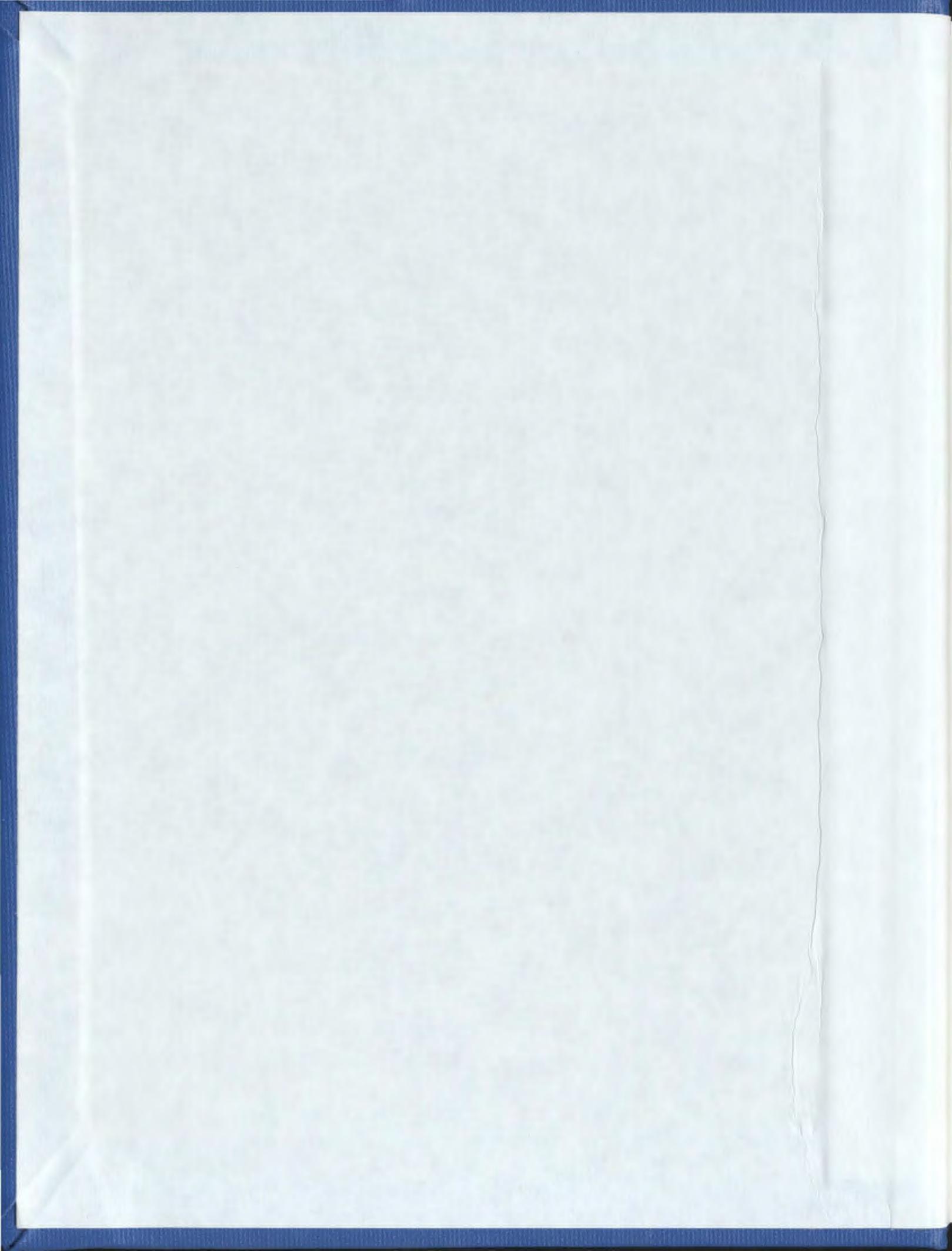


"WHAT IS A BRICKMAKER?":
AN OCCUPATIONAL FOLKLIFE STUDY OF THE
BRICK INDUSTRY IN CHIPMAN, NEW BRUNSWICK

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“What is a Brickmaker?”: An Occupational Folklife Study of the Brick Industry in
Chipman, New Brunswick.

By

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Abstract

This study explores the central question “What is a brickmaker?” Focusing on a group of brickmakers in Chipman, New Brunswick, I examine how the men themselves determine the perimeters of their occupation and define their work and workplace. By privileging the workers’ actual words and by looking at the larger themes of their collected narratives, I identify and reveal the subgenre of recognized occupational folklife such as canons of work technique, accident, prank and close-call narratives, beliefs, legends and jokes. I consider the larger implications of brickmaking to ask: “What is a brickmaker to the village of Chipman?” I argue that meanings of the term “brickmaker” to the actual brickmakers must inform an understanding of the occupation and its implications for the workers and their community.

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Finally, thank you to my informants. Without their participation I would never have been able to complete this project. They willingly gave their time and shared their experiences, and I hope that I have collected widely enough, thought deeply enough, and written well enough to create a project which honours these Men of Clay, builders of the community of Chipman.

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Preface

On a recent summer day I purchased three dozen “paver” style bricks from the local hardware store to edge a fire pit in the backyard. The charcoal-coloured bricks were non-descript; there were no markings that identified them with any particular company, and nothing that married them to any one place or style. They struck me immediately as being devoid of personality and much different than the bricks I had known growing up in Chipman, New Brunswick, the location of LE Shaw’s brick and Tile Company for over sixty years. I have amassed a collection of old Chipman bricks most of which were picked off heaps of old foundations of buildings abandoned all over Atlantic Canada. They sometimes surface in unusual locations such as along the coastline in St. Andrew’s, New Brunswick, or at an old hunting camp in the highlands of Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Unlike this collection, my fire-pit pavers gave no sense of connection to the men who made them. I could in no way relate the bricks to their makers. They showed no visible signs of the hard, hot work in the brick plant that produced them. The bricks I purchased seemed to me to be generic copies of a masterful original.

I asked myself: “What is a brickmaker?” How did the individual men who created this product in Chipman make it so differently from the cookie-cutter bricks available today? How was brickmaking significant to my community’s history, and what meaning did it have for the men who propelled the industry that had such an impact on Chipman’s life? How did the group define itself? Did the memory of the monotony of the job devalue the significance of the product when they looked back on a career from two decades past? How was the work of life in the brick plant remembered, and how did that correspond with the wider perception of what the job is to outsiders? These questions

became the focus of this study. I discovered that in letting the brickmakers define themselves, I collected answers to questions I had not even known were important to ask.

A thesis is often most interesting to the person who wrote it, but there is a narrative, aesthetic quality to objects that is recognized by those beyond researchers. It is this ability of a mass-produced item to evoke a time and a set of values, combined with the perseverance and skills of its maker, which validates the field of occupational folklore. The evocative qualities of Chipman bricks which speak of the men who produced them, the company that funded the production, and the community in which the company made such an economical difference, are the starting point of this thesis.

Chapter One: Introduction

This study explores the central question “What is a brickmaker?” Focusing on a group of brickmakers in Chipman, New Brunswick, I examine how the men themselves determine the significance of their occupation and define their work and workplace. By privileging the workers actual words and by looking at the larger themes of their collected narratives, I identify and reveal the sub genre of recognized occupational folklife such as canons of work technique, accident, prank and close call narratives, beliefs, legends and jokes. I consider the larger implications of brickmaking to ask: “What is a brickmaker to the village of Chipman?” I argue that meanings of the term “brickmaker” to the actual brickmakers must inform an understanding of the occupation and its implications for the workers and their community.

Occupational Folklife

The field of occupational folklife studies began as a movement to bring modern factory, workplace, and industry settings to the attention of folklorists as valid settings in which to find folklore. Without taking a reductionist attitude toward an entire genre of folklore studies, it is observable that prior to the 1960s, very few studies concentrated on factory or non-traditional workplace settings. According to Robert McCarl, one of the foremost contemporary scholars of occupational folklife studies, the origins of the field lie in divisions of labour after the Industrial Revolution in Europe. McCarl writes that early folklorists focused on preserving the way of life before the Industrial Revolution. Industrial trades and occupations initially were unexamined because they were viewed as

“antithetical to the very customs, beliefs, songs and narratives that interested these early scholars” (McCarl 1997, 596).

McCarl notes that progressions in the field of study known as occupational folklife studies have “paralleled the ways in which Americans have historically adapted themselves to their environment” (McCarl 1986, 71). As work shifted from agrarian to more urban and factory contexts, so did the folklorist’s focus of study. Industrial and factory folklife studies since the 1970s have emerged as a singular area of focus, pulling away from the more romanticized occupations and recognizing the importance of examining industry and factory waged labour. Scholars such as Archie Green, Robert Byington, Bruce Nickerson and Robert McCarl have furthered understandings of folklore within occupations. They helped shift folkloristic attention away from country craftsmen and towards industrial settings.

A recent trend in published occupational folklife scholarship has been the ethnographic case study. Works such as Men at Play: A working understanding of professional hockey by Michael Robidoux; The Lost World of the Craft Printer, by Maggie Holtzberg-Call; Lake Erie Fishermen by Patrick Mullen and Timothy Lloyd; and It’s a Working Man’s Town by Thomas Dunk are contextual occupational studies which have informed my research. Cultural elements surrounding an occupation, such as its regional influences and its dependence on the surrounding community, are examined in these studies that recognize that work cannot be understood as an independent entity. Historical, social and regional factors influence how an occupation is perceived.

Barre Toelken identifies this contextual emphasis as the “most prominent approach to folklore in recent years” (Toelken 1996, 5). Toelken indicates that contextualism that appreciates the surroundings of where a mental process takes place are as important to understanding the expression as the mental process itself; the psychological aspects of an area of folklore are directly influenced by the physical context (Toelken 1996, 5).

To understand what it really means to be part of an occupation, it is also important to merge occupational folklife studies with other disciplines and inter-disciplines such as oral history, narrative study and sociology for a broader perspective. Two of the works that particularly influenced my approach are Mullen and Lloyd’s Lake Erie Fishermen, and Holtzberg-Call’s The Lost World of the Craft Printer. Their application of the emergent analytical frames of narrative and memory study to industries encouraged me to re-examine the materials I had collected and to make connections beyond the occupational folklife subgenres I had originally intended to find.

Like Lloyd and Mullen, I had set out to collect the traditional lore of the industry, and instead ended up with personal experience narratives from which common themes and patterns began to emerge. Admittedly, their study is, as Lloyd and Mullen indicate “not a complete ethnography or socio-economic work; rather, it is a presentation and analysis of a body of local knowledge that should complement the other, broader studies that are or will be available” (1990, xxii). Neither is my exploration of Chipman brickmakers meant to be a comprehensive study of a complex industrial setting that influenced the hundreds of people who worked there throughout the plant’s 135 year

history. Rather, I attempt, like Lloyd and Mullen, to “concentrate on specific expressions of local people about local circumstances” (ibid) and to highlight themes of discourse.

Presenting the context of this occupation, and examining what the workers have to say about it achieves two goals I initially set for this study. First, I wanted to document an industry which was such an integral part of the community of Chipman for over a century. I felt that it should be preserved both for the community and for broader academic audiences. Second, I wanted to examine folkloric elements in brickmaking in Chipman. In doing so, I followed Lloyd and Mullen’s example that embraces what they term the “scholarship of identity” (1990, xxiii). These authors merge cross-disciplinary influences to reveal not only occupational, but personal and social experiences.

Approaching occupational study from a cross-disciplinary perspective is ideal because social and regional communities are integral to a deeper and more balanced understanding of an industry.

Maggie Holtzberg-Call’s Lost World of the Craft Printer, has also contributed to occupational folklife studies, and to my own personal understanding of how to study an occupation. Holtzberg-Call examines the craftspeople of the printing trade with the purpose of not only communicating “something of the narrative structure and function of occupational nostalgia...” but also celebrating “... the triumph of people who, connected through their work identities, have adapted to the deskilling of craft labour and the threat of unemployment” (1992, xiii). The concept of occupational nostalgia brings to light an extremely important aspect of occupational folklife studies, because many studies have overlooked the implications of the passage of time on a trade or craft. Deskilling and

displacement are terms that are frequently applied to trades that are less mechanized, compared to more productive and oftentimes more cost-effective machine operated trades. While the world of the craft printer had to adapt in the face of changing technology, the world of the Chipman brick maker stopped altogether when the plant suddenly closed in 1990. The narratives of a vibrant occupation are radically different from the narratives of an occupation being remembered after almost fifteen years. In my work, the concept of nostalgia was central to the re-construction of occupational details.

The Presence of Nostalgia

As I interviewed the brickmakers, it became clear that temporal distance from the occupation promotes self-reflection. With the passing of time, their occupational identity seemed to become more personal and singular. Their shared experience of being a part of a functioning workplace has to be, after the job has ceased, interpreted individually rather than outwardly and with the group. It may also be interpreted more as part of the folklore and oral history community than before, as the worker has to re-negotiate his or her place, now that they no longer fulfill the same role within that community.

As is to be expected with such dynamics, a study of a former industry cannot function solely within the realm of occupational folklife studies. The collection and analysis of occupational narratives falls within both oral history and folklore. Each area is reliant upon the oral tradition, but it is important to define both their overlapping spheres and areas of separation. The field of oral history, not unlike that of folklore, started to re-evaluate the emphasis placed on working-class narratives around the 1970s. It privileged

oral sources that created history from “the bottom up” realizing that, as Ritchie writes, “no group had exclusive understanding of the past, and that the best projects were those that cast their nets wide, recording as many different participants in events or members of a community as possible” (Ritchie 2003, 24). In 1972, Richard Dorson attempted to articulate the distinction between the disciplines in “The Oral Historian as Folklorist.” He illuminated the difference as lying in the collection techniques: “the oral historian interviews, while the folklorist collects. It would never occur to a practitioner of oral history to set out in the morning toting his Sony or Wollensak or Uher with little or no idea as to whom he will meet and record.” (1972, 293).

While this portrait of the oral historian as a coincidental researcher is outdated, interviewing techniques are not the only distinction between oral history and folklore. Folklore extracts the elements of oral tradition and examines them through many analytic paradigms in order to project subject positions, while oral histories tend to focus on presenting the facts in as “complete, candid and reliable a record as possible” (Ritchie 2003, 24). As Neil Rosenberg suggests in the introduction to proceedings of the 1975 meeting of the Canadian Oral Historian Association, “Historians prefer to do their own interpretations of the past while folklorists wish to understand their informant’s interpretations”(1975, xvi). It is, therefore also in the interpretation of the material collected where the two approaches differ. Based on these understandings, this project is both oral history and folklore. I use collected narratives both to reconstruct the past, and to explore continuity and memory

Within occupational folklife study most scholars who have examined obsolete occupations in retrospect focused on their romanticized traditional elements (*e.g.* see Dorson 1981, Ellsworth 1977 and Green 1993). There is of course a need for what has been referred to as “salvage folklore”- the collection of material to reconstruct the past for posterity. However, aside from the goal of preserving the details of an historically important process such as brickmaking, it is also significant to examine the collected occupational narratives tell us about the passage of time and the effect of memory on the narrative.

Narrative research focusing on the complex relationships between memory and narrative is currently gaining inter-disciplinary momentum (*eg.* see King 2000, Holtzberg-Call 1992, and Lloyd and Mullen 1990). The experiences of the present shape and alter our perceptions of the past, and when studying collected narratives about an occupation worked in the past, it is not only impossible, but irresponsible to ignore the implications of the passage of time on the memory of experience and the perceptions of self. There is documented evidence that can re-construct for us the process of brickmaking, and how the different variables of the machinery and minerals can ultimately affect the outcome of the product. As well, there is statistic documentation to tell us exact sales figures for the product that help us reconstruct the economic importance of brick for the company and the community. What narratives collected from a wide cross-section of brickmakers tell us that statistics cannot, is actual physical experience of participating in this production, and the personal and social impact the job and the industry had on not only the individual, but the family, and the community. Also,

it is possible to examine the creativity of the workers within the process of brickmaking. These experiences of the brickmakers within their trade, and their lasting influences on the processes and knowledge of brickmaking, are as important to document as the recreation of the process itself.

Brickmaking

Brickmaking historically was a very labour intensive and physically demanding job which existed outside the realm of technology for centuries. Even in the Chipman brickplant of the 1980s, much of the process was still done by hand and had not changed dramatically from the earlier days of brickmaking in nineteenth century Nova Scotia. This integral element of human participation adds complication and complexity to an occupation in a way that documentation of the workings of the machinery can never illuminate.

The Chipman Brick Plant ceased operation on January 9th, 1990. This means that I was asking people to remember back as far as fifteen years. During this time, these occupational memories had been forming and re-forming subconsciously. They were sometimes shared and reminisced publicly with many audiences made up of friends, family and former co-workers. The men's narratives had ample time to change and be wound with threads of nostalgia and remembrance. Narratives of what were current hot topics of debate amongst the workers when the plant was operating changed their focus. What has endured, what is still remembered after many years, is significant to examine

outside of the extraction of the traditional, folkloric elements of the occupation. As

Holtzberg-Call observes:

a craft that knows it is dying, with little chance of revitalization, develops a tradition of tradition. Much like historical periodization, worlds are delineated and temporally juxtaposed. A generation of individuals with comparable experience marks and assigns meaning to this shared "world" of the past replete with language, techniques, tools, materials and standards of workmanship (1992, 2)

She identifies this as the "rhetoric of displacement." It is notable that, according to many informants, there was no prior knowledge of the Chipman plant's closure. This also adds a level of complexity to the displacement notion, accelerating the process of having to detach oneself physically from the workplace, and retarding the process of emotional closure.

Fieldwork

The majority of my information comes from interviews with former brickmakers and their families. My fieldwork was carried out between June and August of 2003, and from December to January 2004. This consisted mostly of contacting former brick plant workers and scheduling interviews in their homes. I interviewed twenty former plant and administrative workers, and the interviews ranged from one half hour to four hours in length. I usually began interviews by situating myself as a fellow community member. Having grown up in Chipman, I would establish connections within the community to make my informant feel more at ease. I would begin by asking broader questions like "How did you get the job in the first place?" and "How are bricks made?" and then to

prompt during lulls with more specific questions like “What was your job within the plant?”, and “What did you do when you were not working?” These questions were formulated quite randomly. I wanted to ask questions that would bring the informant back to the beginning of the career, and hopefully rekindle some memories that would otherwise have been more difficult to access.

I received a variety of answers, and found that while most were very willing to go into great detail regarding the process of how bricks are manufactured, the more specific questions about day to day life in the plant were often used as points from which to talk about their personal views of the occupation and of community life in general. The recreation of the process of how bricks are made seemed to be much easier to talk about than the recreation of day to day life in the plant. The meaning of this difficulty will be dealt with more fully in Chapter Four.

I took two field trips during my research. In August of 2003, I visited the Shaw Group Ltd. plant in Lantz, Nova Scotia, which is the only functioning brick making plant now associated with the Shaw company. I was given a tour of the working plant by the current superintendent, and afterwards I spent some time doing archival research and looking through old copies of the company newsletters in their head office. The second trip I took was to the Shaw Group office in Moncton, a small building which sells a myriad of Shaw building products, including brick. There I interviewed a couple who had worked in the office of the Chipman plant, who had then moved to Moncton with the company after the Chipman plant's closure.

Other archival research included looking at back issues of the Chipman-Minto newspaper The Grand Lake Mirror, library searches at the Chipman Public Library, and the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive and Queen Elizabeth II Library. I also obtained copies of books and pamphlets pertaining to L.E. Shaw from the Lantz plant in Nova Scotia, including a very valuable resource written by LE Shaw himself, entitled, My Life in the Brick Industry, published in 1955 and Memoirs of a Brick Maker, published in 1972.

The “Men of Clay”

In order to add a broader scope to this study, I am including a brief biography of all the brickmakers I interviewed, and their role and time in the brick industry. Here are the men and women who were so generous with their time, and so openly shared their life stories:

Fred Fairweather started at the plant on August 29th, 1959, and stayed until the plant’s closure in 1990. His father had been one of the original men to clear the lot for the plant before it was built. Fred started out loading box cars and trucks using tongs to pick up the brick six at a time, and putting layers of straw between the bricks to prevent them from sticking together. He shifted over to the mill to be a “picker” which meant he picked green brick off the conveyor belt and put them on the cars. From there moved to the “hard brick crew” taking the fired brick off the cars and tossing them to someone to be set by hand on the cars.

Royden Wishart gave lack of choice as the main reason behind his decision to work at the plant. Royden sought employment where his older brother worked- the brick plant. In the summer of 1974, it was the highest paying job for a teenager in the Village. He earned \$4.75/hour while the next highest paying job was at the lumber mill and paid only \$3.60/hour. His older brother was known as a hard worker and it paved the way for Royden to get a job. The superintendent called him up and offered him the job based on his brother's work ethic. Royden went to work the first day not knowing that bricks were not made out of wet clay, but of shale that had to be ground and mixed with water. Self described as being "low on the totem pole" some of Royden's jobs included picking up loose bricks if cars upset, re-topping kilns when the brick had crumbled, and hoisting and shoveling cement for the masons doing repairs on the kilns.

Basil Trail was an employee for twenty-four and a half years. Basil first started at the plant in 1966. He had been working at the sawmill across the river and friends of his at the plant told him to put his name in because it was better money than the sawmill. He recalls putting his name in one week and being at work at the brick plant the next. His first job was picking green, soft brick in the mill and putting them on cars to be transported to the kilns to be burned, as well as working the transfer that transported the brick to the kilns. After eight years he went to the hard brick crew for two years, transporting the hard, burned brick onto cars for export. He then moved to the grinding room where he ground the shale into a large bin to be mixed with water to make clay. He then moved to firing the brick in the kilns, where he finished out the rest of his career.

The last to retire from the plant in 1988, **Otty Glenn** had left the air force in 1945 and worked periodically at the sawmill and with the CNR before joining the crew at the brickplant. He began at the brickplant in October of 1948, but when the plant closed in December for winter repairs, he did odd jobs until it reopened. Once the older men in the plant started to retire, Otty slowly climbed the ranks until he eventually became the head burner of the kilns. He remembers his first job at the plant shoveling coal into box cars to be taken to the kiln for fuel for burning. He did several jobs at the plant over his career, including being on the hard brick crew for eleven years, and then “strapping” the bricks with metal straps so they could be transported in bundles of one hundred. As the head burner, he remembers how hard it was to be on call twenty-four hours a day in case there were problems with the kilns. When he retired, if the phone rang in the middle of the night, he felt relieved because it meant he did not have to go into work. He keeps a list of everyone who worked at the plant that he can remember, and from that list, those who have passed away,

Russell Boyd, perhaps the oldest of the men I interviewed, began work at the brickplant in 1933, and was employed there until he retired in 1972. He left to fight in WWII, but came back to the plant after he had finished serving. He claims to have done every job in the plant, including the hard brick crew, driving the lift truck and operating the transfer. Russell clearly remembers the time when Jasper Kennedy, the plant’s first superintendent, told Russell to put fifty brick in a wheelbarrow and follow him out to the edge of the site. They buried the brick. Jasper told Russell that whoever lived the longest should come back and dig up the brick to see if they lasted. Russell figured that he was

the oldest, but unfortunately he never got the chance to fulfill this dream. He died about two years after I had interviewed him for this project, with the brick still buried.

George Northrup started working at the brickplant in 1934, shortly before the plant shut down periodically because of the Depression. When it re-opened in the spring of 1936, they were producing drain tile instead of brick, but were back on track with brick production by the fall of 1936. He was a mason by trade and from the spring of 1947 to the fall of 1968 would spend his winters at the plant and his summers doing masonry. His two sons worked at the plant as well. He remembers when the pay was twenty cents an hour in the 1930s. Living across the street from the plant, George recalls feeling sad when the plant shut down in 1990 and was bulldozed. Like Russell, George keeps a list of all the men who worked at the plant since the 1930s, and who have died. He tells of the early days of brickmaking when textures on face brick were made by what the men could creatively produce. They made "scratch face" brick by using knitting needles to pierce the face of the brick, and "bark texture" from bark off the trees that they put on a roller to continually impress the face of the brick with the design. Russell worked at the plant until he retired in 1972, after almost 40 years with the company.

