Displaying the Industrial: Toward a Genealogy of Heritage Labor

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> The hope for a "postindustrial" society is, in fact, only a touristic way of looking at work.
> —Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*

Scholarly attention to the class politics of industrial heritage has tended to focus on places and people experiencing deindustrialization within ongoing, global-scaled processes of economic restructuring in the later part of the twentieth century, with attention to the relationships of "old (industrial) economy" and "new economy" workers and the kinds of transitions and redevelopments often grouped under the term *gentrification*. The growing exploration of these relationships and processes adds a welcome critical complexity to our understanding of the production of "heritage" and the multiple roles that heritage sites, narratives, and workers perform. A further welcome development is the nascent exploration of these forms of production as work in themselves—that is, as labor devoted to preserving and interpreting "obsolete" forms and spaces of labor within transformed or transforming economies. At industrial sites, much of this labor has historically been unpaid, provided by railroad and canal enthusiasts, local preservationists, volunteer docents, and countless others. But it intersects in important and revealing ways with the contributions of compensated and increasingly professionalized workers in the present-day knowledge and service sectors. And it also has a much longer genealogy than we tend to assume, with links to conventions and locations that emerged concurrently with industrialism and perhaps with capitalism itself. While the field we now call "heritage" is arguably an outcome of late twentieth-century deindustrialization, this longer genealogy, which I begin to trace in this article, challenges us to rethink the labor of display more generally as a

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means of explaining, legitimizing, occasionally challenging, and often repairing the effects of industrial capitalism in its expansive as well as contractive moments.[1]

In what follows, I survey some locations and manifestations of industrial heritage labor over the long span of the industrial era with an eye to the class positionings of the people undertaking the work of display at industrial and industrial history sites, as a way to illuminate some of the complex roles played by cultural producers within industrial—and now "postindustrial"—capitalism. It is important to note at the outset that this is a sketch toward a genealogy rather than a comprehensive history. I am building toward the kind of "history of the present" that Foucault envisioned as a way of better understanding the logics and operations of power and particular systems of thought within contemporary institutions and ways of thinking—in this case, ways of thinking about industrial sites and histories. The chronology that begins to emerge from this survey suggests that far from being subsequent or secondary to industrial production—doing what Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has described as endowing the obsolete or outmoded with "a second life as heritage"—the forms of cultural labor associated with displaying the industrial have in fact been present from the start.[2] Labor scholars have become highly cognizant of the economic importance of experience, affect, image, and other intangible products associated with postindustrial places and processes; the genealogy sketched below shows earlier forms of display prefiguring and in some ways exemplifying those types of contemporary cultural production. It also suggests that cultural workers have served crucial functions by explaining and helping people—sometimes including themselves—to adapt to the ongoing volatility of industrialism and capitalism, often from class positions that exemplify the uncertainties of emergent and contingent professions or statuses. Seen this way, the labor of producing heritage and display appears as a complementary, not supplementary, activity that ultimately enables and extends capitalism's reach, a process that continues into the present and that has now become a primary economic driver—or at least an aspiration—in many places.

A Note on Sources

This initial gesture toward a genealogy draws on a variegated and fragmented body of data that includes primary and secondary, historical and ethnographic sources. In a sense I am looking backward from my own ethnographic study of public historians at a national park devoted to industrial history, a project that showed how closely the class positions of the people interpreting the industrial past mirrored those of visitors to the site and suggested that their cocreation of meanings served a shared purpose in locating themselves more securely within the shift into "postindustrialism."[3] This

1. Elsewhere I have proposed a general framework for broadening the economic and historical contexts within which we examine this type of cultural production; this article begins to trace some of the developments and connections within that broader framework. See Stanton, "Keeping 'the Industrial.'"

2. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, and see esp. 131–87, "Destination Museum."

3. Stanton, *Lowell Experiment*.

interpretation of present-day heritage labor prompts me to read backward into the secondary literature on historic and commemorative sites.[4] This now-extensive body of work contains many hints and clues about the people involved in production and display but almost never considers their activities as a form of labor in itself, a lacuna that may reveal something about the methodological and intellectual challenges of looking too reflexively at those who are engaged in doing work much like historians' own.[5] Whatever the reason, the available secondary evidence deals only glancingly, if at all, with the question of how the producers of industrial display have been situated within shifting class formations in a given moment. Thus my historical evidence here is somewhat piecemeal; the records of particular industrial corporations, museums, parks, and historical societies would no doubt yield further clues that could be contextualized much more fully.

