

EVERYDAY OBJECTS AS MEDIATORS OF SELF:  
A MATERIAL CULTURE STUDY OF WORK, HOME  
AND COMMUNITY IN THE PULP AND PAPER TOWN  
OF GRAND FALLS-WINDSOR, NEWFOUNDLAND  
AND LABRADOR

JANE BURNS











Everyday Objects as Mediators of Self: A Material Culture Study of Work, Home and  
Community in the Pulp and Paper Town of Grand Falls-Windsor, Newfoundland and Labrador

by

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## Abstract

This thesis is a material culture study that examines how people in the pulp and paper town of Grand Falls-Windsor, Newfoundland and Labrador, use objects to mediate a sense of self against the dominance of an outside industry. Within the context of work, home, and community, this study looks at how residents use everyday objects—a lunch basket, newsprint from the mill, a kettle made from mill materials, or a paper hat worn in a Labour Day parade—to manage this relationship with the outside, the foreign, the imposed and to mediate a sense of themselves as individuals and as industrial workers. The primary artifact this thesis examines is the mill worker’s lunch basket—a locally made splint-style basket—analysing the basket as craft, symbolic object and appropriated object. The basket plays a key role in how residents manage their relationships: at the mill, workers use the basket as a rite of passage to gain entry to the mill and the meals the basket contains create sociability among workers; at home the basket both links and separates worlds constructed as private (home) and public (industrial work); and within the community, workers use the baskets to create an aura of mystery—not only of the basket itself and of the worker who carries it—but of the secrecy and restriction of the mill itself. This study also suggests that the artifacts themselves, whether they be woven like the baskets or temporary like the paper hats marchers wear in parades, echo the states in which they are used: the weave of the basket reflects the weave of the bond among workers, the temporary quality of the artifacts used in the parade represents the temporary opportunity to confront the industry. By looking at the same objects in different contexts,

this thesis concludes that the residents of this former company town use objects to challenge assumptions held about industrial workers, including their own assumptions that they are passive, and finds that they are active creators of their own identities.



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**Everyday Objects as Mediators of Self: A Material Culture Study of Work, Home  
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Newfoundland and Labrador**

**Chapter One: Introduction**

**1.1 Introduction**

Objects play meaningful roles in people's lives. They play a role in the lives of their makers and their users, as well as within the communities in which they appear. Often this role is one of mediation as people use objects to maintain a sense of self within relationships of domination.<sup>1</sup> This is particularly true of the people of the pulp and paper mill town, and former company town, of Grand Falls-Windsor in Central Newfoundland (see map, fig. 1.1).<sup>2</sup> Community members, especially the mill workers and their families,

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<sup>1</sup>I use the term "mediate" within this thesis in its meaning of "to be between." The term is used widely in material culture studies. Sophie Chevalier writes that the garden is a "mediator of sociability," in the way it mediates between family and neighbourhood (60). Steven Lubar explains that "Machines mediate because they are the physical parts of those political structures, of larger systems...They mediate between the people who make the rules and the people who have to follow them" (207). Tim Dant also writes about objects that mediate, but is using the term more in the sense of "media" and the messages that mediating objects send between people (153).

<sup>2</sup>Grand Falls-Windsor is the contemporary name of this community; this hyphenated name represents the joining of two once very separate communities. The town built by the company in 1905 was named Grand Falls, while Grand Falls Station was the name of the fringe community that grew up beside the company town. It later became known as Windsor. While the two communities have distinct histories, they were



have used a specific group of objects to maintain a sense of self, managing and sometimes challenging the dominant power relationships within the town, i.e. the industrial ideology imported by the pulp and paper industry that created the town in 1905.<sup>3</sup> They use everyday objects: a hand made lunch basket (fig. 1.2), newsprint from the mill (fig. 1.3), a kettle made from mill materials (fig. 1.4), or a paper hat worn in a Labour Day parade (figs. 1.5 and 1.6).<sup>4</sup>

Company towns are a unique phenomenon in society: they are single resource communities that have been built to support an outside economic interest.<sup>5</sup> Sociologist

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amalgamated under the name Grand Falls-Windsor in 1991. In this thesis I refer to Grand Falls-Windsor, Grand Falls and Windsor according to the name of the community during the time period I am discussing.

<sup>3</sup>Terry Eagleton suggests the word "ideology" is a concept so powerful that it is more like a "text" than a word. After considerable examination, he suggests six possible meanings for the word. I am using the fifth, i.e. that "ideology signifies the ideas and beliefs which help to legitimate the interests of a ruling group or class" (30). Meg Luxton and June Corman define ideology in the same way, in their analysis of how "economic restructuring" in the manufacturing sector of Hamilton, Ontario, affected working class families. They write: "We call particular systems of explanation ideological when they are implicated in the construction and maintenance of systems of domination" (30).

<sup>4</sup>Historian Neil White has written about similar issues as I do in this thesis. However, while I examine the material culture aspect of these responses, White concentrates on social behaviour, as residents of the company town of Corner Brook, Newfoundland and Labrador, "negotiated a sense of place in a locale designed primarily to ensure capital accumulation" through "the formation of fringe settlement, community organisation, lobbying and protest" in order to construct community "from below" ("Creating Community" 46).

<sup>5</sup>In his oft-cited work on Canadian company towns, Rex Lucas defined a single industry, company town as one "with a population of less than 30,000 in which at least 75 per cent of the working population serves the single industry and its supporting



**Figure 1.2 Retired mill worker Lou Barker carries a mill lunch basket into the Mary March Museum in Grand Falls-Windsor. His lunch basket was made by Angus Gunn.**





**Figure 1.3** Newsprint, or “sample paper,” through the handles of a mill lunch basket. The lunch basket on the left was made by Angus Gunn. The one on the right was made by Ray Osmond.



Figure 1.4 Kettle made from mill materials, to the right.





**Figure 1.5** Retired paper maker Jim Cater wears the hat, made from sample paper, that he wore in Labour Day parades. The hat was made by Angus Gunn in the 1980s.

Figure 1.6 Jim Cater wearing his Labour Day hat.



**Figure 1.6** Jim Cater wearing his Labour Day hat.

Rex Lucas wrote the classic scholarly work on Canadian company towns, and in distinguishing Canadian company towns from American ones in terms of technology and the community's sense of the past, he also described the overwhelming characteristic of all company towns: that their residents were profoundly aware that their lives and their community were run by outside decisions. He wrote:

[I]n direct contrast [to American single-industry communities], Canadian communities of single industry are twentieth-century products of an age of industry and technology. ...with few exceptions they have a short past, because they were born of technology....their inhabitants have no lingering myths about days gone by; they know that their community, jobs and lives depend upon twentieth-century science and technology. They know that their situation is bounded by bureaucracy and a precise division of labour which in turn depends on a complex national and international division of labour. They know that their future depends upon impersonal forces outside their community such as head office decisions, government policies, and international trading agreements (20).<sup>6</sup>

In addition to being aware that their economic lives were being controlled by outside decisions, those who lived in company towns also realised that their social and domestic lives were structured by the company. As folklorist Peter Narváez has written, company domination in a company town extended beyond workplace control, and into other

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institutional services" (17). Oiva Saarinen notes that these kinds of communities have been given various names, including resource, single-enterprise, company, single-industry and single-sector (219).

"Saarinen makes a similar points when she writes that the defining condition of a single industry town is that "the survival of these communities depends upon a highly specialised economic base linked to the fortunes of either a single company or a single economic sector" (219).

aspects of social life including: “housing, friendship groups, entertainments, and public activities” (Protest Songs of a Labour Union 2). Residents of Grand Falls-Windsor who lived in Grand Falls when it was a closed company town describe the control this way: “Everything in town, everything in town was the Company. Company this, [Company that]... You didn’t have any freedom” (Grand Falls-Windsor Oral History Society, transcript 94-008) and:

The Company seemed to run the whole show. ...In my time as a youth and a young person growing up here I recall the extent of the activities, the Company had the telephone system, they supplied power around the towns—Grand Falls, Windsor, Bishop’s Falls, Botwood. The Company also had a farm and they distributed milk around town (Grand Falls-Windsor Oral History Society, transcript 97-014).

This influence continued after the company town opened up, as the town maintains its reliance on the dominant industry. Considering these circumstances, this thesis explores how people respond to these controls: do they accept them passively or do they find ways to mediate them? What can artifacts tell us about how people live in company towns? Through an examination of a specific group of objects, this thesis seeks to explore how people living in Grand Falls-Windsor maintain a sense of self within their relationship with the outside, the foreign, the imposed. While the experiences I describe cover the years from the beginning of the mill to the present day, the time frame for this thesis is the present. These experiences are all a part of Grand Falls-Windsor today.

The town of Grand Falls and the pulp and paper mill were built by the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company (the A.N.D. Company) from the ground up in

1905 and the town remained closed to (most) outside enterprises and governance until the 1960s (see illustrations of the mill, figs. 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, and 1.10).<sup>7</sup> Grand Falls-Windsor is today a regional service centre for the communities in Central Newfoundland in which it is located. The town remains influenced, if no longer in terms of its employment rate, then certainly in memory and culture, by the outside industry that created it.<sup>8</sup> Mill workers, their wives, mothers and children use objects not only to challenge their relationship to the A.N.D. Company but also to the series of pulp and paper companies that came after. This thesis explores these relationships, looking at how residents of

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<sup>7</sup> I use the term “the mill” as everyone in Grand Falls-Windsor does, to describe the whole complex of industrial buildings that make up this pulp and paper mill. But as Betsy Bradley points out, the term “mill” is an “indefinite term.” She writes: “*mill* has become an overused and rather indefinite term in industrial architecture. During the decades flanking the turn of the nineteenth century, mill served as a generic term for various types of operations and their buildings. Extrapolated from the grinding machine it housed, the term was combined with prefixes that indicated the end product of a grinding process (flour mill, spice mill) or the material worked (steel mill) as well as products (textile mill, paper mill) or even the source of power (steam mill). The term also had a strong association with textile manufacturing” (29). While the textile mill was commonly a multistoried building, pulp and paper mills are typically made up of “larger buildings with great ground-story space to house machinery” (28). Bradley’s book is an extensive survey of industrial architecture in the United States of America. See also Lindy Biggs for a study of the factory as an artifact of industrial creation.

<sup>8</sup> Today the mill employs only about three hundred workers in the mill itself, compared to the Regional Hospital, also in Grand Falls-Windsor, which employs about 750. These figures are from telephone conversations with the Public Relations offices at Abitibi-Consolidated and the Central Newfoundland Regional Hospital, summer 2004. Despite this drop in employment figures, the mill’s importance in the community remains central, as demonstrated by the work of the Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Society. The Society has publicly reflected the historical importance of the industry back to the town by commissioning the painting of outdoor murals which depict early well known images of the industry.





Figure 1.7 Panoramic photo of the central mill building.



**Figure 1.8** Central building of Abitibi-Consolidated today. To the left is the concrete, practically windowless building that houses the Number Three Paper machine.





**Figure 1.9** Building housing the Number Three Paper machine, from the other side.



Figure 1.10 The back of the mill, showing the site on the Grand falls.

Grand Falls-Windsor have used the same group of objects not only in the mill, but also at home and within the larger community in order to mediate a sense of themselves as individuals against the imposition of an industrial ideology that promoted, among other things, an idealised separation of men's and women's work. Sometimes they use objects in order to confront and resist. At other times, they use them to express their identity to the larger community or to challenge assumptions about the lack of individuality in company towns. I will also show how these objects, while linking both home and work, highlight both the divisions and the connections of these two worlds. Women working in the home use these objects to negotiate assumptions about the private nature of their work, by extending their work into the larger world of the male industrial workplace. Thus, unlike material culture studies that have looked primarily at the role objects play in one particular site—such as those that look at the role they play in the home or in the workplace—this thesis takes a group of objects that all link both home and work and looks at how residents use these same objects in different ways within the mill, the home, and the larger community.

The primary artifact I examine in this thesis is the mill worker's lunch basket, a two handled, locally made splint-style basket, usually but not always made from local wood. The lunch basket is carried today by about two thirds of the mill workforce (figs. 1.11, 1.12, and 1.13). I first encountered this artifact when I went to Grand Falls-Windsor in the winter and spring of 1996 to research an exhibit I had proposed for the Provincial Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador. As a museum exhibit curator interested in how





**Figure 1.11** Mill workers carrying lunch baskets enter the front entrance of the mill.



Figure 1.12 A mill worker carries his lunch basket into the mill. Photo reproduced with permission from CBC, "Here and Now."



**Figure 1.13 A mill worker carries his lunch basket into the mill. Photo reproduced with permission from CBC, “Here and Now.”**

everyday artifacts can reflect the links between home and workplace, I was particularly struck by the prominence of this particular artifact in the local landscape, as I saw workers carrying the lunch basket back and forth from the mill to home. One of the women I interviewed described to me how she remembered the lunch baskets on her grandmother's porch as she was growing up in Grand Falls. She said:

The lunch baskets were everywhere. My dad had a half a dozen brothers, my mom had a half a dozen brothers—they all worked at the mill. I remember in the front porch at my grandmother's house—my mom's mother—the lunch baskets were piled up there. I never thought that was an odd thing as a kid to see that—these huge lunch baskets. There was huge amounts of food went in them as well—because it wasn't just meant to feed the person who owned the basket either. They would feed their friends as well—it was a social event. I was always intrigued. What came out of these baskets was very mysterious as well (JB 98-01).<sup>9</sup>

While her description reveals the absolute visual prominence of this lunch basket in the town, her words also indicate that this lunch basket plays a much larger role in managing a range of relationships: among the men in the mill as these meals create sociability; between the men who carry them and the women who pack the huge meals that went into these lunch baskets; and between the male mill workers and the rest of the community as they use the lunch baskets to create an aura of mystery—not only of the lunch baskets themselves and of the worker who carried it—but of the secrecy and restriction of the pulp and paper mill itself.

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<sup>9</sup>The citation format refers to the audio-tape numbering system I have employed in organising my field research tapes. This number JB 98-01 refers to tape number one made during the year 1998.



In addition to the mill lunch basket, this thesis also explores how residents of Grand Falls-Windsor, particularly through the artifactual content of Labour Day, manage their relationship with the planned townsite.<sup>10</sup> The other artifacts I will look at are “sample paper,” objects made at the mill from materials found there, including kettles, ash trays and blankets, and the creation of personal space through lunchrooms.<sup>11</sup> All these objects share something in common with the lunch basket: they are the artifacts locals employ to mediate a sense a self within their relationships between home and work, as well as between worker and management.

## **1.2 Researching the Material Life of the Mill**

This is a material culture thesis on an occupational topic. I come to this topic from two directions, both through my academic work and my museum exhibit work. With an M.A. in Folklore on an occupational topic, I have always been interested in the impact work outside the home has on people’s daily lives and their expressive responses

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<sup>10</sup>Although I talk in this thesis about the planned townsite and company housing, I do not include these artifacts as those that mediate between home and work. Others have addressed this issue. For articles on company housing see, for example, Richard MacKinnon, Diane Tye, and JoAnn Latremouille. For a material culture analysis of the built environment of an American company during the years 1913-25, see Margaret Crawford. For an architectural analysis of the company town in Europe, the United States of America and Latin America, see John S. Garner.

<sup>11</sup>The term “samples” or “sample paper” are the terms used locally to describe newsprint made at the mill which is formed into folded sheets and brought home by mill workers.

to that impact. I have also been interested in the concept of home as refuge and have viewed the material culture of the home with special interest. I agree with Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton when they write: "one can argue that the home contains the most special objects: those that were selected by the person to attend to regularly or to have close at hand, that create permanence in the intimate life of a person, and therefore that are most involved in making up his or her identity"(17). As well, I have always been interested in ways that work enters the home and the links between home and work. A number of museum exhibits I have worked on reflect that interest.

Before my research in Grand Falls-Windsor, I had worked on three fieldwork-based exhibits for the Welland Historical Museum in Welland, Ontario, two of them as Curator. Welland is an industrial town in the Niagara Peninsula of Southern Ontario, where many people of Eastern and Southern European descent have worked in the factories located there that produced electrical equipment, cordage and steel.<sup>12</sup> Separate exhibits explored the Ukrainian, Italian and Hungarian communities under themes of politics, religion, work and home, immigration, neighbourhood and, especially foodways.<sup>13</sup> Many of the people I interviewed for the exhibits had brought with them a

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<sup>12</sup>I wrote about these exhibits in article for the Ontario Museum Association. See Burns "Exploring Ethnicity."

<sup>13</sup>This focus on the European populations of Welland was an attempt to balance the previous focus of the museum which had excluded these groups in preference of presenting the more Western European and British heritage of the town. This new approach was initiated by then Curator/Director Mac Swackhammer.

wealth of material culture from their original homes, including photographs, documents, musical instruments and embroideries. The exhibit galleries were full of music, colour, stories and food.

After completing these three exhibits, I decided it was time to create an exhibit that did not use ethnicity as its main theme, as this is not the only way that people define themselves. When I heard a news item on C.B.C. Radio in May 1994 that the pulp and paper mill in Grand Falls-Windsor was being threatened with closure, I decided it was time to head back to Newfoundland, to Grand Falls-Windsor and the mill. In 1995 I proposed an exhibit for the Provincial Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador. I received funding for the research the following year.

In 1996, I spent five months living in Central Newfoundland while doing fieldwork for this exhibit. I lived twenty minutes (by car) outside Grand Falls-Windsor, in the community of Botwood, the seaport used by the mill when shipping out newsprint. While I had initially been most interested in the mill site itself, living outside Grand Falls-Windsor allowed me to explore the impact of the industry on the larger region of Central Newfoundland. As a folklorist, I was interested in the impact of the industry on everyday life and how local responses to the industry could be found in quotidian material culture. My objective in that exhibit was to display artifacts, photographs, songs and stories that showed the link between home and work. At that time, I conducted forty-eight sixty minute taped interviews and took photographs.

The experience was quite different from that in Welland. I did not find a wealth

of artifacts that would tell the story. There were no colourful embroideries brought from the homeland, no immigration documents that told stories of an escape from a land invaded. But, perhaps because the exhibit focused on an industrial site, I encountered extensive connections between the mill and home and between domestic and paid work contexts exemplified in material culture. One such example was the extensive use of “samples” in the home. Sample paper is made into colouring pads for children, used as coverings for tables (a “Grand Falls tablecloth” as one woman called them), and to protect freshly washed floors. The paper hats that the papermakers wear during Labour Day parades are also made from sample paper. In neighbouring Bishop’s Falls, work and play were conflated in recreational activity. Residents today remember children making snow balls--or more aptly “pulp balls”--from the pulp which leaked out of the pipe that ran from Bishop’s Falls to Grand Falls. And a retired railway worker in Botwood made a wooden model of the A.N.D. Company train--so important to Botwood’s industrial history--and placed it in front of his house.<sup>14</sup>

Most clearly central to the work/home connections, however, was the mill worker’s lunch basket. One mill worker explained how closely the basket is associated with mill identity when he said, “You know a millworker walking down the road because he’s got his basket--his wooden basket” (JB 96-08). In another case, a woman who had three sons and a husband working different shifts said of her domestic labour: “Shift work

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<sup>14</sup>For a local interpretation of the impact of the pulp and paper industry on the town of Botwood, see Botwood Heritage Society.

was hectic. I stayed home and cooked dinner. You might have one going on four [o'clock shift] and another might be coming off, so I was cooking meals all day" (JB 96-23). And another spoke of removing useful items from the mill to home: "The lunch baskets weren't for what you could bring into the mill--your lunches--but what you could bring out" (JB 96-11).

My fieldwork revealed how the mill workers use the lunch baskets to mediate status within the community: it is a symbol to those outside the mill that the man carrying it has a permanent job at the mill. Within the mill, mill workers use the mill lunch basket to mediate relationships and skill. I learned about the role the lunch basket plays in pranks in the mill and also how it is used by mill workers to negotiate their relationship with management. For instance, many things are "borrowed" from the mill and brought home in the basket.<sup>15</sup>

I learned as well that the lunch basket highlights the gendered division of labour among mill workers and their mothers and wives that remains typical of industrial

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<sup>15</sup>Taking materials from the workplace is a common theme in industrial work. The late Johnny Cash celebrated this act in his song, "One Piece at a Time" in which an autoworker builds himself a car from parts taken from the plant over a decade. The narrator of the song longs for a Cadillac and his solution is: "One day I devised myself a plan; That should be the envy of most every man; I'd sneak it out of there in a lunchbox in my hand; Now getting' caught meant gettin' fired; But I figured I'd have it all by the time I retired; I'd have me a car worth at least a hundred grand." I would like to thank Keith Coles for telling me about this song.

workers, especially shiftworkers such as these pulp and paper workers.<sup>16</sup> The role of food, both in the mill and at home figures largely in my research, as this is a lunch basket bringing meals from home to work. For, as sociologist Marjorie Devault writes:

[E]ating, apparently a biological matter, is actually profoundly social. What we eat, where we get it, how it is prepared, when we eat and with whom, what it means to us—all these depend on social arrangements. Food sustains social and emotional life as well as physiological being, through the cultural rituals of serving and eating. The work required to feed a family is partly determined by the material situations of household groups: the organisation of markets, supply and distribution of energy, and typical arrangement and accouterments of dwellings. But the work of feeding others is also shaped by, and in turn expresses, beliefs and customs of the society at a particular time. More than just the provision of edibles, feeding work means staging the rather complex social events that we label meals (35).

I learned that what the mill workers eat in the mill and the amount of time women in the home spend preparing that food hold both social and emotional meanings.

I also learned that the lunch basket can be secretive, as is the mill. Community members who are denied access to the contents of the mill, and the contents of the lunch basket, are very curious about both. I began to see the lunch basket as reflective of the mill itself, as a symbol of the mill.

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<sup>16</sup>See Valerie Preston et al for their observations on these issues in three contemporary Canadian paper making communities. Their conclusions include the observations that “most industrial shiftwork is still done by men, so many women have little choice but to adapt to and cope with the shift schedules of their partners” (6) and “a traditional gender division of labour is also apparent in the millworkers’ households when it comes to housework, with few differences among these three communities....By themselves, women are responsible for grocery shopping, food and meal preparation, and laundry, the routine tasks that must be completed on a daily or regular basis” (20).



I found that the lunch basket is an example of how people in Grand Falls-Windsor mediate their relationship with this outside industry, by making the “foreign” local. The lunch basket was most likely imported by the American skilled workers who came to Grand Falls to work on the paper machines themselves.<sup>17</sup> The form of the lunch basket was then appropriated by local basket makers, making it a local symbol of an outside industry. Indeed, the very townsite itself is an artifact brought in from the outside, a community planned by the industrialists who established the town of Grand Falls, and the community laid claim to that as well.

And so the exhibit, while it was to cover a range of topics, focused essentially on one artifact: the mill worker’s lunch basket. At that time, the Provincial Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador had no mill lunch baskets in their collection, despite the fact that the baskets are used in Corner Brook, Botwood, and Grand Falls-Windsor, and are locally made. This fact stresses the point that fieldwork continues to be essential to exhibits that aspire to reflect community experience. While the Museum has understandably concentrated on the role the fishing industry has played in the province, scholarship on the forestry industry of Newfoundland and Labrador remains limited.<sup>18</sup> I

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<sup>17</sup>Lew Larason identifies this style of basket as a mass produced artifact in the Northern United States, 1880 to 1920 (29). For the interplay between the factory produced object and the hand made one that attempts to recreate it, see Gerald Pocius, “Gossip, Rhetoric, and Objects.”

<sup>18</sup> Exceptions include the work of John Ashton, Ingrid Botting, Jim Hiller, Dufferin Sutherland and Neil White. White notes this lack of academic interest in the forestry industry when he writes that “Prior to Confederation a significant portion of



chose the topic of this thesis based on my desire to explore further the meanings of the artifacts I had encountered during my fieldwork for the exhibit.

From this fieldwork came the central theme for this thesis: that an everyday object like the mill worker's lunch basket could hold so many meanings beyond its utilitarian one. I was fascinated by how this one artifact plays a role in so many different contexts: at the mill, at home and within the community. It is locally made and distinctive to the region, so much so that students I talked to in classes who were from the Avalon Peninsula did not recognise it. However, those from Central Newfoundland and the west coast pulp and paper town of Corner Brook know it immediately as a mill worker's lunch basket. The fact that the lunch basket tells more than one story—it tells of men's industrial work as well as women's domestic work—was the aspect that most fascinated me at the time. And this multiplicity seemed to me to be contradictory, because while the lunch basket links these two worlds, it also separates them. While it brings women's work into the mill and beyond, it also highlights the gendered construction of women's work as

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Newfoundlanders resided in single-industry, "company towns." In fact, four of the largest population centres on the island, Bell Island, Buchans, Corner Brook and Grand Falls were built, owned and administered by single enterprises as an adjunct to their mill or mining operations. Yet there has been very little academic inquiry, historical or otherwise, into the nature of these communities, their social structures and built environment, just to name two possibilities" ("Historiography of Single-Industry Communities" 1). White does not note however that folklorists have made a significant contribution to the study of expressive culture in one industry and company towns in Newfoundland and Labrador, including Peter Narváez's work on Buchans, Gail Weir's and Richard MacKinnon's work on Bell Island and Contessa Small's work on Corner Brook.

“caring work.”

Because of this, when I chose to enter the PhD Programme in the Folklore Department in 1997, I chose Grand Falls-Windsor and material culture as my topic. For my PhD research, I returned to Grand Falls-Windsor for the summer of 1998 and attended the Labour Day celebrations that fall. I did further fieldwork in the winters of 2000 and 2001.

Fieldwork in Grand Falls-Windsor was not particularly easy. As warned by other Newfoundlanders, I did find Grand Falls-Windsor a closed place, not open to outsiders. While I do not wish to reinforce the stereotype, it took a lot of persistence to make contacts.<sup>19</sup> I found it easier to interview retired male workers rather than current workers and I found they were most comfortable being interviewed at the Museum, even when I had returned to the area as a PhD student and was no longer working with the Museum. It was also difficult to meet women with whom to speak. Eventually I asked officials with the mill union, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union, to help me. With their assistance I contacted women whose husbands and sons had worked with the mill, and I interviewed most of them in their homes. I also had difficulty obtaining biographies of the individual basket makers.

I completed this fieldwork while there was, as there still is in 2006, great

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<sup>19</sup>While I was transcribing tapes at the Museum one day, I saw local students hired by the Grand Falls-Windsor Oral History project encountering the same problems when trying to set up interviews with residents of the town.

uncertainty about the economic future of the mill.<sup>20</sup> There have been cutbacks, technology has changed the types of jobs the men do, and there is a smaller workforce. I was also in town in 1998 for one of the first strikes in years.

Besides oral interviews, I have been given permission by Abitibi-Consolidated to reproduce their images from the large photograph collection they possess, including the early collection that documented the start of operations (for an example of these photographs, see fig. 1.14) and the larger collection of photographs that appeared in the company newsletters. I also obtained video footage taken by CBC which is reproduced with permission in this thesis as stills.<sup>21</sup> As well, I consulted the transcripts of the Grand Falls-Windsor Oral History Project and have their consent to quote from these transcripts. Finally, I took many photographs in Grand Falls-Windsor, of lunch baskets, Labour Day parades, sample paper and quilts made from mill materials.

### **1.3 The Object as Mediator**

My theoretical approach in this thesis is informed by those who have studied the mediational role that material culture can play. I will draw on all these approaches in order to explore how residents of Grand Falls-Windsor have used objects to mediate their

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<sup>20</sup> Discussions between the Newfoundland and Labrador government and Abitibi-Consolidated to keep the second, smaller paper machine running are on-going.

<sup>21</sup>The 1972 film written by Grand Falls native Gordon Pinsent, "The Rowdyman," contains excellent ethnographic footage of the use of the lunch baskets in the pulp and paper mill in Corner Brook, Newfoundland.



**Figure 1.14 Mill workers, circa 1909.**

lives as individuals against the industrial ideology, sometimes to confront and resist, other times to express identity to the larger community. Material culture scholars have studied the role objects play in mediating between past and present, between the private and the public, between workers and managers, between the stages of work life, between the global and the local, and between time and space. This section will provide a summary of some of these studies.

One of the more political examples of linking the collective past with the present is provided by Neil Jarman's study of the use of banners in the Ulster Protestant parading tradition in Northern Ireland. Jarman studies not only the significance of the changing fabric of the banners, from locally made linen to British silk, but also the message of the banners: the commemoration of past events in the present. As he writes: "material culture has been central to the creation, expression and distribution of the developing Ulster Protestant sense of collective identity and their allegiance to Great Britain" (121-122). In the celebration of particular events, the past is revered and used to politically inspire those in the present. He states:

A commemoration and celebration of past heroes, of glories and sacrifices is displayed both as a morality and exemplar to the living...Few of the myriad events of Irish history are publicly commemorated in any way. Many minor events and personalities of Irish and Ulster history remain in the public eye solely on the banners. It is only at the major parades that the wide range of historical events and personalities are gathered together for the general public to be shown the full sweep of history. In this manner the lack of any coherent narrative among the jumble of banners is an important factor in equalizing events of apparently vastly different significance, a means of condensing several hundred years of history by denying and refusing any temporal order...History and time are condensed

into a single concept of the past, an entity constructed of categories and events: sacrifice, martyrdom, betrayal, faith. This past has not ended; it continues to structure the feelings, expectations and fears of those acting in the present, who experience it as tradition (143).

The marchers use the banners to powerfully mix past with present.

Perhaps the most familiar and commonplace examples of objects that people use to mediate between past and present, especially in terms of their personal work lives, are found in the form of folk art, and include memory art, miniatures and yard art. These are objects collected or made to reflect upon the past in the present, a form of life review.<sup>22</sup>

Mirroring the enormous impact the world of work has on people, these objects often take the working life of the creator as the subject, as people mediate not only the past but their experience of it, through the creation of art. Many studies by folklorists have illustrated how even after retirement, a person continues to participate in or reflect on their working life by creating artifacts such as memory objects, yard art or miniature scenes. For their exhibit on creativity in the elderly, Hufford, Hunt and Zeitlin found copious examples of people still engaged in this manner in their working lives.

Michael Owen Jones has written about retirement as one of the critical junctures in a person's life that motivates creativity. He writes:

Art also has hygienic value. Many people create aesthetic forms during critical junctures in their lives or in times of anguish or turmoil (illness, retirement, marital problems, loss of a loved one). Physical expression helps objectify complex, unconscious, or vague feelings and issues. Doing something rhythmic and repetitious when troubled tends to calm, free the

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<sup>22</sup>See in particular the essays in Mary Hufford, Marjorie Hunt and Steven Zeitlin.



mind, or unlock emotions. Once produced, forms can symbolise achievement, garner praise, and increase self-esteem. Creating memory paintings, applying craft skills learned in youth at a later point in life, or making things in traditional ways with or for others can comfort through symbolic connectedness (“Art: Folk” 60).

He looks at how people can respond to grief through creativity, whether it be grief as a result of death of a close one or death of a stage of life, such as retirement. He writes:

Grieving and creativity have much in common: the search for structure and order, and the reaffirmation of self. In grief there is loss, followed by a feeling that the world is empty and poor. Expressive structures and objects that one creates fills the void caused by the loss—first comes a state of doubt, then order and belief, then wholeness once more (Craftsmen of the Cumberlands 192).

Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has called quilts the ultimate memory object. She writes:

Perhaps the quintessential example of the synthetic memory object is the quilt. The scraps are literally parts of a life and are often used to recall the larger whole....the patches used to make quilts retain their identity (“Objects of Memory” 333-334).

Her point is supported by the curators of the exhibit on creativity in the elderly. They note that many of the quilts made by the women they interviewed—women who had worked primarily in the home—depicted scenes portraying their work lives as mothers and home makers. The curators describe a “farm and memories quilt,” made in 1932 by Vermont resident Ina Hackett Grant. In brightly embroidered blocks were “depicted scenes [of] various farmhouses, distinguished as the birthplaces of children or where much of life was lived; seasonal activities like maple sugaring, partridge hunting and

gardening; and vanished technologies dependent on horses and oxen” (Hufford, Hunt and Zeitlin 56). Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett suggests that the very materials themselves were often a way of mediating between past and present, of incorporating the past in the present. She writes that: “the recycling of materials is a common method of embedding tangible fragments of the past in an object that reviews and recaptures the experiences associated with those fragments” (“Objects of Memory” 333). She continues: “from such indigenous modes of life review, folklorists have much to learn about the construction of the self through time and the transformation of experience through materials readily at hand” (“Objects of Memory” 336). Through objects, the quilter mediates a sense of self over time.

The retired woods worker has been studied by many folklorists. For instance, Jane Beck writes about Burleigh Woodward, a retired teamster and logger who carved miniature horses and logging scenes. Woodward used these objects to bridge his past and his present after his health made active work impossible. Beck writes: “Through his carvings, Woodward continued to live and work in the woods long after he had lost the health and the strength to do so” (Beck in Hufford, Hunt and Zeitlin 42). For Woodward, the objects mediated two worlds: his former world as worker and his current one as retiree. In both worlds, he remains strong.

Creating miniatures is also a way of showing that skills learned on the job are still retained. Marsha MacDowell writes about a retired lumberjack, Milton C. Williams, who had cut wood for a living in the northern part of Michigan's lower peninsula. She

writes:

When he retired, he turned his cutting activity to smaller forms, carving numerous figures engaged in lumber camp activities. Almost every one of his carved and painted figures is portrayed with a tool in his hand. His depiction of the lumber camp's blacksmith shop not only includes all of the blacksmith's tools, but also shows the smith at work repairing a horse's shoe. William's attention to detail in his portraits of his fellow lumberjacks provides information on ethnicity, age, clothing and camp status (184-185).

Reliving the skills and the accomplishments of work allows the retired worker to reconcile these two worlds: past and present. Making miniatures can also be about controlling events in a way that was not possible when living it, especially when dealing with the most traumatic kinds of work. Varrick Chittenden has written about an American Vietnam War veteran who created miniature scenes of his work as a soldier in Vietnam, as an attempt to gain control over particularly horrible experiences. Chittenden writes: "Being able to tell whole stories as he holds the small scenes in one hand and points to details with the other is very satisfying for him" (25). Creating the miniature becomes a way of fixing the past.

Hufford, Hunt and Zeitlin provide another example of the type of reflection provided by creating these miniatures in their description of the works of retired plumber John Hartter. They write:

And in his retirement, John Hartter humourously gave form to the indignities inherent in his career as a plumber, steamfitter, and water-meter reader in papier-mache tableaux. In one we see him putting his face behind a stranger's toilet to read the meter. In another he portrays the unjust distribution of labour among journeymen and their apprentice

steamfitters. ...The things that don't go according to plan, that keep life from being as one imagines it should have been, may also provide the *raison d'être* for fantasy elements in life review—the ways of fixing flaws, mending ruptures, and reclaiming what is not lost beyond recall (43).

The authors quote John Hartter's articulation of his sense of the past in the present.

Harterter says: "I guess I never really retired...mentally from the job" (47). The authors conclude that Hartter used objects to bridge "the gap between his sense of himself as a working pipefitter and his new identity as a retired pipefitter" (47).

Miniatures can reflect a stage of life. Susan Stewart finds this, and notes the role that they play in life review. She notes that miniatures are:

[L]ocated at a place of origin (the childhood of the self)...and at a place of ending (the productions of the hobbyist: knickknacks of the domestic collected by elderly women or the model trains built by the retired engineer) and both locations are viewed from a transcendent position, a position which is always within the standpoint of the present lived reality and which thereby always nostalgically distances its object...The miniature, linked to nostalgic versions of childhood and history, presents a diminutive, and thereby manipulatable, version of experience, a version which is domesticated and protected from contamination (68-69).

The miniatures made by the elderly are different in perspective from those made by the middle aged artisan: their very size reflects a need for order, a sense that smaller things are controllable things. In their role as an object of reflection, they mediate between past and present.

Yard art is a third example of how people use objects to mediate between past and present. As Gerald Pocius has written, people use their yards:

as a vehicle for personal history or personal topical commentary. Objects

are sometimes created that have a close connection with incidents in an individual's life—perhaps a boat on which the yard owner worked, or a model of the childhood house. Actual objects that have been of significance to the individual may be located there—a spinning wheel used by a great-grandmother....A person's life history, then, can often become artifactual (A Place to Belong 258-259).

People place objects in their yards in order to publicly communicate about their past.

Of course yard art is also a way of mediating between public and private. The creator chooses which objects she or he wants the public to see. Other objects are kept in the home where a further division between public and private exists, the public extending from the yard into specific rooms. In his study of Calvert, Pocius found that the "interior rooms of kitchen and parlour are integrally linked, it seems, to the exterior 'room' of the yard" (A Place to Belong 227).

The public and private is also mediated by objects within the house. Henry Glassie provides an example of a very personal collection, "a bank of private history," imbued with intimate meanings, in his description of Ellen Cutler's dresser in her home in Ballymenone, Ireland. Glassie writes:

Passing her dresser of delph and taking a seat at the corner in her hearth, you find yourself inside her great work of art. Around you spins a scatter of goods; plates gleaming in rows, a chromo of a thatched cottage, a shelf bristling with glass animals, tea tins with the queen's portrait, brass candlesticks, china dogs, a calendar with a scotch whiskey ad, a teapot shaped like a house, a creamer shaped like a cow, a framed photo of her grandchildren, a plate with a donkey bearing creels of turf, another with a poem, an embroidered "Lead Me and Guide Me," and in the window, next to the Bible, a glass dippy duck.

Most of the things around you are neither folk nor art. They were tossed out by manufacturers who, stretching for customers beyond the

limits of a particular culture, eliminated complicated meanings and reduced things to usefulness or prettiness. Mrs. Cutler waded into the tide of commodities and selected the things that appealed to her. But the act of selection tells little about her because her choice was terribly constrained by economic realities. Further, most of the things in her kitchen were selected for her; they were gifts. But as she arranged them around her, she created a new and personal ensemble that tells much. The elements of her kitchen's decor may or may not be art, but their arrangement yielded a great piece of folk art. It expresses her being. She is a 'house proud' woman. She keeps things tidy and neat and arrays them carefully. Her kitchen is a hosting of memories, a bank of private history. All those gifts surround her with silent voices chatting gently, endlessly, of loved ones who are absent, of happy days ago. To create her great work, she employed her community's old rules of order; its trope of symmetry and clarity, its classification of things into low, dark, and useful or high, bright and lovely. 'Lovely' is her word. She has arranged things worthy of love into a conventional pattern through which she welcomes the visitor into her own special place (Spirit of Folk Art 240-241).

Glassie views Ellen Cutler's collection as her way of remembering people, of mediating her relationships with people not immediately present. Plates are everyday objects, and collectors often value everyday objects as a way of preserving their memories of the person who used it. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi makes a similar point when he writes:

Next to giving permanence to the self, the most frequent symbolic use of household objects is to give permanence to the relationships that define the individual in the social network. In this sense things stand for the ties that link a person to others....Relatives of all kinds are recalled by the objects filling up the home. There is the quilt sewn by Aunt Elly, the bed in which Grandmother was born, porcelain cups from Great-grandmother's family, and the Bible inscribed by even more distant ancestors...In a stable culture, where relationships continue uninterrupted from cradle to grave, there may not be a need to secure one's position in the web of kinship through material symbols. But in our mobile American society things play an important role in reminding us of who we are with respect to whom we belong ("Why We Need Things" 27).



Judy Attfield provides an example of an older couple who, on their move to a retirement home, felt they were “ruthless” in unsentimentally clearing out their possessions before the move (260). What she finds, however, is that they have imbued those very few possessions they did keep with intense emotion. She writes:

In spite of the Tuckers’ declaration that “you can’t take possessions with you”, and their “ruthless” determination to become detached from most of their possessions, nevertheless strong attachments and genuine sentiment was installed in small items that took on intense significance and were given pride of place within their more circumscribed domestic space (260).

In contrast to this need to preserve objects, others allow their possessions to age. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has written: “Such objects are not ‘saved’; they are allowed to grow old....they accumulate meaning and value by sheer dint of constancy in a life...generally incorporated into daily life, rather than set aside for display”(“Objects of Memory” 330). In Grand Falls-Windsor, many mill workers carry a lunch basket used by a relative, both as a reminder of that person and because it is the right kind of mill lunch basket to carry. In this case the lunch basket represents what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett would call a “material companion,” valued for its continuity (“Objects of Memory” 330).

Objects also mediate active relationships within the workplace, among workers and between workers and managers. Yvonne Lockwood has studied creativity in the workplace and concludes that the tradition of workers making objects from the materials of work is an act of defiance towards management. In addition, workers assert their

individuality, personalise their workplace, in a number of creative ways. She writes about laundry workers, autoworkers and steelworkers who decorate their space in defiance of their bosses, a point underscored by management's insistence on clearing these items away because "the plant 'needed to look like a plant'"(207). Steelworkers who decorate their hard hats were particularly targeted. Lockwood writes:

Steelworkers also fall victim to management's housecleaning. According to one worker, everyone in the mill eventually decorates his or her hard hat. Sometimes decals are merely stuck on, or individuals' names and slogans are painted on. The more interesting examples are elaborate painted scenes covering the entire hat, scenes whose message often is meaningful only to other mill workers or is a social comment about the workplace. Management tolerates this embellishment for a while, but eventually rounds up all hats for a "safety check" and at the same time cleans them up, like the janitor who cleans graffiti from bathroom walls (207).

Management enforces the impersonality of uniformity, but workers see power in personalising objects. Lockwood writes:

The embellishment of hard hats, beautification of the workplace, and the subsequent destruction of these artifacts are all part of an on-going struggle for control, where one side attempts to personalise and individualise the environment while the other strives to transform humans into replaceable parts of a large, humming machine (207).

Workers mediate their struggle against managers through these objects.

Folklorists have also studied how workers use artifacts to mark a change of status within an occupational setting. Archie Green provides an example of a retired electrician who, leaving work on his last day, had to walk under an arch made by his former coworkers as they held high their pipe benders as a gesture of farewell using the tools of

their trade (349). In his extensive study of the expressive culture of firefighters, folklorist Robert McCarl noted how the retirement dinner moves the firefighter from active to inactive status. While the focus of his study is primarily on the role narratives play in easing this transition, his study is similar to Green's in showing how the dinner itself acts as a way of easing this change. His analysis includes the role one particular object played at the dinner he observed. The retiring fireman is presented with a toy water bucket, to remind him of the real buckets used by fellow firefighters both at their work and also within play. The retiree uses the opportunity presented by the retirement dinner to correct an incident in his career when he had reacted inappropriately to a prank played on him by his coworkers. As McCarl writes:

Jerry is immediately presented with a tangible symbol of his own mistake, the toy bucket. Rather than trying to pass this symbol off as simply another joke gift, Fiorelli pointedly uses it to force Jerry into an explanation, and he quickly responds. The audience, which up to this point in the roast has been eager to encourage the quick-paced patter of dialogue, becomes more quiet because they sense the seriousness of the interchange in contrast to those that have preceded it ("You've Come a Long Way" 413-414).

The retiring firefighter and his former coworkers used an object to mediate the successful transition to retirement.

Scholars have also concluded that artifacts mediate between the global and the local. The global is often represented by the outside, imposed, artifact, whose introduction has the potential to alter the local. Pocius has written that some research had assumed that the introduction of new things would automatically cause social disruption

(A Place to Belong 14). However, he concluded that how a group appropriates an artifact and attaches a cultural value to it becomes as revealing as the design of the artifact (A Place to Belong 13). For instance in Calvert, the uniform “outside” CMHC bungalow was appropriated by locals and used spatially in the same way as local homes. Similarly, other outside artifacts are appropriated and given local significance.

Daniel Miller has addressed this issue of the global and the local in his study of Coca Cola in Trinidad. Challenging a prevailing academic assumption that Coca Cola is the ultimate symbol of American capitalism, he writes that he wanted “to localize Coke partly because I was disenchanted with tedious anecdotes, often from academics, about Coke and global homogenization” (“Coca-Cola” 184). Miller takes an ethnographic approach to trace the complex role the drink plays locally, as it fits into an elaborate local system of preferred tastes, local production practices and mediation between local and global. He finds that this global symbol is actually a powerful local one, and addresses this in a chapter entitled “Coca-Cola: A Black Sweet Drink From Trinidad,” writing:

The title of this chapter has therefore a specific intention. It is a joke, designed to plunge us down from a level where Coke is a dangerous icon that encourages rhetoric of the type West versus Islam, or Art versus Commodity, and encourages the slower building up of a stance towards capitalism which is informed and complex, so that any new critique has firm foundations resting on the comparative ethnography of practice within commodity worlds (170).

His study reveals that it is possible for global symbols to operate on the local level.

