

DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS: THE COLUMN Issue #12

Winter 2018

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Welcome! By the time you read this, it will have been close to six years since I started DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS: THE COLUMN and 18 years since a friend and I started Dimensional Press publishing. Anyway, in this issue, I'll be reporting on the following places and events: six places in Hudson County, New Jersey; A day in Philadelphia; New York state; Washington, DC; New York City; and three days at Philadelphia Science Fiction (SF) Conference (con) or Philcon, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Cherry Hill, NJ. I've been to Hudson County, NJ, before 2017. Back in 2008, I spent the day at the Outlets at the Cove in Secaucus, NJ. I also wrote about it in THE STATE I'M IN #2. Meanwhile, if you would like more information about what to see and do in Hudson County, NJ, contact the following source: Hudson County Division of Tourism, 583 Newark Ave., Jersey City, NJ 07306 (201-459-2070 or www.visithudson.org).

Friday, July 21, 2017: Once upon a time, I entered a castle full of books. Or the reality was that many times I noticed a castle-shaped building in Weehawken, NJ, as the bus I rode toward NYC was about to enter the Lincoln Tunnel. Later, I learned that this building was the Weehawken Public Library, 49 Hauxhurst Ave. (201-863-7823 or www.weehawken-nj.us/library.html). This 1904 mansion once belonged to beer baron William Peter who wanted his 17-room mansion to look like a smaller version of a German-styled castle. After Peter died in 1918, different owners owned this building until the 1940s when the Township of Weehawken owned it and opened it up as a library in 1942. In 1997-'98, the Township had the library enlarged and renovated, and it reopened in 1999. Before arriving, I would suggest that unless you are in tip-top physical shape, you should either drive to this place, phone for a taxi from one of the Weehawken light rail stations, or from Hoboken's train station because this place has been high on a hill. Once inside, I could see plenty of books. (It is a library after all.) As I roamed through the two floors opened to the public, I saw the elaborate details of the interior in its woodwork, marble, stained glass above the doors and on a window, and different fireplaces. Then, I viewed a room displaying old bits of glassware and pottery that I assumed somebody dug up in or near Weehawken. Finally, I sat and read

some magazines in a room overlooking the traffic on its way to the Lincoln Tunnel. Overall, this place looked lovely, but don't forget to do some reading there too.

Saturday, July 22: I've been to an Italian festival before on 9th St. at South Philadelphia's Italian Market, but when I heard about St. Ann's Italian Festival, around the Church of St. Ann, 705 Jefferson St., Hoboken (201-659-1114), I wanted to see this event too. Therefore, on the date above, I arrived in time to see the vendors set up. After I consumed a pepper & sausage sandwich, I also ate something that this festival has been famous for: zeppoles. This deep-fried pastry rolled in powdered sugar added just the right touch to my taste buds because it wasn't a heavy dessert, especially after I ate a heavy sandwich. The vendors for this table were women from St. Ann's Guild who do volunteer work for the church. Thus, the money from the sale of these zeppoles went to the parish. As to the festival itself, compared to the Italian Festival in South Philly, the Hoboken festival wasn't as big. Nevertheless, I did find looking at the items that the vendors sold interesting—and I think I've seen some of them at the Hoboken Arts Festival in June, as well as at events closer to home. Of course, there were vendors selling different foods—and not just Italian. While non-food vendors sold arts & crafts, t-shirts, toys, etc., a few other tables promoted their causes including St. Ann's Church and the Hoboken Museum. I also saw plenty of carnival games that reminded me of the games at the shore, especially in Seaside Heights. At other times during this five-day festival, they carried statues of St. Ann and other religious figures through the streets, and in the evening, two stages provided entertainment with music from traditional Italian to rock. While I wouldn't recommend going out of your way to this festival, if you were nearby, it would be worth seeing. Anyway, as I said in the last issue about Hoboken, the town itself has been worth going a distance to see, especially along the waterfront and along their main street: Washington Street! Here you could observe the different architectural styles of its buildings, especially the brownstones, browse at its shops, and eat in some of its many restaurants.