In addition to a survey of the existing secondary literature, I am reading forward from my vantage point as a participant-observer within a number of research and planning processes at industrial history sites and national parks over the past fifteen years and as an observer more generally of the proliferating contemporary manifestations of heritage discourse and display, which I discuss in the final section. This *longue durée* approach allows me to consider the production of imagery and ideas surrounding industry very broadly, without drawing too limiting a line between displays of active industry, preservation and interpretation of defunct industries, and types of display within the industrial era more generally (for example, the battlefields surveyed in the next section) that may not appear to relate directly to industrialism or capitalism but that nevertheless help us to see how the labor of producing industrial heritage per se is part of a much broader project of coping with the challenges and contradictions inherent in capitalism. My broad-brush approach is intended to compare locations and experiences that seem to suggest continuities and inheritances and to clarify some of the complexities of present-day work in preserving, presenting, and understanding the industrial "past." The survey that follows is admittedly heavily focused

4. This "history and memory" literature is rooted in the work of Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora, Paul Connerton, Michael Kammen, and others, and includes studies of commemorative practices, post-conflict memorialization, heritage tourism, museum and collecting practices, cultural and craft revivalism, and historic preservationism. There is also a substantial (and often peer-reviewed) "gray literature" commissioned by state agencies as part of processes of designation and interpretation of specific historic sites. Sources cited in this article are drawn from both bodies of scholarship.

5. I discuss the issue of historical and ethnographic reflexivity as well as the perceived tensions between history and heritage, in Stanton, *Lowell Experiment*, 16–28. One exception that may prove the rule in this case is Leon Fink's attempt to chronicle in some detail the family and political backgrounds of two heritage workers in a North Carolina mill town. The couple in question, initially collegial and supportive of Fink's research into their community history project, angrily withdrew their consent to use their oral history interviews when they realized they themselves were being scrutinized. See Fink, "When Community Comes Home to Roost." To date, the studies that are most explicitly focused on history and heritage production as a form of labor have come largely from the social sciences; see, e.g., Handler and Gable, *New History in an Old Museum*; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*; Stanton, *Lowell Experiment*; and Tyson, *Wages of History*.

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on the United States, particularly the northeast, where most of my own research has taken place. While the connections seem strong and suggestive and the region is undoubtedly significant to an understanding of the emergence, growth, and decline of manufacturing in North America, the argument will benefit from testing against other regional cases in industrialized places and—perhaps more suggestively—places where industrialization and professionalized heritage production are now emerging simultaneously as twinned aspects of capitalist development.[6]

Nineteenth-Century Proto-professionals

As industrialism was taking hold in northern England and the northeastern United States in the early nineteenth century, many of its novel and spectacular aspects became the focus of the kinds of display and visitation that were also emerging in the nascent tourism industry, enabled by the same new technologies of mass communication and steam-powered transportation.[7] In addition to the very well-known industrial expositions and World's Fairs that began at mid-century and the practice of "factory visiting" among businesspeople themselves, there are many accounts of industrial production and infrastructure serving as attractions for visitors.[8] As steam began to be the motive power of choice in the British textile industry in the early part of the century, some older water-powered factories invested in gigantic new waterwheels that not only expanded production capacity but drew onlookers to marvel. One of these, revolving at a stately three times per minute and producing up to 140 horsepower, was described as "one of the wonders of Lancashire" and was a significant draw for visitors.[9] The utopian image of early nineteenth-century textile mills at Lowell, Massachusetts, widely understood as an antidote to oppressive British factory towns, was burnished through tours and parades that put its state-of-the-art facilities and its earliest labor force of young American women on display for observers, including visiting politicians and celebrities.[10] In Pennsylvania's coal country, tourists thrilled to the juxtaposition of wild scenery and human ingenuity in the form of railways and processing facilities. Mirroring the Ferris wheels, roller coasters, and other machine-inspired amusements at fairs and carnivals in this era, the same rail lines that transported coal also trundled visitors up and down the mountainsides of Mauch Chunk (now Jim Thorpe) from the earliest days of coal mining in the area, providing an exhilarating glimpse of what Leo Marx termed "the technological sublime."[11]

6. For a discussion of one such setting, see Sweet and Qian, "History, Heritage, and the Representation of Ethnic Diversity."

7. See Franklin, *Tourism*, esp. chap. 2; and Sears, *Sacred Places*, esp. the introduction.

8. On industrial expositions in the United States, see Rydell, Findling, and Pelle, *Fair America*, 14–44. On factory visiting, see Bradley, *The Works*, 9–11; and Scranton, *Endless Novelty*, 208–89.

9. Malm, *Fossil Capital*, 89.

10. See Kasson, *Civilizing the Machine*, 53–106; and Bender, *Toward an Urban Vision*, 21–93.

11. On Mauch Chunk, see Sears, *Sacred Places*, 189–208. On the "technological sublime," see Marx, *Machine in the Garden*.

