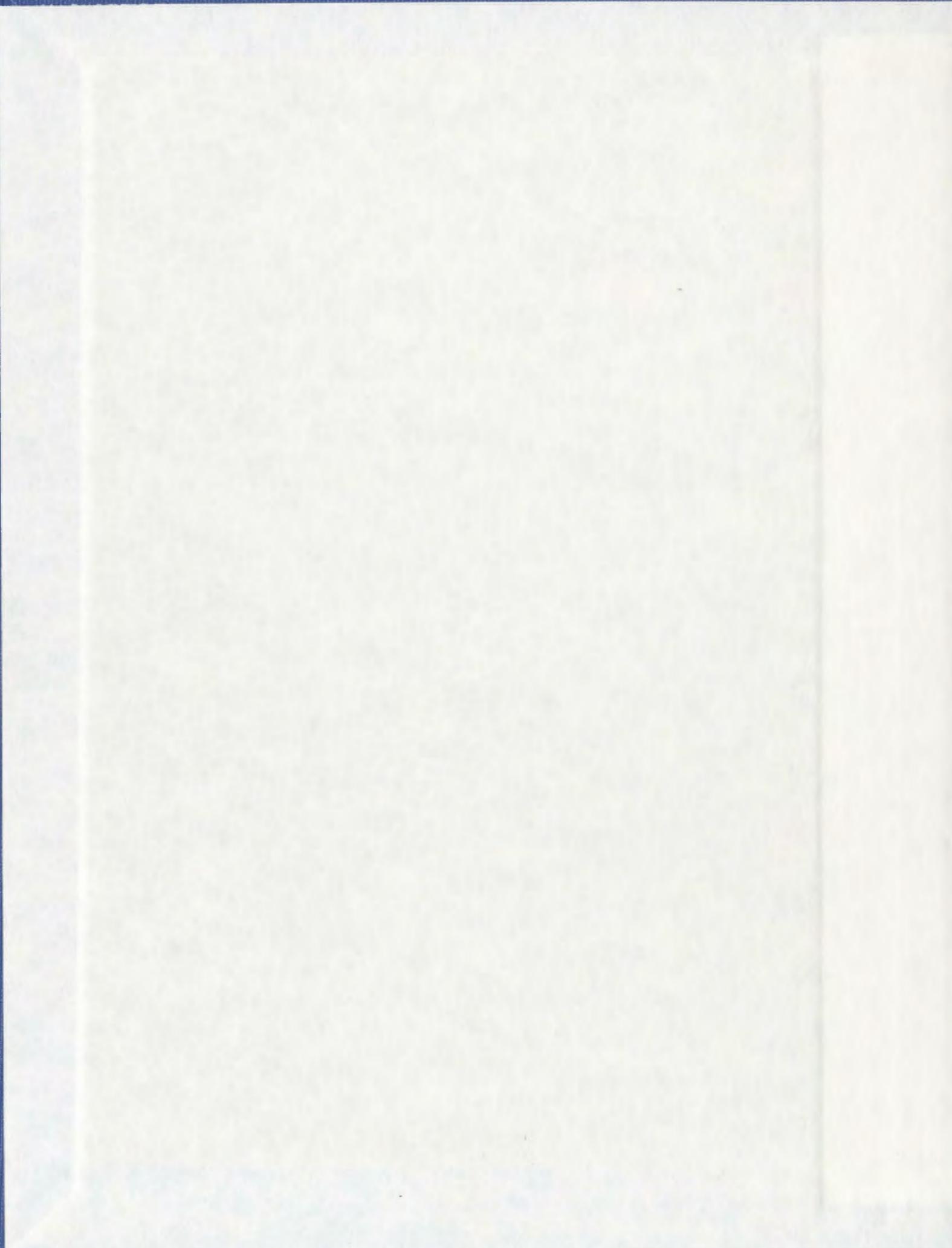


**(RE)VISITING THE INDUSTRIAL PAST:
REPRESENTATION AND MEANING AT
NOVA SCOTIA'S MUSEUM OF INDUSTRY**

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(Re)Visiting the Industrial Past: Representation and Meaning at Nova Scotia's Museum of Industry

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Abstract

This thesis examines questions of representation and meaning at the Museum of Industry, a part of the Nova Scotia Museum, located in Stellarton, Nova Scotia. An ethnographic approach to studying a museum, it views the Museum of Industry as a social space wherein the perspectives of cultural producers and cultural consumers are considered. The museum space - the displays, texts, and objects of the exhibits - is also considered in this approach. The Museum of Industry produces narratives of industrial, technological, and social achievement to historically validate a post-industrial province. Portrayals of an ascent to industrial success, and later, adaptability in the wake of industrial decline, serve as a reminder of previous economic strength and current viability, dispelling regional stereotypes and re-describing Nova Scotia as an industrial place, both worthwhile and competent. The Museum of Industry focuses on interpreting the past through identifiable human characters and interactive, engaging exhibits so that visitors encounter the past in a personalized way. Lastly, museum visitors are active rather than passive consumers of Nova Scotia's industrial heritage, making meaning through the way they put to use or relate industrial heritage representations in their own lives. The study contributes to an understanding of how the industrial past is represented, and what the public consumes, within the Nova Scotia heritage world.

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Chapter 1

Punching the Museum Time Clock

Introduction

The TransCanada Highway runs through the middle of Pictou County, pushing eastward the foreign and rental car license plates of summer tourists destined for Cape Breton Island. Some of these tourists will pull aside at the visitor information centre at the Irving gas station, stretch their legs and consult their *Doers and Dreamers* travel guide to consider what they may see or do in this small region of central Nova Scotia. Some will stay only briefly, waiting in a long line of cars to board the ferry to Prince Edward Island. Others will note in their guidebooks the picturesque image of the shiretown, Pictou, and look there to find the essence of Scottish heritage in the emigrant ship *Hector*, a floating monument to the Highland Diaspora and the first Scots settlers who landed in the province aboard her in 1773. Still others will drive along the Northumberland shoreline to sea bathe in the warmest waters north of the Carolinas.

Compelled by one or another of the many reasons people visit museums, some of these tourists will wind down the long ramp of exit twenty-four towards the small town of Stellarton and the Museum of Industry. They may be surprised to see such a very large and modern building devoted to a provincial industrial story when they have encountered so little evidence or mention of industrial activity, past or present, in their travels. Driving through Pictou County, they will view from the highway the large dark mounds of earth excavated from the single open pit coal mine and if the wind is blowing in a particular direction, smell the toxic stench of the struggling pulp and paper mill, but they will not realize that at the turn of the nineteenth century, Pictou County was the heart of an industrial Nova Scotia. Instead, the Nova Scotia most tourists

encounter, and in which local residents live and work, is a province where leisure, tourism, and what Bella Dicks terms a “backward-looking heritage” (2000b, 9) has, in part, replaced resource exploitation and manufacturing in a new post-industrial service economy. Highly selective cultural images, historical narratives, and physical geographies are given new meaning as a palatable and marketable product. The unsavoury grime of the industrial past is excluded from this cultural commodity so that Nova Scotia is primed for tourist consumption.

Since the 1920s, the landscape of Nova Scotia has rapidly de-industrialized and new service-based industries have emerged as the province struggles with economic stagnation and outmigration;¹ both the tangible and intangible presence of an industrial past and identity has greatly diminished in the province. Tourism has welcomed the local landscape reclaiming its more pleasing pre-industrial appearance. As puffs of smoke ceased, rivers receded, and the earth settled and re-greened when heavy industry and manufacturing left the province, post-industrial Nova Scotia is now, largely, a camera-ready panorama of farmland, forest, scenic coastline, and heritage attractions, dotted with one major urban centre, Halifax. As industry ceased, buildings were demolished or rehabilitated and re-developed in the “new retailing and service landscapes that have replaced industry” (Summerby-Murray 2002, 49). Some industrial towns and former industrial sites have found new meaning as heritage representations of their past selves (Binkley 2000).

The town of Glace Bay, Cape Breton for instance, has re-imagined its former mining identity in heritage enterprise. The Cape Breton Miner’s Museum, a coal mining interpretative centre with an underground mine tour lead by a retired miner, capitalizes on Glace Bay’s former purpose as a mining center, memorializing the industrial past, but also transforming the town as a

¹ According to the Nova Scotia Office of Immigration, the job sector that is service based accounted for 75.2% of all jobs in Nova Scotia versus 24.8% in the goods producing sector.

place of consumption rather than production. Likewise, Lunenburg, a town historically based on fishing, fish processing, shipbuilding, and foundry work has restructured its economy for tourism since the decline of the fishing industry. Now a UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) world heritage site, Binkley observes, "fishing, as a way of life, has become a commodity, an historical artefact, a romantic adventure, which has been used to promote tourism" (2000, 2). Even industry, then, has found a place in the "back-ward looking heritage" schemes of leisure and tourism development that characterize Nova Scotia's new service economy. The relatively few examples of industrial heritage in the province, however, suggest a "preference for an even earlier, rural and pastoral era in the region's historical geography" (Summerby-Murray 2002, 49).²

The cultural landscape of much of Nova Scotia is firmly rooted in a colonial, rural, and seafaring past, but industry and its decline are equally a part of the province's varied landscape and have shaped the geographical, historical, cultural, and economic significance of Nova Scotia. A place of both large and small-scale industrial enterprise in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Nova Scotia mined coal, melded steel, and manufactured products as diverse as automobiles and boxed chocolates. What is challenging, however, is that while Nova Scotia has a rich and diverse industrial past, it is seldom acknowledged, especially in provincial heritage schemes. 'Traditional' industries like fishing and agriculture are readily associated with the province but as McKay (1994) maintains, have been re-imagined within the rubric of the tourism-

² The Museum of Industry is the main museum representative of Nova Scotia's industrial experience. A few small, local history museums scattered throughout the province deal with localized industrial topics, like railroading and natural resource exploitation. Notable industrial heritage sites include The Springhill Mining Museum in Springhill and The Glace Bay Miner's Museum in Glace Bay, Cape Breton. Within the Nova Scotia Museum system, sites that touch on aspects of the industrial past include Sherbrooke Village in Sherbrooke, The Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax, The Fisheries Museum of the Atlantic, Lunenburg, and Balmoral Grist Mill, Balmoral Mills. Wile Carding Mill, Bridgewater, Barrington Woolen Mill, Barrington, and Sutherland Steam Mill, Denmark have a more specified industrial focus.

driven 'folk ideal'.³ Within this ideal, the fact that Nova Scotia heavily industrialized has been advantageously disregarded. The historical complexities and politics of raw industry, capitalism, labour struggle, disparity, and economic shortcomings - all realities that historically shaped the province - are appropriated through cultural selection by more romantically aesthetic images and narratives of a placid landscape and complacent people, removed from the ugliness of industrial modernity. Connected to the sea and earth, poverty is picturesque, and the people's so called 'hardiness' also illustrates a cultural resolve to remain industrially arrested.

My undergraduate honours degree research focused on another Nova Scotia Museum site,⁴ Sherbrooke Village, where I examined an economic imperative to represent and market certain idealized and nostalgic representations of an exclusively folk past that deemphasized the prominent industrial story of Sherbrooke, which had an economy based on shipbuilding, lumbering, and gold mining. I reflected on the reality that many provincial-designate museums, as well as other heritage and tourism sites across the province projected a folksy, pre-industrial, and nostalgic image of the region, bolstering widespread stereotypes of Nova Scotia as an antimodern place. If, as Summerby-Murray (2002) and McKay (1994; 2010) have observed, there is a preference in the Nova Scotia heritage world for rather limited representations of the rural and non-industrial past, I wondered if there were any *alternative* representations of Nova Scotia history - museum sites that did not preclude modernity and industrialization - but engaged with the rich and complex history of industry, labour, and technology in Nova Scotia. If so, how did these sites choose to represent the industrial past? What did the representations mean for a Nova Scotia place-identity? The Museum of Industry, one of only a handful of industrial-themed

³ See Diamuid Ó Giolláin's (2000, 142-165) similar analysis of the 'folk ideal' in the context of Ireland.

⁴ The Nova Scotia Museum is a decentralized group of provincially designated and administered heritage sites and museum complexes. The Museum of Industry is part of this system, and its employees are civil servants.

heritage sites in the province, emerged as the most suitable case study for a critical examination of representation and meaning-making in Nova Scotia's industrial heritage.

In the preferred Nova Scotia heritage landscape of rural, pastoral, seafaring, and colonial, an institution like The Museum of Industry is unique and significant in its focus on Nova Scotia's labour and industrial past. The museum acknowledges industries associated with the province like coal mining and other natural resource exploitation, but also manufacturing, invention, the face of contemporary post-industrial Nova Scotia, and the province's industrial contribution on a national and global scale. A part of the Nova Scotia Museum system, The Museum of Industry, according to its website, is a space that intends to portray the "fascinating story of Nova Scotia's industrial workers, including unique machines, technology, and stories of sweat, grit, tears, tragedies and triumphs." A museum complex with professional exhibits arranged in chronological galleries containing a diversity of industrial artifacts that illustrate a developed, narrative theme centered on social history, objects were intentionally collected, and themes and narratives consciously created and arranged by a skilled exhibit planning team of museum staff and outside consultants. Like all museums, what is being presented and represented to the public has been thoughtfully and deliberately motivated and produced. As Groote and Haartsen maintain, "heritage narratives are not produced for nothing or for fun, but in order to, for example, preserve cultural values, attract tourists and tourist spending, or to reinforce specific place identities" (2008, 181). In the Museum of Industry, stories and objects concerning industry and labour have been selected and creatively crafted into a provincially sanctioned representation or narrative voice of Nova Scotia's industrial and labour past. Following Hall's concept, 'raw' historical events must become a 'story' before they can become a communicative event (1980, 129). How, then, has the Museum of Industry been encoded by cultural producers with certain

meanings for heritage consumers to identify with? What messages are being created and in turn, how does the visiting public decode these messages? Do the representations put forward in the Museum of Industry contribute to a narrative of industrial place-identity for the province?

This thesis is an examination of the Museum of Industry through a diversity of methodological and theoretical perspectives in order to understand how the museum contributes to the production and circulation of cultural values and meanings about the industrial past and present of Nova Scotia for public consumption. A study of representation and interpretation, this research intends to examine the varying messages put forward by the museum about the region's industrial past, why they are put forward, and in turn, how these representations influence meaning for consumers of heritage. It is, essentially, a study of what story about Nova Scotia's industrial past and present is being shaped within the province through a provincial museum institution and what implications that story has for a provincial place-identity. It explores the construction, representation, interpretation, and public understanding of labour, industry, and technology at The Museum of Industry and how meaning is determined by those who make representations and by those who consume them (Lidichi 1997).

Methodology

I pull my small car into the Museum of Industry parking lot. It is around ten-thirty in the morning and I have just driven the sixty or so kilometers from my home in the rural outskirts of Pictou County to Stellarton. I had waited in construction, as the pothole-filled secondary road I travel is re-paved, a routine I become familiar with as I commute to my field site throughout the crisp autumn months of September and October. As a resident of Pictou County, I have been familiar with the Museum of Industry (MOI) since childhood and viewed it as a practical field

site from which I could approach an ethnographic study with relative logistical ease. Michael Mills says a friendly 'hello' as I pass through the heavy, glass lobby doors. "Are there any visitors in the museum yet?" I always ask before I begin my day of fieldnote-taking and visitor and staff conversations. I usually chat with Christine or Barb, the casual receptionists, before I wander off into the galleries or request a swipe card to access the administrative area, which is located beyond a locked door at the end of a narrow corridor adjacent to the foyer. I place my coat and bag in a locker there, which Jamie, the building supervisor, has been kind enough to label with my name. I set my lunch bag in the staff room fridge, a comfortable space with two bulletin boards filled with newspaper clippings, funny staff photos, and occupational safety notices. Some chairs, a water cooler, a kitchenette and a table scattered with pages of the morning's *Chronicle Herald* furnish the space. A deck of cards is on another table where Scott, the museum technician, and Jamie, can be found playing a rather competitive game of bridge during their lunch breaks.



Figure 1. The Museum of Industry, Stellarton, Nova Scotia.



Figure 2. Christine greets visitors at the reception desk.

Like all museums, the Museum of Industry can be divided into two spheres: what is displayed or made public, and what is not. The most fascinating thing about museums for curious visitors (and researchers) like myself, are the exclusive doors which read ‘staff only’ and the knowledge that there are likely hundreds and hundreds of interesting artifacts *not* on display behind them. Likewise, the unseen world of staff offices and boardrooms, where the exhibits we consume were envisioned, planned, and implemented with certain intentions, and where the museum is now kept running and evolving, are an equally intriguing world of cultural production and the encoding process. In the hidden lunch rooms where coffee breaks inevitably bring up tales of silly visitor questions or the irritating but more often humorous encounters museum staff have experienced with tourists,⁵ these interpreters, docents, receptionists, maintenance staff, and curators are a interesting study of occupational life outside their public personas as much as they are in them.

⁵ While carrying out fieldwork for this thesis, I, too, had an interesting encounter with a tourist. I ‘rescued’ one who had become trapped in a ladies restroom stall.

This thesis focuses on the public display of Nova Scotia's industrial past through museum 'texts' (displays, objects, and narrative discourses) and the practice of reading these texts to determine meaningful themes. In other words, it is a study of the representational practices of the Museum of Industry. Throughout this ethnographic research, however, I have been able to move beyond the public sphere of what is displayed, to access the 'staff only' perspectives of the museum. While I was by no means granted an insider or employee status at the museum, I was able, to some extent, experience a glimpse of the day-to-day life of working at the Museum of Industry. In eating my lunch with staff members, in conversations, and in simply observing the happenings at the museum, I have come to understand that as occupational sites, museums have unique personalities that are never witnessed by visitors. In the Tony's pizza Scott has ordered every Friday for the past decade or in the delicious rice crispy squares Marketing Services Officer, Denise, so generously shares, the Museum of Industry is as much a social space for private staff interaction as it is a public institution. I have tried in this thesis, then, to capture some of the personality of the museum as an occupational site.



Figure 3. Lunch time. Clockwise, Cheryl, Scott, Kelly, and Paul.

In another sense, obtaining an understanding of the 'staff only' perspective in relation to how the museum's cultural producers (namely curators, directors, exhibit planners, and frontline interpreters) view or read the museum and mediate the exhibits and public programming was also important. Much of this research is characterized by observations of, and conversations with, museum staff members. I followed interpreter Paul Lalande as he led tour groups through the museum and I observed how the whole museum team worked together to organize and deliver March Break activities for local families. In more formalized settings, I recorded interviews about the nature of their professional work and their views on the Museum of Industry as a representational space. With the museum director as well as a former curator who was a key figure in the early stages of the museum's development, I recorded two separate personalized guided tours through the museum exhibition area. Through these methods, I have been able to examine the institutional context of the museum in order to understand how museum workers frame the museum and contribute to the creation of the museum's messages. From interviews and conversations with the director, curators, and frontline interpreters and receptionist, I have provided staff members the opportunity to relate their own perspectives, motivations, and ambitions regarding the Museum of Industry, and offer what *they* see as the provincial story of industry being told at the museum.

As Handler and Gable suggest, "museums produce messages or meaningful statements and actions," which scholars and critics of museums try to understand by reading and interpreting those messages. However, as they further identify, "most research on museums has proceeded by ignoring much of what happens in them" (1997, 9). My methodological approach then, following Handler's anthropological definition of a museum as foremost a "social arena, not a repository of objects" (1993, 33) views the Museum of Industry as a communicative encounter between

cultural producers, exhibits, and visitors. The social interactions or understandings of the people who consume museum messages are important in being able to fully understand the communicative processes of the museum. Few museum studies have qualitatively examined visitors' understandings of the museum exhibits, and the narratives that they 'take in' during their visit. During the fieldwork for this research, I carried out a visitor study in which I collected twenty semi-structured interviews of visitors both entering and exiting the museum, posing a series of questions that gauged their perspectives on industry in Nova Scotia and what they learned or encountered in their museum visit. Ranging between eight and twelve minutes in length, I analyzed the interviews in order to determine how visitors receive and interpret the messages the museum conveys or, how visitors decode the site and make meanings for themselves.

The focus of this thesis is on the production of meaning through representations in the museum. Thus, the goal of this research is not to examine the historical accuracy of a given past at The Museum of Industry, but is rather to examine how this past is constructed or framed. I am interested in the museum's depiction of a certain historical reality, and the focus is on the cultural and ideological assumptions within the content and delivery of the museum. Thus, this research focuses on the various expressive elements that make up museums: artifacts and objects, exhibit text panels, visual and audio depictions, narrative themes, educational programming, the organization of space, staff actions and ideas, the interactions of visitors and how they "combine to articulate meanings and represent culture" (McLean 1998, 248). The research, then, follows a methodological model that links the cultural producer, the cultural product, and the cultural consumer and which recognizes the agency of cultural producers and visitors, as well as non-human actors like texts and objects. The issues addressed in this ethnography, then, can be

categorized in three main foci: perspectives of cultural producers, consumer perspectives, and the museum space.

Theoretical Framework and Relevant Literature

This research is centered on ethnographic investigation (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Sunstein and Chiseri-Strater 2006). My interest in approaching museums from an ethnographic perspective is influenced by Sharon Macdonald's 'behind the scenes' examination of Britain's Science Museum (2002), Handler and Gable's analysis of the 'new history' at Colonial Williamsburg (1997), and Bella Dicks insights on heritage, identity, and place at the Rhondda Heritage Park in Wales (2000b; 1996; 1997). Their methodological and theoretical approach to analyzing the structures of museums and heritage produced perceptive and comprehensive texts of particular museum experiences where the perspectives of staff members and visitors were considered along with the ethnographer's own observations and readings of museum interpretation and presentation. The methodological and theoretical insights of these texts greatly inform this particular case study which builds on a growing scholarship that calls for an ethnographic approach to museum studies (González, Nader, and Ou 1999; 2001).

This research draws on the social theories of du Gay, Hall et. al's 'circuit of culture' model (1997), Hall's encoding/decoding schema (1980), and textual analysis (Fairclough 2003). Used in conjunction, these methods of analysis produce a detailed understanding of the meaning-making that is being performed at The Museum of Industry. du Gay, Hall et. al's concept of the 'circuit of culture' focuses on a number of processes that, together, complete a circuit through which a cultural text or artifact may be studied: *representation, production, consumption, and*

identity (1997, 3).⁶ As all processes are interconnected, this research explores how a cultural entity like The Museum of Industry articulates itself: how it produces representations about technology, labour, and industry, how visitors consume those representations, and in turn, how the representations put forward contribute to a narrative of identity for the region.

In the framework of an encoding/decoding model, my analysis deconstructs the ways the museum's displays are encoded in the static exhibits and interpretative actions of staff with certain meanings for consumers to identify.⁷ Also termed the 'poetics' of museum exhibiting (Karp and Lavine 1991), Lidichi describes encoding as the "selection and creativity [on the part of cultural producers], which allows certain meanings to surface" (1997, 166). What are these meanings? How do visitors interpret the history of industry and labour in Nova Scotia put on display at the Museum of Industry? My research, then, through the analysis of semi-structured visitor interviews, provides insight on how consumers decode the museum and react to the messages put forward. Dicks suggests that decoding is an active process of "untangling the multilayered narratives, impressions, ideas and images of heritage, which visitors assimilate into their existing repertoires of historical knowledge" (2000b, 219). This research looks to offer insight into how visitors make sense of Nova Scotia's industrial past through the objects and stories the museum displays and narrates.

Textual analysis is used to explore the articulation of significance within the museum texts. It provides insights into the manner in which meaning is constructed and conveyed through museum text, discourse, and language - from exhibit panels, to brochures, to labels, to

⁶ du Gay, Hall et. al's (1997) concept of the circuit of culture also includes 'regulation' as an analytical category. I have chosen not to use this category in my analysis of the MOI as a cultural entity, because it is least applicable.

⁷ See Buzinde and Santos 2008 and 2009 for a useful application of encoding/decoding in studying representations and visitor understandings of history at a South Carolina heritage site.

transcriptions of interpreters' dialogue. As Fairclough suggests "[t]o research meaning-making, one needs to look at interpretations of texts as well as texts themselves, and more generally at how texts practically figure in particular areas of social life, which suggests that textual analysis is best framed within ethnography" (2003, 15). In this way, I link the 'micro' analysis of texts to the 'macro' analysis of the larger systems, structures, and practices within the museum. My research relies on the description of these systems, structures and practices through the lens of ethnography, coupled with a systematic analysis of text, which coalesce to give a fuller account into the way cultural producers and consumers consider industry and labour within the museum.

This thesis also examines general issues in the rhetoric of professional museum and heritage practice, industrial museums, and related academic scholarship. Following Dicks (2000b) and Atkinson (2008), it examines the new 'vernacular heritage' which looks at the historical experiences of the 'ordinary', where the gaze has shifted from "the great stories of traditional historiography towards more commonplace social, industrial and cultural histories" where the public is "learning to see and identify heritage all around them in their mundane, ordinary, everyday spaces" (Atkinson 2008, 381). This same focus on a 'social history' that is more inclusive and populist has been influential in what Vergo's same titled book (1989) has labeled the 'new museology', which promotes a democratization of the museum (Anderson 2004; Kavanagh 1990; Macdonald 2006; Watson 2007). This 'vernacular heritage' is also characterized by informal and experience centered methods of heritage delivery, usually through reconstruction, simulation, and 'hands-on' activity that appeal to a wider population of visitors. Human characters and interactive exhibits, notes Dicks, are a "key contemporary feature of the new heritage, as is the emphasis on themes and contexts" (2000b, 42). What is the new vernacular heritage at the MOI? How does the Museum of Industry represent ordinary people of

the past, and how does it create visiting experiences that ordinary people of the present will respond to? Or as MOI interpreter Randy Muir phrased it, how does the MOI create a more 'personalized' history of Nova Scotia?

This research also examines concepts of region and place and how museums are powerful articulators or cultural communicators of notions of place-identity (Uzzell 1996). Museum narratives can reproduce, elevate, and dispel particular place myths. They can also create new myths that attend to the aesthetics and politics of heritage presentations that adopt a celebratory or comforting nature (Bonnell 2008). This case study examines how the Museum of Industry employs agents of memory and nostalgia to memorialize and mythicize the industrial past and its workers, and how it presents historical narratives of technological and social achievement to validate a post-industrial province. It explores how portrayals of the successes, adaptabilities, and technologies of the province's industrial past serve as a reminder of previous economic strength and ability, dispelling regional stereotypes, and re-describing Nova Scotia as an industrial place, both worthwhile and competent.

Introducing The Museum of Industry

Stellarton is clean and orderly. A typical, small Nova Scotia working town, it has a good home-cooking family restaurant, a well-used baseball field, a Tim Hortons, blooming baskets of flowers, rival pizza joints, and five church denominations. Only a few faint scars of its prominent industrial past remain. Most of the deep earth in the town has been hollowed out after almost a century and a half of coal mining, so that many buildings sit above abandoned mine shafts. Sinkholes, expectedly, are a common problem. This autumn, a large section of Foord Street, the main roadway in the town, collapsed and filled with water, blocking traffic for several days as the

town's construction crew pumped out water and repaired the damage. It seems that every now and again, the de-industrialized landscape, unsatisfied in its stilled and convalescing state, will shift and heave, revealing evidence of past days of industrial activity and reminding forgetful local residents, and informing unknowing visitors, that below them is an unsteady earth floor pocketed with a complex maze of mine tunnels. In a rather authenticating gesture, the Museum of Industry actually sits on the pithead of the first British technology coalmining operation in Nova Scotia, started in 1827. Unlike the rest of Stellarton's architecture, unsteadily built atop the hole-riddled earth, the museum sits on an enormous piece of solid rock that was once used as the foundation of the old Foord mine structures.

Leaving the highway ramp and turning onto Foord Street, visitors may notice the historical and geographical odds and ends of Stellarton's coal mining past: a squat row of dilapidated former company housing sits across from the museum's entrance, and a large Cornish pump house, though reduced in size by almost half, towers over the middle of the museum parking lot, a disruptive image of the past looking out towards the zooming Highway overpass which spans the railroad tracks and East River below.



Figure 4. View of the Museum of Industry on a dreary November day. The Cornish pump house is to the left, the highway beyond.

From the highway overpass, the museum is a domineering feature in the Stellarton landscape, and one of the more notable mentions of the town next to the national grocery chain, Sobeys, whose corporate headquarters are based there. The size of seven hockey rinks, industrial green with a peaked glass roof, it resembles a large factory complex and houses over 30,000 artifacts. Spanning several acres, it is the second largest museum in Atlantic Canada, the largest in Nova Scotia, and like most industrial things, there is a feeling of ‘bigness’ about it. The large Cornish pump house, big black locomotive, and intimidating axle forge in the museum yard suggest to visitors they are about to see the substantial material presence of Nova Scotia industry inside. A bright, red-letter banner across the side of the museum reads “Hands-on-Fun”, softening the intimidating appearance of the museum by asserting its experiential nature, and unlike some perceptions of industry as unapproachable or too technical, distinguishing the museum as an interactive and accessible space. From the wide parking lot, which often has more empty spaces than cars, visitors cross the pavement to the brick portico covered entrance, and beyond the heavy

double glass lobby doors, enter the interior world of the museum where the representations, ideologies, interactions, discoveries, reminiscences, and ultimately created meanings of the museum encounter will play out.

The front reception desk cube - a fine, darkly stained wood and wrought iron countertop that once belonged in a bank - is manned by Michael Mills. It is appropriate that he is one of the first museum staff persons mentioned in this text. As the museum receptionist and a front line staff member, he is the first person that visitors encounter upon arrival at the museum (also the last) and the first person I met when I began my thesis research. Always cheerful, always joking, he has the kind of pleasant professional voice that plays well on the museum's answering machine greeting. When busy with work, he sings the refrains of various seventies and eighties pop hits, from Gino Vannelli to Bruce Springsteen, and if it is a day in which he has a meeting with Debra McNabb, the museum's director, he frets aloud as he prepares to report on gift shop sales, visitor numbers, and all the other business that takes place at the 'front end' of the museum. On other days Barb, Christine, or Mary Enid, the casual receptionists, will be behind the desk with a welcoming smile, offering tourist information, ringing in sales, answering the constantly ringing telephone, or arranging the souvenir and gift items in the nearby Museum Shop.



Figure 5. Michael Mills is the first and last staff person visitors see when they enter and exit the museum.

A ticket to the galleries is about \$8.00, and depending on visitors' degree of interest in museums, machinery, industry, and technology's impact on 'people and places', or whether they have yet eaten lunch, they could spend anywhere from an hour to a whole day touring the Museum of Industry. Many visitors specifically come to see the museum's rare collection of locomotives; others to search for a sense of their past relatives' lived experience as Pictou County coalminers in the Coal & Grit exhibition. Most visitors are tourists looking to kill time while passing through the county, while many more are local Nova Scotians on day trips. Nostalgic seniors, retired or still active industrial workers, families looking to educate and engage their children, and local school groups make up a good portion of the museum demographic. The museum also serves as a meeting place for the local community. Facility rentals for conferences, events, health clinics, and job training see the parking lot more full, and help the museum stay open year-round.