Sunday, July 23: People told me malls have been dying, and this fact has been true for the last few years, but it didn't seem like that for the mall I visited: Newport Centre, 300 Mall Drive, Jersey City (201-626-2078). Built in 1987, this mall contained three floors, four anchor stores, and over 130 other shops, as well as a few restaurants, a food court with 19 food counters, and a cinema with 11 screening rooms. After having lunch on the third-floor food court, I wandered around the next two floors of shops ranging from discount stores to upscale retailers. Here, the merchandise included clothing, accessories, and gifts, as well as cosmetics, electronics, toys, eyewear, jewelry, sporting goods, luggage, etc. Overall, it looked like a suburban mall except there was no big parking lot (car park) outside. Instead, being in a city, there was a parking garage nearby, and the mall was assessable by public transportation: PATH train, Hudson/Bergen Light Rail, NJ Transit busses, and taxis. Moreover, this mall was near the Holland Tunnel. Although I'm not a big fan of shopping sprees, the saying, "You don't know what you got 'til it's gone," has been true as more brick & mortar stores and malls disappeared. Judging from the people in the Newport Centre, however, it wasn't true in all cases as I saw plenty of people, and more than a few were buying things.

Friday, August 4: In addition to the outlet stores, Secaucus, NJ, used to have two shopping malls. Then a few years ago, the Hartz Mountain Industries had these malls changed into outdoor shopping centers. On the date above, I visited the Plaza at Harmon Meadow, 700 Plaza Drive (201-348-1200 or www.harmonmeadow.com). After a harrowing time missing our exit off of Route 3 because the blue sign marked for "Harmon Meadow" was missing, we took the next

exit, spotted Patterson Plank Road, and followed it a ways before we decided that we were lost. We finally stopped at a place called Ruesch's Deli & Liquor Store, 74 Nelson Ave and North Street, Jersey City. Well, it was a good thing we stopped there because the friendly owner and his wife went out of their way to draw up a map on how we should get back. (We went the wrong way on Patterson Plank Road.) Meanwhile, I noticed that this place looked like those "mom & pop" stores that have been a rare breed in these last few decades. Anyway, by following the storeowner's directions, we were at the Plaza at Harmon Meadow in about five to seven minutes. Once there, we walked through this shopping plaza and browsed at the stores: an art gallery & framing store, a candy & gift store, and a General Nutrition Store, as well as a jewelry store, Pier One Imports, and a furniture store. Although there weren't too many stores here, on a good weather day, this plaza made for a pleasant walk with its rows of flowers & greenery and the artistically designed walkways. Finally, I had supper at one of their many restaurants in different price ranges.

Saturday, August 5: I went to the movies but not just to any cinema or just any film. The cinema, Kerasotes ShowPlace 14 Theaters, off of Plaza Drive, Secaucus (1-800-FANDANGO or 201-210-5364), provided large padded seats with plenty of legroom! Meanwhile, the film I saw, *Newsies*, was not the original film from 1992, but the Broadway show, except the producers filmed it at the Pantages Theater in Hollywood, California. Of course, I liked a live show as much as the next person, but seeing a live show on film has had its advantages: close ups of certain scenes, different camera angles, and at times, I saw the live theater audience reaction to the show as well as the interior of the Pantages Theater, a former movie palace. First, I'd recommend seeing almost any film in the Kerasotes ShowPlace 14 Theaters because it only cost slightly more than seeing a first-run film or other film in a cinema with less comfortable seats and legroom. In addition, this cinema had stadium seating. Therefore, there were hardly any bad views. Second, as for this version of *Newsies*, the musical about the 1899 newspaper boys strike against the newspaper moguls, especially Joseph Pulitzer, the show included many interesting songs and dances, some of which were quite acrobatic. Again, some of the stage angles and close ups for this show & film would never be visible to a live theater audience. Anyway, no matter what cinema presented this show on film, I'd recommend seeing it.

Sunday, August 6: The Mill Creek section of Harmon Meadow, 1-101 Mill Creek Drive, Secaucus (201-553-9143-Kohl's), was a former mall that became a strip mall in 2007. When I was there, the following stores remained: Kohl's, Toys R Us, and Kids R Us, as well as Sports Authority, TJ Maxx, and Bob's Discount Furniture. I especially spent most of my time at Kohl's and TJ Maxx. One thing I observed, unlike the Plaza at Harmon Meadow, Mill Creek looked like any strip mall. There were no pretty rows of flowers, greenery, or fancy walkways. Nevertheless, there were bigger stores to shop in, and I suspected, judging from what I saw, the stores here tried to sell what other branches of these stores couldn't sell. I noticed plenty of clearance sales. You may have to look a bit, but you might find a bargain. In addition, across the way, Mill Creek also included two small strip malls with some smaller stores. Although I wouldn't recommend going a distance to these shopping centers alone, if you are at the outlet stores in Secaucus, then it might be worth your while to check out these shopping centers—and maybe take in a film. I've been told brick & mortar stores are going away, but I didn't believe that completely. In all fairness, up to the early 1990s, we were glutted with shopping malls and other shopping centers. Therefore, what stores will be left will most likely be cherished more. After all, in the past, department stores and supermarkets didn't completely replace all the smaller stores.

