

POSTCARD FROM THE USA PART TWO

By this time we had reached New Jersey with a planned stay at Marny's cousin and husband in New Jersey. Like many other people, my impression of New Jersey was of a tacky area but the reality is that the state is very pretty with lots of farming areas and quaint towns, and also some pretty pricey looking estates.

The farm was very restful complete with a large section of woodland. Because the bears are prolific now with some 2,500 bears in New Jersey, we were advised not to enter the woods. Indian arrowheads had been found in the ploughed areas from the local tribe in earlier days, the Lenni-Lenape.

In the afternoon we were taken to see a car collection in a private collection arranged by Marny's relatives. This is a very private collection and we were only permitted because of our connection and because we were "car people". The museum was totally overwhelming and one could only hazard a guess at the multi-million value here. I think we all lapsed into stunned silence at the range of Lagondas, Pierce Arrows, cars from all over the world as well as art pieces, antiques etc. Definitely an eclectic collection. Most interestingly were the stories that accompanied each piece and car and how they came to be bought.



A Cadillac and Lagonda from the private collection.

That evening we were taken to a large, round hamburger joint of 1950s style decor reminiscent of “American Graffiti” or “Happy Days” . About once a month the local car clubs rock up with their 50s, 60s and 70s cars. Luckily the night we were there all these amazing cars were lined up in a circle around the joint. This was a step back into the past and was great fun.



“Happy Days” cruiser – this gave Tony some ideas for his new paint job!

From New Jersey we had to head back into New York near La Guardia Airport and rebook the car for another month. Once we hit the traffic we had the usual misinterpretation of navigation but headed over the Throgs Neck Bridge, paying about \$10 in tolls altogether. After backtracking and fluffing around in this area due to the dopey map we had, we eventually found a motel in Jamaica, Queens. Obviously the name Jamaica comes from the colour of the people in this area. After a bite to eat at a nearby Sicilian cafe, we watched “Law & Order” on the telly and where were the detectives going? - Jamaica, Queens!

We were at the National Car Rental by 8 a.m. the next day and luckily we got to keep our Le Sabre - this was a bonus as the idea of having to unpack the boot didn't bear contemplating. We headed back to Carlisle as this was the closest point to Hershey for accommodation.

Hershey was jumping and was very well organised, the Americans do things so well on this large a scale. After finding parking in a nearby paddock, we crossed the road and inspected the Car Corral to check on the cars for sale and auction.

Top of the wozza price being asked for a car was \$875,000 for a 1948 Tucker! Oh to have had a couple of these tucked away in a garage.

Some Buick prices were a 1940 Buick Super Convertible for \$43,500, a 1941 Century for \$29,500, a 1948 Roadmaster Custom Convertible (this was a one off custom with a disappearing roadster top) for \$89,500, and a 1957 Roadmaster Convertible for \$68,500,

The day had started off cloudy but at midday when the sun broke through it was quite warm. Great food was available all through the huge area of the grounds. Like Carlisle, the maps identifying vendors are excellent and it was very easy to find a certain row and then check on the numbers for a Buick dealer.

We had been very lucky with the weather at Hershey as the next day it pelted down and for a few days after that which would have made some areas into quagmires where it wasn't paved.

After Hershey, a visit to the Harley Davidson factory in Pennsylvania was great. From there we headed to the Red Lion Weaving Factory. Marny is a weaver and wanted to see the 19th century looms still in use here. Because of the old looms still in use, the Red Lion was given the contract to weave all textiles, clothes etc used in the movie "Cold Mountain" (Nicole Kidman) to give the movie an authentic look (despite the fact that the movie was filmed in Rumania instead of Virginia). They had also woven the carpet for the house where the Civil War surrender took place at Appomattox.

By this time we were in the Amish country and the roads were dotted with their horses and buggies. Their furniture shops were worth a visit with well made timber furniture at a very reasonable price. Quilts were everywhere and little shops selling pottery, home wares etc.

Philadelphia was the next stop with heavy rain and a bit "Pearl Harbour" - a nasty nip in the air. However we had our ponchos from Carlisle so sloshed around happily for the day visiting Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell which is smaller than we had imagined - only about a metre high. We saw some excellent movies and great talks from the tour guides. I hadn't been aware that Philadelphia was the original capital city of the US.

We were heading south now and crossed the Chesapeake Bay Bridge which is about 30 kilometres in length including two tunnels where the shipping goes overhead. This sort of engineering is incredible.

We were now driving through the Civil War Battlefields and visited Yorktown, Chancellorsville, The Wilderness, Harpers Ferry and Antietam. All battlefields have a museum, great displays and a movie to watch beforehand and maps and documents are available before you drive around the battlefield. One souvenir shop was called "Lee's Headquarters" and had a wonderful range of flags, books, old bullets, shrapnel, cannon balls etc. If the battlefield is on private land, people can arrange with the owners to trawl over the ground with a metal detector and take any metal object, however if the area is a gazetted war grave area, e.g. Gettysburg, then nothing is allowed to be disturbed or taken away.



Union monuments at the Antietam Battlefield

Now it was time to head off into the mountains to drive the 460-mile Blue Ridge Parkway that runs through Virginia and North Carolina.

More next postcard.....

L Haime (WA Buicks)