



# Regenerating Cultural Identity through Industrial Heritage Tourism: Visitor Attitudes, Entertainment and the Search for Authenticity at Mills, Mines and Museums of Maritime Canada

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## Abstract

This essay analyses visitor attitudes to industrial heritage at a variety of former industrial sites, ranging from former coal mines, shipbuilding yards and steam-powered mills to a reconstructed waterfront. In addition, a comprehensive industrial museum provided a venue for further critique of the means by which the industrial past contributes to a regeneration of cultural identity in Maritime Canada. The range of former industrial sites reflects the multiple narratives of deindustrialisation affecting the Canadian provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island for much of the twentieth century while visitor responses to a detailed survey indicate that a focus on industrial heritage is a highly-valued component of respondents' understanding of the region's cultural identity. The essay notes, however, that this representation of cultural identity is highly problematic and replete with contradictions, most notably between respondents' desires for authenticity and the necessarily sanitised landscapes required for cultural tourism. Similarly, designers and managers of industrial heritage may be motivated to construct heritage landscapes which prioritise entertainment and spectacle and down play significant environmental, social and political elements of the former industry. From these examples in Maritime Canada, it is clear that visitors encounter significant complexity in their experience of the industrial past. This complexity provides both opportunity and challenge in the use of the industrial past as a means of cultural regeneration in the region.

## Introduction

The approach taken in this essay towards cultural regeneration and the shaping of the cultural landscape is influenced heavily by the 'new' cultural geographies

of the 1980s and 1990s, particularly those focusing on the impress of power and motive in the landscape. Based within developments in social theory in the 1980s, these approaches in cultural geography argued that our environments are culturally-contingent arrangements, rather than simply material objects, reflecting the relative power of dominant narratives at a variety of scales, from the effects of interpersonal relations, to the historical relationships between capital and labour, to the tensions between the modern and the post-modern. Of the latter, it is David Harvey's work that is of most significance to this study, especially his arguments that frame post-modernity as a reaction to the homogenisation of modernist, largely capitalist impulses in the social, cultural and economic landscape.<sup>1</sup> Importantly for this study, Harvey argues that the search for authentic landscapes and interpersonal relations in the flux of a post-modern world functions as an antidote to the dislocations and disruptions of an increasingly globalised modernity.<sup>2</sup> This theme of social recovery and regeneration from economic dislocation is developed also in Massey's contention that heritage landscapes reflect a sanitised recovery of the past and in Barthel's pointed argument that the nostalgia of heritage landscape construction is utopian, 'perform[ing] community in a society where organic communities are a thing of the past, if indeed they ever existed'.<sup>3</sup> Usefully also, Mitchell's work sets these themes into a Schumpeterian analysis which argues for the continued processes of capitalist construction and creative destruction, an additional lens that frames the examples developed in this essay.<sup>4</sup>

These social and cultural themes resonate across deindustrialised landscapes in many international contexts and the literature reviewed in this essay draws from examples in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, mainland Europe and New Zealand, all of which grapple with the issues of cultural regeneration after significant periods of deindustrialisation. In Atlantic Canada specifically, McKay has raised similar conceptual arguments informing this essay, particularly in his 1994 book *The Quest of the Folk*, situating the regenerative agenda of a resurgent folk culture against competing processes of cultural dislocation.<sup>5</sup> The engagement of state agency in cultural regeneration is a further theme which emerges from his earlier studies of the construction of a folk fisher tradition and the management of a tourist gaze in Nova Scotia and applicable in many other parts of Maritime Canada.<sup>6</sup>

These social and cultural themes – and their encapsulated tensions between modernity and post-modernity – play out in the built landscape, in the lived experiences of people, in the power structures of change and in various forms of cultural representation that construct people's sense of identity. Numerous scholars have tackled the cultural dimensions of these themes, applying them to urban growth,<sup>7</sup> heritage and memorialisation<sup>8</sup> and the formation of community resistance and cultural expression,<sup>9</sup> while Waterton and Watson have recently explored the intersections of visuality and heritage within the tourist gaze.<sup>10</sup>

For the purposes of this essay, a further literature in cultural geography is also significant, a literature that argues that cultural landscapes can be commodified and consumed, that landscape can exist as a spectacle capable of bringing entertainment value to the observer and participant.<sup>11</sup> Examples range from festival markets to retailing as theme parks, as authors such as Boyer and Hopkins have demonstrated.<sup>12</sup> In the examples that follow in this essay, the construction, reconstruction and commodification of deindustrialised landscapes with spectacle value is of considerable importance, as are the responses of those who visit them and consume them as forms of cultural regeneration and identity formation. As other authors have demonstrated,<sup>13</sup> tension between the authentic and the constructed is enormously important in the development of a sense of cultural identity. I argue here that the examples of deindustrialised but commodified landscapes in Maritime Canada demonstrate this tension – and the difficulties of cultural regeneration. In the examples which follow it is clear that cultural identity is being constructed through deliberate and political decisions, reflecting particular power relationships, motives and agendas. The intersections and visibilities of these agendas to the visiting public (as consumers) are of considerable interest – and as the survey data below indicate, are frequently unconscious or at worst, deliberately hidden. The resulting geographies are uneven, risking becoming ‘fragmented, highly selected and idiosyncratic ruins of a past revolution’.<sup>14</sup> Simply, we make choices regarding the histories and landscapes which we wish to project into the future as ‘heritage’, especially when this heritage is being used as a form of cultural regeneration and an agent of (re)constructed social identity.