The existing literature provides little in the way of detail about the specific people staging and organizing these displays and tours. But an adjacent heritage setting—the preserved battlefields of the American Civil War—offers some clues about the emergence of a class of protoprofessional cultural workers in the second half of the rapidly-industrializing nineteenth century. A good deal more work remains to be done to produce a fuller account of the (seemingly all white) men and (much less frequently) women who were employed as the first stewards, interpreters, guides, and administrators at preserved battlefields. But some preliminary data can be pieced together from the corpus of administrative histories of battlefield parks produced by the US National Park Service as well as from other historical and historiographical studies of battlefield commemoration.[12]

These sources reveal a quite remarkable number of lawyers involved in first-generation Civil War battlefield preservation and interpretation along with a sizable contingent of educators. For example, at Gettysburg, local attorney, educator, Civil War veteran, and civic promoter David McConaughy, already instrumental in transforming the civic landscape through the creation of a garden cemetery in the prewar years, worked to make the battlefield accessible to the pilgrims who began arriving almost as soon as the guns stopped firing.[13] George Carr Round, a Union veteran from New York State, became a lawyer after the war and resettled in Virginia, where he was an early advocate for preserving the Manassas battlefield. In addition to organizing veterans' commemorations at the site, including a fiftieth anniversary "peace jubilee" in 1911, he also served as superintendent of schools and founded a public library, all of which seems to locate him within the educational and civic currents of several Progressive Era cultural and educational movements.[14] For these and other people in both law and education, social status and authority was not as assumed or assured as it would later become, reflecting class fluidities that appear to be strikingly characteristic of cultural work over time. These early battlefield interpreters stood somewhat uneasily between the living and the dead; between well-educated elites and those who were closer to manual labor or to working the land; between the state and various publics; between the firsthand memories of veterans, the curiosity of civilians, and the different authority of historians, who were themselves becoming increasingly professionalized in this period; and between the raw reality of battlefields as sites of industrialized slaughter and visitors' increasing aspirations to gentility as expressed through ever more commercialized practices of touring historic sites and natural or human-made wonders.[15]

This is not industrial heritage labor per se, but it is precisely the kind of work that I am arguing reflects the specific anxieties and changing class positions characteristic of industrialism and capitalism more generally. Well before any explicit

12. My own preliminary exploration of these early battlefield stewards was presented in an unpublished talk in 2009 (Stanton, "Oracle at Gettysburg").

13. Weeks, *Gettysburg*.

14. Zenzen, *Battling for Manassas*, 4–6.

15. On Civil War battlefield tourism and aspirations to gentility, see Weeks, *Gettysburg*, 14.

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articulation of the idea of culture and history as resources to be professionally managed, these workers appear as the precursors to a soon-to-be-elaborated managerial sector, helping to "sacralize" Civil War battlefields (in Dean MacCannell's terms) and render them "visitable" (in Bella Dicks').[16] These acts of transvaluation and translation—what Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has called "produc[ing] the local for export"—constitute a mode of cultural production that was becoming more closely interwoven with economic exchange, even as Americans were using these sacralized sites to negotiate racial, sectional, moral, and other tensions that seemed distinct from, even antithetical to, the logic of capitalist markets.[17] Much as subsequent heritage workers have done, these intermediary figures helped to package an experience of encountering the past that could resolve—at least momentarily—the ambivalence many Americans felt about modernity and "progress" within their rapidly industrializing society.

Building Out the Heritage Landscape

From the turn of the twentieth century into the 1920s, these protoprofessions began to coalesce into more firmly fixed positions and locations, creating an increasingly codified landscape of cultural representation that related to industrialism both directly and indirectly. At the same time as battlefield preservationists were presenting one kind of counterface to industrialization, well-educated workers and reformers at rural and urban settlement houses and in historical pageants and craft revivalism presented another. Through acts of what David Whisnant has termed "systematic cultural intervention," they celebrated and promoted non- and preindustrial skills and lifeways, crafting cultural performances that depicted an orderly march of progress toward an inevitable and desirable present and future.[18] Although civic and historical pageants were initiated and performed largely by civic volunteers, pageantry grew widespread enough to support a cadre of professional organizers who could be hired to assist with staging what were often vast spectacles with thousands of participants.[19] Pageants were performed everywhere, from tiny rural hamlets to large industrial cities, while craft revivalism was a more rural phenomenon that took hold with particular vigor in places that seemed to have been left behind in the march of progress. For example, in parts of Appalachia, traditional basketry and carving became saleable badges of cultural identity for impoverished white populations; the cultural workers in this case were mostly well-educated women, many of them from New England, who established schools, settlement houses, and craft businesses in rural communities. Urban settlement-house workers were also mostly women who were similarly focused on celebrating traditional lifeways even as they guided their immigrant flocks

16. MacCannell, *Tourist*, 43–45; and Dicks, *Culture on Display*.
17. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, 149. On the long-standing connection between battlefield parks and local economic development, see Lee, "Origin and Evolution of the Military Park Idea."
18. Whisnant, *All That Is Native and Fine*, 13.
19. David Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, 108–10, 115–17.

toward American modernity and citizenship. There were strong if sometimes unacknowledged links between these cultural interventions and programs of civic and economic promotion or development, with common ground around the goal of mitigating or offsetting the tremendous volatility and economic disparity of Gilded Age industrial capitalism.

