

PHILADELPHIA TO WASHINGTON DC JUNE 2015

We had recently booked a Tauck tour of Western Canada, and are looking forward to it in September. Recently, Kathy's son and daughter-in-law toured Williamsburg, Virginia. Part of the town has been restored to colonial days, and has reenactors dressed for the period. Kathy said she would like to go there, and that was all it took.

I just happened to have a Tauck tour catalog, and found a tour that goes to Williamsburg. Kathy has not spent much time on the East Coast, so this is a perfect time to go. I gave the trip to Kathy as an anniversary present!

After our last river cruise in Russia, we have decided we are "Europed out", and may not be making any more trips across the pond. There is plenty to see in the US, Canada, and the Caribbean.



The first order of business was to get flights coming and going. I was lucky enough to get the return flight using miles. Getting to Philadelphia was another story. The only thing available initially was First Class on US Air, which is really nothing special. I kept checking, as we have plenty of time. We lucked out and finally got tickets on US Air to Philadelphia, but my theory of the balance of nature came into play.

We were notified that our flight from Washington DC back to Los Angeles, instead of departing at 11:45, was going to leave at 8:50AM! That meant we had to be at the airport at 6:50 AM! That was totally unacceptable, so we cancelled that reservation. Fortunately, Southwest came through for us, and we have a one stop flight that gets us into Burbank, instead of the zoo at LAX.

The problem with flying to the East Coast from California is the flight is over 5 hours and there is a 3 hour time difference. So if we left at noon we would get there about 9 PM! Getting an early flight is out of the question because of rush hour traffic.

Tauck has a policy that gives you a free hotel stay if you have toured with them previously. I think it is a great idea, as we can decompress from our flight and relax. Otherwise we would have to leave LA at 7 AM to get to the hotel by 4 PM per Tauck's request!

We got another notification that our US Air flight was cancelled, and we were put on another flight with the same departure time. The only problem was we were seated in 2 different rows!

On the original flight we were in row 8, but the closest seats I found together were in row 19! I called US Air, and found we could sit in row 5 if we wanted to pay an additional \$180! We lucked out and did not have anyone in the middle seat on our flight. To confirm my theory of the balance of nature again, our plane was early, but the baggage was delayed.

PHILADELPHIA

The driver who picked us up at the airport told us that Rittenhouse Square was only a few blocks from our hotel. It turned out that there was huge art show with stands completely around the square. The next day we took our readers with us, like we did in the Buenos Aires San Martin Park.

We sat and people watched and petted dogs. All the people live in high rises, and this is their chance to get some sun, see some greenery, and walk their dogs.

Across from the park was a little stand that had Philly cheese steak sandwiches. We each had one, and it was not that great, but what can you expect from a food cart?

In the evening we had a cocktail party and dinner hosted by Tauck. We met some of our fellow travelers, half of whom are from California, which makes sense, because people on the East Coast do not need to take a tour.

We are glad we came in the day before and were well rested.

The next day we started on our tour of historic Philadelphia. We drove to Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution were debated.



There were two large rooms in the hall; one was set up as a courtroom, and the other as a meeting hall where the representatives were arguing over the wording of the Declaration of Independence.



On the right picture, a part of the prisoner's dock can be seen. The meetings were presided over by George Washington, sitting at the chair behind the desk. The chair is the only original piece of furniture in the room. The rest are reproductions.



On the back of the chair there is an image of the sun. During some of the heated discussions, Benjamin Franklin said of the image, "I do not know if that is the sun rising or setting on these United States".

After visiting Independence Hall, we were taken to horse drawn carriages to tour the old part of the city. Kathy and I love to do this, because of the slow speed and the narration along the way.



We saw many of the colonial houses, and they were well preserved, with plaques in front attesting to the fact they were original.

On the way back to the drop off point, we passed a synagogue named Mikveh Israel, which is the longest continuously operating synagogue in the United States. The first building was erected in 1782, but the congregation outgrew it and built a larger building.

The pictures below are of the present synagogue, with the ark as it appears when the doors are opened to permit the removal of a Torah for reading during services.



We were supposed to visit the Liberty Bell, but ahead of us were a few hundred school children, so we had to pass on the visit. Just before we left, I went across the street to the Christ Church Cemetery. This is the burial place of one of Kathy's distant ancestors, Benjamin Franklin.