### **Deindustrialised landscapes: physical and cultural consequences**

For deindustrialised landscapes – and their reconfiguration as part of a positive cultural regeneration – we face the difficulties of managing dangerous and problematic environmental legacies as well as resistance to the presentation of past social relationships. While Johnson notes that heritage landscapes need not always be ‘bogus, sanitized and hypnotic renderings of an invented past’, Barthel confirms the strong tendency to erase the evidence of the ‘negative by-products of industrialisation, from air pollution to class conflict’.<sup>15</sup> Francaviglia goes even further in describing the former industrial site of the Du Pont chemical works in Delaware as serene.<sup>16</sup> Similar arguments are well rehearsed in work on the Ironbridge Gorge in England<sup>17</sup> and Mah’s various case studies of urban and industrial decline in Canada, England and Russia.<sup>18</sup> Other scholars have focused on post-industrial urban transformations and cultural consequences in ‘rustbelt’ cities of the United States<sup>19</sup> while still others have explored the tensions between community narrative and heritage tourism.<sup>20</sup>

Scholarly work on environmental legacies of deindustrialised landscapes in Maritime Canada has engaged similar arguments regarding attempts to ignore and sanitise environmental legacies and has frequently harnessed concepts of collective memory to address these. Greenwood noted the manner in which environmental health concerns (particularly high levels of silicosis among former foundry workers in Sackville, New Brunswick) were constructed as negative perceptions of past industry and acted against the construction of heritage memorialisation,<sup>21</sup> despite the presence of epidemiological evidence.<sup>22</sup> Mohammed found significant misperceptions of the impacts of industrial waste on the population of Sydney, Nova Scotia, a point affirmed by MacDonald in his conclusion that cultural elements (of Cape Breton musical heritage) were chosen deliberately to replace the negative environmental history of steel making in Sydney.<sup>23</sup> Wray and Stephenson note the continuity of capital-labour conflict even within deindustrialised communities in Cape Breton while Summerby-Murray explores these themes in post-industrial Sackville, New Brunswick, in terms of the replacement of collective memories of environmental damage from industry with a 'green', environmentally-positive marketing campaign that produces numerous contradictions between environmental realities and popular perception, reinforcing Tunbridge and Ashworth's concept of heritage dissonance.<sup>24</sup> Most recently, Holmes and Hollander have applied the concept of corporate social responsibility to environmentally-damaged deindustrialised landscapes in Maritime Canada (with case studies of the Sydney tar ponds and the redevelopment of abandoned rail lands in Moncton, New Brunswick), drawing similar conclusions on the challenges for environmental histories and cultural regeneration.<sup>25</sup> Many deindustrialised landscapes remain ignored in Maritime Canada, however, as a result of the failure of collective memory. For example, while not commodified as a spectacle, the abandoned slag heaps of a former steel mill in Londonderry, Nova Scotia, now in a reforested location, are eroded continually by an adjacent river (see Figure 1), leaching heavy metal contaminants into the environment and transporting these into the Bay of Fundy.<sup>26</sup> With the former worker population now deceased and the significance of this industrial past no longer part of local collective memory, there is little pressure for remediation, let alone a basis for local cultural regeneration.

The cultural consequences of the failure or selectivity of collective memory are equally problematic, particularly in terms of a politics of regeneration. In many cases, cultural identity (in the forms of work, community and cultural expression) related to industrialised landscapes and locations is built on negative experiences that past workers, former residents, contemporary visitors and municipal governments and tourism authorities have no wish to remember – or, more problematically, choose to remember in ways that ignore or subvert social processes involving gender relations and capital-labour relationships,



**Figure 1.** *Slag heap, Londonderry, Nova Scotia (Author)*

including the valorising of labour (see Figure 2) or the dominance of capital.<sup>27</sup> Regenerating cultural identity in a post-industrial society is thus fraught with challenges. Whose history are we remembering? Whose landscapes are we recreating? How do we deal with the difficult environmental and social issues of the past and create relevance for a contemporary sense of cultural identity? How do we intersect the difficulties of the industrial past with the desires for authenticity on the part of a visiting public? And what happens when the search for authenticity is overwhelmed by the desire for entertainment and spectacle in the landscape? Alternatively, what are our ethical responsibilities as researchers when communities are no longer interested (and indeed reject) the memory of the industrial past, preferring instead to convert a former thriving community to a poorly-managed assemblage of artifacts (see Figure 3). Regenerating cultural identity in Maritime Canada's post-industrial communities must contend with all of these issues.

