

**Presenting History and Garnering Revenue: Folk Ideals and
Economic Imperatives at Sherbrooke Village**

By:

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Abstract

In a competitive world of cultural commodization, museums face a conflict between the presentation of historical tradition and the need to garner revenue. My research examines how history and culture are shaped at Sherbrooke Village, a part of the Nova Scotia Museum, in the context of the economic imperative to maintain or increase tourist visits to the site. I argue that, to ensure that tourists visit the site, museum staff present visitors with sanitized Folk and agrarian cultural productions rather than less popular industrial and conflictual images. I address how the marketing of this rural Folk image for consumer consumption produces historical presentations that challenge the integrity of the museum as a legitimate forum for educational programming and preservation. I examine this topic using participant observation, museum staff interviews, and an analysis of marketing material. I conclude that commodification influences how museum staff interpret and present local culture at Sherbrooke Village. This study contributes to an understanding of how economic imperatives shape images, presentations, and narrations of the past within the Nova Scotia Museum.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

In Nova Scotia, culture and commoditization are inseparable: conservation, education, and museums are categorized within tourism economics. In the name itself, the Department of Tourism, Culture, and Heritage shows that Nova Scotia's culture and heritage are things that can be commercially exploited through tourism. As the province seeks to generate revenue from its cultural traditions through organizations like the Nova Scotia Museum – an institution that seeks to preserve and represent Nova Scotian culture - how do the effects of commodification play out in historical and cultural interpretation? What story about the Nova Scotian past and present is being told to and shaped for the public, and how is that presentation shaped by the need to garner economic revenue?

This thesis is an examination of the conflicting desires to present the past, and also generate income at the Nova Scotia Museum site of Sherbrooke Village. A large, open-air, community based museum, Sherbrooke Village consists of over 25 buildings representing a 'typical' Nova Scotia town between the 1860s and early 20th century. Like the courthouse, the Presbyterian Church, the doctor's office and the jailhouse, most buildings are on their original locations within the town, and have been restored to reflect their appearance when Sherbrooke flourished on the basis of its shipbuilding, mining, and lumbering economy.

The Sherbrooke Village site is located on the Eastern Shore of Guysborough Co. This region has been economically marginalized and underdeveloped since traditional resource-based industries like fishing, gold-mining, lumbering and farming disintegrated in the early 20th century. In recent years, tourism and its spin-offs have stimulated the economy.

My interest in Sherbrooke Village and the effects of tourism on the portrayal and presentation of the site's history was piqued by my employment there. For the past four summers, as a student historical interpreter, I actively conveyed cultural traditions and interpreted period history. Working at the museum motivated me to undertake an analysis of the extent to which imperatives for commercial and market success influenced the cultural images conveyed at the site, and the implications these might have on the integrity of Sherbrooke Village as a museum site, with a role to educate the public.

In this thesis, I examine the presentation of history and culture at Sherbrooke Village in the framework of McKay's (1994) analysis of the creation of the Folk ideal within Nova Scotia tourism. A model for a reinvention of the past and a staging of heritage as a form of cultural production is posited around Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's (1998) argument detailing museums' efforts to market themselves for profit as popular tourist attractions. I also present the shifts in visitor's expectations in museums, signaled by ideas like *experience*, *edutainment* and *service driven values*, as detailed by McKercher and duCros (2002), and others. I agree with these authors, as their points demonstrate that museums' shaping of presentation for popular tourist desire can conflict with foundations of museum integrity, such as education.

In the following chapters, I examine how history and culture are shaped at Sherbrooke Village. I also analyze how the economic imperative to generate revenue influences this shaping of history and culture. I argue that Folk and agrarian cultural themes are produced and emphasized at Sherbrooke Village, to market to paying tourists seeking sanitized and organic Folk experiences. I also look at the conflict between cultural and heritage preservation and the drive for the tourist dollar. The goal of my thesis is to consider whether museum integrity, as shown by Sherbrooke Village's mandate for education, enrichment, and heritage protection, is

threatened by cultural commodification and the subsequent need to gratify a competitive tourism market demanding a more commercialized experience. I ask whether this affects the image and the historical interpretation and presentation of the site. Specifically, is today's economic imperative to commercially exploit tradition for a tourist market shaping how culture and history are presented at Sherbrooke Village?

The Nova Scotia Museum, a decentralized family of 27 provincial historical or heritage buildings, living history sites, and specialized museums (NS Tourism, Culture and Heritage 2007:1) has had “over 620,000 people [visit] last year, making it a huge part of the province's tourism infrastructure” (NS Tourism, Culture and Heritage 2007:1). The culture and history of Nova Scotia interpreted and housed in museum complexes like Sherbrooke Village play a central part in the tourism initiative in Nova Scotia. This study will look at the challenges surrounding cultural tourism in the province. Commodification unavoidably changes meanings of culture by influencing how culture is viewed and presented. This study will contribute to an understanding of the impact economic imperatives have on how images, presentations, and narrations of the past are emphasized or deemphasized within Nova Scotia museums.

Chapter 2

Methods

I visited the museum site three times during the months of September and October. Keeping in mind McKercher's (2002) observation that tourists seek an experience, participant observation allowed me to understand the experience of tourists visiting Sherbrooke Village. At these visits, I entered the site as a paying visitor, and was counted as such. I used my Nova Scotia Museum Card Pass to cover the \$9 entrance fee, and received a site bracelet. I engaged in the standard visitor experience, participating in visitor orientation and proceeding through the numbered buildings as the site map indicated. I ate lunch at the on-site tearoom and I shopped at the Company Store Gift Shop. I focused my observation on three key buildings. These buildings engage in the presentation of living history, and are noted as the highlights of the museum complex. These were Joe McLane's Blacksmith Shop, the Sherbrooke Village Pottery, and the MacDonald Bros. Sawmill.

As I proceeded through the restored site, I took notes and made audio recordings about interpretation, the stories told at the various parts of the site, building presentation and arrangement, facilities, staff, costuming, visitor service, signage, and programming. I had conversations with interpretative staff members and asked typical visitor questions about history, artifacts, and the site. I made hand-jotted field notes and took photographs. I observed the extent to which this museum serves educational and preservation purposes as well as its orientation towards customer service and tourism industry activities. I also observed in detail the picture Sherbrooke Village conveys and the story and history it presents. I attempted to view the site

from a removed tourist gaze. However, as a former employee of Sherbrooke Village, my interaction with staff members felt staged.

This lens posed difficulties in observing details that I had largely overlooked or passed by as ordinary, when I worked at the museum. But it also provided me a positive, established relationship with the museum's interpretative staff and administration. This was beneficial in obtaining access to the site, staff, and resources available. I also consider my summer employment at Sherbrooke Village as site fieldwork, because it provided me with first-person insight in the interpretation of my data.

I also examined the advertising and publicity of the museum. This marketing and promotional material included pamphlets, rack cards, media advertisements and articles, NS Museum promotional material and website data, among other sources. Sherbrooke Village is currently undergoing a re-branding initiative. I examined the changes to the image and representation of the museum, and considered messages that the new logo and slogan might convey to the public about the museum.

I continued gathering qualitative data through four key informant interviews. I recorded interviews with the Director of the site, the Marketing Manager, the Collections and Presentation Manager, and a long-time frontline interpretative employee, who also serves as director of the non-for-profit Historic Sherbrooke Village Development Society. I also informally interviewed an employee who imparted information on the establishment of the historic restoration. This interview was not tape recorded, but notes were made.

These interviews were open-ended conversations that allowed the participant to answer independently, and were approximately 50 minutes to 1 hour in length. Samples of these questions can be found in the appendix. The purpose of the interviews was to gauge perspective

on how commodification and the cultural tourism business affect notions of museum integrity, and also presentations and representations at Sherbrooke Village. The interviews also offered insight on staff's perception of the site as both a museum and tourist attraction, and what images they choose to convey at Sherbrooke Village. The interviews also gave employee perceptions regarding the inconsistency of funding and how this influences programming and presentation. Interviewees also commented on conflicts between commercialization and museum mandates.

Questions I posed included: "How do you see the visitor experience at Sherbrooke Village?" "How do you feel about the general trend for museums to focus more on catering to their visitors and visitor's touristic needs, rather than prioritizing their culture, preservation and education elements?" "Tell me how history is presented at Sherbrooke Village." "What kind of history do you think the visiting public is looking for?" "What do you think their expectations are?" "How do you feel about Sherbrooke Village's new marketing campaign and logo?"

My methodology also consisted of an afternoon of archival work in February, when I was given access to files on past budget allotments, visitor attendance levels, and general museum documents. I used this information to gauge how levels of funding have changed over the years at Sherbrooke Village. Library research assisted in my literature review, helping me to establish a theoretical framework and develop an argument around my research question. My analysis of gathered data from marketing representations, interviews and field notes, were applied to my literature study.

Through this fieldwork, I traced themes that were repeated by interviewees and themes that were exemplified in field observation and marketing representations. I then analyzed the data based on the themes that emerged from the narratives. Two themes that emerged are the

presentation of an idealized Folk or agrarian interpretation of history, and economic-based constraints as constant challenges to the museum.

Chapter 3

Literature Review and Theoretical Framing

An ideal definition of cultural tourism would see cultural heritage management objectives of education and conservation achieved with tourism management objectives of commercialism and market appeal. (McKercher, du Cros 2002:2). While this aim is widely supported by both heritage management and marketing sectors, in practice, it is rarely realized, as one value is compromised or sacrificed for the other. Sustainability is seldom achieved (McKercher, du Cros 2002:2). There is a constant conflict between what should be represented in the educational institution of a museum, and the reality that profitability is now a pre-requisite for a museum's survival. I am asking how the need for profit shapes representations of culture and history at Sherbrooke Village. I argue that, to encourage tourists to visit the site, museum staff present visitors with exaggerated and sanitized agrarian and Folk cultural productions. I show that Sherbrooke Village accentuates idealized rural and pastoral images and hides representations of industry and mercantile activities, which were important parts of Sherbrooke's history. I argue that presenting history in a way that is pleasing to paying tourists produces historical presentations that challenge the integrity of the museum as a forum for education and preservation. I conclude that funding governs how museum staff understand and present local culture at this site.