Similarly, Daisann McLane explores the relationship between the global (in this

case the foreign) and the local (the familiar) in her study of Haitian metal workers. Like the workers in the pulp and paper mill in Grand Falls-Windsor, she finds that these workers transform “the foreign into the familiar” with their own hands and by doing so, take “symbolic control” of a product made primarily for export (118). They mediate the foreign and imposed through objects: they create objects for themselves out of the product with which they are working.

Finally, scholars have studied how immigrants use objects to mediate over time, place and space. As Hufford, Hunt and Zeitlin have written:

The immigrant has to overcome three kinds of distance—spatial, temporal and cultural, and his expressions emphasize a distinctiveness that is ethnic as well as generational.... In his basement in Chicago, the 80-year old Vilius Variakojis puts a stop to time, recreating in miniature scenes from his childhood village in Lithuania (56).

In a recent M.A. thesis, Jade Alburo takes the role of objects and immigration further, looking at objects not just across cultures but also in terms of the politics of dislocation and inclusion, addressing issues such as colonialism and cultural hegemony. She studied the role of the gift packages, called *Balikbayan* boxes, (named after the returning natives who fill them with gifts for family and friends), that returning immigrants bring on visits home to the Philippines. She unpacks, both literally and symbolically, the meanings these boxes hold. She summarises:

[T]hese packages are metaphors for the dislocation of Filipinos resulting from their immigration to the United States. These boxes are also sites, in which *balikbayans* are positioned as neo-colonizers and perpetuate American cultural hegemony. This examination suggests that *balikbayan*



boxes are connected to a host of complex issues, including kinship ties and obligations, politics and economics, colonialism and postcolonialism, immigration and diaspora, globalization and commodification, exchange and reciprocity, travel and tourism (ii).

Alburo examines the role of the box in bringing gifts to the Philippines and in bringing products back to the United States. In doing so, she also looks at the physical properties of packing the box, the very placement of objects within the box a symbol of the relationships it joins. She writes: "In many ways, the tremendous personal effort and care that go into these packages (or the lack thereof) reflect the *balikbayans*'s own sense of affection or obligation toward their recipients" (128-129). She finds that the specific items that immigrants bring home to family members strengthen their family bonds while also supporting the immigrants' status as successful Americans who value American consumerism. Alburo writes:

When they visit the Philippines, Filipino Americans often occupy the position of neo colonizers. By bringing their selectively positive stories of immigration and "made in the USA" goods, they unintentionally perpetuate the colonial hegemony of the US. In doing so, they ensure the continued domination of the Philippines hinterland by the American heartland. ...*Balikbayan* and their boxes uphold the economic and cultural dominance of the US in the Philippines...they promote the idea of the excellence of America and anything American. *Balikbayan* boxes therefore enable returnees to showcase their success as well as their generosity (245-246).

Like the mill lunch basket in Grand Falls-Windsor, people use this box to both link and separate two worlds.

These examples of the ways scholars have studied objects as mediators are the

prime studies that inspire this thesis. However, I draw on other material culture studies as well, including studies on the hand made object and its maker, especially those by Michael Owen Jones, Henry Glassie and Rosemary Joyce; studies on the drive behind creativity as explored by Michael Owen Jones, Gerald Pocius, and Henry Glassie; those on the use of space as analysed by Yi-Fu Tuan and Edward Relph; and those on the material culture of occupational parades by Susan Davis, Jack Santino and Archie Green. I employ the feminist writings of Meg Luxton and Marjorie De Vault in exploring women's domestic work and the concept of the home as domestic workplace. I also look at the symbolic role objects can play, influenced by the recent collections edited by Daniel Miller, Why Things Matter and Home Possessions, where the symbolic meaning of the material world is stretched to include and redefine material culture as far as radio sound. These essays allowed me to broaden my understanding of the material world beyond the hand made. Finally, Jules Prown, especially in American Artifacts, and Christopher Tilley in Metaphor and Culture, challenged me to explore the emotive quality of objects. By applying theories of material culture that range from studies of the celebration of workers' tools and the creation of art in the workplace, to studies of the creative drive of the individual craftsperson, to studies of the emotive quality of objects, and studies of the material culture of the kitchen, I explore the many meanings a specific group of artifacts, especially the mill lunch basket, has for the people of Grand Falls-Windsor both within the home and the industrial workplace. The basket holds symbolic meaning as an object of mystery, reflecting the mystery of the mill itself and ultimately,

acting as a symbolic object in everyday use. It reveals “the ceremonial against the everyday landscape.”<sup>23</sup> It is easy to assume that everyday objects are merely utilitarian and not deliberately expressive but ethnographic research, in looking at the same objects in different sites, can show that the same objects can hold many meanings in those sites and that these meanings reveal much about the communities in which they appear.

#### 1.4 Organisation of this Study

This introduction has stated the topic of this thesis: how people use everyday objects to mediate their varying roles. Informed by scholars who have looked at objects as mediation, this thesis moves from the world of the male mill worker’s industrial life to the physically smaller world of domestic life and back out into the larger community to explore how residents of Grand Falls-Windsor use objects to negotiate relationships in this former company town.

Chapter Two lays the groundwork for asking the question: why do people in Grand Falls-Windsor use objects as mediation? I provide an historical overview of the political climate that existed in Newfoundland at the time the mill was established and discuss the kinds of concessions that were given to this outside industry in order to encourage the company to establish the mill. I look at the types of work men and women were doing in Newfoundland at this time in order to explore the enormous change in style of work that millwork, and life in a company town, represented. I provide information on

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<sup>23</sup>I borrow this phrase from Jo Tacchi, who uses the phrase in her article on how people use radio sound to “create an environment for domestic living”(25).

communities people left when moving to Grand Falls, as well as information on where early skilled workers moved in from, especially the American skilled paper makers who most likely brought the tradition of the mill lunch basket with them. I then look at the establishment and opening of the mill, and the imposition of an industrial ideology that was both hierarchal and paternalistic. This ideology was characterised by an intentional separation of men's work from women's work; allocation of housing according to status in the mill; restriction of shopping to company-owned stores; and the introduction of "discipline" and shiftwork in an effort to control those who worked to produce pulp and paper for export. I describe the role of organised labour at the mill and the importance of Labour Day in Grand Falls-Windsor. I describe mill workers' attitudes towards management and the changes in millwork and workforce size due to technological change. Working relationships at the mill have been particularly strained over the last ten years, with continuing talk of labour force downsizing.

Chapter Three examines the use of objects within the industrial realm and looks at how mill workers use objects to mediate the foreign and the outside, i.e. the industrial presence—both physical and ideological. I discuss how workers respond in material ways to the context of industrial work by taking symbolic control over the paper they produce and by appropriating the symbol of the industry: the mill lunch basket. I discuss the development of lunchrooms because workers talk about lunchrooms as an extension of the lunch basket. The lunchrooms allows the creation of a space that mediates personal (meals) with the impersonal (the industrial plant) and represent the worker's sense of his

right to personalise and own the industrial space. I explore in this chapter the history of the mill lunch basket in other North American industrial spaces and show how the locally-made versions of the basket that exist in Central Newfoundland indicate that this outside artifact was easily appropriated by members of the local community. Men in Central Newfoundland, some of them carpenters, others mill workers, have made their own version of the lunch basket, either for personal family use or to sell to local mill workers.

This lunch basket also identifies the man who carries it as a mill worker, and the mill worker remakes it as his own through years of use.<sup>24</sup> In Chapter Four I explore objects as mediators among mill workers. Working within a sometimes dangerous and always uncomfortable space, workers use objects to maintain good working relationships, sociability, and a sense of self. Within the informal but essential culture they create in contrast to management's official culture, workers use objects such as the mill lunch basket within pranks and other expressive behaviour. In other words, they use objects to negotiate relationships and mediate status. The lunch basket has a role in initiating a new worker and is a marker of the bond between workers.

Chapter Five moves out of the mill and into the physically smaller sphere of the home and looks at objects of mediation between that site and the mill. While it will be shown in Chapter Two that the industrial ideology established by the A.N.D. Company

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<sup>24</sup>Glassie calls this "creative layering," noting that people now make things out of the things other people have made (Material Culture 81 ).



promoted an idealised vision of a separation of men's work from women's work and of industry from home, my study of the use of objects within this community reveals that residents did not accept this separation. Mill workers and their families challenge the ideology of separate spheres of work and home by bringing objects home from the mill, i.e. sample paper and things hidden from management in the basket. Women extend their domestic work into the industrial one, through the meals they provide. The lunch basket highlights the home as work place for women and I discover a darker side of women's role in packing baskets in the devaluing of women's domestic work.

Chapter Six moves into the larger world of neighbours and community and examines how mill workers use objects to mediate a sense of self within the townsite. While the original pulp and paper company, the A.N.D. Company determined where people lived, where they would be seen, and how they would be seen, mill workers symbolically invade the entire community through their participation in Labour Day parades. I discuss the artifactual content of Labour Day and how the temporary nature of the artifacts represents the temporary opportunity to challenge management. The ephemeral nature of the artifacts in parades reflect the ephemeral or fleeting opportunity to confront: neither will last. The physical parade represents the right to be seen, a symbolic invasion of the streetscape. This opportunity was taken to the fullest by mill workers in 1968, when they paraded floats that criticized the company for introducing one large paper machine that replaced three smaller ones, which then caused a reduction in the workforce.

I also discuss how the lunch basket identifies the mill worker within the community as someone who has entry to the restricted world of the mill plant. Especially for children, the lunch basket is a closed box sealed as firmly as the windowless mill building that houses the paper machines. In this context, the lunch basket symbolises the mill and gives the mill worker status because only he knows the contents of both.

Chapter Seven provides my summary of findings. Based on ethnographic research I show that the way that people use everyday objects can reveal much about how people try to subvert, resist and mediate power relationships, both at home and at work. And while residents of Grand Falls-Windsor may say they are a “passive” people, my study of these artifacts will show otherwise: residents in Grand Falls-Windsor use these artifacts as meaningful elements of their lives, to confront the image of themselves as passive and to express individuality in challenge to a dominant industrial ideology. This use of objects is both everyday and symbolic, as individuals negotiate their varying identities in terms of industrial worker, husband, father, community member, domestic worker, wife and mother.

## **Chapter Two: Power in Grand Falls-Windsor**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The dominant power in Grand Falls-Windsor has always been the power held by the pulp and paper company. Since the beginning of the town's existence, the industry and its practices have had an enormous effect on residents' work and on their domestic and community lives. Foreign industrialists brought to Grand Falls an ideology that included: the construct of the "disciplined" shift worker; the promotion of the ideal of a male breadwinner supported by female domestic worker; and control over where townspeople lived and how they socialised. The impersonal space of the mill, the attempt to separate men's industrial work from women's domestic work, and the hierarchal layout of the town itself have all been part of the ideology of turning residents into industrial workers in a manner that would be productive to the company. This chapter explores the industrial ideology imported with the pulp and paper industry and sets the context for my exploration of the meaning of the specific group of everyday objects identified in Chapter One.

Grand Falls started its life as a company town, established by outside economic and political decisions. Life inside a company town tended to be extremely structured, with the company deciding everything from hours of work, to the houses people lived in and how they lived in those homes. Even when the town matured and the closed town

became open, patterns and relationships established by the founding company remained.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the only thing that changed in Grand Falls when the town opened was that the townspeople saw the company as less distant, and more as an employer to be directly challenged when appropriate, as it was by the floats in the 1968 Labour Day parade that I will discuss in Chapter Six.

In this chapter I outline the establishment of the mill and the town of Grand Falls. I follow a chronological order to examine how the aspects of the company town have shaped Grand Falls-Windsor over time, looking at government policies that encouraged the establishment of the mill, the goals of the industrialists who ran the mill, and the impact of this new way of work and home on the people who moved to Grand Falls. I establish the range of relationships affected by the industry. I look at the industry's control over the workplace through factors such as shift work, over the home through its promotion of an idealised separation of women's work from men's work, and over community by establishing on what streets mill workers and their families lived based on the status of the job the millworker held.

The first section of this chapter provides the political and historical context to the establishment of the mill, covering the period from 1900 to 1905. The following section deals with the years from 1906 to 1959 when the A.N.D. Company built the mill and the

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<sup>1</sup>Lucas defined four stages in the life of a company town: the construction of the community, recruitment of citizens, transition, and maturity, with the opening up of the closed town representing the mature, and final, stage.

town and ran Grand Falls as a closed company town. The third section describes the I.W.A. strike of 1959, detailing how this pivotal strike in Newfoundland's history highlighted the social isolation of Grand Falls and revealed the attitudes of many residents towards those who worked outside the town, particularly towards those who worked in the logging operations. The fourth section describes the attitude of townspeople towards the mill in the period after the opening up of the town, as there came to be an increased willingness to more directly challenge the mill's subsequent owners, Price Newfoundland, Abitibi Price and (as of today) Abitibi-Consolidated. The chapter ends with a consideration of working conditions in the mill and employees' attitudes towards their work.

## **2.2 The Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company and the Pulp and Paper Mill, 1900-1905**

Grand Falls-Windsor is one of the few communities in Newfoundland to be located inland, away from the coast, the ocean and the fishery that was the mainstay of Newfoundland's economy.<sup>2</sup> When construction began in 1905 near the site of the Grand

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<sup>2</sup>Due to the nature of the resource they are trying to access, most single industry towns are isolated. As Lucas writes: "The one-industry community exists to house the employees who exploit the area's natural resources; the location of the community, within a few miles, is predetermined by the location of the resource, the electric power necessary for the process, or the technological requirements imposed by the transportation system that moves the product. For this reason the communities are, almost without exception, found in the sparsely settled parts of the country" (393).



Falls rapids on the Exploits River, it established a complex that would come to represent the first major industrial operation in Newfoundland: a pulp and paper industry that drew on the forests and water power, as well as the women and men, of the region. As historian Jim Hiller has pointed out, when the A.N.D. Company began operations in 1909, the mill was “at the time, the biggest and most modern pulp and paper complex in the world and the first integrated operation in the Atlantic region of British North America” (“Origins” 63).

The mill was owned by the Amalgamated Press of Great Britain and run, through the A.N.D. Company, by the British brothers, Alfred and Harold Harmsworth, later known as Lord Northcliffe and Lord Rothermere. They were the publishers of a number of well known English newspapers, including “The Daily Mail,” “The Daily Mirror” and the “London Evening News” (Ashton “The Badger Drive” 219). As it has been widely reported, these newspaper publishers were worried at that time about relying on the open market for their sources of newsprint, and their worries were underscored by the threat of German domination and impending war in Europe (Ashton “The Badger Drive”; Hiller “Origins”). They needed alternate sources of newsprint that could replace the Scandinavian sources on which they currently relied (“Origins” 51). Concluding that they must manufacture their own newsprint, the Harmsworths, through their representative Mayson Beeton, researched various locations and chose Newfoundland as the site of their operations.

Newfoundland at that time was a colony of Great Britain operating under a system

of Responsible Government. It was promoting a national policy to expand its economy in order to reduce its dependence on the fishery as the colony's main source of revenue. In support of this, Newfoundland had already established a railway in the 1880s and 1890s, "whose ultimate justification was economic diversification" ("Origins" 58).<sup>3</sup> Historian Ingrid Botting described the government's motives:

The policies of successive Newfoundland governments were centred on diversifying the island's economy, providing employment for the island's growing population, and breaking the island's over-dependence on the fisheries (54).

Thus, at the same time as the Harmsworths were looking for a site to produce pulp and paper, the government of Newfoundland was interested in industrial expansion and had, by the early 1900s, decided to try to develop a pulp and paper industry. To Newfoundland Premier Robert Bond in 1903, the establishment of the pulp and paper industry was the first significant result of the national policy ("Origins" 42).

This interest in expansion meant that the government of Newfoundland was more than ready for an outside enterprise such as that suggested by the Harmsworths. As Hiller writes: "Premier Bond was anxious to attract settlement and he was prepared to allow concessions that were greater than the existing legislation provided" ("Origins" 52). By 1904, negotiations with the Harmsworths had reached the stage that they had:

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<sup>3</sup> Hiller has studied the global economic climate that both coincided and combined with the interest of the government of Newfoundland interest in an industrial expansion. See his "The Politics of Newsprint" and "Origins."

[Definitely] committed themselves to a Newfoundland development in the Exploits watershed, in spite of dire warnings from established papermaking areas that the wood was of the wrong kind, the ice too heavy, and the fog so wet that the paper would never dry. Early in 1905 [A.N.D. Company representative] Beeton registered the Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company in St John's. The major shareholders were established Harmsworth companies—Amalgamated Press, Associated Newspapers and Pictorial Newspapers. Beeton was President, Northcliffe and two of his brothers directors.... The Harmsworths had reason to feel satisfied. They had obtained what amounted to a perpetual lease on extremely favourable terms of 2,300 square miles of timber lands, and a good source of water power linked by rail to the head of Red Indian Lake and to shipping facilities at Lewisporte. Managed properly, the Exploits watershed promised an unending supply of pulpwood ("Origins" 56-57).

While the agreement was extremely generous, the Newfoundland government reportedly felt that the price was warranted, believing that the "the colony would be amply compensated by the opening of the interior to settlement and industry" ("Origins" 58).

The pact did, however, receive political criticism and opposition, based on the feeling that: "the colony was conceding too much for too little" ("Origins" 59). The government responded to this criticism with amendments that it felt would address the criticism. These provisions proclaimed that:

[R]esidents of the colony could freely enter the demised area and hunt, shoot and trap there; remission of customs duties was limited to twenty years; the amount of Crown land was not to exceed 2,000 square miles, rent would be paid on mineral areas, the property was not to be fenced and the company was to provide land without charge for churches and schools; improved land outside the demised area was exempt from expropriation ("Origins" 59-60).

Despite these government concessions, historians have concluded that, given the long-term political consequences for Newfoundland, the opposition to the deal was justified.

The result, according to Hiller, was that Newfoundland “remained for a while longer as an outpost of an Atlantic rather than a continental economy”(“Origins”63). The development did not involve an attempt to break into the North American market, guaranteeing for Newfoundland an economic relationship with the rest of the continent. Rather, it was an “attempt by British firms to safeguard for themselves forest supplies”(“Origins” 63). Although the stated goal of the government in encouraging interior settlement had been to establish an agricultural population, the result was that, in the end, “the Newfoundland forest played host to the foreign capitalist, the company town and the pulp and paper mill” (“Origins” 42). Or, as Botting summarised the situation:

[I]n the long term, the dominance of the forest industry by foreign ownership meant that newsprint profits were invested elsewhere, Crown lands were consolidated, the Companies became incredibly powerful in the island’s affairs, and the government lost control of the forest resources and its subsequent ability to manage them. In the short term however pulp and paper complexes like Grand Falls created a lot of waged work and absorbed a significant amount of surplus labour from the fishery (74).

The deal ensured the presence of foreign ownership driven by outside interests. The impact of this deal for the whole of Newfoundland was mirrored by the relationship that the residents of Grand Falls themselves would have with this pulp and paper industry. Producing a product meant primarily for export, the residents were governed by the outside and the foreign rather than the local.<sup>4</sup> By 1905, the foundation had been laid for

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<sup>4</sup> Alan Arbitise and Gilbert Stetler have written that one of the characteristics of a single resource town is “the lack of any local control over the town’s economic

an outside industry with outside interests to come in and establish a new way of life. The pulp and paper mill opened in Grand Falls in 1909 with three paper making machines.

### **2.3 Grand Falls as Company Town: 1907-1950<sup>5</sup>**

At the official opening ceremonies of the mill on October 9, 1909, Lord Northcliffe listed the adversities he felt the company had had to overcome to open this new enterprise, including warnings from those in Canada, the United States of America and even Newfoundland itself. He also spoke highly of the Newfoundland men hired to work at the mill. He said:

This vast fabric of industry, this immense maze of machinery. These, the largest buildings in the Island, and almost the largest of their kind in the world, have been erected here in what the greater part of the world regards as a foggy and desolate land, by the enthusiasm of Mr. Beeton and his staff, and by the patience of those shareholders who have poured their money into the country year after year, for the past four years, with truly British pluck and tenacity....The English investors were informed that there was no wood in Newfoundland or, if there was wood, it was the wrong kind. We were told that the Exploits River could never be harnessed to power on account of the great quantity of ice.

It was urged that labour would not be obtainable. No foreigners

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development. The economic base is controlled by outside corporations or governments who determine the nature and extent of the extractive or processing activity and thereby determine the size of the local work force and the degree of local prosperity or growth. Fluctuations between boom and bust depend on the vagaries of the international market in resources or corporate and government decisions, not on local initiative as is often the case with other types of communities" (415).

<sup>5</sup>The foreword (no pagination) to a book of reminiscences of Grand Falls put together by the town's Senior Citizen's Club, refers to the era from 1905 to 1960 as "the paternalistic years."



would ever stay here, and we were solemnly assured that the Newfoundlanders would never desert their favourite amusement of codfish catching for a settled industry...I remember one of our stockholders who, never having been to this country, asked me about the great "labour bogey." You know that at the outset, we were told we would have to import skilled Norwegians and Swedes to make paper...[in original] This shareholder asked me whether or not it was true that Newfoundlanders were all mostly of English or Irish extraction. I said "yes" and he remarked, "Why import foreigners? What Swedes and Norwegians can do I imagine these people of British and Irish stock can do equally well." He was right.

I put the question to one of our most highly skilled American foremen two or three days ago: "How do you find the Newfoundland operatives?" He replied, "Apt, obedient, careful and most willing." And so it is that in this large labyrinth you will find hundreds of Newfoundlanders engaged in the superintendence and the working of machinery, of whose existence they had not dreamed a few years back (Excerpts from opening speech reprinted in A.N.D. News, October 1959, pp. 7-9).

Despite his confidence in these men of British and Irish stock, his fear "that the Newfoundlanders would never desert their favourite amusement of codfish catching for a settled industry," foreshadowed the relationship between industrialist and Newfoundland mill worker in struggles over industrial work, including differences in attitudes towards "discipline" and how to manage dangerous work within imposed, impersonal space. Northcliffe's words imply the imposition of a dominant relationship that would attempt to control the mill worker's life both within and outside the mill buildings.

Where had these new workers moved in from? The new industry had required a great many workers to build the complex. In 1907, construction workers were needed to build the townsite and the mill, which included a hydro electrical dam. Later, mill

workers were required as the mill started production. Workers moved to the site from across Newfoundland, especially from communities which could access Grand Falls by train (fig. 1.1).<sup>6</sup> Botting researched the origins of the people who first came to Grand Falls and found:

Grand Falls was also ideally situated to attract a willing force from surrounding regions. Northwest of Grand Falls lay Notre Dame Bay, site of the island's first major mining industry, and of a vast number of fishing and logging communities, the large fishing communities of Twillingate and Fogo were located northeast of Grand Falls, and to the southeast lay the fishing/farming/sawmilling regions of Bonavista Bay and Trinity Bay (64).

For the most part, then, these people had moved in from outport fishing communities where "traditional economies [were] based on a mixture of fishing, subsistence agriculture, small-scale lumbering, hunting and trapping and the household production of foodstuffs and other basic necessities" (Botting 12-13). Women's domestic work included work in small scale agriculture, berry picking, making clothes and baking bread; men worked at the fishery, logging, sealing and occasionally left the island for work (Botting, 20-22). While working in the fishery had already drawn these people into

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<sup>6</sup>In her analysis of the 1921 Newfoundland birthplace data for Grand Falls residents, Botting found that "the men, women and children who were Newfoundland-born, came from over 300 distinct source communities, most of which were in the districts of Notre Dame Bay, Bonavista Bay, Trinity Bay (especially the north shore), Conception Bay and St. John's" (161). Indicative of the impact of railway access at the time, Botting points out that most of these communities would have been able to reach Grand Falls by train whereas those not linked by the train, such as those from the south and west coasts, could not (62). See David McFarlane, for the story of one family's, the Goodyears, move from Notre Dame Bay in to Grand Falls for work associated with the mill.

unequal relationships with the fish merchants, these women and men faced enormous change when they moved to Grand Falls.

After construction was completed, many of these Newfoundlanders stayed on to work at the mill at a range of jobs, including millwrights, electricians, carpenters, store owners, water tenders, finishers, time keepers, and as labourers who worked in the grinding room or the wrapping room. This workforce was complemented in these early years by a workforce of at least 800 part time loggers (Botting 89). The mill offered full time instead of seasonal work in the fishery and forests and introduced paid, cash wages in contrast to the fishery economy.

These Newfoundland workers were joined by men from England and Scotland who arrived to work in Grand Falls as mill managers, some with their wives and families. Engineers and skilled paper makers came from Canada, especially Nova Scotia, and from the United States of America, especially the New England states. Some of the early paper makers also had connections to Sweden where paper making was a dominant industry. The town's population grew; by 1913, the population of Grand Falls was 4000.<sup>7</sup> By 1919 there were five paper making machines, and six by 1925.

Mill unions were formed in Grand Falls by as early as 1910 (Scott 121; Gillespie 26). The skilled paper makers, those men who work directly with the paper making machines, are credited with bringing unionism and union traditions with them from the

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<sup>7</sup>Botting, Appendix A, "Population Pyramids and Growth Rates, Grand Falls, 1911-1945.

United States of America and Canada. Certainly, some of them had come from the Maine town of Millinocket and had worked there with the Great Northern Paper Company. That company had had a labour agreement in place as early as 1912, covering such issues as schedules, holidays, wages and grievances (Duff 6).<sup>8</sup> So when these paper makers came to Grand Falls, it seems that they organised unions almost immediately. As historian Bill Gillespie wrote: "less than five months after the first paper rolled off the machines they formed Local 88 of the International Brotherhood of Papermakers" (26). Shortly after that, in 1913, the labourers and tradesmen at the mill formed Local 63 of the International Brotherhood of Pulp, Sulphate and Papermill Workers, Local 63 (Scott 121; Gillespie 38). The first president of Local 63 was A.G. Duggan, who was later the first president of another union established at the mill in 1920, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local 1097 (Scott 121).<sup>9</sup>

Establishing unions was described to me by one Grand Falls-Windsor resident as

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<sup>8</sup>Labour historian David Montgomery has written that: "in New England's paper mills, the huge cantankerous Fourdrinier machines turned out paper under the notoriously craft-conscious tenders" (125).

<sup>9</sup>Although this local disappeared during the 1921 strike, it was reestablished as Local 512 in 1939. By 1947, the machinists had organised as Local 1906 of the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (I.A.M) and in the 1960s, the office workers organised as Local 255 of the Office Employees International Union (Scott, 124). The papermakers union and the labourers union merged in 1973 into one with the international union, the United Paper Workers International Union, and in 1974 as members of the Canadian union, the Canadian Paper Workers. Today, mill workers and loggers are in locals of the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. For a chronology of the unions representing the loggers through the years, see Bill Gillespie's chapter on the I.W.A. strike, 105-118.

an act of resistance to company control, especially for those in the mill deemed “labourers.” He described what he felt was his grandfather’s motivation for joining a union. He said:

My grandfather came out of Cottrell’s Cove...past Botwood. He came in to be part of the construction, and then went to work in the mill. He became a foreman in the core plant—the cores that the paper used to go on. He became very active in the union....There must have been a tremendous sense of security in having a job, in this sea of really desperate times and conditions...But I think they felt the need to protect themselves, to resist being absolutely controlled. Historically, my grandfather would not have come from a tradition of unionism. It would be foreign to Newfoundland. They had been part of a barter system, where you had no control on what you paid and on what you got for your fish (JB 96-17).

The mill unions started Labour Day celebrations in 1910 and these celebrations remain an important part of how workers express identity, to both managers and the rest of the community, in Grand Falls-Windsor today. I discuss these events in Chapter Six, where I look at how mill workers use objects not only to express their right to be seen but also in what light they should be seen.

Grand Falls, however, was not the only community established in response to the opening of the mill. As Grand Falls grew, so did the fringe community of Grand Falls Station. This community grew up alongside the closed company town of Grand Falls. It was first known as “shanty town,” then as Grand Falls Station and then as Windsor.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>The existence of a shanty town outside the closed town was a typical feature of company towns across Newfoundland and Canada. N. White writes: “The establishment of these unplanned settlements on the outskirts of company-controlled areas appears to be a common occurrence in pre-Confederation Newfoundland. On Bell Island private



Many of the people who lived in Grand Falls Station did so because they were excluded from living in Grand Falls by the A.N.D. Company as they did not have a permanent job with the mill. But there are those in Grand Falls-Windsor today who believe that the town started in defiance of Grand Falls.<sup>11</sup> One person told me why he thought people chose to live there. He said:

They had well, a lot more freedom than the people in Grand Falls because it was controlled, you know. The Company controlled everything you did, until '62 or sometime when they finally cut their chains and let 'em go on their own. But that was good and bad for us. In Windsor, we sort of grew up haphazardly, you know (JB 95-04).<sup>12</sup>

Some residents of this fringe community definitely had full time jobs at the mill. One current resident explained:

That's how Windsor got its start, or the town, just, well, the seasonal workers, the people that came here to work during the summer months. And they'd be shacking out here, what they used to call 'shacking'. And

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residences were constructed with the change of companies after World War 1; Grand Falls had Windsor; Townsite had Corner Brook West; and Buchans had Pigeon Inlet" ("Creating Community" 20).

<sup>11</sup>N. White makes a similar point about fringe residents in Corner Brook, writing: "For workers who did not want to be dictated to by the company in both their work and home lives, Corner Brook East and West must have been viewed as relatively "free" places, a "safety valve" that mitigated dependence to a certain degree" ("Creating Community" 52).

<sup>12</sup>Grand Falls and Windsor were amalgamated in 1991, but not without opposition from Grand Falls, where taking on things like Windsor's municipal problems with water was viewed as too expensive. Others see the class issue and clash of cultures between the two communities as too strong to support a name like Grand Falls-Windsor, and suggest both names need to be replaced by a neutral name like Exploits (JB 96-08).

then some of them settled, built permanent homes, and they used to have boarders in, of course....Grandfather and my father were full-time workers in the mill, right through, you know (Grand Falls-Windsor Oral History Society, transcript 94-047).

And this resident explained that his grandfather had built a home there in order to remove himself from the overriding control of the company town. He said:

When the mill started up, he was brought in here from Nova Scotia to work, as a machine tender, you see. They had to bring in so many skilled people for operating the machine, I guess. Anyhow, that's when Grandfather came here and he lived in Grand Falls at the time, of course. In a company house like all company controlled towns, and my grandfather was a very independent cuss. Wasn't allowed to do what he wanted, his garden or his hens or whatever. I don't know what it was all about, but anyhow, he rowed out and moved outside the town limits, and he was one of the original settlers out here in Windsor, I guess...It was just that he wanted to do certain things that weren't permissible. I don't know. I've heard my dad talk about it. They couldn't have hens, or they couldn't have this, that, or something else, and they get only a little small piece of land, and my grandfather always had a big garden, so he come out here and took in a piece of land running from the other side of that school, right up to Rice's Avenue up there and all in over. And as a kid, we grew our own vegetables (Grand Falls-Windsor Oral History Project, transcript 94-047).

For this mill worker at least, escaping company control, if only over domestic issues such as where he lived, meant living outside the company town.

Other domestic issues controlled by the company were over where people shopped. As Botting discovered:

From the community's inception, household production of foodstuffs was highly regulated by the AND Co., which provided subsidised dairy products to all residents, who also had to purchase all goods at the company store. The company store had a monopoly on consumer goods until 1912 when the St. John's Royal Stores opened a branch in Grand Falls. As a means of resisting the monopoly of the company store, the

residents contacted and encouraged a Co-operative Store to open. And although they were to buy their food at company stores, people continued to purchase game, including moose, caribou, rabbits, trout and salmon from outside the town, relying on an informal economy based on the exchange of goods and services with people inside as well as outside the town (124).

In Chapter Six, I show how people in Grand Falls-Windsor have continued to be involved in an informal economy in the way sample paper is valued within the community.

The most obvious example of how the company dominated residents' domestic lives is in the allocation of company housing, including the style of housing and its location. The A.N.D. Company promoted housing within the context of the "Garden City." In his opening speech that day in 1909, Lord Northcliffe spoke of this. He said:

[T]he shareholders whom I am proud to represent are as anxious that the health and welfare of people here should be regarded as that we should look after dividends. We hope to make Grand Falls a Garden City and I am pleased that, in my humble way, we are beginning to do so, and that at a time when the mind of almost every human being in this town has been bent on the task of constructing the mills (F.A. Price 85).

The Garden City movement was a favourite of industrialists in England, and Lord Northcliffe is often named as one of the supporters of this idea. Historian Stephen Ward writes: "The patronage of important industrialists such as George Cadbury and the newspaper proprietor Alfred Harmsworth was crucially important in the establishment of a bridgehead of middle-class tolerance and sympathy" for the concept (5). The movement was the vision of Englishman Ebenezer Howard, and the goals were born out

of a desire for both social and political reform, stressing “co-operative action and especially the collective ownership of land” (Ward 2). But the implementation of this ideal to the new community of Grand Falls turned out to be more social than political. Harmsworth was more interested in the social planning components of the Garden City method than the cooperative and collective goals that had also been conceptualised as part of this approach (Botting 77).<sup>13</sup>

In practice, housing in Grand Fall, through both location and size, became a material marker of class and status within the hierarchy established by the Company. Workers lived in smaller houses than mill managers and lived further away, physically and thus in status, from the mill. As folklorist Elke Dettmer has noted of Grand Falls-Windsor, the arrangement of housing was “carefully organised to accord with the status of the occupants as workers or managers of the mill” (270). And as urban historians Gilbert Stelter and Alan Artibise write: “In a pre-automobile age, it was necessary to make it possible for employees to walk to work, so that the distance between residential areas and the industrial plant was usually very short. A form of segregation by class and ethnicity was built into most of the early towns by relating house and lot sizes to occupation” (423).

While not of management status, the skilled paper maker was given higher status

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<sup>13</sup>See N. White “Creating Community” for an overview of the industrialist’s interest in the Garden City movement and the implementation of these ideals in a more utilitarian way than first imagined by Howard.

than the mill labourer and this status was reflected in housing. One woman, whose grandfather had been one of the original paper makers recruited to the community, detailed to me her family's housing history. She said:

My dad was raised on Circular Road, right? All the mill managers lived on the other side—closer to the mill. That's where all the big houses are. Where my grandfather lived, now—he was a paper maker so they had better houses than the little tiny ones further up. They had the big two storey houses. They weren't as big as where the mill executives lived. So my dad was treated better than some of the workers because he was a paper maker and his dad was a paper maker. And I guess they thought they got something pretty good because it was better than what other people had....My mom's dad was an electrician so—again—a fairly high standing in the hierarchy of workers (JB 98-01).

This pattern of company housing highlighted the class divisions in the town itself, and paralleled divisions in the workplace. The same speaker explained to me: "My dad was a paper maker actually so we were kinda considered at the top of the ranks of the men who worked at the mill because paper makers made more money than some of the other workers" (JB 98-01).

Certainly, members of the mill management had the largest homes. Some residents of Grand Falls-Windsor today still refer to the part of town the mill managers lived in as "Millionaire Row" (JB 96-03). This designation was a reflection of the status given to the manager in the workplace. One resident explained this hierarchy to me when he said:

Years ago, you never saw a mill manager. Seeing the mill manager was like seeing the Queen. Or the Prime Minister of Canada. Never in the workplace. Never. He stayed up in his ivory tower. He ran the mill from up there (JB 96-09).



This allocation of housing based on the stature of the occupant's job in the industry has been observed in other Newfoundland company towns. In his study of company housing in Wabana, Bell Island, Richard MacKinnon noted the privileged positioning of the mine managers' homes. He wrote:

These houses were prefabricated in Montreal and shipped to Bell Island in the 1950s for the use of mine managers and they contrast sharply with the other company houses. By locating these houses on a hill overlooking the mine sites and segregating them from the established homes, management consciously delineated the difference between the average worker and mine management (68).

In deciding where people could live, the company also decided where people could be seen within the community. As I will show in Chapter Six, Labour Day parades were one of the ways mill workers challenged the company's control over where they could be seen, and in what light.

The A.N.D. Company set the style of homes and restricted expression. While smaller, uniform housing was provided to most workers, managers were supplied with not just larger houses but houses which varied in architectural form and detail, underscoring the Company's belief in the value of individualism which they thus denied most workers. One resident remarked on this when he told me: "There's more individualism to the houses built for the managers. With the workers' houses, like those on Circular Road, there are eight or ten in a row with the same design" (JB 96-26). Another resident described how the Company took care of their homes. He said:

The Company done everything in them days, eh. Your house was painted, your electric cost nothing, hardly, you know. It was a more benevolent company, you know—it was a company town. And of course, you did whatever the Company—you couldn't do your own thing. Like, you had to paint the house—it had to be painted according to whatever the Company [wanted] (Grand Falls-Windsor Oral History Society, transcript 95-045).

Controlling the allocation of housing also allowed the company to sanction a certain type of life: the male breadwinner supported by the women working in the home. Houses were not allotted to single men but to the married worker. As Botting states:

The AND Company believed the success of the mill depended on the eradication of pre-existing labour traditions of its permanent workforce, and on a sexual division of labour that would relegate women to the role of keepers of the home, inhabiting the private sphere of the household—now a unit of consumption (85).

And although the A.N.D. Company had begun selling off the houses and allowing residents to build their own homes by the 1930s, it continued to emphasise the importance of gender-specific roles in a number of ways. For example, women were encouraged to take courses in domestic science in order to learn how to cook economic and “tasty” meals while also being taught how to set a table and serve a meal “correctly” (Botting 143-144). In Chapter Five I show how women and men in Grand Falls-Windsor use objects to challenge the industrial ideology of separate spheres while at the same time the industry has been successful in creating a gendered division of labour based on the mill and home.

Controls applied to mill work as well. Industrialists used the term “discipline” to

describe the kind of “settled” work that Lord Rothermere described in his opening speech. Those who continued to pursue traditional ways of work and life such as hunting and participation in an informal economy were defined as “undisciplined” and unfit for industrial work. The A.N.D. Company saw its goal as turning these new workers into an obedient workforce who would follow the structure of industrial work (Botting, 84). Vincent Jones was the mill’s first manager in 1910. An entry in a company history reveals his, and the A.N.D. Company’s, attitude towards the Newfoundland workers. It states:

Years later Jones remembered the task of recruiting local workers as “almost a nightmare,” and complained that none of the potential workers “were acquainted with the rudiments of factory discipline, had never heard a mill whistle, punched a card or received a pay envelope” (Anglo-Newfoundland Development Company, unpublished manuscript, author unknown, 1955, CNS, Coll-188, chpt 7, 23 as quoted in Botting 90).

His words provide a contrast to Lord Rothermere’s opening statements.

Newfoundlanders had been in a similar situation before. Historian Bill Gillespie described the situation at the mine on Bell Island in 1894. He writes:

For the first time Newfoundland workers were confronted by a large, foreign company with attitudes and business practices forged outside Newfoundland. The mine managers were Canadians who lived in a separate area of town the miners dubbed “Snob Hill” and Wabana, as the mining town was called, was Newfoundland’s first full-fledged company town with its company store, its company staff house and rows of company housing. The miners were fishermen drawn from communities of Conception Bay. The mine represented an opportunity to earn a steady cash income. It was preferable to the unreliability of the fishery but, to the Company’s dismay, the miners did not conform to the discipline of industrial employment in a way the company was used to elsewhere. Although they were now miners, the men’s attitudes had been shaped by

the sense of independence and freedom learned in the fishing boat. Although some miners moved their families to Bell Island, others commuted on a seasonal, monthly or even weekly basis. They were hard working but, in the Company's view, they were unreliable. Absenteeism was frequent and the miners seemed frustratingly unaware of the capitalist work ethic. Consequently, even after thirty years, BESCO was hiring spies to try to fathom the miners' seemingly undisciplined attitude toward work (35-36).

Peter Narváez described a similar situation in the mining town of Buchans, where miners came from a background in which working time was flexible and unmeasured. He writes: "In its most elementary sense, a reorganisation of living patterns in strict accordance to the clock, regardless of the season, meant adaptive difficulties for Newfoundlanders" (Protest Songs of a Labour Union 63). These miners expressed their resistance to "discipline" in song and recitation (Protest Songs of a Labour Union 63- 66).

I interviewed a former member of the Board for the A.N.D. Company, who had served on the board from the 1960s into the 1990s, when the mill was owned by Price Newfoundland and Abitibi Price. He articulated the concern with discipline. Referring to the establishment of the mill in Grand Falls, he told me:

This was a long term industrial project and Newfoundlanders were not industrial workers, people. They were fishermen, farmers, woodsmen. Fishermen first....Really what the Harsmworth brothers had to do was come over here, go into the centre of the island, attract people from the coasts of the island and convert them from being fishermen, part time fishermen/part time farmers/part time loggers, and convert them into being industrial workers and that's quite a challenge. It took two generations to do it, and to have the workers in Grand Falls realise that if he's working at the mill, he couldn't goof off and look for a caribou on a nice fall day. Take off his tools and go out and shoot a caribou or a moose or if the partridge were flying, to go out. Cause that's what the fishermen or farmer

would do, if the weather was right (JB 96-14).<sup>14</sup>

Labeling it “acquired discipline” he concluded: “And by God it was a success. They made wonderful industrial workers out of people whose fathers before them were brought up in a very very different atmosphere” (JB 96-14). Yet his use of the expression “goof off” reveals a fundamental conflict between industrialists and those they employ.

The sounding of the mill whistle was the symbol of this imposed discipline. This sound regulated men’s, women’s and children’s lives through the enforcement of a rigid schedule of shift work. It marked not only the beginning and end of a shift, but also sounded an hour before a morning shift began so women could get their husbands’ meals ready and send them off to the mill. One woman said:

Back then, we all worked by the whistle. The women worked by the whistle too. The whistle blew at seven. You had to be up then, making the man his breakfast. It was a rush. You didn’t stop much. The kids worked by the whistle too because they were off school at twelve and had to go back at one. Sometimes you’d have the lunch packed in the basket

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<sup>14</sup>Despite this speaker’s lack of enthusiasm for the practice, going off to the woods is a common Newfoundland practice. Firstly, the woods have also always been an important resource in Newfoundland. As Botting has pointed out: “From the beginning of European exploitation of the fishery and of early settlement, the forests of Newfoundland were considered an open access resource, and they were used by fishers and others for firewood, building materials and other subsistence needs” (51). Secondly, the woods have been a source of recreation, and many people in the region disappear to “the cabin” on weekends and during the summers. In fact, the appeal of the cabin is given by some as the explanation for the diminishing importance of Labour Day in Grand Falls-Windsor, as better highways have attracted people outside the town. Ashton noted the appeal of the woods in a 1985 thesis on logging and lumber camp songs. He wrote: “In the rural areas of the province (and this still encompasses much of it) a large number of inhabitants spend much of their working lives and an even greater proportion of their leisure time in the woods” (Lumbercamp Song Tradition 6-7).

and one of the kids would take it to the mill. You had to get supper on the table when the whistle blew (Field notes, April 1999)

Shift work demands a particular change in lifestyle and affects the complexion of the entire community. One man told me: "Our life ran around shifts and an allegiance to the mill. It was a very structured environment" (JB 98-01). Another resident described shiftwork as resembling a constantly turning wheel. He said:

Shift work had a definite affect on the town—half the people were in bed in the day time. There used to be a very large workforce, always on rotation. Everything ran on this rotation. There were women getting up early in the morning to have breakfast ready for their husbands who was getting off at eight o'clock in the morning. Everybody's life revolved around this rotation. School revolved around it. Kids had to run down with lunch baskets at eleven o'clock in the morning, eleven thirty in the morning, to make sure their father had a lunch. So, it was like a spinning wheel all the time, and it never stopped. Never came to an end. If you went to someone else's home, you knew what was going on—Dad was in bed, you didn't make no noise. Only someone from a one industry town would understand this (JB 01-12).

The company provided leisure activities as well. The former Board member explained to me that it had been "a stroke of brilliance" for Newfoundland's industrialists to set up sporting facilities for workers to use in their spare time. In this way, workers would be too busy and would not be able to "cry into their beer" complaining about their lives and their work. He said:

The paper towns. And Buchans, Bell Island. There was a marked degree of intelligence shown—never broadcast, but shown or displayed quietly—by the management of these company, paper or mining towns. By encouraging sport or athletics. For a very good reason. That is a good diversion from their work and if they didn't have these things, encouraged by company and management, they'd be sitting around bitching while they



were drinking their beer. So it was a good financial investment. It was just good management. ..It was part of a good intelligent choice to what could have been social problems....A good piece of corporate strategy (JB 96-15).

Lucas has written that planned recreation in company towns is a form of social control. He wrote: "Many of the post industrial revolution leisure time activities were explicitly set up so that young workingmen would be saved from the grog shops, taverns and beer parlours" (192). Encouraging sports and even building the facilities themselves have frequently been part of corporate strategies of control.<sup>15</sup>

While housing and hierarchy at work emphasised the class structure within Grand Falls, these kinds of practices had ramifications for the residents' relationships with the communities outside the town as well. The isolation it produced disconnected residents from the experiences of others. This was seen most obviously in the I.W.A. strike of 1959.