Specifically for the visitor experiences of the sites analysed in the remainder of this essay, industrial heritage is necessarily presented as clean and visitor-friendly due to the impracticality of reproducing the often dirty and dangerous conditions that characterised the former industry as well as the need to conform to contemporary health and safety standards. As Barthel notes, industrialisation was a 'dirty, smelly, dangerous affair'.<sup>28</sup> This leaves managers



**Figure 2.** *Ironworker monument, Trenton, Nova Scotia (Author)*

of industrial heritage sites caught between the necessities of working with a deindustrialised landscape and visitors' desire for authenticity. In some cases, this is resolved by constructing fictitious landscapes that may or may not deliver a heritage experience but hint at it and commodify it; in other settings, original artifacts, equipment and physical structures, despite their decayed



**Figure 3.** *Memorial Park, Londonderry, Nova Scotia (Author)*

reality and origin in the industrial past, contribute to visitor disappointment. This tension is well-rehearsed in the literature on heritage landscapes, particularly in those regions of North America and Western Europe that witnessed rapid deindustrialisation in the 1960s through to the 1980s, as well as in the museum studies literature which also informs the case studies which follow. Little of this analysis has been applied to industrial heritage sites in Maritime Canada where a long period of deindustrialisation took place and where knowledge of the industrial past is shifting from lived experience to collective memory (and is being erased completely in some cases).

### **The industrial Maritimes**

The industrialisation of Maritime Canada through the nineteenth century was built on the back of primary product processing, drawing on the previous four centuries of European resource harvesting (notably in the coastal fishery, timber harvesting, and the fur trade) and the imprint of systematic and state-supported settler capitalism. With these concentrations on resource extraction (coal, iron ore, gypsum) and the prosecution of the fishery and timber resources, industry was necessarily dispersed by the late nineteenth century, retaining a strongly localised and even rural presence. The

mutually-reinforcing patterns of urban-industrial growth that occurred in many parts of northwest Europe and North America failed to gain sustaining traction in Maritime Canada, resulting in a truncated urban pattern. Halifax, Saint John and Moncton, to some extent, emerged as urban-industrial centres but primarily as trans-shipment points; the Trenton-Stellarton industrial complex was highly dependent on availability of local ore resources, as was industrial Sydney. McCann has noted the difficulties of urban places making the transition to sustaining urban-industrial growth while Wynn points to the considerable capital flight from Maritime Canada in the late nineteenth century despite early investment.<sup>29</sup> The decamping of the major regional banks to Montreal and Toronto in the two decades prior to World War I severely limited the availability of local venture capital. Coupled with a strong sense of individualism within the region's corporate entities (an individualism that remains today in the dominance of key families in the food processing industries, timber industry, fishery, telecommunications and petrochemical industries) and a lack of investment in new technologies, there was a long denial of the impacts of deindustrialisation on regional economies.<sup>30</sup> As McCann notes, there are very few examples where industry moved from processing of primary materials to secondary manufacture (Sydney, the Trenton-Stellarton complex, for example) and in most cases industrial success in the Maritimes involved small manufacturers in small to medium sized towns, heavily exposed to international markets, under-capitalised, conservative in the adoption of new technologies and heavily embedded in local communities in terms of ownership and attitude. While there were certainly many success stories,<sup>31</sup> for much of the twentieth century Maritime Canada suffered through a long slow industrial decline.<sup>32</sup> It has been argued elsewhere that this process continues to the present day in personalised landscapes and memory.<sup>33</sup>

The essay turns now to an analysis of visitor attitudes at several industrial heritage sites in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, ranging from shipbuilding sites, coal mines, grist mills, sawmills and industrial museums. The essay notes that visitor motivations are complex and reflect both the consumption of spectacle and the search for authentic experience, forcing managers of heritage landscapes into difficult and sometimes contradictory interpretive practices.

### **Representing industry as a form of cultural regeneration: 'But where's the steam?'**

Sites for this study were selected for the variety of industries as well as the diversity of contemporary approaches being taken to display the industrial past and manage the post-industrial present and future. For example, several sites were original locations with machinery operating at varying levels.



Others were museums on original sites which displayed artifacts and provided interpretation but made no pretence of having any operating industrial processes. One museum carried a vast array of industrial histories and had several working pieces of machinery but was not an original or authentic site itself – although it celebrated several surrounding industries. A further site made very little attempt to develop authenticity of former industrial processes but created a post-modernist landscape with referential elements, spectacle and a high level of public ‘consumption’. Table 1 categorises the particular sites. The origins and histories of each site explain important components of their intended contributions to industrial heritage, establishing their goals for the visitor experience and processes of cultural regeneration.