Beyond Michael and the front desk, visitors enter an open foyer, where the high-peaked glass roof brightens the transitory space with a saturation of natural light. A series of Nova Scotia

flags drape patriotically from the ceiling, a little toy train scoots around on a track above, and further beyond some potted trees and two back-to-back wooden benches; one of the museum's many painted wooden 2-D cutout workers stands to greet visitors at the gallery entrance. A foreman, dressed in grey work clothes, work boots, and a yellow hard hat holds a pencil and clipboard in his hand, seeming to record that visitors have shown up for a day of 'work' in touring the museum. The Museum of Industry can be viewed as a warehouse-like repository of out-dated technology, still and echoing with a monotony of text panels offering the technical specs of various cleaned-up machines removed from their working contexts. At the same time, however, it is a hub of interactivity where children and adults can use their strength to pump and pull interactive displays, press buttons, explore multiple medias, engage with interpreters, watch machines in motion, and ultimately follow a grand narrative that chronologically weaves together the themes of evolving (and devolving) industry and technology in Nova Scotia in relationship to the social history of how Nova Scotians lived and worked.

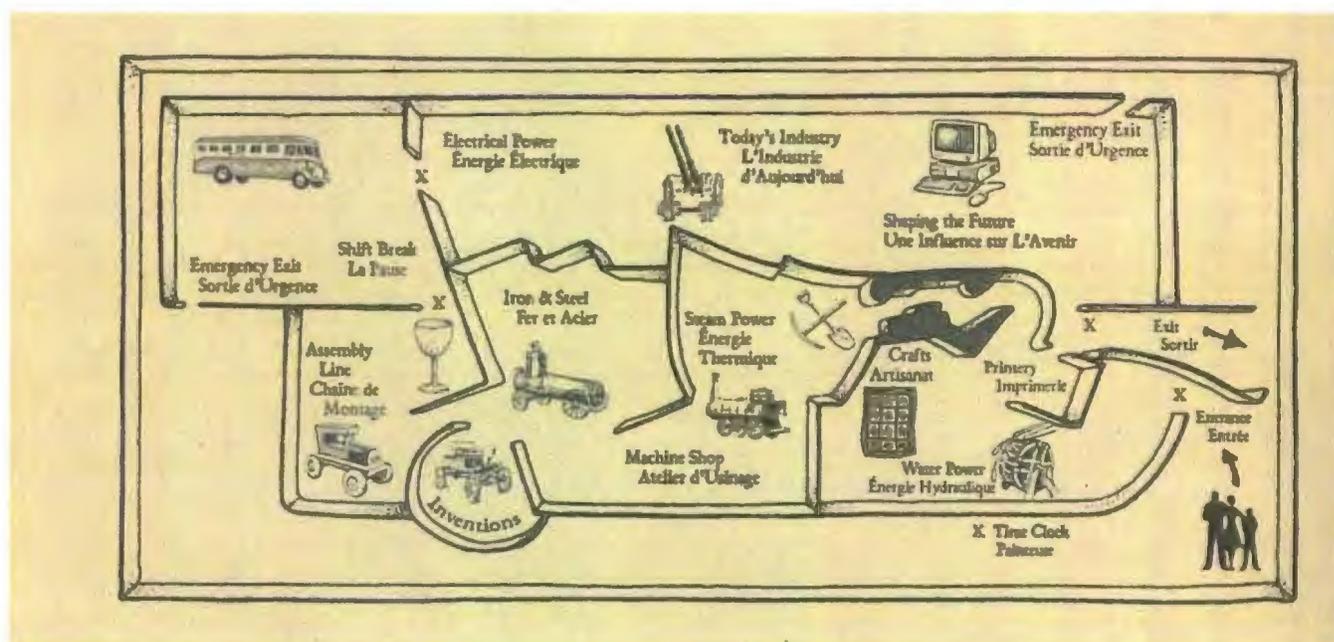


Figure 6. The Museum of Industry exhibit floor plan. Printed on the reverse side of the visitor timecard.

While there is an abundance of wooden 2-D people in the museum, there are also 3-D people who animate the Museum of Industry experience. Visitors are greeted by one of the museum's interpretative staff, like Paul Lalande or Randy Muir, as they move through the exhibit area. Paul and Randy, depending on the size and nature of the group, will offer guided tours of the museum, answer any questions visitors have, note points of interest in the artifacts and generally elaborate on the displays, texts, and in their own individual styles, convey an expanded narrative of industry in relation to Nova Scotia. As Paul sees it, his role is to "enlighten the visitors and enhance their visit." Stephen, another interpreter, helps animate the visitor's experience by operating the four or so pieces of working machinery, like the nineteenth century Davies Engine (used until 1995 to haul boats up for dry-land repair in the Sydney shipyards), which run on a compressed air system.



Figure 7. This way to the exhibits.

The museum galleries are divided into three levels that follow a circular layout and chronological, rather than thematic, method of narration. The exhibits are segmented into three units of interpretation that characterize or outline industrial development in Nova Scotia. Within these units, modes of power or technology that were used in industrial activity within each period are identified and explored. The first unit of interpretation, located in the upper level of the museum, *The Seeds of Industrialization* represents about 20% of the total exhibition and interprets Nova Scotia's industrial history to 1880. According to the *N.S. Museum of Industry Exhibit Planning Committee's Draft Exhibit Themes* report, prepared by Debra McNabb in 1992 during the exhibit planning stages, the unit is "partly intended to set in time and place Nova Scotia on the brink of industrialization as introduction to the more dramatic period of intensive industrialization which follows" (11).

It focuses on small-scale technology and production and outlines those 'seeds of industrialization' that developed the skills, mindset, ingenuity, and initiative necessary to usher Nova Scotia into the industrial age. Human strength and waterpower are the sources of energy explored in this unit. There are few historical objects in this area, besides an early printing press, a millstone, and some common trade and domestic tools. Instead of passively gazing at objects, the visitor is expected to interact with history and experience the nature of work in pre-industrial Nova Scotia - stepping into the role of a blacksmith by donning his cumbersome leather apron or lifting the heavy cast iron cookware an early nineteenth century housewife would move from hearth to table. Waterpower interactives explore how early mills harnessed a naturally occurring resource, and a dedicated group of volunteer textile artisans work in a domestic recreation, demonstrating rug hooking, quilting, and other crafts. It is the space where education and entertainment meet closest at the museum.



Figure 8. The pioneer or pre-industrial gallery focuses on skilled craftsmen, domestic work, and waterpower as a source of energy.

The Age of Contrasts represents about 50% of the total exhibition, and chronicles the period of extensive and intensive industrialization in Nova Scotia from 1880-1920. It carries the visitor from the upper level of the museum, which opened to the public in 1995, to the lower level, which opened in 1998. As the *Draft Exhibit Themes* report implies, this area is “the most dynamic and exciting period to be interpreted and it forms the focal point of the exhibition” (McNabb 1992, 29). It is a unit intended to portray the industrial age, and “the diversity, scale, scope and products of manufacturing activity during this period” (McNabb 1992, 37). Change is emphasized in both the landscape and social reality of the province. The transition from pastoral landscape to a province swept up in the industrial revolution highlights urbanization and the emergence and rapid growth of new technology and inventions, large machines, capital enterprise, and the nature of industrial and manufacturing work. It is intended to “give the impression of Nova Scotia ‘on the move’ ” (McNabb 1992, 29), portraying the province as a

place of industrial accomplishment and potential. This period of intensive industrialization is contrasted, however, with the decline and failure of certain industries, especially manufacturing after 1920, due to 'external factors'. Steam, coal, and electricity are explored as sources of power. Visitors move through galleries highlighting Samson, the steam-powered locomotive, a belt-driven machine shop, steel making, factory work, and workers' living conditions.



Figure 9. Steel ingots on display in the iron and steel exhibit cluster. A large photograph of Sydney Steel is displayed on the wall.

The Period of Adjustment, finally, deals with industry, but predominately technology in Nova Scotia from the 1920s to present, demonstrating Nova Scotia's reversal to resource-based industries and strategies of coping in an increasingly de-industrializing economy. It explores Nova Scotia's transition from a manufacturing, to a natural resource and service-based economy, highlighting both the successes and failures of government incentives that attracted foreign manufacturing interests. Multimedia and computer-based technology are emphasized in this section. On display are objects relating to wartime industry, current products made in Nova Scotia, a 1960s Volvo manufactured in a Nova Scotia branch plant, and an antiquated looking hair salon. In a section relating to the rise of a tourism industry, visitors may watch an early Margaret Perry promotional tourism video and take a group photo with their own heads on the wood cutout bodies of a seaside vacationing family. An out-dated technology section with slow processing desktop computers from 1998 explains the 'cutting-edge' and life-altering technology of the information age.



Figure 10. A view from the mezzanine. The lower gallery, shown here, was completed in 1998.

From here, the visitor returns to the upper level and climbs a set of stairs to the mezzanine, passing a landing with large glass windows where the museum's storage rooms are made visible: horse sleighs, a dory, a banker's desk, cast iron stoves, cash registers, textile equipment and the Albion locomotive tease visitors on the other side of the glass. In the mezzanine, the visitor enters the Coal & Grit exhibit, a more specific place-narrative that relates the social history of coal mining in Pictou County, from the arrival of the General Mining Association in 1827 to the Westray explosion of 1992 and present day open-pit coal mining. Collaboratively curated with a local historian, the mezzanine exhibit differs from the upper and lower galleries in that it tells a story through first person reminiscences of local coal miners, few artifacts, and little mention of technology and machines. From here, visitors descend the mezzanine steps and proceed back through the brightly lit foyer to the reception desk and gift shop, where they may purchase the iconography of their visit in a piece of 'real' Pictou County coal for twenty-five cents, museum postcards and souvenirs, industry related books and videos, handcrafted items, children's science kits, model trains, toy machines or the plethora of standard Nova Scotia gift shop ware from salt water taffy to tartan painted ceramic thimbles. Some visitors linger to chat with Michael or fill out a comment card before walking out through the heavy glass doors, returning to their vehicles, and taking their leave for Cape Breton.

The story being told at the Museum of Industry is "how Nova Scotia evolved from an essentially rural colony of farmers, fishermen, and craftsmen, to an industrial economy, society, and landscape, shaped in particular by manufacturing; how and why the significance of its industrial strength diminished over time; and the current nature of its industrial character" (McNabb 1992, 1). Related mostly through text panels, but also objects, interpreters' narratives, and interactive media, the story intends to offer visitors a glimpse of particular events, places,

time periods, technologies, and ways of life in the industrial past (and to an extent, present) of Nova Scotia. Though the Museum of Industry is situated in Pictou County, a large-scale industrial center known for coal mining, steel manufacturing, and pressed glass making, the museum intends to encompass much more than the Pictou County story of industry. The mandate of its collections and operations, as well as its designation as part of the provincial system of museums, places the narrative themes and displayed objects in the Museum of Industry within a much wider provincial story.

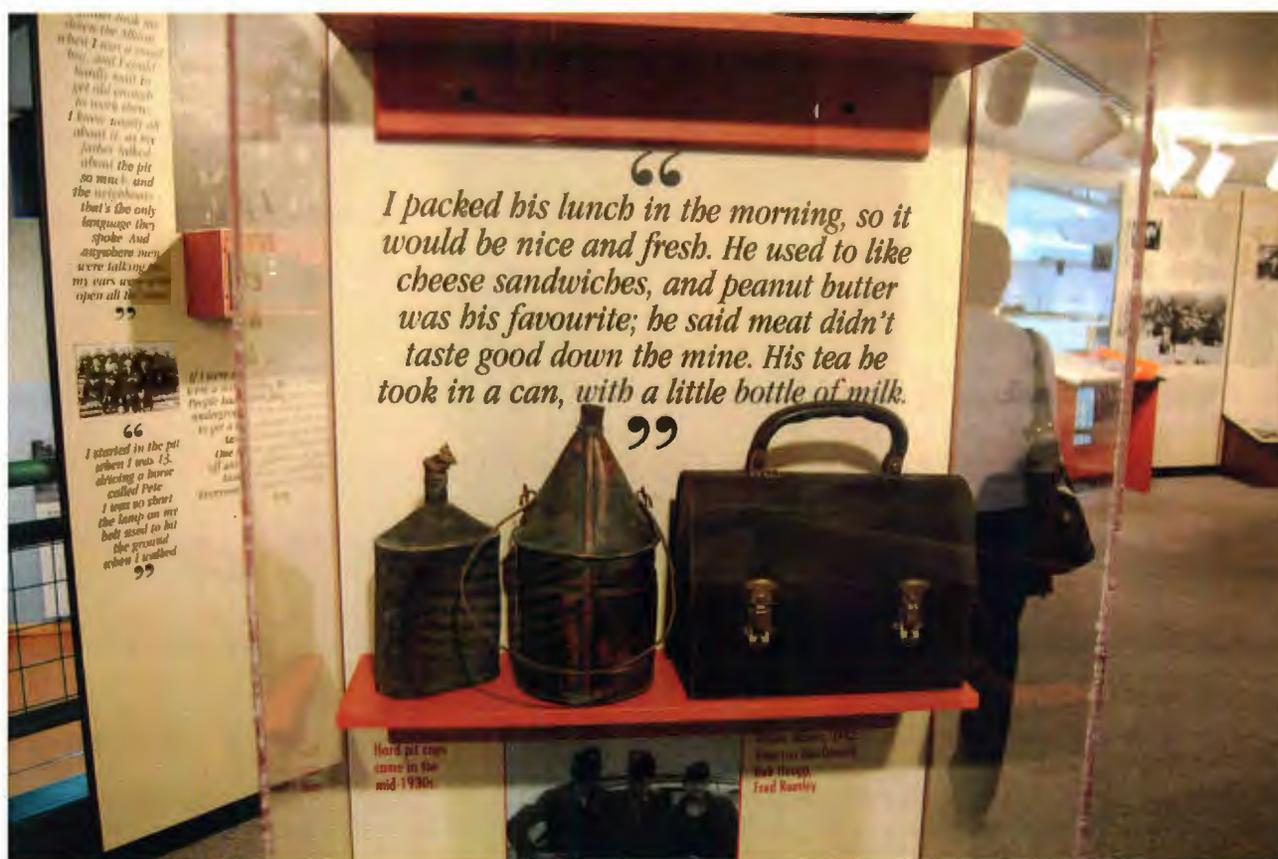


Figure 11. A miner's lunch can and water jug. Coal & Grit tells the story of Pictou County Coal mining through the voices of miners, their families, and community members.

Placing The Museum of Industry in Perspective

Situating the Museum of Industry within its context as a provincial museum site and as a Pictou County landmark offers a more detailed understanding of the museum as a representational space. In briefly looking at the story of the Museum of Industry's conception and implementation, I show some of the development challenges the museum has faced in terms of budgetary constraint and shifting politics, and how these challenges, in turn, have impacted the current exhibitionary and interpretative structure of the museum. Officially opened on June 10th 1995, The Museum of Industry's creation was a multi-million dollar project in the works since the early 1980s. Its story reflects the inconsistencies of politics, the need for tourism-oriented economic redevelopment in a deindustrializing area like Pictou County, and the challenges of preserving and interpreting industrial heritage in Nova Scotia. It is also a story of public engagement and how the support and initiative of the local community overcame an enormous financial set back that threatened to close the museum before it even opened.

When I first contacted Debra McNabb about the possibility of carrying out an ethnographic study of the Museum of Industry, she informed me that she was the "keeper of the collective memory of the museum." It's an appropriate title, as Debra was the second person hired on the team that carried out the exhibition development of the museum. She started working for the museum in 1988 in developing the collection, then managing the development of the permanent exhibition, and has served as museum director for the past twelve years. In late August, I walked the exhibits with Peter Latta, the first person hired to work towards the development of the Museum of Industry, working as Curator of Collections from 1986 to 1992. Both Peter and Debra have offered their personal experience and perspective on the development

of the museum. Supplemented with newspaper articles and museum documents gathered from the museum's archives, I have pieced together a brief account of the Museum of Industry.



Figure 12. Debra McNabb, MOI director, has a chat with 'Mae' in the recreated miner's kitchen, circa 1920s.

The “germ of the idea”, as Debra relates, began in the mid-seventies with two local Pictou County entrepreneurs and industrial history enthusiasts, Mr. Bill Sobey and Mr. Bob Tibbits. Both recognized the importance of the industrial, transportation, and mining history of the county and felt a growing concern for the disappearing material remains of the area's industrial prominence. Mr. Tibbits held a collection of four locomotives, among other industrial materials, and both men wanted to see these kinds of artifacts preserved and interpreted for the public in a museum facility in Pictou County. Mr. Sobey approached the Nova Scotia Museum with the plan and an offer of an eleven-acre parcel of land in Stellarton, the site of the former Foord pit, and

where the museum now stands. The persistence of a potential benefactor brought about a special committee and museum proposal, and in 1975 the Nova Scotia Museum board motioned in favour of establishing, at least in principle, an industrial-themed museum in Pictou County. "I think [the Nova Scotia Museum] saw that there were artifacts around and I think there was some sympathy among the staff at the museum for that theme," suggests Debra McNabb, but the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic in Halifax was also under development and was given financial priority. The industrial museum did not proceed.

In 1984, a renewed interest in the industrial museum brought museum consultants Barry Lord and Gail Dexter Lord to the province to prepare a lengthy plan of implementation for the proposed Nova Scotia Museum of Industry, outlining feasibility, development potential, and interpretative direction.⁸ In addition to projected costs and figures, the report identified the responsibility of the province to preserve and interpret the history of industry in Nova Scotia. The challenge, Lord reported, was to tell an untold story, offering a more complete picture of Nova Scotia's social history. The report also acknowledged the urgent challenge to preserve and interpret Nova Scotia's industrial heritage before the long neglected, yet valuable artifacts of industry and labour were deteriorated, destroyed, or dispersed. While Lord recognized industrial objects already in the possession of the Nova Scotia Museum, he recommended a vigorous collecting strategy that would adequately preserve, and interpret for the public, the industrial heritage of the province.

In 1986, Peter Latta was hired by the Nova Scotia Museum as the first employee working specifically towards the development of the industrial museum. As Curator of Collections, he

⁸ See Lord, Barry and Gail Dexter-Lord. 1984. *Nova Scotia's Museum of Industry: A Plan for Implementation*. Halifax: The Nova Scotia Museum.

began to identify and collect material of industrial significance and interpretative value, combing the province for examples of industrial manufacturing equipment, technology, and products 'made in Nova Scotia'. While his main emphasis was on tools, equipment, and machinery that demonstrated process, when available, he also collected objects that were evocative of work, labour, and worker's lives. Peter recalls that the late 1980s was a time when the industrial landscape of Nova Scotia was literally disappearing. "What I did is that I followed the newspaper," he relates. "I would just buy the *Chronicle Herald* and just read what was closing this week, and then I would go. [...] And it was almost always done in a hurry. Because I would read one day that this plant was being torn down, or you'd see a picture in the paper of a building being torn down, and it was a foundry or something, and you'd run off and you'd see what you could collect." The nature of collections for the museum, as outlined by Lord, emphasized a tangible representation of Nova Scotia's industrial past. Workers' labour stories and oral histories were deemphasized, Peter says, because at the time a lack of object-based resources presented the major gap in the story of Nova Scotia's industrial past. "There had been a fair bit of work done on labour and labour history in Nova Scotia. I did do some interviews around - but I felt that it had been well studied. It was the material things that were vanishing."⁹ Peter Latta recalls the nature of collecting industrial materials in Nova Scotia at the time, and the attitude Nova Scotians had towards industrial material:

In terms of most of this stuff, it was free. The owners didn't want it. In fact, we were kind of doing

⁹ While industrial material culture was indeed disappearing, so were worker's stories. The fact that only one gallery in the museum, Coal & Grit, uses the actual voice of workers through first person quotations obtained from oral history interviews attests to this. If these oral materials were available elsewhere, the museum did not make use of them. Debra McNabb informed me that oral history sources were not available in the MOI collection for curators to draw upon. Today, Nova Scotia is essentially a generation of people removed from industrial work. Individuals who worked as miners, as factory workers, or in steel plants are mostly gone. There is an urgency today, then, to collect the personal perspective.

them a bit of a favour. What we did pay for, we paid for the going price of scrap metal. It was junk. At the time, Sydney [steel plant] itself was closing down, and the plant was in essence, eating itself. They had stopped buying iron ore, they had stopped buying scrap metal off-site, they were just tearing down the steel buildings and melting them down to keep things going long enough to clean up the place. Whatever the price of metal was at the time, forty cents a pound, that's what we paid. And then we paid the shipping, and we had immense shipping costs.

In other words, there was a sense of urgency in Peter's work to preserve the material remains of the industrial past, before it was gone.

In 1988, funding was secured from federal and provincial government sources, and construction began on a twelve million dollar facility. By 1991, a newly hired team of administrative, curatorial, and technical staff moved into the building and began developing exhibit and spatial concepts and designs. An early consultation weekend event with museum professionals and regional historians determined that a chronological approach should be taken to the story (as opposed to thematic clusters of artifacts), an important decision in how the narrative themes of the provincial industrial story would be conveyed to the public. Peter Latta suggests the chronological decision was largely a reflection of the bias of historians consulted in that initial planning weekend. An extensive historical research programme was initiated, where important areas of Nova Scotia's industrial history were identified and explored by regional academics, students, and heritage professionals in about eighty, mainly archive-based, research reports.¹⁰ The reports served as the basis of the museum exhibitions from which the exhibit planning committee, consisting of members with expertise in collections, interpretation,

¹⁰ Research reports covered a diverse range of topics including company housing, women and wartime work, workers' clothing, manufactured products, electrification, furniture making, unionization, and strikes.

education, industrial history, and historical geography, drafted an exhibit themes document that “organized the history of industrialization in Nova Scotia into a general framework of interpretation” (McNabb 1992, iii). “No one had done any kind of comprehensive study of ‘how did Nova Scotia industrialize, and what impact did that have on the developing character of the province’. There wasn’t anything that could tell you the whole story, and that’s what we were trying to piece together - a story to tell,” reflects Debra McNabb.

As Peter Latta succinctly described, “with museums, it’s really easy to set one up in comparison to keeping one going.” While the exhibit planning team worked to create a ‘story to tell’, the scheduled opening of the museum in 1991 was pushed ahead to 1994 due to funding and other delays. The museum, however, faced the biggest setback in September of 1993 when the province announced cost-cutting measures in the newly elected Liberal government’s Fall budget. Wilkie Taylor reported in *The Chronicle Herald*, that the province was “not willing to spend the 1.3 million needed annually to operate the ... museum” (September 2, 1993). The museum would not open, but would be indefinitely mothballed. At this time, nearly seventeen million dollars had been invested in the museum. As the article reported, locals feared the museum itself would become the Nova Scotia Museum’s largest artifact. Adjacent to the museum complex sat a similar victim of government cut backs. The last passenger rail station in Pictou County, a multi-million dollar building, was open for only a few years before it closed in 1990. “Since we were not yet open to the public, they felt it was easy to say ‘we’re not going to continue with this’,” Debra speculates on the government’s reasoning behind the cuts. This wasn’t the first time the museum came under political scrutiny. Peter Latta recalls in his collecting days an expensive purchase he made of early twentieth-century pop bottling equipment. It was discussed on the floor of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly, and he recalls

that serious questions about the development of the Museum of Industry were asked. "That's the kind of scrutiny a public institution has. It didn't amount to anything, it was an honest question, but that's the kind of scrutiny that these institutions are under."

A flood of editorials in the provincial *Chronicle Herald* and the two local Pictou County newspapers expressed the public's frustration with another potential "monument to official short-sightedness and mismanagement" (*Chronicle Herald* September 7, 1993). The John Savage Liberal government of the day justified its decision by citing recessionary times and the rational choice between opening the museum and funding school operations (*Daily News* September 15, 1993). Local editorials, however, implied politics as a motivating factor behind the museum's precarious position. The museum was funded and constructed when the Conservative Party was in power both provincially and federally. A shift in party power during the last provincial election ousted Progressive Conservative Premier Donald Cameron, who sat in a Pictou County riding. "We also have to remember that in the provincial election, the majority of voters in Pictou County bucked the trend and voted Tory. Premier Savage has not forgotten that," wrote one local resident in *The Pictou Advocate* (September 15, 1993). A letter to the editor in *The Evening News* viewed the museum's closure in a similar light, "I know the province is in dire financial straits, but the Museum of Industry is proving an easy scapegoat. I can't help but suspect that the closure of the Museum would not even be considered if the citizens of Pictou Centre and Pictou West had not returned Progressive Conservative MLA's. Reverse patronage, Dr. Savage?" (September 18, 1993).

An awareness campaign initiated by the Pictou County Tourist Association helped drum up public support for the museum. While some editorials emphasized the cultural and educational value of the museum for the province and the public, mothballing the facility was foremost

considered a severe economic blow to the county in tourism revenue. A locally produced report on the economic impact the museum's closure or opening would have on the community emphasized the economic potential of the museum. Projections that upwards of 150,000 persons would visit the museum each year made the museum, the Pictou County Tourist Association argued, an integral part of the future tourism plans of the county. The visitors the museum drew in would bring significant economic spinoffs for the economically flagging area and the province in general, increasing traffic flow and local spending. The museum would purchase local and provincial supplies, and money would go back into the economy in spent wages from the fifty or so anticipated jobs the museum would generate.

Shortly after the funding-cut announcement, local supporters of the museum, especially from the entrepreneurial community, formed the Friends of the Nova Scotia Museum of Industry Society, which met with and lobbied the provincial and federal governments, municipalities, corporations, and the general public for funding in order to allow the museum to open as scheduled. Their eight-page spread in the *Pictou Advocate* attempted to boost community support for the museum through a rhetoric that not only validated the economic benefit of the museum, but also the significance of Pictou County as an industrial place, and the importance of conserving and preserving provincial industrial heritage: "Nova Scotians, especially those from Pictou County, can be proud to claim many "firsts" in the field of industry and transportation. With hundreds of industries throughout the province during the latter part of the 19th and early part of the 20th centuries, their leadership led to the industrialization of greater Canada" (Graham February 23, 1994). Eventually, the Friends Society took over operations of the museum, while the building facilities remained in possession of the province.

The emphasis on the severe economic implications for the county if the museum failed to open its doors worked as a bargaining tool for the Friends Society with provincial and federal authorities. Six staff museum members working as civil servants were laid off in May of 1994, but by June, the federal government approved more than \$450,000 in funding for the opening and operation of the museum through ACOA (Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency). While additional funding was still needed to cover the annual operating cost, the Museum opened temporarily in the summer season of 1994, with the laid-off employees returning to work for the Friends Society. Almost two years after the government announced it would mothball the facility, phase I of the permanent exhibition, or the upper gallery from pre-industrial to factory work, was quickly assembled in time for the museum's official opening on June 10th, 1995. "When we came back, it was really me, supported by a couple of staff people here, who worked with the designers," Debra McNabb says of the changes in exhibit development after the funding crisis. "We had a construction manager ... and he worked with a crew of about twenty trades-people to fabricate what we were designing. [...] It was one of the best times we had here, that's for sure. I wish I had rollerblades here at that time." Around six weeks before the official opening, guest curator and local historian, Judith Hoegg Ryan, created the Coal & Grit exhibit. "Our board at that time insisted that we have an exhibit on the history of Pictou County coal mining for the opening of the museum," Debra relates. A local design group laid out the text panels and the exhibit was placed in the mezzanine, where it still remains today. In 2007, the exhibit was updated to reflect recent changes in Pictou County's coalmining history, like the Westray Inquiry and Bill C-45 worker safety legislation.

"The fact that we were in the midst of exhibit planning and had a timeline for it and were told that our timeframe was going to be cut by a year because of the upheaval that had happened

... we basically had to cut corners," Debra explains as the reasons why the exhibit's final product didn't become what cultural producers had initially intended. "I myself recognize gaps from what we intended to do, but ran out of time and money. Some of those would be really strengthening the worker's perspective. And also talking more about the environmental consequences of industrialization," she elaborates. Looking through the exhibit planning documents at the Museum of Industry, what is currently on the exhibition floors and what the museum is interpreting and offering for public programming is very much the skeletal frame of the initial creative concepts. While there were lofty ambitions for museum interpretation and exhibiting, including costumed interpreters based on historical characters, traveling exhibits, working industrial machines creating products, summer camps, railway tours along the East River and an ongoing industrial archaeology dig - creating an animated and thorough scope of industry in Nova Scotia - interpretation and exhibition has been much more muted. The fifty or so employees once projected to make the museum operational are today only about twenty, many of these casual or seasonal staff positions.

While the Friends could not generate the funds necessary to maintain annual operations, the provincial government decided to reinstate the museum as a part of the Nova Scotia Museum system in June 1996. Debra McNabb was asked to return to permanent employment as acting director, and in 1998 phase II of the permanent exhibition - the lower gallery from factory work to service industry and technology - was completed. Today, the museum has been open to the public for fifteen years. Since its opening, the museum has rented its conference facilities to local and provincial groups to boost revenue and supplement operational costs. March Break activities for schoolchildren and their families are the biggest event at the museum; recent holiday exhibitions and programming have included chocolate, zoo animals and steam train themes. As

the museum moves forward into a new decade, the permanent exhibitions are currently under review and a new collection strategy to address gaps in the collection is being implemented.

Conclusion

This thesis revolves around critical museum scholarship that looks to determine how meaning is made at the Museum of Industry by examining the site as a representational space. It attempts to show, through a diversity of perspectives, how the museum represents and interprets Nova Scotia's industrial past, and in turn, how this influences museum-goers understandings of industry, technology, and labour in Nova Scotia. This thesis, however, does not pretend to capture the sum of the museum as a representational space. Indeed, much of what this thesis does (as most academic studies do) is disaggregate museum texts, visitor perspectives, and curatorial actions and views into rather artificial categories and descriptions that simplify their complex and interconnected nature. In other words, I have placed a multi-faceted institution within a framework of analysis that has excluded many subtleties and intricacies, but also larger contextual considerations. While I cannot offer a thorough analysis of the site, I have tried at least to contribute to, as Handler advocates, a better understanding of the Museum of Industry as a social space.

This chapter has introduced the museum as a representational space, unique amidst a tourism and heritage landscape that, on the whole, does not recognize Nova Scotia's industrial past. This thesis, essentially, looks to situate the MOI within this larger tourism and heritage landscape and explore how museum representations challenge or conform to the labeling of Nova Scotia as a rural, pre-industrial place. The idea of regional stereotypes and perspectives of place

emerge, then, as a context of the museum. The following chapter explores how the Museum of Industry negotiates notions of place-identity for Nova Scotia.

Chapter 2

New Ideas of Region: Revisionist Heritage at The Museum of Industry

Regional Stereotypes and Place-Identity

Herb Wylie observes “for many if not most Canadians, Atlantic Canada is a nice place to visit but otherwise a nagging burden on the federal coffers” (2008, 161). Consigning the Atlantic provinces to a status of idyllic tourist locale or developmentally arrested dependent is a pervasive regionalism within the social, political, and academic discourses of the country and beyond. The stereotype of Atlantic Canada as a place of social and economic inferiority presupposes that a province like Nova Scotia has little to contribute to a narrative of industrial history in Canada. As Ian McKay asserts in *The Quest of the Folk*, the touristic caricature of the province paints Nova Scotia as a land of folk culture, of rural and seafaring ways, and traditional labour. Idyllic, pastoral, untouched, it is not popularly considered a place where the geographic, social, and cultural complexities of industrialization shaped history and landscape.

