

Trans Canada Trek Towards UPEI: Ontario

By Rebecca Shorten

Part 5 of 9

One thing I learned about Ontario is that it is big. Really, really ... big. One thing that I don't understand about it all is, when you drive out of southern Manitoba, you drive right into northern Ontario. What do they call the rest of Ontario, really northern Ontario?

We spent seven nights in Ontario.

"Northern" Ontario was awesome. The Canadian Shield is really something else, and the difference between Manitoba prairie and the beginning of the Shield is really quite distinct. The Shield is the oldest geological landmass in Canada. Basically, it is a great big batholith of granite exposed by glacial movement.

Thunder Bay is an interesting city. There are lots of really cool old colonial style houses and buildings, and their waterfront area seems to have a lot of charm and history to it. Thunder Bay is located on Lake Superior, so we decided to go and look at it. But very suddenly, Thunder Bay lived up to its name and a thunder storm came and soaked us before we could get back to the car. Good thing we'd already set up the tent.

After our second night in Anicinabe Park in Kenora, we drove past some amethyst mines, and one of them you could go and dig your own amethyst. My friend wasn't so sure about this idea, and asked why do we have to do this? And I said, "because we always have to go to a dig-your-own-amethyst place!" So he had to turn around and go back. The side road got longer, and then turned into a dirt road. He said I would be in trouble if when we got there, the place was closed (it was a Sunday). But got there we did, and it was open. Admission was \$3-, and we got a bucket and a digging tool and we could go into the field they had there (left-over rubble from the actual mine) and dig through it. Whatever we found, and wanted to keep was \$2-/lb . After washing and choosing our pieces, we had 1 3/4 lbs of amethyst. And, of course, my friend had a GREAT time!

The next couple of days were spent get-



ting some kilometres behind us. Along the way, we stopped at the Bobby Orr Hall of Fame, and drove through the Muskoka Lakes district. That is a really beautiful area with lots of picturesque towns along the way. We decided that we wouldn't go to Toronto because we've both been there before, and it would be nice to see other places.

The day before we got to Kingston, we stayed at a place called Silent Lake Provincial Park. There were noises in the night that even woke me up (I'm a heavy sleeper) – mainly a crying child. But one noise in particular made me wake up – owls. It sounded like 3 or 4 of them who-whoing, and it lasted for about 10 minutes, sometime just before dawn. It sort of went "hoo-hoo, hoo-hoooo!" It was really neat, as I'd never heard owls before. Another noise that woke us up and some of the neighbours (but not me, of course), was what apparently sounded like a big boulder coming loose and tumbling through the woods somewhere near the back of our tent. My friend says some people came out of their tents to check out the noise, but there wasn't anything to be seen. I took a peek around this morning, but nothing seemed like it was recently disturbed. That one remains a mystery. So much for Silent Lake.

We finally reached Kingston and Queen's University on our fifth day in Ontario. This is the university my travel companion is going to, and it was kind of like reaching the first peak of a mountain; you can see all the

work that got you here behind you, but you can also see all the climbing you still have to do to reach the next peak. We spent two nights in Kingston and unloaded some stuff at a storage locker that my friend went back to after the rest of the trip. We must have lost 300-400 lbs by doing that, and it was a really noticeable difference in how the car performed. We could actually see out the back window!

Our second day in Kingston was the day that the electricity went out over the entire Eastern grid. What a mess that was. We were in the Kingston Maritime Museum at the time, but while we were almost through the museum, the lights went out, and we figured the museum was going to close soon anyway. Then a guy came through warning us that the museum might be a bit spooky going back through and that all the power in Kingston was out! We couldn't believe it! We made our way back through the museum and went outside and there were so many people walking on the street, and people trying to drive home. We decided to wait out the traffic (it also happened at rush hour) and have a hot dog in the park. So did a lot of other people. The hot dog guy must have made a fortune; he had a continuous lineup of 30 to 40 people for at least three hours straight

Our last day in Ontario, we drove north towards Ottawa but we heard on the radio that people were encouraged to go, or stay, home and conserve electricity. We decided to get our campsite first, then go check out Ottawa. When we drove downtown, it was like a ghost town. Not much was open. It was pretty surreal, like an early Sunday morning on a Friday afternoon. We got parking for a special \$5- (normally \$15-) and we had an ice cream at a parlour that was open – and doing good business. Then we went to Parliament Hill and took some pictures there, and watched them work the locks manually on the Rideau Canal as there was no electricity. We drove along Sussex Dr. and saw the PM's house; or rather, his front gate. Then we went back to the campground for an evening of mosquito boxing, and the next day we headed for Quebec.