Randy Nason, a summer student for one summer at the plant, and now a retired Principal and farmer, began his job in the summer of 1973. He does not remember how the jobs were advertised, but he attributes word of mouth to his eventual employment. He heard from his friends that the plant was hiring, and the superintendent knew he was looking for a summer job between his school semesters. His jobs were dirty and monotonous, and Randy still claims he was being "tested" to see if he would quit. His job was cleaning out the clay dust from the grinding room, and recalls emerging at the end of

the day and pulling plugs of clay out of his nostrils, ears and mouth in order to breathe. He and his friends liked to gather in the lunch room to hear the gossip around the plant. Although he had no opinion, positive or negative, about Shaw's as a company, he remembers the banter and pranks between the boys that lightened the work day, and the excitement of getting the Friday pay in cash in a little white envelope so that your weekend could begin.

George Roberts, the Head Superintendent for the entire duration of his years at the Chipman Plant, came from Nova Scotia originally. He worked at the Shaw plant in New Glasgow, Nova Scotia from the time he left the service after WWII until the winter of 1971 when the New Glasgow plant closed and he was offered a position in Chipman. George remembers almost everything about the plant including facts about brickmaking, and the stories about all the people who worked there. Being management for the Shaw company was a wonderful job for George who had the chance to travel as far as Germany with the company, and he saw the brick plants of the Maritimes through many changes and upgrades. George worked at the plant until his forced retirement in 1989 at the age of sixty.

Todd Boyd began inauspiciously in 1947 when he was asked to fill in for a labour shortage after the war. He ended up staying forty-four years. He shoveled coal brought in from Springhill by boxcar, he did repairs on the kilns, he hauled the cooled brick to the dryers, and then he moved on to the setting crew. He was one of the last people to work at the plant, hauling out machinery and helping to remove excess brick before the plant was bulldozed. He remembers his father working with him for a while, and the days when other boys his age were moving away. He could not understand why

because he liked his job, he liked Chipman and he liked the crew at the plant. He remembers his first day on the job as being a bit boring; he waited around for the box car so he could shovel coal, and while he was waiting, played tic-tac-toe on the side of a dirty car. He was sixty one when he retired.

Connie Webber was the plant secretary from 1956-1967 when she left to take a position with the local school board. As a clerk in the office she was paid \$40 per week, and was five days on call. Her duties included payroll, accounting and shipping. She remembers all the men who worked at the plant, but mostly recalls the management and administration as she worked more closely with them in the office. One of her favourite memories is when she bested the men in the office at sales by securing one particularly large order and was awarded the title of "Salesman of the Year".

Dwight Doherty worked for Shaw's in their sales department after transferring from the New Glasgow office, where he was a clerk. He was hired in 1965 by LE Shaw's son Lloyd. His wife **Krista** was an office clerk in Chipman and she began in 1972. Dwight and Krista described the closure of the Chipman plant in 1990 as being a "devastating exercise in brutality." Both Dwight and Krista chose to transfer to Moncton where Shaw had a commercial sales office. They are both currently employed in sales.

Shirley Brown gave an interesting account of the brick plant from the familial point of view. Her father worked at the plant for many years in the kiln, tossing bricks. He had worked earlier on in the woods, but found the brick plant to be a more lucrative, stable living. Her knowledge of the day-to-day life in the plant was scant, but she does remember that when her father retired from the plant in the late 1960s, he was a foreman

at the kiln. When she was younger she would wait by King's Store at four o'clock for her father to get off work so they could go home together.

Peter Campbell, now an RCMP officer, went to work at the brick plant right after he graduated high school in 1978. He was a mason's attendant, worked on the hard brick crew for five years, and then went to the mill where he worked in the grinding room. In the spring, he would help to re-top the beehive kilns that needed repair. He remembers how much easier it was when the shuttle kiln replaced the older beehive kilns. He attributes the closure of the plant to the lack of technology which affected their production. He remembers playing hockey against the boys at the lumber mills and recalls how nice it was when the Shaw trucks used to go up and down the streets of Chipman delivering bricks. He left the plant to pursue a career in the RCMP in 1986.

Corey Shirley was the pug operator at the plant. He was hired in 1974 right after he finished high school, and stayed until the plant's closure. His uncle and several of his cousins worked at the plant and Corey's first job was picking green brick and stacking them to be dried. He remembers how many men actually lost their fingerprints from picking so many hot, coarse brick. He worked for a period of time in the grinding room and used to go home at the end of the day covered in the distinctive red dust from the clay which made Chipman bricks so unique. Corey's house is made out of the brick that he helped to produce, and claims that the brick is durable because of its imperviousness to water and its resistance to damp, freezing climates.

Alyre and his wife **Myrtle Thibeau** were married in 1946, and Alyre started to work at the brick plant in 1948. Myrtle came from Kent County, New Brunswick, while Alyre moved from St. Ignace, New Brunswick, to Chipman in 1941 to work in the coal

mines. He also worked at Sayre's lumbermill until he was hired on at the brick plant. He spent the first seven years working on the setting crew in the kiln, and as a result of the repetitive movement of this job, needed a hip replacement later in life. He worked the transfer track to bring the bricks back to the kiln for five or six years, and then went to maintenance and electrical work for 12 years. He retired in 1988 after forty years of service with Shaw's.

David MacBeth began working at the brick plant in 1982, burning the kilns. He worked a lot of overnight shift work, and remembers being alone at the plant with the kilns and hearing strange noises. He attributed them to the legend of the ghost of Ovie Teed, a former brickmaker who had died of a heart attack on site and was said to still be around the plant. Because his house is situated so close to the plant, David loved never having to have a long commute to work, and continued at the plant until it closed. He liked playing hockey in the winter which was referred to as the "brick plant summer" when some of the men were laid off for repairs to the kiln.

My previous university degree was a BA in English Literature, which meant that I was interpreting texts and works which had already been written. Switching to Folklore meant that I had to become quickly immersed in a discipline that used oral narrative as primary text. There were no criticisms or essays already written about my particular subject which meant that I was responsible for recording and transcribing the primary text, as well as its interpretation. This may seem like an obvious observation, but it certainly affected my ability to interpret the interviews I conducted.

My experience conducting interviews for this project resulted in me learning a great deal about what I am like as a communicator, and where my place is as a member of the community of Chipman. I experienced difficulty with the first phone call to a potential informant. It was difficult to verbalize what I was trying to collect for my project, mostly because I sensed right away that what I wanted to collect was not necessarily what my informants thought was important to collect. During the process of transcribing all the interviews, I was able to listen to the themes that were repeated and form a new focus for my study, which is how I originally started thinking about the influence of nostalgia and memory on occupational folklore.

Every interview was different. I had a different relationship with each informant, and at the beginning of every interview, the initial conversation was a negotiation of my relationship as both an outsider to the occupation, but a member of the regional community. There is a shared ownership of experience that comes from being part of the same regional community as your informant, but there is definitely a communicative distance that is established because of being both a young female, and an outsider to the occupation of brickmaking,

When scheduling my interviews, I discovered that to simply call up a potential informant, explain the project, and then attempt to schedule the interview was too abrupt and formal to be effective. A complex schedule of networking had to occur before interviewing could take place. I started with someone I knew well and was comfortable with, at the end of the interview I would ask them if they knew anyone else who would be interested in being interviewed for my project. They would list names, but would then

usually offer to call. Eventually, word got around the village of my project, and while I was never directly contacted by an informant and asked to participate, agreement to participate certainly came more willingly as time went on.

This networking which yielded me my group informants was not a conscious decision- yet it was one that inevitably coloured the nature of my fieldwork. I was much less likely to be directed to another brick plant worker if my first informant thought that their recollections would reflect on them in a negative light. Also, the order in which I interviewed men was entirely dependent on who their closest friends were because when they called the next person they thought I should interview, it was always someone with whom they were close.

I was never selective about who I chose to interview; which is to say that I had no pre-conceived cast list from which I drew potential informants. I also never considered the option of being selective. I began with Sheila Mowatt, who was also a friend of the family. While she never actually worked in the brick plant in the village, she was acquainted with many of the workers at the plant through family as well as social connections. She directed me to Connie Webber, the plant's long time secretary. In addition to Shirley Brown, the daughter of a family whose father and brothers had all worked for the plant, these were the only three women I interviewed, and only one of these three women actually worked in the plant. This was not a decision meant to exclude the female perspective from this project. Rather, it was a reflection of the male-to-female ratio of plant workers. However, it is interesting to note that in five of the interviews I conducted, the wives of the brickmakers were present and active participants in the

discussion, weaving in elements of how the worker's stories were seen through the family perspective, or how they daily work lives impacted daily family life.

After interviewing the secretary, I interviewed George Roberts, the plant's last superintendent, who called Otty Glenn, the former head burner for me and set up an appointment, and I continued in this way until I had done as many interviews as possible in the time frame allotted. Over the following summer, I continued this social networking, interviewing anyone who would allow me until I had amassed twenty interviews and over fifty hours of tape. My order of interviews was not planned, yet because of the social complexities of "networking", upon reflection, I see that it was planned, but engineered at the hands of my informants into whose hands I willingly placed control.

The following chapters present my research. If anything, I hope to accomplish the task of documenting an industry which has meant so much to my home community, and honouring the men and women who worked so hard to preserve the name of our village on a product which will last for centuries. Ideally, I hope to also contribute to the field of occupational studies, adding yet another perspective to a topic which, by nature of its complexity, struggles for advance.

To these ends, Chapter Three offers a step-by-step description of brickmaking as it was practiced in Chipman. Using McCarl and Byington as an analytical framework on which to structure the information, the chapter provides a "tour" through the brickmaking process and plant. Here I rely heavily on the men's own words, not only to illustrate the

mechanical and technical process of brickmaking, but also to emphasize the kind of intimate and intricate knowledge required to make a seemingly simple object like a brick. Reconstructing the brickmaking process through narrative achieves two goals; first, it reflects one of the foremost emergent narrative themes in the interviews, which was to verbally position oneself as part of the membership group through this deep, intricate description of the brickmaking process; and second, it introduces the theme of life reconstruction through narrative, and the complexities of reconstructing meaning and identity through memory. It is important to note that when I embarked on this project, this was decidedly a chapter I did not anticipate writing. This chapter is important because the men made it important.

Chapter Four builds on the documented process and shaping principles from Chapter Three. Here I examine what was shared of the work culture of the plant by examining the collected narratives in relation to two emergent themes: oral expression and narratives of skill. This chapter also introduces the idea that temporal distance from the actual working days of the plant alters the functions of the narrative from their original purpose. The narratives illustrate that the passage of time affects what is collected and how it is shared.

In Chapter Five I analytically review what has been shared of work and life at the Chipman Brick Plant in the previous chapters and explore the interrelationships of memory, nostalgia, and occupational narrative. Here I look to works such as Maggie Holtzberg-Calls's Lost World of the Craft Printer and Nicola King's Memory, Narrative and Identity. In the context of this and other literature on memory and narrative, I

examine the implications of remembering work, and focus on exploring the process and the difference between memories that are stored, and those that are shared. I will conclude my thesis by reflecting on the challenges of writing a study with the dual purposes of documenting an historical work process and interpreting that occupational experience retrospectively. Finally, I attempt to define the significance of the life of the brickmaker to the community, the workplace and the men themselves and will suggest some areas for further study in the hopes that trades rendered obsolete will never be truly forgotten.

Before moving to these areas, however, it is important to establish the historical context. In Chapter Two I present the history of Chipman, and what made it so conducive to the incorporation of this major industry and I position the occupation within the community to give a fuller understanding to the importance of the plant to the community. I also provide a history of the brick making in the Maritimes, as well as an in-depth look at the company formerly known as LE Shaw's Brick and Tile Company, which was responsible for making brick and tile manufacture a booming business for the whole of Atlantic Canada.

Chapter Two: Brickmaking in Chipman

Like most of the younger members of the Chipman community, my knowledge of the history of my place comes from two main sources. The first is the ubiquitous and dog-eared copy of History of the Parish of Chipman by Rev. Frank Baird, grandson of the first settler to the Salmon River Region, published in 1946. Second are the memories of the people in the community who refuse to forget the vibrant, bustling community of days gone by.

Although the concept of nostalgia and the glossing over of the hardships of the past will be dealt with more thoroughly in Chapter Five, it is an undeniable reality of community life that in Chipman the heyday of prosperity has passed. Once it was thought that with its geographical situation on the intersections of railways, water systems and rich logging forests, Chipman would grow to be the economic capitol of the province. Robert Hawkes, a professor emeritus at the University of New Brunswick, reflects on early life in Chipman in his poem 'Chipman Journey':

On the Saturday nights
Of our summer lives
We gladly paid the price
Of wearing dress-up clothes
For we knew they meant
An evening in town.

As we drive the final mile
In the Chipman village
My brother Dave and I announced
The four familiar landmarks:

The Salmon River far below the highway,
The chimney in the L.E. Shaw brickyard
Sayre's lumbermill
And Saint Joseph's spire (Chipman 2002, 191)

Although the Salmon River and the church spire still exist, the two landmarks of Hawke's lifetime- the brickyard and the lumbermill- have both been erased by time. Logging in Chipman has become the community's only industry and is owned and operated by the Irving family. Sayre's mill was sold to Irving in 1962, and the LE Shaw brickyard is now an overgrown ten-acre lot with barely discernable remnants that once it boasted a large plant that produced the best face brick in the world.

Apart from the physical presence of the plant on the face of the community, what did the industry mean to the economic life of Chipman? How did the brickmakers contribute to community life and how did brickmaking itself become such an important industry in the Atlantic provinces? To answer these questions, this chapter will predominantly serve two purposes. First, it traces the history of Chipman, introducing it as a contextual framework against which the rest of the thesis will be set. Second, it follows the history of brickmaking as a trade in the Maritime region, as well as the beginnings of the Shaw's company, bringing them to the point of convergence with the community of Chipman. This is not meant to be an exhaustive history of the community, the business or the trade, but rather to briefly weave these histories together to establish a setting for the following chapters.

Implicit in the choice to rely on Baird's history as the primary source for information is the extent to which it is in itself a collection of oral narratives. Baird's work and its supplemental chapter were admittedly compiled without "exhaustive research" as he admits in his preface. Instead, he relied heavily on interviews and diaries to supply information. The nature of the book provides insight into the character of the people of

Chipman. This lends validity to his history, as it was taken directly from the members of the community themselves.

As for the character of the first settlers in Chipman, Baird places great emphasis on the influence of “men of tough fibre and strong arm, without which no country can prosper and be safe from enemies and decay” (Baird 1946, 105). Not only does his study function as a historical account of the early years of the settlement of the village, but it also acts as a handbook on community values and behaviour. The perpetuation of the legends of the famous figures of Chipman in a book purported to be the definitive history of a region influenced a community’s self-perception. Given the absence of subsequent histories to challenge or refute Baird’s findings, it is then not strange that lurking in the collected narratives of the brickmakers are remnants of these attitudes and values. Another facet of this chapter will be to illuminate these values and behaviours, as shown through Baird’s collection of stories about prominent community figures at the time. This highlights a similarity between the values of the Shaw Brick Industry and the community of Chipman, which in part speaks to the successful integration of the community and the business. This aspect will be dealt with in more detail in Chapter Five.

The Beginnings

The village of Chipman, located in south central New Brunswick, was founded in 1835, was made up of portions of the older parishes of Brunswick and Canning. The first settlers to the area were mostly native settlers and immigrants, and the Parish of Chipman quickly became prominent because of its large population in comparison with the surrounding parishes, and also because of its industrial activities (Baird 1946, 1). Located where the Salmon and Gaspereau Rivers meet and connect to Grand Lake, which is the largest natural

body of freshwater in New Brunswick, the area was pre-disposed for the lumbering industry, which quickly became the impetus for permanent settlement. Although the first settlers arrived in the early 1800's, the lumbering industry really took hold about twenty years later when businessmen from Maine came to the area to establish the first sawmills (Chipman 2002, 1). Over the subsequent decades, the population slowly increased, aided by the lure of employment from the burgeoning lumbermills, the coming of the railways, the development of the mining industry, and later in the 1930's, the institution of LE Shaw's Brick and Tile industry (Baird, 1946 2).

The first census, taken in 1871, the year that the first sawmill was established in Chipman proper, showed that the parish housed some 1765 people. Compared to the nearby parishes of Brunswick and Cambridge, this was 1315 and 267 more residents, respectively. By the late 1800s, Chipman and its surrounding area boasted several lucrative lumber mills, large company stores, shipyards, a large scale coal mining industry, covered bridges, a bank, a grocer, a hospital, a cheese factory, a post office, a grist mill, several churches, schools and other businesses, and a passenger and cargo railway. By 1881, the population had maintained itself, and the census recorded numbers of 1772 (Baird 1946, 2). Taken from the Kings Co. Record on August 4th, 1904:

Many new dwellings in course of construction give evidence of the faith the people have in the future of Chipman. Many places with five times the population do not give evidence of one half the volume of business that is being transacted in Chipman (Chipman 2002, 199).

The village was also gaining quite a reputation for attracting strong-minded businessmen. Baird tells several tales of Chipman's industrial figure heads; these were imposing, independent men, who were keenly skilled in their trades and had strong,

influential political views and even stronger work ethics. The men, whose lives became almost legendary in the community as immortalized by Baird, eventually paved the way for the success of LE Shaw and his industry. They not only created a tradition of paternal, male-dominated industry, but also allowed for the industrial establishment by influential male community builders. They set the standards for management disposition and workmanship.

As Baird describes it, the initial momentum of the community came from two main industries: lumbering and coal. The early days of the lumber industry in the Chipman area were characterized by the influx of smaller, independent mills: The Poore and Lambert Mill in Gaspereau Forks, the Burpee Family Mill, the Hunt and Pickup, the Langin Family Mill in 1819, and the Dunn Family Mill in 1846, both in Gaspereau Forks. In 1825, Daniel Briggs and his grandfather Ebenezer Briggs had come from Sheffield to establish a sawmill in what is now known as Brigg's Corner, approximately five miles up river from Chipman. In operation at that site until 1870, the mill was re-located into Chipman proper and was taken over by GG King, an influential businessman who played a large part in changing the face of Chipman industry. The property at Brigg's corner was purchased by Hugh MacLean, who established a large mill, company store, bridge across the Salmon River which separates the community, a shipyard and buildings for employee housing (Chipman 2002, 1). Of this transaction Baird writes:

If Mr. McLean purchased from Mr. King, it is probably the last transaction that took place between them. No one now living can recall any evidence of cordiality or cooperation between them. They were strongly opposed politically, and from the beginning seem to have been keen business rivals (Baird 1946, 26).

Of Mr. McLean in particular Baird comments:

That he was a keen businessman no one who ever had dealings with him had any occasion to doubt. Self-made, and largely self-taught; confident and independent, with little or no capital to begin with, but with more than liberal supply of business shrewdness, and with all the Scotsman's gifts for making one dollar earn another; he built up a large and lucrative business, giving employment to many and becoming a citizen of much prominence and usefulness (Baird 1946, 26).

After the death of MacLean in 1900, the property was purchased by FE Sayre and Walter Holly of Saint John. The manager of Sayre's Mill was a Mr. Philip McGinley, "who had grown up with the company since he was a boy, is a practical mill and lumberman, and knows how to manage a mill and crew and keep things running smoothly (Baird 1946, 33)". He could also

...handle a pike-pole on the sluice, or in the mill pond and swing a peevy or cant-dog on the slip, in case a log should stick, and perhaps, apart from the special work of the head sawyer, he can, in an emergency, take over any job in the entire mill yard. He puts on no airs, and moves among the men, simply as one of them, but the work gets done, and there are no strikes or labour troubles of any kind in the Sayre mill, which is largely due to the understanding ability and the universal popularity and wisdom of the manager (Baird 1946, 35).

The qualities of the businessmen who helped to establish Chipman were elevated almost to folk hero proportions by Baird, and these same attributes would later be echoed and praised by the brickmakers about their employers, the Shaw's, and the plant's second and long time Superintendent, Jasper Kennedy. Thibeau, employed with the plant for forty years remembers:

M: Jasper Kennedy was the first one, wasn't he A?

A: Here, yup.

M:...that he went with...

H: So what was he like?

A: He was a hard nut. Yup. He was a hard man, I'll tell ya. But, if you did your work, he used you good. I seen him go in like they used to handle after the brick were burnt, y'know they were hard just like a rock actually, and everyone would wear gloves or hand leathers we called them then, and he'd go in there with his bare hands and handle brick maybe for an hour and come out there and the blood would be dripping off the end of his fingers....He was tough, no doubt about it (Thibeau 2003).

In 1904, Sayre's Mill, then the largest and most lucrative of the Chipman sawmills, was also moved from the nearby location of Brigg's Corner to Chipman proper, after the mills, store and buildings were destroyed by fire in May, 1903 (Baird, 1946 32). The earlier established mills in Gaspereau had gone bankrupt or been destroyed by the spring freshet in the mid 1870's, and so it was the two competing sawmills of King's and Sayre's, operating side by side, which were employing large numbers of men in the village in the first decades of the 1900's.

The railway was an immensely important addition to the mobility of the community, beginning in 1871 with the incorporation of the Central Railway Company (Chipman 2002, 58). Completed in 1888, the Central Railway Company line permitted coal mined in the Grand Lake District to be hauled to Chipman, where it would be sent via rail or water to many other locations, including Saint John. This was the beginning of the next prosperous industry for Chipman, as the rich abundance of coal would continue to be mined, even until the present. In 1903, after the New Brunswick Coal and Railway purchased the CPR Norton-to-Chipman line, passengers, express and mail were being transported between these two locations. By 1909, the Transcontinental Railway had also been brought into

Chipman at the hand of the influential local politician, G. G. King, typically credited with the title of being the first businessman of the village (Baird, 1946 16). As related by Baird:

The first survey of this railway called from crossing the Salmon River, some twelve miles up- near the Kent County line, about at the John Fulton place. Learning of this Mr. King at once became active. His party was then in power in Ottawa, so he at once appealed to Sir Wilfred Laurier, who had made the building of the new road practically his own. Mr. King was informed that new railway was to be an engineers', not a politicians' road, and that the survey must stand, the engineers having reported that at Chipman they 'could get into the Salmon River Valley, but could not get out.' (Baird 1946, 15).

Infamous for his perseverance and tenacity, Mr. King proposed to Laurier to allow him to do another survey with his own engineer, and if the report was not favourable to cross at Chipman, he would personally foot the bill for the entire venture. Fortunately for GG King, the new survey was successful and the Transcontinental Railway was opened in 1909 putting Chipman on the map. This laid the groundwork for attracting much more business into Chipman, including Shaw Brick. Baird writes, "Mr. LE Shaw is authority for the statement that it was Chipman's railway facilities that brought him and his brick and tile industry to Chipman" (Baird 1946, 16). The rail connections ultimately established Chipman as an upwardly mobile community. With the availability of passenger railways, travel between Chipman and Moncton was also possible, and Chipman's industry exports were opened up to the rest of the province.

Coal Mining

Although mining in the Chipman/Minto area began hundreds of years ago, the first steady mining began in the early 1800's, around 1805 (Morell 1981, 11). The first granting

of a Provincial Mining Lease was in 1894, to the New Brunswick Coal Company in the Coal Creek area, situated between Chipman and Minto (Chipman 2002, 30). By 1901, there were more than twelve mines in operation in the Chipman/Minto area, although none on a very extensive scale (Morell 1981, 47). In 1900, Senator George Gerald King established the King Mining Company, and his was a lucrative and large mining operation. He sold his property in 1918 to Alton D. Taylor, who formed the Miramichi Lumber Company (Morell 1981, 52).

