

## Ormand Family Activity

June 2012: Five-State Tour

Monday June 11: Mansfield and Springfield

We had visited the Laura Ingalls Wilder "Little House on the Prairie" in Kansas some time ago, and now, somehow, Jerri noticed that Laura's final destination and the place where she wrote the books is in Mansfield, which is a little bit east of Springfield. Today is the day we travel to Kansas City by way of Springfield, but we will take this little detour. Half an hour, we get to the southeast corner of Springfield, and another half an hour, we are in the sleepy little town of Mansfield, Missouri.



This is the "Rocky Ridge Farm" house, that Almanzo Wilder built starting with a little two-room cabin and adding rooms year by year. It was in this house that Laura wrote all her stories.

Either we are in Amish country, or the "Little House" stories resonate with the Amish, because

there were some Amish families watching the Laura Ingalls Wilder film in the museum when we arrived, and then, while we were in the gift shop, an Amish family with a little girl came in. Dad with his beard and his round-brimmed hat walked around looking at the stuff, and the little girl was animatedly holding up items for her mom to see, and chattering happily. Except for the long dress and the bonnet, she was pretty much like Charity and Faith were at her age. Wait... could that mean she was... human? Travel is a wonderful thing for broadening one's perspectives.

Their daughter Rose became a journalist and a novelist in her own right, and became quite wealthy. She had this English Cottage house built for them (plans available from Sears Roebuck) and wired for electricity, and moved them into it while she herself lived in the farmhouse. Which, while she was there, she had it electrified, too. Within a



year, Rose left to return to New York City, and mom and dad spared no time to move back to the farmhouse which they had built themselves. We thought the cottage was rather pleasant, and it reminded me a great deal of the house my grandmother had on Drachman Street in Tucson.



After the houses, the Wilder graves are the big pilgrimage site for Laura Ingalls Wilder fans.

We have spent the morning driving from Branson and looking over Mansfield, and we are now ready to resume our northward journey. It



is lunchtime, so on the way back to Springfield, we stop at an interesting place we saw on the way out - Uncle Rooster's ([www.uncleroosters.com](http://www.uncleroosters.com)). Besides the delicious grill-type food, the

place is interesting for the coated floor where guests are invited to write their names on the floor with the provided Sharpie pens. They also have antiques, and home-made preserves for sale (pickled eggs, gooseberry jam; you just don't see those everywhere). On the counter by the register was an "Amish Music Box", which invited you to open the lid, and a spider would jump out on your hand. Mommy and Faith especially enjoyed this!



Upon arriving in Springfield, the first thing to see is the original and grandest Bass Pro Shop ([www.basspro.com](http://www.basspro.com)).

In the Fishing and Water Sports area, a full-size live alligator lurks in his pool.

Yep, this place is rather bigger than the one in Branson.







A huge diorama setup *just for fish*. The "tree branches" were festooned with Spanish Moss; I didn't think this was really a Missouri thing. In the ceiling are the bottoms of boats and trolling motors and duck feet, just like you were under the water looking up at the surface. Interesting.

Charity communes with the gamefish. These include gar, big predator fish with beaky mouths full of sharp teeth. In another part of the store, by the Snapping Turtle tank, was the stuffed Champion Gar, as big as me with a mouth a foot wide. The thought of swimming around in a Branson-area lake with fish like these just below your feet is a bit creepy.





A turtle pond, illuminated by camping lanterns hung over the water. Very popular with the younger crowd.

And the amazing giant Snapping Turtle. This fellow was perhaps three feet across. Sure beats the huge Lake Michigan snapper we saw at the Chicago aquarium. If the thought of swimming in a Missouri lake with gar in it was creepy...





The other end of the store is even more interesting. Huge dioramas with elk and bighorns, waterfalls tumbling into pools with gamefowl and fish. We go down the stairs; camping equipment with a stream running down the central aisle, a lecture room with a wraparound fish tank,

the indoor pistol range. It's all just mind-boggling.

After leaving the amazing Bass Pro Shop, we continue on up the street to the downtown area. According to the tourist sites (check out [www.itsalldowntown.com](http://www.itsalldowntown.com) and [springfieldmo.org](http://springfieldmo.org), there are three districts of especial interest: Downtown, with the central square and lots of shops and cafes; C-Street, with more shops and cafes and the Footbridge; and Walnut Street, the historic residential area. We don't really have the time or inclination for Walnut Street, but I want to see what their downtown looks like.