Defining notions of 'integrity' versus 'authenticity'

In the context of this thesis, I interpret the term 'integrity' as representing the integral elements of a museum. That is, an adherence to notions that supports an institution which maintains public mandates of education and preservation. 'Integrity' is interpreted in the sense of

reliability, appropriateness, and an undivided adherence to a code of professional values that sees accurate representation, and cultural and traditional respect, as key elements in the makeup of a museum. Representing heritage or the past as a theme park landscape (Young and Riley 2002), or a reality where commodification and marketing of culture overshadows the value of material and cultural objects, and traditions (McKercher, du Cros 2002) are examples of a museum not operating with integrity. The term ‘authenticity’ often appears in anthropological analysis, tourism and heritage sites (Handler and Gable 1997, Fife 2004). However, ‘authenticity’ is a complex term and “is more than a simple idea underlying and animating touristic sites. What is authentic is formed partly by the personal commitment, bureaucratic mandates and entrepreneurial interests/economic necessities that site guardians face” (Fawcett and Cormack 2001:687). In this sense, the idea of ‘authenticity’ is virtually impossible to achieve or define. Although ‘authenticity’ is addressed in my fieldwork and analysis of Sherbrooke Village, I am not trying to determine whether the presentation of history at the site is ‘authentic’. I am interested in whether the ‘integrity’ of the site as a museum is threatened by marketing and commodification, as demonstrated in the presentation of history at the site.

The attraction of the rural Folk ideal

In the 1970s and 1980s, there was an expansion of sites that purported to represent the past, particularly in Britain (Walsh 1992: 94). This ‘heritage boom’ (Walsh 1992: 94) took the form of open-air museums and heritage centers that used heritage ‘experiences’ which involved a combination of sensory media, like sight, sound, and smell (Walsh 1992:94). This trend coincides with the large restoration and heritage interpretation projects that emerged in The Nova Scotia Museum during the late 1960s and continue today. Walsh notes that, in Britain, the

expansion of heritage occurred within a climate of economic decline (1992: 95). Sherbrooke Village is an example of a similar trend within Nova Scotia.

These sensory forms of interpretative experience, characterized by open-air museums, were a departure from museum displays that were static and dull (Walsh 1992:94). Open-air museums became typified by their use of 'living history' as a method of interpretation (Walsh 1992: 95). The sites were often Folk-life museums, which were concerned with representing the everyday life of working and most often, rural people. They catered to a growing demand for rural and historical experiences (Walsh 1992: 95).

Walsh and other authors have argued that in a post-modern world, the Folk is a welcome, comforting and appealing image. Walsh comments that modern economic systems have increasingly removed people from the process of production, because of this, many open-air museums emphasize traditional forms of industry (1992: 97). To visitors, traditional demonstrations by skilled craftspersons like blacksmiths, weavers, woodturners or farmers show what has been lost in the move to modernity and urban-industrialism (1992: 97). 'Living history' museums, therefore, evoke a sense of nostalgia in the visitor. Pastoral images and a Folk ideal can be an attractive representation of history for a post-modern visitor who yearns to experience the traditional production and lifestyle that he or she has become estranged from. This desire for nostalgic and idealized representation creates a problematic production of the past.

Sanitized History

Walsh argues that the majority of 'living history' museums produce representations of life-styles that reject conflict and antisocial-behaviour. These productions exist within a calm, rural landscape. (1992: 97). Rural bias, however, is often the most feasible of representations, according to Leon and Piatt, as the actual cost of developing an industrial open-air museum is

substantial (as quoted in Walsh 1992: 97). In Britain, attempts have been made to represent industrial society, but Walsh suggests, nevertheless, that even in these sites, the bucolic predominates (1992: 97-98). “The rural idyll arbitrates in an historical representation, which should, at least in part, be concerned with squalor and a degree of adversity in life at which most of us today would balk” (Walsh 1992: 98). Idealized Folk images decide the historical representations of heritage sites, even ones with industrial representations. Post-modern visitors desire ‘living history’ representations that cater to nostalgia for a lost way of life, but these representations cut and dilute the more adverse aspects of history from narration and interpretation. Denying social conflict in favour of non-resistant bucolic representations leads some museum and heritage sites to produce historical representations that do not educate or inform the public of the whole story. This kind of simulation suggests museum and heritage sites look to create profitability through glossed and distorted Folk images, rather than presenting the public with balanced and invoking representations of the past. This calls into question whether a nostalgic response is the comprehension that a museum or heritage site would want the visitor to go away with, after experiencing the site.

While these ‘living history’ sites often claim that they ‘bring the past to life’, or rather, to the present, they actually induce nostalgia. Walsh argues, “the site is successful because the visitor is placed in an environment of nostalgia-arousal” (1992: 98). Visitors participate and promote the nostalgia by reminiscing about artifacts or demonstrations that bring to mind recollections of images from their youthful past. The General Store may be just like the one the visitor bought candy at as a boy, or the cast iron cooking stove may be the same as the stove used by the visitors’ grandmother (Walsh 1992: 99). Those visitors, who actually engaged in industrial work or the labour intensity of farm work, may remember less idealized aspects of the

life represented at these kinds of sites. At Sherbrooke Village, this might be the danger of log drives or long working hours with poor pay. Different people thus interpret exhibits and recreations in different ways (Walsh 1992: 99). Walsh notes that a younger generation, never experiencing and never remembering the kinds of Folk or rural work represented, let alone the kinds of heavy labour underrepresented, will come away from the site with second-hand nostalgia (1992:99). Their parents and grandparents pass on their own nostalgia, and eventually, this generation's heritage lies with the heritage industry. The consequence of "this form of mediation through an emphasis on historical surfaces, set within the eulogized, and almost universally desired, rural idyll" (Walsh 1992:99), is that the ideal becomes historical fact.

Walsh suggests that these kinds of heritage representations do not convey historical processes. Rather, industrial development is told within the visitor's desired rural idyll, without conflicts or social transformations. The heritage site is a form of simulacrum, where images and things of the past create a display constructed around an 'unreal' historical bricolage (Walsh 1992:103). Again, there is a risky consequence for those who cannot remember, as their perceptions of history are shaped by nostalgic evocations. Rather than this sort of nostalgic interpretation of the past, Walsh argues, "the past should [...] be used as a kind of preface to a more critical engagement with the past and its links with, or contingency on, the present" (1992: 99).

The presentations of history set within the agrarian and Folk ideal are a desired form of historical narration and interpretation for the post-modern visitor. Walsh has argued that the visitor offers a demand for these nostalgic, simplified presentations, and that museums can use this demand for garnering profit. However, these presentations distort the visitors' sense of historical reality; they do not engage in a critical understanding of the past, nor its impact on the

present. Such idealized Folk and bucolic representations influence the kind of educational message or priority that a museum or heritage site disseminates to the public, which is an experience of nostalgia rather than a discernment of historical actuality or an undertaking of critical engagement.

The Folk Ideal in Nova Scotia Tourism

The same Folk ideal in heritage attractions and open-air museums as noted by Walsh is prevalent in the Nova Scotia tourism industry. McKay (1994) argues that provincial tourism marketing evokes popular conceptions of Nova Scotians and their history as purer, simpler, and idyllic. The nature of the Folk ideal is embedded in notions of the rural and McKay argues that Nova Scotia's diverse cultural history has been glossed over with ideas of the "simple life" and traditional folk values. McKay not only confirms Walsh's (1992) insights on agrarian and Folk ideals within museum sites in the context of Nova Scotia, but adds that the image of the Folk hides Nova Scotia's class conflict and strong labour movement politics. These Folk images deny Nova Scotia's urban and industrial past, including capitalism and mercantilism, class, ethnicity, and conflict, to produce a homogenous and contrived Folk narrative and representation. In the same way, the idealization of the Folk assumes agricultural life as harmonious and simple. Rural history in Nova Scotia, for example the Antigonish Movement, proves to be more complicated. In this thesis I examine the representation of Sherbrooke Village as a heritage attraction through its marketing image and site interpretation, and argue that depictions of Sherbrooke Village confirm McKay's Folk ideal to be embedded in the site. My purpose is to show that the shaping of history and the representations of culture and traditions on the Folk ideal is based on economic imperatives to attract visitors seeking this 'experience'. I argue that this challenges the site's integrity as a museum.

Profitable Folk and the Nostalgic Tourist

McKay argues that 20th century urban cultural producers constructed the rural Folk as “the romantic antithesis to everything they disliked about modern urban and industrial life” (1994: 4). Rural people became part of an idealized Folk society characterized by innocence and a throwback to a noble, simpler time (McKay 1994:9). This popular conception of romantic nationalism informed the tourism industry. The Folk ideal was sought out and projected as an incarnation of a Golden Age when times were better and traditional culture thrived. The Folk exemplified the pastoral ideal, where social class and divisions were transcended, and the notions of a simple life reigned. The search for the Folk ideal also coincided with a search for profits, where a demanding international market sought an organic, primitive tourism ‘experience’ (1994: 275-276). McKay argues that this idea of the Folk in tourism has been fully developed since its emergence in the 1930s, and continues to be a salient element in the intensified tourist gaze of those in search of the simple life in Nova Scotia (1994: 276).

