



Adventures 2007:

A Driving, Hiking, Biking,
Photographing, Roadfooding
Tour of the United States

Undertaken by Jim Stembridge,
with Ruth (short for “Ruthless”)

November and December, 2007

Described, based on concurrent e-mail dispatches,
Since corrected and elaborated
by Jim Stembridge

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Adventures 2007: Saturday, November 3, 2007. We've started on our big trip around the country. I'm with Ruth (short for "Ruthless"), my female shepherd/black lab mix companion. Hiking, biking, eating, touring state capitols. We are planning Thanksgiving in Boston, Massachusetts, then December back in Port Angeles, Washington.

After a sputtering start on Halloween afternoon (more on that later, if I'm not too embarrassed to tell about it) we make it to Boise, Idaho November 1 and then to Salt Lake City Utah the next day. Both Capitols are surrounded by chain-link fence, closed for repairs, not accessible for photography.



Ruth & Jim Friday at Utah Capitol in Salt Lake City



Ruth & Jim Thursday at Idaho Capitol in Boise

So, somewhat discouraging start to our tour-of-the-Capitols. If everything is going to be closed up, it'll be a big disappointment. Before we head east for more capitols, though, we have some trail scouting, a big hike and some mountain biking planned for southern Utah.

OK, here's my version of the Halloween fiasco. First, I want to tell how carefully I planned for the trip. Clothes, equipment, spare keys, rain-gear, bike helmet, lock, binoculars, two cameras, tri-pod, long underwear, back-pack, tent, sleeping bags, mattress, weather-checks, remote-access bank accounts, everything I could think of. I even made copy of all my important cards, credit cards & driver's license, using the printer-scanner thing at home. You know, in case anything gets lost, I'll have those numbers. Thought of everything!

Continuing with the story . . . it's my first day out, Halloween, first day of forty or fifty, six or-seven weeks, maybe, and I'm headed up I-5 and east on I-84 and I don't need gas until five hours out, in Pendleton, and so I drive into the Shell station up top of the hill just past Pendleton and out comes the attendant and whoops! That's when I notice I don't seem to have any cards in my wallet. Empty! No credit card! No back-up credit card! No ATM card! No back-up ATM card! No driver's license! And, of course, suddenly I can picture them all—still in the scanner upstairs at home. Feeling pretty silly, and slightly ill, all the great planning and everything. Mulling alternatives all night while camped in Pendleton. Called Joan to discuss. And here's what we decided . . . So, I have enough cash to get me enough gas to get back to The Dalles, and that's where sweet Joanie meets

me mid-morning next day, hands me my cards, and, after a few more hugs & kisses, off I go to Pendleton for the second time. What a great pal Joan is for driving all the way to The Dalles just for me! We wanted to say good-bye again, we decided. Good for a laugh. Funny story. Ha ha.

So one photo is of the Halloween departure, the false start; the other photo is of me in The Dalles, departing again, holding up my specially-delivered cards.



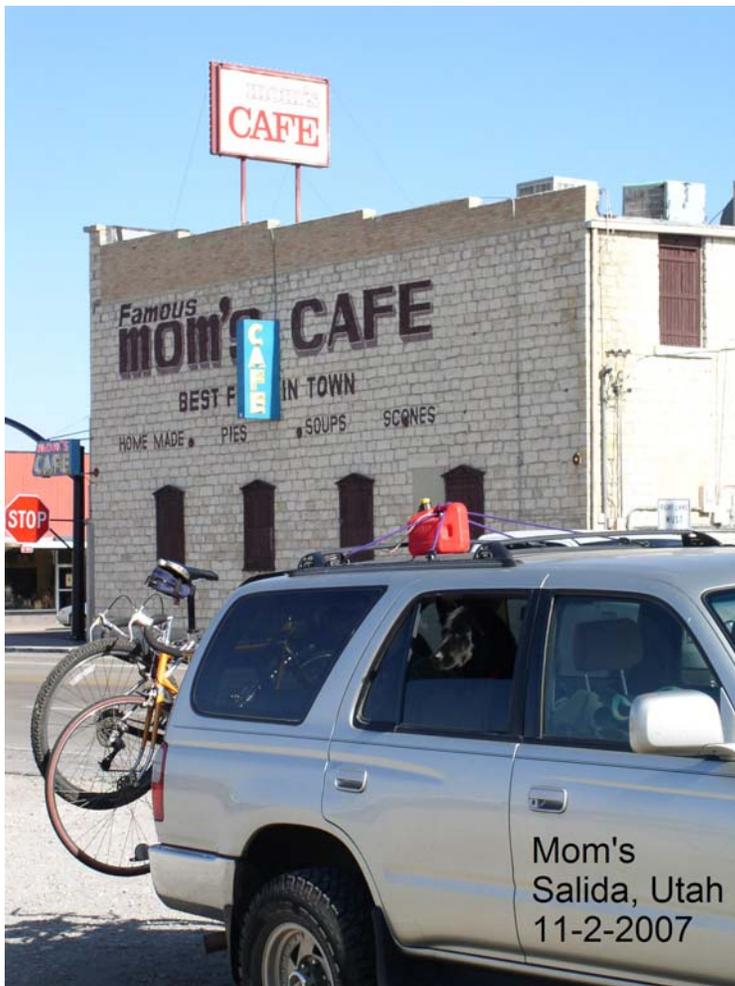
Just prior to departure from Salem, October 31, 2007



In The Dalles, rescued by Joan, November 1, 2007

Oh, yes, I'm quite the planner.

Along the way south, we stop at one of my favorite Roadfood sites, Mom's Café in downtown Salina, Utah.



Ruth & Jim at Mom's in Salida, Utah, a Roadfood site

November 4, 2007. This evening, Ruth & I are in Escalante. We did some trailblazing today, several miles of climbing, scrambling, & hiking, trying to connect up some terraces, some animal trails, & the remnants of human trails high above Calf Creek. We worked our way south from the campground today, making it about two-thirds of the way to the Escalante River. Used lots of GPS and lots of photos. I'm in a motel room tonight, Ruth staying in the car. We are very tired!

Hiking along Calf Creek in the Escalante National Monument the next afternoon, we stop for a rest in the cool shade.



Resting along Calf Creek.



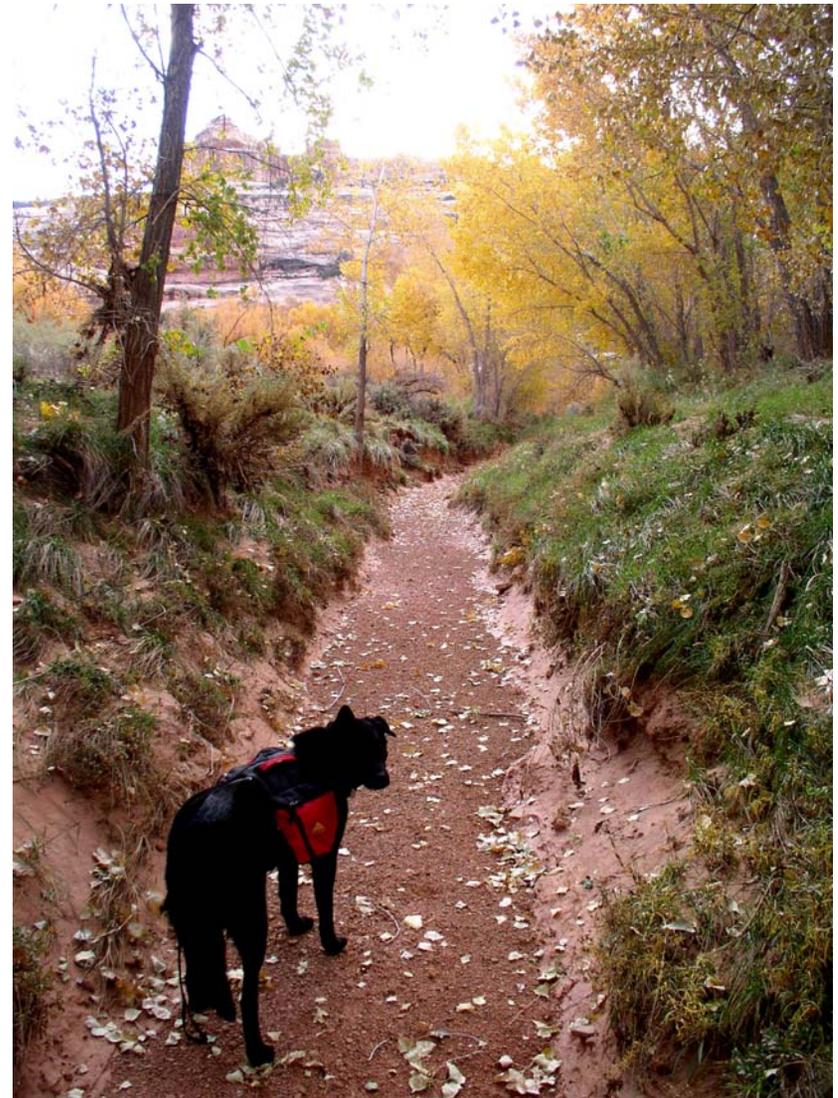
Ruth & Jim November 4 out exploring a ledge high above Calf Creek.