By the 1920's, with the majority of the population being employed by either the lumber mills or the mines, Chipman's population had increased to 2124 people. Although there were some labour and union disputes regarding the mine workers, Baird writes that the "favourable geographic situation and the generally progressive nature of the people" (Baird 1946, 2) were making Chipman a hotbed of industry and growth.

The coal mining industry experienced more setbacks in the mid 1960's due to the declining popularity of coal to oil for industrial and domestic purposes. Also, the federal and provincial governments were reluctant to "subsidize further an ailing industry" (Morell 1981, 138). The two levels of government planned a "phasing out" plan, which would slowly close out the industry over a period of five years. The Grand Lake area mining operations were consolidated into a larger company called the "New Brunswick Coal Company" (NB Coal), and as of 1984, all mining activities, including gold, clay, and coal, were only contributing 2.5-4.5% of New Brunswick's total net value (Morell 1981, 138). Coal mining was lucrative in Nova Scotia, so coal was imported to Chipman to fuel the kilns, rather than mining locally. Although coal mining as an industry experienced decline later in the twentieth century, the early 1900s was a coal mining boom. Chipman was pre-

disposed, both in terms of attitude and resources, for the coming of the brick and tile manufacturing industry.

The Beginning of LE Shaw Ltd., and the Maritime Brick Industry

Before its establishment in New Brunswick, the brick industry began in Nova Scotia as far back as the seventeenth century, when bricks were being handmade by the French. The province had several smaller brick plants in operation by the time Robert Shaw started his brick plant in Hantsport in 1861 (Shawptalk 1978, 10). It would be his son Lloyd, however, who would take Nova Scotia's and New Brunswick's brick industry through several decades of growth.

Born in Hantsport, Nova Scotia on October 21st, 1878, Lloyd Ethelbert Shaw was the second youngest of nine children to parents Robert and Eliza Shaw. Robert Shaw, of Falmouth, Nova Scotia, was an industrious man who had many occupations over his life, including sea-faring, construction, and most notably, brick making. His son Lloyd remarks:

Just why or what took him into the brick business I never knew. I take it, however, that during his trips abroad he had seen some small brickyards, and, when he found some red clay, he grasped the opportunity and set up a small, crude plant about two miles out of Hantsport. The plant was entirely hand made. I fancy \$100.00 at that time would go a long way towards producing the tools- all wooden- that were necessary.

How many brick were manufactured at this first plant I do not know, or how long they carried on. I do know that the brick were marketed almost solely in Windsor, and that the mode of transportation was a scow loaded at Hantsport. The scow was floated up with the incoming Fundy tide; the rudder was two long oars, the crew two men (Shaw 1955, 14).

The series of events that led up to LE Shaw becoming a giant in the brick industry began with his experiences working for his father's plant. When a fire destroyed most of Saint John in 1877, burned clay products became in demand and the Hantsport plant turned a disaster into a success (Shaw 1955, 3). Shaw's father, to take advantage of this demand, bought a property near a pre-existing plant also in Hantsport, and made good use of the abundance of clay the site offered. In 1897 when the town of Windsor, Nova Scotia was burned to the ground, Shaw's enterprising father again took advantage of a desperate situation, and went to Ontario to purchase an engine, a boiler and two small "brick machines" (Shaw 1955, 23), as well as hiring an engineer to operate and install the machines. The small Hantsport plant made good business with the Town of Windsor. Around 1902, Shaw's father had been approached by the owner of another brickyard in Bridgetown, a Mr. Irving, to buy his plant. Shaw's father refused, but convinced L.E. to run the business for Mr. Irving. LE accepted, and immediately started making changes in the plant to maximize the output and create smoother and more effective operations, like those at the Hantsport brick yard.

Comparing his plant to both his father's plant, and the neighbouring Walton Avonport plant, Shaw reflected in his memoirs My Life in the Brick Industry, that he identified ways to improve both plants, in terms of quality of product, better management and smoothness of operation. He also observed that one efficient plant would equal the output of the several smaller plants.

A few years later, LE Shaw expanded by creating a plant in Middleton, NS. Financed by local lawyers, doctors and businessmen, as well as some noted names like Max Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook and W.B. Ross, Leader of the Bar in Halifax, the

Middleton Brick & Tile Company was a multi-purposed venture for Shaw. As well he was the “office boy, typist, timekeeper, head burner and Foreman” (Shaw 1955, 41). Shaw filled the unproductive winter months by selling coal and chopping wood. Shortly after its inception, the plant burned down, and was then rebuilt from another loan from W. B. Ross.

A promoter of industry, Ross’s financing also allowed Shaw to purchase both a small plant at Brickton and his father’s plant, changing the name of his plant group to Valley Brick and Tile company. Demand for brick was high, and recognizing the disorganization of the thirty some smaller brick plants operating in the Maritimes, Ross, Shaw and the F. B. McCurdy Company began buying the smaller plants to form a new, larger company called the Nova Scotia Brick and Tile Company. They planned to operate three larger plants in order to fill the demand for brick in the locations of Elmsdale (Lantz), Pugwash, and a plant in the Annapolis Valley.

By 1913, Shaw was the General Superintendent of the Annapolis plant, and Saint John, New Brunswick was still the recipient of their entire production load as they were still rebuilding the massive damage from the fire of 1877. In August of 1914, with the declaration of the onset of World War I, the production of all the brick plants shut down, and Shaw decided to sell his shares in the Nova Scotia Clay Works Company. Shortly thereafter, he independently opened a brick plant in Avonport, where his father had once operated. By 1915, Avonport was prospering, issuing a better quality product than either the Nova Scotia Clay Works, or the Elmsdale plant ever had. In 1917, another disaster marked a success for the brick industry when the Halifax explosion suddenly created a huge market for the product.

Although one of the largest and most tragic Maritime disasters of the twentieth century, the Halifax Explosion was an economic triumph for the Shaw brick company.

Copeland writes,

He immediately received an order for one million brick from one of his customers, Piercy Supplies, of Halifax. The order was one of the largest ever to come out of the city of Halifax. This would pave the way for so many orders that by the time spring arrived, his company would never be able to fill them (Copeland 1992, 6).

In 1919, Shaw merged the Avonport and Wolfville operations and changed the name of his company to L.E Shaw Ltd., to accommodate for the shortage of labour brought on by World War I (Copeland 1992, 6).

By 1921, LE Shaw Ltd. tapped into the booming market for hollow-ware, and began producing partition tile, and drain tile, in direct competition with the Nova Scotia Clay Works. The one level of marketing in which NSCW was out-selling LE Shaw Ltd., was face brick. Shaw recognized that there was a potential for a good product if shale could be substituted for clay. The region required a more durable material, such as was being produced in Montreal and Toronto (Shaw 1955, 61). Shale deposits were tested in the Avonport area, and proved to be low quality. If the plant was to expand, a new high-quality and substantial shale deposit would have to be located. LE Shaw went searching for a location to fill the needs of the expanding industry, and found all the requirements in the area of Chipman, NB.

Because strip-mining in Chipman had become such an active undertaking in the early 1900's, large deposits of top shale had been removed to access the coal. Dumps were left around the area, defacing the landscape and creating piles of waste that prohibited further mining. W. Benton Evans, president of the Rothwell Coal Company near Minto,

New Brunswick, and MLA Alton Taylor, president of the Sheffield Coal Company, are credited with initiating the communication with Shaw to bring the brick industry to the Chipman/ Minto area (Copeland 1992, 6). Gordon Stairs was employed by Shaw to examine the Minto shale deposits, and also to search for a potential plant site in Chipman that could be serviced by both the CNR and CPR. Upon hearing of the possibilities in the area, Shaw accompanied Stairs to survey the area. The piece of ten acre property that the Chipman plant would occupy for almost sixty-five years was purchased for \$1000 at a site where both railroads intersected. Plans went underway for construction (Shaw 1955, 61).

The plant began construction in the fall of 1928 and arrangements were made with Mr. Evans to ship coal from Minto to fire the kilns. The first kiln of brick produced by the Chipman plant was a disaster. The shale contained too much carbon, and as a result of firing, became one molten mass. The subsequent firings went better, but securing management for the plant proved to be hard. Eventually, Billy Holmes came to Chipman as Superintendent from the Avonport plant in Nova Scotia, and Robert H. Shaw, LE's oldest son fresh out of Acadia University, became the Chipman plant's first Manager.

At the onset of the depression in the 1930's, the market crashed and the plant closed. The following account by LE Shaw marks the turnaround for the Chipman plant:

The depression of the early thirties hit us. The Plant had to be closed- shut down tight. Jasper Kennedy, who had gone from Avonport to Chipman as Head Burner and later succeeded Billy Holmes as Superintendent, was asked to stick around. He made good use of his time, searching for shale. One day while walking over a piece of property within a short distance of the Plant, he stubbed his toe and discovered a large and valuable shale deposit. This property was surveyed and drilled. Here was the solution to our shale problem...Kennedy's toe and keen eyes were our salvation! (Shaw 62).

With the discovery of enough natural resources to last the plant for many years to come, and a solid and popular product, by 1935 the LE Shaw brick plant was well on its way to prosperity, creating many employment opportunities for the community. For many years, along with the coal and lumber industries, brick manufacture was a mainstay of the industrial scene in Chipman, and for many of its employees, a lifelong career.

In Baird's history, an entire chapter is dedicated to LE Shaw and his newest addition to the industrial landscape of Chipman. Like other businessmen praised by Baird, Shaw was no exception. They had met at a dinner in Truro because they were joint Governors on a committee, and Baird asked Shaw to write a letter to be included in the history of Chipman that Baird was compiling. Shaw's letter was accompanied by a photograph, a catalogue of brick and tile products, and a copy of the Martitime Advocate's Who's Who, which included biographical information on featured Shaw. The letter included a brief history of his own successes in the Nova Scotia brick industry from the 1920's, some highlighted trials and successes in the Chipman plant since its inception in 1928, and assurance that Chipman brick was emphatically "the best face brick made on this continent" (Baird 1946,41). The letter ended with a confession that the plant was not hugely financially successful based mostly on the fact that there was a shortage of labour, and that the plant serviced the Maritime provinces, Maine and Eastern Quebec.

Baird was so smitten with Shaw and his history of success in the brick industry in Nova Scotia, that following the letter he was praised in the same glowing terms as the other businessmen featured in Baird's History. He writes:

All things considered Chipman is deeply in the debt of Mr. Shaw for what he has done for the development and the increased population and enlarged trade and industry if the community. He has discovered and utilized something that

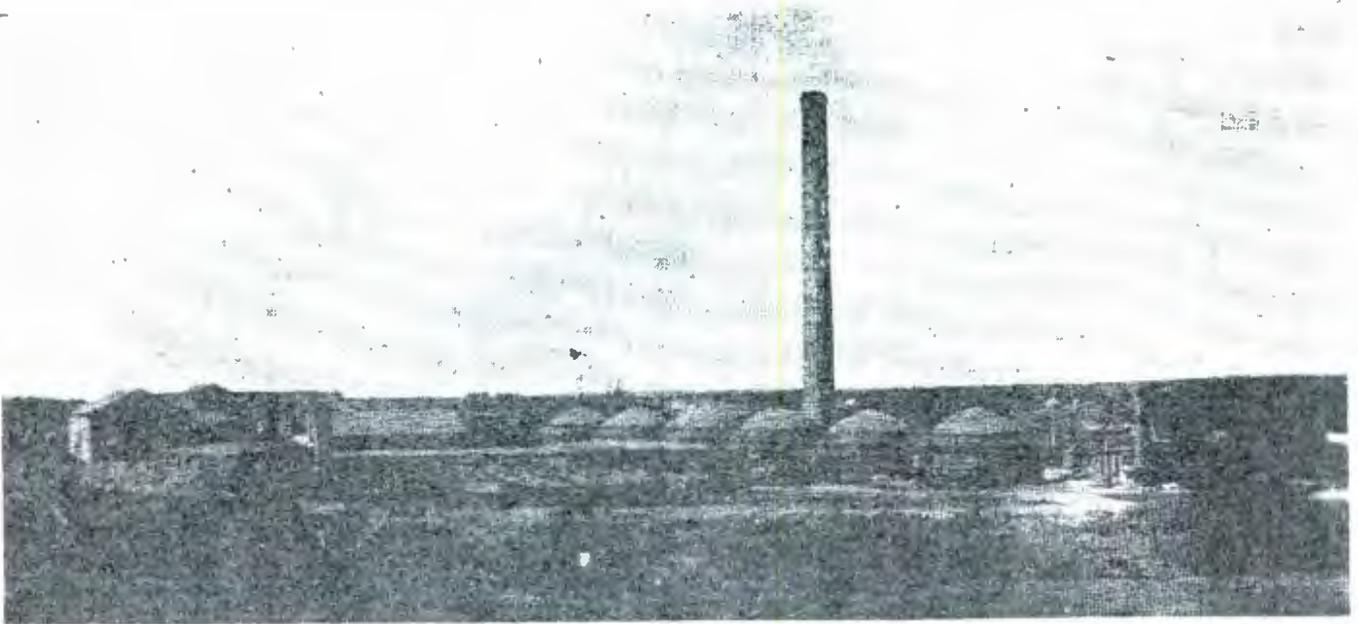
might have lain for hundreds of years undeveloped. He has picked up the common clay and rough material that lay at our feet, and turned it into things of beauty, utility and value. (Baird 1946, 45).

Baird goes on to praise Shaw's usefulness and success to the community by highlighting his humanitarian efforts with the church, sports, academics, and a volunteer and figurehead for several committees, boards, and local organizations.

This written introduction of Shaw to the community was a very mutually beneficial transaction between Baird and Shaw. First of all, when Shaw appealed for more labour, he essentially used the venue as a classified ad to the men of Chipman. Baird not only received a first hand account from an important businessman in the area, he also drew essential parallels connecting Shaw's core business values with those of the other businessmen in Chipman he had previously mentioned in his history.

In 1945, the company catalogue included a comparison of the plants in Chipman and Elmsdale which was included in Baird's brick plant chapter. It revealed that:

The Elmsdale Plant is steam driven, with nine kilns and a personnel of about 65 men. All types of brick, Speedtile, Interlocking Tile, partition tile, farm drain, sewer pipe and flue lining are manufactured. The Chipman plant, while smaller, is of more recent construction, being built fourteen years ago. There are seven kilns, and electric power from Minto turns the wheels. About 3 men are engaged in the manufacture of brick, Speedtile, Interlocking Tile, smaller sizes of partition tile and farm drain tile. Chipman face brick are particularly famous, and it is interesting to note that by test they are unexcelled in structural quality on this continent. Conspicuous features of both plants are the large brick stacks which tower above the plants to a height of 150 feet (Baird 1946, 43).



Plant of L. E. Shaw Limited at Chipman, N. B.

Diagram taken from Baird's History of the Parish of Chipman, pg. 44.

With an abundance of shale and clay, an invitation for steady employment to the community, a new plant with a variety of products, and a promise of solid, value-laden management, the LE Shaw Brick and Tile plant in Chipman in the year 1945 was set up for success.

Ironically, it was right after this letter was written to Baird that LE Shaw Ltd ceased to be a wholly brickmaking company, and ventured into concrete (Western Libraries, Business Library 2005). As a result of company diversification, throughout its sixty-two year history, the Chipman Brick and Tile plant saw much change. The LE Shaw company recognized a National Union of Brickyard workers in 1946, which began the gradual separation of Shaw as a prominent business patron, to a company whose workers were mediated by a bargaining union. When LE Shaw travelled to Chipman on the night of Thursday, July 11, 1946 to address all the Chipman employees on the subject of the union,

he stressed the fact that he supported the Union because it was going to give decent hours at decent wages. This was not something the brick industry had been known for in the early 1900's in Nova Scotia where he first started out. With a plea for togetherness as a company despite the separation driven by the Union, he rallied for a resurgence of the values upon which he had built the company:

I want to suggest to you another formula. It is this: one part faith and confidence- two parts human understanding- and three parts a deep concern for the welfare of the other fellow. I submit this formula in the belief that, if followed, we will build together a house which will stand. What do you say, men? (Shaw 1955, Appendix II).

As a demonstration of the continued success of the company, the next few decades saw many labour-saving advancements. In 1950, lift trucks were implemented in the plant, eliminating the physically demanding job of using a wheelbarrow to transport brick. Fuel usage was switched from locally imported coal to Bunker C oil in 1953.

Only two years later, LE Shaw himself passed away, at the height of the success of the Chipman plant. In 1965, Shaw's main office started a publication called "ShawpTalk", which was a company newsletter subtitled as being "Published Quarterly by LE Shaw Ltd., In the Interest of Better Informed Employees". As a result of losing the main figurehead, the company passed to the hands of his son Lloyd. On December 12, 1978, the decision was made to sell the LE Shaw Ltd. Company out of the Shaw family and into the hands of nine senior managers. One of the managers was Allen Shaw, the grandson of LE Shaw, who became President and chief executive officer of LE Shaw Ltd.

This change was monumental in the history of the brick industry as it ushered in a new era of diversification and change not just in the Chipman brick plant, but throughout their holdings. As a result of the new owner's proposal, a profit sharing arrangement was

implemented to turn some profits back to the workers themselves. The nine senior managers thought it was in keeping with the standards that LE Shaw has primarily established (see Copeland 1992, appendix 1).

The company began diversifying in the 1940's when it first incorporated construction-based products such as concrete pipe and industrial aggregate into production. During a Business Outlook Conference on November 21, 2000, Allan Shaw delivered a speech updating the company's current holdings, and announcing long term plans for further diversification to include landscaping products, pre-fabricated arches and retaining walls for road construction, concrete for offshore platforms, sand, gravels, the creation of a new company called Shaw Wood which contracted with IKEA, the purchase of Prestige Homes to manufacture model homes, and dozens of other ventures. It made the Shaw Group, as it became in 1993, one of the leading business empires in Canada.

This quick diversification of the company was a reflection of the fact that brick both as a commercial and residential building material had been declining ever since the inception of concrete. Lantz and Chipman were the only two plants in the Shaw company still producing brick. There was a long awaited change in the Chipman plant in 1980 when a new, faster, less labour-intensive kind of kiln called the Shuttle Kiln was finally built. The plant at Lantz had been the test plant in 1977 for this extremely advanced kiln, which was originally designed for "exotic, high priced, white ware (dishes), insulation bushings, hot tops for the steel industry, etc" (Shawptalk 1977, 2). Research immediately began to see if such a kiln would benefit the Chipman plant, and it was finally installed three years after the Lantz plant's run of the Shuttle Kiln had proved successful.

It was therefore a shock to the employees that on January 9th, 1990, the plant announced its closure. The doors were shut on February 16th, and in the early months of 1991, the plant was bulldozed and its equipment removed. The Village of Chipman was astounded. Because the market for brick did not necessitate two active plants, the Chipman plant was closed. Like Shaw's had always done, they closed one plant to focus on the success of the company as a whole.

Brickmaking has come long way since the early days of Shaw and his father working in the pits of Avonport, although the essential menu of ingredients and the basic steps of production are the same as they were hundreds of years ago. Technology slowly decreased the amount of manual labour needed to do the job, but especially in Chipman, technological advances were rare. This is not meant to be a definitive study of the decline of the brick industry or the historical timeline of an industry or community. An awareness of both of these, however, is necessary to an understanding of brickmaking's occupational folklore, and of workers, their experiences and rememberings of an industrial life.

As previously mentioned, scholars have taken a multi-disciplinary approach to occupational folklore. Folklore is a communicative process, and nowhere is examining the process more important than in a factory or industrial setting. Without process there can be no product, and objects are replete with meaning. Shown throughout this chapter, a product, an industry or a workplace cannot exist as a separate entity from its region or its workers. Also, the nature of the brick industry is such that its success relies on other industries in the community to function: the railway needs to be used to transport the coal into the plant, and to export the brick. The coal mines need to provide the coal to burn in the kilns. Although later in the century the railways were replaced with trucking companies

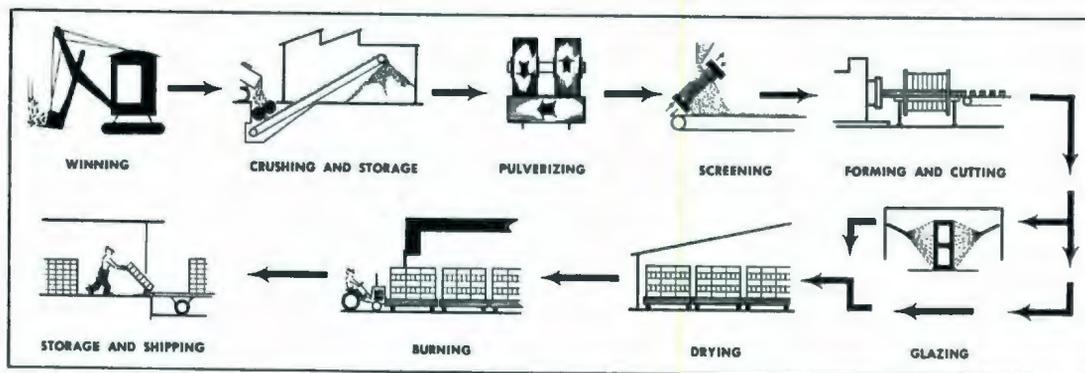
and the coal was replaced by oil, the early days of the plant spoke to a co-dependency on other regional industries.

Much like the process of brickmaking itself, there is a circular nature to the relationship between work, the worker and the place. The process is what creates the aesthetic product, which is what sells and makes money, which is what fuels the economy, which is what allows people to maintain steady employment. The product is a basis of measurement against which skill is determined and is the direct result of a worker's ability to conform to the standards of production. In this particular industry, it is also the result of the combination of skill and creativity. The life of the community is dependent on the employment which is available, and the success of the product which is created by the workers.

Turning now from a historical discussion, it is time to privilege the words of the men themselves. The most remarkable part of the interview process to me was the ease with which the men could recall specific and detailed information about the process of brickmaking from the temperature of the kilns for burning to the measurements of the brick before and after drying down to the centimetre. Their ease of recollection of these minute and specific details takes on an even greater meaning because they were consistently shared with me first during the interview process. For every interview I would start with the same question: "How did you get the job in the first place?" and directly after answering that question, the men would ask me if I knew how bricks were made. I believe it was in part to see if I was eligible to receive their life and work narratives, but also because it was the part they knew best and were most comfortable talking about.

This echoes the importance Robert Byington places on technique in his article “Strategies for Collecting Occupational Folklife in Contemporary Urban/Industrial Contexts” He cites technique as not only being the “nucleus from which the other forms [of occupational folklife] derive” but also as being the key to understanding the workplace (Byington 1978, 185). He suggests starting off any occupationally based fieldwork project by first familiarizing yourself with the “shaping principles” of the occupation and touring the operational area (the notion of shaping principles will be discussed further in Chapter Three). So, without consciously asking for it, my interviews began with this situational dialogue. I was taken on a tour without having to ask. In the following chapter I reconstruct the operational side of the plant using the men’s own words as much as possible and I examine the significance of what we can derive of work from discussions of process.

Chapter Three: The Process of Brickmaking



Diagrammatic Representation of the Manufacturing Process

Diagram taken from "Technical Notes on Brick and Tile Construction".

H: If you could maybe start out by telling me how you got the job in the first place?

G: Oh! They had shut down, you know. They had run a few years before that I went there, and shut down.

H: Why did they shut down?

G: Well, they were, when they first started, course, I wasn't working there then, but, they got their material out of the mines in Minto, and brought in up to Chipman here on rail cars, and they ground it up and made into a powder, and that's how they made their brick (Northrup, 2004).

