



In Search of Eldorado

Link to the Eldorado Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VczD1olutQ8>



Hello to Family & Friends

Here it is, January already and I am off on another adventure. Oh wait, it's not January, it's November! It only looks and feels like January.

I am taking a short jog to Houston to visit Morgan & Matt. For those of you who are not aware, Matt finally manned up and asked Morgan for her hand back in August. The wedding is next July, in Houston, so I'll get a preview of the event venues while I'm there.

This will also give me a chance to get back into the newsletter swing before heading south and west again in 2020, if I do. I think my blood has thinned after spending the last two winters in warmer climes. I arrived home last April 1st and it took me til July in Wisconsin to feel warm again.

If you didn't notice, I added a link at the top of the page to the *In Search of Eldorado* song. It has some of the same lines as the poem to the right.

I remember my dad telling me, once he was retired and traveling alot, that we always skip the sights near home to hurry off and get someplace far away. Taking this into account, I decided to slowly wend my way to Houston this time, stopping along the way to take in some of the sights that are bypassed in the rush to get someplace else (usually because it is freakin' cold here).

My first stop was in East Troy at Gus's Drive-In. Some of you may have been here before, but there is something new.

Day 1

Sunday
November 3rd

On my way to Houston to
visit Morgan & Matt

Weather

40's and 50's Some Sun

In Search of Eldorado

By Edgar Allan Poe

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—
This knight so bold—
And o'er his heart a shadow—
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow—
'Shadow,' said he,
'Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?'

'Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,'
The shade replied,—
'If you seek for Eldorado!'

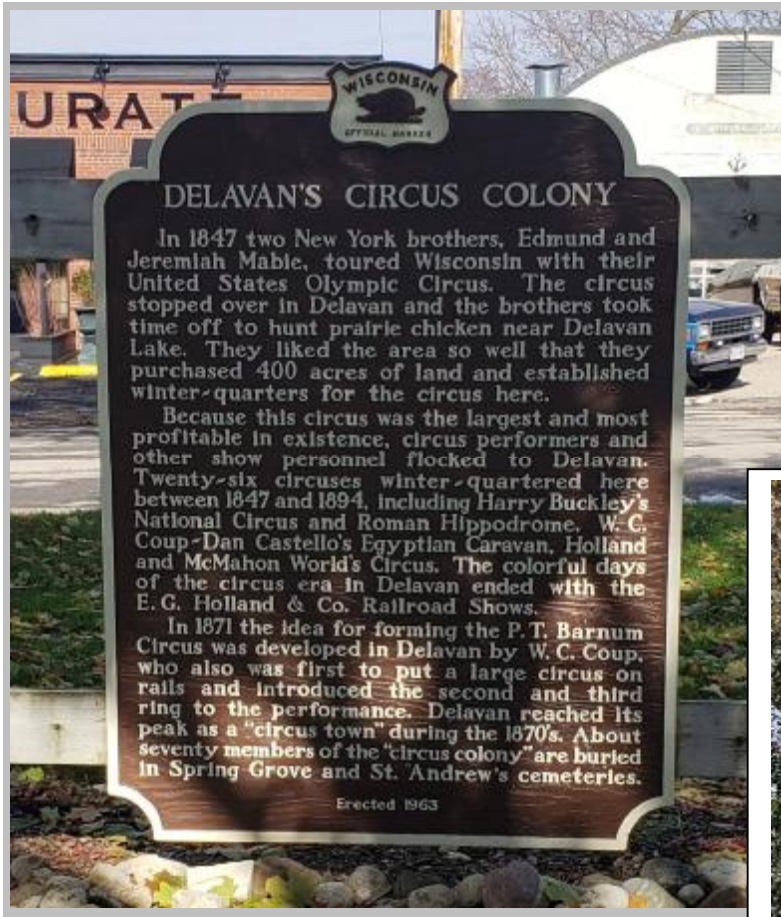


Many of you will remember my Route 66 trip a couple of years ago. Many, so called, "Muffler Men" were prominently featured holding mufflers, dressed as aliens, holding axes, etc, etc. I even ran across several in Arizona earlier this year. The "Muffler Man" here at Gus's was found in Canada in 2017 and refurbished by Mark Cline of Enchanted Castle Studios in Virginia. He was given a hotdog and a soda and arrived at Gus's in 2019. Thanks to Roadside America for the info.



