



In Search of Eldorado

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

Day 6

Friday
November 8th

On my way to Houston to
visit Morgan & Matt

Weather

40's Windy and Sunny



Hello to Family & Friends

Just 3 miles up the road from the campground is Hot Springs National Park. Hot Springs is unique because a good portion of downtown Hot Springs is inside the park boundary. It is also the only National park that has a brewery within it's confines.



Hot Springs is interesting and I would like to spend more time here. I'm sure I will be back this way when I visit Morgan in the future. Hopefully it will be better weather.

Hot springs was discovered over 10,000 years ago by native Americans, rediscovered by the Spanish Explorer De Soto in the mid-1500's, then again in 1818 or so in the modern era. Through various twists and turns, the bathhouses were log cabins (burned down), multi-room wooden structures (burned down), and finally, because of fire (really?), built of stone and brick. They also became much more elaborate, especially into the 1920's.

In Search of Eldorado

By Edgar Allen 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!'

BATHHOUSE ROW



Bathhouse Row is the historic heart of an American spa. Since the 1830s the city of Hot Springs has channeled much of its energy into becoming a national health resort. The Federal Government made “taking the waters” available to all by providing baths and health services to veterans and the poor, and the National Park landscaped many of the exercise paths that were considered essential to good health.

Some of the bathhouses have closed—locally, demand for medicinal baths peaked in 1946—but you can still discover the spa experience. Traditional bathing remains available at the Buckstaff Bathhouse and some nearby hotels. Like earlier visitors, you can stroll the beautiful brick Grand Promenade behind Bathhouse Row or hike mountain trails throughout the National Park.

After a couple laps around downtown looking for an RV parking spot, including following the FREE PARKING arrow around the block just to find another sign telling me no RV/Bus parking (why don't they tell you that before you make the turn and have to go around the block), I did find a free spot on the south end Bathhouse Row.

