

Earl's Diary - Sunday - May 26, 2013

Dear Loyal Readers, everywhere;

This morning we arose to partly cloudy skies, Our plan was to head for Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Park, about 20 miles northeast of Springfield. There didn't seem to be any rain in sight. As we neared Springfield, it started to rain, AND rain, AND RAIN! It rained so hard the windshield wipers could hardly keep up. We had to slow way down because of the deluge. After we passed through Springfield the rain let up. By the time we got to New Salem we felt only a few sprinkles.

We went into the visitor center to watch a 15 minute movie. By the time we came out the rain had stopped and we were able to complete our tour of this reconstructed village. We did get a little water on our heads as the wind made the water drip from the trees. An hour later, the rain was gone.



Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site is a reconstruction of the village where Abraham Lincoln spent his early adulthood. The six years Lincoln spent at New Salem formed a turning point in his career. From the gangling young man who came to the village in 1831 with no definite objectives, he became a man of purpose as he embarked upon a career of law and statesmanship.



Abraham Lincoln engaged in a variety of activities while at New Salem. he clerked in a store, split rails, enlisted in the Black Hawk War, served as postmaster and deputy surveyor, failed in business, and was elected to the Illinois General Assembly in 1834 and 1836 after an unsuccessful try in 1832.



The six years that Lincoln spent at New Salem almost completely encompass the town's brief history. The community was thriving when Lincoln settled here in 1831, at the age of 22, but growth stalled before his 1837 move to Springfield to practice law. The 1839 establishment of the county seat at Petersburg (2 miles to the south) hastened New Salem's decline.



Lincoln's first store



His second store just across the street from his first



We learned that Lincoln moved here as a young man of 22, after he left the home of his parents. I asked which cabin he lived in. Apparently he moved from cabin to cabin. Would you say he was bumming around?

He was a voracious reader and began to read law books.

We were amazed at the rustic conditions women would live under, especially after coming from the big beautiful brick homes from further east. This was the frontier in 1823!

When the county seat was moved to Petersburg, residents of New Salem took apart their cabins and moved them piece by piece to Petersburg. The town of New Salem ceased to exist until reconstruction was started in 1919.



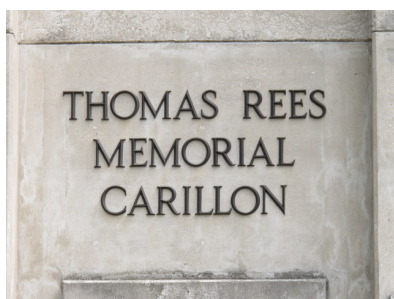
Building details



Primitive door hinge

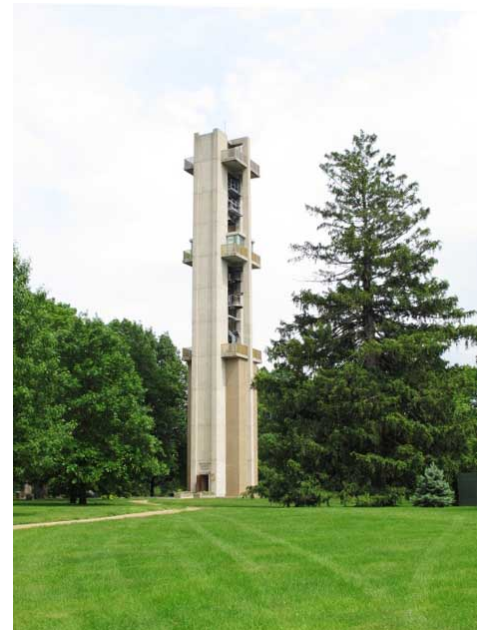


We drove by the State Capitol building in Springfield just to get a picture. The dome is coated in zinc which gives it the silver color.



Our next stop was the Thomas Rees Memorial Carillon in Washington Park in Springfield.

We arrived in time to take a trip to the top of the tower, then listen to a 3:00 concert.



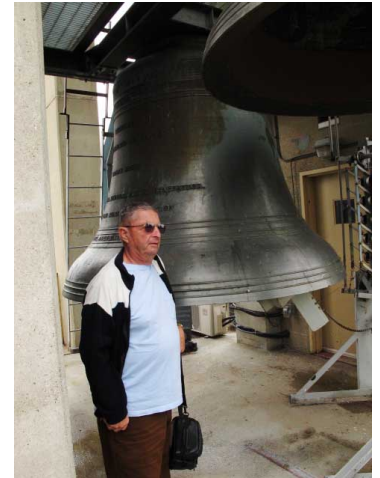


The Rees Carillon is a free-standing open tower which features 67 bells that have a total weight of 82,753 pounds. The brass bells vary in size with the largest bell weighing 7.5 short tons and the smallest bell weighing 22 pounds. The Rees Carillon stands 132 feet and features three observation decks within its open interior. The tower is constructed from concrete, brick and steel. The Rees Memorial Carillon is claimed to be one of the world's largest; the Springfield, Illinois Convention & Visitor's Bureau claims it is the 3rd largest, while the local public television affiliate simply asserted it as "one of the world's largest" in 1997.



We actually got to go up to the top of the tower. The elevator takes people to the second tier where the playing console is located. A young girl was getting a lesson and we were able to watch the bells being played.

From there, the climb up 60 steps on the circular staircase ends on the observation deck on the top. From there, we could see the State Capitol building.



Each bell is connected to the console with a wire. Playing is all mechanical - no electronics at all!



We had another very interesting day here in Springfield. This destination is the farthest east we will travel. Tomorrow we leave for St. Joseph, MO and head west on the homeward trek. We still have lots of country to see - home of Pony Express in St. Jo; Mount Rushmore; Custer Battlefield (where he made a BIG blunder); Yellowstone, Grand Tetons; and Michele wants to put a big toe in Salt Lake.

Anyway, there's lots more to come. Thanks for traveling along with me. Until next time - Bye for now

- - - Earl