Disappointing, really. Much larger than Tucson's, but perhaps more vacant and run down. I guess they are trying to fix things.

Springfield is significant for being the site of the first "wild west" shootout, between Wild Bill Hickock and Davis Tutt. Hickok was on this corner (imagine dirt instead of asphalt and concrete),







and Tutt was on this corner. That seems pretty far for a pistol shot, but Hickok got him in the heart. In typical 19th Century aplomb, the law in Springfield wrote it off as "self-defense", and Hickok's reputation was secure.

Note the nice six-story; all boarded up. That's a police cruiser in the corner; apparently, Springfield finds it necessary to station an officer in the square continuously. There's nobody here but some bands of young people and a few shabby men (homeless?).

We walk down the street just south of the square, looking for a Czech shop that appears on the map, but we cannot find it. It appears the map is out of date. Everything we see is run down. *Or maybe it just seems that way because nobody else is here.* Looking at some store hours, it appears that Monday is an off-day for downtown businesses.

We go back to our car and continue north to Commercial Street, or "C-Street", where the Jefferson Avenue Footbridge is located, which is considered "artwork" as much as a functional pedestrian route..





The attraction of the Footbridge is at least in part for train-watchers to watch the freights go by. Seems Springfield is on the Santa Fe Line.





Charity watches a L-O-N-G train of coal cars headed east.

We go all the way to the north end, where the residences are. Apparently, the Footbridge was intended to provide safe passage for working people going between North Springfield and the businesses and industries on the other side of the rails.





Back on the other side, a view down C-Street. Abandoned. Not just because it's late (which it isn't; it's only six in the afternoon), but because everything is closed on Monday. Maybe we should have stayed an additional day in Branson?

The distance from Springfield to Kansas City is a bit farther than from Tucson to Phoenix... and not nearly as picturesque. Miles and miles of Missouri farmland. It is late before we get to KC, so somewhere along the way, we stop for dinner at a Pizza Hut where they sincerely believe in refrigeration. We were grateful to get back outside in the steamy evening warmth. Come to think of it, the Pizza Hut near our home is excessively chilly.

### Tuesday June 12: Kansas City

Our hotel is in Kansas City, Kansas, but that's okay; after a few days of driving around KC, we find it is pretty easy to find your way. The only thing we have to get used to is the absence of left-turn lanes. Especially at rush hour, when left turns are expressly forbidden at many important intersections. Kansas City is very tourist-friendly, and their website ([www.visitkc.com](http://www.visitkc.com)) and the tourism book are full of interesting information.

Main Street is actually the main street, and goes way down south and almost to the river to the north. The drive through the urban core shows it to be clean and spacious, with lots of shops and restaurants at street level. Lots of people walking about. The "Power and Light District" is down here, especially for live entertainment and the nightlife, and the Arts

District as well. All within walking distance; not at all as far as it seems on the map. I would have liked to have walked around and gotten more of a feel, but (repeat after me) we didn't have time.



After a false start, we find a nice riverside park and get a good look at "Big Muddy" - the Missouri River. "Too thick to drink and too thin to plow", as the sign says. Pretty impressive to this bunch of Zonies.



Looking away from the river, we see the skyline of the city. It's a little surprising to me that the city isn't right on the banks of the river, especially as we see barge tie-ups along the bank. Could be this area was more industrial in times past, and has been "urban renewal"-ized.



With all the silt, and the low-lying farmland, the Missouri River does a lot of meandering. Now with the Army Corps of Engineers on the job, it doesn't meander quite as much as it used to. In the 1850s, before the war, there was a LOT of steamboat traffic on the river, which was more shallow than now, and full of sunken tree trunks - "snags". In this period, the riverboat Arabia was carrying a load of cargo and passengers when it hit a snag and sank within minutes. All the people got off safely (the only casualty was a mule tied to the aft railing), but all the cargo went to the bottom. Which wasn't very deep, but in the course of a few weeks, the current undercut the soft silt under the boat, and piled more silt on top of it, so it actually sank into the river bottom! Then, after a few years, the river meandered away from it. Many years later, a group of amateur treasure hunters did some research of the historical records, and estimated its position to be in a local farmer's corn field. Using some fancy instruments, they located it, and with the cooperation of the farmer and using all their lifes' savings and mortgaging their homes and businesses, they excavated this pre-Civil War steamboat! The original intention was to simply recover the goods for resale and profit, but as they cleared away the mud, they realized the archaeological value. Today, the Arabia items are in a museum just south of the river it sunk in.



