

Trip of Patrick Tai to Toronto, Canada

January 11 – 15, 2013

I made a trip to Toronto, Canada to visit my friends there; among them are:

Wong Hin-Shing, who was my school-mate in Hong Kong high-school “Wah Yan Kowloon”, from where we graduated in 1961. There are also about ten other school mates in Toronto whom I want to see.

Chan Kai-Ming, whom I know in Cambridge, MA when he was at MIT in early 1970s.

This trip was not well planned, it was a spur-of-the-moment idea. Fortunately, Hin-Shing and Kai-Ming were very kind to help me. Hin-Shing offered to let me sleep at his home, and Kai-Ming offered to show me Toronto and drive me around. I thank them sincerely. They made my trip possible and added much to my pleasure.

By happen-stance (using Google) I booked the airplane flights from Porter Airline; which I have never heard of before. After booking, I discovered that the airplane lands on Toronto Island; connected to main-land Toronto by a ferry. I panicked; worrying that it would be too difficult for Kai-Ming to pick me up if he has to drive his car on a ferry. Fortunately, he found out that I can take the ferry instead and that there is a shuttle bus which will take me to a convenient main-land hotel. So, the air-line would work out.

On Jan. 11, 2013, I arrived at the Boston Airport. I found out that Porter Airline is a very small airline, catering mostly for Canadian business. It serves 19 cities and has only 26 planes.

All the airplanes are propeller-engine turbo planes (see photo), not jet planes. Each plane holds fewer than 100 passengers. As such, the waiting time before boarding is reduced to 45 minutes instead of 2 hours.

The plane trip was fine; there was no unusual turbulence or comfort problems. There are only two seats per row and mostly these were occupied by only one passenger; so seating was very easy. I arrived at Toronto in good time.

The ferry from the island Airport to main-land was really hilarious. I went onto the ferry; I moved to different windows to take some photos; and before I know it; the ferry had arrived to its destination! It was as quick as stepping across a puddle.

Landing at the Toronto city itself, a shuttle bus took me to the Royal York Hotel, where I met Chan Kai-Ming. It started to rain but we non-the-less walked around Toronto downtown. He took me to see interesting sites, including Union Station, underground malls (including Eaton) and introduced me to the Toronto subway system.



We walked from the “old” Chinatown to the “new” one; Kai-Ming showed me the interesting history of the buildings and shops. We also ate lunch there; I was delighted to taste the Hong Kong style food.

After the quick round-about tour, Kai-Ming drove me to Golden Court Restaurant, where we met the Wah Yan classmates and a teacher, Ho Sir. The classmates were Bernard Wong, Michael Chan, Stephen Lam, Peter (and wife) Lena Wong, and Wong Hin-Shing. We had a wonderful Chinese banquet dinner.

Ho Sir led much the conversation on sweet reminiscence of our Wah Yan days. I also learned a lot about issues in Canada as well as health and finance affairs relevant to our advancing age. It was all very interesting. It was so nice to see them again.



After dinner, Hin-Shing drove me to his home for the night. We talked and talked. Also, since we are both devotees of Western classical music, we listened to some of his gigantic voluminous collection of music (LPs, CDs, DVDs, mp3 albums. We did not sleep until 3AM.

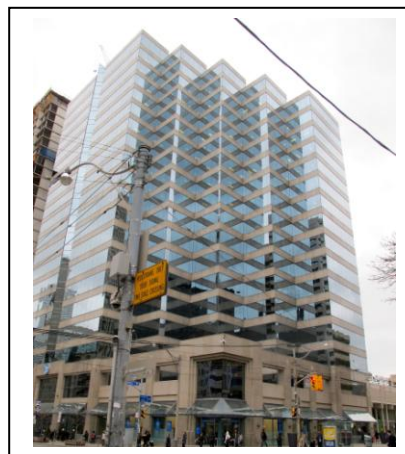
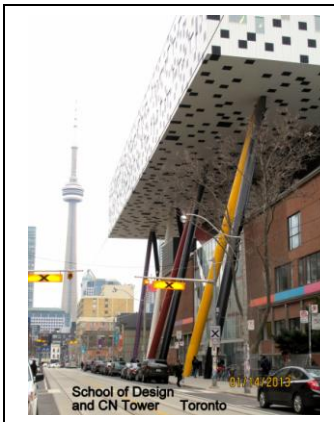
Next day Hin-Shing drove me to have lunch with Chan Kai-Ming and his wife Shirley. (Years ago, I actually attended their wedding at the MIT chapel.) It was so nice to see Shirley. She told me that their son Alex had just got a new baby, so they were very happy. We had delicious dim-sum and congee, as well as other delicacies.



