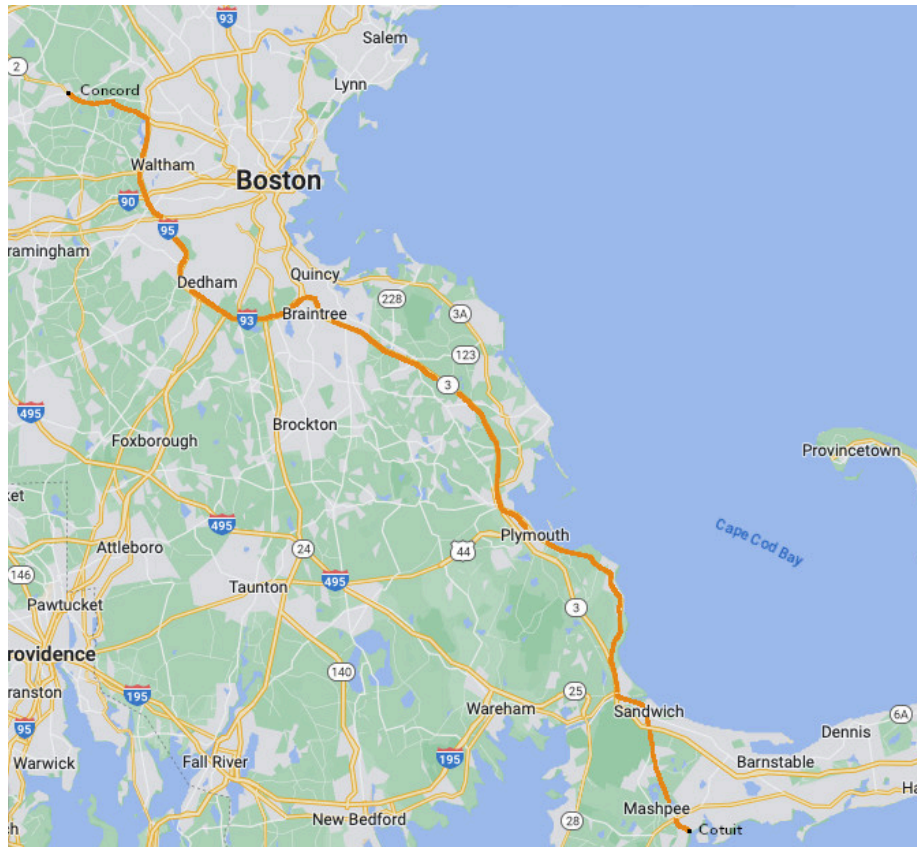


7 – MASSACHUSETTS: BOSTON AND CONCORD



Saturday, 24 October

During the night I had slept reasonably well, though Colm had not as he had felt too hot. After breakfast, John brought us out in his car for a short tour. Driving through Osterville, he brought us to Hyannis Port and then, taking narrow minor roads, he pointed out several exclusive homes belonging to the rich and famous. He drove beyond where the tour buses were allowed to go and showed us the correct houses where members of the Kennedy family lived – not the ones that the tourists were shown. Despite the fact that these were classified as exclusive homes, they all looked similar from the outside: distinctive Cape Cod dwellings faced with weathered wooden shingles. John also drove us in and out of a high-class golf club that was used by the local people, and we stopped at a couple of spots that overlooked Cotuit Bay. As before, I sat in the narrow confines of the back seat, which I found oppressively hot and stuffy; consequently I was unable to concentrate fully on what John was saying.

I was therefore glad to return to the house at about ten o'clock, where we collected our luggage and placed it in our humble vehicle, the Nissan Altima. We then said goodbye to John, who was ready to play some golf, thanked him for everything, and left. Although we had enjoyed his company and good humour, we were relieved to get away from his incessant chatter. Shortly afterwards, Colm

turned to me and said, 'Do you mind if we don't talk for the next thirty minutes?' I readily agreed and we drove along the road in blissful silence.

Taking Route 130 heading northwards, we drove to Sandwich and stopped in the picturesque little town. This was one of the places that I had wished to visit on the Cape; I would have preferred to have travelled on our own along this northerly route by the sea two days previously. We walked through the town centre in search of two historical houses (Hoxie and Wing Fort) but found neither of them. However, we stopped to look at a sale of second-hand books and bric-a-brac in somebody's front garden, then went into the local library, where we found a book sale in the basement. However, we bought nothing. On our way back to the car we saw an old set of wooden stocks in front of a building; for a bit of fun, Colm photographed me with my head and hands pushed through the openings.