In nearly every case, unstructured interviews with site managers, directors and the originators of the industrial heritage site were carried out (in 2007–2009), seeking their views on the history of each development, the objectives of the site and the difficulties they faced in representing (and re-presenting) industrial heritage as a form of cultural identity. These discussions noted the significance of local and provincial political involvement, the use of industrial heritage as an economic redevelopment tool, the problems of engaging with local communities and the significant problems in attempting to provide a sense of authentic history in these landscapes. On this latter point, in some cases this involved being abandoned altogether, the site turning instead to the construction of landscapes as spectacle entertainment. This was reinforced in much of our visitor survey data, an analysis of which follows a brief description of each site.

### *Nova Scotia Museum of Industry*

Although it opened in 1995, the Nova Scotia Museum of Industry originated from discussions in 1975 between the Sobey family and the Nova Scotia Museum system. Owners of one of Canada’s largest grocery chains, the Sobey family has a history of significant philanthropy and interest in community building, as well as in the management of their diversified operations through the Empire Group of companies, headquartered in the small town of Stellarton (and still the home of the original Sobey’s ‘No. 1’ grocery store). The vision of the new museum was to extend beyond the then existing miners’ museum in Stellarton to celebrate the industrial and transport history of the province as a whole.<sup>34</sup> Although initially named the ‘Museum of Transport and Industry’, the transportation focus was eventually dropped so as to avoid confusion for visitors who were looking for more automobile history than the museum intended to provide. That said, the museum today contains not only a focus on industrial processes but also the contextualisation of these within the Nova Scotia economy, including significant displays on post-World War II technologies such as large-scale electrical generation and tyre manufacture.

**Table 1. Selected sites in the research study**

Site name	Location	Former industry	Type	Respondents (n)
Nova Scotia Museum of Industry	Stellarton, NS	Various but focus on coalmining and steel	Museum – not an original industrial site	20
Ritchie Wharf development	Miramichi, NB	Timber-processing and shipping	Waterfront development on original site but low authenticity	30
Green Park Shipbuilding Museum	Port Hill, PEI	Shipbuilding	Museum on original site. No active industry but authentic artifacts	11
Barrington Woollen Mill	Barrington, NS	Wool processing	Museum/factory on original site; some authentic operation	20*
Sutherland Steam Mill	Denmark, NS	Timber mill; slab wood & specialty lines in furniture, decorative moulding production etc	Museum/factory on original site; some authentic operation	20*
Balmoral Grist Mill	Balmoral Mills, NS	Grain milling	Museum/factory on original site; some authentic operation	20*
Springhill Miners Museum	Springhill, NS	Coal mine	Museum/factory on original site; some authentic operation	24
Campbell Carriage Factory	Sackville, NB	Carriage, sleigh manufacture; caskets	Museum/factory on original site; some authentic operation	n/a

\*Figure is combined for smaller Nova Scotia mills

The Canadian federal government under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney committed the bulk of the funding for the museum's construction (as part of a strategy for regional economic development and job creation as well as the political gains such a strategy implies) and the museum today plays an important role in commemorating the industrial heritage of coal mining and manufacturing in the immediate local region as well as for the province as a whole. It is clearly one of the flagship museums in the Nova Scotian system but the relationship can be one of considerable tension: many of the other museums in the system are small and under-funded, for example, and the museum director, Debra McNabb, notes that building connections with the local community is a continuing challenge and mandate – particularly when some members of the local community would rather have seen federal funds directed to a new hockey arena or a museum that focused solely on the industrial heritage of Pictou County. In building its credibility and contributing to cultural regeneration, the museum contends with both the long histories of coal mining and steel making in the region as well as the continuity of industry (pulp mills and a tyre manufacturing plant, for example) that demonstrates that industry is not only about heritage but also about existing employment and economies. The Nova Scotia Museum of Industry is at once a traditional museum, a local educational resource, an arts centre and a gathering place for the community. Debra McNabb notes that the facilities rental operation of the museum started after the local community wanted to use the museum space to hold the public inquiry into the Westray mine disaster of 1992 in Stellarton rather than in the larger but more distant city of Halifax.<sup>35</sup>

### *Ritchie Wharf*

Located on an original site of timber processing and shipment on the Miramichi River in northeastern New Brunswick, the Ritchie Wharf development nonetheless represents one of the most extreme examples in Maritime Canada of the post-industrial heritage landscape being constructed for consumption as a spectacle. Now part of the eleven site Miramichi Open River Ecomuseum (MORE), the history of the Ritchie Wharf development reflects the intersections of several levels of government and municipal management, all part of attempts to reinvigorate the Miramichi economy, an economy that had seen the progressive decline of shipbuilding, timber processing and other industry, as well as closure of the local Canadian armed forces base (see Figure 4).