As Conrad offers, “in the rest of Canada ... a simplified and stereotypical view of Atlantic Canadians has become firmly entrenched. Backward, conservative, and juiced up on handouts, [the provinces are] widely perceived as a region blighted by location, culture, and identity” (2002, 162). ‘Backwardness’ and ‘conservatism’ are important terms when considering these regional economic and cultural attitudes. Conservative not just in the sense of political party leanings, Atlantic Canadians are seen as too traditional, too set in their ways. Focused on dwindling resource-based industries like fishing, lumbering, and coal mining, the regional economy fails to modernize. Unwilling to change, to adapt, the Atlantic provinces have accordingly been left behind, untouched by the forward movement of time. Like Appalachia, that

“oft-forgotten and just as frequently mythologized region” (Anglin 1992, 105), Atlantic Canada is ignored, discredited, and ridiculed, yet mythicized and imagined as a quaint folk haven - the “romantic antithesis to modern urban and industrial life” (McKay 1994, 4).

Provincial tourism literature and initiatives play a significant part in conceptions of the Atlantic provinces as ‘traditional’, if not ‘backward’ and ‘conservative’. A 2010 Province of Nova Scotia tourism website slogan claims the province is ‘Crafted by the Coast’, emphasizing both the prevalence of artisans and traditional and contemporary craft (website images show folk wood carvers and potters). The slogan also suggests a sense of an intrinsic connection to the sea: the province was naturally created and is far removed from the stresses and impacts of a deliberate or synthetic industrial landscape. As McKay has thoroughly argued about Nova Scotia, as has James Overton in the context of Newfoundland, the Atlantic region has been “reconstituted in terms of a tourist aesthetic” (Overton 1996, 7). A notion of an “intrinsically rural, traditional, and conservative” (McKay 1994, 265) place comes forth in the romantic and picturesque images of tourism literature and media, dominating public perceptions of the region and invigorating tropes of antimodernism and a folk aesthetic that has been repeatedly promoted since the first early twentieth century tourism initiatives. As McKay explains in Nova Scotia, “[t]ourists looking for the “Nova Scotianness” they have been trained by the tourism state to expect will see what they are primed to see: quaint fishing-coves and signs of the Folk (festivals, handicrafts, pre-modern rituals, and so on)” (1994, 281).

The paradox in these stereotypes is that while simultaneously blaming economic disparity and dependency on Atlantic Canadian conservatism, many tourists from other parts of Canada as well as the United States, actively seek-out ‘traditional’ representations and experiences while visiting the region. Leaving behind modernity, industrialism, urbanism, and relative economic

security, they seek a certain slower-pace of experience, a pristine environment, a representation of a simple life; the present made to feel like the past. When they return home, however, they are apt to criticize and marginalize the region for draining their pockets, perceiving the adherence to regressive traditionalism, a failure to be self-supporting or to stimulate economic growth as the cause of the region's economic marginality. Within this stereotypical mindset, popular opinion and literature, as well as academic research "tended to seek explanations for the region's economic difficulties in deficiencies in the local people and their institutions - the blame the victim syndrome," so that explanations suggesting "lack of entrepreneurial spirit, a lazy and poorly educated work-force and an excessively timid business community have drawn more from the myth of regional conservatism than from any serious study of the history of the region" (Forbes 1989, 10-11). However, as Forbes and Wylie argue, the causes of the region's current marginal position are much more complex, just as the economic, industrial, and social past of the Atlantic region is more dynamic than assumed.

A Brief Overview of Regional Industry and Economy

Michael Earle observes that prior to the 1970s, "[m]ost general histories ... paid little attention to the regional history of the Maritimes after Confederation, except to briefly note the regional decline in economic prosperity and political importance" (1992, 120). Arguably, aside from selected works by Maritime academics who began publishing alternative ideas as to why the region declined, this historical attitude of the region is still very much ingrained in stereotypes of a 'golden age', conventional arguments that say 'nothing historically significant happened in the Maritimes after the nineteenth century' and that 'Nova Scotia is a repository of pastness'. Indeed, few heritage sites in the Maritime Provinces represent post-confederation stories. In other words, the Maritimes are frequently viewed in a past tense, historically and economically trapped in this

pre-confederation 'golden age'. Further, Earle observes that many historians accepted a sort of black-and-white account of economic and industrial failure, considering "the historical decline of the Maritime economy in the post-Confederation period [as] inevitable and geographically determined" (1992, 121). In easy terms, the regional economy failed to adapt its bygone and backward economy, dependent on timber and wooden shipbuilding, to the new age of iron and steam. Yet, as Earle observes, continuing industrialization in the 1880s and the development of an inland manufacturing industry, are not considered in this kind of simplistic reasoning.

Instead, there are a number of historical grievances attributed to the current climate of underdevelopment in the Maritime region. As David Alexander writes of the decline of the region's economic and industrial interests, "[i]n the Maritimes, underdevelopment seems a sorry descent from those heady days when the region possessed one of the world's foremost shipbuilding industries, the third or fourth largest merchant marine, financial institutions which were the core of many present Canadian giants, and an industrial structure growing as fast as that of central Canada" (1983, 4). The purpose of this thesis is not to comment on economic policy and development in the Maritimes or to offer a detailed historical account of industry, labour, and economy within the region. It is an ethnographic study of a *museum* that deals with these subjects through representation and display. It is important, however, to the discussion offered in this chapter to look briefly at the historical context of the Museum of Industry's subject of interest and how a tourism industry portraying a narrow and idealized picture of Nova Scotia emerged to strengthen certain stereotypes of the region as a historical and contemporary place.

The 'sorry descent' of the Maritimes from a golden era (c. 1800-1866) of 'wood, wind, and sail' and a fast growing industrial and manufacturing structure based in iron, steel, and coal extends back to Confederation. Prior to 1867, a city like Halifax was considered both wealthy

and metropolitan, the urban center of a region with a thriving economy based in natural resources, agriculture, and shipbuilding, as well as strong trade relationships with New England. As Donald Savoie attests “the Maritimes looked to the sea, to the fishery, to timber, agriculture, and shipbuilding for economic development and this strategy worked” (2006, 20). Confederation, however, promised new trade relationships with Canada. With failed reciprocity trade negotiations between the United States in 1866 and the future potential in the Intercolonial Railway in the wake of a declining sea-based trading, Maritimers felt Confederation would “strengthen their economy by establishing a direct rail connection with Canada” (Savoie 2006, 23). Confederation, however, offered only difficult terms as ‘representation by population’ allowed Quebec and Ontario to dictate policy in the House of Commons. Savoie remarks, “[p]olicies were struck in Ottawa to meet national objectives, which, to a Maritimer, became a code phrase meaning the economic interests of Ontario and Quebec only” (2006, 27). Provinces with more voters, like Quebec and Ontario, could influence where industry would be concentrated, allowing economic power to be rooted in central Canada, securing central Canadian economic and political domination. In essence, “confederation dealt the Maritimes a bad hand” (Savoie 2006, 29).

The National Policy brought damaging ramifications for the Maritime region as well. A term which characterizes Canada’s nation building efforts, the National Policy “offered precious little to the Maritime Provinces - it emphasized an east-west continental economy and, by ricochet, it protected emerging central Canadian producers” (Savoie 2006, 28). A system of protective tariffs beginning in 1878 ignored market forces and geographical location, and compelled Maritimers to buy expensive manufactured goods from central Canada instead of England or the United States, also prompting export trade overland to central Canada instead of

through sea routes to Britain, New England, and the West Indies. The partiality of the National Policy continued to negatively impact the Maritime region into the twentieth century. The central Canadian manufacturing sector continued to strengthen while the Maritime sector stagnated. The majority of profitable wartime production focused in central Canada during WWII, for instance, and American companies were encouraged to establish branch plants in central Canada. In other words, central industry was favoured at the expense of the Maritimes, which encountered a series of external forces that placed the provinces into a supplicant position. Changing markets, biased policies, and general 'bad deals' hindered urbanization and growth so that though the region was "fairly strong economically relative to both national and international standards at the moment of Confederation, its position deteriorated during the first half of the twentieth century" (Savoie 2006, 31). Deindustrialization and outmigration, federal transfer payments, and the limited success of federal and provincial economic development strategies and industrial incentives characterized the nature of economic underdevelopment in the region during the twentieth century and into the present.

In this context of underdevelopment, the Maritime Provinces became heavily dependant on tourism as industry rapidly deteriorated at the turn of the century. As McKay discusses, the second quarter of the twentieth century produced a socio-economic crisis for Nova Scotia in which tourism "figured centrally in strategies to cope with regional de-industrialization" (1994, 33). In the 1920s, the Nova Scotia government embraced the potential of tourism as an economic remedy to the province's slowed development. Transforming, producing, and promoting Nova Scotia as a tourist destination, the province initiated the Nova Scotia Travel Bureau in 1923, improved and paved roads for motoring summer visitors, and developed hotels, expanding tourism infrastructure as it expanded the official production of idealized cultural and

geographical images. Emphasizing the pastoral and the notion of the province as 'Canada's Ocean Playground', the state began to commodify, package, and invent Nova Scotia as a tourist destination, creating an economic mainstay in troubled times, but restructuring the province as a service economy. As Binkley notes, "the process of becoming a tourist designation involves the creation of a product, which can be bought and sold" (2003, 2). The Nova Scotia 'product' emerged in a narrative of antimodernism, in which Nova Scotia history, culture, and identity came to be framed as unprogressive, unchanging, and inherently 'folk', an antidote to the stress of modernity and urbanism, and therefore both palatable and sellable. "The tourism-sensitive state," McKay observes, "became a delicate instrument for the measurement of international tastes and a massive machine for the generation of new images, new histories, and new traditions" (1994, 34). The province was framed as unaffected or uninfluenced by modernity, so that "Nova Scotia's heart, its true essence, resided in the primitive, the rustic, the unspoiled, the picturesque, the quaint, the unchanging: in all those pre-modern things and traditions that seemed outside the rapid flow of change in the twentieth century" (1994, 30).

Despite this imagery, few Nova Scotians fit within this imagined landscape, as a "century of capitalist development, beginning with the start of large-scale coal mining in the 1820s, did not augur well for the survival of a supposedly organic and pre-modern society" (MacKay 1994, 28). Thus, the ambiguous idea of the 'folk' had to be "created through framing and distilling procedures carried out in thought, and then set into practice through processes of selection and invention" (McKay 1994, 29). A mythical concept of the province was put in place from the 1920s to 1950s as certain cultural producers (relishing local colour depictions and the profitability of these images) along with the provincial government, inflated aspects of Nova Scotia folk culture making the folk *the* historical and cultural identity of the province, which in

turn, created for Nova Scotians an “overall framework of meaning, a new way of imagining their community” (McKay 1994, 30). In other words, representations of provincial identity were altered as a system of cultural hegemony constructed the idea of the folk as the commonsense concept of identity for the province.

Even though the region’s industry and economy was marred by underdevelopment and decline, a diversity of industrial concerns (from foundries, steel plants and coalmines to textile mills as well as large-scale resource based operations) characterized the province both in the past and in the twentieth century. Historical and contemporary realities concerning working conditions, labour strife, and worker organization; union protest, tension between merchants and producers, foreign interests and monopolies as well as outmigration were not conducive to a desirable tourism image, and were disqualified or ignored. Nova Scotians themselves, as well as tourists, came to identify with this antimodern history and culture, rather than with the progressive, industrialized (and unsavory) aspects of historical and contemporary reality that defined Nova Scotia as a place and people. “What had once been thought essential - the cities, factories, coal mines, railways, and port facilities - were now peripheral. Now the essential Nova Scotia could be found in the unspoiled hamlets, where ‘fisherfolk’ lived in close harmony with nature” (McKay 1994, 35). Ultimately, a “new vocabulary of region” (McKay 1994, 31) emerged, which can be linked directly to regional stereotypes of economic backwardness and cultural simplicity and the “quaint Folk mentality” (McKay 1994, 272), which were, ironically, largely promoted by Nova Scotians themselves (McKay and Bates 2010).

Wylie argues that “tourism provides a powerful frame through which region is viewed [and] tourism ... is thoroughly bound up with the region’s economic, political and cultural marginalization” (2008, 166-167). While locals do not see their landscape the same way tourists

do, nor do all tourists view landscapes in the same way, the restructuring efforts of tourism have undeniably affected both these group's perceptions. Despite whatever external and internal reasons, whatever historical contexts that produced terms like 'regional disparity' and 'have not' status, uninformed about the historical conditions that contributed to current economic realities, the average tourist is prepared to conceptualize Nova Scotia as 'pre-modern'. They expect to see, primed by tourism ads and ingrained stereotypes, 'Canada's Ocean Playground' and relics from an age of fishing, wooden shipbuilding, and small family farms. If industrial work is ever really considered, it is most apt to be viewed in *primitive* methods of nineteenth century pit coal mining. Thus the region is only observed in simple terms: a space for leisure and a repository of pastness. The complex factors that brought about deindustrialization and a reduced economy can hardly be understood when the area is primarily portrayed and viewed as having never really industrialized or modernized to begin with. It is the tourism-induced image of a folk ideal, of belonging to a past era - an image that serves only to reaffirm stereotypes already embedded in people's consciousness - that must be contended with. In a climate of rural, sea-faring, and pre-modern nostalgia, the erasure of the industrial past coupled with a prevalence of regional economic and social stereotypes creates a misconception of the region both historically and contemporarily. Without "constant challenges to the overwhelmingly dominant myths and stereotypes on the Maritimes, the public is denied access to its real history" (Forbes 1989, 12).

As Wylie has put forward, recent cultural expressions have subverted this tourism-fuelled regional identity, just as McKay suggests that regional twentieth century cultural producers bolstered that identity. Increasingly, resistance to idealized images has emerged in regional literature responding to the imposition of tourism, and the 'mytho-cultural' commodification of the provinces. As much as some cultural figures and institutions in the twentieth century affirmed

the idea of the folk in film and literature, contemporary cultural figures are refuting regional stereotypes and encouraging a reconsideration of a preconceived regional place-identity rooted in ideas of the folk.¹¹ Contesting stereotypical attitudes, they are expressing an alternative narrative of the past and present, writing against popular, literary, political, and academic assumptions, replacing conventional regional tropes with more authentic regional portrayals (Smith 2007). While academics have examined how these counter-tourism forces are leading the way in producing alternative images of the Atlantic region, little consideration has been directed towards how current cultural institutions and producers *within* the tourism and heritage system are choosing to represent the history and culture of the area, and whether they are refuting or reaffirming portrayals of an idealized folk landscape. While McKay and Overton's studies have suggested that most cultural producers and cultural sites acting within tourism seemingly conform to the overarching narrative of a mythologized and idealized regional past, have subversive narratives emerged from within? Are any heritage or tourism sites enacting radical reforms to ideas of region? How?

It is important to point out that generally, the heritage landscape of Nova Scotia does not recognize the industrial. While there *are* representations of the industrial past across the province, they are few in comparison to the plethora of rural, natural, folk and colonial attractions that tourists may choose to visit.¹² Within the Nova Scotia Museum system, varying types of restored water and steam mills, as well as museums addressing boat-building represent the extent of

¹¹ For example, Alistair MacLeod. See Smith (2007) for an examination of twenty-first century narratives and the replacing of Atlantic Canadian regionalisms.

¹² McKay and Bates note that "[b]y the first decade of confederation in the 1870s, we have exited the period that most interested the architects of tourism/history, whose eyes turned insistently back to the "glorious days" of eighteenth-century imperial conflict" (2010, 34-35). As the authors further note, Nova Scotia's history, in fact, "is more complicated than commonly supposed" (2010, 35).

industry-related museums, and these sites arguably focus only on nineteenth century rural technologies and the 'golden age' of wood, wind, and sail. An institution like the Museum of Industry, however, is an exception, as the museum site is dedicated to the Nova Scotia story of industrialization, as well as the 'periods of adjustment' in which Nova Scotia deindustrialized and shifted towards a service economy. The emergence of the Museum of Industry in the 1990s suggested a conscious effort on the part of the Nova Scotia government to recognize and make known a provincial industrial story to the public within the larger heritage narratives of Nova Scotia. It is important, then, to look at how this story is shaped and what messages the museum offers a visiting and local public. In the context of the prevalence of regional economic and social stereotypes about Atlantic Canada, and accordingly, Nova Scotia, what does the Museum of Industry say about Nova Scotia industry and economy and Nova Scotian entrepreneurs and workers? How do museum messages reinforce or refute conventional stereotypes of the province? Is a regional re-description being put forward?

Disclaiming Stereotypes at the Museum of Industry

"Industrialization was one of the shaping forces of Nova Scotia. To describe the place we are today, you can't do that without talking about industrialization," says Debra McNabb. In this section I will explore how The Museum of Industry narrates a story of Nova Scotia's industrialization that has recourse for present understandings of place-identity. The underlying themes and messages within the exhibits, objects, texts, and dialogue create a story that does not simply narrate an objective chronological course of industrialization in Nova Scotia, but suggest that the museum and its cultural producers put forth a prominent narrative frame through which visitors are invited to perceive certain concepts of region, place, and identity. These narratives constitute an alternative view of Nova Scotia that disclaims regional stereotypes and touristic

labels that define the province as 'backward', 'traditional', and removed from modernity. As a heritage narrative, it subverts the larger framework of interpretation within provincial museum and tourism sites that mythicize the region as a place of 'the folk' and prioritize romanticized and idealized heritage discourses that disregard the physical, cultural, and social significance of industrialization in the province.

The Lord implementation study suggested the mission of the museum in one strong statement: the purpose of a Nova Scotia Museum of Industry would be "to inform Nova Scotians and Canadians, through preservation and research, that Nova Scotia had - and could have again - an industrial heritage" (1984, 64). As the Lord's related further, their research showed that a wide range of Nova Scotians from museum professionals through politicians, historians, and collectors to residents of former industrial communities like Amherst, Pictou County, and Liverpool felt that "the idea [of] the museum's mission should be to communicate to Nova Scotians and their visitors that Nova Scotia has a significant industrial achievement in its past, present - and future" (1984, 64). But the problem with industrial history in Nova Scotia, the Lords decided, was that "even reasonably well-educated Nova Scotians are largely unaware of the extent of the industrial history of the province, or of its importance to Canada" (1984, 64). Identifying a list of industrial firsts in Canada including the first colliery recognized union in Springhill in 1879, the first steel poured in Trenton in 1883, and the world's first shatter-free rails produced in Sydney in 1931, the Lords asserted, "these accomplishments were real, and were neither accidental nor isolated ... nor was this development on a small scale" (1984, 65). As the Lord's suggest in their report, "the point is that Nova Scotia has played a major role in Canada's industrial development, yet knowledge of the extent and importance of that role is not widespread, even among Nova Scotians" (1984, 67). From the earliest beginnings of the Museum of Industry, then, a main

intention of the museum has been to create an awareness of the historical industrial accomplishment of Nova Scotia and to stimulate an awareness of its industrial potential.

The reality that many Nova Scotians are unaware of the past industrial strength of their province or its current industrial potential is something Debra McNabb recognizes. She observes that many Nova Scotians are generally uninformed about their industrial past, and that people from the rest of the country are “surprised of the breadth of our industrial development. Generally speaking, I think it’s [a problem] of people not knowing, other than coal, what Nova Scotia’s [industrial] history is.” For Debra, one of the main goals of the museum is to persuade visitors to “appreciate why knowing about our industrial heritage and preserving it is important” and to realize “what Nova Scotia had to offer ... that actually helped to develop Canada.” With this challenge in mind, how does the Museum of Industry discuss ‘industrial accomplishment’ in Nova Scotia? How does the discourse of the museum - the language of text panels and narrative themes, illustrative objects and the dialogue of interpreters - combine to create an image of Nova Scotia as a place of industrial achievement? What does this mean for a larger narrative of identity of region and place?

The Museum of Industry encourages the visitor to assume an experiential role within the course of their museum tour. They encounter the physical nature of industrial work by pulling, lifting, and pushing in various interactive displays, like the water pumps which demonstrate water power and early mill technology or the chocolate assembly line which tests dexterity. Until just recently, when a visitor paid her admission fees, she was given a long brown ticket that also served as a time card. “Punch In ... Feel History,” the time card stated beside an image of a worker’s lunch box above a space where the visitor can write in her name, ‘employee number’ and ‘pay period ending’. Four time clocks (now broken and sitting in the museum storage area

waiting to be repaired) signaled the beginning and end of two shifts. Spread throughout the museum at key intervals in the exhibit units, they divided the upper gallery and the lower gallery into two shifts, with a transitory 'shift break' between the two gallery levels. The visitor would punch her time card as she completed touring each exhibiting area. Punching a time clock throughout the visit allowed the visitor to experience one of the motions of industrial work and the feeling of working in shifts.

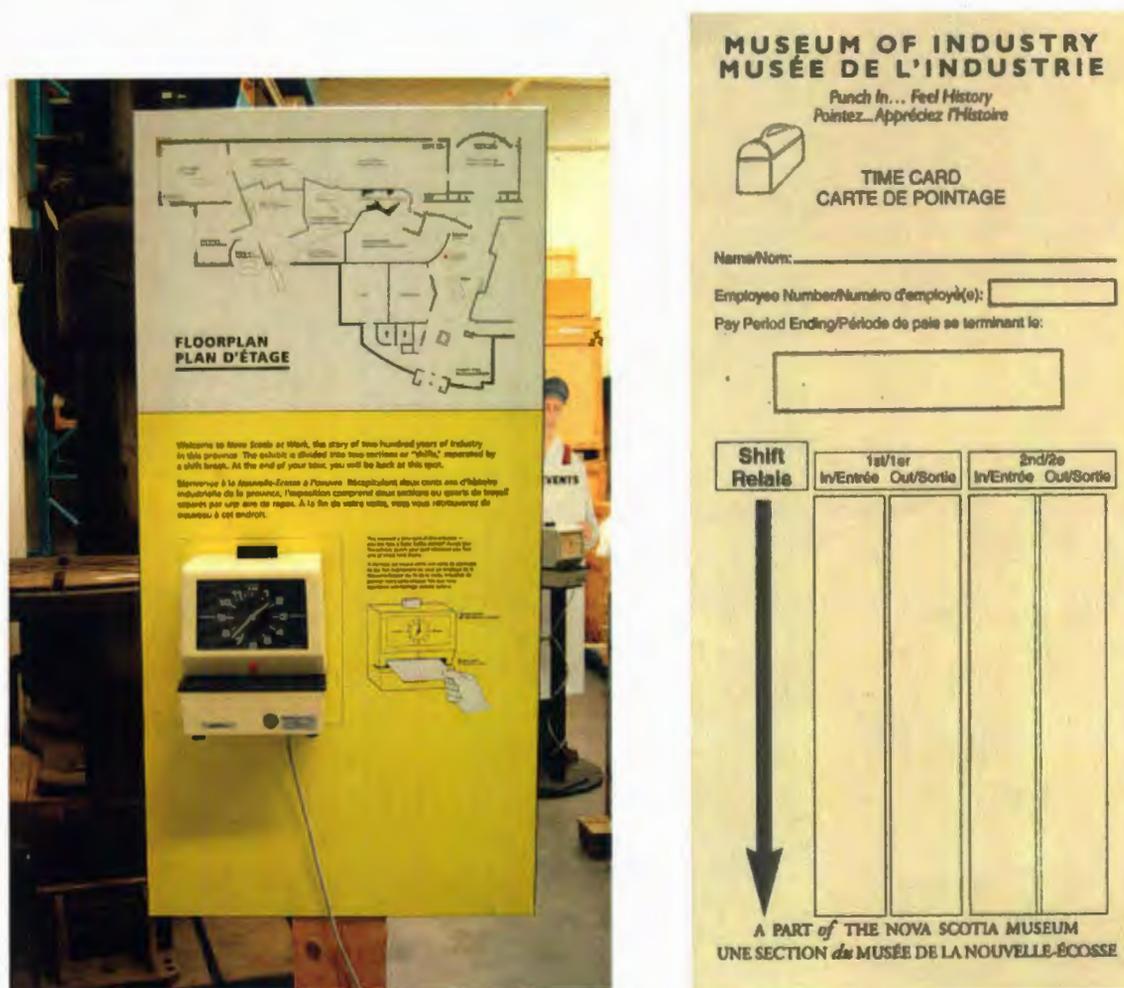


Figure 13. 'Punch In ... Feel History': the MOI time clock - currently out of order and sitting in museum storage - and the visitor time card.

The time clock, however, also showed an emphasis on the conception of 'time' in the Museum of Industry's interpretation and the chronological framework for industrial development

told in the museum. The concept of time, the progression of time, and the technological and social implications implied in this forward momentum are important exhibitionary strategies employed by the museum in the transference of meaning to the visiting public. Rather than utilizing a temporally-complex plot, the linear representation of time and the chronological framing for the story of industrialization places the visitor in a forward-moving journey through time and space, where narrative movement through successive technology and periods of industrial history propels Nova Scotia from pastoral origins to a modern and industrialized recent past and present, to a future filled with industrial potential, and places the province within a larger narrative of industry in the country. Far from being the stereotypical 'conservative' or 'too traditional' province, or as Curator of Collections, Mary Guildford phrased it, 'the place that time forgot,' the province advances as time advances. The museum's representations of time suggest to the visitor that Nova Scotia has never been developmentally arrested, but is constantly evolving, adapting, and moving forward as time progresses. Temporally, Nova Scotia is repeatedly framed as a place not rooted in the past, but driven by what lies ahead. Neither stagnant nor fixed in the past, Nova Scotia has a certain agency that has allowed it to change as global demands and conditions change.

One of the museum's many painted wooden 2-D cutout workers greets you at the gallery entrance of the museum. A foreman, dressed in grey work clothes, work boots, and a yellow hard hat, he holds a pencil and clipboard in his hand, seemingly recording that you've shown up for work today at the museum. The time clock is normally beside him, and you punch in for your workday of touring the museum exhibits. The upper gallery in the Museum of Industry leads the visitor through a chronoscopic walk of early Nova Scotia work and industrial activity over the course of a hundred years, from colonial Nova Scotia in the 1820s through rapid industrialization

in the 1880s up to the 1920s. The pre-industrial or 'pioneer' exhibit space (as staff often call it) is the first story unit within the larger narrative of industrialization that the visitor encounters. An exhibit area filled with wooden planks and beams, echoing the sound of running water from the waterpower energy interactivities, the pioneer gallery implies a certain elemental atmosphere, in which Nova Scotia's early pioneers were 'hewers of wood and drawers of water.'

Panel images show a pre-modern representation of the early Nova Scotia landscape where the countryside is sparsely populated. Workers are bent over in the fields, and dirt roads and dense forests suggest a pristine and primitive place. But if Nova Scotia's early days were primitive and pastoral, the pre-industrial exhibit suggests that Nova Scotians were ready to employ the skills, ingenuity, and initiative necessary to transform the province from colonial hinterland to industrial producer. The first panel relates that before industrialization, the landscape was rural and populated by farmers and fishers but that pioneer Nova Scotians were also tradespeople. Though "life was hard [...] if you had a trade you could make a decent living. And over the years, many of the skills of those pioneer Nova Scotians found new uses in the developing industries of the province." These pioneer skills are shown as based on work that involves not only physical strength but also ingenuity. The nature of the work and skills involved in trades like a ship's caulker, a cooper, a blacksmith, a housewife, and a labourer are described through text panels created to look like job ads in a newspaper. The texts largely describe a type of pioneering people who could "work with [their] hands, and [were] not afraid of hard work or long hours." The job ads also portray early Nova Scotians as able and willing to do any task, just as the housewife mastered "a variety of different skills and appl[ied] them when necessary."



Figure 14. The pioneer or pre-Industrial gallery contextualizes industrialization in Nova Scotia.

The gallery's focus on the harnessing of waterpower for use in varying types of waterwheel enterprises shows the taming of Nova Scotia's natural landscape. An etching of a Nova Scotia waterfall shows an unspoiled landscape overflowing with natural resources ready to be harnessed by the ingenuity of Nova Scotia's early white settlers and industrialists.¹³ Interactive water displays show how water was used in different technologies to power Nova Scotia's early manufacturing enterprises like sawmills, tanneries, carding mills, and foundries. This 'pioneer' narrative of a pre-industrial province suggests that colonial Nova Scotians were well on their way towards creating an industrialized province. The exhibits lay the ground work in the

¹³ First Peoples are referenced only once in the entirety of the museum. The pioneer gallery makes no reference to the indigenous population, the Mi'kmaq, present in the province when European settlers arrived. Like many pioneer narratives, early white settlers seemingly encountered an uninhabited wilderness, which they tamed, exploited, and made lucrative through ingenuity and hard work. In other museums where First Peoples are referenced, this is usually in colonial periods, and indigenous peoples are removed from industrialized life. Their exclusion from participating in industrial work is never acknowledged.

chronological narrative of industrialization, contextualizing industrialization and asserting that Nova Scotians had the skills, ambition, intellect, and vision to propel the province forward into a new age. As the printing press text panel states, great Nova Scotian leaders like journalist, intellectual, and politician Joseph Howe envisioned Nova Scotia in an industrial future: "Printing presses like this contributed to the industrialization of Nova Scotia as much as iron foundries and sawmills. They produced newspapers and books which spread knowledge of the astonishing economic developments in Britain. Some printers such as journalist Joseph Howe, even foresaw an industrial future for Nova Scotia and promoted necessary political changes."

From this pristine space, untouched by industry's smokestacks and urbanism, but filled with the kind of hardy, ambitious, and smart-thinking people who could make industry work, the visitor is propelled through time into the industrial revolution, a process that, a text panel reads, "changed everything - how people worked, what they did, and even where they lived." The visitor enters a dark mine shaft, a simulation of a room-and-pillar coal mine with low lighting, wood beams, and black paint and plastic imitating a coal seam. Throughout the mine tunnel, miners' working objects, like a pick and shovel, a piece can, and safety lamp are displayed, representing themes that discuss life underground and the dangers of mining. A 2-D wood cutout miner is laying on his back in a low and narrow coal seam, pick in hand as he cuts away the face of the seam. In the mine tunnel, the visitor learns that "fueled by coal, the Industrial Revolution relied on three things: men, machines, and money," as a cunning British investor looks on while holding a bag of coins, willing to risk his money in the potential of Nova Scotia. The text panel further informs the visitor that in 1827, with the arrival of the General Mining Association, "on this spot, the future came to Nova Scotia." The coalmine simulation is a transitory space. Like a

time tunnel, the darkness of the mineshaft separates the visitor from pre-industrial Nova Scotia, and the visitor gropes forward towards the brightness of the industrial future at the other end.

Emerging from the darkness and closeness of the mine tunnel, the visitor enters a bright and open space, where the steam locomotive, Samson, is displayed in the center of the gallery as the showpiece of the museum. A big machine with a big history, as its Biblical name suggests, it has a mythic status as “the first steam locomotive ever seen in Nova Scotia,” and the oldest surviving locomotive in Canada. It is a sudden shock to see the looming locomotive, a testament of Victorian technological magnitude and human invention, but most of all, an icon of progress. The visitor has the distinct feeling that she has moved into a new period of time in Nova Scotia’s industrial history, leaving behind small villages, rolling countryside, and thick forests to enter a world of coal and steam power, and important changes in landscape and social organization. The potential, the strength and character of Nova Scotia in this era are embodied in Samson. The machine, representative of the railroad and its connotations of progress, is envisioned as breaking the way for industrialization in Canada. Nova Scotia, the exhibits suggest, has embraced change and ‘climbed aboard’ a new economy and a new way of thinking and living.