#### **2.4 The I.W.A. Strike of 1959: Class Division in Central Newfoundland**

It is not possible to write about the history and character of Grand Falls-Windsor without addressing the I.W.A. strike of 1959, a pivotal event in the history of the entire province in terms of labour relations, provincial-federal relations and of course, mill

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<sup>15</sup>William Littman discusses how there has been "a long tradition of industrialists using design to advance the moral state of workers" (92).

workers versus loggers.<sup>16</sup> For while the A.N.D. Company was handing out scholarships to the children of mill workers, sponsoring Christmas celebrations and sporting events, the loggers and their families who lived outside Grand Falls in communities such as Badger and Millertown were excluded. This contrast in the lives of mill workers and loggers was particularly obvious during the Depression of the 1930s. Conditions in many parts of Newfoundland became so desperate it led the colony to give up Responsible Government and return to a dependency on England. But while most men in Grand Falls at that time had some work, the Depression was particularly hard on the loggers, who lived and worked under deplorable conditions.<sup>17</sup>

Loggers continued to work under these harsh conditions into the 1950s. At that time they were represented by the Newfoundland Lumbermen's Association, under the leadership of J. J. Thompson. By the late 1950s, the loggers were ready for new leadership and when H. Landon Ladd of the International Woodworkers Association (I.W.A.) came to Newfoundland on an organising drive, the loggers were more than open to his ideas and to new leadership.

The A.N.D. Company, however, was not open to the I.W.A.'s intention to try to represent the loggers. According to Bill Gillespie, the Company:

liked the cosy relationship they had with Thompson and they knew from other paper companies just how tough the I.W.A. could be...The A.N.D.

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<sup>16</sup>See in particular Bill Gillespie's chapter on the I.W.A. strike, 105-118.

<sup>17</sup>For more on the working conditions of loggers, see Dufferin Sutherland.

Company decided to do whatever it could to prevent the IWA from winning control of its loggers (108-109).

Neither was the I.W.A. popular with the mill unions in Grand Falls. It had failed to consult the mill unions in their initial contact and the mill unions did not want a strike.

As Gillespie writes, many Grand Falls mill workers felt a potential strike was a threat to their security and:

felt they had much to lose if the mill shut down even temporarily. They lived in comfortable company houses and like other relatively prosperous families, they had bills to pay. The loggers had bills to pay too, but they lived in tattered villages like Badger and Gambo. Although they worked for the same company and were union members too, the mill workers felt they had little in common with the ragged loggers. Baldly put, there was an undeniable element of snobbery at play (111).

The mill unions did not support the I.W.A.'s organising drive and the subsequent strike "pitted union against union and workers against each other and came close to destroying most of what Newfoundland's trade unionists had built over the years" (Gillespie 107).

In the end, a confrontation on the picket line in the logging town of Badger turned the course of events. A member of the Newfoundland Constabulary, Constable Moss, was killed. This event turned public opinion against the strike and allowed Premier Joseph Smallwood to outlaw the I.W.A. Despite this loss, loggers attributed the tremendous changes in their living and working conditions to the strike. It has not eliminated, however, the feeling among many loggers even today that they are at the bottom of the

social structure of the pulp and paper industry.<sup>18</sup> This strike highlights the isolation of Grand Falls as a company town distinct from the surrounding communities, and highlights the importance of class difference built into the structure of the town and reflected in the relationship between the mill workers and the loggers.

## **2.5 Grand Falls-Windsor and the Mill Today**

In 1961, the A.N.D. Company handed over responsibility for the running of the town, and Grand Falls became incorporated as a municipality. In 1965 the Company merged with Price and Brothers Company, changing its name to Price (Newfoundland) Pulp and Paper Limited. In 1974, Price was acquired by Abitibi Paper Company Limited and in 1979 it became known as Abitibi-Price. In 1997, Abitibi Price merged with Stone Consolidated to become Abitibi-Consolidated.

The mill has grown through various periods of expansion. The most significant change was made in 1968. A faster and larger paper machine was installed, allowing the company to close down four of the smaller machines. This new paper machine was briefly known as “Moby Jo.”<sup>19</sup> Today the machine is known simply as the Number Three

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<sup>18</sup>The phrase “We’re nothing, only a logger” is still a common one and one I heard used among loggers while I was preparing my exhibit for the Provincial Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador when I traveled with a union president to sites where loggers were cutting wood (Field notes, Summer 1996).

<sup>19</sup>It is industry practice to refer to paper making machines by a number, but when the new machine began operations it was named “Moby Jo,” after a whale, to emphasise its strength and size. Although the mill manager, L. D. Wickwire, ran a naming contest

machine and the remaining smaller machine is referred to as the Number Seven machine. Mill workers feared a loss of jobs due to the speed and size of the Number Three Machine. As I will discuss in Chapter Six, its introduction inspired one of the few documented times mill workers in Grand Falls decorated Labour Day parade floats in an attempt to criticize and confront the pulp and paper companies (see fig. 2.1). The introduction of this new paper machine did in fact result in a loss of jobs for some workers. As one millworker told me:

I was in the machine room as a paper maker. And then, in '68, I became a victim of automation, you know. They put in "Moby Jo" and shut down four machines (Grand Falls-Windsor Oral History Society, transcript 95-047).

Today, the population of Grand Falls-Windsor is 13,340 and although Abitibi-Consolidated currently employs only about three hundred in the mill itself, the physical

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for the new machine at the local high school, he ended up choosing the name himself. A pamphlet the mill produced to commemorate the opening gives the history of the name: "The question of why did we give our new paper machine a name, instead of a number, has repeated itself so often that we feel it deserves an answer. In the first place, 1966 was a year of great activity in Newfoundland. It was 'Come Home Year' for the Province, when so many native Newfoundlanders returned for a visit and found many changes. It appeared that the island was entering a new era—one that promised a great future for all who lived here or might come later....The next thought was how to retain the identity of this event and not have the new machine just become a number in the industrial records, as so often happens...a story of international note appeared on the scene. A giant whale became imprisoned in a bay on our coast and attracted great interest, together with a mate that swam back and forth on the seaward side on the bay. We wanted something colorful, something big and identified with our time. History has proven that many of our lasting stories have attached themselves to a great tragedy. Maybe history will repeat itself and allow a little niche in history for our story of the whale, and the paper machine that became a part of the new growth in Newfoundland" (Price, 1).



Figure 2.1 The Labour Day float of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 512, shows paper maché whale swallowing paper machines. Labour Day, 1968.



presence of the mill and its importance as the founding basis of Grand Falls keeps the mill at the forefront of the community, despite increasing tension between the current owners and its unions and employees. The current company draws on its lineage to the A.N.D. Company by using old photographs of early mill operations in its advertisements. But today it employs fewer people than the Regional Hospital, also located in Grand Falls-Windsor. The Government is encouraging the mill to get into recycled paper, and fights every attempt the company makes to close down the smaller Number Seven machine.

The Grand Falls-Windsor Heritage Society was successful for a while in 2002 in persuading the mill to reinstall the whistle which had previously regulated the lives of the men, women and children of Grand Falls. It blew three times a day. Once a sign of industrial regulation, the whistle reinstated became a comforting reminder of the "Old Days" to many in town remembering the return of loved ones to the home after a shift at the mill. As one woman told me:

Once they started it again, it sounded so—like home. You heard that whistle and you got that warm feeling you got years ago when you heard it. Years ago, the whistle would go and you would know your father or your husband was coming home from a shift (JB 01-06).

But the whistle's return did not please everyone. One retired millworker told me: "The humour's gone out of the mill now. I don't know why they brought back that whistle" (JB 01-10). When the whistle broke a few years later, it was not replaced.

There is a lot of talk now about the changes in the mill. People talk about

cutbacks in staff, injuries and a change of attitude toward workers on the part of management. Technological change is partly responsible for the reduction in the number of people working at the mill. This job loss is characteristic of the state of the pulp and paper industry across Canada. Labour analyst Julie White found that in the years between 1980 and 1990, there was a decline in Ontario of nine thousand workers, or “a loss of over ten per cent of the jobs in the industry” (16). By the mid 1990s, many Canadian companies were going through periods they called “restructuring” which essentially meant layoffs.<sup>20</sup>

Residents of Grand Falls-Windsor have taken note of the smaller workforce. As one person told me:

I remember going on tours of the mill back in 1963 or 4. I had to have met 150 people, of which I knew 120. Or knew their names or faces or whatever. Whereas I went on a tour of the mill five or six years ago, I only saw a handful of people. It was totally different. Very strange (JB 99-01).

Another worker explained:

Jobs are more technical than they were back then. In the grinding room, for example. That's where the stock was produced for the paper machine. The wood was ground to a pulp. And you had these old grinders. And you had twenty six people on a shift, with three shifts. Now that's gone to mechanical pulping in big refiners and it's just done in chips. There's three people on a shift—down from 104 people to twelve. In orders and shipping, there used to be seventeen or eighteen down there on a shift,

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<sup>20</sup> Luxton and Corman interviewed people in Hamilton who were living through the 1980s and 1990s restructuring of the steel mills in Hamilton, Ontario. The authors translate management terms such as “economic restructuring,” “globalisation” and “the neo-liberal agenda” into “lay-offs, cutbacks and hard times” (4).

of injury he had: back tenders lost their fingers, paper makers frequently suffered hearing loss and mechanics were often covered in cuts and bruises. This woman describes her father's injuries:

He's totally deaf in one ear and only has twenty percent hearing in the other ear. He also has severe emphysema now. Last year they put him on oxygen permanently. And he looks eighty...and his friends all look the same way—they've really aged. Terribly. Totally deaf. His dad had lost most of the fingers on both hands. Which was real common back then. ...All his friends are deaf. It's a real interesting thing to watch. You put Dad in a room with three or four of his friends, you practically have to leave the house. And the funny thing is, where they don't use their hearing aids a whole lot, when they're together in a group. Dad uses his hearing aid if it's us there. It's usually sitting on top of the fridge—that's where he likes to have his hearing aid. But he yells. He prefers that, I think. But when the boys come over. The whole works of them are almost totally deaf. They sit in a room—they talk really, really loud which, if they had their hearing aids in, they could tone that down a bit. But it's natural for them or something, to scream. Make gestures. That's what they did in the mill (JB 98-01).

Her experience is echoed by another woman:

You got to bawl at them. Especially my oldest son. My husband's the same way. They talk real loud. And that's why. Because of the machinery in the mill. And where my husband worked—he used to have a mask and earplugs. Because he worked on the gas trucks. All fumes. So he used to have to wear a mask. But—nothing else around here to do. So, he had to go work in the mill. Now, they can't even get a job there (JB 96-34).

And a current worker said:

I don't think anyone ever walked out of that place without being deaf. Or something wrong. Cause when you go into a place like that, there's so much dust and dirt. And the noise. That was the worst I suppose. But you get used to it (JB 01-13).

These injuries and experiences show how dangerous work in the mill continues to be. In

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Chapter Four I discuss how mill workers use objects to mediate their relationship with other workers and ensure a weave of solidarity and safety. These working conditions are the topic of a poem written by a current paper maker for a group of retired paper makers.

The following is an excerpt:

You worked all your life in the mill  
Making paper day after day.  
And no matter how hard it got  
You had no choice but to stay.

You slaved hour after hour  
In the dirt and in the heat.  
And there were many a times  
You never even had time to eat.

You even risked your life  
Almost every day.  
To keep paper on the reel  
So you can collect your pay.

You never got a thank you  
No matter how much paper you make.  
In the eyes of the company  
You're as good as your last mistake.

And did they really appreciate  
All you gave and did for them.  
Cause without your dedication  
Their profits would be quite slim.<sup>21</sup>

These working conditions, including the lack of time to eat, are the topic of the next two chapters.

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<sup>21</sup>Written by the "Papermill Poet" and given to me by the author in summer, 1996.

As the paper maker's poem indicates, presently, relations between mill workers and their employer are strained. The mill workforce is very small and confrontations have been more frequent than in the past. In 1998, a strike shut down the mill for three months at both the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor and the shipping operations in Botwood (see figs. 2.2 and 2.3). In the spring of 2001, underscoring the local feeling that this is an outside industry with interests elsewhere, mill union presidents appeared on the front of the local newspaper and told the current mill owners to "get out of town" for threatening to shut down the Number Seven machine, leaving only Number Three (*Advertiser* April 26, 2001 and May 10<sup>th</sup>, 2001). In February, 2002, the mill was shut down for two days when thirteen mill workers, sent on a two year training program by the company under a government sponsored program, were laid off at the completion of the course. Mill workers refused to cross the picket line these laid off workers had set up (CBC NEWS Radio Website, St John's, Feb 6, 2002 "Dispute keeps mill closed"). These labour confrontations are in contrast to the past: there was a strike in 1921 and then nothing until 1974.<sup>22</sup>

Today, the mill security offices and safety board dominate the entrance to the mill, where you wait to be escorted upstairs to the business offices. Official company-sponsored safety notices abound. There are framed photographs that document the

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<sup>22</sup>Lucas notes that it is common for the company to inspire more loyalty in a company town than the union. He wrote: "But within a community of single industry the company is far more important than the trade union. In communities of single industry unions are seldom militant" (140).





Figure 2.2 Strikers leave their CEP picket signs over the blocked entrance to the mill, September 1998.



Figure 2.3 Strikers in for the long haul outside entrance to mill, September 1998.

beginnings of the industry on the walls of the second floor Board Room. They have been reproduced from copies of photographs found in the two bound albums, both dated 1919, that were the property of one of the original Directors, Lord Northcliffe. They include images of loggers, log driving, trains, logs entering the mill, different work processes within the mill such as the grinder room, and finished rolls of paper. Some of these images have become iconographic and appear on the murals recently painted on various buildings in the town. There are also two filing cabinets filled with negatives of photographs, mainly from these early collections and in-house industrial publications such as the A.N.D. and Price newsletters. The mill runs continuously and today, due to changes in technology within the industry, you are more likely to notice the chip pile in the mill yard rather than a wood pile (see figs. 2.4 and 2.5) as much of the wood is now chipped by contractors outside the mill.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter I have shown how an outside industry was encouraged by the government of Newfoundland to come and set up a new industry in the centre of the island. While it benefited Newfoundland in the short term, in the long term it meant an extended relationship with a foreign owner with outside interests. This outside, foreign relationship is the key relationship residents of Grand Falls-Windsor manage through their use of objects.

In addition I have explored aspects of the industrial ideology—such as the concern



**Figure 2.4 A log pile inside the mill.**





**Figure 2.5** A chip pile inside the mill.

with “discipline” and hierarchy--imported with this industry that imposed change on the men who worked there. This control extended into the selection of homes and the imposition of a gendered division of labour. People lived on streets according their rank in the mill, but chose to be seen in all parts of town. Work in the mill is dangerous and relationships with co-workers become important.

In the chapters that follow I explore how residents, especially the mill workers themselves but also their families, have negotiated this relationship. The following chapter deals with how they mediate their relationship with the foreign and the global within the industrial realm itself.



## **Chapter Three**

### **Mediating the Foreign and the Global: Challenging the Industrial Power**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The transition from outport fishermen to industrial workers presented Newfoundlanders with enormous challenges. Those who moved to Grand Falls were confronted by that particular characteristic of company towns: the prominence of the foreign over the local, exemplified by the importance over their lives of international markets instead of local initiative.<sup>1</sup> Initially, mill workers laboured to produce pulp and paper for export as a solution to a foreign need, i.e. a British need for these products, and they continue today to produce newsprint meant primarily for export. How do mill workers in Grand Falls-Windsor create a sense of identity against the power and influence of this industry? This chapter looks at how mill workers use objects within the industrial context to mediate a sense of self in their relationship with the foreign and the outside.

The studies cited in Chapter One demonstrate how people use objects to mediate a wide range of relationships, within often complex circumstances. These writers explore

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<sup>1</sup>Gilbert Stelter and Alan Artibise write that one of the characteristics of a single resource town is "the lack of any local control over the town's economic development. The economic base is controlled by outside corporations or governments who determine the nature and extent of the extractive or processing activity and thereby determine the size of the local work force and the degree of local prosperity or growth. Fluctuations between boom and bust depend on the vagaries of the international market in resources or corporate and government decisions, not on local initiative as is often the case with other types of communities" ( 415).

how people use objects to affirm their identity or to defend themselves against loss. I build on this literature to here examine how mill workers manage their relationship with the foreign and the outside. I show how they take symbolic control of the product they produce: newsprint. In addition, I consider how they take the materials they work with—such as steel, brass and the felt that comes off the paper making machine—to produce objects. Workers also personalise their work space in an attempt to humanise the impersonal space of the industrial plant, so I examine these acts of personalisation; in particular, the decoration of lunch baskets and the creation of lunchrooms. Finally, I explore how residents of Grand Falls-Windsor have appropriated the very symbol of this outside industry, the imported mill lunch basket, and claim it as their own. I look at the history of the mill lunch basket and suggest how it may have arrived in Grand Falls. I then explore the work of local basket maker, Angus Gunn, whose woven, splint-style, baskets are the most valued in Grand Falls-Windsor. Angus Gunn was a paper maker at the mill who made hundreds of lunch baskets during his lifetime.

### **3.2 Sample paper: symbolic control over production**

When the Harmsworth brothers learned of the resources of Central Newfoundland, they were looking for a place to produce paper. They established the A.N.D. Company to keep their newspapers in Great Britain running. Workers at the mill laboured to produce this export. But mill workers have taken symbolic control over the product, and therefore over the industry's focus elsewhere, by shifting the focus from export to the local context.

They do this by taking paper from the mill home as “samples” or “sample paper” and using it for their own purposes.

Scholars have noted cases of industrial workers who localise their product as a means of mediating the local and the global. In her study of Haitian metal workers, Daisann McLane found that the workers created objects for their own purposes out of the product they produced, thus appropriating the product intended for export. These rural Haitians were confronted with a new culture of work when they entered the urban factories, just as the Newfoundlanders who moved in to work in Grand Falls were confronted by a new culture of work. McLane writes: “In these factories, the rural Haitian accustomed to the rhythms of agriculture and the culture of the village encounters for the first time the time clock and the imposed rhythms of industrial production” (118). While the mill workers in Grand Falls-Windsor made samples for themselves from newsprint, Haitian metal workers made a number of artifacts from the steel they produced, especially the *bwat sekre*, or Haitian money box. McLane explains that in creating these boxes, the metal workers transformed “the foreign into the familiar” with their own hands, thereby taking “symbolic control” of a product they were making primarily for export (118). This act of creation becomes a dialogue between the worker and the industrial power. As McLane writes:

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the scrap metals, as used in the box, conduct a dialogue between the industrial first worlds of the U.S., and the rural third world of Haiti. To understand this link, one must first know that the *bwat sekre* is considered by city-bred Haitians to be something rustic, “from the country”—possession of one is a sure indication that the owner is

new to the city, an unsophisticated peasant.....the Haitian maker of the *bwat sekre* (like the Trinidadian steel drum maker) not only transforms the foreign into the familiar, but takes symbolic control, with his very hands, of an exploitative and doubly-alienated economic exchange (118).

Similarly, the mill worker in Grand Falls-Windsor is having a dialogue with the industrial power when he uses sample paper outside the mill. This dialogue between worker and industrial power is mediated through objects and allows the mill worker to temporarily decide in which world the product is more important. As McLane's example shows, this dialogue becomes subversive when the materials are "kidnaped" from the industrial world for use in the local one. McLane describes the tradition of making "subversive" objects from foreign materials in both the Caribbean and Africa. She writes:

"Foreign" in this case may mean that the original materials or objects have been imported from outside the country; but it often means that the objects have been assembled on local soil in a foreign-owned factory, under foreign supervision and with imported equipment and material. The process of creating a "subversive" object involves the de-contextualization of the foreign object or material—for example, when a Trinidad petroleum worker steals and takes home a few oil drums from the field—and subsequently, its modification and re-contextualization. The oil drum that is cut, heated, pounded, mounted and repainted by a Trinidadian becomes a sophisticated musical instrument that is the backbone of the island's important Carnival ritual—yet its origins as oil drum are not disguised, and indeed, the steel drum's "marvellousness" as an object is intrinsically tied to the process of its transformation, from the way in which it has been ingeniously "kidnaped" from one world, and reestablished in another (115).

In this context the worker decides what the end product of his work will be. Workers at the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor have de-contextualised the newsprint meant for export and re-contextualised it as sample paper, paper which is then used in the home as, among



other things, tablecloths, notepads, coverings for floors and windows.

Sample paper or “samples” are one of the most common items found in homes in Grand Falls-Windsor that come from the mill (see figs. 3.1 and 3.2). The term refers to a sample of the newsprint being produced, which was tested according to industry standards. As one worker explained to me: “We always took samples for the basic weights and moisture and that in the mill. So we made samples for ourselves” (JB 01-10). As another mill worker explained:

“Sample” is a sample of the product you were making at the time, because it came right off the machine. The same paper as they were shipping as newsprint. Sometimes, if one of the rolls has a defect, they would put that one aside to go back into the system or to make samples out of (JB 01-02).

Samples are made from broken paper, the ends of rolls of paper or directly off the paper machines. The sheet is folded to make it easier to carry: about fifty folded sheets fit in a grocery store plastic bag (figs. 3.3 and 3.4). They are made intentionally to fit the grocery bag. As one worker told me: “They make them so they fit in those shopping bags. And the bag is packed tight” (JB 01-06). And they were made so they were easy to handle.

Another worker explained:

They were folded in a manner you could handle. Make a little bundle out of them. Sometimes you could get the small end—the butt of a roll—and you wouldn’t have to fold that, you’d just take it home and put it on a broom handle in your shed. But then again, they’d only let you take out a certain diameter. So we found it more convenient to make samples (JB 01-02).

Some workers carried samples home in their lunch basket, as this worker described to me:



**Figure 3.1** Newsprint, or “sample paper.”





**Figure 3.2** More sample paper. The folded sheets seen in the handles of the lunch basket are used as coverings for floors. The pads on the table are colouring pads and writing pads. The mill lunch basket was made by Angus Gunn.



Figure 3.3 Sample paper packed into a grocery store bag.

Sample paper would have with people, was in at least 100 to 150 and if you in  
this book, maybe in the two bags that from your basket's handle.  
That's where most of them were stored. That's all enough room to get your  
two fingers in there. You had your sample dishes in your basket and you  
had a perfect stack of samples. That only gave you six or seven inches. So  
you didn't have much paper there. And you rolled them into the bags of  
your basket. So then you rolled up your basket with the two bags of 100  
100



Figure 3.4 Sample paper packed into a grocery store bag.

Sample paper went home with people, maybe in their baskets and if not in their baskets, maybe in the two loops that form your basket's handles. That's where most of them were carried. That left enough room to get your two fingers in there. You had your empty dishes in your basket and you had a perfect pack of samples. That only gave you six or seven inches. So you didn't have much paper there. And you stuffed them into the loops of your basket. So then you picked up your basket with the two fingers (JB 01-11).

Some mill workers explained that management at the mill has been inconsistent in allowing mill workers to take sample paper home. One worker told me: "I know there was one manager we had that really did not like the idea and if he caught anyone with them, he would take them and throw them out. Back in the beaters" (JB 01-06).

Some managers have banned the practice while others have reinstated it.<sup>2</sup> Despite this, the practice continues today and is firmly established within the community. As one retired mill worker explained: "Everyone came out with their basket on one hand and a bundle of samples on the other. That was the trend" (JB 01-02).

Sample paper is highly valued in Grand Falls-Windsor. One worker conveyed this value to me when he described how essential they are to a range of uses. He said:

We used samples for everything. From cutting out Valentines, to wrapping up food. It was just unbelievable what we used it for, there was bartering too. Trout for samples....Samples were *valued*, there was no question (JB 99-01).

Samples were used so extensively in the home that one woman was at a loss to replace

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<sup>2</sup>For example, the practice was being discouraged in 1998 while I was doing my museum exhibit and a special bundle had to be made up for me.



them when she moved to Toronto. She told me:

The first time I potted a plant in Toronto—I didn't know what to do! I didn't know where to empty the soil—I couldn't find any samples! I went to one of the grocery stores and asked if they carried samples. And they told me yes and brought out little samples of shampoo and I just about choked! *Nobody* knew what I was talking about. It didn't dawn on me—I betcha for ten years—it was a sample of the paper they were printing. The word "sample" to me didn't mean what it does now—it was those off-colour, off-white sheets of samples. We coloured on those things all the time. We used them as tablecloths. We wrapped meat in them. Used them for all kinds of stuff. I don't know what we did without them. They were a real important part of our everyday life. All stolen I would assume, now, looking back. One of our biggest treats was Dad would make sample pads. So all of us had pads of paper that Dad would bind himself for us, that we would colour on and play school with. Oh yeah, it was a real important part of our life. And years after I moved away, every Christmas when I got like, a little care package, there was always a few samples in there and a couple of pads for me to draw on. Like I said, I didn't know how to pot my plants. Never dawned on me. What else would you put on the floor, besides a sample? Right? You had to have a sample, or everything got messy. Never used newspaper for that kind of thing. I'd only ever seen fish and chips wrapped in newspaper, apart from that. Because it was dirty and messy and so on so you wouldn't want to kneel in it to pot your plants. Sample paper was required. My dad would make pads all different sizes. My sister liked to draw pictures and I wrote all the time, I didn't draw. So I had a small pad. Maybe five inches by ten. So you could write a really good story. For my sister, he always brought a bigger one home—twelve by fourteen. So she could draw pictures to put on the fridge, cause that's what she did with hers. Those sample pads were always personalised that way, you know. And Dad made them. It was what paper making was to my sister and I (JB 98-01).

Another woman also remembered how important sample paper was to her as a child. She told me:

Dad always brought home samples. Samples was a big thing. It was like—tablecloths. And they always contributed to myself and my two brothers learning to spell. Every supper time we'd have a game of

crosswords with samples. We'd have a game of hangman or crosswords. Mom always said that's how we learned to spell, was doing the puzzles on the samples, on the table. My girlfriend now—her family didn't work at the mill. She always thought that was a treat—to come over to our house and play hangman, on the table. Because they didn't have samples...I know after my father retired, we had to call my cousin to get them. He's a papermaker (JB 99-02).

Her comments reveal how access to sample paper gave mill workers status in the community. As I discuss further in Chapter Six, sample paper also plays a role in the informal economy of Grand Falls-Windsor as people use them to barter for certain products.

Mill workers who bring home sample paper are not only making the foreign local, they are also resisting, perhaps in a covert manner, the industry's domination over them. Feminists have identified forms of coding that individuals use to resist, both covertly and overtly, and Joan Radner and Susan Lanser have devised a typology of such coding strategies. Radner and Lanser explain:

We are thus adding our voices to a general understanding among feminists, African Americanists, and scholars of other oppressed and suppressed peoples when we state as our first premise that in the creations and performances of dominated cultures, one can often find covert expressions of ideas, belief, experiences, feelings, and attitudes that the dominant culture—and perhaps even the dominant group—would find disturbing or threatening if expressed in more overt forms (4).

While these authors focus on feminist coding in their work, the concepts also apply to workers who challenge the dominance of industrial control, such as that that exists in a company town.



One of the types of coding Radner and Lanser identify is juxtaposition. They provide the following definition:

An ironic arrangement of texts, artifacts or performances can constitute a powerful strategy for coding. An item that in one environment seems unremarkable or unambiguous may develop quite tendentious levels of meaning in another (13).

Sample paper in the home takes on a different meaning than newsprint in the mill.

Workers take home the product of their work, an economically valued product, and use it to walk on while it covers clean kitchen floors after a Saturday cleaning, they put their wet and dirty boots on it to keep the porch dry, and they peel potatoes on it and then throw it out. They have appropriated the newsprint to, as Lanser and Radner suggest, suit their own "cultural purposes" (14). Lanser and Radner provide an example from the writings of Sylvia Plath. Plath writes of a woman who made a kitchen mat from her husband's old suits. Plath determines that this action allowed the woman to covertly challenge her husband's obvious desire that all he wanted once they married was "for her to flatten out underneath his feet like [a] kitchen mat" (14). By making an ordinary mat from his clothing and then stepping on it, his wife ironically turns the table, as the question now becomes: "who is stepping on whom" (14). The juxtaposition presented by mill workers stepping on a valued product for export also raises the question of who is stepping on whom? Are the workers then stepping on the powers that control their work? Workers are not demeaning their own work in this way—just claiming the right to use it themselves. One worker told me:

It was our right to take home samples. It was never a crime to take home sample paper. Everybody done it. You brought it home for your neighbours who didn't work in the mill. It was very unusual to go into a house in Grand Falls, Windsor too, that there wasn't a sample in there (JB 01-11).

While taking samples from the mill allows mill workers to negotiate their relationship with the industry by asserting their control over their product, within the home sample paper takes on another meaning. Sample paper in the home represents part of a reciprocal arrangement, in which the lunch basket leaves home full and often returns full. I discuss these issues in more detail in Chapter Six.

### **3.3 Objects Made from the Materials of Work**

Mill workers in Grand Falls-Windsor not only make artifacts from the product they produce, they make them as well from the materials with which they work. They make many objects from supplies within the mill itself, including kettles, ash trays, and the odd steel lunch basket. Some residents claim that even cabins have been made in the area from materials taken from the mill. While some of these activities are sanctioned by management, others are not. Mill workers take pleasure in sneaking items out of the mill.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Whether or not these items are stolen or are perks has been addressed by a number of scholars. Sociologist Paul Willis calls this action "winning" materials, which implies a worker's sense of accomplishment in this act (192). Lockwood notes that scholars have used categories for in-kind payment in which: "employers and white-collar employees get "perks" while blue-collar employees 'pilfer.' The distinction is subtle but real" (208-209).

Yvonne Lockwood has studied the tradition of making things from workplace materials. In her study, she found that workers felt free to use these materials because they are materials of "uncertain ownership."<sup>4</sup> She writes:

The worker scans the material at hand—these are usually scraps and leftovers no longer needed—weighs the capabilities of the machine or tools, and decides what to attempt. He or she does not otherwise have such control and possibility for decision-making-on-the-job. This type of activity is the antithesis of mechanical, repetitive "real" work. ...The question here is one of ownership and "theft". When any worker uses the same materials, machines or tools day-after-day, a sense of propriety develops over these items. In a plant setting, there is no clear division between company property and property of "uncertain ownership". What is scrap and nonscrap or useable and nonuseable is often ambiguous. Thus, the group establishes its own boundaries. Usually property of uncertain ownership is designated "fair game." It includes company-owned materials that are small, inexpensive and copious, often the by-products destined to be thrown out (206-208).

Lockwood distinguishes between what she calls "government jobs" ("the act of taking supplies or materials from work for personal use," (see also Nickerson, 123)) and what are called "homers" (things made as art) although both are "aesthetic creations 'secretly' produced by workers on their jobs for their own pleasure with the tools and materials of

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<sup>4</sup>Lockwood is borrowing this designation from Donald Horning who studied industrial workers' conception of ownership of company materials. Horning found three categories of ownership listed by employees: "company property, personal property and property of uncertain ownership" (51). Property of uncertain ownership included things like scrap and broken parts. He writes: "The company property which had a low degree of certainty of ownership consists of the numerous materials, components, and tools which are small, plentiful, inexpensive and expendable. This includes items such as nails, screws, sandpaper, nuts, bolts, scrap metal, wipe rags, scrap wood, electrical tape, solder, small production components...and small tools" (53).

the jobs" (203).

In my study, I found that workers have taken a wide range of materials from the mill, from the very small to the very large. The very small includes nails, nuts and bolts, paint, and the felt that came off the paper making machine. It is used in the home to stuff quilts (see figs. 3.5 and 3.6). Locals refer to it as "Grand Falls blanket" and is also used to cover outdoor wood piles (JB 96-10).

Mill workers often use the lunch baskets for taking smaller items from the mill. When I interviewed people about the mill lunch baskets, I was often told that the baskets are "not so large for what you could take in as what you could take out" (fieldnotes, March 1996). In explaining why he finds the lunch basket useful, one worker told me: "They're only for bringing in lunches and taking out what you wanted to take out. Nobody was supposed to look in your basket"(JB 01-08). And another said: "That's why they had the big lunch boxes—cause they could take it in full and take it out full. Now it has to be checked by security" (JB 01-01). But workers are finding ways around that as well. I was told of basket makers being asked to make a basket to custom fit a particular item a worker wanted to remove from the mill (fieldnotes, September 1998). One worker showed me how workers can carry the basket out of the mill at the end of a shift so it looks light and therefore empty. In fact it is full: there is a way of hooking the baby finger around the edge to hold the basket against the body (fieldnotes, September 1998). Workers protect each other from being caught, as the following story illustrates:

The lunch baskets were made for taking things out. Someone walked out





**Figure 3.5** Margaret Way holds up a piece of “Grand Falls felt.”



Figure 3.6 Margaret Way holds up a covered quilt she made from "Grand Falls felt."



once, whatever they had in the basket was that heavy: the bottom dropped out of it. I can't remember—he turned around and made some comment and kept on walking. All the men were walking together so they didn't know whose basket it dropped from. But somebody was after bringing out something big and the bottom dropped right out. So they never knew who did it. When you couldn't get it in your basket, you shoved it down your long rubbers (JB 98-06).

There is an element of pleasure in tricking the security man and retelling the tale. Another mill worker told me:

There was a fellow down there once—a crafty fellow. He could steal anything. He came out one night with a hundred gallon paint can. He had one inside and one in his hand. The watchman stopped him, see? The security person. He said: "What do you got there?" "Got a cat there" he says. "Open the cover and let me see." "Well I can't do that, the cat'll jump out." So the security man insisted that he take the cover off the can. So he took the cover off and the cat jumped out. The cat ran back in so he said—"got to go back in and get it." So he chased the cat and when he came out, he had the full can of paint and went on out through the door (JB 96-31).

Perhaps most surprising is the very large items that came out of the mill or, as one mill worker explained: "There was nothing too big I don't think they couldn't get out. And even now it's the same thing" (JB 01-08). The very large include pieces of wood, steel, and even furniture. Locals claim cabins in the region have been made from materials from the mill. One woman told me: "I would say there were a lot of homes built from materials that came out of the mill. And cabins" (JB 01-08). And another person commented: "In the old days, half of what they had, came from the mill. Like Mom would tell me—when Pop worked in the mill, they brought *everything* home. From pieces of wood to steel to *everything*" (JB 01-01).

One woman had not even considered how much was taken from the mill until we talked. She said:

But in retrospect now, I see all kinds of stuff that was, for sure, shouldn't have come out of there. But it never crossed my mind at the time, that this was stuff that Dad was taking. But furniture is a real joke—how they got this stuff out is beyond me. Out at my dad's cabin right now is this fabulous chair. My husband has severe arthritis so he finds this chair real comfortable. Rounded back and so. And I was down at the mill a couple of years ago. And in the Board Room, tucked in the back, I noticed two or three chairs identical to this one at my dad's cabin. So I said "My God. My husband is dying for one of those chairs." "Oh yes" he says "there used to be millions of them around here but we only have a half dozen of them left now." And I said: "Well, I know where there's *one* for sure!" He said they used to disappear on a regular basis. Chairs, tables and furniture. Now, *how*—I can't imagine. Well, the boys had their way I suppose, right? Putting them on trucks and getting them out. But at the time, when Dad came home with stuff like that, I guess because he was my *dad*—and Mom never questioned that I knew of, unless she did it in private. It never *dawned* on me that he was actually *stealing* this stuff. Because him and the mill were one. And nuts and bolts and stuff—that looked like it was nothing—he *always* had. "Yes, I got some of them down at the mill." So there was always that kind of stuff and it was never odd, it was just natural, I thought. It wasn't until I started working myself that it hit me—"My God, I would never walk out of here with a chair." It wouldn't cross my mind. But with Dad and the mill, there was no separation ever. It was his life (JB 98-01).

Another person told me:

People have built houses here just out of scraps from the mill. Now at one point in time, that was a given. It was not an issue. I think it's only in the last fifteen years or whatever that, if I were to take something from the mill, I had to have a requisition for it. I think if there's something of no use to the mill, you can get permission to take the thing. But I don't think anyone in town ever bought nails or screws. And tar paper (JB 99-01).

And another:

Not so much now because they're stricter now but I remember him coming

home-like, if he had something to make up—like the hitch broke off the skidoo. So Dad puts it in his basket in the morning and in the evening comes home with a new one that he had made up from the steel in there. That's mostly what they take out now. Or samples (JB 01-01).

Of course, at one point, the mill was the only place in town to make things, but now it is done "on the sly" as the following speaker indicates:

The mill was the really the only machine shop in the area. And if you needed something for home, you got it made in the mill. And they were pretty forgiving. I would say—kettles, kettles were famous. They're still famous. You can get a kettle made up now in the mill, on the q.t. Certainly not out in the open like it was once time. Toasters. A lot of pokers for your fire—that was pretty common. Stoves, wood stoves. The entire stove was fabricated in the mill. There was quite a few wood stoves made in the mill. Now, I would say, if you made a stove in the mill, you'd be fired (JB 01-11).

The objects this speaker lists—kettles, toasters, pokers—are primarily utilitarian objects, which seems to be the dominant tradition of items made in the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor (see again fig. 1.4).<sup>5</sup> Lockwood found that the automakers she studied also made a range of items from the materials with which they worked, ranging from the utilitarian to the more obviously artistic.<sup>6</sup> She writes:

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<sup>5</sup>See also Mia Boynton who writes about "worker tradition of making useful objects with shop tools during work hours" (95).

<sup>6</sup>Simon Bronner has also noted the symbolic importance of making things from the materials of work. In studying the change in craftsmanship among factory workers in the United States in the 1920s, he notes the importance of tools to the worker's sense of pride in work and argues that when they make things from the materials of work they are asserting their resistance to the deskilling of their jobs, 115-119.

We find many examples of homers in auto plants. Welders and metal workers, for example, make chess sets, miniature tools, miniature automobiles and furniture, knives, sculptures, hash pipes, belt buckles, jewelry and so on (206).

Perhaps a cross between art and utilitarian are the lunch baskets the millwrights are known for making in the mill from leftover steel (see fig. 3.7).<sup>7</sup> One woman described to me the lunch basket her father carries. She said:

Dad's is steel and a lot of the men who work with Dad have steel ones. I guess they just did it up in the shop. Cause the shop is mostly all steel. Easier to get the metal than the wood. Cause it's just one sheet folded and riveted on top and bottom...He made his basket from steel. It has a wooden bottom and a wooden top with a steel basket with handles. They always make them in the mill. I think he only made his own (JB 01-01).

Michael Owen Jones has also written about workplace art. He argues that workers make objects on the job in order to "partly satisfy their need for aesthetic expression by creating objects that use work-related materials, but which are intended largely for off-the-job enjoyment" ("Works of Art" 173). His point that these objects are for off the job enjoyment is illustrated in my research by the mill worker who told me that his grandfather had worked at the mill as a brass molder. He said:

They used to make a lot of things out of brass and cast iron. My grandfather had a Christmas sled made—with reindeer. Made a couple of reindeer for it. In 1949 when we joined Confederation, they had little frying pans made out

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<sup>7</sup> Timothy Corrigan Correll and Patrick Arthur Park's study covers a much more elaborate tradition of workplace art. In their study, workers at an auto shop made brightly coloured metal sculptures out of old mufflers and used auto parts. See also Kurt Dewhurt's study of the clay objects made by workers in an industrial tile factory made from the raw materials of their work.



Figure 3.7 Steel lunch basket made by a millwright in the mill.

of some kind of metal. They had the map of Newfoundland and it says: "Joining Confederation, 1949." Cast in the mill. And they made book ends out of reindeers and dogs. Ash trays. With a reindeer in the centre. The employees made these for themselves. Everybody had them—in every house you'd see something like that (JB 01-03).

While these objects in the home may reflect an acceptance of the dominance of the mill, they also allow workers to bring the mill into their homes on their terms through the objects they make themselves. People in the community like these kinds of objects; and if the mill was going to own them, they would also own the mill. Lockwood makes a similar point. She writes that the workers' pleasure in making these types of objects lies in the fact that they are made on company time, and that these objects represent a material assertion of individualism within a mass produced situation. She states:

Homers help bring about integration in workers' lives. Whereas alienation stems mainly from the sense of separation, loss and discontinuity that seems to characterise modern technical and bureaucratic process, both the homer process and the product give worker-artists a sense of mastery over the disconnected parts of their lives. The homer becomes an icon of that mastery and a symbol of continuity (210).

Behind all these acts is the pleasure the mill worker takes from making personal items in an otherwise impersonal workplace.

### **3.4 Personalising the Impersonal Space of the Plant Through Objects**

People personalise their work place through objects. For instance, office workers decorate their workplace with postcards, xeroxlore and school photos of their children. In his study of office workers, Michael Owen Jones found: "each desk is highly personalised



with plants, postcards, and memorabilia" ("Aesthetic at Work" 137).<sup>8</sup> But industrial workers do not sit at a desk: their work is more mobile. Thus industrial workers personalise the portable objects, like their hard hats or lunch baskets. In her research, Lockwood considered the potential for this act of personalisation to confront management. She looked at how steelworkers decorate their hard hats and found:

According to one worker, everyone in the mill eventually decorates his or her hard hat. Sometimes decals are merely stuck on, or individuals' names and slogans are painted on. The more interesting examples are elaborate painted scenes covering the entire hat, scenes whose message often is meaningful only to other mill workers or is a social comment about the workplace...[But] while steelworkers and autoworkers strive to personalise their work environments, management enforces uniformity (207).

Personalising the hard hat, as the assertion of an individual, can be a powerful means of asserting identity within the workplace. Management recognises this by trying to invalidate these acts by literally erasing them. Lockwood continues:

The embellishment of hard hats, beautification of the workplace, and the subsequent destruction of these artifacts are all part of an on-going struggle for control, where one side attempts to personalise and individualise the environment while the other strives to transform humans into replaceable parts of a large, humming machine (207).

At the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor, workers use the lunch basket to personalise the industrial space (figs. 3.8 and 3.9). They personalise their lunch baskets with their children's school photographs, with union stickers, and their work schedules, clearly using

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<sup>8</sup>See two works by Michael Own Jones, Studying Organisational Symbolism, and "Aesthetics at Work" for discussion on office worker art.



Figure 3.8 Stickers decorate the interior of a lunch basket.



Figure 3.9 Stickers decorate the interior of a lunch basket.

the basket to link home and work. One current mill worker told me, by the time a mill worker retires, he has made his basket into his own creation. He said:

The history of the family is inside the basket. Not only is it the history of the family, but you'll find that people doodle on their baskets. And its interesting to see *what* they doodle. It could be anything. From a young man, who's disenfranchised, may make some type of insignia that might be considered a little bit rude or something but in twenty years time, he may have covered that over with perhaps a CEP union sticker. So you know—you see a young man's basket evolve into an older man's basket into a retiree basket. And you can see a lot of history. If one man carried a basket from age, way back—from age fourteen to fifty five, the same basket, then he has etched, with his pocket knife, his initials, his wife's initials. So they're indelibly etched. Then he may have coloured the scratch marks. Then he may have, at some point, took a marker and wrote in a phone number for his lover. I don't know, but I'm just saying that. Forty, fifty years. Some people have a fifty year history in that mill. And their basket documents their life. There's hardly an inch of the cover, inside and out, and even the floor of the basket, where there hasn't been some pictures taped on, glued on. Carvings. Some people who are fairly artistic have embellished their basket with all kinds of art—like you might see on vans. On walls of buildings—graffiti. The baskets are a living history. Their baskets tell a story—"I was here, I lived this life"(JB 01-12).

As the above description indicates, there are many layers to the basket's life. Made by a local person like Angus Gunn, the basket is remade by the mill worker who carries it to work. This is what Glassie calls "creative layering: the wills of many makers" ("Studying Material Culture" 264).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>The basket is personalised not just through decoration but also through use and comes to represent the man who carried it as is evidenced by the fact that family members keep baskets that belonged to fathers and grandfathers. And although to those who know the maker it may remain a symbol of that man, to others it is recreated by the man who carried it. Glassie has explored collecting as a means of connecting to the past. He writes: "We accumulate souvenirs...to relive the past. Treasuring artifacts that remind us of people we knew and loved, collecting things we associate with ways of life we

Mill workers in Grand Falls-Windsor have also personalised the workplace through the creation of lunchrooms. Some of the first lunch rooms at the mill were no more than cubby holes or closets put together gradually by the workers. Even today with the introduction of lunch rooms equipped with microwaves, these early lunchrooms remain as special places for the men who created them by themselves for themselves, as they alter the industrial space into place.