In 1985, local politician Paul Dawson, a provincial cabinet minister, committed C\$5million to develop a shipbuilding museum. Although this grant was reduced to C\$3million, the mayor of Newcastle (one of the three municipalities, along with Chatham and Douglastown, that would eventually combine into the City of Miramichi), approached the president of the local historical society, Derek Burchill, to lead a committee comprised of



**Figure 4.** Historic waterfront display, Ritchie Wharf, Miramichi, New Brunswick (Author)

representatives from the town, local business interests and the provincial government to plan the construction of the shipbuilding museum.<sup>36</sup> Following a design by Daniel Glen and reflecting the committee's objective of avoiding a static museum piece, the development took the form of a waterfront boardwalk, comprising retail outlets, as well as a whimsical three-quarter scale sculpture of a ship's masts that mimics the earlier mooring of vessels at this waterfront during the heyday of the timber trade. The masts themselves were built in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, the location of a continued shipbuilding industry. Coupled with a children's playground and replica buildings that house small photographic displays and a new forge (that cannot be operated because it does not meet provincial health and safety standards), the 'post-industrial' site was completed by the mid-1990s and is the only site in the MORE that celebrates past industry on the Miramichi River. A further phase (with a C\$7million price-tag), will see the construction of an interpretive centre, funded in part by the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, a wing of the Canadian federal government. This site benefits from an objective to represent the wide range of eco-tourist sites on this part of the Miramichi River, linked by boat tour operators and including military heritage sites (such as adjacent Beaubears Island) as well as industrial heritage. Plans for the Ritchie Wharf site note the need to move beyond static representation



**Figure 5.** *Ritchie Wharf, Miramichi, New Brunswick (Author)*

of timber processing and shipbuilding and into experiential displays that will attract tourists to the site and region (see Figure 5).<sup>37</sup>

### ***Green Park Shipbuilding Museum***

Built on an authentic site, the Green Park Shipbuilding Museum is part of a larger representation of shipbuilding in Prince Edward Island and a celebration of a leading industrial family, the Yeos. The Yeo family home was purchased by the Prince Edward Island museum system in the 1950s and remains essentially unaltered. With various artifacts and buildings displaying shipbuilding processes, this museum has considerable potential to develop an authentic visitor experience and reinforce local (and Island) cultural identity. The modern museum display building houses artifacts and records reflecting the history of shipbuilding on Prince Edward Island as well as the key role of the Yeo family operating out of their Green Park site. Operating for only seventeen weeks each year and at some distance from the main tourist destinations, the museum faces continued difficulty in connecting with the local community and – as in the case of other examples in Maritime Canada – is supported by government as much because of its ability to provide local employment as because of its educational and historic value (see Figure 6).<sup>38</sup>



**Figure 6.** *Green Park Shipbuilding Museum, Prince Edward Island (Author)*

### ***Barrington Woollen Mill***

This small museum on Nova Scotia's South Shore displays a high level of authenticity and prides itself on the detail of its processes. Part of the wider Nova Scotia museums system, the mill continues to spin, weave and dye wool as it did in the late nineteenth century. Staff members are dressed in mid-late nineteenth-century period costume and have numerous connections to local families as well as being knowledgeable of process technologies, a key component of presenting an authentic experience to visitors. As with many other museums in the region, retail sales are important: this mill sells its own woollen yarns as well as being a distributor for other local producers.

### ***Balmoral Grist Mill and the Sutherland Steam Mill***

Essentially managed together (these sites share the same site manager and are only a few kilometres apart), both mills are examples of authentic industrial heritage that have been repurposed in the Nova Scotia museum system to promote small-scale, largely rural industry, as is the case with the Barrington Woollen Mill. At the Balmoral and Sutherland sites, the key focus is on process technologies rather than entertainment value. Educating the public about dominant technologies of the past (the use of water power, steam power, and other mill technologies) is the broad objective of both sites but this

quickly runs into significant management difficulties.<sup>39</sup> As recently as 2000 (for the Sutherland Steam Mill) and 2006 (for the Balmoral Grist Mill), these sites were fully operational and provided visitors with an authentic experience of water wheel technology, steam boiler power and sawmill technologies. With these technologies no longer meeting public safety standards, both mills struggle to maintain their presentation of authentic experiences to visitors, increasingly serving a clientele with antiquarian interests. While this speaks to a purity of focus rather than the consumption of spectacle found at other sites, the financial viability of these sites is increasingly difficult due to low visitor numbers and the rapid removal of awareness of these process technologies from local and regional collective memory.

### *Springhill Miners Museum*

The significance of coal mining to Nova Scotia and many other parts of Maritime Canada is summed up in the Springhill Miners Museum. As with other sites in this survey, the miners museum is located on an authentic site; indeed, until relatively recently, the tour involved a walk into a mine shaft, guided by a retired miner, and the opportunity to swing a pick axe at the coal face. This museum presents the approximately 120 years of active mining in Springhill, a town that is built on top of a series of mine shafts – and which has a history of mining disasters, notably the Springhill ‘bump’ of 1958. Similar to other Nova Scotia coal mining towns such as Stellarton, Trenton and New Glasgow and the more local small mining communities of River Hebert, Joggins and Macan, as well as coal mining locations such as Minto, New Brunswick, Springhill also resembles coal mining towns in other regions of Canada, the United States and Europe with the historical dominance of the mining economy and the significance of capital-labour relations.<sup>40</sup>

