INTERPRETING A PAST
Presenting Gender History
at Living History sites in Ontario

By

Pamela Kirsten Peacock

A thesis submitted to the Department of History
in conformity with the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario, Canada
September 2011

© Pamela Kirsten Peacock, September 2011
Abstract

Drawing upon close observation of site practices, interviews, and visitor surveys, this project analyses the programming offered at historic sites, highlighting the aspects of history that are omitted or treated superficially. The case studies conducted at Fort Henry, Upper Canada Village, and Fort William demonstrate that women’s and gender histories continue to be minimized, stereotyped, and segregated. Each site selectively communicates information about the past.

The commemoration and preservation of the past and the tourism industry have been intricately connected in Ontario throughout the twentieth century. Historic sites have been directed by the dual goals of educating the public about a national past and of attracting visitors and revenues. As Ian McKay and Robin Bates have articulated, the resulting tourism/history is a narrative less interested in verity than in saleability. Though the management of historic sites have not jettisoned the concept of accuracy, broadening the picture of the past presented to be ‘more accurate’ by addressing such issues as courtship, birth control, or marital separation is often not as high a priority as increasing visitor numbers. The costs, financial and otherwise, of making changes to the traditional fare at historic sites are considered undesirable.

Sites are unprepared to invest in changes to collections or programming unless it can be shown that the investment will pay dividends. The perpetuation of traditional political and economic narratives continues also because of the perception that this appeals to and pleases visitors. Sites aim to give visitors what they want and to entertain them in order to secure repeat patronage. Women’s history and gender history are considered, somewhat contradictorily, too controversial and too mundane to garner the interest of visitors. Despite being trusted by a majority of Canadians as trustworthy
sources of history, historic sites are letting down their constituents by omitting significant aspects and concerns of daily life in their narratives.
Acknowledgements

There are many people who facilitated this project, and my sanity, along the way. I am pleased to have this opportunity to recognize their contributions.

I am indebted to my co-supervisors, Dr. Karen Dubinsky and Dr. Caroline-Isabelle Caron for their guidance, motivation, insights, and editorial comments. Thank you for improving my scholarship with your critical eyes, thought provoking questions, and general genius. I would also like to thank Dr. Jane Errington for her support and critical commentary along the long road of this PhD. Your potluck dinners always provided the perfect amount of inspiration and relaxation to reenergize me during this process. I would also like to extend my thanks to my committee members, Dr. Cecilia Morgan, Dr. Brian Osborne, Dr. Ian Mckay, and Dr. Jane Errington. Their critical reading of my work helped me to clarify concepts and arguments. Any lingering mistakes are, of course, my responsibility alone.

This project could not have been completed without the gracious cooperation of the historic sites under study. My deepest thanks are extended to the seniors of the Fort Henry Guard of 2008, Crystal Legros of Fort William, and Bruce Henbest of Upper Canada Village for facilitating my visits and helping to arrange interviews. I am also extremely grateful to all members of management and staff at each site who bore with my incessant eavesdropping on their interpretation and my persistent questions. Without the gift of your knowledge and experience this dissertation could not have been completed.

I would also like to thank the archivists at the National Library and Archives of Canada and the Archives of Ontario who helped facilitate my research. Special recognition should be made to the members of the Information and Privacy unit at the
Archives of Ontario who tirelessly looked over metres of onion-skin documents to ensure I could access all the files I needed.

I am extremely grateful to have been recognized with the Joseph Leslie Engler Dissertation Fellowship in Canadian History, The Arthur and Evelyn Lower Graduate Fellowship in Canadian History, the R.S. McLaughlin Fellowship, and the Dean’s Travel Grant for Doctoral Field Research through Queen’s University. Without this generous funding the extent of my research and time at each historic site would have been extremely limited.

Thank you to all of the graduate students of the history department 2006-2011 for inspiring me with your own research, for challenging me to think differently about my project, and for providing ‘good-times’ when sitting at a desk for another minute was hard to contemplate. Shout outs to Marisha Caswell, Kelly Bennett, Danyal Martin, Caralee Daigle, Carolyn Harris, Claire Cookson-Hills, Maria Moncur, Steph Jowett, and Samantha Sandassie, for listening to me gripe about marking, for Girls-Night-Out dinners, and for making me laugh. My appreciation to Steph, Caralee, Kyle Franz, Matt Trudgen, and Rankin Sherling for making sure history students got involved in intramurals. GHSAers – thanks for putting up with me and for keeping all of us disparate years/fields in contact! To my fellow Teaching Fellows for History 124 and 122 thanks for helping me become a better (I hope!) teacher. Finally, my gratitude to Eleanor Belshaw-Hauff, Madelaine Morrison, and Andrea Lee for hosting me during my travels to Toronto and Ottawa – thanks ladies!

Over the past five years far too many people have heard me describe, and complain, about my research. My gratitude to the Sunset Girls for always listening. I am so lucky to have friends like you! Much love always to Julia (Duinker) White, Lauren
(Reid) Anderson, Kelly (O’Neill) Patrick, Christie (Malecki) Martin, and Lisa (McLelland) Emke, and to your families. I am also thankful to call Meagan (Irvine) Troop and Mary (Harwood) MacDonald long-time friends – thanks for your support throughout the years.

    Thank you, thank you, thank you to all the ladies at pick-up basketball and to all who embraced their inner grad student/geriatric on the Old Biddies intramural team. You provided a MUCH needed escape from academics, helped me improve my fitness and my game, saved my sanity with dinners at the QP and the Grad Club, and have become, I’m sure, lifelong friends. Hugs to Titia, Jennifer, Ryley, Jordan, Christine, Amy, Mandy, Vi, Elaine, Erin, Andrea, Arlinda, Erica, Larissa, Gen, Emma, Amanda, Emily, Lauren, Hilary, Chloe, Ruby, Laura, Rebecca, Vicki, Heather, Ange, Jess, and Johanna. Old Biddies on three…

    No acknowledgement would be complete without recognizing the enormous debt of gratitude I owe my family. Thank you to my mom and dad, Diane and Gary, for instilling me with the values of hard-work and perseverance, for teaching me to value knowledge and debate, and for providing me a most comfortable home during this long process. Thank you for reading my chapters even though you’d already heard me talk about them for months. Thank you Mom and Dad, and also to my siblings, Heather and Alex, and to my grandparents, two of whom did not get to watch me undertake this process, for unconditional support. I hope this work makes you proud of me.
# Table of Contents

Abstract.......................................................................................................................... i
Acknowledgements................................................................................................. iii
Table of Contents....................................................................................................... vi
List of Illustrations..................................................................................................... vii
Abbreviations............................................................................................................. ix

Chapter One: Introduction.
“Shrines to the Good Old Days”: Searching for a Past at Historic Sites....................... 1

Chapter Two.
Cashing in on History: Tourism and historic site development in Canada and Ontario... 54

Chapter Three.
“As long as it brings in visitors”: The Fort Henry Guard, Domestic Interpreters and the
Representation of the Past at Fort Henry................................................................. 114

Chapter Four.
“Little Stories of Domestic Life”: Making history at Upper Canada Village............. 180

Chapter Five.
“Here to entertain people”: Reenacting the Fur Trade at Fort William.................... 243

Chapter Six.
Conclusion.................................................................................................................. 311

Bibliography............................................................................................................... 320

Appendices:

A – Note on Sources.................................................................................................... 345

B – Selection from the Standing Orders of the Royal Canadian Rifles, 1861,
“Arrangement of Married Men’s Rooms”................................................................. 361

C - Fort Henry National Historic Site Commemorative Integrity Statement............ 362
List of Illustrations

2.1 Plan of Fort Henry, c. 1830s. 113
2.2 Portion of a sketch of Fort William by Lt. Irvine, 1811 113
3.1 Map of Fort Henry National Historic Site [FH]. 174
3.2 The Colour Party and Drill Squad march on to the Parade Square during a Sunset Ceremony, summer 2003, FH. 175
3.3 Women at Fort Henry. 176
3.4 Married Quarters, FH, c.2000. 177
3.5 Photograph of an interpretive panel at Fort Henry depicting interpreters at work in the Married Quarters. 177
3.6 Modern day representation of military NCOs (rear) and Officers (seated) - Guard Senior’s Photo 2003, FH. 178
3.7 Captain’s Quarters, Officers’ Wing, FH. 178
3.8 Barrack Room – Museum, FH. 179
4.1 Map of Upper Canada Village. 234
4.2 The brides and grooms from the four wedding ceremonies at Upper Canada Village, summer 2009. 235
4.3 An interpreter in the Physician’s home displays the forceps (left) and the vectus (right), instruments used during childbirth, UCV. 236
4.4 The printer’s wife and daughter work at binding books (left), while the Cabinet Maker oversees his two young apprentices (right), UCV. 236
4.5 The Tenant farmer and his wife sit down to afternoon tea, UCV. 237
4.6 The Tenant farmer’s wife cooks biscuits (left), while Mrs. Loucks shows off what she is baking in the oven, UCV. 238
4.7 An interpreter demonstrates how to churn butter in the Louck’s summer kitchen, UCV. 238
4.8 Visitors try their hand at milking, UCV. 238
4.9 An interpreter spins at McDiarmid House, UCV.

4.10 An interpreter works on a quilt in the Ross farm house, UCV.

4.11 The tenant farmer’s wife instructs a visiting girl in how to do the laundry (left). The washboard and tub are on display in the tenant farm kitchen (right).

4.12 The printer’s wife demonstrates some type (left), and Mrs. Cryslar works at the family’s General Store (right), UCV.

4.13 Women at work for pay, UCV.

4.14 Middle Class residences of the Village help to show the hierarchical nature of society.

4.15 Amongst the working class there was a hierarchy as well, indicated in part by the separation of shop and home, UCV.

4.16 The Broom-maker and Shoe-maker are on the lower end of the working-class spectrum, working out of their one room homes, UCV.

5.1 Orientation Map at Fort William Historical Park [FWHP].

5.2 The Voyageur encampment outside of Fort William’s palisade.

5.3 Mr. McKenzie leads a toast during “The Arrival” dramatization, FWHP.

5.4 Mr. Taitt restrains the drunken smith as Doctor McLoughlin orders the insolent man to be sent to the gaol in the dramatization of “The Arrest,” FWHP.

5.5 The tradesman receives a beaded bag as a betrothal gift and in return gives the Aboriginal woman and her people a gun, FWHP.

5.6 Material Culture of Family Life, FWHP.

5.7 The arriving partner and his wife join the procession to the Great Hall to close “The Arrival” dramatization, FWHP.

5.8 Women at Work at Fort William.
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ALHFAM</td>
<td>Association for Living History, Farms and Agricultural Museums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BVT</td>
<td>Bourgeois-Voyageur-Tour Guide unit (Fort William)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPR</td>
<td>Canadian Pacific Railway</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS</td>
<td>Commemorative Integrity Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DND</td>
<td>Department of National Defence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FH</td>
<td>Fort Henry National Historic Site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FWHP</td>
<td>Fort William Historical Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HSMB</td>
<td>Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBC</td>
<td>Hudson’s Bay Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAC</td>
<td>Library and Archives of Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPB</td>
<td>National Parks Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWC</td>
<td>North West Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OHS</td>
<td>Ontario Historical Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ON-SLDC</td>
<td>Ontario-St. Lawrence Development Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAO</td>
<td>Provincial Archives of Ontario</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHAB</td>
<td>Provincial Historical Advisory Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUA</td>
<td>Queen’s University Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RCRR</td>
<td>Royal Canadian Rifle Regiment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCV</td>
<td>Upper Canada Village</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One

Introduction

“Shrines to the Good Old Days”\(^1\): Searching for a Past at Historic Sites

In the summer of 2003 a female interpreter at Fort Henry National Historic Site held the rank of guiding sergeant. In her fourth year working at the site she was considered a ‘senior’ in the Fort Henry Guard, the interpretive unit on site. She had some responsibility for training staff to lead tours and programming, evaluating performance, and overseeing safety on gun firings. One of a handful of female interpreters who had achieved a senior rank since females entered the Guard in 1993, and one of three female seniors in 2003, this interpreter took pride in her position yet felt like she had to work hard to prove that it was deserved. When she was asked to discard her sergeant’s uniform for the dress of an officer’s wife in order to run a fifteen minute program for visitors she was frustrated, believing that this change of role, however temporary, removed some of her authority among the Guard. The first time she put on the hoop skirt and bonnet that summer and stepped out of the changing room she felt as though other interpreters enjoyed seeing her demotion. Her frustration was compounded by the fact that this perceived removal of authority seemed to have little purpose since the program offering gathered little public interest.

In hindsight, I am incredibly embarrassed by my petty reaction to wearing the officer’s wife costume. I also realize that I likely imagined the jeering reaction from staff. My belief at the time, however, that interpreting the life of an officer’s wife was somehow less impressive or even demeaning for females ‘with rank’ in the Guard, is

\(^1\) This phrase is borrowed from Thomas Schlereth, “It Wasn’t that Simple,” *Museum News* 56 n.3 (1978): 37-40.
reflective of larger values of the site and is a sentiment that continues to be found in comments by the female staff in 2008. This experience is one among many that motivates this project. It raises numerous questions about how women are represented at historic sites, what factors motivate and affect how management and staff enact this representation, and what history visitors engage with during their visits.

These are particularly salient questions because historic sites are an important way that the public engages with history following primary and secondary education. Major tourist attractions, historic sites attract thousands of national and international visitors each year and educate them about defining events and values from Canada’s past and, by extension, for its present. As a predominant vehicle for communicating the past to the public it is important to question what past is being presented.

Thanks to national surveys on how people use the past and understand it in their daily lives, we know that Canadians and Americans trust museums to present the past and that they visit museums in high numbers. Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen’s study of the uses of the past in American life found that Americans believed museums to be extremely trustworthy sources of history, with 50% of their sample ranking museums a

---

nine or ten out of ten for trustworthiness. The Canadians and Their Pasts project found similar results. Results based on 2000 telephone surveys indicate that 50% of respondents visited a historic site and 44% a museum in the past year and, like the U.S. study, that museums and historic sites are considered very trustworthy by a vast majority of people. Yet, focus groups with museum visitors show that all is not perfect at our museums and historic sites. Participants voiced concerns over the inclusiveness of museums, their ability to represent diverse communities and, relatedly, the possibility of finding themselves and their histories in representations of the past. Can women find historical representations of themselves in Ontario’s historic sites? And does the history they find merit their trust?

The surveys also showed that respondents were as much, if not more, engaged with their personal, family histories than with a national narrative of the past. 86% of Canadian respondents were either very or somewhat interested in Canada’s past, and 90% were very or somewhat interested in their families’ past. Likewise, U.S. respondents most often related to and cared about history that related directly to their own experience, for example family genealogies. They consistently returned, however, to more nationalist

---

4 Begun in 2006 and based on 2000 telephone interviews equally sampled from across five geographic divisions of Canada, as well as sub-samples of First Nations, Acadian, and urban peoples, the project sought information on Canadian’s interest in the past, their engagement with it, what they consider trustworthy sources of the past, and the importance given to various pasts.
5 Margaret Conrad, Jocelyn Létourneau, David Northrup, “Canadians and Their Pasts: An exploration in Historical Consciousness,” The Public Historian 31 n.1 (2009): 31; Gerald Friesen, Del Muise, and David Northrup, “Variations on the Theme of Remembering: A national survey of how Canadians use the past,” Journal of the CHA 20 n.1 (2009): 239, 241; Del Muise, “Canadians and Their Pasts,” Acadiensis 37 n.1 (2008): 96-97. It should be noted that these sources vary minutely in the numbers given for responses to historic site and museum visitorship. I have used Conrad et al.’s numbers in text, while Friesen et al. indicate that 43% had visited museums and 49% had visited historic sites. According to Muise, museums and historic sites “both scored in the 90 per cent range for ‘very or somewhat trustworthy’ and over 60 per cent in the ‘very trustworthy’ category.”
7 Peter Sexias, “Surveys don’t reflect interest in history,” The Vancouver Sun, 2 July 2008, A11.
rhetoric when identifying what history is important for people to know.\(^8\) This is significant and museums should take note. Typically invested in representing great moments in the development of a nation or region, museums would benefit from considering how to increase the ways in which people might identify personally with the past represented. Considering the concern voiced in focus groups over finding oneself in museums, the time to reflect on practices is now. Will visitors find the experiences of their great-grandmothers at historic sites? Will they see representations of the familial divisions of labour, of courtship and marriage, and of disputes and conflict, or do our historic sites focus mainly on more abstract notions of national development?

My research undertaken at three sites across Ontario reveals that historic sites are representing female experience, yet that this experience is often minimized, stereotypical, or segregated. Although members of management often have the best intentions to present an as-up-to-date, accurate version of the past as possible, structural, organizational, and societal demands and expectations can hinder their ability to change the interpretive messages of a site.

Historic sites have a tendency to present highly selective, often superficial, versions of the past that seek to provide a baseline of information that any visitor may understand and that aim to perpetuate nationalist values. The sites support and entrench dominant myths about our forebears, perpetuating the tropes of hard work and progress, of connections to the land and nature, and of British roots and traditions. Though these myths have some basis in fact, their dominance in representations of the past occludes the diversity and nuances of past experiences. Created years ago, before social pressures that

\(^8\) Though three times more people identified family history as more important to them than national history, when asked what history children should know “almost twice as many respondents chose U.S. history as chose family history.” See Rosenzweig and Thelen, *Presence of the Past*, 124, 128.
have insisted that narratives recognize the experience of racialized peoples, women, and all social classes, our founding myths heroicize men and are based fundamentally on male actions and decisions. Where women are present in our founding myths they are there to support men. Though historians (among many others) have actively sought to redress this imbalance since the 1970s, historic sites have been slow and inconsistent in their attempts to incorporate ‘new’ understandings of the past into their presentations.

To many, the cost of changing the representation of the past, of challenging national myths, at historic sites is deemed too high. On the one hand, the support of traditional masculine historical myths is often built into the very structure of the site itself. In many cases developed before the 1960s, the collections and buildings of a substantial number of historic sites reflect the priorities and understandings of their era. The financial cost of obtaining new objects and new buildings, of redecorating rooms, and retraining staff to present versions of the past that reflect more recent scholarship, is often considered prohibitive by managers. On the other hand, the perpetuation of myths continues also because of the perception that they appeal to and please visitors. The cost of challenging myths, of not meeting visitor expectations, is feared to be the loss of patronage, with serious financial repercussions for the site and the government bodies that administer them. As such, sites do not always prioritize challenging visitors to think critically about assumptions of the past.

This thesis as a whole undertakes an analysis of the representation of gendered histories at historic sites. Before proceeding to the case studies I will discuss the role the past plays in the present. Why do we choose to commemorate certain pasts? To contextualize current site practices I will explore how and why museums and living history sites have developed and changed over time. Studies that have analyzed how
museums have diversified their representations to be more inclusive of race, class, and gender have influenced my methodology and case-study approach, providing important categories and frames of investigation.

Finding a Past: Memory, History, Heritage, and Museums

According to David Lowenthal, humans seek to know the past because it seems infinitely more concrete than the future. The remains of the past that we see around us provide convincing proof that the past really happened. We believe the past is fixed because it is over, and this fixity promises stability and security. By making links between the present and the past we validate present actions and attitudes and make the ‘new’ seem familiar, find cautionary tales to guide us, and construct our identities upon foundations of times-gone-by. Our firm trust in the past rests on our belief in our memories, material traces, histories, and heritage. Yet, as Lowenthal argues, what survives as the past is not the past at all, but rather “the past as residually preserved in the present.” Despite our fervent attempts to convince ourselves that the past is over and unchangeable, our memories, histories and collection practices continually alter and construct the past to suit present needs.

We are surrounded by tangible traces left ‘forward’ from the past that exist both of the past and the present. We understand these relics to signify the existence of the past; their tangibility and immediacy bring the past into the present and make it easier to believe in. Surrounding us in the form of old buildings, antique furniture, old roadways,

---


and landscapes, to name but a few, relics are easily accessible and able to inform all members of the public.\textsuperscript{11} Whether the public is informed ‘correctly’ is, of course, another question entirely. A fundamental purpose of museums is the collection and preservation of artifacts to be displayed for the public. The expanse of the collections housed in museums, however, is only a minute portion of the objects from the past that might be found in the world. Museums are selective in their collecting habits and their choices about what to collect and how to display it mediates the knowledge of the past visitors gain through interaction with the artifacts.

Our memories constitute another way that we know the past. Inherently personal, our individual memories are constantly in doubt because they are unique and ultimately unverifiable.\textsuperscript{12} We seek corroboration from the collective, revising our memories so that they might be supported by others. Maurice Halbwachs, the preeminent scholar of collective memory, argued that individuals make sense of their memories only in the context of a group that provides the social framework for remembering; without these frameworks memory has no meaning. He writes, “[w]e can understand each memory as it occurs in individual thought only if we locate each within the thought of the corresponding group.”\textsuperscript{13} Remembering requires the articulation of memories across a group, through conversation, movement, or ritual.\textsuperscript{14} Each group has its own perspective

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 238-245.  
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 196.  
and logic that members must adopt in order to recall memories, thus individual memory is reshaped to fit the framework of the group. The frameworks of collective memory enable a reconstruction of the past but in so doing inevitably distort the past. As Halbwachs argues,

when reflection begins to operate, when instead of letting the past recur, we reconstruct it through an effort of reasoning, what happens is that we distort the past, because we wish to introduce greater coherence. It is then reason or intelligence that chooses among the store of recollections, eliminates some of them, and arranges the others according to an order conforming with our ideas of the moment. 15

Further, Halbwachs asserts that the past is not preserved but is rather “reconstructed on the basis of the present.” 16 Influenced by present needs, groups alter and revise the past through strategies of forgetting, omitting, fabricating, exaggerating, blaming, and framing. 17 In constructing memories and understandings of the past, individuals must select between multiple interpretations of the past.

In any society there are a number of groups contesting memory and the meaning of the past. Individuals participate in multiple mnemonic groups - family, occupational, religious, ethnic, political, national, etc. 18 As a result, individuals must navigate multiple articulations of the past and may internalize parts or wholes of different interpretations. Irwin-Zarecka proposes the concept of ‘framing’ to understand how certain ‘texts’ are given importance and how limits to ‘textual’ readings are set. The official, or national,

15 Halbwachs, Collective Memory, 183. See also 38, 47, 51.
16 Ibid., pp. 39-40. Lowenthal similarly notes that, “[t]he prime function of memory, then, is not to preserve the past but to adapt it so as to enrich and manipulate the present.” Lowenthal, Foreign Country, 210.
frame does not define one interpretation, or memory, as correct but rather defines a range of acceptability within which individuals and small groups can select memories to accept, to ignore, and to subvert. Thus, she asserts, although collective memory implies a consensus, the social construction of the past is a site of conflict as multiple groups work to secure an articulation of the past. This contest to define memory also shapes commemorative acts.

We also know about the past through histories, deliberate, discriminating interpretations that seek to synthesize individual and collective memories and information derived from relics into coherent descriptions of the past. What distinguishes between history and memory, according to Lowenthal, is that memory is still initially an individual process while history must be produced through group activity and “collective self-awareness.” We understand history to be more reliable than memory because of its comparative and public nature, yet no account of history is total. Historians, much like social groups creating memories, alter the past to make it intelligible to current society. They work from previous historical accounts, which have already filtered the past, and filter it further by compressing, highlighting and sequencing moments to make them easily understandable. As Lowenthal states, “historical explanation surpasses any understanding available while events are still occurring. The past we reconstruct is more coherent than the past was when it happened.” It is impossible to recreate the past as it was, yet modern Western historians strive to find truth through their accounts.

---

19 Irwin-Zarecka, Frames of Remembrance, 4-5.
20 Ibid., 67.
21 Lowenthal, Foreign Country, 213.
22 Ibid., 234. For his discussion of the ways historians alter the past see 215-224.
Unlike Lowenthal, Pierre Nora finds history and memory to be antithetical. Nora bemoans the loss of true memory brought about through industrialization, the rise of nation-states, and self-reflexivity in the historical profession, all of which distanced people from tradition. He argues that memory that was once social, unselfconscious, lived, and evolving, has been altered into archive memory, duty memory, and distance memory, which seek to hide the fact that memory itself no longer exists but is rather history in disguise.\textsuperscript{23} Nora notes that,

\begin{quote}
we still cannot do away with the word, but we should be aware of the difference between true memory, which has taken refuge in gestures and habits, in skills passed down by unspoken traditions, in the body’s inherent selfknowledge, in unstudied reflexes and ingrained memories, and memory transformed by its passage through history, which is nearly the opposite: voluntary and deliberate, experienced as a duty, no longer spontaneous; psychological, individual, and subjective; but never social, collective, or all encompassing.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

As a result of this break from true memory lieux de mémoire emerge as deliberate efforts to protect, organize and archive memory.\textsuperscript{25} Nora finds that lieux de mémoire act as material, symbolic, and functional storehouses for memory, helping to trigger and organize memory in societies.\textsuperscript{26} Defined fundamentally by the intention to remember and their self-referentiality, these sites seek to capture and communicate meaning in societies bereft of true memory. Lieux de mémoire, then, serve as memory-aids, communicating select messages about the past.

Relatedly, invented traditions arise particularly in times of change and seek to validate current beliefs, practices and systems by rooting them in the past. As Hobsbawm

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 7-24. These sites include the purely symbolic and the concrete, for example, emblems, anthems, holidays, monuments, and symbols such as the Maple Leaf, Beaver, or Mountie. The role of ‘memory markers’ in communicating memory is also discussed by Irwin-Zarecka, \textit{Frames of Remembrance}, 91.
defines it, “‘[i]nvented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.”27 Whether based on past practices or entirely constructed, invented traditions establish group cohesion, legitimate authority, and propagate “value systems and conventions of behaviour.”28 They have been particularly used by nation-states to establish authority and loyalty. As Benedict Anderson has stated, nations are imagined political communities in which, despite never knowing most of their fellow-members, individuals must feel a sense of communion with other group members.29 By attempting to control representations of the past, officials seek to create a common memory, or identity, among its constituents, ensuring the survival of the nation. For example, as Hobsbawm describes, the state develops an origin myth that unites the people together against foreign ‘others’.30 Often fictitious connections to the past come to be taken as truthful because of the repetition of rituals and processes of commemoration.

Commemorations, themselves often invented traditions, seek to preserve a past by perpetuating knowledge of events and beliefs, actual or invented, through a wide range of practices including parades, public spectacles, and monuments.31 As Glassberg notes,

28 Ibid., 9.
30 Traditions, however, can be invented by groups at lower levels than the state; the labour movement, universities, and sporting clubs all have been known to develop traditions to incite identification with the group. Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914,” in The Invention of Tradition, 1983, 14th ed., ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 263-307.
31 For historical analyses of parades see Susan G. Davis, Parades and Power (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Ronald Rudin, “Marching and Memory in early twentieth-century Quebec: La Fête-Dieu, la Saint-Jean-Baptiste, and le Monument Laval,” Journal of the Canadian Historical Association
[commemoration] locates us in time, as we learn about our place in a succession of past and future generations, as well as in space, as we learn the story of our locale. Images of a “common” history provide a focus for group loyalties, as well as plots to structure our individual memories and a larger context within which to interpret our new experiences.32

Through public forums of communication, such as pageants and museums, select messages of the past are conveyed on behalf of specific groups to an audience that must, in turn, internalize, amend or reject the message.33 Central to the act of commemoration is a competition for power and the authority to dictate the version of the past communicated, as well as the means by which and location in which it will be represented.34 John Bodnar categorizes groups competing for public voice as either


32 Glassberg, Historical Pageantry, 1.

33 Indeed the dialogical nature of the process is stressed by many authors. Although one version may ultimately be sanctioned, each group and individual filters their understanding of the commemorated event through the lens of their experience and collective memory. See James E. Young, The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), xii, 3.

34 Access to and control of space plays a significant role in the competition for commemorative authority. Location shapes both the content of the commemoration as well as who may gain access as viewers or participants. See John R. Gillis, “Introduction” in Commemorations, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 5.
official, namely national and patriotic, or vernacular, namely diverse and specialized. It bears repeating that the officially sanctioned version of the past is always contested by alternative versions presented by different societal groups. For example, Robert Cupido studied the Jubilee celebrations that took place across Canada in 1927 to show that although the state intended for celebrations to follow a fairly rigid narrative of national progress, in practice they were reshaped to conform to local histories and include diverse participants. Numerous studies have reflected upon the ways in which First Nations, French Canadian, and female actors have complicated the national narrative by inserting their experiences into commemorations. H.V. Nelles has explored how First Nations actors in the Quebec tercentenary celebrations challenged the dominant script that portrayed them as docile, loyal, and disappearing by instead representing themselves as a very present, vibrant cultural community. Commemorations disseminate versions of the past that have emerged as most powerful or influential. In doing so, they help structure our understandings of the past and our identities. Yet, commemorations are also contested as alternative understandings complicate official versions of the past.

35 Bodnar defines public memory as, “…a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present and, by implication, its future. It is fashioned ideally in a public sphere in which various parts of the social structure exchange views.” See John Bodnar, Remaking America – Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth-Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 14-15.
37 Nelles, Nation-Building, 179, 181.
Commemorations have also been harnessed for their tourist potential by official organizations that seek to convey their version of history to wider audiences and profit economically from the exchange.\(^{38}\) As the tourist industry emerged as a powerful economic force, commemorations were recognized as having the potential to attract visitors because of their ability to convey aspects of history considered unique. They thus define the history of a state or group not only to members but to visitors and seek not only to create communal bonds but to reap also financial gains.

Heritage and history are interrelated yet fundamentally different interactions with the past. Heritage might be understood as the collection of “myths, values and inheritances… defined by the needs of societies in the present.”\(^{39}\) Though heritage is often linked to specific material culture objects, discussions focus increasingly on the preservation of intangible heritage, or cultural heritage, namely the oral histories, folkways, skills, and spaces that contribute to cultural identity and a provide a link to previous generations.\(^{40}\) Both history and heritage purport to tell a true narrative of past events, yet the way truthfulness is judged varies greatly between the two perspectives. History, as we have seen, aspires to objective, accurate reporting of the facts. Although it is inevitable that history cannot make a perfect representation of the past, the field holds accuracy as a benchmark goal. Heritage, on the other hand, revels in selectivity. It is not concerned with what is accurate but with how a version of the past might be employed to

---


elicit pride and prestige.\textsuperscript{41} As Michael Kammen has articulated, “[h]eritage is comprised of those aspects of history that we cherish and affirm. As an alternative to history, heritage accentuates the positive but sifts away what is problematic.”\textsuperscript{42} By telling us about our illustrious roots and gratifying inheritance, heritage calms present insecurities by tying us to our forebears, creating a past that meets our expectations, and laying out a road-map to the future. Heritage is contrived and biased, but this is its strength; it demands people’s allegiance and commitment by accepting no dissent.\textsuperscript{43} Most commemorations may be classified as heritage as they present highly selective, prejudicial versions of events that serve a particular group’s ideas about how the past can influence current society.

Yet, many interactions with the past combine elements of heritage and history. Lowenthal observes that, “[p]ublic history, folk history, collective memory, building restoration, battle reenactment, historical fiction, and docudramas combine heritage aims with historical research, history’s lofty universality with heritage’s possessive intimacy.”\textsuperscript{44} Though the ‘professionals’ engaged with history endeavor to produce unbiased interpretations of the past, most end products are inevitably influenced by the desires of the audience they are being produced for – an audience that increasingly, according to many scholars, wants to be placated with heritage.

\textsuperscript{42} Michael Kammen, In the Past Lane – Historical Perspectives on American Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 220.
\textsuperscript{43} David Lowenthal, The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 120-122. This is not to say, however, that there is no power struggle over the definition of heritage, but rather that once it is defined heritage is uncompromising. Relatedly, expressions of heritage may serve to resist hegemonic discourses, particularly in plural societies (see Tunbridge and Ashworth, Dissonant Heritage).
\textsuperscript{44} Lowenthal, Heritage Crusade, 168.
Historic sites embody a number of these concepts. They act as *lieux de mémoire*, commemorating events, periods, and people considered crucial to the articulation of a society’s identity. Typically funded and managed by governmental agencies historic sites can be considered ‘official’ arbiters of the past. Sites articulate versions of the past that maintain the myths of society. As such, the line between historic site and heritage site is often conflated and the representation of the past is often superficial and incomplete.

**Museums: History and Heritage in various guises**

Museums and historic sites are complex institutions that seek to preserve, protect, and present the past for various reasons. Foremost amongst these, in modern times, has been to educate the masses and shape their behaviour and identity. Museum collections and displays have been meant to help us, the public, understand our world and our place in it. These terms, however, are defined by a select few. As elite, often national institutions, museums took a narrow view regarding the pasts that were worthy of commemoration through the mid-twentieth century. Museums have been selective about the past they perpetuate. Robert Sullivan aptly summarizes the power of the museum:

> Museums are ritual places in which societies make visible what they value. Through the selection and preservation of artifacts, specimens, and documents, museums begin to define for their societies what is consequential, valuable, and suitable as evidence of the past. Through their presentation and interpretation of this evidence, museums define not only what is memorable but also how it is to be remembered. [...] While museums often claim to be value-neutral, nonmoral, and nonpolitical in intent, in their actual practice and behavior, they are moralizing institutions, reflecting as well as shaping their communities’ moral ecology.\(^{45}\)

Museums shape communities, but changing communities also shape museums. In the rapidly transforming social environment of the 1960s museums in North America altered

---

their presentations in response to demands from the community. Elite conceptions of the past were recognized as incomplete and museums began to diversify their presentations to include also racialized, classed, and gendered experiences. This research project seeks to understand just how far this diversification has progressed.

_Historical Overview:_

Over the long course of their existence museums have been defined by a variety of roles and responsibilities. Initially considered places of worship for collections of meaningful artifacts, today museums are thought of more frequently as places of edification and entertainment. Beginning as sites of worship for the muses in Ancient times, museums became places of scholarship with small collections of objects. Traces of the museum survived the Middle Ages in the reliquary collections of the Church.⁴⁶ Museums were renewed during the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods. Driven by the age of exploration, scientific investigation, and an urge to categorize the world, elites collected natural specimens they found strange or curious, forming private collections of cabinets of curiosity. By the late seventeenth century, however, the privacy of the collections was on the wane.⁴⁷ Governments interested in pursuing scientific discoveries formed museums that were associated with universities.⁴⁸ With the rise of nation-states in

---

⁴⁶ Edward P. Alexander, _Museums in Motion_ (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1979), 6-7; Robin Gillam, _Hall of Mirrors_ (Banff: Banff Centre Press, 2001), 15.

⁴⁷ John Tradescant’s collection, for example, was on display during his lifetime (c.1570-1638) as the first public museum in England. Following his death the collection was bequeathed to Elias Ashmole and then to the University of Oxford, which opened the Ashmolean museum in 1683. See University of Oxford, Ashmolean Museum, “The Tradescant Collection,” last updated jcm/15-jan-2002, accessed 9 April 2011, http://www.ashmolean.museum/ash/amulets/tradescant/tradescant00.html. Private collections of curiosities were also displayed in British North America, though in a later time period. The collection of Tomasso Delvecchio was displayed in a private museum in the 1820s and Thomas Barnett opened the Niagara Falls Museum based on his collection of antiquities and curiosities in 1827. See J. Lynne Teather, “Museum-making in Canada (to 1972),” _Muse_ 10 n.2-3 (1992): 22.

⁴⁸ Alexander, _Museums_, 8. In British North America as well many universities were creating museums to improve their pedagogy and research. See Teather, “Museum-making,” 23.
the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries museums were increasingly formed to promote nationalist sentiment.\textsuperscript{49} Museums, by this point, were institutions of veneration, scholarship, and preservation. Their educational and transformative potential came to greater prominence in the nineteenth century.

In Canada, throughout the first half of the nineteenth century, most museums were privately or locally managed. “[The] early years of Canadian museum history,” Lynn Teather writes, “are marked by museums formed, lost or transformed by private persons, groups and institutions, but only occasionally by government interest in them.”\textsuperscript{50} Private collectors and organizations, such as the mechanics’ institutes, spearheaded the accumulation of artifacts and their public display. University museum collections became also an important part of their educational systems. Increasingly, collectors heralded the potential for museums to inform and education the public. The Canadian government’s forays into national museum development proceeded haltingly and with little direction between the 1870s and 1920s.\textsuperscript{51} Similarly, provincial attempts at forming museums and art galleries often were short lived. Local and society museums, however, continued to flourish, especially after the 1880s.

Though most every generation in Western history has preserved some aspect of the ones that came before it, there was a noted increase in attempts to preserve historic homes, scenic landscapes, and objects of historical importance in North America over the course of the nineteenth century. This makes sense considering the generally accepted maxim that we seek out the stability of the past during times of change. The nineteenth century, with its broad sweeping industrial and political changes, was a time of upheaval

\textsuperscript{49} Gillam, \textit{Hall of Mirrors}, 30.
\textsuperscript{50} Teather, “Museum-making,” 23.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 25.
for most people in the Western world. This upheaval both threatened the surviving traces of the past and motivated individuals to act to protect such traces from eradication. In Canada, for example, citizens expressed interest in and concern for old structures. In 1884 many worked together to preserve Fort Anne, Nova Scotia. Shortly after the turn of the century locals and visitors petitioned the government to save Fort Henry from further disrepair. Much like their American neighbours, Canadians in the nineteenth century expressed a concern in protecting old structures in order to educate the populace about its heritage.

Museums were controlled, in most cases, by society’s elites, who used the museum’s cultural position to attempt to modify the behaviour and beliefs of the lower-classes. Tony Bennett, writing about Britain, has argued that, in the nineteenth century culture was directly harnessed by the government for the purposes of social management. Bennett asserts, “[t]he governmentalization of culture […] aimed precisely at more enduring and lasting effects by using culture as a resource through which those exposed to its influence would be led to ongoingly and progressively modify their thoughts,

---

52 Ibid.
53 The early American preservation movement, working to save Revolutionary war homes, was driven by the lobbying and financial support of Societies, such as the Daughters of the American Revolution, that sought to associate themselves with great men and moments of history and, through monuments, to educate the working classes in American values. Similarly, the historic movement that began in the 1850s was driven by similar motivations. Michael Wallace notes that a preservation ethos developed further in the 1890s as middle and upper class American values were seen to be challenged by a growing immigrant and working class population. See Edward Alexander, Museum Masters (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1983), 177-204; Kammen, Mystic Chords, chapter 8 and 260-263; Diane Lea, “Introduction: American’s Preservation Ethos – A tribute to enduring ideals,” in A Richer Heritage – Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century, ed. Robert Stipe (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 3; Michael Wallace, “Reflections on the History of Historic Preservation,” in Presenting the Past – Essays on History and the Public, ed. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 168-171; Michael Wallace, “Visiting the Past,” in Presenting the Past, ed. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 141; and Patricia West, Domesticating History: The Political Origins of America’s House Museums (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1999).
feelings and behaviours."\textsuperscript{54} The display of cultural artifacts and narratives of national
history at museums were used to convey ‘proper’ standards of behaviour and accepted
beliefs to the middle and lower-class visitors. Museums thus adopted an educational role,
albeit one manipulated entirely by the elite and official representatives of the state. In
Canada the state assumed oversight of museums later than in Britain; however,
educational goals motivated privately run museums and societies earlier in the nineteenth
century, and were adopted by various levels of government in the 1920s as they formed
national and provincial institutions.\textsuperscript{55} Museums continued to privilege the vantage point
of elites in the twentieth century however they had to contend more frequently with a
growing popular interest in preserving the past.

Museums have flourished in North America in the twentieth century. As Lynne
Teather has recorded, Canada’s approximately one-hundred-and-fifty museums in 1919
increased to about four hundred by 1949.\textsuperscript{56} In addition to university, art and national
history museums, more and more museums were dedicated also to local, pioneer, and
community histories over the course of the century.\textsuperscript{57} The number of museums
blossomed even further in the post-war period, growing to 1000 by 1972 and doubling to
2000 by 1992. Inspired by the Massey Commission report of 1951 that called upon the
government to improve funding and attention to museums, as well as the looming
centennial celebrations, all levels of government supported to higher degrees the

\textsuperscript{54} Tony Bennett, \textit{The Birth of the Museum} (London: Routledge, 1995), 24.
\textsuperscript{55} Teather, “Museum-making,” 26.
\textsuperscript{56} Teather, “Museum-making,” 26.
\textsuperscript{57} Mary Tivy provides a critical analysis of community museums in Ontario in “Museums, Visitors and the
community museums are rooted in collections of ‘pioneer’ history and focus on periods of settlement,
stressing pioneering characteristics of self-sufficiency, hard work, and ingenuity (38) to promote narratives
of progress.
foundation and maintenance of museum institutions and professional training programs.\footnote{Teather, “Museum-making,” 27-28; Gillam, \textit{Hall of Mirrors}, 72-75.} In 1972 the federal government announced its National Museum Policy aiming to widen the access to museums by doubling the funding received, establishing national exhibition centres across the country, and improving the funding for training programs.\footnote{Teather, “Museum-making,” 28; Gillam, \textit{Hall of Mirrors}, 81.} Yet, by 1986 the Bovey Report highlighted the trend among federal governmental agencies to pass on the fiscal responsibility for museums to provincial and municipal levels, which in turn sought out greater amounts of private fundraising dollars.\footnote{Gillam, \textit{Hall of Mirrors}, 92-93. The 1988 report \textit{Challenges and Choices: Federal Policy and Program Proposals for Canadian Museums} urged similarly that the federal government be fiscally responsible for only the national museums in Ottawa and devolve funding of other institutions to provincial and municipal governments.} A new Museums Policy of 1990 promised greater funding for museums over the next five years, with specific funding earmarked for community institutions. The economic downturn of the early 1990s, however, created a challenging climate for cultural institutions in Canada.

Professionals have been questioning the role of the museum since the 1980s and 1990s. In 1983 Stephen Weil identified three crises facing museums – money, power and identity – that continue to engage museum professionals to this day.\footnote{As paraphrased in Julia D. Harrison, “Ideas of Museums in the 1990s,” \textit{Museum Management and Curatorship} 13 (1993): 163-164.} Facing government cutbacks, museums had to seek new means and methods of economic survival. During the 1980s museums adopted a business model approach that put greater emphasis on profitability and marketability.\footnote{Ibid., 164-165.} In practice, this has often meant catering to the desires of the public and developing a more experience and entertainment oriented approach to exhibitions. Providing edutainment, an entertaining but ultimately educational experience, became the goal of many institutions seeking to appeal to broader public

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\footnote{Teather, “Museum-making,” 28; Gillam, \textit{Hall of Mirrors}, 81.}{Teather, “Museum-making,” 28; Gillam, \textit{Hall of Mirrors}, 81.}
\footnote{Gillam, \textit{Hall of Mirrors}, 92-93. The 1988 report \textit{Challenges and Choices: Federal Policy and Program Proposals for Canadian Museums} urged similarly that the federal government be fiscally responsible for only the national museums in Ottawa and devolve funding of other institutions to provincial and municipal governments.}{Gillam, \textit{Hall of Mirrors}, 92-93. The 1988 report \textit{Challenges and Choices: Federal Policy and Program Proposals for Canadian Museums} urged similarly that the federal government be fiscally responsible for only the national museums in Ottawa and devolve funding of other institutions to provincial and municipal governments.}
\footnote{Ibid., 164-165.}{Ibid., 164-165.}
\end{thebibliography}
audiences. On the one hand, many have found this approach to have pedagogical benefits, appealing to a generation of media-savvy citizens. On the other, critics have argued that it has damaged the traditional educational role of the museum, pandering to the masses rather than seeking to enlighten them. Issues of funding raise questions about the future identity of museums. Can they continue in their traditional roles as temple, storehouse and school, or must they evolve?

Increasingly practitioners and critics of museums have called for a reevaluation of museum practices, arguing for a shift away from top-down communication of information to a model that democratizes power in the institution. Practitioners seek to involve and represent a multiplicity of voices in their exhibits, diversifying topics and interpretations, and inviting the creative participation of the groups whose past and experiences are being represented. 63 For example, a 1992 report of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Communications and Culture advanced cultural policy that called for greater and more equitable participation of Aboriginals, women, and minorities. 64 This democratization brings into question the identity of museums. Once primarily elite, nationalist institutions, museums are breaking away from this paradigm. Instead of presenting an officially sanctioned version of the past in an effort to change the behaviour of citizens, museums are recognizing the subjectivity of any representation of the past and opening up narratives to be more inclusive of a multi-cultural society.

Museums have had various purposes throughout their long history, shifting between or simultaneously being temples of the past, storehouses for its relics, laboratories for its analysis, school houses for its lessons, and – most recently - forums for

63 Ibid., 164, 169.
64 Gillam, Hall of Mirrors, 95.
debate. The future role of museums continues to be debated as practitioners negotiate changing economic climates and challenges from an increasing array of leisure activities, and to develop relationships with a broader range of communities.

*Seeing Ourselves: Diversifying Representations at Museums – Race, Class & Gender*

In response to criticisms that arose in the 1960s that museums were presenting elitist and exclusive versions of the past, many institutions and historic sites strove to represent the experience of minority groups. Scholars began to pay more attention to how messages were produced at sites and to critique representations of race, class, and gender. Non-white, non-elite, non-nationalist narratives are increasingly addressed at museums and historic sites, but much remains to be done before their representation may be considered to be on equal footing with more traditional narratives.

*i) Race and Class*

African American public history and the representation of African American history in museums, especially the experience of slavery, has been a topic of much scholarly inquiry in the United States. Recent studies on the representation of African American history in museums indicate that employees and visitors are often discomfited by the hard truth of past power relationships leading many museums to hide or segregate knowledge. James Horton’s research has found that sites’ struggles to find the least offensive presentation of the past has led to several techniques of avoidance: instead of using the term slave sites instead employ the word servant; sites segregate their presentation of information about slavery so that visitors may still learn about traditional, elite white male heroes undisturbed and may circumvent hearing about slavery entirely; and that if information about slavery is presented it is often centred on daily activities
rather than power relations and is expressed in the passive voice.\textsuperscript{65} Similarly, studies conducted by Joanne Melish and Lois E. Horton separately found that sites struggled over how to include information that put their previous heroes in a less favourable light. Furthermore, they show that sites are unsure how to introduce topics they lack material evidence about and over how best to address slavery in tours. A typical response, they find, is to separate the information in optional, secondary tours.\textsuperscript{66} Such studies demonstrate that museums and historic sites are addressing issues of African American history, but often in ways that minimize the power imbalances of slavery and that segregate information so as to protect traditional white heroes and the sensibilities of visitors.

Perhaps the most thorough study on representations of slavery in the United States was completed by Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small. Conducting research at 122 plantation museums in the American south, Eichstedt and Small set out to “understand how plantation museums reflect, create, and contribute to racialized ways of understanding and organizing the world.”\textsuperscript{67} Based on participant observation and detailed reflections of tours, as well as textual analysis of site brochures, Eichstedt and Small found that the sites were part of a “racialized regime of representation” that, regardless of how they did or did not address slavery, perpetuated a “discursive framework of the


South as…romantic, marked with honor and nobility, and filled with chaste white women…”68 They categorized the sites into four typologies of representation: 1) symbolic annihilation and erasure, for example ignoring the historical presence of slaves or using euphemisms to refer to enslaved peoples; 2) trivialization and deflection, for example valorizing the paternalism of owners; 3) segregation and marginalization, for example running specialized tours dedicated to the experience of slavery; and 4) relative incorporation. This research demonstrates a successful methodology for the analysis of the content of museum interpretation and provides useful terminology for categorizing site interpretive and representational strategies. Unfortunately their findings also show that the majority of institutions still favour traditional narratives of history privileging white, elite, men.

Aboriginal relationships with museums, including the nature of their representations, have also changed since the social revolutions of the 1960s. Historically, Aboriginal artifacts, remains, and ways of life were displayed as primitive oddities for the gaze of white viewers. Represented most frequently in anthropological collections, Aboriginals from Canada and the United States were often essentially removed from the history of the nation and ‘othered.’ This balance of power began to shift, however, in the 1960s as so-called minority groups asserted their right to equal treatment and recognition. Predominant among concerns today are issues of collections care, the repatriation of artifacts and remains, and the representation of Aboriginal history.69

---

68 Ibid., 9.
69 One of the first major demands made by indigenous people that specifically influenced museum practice was the demand for the repatriation of artifacts and remains. In response to these demands US Congress passed the Archeological Resources Protection Act in 1979, and the National Museum of the American Indian in 1989. The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), passed in 1990, required that all federal museums perform an inventory of Native American remains and ceremonial objects in their collection, to inform the respective tribes of the location of these objects, and to return said items as
Laura Peers has undertaken a major study of the ways in which Aboriginal histories have been included in the interpretive programming at living history sites. Peers argues that historic sites have supported national myths by portraying selective aspects of the past, often diminishing the presence and roles of first nations peoples. Yet, she stresses, historic reconstructions present the voices of site officials, staff, and visitors, and hence offer alternative interpretations of the past. Drawing upon ethnographic research at five fur trading sites around the Great Lakes, participant observation, and interviews with staff and visitors, Peers argues that First Nations interpreters see their role as not simply to impart historical stories but to teach about Aboriginal culture in order to improve present day social and political relations. Interactions between visitors and Aboriginal staff can be transformative and disruptive of prior assumptions, though nostalgia can hinder the process. Further, she found that site administrators have been

quickly as possible. Paul C. Rosier estimated that by 1999 “…nearly ten thousand human remains and roughly three hundred thousand artifacts had been repatriated.” See Paul C. Rosier, Native American Issues (Westwood, CN: Greenwood Press, 2003), 92.

In Canada First Nations people have also engaged museums in debates over repatriation. For example, the peoples of the Northwest Coast negotiated with the then Museum of Man (now Museum of Civilization) for the return of items that were part of the Potlatch Collection. Unlike the United States, Canada has not implemented federal policy regarding the repatriation of artifacts and remains. See Gloria Cranmer Webster, “The U’mista Cultural Centre,” in Obsession, Compulsion, Collection: On objects, display, culture and interpretation, ed. Anthony Kiendl (Banff: the Banff Centre Prss, 2004), 234-236.

Aboriginal communities also seek greater access to the objects remaining in collections and to have a greater say in how they are exhibited and used. In 1992 the Canadian Museums Association and the Assembly of First Nations issued the Task Force Report on Museums and First Peoples, “…articulating a constructive set of principles for Canadian museums…” Michael Ames observes that the implementation of these recommendations has been slow, yet highlights that museums are seeking Aboriginal employees and are collaborating more frequently with First Nations consultants and groups. See Michael Ames, “Are Changing Representations of First Peoples in Canadian Museums and Galleries Changing the Curatorial Prerogative?” in The Changing Presentation of the American Indian, ed. W. Richard West, 73-88 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005); and Miriam Clavir, “First Nations Perspectives on Preservation and Museums,” in Preserving what is value: museums, conservation, and First Nations, ed. Miriam Clavir (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002), 76-93.


71 Ibid., 44-53.

72 Ibid., 84, 151, 158.
working to include Aboriginal histories at their sites, but that visitors do not always read the displays of material culture or understand the interpretations in the ways intended. She stresses that “[m]ore attention needs to be paid to the messages that objects actually suggest to visitors rather than the ones we hope they will.”73 This work speaks to the potential of historic sites to inform the public’s understanding of the past and, in so doing, alter present-day social relations.

In addition to revising the histories of racialized groups, museums have also been more attentive to how they construct narratives of class. In fact, addressing race and ethnic differences necessitates an examination of class, and vice versa. For example, Colonial Williamsburg’s ‘Christmas at the Wythe House’ program, described by Richard Handler and Eric Gable, contrasted for visitors the work and concerns of slaves in the kitchen with their interaction with the white slave-owners of the house.74 This program introduced the hierarchy of power relations and labour exploitation, which are central to a class-based analysis of the past. Perhaps the most well known American museum dealing with issues of class and ethnicity is the Tenement Museum, located in New York’s Lower East Side. Founded by Ruth Abrams and Anita Jacobsen in 1995, the Tenement Museum seeks “[t]o promote tolerance and historical perspective through the presentation and interpretation of the variety of immigrant and migrant experiences on Manhattan’s Lower East Side, a gateway to America.”75 The site introduces visitors to the lives of actual residents of 97 Orchard Street, highlighting their experiences of work, family, community

73 Ibid., 100-101. Peers later continues in this vein: “While the stories suggested by artifacts are crucial, …they can be ‘read’ by visitors as easily within misinformed narratives as they can within intended ones. Neither sites nor their furnishings speak for themselves: they are spoken about, by interpreters and visitors.” (104)
and health. The Tenement Museum advances a historical dialogue that has profound connections for present-day migrants. Race and class are tied together in the interpretation of these sites.

Despite the Tenement Museum’s success at discussing working-class history, many sites continue to be reticent or to have difficulties interpreting this aspect of the past. Several museum professionals have critiqued historic sites, particularly house museums, for focusing on the interpretation of the upper class home owners. Margaret Lynch-Brennan points out the too frequent omission of the Irish servant experience in house museums.76 Similarly, Jennifer Pustz questions how well historic sites are representing the lives of domestic servants. Pustz discusses the results from a nationwide mail survey conducted in 2003 that collected information from American museums about the historical evidence each had of the presence of servants, how each site interprets servants, and why sites may not interpret servant life. Her findings indicate that a strategy of segregation is often used, addressing servants in the kitchen, servant bedroom or laundry.77 Though sites do note the ethnicity and gender of domestic servants, results indicate that little critical dialogue surrounds these facts.78 It is promising that 190 sites surveyed address the experience of servants in some way, yet responses also indicate that much remains to be done before the complexity of that experience is presented at all relevant sites.

77 Jennifer Pustz, Voices from the back stairs: interpreting servants’ lives at historic house museums (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 40-49. Pustz indicates that 150 of 190 sites that interpreted servants used the kitchen as an entry point to the subject (48).
78 Ibid., 64-65.
These studies and findings regarding museums’ engagement with issues of race and class provide helpful methodologies and concepts for evaluating the presentation of gender issues. In particular the works of Handler and Gable, Eichstedt and Small, Peers, and Pustz suggest that close participant observation, ‘textual’ analysis of interpretive scripts, in-depth interviews, and surveys are viable and productive means of research. The frequency with which presentations are categorized as omitting, segregating, or minimizing history indicate that these are potentially useful terms of analysis. Likewise, these studies suggest the importance of considering the possible difference between intended and received messages, and of investigating the motivations behind the creation and reception of messages to do with the past.

**ii) Gender**

Calls for the adoption of women’s history and gender history methodologies in museums came fast on the heels of similar academic debates in the late 1980s. Although gender studies recognized the importance of studying the construction of both femininity and masculinity, the traditionally male focus of museums meant that most of the activism in museums centred on improving the representation of females, and, more recently, gays and lesbians. Museum practitioners, however, found the incorporation of such histories into their presentation difficult to institute. There was little precedent for feminist exhibitions and management was slow to fund work that focused on subject matter they thought would have little popular appeal. Traditional collection practices also

---

79 Such calls came primarily from the Western world, with the majority writing in the United States. Canada was certainly involved in this debate, but to date I have only a handful of articles calling for a more equitable representation of women and gender written by Canadians. See Sharon Reilly, “Setting an Agenda for Women in Museums: the Presentation of Women in Museum Exhibits and Collections,” *Muse* 7 n.1 (1989): 47-51 and Kerridwen Harvey, “Looking for women in the museums: Has Women’s Studies really ‘Come a long way’?” *Muse* 11 n. 4 (1994): 24-27.
hindered early exhibits of women’s history in museums. Many of the objects used by women on a daily basis had not been collected because collection is contingent upon valuation of significance. Feminists, however, mined the collections in creative ways, finding women’s experience in their exclusion and in changing household technology. Despite hindrances, practitioners continued to put forth what feminist exhibitions they could, to assess exhibition content through a feminist lens, and to try to rally the museum community.

Since museums were slow in their initial incorporation of women’s history, practitioners called for the acceptance of both women’s history and gender history simultaneously. Gaynor Kavanagh found that two themes were constant in exhibitions of women’s history – the oppression and exploitation of women, and their resilience and resourcefulness. Gaby Porter described the ‘Women’s History approach’ to exhibition development as one where prevailing assumptions and categories were challenged by emphasizing personal experience, expanding definitions of work, and studying areas and skills that were previously devalued as female. Critics described such exhibits as compensatory. Instead, Barbara Melosh and Christina Simmons argued that,

[an] ideal public history of women would present women fully as actors in economic, domestic, social and political life; it would be sensitive to divisions among women by class, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and marital status; above all it would treat gender as a significant category and acknowledge the relationships of power and inequality that have constrained women’s lives.  

Despite calls to integrate gender history, the contributors to a special issue of *Gender and History* in 1994 found that, “very few, if any [museums], have managed to translate the recent scholarship of gender into public presentations.” Scholars found that little interaction between women and men was presented, that the complexity of the socialization of gender and the acceptance of certain roles and task as natural was not addressed or analyzed. Steps were being taken in the late 1980s and 1990s to incorporate women and gender into museums exhibitions and presentations; however, many feminists found that museums were not being critical enough or taking feminist analysis as far as it could go.

Several anthologies on incorporating feminist perspectives into public history were published in the 1990s and early 2000s. They advance important information about the experiences of women in an effort to educate public history practitioners, critique

---


presentations of the past, and propose techniques for redressing the omission or imbalance of women’s history. *Reclaiming the Past* (1992), edited by Paige Putnam Miller, is a collection of articles that highlight aspects of women’s experiences that deserve to be recognized in public history presentations, be they landmarks or museums. Miller’s contribution to this anthology stresses the importance of historic structures for studying the past, urges greater preservation of women’s history landmarks, and calls for wider thinking when considering what contributes to national significance.\(^8\) Anthologies published ten years later cover some of this same ground, but offer more case-study methodologies for the incorporation of women’s history into public history. *Her Past Around Us* (2003), for example, includes articles that advance meaningful ways to integrate women of diverse backgrounds into walking tours, historic homes, public landscapes, and commemorative ceremonies.\(^9\) Similarly, *Restoring Women’s History through Historic Preservation* (2003), edited by Gail Lee Dubrow and Jennifer B. Goodman, provides analyses of women’s roles in the preservation movement and on incorporating women’s history into ‘spaces’, highlights several projects that have successfully presented women’s history in the public sphere, and discusses how public policy affects the preservation of women’s history. Of particular relevance is Alan McCullough’s assessment of Parks Canada’s coverage of women’s history. As of 1991 redressing the imbalance of women’s history and Aboriginal peoples in commemorations has been a priority of Parks Canada. Although women’s history was, and remains, underrepresented in Parks Canada commemorations, eighty-one commemorations were of

---


women or associated institutions. McCullough argues, however, much like Miller, that in order to include women’s history and gender more broadly new standards for historical significance must be set. He concludes by arguing that the interpretation of existing sites can be broadened to better represent the experiences of women.90 Such anthologies demonstrate the diverse backgrounds and interests of scholars working to improve the representation of women’s history and gender history in public history. Yet, although the later works do discuss many successful projects, the continued calls for inclusion and changes to practice indicate that much work remains to be done.

Several Canadian studies on living history sites in the Toronto area support this conclusion. Manda Vranic explored how gender roles and family organization were represented at Black Creek Pioneer Village, Upper Canada Village and Lang Pioneer Village in 1990. She found that women’s domestic roles were more consistently portrayed than extra-domestic tasks, such as field work or teaching, and that the economic benefit of this labour was rarely discussed. Conversely, men’s work was almost entirely portrayed as occurring outside of the home. Heterosexual nuclear families were most often depicted and multi-generational families, servants, bachelors and widows were notably absent from most sites. Vranic concluded by suggesting strategies to improve the representation of gender roles, including diversifying hiring practices, adding children to the site, ensuring tasks and buildings were not seen in isolation from larger societal and market processes, and training staff to specify who would have completed what tasks and

Similarly, Wendy Rowney’s Master’s thesis examined the representation of women’s history at historic sites in 1995. Rowney notes practitioners’ beliefs that sites tended to promote stereotypical, incomplete pictures of women’s lives and were often disinclined to change because they lacked the collections base to present women’s history, the funding and time to undertake the necessary research projects, and the demand from visitors to incite action. Analysis of Mackenzie House revealed that tours often ignored the presence of Isabel, Mackenzie’s wife, and the labour she and her female domestic servant completed around the home. A decade later, in 2008, Jennifer Bonnell reflected on her experience working at Montgomery’s Inn in Etobicoke and found that the site romanticizes the past by oversimplifying gender identities and erasing conflict. For example, she notes that the commemorative time period of 1847-1850 was chosen in part because it allowed staff to ignore the period from 1829-1842 when Margaret Montgomery was pregnant almost every two years and four of seven children died. Furthermore, the site relegates women to domestic spaces and asserts that women were not permitted in the bar, even though historical records show that women were indeed patrons. Bonnell continues,

[w]hat is missing in the inn’s presentation of a pleasant ‘women’s world’ apart from the world of men is any suggestion of relationship – either with the women around them or with the men in the other room. Issues such as domestic conflict, employment inequities, and gendered social norms go unmentioned, as do experiences of friendship, sexuality, and marriage. With its presentation of two separate harmonious spheres, the inn sidesteps

---

93 Ibid., 65-67.
instances of interaction between men and women in the past; it suggests by elision that those relationships that did exist were cheerful, contented one.\(^{95}\)

Though separated by over a decade Vranic, Rowney, and Bonnell raise similar critiques about the representation of women at living history sites – namely that the complexity of their lives is ignored and that representation is often segregated to specific spaces.

