

Travels With Charles – A Short but Colourful Jaunt to The Finger Lakes

It's been a long time since we've blogged. We did take a trip to Nova Scotia during July and August, but it was mostly a journey of recovery, after producing *Dancer* for the Toronto Fringe. We saw some beautiful things and met up with old friends, but just didn't have the energy to blog about it.

However, last Monday, we proved that we're still not only intrepid but impulsive! Without any planning, we packed up Charles and drove to the Finger Lakes.

It turned out to be a perfect week to drive, with beautiful weather and lots of colours left on the trees.

When we got to the border, it seemed we weren't the only intrepid ones on the road.



But after about a 45-minute wait, we were across the border and on to more colourful vistas.

By 6:00 Charles was comfortably nestled at Sned-Acres Family Campground, on Seneca Lake.

I asked the owners why it was called Sned-Acres and they merrily replied that Snedacre is their name so, of course it made perfect sense.

They also gave us a delicious little “Amish Friendship Loaf” which we enjoyed for the next two mornings.

We also enjoyed the peaceful surroundings near the pond, home to hundreds of birds who, although mostly unseen, could be heard squawking and peeping throughout the daylight hours.



In our limited research, we discovered that along with dozens of wineries, the Finger Lakes area was home to over 50 waterfalls!

The next day we set out to see how many we could find. Not far down the road, we arrived at Taughannock Falls State Park. (My favourite pointer, Jim, helps guide you to the sign.)



We had to go into the gift store to find out how it's pronounced. We got the answer in an upstate New York accent: "TaGAnuck", although I'm guessing neither the Algonquins nor the Iroquois, who named it, pronounced it that way.

Waiting for us in the parking lot was a family friend of Charles'.

On our way out of the parking lot, we were approached by a couple who were so excited because they're hoping to buy a Unity like ours in the coming week. Charles has quite a fan club.



But back to the purpose of the trip: Taughannock Falls! No matter how you pronounce it, this is a very impressive sight.



We took a nice walk (you could almost call it a hike!) around the gorge, which was invigorating and beautiful.

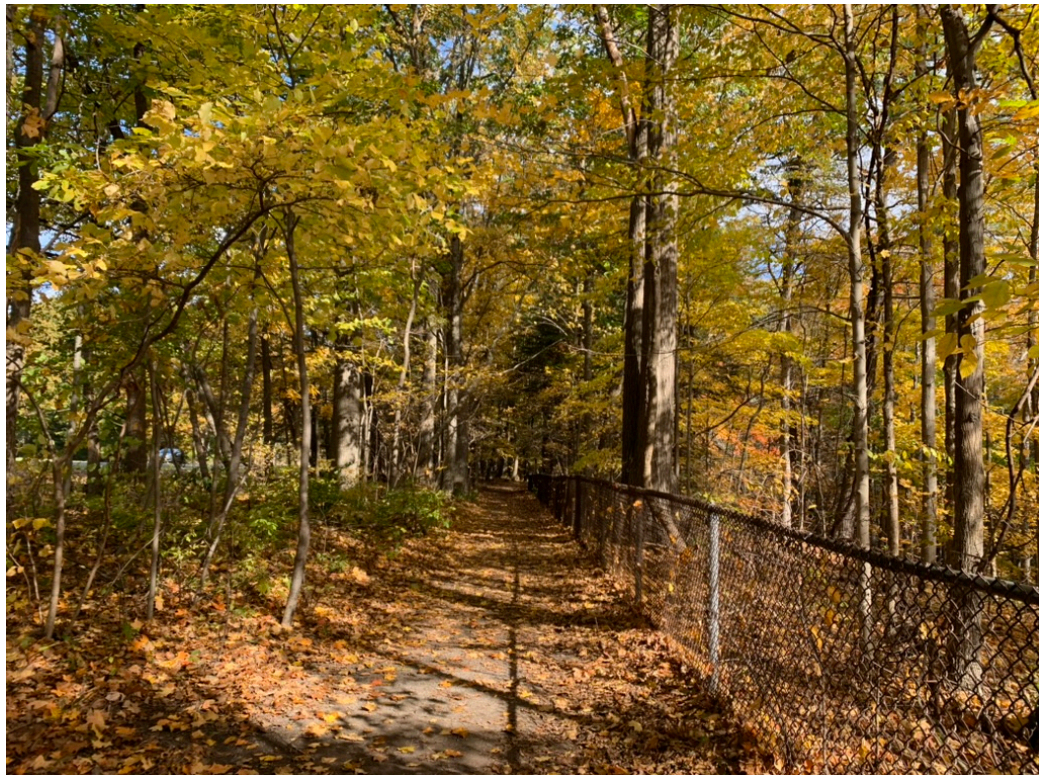




Jim seized the opportunity to take some video, which will be coming soon to a screen near you. (Consider yourself warned!)