One of the wheels (the Arabia was a side-paddler) is reconstructed, but the drive machinery is original. It paddles the water inside the tall area inside the museum. The rest of the engine, and the anchor, and the stern section with the rudder mechanisms, are all here in the museum. Even the snag that brought it down was recovered!

The amazing cargo was recovered intact (except for some barrels of Jack Daniels that were on the manifest, and probably floated away right after the disaster). Bound for frontier general stores. Plates and glasses and cookware.





And hardware, and many, MANY pairs of shoes and boots. The Arabia was involved in the history of "Bleeding Kansas", and it had been boarded before by pro-slavery forces who confiscated rifles before they were delivered to anti-slavery forces. The work to restore the artifacts is ongoing. To our delight, one of the senior members of the original band of

discoverers was there at the museum, and at the end of our guided tour, we had the opportunity to talk with him. It seems they have not yet quite recovered all the investment that they personally made. It also seems that they won't get it from the Smithsonian, who would like them to *donate* the collection! It remains the largest privately-held museum of pre-Civil War artifacts in the world.

Outside the Arabia museum (which is actually a part of a larger arts and shopping district that (yet again) we don't have time to explore), this sign, from which I am surprised to learn that Kansas City was yet another French settlement. By those busy Chouteau people. I always wondered why the small town just south of Pryor, Oklahoma, was named "Chouteau". Seems that family had itchy feet, and they didn't stop in Missouri. Or Kansas. We will learn that the Chouteaus played a role in St. Louis as well.





Our main objective for the day is the Hallmark Visitors' Center. Right in the middle of the city is the Crowne Center, which includes Union Station, the Hallmark headquarters, and a shopping mall. Looking around for a convenient parking place, we end up at the business end of Union Station, where the tracks are.

Yes, Union Station is still served by Amtrak. But in only a minor way, rather like, yes, Amtrak still serves Tucson, but the Tucson railroad station is now occupied by businesses, primarily Maynard's Kitchen. Union Station here also includes the Science Center, the model train museum, some restaurants, other exhibits (like the Titanic show, and the 100th Anniversary of the KC Fire Department), and the post office. From which we mail some Father's Day and Birthday cards - I wonder if the recipients noted the "Kansas City" postmark!







Breathtaking grandeur. Like the station in Chicago, one can imagine what it was like when it was thronged with people rushing to and from the trains. That's a fancy restaurant in the middle, and my inclination was to have lunch there, but I'm glad I did not prevail. On the other side, behind the restaurant, is a "secret passage" to the enclosed walkway that crosses Main Street to the shopping mall and the Hallmark offices.

In the shopping mall, as you might expect, are restaurants, including this intriguing place that incorporates an actual former working trolley. We got a table in the trolley, just on the other side of the door. The restaurant is named, as you might expect...





Faith is full of good food and high spirits.

We ask one of the mall security guards how to get to the Hallmark place. After a brief walk, we arrive where Jerri has been wanting to be for a long time. On one side of the square is the Hallmark corporate headquarters, including the studios of the artists.





On the other side is the Visitors' Center. Inside is an exhibit of their company history and the various directions they have taken since its founding, including the musical cards, wrapping paper (Hallmark essentially invented the colorful printed wrapping paper we take for granted today),

ornaments, and made-for-television movies. It seems the founder, J.C. Hall, structured the company around his employees, like a big family, and he was greatly loved. Hughes Aircraft was rather like that. Raytheon is NOT.

I try out a computerized image processor. A camera puts your image on the screen, and superimposes one of a number of silly Hallmark crowns (it can handle more than one person, but the computer's face recognition algorithm gets confused). At a set time, it takes a "snapshot" of the screen, and sends it to an adjacent computer display, where you can have it e-mailed to wherever you like.



(Note the advertisement for the Arizona Centennial.)

Here's evidence that Jerri was actually present at the center of the Hallmark Keepsake Ornament world.