Several minutes later during this interview with George Northrup, who had been working at the brick plant since 1934, I was still hearing about the process of how brick were made. I did not know that the sequence in which I was receiving the information was important until later when I was able to identify it as a common theme in the interviews. I eventually discerned that as a way to put my informants at ease I should start by asking the question 'How are bricks made?' It is interesting that even though men were assigned to

specific posts or jobs, everyone had a working knowledge of the general process, and more specifically, who did what job and whether or not they were good at it.

Holtzberg-Call refers to the detailing of process in a dying trade as the “get-it-before-it-goes” attitude (Holtzberg-Call 1992, 9), which I think is evident not only in the tone of the informants, but in the initial interests of the folklorist. As much as we secretly want to preserve folklore on the verge of extinction, our informants want to help us. Until I conducted these interviews, I might not have understood the hidden agenda of the brickmaker. I received detailed accounts of process partially, I believe, because the men felt sorry for me for trying to research a topic with which I had little familiarity, but, more tellingly, because the ability to remember the intricate details of the process is a test of skill which not only renews the sense of membership in a group which was once so important and now no longer exists, but also re-instills a sense of authority in the informant. Because I can no longer visit them at their place of work and watch them doing their job with expertise, they must therefore demonstrate the skill in words.

In contrast to other modern urban factory settings where production is extremely regulated and there is little room for human involvement in the process, the Chipman brick plant was a mix of man and machine. Unlike the first Shaw brick plant that operated in Hantsport, NS in the early 1860's that was an operation of horses and wooden tubs, the Chipman brick plant had “beehive” style kilns for drying the brick and cutting machines to cut the continuous clay slab into the proper thickness. Nonetheless, the brick were still handled, tossed and transported by hands and wheelbarrows, and human innovation was still responsible for clever repair jobs on equipment and creativity in face designs.

Initially I searched for recreations of day to day life and hoped to collect narratives that would be similar to those found in other theses of occupational folklife subjects.

Initially, I wanted to discover items similar to those documented by Robert McCarl about firefighting culture, and Thomas Dunk about factory life.

Robert McCarl, suggests several terms used to describe the performance and transmission of folklore among firefighting culture. McCarl suggests that the optimal venue for documenting the occurrence of the transmission of informal on-the-job knowledge is to look at what he terms "cultural scenes" (McCarl 1986, 72). These recurrent social situations are where McCarl suggests that informal canons of work technique are shared, adding depth and informal knowledge to daily work routines. While McCarl's observations among firefighters do provide him with current insights into the occupation, I was relying on the memories from the men who were several years removed from their occupation. The context in which this knowledge was passed on must be recreated from the workers' memories, and one can only guess that, like other occupations, as suggested by McCarl, that these scenes were typical of other occupations: "an end-of-the-week get-together at the local bar after work, a coffee break during the day, a quick conversation in the teacher's lounge..." (McCarl 1986, 73).

More importantly, what McCarl refers to as "technique performance" or the performance of folklore in these cultural scenes (McCarl 1986, 75), assumes that there is an actual functioning workplace. The performance that demonstrates technique for the Chipman brickmakers cannot be passed along in cultural scenes, and the hierarchical knowledge which makes some brickmakers valued in the workplace is no longer relevant. Therefore, it is only by using the men's own words to recreate the process that one can

glimpse into what we can document as skill. What it means now to be a skilled brickmaker is not the same as what it meant then.

The emergent narrative themes in my interviews can be categorized into two sections; the first, which I will discuss in this chapter, are the narratives of process. They speak about life in the brickplant, what it meant to be a brickmaker and how remembering work can tell us what is important about work that would not be evident to an outsider. The second, which will be discussed in Chapter Four, are narratives of oral expression and skill as recreated through memory. They demonstrate what can be shared about work culture through memory.

The brick has been around in one form or another for thousands of years. Originally sun-dried mud sometimes fortified with straw, the earliest kiln-fired bricks date from about 2500-2000 BCE in the Mesopotamians and Indus Valley Indian cultures. Bricks have been used throughout the centuries for decoration, primitive dwellings, safety fortifications, sacred buildings, pop-culture works of art, residential and commercial modern buildings, and relief ornamentation (Lynch 1994, 10-12).

In North America, brick making is thought to have been introduced by the French or the Swedish immigrants in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Morell 1981, 14). Wood was also a very popular and cost effective building material, especially in North America where it was plentiful. Bricks brought with them the connotation of wealth, however, they presented a finished quality to structures that was preferable to the log cabin dwelling exterior. As a popular and aesthetic building material in the twentieth century, the brick proved both resilient and stylistic. The simplistic elegance of brick as a building material even attracted such famous architects as Frank Lloyd Wright in the late nineteenth

century, and resulted in the creation of a new school of architecture called The Prairie Style (Lynch 1994, 61).

In terms of the actual process used to create bricks, there has not been a significant amount of change in the machinery since the early twentieth century. In Chipman, especially, it was noted by several of my informants that with the exception of the introduction of the shuttle kiln in 1980, and the implementation of lift trucks to replace manual loading and unloading of bricks onto and off of pallets for drying and burning, the process and machines stayed essentially the same for as long as the Chipman plant existed. Before most of these machines were invented, however, the process was quite different and more crude. The early days of brickmaking were noted by LE Shaw in his personal memoirs of his involvement with the brick industry, and he described the process as the following:

A brick machine then consisted of a pug-mill and two soaking pits, and a horse. The pug-mill was a square box built of timbers about four foot square and eight foot top. A beam was placed in the centre of it with a series of knives running at right angles. Upon this sturdy piece of centre timber was a shaft about twenty-five feet long to which a horse and traces was attached. The horse was supposed to go round and round in a circle, the diameter of which would be about thirty feet. The soaked clay was shovelled into the pug, and as the horse turned, the knives on this shaft mixed the clay, the water and the sand. At the bottom of the shaft, the clay was pressed out onto a platform. Here is where the "Striker" worked, clad with a long rubber apron, rubber boots and rubber hat. This was a job which only two men out of the crew could do; it required skill, unusual strength, great endurance and perseverance. He must pick the clay up with his hand, put it in a mould which held six brick; then the mould was carried out and later wheeled out where it was dumped carefully on the ground to dry. A good "Striker" could put out eight thousand a day. But the horse had to keep going (Shaw 1955, 6).

The process of brickmaking at the Chipman plant was much more advanced than the days when horses provided power, and dry weather determined product output. But the main ingredient in all bricks, in every century, was clay. Webster's Encyclopaedic

Unabridged Dictionary defines *clay* as:

a natural earthy material that is plastic when wet, consisting essentially of hydrated silicates of aluminum; used for making bricks, pottery, etc.; and *shale* as a rock of fissile or laminated structure formed by the consolidation of clay or argillaceous material

My informants corrected me early on in my fieldwork on the difference between clay and shale. Shale is essentially dried clay, which, when extracted, requires an extra step of grinding it into a powder and mixing it with water to re-form clay. Clay is usually found closer to the surface of the ground, while shale requires deeper extraction, not unlike mining coal.

More specifically, there are structural differences between clay and shale that result in different final products. According to the Structural Clay Products Institute in Washington, DC, as published in a circular in September of 1961 entitled "Technical Notes on Brick and Tile Construction":

Clays are complex materials; surface clays and fire clays differ from shales more in physical structure than in chemical composition. Chemically, all three are compounds of silica and alumina with varying amounts of metallic oxides and other impurities. Although technically, metallic oxides are impurities, they act as fluxes, promoting fusion at lower temperatures. Metallic oxides (particularly those of iron, magnesium and calcium) influence colour of the finished product (Technical 1961).

Furthermore, shales are found in proximity to coal seams, while more superficial clay deposits are found closer to topsoil layers in low lying areas (Lynch 1994, 163). Clays occur naturally in three principal forms, which all have similar chemical compositions, but which produce different results:

Surface clays may be the upthrusts of older deposits or of more recent, sedimentary formation. As the name implies, they are found near the surface of the earth.

Shales are clays that have been subjected to high pressures until they have hardened almost to the form of slate.

Fire clays, mined at deeper levels than other clays, have refractory qualities. As a rule, they contain fewer impurities than shales or surface clays, and have more uniform chemical and physical (Technical 1961).

The clays used to produce a durable brick must have qualities which allow them to be elastic enough to be shaped or moulded, but also to “have sufficient tensile strength to maintain their shape after forming” (Lynch 1994, 163).

Short of combining different mixtures of clays and shales to form a stronger product, there is not much that can be done from the manufacturing point of view to increase the efficacy of the clay itself:

because clay products have a relatively low selling price, it is not economically feasible to refine clay to produce a uniform raw material. Since variations in properties of raw materials must be compensated by varying manufacturing processes, properties of finished products from different manufacturers will also vary somewhat (Lynch 1994, 163).

Certain clays have different levels of silica or sand which makes them more or less durable for production. As Lynch writes, “good clay is composed of approximately three-fifths

silica, one fifth alumina, with oxides of calcium, iron, manganese, magnesium, potassium, sodium and sulphur forming the remainder” (1994, 164).

Extracting Shale

The famous and distinctive Chipman red clay was not originally an ingredient in the first years of brick production at LE Shaw’s Chipman plant. Back in the early 1930’s, covering shale, that is to say, shale that was closer to the surface of the ground, was being hauled from Minto, but proved it to be of low quality once it reached the burning stage because of its high carbon content.

Northrup, a brickmaker, who was able to comment on the early days of the plant from his experience, comments:

Well, they were, when they first started, course, I wasn’t working there then, but, they got their material out of the mines in Minto, and brought in up to Chipman here on rail cars, and they ground it up and made into a powder, and that’s how they made their brick.

Well then, course, it was a, it wasn’t the very best material, and this went on for a few years, I don’t how long, because that was before I was working there, two or three years, I’d say, well then it wasn’t paying. And this material they had, it was full of carbon, and what I mean by carbon, once you start burning it, after it gets so hot, it burns itself after that, and of course, it was swelling the brick up (Northrup 2004).

The poor quality of the Minto shale was a big disappointment for the plant, whose success had been contingent on the discovery of a high quality clay.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the plant temporarily shut down during the Depression. Unless a discovery of another higher quality clay pit was found, the plant was in danger of shutting down for good. Jasper Kennedy again, as mentioned in the previous

chapter, is credited with accidentally finding a clay deposit in Chipman one day while walking some land and stubbing his toe on a clump of clay. This clay bed would prove to be so rich that it could potentially still be being used today. The discovery story is a favourite of the men who worked in the earlier years, and was told many times during interviews as a type of creation narrative. This will be explored more fully in Chapter Five.

After the large clay deposit was discovered and low-quality shale from Minto was no longer used, the extraction operation was set up in the new, seemingly endless, clay pit in Chipman. Northrup continues to talk about the early days at the plant in the 1930's:

And they hired Sid Pyne and I, I was 17 at the time, to go to work on, we were repairing the track going into it, cause they had a railroad going into it. And we worked there, oh I suppose, most of that summer, clearing that track. And then, that'd be '35, they started bringing this clay in and mixing it up, and it made a lovely brick. But then they had taken all the machinery pretty well out of their plant, grinder and all that, and they had to bring that all back, you see. But in '35 they started, and they made a few brick that summer.

But this clay was only about 2 or 3 feet deep, and then they were down on some shale, shale rock. Well, they started digging that, and that made a better brick then the clay, but they had to grind it. So they set their grinding room up again, brought a new grinder in, set it up, started grinding and they made some brick that summer, '35. And not too many, but they made some, and they burnt some (Northrup 2004).

Crushing and Grinding

Once the top layers of clay were all used, and the extraction became entirely shale, the same techniques for extracting the shale were also those employed in local mining

operations like strip mining which were mainly dynamite blasting (Copeland 1992,12).

Once the shale was extracted, the plant secretary recalls:

there was a truckload came down from Redbank full of clay, and it would drive in here, it would empty the load of clay into a bin, then it would be processed, it would go from there to the mill, where they would make the brick (Webber 2003).

Described again by Northrup:

This shale when they started, the clay when they first started that, there was no rocks in it. Well, then of course when they got down to the shale, it was shale rock. It all had to be ground, but they ground it right into a powder. Finer than sugar. And of course when you mixed that with water again, that was just a clear clay again. That's what they made the brick out of (Northrup, 2004).

The large shale rocks came from the blasting site at Redbank. They had to be reduced to smaller pieces before being able to enter the crusher. When the shale was still being imported from Minto, it would have been hauled by box car and dumped directly into the crusher (Copeland 1992, 16), but once shale was discovered in Chipman, railway transportation was not needed for this process anymore. Gary Copeland describes the journey of the clay from the pits to the plant: "The truck would drive up the hill to the closed-in ramp, and empty its load between two sideboards that would feed the shale into a large hopper, narrowing down into the crusher-feeder" (Copeland 1992, 18).

LE Shaw outlined the same process many years earlier in his brick plant in Nova

Scotia:

The clay had to be hauled from a clay pit, dumped in rows on the clay yard, and then levelled off, dried for about two days, rolled, the scraped into long rows, as hay is put into wind-rows. From there it was shovelled into carts, dumped into the soak pits, and mixed with water and sand.

This soaking took from twenty-four to thirty-six hours. Consequently, there had to be three or four of these mills in order to allow continuous daily production. Of course, if it rained on the brick before they were dry, they had to be picked up, hauled back again and done all over. This was the day of “stints” in the clay pit. Three men and a driver were supposed to deliver one hundred loads to the dry ground for a day’s work. Some days we made an hour or so off the twelve hour day. Other days, when things would seem to go against us, we might fall to seventy-five or eighty loads (Shaw 1955, 6).

The hauling would have been done by horses, just as the clay was mixed by horsepower; the sand would have been mixed in with the clay to provide better cohesion of the materials. The later implementation of the grinding machine allowed for better monitoring of what exactly went into the brick, and allowed for some creative manipulation of the raw clay, like the adding of different colour dyes.

After the crusher had crushed the shale into tiny pieces about the size of peas, Fairweather, who did several jobs in the plant, recalls:

They haul-it’s, it’s not clay that the brick are made of, it’s *shale*. Shale. And the shale is hauled from the pit and dumped into a crusher, which crushes it up quite small. And then it’s put into what they call Muller Wheels. And this is great big heavy wheels and it goes around and there’s grates underneath it, and it crushes it small enough and it passes through this grate. And then it goes up into a screen- a shaking screen, and the small stuff shakes through the screen. And that goes on through into a conveyor belt into the *bin*. Now the stuff that isn’t small enough, it goes over into smaller Muller wheels, and the same process is done all over again, and they then they go through a screen. It keeps going til it’s ground small enough that it’ll go through these grates (Fairweather 2004).

The crusher machine itself “was made of maganese steel, which had the properties of work hardening, as it pounded and pulverized the shale. If a crusher tooth or a piece of the crusher happened to break off and escape the eyes of the

Grinder operator, it could certainly play havoc and cause a lot of damage to the screens on its way to the Storage Bin” (Copeland 1992, 19). The wheels of the grinder, called “Muller Wheels” “rolled on a metal, circular bed made of malleable iron Wearplates (Copeland 1992, 21)”.

Once the crusher had pulverized the clay into tiny pieces, and the grinder wheels had turned the shale a fine powder, it would then be taken to be stored. Copeland writes:

After the shale had been crushed, pulverized and screened into a very fine powder, it was carried by conveyor belt to a large storage building, known by many, as the bin. The main function of this large building was to keep the clay dry so it would mix well with the minerals and dyes in the Mixing Chamber of the Pug, on its way to becoming a final product” (Copeland 1992, 23).

For children of the community, these large bins of fine, bright red powder proved to be too much to resist, and many adults recall sneaking into the storage building as children and jumping into the bins to feel themselves sinking into the silky powder.



*Photo taken at Lantz Plant, 2003.
Piles of red, black and gray clay outside of plant, as well as pile of discarded brick.*

Mixing the Elements

This next stage of production is akin to a large pasta maker. The shale powder is brought from the storage bins to the mill area, where the pug machine is located. The pug operator would then add whatever dyes and ingredients were needed for the colour of the brick. Shale and water were the main components, and Trail, who worked for several years in the grinding room, observed the following about another ingredient went into brick:

B: Yup. All that was in our brick was shale, the shale rock and Epsom salts. Epsom salts stopped that from, stopped a lot of that white scum.

H: Right. What was the scum from?

B: Well, the heat, like. Once the heat hit it, they would turn that white on the sides, the Epsom salts would stop a lot of that.

H: I've never heard that before!

B: They used to put down a hundred pound bag of Epsom salts a day through. They just had a little machine set up on the front. Only a thing about that wide and that high on the top (motions with hands), and they just kept that full of Epsom salt and that just trickled out in the pug, as the stuff was made. Like it was ground end. Must have had something to do with the heat, once the heat hit it, it stopped turning white. And they made the black brick out of, put manganese in that. It come in bags too. Could have black, you could have brown or you could have red. (Trail 2004)

Copeland cites barium dyes as being one element that was added to the brick for colouring (Copeland 1992, 23), while Macbeth, who worked in the plant later in the 1980s when technology was a bit more advanced, recalls:

D: What you mix in it would be another thing, but it's baked. Like, Magnesium would be put into it for a certain

colours. Like if you wanted a dark brick, or a black brick, put a lot of manganese in it.

H: And where does that come from?

D: Bags, as far as I know (laughs)... You'd out back and turn the button on the thing, and it shook a little more in or a little less in depending on what colour you wanted. Other than that I don't know where it would have come from (MacBeth 2004).

Once all the ingredients had been added, Copeland describes the process of mixing and extrusion:

This mix was often joined by the occasional brick that had been left on the conveyor belt and returned to the overflow chute. The ingredients would now be well churned in the Mixing Chamber, by a number of sharp knives, which would be extruded through the mouth of the pug by two large work augers. The wet clay was forced through the mouth of the Pug and around a set of finger dyes. The long slab of brick would continue on the conveyor belt, to be cut into individual brick shapes. It was the shape of the dies, on the mouth of the pug, which shaped the hollow ware, such as drain tile, partition tile, or the solid of perforated brick. As the long slab of wet brick continued on the conveyor belt, it passed on to a cut-off machine, which would cut the slab of clay into individual bricks. The cutting action was achieved by a number of tightly stretched piano wires equally spaced, for the exact thickness of each brick (Copeland 1992, 24).

Fairweather, who was excellent at describing things to me so that I could visualize them, relates the same process:

So, that's into a bin and then from the bin that goes onto a conveyor belt into what they call a *pug*. It is mixed with water, and what's the other stuff (chuckle) - I was thinking of all this the other night when you'd called there- anyway, this, there's knives in there and they circulate towards the middle and that pushes the clay which is being mixed at the same time into another compartment which is the air's all drawn out of it, and it's pressurized, and it comes out a

mouthpiece, out of the pug. Anyway, that goes onto a conveyor belt and then, it's on a timered conveyor belt, and when it goes so far, it pushed the cutter ahead, and the cutter turns, and it cuts the brick the right size, the right width. It comes out of the pug the same the right length and height.... It's just smooth on both sides and the top (Fairweather 2004).



Photo taken at Lantz Plant, 2003. Knives in the mixer that pushed wet clay through the mouth of the pug.

MacBeth, who had a copy of Men of Clay on the kitchen table during his interview, would point to the different buildings on the aerial photograph of the plant and describe the processes that went on inside the buildings. He recalls the cutting machine:

[Pointing and referring to the aerial view of the plant¹] This is the machine making the brick, they called it the pug. And it just come out like a stream of spaghetti, one big long strip. And there was a machine sitting right here, and it was uh, well, we'll just say it was a barrel, a drum, a hollow drum. It had wires in it and those wires were set the thickness of a brick, and it was set right in here and it rotated, and it just kept going on a gear and every time this moved ahead so far, it was all on a little timing proxy, this

¹ See Appendix C

thing would turn and it would cut the shape of those bricks all out (MacBeth 2004).

In order to produce different types of brick, the die on the cutter would have to be changed. Corey, the pug operator, talks about the process of changing the dies on the pug to make different shapes of bricks:

when you changed from one size brick to another, you took what they called the cutter out. It was basically a, two big wheels with a bunch of bars on them, bunch of piano wires, and it would turn and cut the brick. Well, to change the sizes you took this cutter out and set it on a car and took it back, stored it, and brought another one up, and it would, you could actually change the different sizes of the brick (Shirley 2003).

After being cut, the bricks would be separated and put onto a conveyor belt before they got to the pickers, and then “a stamp rolled along the slab clearly imprint[ed] the words “CHIPMAN-MADE IN CANADA”, on each new brick” (Copeland 1992, 24). In his interview, MacBeth noted that when the plant closed he kept this big brass roller for a souvenir, and that he still had it out in his shed.

At this pointing the process, the paint colours or designs would also be added to the brick, depending on which kind was being burnt that particular day.



Photo taken at Lantz Plant, 2003. Some finger dies which would be placed on the mouth of the pug.

Trail, who would have seen the brick right after they had been burned on the hard brick crew, describes:

They had a thing sitting right over the pug, just when it come put of the pug there with just paint put on there, and there was a roller there with just all different designs on it. Rolled on the brick, that put that design right on the brick. Put the paint on it, and then when it went to the kiln to burn, it put all different colours through (Trail 2004).

MacBeth, who was very visual in his descriptions, used a piece of paper as a prop to demonstrate to me the process of imprinting colour and design on the brick:

we'll say that this is a full brick face (piece of paper) that things rolled over that and made all these queer didoes in it, and in the meantime, there was a little sprayer come out like this, and there was a whitish coloured paint here, and a grayish colour or black, and that smeared all over that, so when the roller rolled, it squeezed that all out, and then when you burnt that, when you were all done burning, you closed all the doors off [in the kiln] and made it airtight, so the smoke couldn't get out, and you let that just, open everything wide open and let 'er just roar for about an hour, and it burnt that smoke right into it, and you'll see all those houses with the brownish and all that, it's smoke stained paint, it what it is (MacBeth 2004).



Photo taken at Lantz Plant, 2003- Wire cutter which cut slabs of wet clay into brick sized pieces.

Picking and Drying

Once the aesthetic elements were added to the brick, the wet brick, or “green brick” as they were referred to by the brickmakers, would be picked off the conveyor belt by hand “in assembly line fashion” by men who were called “pickers” (Copeland 1992, 24). The Superintendent describes this process of handling the green brick by picking them off the conveyor belt and handling and placing them very carefully onto dryer cars to be taken to the dryers. Roberts, the plant superintendent, emphasizes the importance of being exact in this part of the process to ensure quality control. He described that if the fingerprints of the men made it to the brick, they would be considered of a lower quality:

See, when they come through the pug, and through the cutter, and they're cut into eighteen brick each cut, well then they come ahead in the belt and they're all separated like that now, so you had to take two brick, lay them down, then take the next two brick, and flip them in your hands so they'd face them, and then you had a pattern of how to build your queue. That was in the green stage, yeah. And if they were too soft, [Allan Shirley] would be the pug operator, could be at the last stage from '81 on I guess it was, it was [Corey Shirley] was the pug operator. And if they run, extruded them through too soft through the column, you'd get your fingerprints on them, eh? So you got 'em up to a certain...120 whatever, 180 the air vacuum on them, they'd be more solid so that you could hold, you could grab them with your hand and you wouldn't put an imprint on them, on the brick itself (Roberts 2003).

The placement of the hands on these brick in their most vulnerable, un-burnt stage was crucial to ensure as many brick as possible stayed top quality. Trail, who worked as a picker for eight years, explains the process of “picking”, or placing the brick on the dryer cars:

Yeah. It was hard. I was picking brick in the mill. First hour or two wasn't too bad but after that, my wrists just swelled right up. You had to take two bricks and set two brick face up, well the next two brick you had to flip them, catch them and put them face down on top of them, and they had to be laid right on top of one another. Cause if you didn't lay them on top of one another, they'd fell off catty-corner, they'd put a white scum on the brick. That was just, like a number three of four brick, you see, weren't the number one. They wanted all number one brick (Trail 2003).