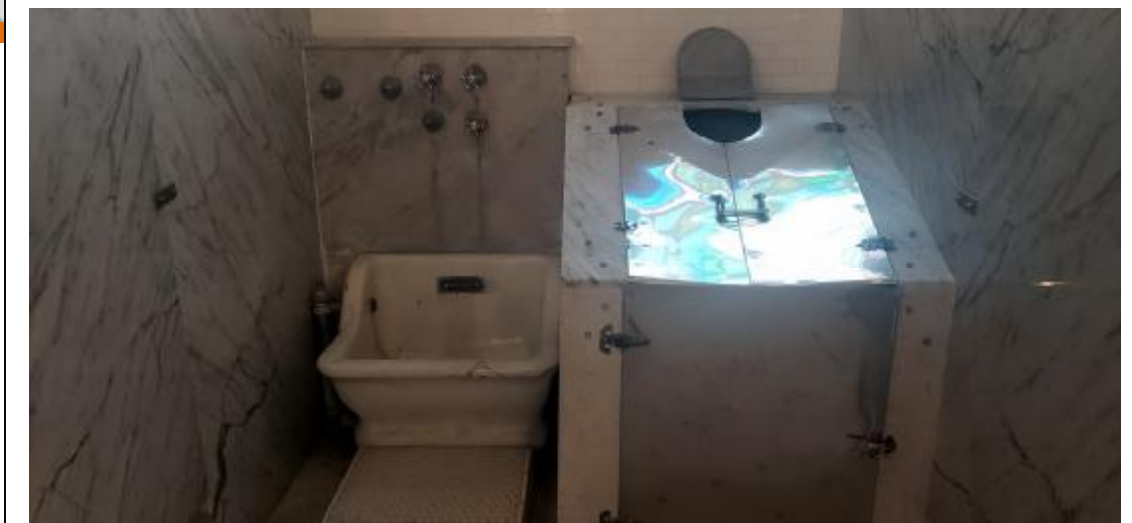
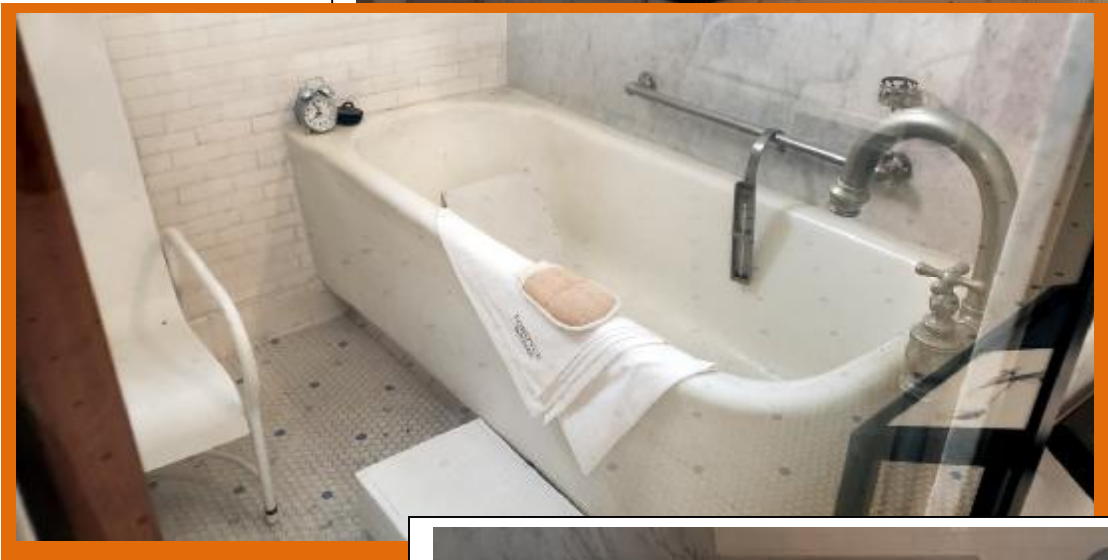
The buildings along Bathhouse Row are the latest stage in a succession of bathhouses. In the 1830s Hot Springs' earliest facilities were makeshift shelters perched over individual springs. Later, elaborate Victorian bathhouses flourished along the avenue, but the wooden structures were susceptible to rot and devastating fires.

The present mix of Spanish mission and neoclassical architecture dates from 1911 to 1939, the Golden Age of Bathing. The Buckstaff remains open for traditional bathing, while the National Park Service preserves Bathhouse Row as a significant national cultural landmark.



All the remaining bathhouses are very ornate

The women's baths



The bathing variations available in this room were generally prescribed by physicians for specific ailments or injuries, although most therapies did not require a prescription. There were no known deaths by electrocution in the "electric bath" at the Fordyce, but the procedure has long since been abandoned.

There was an awful lot of equipment in this place that looked like it belonged in a torture museum



The large domed skylight contains approximately 8,000 pieces of glass, arranged to represent Neptune's daughter, mermaids, dolphins, and fish in swirling water. Lounging on the marble benches below and drinking the waters, the men enjoyed the club-like camaraderie encouraged in the Fordyce.

I guess the 1920's really was a man's world. Above and right are the men's baths. Much fancier than the women's.