The museum itself includes a wide range of artifacts and documents, all of which emphasise process technologies as well as mining disasters. Importantly, the museum benefits from representing authentic local experience: visitors walk through a reconstructed wash house, don rubber boots and miners’ helmets, see original miners’ lamps and hear real stories. But this authentic experience for visitors faces challenges: there are few retired miners left to provide the original narrative and the journey down the mine has been discontinued because of rising water flooding the lower reaches of the former underground tour. As with other examples discussed in this essay, site managers face the dilemma of preserving authentic artifacts and experience versus creating a new set of interpretive displays that allow the visitor to consume a representation of past industry. This is particularly challenging for a town that has long promoted coal mining (in its marketing and municipal symbols) but which now seeks other uses and directions. The location of a federal prison in the town in the early 1960s, to provide local employment in specific response to the decline of coal mining, has been matched more recently with the

promotion of the arts (through the Anne Murray Centre) and the development of former mines as a source of geothermal heating for other industries and businesses.

### *The Campbell Carriage Factory*

This site dates back to the late 1840s and operated continuously for a century before being shuttered soon after World War II. Producing carriages, various forms of sleigh and sled, as well as caskets and other cabinetry, this factory catered primarily to a rural market but also produced high-end carriage bodies that in other large manufacturing settings would have been paired up with the growing automobile industry of the early twentieth century. Following the truncated industrial pattern found in other parts of Maritime Canada, this transition did not occur for the Campbell Carriage Factory. The closing of its doors in the late 1940s literally involved the downing of tools at the end of the work day – leaving *in situ* the daily evidence of process technologies that now gives this museum site a high degree of technological authenticity.

In the 1990s, the significance of this site for the technologies of carriage making was recognised in a community-based restoration project led by the Tantramar Heritage Trust. With painstaking, archaeological methods, the Campbell Carriage Factory has been restored as a centre for the exploration of woodworking technologies, the use of machine patterns and the restoration of tools and equipment that tell of bygone rural industry. Operated seasonally as a museum and as a site for community engagement in industrial heritage of Sackville, New Brunswick, a town with shipbuilding, foundry and manufacturing history, the Campbell Carriage Factory has been a significant source of local cultural regeneration as well as a site celebrating technological change.

Our surveys in 2008 and 2009 asked 106 visitors from these sites to respond to a set of questions that assessed their motivation for visiting the industrial site and sought their opinions on what they found. The survey was developed after discussion with museum managers in the Nova Scotia Museum system including the system director Stephanie Smith and also reflected a review of the museum studies literature, particularly the work of John Falk and Beverley Sheppard on typologies of visitor motivation.<sup>41</sup> Drawing on Falk and Dierking's earlier work on visitor identity, Falk and Sheppard highlighted five identities and associated motivations for visitors: The Explorer, The Facilitator, The Professional/Hobbyist, The Experience Seeker, and The Spiritual Pilgrim.<sup>42</sup> While our survey responses from these sites in Maritime Canada are not a complete fit with these projected identities, the results which follow in the rest of this essay suggest a general conformity. Interestingly, the museum studies literature frequently embraces this discussion from the other direction: how to manage (and perhaps even manipulate?) visitors (as 'clients, guests, strangers') or how to be responsive to perceptions of visitor experience.<sup>43</sup> Our approach was to gauge visitor response and get their reactions.



At the outset, respondents were told that the survey sought their attitudes as visitors to heritage sites ‘based on past industries’. Respondents were advised that we wanted to find out why they were visiting and what they hoped to gain from the experience; in addition, we wanted to better understand the significance of industrial heritage for tourism and related economic and community development. Visitors were asked to respond on a standard five-level Likert Scale indicating a range of agreement or disagreement with statements. These statements addressed their expectations of the industrial heritage site in six areas, with additional questions on their age range and place of residence. There was also ample opportunity to provide additional commentary at the end of the survey. The phrase ‘But where’s the steam?’ that heads this section of the essay actually comes from a survey respondent expressing disappointment at the lack of operation of the Sutherland Steam Mill.

The first set of statements asked respondents to rate the post-industrial site on its ability to provide education, entertainment and family fun. We were particularly interested in whether respondents would identify these as motivations, given Falk and Sheppard’s 2006 typology. For all sites, in aggregate, visitors overwhelmingly identified entertainment as a key motivation for their visit, with 91 percent either agreeing or strongly agreeing; 95 percent of respondents saw their visit as educational with 79 percent identifying providing family fun as a motivator. We suspect that this lower figure was influenced in part by parents dragging children along to the ‘museum’ – and on several occasions we elected either to not approach some families who were clearly not in the mood to be surveyed or who were obviously more intent on finding ice cream for cranky kids on a hot summer’s day than completing a survey. But the variability between sites was also an influence here: lower agreement with ‘family fun’ as a motivator was found at the more specialised sites (such as the mills, carriage factory and mine museum) which projected an image of seriousness of purpose and a focus on past industrial technologies and generated responses in the 55 to 75 percent range. These responses were lower than the more family-oriented sites – e.g. 80 percent at the Nova Scotia Museum of Industry and 94 percent at the Ritchie Wharf site – although a respondent at the Ritchie Wharf site insisted that ‘the teenagers won’t enjoy it as much: they need an internet café with CD burners and a skate park’ (see Figure 7).