We asked to be dropped off at the Reading Market, a Philadelphia institution. It was originally the site of the Reading Railroad Station. The market had its ups and downs, but with new management it is prospering. We found a place called Carmen's that featured the famous Philly Cheese Steak sandwich. Carmen took the orders, and had a great patter with all his customers. The sandwiches were fantastic, eclipsing the ones we had yesterday.



After wandering through the market, which was reminiscent of the Quincy Market in Boston we headed back to our hotel. We were on our own for dinner that night, and on our way back from Rittenhouse Square yesterday, we noticed a little hole in the wall restaurant named Luke's Lobster. It was a small place, down a few steps from the sidewalk. We checked the menu and it featured seafood, which we both love.

We settled on something called Noah's Ark, which featured a lobster roll, a crab roll, a shrimp roll, and 4 crab claws. They were out of crab claws, so they substituted another crab roll! The place was also BYOB (bring your own bottle), so I put a bottle of wine and 2 wine glasses in a bag and brought them to the restaurant.

It was a great way to end our visit to Philadelphia.

AMISH COUNTRY AND GETTYSBURG

We journeyed to Pennsylvania's Lancaster County, home of the Amish. With their simple ways, the Amish still live very much as their ancestors did, without all the modern conveniences that we often take for granted. We gained insights into the Amish culture during a tour with a local guide. We saw a number of carriages, and some unusual bicycles. It was explained to us that the Amish believed that riding a bicycle was to be at ease, so they are converted into scooters.



Their houses were well maintained, but they had high clothes poles to speed drying of laundry



The Amish only go through 8th grade, then work the farm with the family. They have very large families, and our guide told us how to tell if an Amish woman is married. With taking care of a number of small children, fixing 3 meals a day, doing the laundry and gardening, a married woman always looks tired!

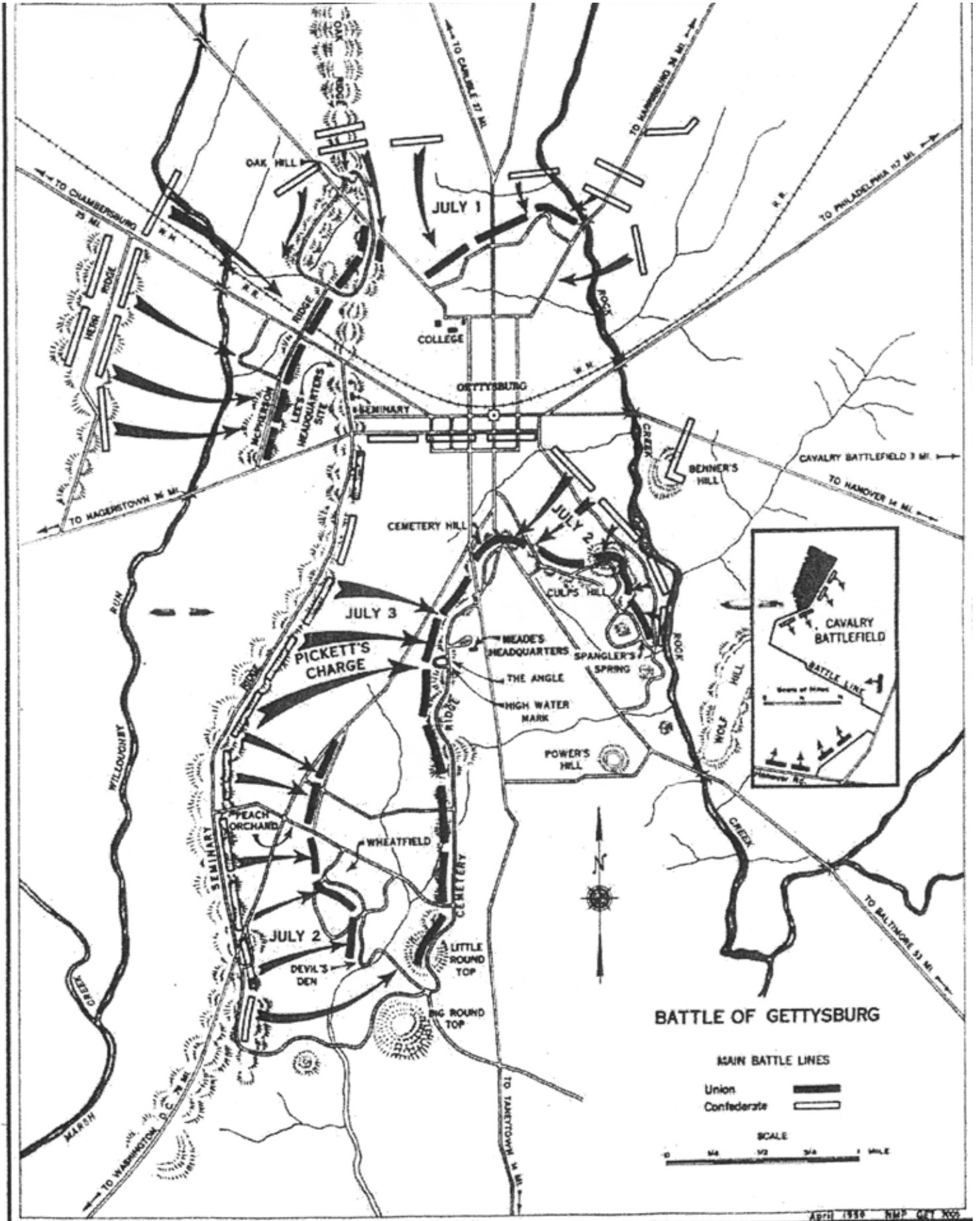
We then continued on our tour to historic Gettysburg. We spent much of the afternoon at the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center, where the exclusive Cyclorama, Film and Museum Experience provided an excellent introduction to the battlefields we will visit the next day; the historic Gettysburg Cyclorama is a destination in itself! The painting is the work of French artist Paul Dominique Philippoteaux. It depicts Pickett's Charge, the failed infantry assault that was the climax of the Battle of Gettysburg. The painting is a *cyclorama*, a type of 360° cylindrical painting. The intended effect is to immerse the viewer in the scene being depicted, often with the addition of foreground models and life-sized replicas to enhance the illusion. Among the sites documented in the painting are Cemetery Ridge, the Angle, and the "High-water mark of the Confederacy". The completed original painting was 22 feet (6.7 m) high and 279 feet (85 m) in circumference. The version that hangs in Gettysburg, a recent (2005) restoration of the version created for Boston, is 42 feet (13 m) high and 377 feet (115 m) in circumference