Richard Handler (1988) elaborates on the processes of objectifying ‘folk’ peoples in relation to Québécois culture. He argues that there has been a construction of the Folk in rural Quebec by urban Québécois and folklorists for reasons of nationalist identity. Handler details how this notion of Folk culture has also fostered tourism in rural Quebec. Similar to McKay’s insights on the Folk and Nova Scotia tourism, Handler shows there is an institutionalization of cultural objectification (1988: 52). He cites the influence of tourism organizations like Vacances-Familles, which directs “city-dwellers to country folk, middle-class white collar families to small farmers, intellectuals to ‘natural’ Québécois” (1988: 52). This kind of host-guest lodging organization caters to people searching for “their roots, or [those] who want their children to experience country life as they imagine their grandparents had experienced it” (1988:52). As

Walsh and McKay state and Handler expands, there is a ready tourist market for nostalgic representations of the Folk ideal.

Museums and Marketing: customer service and ‘edutainment’

As identified, open-air museums are predominantly characterized as Folk museums, which, even in the context of industrialized pasts, maintain a bucolic shaping of culture and history. As there is a large market for representations of romanticized Folk ideals, I will discuss how these representations are shaped, produced, and marketed to visitors, and give insight on how these dealings affect and conflict with notions of museum integrity.

Museums value cultural assets for their intrinsic merits. Tourism involves the consumption of experiences and the need to satisfy the entertainment objectives of the tourist. To be successful and therefore commercially viable, the tourism product must be manipulated or modified in a way that it can be consumed easily by the tourism demographic (McKercher and du Cros 2002: 28) Tourists and travelers want to see history, but they do not want sights that are threatening, alarming, or require a great effort to comprehend. This drives the packaging of cultures for easy, palatable, and fast consumption (Brewer 1994:8).

Walsh suggests that a heritage attraction or open-air museum, like Sherbrooke Village, uses a heritage ‘spectacle’ to convey this objective. The kind of heritage experience at such a site uses images from the past to create a ‘spectacle’, which produces an environment that is different, but to a certain extent remains familiar and safe (1992:103). ‘Living history’ can be viewed as a form of this ‘spectacle’, as local people are paid to perform for or interact with tourists through the elaborate idea of bringing history to life. ‘Living history’ museums are institutions that practice costumed interpretation within reconstructed or restored sites, depicting a particular time in history for educational purposes. Visitors come to engage or interact with a

simulation of a past time as part of an educational or recreational enterprise (Magelssen 2007: xxi).

Museums, which serve to provide educational and cultural enlightenment, face the recognition that they must entertain and create an experience for a post-modern audience. Also with this recognition, museums face the increasing visitor demand for service. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett maintains that there is a move away from object and artifact based museum goals, towards the visitor, which can be at the expense of curatorial research based on museum collections (1998:138). This shift towards the visitor and towards visitor service is signaled by the same term of 'experience'. The term indicates an engagement of the senses, emotions and imagination, and is ubiquitous in tourism and museum marketing (1998:138). Museums were once defined by their relationship to objects: they were keepers and preservers, and their assets were their collections. Now, they are more defined by their relationship to the visitor (1998:138). Although museums were once insulated from the customer focus of the modern tourism industry, as the industry moves from a product-driven approach to one that is market-led – and from creating an experience based on seeing to one based on doing- museums are positioned at the rearguard of the industry (1998:137). Because museums are passive, tourist attractions that offer an adventure experience surpass the popularity of the traditional museum.

This 'experience' is often achieved through 'edutainment', a combination of education and entertainment, which is usually shallower, yet can still be meaningful (McKercher and du Cros 2002:17). Museums, however, face the responsibility of ensuring that cultural heritage values and the integrity of the cultural heritage asset are maintained (McKercher and du Cros 2002:32) while competing in a lucrative tourism industry. While cultural tourism does provide the commercial opportunity to balance funding shortcomings, it introduces the threat of

sacrificing preservation and education, to attract visitors. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett sees this as signaling a crisis in museum identity, as museums must negotiate “competing expectations of diverse constituencies” (1998:138).

Petford considers a shift in the expectations of heritage industry audiences, in which today’s consumer, increasingly influenced by a multi-media world of new technologies, are expecting to be enticed by experiences which are actively involving. The tourist no longer wants to be informed about tradition, but to be involved in it (1994:2). Petford further suggests that the tourism industry is aiming for interactivity to entice new consumers (1994:15). She states that historical sites, faced with increased competition and a limited number of visitors, cannot ignore the entertainment advantages of kinds of presentations like ‘living history’, which engage the visitor in a constructed time-pocket where traditional skills can be re-enacted with traditional implements and visitors can experience the sounds and smells of past times (1994:17). In this competitive market, Petford sees museums facing the temptation to exploit the more exciting or popular elements of history at the cost of the more mundane (1994:18), or as Walsh and McKay suggest, the less idyllic industrialized past. Petford also argues that with ‘living history’, probability can be ignored in order to exploit the more commercially viable ‘experience’. She suggests, “museums, having to compete in the open market, cannot afford to let reality get in the way of profits” (1994:18).

If museums are competing in a tourist market driven by ‘theme park landscapes’, how much commodification can occur before an asset ceases to be legitimate? Kirshenblatt-Gimblett maintains that “museums are experiencing a crisis of identity as they compete with other attractions within a tourism economy that privileges experience, immediacy, and what the industry calls adventure” (1998:7). With museums forced more than ever to rely on earned

income, they are becoming more service oriented, with the pressure to cater to visitor needs before museum mandates of cultural preservation and transmission (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:7). There is also a worry that objects can no longer draw visitors as they have before (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:7). As institutions re-market and re-imagine the term 'museum', into a more exciting and customer-oriented attraction, I ask, what effect does this have on culture, tradition, and heritage preserved and presented through museums? As Silberman suggests, "the gap between compelling historical representation and entertainment is steadily narrowing as heritage has become increasingly tied to substantial investment and economic concerns" (2008:141). Do presentations like 'living history', satisfy a craving for educational entertainment, but aestheticize and simplify the complexities of history? Does modeling a museum on tourism principles, alter the integrity and authenticity of the museum's mandate?

Walsh states that heritage organizations have no problem in seeing their historical resources as marketable products. "Such organizations judge success, not through examinations of how the public perceives or develops an understanding of the past, but by purely financial criteria. [...] There seem to be only restricted attempts at assessing the educational quality or academic credibility of historic representations" (Walsh 1992:129). With this viewpoint, profitability comes to the forefront of a museum mandate, rather than how the public perceives the past. Idyllic Folk representations that draw visitors, but show an imaginary history void of social conflict, become a way for museums to tap into profit at the cost of educational quality and historical credibility.

Lanfant argues that once heritage is shaped into a product for tourists, its 'cultural value' is transformed into a 'commercial value'. This is a process which can stimulate the reinvention of the past (Sheppard 2002: 187) and (Lanfant 1995: 37). Lanfant reasons, "This new tradition is

a manufactured tradition [...] which has been recomposed to correspond to the wishes of tourists. It only mimics the old ways, and is reconstructed on the basis of collections [...] which obscure their relationship to their original reference. When these constructions come to be presented as true [...] we enter into the region of hyper-reality” (1995:38). Once cultural values become commercial values, a simulation of the past emerges. Museums, rather than shaping authentic representations of the past, appropriate culture for profitability, and devalue and de-contextualize history from its complex processes.

In the same sense, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) sees open-air museums not as representations of history; rather she separates the terms ‘history’ and ‘heritage’, so that ‘heritage’ can be defined as “a mode of cultural production in the present that has recourse to the past” (1998: 7). Heritage is classified as a reproduction of history that, although based in the past, is a simulacrum of that past. She argues ‘heritage’ is constructed, and although it seems old, it is actually new. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett does not mean that the result of heritage production is not authentic or that it is wholly invented, but that it can be constructed, and speaks to the present. Using the example of Colonial Williamsburg, she argues the ‘heritage’ of the site is produced, and cultural producers use this advantage to attempt a rectification of a stained history and make the heritage production convey meanings other than what the historical actuality represented - in the case of Colonial Williamsburg - patriotism (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1998:8) and (Gable & Handler 1996:574).

Conclusion

This chapter provides an overview of points central to the ideas presented in this thesis. It demonstrates that sanitized Folk and agrarian representations are desired by a post-modern public, separated from production, who seek a nostalgic presentation of a lost way of life. As

Walsh maintains, this kind of idealized Folk representation, typified at open-air museum and heritage sites, excludes narratives that show social conflict, an industrial past, or how history affects the present. Instead of conveying historical processes and inciting the visitor to undertake a critical engagement with the past, the representations produce nostalgic, rather than educational, merits. This kind of presentation, then, calls into question the integrity of the museum site.

McKay confirms the Folk ideal in the context of Nova Scotia. He argues that provincial tourism marketing evokes popular conceptions of the Nova Scotia Folk ideal, not only to solidify a Nova Scotian identity, but also to develop profit. Krishenblatt-Gimblett maintains that funding is an issue for museum sites. As a result, a museum's need to transform heritage from a 'cultural' to 'commercial' shapes the production of culture and history. This transformation, Lanfant argues, stimulates a reinvention of the past based on commercial incentives to present heritage as consumable and socially safe for the public. The competitive tourist market, that demands the interactivity of 'living history' simulations and nostalgic visions of the past, spurs museums to shift their focus from educational and preservational goals, towards satisfying the visitor's desire for service and for idealized historical experiences. I suggest these idealized experiences have less legitimate purposes for engaging the public or fostering museum's educational potential. In this chapter, I show that idealized Folk representations are marketable to the public. I outline the general shift towards visitor service and exploiting 'experience' for profit. The following chapters will demonstrate how Sherbrooke Village coincides with these theories, and how its desire for funding shapes presentations of history that confront museum integrity.

Chapter 6

Idealized Folk and Agrarian Representation at Sherbrooke Village

In Chapter Three I cited that idealized Folk representations typify open-air and ‘living history’ heritage sites, like Sherbrooke Village. According to Walsh (1992) and McKay (1994), idealized folk and agrarian representations of history can be profitable, because visitors demand them. As Walsh notes, these presentations of history do not engage the visitor in a critical or meaningful understanding of the past.