After our busy day, the Visitors' Center closes before we are finished. We will have to come back. On the way out, we are presented with a gift - a recordable family memories book. My appreciation of the company founded by J.C. Hall goes up several notches.

We leave the Hallmark place via the shopping mall - the Hall's store, to be exact; yes, a department store which is part of the Hallmark empire. Must be strictly regional, rather like "Belk" is in the South, or the "Hudson Bay Company" in Canada. Well, no surprise about the latter. Also in the mall is, yes, a Hallmark store, and a Crayola store/cafe,



where youngsters can color on papers while they eat their corn dogs - it would seem Crayola is yet another subsidiary of Hallmark. There are other interesting shops, like a Christmas place (Jerri will revisit when we return) and a cat lovers' store. Next to a candied apple store. Okay, time to leave!



Further along, directly south of the Crowne Center, is the Country Club Plaza, which is an upscale shopping district with interesting architecture and a lot of fountains. Faith and Charity inform me that most of the shops we see really are *upscale*, and they dislike going in places where

everything is too expensive to even consider. But we stop in an H&M store for Charity, and a Barnes and Noble bookstore for Faith, before we get to the eastern end of the Plaza, where the Cheesecake Factory is housed under the bell tower.

Kansas City is known as the "City of a Thousand Fountains", and there are several here in Country Club Plaza. Faith considers what it must be like to be a fountain sculpture forever squirting water from its nostrils.





The iconic Kansas City fountain is this one, the J.C. Nichols Fountain at the entrance to Country Club Plaza. It is set in the corner of an urban park, where we see joggers and people sitting at tables eating or playing chess, and not

a few people sitting on the curb of the fountain talking and enjoying the evening. Our favorable impression of Kansas City as a pleasant place to live increases.

### Wednesday June 13: Independence

Today is a "president" day. We will visit the famous KC neighbor (suburb, really) of Independence ([www.visitindependence.com](http://www.visitindependence.com)). This starts with a drive down Truman Street (KC really is easy to get around in) to the Historic Square, and the Truman National Historic Site visitors' center. Tickets for the tour of the house are purchased here. Because the tours are small, they have to be scheduled, and the next available spot leaves us time to walk around the town a bit.

After looking through a few antique shops, and a Swedish cultural store, we arrive at the Jackson County courthouse, where Judge Truman worked. Independence was also a "jumping off place" for the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails. The downtown area here was also the setting for an urban battle between Union and Confederate forces.



A few blocks from here is the Truman house. It is a pretty place, built and improved over four generations of Mrs. Truman's ancestors. The family frequently had their meals on the back porch (where we start our tour). The kitchen is covered with wallpaper - ceiling, too. The

living areas were redecorated by Bess when they returned from the White House, with the expectation of entertaining guests of state, but Harry was keen on keeping space between the official part of being a former president and themselves as private citizens, so visits were rare and short. For the most part, official visits occurred in the parlour for ten to fifteen minutes. In fact, although he had a nice study in the house, he would walk on up the street to his office in the Presidential Library every day.

The sad thing about the Truman case is that Harry and Bess intended to return to Independence after his time in the White House and just sink back into the normal life he had before, but people wouldn't let him. In fact, the iron fence around the property was put up to give the Trumans a modicum of privacy.



Across the street is the house where Harry's relatives lived, and it was from here where Harry took a borrowed cake pan across the street and had an opportunity to talk with Bess. It would seem his girl cousins were helping, playing at matchmaking.



The story of Harry and Bess gets somewhat confusing. They both attended Sunday School at First Presbyterian here, but in later life attended at the Episcopal church where they were married. There's not much theological agreement between Presbyterianism and Anglicanism.



This log cabin was a Mormon general store at one time, and then the local justice court. Per the signs outside, it apparently still belongs to Jackson County, although it obviously isn't used for anything but historical interest.



Further down the road is a magnificent mansion from the time of the westward expansion. If I understood the signs correctly, people staying at the house would sit on the porch and watch the wagons of the settlers going by. This field was southward of the property, and the signs said you could see "swales", or the original wagon wheel ruts overgrown with grass. We

tried *really hard* to make out the "swales". It wasn't nearly as obvious as the Santa Fe Trail remnants at Fort Union in New Mexico.