Early accounts of meals in the mill show how difficult it was for mill workers to get a chance to eat their lunch, especially before there were lunch rooms. Many of the retired mill workers I spoke with talked about eating their meals on the mill floor beside the machinery they were working on, or of being too busy working to take a break for lunch, and of bringing their lunch basket home still full of food. Others remember being too busy to be allowed to stop for a meal break. One mill worker told me:

They have microwaves in there now and the guys cook up meals. A meal now is top priority in the mill. At one time—I've seen men bring the lunch basket home without even lifting the cover. Because the job was so demanding you didn't have a chance to eat. I've seen that dozens of times (JB 01-02).

A retired paper maker remembered sitting on the floor beside the paper machine to eat. He told me:

There was no tables then. We used to sit on the floor, believe it or not, when I went in there first. You'd take out your dinner, a bottle of tea. Like

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would like to see perpetuated, things that can be sources of nourishment for the creative spirit in a new age. A way to preserve the past for use in the future. They provide thinkers with tools to use in contemplating life"(The Spirit of Folk Art 30).

I say, there was no percolators or kettles in the mill then. Your wife made you a bottle of tea (JB 01-02).

And another said:

We never had a lunch room. We sat on the floor and ate our meal. You went and got a "head," they call it—cardboard circles—they went in the end of the roll when you wrapped it. So we got one of them, put them on the floor, sit down and eat our lunch. (JB 96 07)

In addition to no lunchrooms, workers had no place to heat their food. A retired paper told me:

When I went in in 1937, there was no such thing as boiling the kettle in there then. You had to bring in your own—bottled tea. You brought your tea from home. When you go in, the first thing you had to look for was where a hot steam pipe was. And put your tea there. By the time you wanted it, it would be nice and warm. Then we got the hot plates (JB 98-06).

The hierarchal structure of the mill and the town itself was reflected in the order in which people ate. One retired worker explained:

Five or six of you on the machine and everyone couldn't eat at the same time. Usually the senior person got the first choice and the poor old Joe down the end he had to take his luck. And if you had a bad job, you didn't get your lunch. You had to wait 'till it was cleaned up before you got your lunch. I've seen days when you just took your lunch box—your dinner dish—and just throw it in the garbage. You couldn't get a chance to eat it and then it was no good. And then of course we improved to a lunch room with a stove in it. Then we had fridges and microwave ovens (JB 01-03).

Official lunchrooms at the mill were only provided by mill management by the late 1950s. One current mill worker spoke at length about the history of the battle for lunchrooms. He linked lunch rooms directly to the mill lunch basket. He said:



You've got to remember, there's a history to the lunch room. And those people originally sat on the concrete floor, in a semi circle and ate their lunch from their basket. And then as time went on and unions became more prominent, people became better educated and were able to fight for their rights. Then, the lunch room became a reality. ... People fought hard for the right to sit down at a lunch table, with chairs. And I can say, even up until a very recent day, within the last few months, it was not to be taken for granted, that you could sit in a chair that had a back and arms on it. That was not necessarily your right. So the fact that you can go in now, to a nice air conditioned room, with a microwave, a stove and a fridge and a chair with a back and an arm and a buddy to talk to and be able to sit down for the same twenty to thirty minutes and enjoy a quiet conversation in a quiet environment, it is not to be taken for granted. And that lunch basket. The fact that those people carried that lunch basket in the mill, sat on the cold concrete floor and ate that lunch in silence in the noise and the hum and the dust and everything else that goes on in a papermill, is a natural development of where that lunch basket led those people. They wanted to sit down like they did at home and enjoy their lunch. They didn't have much opportunity to do that. You ate your lunch on the fly. So your basket was handy to you all the time. Sometimes you didn't get to eat your lunch—you were at the mercy of the machine. If the machine was breaking you didn't get to eat your lunch. Because you didn't have the rights you have today...you went in with your lunch, you came home with your lunch (JB 01-11).

For this speaker, the concept of the lunchroom developed directly from the lunch basket and the right to have uninterrupted time to eat.

Geographer E.C. Relph has explored the concept of why people make "place" out of space. He calls the experience of "place" a "profound and complex aspect of man's [sic] experience of the world" (1). Relph writes that one of the most commonly shared experience of "place" is the childhood experience of making oneself a "private place." Defining "perceptual space" as "the egocentric space perceived and confronted by each individual"(10), he writes:

Through particular encounters and experiences, perceptual space is richly differentiated into places, or centres of special personal significance ....private places to which we retreat in order to meditate. For children in particular, places constitute the basis for the discovery of the self, and caves and trees or even a corner of the house may be claimed as "my place." These childhood places frequently take on great significance and are remembered with reverence...Both remembered and currently significant places are essentially concentrations of meaning and intention within the broader structure of perceptual space. They are fundamental elements of the lived-geography of the world (11).

Workers at the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor have made themselves private places through the creation of many small lunch rooms which still exist in contrast to the larger more formal ones. Carving out their own place, in the huge space of the mill, they have created meaningful places through their own labour.

One mill worker I interviewed spoke eloquently about the creation of lunch rooms, as workers demanded the right to sit to eat their lunch/dinners. His description indicates how mill workers make "place" out of "space." He said:

[The mill] is a huge complex. It's physically large... So yes, there is quite a few lunch rooms in there....But yes, we do have some very large lunchrooms, which may end up with, sometimes, less than twenty-five people. A lunch room that may be able to accommodate 150. Now we have some smaller rooms that may only accommodate ten or twelve. They're more common. I couldn't even add those up because there must be dozens of them. From the really big ones to the fairly small ones. And some are even just cubby holes because people, over the years...you'd find that people ate their lunch wherever they could. So they found a cubby hole, then that's where they ate their lunch. And they managed to acquire a beat-up office desk, not a table. And an office chair. He built himself a nest. So he goes into his little place. It might be ten by twenty, it might be thirty by forty. But a little hideaway. And over the years—and I mean many years—he has acquired a desk or a table or maybe two, for a friend. A radio, a microwave, a fridge. Because it's really hard to ah, not expect a man who

is force put, to be creative and ingenious. Cause when you go in there, you've got to understand that we have labs and stuff in the mill and the labs and that have small fridges for test purposes and stuff like that. So as one gets old, you might acquire it. You might bring in a radio—your kids have grown up and the radio's old. It might be one of those radios with the little flaps that come down and tell you your time—it's not digital. Right. So you got that there in the mill now. And you squirrel that away. A plumber might have come in and hooked up running water for you 'cause it's only a matter of diverting a few pipes. So they might sneak in there. And they might manage to dig up a hot water tank, who knows. But for the most part, those types of situations have become history. Most people now go to a modern lunch room, sit down and enjoy their lunch in a fairly modern setting. There's still a few older type lunch rooms. There's one there that's a locker room. A small crew of several people have managed to turn that into a lunchroom. They've done a nice job. They've got a sink and running water (JB 01-11).

The workers have imbued the lunchrooms, i.e. place, with special meaning through their own labour, through their experience of privacy and rest/a hideaway. As Relph writes:

It is the special quality of insideness and the experience of being inside that sets places apart in space. Insidedness may relate to and be reflected in a physical form, such as the walls of a medieval town, or it may be expressed in rituals and repeated activities that maintain the peculiar properties of a place. But above all it is related to the intensity of experience of a place (141).

For the mill worker, the attachment to the lunchroom comes from having created a place to feel secure, for as Tuan has written, "We live in space...place is security, space is freedom" (3). They have created a place that gives them the security of privacy, the comfort to eat in a chair. This place becomes invested with meaning because the workers have made humanised it (Tuan 54). Like Relph, Tuan theorises about place being transformed when invested with meaning. He writes:

**“Space” is more abstract than “place”. What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with values...The ideas of “space” and “place” require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom and threat of space and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place (6).**

Mill workers have personalised space in the mill as place, making makeshift lunchrooms carved out of the impersonal space of the industrial plant. By personalising the mill—either through their lunch basket or through the creation of small lunch rooms—mill workers mediate a sense of themselves as individuals and not just industrial workers.

### **3.5 The Mill Lunch Basket: Appropriated Object**

Perhaps the most distinctive everyday object in Grand Falls-Windsor is the mill lunch basket. The lunch basket is a woven, or splint style, rectangular, two-handled, basket with a hinged lid. Folklorist Rosemary Joyce has noted that “astounding variety is possible with basketmaking” (59). Yet this variety is achieved using only three methods. She writes: “[T]hat marvelous diversity in shape and size and function is the result of just three methods: coiling, plaiting and weaving” (59). In woven baskets, the term “splint” is used to refer to the thin strips of wood prepared and then woven through the wefts. These types of baskets are therefore referred to as “splint style” baskets, in which “weavers use either flat or round splints, depending on the preference of the maker” (59). The mill

lunch baskets are made using a flat splint.<sup>10</sup>

In the mill lunch basket, the splint weave is horizontal to the top and bottom of the basket. Other than those men who have made themselves a single basket out of leftover materials such as vinyl siding, steel, oak or plywood, basket makers in Central Newfoundland have used wooden splints when making lunch baskets. The wood is smooth and not coarse, and primarily birch or juniper. The basket is noticeably deep in volume, reflecting its use as a container of food. The lid is usually made entirely from plywood, and it opens on the horizontal. Some earlier versions had lids that closed with a latch, but these were the mass produced versions sold at the local Co-op store and not the locally made versions. While some styles look quite different to me as an outsider, as I compare basket maker Ken Payne's rectangular style to maker Angus Gunn's more oval, to the locals in Central Newfoundland, all these styles are immediately recognisable as mill lunch baskets. It is the form, including the depth of the container as well as the two handles, that make the basket recognisable to them. Newcomers to town notice the basket right away, often mistaking it for a picnic basket. When I was walking down a street one day carrying two mill lunch baskets, people jokingly asked me if I was going to work at

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<sup>10</sup>A detailed discussion of terminology is not required here. As Joyce writes: "But I must point out that in any discussion of basketry, especially basket types and materials, the terminology is complex and sometimes ambiguous. The terms *flat-split* and *flat-splint* basketry are interchangeable in general usage, depending on preference and reflecting the similar definitions of *split* and *splint* (*split*: a lengthwise separation of wood caused by the tearing apart of the wood cells; *splint*: a piece split off; a splinter)" (60). See also Virginia Harvey. The original classic work on baskets is by Lila M. O'Neale.

the mill.

But this lunch basket, so rooted in the local everyday experience of work at the mill, is an outside artifact. Like the pulp and paper industry itself, the lunch basket came to Grand Falls from the outside. And just as they claim the newsprint they produce for their own purposes, locals have appropriated this basket as their own. Originally a mass produced artifact brought in from the outside, this basket has become a symbol of work in the local, dominant industry. This section outlines the history of the splint style basket, the history of the lunch basket in other industrial sites, and suggests how it may have arrived in Grand Falls. I then explore how fully integrated the basket is into the local culture, and describe the baskets of the local basket makers, especially the late Angus Gunn, who worked as a paper maker at the mill for forty-nine years.

Despite its prominence in North American native basket-making tradition, scholars have traced the origin of splint-style basketry to Sweden.<sup>11</sup> Anthropologist Ted Brasser concluded that: "the technique of woodsplint basketry was transmitted primarily from the

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<sup>11</sup> American historian Laurel Ulrich noted: "woodsplint basketry developed after wars and disease forced remnant groups to find new ways of making a living. Already skilled in using forestry products, they adapted to an emerging market for inexpensive and lightweight containers. By the early nineteenth century, an "Indian" basket was almost by definition a woodsplint basket." The splint style baskets made by native North Americans were made only to be sold. As Ulrich writes: "Splint basketry, however, differed significantly from most of these other adaptations, in that it was not made by the Indians for their own use, but for the colonial market" (17). See also Joleen Gordon for her study of native basket traditions in Nova Scotia.



Swedish colonists to the Indians in the lower Delaware Valley about 1700" (13).<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, Historian Laurel Ulrich compared Native American and Swedish styles and found that the splint style has a long history in Sweden, although noting that the Swedish version employed a diagonal rather than a horizontal weave. She noted the importance of the tradition in Sweden, writing:

Splint basket construction is still very much alive in that country, and antique examples can be seen in many local museums. Warp and weft of all baskets consist of wide wooden splints in simple checker weave, but everywhere the splints, both warp and weft, are set diagonally to the rim nowadays. Museum specimens, however, indicate the former utilization of a horizontal-vertical weave (11).

The older versions, then, follow the horizontal weave typical of the Grand Falls-Windsor mill lunch basket.

It is possible that Swedish pulp and paper workers first brought the splint style lunch basket to North America industrial sites. Swedish mill workers worked in pulp and paper mills in the United States, as well as in Canada and Newfoundland by the early 1900s. These workers could have easily brought the splint-style lunch basket tradition with them, if not to Newfoundland than certainly to the United States of America.

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<sup>12</sup> Splint style basketry is claimed as Swedish on many websites. The Swedish owned furniture store IKEA has a splint style basket in its collection that it calls its "heritage basket" (IKEA catalogue, 2002). I discovered this link when discussing baskets with my friend Nancy McIlraith. I had given her a mill lunch basket made by Clarence White of Botwood as a wedding present. She showed me the latest IKEA catalogue, where there was a picture of a basket called "Heritage Style" which was extremely similar to the Grand Falls-Windsor mill lunch basket although it had no lid. The catalogue listed the basket as a storage basket. See the IKEA Catalogue 2002, p. 21.

What is more clearly evident is that these lunch baskets have an American origin. Basket collector Lew Larason identifies this style of basket as being factory-made in the Northeastern U.S. between 1880 and 1920, around the same time as the mill in Grand Falls began operations (29). In his book on basket collecting, he identifies the basket in the following way: "Oak and pine. Factory made lunch basket. This type basket was turned out by the thousands in many factories throughout the Eastern U.S. from the late 1880s until about 1920" (29). As I discussed in Chapter Two, historians believe that the first, skilled papermakers came to Grand Falls from the United States of America and my research indicates there are certainly many family links to paper-making communities in Maine where the basket is still used.<sup>13</sup> I believe that the American connection is strong enough to conclude that the basket was imported with those first workers.

American workers came from a tradition of using a splint style basket on industrial sites. Gloria Roth Teleki's research provides two illustrations of single handled splint-style baskets, which she calls "individual covered lunch baskets," dating from the later nineteenth century. She feels that it is obvious for at least one of these baskets, that the

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<sup>13</sup>Folklorist David Taylor confirmed to me in a telephone call that these lunch baskets are still in use by paper mill workers in the state of Maine. As well, entries in the A.N.D. Company Newsletters provide examples of retiring workers whose families came from Maine, including the mill town of Millinocket. Further examples are provided in the interviews conducted by the Grand Falls Oral History Society. One example is Walter Parsons, who was born in Millinocket in 1903 and came to Grand Falls in 1912 when he was nine years old. His father had worked at the mill in Millinocket (Grand Falls-Windsor Oral History Society transcript 97-029). Another example from my own fieldwork is that of Isaac Dawe, who also worked at the paper mill in Millinocket and moved to Grand Falls to work at the mill in 1908 (JB 01-10).

“thick coat of sooty grime on the top suggested service in a rail yard, mill or mine” (112). So it is certainly possible that splint style covered baskets were being used in industrial sites in the United States of America at the time the mill in Grand Falls began production.<sup>14</sup>

The most convincing argument to me that the tradition of using these woven lunch baskets was brought to Grand Falls by American paper workers is in the work of Mary Schlick. Schlick recently prepared an exhibit for the Koochiching County Museum in International Falls, Minnesota, comparing the style of the mill lunch baskets used there (which she calls papermakers’ baskets) to native Ojibwa baskets.<sup>15</sup> International Falls, like Grand Falls-Windsor, is an older pulp and paper town. It borders the pulp and paper town of Fort Francis, Ontario. She described the mill lunch baskets as a basket that could “be carried over the arm and can hold a good meal as well as treasures to go home” (personal correspondence with author, August 2003). She had photographed a mill worker in Fort Frances carrying the basket on his arm in the same way that mill workers in Grand Falls-

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<sup>14</sup>The only reference to this style of basket I could find being made in Great Britain was Jill Betts. The illustrations to this article show a basket which is an entirely different shape and technique, with vertical splints and a single handle in the centre of the basket.

<sup>15</sup>Schlick’s text on the native baskets explores the ash, splint style baskets made by the Anishinabe people of Rainy Lake. She notes the similarity in shape and technique, especially the diagonal weave, between the millworker basket and the native basket. The main difference she finds is in the diagonal weave used in the baskets, which appears in both native and mill baskets. The native influence in this case remains a question.

Windsor carry them (see fig. 3.10). The text for her exhibit also contained striking similarities to my findings in Grand Falls-Windsor. She wrote:

Handwoven baskets to hold hot lunches have been made for paper mill workers across North America for many years. The use of such baskets has been recorded at mills from Newfoundland to the Columbia River in the West. Apparently, as the industry moved westward, the privilege moved with it. Gordon Fisher, who drove the International Falls lunch route each day, described picking up baskets insulated with newspapers or towels and fragrant with the hot meal around 11 a.m. Many workers carried these baskets, but only those who worked on the paper machines or in related jobs had them picked up and delivered. The basketmakers, always men, found their craft in much demand. The borderland baskets originally were made from ash, but wooden packing crates soon offered a less labor-intensive substitute. With wooden crates no longer available, recent weavers have used aluminum "splints." Although a few workers continue to carry their lunch in baskets today, much of the romance went out of the culture of the borderland when microwave ovens and plastic coolers began to replace the picturesque hand crafted lunch baskets (2).

Like the mill workers in Grand Falls-Windsor, these workers had hot meals delivered to them in baskets insulated by sample paper. As in Central Newfoundland, the basket makers were men.

Based on these studies, then, I believe the mill lunch basket came to Central Newfoundland as a mass produced, most likely factory made artifact. While it may have originally been a style popularized by native people based on a Swedish example, it seems likely that it became popular in the Eastern states of the United States of America in industrial sites. It was then most likely brought to Central Newfoundland by those imported skilled workers, the paper makers. Brought in from somewhere else, these lunch baskets, were appropriated by the locals, just as they appropriated the streets, the materials



**Figure 3.10** Mill worker Everett Ramsey of International Falls, Minnesota, carrying his mill lunch basket. Similar in shape and function as the Central Newfoundland mill lunch baskets, this type is woven using a diagonal weave.

of work and the materials from work. When I asked people in Grand Falls-Windsor from where they thought the first mill lunch baskets may have come, very few had an answer.

When they had a response, the theory was usually expressed this way:

They probably came in from somewheres made. There are people here—they seen them and when they started to break up and that, they probably started making them. And they probably made them better. Especially a Newfoundlander—he can make anything better (JB 01-03).

Gerald Pocius' work on the Newfoundland community of Calvert challenges the assumption that the introduction of new artifacts automatically causes social disruption (Place to Belong 14). However, Pocius concludes that how a group appropriates an artifact and attaches a cultural value to it becomes as revealing as the design of the artifact (Place to Belong 13). The number of local versions of the basket that exist in Central Newfoundland indicates that the factory-made version was easily appropriated by members of the local community. Just as Pocius discovered in Calvert, my research shows that residents of Grand Falls-Windsor have little interest in the origins of the basket. And although a factory-made version of the mill lunch basket was for sale at a local dry goods store like the Royal Stores or the Co-Op Store, this statement from a retired mill worker indicates that the locally made item was preferred:

I think in the thirty-nine years I worked, I may have had a total of three, maybe two. Angus Gunn, one of our co-workers, he was a pretty reputable guy, and he done a lot of work in his wood shed and that was one of the things he done—made baskets. I would suggest he made ninety percent of the baskets that were used in the mill at that time. On the other hand, you could buy all kinds of baskets at the Royal or at the Co-op store years ago. They would have them imported. I have no idea where they came from.



But as I said, most of the guys in the mill used our own local baskets made by Angus Gunn and probably a couple more fellows before my time. I did hear of people making them prior to my time. He charged you a nominal fee. I think I paid three or four dollars for my basket at the time. But it wasn't a money making thing—you asked a guy to do it and he did it. I suggest he made hundreds of them over the years. No doubt. (JB 01-02).

I explore Angus Gunn's work later in this section.

Today at least two thirds of the workforce at the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor carries a mill lunch basket.<sup>16</sup> The lunch basket is a firmly established tradition in the town. Local makers recognised and appreciated for their styles. The community claims the lunch basket as "ours," as explained to me by one woman when describing how she feels when she sees a mill worker carrying a different style of lunch basket. She said: "So the odd mill worker you don't see with it, stands out, actually. *Or if he doesn't have one like ours*" (JB 01-06) [emphasis mine].<sup>17</sup> She explained to me that when her husband started working, she felt it was essential that he had the proper kind of lunch basket. She said:

My husband used that from—he went to work in 1975 so I'd say—he had that from 1975. Cause we had that done just after that. At that period of time, we couldn't get one in Grand Falls. There was none around. And it just happened that my husband's brother knew of a guy in Botwood, so he ordered one from Botwood. So that one was made in '75. Or '76 cause I think actually the first year my husband had a lend of his father's—cause his father had a second one—and then we had that one made...The ones that Angus made were rounder, they were more oval. Ken Payne's are square (JB 01-06).

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<sup>16</sup>The other third uses knap sacks and other kinds of bags although this practice is referred to generally, and somewhat disparagingly, as "brown bagging it."

<sup>17</sup>Michael Owen Jones discusses community expectations in "Violations of Standards" 18.

This speaker expects to see a mill worker carrying a wooden woven basket, and is uncomfortable when she sees the odd mill worker with a lunch basket made from tin. She said: "I find it strange when you see men bringing in those tin baskets. You think—my God they look some weird. Out of place. Doesn't he know where he can get a basket?!" (JB 01-06). Her words convey how closely associated the mill lunch basket is with the local everyday experience of the mill.

During my many fieldwork trips to Central Newfoundland, I photographed mill lunch baskets whenever and wherever I could find them. This was primarily in people's homes but also when they would bring them to me at the museum in Grand Falls-Windsor. I photographed many lunch baskets made by a specific basket maker. At the same time, I photographed baskets made primarily for family members or unique baskets that men made for themselves. Finally, I photographed lunch baskets whose makers were unknown to their owners because the basket had been bought at one of the hardware stores or the Co-op store (figs. 3.11 and 3.12). At some point in the 1980s, a crafts store in Grand Falls sold baskets made by a man who lived in nearby Norris Arm (fig. 3.13). I observed the baskets in use as mill workers carried them through the mill's parking lot and into the mill. Security rules meant the mill lunchrooms in the Grand Falls-Windsor plant were not accessible to me, so unfortunately I have no photographs of the lunch basket in the mill.

Angus Gunn, Ken Payne and Ray Osmond all made lunch baskets for sale. They started around the 1960s and made them through their lifetime. All three died in the



Figure 3.11 Lunch basket bought at the Co-Op store.



**Figure 3.12** Ann Drover shows the woven bottom typical of the lunch baskets bought at the Co-Op store



**Figure 3.13 Gary Healey carries a mill lunch basket made in Norris Arm.**



1990s. Angus Gunn made most of the mill lunch baskets currently in use in Grand Falls-Windsor. His father, Francis, was born in Fogo and his mother, Ellen, was born in Little Bay on the West Coast of the island. Married and living on Bell Island, the Gunns moved in 1909 when Francis went to work with the mill. Angus Gunn was born in 1913. Francis, a machinist, was killed on the job in 1935 when Angus was twenty-two years old.<sup>18</sup> Angus Gunn himself became a paper maker. He retired from the mill at age sixty-five in 1978, having worked at the mill for forty-nine years. He also made thousands of baskets. His sister, Molly, remembers Gunn making many of those baskets in his workshop outside his home on Mill Road. He started making lunch baskets while he was still working at the mill, although people say that it was “after he retired is when he really started” (JB 01-06). Gunn used the splint-style weave to make his lunch baskets, and when asked, he also made a larger picnic basket, and a plant stand, using the same weave on the sides, and plywood tops, as the lunch basket (fig. 3.14).<sup>19</sup> The only basket Molly

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<sup>18</sup>Francis Gunn’s name is on the memorial to workers killed on the job erected in Grand Falls-Windsor. A listing of names carved into rock, it appeared in miniature on a Labour Day float that same year. For work on other memorials to fallen workers see Kenneth Foote. For a study of another memorial whose long listings of names reflects a nation’s conflicted feelings about its role in the Vietnam War, see Kristin Ann Hass, especially Chapter One, “Making a Memory of War,” pp1-33. Hass writes: “Each name has a physical presence...The power of the design lies in the overwhelming presence of individual names, which represent complicated human lives cut short. This attention to individual lives lost would not, however, be as potent if it were separated from the black expanse of all the names together, the effect of which is so overwhelming that it both foregrounds the individual names and hides them” (14-15).

<sup>19</sup>Michael Owen Jones has asked the question, “what compels people to give aesthetic value to some aspects of their daily lives, even the making of utilitarian





**Figure 3.14** Plant stand, picnic basket and mill lunch basket made by Angus Gunn.

has of her brother's is a smaller version he made for her grandson in 1977 (fig. 3.15).

Although in some ways a miniature of a mill lunch basket, it was actually too large for her young grandson to carry so he never used it. Angus Gunn had died before I went to Grand Falls-Windsor to do my fieldwork so I never met him. However, in addition to his sister Molly, I interviewed his daughter Isabelle, his son Angus, numerous co-workers and other admirers of his work.

In Grand Falls-Windsor, it seems important to most mill workers to have a lunch basket that was made by Angus Gunn. People in town mentioned his name the most when I asked mill workers who had made their lunch baskets (figs. 3.16, 3.17, 3.18 and 3.19). Based on my fieldwork, I would say that Angus Gunn's baskets are the most valued and admired in Grand Falls-Windsor. One retired mill worker told me: "One fellow was very famous for making baskets: Angus Gunn. He was a paper maker. Angus Gunn made a lot of baskets. Wicker baskets, made from strips. They last you years and years" (JB 96-12). And another said:

Mine was made by Angus Gunn. Angus made most of the baskets in Grand Falls. I worked with Angus—he worked on the old rewinder. I worked with him on Number Eight sulphate machine when it was running. Angus made them all by hand. It seems to me he took hockey sticks and ripped them into strips. He also cut some of his own wood (JB 96-19).

Gunn's baskets are treasured because they look good and last a long time. Mill workers

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objects?" in discussing the human impulse to be creative (Craftsmen of the Cumberlands, ix). His study of chairmakers sought to explore how chairmaking "fulfilled a need to express and an urge to create" (xi).



Figure 3.15 Basket made by Angus Gunn for his great nephew.



Figure 3.16 Basket made by Angus Gunn.



**Figure 3.17** Basket made by Angus Gunn.





Figure 3.18 Basket made by Angus Gunn.





Figure 3.19 Baskets made by Angus Gunn.

admire the strong weave of the lunch baskets. Coworkers attribute his skill at making baskets to the skills he acquired working with machinery in the mill. As one former coworker of Gunn explained to me: "Angus was a real good carpenter—he understood things" (JB 01-04).

Gunn made his baskets from a variety of materials including local birch and wood that he recycled from discarded hockey stick handles and even the wood from his own living room when he renovated. Many people remember seeing Gunn down at the hockey stadium keeping an eye out for a broken stick. One man told me:

If you broke off a hockey stick, old Mr. Gunn would always be down at the back of the stadium. And his mission in life was to collect as many broken off hockey sticks as he could. Mr. Gunn made probably the strongest, the most durable basket. There's a lot of those baskets still around. And they can take a lot of punishment (JB 01-11).<sup>20</sup>

And another said:

Angus Gunn. He used to make them out of hockey stick handles. Take the hockey sticks—you know, hockey sticks are all glued together. He used to steam them apart somehow and sand them down and make baskets out of them. He worked in the paper mill. He made a good many baskets. The

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<sup>20</sup>As Joyce notes in her study of basket maker Dwight Stump, to the folk artist, an object's beauty can be in its lastingness. Joyce writes: "Dwight knows what he likes. While he wants very much to satisfy his customers, too, even experimenting to make newer sizes and shapes at their request, he pleases himself first. To Dwight, a basket is a *container*, an object made for use, and usually for a special function, not merely for aesthetic pleasure. Dwight's sense of aesthetics evolves from one central idea: function. Not "Will it sell?" but "Will it last?" Not "Is it beautiful?" but "Is it useful?" Yet that very observation warns of a potential ethnocentric or art-criticism approach here, a culturally biased use of judgmental terms. For Dwight, and for many traditional artists yet to be studied as individuals, *useful is beautiful*" (188, italics in original).

one I got home now he made. I don't use it now, but I keep it. Cause my father owned that one. He had it in his day (JB 96-05).

Gunn's daughter believes he used the broken hockey sticks because he did not like to see things go to waste. She said to me:

Dad made everything. He had a use for everything. He cobbled—he made shoes. There were eleven of us children in the family, so he was kept pretty busy. He renovated the house. He did everything. I guess one of the boys had a couple of hockey sticks, they had the blade broken I guess—you know how they break off—and he said “you know, there must be something I can do with that—I can't throw it out!” (JB 98-100)

Gunn also had a tremendous sense of order that is reflected in his work.

Anthropologist Christopher Tilley has noted that one of the characteristics of basket-making is the “transformation of the world into a coherent and ordered reality, making a sum, a whole, out of seemingly disparate parts” (72). When I talked with Isabelle Crawley about her father, she commented on his remarkable sense of order. About the condition of his work shed she said: “You would go in Dad's shed. Oh my goodness. He was so meticulous about his tools. Everything was hung up, and sized” (JB 98-100). She spoke of this same sense of order when describing how neatly he kept his own lunch basket. She said:

Other people—I've been in houses—came home with their lunch basket and took their dishes out and they were full of gravy and whatever was in it. But Dad's always came home clean. Mom'd wash them—but they were always rinsed off—there was never any food stuck on it (JB 98-100).

Angus Gunn seems to have been a man with a high respect and perhaps need for order.<sup>21</sup>

Other popular basket makers in the 1970s and 1980s include Ken Payne and Ray Osmond, both of Botwood, whose lunch baskets are also admired and used by mill workers in Grand Falls-Windsor. Bob Payne told me that his father Ken used birch in making his lunch baskets, but also used the wood that he collected on the shores of this harbour town, wood known as “dunnage.”<sup>22</sup> Some of this wood came from the Caribbean, and was therefore a very different wood than that available locally. Payne used this darker wood, according to his son, to “dress up” his baskets, using the different colours provided by the wood to give his baskets a ribboned look (fig. 3.20). Payne’s baskets are

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<sup>21</sup>It is not the goal of thesis to explore the aesthetic impulse behind the creativity of the hand made object, but given the number of studies within Folkloristics that have looked at creativity as a response to grief and a need for order, it is not possible to ignore the possibility that Angus Gunn created so many baskets as a way of coping with grief and the death of his father in the mill. Michael Owen Jones asks: “Why do some people strive to perfect form in some aspects of their daily lives, even in the making of utilitarian objects?” (“A Strange Rocking Chair.”44), and suggests working through grief inspires creativity. He writes: “Grief may precipitate certain acts of creation both as an experience of and a solution for the losses that one suffers” (54). See as well Henry Glassie, “Take that Night Train,” Melissa Ladenheim, Linda Pershing, Edward Ives’ study of the songwriter Joe Scott, and Michael Owen Jones’ work on Chester Cornett’s furniture-making (“Handmade Object”). Linda Pershing cites Michael Owen Jones’ work, as well, when she explores the motivation behind the organising of the ribbon around the Pentagon. See pages 143-145 where she discusses the organiser’s feeling of fear because of the nuclear escalation by the USA and the USSR in the 1980s, but also her feelings of grief towards her awareness of her “complicity” in the escalation due to being a United States citizen.

<sup>22</sup>Dunnage is the term used to describe the wood used as packing and ballast, ships would arrive with it but not need it on the return trip so left it in Botwood.



**Figure 3.20** Lunch basket made by Ken Payne, Botwood. The darker wood which he used to “dress them up” is made from the wood that visiting ships use to secure their shipments from movement in travel.

rectangular, with all four sides made separately and then fitted together. When I asked his son how many lunch baskets Ken Payne had made, he replied: "Oh I don't think five hundred would be out of the realm of possibility" (fieldnotes, 1998).

In contrast, Ray Osmond made lunch baskets that were oval shaped and most often made from juniper (figs. 3.21, 3.22 and 3.23). The only active basket maker I met was Clarence White in Botwood. He had just started selling lunch baskets when I met him in 2001. The day I stopped by, he had just sold twelve lunch baskets (figs. 3.24 and 3.25).

Some men made lunch baskets only for themselves and family. Charlie Hillier was one of these men. I interviewed his son-in-law about these baskets. Hillier made lunch baskets entirely from plywood, and did not use a splint style weave as Gunn had. But like Gunn, Hillier made both mill lunch baskets and a larger picnic basket (figs. 3.26 and 3.27). There are men in Grand Falls-Windsor who have made themselves a single lunch basket from leftover materials at home, such as the mill worker who made himself a lunch basket from the oak leftover from making kitchen cabinets. His co-worker recounted the story. He said:

One of the young fellas in the mill came in about a month ago and he had his basket made out of oak. I said: "who made your basket?" He said: "I made that meself." He said. "Some oak boards left over from making the cupboards." I'll make mine out of walnut now, I suppose! (JB 96-22).

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, occasionally, a millwright has used the materials he is surrounded by at work, and made himself a basket from steel from the mill (figs. 3.28 and 3.29). Basket makers who did not produce baskets on a large scale demonstrate more





Figure 3.21 Lunch baskets made by Ray Osmond.



Figure 3.22 Lunch baskets made by Ray Osmond.



Figure 3.23 Lunch baskets made by Ray Osmond.



**Figure 3.24** Lunch baskets made by Clarence White.





Figure 3.25 Clarence White and his baskets, Botwood.



Figure 3.26 Picnic basket made by Charles Hillier.





Figure 3.27 Picnic basket made by Charles Hillier.



**Figure 3.28 Steel lunch basket made at the mill.**



Figure 3.29 Steel lunch basket made at the mill.

flexibility in terms of materials and their baskets are less elaborate and well made than those made by Angus Gunn.

What all these basket makers seem to have in common is that the people who knew them considered them as “good at making things.” Gunn’s work is seen as successful because “he understood things” (JB 01 04). Charlie Hillier’s son-in-law theorised that Hillier made lunch baskets because of what he learned working in the mill. He said:

I remember, out in his shed, watching him make the baskets. He would take certain kinds of birch or whatever and he would steam it—getting it moist so he could turn the handles on the basket. It’s kind of interesting—I guess a lot of people made them...I think he made them because he was totally mechanically-minded. And I think that came from the mill, from working around machinery (JB 99-01).

While Ken Payne did not work for the pulp and paper industry in Botwood, he was a carpenter who made a range of objects. Ray Osmond’s nephew referred to him as a “handy man kind of man.” His nephew told me: “He was into a hobby man sort of thing anyway. He was a pretty good carpenter and I suppose he just got into it for something to do and he started making the baskets” (JB 01-08). When I asked Clarence White in Botwood how he had learned how to make lunch baskets, he replied: “I just looked at them” (fieldnotes 2001).

Folklorists are interested in the ways traditional craftspeople learn their craft. In her study of basket maker Dwight Stump, Rosemary Joyce provides his description of how he learned to make baskets. Like the basket makers in Central Newfoundland, he learned by watching rather than through any formal apprenticeship. Stump tells Joyce:

So I watched Mort, watched him while he was makin'. Then I helped him pull through the holes—I was just a boy then and it was fun for me. And that way I picked it up. Just watched him real careful, watched how that was done, but didn't say nothin'. I just knew I could do that too, studied on it, then went back to Carroll's and worked it out step by step (37-38).<sup>23</sup>

Stump had no formal training, but learned by watching, and then remembering.

Henry Glassie has written extensively about how folk artists learn their craft. He uses as one example the singer Peter Flanagan. He writes:

Peter Flanagan learned as thousands of folk artists have learned. He grew, surrounded by examples of art so diverse and yet consistent that repetitive acts of imitation led him naturally into a personal version of a collective style (Spirit of Folk Art 95).

When Glassie asked weavers in Turkey how they learned to weave he could only conclude that the question itself was wrong. They learned as Peter Flanagan had, surrounded by examples and learning by "copying, repeating, receiving random hints about how to better their performance, until at last they had so mastered the art that they could control the progress of the rug"(Spirit of Folk Art 95). Glassie provides a third example, the basket maker, William Houck. He writes:

William Houck, basketmaker from upstate New York, did not remember being taught. His father was a basketmaker, but as Mr. Houck said, "I just figured it out by myself." Watching others at work, looking at examples he admired, Bill Houck taught himself to fit into the old Adirondack style (Spirit of Folk Art 95).

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<sup>23</sup>Joyce writes about other basket makers who learned by watching, see her footnotes to page 218.



About folk artists, Henry Glassie concludes:

They all learned the same way. They were born into environments that supplied them with models that they copied, botched, copied and improved. Eventually they had so mastered the style implied by their models that they developed a personal version of a tradition that had embraced them from birth (Spirit of Folk Art 95).

So it seems likely that the basketmakers in Central Newfoundland also learned their trade by example, by looking, by figuring it out for themselves. And by fitting into a locally accepted style.<sup>24</sup> Peter Dormer writes that, when learning a craft by rote and constant practice, “learning a skill is not a mechanical activity but an emotional as well as an intellectual and physical process” (40). There is always judgment and selection involved. These basket makers have put their own mark on a common object. What all these basket makers have in common is a recognisable style. This is obvious because, whether they are made from birch, hockey handles, steel, juniper or oak, these baskets are all recognisable to the local community as a millbasket.

Thus, the most popular basket makers in the area have produced baskets which reflect individual creativity within an established norm, what Henry Glassie calls “a

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<sup>24</sup> Peter Dormer writes that craft knowledge has come to be “disdained” because “there is a view that craft knowledge, because it is communal (it has been created by many people), conflicts with originality. The prejudice against craft tends to be crude: craft, it is thought, is bound by rules, and it is assumed that rules necessarily conflict with freedom of thought, imagination and expression” (7).

personal version of a collective style”(Spirit of Folk Art 15).<sup>25</sup> In a later work, Glassie restates this observation, noting that the object will always display both stability and variability and that “creation always blends the repetitive and the inventive”(Material Culture 16).

It is obvious from the above discussion that the mill lunch basket has become deeply entrenched as a local object within Grand Falls-Windsor. A number of local men, particularly Angus Gunn, are known and respected for their work. They have learned how to make the lunch basket following local norms while still emphasizing their own skill. Locals see the lunch baskets of these makers as the ones to be used by men working at the mill, and they refer to the basket as “ours.” It is intimately associated with mill work. As one resident told me: “When you look at a basket like that, the first thing that comes to mind is: the mill. It’s a mill basket” (JB 01-06).

### 3. 6 Conclusion

Challenging the dominance of the foreign and the outside as represented by the

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<sup>25</sup>This tension between innovation and conformity has been the topic of much discussion. Folklorists, anthropologists and others have approached the concept of creativity from a number of angles. Many studies have been done on the concept of creativity within tradition, and the tension between innovation and conformity. Early studies on creativity in material culture include Ruth Bunzel’s work. She notes that: “even an individual of marked originality operates within narrow limits” (1). Echoing Bunzel’s conclusions, William Bascom observes that: “within each of these distinct styles there is usually considerable uniformity and obviously less creative freedom than was originally believed” (“Creativity and Style” 101).

pulp and paper industry, workers in Grand Falls-Windsor use everyday objects to mediate a sense of themselves. They use objects to claim ownership over the industry, owning both the product they produce as well as the materials with which they work. In appropriating the mill lunch basket, they have appropriated the symbol of the outside industry. But the mill lunch basket holds many meanings. In the next chapter, I explore its meaning within the male industrial world, where the warmth of the wood (and the woods) contrasts with the cold of the impersonal mill.

## **Chapter Four: Mediating a Sense of Self within the Industrial Plant**

### **4.1 Introduction**

While mill workers use a range of objects—sample paper, kettles and the lunch basket—to mediate a sense of self against industrial control, within the physical plant of the mill itself, it is the lunch basket that plays a pivotal role in managing relationships among workers. Mill workers use the basket as a marker of the bond between them and as entry into the restricted world of mill worker. The lunch basket mirrors the weave of social relations necessary among workers to work safely in the dangerous and physically demanding environment of the mill, and marks the stages of the mill worker's career. In the first section of this chapter I discuss work inside the mill itself and the informal culture of the shopfloor in order to explore how the woven lunch basket is a material manifestation of the bond that workers are continually weaving among themselves, through informal expressive means such as play, and of the importance of strong working relationships for those who work in dangerous conditions. In the second section I explore how workers use the mill lunch basket to mediate different stages of their work life: it marks a separation from the rest of the community and gives them access to the mill.

### **4.2 Shopfloor Culture: The Mill Lunch Basket in the Weave of Working Relations**

Is there a significance to the fact that most mill workers have preferred the lunch

baskets made by Angus Gunn, which, in addition to being strong and durable, are woven baskets? Is there a reason most residents of Grand Falls-Windsor expect to see a mill worker carrying a wooden basket, one like “ours”: a woven splint style basket? What does the importance of the weave tell us about the nature of mill work itself? I believe the weave of the lunch basket represents the physical manifestation of the bond between workers (4.1) and its prominence tells us about relationships between workers. While the lunch basket separates a worker from the rest of the community, it incorporates him into a difficult working space. I explore here that space and the strength of the informal cultures within it.

Weaving has often been used in cultures as a metaphor for life, for growth and for union. As Anthropologist Christopher Tilley has noted, in many cultures, weaving is linked to procreation and social regeneration (57). Historian Tim Ingold writes of life itself as weaving, writing: “Dwelling in the world, in short, is tantamount to the ongoing, temporal interweaving of our lives with one another ...the world of our experience is, indeed, continually and endlessly coming into being as we weave (69).<sup>1</sup> Based on this metaphor, I explore how the weave of the mill lunch basket mirrors how social relations

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<sup>1</sup>This weaving metaphor is often used in relation to cloth, but as Ingold points out, making “baskets preceded the weaving of cloth, and there is evidence to suggest that the techniques of the latter actually developed from basketry (which, in turn, may have developed from net-making)” (63). Rosemary Joyce employs the metaphor as well in looking at Dwight Stump’s basket making. She writes: “For Dwight’s basketmaking is truly a metaphor for his life. As he attends to the many steps of the process, he twists the strands of daily existence into and around the oak withes, in an unconscious weaving of the textures of his life” (194).





**Figure 4.1** Woven lunch basket made by Angus Gunn.

among coworkers are intertwined through play and other informal behaviours, for safety, sociability and solidarity, considering mill work in terms of working conditions and informal culture.

Like most industrial workplaces, the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor is noisy, hot and dangerous. As I described in Chapter Two, it is not uncommon for a worker to end his career with injuries; for instance many retired paper makers suffer from hearing loss. Perhaps the harshness of mill work is best summarised by this retired worker, who said of his retirement: “I come out of that mill 125 pounds. Skin and grief” (Grand Falls-Windsor Oral History Society, Transcript 94-009).

Sociologist Paul Willis studied the experiential conditions under which most industrial work is performed and he found that “excruciating noise is probably the most unpleasant sensual concomitant of industrial work” (185). He writes:

It is often forgotten that the main reality for most of the people, for most of the time, is work and the sound of work—the grind of production, not the purr of consumption, is the commonest mark of our industrial culture (185).

Even today, after much of the work has been computerised, the mill is still a hot and noisy place to work. One of the retired mill workers I spoke with described the effects of these conditions on the personalities of one particular group of mill workers. He said: “Paper makers were short of patience. Heat, noise, dirt. People were to their limit all the time” (JB 96-19). Because they worked on the paper machines themselves, paper makers often earned the reputation of being the most ill-tempered of all mill workers.

There are other strains on the workers. For example, for a period of time from the 1950s to the 1960s, the mill was plagued by cockroaches. Cockroaches thrive in areas that are moist, like the mill. One worker described his discomfort with this situation:

Cockroaches! You tried your best not to bring them back with you....When I went to work in the mill, it was some transition for me to get used to the cockroaches. They were everywhere. I remember doing construction—if you had to lift up a pipe, off from the floor—there was always this wet band in the basement part of the mill...you'd lift up the pipe and here was this shadow—and it would scatter. That's how thick they were. You'd hang your baskets from wire hooks. You'd always change your clothes. You'd check your basket before you'd leave the mill, to make sure you didn't bring any home (JB 96-17).

Yet despite discomfort and the noise, heat and dirt that working with machinery involves, for some in Grand Falls-Windsor, a job at the mill is thought of as a good opportunity. For others, worried about industrial injuries such as deafness or the loss of a limb, the mill is not considered the best place to work. One resident described this attitude as: "it's like mining towns where the father always says: 'well, the young fella's not coming in here to work'" (JB 96-19). Nevertheless, fathers have been able to ensure their sons a job at the mill. One worker described the situation in the 1960s to me when he said:

In those days, if your father worked at the mill, normally, your sons worked there. And I know families there who had five or six sons working at the mill. So that was the thing—get a job at the mill. The mill paid good money, especially compared to the people who worked outside the mill. And with unions, benefits increased. It's a good living (JB 96-12).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Family connections are prominent in company towns and distinguish them from other "urban" communities.