Like Samson, the artifacts displayed in this age of industrialization are big and complex. The workable machine shop is a rush of interconnected belts and wheels, the large steel ingots loom over the steel exhibit, and in the lower gallery, the Baldwin locomotive, the Bucyrus Erie shovel and the Robb flywheel reinforce a sense of scale and significance in Nova Scotia industry. The language of the text panels suggest that this is a period of industrial success for Nova Scotia, as Nova Scotians possess the skills, capabilities, and initiative to industrially expand. Narrating the growth and success of steel production in Nova Scotia, text tells visitors that “to make steel on a large scale required new skills and abundant capital. Starting in the 1880s, a group of

enterprising Nova Scotians acquired the necessary men, money and machines. Their successors continue to make steel to this day.”¹⁴ And that “Nova Scotians soon *mastered* the technology of casting iron, establishing more than one hundred foundries large and small, between 1850 and 1900. Their products, ranging from steam engines to stoves, equipped both factories and homes.” In this language, Nova Scotians are portrayed as a capable and hardworking people, excelling in a new industrial era.



Figure 15. The Samson. The author stands in front of the locomotive.

The Spirit of Invention gallery showcases the creativity of Nova Scotians and their ability to think ‘outside the box’. The luxury MacKay car, the first mass-produced automobile in the province and the product of two “ambitious” brothers, Jack and Dan McKay, sits in this

¹⁴ Steel is no longer manufactured in Nova Scotia. This text panel reflects some of the out-dated elements of the MOI exhibits. It is commonly acknowledged in museum circles that exhibits have a life span of ten years. Most museums, however, do not have the financial resources to re-do or update their exhibits every decade.

exhibiting area. As well, the Victorian horseless carriage made by John MacArthur of Hopewell in 1899, and samples of the inventive patents of David O. Parker's multi-use furniture showcase the creative and visionary spirit of early Nova Scotians. The Spirit of Invention text panel reads, "these were years of *confidence* - Nova Scotia was industrializing and Nova Scotians were using their *customary energy* to *master* the new industrial technology. *Resourceful inventors and innovators* from all walks of life patented a host of new devices," while the Victorian horseless artifact represents the pioneering work of Nova Scotians in early automobile development and demonstrates "the confidence of Nova Scotians to adapt and use whatever new technology became available." Again, the text frames visitors' understandings of Nova Scotians to be a working people confident in their abilities and products, possessing the innovation and foresight to invent new ideas or adapt technologies. Further on, factory work is represented in an exhibit on Trenton pressed glass, soda pop, and chocolate manufacturing. Like the Spirit of Invention gallery, the diversity of products prompts visitors to 're-think' what was made in Nova Scotia, and reflect on the capacity the province possessed in manufacturing. Around the corner, another text panel shows an alphabet of 'Made in Nova Scotia' products, listing off items as diverse as underwear, elevators, pianos, and rifle sights, followed by a row of display cases that tangibly demonstrate the variety of these Nova Scotia-made products. "We made all kinds of stuff," the panel declares. Glistening pieces of pressed glass rotate on a mirrored dais, showcasing worker's skilled talents in using one mould to produce several different looks, and encouraging visitors to recognize that the products manufactured in Nova Scotia factories "could compete with the best made in Canada or the United States."



Figure 16. 'Made in Nova Scotia': gaiters from the Amherst Boot & Shoe Co.



Figure 17. Gleaming Trenton glassware rotates on a dais.

Walking down a long ramp takes the visitor from the upper gallery to the lower gallery. The visitor experiences another change in the chronological time frame in the 'shift break' area, where she can punch another time clock, and experience a transitory space with large glass bay doors that open to allow machinery and artifacts to be moved in or out of the museum.¹⁵ The 'shift break' is a rest space with benches for visitors, and where large, showpiece artifacts that do not directly fit within the narrative themes of the museum, like the Baldwin locomotive, the Bucyrus Erie shovel and the Shopmobile, are located. Here, the progression of time is momentarily suspended as the visitor reflects on the previous exhibits that showed the work ethic, ingenuity, progressiveness, and manufacturing capability of Nova Scotia and its people. The third unit of the museum, which represents the decline of industry and manufacturing in the 1920s, strategies of coping with de-industrialization and the shift towards a service economy, is entered through this 'shift break' area. These exhibits discuss factors affecting the decline of industry in Nova Scotia, and deal with adaptation and change as "Nova Scotians Rise to the Challenge."

The floor paint shifts from gray to yellow, indicating another shift in time and a new chapter in the museum storyline. Through the layout of the gallery space, visitors are encouraged to look towards Nova Scotia's dynamic future, reinforcing the idea that Nova Scotia's story is one of progress and growth. Stepping onto the yellow floor of the new gallery, the visitor's eye is drawn straight along the length of the room and upwards to a large reproduction highway billboard that reads in capital letters "LOOKING AHEAD." Below, a message from G.I. Smith, Premier of Nova Scotia from 1967-1970, offers an appropriate segue to the content of the upcoming exhibit: "What's happening today is just the beginning. In our communities, as in our

¹⁵ For instance, Scott starts the Volvo car and drives it around the museum building once or twice a year, helping to keep it in good running order.

nation, we've gone far... and there's more to come. We're planning now, we're working now ... with confidence, energy and enthusiasm ... to meet new challenges, and reach new goals."



Figure 18. Looking ahead in the lower gallery.

The last section of museum exhibits, completed in 1998, the lower gallery reflects a modern history, and the idea of a 'period of adjustment' for the province as its former industrial enterprises fade. Though declining industry is a difficult issue which many industrial museums do not address (Wallace 1996, 87-100), the Museum of Industry is willing to engage the visitor in a representation that deals with this topic in the context of Nova Scotia. Just before entering the new gallery, the visitor faces a lengthy panel that contextualizes the time period represented and the exhibits to follow:

A Century of Change: Nova Scotians Rise to The Challenge: During the latter half of the nineteenth century, Nova Scotia experienced a period of relative prosperity. The development of coal, manufacturing, and steel industries contributed to the significant economic growth in the province and defined a landscape of factories and company towns. By the 1920s, however, the prosperity of the intense industrialization could no longer be sustained. The province had become part of national and international economies in which it played a minor role. Consequently, Nova Scotia had to respond with limited resources to external economic factors that left the province increasingly marginalized and challenged. This modern period is characterized by industrial strategies which are adjustments to these new economic realities.

The panel serves to influence visitor understandings of Nova Scotia as a place in two ways. First, it clearly reiterates and reinforces the messages the upper gallery intended to convey: that in the nineteenth century, before other parts of Canada were populated, Nova Scotia had a developed and prosperous economy, parallel with industrial development in Upper Canada and parts of the United States. Rather than a unified landscape of picturesque fishing villages and small farms, the Nova Scotia landscape reflected urban and industrial forms of architecture. Secondly, though the panel and the rest of the exhibition does not delve into the complexities as to *why* “intense industrialization could no longer be sustained”, the panel makes clear that external factors on a national and international scale beyond Nova Scotia’s control prompted the decline of industry and the province’s subsequent economic marginalization. The panel emphasizes that rather than adopt a defeatist attitude, Nova Scotians countered these challenges from a disadvantaged position, demonstrating competitiveness and an ability to adapt.

The second half of the panel reads:

Within the context of a world of shrinking manufacturing and increasing service-based industries, Nova Scotia companies have responded in a number of ways which have determined their successes or failure. Some manufacturers adapted to changing markets by developing expanded product lines. Others survived by effectively implementing new technologies. Nova Scotia manufacturing has also been shaped by companies drawn to the province by government incentives. Increasingly, failed manufacturers have been replaced by businesses offering services to Nova Scotians and the world. Since the turn of the century, advancements in the use of electrical power, improved transportation and communication and more recently, the adoption of computer information technologies, have helped Nova Scotia in its efforts to remain competitive.

Here, the museum acknowledges both the failures and successes that have characterized twentieth century industry in Nova Scotia, but remains optimistic in the province's continued competitive edge, and the increasing business/service endeavours on a local and global scale. Later, another text panel further reinforces Nova Scotian's ability to creatively and effectively adapt in the face of change and challenge:

A New Era For Nova Scotia: Manufacturing has played an important role in the economy of Nova Scotia. As the demands for products change, however, Nova Scotia has been faced with the *challenge of adapting* to new requirements. Some manufacturers have turned this *potential obstacle into a benefit* by becoming *flexible* in the goods they make. By *adapting* to the needs of customers, they have ensured that manufacturing will continue to play an important role in the future.

Though deindustrialization is recognized in these texts, the panels do not delve much further than vaguely stating that a major change affected the manufacturing capabilities and economy of Nova Scotia. While the government industrial incentives which characterized the 1960s, and 70s are shown in the gallery further beyond - representing both the successes and failures of foreign industrial interests in the province - the museum does not talk about the specifics of

deindustrialization. The wider ramifications of deindustrialization on the economy, especially in terms of an impact on the social fabric of the province, like outmigration, are not considered. Instead, the decline of industry is mitigated with a language that downplays the damaging experience of deindustrialization.

Throughout the lower gallery, technological change and the progression of time is further conveyed in displays of electrified appliances, modern textile mill machinery, the exploration of off-shore natural resources and computer and multi-media technology, providing a sense that despite the substantial decline of the kinds of industrial manufacturing displayed in the upper gallery, Nova Scotia did anything but remain in the past. In fact, Nova Scotia rose 'Up from the Depths' of economic marginalization and decline, as one text panel on the shift from coalmining to other mineral resources like offshore oil and gas, suggests. The repeated theme of Nova Scotian's successful adaptability becomes linked with this constant push toward the future, giving a sense that the province, much like in the 19th century, is in step with global trends and the increasingly service and knowledge-oriented business demands:

New Opportunities, New Industries: Fuelled by the decline of traditional industries and a shift in social expectations, the service sector continued to grow. Nova Scotians had to *adjust* to many dramatic changes in their everyday lives. Many people *seized upon new opportunities* and helped to *propel the province towards the future*.

Shaping the Future: With training, ingenuity, and tools such as multimedia, Nova Scotians can compete in these new "knowledge based" industries.

Through the adage 'period of adjustment', and in carefully phrased texts that focus on Nova Scotia's ability to adapt, adjust and seize new opportunities, the touchy issue of deindustrialization is broached at the Museum of Industry, but framed in an optimistic way.

While failed industries, especially those of government incentive projects are shown, like Clairtone and the Deuterium Heavy Water Plant, the exhibits fail to engage visitors with the social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts of deindustrialization, which would detract from a positivist view of the province. Text panels that do discuss this major change, arguably one of the most important social impacts on the province in the 20th century, encourage the visitor to consider Nova Scotia in terms of its persistence and adaptability in the face of change, persuading visitors to reconsider any perceptions they may have of Nova Scotia as a province in 'decline'.

Both the upper and lower galleries of the Museum of Industry employ exhibitionary devices which project Nova Scotia as a place with a prominent industrial past, actively challenging negative or idealized stereotypes of the province. The importance of time and forward momentum through the time clock activity and the chronological exhibitionary strategy suggests that Nova Scotia has never been 'stuck in the past' but has continually evolved and adapted as technology and society change. Text panels relate the hard work and ingenuity of the early pioneers and industrialists across the province, while large artifacts like the steam locomotive, Samson, symbolize progress and industrial strength. Other material objects showcase both the skill and inventiveness of Nova Scotians. The decline of industry, while acknowledged in the museum texts, is presented in a way that encourages the visitor to view these important changes with an optimistic outlook, and to identify Nova Scotian's ability to adapt and seize upon new opportunities, which testify to Nova Scotia's competitive edge and ability to overcome economic adversity. Ultimately, the museum galleries favour a celebratory nature that, as shown below, influences visitors' perceptions of Nova Scotia as an industrial place.



Figure 19. Paul polishes the B-18, the first Volvo car to roll off the company's Nova Scotia assembly line.

"Who Knew They Made Volvos in Nova Scotia?": Changing Place Perceptions of Nova Scotia

As previously argued, Nova Scotia's geographical and historical character has been selectively reshaped in a 'tourism/history' narrative (McKay and Bates 2010) that idealizes the landscape and sanitizes the past, discrediting any claims that Nova Scotia has been a heavily industrialized, modern, urban, or progressive place. As tourists are primed to view the region as a heritage haven of pristine beauty and folk culture, this particular framing of Nova Scotia is further reinforced by long-held regional stereotypes that see the province as 'backward', 'too traditional', and economically and developmentally arrested. How prevalent or ingrained are these touristic representations and economic stereotypes of the province with everyday visitors at a Nova Scotia museum site? Do tourists (and Nova Scotians themselves) perceive Nova Scotia as an industrial place? This section examines visitor survey responses that deal with perceptions of

Nova Scotia and industry before visitors toured the museum, and then afterwards. How do visitors look at Nova Scotia as a place when they exit the site? Does the Museum of Industry actively replace a stereotypical rhetoric of Nova Scotia-as-place? This section argues that while visitors held stereotypical images of Nova Scotia as an unindustrialized place before they entered the museum, these views changed after touring the site, suggesting that the Museum of Industry facilitates a re-reading of Nova Scotia as a historical and contemporary place.

Nearly all visitors interviewed characterized Nova Scotia industry, past or present, as primary sector or non-manufacturing activities.¹⁶ Natural resource, land and sea, and ‘traditional’ (i.e., craft-based) enterprises like wooden shipbuilding, as well as tourism, were the most common responses for visitors. As one visitor succinctly summarized her perceptions of industry in Nova Scotia: “Coalmining, fishing. Oh yeah, farming too and tourism.” Other visitor responses reflected this view:

Coalmining and fishing, that was it.

I think of coalmining a lot and fishing. And shipbuilding.

Apples and potatoes and stuff. We saw apple trees all along the sides of the road everywhere on the road we went through. It was just beautiful! Apple trees everywhere. Lots of dairy farms.

I only think of it as wood industry or fishing.

Mostly coalmining, that’s all I’ve ever heard really.

We know there’s fisheries, and we’d hear of the mining, the ah, deaths in the coalmines.

Shipbuilding, coalmining, basically. Trucking, fishing.

Coalmining, shipbuilding, that’s about it.

¹⁶ One visitor interviewed did make reference to steel production, another to textile manufacturing.

As reflected in the comments above, visitors named industries that they viewed as past enterprises for Nova Scotia, like shipbuilding: "Shipbuilding. Wasn't the *Bluenose* built here?" In linking shipbuilding with the age of wood and sail, typified in the *Bluenose* schooner, Nova Scotian industrial development was seen only as traditional industry, having peaked in a past form of technology. Industry and Nova Scotia, largely, were framed within a sense of the past - something that was, but had since left or failed to develop or adapt with changing times and technology:

Meghann: Do you think of Nova Scotia as an industrial place?

V: Kind of in the past I guess, not now [...].

Meghann: Do you think of Nova Scotia as an industrial place?

V: No, not anymore.

Visitors who self-identified from non-Atlantic parts of Canada expressed a lack of knowledge of Nova Scotia's industries, based on their geographic locality. This suggested that in other regions of Canada, Nova Scotia is not readily considered as a place other than a tourist destination:

I don't know anything. I'm from the West, I'm from Calgary. And I don't know anything about the industry, and that's why my friend brought me here.

Fishing, coalmining, that's probably about it, because we're from Victoria.

While visitors *did* identify industry within Nova Scotia, it is interesting to consider the *types* of industry they associated with the province. Except for coalmining - the only heavy industry repeatedly identified (though still a primary sector industry) - the kinds of industry listed

by visitors conformed to touristic and stereotypical labels. Considering industry is often defined or perceived in terms of the secondary sector (refining, construction, manufacturing, processing and product) combined with a certain level of mechanical or technological application, the categorizations above suggest that the heritage consumers interviewed identified Nova Scotia 'industry' as *less* industrial, in the sense that they categorized it within the primary (raw material extraction) and tertiary (services) sectors. As one visitor suggested, "I guess if you're broadly defining the term industry, you can [include other activities], but if you're thinking of it as manufacturing, [there's] not so much [industry in NS]." While Nova Scotia was arguably viewed as *less* industrial, other visitors, like the one above, didn't consider primary and tertiary sectors in their definitions of industry, and so did not consider the province as having anything that they could categorize as 'industrial'. In fact, thinking about industry in Nova Scotia was just something these visitors had never considered:

Yeah, we didn't think about industry until we came here [to the museum].

I don't give it much thought.

For the visitors below, like many tourists, the idea of an industrial past or present was not encountered in their travels, and little reflected upon. While these visitors were motivated to visit a provincial museum telling an industrial story, industry and Nova Scotia didn't logically fit into their perceptions of the province:

I think the industrial past was ah, virtually un-thought of with all our touring in our vacation and our traveling here. We really didn't think about industry, when we were traveling around the coast you see. You know there's lobster fishermen here and people that make their living from the sea. But really not much else that we were aware of. We saw one plant belching some steam or vapor; I didn't know what the plant was. Someone told me it was a pulp mill.

As one visitor offered, Nova Scotia was best described as 'scenic'. The concept of an industrial past or present was challenging for visitors to visualize in their preconceived image of a scenic Nova Scotia. Even visitors who grew up in Nova Scotia, but moved away from the province, had similar perceptions of Nova Scotia as a place. One visitor expressed that Nova Scotia in her mind, was a place she could retire to, rather than work in:

We think of it as home, but I see it more as a retirement [place]. Once you've moved away and you've been away for a long time, that's what you see it as, yeah, more of a tourist.

Visitors' perceptions of industry accordingly coincided to fit within this scenic vision of the landscape. If visitors did expect to encounter work and 'industry', it would be of a physical and traditional nature, involving the earth or sea, and would not scar a pristine landscape with modern buildings, noise, and pollution. The expectation that Nova Scotia industry involved only certain types of industry that complimented a specific vision of landscape was further confirmed by visitors who were surprised to have seen little historical information or artifacts dealing with the fishery, shipbuilding, and agriculture in the museum storyline:

There wasn't much on the fishery. Or farming either.

Where's the fishing industry, where's the fish?
Fishing definitely feels like it would have been a big part of [Nova Scotia] as an industry. Boatbuilding and stuff.

In this view, industries that do not connote an idea of heavy industrialization and manufacturing are seen as the expected or commonsense industries for Nova Scotia.

These responses reveal that everyday visitors, including both local and extra-provincial tourists, primarily perceive Nova Scotia historically and contemporarily as a non-industrial place. While visitors included different sectors in their definitions of industry, most visitors did not

associate industry in Nova Scotia in terms of the secondary sector or manufacturing. Those who did associate Nova Scotia with industry largely saw industry within the primary and tertiary sectors, specifically, tourism. Industries like fishing, farming, and shipbuilding were viewed in a past sense and perceived as 'traditional' in that they involved physical labour, craft, and a connection to the earth or sea. These ideas of place conformed to touristic labels, as they reflect popularly referenced images in tourist literature depictions of region: brightly coloured fishing buoys and lobster traps in Cape Breton, South Shore sailing ships and dories, fresh produce at local farmer's markets in the Annapolis Valley.¹⁷ These visitor understandings of industry also conformed to regional stereotypes of the province as having a non-progressive or backward economy, in that visitors did not identify Nova Scotia as a place where products were manufactured on a large scale, using industrial technologies. Among the visitors interviewed were several Nova Scotians, and it is interesting to consider that they also produced the same categories of industry as non-local respondents. This could suggest a reality in which Nova Scotians have largely forgotten an industrial past, especially considering that the majority of residents work in service industries, and are part of a society where a manufacturing industry, largely, no longer exists. That industry is viewed by Nova Scotians within these 'traditional' categories could arise from a desire to hold on to a nostalgic place-identity - a reminder of a past golden age. However, as discussed previously, McKay has argued that this widely held non-industrial place-identity among Nova Scotians is a product of state-driven hegemony that has made deliberately constructed tourist images the commonsense identity for the province.

Many visitors, however, did reference coalmining (considered a 'heavy' industry in comparison to fishing and farming) as a main industrial activity that Nova Scotia engaged in.

¹⁷ These images were frequent among the pages of the Province of Nova Scotia's 2010 *Doers and Dreamers* travel guide.

Most visitors were aware that coalmining had left the province, and while I did not ask visitors how they visualized coal mining in Nova Scotia, it is reasonable to assume that they associated the industry with out-dated, nineteenth century technologies like pit ponies, picks and shovels, coal cars and room-and-pillar mine shafts. In this sense, coalmining also fits within a sense of 'traditional' industry in Nova Scotia. If any heavy industry were to be associated with Nova Scotia, it would be coal, as it has been memorialized in the province and abroad through mining disasters of national significance (Springhill in 1958 and Westray in 1992) and cultural expressions by recording artists like Rita MacNeil and the Men of the Deeps choir, CBC television series like *Pit Pony* and major motion pictures like *Margaret's Museum*, as well as national literature, specifically Sheldon Currie's book of the same film title.¹⁸

Exiting the Museum

After touring the museum, visitors' responses reflected a change in view of Nova Scotia as a place. Visitors reflected on the impact of the museum in contributing to a broader and deeper understanding of industry in the province, exposing them to new information about - or for some respondents, reinforcing - the historical prominence of industry in the region:

A lot of these things really impressed me. I learned a few things but it was impressive to just reinforce a lot of the things that I already know.

We didn't think much about industry in Nova Scotia really. We're from the States and we really didn't think much about industry and some of it's surprising. ... A lot more than we thought, you know.

Visitors expressed insights from their informative encounters with the exhibit material through two key themes. First, the museum informed the visiting public about a diversity of industries they had

¹⁸ See Haiven, 2008 for an insightful examination of cultural production amid the decline of coal and steel on Cape Breton Island.

not realized were part of the province's economic and industrial fabric - particularly enterprises in the secondary or manufacturing sector, like iron and steel production. The scale and extent of industry in the province was also revealing for visitors who had presumed that only small endeavours characterized industrial initiatives in the province:

There were a lot of surprising things. Like that woman making films, the Volvo, who knew they made Volvos in Nova Scotia? A lot of really surprising things. It was really eye opening.

I didn't know there was so much metal, steel and iron and stuff like that.

I didn't realize actually how much coal and iron they had here.

It's fascinating all the things they used to make here. I had no idea.

I didn't know there was a heavy water plant here at one time.

There are a lot of things going on down here.

I didn't realize the steel industry was so big here. I should have, but I didn't realize that. I forgot about all your gas, offshore gas and stuff like that.

I didn't realize that they had like sawmills. I mean, we saw all the beautiful forests and I saw those gorgeous trees, but there was already lots going on with the lumbering industry.

I always thought about Nova Scotia as 'lobster'. 'When I go, I'm going to eat all the lobster because I know that's where it comes from.' Now, it's like, there's a lot of things that come from Nova Scotia. Glass making, I didn't know you even did it down here.

But I didn't know it was so industrialized, like you know, during the war making shells and all that stuff. Building boats and ships and, I should have known. But I never thought about that, eh.

It's a lot broader, I've seen more different things. You know, more things basically I didn't realize before. Seeing the scope of it. Nova Scotia is a huge place, seeing that broad range.

I did learn about industries that I wasn't aware were in Nova Scotia, or certainly the history of how they evolved, like Moir's chocolates.

We don't know anything. We thought it was fishing. There has been lots of industry and, it's been quite extensive.

You know, we're both from Nova Scotia, but I was amazed with the history of it and how much Nova Scotia, you know, put forth.

I'm quite amazed, when we first came in we sort of thought just a few things, but just to see all that was here. It was quite remarkable. It was truly amazing.

Again, as these excerpts reveal, visitors gained a new understanding of the scope and diversity of industrial activity in Nova Scotia, realizing that the province produced Volvo cars as well as canned lobster.

Second, visitors spoke of gaining a sense of the technological and progressive successes of an industrialized Nova Scotia, not only in terms of machines and products, but also in the skills of its people. Ways that visitors spoke about Nova Scotia centered on a new sense of 'evolution' and 'progress', contrasting stereotypes that label the province as 'backward' and 'too traditional':

I guess it reinforced my understanding of the evolution of industry.

I think that Nova Scotia evolution has a lot of pieces that we Albertans don't necessarily see. It was great to fill in some of those earlier parts.

It's very nice to come in and see all of the great accomplishments that have been done here.

There were things I didn't realize we did as much of and that we were like, pioneering as much of. And, I said the first time, that this was not an industrial

province, and it was! Obviously it was! And we were not aware of it at all because we're not old enough. But it was, but it's gone and so.

Nova Scotia was also viewed as having made a significant contribution to industry in a larger context. Rather than trailing behind other provinces or places in industrial development, Nova Scotia was seen as a place where its industries had made a noteworthy historical impact:

[Industry] is extremely important to Nova Scotia, I think. And we were always kind of at the forefront. You don't think of Nova Scotia as being cutting edge, but it kind of is. So, that was neat.

It is quite impressive, the latitude of endeavours that have taken place here in Nova Scotia.

Nova Scotia has quite a history of industry.

As well, visitors commented that despite the obvious decline in industry throughout the province, Nova Scotia was capable of adapting in changing times:

A long history of many diversified industries and that certainly there's been an evolution over time in industry and they mention a heyday between 1850 and 1920. When Nova Scotia had a strong, I guess, manufacturing base you might say in iron and steel, coal and a lot of traditional industries and that had to adapt and retool since that time in manufacturing service, and adapt to the way technology, and I suppose industry, in the world is going. It had to use the particular resources it had and the skills of its people.

Nova Scotia has had to adapt to other kinds of industry, well, tourism, service, specialized agriculture, R&D, that sort of thing, knowledge industries.

The people of Nova Scotia, rather than being lazy, uninventive or inflexible - as stereotypes put forward - were termed as an 'ambitious', 'entrepreneurial' and 'open-minded' people:

Yeah, people were very, very open minded to all, anything new and, just progress... people embraced progress. New ideas, new things.

A story of technological progress, of ah, kind of an entrepreneurial and ambitious peoples if you like.

Well, I think the story, to me, when I walked through the whole thing, I just thought to myself, 'wow', Nova Scotians - when you look through the whole history of the Nova Scotian people they were a people that were really open-minded, to umm, inventions, new things, an open minded kind of people as opposed to people not wanting to change. They embraced change, because there was so much change that happened here in Nova Scotia, you know. You know building automobiles and everything, which I didn't know they did any of this stuff. Some of it endured and some of it didn't.

It reinforced the fact that there's a lot of really smart people in this region, and we've done a lot of really fantastic things over the years.

They got a lot of skills here, you know.

These responses suggest that, compared to their earlier perceptions of industry in Nova Scotia, visitors experienced an enlightening tour that prompted them to develop a more nuanced understanding of industry within the province than previously understood, especially in terms of understanding the presence and extent of manufacturing in the province. Visitor responses reflect perceptions of Nova Scotia that contend with common stereotypes and touristic images of the province as a place. Visitors framed Nova Scotia as having a prominent industrial past, peopled with hard and inventive workers, and a diversity of industries that do not exclusively fit into primary sector and craft-based categories.

Shaping Industrial History for the Public

An important aspect of this study concerns understanding the intentions of cultural producers, or how they envision the public messages of the museum. While the exhibit texts are

largely the institutional voice of the museum, the viewpoints of museum staff are also a part of this discourse and are important to consider in an analysis of the representational practices of the MOI. Staff implement and influence the day-to-day activities that make the museum run as a representational space, shape the educational goals of the museum and determine how history is performed at the institution. Most importantly they are intimately connected to the museum space and so have firsthand understanding of the museum narrative and a well-developed view of what they see the museum contributing to visitors' understandings of Nova Scotia as an industrial place. What do staff intend the museum to show? What do they see as the museum's aim in influencing visitor perceptions of Nova Scotia? How do they perceive Nova Scotia and industry? This section explores how Museum of Industry staff members actively challenge the touristic and regional stereotypes of Nova Scotia as a place, and reveals what staff members view as the messages the museum puts forward.

"Yeah, it's 'Canada's Ocean Playground', not the birthplace of steel making in Canada. They didn't put *that* on our license plate," Mary Guildford jokes as we sit at a small table in the museum's library and talk about her views on how industrial history has been sidelined in cultural representations of the province. "The sort of industrial part of Nova Scotia's history has to such a degree been forgotten, that I think it's very valuable to both native Nova Scotians and visitors, to say, 'we did this, we did all these things' - that there were factories in Nova Scotia that were producing things, machines that took flywheels the size of the one on display." The Museum of Industry, she says, is about reminding the public that Nova Scotia, a hundred years ago, was anything but 'Canada's Ocean Playground.' She emphasizes what she wants visitors to understand after touring the museum: "I guess I'm hoping they'll come away with a stronger appreciation of Nova Scotia's industrial history, specifically understanding that we have one, that

we have an industrial history. That there were a lot of resourceful, innovative people in the province ... Nova Scotia in the nineteenth century was in the current of contemporary thought and a fairly progressive place.”



Figure 20. Mary Guildford, Curator of Collections, stands beside the Albion locomotive in the museum storage room.

It's in this kind of heritage landscape - one that seems to erase the industrial presence and progress of Nova Scotia - that Andrew Phillips, Curator of Education and Public Programs, says the museum faces challenges as a provincial heritage institution. "I think a lot of people are a little surprised, perhaps at the diversity of things that have gone on here in the past. That even Nova Scotians themselves, and certainly people outside of Nova Scotia tend to look at the province and the East Coast as fishing and lumber and primary industries," he remarks. In a context where many locals are unaware or forgetful of their province's industrial history, and the tourist class is primed

to see 'Canada's Ocean Playground' filled with tourist-friendly 'traditional' industries, the Museum of Industry sets out on what could be labeled an industrial heritage awareness campaign. "Through either personal interpretation or through the text panels, [the museum] bring[s] out some of those themes and concepts that challenge stereotypes or preconceived assumptions about what Nova Scotia is. What Nova Scotia industry and work is all about," Andrew emphasizes.

For staff, the museum serves many purposes, but it's clear that from the museum director to frontline interpreters, the Museum of Industry is about fostering, as Mary summarized, "a greater awareness of Nova Scotia's industrial heritage." Attempting to fill the gap in industrial heritage across the province, the Museum of Industry stands out as more than just another heritage 'attraction' - a saleable commodity in a long string of little red schoolhouse museums, living history villages, carefully preserved elite residences, colonial military fortifications, and so on that dot the province from Yarmouth to Sydney. Though a provincial tourism commodity to be certain, the museum diverges from the majority of other heritage narratives in the province in that it acknowledges the fact that Nova Scotia has an industrial, urban, and working class history. On the front end, interpreter Paul Lalande makes sure visitors get a sense of Nova Scotia as an industrialized place: "I don't think there's a visitor who goes through, that I don't mention some point in the tour that Nova Scotia was heavily industrialized at one time. [...] I have said that over and over again," he remarks. "I think it's something that should come across in the visit." For Paul, getting this message across in his interpretation of the museum is important, because it compels visitors to reconsider their views of Nova Scotia as a place: "I think they have an opinion of Nova Scotia that it's fishing and coastline, and that's pretty much it."

Challenging these kinds of preconceived concepts of the province is recognized, then, as a part of the museum's task in preserving industrial heritage. While staff maintain and collect

artifacts, display and interpret them for the public, the museum goes beyond standard conservation issues and tackle contemporary issues within the heritage world of Nova Scotia: a lack of historical reality. For Andrew, the museum serves the Nova Scotia community by creating awareness about an under-represented period of history in Nova Scotia, and a realistic picture of the province as a place and people:

I think a lot of it has to do with preserving an awareness that Nova Scotia is and has been a productive, innovative, hardworking place. A skilled place. A knowledgeable place. That the stereotype of fishermen in fishing villages is a stereotype, and that the reality is much more diverse. That this is a place where valuable things are produced, whether it's tangible, manufactured goods or services, knowledgeable or technical ability. That those things are produced here, and have been produced here, and are still being produced here. That we have been interested and we have worked very hard to secure our own prosperity, and have not always or only relied on handouts from somebody else. I think that's the role, the value in this kind of museum. To preserve that kind of knowledge and a different perspective on the past that will challenge preconceptions and assumptions.