Next stop was Tower Park in Delavan. I knew Baraboo was a big circus hot spot, but I was not aware Delavan was even bigger. Most of the pix below have their own plaques, so I won't boor you with additional descriptions, at least until the last photo.

Roadside America mentioned the giraffe and the elephant. I added the rest because I found it interesting.



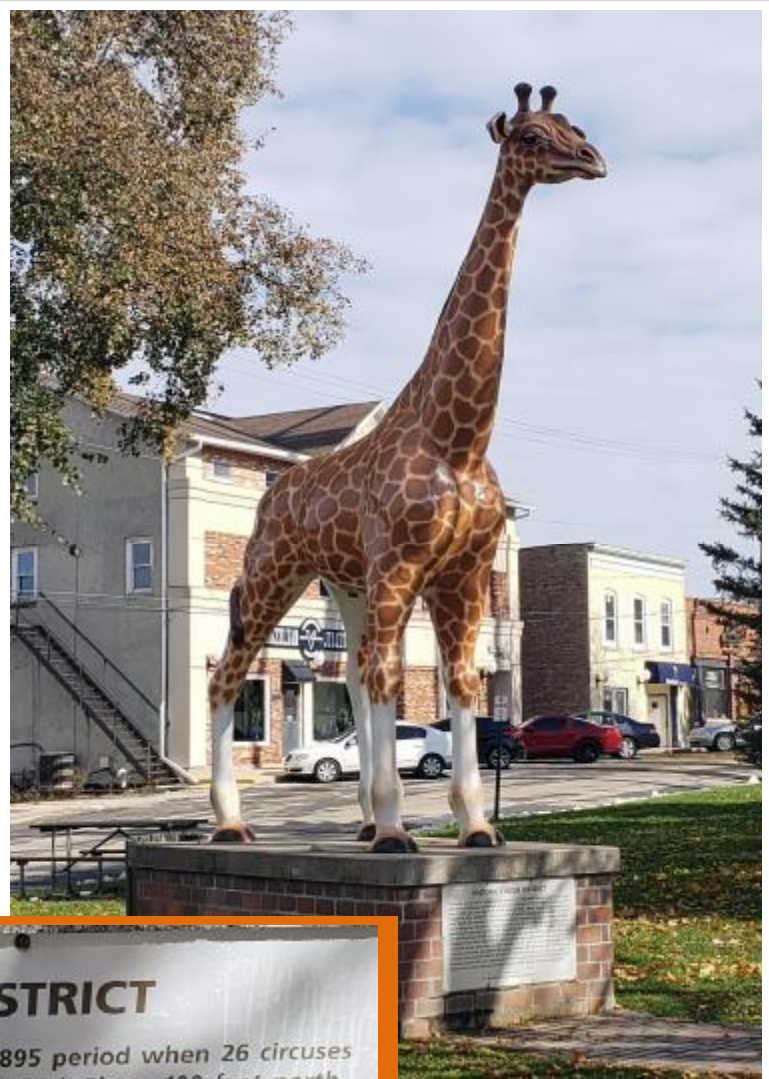
DELAVAN'S CIRCUS COLONY

In 1847 two New York brothers, Edmund and Jeremiah Mable, toured Wisconsin with their United States Olympic Circus. The circus stopped over in Delavan and the brothers took time off to hunt prairie chicken near Delavan Lake. They liked the area so well that they purchased 400 acres of land and established winter-quarters for the circus here.

Because this circus was the largest and most profitable in existence, circus performers and other show personnel flocked to Delavan. Twenty-six circuses winter-quartered here between 1847 and 1894, including Harry Buckley's National Circus and Roman Hippodrome, W. C. Coup-Dan Castello's Egyptian Caravan, Holland and McMahon World's Circus. The colorful days of the circus era in Delavan ended with the E. G. Holland & Co. Railroad Shows.

In 1871 the idea for forming the P. T. Barnum Circus was developed in Delavan by W. C. Coup, who also was first to put a large circus on rails and introduced the second and third ring to the performance. Delavan reached its peak as a "circus town" during the 1870's. About seventy members of the "circus colony" are buried in Spring Grove and St. Andrew's cemeteries.