More squarely within the realm of the industrial itself was the factory tour, a stylized form of presentation that emerged in the 1890s. To MacCannell, such "work displays" signal a new phrase in modern mass tourism and modernity more generally. People in the modern world, he argues, struggle with the task of somehow comprehending and locating themselves within a dauntingly differentiated socioeconomic setting that creates alienation on a number of levels—among individuals and groups, between past and present, and between people and the products of their own work. MacCannell sees tourism as an inchoate but increasingly systematized attempt to construct some sense of a whole out of the disparate parts of that world, from things supposedly outside modernity—"primitives," "nature," "obsolete" lifeways and crafts—to its most prototypical sites and emergent trends—new buildings, spectacular infrastructure, cutting-edge technologies.[20] In his view, factory tours, like visits to infrastructural and civic sights, are quintessentially modern rituals that help create a sense of holism. They serve to integrate visitors into what he calls "the universal drama of work" by presenting supposedly transparent views of labor and production at both the trailing and leading edges of capitalism and industrialism.[21]

There were many reasons why corporations began courting tourists during the Progressive Era. Muckraking journalists had exposed the darker side of industrialization, while repeated economic shocks had made many Americans leerier of large-scale capitalism and corporate influence. As corporations expanded from city centers into suburban belts, new and often gigantic manufacturing facilities seemed opaque to neighbors and customers, adding to the sense of distrust and unease. In the same era, the growth of a managerial and professional class went hand in hand with the emergence of advertising as a professionalized industry, enabling more sophisticated packaging of corporate images and the cultivation of consumer loyalty through a range of new techniques, including putting factories themselves on display.[22]

The rise of factory tours created a new semiprofessionalized role within the industrial environment: the tour guide, whose position in many ways mirrored that of the expanding managerial layer of the period. Tasked with creating a sense of accessibility and transparency while also hewing closely to a company line ("You do not have the privilege of volunteering any information not given in this Manual," a 1931 Heinz factory tour script warned),[23] guides performed crucial affective labor for

20. MacCannell, *Tourist*, 57–76.

21. MacCannell, *Tourist*, 63.

22. On the rise of managerialism during what is sometimes termed the second industrial revolution, see Nelson, *Managers and Workers*; and Noble, *America by Design*.

23. Marsh, "Greetings from the Factory Floor," 383.

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their employers, navigating the territory between visitors and the factory floor and between controlled corporate narratives and widespread public uncertainty about the changes taking place in an increasingly industrialized world. Corporations crafted the first generation of factory tour experiences by building special routes, features, and viewing mechanisms into their plants—large windows overlooking production floors, reception areas furnished as elite drawing rooms—and by training in-house guides to present strategically honed messages. The spaces of white-collar labor were omitted from these tour routes, as were the less "presentable" of blue-collar workers and tasks. Rather, visitors were treated to carefully curated glimpses of production processes in ways that emphasized docile workers, well-coordinated assembly processes, stupendous scale, and sophisticated technologies. Spectacular industrial processes like a blast at a steel plant were particularly compelling; in Pittsburgh, the "matinee at the mills" was touted as both educational and celebratory.[24] The inclusion of an occasional older building provided a sense of continuity with the past, helping to construct a timeline in which visitors could locate themselves in an ever-improving present. In 1904, for example, the H. J. Heinz Company floated its founder's boyhood home five miles downriver to its flagship plant in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where it became an important stop on tours as "The House Where We Began."[25] Tourists' own physical positions—moving through an industrial campus in a skillfully choreographed progression, looking down at manual laborers from elevated walkways or through panes of plate glass—reinforced their socioeconomic distance from the work that was on display. The fact that the literature on factory tours tells us far more about the physical spaces than about the people serving as guides underscores their essentially facilitating role. Like the battlefield interpreters, they were mediators who were themselves largely invisible, secondary to the industrial spectacle both in their own time and in subsequent historical inquiry. More exploration into the people performing this role could confirm whether, as in many tourism settings, they were operating between statuses, perhaps drawing on insider knowledge or experience in translational and performative ways that served both their employers' interests and their own.[26]

With the establishment of industrial museums per se starting in the 1920s, this mediating role expanded, overlapping with amateur and avocational forms of preservation and presentation in much the same way as was happening at Civil War battlefields and other nascent historic sites. Many factories featured small in-house museums, while some stand-alone sites were also reconfigured as museums. Perhaps most notable was the Slater Mill in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, often touted as the "birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution," which was purchased and

24. Slavishak, *Bodies of Work*, 94.

25. Brian Butko, "Heinz"; Littman, "Production of Goodwill," 71–84.

26. The tourism literature includes many examples of tour guides who create interstitial positions for themselves by drawing on local knowledge, relationships, and authority. For a discussion of the triadic and surprisingly fluid relationship among tourists, locals, and brokers, see Cheong and Miller, "Power and Tourism." On tourism as a crucial site where the "global" and "local" have long constituted one another, see Salazar, "Tourism and Glocalization."