In this chapter, I will show how Sherbrooke Village fits the model of idealized Folk and agrarian representations, as described in Chapter Three. Using fieldwork, interviews, a marketing material analysis, and four summers’ employment experiences at the site, I will describe how history is represented at Sherbrooke Village.

Two themes emerged from my data that suggest, as Chappell argues, Sherbrooke Village slips into creating themed scenes and experiences (2002:152). Themed experiences take an element, from a past or present reality, and project it out of proportion (2002:152). Little “concern [is] given to its role in the historical context or as a component in a larger social or political setting” (2002:152). The experience which Sherbrooke Village creates and projects out of proportion is Nova Scotia’s Folk and rural past. Chappell cites examples of this kind of historical display in places like fantasized Folk villages, where blacksmith shops and gristmills evoke a simpler time without substantially addressing the nature of life in the communities where they stood, or in the case of Sherbrooke Village, still stand (2002:152-153).

The first theme shows that a Folk and agrarian ideal introduce the presentation of history at Sherbrooke Village. This folk and agrarian past is idealized through three sub-themes: an

‘evocation of nostalgia and memory’, a ‘lack of historical process, class division, social conflict and minority history’, and ‘the pristine nature and Folk aesthetic’ of the site itself. The second theme shows a de-emphasis of Sherbrooke’s heavy labour and industrial past. This past is de-emphasized through an alternative emphasis on four sub-themes: ‘domesticity’, ‘hands, handiwork and craftspersons’, a ‘farm focus’, and an overall appropriation of the industrial by the Folk.

Evocation of Nostalgia and Memory

Walsh notes that the post-modern visitor is nostalgic for a Folk and agrarian past which has been lost in the move to modernity and urban-industrialism (1992:97). Idealized Folk heritage sites satisfy this desire for nostalgia by bringing to life recollections of images from visitor’s youthful past. If the visitor cannot recollect these nostalgic visions from his or her own past, then they take away a second-hand nostalgia (1992:99).

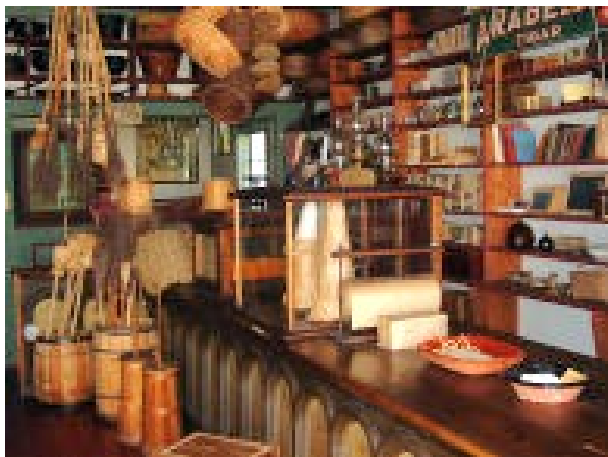


Figure 1: The Cumminger Bros. General Store evokes nostalgia in visiting tourists, with its simplistic, functional wares and old-fashioned hard candy sticks for sale. *Photo on left courtesy of Sherbrooke Village.*

Sherbrooke Village ‘brings the past to life’ by evoking nostalgia for a bucolic past. Building interpretations at the site are responsive to the nostalgic visitor’s search for an ideal 19th century Nova Scotia. The Cumminger Brothers General Store was a mercantile center in 1860s

Sherbrooke. John Cumminger, a successful local shipbuilder and merchant, was a large supplier of goods in the area. Stepping into the store from the main street, the building is warmed by a large pot-bellied wood stove in the center of the room. Elegant dishware is on display in the large, picture window. Bolts of fabric, pots, pans, baskets, lamps, small stoves, food supplies, and other useful items line the walls and shelves. Several glass jars hold bright, hard candy sticks, which are sold to visitors for about thirty cents each – a gesture that engages the visitor to participate in the nostalgic memory of buying old-fashioned candy in a ‘real’ general store. Although this is an engagement in the modern pastime or ritual of shopping, it is a regression to a more organic shopping experience. Visiting children are excited to lean against the worn wooden counters and point to their flavour of choice. Parents are happy to oblige, letting their child participate in what may be a pleasant memory of their own youth.

General stores have been staples in many communities until recent memory – gathering places for community members to socialize. One historical interpreter at the Cumminger Bros.

General Store describes recollections she has heard from visitors, reflecting on the building:

“A lot of people come in and say it smells like a General Store. A lot of the old folks come in, and they sit right down and I talk to them and they say ‘yeah, this is what people would have done, sat and chatted here like this’ ”.

Smells and atmosphere both contribute to evoking a sense of nostalgia. The memory becomes vivid and real, as the visitor is transported to an early recollection, triggered by an object in the store, or the aesthetic of the building itself. The sensory experience of the building – the smell of kerosene, hemp rope, coffee and spices, the image of sugar cones, polished silver, bright prints, reed baskets - revitalize the visitor with a nostalgic sense of history.

With goods randomly laid out and contained in two rooms, the General Store is simple and rustic compared to modern mass production and the large selection in today’s big-box retail

stores. The General Store harkens back to a slower-pace, when shopping was personable and a matter of necessity, not recreation. Money is not exchanged in the General Store, other than the few cents in purchasing candy sticks. There is no cash register or a sense of cost of goods. Hard times, poverty, and bills are not addressed at the store. The entrepreneurial spirit of John Cumminger is overshadowed by individual objects, and the store as a whole, which triggers the nostalgic responses. The focus of the visitor is the memory surrounding the notion of the general store. The store is stripped of its mercantilism for an ideal where the visitor can be transported to a realm of recollection.

Looking through the ‘Wish You Were in Sherbrooke Now?’ brochure at Sherbrooke Village’s Visitor Information Centre, nostalgia and memory come directly into play in the marketing of the museum. The brochure emphasizes the museum’s role in preserving ‘memories’ of Nova Scotia. It claims that Sherbrooke Village is “A Living Memory of Nova Scotia” (Wish You Were in Sherbrooke Now? 1). The producers of the brochure suggest Sherbrooke Village is a place where visitors can call up *memories of the past*, rather than learn history. Sherbrooke Village is a place where the sensory experience of engaging in ‘living history’ evokes visitor’s nostalgia for an idealized Nova Scotia past. The brochure emphasizes the history of the area and the province as a preservation of an idyllic “golden age” (Wish You Were in Sherbrooke Now? 1) – a picture of 19th century village life in its “natural and authentic setting” (Wish You Were in Sherbrooke Now? 1). The brochure suggests Sherbrooke Village is a perfect memory of a perfect past, the ultimate representation of Nova Scotia’s history.

Like the Cumminger Bros. General Store, Dr. Densmore’s office in Renova Cottage evokes an idealized Folk past through nostalgia and memory. The rural family doctor is an elevated symbol of dedication, resourcefulness, and commitment to the healthcare profession. A

painting of a caring doctor watching over a sick child's bed and struggling to realize a cure, hangs above a case full of old medical texts. Dr. Densmore's black leather doctor's bag sits on the floor by his examining room desk, ready to be grabbed for an emergency house call. Visitor's leave the building with an understanding of the doctor's role in the community, and the kind of services he performed. The visitor imagines 19th century healthcare as accessible, and that the doctor's house call could be paid for by a barter system of chickens and vegetables in return for the medical service. A small cardboard clock cut out says that the doctor is 'in' or 'out'. Flipped to the 'in' side, it gives a sense of the past in the present. The visitor easily becomes nostalgic for a less institutionalized system of health care.

The style of wood stove in the kitchen is familiar to older visitors, much like the General Store. Carrying out an afternoon of field work, a visitor related to me as we stood in Renova Cottage's kitchen, that she remembered stoves like this when she was a young married woman in Cape Breton:

"I remember my mother-in-law had a stove like that. I remember when I first moved to Cape Breton, when a new person came to the area or into the church, when they had the ladies church meeting, they'd have to bake something and bring it. Well, I was trying to use her woodstove, and I couldn't get it right. I was trying to make butterscotch brownies, and I just couldn't get them to cook. She says 'Oh gosh, we've only got half an hour to get there', so I pulled them out of the oven – they were almost cooked. I cut them in pieces, rolled them up, rolled them into coconut, put them on a dish, brought them, told them they were butterscotch snowballs and everyone wanted the recipe!"

The kitchen woodstove called this visitor to relate a nostalgic memory of baking in her mother-in-law's stove. The woman recalled a pleasant and humorous memory, and her experience at Sherbrooke Village was shaped by things that triggered a recollection of an idealized past. Cookies made in the Jailhouse kitchen, likewise call up memories of the warmth and taste of 'grandmother's cooking', and evoke regret for lost domesticity.

Lack of Historical Process and Social Conflict

The problem with Folk and agrarian representations is that they deny historical process and social conflict. Instead, they present history as sanitized and idyllic, denying the more adverse aspects of the past. While these kinds of presentations are desirable, palatable, and consumable for the tourist, they don't offer the public a critical engagement with the past (Walsh 1992).

Although Sherbrooke Village represents historical process in the sense that the main street of the modern town of Sherbrooke still runs into the main street of museum Sherbrooke, and that buildings range in date and display from 1860 to 1918, the history evoked at Sherbrooke Village is not deep and does not emphasize change. Sherbrooke Village does not evolve; it is isolated in time and space, locked in an idealized 'golden age' - a living, unchanging memory. A *Century Home* article describes 19th century Sherbrooke as a place where "progress did, in fact, leave [the town] behind long ago," and a place that "has a genuine feel to it, as if progress bypassed this little corner of the world and froze it in time" (1997:73). Narratives of history at Sherbrooke Village present a limited context to look at history in a broader scope. Sherbrooke Village's history is based on shipbuilding, lumbering, and gold-mining. These industries shaped Sherbrooke into an active commercial centre in 19th century Nova Scotia. While this is acknowledged within the museum, it is not emphasized in the narratives told throughout the museum complex. For example, while John Cumming is acknowledged as a shipbuilder and local merchant, the visitor is not provided with any other insight in the role of shipbuilding within the Sherbrooke economy, the global and regional context of shipbuilding in the area, nor the impacts on economy and identity when shipbuilding disintegrated as an industry across the province.

