

PLEASANT VISITS TO SIX STATES IN THE USA - 2022

This winter and spring I traveled in the U.S. to visit family and friends. I was in places with many memories – Seattle and Port Townsend, WA, Marblehead, MA and of course Chicago. But, also many first-times: Arlington and Skagit County, WA, Cadieux (Belgian) Cafe in Detroit, Sturbridge Village and Plymouth, MA, the Vanderbilt Biltmore Estate in Asheville, NC and Santa Fe, NM.

A Seattle must-visit is Pike Place Market and now that the Alaska Way Viaduct has been



removed the views of the active port, Mt Rainier and the Olympic mountains are superb. Mass transit finally has taken hold with trains and light rail running from points north and south to events at the two stadiums as well as businesses and schools.

The then-current exhibit at Seattle Art Museum, Our Blue Planet, Global Visions of Water, was a multinational installation of the importance of water to us culturally and for survival with works dating from 618 AD to the present. I particularly liked Autumn Moon, inspired by the landlocked salmon in Kootenay



Lake, BC by Musqueam First Nation artist Susan Point.



Port Townsend's waterfront historic downtown always delights with its Victorian-era buildings and creative artists on display. Nearby Sequim also has remnants of the area's history as a fertile farmland.



Although I had previously been aware of the tulip industry in Skagit County (I missed the peak season between my two visits this year) I hadn't known the rich diversity of products available from the descendants of the original Dutch and Scandinavian settlers. Of course, I knew the hugely diverse seafood choices from local waters that we used to ply. The left photo is from the tulip festival brochure with Mt. Baker in the background and the right one from Skagit's Own Fish Market brochure.





At the Tulip Valley Winery well-known local Italian chef Angelo gave up his famous restaurant in favor of a food truck and catering business. Many good reasons to visit the valley!



I had never been aware that Glacier Peak, rising between Mt Baker and Mt Rainier (elevation 14,411') at 10,541' is only 240' shorter than Mt Baker. It is just hidden inside of the North Cascade Range instead of rising majestically visible from sea level as do the others. Below, Glacier Peak, Mt Baker, Mt Rainier.



Arlington was founded in 1903 as a center for logging the old growth forests in the area which could be floated down the local Stillaguamish River to Puget Sound.



Downtown, a few buildings date from that era and the local hardware store displays some of the local wildlife.



The 29-mile Centennial Trail on former railroad rights of way dating from the 1880's was begun in 1989, the state's centennial. Along the way, Nutty's is a terrific hamburger joint celebrating the history of Route 66.



Michigan was my next stop. Detroit has a rich musical tradition (Detroit Symphony Orchestra, blues, jazz, Motown) and I saw a bass saxophone, I think for the first time in my life, when enjoying Planet D Nonet play at the Cadieux Cafe in Detroit one Sunday afternoon.



Massachusetts was next. When visiting Marblehead, I stopped by our first address, a church in old town converted to apartments.

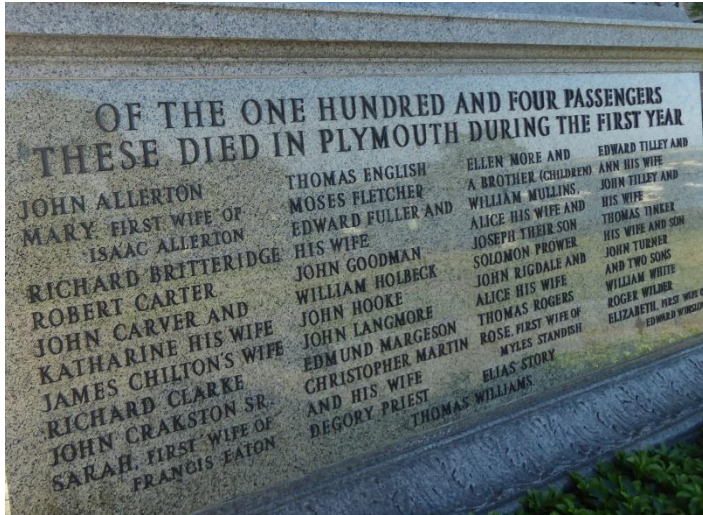
The harbor at sunset is beautiful as always, and many of the buildings with

their 1700's and 1800's historic plaques are of about the same era as buildings currently remaining in Plymouth.