I find November to be delightful in southern Utah. Most of the guide books say September and October are the best fall months, so the land is almost empty in November. It is a little chilly at night, but daytime

temps are in the 60s, especially warm in the sun, and it is usually sunny. I'm four for four on November weather in the southwest. Tomorrow, we will start from the south, head north toward the campground, and attempt to connect up with our southern-most point from today. Then on to our wilderness adventure in Grand Gulch.



Part of our 25-mile, three-day Grand Gulch Backpack



More Grand Gulch scenery

November 8, 2007. Following a chilly, dry (too dry), and wonderful three-day wilderness backpack through Utah's Grand Gulch, we head for two days of mountain biking around Moab, Utah, then to a narrow-canyon paved bike-path experience just east of Glenwood Springs, Colorado, and on over the snowy Rocky Mountains and Eisenhower Tunnel into Denver. We find more paved bike paths in Denver, a long smooth network along the Platte River & tributary creeks. Ruth is loving all the adventurous exercise. To her, the wonders of the city probably seem no different from the wonders of the wilderness! Rats or rabbits, they are all rodents!

November 11, 2007. Up early and into downtown Denver looking for the Capitol dome in the pre-dawn twilight, we find close parking plentiful, and meters that don't require coins for another couple of hours. Plenty of time to wander the grounds and surrounding building entrances, looking for the

best views as daylight slowly illuminates the scene. My goal is to get half-a-dozen excellent pictures of each Capitol's exterior, and the same number, maybe a few more, of the interior, with a few additional views of sculpture or architectural detail. The crisp, partly cloudy weather in Denver is perfect. Less perfect are the signs, traffic signals, automobiles, and fences crowding around the building, making the scene less-than-perfect no matter the angle or distance. So, we do our best. This time, Ruth waits in the car as I wait for just the right lighting, return to the car to put in coins at the appointed hour, and return to the building for interior exploration.



Colorado Capitol, Denver, Colorado

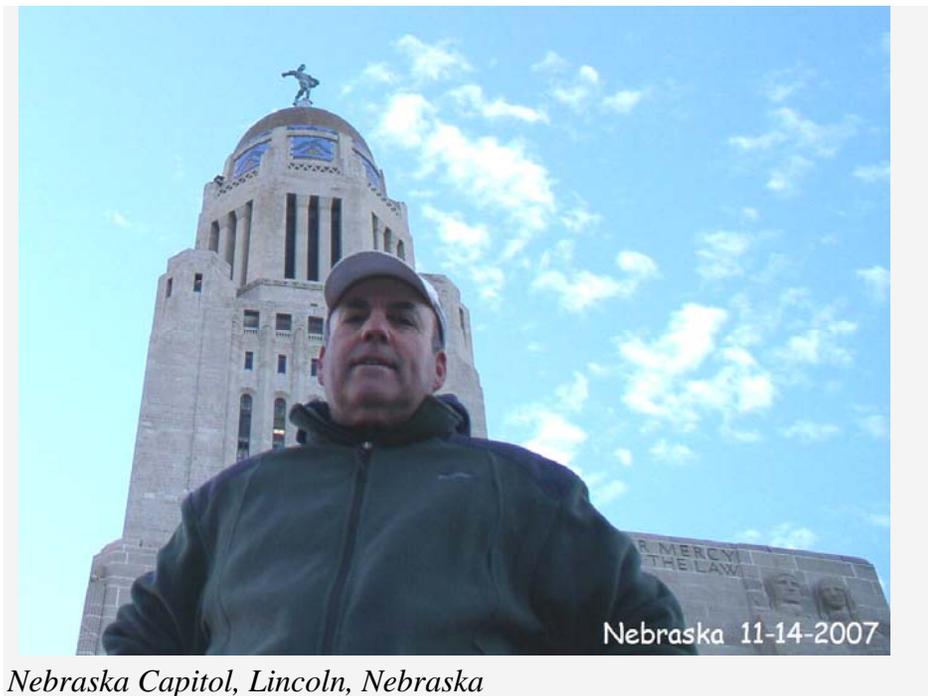
Sending camera and tripod through the x-ray, I go through the metal detector and I'm in, free to roam. Our first capitol interior. And it is

lovely inside; plenty of dramatic architecture and ornate details. But at the Senate gallery, I'm warned by a security guard not to photograph anything lying on any legislator's desk, or they will have to confiscate my camera. Seems an over-reach of paranoia, the ugly head of government secrecy, just the kind of action that breeds contempt among the governed. Disturbing. I hope they will stop saying this sort of thing to capitol visitors.

We may have time to get to Cheyenne, Wyoming yet this afternoon, so that's where we head, north on I-25, into a brisk prairie wind.



Wyoming Capitol, Cheyenne, Wyoming



Nebraska Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska

November 13, 2007.

Last night, we camped out in rural Nebraska, between the rustling cottonwood leaves and a newly-plowed field. Wonderful crispy fall smell in the air. It was a warm evening, but a cold front moved through this morning (I had to wait for clouds to clear to get one of those bright-sun-shiny-against the clear, blue sky pictures of Nebraska Capitol in Lincoln). What a wonderful building, and I did not think it was going to be! Grand, glorious architecture (Gothic vaults and columns inside), clean inside & out, bright modern and historic artwork all over, wonderful mosaic tile images in the floor. Wow!

Capitol faces west, so best-lighted views are afternoons all year, although, back-lighted with dramatic sky, she's a beauty in the morning, too.

Wyoming (Cheyenne) minimal, dull, & somewhat decrepit by comparison, although we do not want to compare children, do we?

Some summary observations, having seen, now, seven capitols:

Front doors wide open, rear door wide open, welcoming:
Nevada, Wyoming, Nebraska

Front doors locked, enter through side-door-metal-detector-staffed by serious officers only:

California, Colorado

Completely closed, surrounded by chain-link construction fence:
Utah, Idaho

Faces north, summer is best time for dramatic photo:
Nebraska, (Oregon)

Faces west, evening is best time for dramatic photo:
California, Colorado

Faces west, so crowded by trees, it is hard to get a dramatic photo anytime:

Nevada

Faces south, so winter is best time to get dramatic photo:
Wyoming, Idaho, Utah

November 14, 2007. We have arrived in Kansas City, taking the long-ways-around tour of Wyoming and Nebraska Capitols, saving Topeka for a short back-track tomorrow, dinner tomorrow at Chicken Annie's on the rural road a couple of miles north of Pittsburg, KS (see <http://www.roadfood.com/Reviews/Overview.aspx?RefID=4524>) then on to Jefferson City Friday. We'll see if the Illinois Capitol might be open Saturday, otherwise it will be a long week-end of r&r in central Illinois.



Chicken Annie's chicken with sides of potato salad & coleslaw

Another south-facing Capitol in Topeka, Kansas, so lots of good pictures on a cloudless, crisp morning like today's. Thousands filled

the building in a single snaking line as Kansans lined up for flu shots this morning.



Kansas Capitol, Topeka, Kansas

Front doors are locked from the outside, with a separate side entrance for visitors, but no metal detector, no officer-scrutiny, no officers at all. Lots of re-construction, boxed furniture filling the halls. John Steuart Curry's painting of John Brown, perhaps the most famous of all Capitol

murals, is right outside the old-fashioned, manually-operated freight-type elevator. Wow!



Curry Mural in the Kansas Capitol

The significance of Curry's mural is deep. The history of the State of Kansas starts with repeal of the Missouri Compromise of 1820, in the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, which opened new states to slavery, if it was the will of the majority in those states. The contest between pro-slavery and anti-slavery forces resulted in "Bloody Kansas" in the years prior to the Civil War, and was the stage for the John Brown-led massacre at Pottawatomie, Kansas (1856), which led to John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry, Virginia (1859), the election of Abraham Lincoln (1860), and the beginnings of the Civil War (1661). After much bloodshed and rival constitutions, Kansas entered the Union as a free state (January 29, 1861), and this wonderful Capitol building, begun in 1866, was finally finished in 1903. No wonder Abraham Lincoln has such a prominent spot on the grounds!

Beautiful rotunda, an extra-wide hole-in-the-floor down to the main floor yields especially large, elegant space, today filled with chatty Kansans in a long flu-shot line.

Outside again, we wait and wait for sunshine to illuminate Abraham Lincoln's monument. Oh, but it is hard to get bronze well-lit!

