

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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A Visit to Greenfield Village

Did you know that our American dollar is worth only 95 cents in the Dominion of Canada? We found this out when we cashed a \$10 traveler's check and got only \$9.75 in return.

We entered the Dominion at Windsor, a city in Ontario just across the river from Detroit, and we re-entered the U.S. at Niagara Falls. With the exception of our experience with the deflated dollar, our visit to our sister country to the north was most pleasant in every way.

Michigan is a beautiful state – its system of highways, the green of the hills, the villages, in fact everything about the part of the state we saw was beyond criticism. We admired the large two-story houses set well back from the streets, the tall widely branching elms that lined the parkways, and the peacefulness of the very atmosphere.

While in Michigan we visited Henry Ford's famous Greenfield Village in Dearborn. This unique village is more than a restoration; it is a preservation, for the future, of American customs and institutions. The founder, Henry Ford, expressed his aims when he said:

“When we are through, we shall have produced American life as lived; and that, I think, is the best way of preserving at least a part of our history and tradition. For by looking at things people used and that show the way they lived a better and truer impression can be gained than could be had in a month of reading – even if there were books whose authors had the facilities to discover minute details of the older life.”

We learned during the visit to Greenfield that the name was the name of the township near Dearborn where Mrs. Henry Ford spent her girlhood and which was later swallowed up by the City of Detroit.

Along the streets of the village, which faces on a village green as did all the early American communities, are mills, shops, stores, laboratories, historic structures, schools and homes, much as were found in the villages of this country during the days of its early development. On weekdays the shops and mills are in operation and the school in the village is in session.

Greenfield Village was dedicated Oct. 21, 1929. Besides the village green it consists of nearly 100 buildings and historic homes, occupying an area of 200 acres and is visited annually by more than 500,000 persons from all over the United States and numerous foreign countries. We do not doubt the figures, for we were there on a weekday and there was a large interested crowd of respectful, awe-inspired persons.

The exhibits in all the buildings represent historically significant developments in American science, agriculture, industry, music and statesmanship. It includes buildings closely associated with the lives of such great inventive and creative Americans as Abraham Lincoln, Daniel Webster, Stephen Foster, Luther Burbank, McGuffey (of McGuffey Reader fame), George Washington Carver, the Wright brothers, Thomas Edison and Henry Ford.

It seems to all visitors that the pioneer spirit of America – from the time of the first settlers to the present day – is recaptured and preserved in the immense museum in the village. This structure occupies a space of 14 acres with a vast and fabulous collection of Americana, ranging from delicate silverware made by Paul Revere to the famous tri-motored “workhorse of the air” which carried Byrd to the South Pole.

The facades of two of these buildings are exact reproductions of Independence Hall and Old City Hall in Philadelphia. The fine arts gallery and the street of Early American shops attract much attention. We were particularly impressed with the wonderful and varied display of timepieces and with the exhibition of vehicles; included in the latter are buggies, carts, bicycles and automobiles of all manner and make.

But we cannot reveal all the pleasures that await the visitor to Greenfield Village. Some day all our readers must make this trek for themselves.