Professional and academic attention to the lack of representation, or the misrepresentation, of gendered pasts continues. A collection of articles published in 2010, *Gender, Sexuality, and Museums*, presents articles that examine the representation of gender and sexuality in museums.\(^{96}\) Barbara Clark Smith rearticulates her call to reassess collections and exhibitions, and to interpret objects so as to draw out their social and cultural meanings. She concludes that it is imperative that museums consider the “impact of masculinism” on the way they collect and display objects, and alter their practices to place both men’s and women’s artifacts within their gendered contexts.\(^{97}\)

Laura Brandon assesses the collection at the Canadian War Museum, finding that collection and cataloging practices help efface the presence of women’s experiences and voices in the collection.\(^{98}\) Numerous articles in the collection also critique the representation of sexuality, hetero- or homosexuality, in museums.\(^{99}\) The authors evaluate the “institutional homophobia” that pervades many museums, draw attention to

\(^{95}\) Ibid., 142-143.


the exhibitions that have represented sexuality, and suggest frameworks for changing practice. This collection highlights both the progress that has been made by a handful of practitioners and institutions, and the long road that still remains before the masculine and heterosexual biases of museums are overcome.

Museums and historic sites have become more inclusive places since the 1960s, paying greater attention to the ways in which they address the histories of racialized groups, the lower-classes, and women. Yet, as the literature on all three areas of museum work have shown, there are wide gaps between the academic information available and the representations of the past portrayed in museums. Museum practitioners have taken many steps to include women in exhibitions and interpretive programming; however, critiques continue to lament that public history presentations neglect to show the complexity of women’s lives and relationships. My study adds to this literature by analyzing the representation of women’s and men’s experiences at three Canadian living history sites, carefully comparing the narratives told to the public with those now commonly accepted by historians. By highlighting where and how gendered experiences are omitted, marginalized, segregated, and embraced at historic sites, and explaining the motivations behind these choices, this project hopes to suggest ways for historic sites to become even more inclusive of gender histories.

**Living History – Definitions, History, Practice**

The three historic sites this project examines are living history sites, sites that attempt to ‘bring the past to life’ through such methods as period rooms, skill demonstrations, and costumed interpreters populating recreated scenes and landscapes. Living history sites were selected in part because of personal interest and familiarity, and in part because of
their size and popularity. They offer a variety of settings for the interpretation of diverse histories and a relatively large number of staff and visitors to observe engaging with history. To contextualize the methods and state of Ontario’s living history sites, I present a history of living history, a description of its main methods and functions, some critiques, and a discussion of the genre’s concern for authenticity.

Many definitions of living history have been put forth over the years yet they assert the same principle: living history represents the past through recreated landscapes and scenescapes, material culture, and social interaction. In the first article to analyze the broad practice of living history, Jay Anderson defined it as “an attempt by people to simulate life in another time.”

G. Ellis Burcaw defined living history as “…a more or less dramatic re-creation of historical life situations, especially popular culture, in order to make history come alive; that is, showing the lives of ordinary people.” Although Burcaw identifies the dramatic element of living history, the degree to which living history may be associated with theatre and dramatic techniques continues to be an area of debate.

The Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums [ALHFAM], a U.S. based organization, has adopted a definition of living history that claims it is the use of “historic objects and environs and appropriate recreations […] to tell the stories of the people who used those objects,” in order to contextualize the past.

---

102 Though some see living history as completely distinct from theatre, possibly stemming from the understanding that acting is ‘fake’ while history strives to be true and authentic (see interviews in Snow, 133-135), increasingly the dramatic nature of living history is being acknowledged. Several major works have assessed the relationship between theatre and first-person interpretation including Stephen Eddy Snow, Performing the Pilgrims – a study of Ethnohistorical Role-Play at Plimoth Plantation (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1993) and Stacy F. Roth, Past into Present – Effective Techniques for First-Person Historical Interpretation (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).
and engage the public. Each of these definitions share the idea that living history is an attempt to communicate or understand aspects of history through the recreation or simulation of the past’s physical and social environment, including human action and interaction with each other and the environment.

The techniques of living history were first pioneered by Artur Hazelius in Sweden in the late nineteenth century. Concerned by the perceived detrimental changes to Swedish culture and lifestyle brought about by the industrial revolution, Hazelius set out to collect and preserve the folk-life of his people. By the 1880s Hazelius was avidly collecting buildings, shops, plants, and animals, so that the folk objects could be placed in a functional context. Hazelius’ embraced the display method of period rooms and tableaux, three dimensional spaces arranged with objects in the manner in which they would have been if fully functioning. In 1891 he opened Skansen, the first open-air museum, which presented folk-life through costumed guides, live animals, craftspeople, music, food, and various other activities. Skansen served as the prototype of living history sites for many years. These new techniques of interpretation were transferred from Europe to the United States when Hazelius sent six folk-life tableaux to the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia in 1876. Two years later, his displays of ‘peasant life’ at the Trocadero Palace attracted great interest and helped spread his ideas across the western world.

104 Sten Rentzhog, Open Air Museums, trans. Skans Victoria Airey (Kristianstad, SW: Jamtli Förlag and Carlsson Bokförlag, 2007), 4-32; Jay Anderson, Time Machines – the World of Living History (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1984), 18-19; Alexander, Museums, 84-85.; Alexander, Museum Masters, 244-245.
105 Anderson, Time Machines, 25; Alexander, Museum Masters, 245.
Though no overarching study of living history in Canada has yet been completed, its practice began in the 1930s with the reconstruction of Fort York and Fort Henry and the institution of each sites’ interpretive military guards. Its popularity with visitors and tourists ensured that sites would continue to adopt its methods. In the United States living history methods were pioneered by the individuals who fought to preserve ‘historic house museums’ and, with greater notoriety, Henry Ford and John D. Rockefeller. In the 1920s Henry Ford adopted the Hazelian idea that the way to understand our forefathers is by reconstructing the conditions of their life. Assembled into a village comprised of resituated buildings, Ford’s collection of Americana celebrates pioneering Americans, hard work, discipline, and the idea of progress. John D. Rockefeller similarly funded and oversaw the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg beginning in 1928; however the recreated setting lauded the elite planters and politicians of the historic community. By 1978 there were an estimated 800 sites using living history in North America.

Jay Anderson has argued that the primary functions of living history are its contributions to scholarly research, its element of play through reenactment, and its ability to interpret the past. Research is crucial for the presentation of living history,

---


which generally prides itself on accurate portrayals of the past. Site specific research projects often focus on the details of daily life, from the colour and patterns of home décor, to the step by step process of operating a machine. Such studies supplement academic studies that often focus on larger societal processes. Living history sites also offer scholars a venue, or laboratory, to test historical hypotheses. Using the reconstructed environment, archeologists and social scientists can construct or use objects in the way they believe they were used in the past and compare present outcomes with past outcomes to determine the validity of their hypotheses.\textsuperscript{110} Research findings benefit not only the historic site but can also contribute to the wider academic community.\textsuperscript{111}

Living history is also an escapist venture that allows everyday people to explore the past through reenactment. Anderson’s research has uncovered several recurring themes in the answers to why ordinary people seek to re-live the past through reenactment. Some seek to understand what life was like for their ancestors, to gain a stronger sense of self; others are simply curious about how life differed from our own modern experience. Some seek to escape the trials and tribulations of modernized society through imagination and nostalgia; others seek a social outlet and testing ground for acquired historical knowledge.\textsuperscript{112} Re-enactors are understood to be different from interpreters in that re-enactors are unpaid, voluntary participants who engage in historical recreation in their leisure time. Interpreters – for the purpose of this study - are defined as


\textsuperscript{111} John D. Krugler, “Behind the Public Presentations: Research and Scholarship at Living History Museums of Early America,” \textit{William and Mary Quarterly} 48 n.3 (1991): 355.

\textsuperscript{112} Anderson, \textit{Time Machines}, 183-192.
the employees of or volunteers at historic sites that reenact or present history to the visiting public for the purpose of their heightened understanding and entertainment. Re-enactor groups, then, have little bearing on this study, though their motivations for participation speak to the motivations that draw the public to visit living history sites.

Anderson’s final function of living history is animation or interpretation. Living history sites interpret history through a variety of means, but without interpreters animating history and bringing it to life, so to speak, the presentation is not living history. Typically living history sites use historic dress so that the interpreter melds into the recreated historic context, aiding the visitor to ‘suspend their disbelief’ and imagine life as it once might have been. Sites employ a variety of interpretive approaches, often simultaneously, including first- and third-person interpretation, character interpretation, demonstrations, and museum theatre.

In third-person interpretation, the most common form employed by sites, the interpreter recognizes the past as being ‘then’, in the past, enabling them to explain interim events and to compare the past with the present. Demonstrators are a sub-category of third-person interpretation. Typically crafts or trades people, these interpreters, who may or may not be in costume, actively undertake an activity as it would have been done in the past and explain the process to visitors.

The interpreter using first-person interpretation, in contrast, enacts a character from the past, taking on historical language, mannerisms, and knowledge. Stacy Roth explains: “The interpreters behave in a fashion that evokes, as closely as possible, the

behavior, folkways, customs, beliefs, activities, foodways, speechways, tradeways, religions, technology, dress, deportment, and contemporary perspective of the past peoples they represent.\textsuperscript{114} When the character is an individual who actually once existed, as opposed to a ‘composite’ character, the first-person interpretation may be referred to as character interpretation. First-person interpretation is seen as a method that relates the past in a way that personalizes it through its ability to convey feelings, attitudes, beliefs, processes and social interaction.\textsuperscript{115} It, along with living history more generally, is seen as an interactive, multi-sensory, thought provoking method of engaging visitors and educating them about the past.

Theatre shares similar principles with first-person interpretation, yet is usually undertaken in a demarcated setting and is often scripted. Theatrical scenes are seen as a good way to broach controversial subjects because they allow for diverse opinions to be explored and they can be book-ended by discussion, providing historical context and enabling visitors to raise questions and engage in debate. Performances also occur at preset times giving visitors the choice of whether or not to attend.\textsuperscript{116}

Proponents of living history advocate its ability to engage the public through educational and entertaining enactments of past events, activities, skills, and social relationships. Yet, despite its popular success – or perhaps because of it – living history has been fundamentally and practically criticized. Living history is criticized as a deceptive oxymoron that lulls visitors into an uncritical acceptance of what they were witnessing. Authenticity is an elusive dream. In an oft-quoted article, “Is the Past

\textsuperscript{114} Roth, \textit{Past into Present}, 13.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 20.
\textsuperscript{116} Tessa Bridal, \textit{Exploring Museum Theatre} (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2004), 134-137; Catherine Hughes, \textit{Museum Theater – Communicating with Visitors through Drama} (Portsmouth, NH: Heineman, 1998), 54-58.
Dead?” Robert Ronsheim argued, “[t]he past is dead, and it cannot be brought back to life. Those beliefs and attitudes, conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational that provided a foundation for institutions, governed conduct and controlled behaviour cannot mean to us what they meant to those who lived them.”\textsuperscript{117} No re-creation of the past will ever be complete, he argued, for historians are always lacking evidence and the feelings and thoughts of historical actors are beyond our capabilities of understanding.\textsuperscript{118} He further asserted the trust that visitors developed because of a sense of involvement in the program led many to uncritically accept the version of history presented to them. This, he said, was dangerous because living history sites presented an imbalanced version of history that placed greater emphasis on architecture and productive activities than the economic or political systems.\textsuperscript{119}

Ronsheim’s critique has been restated by several scholars. Living history’s attempts to capture the past focused too heavily on economic-oriented activities and did not adequately address the more ‘cerebral processes’ of government or religion, David Peterson argued and, furthermore, they pursued popularity and entertainment over controversial subjects.\textsuperscript{120} Thomas Schlereth also disapproved of the over-simplified version of history neatly packaged at living history sites. He found that many sites romanticized history, depicting a past which was overly patriotic, with an emphasis on progressive evolution. Further, it was, disproportionately, a history of white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant males. As “shrines to the good old days,” he claimed, sites did not represent the conflict and discord affiliated with change and ‘progress’ and so only told a

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p. 16.
\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., p. 17.
\textsuperscript{120} David Peterson, “There is no Living History, There are no Time Machines,” \textit{History News} 43 n.5 (1988): 29.
partial account of history. One might add a lack of gendered analysis to this list of critiques of living history. More recently, Scott Magelssen has analyzed how historic sites construct ‘authenticity.’ Attempts at realism and naturalism, he states, limit the history sites are willing to present and lulls the visitors into a state of passivity where the site directs their gaze, the visitors ‘suspend their disbelief’ and lose their capacity for critical thought. These critics want living history advocates to moderate their claims of total authenticity considering the imbalance and incomplete nature of their presentations and for practitioners to work toward more inclusive representations of the past.

Though some sites recognize the subjectivity of their interpretations, many continue to assert their objectivity and authenticity. In a major work within the field, Richard Handler and Eric Gable examined the institutional life of Colonial Williamsburg, tracing the history presented at the site from upper management to the front-lines, examining how messages were altered en route. Although management sought to make clear to the public that history was not objective, the interpreters continued to communicate the idea that changes occurred on site as new facts were uncovered.

123 Richard Handler argues that although authenticity, or ‘isomorphism’, is the goal of historic sites this is impossible because of the presentation methods employed. He claims that authenticity has to do with the true existence of a thing, rather than its representation, in which case living history sites as representations of the past can never be considered authentic. See Richard Handler, “Authenticity,” Anthropology Today 2 n.1 (1986): 3.
In another article that takes a more theoretical approach, Handler and Saxton claim that ‘moderns’ understand an authentic life to be a storied, integrated whole, and that in striving to rewrite or recreate events as a narrative, as is done at living history sites, one cannot help but be reflexive. This self-conscious reflection negates all possibility of an authentic (unself-conscious) experience. See Richard Handler and William Saxton, “Dyssimulation: Reflexivity, Narrative, and the Quest for Authenticity in ‘Living History’,” Cultural Anthropology 3 n.3 (1988): 257.
improving authenticity.\textsuperscript{124} Furthermore, Handler, Gable, and Anna Lawson found that guides and visitors attributed authenticity to those narratives that were supported by objective evidence. Even though there is a degree of subjectivity present in all interpretations at Colonial Williamsburg, these scholars found a dramatic difference in the acknowledgement of this subjectivity between the main site and Carter’s Grove slave quarter. They conclude:

History, as Colonial Williamsburg interpreters sometimes tell their audience, is an invention of the present, dependent upon present-day preoccupations, not “the past” revealed for all to see. At other times, however, museum personnel invoke a different epistemology, a kind of naïve objectivism. We have argued that the second epistemology, a “just-the-facts” history, takes precedence in the stories the institution tells about whites, while a relativizing epistemology is used, even emphasized, in the stories told about blacks.\textsuperscript{125}

Even though complete authenticity is recognized by management as elusive, interpreters continue to stress the possibility of objective, and increasingly accurate, reconstructions of the past.

Several other studies have critiqued the ways in which living history sites have imbibed themselves with authenticity. Alan Gordon has undertaken a study of the creation of Sainte-Marie-among-the-Hurons, in Midland, Ontario. He finds that a major concern of the site creators was ensuring that this site of French, Roman-Catholic importance be accepted as part of Ontario’s heritage as the ‘first’ European settlement in order to generate high visitorship.\textsuperscript{126} Despite mass marketing efforts, however, surveys conducted in 1968 revealed that the Ontario public did not associate the site with the province’s


heritage. Another survey conducted that same year polled visitors for their suggestions on improving the site: of eighty-eight recommendations, twenty-three addressed historical authenticity, criticizing the messiness of the site and construction techniques, ironically asking that researched portrayals be changed to fit an inaccurate vision of what the authentic past was. In this case, as Gordon argues, the public assessed authenticity according to what they expected to see. What becomes important to question, he says, is not what is authentic but what generates a sense of authenticity. As historians studying the representations of the past at historic sites this is a valid and important inquiry. It emphasizes the benefit of developing knowledge regarding how history is both emitted and received by historic sites, on how prior knowledge and expectations shape what visitors read in to the messages presented by history sites. Although this study agrees that this is a crucial avenue of inquiry, it does not reject assessment of the accuracy of historic site narrations as unimportant. If sites portend to be purveyors of historic truth and authenticity, as many do, then the messages they emit should be held to high standards of accuracy, regardless of whether visitors expect this version of the past.

Scholars criticize living history sites for clouding the historical process and its subjectivity through claims to realism and authenticity. Yet few living history advocates ever put forth such claims of authentic completeness, at least publicly, though certainly site advertising stresses the ability to step back into the past. Advocates, such as James Deetz, who introduced first-person interpretation to Plimoth Plantation, clearly acknowledged that sites rarely approximate the pasts they are trying to recreate as there

---

127 Ibid., 524-525.
128 Ibid., 529-530.
are too many variables to possibly control. Likewise, Gaynor Kavanagh recognized that no recreation could be experienced as it was originally experienced because interim events and knowledge influence the curator’s and visitor’s judgments. Historians increasingly admit the subjectivity inherent in their work and make greater efforts to make visible the historical process.

To even approximate an authentic reconstruction of the past gender must be included at historic sites. In addition to the common mythological tropes of national origin and development, with their commitment to representing daily life living history sites must also incorporate narratives of family, love, and gendered behaviour, as well as work, faith, and community, into their interpretations. As Handler, Gable, and Lawson have shown, sites sometimes have difficulty with this because they lack collections and an objective base upon which to set such narratives. Likewise, as Gordon has argued, visitor understandings of what constitutes an authentic past also shape what historic sites consider important to include. Until more visitors expect that gender issues be addressed as part of an authentic portrayal at living history sites, sites are able to minimize and ignore such issues and still assert their authenticity. This project takes such claims to task by asking how accurate, or authentic to the past, living history sites’ representations of the lives of women and men are.

---

Methodology:

My research findings are drawn from three case studies of living history sites in Ontario. Fort Henry National Historic Site, Upper Canada Village and Fort William Historical Park were selected because of their large size, in terms of buildings and acreage, and staff and visitorship numbers. They also all fall under the purview of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, allowing for a comparison of how provincial tourism policies and funding decisions affect the interpretation across sites run by the same governmental body. This characteristic of the sites may limit the ability to broadly apply the conclusions of the study. Tourism and the goal of revenue generation is found to have a prevalent impact on the operations of the site under the aegis of the Ministry of Tourism; however, this study does not reveal whether sites run by different bodies, such as Parks Canada, are guided by the same concerns.

Several methods were used to identify the interpretive messages of the site, how these were communicated to the public, and how the public might have understood these messages. Drawing upon the work of Handler and Gable, Peers, and Eichstedt and Small, my project examines how historic sites in Ontario are engaging with women’s and gender history through a close observation of site practices, interviews with management and staff, exit surveys with visitors, historiographic comparisons, and archival research (See Appendix A).

Over the course of two summer field seasons I visited each site on approximately thirty separate days. I conducted research at Fort Henry National Historic Site and Fort William Historical Park between May and August 2008. Research at Fort William was done in three eight-to-fourteen day blocks. I spent eight and half days on site during late May-early June, allowing me to observe eight guided tours; eleven and a half days at Fort
William in early July, witnessing peak-season programming and the Rendezvous Weekend special event; and eleven days in mid-August. Twenty-nine days spent at Fort Henry were spread across the four month period. Fourteen days on site in May and June allowed me to observe tours run primarily for school groups, and over fifteen days in July and August I gathered evidence on programming run for summer tourist groups.

Research was conducted at Upper Canada Village during the summer of 2009. Nine days were spent on site in May and June, primarily on weekends. Nineteen days were spent at Upper Canada Village in July and August. Over the four month season I was able to partake in several special events run by the site, including all four Wedding ceremonies, the Funeral, Confederation Days, and the Election, as well as the Medieval Fair weekend and the Battle of Crysler’s Farm reenactment.

The primary means of gathering evidence was the close observation of interpretive methods at each site. I attended all program offerings multiple times and recorded notes regarding the content and tone of tours and presentations both during and/or immediately after the experience. I was also able to audio-record my interactions with interpreters in various buildings at Fort William and Upper Canada Village. Each of the dramatic scenes presented at Fort William was also recorded and transcribed. Photographs of the site layout, building interiors, museum displays, and interpretive presentations also help reconstruct site practices.

My observations of site practices are supplemented by interviews with members of management and of the interpretive staff. At each site, I conducted open-ended interviews of approximately one and a half hours in length with members of management involved in the operation of the historic area of the site. Titles and responsibilities varied
at each site but, overall, I was able to discuss standards and practices with those involved in curatorship, special event planning, program planning, and collections at each site.

Interviews with interpretive staff varied in formality depending on the site. At Fort William, for example, daily duties necessitated that I informally question staff only when visitors were absent and they had a free moment. At Fort Henry, on the other hand, staff scheduling enabled me to formally interview forty-one members of the Fort Henry Guard. The fact that I had previously worked on site and was familiar to a number of interviewees likely contributed to the willingness of staff to meet with me. It was significantly more challenging to obtain willing participants at Upper Canada Village because of tensions on site due to recent layoffs. Scheduling interviews was identified as a potential challenge, hence, in consultation with management, I developed an anonymous paper questionnaire for staff. Questions addressed work experience, the thematic messages of the site, how interpretation has changed over their tenure at the site, and whether the site adequately represents the experiences of women. I received eight completed questionnaires. Happily, three women also volunteered to discuss their experience and opinions about the site in an informal interview. The input received from management and staff in these interviews is critical to my understanding of why the sites operate the way they do and shed light on how the process of program development and implementation undergoes subtle shifts between the levels of management and interpretive staff. Their willing self-reflection and perceptive comments provide invaluable depth to my project.

I also sought to understand how visitors engaged with and understood the messages presented by the site by conducting a random sample of approximately fifty visitor questionnaires at each site. Each survey took about ten minutes to complete in its
entirety. Questions addressed the purpose of the visit to the historic site, what activities or programs they participated in, what activities they remember male and female interpreters undertaking, and whether they would like to see more ‘social’ interpretation at these historic sites. Though too few surveys were conducted to provide scientifically valid results, the quantitative results do indicate trends in visitor belief and behaviour, and the qualitative results reveal important findings about what visitors both expect and take away from their visits to historic sites.

My sources highlight the vital role members of management, interpreters, and visitors play in shaping the narratives of history presented by historic sites. The managers of the various departments, or areas, of each historic site communicate certain priorities to their staff members through training and evaluations. Interpreters bring their own unique educational background and web of personal experiences to the table, so to speak, which shape the topics they engage with and the way they express their knowledge. Visitors, in turn, bring their own set of expectations, curiosities, and distractions that influence their interactions with interpreters; their existing knowledge and their interests effect the questions they ask and the discussions they are willing to listen to. The interpretations I witnessed at each site were each unique. They often followed a predictable pattern, one typically endorsed by site officials, yet each conversation unfolded slightly differently. Even the scripted performances at Fort William contained slight variances in language and posture. This suggests that the findings of this study are particular to the years the research was undertaken. New management and a new crop of interpreters might significantly alter the presentation of history at each site. This does not devalue the conclusions this study presents. The consistent exclusion, segregation, and minimization of detailed gendered histories across all three sites signal that the lack of representation is
a systemic issue. Indeed, return visitation to the sites indicates that although the potential exists for individuals to alter the narrative, in practice the overarching framework the sites present and operate within is persistent.

**Outline:**

Thirty years after the social revolutions in history, how are historic sites integrating women’s and gender histories into their exhibits and interpretations? Have they managed to ‘translate’ scholarship into public history representations?\(^{131}\) Are visitors engaging with a past that is trustworthy? In seeking to explain what has been included and omitted from the narrative presented at historic sites, my project highlights the various factors that determine how the experiences of women and men have been portrayed.

The first chapter delineates the development of the tourism industry in Canada and Ontario and its relationship with the preservation movement. Upon realizing the financial and nation-building potentials of tourism early in the twentieth century, the federal government inserted itself into the regulation of the industry. At a similar time, it also took greater responsibility for the preservation and commemoration of locations and moments of import to Canada’s past. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these historic locations quickly became enmeshed in the tourism industry, marketed as important sites to see to truly understand Canada. Citizens petitioned the government for the preservation of notable sites in their areas, including Fort Henry and Fort William. Drawing upon the sites’ educational value as well as their potential financial rewards, petitioners sought to convince bureaucrats of their worth to the nation. In many cases, however, preservation was only pursued once the economic benefits of creating a historic site were deemed

\(^{131}\) Melosh, “Introduction,” 315.
sufficient. The relationship between tourism and history, indeed the development of tourism/history as coined by Ian McKay and Robin Bates,\textsuperscript{132} has profoundly shaped the representations of the past at historic sites.

Chapters three through five provide in-depth analyses of the representation of women’s history and gender at Fort Henry National Historic Site, Upper Canada Village and Fort William Historical Park. Each chapter follows a similar pattern. After a brief introduction to the layout of the site, program offerings are assessed. The representations of the past at each site are described and their accuracy is gauged compared to academic sources. The portrayal of the relationships between men and women, their labour, and their gendered behavioural roles, are assessed for each site. The factors shaping these representational choices are then explored. Managed by the provincial Ministry of Tourism, each site is directed by concerns of revenue generation and visitor retention. Meeting visitor expectations and providing an enjoyable experience are, similarly, considerations in program design. The sites create an edutainment experience, in which the conveyance of information and the production of amusing, engaging events are priorities, albeit not always equally weighted. Each chapter provides insight into the limitations and strengths of the representation of history at these historic sites, as well as into the factors affecting the decision making processes of management, staff and visitors. With a better understanding of these processes practitioners and visitors alike might be able to cast a more critical eye on historic sites and management might use this information to make interpretive changes that improve their site’s representation of the past.

\textsuperscript{132} See Ian McKay and Robin Bates, \textit{In the Province of History} (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010).
Chapter Two

Cashing in on History: Tourism and historic site development in Canada and Ontario

The tourism industry, one of the largest industries in Canada, set its foundations in the nineteenth century. The desire of people to interact with nature drove many to Canada’s hinterlands and defined forever the wilderness as quintessentially Canadian. By the late nineteenth century, private entrepreneurs were seeking to capitalize on tourism by developing services, such as hotels, along the railroad routes in the Rocky Mountains and in the national park system. The federal government assumed greater oversight of the industry in the 1930s, realizing the economic potential of tourism. At the same time as tourism was developing into a large industry, the preservation and commemoration of history were also being undertaken by provincial and federal governments. Though initially groups of citizens advocated for measures to be taken to preserve historical landmarks and landscapes for future generations, governments quickly realized that such attractions would be an asset to the tourism industry. Governments co-opted history into tourism/history, a hybrid representation of history that was selectively ordered and represented to tourists to make money. As Ian McKay and Robin Bates argue, “[r]ather than a public sphere of open, democratic debate about history, tourism/history creates a closed commercial sphere in which the significance of any given historical issue boils down to its capacity to generate saleable commodities.”¹ Through government managed historic sites an official version of tourism/history was sanctioned and sold to the public. From the earliest stages of government involvement in the creation of Fort Henry

¹ Ian McKay and Robin Bates, In the Province of History (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 51.
National Historic Site, Upper Canada Village, and Fort William Historical Park, government officials were motivated by a desire to strengthen the tourism industry and the economy and to affect a sense of national consciousness through the representation of select moments and versions of history. The representation of history created at these sites was shaped by the combined factors of revenue generation and nation building.

Tourism and the preservation movement developed side by side in Canada, often working together to bolster each other but also at times competing to determine the goals that would take precedence in the design and operation of historic sites.

The Growth of the Tourism Industry in Canada, with a focus on Ontario:

The tourism industry is fundamentally built on the desire to make money. Although people travel for a variety of reasons, the tourism plant that has been built up over two centuries developed because of the potential to generate revenue from tourists. As early as the nineteenth century, when tourists were motivated by romantic inclinations and the desire to experience nature, vendors capitalized on tourists’ need to remember experiences by selling souvenirs. Private companies developed the industry further. The CPR, for example, built hotels and restaurants along rail-lines to increase passenger travel. When automobiles changed how people travelled at the turn of the century, entrepreneurs adapted and built motor-camps and motels catering to tourists. By the 1930s the economic potential of the tourism industry incited the federal government of Canada to assert oversight of the industry. While the government hoped to profit from tourism, it also saw the opportunity to shape the construction of national identity through the development of tourist attractions such as historic sites. During the prosperity of the post-war period, the tourism industry boomed, with increasing numbers of Americans and
Canadians travelling to Ontario. In response, the tourism plant underwent massive renovations and construction, with the provincial government setting new standards for hotels and restaurants and improving roads. The industry continues to be a major employment and revenue source for the province, despite a downturn in the late 1980s and 1990s.

*Planting the roots of the tourism industry:*

Although people had been touring for hundreds of years, whether making pilgrimages to religious shrines or taking an edifying Grand Tour across Europe,\(^2\) the mass tourism industry that is so familiar to us today only began to take shape in the mid-nineteenth century. Initially still an elite pastime, the development and expansion of transportation methods, range of attractions and, perhaps most importantly, a shifting understanding of leisure time, extended vacations to the middle classes. As Cindy S. Aron has shown, in the mid-nineteenth century a wide variety of vacation types were available for middle and upper class Americans. Ranging from resort vacations, self-improvement camps, and touring, there was a vacation to appeal to all manners of middle-class people.\(^3\) The working classes, however, were largely excluded from considerations of vacations and leisure until the early twentieth century when the automobile enabled an increasing number of people to travel further and further away from home. Changing work environments and the introduction of paid vacation time embedded the importance of tourism as a major leisure time activity and industry. Though initially developed by

\(^2\) The first reference to an English Grand Tour across Europe is for 1679, though this practice was most popular among the elite between 1763 and 1793. See Louis Turner and John Ash, *The Golden Hordes – International Tourism and the Pleasure Periphery* (London: Constable, 1975), 32-33, 38.

private interests, by the 1930s the tourism industry was sufficiently large and prosperous that federal and, in the case of Canada, provincial governments began to oversee and manage the growth of the industry.

In the nineteenth century, tourism in North America was driven by romantic sensibilities. Though rooted in Europe, the Romantic Movement and its beliefs fundamentally shaped the tourist attractions in North America and left a lasting mark on the industry. Based on the valuation of sensibility over sense, of feeling and emotion over rationality, romanticism created a kind of back to nature movement where individuals sought new experiences and meanings from the environment. In turn, the categories of the sublime, that powerful landscape inspiring deep emotion or awe, and the picturesque, that landscape which is visually appealing but lacking deep emotional response, were articulated. The Canadian landscape offered romantic individuals seeking sublime or picturesque experiences a smorgasbord of options. Niagara Falls, in particular, quickly developed a reputation for the sublime. Similarly, as Patricia Jasen ably shows, the romance of the St. Lawrence River and the primitive wilderness of the upper Great Lakes region appealed to many tourists in the nineteenth century. Jasen argues, drawing upon Colin Campbell, that the Romantic Movement ushered in an association of objects with feeling and the consumption of objects to capture the essence of the emotional experience. As more and more tourists sought out landscapes for emotional experiences, more and more enterprising businessmen sought to provide tourists with ways of enhancing, extending or recalling that experience. A growing

---


‘tourism plant,’ as it would later come to be called, grew around attractions, providing visitors accommodation, food, entertainment, and mementos. The Romantic Movement, then, laid the groundwork for tourism in Canada, establishing both the landscape as a central tourist draw and the consumption of objects, or souvenirs, as a legitimate way of remembering one's experiences.

The Canadian Pacific Railway’s [CPR] efforts to prosper from tourism led them to pioneer the first park reservations in the country, which, when assumed by the federal government in 1911, formed the initial basis of government managed tourist attractions. Upon its completion, the management of the CPR set out to recuperate construction costs. William Cornelius Van Horne identified the appeal of the scenery surrounding the tracks, particularly in the Rocky Mountains, as an asset. “If we can’t export the scenery,” he stated, “we’ll import the tourists.” Although passenger earnings comprised only a small part of CPR operations, attracting tourists was a significant enough enterprise that the company committed funds to the construction of dining stations and hotels along the most scenic routes. The government allotted parcels of land for such use to the CPR. Following the growing popularity of Banff Hot Springs as a therapeutic get-away and the springs’ designation as a park in 1885, in 1886 the company built three more restaurant stops with overnight accommodation to entice tourists. Shortly thereafter in 1887, the

---

7 Additionally, the CPR profited from the parks as areas of resource extraction; transport of the coal mined in the mountain parks provided a crucial stream of income for the company. See Leslie Bella, *Parks for Profit* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1987), 25. Indeed, in 1886 freight earned the company more than twice as much income as did passenger earnings. See Hart, *Selling of Canada*, 8.
government expanded the hot springs’ park reservation and created the Rocky Mountains Park, the second national park in North America after Yellowstone. Through the turn of the century, the CPR’s advertising efforts made Canada’s Rocky Mountains known world-wide and drew an increasing number of tourists. In response to the parks growing popularity, the government designated other parks along the railroad route and the CPR continued to construct, and profit from, resort facilities. As Leslie Bella argues, fifty years of control and favoured treatment by governments had allowed the Canadian Pacific Railroad, and to a lesser extent Canadian National, to build on the best sites, to finance the best facilities, and to control their business and physical environment. [...] They [the parks] were not built to preserve a natural landscape, but to centralize control of that landscape in the hands of the railroad.

The railroad’s monopoly on national park tourism ended, however, with the rise of automobile culture and the federal government’s decision to assert greater control over the prosperous parks for themselves.

Growth in national park visitorship and, relatedly, an increase in earning potential spurred the federal government to assert greater control over the national parks. The government took stock of the number of visitors to the parks in the Rocky Mountains, ever increasing since the rise of the automobile, and considered that more should be done to protect the parks. As a result, in 1911 the National Parks Branch [NPB] was created under the Ministry of the Interior. All national parks and scenic reserves in the Rocky Mountain area were designated as Dominion Parks. J.B. Harkin was the first head of the NPB and, with no vested interest in railroad monopolies, he set about increasing

10 Bella, Parks for Profit, 14.
11 Hart, Selling of Canada, 69-71. In 1887 3000 visitors were recorded to the area and this number was up to 7250 in 1891 and approximately 8000 in 1901. See Bella, Parks for Profit, 20.
12 Bella, Parks for Profit, 24.
accessibility to auto-tourists. Harkin’s prime consideration in park development (i.e. road construction, etc.) seems to have been the profitability of the parks with regard to the generation of tourism. He even went so far as to note that scenery as a resource was worth $13.88 an acre compared to the paltry $4.91 value of an acre of wheatland. In addition to the economic benefits of parks, Harkin also stressed the humanitarian benefits, including improved health through recreation, access to beauty, and an escape from modernity. Fundamentally though, from their inception through the change-over to government administration parklands were viewed by their overseeing heads as economic assets to the tourism industry.

The growth of the automobile industry throughout the first half of the twentieth century changed the face of tourism by democratizing travel and fundamentally changing infrastructure. Unlike travelling by train, the automobile allowed its passengers the ultimate freedom of deciding the route to take, when to stop, and what to explore. Instead of passively watching the scenery unfold from a train compartment, automobilists actively interacted with their environment. The increase in car ownership over the first half of the twentieth century was significant. Though only five hundred Canadians registered car ownership in 1904, that number had risen to over one million by the late 1920s, and to four million by 1960. Autos were initially bought for pleasure tripping

---

13 Ibid., 61.
14 Ibid., 63.
16 Shaffer, *See America First*, 132.
17 John A. Jakle, *The Tourist – Travel in twentieth-century North America* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1985), 121, 128. Car ownership was more common in the more populous United States, where the number of registered cars grew from 8,000 in 1900 to 458,000 in 1910, 8,000,000 in 1920 and 23,000,000 in 1930.
and a popular turn of the century activity was caravanning across the country.\textsuperscript{18} In consequence, automobilists called for more and improved roads and services. The number of highways grew exponentially in the 1920s following the Canada Highways Act of 1919, which provided federal funding for the development of a system of highways that would connect the country coast-to-coast.\textsuperscript{19} A coast-to-coast highway was not completed until 1962, after a cost-sharing agreement was reached between the federal government and the provinces in the Trans-Canada Highway Act of 1949. Similarly, a new host of roadside attractions and accommodations sprang up during the 1920s and 1930s to cater to the needs of the modern traveler, including motels, gas stations, roadside diners, and drive-in campsites.\textsuperscript{20} Where in the past the railroad sought to capitalize on tourists, a new assortment of businesses was established to serve and benefit from tourists.

While the advent of the automobile enabled a wider variety of people to take vacations further afield, so too did the increasing number of employers offering paid vacations to workers. As Karen Dubinsky notes, by the 1920s paid vacations were offered to most North American white-collar workers and professionals.\textsuperscript{21} A growing number of industries turned to paid vacations in the 1930s as a way to combat labour unrest and unionization during the Depression. In 1937 40\% of workers were receiving paid vacations and 70\% of the companies in the United States offering paid vacations had

\textsuperscript{18} Jakle, \textit{Tourist}, 120; John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, \textit{Motoring: the highway experience in America} (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2008), 25, 27; Shaffer, \textit{See America First}, 135. Although Shaffer addresses only the United States, there is no reason not to assume that this trend would occur in Canada also.
\textsuperscript{19} Jakle, \textit{Tourist}, 121-127.
\textsuperscript{20} For a brief discussion about autocamps and accommodation at Niagara in the 1920s see Karen Dubinsky, \textit{The Second Greatest Disappointment} (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1999), 127-129.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 118-119.
instituted the practice since 1930. An increasingly diverse and numerous population became tourists in its expanding leisure time, and private and governmental tourism groups sought to market to them.

As the number of tourists grew in the early twentieth century, private agencies and, eventually, government departments were formed to coordinate advertising and to ensure better profitability from the tourism industry. On Prince Edward Island, for example, the Summerside Improvement and Tourist Association was formed in 1903 and the P.E.I. Development and Tourist Association was formed in 1905 at the instigation of local businessmen; both sought to demonstrate the importance of tourism to the local economy. Yet, P.E.I’s tourism industry grew with little official direction until the P.E.I. Tourist and Publicity Association was formed by the government in 1923 to focus available resources on publicity. Nova Scotia followed a similar pattern. Corporate interests promoted the Evangeline Phenomenon in the Annapolis Valley from around the 1880s. As tourism numbers to the province grew in the 1910s, private business efforts joined forced under the Nova Scotia Tourist Association, later the Nova Scotia Publicity Bureau. The Nova Scotia Motor League also sought to promote tourism in the area by organizing markers along routes for tourist interest. In 1928 provincial involvement expanded as the Provincial Tourist Bureau became a part of the Information and Tourism branch of the Department of Highways. Similarly, private interests guided tourism

---


23 Alan MacEachern, “No Island is an Island: A history of tourism on Prince Edward Island 1870-1939” (MA diss., Queen’s University, 1991), 85-100.

24 McKay and Bates, Province of History, 64, 103.

initially in British Columbia with government involvement occurring only shortly before WWII. The Ontario government jumped on the tourism bandwagon earlier than most provinces, legislating a park around Niagara Falls in 1885 to preserve the landscape for tourists from industrial encroachment. By 1929 promotional brochures highlighting leisure activities and accommodations were also created by the province. In all cases, regardless of timeline, government interest in tourism promotion occurred after private interests demonstrated the economic potential of the industry.

The tourist economy was diverse and locally-managed prior to the 1930s when the national government, at the prodding of private interests and provincial governments, intervened to take a leading role in managing the Canadian tourism industry. Up until 1934 the only branch of the federal government promoting tourism was the Department of the Interior, which, since 1911, ran the National Parks Branch and had added a publicity division in the 1920s. Yet, as Alisa Apostle notes, throughout the 1920s and 1930s the government was carving out a larger role for itself in the management of the economy and culture. Asserting a measure of control over the tourist industry was no great leap. Facing a decline in foreign visitors since the onset of the Depression in

---

26 British Columbia experienced its share of civic boosterism at the turn of the century, with various groups, including the Tourist Association, working to beautify cities, improve transportation, and promote Victoria and Vancouver in an effort to attract settlement and business investment. By the 1920s these organizations underwent a shift from boosterism to outright promotion, and organizations such as the Tourist Trade Development Association of Victoria and Vancouver Island were formed. A centralized effort to coordinate tourism under the provincial government, however, did not take shape until 1938 when a provincial tourist council was established and, eventually, the Tourist Act established the British Columbia Government Travel Bureau. See Dawson, Selling British Columbia, 27-109.


29 Apostle, “Vacations Unlimited,” 45-47. She notes, amongst other organizations, the Canadian Radio Broadcasting Commission of 1932 (which became the CBC in 1936), the Canadian Government Motion
1929, provincial representatives, particularly from the Maritimes, called for a Senate Special Committee on tourism traffic in 1934. Over four weeks in May 1934, the Committee members heard testimony from a number of ‘experts’ on the current situation and the promise of tourism in Canada. J.B. Harkin, Minister of the Interior from 1911 to 1936, noted that, the National Parks system provided the “raw materials for tourists, that is the ultimate in scenery,” but that financial appropriations had been dwindling leaving little budget for advertising.\textsuperscript{30} Other witnesses remarked upon the need for improved infrastructure, better advertising, and the need for a centralized body to coordinate efforts. After deliberations, the Senate Committee found that the tourist trade was a matter of national concern and advocated an “aggressive campaign of tourism promotion.” As such, it called for the establishment of a Canadian Travel Bureau to be financed by the federal government, a permanent program of tourism promotion, and the extension of the national parks system. As an indication of the growing importance of tourism, all of the Committee’s recommendations were acted upon.\textsuperscript{31} Following 1934 tourism was regulated both federally and provincially.

The Canadian tourist industry grew from its nineteenth century, elite, romantic origins. By the twentieth century tourism was expanding from a predominantly elite and middle-class practice to include the working-classes. The growing popularity of the automobile, beginning in the late nineteenth century and expanding exponentially through to WWII, contributed to the democratization of travel and greatly altered the shape of the tourist landscape. The spread of paid vacations, reaching ever more people in Canada and

---

\textsuperscript{30} Kyte, “V-8,” 54.  
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 61-89.
the United States during the 1930s, also increased the economic potential of the tourism industry. Privately run and provincially administered tourist bureaus developed in tandem with the growth of the industry, seeking to promote areas to both tourists and business investors. With the industry facing challenges wrought by the Depression, yet promising to be an economic boon to Canadian society, the federal government asserted some control over the industry in 1934.

**Boom: The Tourism Industry in the Postwar Period**

The tourism industry underwent substantial growth in the post-war period, producing increases in tourist numbers, revenues, and jobs through to the 1980s. Changes in attitudes towards leisure time, as well as legislative changes making vacations more accessible, helped to spur the travel bug for many North Americans. The federal and provincial governments, which had asserted their role as overseers of the industry in 1934, faced numerous challenges in meeting the needs of an expanding number of tourists but reaped many financial rewards. Tourism would become one of the Ontario’s top five exports and a major contributor to the province’s Gross Domestic Product. As officials worked to secure tourists’ time and money through multiple promotion campaigns, they defined Canada for visitors and citizens, drawing heavily on the traditional image of wilderness and increasingly on the country’s urban attractions. The tourism industry developed in the post-war period both as an economic powerhouse and as a creator of national consciousness.

The tourism industry, like many others, boomed in the post-war period. Tourist numbers declined beginning in 1939, inciting valiant attempts to maintain tourist numbers
during the war.\textsuperscript{32} By 1949 the industry had rebounded enough to boast a record breaking year to date, with tourism revenues reported at $282 million.\textsuperscript{33} In January of 1950, during a speech to the Hotelman’s Association of Ontario, Premier Leslie Frost noted a 50% increase in automobiles entering the country from the United States over the previous year.\textsuperscript{34} Numbers continued to grow throughout the 1950s and 1960s, leading the Minister of Tourism and Information, James Auld, to assert in 1969 that, “[t]he Sixties, just ended, could be described as the decade in which tourism reached its majority.”\textsuperscript{35}

The Canadian Tourist Bureau had much work to do developing the ‘tourism plant’ in the post-war period to make it ready for the influx of visitors to the country. Both the federal and provincial governments paid great attention to the standards of the industry. New post-secondary courses in tourism hospitality were inaugurated to improve the skills of service-industry workers and new bureaucracies were created to regulate and rate hotels and restaurants.\textsuperscript{36} Dalton M. Waller, president of the Canadian Tourist Association, reported that the tourism industry was second only to the auto industry in Ontario in 1968, and noted its continued growth with the recent construction – no doubt related to Expo ’67 - of 30,000 hotels and 25,000 restaurants.\textsuperscript{37} James Auld similarly reported for 1965 that the Ontario government had invested $28 million on new attractions and events, such as festivals, pageants, and historic sites, to bring new visitors

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{32} Apostle, “Vacations Unlimited,” 156, 169. See also Dawson, \textit{Selling British Columbia}, 126 for a discussion of the effect of the war on the British Columbia tourism industry.

\textsuperscript{33} Apostle, “Vacations Unlimited,” 215.

\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Address by Leslie M. Frost to the Hotelman’s Association of Ontario, Royal York Hotel, 15 January 1950}, in RG 3-33, b292205, “April ’49 – January ’52,” Provincial Archives of Ontario [PAO], Toronto, Ontario.

\textsuperscript{35} Department of Tourism and Information and the Department of Public Records and Archives, Ontario, \textit{Annual Report for the year 1969} (Toronto: Queen’s Printer, 1970).


to the province. Further additions were made in the centennial year with the grand
gen the Ontario Science Centre and the National Arts Centre. Road improvement
constructions also became a priority for provincial governments hoping to attract
American travelers to their province. Joint efforts to promote touring routes across the
country, for example the Heritage Highway through Ontario and Quebec, sought to
economically benefit multiple regions. As tourism flourished in the post-war era,
governments made more capital investments and committed more resources to the
improvement and regulation of the industry.

The primary drivers of this growth were American and Canadian tourists.
Americans were especially important to the Ontario tourism business, generating 90% of
the province’s foreign travel receipts. 55% of US tourist expenditures in Canada were
made in Ontario in 1965. Similarly, Ontario captured 73.9% of all foreign cars entering
Canada in 1961, which, considering geography, most likely originated in the United
States. Further statistics reported by the Travel Research Branch of the Ministry of
Information and Tourism uphold the importance of American tourists to the industry in
Ontario. The number of American visitors grew steadily throughout the 1950s and 1960s,
with 15.8 million reported for 1950 and 23.2 million recorded in 1965. American
contributions to the tourist industry were surpassed only by Canadians travelling within
their country. In 1968 U.S. and foreign expenditures in Ontario totaled approximately
$500 million, while Ontarians contributed $920 million and other Canadians $288

38 Department of Tourism and Information and the Department of Public Records and Archives, Ontario, Annual Report for the year 1965 (Toronto: Queen’s Printer, 1966), 5.
This trend continued into the 1970s. In 1973 U.S expenditures in Ontario totaled $626.4 million and other foreign expenditures contributed a much smaller $135.8 million, while Ontarians spent $942.7 million on tourism and tourism related activities and other Canadians spent $243.7 million. This time period also saw a diversification in the socio-economic status of tourists. With most Ontarians granted one week of paid vacation in 1944, similar legislation achieved across Canada by 1947, and four-fifths of American private sector employees given paid vacations by 1946, tourists were increasingly of the working class. Tourism promoters also identified women as a growing market of travelers and targeted them as business travelers, and family decision-makers, in advertisements. Tourism promotion had a growing and diversifying audience of Americans and Canadians to target.

The aims of tourism promotion were two-fold: to improve the economic returns of the tourism industry by increasing the number of visitors and the duration of their stay, and to develop national consciousness and identity. The tourism industry helped to shape the ‘imagined community’ of Canada. During the 1934 Senate Committee, Leo Dolan, who was shortly afterwards appointed the head of the Canadian Tourism Bureau, said, “I do not know of any agency that has done more to create a national spirit and a national consciousness in this Dominion than the tourist industry.” During the post-war years centralized tourism promotion defined Canada, its landmarks, and culture, for citizens and visitors alike. Advertisements provided snap-shots of places and things deemed

---

42 Ontario Department of Tourism and Information, Travel Research Branch, Statistical Handbook 1975.
43 Dubinsky, “Everybody likes Canadians,” 322; see also Dawson, Selling British Columbia, 138-140.
44 Dubinsky, “Everybody likes Canadians,” 323; see also Dawson, Selling British Columbia, 138-140.
representative of a Canadian experience. Slogans and text defined the essence of Canada that visitors could expect to find on their travels. These representations, selectively constructed by only a few, were disseminated widely and embedded themselves in popular culture and imagination.

Tourism promotions focused on selective elements of Canadian life and society, designating these aspects with a sense of importance to Canadian identity. A 1949 article, “Distinctively Canadian,” outlined for visitors what they could expect to find in Canada: bush pilots, Hudson Bay blankets, moccasins, elk, and canoes – all hinting at the wilderness tradition of the country that the tourism industry was founded upon.⁴⁶ Throughout much of the 1950s and early 1960s, advertisements played upon this association with the outdoors, with promotional brochures beckoning people to come to “Ontario for a Refreshing Vacation,” providing information on angling, hunting, camp sites, and winter sports.⁴⁷ In 1965, however, Ministry officials considered that this angle limited the appeal of Canada and neglected the more cosmopolitan developments of recent years.⁴⁸ Thenceforth, promotional material sought to balance Canada’s wild nature with its more modern tendencies.⁴⁹ James Auld summarized the shifting goals of the Ministry nicely:

Ontario has always been known for its great outdoors, for its unspoiled wilderness, but we want to make it quite clear […] that we have good roads, and good places to eat, good accommodation, modern conveniences all over, because we have found from surveys which we have done particularly in the

---

⁴⁷ Department of Tourism and Information and the Department of Public Records and Archives, Ontario, Annual Report for the year 1964 (Toronto: Queen’s Printer, 1966), 26. See also Apostle, “Vacations Unlimited,” 282-290 for a discussion of the focus on winter sports, fishing, national parks, historic sites, canoeing, fishing, and boating in promotional print and film media.
⁴⁸ Department of Tourism and Information and the Department of Public Records and Archives, Ontario, Annual Report for the year 1965 (Toronto: Queen’s Printer, 1966), 5.
⁴⁹ See also Dubinsky, “Everybody likes Canadians,” 334 for a discussion of this.
States, that there are still people who don’t realize that we’re a modern province in a modern country.  

In 1969 the advertising branch of the Ministry of Tourism and Information articulated again its goal of providing a balanced impression of Canada, using three key elements to attract Americans, including outdoor living, cities and sightseeing, and scenery. While landscape and the outdoors still received a heavy emphasis, modernity was also gaining ground.

The post-war period saw an enormous expansion in the tourist industry of Canada and Ontario, more specifically. As the number of tourists rose, in part due to freedom from wartime restraint, a rise in paid vacations, and an increase in wealth and leisure time, so too did the number of businesses providing service to them. In turn, governments sought to regulate and standardize the tourist industry to ensure a high quality of service, return patronage, and word-of-mouth advertising. Provincial tourism agencies oversaw the official promotion of the provinces and selectively articulated what the best of Canada and, by extension, Canadians, was. Canada’s association with wilderness scenes and outdoor activities was, and continues to be, a staple in tourism advertising, though by the mid-1960s officials sought to modernize Canada’s image, and widen its appeal, by highlighting its many cities and cosmopolitan attractions. As Alisa Apostle well expressed it,

[m]any of the images produced for the tourism industry in the period of its definition and consolidation – from the mid-30s to the mid 50s – still circulate in Canada today. Likewise, the tourism infrastructure that had been put in place by the end of the 1950s still shapes the practices and attitudes of tourists, promoters, and Canadians in general – from cross-country road trips

---

and camping in national parks, to resentment about the domination by American sportsmen of Canada’s ‘natural’ wilderness.  

Recession and Recovery: Tourism from 1986 to the present

The post-war tourism boom continued through to the mid-1980s. Officials lauded the high performance of the tourist industry late into the 1980s and, as a recession became more entrenched and a tourism slump was felt through the 1990s, the heights of the mid-80s were aspired to. If, as John Eakins, asserted in 1986, “Ontario’s future prosperity depends on realizing the economic potential of our leisure service industries,” the future looked promising in 1986 and 1987. Ontario tourism experienced an 11% growth in 1986, with U.S. tourist numbers up 4.9% from the previous year, overseas numbers up 23.8%, Quebec numbers up 82.4%, and Ontario’s numbers up 12.8%. The tourism industry increased from $6.3 billion in 1982 to $9.3 billion in 1987. 125 million people toured across Ontario in 1987, creating the equivalent of 470 000 full time jobs. Yet, a number of factors at the end of the decade caused a decline or flat-line in the tourism industry, leading Anne Swarbrick, Minister of Tourism and Recreation, to proclaim in 1993 that “[t]he situation is urgent. Ontario is losing its share of the world tourism market.” Uncertainty caused by the introduction of GST, the Meech Lake Accord, and the Gulf War, as well as a challenging economy due to a high Canadian dollar, high gas prices, and a recession, were listed in numerous daily papers as contributing to a poor

55 Remarks by the Honourable Hugh O’Neil, Minister of Tourism and Recreation, at the National Tourism Awareness Week Kick-Off Breakfast, Kitchener, 16 May 1988 in RG 65-51, b708613, file 5, PAO, Toronto, Ontario; Bullet points for remarks by D. Blair Tully, Deputy Minister of Tourism and Recreation, at Tourism Awareness Week Media Launch, Spadina Quay West, Toronto, 15 May 1989 in RG 65-51, b708613, file 2, PAO, Toronto, Ontario.
climate for tourism.\(^{57}\) Furthermore, the inability to shop on Sundays, combined with a stronger dollar, was cited as drawing many Canadians into border states for their travels rather than to Ontario’s larger cities. In the first eight months of 1989 the number of trips by Americans to Canada was down 5.3%, and Tourism Canada found that Ontario lost 700,000 tourists between 1988 and 1989.\(^{58}\) Roly Michener, president of Tourism Ontario, lamented that the industry suffered a 22% decline in revenues in 1989.\(^{59}\) Despite a strong beginning to the decade, the 1980s produced a decline in growth of the tourism industry that lasted well into the 1990s.

The tourism industry saw some recovery in the late 1990s, only to be hard-hit again by the international repercussions of 9/11 in 2001 and the fears surrounding the SARS outbreak in 2003. From 1993, which recorded a lean 21.4 million American visitors, the number of American tourists to Ontario grew, finally reaching 30.0 million in 1999. Numbers have eroded since then however, experiencing drastic reductions to 13.2 million in 2008.\(^{60}\) Similar trends are witnessed for overseas visitors to Ontario, with 2003 producing the lowest number of visitors in the 2000s, with only 1.6 million.\(^{61}\) Numbers of domestic travelers to Ontario fluctuated throughout the 1990s between a low year of 73.2 million and a high of 77.6 million. Similarly, domestic travel was on the increase in

\(^{57}\) See RG 65-12 Ministry of Tourism and Recreation media reports, PAO, Toronto, Ontario.
the early 2000s until 2003, when it dropped to 74.7 million travelers as compared to 81.3 million in the previous year. Numbers rose again in 2004 and improved moderately to 2008.\textsuperscript{62}

The tourism industry is built on the desire to generate revenue and to construct a sense of shared national identity. From the nineteenth century tourism has been associated with consumerism. Tourism is a business; its operation is designed to produce profits. In the creation of tourist attractions, such as landscapes, museums, and historic sites, government bodies have constructed what is essential to see and experience. In so doing, they have defined a Canadian identity that is communicated to each visitor. History has been marshaled by governments for the purposes of tourism, serving as an attraction that represents very specific ideals about Canadian culture and identity.

**Commemorating History and Promoting Tourism**

Parallel with the development of the tourist industry, governments also assumed responsibility for commemorating and preserving histories judged to be of national and provincial significance. Recognizing the National Parks division’s lack of expertise in managing the historic sites under its aegis, Harkin formed the Historic Sites and Monument’s Board [HSMB] in 1919 to advise the Department of the Interior. Most sites marked by the HSMB reflected board members’ biases towards Loyalist and military history. In the 1930s, however, the preservation movement gained ground and the burgeoning tourist industry demanded more experiential attractions for visitors. As a result, demands for the restoration or reconstruction of historic sites grew. The HSMB

was firmly opposed to this, yet the tide had turned. In the 1950s and 1960s the HSMB, as part of the parks agency more broadly, became involved in the development of large historic sites. Ontario developed its own advisory board in the early 1950s. Plagued by problems of authority and budget, the board got off to a slow start and survived only to 1957, when the duty of recommending sites for commemoration fell to the Archeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario. The federal and provincial governments undertook to place commemorative markers and preserve historic sites to protect national history and contribute to the tourism industry, yet the bodies that they put in place to oversee such actions were often marginalized.

The development of the Historical Advisory Boards

Prior to 1919 a variety of preservation-minded groups agitated for and coordinated the protection and commemoration of historical landmarks and landscapes. Yet, Harkin, head of the Dominion Parks Branch of the Department of the Interior, was concerned over how to manage the rising number of heritage sites under his department’s control. He recognized that the department lacked the money and historical expertise to manage the sites. Therefore, in 1919, Harkin wrote to the Minister of the Interior suggesting that an honorary board be appointed “of men from all parts of the country who are authorities on Canadian history, to advise the Department in the matter of preserving

---

63 The Committee for the Preservation of Scenic and Historic Places was formed in 1901 to preserve historic landscapes and in 1907 the Historic Landmarks Association was initiated to work on the development of the Plains of Abraham and lobby the government for money for various preservation projects. Once the Quebec Battlefields Commission (later National Battlefields Commission) was established in late 1907-1908 the focus of the HLA broadened its focus to historic sites across Canada. See C.J. Taylor, *Negotiating the Past* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1990), 21-24.
those sites which pre-eminently possess Dominion-wide interest.” The Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada was born.

The board served a dual purpose. On the one hand, it identified sites of national importance and recommended commemoration methods for said sites; on the other, it developed a roster of tourist attractions that would have commercial benefits. According to C. J. Taylor, Harkin was a firm advocate of the latter while the men who comprised the board “emphasized their moral value in helping to civilize a raw and materialist society. They considered themselves part of an educated elite whose duty it was to impart proper values of patriotism, duty, self-sacrifice, and spiritual devotion to young and new Canadians and members of the lower orders of society.” In 1925 the HSMB recognized this dual purpose in a statement promoting the preservation of the fortification of Quebec, arguing that such military posts should be protected because they “are an attraction to travelers and the general public, and that their preservation is a stimulus to the growth of a healthy national and patriotic sentiment in our land…” The preponderance of military sites amongst those recognized by the Board suggests both the narrow, masculine, statist view of national significance, and the influence of militaristic thinking. On the rise in most imperial countries since at least the 1880s, and exacerbated by the First World War, militarism pursued and promoted a healthy respect for a state-run military, and aggressive, gallant masculinities that were willing to die for their countries. The “national and patriotic sentiment” that Board members pursued was specific, and the sites

64 Ibid., 30-31.
65 Ibid., 47.
66 Ibid., 63-64.
they selected supported an identity of which dedication and loyalty to the nation, in spirit
and in body, was a fundamental characteristic.

The board lacked, however, any clear direction from the government as to their
exact authority, as well as any budget to undertake projects. Many of its efforts in the
1920s proceeded on an ad hoc basis. Guided by the proclivities of the Board members,
the HSMB compiled a list of sites to commemorate that disproportionately recognized
Loyalist sites, military sites, and moments of geographic expansion. “Firsts” in Canadian
history were prominent among HSMB markers.68 Actions taken by the Board were
commemorative only and it showed little interest in preservation. During the 1930s,
however, the preservation movement gained popularity in government circles as the
growth of the tourism industry raised the demand for tangible heritage sites to visit.
Provincial agencies, such as the Niagara Parks Commission, took a role in preserving
historic sites.69 The federal government undertook several heritage preservation and
reconstruction projects using relief money in the late 1930s, such as Fort Henry, the
Halifax Citadel, and Port Royal. The HSMB, however, remained firmly opposed to such
projects, arguing that reconstructions had “doubtful authenticity” and were, as such,
“absurd and a mere waste of money.”70 During the 1930s the board steadily lost its
ability to influence government actions, in part due to their recalcitrant stance on
restoration and heritage projects and in part due to the retirement of Harkin.71

The HSMB and its commemorative actions experienced renewed prominence in
the 1950s as nationalistic sentiment grew. The 1949 Massey Commission found that

68 Taylor, Negotiating the Past, 48-60, 72-73.
69 Ibid., 102. See also W.F. Lothian, A Brief History of Canada’s National Parks (Ottawa: Parks Canada,
1987), 152.
70 Taylor, Negotiating the Past, 116.
71 Ibid., 124.
preservation was critical if Canadians were to know as much as possible about the
country, its history, and traditions. Thus it recommended several changes and
improvements to the HSMB, including a greater emphasis on restoration and
preservation, more accessible markers, and better funding, as well as recommending that
the federal government protect historic sites by transferring their care to the National
Parks Service. In response An Act to establish the Historic Sites and Monuments Board
of Canada was passed in 1953 and later amended in 1955, formally outlining official
powers of the Board for the first time. The Board was to consider recommendations for
the commemoration of historic places, the establishment of historic museums, and the
preservation and maintenance of historic places. The Parks Branch was also given an
increased budget; from $6.9 million in 1953 the budget grew to $14.2 million in 1963.
This enabled the Branch to commit to the development of more historic parks across the
country. The types of sites considered of national significance continued to represent
moments of discovery, exploration, settlement, and Loyalist defence in the 1950s, as the
federal government set about developing a major heritage site in each region. For the
first time, in the 1950s the HSMB rallied behind preservation and the development of
several historical parks across the country.

The federal government continued to develop the historic park system in the
1960s and 1970s, with projects such as the reconstruction of Louisbourg, the excavation
of L’Anse Aux Meadows, and the restoration of Province House in P.E.I. The HSMB,
however, was increasingly alienated from the process; in order to move development of

72 Report – Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences 1949-1951
(Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1951), 347-349. See also Taylor, 134-135 and Lothian, 155.
73 An Act to establish the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, 1-2 Elizabeth II (1953), c.39
(Province of Canada).
74 Lothian, Canada’s National Parks, 153.
75 Taylor, Negotiating the Past, 137, 142-145.
the parks along quickly consultative processes were limited. In part, Taylor notes, this was purposefully done so that the tourism-oriented plans of the Branch director and engineers did not clash formally with the more conservation-oriented concerns of the historic sites division and the HSMB.76 Decisions about how to proceed with historic site development were made without the advice of the Board, and their role was essentially relegated to nominating sites for commemoration.77 The HSMB had come full circle.