Tomorrow, after Jefferson City, Missouri, we'll cross the Mississippi and head into the old Northwest Territories, I think.

The next day, coming through Sedalia, Missouri, 60 miles west of Jefferson City, we came upon deserted state fairgrounds, with gate wide open, so, spent some time biking & jogging & fetching there (I throw the ball, Ruthie runs & picks it up then hides it somewhere and I fetch it

and then I throw it again). It turns out the state fairgrounds were something of a booby prize for Sedalia, which had wanted the State Capitol and had the perfect shallow hill. Instead, the State Fair has occupied that hill for many decades. Sedalia's most famous native son, many of you will remember, was Scott Joplin, and there are some remembrances of Scott Joplin here and there in town. Oh, my, what a forlorn town, though, lots of abandoned buildings, abandoned railroads, abandoned factories. And what's left is poorly cared-for. One feature is a prominent stop along the 200-mile-long KATY-Line rails-to-trails project. My favorite box-car on our old electric train set was a bright yellow "KATY" boxcar. So I'm partial to the KATY Line. Some warmer day, I want to come back & ride a bike on the trail, which borders the Missouri River as it heads on to Jefferson City.



Missouri Capitol and Jefferson City, Missouri

Missouri's capitol has about the finest site of any I've seen to date (Missouri is my ninth of the "detailed" tour for 2007). By site, I mean its surroundings. For it is on a hill, but it shares the top of that hill with a little town, an up-scale part of Jefferson City, with a tree-bordered street lined with law offices, banks, restaurants, and the view of the Capitol. The Capitol grounds are sweeping lawns, with muted military references. South-facing, white, photogenic! Fine features inside, too, although writing this on Monday, having visited four more since then, I'm a little fuzzy on the Missouri interior details! I'll need to check my notes. Oh, yes, lots of "busts", sculptures of famous Missourians, Walt Disney, Walt Cronkite (from whom we continue to get lots of letters), George Washington Carver, & more! Out front, the big welcoming statue is Thomas Jefferson. For video tour, see http://www.missourinet.com/Capitol_Building/.



Illinois Capitol, Springfield, Illinois

The Illinois capitol faces east, perfect for early-morning photography on a day when the dawn sun lasted but a few minutes as cloud-cover spread to the south and east. I think I got some good ones. Inside, big-diameter rotunda. Stephen A. Douglas has a surprisingly prominent presence. In the House Chambers, his portrait is equal to Lincoln's, with Lincoln's large countenance gazing out over the Republican house members, while on the opposite side of the chamber, Douglas does the same for the Dems. Around the rotunda, Lincoln and Douglas are again equals, each represented in statue. Outside, though, it is Douglas who is given the prominent in-front-of-the-entrance position, with the young Lincoln down next to the street with part of his "Farewell to Springfield, I'm Heading to Washington, DC" speech inscribed.

Douglas was the Illinois attorney general, member of the legislature, secretary of state, and judge of the Illinois Supreme Court during his career, but, besides the Lincoln-Douglas debates, he is most famous for introduction of the infamous Kansas-Nebraska Act in Congress, which

did away with the Missouri Compromise of 1820 and led to "Bloody Kansas", and, oh my! The thing is, though, he was a Democrat, and maybe a more worthy Dem than, say, Richard Daley, or any other prominent Illinois Dem. Perhaps his prominent position is an effort to assure that not all the accolades go to that Republican Lincoln in the "Land of Lincoln" (even though modern Republicans seem to have taken up the old southern Democratic ideals), a sort of "Illinois Compromise".

PS - Illinois State House open Saturdays, first tour at 9:00 a.m. If you come on a Saturday in Mid-November, you are likely to be the only person on the tour, and can take pictures to your heart's content while the tourguide talks and talks. If you are not on the tour, you are limited to the main floor.

No Ruthie, we are not chasing squirrels on the Capitol grounds. Not today.

It was something of a grey afternoon by the time we reached Indianapolis, site of the Indiana State Capitol (having driven through the day from Springfield, Illinois).

Indiana's Capitol is in a hole in the Indianapolis skyline, so, it is tough to get a good all-inclusive picture. Not to mention the chain-link fencing, orange barricades, gravel piles, and blue tarps. This is an east-facing Capitol, with lots of tall buildings right across the street casting big shadows. It was a grey day, but maybe that's best for Indianapolis. So, we did the best we could. There are only so many cliché-views, and this applies to all capitols. You've got the over-all (taking in the wings and a good part of the grounds), "landscape". You've got the main front (wide stair, columns, front door, and facade, topped by the dome high above, with maybe some flanking flags), "portrait". You've got just the dome, if you can get a good angle close enough (Nebraska impossible, bad angle, way high up), either landscape or portrait. And then you've got the oblique angle shot, usually portrait orientation, showing front facade in partial profile, along with the main structure, all topped by the dome. So we didn't get the broad landscape, but we got the rest.

At Indianapolis, as at Sacramento and Boise, there is a parking structure across the street which yields some interesting photographic variety. I'm not sure you were aware of this, but parking structures are ordinarily open at all hours . . . to pedestrians. The elevators usually work, too. Ruthie is very comfortable with elevators, and likes the walking around, although she would like permission to chase rodents.

The Capitol's rear door is open, so I walk in to see lots of people setting up for some sort of event. "Capitol's closed for the wedding," the officer tells me. So I tell him I can't come back, that this is the only time I have, that I just want some quick pictures. "Sorry", he says. "We closed half an hour ago." So I continue my conversation with him. "Missouri yesterday, Illinois this morning. Ohio tomorrow. So, when is the wedding? Looks like it won't be for a while." "Tell you what," he finally says. "I don't have anything to do for a few minutes, so I'll go around with you. Just the main floor, right?" So, whoopee! We are going to get some interior views! He doesn't know much about the Capitol I find out, as we stroll around and chat. I get some of my cliché interior pictures . . . straight up into the rotunda, oblique into the rotunda to get some of the wall detail along with the interior of the dome, a mural or two, some architectural detail such as a cornice or door knob.

At one point, I ask him (to try to cut the exploration time) "So, anyone famous represented in the sculptures or paintings? For instance, has anyone from Indiana ever been elected President?" I feel like someone doing a fake interview for Comedy Central or something, as he strokes his chin and says "No, I don't think so." I glance around at the names of the people represented—famous Indianans, I'm sure—but it's like a different planet or something, compared with Illinois or even Kansas. Like Senator John Doe. Or Treasurer Thomas J. Hunseth. Not even an Amelia Earhart or Walt Disney like over in Missouri.

Anyway, down the street is an excellent Roadfood site, Shapiro's Delicatessen (pastrami sandwich rivals the Carnegie Deli in Manhattan), so all was well! On to Columbus . . .



Indiana Capitol, Indianapolis, Indiana

Sunday in Ohio, at least in the vicinity of the State Capitol, is very quiet. Very quiet. Capitol is all dressed up for the holidays, an

interesting mixture of lights, wreaths, and military memorials. Beautifully manicured and maintained grounds, the best we've seen.

Our habit has been to arrive at the crack of dawn. Not only are the picture possibilities sometimes spectacular, but the parking is usually free, sometimes free until 9:00 a.m. Ohio's Capitol faces south, and is in so deep a hole in the Columbus metropolis that you don't see it until it is suddenly in front of you. Overcast, dark, little of dawn's early light. The darkness serves to highlight gaily-lighted holiday stuff. So from our initial round of picture-taking at dawn, 6:30 to 7:30 or so, we wait around for the building to open so we can get some interior views. Today is Sunday in Ohio (as it probably is in most of the world, come to think of it), and there is no sign of any activity inside the building. No sign or other source of information on when tours might commence. We wait until 9:00. 9:30. My these grounds are beautiful. Lots of rodents with bushy tails that seem to prefer tree-climbing. Squirrels, I believe. Ruth is just ever so energetic and alert, but she stays on the lead, because she is not allowed to chase rodents on Capitol grounds. Not since the rabbit incident in Lincoln.

Ohio's featured individual, statuary on a pedestal, is favorite-son and ill-fated President William McKinley. Also a fine piece of work commemorating Christopher Columbus, which seems out-of-place until I remember the name of the city I'm in. Columbus.

There is a peace memorial, which I am attracted to, because of all the memorials to war and warriors, and displays of archaic weaponry, especially cannons. The "peace" memorial turns out to be a monument to the men and women of the Civil War, however. Not really a peace memorial to my mind. Maybe some states feel that the continuing reference to military action is necessary for their retention of power, jurisdiction, and legitimacy.

Lots of apparently homeless people cutting across the Capitol grounds, as if the Capitol were between campsite and meal distribution site. Having "camped" out on a dirt road last night, ourselves, we feel right at home. "Have a good day, brother!"