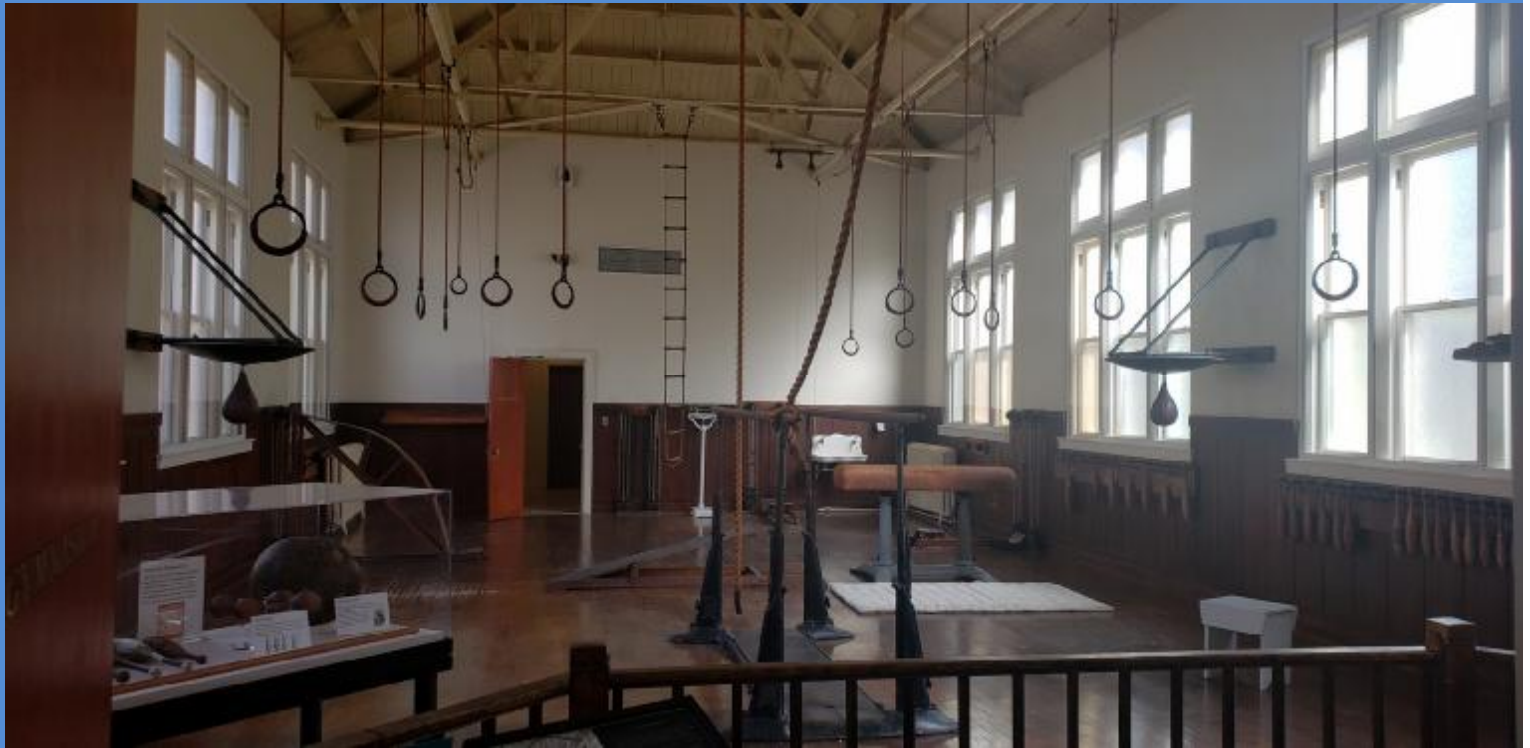


Type B-9/10, Adjustable Leg Lift

This device can be adjusted to suit the user's strength. Like most of Zander's machines, it can be used either therapeutically, to rehabilitate weak leg muscles, or as a strength-training device.



GYMNASIUM



Assembly Room

"Here the bathers of both sexes meet their friends, read their letters, listen to the music; or indulge in games. The direct overhead rays of the sun are filtered through soft tinted stained glass."

Arkansas Gazette, Feb. 28, 1916

This elegant assembly room was considered one of the crown jewels of the Fordyce. Both a social and cultural center, the area was used for concerts as well as more private socializing. Here John Fordyce's collection of Indian relics was displayed "for the edification of the bathers," in special cases added to the hall by 1934.

There were about 10-12 of us that joined the Ranger for a walk to one of the open springs. Myself, a couple and two lady friends were all from Wisconsin.