After the pickers had carefully placed the green brick onto dryer cars, they were then transported on steel carts to the dryer on a transfer, "where their moisture content is lowered by dry heated air before the brick are finally wheeled to the kilns and piled there by a forklift equipped with a device to unload them from the carts without disturbing the exact position of the units" (Masonry 1979).

Drying the brick was a very important process in ensuring that the size and shape of the brick stayed consistent throughout the burning process. An earlier method of drying bricks was in "hacks" which were "open-sided sheds which allow free air circulation around the bricks" (Lynch 1994, 166). However, the Chipman plant was first created to use "chamber driers" where the "bricks were stacked on pallets, and cool, humid air was circulated, followed by hot, dry air. Temperature and circulation were adjusted to control humidity" (Lynch 1994,166).

The transfer system, operated for many years by Thibeau, was originally a hand driven transfer; one man was in charge of pushing the dryer cars into the dryer on the transfer by hooking a cable to the axle of the dryer car, and dragging the cart slowly through the dryer. Copeland writes that "the drying process lasted about 48 hours, before

being delivered by gasoline-driven transfer, to the Setting Crew inside the Beehive kilns for burning (Copeland 1992, 25)". Fairweather describes:

Off the car it's put onto a trolley and taken down and put into a drying--dryer...I forget all the names now...went into a dryer anyway, and in the dryer the heat is up to anywhere's to 200-250 and can go up to 300 degrees heat. That's just in the dryer. From the drying bin it is pulled out of there and is set for awhile to cool off, and then when it's cooled off enough, they put it onto another trolley, and take it to the kiln. And it goes in the kiln on a set of tracks (Fairweather 2004).

Trail, who worked on the transfer when he first started working at the plant, describes:

[I] started picking brick in the mill and putting them on the cars. Down in the dryers, that's when the brick come out of the pug and was soft-like. Shale was soft. They went down the transfer- like into the dryers and they dried them there, then they come out the other end and they took them to the kilns. They had another crew there setting them in the kilns (Trail 2004).

Copeland provides a bit more detail about the transfer workings:

Once the dryer cars were loaded they were transferred, by George Briggs, to the Dryers. These Dryers were replaced by a new type of shuttle kiln in 1965, after I left the company. George pushed the transfer by hand and once it was rolling, it did not require a lot of effort. It did, however, take a lot of stamina to get it started and stopped (Copeland 1992, 25).

MacBeth, who also worked the transfer, introduces the next step of the process, which takes place in the kilns:

The transfer car on the inside, it was a little trolley car, but it was manually pushed. You had a mechanical lever here to bump it to get it started. It was heavy enough, like there would be over a thousand bricks on each car, and then it's a metal car. Mechanical lever, and you'd push that down, and the length of that depending on which dryer you wanted to go to. So, after the bricks had been though the dryer, they

were ready to be taken over to the kiln to be burned (MacBeth 2004).

Firing the Kilns and Burning the Brick/Tossing and Setting

Although the process of brickmaking in Chipman did not change significantly from the beginnings of the industry, there were some technological advancements which need to be noted, as they also changed the role of certain positions in the plant.

Originally, the plant was built with seven “beehive kilns” which were named for their cylindrical, domed roof construction. The beginning of the brickmaking process stayed the same right until the green brick had to be loaded into the dryer cars. After coming out of the dryers, the “setters” and ‘tossers” would then unload the dry brick from the cars, and place them into the beehive kilns. The kiln would be sealed and fired, and the brick would be burned. After the brick had set, the kilns would be cooled down, and the hard brick crew would be sent in to the hot kilns to unload the brick, and transfer them onto boxcars for shipping, or into trucks in the later years for shipping or storage. The hard brick crew had a stigma attached to it- you had to be strong and able to withstand repetitive motion in order to work this job. Considered to be one of the most physically demanding positions in the whole plant, working on the hard brick crew seemed to be a rite of passage for most of the men at the plant.

In 1980, a new type of kiln was installed called a shuttle kiln or tunnel kiln. When the bricks were loaded onto dryer cars and taken through a long tunnel which combined the three steps of drying, burning and unloading as they always stayed on the same pallet and were forklifted onto trucks by the lift drivers. Northrup was able to describe this process to

me, even though he had long since retired by the time the new shuttle kilns were brought into the plant:

The new kilns, they were all steel cars and everything. The brick went on in insulated steel cars, so they were all out there. Now these were the, when they took the brick out, they made them see, they put the in the dryers. And these dryers were about, oh I don't know, a hundred feet long, just a tunnel, and there was about 13 or 14 or them right side by side. And the brick all went on to these steel cars, soft brick, and you pushed them in that to dry.

And the heat went into them and they sucked that outta the kilns when they were burnt off, underground, two tunnels up underneath them tunnels of brick, and that heated them, that dried the brick. They had to be perfectly dry before they were put into kilns to burn. If they weren't dry, they just swelled up and burst (Northrup 2004).

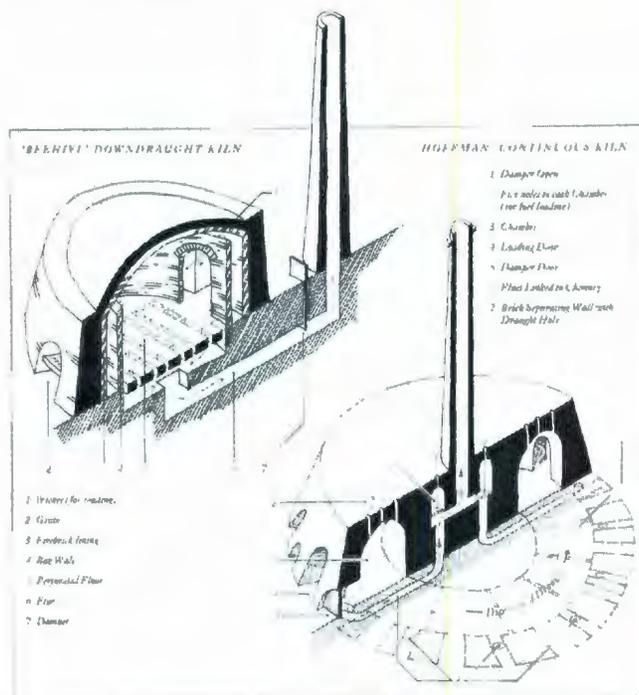


Diagram of a beehive kiln taken from *Brickwork*, pg 168

At the kiln end of the drying tunnel, the bricks were unloaded by hand by the setting crew and placed in the kiln to burn. These “setters” worked with another group called the “tossers”. Thibeau, a tosser for many years, describes both the process and the physical strain it had on his body:

Tossing. I used to toss brick, Like uh, they'd bring a car of brick into the kiln, the round kiln, I don't know if you've seen, you've seen them...and they used to bring a car of brick- there was five hundred brick on the car, and there used to be a tosser and a setter. And the tosser would toss two brick at a time to the setter, and he'd catch them and set them down. Day in and day out. Hour in and hour out doing that. And I think that's where I got my hip out of joint. I had to get a hip replacement after awhile (Thibeau 2003).

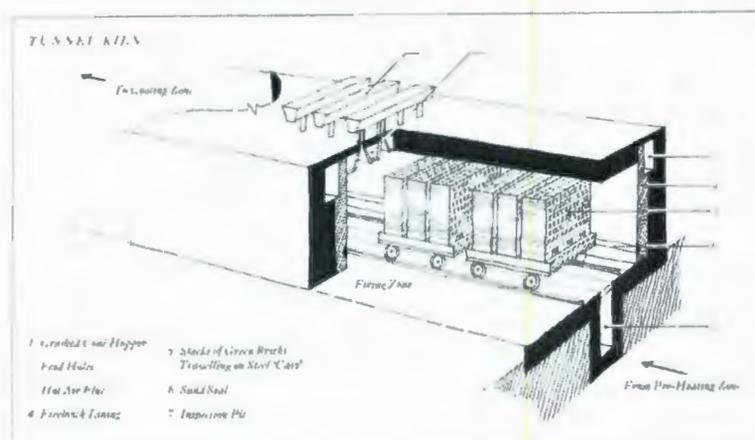


Diagram taken from *Brickwork*, pg 168

In the days of the beehive kilns, the kilns would have to be fired to be hot enough to burn the brick. Copeland characterizes it this way:

One of the key positions in the Plant Operation were the Men of Clay who conducted the final burning of the brick. These Burners had the responsibility of tending the fired kilns. Prior to 1955, these Kilns were heated by a very hard coal from Springhill. The bituminous coal from Minto was too soft and did not hold its heat long enough

for proper burning. The Burner then had the responsibility of not only starting the fire in the fire boxes of the Kilns, but also monitoring the heat of each kiln on a Pyrometer, which gave an instrument reading and a printed readout. The equipment was located at the base of the 150 foot stack, in the Pyrometer House (Copeland 1992, 26).

Fairweather, who worked on the Hard Brick Crew for most of his career,

describes:

Well then, after the kiln is filled, both doors is closed off and uh, with brick and clay, and the kiln is burnt. It starts in about 200 degrees of heat, and it goes from there. They used to do it...the old way we done it when I first went there anyway was 96 hours it took to burn (Fairweather 2004).

Copeland explains the process as sealing everything off on top of the kiln but a port hole, after the burner had inserted a thermal temperature rod into the hole. Both doorways were also sealed except for a square opening that the Burners used to monitor the burning process (Copeland 1992, 27). The kilns had to be continuously monitored, so the burning shift went twenty-four hours a day, in shifts. Also, because there were so many beehive kilns to be fired, the burning and loading would be staggered. Fairweather recalls:

And what they start out with first what they call "floaters"- there's two men goes ahead and starts the kiln and after it's got so much into it, the other crew comes and fills in, and then the floater goes to the next kiln and starts (Fairweather 2003).

After the burning, the seals were broken, and large fans were placed near the doors to cool the air to make it possible for the hard brick crew to unload the kilns.

The Hard Brick Crew

Undoubtedly one of the most physically demanding jobs in the plant was the hard brick crew. These were the first men to touch the finished brick and transport them to storage. Breaking into the burnt kilns even after the fans had been placed to cool the air was something that was the cause of many close call or accident narratives. Before the fans were put into use, Trail recalls that the air was once so hot in the kilns that the plastic glasses melted right off someone's face. Aide from the fans, Fairweather describes another cooling system which was also a labour saving device:

Then the hard brick crew well, no, it's cooled down, and the heat from the beehive kilns is sucked into the dryer, and that helps them dry it in the kilns when they come off the green belt. After the kiln is cooled down enough, then there's two men start to break in. And years ago they used to have- they put it on wheelbarrows, and wheeled it out into the- they had to manually put the brick on the wheelbarrow, wheel it out back and pile it in a piles. It was a hard job cause they just had old straps, like of probably 6 inches wide for them to wheel the wheelbarrows on. But then, the kilns was heated with coal back then (Fairweather 2004).

Strapping the bricks was a job that was once done by Glenn, who later became the head burner. The burning of the kilns took, as Glenn could recall, ninety six hours to burn each load. Even years after his retirement, he was still able to access the detailed information of the burning process and the time it would take each kind of kiln to burn. When the advanced, labour-saving shuttle kiln was introduced to the plant in 1980, it reduced the burning time of the brick down substantially. According to the Structural Clay Products Institute, "after the temperature has reached the maximum, the cooling process begins. Forty-eight to seventy-one hours were required for proper cooling in periodic kilns, but in tunnel kilns, the cooling period seldom exceeds forty-eight hours" (Technical 1961).

This innovation in burning was a huge asset to the brick plant, and contributed to the success of the Chipman operation. Tunnel kilns were not only faster for production, they were also drastically less labour intensive than the beehive kilns. Rather than loading and unloading several times, the brick would be placed on transfer cars after to be dried, and then moved slowly through a long tunnel, which would burn and cool the brick and delivered them on the other end of the tunnel, finished and ready for transport. Forklifts were then employed to lift the pallets of brick from the transfer cars to their next destination: trucks, or storage. Northrup, a valuable source of information for the early days of the plant, recalls:

then of course, after they converted to oil and everything they got, they set everything then with these lift trucks. And the only thing the men done then was sort them. And brought them out of the kilns with lift trucks, took them to the strapping machine, they had a strapping machine then, they strapped them, there was another man setting there on the end of that belt with a lift truck, he lifted them off and piled them. Back when we were unloading them at one time, I seen us putting them in box- of course everything was by boxcar at that time. Used to have to put straw between the good bricks so it wouldn't chip. I've seen them that hot that it would set the straw on fire in the boxcar. We were taking them outta the kilns like that! (Northrup, 2004)

Another advantage to the shuttle kiln was the fact that they were fired by oil and not coal. Oil was shipped in by truck and loaded into the tanks, and then the temperature was more easily controlled, and less man power was needed to feed and fire the kilns. It was often a dangerous process though, to fire the kilns. MacBeth, who had several humorous close-call stories about kiln lighting, recalls:

And they used to bring in, they'd call it a waste oil. And what it'd be, the trucks would be all over the province, and they'd go the gas stations. They gotta have their old oil and

their old stuff all gathered up, so they would have all the stuff, or maybe they were out at the airport, they had airplane fuel all mixed in it. I remember one time I went to light a kiln, and just had a stick about that long [indicates with hands], or a rod about that long [indicates with hands] with this waste product wrapped around it, wired onto it, and you'd dip that in furnace oil, and you lit that. You just turned the burner on, you just turned your head, went like that, snapped it in-Whoosh! Big flame, and away it went (MacBeth 2004).

Aesthetics

Once the burned, cooled brick were taken from the kiln, the pallets were transported by lift truck to storage, or loaded directly for shipping. Sometimes additional aesthetic changes were made in the brick, such as rockfacing. This was a process where the brick were manually chipped on the surface to produce a rough "faux-rock" face.

The following narratives come from two very different perspectives- the first from MacBeth who describes the process as he had seen it being performed, and the second from Nason, who not only had to actually *do* the job, but was convinced it was a punishment for being new to the crew:

And you see the fancy looking rockface bricks, and they were just a big wheel, and there was a just a like a carbon tip thing that you screwed into that, sticking out here, one over here, and it just come around, it just thumped pieces off the brick, broke the pieces off (Macbeth 2004).

And as seen from Nason's point of view:

...And rockfacing was where we took finished bricks and we put them on this little, it looked like a little uh, it acted like a little router. You put them on this little conveyor, and you had to hang on to them really really tight, and you'd they'd go on this little, oh what do they have, uh, there's a carpentry machine that does the same thing...a jointer! It would, a jointer in carpentry makes one edge really really

flat and smooth, well this had a thing that went around and around and I think it might have had a diamond edge on it, and it took chunks out of sides of the brick. So this perfectly beautiful brick we would then take chunks out of the side of it so that on the. And that would be what would be on display....

H: Oh, like a textured face?

R: Yes, so it would look, yes. And that was called, uh..something facing, rockfacing, yes. And Bev and I worked that at the end of it. And it broke down all the time. It was very loud, I remember it being incredibly loud. But it was outside in the fresh air, it wasn't down in the dungeon. And it wasn't in hard brick room. Hard brick crew was always very hot.

H: So you had to do each brick individually?

R: Yup, yup (Nason, 2004).

As he described this process, Nason physically demonstrated for humorous effect what it was like to hold the brick against the rockfacing machine and, akin to holding a jackhammer, have your body continually jolted all day. He said that by the end of the process, your body was vibrating until you fell asleep. (See Appendix D, image #6 for photo of the rockfacing operation).

The Finished Product

Chipman brick have graced the buildings of not only Chipman, but those in Moncton and other cities in New Brunswick, and in several other provinces in Canada. Some men even had stories of finding Chipman brick overseas during the war years. MacBeth noted that all of the major buildings in Chipman as well as most of the houses of the men who worked at the plant are made of Chipman brick. The high school in Chipman,

constructed in 1988, was one of the last large projects to use entirely Chipman brick.

An employee could purchase the materials at cost to build your home, but Trail recalled that there were ways around that. Perhaps a legend, but told convincingly, he recounted that a superintendent once told one of the men that he could have any material for free if he transported it himself, because he knew that this man only had a bicycle for transportation. Nonetheless, the employee loaded a couple brick at a time into his bicycle basket until, years later, he had enough to build his house. Trail also mentioned that because of the number of masons who were employed for repairs at the plant, labour often came cheap if you could convince your co-workers to lend a hand.

Chipman's landscape is peppered with red brick houses, a dominant building material throughout the entire region. As a company, Shaw began to diversify into hollow ware and concrete in 1945, and according to updates in the business library of the University of Western Ontario, Shaw Ltd. has over 750 employees and are marking sales of record highs to date. Over the past twenty years, as the trade of masonry became more and more specialized, most builders opted not to build with brick because of the cost of labour. Brick buildings are quickly becoming rare.

If one were reading about how bricks are produced from a book, much like the diagram at the beginning of this chapter, it would be a technical, impersonal description of process. This chapter that uses the men's own words to describe the process achieves two goals. First, it documents a process which is no longer in existence in Atlantic Canada. Second, it establishes a sense that even though the process is regulated and technical, there is an element of humanization in mechanization. The ability of the brick to communicate a set of values and a story begins with the ability of the men to create a work identity that is

merged with their personal identity. In sharing stories about work, what emerged from the brickmaker's description relates the importance of having deep knowledge about the way in which the brickplant functions, regardless of what position you held within the plant. That these descriptions were revealed first in every interview speaks their importance to the workers, their prominence in the men's memory, and their centrality to the identity of the brickmaker.

As pointed out by Lloyd and Mullen in their study of Lake Erie Fishermen, "Personal experience narratives can convey many sorts of identity at once. When a fisherman tells of a work experience, the story not only reflects his occupational identity, it also contains signs of his personality, ethnicity, religious beliefs and more" (Lloyd and Mullen, 1990, 163). Only after the technical descriptions had been related and the informant felt sufficiently rooted back in his expertise of work identity, did he share memories of work culture and day to day life in the plant. The next chapter examines the other narratives of the brickmakers and reflects on what they reveal of work culture as well as of community and personal identity.

Chapter Four: Oral Expression and Skill through Narrative Memory

The ease with which all the brickmakers I interviewed talked about the process of making brick was definitely contrasted with the jumble of experiences and stories that made up the remainder of the interviews. Trying to classify the narratives and examine emergent narrative themes created difficulty which begins to highlight the challenges of trying to separate work and life identities and examine subject positions.

Work is inextricable from life; life is lived around work. The choices we make around our occupation are many- the need for income, productivity, and making use of our strengths to find occupational purpose, as well as what is available at the time in terms of opportunities for employment. The brick plant would have been no different than any other work environment during the years it was open in that there was a community and dynamics that workers had to socially negotiate. Techniques were learned, processes were manipulated and one could either conform to or diverge from the internal social ordering of the workplace.

Like the group of craft printers in Holtzberg-Call's study, the brickmakers I interviewed shared stories which helped create a group identity: "stories of initiation rituals, of apprenticeships, of botched jobs, of superb workmanship" (Holtzberg-Call 1992, 3). The workers will share these kinds of similar stories because, according to Holtzberg Call "they have learned to" and because processing experience after it has stopped is a social and communicative experience (Holtzberg-Call 1992, 3). Being able to relate stories and retrospectively comment on situations and experiences that happened is a way to verbally negotiate the past. Participation in a group identity is done through

position ourselves as contributing members of the group both in memory and in shared oral interactions with other former members of the group.

This shift in membership status accounts for the trouble in classifying the non-process based narratives I collected. During my interviews I struggled to obtain the kind of occupational lore I thought I should be collecting: accident narratives, prank narratives, lore about technique, customs, costumes, and foodways. I was disheartened early on with how, if I collected any of these examples at all, I had to prompt, explain and tease answers out of my informants. Often I would ask questions to coax these answers out of the men and would receive a completely different answer than I asked for. It was almost as if they had their own agenda of what needed to be collected, and they were determined to have it recorded. This interviewer/interviewee relationship was constantly in negotiation depending on several factors, including whether or not the informant remembered their work career fondly or not.

The reason I did not get what I originally sought is, I believe, threefold: I was an unlikely candidate to be immediately accepted as a worthy audience to receive confidences and memories of a topic so heavily linked with personal identity. I was not attuned until much later in my fieldwork to the key topics and essential areas of importance to the men themselves, and most importantly, I did not realize that many functions of the narratives I was asking for were no longer relevant to the individuals fifteen years removed from the workplace. For instance, the banter that would have existed between the boys in the plant is a thing of the past. The work situation no longer exists and the camaraderie has shifted focus. Rather than collecting shared complaints of conditions or people, I was recording personal narratives of things that, after fifteen years, had been retained in the mental database of work lore. The gritty nature of shop

talk or the underlying strain of workplace relationships would never exist again, even if the audience were appropriate, and even if I asked different questions. At the beginning of my research, I expected my informants to be able to recall day to day life to be able to be recalled with clarity and precision, and I came to realize the mistake on my part. The question I wanted to be asking was “What is a brickmaker?”, but the question I realized I had been asking was “What *was* a brickmaker?”

By giving the appropriate weight to the passage of time, I discovered that I would have to change my perspective on occupational folklore. Typically, folklorists have separated occupational folklore into four categories: technique, gesture, custom and oral expression (McCarl 1978). Custom, gesture and technique all assume that they can be physically observed in the workplace. Oral expression typically something which is collected in an interview setting, or at least a prolonged face to face encounter, is based on day to day events that are ongoing. With the Chipman brick plant, I had to ask the men to reconstruct what ideally I should have been able to observe, thus turning everything into an memory based oral expression. The narratives that are the focus of this chapter are less chronological and practical in nature than those of the last. Taken together they offer a glimpse of what retains importance for the brickmaker when remembering their work. What the men conveyed to me about their work life reflects Robert Byington’s theory that *what* is done is not so important as *HOW* it is done. He states that “cultures are shaped by work technique that is expressed through non-verbal as well as verbal modes. This includes the recognition that what workers do (e.g., pulling in a rope) is not so important as how they do it (hand over hand, both hands at once and lashing it), and why they do it that way” (1978, 195).

Many scholars have attempted to classify occupational lore. For example, Nickerson focused mostly on forms of verbal lore, material culture and interpersonal relations. He subdivided these into the categories of customs and play which can include ceremonies, initiations, picnics, banquets, rewards/bonuses and pranks (1983). The interpersonal relations category can include skill, accident, first day on the job and close call narratives; the material culture category extends to clothing, hats and special uniforms. These categories are not meant to be perimeters of what can be observed about the meaning of work, but rather provide a framework on which to hinge a discussion of the things that hold meaning to the particular work community.

Using McCarl's broader classifications, the underlying assumption is that gesture, technique and custom are communicative acts which take place in the workplace and can be *observed* and *collected* (1986). Technique in particular, which is the largest grouping of lore in an industrial, factory or plant setting, is a large part of scholarly discussion because of its relationship with expressive performance. Techniques in the workplace are manipulations of process to reflect or develop skill. The discussion of technique is the starting point for identifying humanization in mechanization, similar to the approach taken by Lloyd and Mullen in "Lake Erie Fishermen" who concentrate their study on "specific expressions of local people about local circumstances, in some part because it is with individual conversation expression that folklore work often begins, and in some part because of the relative lack of attention paid to individual expression in the existing work" (1992, xxii).

Oral Expressions

Holtzberg-Call writes that:

It is significant that people make peace with lost status and the deskilling of craft labour through the voicing of patterned expressive forms (Holtzberg Call 1992, 216).

Originally, verbal communication and oral expression in the work place were thought to be the point of convergence between the “day to day concerns of group members on one hand and unusual occurrences or dramatic events or accident accounts on the other” (McCarl 1978, 155).