Erected 1963



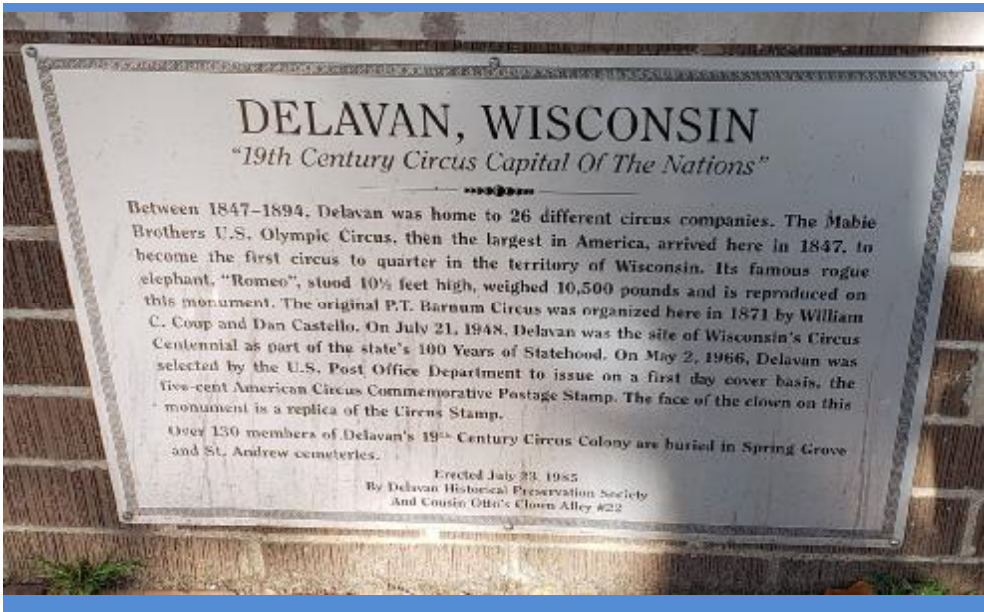
HISTORIC CIRCUS DISTRICT

This area was a hub of circus activity during the 1847-1895 period when 26 circuses quartered in Delavan. The three-story brick building, 117 Park Place, 100 feet north-east of this site, was the Park Hotel, built in 1848, where many circus performers lodged. In 1874, balloonist Rodley A. Palmer, while making an ascension from this park, struck the cornice of the hotel, sustaining injuries that later caused his death. Famed magician-illusionist, Harry Houdini, as a 12-year old runaway, slept in the hotel's basement livery stable. The three-story building at 124 E. Walworth Avenue, 125 feet southeast of this monument, was quarters for the 1879 Dr. George Morrison Colesium Circus which featured Al and John Ringling as performers. Circus wagon and blacksmith shops were once located adjacent to the park. A watering trough at the east end of the park was utilized by various animals. This park was the assembly area for many circus parades held in the past. The giraffe on this monument is symbolic of the many circuses that once quartered in Delavan and nearly 150 members of the 19th century circus colony who are buried in Spring Grove and St. Andrew's Cemeteries.

Erected, 1990

DELAVAN HISTORIC PRESERVATION SOCIETY

This is the hotel mentioned above



What is not mentioned on the plaque is the violent nature of Romeo. Over 15 years he killed five people by crushing, stamping upon and impaling with his tusks. He once escaped from his barn and terrorized the countryside for 3 days. And in Chicago, he nearly tore the theater apart (can't really blame him for not liking Chicago).



DELAVAN'S HISTORIC BRICK STREET

Dusty and rutted in dry spells, muddy and miserable in wet, Delavan's main street, Walworth Avenue, remained unpaved from the 1830s until the second decade of the 20th century. In 1911, Delavan's City Council voted to pave the three block central business district of Walworth Avenue and chose brick as the preferred paving material. The city contracted with the Birdsall-Griffith Company of Racine to install the street at a cost of \$19,198.18. A workforce of thirty laborers graded the street, poured the concrete base and installed a two inch layer of sand. A crew of skilled Italian immigrant workers then laid the bricks in a running bond pattern along the street and in a herringbone pattern at the intersections. Paved in vitrified brick, a durable waterproof material resistant to wear, the street was completed in 1913 and hailed as a great transportation improvement. Delavan's brick street has been in continuous use since its installation and remains one of the last and best examples of brick paved roadway in the State of Wisconsin. The street was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1995.