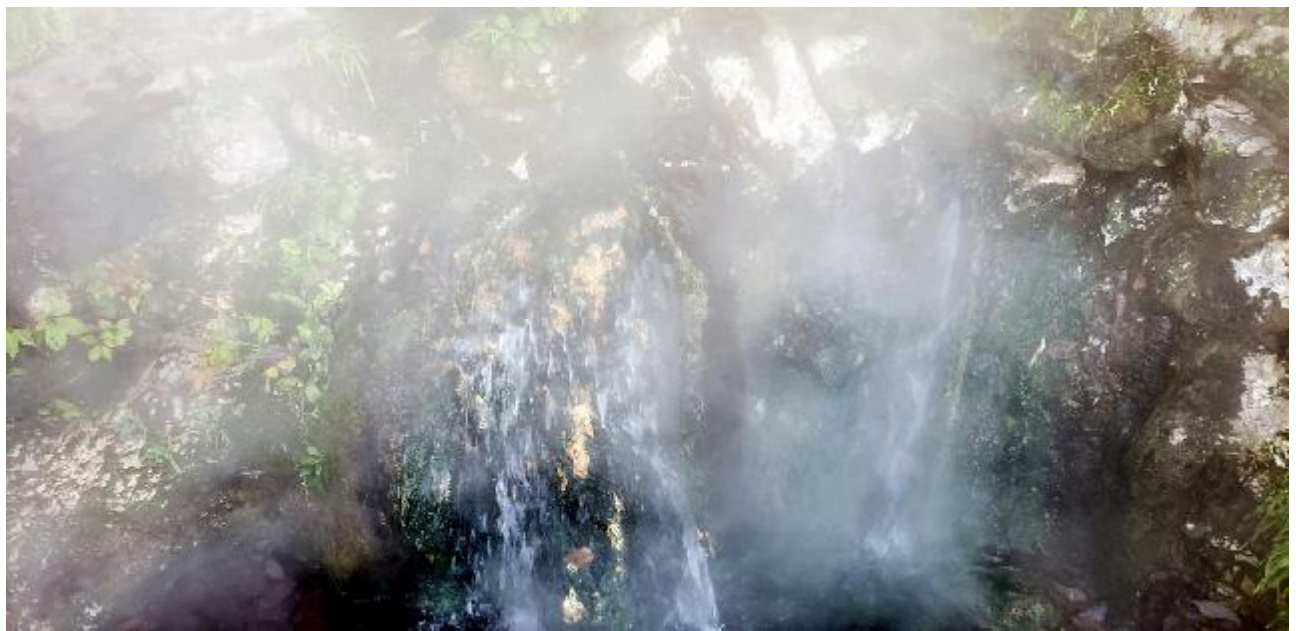
The hot water, around 130 degrees, just pours out of the ground, down the hill, and into the basins



Because of the cold air temp the steam from the spring was very visible.



The cause of the hot water is not volcanic. After rain falls it makes its way through cracks down through the surface of the earth. It takes many years for the water to reach an underground reservoir, gaining 1 degree for every 1 mile. The pressure from the incoming water forces water from the reservoir back up through other cracks to the surface. This round trip takes approximately 4400 years.





The Arlington Hotel – Probably the most famous hotel in Hot Springs and the most rebuilt – This is the third version (fire).



I don't want to start a controversy or anything, but the Ranger told us to imagine a rotating earth on top of this building, a former medical office building, with a sign saying DAILY PLANET. Yep, that's right folks, this is the building used in the 1950's SUPERMAN TV series as the Daily Planet Building. It seems a producer or someone was on vacation in Hot Springs and got the idea from some of the photos he took back to Hollywood.

Now just wait a moment here....in my research for this building I found no substantiated evidence for what is mentioned above. It seems this is a rumor that has been percolating (pun not intended) for many years. However, there is no proof. In fact the building used is in L.A.

Oh well, so much for that "hey, this is cool" factor.