Continuing to sit on the bench, waiting, I'm reminded of one of my favorite geography quiz questions: What city has the most people in

Ohio? People usually try to decide whether it is Cleveland or Cincinnati, but the correct answer has been, for many years, Columbus.

Also, "What state is high in the middle and round on both ends?" Ohio.



Ohio Capitol, Columbus, Ohio

Ten o'clock comes and goes, dark weather threatens, and Harrisburg beckons, so off we go. No interior photos of Ohio, today.



Pennsylvania Capitol

Cloud-cover from the past several days getting thicker and thicker, air getting colder and colder, we drove east from Columbus, stopping to bike along the wonderful Wheeling WV waterfront bikepath (a "rails-to-trails, I think), then on into Pennsylvania. Monday morning, we came upon the Capitol of Pennsylvania, through rain, sleet, "ice pellets", hail,

and snow flurries. For picture-taking, it was pretty much a waste of time to arrive at dawn--no dramatic "spotlight" moments or soft-glow twilight. So, we waited for enough light to get the outside pictures we need. Capitol faces west, I think, toward the Susquehanna River. I'm really not sure as the thick clouds and darkness kept us disoriented. No dynamic sky, but, looking at the pictures, you really can't tell it is raining. So, okay pictures, really.

We had to put coins in the meter, but we found a great spot right out front.

Pennsylvania is one of the fanciest of our state capitols, and the citizens of the state have invested a lot in renovations of their building. Beautiful rooms, dramatic views, fine details of stone, brass, & hardwood. House chambers security guard "Josh", sitting in the dark up on the third floor, let me into the huge room a few minutes early, I told him I work at the Oregon Capitol, so we discussed Capitol security issues & traded scary stories and even scarier scenarios. It would probably be very easy to create a real disaster in most any state Capitol, even the ones that "screen" visitors. This Pennsylvania House chamber is huge. Most chamber galleries are one floor above, affording the public an intimate view of the proceedings; this one is two floors above, the room looks like a converted two-court basketball gym, the desks and carpeting far below. "So, of all the State Capitols, which one has been the most impressive?" asks Josh. I pause, thinking of the wonderful features I've seen in the ten or so buildings I've toured to date, when the correct answer suddenly dawns on me. "You know, probably this one, Josh. Very impressive. I haven't seen any better than this one." Josh nods, knowingly. "Yes, that's what we hear. This is really a great building."

I'm due Wednesday in Boston, but I'm thinking I can squeeze in NY, VT, & NH, so, better get moving.

Snow, cold, & dark skies hamper the photo-expedition as we move up north, but we take some good inside ones. The outsides will be passable, I think. I've been using a tri-pod for most interior pictures, as the spaces are too big for the flash to be effective. Plus, shiny surfaces result in unwanted glare. The soft light light of the Capitol interiors gives a pleasing tone, with plenty of detail, even bronze statues and shiny marble sculptures are coming out well.

Our three capitol buildings for Tuesday-Wednesday of this week have no rotundas. In Albany, New York, that's because the building is more like a medieval castle, with some exterior spires, fine open gothic interiors lit by excellent restored skylights, but no dome. East-facing, views would have been great had there been early sunlight or broken clouds. Maybe the dark snowstorm background/lighting will turn out OK, especially considering the building's style.



New York Capitol, Albany, New York

Theodore Roosevelt is the featured politician, in sculpture and portrait, in New York; Ethan Allen in Vermont; Franklin Pierce (and Daniel Webster) in New Hampshire.

In Vermont and New Hampshire, old Capitols, the "domes" are more like cupolas, up there for show, not contributing to the interior ambiance. Vermont's Montpelier Capitol is on the side of a hill, west-facing, four-or-so inches of snow Tuesday afternoon. Montpelier brags as being the smallest capital city among all the states. It is small, and very cute.

There is something extra-special about driving around little New England towns amid holiday-season snow flurries.



Vermont Capitol, Montpelier, Vermont

I stopped to eat (hood of the car makes the best table when you are eating something sloppy along the way). Ruth noticed a little trail through the new-fallen snow down to a picnic table along a little river, and we hiked there and then along the riverside path half a mile or so, the first footsteps through the new white covering.



New Hampshire Capitol

New Hampshire is especially proud of its unfair always-first-in-the-nation Presidential Primary; a Japanese TV news crew was setting up on the lawn across the street, otherwise, no candidates or hoopla.

On to Boston this afternoon (Wednesday, November 21, 2007), where we'll have a family reunion. I'll start back, south then west next week.



Thanksgiving with Joel, Koren, JJ, & Joan (Ruth at the boarding house)

So we are back on the road, heading south along the Atlantic Seaboard, intending to turn right at Atlanta early next week. Today, Rhode Island, a wonderful on-the-hill-with-lots-of-landscape-space capitol between Providence's Amtrak station and the big indoor mall (where the theater is that we had taken JJ on the train 's from Boston to see Polar Express or whatever that Tom Hanks movie was called; a memorable saga about how we lucked into avoiding the Acella surcharge, but that's another story).

Rhode Island 11-27-2007



More on Rhode Island's Capitol from the photographer's notebook:

- Faces southwest, so winter afternoons best for soft lighting of the front.
- Parking meter people out in force, so take coins and don't overstay your coins. We waited for just the right beam of sunlight and clouds and almost paid the no-doubt-hefty extra parking surcharge
- Trees lining central walkway block much of the view from directly in front, even with winter's leaf removal.
- Lots of sweeping views from oblique angles
- White Georgia marble exterior picks up sky colors well
- Dome said to be second-largest among state Capitols (only Minnesota larger)
- Backside definitely the working side, front is majestic & impressive, but otherwise useless



Rhode Island Capitol, Providence, Rhode Island

Coming up next: Connecticut.

From the photographer's notebook

Connecticut Capitol, Hartford . . .

- Faces north, so no front lighting, soft or otherwise during winter
- Late afternoon summer would probably be best for soft lighting, as tall buildings of downtown and some trees might block dawn sunlight



Connecticut Capitol, Hartford, Connecticut

- Grayish building contrasts well with sky
- Set on a hill with few trees blocking, so lots of sweeping views
- Tall central dome, with side towers. Positions of side towers need to be considered when choosing photograph angle
- Parking all across front, so get there early before cars arrive, or use grass slope to block out cars
- Free visitor parking!!
- Escalator connects Capitol with underground concourse to legislative office building across the way!
- No hassle at the door. "Pictures? Sure? Anywhere you want. Enjoy!" No electronic x-ray screening, no badge, no i.d. required. Free un-escorted access to all floors, but House

chamber filled with scaffolding (undergoing restoration), Senate chamber and gallery closed.

- Lots of architectural features, lovely statuary, and ornate finish-work create multiple photo opportunities.
- I'm finding that with the manipulation possibilities of digital photography, I'm getting better photo-quality results under overcast conditions, or early-morning-time-exposure with dark sky. Dusk is really the best time, unless there is rain or snow.

Photographer's notes; New Jersey Capitol, Trenton

- Another north-facing building, no lighting for front façade on this winter day, any time of the day. None. I worked out the geometry! Maybe the overcast will give me an image I can "push" on contrast and brightness.
- Dark gray stone makes for gloomy appearance. Dome, glowing salmon in the early morning, has interesting oval openings near base, but can't be seen much from out front, for the buildings, trees, police headquarters. No place to stand and take a picture of the danged building!

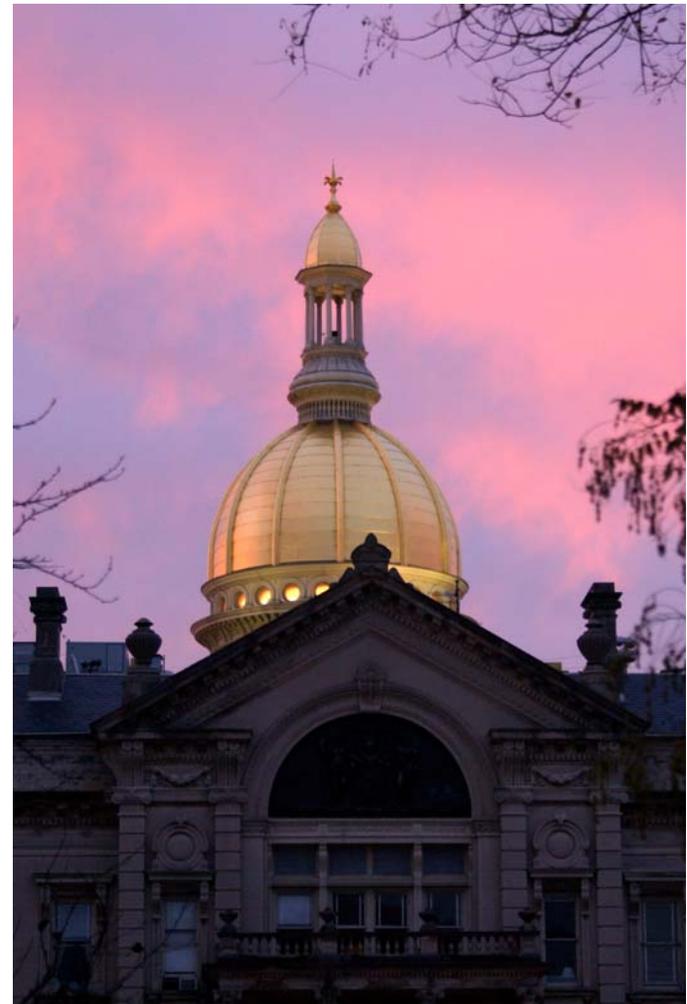


New Jersey Capitol, Trenton, New Jersey (back)

- Very little space between front of building and other structures across street; so virtually impossible to get whole building in single, head-on front photo. Big bright street light out front; need to wait for daylight to trigger the "off" switch. No parking structure to climb (as in Boise, Sacramento, Indianapolis). S.O.L.