Erected 1996



My next stop was also due to Roadside America, the Lensing Historic Auto Museum in Roscoe, Illinois.



As museums go, this one is pretty good. Well laid out, clean, large print on the descriptions (that one in Arizona had descriptions the size of this font on hundreds of tiny items), friendly personnel, and Tony. I'll call him the researcher but he is so much more, knew the background of every item, almost all of which are the real McCoy, not look-alikes.



No need to say how much I like John Wayne



Speaking of Tony, here he is. I was fortunate to be the only one in the museum on this day, so Tony and I spent a good 15 minutes talking, well actually Tony did most of the talking, but I enjoyed listening.

Bonnie & Clyde Car

In 1967, Warren Beatty and Faye Dunaway played Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker in the motion picture "Bonnie & Clyde." George Barris built the Hollywood movie car used in the film. Bullet holes were actually shot into it with a 45 caliber Thompson submachine gun.





Bonnie & Clyde's Hats

The actual hats, worn by Clyde Barrow and Bonnie Parker, on the Day that they were ambushed and killed. This is the tan fedora hat, that Clyde Barrow was wearing, when he and Bonnie Parker were ambushed and killed on May 23, 1934, near Gibsland, Louisiana. The Hole in the brim of the hat was caused by one of the many rounds fired into the couple, while sitting in their 1934 Ford Sedan. The small sequined tam-styled hat belonged to Bonnie Parker and was recovered from the "Death Car" after the notorious Texas Outlaws were killed. This and some of the other personal items were returned to the family.



Glasses from "National Treasure"

Spectacles as worn by Nicolas Cage in
Walt Disney Pictures/Jerry
Bruckheimer Films,
"National Treasure."

Donor: Disney Pictures
Value: Priceless

HOUDINI BURLAP STRAIGHT JACKET

This is the floor length burlap straight jacket Used by Houdini in his historic straight jacket escape act. The jacket has long sleeves, brown leather collar and cuffs, black leather front and three buckle front-closure.

The straight jacket escape was popularized by Houdini, who "discovered" it. Houdini first did it behind a curtain, forcing the audience to listen to thumps while watching a billowing curtain for many minutes. He found the trick went over better when the audience could see his struggles. In one of his later and more popular acts, he would perform the straight jacket escape while hung upside down from a crane.

To remove a straight jacket, it is not necessary to be able to dislocate one's shoulders in order to gain the slack necessary to pull an arm out of the sleeves. The necessity of this ability was fictitiously created by Harry Houdini and his brother Hardeen to try to lessen the amount of competition.

BORN IN HUGARY MARCH 24, 1874
LIVED IN APPLETON, WI
DIED ON HALLOWEEN 1926



I have to admit, I have a fascination with Houdini also. If you read the full plaques in Delavan, you'll see that a 12 year old Harry Houdini hid out in the basement of the hotel.



No screaming or fainting, please ladies.
Yes, this is the actual outfit worn by Elvis.

Laurel & Hardy

Laurel and Hardy were a legendary comedy team made up of thin, British-born Stan Laurel and heavy, American-born Oliver Hardy. They became famous during the early part of the 20th century for their comedic work in motion pictures, and were also veteran stage actors throughout America and Europe. During their career they starred in over 100 films, both short and feature length, and became one of the most beloved and iconic comedic figures in film history.



Historic Auto Attractions

A Journey Through Time

1925 Ford Model T Roadster Pickup

Used in the Laurel & Hardy film "Big Business"

- Rare car to pickup conversion
- Basic factory cost - \$281
- Other options - Starter \$25
Truck Bed \$55
- 33,795 produced in 1925



1939 MERCEDES BENZ G4 Cross Country W31 Six Wheeler

Mfg. from 1934-1939 Total of 57 Mfg.

This cross country automobile was constantly used in parades and as a staff car. In 1935, Daimler-Benz stated that the G4 was intended for "Staat, Partei und Wehrmacht", which means "the government, the party, and the armed forces". The G4 became known to many, not as a cross country car, but as the big, imposing, and exclusive vehicle that Hitler and his government used. Only three G4s are known to have survived the war.





Lincoln - Kennedy Coincidence?