The lack of a historical reality in provincial heritage schemes, especially in terms of industry, and the challenge to educate both Nova Scotians and those visiting from elsewhere about industrial history has been a motivator for Debra McNabb in her role as museum director. She wants visitors to discover the rich labour history of Nova Scotia, because while growing up in Nova Scotia, she herself never gained a sense of the nature of industry in the province or the struggles that its workers went through. Showing a prominent industrial past, through machines but also workers, and contextualizing current economic concerns are important to talk about, she says, so that the public gains "an appreciation of the role our industrial past has had in shaping Nova Scotia, and why it should be of value to citizens, and how it helps them understand what's going on now." The

industrial past becomes an important distinction in defining Nova Scotia as a place, Debra emphasizes, because it “makes us distinctive as a society.”

For Andrew, it’s important to present provincial industrial history in an alternative rhetoric that counters the discourse of regional stereotypes that label Nova Scotia as a ‘have not’ province with idle people and defeatist attitudes. Part of the purpose of the museum is about convincingly framing Nova Scotia history in a way that allows visitors to gain an understanding of the *real* story of Nova Scotia as a place. In Andrew’s view, the most important or significant things the museum interprets have to do with the idea of industry and people

continually adapting to changing circumstances in Nova Scotia. *Of not giving up, of not quitting. Of always trying, of working harder than people have to work in other places sometimes, just to succeed. That it is a hard working province, that it is an innovative province. That people invented things here, produced things here, built things here. Worked very hard. And even if a lot of the optimism of the nineteenth century didn’t play out in the twentieth century, there’s still this ongoing persistence in looking for success, and working hard and contributing to the local economy and local prosperity. And adapting, again, to all those external influences that come and go over time.*

While staff perspectives seem like they intend the museum to portray a glorified Nova Scotia, showing only achievements and reimagining the province through highly selective representations, Mary suggests:

I don’t think it’s wrong for us to celebrate some of those things, I think it’s all very well and good to be ‘we’re just telling these stories and being objective, academic, historians.’ but I don’t think it’s such a terrible thing for us to say, “we made the first steel in Canada!” I don’t think it’s wrong to point those things out to one another and to visitors - that past that has been forgotten in so many circles. [...] I think

there might be a little bit of pride in showing off those products that were world class in their day.

Conclusion

This chapter has offered insight into how Nova Scotia has been assigned a place-identity that has little basis in the complexity of its history. The decline of industry since 1920, the subsequent emergence of a tourism economy that looked to recreate post-industrial Nova Scotia as a tourist destination and the prevalence of deep-seated stereotypes that label the province as 'backward' and 'undeveloped', reveal how a heavily industrialized province was distilled and transformed into a simplistic representation that defined it as a place: picturesque, antimodern, and folk. While forums for cultural expression are increasingly challenging these regional stereotypes, heritage sites and museums across Nova Scotia generally conform to these mythicized and stereotyped ideas of place in their representations of Nova Scotia's past, identity, and culture. Very few of these museums deal with topics on Nova Scotia's industrial heritage. This chapter has argued that the Museum of Industry, with a mandate to represent the presence and role of industry in shaping Nova Scotia puts forward a new idea of region that opposes and refutes negative economic stereotypes of the province and replaces popular place-identity with a more authentic regional portrayal that recognizes the important role of industry in Nova Scotia's past and present. As an early planning document stated, the Museum of Industry "remind[s] the visitor that the present story of Nova Scotia is not stereotypically negative, and ... bring[s] the story of the elements of industrialization into modern times" (Latta 1989, 5).

Through the intentions of staff and through exhibiting techniques that rely on meaningful language and display, the Museum of Industry employs strategies of representation that value a narrative of industrial work, success, and progress that actively counter regional tropes to express a more contemporary regional place-identity. Shown through the responses of visitors, the

Museum of Industry is successful in replacing these preconceptions of Nova Scotia as a place, encouraging a re-inscription of regional place-identity as visitors come to understand the breadth and depth of industry, and develop positive attitudes about workers and innovators in the province.

But is the museum also reconstituting stereotypes? While the Museum of Industry challenges stereotypical perceptions of place that are based on idealized representations of the past, a framework of 'heritage myths' still persist at the museum. Arguably, the Museum of Industry creates a new kind of mythicized Nova Scotia - one rooted in industrialization and the worker. Nova Scotia as a people and place, the museum suggests, industrialized with much success, faced hardship and struggle, and responded to industrial change and decline in adaptive ways. In these historical and social circumstances of industrialization, a set of inherent qualities repeatedly characterizes Nova Scotians facing both "tragedies and triumphs": hardiness, ingenuity, energy, adaptability, and ambition. In many ways, these images and inscriptions mythicize Nova Scotians just as much as folk representations.

It's also important to point out that the common tourism and heritage myths that label Nova Scotia as exclusively preindustrial and which repeatedly place the province in a past age of craft and 'traditional' work are simultaneously present with depictions of heavy industry and manufacturing. The exhibits that emphasize pre-industrial or pioneer Nova Scotia do provide context to the larger story of industrialization, but they also suggest that these kinds of images are so fully ingrained within Nova Scotia heritage representations, they cannot be ignored or discredited even in a provincial industrial museum. The cozy domestic atmosphere of the textile handcraft area, the focus on early physical work and methods of technology creates a pioneer, pre-confederation nostalgia that is repeated in many other non-industrial provincial museum and heritage sites. Two interpreters, though expressing their efforts to fairly highlight all of the

museum space in their tours and discussions with visitors, identified the pioneer gallery as a favourite period of time to interpret in the museum. Also the first gallery completed, Debra McNabb identifies it as one of the better galleries, suggesting its significance within the museum. While museum sites shouldn't ignore pioneer stories or representations of traditional work and craft (they are historical realities), their prevalence within provincial heritage representations makes them trite and extraneous in a museum intending to represent industrialization, industrial work, and its affect on society.

The museum's displays also conform to conventional heritage discourse that looks to embellish the past in palatable ways. The general lack of clear dialogue in museum texts regarding the more unsavoury aspects of industry, like strikes, capitalism, deindustrialization, and environmental degradation are skirted, which suggest a certain way of looking at the past. The past is not entirely commendable. Exhibits do touch on workers' difficult living conditions, child labour, and controversial labour legislation like The Michelin Bill (which has effectively prohibited unionization at the three tire manufacturing plants across the province), but whether the museum is celebratory or timid - suppressing conflict in order not to offend its audience - is often a fine line. Either way, the effect is largely one of a sanitized industrial history that does a historical disservice to the contentious industrial character of the province. The bookshelf in the Museum of Industry gift shop, however, says a lot. Titles cover the typical range of gift shop texts: glossy colour photo books on Nova Scotia's scenic natural landscape, guides for must-do tourist destinations, cultural oddities and local history. The other side of the bookshelf is less clichéd, offering a more pronounced statement on industry and labour than the museum's hesitant and carefully phrased text panels and interpreter's manual. Titles such as *Echoes from Labor's Wars*, *The Westray Disaster: A Predictable Path to Disaster*, *The Glace Bay Miner's Museum*, *Blood on the Coal*, *Coal Black Heart: The Story of Coal and the Lives it Ruled*, *The Failure of*

Global Capitalism: From Cape Breton to Colombia and Beyond, *Views from the Steel Plant*, and *The Canadian Auto Workers* all comment on Nova Scotia's industrial past, workers' lives, and capitalist labour relations. In subtle ways, then, the Museum of Industry is acknowledging a more radical history.

Like the two sides of the bookshelf - one that contains stereotypical, palatable representations of Nova Scotia, the other which speaks to a contentious industrial past - the Museum of Industry attempts to negotiate both of these representations of the province in its exhibits. These museum text panels discuss the conciliation of tradition and industrial modernity in Nova Scotia:

Strategic Industry, Responsible Scale: From pewter ornaments to "high tech" ambulances, Nova Scotia continues its long history of providing goods to the world. Handmade items crafted by skilled workers reflect the traditions of the province, while specialized, state-of-the-art products show the world that Nova Scotia is eager to remain in the forefront of technological development.

A 2-D wood cutout autoworker relates:

When the Volvo plant opened in 1963, many people applied for jobs. I was lucky enough to get one and have been working for Volvo ever since. My father was a traditional shipbuilder. I am involved in the construction of things as well, but not in the same way that he was. I assemble parts that arrive at the plant from Sweden. Although it is different, I don't mind. I would rather be in this warm factory than outside in the shipyard any day.

The museum, then, seems to suggest that Nova Scotia is both traditional and industrial, but it ultimately reminds visitors that change, modernity, and industrial process are the more real signifiers of Nova Scotia as a place. While traditional crafts are made in the province, Nova Scotia is "eager to remain in the forefront of technological development," and though the Volvo

employee recognizes his father's work as a shipbuilder, he is more satisfied in the modern factory plant. Perhaps conforming to craftwork and pioneer representations speaks more to the pressures museums face to show the visiting public what they are often most desirous to see - the antimodern and the nostalgic, and that these images are the expected norm for representations of the past within the Nova Scotia Museum system.

The Museum of Industry, in the end, considers alternative events and groups that have shaped the province's history - like industrialization, technological change, and the industrial working class - to revise a regional place-identity. In this sense, the museum is part of a larger exhibiting shift, which has recently brought alternative themes, topics, and methods of display to light in heritage institutions. This shift has widened the representational focus of museums from artifacts and stories of the upper class to topics like industrialization, especially the more ordinary stories of the working class and the social affects of industry. The following chapter places the Museum of Industry within this larger heritage movement to explore how industry, technology, and labour are presented, and how the public is invited to visit the past in new ways and with new perspectives.

Chapter 3

New Ways of Visiting the Past: Exploring Interpretations of Industrial Heritage at the Museum of Industry

This chapter explores how industry and technology are interpreted at the Museum of Industry. Drawing on a larger context of museum development, it places the Museum of Industry within the curatorial movement that has sought to vernacularize museum content and the public experience of museum-going. In other words, museums are shifting towards new ways of visiting the past that focus on the lives of ordinary people (including marginalized groups) through informal methods of display, which allow the public to consume heritage in an engaging yet meaningful way. Through a critical analysis of the museum's exhibits and public presentations, the chapter examines how the concept of 'vernacular heritage' is used by the museum as a framework for interpreting the industrial past. More generally, this chapter offers a more nuanced view of the practices of representation at a contemporary industrial museum and the use of 'vernacular heritage' and 'social history' in industrial museums.

The Development of Industrial and Technological Museums

Industrial and technology museums became popular in the 1970s, but their origins extend farther back to the early formation of national museum institutions and collecting practices in Victorian Britain. The earliest museums, Kavanagh suggests, reflected the ancient and peculiar, and were "arguably reflex reactions in an age when middle and upper-class opinion sought to dissociate itself from innovation and expansion", and so "rarely reflected the worlds of commerce and industry that had created and funded them" (1990, 14). But as Victorian Britain continued to industrially develop, industry, innovation, and invention were glorified by a society preoccupied with technological progress. The Great Exhibition of 1851 showcased developments in

technology and industrial machinery. It led to the establishment of the South Kensington Museum in 1857, and later in 1928, the Science Museum, which held a mandate to increase industrial education and provide the public an opportunity to view the best and latest inventions in science and industry (Macdonald 2002, 25-27). The Science Museum and later museums of an industrial and technological nature were about “achievement, innovation and technical developments,” Kavanagh notes (1990, 41). The collections were arranged and displayed from the primitive to most recent forms within a group of objects in a way that emphasized the linear progression or evolution of technology and the physicality of the objects rather than their social and cultural significance (Macdonald 2002, 27). This type of technology and industry museum characterized the genre, but was less abundant in comparison to art or natural history museums until the 1960s and 70s, when transformations in manufacturing and transportation heightened interest in preserving disappearing industrial artifacts. An object-centered approach, however, still dominated attitudes towards industrial and technological history, so that the museums that were formed to preserve industrial sites and machinery “were products of an interest in the history of technology, rather than work and workers” (Moore 1994, 145).

‘Social History’ and ‘Vernacular Heritage’

Ironbridge Gorge Museum, including Blists Hill Victorian Town, as well as other open-air industrial sites, like Beamish, emerged during the ‘heritage boom’ of the 1970s and late 80s (Hewison 1987).¹⁹ The decline of the British Coal Industry, especially in Wales, saw several former mining sites like the Rhondda Valley and Baenafon reinvent themselves as industrial history parks (Rhondda Heritage Park and the Big Pit Mining Museum, respectively) as a means

¹⁹ In America, Lowell National Park in Lowell, Massachusetts, one of the largest and most well-known industrial heritage sites in the country, was created in 1978. See Cathy Stanton’s *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Post-Industrial City* (2008) for an ethnographic look at this important industrial park.

of economic regeneration in the transition towards a service economy (see Dicks 1996). The idea of 'living history' and *in situ* representations, which formed the basis of interpretation at sites like these were part of a larger movement, which can be characterized by the term 'vernacular heritage' (Dicks 2000b, 37), that looked to repopulate and popularize history for the public. Moving away from glass cases, text labels, and diachronic displays to more engaging, interactive, and 'authentic' venues, 'vernacular heritage' focused on a more synchronic approach to interpreting the past. Folk villages and rural history museums, vernacular buildings, and sites reflecting working class life - previously marginalized in favour of the histories and architecture of the wealthy and elite - gained popularity and recognition as rural and industrial life was increasingly studied and recorded by academics (Kavanagh 1990, 45). The vernacular heritage approach also incorporated methods of 'social history', which involved a desire to show the ways that "social experience shapes work, politics and ideology" and to represent the experience of "ordinary people" (Blewett 1989, 263). Eventually, this approach emerged in representations of the past in more conventional, collection-based museums. Industry and technology museums, previously concerned with charting the progress and magnitude of technology and the great men who invented it, began to show history from the 'bottom up', or the "history of work, and the social history of the working class" (Moore 1994, 149) by showing the social contexts and impacts of technology and industry. Museum curators became sensitized to the stories of not only the urban and rural working class, but also women and minorities, realizing that they had "denied people their history [and] had also sanitized it of the dissent and diversity that were part and parcel of both the rural and urban social scene" (Kavanagh 1990, 49). There emerged, then, a larger goal among some museum curators to repopulate and democratize history through this new approach to museological practice.

Part of the reason that curators began to focus their representations on ordinary people and their stories was the realization that these presentations brought more visitors into their museums. Industrial and technological museums were largely part of a niche market frequented by technology collectors and industrial enthusiasts, and failed to reach out to non-specialist audiences. In a broader sense, museums, despite their long-held mandate of public accessibility, failed to draw many visitors who were not from white, middle or upper class, well-educated backgrounds. At the same time, working class history became increasingly recognized in the 1970s, and more people looked to find traces of their own family's experience or stories they could relate to when they visited museums (Moore 1994, 149). Curators recognized that representations of everyday people and their social lives in relation to technology and industrialization made more meaningful museum visits that spoke to a wider variety of people. As Bella Dicks describes the shift towards the new vernacular heritage, definitions of national history expanded from aristocratic private residences and public monuments to the popular or ordinary domains of human life, aiming to offer " 'ordinary people now' the chance to encounter and learn about 'ordinary people then' " (2000b, 37).

The visiting experience as well as the subject of display also distinguished the new vernacular form of heritage. While collection-based museums were often labeled as boring or dull, with a long practiced "glass-case, scientific paradigm of display" (Dicks 2000b, 40), the new vernacular heritage epitomized in the open-air, *in situ*, living history forms of display was adjusted for traditional museums as well, broadening the appeal of these institutions. Dicks notes that museums, constrained by limited funding and in a climate of competition, must find creative ways to draw both visitors and revenue. Museums have responded in a number of ways, from increasing emphasis on 'image' and marketing to attract new audiences, to diversifying as multi-

purpose and leisure spaces (function rentals, performing arts spaces, play-areas and parks) and offering consumption opportunities (gift shops, restaurants, cafés), rather than relying solely on their exhibitions to attract attendees. Most importantly, adopting new techniques of display and interpretation that focus on “contexts, people and interactivity” (2000b, 41) in order to enliven exhibitions and attract a wider range of people have also characterized vernacular heritage. Dicks further explains, “the focus on identifiable human characters and on interactive exhibits is a key contemporary feature of the new heritage, as is the emphasis on themes and contexts” (2000b, 42). Multi-media technologies, interactivity, audio excerpts of oral history accounts, performance, reminiscence, and children and family programming combined with an overarching storyline characterize the presentation methods of social history oriented exhibits, whereas traditional exhibiting approaches focused on, and were determined by, material culture. While vernacular heritage has emerged as a more plural and engaging way to approach the industrial past, criticism has been directed towards the depoliticized character of museums and historical accounts that, while considering previously marginalized subjects, only “focus on the positive, the distinctive and the heroic, while eliding the unpopular, the dirty and the unsavoury” (Atkinson 2008, 384), celebrating an almost mythical view of the industrial and working class past. Further criticism has been directed at the ways in which these social history based exhibits overshadow objects with ideas, interpretations, and text (Moore 1997, 35).

Representing Technology, Industrialization, and People

Lawrence Fitzgerald has observed that there are three prevalent characteristics that have defined the way history has been presented in industrial and technology museums: uncritical celebration, the idolization of technology and its male inventors, and the “ritual recitation of ‘technical facts’ ” (1996, 118). The Museum of Industry, however, states that its main focus is on

the *ordinary people* of the past: how they worked, lived, used machines and technology, and how industry affected their lives. "I think the central story is a cultural story ... explaining how Nova Scotia has changed as a result of industrialization and how that affected the lives of Nova Scotians. [...] The way we tell it is with objects that are more or less about the technology," Debra McNabb points out. She also emphasizes that the Museum of Industry, in adopting the social history paradigm, always makes reference to the worker and describes the kind of labour the working class performed: "Our viewpoint is kind of [a] socialist social history approach. So we're not about the hall of fame for the industrialist, we're about the worker. And we're about the technology in so far as it explains our industrial production and the experience of workers." With this intended interpretative context in mind, I look at Corn's (1989) useful categories for industrial and technological interpretations to examine how the MOI represents industry and technology, specifically looking at his social history category. How does the museum approach people and industry through the methods of social history? How has the turn towards ordinary people and their experience played out in the museum's presentations of history? In looking at one particular group that has been given voice in museums through the vernacular heritage/social history movement - women, and in the case of the MOI, working class women - I critically analyze how the Museum of Industry represents their stories and material culture within the larger narrative of industry and technology.

Corn's classification of interpretative styles speaks to the varying roles of objects in representing and illuminating history. His first two interpretative styles, *internalist* and *celebratory* place greater emphasis on objects and their forms, while *social and cultural history* is concerned with stories and experiences. The internalist strategy is antiquarian in nature and presents the 'internal' history of a class of objects (form, function, performance, technical

evolution/chronology) versus their 'external' history (historical context and development, or the 'why' of their existence). Ettema similarly labels this as the *formalist* approach, which "usually seeks to explain the development of the physical forms of objects; it emphasizes the concrete aspects of history - both fact and artifact" (1987, 63), but, as Corn offers, disregards the "intellectual, economic, social, political, technical, and other influences that might have shaped them or in turn, might have been stimulated by their existence" (1989, 239). Fitzgerald also notes that the internalist or formalist approach appeals to male audiences and specialized groups of machine enthusiasts, called 'rivet-counters' (1996, 118), who are interested in the form and evolution of technological objects removed from their working contexts. While this method of object-centered interpretation is generally outdated in museum displays because it offers little in the means of actual *interpretation* for visitors, it does persist in the MOI. As Fitzgerald emphasizes, its popularity still stands because it is "safe and uncontroversial" (1996, 119).

Most of the larger machines throughout the MOI are placed with labels that cite their date and place of manufacture, as well as their technological specifications. Because the museum focuses on a chronological exhibiting structure, it is easy to get a sense that the technological evolution of machinery is an important theme. In the shift in time gallery, the large Bucyrus Erie B-22 Shovel and the Baldwin Locomotive have no text panels interpreting their purpose and use, though the Baldwin Locomotive's panel recites technical facts. The steam gallery (though suggesting to the visitor the emergence of industrialization and changes to technology and society) isolates its five, large artifacts and presents them according to their form, function, and technological specification. The Davies engine, the machine shop, and the Robb engine are meant to show 'Steam in Action' but their operation mainly highlights the repetitious movements of the machine's parts. The clean and polished engines stand in isolation, far removed from their

original intent and purpose. Information offered on the machines by interpreters and text panels does take into consideration some of the health and safety hazards encountered in working with these machines, but mostly involves a basic explanation of how the machines parts make motion, the amount of horsepower produced, or how much weight the engine could haul. On the Davies engine, Paul remarks: "It could pull an amazing 1000 ton ship out of the water, to put that into perspective, a big fishing schooner, it could pull 3 and a third of those out at one time. 18hp in each cylinder, 36hp. There are some ride-on lawnmowers that have more horsepower than that now. This could do the job of pulling a thousand tons out of the water."

The *celebratory* style of interpretation is also an uncritical approach that celebrates inventors and devices and draws links between the objects on display and narratives of technological progress and success (Corn 1989, 241), often without considering the complexities of this progress or the transition of communities into post-industrial economies. At the MOI, the Samson locomotive, for instance, as the showpiece of the exhibits, is transformed into a 'technological icon' (Fitzgerald 120), commanding the attention of visitors and celebrating the success of Nova Scotia's industrial ascendancy. As described in Chapter 2, the museum primarily employs a celebratory approach to the story of Nova Scotia's industrialization, emphasizing triumphs and optimism, in an effort to replace negative stereotypes of the province as an idealized landscape, but backward and industrially arrested, with a new perspective of successful industrial development and the ability to adapt and change. While the Museum of Industry rarely mentions inventors outside of the Spirit of Invention gallery, industrialists, capitalism or 'the great men' of industry, it does offer a celebratory, if not cautious account of industrial history. The storyline offers little criticism of the social and economic affects of industrialization, and later, deindustrialization in Nova Scotia. The museum skirts conflict and a greater depth of

understanding as text panels and first person quotations of the 2-D wood cutout workers are hesitant saying or explaining anything other than *how* a job is performed and the challenges it involved. As Kath Davies maintains, “the interpretation of labour should not merely comprise functional explanations or demonstrations of how objects, be they fan engines or flat irons, were used. Work has many socio-political by-products and is not simply a process of performing a particular task” (1999, 114).

The *Social History/Cultural History* approach is closest to the interpretational intentions of Museum of Industry. As detailed above, this approach is more in touch with academic interpretations of the past and shows the social and cultural dynamics of the objects in relation to their pasts. This strategy of interpretation is centered on peopling history, and how work and ways of living, but also cultural organization, expression, values, and beliefs, have been influenced by industry and technology (Corn, 1989, 244). As Leon and Rosenzweig observe, “the influence [of social history] has not spread evenly over the museum landscape; its effects have varied according to the size, purpose, and focus of differing institutions” (1989, v viii). Considering museums are notoriously slow to change or accept change, or have little funding to initiate change, this movement is not entirely widespread or successfully employed by curators.

The Coal & Grit exhibit in the mezzanine of the museum uses this approach to paint a holistic picture of the Pictou County coalmining community, telling this story through a focus on first person quotations from oral histories of miners, photographs, the material culture of mining (safety lamps, draegermen equipment, company ledgers, a coal car), labour conflicts, disasters, and ideas of locality and community. Paul Lalande’s personal interest in this exhibit also offers the visitor an enthusiastic interpretative experience, as his narration draws on personal family history, storytelling and other historical anecdotes, adding much to the visitor’s experience.

Social history interpretation, however, has been criticized for being too text heavy, literal ‘books on the wall’, with little focus on material objects as communicators. This is the case with the Coal & Grit exhibit, as ideas and statements are the focus of the exhibit, rather than narratives based around key objects. An over-abundance of panels with a jumble of paragraphs, quotes and images makes a ‘book on the wall’ that has little flow or transition. The few artifacts that do represent Pictou County mining are incidental to the text panels, the main focus of the exhibit.

Concepts of social history form the main interpretative threads of the museum, and representations of ordinary people and their work are present in many of the exhibits in the MOI. Child labour is acknowledged in narratives that explain the process of glass bottle making and through a 2-D wood cutout of a trapper boy, who works in a coalmine, as well as Paul’s interpretations of child workers in his tour of the Coal & Grit exhibit. Objects like a wartime worker’s lunch box and the whimsies made by Trenton glassmakers,²⁰ show a personal side to the workers behind the industries represented.



Figure 21. A recent newspaper advertisement for the MOI emphasizes the interpretation of workers, their material culture, and their stories.

²⁰ Whimsies are amusing or whimsical glass objects made by glassmakers on their own time, or while not under supervision.

While it would be too lengthy to examine all of the manifestations of social history or the representations of people at the museum in this chapter, I will instead narrow my focus to the ways that women and their work are represented. As identified earlier in this chapter, museums became sensitive to women's perspectives, experiences, and histories in recent decades as social history translated into museum practices and presentations. Very much a current issue for museums at the time the MOI was developed,²¹ the museum consciously chose to include the experiences of ordinary women in its portrayal of industry.²²

Designing Women at the Museum of Industry

In her examination of museum representations of women's history, Barbara Melosh (1989) chronicles how the women's movement and social history converged in museum representation in the 1970s. A previously unacknowledged aspect in museums based solely on a "history of politics and great men" (1989, 184), the new history from the 'bottom up' took into consideration the perspective, stories and material past of women. While museums have shifted their focus to include women, the women of social history museums are typically confined to domestic representations: sewing, cooking, washing, cleaning, minding children or busying themselves with fancy needlework in upper and middle class domestic settings, such as the parlour. Industry and technology museums, specifically, have largely excluded representations of women in their displays; women are noticeably absent from trade and craft representations in

²¹ So were minority perspectives, but the MOI does not deal with these histories. There is only one visible minority figure represented in all of the 2-D wood cutout figures.

²² Museums can be considered as cultural products of their times. Including feminist histories in exhibitions was a popular and cutting-edge approach in the 1980s and 1990s when the MOI exhibits were planned. Today's museums are concerned, for instance, with accessibility and digital media, creating virtual galleries by using the Internet as an exhibitionary medium. As a new exhibit at The Rooms Museum, St. John's, NL suggests, today's exhibitions are also about de-mystifying the museum space: visitors can go on tours of museum storage rooms, storage vaults are 'opened up' to reveal objects never before displayed, and the public can watch curators at work, witnessing firsthand the conservation and curatorial process.

small museums, and are rarely seen in larger industrial museums. In many instances, women are type-cast in roles which do not reflect the complexity and diversity of their lives and work: “[e]xcept as domestic servants, shop assistants, and occasionally munitions workers, the museum visitor might be forgiven for thinking that women in the past did not work outside the home at all, and spent most of their time sitting at home sewing” (Porter 1989, 107). As we walk together through the museum galleries discussing views on the exhibits, the artifacts and the curatorial intentions behind some of the representations, Debra McNabb points out figures and themes that talk about women working, explaining that it was important for herself and curators involved with the planning and implementation of the permanent exhibits in the 1990s to look for opportunities to include representations of women. As a museum looking to embrace the new vernacular heritage by incorporating a social history paradigm, how does the Museum of Industry represent ordinary women? How are women included (or excluded) in representations of work, industry and technology?

A good place to start an examination of women within the museum space is to look at how female visitors interact within that space. Women are generally reluctant industrial museum-goers because of an implicit gender bias in this genre of museum. According to Corn, industrial and technological exhibits are most often curated by men, and rely on a method of display that arranges technical artifacts in terms of specifications and performance that “unconsciously perpetuate male power and domination” (1989, 241).²³ The exhibits “tend to exclude and mystify women, who are less likely than men to be interested either in specifics about horsepower and cylinder bores or in interpretations built around technical milestones and performance statistics” (1989, 241). While Corn’s arguments, at first, appear to be generalizations, in my discussions

²³ See Cynthia Cockburn’s (1985) related study on machinery, technology, male power, and women’s exclusion from possessing or participating in technical competence.

with the weekly craft volunteers, they related how many men touring the museum informed them that their wives were sitting in their parked cars outside, as they felt that a museum about industry would contain nothing of interest to them. If they had known there were craft demonstrations, they would likely have agreed to tour the museum. Similarly, Debra McNabb related the appeal of the domestic craft area, rather than displays of machinery, for female visitors:

It's been very popular because a lot of women are interested in it when they don't expect to be that interested, for the most part, in the contents of the museum. Women that grew up on farms tend to be interested in our machinery, because they grew up with machinery, but you know, for others, it's 'thank goodness there's something here for me'. And that's highly valuable for us. We've included photographs of them [the craft volunteers] in our marketing and to let people know that we are challenging their ideas of what might actually be in here.

To that extent, I observed one female visitor exclaim to her traveling companion when being hurried along past the craft display during a guided tour, "that's not right, we skipped right past the quilts - that's the best part!" Whether women are disinterested in industrial museums because they simply dislike industrial artifacts, 'don't understand' machinery or feel excluded from the perceived maleness of technology, Corn suggests that unless museums pay more attention to "the imaginative, affective, and social aspects of the human-machine experience and unless they teach visitors how things work and why" (1989, 241) industry and technology museums will not reach out to a female demographic. In this train of thought, perhaps industry and technology museums need to also include stories that show women working industrial, machine-based jobs (because they did and do) and explore the challenges these women have faced working within these kinds of industry and male-dominated sectors.



Figure 22. Female visitors observe the weekly volunteers demonstrate domestic crafts in the pioneer gallery.

Several representations dealing with women at the MOI place women and their work in domestic settings. In otherwise male dominated spaces (though many areas of the museum are ‘gender neutral’), the domestic craft area is central to a focus on representations of women and their work. It is the main space in the museum where the domestic, in contrast to the industrial, is performed, and in this way, the space is divided in terms of gender - female visitors frequent the area and female volunteers enliven its interpretations - aligning women with domestic, pre-industrial representations and men with machines and progressive technology. As a unique and popular space (there are living people for visitors to interact with), taking up a large portion of the pre-industrial or pioneer gallery, it is probably the most memorable representation of women that visitors experience. The area is neat, bright, and homey, with a parlour organ in one corner and a treadle sewing machine nearby, untypical of what one would expect to find in a industry and technology museum populated by artifacts that are cold, metal, shiny or full of rust and

grime. Framed needlework, afghans, hooked mats, and quilts hang from the rough-hewn wood walls, evoking warmth and security. An antique white cupboard is filled with old tins of baking powder, mason jars, and teacups and a bookshelf with crafting books and magazines sits against the wall. In the center of the area, two large quilt frames and a mat frame are tied up with the latest projects the volunteer crafters are working on. Work often reflects contemporary designs, like the Colonial Lady quilt the volunteers were stitching while I conducted this fieldwork, though the hooked mats usually follow a more period-appropriate Bluenose design, after Pictou County entrepreneur John E. Garrett's factory-made printed designs.²⁴ In many ways, the area looks more like a hobby room decorated with antiques than an actual nineteenth century domestic space, though Debra points out that "what's happened is that I've had to compromise on what the appearance of this space would look like, in that it doesn't actually match the period, in order for them [the volunteers] to have ownership of it as their space."