So, once the street light is doused, I get most of the building into my viewfinder, and I'm going to be happy with that.

- Vacant lot immediately across street appears destined to be site of WWII memorial .
- One portion of the building is the original 18th-century Capitol; there are at least eight separate additions, including one for the dome and cupola, one for Senate chamber, another (different date) for Assembly chamber. Plenty of room for more additions down toward the river.
- Be prepared to show I.D. for (free) parking, and again for entry (in addition to metal detection screening). "Visitor" badge required. "Tour" required in order to photograph anything other than Rotunda. No photography allowed in Governor's reception office under any circumstances. Do not set tri-pod such that its leg is over the rope. Best find a police officer first thing and explain that you are taking pictures outside or they are likely to send an officer out to find out what you are doing with that camera and tri-pod, especially if it is early in the morning. Interrogation at oh-dark-thirty. Well deserved, I'm sure—the guy (me) is wearing a hooded sweatshirt, carrying a black back-pack, no bath in two days, wandering around shifty-eyed squinting at our building, and at six-forty-five no less. It's a reminder that we are just a few score miles from ground zero, knowing that many of those who perished on September 11, 2001 were New Jersey residents. Also, I'm reminded that the remains of Jimmy Hoffa are thought to be somewhere in Jersey. Plus there's that Toll Road. No wonder they're afraid of their citizenry.
- On the bright side, in the newest addition, wonderful welcome center has interactive activities for kids, plus one of those perpetual-marble contraptions, rigged to show how a bill becomes a law (or not, as the case may be). Also, fun to banter with the cooks in the cafeteria, overhear conversations/story-swapping among the security staff. So not everyone is paranoid.
- Once I tell them about other capitols and security concerns in other capitols and where I work, everyone seems more relaxed about the whole thing. Part of the paranoia mystery is solved when someone mentions to me that some mischief-makers recently tried to pass themselves off as photographers. Seems the trouble took place in the Governor's reception office.



New Jersey Capitol (front)

- New Jersey a full-time legislature, there are committee meetings this morning, school tours, lobbyists, security people. Plus that mysterious roving photographer. ("Where does he say he's from? Likely story!") And Senate as well as Assembly sessions this afternoon. But not very many citizens or citizen-groups. (Seems like it would be intimidating for citizens to participate, with all the security hoops.) Today debating the death penalty.

As much as I want to stick around, this time, this place, this New Jersey, I'm going for the photos rather than the politics, so I'm leaving for Delaware. Today could be a three-fur.

Photographer's Notes--

Delaware Capitol, Dover

- East-facing structure would catch soft morning light in all seasons
- Handy parking slots for delivery trucks and other vehicles right out front, where they will appear prominently in any photo
- Homely capitol, composed of brick and multi-colored paver block rather than limestone and marble. Has cupola rather than dome; no rotunda, although ceilings have some decoration; house and Senate chambers have nice inset, indirectly-lit state seals in ceilings. Feels like Vermont's Capitol, only without the character. Least impressive Capitol so far, I'm afraid. If all the Capitols were like this one, there'd be no interest in traveling around the country to see 'em.



Delaware Capitol, Dover, Delaware

- Not much that is ornate or architecturally interesting inside or out. Seems more like a city hall, except it's got the two big meeting rooms. I kind of feel bad for the citizenry; it's like they must believe they live in an inferior state, almost. DuPonts could have done better, I suspect. Nice layout of buildings in Capitol Complex, however; feels like Linfield College.
- As with New Jersey, visitors need to show I.D., carry visitor's badge.

- House and Senate chambers wide open, though; visitors free to enter & walk around, though lights are off.

Oooohhh! It's three o'clock and Annapolis is just over an hour away. Sun's been setting a little after four, but we've been moving south as well as west, so maybe there might be time to get Maryland done yet today. Let's find out!

We're just in time to get in the door in Maryland, only to find out that the room we're most interested in--that old House Chamber where George Washington made his never-to-be-forgotten speech (I can't quite remember which one right now), the one that was so critical in the course of our nation's history, that very room, is under-going renovation, so not picture today. By the time I get my interiors and exteriors in the sunset, it is dark, so the picture you have is of me and Chief Justice Roger Taney, I believe, out back. You might be able to see the "dome" faintly in the background. Ruthie is waiting patiently (I assume) in the 4Runner.

Maryland Capitol, Annapolis, photographer's notes:

- New Capitol added to old capitol; old capitol once served as U.S. Capitol, including the room (old Senate chamber) where George Washington announced that he was stepping down (many had wanted him to be declared King). I think that's the one.
- On hill crunched into old-town Annapolis, its dome is visible from all over town
- Unlit, largely un-decorated rotunda
- West-facing Capitol with white as well as grey features that pick up soft evening light. Beautiful old-town capital with Capitol to match. Another sight worth working to get to in Annapolis, is the view of the Capitol dome from down along the now-touristy original wharfs and waterfront. With those packs of uniformed mid-shipmen roaming around.
- Long roadway leading up toward front of building is slightly off-line with center-line of building, so you can't set up in the median and get a symmetrical picture. I'm finding, upon review of several days' work, it is the symmetrical photos that are most striking, to me. I'm guessing that's because one side of my brain has won out, leaving the other side of my brain as a pitiful weakling. Other people may find my collection of symmetry boring. They will want to see the obliques; the stairways from an angle, the

paintings, the shadows, the artistic imperfections. I hope I have some of those pictures, too. (But not needing very many!) Anyway, to get the symmetrical photo, the one where the front pediment point coincides with the exact center-line of the dome, reproducing the front-on profile of the architect's drawing. Wow! I had to stand in the street between pulses of rush-hour traffic. I'll show you the result some day, if you ask! Actually, here's one:



Pediment and dome, Maryland Capitol

- Impressive Thurgood Marshall memorial out front.



With former Chief Justice Roger Taney, Maryland Capitol, Annapolis, Maryland

Usually, we are finished with the photography part of our day early, leaving plenty of time for romping in the woods somewhere. A dog and her human need to get lots of exercise, especially with all the sitting around required when driving around the country. Yesterday, she romped and I biked around Central Park. THE Central Park. We parked at 113th street in Harlem and made it as far south as the TKTS booth on about 48th street. So, big romp. Today, no romping. today, a three-fur—New Jersey, Delaware, & Maryland. Lots of car-time. Today, Ruthie was extra patient. We'll find something extra-special tomorrow, in Virginia. Shirley.

Virginia! Poignant! Thomas Jefferson did the architecture, setting the Greek-temple tone for so many of America's state capitols. The building is iconic, the setting elegant, high on a hill, facing south/southeast, early-morning sun bathing its glorious columns.

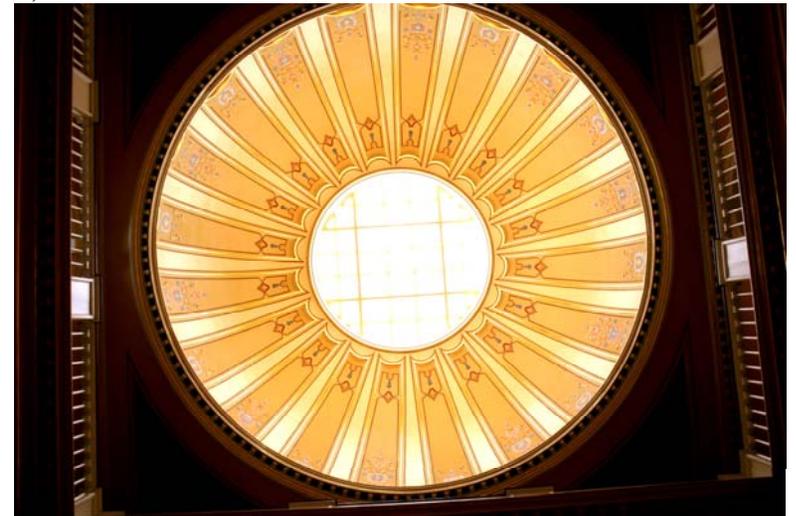


Virginia Capitol, Richmond, Virginia

Wonderful early-morning sky this last day of November. So many well-known names on the statuary, too -- Washington, Jefferson, Monroe, Madison. Plus the big admixture of Civil War heroes Lee, Jackson, Davis, Stuart. Plus a glorious newly-opened addition that takes visitors into the side of the hill, at the bottom, then level-by-level inside the Capitol from underneath. Dramatic entry. Inside, there's the taken-from-life-while-he-was-alive casting of George Washington. And those floor-to-ceiling windows reminiscent of Jefferson's other famous architectural masterpiece, Monticello. Lots of tempting-but-wary squirrels on the grounds, Ruthie reminds me.