Men often work alongside their father, uncles and brothers. I met one man who had held summer jobs in the mill during the 1960s. He felt great respect for the work his father did in the mill. He told me:

Many of these men gave their hearts and souls to their jobs. I remember coming across my own father one day. And I just had to stand back and watch him. I couldn't believe what he was doing—the piece of equipment that he was trying to fix. The wrench he was using—it was a massive thing. I just stood back and watched my father working (JB 96-27).

Industrial workers operate large tools, engaging them in what Willis calls “the confrontation with the task” (196). Working with difficult equipment and machinery can invoke pride and enjoyment in the worker. For, as Willis writes:

[D]espite the dispossession, despite the bad conditions, despite the external directions, despite the subjective ravages, people do look for meaning, they do impose frameworks, they do seek enjoyment in activity, they do exercise their abilities. They repossess, symbolically and really, aspects of their experience and capabilities (188).

They find meaning as well, in the objects that ease this work and in their working relationships.

Working with machinery can be a source of pride; Willis names this: “the mythology of *masculine* reputation—to be strong and to be known for it” (189).<sup>3</sup> This

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<sup>3</sup>Because the shopfloor workforce at the Grand Falls-Windsor mill is entirely male, I have not discussed the exclusionary nature of this behaviour. However, Luxton and Corman note the construction of this work as men's work and its consequences for women trying to move into these jobs. They write: “Because large-scale industrial settings such as Hilton Works have often been considered ‘men's work’, one of the ways men make sense of these environments is by equating their ability to tolerate noisy, dirty and noxious work with notions of masculinity. These are tough jobs and it takes a ‘real

includes the "sheer mental and physical bravery of surviving in hostile conditions, and doing difficult work on intractable materials...there is a stature and self-respect, a human stake on the table against the relentless pressure of work to be done" (189). This type of work increases the need for cooperation among workers and intensifies the camaraderie of the workers, often emphasizing the maleness of the job. As Willis writes:

The brutality of the working situation is partially reinterpreted into a heroic exercise of manly confrontation with "the task". Difficult, uncomfortable or dangerous conditions are seen, not for themselves, but for their appropriateness to a masculine readiness and hardness. They are understood more through the toughness required to survive them, than through the nature of the imposition which asks them to be faced in the first place (196).

One of the results of working together under these difficult and uncomfortable conditions is a closeness that often supersedes that at home and in fact excludes one world from the other. One current worker expressed this closeness in terms of family. He said:

I say we spend more time together—we're in there for twelve hours a day and we go home and while we're home, we go to sleep. So I say we spend more time with each other in there—especially if you're on the same shift with the same people all the time, you're in there more time than with your own family. And you talk about everything. If you've got problems home. You talk about everything. Go up to the cabin together. When you have to leave one shift and go on another—that's hard (JB 96-22).

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man' to do them; as real men they have the capacities to handle anything the job can 'throw at them'" (82).



And another worker said: "I never resented going to work. Some of the happiest days of my life were spent in that mill. The good fellowship in that mill was unbelievable. We were like a bunch of brothers. You got to know everybody" (JB 96-31).

Some of this closeness is evident in the speed with which news is spread. As one person said:

Nothing was ever done wasn't done in the mill. And any news you wanted, you got it in there. Before other people knew it, and the newspaper knew it, anyone who worked in the mill knew it. That included—no, I'm not going to go into that. That included everything (JB 98-03).

He caught himself before telling a tale, demonstrating the camaraderie of the mill by excluding me, the outsider.

The closeness of the male mill workers is observed by most of the people I spoke with. One female office worker said: "You want to know something that's going on—whether in town or in the mill—the paper makers know it before it happens, actually" (JB 01-7). And another said: "Talk about women gossiping! They'd never keep up with the men in the mill" (JB 01-07). Naturally, some of this closeness is because of actual family connections in the mill. The following circumstance is not uncommon: "My father worked in the mill. And all my brothers worked in the mill. Two sisters. We come from a family of twelve" (JB 96-31).

What is obvious is that there is a tight weave of relationships in the mill. For some it has extended outside the mill, where bonding continues over the consumption of alcohol. This woman described the effects of her father's drinking. She said:

Drinking, and drugs—pills and so on. And yeah—when Dad got a prescription for anything, he always shared it with his friends. And at that time, again, I didn't think that was odd. It obviously happened so much, that I believed it was natural. It wasn't until I grew up and thought: "Holy Cow! What do you suppose was going on there?!" Lots of drinking going on. And pay day. The boys didn't make it home, half of them. They'd go on binges and stuff. Wasn't unusual on pay day to lose Dad for a couple of days. And he wasn't a 'drinker.' My mom married a non drinker. And ended up married to an alcoholic (JB 98-02).

Another described this situation as solidarity inside the mill carried to life outside the mill. He said:

They may not have been alcoholics, but they were large consumers. They brought the camaraderie out of the mill and into their off-shift time as well. Tremendous friendships—but like male bonding that never stopped. You can see that translating into home lifestyles (JB 96-17).

The most intense camaraderie appears to have occurred after World War Two. The men who returned to work at the mill in the 1940s were particularly known for drinking—and for covering for each other. When I asked one man if workers drank in the mill, he replied:

Oh you know they did. They probably still are. Not at the rate they used to. There was a period—now, nobody probably will mention it to you—probably interesting. When the guys went overseas, a lot of men went overseas, young fellows, eh—in the war. When they got over there—fighting in the trenches—they became great buddies. They became life long friends. ...They were guaranteed jobs in the mill, eh. So they came back into the mill. They started to set up the legions. And they were heavy drinkers. And they were buddies. And that carried through in the mill. So when I went to work in the mill, I worked with a lot of these guys....The protection thing. Like a guy came in—these guys were heavy drinkers—they'd smuggle it in and they'd drink on the job. And they got caught. And they're in trouble—in trouble with the Company and the

unions. And the unions had to help them out. And they were protecting each other in there. Hiding each other away. Like a guy'd bring in a bottle—he was half drunk—"I'll go do your job—you hide away." See. A real protection thing. And if something happened—"they can't do that to my buddy. We'll walk out." So there was a real element there after the war, that came in there (JB 96-12).

Today, people admit cautiously to the presence of drinking: "I guess there are a few of the men who probably brought a beer or two in there in their basket, right. Or a little flask. I've heard of that" (JB 01-07). And covering up still takes place. One woman told me:

They had lots of hideaway places for that. Dad and them used to talk about that too. He'd never say *he* brought it in but he told stories about the boys sneaking off in the tunnels and stuff like that. Having their beer or their rum or whatever, type thing. Stories from carrying on in there. They're still in there drinking and covering for each other. Like anything—you cover for your buddy (JB 01-07).

Workers put a high value on the social relations they have with their coworkers, often citing it as the best part of their job.<sup>4</sup> In his study of male working class culture in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Thomas Dunk found that, like the mill workers in Grand Falls-Windsor, camaraderie is highly valued. Dunk writes:

This social aspect of the job is where meaning and satisfaction are to be found, rather than the work itself. "It's the people you work with that make a job enjoyable. As long as you got a good bunch of guys to work with, that's all that matters." This statement, by a retired worker, reflects an aspect of the working class attitude towards work, and indicates how it is through the cultural practices of the informal group that an alienating situation is invested with meaning (8).

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<sup>4</sup>Some scholars consider sociability a workplace skill. See Ken Kusterer 58-60.

Dunk also notes that it is this informal workgroup that forms the “basis of the joking and bantering that fill up a large portion of the work day” (8). Joking is all about play.

Play is one of the most characteristic elements of work, either as resistance to work (Dunk, 7), as subversion of management's authority (Willis, 193), or as an element of the testing of co-workers as part of the “canon of work technique” (McCarl, “Retirement”, 414). It can be joking behaviour played out through pranks.

One man I spoke with who had worked in the mill summers as a student commented on why he thinks play is so important to mill workers. He said:

They had to enjoy their work. They enjoyed it—not so much through pride because there was so much routine and seniority—in terms of pride for advancement—that I think they tried to have as much fun as they could (JB 96-17).<sup>5</sup>

Play's serious side is seen through characteristics such as the importance of rules. In the mill, play sometimes includes its opposite, danger.

Workers at the mill refer to most play as “skylarking.”<sup>6</sup> In answering my

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<sup>5</sup>Classic works on play include John Huizinga as well as and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Stith Bennett. All authors stress the seriousness of play. Huizinga writes: “we find play present everywhere as a well-defined quality of action which is different from ‘ordinary’ life” (4). And: “To our way of thinking, play is the direct opposite of seriousness. At first sight this opposition seems as irreducible to other categories as the play-concept itself. Examined more closely, however, the contrast between play and seriousness proves to be neither conclusive nor fixed. We can say: play is non-seriousness...some play can be very serious indeed” (5).

<sup>6</sup> The following definition of skylarking comes from the Oxford English Dictionary: (OED, second edition, 1989, vol. 15.): “As a verb it means: “to frolic or play; to play tricks; to indulge in rough sport or horse-play. In early use chiefly nautical. ...Shows up in 1835: early evening the hands were turned up to skylark, that is, to play and amuse themselves.” Another definition is: “To trick or to cheat. B. To leap in a

question: “What is skylarking?” one mill worker gave this charged yet evasive answer:

“Lots of pranks in the mill. Everything went on in there. Everything you could name—and more besides” (JB 96-12). He then told me a story of playing with “stock.”

He said:

Stock—that’s like a log ground up. It’s like porridge. You wring the water out. Lots of time, we used to have a welder with us, see. He’d be down underneath. One of the guys would get up top, fixing a set of bolts or something, and he’d get a handful of this old stock. And I’d take me dick out eh. And I’d squeeze the old stock out of me hand, look like I’d be pissing on him eh. I’d squeeze this old stock down his neck. It was only old water from this stock. Oh, did he ever get mad eh?! (JB 98-06).

His story contains the scatological elements I expected after learning the expression “skylarking.” I first heard it just before I started my fieldwork, when sitting in the food court of the Avalon Mall in St John’s. A friend from Grand Falls-Windsor asked me if the mill workers had told me any stories yet of “skylarking.” The term was unfamiliar to me although the inclusion of the word sky made me think of heights and larking does mean play. He thought no one would tell me these stories, which made me think they either included scatological elements or illegal ones like drinking. The term is in fact nautical in origin, referring to the play of sailors and implies danger. It is used to describe

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frolicsome manner. 1809 there was an admonition against skylarking. 1815 a dictionary (marine): a term used by seamen, to denote wanton play about the rigging, and tops, or in any part of the ship, particularly by the youngsters”(635).

a particular type of crime.<sup>7</sup> Described as wanton play, and outlawed, the term implies the contradiction: dangerous play.

In the mill, skylarking is sometimes a way to pass the time; other times it is used as social commentary. It is always an important part of work, one which a retired worker feels is being lost. He said: “there's no one going in there with a skylark now” (JB 96 05). And another said: “This is what’s the matter with work now, eh. Everybody goes to work now, they’re too serious. There’s nobody going in there now with a skylark” (JB 98-06).

Skylarking at work was celebrated in a poem in one issue of the company newsletter, yet another indication of the value the mill workers put on skylarking. “Farewell John” was written by the “Mill Poet” Isaiah Cole. The poem consists of six stanzas, the following excerpt contains stanza one, five and six:

*We have gathered together this evening  
To wish a co-worker farewell,  
Who is leaving this town for another.  
In British Columbia to dwell;  
We wish him success and good fortune  
Which now we express in this poem,  
And hope that he thinks of us sometime,  
The fellows he worked with back home.*  
...  
*We hope he will leave with fond memories ~  
The years while he worked at Grand Falls.*

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<sup>7</sup>As a search of the Internet proved, it is still used within its nautical context in countries such as England and Australia. It is used as a generally accepted term, i.e. not slang, and appears in an Australian government safety publication: “The fire was caused by two young workers skylarking in the spray booth after they had finished work.”



*Repairing and fixing the motors,  
And switches so high on the walls;  
With flashlight, screwdriver and wrenches,  
And all of it strapped to his waist.  
Then the nice cups of tea in the morning,  
And tha caplin ~ oh wonderful taste!*

*The fooling around and the joking.  
Capsizing the barrels on the floor;  
Then busting the cleaner's broom handle.  
All this "skylarking" and more  
All this he will no doubt remember  
When he makes his new home in B.C.  
And thinks of his former old buddies  
In the mill where he once used to be!*

(Isaiah Cole, "News-Log:, Price (Newfoundland), November 1966, vol. 2, no. 11.)

Skylarking includes pranks. At the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor, pranks are played on sleeping workers as well as those too eager to get off work. Some pranks are played to serve as warnings. Industrial workers in dangerous, hot, and noisy industrial plants must rely on each other for safety. While management warns about safety through official signage such as notices on bulletin boards throughout the mill, informal communication about safety amongst workers is equally important. Worries over being able to rely on a coworker and his attention to his job are frequently expressed and enacted through pranks. Lazy people, particularly those who fall asleep on the job, are often targeted. Mill workers told me how cigarettes were dropped down the pants of sleeping workers or water was sprayed on them (JB 01-04). One mill worker described an elaborate prank to me. He said:

There was one guy, partly he was crooked and whatever, someone they

didn't get along with too well anyway. Anyway, he fell asleep on a shift. So they made this dummy and hung him from a rafter. Then they made a noise, cause he woke up. And when he woke up—there was this—he thought that the guy he was working with on that shift, was after hanging himself. So they're always up to stuff like that. One of the bosses had this chair they weren't allowed to sit on. He'd tell the boys off if they sat on his chair. So, they saw he was gone one time and they went up and sawed the legs off the chair and that was it. He couldn't use it anymore either (JB 01-07).

Pranks are also played on workers who are too eager to leave, using the lunch basket to send the message as in the following account:

You'd have your basket on the table and you'd have your shower and you'd be getting ready to go home. You'd come out and you'd grab your basket, when the whistle would blow or whatever—and they'd nail your basket down. You'd haul the handles off your basket! Or they'd fill it full of rocks or something like that (JB 96 05).

And:

One guy had a habit—so eager to get off shift and get away from the job—he'd swing his arm up through the handles and go on with the basket all in one motion. This particular day he swung his arm through and all he came up with were the handles. The basket was nailed to the floor (JB 96-31).

Other pranks illustrate what Willis describes as “subversion of the boss's authority and status” (193). In this case, the names of three managers were hand written onto a panel which described the plant's lagoon system:

Every now and then someone comes up with a bright idea—making fun of someone else. On one of the walls down there, they got a plywood thing about the new lagoon and how the temperature affects the bugs. On the bottom they got three bugs, sat at a table, three plates in front of them and it says—if the temperature is cold the bugs won't eat. The plates are full. It goes up and you got the bugs there again. If it's warmer, they're looking

happy, they'll eat some of it. And then it goes right up to the top, and it says, at this temperature they're happy and they'll eat the full plate. Well someone cut out a picture of the Dave Kerr and Gord Cole and Roger Pike and put them right over the bugs. So now the three bugs on the bottom are Dave Kerr and Gord Cole and Roger Pike. Pretty good laugh. I had a good laugh out of it (JB 96-22).<sup>8</sup>

Associating the names of the three top managers with bugs is a clear challenge to the managers' authority.<sup>9</sup>

Many of the pranks centre on food. One mill worker told me a story about his sister-in-law making him fake sandwiches out of cardboard, another told me about his young niece who took a bite out of one of his sandwiches before it was sent in, and another told me about "stock" being put in a sandwich (JB 01-04, JB 01-07 and JB 98-06).<sup>10</sup> Pranks on food were the only practical jokes to make it into the company newsletter. In the "*News Log, Price (Newfoundland)*" in April 1967, an entry in "Around the mill—by Carol" says, under "Things We'd Like to Know": "Who put soap in one of

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<sup>8</sup> As in most workplaces, xeroxlore shows up as part of pranks. Recently, a cartoon circulated during tensions between managers and workers. One worker told me: "There was a seagull, and he had a frog in his mouth. He was swallowing the frog. And the frog had hold of the seagull's throat. And it says: 'never give up.' We had some trouble awhile back when we went through the restructuring. The cartoon went around then. 'Never give up.' Had the company by the throat while they were trying to swallow you" (JB 96-05). This particular cartoon is included in Alan Dundes and Carl Pagter 46-47. The authors describe the meaning of the "Don't Give Up" sketch as representing the American ideal of fighting to the end.

<sup>9</sup> Luxton and Corman write that these acts against management add to "a workplace culture that makes day-to-day life on the job more amenable and lays a basis for working-class authority and union militancy." (33).

<sup>10</sup>I explore the devaluing of sandwiches in Chapter Four.

the sandwiches belonging to one of the boys in the Engineering Dept a while back?”  
(April 1967, vol. 3, no. 4, p. 5).

Mill workers labour in a noisy, pungent workplace, often working with dangerous equipment and in uncomfortable circumstances. To work safely and socially, they weave strong bonds with their coworkers, in informal ways such as play. Just as they value this bond, they value the lunch baskets made by Angus Gunn, the woven wooden basket that most of them carry. The importance of the bond between them is materially reflected in the weave of the lunch basket.

This shopfloor culture is separate from the everyday. In the following section, I explore how mill workers use the lunch basket as a marker of separation.

#### **4.3 The Mill Lunch Basket as Mediator between the Stages of a Work Life**

Objects are not passive. They play a role in making the person. Christopher Tilley acknowledges this when he writes:

[P]ersons require things to make and transform themselves....Just as persons make things, things make persons. The dualistic fashion in which we have a tendency to think of persons as active subjects and things as passive objects hinders an understanding of the manner in which material metaphors work in relation to persons and their self-knowledge and understanding of the world (262).

Carrying a mill lunch basket in Grand Falls-Windsor transforms the person carrying it into a mill worker.

French scholar Arnold Van Gennep's lasting contribution to folkloristics is his

study of the ceremonies that mark a change in an individual's social or spiritual status. In his classic work, The Rites of Passage, he noted that individuals live in a constant state of change and that there are rituals which move them into a new stage, allowing them "to act and to cease, to wait and rest, and then to begin acting again, but in a different way" (Van Gennep quoted in Dundes, 104). He identified three stages to the rites of passage that accompany life changes: rites of separation, rites of transition (initiation), and rites of incorporation (Van Gennep, 10-11).<sup>11</sup>

The mill lunch basket is intricately tied to rites of passage. When the mill worker in Grand Falls-Windsor begins his career, he normally acquires a lunch basket. As one woman told me "I always joke with my husband—he uses, just a little thermos type thing—and I always say to him—'you're not a mill worker unless you have your basket'" (JB 99-02). Sometimes the new worker receives a lunch basket from a family member who worked at the mill, other times he may buy one. One worker told me: "Yes, you get a job. You have to buy safety boots, and you have to get a basket. And coveralls and

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<sup>11</sup>In each rite, some aspects may be emphasised more than others and in some cases, certain rites are emphasised. For example, "rites of separation are prominent in funeral ceremonies, rites of incorporation at marriages" ( Van Gennep quoted in Dundes, 102). Robert McCarl suggests that the ritual of the retirement dinner among the firefighters he studied is primarily a rite of separation, as the individual separates from his working life and colleagues, but at some point within that dinner, before declaring himself retired, the retiring firefighter is in a liminal (or transitional) state ("'You've Come a long Way'" 407). But as Alan Dundes explains, while one rite may be more clearly articulated or performed than another, their common objective is always to "insure a change of condition or a passage from one magico-religious or secular group to another" (Dundes, 103).

stuff. It's all part and parcel" (JB 01-08). Many mill workers value having a family member's lunch basket. One woman told me how common this is when she said:

Normally, most guys, there's someone waiting in the wings. "I want Pop's basket, or Dad's basket" or whatever. That's a big deal. Which it is. I know for my brother-in-law it is. Meant a lot to him especially when his grandfather passed away. He treasures that (JB 01-06).

Once he has a mill lunch basket, the man carrying it in Grand Falls-Windsor is immediately identifiable as a mill worker. This is so much so that those who do not carry one stand out. As one woman told me:

To us—he's *supposed* to have a basket. You see a guy coming out on shift and all the workers coming out—and he doesn't have a basket. You almost feel like shouting—"Hey, you forgot your basket!" It really looks strange if they don't have it (JB 01-08).

This linking of the basket with the identity of the male worker was particularly emotional to one woman, a mill office worker whose late husband had been a mill worker. She told me:

The basket is a status symbol of: "I've got a permanent job in the mill. Here's my basket." Because first when my husband passed away, I found it very hard to see the men in the mill with their baskets. I used to make sure I was in my office so I didn't see the men going out with their baskets. It's just, that picture is there: the man and his basket, the mill and his job (JB 01-06).<sup>12</sup>

The mill basket marks the mill worker as different from others in the community, it

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<sup>12</sup>At her teenaged daughter's request, she had not unpacked her husband's basket after he died; it remains full of the non perishable items he took to the mill each day.



separates him and as such, represents Van Gennep's initial stage of separation. It also allows him entry into the mill and entry into the initiation phase of this passage from community member to mill worker.

A new worker at the mill starts his career by being allowed in through the secured doors; visitors to the mill only make it to the security office where they must sign in. Wire fencing surrounds most of the mill, emphasising its impenetrability and its deliberate separation from everyday life, including domestic life.<sup>13</sup> To pass through the mill gates as a worker involves a passage to a new stage in life. Van Gennep noted the symbolic importance of the entrance as marking this passage when he wrote:

[T]he passage from one social position to another is identified with a '*territorial passage*', such as the entrance into a village or a house, the movement from one room to another, or the crossing of streets and squares. This identification explains why the passage from one group to another is so often ritually expressed by passage under the portal or by an 'opening of the doors'...(Van Gennep quoted in Dundes, 106, italics in original).

He identified the doorway as having particular ritual importance as a marker of a new

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<sup>13</sup>This is of course the result of an industrial ideology that promotes the intentional separation of work life from home life. As Luxton and Corman found in their study of Hamilton, Ontario, the industrial plant is purposely otherworldly. They wrote: "The physical location of the plant, in an industrial area away from residential neighbourhoods, its massive size, and industrial architecture—dozens of large interlocking buildings spread over a thousand acres—and its security-high fences and monitored gates, powerfully convey the message that Stelco as a workplace is a separate world from the rest of the city. A steelworker described his experience of that separation: 'When you go through the gate, you enter a different world. You just have to leave the rest of your life behind because when you are at work, that's all that counts'" (65).

world. He writes:

The door is the boundary between the foreign and domestic worlds in the case of an ordinary dwelling, between the profane and sacred worlds in the case of a temple. Therefore to cross the threshold is to unite oneself with a new world (Van Gennep 20).

While the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor is neither a temple nor a home, it is set apart from daily life by fences, by its heat and noise, and by the mystery it holds for the uninitiated (figs. 4.2 and 4.3).

Some residents used religious imagery when talking to me about the mill, as this one woman did when she gave me her first impressions of the inside of the mill when she was a child. She said:

I remember the first time I took a tour of the mill. It was probably the most horrifying time. My mom is Pentecostal and very religious, *really* religious. So I knew all about hell fire and brimstone. And my dad was not a religious man and so I believed that that's where he was going when he died. He was going to hell. When I did that tour of the mill, I changed my mind. That was when my whole religious future changed, right then and there, because I believed that it couldn't get any worse than that—that the mill *was* hell. It was hot and smelly and noisy and absolutely unbearable. After that, I didn't want Dad to go to work. After that I never resented carrying the heavy basket for him or having Mom spend all this time either packing these baskets because that's *all* they had down there. That was the warmth, the only real life they got out of it. Terrible (JB 98-01).

As this woman's memory indicates, children in particular view the mill as mysterious. Children can only gain entry to the mill operations through an organised tour and under the guidance of an experienced worker. As another resident told me:



Figure 4.2 Barriers to entry of mill.



Figure 4.3 Smoke billows from mill.

When I took the basket over to Dad, you only got to go to the punch office then—where the men punched their time cards. So you never really saw the mill. Just that one little entrance area. I was pretty old before I got to go on a tour of the mill (JB 01-06).

Children can almost get inside the mill when they deliver the packed lunch basket to their father. One woman told me:

All the kids would then deliver. You'd see that happening all the time—the moms would pull up outside. The kids would get out and go in and you'd line the lunch baskets up. Inside the front door—it's changed now, it's all been modernised—but back then there were two benches when you opened the front door of the mill. The heat was the first thing that hit you—and then the smell. And you would line the lunch boxes up—all up and down the side. They all looked identical but everyone knew who owned what one somehow. Dad's name wasn't on his lunch box, but everyone knew it belonged to him. And if you were lucky, you'd get there just as your dad was coming out to pick up his lunch. So you could actually hand it to him. That was a real treat—to see them coming through that big dark hole at the end of the tunnel-thing. It was really quite scary (JB 98-01).

There is a special way to carry a mill lunch basket (figs. 4.4, 4.5 and 4.6), mainly to prevent spilling the contents. One man remembered the style in which the basket was carried when he told me:

I can still see the way they carry them. And they all carry them the same way. Their arm would be through, the loops of the handles would be leaning on their forearm, their hand hooked on the bottom. They never carried it by the handles, always carried it on the forearm (JB 99-02).

Children who delivered baskets would imitate the style. As one man told me: “You would walk down proudly with your arm up like this and the basket kinda hanging by your side. You put on the act as if you were a mill worker” (JB 01-05). Delivering the





**Figure 4.4** Retired mill worker Bruce Dawe shows how to carry a mill lunch basket.





Figure 4.5 Retired mill worker Ray Dunne with his mill lunch basket.



**Figure 4.6** Lisa Butler demonstrates how her father carried his lunch basket.

lunch basket was a child's key to getting close to the mill, and they were rewarded for that chore by the chance to step inside the doors of the mill. One man articulated the allure of the mill for the uninitiated when he told me:

When we delivered the lunches we got to go inside the mill. I mean—this *monster* down the end of the road, that we could see from our house—the smoke billowing out—it was a mystery what was inside. We were never permitted—I think I was sixteen, seventeen before I got through the doors there. So, we didn't know *what* went on inside the mill. It was sort of like a secret. But we got to bridge that just at the door—to get in there a little ways at times. So that was exciting enough for us. The fact that we had an opportunity to go down was often payment enough, right (JB 01-05 ).

The speaker is conscious of being at the door to something restricted to him, not just from entering, but also from comprehending.

The new mill worker is not unlike the child at the mill door. Van Gennep has identified the initiation stage as one of “waving between two worlds.” He wrote:

Whoever passes from one to the other finds himself physically and magico-religiously in a special situation for a certain length of time: he wavers between two worlds. It is this situation which I have designated a transition, and one of the purposes of this book is to demonstrate that this symbolic and spatial area of transition may be found in more or less pronounced form in all the ceremonies which accompany the passage from one social and magico-religious to another (Van Gennep, 18).

Not yet initiated, a new worker requires someone to show him around, to initiate him into this new world. As one worker said: “I never went in to the mill, outside of the punch office, until I got a job. Someone had to show you what to do” (JB 01-03).

Like most workplaces, the mill has a lively informal culture through which

workers initiate new workers. Once inside the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor, new workers are admitted into an unfamiliar workplace through a number of initiation rituals, or transition rites. One of the most obvious forms of initiation is pranks, which can teach the new worker how to work well and safely by learning the layout of the physical work site, how to operate machinery, and how to manage the personalities of other workers. Robert McCarl studied the motivation behind this informal instruction. He wrote: “in spite of what new workers think they know, there are traditional ways of doing things in the workplace which workers themselves create, evaluate and protect” (“Occupational Folklife” 71).<sup>14</sup>

A first day on a new job is the classic time for established workers to play a prank on the beginner, making that day “a nightmare of new terms, actions, and techniques” (“Occupational Folklife” 71).<sup>15</sup> McCarl provides an example of “experienced workers sending new welders for a glass rod to weld a broken window” (“Occupational Folklife”

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<sup>14</sup>He names these traditional ways “the canon of work technique” which comprise “the body of informal knowledge used to get the job done” (“Occupational Folklife” 71-72). As McCarl writes: “The study of occupational folklore today focuses not only on the verbal forms of occupational jargon and narrative, but also on the customs designed to mark an individual’s passage through a respective career, as well as the various skills and techniques which must be informally learned and performed by a worker in any job. Together the techniques, verbal expressions, and customs of work comprise a wide-ranging way of life in the workplace which folklorists have termed occupational folklife” (“Occupational Folklife” 71).

<sup>15</sup> See especially Jack Santino, “Occupational Narratives,” in which he describes first day on the job experiences as one of the main themes of occupational narratives (62), and Robert McCarl, “Accident Narratives.”

71). At the mill in Grand Falls-Windsor, one worker remembered being sent to the dark basement on his first day. He told me: "I remember going down to this basement, spooky as Dickens, mile after mile of aisles. And noises. And being set up in terms of ghost stories from the guys"(JB 96-17). The prank did give the new worker an understanding of the physical layout of the plant, illustrating folklorist Contessa Small's observation in her study of the occupational narratives of pulp and paper mill workers in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, that the goal of this kind of prank is to give the new worker familiarity with a new workplace (56).

Other first day pranks teach the initiate about the personalities of other workers, particularly the difficult ones. One worker told me:

There was one where they'd ask you to go get a bucket of steam. That kind of thing. Someone says, one of the backtenders says: "I need a bucket of steam." "Where do I get that?" "You got to go up to the office and ask the boss for a bucket of steam." And you'd go up and the boss would be crooked as sin, probably. Old fellow, anyway. And some were grouchy. Or we thought they were. Seemed to us they were. "You get the jeezly out of here now and you'll get some bucket of steam alright!" You had to learn and you learned fast (JB 01-04).

As a previous speaker pointed out, paper makers, working under demanding conditions, could be ill tempered and a prank like this ensures the new worker learns that lesson quickly. The following pranks illustrate similar lessons:

There was all kinds of humour. The young guys going in—we were the butt of the jokes. From being sent for greased lightening and for all kinds of tricks. When you were broke hustling, the older men—you were cleaning up paper—I remember seeing one guy who had such a stack of paper, he did a swan dive into it and started to swim through it. And I'm there saying:

“I gotta push this stuff down!” (JB 96-17).<sup>16</sup>

And

The joke was—you send him up for a bucket of greased lightening. Of course there’s no such thing. But you’re supposed to bring this back. Cause you’re green. And then the supply stores would recognise this. So then they’d say: “well, what kind?” They’d play it for as long as they could (JB 96-17).

One worker explained: “You had to be tough—give it back to them, verbally—could never show they’d got to you” (JB 96-17). He recognises the test he is being put through, that he needed to prove he was “male” enough to take the jokes and pranks, a skill identified by McCarl as one of the factors in the canon of work technique. He writes:

Participation in the canon of work technique is a continual series of these tests in which the individual is called upon to perform skills, return verbal darts, tell stories and act like a “good” fire fighter in a variety of occupational and extra occupational settings (““You’ve Come a Long Way”” 414).

As the worker learns the informal skills and attitudes necessary for his job, he is incorporated into the new workforce, woven into the series of workplace relationships in which he must participate to work safely.

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<sup>16</sup>The role of the “broke hustler” was to clean up the broken paper. An industry-wide term, it was best described to me by a retired paper maker. He said: “The broke hustler had to keep the floor cleaned up. The paper that was on the floor. And rolls that was no good—you had to cut up. The man that cleaned the floor—he had to cut up the rolls, put ‘em down below—in the basement. There was a man down there. And a beater. Like a washing machine. Way bigger than that. And all the broke, that went down in the basement, had to be beaten away and pumped back to the wet end of the machine” (JB 96-06).



The lunch basket plays a large role in the third phase of the rites of passage in the meals it facilitates. Sharing a meal is a classic rite of incorporation and today workers often cook up meals together as a way of maintaining their bond. The lunch basket may arrive full of food ready to be eaten or contain food to be prepared in the plant. Sharing meals, the rite of eating and drinking together, is clearly a rite of incorporation that Van Gennep identified as the final stage that solidifies the new person into the new status. The worker uses these meals to create solidarity with other workers and to build his relationship with them.<sup>17</sup> Food is a social activity, a fact underscored by the fact that many pranks are played with or about food.

Mia Boynton describes meals held inside a mill as part of the worker culture of male plant workers (96). In her study, one of the millwrights “would prepare elaborate

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<sup>17</sup> Meals in the workplace can also act as resistance to management control, particularly when they involve a work stoppage. Dorothy Fennell has written about her experiences of being a shop steward among industrial factory workers. She saw workers trying to humanise and control their work experience. She writes: “workers in assembly, for example, try to arrange their jobs so that they can talk, control the pace of work, assist other workers, and restrict production. Often workers make something special out of their lunch breaks, either by organising a pot-luck dinner or, during the summer months, by picnicking behind the factory” (306). Birthday celebrations and going away parties are more elaborate forms of these meals together. One of the purposes of these group meals is to gain control over the workplace by workers. She writes: “Though the factory continues to be an inhospitable place over which workers have very little control, they have not deferred completely either to the noise and grime or to the boss. Interacting on and off the job they instead integrated their personal and political lives to form a resistance network that extends from shop to home” (309). She sees meals together as forming part of this resistance. Sallie Westwood studied women’s factory work, and she too concludes that food as celebration in the factory was an act of resistance. She writes: “celebrations were one way in which the shopfloor wrested their own space from the company” (97).

meals for the millwright crew, which he sometimes did on afternoon and midnight shifts” (96). Workers brought in food from their gardens to share and kept cooking utensils in their lockers in case of a special meal, at which point “cookware and hotplates, stored in the lockers with the tools, would be brought out, and people would cook up meals for one another at the plant” (99). The meals she describes are elaborate and she provides one worker’s description of what they included. Boynton writes:

In the mornings sometimes we would make a big breakfast, like pancakes, sausage, juice...We had a fishfry one time. And we had spaghetti, and then we had big fat hamburgers. Breakfast we would have sometimes eggs, sometimes French toast...pancakes, bacon, sausage...We would have like Italian sandwiches with the green peppers—and things like that (97).

Boynton concludes these meals are rebellious and creative acts. She writes: “According to plant management, these workers were being paid to do work for Republic Steel, not to be creative and festive. Preparing for and eating these meals on paid time when supervisors were not around created a cheerful, reversed situation” (97).

Some meals in the mill included invitations to management to join in. One worker described such a meal to me. He said:

I’ve participated in quite a few boil ups as we call them. We had a situation a few years ago where a group of us used to come into work and—it may be a little better organised than our forefathers because for one thing, we have vehicles. ...So we got into the habit—and one of the guys who worked with me was a tremendous cook. Very, very good. With us you gotta be clean too. It’s no good to be haphazard and dirty. I mean, if we’re going to cook a dinner, we want to cook it like a restaurant, right. The same. So what we used to do—we used to bring in several dollars each. There were six or seven of us. And, they make up a list. A turkey maybe. Part of my job—we’d go out to Sobey’s and collect about—almost

one hundred dollars worth of food. And we'd bring it back and then we'd start cooking it. That would include a roast, probably salt meat. Potatoes, carrots, three or four pies. Pastries. Maybe three or four litres of Pepsi. Maybe a couple magnums of wine. And then we'd invite everybody that was around. We'd go so far as to shut the plant down, that we worked in. We did invite management. We had quite a few management sit down to eat with us. We've fed as high as fifteen people. The odd time we might order one hundred dollars worth of Chinese food and have it brought in and serve it up. You couldn't always have a dinner, but we'd pick a time, and we managed. I don't think there was very many times that we canceled a dinner. We always managed somehow—even if we had to eat in shifts. There were times we couldn't shut the plant down. We only needed to shut it down for the half hour we were eating. Sometimes we had to eat in shifts (JB 01-11).

These types of festive meals, characterised by Sunday foods like roasts, humanised the workplace for these men and in the occasions that they involved a mill shut down, even temporary, act as a form of confronting management control.

McCarl describes how the firefighters he studied employed a range of ceremonial dinners, or “ritual food events,” as a way of maintaining closeness. He wrote:

Food and food preparation in fire fighting culture provide an extremely important context for the establishment of a cultural identity. A fire fighter “in on the meal” asserts his solidarity with his fellow workers by maintaining the close knit “home-away-from-home” ambience of the firehouse (“‘You’ve Come a Long Way’” 394).

McCarl describes how individuals are called upon to “prepare ‘their’ dish” and this is certainly true at the Grand Falls-Windsor mill (394). One woman remembered her father's reputation for a certain meal. She told me:

As you remember me saying—they ate like kings—they ate better at that mill than they did at home. I know Dad would always have a big meal, they ate

quite well. I can always remember—there was probably a tin of Vienna sausages, bread, teabags. Little things like that stick out because they were always there. But I mean, they would have their salt beef dinners or they would cook up a chicken. Sausages. They ate well. Like I always say—Dad ate better than we did—in the mill. Dad never came home to lunch, he always ate in the mill. To my knowledge. Dad cooked it in there. One meal I remember in particular and I still love it to this day—fried tomatoes with macaroni, fried up with onions and fat back pork. That was one meal they had a lot. When I met my husband, we talked about it with his mother. She said, “Ron—who is my father—always made the best tomatoes.” Her husband always said: “you can’t cook it as good as Ron.” Mom would pack it (JB 99-02).

Some of the meals that were sent into the mill were shared amongst workers and today it is not uncommon for a group to cook up a meal together in the mill itself. One mill worker told me:

For the last ten, fifteen years—there’s been lunch rooms, ovens and everything in the mill. So you can cook up something or do whatever you like. But in those years, they used to sit on the floor wherever they were working and eat. My father used to take a bottle of tea in a glass bottle—it’d be wrapped up in sample paper to keep it warm. And you’d have a drink of tea from the bottle—probably have a mug to pour it into. That’s how they kept it warm. And they’d eat wherever they were on the job. That’s why—when their lunch was sent in and it was hot, they’d eat it right away. They wouldn’t be able to take it and warm it up anywhere. That’s probably why they sent the lunches in. Like now, you can go in, you can take in your own potatoes. You can fill your locker for the week and then cook up every day. That’s usually what the group does. If there’s four on a shift, they’ll all do their own cooking and bring in their groceries at the beginning of the week. They have cupboards with their dishes. The lunch room now is like a kitchen (JB 96-05).

As one millworker told me, the strengthening of this connection between mill workers can be seen in the sharing of meals. He said: “Food becomes a recreation. It becomes a chance for camaraderie around the table. And I guess—the breaking of bread—there’s a lot

of symbolism in the lunch room table” (JB 01-11). He recognises the symbolic level on which the basket operates.

The meal may also mark a separation: the final milestone in the mill worker’s career is his retirement, a separation from his work mates and a new status as retired worker. Not surprisingly, taking into account the valuing of the camaraderie of the mill, this is not always an easy role. One woman told me after her father retired, he just sat in his easy chair and mourned, until he had his first heart attack (JB 98-01).

Retirement dinners are of course part of the repertoire in Grand Falls-Windsor.<sup>18</sup> One retired worker told me of his retirement, highlighting the role material culture and the symbols of work play in this rite.<sup>19</sup> He jumped on his lunch basket, that piece of material culture that publicly linked him with a working workforce. With no son to pass his lunch basket on to, jumping on his basket at his retirement party broke not only his own link to the mill but also his family’s link to the mill. He gave his reasons for this action in the following way:

I jumped on it because I made a commitment to the guys in the mill some years ago. We used to have a saying: “what are you going to do with your basket when you retire.” Because I didn’t have anyone to pass my basket down to. Normally, everybody in the mill who had young fellas, the general policy was that they would work with their fathers. Like, I worked with my father and four brothers. You were almost guaranteed a job in the

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<sup>18</sup> Peter Narváez describes send off parties as occasions and opportunity to confront the contradictions in reporters’ work culture (“Send-Off Parties”).

<sup>19</sup> See also Archie Green, especially the chapter, “Our Ritual Grab Bag,” pp. 347-353.

mill at one time, if your father worked in the mill, you had it made, sort of thing. And you usually followed the trend. Like my father was a papermaker and my three brothers and I were papermakers. So I just said after thirty-nine years when and if I do retire, I'm going to jump on my basket and I lived up to that commitment (JB 01-02).

The speaker energetically participated in his transition from active millworker to retiree by destroying the artifact that identified him as a millworker: his lunch basket. His actions symbolically destroy his public and personal identification as an active mill worker. Just as the retirement party McCarl describes puts the retiring firefighter in a liminal space (neither here nor there) until he acknowledges the change, this mill retiree accepts and marks his new position by breaking (a classic characteristic of separation) the symbol of his day to day identification as a worker. Not all mill workers jump on their baskets of course. Others take them home and put them in their basements, waiting for the chance to pass them on, to publicly welcome a new worker. Even this worker was unable to completely part with the most day to day symbol of his working days: he keeps what is left of the basket—the handles—in his basement.

Robert McCarl notes the intensification of the retirement party and writes that: “day to day symbols, metaphors and imagery used in the culture are imbued with creative significance in the dinner and are given much more strength and meaning in this context” (“‘You’ve Come a Long Way’” 407-408). Thus, through material culture, particularly the woven basket, the mill worker marks his entry to and exit from the mill work force.

Mill workers use the lunch basket to mark the cycles of their working lives. Through the cycles of separation, initiation and incorporation, the basket transforms the



mill worker from outsider to insider and again to outsider. Christopher Tilley has written about the weave of cloth as a metaphor for life cycles. He writes:

So cloth can metaphorically give expression to basic ideas about death and the regeneration of life and can stand for the life-cycle of birth, maturation, death and decay. Participants in life-cycle celebrations and in death rituals often emphasise the gift of cloth as a continuous thread that binds kin groups, ancestors and the living, thus showing that the process of making things and making people are part of the same seamless orders of things (57).

The gift of a basket, like the gift of cloth, plays a central symbolic role in the life cycle of the mill worker as worker.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

The lunch basket plays an elaborate role in the informal culture of the mill workers, both within the rites of passage of a mill worker and in the representation of the connections between workers. Mill workers use the basket to mediate a sense of themselves as individuals within an industrial setting: while they labour to make a mass produced commodity for export, they give significance to an everyday object, the lunch basket, imbuing it with symbolic meaning beyond the everyday and through it, transforming themselves. In the following chapter I look at how mill workers and their families have managed their relationship with the imposed industrial ideology through objects.

## **Chapter Five: Objects of Mediation Within the Home: Divisions and Links**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The A.N.D. Company imposed a very structured society on the people of Grand Falls, beyond the industrial workplace and into the home. Life in a company town meant company decisions over such domestic issues as on what street you will live and in what type of house.<sup>1</sup> At one point, the mill whistle sounded early so that women would know when to get their sons and husbands ready for work. As people in Grand Falls-Windsor told me, home life runs around shift work and an allegiance to the mill. And inside the mill, no woman has ever worked on the shop floor.

The industrial ideology of the A.N.D. Company established clear gender roles which promoted women's work in the home rather than in the workplace, especially the industrial workplace. Opportunities for women at the mill have always been limited, while the A.N.D. Company promoted women's domestic work in the home. As Botting concluded:

The A.N.D. Company sought to transform a disparate group of workers, as well as their wives and children, into citizens of an industrial town. Part and parcel of that transformation was the dominance of the gender ideology of the male breadwinner and female domesticity (368).

This chapter explores how people in Grand Falls-Windsor use objects, in particular

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<sup>1</sup>The Company privileged the married man by reserving company housing for married men (Botting, 155).

sample paper and the mill lunch basket, to challenge this dominant ideology. Just as I examined the nature of the male shopfloor culture in the last chapter, here I explore the nature of women's domestic work, suggesting that it, too, be considered in terms of the workplace. The first section of this chapter will focus on how men challenge the concept of separate spheres, by using objects to extend and to link work with home primarily through what is brought home in the basket, including sample paper, tools and machinery parts. Children also use the lunch basket to link these worlds. I then explore how women disprove the concept of separate spheres, and how their domestic work in fact extends into the industrial workplace, through the food which is mostly shared but also used as something to barter with for other items. The second section discusses the divisive aspect of this equation, as I look at the gendered nature of women's domestic work in Grand Falls-Windsor as highlighted by the lunch basket. In the concluding section, I suggest ways in which my study contributes to our knowledge of the material culture of the home, particularly within the concept of home as "workplace."