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restored by a consortium of prominent industrialists in the early 1920s.[27] Many of these projects were instigated and staffed by engineers who were also collectors, hobbyists, and enthusiasts for the histories of their own fields. Mike Wallace sees this as a reflection of engineers' transition into the managerial class, a move that both cut them off from their origins on the shop floor and gave them a platform for celebrating technological and economic progress alongside employers at whose control they had previously been more inclined to balk.[28] There were some counterhegemonic moments within the display of industrial culture and heritage—for example, the famous 1913 Paterson Strike Pageant at Madison Square Garden in which thousands of striking silk workers portrayed themselves in a performance orchestrated by the Industrial Workers of the World. But by and large, the emerging conventions of industrial display reflected solidly middle-class visions and socioeconomic locations, mobilized in service to the interests of the expanding corporate order.[29]

Midcentury Celebration and Repair

The catastrophic collapse of capitalism during the Great Depression paradoxically extended rather than undermined the project of constructing a visitable industrial heritage. In the United States, the state's efforts to restart the economy opened up new roles and livelihoods for historic preservationists and interpreters, creating federal, state, and local park systems, heritage inventories, and tour routes that still serve as important elements of cultural-sector infrastructure.[30] In many places, remnants of nonindustrial lifeways were cleared away to create new "natural" spaces, but in at least some places, sites of industrial or protoindustrial production were incorporated into the newer attractions. At Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site in southeastern Pennsylvania, for example, the remains of an eighteenth-century iron-making site were discovered while the surrounding area was being transformed into a state park. Before federal work-relief laborers could take away all the stones from the old furnace to serve as dam- and road-building materials, historians in the National Park Service—whose own mandate had recently been expanded to include historic sites—made a case for preserving and restoring the old furnace and some of its surrounding village as an homage to the small-scale origins of the state's iron and steel industry. As at other heritage sites, many of the staff and volunteers at Hopewell Furnace straddled the line between manual and white-collar status, interpreting ways of living and working that were framed as past while occupying transitional roles that looked toward a future in which cultural production was an increasingly important economic driver in and of itself.[31]

27. Blewett, "Machines, Workers, and Capitalists," 269–73.

28. Mike Wallace, *Mickey Mouse History*, 80–81.

29. On the Paterson Strike Pageant, see Glassberg, *American Historical Pageantry*, 128; and Green, *New York 1913*.

30. On these developments, see Conard, *Benjamin Shambaugh*, esp. chap. 6; and Unrau and Williss, *Administrative History*.

31. Glaser, "Administrative History of Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site"; Stanton, "Cultures in Flux"; Stanton, "Past as a Public Good."

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Starting in the Depression years, American factory tours shifted toward what some have since termed "biztainment" as industrialists responded to public resentment and pushed back against more stringent government regulation of business.[32] Taking their cue in part from the "century of progress" expositions that proliferated in the 1920s, upgraded tours emphasized the benevolence of corporate stewardship of environmental resources and the many benefits of job creation and tax revenue for local communities, while the act of touring itself helped to underscore the message that free markets were open and aboveboard, in contrast to secretive, centralized socialist economies.[33] Although they were ideologically very different from New Deal programs of cultural and economic repair, corporate self-displays during the Depression and early years of the Cold War similarly worked to create bridges between industry's past and its present (and sometimes its future, as with General Motors's famed "Futurama" display at the 1939 World's Fair). In Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, for example, corporate leaders at Bethlehem Steel partnered with the Chamber of Commerce to promote Christmas-centered tourism keying off the city's name and its Moravian heritage, including its small-scale "colonial industrial quarter." This venture was launched during the Depression-era downturn in steel production as a way to shore up the city's struggling downtown and demonstrate that "the Steel" was keeping its host community's best interests at heart.[34]

Corporate self-celebration through heritage production gained new momentum in the United States after the Second World War, continuing to overlap and occasionally to merge with state-sponsored and community heritage projects as well as with the increasingly professionalized realms of urban and regional planning, tourism-oriented marketing, and museums. In Delaware, the Dupont Company celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1952 by founding the Hagley Museum at its original powder manufacturing facility; it opened to the public five years later. The refurbished Slater Mill in Rhode Island was also regularly opening to visitors by the 1950s. In 1953, Heinz's "House Where We Began" in Pittsburgh was moved to Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan, where a second generation of administrators was beginning to professionalize the presentations at Henry Ford's idealized American village as part of a package of attractions that included tours of the iconic Rouge plant, open to the public since the 1920s.[35] The idea of creating holistic heritage environments at living history villages and historic districts was more widely adopted as the postwar years went on; San Francisco's Ghirardelli Square, an industrial food-production site reconfigured in 1964 as a space of upscale consumption, became an important model and inspiration for similar "adaptive re-use" and "festival marketplace" projects throughout the industrialized world.[36]

32. Littmann, "Production of Goodwill," 80; Newsom, Collier, and Olsen, "Using 'Biztainment' to Gain Competitive Advantage."