Parks Canada invested heavily in its historic sites in the 1960s and 1970s. Developing the educational potential of sites became a central focus. As a result, slide shows and visitors centres became common elements at many historic sites. When revamping the interpretive materials at the sites, however, museum professionals did not significantly update the historical themes presented. Christina Cameron argues that, the themes of “European exploration, nation-building, political and military history,” continued to be dominant.78 In fact, many sites that commemorated the European exploration of Canada through the fur trade were developed at this time. Fort William Historical Park, for example, was constructed in the early 1970s.

During the 1980s the mandate and focus of the Parks Branch was expanded. In 1981 Parks Canada developed a formal, long-range plan for developing commemorative programs beyond political, military, and exploration narratives. The plan focused initially on economic and industrial themes, but was revised in 1991 to emphasize the expansion of women’s, Aboriginal and ethnic histories. Dianne Dodd points out, however, that this

76 Ibid., 170. Similarly, Christina Cameron states that, “[w]hat appears to have motivated government was both a desire to conserve places of importance to our history and a recognition that operating historic sites and museums could be key factors in economic renewal.” See Christina Cameron, “The spirit of place: The physical memory of Canada,” Journal of Canadian Studies 35 n. 1 (2000): 77-96, accessed 19 September 2011, http://lion.chadwyck.com.proxy.queensu.ca.
77 Ibid., 189.
78 Christina Cameron, “The spirit of place,” n.p.
shift was initiated by amateur experts and activists who petitioned the government for the adoption of more inclusive commemorative practices. The government and the HSMB, she says, were reluctant “to give even minimal acknowledgement to women.” By 2003 only eighty-one of sixteen hundred commemorations treated women or their associated places/institutions. In 1989 the HSMB was given also the authority to designate heritage railways stations, and in 1999 their portfolio expanded to include the commemoration of the graves of prime ministers and heritage lighthouses.

Today the Parks Canada Agency falls under the portfolio of the Minister of the Environment and acts under a mandate to protect and make accessible sites of nationally significant natural and cultural heritage. The main programs managed by the agency include historic place designation and conservation, public awareness of historic places, visitor access to and use of historic places, and the provision of municipal services in the five towns located within national parks. Stated goals and priorities are to renew programming at historic sites, strengthening the sense of connection Canadians feel to the sites, and increasing the number of visits “through improved and diversified accommodation offers, recreational activities, and an expanded number of interpretive products.” The HSMB continues to advise the agency on new commemorations. Preservation and tourism continue to be paired through Parks Canada.

83 Ibid., 27, 16.
The government of Ontario appointed its own Provincial Historical Advisory Board [PHAB] in the early 1950s during a wave of nationalist sentiment. Yet, in practice it was given little support and floundered throughout its short-lived existence. In August 1950 the provincial government formed an advisory council of nine members under the Ministry of Travel and Publicity to identify and recommend historic sites for commemoration. In actuality, however, only five members were appointed to the initial committee. Much like the early days of the HSMB the PHAB did not have a clear sense of their authority from government, nor did they have a budget. Following several board meetings in 1951, D.F. McOuat, board secretary and provincial archivist, requested a meeting with the premier to define the jurisdiction and powers of the Board. It does not appear that this meeting ever took place.\footnote{Letter from D.F. McOuat, Secretary of the Provincial Historical Advisory Board, to Col. E.J. Young, Executive Assistant to the Prime Minister of Ontario, 14 May 1951 in RG 3-23, b292345, ‘Historical Sites II, 1950-61,’ PAO, Toronto, Ontario.} Shortly thereafter he wrote to Louis P. Cecile, minister of travel and publicity, to request the allocation of $5000 to mark historic sites and $3000 to survey sites for future development.\footnote{Letter from D.F. McOuat, Secretary of the Provincial Historical Advisory Board, to Louis P. Cecile, Minister of Travel and Publicity, 27 June 1951 in RG 3-23, b292346, ‘Historical Sites Projects (Advisory Board) 1951-59,’ PAO, Toronto, Ontario.} Cecile referred the matter to Premier Frost, noting that his department did not have the available funds for such undertakings. Despite numerous letters, no response was received until June 1952 when Frost wrote to Major J. Barnett, Chairman of the PHAB, to say that while he was sure the Board would do valuable service for the province, that, “we are not anxious in these days of high taxation to engage in any extraordinary expenses. As a matter of fact the most valuable work the Committee can do at the moment is to lay the plans, groundwork and outline for
a planned operation in the future.”86 How the Board was to lay groundwork without any means to do so remains unclear. In 1953 the board was revived and expanded to nine members and continued to meet until 1957 when it was made defunct. Its work was assumed by the Archeological and Historic Sites Board of Ontario. Renamed the Ontario Heritage Foundation in 1968, and the Ontario Heritage Trust in 2005, the Board continues to preserve and conserve heritage building and natural landscapes in Ontario, and to place commemorative plaques.87

In conjunction with the growth of both the preservation movement in the 1920s and the tourism industry from the 1930s onwards, the federal and Ontario provincial governments instituted Boards to advise the relevant ministers on acts of commemoration. Neither the Historic Sites and Monuments Board nor the Provincial Historical Advisory Board were given clearly defined parameters in which to work, however, and their efforts were further hampered by the lack financial resources. Facing these limitations, both Boards made significant strides in commemorating sites and compiling lists of sites of national and provincial significance. Following the war preservation took precedence over commemoration and both governments undertook large historic restoration or reconstruction projects. Three such provincial sites will be examined in greater detail here.

86 For the correspondence back and forth on this matter, see Letter from Louis P. Cecile, Minister of Travel and Publicity, to PM Leslie M. Frost, 10 July 1951; Letter from Louis P. Cecile, Minister of Travel and Publicity, to PM Leslie M. Frost, 25 September 1951; Letter from John Barnett, Chairman of PHAB, to Louis P. Cecile, Minister of Travel and Publicity, 21 January 1952; Letter from Louis P. Cecile, Minister of Travel and Publicity, to PM Leslie M. Frost, 24 January 1952; Letter from Leslie M. Frost, PM, to Major J. Barnett, Chairman PHAB, 19 June 1952; and Letter from Louis P. Cecile, Minister of Travel and Publicity, to PM Leslie M. Frost, 8 July 1952 in RG 3-23, b292346, ‘Historical Sites Projects (Advisory Board) 1951-59,’ PAO, Toronto, Ontario.
Creating historic tourist attractions in Ontario – Three Case Studies:

During the twentieth century a number of locations with historic meaning were preserved and commemorated with plaques and landmarks, or as parks, historic homes, and historic sites. This dissertation pays special attention to three such sites: Fort Henry National Historic Site, Upper Canada Village, and Fort William Historical Park. Each site was founded after the public expressed a desire to preserve locations and structures significant to local and national history and the government recognized each site’s economic potential. Fort Henry was restored in the 1930s, shortly after the federal government involved itself in administering the tourism industry. Upper Canada Village was created in the late 1950s, a by-product of a booming economy which added a number of assets to Ontario’s expanding tourism plant. The provincial government’s decision to construct Fort William in 1971 was influenced at least in part by post-Centennial-year nationalism, as well as concerns to stimulate regional economies. The development of each site was motivated to varying degrees by the overlapping considerations of preservation, tourism, and economic development, and public education in national history and identity.

Fort Henry: a “vivid reminder” of the past

Fort Henry has been a defining landmark on Kingston’s harbour for over one hundred and seventy years, initially serving as a military garrison but transformed into a historic site during the Depression. When the site began to fall into disrepair around the turn of the century, local citizens advocated for renewal for many reasons, foremost amongst them the desire to preserve heritage for future generations and to foster tourism in the region. After years of back and forth negotiations between government bodies, restoration was undertaken in the 1930s, stimulated by the poor economic conditions of
the day, the federal government’s recent creation of a tourism bureaucracy, and the desire to preserve the country’s heritage for the edification of future generations.

Fort Henry was first constructed between 1813 and 1814 to protect the naval dockyards and Kingston’s inner harbor during the War of 1812. Situated high on Point Henry, the fort had a spectacular vantage point overlooking the Royal Naval dockyards next-door, the city, and the main bodies of water surrounding the site. By 1814 plans were afoot that would lead to the redoubt’s expansion. The war had made the British painfully aware that their main transportation route to the interior of the colonies, along the St. Lawrence to the Great Lakes, left them easily susceptible to attack from the Americans. Authorities decided an alternative water route from Montreal to Kingston was necessary. Shortly after construction began on the Rideau Canal in 1827, military leaders put forth a plan in 1829 calling for a major expansion of the defences at Kingston. The escalating cost of the Rideau Canal, however, prohibited such ambitious undertakings and funding was only approved for the fortification at Point Henry (Illus. 2.1). Following the completion of the Rideau Canal in 1832, Fort Henry was rebuilt using some of the most advanced fortification designs of the day at a cost of £70 000. British regiments were stationed at Fort Henry until 1870, when control of the fort was assumed by the Canadian government. It was used as an artillery school until the 1890s, when it was left to fall into disrepair. Subsequently, the fort was no longer inhabited by soldiers, but was used as an ammunition storage depot.

By the turn of the twentieth century, Fort Henry was in a state of disrepair. In 1905 the Fortress Commander at Kingston wrote to the Secretary of the Militia Council, “that owing to the effect of frost the exterior facing and other walls at Fort Henry have fallen down in several places, and in large quantities. […] In several other places the walls are
Correspondence continued between the Militia Council, the Master General of Ordnance, the Director of Engineering Services, and the Kingston Commander over the next decade, querying the repairs necessary and attempting to appropriate the necessary funds. The poor condition of the site was also noticed by local historical societies, which became vocal advocates for repair and reconstruction. In May 1908 the Lennox and Addington Historical Society wrote to Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, that,

> [t]he subject of the restoration of Fort Henry is one which we feel should be considered seriously and at an early date. …one cannot pass it without feeling a pang of regret that the old Historic Structure should look such a wreck. […] It surely would not be very expensive to repair the walls and put the Fort in such a condition that it could be shown to the visitors who annually go to Kingston as a truly interesting Historic Landmark.\(^8^9\)

Oliver responded by forwarding the letter to the Department of National Defence [DND] as the buildings in question were under its control. Little action was taken by the DND in response to calls for repairs from the public or from military officers employed at the fort.

In the 1920s the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada actively sought to preserve Fort Henry. W.W. Cory, Deputy Minister of the Interior, wrote to the Minister of Militia and Defence in 1922 to advise him that the HSMB was interested in having control of the site transferred to them. He received the reply that, although the fort “should be preserved on account of [its] historical associations,” the site was used for


\(^8^9\) Letter to Frank Oliver, the Minister of the Interior, from Clarance M. Warner, President Lennox and Addington Historical Society, 19 May 1908 in RG 24, Vol. 5894, File 2, LAC, Ottawa, Ontario.
practical purposes as a magazine and could not be transferred. The DND was agreeable, however, to allowing the HSMB access to undertake (i.e. fund) repairs themselves. Unsurprisingly, the HSMB was unwilling to invest in renovations to structures over which it held no control. Similar communiqués occurred again in 1923 after the HSMB passed a motion that the site was of “great national significance,” but transfer of the site was once more refused by the Department of National Defence for practical reasons.

The tables turned in 1925, however, when the Deputy Minister of Defence inquired whether the Department of the Interior wished now to have Fort Henry transferred to them, with the caveat that the Department of National Defence could continue to use parts of the site for storage. Despite initial interest in preserving Fort Henry, the matter languished before the Board for many years, as they did not have the appropriate funds to undertake such a large renovation project.

Throughout the 1920s many individuals took interest in the site and advocated for its preservation. Repeatedly, letters about the desirability of the fort’s preservation, its significance, and its potential role as a tourist site went back and forth between the Department of the Interior, the National Parks Commission, the HSMB, local historical societies, and community members. The Arts and Letters Club of Ottawa passed a resolution in 1925 in favour of the HSMB taking over Fort Henry so that steps might be

---

90 Letter from Deputy Minister, Department of Militia and Defence, to W.W. Cory, Deputy Minister of the Interior, 14 March 1922 in Microfilm T-14076, 670, LAC, Ottawa, Ontario. See also RG 24, Vol. 5894, File 2, LAC, Ottawa, Ontario.

91 Extract from the Minutes of the H.S.M.B of May 29th, 1923; Letter from W.W. Cory, Deputy Minister of the Department of the Interior, to G.J. Desbarats, Esq., Deputy Minister of the Department of National Defence, 22 October, 1923; Letter from G.J. Desbarats, Deputy Minister of Defence to W.W. Cory, Deputy Minister of the Department of the Interior, Re: Fort Henry, Kingston, 9 November 1923 in Microfilm T-14076, 622, 611, 607, LAC, Ottawa, Ontario.

taken towards the site’s conservation. R. H. Davidson of the Tool and Engineering Company in Kingston wrote twice to Colonel Ralston, DSO, Minister of Defence, to inform him that, “a great opportunity was being lost in not capitalizing Fort Henry as a Tourist’s point of interest.” Similarly, Walter James Brown, Esq., of the University of Western Ontario, wrote to Prime Minister Mackenzie King that he and several other London business men felt that the site justified the necessary expenditures to keep it in good repair because of its potential as a tourist asset. For years government bodies pointed to the lack of necessary funding to explain why, despite recognition that the situation of Fort Henry was deteriorating and undesirable, they made little material progress in preserving the site.

Finally, in the early 1930s some headway was made in the commemoration of Fort Henry as an important historic landmark. In July 1931 Brigadier-General E. A. Cruikshank, Chairman of the HSMB, wrote to J. B. Harkin, Esq., commissioner of Canadian National Parks, via Harkin’s secretary, Arthur Pinard, recommending that Fort Henry be commemorated with a plaque. After multiple inscriptions were drafted and reviewed by the Kingston Historical Society and members of the HSMB, the plaque was finally unveiled in 1937.

---

93 Letter from R.O. Spreckley, Secretary Arts and Letters Club, Ottawa, to J.B. Harkin, Esq., Commission of Dominion Parks, Ottawa, 31 March 1925 in Microfilm T-14076, 594, LAC, Ottawa, Ontario.
95 In response the Minister of the Interior noted that as of yet no action had been taken to stop the deterioration of the site because, “we have not been able to obtain a sufficiently large appropriation for the restoration of these and other historic structures.” Letter from Walter James Brown, Esq., to Rt. Hon. William L. Mackenzie King, C.M.G., LL.D., Prime Minister, 1 August 1928 and Letter from Minister of the Interior to Walter James Brown, Esq., 12 September 1928 in Microfilm T-14076, 558, 555, LAC, Ottawa, Ontario.
96 Letter from E.A. Cruikshank, HSMB, to Arthur A. Pinard, Secretary, Canadian National Parks Branch, Department of the Interior, 4 July 1931 in Microfilm T-14076, 534-537, LAC, Ottawa, Ontario.
While this commemorative effort was on-going, the Department of the Interior continued to seek out a method of preserving the fort. As early as 1933 it was suggested that the site could be reconstructed using unemployment relief labour.\(^97\) This did not come to fruition, however, until 1936 when the provincial Department of Highways broke up the bureaucratic log-jam between the DND and the Department of the Interior. In September 1935 the province indicated its willingness to collaborate with the federal government in the restoration work if the site would be opened to tourist traffic.\(^98\) By late May 1936 an agreement was reached between the Department of Labour, the DND, and the Government of Ontario for restoration to occur as part of an Unemployment Relief project.\(^99\) Preliminary work began in July 1936 and the restoration was completed two years later.

Ronald L. Way played a central role in directing the reconstruction of Fort Henry. Way was hired to oversee research and site development by the provincial government in 1936, because of his university education in Canadian history and his knowledge of military fortifications. Way later received his Master’s of History from Queen’s university in 1938 for his research on the defences of the Niagara frontier, focusing on the 1764 to 1870 time period. His expertise in the design and purpose of British fortifications during the nineteenth century made him a lynch-pin in the reconstruction process.\(^100\)


\(^98\) Mecredy, 63-65.


\(^100\) Between 1936 and 1939 Way worked also on the restorations at Fort George and Fort Niagara. When Fort Henry was deemed a historical and financial success, government bodies across Canada sought Way’s expertise when developing historic sites. In 1958 site management was transferred to the St. Lawrence Parks Commission [SLCP] and Way took the new title of Director of Historic Sites and Buildings with the SLPC, as well as continuing as Director at Fort Henry. At this time, he and his wife Beryl, whom he had met working at Fort Henry, worked also on Upper Canada Village. Way was a formidable force in the
Director of the site until 1970, Way was formative also in shaping the nature of interpretation and the thematic foci of the site.

On 1 August 1938 a trumpet call sounded from the ramparts of Fort Henry, announcing the arrival of Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King. As the Prime Minister approached from the Advanced Battery a sentry ordered him to halt and identify himself before the equipoise bridge was lowered, admitting the Prime Minister to a parade square filled with over 6,500 eager spectators. In the opening ceremonies that afternoon, control of the fort was officially transferred from the Department of National Defence to the provincial Department of Highways. King opened the site for the people of Canada and their visitors, stating, “I declare this Fort an historic site, not so much as Prime Minister, but in the name of those unknown British soldiers who laid the foundation of this land. I declare it open after one hundred years to further the cause of peace.”

One hundred years after garrisoning regiments of British soldiers, Fort Henry began a new career as a historic site.

The fort’s tourism potential was heralded by many. As early as 1908 the Lennox and Addington Historical Society advocated for the site’s renovation so that “it could be shown to the visitors who annually go to Kingston…” Twenty years later similar calls were still being made. R.H. Davidson, of Kingston, and several London business men voiced their interest in government restoration of the site in 1927 and 1928 so that local

---


101 Macredy, “Fort Nobody Wanted,” 81. See also numerous press articles regarding the opening ceremonies in Fort Henry Scrapbook Collection, MF 3907, Queen’s University Archives [QUA], Kingston, Ontario.

102 Letter to Frank Oliver, the Minister of the Interior, from Clarance M. Warner, President Lennox and Addington Historical Society, 19 May 1908 in RG 24, Vol. 5894, File 2, LAC, Ottawa, Ontario.
businesses could capitalize on the tourist market. Ultimately, reconstruction was possible because of the provincial Department of Highways’ interest in developing tourism and a shifting political climate that supported government involvement in tourism in the mid-1930s.

Fort Henry Historic Site was seen also by its developers as a means of unifying the nation by instilling in visitors a sense of Canadian identity. According to Way, the head historian on the Fort Henry restoration project, and many others who advocated for Fort Henry’s preservation, the value in commemorating this site was the potential to teach people about founding moments in Canada’s history and about Canadian values. In a speech to the Canadian Historical Association in 1950, in which he discusses some of the processes and choices made in historical restoration, Way stated, “the justification of the Government’s work in rehabilitating such important structures as Fort George, Fort Erie and Fort Henry, instead of merely preserving the unintelligible ruins, is that these restorations constitute a significant contribution to the teaching of Canadian history…”

This history, many thought, would develop a sense of patriotism and of nationalism. Ronald L. Way expressed a deep concern over Canadian’s apparent lack of unifying identity in a 1951 report to the Ontario Prime Minister, Leslie Frost. He lamented the perceived loss of patriotism in Canada:

Can it be that in our search for national independence in a constitutional sense we have renounced the pro-British ideals of our forefathers and have failed to fill the vacuum thus created with any corresponding pride in our own country? […] Perhaps here in this new country, history is so recent that time has yet to give us perspective and we fail to see the forest for the trees. This is why I think that any means of inducing the people of our Province to

---

take conscious pride in the story of this brave young country is a matter of top priority.104

He believed fervently that Canadians needed to be aware of their past in order to unite as a strong nation. In the conclusion of this report, Way stressed the importance of historic sites “as a means towards the creation of patriotism and a true sense of Canadian nationality.”105

The ideals and discourse around Fort Henry reinforced the anti-American aspect of Canadian identity. Yet, the relationship between the two countries was not seen as one of simple animosity. Though rhetoric stressed the repulsion of American attempts to control the colony and hinted at Canadian superiority, expressions of present-day friendship and the closest of ties were also expressed in an attempt to attract American tourists – by far the majority of Canada’s foreign visitors - and their dollars.106 Publicity surrounding Fort Henry stressed its role in keeping “Americans off British soil” at a time in the nineteenth century when they would have invaded “armed and with blood in their eyes.”107 Yet, it was also asserted that the days of antipathy between the two nations were over. The fort was described variously as “[o]ne of the oddities of another day before two civilized nations learned to live side by side in peace and security…”108 and as one of the few outstanding relics “of the days, now happily past, when it was felt necessary to erect

105 Ibid.
106 Writing about the post-war Canadian tourism industry, Karen Dubinsky has said, “[t]o Canadian tourist promoters, tourist and American were virtually inter-changeable terms; the sole concern of the tourist industry in this era was attracting Americans north.” Dubinsky, “Everybody likes Canadians,” 321.
108 “Historic ‘Fort Henry’ is being rebuilt to attract U.S tourists,” Evening Citizen, Ottawa, in Fort Henry Scrapbook Collection, Mf 3907, QUA, Kingston, Ontario.
such fortifications for defence against our neighbors to the south.”

Prime Minister King highlighted the ties between the two nations most strongly in his opening address at Fort Henry in 1938: “The two sane and democratic nations living side by side have realized the utter futility of war which brings blood and destruction. May this fort symbolize that between the British Empire and the United States there shall be an enduring peace.”

Fort Henry imparted to its visitors messages about the Canadian colony’s independence and difference from the United States at the time of the American Revolution and during the War of 1812, and as well about its powerful military heritage. Yet, those in charge of the site were also sure to highlight improved relations and to invite Americans to visit as money-spending guests.

Fort Henry National Historic Site developed out of several competing, yet often complementary, movements – those of preservation, tourism, and nationalism. For decades citizens had advocated that action be taken to preserve a decaying fort, yet it took the economic appeal of tourism and a make-work project during the Depression for progress to be made. As we have seen, tourism generally was seen as a means of articulating and creating a sense of nationalism. But this was not necessarily incompatible with tourism’s other benefits. Ronald L. Way, for example, recognized also the financial potential of historic sites, stating that one theme of Fort Henry might be

---

109 “Restoration of Fort Henry,” 4 May 1936 in Fort Henry Scrapbook Collection, Mf 3907, QUA, Kingston, Ontario. Similarly, W. S. Lavell wrote, in a paper presented to the meeting of the Ontario Historical Society in 1934, that, “[a]ntiquated cannon which frown from the battlement stand as mute testimony that the peace and security now so fully enjoyed by Kingston and by Canada were not always so sure, but the neglected and dilapidated walls from tragic, yet gloriously significant evidence that an international antipathy which once existed has been forgotten, and that international differences can be overcome by other means than force.” See W. S. Lavell, The History of the Present Fortification at Kingston, 1934, Reprinted from Vol. XXXI, Paper and Records of the Ontario Historical Society, 177.

“Let’s cash in on History.” Writing to Ontario Premier Leslie Frost in 1951, Way suggested that historic sites could be outstanding tourist attractions, appealing to the curiosity of American visitors especially; however, he tempered his assertion that educational and financial potentialities could be complementary, and in fact augment each other to pay “two-fold dividends” by identifying the prioritization of revenue over education as a major problem faced by historic sites. Although Way, like many others, recognized the great potential of Fort Henry to draw in tourists and revenue, he valued the educational possibilities of the site even more.

Upper Canada Village: a “living monument” “as realistic to our manufactured truth as possible”

Unlike Fort Henry, Upper Canada Village [UCV] is an entirely imagined place. It is an amalgamation of architecture from various counties in Southeastern Ontario, time periods, of researched landscaping, and of an assorted collection of material culture. All are brought to life, so to speak, by costumed interpreters who demonstrate historic crafts and lifestyle. The Village was created to preserve some of the Loyalist heritage of eastern Ontario that was scheduled to be destroyed with the creation of the St. Lawrence Seaway, to attract tourists, and to generate revenue for the province.

Upper Canada Village developed as a direct result of the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Proposals had been made as early as the late nineteenth century to widen and deepen the St. Lawrence River and lock systems to allow larger transport vessels passage. It was not until the postwar period however, when expanding economies demanded an increase in electricity and when the Iron Ore Company of Canada,

extracting newly found iron ore deposits from Labrador and Eastern Quebec, lobbied for a more efficient transportation route, that both the Canadian and American governments made serious efforts to come to an agreement on the future of the seaway.\textsuperscript{112} By 1951 the \textit{St. Lawrence Seaway Authority Act} and the \textit{International Rapids Power Development Act} allowed work to commence on the Seaway between Montreal and Lake Ontario, as well as in the International Rapids section of the river. The \textit{St. Lawrence Seaway Authority} was established by the federal government in 1954 and later in the year, after the U.S. Congress passed the Seaway Act, the U.S. government established its own Saint Lawrence Seaway Development Corporation.\textsuperscript{113} Construction began in earnest in 1954 and would be completed by 1959.

Such large scale construction came with significant costs. Monetarily the Seaway cost $470 million, with Canada supplying $336.5 million of the overall cost.\textsuperscript{114} Equally significant, however, was the less tangible cost of the loss of historic loyalist landmarks and heritage along the widening shores of the river in Eastern Ontario. Beginning July 1958 seven historic villages and a third of Morrisburg, Ontario, were to be inundated, requiring the relocation of 6,500 people and 500 houses.\textsuperscript{115} Residents, many of them descendants of the United Empire Loyalists, were justifiably upset at the loss of the land that held so many memories for them.

Recognizing the changes to come, beginning in the early 1950s various individuals and agencies worked to preserve the heritage of the area. The Ontario Historical Society [OHS] sought a partnership with the Hydro-electric Commission in

\textsuperscript{112} D’Arcy Jenish, \textit{The St. Lawrence Seaway: Fifty years and counting} (Manotick, ON: Penumbra Press, 2009), 33-34.


\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.

1952 to facilitate a project photographing and recording local histories, and again in 1954 to survey the history of the area, including buildings, textiles, arts, and crafts. The OHS proposal was rejected, though, and the Commission instead gave support to initiatives proposed by James Smart. Smart, a past Director of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board, initially proposed a plan in 1953 to create a monument to the United Empire Loyalists using headstones from relocated graves. Over time this proposal grew to include a memorial to the 1812 battle site of Crysler’s Farm and, by 1955, he was calling for a more sizeable pioneer memorial:

The lands reserved would include a sizable area for the “Historic Centre” whereon will be located the Crysler Monument and buildings of historic interest to be moved and re-erected and fitted out for museum purposes and in themselves serve as specimens of the construction of early days as well as perpetuating their association with the early history of Upper Canada.

In 1955 the government of Ontario embraced the idea of commemorating the past and created the Ontario-St. Lawrence Development Commission [ON-SLDC] to preserve the architectural and historical treasures of the area for present and future generations. Eventually Upper Canada Village and a memorial park at Crysler’s Farm were to become the major focal points of the ON-SLDC.

Progress on the creation of Upper Canada Village began slowly but gained momentum until the site officially opened in 1961. Although the concept of a historic

---

village had been approved by George Challies, Chairman of the ON-SLDC, in 1956 no action could be taken in its physical development until buildings were purchased by Ontario Hydro. As Hydro made slow progress with the acquisitions, the ON-SLDC assembled a team to define the vision for the site. Anthony Adamson, a Toronto based architect, became the project manager and in 1957 presented the Development Plan for the park, in which he stated that,

> [o]n this site of proposed park land it is intended that original and restored structures of period architecture will house items to be preserved for posterity and displayed as our heritage, such as agricultural implements, household items, military relics, original documents of literary or historical value and other such objects revered as a material link with our pioneering forefathers.\(^\text{120}\)

The Plan outlined several principles that guided the design of the park, including, “to provide a living monument to the way of life of Upper Canada’s earliest settlers…”\(^\text{121}\)

Adamson’s designs for the Upper Canada Village privileged the beauty of the buildings and of the landscapes and the visitor’s ability to navigate the site over historical accuracy.\(^\text{122}\) Later, reflecting on the design process, Adamson said,

> [i]t was my job as a consultant to design a village as truthful as I could make it. Historians are all liars and if we have lied it has been with tongue in cheek. The first problem was scale. The hamlet we had in mind might have housed a population of 75 people. It had to be designed to be visited at times by thousands and there is no tradition in Upper Canada of village greens. […] …we created a complete history of land settlement using other people’s hedgerows and houses and fences to make the townsite as realistic to our manufactured truth as possible.\(^\text{123}\)

Even though strict historical accuracy was jeopardized by the considerations of tourist comfort, a plan was in place. With the buildings finally obtained, a team was assembled to oversee the restoration project. The Ways were sought to consult on and guide the

\(^\text{121}\) Ibid.
project because of the success of Fort Henry. Ronald Way took the lead of the team, which included Beryl Way, Jeanne Minhinnick and Peter Stokes, among others; a mix of historians, architects, material culture experts, and researchers. Facing the incredible time constraint of a four year deadline, the team set about expanding the buildings to better represent a typical 19th century Upper Canadian village, acquiring appropriate furnishings and artifacts, and organizing their display in an authentic manner. Conflicts arose over what an ‘accurate’ display would mean, however, as disagreements over appropriate ‘terminal dates’ for buildings occurred, arguments over the role of each building were held, and there was little time for thorough research and contemplation. By 1959 debates over the nature of the interpretation of the site were also in full swing. Compromises needed to be made, the nature of which Way outlined to the Canadian Historical Association in 1960:

[F]irstly, individual structures would be restored in all that pertains to architecture and craftsmanship as authentically as research and workmanship could make them. Second, the creative concept of a museum village with its educational purposes would take precedence in the use to which each restored structure would be put. In other words, when the actual story of a particular house does not add anything to the picture of a typical village, that building’s history will be subordinated to the main theme, and our use of it amended for that purpose.

Miraculously, everyone and everything came together to prepare buildings, grounds, and staff members in time for the opening date. On 24 June 1961, despite the chilly weather, 20,000 people attended the opening ceremony of Crysler Field Battlefield Park and Upper

Canada Village, where Leslie Frost, prime minister of Ontario, officially opened Ontario’s “homage to the past and … gift to the future.”126

Although the preservation of heritage buildings and artifacts was a central purpose of the creation of Upper Canada Village, newspaper articles, speeches, and documents chronicling the development of the site reveal that other interests were served as well. Numerous commentators reflected on the importance of displaying history in order to educate people about their past to develop a sense of nationalism and to better understand the country presently. Also of great importance was the ability to capitalize on public interest in history through tourism.

Government agents particularly expressed the value of Upper Canada Village in terms of the site’s ability to educate visitors about the country’s past and to instill a sense of pride and nationalism. Frost announced the opening of the site in 1961 in print advertisements that stressed what visitors could learn about the foundation of the current society:

Here we gain a new and intimate understanding of the pioneer spirit of our forefathers; we view, with an honest pride in our heritage, the way of life which is the very foundation of our society today. There is inspiration to be found in Upper Canada Village, for this faithful re-creation of the past tells a story of loyalty and courage. This is the heritage we of today have preserved for coming generations. This is our gift to the future.127

Likewise, an address by Fred Cass, minister of highways, highlighted the role of the site in instilling a new appreciation for those who created the basis of modern society: “Upper Canada Village is a unique living museum of our early heritage designed to give young and old alike a new appreciation of how our forefathers fashioned the roots of life as we

---

126 Leslie Frost, “.it is at once our homage to the past and our gift to the future,” Globe Magazine (17 June 1961): 6.
127 Ibid.
know it today in this great and ever growing province.” One journalist elaborated on the aspects of history represented on site that should specifically generate pride and strengthen sense of self. R. A. O’Brien claimed that the site’s focus on Loyalist roots and British ties were critical to generating a sense of identity that differentiated Canadians from Americans:

We need this kind of thing to re-awaken our slumbering pride. … We need to know that we have an honourable past, one in which our ancestors lived as honourable men. The fact of our having been a British colony is a part of that honour. Loyalty, devotion and love for their own land and for the Mother Country were what made the United Empire Loyalists, and the rest of pioneer Canada, the stable, cool-headed, productive and, above all, peaceable, people they were. The story of this particular phase of our history is in many ways the key to unlock our sleeping national pride.

As seen with the publicity surrounding Fort Henry, ties to Britain and distance from Americans were stressed as part of the foundation of Canadianness the site helped to reinforce. The site was frequently represented by advocates as a medium through which the ‘Loyalist rock’ on which the province was built could not be forgotten, through which the ‘valorous deeds and sacrifices’ of ‘heroic’ men and women who shaped a wilderness into a prosperous and free nation would be brought into focus for society’s youth. This education in historical roots would serve to generate a stronger sense of nationalism and, thus, strengthen the country. Way himself fervently believed in the power of history and

---

130 Peter Maitland, in “A Living Memorial”, quotes Commission Chairman George Challies as stating: “Here is our chance to bring into focus for this generation and future generations, the valorous deeds and sacrifices of the heroic men and women who started a remote and savage wilderness on the way to becoming the great and prosperous Province of Ontario.” See RG 5-54, Box 165, File 76, PAO, Toronto, Ontario. W. M. Nickle claimed that, “…Mr. Frost has ensured that Canadians of today and tomorrow shall not forget the loyalist rock on which this fair province was built, the struggle and sacrifices of our forefathers which made possible the freedom we enjoy today.” See “Opening Day Speech: Introduction of Hon. Leslie M. Frost, PM Ontario by Hon. W. M. Nickle, Minister of Commerce and Development,” in RG 5-54, Box 169, File 286: Upper Canada Village – Opening Ceremonies, PAO, Toronto, Ontario.
historic sites to develop national identities. In his address to the Canadian Historical Association in 1960 he asserted, “I am confident our commission’s living museums will not only make a tangible contribution to the advanced study of Canadian history, but will, by awakening in Canadians an appreciation of their national heritage, assist in the formation of a stronger Canadian identity.”

Upper Canada Village served, in the minds of its architects and government supporters, as an important institution for conveying selected messages about the country’s past that would, in turn, produce a specific, proud, understanding of the modern nation.

From its early planning stages, Upper Canada Village was seen also by its promoters as an important tourist attraction for eastern Ontario. Challies saw the Village as a commodity that could be sold to tourists. He stated, “[w]e are planning a bold program to sell our parks and our official opening next year. The tourist trade, which this will stimulate, will help the entire area.” Newspapers gushed about the potential of the site to be a huge draw to travelers, almost undoubtedly at the urging of government press releases. In 1959 the Napanee Post-Express stated that, “[o]n completion [Upper Canada Village] will be one of the major tourist attractions on the continent and the whole parks system stretching from Glengarry County to Adolphustown will be the outstanding tourist mecca of Ontario.” One doubts that visits to the site were akin to religious pilgrimages to most visitors, yet visitor numbers clearly show that there was an attraction to the site.

---

Upper Canada Village had strong attendance numbers in its first years that outdid other SLPC sites. One month after opening in 1961 Upper Canada Village was reporting an average daily visitorship of 3,000 people. By October of that year, the end of the operating season, the site reported 212,494 visitors over the entire season, including approximately 60,000 school children. In comparison, in 1961 Fort Henry saw only 168,073 visitors. Upper Canada Village closed the 1962 season with a total of 247,795 visitors, an impressive increase of 35,301 from the previous year. Attendance numbers would continue to be high throughout the 1960s and 1970s, reaching a peak of 350,000 in 1975, and then declining back to 250,000 by 1985. With numbers like these, Upper Canada Village played an important role in the expanding provincial tourist economy.

The Village trod a fine line attempting to find a balance between educational interests and economic ones. Site Supervisor Ronald L. Way asserted the primacy of education, arguing that when high educational standards are met tourists will follow:

I deplore the tendency in certain quarters to ‘cash in’ on history through whatever distortion of facts seems necessary to make the proposition lucrative. No restoration can be deemed truly successful that does not put educational values first. When we are successful on this higher level, all the

---

economic benefits associated with a major tourist attraction will inevitably follow.\(^{138}\)

Way had long advocated for balance between the goals of revenue generation and education, arguing that when developed together both were exponentially more successful. Similarly, Beryl Way upheld that while revenue generation would undoubtedly occur, the primary value of Upper Canada Village was educational:

Nor was Upper Canada Village conceived only as another visitor attraction, its value to be estimated solely from the standpoint of tourist dollars. Above and beyond its undoubted worth to this economically-important industry, the Ontario-St. Lawrence Development Commission is convinced that important education dividends must accrue from the development of historic resources. Upper Canada Village, in the highest sense, is a serious contribution to the understanding and appreciation of our Canadian heritage.\(^{139}\)

The fact that such assertions needed to be made indicates that there was, even in the 1960s, a concern about a commercialization of the past that might detract from accuracy. Yet, Upper Canada Village was designed, fundamentally, as a place that would be both educational and profitable.

*Fort William: “building a vigorous and dynamic country”*

Fort William served as a transhipment point for the North West Company, a dominant fur trade company, during the early nineteenth century. As such, it is part of the history of the geographical expansion and economic development of Canada. Sold to the CPR in the late-1800s, the original buildings and landscape were torn down or left to fall to ruin. Locals opposed this situation almost immediately and by the early twentieth century were advocating for preservationist action. Government support was not forthcoming for a restoration project, however, until the late 1960s. In the midst of an


economic boom, fostered in part by a dramatic growth in the tourism industry, and riding a swelling sense of national pride brought by centennial celebrations and Expo ’67, the province of Ontario undertook the construction of Fort William Historic Site between 1971 and 1973. From the outset the objectives for the site were twofold: to inform visitors about Canada’s history and to attract tourist dollars to the region.

The fur trade has deep roots in Canada’s history. Frenchmen, Canadiens, Englishmen, and Scots explored Canada’s vast geography seeking profit from furs as long ago as 1534. Several fur trading companies formed over the intervening centuries, the two most successful of which – the Hudson’s Bay Company [HBC] and North West Company [NWC] – were also the bitterest of rivals. Founded in 1783, by the late eighteenth century the NWC was facing already political challenges. New borders drawn between the United States and the colonies of British North America cut British traders off from company posts and the key transhipment point of Grand Portage. Jay’s Treaty of 1794 gave the British until 1 June 1796 to withdraw from the posts on U.S. territory. This agreement cut the NWC off from its main rendezvous point, where goods from Montreal and furs from the west changed hands, and a new site for a central headquarters was quickly needed.

140 The North West Company was first founded in 1779 as a co-partnership of sixteen shares that brought together some of the most prominent names of the Montreal fur trade, including Simon McTavish, Benjamin and Joseph Frobisher, John McGill, Isaac Todd and James McGill. Though this initial contract lasted only one year, the experiment was more enduring as new contracts and share arrangements were reached in 1780 and 1783. See Marjorie Wilkins Campbell, The North West Company (Toronto: Macmillan, 1957), 19, 37; Daniel Francis, Battle for the West – Fur Traders and the Birth of Western Canada (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1982), 45; George B. Macgillivray, Our Heritage – a brief history of early Fort William and the Great North West Company, its personalities and competitors from 1764-1830 (Dryden, ON: Alex Wilson Publications, 1970), 3; E.E. Rich, Montreal and the Fur Trade (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1966) 74; Florida Town, The North West Company – Frontier Merchants (Toronto: Umbrella Press, 1999), 24, 25; W. Stewart Wallace, Documents relating to the North West Company (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934), 6, 8.

141 The Treaty of Versailles (1783), ending the American Revolution, established a territorial boundary that divided trading territories by following the Pigeon River west from Lake Superior and then the 49th parallel
The new location of the NWC headquarters was selected in 1801, along the Kaministiquia River route re-discovered in 1798 by Roderick McKenzie, with the help of local Aboriginals. Construction began on Fort Kaministiquia in 1801 and the first annual rendezvous meeting was held there in 1803, though the fort was not entirely finished (Illus. 2.2). With approximately 1,000 men working on erecting forty-two buildings on the fifty hectare plot the project cost in excess of £50,000. By the time the fort was completed in 1816 the partners had voted to change the name of the new fort to Fort William, in honour of William McGillivray, Chief Director of the NWC from 1804 to 1821. Located at the mouth of the Kaministiquia River, the fort was surrounded by a wooden palisade, outside of which could be found a working farm, a wharf, and voyageur camps during rendezvous. Inside, buildings formed a main square, with a dining hall, quarters for partners and guides, warehouses, and trades workshops. Ross Cox wrote in 1816 that,

Fort William is the great emporium for the interior. … A number of the partners and clerks, whose turn of rotation has not arrived for going to Montreal, assemble here every summer, and deposite [sic] the furs which they purchase during the winter, when they obtain a fresh supply of trading goods for the ensuing season. Those on their way to Canada also remain some time previous to their final departure. In addition to these, one or two of the principal directors, and several clerks, come up every spring from Montreal to make the necessary changes, and superintend the distribution of the merchandise for the wintering parties. Fort William may therefore be looked out to the Mississippi River. The outlines of the new country cut off NWC access to forts at Niagara, Detroit, Michilimackinac, and, most problematic of all, Grand Portage. See Town, North West Company, 27. Campbell, North West Company, 138; Town, North West Company, 28.

143 Campbell, North West Company, 160; Rich, Montreal, 224; Town, North West Company, 43-46; Jean Morrison, Superior Rendezvous Place – Fort William in the Canadian Fur Trade (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2001), 32.

upon as the metropolitan post of the interior, and its fashionable season generally continues from the latter end of May to the latter end of August.¹⁴⁵

By all accounts Fort William was like a large town, overflowing with voyageurs, clerks, and partners during the height of the season from late May to August.

From 1801 until 1821, when the NWC merged with the Hudson’s Bay Company, Fort William witnessed the business and social transactions of one of Canada’s founding business enterprises. On 26 March 1821 agreement to unite the two companies under the HBC was reached.¹⁴⁶ Many traders lost their positions or retired and by 1830 most vestiges of the NWC were gone. Fort William, once a vibrant summer community, became a small post as trade routes shifted to take advantage of Hudson’s Bay. The post was officially given up by the HBC in 1864 though it only closed in 1878, when a retail post was opened by the HBC in town, clearing the way for the CPR to obtain the land from the HBC in 1883.¹⁴⁷

Fort William Historical Park is the product of over sixty years of commemorative action on the part of the residents of Fort William and Thunder Bay. As early as 1911 the Thunder Bay Historical Society commissioned a monument to the fur traders. In the decades that followed, the idea of rebuilding Fort William was raised by numerous voices.¹⁴⁸ In the 1930s the desire to build a historic site was driven, in part, by excavations at Grand Portage, U.S.A. The Thunder Bay Historical Society actively

---

¹⁴⁵ Cox, Adventures, 287.
¹⁴⁷ Morrison, Superior Rendezvous, 131; Fort William – Hinge of a Nation, in RG 17-25, box 3, PAO, Toronto, Ontario.
promoted the idea of a historic site between 1937 and 1939. The mission was delayed by the advent of war, but the reconstruction of Fort William was taken up once again in 1941. Unfortunately, no government funding was forthcoming for this project after the war. The Historic Sites and Monuments Board did not support rebuilding on the original site and, subsequently, reconstruction schemes lapsed in the 1950s. In 1960 Fort William’s City Council formed the Old Fort Restoration Committee aiming to obtain provincial and federal financial support for the reconstruction of a heritage site. Neither level of government, however, proved willing to finance the venture at that time. Proposals to raise funds through municipal taxations also failed and the restoration project stalled for several years.

Progress was finally made in the late 1960s. Spurred by a renewed interest in the country’s past brought about by the Centennial celebrations in 1967, Kenneth Dawson received provincial funding to begin preliminary archaeological excavations of the original Fort William site. Ronald and Beryl Way, respected consultants for historic site development, were asked by the Minister of Tourism and Information to report on the feasibility of reconstructing Fort William. The Ways believed there was not enough historical evidence available to justify a restoration of this specific site and that, therefore, the “best you could hope for in a Fort William restoration would be a Disneyland mock-

151 Morrison, Superior Rendezvous, 131.
up,” yet they recognized also the “paramount importance of the fur trade in the early history of Canada.” Further archaeological studies were funded. National Heritage Limited was hired by the province to undertake historical research and present a plan for site development. Sixty years after the idea of reconstructing Fort William was first expressed by local advocates the provincial government was beginning to invest some time and money into considering the feasibility of creating a historic site out of the fur trade post.

On 20 January 1971 Ontario Premier John Robarts announced that the reconstruction of Fort William would begin later that spring. Robarts explained that a “sizable village” of forty-eight buildings, as well as a visitor information centre, marina, picnic area, and camping facilities, were planned for a 125 acre site at Pointe de Meuron, two miles upstream from the fort’s original location. After years of lobbying, this was well received by many; less pleasing, however, was the fact that the reconstruction would not occur on the fort’s original site. Many of the initial lobbyists regarded the original

---

155 For examples of reactions to the announcement of the location for the reconstruction of Fort William see: Letter from Ina McGregor, Citizens Organization to Save the Old Fort, to Mayor Saul Laskin and Member of Council, Thunder Bay, 23 February 1971; Brief Regarding the Restoration of Old Fort William, Thunder Bay Historical Society, to James Auld, Minister of Public Works, and Fern Guindon, Minister of Tourism and Information, 6 April 1971; Letter from D.B. Morris, Thunder Bay City Clerk, to James Auld, Minister of Public Works, 14 April 1971; Resolution of the Thunder Bay Citizen’s Association, to Premier William Davis and Fern Guindon, Minister of Tourism and Information, 19 June 1971 in RG 15-1, b388498, “Fort William Tourism (Old Fort William Historical Park/Restoration” 1971, PAO, Toronto,
site of the fort, then part of a CPR freight yard and residential properties, as the only appropriate option for reconstruction. Government representatives, however, were dissuaded from pursuing the course of building on the original site because of the cost of buying out the CPR and relocating citizens. Despite this disagreement, reconstruction began in 1971 and, although unfinished, the site opened to the public on 3 July 1973. It would take over ten years before all of the site’s structures were completed.

Fort William was always and explicitly a tourist site that had the benefit of bringing a piece of national history to its visitors. Premier Robarts linked Fort William to Canadian identity early on in the reconstruction process. In an address to the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce in January 1971 Robarts stated that, “[a] basic principle of the Government of Ontario is that we must remember our past and profit from the experience and hard work of those who went before us. We must use their lessons in building our future.” He further honoured the voyageurs as the geographic founders of Canada and described them as living “our country’s characteristic life.” By learning about the voyageur lifestyle one might understand what it meant to be quintessentially Canadian and, by extension, perhaps be a better Canadian. Robarts stressed that Fort William was an early example of multiculturalism, stating that the site would provide “an object lesson in what Canadians have been trying to do ever since [the days of the fur trade], namely, to draw all of the peoples of our country into the harmonious enterprise of building a vigorous and dynamic country.” The site would provide for visitors a living vignette of the type of multicultural interactions the country was adopting as

Ontario; and Letter from John G. McKirdy, Past President of the Thunder Bay Historical Society, to Al Bray, Deputy Minister of Tourism and Information, 1 February 1871 in RG 47-63, box 1, file “Fort William 1971,” PAO, Toronto, Ontario. See also various newspaper articles, for example: “Fort Site is Discussed at Historical Meeting,” Thunder Bay Times, 18 February 1971, and “Auld Explains why Pointe de Meuron Picked as Site for Old Fort,” Thunder Bay Times, 20 February 1971. Morrison, Superior Rendezvous, 134.
stereotypically Canadian in the 1970s, even though historically harmony was inconsistently, if ever, achieved. Finally, Robarts’ concluding remarks dramatically reinforce the notion that historic sites can develop a sense of nationalism: “We… are sure that you will welcome the opportunity to help build in your midst an historic monument that will contribute to the unity of our country.” Fort William should, it seems, convey to visitors select messages about Canadian identity, including the hard-working yet cheerful disposition of voyageurs and the cooperative, multicultural landscape of the fur trade. Knowledge of these key Canadian character traits would unite the populace together into a stronger mosaic.

Yet, the rhetoric of nurturing the Canadian spirit was integrally connected to financial considerations. The decision to move ahead with the reconstruction of Fort William was made with a careful assessment of the economic benefits the site would bring to Northern Ontario as both a source of jobs and tourist revenue. James A.C. Auld, Minister of Tourism and Information, noted that the province consciously used history in two ways, “[f]irst, to make our own people proud and knowledgeable of our past, therefore, determined and confident about our future. Secondly, to use this history in a promotional sense, by making our history interesting to others and, in turn, attracting tourist income for our own province.” Early assessments of the feasibility of the reconstruction project by National Heritage Limited considered the potential economic benefits of the site. M.A. McCance, Vice President of National Heritage Limited, wrote

157 The federal government appointed its first Secretary of State for Multiculturalism in 1971.
Campion that studies found that the development would provide numerous job opportunities and entrepreneurial opportunities with regard to souvenirs and staff training.\footnote{Letter from M.A. McCance, VP National Heritage Limited, to Mr. A. Campion, Executive Assistant to the Minister of Tourism and Information, 1 June 1970 in RG 5-7, box 31, File 4.6 ‘Department of Public Records and Archives, 1968-70,’ PAO, Toronto, Ontario.} National Heritage Limited also commissioned a study forecasting the visitor attendance to Fort William. The results of this survey, as conveyed by William M. Pigott, President of National Heritage Limited, to Dr. Peter Klopchik, the Director of the Travel Research Branch of the Ministry of Tourism and Information, indicated that the site could spur an 8% growth in tourism to the area.\footnote{Letter from William M. Pigott, Pres. National Heritage Limited, to Dr. Peter Klopchik, Director of Travel Research, including “A Five Year Forecast of Attendance at Old Fort William,” by Dr. Kenneth G. Hardy, 5 May 1970 in RG 5-46, box 136, 17.22 ‘Branch, Miscellaneous Correspondence,’ PAO, Toronto, Ontario. This study is also referenced in National Heritage Limited’s final assessment, Fort William – Hinge of a Nation in RG 17-25, box 3, PAO, Toronto, Ontario.} An articulated objective of the site was to capitalize on the anticipated growing number of tourists to the region. R.G. Bowes and J.A. van der Meer, writing an interpretive plan for the site in 1972, noted that the site aimed to present an interpretive program that would attract tourists to the area and foster an atmosphere of discovery that would motivate visitors to return.\footnote{R.G. Bowes and J.A. van der Meer, An Interpretive Plan for Fort William: The Approach, May 1972, 3-4 in RG 47-64, box 1, PAO, Toronto, Ontario.} Similarly, an Interim Management Plan for 1974 noted that the summer program was “designed to give the general visitor an impressive and enjoyable experience and to instil in them a desire to return again and again.”\footnote{Interim Management Plan for Fort William Historical Park, Revision #1, 15 August 1974 in RG 65-9, “Old Fort William – Interim Management Plan,” PAO, Toronto, Ontario.} Fort William aimed to capture and augment the tourist market in northern Ontario and to spur economic development by enticing multiple visits to the site and region.

Statistics show that the site did have a significant impact on the tourism industry of the region. A document by the Ministry of Industry and Tourism reported that 43,600
people visited the site in 1973, even though only three of a projected fifty structures were opened. In 1974, with fourteen structures now fully reconstructed, the site had 71,400 visitors. By 1976 over 120,000 visitors toured the fort. Surveys indicated that 90% of site visitors came from outside of the Thunder Bay region, predominantly the United States and elsewhere in Ontario, and that 25% came to the area for the specific purpose of visiting Fort William. As a tourist site, Fort William succeeded in being an economic asset to the region and province.

From the outset designed as a living history site, Fort William now animates the history of the fur trade through costumed interpreters, communicating the themes of Native life, rendezvous, medicine, voyageur life, foodways, and crafts, among others, to the visiting public. The largest living history site in Canada, Fort William Historical Park remains a popular destination for tourists seeking an entertaining and educational visit into the world of the fur trade in 1815. Its managers continue to blend the objectives of education and economic development in its daily operations.

**Historic Site, Tourist Site:**

The restoration or (re)construction of Fort Henry, Upper Canada Village, and Fort William were all advocated initially by members of the public seeking to preserve sites of national historic significance. Each site represented important moments in Canada’s development, from the geographic and economic expansion of the fur trade, to Loyalist settlement, and colonial roots. Little government action was taken, however, to either

---


mark or preserve these sites until economic considerations tipped the scales. The growing tourist industry, as well as the push of the Depression and demand for work projects, incited the Department of Highways to spearhead the reconstruction of Fort Henry, while the need to soothe a community displaced by the Seaway, as well as a desire to attract tourist traffic to the eastern Ontario region, led to the creation of Upper Canada Village. Fort William was constructed as a central attraction for North-western Ontario. While economic considerations were paramount, also important was the sites’ ability to convey a sense of nationalism to visitors. From their inception as historic sites these three sites have been shaped by the desires to increase provincial revenues through the tourism industry and to educate visitors about defining moments in Canada’s past. Tourism, history, and the promotion of national identity have led a braided existence.

Conclusion:
Over the course of the twentieth century government agencies began to manage tourism, and historical preservation and commemoration. The two fields were intertwined into a new tourism/history, where history was reordered and shaped for the purposes of tourism development, which is also to say for the purposes of economic development. History became something to consume at these sites. As McKay and Bates have recently argued, “[t]he point of the new tourism/history was perforce to display and sell commodities. The historic site was ipso facto a tourist site.”\textsuperscript{166} As tourist sites, Fort Henry, Upper Canada Village, and Fort William were designed with specific goals in mind. Fundamentally, these sites were created to make money through a representation of history that made people feel good and developed a sense of national pride and identity. The

\textsuperscript{166} McKay and Bates, \textit{Province of History}, 330.
tourism/history that was and is presented by these sites is highly selective. McKay and Bates write,

[t]ourism/history poses no questions, issues no challenges, demands no recognitions, and presents no contradictions. It presents no difficult-to-grasp underlying logics. It entertains us with a parade of beautiful objects, but relieves… us all… of any responsibility to know how these beautiful objects came into existence and why they are dancing in front of our eyes. … History is no longer a root, an inspiration, a curse, or a blessing. It is merely a curiosity – a diversion from real life. History is just something that happens every summer.\footnote{Ibid., 372.}

It is important to question, then, how that history is made to happen every summer: who is creating it, why, and how? More particularly, what room might there be within the tourism/histories of historic sites for the inclusion of women and gendered pasts?
Illustration 2.1: Plan of Fort Henry, c.1830s. Courtesy of Fort Henry National Historic Site.

Illustration 2.2. Portion of a sketch of Fort William by Lt. Irvine, 1811.
Chapter Three

“As long as it brings in visitors” : The Fort Henry Guard, Domestic Interpreters, and the Representation of the Past at Fort Henry

Introduction:

Fort Henry National Historic Site is a long-standing feature of Kingston’s tourism/history economy. First opened in 1938, the site welcomes thousands of visitors each year. From its reinvention as a historic site, the fort has been shaped by the desire of its managers to engage people with history in an entertaining way. For Ronald L. Way the institution of the Fort Henry Guard was critical to the success of the site. He stated, “I firmly believe that the Guard is the spirit of Fort Henry and is the greatest single factor in creating an illusion, an illusion of the past restored to life.”

Combined with the restored site, surviving relics, and redesigned rooms, the Guard visually stimulated the visitors and decreased the amount of work required to imagine the past. Almost from the beginning the Fort Henry Guard was allocated a primary role at the site. This remains the case to this day. In the interim period, however, the programming at the site has been diversified to both expand the actions of the military interpreters and to introduce a new cast of interpretive characters. When John Robertson accepted the position of site manager in 1988 he did so with plans to make “sweeping changes at the fort over the next few years to make it more attractive – and educational – for visitors.”

Robertson sought to add to the military performances offered by the Fort Henry Guard by introducing aspects of military discipline, the poor diet, and alcohol consumption to programming, as well as

---

reconstructing new rooms on site to represent men’s living space, married quarters, and a
school room. As he asserted, “[i]f you’re going to have an historical site, you want to try
to make it as realistic as possible – as realistic as safe and comfortable [sic]. You don’t
want to offend people, but on the other hand you don’t want to gloss it over to the point
that they don’t get a sense of the place.”

With a base of military reenactment and performance, Fort Henry entered the 1990s with the plan of expanding of its
representation of daily life at the site. How successful has this transformation been?
What can visitors see today of the lives of men in barracks, of married life in a regiment,
or of women’s contributions to the garrison? Have such everyday relationships and
duties been molded into a tourism/history framework, or do they struggle to find a
foothold in programming?

This chapter explores the nature of staffing at Fort Henry, outlining the centrality
of the traditionally male Fort Henry Guard, the introduction of females into this unit, and
the rise, fall, and rebirth of a domestic interpreter program. Understanding how the
interpreters make sense of their place within the site is vital to developing an appreciation
of how they prioritize the information to convey to visitors. Undeniably, the military unit
is seen as integral to the site’s success, while the domestic unit is regarded by many as
disposable. An analysis of the programming offered by the site addressing women’s lives
in garrison and men’s lives off the parade square uphold the assertion that the intricacies
of daily life, family, work, and health are but superficially treated. Instead, the site and its
interpreters highlight the performance of military drill, the harsh discipline required of the
troops, and the social gradations between officers and enlisted men. Though such aspects
are also relevant to a thorough understanding of the past, the focus on entertaining the

3 Ibid.
populace with military spectacles has restricted the features of garrison life available for consumption at Fort Henry.

“Would all those interested in a guided tour of Fort Henry please gather this way”:

As visitors approach Fort Henry National Historic Site (Illus. 3.1) during the summer months, they are assailed by a symphony of sights and sounds. Nearing the site entrance they might hear the repetitive boom of the bass drum, the rapport of rifle fire, or the jarring yells of ranking officers. The limestone walls, drop-ditches, and wooden bridges signal a trip back in time. Passing the sentry as they enter the main gate, visitors are meant to imagine a world of the past where costumed interpreters are soldiers, officers, wives, and daughters. Standing in the advanced battery, taking in the view of Lake Ontario and noting the flanking washrooms, gift store, and restaurant, a young man in a red tunic announces that a tour is about to begin.

The tour is the main programming offering, designed to provide visitors with a broad introduction to the strategic purpose of Fort Henry and to garrison life. Over the course of fifty minutes, it visits most rooms at the fort, which have been set up to reflect how they might have looked in 1867. Beginning with an introduction to the strategic position and design of the fort in the advanced battery, the tour proceeds to the garrison cells and privies before arriving at the officers’ quarters, stopping in various bedrooms and social quarters. The tour continues through the interpretive wing, focusing on the soldiers’ barracks and school room, before climbing the winding staircase to the ramparts where the tour concludes.

Remembering that the guide indicated there were museum rooms on the balcony level, visitors descend the staircase and enter a room explaining the purpose of the Rideau
Canal and the fort’s role in its defence. Over the next few rooms, they view different uniforms and weapons, learn about the reconstruction of the fort, and see artifacts of the Royal Navy. Descending another level of stairs to the parade square they stop in two more rooms that display large artillery pieces and shells.

Suddenly, a bugle sounding from the parade square draws visitors out onto the bleachers. Soldiers fall into formation on the parade square and an officer inspects the troops. Pausing at the goat major, the officer ‘shakes hands’ with the fort’s mascot, David, the goat. Satisfied with the men’s turn-out for the day, the officer dismisses the parade and prepares to inspect the men’s drill. First, a gun detachment climbs to the ramparts and loads and fires a twenty-four pound muzzle loading gun. Next, the Drums re-enter the parade square and plays folk-tunes and marches whilst performing various marching formations. Pleased with the display of drill, the officer instructs the units to carry on with their training.

After consulting the daily program, visitors next cross the parade square to wait for the Rifle Demonstration. After explaining the evolution of arms from the Brown Bess musket to the breech-loading rifle, the young woman dressed as a member of the infantry fires off three shots. Hearing a bell ring from outside the school room, visitors head over to take part in a lesson. For the first time many see a woman in a dress at the fort. After a brief introduction, the schoolmistress begins her lesson, asking the class questions on geography and mathematics. One student gets a question wrong and is called to the front of the class and made to put their nose on the board, making the participants laugh at the demonstration of classroom discipline. After the lesson, on the way out of the fort, visitors run into a soldier in shackles being escorted by a sergeant and a gaggle of children. Wondering what they have missed they consult the program and realize that
they have failed to see the Crimes and Punishment of Private Atkins, as well the flag lowering, the Walk of the Dead tour, and several other programs. Several think that it might be worth a trip back to the site in future to see these programs. Grabbing a drink at the restaurant, and some postcards in the store, they leave, satisfied with the afternoon.

Fort Henry is run on a program based model. Costumed interpreters are tasked to lead programs at various locations around the site that will relate details of the past. For example, one interpreter might conduct a tour, the Pay Parade, and the Atkins demo, while another will lead a muster, a rifle demo, and take down the flag. In addition to programming tasks, interpreters are also scheduled to stand in certain locations to welcome the public, help guide them through the fort, answer questions, and ensure the safety of all present. Visitors are welcome to wander the fort at their leisure but they are most likely to interact with interpreters and, possibly, the past during scheduled programming.

**Living History: The Fort Henry Guard and Domestic Interpreters**

As a living history site many of Fort Henry’s messages are communicated through the oral presentations of the interpreters, through their physical demonstrations of objects and tasks, and also through their mere presence. Living history interpreters are meant to recreate, to some extent, the historical population that resided or worked in an environment. The interpretation of life in the Fort Henry garrison has been divided by the site into military interpretation and domestic interpretation.

Since the site opened in 1938, the military organization of the garrison has been ‘brought to life’ by the Fort Henry Guard. The Guard is a group of university and college students working a summer job where they interpret military life by wearing military
costume and performing infantry, artillery, rifle, and music drills for the public (Illus. 3.2). The Guard is managed by the programming department, though daily functions are overseen by a group of senior staff members promoted into leadership positions. Guard members are assigned to a training sub-unit, either the Drill Squad or the Drums, determined, for the most part, by their musical talents and brawn. The sub-units alternate ‘training days,’ spending one day marching on the parade square or training on artillery, and one day ‘manning’ the fort’s interpretive programs. In addition to training and performing in parades for visitors’ enjoyment, military interpreters conduct guided tours and educational programs, rifle and music demonstrations, flag raising and lowering, sentry stands, and musters, in which children enlist in the army and are taught basic drill. The fort is animated by these interpreters and they play a central role in presenting the history of the site.