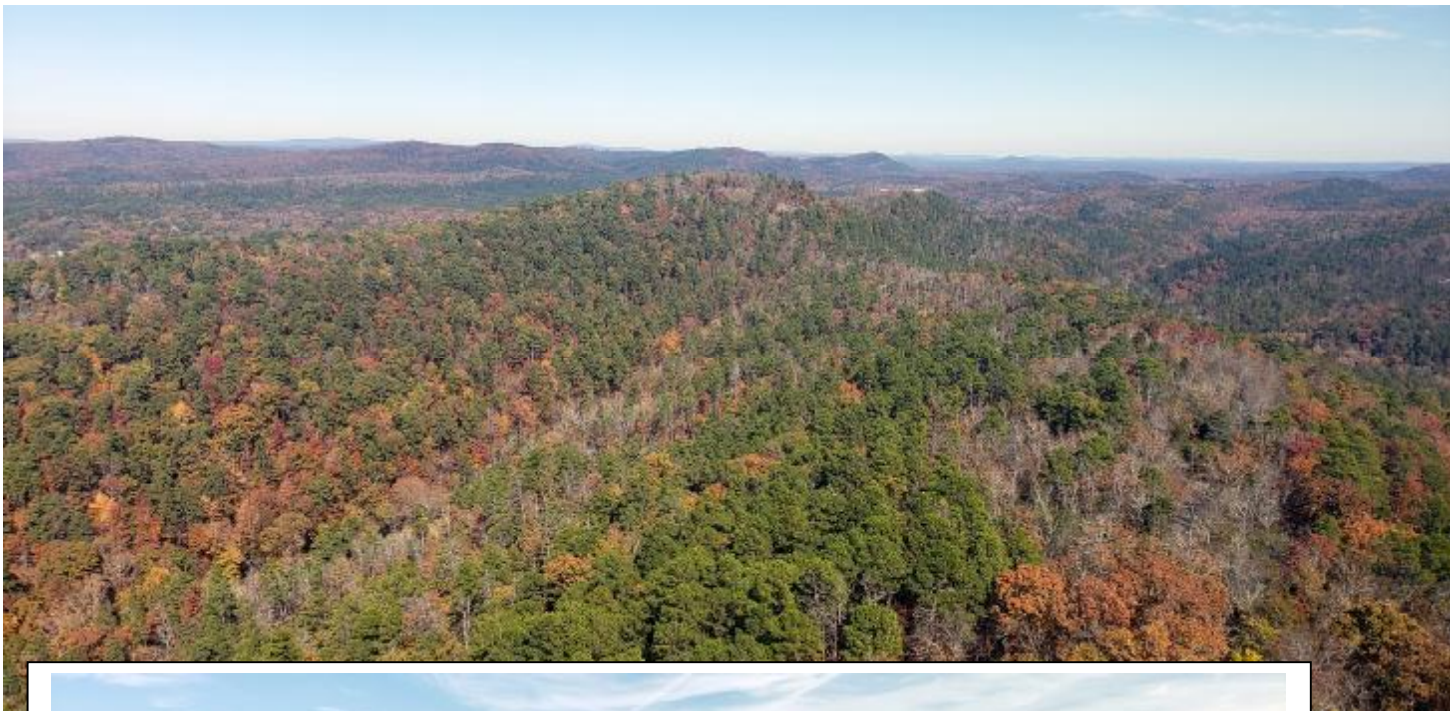
Leaving the bathhouses of downtown Hot Springs, opted for a drive into the mountains of Hot Springs NP and possibly a trip up in the look-out tower. I had thought to do some hiking here, but as I drove towards the tower it seemed like all the trails were near or crossing the road. I like to get a little further off the beaten path, so I opted for the tower.

Not operated by the park service, it cost \$5 to take the elevator to the top (saved \$2 with the NP pass). The views were nice, just a little past peak of the fall color season. Enjoy them below.

Below is looking kind of southwest. The Arlington hotel is the dominant structure on the right with the 'Daily Planet' building across the street. In a line through the valley are the bathhouses.