Punishment in the stocks: Sandwich, Cape Cod, Massachusetts

As we drove out of the town, by the same way as we had entered it, we flashed past Hoxie House. However, as time was ticking by, we decided to skip it. We now crossed the Sagamore Bridge and travelled northwards, branching off the highway on to a minor road, which proved to be a pleasant way of approaching the famous town of Plymouth. Realizing how touristy this place was likely to be, we had decided to visit it only if it was on our way and if we had enough time at our disposal.



The Mayflower, Plymouth

We soon found ourselves driving along the main street, which was quite pleasant. Having found a parking space, we walked down to the coast, stopping briefly at the tourist centre to pick up a map of the place which, although very old, was like a typical seaside town. We had a quick look at the reproduction of the famous *Mayflower* ship, which had transported pilgrims from England to America in 1620, and I photographed it as best as I could, avoiding an ugly wooden building nearby. A short distance away was a classical 'temple' that enshrined the famous rock that the pilgrims had supposedly set foot upon; the rock turned out to be a small, miserable little thing. We gave it a cursory glance and climbed up a low hill behind the building, from where we had a good view of the bay. Up here we looked inside a couple of high-class shops, but bought nothing.



Site of the pilgrims' rock in Plymouth, Massachusetts

We then returned to the main street where, after passing an Irish pub, we found a restaurant and lunched on clam chowder and chicken salad. Afterwards we looked in some other shops and popped into a small museum. While waiting for Colm, who was using the rest room, I bought an interesting small book for about \$9 entitled *Mourt's Relation: an account of the pilgrims' landing here in Plymouth*. It had been published in 1622. Unsurprisingly, the lady behind the counter said that it was an excellent book.

After this we returned to the car and set off on our journey to Rita and Bud's house in Concord. I had telephoned them yesterday and had asked Bud if we could return a day earlier. After we had filled the car with gasoline, I took the wheel. Soon we were on the I-95 highway, whizzing northwards. I had shown Colm the route that we needed to take, but just at a critical moment when we had to decide when and where to turn, he became confused and I shot off on to the wrong Interstate highway: number 93 heading straight for Boston. As there was no easy way of returning to the I-95, I was finally forced to drive off the I-93, turn around and go back to the original junction. We were now near the town of Quincy, where the second president of America, John Adams, had once lived.

Paying more attention this time, we took the correct exit from the I-95 and made our way to Concord, which we found packed with cars. We arrived there at 4.30 p.m. and found that today's Mass in Saint Bernard's Church would be at five o'clock – not four as we had thought. A re-enactment of the famous battle in Concord must have been staged earlier in the day, for a worn-out looking fellow, dressed as an eighteenth-century British soldier, was wandering up and down the

road, looking quite lost. I managed to take a photograph of him. I could see more men dressed as British soldiers emerging from a building across the road.



A 'British soldier' in Concord

We finally entered the church, which filled up just before five o'clock, and attended a Mass similar to the one on our first Sunday morning here, complete with hymns led by the same man. This time, however, we had a very long sermon; Colm agreed that the priest could have said everything in half the time. A very elegant young lady read the Lessons.

Because of the long sermon, we were late leaving the church for Rita and Bud's house. We also stopped to admire a beautiful old Rolls Royce that was parked outside the nearby Unitarian church, where a wedding was in progress. I tried to take a photograph of Colm and the car, but there was not enough light.

At last we left and set off for Monument Street in the dark, where we found Rita and Bud's house without any trouble. I gave Rita the box of preserves and blamed our lateness on the length of the sermon. With this information, she and Bud were able to guess which priest had said the Mass!

Colm and I then brought in our luggage, after which we had showers, then chatted to our hosts. Dinner this evening consisted of corned beef, potatoes, and vegetables. More conversation followed until we bade Rita and Bud goodnight. In our bedroom we put our watches back an hour for the start of winter time, then did some repacking in readiness for our trip to New York. We both agreed that it was good to be in our old base once again, for it really felt like home! We were looking forward to seeing some more of Boston on the following day.