33. Littmann, "Production of Goodwill," 80–81; Rydell, *World of Fairs*.

34. Taft, *From Steel to Slots*, 67–68.

35. Barndt, "Fordist Nostalgia"; Butko, "Heinz"; Swigger, *'History is Bunk,'* 105.

36. Isenberg, *Downtown America*, 256–311; Taft, *From Steel to Slots*, 52. On festival marketplaces, see Dagen Bloom, *Merchant of Illusion*.

Culture as Resource and Product in the Late Twentieth Century

The mix of vernacular, state-sponsored, and corporate interests involved in industrial heritage display became more integrated into economic projects per se as First World economies began to experience more widespread disinvestment and restructuring in the later decades of the twentieth century. Factory tours declined in this period as corporations moved their manufacturing facilities to places where labor and raw materials were cheaper; those that continued shifted further toward biztainment, with staged representations of production processes rather than firsthand visits to the factory floor. In Hershey, Pennsylvania, plant tours were replaced in 1973 by Hershey's Chocolate World, a small empire of glossy attractions that has since spread to Las Vegas and New York's Times Square. Coca-Cola's new corporate museum, The World of Coca-Cola, opened in 1990 in the heart of Atlanta as part of that city's vaunted reinvention of itself as "the capital of the New South," a claim bolstered by its successful bid to host the 1996 Olympic Games.[37]

Not all attempts to reinvent the factory tour were successful. Kellogg's Cereal City USA, built in Battle Creek, Michigan, in 1998, closed within a decade, in part because potential visitors retained a fondness for the older factory tours that the shiny new attraction was intended to replace.[38] As steel production dwindled in Pennsylvania, Bethlehem Steel worked with professional developers on a plan to transform its site into a festival marketplace (including a themed entertainment center to be called "The Fundry"), but the idea failed to launch, and it took another decade before a giant casino firm came in to redevelop the property.[39] In a more and more crowded and sophisticated cultural marketplace, the brokering and presentation of authenticity and heritage became a highly demanding business that drew on specialized skills and an ability to create novelty while building on familiar, marketable imagery, narratives, and associations.

Those presentations were increasingly crafted and delivered by white-collar workers from a set of interlocking professions that generally complemented but occasionally clashed with each other. Within the repertoire of redevelopment strategies sometimes termed "culture-led regeneration," cultural planning emerged as a new mediating location between cultural and heritage workers per se and the business, real estate, and political interests involved in "revitalization" projects of many kinds. At the more purely marketing-oriented end of the spectrum, these workers contributed to projects that drew on industrial tropes and histories in often facile, surface-level ways. The Sands Casino development in Bethlehem created an entertainment facility that gestured only minimally toward the site's previous use and largely discounted the various efforts to preserve and interpret the history of "the Steel."[40] In North Adams, Massachusetts, a modern art museum in a former electronics factory drew enough visitors to support a boutique hotel in a row of former working-class

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37. Harris, "The World of Coca-Cola"; Rutheiser, *Imagineering Atlanta*.
38. Che, "What Happened to Tony the Tiger?"
39. Taft, *From Steel to Slots*, 51–55.
40. Taft, *From Steel to Slots*, 158–66.

housing where, in the words of its website, "retro-industrial architecture mingles with modern comforts, cutting edge technology and a design sensibility that could most closely be described as granny chic."[41]

More critical, less profit-driven approaches to preserving and depicting the industrial past emerged from fields like public history, oral history, public folklore, historic preservation, cultural resource management, public art, museum studies, and the design world. Echoing the way that engineers had been drawn more fully into managerial status in the earlier decades of the century, those fields became much more professionalized and purposeful in this period, often linked with academic institutions and guild organizations that provided credentials and an intellectual framework for practice. However, more nuanced or even sharply critical takes on industrialism and deindustrialization could also be absorbed quite comfortably into larger efforts to attract new sources of capital—efforts that often had the effect of replicating and widening older divisions between people who controlled the means of production and those scrambling to find niches for themselves on shifting economic ground. One revealing story from Lowell, where the US National Park Service established a national park dedicated to textile history in 1978, concerns a local businessman who was blithely dismissive of the park's class-oriented critique of Lowell's industrial heyday. Referring to a comment by historian Mike Wallace that "If you have Old Faithful in your backyard, then you're in favor of geysers," historians at the park acknowledged that the businessman's response reflected an attitude that "if labor history sells, then go ahead and sell it."[42]

My own ethnographic work among public historians in Lowell and my observations of cultural workers in similar settings showed that at the turn of the twenty-first century, many of them occupied highly transitional, interstitial class positions that seem typical of cultural intermediaries over the longer course of industrial history. The production and maintenance of industrial heritage sites in that historical moment continued to respond to the modern sense of discontinuity with the past and modernity's peculiar combination of excitement and unease about technological and economic change. The efforts of cultural workers—agents of the state that serves as one of the main markets for their skills—and the corporate leaders who engage with them in a complex dance of meaning- and place-making combined in a continual suturing of something that was felt to be always already coming apart, a project that both extended industrial capitalism and attempted to remediate and explain its many discontents.