Truman belonged to the railroad period, and politicians would do "whistlestops", and address crowds from the railing of the last car. This sign was put up when Truman made a "whistlestop" in his home town.



And this is the station where he made the "whistlestop". Unclear how much of this working Amtrak station is left from the Truman period.

A little northeast of Heritage Square, and several blocks from the Truman's house, is Trinity Episcopal Church, where Harry and Bess were married and where they attended. I was thinking, given how much Harry liked walking to places, it's a pretty good walk to here from their house, which would probably be okay when they were younger and the weather was good, but this is



Missouri, and it rains often. I suppose in those days there would be flocks of umbrella-toting church people out on rainy Sunday mornings.



There's more to Independence than Harry S Truman. There's a cluster of religious buildings southwest of Heritage Square. The Mormons are here, and one or two (or three) "Christian" groups. The wierd curly spire can be seen while coming down Truman Boulevard at some distance.

Now, I was intending to try some of that famous Kansas City barbeque today, but I made a tactical error. While we were walking around the square, I noticed a German restaurant across from the Visitors' Center. After we did our foot tour and before we drove southward to see the cabin and the "swales" and such, we went in for some German lunch. And it was good; the ham sandwich, the sauerkraut, the red cabbage, the spaetzel, all of it was delicious, but it wasn't... *light*. At least I felt rather stuffed when we left.

Having finished our visit to Independence, we return to KC and, in search of a restroom, decide to pop into the World War I Memorial. We got inside just before they closed for the day, just long enough to use the (air conditioned) restrooms, look around just a bit, and wish we had more time for a proper visit. It looks like an excellent museum about the Great War.





Besides, one of the attractions of the Memorial is to go up inside the spire. As it is, we have to settle for the view from the plaza.

Which is still a pretty good view of Kansas City. A beautiful, interesting, and very livable place.



Out in front of Union Station is the Bloch Fountain, whose jets rose to different heights or disappeared altogether. One of those "thousand fountains". Might be interesting for residents to go on a "fountain hunt" and try to find and see them all.



The recommendation for authentic Kansas City barbeque from the clerk in the cat lovers' shop in the Crowne Center mall is for Arthur Bryant's ([www.arthurbryantsbbq.com](http://www.arthurbryantsbbq.com)). We are advised to get there a bit early. When we arrive, we find a little storefront type restaurant, with formica tables



with the famous Arthur Bryant's sauce, and a counter where you place your order through the little window and then stand by the register until it arrives. When we get there, most of the tables are occupied but there's nobody at the counter. Before we are half finished, however, the line for the counter is almost to the door. The smoked meat is very good (I get rib tips), and the sauce makes it better, along with french fries and cole slaw. There are televisions playing sports channels hung on the walls, and photos on the wall of various celebrities who have been here, in addition to (the now deceased) Arthur and other coworkers. Arthur Bryant's claims to be the original Kansas City barbeque, the one that started it all, the city's reputation for barbeque. I don't know how much this was true, but it was *pretty good barbeque* (but... no, not as good as JL's).

#### Thursday June 14: Winterset

The next day is our trek to Iowa and Des Moines, but it has to start with one more trip back to the Crowne Center so Jerri can finish seeing the exhibits in the Visitors' Center. She does. And they give us another gift recordable memories book! And then we go back to the mall and see the Christmas shop. And now we are really done. The next challenge is to find our way to the interstate. There's a tangle of on-ramps and off-ramps and partially marked roads running beside the railroad tracks through an industrial district, and we cross the river three times before we get it right. The exception to "easy to get around KC" seems to be where the river is involved.

After a couple of hours of Missouri farmland, we cross the border into Iowa. About half an hour more, and we are at the state route to Winterset. Now it seems there is a preferred route, which is a bit further north than where I get off the interstate, but I am just following the signs. We find ourselves on a farm road which eventually gets to Winterset and enters from the south.



Why are we going to Winterset, Iowa? It's *John Wayne's birthplace!*

The phones are out due to some problem (storms? but it's so clear outside) and the credit card machine doesn't work. Good thing I have enough reserve cash for tickets and some John Wayne knick-knacks.