In McCarl’s discussion of fire fighting culture, he states the importance of recalling the accident or close call narrative as being a warning to any less experienced fire fighters. The more intimate sharing of a personal experience narrative is an individual performance where “normal cultural boundaries” (McCarl 1986, 83) are pushed because the audience has nothing to gain from the insights being provided about the workplace. A warning story to an apprentice of a trade will be much more effective than a warning story told to an outsider; outside its original context of the workplace, the story is compromised because of the need to provide a larger context for the storytelling audience. Also, McCarl states that more personal points of view will be interwoven into a telling aimed at outsiders because assumedly there is less at stake in terms of compromising work relationships (McCarl 1986, 83).

McCarl further argues that when placed alongside the shaping principle of the occupation, the middle ground of oral expressions can help illuminate the “internal ordering of expressive behaviour” (McCarl 1978, 155). For the Chipman brickmakers, accident, close call, safety and prank narratives no longer act as the stories of warning. Because the workplace no longer exists, their function of warning is futile. Collecting those narratives becomes complicated by the fact that the “internal ordering” of the

workplace is inherently out of order. Although the shaping principles remain the same and the order of process stays in their memories in its original context, the expressive culture is constantly being processed and re-processed in the minds of the workers. A story about work shared with a folklorist when the informant knows they have to return to the workplace the next day is vastly different than the story about work shared with a folklorist when the job site was bull-dozed fifteen years prior, and most of the men who used to be co-workers are either dead or have moved on to other careers. Notwithstanding the challenge of remembering and collecting narratives of prior work experience, the brickmakers did share several types of stories with me like accident narratives, pranks and jokes.

Accident Narratives

When asked to relate stories about accidents in the plant, Thibeau immediately told me about the “fall from the stack” story, which is documented in Copeland’s Men of Clay, and was often mentioned first by the other men when I asked for examples of accidents in the plant. This most famous accident narrative, which made it to several major Maritime newspapers, was based on an incident that happened in 1952 when repairs were being made to the 115-foot smokestack. A nineteen-year-old steeplejack by the name of James Banbury from Halifax NS, fell off the staging 115 from the top of the stack, and crashed through another set of staging twelve feet above the ground before hitting the pavement. He lived, although he had suffered fractures to both legs and an arm and sustained severe internal injuries (Copeland 1992, 47). Thibeau followed this narrative with a second, this one about an accident that happened to him personally. An electrician for ten years, he reflects on the long term effects of his own accident:

H: So, how did you get the electrical burn?

A: A switch blew up right in my face.

H: Oh my goodness. So it burned, did it burn your face?
And your hands?

A: Oh yeah, and my arms. My arms are bare. I was in the hospital, what, three weeks? And this nurse kept pulling the dead skin off my face, and they claimed that's how I never did scar. Her doing that.

M: He never had a scar on his face, but his hands are scarred. But it was quick though.

H: Yeah, I can imagine!

A: 600 Volts!

H: It's amazing you can still see!

A: Well, I just happened to blink my eyes I guess at the right time when it blew. That's all that saved my eyes.

M: He just looked like a raccoon anyways, just white around here (motions around eyes).

A: Yeah, I had a hard hat on, and it just burned the exposed place.

H: So were there any other, like sort of major accidents that happened?

A: Uh, not really, well, the only thing that happened there one time, they used to have a stack that was 90 feet high or something like that, and there was guys that came there to repair it. And one guy fell right from the top (Thibeau 2003).

It is interesting to note that in this interview Thibeau's wife had to prompt him to recall his injury. Obviously the accident made an impact on her memory and she links the physical reminders of her husband's accident today to the severity of the accident back

then. Sharing oral expression and being able to participate in an interview where specific circumstances are sought allows re-entry into the earlier work world. It re-kindles membership status. There is in Thibeau's recollections, as in those of the other informants I interviewed, a recognition of the stories recorded in Men of Clay, which was widely distributed amongst the community members, and it often functioned in my interviews as a stepping stone for the recollection of other unrecorded stories.

When asked about accident narratives, Northrup also refers to Copeland. He alludes to the other major accident in the plant documented by Copeland in Men of Clay, which was the death of Ovie Teed:

H: So, were there ever any other accidents?

George Northrup: Not, not bad accidents. They had the odd, but there was nothing. There never was nobody killed there that I know of. Nobody really, there, but maybe get a finger broke or a toe broke or something like that, but no I don't remember anybody ever being....Ovie Teed now, he was working in the mill at the last- I wasn't there then- he took a heart attack right in the mill and dropped dead. Died right there. Right at his work. I remember that.

MB: You fell, didn't you, I remember dad... remember you fell off a station

GN: Well, station broke, I fell yeah. Broke a bone off my vertebrae in my back, something like that. Spent a couple weeks in hospital.

H: Just a couple weeks! My goodness, you were pretty resilient!

GN: I don't know, I suppose, about 12-15 feet. I fell right over a pile of brick. I didn't fall that far, but, then of course, they did, have a bad accident, but I wasn't there then. That was after see, they come there in '39 or around there '38 and built a stack. Some guys come in there for the (safety of ...?) 125 feet long. They used that for years, well then of course it had to be repaired and since I was up there I don't know, I think they come from Nova Scotia to repair it. And they were right at the top of that,

and he slipped and fell that guy, and he fell the whole length of that down, but at the base of that stack the had an instrument building, there where your instruments was in, away from the heat and everything. He fell on that, and that kept him, if he hadn't of hit that board roof, he'd a hit the pavement, but he was broke up. I don't know if he ever died or not. He didn't die there, but he might have died later. They took him away from there. He fell about 125 feet or 120 feet...

H: That's quite a fall!

GN: ...when he fell. That's the only bad accident (Northrup 2004).

Having to be prompted by his daughter, Northrup also tells of an account of a severe personal injury, as well as mentioning the stack fall. His own injury clearly affected his whole life, but since it was not included in the Copeland text, the severity of his own injury was downplayed in favour of the stack fall story. Having his daughter at the interview changed the audience dynamic just as the first accident shared by Thibeau was influenced by the presence of his wife. In both cases, their family reminded the men of other stories that they originally might not have considered sharing. George was one of the original workers hired at the brick plant in the 1930's, and he worked there until retirement. He had a vested interest in participation in the membership status of the work group and it is revealing that he shared a commonly known work story before his own injuries, which clearly were quite severe. His investment in the group work identity overshadowed how he viewed a personal experience that was not a common story in the workplace. This attachment and loyalty to the status group is a typical reflection directly related to the length of time spent at the plant and whether or not the informant was a summer student or someone who made it their career. Shirley, who worked at the plant for fifteen years before it closed, preferred to tell funny stories about other close calls that he witnessed while operating the pug:

What got people's attention the most was the day that the fella's rubber boot come in through. Out in the part of the grinding room where they ground the shale, and it went into a big bin, well there was a feeder that fed out of the bottom of it and as the material out there fed down, it would form a great hole, and then over time they would send somebody out and if the grinding room wasn't running, they'd send somebody out, take it and push mud down into the hole. You'd always, it's always end up being a new fella that they sent out there, and you told him, "Don't go near the hole, stay back", because sometimes the sides would cave in, and you had to try to get up and close enough to the hole to push the mud in, but stay back back far enough that if the sides caved in that you wouldn't go along with it. And anyway, one of the young fellas got out too close to it, and it went down and took him to about his knees when he stepped out, he left his rubbers in the hole, and then whoever, I forget now who it was, the rubber went in through and they figured he went down though and was coming put though the bottom end of it. They were concerned for a few minutes! (Shirley 2004)

Similar to the close call narrative, Nickerson states that "one of the functions of the industrial accident story is to warn workers about the dangers inherent in their work" (Nickerson 1983, 123). Sharing a story about going too close to the center of the feeder cannot prevent the listener from doing the same dangerous thing, because the plant no longer exists, so what is the purpose of telling the story? Perhaps an answer lies in McCarl's observation that at work there are mundane repetitive actions one must perform, and then there are unusual occurrences which become the stuff of verbal lore in the workplace. He cites, "the simplest mundane skills become unconscious reflexes whereas the more unusual innovations and techniques become near-legendary in the trade" (McCarl 1978, 72). Therefore, in this particular circumstance for Shirley, this event must have been unusual enough to be retained in his mental lexicon of stories. It is very hard to conclusively say what it means to the group, as it was not part of the communal lore, but the common aspect of it is in his ability to pick a personally

important story and use it as entry into the conversation about his former place of work.

This narrative, told by MacBeth, shows what kind of material would be personally important to share, even if it was not part of communal lore:

But I don't know how much, how much they coulda done up here. Then you look at what they've done, the mess they made, I mean, on a good, on a summer day here when the rain still rains hard, there's still oil runs down...I worked one night and a truck come in, with a load of waste oil on it and this is stuff that they burnt, and up in the back of the boiler, there was two big tanks and he pumped off, The train used to come in there, these cars, and I think I only unloaded two of the cars. But anyway, this truck would come in, and he'd bring his pipe over and hook it onto here, and my shack was down here that he was, so he would come down and say "I'm pumping in". Yeah. He'd say, "Well, I'm tired, I'm going to lie down for a bit- if you come up by after a bit, just give a tap". I said, "Oh yeah". And I went up with him, and he opened his pipes up and I looked and said, "Well, this tank's almost empty, you'll have no problem dumping that whole truck in it. And if this pumps out we're going to hear your motor revving up, when it's pumping empty, you're going to know it". "Oh, yeah yeah". He wasn't up there twenty minutes, he come running back down and said "I got somewhat of a mess" and at the time...But they had an earthen dike built around that to trap the oil, that was all to the top. There was something got in the top of the filter up here and plugged that, and he just went in and sat back and laid his head down, and it just run down all over the sides of that tank.

One other time I come up, and this back there was a building on here that the boiler's was in, and there was a little electric room in the back and the flames is all coming up the front, the sides, I never went near it, I sat back down and called the fire department.

When I went back here I shut the valves off so it wasn't feeding no more oil. But I believe it was shortly after this fire I went to the boss and said "If I gotta be here by myself" I said, "I don't want the job". And that's what you're there, you're there by yourself. All weekend. Big

responsibility. And all the heat, a lot of mess (MacBeth 2004).

There are two very important observations in these contributions to the accident/close call category. The first is that the damage done by the oil to his land is obviously distressing to MacBeth because it affects his property; geographically, his house is downhill and in very close proximity to the brick plant. The second point is that the function of this story is clearly not to scold the oil truck driver and warn him not to do it again, but instead to make it known that when you do not pay attention to the job you are supposed to be doing, there can be hazardous and long lasting effects on the environment around you.

In this narrative, based on Macbeth's experiences firing the kilns, his contribution had a much different purpose:

Well I had a beard about to here [motions about 8 inches away from his face] and I had hair about to here [motions below shoulders], I just turned my head, and I give that a smash like that, and just Ko-whooo! Blew all the bricks out, and I had hair about the here [motions very close to his face] and a beard about to here [motions close to his head]. Just, just a flash come out, and here it was this mixed fuel, you we didn't knew what we were getting. I mean you might hear it just go whoo! (MacBeth, 2004)

Outside the workplace, and in the context of the interview, this narrative was meant to be entertaining rather than informative or warning. When telling the story, MacBeth's body language changed and he gesticulated more and he used more vibrant facial expressions than when recounting the last two narratives.

Connie Webber, the plant's secretary for eleven years, was involved in the marketing and sales of brick. While not constantly on site, she did have knowledge about what went on in the brick plant. Accidents were unlikely to happen in the office, so she shared what she could in an attempt to answer my question:

So there was one old gentleman who was a burner. He was what they called the “head burner” over the others. And he lived up where the CNR station is, up over there. And he would be a man, I suppose in his 50’s or 60’s. He would get out of bed in the middle of the night and walk down that track just to check to make sure the fireman on duty was keeping that temperature. He was another, like, and that’s the kind of people they seemed to be. They were devoted. And like, he had to be sure, he just couldn’t depend, he had to be sure. And they would say, “No, Calvin was here in the middle of the night, and checked the temperature”. And they had to mark the temperature.

And there was one fireman, or burner, one time, I won’t tell who it was, he wasn’t doing his job that night, he was doing something else, that whole kiln of brick was destroyed!

H- 60,000? Down the hole?

C- Yup. Because he didn’t, this was, you know you had to watch that temperature. Because that was down to a science as to how they had to be burned and that’s what made them the good brick that they were. But that was one of the incidents that uh, and I think after that is when Calvin started coming to check in the night (Webber 2003).

Her obvious concern for the production of the brick is evident from this narrative; her concern and admiration for the men themselves is also clear.

This introduces another category which stems from the accident and close call category: safety violation stories. The process of making brick is wrought with dangerous machinery and hazardous conditions, and there are conflicting accounts of what was done in terms of safety training. The company rewarded hours of mantime without incident, but it was also a test of skill to keep up with the older men, who had never worked with any safety precautions before, and were considered masters of the trade.

Webber shares:

H- there must have been a lot of hazards, you know. Breathing in the dust and cutting your hands, and...

C- yup, but there weren't a lot of accidents. They were just, there was a lot of safety training, and they all were very safety conscious because they knew. At that time if you were a person that caused, were in one or two accidents, you could easily lose your job. You weren't going to be kept because that moved the cost of the company's compensation and increased the cost of production and that type of thing (Webber 2003).

But Nason, a summer student at the plant in the 1970's, remembered conditions differently:

But I was down inside that place for about two weeks. When I would come out- this is going to be gross- when I would come out, I would have to put my thumbs or something in my nose and pick these huge gobs of dust out of my nostrils in order to *breathe*. And my ears would be full! And my job down there was to shovel, manually, this coal dust away from this machinery and this space that they needed down there into buckets (Nason 2004).

Trail, who was employed with the company for twenty four and a half years, remembers a time when skill was a reflection of being able to avoid dangers despite the lack of protection:

B: Yeah. No, we've took some good fun. We took one there when it first started, then the last of it all got serious. The fun was gone. They brought the hard hats and the steel toed boots and all that stuff...No safety glass, there was nothing when we first got there.

H: Was there a lot of accidents?

B: No.

H: Really?

B: More accidents after they brought the steel toed boots in then there as before! Once they brought the steel toed boots in you'd haul your foot back then everything would hit you up in the back of then foot! You'd figure it was going to land on the steel toe, but it wouldn't! (Trail 2004)

Wishart, who worked at the plant for two summers as a high school student, actually went on to work in the Human Resources Department as a Safety Manager for the board for the New Brunswick Safety Council. One of the first things he talked about, even before he described the process of how bricks were made, was his disbelief about the lack of enforced safety practices within the plant. He seemed appalled when recounting instances of men climbing up tall stacks to make repairs without proper harnessing, and was particularly shocked by the men who would change the piano wires on the cutting device while it was still in motion. He remembered students wearing cutoff jeans and t-shirts to work in the plant, and that more than one employee not wearing protective headgear and eyewear when working. He also blamed the hot, dusty working conditions for the men's sometimes severe nosebleeds, which would eventually lead to his brother's departure from the plant. The hegemonic reality of what job safety was, is now the counter culture view for the people still invested in the job.

Pranks and Play

Those who work in labour intensive occupations and male-based industries must endure the physical and emotional strain of the job. This kind of a working environment encourages practical jokes and pranks, and warning stories of accidents and close-calls. During a work day it is unproductive to tell stories about tough working conditions, because everyone is experiencing the same thing. In the real environment, these stories are going to emerge more as complaints. Fifteen years after the fact, the downplaying of skill and the acceptance of the harsher physical realities of a job in production, turn into narrative coping mechanisms to verbally negotiate the past. Like the accident narrative,

the function of a prank story changes because it is no longer being told to alleviate frustrations with the monotony of the workday.

Shirley remembers taking the grease gun and squirting grease in the fingers of the work gloves of the men who went on break, and also of throwing bits of unburned clay around as small projectiles to annoy his fellow workers. Most of the men who had worked at the plant as students or for a short period of time had a few pranks to share, but I observed that the men who had been there for their careers preferred to share more serious memories. The longer the time spent at the brickplant, the more responsibility the men seemed to take for doing their jobs properly and efficiently, and the more important it was to lend validity to the occupation when relating it to others. For instance, Glenn, one of my oldest informants, who strongly believed that the “good old days” of strong work ethics were over in the modern world, shared this story of how the harder workers exhibited control over those who needed to learn:

we worked hard but we had a lot of laughs, a good time, always were on target, and Corbett Fowler was very close friends, like one day, see, they'd bring two cars in, and we had a certain place to stop the car and open up the bottoms so the coal would come out and then shovel off this sheet into the trucks, but Walter takes the brakes off it and lower it down the track and brings the other loaded one up. And of course, we had to have one guy on the brake, and the other guy telling just when to put the brake on. So this Corbett fella is this day on the brake, so I showed him how I put the brake on, but he never even got the brake on, and it got down behind, beyond the sheets, course then they couldn't dump the stuff, the coal had to be shovelled out over the top of the car, and it was a lot harder work. So Walter said to me, he said “What do you think we should do with Corbett?” I said, “Well, maybe we shouldn't speak to him the rest of the day”. So Walt said “Good enough”. Corbett would say something to him, and Walter said “Otty, did you hear something?” I said” No, never heard a thing”. And we never, never,... just ignored him the whole day! Next morning he come to work, he said “Are you sons

of...going to talk to me today?" Stuff like that, y'know (Glenn 2003).

This is not to say that there was never any fun at the brickplant. When dealing with a process which is hundreds of years old where the technology has not changed significantly, and the work is very physical and very mundane, workers find ways to make the work day more palatable. Pranks are one way to integrate work and play, but are hardly ever sanctioned by the management. Company-sanctioned events serve not only to create a sense of community within the plant, but also provide order to the fun, which keeps everyone productive. Examples of sanctioned events include things like the annual company picnic, annual family steak and lobster suppers, turkeys given out at Christmas, bonuses, rewards, the circulation of the company newsletter, and the maintenance of the regional community of brickmakers through hockey and baseball games with the other plants. Northrup remembers when the company would reward their workers by sending apples from Nova Scotia in the fall:

GN: Years ago they'd send us up apples. Yeah, in the fall year we'd always get oh, two or three pecks of apples sent up. Nova Scotia was a mighty apple growing place at that time.

H: Not too many companies would send you up apples, y'know?

GN: No, no, but they always would. But when I worked there years ago, Christmas time come, you didn't get no turkey, you got nothing. I don't know when they started with that (Northrup 2004).

Thibeau and his wife proudly recall the time when Alyre received an award for his length of service with the company, and mentions the fact that the company still provides its former employees with a turkey at Christmas:

M: They had a banquet out at the, where they gave you all your 25 year watches at uh Halifax there at the Golf Course

H: A 25 year watch, like a watch-watch?

A: Yeah it was a a...Tudor-the name of the watch. And it's all engraved in the inside on the back of it y'know the year that, the name and company's name and all that. Yeah they gave everyone after 25 years, they gave them out a watch.

H: Sounds like Shaw's kind of took care of you guys a lot

A: Oh yeah, they're a pretty good company to work for.

M: They're still! We get a turkey from them still (Thibeau 2003)

All the events and bonuses created and supported by the company helped reinforce the notion that working for Shaw's was working for a family, and in a family. This kept their employees loyal and therefore it is not surprising that many of the men stayed in the brick plant for their entire careers.

Thomas Dandridge highlights this idea in "Work Ceremonies: Why Integrate Work and Play" by recognizing that in the levels of organized socialization that take place in the workplace, there is actually a concerted effort to make the dichotomy lessen between the menial tasks of production and the idea of workplace contentment and social functionality. Promoting the attitude that those with whom you work are like your family also increases the notion that their faults or annoying idiosyncrasies, which would normally encourage friction and conflict, must be forgivable because there exists a sense of family, and a small concept of unconditional love, or at least acceptance. One anomaly for the Chipman brick plant was the fact that the community was so small that the lines between created family and actual family were frequently blurred. Northrup, whose sons also happened to find employment at the brick plant for period of their lives, recalls:

H: So did all the people the worked there get along, mostly?

GN: Yes, everybody, just like one big family, seems to me, there was no problem that way.

H: You don't see that a lot these days.

MB: I think that most of them were related, but still they got along!

G: A mighty lot of them was related. But they got along anyway. They were good fellas to work for, most of them. Pretty near all of them. And there never was any wrangling or anything, not at that time. You know a lot of the places now, it's just dog eat dog (Northrup 2004).

Factories and plants have the connotation as being places that are sterile, both in terms of their level of cleanliness, streamlined production methods, and the range of emotions socially permitted on the job. In reality, it is the integration of the ideas of play and socialization that add a sense of freedom to what would otherwise be considered a space designated solely for productivity.

There is a difference between the functions of play sanctioned by the governing order, and those which are not. Using the linear construction by Van Gennep on *rites of passage*, Peter Narváez examines how separation, transition and incorporation stages are marked within a CBC workplace, and how ultimately marking send-offs or changes of status with sanctioned parties and gatherings serve to “ease group anxieties over a member’s anticipated disappearance through emphasizing the continuity of social bonds” (Narvaez 1990, 346).

Notions of play sanctioned by the governing orders of a workplace, can occur in the form of sponsored celebrations recognizing achievement, birthdays, marriages, promotions or holidays. Dandridge suggests that transitioning a space inside the

workplace into a temporary place of celebration makes boundaries of work and play unclear (1988). Parties may also be held outside the workplace, but the continuing factor is the celebratory group. Rearranging the factors of place and group still introduces the notion that work and play can co-exist, yet keeps the perimeters of propriety in check. Ultimately play at work serves to make the workplace a less sterile, hostile environment thus increasing worker harmony and productivity. Unlike modern office buildings, where there is often a designated space for meetings or gatherings, the brickmakers had to be creative for their on-the-job gatherings. Channelling the heat of the kiln, the men would bring meat and have a steak fry in the kiln, usually on the day before they were let off for Christmas.

Even when LE Shaw was first involved with the brick industry, there were traditions which were meant to incorporate the regional community and make brickmaking a significant part of community life. Shaw was a keen businessman with an appreciation for history, and he realized that making the historical beginnings of the company known would create a strong company foundation. He also realized that while he was arguably the most successful brick plant owner in the world, the business had not started with him. Being a prolific writer, over his lifetime he produced not only a history of his own life in the brick industry, published in 1955, but also a small publication in 1972 entitled Memoirs of a Brick-maker, a tribute to Owdis Isenor, a man who had devoted his life to working for Lloyd Shaw, the President of LE Shaw Ltd.

Memoirs tells us that as early as 1900, there were customs to include the community and workers in production. "BrickYard Day" was the "traditional date to start the seasonal operation of brick-making" and was usually marked with community events (Shaw 1972, 4). Owdis's first job in the brick industry was to carry water jugs to the men

working in the brick yard. The early spring start was probably due to the fact that in order to dry the brick outside there required a stretch of good sunny weather, as there were no dryers in operation and the brick must be dried outside before being burned. I have never found or heard mention of this calendar custom in any other place, but I assume that, with the progression of technology, the custom faded.

The chronology of production of the brick plant even changed the daily lives of everyone in the community of Chipman. Northrup's daughter observes:

MB: And, I don't know if you noticed that about every family almost in Chipman eats at, their supper at 4 o'clock, when the brick plant let out at 4 o'clock!

G: Well it was, when I was first there though, it was from 7-5.

MB: Yes, yeah. But like, but I can remember, because when...

G: When I went back [from the war] it was from 7-4.

MB: And everyone has their supper at 4 o'clock (laughs) (Northrup 2004).

Several of the men even referred to suppertime as being on "LE Shaw time"

What is ultimately revealed about all of the particular examples of sanctioned and non sanctioned events in the workplace is that although they demonstrate different parts of custom, oral expressions and play, they are all shared through the same expressive mode. As McCarl states:

The choice of expressive mode is significant because there are statements that can be made in one mode or context that cannot be made in another. The tool and die maker, for example, has to show the apprentice how to mill a certain piece of stock because words would not communicate the correct information. Conversely, the industrial accident account must be verbally presented (McCarl 1978, 152).