A Touristic Way of Looking at Work

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, it is possible to argue that cultural work itself is becoming industrialized, in the sense of being routinized, highly ratio-

41. "About Porches Inn: Where Art Meets Whimsy," Porches Inn at MASS MoCA, www.porches.com/about-our-bed-and-breakfast/.

42. Stanton, *Lowell Experiment*, 113.

nalized, often mechanized, and carefully monitored in terms of its specific outcomes and contributions to economic and other kinds of productivity ("A healthy civic commons will enable economic opportunity through which entrepreneurs can build supply chains and cultivate markets," states one influential study that undergirds an ongoing civil-society, place-making project launched in several US cities with support from a consortium of large foundations. "A vibrant civic commons will entice newcomers to invest, and bring their ingenuity and their purchasing power"[43]). Under the rubric of the "creative economy" and the fetishized term *innovation*, cultural production is now a taken-for-granted component of planning and development, with countless studies, campaigns, and offices devoted to supporting its expansion.[44] It is also a crucial element of competition within what Anna Tsing terms "the economy of appearances," or the image-driven, performative display of viability, stability, and identity through which cities, regions, and nations attempt to demonstrate their receptivity to investment and their potential for capital accumulation.[45] As the manufacturing of tangible goods continues to recede as a primary economic activity in most parts of the Global North while professions geared toward "branding" and producing cultural display continue to proliferate and become more specialized, it seems likely that the class positioning of the next generation of cultural intermediaries and heritage producers may reflect less of a blue-to-white-collar transition than has been the case in the recent past. Instead, newer workers seem more typical of the well-educated "creative classes" or "cultural intermediaries" who have come of age in settings that we are now used to thinking of as postindustrial.[46]

Set against the genealogy sketched above, the term postindustrial begins to seem more like a mask for the continued workings of industrial capitalism than a descriptor of some new phase of it. This is precisely the condition that MacCannell envisioned in the 1970s when he declared, "The hope for a 'postindustrial' society is, in fact, only a touristic way of looking at work."[47] MacCannell correctly foresaw the ubiquity and holism that now characterize the landscapes of both work and tourism—or rather, the way that those two realms have continued to merge as the logic of capital investment and the search for new products and sources of profitability continue to reshape places, jobs, and ideas. "Modern society divides its industrial and esthetic elements," he wrote, "and reunites them on a higher social plane."[48]

43. Municipal Art Society of New York, "Re-imagining the Civic Commons."

44. For some examples of recent creative-economy studies from the United States, see Forman, *Creative New York*; Harris, Collins, and Cheek, *America's Creative Economy*; and DeNatale and Wassall, *The Creative Economy*. Newbigin, "What Is the Creative Economy?" traces the emergence of the concept of creative industries and its transformation into the more expansive creative economy since the 1990s.

45. Tsing, "Inside the Economy of Appearances."

46. "Creative class" is the widely adopted term originated by Richard Florida in *The Rise of the Creative Class* and subsequent work. "Cultural intermediary" comes from the work of Pierre Bourdieu and has been adopted in many studies of "creative" labor; for an overview of this field, see Smith Maguire and Matthews, *Cultural Intermediaries Reader*.

47. MacCannell, *Tourist*, 65.

48. MacCannell, *Tourist*, 70.

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Figure 1 In the early twenty-first century, the labor of professional historians intersects that of planners and developers in complex ways. This group of scholars and National Park Service staff was touring a redeveloped area of Lowell, Massachusetts, in 2014 as part of a critical reconsideration of the extensive preservation work done in the city a generation earlier. Photo by author.

On this higher plane, tangible manufacturing, spaces of former manufacturing, and purpose-built spaces of display are equally visitable attractions produced using a repertoire of techniques learned and honed over many decades by people in what are now termed the "cultural industries." Tellingly, those industries are now seen as including the high-production-value fields of film and advertising as well as types of labor traditionally associated with fine art and scholarship. In this blurred, recursive set of locations, cultural production and interpretation are highly distributed and fluid, with such occupational niches as historian, archivist, guide, publicist, entrepreneur, and designer overlapping and recombining in practice (see fig. 1).