We took a different trail back, which was filled with more spectacular colours.





Then we drove to our next waterfall, past more brilliant colours. These burning bushes were everywhere. Thinking of getting one for our back yard. They're so amazing.



Next stop, Buttermilk Falls. Which Jim helpfully points out behind us.

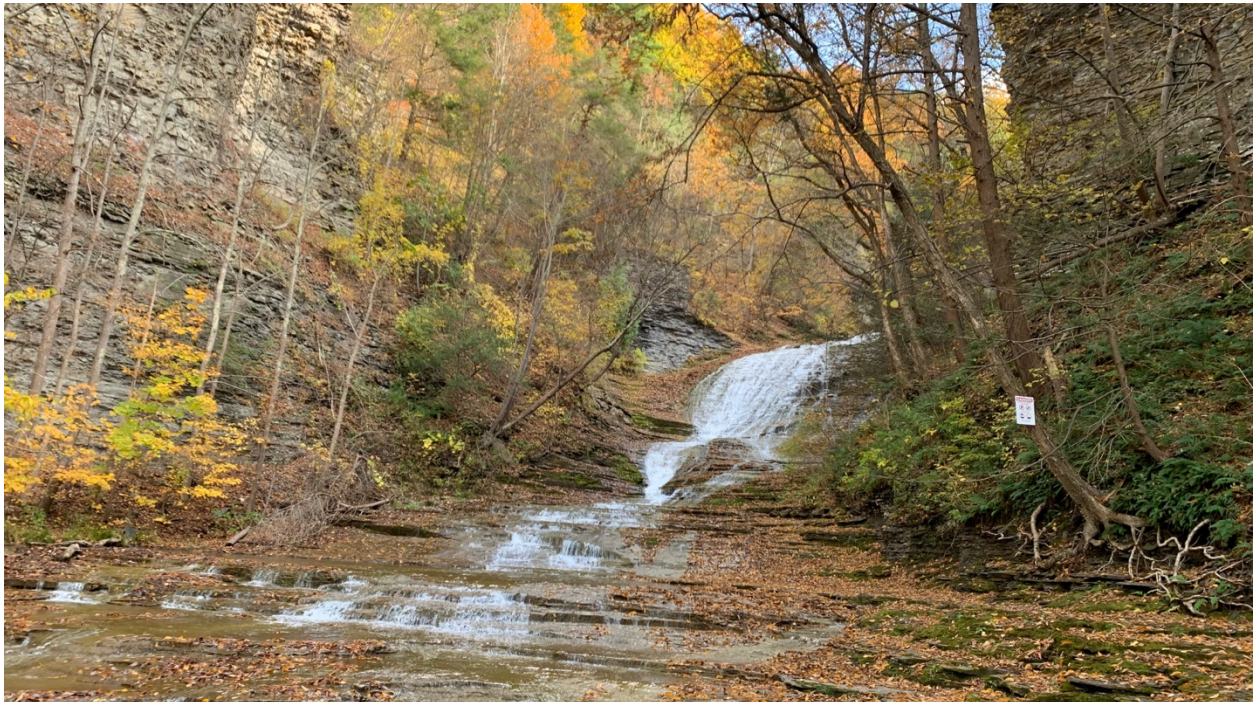


This is what it looks like without obstructions.



Took another short "hike" up beside the falls.







We headed down and turned Charles toward Sned-Acres, passing through towns with impressive names like Ulysses and Romulus and Ovid (to which some smart-ass added a "C").



We made a stop at a beautiful park by Cayuga Lake. It really is a lovely area to visit. By the end of the first day, we already knew we wouldn't be staying long enough.



There were lots of farms.



And so many wineries! And to everyone's amazement, we didn't stop at any of them. Another reason to return.



During our travels on the first day, we heard that THE place for waterfalls was Watkins Glen. So that's where we went the next day. It's at the base of the lake west of us, Seneca Lake.

The drive to and through Watkins Glen was full of charming sights.





In the Visitors Centre, we met and had a nice chat with this man who has been working on this mural since August. It depicts a famous race at the Watkins Glen racetrack.



But then we arrived at the big show at Watkins Glen: Its State Park. See if you can find the sign.



Thanks to Jim's incredible navigational sense, we found the way to the gorge – which boasts 19 waterfalls! (We tried to count, but lost track.)



The trail is beautifully laid out. The walk is 1.5 miles (2.4 km) each way, and there are apparently 832 steps, but because of the way they're spaced out, it's actually a very easy walk. And spectacular!