When the context of physically being able to show someone something is unavailable, how is skill communicated? What are the implications of trying to communicate skill exclusively through oral expression? And what are the particular skills valued by the brickmakers that will bring us closer to an answer?

Skill

One's attitude towards one's job is partially dependent on how well he or she can function within the workplace, and that in turn is a reflection on his or her skill. What is skill, then? Skill is both the ability to perform one's tasks safely, expediently and with little error, and also to be able to integrate oneself socially into the atmosphere of the workforce, both during work hours and also during leisure time activities. While it may be assumed that one will inherently not like, yet accept the challenge of, physical or mundane labour, much of understanding work is understanding what we do to make the intolerable tolerable. Reflective of an earlier attitude in the plant that hard work is worth it if the work itself is satisfying, Russell Boyd, the oldest of my informants, recalls a conversation he had with a co-worker when he first started with the plant in the 1930's:

H- What did you think of it when you first got there?

R- the brick plant?

H- yeah.

R- I figured she was a rotten spot. Goddamned right. And I said to Frank "Do they never take a five here or nothing?" Frank said "no". Frank said "it'll get to you" He said "There's something about the brick plant" (Boyd 2004).

McCarl reiterates that work which produces an aesthetic product is a *communicative* process, and this communication is expressed in "both material and oral

form” (1986, 252). That is to say that there is a circular nature to production. Webber, the plant secretary, describes this dynamic, which shows that accountability and responsibility in the plant process is important because if your job isn’t done correctly, it affects the next step in the process:

and then it would go from there to what they call “setters’ who would set the brick. Then it would go to the kilns. After it was baked the, what did they call them? The sorters, they would pull the brick out and sort them, the lift truck operators would put them here in piles, then either the train track come right in through in the plant, they would load or there would be a truck back in here. So it was just, they were all connected, and one depended, if this clay that came in here, if that guy coming down from the pit didn’t just bring good clay, he shouldn’t mix any topsoil or anything with it, if it come in to the what they call the grinder, and they didn’t sort rocks and everything out of it, like they all had to do, they all had a very important job, and every one of those cells had a part in that finished product.

H- so you’d know if the person behind you wasn’t pulling their weight, right?

C- exactly. And the people that cut the brick, they had to be precise. They couldn’t be a fraction out. So, they, and like, the burning of the brick, what they call the burning. They were put in a kiln and they had to gradually bring the temperature up, level it and then gradually bring it down. And if they didn’t, instead of getting 52000 out of that kiln, you may only get 30 or 40 (Webber 2003).

Matching the job skills of your co-workers and being a contributing part of a functioning workplace is part of what makes you fit in socially in the workplace as well.

In a brick plant, one must fit in as part of a group to complete a task sufficiently and aesthetically, but one must also integrate oneself as part of this group through more than being an effective employee. In many ways a product such as a brick can be regulated so that whether or not the workers get along with each other and learn from

each other, the brick still comes out as an aesthetically pleasing product. In terms of longevity of success however, a workplace has to function as a community with trust, judgement, ramifications, and it needs an oral system of lore and legends to maintain a sense of control and tradition. It becomes clear then why this symbolic creation of community in a workplace can be of great importance to a workplace setting.

McCarl's canons of work technique, a mainstay of the study of occupational folklife, provides a scale against which to measure narrative and adds precision to a very complex system of knowledge which is comprised of skills, rules and abilities needed to perform a job or a task. McCarl argues that it is a "body of informal knowledge used to get the job done; at the same time, it establishes a hierarchy of skilled workers based on their individual abilities to exhibit that knowledge" (McCarl 1986, 72). The skills needed to perform a particular task or a series of tasks, can range from quite straightforward information, like what temperature is optimal for the burning of the kilns, to the more particular and unusual knowledge, like how to create new surface patterns for face brick, using materials at hand and ingenuity.

McCarl suggests that while some skills are downplayed because of their frequency of performance, or their monotony, other skills which are considered creative or innovative are often praised (McCarl 1986, 71). Furthermore, he suggests that "between these two extremes lie the central, daily technique performances in which the informally learned skills are performed by individuals under the scrutiny of co-workers who evaluate a worker's status in the culture on the basis of these acts (McCarl 1986, 72).

Not being able to follow the traditional rules of gauging skill in the Chipman brick plant, or observe the typical transactions of passing it along, I must therefore extract

skill from personal experience narratives. Nason, a summer student, remembers being awed by great feats of strength and men who seemed to be capable of inhuman skill:

If you were in hard brick crew, you had to be strong. Like Ronnie Legere, they often said that- who would be...Georgina Wallace's brother. Ronnie Legere was an incredible man. Incredibly strong. And it was rumoured that he would take a brick in each hand, like let's say the bricks are sitting down flat, that he could take a brick in each hand and have ten bricks between- I think it was ten bricks between- and he could push them hard enough to pick them up. Oh that takes phenomenal strength, I mean, I might get five! (Nason 2004)

Although he was not particularly fond of the management style of his boss, Fairweather remembers being satisfied at his ability to "walk the talk" of the brickyard:

we had a hard boss there. He was a hard boss in a way cause, just same as any place, if a place don't make a profit, it don't stay in business, so he was looking after this own job. But he wouldn't ask you to do something that he wouldn't do himself. Like, I'd never seen him do what I done. I've heard the men say that he'd go in the hard brick and it would be hot in there and bare hands, and you always had to wear hand leathers to sort the brick, and he'd come out there with his hands bleeding, and sometimes it'd be that hot in there, that they'd had to carry him out. So I mean, like he was HARD in a way but yet he was a knowledgeable boss, let's put it that way. So, he knew what he was doing, and a lot of people didn't like him because of his ways, but he got the job done. He kept the brickline going (Fairweather 2004).

It is also interesting to note that even in a plant setting, creativity was still a valued quality in production. The ingenuity of one of their fellow co-workers in creating a type of design for face brick was mentioned by other brickmakers I interviewed, and prompted again by his wife, Thibeau recalls:

M: You put a design on the bricks too, Al.

H: ...So, what was your design?

A: Oh, it was like a worm design on the brick, I took a steel roller and welded beads and weld on it, y'know different designs on it, and then what they did, they took that roller and run it this big bar of brick was coming out of what they called the pug, before it was cut in brick and this roller would roll on top of it, that made the design on each brick.

H: So, what was that brick used for?

A: Used for different things. Where was it the last one we was looking at? The building...

M: It was in Saint John wasn't it?

A: Saint John or Moncton. Moncton! Yeah. Y'know well, like uh, liquor stores and hotels and stuff like that..

M: government buildings.

A: Not every one, but there is a few that's got them.

H: That must so neat to just go around and be able to see the design that you made!

M: Then he'd tell the girls, "I designed that! (Thibeau 2003).

Something else that stood out in the brickmaker's memory was the ability to manipulate working conditions around you to perform your tasks faster and more efficiently. Nason remembers the antics of one of his coworkers:

he drove the lift machine, and he drove like a...like a bat! But he never ever dumped anything over, like he was incredibly good at what he did, but he did it very very fast. And he'd whip in with this great big pallet of bricks, and he'd drop it in front of us, and then whenever and then there's be a spare pallet, and you'd take them off, and rock face them, and then build this on another pallet and when that was done he'd come and take it away and there'd be another one there. And that's what we did for days (Nason 2004).

Having skill that was learned through time and experience made you better at your job and reduced the time you would need to perform your duties. MacBeth reveals a skill that he admired in the older workers:

And if you never cooked them hard enough, and to the trained ear, two brick together (knocks fists together), you know if they're ready or not, just by the hollow sound, they're not cooked long enough they're going to break, crumble easy, and if they're not, they'll fall apart. But a trained ear, fella picked- the older guys, usually, they'd just pick up, when they went into a new kiln, (knocks fists together again) "yeah, going to get the best in here"- they could tell by hitting it. But if you burned it too long, too hard, too hot, if you go into the corner [of the kiln], just a big melted pile of stuff, either had the heat too high over there, just went to the next level and melted down instead of baking. Just like cake in the oven, same thing. You don't have it right, it don't cook right in the middle, same as brick. If you get it too hot, it's all burnt on the outside, it's no good. Brick, same thing (Macbeth 2004).

He also told me about some of the equipment in the plant, and how the pug operator and his learned experience in recognizing the quality of the bricks from their feel could determine the outcome of the whole operation:

H: So, how mechanized was stuff when you were working there? Like to what extent was it people running machinery

D: As far as going in, the unfinished product, like I say, loading all these cars to go, all manual labour. All manual labour. There was a machine up front which they called the pug, came here in 1928 when we started, still there when we left. It was the boy. And they claimed that if that guy running that woke up, you were going to get a mess, cause all's he sat there and slept with his foot swung up over the side, and it was going "whuur", it was just a big bread mixer! It just augured all that stuff in and compressed it in. As long as he sat like that, it was not a problem. Cause if that come down here too hard, it broke all the wires off, so he just had a big long piece, couldn't do, it's no good to you. And if it came too soft, it just, and you reached out your hand. If you could dimple it real easy with your hand,

it wasn't going to be no good- there's too much water content, and went back through a wheel. So this guy was the key of the quality coming right from the get-go (Macbeth 2004).

Finally in the discussion of skill, as was discussed in Chapter Three, is the ability to remember of the deep, embodied knowledge which comes from experience, repetition, and dedication to mastering a skill. Since the plant's closure, this knowledge has not been needed or required, but it was impressed upon me that this was crucial information to be remembered because it set you apart at the time. The plant Superintendent, who spent a great deal of time in his interview being very precise about information on brickmaking demonstrates his particular skill in remembering by telling me about these precise measurements about bricks their burning:

well brick is made, they're made to be burnt $2 \frac{1}{4}$ by $3 \frac{5}{8}$ by $7 \frac{5}{8}$, that's the actual size you should have. That's imperial size, eh? And therefore you had to make 'em, like you went down to $7 \frac{5}{8}$ so you had to make them eight inches, or and eight and an eighth according to what it was, to allow for shrinkage to go down to where it's at. So if they're too soft, that meant they might have come out of the pug, they would kind of (squash?), you know what I mean? So maybe they could be pretty near eight and a quarter eh, or eight and $\frac{3}{16}$. Well that's be very seldom you'd ever get them down to a size where you burn them cause there at that and there going to stop. But then you grab them same as if that was a brick (demonstrates with book) and you saw you grab there and the other on the other, I mean your fingers touch the face- they'd be on the edge of the face, and what you weren't allowed to do is to grab and if you didn't have your fingers touching the face of the brick. And some fellas with little short fingers had a lot of trouble with that now. So we used to get after them. So that's why you need them pretty firm coming out of there (Roberts 2003).

According to McCarl in "Theoretical Hypothesis," technique is the performance of mundane redundancies. Communication stems from the transmission of these techniques.

Skill is an internal mastery of these transmissions, learned behaviours and adaptable abilities. However, he notes:

The difficulty is that we continue to use one word, "skill", to signify both the things that a man can do with his hands and the things that he knows with his head. They are not comparable and merely to say that a worker is "skilled" is to say nothing of the changes continually re-shaping his job (McCarl 1978, 148).

For the brickmakers I interviewed, skill includes what they valued at the time they worked in the trade. It is the mastery of techniques necessary to perform the job safely, effectively and with expediency. Skill also includes their ability to remember an earlier work culture. These two aspects draw on both Holtzberg-Call's argument that the past is a non-negotiable, crystallized catalyst for social distancing (which is more fully discussed in the next chapter) and McCarl's position that skill is constantly being "re-shaped" in the active workplace. Further, what it took for brickmakers to be skilled workers and what it takes for them to remember their past brickmaking are now negotiated through shared social oral transmission. Approaching the topic of skill within brickmaking retrospectively, I am unable to observe the plant in operation or the men I interviewed on the job. I am limited in my assessment of skill by what is remembered by members of this work group. The final chapter examines in more detail the fuller implication of memory and nostalgia on the study as a whole, and concludes with thoughts for future study.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Underlying this study is the central question “What is a Brickmaker?” In Chapter Two, I examined two of the main published sources of historical information about the Chipman Brick Plant: History of the Parish of Chipman by Rev. Frank Baird, and Men of Clay: The Chipman Story, by Gary Copeland in an attempt to historically position the importance of the brickmaking trade to the larger regional community of Chipman. These two sources reveal that when LE Shaw first brought the brick industry to this small village that there was a niche market for the physical product because of building trends and the need for building materials after disasters such as the Halifax Explosion, but also that there was a precedence set for successful, paternally dominated male figureheads to launch businesses in the area. Of Shaw, Baird wrote:

Though thus far but little known to the residents of the community, Mr. Shaw must be added to the list, and given a high place among the business builders and benefactors of Chipman. He is a remarkably charming and highly informed personality, as well as being a scientist and a keen and able businessman. And he is interested in men as well as in Brick and Tile.

Like John Ruskin he believes that sound work can only be done by sound men. He writes in one of his catalogues:

‘My greatest discovery in fifty years of playing with clay has not been the fine qualities of common clay, but in the fine qualities of common men. It is true that there are amazing possibilities wrapped up in common clay, but the latent qualities concealed in the common man are infinite and unpredictable’ (Baird, 1946, 45).

Baird further praises Shaw for being highly involved in the community by participating in sports, church affairs, committees for various charities and causes and generally being part of the public social sphere. Clearly in 1946, these were valued qualities emergent to the community for their leaders. The brickmakers themselves were

appreciated not so much for their individualistic achievement in craftsmanship, but more for their place as cogs in the wheel that ensured the entire plant's success. At a time when the community was really burgeoning in population and flourishing in the establishment of successful businesses, the determination of Shaw to push his company through the challenges of short staffing and periodic revenues loss was rewarded by establishing the plant as one of the mainstay industries in the community.

Once the plant was firmly rooted in the community, Shaw turned to the development of his employees. The company was made part of a Worker's Union to improve labour standards, and on July 11th, 1946 Shaw delivered a speech to the men at the Chipman plant to usher in the new era of a unionized employee base. He recalled the early days of the industry when labour was not mechanized at all and the work was hard, hot and crude. He also recalled several instances when the formulas and the ratios of mixtures and the machines could only do so much for production, and the difference between great success and mediocrity was the perseverance of the workers and the spirit of the trade. He rallied:

We have signed an agreement and this is more, much more, than signing a cheque to pay in dollars. This Agreement involves human qualities: forbearance, understanding and here I myself am reminded of the personal responsibility of each individual in this group, which adds up to the closest possible cooperation (Copeland 1992, 77).

The qualities desired in the ideal employee from the point of view of the Shaw company were loyalty and responsibility that were not going to falter in the face of a Unionized agreement, as Shaw himself was clearly a man who would sacrifice his own time and money to make his industry work and he expected the same from his employees. His purpose was to perpetuate these qualities which reflected a strong work ethic into a

group that was on the verge of becoming detached from the pride in the labour and product.

The first glimpse of the story from inside the operation was provided by Gary Copeland, and not published until 1992. Although his perspective was decidedly biased towards more traditional company values because of his relationship with the company founders and management, the insight he provided into the deeper company culture provided the community of brickmakers with a master narrative which would be regarded with mixed feelings throughout the decades after its publication. Although it was not universally accepted as being totally accurate or reflective of the view of the larger population, it was the only published compilation of stories from which to draw. Interestingly, although not surprisingly, the elements of Copeland's work which were echoed in the narratives I collected were unusual or newsworthy ones about accidents or the discovery story of the clay pit. I collected less commentary on the managerial history of the plant which was supported by Copeland's familial bias. The brickmakers chose a collective group of stories from the Copeland text which informed the community's master narrative- stories which were universal and could be shared in any group setting with family and friends, and not just those specifically composed of former employees. The stories concerned the discovery of the clay pit, accidents which made the community newspaper and the closing of the plant affected the whole community. They were sanctioned by the larger brickmaking community as acceptable excerpts from Copeland's book.

The narratives in Copeland's publication may have been taken up by the brickmakers because, as Holtzberg-Call writes:

Texts are treated as social fact...You will find an abundance of texts. Practitioners of the ethnography of communication have taught us that speaking, the nexus between language and social life, is patterned within each society in culture-specific ways and that the patterns and functions of speaking are discernible through ethnography (Holtzberg-Call 1992, 19).

For example, one of the shared stories collected and disseminated by Copeland's is the "creation story" of Jasper Kennedy, the first Superintendent. Kennedy went for a walk in the woods and stubbed his toe on a mound of what would prove to be a distinctly red, abundant clay field that revitalized the whole operation in Chipman. Almost everyone gave me some version of this story, but Fairweather told it most succinctly:

And they hauled their shale from Minto. Why they built here and hauled 'er from Minto I, you know, it's hard to understand. But a few years after that they sent a man up here from Nova Scotia, Jasper Kennedy, and he happened to be up Red Bank there and was walking there looking for...I think he was hunting, what tell you the truth, he was hunting, and he just happened to trip over a brick, er, over a rock, and he picked it up and he knew, you know, what it was, eh? So then they had the pit up there, and got it from Chipman. Been there ever since.

H: So that's the famous shale?

F: That's the famous Chipman shale, yep. It's been tested. I think they told me that five different tests that they done cross Canada and four out of the five, Chipman brick was the best for durability, you know, strength and stuff like that (Fairweather 2004).

This commonly known story is important to the brickmakers because it describes the beginnings of a prosperous industry that was in danger of closing, and because it is a piece of shared history in which everyone can participate. Knowing this story and being able to tell it is an important piece of community history, and a way into the status group of the brickmaker. Regardless of how everyone felt about Kennedy who was known

locally for being tough and hard, his discovery of a site replete with the material that would keep them employed is worthy of passing along and sharing. Everyone interviewed knew the narrative, and everyone was able to share and enjoy it.

While Chapter Two explored how local historians conceived of the company and the industry's place in the community, Chapter Three presented the brickmaker's narratives. The men themselves have much to say about brickmaking and its significance to the broader community. This is not to say that Copeland's work was in any way under-researched or compromised by a lack of sources, but his goals as a local historian as well as the time of publication which was directly after the plant closure, shaped, and perhaps limited, his particular construction. Not all of the stories that the men shared with me have a prominent place in Copeland's book, which became the community's master narrative for the brick industry, but they do reveal other perspectives of what should be remembered of brickmaking in Chipman.

After several interviews which all went straight into a description of the technical production aspects of bricks, it became apparent that remembering process was the easiest way into remembering and recreating work culture. From her research experience Holtzberg-Call remarked:

Spend enough time with people and they will tell you what the key texts are- either directly by example or indirectly through repetition, heightened emotion, and performative speech, that is, directly quoted dialogue, the use of present tense in referring to past events, gestures, laughter, anger. To ask what the great texts are is to ask what endures, what a culture retains. Where is meaning stored, tradition re-enacted, and artful work expressed? (Holtzberg-Call 1992, 20)

For the brickmakers, process was paramount. The knowledge and the ability to create a verbal tour through the production process of brick in great detail brought into light a hierarchy of narrative memory- a mental prioritizing of information which spoke to these key texts. Recreating the deep, embodied, physical knowledge needed to run and operate the machinery to make bricks illustrated a pride of workmanship which echoed the loyalty and sacrifice alluded to by Shaw in his speech. In not so many words the brickmakers declared their allegiance to all aspects of the company philosophy, but in their diligence to recreate and remember the process of brickmaking, they showed a different kind of loyalty.

Certainly an informant's commitment to the company depended on the length of their career at the brickplant, and the particular time they were employed. Summer students were more concerned with collecting their pay to be able to party on the weekends, while the older generation appreciated the benefits which contributed to helping out their families or rewarding their years of service. This group also downplayed the difficulty of the sheer physicality of their job. They resisted my praise for their endurance of harsh working conditions and repetitive movements, attributing their endurance to the stronger work ethic of years gone by. The younger generation who spent five or less years working at the plant before moving on to other careers created a different portrayal of masculine narrative- the invincibility of youth which allows for the ability to withstand any physical strain as opposed to the brushing off of praise for physical labour that is seen as a necessary and non-negotiable part of work.

This group of short-term workers was quickest to relate humorous stories such as prank narratives. These stories, unlike the mechanical details of process, were harder for

them to talk about, but conveyed stories of great importance to the group, such as this legend which had never been part of the master narrative. Nason, who provided me with many humorous anecdotes he remembered from being a summer student, told this supernatural tale with gravity:

there was a man who worked there that could stop blood from bleeding, stop you from bleeding. And he charmed warts... And now you're gonna laugh but I'm gonna tell you, I saw it happen. And I had a wart on my finger, on this finger right here Heather, it was making my finger grow crooked. At the time I was dating...and her father was a surgeon. He froze them and he cut them out, and this wart was getting bigger and looked like a little, a little, a bunch of grapes or something. Like it was disgusting. It was massive and it made my finger turn crooked, and I went to Alvie, and said "Alvie, can do something about this thing on my finger?" I said "it's really driving me crazy!" And what he did at that time, he licked his finger, and said "tell me your full name". Now he did this at his house. He licked his finger, I gave him my entire name, and he rubbed- he just took that spit from his finger and he rubbed my finger twice. And I don't ever remember- this was amazing- I don't remember the wart actually being- falling off- but it seemed like in two or three weeks, it was just gone. I don't, and that still, I don't know, I don't know how that happened. But it just, it was gone.

In the hard brick crew, they were taking bricks and putting them on pallets, and you'd see in the kilns there'd be some hollow chimney liners, there'd be some great big jumbo bricks, there's be some red bricks, there's be some multi-coloured, like there be different kinds of bricks. And this person, um, I don't know who they were, can't remember, a brick fell down and hit the top of his hand and cut the top of his hand, and it was bleeding. And I was there. I saw Alvie Brown do this. Alvie Brown said "What's your full name?" And the man said his first name- I mean there was lots of swearing and cursing- the man was, like you know, upset, his hand was hurt. And Alvie said "tell me your first...", and like it took him a minute or two to get it. He said "tell me your entire name". So finally the man did whilst he's standing there with his hand bleeding. And Alvie just took his hand over that man's like that and said

the man's entire name and slid his hand down like that and in doing so, he wiped all the blood off. And no more blood came! It didn't bleed anymore. And then they took him away because there was a first aid kit. But, I mean Alvie just went, let's say it's like, you know, "Heather Marie Gillett!" (makes wiping motion down arm while saying my name). I saw it. I saw that. And his name was Alvie Brown and he could charm warts. And he could do stuff with blood. And I saw it (Nason 2003).

I was also told about pranks that after twenty years were still funny, and about accident narratives that did not make it into Copeland's book and were therefore not part of the commonly told narrative of brick making in Chipman. The men remembered the nice things the company provided their families, and conveyed the specialized knowledge they possessed that would ultimately make the brick a better, customized product. Why were these narratives harder to share? The answer is probably a combination of factors: the stories involve people who have taken on different roles in the lives of the men. The man who used to be a co-worker could now have a completely different relationship to an informant depending on where his life took him post brick plant. Sharing stories about co-workers in the same work culture makes the circumstances surrounding sharing memories more stable. Also, technical information is impersonalized- there is nothing to be misconstrued about concrete details. The narratives that really told us about life in the plant, what made someone a more skilled worker than someone else, and the funny things people did that are remembered after all these years are subject to questioning by anyone who would have remembered the situation or experience differently. At a time when the mundane, common, annoying workplace occurrences have faded away, one is left with a databank of work remembrances that both conform to and diverge from company values and published history. Constructing a work identity while you are doing the job is a much

more active process than reflecting back on work identity and determining what that work meant to you and how it has shaped your self perception.

The question remains: "Why do we remember and share what we do?" or, as Philip Hiscock asked while conducting a similar study between oral history and occupational folklore:

"... "Why will a person tell the same story over and over again about an event?" This is the experience of many fieldworkers in folklore and oral history: in trying to jog the memories of other aspects of an event it is found that they cannot be brought forward. Another more general way of putting this questions is "Why do so many people tell the same stories about an event?" Clearly we have oral historical cores to the repeated stories, but we also have recurrent folk historical biases or points of view which are repeated in different texts from people who have shared experiences (Hiscock 1987, conclusion).

