

Somewhat surprisingly, when we were in the down state farming area the trees (far fewer, as we said) were more vivid in color and seemed to be much more alive. Perhaps we were looking at different varieties now, or perhaps it was the latitude; but, whatever the cause, it would appear that we may have a few more days of color before the trip is over.

We stopped around 1pm for coffee and once at a wayside park (lots of them in this part of the world and usually very well kept up and having restroom facilities) but otherwise kept driving until we reached St Paul. Avoiding the expressways for much of the journey made for a much easier and more pleasant drive – and the driver was able to enjoy the countryside fully.

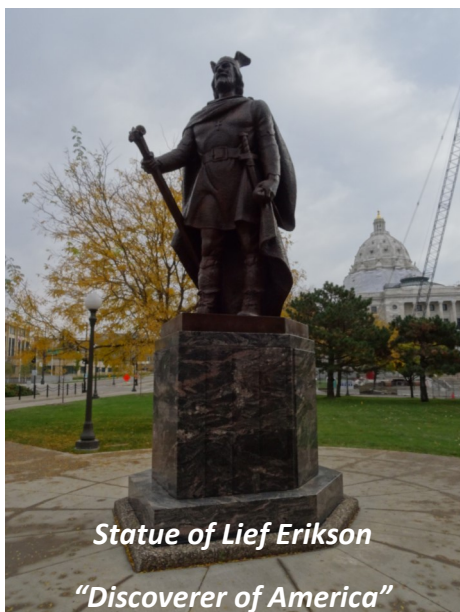


We arrived in Roseville around 3:30 and spent some time looking for a nearby restaurant online before relaxing until dinner time. We ate at a restaurant attached to a nearby Ramada Hotel and had a good meal of starters – and a bottle of wine.

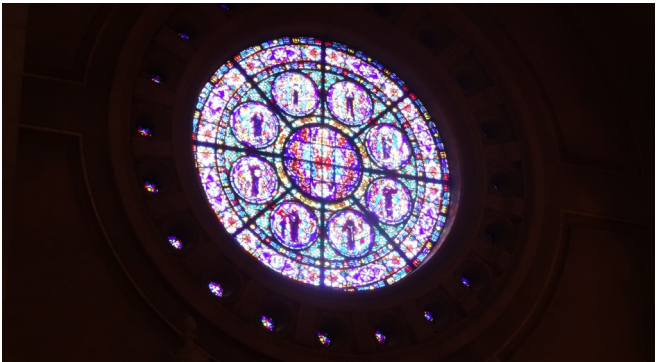
Monday October 17

We had breakfast at a nearby Perkins and then set out for our day of sightseeing. It was a little overcast but pleasantly warm; short sleeves the order of the day.

Our first stop was at the Capitol in St Paul. Unfortunately the building is undergoing a major renovation inside and out so we were only able to walk around the outside of the huge building, part of which was covered in tarps and was surrounded by cranes. However, we got a sense of how grand it is and hope to return when we can see inside.



Next we drove a short distance to the Cathedral of St Paul. This is of Greek cross design and has a huge central dome. There are some magnificent stained glass windows and a number of mosaics on the main pillars. The whole of the interior is beautifully decorated without being “over-the-top” and the exterior is very imposing, sitting as it does on one of the highest points of the city.



*Cathedral
Of
St Paul*



Finally we went to the St Anthony Falls area of the Mississippi River near to the heart of downtown Minneapolis. This is where the river drops almost fifty feet and originally formed one massive waterfall – the only one of any significance on the Mississippi. It was said that the falls were eroding and retreating about four feet every year (it sits on a limestone shelf) but that retreat was permanently halted with the construction of a dam and associated lock.

The area near the falls was at the heart of the industry of the city and in the 1800s a canal was built to provide water to the many businesses (mostly grain) nearby. Minneapolis (and its former sister city across the river) became the grain center for the world when the power of the river was harnessed. Today, the canal and mill races have been exposed and left more or less intact so that the modern city stands behind what appears to be a huge archeological site. Many pieces of old buildings, canal entrances and remnants of machinery have been left so that visitors can see the complexity of the system that gave birth to the modern metropolis.