Northwest





MEL OTT

This Hall of Fame outfielder, tutored by John "Mugsy" McGraw, played his entire career with the New York Giants, hitting 511 home runs. On his thirtieth birthday, March 2, 1939, in an intra-squad game here at Whittington Park, "Master Melvin" belted three homers over the right field fence. He played alongside Hall of Famers Bill Terry and Carl Hubbell, to lift the Hal Schumacher team over the Carl Hubbell team by a score of 10-6.

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Alright, now we get to some fun stuff. There are 26 of these plaques scattered around Hot Springs. I have pictures and descriptions of every single one for you to read. HA HA HA. If you believe that I have some swamp land in Florida for sale. It is true there are 26 plaques, but I was not about to drive the RV to each and every one, find parking, and take a photo. That task would be for a much warmer day and my bicycle, today I only visited a couple. I know you're all very much relieved to hear that.

What I was unaware of is that Hot Springs was THE baseball spring training facility from 1886 until 1942.



Hot Springs: The Birthplace of Spring Baseball

Hot Springs' reputation as a health and recreation resort attracting the rich and famous was certainly true in the late 1800s and well into the 20th century. The city had fine hotels, lively nightclubs, a beautiful mountain setting, and the famous hot water from natural springs.



In 1886, Cap Anson brought his Chicago White Stockings (now the Cubs) to Hot Springs. This bustling turn-of-the-century spa resort with its famous hot baths, mountains, trails, hotels, and activities was the perfect place for something no one had heard of: spring training for professional baseball. Soon, teams had built five fields and as many as 250 players, including the legends of the game, trained here year after year.



Now you can follow *The Hot Springs Baseball Trail* and stand where legends stood and records were set. Read and hear stories of the players and places that shaped baseball.



Pick up a guide map at the Hot Springs Visitor Center in Hill Wheatley Plaza on Central Avenue, at the Alligator Farm, or at Oaklawn Racetrack. Each Baseball Trail marker has a digital 'code' that can link your smartphone to historic photos, audio, and more. With a phone call you can hear stories of the golden age of baseball in Hot Springs.



BABE RUTH

Ruth trained here nine times and became a very familiar face around Hot Springs. He hiked the mountains, took the baths, played golf, patronized the casinos, and visited the racetrack.

On March 17, 1918 (St. Patrick's Day), he launched a mammoth home run from Whittington Park that landed on the fly inside the Arkansas Alligator Farm. It has been measured at 573 feet, baseball's first 500-foot-plus drive.

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Wittington Field is now a parking lot for Weyerhaeuser, but they keep the home plate in place. The Babe was left-handed, so he stood in the batter's box to the right of home plate. In the far distance you can see a yellow canopy. That canopy is the entrance to the Alligator Farm that the Babe's homerun landed in. This IS one of those 'how cool is that' sights.

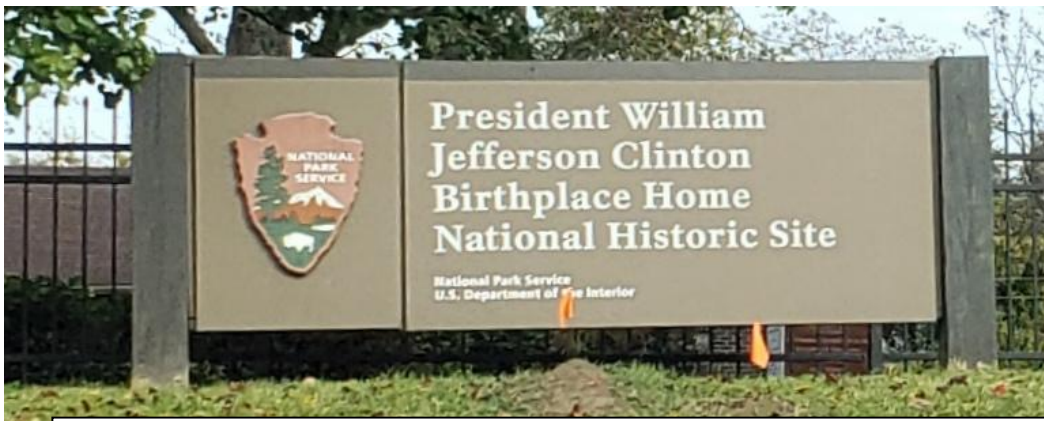


What remains of the bleachers of Whittington Field



Before leaving Hot Springs I noticed this warning. I don't know, it just seemed to me that this was kind of a weird advisement for a church.

