great conversation and good laughs.

Molly and I then made the three hour, easy drive to Montreal where we checked in at the Downtown Renaissance about 4pm. We found a local Italian restaurant for dinner and then relaxed for a few hours.

Mozza was a good Italian restaurant, perhaps a little noisy but a good meal and we were there for most of the obligatory two hours.





## Tuesday May 10

It was after nine before we had breakfast in the hotel and about ten before we started our day out. We walked about 15 minutes to the Gray Line bus depot where we purchased our two-day Hop on/Hop off bus tickets.

We rode the bus for about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the red line route before we made our first stop at the St Joseph Oratory.



This is a relatively modern basilica (completed in the 1950s) and stands on top of Mount Royal and has 256 steps from the parking area to the main entrance.



### *St Joseph Oratory*

The climb was worth it, however, as the church is beautiful inside and commands some spectacular views over the city and the St Lawrence River.

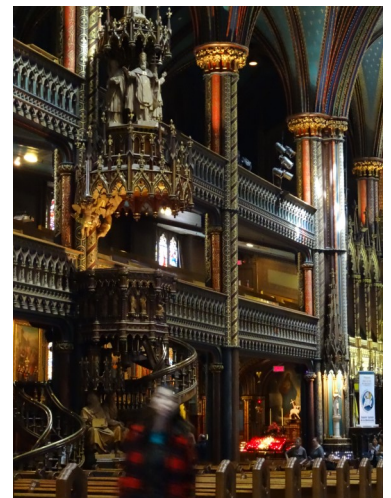
Back on the bus, we completed the Red Line circuit and got on the next bus for just one stop to visit Old Montreal.



decoration and the 30 feet tall pulpit was magnificent. The 7000 pipe organ was also a wonderful feature of the facility.



Here we had our coffee break before visiting the **Basilica of Notre Dame** which was even more ornate inside than the Oratory. Every surface seemed to be completely covered with





On leaving the church, we walked through part of Old Montreal (quite close to the river) and then slowly found our way back to the hotel, arriving around 4 pm after six hours of sightseeing.

The weather today was much better than yesterday and was sunny and bright the whole day. It didn't get much higher than about 60F but with a gentle breeze it was very pleasant for walking.

*Old Montreal (right) and  
other sights on our tour of the city*



***Montreal***



Tonight we ate at Vargas, a sushi and steakhouse just one block from the hotel. Again, it was an excellent meal with great service and in much quieter surroundings than last night. Once more the price was very reasonable for a major city.

### **Wednesday May 11**

We left the hotel after breakfast to get the 10am bus to complete Day 2 of our tour of Montreal.



### ***Features of Montreal***

This tour took us out of the downtown area and our first stop was at the Olympic Stadium, built for the Games in 1976. The complex has now been converted into several tourist attractions (although the original stadium is still used as a covered arena).



We chose to visit the Biodome which contains three ecosystems, much like the one we visited in Singapore or the Eden Project in England. This one is much smaller than either of the others but has some interesting birds, fish and other wildlife in natural settings



We spent almost two hours in the complex and saw a large number of the inhabitants in a very pleasant environment.

We then took the bus on to our second stop (Little Italy) where we had a light pizza and wine lunch sitting in a sidewalk cafe. We then completed



the tour and walked back to the hotel after a six hour day out in wonderful weather - warm and sunny!







Tonight we ate at the main restaurant in the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, perhaps the premier hotel in Montreal. The food was quite good but the service was not what we would have expected for such a prestigious hotel. Nevertheless, it was a nice enough meal and only a short walk from our hotel.

### ***Lunch outside in Little Italy***

#### **Thursday May 12**

We left Montreal on a warm and sunny morning and headed south to cross into the US at the Vermont line. The cars were lined up at the border and it took 25 minutes to get through the immigration point and we were somewhat surprised at how much more difficult it was to enter the US here rather than at any International airport - and the agents were nowhere near as pleasant.