Tonight, a storyteller / interpreter in Civil War-period costume described the experience of a Gettysburg civilian caught in the fighting at a private reception. It was quite scary for the residents, with both Union and Confederate soldiers marching through town at various times in the battle.

GETTYSBURG

This morning we experienced first-hand the haunting quality of the battlefields where the decisive 1863 Civil War Battle of Gettysburg was fought as we explored Gettysburg National Military Park with a National Park Service guide.



The above map shows the battle lines during the three days of fighting.

Late in the afternoon of July 2, 1863, on a boulder-strewn hillside in southern Pennsylvania, Union Colonel Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain dashed headlong into history, leading his 20th Maine Regiment in perhaps the most famous counterattack of the Civil War. The regiment's sudden, desperate bayonet charge blunted the Confederate assault on Little Round Top and has been credited with saving Major General George Gordon Meade's Army of the Potomac. There is a statue of him on Little Round Top.



On the final day, July 3, 1863 the Confederate infantry assault was preceded by a massive artillery bombardment that was meant to soften up the Union defense and silence its artillery, but was largely ineffective. Approximately 12,500 men in nine infantry brigades advanced over open fields for three-quarters of a mile under heavy Union artillery and rifle fire. Pickett's men charged across an open field, where they encountered canister shot from the Union cannons. This ammunition turned the cannons into large shotguns! The fire was withering on the men marching in closed ranks across the open field.

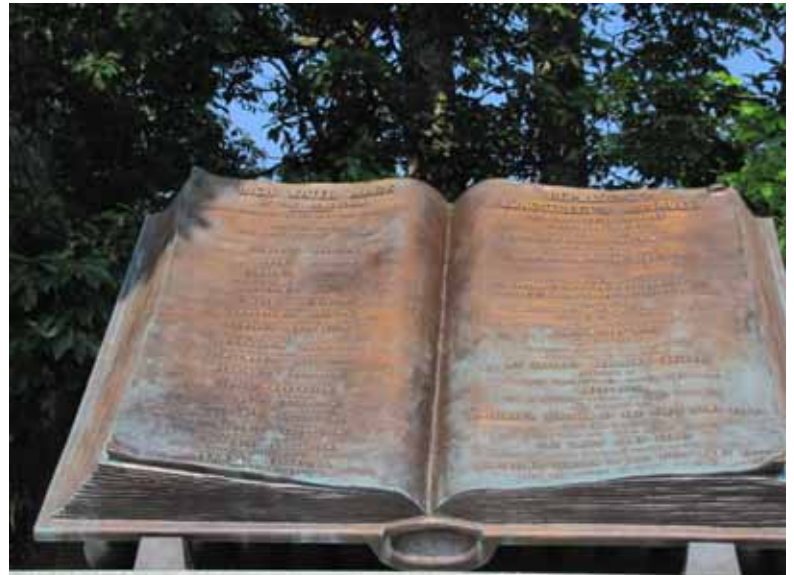
Although some Confederates were able to breach the low stone wall that shielded many of the Union defenders, they could not maintain their hold and were repulsed with over 50% casualties, a decisive defeat that ended the three-day battle and Lee's campaign into Pennsylvania.