Saturday, September 2: For the last few years, I've passed the Kimmel

Center, 300 S. Broad St., Philadelphia, PA (215-790-5800 or www.kimmelcenter.org), a few times, but until the date above, I have never been inside. Then I learned that the Kimmel Center offered free tours almost every day; therefore, I decided to see the interior of this place for myself. One of the first things I learned on this tour was that acoustics were foremost in the minds of the building designers in planning this complex. It was the main reason why the Philadelphia Orchestra moved here from the Academy of Music. The first theater I saw on the tour, the Perelman Theater, looked plain, but the main stage rotated. Our guide explained how this theater has been a popular place for school graduations, as well as concerts and performances from some of the following groups: The Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, The Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, and Philadanco. Next, our tour guide took us up to the top floor to see the Hamilton Garden, an enclosed rooftop room that offered great views of the city. This room has been a favorite venue for private events. Then, the next place within this complex was the highlight of the tour for me: Verizon Hall! Being the largest theater here, this has been where the Philadelphia Orchestra performed as well as the Philly Pops. In addition, many other performers and visiting orchestras put on concerts here. It was the interior, however, that I also found impressive. We sat on red mohair seats as our tour guide pointed out the quiet air-conditioning vents under every seat, the large and elaborate organ, the woodwork-looking interior, and other special features that helped improve the acoustics. The outside of Verizon Hall looked just as handsome with its displays of wood walls: mahogany being shaded by another wood from a certain kind of tree from Africa that can take ultraviolet light, and thus, it wouldn't fade from constant exposure from the sun. Finally, our tour guide drew our attention to the different works of art on display, especially on the ground-floor Commonwealth Plaza atrium.

Sunday, September 17: If you would like to see how the early Rockefellers lived and enjoyed some great views of the Hudson Valley, then a visit to Kykuit (Dutch for "Look out"), on Route 9, about two miles north of the Tappan Zee Bridge, Phillipsburg Visitor Center, Sleepy Hollow, NY (914-366-6900 or www.hudsonvalley.org), should settle your curiosity. On the date above, I took the "Classic Tour" of the Rockefeller Home, Kykuit. The people at the information center told me that this "Classic Tour" was the best tour for first-time visitors. Therefore, I rode the shuttle bus from the Visitor Center at Phillipsburg Manor to Kykuit. Once there, our tour guide told us a brief history about the first three generations of the Rockefellers before pointing out the exterior features of this 1908 Renaissance-Revival mansion and its Italian-villa-styled landscaping in the front. Because the first two generations of Rockefellers were strict Baptists, they didn't take part in drinking, gambling, dancing, and the theater. Thus, in this mansion, you would not see a grand ballroom or a grand stairway for family and guests to show off while wearing their fine clothing. Overall, compared to some other mansions along the Hudson, this place wasn't as ostentatious. Nevertheless, compared to regular homes, that was another matter! One thing the Rockefellers did take part in was playing musical instruments and singing, especially Baptists hymns, and one of the most interesting rooms was the Music Room. This lovely two-story room displayed an elaborate balcony around an oculus—an oval ceiling opening. Then I looked up and glanced at a fancy lighting fixture hanging from the upper floor. As I walked through the other rooms on the tour--parlor, dining room, and a men's study, as well as a women's tearoom, library, and a few other rooms, I saw furniture in 18th- and 19th-century-styles, and some very elaborate chandeliers. The Rockefellers weren't too interested in collecting authentic American or European antiques from those centuries; anyway, replicas would do for them. They did, however, collect Asian items and artworks, especially from China, dating from about 100 B.C. to the early 20th century.

The family had these objects displayed amongst the furniture as well as showing modern, 20th century art in paintings, drawings, and sculptures that Nelson Rockefeller and his mother, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, collected. Down in a basement gallery, I looked at more of their modern art collection. The modern sculptures extended out on the surrounding grounds among more classical-styled sculptures and a few Asian-styled sculptures. I wasn't a big fan of abstract art, but it was interesting to see how it blended in with other styles of art and sculpture. Also on these grounds, I saw a teahouse and rose garden, as well as a more distance golf course. Next, the shuttle bus took us to the family's garage and stable. Here, I walked through stables exhibiting equestrian equipment, especially saddles and horse buggies. On the other side of the building were different autos that the family owned from a 1907 Ford to a Lincoln Continental from the 1960s before the shuttle bus took us back to the Visitor Center at Phillipsburg Manor.