Strife and tension are missing at Sherbrooke Village, and like Chappell suggests, the representations of old time life are uncomplicated and uncritical as “open-air museums too often substitute theming of old-time life for a more nuanced portrayal of the diverse lives actual people experienced” (2002:119). Social classes blend in a harmonious existence, where the poor and lower class are integrated in the same, generic story as the socially and economically elite. Social differences are acknowledged and contrasted to an extent. Interpreters at Greenwood Cottage, a large and imposing Victorian residence, explain that the family’s two maids resided in the basement, and were prohibited from using the main stair, except while cleaning it. The Doctor’s Office shows the modest, sparse room which the family’s maid occupied. Cumminger House is interpreted as a representation of a typical dwelling of Sherbrooke’s early ‘modest pioneers’. The wealthy are prominently displayed at Sherbrooke Village in restored buildings that reflect Victorian domestic comfort and prosperous businesses. The Courthouse, Greenwood Cottage, the Drug Store, the General Store, the Tailor Shop and Renova Cottage exemplify the social elite. Cumminger and McMillan Houses, the Blacksmith shop and the woodturner serve to show modest dwellings and businesses. The Jailhouse hints of social conflict and discord. Despite the stark difference in economic backgrounds, these separate spheres of buildings connect in one, whole narration. The class divide, although apparent in a building’s function and design, is suggested as a division in outward appearance only. The narrative of Sherbrooke Village sees each building, and each class of person represented within, as communally integrated. The town is a whole, where even when the division of class is apparent, there is no social conflict, as the underclass is seemingly content to accept its economic and social subjugation.

This contributes to Sherbrooke Village’s organic feel. George Brothers, Acting Site Director, says that “one of the things that people remark on favourably is the fact that the Village

has an organic feel.” Not only is the site organic in the sense that Sherbrooke Village’s buildings are restored on their original sites, but the organic sense comes from the harmony of social and class unity in the town’s narrative. The idealized nature of Sherbrooke Village and the lack of class division and social conflict are best exemplified in interpreter’s costumes. Costumes do not show difference in social statuses. Interpreters dress in generic, rustic costumes of work shirts and suspenders, or plain print dresses, aprons, straw or simple street hats. The costumes reflect a peasant Folk class in their simplicity and homogeneity. Finer, elaborate dress which divides social classes is worn by a small number of interpreters, and only at Greenwood Cottage. Although certain buildings represent different social standings and functions in the town, Sherbrooke Village interpreters seemingly weave between classes as they do among buildings, and merge to create a harmonious, functionalist picture of 19th century Nova Scotia life.

As McKay (1994) maintains, the image of the Folk has glossed over Nova Scotia’s history of social conflict, change, and labour organization. Mining, shipbuilding, and lumbering were the main industries in Sherbrooke, but interpretation on this history does not link the history of those industries with their reality and roles in the province today. Exploitation, job security and safety, are not brought into historical narratives, or the contemporary narratives at Sherbrooke Village. In the stories of lumbering and mining, specifically, social conflicts and economic factors are not interpreted. There are no narratives on social relationships or economic exploitation – such as company stores that prohibited employees from purchasing goods elsewhere. Today, the Company Store is the museum gift shop, appropriating worker exploitation into a sanitized space that sells traditional crafts made on site. There are no narratives of child labour or the physical and elemental dangers of lumbering and mining. These alternative, real, and relevant histories are missing. Chappell reasons that “while museums

conscientiously preserve and reproduce fragmentary details of past life, the larger contours of how a community looked can be lost in the free replication of selected elements” (2002:121). By focusing on interpreting select representations of history, Sherbrooke Village excludes histories which offer the visitor different perspectives on the past.

The Jailhouse is a building that denies social conflict with limited interpretation. The Jailhouse, with its bars and cells, has been sanitized by the domestic space of the kitchen, which emphasizes demonstrations of rural foodways like preserving and baking with a wood cook stove. Entering the jailhouse, interpreters relate a brief narration on the function of the building as a jail. The jail housed petty offenders for crimes like driving a horse too fast down the street, or drunk and disorderly behaviour. This is not drawn for the visitor in the context of the local Temperance Movement and its impact on community morality. Upon entering, the visitor is soon drawn to the smells of baking from the kitchen, and the uniqueness of the wood stove, and the story of crime and punishment in Sherbrooke is negated with the domestic. Although the Jailhouse was also the residence of the jailer and his family, this literal side of the building’s history – the domestic life of the jailer’s family - is emphasized over the other, socially deviant history. The justice and penal system in Nova Scotia is not developed in presentations, despite the courthouse dominating the landscape of the town as an architectural symbol of authority and order. The Jailhouse was used in the town until the 1960s, and the courthouse until 2000. Interpretations do not show how systems of justice differed from today, how people dealt with crime in the community, how temperance influenced the town, who enforced law, and how it was enforced in Sherbrooke.

Minority histories are also denied. Sherbrooke Village is represented as exclusively Scotch Protestant. While Scots did constitute a large majority of residents and early founders and

developers of town, business and industry, not everyone was Scottish. In the site orientation video, First Nations communities are identified in Sherbrooke's geographical area as hunters and gatherers existing in "pre-historic times". Later, they are identified as traders with the 17th century French settlers to the St. Mary's River. However, they do not continue into the narrative of 19th century Sherbrooke, despite Mi'kmaw communities along the Eastern Shore which are present today. Likewise, black groups are excluded from narratives, because, as George Brothers suggests, their history in the area is so rife with unsavory elements that visitors may not feel comfortable hearing it:

"There are things that have been sanitized from our history that play to peoples comfort levels, for instance, racism that existed then and today. In the history of gold mining, there were black families that lived in Goldenville, off by themselves. There are black families buried in the cemetery here locally in their own sections. So that's something that would not necessarily get interpreted here, but it happened [...] I think it's only natural to selectively interpret parts of your story, somewhat based on the resources you have and somewhat based on the audience you expect."

Programming throughout the year includes music and music camps. These camps emphasize contemporary traditional and Folk music, specifically Scottish Gaelic traditions. Artists who play Courthouse Concerts, are often associated with Folk festivals. Sherbrooke Village collaborates with both the Stan Rogers Folk Festival and The Celtic Colours International Fall Festival, both of which largely emphasize Folk music traditions. Three camps were undertaken last summer, including a songwriter's camp, a fiddle camp, and a 'Road to Celtic Colours' music camp. George Brothers explains what the museum hopes to achieve with these camps:

"There are a lot of subsets of culture that were around even back then. One of the things that we haven't done much with, but are looking to do is our Gaelic heritage. This place was settled by Gaels and Gaelic speaking people, so we're starting to make some reconnections with those roots [...] music certainly was part of the history."

This Gaelic reconnection was also offered to visitors through a wool-dying workshop that I participated in during my field observations. A woman from the Outer Hebrides of Scotland conducted a workshop that showed traditional Scottish dying techniques. While museum staff tap into this subset of ethnic history, according to McKay (1994), Scottish Folk traditions are typically the sole basis of the Nova Scotia tourism industry. A quick flip through the *Doers and Dreamers* guide will easily affirm this as the cultural past which Nova Scotia markets.

However, programs like these music camps are basing their historical precedent on Folk traditions from other parts of the province, like Cape Breton, rather than Sherbrooke, in order to market a perceived image to the public. These highland Folk traditions, even though Sherbrooke has strong Scottish connections, are representative of rural and pastoral images that were not necessarily exclusive or central to the industrial and merchant economy of the town.

Pristine Aesthetic of the Site

The aesthetic of Sherbrooke Village itself – its scenic location, its quaint story-book feel is readily engaged in the development of the Folk and agrarian presentation of history. Several marketing sources produced by the museum offer this experience as something the tourist can relish in at Sherbrooke Village. *Century Home* suggests the post-modern visitor, consumed with the unauthenticated world of superhighways and information highways, can enter a world with a slower-pace that offers a glimpse of daily life a hundred years ago (April 1997:72). They can visit a rural village in Nova Scotia “rich in down-home charm” (April 1997:72). The Nova Scotia *Doers and Dreamers* guide describes the village as “picturesque” (2007:376), with “tree-shaded lanes” that “bustle with the daily comings and goings of a century past” (2007:363). *Wish You Were in Sherbrooke Now?* brochure emphasizes how the site is pristine and untouched by the corruption of modernity: “visit a place where time has stood still...visit Sherbrooke Village” (1).

Window boxes hang from most buildings, brimming with blooming flowers. A small walking trail following the river lets the visitor stroll along the shore and experience quiet and serenity of the now tranquil river, once wide, deep, and brimming with flowing logs or ships carrying goods. Lawns are freshly cut; flower gardens and shady trees create a comfortable atmosphere to tour the site. While it is a practical reality that tourists don't want to slop through the muck and mud of dirt roads, smell outhouses or see overrun lawns or drab, unpainted buildings, the intense story-book quaintness of Sherbrooke Village helps reinforce a presentation of idealized Folk and agrarian history, by setting a charming and scenic backdrop for the presentation. The *Wish You Were in Sherbrooke Now?* brochure invites visitors to step into the story-book illustration of 19th century Nova Scotia. Children on the cover and throughout the folds are predominantly featured, with girls in hair ribbons and pinafores, and boys in suspenders and knickerbockers. They are reminiscent of the innocence and simple charm of rural life as portrayed in TV series like 'Road to Avonlea' (1).