Our next set of questions asked visitors about their attitudes towards historical accuracy, their sense of the authenticity of the industrial site and whether it provided them with a sense of the various social, economic and political issues that they were expecting to find. One question in particular asked whether the site represented any of the labour, gender, or environmental issues associated with the industry. Exploring these latter issues was a much lower motivation for visitors although 90 percent in aggregate either agreed or strongly agreed that the site provided an ‘authentic and accurate representation of history’. When broken out into specific sites, however, there was much more variation.



**Figure 7.** *Nova Scotia Museum of Industry, Stellarton, Nova Scotia. Note the 'Hands on Fun' banner at left (Author)*

For the clearly original sites such as the mill and shipbuilding museums and the Springhill Miners' Museum, between 90 and 100 percent of respondents supported the statement about authenticity and accuracy and the majority of respondents 'strongly agreed'. For the Museum of Industry, the majority of respondents 'agreed' with the statement. For the Ritchie Wharf development, only 50 percent agreed with the statement; 23 percent strongly agreed, but 17 percent actually disagreed that the site provided any authenticity and were cognisant that the site was largely a fabrication. A similar pattern emerged for responses on the capacity of the site to showcase 'how people had lived and worked'. The obviously original mill and mine sites and the Museum of Industry saw general agreement with the statement but the Ritchie Wharf site drew responses where 43 percent disagreed.

A site's ability to address labour, gender and environmental issues within past industry strengthened this division: 53 percent of respondents from the Ritchie Wharf site were either neutral or disagreed that the site provided any information on these issues; 73 percent of respondents at Green Park were either neutral or disagreed; and, surprisingly given its strong focus on the social politics of the mine disaster of 1958, the Springhill Miners' Museum saw 38 percent of respondents who were either neutral or disagreed that

the site addressed any of the labour, gender or environmental issues of the industry. One respondent felt that the commemorative display in Springhill did not go very far in addressing the ways in which women and families supported the mining operation and mining accidents. Other comments from survey respondents tempered these data somewhat with some respondents commenting specifically on the authenticity of the site and noting its role in addressing labour and gender issues. For example, visitors to the Barrington Woollen Mill commented on the gender divisions within the wool industry, noting that the mill displayed work for women only (and ignored the male domination of sheep raising in the area); a female respondent at the Museum of Industry suggested that a stronger focus on gender issues would attract more visitors.

We also surveyed respondents on their specific reason for visiting the site. Earlier discussions with site managers had led us to believe that strong family connections to past industries (or specific sites) as well as antiquarian interests in past industrial technologies and machineries were key motivators for visitors – reinforcing the expectations of Falk’s professional/hobbyist identity. Our respondents confirmed these expectations: visitors to the mill, mine and carriage museums overwhelmingly (95 percent) identified a fascination with past industrial technologies: ‘I felt a strong link between past and current technologies’, said one respondent; ‘It’s very important to preserve past technologies and original industrial sites’, said another.

This ‘hobbyist’ motivation was reinforced by strong family connections. Just over 40 percent of aggregate responses for all sites reported a family connection to the site, its location or its subject matter. This varied widely, depending on the home locations of visitors and the length of time since the closure of the industry. For example, only 22 percent of visitors to the Campbell Carriage Factory reported family connections while over 40 percent of visitors to the Museum of Industry and the smaller mills reported family connections. We had expected the miners’ museum to generate strong family associations but these were not borne out in the quantitative data. However, the survey recorded comments from all locations (including the miners’ museum) that supported the importance of family connections for visitors, part of a process of defining connection and cultural identity. These comments ranged from specific examples (‘My grandfather did the wheel at the Barrington Woollen Mill’; ‘My grandfather passed in the bump of “58”’; ‘My husband worked in the steam sawmilling industry’; ‘I worked in the steel mill myself’; and ‘My brother was in the Westray mine just before it exploded’) to more general comments about the need to educate children about the work of their relatives in former industries: ‘We have a family connection in the area’ and ‘We need to show more of the past to future generations’. These many comments noting family members who had worked in the mines, here or elsewhere, about the need to educate present generations about the work and life of former family

members, and the references to family tragedies were key elements of the way in which these sites functioned to create and reinforce cultural identity, for local populations and more distant visitors alike. And occasionally there were surprises: one family discovered a picture of a grandmother and realised there was a family association with coal mining in Stellarton: 'We didn't know about this connection until we arrived and our niece saw a photograph of her grandmother on the wall'.