Sunday, October 1: Although many people have been visiting the much newer African-American History Museum on The Mall in Washington, DC, since it opened last year, I chose instead to visit the National Museum of African Art, 950 Independence Ave., SW (202-633-4600). This (literally) underground museum comprised of art from Sub-Saharan Africa. Upon entering on the ground floor, I noticed a collection of sculptures and objects dealing with healing, and I watched a video of people making and dying fabrics. Another video showed natives doing traditional African dances. Next, on the floor below, the African Mosaic galleries displayed the permanent collection of African fine arts in pictures and sculptures as well as decorative and folk arts displaying many objects from B.C.E. to the current. On the other side of this floor, I spent much of my time viewing videos. The first video presented different women of different generations and races talking about life in South Africa before and after Apartheid. Another video showed a dancer dancing in a disused copper mine in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Meanwhile, subtitles suggested ways to bring peace to the Congo. Finally, the last video was of a masked ball showing the dancers doing a combination ballet/minuet with no music in the background. These dancers wore upper-class 18th-century-styled clothing, but the fabrics were brightly colored African-styled cloths, instead of the mostly-pastel-colored silks and satins. Overall, it was an allegory about the assassination of Sweden's King Gustav III in 1792. At the lowest-level floor, I observed a special exhibit area about water that showed fine and decorative art items having to do with this subject as well as how important it has been in the lives of Africans. Overall, while this museum wasn't as popular as the bigger museums on The Mall, it does have items of interest to keep you occupied for an hour or two--or more!

Sunday, October 22: If you would like a crash course about NYC, you could learn about NYC's past, present, and possible future at this place: Museum of the City of New York (MCNY), 1220 5th. Ave. at E. 104th St. (212-534-1672 or www.mcny.org/)! On the date above, I took a crash course disguised as a visit here. Starting at the ground floor, I watched a 28-minute film called *Timescapes* about NYC's history from the time of the local Lenape Native-Americans to the current. On the floor above, the new permanent exhibit areas presented NY at its Core, 400 years of NYC history. Comprised of three rooms, the first room showed via texts, pictures, and exhibit items, Port City, 1609-1898, or how NYC went from being a Dutch trading post to the second-largest city in the world, after London. The second room, World City, 1898-2012, presented some multi-media exhibits and videos in addition to texts, pictures, and items. Thus, I learned about NYC through the changing years of the 20th and 21st centuries as the city reinvented itself, especially from being a high-crime city to one of the safest cities in the USA and the

unofficial capital of the world. The last room on the first floor covered Future City Lab where visitors could help imagine the city's future.

(Affordable housing would be a good start.) On the next two floors above, other permanent exhibit areas included 1) Activist NY, where different people fought for changes in many causes by several ways: minorities, women, gays, etc. 2) On a lighter subject, I also admired a dollhouse someone donated to the museum. Here, the interior looked like the home of a wealthy family from the 1920s and '30s, and this house displayed miniature copies of well-known paintings from those times. Next, I noticed 3) NY Silver: Then and Now. This exhibit area compared silver made by New Yorkers in the 17th-, 18th-, and 19th-centuries to silver made by New Yorkers in the 20th- and 21st- centuries. When I was there, the museum also presented four temporary exhibit areas: 1) Salsa(the dance) in NY, 2) The Croton Aqueduct, 3) AIDS at home, and 4) Women in NY Politics. Anyway, whether you are new to NYC or have lived in NYC for years, you owe it to yourself to see this place.