Figure 2: Tree-lined streets, rustic wood railings, brightly painted buildings, white picket fences and vibrant flowerboxes, give Sherbrooke Village a pristine aesthetic, 'nestled' along the banks of the beautiful St. Mary's River.

The second theme which emerged from my data supporting my argument that Sherbrooke Village represents history as idealized agrarian and Folk is the de-emphasis of Sherbrooke's industrial past. In chapter three, I noted McKay's argument that Nova Scotia's long history of capitalism, heavy labour, industry and labour and social movements have been expropriated by the tourism industry and cultural producers, in favour of bucolic projections of the past (1994). This coincides with Walsh's (1992) argument that in Britain, the history of heavy labour and industry is obscured by a rural idyll in open-air heritage sites.

Domesticity

Sherbrooke Village deemphasizes Sherbrooke's history of heavy labour and industry in order to shape a representation of a Folk and agrarian history, through an emphasis on the domestic. Although a 'cult of domesticity' would be an accurate representation of the time period's Victorian values, Sherbrooke Village specifically inflates Folk domesticity. This theme is shown through the motif of kitchens. Sherbrooke Village has many kitchens – from Jailhouse cookery, Dr. Densmore's early 20th century kitchen in Renova Cottage, to the Cumming House's rustic kitchen. The old Sherbrooke Village Hotel is now an on-site restaurant, serving contemporary foods, as well as traditional, like baked beans and brown bread. There is a happy sense of the domestic in most of the site buildings. The elegant parlours in Greenwood Cottage suggest a comfortable and quiet domestic space.

The Jailhouse particularly emphasizes the domestic in its focused presentation on woodstove cookery and Folk foodways. At the print shop, copies of Jailhouse kitchen recipes are prepared in a booklet and produced for sale. These recipes are largely taken from *Out of Old Nova Scotia Kitchens*, a collection of traditional recipes and stories compiled by Marie Nightingale. A Jailhouse certainly doesn't seem like a place where cookies and breads baked on

a woodstove would be emphasized. However, this building represents domestic work, like baking and preserving. Narratives in the Jailhouse explain traditional Folk foodways. This interpreter, dressed in working apron and mob hat, explains how she cooks beans on the wood Waterloo stove, (which becomes very hot in a small kitchen) and explains how the oven works for baking:

“You soak them in water over night, and then you boil them for half an hour, and then it can take up to seven hours for them to really cook, on low heat [She lifts the lid of the pot to show visitors] Which we don’t have today! There isn’t any thermostat, so you see you just feel it and work around it. This is the oven where we do our baking. [She opens the door and points out the double lining of the interior, which allows smoke to circulate around the food to help cook, but does not touch the food]. You see they made use of the smoke and the heat. It’s very hot... would you like to try a cookie?”

Foodways are also a reoccurring emphasis in museum events. *The Nova Scotia Museum Events* publication for September-December 2007 shows two events that emphasize food and the domestic: An apple day, where cider is made, with apples as the featured ingredient in the Jailhouse kitchen, and a ‘celebration [of] harvest weekend’ which features an ‘annual pantry sale of jellies, jams and comestibles (11). *The Daily Chronicle*, a newsletter of the day’s featured events in the museum draws the visitor to focus on the Jailhouse: “Follow your nose to the warm and inviting scent from the Sherbrooke Jailhouse. Be sure to sample one of the Village’s time-honoured recipes, baked on the wood Waterloo stove.”

Domesticity is also represented in the proportion of women to men interpreters. The majority of historical interpreters are female. While this observation could relate to employment demographics, it associates Sherbrooke Village with traditional women’s work – domestic activity. Walking through Sherbrooke Village, it is typical to see almost every female interpreter engaging in domestic crafts: sewing, embroidery, stitching, knitting, millinery work, quilting, rug hooking, crocheting and in the McMillan House, weaving and spinning wool.



Figure 3: Domestic work is emphasized at Sherbrooke Village's Jailhouse. (Top Left) An interpreter stirs beans on the kitchen's wood stove while bread rises. (Top Right) Fresh biscuits are removed from the Jailhouse oven. (Bottom Center) Domestic crafts, like rug-hooking, are practiced by most female interpreters on-site. Photo top right courtesy of Sherbrooke Village.

'With These Two Hands'

A series of interpretative demonstrations titled 'With These Two Hands' run throughout the season at Sherbrooke Village. They showcase particular crafts at the museum that are hand-

produced. The “With These Two Hands: Quilt Show” ran at the museum when I carried out fieldwork. *Nova Scotia Museum Events* highlights the feature demonstration as “ ‘Love is a gift that is surely handmade.’ Interpretative staff showcase their quilting and stitch work skills in an historic setting” (11).

Hands are a recurring motif in presentations at Sherbrooke Village. Just as the domestic is emphasized through women’s handiwork, the production of handcrafts by artisans foregrounds the interpretation of production at Sherbrooke Village. Craft work at Sherbrooke Village emphasizes small scale over large scale production. There is an assertion of quality over technology, and that quality comes with hand skills. Marketing material for Sherbrooke Village shows the recurrence of the hand motif, and plays to visitors nostalgic for hand crafts over today’s mass production. Nostalgic descriptions emphasize the importance of hands in the history of the town. A kind of rustic and hewn out history that was built on the honest toil and physical labour of a Folk people: “For centuries the commerce of Sherbrooke was dependent on hands. Weathered and worn, those hands were a witness to the life of a community that was tested, tough and true. Through mistakes made and lessons learned, they now tease into life a lump of clay, a shard of iron or a bolt of cloth” (Wish You Were in Sherbrooke Now? 1). This description of the town’s history contrasts with the historical economy of the town as being built on shipbuilding, lumbering, and gold mining, or claims that Sherbrooke Village “reflects Nova Scotia as it was during its industrial boom in the late 1800s and early 1900s” (*Experience Guide to Atlantic Canada* 2007:13). While Nova Scotia’s industrial boom is outlined as the historical context for the museum, the experience suggested at Sherbrooke Village is not related to those activities, but to simple, rustic Folk productions. Just as much, visitors can engage with interpreters in the motif of hands by experiencing a living history that is a ‘hands-on’ experience.



Figure 4: (Left) Sherbrooke Village's 'handmade' history. (Bottom) The potter produces functional earthenware for sale at the gift shop.



The pottery shop reproduces typical earthenware of the 19th century. The pottery is rustic, functional and durable – simple utensils that served practical purposes. Although there is no historical evidence of a pottery shop in 19th century Sherbrooke, the shop is there to “have a handcraft represented in Sherbrooke Village,” explains an interpreter. Many handcrafts are represented in the narratives and demonstrations at the museum. At the Temperance Hall, quilting, rug hooking, knitting, embroidery, and sewing is demonstrated; in-house crafts are sold. At McMillan House, a weaver spins and produces textiles on a foot-treadle loom. The idea of handcrafts are also represented in the wood-turner’s shop, where spoons, chairs, rolling pins, spin tops and other products are fashioned without machines. A blacksmith forges metal hooks and useful implements, while fat and beeswax are rendered down to mould candles at the Cumming House. All of these products are emphasized as organic and traditional – the homespun products of rural Nova Scotians. There is no mass-production, but rather people are

portrayed as self-sufficient pastorals. A poster in the pottery shop emphasizes the rustic and elemental connection of the craftsman to his/her material:

“Sherbrooke Village Earthenware Pottery – Our hand thrown 1800s reproductions are made from Nova Scotian Clay. They are a reminder of the humans and the elements (water, earth and fire) which combined to make this unique kitchenware.”

The Boat Shop offers an opportunity to examine Sherbrooke’s story of shipbuilding in the *craftsmen* sense of boat building, focusing on locally produced river punts and dories. The small, glass encased models of large boats that were constructed in the Sherbrooke area have little interpretative text. Old pictures of ship building in Sherbrooke offer a glimpse of the expanse of the industry in the town, but are faded and worn. The building, unlike most other buildings, does not have an interpreter to convey a historical narrative. Rather, a worn text reads:

“Last century boat building was an important part of the Nova Scotia economy. Just to your right between the Boat Shop and the Cumminger General Store was a ship building yard. We are now in the process of reconstructing this yard, and hope to have a better interpretative display in the near future.”

An interpretative panel, between the Boat Shop and General Store is reached by walking down a series of stairs towards the river. It is in a location that many pass by. The panel claims “Shipbuilding: Sherbrooke’s Link to the World” and lists the numerous vessels constructed in Sherbrooke throughout the 19th and early 20th century, as well as what types of vessels characterized that period. The panel evokes a romanticized and lost time – “the golden age of sail”. Rather than ships produced by larger-scale operations, what has preserved, and what Sherbrooke Village displays, are smaller Folk vessels of the inshore fishery:

“Today, the skills of the shipbuilders are seen in skiffs, dories, riverboats and Cape Islanders of the much smaller fishing industry. The billowing sails and the big wooden ships are seen no more.”

Farm Focus

Cows mooing, chickens clucking, and the trod of horses hooves are sure to be heard at Sherbrooke Village. The Jordan Barn is a featured setting within the museum. The barn houses the team of horses which carry visitors for rides along the street. The barnyard animals offer a ‘living’ element to the museum, as cows and their calves, chickens, turkeys, peacocks and sheep are on-site. Throughout the course of the year, farm animals are featured in animations and special demonstrations – like sheep shearing and wool processing. Each day at 10 am and 4 pm the cow, which must each year have a new calf, is milked for visitors to watch. This milk is taken to the Jailhouse kitchen, to be used for butter churning demonstrations. A farm in itself has been recreated within the Village. The *Daily Chronicle* encourages visitors to “see what’s happening down on the farm!” by taking a scenic wagon ride through the Village street, try dashing butter in the churn or keeping an eye out for the speckled free-range hens that run throughout the pasture and back street.

