

Day 1, Tuesday 12 October 2004

We left Freeport at 7:00am as planned. Unlike some of our trips, the sky was slightly cloudy so we were not dazzled by the sun. Although 30 miles longer, it is quicker to take I39 and I80 to get around the south side of Chicago.

I think Michigan drivers are even worse than Texans! Twice I was driving at 70+ mph overtaking a truck when vehicles came up the inside, and pulled in front with scarcely three car lengths to spare. Scary!

As we drove north, the fall colors became more intense.

We made good time. For once, hurray, no road works. We left I94 after Battle Creek following I69 for Lansing and Flint. We planned to cross into Canada at Port Huron using the Blue Water Bridge to Sarnia. Five miles before the bridge, the traffic started backing up. We drove one mile in 45min.

I94 turns north at Detroit towards Port Huron and re-intersects I69.

“Quick Jan, give me the map. How far to Detroit? About 50 miles. Lets do it!”

So like a worm crawling back into its hole, we ran back down I94 to Detroit. A little excitement when we encountered poor road signs and nearly ended up down town. Just ten minutes to cross the Ambassador Bridge.

“Citizenship? Where are you going? For how long? Any alcohol or tobacco? What gifts are you bringing in? Pass on.”

We later learnt that public servants are on strike. They are targeting different services each day. Today it was the Customs at Blue Water Bridge. Just our luck. There were seven hour delays, so we did well to detour to Detroit. This is the second time we have had delays. Last year they were on strike. I said that was the last time I would drive to Port Huron, but later learnt they closed the Ambassador Bridge yesterday.

We picked the first hotel we saw, a Hampton Inn and crawled in around 7:30pm having lost an hour. I did not feel like going far to eat, so we crossed the road to the Market Place at a Holiday Inn for English fish and chips.

We turned in early.

Day 2

The truck traffic is heavy. This part of Canada is flat. The highest point around is a bridge over pass. Most of the beans are harvested, the corn is not.

On to London. So many English names. Thames, Tilbury, Kent, Chatham. We know them all.

At Woodstock we turn south east on Rt 59. A winding, pretty route. Just 15 miles to Norwhich where we turn east to Scotland. This is sandy land. The tobacco is harvested. Lots of new ginseng patches being planted. Must be money in that. It can only be grown once on any land. It takes out all the nutrients. Poles are planted and the whole plot covered with shading cloth for four years before harvest. Strange.....

We fuel in Norwhich. I offer US dollars.

Clerk. "Why did you do that. This is my first day. I don't know how to convert. She allows 25 cents."

Me. "Got a calculator? Multiply by .75"

Now across country on a gravel road. Well packed so we can drive at reasonable speed. The tree colors are spectacular. Turn here and we drive into Rosa & Ken's 400ft driveway just after noon.

Usual family greetings.

We hear a rumbling.
Looking out, their beans are being combined.



Get them beans!

Still at it after dark. Supposed to rain later this week. They must have combined 20 acres in a few hours. The corn is for another day.



The Homestead.

Day 3 Thursday

This was the day of the computer. Ken is just getting into photo editing, so we had purchased Adobe Photoshop Elements as a gift from Staples. Baby brother to the full version which I use. It installed just fine on his computer. Now to register it. No luck. Call customer service.

After a short wait I was informed that this serial number had been registered by someone in Freeport a year before. After a long wait I was told Adobe could not help.... So I guess when we get back home I will be making an appointment with Staples store manager! Close examination confirmed that the box had been resealed.

Most of the rest of the day was spent optimizing their computer.



Rear View.



Corner of the bean field.



Wine and Dine. Two jugs waiting to be decanted.

Day 4 Friday

A morning mist turned into a light drizzle then heavy rain.

Wine and liquor are extremely expensive in Canada. Rosa & Ken make their own wine for a fraction of the cost, but about the same as we pay in the US for medium priced wine. I watch as the latest batch is decanted in the wine cellar (basement). We have sampled both red and white. Their product is very good.

The leaves are falling fast.

We drive 15 miles to their nearest food store, about the same size as Cubs. Very well stocked with fish and fresh produce. Jan thinks the meats are more expensive and there is not as much choice as we are used to. Our turn to buy.



Day 5 Saturday

The rain is over. We want to capture more photos of the fall color, but the sun does not shine.

Off to St. Jacobs, a Menonite town north of Kitchener, about an hours drive. It's a tourist spot. Being Saturday there are crowds of people and bus tours are in. We prowl the stores and make a few purchases.

Time for lunch so we visit Valdivia's. Seats in the middle. Around the perimeter are counters where one can buy hot entrées, sandwiches, salads, deserts etc. Purchase is a misnomer. One carries a card which is stamped at each counter with a symbol. The card is then turned in to the cashier on departure. We enjoy a local micro brew.

We tour a few more stores, then head for home.

Day 6 Sunday

We watch as various farm implements rumble up the driveway. They are planting winter wheat where the beans were harvested. Lots of money in that. Disk and plant in one pass.

The coons have done a lot of damage to the corn. We walk around the perimeter of a small field to shoot the next great fall picture. The corn is flattened in a 25ft swath. Ken calls the coon hunters. They arrive complete with hounds. We hear them baying into the night, but no shots. We are not sure if the coon season is open yet. Ken says "Them good ol' boys are happy."

Day 7 Monday

The birds are active, so are the squirrels and chipmunks. The squirrels are black but one new born is gray. The weather is still not the best. Our turn to cook. We have great pork chops.



Day 8 Tuesday

We drove into Tilsonburg, about 20 miles. Everywhere is 20 miles away. Rosa had to pick up replacement screens for the windows. The flies here are bad in the spring. Visited a small exhibit of pencil drawings. Very well done. Nothing too exciting at the mall, but it was an excursion for the ladies.



Day 9 Wednesday

We drove to Sarnia and crossed to Port Huron without incident. Home by 5:15pm.