The size of the Guard has fluctuated over the years. The number of military interpreters fell from a peak of one-hundred-and-forty-four in 1990 to fifty in 1996, following a sharp reduction in budget. Numbers increased to sixty in 1998 and since 2000 have sat consistently at seventy-five, give or take one or two. As a consequence of lower staffing numbers a higher percentage of the staff are occupied leading scheduled

---

4 The majority of the interpreters in the Fort Henry Guard since at least 2000 have been students in university. Their academic backgrounds, however, are exceedingly diverse and range from music majors, to politics majors, to physical education and kinesiology majors. There is no pre-required knowledge required to become a Guard member. On occasion students still in high school, or completing their final year, have been hired. Their late arrival – beginning full-time employment in late June rather than early May – typically dictates that they undertake domestic interpreter positions wherein they do not train with subunits.

5 These leadership positions, or ranks, include: captain, lieutenant, ensign, sergeant major, drum major, colour sergeant, drum sergeant, artillery sergeant, guiding sergeant, and corporals.

6 “Manning” days refer to the days interpreter give tours and lead demonstrations. Fort Henry incorporates many military phrases and terms into its present operations. However, the continued use of the term ‘manning’ privileges male staff on site and perpetuates the stereotype of male action and, conversely, female passivity. Though I have never heard a female staff member complain about the use of this term, it seems outdated.

programs, leaving less time for informal first-person interpretation of the barracks and school room.

Only in 1993 were women allowed to join the Guard following the advancement of equity legislation by the provincial NDP government. Though Mark Bennett asserts that the site embraced this change in employment opportunities, everyone was not so pleased. Katherine McKenna notes that there was “consternation about how to integrate women into the history of the Fort,” and that members of the Kingston Historical Society held intense debates as to the merits of this modification of practice. Some previous Guard members continue to question the wisdom of allowing women to interpret soldiers.

While the site embraced the inclusion of women into the Guard, critiques have been raised by previous employees especially about women’s involvement in military interpretation. Many are simply uncomfortable with women entering this bastion of masculinity known as the Guard; others, however, have voiced more substantial critiques of mixed-gendered interpretation’s effects on the perceived authenticity and accuracy of the historic site. As one ‘old Guard’ told me, he is opposed to the inclusion of women


9 Interview with Mark Bennett, programming supervisor, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 6 August 2008.

10 Katherine McKenna, “Women’s History, Gender Politics and the Interpretation of Canadian Historic Sites: some examples from Ontario,” Atlantis 30 n.1 (2005): 24. A search of online databases of local newspapers, including the Kingston Whig Standard, the Globe and Mail, the Toronto Star, and the Ottawa Citizen, have not revealed any articles that comment on the incorporation of women into the Fort Henry Guard. It appears as though there was little public interest or outcry over the change.

11 Attempts are made at Fort Henry to have the female military interpreters blend in with the male soldiers (i.e. hair pulled up) to visually minimize the inaccuracy of their presence as soldiers. These attempts are far from successful. More often than not the tourists recognize the presence of women within the Guard. They often ask how many women are in the Guard or tell interpreters how great they think it is that women are performing the job.
into the Guard because it is inaccurate for the time period represented. I would argue, however, that the most important test is whether the public understands the difference between current presentation practices and historical fact. Are they aware that females were not allowed to be soldiers in 1867? First year staff member Kristen Turvey remarked,

[m]ost of them pick up pretty quickly that, okay, you are supposed to be portraying a man. When we usually get to the privies, amazingly enough, a lot of them are actually like ‘oh there would have been women here?’ So most of them understand that there wouldn’t have been women in the military and they do understand that we are, in fact, portraying men...\(^{12}\)

Visitors seem to understand that women would not have historically been allowed in the military. The anachronism of presenting female soldiers, then, does not lead to misunderstanding and this argument for the exclusion of women loses its teeth.

The Fort Henry Guard was a male institution until 1993, but the site was not devoid of women. Beryl Way, Ronald Way’s wife, played a central role in the administration of Fort Henry for many years after its opening. From the 1950s through to the late 1980s, women were hired to work at Fort Henry as administrators, store clerks, and as hostesses. Hostesses were stationed around the tour route to impart information to tourists and were expected to lead tours in different languages. Women were specifically singled out for this job, at least in the latter part of the century, in order to obtain a more balanced ratio of male to female employees at the site.\(^{13}\) Women’s roles were largely

\(^{12}\)Interview with Kristen Turvey, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 21 July 2008. Brian LeClair supported this statement: “I would say, probably 20-30% might come in and be curious and wonder why there are women in uniform and I would say that maybe 80-90%, probably even higher, leave understanding that it’s pretend. So they might come in with the misconception right away but I think that we’re pretty good at clearing it up and explaining to them why things are the way that they are.” Interview with Brian LeClair, Guiding Sergeant, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 20 May 2008.

\(^{13}\)Interview with Mark Bennett, Programming Supervisor, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 1 October 2007.
peripheral to those of the then male Guard however, which was considered the central interpretive measure of the site.

The domestic interpreter program, introduced in 1990 following the appointment of John Robertson as manager in 1988, was intended to broaden the representation of life at Fort Henry beyond military drill.\textsuperscript{14} In practice this has primarily included demonstrating the presence of soldiers’ wives, officers’ wives, and a schoolmistress, though male figures such as a baker and leather-worker have also been represented.\textsuperscript{15} A number of men were hired into the program in the 1990s; however, since the year 2000 males have held non-marching interpretive positions only if they were a part of a government language exchange program, or if they have been injured and are unable to march.\textsuperscript{16} By far the largest number of domestic interpreters, or “doms” as they are called on site, has been female. Female domestic interpreters wear period costume and, though tours remain their primary duty, they also lead the School Room, Children’s Story Telling, and demonstrations of laundry detail (Illus. 3.3).\textsuperscript{17} By visually presenting individuals who were not soldiers, the domestic interpreter program expands the picture of history represented on site.

The domestic interpreter program has seen highs and lows over its existence. From 1993 to 1998 the domestic interpretation program worked alongside the co-ed

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{15} Interestingly, terminology on site continues to refer to the women who were married to soldiers or officers as ‘soldiers’ wives’ and “officers’ wives,” turning women into possessed beings defined by their ‘owners’ rather than individual actors.
\textsuperscript{16} One respondent commented that when male domestic interpreters were present on site they were considered to be on the lowest rung of the hierarchical ladder. They noted also that there had been very few male domestic interpreters recently and that they were acquired in very different circumstances than female doms – not being hired expressly, but being Guard members who were injured and could no longer march. Interview with Anonymous, 14 September 2007.
Guard but budget cuts slowly reduced the number of all interpretive staff. In 1990 there were fifteen domestic interpreters to one-hundred-and-forty-four military interpreters, or 10.4% of interpretive staff. The number of domestic interpreters peaked at twenty in 1993 and then decreased until the unit was phased out in 1998. Although the introduction of females into the Guard did not directly contribute to the end of the domestic interpreter program, the fact that female employees could lead both military and domestic programs meant that specialized domestic interpreters were expendable when budget cuts were required.\textsuperscript{18} Despite the fact that no domestic interpreter unit existed in the years after 1998 soldiers’ wives were portrayed, however inconsistently, by female military interpreters who received permission to dress as a soldier’s wife for a day.\textsuperscript{19} Domestic interpreters were hired again in 2004. Approximately six to eight female domestic interpreters have been hired each summer since.

Despite the diversity of tasks that domestic interpreters accomplish at the site, many co-workers do not appreciate their efforts. McKenna noted that early domestic interpreters found that they were treated as “second class citizens” at work.\textsuperscript{20} Most domestic interpreters feel that their role is still considered inferior to that of the Guard. One female who worked as a domestic interpreter in the mid-2000s informed me that,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{18} Interview with Mark Bennett, Programming Supervisor, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 1 October 2007.
\item \textsuperscript{19} Female Guard members spend the majority of their time in military dress, especially in their first year, and they require the permission of the upper ranks to wear dresses. Interview with Greg Gouthro, Senior Interpreter, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 July 2008. One female interpreter stated, “I know as a rookie we’re not given doms clothing. I do know old boys and lance corporals, I think, have the chance of doing that, however, it’s more so a case if you can’t portray the role of a man, I guess, you can be a woman today.” Interview with Kristen Turvey, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 21 July 2008. Lauren Heggison, a lance corporal in the Drums, also asserted that she wore a dress very infrequently, “maybe two, three times a summer,” and that, “…if you did, like, [wear a dress] all the girls were, like, ‘but I’m really in the Drums.’ It was always like you’re more proud to have done that than to be dressed up like [a soldier’s wife].” Interview with Lauren Heggison, Lance Corporal, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 27 July 2008.
\item \textsuperscript{20} McKenna, “Women’s History,” 24.
\end{itemize}
[i]t seems as though most people feel as though many of the duties performed by DOMs (including commentary, school rooms, tours, etc) could be performed by someone in the guard just as easily, where as [sic] DOMs are not able to perform many of the duties of the guard (i.e. musters, marching, etc), and therefore feel as though DOMS are somewhat ‘useless’ because of their limitations.\textsuperscript{21} [capitals in original]

Some domestic interpreters note, however, that management has made overt efforts to make them feel important. The role of sergeant’s wife was created for those interpreters in their third year of employment and, in 2008, a domestic interpreter was appointed the ‘unofficial rank’ of guiding sergeant. Yet, doms are also clear to distinguish that while this ‘promotion’ recognizes their experience, it does not mirror the increase in pay or responsibility given to Guard with similar tenures.\textsuperscript{22} Even though the domestic interpreters have been contributing members of the staff for many years, their role is still considered by many to be second in importance to the military interpreters.

Both men and women have been employed since the site first opened. Their work experiences at the site have been quite different. Up until the 1990s, women’s interpretive contributions as tour guides were seen as peripheral to those of the men in the Guard. Although women’s work was likely appreciated as necessary to the function of a tourist site, the work of men interpreting soldiers’ lives was central to the self-definition of the site. While women have diversified the Guard since 1993, they interpret primarily the lives of men, perpetuating – along with male interpreters – the valuation of military

\textsuperscript{21} Email correspondence with Dana Dabros, 24 September 2007. Another domestic interpreter made similar comments to me about the level of respect given to the role domestic interpreters play in the daily functioning of the historic site: “I think the seniors recognize it, like, I think they’re… like they’ve never given us any attitude or disrespect…. But I find a lot of the old boys think ‘you don’t work as hard as we do,’ like, ‘you’re not doing anything.’ […] Clearly the rookies have the same idea – ‘You’re not worthy if you’re not in a uniform.’ And I think that’s stupid.” Interview with Anonymous 9, 1 August 2008.

\textsuperscript{22} Email correspondence with Catherine Vanner, 24 September 2007. One domestic interpreter lamented, “…I know one thing is for the soldiers there is different levels and they can move up, for us there isn’t. … You can’t get a promotion, which, obviously, any opportunity to make more money is one that I would like to take.” Interview with Meredith Hefler, Domestic Interpreter, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 July 2008.
interpretation. Women interpreting women’s lives is a practice that has yet to be fully embraced as equal in importance to the interpretation of military skills.

**On the Strength: Representations of Women at Fort Henry**

On any given day there are only four to six female interpreters dressed as soldiers’ wives and their duties sometimes limit their visibility. The most likely means by which the public will learn about the lives of women is through oral presentations in daily programming. Visitors are likely to hear about the married status of women in garrison and their daily life. Much of the work that women did, however, is overlooked in the presentation. The lives of women are acknowledged and included in the narrative the site presents. A lack of detail and nuance leaves them rather one-dimensional.

*“An occasional indulgence” - Marriage in the military:*

Women were not officially allowed to join the military forces until the Second World War. There is a general perception that the armed forces prior to this time were entirely masculine entities. Yet, British garrisons of the nineteenth century included women. Although it could not deny outright the rights of any man to matrimony, the Army did its best to deter or limit those entering into its bonds.²³ Permission of commanding officers was required and the number of wives in the regiment was limited. Despite these stringent rules, a number of soldiers were given permission to marry and the military provided housing and rations for the couple and allowed a small percentage of women to travel abroad with the regiments. The interpretation on the guided tour at Fort Henry explains some of these rules that allowed women in garrison. It does not

²³ For example, as early as 1685 men were required to seek the approval of their Commanding Officer before getting married. Noel T. St. John Williams, Col., *Judy O’Grady and the Colonel’s Lady—the Army Wife and Camp Follower since 1660* (London: Brassey’s Defence Publishers, 1988), 10.
provide much depth about the background of the women and how they found themselves overseas, or context about the changing social attitudes towards marriage and the military.

The tour verbally explains why women were present in a military fortification when they were not allowed to be soldiers. The stop at the washrooms or privies introduces how soldiers received permission to get married. There are two privies open for public viewing at Fort Henry, one used by the soldiers and one used by their wives and daughters, and the clear indication of the presence of women at the fort often raises questions about who the women using these privies would have been. Of the eighteen tours I observed in 2008, six guides used this entry-point to explain that soldiers in the British military could be given permission to marry, that this permission was generally given to 6% of the company and that, furthermore, this 6% of men was selected from men with good service records.\textsuperscript{24} An additional two guides further explained that some regiments, such as the Royal Canadian Rifle Regiment [RCRR], allowed 12% of their men to get married because of the age and service record of the regiment and to deter desertion.\textsuperscript{25} School tours were given a slightly different experience at the privies. Because of crowding and time constraints a number of groups stopped only momentarily to view the privies with no verbal explanation about them. Of eleven school tours that did stop, four learned about why women were here and what the marriage requirements were in the military in the 1860s. The privies were one location, therefore, where visitors


\textsuperscript{25} In Britain, prior to and throughout much of the nineteenth century, marriage was discouraged as incompatible with military efficiency and mobility, though by the 1850s some saw it as a means to increase morale and enlistment. Regimental practices varied but in general only 6% of the men were given approval to marry based on their good service record. The RCRR, a regiment comprised of soldiers with long-service and good-conduct records, was stationed at Fort Henry in 1867. Because of this service record, and also to improve morale and inhibit desertion to the United States, the regiment was given the privilege of a 12% marriage rate, double that of the norm.
were informed about the presence of women at the fort and the number of men that might enter into matrimony.

The subject of marriage in the military was brought up by many guides in the Commandant’s quarters. Officers did not face the same barriers to marriage as the enlisted men. They were expected to marry a respectable woman of the same social class as themselves. Though officers did not have to seek their ranking officers’ approval prior to marriage this was frequently done as regimental disapproval of an officer’s wife could lead to a forced choice between the regiment and the woman. Three guides used this opportunity to discuss the expectations surrounding officer marriages and to compare these to the experience of the soldiers. Eleven of eighteen guides explained that although officers could be married their families did not reside at Fort Henry but rather in Kingston. Nine noted that most officers would not remain at the fort overnight if they had a family in Kingston to return to. Taken together, seventeen of nineteen guides referred to marriage in this room.

Although the majority of tour guides introduced the topic of marriage in the British military at the privies or in the officers’ quarters, the depth of detail presented varied significantly. While the guides who discussed these topics were able to present a brief statement about some of the conditions surrounding marriage, they provided little information about the reasons for these limitations or how some regiments bent these regulations, about the women the men might be marrying, or about how the women arrived at the fort. Katherine McKenna’s study of family life in the Fort Wellington garrison between 1843 and 1854 indicates that the marriage rate far exceeded 12% in

---

practice, with 38% of the RCRR – or 335 of 885 men – listed as legally married in 1846 and over 52% in 1851. Basic information about the rate of permission was generally all that was conveyed by the guides at Fort Henry. The rules and regulations of the Standing Orders of the army are stressed, rather than their practical application and bending as was seen in the case of the RCRR. Though some visitors inquired into who the women at the fort might have been, most responses by the guides defined them by their marital status as opposed to providing detail about where the women were from geographically or what relationship they had originally with the military. Little to no information was provided about how British women found themselves overseas with the garrison, neglecting this aspect of women’s regimental experience. The fact that many regimental families, both of enlisted men and officers, were split up when soldiers were posted overseas – much like today – is omitted from the narrative. Not all of the officers’ wives, for example, opted to travel with their husbands abroad. Some women chose to remain behind in more familiar society, and those that did travel with the regiment often elected to educate their children in English boarding schools. Little recognition is given on tour to the fact that

28 When posted abroad, particularly when in America or the Canadas, the men married local women. As Robin Grazley notes, British garrisons played a significant role in colonial society and officers interacted frequently with the local colonial elite, socializing with eligible young women. They also often married from within the regiment. Many wives became widows at a young age and regimental rules stipulated that they had to remarry within the regiment or be returned to England to fend for themselves. Soldiers’ daughters were also attractive brides as they were familiar with military life. Many girls were married in their early teens to grizzled men of forty. See McKenna, Family Life, 69-71, 119-123; Venning, Following the Drum, 14-19; Robin Grazley, “Nothing Improper Happened: Sex, Marriage and Colonial Identity in Upper Canada, 1783-1850” (PhD Diss., Queen’s University, 2010), 52; Richard Holmes, Redcoat (London: HarperPerennial, 2001), 155.
29 When a regiment was sent overseas only a small quota of soldiers’ wives were officially allowed to travel with it. In 1800 the Duke of York, Commander in Chief of the Army, formally established that six women per company of one-hundred men could accompany men on foreign-service. Eligible wives on the strength drew ballots to decide who would travel abroad with the regiment and who would be left behind to fend for themselves. See Venning, Following the Drum, 14-19, 27-32; Holmes, Redcoat, 294, 346.
30 Ibid., 85.
men were often split apart from their loved ones, though admittedly this was likely uncommon amongst the officers of the RCRR who were recruited from the colony.\textsuperscript{31} A more holistic picture of military life might be captured should more information be included in the tour about how the soldiers’ wives found themselves travelling with the regiment overseas and about how a number men were forced to leave their wives and families behind. Furthermore, the guides made no indication that many soldiers circumvented regulations and married without permission. Never mentioned during my visits at the fort was the fact that, in practice, many men married off the strength of the regiment without commanding officer approval; some estimates place numbers at 7\% of the enlisted men.\textsuperscript{32} Without the support and provisions provided by the military to families on the strength, though, these families found it very difficult to survive on a soldier’s wages.

In general, most visitors will leave the guided tour with a basic understanding that only a certain number of well behaved soldiers would be allowed to marry and to have their wives live in regiment with them. This is important information to communicate as it sheds light on why women are present in what is often assumed to be an entirely masculine environment. Yet, more detailed information might be provided about the reasons for marital regulations, about the circumvention of these regulations, and about the experience of regimental families being posted overseas in the British Empire. The subject of marriage and family in the military has been introduced on tour, however the information presented only scratches the surface of the experience of these families.

\textsuperscript{31} The Royal Canadian Rifle Regiment was a unit raised from regiments already in BNA and thus requiring no overseas deployment. However, site management is adamant that the interpreters do not represent the RCRR but rather a generic regiment.

Making room for families in the garrison:

Military families were provided housing by the military. The nature of this housing changed as the presence of women in garrison became more accepted over the nineteenth century. Regardless of whether they lived in barrack rooms populated by a dozen or more men, or whether they resided within a specifically designed family space, families lived in crowded conditions. Fort Henry has recreated a family barracks, which is set up for the public mainly in July and August, and the tour stops here to stress the cramped quarters. The evolution and variety of living space for families in garrison, however, is rarely touched upon.

The conditions that military families experienced in garrison are raised on the tour in the family quarters (Illus. 3.4). Eight guides used this tour stop to elaborate upon the cramped quarters and lack of privacy experienced by families in the military. Interestingly, this is less than 50% of the tour guides I observed, indicating that this subject matter is considered non-essential to convey. Pointing to the hanging curtains dividing the room into six spaces, each with two foldable cots, the eight guides drew attention to the fact that four to six families occupied these quarters. Conditions are highlighted to shock visitors. Many guides stress that children would sleep on the floor, in dangerous reach of Papa’s heavy-heeled boots should he be roused in the night. Others draw attention to the number of residents in the room – thirty if one assumes each family has three children – and wonder how so many children are conceived with only a curtain for privacy. Visitors are likely to understand that families lived in spaces very different from their own homes today.
Yet, visitors have received very little context about the history of family quarters in the British military and the fact that these shared quarters were a vast improvement over prior living situations. Following the Napoleonic War, the Army began to provide barracks for the troops, rather than billeting them at inns and taverns, and to allocate some space for married men within the barracks. The ‘corner system’, wherein a married man and his wife were allowed to reside in the corner of a barrack room populated by nineteen or so other soldiers was first instituted in 1817. In response to growing concerns about the morality of shared accommodations, the corner system was phased out over the 1860s. In its stead, the military built separate married quarters to house multiple families. In 1867 families at Fort Henry resided in separate married quarters adjacent to the parade square housing six families apiece, as well as in more private lodgings in the two flanking ditch towers outside the fort’s main walls and in the Martello Towers around the city’s harbour. The shift over time and, indeed, amelioration of conditions of family quarters is not addressed on tour. The diversity of accommodations for men and their families is also infrequently addressed. Most guides, by omission, suggest that all families lived six-at-a-time in designated barrack rooms. This serves to highlight their lowly condition in

---

33 The Barrack Regulations of that year stipulated that, “the Barrack master may permit (when it does not interfere with or restrict the soldiers’ accommodation), as an occasional indulgence and as tending to promote cleanliness and the convenience of the soldier, 4 married women per Troop or Company of 60 men (or 6 per 100 men) to be resident within the Barracks.” St. John Williams, Judy O’Grady, 17. See also Trustram, Women of the Regiment, 70-76.

34 Throughout the 1850s Charles Dickens used his reputation to raise debate about the accommodation of married women in the military, publishing first-hand accounts of living conditions in barracks and highlighting the depravity of the situation. In 1865 the Quarterly Review asked, “[w]hat shall we say of the outrage which is thus offered to the wife’s delicacy, if she have any; or the effect that must be produced upon her moral nature, while she is forced to overhear the ribald talk of a dozen rough young bachelors? What shall we say of the state of her feelings till she has become utterly hardened, while a dozen men, every night and every morning, are stripping and dressing in front of her very presence? Or shall we ask what the husband feels when his duty comes for guard, and he is forced to leave his wife alone in such a place?” Quoted in Trustram, Women of the Regiment, 71; see also Venning, Following the Drum, 64-66.
comparison to the luxury the officers were afforded, rather than to bring into focus the environment in which families were raised.

Fort Henry recreates a family barracks and a number of interpreters choose to explain this space to visitors on tour. Despite having information at their disposal about the evolution of living spaces for families in the army in the nineteenth century, very few guides opt to provide this information to visitors. Instead, the cramped conditions are stressed and compared to those of other enlisted men and to today’s conditions.

*A Day in the Life of a Military Wife:*

Women in garrison held many responsibilities. As wives and mothers they had to care for their husbands and children, maintain a living space, and provide nourishment. In order to ensure economic survival women in garrison often took on additional paid tasks that helped sustain the regiment and their families. Their days were full of laborious tasks such as laundry, cleaning, and sewing. Officers’ wives, on the other hand, were less central to garrison life; nevertheless they were present as supervisory figures. The role of both classes of women is touched upon at Fort Henry but inconsistently and with gaps in the narrative.

As the military became more centralized and bureaucratized, jobs that had once been done by billets were now expected to be undertaken by the wives in return for their board. Women officially became a more integral part of the daily operation of the garrison. Regimental Standing Orders varied somewhat, yet the regulations and responsibilities set out in the 1861 *Standing Orders of the Royal Canadian Rifles* offer a fairly typical example of the rules set down for soldiers’ wives on the strength in the 1860s (see Appendix B). Soldiers’ wives were expected to clean and maintain the wood
stoves in their barracks, to sweep and scrub their berths every day, and to make the beds each morning. They were responsible also for preparing meals for their families and for raising the children. In addition to all of the duties listed above, the women in the RCRR were also given permission to tend gardens in order to supplement their diet. Further tasks and responsibilities were assigned according to rank, with senior soldiers’ wives given the less menial work of being a maid to an officer, a nurse, or a midwife. The major paid employments of the women of lower standing were washing and sewing for the men. The wives usually washed for between six to ten men and were paid 6d a week per man. The women took in sewing from the rank and file. Some also did piecework for the army clothing depot, 8 ½ d a shirt, through Garrison Needlework Associations superintended by the officers’ wives or chaplains. The task of cleaning the women’s privies was offered to the wives, at a wage of 15s a month, before being contracted out. Wives could also be employed as the schoolmistress. In contrast, the officers’ wives spent time in garrison visiting the hospitals and checking in on soldiers’ families, though the majority of their agenda was filled with calls on other officers’ wives, picnics with the officers, and dinner parties, musical soirees, and balls. Neither soldiers’ wives nor officers’ wives were idle. It should be clear from this long list of duties and

35 Ron Ridley, email communication with the author, 12/12/2007; McKenna’s study also indicates that the women at Fort Wellington were allowed to grow gardens.
36 Venning, Following the Drum, 112; Holmes, Redcoat, 293.
37 Trustram, Women of the Regiment, 111; Holmes, Redcoat, 293. McKenna found that in 1845 the RCRR paid 3/4d per day for washing. See McKenna, Family Life, 98.
38 Trustram, Women of the Regiment, 112-113. Though an Army Clothing Factory was established in 1856 to manufacture more complicated pieces, shirts which did not require much skill to make were distributed amongst the garrisons from the 1850s through to the end of the century. Although outside the time frame of Fort Henry, Trevor May noted that in 1879 women were employed making shirts for the clothing depot at a wage of 8.5d per shirt.
39 McKenna, Family Life, 99.
40 Venning, Following the Drum, 176-190.
responsibilities that soldiers’ wives worked hard for their board and that the military benefited from their labours.

Elements of women’s work and daily life are portrayed at Fort Henry but the picture is incomplete. Woman’s role as mother is occasionally demonstrated in conjunction with an enrichment program for grade seven students. More consistently, interpreters display the work of women in the school room. Specific daily programs have in the past verbally highlighted women’s various contributions to the garrison. Very few of women’s tasks, however, are physically demonstrated.

Childrearing is sporadically interpreted at Fort Henry, minimizing the work of military wives. In 2001 the fort introduced a summer enrichment program for local grade seven and eight students, occurring in July and August, to better visually represent families. This program offers students the opportunity to dress in period costume and participate in the daily activities that historical youth may have participated in. The children attend the program several days a week and follow the same schedule each day, for example aiding with the fire-engine demonstration, attending a school room lesson, and, most frequently, idly chatting in the married quarters. The students add to the atmosphere of the site - after all, dozens of them once lived there. They tire quickly of the repetitive program, however, and start to spend more time lounging in the married quarters rather than actively interpreting.41 Furthermore, their numbers, while more than enough for the assigned staff to manage, are far below what would be historically accurate, even taking into account proportionality for the present-day, reduced size of the garrison. Their age range is also not representative and limits the depiction of the type of

physical care and attention that women had to provide to their children. Certainly, any presence at all of children on site is welcomed and the participants seem to thoroughly enjoy their experience interacting with the past and the public; however, the lack of small children on site circumscribes the portrayal of a significant portion of women’s work.

Women’s contribution to the function of the garrison is addressed on the tour. One guide out of eighteen, the senior domestic interpreter, introduced women’s work at the privies, stating that women might clean the privies in order to better support their families. An additional four guides briefly touched on the topic of laundry at the privies by making a joke that the privies flushed out to Navy Bay where women of the garrison did the washing, but they did not elaborate on how this work was done. Three guides of thirteen, two of whom were portraying soldiers’ wives at the time, included information about women’s daily work during their stop in the family quarters. All three guides noted that the women cleaned the family quarters, but the two ‘wives’ provided more breadth on the tasks the women could take on to supplement their husband’s wages. One told her group that the women took in laundry and sewing, and the other that women could clean the privies or tend gardens. The tour guides did not provide detail about the amount of work that would be undertaken by women, such as the number of pieces of laundry each woman was responsible for, nor did they inform their groups about the wages the women received and how these compared to their husbands. Further, the contrast between the experiences of the officers’ wives and the soldiers’ wives – a comparison that is explicitly made on the tour between the men of differing ranks – is, at best, infrequently addressed. These bits of information conform to the sources; however they scratch only at the surface of the work women contributed to the garrison. The amount of labour women contributed and their role in supporting the family economy is minimized. Equally
troubling is the fact that so few tour guides find this type of information important enough to transmit on tour.

Unsurprisingly, visitors are walking away from the site with incorrect assumptions about the roles of women in garrisons. When confronted with the statement, “[o]fficers’ wives played no role in garrison (or fort) life because of their high class and status,” 57% (or 28 of 49) respondents agreed. Only 18% (or 9) respondents disagreed. Relatedly, 47% agreed with the statement that, “[t]he only benefit of having soldier’s wives living in garrison was improved morale.” From the long list of tasks outline above this is clearly false. The site is not conveying the facts of women’s history clearly to their visitors, as the above results indicates, and the messages they do communicate are, perhaps, not being heard.

Though the tours I witnessed in 2008 did not convey the difference between officers’ wives and soldiers’ wives experience in garrison, the site once offered a program that focused on this topic. Meet a Soldier’s Wife was introduced in 2002 and expanded to Meet a Soldier’s Wife and Officer’s Lady in 2003 to create visitor interactions with soldiers’ wives and to better convey information about their lives in garrison. An interpreter dressed as a soldier’s wife, and eventually an officer’s wife, mingled and talked with visitors in the dry ditch each afternoon discussing their roles and duties at the fort for approximately fifteen to twenty minutes. When placed together, dressed differently and discussing drastically different daily schedules, the visual contrast between officers’ wives and soldiers’ wives was clear. The information presented, however, had hardly more depth than the tour.

In 2006 a revised version of Meet a Soldier’s Wife and an Officer’s Lady was introduced. A Soldier’s Wife: Tools of the Trade, ran twice daily at 13:15 and 15:45 in a
recently redone officers’ kitchen in the west demi-bastion of the site. This program ostensibly focused on the work women would have accomplished while in garrison. The interpreter brought with them a basket of the ‘tools’ the soldier’s wife would have used on a regular basis, including knitting needles and a wash-basin. They then explained to the attending public the tasks women completed daily using the objects as visual props. The domestic interpreters were often frustrated that the program entailed only ‘talking at’ the public while they believed that the majority of those who attended the program expected to see them actively using the tools, as is done in the military music and rifle demonstrations.\(^42\) The program reiterated the limited information presented by more conscientious tour guides instead of advancing the narrative with detail and demonstrations of the hand skills required. It was taken off the schedule after one year.

Why were each of these programs so short lived? Interpreters felt ill-prepared for their duties and there was little visitor interest as demonstrated by low attendance numbers. With no domestic interpreter unit yet (re)established in 2002-2003, female military interpreters were randomly assigned to Meet a Soldier’s Wife and Officer’s Lady. Although experienced staff were primarily tasked as the wives they often found that they lacked the ‘specialized’ knowledge to deliver this program to its potential. Later, even with a domestic interpreter unit, the women tasked to Tools of the Trade often felt unprepared. The guide manual contained only brief references to women’s experiences on site. The interpreters received very little instruction on how to carry out these programs, being given only a written summary of program expectations that outlined basic structure and relevant information. As one domestic interpreter reflected, “I felt that I was well trained for tours, but everything else felt very unprepared. We were

often expected to read over a manual and make up the program ourselves, especially for
the programs which were solely for soldiers’ wives.”43 Furthermore, very few visitors
showed up to partake in these programs. Timing, location, and the subject matter of the
program likely had much to do with its lack of overall success. Each program’s
respective time slots competed with the site’s most popular offerings, including one of the
last guided tours of the day, a School Room demonstration, and a Muster parade. The
locations of the programs were often not ideal, held in corners of the fort that were not
highly visible and thus did not randomly attract the attention of the public. Practical
planning matters decreased the likelihood of success for these three programs dealing
with women’s work, as well as the lack of confident interpreters providing detailed
information.

Women’s work running the laundry at the fort was the focus of a program in 2007.
The Blue Monday, or laundry detail, program ran from 1990 to 1997 and was reinstated
in 2007. As described by a domestic interpreter,

Laundry detail would entail washing clothes, like aprons and fatigue shirts
over in a large basin with a bar of soap. While doing this I would talk to
tourists about what I was doing and how it was similar to how the soldier's
[sic] wives would wash clothes in 1867. I then would explain the entire
washing process from that time period that was used at forts like Fort Henry
and tell tourists why washing the clothes was not only back breaking labour
but also essential to helping with otherwise prevalent [sic] hygiene problems.
I then usually asked some of the tourists to help ring [sic] the washing I was
doing and I would put it out to dry on top of a table...44

This program introduced the laborious work soldiers’ wives took on, yet, once again, the
subject is communicated orally as opposed to visually. Washing a fatigue shirt or two in
a small basin does not accurately convey the physical effort it would have taken to obtain

---

and heat the water to launder the clothes and sheets of hundreds of men, nor the muscle required to scrub and wring these items. One domestic interpreter reflected,

Blue Monday, that was supposed to portray how soldiers’ wives would be responsible for doing the laundry, which from my understanding was a big undertaking, it was something that really affected their lives, it was a great way to bring in money for your family. What we did was stand at a table with a bucket of water in front of us <laughs>, and like an apron, and you could call people over and they could stick their hands in the bucket and you could tell them about Blue Monday. What could have made that better is if we had more domestics, I think, and more people assigned to do the laundry for the day. […] …and really just have more people participate with you so you can actually interpret as a woman would have been living back then because they wouldn’t have been doing the laundry for the entire garrison by themselves and it wouldn’t have been just, like, one apron.45

Fort museum files contain two in-depth reports on the process of laundering in the 1840s and 1860s, with specific reference to laundry in the garrison. These outline several steps in addition to those described by the interpreter, including sorting, soaking, boiling, mangling, and ironing.46 The reports also provide information on the amount of washing allocated to each woman and the payment for her work, which are not mention in the interpreter’s summary. The demonstration as executed provided a basic grounding in the long and tedious process of doing the laundry, but it left out several steps and was too minimalist to accurately convey the amount of effort required by the women to accomplish this task.

Much like its forebears, Blue Monday saw little popular success. Taking place in the Advanced Battery at 10:45 and 14:00, the location and timing of this program were not as problematic as those of previous programs. All visitors must pass through the Advanced Battery to enter the fort and many will gather here for the guided tours.

45 Interview with Anonymous 1, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 May 2008.
indicating that a number of individuals will happen upon the demonstration by chance, if not intent. Yet, few visitors were drawn into the demonstration. The general perception of staff members was that laundry simply was not an interesting enough task to grab visitors’ attention: there was not enough spectacle surrounding doing the wash to compete with sentry changes, soldiers marching in step on the square, and cannon fire. Interpreters were themselves uninterested in the demonstration and felt that laundry was not a worthwhile use of visitor’s time. Few recommended the program to visitors and fewer still visitors opted to attend. After one season Blue Monday was retired from the daily schedule.

Women’s role as teacher is showcased in the School Room demonstration, which was introduced in the early 1990s and has run consistently over the past twenty years. Both a schoolmaster and schoolmistresses taught in the school, but, in recent years, the task of leading school room demonstrations has fallen to female members of the domestic interpreter unit. The program is a half hour, first person (meaning character role-play) interpretation of a Victorian Garrison School Room lesson that runs three times a day. A typical school room lesson includes both a third-person presentation of contextual information. For example, they address why there is a school room on site and who

47 Ryan Dejneha said: “…they’re not going to pay to come to a fort and take part in a laundry reenactment…” Interview with Ryan Dejneha, Captain, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 21 May 2008. 48 As a first-person demonstration the School Room requires a knowledgeable and skilled interpreter to achieve the proper dramatic and educational effect. Domestic interpreters filled this role initially and due to the frequency of the program became quite adept at leading the program. The School Room demonstration continued after the domestic interpretation program was ended in 1997, but was led more frequently by military interpreters who did not have much first-person or improvisation experience. When site management recognized that the quality of the program was decreasing they instituted the practice of assigning the duties of schoolmaster or mistress to a select few upper-year employees. Even with this practice, however, the high frequency of School Room demonstrations each day often required an untrained Guard member to lead a lesson. The perceived low quality of these presentations led management to reduce the number of School Rooms to three per day in 2003. Since the domestic interpreters have been re-instituted in 2004 they have resumed responsibility for the presentation of the School Room and there is discussion of increasing the number of School Rooms.
would have attended, and a first-person lesson. Often the program proceeds as follows: After ringing the bell, calling the class to order and instructing the boys and girls about which side of the classroom to sit on, the schoolmistress begins by performing an inspection of dress and hygiene. She then leads a lesson in geography, mathematics, or history, as well as a brief lesson on writing using slate boards and slate pencils. Throughout, the schoolmistress is quick to point out those visitors breaking the rules of the school room and to discipline the students. At the end of the lesson, most of the interpreters will break character to explain some of the history of garrison schools, how old the children would have been, and why they were taught. Part of this typically involves explaining that families were part of a garrison, with some indication of the regulations surrounding marriage on the strength of a regiment. It is not made clear, however, in either the demonstration or during the stop in the school room on tour who the schoolmistress would have been or how she obtained her position. The public sees a female working in the role of teacher but knows nothing of the context that gave rise to this situation. The schoolmistress has in the past been instructed to wear a fancier costume, with hoop skirt, blouse, and jacket, indicating to many – staff included – that she was of higher-class that other women in the regiment. However, primary documents indicate that most regimental schoolmistresses were the wives of the schoolmaster or a sergeant in the regiment.\textsuperscript{49} Although women’s work is demonstrated in the school room, the main focus of the program is on comparing education then and now and on the experience of childhood within the garrison rather than on elaborating upon women’s work.

\textsuperscript{49} McKenna, \textit{Family Life}, 103.
The domestic interpreters interact with children and families during the Storytelling program, which was included in the daily program in 2004, 2008 and 2009. ‘Miss Macklin,’ the schoolmistress, gathers interested visitors around her and reads them a story. After the story is finished, some interpreters ask the children about the characters or plot, but no information about history must be conveyed. One domestic interpreter said,

[w]ell Storytelling is new this year, it hasn’t been that well attended, I mean, sometimes we get people but not all the time. And also it’s sort of hard because we don’t really have a lot of historical stuff to tell people other than reading the story. […] We haven’t been given much info, so it’s sort of hard to make a link between the fort, why you’re listening to a story at Fort Henry...

The schoolmistress was in charge of the children’s education; however, it seems unlikely, considering the strict standards of discipline of the day, that she spent time lolling on the hill reading them stories for pleasure. As one domestic interpreter stated, “Storytelling doesn’t have a lot to do with how women would have lived back then at all.”

This activity brings the soldiers’ wives into public view, but does not readily communicate information about their experiences at Fort Henry.

Women also undertook illicit work activities to earn money to support their families, yet this aspect of their work is excluded from the narrative at Fort Henry. The ties between the military and prostitution have been clearly elaborated in many sources.

50 Interview with Anonymous 10, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 2 August 2008.
51 Interview with Anonymous 1, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 May 2008.
52 Sherry Olson and Patricia Thornton note that, “[a]s long as British regiments were garrisoned in Montreal (to 1871), the number of illegitimate births registered “to unknown parents” remained considerable (one in eleven) in 1859…” indicating that soldiers were having sexual relationships with women whom they did not support and who could not adequately provide for a child. Mary Ann Poutanen states that, in Montreal “many of the brothels were located near the barracks, military installations, and other establishments which were frequented by both soldiers and their officers.” Although some concern was expressed about this relationship, most considered prostitution to be a “necessary evil,” one that catered to the needs of a single, male population and prevented further immoral behaviour. See Patricia Thornton...
Many soldiers’ wives and daughters turned to prostitution to support themselves because of insufficient means provided by the military.\textsuperscript{53} John Grierson, a missionary in the city of Halifax, wrote in 1866: “By far the greatest number of prostitutes has been the wives of private soldiers, who have not the means, many of them, nor have they the inclination to provide them with any comforts of home.”\textsuperscript{54} Although this statement is not held up in the Kingston Police Court of 1864 to 1867, soldiers’ wives did appear on the docket several times for charges of vagrancy, a broad crime that encompassed prostitution.\textsuperscript{55} Such illicit activities and concerns, however, are not addressed at Fort Henry.

One does not have to attend a specialized program to learn about women’s work in the garrison. Domestic interpreters can be found completing various duties throughout the fort during the day (Illus. 3.5). In the past the domestic interpreters have taken it upon themselves to bring knitting with them to demonstrate visually to the public one aspect of their work. Over the course of the summer of 2008, though, very little needlework was being done. Meredith Hefler, a first-year domestic interpreter, commented that they were

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{} Quoted in Fingard, \textit{Dark Side of Life}, 98.
\bibitem{} During these years two women were brought before the police court that the court reporter identified as being the wives of a member of the Royal Canadian Rifles. On 4 November 1865 Ellen McKay was discharged from a charge of drunkenness but, as the reporter noted, she was put out of barracks. Mary Ahern had a longer standing relationship with the Kingston court, first showing up in the records in late 1864 on the charges of drunkenness and vagrancy. Identified as a wife of a soldier not currently on the strength of the regiment, she appears in the records eight more times in 1865 and 1866 on charges that include drunkenness and vagrancy, and frequenting a disorderly house. Though these charges do not confirm that either woman resorted to prostitution, these two cases indicate that soldiers’ wives were familiar with the rougher establishments in Kingston. See the \textit{Kingston Daily British Whig} newspaper.
\end{thebibliography}
not doing so much knitting in part because of busy schedules but, mainly, “because we don’t like to do it and… we’re not told we have to so…”\textsuperscript{56} Another first-year domestic interpreter noted that activities such as sewing or sweeping, “are available.”\textsuperscript{57} Such interpretive duties are left up to the discretion of the domestic interpreters. As one domestic stated,

\begin{quotation}
[t]he materials that we’re given I guess are sort of scarce; so it is just being in the married quarters, cleaning the married quarters, and knitting or making, like, a braided rug or something like that. But there are… like, we could do privy cleanings or pretend to clean the privies, and just if there were more of us we could be in different locations at once and just, I feel like interpret overall better what women would have been doing at the fort.\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quotation}

Few resources are available and little incentive is present for the domestics to undertake the physical representation of their historical duties. The ever-present military interpreters marching on the square or guarding the gates overshadows the physical role of women in garrison.

Women’s work in garrison is included in the picture of history presented at Fort Henry but it takes a tertiary role to the image of battle tactics and male hierarchy depicted on the parade square and on tour. Comparatively, women’s work is infrequently addressed on tour, even though the privies and married quarters provide entry ways to the subject. Recognizing this void, management has included programming dealing specifically with women’s roles at the fort; however, these have been poorly planned, inconsistently executed, and inadequately supported by management and other staff. These programs have been given little chance to develop and succeed. Cut after only one year the flaws in the program are given little time to be identified and rectified. Visitors

\textsuperscript{56} Interview with Meredith Hefler, domestic interpreter Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 July 2008.
\textsuperscript{57} Interview with Anonymous 10, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 2 August 2008.
\textsuperscript{58} Interview with Anonymous 1, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 May 2008.
might hear about women’s work on tour or by attending a program, but the likelihood they will see women’s work in the same way they see drill being executed is low. Domestic interpreters are provided with the materials to demonstrate only a few of the tasks women undertook, namely sweeping and knitting. Yet, the culture of the site does not stress to the interpreters that it is important that they demonstrate these activities and many doms opt to keep their hands still. Women’s work is included in the narrative at Fort Henry, but its storyline has the potential to be much stronger than it currently is.

Women played important roles in British military garrisons, as wives, mothers, and workers, and their experiences challenge the prevalent image of Victorian gender relations. Victorian gender ideology stipulated that women should be the ‘Angel of the house’, overseeing all private-sphere domestic duties and raising the children, as well as, most importantly, being paragons of moral virtue. Soldiers’ wives, and the lower classes more generally, could meet few of these requirements. The married quarters can hardly count as the ‘private sphere’, overseen and regulated as they were by military agents. Many women’s characters were far from chaste and their virtue was impugned by shared quarters and easy access to drink. While the wives completed the domestic chores in their quarters, they also worked at sewing and laundry for the broader military establishment, earning an income. Like many women and men, soldiers’ wives could not live up to the ideal. The story of their lives and work, then, is important to tell as it sheds light on the complexities and nuances of a past society. Fort Henry provides a brief view of these women, yet their story remains largely untold at the site, which favours the spectacle of drill and military performance.
Rank and file: Representing Men at Fort Henry

While women were present at British military fortifications in the 1860s, by far the greatest population was that of men. As enlisted men, tradesmen, and officers, men lived and worked in the garrison within the strictures of a very regimented system. The hierarchical order of military power and authority are conveyed at Fort Henry through uniforms and physical deportment, as well as orally on the tour. Order and precision are depicted also through daily drill maneuvers. Yet, although drill training took up a substantial amount of time for most soldiers they had also duties to complete in barracks and some leisure time. Programming at Fort Henry neglects the variety of men’s duties and activities in favour of portraying the discipline of drill.

Depicting the hierarchy of power and authority:

The military is a hierarchical organization. Some men hold more power, authority and privilege than others. Fort Henry’s interpreters exhibit this hierarchy daily as they go about their duties. Dressed as soldiers, the interpreters attempt to interact as officers and enlisted men might have done in the 1860s. The men pay respect to higher ranking soldiers and those with rank chastise the men for any infraction in uniform, comportment, or drill. The degrees of power held by different ranks are clearly communicated to visitors through physical acts and comprise the central message of the guided tour.

Differences in rank are communicated through variations in uniform, posture, and attitude, giving commands, and the act of ‘paying respects’ or saluting. Soldiers’ ranks are differentiated by the stripes on their sleeves, the sashes and type of hats they wear, and the pace sticks or swagger sticks that they carry. While some of the differences in uniform between enlisted men are subtle, the difference between officers and enlisted
men is evident (Illus. 3.6). The officers’ black undress uniform clearly separates them from the red infantry jackets worn by the enlisted men. Visitors are likely to recognize the different uniforms and, even if they cannot immediately identify which interpreter would be of higher rank, further behaviour and interactions should quickly clear this up. Some staff members have commented that the interpreters with higher rank have a greater presence on the square, carrying themselves more erect, and exuding an almost ‘snooty’ air. Those with higher rank are able also to give commands, often marching apart from the assembled soldiers to observe and correct their drill. Further, their rank is recognized by others. Lower ranks pay respects to higher ranking soldiers by calling out their ranks and/or saluting when entering or leaving their presence.

The hierarchical nature of the military is clearly conveyed at Fort Henry through the physical and verbal interactions of uniformed interpreters.

The tour has also a primary focus of differentiating the experiences of the officer class and the enlisted men. Twenty-seven of thirty-three interpreters who were asked about the overarching messages visitors might receive on site identified the difference in

---

59 Alex Holland, Guiding Sergeant, claimed that, “[i]t’s definitely established amongst the officers that they need to act in an almost snooty manner towards everyone else and so that they convey that message [that they are of a higher class].” Interview with Alex Holland, Guiding Sergeant, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 20 May 2008. As one lance corporal noted, “[t]he uniform [is] one thing, yes but posture, precision, absolutely everything else, all the officers are, like, they definitely stand out.” Interview with Anonymous 12, Lance Corporal, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 4 August 2008.

60 Emily Studd reflected that while uniforms were the main way that status was portrayed: “[I]f you’re watching training the higher ranking people are the ones in charge and that can obviously be seen.” Interview with Emily Studd, Lance Corporal, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 4 August 2008. One first year interpreter found that differences in rank were “communicated pretty well because we’re always getting yelled at by the high ranking staff. ....and, um, the public loves it when we get screamed at so I think they definitely see that there’s a set hierarchy.” Interview with David Farnell, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 July 2008.

61 Daniel Lord explained that, while on tour “if a soldier marches by you they’ll pay respects so the public is like ‘ooh, this guy’s important’ and then you explain why they have to pay respects because I’m of a higher rank, um, and then other times when an officer walks by I’ll cut the tour and salute and say ‘I have to salute this guy ‘cause he’s a higher rank than me,’ so show them that there’s a hierarchy that, yes, I’m in charge of some people but I’m still under a lot of people.” Interview with Daniel Lord, Colour Sergeant, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 24 May 2008.
lifestyle between officers and soldiers as a primary theme of their interpretation. In the Officers’ Quarters, sixteen of nineteen guides explained that officers obtained their rank, in the main, through the purchase system. They further noted that this meant that officers had to be of a high enough class to afford the going rate of their rank. The higher status of officers was further stressed by eight guides who noted that officers were allowed alcoholic drinks in their rooms, six who mentioned that officers could bathe in their rooms and have servants to tend to their needs, nine who elaborated upon the leisure time options open to officers, and eight who stressed the education and literacy of the officers. These verbal messages are supplemented by the antique and reproduction furniture in the rooms, including four poster beds, carved bureaus, crystal decanters, silverware, paintings, and rugs (Illus. 3.7). Visitors are clearly receiving the message the site emits about the hierarchical divide between officers and enlisted men, and about the elite nature of officers. When asked their opinion of the statement, “British military officers were always of the upper class and rich,” 80% (or 39 of 49) of respondents agreed.

In contrast to the officers’ quarters are the starkly furnished quarters of the enlisted men, which the tour views next (Illus. 3.8). The iron, foldable cots with thin mattresses upon them arrayed along the edges of the room, flanking two wooden tables and benches, are clearly of lower quality than the officers’ furnishings. Further, while the officers appear to have resided one man to a room, the barracks are designed to house up to nineteen men. Sixteen guides described the cramped conditions of the space the men used to eat, shine, and relax. Seventeen also compared the quality and amount of food the soldiers would receive with the officers’ diet. The fifty minute tour provided some basic differences between the military experiences of officers and soldiers.
In highlighting these differences, however, many guides elevated the officers to a higher class than they actually held. Most guides stressed incorrectly the high-class, if not aristocratic, background of the officers required to afford such a purchase, serving to heighten the divide between officers and enlisted men. While studies have shown that in 1830 the officer class was comprised of 21% aristocracy and 32% landed gentry, the remaining 47% was drawn from an ill-defined middle-class. An 1854 study of the background of colonels, if taken to be representative, shows a shift in the make-up of the officer class; 13% had aristocratic backgrounds, 25% were of the gentry, and 62% were of the professional or middle class, with 10% being clergymen’s sons. While the interpreters are correct in saying that much money was required to purchase a rank and outfit oneself as an officer, they place undue stress on the “very, very upper-class,” nature of the officers. Claims that they all came “from the highest echelons of society,” “with all the money in the world,” and were the “crème de la crème,” of society, or further that the purchase system was a ‘feudalistic’ institution designed to ensure that only nobles could be officers, are simply false. Such a simplification of the officer class serves to heighten the divide the tour attempts to demonstrate between officers and soldiers, but does not accurately reflect the state of the military in the 1860s.

The representation of the hierarchy in the military is stressed both because it was a reality and because it creates possibilities for amusement. The higher ranks yelling at soldiers attract the attention of the public. People stop to watch the encounter, chuckling to their companions about not wanting to be in that soldier’s shoes. Others are shocked at

---

64 Quoted from tours 17 May, 18 May, 17 July 2008.
the harsh treatment meted out. On tour the difference between officers and soldiers is stressed to the extreme, with the luxury of the officers’ lives illustrated to evoke awe and the discomfort of the soldiers’ lives described to elicit shock and visceral reactions. Meant to convey information about lifestyle in the military, the tour is also designed to entertain visitors with descriptions and stories of the extremes of life in garrison. The polarized experiences of officers and enlisted men are clearly, if not always accurately, portrayed at Fort Henry.

*Life off the Parade Square:*

Practicing drill manoeuvres was a large part of an enlisted man’s day, but it was not their only activity. In addition to marching in step on the parade square, soldiers also had duties to fulfill in their barracks. Some soldiers were given special duties that kept them occupied off the square, such as the Messman who organized the officers’ meals, the Barrack Room Orderly, or the men assigned to the cookhouse. There were also a substantial number of men in garrison who performed trades for the military, repairing weapons and maintaining uniforms. Yet, such aspects of life are rarely physically depicted at Fort Henry. Instead of communicating information about men’s daily lives beyond the parade square through physical interpretation, the site relies on guided tours and reconstructed physical settings to convey a sense of the living conditions at the fort in the 1860s. Much as we have seen with the presentation of women’s lives at the fort, aspects of life that occurred in more domestic settings off the parade square are interpreted primarily orally or through material culture, if at all.

Soldiers were not automatons who marched day in and day out with no respite. While training on the parade square was a significant, and monotonous, part of their lives,
they also ate and socialized in the barrack’s room. This more relaxed side of military life is infrequently portrayed at Fort Henry. One senior staff member stressed that although visitors could hear about soldiers’ and officers’ lives on tour, they would see very little of them being interpreted:

They don’t really get to see much of the life, they just get to see little snippets and then we try to fill in as many blanks as we can with the tour. Like they don’t get to see the men just hanging out on the hill on their break, maybe even partaking in lunch just dealing with each other, they don’t get to see a lot of that type of thing. Most of it’s going to be the drill so they’re going to see a lot of the discipline and that I think is just to try to enforce more what army life was like than trying to show what a person’s life was like. 65

Ian Lewis, another senior staff member, felt similarly: “I guess, for men there is no, you don’t really see them, say, in the barracks room. Maybe it’s on a rain day we get to go in there but that’s only if it rains. So that kind of, soldiers sitting in a room, doing what they’d be doing during a day, shining, cleaning, things like that, you don’t get to see, you only get to talk about it.” 66 No specific programs target the activities the men would have undertaken in their barrack rooms, perhaps because these were often routine and are seen to lack excitement. While one can intuit there would be little draw to a set advertised program demonstrating boot polishing, unless perhaps it was an interactive activity for children, it remains problematic that the portrayal of life on site is so weighted towards the execution of drill maneuvers. Staff members also recognize this. One thought that, if the staff were available, it would be interesting to have the staff doing more interpretive things, such as cutting wood or shining the howitzers, because they did not just train all

65 Interview with Alex Holland, guiding sergeant, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 20 May 2008.
66 Interview with Ian Lewis, Ensign, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 May 2008. A first year domestic interpreter expressed almost the exact idea: “I think a lot of the other lifestyle besides the marching is just talked about on the tours and not as much, there’s not as much interpretation of those types of things. Maybe on rain days when everyone’s in the barracks room shining their boots and things like that. But it doesn’t seem like there’s any specific activities that are represented in terms of interpretation other than that.” Interview with Caitlyn Somers, Domestic Interpreter, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 2 August 2008.
the time. Furthermore, the numerous other jobs executed by men that made the garrison function have been ignored by the site in recent years. The men working in the trades at Fort Henry have been erased from the history presented visually on site:

Well you’re missing, I guess, all the other things that would have been going on to keep the fort running, so all the trades. So if you were here all you would think, ‘oh it’s just a bunch of soldiers, that’s all that lives here, and that’s all that gets done.’ So we don’t have any tradespeople, we don’t…this year we barely had a pioneer ever so you don’t even see that person walking around and interpreting what pioneers,, that there used to be pioneers here. And you also, I guess anything outside of the marching isn’t interpreted at all.

No sense of balance is provided; the interpretation at Fort Henry continues to focus on the execution of drill.

This focus neglects the personal relationships of the men. The close ties men had with other soldiers are rarely spoken of. Completely neglected during my observations of site practices was the topic of homosexuality. While it is possible to see several soldiers standing together conversing, conveying friendship, the nature of their conversation is rarely historical because the site is run on a third-person interpretation model. Similarly, marriages are discussed rather than shown on site. The number of daily duties given to staff, as well as their reticence to take on unrequired work in unscheduled time, means that domestic interpreters and military interpreters rarely find the time to go to the

---

67 Interview with Joseph Snider, Corporal, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 5 August 2008.
68 Interview with Emily Stud, Lance Corporal, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 4 August 2008.
69 Few academic works have investigated the existence of homosexuality in the nineteenth century British military. Arthur N. Gilbert investigated cases of sodomy in the naval courts between 1700 and 1861 and argued that, although there were debates about what exactly constituted an act of buggery, punishment was especially harsh because of its perceived threat to societal order. Sodomy, or buggery, was a capital offence in England until 1861, when the punishment was decreased to life imprisonment. See Arthur N. Gilbert, “Buggery and the British Navy, 1700-1861,” Journal of Social History 10 n.1 (1976): 72-98. However, the bulk of work addressing homosexuality in the military begins its focus in the twentieth century. See Paul Jackson, One of the Boys: Homosexuality in the military during World War II (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004), and Allan Bérubé, Coming Out Under Fire: the history of gay men and women in World War II (New York: Free Press, 1990). There is little academic work to date that would ground an interpretation of homosexual practices in nineteenth century British garrison.
married quarters, take on the challenge of first-person interpretation, and pretend to be a couple. The nature of the interpretation on site prescribes that visual portrayals of relationships will be rare, while the heavy focus on drill dictates that few staff members will prioritize the depiction of such relationships.

Illicit intimate relationships are also omitted from the narrative of the site. Facing strict regulations dictating who could marry, soldiers sought out women within and without the garrison to have sex with. Taverns located near the barracks and on the waterfront served as meeting grounds for prostitutes and their clients in Kingston.70 Analysis of the Police Court Reports in Kingston newspapers reveal several cases where women were charged for activities involving soldiers. Two incidents occurred in February 1870. Susan Brickwood and Mary Ann Sheppard were charged with vagrancy for loitering in the neighbourhood of the Tête du Pont Barracks, and Alice Slater, aged 29, was charged with vagrancy for “doing duty with the soldiers” in the same vicinity.71 Officers also had illicit relations with the women of garrison towns. Being men of some standing and wealth, however, they could usually resort to higher-class brothels or ‘keep’ women in private rooms.72 Venereal disease was a major concern of the army because of

71Kingston British Whig Standard, 12 February 1870, 3 and 25 February, 1870, 3.
72Mary-Ann Poutanen, for example, provides an account of five officers of various regiments being observed knocking on the door of a brothel in Montreal and demanding to be let in. See Poutanen, Carnal Appetites, 74. Frances Finnegan also notes that officers of the garrison in York were occasionally reported in the company of prostitutes, though she suggests that the infrequency of such reports indicates that officers had recourse to higher class, more discreet brothels in the city. See Finnegan, Poverty and prostitution, 27-28.
the tie between soldiers and prostitution. This topic is not included in the training manual, nor is it raised frequently during tours. Perhaps this is due to the fact that little written evidence supports the association with the Fort Henry garrison and prostitutes in 1867. Certainly, though, management is concerned about offending its visitors and is wary of presenting information about sex to younger audiences. As Mark Bennett, the Programming Supervisor, noted, “that the biggest problem with the British Army in 1867 is it drank and whored its way around the globe causing innumerable damage, that’s not something I want to [tell] a kindergarten class.” In an effort to protect the innocence of our youth, however, the presentation has been sanitized for all and the very human proclivities of the soldiers are wiped from the narrative of history.

The site offers only two formal programs that depict soldier interactions off the parade square, the Pay Parade and the Crimes and Punishments of Private Atkins. Both rely heavily on humour and conflict to attract and hold the attention of their audience, yet each also succeeds at communicating information about the hierarchy of power in the military, the maintenance of discipline and soldiers’ pay.

The Pay Parade is a first-person program that is meant to illustrate, with as much humour as possible, how soldiers received their pay, how much they were paid, and how much of that could be taken away for various infractions or to pay for equipment. At the appointed time a sergeant and a supervising officer will proceed with the pay box to a table and chair set out in the Advanced Battery. Interpreters seem to take great enjoyment out of creating false, and sometimes outrageous, names as they step forward to receive

73 Analyzing hospital admissions records at Fort Wellington, Jacalyn Duffin has found twelve records indicating venereal disease as the cause of admittance. Quoted in McKenna, Family Life, 16, 131.
74 Interview with Mark Bennett, Programming Supervisor, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 6 August 2008.
their pay. The sergeant critiques the ‘turn-out’ of the soldier, finding fault with the shine of their brass or boots, or claiming an item of equipment was missing, in order to ‘stop’ part of their pay. For example, one sergeant took away six pence because of a soldier’s dusty boots and a further two pence to pay for the boot black they would need leaving the soldier only two pence.\footnote{Pay Parade demonstration, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 1 August 2008. One historian wrote of the pay sergeant: “The pay sergeant was a menace to Tommy Atkin’s contentment. He knew every trick for keeping back part of a soldier’s pay, often with the excuse that he must hold funds for any future stoppage for loss of or damage to uniform or equipment.” See John Laffin, \textit{Tommy Atkins, The Story of the English Soldier} (London: Cassell, 1966), 122.} Once the soldier is told how much daily pay is left to them, they are asked whether they would like to keep the pay or leave it in the Regimental Savings Fund. Some soldiers keep their pennies ‘to spend on their wife,’ or, alternately, save them because they ‘hope to have a family one day.’\footnote{Pay Parade demonstrations, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 20 June 2008 and 4 August 2008.} After the soldiers receive their meager wages after stoppages, the public is invited to join in and be inspected to receive their pay of ‘Fort Bucks’ that can be redeemed in the Garrison Store. After being told they have too long hair and too short pants, or holes in their boots, to the great amusement of their family or friends, they are paid and dismissed. Depending on how many soldiers are available to participate, and how whole-heartedly the public joins in, this demonstration lasts from five to fifteen minutes. Amidst the humour and interactivity, factual information, such as how much soldiers were paid daily and the subtractions the military took from this, are conveyed while the hierarchy of authority is also reinforced.