The farm program is emphasized in educational programming, as well as the domestic. ‘Hands on History’ is the main programming experience at Sherbrooke Village, offering adults and children the opportunity to participate in Village life by offering a “ ‘hands on’, interactive, educational and fun experience” (Hands on History brochure). The program provides costumed and non-costumed experiences where school groups, families, or individuals may live in an on-site house and engage in heritage activities, as described below:

“When we make butter we use a paddle-churn and everybody gets a turn churning butter [...] making (and sampling) cookies or biscuits in the kitchen of the Jail, sewing beanbags in the Tailor Shop, working with clay at the Pottery Shop, or making a hammer at the Woodturner’s Shop – they are all interactive and ‘Hands On’” (Hands on History Brochure).

The emphasis on this educational component of the museum is based on the rural, with a focus on Folk and farm activities. The representation of history shown through this program is an

easily consumed experience that allows children to role play and imagine themselves as a part of 19th century Nova Scotia. This kind of themed experience (Chappell 2002) can be defined as ‘edutainment’ (McKercher, du Cros 2002), where aspects of heritage are conveyed, but are shallower or less meaningful. This sentimental, wistful, and rural description of heritage offers a “ ‘hands-on’ pioneer adventure” (*Experience Guide to Atlantic Canada* 2007:13) which suggests a more rustic and undeveloped setting than a town based on industrial commerce.

The emphasis on farming is also shown in the images of Sherbrooke Village museum staff choose to market. In the Antigonish Eastern Shore Tourist Association *Reward your Senses* trip planner, representational images of Sherbrooke Village favour depictions of the rural and farm program. One image shows a man in rustic costume and straw hat leading a horse down a dirt road along a wooden rail fence shaded by trees (*Reward your Senses* 2007:5). There are no images or depictions of a mercantile class or business being carried out, which would have been typical for a town based on industry at the period represented.

In the *Reward your Senses* trip planner, Sherbrooke Village is explicitly presented as rural, under its categorization in the ‘Rural Life Heritage Tour’ day trip section. The site is described as a living museum which “brings all the sights, sounds and scents of rural Nova Scotia in the mid 1880s vividly to life” (*Reward your Senses* 2007:26).

Interpretations of Industry

Gold mining is interpreted in the Royal Oak Stamp Mill, located off-site across the road from the sawmill. This building has no interpreter, and is typically featured once a season during a “Gold Mine Frolic” where beans and brown bread are served and visitors can learn to pan for gold with a neighbouring community heritage society. The Stamp Mill houses a portion of the machinery of a stamp mill, roughly displays a few damp and rusted gold pans and mining

implements. Pictures of the mines and mining operations line the walls, but have no interpretative text. A sign suggests that visitors proceed to the nearby Goldmine Interpretative Centre in Goldenville. Outside the mill is a reconstruction of a mining shaft, which is meant to show the cramped quarters and dark bleakness of a mine. However, this area is fenced off, no doubt due to safety concerns.



Figure 5: (Left) The MacDonald Brothers Sawmill, a representation of Nova Scotia's heavy labour past at the site. (Top right) Smokestacks and tall ships, a 19th century lumbering and shipbuilding operation along the St. Mary's River. Photo top right courtesy of Sherbrooke Village.

Although there are portrayals of both gold mining and ship building in the museum, the lack of interpreters and interpretative displays do not incite visitors to absorb the story of these two industries in Sherbrooke, and within the province. Again, shipbuilding is marginally interpreted through small *boatbuilding*, which places an emphasis more on the craftsmanship of the trade, and the Folk elements of using hands to produce a traditional item.

The MacDonald Bros. Sawmill stands as “a testimonial to the ingenuity of the peoples who harnessed nature's resources to build communities across this province.” This is the most

emphasized industrial presentation throughout the museum.¹ Lumbering is portrayed as the cornerstone of the town. A copy of a column printed in the *Nova Scotian* or *Colonial Herald* on July 27th, 1831, and posted on a panel in the Royal Oak Stamp Mill reads:

“Sherbrooke is a rough and unsightly cluster of wooden houses built along a street running parallel with the Eastern bank of the river [...] this village is the creation of timber trade.”

Sawmill interpreters explain that work was dangerous, and that sawmills would often catch fire, as lead cogs would get very hot and cause the sawdust to ignite. The sawmill is loud and rhythmic, and explanations of the workings of the mill are technical and in-depth. But social conflicts and local, provincial, national or even global economic factors that affected the town’s well-being are not interpreted in the story of lumbering in Sherbrooke. The museum however, highlights narratives that de-industrialize Sherbrooke Village. Images of more technological labour, like the MacDonald Bros. Sawmill, are softened and rendered more organic by lupines in the foreground and a young child standing among them (*Reward your Senses* 2007:7).

While Sherbrooke Village makes claims of authenticity and presenting Sherbrooke as it looked a hundred years ago, interpretation focuses mostly around farm, domestic craft production and artisan work which reflect a Folk context that wasn’t the whole basis of Sherbrooke’s history.

¹ Walsh (1992) suggests that tourists are not interested in seeing presentations of the industrial past – at least presentations that are not softened by the bucolic. This is not the case for all tourists or all museums. While Sherbrooke Village may deemphasize its role in Nova Scotia’s industrial past, The Museum of Industry, a part of the Nova Scotia Museum located in New Glasgow, NS, details the province’s history of mining, technology, railroads, and invention. According to its website, The Museum of Industry tells stories of “sweat, grit, tears, tragedies and triumphs” (www.museum.gov.ns.ca/moi/index.html). This is an atypical example of a Nova Scotia provincial museum and tourist attraction which challenges the predominate Folk and agrarian historical presentation within the province.

Chapter 5

Economic Imperatives and Funding

This chapter will show that Sherbrooke Village is faced with an economic imperative to commercially exploit tradition for tourists, to ensure that sufficient funds are generated to maintain the site. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) maintains that museums must compete with other attractions in the tourism economy that privilege adventure, ‘experience’, or theme-park landscapes - things which museums traditionally are not associated with. Petford maintains that shifts in visitor expectations see museums faced with the reality of exploiting the more popular elements of history at the cost of the more mundane (1994:18). Kirshenblatt-Gimblett states that museums are now forced more than ever to rely on their own earned incomes, and are becoming more service oriented, to cater to tourist expectations (1998:7).

This chapter examines the economic imperatives that Sherbrooke Village faces. I will look at this issue in two ways. First, a quantitative analysis of what Sherbrooke Village’s operating budgets reveals about funding at the site, and second, what staff members think about funding at Sherbrooke Village.

Costs and Figures

Sherbrooke Village currently operates on a budget of just under \$1.5 million. Through a Nova Scotia Museum operating grant, the provincial government provides just under \$1 million of funding. Other government capital grants, typically through Transportation and Public Works, provide money for maintenance operations. The remainder of the budget is self-generated by Sherbrooke Village, through programming, admissions and retail operations. Corporate

sponsorships also provide subsidies for programming and operations, such as the Courthouse Concert Series, which is sponsored by Exxon Mobil.

Shifts in Funding at Sherbrooke Village

I have examined a series of operating budgets at Sherbrooke Village from 1973 to 2007. Calculating inflation for the budget figures, I analyzed the data in terms of real money for 2008. I looked to see whether total government funding had decreased over time for Sherbrooke Village, and whether the self-generated funding of Sherbrooke Village has increased. Graphing the overall operating budget (including total funding and total revenue) from 1973 to 2007 (see figure below) revealed that Sherbrooke Village's budget peaked in 1973, rose and fell throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, peaked again in 1989 and continued to gradually fall in the 1990s. Reaching a high point in 2000, funding since then has steadily decreased, and is now the lowest that it has ever been.

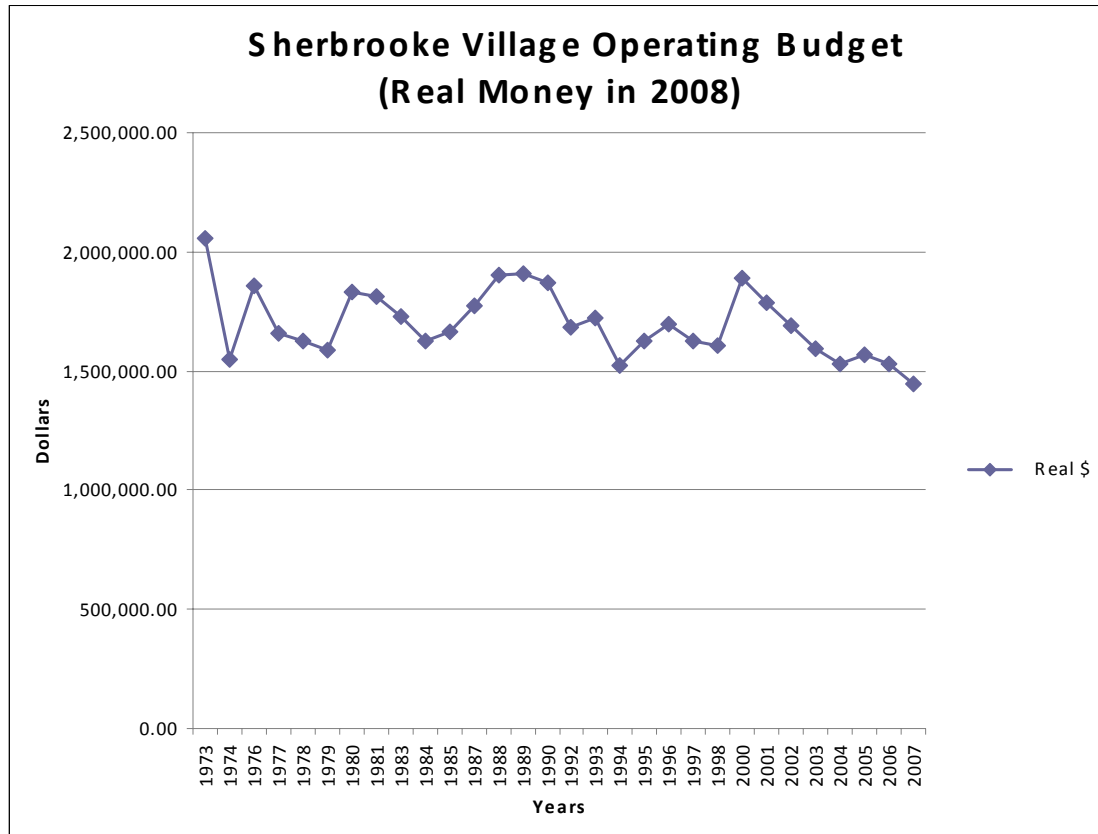


Figure 6: Government funding has decreased at Sherbrooke Village in recent years.