## **5.2 Interdependent worlds: men, children and women challenge the concept of separate spheres**

Most western industrialised societies have operated under an ideology that has relegated domestic "caring" work to women while at the same time promoting the ideal of "separate spheres" of work in which men's industrial work was done in the "public sphere" and women's domestic work was done in the "private sphere" of the home, an

often idealised place of hearth and harmony where women are “protected” from the harshness of the industrial world. This ideology promotes a gendered division of labour in which women are responsible for the nurturing work, including planning and preparing meals, while at the same time devaluing the economic and social links that in fact exist between these two “spheres.” As sociologist Marjorie DeVault has pointed out:

The dominant idea of family in Western societies has developed as part of the construction over time of an ideological distinction between “public” and “private” realms. With industrialisation, an ideology of separate spheres assigned wage work, outside the home, to men. Women, at home, were to do the work of transforming wages into the goods and services needed to maintain the household....this private, “nurturing” kind of family was promoted as a personal realm that would provide protection from the competitive world outside...this falsely “monolithic” concept of family has been influential throughout society. Social discourse has privileged the emotional character of family life implied by this model, and has devalued the economic interdependence that has been so important in working-class and poor households (DeVault, 15 - 16).<sup>2</sup>

Sociologists Meg Luxton and June Corman have also written about the fundamental interdependence of these worlds. They note that most Canadians subsist by “combining paid employment and unpaid domestic labour to maintain themselves and their households”( 28). They continue:

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<sup>2</sup>Other writers, such as Harriet Rosenberg, have further developed this concept of the linking of worlds in spite of an ideology that attempts to disconnect them. Connecting the social isolation of the housewife and the “household’s colonization by home products manufacturers,” she writes: “In post World War 1 in North America, anything other than the isolated housewife, managing her domestic work alone, came to be identified as politically subversive. The imagery and symbols of these decades continue to have profound effects on how domestic labour is organized and carried out today, and influence what has and what has not been problematised in relation to domestic labour in theoretical terms” (133).

From this perspective, women's unpaid labour in the home is not a private service for their families, but an important and socially indispensable labour that contributes to the production of the labouring population and its labour power—that is, workers who are ready and willing to sell their capacities to work in the labour market. Domestic labour involves the production of labour power as a commodity to be sold in the labour market, while wage work presupposes the exchange of labour power. Because the demands of these two labour processes generate a specific range of constraints and possibilities that shape daily life, they are key processes that constitute and reproduce class, gender, and race relations in a context that is already constituted by state, law and ideology (28-29).

This interdependence, as Luxton analyses it, is based on women's domestic work in reproducing the workforce in the home, and in Grand Falls-Windsor is made visible in the lunch basket: women prepare meals for their husbands and sons and send them to the mill in the lunch basket. This nourishment enables men to sell their labour to the market. And the male mill worker contributes to the home the product of his industrial work in the form of sample paper. These acts extend both worlds: women's domestic world extends into the mill through the food they send in; while men's industrial work extends into the dwelling primarily through what is brought there in the basket, including sample paper, nails and machinery parts. Sample paper, in particular, is used by women in completing many chores including cleaning and food preparation. In addition, the basket acts as a go between, a messenger between these worlds. Children place a gift for a father in the basket, a woman puts a note or a reminder in the basket for her husband; and children check the basket for treats when it comes home. These acts underscore the misrepresentation behind the ideological construction of separate spheres. This section

explores the social interconnectedness of these two “separate” spheres.

One woman’s description of her mother’s pantry illustrates that link. She said:

I remember vividly the pantry. The lunch box being left there. And that it was always opened. There was always samples—to line the lunch box. Then there’d be whatever she had on the go at that time—cookies or whatever. That would come out. She’d clean it and have it prepared. The lid would be flipped up. I remember it on the table. And there might be two, depending on who was working there at the time. At some houses there might have been four. And when the lunch box came home—there was a lot of stuff came out of that mill in lunch boxes! Samples always came out. But there could be tools, there could be toilet paper. And God knows what. Certainly nails. People have built houses here just out of scraps from the mill (JB 99-01).

Her description shows the way the very mobility of the lunch basket facilitates an interdependence. The lunch basket leaves full and often returns full. This is evident in the description given to me by another woman. She said:

I don’t know how Dad even swallowed all that food. There was *tons* of stuff. A pie. Not a piece of pie—a pie! Sandwiches made from a loaf of bread. Not two sandwiches. That thing was blocked. When my dad came home—it would be full—I don’t know lots of time what was in the basket, but the basket would be full and he would have samples across the top. And put his arm in through the handle and the samples then underneath. It usually bulged a little bit. It always bulged when he left in the morning. Nothing on top—just his arm on through it. That’s how he carried it. But it always bulged with all the food in it. But I think they were feeding each other. I know there was trading and stuff happening. Trading food for prescription drugs and all kinds of illegal things! I know for a fact there was stuff going on. Guaranteed (JB 98-01).

How mill workers, their children and the women who pack these lunch baskets challenge the ideology of separate spheres, is the topic of the next sections.



### 5.2.1 Mill Workers Link Work and Home

Male mill workers challenge the ideology of separate spheres in ways beyond the financial contribution of their pay cheque. The items they bring home add to the household economy. In Chapter Three, I discussed the items that are taken from the mill as a way workers mediate a sense of self within a relationship with the dominant industry. Within the home, these objects play another role, that of easing domestic work. As one woman said:

Sample paper was a big thing in the household. Everybody had sample paper. I mean, we used sample paper for everything. When you washed up the floors on Saturdays—the whole floor would be covered in samples. Samples was a thing that everybody used. Like Mom would wrap stuff that went in Dad's basket. We used sample paper for doing your home work—scrap paper. Sample paper was a big, big thing. The men would all come home with bundles, tucked through the handles. Mom still gets some (JB 98-04).

And another said:

I know when they stopped the workers from making samples there for awhile, sure I was lost. Cause I always have a bag of samples out in the garage. They're always needed for something. You always put your hand out for a sample and I was like—well, what am I going to use now. Clean your windows. Cut up your veggies. And all of a sudden it was like—well, what are we going to use. Cause you always had samples around. Playing cards—you never used a note pad. You had your sample (JB 01-06).

Samples were also helpful when preparing meals. One woman told me:

Mainly like you put them down if you're peeling a lot of vegetables. You put them down for, just put your peel on them and then you wrap up your sample and throw it out. Or, Mom puts them down in the porch when it gets wet. Or for wrapping big boxes for sending in the mail. When we were small, if we were colouring, Mom would spread out samples, if we

had a few people over. Just spread them out because they were so big, they almost reached all ends of the table. And then you'd just pick your corner and everybody would draw on the same piece of sample (JB 01-01).

And another woman said:

We lay them our back porch to catch the mud and the sand. And we used them to cover up our furniture when we were painting, cause they were ideal for that. We used them up to the cabin a lot because we used to use them as a tablecloth! They were ideal for the woods (JB 99-03).

In this way, then, the mill worker links his industrial work to his home by bringing samples home.

### **5.2.2 Children challenge this ideology**

Children also use the basket to link home and the mill by using the lunch basket as a go between, a messenger between these public and private worlds. Children place a gift for their father in the basket check the basket for treats when it comes home. One woman used the lunch basket to send messages to her father. She said: "I know as a young child too, like at Easter, I would always slip in an Easter egg and if I wanted to write a note to Dad—I'd slip a note to Dad in his lunch box" (JB 99-02).

Another woman remembered checking the lunch basket for leftovers when her father returned from the mill. She said:

Mom told me before I left today that my sister—she's like six or seven years older than me so I don't remember, but Mom said every single day, when Dad used to come home from work, Dad used to put down his lunch box and my older sister would always go through his lunch box to find anything that was left. Like any snacks or stuff. And she'd always eat the

snacks before the next morning. She moved out and moved away to university. And she was home last year and, it was like a Friday afternoon, and Dad came home from the mill and my sister went running down the stairs and Mom said: “where are you going?” She said: “I gotta get his lunch box.” So she ran down the stairs and grabbed his lunch box to get the snacks that were left. Like cookies and stuff like that. So I guess it continues even when you move (JB 01-01).

Another woman’s description illustrates that this activity was not uncommon. She told me:

And when they bring their basket home, you’d be excited to see what they had left. Cause actually, there’s stuff in my husband’s basket still. Cause my daughter is twenty-eight and she always used to love—when he’d come home, to get at his basket. And when he passed away, she didn’t want stuff taken out of his basket. It’s still there. And—she always looked forward to that. And we did too, with Dad, even though there might be nothing in there, still, you’d look in the basket and see what he had there. Sometimes there were those little notepads and probably cookies if he never ate them up. If there was cookies, usually if there was not that much, it went in his basket because he was a working man, that’s the way most things were. So I guess you looked to see what he had left. Or if it was a note pad or if he had a pencil he was using in the mill. Come home with a pencil in his basket. Things like that. I suppose with kids, it’s just a little surprise type of thing (JB 01-08).

Others remembered what they looked for in their father’s lunch baskets when they were children. One told me: “Mom would put fruit in a mason jar, so you could take the fruit and eat that, right?” (JB 98-04). And another said: “I would always look to see if there was something there. I remember as a young girl, looking to see what Dad had left over. Things like those tins of Vienna sausage—that was mostly what was left in there. And usually a crossword book and a pencil” (JB 99-02).

Not everything that comes home from the mill is a treat. More than one person

told me an experience similar to the following: “He always had a slice of buttered bread, and he never ate it. When he brought it home—would it stink! It would have to go in the garbage” (98-03). And another person told me a similar story: “Dad used to come home—we’d always check the basket to see if there was anything good in it. The only thing that was in it was the old bread. He would never eat bread, for some reason. But you wouldn’t eat bread ‘cause it smelled like the mill. Stinked of the mill” (JB 98-04).

The basket also acts as a messenger. One young woman explained to me how the lid is used as a bulletin board. She said: “On the top of Dad’s lid, they always had a schedule. What shift they worked. Course back then they did an eight hour shift” (JB 99-01). When her father needed to be reminded to book time off for her graduation, the message was placed on the lid. As she described to me:

Now I know that, in his basket—if he has to remember to do something like book his holidays, to take a bonus day, Mom always writes a note and lays it in the basket. So he remembers. Cause just the other day he had to book a bonus day for my graduation so she had to write a note (JB 01-01).

Children treat the lunch basket with reverence because know they are not to ask for second helpings before their father’s lunch basket is packed. They negotiate their relationship with their fathers by using the lunch basket as a bridge between them and their father’s workplace. They are also curious about the contents of the mill lunch basket, both coming and going.

### **5.2.3 Women’s Domestic Work as Challenge to the Ideology of Separate**

## Spheres

In exploring how women's networks extend beyond the home, DeVault draws on the work of feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith, in particular Smith's desire to build a "sociology for women: that is based on the actual lived experiences of women" (12).<sup>3</sup>

DeVault writes that this approach:

can show how women's everyday activities are organized by social relations extending beyond the immediate, local setting. Through their work, women are connected with organizations and institutions—families, workplaces, schools, stores and services, and the state...in my analysis, the social organisation of the family setting provides a way of understanding both how women are recruited into the work of feeding, and also how feeding work contributes to women's oppression. Women learn to "care" because the production of a "family" as a socially organized material setting requires particular kinds of coordinative and maintenance activities. Women are not the only ones who can perform these activities, but the concept of "family" (maintained over time in its shifting forms by a variety of interlocking social discourses) incorporates a strong and relatively enduring association of caring activity with the woman's position in the household ("wife" or "mother") (12).

The following descriptions from the women I interviewed indicate how food was shared at the mill and how women's domestic work extended to other spheres. As samples brought home were shared among neighbours, food was shared at the mill. For not only are these worlds economically interdependent, they are socially interdependent, with women creating sociability and social networks for the men in their lives through what is put in the basket. This social work, like their domestic work in preparing meals and cooking them,

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<sup>3</sup>She is quoting Dorothy E. Smith, 1987. The Everyday World as Problematic: A Feminist Sociology. Boston: Northeastern Press.

is often made “invisible” as “natural” work. As DeVault writes:

My aim has been to move toward a view of women’s household activity that more fully represents its “invisible,” incompletely acknowledged aspects, and also shows how and why these are made invisible. I have shown readers a kind of activity difficult to describe—activity that produces the sociability and connection of group life. It is activity essential to producing central cultural rituals of everyday life, but also activity whose invisibility makes it appear “only natural” for women...we too often fail to see the skill that produces group life, the effort of being constantly responsible and attentive, or the subtle pressures that pull women into the relations of subordination and deference produced by this work (228).

One woman in Grand Falls-Windsor was speaking about creating sociability when she talked to me about mill workers’ social expectations of food in the mill. She said:

They like having a hot meal. Mom always packs lots of lunch. And Mom was talking to one of the guys that Dad works with and he said “Joan” he said “what’s the matter lately?” She said “why?” He said: “Sure there’s not enough for all of us in Joe’s lunch anymore.” Cause Mom used to put in so many cookies and everything and Dad never used to eat it. So Mom started cutting back on baked stuff she put in. So all the guys—if anybody wants a snack they go to Dad’s lunch box. In Local 59, the ones that Dad works with. So if they’re looking for a cookie, they always know—Joe’s got some. Cause Mom always bakes and there’s always something baked in his lunch (JB 01-01).

Even after their husbands retire, some women still feel responsible for creating sociability.

When talking about her mother cooking, another woman said:

Jeeze. She cooked all the time. For years after Dad retired, for heaven’s sake, she still made preserves and stuff—enough so Dad could take some into the mill. Dad liked the extra bottle of mustard pickles or rhubarb relish or jams and jellies and that kind of stuff. So she would always make extra for Dad to bring to the mill. She still did that for years after Dad retired—she made the extra (JB 98-01).



In this work, women disprove the concept of separate spheres by doing essential work in the industrial setting: creating sociability as well as providing nourishment and comfort.<sup>4</sup> The following section explores the work that goes into creating this food and comfort.

### **5.3 The Mill Lunch Basket as Object of Division: Gendered Work in**

#### **“Feeding the Family”<sup>5</sup>**

The shift schedule pasted inside its lid highlights the lunch basket’s role in linking men’s industrial and women’s domestic work in Grand Falls-Windsor (see fig. 5.1). It indicates that women’s lives are as dictated by shift work as men’s. At one time, shifts were marked by the mill whistle, regulating women’s lives just as much as men’s. Women work around their husband’s, and often sons’, shiftwork, planning and preparing meals. The impact of the daily chore of preparing and then packing the basket was obvious to me whenever I asked women if they had packed a basket. The following examples from my fieldnotes are typical: one woman I asked almost scoffed at me as she rolled her eyes upwards and replied “thousands of times” (fieldnotes, March 1999).

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<sup>4</sup>Margaret R. Yocom provides another example of the material link between men’s and women’s work. In her discussion of the baby dolls made by women in Rangeley, Maine, she notes the contrast created when a woman places her doll beside a chainsaw carving made by her logger husband. Noting that this contrast made the carving soften and become more toy-like, Yocom writes: “Through this juxtaposition, Lucille calls attention to her own work and points out the similarity between her knitting and her husband’s carving, both in subject matter and in quality. She transforms part of the male world into the female world” (149-150).

<sup>5</sup>Borrowed from the title of De Vault’s book.



**Figure 5.1** The shift schedule of a mill worker is pasted to the inside of his lunch basket for his wife's information.

Another woman, while simply showing me a basket, instinctively picked up some utensils and said: "Look, I'm packing a basket," because she couldn't stand in front of one without being reminded of her work (fieldnotes, April 2001). Men also talked to me of strong memories of this daily chore. One man told me: "I can see my mother now packing lunches for the twelve o'clock shift and lunches for the five o'clock shift" (JB 01-10). As another man pointed out, this was always women's work. He said: "When I was living home, my mother would pack it for me. Then when I moved out, my wife packed it for me" (JB 96-05).

This section examines the work invoked in this daily chore, based on the experiences of the women I interviewed. I will discuss the women's sense of pride in this work, while also exploring how the women think of it as a burden and a restriction. This analysis will reveal how a chore such as "feeding the family" is conceptualized as "normal" in terms of women's work within the home, while revealing the hegemonic ideology of industrial work which supports such power relations of men over women, as exemplified by the male sense of entitlement to a "proper" meal.<sup>6</sup>

In order to put women's work in Grand Falls-Windsor in context, I first provide a brief overview of the history of women's domestic work in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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<sup>6</sup>Raymond Williams defines hegemony as an expression of power over others that "depends for its hold not only on its expression of the interests of a ruling class but also on its acceptance as 'normal reality' or 'commonsense' by those in practice subordinated to it" (145). Expressions of power relationships as "normal," or as "always done that way" are particularly revealing in analysing relationships within the domestic context.

prior to moving to Grand Falls and Windsor. I then look at the restrictive policies established by the A.N.D. Company and subsequent owners of the mill regarding women's employment at the mill. Within this context of dramatic change, from outport to industrial town, I consider women's domestic work in providing meals and packing the lunch basket for their husbands, sons and fathers who work in the mill. I examine how the work of feeding a family is one in which many women feel pride and satisfaction, but which has an oppressive, darker, side in which their work is undervalued, bounded by male sense of entitlement and restricted by social expectations, at the same time as it is onerous and much more time consuming than acknowledged at face value. I look at the normalization of packing a lunch basket as "ritual," as it was often called in Grand Falls-Windsor, and of the unstated, hegemonic, relationships behind that attitude.

When the mill opened in 1909, women as well as men moved to the communities of Grand Falls and Windsor in search of employment. The majority of women came from coastal communities, where their various duties included unpaid work in the family fishery, also known as "shore work," as well as a range of domestic work, such as working outdoors in the family vegetable garden. The move to Grand Falls represented a fundamental change in their pattern of work and range of responsibilities, as their new work moved them much more inside the home. In addition, their lives became as regimented as the men's by the sound of the mill whistle, which marked off shifts.

Ingrid Botting provides a number of descriptions of what women's working lives were like before coming to Grand Falls. In the following example, she details the daily

work of one woman, who came to work in Grand Falls in the 1920s as a domestic servant.

She writes:

Stella B., who grew up in a small coastal community near Twillingate, worked in her family's vegetable garden and performed fishery-related tasks in her parents' household before leaving home for Grand Falls in the late 1920s....Since she was the only daughter remaining in the household and capable of doing the work, her parents depended on her labour. ...While her father was away fishing on the Labrador, which usually involved months of absence from home, Stella B. and her younger brother were expected to catch the capelin. Male absence from home for extended periods often reshaped the roles of sons, daughters and wives in the rural household, as they often performed tasks which would normally have fallen to the husband/father (203-205).

“Stella B”'s story illustrates the range of responsibilities outport women took on, which included men's work while the men were away. Work was not isolated or entirely indoors, unlike the work they came to in Grand Falls.<sup>7</sup> It was varied and not always separated from men's work. In contrast, women's domestic work in industrial settings has tended to isolate them in many instances. No longer a partner in the running of the home, women's work became restricted.

The A.N.D. Company promoted cooking classes for women as a means of promoting women's “nurturing” work in the home. The prime responsibilities for women

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<sup>7</sup> For more insight into how women's work in the fishery in Newfoundland and Labrador has been studied and how these analyses have evolved, see Botting, pages 25-31, for her section on “Women's Work in Newfoundland.” In particular, she cites the work of Hilda Chaulk Murray on women's social and economic lives in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as well as the work of Ellen Antler, Marilyn Porter, Dona Lee Davis and Barbara Neiss (28).

was the preparation of meals for the male breadwinner. The Company also limited women's employment opportunities at the mill. Botting writes about the mill's employment strategies in the 1930s:

In the interwar years the mill at Grand Falls offered few direct wage-earning opportunities for women. This was usual in the pulp and paper industry, which generally exhibited a large degree of sexual homogeneity in its labour force. ...manuscript census data and oral history indicates that no married women worked for wages in Grand Falls in the interwar years. While the 1935 census consistently indicated a blank for the occupation of married women in the schedules, other sources not surprisingly revealed that elite and non-elite married women engaged in a wide range of voluntary and philanthropic activities in the community. They also provided unpaid care for children, elderly relatives, husbands, and in some cases they cooked and cleaned for boarders, who were generally distant relatives (152-153).

The photographs in the Abitibi Consolidated filing cabinets confirm the types of jobs held by women in the 1950s under the A.N.D. Company: there was a company nurse and women working in official domestic arrangements like cleaning, cooking and serving meals, crisply dressed in uniforms and wearing caps. The newsletters published by Price (Newfoundland) in the 1960s show the female office workers who worked in the steno pool (Price (Newfoundland) News-Log, March 1968, 11).<sup>8</sup> Women who did get positions with the mill were required to resign if they got married. This practice was continued by

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<sup>8</sup>For a gendered interpretation of how women's entry into office work was reflected in the material arrangement of the workplace, see Angel Kwolek-Folland.



subsequent owners into the 1970s, well beyond most other Canadian employers.<sup>9</sup> This policy, or marriage bar, was common across Canada before World War Two but lasted in Grand Falls much longer than most places (Botting, 304). The first time a woman got married and kept her job was in 1974. This policy had an impact on the lives of women employed by the mill, some of whom put off marriage in order to keep their jobs. One woman I interviewed described the situation for women. She said:

No woman ever worked *in* the mill—the making of paper. It never would have been. They would have had to fight really hard to break that mold. I don't think it was even *thought* about to be broken. If anyone did, it was never voiced. Mostly girls were stenographers and then we started going into the other jobs—like the buyers. The girls were just there to type. At that time you were not allowed to work in the mill and be married....A married woman did not work in the mill. A woman in the mill did not join the pension. A woman in the mill had to finish at age sixty. A man could work to sixty-five, a woman could work until sixty. They never expected a woman to work until she was sixty. The mentality! (JB 96-03).

Another woman described the limitations of employment. She said:

Years ago, a married woman couldn't work at the mill. If you worked at the mill and then got married, you had to quit. You could come back as relief for the summer—to relieve the girls who worked in there, but you

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<sup>9</sup>These practices were “normalized” by their celebration in company publications. For example, in a copy of the AND NEWS from September 1959, in a column entitled “...through the mill by Theresa” there was an item entitled “Married” that reported that: “Two popular young ladies, Misses Marina Collins (of the Mill Engineering Dept.) and Carmel McCormack (Receptionist) terminated their employment this month to take up new duties as housewives” (7). Nine years later, in the AND Price News-Log, a photo of two women sitting at typewriters, entitled “Two Prospective Brides,” is captioned: “Two executive office secretaries have signified their intentions of getting married this year. They are Miss Marina Hillier (foreground) and Miss Deanna Waterman. Miss Hillier resigned from the Company this month” (A.N.D. News-Log, vol. 4, March 1968, no. 3, p.6.”

couldn't have a permanent position (JB 01-06).

Obviously, newsletters were an effective vehicle for the company to idealise, and ideologise, women's work in the home. The following item will provide a contrast to the stories of women's work provided in examples from my own fieldwork in the sections that follow. In the AND News-Log (Price) from 1967, the regular column, "Around the Mill—By Carol" asked:

"Will we ever see the day when we'll have our own Cafeteria here ?" This question has been asked by just about everyone, not only here in the office, but mostly by the men out in the mill. It was just a while back that they opened one in Corner Brook and I'm sure the employees are more than grateful for it. When you sit back and think of all the advantages of a cafeteria, one can only wonder why every big business doesn't have one. Of course, outside of Grand Falls just about every other business does. After talking to several wives of the men who work here in the mill they told me it would be a "God send" to see such a move take place. How many times did your wife have to leave her card party in the afternoon to go home and pack a lunch for Joe or Johnny? How many times did she have to rush home after a game of Bingo or from a movie or place of amusement because she had to pack a lunch for her husband or son? And what to be putting in the lunches alone, is enough to give a wife the "willies." (News-Log (Price), November 1967, vol, 3, no. 11, p.9.)

The situation had changed little by the 1990s. A workforce survey and community research project carried out in 1988-1990 found that women's jobs in Grand Falls-Windsor still paid less than men (Porter, 132). Reflecting the impact of the A.N.D. Company on gender relations, the study discovered that Grand Falls in the 1990s was still "divided among economic lines in terms of women's work, operating under 'the assumption that men are the breadwinners and women the homemakers' while in fact

relying heavily on the women's as a 'second income'" (Dettmer, 272). Writing about the closedness the town still has for many, the author concluded:

Grand Falls is a good place to live if you are affluent, married and a member of an old established family, which gives you right of entry into the various groups and cliques which dominate the social and economic life of the town. But this closed status- and class-conscious town is a hard place for outsiders—the less well-to-do, newcomers or single women. After a year in Grand Falls, the wife of an outgoing mill engineer complained that she had not once been invited for a cup of coffee. Social problems tend to be hidden in Grand Falls, and most women would rather take their psychological problems to a psychologist in Gander, who has confronted it so often that he refers to it as the Grand Falls syndrome. Meanwhile the husbands join a buddy system that involves playing cards, hunting, golfing, curling and making careers together, a process that either excludes their wives or involves them in an unending stream of activities designed to enhance the family status (271).

The situation reflects the earlier patterns established by the A.N.D. Company and echoes that described to me by one woman talking of her parents' lives while her father was at the mill. Her father benefitted from the social life and camaraderie of the mill, while her mother was isolated in the home.

The mill never did get a cafeteria. The women I interviewed did not talk about leaving card games to pack lunches. They spoke of a reality that consisted of making one meal while planning another, of worrying what the other men would think of their father's, husband's, sons' meals, of making sure these meals provided comfort. These issues are discussed in the following section.

DeVault has explored the way in which caring work both enriches yet restricts women's lives. She establishes her analytical framework in the introduction to the book,

where she writes about the conflict in Western societal attitudes towards women's work in caring. She writes:

[T]he culture's division of labour has assigned far more responsibility for care to women than to men. For generations, women's caring work has sustained life and community. For many, caring has been a source of deep satisfaction and pride. But women have also been constrained and oppressed by the burdens of caring for others. Often, caring has required the suppression of other capacities and desires. It has meant involvement in low-status, often unpaid work that has limited women's entrance into more lucrative work. In addition, traditional caring work has become part of larger social structures; women's work has supported traditional family patterns—with their characteristic benefits and costs—and has helped to maintain the divisions of gender and class relations. Through caring work, women have participated in the activities that structure their subordinate position in society. They have participated not only because of social coercion, but also because of deeply-held beliefs about connection and people's responsibilities to one another, and commitments to fostering growth and relationship. The activities of care, in short, spring from more than a single source and have potential effects that both enrich and limit the course of the group (2).

Her goal was to explore how women become part of this unequal relationship, and the impact these pervasive social relations have on their everyday lives.

DeVault concentrates primarily on one specific aspect of women's caring work: preparing the family meals. She narrows her focus in this way in order to explore society's construction of women's domestic work as "caring work" within the family. At the same time, she considers the darker side of this work and its implication for issues of power between men and women. This double analysis allows her to, as do the women she interviewed, value the work women do in the home while also allowing them to acknowledge the negative aspects of this construct. DeVault and the women she

interviewed acknowledge the women's skill in preparing meals such as the constant planning and need to provide variety while meeting different family members' needs and tastes. They also recognize the danger for women in a situation that privileges men's sense of entitlement and the constraints of the societal expectations of a "good meal" provided by a "good wife." While many of the women she interviewed invested themselves in the caring side, they feared its darker side as well.

When I interviewed women in Grand Falls-Windsor about packing the mill lunch basket, I discovered these same contradictions. Women expressed much pride in their work, particularly when they spoke about the quality as well as the quantity of the meals they prepare for their husband or father. Yet they also spoke about the constant demands of the work, and their fear of being seen by a husband's co worker as a "bad wife" if their meals did not meet a certain standard.

In the analysis that follows, I draw primarily on De Vault's work as well as that of Meg Luxton's in my inquiry.<sup>10</sup> I discuss the elements of pride and care, arduousness and the social scrutiny that are all part of this aspect of women's domestic work. Finally, I look at who delivers the lunches and suggest that this work is done by those with the least power, either within the community at large (the children) or within the hierarchical layout of the mill itself (the broke hustler), highlighting an essential ambiguity towards the

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<sup>10</sup> Other recent books, although not directly related to my topic, have also examined the relationship between gender and food: see in particular the essays in the books edited by Sherrie A. Inness, as well as Carole Counihan and Penny Van Esterik, and Arlene Voski Avakian.

valuing of women's domestic work.

When I spoke to women in Grand Falls-Windsor about the meals they pack into the lunch basket, they expressed great pride in the meals, and their variety, that they send to the mill. During interviews, they frequently listed all the foods that they had sent. One woman's list of the meals she had made for her husband included:

Macaroni and cheese. And cooked vegetables and chicken. And turkey. And beef. Pork chops. Always with the trimmings—everything to go with it. It all went into this casserole bowl. Then he'd have his bread and jelly and fruit and cookies—or any kind of dessert that I had in the house. And his bottle of milk of course. That had to go in every basket (JB 99-03).

She also spoke proudly of the fact that she had only sent in sandwiches, instead of a full meal, to work twice in thirty-eight years.<sup>11</sup> As I discuss later on, sandwiches in a lunch basket are a sign that the man is not being taken care of “properly.”

One man acknowledged this variety of food when he told me how good the meals in the mill smelled. He said:

As you walked down the aisle, you could smell—like, if someone had a salt beef dinner, you would know that almost immediately. Or roast beef—you could smell the gravy off a roast beef dinner or a turkey. Especially on Sundays. Sundays, everybody seemed to have a cooked meal. Whether you were working in the mill or at home. You could smell it. And if you walked in there on a Sunday morning—it was just incredible. The aroma. During the week days—not so much, and during the summer, there were

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<sup>11</sup>This lack of appreciation of sandwiches is cross cultural. In her article on food from home among Greek students at a British school, Elia Petridou notes how the students used their disdain of the British enjoyment of ready made sandwiches to express social difference: “the “English” home is imagined as the epitome of social alienation brought about by the penetration of ready-made food into the domestic sphere” (94).



more cool meals—cold plates and things like that (JB 01-05).

At one point, meals in Grand Falls-Windsor followed a pattern. One woman described this pattern to me. She said:

Your home was like that. Sunday you had your cooked dinner. Sunday supper was salad and jelly and all that stuff. Then Monday would be leftovers. Then Tuesday was probably pork chops and Wednesday was probably beans—if you were lucky enough to have beans. When we went to school, we knew what we were having for lunch and what we were having for supper. Cause you knew by the day. You pretty well had the same menu all the time (JB 01-06).

And another woman said:

I was amazed at Mom. On Sundays she would always have cooked dinner and then cold plates for supper. Salads and whatever. She could stretch supper and if fifteen people showed up for supper, everybody had supper and they had plenty (JB 98-04).

A daughter remembered her mother's skills at cooking. She told me:

Mom was a real good cook. She had soups and rabbits and moose and vegetables. And always Dad liked drop cookies. He always had to have them in his lunch. And then he'd have his bottle of fruit. A variety of different foods (JB 99-03).

And a retired mill worker still remembers the variety of food his wife provided. He said:

A number of times on twelve o'clock shift she'd probably have pork chops or cook up liver. And potatoes. And everything. Like I said—I can eat any time of the night. I can get up now—twelve o'clock at night or three o'clock tomorrow morning—and if you've got pork chops, I'll sit down and eat them with you (JB 98-03).

Another woman told me her father considered it a “rip off” when his wife sent in

sandwiches, even though it was a whole loaf of sandwiches. He preferred a hot meal.

The volume of food is also important. As one woman told me: “They eat like horses down there. It’s really quite frightening. I’m surprised they’re not all dead of heart attacks a long time ago ‘cause of what was in those baskets” (JB 98-01). This volume of food is seen as necessary to keep manual labourers fueled, but it also keeps them comforted.<sup>12</sup>

Certainly, the food that is sent in to the mill provides comfort, nourishment and a touch of home to those working in a hot, noisy industrial workplace. Many of the men appreciate this care. One man spoke about his mother’s care in the following way:

When you worked in the mill, you sure got fed. Because your mother knew you were working really hard in there. You’re really working, so they really packed a lunch. I remember a friend opening his lunch one day and saying, “Does Mom think I’m never coming home?!” (JB 96-27).

Women’s work provides a comfort in contrast to the harshness of millwork. One daughter remembered her first tour of the mill as a turning point in how she had previously resented the work her mother had had to put in to packing meals. She said:

I remember every morning, when I went to school, and the night before I went to school, Mom making a huge pile of sandwiches. She’d go through a whole loaf of what we would call Cabot bread—because the bakery here in town was Cabot Bakery and everybody used Cabot bread. And she would

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<sup>12</sup>In their study of Lake Erie fishermen, Patrick Mullen and Timothy Lloyd also interviewed women who were preparing enormous amounts of food for their husbands. Like the women in Grand Falls-Windsor, they, too, showed pride in their work. The authors offer an uncritical look at this division of labour and name the women’s domestic work a “custom” that links the fishermen’s work to “the myth of the hearty appetite”(124).

use a whole loaf of bread if she was making sandwiches. And that was a real rip off for Dad too because he preferred a hot meal, right. If he was working the evening shift—like the four to twelve—then I would go with Mom to deliver the hot meal because five o'clock for sure, you got a hot meal. If he had sandwiches at lunch time, even though it was a *whole* loaf of sandwiches, that was irrelevant. It was still not enough food. And we would go then at supper time. All the kids would deliver. You'd see that happening all the time—the moms would pull up outside. The kids would get out and go in and you'd line the lunch baskets up.... Back then there were two benches when you opened the front door of the mill. The heat was the first thing that hit you—and then the smell. And you would line the lunches up—all up and down the side. They all looked identical but everyone knew who owned what one. Dad's name wasn't on his lunch box, but everybody knew it belonged to him. And if you were lucky, you'd get there just as your dad was coming out to pick up his lunch. So you could actually hand it to him. That was a real treat—to see them coming through that big dark hole at the end of the tunnel thing. It was really quite scary, right (JB 98-01).

While women's sense of pride is evident in these descriptions, so is the amount of hard work. This hard work comes not only from time spent cooking, but also the work involved in having to plan the next meal while still cooking the first. As one woman told me: "When you prepared the lunch hour meal, you were preparing a meal to go in that basket as well as you were preparing a meal to go on that table" (JB 01-05). Another woman told me:

I had to work shift work too. We'd just tidy away from a meal and I'd say "Oh my God, I haven't got your lunch ready yet." And I had to turn around and get the lunch ready so, I mean, it was a busy time for me. All he had to do was pick up a basket and go to work. But I mean, I had to cook the meals home. And it was always a cooked meal. Cause it was only twice he took sandwiches to the mill. Only twice in all them years! So he was well fed! (JB 99-03).

In contrast to this woman's obvious pride, some men I spoke with did devalue their wives' work. One man said:

You're on the four to twelve. She packed—whatever she had for that basket and put it in. Like it or lump it. Look in the basket: “well, I don't want that.” But what can I do? I eat it or throw it out. Same with twelve to eight. But on day shift, I was a getting a good cooked dinner. Pork chops, or jigs dinner—whatever. I didn't expect anything on the other two (JB 98-03).

Meg Luxton's classic work on three generations of women's domestic work in Flin Flon Manitoba describes domestic work as “more than a labour of love,” refuting the notion that, because women's domestic work was based in the private world of the family, it was merely a “a labour of love”(11). Luxton broke women's domestic work down into a series of responsibilities, looking at the many steps contained within one task. She looked at food preparation in cooking as a separate task and identified it as one of the most time consuming tasks in a woman's work day (142). The women she interviewed felt food preparation to be the most arduous task, in part because it required constant mental preparation. This can be seen in the previous examples of women in Grand Falls-Windsor as they prepare for the next meal even while getting the current one ready.

De Vault studied this task as well, noting that: “the work of feeding a family goes on and on; food must be provided again and again, every day” (38). DeVault wanted to “make visible the work involved: planning; includes making sure people get what they want” (39). She further broke down the elements of planning:

The planning part was among the most difficult: planning a meal is rarely recognized as the kind of intellectual problem it actually is. The process is

like solving a problem. There are specific requirements stemming from individual's tastes and preferences, and relationships within the household, but variety is also important, so that the puzzle must be solved in relatively novel ways each day. The intersection of these different, sometimes contradictory concerns means that planning requires continual monitoring and adjustment. Planning is based on the overall form of each meal, and also the way it fits into a pattern of surrounding meals (47-48).

One of the components of food preparation that Luxton identified is the need to ensure that all the equipment and supplies needed for a particular task are available. This is particularly true in Grand Falls-Windsor, where shiftwork puts extra demands on women.<sup>13</sup> Shiftwork and unexpected overtime require that extra food always be available. One woman explained the need for "readiness" in the following way: "You had to be a step ahead of them all the time. And if he got called in on an extra shift, you had to be prepared at the drop of a hat to accommodate that. You're talking about a picnic basket full of food" (JB 98 02).

Women describe shiftwork as particularly hectic, as a number of tasks must be performed at the same time. One woman told me about the difficulties of trying to fix breakfast for her husband who had just got off a shift and trying to get the children off to school, and, as Luxton labeled it, the "endless duty" of getting one meal over with while planning the next (140). One woman reflected:

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<sup>13</sup>This does not just apply to shiftwork in Grand Falls-Windsor. In their study of three Canadian paper making communities, Preston *et al* concluded that "most industrial shiftwork is still done by men, so many women have little choice but to adapt to and cope with the shift schedule of their partners" (6).

It was hectic, sometimes—especially coming off eight [o'clock shift]. And you're trying to get your children ready to go to school. He's coming home. You had to put your fire in then. You got a furnace now. You'd try to get his breakfast—and the children off to school. It was hectic sometimes. I stayed home from the time I was married... I stayed home and cooked dinner—every day—even for that boy. Until he finished his grade eleven—because there was no grade twelve then. And I cooked twice a day—dinner and supper. Hot meals. I might have had one going on the four o'clock shift and another one might be coming off four, so it was his dinner time. And the other fella had to have supper. See? So lots of times there were cooked meals twice a day. Three sons and my husband working (JB 96-34).

The importance placed on the man's work as family breadwinner is obvious in how packing the lunch basket was a major priority in the home. One woman described how her mother prepared her father's lunch basket and how the children were well aware that the current meal was also the father's next meal. She said:

It's usually leftovers from the night before. When Mom takes up supper, it's always—she takes up our plates for supper and then Dad's dish for the next day and his lunch box. So there was always enough cooked. So there was ours, and then Dad's lunch. So you couldn't go back for seconds till Dad's lunch was taken up (JB 01-01).

Children noticed this priority given to the lunch basket. Another woman said:

One of the most important things that had to be done was Dad's basket. You didn't get fed 'till his basket was done. And in the night time, she'd fix his basket for the morning. I *hated* packing the basket. *Hated* it. Cause I was forced to do it, growing up. Forced to take the lunch, forced to pack the basket. Cause once I got to a certain age I'd have to be packing the basket (JB 01 06).

Her words reveal that children sometimes found packing the lunch basket demanding.

The above discussion centred on the ardousness of this work. One of the



darker sides of this type of work is the isolation it can produce for the woman in the home. While many people in Grand Falls-Windsor remark on the closeness of mill workers, noting that if you wanted to know what was going on around town, you only had to ask a millworker because “he knew what was going on before it happened,” (JB 01-07) women’s domestic work lacked this camaraderie. One woman contrasted her father’s life with her mother’s. She said: “The life that my Mom lived was totally separate from the mill. That was Dad’s world. All she did was feed it—and she did that a lot” (JB 98 02). She continued: “My Mom was so busy taking care of my Dad and making sure that he was happy, healthy and fed. But I’ve never met the wives of Dad’s friends. I don’t even know who they are” (JB 98-02). The following description reveals the resulting isolation:

All of Mum’s life was around—she couldn’t do things at a certain time because Dad’s lunch had to be done at a certain time. And so on. Everything was around Dad. I never saw—there was no camaraderie with the women, with the wives of the men at the mill (JB 98 01).

Obviously meals were of major importance for many reasons, including maintaining power relations between men and women. Susan Lanser has written about the “subversive use of incompetence” some women may use “to extricate herself from [the] traditionally female performance” of cooking (36). Inspired by this theory and wondering whether or not this kind of resistance ever took place in Grand Falls-Windsor, I asked a number of women if they or any other women had ever purposely sent “incompetent” meals in to the mill in the lunch basket. The reply was always “no” as in this example: “I can’t really see a woman sending a bad lunch because that was a big thing” (JB 01-06).

The same speaker remembered that as a child, she was afraid of spilling the contents of the lunch basket. She said: “You were taught how to hold it and you had to hold it just so. When he got it, his dinner couldn’t be tipped or anything like that” (JB 01-06).

The women who prepare these meals are no doubt aware that their husband’s and sons’ coworkers observe the quality of the meals that are sent in. Anne Allison’s article on the Japanese lunch box provides an example of how preparing food in certain cultures follows social constraints; there is a “right way” to prepare a meal. She writes about food as a cultural and aesthetic apparatus in Japan, where it is “endowed with ideological and gendered meaning” (195). This informal message is also seen in Grand Falls-Windsor, where what a man brings in is definitely noticed by his coworkers. As the following description from a retired millworker indicates, sometimes a man’s income is judged by what he brings. He told me:

Some people would have fabulous meals, some more people would have mediocre meals, depending on your income and your family lifestyle. You couldn’t help but notice what everybody had for their meal. You could determine who had the good meals and the not so good meals. Sometimes my meals weren’t great, cause there were eleven of us in the family. We had tough times. She had to send in three meals and she had six kids home from school. Every apple and orange counted (JB 01-02).

Another woman was embarrassed by what her husband, in contrast to her father, brought in for his meals. She said:

Dad never took a sandwich in his life. Some men now, they take sandwiches. They don’t take the big cooked meals. My husband for one mostly took sandwiches. And you couldn’t get him to take cooked meals. Cause actually, I used to be embarrassed. Cause I know Dad, years ago, they’d have cooked meals and they’d make fun of the guys who had

sandwiches. “Too miserable to make a cooked meal.” They did—that’s what they’d say. My husband used to go to work there and he’d take a sandwich. I’d be the other way around—try to get him to take something cooked because I’d be embarrassed—I knew what Dad and them used to say about the boys who took sandwiches. But he’d just as soon take a sandwich and coffee and a couple of biscuits. But *Dad*: Dad took everything in the house (JB 01-06).

Her discomfort emphasises the pressure some women in the community feel about preparing a meal the “right way,” the way that is accepted by the other mill workers. She talked about how the men knew who had a wife who was “miserable.” She said:

Dad and them used to make fun of some of the guys—their wives were too lazy—send them in here with a sandwich. Or—they’re too tight. That’s why I used to be paranoid with Bruce taking sandwiches. Cause I hear all these stories about what they say and I think—are they saying the same thing about me?! Growing up I heard this all the time. So I didn’t want him to take a bloody sandwich cause I knew everyone in his group would say the same thing—“you’re too tight to buy a bit of food.” They did notice what the others brought. And they shared. What one had, everyone had. But if you had a wife who was miserable, they’d know that too. They noticed it all. If you shared or didn’t share (JB 01-06).

DeVault writes about producing “proper meals” in the following way:

If pleasing the family is the first requirement, a meal must do even more: it must also conform to the pattern for a “proper” meal that household members have learned to expect. Within every culture, custom dictates that foods should be prepared and served in particular ways (43).

These women’s experiences of isolation and fear of sending in a bad meal that would be publicly scrutinized illustrate well Luxton’s and DeVault’s analyses of the darker side of women’s domestic, “caring,” work. As DeVault concludes: “women do take pride in their work....but ... the work of caring—however valuable or valued by those who do it—is

implicated in subtle but pervasive ways in relations of inequality between men and women”(161).

After exploring women’s sense of pride in caring work in the first half of her study, DeVault writes about family relationships in terms of power relations. She addresses: “the construction of feeding as women’s work” as “societal expectations which demand women’s deference to men’s needs.” Meals, in particular, are expected to be hot, prompt, and large. Based on her interviews, she writes:

Women’s comments about feeding reveal powerful, mostly unspoken beliefs about relations of dominance and subordination between men and women, and especially between husbands and wives. They show that women learn to think of service as a proper form of relation to men, and learn a discipline that defines “appropriate” service for men. (143)

One of the consequences of this power relationship is the potential for conflict in the area of food preparation. It is not uncommon for an “unfit” meal to spark actual violence.

DeVault quotes the results of a study by Rhian Ellis that suggests that “many incidents of domestic violence are triggered by men’s complaints about the preparation and service of meals” (143). She continues:

Some of the researchers who report such incidents remark on the fact that violence can be triggered by such “trivial” concerns, but Ellis suggests that the activities of cooking and serving food in particular ways are in fact quite significant because they signal a wife’s acceptance of a subservient domestic role and deference to her husband’s wishes (148).

Luxton and Corman’s research provides a concrete example of how women’s domestic labour involves this power struggle. Recounting an incident that occurred at the

steel mill in Hamilton they were studying, they write:

The way domestic labour is done, and who does it, are also ways that authority can be asserted, or love expressed. A woman steelworker recalled a co-worker's reaction when his wife packed him a lunch he disliked: "he threw his lunchbox across the room so it smashed against the wall and the food splattered all over. He was screaming—like hysterical! He really lost it. He kept shouting, 'You fucking bitch! You're no wife of mine! I told you what to make in my lunch!' It was like he couldn't believe she hadn't done exactly what he said or that she didn't love him, or something. Geez—why doesn't he make his own lunch? Or give it to me—I'd love for someone to make me lunch" (156).