Friday, November 10: Except for once in 1983, due to the flu, I haven't missed Philcon since I went to my first one in 1980. I started the 2017 Philcon by listening in on a panel, 1) The Worst Science I've Seen on Film, where John Ashmead, Debby Lieven, Carl Fink, Mark Wolverton, Amy Fass, and Orenthal Hawkins pointed out flaws in such things as radiation making people more powerful--instead of giving them cancer. Then somebody mentioned that there was a better chance of mixing a human with a rutabaga than having a human-alien hybrid. Because these were SF stories, it has been acceptable to add one or two made up science rules, but the rest of the science should be correct--and in many films and TV shows, it wasn't. Next, I attended the 2) November Meeting of the PSFS (Philadelphia Science Fiction Society) & Reading by Janny Wurts. First, the PSFS President, Susan Rosin, called the meeting to order and briefly explained about the PSFS and its monthly meetings. Second, when she asked if anybody wanted to finish all business for now, someone else voted to do that, and another person seconded it. Therefore, author and artist Janny Wurts read us a short SF story she wrote about a woman serving in a space service who tried to save a society on a planet that was going to explode. After this, I watched videos and pictures of costumes from past masquerades, 1976 to 2005, at 3) Great Costumes!, presented by Byron Connell. I found it amazing when I saw the workmanship in the costumes and performances of the costumers. Some of those cons were past Worldcons (World Science Fiction Conventions), Costume Cons, and other SF cons. Sadly, I also recognized a few people in those videos and pictures who were no longer with us. Finally for that night, I took a look at 4) "Meet the Pros" & Art Show Opening. I didn't meet any professional artists, authors, editors, and so forth, but I did meet some other SF fans. Meanwhile, I also ate some snack foods and overheard the musical guests-of-honor (GOH), Bed & Breakfast, Bill & Brenda Sutton. They sang some fantasy songs, and shortly after this, I headed home for the night.

Saturday, November 11: Philcon's busiest day started for me by visiting the 5) Art Show room. Here, I noticed that about 80% of the art themes presented fantasy, and the rest displayed SF and space art. Meanwhile, around 75% of the art mediums exhibited paintings and drawings, and the other kinds of art showed other mediums: jewelry, sculptures, and pottery, as well as accessories, holiday ornaments, and so on. I also saw some of the fantasy paintings by the artist GOH, Don Maitz. Then, the first panel I listened in on that day was 6) Ovaries of Steel. Thus, Vikki Ciaffone, Muriel Hykes, Debby Lieven, Christine Norris, and Edie Stern talked about how to deal with men who have been clueless on how to treat women. They also mentioned past sexual harassment stories that happened at past cons. Overall, they agreed that just because some women wore sexy outfits at cons, it didn't mean they wanted sexual advances. Next, I had lunch at the 7) Con Suite. Meanwhile, the main GOH,

Seanán McGuire, talked about different subjects, including her writing SF and fantasy. It was a bit awkward for me because the room was crowded, and I had to sit on the floor. At other, less crowded, times, the con committee offered snacks and soft drinks in the con suite. Later, I sat in on this panel: 8) What Are We Currently Doing In Space? The panel, Dr. Paul H. Shuch, Earl Bennett (President of the Philadelphia Area Space Alliance, a chapter of the National Space Society [NSS/PASA]), Bob Hranek, Tobias Cabral, Frank O'Brien, and Mitchell Gordon (Vice President of NSS/PASA), covered such subjects as Earth-based observatories vs. space telescopes, future missions to the moon and Mars, both unmanned and manned, and missions beyond. Other subjects included asteroid mining, near-Earth objects, and finding more exo-planets. Most importantly, they talked about how to keep humans safe in space.

That night, after I had dinner, I attended 9) The Masquerade. This year, I saw more entries than in the past few years: 17. Four of the entries were SF costumes: two from *Star Wars*—Yoda & Luke Skywalker, and R2D2; one from *Star Trek*—a Star Fleet Captain; and a Space Academy Cadet. The rest of the costumers wore fantasy costumes.

Sunday, November 12: As a minister of the Universal Life Church (ulcseminary.org), I played host to a 10) Meeting for Worship. When I did this at the last few Balticons and last year at Philcon, I had about a half-dozen people. This year, I only had two people show up in addition to myself and my husband. As in the last few times, attendees were encouraged to sing a hymn, say a prayer, say something for the occasion, or just sit in silence, and the two people who showed up did the latter. After this, I went to the 11) Dealers' Room. I noticed that around 50% of the dealers sold reading materials of books, magazines, and comic books. The rest of the dealers sold other merchandise: jewelry, accessories, and t-shirts, as well as toys, games, etc. I ended up buying a magazine. Finally, I sat in on the following panel before heading home: 12) *Hidden Figures*: The African-American Women who Sent the U.S. to Space. Here, Scheherazade Jackson, Kim Kinda, and Tom Purdom discussed the hit film based on the true story of Katherine Johnson and other African-American women whose math and engineering skills helped the early US space missions. This panel also mentioned what parts of the film were true events, and what parts were made up in the Hollywood style. I've seen this film myself, and I highly recommend others to see it.

Thus, another issue of DOTTY'S DIMENSIONS: THE COLUMN bites the dust. For Issue #13, I hope to visit six places in Essex County, NJ; a day trip to NYC; a science event in Washington, DC; a regular visit to DC; and Balticon. Meanwhile, have a Happy Holiday Season. Goodbye for now!