However, we were soon in Burlington after crossing the border and checked into our hotel before 1pm. Our friends Gordon and Jay from Massachusetts were about 30 minutes behind us so we soon met up with them. Once they had checked in we drove to a park overlooking Lake Champlain where we had a hotdog and fries lunch from a "chip wagon" that Gord just loved. We ate outside with a view of the lake and then spent a further two hours in town on a main pedestrianized shopping area. It was now very warm and sunny and it was really pleasant to stroll along the street and enjoy a coffee.



### ***Burlington, VT***

After a quick clean up at the hotel we drove to a very nice restaurant (Pauline's) on the south side of Burlington where we had an excellent meal in the superb surroundings of an old home. We got back to the hotel, had another drink in the bar and then retired.

#### **Friday May 13**

It was a little cloudy as we had breakfast at the hotel and then started our drive south - actually mainly east, at first. Our first stop was at the Ben and Jerry's Ice Cream factory where we learned the history of this company and took a tour of the facility. We then drove through beautiful Vermont mountain countryside to a pizza place for lunch, having made two quick stops at a couple of waterfalls along the road side.

Our final stop (of over an hour) was at the Vermont Country Store where they had many products from days gone by as well as an enormous selection of sweets, cheeses, candies and games. It was fun to stroll through the complex and spend a few dollars.







***Warren Falls***



***Moss Glen Falls  
Jay and Molly***



Then we had two hours of driving in torrential rain before we arrived at our hotel in Westborough. Meanwhile, Gord and Jay had gone a slightly different route to their home in Rutland before setting out once again to meet us for dinner at Uno, just ten minutes from the hotel. We had a pleasant meal and more good conversation and finished the evening with a nightcap at our hotel.

### **Saturday May 14**

It was a much brighter morning as Molly and I went to a local Starbucks for breakfast. Around ten, Jay and Gordon arrived at the hotel and we set off in our car to drive about an hour northeast into New Hampshire to visit "America's Stonehenge". This is a privately owned site on which are many large (huge!) stones arranged in what could have been an astrological and/or sacrificial arrangement, much like its English namesake.



***Jay, our tour guide in  
the "Pulpit", and one of  
the many structures at  
"Stonehenge"***



We first watched a ten minute movie about the discovery and recent excavations of the site since the mid-1950s. Work is still continuing and there has been no unequivocal dating of the original structure, although there are many indications that it could be of the order of 4000 years old. The dating and definition of its purpose have been complicated by the fact that later inhabitants of the area (it is known that a family built and farmed there in the 1800s) used some of the stones for their buildings or as foundations for an upper wooden structure.



In addition, it appears that stone was actually quarried here and taken away.



*The Oracle Chamber*



*Sacrifice Table*



*Astronomical Feature?*

Hence, the speculation continues but, whatever its origin and purpose, it is set in a lovely wooded area and it was a very pleasant 1 ½ hours of strolling and “what ifs” on a beautiful warm morning. We left the site and found a pub for lunch within 20 minutes and then drove the 60 miles back to the hotel.

In the evening, Molly and I drove to Jay and Gord’s home for dinner and more fun conversation. We had hamburgers from the grill and all the fixings, as well as home grown (just picked) asparagus. That with fresh fruit and coffee to follow - as well as a cold beverage or two - made for a wonderful evening and it was 11pm before we got back to the hotel.

### **Sunday May 15**

We had a coffee at Starbucks and at 11:30 met Jay and Gordon for brunch at a downtown Worcester hotel. The selection was great (breakfast, lunch and desserts) and, with a couple of glasses of mimosa, it was a very pleasant meal.

Jay and Gord then drove us on a tour of Worcester with its many fine buildings, dozens of churches and, of course, its college campuses. In addition we were treated to the Matheson Medical History Tour (with apologies to the Beatles) on which we saw where Gordon has



13/06/2016



*Worcester Railroad Station*

received most of his treatments and examinations over the past several years.

We then went to their home but only for a few minutes before taking another drive in the neighborhood of Rutland. It was quite chilly again by now so we didn’t spend an awful lot of time outside the car but we did manage an almost one mile walk along a lovely walking trail that had been converted from the railroad bed.





