

A WALKING REPORT 16

Posted on 2020-08-31 2020-09-03 by spd_wp_admin

Dear Reader (2020-08-31),

You may want to grab your beverage of choice. This could take a while. Or, perhaps you just want to look at the pictures. In that case there are 3 sets to this post, and I trust in your ability to scroll to them.

It is time for another change. For today's post I travel east to Cypress Hills Provincial Park, in the south-east corner of Alberta, with a side-trip into Saskatchewan. The post is divided into 3 parts, The Ramble, The Walk, and The Village.

The Ramble – Wednesday August 12

The day's drive begins shortly before 06:30. Different vehicles feel fast at different speeds. The truck feels fast at 110 km/hr, and requires more focused concentration than at 100 km/hr. At the lower speed, I don't tire as quickly, and can spend time enjoying the start of the harvest season. At some point the radio and pod casts are turned off as they have become noise. I stop occasionally for photographic opportunities. Some work (01). At Fort Macleod (02) the road takes a turn eastward towards Lethbridge. Its iconic bridge doesn't capture my fancy today. I continue heading south east until just before Stirling. My route east to the Cypress Hills based solely on name is Highway 61, and I cant even say it is being revisited. Besides the highway signs, the road is labled "The Red Coat Trail". It isn't until I finish writing this post I discover "The Red Coat Trail is a 1,300 km route that approximates the path taken by the North West mounted Police in their quest to bring law and order to the Canadian West" (Wikipedia). The road doesn't disappoint (03-07). There is even a 5 (08) in the results.

I arrive in Elkwater a little past 15:00 only to find that I booked my campsite for different days. The helpful woman from Alberta parks laughs with (?) me as she saves me from myself. I end up with a campsite near the east edge of the park. I make camp and inflate my brand new air mattress with hope for an improvement over the ensolite pad.

The Ramble (cont'd) – Thursday August 13

I wake after a horrible night on the air mattress. Maybe if I inflate it a little more for tonight, it might work. I animal proof camp and get ready for the day's walk. After my walk a bee that had flown under my hat takes hold. It convinces me that I should drive further east into Saskatchewan. It takes me the better part of 2 and half hours to get to "The Great Sandhills". Once

there (09-11), I meet a thin grey haired man with a sun sculpted face and a cowboy hat. He tells me he rode this land for 25 years, and points out Boot Hill (12). I'm sure some of those boots are his. I wander around the closest sand dune. A woman tells me of 2 porcupines she just saw in a nearby tree.

After eating tomorrow's lunch for today's supper, I begin the drive back to my Cypress Hills campsite. My last photo of the day is taken North of Maple Creek (13) as pea size hail bounces off a freshly paved section of Highway 21. At the hamlet of Walsh on the Trans Canada Highway (TCH), I could take the now known road back to my campsite via Elkwater, which would amount to 3 sides of a rectangle. Instead, I turn south.

The light of my high beams falls off the edges of the unfamiliar sharp shouldered gravel road. The stars are just beginning to shine. I am grateful for the yellow caution signs that let me know of yet another twist in the road. The scotch and beer back at my campsite are welcome punctuation marks to a very good day. I marvel at the simplicity, functionality, and durability of my 30 year old Coleman lantern as I make the initial notes for this post.

I add more air to the mattress, and hope again.

The Ramble (cont'd) – Friday August 14

I don't really need the alarm, which goes off shortly after 04:00. I've spent most of the night in that half land where you don't really know if you have slept at all. 2 weeks later I will give the air mattress away. The experiment was a success – the subject was exhausted. I pass 12 or so cows all lined up single file asleep along a wind break head to tail, when I drive out to Ressor Lake Lookout to greet the dawn (14).

By the time I have broken camp, packed, and driven to Elkwater, the café is open. With coffee and croissant in hand I begin the drive up to the TCH and home. I try once again to do something photographically with a particular section of the highway. I will try again because that experiment was an example of what doesn't work. The early start and the lousy sleeps finally catch up with me half an hour east of Strathmore. I grab my pillow from its home behind the passenger seat, and sleep for 30 minutes on the front seat of the truck, before the final leg of an excellent ramble.

To remove the annoying band across the top of the full size image, click anywhere on the image.



01



02



03



04



05



06



07



08













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The Walk – Lake, Firerock, Horseshoe Canyon and Beaver Creek – < 12.5 km – Loop

A reader took the time to read and comment on all the walking reports up to this one in a single session. I hope Richard had wine. One comment suggested I consider using a tripod more often. It was a seed I had already planted, and it was serendipitous to have it watered by someone else. Thank you, Richard. Hiking poles are not required today. I am therefore carrying, and using my tripod for all images from this walk.

Today's walk begins with a lake-shore stroll by tall grasses (15) along a luxurious boardwalk. After bending inland, the well trodden path begins a long lazy climb (16) to Horseshoe Canyon (no not the Drumheller one) Lookout (17), 5 or 6 km away. There is a bench overlooking the canyon. Carved into the wooden railing are the usual collection of hearts and initials. Are they still together? Someone has used a permanent marker to print "As you wish", and I wonder who was Buttercup. The trail back is also used by careening mountain bikers who talk about gnarly turns. For me, it is a pleasant walk in the woods (18,19).











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The Town – Skiff (20)

In the pale light of a summer's day under a Turner sky a new rainbow flag flies – its colours still vibrant. A post away, there is a faded Alberta flag with a wind shredded edge. A block away the only life in the abandoned farm equipment store (21) is insulating plastic blowing from a boarded up second story window.