After that we had a meeting with another Wah Yan schoolmate, Chow Chue. We met at McDonalds for a short tea. It was great to meet him again. He looked well and was very eloquent and we talked about good times we had. He recalled meeting me at Brandeis University around 1964; something I remember, but not the time or the location.



I took subway to visit Toronto by myself; I also walked around. Here is what I saw:

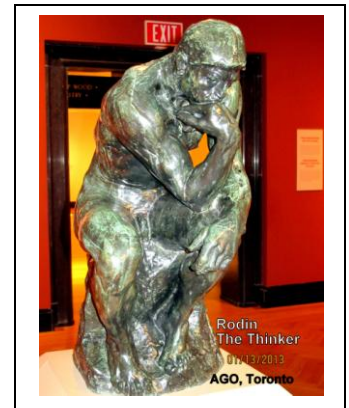


I also visited a few tourist sites. The first one I went to was the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM). This museum has a striking façade, with angular geometric shapes.

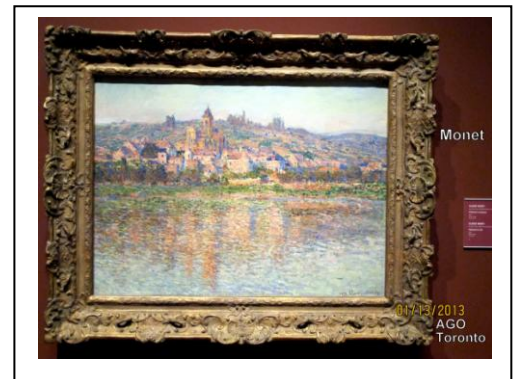


There are exhibits inside of artifacts from Ming Tombs; Chinese religious sculptures and paintings.

Then I went to the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), where I admired the sculptures of Henry Moore and August Rodin.



There are also many paintings, some conventional, such as this Monet:

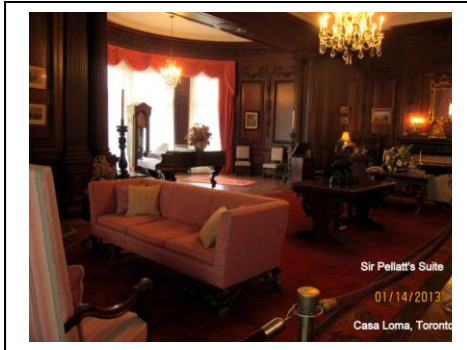


Or this modern one next to a modern sculpture:



The next day I went to visit the castle Casa Loma; up on a hill north of downtown Toronto. This is a castle built around 1911 by Sir Henry Pellatt. It is quite an amazing sight:

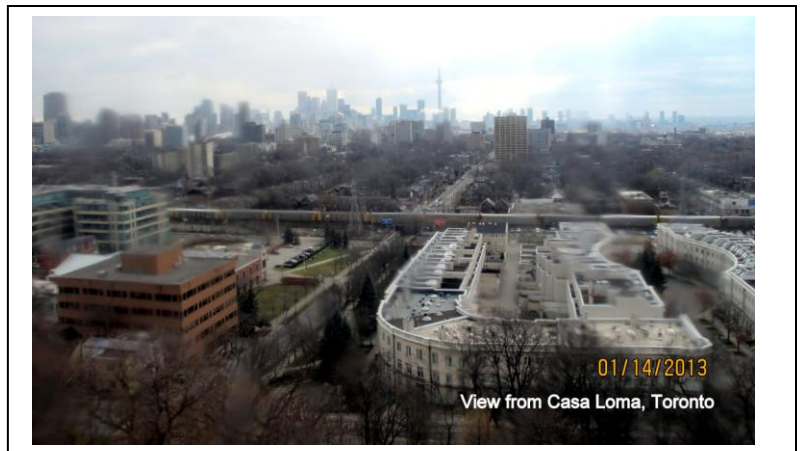
It is a “100 room” estate house in the style of a medieval castle. It has parlors, libraries, studies and halls; not to mention a Wurlitzer organ and a tall tower.



The castle also claimed some very modern bath-rooms and toilets. The bath is marble (to prevent germs) and the bath/shower has 8 horizontal sprays with water in adjustable temperature. This was the height of high technology in 1911.



And it is a “Room with a View”:



The next day I took leave of Wong Hin-Shing, and took the subway to south Toronto to fly back to Boston. It happened to be a sunny clear day.

So, farewell Toronto ... I hope to see you soon.

Patrick Tai. 戴振樑