At several points, the path goes behind the waterfalls, which was pretty cool – literally!



I confess to getting a severe case of snap-itis and took way more photos than I needed. And editing them has proved to be a problem. So, if you're bored, you have my permission to skim through these.













When we got to the end of the gorge trail, we took the upper trail back. Although we couldn't see much of the falls below, we still found lots to look at. Including these amazing vines that had wrapped themselves around all the surrounding trees, like rope.



As we walked back to our starting point, we realized how high up we had climbed.

It was well worth the trip to Watkins Glen, and although the water levels would have been higher in the spring, the colours made the trip so much more beautiful.

During our trip back to the campground, we stopped in at the Trumansburg Farmer's Market, which went all out for Halloween. (It's hard to fit Trumansburg on one pumpkin.)





This explains ...



... why there were no
vampires there.



It was a great day, and we were thrilled and surprised at how much the area had to offer. But there was another surprise ahead of us on our return drive home.

At an intersection in the town of Seneca Falls, we saw a sign for the Women's Rights National Park. Of course we had to check it out.



We discovered that Seneca Falls was the site of the first convention for Women's Rights.



There, a group of activists gathered to write and sign "The Declaration of Sentiments"



WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Here in the Wesleyan Chapel, at 11 a.m. on July 19, 1848, "A Convention to discuss the Social, Civil, and Religious Condition of Woman" came to order.

Only women attended the first day of the world's First Women's Rights Convention. Led by Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott, conventioners debated and amended the proposed Declaration of Sentiments. That evening, Lucretia Mott spoke publicly on emerging reform movements in the United States.

On the second day, organizers presented the Declaration of Sentiments to an open audience of women and men. Its expansive view of equality enlarged the vision embodied in the Declaration of Independence. "All men and women are created equal," asserted the Seneca Falls declaration.

On July 20, 1848, one hundred men and women signed the Declaration of Sentiments. The decades-long, worldwide struggle for equal rights for women was on.

First Women's Rights Convention, July 19 and 20, 1848

The museum, which was free, was full of involving displays and all kinds of information about the evolution of women's rights.



The Birth of an Idea

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott met at the 1840 World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, England. Mott came as an official delegate, as did Henry Stanton, Elizabeth's husband. After long debate, male delegates voted to bar female participation, and relegated women delegates to the back of the hall. Disappointed and angered by this reception, the American women met informally. According to Stanton, their segregation "stung many women into new thought and action.... Mrs. Mott and I...resolved to hold a convention...to advocate the rights of women."

Right: World Anti-Slavery Convention, held in London in 1840; painting by Benjamin R. Haydon. Elizabeth Cady Stanton's husband Henry appears second from right.



This panel explains that, in the beginning, women didn't trust that a woman could hold the position of president of their own convention!

WOMAN RESIDENT

"I have so often regretted my foolish conduct in regard to the president of the convention at Rochester. The result proved that your judgement was good, & Mrs Bush discharged her duties so well that I was really quite delighted that we were able through her to do up our business so well without depending on any man."

— Elizabeth Cady Stanton to Amy Post

A RADICAL ACT

At the opening of the Rochester Women's Rights Convention, reformer Amy Post announced the officers of the convention. When Abigail Bush was chosen as the convention's President, Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton demonstrated their distrust over a woman's ability to perform the office.

These women—who two weeks prior in the Declaration of Sentiments had rallied against a lack of confidence in women's powers—were now unsure of a woman's ability to perform a public office. Despite their disapproval, Abigail Bush took the chair.

Early women's rights activists had to overcome feelings of inferiority. According to Elizabeth Cady Stanton:

"Woman has been so little accustomed to act in a public capacity that she does not always know what is due to those around her..."



In 1848, it was unheard of for women to preside over public meetings attended by both women and men, but Rochester organizers like Amy Post and Mary Hallowell thought differently. Not only did they select Abigail Bush as President, they chose women for the Vice-President and Secretary offices too.

Later, Abigail Bush (below left) recalled, *"...at the close of the first session Lucretia Mott came forward, folded me tenderly in her arms and thanked me for presiding... That ended the feeling with women that they must have a man to preside at their meeting."*

Abigail Bush (left) could not meet with organizers before the convention and only learned of her presidential role as she walked into the church that morning. *"My old friends Amy Post, Rhoda DeGarmo, and Sarah Fish at once commenced laboring with me to prove the hour had come when a woman could preside..."*



Another fascinating display tells how the women turned to the native Haudenosaunee people to see how women were treated, and used their example as proof that the rights they were fighting for were possible. (Just another example of how much better things would be if we'd only paid attention to the original peoples.)