The lady in the shop

steps out from behind the counter to take us on the last tour of the house for the day. It's a small house, four rooms, rather like houses of the same vintage in Tucson. The first two rooms (kitchen, living room) are furnished similar to Marion Morrison's boyhood home, and the two back rooms are dedicated to movie memorabilia and artifacts. Seems his original intent was to play football, but he suffered an injury that prevented him from playing, so he connected with a producer of "B" films to be an extra, and got his big break in "Stagecoach". The rest is history. Of his several children by two or three wives, some appeared with him in movies.

Our parting tribute to the Duke - standing by his statue in his boyhood town. Then off to see more of Madison County.





Turns out Winterset is the county seat. The Madison County courthouse is an interesting building, with a tall dome with little dormer roof structures. As we drive around the square, we notice people gathering on the courthouse lawn. Then we notice signs announcing an outdoor musical concert this evening. Too bad we can't stay.

The Winterset town square is on the classical model with stores all around facing the central courthouse. Looks like an interesting variety of antique, knick-knack, and craft shops. All closed now; it's after 5. Silly. Not sure what to make of all the cars parked along the square, since the shops are mostly closed now. Too many for concert-goers.







The town movie theatre: the "Iowa". Just another storefront on the square. I love it.

Now, the other thing besides John Wayne that Winterset is famous for is the large number of covered bridges in the vicinity; that is, "The Bridges of Madison County". That's right, the novel and the movie were set right here. Here's two girls at the Cedar Bridge.





When we are done looking at it, we drive through it. Turns out this is the only bridge that you can drive through.

Jerri at the Hogback Bridge. The literature says bridges were named after nearby farmers who partially sponsored the construction and then maintained them. I would hope "Hogback" wasn't a family name...





The Hollwell Bridge. What we are learning is that the covering is intended to protect the thick roadway planking, which are more critical and more expensive to replace than the enclosing structure.

It seems to me that the covering also protects the supporting structure as well. The bridge with the longest span has actual arching load-bearing beams.







One of the oldest bridges was moved to the Winterset city park. We note that the more recent bridges have the flat roofs, but the two oldest ones have the classic gable style roofs.

While we are here in the city park, we notice - they have a *hedge maze*!





This is too good to pass up. It's very well-maintained, and not anywhere near as intimidating as the evil carnivorous hedge maze in the "Goblet of Fire" Harry Potter story. The entrance has a proper Victorian style gate.





At the center of the maze is a pretty little sundial.

The exit is an iron gate set in stone pillars. Very nice.





The park has a one-way drive through the forest, and eventually we discover the "Tower", set up in honor of the original Winterset area settlers.

Of course, Faith and Charity are fascinated. It is a while before we can finally leave Winterset, and return on the farm route (picking up another one or two bridges on the way) to the interstate. Another half-hour and we enter the Des Moines area from the southwest and find our hotel adjacent to the airport.



Friday June 15: Des Moines

I've checked the on-line map, and yes, it's pretty easy to get to downtown Des Moines. The hotel and the airport are on Fleur Blvd., and we just have to continue on up and take the downtown ramp. Except for a momentary terror where I almost turn the wrong way on a one-way street, it isn't bad at all. We cruise up through the tall buildings and get an idea of the city. Pretty nice; for much of the way, the area between the two major streets (one is one-way east, and the other is one-way west) is a grassy mall with sculptures and walkways. The businesses seem healthy, and there's a lot of foot traffic. The kind of place I'd like to explore a bit more, but we don't intend to spend much time in Des Moines.





At the edge of the tall city is a river. A real river! The Des Moines River. We park on the bridge.

At the other end is some sort of outdoor amphitheatre, and stairs wrapping around the stage down to this landing on the river, right at the water. It's clear from the marks on the wall that the water has been higher. It isn't at all clear what the purpose of this landing is, but it's cool, and a chance for pictures of Zonies next to a lot of water.



Continuing on, we pass through East Village, which per the literature is an artsy high-end shopping district. Looking through shop windows, yep, it's high-end. And avant-garde; we don't really see anything we care to look at more closely. Besides, the intent is to not spend a lot of time in Des Moines.

Coming out of East Village, we can see unobstructed what we have been looking at from all the way at the other end of downtown - the golden-domed Iowa State Capitol! Magnificent!