The area intends to focus on "Artisans at Work", and the text panel reads, "In this workshop, skills and activities from the days before industrialization are demonstrated. Some are no longer practiced and some have lasted up to the present." An adjacent panel indicates what the visitor can expect to find: "Here you will see quilting, tatting, crocheting, knitting, rug hooking, braiding, and embroidering - all skills employed by housewives and other family members to create household articles in the days before factory-made goods were widely available. Ask about

²⁴ Interestingly, the MOI makes no reference to this very successful local business (in fact, there is little reference to these kinds of entrepreneurial endeavours in the museum). Garrett manufactured and marketed printed mat designs and patented a rug-hooking machine, all of which sold throughout Canada and the United States. Garrett's factory building, located in New Glasgow, is still standing and is now a large antique store. See Scott Robson's *Garrett's 'Bluenose' Hooked Rugs* (2004) for more information. This domestic craft display could be a better-utilized area if it spoke about issues concerning the shift from traditional or individual mat designs to factory-made designs, and in a broader sense, the decline of hand produced items due to the availability of factory made goods, and how this impacted domestic and social life (for instance, the popular use of mail order catalogues). In this train of thought, the decline of mat-hooking due to industrialization, and the twentieth century resurgence of rug hooking as a marketable tourist commodity initiated through the efforts of craft revivalist Mary Black's training programs, which sought to assist rural women in earning money, could be explored. See McKay 1994, 152-213.

classes and other special events offered by these skilled artisans.” In showcasing this type of domestic work in an industrial museum and labeling the activities as ‘skilled’ the museum is placing value in one aspect of work involved in the domestic sphere, despite the fact that domestic, non-public work has been frequently devalued as ‘real work’, since women did not earn a salary for these efforts.²⁵ By including female craftwork in their definitions of industrial work, the museum is attempting to show a larger and more inclusive picture of industrial life in Nova Scotia, and women’s place within it. While terms like ‘artisan’ and ‘craft’ connote highly specialized skill sets, they also evoke a sense of ‘primitive’ technology because the products are not mass-produced, inconsistently suggesting that women’s work is not really industrial work - work associated with technological advances, complex manufacturing processes and marketable commodities. Because this work is in the ‘pre-industrial’ section of the museum, and is demonstrated and interpreted in a simulated exhibit background with nostalgic overtones, women’s real working conditions (working class and pioneer dwellings would have been less picturesque and *Country Home* magazine ready) are trivialized. There is no contextual information on the other labourious, tedious, and dirty processes involved in craft production like preparing wool, spinning and dyeing yarn and other cloth, and the multitude of other domestic tasks women performed in addition to producing textile goods. That these crafts are practiced and presented more as ‘hobby work’²⁶ can suggest that domestic textile crafts are not valued in the same way that technological artifacts, technical processes, and male stories are in their contribution to the provincial story of industrialization.

²⁵ For an in-depth understanding of women’s domestic labour, see Luxton’s (1980) exceptional critical study.

²⁶ As opposed to representations in living history museums, where female workers, dressed in period costume and in a more ‘authentic’ contextual setting would demonstrate domestic craftwork.



Figure 23. This craft area places value in women's unpaid domestic work.

Melosh criticizes that women's domestic work culture can easily "slide into sentimentality, offering a nostalgic vision of the world we have lost now that women are striving to take their places in public life" (1989, 198). In many ways, the domestic craft area perpetuates a sentimental myth of women's work: the nostalgia and comfort of a warm patchwork quilt made by grandmother, the feminine lace edges of a tatted doily, the homespun coziness of a hooked mat made from old family clothes. The historical depth of exploration goes little beyond a warm reminiscence of female family members handiwork or piquing the interest of present day crafters to take home a photocopied sheet of instructions for a certain quilt pattern, or a poem about Log Cabin quilts which states that "the plain red center block/ means home and heat and hearth/ and the printed logs around it/ means the family will not part." This nostalgia and sentimentality, which denatures the idea of women's culture, suggests Melosh, may "render [women's culture] more palatable for wider public consumption" (1989, 198). In many ways, the craft area is

offering a feminization but also a sentimentalization of space, acknowledging the domestic products women made but at the same time rendering them obsolete and hobbyist, and isolating and distancing them from the larger narrative of industrialization. The display would benefit with visitors understanding why women's craft products were relegated to hobby work status through industrial change and technology, thus altering their meaning and value. For instance, women's home-based craftwork was replaced by factory made commodities. Though space restrictions allow the craft area to provide only a very partial glimpse of women's domestic products and their context and process, as Melosh suggests, the kinds of sentimental and nostalgic presentations this area produces may be more desirable for heritage consumers.²⁷

Domesticity and women are also aligned in Mae's Kitchen. Located in the upper gallery, the kitchen recreation depicts a miner's home in the 1920s. The wainscoting, casings, and wooden latch hook doors were recovered from a demolished company house in Stellarton. The small room is furnished with period table and chairs, a Gem Richmond cast iron cook-stove, and a kitchen cupboard, which holds various dishes, a rolling pin, and flour sifter. A period calendar hangs on the wall and a hooked mat lies on the floor. 'Mae', as staff call her, is a wooden 2-D cutout who sits at the kitchen table in a blue striped dress, teacup in hand. Beside her, a chair is pulled out and an empty cup and saucer are set at the table, the visitor can assume, for her husband or son when they return from their pit shift, a neighbour with whom she will gossip, or perhaps reserved for the visitor herself, so she may chat with Mae about her life and role as a miner's wife.

²⁷ Showing July- September 2010 is a hooked mat exhibit with new pieces created by members of the Pictou / Antigonish Branch of the Rug Hooking Guild of Nova Scotia. As part of the display, visitors may have their own rugs appraised by the Guild and potentially added to the provincial hooked mat registry. A recent past exhibit showcased star patterned quilts.



Figure 24. An MOI postcard of Mae's Kitchen, available in the museum giftshop. The reverse of the postcard says, "Discover the hardships and joys of life in a Nova Scotia Company Town."

Initially, the curators intended to have audio based interpretation for this area. Visitors would push several buttons to prompt different dialogues (an actor portraying Mae and reading an imagined script created by curators, rather than a dialogue based on actual oral history recordings), which would speak about home life in a mining community. A failed sound system and poor recording and acting quality saw the audio dialogue eventually scrapped.²⁸ Female museum interpreters in the past have dressed in costume and interpreted the space, but in recent years, a shortage of interpretative staff due to budget constraints has limited this kind of

²⁸ It should be emphasized that the MOI intended to do many things differently, but lack of funding, time and collections challenges, as stated in Chapter 1 inhibited these initial plans - many of which were quite creative and addressed important social history issues, like labour and union relations. It is, however, not the intention of this thesis to recount what 'could have been.' Instead, it looks to address what visitors actually experience, or what is being actively represented in the museum. Unfortunately, intended representations and ideas are not what the public consumes, though they do reveal the limitations which curators must work within, the incomplete nature of exhibiting, and the fact that the final, on-the-floor product is determined by choice, but also compromise.

interpretation. One large text panel, with a bleak photograph of a row of grimy company duplexes, smoke stacks belching in the distance and a woman standing in the backyard, is the only panel that interprets the recreated set. It reads:

How People Lived. The men who worked in the factory floor, in the mines, and in the steel mills often went home at night to places like this. Workers had no other choice than to rent such housing from their employer, and living conditions in some of these duplexes were grim. People struggled against disappointment, poverty, and disease. It usually fell to the woman of the house to try and keep the family healthy, fed and clothed. Despite all the difficulties, she often succeeded.

Because there are no text panels enlightening the visitor about Mae, her kitchen, how she would have used the domestic artifacts on display or the issues of company housing (overcrowding, lack of privacy and sanitation, disrepair, overwhelming debt) and her work as a housewife (we presume this is her job, we do not know if she worked outside of the home) the visitor is left to freely imagine his or her own interpretations of the space. As the text panel suggests, this area intends to place value on the important role of women in providing for their family when they had little means to do so. *How* women did this, and *why* 'poverty, disappointment and disease' were real issues dealt with by working class families is not broached.

In looking at Mae's kitchen, where on days when interpreters are available or visitors are interested, copies of two of Mae's period recipes are distributed ('Mae's Molasses Fudge' and 'Mae's Molasses Cookies'), visitors see little evidence of the grief and hardship alluded to in the text panel and photograph, or in the quaint and bright domestic décor. The cook-stove suggests the house is warm, and the cups of tea and recipes provided imply that Mae's family is amply fed. Mae's kitchen is a silent room that doesn't speak about workers' living conditions any more

than it speaks to the kinds of labour women performed. What did Mae do? Certainly more than leisurely sipping tea in her kitchen. In its representations of domestic work, the museum suggests that women like Mae only worked for family purposes. Though many working class women were confined to their homes, they took in laundry and sewing, supplementing their husband's income (Davies 1996). Is this how Mae, 'despite all the difficulties, succeeded?' Though an intimate and personal space, as the visitor feels like she is stepping into a 'real' miner's kitchen, the kitchen setting provides a passive background on issues of how workers lived, but especially how women worked within and without of the domestic setting. Like the domestic craft space, Mae's kitchen sentimentalizes domestic work, and creates a nostalgic and sanitized representation of women's labour through an emphasis on home-cooking and handing out 'traditional' recipes to an eager public looking to find warmth and comfort in domesticity.

Women's work is also represented in the pre-industrial or pioneer gallery through the role of the housewife. The beginning of the museum showcases five trades that 'pioneer' Nova Scotians practiced including a labourer,²⁹ a ship's caulker and a blacksmith. A 2-D wooden cutout figure of a woman dressed in an early 1800s dress with mob hat and peeling an apple is situated beside several domestic artifacts, including a wooden dash butter churn, butter pat, potatoe masher, and heavy cast iron pot and kettle. Organized as a 'help wanted' ad, the job description for a housewife reads:

²⁹ A quick look at an early Nova Scotia census will reveal that a significant portion of the male working population identified as labourers. Focusing on the job of an 'unskilled' labourer is a radical curatorial gesture on the part of the MOI, as Porter notes, "less advantaged, affluent, and articulate groups - such as unskilled and casual workers, unemployed people, migrants, and travelers - are underrepresented or omitted from social and industrial museums" (1988, 104). Increasingly, migrant workers from Central America and Africa are employed in fruit harvesting in Nova Scotia. This could be an issue that the MOI represents in future exhibit revisions, especially in its apple production display.

A housewife to work long hours with no pay; duties include cooking, cleaning, bearing and raising children, making and repairing clothes, growing vegetables, assisting with farm chores; considerable responsibility, possible risk to health in childbirth, but great satisfaction in raising a family and helping to build a community.



Figure 25. The housewife's labour is emphasized as being as important as male pre-industrial labour.

The text panel further reads:

Of course nobody would have run an ad like this, and if they had, nobody would have answered! However, the work of the housewife was just as real and just as valuable as that of any other jobs shown here. In the early 1800s few Nova Scotian women worked outside the home, but all worked at home, providing a wide range of goods and services to keep farm and family running.

After reading these panels, visitors can then attempt to lift weighted models of cast iron cookware, gaining a first-hand understanding of the physical strength women needed to perform domestic tasks. Organization, mastering a variety of different skills and applying them when necessary are emphasized as the demands of the job. This display offers a much more realistic and descriptive account of domestic labour, showing actual artifacts that women would have used in their work, and recognizing the 'occupational challenges' women faced in bearing and rearing children. Rather than sentimentalizing domesticity, housewives are given the same value as other trades described in the pioneer gallery.

This labour-intensive work of the housewife is contrasted with the labour-saving capability of electricity for domestic work presented in the lower gallery and the age of electricity exhibit. In part, the exhibit was intended to reflect on how "the advent of electrical appliances changed life at home, especially for women" (Cardinal Communications Ltd. *Interpretative Plan* 1997, 6). An area that talks about the impact of electricity on Nova Scotian lives, it also makes specific reference to the invention of electric appliances and how these, essentially, made life easier for the housewife who performed domestic tasks like cleaning, food preparation, and laundry. A text panel relates:

Living Better With Electricity. Before the advent of electricity, everyday life for Nova Scotians was much different than it is today. Without the convenience of electrical appliances, a typical day was filled with many arduous tasks. Women and children, who were responsible for most of the household duties benefited immensely from the technological innovations which accompanied the introduction of electricity into the home.

Another text panel emphasizes the changes to the home electricity brought, including a safer light source that didn't require cleaning as did oil lamps, and the electric water pump which reduced

the amount of work involved in hauling water from an outside source. Flip panels answer questions about how appliances affected people's lives, for example, that laundries went out of business with the emergence of washing machines. A façade of a white clapboard house with green trim is connected to a series of power lines that run throughout the lower gallery, illuminating the upstairs window of the façade with electric lighting. Below, various antiquated domestic appliances from the twenties, thirties and forties are on display: vacuum, radio, kettle, toaster, heater, and white streamlined fridge. A spunky little 2-D housewife from the 1940s wears retro glasses and an apron, and stands with a hand on her hip, an electric plug in the other near the appliances. A text panel expresses her opinion on the shift in technology, and its impact on her life and home:

Now that we've finally got electricity in our home, life seems better. It's clean and modern, and the vacuum cleaner makes cleaning the rugs easier. But appliances are expensive, and there are so many to choose from. The advertisements are appealing but I'm not sure some of those gadgets are worth the money.

Portions of the exhibit cluster contrast the work described for a housewife in the job ad in the pioneer gallery, showing how the progression of technology and invention has impacted and unburdened some of women's domestic tasks. Gaby Porter maintains, however, that industry and technology museums frequently promote messages that say machines in the home reduced the amount of housework women performed, because the exhibits are often based on company advertising sources rather than on any historical study of housework - information more rare than printed materials (1988, 116-117).³⁰ Displays on appliances and technological change, then, often

³⁰ Though it did not make the final exhibit cut, a draft text document shows the intention to select an advertising image from the June 1937 issue of *Chatelaine* magazine, which read "Lovely hands are free from toil." (*Text Production Final Design*, 'Electricity in the Home' 1995, 9).

take on the nature of a promotional exhibit, showcasing the product rather than usage and working context, and how the product reduced or eliminated physical labour. While the MOI exhibit does discuss how electricity changed the nature of domestic life (in terms of entertainment, diet, quality of life) and work (economic impacts on local businesses, assisting in making housework 'more efficient') the quirky appliances on display outshine any references to the women who would have used them. The text, in fact, makes many obvious statements, and is rather boring compared to the archaic toaster.



Figure 26. 'Living Better with Electricity.'

While electricity did dramatically and often positively impact women's housework in labour reducing and time-saving ways, electricity and appliances did not eliminate housework or domestic tasks. Work in all instances did not become easier per se, but electricity did make work *different*. In some cases, as briefly alluded in a text that says washing machines led to more clothes washing, electric appliances escalated standards of cleanliness, requiring women to put more effort into household maintenance. Appliances also created domestic work that took place in isolation, delegating once communal tasks entirely to the female individual and her appliance,

as mutual interdependence diminished once the home modernized. For instance, men cut and hauled wood for fires, while women cooked on the wood stove; children and some men hauled water for women to use in cooking and washing. The electric and appliance age also helped usher in the stereotypical middle/upper middle-class suburban housewife image, her main concern, as the housewife's quote disparagingly suggests, choosing which appliance to purchase and which product advertised is the best or most honest deal. As appliances made domestic work more acceptable for these women, removing some of the more physically unattractive aspects in cooking and cleaning, which had previously been done by female working class servants, the exhibit cluster doesn't make reference to how electricity impacted work for women who were in service positions - those who took in laundry or cleaned houses for wages - some of the few jobs acceptable or available for working class women. The exhibit could explore how electrification and appliances presented challenges for women seeking paid service work, but increased opportunities for women to work outside of the home (i.e., did electrification and 'time-saving' appliances allow more women the opportunity to seek employment outside of the domestic realm, as in clerical positions?

While the display intends to show, in part, how electrification impacted the life of ordinary women working in the home, the curious appliances become the focal point, and women the back-story. It is suggested that appliances made domestic work much easier, but little information is given on how women perceived them or how they altered their lives in more ways than making the rug easier to clean. The Museum of Industry could focus more on changing gender roles, and work to debunk the myth that electric appliances were only positive inventions for women, considering the reality that "the time women spend in housework has not changed significantly despite the multiplication of labor-saving devices" (Melosh 1989, 200).

Women *are* represented outside of the domestic sphere at the Museum of Industry, which is important to emphasize. In the nineteenth century printing press display, a woman is depicted as a compositor, a job that involves the arranging of individual letters into lines of type. The 2-D wood cutout woman states through her text panel that “people say that women are better at this work than men,” suggesting a division of industrial labour based on gender. In a tour I followed with Curator of Collections Mary Guildford, special reference was made to Catherine, the wife of famed Nova Scotian publisher and freedom of the press advocate, Joseph Howe, and the fact that she often managed operations of *The Novascotian* while Howe was traveling. Women are also depicted in a photograph representing factory work at the chocolate box assembly line game. Reminiscent of *I Love Lucy*, the factory workers are arranging chocolates in boxes as the conveyor belt moves along. Another image shows a woman assembling parts in a factory setting, near the Volvo car and industrial incentives display. In the lower gallery, women’s ‘entrance’ into the non-domestic workforce is chronicled in exhibits that deal with World War II manufacturing and service industries like hairdressing and clerical work.³¹ The wartime industry display text recounts the shortage of male workers as men enlisted for service overseas. The exhibit and design plan states the intended messages for the area are to “compare the role of women in the workforce prior, during, and after the war years to demonstrate the important role that women played in wartime production,” and “to highlight how the changing composition of

³¹ The exhibits seem to suggest that women did not work beyond the domestic sphere prior to WWI and WWII. Women who were employed in textile mills in Nova Scotia, like the girls and women at the Wile Carding Mill, Bridgewater are not acknowledged in the museum. Though the Wile Carding Mill represents this theme (as part of the same museum system, the museums do not want to overlap their content) there is an extensive history of women working in textile manufacturing that deserves to be elaborated in the context of Nova Scotia within the MOI storyline.

the workforce had a lasting effect upon domestic life and the individual and societal expectations” (Cardinal Communications Ltd. *Interpretative Plan* 1997, 11). A text panel reads:

New Roles. Before the war the types of jobs available to women were limited because of tradition and social expectations. During both World Wars, women filled the void created when men enlisted. Wives, mothers and daughters entered the factories, which until then had been considered the exclusive domain of men. Working women were seen as making a patriotic contribution to the war effort, rather than making a radical departure from their traditional roles. It was an important development, however, because it provided women with an opportunity to join the industrial workforce.

Trenton Industries is represented as an example of a World War II manufacturing plant, and the Lange Lathe, used in the machine shop to make products for the war, is operated by a female figure. She expresses through a text panel that “operating the lathe is a very strenuous job and when I get home at night, I am exhausted. I don’t mind though. I am proud to know that I am making a difference in the war. Besides, work is not all that bad. I have met some great people and the workers get along really well. If my husband could only see me now!” Beside the figure are personal items from women’s wartime work: a banged-up green lunch box, a worker’s ID badge, ration booklets, and an autograph book with a message about friendship written by one co-worker to another, dated Feb. 9/44. The *Interpretative Plan* states that the exhibit should speak to the following key questions: “What were the attitudes of different industries to the influx of women in the workforce and what facilities and services did the industries put in place to attract women into the workforce during the war years?”; “What impact did the influx of women into the workplace and out of the home have on family life, cultural activities and the communities?”; and “What happened when the servicemen returned? Did the role of women revert back to that of pre-war years?” These are all good social and cultural history questions, but

the actual exhibit delves little into the wider implications the questions probe - those of women participating in male-specific jobs, class considerations (many working class women had always worked outside of the home in various jobs, many of an industrial nature; war industry recruited middle class women into these roles as well), why women entered the workforce (economic incentives as well as patriotic duty), changing attitudes of men towards women working outside of the home, but at the same time male suspicions of women's work (for instance, male dominated unions sought to exclude women). While the women and wartime exhibit is important in its efforts to show the industrial capability of women like 'Rosie the Riveter', who asserted that women could perform heavy industrial jobs, more emphasis is needed on these women's experiences and more attention paid to answering the questions initially posed in the interpretative plan.



Figure 27. "If my husband could only see me now!": A female wartime worker operates the Lange Lathe.

The return to a cultural division of labour by sex once the war was over is suggested in the clerical work exhibit cluster, which shows several female figures at work in an office setting. Text panels relate that the shift from a product to service economy opened up new opportunities for women to enter the (presumably paid) workforce. The panel explains that many of the new positions women occupied were no longer attractive to men, but “women, however, seized the opportunity to work outside the home.” The area is intended to “highlight the feminization of office work and the changing role of women in the service industry” (Cardinal Communications Ltd. *Interpretative Plan* 1997, 12) and “employment opportunities for women in post-war Nova Scotia” (1997, 13). Two, 2-D figures - a typist and filing clerk - lean over an old typewriter and a wood filing cabinet. Their text panels read, “As a typist, my day is very busy and involves endless paperwork. There are many new machines which are starting to make it easier though. I get a long really well with the other girls in the office, which makes the job fun.” The other states, “I am responsible for helping to manage the mountains of paperwork which come through here each day. This is my first job and there are many things that I still have to learn. I might have gotten work in a store or as a maid, but I enjoy working in an office.” These are interesting choices in descriptive text and phrasing. They do mention the limited career opportunities available for women in post-war years (domestic work, shop assistant) but they don’t move beyond superficial statements. Like the wartime female lathe operator, these women express enjoying the camaraderie of their co-workers, subtly suggesting that women worked because they preferred or enjoyed the social aspects of working, rather than an earned wage. The exhibits could engage in a dialogue that talks about more contentious issues, like sexism in a male supervised workplace, disparity in wages between men’s work and women’s, managing families and work and why career options were so limited. How women’s jobs differed from those available to men could also be broached. A Museum of Industry text document from 1998 shows

that curators had drafted text relating to the ways women's working lives changed after World War II, including displacement from factory jobs by returning servicemen, the feminization of specific jobs in the service industry (like retail employment) and subsequent issues with childcare. Panels or artifacts that related to these issues were not included in the final exhibit presentation, however.

Hairdressing, the next exhibit, makes a direct connection between the increased presence of women in a professional workplace environment and socio-cultural implications. As women had less time for personal styling, hairstyling businesses emerged, which in turn, allowed more women to enter the workforce through a service industry. The display, however, much like the electricity in the home, is centered more on the curiosity of the outdated equipment than women as hairstylists and clients. The exhibit is, very successfully, meant to be a fun space that grabs visitor's attention, prompting an array of visitor comments on the 'torture-like devices' and the hilarity of outdated hairstyles, as visitors can 'try on' various period hair styles, from an Elvis pompadour to Shirley Temple ringlets, by sticking their faces through a wood cutout panel.



Figure 28. An MOI postcard shows women assuming new roles outside of the home through service industry jobs, like clerical positions.



Figure 29. Antiquated hair styling equipment looks like it belongs on the set of a low-budget horror film.

In using the specific example of a gender group, this section has discussed how ordinary people and their experiences are represented in relation to industry and technology at the Museum of Industry. In examining women, it looks at how a marginalized group has been actively incorporated within the museum storyline through a focus on the social history paradigm. In critically examining how the evolving patterns of employment opportunities for women - from domestic, to manufacturing, to service work - are represented in social and cultural terms in the museum, it suggests the MOI has made significant efforts to invite visitors to reconsider their definitions of industrial labour and work. By validating women's domestic work (often not classified as 'real work' because it offers no wage), the MOI looks to equalize women's domestic labour and products with those of 'great men and machines'. However, the emphasis on the domestic is overshadowed by a nostalgic effect that actually sentimentalizes women's work. While the museum considers the home as a workplace, it also considers women who do not work exclusively within that sphere, but the simple narrative and limited depth of social and cultural consideration in these exhibits limits their ability to fully convey the

experiences of working women and the patriarchal structures in industry and technology. As Melosh observes, “a fully realized history of women [...] must convey women’s simultaneous participation in and alienation from a dominant culture that defines them as other. [...] It must capture a sense of female agency even as it depicts the limitations that bound women’s ability to act” (1989, 186-187). The museum also needs to present a broader spectrum of women’s industrial activities - not just work within the domestic sphere, services, or wartime production. Susannah Oland, the Halifax brewer, for example, who is profiled in the ‘Put Your Self in the Picture’ interactive exhibit (currently not operational), was a successful Maritime female entrepreneur, whose work and legacy as a brewer could be further explored.³²

Visiting the Past at the Museum of Industry: Engaging the Public Through Vernacular Heritage

A group of tourists stop at the visitor rest stop at the Irving gas station off the TransCanada Highway. Inside, they browse the brochures promoting Pictou County tourism destinations and activities. They pull out the rack card for the Museum of Industry, glance at the images on the front - the shopmobile, children with an interpreter in Mae’s kitchen, a view of the lower gallery exhibits - then flip the card over and read the brief text: “Push, pull, lift, drop and laugh as you explore exhibits and interactive displays that highlight how technology- and people-worked throughout this province’s history.” Below, a young visitor’s comment is quoted “ I like your museum. It isn’t scary. I can run around and you have cool stuff!” Is the visitor persuaded to visit the kind of museum described? If it is a rainy day, as the Doers and Dreamers guide suggests, visiting the Museum of Industry may be an ideal opportunity to learn something new,

³² Mary Guildford actually suggested this as a theme that could be further expanded in the museum’s representations of women.

yet be entertained while doing it. The brochure offers an idea of museums and of industry that many would not associate together: approachability, fun, interactivity and a focus on people's stories as well as their objects.

This section focuses on the ways the Museum of Industry has adopted the new vernacular heritage, which, as previously discussed, focuses on representations of ordinary people through the social history paradigm, but also involves the idea of an interactive or hands-on history, which places importance in the 'visitor experience'. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett discusses, museums are shifting from a focus on artifacts to a focus on visitors, as "the presumption in some quarters is that visitors are no longer interested in the quiet contemplation of objects in a cathedral of culture. They want to have an "experience" " (1998, 139). The idea of 'experience', Kirshenblatt-Gimblett further relates, is an important consideration for museums, which must compete for visitors against tourism destinations, and also each other. This focus on a visitor 'experience', which "indexes an engagement of the senses, emotions, and imagination" (1998, 138), is important to consider in questions of interpretation and meaning making at a museum. This chapter, then, looks at the visitor 'experience' at the MOI, and examines how the past is made both appealing and personal to the public through interactive displays, programming, and an overall approach to interpreting industrial history.

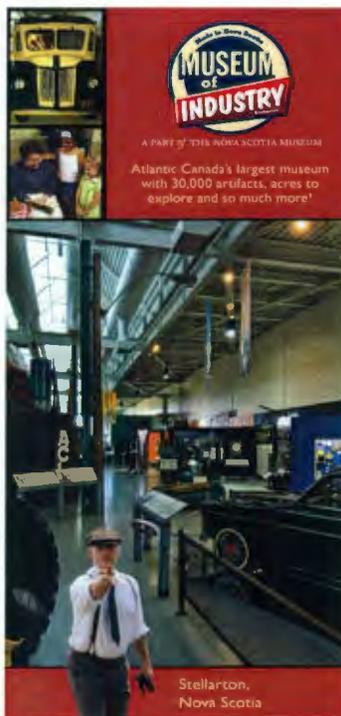


Figure 30. Museum of Industry promotional rack card.

The Museum of Industry has received high praise for its approach to interpreting industrial history.³³ Roger Brooks, a tourism consulting expert was quoted in a local Pictou County newspaper after a consultation session with local stakeholders and town councils on ways to improve the area as a tourist destination. He said that the Museum of Industry “is one of the best museums in Nova Scotia if not the Atlantic Provinces ... About everything is hands-on, we loved it. This is one heck of a museum” (*The News* 2009). That hands-on aspect is an important part of what defines the museum as a representational space, according to Debra McNabb. “You want to provide varied experiences, so it’s not just all passive, looking at artifacts, that you’re engaging the visitor, and I think that’s a big element of our success and has shaped our audience.” Debra further explains why the Museum of Industry chose to focus a substantial portion of its exhibits on motion and interactivity:

³³ See Jon Price (2006) for an overview of the variety of ways industrial museums approach interpretation.

We felt that these processes had more meaning if they were actually happening. [...] We think it's integral to the story of industrial activity, that you're showing things moving and hearing noises, you know, the noise of machinery and experiencing those sounds and providing opportunities for people to be physical, because so much of what people did, the work they did, was physical. [...] We're about mechanical interactive kinds of things where people are pulling and pushing and lifting. Putting their energy into it.

As Dicks maintains, the new vernacular heritage is characterized by experience-centered forms of cultural consumption (2000b, 33). What is the visitor experience at the Museum of Industry? How have the museum's public presentations been shaped by the ideas of making heritage accessible, engaging, and fun, but also educational?

Industry, as Andrew Phillips jokingly describes, "is not a sexy topic." Compared to living history museums across the province that deal with cuddly farm animals, house museums that offer English garden tea parties, or the Natural History Museum that has an eighty-year-old turtle named Gus, the industry-based sites in the Nova Scotia Museum system easily fall at the bottom of the list of most exciting museums to visit. Some people are frightened by industry, find machinery boring, perceive technology as difficult to understand, and children are not, generally speaking, interested in stories about 'adult' topics like industrialization. The vernacular heritage approach to interpretation and the active marketing of a 'friendly', 'fun', 'interactive', and 'story-based' approach to industry is being applied as a remedy for negative perceptions of industrial museums. As the large red banner on the outside of the museum reads, the MOI is about "Hands on Fun."

From the very planning stages of the museum, curators anticipated a new way to visit or experience the past, which focused on the museum as an interactive space, and a highly visual

environment where “a few key objects move continuously, suggesting the dynamism of an industrial environment, while others will move when activated by the visitor or demonstrator.” In this environment, non-textual ways of presenting the past were considered important. Visitors were meant to “interact with many of the exhibits, and the interactions [would] usually go beyond the simple pushing of a button.” Sound was meant to be a continuing feature throughout the galleries - “the chug of steam engines and the slap of belt drives ... overlaid ... at various points [with] the voices of Nova Scotia workers, telling their own stories.” Again, the people behind the machines would also be present as voices and images from the past, but also in opportunities for role play, allowing the visitor to stand in the shoes of the worker. Live interpretation in the galleries by staff, whether demonstration, historical interpretations or guided tours were also a priority (*Nature of the Visitor Experience* 1993, 1). Collectively, the visitor was expected to experience the museum “not as a neutral observer, but as a participant in the work of time. Greater emphasis on walk-through, experiential exhibits, and increased use of sound and interactive [would] contribute to the feeling of having experienced the past” (*Plans for the Nova Scotia Museum of Industry* 1994, 3).

While the actual exhibits did not entirely live up to the ambitious experiential intentions described above for various organizational and financial reasons detailed in Chapter 1, the idea of interactivity and sensory engagement still informed a large part of the museum’s interpretative strategy. While many of the methods mentioned above are widely used in museums (especially audio/visual), most institutional-style (versus open-air) museums do not employ a combination of all categories. The Museum of Industry’s visitor ‘experience’ is unique in this way, and while the artifacts are decontextualized from their original working sites, the museum has attempted to recreate, as much as possible, an *in situ* industrial experience through working, moving artifacts.

As Debra emphasized, "these processes had more meaning if they were actually happening." The museum employs this interactive approach primarily through the following categories:

- 1) **Demonstration:** At least four machines are workable at the Museum of Industry, three of them engines running on compressed air in their new museum location, rather than steam. The Davies engine, for instance, is often operated by the interpreters, explaining how the engine works mechanically. Interpreters also operate a small portable model sawmill that cuts undersized boards, a machine shop, the Robb engine from Robb Engineering Works in Amherst, and a 1930s hand-operated printed press which produces bookmarks visitors may take home as a souvenir of their visit. The domestic craft area involves volunteer interpreters who demonstrate various craft methods, like quilting and rug hooking.