Lincoln was elected President in 1860; Kennedy in 1960.

Both were slain on a Friday and in the presence of their wives.

Both were shot from behind and in the head.

Their successors, were both named Johnson.

Andrew Johnson was born in 1808 and Lyndon Johnson was born in 1908.

John Wilkes Booth was born in 1839 and Lee Harvey Oswald was born in 1939.

Lincoln's secretary, whose name was Kennedy, advised him not to go to the theatre.

Kennedy's secretary, whose name was Lincoln, advised him not to go to Dallas.

John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln in a theatre and ran to a warehouse.

Lee Harvey Oswald shot Kennedy from a warehouse and ran to a theatre.

The names Lincoln and Kennedy each contain seven letters.

The names John Wilkes Booth and Lee Harvey Oswald each contain fifteen letters.

Both assassins were killed before being brought to trial.

I have seen this list of coincidences before in several of the Kennedy/Lincoln Assassination books I've read, but I thought it was interesting enough to include. These things are bizarre. Tony mentioned he was told about a recent request to exhume Kennedy to try and prove he was an alien reptile. The request was denied. Truth really IS stranger than fiction.



This is the actual flag that was draped over Kennedy's casket.



1956 Cadillac Secret Service Parade Car - The Follow up car behind Kennedy in Dallas Nov. 22, 1963. This vehicle was specially built for the use of the Secret Service, and the President of the United States. The car is equipped with siren, red light, flag staffs, pistol holders, built in gun rack, extra pockets, running boards for six Secret Service agents outside, and seats for eight passengers inside. This particular car was used by President Eisenhower, John F Kennedy, and Lyndon B Johnson.





For you youngsters out there, this is the original Batmobile, from the 1960's TV show





These pictures show some of the cast members signing the Mayberry car.



**TRIBUTE BOAT
VICTORIAN
CARRIAGE**
BUILT BY THE WOOD BROTHERS
IN 1864 IT TRANSPORTED
PRESIDENT LINCOLN AND HIS
WIFE, MARY TODD ON THAT
FATEFUL TRIP TO FORD'S
THEATRE FRIDAY APRIL 14, 1865

I think it was 2 years ago? that I visited Mount Airy in North Carolina, where The Andy Griffith Show was supposed to take place and on where Mayberry was conceived.



Overall it was a great visit. I spent about 2 hours in the museum and enjoyed most of it. There was only one problem I found - The wax figure of Michael Landon as Little Joe on BONANAZA was wearing his gun on the right. Little Joe, and Michael Landon, are both left-handed.

continued south on I-39 to Rochelle, mainly because I like trains. Roadside America recommended this one. It is the only place in America that has a quad diamond railroad crossing. Basically 4 sets of tracks crossing each other in a pattern of X's. You'll understand when you see the photos below.