Across the battlefield are monuments to all the states that fought on both sides. The most striking ones are the Virginia Monument, with Robert E. Lee on his horse, and the Pennsylvania Monument.



The other striking monument is one that lists both sides in the conflict.



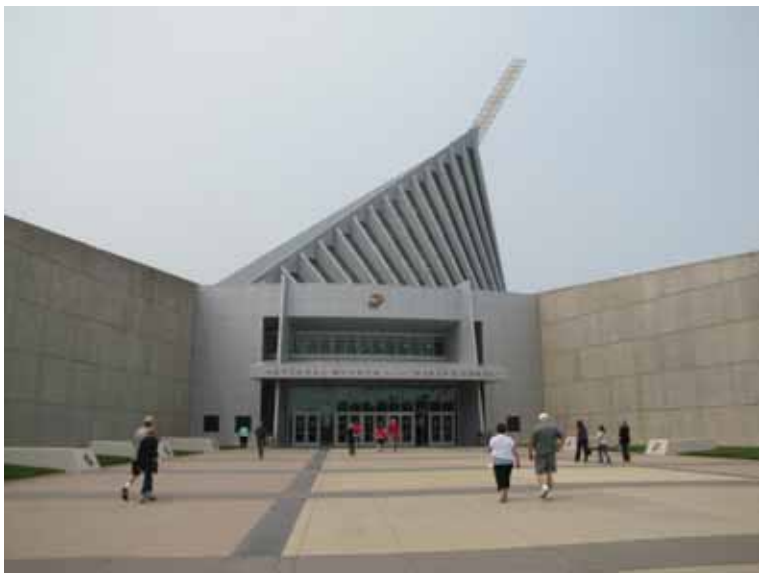
All in all, it was a very moving experience to stand on, as Lincoln called it, "Hallowed Ground". To think of the thousands of men, all Americans, that were killed or wounded during the battle.

MARINE CORPS MUSEUM

After crossing the Mason-Dixon Line, we arrived at Virginia's National Museum of the Marine Corps, where interactive exhibits showcasing the USMC's glorious history illustrate the meaning of "Semper Fidelis."

Many years ago, I was assigned to the island of Iwo Jima, which was one of the most famous battles of WW2 involving the Marines. I went down to the beach, and tried climbing up the loose volcanic sand. I tried to imagine what it was like, carrying a 40 pound pack, a rifle, and someone shooting at you. It must have been horrific.

Joe Rosenthal shot the iconic picture of the raising of the flag atop Mt. Suribachi, and the shape of the museum captures that spirit.



Inside the museum were some of the aircraft that the Marines flew in WW2 and Korea. One of my favorites was the Corsair, an aircraft used in the TV show Black Sheep Squadron. Another aircraft was the Hawker Harrier, an aircraft used in the movie True Lies



But, the most memorable event was meeting Frank, who was a WW2 veteran that was actually involved in the landings on Iwo Jima. He was featured in the photo display as a young Marine with a flamethrower.



He had to be at least 90, and I thanked him for his service in defense of our country.

WILLIAMSBURG

Our final destination for the day was Colonial Williamsburg, whose cobblestone streets and buildings have been restored to the way they looked when the city was Virginia's colonial capital. We stepped back in time on a two-night stay, having dinner tonight at one of Williamsburg's famous taverns named Christina Williams Tavern featuring authentic colonial-era fare. The town was restored to its 18th-century glory and inhabited by interpreters in period dress living its 18th-century lifestyle. We explored Colonial Williamsburg and discovered life in days gone by as we stepped back in time to meet residents ranging from artisans and trades people to militiamen and ordinary citizens, and visited restored buildings including Virginia's colonial Capitol, the Governor's Palace, Raleigh Tavern, Bruton Parish Church and scores of colonial homes and shops.

