

June 2008: Family Vacation - South and Midwest

7. Ohio & Indiana

Tuesday July 1: Cincinnati: We spent the night in a hotel near Downtown Cincinnati, with this marvelous building (which I wish we could have visited) practically right outside our window.



Two things were notable:

- First, we tried their swimming pool. Most of the hotels we visited had pools, but we rarely had time to try them, such as the hotel in Louisville, which had an indoor pool, but by the time we got back from dinner and girlies put on their suits and went down, five minutes later it was 10:00, and management closed the pool! Here at Cincinnati, it was an outdoor pool in a narrow little courtyard - and the water was freezing! So the only place we used the pool and enjoyed it (relatively speaking) was at Disney World.
- Second, there was a White Castle right across the street! When we were in the South, especially Huntsville, the local culture restaurant was "Krystal". Little teeny hamburgers, maybe 2 inches square. Well, Krystal appears to be a knock-off of White Castle, which is the local culture restaurant in the Midwest. Mom didn't really appreciate them, so it's as well that we didn't try Krystal when we were there, or I would never have gotten her into White Castle!



The purpose for coming to this part of the world was to see the Creation Museum. If we had more time (like another day), we might have gone up to where I grew up, in Beavercreek, between Dayton and Xenia, and the Air Force Museum on Wright-Patterson AFB. But we don't have time for that. We *do* have time to look around Cincinnati, however briefly.



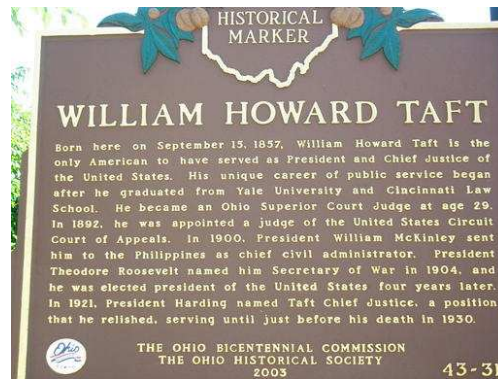
Downtown Cincinnati is fairly walkable, not as attractive as Nashville, but nice. The central park in the city is Fountain Square, home to their iconic "Genius Of Water" fountain.

President Taft came from Cincinnati (and his birth place is a National Park - get out the Passport Book!), so we visit.



The house is on Auburn Street, in what used to be an upscale suburban neighborhood but is now quite in the city proper, and while the neighborhood isn't *bad*, it isn't quite *good* either. Many of the 100-year-old houses with their unique architecture are still standing on Auburn Street. Even in Tucson, I compare the subdivision cookie-cutter houses they are building now with even my '50s neighborhood (every house is unique), and especially with the Sam Hughes or West University neighborhoods, and it is clear there is a degradation in our culture.

Notice the many chimneys and windows. The house was originally half the size it is now, but WH's dad extended it. This has the result of there being two staircases that actually run into each other! Many original Taft furnishings are here. The property (in its 1900s suburban mode) was a couple of acres, and included a garden and a stable. All that has become expensive urban real estate, and has been sold off by the Park Service.



The exhibits inside the house make it clear that the Taft family has been committed to selfless public service for generations. Especially in WH's case - he practiced law, but kept getting roped into administrative posts, like executive supervisor of the Panama Canal project, Governor General of the Philippines, and President of the United States, tasks he did well, but against his heart. He even turned down his first chance to be on the Supreme Court because he didn't believe he was done in the Philippines.

Maybe "Republican" meant something more in those days...

Along with the historical video, the Visitors' Center had an unfinished display of wedding dresses.



After finishing our visit to the Taft birth home, we attempted to leave Cincinnati. Which was rather difficult. Cincinnati is a maze of twisty streets and odd-angled intersections and poor signage. I got close to the freeway at one point, but apparently took the wrong turn - and ended up in the Auburn Street neighborhood again! I tried again - and overshot the freeway *and* the railroad switchyard, and it took some doing to get turned around again! Of course the inadequate map in the road atlas was useless. I'm not sure even a GPS navigator would have helped with these crazy streets. But we finally escaped the clutches

of Cincinnati, and soon we were across the line and into Indiana.

Indianapolis: It isn't clear that there is much in Indiana, not even the capital city, but to honestly say we've been here, we look in on a couple of sights.



Like the Benjamin Harrison home. I knew his grandfather had been president (very briefly; he made his inaugural address in D.C. in the rain with no hat or coat, and died of pneumonia within a few weeks). I didn't know his ancestor had signed the Declaration of Independence! So the Harrison family was deep into American politics. The home was beautiful, and privately owned by a foundation. Our guide made it clear that this gave them more flexibility to restore the property than if it had been owned by the Feds. Much of the furniture was original to the Harrisons, and it was apparent that they were quite wealthy.

About the only other thing there was to see in Indianapolis, as far as we could tell, was the Motor Speedway, home to the Indianapolis 500. Well, what can I say? If we appeared at Churchill Downs, why not the Indy Speedway? There was no *race* today; I believe some motorcyclists were using the tracks, by the sound.



One of the features at the track - an observation tower.

Okay, we've seen Indianapolis now. We can claim to have been "in" Indiana. It is much easier to escape than Cincinnati, and in a few hours we are in Gary and Hammond up by the Lake. Then across the state line into Illinois! The density of the city increases as we drive north, then we pass a CTA train station, then the peaks of the city rise over the horizon before us. We will be in there tomorrow.

On to Chicago: See Part 8