The Crimes and Punishments of Private Atkins program seeks to communicate information about discipline in the military in an interactive and humorous fashion. The demonstration presents the case of one unruly soldier and invites the public to take part in deciding his punishment. In some cases, the senior ranking soldier guides Atkins, in handcuffs, into the Advanced Battery and calls visitors over. In others, a soldier
misbehaves in the Advanced Battery, drawing the attention of a higher ranking soldier who would then see to his punishment. For example, one day Private Holmes, wearing a black rain jacket, wandered the Advanced Battery telling visitors he was trying to solve the mystery of the missing pay parade. More typically, though, Atkins is being punished for drunkenness, poor turn-out, or theft. After describing his infractions, the ranking soldier outlines possible punishments, including time in the garrison cells, shot drill, lashings, branding, or deportation. Visitors often seem to vote for lashings, but ultimately Atkins is escorted to the garrison cells where he is detained under the careful watch of children. This demonstration is designed to create humour and spectacle. The humour, however, is the major drawback of this demonstration as the infractions and their circumstances become increasingly outrageous over the course of the summer. Though it would be repetitive for staff, it would be more accurate and informative to play out two or three well-researched case-studies of soldiers punished for drunkenness, disrespect, or absence from parade. Overall, this demonstration conveys somewhat mixed messages about discipline in the military. Although punishments are always strictly meted out, soldiers are not deterred enough to prevent them from acting the fool as Private Holmes. The demonstration does, however, show that real people with flaws and personalities wore the red coats that marched with order and precision on the parade square.

Programming at Fort Henry is able to convey broadly what life was like for men serving in the military but the picture they create is not complete. The focus of interpretation at Fort Henry favours the order and spectacle of precision drill. Depictions of and information about skilled trade work, health, leisure and relationships within garrison and with the community are rarely presented.
Fort Henry privileges the representation of spectacle. The repetitive cadence of marching in time, the heart-grabbing beat of the bass-drum and the flash of rifle fire capture audience attention and are understood to be a major attraction of the site. The presentation of the drill is seen to be a unique feature of Fort Henry that sets it apart from other living history sites. As a result, site management places great emphasis on the execution of drill to ensure that customers have a memorable visit. As a performance unit reenacting a regiment from 1867, the Fort Henry Guard depicts the hierarchy of the military. Their uniforms and deportment visually indicate the differences in ranks, and the organization of the tour reinforces this message. Not so dramatic, however, is the picture of life off the parade square where men cooked, polished, socialized, and performed trades. These elements are largely neglected by the site in favour of the flair of drill, mentioned only briefly during the tour and perhaps the Pay Parade. Visually visitors receive a very one-dimensional understanding of life in the military. The tour redresses this imbalance somewhat, but the diversity of men’s experiences continues to be superficially dealt with by Fort Henry.

“It is about making money”: Factors shaping programming decisions at Fort Henry

The narrative of history presented by the site is not the only possible narrative. In selecting what to include and what to exclude from its portrayal of history, Fort Henry was influenced by a number of factors. The beliefs and priorities of the site creators, dating back to the 1930s, continue to have lingering effects on material culture collections, site organization, and institutional culture. The founding decision to create the site as a tourist attraction also plays an integral role in shaping management priorities today. Economic concerns and revenue generation are paramount. Relatedly, visitor
appeal is often given more weight than historical accuracy or representing a broader spectrum of historical conditions. A program or demonstration that is entertaining is valued more highly than one that is fundamentally informative. Of course, one need not be exclusively entertaining or informative; one program can be both. Yet, the former adjective is given primacy over the latter. The site considers its most entertaining feature to be the Fort Henry Guard, a military reenactment group. In tandem with the deification of this group of interpreters and their performances, the interpretation of military and artillery drill are considered to be of the utmost importance by site management and staff. The non-drill aspects of life in garrison, whether relating to men or women, are given short thrift in the representation by the site because they are deemed less important and less entertaining than military life by many interpreters and decision makers.

The dominance of militarism amongst many circles of thought in the early twentieth century privileged the conveyance of certain narratives of history by Fort Henry over its existence as a historic site. The esteem granted to the military, and to the brave and loyal actions of soldiers who fought to protect their country, by much of the populace in the first half of the century must have shaped how the historic site envisioned itself narrating the story of Britain’s imperial garrisons. It was, after all, from such roots that Canada was able to form its own modern, well-respected military. Critical, in this instance, is the depiction of disciplined, ordered men who could serve as examples to the ideal citizen. The performances of the Fort Henry Guard continue to this day to create an image of soldiers characterized by a sense of unity, determination, and forbearance.

Fort Henry operates under the guidelines and oversight of many different bodies. It was designated part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2007, is owned by Parks Canada, an agency of the national government, but is operated by the St. Lawrence Parks Commission [SLPC], an agency of the provincial Ministry of Tourism. The missions and mandates of each of these bodies prioritize different values and actions. UNESCO seeks to ensure the protection and conservation of natural and cultural heritage by raising public awareness, by including sites on the World Heritage List, by providing technical expertise and assistance to parties to aid in conservative efforts, and by encouraging local preservation efforts. Similarly, Parks Canada’s mandate is to “protect and present nationally significant examples of Canada’s natural and cultural heritage, and foster public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment in ways that ensure the ecological and commemorative integrity of these places for present and future generations.” Fort Henry’s Commemorative Integrity Statement, written in 1996, outlines the history of the Fort that is considered to be of national significance. This document is meant to help focus the site’s plans for development and interpretation, ensuring that certain facets remain inviolable due to their national significance. For both of these bodies the preservation of heritage, the protection of resources, and the advancement of public

---

80 Fort Henry National Historic Site Commemorative Integrity Statement, Internal Document. Most of its statements relate to the structure of the fortification, what it was meant to defend, its design, construction, cost, and place among fortifications in BNA, and the timeline of its use. Although most of these facts are covered in the guided tour, the secondary message, “the organization of the garrison,” is communicated to the public by the Fort Henry Guard and period rooms. It is this point of commemoration that opens up the possibility of presenting the broader social history of the site. In effect, the CIS, with its focus on the physical structure of the site, leaves discretionary room when it comes to presenting the social history of the garrison.
awareness are of the foremost importance. Authenticity and accuracy are of prevalent concern.

Conversely, the SLPC and the Ministry of Tourism have as their priority the generation of tourism and economic benefits for the region. One member of management highlighted the difference between the mandates of the Parks Canada and the SLPC:

[W]ithin the SLPC, we also have a guide as well in terms of what our mandate is – it’s different than Parks Canada in that we’re expected to generate income. And it’s to bring people into this area so they’ll stay and they’ll spend their funds. We’re to drive tourism, the Ministry of Tourism for the Province of Ontario, and that’s our importance. That’s different than what Parks Canada does, which is essentially pure historical research and presentation. We’re also very heavily consumer based.  

From its inception as a historic site, Fort Henry has been a tourist attraction. Over time this has meant different things. At present, the importance of generating revenue is paramount. The Mission Statement of the SLPC, revised in 2008, clearly focuses on the importance of revenue generation:

The purpose of the St. Lawrence Parks Commission is to generate lasting visitor growth, drive economic prosperity and build community partnerships in Eastern Ontario. It is a revenue-generating tourism business offering customer-focused entertaining and educational experiences that maximize its natural, leisure and heritage assets.

Interestingly, being entertaining is given precedence over education in the wording of this statement, and heritage assets follow behind leisure.

As Programming Supervisor Mark Bennett explained, profitability and tangible benefits are the bottom line because the government is simply not as willing to fund tourism sites as it is health-care or education. Bennett explained that sites submit their projected operating budgets to the SLPC and if there is a deficit the Commission will ask

---

81 Interview with Anonymous, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 10 June 2008.
the government to make a transfer payment to help cover the short-fall. The payment is made to the SLPC, which then distributes the money to the sites under its aegis. “More and more,” says Bennett, “the thing is, you need to be making more money so that we have to get less of a transfer payment and that way the government can afford to help you maintain [the site].” Members of management were quick to point out, however, that such seemingly capitalistic goals were necessary to maintain the presentation of historical messaging. Bryan Mercer, Marketing Supervisor, noted that a goal was to keep visitors on site as long as possible and to “capture as much of their discretionary dollars as we can,” but he also stressed that without such revenues, from special events or the stores, the funding received from the government would be unlikely to maintain the living history aspects of the fort. Mercer stated, “[t]he purists should understand that if it wasn’t for the revenue generation they wouldn’t be able to walk in the gate, because it wouldn’t be here, and that’s what keeps it vibrant and alive and allows us to restore it, develop a new museum plan... all of these things.” In order to maintain the historic elements of the tourist site, for example its living history program and the Fort Henry Guard, monies must be generated. Revenue generation is a central goal of the Ministry of Tourism, and hence also of the SLPC and of Fort Henry, yet, as a historic site owned by Parks Canada and designated by UNESCO, the site surely has a commitment to historical accuracy as well.

---

83 Interview with Mark Bennett, Programming Supervisor, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 6 August 2008.
84 Interview with Bryan Mercer, Marketing Supervisor, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 18 June 2008. Likewise, Will Baird, Special Events Coordinator, reflected that, “if we didn’t host any of the self-produced events that generate the kind of revenue that they do we may not be able to host the historic events...” Interview with Will Baird, Special Events Coordinator, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 10 June 2008.
The balance the site manages to strike between its goals of revenue generation and of historical accuracy is questionable. Numerous staff suggest that the desire to bring in money outweighs historical concerns, though certainly this opinion is not unanimous. Andrew Brown, Artillery Sergeant, stated that, “I think there’s a greater focus now on revenue generation, that’s the bottom line, that’s what this place is now about. It’s no longer about representing, um, garrison life in 1867; it is about making money.”

Most senior staff recognize that the site is trying to find some ground between revenue generation and historical accuracy, yet they indicate that revenue generation is the primary concern and that accuracy will be maintained insofar as it does not impede profits. Ryan Dejneha, Guard Captain, reflected on this: “I think that historical accuracy is maintained as long as it brings in visitors and if it doesn’t, it’s not as important.”

Staff pointed to various programs and initiatives to support their claims that revenue generation was a priority on site. Most commonly cited was the initiative to have visitors pay an extra $3.00 per child to take part in the Muster Parade and receive a paper shako. Fort Fright, a fall haunted fort display and tour, was also cited by many as a program with no historical validity; some saw this as a step on the way to becoming a fully-fledged amusement park. On the other hand, one new staff member stated that he frequently

---

85 Interview with Andrew Brown, Artillery Sergeant, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 May 2008. This thought was reflected in the comments of several other senior staff as well. Matthew Spencer said, “[q]uite frankly it’s [the interpretation] geared toward money now, like, that’s the ultimate concern, how much money can we make.” Interview with Matthew Spence, Ensign, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 22 May 2008. Another stated, “I think they’re just trying to make as much money as they can in any way.” Interview with Anonymous 1, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 May 2008.

86 Interview with Ryan Dejneha, Captain, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 21 May 2008. Likewise, Emily Spencer, the Drum Major, found that the site did a “decent” job of finding a balance, but not a “great” job: “[R]evenue generation is number one and historical accuracy is number two, because everything is geared towards getting a revenue...” Interview with Emily Spencer, Drum Major, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 22 May 2008.

87 Interview with Meghan Lewkoski, Lance Corporal, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 July 2008. Though he did not reference Fort Fright specifically, Daniel Lord reflected that the mentality to make money at the site was so strong that that management would consider putting in a water park if it would
heard staff telling others not to do something because it was not historically accurate and that the only way he had been instructed to generate revenue was to point people towards the garrison stores at the end of his tour. Justin Briginshaw likewise asserted that the financial concerns of the larger site did not have a great impact on the way interpreters did their job:

I don’t think as a part of the Guard we are concentrating on revenue, that kind of thing. For us the importance is portraying a soldier of 1867. When we give tours we don’t think about necessarily advertising the Sunset Ceremonies or this thing, the importance is giving the facts, teaching people the history, hopefully they leave knowing a little more than when they came in. When we perform on a Wednesday night we’re not performing for the fort to make a lot of money, we’re performing cause we’re proud, we’re performing cause it’s fun and we’re performing cause that’s helping get across what soldiers did, their drill that kind of thing. We’re not, we don’t have that nagging voice in the back of our head about revenue…

While this reflects the personal attitude of many interpreters, the fact is that the Guard as a unit is performing to make the fort money.

The site has adopted the position that in order to make money it needs to entertain people. Spectacle and humour then become the means by which to pepper history and education into the leisure-time of consumers. One domestic interpreter stated that, “[i]t seems like the entertainment is really the priority, to make sure people have a good time, and then they try and use the historical part to work it into the entertainment so that people will retain that too.” Matthew Spencer elaborated upon how information was surreptitiously conveyed to perhaps unwitting visitors:

---

88 Interview with David Farnell, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 July 2008.
89 Interview with Justin Briginshaw, Lance Corporal, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 21 July 2008.
90 Interview with Caitlyn Somers, Domestic Interpreter, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 2 August 2008.
They are supposed to be presenting something, maybe in a light-hearted, maybe in a fun way. But you throw out kernels of information when you are doing things, like, ‘your hair’s too long it has to be as short as mine.’ You know, ‘why aren’t you wearing this particular kind of boot?’ etc., etc. So you’re not presenting it in a direct way but you’re sort of sneaking it in. […] …you know, there’s a good mix of entertainment and then clarification and technical historical information.\(^91\)

Tourists are assumed to be seeking enjoyment and enjoyment is equated with frivolity and pageantry and often held in opposition to education. Thus, learning opportunities should be tempered with humour and the visitors’ good mood and relaxation are given a premium. Bryan Mercer’s comments regarding the branding and marketing of the site would seem to apply equally as well to daily programming: “It’s all designed to stimulate excitement and enthusiasm…”\(^92\)

Further, the site works under the assumption that the reason tourists visit the site is to see the Fort Henry Guard and the visual performance of military drill. As Jared Ross summed up, “[t]he drill and artillery is put on the pedestal because it’s what we do well, and have always done well, and has to be maintained to a certain standard to keep people coming back, or so we’re always told.”\(^93\) This sentiment of the primary importance of the drill and the Guard was reiterated by several interpreters. Two claimed that “…people come here to see the military,” and that “where [the site] make[s] the most money now is the Guard and their performances…”\(^94\) One Lance Corporal reflected that, “I feel like there’s more priority given on to the way we look on the square as opposed to the way we present ourselves and the way we function as a guiding unit.”\(^95\) Ironically, only two of twenty-eight respondents (7%) to a visitor exit survey indicated that they came to the site

\(^{91}\) Interview with Matthew Spencer, Ensign, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 22 May 2008.
\(^{92}\) Interview with Bryan Mercer, Marketing Supervisor, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 18 June 2008.
\(^{93}\) Interview with Jared Ross, Piper, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 1 August 2008.
\(^{94}\) Interview with Interview with Tyler Nelson, Lance Corporal, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 25 July 2008; Interview with Anonymous 1, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 May 2008.
\(^{95}\) Interview with Anonymous 4, Lance Corporal, 18 July 2008.
looking forward to seeing drill or marching; eight (29%) indicated they came to find out about history, while the majority, eighteen respondents (64%), said there was nothing specific they were looking forward to seeing or doing during their visit.

As a result of the presumption that everyday aspects of life are not entertaining very few programs highlight the lives of women or of soldiers off the square. One new staff member thought that 95% of the programming of the site dealt with the military aspects of soldiers’ lives. But, he rationalized, even though the exclusion of daily aspects of life made the picture less accurate, “it’s still what [visitors] are looking for.”

Similarly, women’s lives are incompletely portrayed by the site. When discussing the lack of success of the programs dealing with women’s work and experiences in garrison interpreters consistently pointed to the boring nature of the tasks as a reason for the demonstrations’ unpopularity. Ryan Dejneha recognized that the Blue Monday laundry demonstration passed on important information about the physical nature of work but said that it just did not draw the interest of the public: “…they’re not going to pay to come to a fort and take part in a laundry reenactment…” More generally, he said,

you want to bring people in and engage them, but the sorts of things that historically women might have been doing don’t really lend themselves to entertainment I find. Cleaning privies, and mending uniforms, and maybe watching over the children and preparing meals, like, while it’s good to know it’s really difficult to entertain people based on that information.

Fundamentally, as one interpreter put it, “there should be an interest in it but I think it’s harder to do it in a way that’s entertaining.” Ultimately, the desire of the site to be entertaining to visitors, and the assumption on the part of many staff members that social life demonstrations are boring and secondary in importance to the military spectacle,

96 Interview with David Farnell, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 July 2008.
97 Interview with Ryan Dejneha, Captain, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 21 May 2008.
98 Interview with Anonymous 11, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 4 August 2008.
results in little commitment to depictions of the social life in garrison for either men or women.

Yet, several staff members thought that visitors were particularly interested in learning about the lives of the men and women at the fort. Greg Gouthro, Senior Interpreter, said while the Guard thinks that they “[g]otta be good at the drill, that’s what everybody cares about […] really the public is more interested in the social interpretation than the physical.” Justin Briginshaw stated that adult visitors most frequently ask questions to put things in comparison with today: “Like, a lot of people ask about family stuff, …how did families live, how did they interact, privacy that kind of thing, so always a big thing for the adults putting in a family perspective at the fort and how that worked.” Exit Survey results uphold the fact that visitors are interested in learning about day to day activities, both on and off the square. When asked whether they would like to see more social interpretation at Fort Henry eighteen of twenty-eight respondents, or 64%, said yes – many emphatically and with examples of where interpretation could be expanded – and ten, or 36%, said no – often indicating that the present interpretation was sufficient. Though several staff members recognize that a presentation of more social aspects of life in garrison would better meet many visitors’ expectations, the culture of Fort Henry idolizes military interpretation as most visually impressive and entertaining.

---

99 Interview with Greg Gouthro, Senior Interpreter, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 July 2008. Meghan Lewkoski also said that she thought people would be interested in seeing what ‘it was really like’, referring to the popularity of Upper Canada Village and the handicraft interpretation they demonstrated there. Interview with Meghan Lewkoski, Lance Corporal, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 July 2008. Likewise, a squad member said that visitors are most interested in, and ask the most questions about, what the daily life of a soldier or an officer was like. Interview with Anonymous 8, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 24 July 2008.

100 Interview with Justin Briginshaw, Lance Corporal, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 21 July 2008. Prior to this quote he had stated that did not think visitors were interested in watching demonstrations of women’s work, stating that laundry, food preparation, and child care, “…are very basic, they’re things that we do today. I don’t think tourists want to come and see, ‘oh, they’re doing the same thing we do’ kind of thing.”
Meeting the needs of their consumers also limits the topics presented on site to those likely to raise the least conflict. Mark Bennett, Programming Supervisor, stated that, “we have many ‘red-flag’ topics,” that shouldn’t be presented to certain audiences. For example, he explained, “I don’t want the Guard to have a group of kindergarten children and talk about why the guys are really in the hospital in 1867, because they’ve got sexually transmitted diseases.” Likewise, he said that, “[s]ome of the broader geo-political issues you really don’t want to get into. That should be done at a separate time, separate place.” Matthew Spencer concurred, finding that “you have to strike a chord between ensuring that they’re [the visitors] getting some important historical knowledge but that you’re not alienating people or pushing them away or anything like that…”

Bennett stressed that interpreters needed to be cautious of who their audience was. He also indicated that detailed information on the health of the army, or on the international context of imperialism, was not provided in the guide manual because then “everyone’s got it,” and “they might use in the wrong way.” Instead, experienced staff who wish to learn more about such topics are expected to seek out the curator and inform themselves. It seems evident that if staff are not educated in topics deemed controversial for some audiences that such topics will not be presented to any audience thus limiting the picture of life portrayed by the site.

The messages communicated by the site are influenced by the training the interpreters receive. Interpretive staff undergo an intensive week and a half training period called Rookie Phase in early May, designed to introduce or review the history of the site, the interpretive programs, and the physical standards of marching and firing

---

101 Interview with Matthew Spencer, Ensign, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 22 May 2008.
102 Interview with Mark Bennett, Programming Supervisor, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 6 August 2008.
artillery. Both Mark Bennett and Greg Gouthro, members of management in charge of the Guard, indicated that the weighting of training for guiding and military drill, while not equal, was equalizing; although the greater focus was still given to military drill, about 60% according to Gouthro, guiding and interpretation was gaining ground.\textsuperscript{103}

Interpreters themselves find there to be less of a balance in their training. Of thirty-one interpreters asked about the weighting of their training during Rookie Phase(s) two (6%) found it to be equal and nine (29%) agreed with a 60:40 split; the majority felt that drill significantly outweighed other training, however, with eight (26%) indicating a 70:30 split, four (13%) a 75:25 split, seven (23%) a 80:20 split and one (3%) thought it was as imbalanced as 90:10. When asked why they believed there was this perceived imbalance in their training most indicated that the drill was both more important and harder to learn:

Well, just getting everyone to know the basic foot drill and all that is more important to get us into shape for the public. The historic information we can read about. We can’t really go two days ahead and learn the movements at home before we actually learn it, so we can learn the information before hand and not the drill.\textsuperscript{104}

Mark Bennett would seem to support this statement, stressing that new hires must be transformed from interpreters that do not know how to walk properly or dress themselves into world-class precision drill performers.\textsuperscript{105} The underlying presumption is that it is easier to learn the information and become ‘world-class’ tour-guides.

Ongoing training is also heavily focused on the military drill, to the near exclusion of social or historical interpretive development. Every other day the military

\textsuperscript{103} Interview with Mark Bennett, Programming Supervisor, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 6 August 2008; Interview with Greg Gouthro, Senior Interpreter, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 July 2008.
\textsuperscript{104} Interview with Anonymous 3, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 9 June 2008.
\textsuperscript{105} Interview with Mark Bennett, Programming Supervisor, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 6 August 2008.
sub-units execute maneuvers on the parade square, improving their timing and precision. There is no additional formal training for guiding:

I wouldn’t say there’s been any additional training. …the recruit phase is where we hammer everything, then once the guide test has been written and you’ve passed, …effectively you’re on your own until you get your tour monitored and then we get to see what’s happening. …But there isn’t really any additional training that’s provided unless you require it, so unless you come forward and say, “I’m really unsure about this aspect.”

Brian LeClair, Guiding Sergeant, felt that, “there’s not a very good learning curve for how to do proper interpretation.” This lack of development seems highly problematic when staff indicate that, “tourists do expect [them] to know everything about history. They just think [they’re] like this wide based knowledge and…when [they] tell them ‘[they’re] not sure about that answer,’ that’s when they’re kind of disappointed…”

A handful of staff reflected that they received especially little information about the lives of women during their training. Many domestic interpreters also commented that they had felt unprepared for duties at the beginning of the year because they received little instruction in them. One domestic interpreter stated that she felt like her training was not a priority during Rookie Phase because her main duties were interpretive and giving tours. Ryan McCluckie, the Sergeant Major, admitted that he tried to avoid the married quarters because, although he felt confident in the little information he did know, he did not find that this satisfied the curiosity of visitors about married responsibilities. Several other interpreters echoed this sentiment. One stated that the information they were provided about women’s daily life was insufficient: “You really have nothing to say

---

106 Interview with Ryan Dejneha, Captain, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 21 May 2008.
109 Interview with Anonymous 9, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 1 August 2008.
so it leaves you out in the dark.” The military training then is given the greatest focus in terms of programming, training, and emphasis: “The focus is on the performance. It’s on the show.” As interpreters articulated, the greatest amount of training is invested in perfecting drill maneuvers leaving them with the impression that guiding and off-square interpretation is less valued. One Lance Corporal stated,

guiding, from what I see, from a management point of view is, kind of, um, not as important. I don’t think they would care if, like, you were, kind of, leaving some things out, um, on your tours and stuff. Like, it’s not good, but to them I think what…the demonstrations and stuff are more important than guiding… …it’s the visual I find is more important, or more emphasized than the knowledge.

The prioritization of visual elements, such as rifle firing and parade inspections, does not prevent historical information from being conveyed. Performances depict the

---

111 Interview with Joseph Snider, Corporal, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 5 August 2008.
112 Interview with Meredith Hefler, Domestic Interpreter, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 23 July 2008.
113 Interview with Anonymous, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 10 June 2008.
114 Interview with Justin Briginshaw, Lance Corporal, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 21 July 2008.
monotonous and physically rigorous routines soldiers underwent daily and effectively communicate the hierarchy and discipline of the institution. Unfortunately, however, the presentation of military aspects of soldiers’ lives is focused on to the impediment of the depiction of their social lives at Fort Henry. Tours emphasize the division of experience between the officer class and the enlisted men, and demonstrations highlight the pay structure and discipline of the Army, yet the leisure time activities of soldiers, aspects of their health, and their work off the parade-square or in the trades are infrequently spoken of. Likewise, one learns only superficially, and orally, about the lives of women in the garrison. As one domestic interpreter expressed, there seems to be no balance in the representation of garrison life:

There is no balance. I have nothing to say to people when they ask, ‘what do you do here?’ […] ‘As a soldier’s wife what do you do?’ ‘I look after the kids and I do laundry.’ ‘Where I can see this?’ ‘You can’t.’ There’s no balance. It’s the Guard. It’s the marching. It’s what they’re here to see and what’s promoted. And, like, I get all the time, ‘why are you dressed like that? There was women here?’ […] But there’s nothing that we do that shows, like, what our day would be here, so it’s very… Even on the tours it’s very streamlined and focused to the men and what the men were doing. […] There isn’t any programming for like a day to day thing if you’re not marching, at all.\(^\text{115}\)

With no demonstrations calling upon such information, staff training emphasizes the soldiers’ experiences and only briefly treats those of women. This perpetuates the cycle of valuation by creating the impression that women’s and social issues are less important to know about and less interesting, by virtue of the little that is ‘known’ about them, and ensures that interpreters will focus on military concerns by default. Although fewer historical sources treat the experiences of women in garrison, and there is generally a greater scholarly interest about life on campaign or political reforms, there is enough

\(^{115}\) Interview with Anonymous 9, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 1 August 2008.
information available to portray life on and off the parade square equally. Mindsets of site management and staff must be altered first, however, from the *de facto* position that drill is entertaining, and hence revenue generating, while social interpretation is boring, and hence a drain on resources.

Conclusion:

Fort Henry represents officially the themes of Military, Defence, and Governing Canada, according to the National Historic Sites of Canada Systems Plan. As such programming highlights military drill manoeuvres, weapons firings, the tactical layout of the site and how the troops would defend it if under attack. The former are demonstrated by the Fort Henry Guard, who seek to capture the attention of the audience and entertain them with precision, whilst also communicating information. The latter are critical components of all tours. The tourism/history dictated by such themes, however, neglects much of the lifestyle of a colonial military garrison. Unselected for commemoration are the daily concerns and duties of the women and families in garrison and of the soldiers who kept the site functioning while off the parade square. Tours offer the opportunity to introduce the presence and role of women in garrison, yet many guides omit this information or present a highly selective, superficial portrait of women’s lives. Other programming offerings over the years have likewise been sparse on detail and have floundered. Similarly, the roles and work of men in the barracks, kitchens and shops are irregularly mentioned. While military hierarchies, discipline and precision are focused upon in staff training and site programming, the nuances of daily life and relationships are at best blurred and at worst erased from the picture of the past presented by the site.

---

All historic sites must make choices about what aspects of history to include in their presentation. Fort Henry is both an historic site and a tourism attraction and as such straddles two worlds that typically have two very different priorities: historical accuracy and education as opposed to revenue generation and entertainment. The negotiation of these goals is not simple. In practice, at times they work together, and at others compete. One senior interpreter expressed the dilemma perfectly, in a way that Way and his sugar-coated pill of history would understand:

It’s [fitting the business aspect and the history aspect together] really tough to do and you’ve got to meet that harmony, walk that thin line in the middle where you’re hitting important information and educational aspects while entertaining people. And that’s the problem with history, is that it’s not always interesting, it’s not always exciting and entertaining for people but it still has that relevance and importance. And that’s always the toughest part, educate and entertain, and it’s much easier said than done.117

Government oversight bodies, including the Ministry of Tourism and Parks Canada, aim to find some measure of this harmony in their construction of tourism/history at Fort Henry. Yet, ultimately, site prioritization of revenue generation and entertainment, and assumptions about what visitors want, enable the site to successfully depict marching and drill in “pure Hollywood”118 style while skimming only the surface of the lives of women, children and soldiers off the parade square.

117 Interview with Ryan Dejneha, Captain, Fort Henry National Historic Site, 21 May 2008.
118 McKenna, “Women’s History,” 27. In describing the military drill at Fort Henry McKenna stated, “…some of the more popular aspects of current interpretation of the site – such as the Fort Henry sunset ceremony – are pure Hollywood, based on imaginative choreography of various military manoeuvres and ceremonial marching that may have been carried out by certain regiments on special occasions, but were not routinely performed on-site in the 1860s.”
(accessed 2 November 2009).
Illustration 3.2: The Colour Party and Drill Squad march on to the Parade Square during a Sunset Ceremony, summer 2003, FH. Photo by Alexander Peacock.
Illustration 3.3: Women at Fort Henry.
Top - Dana Dabros as an officer’s wife, 2010.
Bottom - The schoolmistress answers a visitor’s questions in the school room, 2010.
Photos courtesy of Emily Studd.

Illustration 3.5: Photograph of an interpretive panel at Fort Henry depicting interpreters at work in the Married Quarters. Photograph by the author, 2008.
Illustration 3.6: Modern day representation of military NCO’s (rear) and Officers (seated) - Guard Senior’s Photo 2003, FH. From the collection of the author.

Illustration 3.7: Captain’s Quarters, Officers’ Wing, FH. Photo by the author, 2008.
Illustration 3.8: Barrack Room – Museum, FH. Photo by the author, 2008.
Chapter Four

“Little Stories of Domestic Life” : Making history at Upper Canada Village

Introduction:

Upper Canada Village, a historic site creating an agrarian village community as it may have been in the 1860s, was opened in 1961 in south-eastern Ontario. It commemorates Loyalist history following the loss of important Loyalist territories during the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway. As an entirely fictional village, the primary designers of the site, Anthony Adamson and Ronald L. Way, had significant leeway in deciding what histories the site would tell. Together, the group of experts who designed the layout and recreated settings of the Village constructed a tourism/history narrative that communicated carefully chosen versions of the past. According to Adamson, writing in 1962,

[b]esides the history of political or national events we had to use our village to tell a number of stories or aspects of social history. These included the story of travel, transportation and immigration, the story of farming and settling, the story of government and defence, the story of industries and crafts, the stories of schooling, doctoring and worshipping, and the little stories of domestic life.\(^1\)

A visit to Upper Canada Village finds similar stories being told today. Yet, in the intervening period the academic field has found new interests and uncovered new experiences and tales to tell. Since the late 1960s the ‘little stories’ of domestic life have been given greater attention in women’s histories and social histories that have shed light on marital relationships, norms of masculinity and femininity, and gendered behaviours and roles. How have the stories told by Upper Canada Village incorporated these

insights? What might visitors learn about the lives of men and women of the nineteenth century and what areas remain shrouded in silence? What factors shape the story told and how might this account of history become more complete in future?

“Making history”: a visit to Upper Canada Village

After paying the entrance fee and passing through the front gates of Upper Canada Village, a visitor chooses their own adventure (Illus. 4.1). One may proceed straight onto the bridge, where crowds of children are pointing at carp of impressive size, or turn left toward a collection of buildings. Deciding to head left, the visitor tours the Woolen Mill, discussing the carding machine with its operator, the Grist Mill, where the miller is dressing the stone, and the Sawmill, where a new log is being rolled into place to be cut. Following the main road past the broom-maker’s one room home, the visitor stops at Cook’s Tavern, where they learn that they could secure lodging for $0.25 a night. Continuing down the road towards the water, they view the Anglican Church, the Lutheran Pastor’s home, and the Masonic Lodge, before haggling with the shoe-maker and tinsmith about the price of their wares. Returning to the main street, the visitor next tours Mr. Robertson’s fine home and gardens and stops at Crysler’s General Store to learn about the items available for purchase. Soon, the scent of baking bread lures them to the bakery next door, but the building is warm and they move on down the road beyond Willard’s Hotel to impressive Crysler Hall, which houses an orientation video and an exhibit on the St. Lawrence Seaway. After a short rest in the garden, the visitor continues on to the Physician’s House and the Dressmaker’s before heading down a lane to the two farms on site. At the Tenant Farm, a woman is cooking biscuits on the open hearth. Deciding not to take the tow scow back to the entrance, the visitor returns to the main
road, passing Loucks Farm, and enters the Cheese Factory, the School Room, and the Printing Office. Carrying on down the road the visitor discovers women hard at work spinning wool at McDiarmid House and quilting at the Ross Farm. The smell of pine shavings tickles their nose in the Cabinet Maker’s shop, where the craftsman is turning chair legs on the lathe. After a quick look into the Methodist Church, the visitor continues on and finds themselves back at the entrance, where they explore the gift shop before returning to their vehicle and continuing on their adventure.

Upper Canada Village has expanded over its fifty year existence. It has always aimed to communicate information about Ontario’s pioneering past to visitors but the interpretive methods it has used to tell that story have changed over time. From ten buildings available for exploration on opening day in 1961, Upper Canada Village has grown to forty-five buildings, ranging from domestic dwellings, to trade shops, to farm outbuildings, to industrialized mills. Initially these buildings were divided into four zones that presented pioneer life in different stages of development. Representing end dates of 1780, 1820, 1840, and 1860, each zone was a vignette of life, with costumed interpreters animating the buildings and providing information about the antiques on display. As time went on, however, buildings took on different end dates, leading to confusion for visitors. Comments and criticisms of the system led to a reassessment of the interpretive design by the late 1970s. Interpretive staff presented a position paper in 1978 suggesting a shift to one time period, the 1860s, and a ‘whole Village’ or ‘community concept’ approach.²

The idea was considered for several years before being officially accepted by the St. Lawrence Parks Commission as part of a Five Year Plan to upgrade the Village in 1987. The new interpretive plan was supplemented, beginning in 1990, with a small troop of first-person interpreters. Hired to complement the third-person demonstrators, the main purpose of these first-person interpreters was to “…animate certain portions of the Village that previously had not had much animation…” Five interpreters were initially hired to take on the characters of a printer, a Lutheran pastor, the doctor, a servant, and a female Methodist temperance advocate, though the program at one time also included a female tavern keeper. Budget cuts in 1993 kept the program from expanding further, however, as did internal frictions between staff members and frustrations with evolving job expectations. By 2000 the first-person program was removed and the focus of the Village returned squarely to third-person interpretation and demonstration.

The summer of 2009, the year research for this study was conducted on site, was one of upheaval and interpretive change. UCV experienced significant seasonal staff cuts and new programming was introduced to increase the site’s appeal. The climate at the beginning of the operating season was one of hostility and uncertainty. The St. Lawrence Parks Commission reported seventeen job cuts at Upper Canada Village, or 10% of the interpretive staff, and OPSEU, the staff union, asserted that the layoffs

---

3 Interview with Peter Cazaly, Research and Training officer, UCV, 11 August 2009.
4 Both Gabriele Thomas and Bruce Henbest, once the first-person doctor, reflected that with cuts to staffing the first-person interpreters were expected to be on site for more and more hours each day and that staff were increasingly frustrated by the expectation that they could stay in character for such long periods of time. One long term interpreter noted that there were jealousies between interpreters over the amount of allotted research time given to first-person interpreters, which was seen as a paid coffee break. Peter Cazaly, once the first-person printer, also thought that the program was eventually removed because visitor difficulties distinguishing between first and third person interpreters led to frustration and compromised customer service.
affected 50% of the interpretive staff. These cuts seemed to go hand in hand with a revised approach to programming and interpretation at the site. Newspapers reported that Patricia Macdonald, then general manager and CEO of the SLPC, stated that due to declining visitorship the site was moving from a more ‘casual’ third-person interpretation model, where visitors randomly interact with interpreters, to a more structured, interactive program-oriented model. Instead of leaving the presentation of information up to chance, Macdonald is reported to have said, a group of visitors will be guaranteed to get in-depth information by attending scheduled presentations. The hope was that the added programming would incite more return visits from patrons and longer stays on site.

Numerous newspapers and editorials weighed in on the issue, expressing concern over the effect of the changes and the perceived shift toward becoming an amusement park. Staff members found the value of the new offerings highly questionable. They argued both that visitors had no interest in following a tight schedule during their visit and that they presented the information in the scheduled program during their normal, casual interpretations already. My discussions with interpreters throughout the course of the summer indicated that the programs were a marginal success. Very few patrons requested the programs and interpreters only led them if asked, thus the programs ran extremely infrequently. Ultimately, despite implemented changes, interpretation at Upper Canada Village remained primarily third-person, unscripted, ‘casual’ exchanges with visitors guided by visitor questions.

---

The interpreters at Upper Canada Village are a very diverse group of individuals. Unlike Fort Henry and Fort William, the majority of staff members are mature adults with long tenures of employment; university and college students, while present, are in the minority. The educational background of the UCV staff is also more diverse than that of the other sites, in that many trained in the trades or did not pursue post-secondary education. They bring diverse and rich life experiences, skill sets, and points of view to their work; many were hired expressly because of their skills, such as their ability to spin, to woodwork, or to work with horses, and their practical experience. Staffing is organized at Upper Canada Village according to areas of work, which are largely based on the required skill set of the workers. Interpreters are hired into one of the Mills and Trades unit, the Domestic unit, the Cooking unit, the Agricultural unit, the Gardening unit, or the Musician’s unit. Each unit is responsible for the interpretation of a set number of buildings or for the completion of certain duties around the site. In the main, the Mills and Trades, Agriculture, and Gardening units were primarily comprised of male staff in 2009, although there were several females in the Mills and Trades section working as printers, broommakers, and factory workers. Conversely, the Domestic and Cooking units were staffed entirely by females, with the exception of one male. To a large extent, this division of labour follows historical realities, yet, it also circumscribes the presentation of men’s lives in domestic settings.

Visitors to Upper Canada Village will find themselves face to face with transplanted historic buildings, antiques, and costumed staff excited to demonstrate the use of tools and hand skills, as well as converse with the public about life in the nineteenth century. Both material culture and the visual and oral presentation of history made possible by third-person interpreters communicate a variety of stories about the
past, but these media are also seen by management and interpreters to limit the nature or content of such stories as well. The following sections will investigate the stories that are told, their limitations, and the factors influencing their narrative and form.

**Telling the Stories – Interpreting women’s history**

Women led full and busy lives in the nineteenth century and though each woman’s story is unique, certain common elements connect them. As Jane Errington has noted, “‘women, work and family’ were inseparable categories in Upper Canada.”⁷ The majority of women, regardless of class, entered into marriage and bore children for much of their lives. Though their experience of work varied with their position in society, most Upper Canadian women cared for their home, prepared food, and created clothing. Many supported their husbands’ endeavours by lending a hand in the shop or running his business in his absence. Fewer took on paid labour themselves, entering others’ homes as domestic servants, labouring in factories, or teaching, to name but a few options. The communication of the occupations and preoccupations of the women of yesteryear by historic sites can only provide a clearer understanding of society as it was, which in turn imparts greater insight into today’s world.

**Representing Family Formation:**

Two of the key roles of women in the nineteenth century were those wife and mother. Companionate marriages were prevalent by the nineteenth century, superseding relationships based on economic interests.⁸ Yet while bonds of affection may have

---

⁸ Robin Grazley points out that the ideal of companionate marriages was a middle-class one that emerged hand-in-hand with the ideal of separate spheres for men and women. She notes that while it was the ideal, there are academic debates over the extent to which it was practiced, particularly amongst the lower-classes.
brought many couples together, this was not the case for all, nor was it assured that affection would define the relationship in perpetuity. Studies relying on diaries and letters, and more public sources such as newspapers and court cases, have increasingly shed light on the experience of women within the family, the nature of the relationship with their husband, and their concerns and challenges raising children. Upper Canada Village represents both of these roles, but focuses primarily on the physical tasks women performed rather than emotional ties and preoccupations.

The courtship process was an important stage in the relationship between a man and a woman. Robin Grazley has asserted that, “Upper Canadians met potential partners and engaged in flirtations virtually everywhere.” Individuals would meet at any variety of social events, from sleighing parties to church or neighbourhood gatherings, and when an attraction was felt the man could commence to court the female. The young couple might go on social outings with friends to better get acquainted, write letters, or exchange symbols of their affection for each other. Ward and Noël indicate that following an engagement it became acceptable for the couple to spend increasing amounts of time alone together. Yet, Grazley demonstrates that the courtship process was far from chaste for many prospective couples; indeed, she asserts that physical intimacy was a component of heterosocial activity generally, not limited to courtship. Documents reveal that many men engaged in kissing, such as James Lundy who described his ‘puttering’ to his friends, and that limited sexual contact was often condoned by family members who enabled practices of bundling and sparking, or spending the night together, to occur.

9 Ibid., 23.
Only in the weeks after this contact, Grazley contends, did many couples decide whether to join their lives together. Modern society often paints nineteenth-century Victorians with a rather staid and proper brush. Recent scholarship, on the other hand, indicates that our ancestors were concerned not only with emotional, intellectual, or economic compatibility, but also physical attraction.

The process of courtship is not addressed at Upper Canada Village. In large part the absence of courtship at Upper Canada Village is due to the fact that all daily interpretation is in the third-person. Speaking of the past as it was, interpreters cannot pretend to be courting. Interactions between staff members are infrequent also, making it challenging for interpreters to find entry-points to the topic. Interpreters are asked most frequently about the activities they are doing or about objects in a building, rather than about abstractions or concepts visitors cannot see. As a result, information about the nature of relationships is rarely sought and rarely given. Interpreters are not precluded from discussing courtship but in practice this happens rarely. The longer sites such as Upper Canada Village ignore the proclivities of Upper Canadians regarding courtship, the deeper an idealized image of Ontario’s forebears for whom romance was pure and whose morals and values were untainted by sexual activity outside of marriage is ingrained.

Although the stage of the relationship leading up to marriage is not shown at the Village, the marriage ceremony is. The special event weddings at Upper Canada Village demonstrate the impact of trying to meet visitor expectations and also reflect the attempt to balance entertainment with education. Beginning with one wedding in 1998, the program eventually became such a success that the general manager of the SLPC requested that four weddings be held over the 2009 season. The scenarios for the

---

marriages were designed by Research Officer Peter Cazaly. They include a Methodist ceremony joining two young, working-class people; a Lutheran wedding between the daughter of a prominent tavern owner and an American; an Anglican wedding between the daughter of the wealthy Crysler family to a British military officer; and a Methodist home wedding at the Loucks’ farm. Cazaly commented that, each year, he tries to come up with new scenarios for the weddings but has just about run the gamut considering there are only three churches on-site in the Village.12 Each scenario, though, provides an entry point to a broader issue related to marriage should visitors engage with interpreters on the subject. For example, the Cook family was upset their daughter was marrying an American because much of their property had been destroyed by American troops during the War of 1812. As designed, the scenarios are meant to provide educational moments for those seeking them and to offer picturesque moments for those wishing them. And the experience of interpreters indicates that visitors want a pretty wedding.

A central component of a pretty wedding is the bride. Cazaly stated that he worked hard to get interpreters to correct their messaging about the age of brides in the 1860s, to tell visitors that brides were most frequently in their twenties.13 The visual presentation of the weddings supports this. Each of the four brides in 2009 appeared to be between the ages of twenty and twenty-five (Illus. 4.2). This, however, neglects to

---

12 Interview with Peter Cazaly, Research Officer, Upper Canada Village, 11 August 2009.
13 Ibid. Françoise Noël cites several studies that support that the average age of marriage was between twenty-four and twenty-eight years of age for the groom and between twenty-one and twenty-three years of age for the bride in the mid-nineteenth century. See Noël, Family Life, chapter two note 15. Michael Katz,’ in his study of Hamilton, claims that the mean age of marriage for men was 27.7, with 61% of men marrying over age twenty-five, and that women were on average four years younger, with a mean marital age of 23.2. 72% of women married by the time were twenty-five. See Michael B. Katz, The People of Hamilton, Canada West (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975), 32. Barbara Maas argued that the average age of marriage for women was rising during the Victorian era, changing from twenty-three in 1851 to twenty-six in 1891. She also noted that while the majority of women had married by the age of forty approximately 10% remained lifelong spinsters. See Barbara Maas, Helpmates of Man: Middle-class women and gender ideology in nineteenth-century Ontario (Bochum: Universtitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer, 1990), 30.
represent the substantial number of remarriages that also occurred between more mature men or women, perhaps with children, after the death of a spouse.\textsuperscript{14} David Gagan noted that 20\% of the male heads of households under age forty-five in Peel County in 1852 were widowed in the next eighteen years and that 90\% of the widowers remarried. Further, their new wives were typically a decade younger than the wives they replaced.\textsuperscript{15} Despite being aware of the omission of more mature brides and grooms, as demonstrated by Cazaly’s indication early in the 2009 season that one of the weddings would have a mature bride, all the brides were youthful and petite.

Why were all the brides in their early twenties when the majority of staff at the historic site appears to be, in fact, over forty? Two interrelated factors explain the selection process. First, as Cazaly said, “she who fits the dress gets to be the bride.”\textsuperscript{16} The costume department on site does not have enough time to alter the handful of appropriate dresses so selection of the bride is largely based on which female can fit into the dress and, equally important, look good in it. Pat Trudel, supervisor of domestic interpreters, reflected that one blonde interpreter did not get to be the bride because the colour of the dress simply washed her out. She remembered an incident when visitors caustically remarked upon the attractiveness of the interpreter playing the bride, questioning ‘why would you people have chosen her?’ Trudel noted that visitors are coming to see something pretty and to enjoy the afternoon. For the sake of the interpreter’s self-esteem and feelings, she says, management does its best to ensure that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{14} Noël notes that in Upper Canada in 1851 there were 145 males to 100 females between the ages of fifteen to thirty-nine. This disparity would seem to indicate that it would be common for women to remarry upon the death of their spouse. See Noël, \textit{Family Life}, 62-63.
\item \textsuperscript{15} David Gagan, \textit{Hopeful Travellers} (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), 93.
\item \textsuperscript{16} Interview with Peter Cazaly, Research Officer, Upper Canada Village, 11 August 2009.
\end{itemize}
the brides fit the bill. One female interpreter on site stated that it is always young, slim, and trim interpreters who get to be the bride. “And part of it,” she continued, “part of that will be purely visitor pressure for the photo op of the girl in the beautiful dress.” Visitor feedback over the years has clearly indicated that they want that picturesque photo of an attractive couple in beautiful period costume among heritage homes and gardens and, despite the fact that this represents only part of the spectrum of marital relationships of the nineteenth century, visitors are getting what they want.

Childrearing was a major occupation of women. Gagan’s study of Peel County revealed that women entering their childbearing years in the late 1840s saw an average of eighteen years between their first and last conception, typically age twenty-one to thirty-nine. A woman starting a family in 1851 could expect to bear children for 40% of her lifespan and to have dependent children for 75% of it. Pregnancy was a regular condition in most married women’s lives – on average a woman had a baby every thirty months. Yet, Upper Canada Village did not explicitly represent pregnancy during the summer of 2009. No staff member was visibly pregnant during the summer of 2009 and at no point during my research was mention made of a prosthetic pregnancy suit that interpreters might wear to enact the condition. While the cost of the pregnancy suit is possibly a factor in the decision not to introduce this interpretation, a more likely explanation is the belief that staff would not be willing to work in the physical conditions

---

17 Interview with Patricia Trudel, Supervisor of Domestic Interpreters, Upper Canada Village, 18 August 2009.
18 Gagan, Hopeful Travellers, 86-89. Likewise, Katz’ study of the city of Hamilton showed that of married women aged forty to forty-five in 1851, 60% had a child between the ages of one and five and 81% had a child under the age of ten. See Katz, Hamilton, 246.
19 Ibid., 86-87. Errington similarly notes that women could expect to become pregnant at two to three years intervals from marriage until menopause. See Errington, Wives and Mothers, Schoolmistresses and Scullery Maids: Working women in Upper Canada, 1790-1840 (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995), 58.
the suit would cause, namely added weight and heat, at least, not without a commensurate increase in compensation. According to Gabriele Thomas, the site has had some pregnant women on staff in the past, but in general pregnancy is not visually represented by the site.

Pregnancy is, however, introduced in the interpretation of several objects and occupations. Bruce Henbest noted that the Dressmaker had done quite a bit of research into ‘alternative’ clothing of the period, including maternity wear.\(^\text{20}\) Although none of my interactions with the dressmaker brought about a discussion about what women might wear while expecting, presumably this subject is in her repertoire if a visitor were to ask. This seems to be the norm for many aspects of women’s history – interpreters have some information on the subject, but it rarely factors into their regular presentations unless a visitor purposely asks about it.

The subject of childbirth was raised quite frequently at the Physician’s House, though not in much depth. The interpretation of this building revolves quite heavily around the explanation of a handful of medical implements on display. Two of these tools would have been used if the doctor was called in to assist in childbirth; the vectus, to reposition the baby, and forceps, to help the passage of the baby through the birth canal (Illus. 4.3). Generally, however, this concise explanation was all that was given. Some female visitors took a moment to compare the tools to ones they had experienced while they were giving birth or to explain to their children what the tools would have been used for. One mother asked her child to guess what the forceps were used for and, when he could not guess, she informed him. At this point the interpreter pointed to the vectus and asked if the child could now guess what this was for, as it was very similar. The child

\(^{20}\) Interview with Bruce Henbest, Supervisor of Mills and Trades, Upper Canada Village, 6 September 2009.
thought it might be for scooping ice-cream. After correcting him, the mother questioned why they did not just use their hands to reach in and turn the baby, to which the interpreter replied they did not really do that and then moved on to discussing the tooth puller.\(^\text{21}\) The moment seemed to be an educational one, particularly for the mother as she compared her own experiences with those of the past, yet much is left unspoken. Where did women give birth? Would they have most likely called a midwife or the doctor? How much did their services cost? What was the likelihood of complications and survival for both mother and child? On only one occasion did I hear an interpreter state, while explaining the forceps, that midwives would primarily assist in childbirth but that doctors would be called in if there were complications.\(^\text{22}\) Indeed, the building manual used to train staff to interpret this building said very little about the competition between midwives and doctors that developed through the nineteenth century.\(^\text{23}\) Similarly, while it was noted that it was generally women who attended the birth, little was said about the important female networks of support that were formed throughout the community, with family members and neighbours lending a hand in the preparation of food and caring for

\(^{21}\) Interpretation of the Physician’s House, Upper Canada Village, 27 June 2009.
\(^{22}\) Interpretation of the Physician’s House, Upper Canada Village, 2 August 2009.

193
other children after the birth while the mother regained her strength.\textsuperscript{24} These are missed opportunities, both for shedding greater light on the experience of childbirth in the 1860s and on this aspect of women’s work and community.

The points about pregnancy that were raised in the physician’s home neglected to mention the fear and worry many women experienced during their pregnancy. Although, as Errington notes, mortality rates during childbirth are unknown for the years 1790-1840, obituaries indicate that death due to complications, fever, or exhaustion was a sadly common occurrence.\textsuperscript{25} Gagan further found that one in five women starting a family in 1850 did not survive the childbearing cycle.\textsuperscript{26} By not addressing how women felt about this experience, the site treats this important moment in a woman’s life superficially and incompletely.

The site is silent also about more controversial issues such as birth control, such as it was, abortions, or birth defects. Although limited, means did exist for men and women to attempt to limit incidents of pregnancy. Highlighting these means, and attitudes towards them, would provide an avenue for visitors, teens and adults specifically, to compare their rights and experiences with those of a past society. At the extreme of this topic, arguably, the site might address abortion. One interpreter noted that the physician’s house stores several tools that might have been used for abortion but that few people would speak of this distasteful topic. Although she stressed that such an issue should never be spoken of with children, she did feel that interpreters might, with well chosen language, open the subject up to adults. One reason she thought interpreters shied away from such issues was that many staff had been raised in a time when you simply did not

\textsuperscript{25} Errington, \textit{Wives and Mothers}, 65.
\textsuperscript{26} Gagan, \textit{Hopeful Travellers}, 89.
talk openly about such issues. Most visitors, particularly in the physician’s house, base their questions on displayed material culture; their questions are prompted by what they can see. To my knowledge, the tools the interpreter refers to that would have been used for abortions, or for extracting dead fetuses, were not on display, limiting the likelihood that visitors would stumble into this topic. Likewise, never was any mention made about what might have happened to children born with deformities, disabilities, or other health conditions. While one might simply conclude that the survival rate was low, there is a possibility here of opening up a discussion about society’s changing understanding of ability, as well as medicine’s capacity to treat various conditions. Certainly, the contentious and difficult nature of these topics requires that they be treated with consideration and care. Yet, while arguments have been made that such issues are inappropriate for children, surely there might be room to address these topics in a specific program that visitors opt to attend.

The fact that children also would have lived in a village such as the site portrays is indicated by material culture displays and comments made by interpreters comparing the experience of youth today with that of the youth of yesteryear. Katz’s study of the city of Hamilton in 1851-1852 indicated that the mean size of all households was 5.8, with 37% having zero to two children, 44% having three to five children, and 18% with six or more children. Certainly, then, in a village that contains more than ten family residences there would be many children. The presence of children is indicated by a cradle at Loucks Farmhouse, a rocking horse at the Physician’s House, and dolls and other toys at the Pastor’s House. Interpreters also frequently commented on the number of people that

---

27 Interview with Anonymous 1, Upper Canada Village, 11 August 2009.
28 Katz, Hamilton, 33-34.
would have lived historically in a residence, such as the broom-maker and his eight children, or the three children in the pastor’s family. They also made some effort to interact with visiting children and explain to them the type of life they might have led in the 1860s. The broom-maker explained that broom handles came in varying lengths because children had to sweep the house as well, prompting one mother to exclaim, “They helped back then?! Really?”29 Although children are not always physically present, visitors are made aware of some of their roles and responsibilities in society.

Child-rearing and childhood are represented to a greater extent, both visually and verbally, through the summer day and overnight camps run by the site. Although Henbest acknowledges that “childbearing and childrearing have not been, maybe, a major emphasis,” he points out that children are present on site during the summer through educational programs.30 Beginning in 1982 Upper Canada Village offered a camp opportunity for youth in the Time Travellers program. Over the years, programs have expanded to include four separate ‘camp’ options, covering youth from the ages of five to seventeen. The Pioneer Pals Day Camp, for children aged five to nine, engages participants in crafts, games, dress-up, and songs and seemed largely, in my observation, to have little interaction with interpreters or the public. Both the Time Travellers Program, for youth aged nine to thirteen, and the Young Interpreters Program, for those aged ten to fifteen, have the participants dress in period costume and act within the Village environment, completing activities in the school house, playing baseball in a field, or learning a skill with a variety of tradespeople (Illus. 4.4). One Young Interpreter indicated that girls could go to the Printing Office, the Ross Farm where they do

29 Interpretation of the Broommaker, 27 June 2009.
30 Interview with Bruce Henbest, Supervisor of Mills and Trades, Upper Canada Village, 6 September 2009.
needlework, and Loucks Farm where they cook, while boys often went to the Grist Mill, the Cabinetmaker’s, and the Farm.\textsuperscript{31} With thirty-six youth enrolled in these two camps each session, the visual representation of children on site increases dramatically in July and August. An additional twenty teenagers may take part in the Senior Youth Interpreter Program and spend the bulk of their days on site working with interpreters in buildings, improving hand-skills and oral presentation.\textsuperscript{32} Their presence on site helps to round out the picture of society. As one interpreter suggested, though, the representation cannot be entirely accurate because the children are not treated as children would likely have been treated in the 1860s. She stated, “[i]t’s hard to make it totally accurate because I cannot treat, I can’t treat a child as though I would have in the 1860s, you know. […] Like, I mean, I let them make these…let them, well, make them make a little yarn doll… well, as if. <laughs>”\textsuperscript{33} The work the children would have been doing in many of these locations was much more strenuous than the craft activities they partake in today. Furthermore, though the site shows to some degree the transition from youth to adulthood by demonstrating the work of youth and the entry into apprenticeships, it does not address the attitudes of colonials toward physical, bodily changes, nor does it explicitly address how expectations of behaviour might change as children aged. The presence of youth on site visually creates a more accurate depiction of the past, yet more might be done to generate a better understanding of their experiences.

From courtship, to marriage, to child-rearing, the stages of family formation are touched upon at Upper Canada Village but not focused upon. Courtship itself is not

\textsuperscript{31} Interpretation of the Printing Office, Upper Canada Village, 27 June 2009.  
\textsuperscript{32} Information on the summer youth programs offered by Upper Canada Village was obtained through the site website, <http://www.uppercanadavillage.com> (accessed 3 July 2009).  
\textsuperscript{33} Interview with Anonymous 2, Upper Canada Village, 14 August 2009.
addressed because of the third-person interpretation style of the site and decreasing staff numbers, as well as because of the lack of objects on display spurring conversations on the subject. Marriage ceremonies are shown regularly each season, but focus on the visual appeal of the bride and groom. Pregnancy itself is not included in the interpretation of the site, though child-birth is superficially mentioned in the physician’s home. Day camps introduce the presence of children and visually present some aspects of childrearing. Many of the aspects of family formation are introduced at Upper Canada Village, but much of the detail and nuance of the various experiences are left out.

*Interactions:*

Upper Canada Village aims to represent a small community in south-eastern Ontario, but how much ‘community’ do visitors really see? What sort of interactions and relationships between town residents are observable? Visitors might see the delivery wagon picking up bread from the bakery or a pair of interpreters discoursing quietly on the street corner. They are not, however, usually privy to the nature of the underlying relationship or topic of conversation; these interactions seem private and are often inaccessible to visitors. Friendship and intimacies, whether hetero- or homosexual in nature, are occluded. Bruce Henbest explained that, due to the nature of third-person interpretation, when staff meet on the streets, “staff are just calling their modern colleagues.”[^34] While you occasionally find people greeting each other, you do not have a scenario being played out for the visitors. Interactions, while visible, do not often communicate historical information to visitors.

[^34]: Interview with Bruce Henbest, Supervisor of Mills and Trades, Upper Canada Village, 6 September 2009.
Moreover, with the reduction in staffing numbers over the past number of years these random meetings on the street, the visual presentation of community life, happens less frequently. Peter Cazaly reflected,

a lot of that we can no longer do because we don’t have the staff to free up from a station to do that. In the ideal early days when I was here in the early 1990s we did that regularly all through the day and it was quite wonderful and people would often say, ‘my god, I’ve eavesdropped on a real conversation here’. You know, they really enjoyed that kind of encounter with the interpreters in the middle of their daily life.35

Creating a sense of community was easier when more staff was available to people both the buildings and the streets. First-Person Interpretation facilitated also the presentation of relationships.36 Interpreters continue to attempt to highlight community ties in their presentations, and visitors might stumble upon interpreters in conversation, but in the main the visual picture presented is one of isolated individuals.

The unlikelihood of witnessing interactions between interpreters in the streets of the Village also means, aside from more first-person oriented special events such as weddings, it is rare to see male and female interpreters mingling. Henbest commented,

I think, again, rightly or wrongly, the site has included the interpretation of roles, you know, in terms of historical information - what would the typical farmer do and what would his wife do, and you know; but I don’t know that the site has ever explicitly made a mission out of interpreting that interaction between genders. …. And in some ways we probably regularly misrepresent it because the interaction between men on women on site in general is much more informal and friendly, probably, and less distant that it probably should be from a strictly historical perspective.37

35 Interview with Peter Cazaly, Research Officer, Upper Canada Village, 11 August 2009.
36 When first-person interpreters were on-site throughout the 1990s they took on roles and performed improvisational skits. As Cazaly noted, one of the first scenarios the site designed was a visit by Mrs. So-and-So to the store, where she carried on a conversation with the store keeper, picked up her mail, and bought the necessary items for her household. Such scenes allowed interpreters to establish a relationship with each other and to interact following norms of historical behaviour. In assumed roles all conversations carried on were ostensibly for the benefit of the visitors; everything was a show designed to communicate information.
37 Interview with Bruce Henbest, Supervisor of Mills and Trades, Upper Canada Village, 6 September 2009.
With little programming explicitly aimed at presenting male-female relationships, the 
interactions that do occur, as stated, tend to be between Joe and Jane, friendly co-workers, 
as opposed to Mr. Loucks and Mrs. Crysler, co-residents of the Village. Marital 
relationships are infrequently shown, represented only briefly at tea time when the 
members of the ‘cooking unit’ and ‘farms unit’ come together on break and the 
relationship is inferred from visual clues (Illus. 4.5). Even then, however, conversation is 
between staff members rather than a presentation of a marital moment between historical 
characters.

For many years, up to 2008, the ‘cooking unit’ prepared a noon-time meal at one 
of their buildings which was served to available interpreters from the ‘farms unit,’ 
creating a tableau of family life and sociability. The Loucks Farm and the Tenant Farm 
staff alternated preparing dinner or tea each day, except for Fridays when the meal was 
served at Cook’s Tavern. After cooking an aromatic feast of a roast or chicken, 
vegetables, and deserts, the cooks and the men would gather round the table to dine and 
converse with each other and with visitors. In at least one interpreter’s opinion, these 
meals furnished one of the only opportunities for interaction between the men and women 
on site.38 Visitors were able to see and speak with what appeared to be a family unit, to 
observe etiquette at the table and, by inference and deduction, the hierarchies and power 
relations at play. Pat Trudel, Supervisor of Domestic Interpreters, thought that the 
program had several benefits, not least of which was providing visitors an opportunity to 
relate with the presentation on a personal level:

[I]t’s good for staff morale to be honest, but it’s also good for visitors to see 
that. It gives that realistic view of..., because men and women would have 
interacted, but if you’re always coming into a historic site and it’s just a

38 Interview with Anonymous 3, Upper Canada Village, 14 August 2009.
woman in a building, a man in a field, you don’t see that interaction. It also, from what I have observed, it also opens things up for the visitors because, for instance, you come in and the men are sitting down for afternoon tea. Well, the men coming into the Village with their wives coming into that building always make comment, always. And then the banter starts, ‘oh I wish my wife could make a pie like that,’ and then the wife has something to say. And it’s always a good interpretation because then the visitor has actually interacted on a personal level with the interpreter. And the men have had a man to relate to and the women have had a woman to relate to.39

The visitors were able to compare their own experiences in relationships to what they witnessed during the meals, even if on a fairly superficial level. As such, the meals had the potential to be a powerful learning moment, informing visitors about the nature of family and marital relationships, about gender roles within the household, as well as about diet and food preparation technologies. I was unable to witness any such meals, however, as they were discontinued in 2008; teas, though, were reinstated part-way through the 2009 season.