- 2) **Multi-media (audio dialogue, film and computer technology):** An audio script, illustrated through several expressive 2-D wooden cutout characters is presented by actors and relates a dialogue of a group of miners' and their confrontation with a General Mining Association manager over better wages and job expectations, exploring labour issues in a way that lets visitors draw their own opinions on the topic. Film footage of a Yarmouth textile mill shows employees carrying out various jobs at the mill, helping to illustrate the machine loom on display, as it is non-operational. In the electricity section, a selection of 1930 radio broadcasts can be played, one about the Moose River Goldmine disaster, and at the end of the lower gallery, the 'Shaping the Future' exhibit allows visitors to explore digital media through a interactive computer program that talks about 'new' directions (now out-dated) in technology. The 'Put Yourself in the Picture' interactive lets visitors take a

photo of themselves in a small photobooth, place it on the body of a significant individual or entrepreneur who contributed to Nova Scotia's industrial history or a worker representing a certain skilled job, and then print the image as a take-home souvenir. These exhibits all allow the visitor to experience the working/human context and usage of machines, human stories, and worker's issues, new forms of technology and the impacts of technology on the social life of Nova Scotians.



Figure 31. “Now you men get back to work”: A group of dissatisfied miner's confront their General Mining Association manager about unfair practices.

- 3) Sensory engagement (Visually, Aurally, Tangibly): In a fenced-off area, a belt-driven machine shop, salvaged from the former Drummond mine in Westville, Pictou County allows visitors to witness the whirl of spinning wheels and belts. Nothing is produced, though occasionally a piece of metal pipe is cut in the machine shop set up. The sound of the spinning parts and belts, combined with the slow chug of the Davies engine creates a sense of an *in situ* industrial context. Because the machines are semi-

operational, they give visitors the feeling of industrial sound and movement, and a better understanding of machine function and operation, though visitors can easily become mesmerized by the wheels and belts in action. Because few artifacts are behind glass cases at the museum, visitors are able to freely touch, feel, and fully examine many of the machines and tools. Rather than the restrictive exhibit encounters that involve excessive text reading and the adoration of material objects-on-pedestals, this method of display, and the general nature of industrial objects (some machines are less fragile than other kinds of museum artifacts) satisfies visitors' natural desire to experience and explore objects through touch or close observation.



Figure 32. While visitors are not permitted to touch or climb aboard the McKay car, they are able to inspect its luxury features - like plush leather seating and brass grill - quite closely.

- 4) **Active participation:** Activities like the assembly line game, where visitors box chocolates on a crank conveyor belt at various speeds, the shift work/timecard and clock experience, the labourer's pulley system, the housewife's cooking pots and the blacksmith's apron and fan let the visitor take on the role of an industrial worker. Through this experiential method of role-play, visitors understand, in part, concepts of time and work, the often physical and mental monotony of factory work, and experience firsthand the physical output necessary in the 'hard labour' tasks of pre-industrial work.



Figure 33. Scott assists visitors participating in the boxed chocolates assembly line game.

- 5) **Explanatory working models:** The water pump-ups in the pioneer gallery are a good example of working models that explain the technological process of water harnessing in early mills. The models are designed with plexiglass and show various waterwheel mill forms, like an up-and-down sawmill, a gristmill and carding mill; visitors pump

levers which bring water up from a source below to fill a small tank. When the trap door of the tank is released, the water flows out and spins the water wheel, which powers the saw blade, millstones, roller, etc. Similar models show how waterwheels are designed, and illustrate the gravitational force of water. Children enjoy these areas, because they can get splashed and actually feel the water.



Figure 34. The author's young cousin eagerly pumps water into the gristmill interactive.

- 6) Re-creation: The museum attempts to recreate or evoke the physical 'settings' of industrial landscapes across the province. From the choice of paint colours (the iron and steel gallery is bright orange, evoking blast furnaces and molten steel, the pre-industrial gallery is blue, reflective of waterpower), design of the building (resembling a factory in appearance), to specific gallery areas that encourage the visitor to feel like they are 'on location', the museum looks to place the visitor within the dimensions of industrial Nova Scotia. In the Iron and Steel gallery, a blown-up black & white

photograph of the plant at Sydney Steel lets visitors visualize the size and extent of the structures, though they are physically unable to experience the buildings in person. The painted train tracks and steel ingots on railcars lead from the interior to the exterior through the window to a locomotive outside, suggesting that they are being hauled to a new location. The inside of a shipping container houses text panels and a film on the Halifax Shipyards, a brick wall façade and old windows recreate a factory setting, and the darkened pillar and beam coal tunnel simulates a miner's job site.



Figure 35. The textile mill exhibit cluster. The belts and wheels on the pole prompt a feeling of 'motion.'

Youth oriented programming and themed events also speak to the museum's efforts to engage while educating. Regularly offered school programs look at pioneers, simple machines, power, and structures. The programs, Andrew Phillips describes, "look at how work was done or how things were made in the past. What kinds of tools or machinery or skills were used, how those things changed over time. How people learned how to do their work, and how work affected their lives. If we're looking at more science-based programs, where does power or

energy come from to do work, and how do machines help people do their jobs.” March Break, for instance, is a major event in the museum-programming schedule during which a large number of visitors pass through the museum in a one-week period, and one that involves much preparation by museum staff. This past March, I spent a day at the museum observing children’s activities. I brought my seven-year-old cousin, his grandmother, and my father along, and took part in the activities while also taking notes and photos of their interactions with the museum exhibits and programming. Themes have varied over the years, and while 2010’s programme was a relatively low-key event focusing on building with lego blocks, craft making, dress up, and circus acts, past exhibits have included a zoo theme with live monkeys from the Moncton Zoo and a chocolate theme that evoked a Candy Land sort of feel, with Willy Wonka’s Oompa Loompa wood cutouts beside a chocolate fountain. The themes often have little to do with industry or technology, but are a way to attract community members and other visitors in large numbers to visit the museum.³⁴ While carrying out fieldwork, I followed Scott’s (the museum technician) progress in building a large wooden circus train for the 2010 March Break programme. The kind of talented person who could build you the coolest tree house, Scott designed and constructed the train, and had it painted by a local artist. The centerpiece of the March Break activities, children rang the bell in the engine cab and climbed in and out of the various cars - one a wild animal car filled with stuffed exotic animals, another a butterfly passenger car aimed at girls. This train interactivity (which will be permanently housed in the building’s foyer) helps make the museum a fun-filled attraction that is attractive to children and their families, and helps the museum keep a competitive edge in attracting visitors.

³⁴ The museum also hosts a popular annual craft fair with many local and provincial craft exhibitors and vendors.



Figure 36. Visitors enjoy Scott's 'wild animals' car during March Break activities at the museum.

The Museum of Industry 'experience' centers on an interactive approach to the past through a variety of ways. Sights, sounds, movement, demonstration, re-creation, and creative programs combine to create a different kind of visit to the past - one that is not passive, but active - and one in which the public can play a role, thereby making a more meaningful connection to stories of industry and technology. Several visitors I spoke with mentioned how they liked the interactive nature of the museum best of all: "the interactivity, the hands-on stuff, the hand pumps, it's all fun to play with," one visitor remarked. These experience-centered forms of consuming culture characterize the new vernacular heritage, which looks to move museums from the rearguard of tourism by relying on popular methods of display accessible to a public who expect to experience a sensory engagement (as in other tourist attractions) based on doing, rather than seeing.

In this kind of interpretation at the MOI, however, 'work' becomes 'play'. Hauling on a rope and pulley, lifting a pot, caulking a ship, making a water-wheel move, or boxing chocolates on an assembly line transform jobs that were labourious, challenging, and mind-numbing into amusing, enjoyable activities within the museum setting. The experience of industry and of work becomes a game and adventure, a light-hearted contrast to the actual drudgery and physical danger of industrial work. In this respect, the kind of experience of the past that visitors take away with them may be one that is enjoyable and engaging, but the experience doesn't go beyond a subdued simulacrum of work.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored how the concept of 'vernacular heritage' is employed in creating representations of industry, technology, people, and their work at the Museum of Industry. In using this strategy, the Museum of Industry looks to create a heritage dynamic based on experientialism. Through fun, engaging, and interactive forms of interpretation, and in telling stories about people and their social and cultural experiences, representing the industrial past at the MOI is about performing the *personal* sides of industry. The Museum of Industry's interpretational and representational focus is thus centered on a key idea: the personalization of industrial heritage. This personalization involves the ways in which the Museum of Industry actively incorporates people and human experience - whether historical persons or the contemporary visitor - into its consideration of history. Through narratives and displays that speak to the experiences of a marginalized social group (such as women) or in employing experience-centered, engaging methods of interpretation and programming that convey fun and positive messages about industry that draw visitors into the story and the displays, the idea is to

create an experiential, one-on-one connection between museum space and visitor, between the people of the past and the people of the present.

While the Museum of Industry does employ one-dimensional methods of interpreting industry and technology which can peripheralize the human experience, this chapter has shown that the museum is foremost ordered by a social history approach that looks to connect the ordinary people in the exhibit displays with the ordinary people standing on the exhibit floor. "People remember what is important to them, so making this history personal to people is important," says Andrew Phillips. "So, being able to establish a sort of personal relationship with individual visitors, and then draw on their personal interests to be entertaining ... to make the experience personal is very important." As Andrew's statement suggests, the Museum of Industry makes a conscious effort to *involve* the visitor in the museum, allowing them to take part in industrial history in personal ways, whether that be through a deeper understanding of a historical person or group's experience, or the feeling of being drawn into the storyline of the museum narrative through experience-centered methods of interpretation. The idea of 'vernacular heritage' at the MOI, then, is concerned with making the personal experiences of the people in history matter on a personal level to the public who consumes them, and that the methods of interpretation create an experiential encounter for the visitor. As Andrew's statement suggests, personal relationships and personal experiences are most meaningful for visitors. The following chapter will further explore how visitors look to connect with the museum's exhibits in personalized ways.

Chapter 4

The Streaker, The Stroller, and The Studier: Consuming Industrial Heritage at the Museum of Industry

For a little engine, the Baldwin locomotive has a considerably loud bell. Its relentless clanging resounds up through the lower gallery, reverberating from the concrete walls and filling the vast open space of the museum building with a discordant sound. Its mad peal proclaims that visitors, especially children and their families, are in the museum, clambering aboard the plucky steam loco's cab, shoving levers, and pulling cords before they choo-choo their way to the next interactive exhibit. Streakers, they take a passing glance at a text panel, charge off to the gift shop and out the museum doors. The Strollers, a more leisurely lot, wander through the galleries with no pressing agenda. They selectively read text and their interest is piqued by certain words, images or objects. They casually circle the 1912 McKay touring car to get a closer look at the gleaming brass grill, but they carry on past the chocolate box assembly line game. They politely listen to the interpreter's discussion of living conditions for a turn-of-the-century coal miner's family, but otherwise feel independent in their visit to ask questions only when they wish to. The Studiers, an interpreter's walking nightmare in specialized knowledge, visit with intent and purpose. Detailed and careful in their observations and interactions, they move slowly through the galleries, savouring the exhibits. If train enthusiasts, they spend half their stay admiring the Samson locomotive. If collectors of American pressed glass, they marvel at the form and intricacies of moulded Trenton glassware. Determined to gain a thorough understanding of industrial process and the museum's displays, these attentive patrons make the most of their visit. Fast, flitting, or focused, the streaker, the stroller and the studier, as Debra McNabb and the

exhibit team aptly characterized museum-goers, are important factors in a study of meaning-making at the Museum of Industry.



Figure 37. “I think I can, I think I can”: this steam engine from Baldwin Locomotive Works, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is reminiscent of *The Little Engine That Could*.

In this chapter, I examine the people who consume the Museum of Industry’s messages and how they make sense of Nova Scotia’s industrial heritage as active participants in the process of interpretation. Drawing on Hall’s idea of decoding (1980), I explore the ways visitors interpret the museum’s representations of industry, ascribing their visit with various meanings. As Cutcliffe and Lubar recognize, “to expect visitors to choose to spend their time and money at the museum, the museum must not only pay attention to their needs, desires and interests, but also to allow them a significant role in the creation of meaning in the museum” (2000, 22). By looking at the way people talk about their visiting experience and industrial heritage in Nova Scotia, this chapter provides insight on what understandings of industry, labour, and technology visitors take away with them when they leave the museum building. How does the public engage with the Museum of Industry’s exhibitions? How are the museum’s representations and messages

rearticulated by visitors? How does the public culturally frame their visiting experience in order to make it meaningful?



Figure 38. A mother points out the intricacies of the loom to her young child.

The Challenge of Studying Visitors

“Measuring, counting, and mapping have formed the basis of the vast majority of museum visitor studies,” observes Hooper-Greenhill (2006, 373). This visitor study is different in that it is a *cultural* study of visitors at a specific museum site, and so is unconcerned with visitor demographic statistics, visitor behaviour, or visitor preference (Dicks 2000a; 2000b; Handler and Gable 1997; Katriel 1997; Macdonald 2002; Smith 2006). As Hooper-Greenhill reflects, there is an increasing shift in professional and intellectual approaches to studying museum visitors, where instead of thinking about visitors as “an undifferentiated mass public,” they are accepted as “active interpreters and performers of meaning-making practices within complex cultural sites”

(2006, 362). In other words, visitors are viewed not as passive recipients of institutionally generated 'intended' messages that they 'get' or 'don't get', but as an active audience that constructs meaning for themselves in interactions with cultural texts and representations in a diversity of ways (Macdonald 2002, 219). My visitor-oriented research, then, employs a qualitative approach that focuses on the attitudes, values, and feelings of visitors and in turn, how they understand the representations of industry put forth by the museum. It looks to situate the visitor within the cultural product of the museum to show a more nuanced view of how visitors frame their experiences, and how their perceptions of industry within Nova Scotia are influenced by their museum visit. The aim, as Hooper-Greenhill summarizes this type of approach, is a deeper comprehension of public perceptions and cultural understandings (2006, 374).

Studying visitors, however, is challenging whether using qualitative or quantitative methodology. Tired from standing on their feet all afternoon, hot or cold, hungry, frustrated by their misbehaving children and complaining in-laws or simply in a rush to get to their next destination, many visitors feel harassed by a researcher looking to 'have a few moments of your time to ask some questions about your museum experience'. The fact that the researcher is suspiciously sitting on a bench behind a small shrub in the museum foyer, tape recorder in hand and eyeballing the visitor as the next potential informant, is rather off-putting. The researcher's challenge of presenting herself as polite, convincing, yet non-intrusive is no easy feat, and those visitors who do not flatly refuse an interview, often give hurried, disinterested or hesitant responses. Only if the researcher is lucky, will she get a real 'talker' who is willing to elaborate beyond superficial replies.

Hooper-Greenhill identifies several difficulties in the methodology of a cultural studies approach to studying visitors. In terms of generalization, she notes the criticism that has been

directed towards the 'anecdotal' and 'subjective' nature of the results (2006, 374). In the case of this study, which focused on a limited number of participants being posed very specific, though open-ended questions, this study can easily be characterized as 'anecdotal' and 'subjective', in comparison to the more rigid, statistic-oriented approaches of quantitative questionnaires, or even the in-depth probing of more sophisticated qualitative studies, which include large numbers of visitors, offering a more unbiased breadth and scope of visitor understanding.³⁵ Individual interpretations can also seem limitless in this kind of research, each visitor bringing a certain experience, perspective, and value system to the visit that differs from others. Why is this kind of study worth undertaking? How can one take into account an endless range of interpretations? As Macdonald encountered in her own ethnographic visitor study at The Science Museum, there was indeed variety in visitor interpretations, but "amidst the variety were also certain patterns, which, while not necessarily common to all those studied, could be seen as part of a repertoire of prevalent interpretations" (2002, 220). Patterns, then, emerge from this type of qualitative data, suggesting that visitor responses are not so individualized, but can be understood within wider themes and cultural frameworks.

Visitor studies of museums and heritage sites are useful and necessary. Scholars generally approach these sites without taking into consideration the way visitors themselves read heritage texts or presentations. As Bella Dicks emphasizes, heritage is a *public* text, not an isolated encounter between text and scholar (2000b, 195). Instead of looking to find how those texts are read by visitors, how visitors interact with displays, and how they frame concepts of, for instance, place-identity after visiting the site, most scholars do not go beyond their own interpretations or

³⁵ In a master's thesis, the scope and time frame of research is limited. The fact that I was the only individual conducting fieldwork greatly limited the number of interviews collected. More in-depth understandings of visitors and their interpretations of the museum could be determined through a larger, more focused study.

readings of the text to determine meaning. As Dicks argues, “studying the *rhetoric* of heritage means both identifying the ways in which the text itself addresses an audience *and* analyzing how the visitor makes sense of the text” (2000b, 195). In this scholarly context, it is important to consider the role of the public - those who actually consume the texts - in order to understand the full value of heritage in shaping meaningful experiences.

Study Methods

Tourist’s interpretations of the Museum of Industry were explored through semi-structured interviews. In September 2009, on-site interviews were gathered from twenty different visitors.³⁶ A ‘convenience’ sampling was utilized, where adult visitors were approached at random until the desired sample was met. Responses gathered represent a diversity of individuals and groups in terms of age range (from twenties to seniors), sex and locality, though many of the respondents were current or former residents of Nova Scotia, or had some familial connection to the province. No identifiable minorities were interviewed because no minority groups visited the site while the survey was carried out.³⁷ The interviews ranged in length from about eight to twelve minutes. Some visitors were briefly interviewed when they entered the museum, and then later when they exited, in order to determine how their perceptions of industry changed once they had toured the site (see Chapter 2). However, because of the ebb and flow of museum traffic, and the fact that only one person conducted the survey, it was impossible to ensure that all

³⁶ I felt this was a desirable sample of visitors for the scope of this thesis. Because interviews were conducted in the tourist down-season (September), reaching this number of participants was challenging.

³⁷ Debra McNabb has mentioned, much to her dissatisfaction, that the MOI seldom receives visitors from minority groups. Only one 2-D wood cutout figure displayed in the museum, a textile worker, is of a visible minority. The majority of Nova Scotia Museum sites do not represent the historical experiences of, for instance, African Nova Scotians or Mi’kmaq (other than in a pre-historic or first-contact setting).

participants were interviewed prior to entering the museum. The exit interviews were deemed most valuable in that they consisted of more elaborated discussion.

For the visitor survey, I sat in the museum foyer, a liminal space between the reception desk and the entrance/exit to the exhibits, in order to easily approach visitors. I explained that I was a student from Memorial University of Newfoundland conducting my master's thesis research at the museum (I made a point of clarifying that I was not conducting visitor research for the museum) and asked whether they would be interested in answering a few questions about their museum experience. Individuals or groups I approached took a seat on the nearby bench, or remained standing while I tape-recorded their responses. Questions focused on perceptions of 'Nova Scotia and industry', the exhibits (an account of their experience, what kind of emotional or physical responses the exhibits evoked, what they encountered concerning people or workers, invention, technology, and progress) and lastly, what general messages the visitor took away concerning industry and labour in Nova Scotia. While the emphasis of the questions focused on industry and labour in *Nova Scotia*, responses also reflected thoughts on industry and labour in wider contexts.

To derive meaning from the descriptive conversations, narrative analysis was employed in order to understand visitor's interpretative processes, and interview texts were examined through close (re)reading and coded for emerging, relevant themes. Larger themes were then identified from the emerging themes, and the narratives of the visitor experience were assembled into a coherent framework of overarching themes and sub-themes in order to provide insight as to how tourists give meaning to the site and their visit. Three major themes were selected for further analysis and are explored below. Part of the research also involved the more general observation of visitors as they interacted within the museum galleries. Visitors were not 'tracked' per se, but

when I was in the galleries, and visitors were present, I made a point of listening to their conversations whenever possible, and observing their encounters with objects and text, the interpreters, and the interactive components of the museum. Visitors were made aware of my presence in the museum and my purpose there through an information sheet posted at the reception desk.

Some visitor transcripts are altered or edited for clarity. Whenever possible, I avoided altering the transcripts. Phrases in italics are my own words, and offer clarity or context for visitor comments. Group conversations are notated with V1, V2 and so on for Visitor 1, Visitor 2, in order to distinguish separate speakers. Instances where my voice is included in the conversation transcript are indicated by my name.

'They Worked Hard': Visitor Understandings of Work and Labour at the Museum of Industry

As discussed, objects, text, and dialogue can be read and interpreted in a multiplicity of ways by consumers of heritage. Despite individualized responses, significant themes can emerge which lend insight into how visitors, as a general group, read a given past and find experiences that give value and meaning to their lives. This section focuses on how tourists talk about their visit in terms of a wide narrative of work and workers. It presents how visitors, through their museum encounter, come to understand the lived experiences of past industrial workers and how they make links between the industrial past, worker's achievements, and the evolution of modern-day life, making their visit a meaningful experience. It also explores how museum narratives, objects, and images focused on the nature of work and the lives of workers, evoked an emotional

response from visitors, so that their tour was framed with feelings like empathy, respect or gratitude towards the working people of the past.

A significant theme that emerged from conversations with visitors was the prevalent view that ‘the past was hard.’ In this view, the hard work of the industrial past was seen in terms of a working class experience and manual or physical labour. For most visitors, their museum visit was an eye-opening experience in that they realized or were reaffirmed of, the physically demanding nature of industrial work and the health and safety dangers and harsh living conditions faced by early workers. Making specific reference to the Coal & Grit gallery, which presents a social history of Pictou County coalmining, the Pioneer gallery, which offers the preindustrial context in the museum’s chronological narrative, and exhibits on factory work,³⁸ visitors perceived an understanding of ‘hard work’ and a ‘hard life’ as the underlying point or message they received from the museum, especially in terms of the human dimension of industry. As one visitor described, the museum was about “basically the hardships these people lived with,” while another visitor commented that the museum showed people of the past in terms of “how hard their life really was.” Other visitors phrased their understandings of the industrial past and its workers in similar ways, expressing a sense of empathy with early workers:

V1: They worked hard.
V2: They worked darn hard ...

V1: They had a rough life, right?
V2: Hard life.

It’s kind of sad that they had to work so hard for so little.

³⁸ These are galleries where physical labour is emphasized, as opposed to other displays of work which deal with examples of less physical exertion, such as pattern making, engineering, clerical work, scientific research, etc.

The stories were what our ancestors went through in the past. The hardships and all the other things that they went through.

The dangers that were involved, especially ... children, because they started as children.

The hard life, how full people's days were, just with the things they had to do to exist! Everything was difficult.

They worked harder, I think.

I think a lot of hard work, you know. I think that particularly when you start with some of the early kind of displays you appreciate how hard people worked.

Ideas of overcoming hardships and just 'surviving' also characterized visitor's perceptions of the reality of early life in industrializing Nova Scotia:

Back then, it's survival, everything was survival. Seeing some of the conditions and stuff back then. What it took, to ah, eek out a living, what it took just to survive.

Their [lives] weren't easy. It was a tough, tough life. [...] They had to do what they had to do basically to survive.

Reactions to child labour, a concept unthinkable for most visitors, also affirmed a visitor interpretation that 'the past was hard.' When Paul, the interpreter, made reference to children working in coalmines as young as nine years old, women in one tour group expressed shock and sympathy for the living and working conditions young children endured. Other visitors reacted similarly, expressing amazement at the reality of child labour:

We saw pictures in the past with these children in the coal mines and different, other labour, you know, industries. But especially in the coalmine, and the glass making where they were handling hot things. Nine-year-old boys!

Little boys, in an apprenticeship for four years. And it talks about like, the first year you do this, and the second year you do this and it showed the hard life that people had. And you really feel that and you think 'wow.'

'The past was hard' trope became a common framework for viewing industrial history in which visitors made divisions between the present and the past. Many visitors read the museum as pointing out the difference in labour conditions and the nature of 'work' in contemporary society (i.e., physically easier and requiring less risk) compared to the challenges endured with work in the industrial past. Contrasting the modern-day realities of work with those of the past, visitors reflected that today's workers do not face the same challenges as those who lived before. In this sense, visitors looked back on the industrial past as a distant and unfamiliar place - one where the realities of 'hard work' had little similarity to the contemporary experience of labour and relevant ease of living:

It's hard work I guess, it's a lot harder than what we have to do now. It's a lot easier to sit at a desk and do that sort of thing.

In making this division, visitors used their museum experience as a stimulus for critical commentary on the difference between contemporary work and lifestyles with those of the past, suggesting that today's generation of workers have little knowledge of what it means to do a 'hard day's work':

Ah, basically, everything through the years, like how everything progressed. And, how everything is like, you know, how hard people had it back then. You know you hear stories, but until you actually see some of the tools, some of the things they had to use. And you know, now they complain cause their iPod doesn't work.

It amazes, it always strikes me, it's always amazing to me how hard people had to work, you know, it was a

hard life, they didn't know any different. It's not like now, we know the difference.

But how hard they worked. And today, you're pushing buttons ...

V3: And they didn't have the facilities to work with what people have today.

V2: They were brave men. Young people today wouldn't know what bravery is, because what they call bravery today is nowhere near that. The things they went through everyday.

V1: And they knew it, and they still went down and did their job!

It's obvious, I think, in any history that I've looked at that the people of that generation seemed to be much more hard working. They did jobs that I cannot imagine men of today doing. [...] They obviously were extremely hard working people.

I've been to a lot of museums of this type, and the big thing is you know, how hard people worked, and you know, how little they had. That they are working to survive more than anything. That, you know, we've gotten pretty lazy in our modern-ness. These things, we take for granted.

We have a gadget to do everything nowadays. We were talking about that coming up here. It's like, we watch some TV shows and reality shows - we can't even start a fire nowadays without a Bic lighter, you know, and what these people had to do just everyday!

As these quotes suggest, visitors perceived workers in the past as experiencing more challenging labor than workers in the present, who have the resources of modern, labour-saving technology to make their tasks easier.

While the visitors quoted above made a critical commentary on the lax character of today's work and a generation of people technologically and socially removed from the struggles of pre-industrial and early industrial life, most visitors did not express a nostalgic desire to 'return to the past', or express a 'it was better back then' view of the past, which heritage sites and

museums are often criticized for promoting (Bonnell 2008; Bennett 1988; Davies 1996; Wallace 1996; Walsh 1992; West 1992). For one visitor, seeing a narrative of progression and contrast allowed her to realize that far from being nostalgic for the past, or at least past forms of work, early industrial labour was “something I certainly wouldn’t want to do. You think it would be a pretty tough life.” Only two visitors expressed a nostalgic ‘it was better back then’ view of the past. One visitor expressed a desire to see only ‘old things’ in the museum, and the desire to return to a certain period of time, viewing the museum’s displays on current technology in an unenthusiastic way:

I don’t want to hear about that stuff [*changing or new technology*]. That’s my life now. I’m interested in the older things. I’ve often said take me back to 1949 and leave me there. [*laughs*]. I have a little sticker on my antique car that says ‘lost in the 50s.’

Another visitor mourned the loss of a sense of community and the strong family ties early workers shared:

They considered themselves one big family, and they didn’t have to worry about their neighbour coming in and stealing something, like you do today. [...] A social life and looking after one another. [...] You don’t see that as much today, I mean some people do. But you don’t really see that today. People are all for one, for themselves, they don’t worry about their neighbour, eh? Even you know, immediate families don’t. [...] But in that time, and day and age, you knew where your family were, you knew where [all] of your relations were, it was something that you kept close to you.

These views, however, were not entirely oppositional to the more frequent view that the ‘past was hard’ or the feelings of gratitude toward past workers who contributed to industrial and social progress, as these visitors expressed similar sentiments, although they would not exchange their

present day comforts for a life that was more labour-intensive. Nostalgia was more a longing to experience a familiarity that was rooted in the past, as one visitor linked the two: "there was a lot of nostalgia for me, obviously. Going around I saw quite a lot of stuff I was familiar with."

In looking back at past times visitors were able to contextualize or explain their contemporary life and work through exhibits that encouraged them to reflect on the nature of work in both the past and present. Visitors recognized an evolution or progression in society that, while connecting them to the lives of workers in the past, also distanced them. As one visitor suggested, the museum tracked the "evolution of human endeavour." In this view, visitors interpreted the Museum of Industry as a place that directed the public towards a present and future gaze, rather than solely on the past. The exhibits asked visitors to look back at the past for a unique or re-adjusted perspective on the present, to witness the march of time, progress, and technology, and use that as a way to contextualize the present and project towards the future. As Lowenthal describes in relation to pioneer museums in America, "visitors are encouraged to identify not with the pioneer past but with the future that past projects: their own present" (1989, 123).³⁹ While visitors addressed a difference between modern concepts of work and workers versus nineteenth century concepts of labour, in contextualizing the present, visitors made connections between workers' achievements and the creation of present work conditions and lifestyles. As one visitor described the main message he received from the museum, "I think basically it is don't forget where you came from, but remember where you're at." As the response suggests, industrial museums become a place where visitors remember, or are reminded of, hard

³⁹ The MOI largely fits within the pioneer museum type, even though its main focus is on industrialization. While the MOI centers on industrialized Nova Scotia, the museum is essentially talking about the province's 'industrial pioneers,' showing the seminal beginnings of progress and portraying Nova Scotia's forbears as perpetually industrious. As Lowenthal observes, "[t]hus the visitor to pioneer museums both admires the laborious past and sees how much better off he himself is, because his present emerges out of that past. In few historical museums today is progress from past to present so deliberately traced" (1989, 123).

work in order not to forget how the experiences of past generations have contributed to the ease of twenty-first century living and working conditions. As David Lowenthal elaborates, in looking back on the past, we can feel we have transcended a sorry or difficult history, and so measure our progress. In appreciating the 'bad old days', the past becomes a testimony to our subsequent social and technological advances (1985, 41). In looking back at the past, then, we reassure ourselves that 'the past was hard' for our forebears, but in the present, we have a much better life (Lowenthal 1985, 49).

Early industrial workers were valorized or commemorated for 'paving the way' for a better standard of living for future generations, and visitors expressed gaining a deeper understanding of the lived experience of early industrial workers, in turn garnering a new appreciation for present standards of living:

Whenever you go back in time, and you think about how people lived, and what we should be thankful for, we just take everything for granted. I think 'wow', look at how hard those people worked.

I'm appreciative of the hardships of the past. Very appreciative of the hardships of the past. I guess we understand better a lot of the hardships that our forefathers went through.

We're lucky that we're living today with the technology, and we need to realize what our forefathers went through to get us to where we are now.

We have grandchildren. I think it's good for them to know how this all started, and where from, and where we are today with industry and technology today.

This sense of appreciation was further shown through a discourse of gratitude for being born in an era where standards of living and working were improved:

I was thankful that we live today, with today's technology.

For me, I was glad I was born in the era I was born. I can't believe people used to work that hard everyday just to survive.

The historic industrial working class, who one visitor perceived as a social class at "the bottom of the ladder," was elevated in status because of the demanding nature of their jobs, and the technological, class, and gender oriented challenges endured, but overcome. Visitors expressed a sense of gratitude by recognizing what people had done, achieved, or endured in the past so that things could be better now:

I guess we've come a long way.

You know it was pretty tough times and pretty hard won rights.

Just the history of the province, and how it started, and come from farmers and fishermen to where we are today.