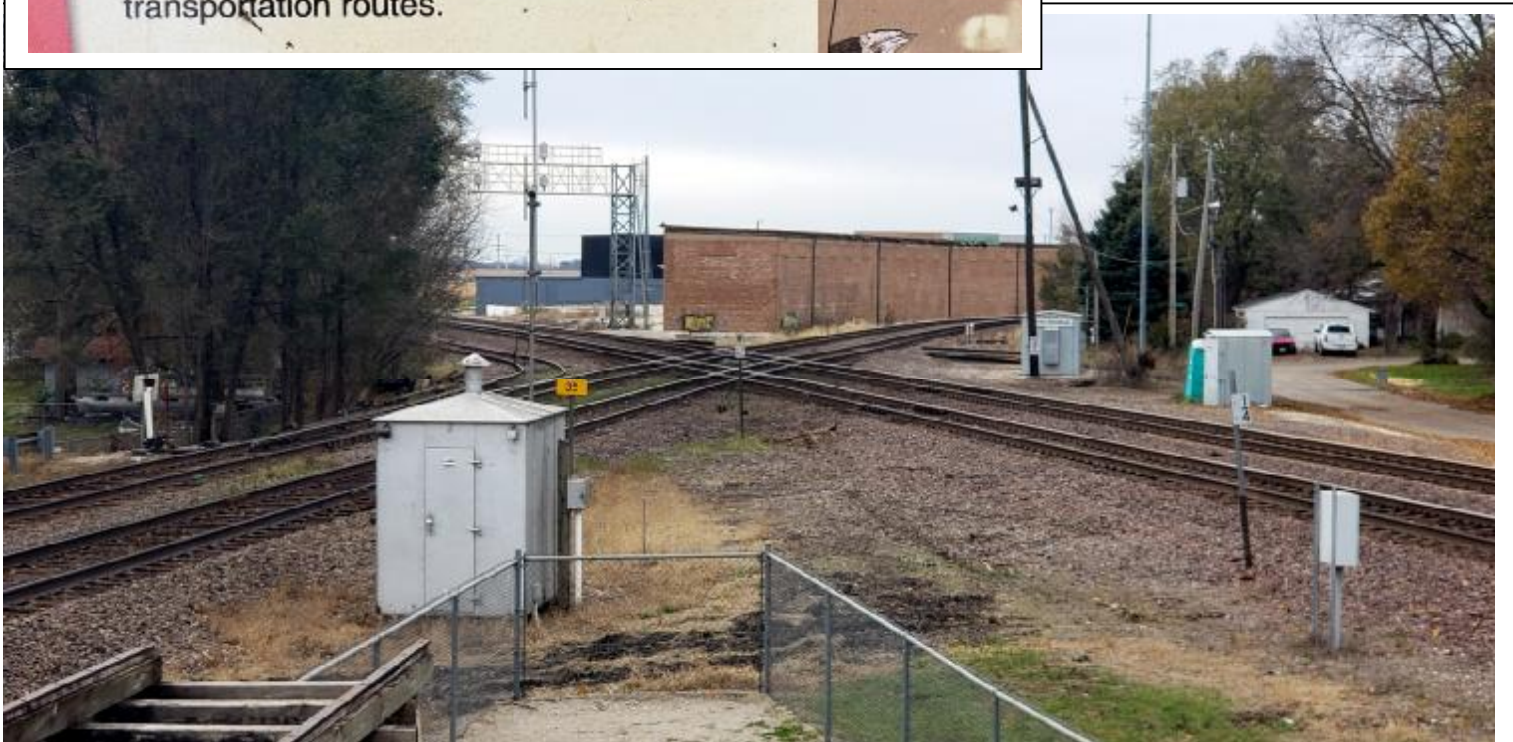


Lincoln Highway

City of Rochelle

Hub City

Rochelle was a natural forefront to major automobile transportation and grew to earn the name of the "Hub City" because of its location at the intersection of several major transportation routes.



RA stated that 150 trains pass through this crossing on any given day. However, it is Sunday, but I was lucky enough to catch a train after only about 10 minutes.



Hmmm...that's actually a pretty nice picture. I just kind of zip through them until I insert them here in the newsletter.

On the right is what they call a Hobo Fire. I assume that, back in the depression, hobo's would sit around the fire and watch the trains go by and wait for the one headed in their direction so they could hitch a ride.



Next stop is Troy Grove, birthplace of Wild Bill Hickok

Wild Bill Hickok State Memorial



James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok was born May 27, 1837, in a house that stood on this block. His parents, William A. and Polly Butler Hickok, settled in Troy Grove (then called Homer) in 1836 after living for a time at Tonia (then called Bailey's Point). Here William operated a store until it failed, when he moved his growing family to a farm north of town. On William's death in 1852 the family moved back into Troy Grove. Young James worked to help support the family until about 1856, when he left Troy Grove for Kansas Territory and set out on the path that would bring him fame.