Now, we're not intending to spend a lot of time here, but we go on up all the steps to the building. On a whim I go around the side of the front portico to the public entrance. "Free Tour". Well, we can at least go inside and look. Once inside, we go through the airport-style security checkpoint and up to the information desk. "The tour has just left", she says, "but you can catch it at the top of the stairs". So we run up the stairs to the main floor of the Capitol.



And find ourselves under the awe-inspiring rotunda.

We catch up with the tour guide, who is telling the group about the different state capitals, and capitol buildings, and how the first dome of this building was lost in a fire. She pointed out the various kinds of marble and all the gilt work. Then we went down an adjacent hallway where she showed us a case of dolls of the governors wives in their inaugural party dresses. Over the doll case is a big painting of an Iowa regiment drawn up around the Capitol at the end of the Civil War, and she told us the story of taking a tour a little while back up to that picture, and in the tour group was a soldier back from Afghanistan - *of that very same Iowa regiment!*

We saw a model of the USS Iowa (that's okay, we have a model of the USS Arizona, and a few rooms of silver and other relics recovered from the sunken Arizona, in our Capitol), and the huge "Westward Ho" painting at the top of the Grand Staircase, and the mosaics created by Italian artisans. She pointed out the statues around the rotunda of classical Muses; most were the classical Greek style, but one was a man in American clothing with a pig and holding a hoe, and that was Agriculture, and another with an anvil and holding a hammer, and that was Industry. We went up into the "whispering gallery" above the Staircase, where visitors to the House and Senate galleries could stand outside and see the representatives.

The Capitol Library was a big hit - fascinating room, with five levels of bookcases reached by space-conserving spiral staircases.



She took us into the House and Senate chambers, and explained the seating arrangements based on seniority, and the odd Iowan method of representation: The state is divided into legislative districts which elect their Representatives and Senators - but these districts have nothing to do with the counties. This is odd to Arizonans, whose counties send their politicians to Phoenix.

An interesting feature of both chambers: The original desks formerly had inkwells. More recently, these have been replaced with plug strips with power outlets and network jacks. And they're retractable! Now you see it...



Now you don't!

However, technology marches on, and now the politicians have laptops with wireless networking, so much of the capability of their desks is unused now.



Finally, the guide opened a little door up in the "whispering gallery" outside one of the chambers. Inside was a narrow spiral stair. We went up, and up, and up, and up...

And finally came out on the topmost gallery of the rotunda! Quite a view. And nerve wracking to get very close to the balustrade. And Jerri went up here! I was so surprised! But she did fine. Took her a little while to get back down.



And that was the tour of a fascinating public building. We didn't intend to do that, or to take so much time here, but absolutely no regrets! After a visit to the Capitol gift shop in the basement (the cafeteria is already closed; it would have been unique to have our lunch here), we are ready to leave Des Moines.



For the sake of expeditiousness, I walk back quickly to the bridge and fetch the car. When I catch up with the ladies, I find they have been doing their own discovery of East Village functional art.

Our parting shot at Des Moines is a drive around the government area before going back across the river and finding the entrance to the eastbound freeway. The original Des Moines capitol building used to be just south of the current site, in a place now occupied by the Civil War Memorial. The four statuaries on the corners honor the participation of Iowans in the cavalry, the infantry, the artillery, and the Navy of the War Between the States. I've seen this kind of monuments before... but they were always Confederate monuments. This is Union Iowa.



### Saturday June 16: Amana Colonies

The next destination is the Amana Colonies ([amanacolonies.com](http://amanacolonies.com)), near Cedar Rapids. It's a quick run from Des Moines, and we stop briefly to check into the dumpy hotel in Williamsburg, and then zip up to the Amanas. Of course, we don't get there until after 5, so again, most everything is closed. That's okay, we will be back tomorrow, so after a quick visit to the Amana General Store, we go to the Ox Yoke Inn for a German-style dinner. There's two ways of doing dinner, the regular order of an individual dinner, or family style, in which they will bring the bowls of dinner servings to the table, and keep them filled until you are done. Well, we aren't up to a belly-buster like that, so we don't do the family style. The food is very good.

After dinner, we get back in our car and drive around the colonies in the daylight savings time-extended evening light. Amana, High Amana, West Amana, and South Amana are the original villages, and Homestead was set up for access to the railroad when it arrived. I notice the Whirlpool plant where the "Amana" brand appliances are built; at one



time, Raytheon Corporation owned that building, and produced the original "Amana Radar-Range" line of microwave ovens.