A Comparison between Haudenosaunee and Euro-American Women: Before the Woman's Rights Movement

Social:

<i>Haudenosaunee</i>	<i>Euro-American</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are members of their mother's clan • Violence against women not part of culture and dealt with seriously when it occurs • Clothing fosters health, freedom of movement, and independence • Woman's responsibilities have spiritual basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are the property of their fathers • Husbands have legal right and religious responsibility to physically discipline their wives • Clothing restrictive, unhealthy, and dangerous • Women's subordination has religious foundation

Economic:

<i>Haudenosaunee</i>	<i>Euro-American</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work satisfying, done communally • Responsible for agriculture as well as home life • Work done under direction of women working together • Each woman controls her own personal property 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work drudgery; isolated • Responsible for home, but subordinate to husband • Work done under authority of husband • No rights to her own property, body, or children

Spiritual:

<i>Haudenosaunee</i>	<i>Euro-American</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Sky Woman" the spiritual being, catalyst for the earth • Mother Earth and women spiritually interrelated • Women have responsibilities in ceremony • Responsibilities in balance with those of men 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No female in the godhead; women responsible for sin • Spirituality not connected to earth • Women forbidden to speak in churches • Responsibilities subordinate to men's authority

Political:

<i>Haudenosaunee</i>	<i>Euro-American</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women have equal voice with men in decisions • Women and men have equivalent and equal governing responsibilities • Confederacy law ensures woman's political authority • Decision making by consensus; everyone has a voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illegal for women to vote; women arrested for voting • Women excluded from political office • Common law defines married women as "dead in the law" • Decision making by men; majority rules

Chart from *Sisters in Spirit: Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Influence on Early American Feminism*
Sally Roesch Wagner, Native Voices, 2008.

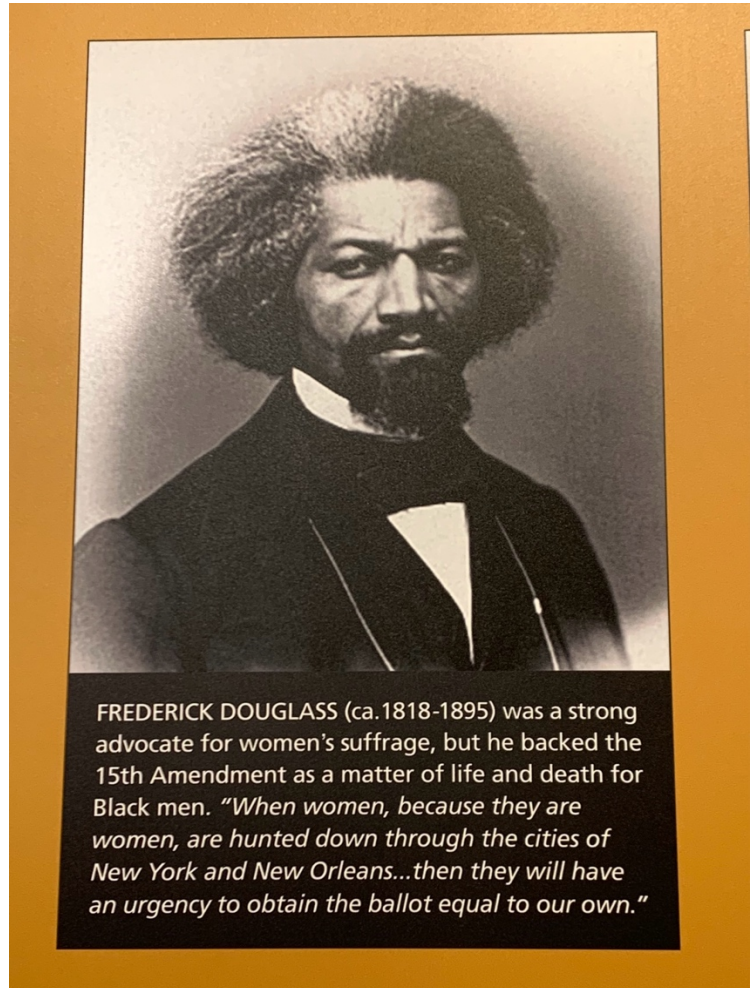
"Early women's rights activists believed women's liberation was possible because they knew liberated women, women who possessed rights beyond their wildest imagination: Haudenosaunee women."

— Sally Roesch Wagner, *Sisters in Spirit*

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Another important aspect of their fight was the involvement of Black Americans, like Frederick Douglas. Together they recognized that both groups suffered at the hands of white men.



It was a perfect surprise ending to our impromptu trip. Which just goes to show how much fun you can find - and how much you can learn - if you don't plan anything. We plan to try it again soon.