The potential for danger is real.

One of the ways this power relationship is maintained is by constructing the events around it as normal, common sense, or so taken for granted that they seem natural. This is of course the definition of hegemony. In Grand Falls-Windsor, many people talk about the routiness, the "normalness" of seeing the packed lunch basket. This normalising as "just the way things were" hides the power relationships involved. For example, the valuing of men's needs over others, this sense of entitlement, is in fact a hegemonic expression of male patriarchy, and is evident in the stories women told me. One woman said: "If there were cookies, usually if there was not that much, it went in his basket because he was a working man, that's the way things were" (JB 01-06).

From my fieldwork in Grand Falls-Windsor, I could see that the basket is the woman's responsibility as soon as the man brings it into the home. A daughter's words illustrate her awareness of this gendered division of work. She told me:

Every night he comes home and he puts his basket on the counter and Mom

takes out the dishes and stuff and in the morning Mom fills it with whatever he needs and leaves it on the top of the stairs and he just takes it as he leaves. It's kind of a ritual (Field notes, June 1999).

And a son pondered this division during our interview:

Now that we're talking about it, I don't remember my father ever packing the basket. Or even touching it. He dropped it in the pantry when he came in and he picked it up again when he left. My mother must have always been up—she packed it even when he was on the midnight shift. He took it in with him then—it didn't get sent in to him like during the day. And as kids—it was no big deal to take it in. At ten to twelve. I remember there was a flurry of activity about twenty to twelve, getting the basket packed. And there was a sense of panic if the basket wasn't ready. It had to be ready by ten to twelve (JB 99-01).

Even though there was often panic about the basket, it is described in these accounts as “like a ritual,” just part of the pattern of life. While people in Grand Falls-Windsor noted the repeated nature of packing the lunch basket, their inability to acknowledge the work that went into this routine chore reveals the invisibility of women's domestic labour within this culture when it comes to feeding work. Yet when they say “[My father] just expected it to be full” or “I didn't think about that 'till you asked about it,” they are indeed talking about invisibility.

Many people talked to me about the routiness of the lunch basket. One person said:

I saw mill baskets, growing up, every day. I can remember it sitting on the kitchen floor as long back as I can remember. Dad used it every day. He left it behind the door, in the back porch, and then, when he was getting ready to go, it would be on the kitchen floor. I can still picture it there. And then it would be moved to the counter to be filled. That was the



routine every day (JB 99-02).

Framing an action as routine allows the work behind filling it to be made invisible.

Another person said:

At my house it was kept right next to the refrigerator. We had a little breakfast nook where we ate all our meals, unless we had company and then that's when we went to the dining room. So we had a breakfast nook in the kitchen. And the lunch box was always there between the refrigerator and the--so, my little sister, when she was born--she'd sit on that lots of times. She'd sit on the lunch box. It was a great big one. Had a big heavy cover that opened up. Had a real nice little brass hinge on it as well. And it was never beat up. Or never dirty. So I'm assuming it got replaced. Once in awhile. 'Cause it didn't look like it got the use it did. I don't know whatever happened to Dad's--I must ask Mom. I bet you it's still there. It's, no way it's something they would ever throw away--not in a million years (JB 98-01).

People talked about the women who would always have the basket ready: One person said:

"Mom would have his lunch basket on the table and we'd give him a kiss and he'd put his arm in to the elbow and carry it off on his side" (JB 98-06). The invisibility of this work is underscored by the opening phrase "we don't even notice it" in the following description:

We usually don't even notice, and last night, Dad came in, put his basket on the stool in the kitchen and Mom got up this morning and packed his lunch and put it on top of the stairs and then Dad got up from the kitchen table and grabbed his basket and went down and on out. It's just funny cause I don't even notice it anymore. It wasn't even until you asked me last year that I even thought about it. And then I didn't think about it again 'till you called me and then yeah, it still happens. It really does work that way. Cause we have a split entrance--you have to go downstairs to get out the door. It's at the top of the stairs. He just picks it up and goes on. He doesn't look at it at all. He just assumes his lunch is in there (JB 01-01).

People are also talking about invisibility when they say this is: "just the way it was always

done.” One person told me: “Some people still bring the hot meal to the men. I know a lady across the street from me, I see her going with her husband’s. Every day at five o’clock. Now he’s getting ready to retire so—she always did it and it’s still done, you know” (JB 99-01). And yet this work is not just routine, it is expected. Another woman said: “Oh yes, he had a basket as well. My mother used to pack it just the same as I had to. I followed on in that tradition” (JB 99-03). The same expectation was applied to women working outside the home. I was told:

When my mother had a job, she still got up every single morning and packed his lunch and put it at the top of the stairs. I never remember my father packing his own lunch. Even when Mom went away, when Mom goes away—someone has to do it for him. Like Mom went away a couple of months ago, so I had to pack his lunch. So I had to get up every morning and pack his lunch and put it on top of the stairs. That’s where it goes, I guess (JB 01-01).

The following speaker talks about her father’s assumption--his sense of right--that his lunch basket will be full when he picks it up the next morning. She said:

Dad comes home and lays the basket down in the kitchen, on the counter. And Mom gets up every single morning. The only time Mom didn’t get up in the morning is if she’s gone away. But every single morning Mom gets up, makes Dad’s lunch. Then Dad gets up and she gets Dad’s breakfast. She lays the lunch box at the top of the stairs and when he gets up from his breakfast then he just takes his lunch box and goes on down the stairs and goes out the door. He doesn’t look inside at all (JB 01 01).

These descriptions of women’s invisible work in the preparation of meals reveal the pervasiveness of hegemony—of men’s sense of entitlement—towards women’s domestic work.

Finally, who is assigned to deliver the basket reveals an ambiguity towards women's work. In a town so highly structured that where you live depends on the rank of your job, the job of delivering the lunch basket is more often than not relegated to those with the least power: the children, the broke hustler, the disabled.

Susan Lanser has written about the "limited cultural value of domestic competence despite its urgent cultural, if not biological, necessity" (41). The limited cultural value placed on the product of women's domestic work may be seen in the ambiguity shown in how it is delivered. The following descriptions from the people I interviewed reveal how hard children worked at bringing the basket to the mill, and the pressure they felt. They said:

We used to have to come home from school and walk over with his lunch. We'd have to walk over to the mill and take turns taking his lunch each day. Myself and my brothers. Each one of us had to take our turn carrying it over. Then you'd come back, get your lunch and then belt it over to school. Mom cooked dinner for us and Dad's had to be delivered first. Cause he only had half an hour so you had to take it over and give it to him right away (JB 01-06).

The children felt rushed and pressured:

A good many times I'd get out of school at twelve and I'd have to run home and get me father's lunch basket. Run back to the mill and drop it off. Then I'd run home and get me own lunch and be back at school at one o'clock! Done that a good many times. Or just get home from school and here you'd have to lug a lunch all the way back down to the mill to drop it off for supper at five o'clock (JB 96-19).

It was not a chore many children enjoyed as one family remembered when I shared a meal with them. The daughter said:

We had to carry the lunch baskets to the bus. But that was all. Mom packed them. We weren't allowed near that basket--Mom was afraid we'd eat what she had in it. We weren't allowed to touch it. Whoever was the first home from school was the one who had to go. Mom would say--"take this basket down and put it in the bus for your father." And I'd say--"Mom, I don't want to take the basket down today." She'd say: "*You* take that basket down" (JB 98-04).

At one point, it was often the broke hustler who collected the lunch baskets for the paper makers. A retired worker told me:

The departments used to send out somebody to bring the lunches in. And they had sticks for carrying them on. You could take maybe twenty lunch baskets in at one time. Bring them in and the people--whenever their breaks were--would pick up their dinners. In some cases, they would shut down--depending on what they were on. What machinery they were on (JB 96-08).

The broke hustler sometimes took the basket directly to the paper makers, as this woman pointed out in a conversation we had with her grandfather: She said:

I can remember Pop--you not taking your basket--especially on Sundays--not taking your basket with you and Nan would take your supper up. We'd take your basket to the mill--pass it in through the front doors. Who came and got it? The broke hustler" (JB 96-06).

The broke hustler, the lowest class of worker working on the paper machine, often had to collect lunches for two bosses.<sup>14</sup> The lowest member of the work crew on the machine

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<sup>14</sup>This scene is depicted in the movie "The Rowdyman," which was written by Grand Falls native Gordon Pinsent. He also starred in the movie. Although set at the mill in Corner Brook, he no doubt drew on his knowledge of Grand Falls as well in writing the scene: the scene shows a broke hustler walking through the mill holding his broke hustler stick over his shoulder. The stick carries about six lunch baskets. He delivers them to the men, who eat their meal while sitting outside, on the roof of one of

went out to collect lunches: "There were two boss machine tenders. ...So you'd have to get dressed eleven o'clock in the morning and go out and pick up their lunches and bring them down to the mill" (JB 01-10). It was the lower worker who went out to get the lunch. One retired worker remarked on this, saying: "Six men worked on the paper machine—lowest picked up the lunches at office. Also the last to eat. It was the class system—you ate by rank. Very militaristic" (JB 96-19). Another worker remembered the role of the broke hustler in collecting lunches. He said:

The broke hustler—before my time, years ago—they used to have to go to the houses. The wives would have the lunch ready. The sixth hand would go out to the houses and pick them up. In my time, we'd go out—the women would drop them off. We had a rack there. The old fellas—some of them were crooked. And I mean crooked. I remember one old fella said to me one time—"my lunch is in, now go get me lunch." On me way out, the other fella said—"my lunch should be in pretty soon—get mine too." So I went out. Now one was there but the other fella's wasn't. I didn't know what to do. "What'll I do now?" If I don't bring buddy's lunch in, he's going to be crooked. Because if he doesn't get it right away, it'll get cold. But if I don't wait for the other fella's and I goes in, I gotta come out again. They were crooked—you couldn't please them I tell ya. The old time fellas. They give you the hard looks, the stern looks. They don't want you to touch their jobs. They knew how to make paper, the old time paper makers (JB 96-22).

Others who collected baskets were unemployed townspeople as this description indicates:

There were a couple of guys who collected baskets. There was a guy on my street, he'd go around dinner time to all the houses and he'd pick up lunches. He carried as many as ten or twelve lunches in his arm and walked to the mill with these lunches. There'd be a stand inside the mill to lay all the lunches and your name was on your basket so you'd come out and pick it up. He'd probably get a quarter a week—from all the wives, or

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the mill buildings.

whoever owned the baskets. So he carried them mostly for people working day shift, 'cause he did dinner. And then people on the four o'clock shift, he'd pick them up at five o'clock and bring in their supper at five. So they'd go to work at four and have their suppers sent in at five! That was the tradition, then, to have three square meals a day. My mother still cooks three square meals a day (JB 96-05).

This section has explored how the basket highlights the gendered division of labour which is still a dominant theme in Western industrialised society: women are still responsible for "caring work" and this is seen in Grand Falls-Windsor as the basket becomes the women's responsibility as soon as it enters the home. In this way, the lunch basket highlights the separations of these worlds. But because it travels from home to work and back again, the basket highlights how home and work are also intimately connected, both economically and socially, through the content of the basket. Women who work in the home, especially regarding food preparation, are in a workplace and this work world is as visible as the industrial workplace marked out by security fences and industrial buildings.

#### **5.4 Home as Workplace**

What is clear from the above discussions is that the home, often idealised as the heart of the family life, is also a workspace, a shopfloor, particularly for women. The lunch basket is as an artifact of domestic work. While scholars have studied the material culture of the "home" in general, in this section I argue that the home as women's workplace needs to be more fully explored, adding to an understanding of women's work



and challenging the idea of home as refuge.

Scholars have concentrated on the kitchen as a social space rather than as a female work space. For example, Henry Glassie has looked at women's influence on domestic spaces. He has been particularly interested in Mrs. Cutler's kitchen in Ballymenone. He describes her kitchen in this way:

The walls of her kitchen darken from smoke nearly as often as the walls outside darken in the wet weather. Nearly as often as she whitewashes the exterior, she papers the kitchen, covering its walls with running, repetitive patterns of medallions. Mud tracked in by the damned old men, when they come home from the fields for their tea, causes her to scrub the floor every day. So it will shine, she covers the floor with a smooth sheet of linoleum that brings another pattern to her kitchen. ....on the dresser, built into the wall across the hearth, she arranges plates so that they will sparkle or glimmer or glow with the mood of the fire. She calls these plates "delph." ....each of the plates on the dresser was a gift from a neighbour, a friend, a member of her family. Like friendships, plates last forever with care and break in one careless moment. Plates make apt gifts, and assembled on her dresser, her plates are her friends. Her social network could be accurately reconstructed from a list of the people who grace her the plates that she loves enough to display on the dresser and wash once a week" (Material Culture 267-270).

While Glassie includes details of Mrs. Cutler's domestic work such as papering the kitchen and the daily scrubbing of the floors, his interest is in how the room functions as social space.<sup>15</sup> He concludes his description with an emphasis on the concept of home as

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<sup>15</sup>Although studying the material culture of the home as the relationship between people and their possessions, Hecht acknowledges the impact of domestic work when she notes that the subject of her study, Nan, can remember her home from years before in such detail and so intimately because she cleaned it. She describes Nan's work: "Nan's vivid recollections of the everyday, bodily experience of household chores, manifested in acts of cleaning and polishing, as well as in the act of decoration" (134). As Nan puts it: "They've asked me how do I remember it all in such detail. Well, I've cleaned it all every

refuge. He writes: "Mrs. Cutler and Mrs. Yidiz make tea at the hearth. The tea does what the room does. It restores and pleases the guest. The talk does what the tea does. It makes friendships possible" (Material Culture 272).<sup>16</sup>

Gerald Pocius also discusses the kitchen as social space in the Newfoundland community of Calvert. He writes:

The kitchen is without doubt the centre of community life in the Calvert house.....Most of the family's daily living takes place in the kitchen: eating, talking, playing, even periodic napping. The intense use of the kitchen increases in the evening, when children are home and visiting might occur. .... The kind of artifacts that are found in the kitchen go hand in hand with the social relationships that take place there. Talk among neighbours, among equals is the prime kitchen activity, which means this room essentially conveys values of familiarity and equality through objects and surfaces...(Place to Belong 228-230).<sup>17</sup>

Pocius contrasts the more formal parlour with the more egalitarian kitchen. While the parlour is full of everything "that is special, unique, or fancy," he concludes that the

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week, haven't I." (134).

<sup>16</sup>Glassie writes about Mrs Cutler's kitchen in a number of places including the passage above from the book, Material Culture. He also writes extensively about her in Passing The Time in Ballymenone. And in The Spirit of Folk Art, Glassie writes about the things she collects and displays on her dresser as a work of folk art which acts as a private museum for her memories of people and personal events.

<sup>17</sup>See Pocius's article on rugmaking for a similar point; in this case, that the patterns on the hooked rugs reflect the social relations in the room. Pocius writes: "The symmetrical, geometrically repetitious rugs—those with community design antecedents—are used almost exclusively in the kitchen. These "egalitarian" designs are displayed in the context where equals would meet. On the other hand, those rugs with individual antecedents are used in the front room where hierarchal interaction takes place. ...the design of hooked rugs point to their use within the two major rooms of social interaction, one egalitarian, the other hierarchal."

kitchen, with its day bed, the stove, and even the quality of wall finish, is a place of interaction among equals and that the artifacts displayed there reflect these same values (A Place to Belong 230).<sup>18</sup>

Robert Mellin's recent book on the community of Tilting on Fogo Island in Newfoundland adds to the interpretation of the kitchen as a place of social activity. He emphasises the busyness and lack of privacy of the kitchen, but excludes women's domestic work from his analysis. He notes the amount of activity in the room around which "somehow things got done, all the cooking and cleaning up," leaving the reader to wonder who did this invisible work (120). When he writes that the kitchen is a "work room," it is expected that here he will refer to women's domestic labour. But as the following excerpt illustrates, Mellin is referring only to men's fishery work. He writes:

Once inside you will find that Tilting's old houses used their rooms like houses in other rural Newfoundland communities did. The kitchen was a quasi-public room and the centre of visiting and daily life, and was sometimes used as a work room. Fergus Burke remembers that Ed McGrath would mend his fishing nets in his kitchen in the spring of the year because it was warmer for working...In the house in which Pearce Dwyer grew up, people were always very busy, and the centre of activity was the kitchen. In his kitchen there was no privacy, although there were usually only three or four people there at a time. It seemed to Pearce that he was always underfoot in the kitchen. But somehow things got done, all the cooking and the cleaning up: "You were right in the middle of it" (118-120).

Mellin makes women's work invisible, missing the opportunity to talk about the work

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<sup>18</sup>See the whole chapter of A Place to Belong which discusses these issues: "Interiors and Exteriors," pp. 227-271.

women do in the home.

While Pocius and Mellin approach the kitchen as an area of social activity rather than domestic work, Linda Dale refers specifically to the kitchen in outport Newfoundland life, 1900 to 1960, as the woman's workplace (20). Dale explains the focus of her research when she writes:

This paper will look at the work roles of men and women in pre-confederation rural Newfoundland and move from those roles to a consideration of women's perceptions of the house and their function in its organization...[T]he organisation of the house interior was a function of the overall role of women in a family-based fishing economy, which characterized most of rural Newfoundland prior to confederation. ...These comments indicate two attitudes about the home: because the men were away from the house so frequently both partners saw the house as the woman's territory, and women saw the home as the headquarters for their work. This second point is an important one as it involved a perception of the home as both a centre for family life and a work-place.

Even though the house was perceived by both partners as the woman's territory, there were many factors which helped to determine how she organized her home. The overriding consideration for all the female informants was how their homes could best be set up so they could efficiently carry out their daily chores (19-20).

In the introduction to this thesis, I stated that I was always interested in the concept of home as refuge and the preciousness of things found in the home, things we keep near and dear. The artifacts I sought for the exhibits I curated were often romantic ones: an embroidered scarf from a home country. Although I did look for links between home and work, they were in the male industrial worker realm: the bottle corker made by the Italian immigrant from materials he used at his job with a cordage company.

Lizabeth Cohen views the symbol of home as refuge as a middle class construct.

The homes of the European immigrants she studied in the United States of America revealed to her that these European immigrants never had the luxury of thinking of home as a place other than workplace. They left their rural, small communities for industrial workplaces in large towns. She writes:

And for those working people whose homes were also their workplace, the middle-class ethos of the home as an environment detached from the economic world was particularly inappropriate. Jewish, Irish, Italian and Slavic women frequently took in boarders and laundry, did homework, and assisted in family stores often adjoining their living quarters. For farmers and self-employed artisans and merchants, this integration of work and home seemed normal. Among Southern Italian women, doing tenement homework in groups sustained "cortile" (shared housekeeping) relations endangered in the American environment of more isolated homes (269).

Yet the potential for the idea of home as refuge remains a powerful one. In a moving description of the potential of the home to replenish, bell hooks writes about visiting her grandmother's house. She writes:

In our young minds houses belonged to women, were their special domain, not as property, but as places where all that truly mattered in life took place—the warmth and comfort of shelter, the feeding of our bodies, the nurturing of our souls. ...Despite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one's homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanization, where one could resist. Black women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where we could be affirmed in our minds and our hearts despite poverty, hardship and deprivation, where we could restore to ourselves the dignity denied us on the outside in the public world (41-42).

As she writes, many of these African American women were not only working in their own homes, but working outside in the homes of "white folk," cleaning and washing

clothes.

For most women with families, the home, especially but not only the kitchen, is not only a place of sociability or a refuge; it is also a workplace. As Preston et al confirm in their study of three Canadian paper towns:

A traditional gendered division of labour is also apparent in the millworkers' households when it comes to housework, with few differences among the three communities. Men do far fewer household chores by themselves than women. Tasks are differentiated on the basis of gender. Men are more likely to do outside work and to take care of the car....By themselves, women are responsible for grocery shopping, food and meal preparation, and laundry, the routine tasks that must be completed on a daily or regular basis (20).

Studying the lunch basket's role in domestic work in Grand Falls-Windsor offers an understanding of the women's domestic work, as discovered through the use of objects.

## **5. 5 Conclusion**

While at first glance the mill lunch basket may be seen as an artifact made by men for men's use, it is an excellent example of how material culture allows us to probe the often neglected area of women's domestic work. In this chapter I have shown how mill workers and their families negotiate the industrial ideology of "separate spheres" by using objects, especially sample paper and the mill lunch basket, to link these worlds in intimate ways. The child who puts a gift for her/his father in the lunch basket is using the lunch basket in the most gentle way: to show love for a parent. Men extend the "public" sphere of the industrial world into the home by bringing home sample paper. Women extend the



“private” sphere of the domestic world into the mill by providing sociability.

At the same time, a focus of the role of the lunch basket in the home reveals the gendered nature of “feeding the family.” Women show great pride in the meals they produce but are profoundly aware of the arduousness of their work and its constraints due to social expectations of “proper meals” and male sense of entitlement towards meals. The lunch basket is an artifact of home as workplace.

This chapter has looked at the role of objects in the home against an imposed ideology that attempted to separate men’s industrial work from women’s domestic work. In the following chapter, I move into the larger world of neighbour and community to explore how mill workers have challenged an imposed ideology that attempted to control how, and where, they were seen.

## **Chapter Six: Objects as Expression of the Right to be Seen**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In a company town, the Company imposes its power on where people live, where they will be seen, and how they will be seen. In this chapter I discuss how the mill worker uses objects to express his right to be seen outside the mill and within the community in which he lives. He does so in two ways: through the festival elements of Labour Day and the symbolic invasion of the community through the Labour Day parade; and through the status in the community he achieves through both the mill lunch basket and sample paper.

In the first section of this chapter, I describe the importance of Labour Day, its long history within traditions of occupational processions, and the artifactual content of the parade as a means by which mill workers use Labour Day to mediate their relationship with the imposed industrial ideology. They assert, for example, their right to be seen in a respectable light outside working hours. The temporary nature of the Labour Day artifacts represents the temporary opportunity to challenge the Company; the ephemeral nature of the artifacts in parades reflects the fleeting opportunity to confront. Neither the opportunity nor the artifacts will last.

In the second section of this chapter, I discuss how mill workers use both samples and the mill lunch basket to give themselves status within the community. Access to sample paper gives the mill worker importance among his neighbours because sample

paper is used so extensively in the home. The mill lunch basket also gives the mill worker prominence: carrying a lunch basket shows those outside the mill that the man carrying it has a permanent job. It also shows the rest of the community that the mill worker has access to the mill itself.

## **6.2 Labour Day: Symbolic Invasion of Community Space**

Folklorist Archie Green has studied how workers celebrate the objects of work through their role in Labour Day parades. He notes that workers use objects to publicly mediate a sense of self and to publicly celebrate skill. He writes:

I have not yet witnessed a parade in which an assembly line robot or an antiseptic computer is revered. Perhaps the time will come when such objects also will signal antiquity. I suggest that working people committed to modernity will continue to elevate particular products of their skill as they ritualise work experience. Parading by numbers, unfurling old banners, declaiming tested slogans—all contribute to humanity's control over the workplace (347).

In many ways, Labour Day is a celebration of the material culture of work, including both the tools of work and the product of work. Archie Green has described the types of materials that are paraded as “Labour Day icons” as so many of them represent the workers’ pride in skill as they represent “a visual and ornamental bedrock of workers’ beliefs” (344). As Green suggests, parading these items raises these products to a ritual level. Paper makers wear paper hats during Labour Day parades in Grand Falls-Windsor because they are proud of their skill in making paper (figs. 6.1 and 6.2). They wear the



Figure 6.1 Papermakers march behind their Union banner, Local #88, circa 1968.



**Figure 6.2** Papermakers wearing paper hats march in Labour Day parade, circa 1959.

hat as well as a way of distinguishing themselves from the other workers at the mill. The following speaker highlights the importance of expressing distinct occupational identity during the parade. He told me:

Oh yes, we had to have our paper hat.... Out of the paper came your samples and your pads and your paper hat. And no one could make a paper hat better than a member from Local 88. There was a special way to make them. And there were people in there who made sure we had the hats made for Labour Day. When it started getting close to Labour Day, some of the older fellows—well, everybody was old then. (When you went in the mill, everybody looked old. You used to call them sir and mister and all this and you find out they're only four or five years older than you were). But there were certain people who made the hats and everybody in 88 had a hat when they went on parade...Local 63 bought theirs. Or had them made. Straw hats and that kind of thing...The feeling was, nobody should be allowed to wear them, only us. We were the ones made them—I mean, we made the paper to make the hat. The kids all had them—you used to pass them out to the kids if you had any leftover (JB 01-03).

Wearing the paper hat is also a way the status of the paper maker over other mill workers is negotiated, reflecting the hierarchal patterns established within the mill. This was obvious to other mill workers. One member of a different union local told me: "They're the only ones clever enough to make them. They make the paper—they're the paper makers. They like to tell us that. That was their signature. They made the paper hats. They wore the paper hats" (JB 01-11).

These paper hats demonstrate the paper makers' links to the earlier craftsmen who also paraded the product of their skills in occupational parades. One paper maker, now retired, had saved the last paper hat he had worn and posed for a photograph after I interviewed him (see again figs. 1.5 and 1.6). Children who join the parade with their



bicycles decorated in competition are the only participants besides the paper makers themselves allowed to wear a paper hat.

From the same sample paper that mill workers take symbolic control of in the mill, through which they link work and home, and through which they find status within the community, come the paper hats that paper makers wear when marching in the Labour Day parade. But the paper hat, made especially for the occasion, represents both special clothing as well as the product of their skilled craftsmanship. As Heron and Penfold note: "Costuming accented the tight bonds among the group of marchers and set them apart from their audience" (375). But the audience participates as well as Labour Day parades involve the whole community and in this way residents have found ways to own the streets through Labour Day marches. They take symbolic control of their surroundings and subtly use objects to express conflict.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Although both Michael Robidoux and Thomas Dunk have written about the futility of worker resistance, claiming it only reinforces worker subordination, I do not believe that forms of resistance need to take an overt confrontational form to be powerful to those who express them. As Pershing has written: "Many folklorists have concentrated their attention on the ways in which expressive behaviour has operated in small, relatively homogenous, often rural or agrarian communities to maintain conformity and solidarity within these groups. As a result they have overlooked manifestations of conflict in folklore, seeking and finding only expressions of shared values and similar world views. However, individuals frequently express their disagreement in folkloric terms. In the last two decades some scholars have begun to examine expressive practices that occur between different social groups or within the context of larger, more heterogeneous public events. Instead of focusing on how folklore functions to maintain social harmony and compliance, these folklorists have explored expressions of social antagonism and inequities as they are played out in the folklore of marginal or disenfranchised communities" (179).

Occupational processions that celebrate the tools and products of work as well as celebrating the workers themselves have a long history in the Western world and some forms continue today in Labour Day and May Day parades throughout the world. From the earliest years, workers in Grand Falls participated in an annual Labour Day parade, using this traditional form of marching to take ownership of the streets, to symbolically invade the public space of a town whose planning was so precise it designated streets by rank on which workers lived. The first photograph available of Labour Day in Grand Falls dates from 1911, two years after production began (see fig. 6.3). This particular parade was a sparse occasion; later parades highlighted material expressions such as special floats, banners and clothing. Those who participate in Labour Day celebrations recognise the potential provided by symbolic inversion to confront the dominant group. In the sections that follow, I place the Labour Day celebrations of Grand Falls-Windsor within the context of their place in the Western traditions of occupational processions. I then provide a description of Labour Day in Grand Falls-Windsor and end with a discussion of the festival elements that make the use of objects in this holiday so meaningful.

### **6.2.1 History of Labour Day, May Day and Occupational Processions**

There is a very long tradition in the Western world of participation in rituals and processions that celebrate work. Within this context, the celebration of Labour Day in North America is relatively recent. It became a national holiday in Canada in June 1894,

▼ 1912 – A procession of mill workers heading up Mill Road onto High Street.,.



**Figure 6.3** A procession of mill workers walks along Mill Road, Grand Falls, 1912.

when the House of Commons passed legislation marking the first Monday in September as a statutory holiday (Heron and Penfold, 359). Canadian legislation just barely preceded American in establishing the holiday.<sup>2</sup> This official, government sanctioning of a labour celebration produced mixed reactions. For some, it came too late. Engineer Edward Williams, once prominent in the Toronto branch of the North American labour organization, The Knights of Labor, described the act at the time “as a tardy recognition of those noble beings who in the past, through vituperation and calumny, suffered persecution for defending rights and liberties of men” (Kealey and Palmer 291). Other activists, leery of any and all forms of authority, viewed the entire event with suspicion (Heron and Penfold 361). But perhaps it is the choice of that particular day of the week that marks it as truly a “people’s holiday.” While the selection of a Monday holiday may be thought of as a response to the desire for a long weekend at the end of summer, Labour Historian Herbert Gutman attributes its choice to the tradition of “Blue Monday,” the name given to the day that workers traditionally took for themselves to recover from weekend drinking revelry (37-39).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Scotton has written: “The Canadian labour movement can justly claim the title of originator of Labour Day. Peter J. McGuire, one of the founders of the American Federation of Labour has traditionally been known as the ‘Father of Labour Day.’ Historical evidence indicates that McGuire obtained his idea for the establishment of an annual demonstration and public holiday from the Canadian trade unionist” (Scotton, 39).

<sup>3</sup>Some feminist writers have noted that the term Blue Monday refers to Monday as the traditional wash day. See Joy Parr.

Perhaps because of the labour celebration of International Labour Day on May 1<sup>st</sup> in many parts of the world, the origins of Labour Day in North America are sometimes too closely linked to the British traditions of May Day. May Day in Great Britain has a much longer history than Labour's May Day. Ronald Hutton notes that references to the celebration of the bringing-in of May can be found in England as early as 1240 (226).<sup>4</sup> These early May Day celebrations certainly included an occupational element, but they also celebrated the coming of spring and functioned as occasions for acts of charity. Bob Bushaway also notes this purpose. He writes:

Mayday [was] celebrated in town and country alike. Mayday was marked, in the printing trade, by a procession to Stationers' Hall by masters and workers. In the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, chimney sweeps celebrated Mayday by appearing in the streets with a Jack-in-the Green, soliciting money from passers-by (47).

He points out that "masters and workers" walked together at this time, a point that I discuss later in this section as one of the changes that occurred in occupational process as industrialization progressed and as Labor Day changed (Kealey 39).

International Workers' Day of May 1<sup>st</sup> is still celebrated in parts of Europe and unofficially in North America. The choice of May 1<sup>st</sup> as this day of labour celebration has its origins in an event that took place in the United States of America, where a significant labour strike occurred on May 1<sup>st</sup>, 1886 in the city of Chicago. Processions

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<sup>4</sup> In Stations of the Sun, Hutton devotes a chapter of his book to "The May" and documents its celebration over the centuries, pp. 226-243.

had been held to mark the demand for an eight hour day, marked by a violent confrontation on May 1<sup>st</sup>.<sup>5</sup> This date was later chosen by the International Socialist Congress as International Workers Day (also known as International Labour Day and International May Day) to honour those who had died during this confrontation. Hutton describes this decision:

[B]y a wholly fortuitous coincidence, the strike which became the symbol of the American labour movement began on 1 May, and so that became its favourite date. To show solidarity with comrades in the USA, the International Socialist Congress held in Paris in 1889 adopted it as International Labour Day (300).

Scholars have documented and described occupational rituals and processions. Bob Bushaway provides examples of occupational rituals among craftsmen that were included in parading in England. He notes that from 1700 to 1880 "St Catherine was the patron Saint of rope-makers, and in Kent, at Chatham, Rochester and Brompton, her embodiment was placed in a chair and paraded round town wearing a gilt crown"(185).

In addition:

St Clement was the patron saint of blacksmiths and of anchor-makers. The custom of "firing the anvil" which was common on St Clement's day, when a small quantity of gunpowder was ignited in the anvil, was suppressed in Brighton in the 1840s. The suppression was probably occasioned not so much by the disruption of the ritual, but because of the

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<sup>5</sup> There are those in the United States who believe that the decision to move Labour Day to September is an affront to those who fought at "Haymarket" as the confrontation is known. See the articles in the special issue on "Haymarket" in International Labor and Working-Class History, no. 29, Spring 1986 for a discussion of this issue.



leaving-off of work to celebrate the festival. A supper was held in the evening similar to the feast provided for printers (185).

The noise, explosions and colour and the leaving of work mark this as the same kind of festive behaviour found during Labour Day celebrations in Grand Falls-Windsor.

Specific occupations celebrated their own Saints Days. Bushaway writes: "St Crispin's Day was celebrated by shoemakers, and St Clement's Day was of great importance to blacksmiths, and to dockyard workers. Cornish tinnerns assembled to pelt a pitcher of water on St Paul's eve, after which the day was given over to festivity" (47). Most of these occupational traditions included processions. Bushaway provides an example: "Annual processions, common to some industries and trades, were similar in form to county Whit walks or Benefit Club parades. The feast of St Blaise (3 February) was customarily celebrated by workers in the woolen industry, particularly wool combers" (46). These occupational customs of processions and the marking of Saint's Days solidified workers' relationships with each other and allowed them to express a unique occupational identity. Archie Green's research provides a first hand account from a Reform League Procession in Glasgow from 1866:

Flags were flying in all directions and men were mustering in every quiet street, covered with medals, rosettes of all colours, aprons and silk sashes, and attended by instrumental bands...I saw stalwart stonemasons and bricklayers, plasterers and slaters, plumbers and painters by the hundreds...bearing splendid banners, miniature houses and monster chimney stacks. Blacksmiths, joiners, ship carpenters, and cabinetmakers were also there carrying model ships, model machinery, anvils, vises, chests of drawers, wardrobes, pulpits, tester beds, sections of ship fittings and other articles of similar description...But the letter press printers, the

lithographic ditto, the pipemakers and the nail makers took the shine out of the representative models displayed by the other trades. They had large lorries or wagons where their trades were carried on as the procession moved along and people by the way had the opportunity of seeing the work done and of getting printed bills, pictures, tobacco pipes or horse nails hot from the hammer, the hand and the printing machine (354-355).

These traditions emigrated to North America. Scholars have traced the occupational processions and customs associated with particular occupations in North America back to these roots in Britain and Europe.<sup>6</sup> Susan Davis makes the link between American craftsmen's traditions and the British and European tradition of public display of skills, claiming: "The tradition of public craft and trade displays in America descended from English and European guild customs" (116). She describes in detail the Grand Federal Procession of July 4, 1788, as Philadelphia's "first and most elaborate display of corporate craft imagery" (117). Crafts and trades were highlighted in the procession because of their importance to the city's economic growth (118). Her description attests to the elaborate role material culture played in these early parades. Not just illustrating work in miniature, these floats portrayed actual reenactments of work which highlighted the material culture of these craftspeople. She writes:

Enactments by the shipping and shipbuilding trades of the Delaware docks displayed the power of the port, its shippers and its master craftsmen. Eighty-nine members of the Marine Society of sea captains and merchant traders marched 'six abreast, with trumpets, spy-glasses, charts...wearing badges in their hats representing a ship.' The society guided an elaborate float through the streets. 'The Federal ship *Union*,' 30 feet long and

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<sup>6</sup> See in particular the chapter "Class Dramas: Workers' Parades" in Susan Davis Parades and Power: Street Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia.

‘mounting twenty guns,’ made a stage for Commander John Green, Esquire, and his crew of 25, including ‘four young boys in uniform as midshipmen.’ On this ‘masterpiece of elegant workmanship...decorated with emblematical carving’ an occupational drama was staged. Her crew rehearsed ‘setting sail, trimming her sails to the wind...throwing the lead and casting anchor...with the strictest of maritime propriety’ (120).

They were followed by the master ship builders and behind them walked “mast makers, caulkers and workmen, to the amount of 330, all wearing a badge in their hats representing a ship on the stocks and a green sprig of white oak” (120). Those who did not recreate their work carried their tools. Thomas Schlereth describes New York City’s Constitution Parade of 1788, where similarly, “the city’s shipwrights constructed floats mounted on wheels and outfitted to look like full-rigged vessels. Blacksmith shops atop wagons carried working smiths toiling at their anvils and forge fires” (114).

These parades, however, did not celebrate all workers. As Davis points out, only the “respectable trades” were included. She writes: “Aside from a few sailors, the stevedores, sawyers, vendors, caterers, domestics and women who toiled in their homes found no representation in the street drama” (123). These were displays of craftsmen and: “the lines of power and status were clearly drawn: masters and senior craftsmen came first” (123). However, foreshadowing the divisions between workers and owners seen in later Labour Day parades, Davis found that later workers rejected:

older conventions of occupational display and enactment, developed their own ways of presenting themselves in street parades. There were no patriotic, multi craft spectacles after the 1830s[.] ....[W]orkers found it useful to present themselves not as employees but as members of brotherhoods bound by ties of solidarity, not dependence (132).

Certainly with industrialisation, the split between master and craftsperson had been made. Descriptions of occupational processions are rich examples of material culture that celebrates the work and the worker.

Gregory Kealey provides a Canadian example during the years 1867 to 1892. He describes how these traditions were enacted in Toronto:

Processions were also an important way of maintaining solidarity. As “festivals of the old artisan way of life presented in the context of the new system of industrial capitalism,” they symbolised for the participant (and now for the historian) the meeting place of the two worlds. In a Confederation parade in Hamilton, “The shoemakers with King Crispin and his champion and sundry other worthies grotesquely habited were a decided attraction. The King was dressed in robes of pink with a crown of gold upon his head, while the champion looked decidedly like a warrior of olden times.” Five years later, when marching for the nine-hour day, Hamilton Knights of St Crispin were ‘headed by their marshal in uniform on horseback and their officers wearing the uniform of the Order. They carried a very handsome banner bearing the portrait of St Crispin and having the motto “Union is Strength”. Toronto shoemakers marched in similar celebrations carrying symbols of St Crispin, an organic link with a past artisanal world (41).

Not just parading but also work rituals have been the object of study for many labour historians. Kealey writes in particular about shoemakers in Toronto:

Shoemakers had, in addition, a particularly vibrant craft tradition. Stories of St Hugh, of Saints Crispin and Crispianus, and other types of lore provided a set of familiar and well-defined customs that instilled the craftsmen with pride and solidarity. On 25 October, the feast of St Crispin, cordwainers the world over marched beneath banners depicting their patron saints and engaged in drunken frolics. Shoemakers in Canada built on these traditions. This craft lore was undoubtedly brought to Canada by emigrating crispins, who later took a prominent role in organising unions (38).

Labour Day was officially sanctioned in Canada in 1894. Historians Craig Heron and Steve Penfold describe the first nationally recognised Labour Day Celebration which took place in London, Ontario in 1894. They write:

The first was a group of seventy-five butchers on horseback, who set the tone of respectable craftsmanship with their crisply white shirts and hats and clean baskets on their arms. Several other groups presented themselves in identical outfits: the firemen from the railway car shops in their white shirts and black felt hats; the printers in their navy blue yachting caps (the apprentices wore brown); the barbers in their plug hats and white jackets. Each group of well-dressed unionists sported at least a distinctive badge. At intervals in the procession, floats depicted the craftsmen at work as they rolled along the streets (358).

The day continued with games, including a tug of war and mock battles.

Bill Gillespie provides an account of the first Labour Day parade in St. John's. His description illustrates how tradesmen typically differentiated themselves through material culture, including dress, while also highlighting their skills. He writes:

On July 15, 1897 the unions of St. John's introduced themselves to the public. ... First came the Constabulary band followed by members of the Mechanics' Society draped in ceremonial sashes and badges. The Temperance and Abstinence Fife and Drum band was next, followed by the first of ten floats, each of which demonstrated the skill and craft of an individual trade. The moulders, dressed in white shirts, blue caps and black pants, cast small souvenirs which they threw to the crowd; the tailors' float featured a picture of Adam and Eve indicating their trade was the most ancient of all and demonstrated how a garment was cut and finished; the boilermakers had a fire on their float and demonstrated their skill at riveting a boiler; the blacksmiths shaped hot metal into horseshoes; the masons built a miniature arch; the rope-makers wove line and made a cod trap; the printers float carried a full working press which was operated by employees of *The Evening Telegram*, who printed and distributed circulars to the spectators; and the tobacco workers rolled the leaf into the local favourites "Home Rule" and "Mikado" which two factory boys then

distributed amongst the crowd assembled along the way (22).

Special clothing gave the workers a sense of respectability. Heron and Penfold describe the value of achieving respectability to the workers. They write:

[W]orkers could lift their heads proudly and march through the main streets of the town or city as full citizens without scorn or condescension and with respect for their valuable contributions to the evolving urban society....[W]orking men shed grubby overalls and aprons and strode forth in their best shirts, ties, jackets and hats. Although some wore special outfits to symbolise their particular trade, they never marched in their actual working clothes. Some even donned fancy-dress clothes with silk top hats. They also insisted on full public acceptance by marching along the main public streets of the towns and cities, not merely in the working-class districts where they lived (367).

Heron and Penfold state that: “the centrepiece of the first Labour Day celebrations in Canada was the parade. Here was the public face that organised workingmen wanted to present to their fellow citizens and that drew far more attention than any other part of the day’s festivities” (363).

Eric Hobsbawm has also written about occupational rituals, which he includes as: “formalities of initiation, meeting and procedure, of communication with brothers from other parts” as well as “rituals of public presentation such as processions on ceremonial occasions shading over into modern demonstrations” (71-72). Many of these processions included elaborate clothing such as the “white cotton gloves and flashy waistcoats” worn by the Derbyshire miners. He states: “I shall merely mention two obvious occasions for such ritual: mass political demonstrations and union festivals, long associated...with



bands, banners, ceremonial marches, speeches and popular sociability" (73). These are the characteristics that are seen in many Labour Day celebrations today.

While it drew on the occupational traditions described above, Labour Day as a holiday had to meet new needs, including satisfying those in the labour movement who were suspicious of authority of any kind, even when it appeared in the guise of ritual. It fell to labour leaders "to invent a new labour festival built on well-established traditions of public celebration but designed to serve new needs" (Heron and Penfold 361). Some of the new goals included the right to be seen as "respectable." This goal was co-opted at times by employers, including the management of Price Newfoundland, who took the opportunity in Labour Day speeches to stress their own emphasis on the work ethic and the need for companies and labour to "work together" (Price Newslog, September 1966, vol. 2, #9, 1). As Gregory Kealey and Bryan Palmer found, workers now marched separately from managers: "the independence of the culture was thus presenting its face, marking it off from the accommodationist stance of earlier years. Self-proclaimed working-class holidays, known as labor festivals, celebrated this development" (291).

The first parade in Toronto had been held in April 1872, where "the beribboned parade marched smartly in martial red accompanied by four bands" (Scotton 41). One of the goals of the labour movement at that time, and the purpose of the parade, was to secure a nine hour working day (Scotton 41).

Hobsbawm noted that these processions are "a regular public self-presentation of a class, an assertion of power, indeed in its invasion of the establishment's social space, a

symbolic conquest of their right to confront” (72). Labour Day and Labour Day parades, in their celebration of workers’ skills, of the tools, contexts and products of their trades and of their assertion of their right to parade are clearly linked to those early occupational processions and celebration of patron saints over certain crafts. In the following section I discuss how Labour Day had been celebrated in Grand Falls-Windsor over the years.

### **6.2.2 Context of Labour Day in Grand Falls and Grand Falls-Windsor**

In their analysis of Labour Day parades from Halifax to Vancouver, from 1880 to around 1920, Heron and Penfold write that Labour Day “never appeared in company towns and much less often in resource-based communities such as mining towns” (374).<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately they do not speculate on the reasons behind this. It is therefore particularly interesting, and an indication of the strength of their resolve to be seen, that the parade took place so early in the company town of Grand Falls. Certainly the paper makers, as craftsmen, came from a long history of participation in labour parades.

The first Labour Day celebrations took place in Grand Falls in 1910, just one year after the mill had started operations. The first Labour Day celebrated with a parade took place in 1911 (Central District Labour Council, 1). The earliest parades were like that

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<sup>7</sup>Their study excludes Newfoundland which had not yet joined Canada during the period they were exploring.

shown in fig. 6.3, a long column of men walking through town, dressed in their best.<sup>8</sup>

This photograph of the parade in 1912 shows a long sombre procession of men, dressed in overcoats and top hats, walking to High Street from the mill. While there is no indication of the presence of either banners or floats, the visual impact is that of a large group of men as they are walking in twos rather than in larger groups as in later years. The result is a very long line of men and a message of “strength in numbers.” Other photographs of early Labour Day parades in Grand Falls show similar long lines of men, dressed in overcoats, walking through the centre of town. The statement made by these processions would have been strength in numbers, and the right to be seen, especially as unions were not legally recognised at that time. There is little documentation of early Grand Falls Labour Day parades, although one man I spoke with remembered hearing that: “One of the first floats was a replica of a generator” (96-01). This would certainly have fit the pattern of other labour parades where the tools of the trade were celebrated.