Some peculiarities suffered by this photographer. "Capitol open to the public at 8:00," it says ("Grounds open at 7:00"). But when I get back there at 8:00, they say I cannot go in until the visitors' staff arrives at 9:00. So, after moving car to a different one-hour parking spot, I come back at 9:00 whereupon the visitor staff says I cannot go in without the permission of the Clerk of the House and the Secretary of the Senate. I tell my "touring the state Capitols" story. I tell my "I work in the Oregon Capitol" story. I tell my "lots of restrictions in New Jersey"

story. Several phone calls are made while I clear the electronic screening and i.d. inspections with the Capitol police. No visitor's badge required. Then I am asked to explain over the phone to a chamber staff person what pictures I want, and she says "Thank you for the information. I will call back with the decision." I recollect that one of the four 9/11 planes came down in Virginia (often mistakenly reported as having come down in Washington DC). I say to the visitor staff that I will be back in the gift shop (apparently open to me) and check back a little later, but the phone rings and it is word that my entry into the Capitol has been approved. So then I am free, at about 9:45, to walk the largely-deserted structure, including onto the Senate floor (House floor & gallery locked), without further restriction. What are they doing, do you suppose? Quick criminal records checks? No fly lists? Persecuting people from states that fought Virginians during the Civil War? Random hassling to discourage troublemakers? Maintaining the mysteries of government? Seems like some of the enjoyment of living in a democracy is gone, taken away by irrational reactions to 9/11. Politically, I guess, they have to do something, if just to be able to say to the public they've taken action, by golly. But by attempting to hide the works (and workings) of government, I think they increase the rationale for violence against the government. (Remembering here the rationale for our own Revolutionary War, led so ably by Virginia's General Washington.) (By contrast, in Nebraska, I walked in an un-locked back door with building employees at about 7:15, roamed the halls without interference.)



Looking up into the rotunda, Virginia Capitol

North Carolina's old Capitol is not much used these days; the Governor holds ceremonial things and a few hearings, but the Legislature moved to a specially-constructed legislative operations building a couple of blocks away many years ago.



North Carolina 12-1-2007

North Carolina Capitol with "NC" Presidents Polk, Jackson, Andrew Johnson

The Capitol has two identical "fronts". Not mirror images. The east-facing one is usually thought of as the real front, though, which would be great for early-morning photography, except for all the trees. This building is almost as socked in as Nevada. No way to get the full building plus dome from head-on. So a good oblique has to do. Inside, not much. It is apparent that the citizens of North Carolina, through their representatives, long ago, determined that the building could not continue as the center of government, and so, rather than adding a series of enlargements and enhancements, as at New Jersey, or completely replacing it with a fine unified structure, as in Illinois, they just left it as a sort of 1870's museum. (I'm now wondering if that's the situation in Delaware; perhaps I should have asked a few more questions!)

By the way, Ruth did a lot of running when we hiked yesterday.

As with Virginia, there are lots of references to the Civil War, except, as you may know, in the South, it was not the Civil War but the War Between the States. North Carolina's biggest Capitol monument to the War Between the States commemorates North Carolina soldiers who were among the first to die in the first battles of the war and among the last to die in the action just prior to Appomattox. Thus, by reference to Appomattox, it is monument to the final defeat of the Confederacy, or would be if the people of the Confederacy, and their descendants had accepted a final defeat.

South Carolina—we arrive Monday afternoon and find:

Nice grounds, magnolia trees and palms create a tropical atmosphere, with lots of good photo angles.

North/northwest facing building, with open sky to the west; best photos probably summer evenings.

Nice dome, good-looking front, entire building completely renovated about ten years ago.



South Carolina 12-3-2007

South Carolina Capitol, Columbia, South Carolina

South Carolina no longer flies the Confederate flag atop the state capitol, but the Confederate flag is a prominent part of Confederacy memorial out front.

I.D. and metal screening required for entry.

Unique rotunda: every rectangular capitol building with a round dome has to have a transition from rectangular to round. Most, like Kansas, do the round hole in the first floor and carry the round shape up through several floors. SC maintains rectangular all the way up through the top floor, with a huge two-story rectangular-shaped reception room between the legislative chambers, the round rotunda extending up from the reception-room ceiling.

Behind the Capitol is recently-installed prominent statue of Strom Thurmond, Dixie-crut turned Republican, arch segregationist when he ran as third-party spoiler during 1948 election (winning four southern states), longest-serving Senator in history of U.S. Senate to that point (originally elected to the South Carolina Senate in 1933, served as Governor of South Carolina 1947-51, and served as U.S. Senator for 48 years), as well as the oldest U.S. Senator ever, 100 years of age. Perhaps it was the result of a compromise: on the east side of the building is a prominent memorial to black history, complete with bronze mural depicting eras including slavery, emancipation, segregation, voting rights, and the civil rights acts of the 1960s. Maybe, if-you-are-going-to-have-Strom-then-we-are-going-to-have-black-history kind of deal.

South Carolina has a fine Capitol; among the first-rate buildings; well used by Governor & Legislature, the symbol and actual center of state government.

Georgia's Capitol is in downtown Atlanta, at the junction of two major interstate highways (I-75 and I-20), a real noisy urban setting, with narrow grounds, & trees blocking much of the view. Lots of people seem to be day-camping in the area, at least one in need of money so he could buy some food to take with his medicine, he seemed to be saying.

West-northwest facing building, best lighting in evenings, winter or summer, if you can find a spot to view through the trees. They don't seem to be dropping their leaves this far south!

Brilliantly-lit at night.



Georgia Capitol, Atlanta, Georgia

Parking is a problem. Street meters a couple of blocks away sell time at 8 minutes for each quarter. All-day parking lots available three or four blocks southwest. I couldn't figure out the private-lot rates, so I'm guessing that's because the rates are too high to post clearly. Traffic is heavy around the building, especially at rush hour.

Capitol has dramatic gold-plated dome, especially striking when viewed against darkening sky to the west.

Across the street is the Atlanta City Hall, which may afford high-elevation view of the building.

“Greeting” statuary includes Thomas Watson and Richard Russell. Largely missing from the scene is former Georgia Governor and U.S. President Jimmy Carter, with just a portrait among the Governors, a portrait that doesn’t look at all like President Carter. Looks more like, uh, Trump. Maybe Carter is in line for posthumous honors? As with so many fine monuments to so many fine Americans on the grounds of America's State Capitols, I have no clue as to who Thomas Watson is. Do you?

Thanks to Salem neighbors Dan & Laurel for hosting my Atlanta stay. By the way, Laurel, I did return and get that pile of dog poop off the Capitol lawn—Ruthie’s pile that I had forgotten the evening before in my rush to get back to the car before the parking meter ran out. So much symbolism in all that!

We arrive in Montgomery, Alabama, just after sunset on Thursday, December 6, almost perfect for photographing this west-facing Capitol building. Immediately, I spot several good views from across the street. Unfortunately, this being the holiday season, and southern states famous for disregard of the religion-establishment prohibition in the Constitution, a giant Christmas tree blocks views of the iconic columnar front entryway. The building is nicely lit, but the tree is a large, completely dark shadow, right in front. I haven’t had much use for Christmas trees for many years, and now here’s one blocking my view on my one-and-maybe-only visit to Montgomery, Alabama. I take a few less-than-perfect frontal photos with the silhouette of the tree, and then find an oblique view where I can crowd the tree out. My oblique view, though crowded, shows the front at a radical angle, plus a good portion of one side of the building, plus a pretty good look at the dome (all-white dome, in this case, no iron, no gold). But the dang cranes that they had used to haul in the tree are blocking the longer view from that direction.

It is about five o’clock, bureaucratic quitting time for the day, but there seems to be extra activity around the tree. “Guess you’re going to get a sneak preview,” someone tells me, and then, the tree lights up in

glorious fashion, lots of small and medium white lights. Beautiful! So I hurriedly re-take my frontal pictures from out on the street, this time with the glowing tree. Hey, Christmas isn’t really so bad, when the decorations are this good!