The old people, and how they innovated with the stuff, they did a lot with nothing. Basically, it's innovation. [...] Just making inventions from nothing really, just to get the job done.

The dangers they sustained. [...] The courage it took to face those dangers.

It was a real different mind-set back then. And this whole HR nonsense of today was non-existent. You had people who were in charge and people who did the work, and they were secondary and expendable.

I think it's better now, than it was then. That exhibit where they were getting told to do the work, or get lost kind of thing. [...] That still happens now, obviously, but not quite the same (*referring to worker-employer relationships*).

V1: even the women's roles, how they had to hold the home front together, alone not knowing where their husbands were.

V2: Raised all the kids alone. Did all the work.

V1: they had a lot on their shoulders too.

[There] was ... a theme of health and safety of workers and it certainly was less so than it is today, back in those kinds of shops.

I guess, sort of a, not a sadness, but new appreciation as to what people use to have to work with and, you know, more of an understanding, I guess of what they use to have to do.

As the quotes above reveal, visitors viewed present standards of living and working conditions as a direct improvement from the past, because of the efforts of early industrial workers.

Visitors to the Museum of Industry identified with narratives of workers in the past. Despite the abundance of machines, tools, and products on display, technological specifications and historical facts, the prevalent storyline that was engrained as most meaningful in people's visit involved an encounter with a human and personal view of the past. In coming to view pre-industrial and early industrial history through the prevalent trope 'the past was hard', visitors expressed a sense of gratitude and appreciation for early industrial worker's contributions to current and much easier standards of living and work. In contextualizing the present, visitors put into perspective the fundamental question, 'how did we get to where we are today?' giving value and meaning to contemporary work and life. In other words, visitors looked to find meaning in connecting their current lives with those in the past, becoming a part of a larger story of progress and human achievement, and renegotiating the meaning and value of work and quality of life in contemporary society.

Placing the Visitor within Museum Narratives

"My grandmother made for me almost that identical quilt. We've got that stuff!" says one visitor to another. The two stand behind a low wooden barrier, pointing and looking and chatting

about the various quilts and textile crafts on display in the domestic corner of the pioneer gallery. Joanne, one of the weekly volunteers who demonstrate traditional crafts for visitors, is sitting at her hooking frame, working on a Bluenose patterned mat. She tells me that some visitors just “want to tell stories themselves,” whether about quilting or about their family members quilting or other experiences or memories the material objects or the visual demonstration of neatly pulling thread through recycled fabric, may trigger. Often, rather than talking about their crafts or the domestic work of nineteenth century women, the craft volunteers just listen.

When visiting museums, people ultimately look to answer an important question: how does this relate to me? Where do I fit within this story? People visit museums to learn new things and to be engaged, but they also wish to find themselves or their interests within the museum exhibits. As Harold Skramstad observes, the way most visitors use museum content is by “attaching it to their own personal needs and experiences” (2000, 29). This section identifies the active self-placement of visitors within the Museum of Industry narratives, and how visitors create their own, personal meanings from their museum experience. As Gaynor Kavanagh notes, “what happens in museums is far more than the cold meeting of the minds of the visitors with the curator’s carefully constructed displays. [...] Both curators and visitors make meanings” (1996, 2).

Memory and the Museum

I chat with a man as he takes a break from touring the museum. Sitting on one of the rest benches in the ‘shift break’ gallery, he tells me he enjoys the museum immensely because it is a history within his memory - a place where he can revisit scenes, memories, and objects from his past. Many of the Museum of Industry artifacts date from a recent and popular history. A tumble

dryer, for instance, is one of the latest additions to the collection. For some visitors, the objects on display, like a wringer washer ("I remember the wringer washer in the kitchen!" one visitor joked about his increasing age), or a mid-eighties fax machine, barely seem historical. "It's the closest thing that we have to a popular culture museum, because there's so much of that sort of everyday stuff," Mary Guildford, the Curator of Collections observes. "They're not sort of art objects, like when you go to the British Museum and you see all of these exquisite things. They're things that real people used, or had in their homes or had in their workplaces."

As one visitor stated about the collection, the "things that my kids look at as being antiques, my mom and dad and myself actually used." For instance, the miscellany of products in glass display cases lining the wall along the ramp to the lower gallery, with items like a can of Schwartz turmeric, a carton of Morse tea, and a box of Moir's chocolates were familiar products for many of the Nova Scotian visitors. For visitors in a middle or senior age group especially, museum objects like these served as memory-joggers, just as much as they conveyed new information for young people with no first-hand knowledge of what the exhibitions at the museum illustrated. The idea of experiencing a 'history within memory' was expressed by many visitors, though it made them feel like artifacts themselves:

I'm older than I thought I was, I see a lot of stuff that I worked with.

I was just thinking, I must be getting old. I can remember when Clairtone was here, and all this.

Basically, a lot of the items I see here, I can relate to as far back to when I was 3 or 4 years, and that takes you back 60 + years. It's fun to watch the progression of appliances and materials and vehicles and whatnot to the present day.

A lot of these things were familiar exhibits.

(Says a visitor jokingly about her husband) He's really old. He's done blacksmithing; ... they triggered memories for him."



Figure 39. A box of Moir's chocolates.

The relationship between the Museum of Industry and memory emerged as an important theme in visitor conversations, especially the way in which the museum acted as a trigger for memories. This interplay of historical images and objects and personal memories and experience give the museum its “special power” (Cutcliffe and Lubar 2000, 22). As Kavanagh explains, “museums are a meeting ground for official and formal versions of the past called *histories*, offered through exhibitions, and the individual or collective accounts of reflective personal experience called *memories*, encountered during the visit or prompted because of it” (1996, 1). In talking with visitors, it became apparent that memory and recollecting memories was an important factor in visitors’ museum-going experience. Visitors were quick to relate the exhibitions to their own personal and collective family memories, situating themselves within the

storylines. Visitors used the museum, then, as a tool for remembering a diversity of past events, experiences, people, and surroundings. The formal history that spoke out to visitors from across the galleries and in close exhibit encounters fused with visitors' own personal memories, creating experiences where both curatorial influence and personal feeling co-interpreted the museum narrative.

However, as Kavanagh relates, "when people visit museums, they can do no other but bring their life histories and memories with them, maybe not ostentatiously nor even consciously, yet within reach. Personal memories may be stirred by the images, objects or words made visible and may 'dominate' over any 'formal' history offered" (1996, 2). The idea that personal memory dominated over the formal history the museum narrates in its chronological timeline was evident with one particular group of visitors. The group of middle-aged sisters and their elderly mother grew up within a coal mining family in Pictou County, but all except one sister had since moved away. When asked what they felt they learned at the museum, one sister responded with an answer concerning the formal history the museum relates:

V1: I think it was the depth of industry that has been going on since the early 1800s. It's something that many of us didn't know about.

Another sister, however, expressed a memory-centered response, which is seen by the first respondent as a more accurate observation of their museum experience:

V2: Well, for us it was the memories.

V1: Exactly.

V2: Brings back memories to us.

Meghann: Ok, so what kind of memories?

V2: Things that happened in the mines that we heard our Dad talk about.

Their elderly mother, stirred by her visit, proceeded to reminiscence about growing up in a coal-mining town, recollecting stories of daily life and community, and placing herself within the museum story:

You know when we were going to school and we use to walk down the railroad track, eh. And ah, the engineers would come along and they'd stop and take us up in the engine and drive us to school. We'd be black going to school (*laughter*) we didn't care; we wanted a drive on the train. They knew us from Dad. You know, they use to call us 'little moose.'

You know what we use to do? When there was one family, you know, say the man was sick and he couldn't work, no money coming in, so the rest of the family, miners, would get together and they'd have what they'd call a pound party, and you went to the house and you brought a pound of sugar or pound of something and then they use to have these guys come in and play music. And they'd strip everything off the kitchen floor and they'd dance.

The elderly mother further placed herself within the museum by discussing her job riveting war ships at the Pictou shipyard during the Second World War. She made a further, personal connection with the museum in Paul, the interpreter, informing me that she knew one of his relatives who had also worked in the Pictou shipyard. In their entrance conversation, these visitors expressed a hope to see exhibits that related to their personal experience, suggesting a desire to validate personal history and experience as a motivating factor for museum visits. The group mentions how they wish to see information on the wartime work of women, especially in the Pictou shipyards where the elderly mother worked in her youth. The elderly mother even expressed anticipation that the women might see a photo of her father, a coalminer:

V2: Also, if there's any information on how they built the ships during the Second World War that would be really interesting, because my Mom use to put the rivets on.

Meghann: Oh, really?

V3: The boats in Pictou.

Meghann: In Pictou, during the Second World War?

V1: Yes, the Second World War.

V2: It would be interesting to see what the museum has on that.

Meghann: What are your perceptions coming into the museum? What do you expect to see here?

V3: My father's picture!

Likewise, one sister mentioned how seeing her lived experience and familiar subjects being told in the museum was a particularly relevant part of her tour:

We lived that life, eh? You know, I mean, what was I? 19 or 20 when I left home to go to the Air Force. By that time the mines were closed. In Stellarton and that, eh. But that's all I lived as a kid growing up was coal mines. And you're listening to your father and he'll tell you about this, that happened today or that would happen. You know it was fascinating [to see it represented in the museum].

While my questions generally probed what visitors felt they learned, rather than personal questions, other visitors like the elderly women quoted above focused less on didactic discussions of museum content, but voluntarily offered emotional and memory-centered responses and stories about their visiting experience. This visitor experienced a particularly emotional response in his encounter with a 'history within memory':

I almost cried when I went into that shopmobile. [...] It just brought back certain memories, some of the lathes. Cause the very first job I ever had, real job, was in a machine shop.

Indeed, the most important thing for visitors was experiencing things they could relate to or make connections with from their personal experience or memory. Rather than remembering historical

content, visitors identified with things they were able to connect to their own lives and experiences:

V1: a lot of these things were familiar exhibits. Ah, you know the old cars; we had a friend who used to rebuild old cars. My dad was in the iron and steel business.

V2: Joyce does quilting.

V1: Yeah, I mean there were a lot of things you know.

V2: That we could relate to.

You know, the oldest surviving engine, the actual engine - that was very impressive to me. And ah, my background is in steam and power so a lot of these things really impressed me. I learned a few things, but it was impressive just to reinforce a lot of the things that I already know. To see the older versions of everything, the old time versus what we see today or when I started forty years ago.

(Talking about his first job with machines and the punch cards that automated the machine process) For me, watching the historical evolution of those kinds of machines really touched a responsive core.



Figure 40. The Shopmobile's interior. The travelling industrial arts classroom touched an emotional chord for one particular visitor.

Visitors also connected to the museum through family stories or memories of relatives that related to the content of the museum, making their visit meaningful. They actively sought

content that spoke to them about the experiences of people in the stories from their own past. As one group of female visitors stated, "We were most interested in the mining history because we have relatives who were here in that industry way back." They then proceeded to tell the story of their grandmother who grew up in Pictou County, but was a sickly child, so that eventually the family left coal mining and moved to Washington State. Other visitors talked about their family past in relation to the museum:

V1: We were looking at the first big explosion on the Drummond. On the Drummond, because [of] our relatives ...

V2: Because our great grandfather was killed in that explosion. So we were more focused on that [section].

My dad was a civil engineer. And I can relate to some of the stuff here, as far as equipment and whatnot.

Visitors also made meaningful connections by discovering their family's past through the tangible things their ancestors used:

My grandfather was very handy and used to design and build a lot of things, and just seeing what he would have to work with back in those days, like you know, as far as, from the sawmills and the lumber and that. Like you know, that was eye-opening to see.

The big thing that got me today was to see some of the equipment that he [Father] worked with or maybe had worked with down in the mine. That we've never seen, eh.

As Skramstad argues, industrial museums offer "a powerful opportunity to acknowledge and honor the fact that many of the ancestors of people visiting the museum were part of industrial history. The museum experience is a very personal reminder that their lives - and by extension the museum-goers life - through the connection with the lives of others who lived earlier, also has meaning and purpose" (2000, 31). In remembering, seeking out, and discovering family stories

and family connections in an industrial past, visitors situate themselves as part of a lineage of workers and within a larger story of industrial history. In this way, they look to validate and affirm their family, and in turn their place in history. The museum, then, becomes a way through which they can value their own memories (or 'a history within memory'), generational memories and form connections with the exhibits that shape a sense of personal identity.

Lastly, visitors also fit themselves within the museum by talking about their personal connection to museum objects, stories or themes of individual interest that related to them in relevant or meaningful ways. One visitor expressed his specific interest in seeing tangible, authentic things, which made his visit significant: "I just liked the ones that just had stuff, like the locomotive and the car and stuff like that, the thing was physically there. Or little tools and stuff like that, just that stuff that was actually authentic, you know, stuff from the time period." Another visitor expressed interest in seeing elements of Nova Scotia industry he was familiar with through place and family involvement:

I'm really into all this stuff. I came here because I knew it was here, and I really wanted to see all this stuff. I mean, I knew we had a great history. There's an Acadia engine in there, I'm familiar with the LeHave Foundry. There's the McKay car in there. I'm from Kentville, so I knew about the McKay car. The shopmobile that's in there, my father actually helped restore that. So coming in, I had a pretty good idea of what was going on in here.

I was particularly interested in some of the older machines. I really enjoyed that.

I liked looking at the old household items and thinking about before you had an iron.

In focusing on a personal interest in specific objects or themes in the museum collection, visitors again framed their experience around the self. The museum visit became an individualized

engagement between the person and a specific group of objects or stories, so that the visitor made ways to form a meaningful attachment in what they chose to identify with and consume. This connoisseurship suggests a desire for visitors to take the often broad and impersonal subject of history told in large institutions, and reduce it to a personal level that makes it digestible and accessible.

As Lowenthal argues, “the ability to recall and identify with our own past gives existence meaning, purpose, and value” (1985, 41). At the Museum of Industry, the public frames their visiting experience in ways that situate their personal experiences within the museum narratives and exhibits encountered, thereby making meaningful connections with the past. Through personal and family memory and the pursuit of personal interests, museum visitors repeatedly make reference to themselves within the course of their museum visit, finding relevant connections between what they see presented and their own lives. Through the act of remembering, visitors connect with the past, and validate their own stories within a larger narrative of history, becoming a part of the industrial process and affirming their own identity. As Michael Mills informed me,

“the history that they are looking for is their own. So many people, they’re coming to look for their own stories, their background, that connection with the past, a genealogical search. Whatever the case may be. And I think they end up finding more of their own history than just the tale of industrial history in the province.”

Post-Industrial Visitors in an Industrial Museum

The decline of industry, particularly within the context of Nova Scotia, was also a key area visitors engaged with during their interviews. This section shows how visitors perceive the museum as offering little insight on the current nature of industry in Nova Scotia, reinforcing a

view that places industry in Nova Scotia as part of a lost 'golden age'. It also identifies how visitors, in an increasingly post-industrial world, react to a theme of deindustrialization within the museum, and how visitors approached the decline of industry with emotional reaction and critical commentary. It suggests that while visitors view the Museum of Industry as a place where they can celebrate the contributions of industrial workers and validate their personal experiences and memories, it is also a venue through which they may mourn, memorialize and critically comment on the loss and failure of industry in Nova Scotia, and more generally, North America.

Most visitors commented that after touring the museum, they had little understanding of the current nature of industry in Nova Scotia. As one visitor said, "I was left with a bit of, so 'what is Nova Scotia industry today?' With the declining fishery you know, and the decline in the need for coal, that kind of thing. You know, where is the industry going? What is it becoming?" Visitors expressed that the museum focused more on past industry (though as some visitors suggested, the past was, after all, "what museums focus on") than modern industry:

More of what was, than what it is now.

V1: Most of it had to do with industry in the past. What was being told was in the past, it didn't say too much about what's going on in the future.

V2: Or even today, it's hard to get a sense of that, what the industry is like.

V1: Yeah, we don't really know what the industries are currently.

I mean, it might be just a fact that it's a museum that kind of gives me that feel. You know, you're looking at old things. [...] Like I said, I don't know which ones [industries] are still going.

You don't see much [on industry today].

I mean, what's been existing for years, and around like, different shipyards and the ports and stuff like

that, but nothing, I don't remember anything really comes out at you like, as to what the latest was so.

The last portion of the lower gallery, however, is largely devoted to modern industry in Nova Scotia (from the 1970s to 1990s), specifically service and knowledge-based industry. Visitors, however, seem to not have retained this information, or as interviews suggest, visitors consciously avoided exhibits that dealt with the modern nature of industry in the province. Some visitors expressed that they were pressed for time or too tired to pay much attention to the last displays:

I did look at a little bit at some more modern stuff toward the end of the tour. But we were getting tired at that point and didn't spend as much time there as we did at the first part.

We didn't get into the technology part. We just kind of browsed through all that because we're leaving now. We were, at least I was, more interested in the past, what made it. I skipped over all the electronics stuff, because that happens all over Canada.

But other visitors articulated their disinterest in the contemporaneous experience, which implies that visitors were searching for an impression of a permanent 'pastness' in the representations of Nova Scotia they just viewed:

But you know and stuff, compared to our past, the section on our present and our future is much more minimal. I think we spent more time, definitely in the past. We whipped right through there [the modern history gallery].

Ah there was something about, you know the textile industry, some of the panels did bring it to contemporary times but I thought that in a lot of cases it was in past history. As a matter of fact the closer it got to the present date, the less interested in that I was. Way more interested in, you know, getting to the industrial age and that progress there.

I spent more time in the historical period, I really did.

The preference for earlier representations of industrial history led many visitors to view industry as something only in the province's past, and as something that was irretrievably lost:

You sort of got that sense [of deindustrialization] all the way through. Everything that you are seeing that is unfamiliar is something that has gone. Things have moved on.

The things that we started sort of doing here were modernized into something that took it out of our hands, and sent it off to other places where it's either been massed produced or whatever. We became obsolete, I guess.

I'm not sure what they have today. Not too much now, [industry is] in the past.

This sense of loss was expressed with sadness by many visitors, mainly Nova Scotians, who felt the province had diminished in strength and capacity. This sense of loss can be viewed as a sort of wistful nostalgia, as nostalgia is "founded on a preoccupation with loss - with what was or might have been, rather than what is or will be" (Tannock 1995 quoted in Dicks 2000b, 45). Nostalgia in terms of loss can be defined, according to Turner, as a sense of historical loss brought about through the decline of a 'golden age' (1987, 150). The sense of a 'heyday' in industry was recognized in the museum narrative, and some visitors mourned this passing of a 'golden age' of industry in the province. As one visitor described the museum story, "industry is a failing thing for Nova Scotia. Basically, it's kind of like a timeline, like a heyday and then decline. Like government desperately trying, and [it] not really working. Yeah, the 'decline of industry museum', I guess it could be."

Other visitors likewise expressed this nostalgic sense of loss:

It's just sad to see, that a hundred years ago, this was a prosperous province, by the look of it. Although people obviously had to work at it. This was somewhere to be, this was a province of some note, and now, I mean, I don't feel we're much of a province of note anymore.

That was sort of almost kind of sad at the end where it was like, 'oh, there's not a whole lot left anymore. [...] Depletion.

It's too sad that it's gone, you know, that it's been, we've been surpassed by time, that you know or whatever. And that, really, I mean, that industrially now, there isn't much here except Michelin, which is too bad.

Sad, yeah. The disasters and the industry going down hill.

Saddened, because there's not much of a future to look forward to.

It's [industry] gone. You know, like I've seen in here we had the Moirs chocolate factory. But it's gone, bought out. It's moved to Mexico. And the railways, they've taken up so many of the railtracks. But it's gone. It's a shame.

Turner also identifies another dimension of nostalgia as the loss of social relationships, or in other words, a loss of community (1987, 151). This visitor mourned the decline of industry in Nova Scotia and subsequent loss of a sense of purpose, place, and community that came with working an industrial job and living in a working class community:

That seemed to be a time of busyness and happiness, sort of was portrayed in that, it made you feel that everybody had a place and, you know, there was a job and you know you had some work of some worth. You know, as opposed to like the computer analyst that's standing over there (*laughter*) who you don't get a feeling of joy or sense of community from him at all. It's a loss of community, I would say, it's a real loss, shows a loss.

Nova Scotian visitors, in particular, used the museum exhibits as a springboard to vocalize their opinions and frustrations about the current nature of industry in Nova Scotia. The museum was a place that prompted discussion and dialogue on a changing Nova Scotia industrial landscape, but also the contemporary nature of industry in North America. Visitors moved

beyond the specific museum exhibits and commented on events or issues that were important to them, which were drawn from other sources of information. Visitors expressed frustration about Nova Scotia's reduction from an industrial manufacturing economy to a service economy, industrial manufacturing moving from North American to rapidly industrializing China, the decrease in quality manufactured goods, changes in the nature of work, outmigration, dependency on natural resources and failed foreign business interests in the province:

I guess industry changes, but the only things we hear about now, is who's got a cell phone deal, who's got a blackberry contract.

I still think they have a long way to go.

You know, people come in from away, and they start here and they get a lot of money and then they're gone again. It seems to keep repeating itself.

Well, there's the two mainstays, forest and fishery, that's all we have left, they've sustained us ah, through thick and thin from the start. They're still the two largest employers; even today after everything's come and gone. That's what we keep going back to.

The Chinese are doing it [manufacturing today's goods].

And the things that were made, you know were quality items. Now everything is kind of slapped together, doesn't last, throw it away and get another one.

It was just like yup, there was blacksmiths and everything and then it got better and then there were trains and mining and forestry and then it stopped existing. Cause it all moved to China.

[Industry] is a lot less than what it has been. You know, we had so much and then it just came right down to ... it funnels down to next to nothing. We have RIM, we have the Blackberry people here.

When you come around the final corner after the Volvo, and there's the Kodak [*Put Yourself in the*

Picture interactivity, currently broken] booth that says, 'Sorry, out of order', I think that really sums it all up.

[The museum] just said everything has gone, there's not much of this, and they're not doing much of that, all that kind of stuff.

It's changing big time [*industry in NS today*]. Everything is going to technical age, eh. Like I work in industry, and I spend most of my time at a computer. So you know, a big difference from growing up.

We don't make as much stuff as we use to, close to any scale.

We've heard from people we've visited with this time, that a lot of folks are going other places to work. I suspect that's because the industry is not here, like it was.

In touching on issues like failed industry and Nova Scotia's shift towards a service economy in its exhibits, the museum became a space that initiated a critical commentary on the impact of deindustrialization for post-industrial visitors. Like the framing of 'the past was hard', which provided a meaningful context for visitors' understandings of the contemporary quality of work and life, the theme of industrial decline and change offered perspective and context which visitors drew on to help them make sense of, or come to terms with, living in a post-industrial world.

While the Museum of Industry does allocate part of its exhibiting space to contemporary industry in Nova Scotia, some visitors consciously ignored this section of the museum, expressing their preference to see images of past industry. Most visitors saw the museum as focusing on a past 'golden age' of industry in Nova Scotia, which contributed to their 'nostalgic sense of loss' in how they framed an understanding of industry in the province. Visitors did, however, recognize the museum's narrative of changing industry, industrial failure and decline, and drew on these representations as well as their own understandings of the contemporary nature

of industry in order to engage in a critical dialogue that considered a diversity of post-industrial issues.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to communicate the ways in which the public interacts with museum spaces, and how museums are influential in shaping public discourse and perceptions of a certain past. While much museum studies research is a one-sided engagement between scholar and exhibit text that does not take into account the agency of visitors, qualitatively studying visitors can produce a much deeper and accurate understanding of the museum as a representative and social space. While there are several challenges and criticisms in qualitatively studying visitors, especially the 'anecdotal' and 'subjective' nature of the interview results, and the fact that visitors, coming from a variety of backgrounds and experiences can have a plethora of different readings and ways of understanding a site, significant themes and patterns do emerge which show how visitors create similar frameworks for making sense of the past in meaningful ways.

This chapter identified three significant themes through which visitors make sense of the industrial past at the Museum of Industry. The trope 'the past was hard' emerged as a prevalent way through which visitors viewed the industrial past and the labour of industrial workers. Viewed exclusively as engaging in physical or manual labour, workers of the past were celebrated for their ability to survive in the hard working and living conditions of the pre-industrial and early industrial eras. Visitors expressed a sense of empathy with workers, and gained a better understanding of the lived experience of workers, comparing the present nature of work and living with that of the past. In turn, this translated into an understanding of how

industrial workers' achievements contributed to technological and social progress, and contemporary work and living standards in the twenty-first century. In looking back at a 'hard past', visitors expressed gratitude towards these early pioneers. In identifying the successes of early workers in overcoming obstacles, they contextualized the present order, creating meaning in their visit.

Secondly, visitors made sense of the industrial past by placing themselves within the Museum of Industry narrative, and in turn the larger story of industrial history. Visitors framed their experience around their own specific interests, finding ways to connect with the museum exhibits whether through specific types of objects or stories, family links or personal memory. The theme of memory and the museum visit revealed that visitors used the museum as a tool for remembering personal and family experiences. As the museum triggered memories, visitors made meaningful connections between their own lives and the familiar or personally relevant objects and texts on display in the exhibits. These connections produced emotional responses for visitors that validated personal and family stories as part of an industrial past. This suggested that visitors found the most meaning through personal histories rather than any of the formalized histories the museum narrates.

Lastly, as a post-industrial public, visitors paid little attention to exhibit themes that dealt with contemporary service or knowledge-based industries, but were more interested in past representations of Nova Scotia industry. This focus on the past saw visitors emotionally react to a chronological story of the decline of industry, as they expressed a sense of loss and nostalgia for the 'golden age' of an industrial Nova Scotia. The museum became a forum through which the post-industrial visitor could mourn the passing of industry, but also a means through which to engage in a critical dialogue on the decline of industry.

This chapter has suggested that visitors are unified in their desire to find a story that is meaningful or relevant to their *personal* lives, and will frame their visiting experiences according to ways that will meet those needs, whether that's a desire to experience a sense of historical validation, the opportunity to remember or reminiscence, a space in which to engage in meaningful dialogue and to express emotion, or a way to find links between the past and the present in order to make sense of contemporary life. What mattered most to visitors at the Museum of Industry wasn't a detailed understanding of how electricity is generated, kraft paper is produced, how many boards were sawed in Nova Scotia sawmills or the hauling capacity of the Davies engine, but the way in which he or she could connect on a personal level with the museum exhibits, whether through gaining an understanding of workers' hardships or focusing on a series of tools of particular interest. As in Chapter 3, the idea of a 'personalized' industrial history is revealed.

Conclusion

This thesis has explored the representation of Nova Scotia's industrial past at the Museum of Industry, and how cultural meaning is established through the cultural practices of production, representation, and consumption. It has looked to show how meaning arises from the ways in which museum texts and themes are presented, interpreted, and ultimately represented for public consumption through oral and visual language, action, and technical display. Returning to du Gay, Hall et. al's (1997) 'circuit of culture' framework for analyzing cultural artifacts we can see how the Museum of Industry articulates itself as a cultural body, creating meaning through the ways it produces displays and representations of industry, technology, and labour for public consumption, and how these, in turn, influence notions of identity.

The articulation and interaction of these key 'circuit of culture' moments within the Museum of Industry has been the concern of this thesis, leading to an understanding of how the museum works as a social space. Considering *production* - how a text is made both culturally and technically - and *representation* - how meaning is conveyed through language, objects and interpretation - these closely linked processes reveal that the Museum of Industry has been encoded with particular cultural meanings for visitors to identify with. As Chapter 2 maintains, the representations (the resultant entities or products of representation [Lidichi 1997, 153]) produced about the industrial past and present demonstrate that the Museum of Industry intends visitors to recognize Nova Scotia as a place that is nothing like regional and economic stereotypes. As staff views suggest, and the language of text panels, objects, and exhibitionary strategies demonstrate, representations of industry, workers, and technology frame Nova Scotia as a place with a significant industrial past. Its people are characterized as hard working,

innovative, ingenious, and adaptable, which challenges preconceived assumptions of Nova Scotia as a 'backward' or 'overly traditional' place. As Chapter 3 put forward, the museum is concerned with producing the past through new ways. The focus on 'vernacular heritage' and the social history paradigm reveals representations of ordinary, often marginalized people, and their experiences of work, technology, and industrialization, providing a view of the past from the 'bottom up'. These representations of people, as well as industrial processes and objects, produced and interpreted through interactive, engaging ways, gives meaning to the visitor's experience by making industrial heritage a personalized encounter.

In considering *consumption*, or how a visiting public consumes the Museum of Industry's representations, this thesis has looked at what the representations of the industrial past have come to mean for MOI visitors. As Chapter 4 maintains, consumers do not receive messages or meanings passively, but rather meanings are actively made through the way visitors put to use or relate these representations to their own lives. Memory, nostalgia, and historical validation, for instance, show how visitors seek to identify with representations of the industrial past in personal, meaningful ways.

Identity, lastly, is derived from *production*, *representation*, and *consumption*.

Representations of industry, work, and technology at the Museum of Industry encourage a re-inscription of ideas about Nova Scotia-as-place for both local and tourist visitors. The consideration of a new regional identity, essentially, becomes the message or meaning of the museum as a cultural text. While Nova Scotia's industrial past has been marginalized in favour of more palatable representations of the past which remain attractive to tourists, and forgotten by many locals living in a post-industrial province, the Museum of Industry looks to re-envision Nova Scotia as a place. This new place-identity, the museum puts forward, is one that should

define Nova Scotia through industry and industrial work just as much as rural, seafaring, colonial and 'folk' identities.

This research raises general issues about what museums do: their role, how their exhibit themes are organized and interpreted, what impact they have on public understandings of history and culture and in shaping identities of who we are and where we are. As 'multi-tasking' institutions, then, museums are diverse and complex spaces where there can seldom be singular meanings. This particular case study speaks to multiple meanings being made at the Museum of Industry, giving insight into how cultural producers and visitors make sense of technology, labour, and industry in Nova Scotia both historically and contemporarily, and how museums play a role in shaping public discourses of place-identity.

In March 2009, the Nova Scotia Museum released a provincial interpretative master plan. The strategic plan intends to "collect and organize Nova Scotia's natural and cultural heritage - its stories - in a manner that clearly identifies provincially significant themes and topics" (2009, 103) in an effort to help heritage consumers better understand Nova Scotia as a historical and cultural place. The extensive document, both critical and constructive in nature, speaks to the need for change and improvement in both the production and representation of Nova Scotia's past in provincial-designate museums. This interpretative renewal, addressing gaps in museum interpretation and communication, opens a wide range of interpretative possibilities and new representational directions for sites within the provincial museum system. McCulloch House in Pictou, the home of education reformer Rev. Thomas McCulloch, for example, has re-imagined the way historic houses are presented, drawing on innovative interpretative storylines, panels, and methods of displaying Rev. McCulloch's personal objects. As this case study has shown, sites within the Nova Scotia Museum system - like the Museum of Industry - are rich in interpretative

potential, and make interesting case studies of the practice of representing the past in museum institutions. Unfortunately, very few academics have examined this diverse museum system. With this on-going interpretative renewal, the Nova Scotia Museum continues to be a group of museums worth critical and scholarly consideration. Further research needs to look at how these sites, both individually, and as part of a complex whole, represent Nova Scotia's past, and what this means to a visiting public. As Debra McNabb aptly remarked, "there are different stories to be told now." How the Museum of Industry, as well as the rest of the provincial museums shift and grow under this new heritage direction, and how this influences new representations and meanings about the industrial past, remains to be seen.

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