The “centerpiece” of this area is an 1882 railroad viaduct built with massive stones in a grand series of archways spanning the river. The enormous project was completed in two years and, although it has undergone a 20th century renovation, it still stands as another example of the grand scale on which commerce was founded in the city. The bridge is now a recreational area for walkers and cyclists. All in all, this part of the city has a lot of history and Minneapolis has done a good job of preserving it and making it accessible and interesting for locals and visitors alike.

Around 2pm we finished our sightseeing, had a late Starbucks lunch and returned to the hotel for the rest of the afternoon. A great day in the Twin Cities and the fall foliage was still colorful!

There were a couple of heavy thunderstorms during the late afternoon but at 7:30 we left under dry skies to eat at The Sanctuary in downtown Minneapolis. This was a very nice restaurant with an interesting menu (Molly had alpaca) and a good wine list. In addition the service was excellent so a great way to end our visit to this city.



Tuesday October 18

After a McDonald's breakfast we left Minneapolis and basically spent the day driving to Des Moines, Iowa, a distance of about 250 miles. We spent the first two hours on Interstate 35 in Minnesota and made our first stop at Mason City – because it sounded like a nice place! After coffee there we left the expressway and took US 69 south across the Iowa border. The trees of Minnesota – still beautiful, especially the oranges and crimsons – gave way to the farmland of Iowa. This was almost all corn fields, most of it harvested and many fields already plowed under. We were now in true Midwest farm country with the highest points being the dozens of grain elevators.



We stopped to stretch our legs in **Ames** and walked about ½ mile through the Historic Downtown streets, looking at the many buildings described in plaques describing the history. Then we had about another hour to our hotel in West Des Moines where we arrived around 5pm after an easy drive on a beautiful warm day. It's difficult to believe we are in mid-October and the afternoon temperatures are over 70F.

Tonight we drove a few miles towards downtown Des Moines to a French restaurant that had a choice

of three set menus. We chose the four course degustation menu and it was absolutely delicious. With a bottle of wine and excellent service, this was a perfect spot to spend a couple of hours.

Wednesday October 19

We had breakfast in the Concierge Lounge and then drove to downtown Des Moines, where we spent the next five hours. First, we spent 1 ½ hours in the Capitol, which must be one of the finest in the country, both inside and out. Certainly the outside, with its huge rotunda gold dome and four smaller domes symmetrically placed on the four corners of the building, is the best we have seen and its location at the high point of the city. Inside, we had a very interesting discussion with the librarian and saw not only the huge collection of legal volumes but about six very old books that he had in a small room off the main library. One was over 400 years old – and he handled it as though it were the latest paperback novel!



From the Capitol we walked about ½ mile to the Iowa State Historical Museum, where we spent another two hours – including a light lunch. The majority of the museum is taken up by the history of Iowa and its position in the United States but there were additional exhibits about movies made here or about the state and another on an annual cross-state bicycle event from the Missouri to the Mississippi. It was a pleasant way to spend some time and we learned a little more about the area.

Finally, we walked back to the Capitol and spent 45 minutes simply admiring the outside of the buildings and its grounds on a picture-perfect afternoon. It was mostly sunny and the temperature was about 75F; not bad for the third week in October!

Tonight we ate at a local tapas restaurant, only a few minutes from the hotel. Although it was noisy and very much younger crowd, the food and service were very good, so we had yet another pleasant evening.

Thursday October 20

We had breakfast in the hotel again and then started our long drive to St Louis. It was a cold morning (low forties) and somewhat overcast as we left Des Moines, but it got brighter and warmer as the day progressed.

We avoided expressways and zig-zagged our way southeast in Iowa to the Mississippi River at Burlington. Here we had a coffee break before crossing into Illinois for a stretch on the Great River Road. It was a very pleasant drive south alongside the river; at this point we were not only on the Great River Road but also on part of the Lincoln Heritage Trail. In fact we stopped at a marker in Dallas City at a point where Lincoln gave a speech in 1838. We were on US Route 61 which at this point was also labeled the Avenue of the Saints. We imagined all sorts of reasons for the name (was it the route followed by the Acadians south from Canada,



part of the Mormon Trail, or perhaps a Mission Route much like

several we have seen out west? It turned out that none of these were correct and the name was conceived by an Iowa businessman in the 1980s who envisioned a four lane highway between St Louis and St Paul – a much less romantic reason than those we had considered but nevertheless practical!