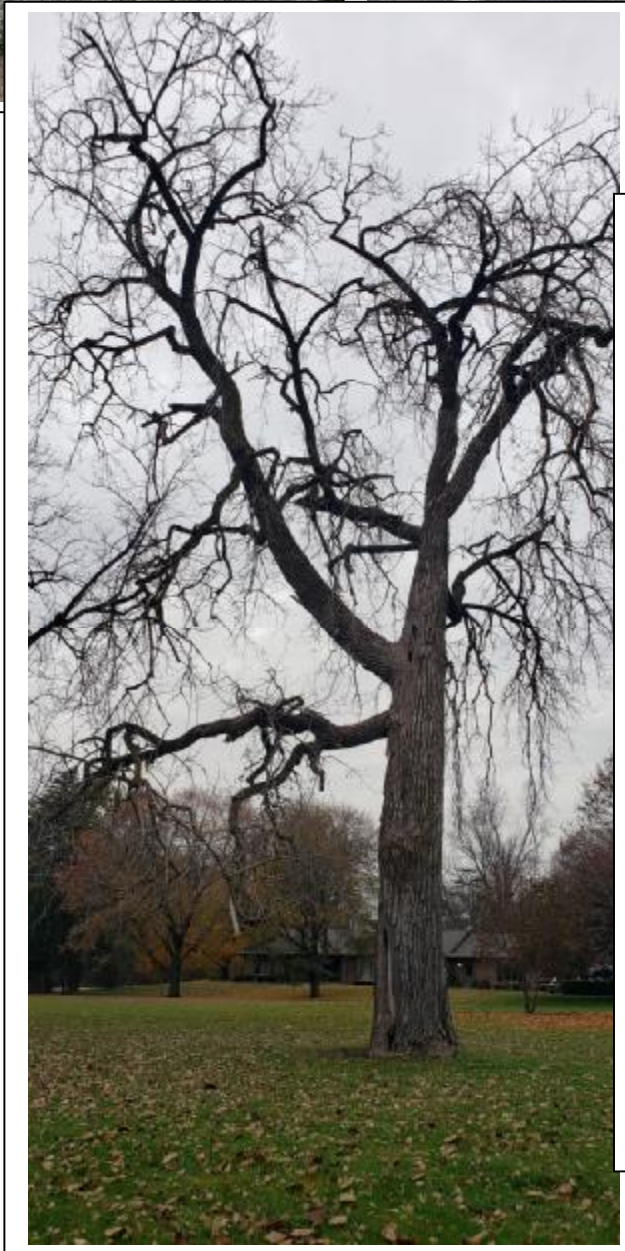
William A. Hickok supported antislavery efforts, and his homes were said to have served as stops on the Underground Railroad that aided African Americans fleeing from bondage.

Historic Sites Division
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency





JAMES BUTLER "WILD BILL" HICKOK
PIONEER OF THE GREAT PLAINS, BORN HERE MAY 27, 1837. ASSASSINATED AT DEADWOOD, AUGUST 2, 1876. SERVED HIS COUNTRY AS A SCOUT AND SPY IN THE WESTERN STATES. TO PRESERVE THE UNION IN THE CIVIL WAR. EQUALLY GREAT WERE HIS SERVICES ON THE FRONTIER AS EXPRESS MESSENGER AND UPHOLDER OF LAW AND ORDER. HE CONTRIBUTED LARGELY IN MAKING THE WEST A SAFE PLACE FOR WOMAN AND CHILDREN. HIS STERLING COURAGE WAS ALWAYS AT THE SERVICE OF RIGHT AND JUSTICE.
TO PERPETUATE HIS MEMORY
THIS MONUMENT IS ERECTED BY
THE STATE OF ILLINOIS.
A. D. 1929



Kind of looks like this tree, in the memorial park above, may have modeled for Walt Disney and landed a spot in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*.

From Troy Grove I had my longest leg of the day to Springfield. I have been in Springfield a couple other times, most recently with Kali back when the full eclipse of the sun occurred. I was searching for a plaque that marked the spot from where the Donner Party headed west. If you're not aware, a wagon train headed west from Springfield, IL on its way to California. Unfortunately, they became stuck in heavy snows while trying to get through the Donner Pass in California. Food was short and, well, you can guess what had to be done. Some survived, some did not. I walked up and down Lincoln Square, I even had GPS coordinates, but to no avail. The plaque must be well hidden. Next time I'll try before it gets dark.



Well, I hope the sailor's are right and the red sky at night does make for a delightful tomorrow.

I arrived in Glen Carbon, Illinois and scoped out a Sam's Club for the evening, but ended up at a Cracker Barrel. It was a good day, and I have to admit that I was happy with my decision NOT to have stopped at a bar and wasted 3 hours watching the Packer game. It was bad enough listening to the Chargers radio announcers.

Tomorrow I make more use of my America's Beautiful Pass (thanks Gpops) and visit the St Louis Arch. I have been there twice before also, the first time not long after it was completed in about 1969 I think. But I hear there have been more changes.

Anyways, I will save that for tomorrow.

Until next time.....