Alabama Capitol, Montgomery, Alabama (with unlit/lit tree)



The straight head-on requires me to set up in the middle of the four-lane road during rush hour (which I am able to do safely between green lights). As I cross the rest of the street to set up for a fourth angle, the lights just as suddenly go out, and the dark silhouette returns, so Ruth and I just put the camera away and go for a stroll around the grounds. I think they will have a gala tree-lighting some evening between now and Monday.

We discover that, just as Strom Thurmond seems to be the official “greeter” at South Carolina (although he is out back), and Richard Russell (out front) at Georgia, at Alabama it is Jefferson Davis, former President Jefferson Davis, out front. Also, on the north side, Alabama’s Confederacy memorial is bigger and more elaborate than the big memorial to the defeat of the Confederacy in North Carolina, bigger and more elaborate even than South Carolina’s Confederacy Memorial, though not flying the Confederate flag out front as in South Carolina.

Also, to be fair about it, we find nothing similar to South Carolina’s memorial to black history here at the Alabama capitol in Montgomery, although Montgomery certainly contributed more than its share of dramatic events in recent black history, what with the bus boycotts that brought national fame to Martin Luther King, Jr. and the segregationist antics of three-time former Alabama Governor George C. Wallace.

Lots to see on the Capitol grounds here in Alabama, all well lit: a dozen or so monuments and statues, a landscaped star in flowers, the liberty bell replica prominently displayed, an eternal flame, a walk of flags, all fifty state flags, each flying on a separate pole, alphabetical order. PS-Oregon’s walk of flags is very similar, except flags are placed in order of states’ admission to the union. PPS-Oregon might have an easier time than Alabama adding that fifty-first state flag. PPPS-My Grandpa Bonini always predicted that the next state admitted to the union was going to be “Italy”.

Seems to be lacking in squirrels and/or rabbits, Ruthie notes, although I think it may be just the time of day or unusually low air temperature.

Florida has replaced its historic ornate small capitol building with a complex of five buildings, including an un-adorned about-20-stories-high skyscraper, connected by skywalks, surrounding the small historic capitol on three sides. The office tower and modern buildings are Florida-style monuments to government efficiency. Or else monuments to Florida-style government efficiency. Out front, on the west-face of the skyscraper, is a stairway-waterfall-sculpture featuring pods of leaping aluminum dolphins, Florida’s answer to South Carolina’s Strom Thurmond, Georgia’s Richard Russell, and Alabama’s Jefferson Davis. I opt to concentrate on the east-facing old capitol, finding evening-dusk views that, in easy irony, include the new tower in the far background.

By the time I get back to the dolphins, they are too dark to photograph. Such a pity.



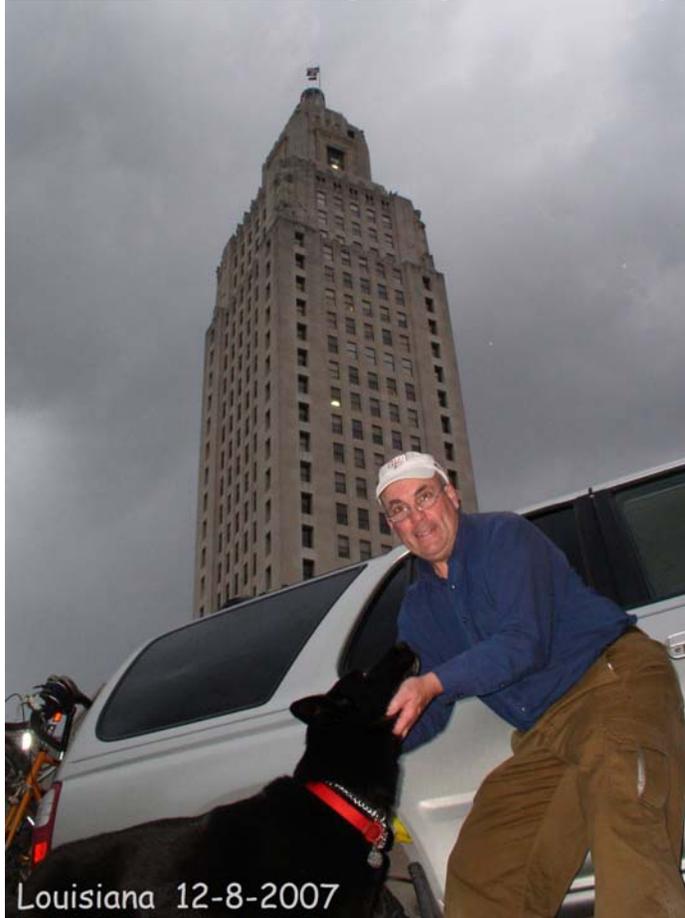
On the steps of Florida’s old Capitol, Tallahassee, Florida

Inside the new office-building complex, I have trouble finding views and/or details worth photographing. What’s the point in documenting modern meeting rooms not too different from the Salem (Oregon) convention center? By comparison, Nebraska’s skyscraper capitol has gothic architectural features and ornate decoration all through its lower floors. I don’t see any of that here. But then I get the same feeling when I get inside the old capitol building, looking for interesting views. Uh, plain room where the Florida Senate once met, years ago? I don’t think so. So, looking up into the rotunda, plus unique exterior awnings are about all that attract my attention. This is my 25th Capitol this trip, the 22nd interior I’ve viewed. Maybe that’s too many for one trip.

Weather has turned balmy; in the low 80s with high humidity. I’m heading back west, intending to spend the weekend exploring the

Mississippi River delta south of New Orleans while I wait for Monday's visits to Baton Rouge and Jackson.

Louisiana is another skyscraper-Capitol state. But Louisiana restores my interest in, and love for, this project. What a wonderful building, wonderful setting, and wonderful working, messy city. Louisiana's is the tallest Capitol, they tell me quickly at the visitors' desk. From up on the 27th floor, can be seen the Mississippi River just a few hundred yards away, train tracks, chemical plants, highways, downtown Baton Rouge, and acres and acres of sculptured grounds, featuring statuary.



Louisiana Capitol, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Right in the middle, Huey Long. Inside the building, they have marked the exact spot where then U.S. Senator and former Louisiana Governor Huey Long was assassinated in the new Capitol in 1935; he was 42 years of age (see <http://www.hueylong.com/> for a biased-positive

view). So, lots of Huey Long. The book/movie you may have heard of, *All the King's Men*, is not about Huey Long, they try to say.

Great viewing platform (similar to the Empire State Building's), but, no dome, so, inside, the "rotunda" is a great dark-rock room just inside the main entrance, separating the two chambers. This is a wonderful, working Capitol, with the Governor and legislators and lobbyists and the public milling about waiting for hearings. Fine formal meeting rooms for the House and Senate, though overly decorated for holidays.

This is a south-facing skyscraper, with low trees all around the expansive landscaping. Lots of softly-lit morning and afternoon views, especially in winter. Fog could be a problem, though, as it was Monday morning. Fortunately, we had gotten plenty of views the evening before.

Two state capitol controversies in the Baton Rouge news today. One, the tradition of having the Governor pick legislative leadership (this is an unusual arrangement and one that would violate the separation of powers provisions of most state constitutions). Evidently the Governor-elect had renounced this abuse of power while campaigning, but today—now that his is actually going to be Governor—announced who he wanted for the leadership positions (Senate President and House Speaker). By way of explaining away the controversy, he said these were the individuals he understood the respective legislative bodies wanted. (I'll bet not too many legislators would want to take on the governor on this issue!) The other controversy was word that Louisiana's legislators are entitled to New Orleans Super-dome college bowl game tickets at face value (say \$100 each), while everyone else has to pay market rates, upwards from \$1000. In addition to this season's Sugar Bowl game, the BCS championship in New Orleans features Louisiana State University (LSU), whose campus is just a couple of miles south of the Capitol. Legislators' response to this story is that a special session of the legislature, to be held later in 2008 (after the bowl games), will deal exclusively with ethics.

Mississippi has a grand old Capitol, nice dome, ornate insides, and a fine rotunda, open all the way to the ground floor.



Mississippi Capitol, Jackson, Mississippi

Lots of features highlighted, literally, with rows upon rows of light bulbs. And these are not just holiday decorations. Very few light bulbs are burnt out, although I'll bet the bulbs keep the maintenance staff busy. (For my interior photos, I looked for areas with symmetrical burn-outs). *Inside:*



Plus, Mississippi's is a working Capitol with legislature & governor offices right there.