But all the above happened Friday. Today, Saturday, we come back for the real visit. We stop first at Homestead, where the Amana Church is, but we can't see it without tickets, and the old lady tending the church can't sell us tickets except for cash. The Museum in Amana can sell us tickets on the credit card, so we leave, telling her we would

be back. We never get back.

Instead, we spend pretty much all our day in Amana, the principle village, and a good bit of that in the visitors' center and museum, learning about the settlers' way of life.

- It was a religious Pietist sect from Germany, called "Inspirationalists", and the primary feature was the *Werkzeuge*, essentially a prophet who speaks for God. Hmm, sounds pretty Charismatic to me. But there haven't been any *Werkzeuge* for a long time. It isn't clear to me how "alive" the denomination is today, but the Amana Church Society still maintains and operates the churches and the cemeteries. Services are still held, and open to the public; you don't have to be an Inspirationalist believer to attend.
- When the Germans arrived in America, originally in the Buffalo, New York area, they adopted a "commune" economic model after learning that the poorer members were not able to make it on their own. When the group moved to Amana (which means "Remain True"), they structured their settlement along explicitly communal lines: food was prepared and meals taken in central kitchens, job assignments were made by the elders, housing was assigned the same way, even the children were taught together, including working in crafts like knitting (*Arbeitsschule*). However, in 1932, in response to the growing awareness that things could not continue as they had, in light of the Depression and the numbers of young people abandoning the commune, the settlement voted for the

"Great Change". A joint stock corporation was set up, the Amana Society, and the properties were distributed to the members. Essentially, the model changed from a commune to an agricultural cooperative.

- In order to capitalize on the tourist interest in the Amanas, the Amana Heritage Society was set up. This is now the organization that employs and directs the workers - from what we saw, predominantly older Amanda-descended women - to operate the museum and the historical sites like the Barn and the Homestead Church.

I could see why young people would rebel against the authority of the community elders. It was not permitted to have dogs as pets. Marriages had to be approved. Conveyances (like horses or buggies) had to be "checked out". After the Great Change, membership in the Amana Society was open to anyone without regard to religious commitment, and this is doubtless why we saw homes in the Colonies occupied by young families. Oh, and the Amana people are very quick to correct the misconception that Amana is connected in any way with the Amish. Even though both are German and both are religious, the Amana people were not opposed in any way to technology. Although, I find it interesting that Amana is just north of the freeway, near Iowa City. Just about due south, and about as far on the other side of the freeway, is Kalona, one of the largest Amish settlements in the region.

This picture was actually taken Friday evening, in South Amana. An example of the large held-in-common barns.





Most of the buildings of the original colonies were made of brick. Many were dormitories for single people, but after the Great Change, the houses were distributed to be private property of families. I find it notable that they are of *brick*, which had to be made locally, as brick would be expensive to ship even by rail, and there was no railroad present when these were built. However, I

see no mention of a brick works in the Amana literature.

Some of the Amana buildings were in wood. This was the doctor's house. No evidence of paint.

Not all the homes in the Colonies are original Colony buildings. In the other villages and behind the main roads in Amana, we saw regular contemporary "Ranch"-style houses.



After finally finishing the historical stuff, most of the rest of the day was spent visiting shops along the main road. Faith here is resting in a glider swing outside one of these house-now-shops, amusing her sister with the camera. We had some home-canned jams and jellies shipped home from Amana, and as I write this, we are about half-way through the Berry and

the Rhubarb jelly. Yum!

We had our lunch at the Colonial Inn, the first public restaurant set up in the Colonies from way back. We placed our order for a family-style meal... and then the waitress went off-duty. After a long while, a young

waiter appeared to apologize and inform us that our order had not been put up in the kitchen, and then brought out the side dishes while we waited for our order to be completed. Mashed potatoes and gravy, sauerkraut, pickled ham cubes, salad, green beans, and bread. And then our individual meals arrived. I'm guessing that Germans simply don't do "light". Unfortunately, a lot of our time was soaked up waiting in this restaurant, and this was the chief reason we didn't get back to the Church in Homestead. Like before, everything starts to close around 5:00, so it isn't long before we have to leave Amana, only half explored, and continue on to Cedar Rapids.