The visit to Plymouth arose because of the recent discovery of seven ancestors on board the Mayflower. It was surprising to learn that at least 47 of the 104 passengers on board perished during the first year, including three of my ancestors.



But the Mayflower Compact, signed by 41 of the men (separatist Puritans, traders and adventurers) on board laid out a vision of self-governance and rule of law that 150 years later were echoed in our Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution.

Burial Hill overlooks the town harbor and the replica Mayflower. Built from 1955



to 1957 in England, it then sailed to Plymouth. The original Mayflower was fortunate to land in one piece as many subsequent ships of potential settlers were lost at sea. Although its original plan was to join the colonists already present in Virginia, supplies were running short so they sought landfall from an anchorage in Cape Cod Bay and settled on what became Plymouth.

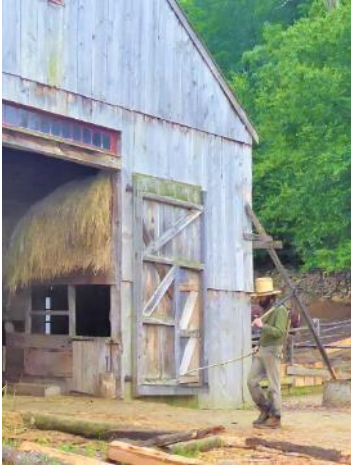
Here I am with the tomb of one ancestor family. And another ancestor built one of these seven houses.



Sturbridge Village is a vivacious community which illustrates New England life of the 1700's with historic buildings relocated there and dedicated staff reenacting the period. One man explained how

he received charge of two bulls when they were two months old and he was their "boss".

Although they now outweigh him by 10 times at age 2 years, he is still the boss and has trained them as working oxen pulling carts for various village projects.



The blacksmith showed the many necessary tools they created in addition to horse shoes.



At Logan Airport outside the Hilton Hotel there is a very moving memorial to flights AA11 and UA175 which were sacrificed on 9/11.



From Boston I traveled to Asheville, NC. Although I had visited friends in the area before, I had never been to Biltmore. George Vanderbilt assembled more than 700 properties totaling 125,000 acres of rolling farm land in the late 1880's and from 1889 to 1895 proceeded to build the supposedly largest private residence in the US with 250 rooms, an indoor full size swimming pool, bowling alleys, and 30 en-suite bedrooms for visiting guests with their own sitting-room. I found the 70' high banquet hall with its 3 adjacent fireplaces very



impressive. The frieze over the fireplace depicts “Return from the Hunt”, a scene from Wagner’s opera Tannhauser.



Vanderbilt was an avid collector and in addition to magnificent tapestries had Monet and Renoir paintings and family portraits by John Singer Sargent.



Frederick Law Olmsted (Central Park, NYC) was his landscape architect/planner. Because most of the farmland was depleted, he recommended planting the first scientifically-managed forest. Vanderbilt intended the property to be self-sustaining and created many types of farms. Before Vanderbilt’s death, he sold the 87,000 acres to the federal government that became the nucleus of the Pisgah National Forest. The remaining estate totals 8000 acres of wooded trails, rolling pastures and a small community area of hotels, winery and restaurants.

Nearby Hendersonville was also new to me and people said it is how Asheville used to be. The downtown main street has some interesting buildings and I realized that even on opposite coasts buildings from the same era had a similar feel. Below is Hendersonville.



Adjacent photo is Arlington, WA.

The Blue Ridge Mountains are absolutely beautiful with vistas and four seasons. In late June there were white rhododendrons in full bloom. I don't think I would want to negotiate those hills, however during the winter!





Whenever I go to Chicago, I take the AIA architectural boat tour. There are always new exciting buildings and this time the guide told us some things I hadn't learned before. Such as about the 150 North Riverside building. Because of railroad tracks and easements, the building's allowable footprint was only 39' wide so the architects/engineers came up with a unique inverted 8-story wedge as its base, above which rise 54 stories of 1.5 million square feet of rentable office space. And then, despite successful wind tunnel testing, once built it had a dangerous sway problem. I thought it was a brilliant solution to enclose the top floor as a bladder and fill it with water whose movement would counterbalance the sway!



New fully glassed viewing platforms have been added to the Willis Tower's 101<sup>st</sup> floor (no thank you!).

My former neighborhood between Grant Park and the river is now known as Lakeshore East. On my last visit I fell in love with architect Jeanne Gang's Aqua Tower in "my" 'hood, with its wavy balconies.



