



MY VIEW

It has been delightful getting to know Buffalo

A year ago, I'd been a New Englander all my life, and thought I would be until the day I died. But when my husband changed careers, became a minister and was called to a church in the Southtowns, that was all about to change. I had no idea what the Buffalo area was like, but I noticed when I enthused about our upcoming move, some people in Massachusetts did. One person sent me a link to a site that talked about Buffalo's architecture and efforts to restore it. Others weren't so positive. One person went so far as to tell me Buffalo was on every list ever written of worst places to live. Some just looked away.

My enthusiasm took a hit. Eventually it morphed to an uneasiness tinged with fear. Were my husband and I making one of the worst mistakes of our lives? But we had a wonderful feeling about the church Dick had been called to. The people we'd met there were warm and welcoming. And we had committed to come. So we put the house we'd lived in for many years on the market and started packing. When our house sold almost immediately, we took it as a sign we were doing the right thing.

We made our move, shedding lots of tears as we left our beloved home, bade friends and family goodbye and started off on our new adventure. My husband began work, immersing himself right away in the life of the church. I focused on getting us settled in at home. But I also began to venture out, heading into Buffalo to the Albright-Knox Art Gallery and walking around Delaware Park, taking a tour of City Hall, getting to know Elmwood Village, visiting the Botanical Gardens and Our Lady of Victory. I started to fall for Buffalo.

But I knew there was much more to Buffalo than the sights every tourist saw, so I ventured into other neighborhoods. Not all were as tony as Elmwood, and it didn't take long to notice that people were hurting. I attended a literacy event at the library and found out that 30 percent of Buffalonians are functionally illiterate.

I learned about the steel industry and the catastrophic toll the closing of the plants took on so many people. As steel crumbled, so did the dreams of many of those who worked there. My heart broke for what people here have suffered. But it didn't make me want to turn away; it made me love you more. It made me want to help.

I realized Buffalo had a self-image problem, too. On a tour of a historic building, the guide said she thought it started when President William McKinley died here. I've heard others say it's because there's nothing going on here. I went to a workshop and when the leader said something about Buffalo and self-image, the people in the room instantly knew what he was talking about.

There have been times when my husband and I have been lonely for Massachusetts, moments when we long to see loved ones. But this is home now, and we intend to stay right where we are.

When I first moved here, I cried for the friends I'd lost. Now, I feel joy for the friends I've made, and the knowledge that I'll make more. I miss my old hometown and Boston a little. But I don't have time to miss them a lot. I'm too busy taking in the glory of places like Niagara Falls, getting to know more about your history and figuring out how I can be a part of your future. And I'm delighted to be getting to know you.

People had warned me about the snow, and it's true. But as in any relationship, you take the good with the bad. So hold your head up, Buffalo. To know you is to love you, warts and all.