We visited the silversmith's shop to see how silver artifacts were made, and the silversmith described how it was all done freehand with different shaped mandrels and hammers. The heat and humidity were oppressive, so we got on the air conditioned shuttle bus and sat on it for a complete tour of the city just to cool off.

I discovered that they offered carriage rides around the town, so we booked one. We had a choice of the longer 9 passenger carriage, or the shorter 4 passenger one. The longer one would have required a long walk to get it and return, so we opted for the shorter one.



As usual, we enjoyed the ride thoroughly, as we slowly rode through the town. We passed a carriage driven by someone dressed as Thomas Jefferson, and an outdoor stand selling all manner of ladies' hats.



The hotel we stayed at in Williamsburg was really spread out, so we just ordered room service for dinner instead of trekking through the heat to the main dining room.

JAMESTOWN

En route to the nation's capital, we visited the historic site of Jamestown, Virginia, established 400 years ago as the first permanent English settlement in the Americas. There was a contrast of the three cultures that converged here – Powhatan Indians, the English and the Africans. We had an educational lecture, and a walking tour to view gallery exhibitions focusing on America's early heritage.

Unfortunately, it was so humid that the lens on my camera kept fogging up, so I missed a couple of pictures of the Native American's houses.

There were replicas of the ships the colonists arrived in, plus some of the buildings they built.



WASHINGTON, D.C.

We then continued on to America's capital city for a two-night stay in the heart of it all at the Fairmont Washington, D.C. and enjoyed dinner at a popular DC restaurant tonight. The name of the restaurant was "The Caucus", but they were having a problem with their air conditioning. Our tour director finally got the group moved to another room where the air conditioning worked!

MOUNT VERNON AND WASHINGTON, D.C.

We took a morning excursion to the beloved Mount Vernon estate of George Washington, overlooking the Potomac River and explored the estate with its state-of-the-art interactive museum, the 18th-century mansion and its landscaped grounds. Unfortunately, we were not allowed to take pictures inside.



The exterior of the house was quite interesting. It was made from boards that were scored to look like stone, and then sand was sprinkled into the wet paint to complete the illusion. The first room we entered was a reception room, which was quite large by 18th century standards. In fact the houses of those days would fit into the room! We toured the rest of the house and then went out to what is now the back. The view of the Potomac was spectacular!



We were able to take pictures of the kitchen, however. In colonial times the kitchens were in a separate building due to the danger of fire. We were told that the two major causes of death for women at that time were childbirth and fire.



I was also able to take pictures of the wash house and of a riding chair.



Hiking further down the trail back to the visitor center, I was able to see George Washington's final resting place.



We returned to the capital for daytime sightseeing featuring the National Mall and its poignant memorials to those who served in World War II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, as well as the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial and Capitol Hill.

Before we started on our tour of the memorials, we stopped for lunch at the National Gallery cafeteria. We were given a handout showing a few of the featured paintings, and I had just enough time to go up to the impressionists' galleries. I found the room with the Monet's, and took a photo of two that were very meaningful to us.

A few years ago, we took a private car to Monet's home in Giverny, France, and to Rouen to see the cathedral he painted.



We actually walked across the bridge in the painting, and stood in front of the Rouen cathedral where Monet stood when he painted the view of the cathedral.

The first memorial we went to was the Korean War Memorial. The men were all dressed in ponchos, because of the bitter cold and rain during the fighting. I spent some time in Korea in the early 60's and can attest to how miserable conditions were.





We were next taken to the Lincoln Memorial, at one end of the reflection pool. The Washington Monument stands at the other end, and below is a picture I downloaded to show both.



The visit to the Lincoln Memorial is always a moving experience, on the wall to the left is his Gettysburg Address, and on the wall to the right is his second inaugural address.



The last memorial we visited was the Vietnam Memorial. Recently, a statue of nurses had been added to recognize their work during the war. It is on the opposite side of the memorial from the statue of the soldiers.



Our last stop was to view the White house. Since there has been a problem with fence climbers, a set of barriers has been erected 10 feet in front of the actual fence. I have downloaded images of both sides of the White House so it can be seen without the barriers and fences.



We were then taken back to the hotel for a great farewell dinner. The next morning we were taken to the airport for our flights home. It was absolutely wonderful to arrive home with temperatures in the mid 70's and NO humidity. The day we left Washington was forecast to have a temperature of 96 degrees!

In conclusion, it was a fantastic tour, in spite of the weather. To see so many historical sites and monuments in such a short time was great! We are always glad to be back home where we belong and feel so very privileged to be citizens of the United States of America. God bless America, always.