Around the corner on Railway Avenue just past the grain elevator (23), a kilometer of grain cars (24) lie in wait for their annual journey west soon to be filled with grains or pulses. Past the grain cars (25) there is an equally long line of oil cars (26). Across the Canadian prairies there must be thousands of these oil cars, waiting for a future need. I think (completely unverified thought) CN and CP use these sidings as cheap storage. I return to Highway 61 and continue driving east.















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As always your comments are welcome and sought
Cheers, Sean

Appendix – History Moment Courtesy of a plaque near my campsite. Date of plaque is unknown – Murder of Constable Graburn

Constable Marmaduke Graburn N.W.M.P. was shot and killed by unknown persons in the Cypress Hills November 17, 1879. He was the first mounted policeman killed by violence since the force was organized in 1873. Star Child, a Blood Indian was accused of the murder but was acquitted in 1881.

Appendix Horseshoe Canyon courtesy of a plaque at the lookout

Thousands of years ago, glaciers advanced from the north. They flowed into and around the Cypress Hills, leaving the plateau where you are standing untouched. This is one of the few areas in western Canada that escaped glaciation. As the glaciers melted, water carved steep-sided valleys into the northern and western slopes.

2 Replies to “A Walking Report 16”

1. **Keith** says:

2020-09-04 at 11:24 Edit

Here I am, set up to comment. Most places where I comment, I read, scroll down, and comment. Not here. I like to visit a few times from the big computer screen, get a sense of what's in the photos, see which make an initial impression. Then come back and spend some time with them. With a busy life that isn't easy sometimes. Then get two windows going, one for the comment page, the other to scroll through the photos one by one.

But first, a digression on air mattresses. I find them wholly unsatisfactory in every sense of the word, no matter how inflated. There could be a further digression on flatulence, but I don't think I need to.

Photos.

1-I find myself pondering the meaning of level. Was the sign level at one point? I wonder why the sign makers did not consider the sensibilities of passing photographers, and have that spear on the right side slanting the other way.

2-An illustration of how our eyes and brain interpret a scene, compared to how the camera does.

3-At first I thought about the centering of the building in the photo. Then the slope of the building intrigued me, and I realized if the building were off centre, there would be too much unsymmetricalness for the photo. I like the tufts of grass all bent over in different directions, suggesting the winds of change wearing on the building.

4-Delightfully composed. I love the big wide open spaces. I hope you didn't have to wait long for the truck, or were rushed to get the shot while the truck zoomed. I think out of all the shots, this is my favourite.

5-A similar shot to 4, but I find it doesn't work quite as well for me. My eye seemed to get stuck on the horizontal layers, looking for something in each.

6-Ahhhh! The textures in the grain and clouds are wonderful, as is the ever so gentle roll to the landscape. I'd probably wait there a long time just to see what the clouds did.

7-I'm not sure what I think. At first I was really interested, then a sense of disquiet grew on me. I'm not sure why. Perhaps a sense of scale, sometimes I seem too close to the truck, other times not close enough.

8-Nicely composed. Evenly rusted metal like that is hard to capture. I'm amazed the headlights haven't been broken by some hooligan.

9-The sand hills. Only been there once, and the light was not optimal.

You were much more fortunate, in that you managed to capture the shadows in the little rills. And the clouds!

10-I think that took a sensitive hand on the sliders to keep both the sky and the sand looking right.

11-I like the contrast of the vegetation growing out from the sand. It seems very alien.

12-Pity about the modern hiking boots in the foreground. I've seen a wide panorama shot of just the boots, with lots of detail, in really nice light. I'd like to get back to the sand hills, to try that shot, among others, with time to wait for the light if necessary.

13-Normally power lines are the bane of landscape photographers, but they seem to work here.

14-Such lovely colour!

20-Somehow, while I had heard of Manyberries, Orion, Pakowki, Etzikom, Foremost, and Legend, in the course of many hours in oil and gas databases, I had never heard of Skiff. Poor overlooked Skiff. Nice sign though.

21-A sad abandoned building, with nice texture on the surfaces. I always wonder about the stories involved, who locked the door and walked away for the last time.

22-Farm equipment is often interesting, but I think you struggled with composition here. I suspect something you didn't want in the photo is just in front of the tractor. The left side feels crowded and cramped, while the right is open and spacious.

23-This is one I came back to several times, thinking about the old elevators with the peeling paint, together with the new steel tower and the somewhat new RV on the right. I was thinking that cropping in from the bottom right to just exclude the pole to the left of the RV would change the photo dramatically, but I don't know that it would make it a better photo.

24-Like a pro musician on the stage, you pretty much assume they aren't making a mistake. That if they're making a particular sound, it's what they intended, and if you aren't getting it, it's on you not the musician. So I'm working from the place that you intended this photo to be looking somewhat overexposed. Which makes me wonder why. There's something I'm not getting.

25-Similar to 24. For me, losing the detail in the light tank cars takes away from the photo, but that is almost certainly not what you're trying to do here.

26-It's funny, but all the horizontal lines are not a barrier to getting to the sky, with all its interesting swirls and textures. I find the position of the three poles in relation to the tank cars to be quite delightful.

1. **spd_wp_admin** says:

2020-09-04 at 12:00 Edit

Thank you, Thank you – I'll reply in detail later.

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