The meals were taken out of the site programming because they were getting “out of hand,” to quote several members of the staff. With the shift to the new program-oriented model of interpretation in 2009 management decided that there would be too many other demands on the cooks’ time and that it would be unfair to expect them to prepare a meal to standard as well. Gabriele Thomas stated that, with fewer staff available, more tasks were being handed to each cook and that many had been getting ‘stressed out’ at the prospect of having to work with a child from the camp program between 9:30-11:30, keep the fire going, and try to prepare a full meal by noon.40 Trudel and Thomas also pointed to the pressure of wanting to impress colleagues with the meal

39 Interview with Patricia Trudel, Supervisor of Domestic Interpreters, Upper Canada Village, 18 August 2009.
40 Interview with Gabriele Thomas, Supervisor of Farms and Domestic interpretation, Upper Canada Village, 26 August 2009.
as a negative outcome of the program. Trudel noted that the purpose of the program seemed to warp over time, shifting from an interpretation of the preparation of historic recipes to the goal of being the cook that the ‘men’ preferred to have make the meal. As a result, she continued, modern implements sometimes came into play in the preparation of the meal, distracting from the 1860s atmosphere the site hopes to convey. Furthermore, she said, the mealtime itself was becoming unrealistic:

For instance, at the tenant farm there should never be more than six people at the table; …yes he might have had ten kids, but if you’re interpreting a poor man, you know, you shouldn’t have all these visitors from different areas of the Village coming and sitting down and eating, and you’ve got fourteen adults coming through there for their meal. That is not a proper interpretation of the building. So, you know, I think the meals could get out of hand that way.

So many staff members wanted to partake of the free, and one suspects delicious, food that the representation of family life at meal times was deviating from the more likely historical reality.

Although the lives of men and women were historically intertwined, the nature of their relationships is only partly shown at Upper Canada Village. Despite being husband and wife, family and friends, and having varied social and economic relationships, relationships between men and women are rarely visually depicted. In large part, this is due to the declining staff numbers on site, which enables only one interpreter to be present in most buildings, as well as the third-person presentational method selected. The site makes a concerted effort to address marital and family relationships in the oral presentation of interpreters, yet their presentation predominantly focuses on the

---

41 Trudel provided the specific example of a cook using a mix-master in the basement of a building which was audible in the upstairs kitchen to visitors.
42 Interview with Patricia Trudel, Supervisor of Domestic Interpreters, Upper Canada Village, 18 August 2009.
complementary nature of their work rather than on the emotional or personal nature of the relationship.

**Women at Work:**

Since the rise of social history and women’s history in the 1960s, much has been written about the nature of, motivation for, and affect of women’s work. Countless studies have analyzed women’s unpaid and paid contributions to the economy over a broad swath of time and locations. In the case of Canada, however, these studies seem to fall into two chronological time periods, pre-industrial to 1840 and post-industrial from 1880. The transitional in-between period of industrialization, in which Upper Canada Village is set, has received little attention with regards to the adaptations one expects were being undertaken in women’s work and lives. This creates a conundrum for those trying to create an accurate picture of that work. What elements of the pre-industrial era

---


persisted? What elements were modified or superseded by new technologies or available consumer goods? These questions are made more challenging in this case because so much of the information available for the 1880 period has focused on urban areas. The site visually represents many, but not all, of the tasks ‘pioneer’ women would have done in the early-to-mid nineteenth century but orally updates these activities to the 1860s by noting items purchased at the store, obtained from a mill, or sold to the market. The picture of women’s work presented at Upper Canada Village shows the physicality and skill required to accomplish most daily duties as well as the importance of women’s work to the family economy and survival.

The two predominating and sometimes conflicting ideals of the family economy and the ideology of separate spheres shaped women’s work throughout much of the nineteenth century. Although the rhetoric of the day sharply divided the domestic and public spheres, in reality the borderline was less clear for most women in Upper Canada. As Jane Errington writes, “[i]n most Upper Canadian homes, the divisions between the public and private spheres were never clearly delineated. Like their mothers and grandmothers, all colonial women worked hard within their homes; most took an active and essential part in maintaining the family economy, and many worked for wages at a variety of occupations in the public marketplace.”44 Women took care of domestic responsibilities inside and outside of the home, undertaking the cooking, cleaning, washing, and sewing, as well the gardening and oversight of poultry or a dairy. Not only were the goods they produced consumed by the family, but the surplus was sold also for profit on the market. And, in more challenging economic situations, women would

undertake paid labour to sustain the family economy. Women’s work was undeniably diverse and essential to the development of the family, community, colony and nation.

Upper Canada Village depicts many aspects of this work. Visitors to the site would be hard-pressed to miss seeing a woman preparing food, spinning, or completing needlework, and luckier ones will also be able witness, and take part in, the wash or candle-making. Women’s important role as ‘helpmates’ to their husbands is represented in the General Store and the Broom-maker’s House, while their paid labour is shown in the Woollen Mill, the Printer’s Shop, and the School House.

Food preparation took up an inordinate amount of most colonial women’s time and effort. Whether done over the hearth or on a wood stove, cooking was a labour intensive affair. From obtaining the raw produce from the garden or poultry shed, to maintaining the fire, to preparing the typical two substantial hot meals a day, and baking bread, women’s work to feed their families consumed much of their time.\(^{45}\) There is almost always a woman cooking at Upper Canada Village. Members of the ‘cooking unit’, working out of the tenant farm and Loucks Farmhouse summer kitchen, select historic recipes they would like to try, obtain the ingredients, and then try their hand in front of the public (Illus. 4.6). The tenant farmer’s wife frequently prepares biscuits on the griddle or pies in the bake kettle, while at Loucks, working on a more sophisticated wood stove, they prepare marmalades, rhubarb tarts, pickles and jellies, and churn butter each morning (Illus. 4.7).\(^ {46}\) The cooks, as well as the bakers in town, all asserted regularly in their interpretations that women baked bread for their families at home, yet

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 91-92.
\(^{46}\) A new addition to the core program in 2009 was daily butter churning at Loucks farm. Visitors, particularly children, seemed to enjoy helping with this interactive task, dashing away at the cream and hoping to see some change in texture. Although the churning itself was done in the morning, throughout the day the interpreter would refer to butter made that morning and the uses it was put to in her baking.
this was not demonstrated for visitors regularly, if at all. Visually, the interpretation of diet privileges sweets and desserts. The oral interpretation often corrects this visual imbalance, though, with discussions of reflector ovens and typical meals. The heat and effort that goes into food preparation is shown, but the cooks juggle only one or two items at a time, which does not reflect the coordination required to have an entire meal ready. Visitors get a sense of the skill and hard work required to feed a family, but some of the complexity of meal-times is removed. Aspects of food preparation are communicated at Upper Canada Village. But, while women are shown cooking, preserving and pickling, and maintaining the fire, one does not commonly see their work to procure foodstuffs.

Women, as Errington outlines, were responsible for sewing, weeding, and harvesting a medley of carrots, tomatoes, potatoes, beets, and beans in the vegetable gardens. Women had been gardeners at UCV in the past, but in the 2009 season there were none present. Similarly, women also had great responsibility for the oversight of the dairy, the poultry, and the butchering of animals. The cows are milked, though, before the site opens to visitors, or by the visitors themselves in the late afternoon as an interactive activity overseen by the male agricultural interpreter stationed at the Loucks barn (Illus. 4.8). Nothing in particular seems to be done with the chickens and ducks at the farm, nor with the pig or piglets. I never witnessed a cook cleaning a recently killed pig.

---

47 Errington, Wives and Mothers, 101. Mary O’Brien included reference to gardening in her journals of 1828-1838. For example, on 26 April 1830 she notes that “the garden and dairy will be my special care…” See Audrey Saunders Miller, ed., The Journals of Mary O’Brien, 1828-1838 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1968), 105.

48 Errington, Wives and Mothers, 102. See also Barbara Williams, ed., A Gentlewoman in Upper Canada: The journals, letters and art of Anne Langton (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), for numerous diary entries that recount Anne’s hands-on role in butchering ‘porklings’ (17 October 1838, 187), and women’s responsibility for the poultry (12 April 1839, 226 and 2 July 1839, 237) and for milking (1 January 1839, 200). Mary O’Brien’s journals note similarly that she put her hand to milking, and also make several references to her mother or herself undertaking or overseeing the butchering of pigs. See Miller, Mary O’Brien, 23, 118 and 142.
chicken, nor does the site slaughter any of its animals for visitors as an educational moment.49 These omissions circumscribe the sometimes violent nature of women’s work that does not fit as comfortably with the traditional, separate spheres idealization of women as nurturing and passive.

A second major category of women’s work in the home was the production and maintenance of clothing. Although factory woven fabric was increasingly available through the 1850s and 1860s the significant monetary cost saving of homespun meant that a number of women continued to spin and weave in their homes. Their products were for domestic use and also sold in the community or on the market.50 An interpreter at the McDiarmid House explained that only about one in six farm households would still be weaving in 1866, primarily to meet family needs.51 Though less common than other types of work, the production of cloth required great skill and a considerable amount of time. Wool is spun on site most every day of the season at McDiarmid House (Illus. 4.9). The interpreter demonstrates the skill required to make a consistent weight of yarn, while discussing that this was a distinctly female task, the time it would take to make a ball of yarn, and what could be made out of that ball. Also on display in the home are local and store-bought dyes and a large loom. Though the action of weaving was not demonstrated frequently in 2009, the topic was incorporated regularly into conversations with visitors.

49 In the context of discussing the site’s reticence to present challenging material Peter Cazaly asked whether the site should slaughter a pig in front of visitors in the fall. He stated that he has argued for this for many years.
50 Errington references the cost saving of homespun in the 1840 period. See Errington, Wives and Mothers, 100. Craig’s study of the Madawaska region argues that domestic cloth production remained important in the region through the latter half of the nineteenth century, with women producing cloth for their families, to exchange with neighbours or to trade at the general store. She does note, however, that domestic cloth production was on the decline in Upper Canada after 1850. See Béatrice Craig, Backwoods Consumers and Homespun Capitalists: The rise of a market culture in eastern Canada (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 181-194.
51 Interpretation at McDiarmid House, Upper Canada Village, 2 August 2009.
One interpreter stressed the amount of thread required to set up the loom, noting that the
warp alone could require 12,000-15,000 yards of yarn, though store-bought cotton was
becoming available for this purpose. She further noted that families could earn an extra
$40-100 selling their cloth. The representation of women’s spinning and weaving
demonstrates both skill and effort, as well as explains the interconnections of women’s
work to local and international markets.

Needlework was also an important activity undertaken by women and girls. Even
if most homes were no longer weaving their own fabric the majority of women were still
turning fabric into clothing in the home. And, as Errington explains, the work of mending
and refitting clothes was ongoing. Interpreters stationed in Crysler’s General Store
were often overheard explaining that only men’s pre-made clothing was on sale because
women made their families’ everyday clothes themselves. Yet, despite the heavy load
of work that Anne Langton describes fixing muslins to be, the production of clothes is
rarely shown at Upper Canada Village. A number of women can be found on site
working a needle but they tend to be engaged in more decorative projects, such as
embroidery. The Ross Farm house is dedicated to quilting, which combines artistic
qualities with the practicality of combating the winter chill (Illus. 4.10). While decorative
needlework is completely legitimate activity for women, it is striking that such a routine
and time-consuming activity as sewing clothes is omitted from the repertoire of
needlework.

---
52 Ibid.
53 Errington, Wives and Mothers, 100.
54 Interpretation at Crysler’s General Store, Upper Canada Village, 2 August 2009 and 22 August 2009.
The struggle to get clothing clean is both talked about and shown at the site. The unpleasant work of making soap is not shown. Doing the laundry was physically taxing work. The process involved heating the water, mixing in the soap, scrubbing, rinsing and wringing the heavy, wet material, and hanging everything out to dry. Once dried, most items then needed ironing. Upper Canada Village demonstrated the steps involved in laundering clothes in its newly introduced laundry program at the Tenant Farm, but the small scale of the program and its emphasis on interactivity conveyed little about the effort that went into the job. A female interpreter coaxed several children out of the crowd to help her with her laundry, a pair of trousers and a work shirt (Illus. 4.11). Having them look for spots, she instructed them to get the clothes wet, to scrub them hard ‘putting their back into it’, to rinse them, and to wring them out hard before hanging the items to dry on the fence. The children appeared to be having a great time and their parents also appreciated the display of effort. While the demonstration engaged children in active learning and gave them some idea of the process of laundering, the program is, as the interpreter expressed, “[m]ore for fun than anything.” With only two items in the wash pile, and two items that did not use up many yards of fabric, the scale of work is poorly communicated. With such limited items available for washing the physical effort and endurance of women is minimized. Furthermore, the program focuses on the “surface processes” of the task, how laundry was done, rather than on who is doing the work, why they do it, and how it affects their lives.

57 Interpretation of the Tenant Farm, Upper Canada Village, 1 August 2009.
Similar to cloth, soap was also available at the general store but economizing women continued to make their own using animal fat and ashes. Errington notes for the earlier colonial period that even those who had available cash to purchase soap usually made their own at home.\(^5^9\) Upper Canada Village does not have a demonstration of this. In fact, the subject of home-made soap was raised only briefly by the dressmaker, as she explained that she gladly took as payment a store credit on the account of one her clients because she could then buy soap and candles rather than make them by hand as her husband expects her to do. She had great hopes that he would so impressed with the quality of the store-bought goods that she would never have to make them again.\(^6^0\) This story suggests that the production of soap was a tedious affair; yet, nowhere on site are visitors able to witness the process and judge for themselves.

Likewise, candles were another item that could be either hand-made or purchased. Whether dipped or molded, many women continued to rely on candles through the nineteenth century for lighting. In 2009 Upper Canada Village introduced an interactive program of candle-dipping for visitors, with a target audience of youth participants. Though I did not witness this program, several interpreters commented on its success, measured by attendance numbers. Once again, as with the laundry, the scale of the enterprise is lost. Anne Langton noted in her journal making twelve dozen candles at a time.\(^6^1\) Here, each child makes only one or two. The coordination and repetition of the task is lost in the demonstration because of the number of participants and the single candle they produce.

\(^6^0\) Interpretation of the Dressmaker’s home, Upper Canada Village, 2 June 2009.  
\(^6^1\) Williams, *Gentlewoman*, 226-227.
Women’s work was also focused, in large part, on maintaining or obtaining cleanliness. Ridding the home of dirt, dust, and grime was a constant daily battle fought by women and their daughters. Daily dusting and scrubbing, especially in the kitchen, took up time and effort. This is shown only to a limited extent at Upper Canada Village, where the cooks at the Tenant Farm and Loucks Farm regularly wash the dishes they cooked with that day, wipe down the tables, and sweep the crumbs from the floor. All other household maintenance - the scrubbing of floors, the washing of windows - is left unseen, completed by hired cleaners before the site is open to visitors.

Women accomplished many tasks around the home and most of these are physically and orally represented at Upper Canada Village. Visitors are able to witness female interpreters baking, preserving, tending the fire, spinning, weaving, sewing, and quilting. Some of the more physical domestic tasks, however, are downplayed in the programming or omitted altogether. For example, gardening was not shown, although it had been in the past. Likewise, milking, butchering, and soap-making were not included, while laundry and candle-making were presented as a children’s interactive experience limiting the physicality and scope of work depicted. It is clear that women performed a variety of important tasks, and visitors seem to walk away understanding that women’s work was essential to the agricultural family economy; however, even more of the jobs women undertook could be portrayed to present a more complete picture of their lives.

The doctrine of separate spheres, which worked to regulate the behaviour of middle- and upper-class women, stipulated that the home was women’s domain to oversee and maintain. As we have seen, women performed many rigorous tasks to keep their homes functioning. Their work within the home was accepted and expected,

---

62 Errington, Wives and Mothers, 97.
however, “…within the context of the pre-industrial colonial economy, working ‘in’ the home often included assisting their husbands in family businesses or taking in work to supplement the family income.” 63 This broadening of the domestic sphere to include places of family business meant that women often completed work in the public sphere, or in a hybrid domestic-public space, under the supervision or authority of her husband. So, for example, one might find a female interpreter making brooms, presumably to help her husband who might be taken ill or working his land. Interpreters made it quite clear that the wives of artisans and tradesmen were required to become adept at the trade and to perform the husband’s or father’s duties should he fall ill. A female interpreter in the Printer’s Office explained,

[t]he woman only gets married, so you’d never work outside the home again… but of course it does not mean that a woman doesn’t work when she gets married, of course. If you married the blacksmith you’re one of the best blacksmiths around because if your husband is sick or injured you cannot close the business and say, ‘well, sorry, we’ll be back in a week.’ You do whatever they do. … But the time the wife spent in the family business was not considered work, it was only considered helping out. And that’s why women are not listed in a lot of the trades, but they were doing all of them. 64

Interpreters made oral assertions of women’s participation in what are considered traditional male occupations and women were shown regularly to be working at making brooms and typesetting newspapers (Illus. 4.12). Upper Canada Village clearly communicated to visitors that women performed essential tasks within a more public sphere.

Despite prescriptions of behaviour that narrowly defined women’s appropriate role as mother and housekeeper, not all women were situated in economic positions that allowed them to fulfill this norm. Beyond ‘helping husbands,’ many single, widowed, or

63 Ibid., 19.
64 Interpretation of the Gazette Printing Office, Upper Canada Village, 6 June 2009.
economically disadvantaged women had no choice but to participate in paid labour within or without the home. As Barbara Maas asserts in her study of immigrant women in the early nineteenth century, “[p]erforming domestic duties was not the only way in which immigrant women contributed to the economic survival of the family. Financial difficulties forced some women to turn to paid work to avert ruin, or to transcend the sexual division of labour within the family and join husbands in field work.”

Wage labour that was undertaken in the home could still be considered respectable. Wage labour outside the home, on the other hand, as an interpreter said, “was a stigma on your husband; if you were working it looks like he can’t support the family…” Maas concurs: “Although, ideally, neither married nor unmarried women should join the workforce because it entailed a loss of status for them, a pattern which defined woman solely through her maternal and domestic functions was in danger of losing validity as the nineteenth century progressed and a growing proportion of the female population deviated from the ideal.”

This growing population of female wage-labourers in the 1860s is fairly well represented at Upper Canada Village. Although there are few women working in the paid labour-force in the Village, those that do so characterize three of the five broad categories of mid-nineteenth century paid women’s work – dressmaking or needlework, teaching, and industrial labour, with only domestic service and prostitution excluded from visitors’ view. The dressmaker of the Village is a married woman, working out of her home as household duties allow in order to supplement the family income. The schoolmistress was sure to explain that she resigned her position upon marriage, but that the investment

---

65 Maas, Helpmates, 97.
66 Interpretation of Cook’s Tavern, Upper Canada Village, 27 June 2009.
67 Maas, Helpmates, 71.
in training was expensive enough that most teachers put off marrying until their thirties in order to get enough economic returns. Both of these jobs saw women earning money based on skills that were considered natural to woman and were complementary to the ideas espoused by the doctrine of separate spheres. Upper Canada Village also represents a female employee in an industrial mill (Illus. 4.13). The men at the mill, it was stated, ran the machines while women did the weaving and finishing work on items, such as putting tassels on blankets. As an agrarian village, there would have been few industries in which women would commonly work, textile factories being most commonly found in urban areas such as Montreal and Toronto. It is important that Upper Canada Village continues to show this aspect of women’s employment in order to communicate information about their varied work and also that not all women could meet the ideals set out for them.

Women’s work is quite thoroughly and consistently shown at Upper Canada Village, though there are some notable omissions in the picture of life presented. Women’s work within the home is regularly demonstrated by interpreters baking, spinning, sewing, and doing laundry, and the support women provided their husbands in their trade shops is consistently visible to visitors in the Printing Office and Cook’s Tavern. Gaps can be found, however, in the depiction of women’s paid work. Women are shown to have been employed in factories, needle trades, and teaching, but their extremely common work as domestic servants is not mentioned. Nor is women’s more illicit employ as sex workers. While one might debate how visible the latter would be in an agricultural town, all aspects of women’s work warrant mention in order to provide visitors with the most accurate understanding of the past as possible.
Representing Men – Status and Occupation:

Men were given status in the nineteenth century based on economic wealth and how they generated income, while women were given status based on their familial association with men. Generally, men might be categorized as being among the idle rich, the middle-class, and the working class. As Andrew Holman has argued, by the 1850s and 1860s Old World ideas of social place were losing their relevance and “[i]n their stead emerged a conception of society divided, between upper and middle classes, on the bases of wealth, occupational prestige, and idleness; and, between middle and lower classes, by the non-manual/manual work cleavage.”68 The interpreters at Upper Canada Village demonstrate a wide variety of occupations held by men of diverse status positions. While no one seems idle in the Village, each of the three classes are represented by different families and tradesmen, as indicated by the quality of their homes and furnishings, their clothing, their income and how they are referred to by other members of the community.

There are no idle rich represented in Upper Canada Village though the residence of the local elite is displayed. The Crysler family worked farmland and ran various businesses to gain their elite socio-economic position. Their brick home is by far the largest and most imposing structure on site, indicating that they were significantly better off economically than most other residents of the Village. Interestingly, Crysler Hall is not interpreted in the same way as the other buildings on site. Rather than arranging each room in a tableau and having an interpreter demonstrate some aspect of life experienced in the home, Crysler Hall is used as an orientation centre and museum. Although information on this high status family is available, details are less easily accessible than in

other buildings where material culture and physical demonstrations support the oral presentation.

The middle-class is represented by a number of professional men, business men, and merchants. Interestingly, however, the homes and places of business of these middle-class men are interpreted almost entirely by women. The domestic unit is responsible for interpreting Robertson House, the Physician’s Home, and the Crysler General Store. Predominantly staffed by females, with the exception of one male staff member in 2009, the lives of the middle-class men of the Village are rarely visually portrayed by men themselves. Instead their histories are communicated orally by female interpreters or by the material culture displays and architecture of the buildings themselves. In Robertson House the lavish decorations - imported wallpaper, faux-marble walls, and carved doorframes - and material culture are highlighted as interpreters speak about the business dealings and savvy of Mr. Robertson. The focus in the Physician’s House is on the implements he used in his surgery, but upon further questioning interpreters are able to provide detail about his educational background and income. With a Bachelor of Arts and four years of medical studies, the physician was one of the most highly educated men in an agrarian village. He was also, as one interpreter asserted, “very well off,” billing patients an average of $2900 a year.\(^69\) The Pastor is also distinguished as a member of the middle-class because of his education and non-manual labour. Several interpreters explained that the Pastor was paid an annual salary of approximately $400, with the additional provision of a house, a garden, and an amount of wood.\(^70\) Although the salary was not particularly high in comparison to the physician or even some of the tradesmen,

\(^69\) Interpretation of the Physician’s House, Upper Canada Village, 14 June 2009. Education was also addressed on 19 July 2009, while the same income was discussed on 2 August 2009.

\(^70\) Interpretation of the Lutheran Pastor House, Upper Canada Village, 20 June 2009 and 27 June 2009.
the trusted leadership role the Pastor played in the community raised him in status above others of similar income. Interpreters also set the Pastor apart from other men in the community by stressing that he had a small family because the added children were not required to work around the home or shop. As one interpreter put it, “[a]nybody who had a lot of education…, …didn’t need to have a big family. He didn’t have fields to sow. He just didn’t need a big family.” In all three buildings, the size of the home and the furnishings distinguish the residents as well-off and support each interpreter’s assertions about the resident’s status (Illus. 4.14). Despite the fact that some middle-class occupations are absent, notably lawyers, and that middle-class men are rarely interpreted by men, the site does a good job of ensuring that visitors understand that society was hierarchical.

The working class is shown with attention to gradations in status. A range of tradesmen, farmers, and manual labourers, including factory workers, are represented. Their status is defined by economic success, as well as the nature of their work and how essential it was deemed to the community. Nuances of position are communicated to the public in several ways, including the size and location of the workshop or home, income, the length and intensity of training or apprenticeship, the ability to hire help, and the way other tradesmen refer to them in their interpretation. Tradesmen were quick to point out if they were earning over the dollar a day average. For example, mill workers and labourers earned approximately $1.00 a day while the tinsmith earned $2.50-$4.00. The most successful tradesmen were able to separate their home and workshop. As visitors enter the broom maker’s one room home the impression is distinctly that he is on the

---

71 Interpretation of the Lutheran Pastor House, Upper Canada Village, 27 June 2009.
72 Interpretation of the Tinsmith’s Shop, Upper Canada Village, 1 August 2009.
lower-end of the economic spectrum while, in comparison, the bakery is unattached to any home, indicating that the baker is successful enough to afford both properties. Relatedly, tradesmen also attempted to distinguish themselves from other trades by stressing the skill and training required for them to do their job well. The length of their apprenticeship was held up as a measure of their talent and worth. The apprentice cheesemaker explained that he would apprentice for four years before he could conceive of running his own business.73 The tinsmith took a more comparative approach in his discussion of his training, noting that both he and the blacksmith apprenticed for seven years as a skilled trade, while the shoemaker needed to only apprentice for two. The interpreter continued, “[a]nyone can make shoes, it’s easy. […] Any monkey can make a pair of shoes…”74 (Illus. 4.15 and 4.16) Within their discussions with visitors, interpreters made a point of delineating the hierarchy amongst tradesmen and highlighting the status differences between trades that were considered highly skilled and those that were not. Upper Canada Village presents a clear oral message that the working class was not one homogeneous mass.

Men’s status differences are made clear at Upper Canada Village, yet only part of the economic spectrum is addressed. As one interpreter commented, class and status might be further stressed by, “adding interpreters representing dramatic ends of the spectrum.”75 Another interpreter noted that the site needs “a truer representation of all socio-economic levels.”76 Arguably, there would not have been many members of the highest echelon of society residing in a rural village and this may be why the Village opts

73 Interpretation of the Union Cheese Factory, Upper Canada Village, 14 June 2009.
74 Interpretation of the Tinsmith’s Shop, Upper Canada Village, 1 August 2009.
75 Anonymous Staff Survey, 2009
76 Interview with Anonymous 1, Upper Canada Village, 11 August 2009.
not to highlight this aspect of class; however, a larger focus should serve only to broaden visitors’ understanding of the societal make-up of the nineteenth century. Likewise, while the working-class is shown to have its own internal hierarchy, the lowest rung of that ladder, the destitute or vagrant, is omitted from the picture of life presented on site. One interpreter reflected that, “[t]he class/status differences are too slight to make them an important part of everyday interpretation.”

Yet, it seems that the site is already representing the slight gradations of status amongst some strata; what is omitted is the recognition of the larger differences between the highest and lowest extremes of the social ranks.

“A revenue generating tourism business”: Factors shaping the representation of the past at Upper Canada Village

From its inception Upper Canada Village fell under the auspices of the Provincial Ministry of Tourism and its agency the St. Lawrence Parks Commission. Much like Fort Henry, another site run by the SLPC, Upper Canada Village is meant to both educate residents of and visitors to the province on its history and to incite those individuals to travel the province and spend money. The site is guided, in part, by the mission statement of the SLPC that states that the Commission “is to generate lasting visitor growth, drive economic prosperity and build community partnerships in Eastern Ontario. It is a revenue-generating tourism business offering customer-focused entertaining and educational experiences that maximize its natural, leisure and heritage assets.”

---

primary emphasis in this statement is on the economic concerns of tourism, with educational goals being mentioned secondarily to revenue and entertainment.

Generating revenue is critical to the operation of most any business and Upper Canada Village is no exception. The site derives its budget both from monies transferred by the province and revenues generated by the site. Bruce Henbest explained that the shift to an interest in revenue generation has been around for quite some time. He noted that it was around 1992 when the Commission altered its funding model to have sites retain revenues rather than, as previous, cycle all earnings back to the Commission and have the full operating budget provided by the Commission through a transfer payment. Over time the province has decreased the amount it is willing to transfer to the site, causing the site to be more self-reliant and increasingly concerned with the earning potential of its programming. Gabriele Thomas, Supervisor of Farms and Domestic Interpretation at Upper Canada Village, echoed this idea: “So we are really pretty much pushed into trying to make that money [difference between transfer and expenses] up. And it’s not just trying to make the same we did last year; it’s making more because we’re spending more on salaries automatically. And many of the other costs, you know, fuel and all of that are usually going up too.” As the operating costs continue to grow each year, and the province is reticent to increase payments, the site is pressured to augment their earnings at the gate by drawing in more people and having those people spend more money.

It is clear to some members of management and staff that prioritizing revenue generation affects the presentation of history on site. Peter Cazaly discusses several

---

79 Interview with Bruce Henbest, Supervisor of Mills and Trades, Upper Canada Village, 6 September 2009.
80 Interview with Gabriele Thomas, Supervisor of Farms and Domestic Interpretation, Upper Canada Village, 26 August 2009.
programming initiatives he had proposed that he felt were good ideas, yet, he says, “[w]hen I made the proposal to managers they looked at me and said, ‘all very nice, but how much money will it make?’”\footnote{Interview with Peter Cazaly, Research Officer, Upper Canada Village, 11 August 2009.} Another interpreter echoed this idea reflecting that there were any number of topics, for example a literary society, that could be represented on site to better show life in the nineteenth century. Yet, they reflected, “[w]ould it bring people in? No. But the people who were in would go away saying that was interesting. And I think that’s where we’re falling down now.”\footnote{Interview with Anonymous 3, Upper Canada Village, 14 August 2009.} Similarly, Cazaly noted a suggestion to build a house in order to demonstrate construction techniques of the day that was twisted into renting out a building as a guest house. According to Cazaly, “[t]hat’s an indication to me that the educational and teaching value of the Village really is being subverted by management policies that are not particularly favourable to that direction.”\footnote{Interview with Peter Cazaly, Research Officer, Upper Canada Village, 11 August 2009.} For programming to be introduced it needs to be shown that it can increase revenues, rather than that it will make the history presented on site more accurate. It is difficult to argue that the introduction of women sewing shirts would bring more people through the door. That being the case, there is little impetus from higher levels of management for the site to introduce new demonstrations of women’s daily chores.

On the other hand, Bruce Henbest thinks that changes in programming have more to do with trying to stay relevant to visitors than revenue generation:

…I think the biggest challenge for us is to communicate to people that we as a museum are relevant to them in some way. And, um you know, I think inevitably it’s going to require a certain level of experimentation in terms of the kinds of programs we offer […] you know, whether it’s to increase the entertainment value or whether it’s to increase the educational value or
whether it’s to attract people for other reasons, the fundamental question is, I think,… are we relevant to them in some way.\textsuperscript{84}

Ultimately, Henbest still finds historical integrity to be fundamental to the success of the site: “You know, I would still like visitors to come to Upper Canada Village and recognize that we are attempting not simply to entertain them, not simply to educate them, but to present a program that’s engaging but that still has a certain amount of historical integrity behind it.”\textsuperscript{85} Though many see that economic goals are shaping the programming at Upper Canada Village, other aims continue to influence the decision making process of management.

One of these aims is to provide good customer service to visitors. In part, this requires providing them with the experience they anticipated when they decided to visit the site. In the majority of cases, the customers at historic sites, particularly in the summer months research was undertaken, are tourists on their vacation. Survey results from Upper Canada Village in 2009 (n=50) show that 62\% of respondents indicated they went to the site while on vacation primarily because of its reputation or to have a good time; 46\% linked their primary motivation to visit to an interest in history. Clearly, and unsurprisingly, visitors to historic sites are motivated by a variety of goals and interests, from seeking an educational experience, to time spent with family, to fun and entertainment. Yet, it is also evident that the majority of respondents highlighted vacation, leisure, and entertainment as the purpose of their visit, with a smaller percentage being drawn in specifically by history. This characteristic of the audience of historic sites greatly shapes the presentation of historical narratives.

\textsuperscript{84} Interview with Bruce Henbest, Supervisor of Mills and Trades, Upper Canada Village, 6 September 2009.\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
Interpreters seem to walk a difficult mine-field between wanting to surprise visitors with some new piece of information that will be memorable and exciting and not wanting to push visitors’ comfort level or to explode preconceptions and tightly held myths for fear of making the visitor upset or angry. It is a common refrain in interpreter training that one must adapt one’s presentation to meet the changing audience. Yet, this principle seems to have mutated amongst many interpreters into a sense that they must address topics that visitors want to hear about. “Giving visitors what they want” becomes a frequently stated operating standard. To paraphrase one interpreter, if you do not get the sense that they want historical information you do not give it to them; after all, they are on holiday. You don’t let the education suffer but you don’t push it on people.  

Gabriele Thomas, supervisor of farms and domestic interpretation, similarly reflected that,

[interpreters are] always pulled in by the visitor questions which rarely go [beyond material culture], you know. I think they’re sort of responding to what the visitor wants and obviously…, and some of the more skilled interpreters can take that and push it a bit further but some of the other ones don’t do that, they just stick with what the visitor wants. So I think there’s definitely more we can do but, again, is that what the visitor wants?  

Clearly, then, perceptions of the audience – who they are, what they are interested in, what they want to hear, as well as what will entertain them and incite them to return – shape the narratives told on site.

So what do the visitors want? In part expectations for a historical narrative are built into Ontarians through the educational curriculum, which helps establish historical

---

86 Interview with Anonymous 1, Upper Canada Village, 11 August 2009. This idea was also articulated by two others. One stated, “I have always worked on the theory that you give visitors what they want,” while the other noted, “We’re supposed to give the visitor what they want to a certain extent…”

87 Interview with Gabriele Thomas, Supervisor of Farms and Domestic Interpretation, Upper Canada Village, 26 August 2009.
consciousness. Very few respondents to the Canadians and Their Pasts survey found the history presented in schools to be very trustworthy, yet that history becomes a standard baseline for society to compare new information against to judge veracity and trustworthiness. Whether they truly want this history becomes secondary in some ways to whether they expect it. The educational system in Ontario addresses the colonial period of Upper Canada Village in grades three, seven and twelve. This curriculum stresses the environmental factors shaping settlement, immigration patterns, industrialization, and changing economies and social relations. All three course curriculums do include a component on gender, but this is a small part of the overall course: students in grade three must distinguish between male and female roles in colonial society, “farm worker, minister, teacher, merchant, blacksmith, homemaker”; those in grade seven must explain characteristics of colonial family life; and grade twelve students must be able to analyze how women’s traditional roles have changed since Victorian times, including their changing role in the economy. I expect that the curriculum intends ‘farm worker’ to be a male role, and yet surely wives and daughters laboured tirelessly for the success of the farm as well. Such simplified understandings of gendered work are ingrained at a tender age. Interestingly, all three curriculums stress the differentiation of male and female roles while the last creates also a narrative of progress. Based on the recent educational guidelines it should come as no surprise that many Ontarians have a sense of history constructed around narratives of progress and politics, and dichotomized understandings

of how men and women contributed to national development. Regardless of whether they trust this history to be true, it is the version of the past most will expect to see.

The narrative of national progress that has been instilled creates an expectation of finding simpler, slower times in the past. The sense of some interpreters is that visitors to Upper Canada Village want a picture of a simpler life of hard, physical work, an idyllic vision of a communal agrarian lifestyle when life was not as rushed. Of course, this idealization leaves out experiences of illness, poverty, and female and child mortality to name a few. One long-term interpreter at Upper Canada Village stated, “[w]e also have to contend with the mythology, constantly. What do you want to see? You think of quiet, laid back. This is entirely, it’s a misconception. I will tell you about the misconception but, generally, as a visitor I don’t want to a shatter a myth, ever.” Having the ideals and truths that you believe in challenged is a potentially difficult and emotional experience, albeit enlightening. Such a potentially complicated interaction is seen to detract from the entertainment value of the site. If visitors’ beliefs are challenged can they still have a good time? Many do not seem to think so.

Generally speaking, the desire to meet visitor needs and to give them an enjoyable visit means that the unpleasant aspects of history, conflict, violence, disappointment, and sadness, are omitted in preference for narratives of progress, perseverance and heroism, and scenes of hard-work, domesticity, and quaint beauty. Representations are often tinged with nostalgia and romance, with obstacles depicted to better highlight the overcoming of them. Insofar as women’s history complements these positive pictures it may be included. When it complicates the narrative it is often treated superficially or incompletely.

---

90 Interview with Anonymous 1, Upper Canada Village, 11 August 2009.
Women’s work, as long as it does not get too messy, is shown as part of a representation of pioneer strength and spirit. Visitors can witness women hard at work cooking, spinning, and sewing. The centrality of family to economic survival is also highlighted through the many instances where women are shown to be helping their husbands, whether within the household or in a shop. The dangers of mill-work, the conditions of child labour, the pain of child-birth, the violence of abuse, and the disorder of drunkenness, however, are all left out of the narrative presented by Upper Canada Village. Such elements blur the image of a romantic past.

In part, the superficiality with which some of these issues are covered is because they are topics that have not left an abundance of material culture or evidence behind – they are emotional or intangible and as are difficult to signify to visitors through displays of objects. With few objects on display to clue visitors into a topic of inquiry, few visitors find the entry point; without visitor questioning to indicate to interpreters an interest in a topic few interpreters will take the time to broach the subject. As one interpreter succinctly put it, the site is highly afflicted with “This Is” Syndrome. He continued, “Most people who are hired here talk generally about the material culture. It is the easiest to deal with for everybody.”91 Gabrielle Thomas concurred:

I think what’s happening is that unless an interpreter is really keen and very good often the conversation will sort of stall at the ‘what you can see,’ you know, the stuff, and it’s not going to go up into the ideas as much. And I don’t know if it’s necessarily the fault of the interpreter; it’s different things. People who just meander through the Village, there’s certain questions… that come again, and again, and again, the stock set of questions that everybody asks and they often don’t include that social history, right? They include, you know, how do you use this? And ‘oh what did you do there?’ ‘what is that?’ you know? So it’s because so many people are much more visual and they

91 Interview with Anonymous 5, Upper Canada Village.
just see something and that’s what sparks them. And then by the time you’ve covered that stuff they may have had enough.\textsuperscript{92}

As a result, interpreters often generate a short presentation about the building or space based on the history of the site and the objects located within it that satisfies the most common questions visitors ask about. As one interpreter expressed, “[a] lot of times it’s a basic interpretation, … you know there’s a bit of a spiel that goes, but that’s supposed to be the information for people who don’t want to go any further, so they’ve got the sound bite, if you will, of the building or the base for exploration. Like, it’s a conversation starter.”\textsuperscript{93} Unfortunately, as another interpreter noted many staff are happy with the brief spiel and lack the initiative to learn more.\textsuperscript{94} Thus, the information that is most consistently conveyed to visitors is both very basic and oriented towards what visitors can see, excluding to a great extent historical experiences that were not always strongly object based, such as abuse, relationships of power, pregnancy, and belief systems.

As an institution, Upper Canada Village is also hesitant to portray many of the negative, uncomfortable or controversial aspects of the past. Many of the working conditions are left out of the picture and many aspects of social interaction, the way men and women might have spoken to each other for example, are not shown. Peter Cazaly develops this idea:

\begin{quote}
Do we really show the dark side of Victorian life? No, we don’t. I think that’s one of our real weaknesses and it’s the weakness of all living museums. We do not deal with the horrible, horrible issues of labour in the industrial sector at that time, child labour, female labour, long hours of work, intimidation, harassment, you know all of those issues existed. I mean, our
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[92] Interview with Gabriele Thomas, Supervisor of Farms and Domestic Interpretation, Upper Canada Village, 26 August 2009.
\item[93] Interview with Anonymous 2, Upper Canada Village, 14 August 2009.
\item[94] Interview with Anonymous 1, Upper Canada Village, 11 August 2009.
\end{footnotes}
mills are far too lovely to really jibe with the actual descriptions of life in an industrial economy at that time.\textsuperscript{95}

Similarly, Bruce Henbest noted that the site had unofficially avoided the representation of a number of social ills of nineteenth century society: “And we clearly have decided not to represent wife abuse and you know a number of other social ills that existed. Whether we consciously sat down and made that decision in a motion, you know, we didn’t but in practice we’ve clearly avoided that.”\textsuperscript{96} Henbest reflected that this evasion of the darker side of life is likely attributed to “a certain level of um institutional reticence to portray really nitty gritty experiences that the commission would be worr.. concerned that people would find offensive,” as well as to concerns over the work conditions of the interpreters.\textsuperscript{97} Yet, Cazaly finds that this concern over what people might find offensive is slightly overblown. Commenting that “[w]e are constantly underestimating the good judgment of our visitors, constantly underestimating,” Cazaly remembered the unfounded fears of management over potential visitor reaction to the first funeral demonstration:

We knew that the wedding was a popular event, but we didn’t know that people would come out to see a funeral and we worried about – it sounds silly now – we worried about upsetting people. In actual fact the funeral was the biggest draw of the summer for a couple of seasons running, more so than the wedding. And most people who came in families brought their children to the funeral so the kids could experience a funeral without it being a real event; it was, for them it was a teaching event.\textsuperscript{98}

Despite the success of the funeral demonstration and the revelation that the public was able to embrace topics that might be considered more difficult to digest, in the main, the site avoids the presentation of subject matter that might be construed as offensive or uncomfortable for families and tourists to witness.

\textsuperscript{95} Interview with Peter Cazaly, Research Officer, Upper Canada Village, 11 August 2009.
\textsuperscript{96} Interview with Bruce Henbest, Supervisor of Mills and Trades, Upper Canada Village, 6 September 2009.
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} Interview with Peter Cazaly, Research Officer, Upper Canada Village, 11 August 2009.
Even though management is aware that the picture of life they are asking visitors to step back into is incomplete, it is unlikely that the portrayal of the past at Upper Canada Village will change any time soon. Following our conversation about the introduction of such issues such as pregnancy, abuse, and drunkenness, Henbest commented that, “[i]t would take a pretty courageous leader, who might also not be around for very long, to really make that a priority.” While one suspects that this is because such efforts would conflict with a broader institutional culture, mindset, and tradition, Henbest also argued that there may be a historical reason for the exclusion of such topics as well: “How much of a priority do you make private life? You’re already sort of doing something weird historically by making what are often private things public and how much of a priority do you make that in the overall scheme of the programming?”

This argument has been made before in museological literature and, while it should not be discounted out of hand, it seems weak. Making private things public does not seem at odds to the historical craft: many scholars rely on diaries and letters to illuminate their subject and there are innumerable biographies and studies that reveal much about the personal lives of their subjects. Furthermore, the distinction between private and public has not always clear-cut; charivari’s, for example, brought ostensibly private matters into public view. If a visit to the site is marketed to visitors as an opportunity to ‘step back’ and ‘experience the past’ then one has a responsibility to reconstruct that past as accurately and as entirely as possible, which includes aspects of life that were considered private matters.

99 Interview with Bruce Henbest, Supervisor of Mills and Trades, Upper Canada Village, 6 September 2009.
Yet, until visitors request that more of these issues be addressed, it is unlikely that the site will make any effort to include them in its interpretation. Henbest noted that visitors seem content with the way things are done, for the most part:

I mean we don’t know necessarily what people who aren’t coming are thinking we should be doing but we have visitor feedback saying we should be more accessible, we have visitor services saying you should provide more services in French, um that’s pretty consistent you know, but we don’t have any visitor feedback that I’m aware of that says why don’t you represent more public drunkenness on site as part of 19th century society.\textsuperscript{100}

Survey results uphold this, in this main. When asked whether they had heard about nineteenth century society during their visit to Upper Canada Village including, for example class, relations and courtship, 22\% of respondents, albeit only eleven of fifty, said no. The majority of these indicated they would like to have heard about it, though two were not sure and two said they were not interested. Similarly, 32\% of respondents indicated that they had not heard about leisure activities of the day during their visit. Nine of sixteen respondents would have liked to have heard about this, four did not want to learn about it, two were unsure and one did not respond. Clearly in these cases the vast majority of respondents did feel they had garnered some knowledge about society or leisure during their tour of Upper Canada Village. What should be highlighted, however, is that of those who missed these messages the majority were keen to know more. Instead of assuming that visitors are not interested in learning about courtship, birth control practices, or marital separations, it would behoove sites to ask. Without the assurance that the inclusion of ‘challenging’ topics will be accepted by the public the site needs so desperately to attract, however, many embrace the position that it is safer to continue to represent the status quo.

\textsuperscript{100} Ibid.
Upper Canada Village is a tourist site that aims to attract people to the region in order to generate economic revenues and growth and to inform them about the history of the area. In order to appeal to a customer that faces many leisure time options, the site seeks to entertain them and meet their needs. In doing so, interpreters adopt the mantra of giving the customers what they want. In turn, this often means providing the visitors with only the information they ask for, rather than information that might give a more holistic picture of life. For fear of upsetting the customer and leaving them with an experience that could generate negative word of mouth, historic sites are reticent to interpret histories that are seen as controversial or challenging. Abuse, drunkenness, and prostitution are hence omitted from the narrative, unless explicitly sought out by the visitor. In practice, visitor questions are motivated by objects they can see and that generate curiosity, directing interpreter presentations to address the what and hows of daily activities rather than the intangible aspects of history like power relationships, fears, or beliefs. Unfortunately, few visitors seem to notice the silences in the story told by Upper Canada Village and do not demand that they be redressed, enabling the site to continue to present a selective – detailed in parts and vague in others – picture of the past.

Conclusion:
Hundreds of people wander the streets of Upper Canada Village each year and while many come for an entertaining day out with family and friends, a number also come to gain a better understanding of what life was like in the past. The site attempts to cater to both interests. Though not strictly at odds with each other, there is often a balancing act the site must negotiate between its desire to be entertaining and the desire to be informative or accurate.
Upper Canada Village provides a picture of life in an industrializing rural village in the 1860s; however a number of details are missing from this picture. The site’s strength resides in the interpreters’ abilities to demonstrate and explain skills and activities to visitors using material culture. Laura Peers has said, “Historic reconstructions offer material history masterfully, but can strip away social and political and cross-cultural histories in the process.” 101 Topics less ably linked to objects on display are often overlooked. Decreasing staff numbers, and the nature of third person interpretation, dictate that visitors see few interactions between Villagers. Aspects of relational development are infrequently touched on by the site; courtship is not discussed and, while marriages are shown, visitors learn only superficially about the nature of the relationship and motivations of the couple. Pregnancy is discussed briefly, but is rarely portrayed, and little background is provided on the frequency with which most women found themselves pregnant, the dangers of the condition, or how childbirth brought networks of women together. Childrearing is likewise shown, to an extent, by the presence of children attending camps run by the site. The age of the camp children, however, limits the presentation of women’s work caring for young infants while juggling all of their other duties around the house. A wide variety of women’s work is demonstrated around the Village, from food preparation to spinning to candle-making, yet the physicality of some duties is diminished by the decision to present the topic as an interactive children’s program. The responsibility many women faced of helping their husbands in their trades is also clearly shown by women working in the tavern and the printing office. And, although many interpreters will stress that women’s paid work outside of the home was very uncommon, this too is represented by a woman working in

---

the woolen mill and the school house. Men’s status in the community is communicated to the public through the material culture displays of their homes and shops and interpreters’ oral presentations, which regularly stress their income or earnings, their training, and their (in)dispensability to the community. It is clear that a hierarchy existed; however, the highest and lowest ranks are not shown with the same detail as the middle and working class. A wide variety of topics are touched upon during a visit to Upper Canada Village, but there are evidently a number of subjects that continue to be left out.

There are many factors affecting the selection process of site management and staff regarding what elements to include in daily programming. At the root of their decisions are the economic goals of the site and its oversight agency, the St. Lawrence Parks Commission. As part of the provincial Ministry of Tourism, the SLPC has as its mission the aim of generating tourism and revenues for the area. Attracting higher numbers of tourists each year is also a goal of the site because its budget is derived from revenues at the gate as well as a transfer payment from the province. Competing with a variety of other leisure time activities for visitors’ time and money, interpreters on site understand that they are supposed to give visitors what they want. This frequently entails entertaining them, focusing on their areas of interest, and not addressing issues that are seen as controversial, even if this is to the detriment of the portrayal of life in the past.

Site management is particularly unsure about representing the nitty gritty details of daily life for fear of visitor negative reaction. Yet, when chances have been taken, such as introducing a funeral, visitor reaction has been more favourable than expected. Perhaps, as Peter Cazaly articulated, the site is underestimating the good judgment of its visitors when it uses them as an excuse for not including topics such as child labour, drunkenness, or prostitution.
Illustration 4.1: Map of Upper Canada Village.
Illustration 4.2: The brides and grooms from the four wedding ceremonies at Upper Canada Village, summer 2009. Clockwise from top: Anglican wedding between a Crysler daughter and a British military officer, a Methodist home wedding, a Methodist wedding, and a Lutheran wedding. Photos by the author, 2009.
Illustration 4.3: An interpreter in the Physician’s home displays the forceps (left) and the vectus (right), instruments used during childbirth, UCV.  
Photo by the author, 2009

Illustration 4.4: The printer’s wife and daughter work at binding books (left), while the Cabinet Maker oversees his two young apprentices (right), UCV.  
Photos by the author, 2009.
Illustration 4.5: The Tenant farmer and his wife sit down to afternoon tea, UCV. Photo by the author, 2009.
Illustration 4.6: The Tenant farmer’s wife cooks biscuits (left), while Mrs. Loucks shows what she is baking in the oven, UCV. Photos by the author, 2009.

Illustration 4.7: An interpreter demonstrates how to churn butter in the Louck’s summer kitchen, UCV. Photo by the author, 2009.

Illustration 4.8: Visitors try their hand at milking, UCV. Photo by the author, 2009.
Illustration 4.9: An interpreter spins at McDiarmid House, UCV. Photo by the author, 2009.

Illustration 4.10: An interpreter works on a quilt in the Ross farm house, UCV. Photo by the author, 2009.
Illustration 4.11: The tenant farmer’s wife instructs a visiting girl in how to do the laundry (left). The washboard and tub are on display in the tenant farm kitchen (right), UCV. Photo by the author, 2009.

Illustration 4.12: The printer’s wife demonstrates some type (left), and Mrs. Crysler works at the family’s General Store (right), UCV. Photo by the author, 2009.
Illustration 4.13: Women at work for pay, UCV.
L-R: Fringing a blanket at the woolen mill; The Dressmaker shows patterns to potential customers; The Schoolmistress instructs her pupils.
Photos by the author, 2009.

Illustration 4.14: Middle Class residences of the Village help to show the hierarchical nature of society, UCV.
Left: The Lutheran Pastor’s parlour demonstrates his status.
Right: Mr. Robertson’s parlour is luxuriously furnished and decorated, showing his wealth.
Photos by the author, 2009.
Illustration 4.15: Amongst the working class there was a hierarchy as well, indicated in part by the separation of shop and home, UCV. Clockwise: The Cabinet Maker, Tinsmith, and Blacksmith work out of their shops. Photos by the author, 2009.

Illustration 4.16: The Broom-maker and Shoe-maker are on the lower end of the working-class spectrum, working out of their one room homes, UCV. Photos by the author, 2009.
Chapter Five

“Here to entertain people” : Reenacting the Fur Trade at Fort William

Introduction:

The fur trade has long held the Canadian imagination. From the nationalistic portrayals of intrepid explorers who carved out paths for the westward expansion of our nation, to the romance of French-Canadian men bravely facing the wilderness of the land, to the nostalgia of ‘simpler’ times gone by, academic and popular works of history have represented the fur trade as foundational to Canada’s development. Over time the subjects of these histories has shifted from company oriented business histories to studies on women, Aboriginals, and culture in the fur trade.

Since the 1970s when Fort William Historical Park was first opened, the information available on the fur trade has widened in scope. To a great extent much of this new material has found a place at the historic site. The historic site’s web-site advertises that Fort William “offers a vivid and rich tapestry of fur trade life, running the

---


Works focusing on voyageurs often held them in a heroic light as well because of the role they were perceived to have played in founding the nation. See Grace Lee Nute, The Voyageur, 1931 (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1955); Eric W. Morse, Canoe Routes of the Voyageurs – the geography and logistics of the Canadian fur trade (Toronto: Royal Canadian Geographical Society, 1962); Eric W. Morse, Fur Trade Canoe Routes of Canada, Then and Now (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1969).
gamut from culture to crafts, medicine to business, domestic life to heritage farming.”

The site seems to see itself representing both the business side of the fur trade as well as the social and cultural. However, although staff and management are aware and informed about many aspects of women’s and gender history, a visit to Fort William shows that they continue to be selective about the histories they will front-end and those they discuss only when pressed.

This chapter investigates how Fort William Historical Park in Thunder Bay, Ontario, has engaged with academic studies in women’s and gender history. How has the site integrated information about the daily life and work of Aboriginal and Métis women, about the personal relationships on which much of the trade was based, and about the status hierarchies that structured the men’s lives, into the daily interpretation of the fur trade? What is included and what is excluded in the histories communicated to visitors at Fort William? Site interpreters represent the hierarchies of the fur trade, the contribution of women to the success of the North West Company, and the importance of marriages between traders and Aboriginal women. These subjects are prominent in the interpretation of the past at Fort William, yet aspects of them continue to be treated superficially. Why is this the case? What factors deter the presentation of certain narratives to visitors? How might the site move beyond these concerns to provide an even more complete and accurate representation of the past?

3 In this chapter I use the terms Aboriginal and Native interchangeably. Although Native is considered increasingly outdated by many scholars, both terms are broadly inclusive and reference the collectivity of the descendants of the original peoples of North America. Furthermore, Native is a term employed by the site and its interpreters, many of whom used it to describe themselves.
A Day at Fort William:

After purchasing their ticket to Fort William in the Visitor’s Centre, visitors stop and watch the orientation video, informing them about the North West Company, the location and importance of Fort William, and the influence of the fur trade on the development of Canada. Exiting the building, visitors walk along a nature trail to reach the site, providing distance from modern conveniences that is intended to facilitate the illusion of going back in time to the year 1815 (Illus. 5.1). Soon they see a shelter up ahead and are greeted by a voyageur. After a brief conversation, the voyageur introduces the tour guide – if they have arrived in May or June – or shows the way to the Native Encampment, where one learns about the role of Aboriginal communities in the fur trade. Luckily, the visitor has arrived in time for the Betrothal; they witness Mr. McKenzie announcing the engagement of a company tradesman to a Native girl. After dancing and eating some bannock, they exit the forested area and are greeted by a group of voyageurs. One interpreter makes sure that visitors are aware that Fort William was the central transshipment point of the company, while another wonders if anyone cares to join them in a canoe. Deciding to paddle after lunch, the visitor moves on to the Voyageur Encampment where they are offered some pea soup. Entering the fort, they visit several buildings: the Doctor’s home and Apothecary, where they learn about common complaints and cures; the Indian shop, where they see the various items the Native peoples could obtain for their furs; and the Fur Stores, where they feel the pelt of a silver fox and watch a clerk overseeing the packing of a ninety pound fur pack. Crossing the square, they next visit the Great Hall, appreciating the fine china and silver at the head table. Moving on, they also stop in the Kitchen and Bakery before seeing the work of the tradesmen in the Canoe Shed, Blacksmiths and Cooperage. After a break for lunch, the visitor watches the Arrival of a
canoe and learns of the fierce rivalry with the Hudson’s Bay Company. Re-entering the fort, they look at the goods in the Company Stores before being distracted by hooting and hollering outside the windows. Following the noise, the visitor watches a group of voyageurs who are celebrating. Soon some partners of the company leave their Annual Meeting and a conflict arises as the blacksmith refuses to report to work and is put in the gaol. After this scene, the visitor stops at the dairy to help churn some butter and is just in time to help with the milking on the Farm. Realizing they have bypassed a few buildings inside the fort, the visitor returns the way they came to view the Hospital and Guides’ house, climb the Observatory Tower, and peek into the Powder Magazine. Noting the time and their tired feet, they walk back out the main gates and return to the orientation centre, where they peruse the gift store before leaving the site.

During a visit to Fort William, visitors have the chance to interact with a number of costumed first-person interpreters. Mostly university, college, and high school students, they take on the task of enacting a character from the fur trade era, whether real or a composite creation, and are hired into one of several departments depending on their interests and skills.\(^4\) Those hired into the Bourgeois-Voyageur-Tour Guide [BVT] unit interpret a range of buildings on site and take lead roles in dramatic sketches. In the Family Life unit the, mostly female, staff interpret the Kitchen, Bakery, Wintering House, and Boucher’s House, with an emphasis on demonstrating historical baking. All of the female interpreters portray a Native or Métis woman, regardless of the staff members’

\(^4\)The educational background of the interpreters is diverse. Approximately fifty-five university and college students are hired every summer. Their academic careers are varied; though many professed a deep interest in history, they pursued studies across many different fields. High school students were also hired as interpreters in July and August. Applicants demonstrating certain skill sets and interests are more likely to be hired into certain areas of the site than others; for example, those with canoeing qualifications or teaching experiences are likely to be hired into the Education department, whereas those with culinary talents or interests will likely find themselves in the Family Life Unit.
actual ‘racial’ background. To communicate this information, which often seems to be contradicted by fair skin and blond hair, interpreters are taught to mention their characters’ backgrounds in most every conversation. Male interpreters represent a more diverse range of backgrounds, portraying Scottish, French-Canadian, Métis, and Native men. The staff hired to work at the Native Encampment self-identify as Native or as having Native bloodlines. To prepare themselves for these tasks, the staff attend orientation and historical information sessions, are allocated library research time, and are encouraged to attend seminar sessions throughout the summer. This ongoing training creates a climate where introducing new information to interpretation is facilitated and valued.

Visitors are able to self-select their activities at Fort William based on their interests. Each visitor group will shape the content of their visit in a unique way through conversations with any number of interpreters. Yet, based on training, comfort level, and tradition interpreters are more likely to provide entry points to certain topics than others and to try to direct the conversation along familiar terrain. While no interaction will be exactly the same, common nodes of information recur frequently amongst interpreters and reflect the central messaging the site managers consider imperative to communicate. How often are women’s experiences found amongst these key points? What are visitors likely to see and hear about hierarchies of power and male bonds of friendship? Has the representation of the past at Fort William developed alongside academic scholarship and moved beyond nationalist portrayals of the fur trade?

Representing Men in the Fur Trade:

Fur trade companies were comprised of a mix of men from various backgrounds.
Relatively wealthy partners might reside full-time in Montreal, overseeing shipping, supply and finances, or they might continue to work as traders in the wilderness.

Educated clerks kept track of returns of fur, while the diverse mix of voyageurs powered the companies’ transportation network. The vast majority of voyageurs were French-Canadians recruited from the Montreal area and from the western St. Lawrence valley, or the Métis children of French Canadian winterers. Voyageurs were a hardy lot of men who undertook very physical labour for long stretches of time, often in geographically remote locations. The work and relationships of these men shaped the fur trade.

Together partners, clerks, *hivernants* and *mangeurs du lard* created a culture of rituals, stories, beliefs, and power hierarchies that structured their interactions, their days and the progress of the fur trade. Up until recently, details about their lives and experiences have been superficially treated in most historical accounts. While the fur trade has long been seen by many historians as foundational to the creation of Canada, the politics and geography of the trade were of greater interest in this regard than interpersonal relationships. Fort William represents the political and the personal, highlighting the

---

5 The wage work of the fur trade supported agricultural families when the soil did not yield enough to survive on. Certain villages, like Sorel, provided a large number of voyageurs each year, as Allan Greer has shown. See Allan Greer, *Peasant, Lord, and Merchant: Rural Society in Three Quebec Parishes 1740-1840* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985).

6 Since the 1980s there has been a greater focus on accessing the lives of the subaltern members of the trade and a number of studies have explored voyageurs’ experiences. Authors, such as Daniel Francis and Jean Morrison, wrote general public histories of the trade but included nuanced and balanced depictions of voyageur life. Edith Burley examined the perpetuation of hierarchy through disciplinary tactics in the HBC, shedding light on power relations and on the rebellious actions of some voyageurs. Yet, despite these advances, it was not until 2007 that Carolyn Podruchny’s *Making the Voyageur World* attempted to comprehensively describe the voyageur experience. Podruchny explores the rituals and belief systems that guided voyageurs, the actions and performances that reinforced class divisions, the pageantry of trading and rendezvous, and the daily life and activities of single and married men at posts. Though stereotypes of the happy-go-lucky voyageurs still persist, recent scholarly attention to their lives, power and culture has illuminated the complexity of their characters and experiences. See Daniel Francis, *Battle for the West – Fur traders and the birth of Western Canada* (Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers, 1982); Jean Morrison, *Superior Rendezvous Place – Fort William in the Canadian Fur Trade* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books, 2001); Edith I. Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company – work, discipline, and conflict in the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1770-1879* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Carolyn Podruchny,
role of the North West Company in the development of Canada, but also putting faces and personalities to the characters that enabled the company to flourish.

Voyageurs at Fort William

Voyageurs played a central and critical role in the fur trade and, likewise, they play a visible role in the daily interpretation of Fort William. From greeting visitors at the voyageur encampment, to taking visitors out in a canoe, to participating in the arrival and arrest dramas, interpreters attempt to recreate the lives of voyageurs at Fort William. Their presence is obvious, yet the representation of voyageurs favours good-spirited men, in part to provide good customer service, and does not make clear enough the status differences between winterers and Montrealers.