Sunday, 25 October

Having gained an extra hour because of the onset of winter time, we were able to have a good sleep, though we both woke an hour earlier than necessary, at about seven o'clock. It was a lovely warm and sunny morning. We had the usual cooked breakfast with our hosts, then hurried off to the train station in our car. We arrived just in time to catch the 8.44 train to Boston. This morning we hopped off at Porter Square, Cambridge, and walked for a mile or so along a pleasant street to Harvard Square. On the way we noticed several Chinese restaurants and saw many oriental people, some of whom may have been students. We saw even more as we approached the famous Harvard University, which was what we had come to see. In Harvard Square we got our bearings and crossed over to the university, entering it through a pair of elegant gates.



Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts

The university campus turned out to be quite beautiful; it was full of elegant old buildings and tree-filled quads, all illuminated in the dappled sunlight that streamed through the trees. People ambled about unhurriedly and the atmosphere was peaceful. Almost immediately I reached for my camera and began to

photograph the red brick buildings. Although there were many tourists about, there seemed to be no guided tours; this may have been due to the fact that it was a Sunday morning or that it was too late in the season. The quads bore a slight resemblance to those in Trinity College, Dublin, though here they were more elegant. In the next quad was the fine Memorial Church; a notice by the door stated that there would be a service at 11 o'clock. I suggested that we attend the service, for I realized that it would be a way of seeing inside the church and also we would have an opportunity of hearing some good music. Colm readily agreed to my suggestion.

As both of us needed to use a rest room by now, I asked a couple of girls if there was one nearby, and we were told to go over to the Science Center across the road. We entered this modern building, in which we saw computers for the students' use, and used the facilities. We then returned to the old part of the campus, where I chatted to some cheerful Taiwanese youths who were here on holidays. Afterwards we found the Fogg Museum of Art, which would open at 1 p.m. From here we wandered out to an adjoining street and looked at some shops, including a book shop. It was quite busy around here; obviously we were in the main centre of Cambridge.



The Memorial Church, Harvard University, Cambridge

We then drifted back to the Memorial Church and entered it just before eleven o'clock. Our informality of dress did not matter too much, for we noticed that other people were dressed quite casually. As expected, the interior of the church was very fine. We chose a pew below the loft, for we noticed that both the organ and the choir were situated behind the altar. We were rather surprised to see other people genuflecting and crossing themselves when entering, as we had done.

The service started precisely at 11 o'clock and proved to be very interesting. I found the hymns in the hymn book and sang along as best I could; the first one was the *Old Hundredth*, which I remembered singing in school. The choir was excellent; they sang a short piece by the fifteenth-century French composer Dufay beautifully

at one point during the service. The twenty-minute sermon was given by the Reverend Peter J. Gomes, a black minister who spoke excellently; his subject was the poor woman (mentioned in the Bible) who had given away a few coppers – her entire savings – to charity. He made several pointed remarks aimed at certain individuals and often had the congregation laughing. He told us about going to church as a child in his hometown of Plymouth, when the money collected was counted on the spot, and an announcement was made if the required amount of money needed had not been received.

The entire service lasted an hour and a quarter. Deciding not to avail of a reception afterwards as we were not dressed smartly enough, we left and made our way to the nearby streets to find a restaurant. We ended up choosing a very smart and clean Asian one, where we ordered oriental dishes: Colm chose a simple Thai dish and I had chicken with rice and pineapple.

Rested and refreshed, we then walked to the Fogg Museum and paid for a couple of entrance tickets. The museum is a fine building, based on an Italian *palazzo*, and has an open area in the middle. First of all we went to an exhibition in the basement entitled 'Behind the Line'. This was a collection of drawings by various artists, some famous, some not so famous; the emphasis was on the different techniques of drawing, not the artists. Magnifying glasses had been provided so that the techniques used could be observed more closely. I quite enjoyed this. The final exhibit in the gallery was a magnificent portrait of a French gentleman done in pastel, which looked more like an oil painting.

We then moved upstairs to admire various collections of paintings from different countries. We saw paintings by Rembrandt, some French Impressionist works (including Monet's *La Gare Saint-Lazare, arrivé d'un train*), American portraits and landscapes, paintings by Ingres and Degas, and various works by Dutch and German masters. There were also collections of modern paintings and early religious art. The portrait that I liked best was of Napoléon II as a child by Thomas Lawrence. By the time we had finished looking at everything, we were quite tired!