House & Senate chambers are in the wings, same as in most state capitol buildings, but in Mississippi, the chambers are low-domed each with a semi-circular extension with lots of windows on the far side that make the rooms especially spacious. The arrangement is unusual also, in that the Speaker of the House and the Senate President face away from each other, away from the center of the building, away from the Governor. Going into the chambers, visitors actually pass through the offices of the presiding officers. (Most capitols have the presiding officers, the Speaker and Senate President, at the far ends of the buildings.)

Mississippi's is a south-facing building, with lots and lots of trees on the grounds. Good angles with big portions of the building visible through vegetation are readily available, soft lighting in winter is best. "Capitol Street" in Jackson leads right up to the old capitol; the new capitol, built in 1903, is several blocks north, easily seen from Capitol Street . Hosting statuary is Women of the Confederacy: Our Wives, Our Mothers, Our Daughters. Enter the building under the front stairs; metal detector, but no x-ray or identification requirements.



Along the way, we stop at Natchez. Great fried catfish at Cock-of-the-Walk, one of those Roadfood restaurants. That southern sweet tea is growing on me, too. Restaurant is at the far north end of the town, next to the park that over-looks the Mississippi River. See <http://www.roadfood.com/Reviews/Overview.aspx?RefID=1317> . Down below the cliffs: fancy cruise-type riverboats of the old-fashioned sternwheeler design. Made me wish I could cruise the Mississippi River while reading my Mark Twain.

Today, Texas . . . Texas has the huge dome & rotunda. There are four floors of viewing in the rotunda, which is unusual. Some of the

bigger rotundas have three floors of viewing; Oregon has two viewing floors only.

They say Texans found out how tall the U.S. Capitol in Washington DC is, and made theirs just a bit taller. If it's not a true story, it sounds like a true story. Light brown stone gives the building unique color.



Texas Capitol, Austin, Texas

The Texas Capitol has an excellent visitors' center (in a separate building) with videos, display, interactive activities, tourist information, state parks information, and museum.

Well maintained grounds with lots of interesting statuary. Four main ones commemorate volunteer firefighters, the civil war, Texas rangers (not the baseball team), and, take a guess here . . . the Alamo. Amazing addition of buried offices, two or three stories of them, out back allows lots of staff to be close by, yet remain out-of-sight. All that can be seen from outside are banks of low sky-windows among the raised gardens.

Absolutely no hassles getting in. Doors are unlocked all over, no sign-in required, no badges required, no x-rays required, no metal detector. Not even a desk to get past. All five lower floors open; House and Senate floors open; House and Senate galleries unlocked. Visitors welcome!

House and Senate galleries on all four sides of the chambers, so lots of public scrutiny possible, at least of behavior in the chambers. On the wall of the rotunda, among the parade of governors' portraits, Ann Richards is right next to George W. Bush.

Nice south/southwest facing complex, but it's been cloudy & rainy for several days, so all the lighting is soft & somewhat fuzzy. The building is well-lit in the evening, so well-lit that the modern light standards interfere with the atmosphere. Lots of trees on the grounds, too, make it impossible to get the whole building in a single view, and make it difficult to get the front with the dome without including automobiles parked around the front.

Yesterday's temperature in Austin was hot & muggy 81 degrees; today the high was 43 degrees, with cold drizzle. So, I think I brought some winter with me!

Austin seems to be quite different from the rest of Texas in its attitudes and values. I could almost survive here! Almost.



Hut's Hamburgers
Austin, Texas
December 12, 2007

Hut's Hamburgers. Noted Roadfood restaurant. Local flavor. Make a note of it! Good food, good atmosphere, busy with local chatter. Downtown Austin, along the creek that has the jogging path that connects the Texas version of the Colorado River with the U of Texas campus. Check out Hut's at <http://www.roadfood.com/Reviews/Overview.aspx?RefID=497>.

My understanding with Ruth is that she will wait patiently in the 4Runner (she is in the car in the picture; declining to have her picture taken this time) while I dine at these premier establishments, provided I bring back, for her, just a tiny bit of the fare. So Ruth got small bites of hamburger & bun & seemed very happy with the whole experience.

Ruthie waited in the 4Runner whilst I checked out the LBJ Presidential Library and Museum, in Austin, too. Very evenhanded treatment of the Johnson presidency. I think. Personally responsible for lots of social progress, but forever tied to the disastrous Vietnam War. Good "automaton" of Johnson telling poignant yarns. I recommend both LBJ Library & Hut's.

Austin Lounge Lizards (fun singing group) was scheduled for concert Monday night in Austin. Alas, this was Thursday, we couldn't wait around, even with Hut's, so on we went, aiming to travel through San Antonio (wherein lies the Riverwalk) & on to El Paso (wherein lies the Sun Bowl) & thence to Phoenix (wherein lies the Capitol of the State of Arizona).

After some great walking along the Riverwalk in San Antonio (both of us) and a meal at my favorite San Antonio saloon, La Margarita (in the old Mexican market area), we head through the Texas hill country, stopping at the Caverns of Sonora, El Paso (and Ciudad Juarez) on our way to our last capitol stop for this loop—Phoenix.

Arizona, like Florida, built a "new" capitol complex, but didn't have the heart to do away with its old one, so chose to surround the old with the new, leaving the old as the empty symbol. I like it all about as well as I do Florida's. That is to say, not much.

The old copper-topped Capitol faces east, with new buildings, one each north and south, for the legislature, House and Senate, facing each other across the plaza. The new executive office tower (not nearly so tall as in Florida), sits behind the old Capitol, facing the opposite direction.



Arizona
12-17-2007

Arizona Executive Tower, Phoenix, Arizona

So mornings would give wonderful light for the old Capitol and legislative buildings, were it not for the trees and light standards crowding around, preventing a view of the whole. So, bits and pieces it was. The grounds across the street, are big, geometrical pathways

among gravel, grass and parking lots, with lots of monuments & memorials, including one to nine-eleven.

The old Capitol has some character, I could find little, if any, in the new office building. Legislative chambers are nicely designed, big and functional, but not necessarily photogenic. Inside the Capitol (now just a museum) is a big photograph of the members of the Arizona Statehood Constitutional Convention of 1911, posing in front of the present building. Nice touch. Arizona's 1911 statehood legislation was vetoed by President Taft because the Arizona Constitution would have provided for the recall of judges. The people of Arizona, in their wisdom, eliminated that part of their constitution, Taft signed the 1912 legislation, and, in 1913, Woodrow Wilson having become President, Arizonans amended their state Constitution to reinstate the provision for the recall of judges. As far as I know, Arizona judges are still subject to recall. No mention of former President Taft's view of the events.

One of the memorial statues inside the old Arizona Capitol is of one of the Harvey Girls, so important in the settling and civilizing of Arizona. Everyone know the Harvey Girls? (Not Paul Harvey, not Harvey Comicbooks, not a rabbit) They were the waitresses and other service employees of the Fred Harvey Company, franchisee of the Santa Fe Railway. The Harvey Girls, so they say, civilized the west.

So the November-December 2007 trip covered 12,500 miles, including the following side-trips: hiking/biking in southern Utah; Chicken Annie's in southeastern Kansas; the John Brown museum in Osawatomie, Kansas; Hendersonville North Carolina and Tryon North Carolina to stay with cousins; Courtland, Virginia to buy some of my favorite peanuts; the Jimmy Carter Library and Museum in Atlanta; the Martin Luther King Memorial in Atlanta; hurricane aftermath on the Pensacola outer banks; an as-far-as-you-can-drive drive down the Mississippi River south of New Orleans; Natchez; San Antonio; the Petersburg National Civil War Battlefield Park in Virginia; Chiricahua National Monument in southeast Arizona; and a brief stay with my mom in Montrose, California. I have two long strings of capitols yet to see, a loop of 7 from Montana east through Michigan and 6 more from West Virginia west through New Mexico. Plus I need to get back to get inside Ohio, Idaho, and Utah. Plus I'll still need to figure ways to get to Alaska, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Maine, Washington, and Oregon.

Travel notes:

Sign along the beach road near Pensacola: "HEAVY PEDESTRIAN TRAFFIC AHEAD". Florida ranked 42nd in health among the fifty states in 2005, but to be fair, I'd guess that many of those heavy pedestrians are from out-of-state.

Sign at a big open grassy area near Tallahassee: "RESTRICTED TO PUBLIC". We went right in, knowing we were members of the public, feeling reassured that would be no businesses or other private uses bothering us.

Pamphlet in the rack at the motel in Austin: "OLDEST DANCE HALL IN TEXAS". In addition to being the oldest continuously-operating dance hall in Texas, Gruene Hall hosted Nolan Ryan's 50th birthday party!

Arrived home in Salem, Oregon December 20. When I got to a place where I could review the pictures I had taken with my new Sony A-100 SLR camera, my attempt to take really really good pictures, I found this image of the Louisiana Capitol in Baton Rouge. At the time I had lost track of Ruthless, momentarily, but now I see where she was, and what she was doing. Can you spot her?





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