Visitors are likely to interact with a voyageur as they pass the voyageur encampment outside the fort’s main gates (Illus. 5.2). As some of the first faces visitors will see at Fort William, these voyageurs seek to orient visitors to the site, enforce basic messaging about the purpose of Fort William, and portray the living conditions of voyageurs. Interpreters often comment upon their voyage from Montreal or an inland post to Fort William, describing conditions of a canoe brigade or difficulties met on the journey. Occasionally, they will offer a taste of the pea soup cooking over the fire, or make note of the labour they have to do. They do so with tenets of good customer service in mind, cheerfully answering visitor questions and telling their personal story. At times, someone will grumble about the work to be done around the fort, or make jokes at another voyageur’s expense, but the general impression visitors are likely to receive is

of joviality and pleasantness. Though these characteristics are sure to apply to many voyageurs, especially at rendezvous, and indeed voyageurs were portrayed in many histories as hardy, singing, joking men, the stereotype oversimplifies the existence and concerns of voyageurs. The customer service orientation of the site continues to perpetuate the age old myth of the fun-loving, spirited voyageur.

The voyageur encampment itself, furthermore, is far from accurate. Much smaller in scale than would be historically correct, the encampment includes only one or two canvas tents and a fire pit. This inaccuracy is understandable considering the cost of setting up hundreds of tents to represent the over 1,200 voyageurs that assembled during rendezvous, let alone populating each campsite with interpreters. The decision to only present one generic voyageur encampment, however, instead of presenting two separate camps for winterers and Montrealers is less comprehensible. Both Montreal men and hibernants converged on Fort William in July for rendezvous, where goods and news changed hands between the men from the east and west. Winterers pitched their tents in one locale, while Montrealers set up in another, and guides and interpreters alone were given permission to reside inside the fort in a cabin. These divisions of status were

7 Grace Lee Nute calls the French Canadian voyageurs an “effervescent race of men,” while Eric Morse describes them as, “…incredibly durable, always cheerful and tractable…” Carolyn Podruchny notes that voyageurs “took great pride in being cheerful… in the face of hardship, toil, and danger.” She sums up the representation and perpetuated myth of voyageurs: “Like comic-book heroes, voyageurs have a highly visible reputation, building the Canadian nation with their Herculean strength, while singing, laughing, leaping over waterfalls, and paddling faster than speeding arrows.” See Nute, Voyageur, 28; Morse, Canoe Routes, 35; and Podruchny, Voyageur World, 194, 2.

8 Gabriel Franchère describes the voyageur encampments at Fort William in his journal: “The wintering hands who are to return with their employers pass also a great part of the summer here; they form a great encampment on the west side of the fort, outside the palisades. Those who engage at Montreal to go no farther than Fort William or Rainy Lake, and who do not winter, occupy yet another space on the east side. The winterers, or hibernants, give to these last the name of mangeurs de lard, or pork-eaters. They are also called comers-and-goes. One perceives an astonishing difference between these two camps, which are composed sometimes of three or four hundred men each; that of the pork-eaters is always dirty and disorderly, while that of the winterers is clean and neat.” Gabriel Franchère, A Voyage to the Northwest Coast of America, ed. Milo Milton Quaife (New York: Citadel Press, 1968), 267-268.
rigidly enforced by the men themselves. Winterers reinforced their advanced place in the hierarchy by stressing the increased physicality and mental toughness required to over-winter in the west, drawing attention to the wild nature of the game they ate compared to the domesticated pork eaten by the Montrealers, and to the lack of comforts they had in the north. These status differences are not represented physically on site.

Finally, the variety of activities undertaken at the voyageur camps is too lean to adequately represent the experience of voyageurs during rendezvous. They amused themselves with physical games such as lacrosse, arm wrestling, racing, and brawling, as well as by telling jokes and stories, and singing songs. Unfortunately, this diversity is not consistently represented and visitors are likely to see only cooking, wood cutting, and socializing in the camp, though it should be noted that interpreters do often play lacrosse inside the fort. The voyageur camp is an integral part of the representation of Fort William, at least during the rendezvous season. As presented, visitors can glean an understanding of the conditions in which voyageurs often lived, yet the diversity of the voyageur experience, from status differences to activities, is not communicated clearly to visitors visually. Interpreters do seem, however, to be communicating this diversity orally. 97% (or 38 of 39) of respondents to an exit survey agreed with the statement that “[t]here was a hierarchical or ranked social division between voyageurs/engagés based on the distance they had traveled into the interior and their time served in the fur trade.”

A popular activity offered at Fort William is a short canoe ride along the site’s waterfront. Voyageurs are responsible for outfitting visitors, for instructing them how to...
hold a paddle and how to use it and, while on the water, for providing information on the historical experience of voyageurs. During the demonstration I partook of in August 2008, the guide explained that there were four hierarchical positions within the canoe. The *milieux* were the most inexperienced men who were paid approximately £300 a year; the *devants* and *gouvernails* who steered the canoe received anywhere from £350-£700 a year depending on skill and experience; and the guides and interpreters were paid £800-£1,000.11 Additionally, these wages differed depending on the routes the voyageur was engaged to work, with those wintering west of the Great Lakes – the *hivernants* – being paid up to twice as much as the Montrealers or pork-eaters. Since, as we have seen, this gradation in status is not highlighted at the voyageur camp, visitors are likely only to hear of this hierarchy during this demonstration, or perhaps in the canoe shed or in passing conversation with an interpreter.

The canoe ride also communicates information about the experience of voyageurs en route to Fort William from Montreal or the interior. Interpreters described the large Montreal canoes, thirty feet long and carrying eight to ten men and 4,000 pounds of provisions that set off from Lachine each May, as well as the smaller *canots du nord* of six to eight men that navigated the western waterways. The rigours of a long day of physical labour were also outlined, from breaking camp between 3:00-5:00am, to stopping the rhythm of the paddle only for breakfast and lunch, portages, and brief breaks or ‘poses’ to smoke a pipe, to mending canoes at night.12 Good voyageurs could paddle consistently at forty strokes a minutes, averaging a speed of four to six miles per hour,

---

and would maintain this rate for hours at a time.\textsuperscript{13} The monotony of these arduously long days was broken by song, occasionally demonstrated by the interpreters, by races between passing brigades, and by brief smoking breaks. In having the chance to actively participate in canoeing, visitors were able to experience first-hand some small measure of what voyageurs went through, while also being made aware that conditions were much more strenuous in the past. One gains a clear sense of the robust tenacity that must have been exuded by the voyageurs to survive.

Left out of the dialogue, however, at least during the canoe ride I took, was any sense of the precariousness and danger of the canoe trips into the interior. Along the routes, white crosses marked the graves of drowned men and tales were told about areas haunted by the spirits of drowned individuals.\textsuperscript{14} In addition to dangers from rough waters, men were also susceptible to injury, illness, animal attacks, and hostile parties of Natives. The inclusion of such information at Fort William would further heighten the understanding of the difficulties the voyageurs faced.

Voyageurs are represented in canoes, at their camp, or performing chores inside the fort. Diverse aspects of their lives are re-enacted and discussed with visitors, including canoe voyages, rendezvous celebrations, and physical labour. Site management actively attempts to ensure that fair and balanced historical characters are portrayed, wary of stereotypes perpetuated in the past of drunken, brawling misfits; however, the customer-service driven welcoming, amusing voyageur now faces similar stereotypical

\textsuperscript{13} Grace Lee Nute, \textit{The Voyageur’s Highway – Minnesota Border Lake Land}, 1941 (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 2002), 27; Campbell, \textit{North West Company}, 40.

\textsuperscript{14} John Macdonell noted in his diary of 1793 the story of the l’enfant perdu site, where the cries of a drowned child were heard for days after his burial. See Charles M. Gates, ed., \textit{Five Fur Traders of the Northwest – being the narrative of Peter Pond, and the diaries of John Macdonell, Archibald N. McLeod, Hugh Faries, and Thomas Connor} (Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1933), 83-84. Daniel Harmon also comments on the tradition of erecting crosses for drowned paddlers; see W. Kaye Lamb, ed., \textit{Sixteen Years in the Indian Country – the Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon, 1800-1816} (Toronto: Macmillan Co., 1957), 15.
pitfalls. Seeking to provide the visitor with an enjoyable experience, more contentious or potentially upsetting aspects of voyageur life, such as their use of alcohol or the dangers they regularly faced, are expounded upon infrequently and usually at the visitor’s discretion.

_Clerks and Partners at Fort William_

All full-time male staff in the Bourgeois-Voyageur-Tour Guide area of Fort William were assigned two interpretive characters in 2008, a voyageur and a clerk or bourgeois. Staff alternate their characters depending on the location or duties they have been assigned. This ensures that there is a fairly equal representation of clerks, bourgeois, and voyageurs on any given day though, historically, the voyageurs would have far outnumbered the company elite. When informally questioned, most staff members indicated that they preferred playing their bourgeois characters. The curator remarked upon this as well, explaining that he believed this preference was due to the lack of specific information available to help build a voyageur character, as well as to the site tradition that allowed only experienced staff to play higher status characters, thus generating a sense of elitism among the staff who represented the bourgeois of the company.15

At Fort William the roles of wintering partners are elite, both on a historical level and a modern day interpretive one. Staff members must compete to play the limited number of wintering partners included in programming. After a couple of years of experience, staff are asked to write the primary characters test, a check on their knowledge and skill which gives some indication of the importance given the bourgeois

---

15 Interview with Shawn Patterson, Curator, Fort William Historical Park, 3 June 2008.
roles. To pass the test staff must demonstrate detailed knowledge of the fur trade, from post names and locations, to company pay scales, to Simon McGillivray’s Masonic medals. Initially this test was only written by men. Since at least 2005 female staff have had the opportunity to participate. Individuals who pass the test and are given wintering partner roles are differentiated from other staff by the new costumes and daily duties they must execute. By and large, the new duties are primary roles in the daily dramas that are performed, which put the partner prominently in the public eye and display their interpretive and dramatic skills. Interestingly, female primary characters are not given the same responsibility, nor do they figure prominently in the dramas. Of course, some staff members do not aspire to playing a part in a drama, but others look to the wintering partner characters as role models and as sources of information. Management sees them as mentors for younger staff.16 Traditionally, the staff playing the wintering partners have been given a slightly higher status amongst the staff – at least in the BVT area from which they are selected – just as their historical counterparts would have been.

Wintering partners are visibly distinguished by their costume and demeanour from voyageurs and from clerks. Their wealth and status is communicated through the cut and quality of their clothes. The status conveyed by the clothing is reinforced by the erect posture and tone of voice taken by the staff acting these roles. The bourgeois characters were more likely to be portrayed as gruff or arrogant. As one female staff member explained, the bourgeois were often abrupt and curt in their interactions with other staff members. This was often done with some humour and stayed within the bounds dictated by customer service. Yet, the overwhelming impression visitors are likely to receive is that the bourgeois were short-tempered, impatient with their inferiors, and a little

16 Interview with Crystal Legros, BVT specialist, Fort William Historical Site, 12 August 2008.
pompous. In many cases these would be true descriptions; however, as with the voyageurs this is something of a caricature.

The elevated status of the partners and the clerks is also communicated by the work they do. Verbal interpretation and role-play show that the partners would have traded goods with the local Native populations, as well as oversee the canoe arrivals, the packing of furs from the interior, and the assembly of trade goods to go with brigades back west. The managerial position of these tasks is clear. Interactions between partners and clerks demonstrate the partner giving orders or clerks seeking council, reinforcing that the partners are in charge.

The dress, location, and speech of the partners and clerks distinguish these characters as ones with status and power. Although rendezvous was also a time of leisure and sociability for the partners, the impression one receives from the interpretations on site is that it was a time to reassert your place, if not gain a rung, on the ladder of power in the company. Often depicted with raised voices and tempers, and rarely seen together in an atmosphere of relaxation or joviality, it would be easy to assume the partners, and clerks to a lesser extent, were exclusively concerned with business matters and self-promotion.

**Voyageurs and Partners in the Dramas:**

During the summer of 2008, Fort William included four dramatic sketches in its daily program.¹⁷ The Betrothal, a new addition to programming, represented the union of a company tradesman with a local Native girl at 11:00am daily. Mid-afternoon, to

---

¹⁷These scenes have been researched and written by a member on staff, the Interpretive Specialist. Between 2003 and 2008, Jason Boesche held this position and was responsible for developing new scenarios, as well as revising some of the longer standing dramas.
coincide with the largest visitorship, voyageurs and partners gathered on the wharf to perform the Arrival, replete with dancing and singing, a canoe gliding through the water, speeches, and celebratory cannon fire. Shortly after the Arrival, the partners of the company convened in the Council House to lead an improvised debate about company concerns, while voyageurs simultaneously assembled in the main square to celebrate. As the voyageurs’ party disrupts the partners meeting, the Arrest drama unfolds, with the blacksmith’s insubordination leading to raised voices, lost tempers, and time in gaol. Each drama aims to entertain visitors with visual spectacle and exciting storylines that also communicate historical information about the North West Company and its members. In particular, they represent the voyageurs as happy, boisterous men, while the representation of the partners in the daily dramas reinforces the message that the partners held power in the company and that they exercised this power regularly.

The Betrothal demonstrates a hierarchy of authority amongst men at the post, as a company partner speaks on behalf of a labourer and assumes a leadership role in the ceremony. Kenneth McKenzie speaks for the tradesman being united with a Native girl, asserting that, “[h]e promises to look after your sister and your family for as long as they both may be together and any children they may have as well.” Following the speeches and gift exchange that bond the couple together, Mackenzie directs the rest of the ceremony, calling for a dance and for bannock to be distributed to the assembled guests. Even though the ceremony is taking place outside the fort in the Native encampment, it is Mackenzie who appears to be in charge. In part this reflects the status differential between company men. It is also, however, a reflection of modern staffing needs. The interpreters playing McKenzie are those with a number of years of interpretation under their belts and with the most experience acting in dramas. As such, they are purposefully
given a significant role by the script-writer in order to ensure the smooth performance of the drama. The presentation of the authority of a partner then is historically based with modern influences.

The Arrival demonstrates the cheerful nature of the voyageurs and also restages the higher status of the partners. In anticipation of the arrival of a canoe brigade from the west, voyageurs and local women congregate near the wharf to welcome in the new arrivals. While waiting to sight the canoe, they amuse themselves by singing French Canadian and Scottish folk songs and dancing. When the canoe is finally spotted on the water, a cheer goes up from the assembled group. The arriving brigade of voyageurs is equally excited to have reached Fort William, hollering greetings to acquaintances on land. The atmosphere is that of a party.\textsuperscript{18} Visitors are attracted by the crowds and the noise, entertained by the songs and dance, and pleased with the picturesque photo opportunity of a birch bark canoe arriving at the wharf. Their sense of the voyageurs as cheerful and happy is supported by the smiles and laughter of the interpreters as they greet each other and guests.

This is overshadowed momentarily, however, by the seriousness of the partner’s speeches, which reveal their authoritative voice in the company. The majority of the Arrival is comprised of a speech by the arriving partner drawing attention to the tensions with the HBC and the words of the fort proprietor, Kenneth Mackenzie (Illus. 5.3), who seeks to rouse all assembled in support of the ongoing success of the NWC:

\begin{quote}
We are facing constant pressure each and every year gentlemen - the Bay men to the north and all the HBC pursuits to the south. These are men whose appetite is so big it can only be satisfied by one thing, the destruction of the NWC. That’s why I propose one final toast; everyone raise your glasses –
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{18} For a discussion of the carnivalesque nature of canoe arrivals and departures see Podruchny, \textit{Voyageur World}, 167-174.
look to the person to your left, and to your right, the true lords and ladies of the lakes and forests <hear hear>.\textsuperscript{19}

Although his speech recognizes the important role that clerks, voyageurs, and Native partners play in the fur trade, the speaker is invested with the authority to speak on behalf of the company. The partners command the attention of the crowd, lead the toasts, and give orders to the men who fire the cannons. They are the centre of attention around which all other players orbit in this drama, reasserting for all to see their position in the highest echelons of the company hierarchy.

Shortly after the arrival party disperses, another one forms in the main square. A tradesman’s contract has expired and he wishes to return home, so his friends have assembled in the main square to sing, dance, and drink in celebration of his departure. The party becomes quite riotous and turns into a parade to the trades’ square, where the gun shots and celebratory hollering finally attract the attention of the partners assembled in the Council House for a meeting. The dominant impression visitors receive is that voyageurs were of good cheer with fun-loving natures.

The hierarchy of the partners is asserted once again in the Council Meeting – Arrest drama. The Council Meeting, an improvised skit, interprets a business meeting of the assembled of partners. Due to staffing constraints, at most five or six partners are in attendance to debate company concerns, such as the lack of twist tobacco to trade, whether or not express canoes should be used, and the promotion of clerks. While these skits fundamentally represent a very real historical activity that occurred during rendezvous and raise historical issues that were of concern to the company, the overall impression is of a group of similarly stationed men grasping for position and competing

\textsuperscript{19} Quoted from the Arrival, Fort William Historical Park, 10 August 2008.
for power. In most every presentation bickering between partners, or snide remarks and insults, are inserted into the discussion. For example:

Dr. McLoughlin: Now Mr. McKenzie, that’s a man that is completely foreign to water.
Kenneth McKenzie: Myself?
Partner: Yes, yes you never travel anywhere
Dr.M: I never see you bathe more than once a year and every time you get into a canoe you are terrified you are going to drown in Lake Superior.
Taitt: Doctor, am I putting this in the record books?
P: Absolutely.
KM: Put it also put it in the minutes that I’ve been the chief, I’ve been the proprietor of the inland headquarters since Grand Portage
P: Yes, yes and the only time I’ve seen you on the water is when you came from Grand Portage to Fort William.\(^{20}\)

In part, such insults are based on historical animosities but, by and large, they seem to be the product of staff attempts to keep themselves amused at council meetings they must interpret most every day. The off-the-cuff slurs hurled across the meeting table do serve to show status differentials among the men, as higher ranking men prove less willing to suffer insult than lower positioned men and they retort with threats of undesirable postings, signifying their position of influence in the company. The impression left by the style of the council meeting is that the partners are desperate to out-do each other and to make their voices heard, even if they have nothing to add but witty banter or poorly disguised contempt for other council members. Though it is difficult to say whether the partners’ conduct is accurate or not, the Council Meeting drama clearly indicates that these bourgeois were in charge of the company and that certain men held particular power.

The Council Meeting leads directly into the Arrest and here, again, the power of certain individuals is questioned and vehemently asserted. Interrupted by the noise of a

\(^{20}\) Quoted from the Council Meeting, Fort William Historical Park, 10 August 2008.
passing crowd, the council meeting sends Mr. Taitt outside to investigate. Mr. Taitt finds the drunken blacksmith and other labourers assembled to bid farewell to the smith upon the termination of his contract. Displeased with this lack of order, Taitt breaks up the party and demands that the smith meet with Mr. McKenzie. The smith drunkenly refuses upon the grounds that his contract has expired and so he need no longer obey company orders. Seeing as no resolution was brought to this conflict, Kenneth McKenzie and Dr. McLoughlin leave the council meeting to express their displeasure with Mr. Taitt’s inability to bring the smith to order:

McLoughlin: Now you Fraser, come here. Taitt, bring him up.
Fraser: I don’t need to be manhandled.
McLauglin: Now, it seems you failed to report yourself to Mr. McKenzie this morning; where were you?
Fraser: Well, Sir <sarcasm>, as you are well aware I am no longer an engagé in this company and therefore my whereabouts are of very little concern to you.
McKenzie: You impudent whelp! You will mind your tongue when you speak to the partners of this concern, and what’s more, you will do as you are bloody well told. Now Mr. MacDonald, the doctor and I are going to return to council and after we are finished you will present yourself there to discuss this recent behaviour. Mr. Taitt, I am holding you personally responsible for the actions of the smith from here on out. Do well not to disappoint me again.21

Fraser, the smith, again refuses, causing Dr. McLoughlin to lose his temper and berate Fraser for consorting with members of the HBC. When Fraser reveals that he has traded with said individuals, McLoughlin threatens to have him hanged and has him thrown in gaol (Illus. 5.4).

Several historical themes run through this dramatic performance: the contract system; the conflict with the HBC; and the hierarchical order of authority and power. The latter comes across very clearly, despite the challenges to the hierarchy made by the

21 Quoted from the Arrest, Fort William Historical Park, 8 August 2008.
smith, in the partners’ use of language and their threats of violence to insubordinates. In the drama, Taitt’s power is challenged by Fraser, who refuses to do his bidding and mocks him, and he must scramble to remain in the good graces of the higher ranking partners. Power is being constantly challenged and asserted in this drama, reinforcing the understanding that partners held the most influence in the company, albeit somewhat tenuously at times. Although the focus on this event of insubordination may give greater weight to the idea that the system of power was challenged more frequently and openly than it was historically, the drama successfully depicts the hierarchy of power in the company.

These dramatic performances are loud, and full of conflict and humour in order to attract a crowd. Visitors are drawn to the scene, not only because it is listed in their programs, but because the noise of music or argument catches their attention and they want to know what all the fuss is about. Audience attention is held by increasing tension and humourous banter, while the script also injects historical information about contracts, competition between companies, and authority at Fort William. Visitors are both entertained and, hopefully, informed. The dramas presented by Fort William in the summer of 2008 touched upon a variety of subjects, from interpersonal relationships to competition in the trade. Yet, the representation they made of voyageurs and partners create the impression that voyageurs were positive and fun loving men and that partners were authoritative, power-hungry men. Neither of these representations is wrong per se, but they lack dimension.
The personal relationships of voyageurs and bourgeois are irregularly represented at Fort William. The close friendships they developed with other men are alluded to in conversation, but only occasionally represented visually due to staffing constraints. The possibility of homosexual relationships is not discussed, in part because of a paucity of sources documenting this relationship, while their informal sexual relationships with women are alluded to quietly in a note in the hospital referencing venereal disease. Marriages with Native or Métis women, which will be discussed in great detail in a further section, are represented with much more detail than the homo-social bonds or more temporary sexual liaisons of voyageurs and partners.

Joining the NWC meant entering a brotherhood of voyageurs and wintering partners. Montrealers entered this world perhaps only fleetingly but, for the season(s) they worked for the company, they were a part of a team around the clock. Being together for such long periods of time and facing physical challenges developed friendships and loyalty. Such bonds could be stronger amongst the winterers who spent an entire year in the companionship of a much smaller group of men. The diaries of the wintering clerks and bourgeois indicate that they placed great importance on the camaraderie and friendships developed with the clerks and partners at nearby posts. Daniel Harmon, who spent much of his time alone at his posts reading and writing, notes in his journal on several occasions his relationship with a man named Goedike. After several years acquaintance and of living together, in July 1805 Harmon laments that Goedike must move on to the Athabaska, stating, “[Goedike] had past [sic] nearly four years with me, and all that time we lived on the most friendly terms, therefore both of us
were very loth [sic] to separate.” 

Men formed close ties with their peers in the canoes and in the interior.

How intimate these ties became remains up for debate. Harmon continues his journal entry: “He [Goedike] it is true had romantic Ideas, but I believe him to have a generous humane heart – and susceptible to the strictest ties of friendship.” This entry is vague and readers are left wondering whether Goedike had romantic, affectionate, perhaps sexual ideas, or whether he was a Romantic thinker who embraced nature and its untamed majesty. Exactly how far bonds of affection went is unclear. Did some men in the fur trade engage in what we would now deem homosexual physical relationships? How frequently did this occur? Amongst what percentage of the population? How long did such relationships last and did they transcend retirement and a return to the east? These questions remain unanswerable. As Podruchny has found, the written records of bourgeois and clerks are “conspicuously silent on homosexual practices.” She posits several possible reasons for this silence, including the inability of the bourgeois to regulate the men’s sexuality through the courts, which led to their wilful ignorance of the practice and the decision to overlook such relations to benefit trade. She wonders whether the isolation of men along canoe routes and at interior posts, or the lack of social and religious supervision, led men to experiment with their sexuality or whether they were simply too tired for such exertions. It seems unlikely that no such relationships existed. At this juncture, however, we cannot know whether the voyageur culture so rooted in masculine, ‘rough’ culture diminished the likelihood of sex between men or

22 Lamb, _Sixteen Years_, entry for 12 July 1805, 92. See also 23 December 1801 on page 52, and 27 December 1803 on page 71.
23 Lamb, _Sixteen Years_, entry for 12 July 1805, 92.
24 Podruchny, _Voyageur World_, 196.
25 Ibid., 197.
whether it simply turned a blind eye to such relationships. Lacking any decisive evidence regarding such relationships the site and the interpreters at Fort William opt, generally, to omit reference to them in their conversations with visitors.

 Regardless of such questions, it is undisputable that close friendships were formed amongst the men of the trade. Acquaintances are acknowledged at Fort William, as the partners greet each other with hearty handshakes during the Arrival and voyageurs joke with each other, but one does not get the impression that these are men with close, personal ties. Teasing and gentle mocking signals friendships, but does so in a light-hearted way that does not delve into the emotional bonds men developed over months of co-habitation. Due to staffing constraints, it is rare for a visitor to see two partners, or two clerks, in each other’s company for very long.26 When several groups of tourists enter a building, most interpreters split up and each speak with a ‘family’ group rather than jointly conversing with the larger group. Circularly, instead of conveying amicable relationships through visual cues, staff must find a way to insert the topic of friendships into a verbal presentation guided by visitor questions, which, in turn, are largely directed by visual cues. Bonds of friendship are rarely shown, though they may be talked about.

 The sexual lives of voyageurs and partners are also only obliquely referred to. The frequency of complaint of venereal disease to Company doctors indicates, however, that the men were not celibate.27 In 2008 Fort William installed a new element in the hospital drawing attention to the prevalence of venereal disease in the fur trade. Attached to the dead room door, where a ‘corpse’ is laid out in readiness for burial, is a letter composed by the curator written in Dr. McLoughlin’s name:

26 More experienced staff members are often placed with newer interpreters for training purposes. In effect, partners are most frequently stationed with clerks, voyageurs, or women, rather than with other partners.  
27 Morrison, Superior Rendezvous, 54.
Mr. Taitt, I find myself under the disagreeable necessity of making known the departure of Jean Baptiste LaVallée from this life. A recent arrival with the Columbia express, he was this morning carried off by the Venereal complaint. This foul malady is so prevalent in that quarter that it may seriously affect our Commerce there, but should prove to be of little consequence at Fort William. […]

This letter draws attention to the sexual lives of the voyageurs as they overwintered and to the impact this had on the health of the voyageurs, and by inferred extension, the Native communities they consorted with. Considering the great fear many sites have with offending visitor sensibility, this reference to sex and venereal disease is noteworthy. The addition of this component to the hospital display was a creative means of introducing this topic in a subtle way. Placed at adult eye level, the note will attract the attention of curious visitors seeking to understand why the corpse is there, but allows them to self-select how engaged they and their group want to be with the topic. Parents who feel the subject is unsuitable for their children can provide a different explanation, and those who wish to know more can ask an interpreter in the next building. It is difficult to discern, however, how many visitors stop to read the notice or to discuss the cause of the voyageur’s death since the building is so irregularly staffed.

Male bonds with other men are infrequently mentioned at Fort William, whether of friendship or of a more intimate nature. In large part, this follows a dearth of material in the primary sources to substantiate a focused discussion on homosexuality in the trade. Yet, the lack of sustained portrayals of close ties of friendship has more to do with staffing constraints and the decreasing ability to present a number of interpreters together in one space than a lack of awareness of such bonds. The network of friendships voyageurs and partners developed is portrayed, but the reliance of the men on these ties to help them through the time spent in the interior is rarely hinted at. Intimate bonds are
suggested only superficially and the interpreters are rarely pressed to go any deeper in their presentation by visitors.

The ranks of men that made up the North West Company are a very visible presence at Fort William Historical Park. Voyageurs, clerks, and partners undertake tasks they might have in the past and regale visitors with anecdotes about life in the trade. The interpretations presented at the site, however, hover between loyalty to historical accuracy and stereotypical portrayals of different social classes of men. The power hierarchy dividing the men of the fur trade is repeatedly asserted, but the bourgeois come across as arrogant and competitive, concerned only about status and money, while the voyageurs are welcoming, happy folk. Differences between voyageurs are not as clear as they would have been historically, however, and while bonds of friendship are indicated in the ways interpreters greet each other and interact, much of the depth of feeling is omitted from the portrayal.

“[I]t is customary for all the Gentlemen who come in this Country to remain any length of time to have a fair Partner…”28: Marital Relationships at Fort William

Women played an important part in fur trade. As Susan Sleeper-Smith has argued the fur trade was built on indigenous friendship and kinship networks, which Europeans negotiated, in part, through relationships with Aboriginal women.29 Women shared skills and knowledge that helped the trade succeed and through the relationships they formed with traders helped to populate the companies with their Métis offspring. Few histories provide a deep examination of these roles, however, because of a shortage in primary

28 Lamb, Sixteen Years, see entry 10 October 1805, 98.
sources that document the work of women specifically. Two seminal academic texts have furnished much of the knowledge on women in the fur trade; despite their age, they continue to be the vital sources for academic and popular historians. Throughout the late 1970s and into the 1980s, Sylvia van Kirk and Jennifer Brown published numerous articles and books on fur trade marriages in the HBC and NWC, women’s roles in the fur trade, and fur trade children. Both scholars provide rich, well documented studies that discuss the motives for marriage and mate selection, company policies on marriage, marriage ceremonies, child rearing, kinship networks and social interactions, and “turning off.” Though ties to Native women were initially sought to make trading alliances and to obtain much needed Native skills and knowledge about the local environment, van Kirk and Brown argue that as Métis women, and eventually White women, were available as marriage partners, they were selected over Natives because of racial and cultural preferences.  

The work of van Kirk and Brown continues to shape the characters created by interpreters at Fort William. The site acknowledges the importance of ties between traders and Native women, of the cultural differences negotiated in mixed-race fur trade families, and of the work Native women contributed to Fort William. Through material culture displays, dramatic sketches, and first person interpretation the site addresses the topics most salient to women’s experiences in the fur trade. More might be done,

---

however, to recognize the changing racial attitudes of the trade, to depict pregnancy and child rearing practices, and to represent the process of “turning off.”

*The Custom of the Country*

Heterosexual unions were sought by Aboriginal peoples and traders for many reasons, primary among them economic success in trade, survival, and companionship. Fur trade marriages benefited both parties as traders gained access to an important network of Native contacts that would supply furs and Native peoples secured access to trade goods. These marriages developed their own unique ceremonies and rituals that changed over time and speak to the evolving nature of trade relationships. Fort William represented a marriage ceremony on a daily basis in one of their dramatic presentation.

The topic of betrothals comes up at Fort William through one of the three dramas they put on every day throughout July and August and rarely at any other time. While slight improvisations were made to the script, each betrothal I witnessed followed the same chronological and thematic structure. The proprietor of the fort, Kenneth McKenzie, arrived at the Native Encampment with a tradesman and called people to gather round. McKenzie then made a speech to the assembled group, thanking everyone for attending the celebration. He vouched for the groom, speaking to the bride’s family:

> I believe he [the tradesman] is a good man, he’ll make a fine husband and a good father. He promises to look after your sister and your family for as long as they both may be together and any children they may have as well. He’s brought some wonderful gifts, here, to show his affection and support. This union I’m sure will make both of our people stronger as do all of us.  

This speech is followed from one by the girl’s father or sister recognizing the bonds between their peoples and the role of the women in teaching traders the ways of the land.

---

31 From the Betrothal, 9 August 2008.
Gifts are exchanged by both parties as a sign of “love and loyalty,” with the tradesmen giving what appears to be a gun and the girl giving a beaded bag (Illus. 5.5). Dancing and a ‘feast’ of bannock ensue. The entire drama, dancing included, runs for approximately 15 minutes. This representation raises many key ideas found in the historical record, including the benefit of these relationships to traders, the required support of a bourgeois, and the symbolic and economic ties of gift giving. It is also problematic in several ways.

“The Betrothal” shows a trader becoming betrothed to an Aboriginal woman regardless of the fact that this was ‘outlawed,’ though not always strictly, by the company some nine years previously. Married couples would reside under the auspices of the NWC at company posts and as such the company regulated the unions in several ways. Engagés of the company had to obtain the permission of a bourgeois prior to betrothal. 32 Then, as alluded to, in 1806 the partners responded to the growth of families and ‘domesticity’ at trade posts and the corresponding cost of providing for them by forbidding men from marrying Native women, directing them, in essence, to the Métis daughters already under the care of the fort. 33 It appears that this resolution was not always obeyed, though, as several of Simon Fraser’s letters show. Writing in 1807, not long after the resolution was made, Fraser expresses his concern that a woman was taken

32 Van Kirk, Tender Ties, 50.
33 Brown, Strangers, 96-97; Van Kirk, “Custom of the Country,” 57; Morrison, Superior Rendezvous, 63; Campbell, North West Company, 157. See W. Stewart Wallace, Documents relating to the North West Company (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934), 210-211, for the text of the resolution: “It was therefore resolved that every practicable means should be used throughout the Country to reduce by degrees the number of women maintained by the Company, and for that purpose, no Man whatever, either Partner, Clerk, or Engagé, belonging to the Concern shall henceforth take or suffer to be taken, under any pretence whatsoever, any woman or maid from any of the tribes of Indians now known or who may hereafter become known in this Country to live with him after the fashion of the North West, that is to say, to live with him within the Company’s Houses or Forts & to be maintained at the expense of the Concern.” George Nelson’s notes to his journals indicate his belief that this Resolution was passed because there was too great a number of ‘half-breeds’ in the country and it was better for a white man to “take one of these rather than they should live with the Indians…” See George Nelson, My first years in the Fur Trade – the journals of 1802-1804, ed. Laura Peers and Theresa Schenck (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), 178.
by a man, Bugni, after she had been ‘removed’ from another trader, St. Pierre, the prior spring, “merely to give up the Custom of taking any more women from the Indians…”

Despite this clear evidence that the decree was not always followed, it did create an overall change in the make-up of fur trade marriages. The presentation of a trader’s betrothal to an Aboriginal women silences dialogue about the privileging of whiteness through regulations of behaviour and the changing conceptions of race in the fur trade in the nineteenth century.

This Betrothal drama melds the little information historians have about two types of fur trade marriage ceremonies, which might be loosely classified as Native and Métis, into one. Van Kirk and Podruchny have outlined the most common steps of a betrothal, initially derived from Aboriginal marital rites. Betrothals involved obtaining parental permission, the payment of a bride price or the exchange of gifts, smoking a pipe to cement the alliance, and a ritual cleansing of the girl prior to her being ceremoniously escorted to the fort with her husband. Van Kirk has argued, however, that the 1806 resolution banning marriage to Native women led to the blurring of class boundaries as bourgeois men married engagés’ Métis daughters and to a shift towards Whiteness in fur

---

34 See W. Kaye Lamb, *The Letters and Journals of Simon Fraser 1806-1808* (Toronto: Pioneer Books, 1960), 246-250. Letter from Fraser to John Stuart, Natleh [Fraser Lake], 1 February 1807: “McDougall owns that he gave Bugni leave to take the woman that St. Pierre had last winter. ... He knew full well that she was taken from St. Pierre merely to give up the Custom of taking any more women from the Indians and that St. Pierre was promised that no other Frenchman would get her.”

35 Van Kirk, *Tender Ties*, 42-43; Podruchny, *Voyageur World*, 271. Similarly, Daniel Harmon, a wintering clerk and eventual NWC partner, observed the betrothal of a Monsieur Mayotte in 1800: “…in the evening Monsr. Mayotte [Malhiot] took a Woman of this Country for a Wife or rather a Concubine, and all the ceremonies (as I am informed) attending such a circumstance is, when a person is desirous of having one of the Native Daughters to live with him, he makes a present to the Parents of the Damsel, of such articles as he may suppose that will best please them, but Rum always forms a principle part of the donation, for this is what Savages in general are most fond of, and should they accept the articles offered, the Girl remains at the Fort with her lover, and is clothed after the fashion of the Canadians, with a Shirt, short Gown, Petticoats & Leggins &c. and the most of them I am told are better pleased to remain with White People than with their own Relations.” See Lamb, *Sixteen Years*, 28-29.
trade communities.\textsuperscript{36} As the preference for Métis marriages became more entrenched, Van Kirk suggests that the marriages and their rituals became more European. She proposes that these unions had greater longevity than those with full-blooded Natives as they were increasingly imbued with the European concept of being a life-long commitment. Similarly, the contract was increasingly patriarchal, negotiated between husband and father, and the trend shifted from presenting gifts to the bride’s parents to providing a dowry for the bride. Vows were taken in public and increasingly the event was celebrated with a drink and dance.\textsuperscript{37} The Betrothal mingles elements of both of these marriages, combining the Native bride and traditional gift exchange, with the patriarchal negotiation of the union, as evidenced by the girl’s father speaking for her, public vows and dancing. Visitors gain an understanding of the importance of Aboriginal ties to the fur trade. They are less sure of the changing racial dynamics of fur trade unions. Though 42\% (or 14 of 33) respondents agreed with the statement that “Métis or bois-brûlés women came to be considered more desirable wives than Aboriginal women,” 39\% were undecided and 18\% disagreed. The changing nature of these relationships over time is obscured in the Betrothal as elements from two different times or types of unions are compressed into one presentation.

Finally, the drama verbally stresses the ‘love and affection’ present in the relationship. McKenzie says, “He’s brought some wonderful gifts, here, to show his affection and support,” and, in giving her gift to her husband, the girl replies, “I give you this gift as a sign of my love and loyalty.”\textsuperscript{38} Within less than a minute the words love or affection have been repeated three times. This masks the fact that for many couples the

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{36} Van Kirk, \textit{Tender Ties}, 101-106.
\textsuperscript{38} Betrothal, Fort William Historical Park, 9 August 2008.
\end{footnotes}
union began as an economic bargain and only developed into an emotional bond over the course of the relationship. The romanticization of the union was lamented to me by the site curator: “But, when we do a betrothal there’s a tendency to make it, you know… less of a business transaction, which frankly it probably was more often than not.” He continues: “It ends up being a little bit, you know, like a twenty-first century wedding shower.” The romance of a marriage is more familiar to us today and hence, perhaps, more palatable than the union of a young girl to an older man for political and economic reasons.

There are a lot of entry-points to complex stories to be found in this drama, if one is discerning and looking for them. But, unless visitors take the initiative to prod interpreters for more, the historical context of the betrothal and changing conceptions of race are subsumed under the ceremony and entertainment of a familiar, romantic, heterosexual narrative.

*Family Life in the Fur Trade:*

The daily domestic life of fur trade families is shown at Fort William primarily through material culture – objects and their arrangement – rather than personal interactions between interpreters. Objects are arranged to communicate messages even if interpreters are not there to help visitors decode them. Some are easier for visitors to ‘read’ because they carry much the same signification today as they did in the past. Others prove to be more difficult to understand as they are unfamiliar. For the most part,

---

39 As Van Kirk states, “[t]he marriage of a fur trader and an Indian woman was not just a ‘private’ affair; the bond thus helped to advance trade relations with a new tribe, placing the Indian wife in the role of cultural liaison between the traders and her kin.” Van Kirk, *Tender Ties*, 14. See also Brown, *Strangers*, 80-85.

40 Interview with Shawn Patterson, Curator, Fort William Historical Park, 3 June 2008.
those objects that ‘stand in’ for women and children in the domestic buildings of the fort are easily identifiable, namely strap-dresses, cradles, and dolls (Illus. 5.6). The repetition of these objects throughout most strictly domestic spaces also helps to reinforce their association with ‘family.’ Strap-dresses are laid out on the beds in the doctor’s home, the McKenzie’s rooms, and on hooks in three rooms in the Winterer’s houses and the Tradesmen’s residence to signify the presence of women in the homes. The presence of children is indicated by a cradle in the McKenzie’s bedroom and the tradesmen’s room or a tikitagan in the McLoughlin’s home. Alone this object is likely to need some explanation. When placed in proximity to the ‘twin’ beds in the doctor’s home, one of which also has a doll on it, the signification of ‘children’ is quite strong and it is likely that visitors could intuit that this object is used for holding or carrying children. It should also be noted that there is a tikitagan prominently displayed outside one of the wigwams at the Native Encampment, where most visitors stop first before entering the palisade. The cloth dolls present in the various rooms mentioned above also indicate that children occupied these spaces. When strap-dresses, cradles, tikitagans, and toys appear in close proximity to each other, either in the same room or several rooms in one building, there is a strong message that the space was lived in by women and children.

Marital relationships are only sporadically communicated through interpreter interactions due to decreasing numbers of staff. Due to budgetary cut-backs beginning in the early 1990s, the number of staff employed on site as historical interpreters has decreased. Both staff and visitors commented that the visibility of interpreters is lower now than it was when they were younger or when they last visited. This has created many problems and changes. Among them, lower staff numbers limit the frequency and duration of staff interactions with each other and with visitors.
It was a rare occurrence that historical partners were able to interact together during my observations. Eight staff members, five female and three male, stated that face to face interaction with their ‘historical’ partner was “uncommon” and that there was “little opportunity to be together.” Lack of familiarity with other staff members’ roles due to departmental divides and people playing multiple characters combine to discourage interpreters from interacting with ‘historical partners.’ Two upper-year staff members noted that because male staff members changed roles daily, rotating between being a voyageur, clerk, or partner, it was often difficult to remember which staff members were historically in a relationship with whom. Likewise, one staff member who portrayed fort proprietor Kenneth McKenzie noted that his wife, Louisa, was staffed by another department and so he often had no idea when entering ‘his home’ which of the two or three interpreters inside was meant to be Louisa. This obviously adds a greater element of risk to the interpretation and, it seems, many interpreters felt it was better to keep silent on such issues rather than risk being wrong. Some staff members creatively attempted to get around the physical separation with their ‘spouses’ by telling visitors of their relationship, pointing out where their ‘better half’ was on site and by asking visitors to relay messages for them. Others noted calling out to their ‘partners’ across the square and carrying on public conversations, or simply referring to the fact that they exist in conversation with visitors. The relationship was discussed rather than shown, limiting the ways visitors might learn about the dynamics and norms of a historical relationship.

Greater contact between marital partners would provide an entry point into the power hierarchy in these marital relationships, which is only currently discussed circuitously.

One of the few times that married couples are visible together is during the Arrival. The arriving canoe often contains a partner and his wife, and the assembled
partners already at the fort process with their wives to the wharf to greet the canoe and back to the Great Hall when the ceremony is over (Illus. 5.7). Although the couple is now visually presented there is no verbal explanation to accompany it. The wives are present but inconsequential in the events that unfold and the focus of the drama reveals little about their lives or relationships. Visitors are given the chance to see a relationship, however superficially, and this reinforces the verbal message received at other times; however, the nature of marital relationships continues to be peripheral.

Since one rarely sees the interpreters interacting, it is perhaps not surprising that one rarely sees representations of, or hears references to, pregnancy either. The historical record is woefully low on references to pregnancy, childbirthing, and childrearing, and this dearth of material factors into the topics’ near absence at the historic site. Historical sources do not provide much detail about the experience of pregnancy and childrearing in fur trade societies, in part, one assumes, because most of the traditional sources were written by men who did not trouble themselves with such details. Traders noted that Aboriginal women simply went off alone to birth a child and, perhaps more shocking to them, that the women were up and about their duties very shortly after bringing a child into the world. Such remarks show a certain amount of respect for women’s ability to endure physical trials; however, a perusal of trader diaries and writings reveal terse commentary on the birthing practices. If the birth of a child is noted at all, it is done

41 Van Kirk, Tender Ties, 28-29; John McDonnell, writing at the Red River in the early 1790s, recorded that: “An Assinibouan [sic] woman was delivered of her child in the house, and had no other screen than her husband’s buffalo robe to keep her from view along the cheek or jambage of the chimney, while in labor, which did not last about a quarter of an hour. She was trading out in the cold air and doing the other painful drudgeries of her station an hour after, with her first tender infant on her back, same as if nothing had happened.” See “Extracts from Mr John McDonnell’s Journal (1793-1795),” 10 January 1794, in Masson, Bourgeois, 286-287.
cursorily and with little fanfare. Though entries do not tell us much about what went on during delivery, they do suggest a critical change from the traditional Aboriginal way of squatting during birth to the European method of birthing lying down. Whether “being brought to bed” was simply a figure of speech for these men, or whether their phrases accurately reflect the nature of the birthing process, is unclear. One wonders how the European and Native understandings of childbirth coalesced in country marriages and at fur trade posts. Did European beliefs in bed-rest and midwifery become the norm for the Aboriginal and Métis women they took as wives, or did the women continue to hold fast to their traditional practices? The records reveal little about such interesting cultural questions.

They are also, unfortunately, fairly uninformative about specific childrearing practices. Van Kirk mentions that Aboriginal women breast fed their children for several years but that European men disliked and discouraged this practice as they believed it aged women prematurely. Small children were carried or sat in tikinagans. Instead of cloth diapers soft, absorptive mosses were placed inside the carrying sac of the tikinagan with the child and discarded when used. Traditionally, in Aboriginal societies it was the women who oversaw and had authority over children, but this position was challenged by the European belief in paternal authority; increasingly, the father figure had the final say on the shape and direction of childcare. Ultimately, it seems as though women in fur trade marriages remained in charge of the children on a day to day basis. Female children, in particular, were raised in the culture of their mothers, as it was to the

---

44 Ibid., 29-30.
45 Ibid., 83.
company’s benefit for them to learn traditional ways and to continue to work in the fur trade; however, the voyageurs and traders, particularly those of higher authority within the company, decided if and when a male child would be sent east for placement or an education.\(^{46}\)

While interpreters are often able to answer a visitor’s questions, the limited amount of information about childbirth and childrearing in the culture of the fur trade that is available is not seen as specific enough to confidently portray these acts physically. For example, the head of one department, along with some of her staff, identified the lack of sources regarding pregnancy as a disincentive to incorporating the information they do have into their daily interpretations. Management feared the risk of being inaccurate, while staff feared looking foolish when they couldn’t answer visitor questions. Detail is seen as essential to an ‘authentic’ re-creation at the historic site. Without it programs highlighting such issues are unlikely.

Also necessary to any interpretation is willingness on the behalf of interpreters to discuss or portray the subject, and this is not always present at Fort William. During the 2008 season no characters were depicted as visibly pregnant during my visits to the site and the subject was infrequently broached with me and, presumably, other visitors. Staff members identified one character as pregnant in 1815, based on records that indicate that Nancy McCargo, the schooner captain’s wife, gave birth in early 1816, yet she is rarely portrayed as pregnant. Why is this opportunity not taken? Why do more interpreters

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 92-93. Jennifer Brown makes similar observations, noting that prior to the 1790s NWC children most likely were assimilated into their mother’s culture or left as dependants at company posts, but that after 1790 the likelihood that children were sent east for an education increased and was in fact greater than in the HBC where the journey was far greater. Brown lists baptismal records from Montreal churches to show that children were being taken east, as well as several letters indicating that children, both male and female, were being boarded and educated by relatives in Glengarry, eastern Ontario. See Brown, Strangers, 158, 170-172, and Brown, “Ultimate Respectability.”. See also Lamb, Sixteen Years, 21 April 1811 (138), 8 May 1811 (138-139), 26 October 1812 (154), 14 December 1813 (165) for primary references.
portraying composite characters not create the opportunity to portray and discuss this experience? The reasons are multiple, yet not overly complicated. Not all members of management agree that these are subjects that should be broached on site and so do not prepare their staff rigorously. Some interpreters feel uncomfortable also with the idea of having their bodies gazed upon as potentially pregnant.

Some members of management do not stress to their staff that the representation of pregnancy is important. In fact, the head of one department explicitly stated that they felt that pretending to be pregnant was inappropriate, that the risk of the experience being stereotyped or “made light of” made them uncomfortable, and that ultimately, “it’s not part of the show we’re trying to do.” They felt strongly that other more important roles and experiences, such as the cultural change from Native life to fort life, took precedence. On the other hand, another unit head stated that they did not discourage the portrayal of pregnant characters and that one of the composite characters often portrayed ‘was’ pregnant. Without a consensus amongst those overseeing and training the interpreters the presentation of pregnancy is likely to continue to be sporadic.

Three female staff members stated that they were uncomfortable portraying a pregnant character. One, in her sixth year on site, said that when she first started as an overweight teenager she would never have said she was pregnant because of the attention it would draw to her body and the embarrassment she would feel if visitors unquestionably took her words to be true. A first year interpreter playing Nancy McCargo explained that she too had yet to discuss her possible pregnancy with visitors.

---

47 Interview with Anonymous 1, Fort William Historical Park, 12 August 2008.
48 Likewise, Adar Charlton, BVT assistant, noted that when one staff member approached her about playing a composite character who was pregnant she referred her to the next level of management, but, as expected, it “was not an issue, it wasn’t seen as inappropriate.” Interview with Adar Charlton, BVT assistant, Fort William Historical Park, 15 September 2008.
because she anticipated being uncomfortable if they responded with ‘of course you are.’

Another interpreter who indicated that there were records of her character being pregnant at age 21, presumably post-1815, said she too steered clear of the information, opting to answer any questions visitors posed rather than offering the information to them. In sum, as a departmental assistant put it: “[T]he main reason why it’s not interpreted that much is because most of them are twenty year olds that don’t feel comfortable telling people that they’re pregnant, just because they’re not and they’re young and that’s kind of the bigger issue for them.”49 Young women’s inability to separate themselves from their character and their reticence to have their bodies identified as pregnant limits the frequency with which the topic of pregnancy is both portrayed and verbally discussed.

There would not have been an abundance of children living at Fort William. Only a handful of families lived year-round at the post. Most partners, clerks, and voyageurs were present for only a few weeks during rendezvous, and few of these would have brought their family with them on the long journey to Lake Superior. However, one might reasonably expect to see children and parenting represented on site at Fort William Historical Park because families were present. In part to address this historical presence, site management instituted a family volunteer program and several educational camps where children dress in costume. Despite this, the visibility of children on site remains quite low for the average visitor.

The family volunteer program, initiated by Krista Power in the early twenty-first century, enables youth to come to play and learn on site in a free-form way under the supervision of a guardian. It simultaneously provides the opportunity for visitors to

49Ibid.
interact with ‘fur trade children’ characters that otherwise would not be present on site.\textsuperscript{50} Power notes the importance of preparing the children to pretend, and the family to convey information. Each family group undergoes site orientation and training and adopts historical character roles much like full-time paid interpreters but, Power notes that the historical preparation is difficult because there is very little information about what their days looked like:

Now, it’s very difficult to train those family volunteers because there’s no information about what families did in 1815 on a regular day. What does a regular day look like for the Masta’s [a family that worked on the farm]? Well, the mom and dad were working but what were the kids doing…? Once they got to a certain age we know what they were doing because they were working, but I mean as children what [did they do]? So we’ve tried to put together kits for families, games to play, things they can do.\textsuperscript{51}

To facilitate family interactions on site Power compiled several kits of activities and games that family groups could do together on site that were both active, fun, and historically accurate. She argues that visitors enjoy seeing children on site and that their presence helps to create a more accurate picture of who would have been on site in 1815. Though I agree with this statement, the likelihood of witnessing a family group on site was low. Few visitors might benefit from the program, but it is undoubtedly informative to its participants.

In addition, reenactment groups that are comprised in part of family groups spend time at Fort William during the Rendezvous Weekend special event. According to Power, the Neebing Brigade, a reenactment group that is a branch of the Friends of Old Fort William, has approximately fifteen families that regularly volunteer at events. A handful of such family groups, and similar ones from diverse regions, congregated at Fort

\textsuperscript{50} Interview with Krista Power, Events and Volunteer Coordinator, Fort William Historical Park, 4 June 2008.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
William 10-15 July 2008 for the annual rendezvous reenactment and special event. This six day period was the only time I recall seeing family groups on site. The extra reenactors added to the liveliness and population of the site and it was great to see children in costume. Whether or not the visiting public felt comfortable engaging with the reenactors at their camps or in various activities is unclear to me but, certainly, they provided a visual entry point for visitors to engage with the topic of fur trade families. Together, the Rendezvous Weekend and the family volunteer program provide fantastic opportunities for fur trade family life to be represented.

Costumed children are also present on site through a variety of educational programs and summer camps. The nature of these programs, however, means that there is little interaction between the child and the public. The education department’s Residential Program brings children on site in costume for an overnight stay during which they will participate in activities such as canoeing, games, chores, apprenticeships with tradesmen, and learning about Aboriginal cultures.\(^5^2\) Broken into groups for these activities, the children interact primarily with their ‘brigade’ of classmates and the educational staff. Often, the spaces for such educational activities are segregated from the rest of the site, in special educational buildings or wigwams. Games and apprenticeships do occur on the main site, though, and the students are visible as they move from one activity to another. Fort William Historical Park also runs six separate summer day camp programs for youth aged seven to fifteen, ranging in topic from science and technology to French language camps to voyageur discovery camps.\(^5^3\) Two Young Interpreter camps are run for teenagers that introduce them to character formation, fur


\(^{5^3}\) Ibid.
trade history, and a number of skills they would need as a paid interpreter on site. In particular, the latter provide the opportunity for teenagers to get a taste of history and for visitors to occasionally interact with young characters on site, depending on the camp’s daily schedule. Through these youth programs, a visual picture of life at the fort is created, which is a fantastic step toward a more realistic portrayal of life as it would have been, but opportunities for visitor interaction with children are limited.

**Women’s Labour at fur trade posts**

In addition to caring for children, women also performed various tasks that helped sustain fur trade posts. Women from the nearby Free Canadian settlement and the local Ojibwa camps were a key part of the labour force at Fort William. Particular after marriage, Native women entered the daily life of the fort, often performing important tasks that sustained the fur trade post, earning wages that helped their family purchase necessary goods from the company. Women can be found almost anywhere at Fort William doing some kind of work, from sweeping to sewing to cooking (Illus. 5.8). Interpreters will explain that they are doing a bit of piecework or chores at the fort to earn some credit in the Indian Stores:

> It would be primarily women, a lot of women like myself doing piecework, so jobs that needed to be done. For example, my father was a Free Canadian and his wife was an Ojibwa woman here so often people like me will come and do a bit of work to earn a bit of credit for things that we might want, so a lot of fabrics. I’m saving for a blanket myself, and tinware…

In many cases, that piecework is sweeping. Visitors do not see much sweeping in fact, but rather a female interpreter holding a broom leading groups of visitors around the

55 Quoted from the Dairy, Fort William Historical Park, 19 August 2008.
Great Hall, fur stores, or apothecary. Some demonstrations of work produce more tangible results, however, and visitors are able to taste the soup made in the kitchen, bread baked in the bakery, cupcakes from the Wintering House, or bannock from the Native Encampment. In some areas, visitors are able to take part in the labour and, by so doing, gain a greater appreciation for the skill and strength required of the women who performed these tasks centuries ago. Angélique is often hard at work in the Canoe Shed sewing birch bark together to form the hull of the boat, and, although she’ll briefly lament how long it is taking to make since she’s the only women working that day, she will always take the time to explain the stitch to you and ask if you’d like to give it a try. In a similar manner, visitors can try their hand at churning butter in the Dairy or hand-milking cows in the barn. The number of staff simply cannot visually represent the number of women that would have worked at and around Fort William, just as it cannot accurately portray the numbers of voyageurs assembled at rendezvous, but the interpreters do undertake to represent the diversity of physical and skilled labour Native and Métis women provided to the NWC.

“Turning Off”: Representing the end of fur trade marriages

Ties between voyageurs, clerks, partners, and Native and Métis women were largely impermanent up to the early nineteenth century. Van Kirk and, more recently, Carolyn Podruchny both describe fur trade heterosexual relationships as ‘serial monogamy,’ stressing that these were usually relationships based on strong affection that were, however, of sporadic duration.56 Van Kirk has argued that this tendency fit with

---

56 Van Kirk, Tender Ties, 49-50; Podruchny, Voyageur World, 282.
Native marriage practices, which did not see marriage as a “lifetime contract.”

Similarly, Sarah Carter has noted that many traders took advantage of the practice of separation and divorce that was legal under many Aboriginal laws. Wintering partners and voyageurs would frequently change postings and travel east for weeks at a time in the summer months and would often end relationships prior to geographic relocation. Many bourgeois partners, while able to afford the transportation of their Native families, saw a quite real cultural divide between the interior and the well-settled areas surrounding Montreal. As a result many decided to keep their two lives separate, “turning off” country wives before moving east. Van Kirk argues that Native communities easily (re)incorporated women and their Métis children, providing some ‘turned-off’ wives a choice between returning to their home community or remaining at a trade post. This does assume, however, that the woman had remained in sufficiently close proximity to her Native community and could easily return. Should she prefer to remain within trading society, the woman might take another husband, or she could reside outside a fort’s walls and hope to get work and wages from the post.

Not all traders, however, could so easily forgo the bonds they constructed with their Native partners. Increasingly in the early nineteenth century, traders were maintaining these unions and having them legally sanctioned by the Church.

57 Van Kirk, Tender Ties, 49.
58 Sarah Carter, The Importance of Being Monogamous – marriage and nation building in Western Canada to 1915 (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008), 31-32.
59 Van Kirk, Tender Ties, 49.
60 Daniel Harmon, a full partner in the NWC by 1818, brought his Métis wife, Elizabeth Duval, back to Vermont with him in 1819/20 and the two were legally married and their 12 children were baptized. This decision was in full opposition to his original intentions for the relationship when it began in 1805. He noted in his journal of 10 October 1805: “In case we can live in harmony together, my intentions now are to keep her as long as I remain in this uncivilized part of the world, but when I return to my native land shall endeavour to place her into the hands of some good honest Man, with whom she can pass the remainder of her Days...” Fifteen years later his diary entry of 28 February 1819 demonstrates the bonds and affection
options presented themselves to the men of the fur trade who were retiring or moving on to new geographic regions of the trade. Some left their families behind as they returned east to a different life, leaving them in the care of other trusted traders or their home communities. Others brought them along and continued to reside together, demonstrating the strength of the bonds that had formed. A number of men chose to remain in the west.\footnote{Van Kirk, \textit{Tender Ties}, 52.} Regardless, the future of \textit{marriage à la façon du pays} was uncertain for the women entering into the contract and the power to choose the fate of the union was largely vested in men.

During my many hours on site at Fort William, I heard talk of “turning off” very infrequently, and usually at my own introduction. Crystal Legros, BVT specialist, asserts that the subject is part of staff training and that it is “talked about pretty regularly.”\footnote{Interview with Crystal Legros, BVT specialist, Fort William Historical Site, 12 August 2008.} She states that no one is trying to shy away from it or ignore it. Another member of management explained that, “… [staff] will at any opportunity bring [“turning off”] in as part of the interpretation, you know a touch of it and then if there’s inquiry [they will elaborate]. […] … it’s not easy for young girls to interpret that – so we leave it to their discretion about what topics they feel comfortable to elaborate on.”\footnote{Interview with Anonymous, Fort William Historical Park, 12 August 2008.} Information is provided to interpreters on “turning off,” but it is largely up to them whether to communicate that information to visitors or not.

that had grown between the pair: “…my intention is, during the next summer, to visit my native land. I design, also, to take my family with me, and leave them there, that they may be educated in a civilized and christian [sic] manner. The mother of my children will accompany me; and, if she shall be satisfied to remain in that part of the world, I design to make her regularly my wife by a formal marriage. […] Having lived with this woman as my wife, though we were never formally contracted to each other, during life, and having children by her, I consider that I am under a moral obligation not to dissolve the connexion [sic], if she is willing to continue it.” See Lamb, \textit{Sixteen Years}, 98 and 194.
The decision to talk about this prevalent occurrence in the fur trade was not always an individual one. Since 2002 the site has run and discontinued a dramatization dealing with “turning off.” In the drama, Louisa McKenzie finds a letter her husband has written but, illiterate, must get a visitor to tell her what it says. To her dismay, it mentions McKenzie’s promotion and she foresees being left behind, or turned-off. When McKenzie and other partners return to the building Louisa argues with him. One departmental assistant describes the drama:

[W]e had a Wintering House drama, originally, which was Kenneth Mackenzie telling his wife that he had to leave because he was promoted to agent, so in a sense turning her off, and then the Doctor and the doctor’s wife were there and they just basically got into a huge screaming match and then… Kenneth Mackenzie like storms off and Marguerite gets really mad at her husband because he’s kinda supporting Kenneth, and it was just a big fight and then they just kinda storm off.64

The drama introduces the practice of “turning off” women and children when postings and positions change, but presents it in a highly charged, theatrical way where emotions flare and tempers boil. Certainly, this may get the attention of visitors, but what does it communicate about “turning off” and is it ‘accurate’?

Staff members have expressed a variety of contrasting criticisms about this drama and its portrayal of a common historical event. Some argue that the drama lacked accuracy because it depicted “turning off” as being a highly emotional event. BVT Assistant Adar Charlton believes that the drama was rethought because the documents did not support that “turning off” was such an “angry issue.” Similarly, a member of management believes that “turning off” was an accepted part of Native-European relations, stating, “[t]hey were all totally aware of “turning off.” That had always existed. These white Europeans came out and then they left, they came out and then they left.

---

64 Interview with Adar Charlton, BVT assistant, Fort William Historical Park, 15 September 2008.
That was never really an issue.” They further reflected that they believed that Native women would not have invested a lot of time and energy worrying about being turned-off because such a concern for the future contradicts the Native focus on the present. Further, they see “turning off” in a positive light; that this was not a system to reject women but rather one to ensure that the woman you care about is taken care of and well supported in your absence:

So this system of “turning off” was really, I feel, built as a support system that someone was going to look after your wife and children when you had to leave and it could be your brother, it could be your best friend. You would say, he would take you, he will look after you, and I think that’s more what the point was. It wasn’t like throwing them [women and families] to somebody, it was ensuring he was going to care for you; they weren’t being abandoned totally…

From these perspectives, portraying Louisa pitching a fit in is questionable.

On the other hand, another staff member has criticized the way the subject is often treated as if there was little emotional reaction from the women. She claims that interpreters present “turning off” as if the women were always cared for and felt no emotion whatsoever about this change in their life but, she argues, just because the emotional reaction was not noted does not mean it was not felt. Consider, she said, how you feel when a boyfriend dumps you, and that these women lost not only a husband but, in some cases, their home and lifestyle. Although presentist in nature, it does seem hard to believe that as aware as country wives were about the likelihood of being turned-off that they were not upset at the event, even though they might ultimately resign themselves to the fate. However, with no historical evidence to support this interpretation it makes

---

65 Interview with Anonymous 1, Fort William Historical Park, 12 August 2008.
66 Personal communication with Wintering House interpreters, 4 July 2008.
more sense to proceed with greater caution than the Wintering House drama, as written, allowed.