The results are wildly hybridized and pervasive. Decommissioned blast furnaces are re-spectacularized with sound and light shows; a well-known filmmaker directs a colossal pageant depicting Britain's "dark Satanic mills" as part of the global spectacle of an Olympics opening ceremony. Factory tours and corporate visitor centers draw on the same techniques of display whether they are selling social and environmental responsibility (for example, at Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream factory, a top tourist destination in Vermont) or the wonders of fully industrialized agriculture (as at Fair Oaks Farms in Indiana, a gigantic dairy that incorporates a theme park into its oper-

ations). The contemporary boom in small-scale artisanal food and drink production reflects the generational sensibility of born-postindustrial entrepreneurs, with businesses that are often highly "display-ready," adept at layering themselves into older industrial settings through the production of affect-rich, story-dense marketing materials. Ruin-gazers, graffiti artists, and "urban explorers" approach the entire built environment touristically, entering abandoned or active industrial and infrastructural spaces with cameras and often paint in hand; in a perhaps predictable twist, abandoned theme parks, hotels, and resorts seem to exert a particular fascination for certain kinds of tourists, achieving a second life as art. Meanwhile, the digital innovators whose products enable much of this do-it-yourself representation are far more secretive about their own production facilities; there is strikingly little visitable infrastructure as yet at Silicon Valley's gigantic tech companies' headquarters, although complementary institutions like the Computer Museum in Google's home town of Mountain View, California, and the Intel Museum in Santa Clara, California, fill in some of the gaps with traditional museum display.

The particular class positions of contemporary cultural workers involved in producing industrial heritage may be shifting, but the genealogy outlined in this essay suggests that contingency, opportunism, and fluidity in this type of labor have actually been the norm over time, while the expectation of more fixed professional locations in the late twentieth century begins to look more like the anomaly—an echo, perhaps, of the death of Fordist expectations and relationships in industrialized places.[49] MacCannell's use of the word *hope* in his formulation of the seeming shift into the postindustrial is particularly telling here. This set of fields both produces a sense of continuity with the past and forever operates on the edge of uncertainty about the present and future, a state that professionalization and proliferation have not rendered any more stable or secure and may in fact have exacerbated. Some critics have seen the rising level of standardization in a crowded cultural marketplace leading toward what Briavel Holcomb has called "eclectic conformity," in which the encounter between local particularities and purposeful place-marketing can end up contributing to strangely generic presentations of place and history.[50] Allied with this is another long-standing tension between the skills and compensation of those constructing the presentations and the people whose cultures, practices, and homes are being presented. This is increasingly expressed as a concern about the gentrifying and whitening effects of cultural projects, outcomes that become more evident as more places adopt these strategies as part of wider development or redevelopment plans.[51]

49. This is the argument of several scholars who have pointed to post-Fordist capitalism's "haunting" by a sense of a supposedly more stable Fordist order. See, e.g., Molé, "Hauntings of Solidarity in Post-Fordist Italy"; and Neilson and Rossiter, "Precarity as a Political Concept." See also Lloyd, *Neo-Bohemia*.

50. Holcomb, "Revisioning Place," 142.

51. For samples of the growing literature on gentrification and cultural projects or institutions, see Brown-Saracino, *Neighborhood That Never Changes*; Bures, "Historic Preservation, Gentrification, and Tourism"; Cahill, "Negotiating Grit and Glamour"; Dávila, *Culture Works*; Gregory, "Radiant University"; Herzfeld, "Engagement, Gentrification, and the Neoliberal Hijacking of History"; and Lloyd, *Neo-Bohemia*.

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The institutions and organizations credentialing and producing (some have suggested *over*producing) professional cultural workers are implicated in this critique as well. Like museums, historic districts, arts, and cultural quarters—with which they often overlap—universities and other sites of knowledge production have become industries in themselves, heavily involved in planning, building, and representing their host communities as well as representing themselves through spectacular building projects and the "seemingly compulsory" ritual of the guided campus tour.[52]

With the professionalization, specialization, and routinization of many facets of industrial heritage production, we may be seeing a shift in its historical function of creating an active sense of homage and continuity between past and present, something that historically appears to have been linked at least partially to heritage workers' own transitional class positions and statuses. This type of labor may come to be less like facilitating a ritual and more like producing a commodity, although the two are by no means entirely distinct. It is worth noting, however, that even though today's "cultural creatives" are clearly on the higher-status side of the labor continuum, many—perhaps most—are actually highly vulnerable to the contingency that characterizes contemporary neoliberal economies more generally. In their own increasingly entrepreneurial and precarious pursuit of creative labor, these workers may—as factory tour guides have long done—help audiences connect to an *ideal* of industrial capitalism that may symbolically help to compensate for its turbulence and the unforgiving logic of profit-seeking. This compensatory function of industrial heritage production can be traced back to the roots of industrial capitalism; in the present day, it may most clearly express itself in the choice to enter fields that seem to offer at least the promise of meaningful, unalienated work with some degree of status and autonomy. However compromised or illusory that promise might be, it may nevertheless serve as an implied critique of the expanding neoliberal economic order and a basis on which demands for greater accountability and equity might be made and new consequential solidarities formed.

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52. Reischer, "Skipping the College Tour." On campuses, see Campbell, "Universities Are the New City Planners"; Campbell et al., "Shapers of the New City"; Halsband, "Living and Learning"; and Gregory, "Radiant University." On overproduction in arts schools, see Davis, "Why You Should Be Suspicious of the 'Creative Economy.'" For a similar argument about public history, see Weyeneth, "A Perfect Storm?"

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