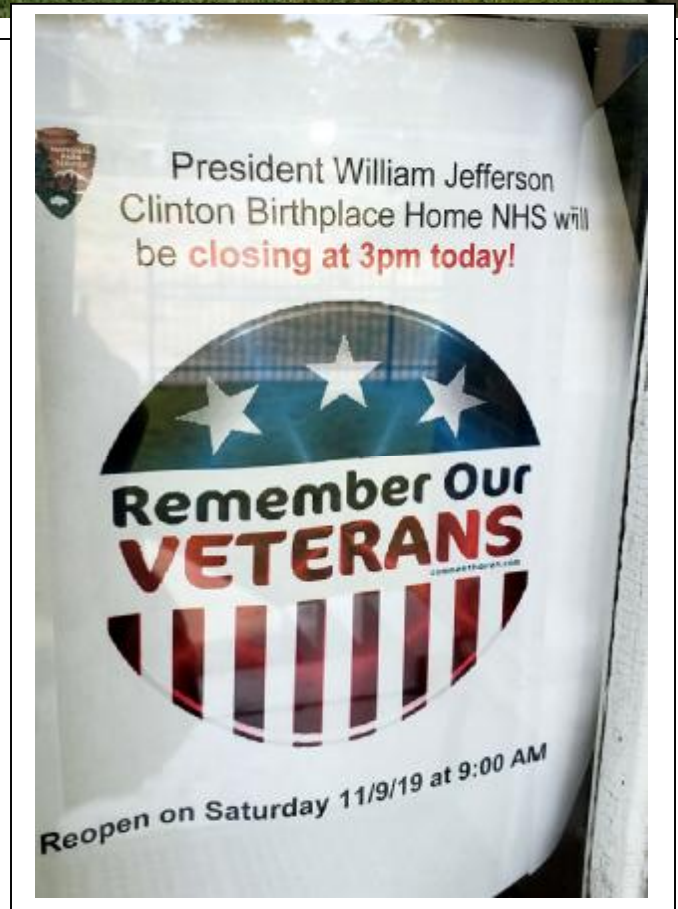
At this point I was tired of the poor weather, being unable to use my bike and frustrated with the battery issue, so I decided to drive on down to Houston and start my visit with Morgan and Matt. On the way is the Birthplace of Bill Clinton historic site, so I might as well stop there. It has nothing to do with Democrat or Republican, I just could never stand the guy. So off I headed, for Hope, Arkansas.



This place was hard to find. I had to turn the RV around three times before finding the road to Bill's place.



I finally found it and was able to park on the street right in front. Now I know why. I guess my luck changes with the wind. This photo was taken at 3:20.



arrived in Houston Friday night. Obviously there was no time to do a newsletter. We all hung out until Wednesday when we had tickets to the Simon & Garfunkel Story. I had never seen the real duo in concert, and it was neat how they told the story in songs and pictures.



So far, the weather in Houston sucks also. They had almost record cold the other night, 31 degrees. Next week should be much nicer.

I solved the battery issue after several phone calls and testing, by buying new batteries. Fortunately I was sent to the local distributor of NAPA batteries, which is the brand in the RV. Instead of \$160 each (2 batteries) plus probably \$100 to install them at NAPA or, heaven forbid, CampingWorld, they charged me \$94 each and helped me install them. So I probably saved over \$250 by going to the distributor rather than the dealer. It's nice to have heat through these cold nights.

So this is my last newsletter for this trip. I will be heading home around the 25th or so. We have a list of things to see and do here in Houston.

Until the next open road calls....