Finally, Shawn Patterson, the site curator, noted his discomfort with the drama not because it misconstrued the emotion associated with “turning off” but because it was unrealistic in its portrayal of the power dynamics in the relationship, allowing Louisa to challenge her husband in front of his peers:

So it’s an interesting drama because it conveys the practice of “turning off” and it conveys the nature of these relationships and that largely the power rested with the men and it provokes all these great questions: What is Louisa going to do? What is the little daughter Margaret going to do? Doesn’t dad care about little daughter? And etc., etc., etc., But in the present incarnation of the drama, you know, you’ve got Louisa McKenzie bawling out her husband in front of a bunch of partners… That would be a short conversation that would end with the back of someone’s hand. So it’s kind of… it’s… difficult, because you know you’re not quite right but you kind of, you want to tell the story because it is important to be included.67

It is an important story to be told on site but, clearly, there are conflicting opinions about how to do that correctly.

Even though this drama had been discontinued, one still hears references to “turning off” if one is paying attention or asks about it. Female staff will sometimes mention previous partners or introduce the possibility of their partner leaving them when they return to Montreal. Male staff will occasionally joke that if a female character did not behave or complete a task that she would be turned-off for certain. A dialogue between Louisa McKenzie and Nancy McCargo illustrates the lightness with which this topic is often addressed. Nancy is telling Louisa that when Kenneth is promoted and sent to Montreal that she won’t live in their mutual home anymore. Nancy boasts that she will go through Louisa’s things and take those objects that she wants, including a hand-

---

67 Interview with Shawn Patterson, Curator, Fort William Historical Park, 3 June 2008.
made rabbit blanket given to Louisa as a wedding present by her mother. When Louisa protests, Nancy jibes, “[w]hy do you need a wedding gift if you aren’t married anymore?” Although the dialogue wraps up with the pair admitting that they tease each other because they are good friends, it does rather leave the impression that the process of “turning off” was a breezy affair with little consequences for anyone. Although the records do not indicate that “turning off” was a highly contentious event, it seems likewise unjustifiable to present the event as a joking matter when the sources do not indicate that it was seen as such. I believe that Fort William has the best intentions to present a balanced, informed interpretation, providing staff with training and background on the subject matter; however, in order to introduce the topic staff seem to test the waters of visitor tolerance by ‘joking’ about an issue that is sometimes seen as ‘dark’ and unpleasant for visitors to hear about on vacation. This tactic has some merit, as long as the rest of the conversation unfolds with gravity. “Turning off” was a common and accepted part of life, and its prevalence demands that it be dealt with seriously and with nuanced respect.

Fort William’s management intends to present an accurate and faithful depiction of fur trade life as it was experienced by men and women. This desire, though, can sometimes hamper progress in women’s history and gender history more broadly since thorough, precise sources are lacking regarding such topics as heterosexual attachments, marital relations and childrearing. Without recourse to explicit historical evidence staff members often find it easier to neglect a topic, or wait for it to be introduced, rather than open themselves up to questions they may not be able to answer. The curator recognizes

68 Personal communication with Wintering House interpreters, 4 July 2008.
that “…they have a brutally hard job, a really difficult, hard job to convey the role of women during our period which is not a comfortable thing to talk about and it’s… to do it well and to sustain it over a long period of time is really challenging. And it’s made worse by the fact that we don’t know the factual information attached to that.” There is also a sense amongst interpreters that the upper levels of management prefer a more sanitized version of history, lightening up the darker side of the fur trade to accommodate those tourists out to enjoy their vacations. Thus, “turning off” is material for interpreter teasing and the betrothal is sure to incorporate romance. While there is room for improvement, and a clearer portrayal of the complexities of fur trade relationships, it is pleasing to see and to hear from staff and management that women’s and gender history is something they think about and struggle with.

“We’re not a museum, we’re Disneyland”: Factors influencing interpretation at Fort William

Despite an awareness of broader, ‘darker’ issues relating to the fur trade that could be covered at Fort William, the focus remains on company history with a growing emphasis on social relations and Aboriginal history. Why is it that issues pertaining to women, such as “turning off” and pregnancy, or relationships between women and men receive less attention than other subjects despite an academic knowledge base on which to build interpretation? Many factors contribute to this state of affairs and some are more entrenched than others. The history and traditions of the site itself, how it was formed and developed, strongly shapes the path the site takes. Directly related to this, the presentational styles and methods selected by the site create opportunities and have weaknesses that affect content. Staffing numbers and training, directly related to budget,
influence the nature of the interpretation on site. Standards of tourism also have a great impact on the way the site presents itself, as well as on visitor expectations of the site.

The priorities in place when a site was founded have a long term impact on the visual presentation and structural organization of a site. When Fort William was planned and constructed in the early 1970s, economic and political histories were still dominant in the discipline of history and social history, ethnohistory, and women’s history were in their infancies. The bulk of fur trade scholarship was focused on company histories and this scholarship shaped the presentation of the site. Long rooted traditions continue to influence practices today.

The amount of information available regarding the lives of elite men in the fur trade, in the forms of diaries, letters, and company papers, make it easier for interpreters to enact bourgeois characters. The historical subjects who left few written records are much more difficult to reconstruct. Shawn Patterson comments on the accessibility of information:

You know the early history of the fort, certainly things related to the bourgeois, to the gentlemen who are running the concern, their biographies are always fatter, their shoeboxes of correspondence are always more significant, so as a consequence of that that backbone of research required to acquire these things is more easily accessed. […] So that aspect of our delivery has been historically very, very strong. And then there are the other things… that [are] not as easy and therefore [don’t] get as much love and attention at historic sites. You know for us it’s stories relating to French Canadian men, women, and then…women whether they’re the wives of voyageurs or wives of gentlemen, and then Aboriginal people in general, which in reality is the other 70% of our messages here. And it’s not out of, I don’t want to give the impression it’s out of laziness. A lot of it has to do out of an intense respect for wanting to get story right.69

The wealth of primary sources written by, and about, the partners and clerks of the company, as well as the secondary material focusing on their experiences, facilitates the

---

69 Interview with Shawn Patterson, curator, Fort William Historical Park, 3 June 2008.
creation of these characters. Female characters, on the other hand, lack this depth of primary resources and must extract plausible characteristics and experiences from general studies, such as those by Sylvia van Kirk and Jennifer Brown.\textsuperscript{70} Even so, one member of management said, even after you feel you have the documentation to add an aspect to your character, “if somebody points it out and makes you feel uncomfortable then, hey, better to pull off and not even go that way if you’re not sure, eh?”\textsuperscript{71} Interpreters may be less confident in their interpretations of composite characters, subalterns of the trade, and thus be less likely to delve into the complexities of history for fear of getting it wrong or being embarrassed. It is easier to be more detailed when representing bourgeois characters.

As a shift in focus in the available sources has occurred, concurrent and related shifts have taken place in the organization of the historic site, particularly the interpretive area demonstrating bourgeois and voyageur life. Shawn Patterson, the site curator, notes that there used to be a Bourgeois department and a Voyageur Life department, among others, that were hierarchically related – newer staff members were most likely to be found in Voyageur Life, creating a sense of elitism around the Bourgeois characters.\textsuperscript{72} By 2001 the two units had been amalgamated into Bourgeois and Voyageurs Activities, signaling, perhaps, the recognition that the role of each type of character was fundamental to the success of the fur trade. In 2002 Tour Guides were incorporated into the BVT department. Despite this union, the tradition of bourgeois elitism continues in many ways, particularly through the requirement that staff pass a ‘partner’s test’ or, as it was more recently named, a ‘primary character’ test in order to play bourgeois characters.

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{71} Interview with Anonymous 1, Fort William Historical Park, 12 August 2008.
\textsuperscript{72} Interview with Shawn Patterson, Curator, Fort William Historical Park, 3 June 2008.
Although the test was renamed to be more inclusive of female characters, one cannot help but see also that the use of the word primary reinforces the elite nature of bourgeois characters that has been present since the site opened. The BVT department is tasked with covering a fairly inclusive list of historical themes, including French Canadian and Scots culture, the roles and responsibilities of bourgeois and voyageurs, family life, life in the interior, pay, and company history and structure. While this list includes cultural and status differences and offers the opportunity to address women’s roles, the tradition of prioritizing bourgeois messages continues to this day based on precedent, and on the amount of information available to support the interpretation.

Staffing considerations also define what topics are likely to be portrayed. As a living history site, the individuals hired as interpreters are the primary method through which information is conveyed. Their numbers, characteristics, and training have an impact on the interpretation that takes place. Fort William is staffed by approximately twenty-two full-time employees, eleven long-term seasonal employees, fifty-five student employees, and thirty-six ‘Experience’ student employees. Specifically, the BVT area had a total of thirty-four staff, comprised of twenty-two student employees and twelve ‘Experience’ students ranging in age from sixteen to the mid/late twenties.

Selected based on their perceived ability to interact confidently with the public, dramatic experience, and skill set in music or canoeing, etc., all staff undergo several days

73 Interview with Crystal Legros, BVT specialist, Fort William Historical Site, 12 August 2008.
74 Interview with Peter Boyle, Historic Operations Manager, Fort William Historical Park, 13 July 2008. Experience staff are high school students whose contract runs during July and August, working three days on, three days off.
75 Interview with Crystal Legros, BVT specialist, Fort William Historical Site, 12 August 2008.
of focused training and a period of mentorship on site. Training also continues through seminars, providing more information on selected topics, scheduled library research time, and research papers that must be submitted as a requirement for rehire. As budgets have become tighter over the recent years, the amount of time devoted to training has decreased. Karla Gibson stated that, at one time, they had a full week of training, excluding specific skills training like canoeing, but that now that timeframe has been shrunk to three days. However, another staff member commented that despite always wanting more time for training, “compared to other places I’ve worked the training here is quite substantial.”

Despite this ongoing focus on training and staff development, the seasonality of the work and the age of the employees undoubtedly have an effect on the type and depth of knowledge the staff possess. This is a temporary job for the majority of the staff. Jason Boesche reflected that when he first started working at Fort William in 1993 it was common for seasonal staff to return for eight or nine years, while currently the trend is to remain only two to three years. Although most of the staff took pride in their job and worked hard to ensure that they could do it adequately, it seems evident that the amount of knowledge they can develop and retain over a four month season for three years will be less than that of someone working full-time, in almost all cases.

76 Interview with Crystal Legros, BVT specialist, Fort William Historical Site, 12 August 2008; Interview with Peter Boyle, Historic Operations Manager, Fort William Historical Park, 13 July 2008; Interview with Jason Boesche, Interpretive Specialist, Fort William Historical Park, 17 August 2008.
77 Interview with Crystal Legros, BVT specialist, Fort William Historical Site, 12 August 2008; Interview with Peter Boyle, Historic Operations Manager, Fort William Historical Park, 13 July 2008; Interview with Jason Boesche, Interpretive Specialist, Fort William Historical Park, 17 August 2008; Interview with Adar Charlton, BVT assistant, Fort William Historical Park, 15 September 2008; Interview with Karla Gibson, Education Specialist, Fort William Historical Park, 4 June 2008.
78 Interview with Karla Gibson, Education Specialist, Fort William Historical Park, 4 June 2008.
79 Interview with Anonymous 2, Fort William Historical Park, 13 August 2008.
80 Interview with Jason Boesche, Interpretive Specialist, Fort William Historical Park, 17 August 2008.
The short duration of their employment creates a further challenge to maintaining a network of knowledge and expertise amongst staff because of constant changeover.\footnote{It should be recognized that some areas on site, notably the Trades area, has several long-term, seasonal employees, and that the high-turnover of staff is more pronounced in some areas than others.} With less time devoted to training, a period of staff mentorship is critical. This most often involves, however, reinforcing the ‘script’ of each building; the mentor demonstrates the key information to convey in answering visitor questions, yet information that comes up infrequently may not come up in the presence of a mentor and the newer staff member might never receive training in that subject. Certainly, some staff are quite self-assured in their ability to discuss a wide array of subjects to do with the fur trade, but others have indicated that a lack of information on topics such as pregnancy, for example, has contributed to their silence on the subject. As Peter Boyle notes, the presentation of ‘dark’ subjects of the fur trade has less to do with the willingness of the staff or their interest in the subject matter than with their own knowledge and the experience they have.\footnote{Interview with Peter Boyle, Historic Operations Manager, Fort William Historical Park, 13 July 2008.} Similarly, Adar Charlton reflects that, “there’s almost so much information to learn on [the fur trade] that some of our younger staff do get intimidated by it, and it’s just easier for them if they’re not going to talk about it all the time, do they really need to put forth the effort to learn about it?”\footnote{Interview with Adar Charlton, BVT assistant, Fort William Historical Park, 15 September 2008.} Staff are doing the best they can with the knowledge they have. Nonetheless, as young, seasonal workers with a high yearly turnover rate and with decreased time devoted to training, they are faced with a large amount of information to take in. The information they use every day is the information that they will remember and, in a circular fashion, is the information they will continue use.
The presentational methods selected by the site, namely first-person flexible role-play and dramatic sketches, circumscribe the material that can clearly and effectively be presented. In first-person role-play, interpreters represent a character that lived, or a composite character that could have lived, in the past. Speaking as that character, they must consider the information that the character could have known at the time of speaking and limit the information they convey to coincide with that knowledge. The flexibility aspect of this method allows interpreters to break character occasionally in order to better respond to visitor needs and queries. First-person role-play requires a high level of knowledge on the part of the interpreter. They must know the specifics of events in great detail because they are meant to have lived them and must be able to answer visitor questions in a way that upholds the illusion that they have first-hand knowledge. Again, with less training and increased turn-over, the knowledge base to effectively interpret historical processes in first-person is not always present for the interpreter, who, in turn, decides not to discuss certain issues because the holes in their knowledge would throw off their interpretive flow.

Controversial, or complex subjects, are not suited to short, attention grabbing dramatic sketches according to the management at Fort William. Proponents of museum theatre have argued that it is an ideal means to explore controversy and heated issues because it can present multiple points of view better than text panels and can be bookended by discussion. Most of the management team at Fort William, however, would respectfully disagree. Some point to the inability of dramas to provide context and to get nuanced messages across to explain why subjects like wife-swapping or abuse are not portrayed. Jason Boesche noted that although the site sometimes treats the dramas as
superior to building interpretation that they are, “another method of delivery of
information, and … a less accurate system of delivery….” He continues,

…the messages have to be quite obvious [in dramas] and you’re only going to
get across what people observe, whereas in an interpretation, to be able to
actually talk about those things, you can put [information] into context much
better. So things that are easily put into context, I guess, and can be easily
made accessible to visitors are things that you can script.\footnote{Interview with Jason Boesche, Interpretive Specialist, Fort William Historical Park, 17 August 2008.}

Furthermore, the subject matter of dramas needs to have a factor of entertainment. Peter
Boyle commented that although the dramas highlight certain seminal themes of the fur
trade the most long-lasting had sensational aspects to them.\footnote{Interview with Peter Boyle, Historic Operations Manager, Fort William Historical Park, 13 July 2008.} For Jason Boesche, “when
you’re trying to develop those sorts of dramas, again, what you’re looking for is
something that you can build up into something exciting,… and something that is
historic in nature.”\footnote{Interview with Jason Boesche, Interpretive Specialist, Fort William Historical Park, 17 August 2008.} The potential for excitement and spectacle is seen as central to the
development of a dramatic script. The presentation format of short dramatic sketches has
strengths and weaknesses that help to define what topics the sketches can effectively
communicate. Ideally, the subject matter will have the potential for spectacle and be
easily contextualized. This relegates most subject matter relating to women and
voyageurs to one-on-one interpretation, where issues can be more fully discussed and
debated with visitors.

Fort William Historical Park is a tourist attraction. It is run, funded, and guided
by standards and expectations espoused by the Ministry of Tourism. The mandate and
values of the site reveal its orientation toward tourism and economic development as well as cultural enrichment. The Vision Statement asserts that,

Fort William Historical Park will continually strengthen its economic impact upon Northwestern Ontario through its role as a unique, leading multi-component destination tourist attraction that exceeds customer expectations by providing outstanding cultural, recreational, entertainment and educational experiences. … Fort William Historical Park seeks to advance Northwestern Ontario’s competitive tourism advantage and enrich our community through our economic and cultural contributions. … Our visitor-first philosophy, excellent customer service standards, and unique tourism approach have succeeded in encouraging travel to Northwestern Ontario and strengthening regional prosperity.87

These considerations, not the least of which is meeting visitor needs, shape the programming at the historic site.

The amount of money the province is willing to spend on the site is directly related to the perceived amount of money the site is able to contribute to the regional economy. As a provincial attraction, the site is a direct branch of the Ministry of Tourism, and is given a set budget from the province. Revenues taken at the gate are cycled directly back to the province and do not add to the annual budget allocated by the province. As Krista Power explains, while attendance numbers do not directly affect the budget of the site the ministry is more likely to provide a higher budget to a site that is performing well.88 This is especially true under the recent strategy of ‘Destination Based’ tourism, which aims to attract tourists who will stay overnight or for several days in an area, boosting the economy.

In turn, the province’s concern over economic development influences how programming initiatives and spending are approved by the site. The consideration of how

many new tourists the addition will attract and how long it will keep them on site are central concerns. The site curator stated that although he wishes they had more reproductions on site to complete the material culture displays, the site cannot justify the amount of spending required to make those changes by arguing that visitorship increased. As he puts it, “accuracy won’t bring visitors through the door.” Like many museums in the past ten to fifteen years, the site has embraced the idea of entertainment as a way to attract visitors. Adar Charlton stated,

the Marketing team, too, are putting across things that will sell and not necessarily things that are historically accurate. Right? Um, so the ‘Romance, Conflict and Adventure’ was a catchy slogan that encompasses things that are entertaining. Doug Stanton, I remember, in my first orientation was “We’re not a museum, we’re Disneyworld. And you’re here to entertain people.”

Although the staff do care about historical accuracy, as Charlton also points out, entertaining the visitor takes precedence on many levels. This involves creating spectacle through dramas, providing interactive experiences, and, perhaps most importantly, meeting their expectations and amusing them. In other words, providing customer service and giving them what they want so that they stay longer, tell their friends, and help promote the tourism industry.

Tasked with entertaining visitors and meeting their expectations, interpreters modify their performance based on audience response. The audience will hear what it is prepared to hear and see what is assumed they want to see. Whether or not that is 100% accurate or the whole picture comes second to meeting customer needs. As Karla Gibson concisely put it, “[i]t’s all about the customer.” One important clientele are school

---

89 Interview with Shawn Patterson, Curator, Fort William Historical Park, 3 June 2008.
90 Interview with Adar Charlton, BVT assistant, Fort William Historical Park, 15 September 2008.
91 Interview with Karla Gibson, Education Specialist, Fort William Historical Park, 4 June 2008.
groups. As such, the site aims to meet the requirements of the Grade Six provincial curriculum, presenting information on the contact and intermarriage between Europeans and Aboriginals, and the founding of trade posts as indicative of European expansion, to draw in as many student groups as possible.\textsuperscript{92} Another clientele group, particularly in the summer months when this research was undertaken, is comprised of tourists on their vacation. It is often assumed that vacationers, spending their leisure time at the historic site, are seeking pleasurable experiences rather than intellectually challenging ones, as if the two are mutually exclusive. Reflecting on the assumptions of the marketing department, Adar Charlton states,

I think that, umm especially our marketing department does have a general sense that people come to the fort to be entertained, right? It’s their family vacation, they’re driving through Thunder Bay, they’re not historians that come to find out real history, well they’re finding out historical fact but they’re not researchers... Umm, so I think in that sense that’s kind of where that mentality [about what visitors want to see] comes from.\textsuperscript{93}

Interpreters are taught to feel out visitors and to provide information based on their interests. Finding a balance between accuracy and visitor interests can be a challenge:

“So that’s one of our big challenges, is that we want to make sure that we’re accurate and that there’s a certain integrity to what we do, and we’re portraying people as appropriate but on the other hand there’s stuff that people maybe don’t want to be talking about or visually experiencing for sure while on their vacation.”\textsuperscript{94} On one hand, this makes perfect sense: develop your narratives according to your visitor’s prior knowledge and interest in order to develop a dialogue with the potential for learning. On the other hand, this


\textsuperscript{93} Interview with Adar Charlton, BVT assistant, Fort William Historical Park, 15 September 2008.

\textsuperscript{94} Interview with Shawn Patterson, curator, Fort William Historical Park, 3 June 2008.
approach dictates that visitors need never hear or learn about anything they don’t want to, anything that challenges previously held beliefs or stereotypes. This seems highly problematic for a site that aims, on some level, to educate its visitors about history.

Numerous factors shape the story of history communicated at Fort William and what is left out of that narrative. The mind-set and more limited knowledge base of fur trade societies available at the time the site was built can still be seen in research documents used to educate staff and in programming organization. The fact that the site was reconstructed as a tourist destination, with concomitant economic motivations, dictates that visitor desires are placed ahead of historic needs. Ensuring an entertaining, comfortable visit for tourists had meant that the site is not prepared to overtly depict challenging subjects, though they may be introduced on an individual level. As Shawn Patterson explained, interpreting difficult subject matter is not a priority of the site:

[P]art of the reason [visitors are] not prepared for [controversy] is because that’s not how we do business. You will not encounter a drama on our historic site that deals with someone, you know, going to the doctor to have their syphilis dealt with. You will not hear Kenneth McKenzie backhand his wife when they’re having an argument in the back of their house. You know what I mean? You will not hear corporal punishment with kids. You will not see someone in the hospital who has a dreadful case of measles, etc., etc., etc. There is a certain threshold up to which we do not present in a very significant way on our historic site. Now mind you, if you’re dealing with some of our more seasoned interpreters, and you’re inclined to talk about any of those things, we’d be pleased to. […] They are important things I genuinely do enjoy chatting about, but we don’t front-end them.\(^95\)

It falls to individual interpreters or visitors to initiate discussions on less pleasant or more controversial topics. As indicated, experienced interpreters may do so, yet with such young staff members who often return for only two to three summers it should come as no surprise that such dialogues occur sporadically. It is possible to learn about “turning

\(^95\) Ibid.
off,” pregnancy, homosocial culture, and conflict at Fort William if visitors take an active interest in finding out about such things, but numerous factors contribute to the silence on these topics heard by less conscientious tourists.

**Conclusion:**

Fort William presents a rich and varied history of the fur trade through living history techniques of first-person interpretation and scripted dramatizations. Visitors can access information on the status hierarchies and power struggles between the men of the company, the union of company men and country women, and the labour of voyageurs, tradesmen and women by watching the Arrival, the Council Meeting, and the Arrest, or by conversing with different characters of the fur trade. Developing an understanding of the homo-social bonds developed between *les hivernants*, practices of childrearing, or the conclusion of *mariages à la façon du pays* through “turning off,” however, is much less likely. The silence or, more accurately, whispers surrounding these topics are influenced by many interrelating factors. The strengths and limitations of the presentation methods selected by the site, namely first person interpretation and dramatic sketches, favour bourgeois characters who left detailed sources, and attention grabbing scripts that present topics that are easily explained and digested by the audience. Characteristics of the seasonal staff animating the site, such as their youth and seasonal transiency, act to limit the scope of topics some are comfortable discussing, as well as the depth of detail many are able to delve into. Most predominantly, the site’s reticence to embrace some of the ‘darker’ topics of the fur trade relates to the understanding of the site as tourist attraction that must meet visitor expectations and leave them happy. In attempting to create a version of the past that will appeal to the broadest popular denominator, and thus have the
largest fiscal benefits for the site and region, the site presents a narrative of tourism/history that omits some of the complexities and nuances of fur trade life.
Illustration 5.1: Orientation Map at Fort William Historical Park. Photo by the Author, 2008.

Illustration 5.3: Mr. McKenzie leads a toast during “The Arrival” dramatization, FWHP. Photo by the author, 2008.

Illustration 5.4: Mr. Taitt restrains the drunken smith as Doctor McLoughlin orders the insolent man to be sent to the gaol in the dramatization of “The Arrest,” FWHP. Photo by the author, 2008.
Illustration 5.5: The tradesman receives a beaded bag as a betrothal gift and in return gives the Aboriginal woman and her people a gun, FWHP. Photo by the author, 2008.
Illustration 5.6: Material Culture of Family Life, FWHP.
Top - Children’s room in Doctor McLoughlin’s House.
Bottom - The cradle, dolls, and small snowshoes indicate children’s presence in the McKenzie portion of the Wintering House.
Photos by the author, 2008.
Illustration 5.7: The arriving partner and his wife join the procession to the Great Hall to close the “Arrival” dramatization, FWHP. Photo by the author, 2008.
Illustrations 5.8: Women at work at Fort William.
Top - Three women are hard at work planting the garden, FWHP.
Middle - Women are busy decorating clothing and bags with beads in Boucher’s House.
Bottom - An Aboriginal or Métis woman assesses furs at the Indian Shop.
Photos by the author, 2008.
Conclusion

When this dissertation was still in its infancy I dragged a fellow graduate student with me to Upper Canada Village’s Fall Fair. As we toured the site, asking questions and conversing with interpreters, we noticed an interesting trend. In building after building, as we probed the work women did, we were told that women did not work outside of the home. Yet, we finally said, is there not a woman working in the woolen mill? Oh yes, the interpreter responded, but that’s only because her husband owns the mill. As I conducted my research on site two years later, this statement about women’s work continued to be popular. Time after time, interpreters asserted to the multitude of visitors passing through the site that women did not work outside the home. When pressed, however, they amended this statement. They explained the ideal of separate spheres, but that many women took up the skills of their husband’s trade, and elaborated upon the jobs available to women, such as teaching. So why, I wonder, if the interpreters have all this information available to them to begin with do they continue to assert, in contradiction to their knowledge, that women did not work outside of the home?

This project is rooted in a handful of questions about how historic sites represent the past. How are women’s and gender histories addressed at living history sites? What aspects of the past are included and what are excluded in these public history venues? What factors shape the decisions made by site management and staff when selecting the narratives and ‘facts’ to communicate to site visitors? To what extent does this past perpetuate myths of national development and Canadian identity? And, finally, does the history visitors engage with at historic sites merit the trust they put in it?
The narratives of history presented by Fort Henry, Upper Canada Village, and Fort William in 2008 and 2009 included a wide variety of stories, events, and characters, yet, they also excluded a significant portion of the past. Visitors to these sites should have learned about the importance of the land and landscape, about the work men and women did to develop the land, about class or status differences, and about the relationship of each site to the development of Canada, whether politically, economically or geographically. The sites excluded, or addressed very infrequently, the nature of relationships, pregnancy and childbirth, sexuality, or violence. In the cases where such topics were mentioned, they often lacked the detail and nuance available to other subject matter. For example, Upper Canada Village mentioned pregnancy in the doctor’s home but did not discuss the dangers of giving birth or the female community of support that aided new mothers. Likewise, Fort William reenacted a betrothal of a trader and a local woman, yet neglected to present information on the attitudes towards race that shaped company policies towards marriage.

The case studies conducted at Fort Henry, Upper Canada Village, and Fort William in 2008 and 2009 demonstrate that women’s and gender histories continue to be minimized, stereotyped, and segregated at many historic sites. Although each site has its strengths and weaknesses concerning the representation of the past, all excluded information and selectively communicated information about the past. They “sift[ed] away the problematic” elements of history, to use Michael Kammen’s words,¹ and left behind stories that aggrandize our national and community roots, that distil a sense of national character, and that perpetuate traditional myths of grandeur and greatness. In

¹ Michael Kammen, In the Past Lane – Historical Perspectives on American Culture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 220.
minimizing the role of soldiers off the parade square at Fort Henry, or the changes being “turned off” by a fur trader brought for a Native woman at Fort William, by leaving out detail or treating these topics superficially these sites communicated to visitors that these are less important histories. Although Fort Henry trained its staff to address the presence of women during tours, this is inconsistently done. In practice, the site segregated the communication of the experiences of women into short programs that visitors may or, more often, may not choose to attend. Finally, women’s work was stereotyped at Fort Henry and Upper Canada Village. Work inside the home, or family quarters, that conforms to visitor expectations of domesticity was more visible than work that challenges these notions. For example, the hard physical labour of gardening, butchering, and dairying was not shown at Upper Canada Village. Although the work of laundering clothes was recognized at both sites, the scope of the task was not presented clearly. Similarly, the ebullient character of voyageurs and the pomposity of fur trade partners, though based on historical sources, became somewhat stereotyped through repetition at Fort William. These stereotypes conform to popular conceptions or myths about the past and so are easier to support than challenge. All of the sites addressed aspects of women’s and gender history. In doing so, however, they used the strategies of minimizing, segregating, and stereotyping to maintain the dominance of other narratives of history, whether they be the precision of the British infantry, the adventurous spirit of fur traders that expanded the nation, or the determination of ‘settlers’ that developed the backbone of modern society.

Each site must be selective about the aspects of the past it conveys. No site can present every known piece of information about its topic because its subject area is too broad, and visitors would have a difficult time navigating the flood of ‘facts.’
designers and management must debate the primary and secondary (and tertiary, etc.) messages they want the site to get across to visitors. Why is it, though, that women’s and gender histories continue to be given short shrift on the priority list of historic sites? This paper has argued that the dual factors of the tourism industry and the desire to support a Canadian identity have shaped the formation, development, and present practices of historic sites.

As shown in Chapter Two, the tourism industry and the preservation of historic sites have been long integrated. The profitability of the tourism industry quickly led to the involvement of provincial and federal governments in the industry. They sought to boost their economies by developing parks, infrastructure, and attractions for tourists. History and historic places were commended by local citizens and politicians alike as sites that would invite tourists to a region. Government bodies built or renovated sites across the country throughout the twentieth century to capitalize on tourist revenues, as well as to communicate certain messages about the past to citizens and their visitors.

In consequence of historic sites being so enmeshed in tourism, a fundamental factor influencing the decision making around historic sites is revenue generation. The representation of the past at historic sites is shaped by perceptions of what will appeal most to visitors and what will attract their business. As McKay and Bates have argued, such sites present a hybrid tourism/history, a heavily commodified narrative of the past designed to generate profit.2 Rather than imparting the most accurate information possible, tourism/history expounds the most saleable history.

---

The desire to make money through historic sites affects the history presented by the site directly and indirectly. On the one hand, site directors and management parse what is known about the past to mold a narrative that they believe will appeal to visitors. On the other, the organization of the site, how it is staffed and funded for example, also influences the representation of the past created by the site.

Each of the sites studied here fall under the oversight of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism. Each receives funding from this body. Management from each venue, however, asserted that the ministry was less and less willing to fund historic sites. This put greater pressure, they said, upon the historic sites to generate more revenues at the gate to fund their own activities. As Peter Cazaly at Upper Canada Village and Shawn Patterson at Fort William lamented, this has meant that programming initiatives that would make the interpretation at each site more accurate have been denied because it could not be shown that they would bring in more visitors and more revenue. Sites are unwilling, in many cases, to spend money to improve the history presented at a site if it cannot be shown that the change will improve the profitability of the site. The relationship of the sites with the Ministry of Tourism creates a system in which sites act to support the aims of tourism in order to receive as much money as possible from the government, as well as in which they make decisions about programming based on financial potential and concerns.

Similarly, often sites are staffed in the most economical way possible, using seasonal staff often made up of frequently students. Students can be hired at a lower minimum wage than other categories of workers. While hiring students is often a bargain, their employment also creates challenges. Youth transition in and out of student status relatively quickly, meaning that most sites have a high-turnover rate each year. At
best, in most cases, the majority of interpreters have two or three summers of experience. The high turnover of staff means that the development of knowledge is somewhat circumscribed. As such, the training the interpreters receive is especially critical as there is little time for independent research and development. Research at Fort Henry has shown, however, that training is highly selective, preparing staff to address the primary messages of the site and little else. Even with diversified and on-going training, it would be a challenge for seasonal staff to learn the nuances of fur trade history, colonial Upper Canada, or the British military in Canada in only four months. Furthermore, the age and maturity of staff can also limit the material they are comfortable discussing, as the investigation into the presentation of pregnancy at Fort William has shown. As a result of experience and age, then, interpreters are often prepared to present only a small snapshot of history, one framed by the financial imperatives of the site.

The historical narratives selected by site management are ones that are felt to appeal to visitors. They design experiences at their site that they hope will both entertain and educate visitors; yet, in an edutainment, experience-focused leisure economy the communication of in-depth information is often sacrificed to produce pleasurable diversion. Management aims to give visitors what they want, but what do visitors want? And how was it decided that accurate gendered histories were not what was desired by the public? Archival research and interviews with site employees indicate that the conception of what visitors want is shaped variously by what government officials say that they want, by larger trends in societal leisure time that privilege entertainment, and by actual visitor opinion gathered through interaction and surveys.

Government rhetoric has often told visitors that they should desire a history that defines them, one that provides the foundation of modern society. As such, sites continue
to perpetuate myths about Canadian identity and roots. We are a nation connected to the land, able to expand sea-to-sea because of intrepid explorers and adventurers exploiting the natural resources of the land. We are a Commonwealth nation with deep connections to Britain, connections that define us equally as British and as non-American. We are a nation built on loyalty to the Crown, and the hard-work and perseverance of moral, forthright colonial ancestors. These myths are perpetuated in the education system and reinforced at historic sites. Because they are ingrained from a young age, they are in fact what many visitors expect from historic sites.

Beyond identity myths, however, sites also want to entertain visitors to keep them patronizing historic sites and spending discretionary dollars. On the one hand, this is interpreted to mean making history easy for visitors. Such history should be familiar and digestible, history that is not-controversial or challenging. This limits the amount of gendered history that might be introduced because it is newer, less familiar, and often broaches subjects that are controversial, such as sexuality, violence, and power. On the other hand, keeping visitors entertained means providing them with spectacle. Yet, some history is considered more attention-grabbing than others. Many of the daily tasks performed by women are considered menial, and boring, and are excluded from some historic site demonstrations. Fort Henry, for example, rarely shows the tasks women performed in garrison nor the daily of duties of men in the cookhouse or the barracks. Even when issues such as courtship or the disintegration of a marriage are depicted, however, such as at Fort William, the desire to make them spectacular often distorts the information communicated. The goal of entertaining visitors constrains the history presented, and excludes or minimizes gender history, because what is entertaining is defined narrowly as familiar, comforting, and visually appealing.
Even when interpreters have information about courtships, pregnancies, or destitute vagrants available they often do not share it because visitors do not ask for it. This is a Catch-22 situation. Visitors, typically with little background in history, rely on the material culture displays to spark their interest and questions. They ask about armoires and wallpaper, and comment on antiques and tools. Interpreters, in turn, arm themselves with facts and stories about objects and how they were used in order to best answer visitor questions. Yet, as feminist museologists noted in the 1980s, few museums collected objects of women’s history because they were not valued until recently. Furthermore, many aspects of gender history are more abstract, such as power and violence, and do not have an object base to build upon. Without objects to spur questions, and without questions to incite interpreter commentary, visitors remain uninformed about many aspects of history, continuing their inability to voice or frame questions. Interpreters become locked into rote presentations that address what they believe visitors are interested in based on past experience with questions, and over time visitors learn that such spiels focusing on material culture are what defines historic sites.

Does the tourism/history presented at historic sites warrant the trust of their visitors? Yes and no. None of the sites fabricated outright lies about the past. Everything they presented has some basis in historical sources. Yet, the selectivity they practice in telling stories about the past, the amount of detail that is omitted and the amount of conflict that is silenced, indicates that visitors would do better to be more critical of museums and historic sites than they have been.

Might not a greater representation of women’s history and gender history issues appeal to the public? Such topics have the ability to generate personal connections with the subject matter, as was seen with several mothers comparing their birthing experience
in a hospital with a doctor’s home visit. Including greater detail about the daily experiences and concerns of our forebears allows us to better connect with what our ancestors lives might have been like and to compare the differences between our lives, an important priority for many Canadians according to the Canadians and Their Pasts survey. Although sites are extremely wary of breaking down the false conceptions or the myths held by visitors, for many of the people I have spoken to about this project the discovery of new ideas is exactly what they find interesting and entertaining about museums. Such a shift does require, though, the belief on the part of management that women’s history and gender history provide as valuable narratives and lessons about the past as political and economic histories. How we, and museums specifically, define ‘historically significant’ needs to be challenged and broadened.
Bibliography:

Primary Sources – Archival:

Fort Henry National Historic Site Internal Documents:

Bates, Christina. “Blue Monday—A day in the life of a washerwoman, 1840 being a description of the Tools of her Trade, and how she used them.” ND.

Fort Henry Guide Manual

Fort Henry Interpretation Staff Chart, 1990-1998

Fort Henry National Historic Site Commemorative Integrity Statement


Provincial Archives of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario.

RG 5-54 Administrative Records of the St. Lawrence Parks Commission [1952-1966]
RG 47-47 Archeological sites and survey report files [1955-2004]
RG 17-1 Archivist of Ontario’s Administrative, Correspondence and Subject Files [1903-1997]
RG17-25 Archivist of Ontario’s Old Fort William Project Files [1971-1975]
RG 1-8 Correspondence and reports of the Minister of Natural Resources [1958-1998]
RG 5-7 Correspondence of the Executive Assistant to the Minister of Tourism [1930-1971]
RG 15-1 Correspondence of the Minister of Public Works [1905-1972]
RG 5-4 Correspondence of the Minister of Tourism and Information [1945-1972]
RG 47-64 Correspondence on historical resources in provincial parks [1910-1979]
RG 5-18 Interdepartmental Correspondence of the Deputy Minister of Travel and Publicity [1943-1963]
RG 65-12 Ministry of Tourism and Recreation media reports [1990-1993]
RG 47-63 Old Fort William Restoration Project Correspondence [1967-1977]
RG 3-23 Premier Leslie M. Frost general correspondence [1949-1961]
RG 3-33 Premier Leslie M. Frost speeches [1949-1963]
RG 65-51 Tourism, and recreation speeches and statements files [1983-1993]
RG 5-46 Travel Research Branch Records [1961-1974]
National Library and Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario.

RG 24 vol. 5894 Fort Henry Kingston Repairs and Proposed Transfer to Department of Mines and Resources, Vols 1-3.

Micro T-14076 Historic Sites – Eastern Ontario – Fort Henry – Kingston, Park/Subject Classification System

Queen’s University Archive, Kingston, Ontario.

Fort Henry Scrapbook Collection
Kingston Historical Society, Fort Henry Centennial 1936

Upper Canada Village Archive, Morrisburg Ontario.

Box 1: Magazine articles about UCV, 1960-1969.


Newspapers:
Kingston British Whig Standard

Primary Sources - Published:


An Act to establish the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, 1-2 Elizabeth II (1953), c.39 (Province of Canada).


Department of Tourism and Information, Ontario.  Ontario – Great Ontario Adventure Vacations.  nd.


Frost, Leslie, Prime Minister of Ontario, “..it is at once our homage to the past and our gift to the future.” Globe Magazine 17 June 1961, 6.


Ontario Department of Tourism and Information, Travel Research Branch, Statistical Handbook 1966.

Ontario Department of Tourism and Information, Travel Research Branch, Statistical Handbook 1968.


Ontario Department of Tourism and Information, Travel Research Branch, Statistical Handbook 1975.


Secondary Sources:


------------------------


Krugler, John D. “Behind the Public Presentations: Research and Scholarship at Living History Museums of Early America.” *William and Mary Quarterly* 48 n.3 (1991): 347-386.


------------------------  *Living History Museums – Undoing History through Performance.* 


------------------------

------------------------


------------------------


Poutanen, Mary Ann. “‘To Indulge Their Carnal Appetites’: Prostitution in Early Nineteenth Century Montreal, 1810-1842.” PhD Dissertation: Université de Montreal, 1996.


Sexias, Peter. “Surveys don’t reflect interest in history.” The Vancouver Sun, 2 July 2008, A11.


Appendix A:

Note on Sources

This study is inter-disciplinary in its approach, drawing upon ethnographic research and anthropological study, museology and visitor studies, historiography, and the application of theories of memory, identity, and nationalism. In my case-study approach, focusing on three living history sites, the bulk of the research was undertaken as a participant observer, producing “thick descriptions” of events, to use Clifford Geertz term, and deriving data from detailed on-site observation of programming. Much like anthropologists, I sought to “closely observe, and [record]…” the institutional practices at the sites under study.\(^{616}\) On four occasions I brought family members and friends along with me to Upper Canada Village in an attempt to see the site through fresh eyes. Their perceptions of the site and its messages both provided me with thought-provoking new avenues of inquiry and affirmed some of my thoughts about site practices. Through my repeated immersion into the daily operations of the sites and its peoples, namely interpreters, managers, and visitors, I was able to gain a deep understanding of the norms, concerns, and motivations of the site.

As a ‘foreigner’ intruding regularly into the site community and culture, the question does arise as to whether my presence affected the performances presented by interpreters. Most assuredly the majority of interpreters were aware of my presence and research goals. Did they alter their behaviour to conform to my perceived expectations?

Yes, I believe some did. To the best of my ability I attempted to negate this by tagging along behind family groups, and eavesdropping on visitor-interpreter conversations from just out of sight. When other visitors were present in a building or space I let their curiosity and interests direct the flow of conversation. I would occasionally press interpreters with questions if they were not forthcoming with information, even if visitors did not initiate the topic, in order to ascertain what information they knew but did not prioritize in their presentations.

In addition to close observation of the practices and culture of the sites, I also undertook informal oral interviews with staff members and management to gain a clearer understanding of the factors motivating and influencing their interpretive choices. All interviews were open-ended and lasted approximately one to one-and-a-half hours. Although I had a set list of interview questions, participants formed their own answers in their own words. The nature of the participants’ answers directed the flow of the conversation; questions were posed in no particular order, though interviews did tend to follow similar topical flows. Exact wording of questions was also inconsistent in some cases. Examples of the questions posed to management and the interpreters at Fort Henry and Upper Canada Village are appended. Feedback from interpreters at Fort William was solicited informally during the course of their everyday work on site. I attempted to engage as many interpreters as possible in conversations about the following issues: the representation of pregnancy; the depiction of husbands and wives together; the portrayal of day-to-day conflicts and arguments; the latitude each interpreter is given to create their own character histories and personas; whether they prefer playing certain (types of)

---

characters; the activities they can engage in whilst interpreting; and their perception of the most common visitor questions. All interpreters and members of management were made aware that their comments were going to be used for this research project and each had the opportunity to decline to respond, or to request that they remain anonymous.

Visitor surveys were completed at each site. The English versions of each are appended here. Fifty surveys were completed at Fort Henry and Upper Canada Village, and fifty-seven surveys were completed at Fort William. They were conducted at intervals over the course of the summer, in an attempt to capture any seasonal changes in experience, and on all days of the week. Typically, surveys were solicited between 11:00 and 16:30 because visitors were not yet leaving the site prior to 11:00. The surveys were conducted at the exits of the sites. Each visitor or visitor group approaching the exit was asked whether they had the time to participate in a ten minute survey about their visit. Questions on the surveys conducted at all three sites attempted to ascertain information falling into several broad themes: the motivation for the visit; visitor self-perception of prior knowledge and acquired knowledge during the visit; their engagement with male and female interpreters during the visit; their understanding of issues of gender history following the visit; and demographics. Some questions had predetermined answer sets, while others were open-ended. I wrote down as much of the conversation between myself and the responders as possible, but the conversations were not recorded. On occasion visitors ended the survey before its completion because of time constraints. In some instances, recognizing the signs of a visitor keen to move on, I selected only a handful of questions to ask the visitor. As a result, the number of total responses for each question varies across each survey.
Open-ended Interviews with Site Management (approx. 1.5-2 hours)

I. Employment History

How long have you acted as ________________?

What are your responsibilities in this position?

What type of qualifications do you have for this position?

Have you held any other job(s) at Fort William?

Have you ever worked at any other historic site? In what capacity?

Who do you work most closely with at the site?

II. Staff Training & Evaluation

What skills or knowledge does the site look for in its interpretive employees?

How does the site prepare staff for interpretive responsibilities? Who conducts training?

Are certain subjects stressed as more important to know/communicate than others? If so, why?

Are tours and programs assessed? If so, how? What elements are focused upon?

What opportunities exist for on-going learning and/or training?

III. Choosing Stories, Designing Programs

What are the goals and aims of the site?

What are the key messages the site must and would like to communicate?

What are the methods the site uses to communicate these messages?

What is the process that the site follows for program development?

Who makes the final decision?

What factors do you think influence their decision?

How are new programming ideas prioritized and ultimately selected?

To what extent do your personal interests influence the subject matter you choose to investigate or present?
Are there any government policies that delimit what the site chooses to present?

How much weight is given to the entertainment value of a program compared to its educational qualities when selecting which ideas to pursue?

How often are new programming initiatives made?

What are the main sources of information or resources the site uses for research?

Do you intentionally cater to any particular elements of school curriculum? How so?

Is funding an issue?

IV. Women’s History and Gender History

How does the site currently represent women’s experiences?

Have specific demonstrations or programs been implemented to address women’s history?

How has the representation of women’s experiences changed at the site over time? Has it become more of a priority for the site to address? Why?

Do you think women’s history is adequately represented at the site?

In your opinion, how does the representation of gender history differ from the representation of women’s history?

Does the site represent gender history?

Are relationships between men and women shown? Do male and female interpreters interact?

Does the site address differences in masculinities, i.e. class, race, rank?

V. Overview/Conclusion

Where do you see the site going in the future?

What is your next priority for site development?
Open-Ended Interview Questions for Fort Henry Interpretive Staff  (approx. 60min)

I. Employment History

How long have you worked at (site name)?

What job titles or interpretive positions have you held during this time?

What are/were your responsibilities in these roles?
What do you consider to be the most important aspect/element of your job?

What is about this/these jobs that appeals/appealed to you?

Have you worked at any other historic sites? In what capacity?

II. Training

What skills or knowledge did the site want you to have before beginning employment?

How does the site prepare you for your interpretive responsibilities? Why type of training, if any, is given?

How much of staff training is devoted to instruction in historical information and tour and demo preparation?
Do you think equal weighting is given to “interp” and “marching” duties? Why or why not?

What do you think is/would be the most effective way to teach staff about the history of Fort Henry?

What role do other interpretive employees play in preparing you for the job?

How much onus was on you to learn information by yourself or on your own time?

Are there on-going learning opportunities run by the site throughout the year? (i.e. lectures etc.)

Did you feel prepared to interact with and inform tourists by Opening Day?
If not, at what point (if any) did you feel comfortable and confident in your historical knowledge and skills?

What aspect of the Fort’s history or the history of British Garrisons do you feel you know the least about?

How does the site assure ‘quality control’? Do you think this is an effective means?

What are the qualities of a good interpreter?
III. Leading Programs and Demonstrations

How would you describe Fort Henry to a potential visitor?

What programs or demonstrations do you most commonly lead? (Can you please describe them?) What methods do you use to communicate this information to the public?

Which programs have been the most successful and what characteristics do they share?

To your understanding, how does the site evaluate these programs? Do they take into account interpreter feedback?

What balance does the site strike between accuracy and entertainment?

Are certain subjects, topics, or issues stressed as more important to know/communicate than others by site management? If so, what reasons does the site give for this?

If you could narrow the historical themes addressed by the site down to two what would they be?

What (historical information) do you find most important to communicate to the public (during these programs)? Why?

How do you find that the public interacts with and understands these programs? Are there common questions or reactions? Any memorable examples?

Do you think gender history is important to communicate at (site name)? Why? How is it presently communicated? Could it be improved upon?

How does the site demonstrate the diversity of men’s social statuses, occupations, and experiences?

What does the character or role you play day to day here communicate to the public?

Do you think the site and its programs adequately represent the history of life in a British garrison? Is anything overly stressed in your opinion? Or glossed over? Why do you think this may be?

How do you see the overall messages of the site fitting into the history of Canada? Does the site help to define what Canada is, and by extension what being a Canadian is?

In your opinion, how has the interpretation of Fort Henry changed since you began working there?
Staff Questionnaire – Upper Canada Village Historical Park
Summer 2009

Work history at UCV:
How long have you worked at UCV (please note year)?
Why did you decide to work at UCV?
What is the best thing about your job?

Training and Interpretive Messaging:
What training methods have the site used to prepare you for your job(s)?
What do you consider to be the central thematic message(s) communicated by the site this year? How does your building/area support these messages and themes?
Are certain historical topics stressed to you as critical to communicate to visitors by management? If so, what are they? Do you agree that they are critical? Why or why not?
What, if anything, particularly interests you about the time period represented at this site?
What aspect of 19th century Canadian history do you feel you know the least about or are the least comfortable with?

Experiences with Visitors:
What do you think visitors are most interested in hearing about? (i.e. specific objects, skills, lifestyles, politics…) What are their most common questions?

Comments on Programming: Where can UCV go from here?
In your opinion, how – if at all - has the interpretation at UCV changed since you began working here? (i.e. shift in thematic focus, special events, presentation methods, staffing numbers or composition etc.) Please be specific re. the timeline.

Do you think the site and its programs adequately represent the historical experiences of women at home? In the community? At work & at leisure?
What is the site doing well and what do you think it could improve upon?

How might the site improve its representation of family relationships in the 19th century? Class/Status differences? Interdenominational differences? Racial & Ethnic differences?

Sex: M F
Age: 19 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+
VISITOR QUESTIONNAIRE – FORT HENRY

I. EXPECTATIONS AND PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

1) Why did you visit Fort Henry today? What were you looking forward to seeing/doing here?

2) What did you do while visiting Fort Henry today?

3) What did you find most interesting during your visit? Why?

4) Where have you learned about the British military or 19th century Upper Canada?

5) How much knowledge of the British military in Upper Canada would you say you had…

   …prior to visiting the site? None Some Expert
   0 -- 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4

   …after visiting the site?
   0 -- 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4

6) What words come to mind when you hear FORT HENRY / BRITISH FORT:

7) Please indicate your opinion of each of the following statements about the BRITISH MILITARY (Agree, Undecided, Disagree):

   | British military officers were always of the upper class and rich. |
   | Officer’s wives played no role in garrison (or fort) life because of their high class and status. |
   | The only benefit of having soldier’s wives living in garrison was improved morale. |
   | Military garrisons, generally, contributed greatly to the social life of garrison towns, i.e. dances, skating parties, regimental bands. |
   | Marching or military drill was the primary activity of all men at Fort Henry in the mid-19th century. |

Comments?:

II. INTERACTION WITH INTERPRETERS

8) Do you recall seeing or talking with female staff in costume at the site today?

   [ ] Yes   [ ] NO

→ If YES:
a) What roles were the women playing? What activities or tasks can you recall them doing?

→ If NO:
c) To what extent were you aware of this during your visit?
   [ ] very aware       [ ] somewhat aware       [ ] not aware/did not notice

9) Do you recall seeing or talking with male staff in costume at the site today?
   01 Yes   02 No

→ If YES:
a) What roles were the men playing? What activities or tasks can you recall them doing?

→ If NO:
c) To what extent were you aware of this during your visit?
   [ ] very aware       [ ] somewhat aware       [ ] not aware/did not notice

III. OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

10) Did you learn anything new or different about British military garrisons today?
   [ ] No       [ ] Yes

→ IF YES: What stands out as an ‘aha’ moment or as something that changed a preconception?

11) Following your visit today, if there anything you now want to learn more about?

12) Would you be interested in seeing more interpretation/demonstrations of day-to-day activities at Fort Henry? i.e. shining, cooking, laundry, etc.

12) To what extent did your visit to Fort Henry add to your understanding of Canada’s history?
   [ ] very much       [ ] somewhat       [ ] not at all

13) Would you like to make any other comments about your visit today?

DEMOGRAPHICS:

14) Sex: [ ] Male       [ ] Female       [ ] Transgendered

15) Within which of the following age ranges do you fit?
   [ ] 15-19       [ ] 50-59
   [ ] 20-29       [ ] 60-69
   [ ] 30-39       [ ] 70+
   [ ] 40-49
16) The highest level of schooling you have completed is:
   [  ] Grade School
   [  ] Some High School
   [  ] High School
   [  ] Some Post-Secondary
   [  ] College or University Diploma/Degree
   [  ] Graduate School

17) How many times have you visited Fort Henry?

18) How many people are accompanying you today?

19) How do you ethnically self-identify?

20) What is your nationality?
    → If CANADIAN: What province are you from?

21) What language do you most frequently speak at home?
VISITOR QUESTIONNAIRE – UPPER CANADA VILLAGE

I. EXPECTATIONS AND PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

1) Why did you visit Upper Canada Village today?

2) What did you do while visiting UCV today?
   - Carriage/Oxen ride
   - Tow Scow
   - Orientation video
   - Museum
   - Farm(s)
   - Mills
   - Trades
   - Tavern
   - Homes
   - Churches
   - Family Activity Centre
   - Bike ride
   - Costume
   - Gift Shop
   - Restaurant
   - Other:

3) What did you find most … interesting during your visit? Why?
   …memorable about your visit?

4) Where have you learned about Upper Canada in the 19th century prior to your visit?

5) How much knowledge of Upper Canadian life in the 1800s would you say you had…
   …prior to visiting the site? None Some Expert
   0 -- 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4
   …after visiting the site?
   0 -- 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4
   If increased: What did you learn?

6) What words come to mind when you hear Upper Canada Village?:

7) During your visit today did you hear about… If no, would you have liked to?
   19th century Canadian Politics? Y N Y N
   19th century Economy? Y N Y N
   19th century Religion? Y N Y N
   19th century Population/Society Y N Y N
   19th century Leisure activities? Y N Y N
   The International context of 1860s? Y N Y N

Comments?:

II. INTERACTION WITH INTERPRETERS

8) What activities or tasks can you recall female staff doing today?

9) What activities or tasks can you recall male staff doing today?
III. OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

10) Following your visit today, if there anything you now want to learn more about?

11) To what extent did your visit to Upper Canada Village add to your understanding of
Canada’s history?
   [ ] very much   [ ] somewhat   [ ] not at all

12) Would you like to make any other comments about your visit today?

IV. DEMOGRAPHICS:

14) Sex: [ ] Male   [ ] Female

15) Within which of the following age ranges do you fit?
   [ ] 15-19   [ ] 20-29   [ ] 30-39   [ ] 40-49
   [ ] 50-59   [ ] 60-69   [ ] 70+

16) The highest level of schooling you have completed is:
   [ ] Grade School
   [ ] Some High School
   [ ] High School
   [ ] Some Post-Secondary
   [ ] College or University Diploma/Degree
   [ ] Graduate School

17) How many times have you visited Upper Canada Village?

18) How many people are accompanying you today?

19) What is your nationality?
   → If CANADIAN: What province are you from?

20) What language do you most frequently speak at home?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME
VISITOR QUESTIONNAIRE – FORT WILLIAM

I. EXPECTATIONS AND PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

1) Why did you visit Fort William Historical Park today?
2) What did you do while visiting Fort William today?
3) What did you find most interesting during your visit? Why?
4) Where have you learned about the Fur Trade prior to your visit?
5) How much knowledge of the Fur Trade would you say you had…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>…prior to visiting the site?</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Expert</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 -- 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

…after visiting the site?

| 0 -- 1 -- 2 -- 3 -- 4       |

6) What words come to mind when you hear FUR TRADE:

7) Please indicate your opinion of each of the following statements about the FUR TRADE
   (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided, Disagree, Strongly Disagree):

| In the North West Company there was a clear occupational and power differential between Scottish and French Canadian employees. | |
| There was a hierarchical or ranked social division between voyageurs/engagés based on the distance they had traveled into the interior and their time served in the fur trade. | |
| The introduction of European trade goods into Aboriginal society through the fur trade caused an immediate destruction of traditional Aboriginal lifeways. | |
| Aboriginal women were viewed by the majority of fur traders solely as sexual objects. | |
| Métis or bois-brûlés women came to be considered more desirable wives than Aboriginal women. | |

Comments?:

II. INTERACTION WITH INTERPRETERS

8) Do you recall seeing or talking with female interpreters/characters at the site today?
   [ ] Yes       [ ] NO

→ If YES:
   a) What roles were the women playing?

   b) What activities or tasks can you recall them doing?
→ If NO:
c) To what extent were you aware of this during your visit?
   [ ] very aware      [ ] somewhat aware     [ ] not aware/did not notice

9) Do you recall seeing or talking with male interpreters/characters at the site today?
   [ ] Yes   [ ] No

→ If YES:
a) What roles were the men playing?

b) What activities or tasks can you recall them doing?

→ If NO:
c) To what extent were you aware of this during your visit?
   [ ] very aware   [ ] somewhat aware  [ ] not aware/did not notice

III. OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

10) Did you learn anything new or different about the Fur Trade today? [ ] No[ ] Yes
→ IF YES: What did you learn?

11) Following your visit today, if there anything you now want to learn more about?

12) To what extent did your visit to Fort William add to your understanding of Canada’s history?
   [ ] very much       [ ] somewhat       [ ] not at all

13) Would you like to make any other comments about your visit today?

IV. DEMOGRAPHICS:

14) Sex: [ ] Male          [ ] Female

15) Within which of the following age ranges do you fit?
   [ ] 15-19       [ ] 50-59
   [ ] 20-29       [ ] 60-69
   [ ] 30-39       [ ] 70+
   [ ] 40-49

16) The highest level of schooling you have completed is:
   [ ] Grade School
   [ ] Some High School
   [ ] High School
   [ ] Some Post-Secondary
   [ ] College or University Diploma/Degree
   [ ] Graduate School
17) How many times have you visited Fort William?

18) How many people are accompanying you today?

20) What is your nationality?
    → If CANADIAN: What province are you from?

21) What language do you most frequently speak at home?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME
Appendix B:
Selection from Standing Orders of the Royal Canadian Rifles, (Montreal: John Lovell, 1861), 41-42.

ARRANGEMENT OF MARRIED MEN'S ROOMS

1. Women are only allowed in Barracks, when accommodation can be had, as an indulgence under certain regulations, not as a matter of right. Therefore all orders laid down for the guidance of married men and their wives, must be implicitly obeyed by the women, otherwise they will forfeit the advantage of Barrack accommodation.

2. Married men and their families must never be quartered in the same room with single men, except in cases of absolute necessity.

3. The Non Commissioned Officer in charge of a married room, will tell off a woman daily as orderly woman for the room all taking it in turn without reference to the rank of the husband.

4. The duties of the orderly woman will continue from rouse to lights out. The Barrack utensils are under her particular care, and she will report to the Non Commissioned Officer in charge, any deficiency in the same within one hour after rouse sounding. She is held responsible for the cleanliness of the stove, that part of the room common to all, and the carrying out of ashes or sweepings. This is the extent of her responsibilities, every woman being answerable for the cleanliness and good order of her own berth. Each woman will also fetch fresh water for her own use.

5. Changing Barrack utensils for inspection, sheets, or other bedding, sweeping the stairs and passages where married people are quartered, will be done by the soldier, only, and considered a room fatigue.

6. Bed posts are allowed to be put up by married people for the purpose of hanging curtains on at night; but these curtains must be taken down, or very closely drawn in to the bed posts, beds made up (not folded and turned up like the single men's) and berths in passable order by two hours after rouse sounding.

7. Each woman is to have her berth scrubbed out with water and soap every morning, summer and winter, Sundays excepted, by 9:30 a.m. No curtains will be allowed round the lower portion of the beds, nor any other thing that will impede the free circulation of air.

8. When an orderly woman of a room is reported for neglect of duty, her husband will be deprived of a working pass, until he teaches her how to perform it.

9. The arrangement of married man's accoutrements, clothing, etc., must be exactly the same as the single men; and they must be placed in that part of their berths most exposed to view. No article of household furniture can be allowed to appear amongst, nor crowded near them.

10. On the distribution of fuel by rooms by the Company Orderly, one man from each married room must attend on behalf of his room; also on the issue of candles. This will also be a room fatigue.
Appendix C:  
Fort Henry National Historic Site  
Commemorative Integrity Statement Messages

Primary Messages of National Significance of Fort Henry are:

- It was built (1832-1837) to defend the terminus of the Rideau Canal and the Naval Dockyard in Kingston Harbour;
- When it was completed it was the largest and most costly fortification built in British North America west of Quebec City;
- It was designed as the key site in a network of fortifications for the defence of Kingston and its harbour.

Secondary Messages of National Significance include:
- The commemorated period is 1832-1870;
- The significance of Kingston as a transportation centre and political capital in the first half of the 19th century;
- The strategic plan of defence of Kingston, the Rideau Canal and the naval dockyard;
- The design and construction of Fort Henry;
- The augmentation of the Kingston fortifications in the 1840s;
- Fort Henry’s place in the evolution of smooth bore fortification design;
- Fort Henry’s place among fortifications in British North America;
- The organization of the garrison;
- The British withdrawal from the site in 1870.

Heritage Messages* of Fort Henry include:
- The surviving 19th century heritage character of the Kingston harbour area;
- The historic military presence in the Kingston area, in particular the social and economic interaction between the civilian and military communities from the early 19th century continuing to the present;
- The construction and role of the first Fort Henry particularly defending the dockyards during the War of 1812 and its evolution to 1832;
- Fort Henry and its use by the Canadian military, 1870-1914;
- The use of the Fort as a detention centre during the 1837 Rebellion, WWI and WWII;
- The restoration of Fort Henry in the 1930s;
- The social and economic life of Kingston since the restoration activities in the 1930s – e.g. tourism and the role of the Fort Henry Guard in representing/symbolizing the city;
- Early (1930s) live animation of historical presentation in Canada – the Fort Henry Guard.

*NOTE: Heritage Messages are not directly related to those of national significance, but do contribute to the Fort’s heritage character and heritage experience.