Hiscock's own fieldwork experience was that having a written account of an event changes the tenor of the response. For instance, when asked to recall any of the specific banquets, picnics or suppers held by the company, most Shaw employees were very general; in the rank of importance of memories, they did not make it through the mental sifting process. Company events were marked in the quarterly newsletter that was published and circulated to every member of the company. There was no need to include stories from those events in the verbal lexicon of stories to be shared about life in the brick plant. They were less important than the core of stories about the creation of the brick plant of major accidents that happened that could be recounted with storytelling elements.

Based on the interviews I conducted, shared information most often highlighted individual experiences which are more important to relate for posterity instead of group

experiences. Perhaps this is because in terms of memorable storytelling the informant wants to remain unique. So, will a form of documentation colour a folk response?

According to Hiscock, the answer is yes:

Personal lore can become communal lore, but only when it succeeds in being passed on, either through the social success of its original carrier, or through some inherent aspect (humour, drama, rousing tune and so on) which called attention to it. Folk history is a clear example of this process: shared experiences produce folk history when the memories are re-shared. If that folk sense of what happened is never mentioned again, then it is lost (Hiscock 1987, 195).

It logically follows that the Chipman brickmakers would have a mental lexicon of stories to share so as not to lose that work identity, but it is with life stories that we recognize that the work identity was taken away and they had to re-evaluate what their work identities were. Even for those men who retired before the closure, the elimination of the physical job site played a major part in their remembrances. They told “it’s a shame” narratives that lament the loss of what to them, is still a happy preservation of a career. Even more they lament the good old days because it means no one can ever try and recreate that time when hard work was seen as different than today- no one will get that chance because no one in Chipman can be a brickmaker again.

The process of how these mental databases are formed and reformed and what that tells us about construction of identity is fascinating. In Memory, Narrative and Identity, Nicola King observes, “it is not only the content of memories, experiences and stories which construct a sense of identity: the concept of the self which is constructed in these narratives is also dependent upon assumptions about the function and process of memory and the kind of access it gives us to the past” (King 2000, 3). Recognizing the importance of memory as a *process* and not an inert series of *things* allows us to examine it in a way

that is tangible; we can deconstruct a process, but it is impossible to deconstruct memory as we might view it as random images and places that can be haphazardly articulated. In this way it is very fitting to use memory, which is itself a process, to help define work, which is also a process. The things which we recall in response to a question are significant, because they help us realize the differences between ourselves; ourself of the long-ago past, ourself of the not-so-distant past, our work self, our leisure self, and all the complex notions of self that one person can have about his or her life. Memory is articulated in the present, and therefore can be relevant to reconstructing past selves because of its constant awareness of how the self of the present portrays the selves of the past. According to current psychoanalytic theories about memory processes, it is impossible to chronologically reconstruct a daily routine one would have had years ago as well as one could describe the routine of the previous day; thus, clearly, what is recuperated from the past and articulated in the present is what has replaced the actual experience as a crystallized, pre-emptive impression, becoming the “new memory” (King 2000, 25).

Smaller, non-routine occurrences such as conversations or inconsequential conflicts in one’s daily work routine become less important years after the work has ceased. In fact, relating these minor details is counter-productive in the present, as the issues can no longer be resolved. Looking at what stories and situations are recalled when asked to reconstruct a “typical working day” serves to illuminate the lingering important aspects of work; those things which, over time, have been retained in the memory as being typical, or mundane occurrences. What stands out in the memory as being atypical or extraordinary tends to take the form of “stories” or narratives which are told with a

certain degree of performance. These are stories which have no doubt been told many times over the years, to different audiences, with shifting contexts and shifting degrees of remembrance and/ or exaggeration. Certainly the recounting of a tale to a folklorist, no less a young girl with no experience in the trade of brickmaking, elicits a much different telling of the tale as compared to the same tale told over drinks during an evening out with the boys at a local bar. Therefore, the importance of examining narrative through memory is not to recreate the context in which these stories or facts, ordinary or extraordinary, are told, but to examine the “sifting process” through which these stories or facts are filtered. This was discussed by Holtzberg-Call as the “folklore of time,” which is:

one of the most distinctive features of the printer’s occupational discourse is the way in which narrated experience is temporally framed. ...In the printer’s folklore of time, a legendary past of the old time printer antecedes the more recent past of the transition to cold type, which precedes the “nowadays” of the present. It is a conceptual, if not utilitarian, time frame (Holtzberg-Call 1992, 200).

In the brickmaker’s folklore of time, the legendary past is a communal narrative not only because of the written sources which cement some of the old stories, but also because the plant’s history only dates back to the 1920’s, so several of the original brickmakers were able to orally transmit stories to the newer generations, many of whom were their sons. This is a new take on the “cultural scenes” of McCarl’s early work, and allows for a more global look at transmission of occupational folklore. It is in this way that the creator of the company and the first head burner and superintendents achieved legendary folk hero status, and much in the same way that citizens of Chipman who were part of the legendary “Chipman Saturday Nights” mourn for the prosperity of the past. The later

generations who would see the closure of the brick plant acknowledge the passing of an era of a strong work ethic and extend the “Good Old Days” mentality to the workplace.

Holtzberg-Call writes:

The wonder of a romanticized past lies in its non-negotiability. Conditions are created from a certain kind of exchange that permits people to talk about things otherwise unspeakable. Telling a story out of the past, to one who was not there, is an achievement of social distancing. This is true whether one is talking about the distant past of the old style printer or whether one is talking about the distance past of the old style or whether one is speaking about the transitional times of the more recent past” (Holtzberg-Call 1992, 203).

Occupational nostalgia has been a constantly present filter through which all the narratives I collected were shared. This is not to say that nostalgia is always a remembering of things in a positive light that may not have been so positive at the time, but rather an understanding that the event being remembered cannot be changed- only one’s feeling towards it. There is the notion of the “good old days” but there is also the idea that there was a feeling of accomplishment in pride of withstanding the conditions and the physical strain- they recognize that it was hard, but are unwilling to accept praise for endurance. The satisfaction derived from having worked in the brickplant is partially based on the survival, but also partially based on what Holtzberg-Call refers to as the “good old days” subtext:

The subtext to this and other stories about tough times reads: thank goodness we do not have to work like that today, but at least we were capable of it. Meeting those challenges made us what we were. The nasty details of the unremitting dirt, the unattainable standards and the unbearable noise and heat are included as living proof that ‘people were tougher then’. It may have been bad, but they were the good old bad days (Holtzberg-Call 1992, 201).

The interwoven themes of nostalgia for the past life of the plant and nostalgia for the community were treated with equal gravity and importance by the brickmakers and their families. The heyday of Chipman and the best years of the plant were synonymous. I am not sure if it is accurate to say that the closure of the plant is fully responsible for the community's decline, but it was certainly a significant factor. Fairweather was one of several informants who ended the interview by lamenting the Good Old Days of the community:

F- but the thing was too you see we had Sayre's Mill, Bishop's Mill, Darrah's Mill, McLeod's Mill...there was four mills going here all at the same time.

H: That's amazing. It's amazing to me things a couple people have mentioned..sort of ...things that used to exist in Chipman that...

F: Oh! It used to be the going concern at one time.

H: I can't even imagine.

F: No..*laughs* that was a way back. Well, I mean, you take over now where, on the opposite side of the road, from the liquor store there, More Convenient, that was a great big grocery store, Sayre's there, and a feed shed, and a warehouse on that, and then there was Wood's garage where More Convenient is now, and then there was the five and ten, where the parking lot is there now, and there was Billy Burke's (spelling?) grocery store and an ice cream parlour, and beside it was Dufour's, it was a furniture store, and beside it was Ken Darrah's, where...it's still standing, the brick one there....well then, course the CPR station was where the library is now, and then there was a little restaurant there bedside right in the library parking lot, Paul Sears and Herbie Brown had a restaurant there, and on the corner there where the two roads come in, there was a big clothing store there, Wilson Frasier owned that. And then across the road as you come down from the Post Office, right across the road there was a great big garage there. If you're ever into the museum there, the caboose, take a look, there's a lot of the old pictures.

...right where the NAPA [Auto Parts] is there, that was a great big grocery store, well it was a grocery store, and clothing store and a furniture store.

Down below that where the V+L Variety Store, that was a drugstore, and beside that was a barber shop. And, you know where Heather Fidler lives there now? That used to be a cafe, Morrison's café, and then they tore the old store down there for the parking lot of the church, that was Morrison's little store. Across the road from was Jake's clothing store. At one time you didn't have to leave Chipman at all, but now there's nothing left- no grocery store here.

A lot of the old people like to go down and get a spool of thread or get a thimble or something like that, but you see you can't get that in Chipman.

Everybody's got a car today, and it's nothing to drive to Fredericton and you can get it cheaper there anyway, and if you want to take it back, you can always take it back. Here if you want to take it back, you got to get credit for it. So, you gotta turn around and buy something else in the place of it. And as I say, it only takes an hour to drive to Fredericton, so.

H: So when did all the mills, I mean, it seems to me that there was a lot of industry here at one time

F: Oh yeah, I think Irving took over Sayre's in 63. 63 or 64. I'm not sure when the other one, you see there used to be well, there's still a mill over there across the bridge there. That used to be what they'd call Darrah's Mill, Eddie Darrah owned the mill there. And then going up this way the other side, you know where Willa's, just as you go by (Fairweather 2004).

So just as the lumbering, mining and brick industries were a significant part of the community, the men who worked there were regarded as family and remembered and memorialized in the years since the plant's closure. I actually had to reschedule one interview because one of the men had just died and my informant was going to the

funeral. Roberts later told me that all the men who still live in the village gather at each funeral to pay their respects and see each other again. As mentioned in Chapter One, Glenn keeps a list of former brickmakers who worked at the plant, and those who have died. He didn't mention it at first, but then his wife added her commentary:

P: So tell Heather your first job when you went there.

O: Just a well, mostly, wheeling coal. We used to burn coal that we shipped in by railway car, rail car, and we had, it was dumped on a big sheet there and shovelled into a truck, and brought up around the kilns, so it was firing the kilns, fired with coal then. There was four of on that, unloading the coal, those three guys are all gone..

P: ...he keeps a list of all the men who passed on (Glenn 2003).

What can be drawn from this study is that in the past, as well as in the present, work life, community life and family life are inextricably intertwined. Work is a central part of life and the work qualities and community values that are important come through not only in descriptions of process and technique, but also in the dedication to the remembering of these narratives. This thesis builds on the work of Holtzberg-Call and Mullen and Lloyd to argue that we cannot marginalize the cultural impact of region and family on work and examine work as one isolated experience, devoid of external influences. To further these sorts of multi-dimensional studies of work and community culture, I suggest that when trying to define an occupation or document a trade that emphasis be given to letting the group *self* define rather than approaching a study like this with preconceived notions of what is important to document in an industry.

I believe that this thesis continues the trend of occupational studies over the past two decades in that it presents a more holistic approach to fieldwork and a commitment

to asking broader questions about the influence of work identity on life identity.

Furthermore it documents the journey I personally took in learning about the purpose of fieldwork and the influence that pre-conceived bias can have on what is collected. It would have been easier to collect all the narratives I could and examine the emergent themes than it was to ask the questions I thought I should ask and then try to draw meaning from how the questions *weren't* answered. Moving forward, the reason this study is still important fifteen years after the fact is that it has been kept important in the community dialogue and was central to creating a family and community identity for the men who worked there.

Fire is the process by which the brick are solidified. They bake at such a high heat that the product is rendered virtually impenetrable. Fire was also the basis of success for the whole brick industry for the Shaw company. Fires in the late 1800's and early 1900's which wiped out many major cities in the Maritimes created opportunities for capitalization on the market of building materials, which ultimately led to the company's great success. Much like the Chipman brick plant itself, the kiln fires burn intensely long enough to secure the material, but then cool off gradually until, in the remnants of a great heat, they are dismantled.

The Chipman brick plant had a bright, celebrated beginning, and met a gradual cooling off until its final dismantling. The synonymy of the beginning and ending of the industry in Chipman is the reason why occupations can no longer be considered independent from their regions. The particularities of the process which make brick making such an interesting blend of traditional knowledge and modern ingenuity are nothing without the brickmakers to illuminate the workplace and instigate a pride in the

product which was an infectious part of the industry's success. Certainly some were transient workers, blowing through during summer months to make a good wage to have a good time, but most were dedicated tradesmen who harboured a skill honed from many years of working and absorbing knowledge. Even without the advantage of being able to predict what would have happened to the future of the community at the time of the plant's closure, it is safe to say that the men who created success in the brick plant made a conscious decision to remember that success, and preserve the integrity of a community that was once as solid as the brick they made. Their pride in the product reflected their pride in the community and regardless of Shaw's commitment to economical success, that particular group of men at that particular point in history perpetuated their own success, albeit brief. A poem written by a member of the community, compares the tenacity and enduring values in brickmakers with those of the clay they work:

“Brick plant man is made of clay, just as god made other men
 But when he made the brick plant man, he put a little extra in
 He made the backbone out of brick and muscles out of clay
 Then put him in a kiln to toss sixty-six thousand brick a day
 Brick plant men, Brick plant men, pick and toss, pick and toss
 All day long, five days a week, made of clay and water and heat.

Heat inside a burning hades, the only hell they will know
 A man who's made of brick and clay has no other place to go.
 His will to be a brick plant man is welded in his heart
 By water and clay and mighty heat, that has set all these men apart.
 Brick plant men just live for love, can't get rich in brick plant pay
 And they don't die like other men, they just dry up and fade away.
 And when they're dead they bury them beneath six feet of clay
 They dig them up and mold them into sixty-six thousand brick a
 day (Copeland 1992, preface).

So, what then, is a brickmaker? He is the point of convergence between the organic and the aesthetic. He is the point between community and workplace. He is the embodiment of pride and purpose.

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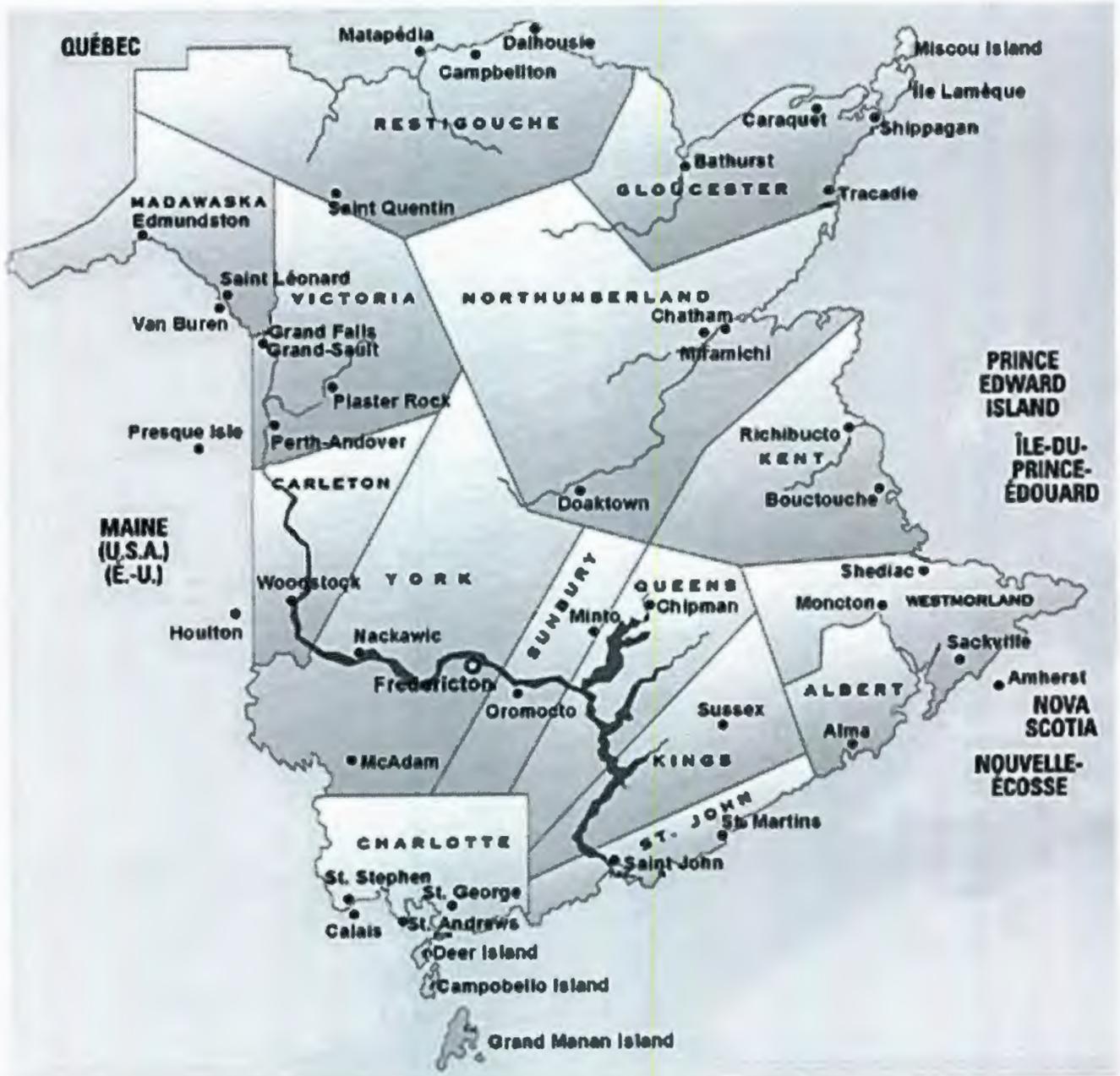
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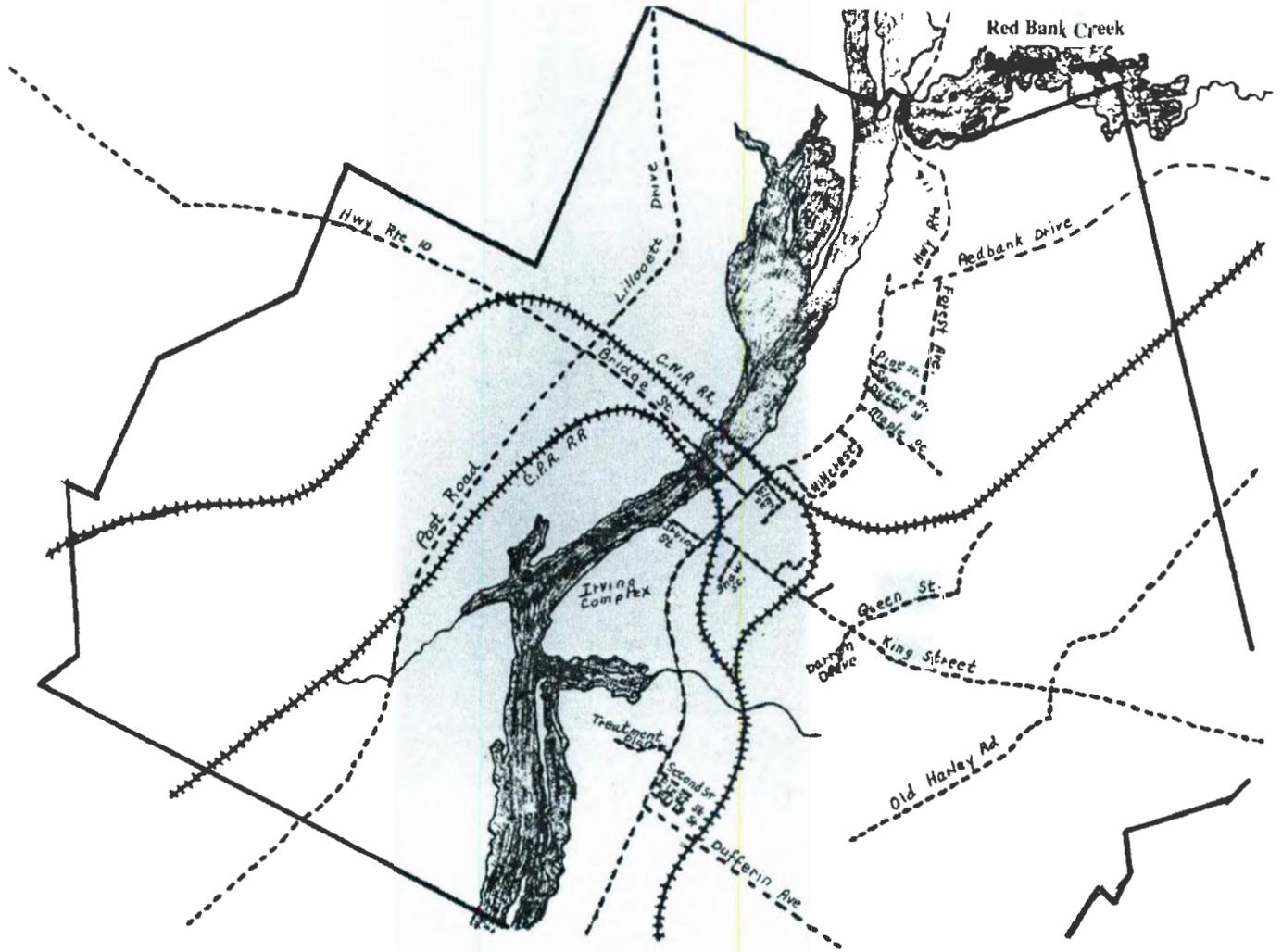
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Appendix A
Map of New Brunswick



Appendix B
Map of the Village of Chipman (Chipman 2002, endpiece)



VILLAGE OF CHIPMAN

Appendix C
Aerial shot of the Chipman Brick Plant, circa 1980. Courtesy of George Roberts.



Appendix D

Masonry Atlantic. "The Famous Chipman Brick and Some of Its Makers". Newsletter, Sept. 1979.

Sept 1979 -- from "Masonry Atlantic"

THE FAMOUS CHIPMAN BRICK AND SOME OF ITS MAKERS



The L. E. Shaw Ltd. plant at Chipman, N.B. produces brick and clay products that have become famous far and wide for their outstanding quality of durability accounted for mainly by their unusually low water absorption rate. This characteristic is highly important in the northern coastal climate we experience in Atlantic Canada.

Photo No. 1 shows an overall view of part of the plant at Chipman. Note the "beehive" type brick kilns in which the brick are burnt. Raw shale excavated near the plant is ground to a fine powder with which are added necessary additives also in powder form and transported by belt conveyor to the pug mill where water is added in precise quantities to provide clay of proper consistency. Photo No. 2 — Barclay Hay, pug operator, keeps a sharp eye on clay consistency through the grid below him and makes proper adjustments when necessary. The clay mass then passes through a vacuum removing air bubbles and is extruded into a continuous column of wet clay of exact proportions corresponding to desired dimensions. It is at this point that surface texture and surface colouring is imparted. Allan Shirley in Photo No. 3 stands beside a drum which is impressing an "antique colonial" texture to the brick.

The continuous clay column is then chopped by a series of taut piano wires called a cutter bar into thicknesses of individual brick. Men called hackers, photo No. 4, immediately then pick the brick moving by them and pile them precisely face to face on steel carts.

The "green" brick are then moved along on these carts to the dryers (photo No. 5 shows Darrell Taylor charging the dryers) where their moisture content is lowered by dry heated air before the brick are finally wheeled to the kilns and piled there by a forklift equipped with a device to unload them from the carts without disturbing the exact position of the units.

Beehive kilns such as those in use in Chipman are considered pretty old fashioned and the plant there is slated for a shuttle kiln of modern design to be built in the near future.

Photo No. 6 shows a rock-facing operation where blades built into heavy wheels tear off the face of solid bricks giving them a rock-like texture. The low productivity and high cull rate account for the high retail cost of this particular item.