Central to our discussion of authenticity were visitor attitudes to the former operations of these sites and the extent to which visitors reflect the 'experience seeker' and 'spiritual pilgrim' categories of Falk and Sheppard's typology. It is here that we encountered examples of 'visitor disappointment'. Our survey statements about the importance of past industrial technologies, the search for authenticity (as expressed through symbols, images and artifacts), and a general statement about the relationship between spectacle and historic preservation generated a number of responses that were critical of a site's ability to be authentic and provide an appropriate experience, even if it was clear that the site was original. Overall, respondents provided 85 to 90 percent agreement that the site was authentic in terms of its broad history; only 62 percent overall perceived these sites to be representing social, labour, environmental and gender issues accurately. The desire for authentic experience was reinforced in people's responses to the statements but also in highly critical comments about specific sites. These included dissatisfaction that there was no actual shipbuilding happening at the Green Park site ('I wanted to see some boat building'), that the Balmoral Grist Mill was advertised as being in operation but never seemed to be ('Had just been to Balmoral yesterday; very disappointed that it wasn't running'), to questions as to why the Sutherland Steam Mill was not fired up with an operating saw mill ('But where's the steam?'), to more positive comments (in the case of the Museum of Industry) that it was good to see 'stuff working'. (The irony that the 'stuff working' was actually an artificial construction was generally lost on respondents although this is clearly identified in the displays and was a topic of our discussions with museum managers both locally and at the provincial level.)

The Ritchie Wharf site provided something of an exception to these responses. There was little evidence of visitor disappointment, largely because the representation of past industry had never set out (at least in the present early stage of the development) to depict any accurate sense of the past industrial landscape. One respondent suggested that this site was more about a 'whimsical view of history' and never suspected that there was actually a reality that literally underpinned the site. 'Perhaps tourists might expect more history but community use is not for history', said a further respondent. This disconnection between heritage managers, site developers and the public could become increasingly problematic in this case; presently, the site is seen to be a community meeting place, a site for tourism and retail, dressed

up in post-modernist ship's masts and a playground. One respondent noted that it was 'the best mistake the city ever made' in that the mistaken effort to promote industrial heritage had actually turned into a vibrant community space, a meeting place for seniors and 'a place to enjoy the view and the water'. Without the expectation of sawmilling, shipbuilding, timber shipping, industrial smoke, difficult labour relations and an environmental legacy being built into the landscape, perhaps there is nothing to get disappointed about.

### **Conclusions: smoke, steam and heritage management**

The analysis presented in this essay raises interesting questions about the nature of authenticity in the landscapes depicting industrial heritage and the manner in which site visitors are engaging in forms of cultural regeneration. Smoke and steam are clearly identified with the heyday of past industries and function as a proxy for visitors' expectations of site authenticity. This reflects visitors' expectations of the past, founded on images and real examples that are in their collective consciousness. Dirt, noise, environmental pollution are also in this expectation but it is clear that site managers have worked hard to downplay these negative environmental issues or to contain them in ways that are appropriate for contemporary standards of health and safety. Visiting an industrial heritage site is not intended to be an extreme sport where one is exposed to health risk. And yet, visitors question the lack of industrial operation and seek to consume this as part of their experience; they are seeking a consumptive spectacle from the landscape (as well as the more obvious educational and professional/hobbyist results identified by Falk and Sheppard).

In terms of the value of industrial heritage as a form of cultural regeneration in Maritime Canada, our results are mixed. There is no doubt of the importance of the search for authentic experience and the need for visitors to believe that they are reinforcing their cultural identity in their visits. The large number of references in the survey data to family connections demonstrate this as well as the search for real technologies and the desire to see these in operation – however problematic this may be. On the other hand, it is very clear from these examples that industrial heritage has significant capacity to be manipulated and constructed as a form of heritage for public consumption. The desire for entertainment is particularly high, whether or not this has an authentic basis in the industrial site itself. There are no simple solutions for managers here; to get visitors in the door they must provide an accessible experience and work with their market – and yet, there is considerable danger of duplicity, of the creation of a spectacle that simply plays to an audience's need to be entertained. We need to be cautious; therefore, as we consider the role industrial heritage is playing in the construction of cultural identity in the de-industrialised landscapes of Maritime Canada. The key questions of whose history is being presented in the heritage landscape of these sites

remains highly problematic, especially as collective memories of real experiences of labour, gender and environmental legacy are replaced by a landscape of consumption and spectacle.

The examples analysed here reinforce many of the findings in the literature on deindustrialised landscapes outlined at the beginning of this essay, including the tensions between modern and post-modern landscapes, the sanitisation of the past and the politics of using heritage (in any form) as a means of cultural regeneration. By linking these themes to approaches in the museum studies literature, this essay demonstrates the complexity and opportunity inherent in the use of industrial heritage to regenerate cultural identity in local communities, situating Maritime Canada within a wider field of scholarly study and policy application.

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