***Picturesque Worcester with:***  
***Top Left; one of the churches where***  
***Gord's dad ministered***  
***Bottom Left: Worcester State University where Jay and Gord***  
***taught for many years***



We then returned to Jay and Gord's for the rest of the evening and enjoyed another great meal and good conversation before saying our farewells for this trip. We got back to the hotel around 10:30.

### **Monday May 16**

We were up early and packed and checked out by 8am. It had been very cold overnight (mid-thirties) and was barely above 40F as we drove to a local McDonald's for breakfast. We then drove via Interstate 90 via the Berkshires to Schenectady, NY where we had a Starbucks lunch before continuing to Syracuse. For this stretch we used NY Route 5 rather than the Interstate for about 100 miles and enjoyed the hilly scenery of upstate New York. We checked into our hotel in Syracuse soon after 3pm and left about 5:30 to meet Cathy Temple for dinner.

Cathy (and her late husband David) had been our neighbors when we lived in Liverpool, NY and Elizabeth and Cathy's daughter Chrissie had played together as toddlers. Wow, that's about 45 years ago!

Cathy had made a reservation at a steakhouse near the fairgrounds which turned out to be very nice. We had a very good meal and an evening of great conversation before returning to her home for just a little while before going back to the hotel.

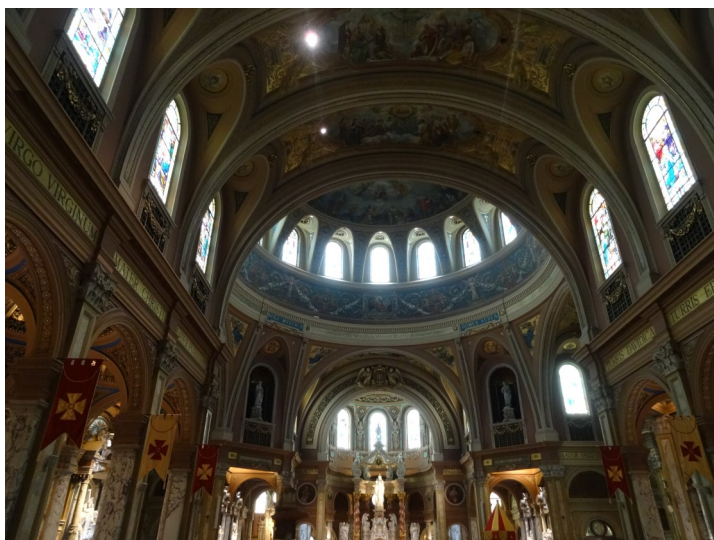


### **Tuesday May 17**

We were checked out before 9am and had a Starbucks breakfast in Liverpool before getting on the NY State Thruway as far as Buffalo. From there, we left the expressway and went on Route 5 alongside Lake Erie, all the way to our destination for the night in Erie, PA. Just before we reached the lake at Lackawanna, we stopped to visit an enormous marble basilica, which looked a little out of place in suburban Buffalo but was magnificent, inside and out.



***Our Lady of  
Victory Basilica***





Along the lakeside we followed the Seaway Route which hugged the water for the most part and took us past some huge lakeside homes and a number of state and local parks. The weather was still a little cool (mid-fifties) but it was a bright and sunny day which made for a very pleasant drive and a nice change from the expressway. We checked into our hotel on the south side of Erie around 4pm.

We took the recommendation of the hotel receptionist and ate at the restaurant in the hotel and actually had a decent meal at a reasonable price.

### **Wednesday May 18**

We checked out and had breakfast at a local Bob Evans and then set out on our journey home. We used the expressways to get south of Cleveland and then took Route 42 all the way home - about 200 miles on non-expressway driving through the flat farmlands of Ohio with its frequent small towns. It was a very pleasant ride and we arrived home at 5:30 after a great 2400 mile trip to see friends - together with some great scenery and places to visit.