We stopped for about 30 minutes in Nauvoo, Illinois which was the second major settlement for the Mormons on their way west following persecution in New York and Ohio. They arrived here in 1839 but continued to suffer persecution and, after 1844 when their leader Joseph Smith was killed, they began yet another – and final – march to settle in Zion. We have been to Nauvoo before and admired the enormous temple built (in the early 2000s) on the same site as the one used





by the LDS during their brief stay here. Today, on a beautiful sunny afternoon seeing the beautiful white building in a park-like setting overlooking the Mississippi River, we were once again impressed.

Monument to Joseph and Hyrum Smith and the Mississippi at Nauvoo

North of Hannibal, MO, we crossed the Mississippi westward to re-enter Iowa. It was a short-lived visit, however, as we crossed the Des Moines River almost immediately and were soon in Missouri and heading south to our destination. The final forty miles or so was on Interstate 70 and was very busy so we were pleased we had taken an alternative route for most of the day. We arrived at what we thought was our hotel around 5:30 only to find out that we were booked in at another Courtyard a few miles away. We settled in the room around 6pm, with a light rain falling as it had on and off for the final fifty miles.



Tonight we ate at Landry's Seafood Restaurant in the old Union Station complex just a few minutes from the hotel. We had eaten here a year ago with Robert and, although it's not the fanciest of places, we enjoyed the meal again tonight.

Friday October 21

We checked out of the hotel in St Louis about 8:30 and started our drive to Louisville. We used the expressways to get through East St Louis (Illinois) and, after a McDonald's breakfast, set off on US 50 rather than the interstates.

The two hours or so across southern Illinois were through flat farmland but there were a number of small towns and villages to break the monotony of corn fields and add some color to the journey. We always admire the buildings in these towns, especially, it seems, the courthouses (and/or city halls) and the churches – as well as some very fine homes at times.

We crossed the Wabash River at the Indiana border and stopped in the town of Vincennes. Here we found a small coffee shop for a brief break and we also visited the George Rogers Clark memorial on the edge of the river. This is actually a tribute to all frontiersmen and specifically those involved in the capture of the fort here from the British in 1779 – three years after Independence. Clark was the father of William Clark of Lewis and Clark fame so we were once again reminded of that journey over 200

years ago and ours on the same route about ten years ago.



*The Memorial and a nearby "Old"
Catholic Cathedral, Vincennes*

Today we were on US50 which we have covered in its entirety (also about ten years ago?) so we were seeing some of the same things again. However, we soon left US50 and followed US150 in a southeasterly direction across southern Indiana. Here the terrain changed significantly and we were once again





Last of the Fall Foliage for this trip

in a forested area with some relatively steep descents. The foliage seemed generally to be past its peak despite the fact that there was still a lot of green to be seen. This part of Indiana, and particularly the area of Brown County to our northeast, is renowned for its fall colors and they were indeed still very colorful – but we believe we saw the best earlier in our trip.

We joined I-64 just outside Louisville and followed expressways through town and on the eastern side to our hotel. Construction caused some delays as we neared our destination but we were settled in our room before 6pm – now back on Eastern time.

Tonight we ate at Ruth's Chris, a favorite of ours in Louisville and a major reason for detouring a little to stop here. The other reason will be breakfast on Saturday morning when we are meeting Hayley who transferred to Bellarmine University here at the beginning of this academic year.

Saturday October 22

We were up before 7:30 and drove to Bellarmine University where we picked up Hayley. We had a very enjoyable chat as we ate breakfast at a local Bob Evans and then returned her to school – so she could start her work shift in the dining hall.

We then drove straight home using I-71 and got back to Mason around 12:30pm. Another great trip.