Now the same architect has created The St Regis Chicago, Chicago's third tallest building after Willis (Sears) Tower, and Trump Tower (due to the "spire" on top). The design concept is from crystal formations in nature known as frustums which slightly angle, in this case attenuating the wind forces which is further assisted by a two-floor "blow-through" at the 83<sup>rd</sup> floor. The 8-sided floors house condominiums and the St Regis Hotel and is the world's tallest building designed by a woman.

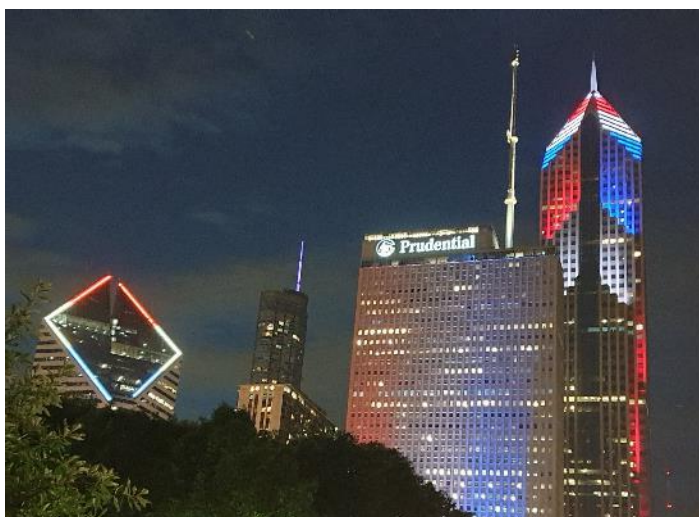
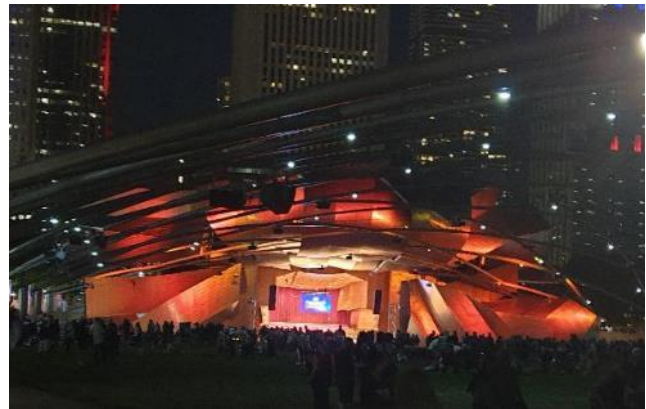


The neighborhood contains several restaurants, good supermarkets, schools and a 6-acre park.

Speaking of Grant Park, now Millennium Park, I was fortunate to be there on Saturday July 2<sup>nd</sup> when Grant Park Orchestra and Chorus resumed their traditional Independence Day concert followed by lake front fireworks.

It was my first concert experience in the stunning Jay Pritzker Pavilion, by Frank Gehry,

completed in 2004. The photo on the left also shows the two buildings that were my former Chicago homes! Due to current events the orchestra closed not with the traditional 1812 Overture but with John Williams' moving Prayer to the Fallen. They also added Ethel Smyth's 1910 English suffragette song March of the Women to the pre-printed program.



And, of course buildings were appropriately lit for Independence Day.

Although open since 1987 I did not know about The National Museum of Mexican Art in the Pilsen neighborhood. One of the current exhibitions traces the rise of Mexican cultural pride from post-



colonial times through independence to immigrants into the U.S. This beautiful piece is actually very fine bead work!

Civil rights photographer Maria Varela, whom I didn't know, was featured and



there was also an exhibit of family photos from the life of Frida Kahlo on loan from the Frida Kahlo Museum in Mexico City.



This south side neighborhood, Pilsen, has some fine street art.



A local artist whom I also didn't know, Nick Cave, was on exhibit at the Museum of Contemporary Art. His mixed media, especially textile and found objects, and expressions of the life of blacks in America are very moving while also beautiful.



I managed to dine at historic favorites Gene and Georgetti's and Gibsons and noticed that Latino fare seems to have displaced pizza as the go-to fast food in town. I ran out of time for a Chicago deep dish pizza from Lou Malnati's.

The final stop on the trips was my first visit to Santa Fe, NM and the International Folk Art Market (ifam). You probably couldn't make a bigger contrast back-to-back than high-rise downtown Chicago and horizontal Santa Fe where historic preservation controls heights to about 4 floors for a radius of 15 miles from the center!