We left, satisfied, then took the nearby subway to South Station, where we bought tickets for the following day's five-hour-long journey to New York. We were quite surprised to discover that the journey would take so long, and we were equally surprised by the sky-high price of the tickets: \$45 each!



The Boston Tea Party ship, Boston, Massachusetts

From the train station we walked to the nearby Boston Tea Party ship, which turned out to be quite a disappointment. This modern replica of the famous ship was very small and was placed in an unattractive part of the city, next to a bridge.

We did not bother to go on board as there was nothing authentic about the ship; it was not even moored at the correct spot. I just photographed it and we moved on.



Skyscrapers, Boston city centre

We then ambled across to Boston Common, window-shopping as we went. We popped into a HMV store on the way, where I bought an interesting CD of early American revolutionary music called 'Liberty Tree'; it cost \$12.99, sale price. Colm and I were able to listen to several tracks of the CD on headphones before I bought it. I noticed that DVDs could be bought here – at first we mistook them for video tapes.

In Boston Common we sat down on a bench for a while in order to relax. Although the sun was now setting, people were still sitting outdoors and reading newspapers. We watched some grey squirrels running about; they were quite tame and came right up to us. We were both sorry to be leaving this fine city. Although we would be heading off for New York on the following day, I had the false impression that our holiday was coming to an end.

Eventually we bestirred ourselves, followed a little of the Freedom Trail, then made our way to the North Station. Having obtained some information about our transfer on the following day, we boarded a packed train that set off at 5.30 p.m. Tired my now, I dozed during the journey. We reached Concord at about 6.20 p.m. and I drove to Rita and Bud's house.

After taking much-needed showers, we sat down for our last dinner together, which this evening was quite tasty. We chatted afterwards and I telephoned my cousins in Canada in order to apologize for not having had enough time to visit them. (They were probably relieved that we had not come!)

We then bid Rita and Bud goodnight and retired to our room, where we finished our re-packing. Somehow or other we managed to fit all the books that we had bought into our bags. Afterwards, I wrote a shortened account of what had happened during the day, for my main diary was very much behind, then went to bed. I was very much aware that this was our last opportunity to sleep in such peace and quietness, and in such a nice room.

Monday, 26 October

We rose at about 7 a.m.; it was a fine though cool morning. We went downstairs for our usual large and tasty cooked breakfast – our last meal with Rita and Bud – and afterwards I telephoned the hostel in New York to let them know that we would be arriving at about 6 o'clock this evening. We completed our packing, put all our bags into the back of Bud's car, and left at 9 a.m. to return our rented car. I was a little anxious about doing this for some reason, but I had no need to worry. On the way we stopped at a gas station and filled the tank of our car for a couple of dollars. It seemed to take ages to get to Burlington, where the Herz place was, but we eventually arrived. A different fellow dealt with us this time; he merely asked me if everything had gone fine, then printed a receipt stating that the price was \$727, despite having been told in Dublin that renting the car would cost us \$707. However, as Bud was present and we had been very satisfied with the car, I did not protest. Amazingly, the fellow never went outside to examine the condition of the vehicle.

We then got into Bud's car and were driven to Woburn, where we had met at the beginning of our holiday. As we were far too early for the train to Boston, we stepped into a nearby hotel and sat in the plush lobby, sipping complimentary tea and coffee. Shortly after ten o'clock Bud drove us over to the train station and we unloaded our baggage. We said goodbye to Rita and Bud, thanked them for everything – they really had been very good to us – and walked down to the platform. The train arrived at 10.28 a.m. and we bought our tickets from the inspector. It was a short journey to the North Station. Following the instructions that we had been given, we struggled with our luggage out into the street, where we loaded everything into a taxi. The driver whisked us off to the South Station in a few minutes and charged us just \$4.50; Colm added a small tip.

As we had arrived at the station with plenty of time to spare, we sat at a table and I wrote some of my diary while Colm drank a cup of tea and ate a muffin. Later I bought a muffin and drank some mineral water.

The platform number for our train was finally announced and we boarded it at 12.15 p.m. Up until this point I felt that we were on our way home, but as we walked to the train I suddenly realized that we were off on another adventure: five days in the big smoke, New York.