By the 1930s, the number of unions in the mill had expanded to include office workers and machinists and they joined the parade. A photo from the 1930s shows a large group of men under the IBPS&PMW Local 63 banner, most wearing ribbons on

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<sup>8</sup> This discussion relies on photographs as documentary records and notes from interviews. The tradition of industrial photography and industrial newsletters is discussed by Larry Peterson. The photographs I discuss, other than my own taken in 1998, are from Company documentation, primarily from the 1950s and 1960s when the A.N.D. and Price newsletters covered the day and the speeches in their Company newsletters. The photos therefore come from only from the industrial/corporate viewpoint, rather than unions or residents, and thus may limit my interpretation of the day.

their lapels, like a medal. These are the mill labourers (fig. 6.4; see also Central District Labour Council 19). They are gathered at the former ball park, presumably after the parade and at the beginning of the sporting events. A 1936 photograph shows Local 63 again wearing ribbons (fig. 6.5, see also Central District Labour Council, 3). In the 1940s and 1950s, floats were often built at the mill itself and at one time the mill contributed a hundred dollars to each float. In the 1956 "AND Newsletter," management wrote on the front page under the headline, "Labor Day Greetings":

The Management of Anglo-Newfoundland Development Co. Ltd. extends cordial greetings to its employees and to all labor forces in Newfoundland on the occasion of Labor Day, 1956. That the special holiday will be fully enjoyed by all workers and their families is the sincere wish of the Company. The significance of Labor Day, now a statutory holiday everywhere, is to honour the working man and give emphasis to his role in industry and business. It is also a time for sober reflection on the spirit of goodwill and harmony that must exist between labor and management for mutual success in the free enterprise system (A.N.D. News, September 1956, 1).

The message reveals the contradiction of involving management in this celebration. It is often an opportunity for management to take advantage of the day's "respectability" to talk about their understanding of worker/company cooperation.

By the 1960s, office workers had unionised and more women were represented in the parades. When the town opened up in 1961 the parade stopped being a mil-only parade and included local companies like Riff's Furniture Store and organisations like "Tweenies," representing pre-teens. Floats at this time displayed themes such as woods safety and centennial year projects. The first time the marchers appeared on the front of



**Figure 6.4** Members of the mill laborers union listen to speeches after the parade, 1930.



Figure 6.5 Members of the mill laborers union, 1936.

the A.N.D. News was in October 1960, in a photograph that shows the marchers wearing both ribbons and paper hats. One young boy walking beside them has obviously been given a hat as well as it is the custom to make extra hats to hand out to the public. An article inside describes the full day's activities:

From the time the first floats lined up along High Street until the last exhausted dancer reeled home from the senior dance at Harmsworth Hall, Labour Day celebrations could only be described as a complete success. A giant parade, in which many floats, hundreds of union men, and the Salvation Army Band participated, got the celebrations off to a start. Observers feel that it was the most colorful parade in recent years. The parade terminated at the Ball Park, where those who took in the parade, as well as thousands of interested citizens, heard speeches by Mr. T. Ross Moore, President and General Manager of A.N.D., Charles R. Granger, Commons Member for Grand Falls-White Bay-Labrador, Raymond Guy, Member of the House of Assembly for Grand Falls, and Donald Murphy, Chairman of the Joint Mill Unions. Harry Powell was chairman for the Fortieth Annual Labour Day celebrations....But there was a lighter side to Labour Day. The floats taking part in the Parade had to be judged, and the prize for the best Mill Float went to Local 63. The best commercial float prize went to the Newfoundland Brewery. Little Derris Budgell was awarded first prize for the best decorated bicycle, and was presented with a new bicycle by Bowring's Limited. The remainder of the morning was given over to Junior and Senior sports events, with games of chance for the spectators, and Canteen service for the small fry. In the afternoon Gander and Grand Falls clashed in an exhibition baseball game, which saw Grand Falls emerge with a crushing 10-0 victory over the visiting team. The evening of Labour Day was given over to adult celebration, with Bingo at the Stadium and a Dance at Harmsworth Hall (A.N.D. News, October 1960, 2-3).

The President of the A.N.D. Company, T. Ross Moore, said in his speech that day that "we must constantly be in the alert, both Labour and Management, to maintain our industrial and individual working pattern and living standards" (8).



The New-Logs (Price-Nfld) has “The Spirit of Labour Day” on its front cover in September 1967. It shows groups of people carrying large helium balloons, a display organised by the IBEW (fig. 6.6). Inside are four pages documenting twenty floats, although there is little coverage of the crowd or marchers. It shows the float of the OPEIU Local 255, the office workers. Other floats indicate an expanded involvement of the town with the parade. There is a float from the Twixteen Youth Club, one by hospital workers, and another of Riff’s workers wearing the fashions of 1967.

General Manager L.D. Wickwire’s address to the unions during the 1968 Labour Celebrations was also published on the front page of the company newsletter, the Price (Nfld.) News-Log. This was during the construction phase for the new paper machine, briefly called “Moby Jo.” He assured the crowd that “all of us here in Central Newfoundland are well aware of the progress which is being made on our new high-speed newsprint machine” (1). Inside are three pages of photographs, documenting eighteen floats. As “Moby Jo” was about to open, both Local 512 of the I.B.E.W. and Local 88 of the C.P.U. had floats depicting a whale. The whale on the I.B.E.W. float is swallowing up the four paper machines it will replace; the whale on the float made by paper makers’ local has its mouth open in front of four paper machines and the statement “I’ve Come to take Your Jobs Haw Haw” is printed on the side of the float (see again fig. 2.1).

The parade and celebrations have remained part of the town’s annual events up to today, stopping only during World War One. In order to take advantage of the summer weather, the town celebrated Labour Day in July until 1952. The only other year that there



ol. 3

SEPTEMBER, 1967

No. 9

## The spirit of Labour Day, 1967



Figure 6.6 Helium balloons carried by members of the IBEW, September 1967.

was no Labour Day parade was in 1963. However, the children of the town refused to be denied what they viewed as their day. As reported in the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary pamphlet:

The children decided to hold their own Labor Day parade in the gayest way they could. Bright and early Monday morning, Labor Day 1963, our photographer caught the kids of Exploits Lane and Avenue and surrounding streets tripping off in Halloween costumes, decorated bicycles, representatives from Little League Baseball, headed off by their own home-made banner (9).

Programs from the 1990s indicate that by then the celebration was a full three day affair, starting with sporting events and special entertainment for children on Saturday and Sunday, with the parade and speeches on the statutory holiday, Monday. The route proceeded from Windsor Stadium through town without passing the mill. It concluded at Church Road Park. In 1998, I attended the Labour Day parade which took place during a three month strike. That year the parade ended with an unveiling of the monument to workers in the area who had lost their lives on the job. The monument was a project of Local 63 and that year their Labour Day float was a replica of the monument (fig. 6.7).

Today, Labour Day celebrations have been diminishing in numbers and the committee is attempting to fix that. As they wrote in the Program to the 1995 Labour Day:

Labour Day celebrations have diminished little by little since the late 1970s and the committees have struggled to keep it alive. In 1993 the Family Outing was started in conjunction with the track and field events on the Sunday before Labour Day. It turned out to be a big success with about 600 free hot dogs and drinks given out to approximately 300 children and parents who attended. This year marks the 75th anniversary of Labour Day and the organisers are trying to make this a memorable one.



**Figure 6.7** Communications Energy Papermakers Union Local 63 (mill laborers) made a float with a replica of the memorial to fallen workers in the Labour Day parade, September 1998.

Remember, if for nothing more than the children of our town, Labour Day celebrations should be preserved (Central District Labour Council 1).

One of the reasons it has become smaller today is that people have decided to use the holiday to go to their cabins rather than participate in the parade, a trend noted by Heron and Penfold as the tension in the day itself: while Labour Day is a day to celebrate workers solidarity, it is also a day of rest (359).

Labour Day was and still is important to children. The following speaker likens it to Christmas:

I remember my first Labour Day much as I do my first Christmas. Labour Day in Grand Falls was a very big event. As a young kid, you looked forward to it all August month. When it came it was a big day. In those days, nobody went off to their cabins. One year we didn't have a Labour Day—all the kids had their own parade. They decorated their bikes and went around town. It just wouldn't die. The whole day was planned out. When I was young, the R.C.M.P. drove around town with their sirens going, to get everyone out of bed. Six in the morning. I remember my mother being up all hours of the night, making clown costumes. First would be the parade. It usually ended at the baseball field—where Church Road Park is now. Guest speakers were people of prominence. Then there'd be picnics for the children. Baseball tournaments. It was a full day. There were a few bands in the parade (JB 96-19).

And another notes the family day. He said:

I remember Labour Day quite well. We would always go to the parade. Sometimes my father worked Labour Days, even though it was a holiday. They were one of the essential workers. If he wasn't working we would go on a picnic. Didn't matter where—we usually went somewhere. If not, we went to the races. They always had races. We used to win silver dollars (JB 99-02).

Some people I spoke with talked about the recent diminishment of the importance

of Labour Day. One woman told me: "By the time I was fifteen, Labour Day became a holiday to get out of town. Highways were getting better then too" (JB 01-05). Heron and Penfold provide some reasons why Labour Day's popularity has decreased:

From the beginning, however, the project of creating this workers' holiday was inherently ambivalent. Labour Day embodied two distinct demands—one for public recognition of organised labour and its important role in industrial-capitalist society and the other for release from the pressures of work in capitalist industry and for expanded leisure time. Once Canadian labour leaders had won an official public holiday, it was up to unionists to shape the day's events to serve labour's needs. That task could often prove too much for local workers' movements with limited resources, whose confidence and morale could be sapped by unemployment, bitter strikes, hostile courts, and transient members. It could also be frustrated by the open-endedness of a public holiday that allowed wage-earners and their families to turn the time off the job to private pleasures, rather than cultural solidarity. The tension between celebration and leisure eventually undermined the grand ideals of the original proponents of Labour Day (359).

Folklorist Jack Santino attributes the demise of Labour Day's communal importance to its place in "summer's end activities of today" as it represents a peak travel and holiday time (140).

Paper makers today maintain their pride in their work, and continue to assert that they are the only workers allowed to wear the paper hats in the parade. This message was clear to others mill workers. A member of another union local told me: "When you see a guy with a hat on, he's definitely a paper maker, Local 88. And it would be nobody else" (JB 01-02). One retired worker explained why paper makers had a higher status:

Paper makers had their own identity. It was a higher classification and it may be unfair for me to say but history will show—if you were a paper



maker, you had a little bit of esteem, a little bit ahead. You probably felt—or the company felt—that you had more esteem over and above everybody else. You had skills—long before some of this high technology came on stream—if you were in the paper making trade. Once you were a paper maker, you were a paper maker, heh. People respected you for that. Some of the old timers—they were cracker jacks. Just something they picked up over the years. Top notch paper makers (JB 96-23).

Although he mentions the Company's respect for its workers, managers no longer walk in occupational parades along with workers as they did in pre industrial days, the factory having "created massive barriers of social distance between owner and worker" (Kealey 39). The community is aware of the longevity of the town's celebration of the parade and feel that marching in the parade gives them a link with the past. It is also a time when many remember the town's history; one of the children's bicycle decorations the year I was there in the fall 1998 was a replica of an A.N.D. Company truck loaded with logs (fig. 6.8).

In this section I have shown the manner in which Labour Day was celebrated in Grand Falls-Windsor. In the following section I explore the role objects play in this celebration, and how mill workers have used objects to express pride in work, to challenge management during one of the most significant mill expansions, and ultimately, to challenge an industrial ideology that attempted to place them within a hierarchy that they overturn on this day of festival.

### **6.2.3 Labour Day in Grand Falls and Grand Falls-Windsor: Festival and**





Figure 6.8 Child's float, September 1998, honours the town's first company, the A.N.D. Company.

## **Objects.**

Labour Day and in particular, Labour Day in Grand Falls-Windsor, is a multifaceted and multivocal event. Mill workers use objects within the context of festive behaviour to send messages to the community in which they live about pride, skill, and ownership. Participants also take advantage of the festival aspect of the holiday to confront management within a socially sanctioned event. It is this festival environment that allows workers to turn the tables on management and to make political statements otherwise forbidden, especially within this company town. Folklorist Barbara Babcock has termed this type of behaviour "symbolic inversion." She defines it as: "any act of expressive behaviour which inverts, contradicts, abrogates or in some fashion presents an alternative to commonly held cultural codes, values and norms be they linguistic, literary or artistic, religious, or social and political"(14). The parade is also a drama. As Susan Davis writes:

As dramatic representations, parades and public ceremonies are political acts: they have pragmatic objectives, and concrete, often material, results. People use street theatre, like other rituals, as tools for building, maintaining and confronting power relationships...Parades are public dramas of social relations, and in them performers define who can be a social actor and what subjects and ideas are available for communication and consideration (5-6).

The parade itself opens the day, as distinct groups of workers march in groups organised by union local, stores and businesses. After the parade, the festivities include speeches, sporting events, special food, and often a dance.

The objects that mill workers use to celebrate Labour Day in Grand Falls-Windsor

are ephemeral, built to last only that one day. In Labour Day parades in that community, balloons have always been essential (figs. 6.9, 6.10 and 6.11), paper flowers adorn children's decorated bicycles (fig. 6.12), the miniature is prominent on floats, such as the miniature of the monument to fallen workers (see again fig. 6.7) or the miniature paper machines being gobbled up by a whale, representing the new Number Three paper making machine, "Moby Jo" (fig. 6.13) and paper makers wear paper hats (fig. 6.14). But balloons burst, paper flowers get torn, floats break up, and even paper hats fade. It is the very impermanence of these objects that allows mill workers to self identify, as well as to confront management's permanent placement of them in restrictive categories, such as a group of people only to be seen on certain streets, in certain parts of town.

Folklorist Roger Abrahams has noted that is the transitory aspect of floats within parades, where objects are taken out of context by means such as miniaturisation, that characterises the "festival" aspect of certain events. He writes:

The essence of the festival world is articulated by the temporary and fragmentary objects associated with this kind of celebration. Here I refer to festive employment of exploding devices, pieced-together costumes made in high-contrast and high-intensity colours, and to the temporary character of the inventions, like the decorations on animals, carts, floats and people (180).

This carnival aspect was and still is particularly obvious to the children, who play an important role in this community event. The following speaker notes this carnival aspect by comparing it the New Orleans' celebration of Mardi Gras:

The earliest memory I have of a big important date—other than Christmas



Figure 6.9 Balloons decorate the IBEW float, 1967.



Figure 6.10 Balloons decorate the float made by the machinists' union, circa 1968.



**Figure 6.11** Balloons are prominent in the Labour Day parade, September, 1998.



Figure 6.12 Paper flowers adorn this young girls' bike, circa 1968.





Figure 6.13 A union float in the 1968 Labour Day parade displays mill workers' concern over the new Machine Number three, briefly known as "Moby Jo." The miniature whales are swallowing other paper machines. The introduction of "Moby Jo" resulted in the closing of three smaller machines and a loss of jobs.



Figure 6.14 Paper makers march in Labour Day parade circa 1950.

or my birthday—would be Labour Day. It was absolutely a full day thing. I remember, as a young boy, being with my Dad...and going with him to build the floats. And these big men—you would just carry the nails. There was a lead up to it—almost like Mardi Gras. That's how important it was. I think partly, it was a demonstration of strength (JB 96-17).

In the following sections, I explore how workers in Grand Falls-Windsor are drawing on long traditions of labour customs in order to maintain a sense of self within an industrial town.

Through the material means available to them through parade and festival, the residents of Grand Falls-Windsor have made and continue to make statements about their pride in work, their right to be seen, their right to express concern over their work, and their relationship with their town and the domination of the industry that established the town. By definition, the openness of festival involves the whole community and children's participation in this otherwise adult worker's holiday marks its festive nature. Identity is marked in material culture through the temporary nature of the floats—covered in balloons, paper flowers, and miniaturisation of objects—as well as the paper hats that distinguish the paper makers. Through these means, workers in Grand Falls-Windsor express their resistance to company control and articulate their own control over the product they produce: paper.

Labour Day celebrations in Grand Falls-Windsor involve, as festivals do, not just the participants in the parade but the whole community, especially children. Roger Abrahams discusses festivals and festive occasions. He writes:

*Festival* itself conjures up notions of openness, either through the opening of the doors of the community...or through a taking to the streets. Festivals, in general, mean the evocation of the spirit of fun, of play and games. Festivals draw on the languages and techniques of play to intensify them. Festivals seize on open spots and playfully enclose them. Spaces are found and are invested with the meaning of the moment and the power of the occasion. This is, of course, what happens on the streets during parades: spaces become transformed and activated, a place for diversity to be displayed within certain rules and between the boundaries made for the occasion. Festivals thus draw their own boundaries for the occasion and redraw the boundaries of the host community, ironically establishing themselves in areas that, in the everyday world, have their own boundaries (178) (italics in original).

In parades, marchers take ownership of the streets, making the statement that they too have a right to the streets and a right to be seen on them. In Labour Day parades, marchers take the opportunity to make public statements, either about their skills, or their protest. In the past, pride in skill was expressed in occupational parades by craftsmen in ways that demonstrated their skill either through miniaturisation, displaying the tools of their trade or actual demonstrations. The very ephemeral nature of floats, where things are taken out of context for example by miniaturisation is characteristic, as Abrahams notes, of festival. In addition, children's actions illustrate the characteristics of Labour Day that define it as festival: the inverted behaviour of masking (in this case through costumes), the seriousness of play such as sports and other competitions, and the insistence on being seen. The participation of children in what is otherwise seen as a celebration of the adult working world is inverted behaviour which characterises festival. Children are included in other ways, such as receiving the paper hats which are normally restricted to paper makers. As

one worker told me: "And the kids. Oh my God they used to love it when they got the free hats. They thought that was a big deal. To get one of them paper hats, when they [the paper makers] were finished walking in the parades" (JB 01-06). Today the parade is still important:

I know as a young child, myself and my brother and a couple of cousins and my girlfriend, we always took part in the Labour Day parade ourselves. The big thing was, decorating your bike. We had no help, we used odds and ends. We never did win! Just for the fun of it—to be in the parade...We put straw on the wheels...A big thing was the flowers, made out of tissue (JB 99-02).

Parades are a way of marking the beginning of a festive day's events. Parading also sends messages to on-lookers about strength in numbers, ownership, pride in work, a sense of power, solidarity with co-workers, orderliness as well as confrontation. Some of these messages are expressed in movement—the procession of a workers' parade through all parts of a town, not just workers' neighbourhoods—and through material culture, such as the floats built for these occasions, and the paper hats paper makers wear to mark their identity as producers. The parades in Grand Falls-Windsor appear to have rarely involved direct confrontation. For many years the floats were built on mill property and the mill contributed money towards building the floats. As one worker told me: "We would build our floats on company property. You would have access to the whole mill. You could go and take what you wanted. Wouldn't cost us a dime" (JB 96-23). However, in 1968, the new paper machine named "Moby Jo" began running, causing the closure of four smaller machines and resulting in lay-offs. Both Local 88 and Local 512 of the IBEW presented

floats in the parade that criticised the Company. The parade I viewed in 1998, which took place in the middle of a three month strike, was thought by those present to be larger than in previous years, the marchers needing the opportunity to collectively express solidarity.

Louis Marin describes parades as a ritual that marks the collectivity of a group. He writes: "To parade or to form a cortege or procession implies that the individuals constitute a totality and collectively 'take shape'" (222). A Labour Day parades allows a number of unions, including separate locals, to march as one group of working people, which is a mark of strength. Marin notes the spatial and temporal characteristics of parades as they wind their way through a specially chosen route. The parades:

unfold as they move through a pre-existing space already articulated by certain named or marked places: streets, squares, interesections, bridges, buildings, monuments, districts, neighbourhoods, and boundaries within the city: paths, roads, hamlets, farms, hamlets, farms, fields, fences and woods in the country. In and from this space, a parade will extract its stage and decor. Because certain routes will be chosen in favour of others, some places will be kept on the program while others are discarded, some buildings or monuments will be visited while others are ignored. A parade thus manipulates space and the places that already exist. A parade gives space a meaningful structure, and the places chosen for its route articulate the "sentences" of spatial discourse (223).

Parades follow a meaningful order and take ownership of streets, marking the marchers right to be there and to be seen there. They take place on the main streets of the town. This would have been particularly important in early Grand Falls, where, as outlined in the previous chapters, social rank, as evident in housing allocations and even the delivering of lunch baskets, was built into the town's structure. The rest of the community is the

audience to this challenge. As Marin writes: "It appears that the major effect of a parade results from the articulation of two domains—the spectators' and the actors' ....the parade implicates the 'audience' of spectators as actors" (227).

Labour historian Eric Hobsbawm writes about the parade during International Workers Day as "invasion of the establishment's social space, a symbolic conquest." He writes:

The International May Day, which dates back to 1889, is perhaps the most ambitious of labour rituals. In some ways it is a more ambitious and generalised version of the annual combined labour demonstrations and festival which we have seen emerging for one highly specific group of workers and confined to single regions in the miners' demonstrations and galas of two decades earlier. It shared with these the essential characteristic of being a regular public self-presentation of a class, an assertion of power, indeed in its invasion of the establishment's social space, a symbolic conquest. But equally crucially, it was the assertion of class through an *organised movement*—union or party. It was the labour army's annual trooping of the colours—a political occasion unthinkable without the slogans, the demands, the speeches...May Day was planned simply as a one-off simultaneous international demonstration for the Legal Eight Hour Day. ...it was through public participation that a demonstration was turned into a holiday in both the ritual and the festive sense (76) (*italics in original*).

This conquest represents many things: an opportunity to be seen outside the mill, the opportunity to parade their skills. And just as mill workers show ownership over the material they produce and the materials they work with, so they show ownership through the parade of the imposed planned townscape.

Festival and parading are also about identity. Anthropologist Carole Farber has written: "it is apparent that festivals are about identity, whether personal or social, and



they are the context and the process of creating links between people in the community, as well as between the community and the wider national and cultural environment" (34). Nowhere is this more obvious than in the paper hats that the paper makers wear. As one female office worker told me: "The paper hats were symbolic of the paper makers—the guys who actually *made* the paper. We help to produce the paper—but they actually make the paper. The paper hats don't belong to anyone else" (JB 01-06).<sup>9</sup>

People in Grand Falls-Windsor have drawn on long traditions of expression of pride to challenge the outside and imposed structures on their lives. Their Labour Day expressions find their roots in early occupational processions and organised labour. Labour Day parades are festival behaviour that allows participants to challenge the status quo. They involve the whole community in a festival that allows for reversal of roles, challenge to management and expressions of occupational identity. Labour Day in Grand Falls-Windsor takes place within the context of carnival and festival. It is a day given ritual meaning through parades, floats, competitions and children's events. It is a day of celebration which allows workers to turn the tables on management in order to confront certain issues and to express their right to be seen. Festive behaviour allows participants to challenge the status quo. As a day of festival, events such as the opening parade and the day of competitions give it an air of a carnival performance. The inclusion of children in all events ensures its festival aspect. Labour Day in Grand Falls-Windsor is a family day.

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<sup>9</sup>See Neil Jarman for his observations on the expression of identity of the decorative banners carried during parades by Ulster Protestants.

As Roger Abrahams notes:

Festivals are ultimately community affairs. Indeed, they provide *the* occasion whereby a community may call attention to itself and, perhaps more important in our time, its willingness to display itself openly. It is the ultimate public activity, given its need for preparation and coordination of effort, and its topsy-turvyness, in which many of the basic notions of community are put to the test (181) (emphasis in original).

Residents of Grand Falls-Windsor, particularly mill workers and especially paper makers, use the topsy turvy elements of Labour Day to challenge the industrial ideology that would see them as workers to be controlled by the time clock and the mill whistle and an allocation of housing that determined their place to be seen. Drawing on traditions of occupational processions, they use objects within this context to mediate their relationship with the industry by asserting their identity and their concerns.

### **6.3 Negotiating Status: Access to Sample Paper and the Status of a Mill Lunch Basket**

Labour Day occurs only once a year and is a dramatic way of expressing identity to the community. Mill workers use objects as expressions of identity on a more everyday basis. They use sample paper and the mill lunch basket.

Mill workers use access to sample paper to show those who work outside the mill that they, the workers, have ownership of this product. As in the mill, they take symbolic control over the newsprint they make and use it to mediate status within the community. Sample paper is shared with coworkers who do not have access to it, and with neighbours

who do not work at the mill.

The paper makers who work directly on the paper machines have the best access to samples and this has increased the bartering power of some workers. One worker described the situation to me. He said:

The guys who worked in the machine room—now that's on the paper machines themselves—they would be constantly hounded by the carpenters and the electricians and the millwrights and whatever to get them a bundle of samples. All the samples were made in that particular area. But like I said, you would make them for your friends at home or your friends in the mill (JB 01-02).

Demand for sample paper is so high that it has become part of an informal economy in Grand Falls-Windsor. Workers take home the newsprint they produce for their own use, and also use it to barter for other items from neighbours who value but have no access to sample paper. One resident explained:

This was typical years ago—everybody and their grandmother in Grand Falls-Windsor had samples. They used them to put on the floor, to keep the dirt off. And the people ask: "Any chance of getting a few samples?" And it was no problem then. But I understand now today it's a bit more difficult because it takes time away from your responsibilities. But I know there's an awful lot of sample paper come out of that mill over the years. Bundles (JB 01 02).

Another resident spoke about their value. He said:

We used samples for everything. It was the weirdest thing because every time Mom washed the floor, samples had to go down on top of it. And you'd always walk in anybody's porch and there were always samples in the porch. Everything was always wrapped in samples. And samples was something you always gave others here. Like, if you worked in the mill, tons of people would come knocking on our door for samples. That was a

real nice treat that you provided other people. We used samples for everything. From cutting out Valentines to wrapping up food. It was just unbelievable what we used it for. There was bartering too. Trout for samples (JB 99-01).

Samples have bartering power because neighbours are eager for them. As one man said: "They'd give their life away for some samples. I don't think there was too much you couldn't get if they needed the samples bad enough. You almost had regular costumers" (JB 01-03).

As the above descriptions indicate, neighbours share the samples with each other, extending the male men's industrial work through the neighbourhood. Another resident told me:

Mom was always like—"go over to Gert's and get some samples." Didn't call and ask, 'cause they're always there. Sometimes you wouldn't even knock—you'd just go in the basement and there'd be a stack—and you'd take three or four packs. They were all neatly folded. All the same, all uniform (JB 01-05).

One person spoke of the importance of having a neighbour who worked at the mill. He said:

If you didn't work at the mill, you had to hope you had a neighbour who worked in the mill so you could get a bundle of samples. That was a great thing you know. You could almost get what you wanted for a bundle of samples. Especially around certain times—like cleaning at Christmas time or May cleaning. The woman would scrub the floors and put the samples down. And use them for table cloths. They were used for just about everything (JB 01-03).

Mill workers mediate the status given to them within the mill by raising their status

outside the mill, within the neighbourhood and community itself, by their access to sample paper.

The mill worker also uses the lunch basket to mediate status within the community. Carrying the lunch basket is a symbol to those who work, and live, outside the mill that the man carrying it has a permanent job. As one current worker told me:

It's a symbol that you are a millworker. To be a millworker was an honourable profession and it's still considered an honourable profession. It's good work. It's hard work. It's hard to dedicate yourself to forty years of working in a factory. It sort of tells everybody—look, I'm a steady guy. I work every day of my life. There's certain things that you can know about me by the fact that I'm carrying this basket. You know that I have a good job and a well paying job. You know that I show up for work on a regular basis. You know I have respect for my family because why else am I going to work. So yes, you can tell a lot of things about the person who carries the basket (JB 01-11).<sup>10</sup>

Status within this community is not only defined in terms of a permanent job, but also by the aura of mystery that the mill worker uses the lunch basket to project.

In Chapter Four I described how the uninitiated are not allowed into the mill. In Chapter Three, I discussed how mill workers frequently use the mill lunch basket as a vessel for concealing the items they are taking from the mill. As one mill worker

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<sup>10</sup>In contrast, the Blackmore brothers hid their mill lunch baskets away when they had a meeting with management in which they did not want to play their role as paper makers. Leo Blackmore wrote about a meeting he and his brother had with mill managers when they were working two jobs: one as paper maker, the other as publisher. He writes: "Mike and I were on the day shift that day. Shortly after four o'clock we were climbing the stairs that took one to the general offices. We had lodged our lunch baskets at the foot of the stairs; after all, we could not very well present ourselves in the V.P.'s office carrying lunch baskets" (53).

explained to me: "They're only for bringing in lunches and taking out what you wanted to take out. Nobody was supposed to look in your basket" (JB 01-03). Because no one is supposed to look in the lunch basket, management does not know what is in the baskets; just as at home, children do not know what is in the baskets. The basket hides things; it is closed to outsiders, including management and children. The mill hides things as well. The baskets mirror the mill itself: both are places of restricted entry and restricted knowledge, places of mystery.

In Chapter Four, I provided this description of one man's childhood impression of the mystery of the mill and I repeat it here. In describing why he liked to deliver the lunch basket, he said:

We got to go inside the mill. I mean—this *monster* down the end of the road, that we could see from our house—the smoke billowing out—it was a mystery what was inside. We were never permitted—I think I was sixteen, seventeen before I got through the doors there. So, we didn't know *what* went on inside the mill. It was sort of like a secret. But we got to bridge that just at the door—to get in there a little ways at times. So that was exciting enough for us. The fact that we had an opportunity to go down was often payment enough, right (JB 01-05 ).

His words description evokes the mystery of the mill, just as other residents had spoken of the mystery of the mill lunch basket.

Both Christopher Tilley and Jules David Prown have suggested that those who study material culture consider the emotive quality of objects.<sup>11</sup> So in my final

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<sup>11</sup>See Christopher Tilley Metaphor and Material Culture, and Jules Prown, "On the 'Art' in Artifacts" in Gerald L. Pocius, ed. Living in a Material World. St John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1991, 144-155 and his book with Kenneth

exploration of how people in Grand Falls-Windsor, particularly the mill workers, have used the lunch basket as an object of mediation, I found myself wondering: "What is the emotional response to a basket?" To me, a basket is a daily utilitarian object, used for all kinds of work. It also projects an image of care: delicate things are kept in baskets. But in the case of the mill lunch basket, it is above all a lidded box, a closed box.

Daisann McLane applied Prown's theories to the Haitian money box brought back from Haiti by a friend, describing the box as a "shiny squarish metal box" (109). Inspired by Prown's method of analysing material culture, she relates to the box emotionally, taking it into her hands. She writes about the first time she sees it:

One of these objects immediately caught my attention: a shiny squarish metal box, about 6 inches high by 4 inches deep, covered with a bright red, white and blue pattern of what appeared to be, from where I stood on the other side of the room, wheels in motion. I walked over to the box in order to see it better, and it all but jumped into my hands. Delighted by the box's lively, kinetic contrasting colours, its pleasing size and shape, I examined it as a child would a toy (indeed, it seemed to be some shiny plaything), turning it around and around, admiring the way the light caught and reflected off its metal sides. It was not until later that I noticed that while handling the box, I had scratched my hands on the sharp points of its metal corners (109).

She examines its shape, colours, textures. She embarks on an "exploratory" quest. For as Jules David Prown has advised:

We begin with the premise that in objects there can be read essential evidence of unconscious as well as conscious attitudes and beliefs, some specific to those objects' original makers and users as individuals, others

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Haltman, American Artifacts.



latent in the larger cultural milieus in which those objects circulated. Less concerned than some historians of material culture with the making or makers of such objects, our focus tends to be more on user interface, on the ways embedded meanings are actualised through use—matters subject always (and invitations always) to controlled speculation. Material culture, in this view of it, is consequently less an *explanatory* than an *exploratory* practice. ... Most importantly, the reader is invited to enjoy the pleasures in close looking! (9).

McLane concludes that “the box hides; it is, like all closed boxes, a mystery,” pointing out that all closed boxes indicate/implicate/imply mystery (114).

The mill lunch basket is also a closed box. The lunch basket a millwright made for himself from metal in the mill is so closed he had to punch air holes into it to keep his food from moulding. The mill too is a closed box, especially the windowless building housing the Number Three machine. And just as the lunch basket identifies the carriers as mill workers, presenting themselves to the larger community, including neighbours, the rest of town, and the mill management, so does the lunch basket give the mill worker status within the community as someone who has entry to an unknown world: the mystery of the closed box. Workers are aware that it is as mysterious and as secretive to those outside as the mill itself.

One current mill worker I interviewed believes there is a symbolic reason for carrying the lunch basket. To him, the lunch basket will always symbolise the mill worker. He told me:

If we are talking in a modern sense, I think the basket has become rather symbolic and it's no longer for the conveyance of a lunch because if you check inside of most people's baskets, you'll find very little if anything in

them. You may find a can of coke or a Joe Louis. Or you may find just a traditional sandwich, but it doesn't convey a cooked lunch as it did many years ago. In some cases it probably do. But I think that most people carry the basket because they've always carried the basket. And they probably wouldn't feel that they were completely dressed if they didn't go to work in the morning with that basket underneath their arm. Most baskets I think—that there haven't been any new baskets made in perhaps twenty years. There may have been one or two people who continue to craft baskets but I really don't think that that skill is still alive today. Not in the sense that we knew twenty-five or thirty years ago....But in a modern term, in the day of high convenience and stuff like that—microwaves—and a t.v. dinner fits in your basket pretty good. It doesn't take up much room. So I look at it now as a utility basket. It's a nice little comfortable basket to put things in both ways—coming and going. So it's become a place to throw a couple of tools—you may have a pair of plyers in it sometimes. A roll of tape. God knows what else. Because it's a little place to put your stuff...The paper industry is going through significant change and that change is coming home to roost in our little town. I guess the basket itself will always be tied to us. It's part of our heritage. And I carry my basket and I hardly know why (JB 01-11).

Why does he carry it and doesn't know why? Perhaps it is a statement of power: he links the basket to the establishment of lunchrooms; as workers claimed place out of space. He works at a mill that is a closed space, an impenetrable space, a space children cannot access; as managers cannot access the contents of his lunch basket. So even when the lunch basket is no longer needed as a way of carrying food into the mill, for many workers it remains an important political symbol of the fight for the right to sit down to a meal, an important identifier of someone as a permanent worker, as well as a closed area. Or perhaps he carries it because the lunch basket echoes the mystery of the mill. For, as I noted in the introductory chapter to this study, one woman told me: "I was always intrigued. What came out of these baskets was very mysterious as well" (JB 98 01).

## **Conclusion**

Through the material means available to them, mill workers have challenged the industry's imposition of an ideology that restricted where they lived and how they would be seen. They have used objects to symbolically invade the community, to express identity to neighbours and to give themselves an aura of mystery. But while paper flowers fade and balloons burst, and with it the opportunity to confront management, the permanence of a mill lunch basket made to last as long as did those made by Angus Gunn, is a permanent, everyday expression of identity.

## **Chapter Seven: Conclusion.**

Objects hold many meanings, some of them symbolic, some of them more tangible. Within a single community, an object can convey different meanings in its various contexts, sometimes mediating between and within sites, other times highlighting divisions between people and their locations. As folklorist Bernard Herman has pointed out: "Artifacts, like the totality of expressive culture, are multifunctional in their expressive content with a single object often imbued with an array of potential meanings" (3). The specific group of objects I identified in Chapter One, especially the mill lunch basket and sample paper, hold multiple meanings for the people of Grand Falls-Windsor. I discovered the objects' multivalence during fieldwork, as I began to notice that people use objects to mediate their different subjectivities, to express identity, and sometimes to challenge in subtly subversive ways. They did so within the context of work, home and community.

Within the industrial workplace, mill workers "kidnap" sample paper and take it home, the foreign and the outside thus made local. In their households, they use the paper as a way of extending their industrial lives into the home, challenging the imposed industrial ideology of "separate spheres." Similarly, within the industrial context, mill workers take an outside artifact, the mill lunch basket they have appropriated as theirs, and make it an intrinsic element of their informal culture. At the same time, women working in the home use the lunch basket to extend the concept of "separate spheres,"

transporting their domestic work into the industrial world by creating sociability, through food, for their sons and husbands working in the mill. It is clear from my research that these artifacts hold multiple meanings for people in Grand Falls-Windsor. As it travels to the mill it expresses women's domestic work; as it travels home carrying sample paper, it expresses the link between "public" and "private" spheres. In their many roles, these objects mediate the local and the global, the public and the private, the past and the present.

In the introduction to this thesis, I asked what could be learned about the people of Grand Falls-Windsor through their use of objects. Specifically, I asked how they responded to the constraints imposed upon them by the industrial ideology of a company town. Did they accept these controls passively or did they find ways to mediate them? What can artifacts tell us about how people live in company towns? How do they mediate a sense of self against an industrial ideology whose interests lie elsewhere?

In Chapter Two I described the series of events that led to the establishment by foreign industrialists of a pulp and paper mill in Grand Falls in 1905. I looked at the concessions the Newfoundland government made to this new industry, and how the deal to establish the mill also established a focus outside Newfoundland. I noted the prominence of foreign paper makers who came to work at the mill from elsewhere in North America. I showed how the A.N.D. Company and the company town imposed a new way of life on the people who worked for them, including a concern with "discipline," control over housing, purchasing and social activities, and the Company's

creation of a hierarchal community that reflected the hierarchy of jobs within the mill.

In the next four chapters, I examined how mill workers, their wives, mothers and children have used objects to mediate their relationship with an outside industry driven, at least in the beginning, by foreign interests. I looked at how objects are used at the mill, in the home and in the community. This range of contexts describes the social network of the mill worker, the context in which he expresses his identity.<sup>1</sup>

In Chapter Three, I showed how mill workers use objects within the industrial context to mediate a sense of self as individual within an impersonal structure. While manufacturing a mass produced commodity, mill workers appropriate the product they produce for export and claim it as their own. In addition, they appropriate the outside lunch basket and perceive it only as a locally produced item. The lunchroom, an extension of the lunch basket, becomes a symbol of private place within the industrial complex of the mill, a place mill workers have made on their own, a place that becomes a hideaway. The kettles, ash trays, and pokers mill workers make in the mill establish in a visual and material way their control over the workplace. The manager who enters a worker's home and sees a kettle there made from mill materials may only see a kettle, but

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Handler notes that the "the concept of 'identity' is peculiar to the modern Western world" (27) and provides examples of other cultural contexts in which the idea is absent. Using the world of Jane Austen's novels, he writes: "When Austen's narrators or characters talk about what we would today call identity, they use such words as family, friends, connections and relatives" (34). His description fits the manner in which I look at relationships in Grand Falls-Windsor, what Handler calls the "web of social relations that places the individual in question with respect to family, connections and social rank" (35).

the worker sees an assertion of his control over the materials he works with daily.

In Chapter Four I showed how mill workers use the lunch basket as a marker of separation from the rest of the community, and give it a prominent role within their shopfloor culture. The shopfloor culture of mill workers is sustained through informal ways such as pranks; the weave of the lunch basket is the material embodiment of the weave that exists between mill workers.

In Chapter Five I looked at these objects within the context of the home. I explored how women, children and men have challenged the imposed industrial concept of separate spheres through the lunch basket. I then examined the divisive part of this equation. Studying the role of the lunch basket in the home reveals the extent to which the two worlds are divided. The lunch basket becomes the women's responsibility as soon as it arrives home. Although the women show great pride in their work, it is also arduous and potentially demeaning. The lunch basket is an artifact of the domestic "shopfloor." The choice of those who are assigned the task of delivering the packed lunch basket reveals more about the hierarchal nature of the town, and of the valuing of women's work.

Finally, in Chapter Six I looked at how mill workers have challenged the imposed industrial ideology that determined where they would be seen and in what light. Their actions reveal the role of occupational processions, as they symbolically invade the streets through Labour Day parades. The ephemeral paper flowers on a Labour Day parade are a key to understanding the parade's role within the context of "festival" when symbolic



inversion allows workers to confront management. The mill worker mediates his relationship with his neighbours and the rest of his community through his access to sample paper and the carrying of a mill lunch basket as an identifier of someone with a permanent job at the mill. Ultimately, the lunch basket is an object of mystery, to the researcher, to the community, to the children. It hides. It reflects the mystery of the mill itself, that monster billowing smoke at the end of the street.

In the introduction to this thesis, I wrote that residents of company towns are profoundly aware that their lives are run from the outside. They are also aware that the Company has provided for them. In Grand Falls-Windsor today, people are self-conscious of their roots in a company town. They talked to me of their town's character as being passive because many necessities of life were provided for them. One resident told me: "We were a company town. The people were pampered. Never knew hard times—labour movements think we were too much inclined to see the company's side. There was a strike in 1921 and we never had another one until 1975" (JB 01-02). Another argued: "Grand Falls has always been somewhat an apathetic community because for so many years everything was done for the people here" (Grand Falls-Windsor Oral History Project, transcript 94-010).<sup>2</sup> But the objects of Grand Falls-

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<sup>2</sup>But scholars who have studied company towns point out that some of the most dramatic strikes, including the American example of the Pullman Company strike, have taken place in company towns. For instance Margaret Crawford writes: "Although company towns created a 'diffuse' relationship between employers and workers, blurring the boundaries between working and living spheres, and making employees more vulnerable to their employers' control, workers rarely were passive. In company towns

Windsor tell a different story.

Through an examination of a specific group of objects, I have clearly shown that residents have mediated a sense of self within this industry dominated town by challenging and sometimes confronting the central ideology and presence of the foreign, the imposed, the outside. In doing so, they also challenge their own concepts of self as inactive recipients rather than creative innovators. It is in the nature of the artifact, both temporary and permanent, that we find these states reflected. The weave of the lunch basket can express the weave of social relationships within the mill, and the temporary quality of the artifacts used in Labour Day parades represents the temporary state of the inverted relationships played out in those events.

By grounding my thesis within the work of scholars who have studied how people use objects as a way of mediating relationships, I place my study firmly within that tradition. This thesis not only contributes to that field of study, but also pushes it, to look at the role the same group of objects may play within different sites, such as work, home and community, and to suggest future study of communities through their use of objects. In terms of methodology, I suggest that in order to understand the role an object plays in people's lives and in their culture, it is essential to look at the way people use that object in a number of different contexts. Because this topic developed from my research for a

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across the country, they actively participated in struggles to define their living and working conditions. Company towns became important sites of labor strife, dramatizing the continuing conflicts between capital and labor, ethnicity and Americanisation, and discipline and democracy that marked industrialising America" (7).

museum exhibit, this contribution will also benefit material culture studies within the context of museum studies and exhibition practice and inspire curators to look at the symbolic use of artifacts within communities, rather than simply their utilitarian or illustrative role.<sup>3</sup> In addition, as museums are being challenged to abandon their authoritative voice and include consultation with the communities they aim to represent, this study suggests how fieldwork engages the community and allows the researcher to uncover the multiplicity of perspectives of everyday objects.<sup>4</sup> As well, this study contributes to Women's Studies in general by confirming that public/private divisions are not as clear as we thought, by adding to knowledge on women's work in a Newfoundland pulp and paper town, and by suggesting that concepts of home as workplace and women's use of objects in the home bears further investigation.<sup>5</sup>

Personally, this thesis has caught my imagination in terms of the symbolic role objects play in everyday life. When I first encountered the mill lunch basket, I was fascinated by how it linked yet divided worlds, how it was locally made, and the role it

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<sup>3</sup> Recently my friend Glenn Keough told me about his visit to a museum in Victoria, British Columbia. It was his observation that most of the museums he had visited in Canada displayed First Nations' artifacts with much greater care to their deeper and symbolic meanings whereas the European sections of museums tended to show artifacts as a "bunch of stuff" with no discussion of the symbolic roles artifacts had played in these peoples' lives.

<sup>4</sup>See the articles in Ivan Karp's two edited collections.

<sup>5</sup>In her thesis, Botting notes: "Few scholars have explored [Newfoundland] women's non fishery related work" (28)

played in identifying workers. In my study I learned the role it plays as a symbol of mystery to those who are restricted from knowing its contents: how it hides things, just as the windowless mill does from those who are restricted from entering it. I learned the artifact's meaning not only from the extraordinarily articulate residents of Grand Falls-Windsor who told me directly of the puzzle of the lunch basket and the secrecy of the mill, but those who artfully hinted at it by telling me that no one other than the owner or the wife who packed it was supposed to look in a mill lunch basket.

The basket, though seen as an everyday, utilitarian object, can be seen more clearly as holding many meanings: as ritual object, as symbolic object, as a political statement, as souvenir, as craft, as appropriated object. As Tim Dant writes: "All objects mediate, carrying messages about the culture they originate in, but only some carry messages that were *intended* as messages" (154) (emphasis in original). This thesis is about those intended messages.



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