A friend drove me through the stunning Abiquiu area with its buttes, mesas and subtle desert shading – Georgia O'Keefe country. Having previously done a virtual tour of her home and studio I skipped that and, unfortunately, the pueblo communities were still closed to visitors.







I had a fine lunch of pulled pork and black bean soup at Abiquiu Inn with a sensational chocolate pie for dessert.



On the Historic Walks of Santa Fe tour, I learned that the historic preservation regulations not only control heights, but colors must be of natural earth found in the area, plus blue for the expansive sky. Dating back to 1610, the Palace of the Governors is the oldest public building in continuous use constructed by European settlers in the continental United States. Its pueblo-style construction is symbolic of this area.



The state capital (1966) is also unique in that it has no dome and is laid out in the shape of the Zia sun symbol which forms part of the state seal. Thus, Santa Fe has both the oldest and one of the newest state capitol buildings in the U.S.





American Indian to was an Algonquian-State who converted age. The statue was sculptor from the



Outside the cathedral is a statue of Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680) the first north be beatified, in 2012. She Mohawk woman of New York to Christianity at an early created by Estella Loretto a nearby Jemez Pueblo.



Gothic-Revival-style Loretto Chapel, completed in 1878, with its curved wooden “Miraculous”



staircase is now a private museum and popular wedding venue. The Staircase has two complete 360 degree turns with no center pole for structural support. The entire weight of the staircase rests on the bottom stair.

San Miguel Chapel (~1610) is regarded as the oldest Christian church in the U.S. although it is likely that little of the original structure actually remains.







And at La Fonda I had the best enchilada lunch ever.

The ifam was conceived and begun in 2004 by former Peace Corps volunteers to bring together the finest examples of traditional arts from around the world. This year 164 artists (38 for the first time) were selected by jury from 48 countries, 2 of them represented for the first time – Finland and The Russian Federation. On Monday evening, July 4<sup>th</sup> before their set-up day the artists assembled for the traditional

Community Welcome parade in central Santa Fe. Volunteers held the country name signs for each group.



Some of the more unusual arts I saw included broken porcelain “repair” (Kintsugi) from Japan, weaving from a very fine natural thread from Guatemala, and these quirky baskets.





I had a fascinating conversation with the woman who provided the start-up materials of silk and silver thread and created the Tally Assuit Women's Collective for Egyptian women to produce traditional Assuit from their region which is now largely replaced by machine-made polyester. It has provided income for women aged 16 to 70 to pursue their dreams of becoming a dentist, owning a first tv

at age 70, and sending children to school.

It also provides social contact for otherwise housebound women in this traditional Egyptian community. At the first night gala they sold six of the seven of the gowns they brought at \$700 each!



I was only there for the set up and first day of the 5-day event but was able to volunteer to deliver lunches to artisans on their set up day and to scan the tickets for the opening night gala when for at least \$500 per ticket, 1000 Santa Feans came to be the first to meet the artists and shop. Visitors were greeted by both New Mexico's Governor and Santa Fe's Mayor and fine entertainment which continued throughout the week.



I helped set up and greet visitors to the Sefrou Cherry Button Cooperative from Morocco, whose leadership I have known for two decades. They have exhibited jewelry they make from their djellaba buttons several times previously but were the only Moroccan artisans represented this year. Here I am in my volunteer t-shirt with Gregg Johnson who as a Peace Corps Volunteer worked with the group from 2003 to 2006 and has remained very close to them.

The over 11,000 attendees purchased more than \$3,000,000 of products, a record in terms of sales/visitor. Some felt that because of the smaller number of visitors (in peak pre-Covid years as many as 21,000 attended for an only 3-day event) that there was more time to get to know the artists and therefore better appreciate





their work. This event operates with a staff of seven and over 1600 volunteers this year, some years as many as 2400 volunteers! It was joyous to watch the positive interactions among people from so many different cultures, their mutual respect and how helpful they were to one another.

I visited two of the four museums on Museum Hill where the event was held – Museum of international Folk Art and Museum of Indian Arts and Culture where I learned a lot. Museum Hill is located on unceded Tews tribal lands.

The sun was setting as I headed back to my hotel following a very successful opening night gala.



Although the time visiting with friends and family seemed never to be enough, these trips are totally memorable for those times as well as the many experiences that were planned and not planned in my itineraries.