George Brothers suggests that funding was generally higher in the 1980s than it is now, because that was a period of restructuring. Budgets were lower in the 1990s, because government cutbacks rationalized budgets. He suggests that budgets have been substantially lower in the last ten years because visitation numbers have decreased. The statistics which I had access to (1990-2007) show that visitation peaked in 1991 (despite a low budget) at 58,831. In 2007, visitation was down to 34,541. Visitation in the last decade has also been less than what it was in the 70s and 80s, according to Brothers. This has created an even greater need for Sherbrooke Village to motivate more visitors to come through the museum gate.

While funding from government sources has decreased over the years, self-generated funds from sources such as entrance fess, programming and retail sales, paid by tourists, has increased over time.

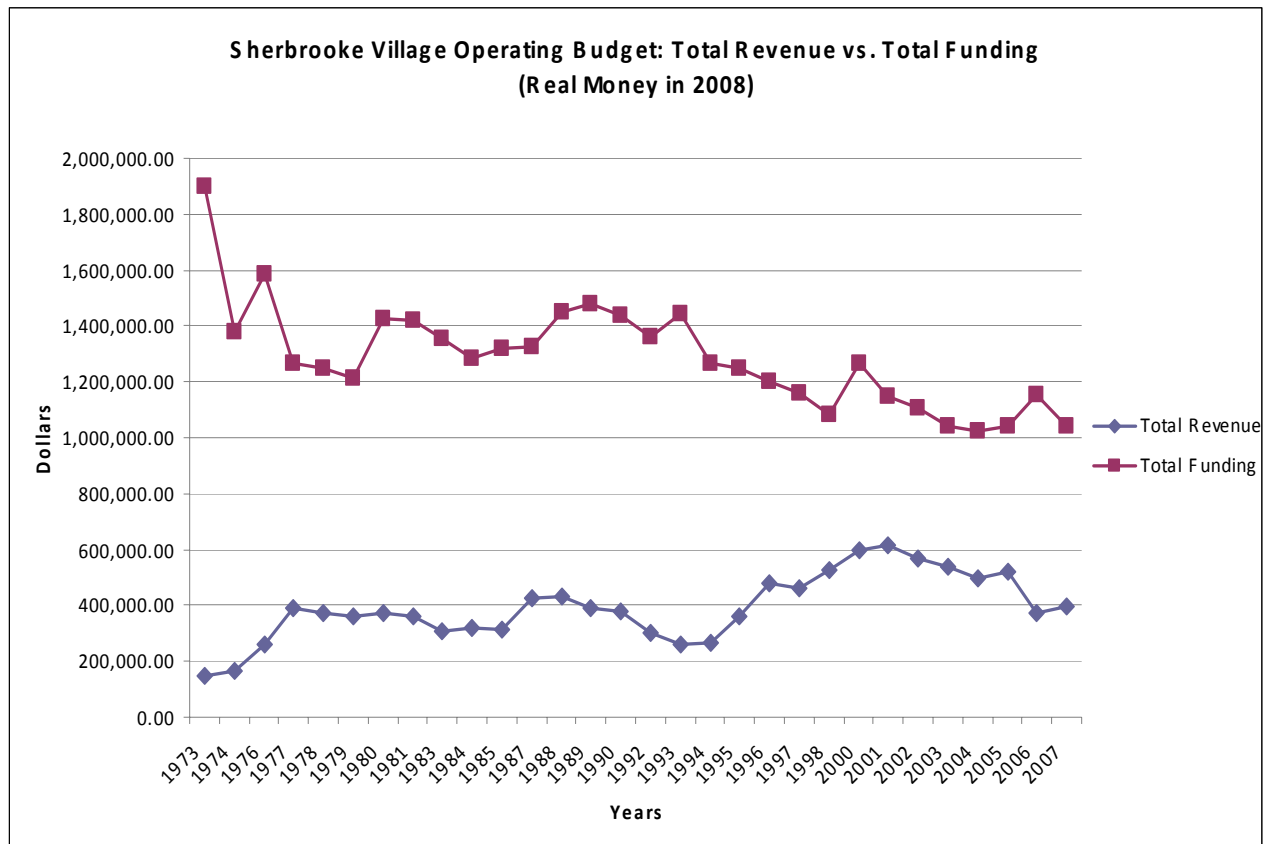


Figure 7: As government funding has decreased, Sherbrooke Village’s self-generated revenue has increased.

This graph shows that, as funding from government has steadily decreased, self-generated revenue has steadily increased at Sherbrooke Village. Funding from government sources is the lowest that it has ever been for Sherbrooke Village. While these trends in funding do not look promising for Sherbrooke Village, the site must continue to seek ways to attract tourists and tourist money, to sustain operations.

Staff Perceptions on Funding

George Brothers has been the acting director of Sherbrooke since 2007, but has been employed with the museum in various capacities since 1996. As acting director, he oversees all facets of the operation of the museum, and describes his job as an effort to try and “access whatever resources we need to keep us going.” He feels receiving adequate funding is a problem for Sherbrooke Village, especially because as a NS Museum Site, Sherbrooke Village is not allowed to run a deficit. Brothers sees funding as one of the biggest obstacles Sherbrooke Village faces, saying that: “Costs are rising faster than grants and strictly sales from general admission, so we have to look at ways to try to make up any shortfalls.” He notes Sherbrooke Village is placed under an economic constraint, and that this is a continually looming threat to the museum in terms of its operation, salaries, educational programming and conservation efforts. After a recently-conducted operational analysis, Brothers says that if Sherbrooke Village continues to operate the way it always has, this will create a financial crisis for the museum.

Nancy Beaver has been a frontline historical interpreter at Sherbrooke Village for 22 seasons. She was born in Sherbrooke, but raised in Halifax, and has now lived in Sherbrooke for over 30 years. She is also the chairperson for The Historic Sherbrooke Village Development Society, a not-for-profit organization that raises funds for upkeep and programming at the museum. A concern for Beaver is funding, which is why she works with the Historic Development Society to help make up funding shortcomings at the museum. She feels that Sherbrooke Village isn't recognized as being as important as some other museum sites, especially because Sherbrooke Village is a provincial museum, and this contributes to the level of funding Sherbrooke Village receives from government sources. She explained that money largely limits what Sherbrooke Village can and cannot do:

“Money is the biggest thing, because anything you do revolves around money. You can’t repair a building, you can’t hire staff, and you can’t offer programs unless you have the funding behind you. And when you have to cut back on your funding, if you have to take from one pot to keep another pot going, where do you [prioritize]?”

As a part of the NS Museum, Sherbrooke Village is expected to follow a mandate that educates, preserves and conserves. Robert Robichaud is the Collections and Presentation Manager at Sherbrooke Village. He sees his job as making sure that the site remains true to its objective of recreating the past, as much as possible. He sees problems with the commodification of culture and heritage:

“Well, sometimes I think it goes too far. Sometimes I think with other museums and not just Sherbrooke Village [...] it can start to feel more like a theme park instead of a museum. The emphasis is so much on numbers, and bringing in the numbers and visitors, so sometimes it’s a fine line that you walk.”

For Robichaud, funding and trying to supplement funding by bringing in a high number of visitors is a big problem for Sherbrooke Village, as well as other sites in the NS Museum. He says money restricts what he can do in conservation, research and interpretation. According to Robichaud, there are too many museums and heritage centers in the province, and not enough money being provided to maintain all of them. There are currently 27 museums in the NS Museum system. He notes that about ten years ago there were approximately 150 museums and interpretative centers in the province. Today, there are approximately 350, which all seek funding from the government. The main issue Robichaud feels, is that the government will often invest money in building new museum structures, and then not follow through with enough money for operations.

Funding struggles clearly influence what Sherbrooke Village museum staff feel they can interpret and present to the public. George Brothers sees funding from the provincial museum as only enough money to maintain basic operations as they are:

“It’s adequate for operations as they are. We’d like more, absolutely. We need more, absolutely. I guess what I would say are restrictions on operations budgets place restrictions on what we’re able to do. No on service per se, but there are programs we would like to do that we don’t have the money to do yet.”

For instance, Brothers explains that staff at Sherbrooke Village would like to like to be able to interpret boatbuilding with an actual boat builder. He says Sherbrooke Village used to have one, but was not able retain him because of economic factors. Likewise, he notes the story of gold is something that Sherbrooke Village would like to interpret:

“There is something where economics doesn’t stop you from telling stories you want to, but it also doesn’t allow you. It’s a very subtle difference. We have certain stories that we’d like to tell more, but right now we just don’t have the human or the physical resources to do them. And gold mining is one of those.”

Museum Marketing: What Tourists Want

Museums have been thrown into the arena of tourism economics and commodification. Changing expectations and increased competition from other tourist attractions are shaping how museums market and present themselves. George Brothers says that Sherbrooke Village makes an effort to follow tourist’s desires, and to market the site accordingly, “I think every museum has to look at their programming in context as to what and where their markets are and where markets are going.”

Jamie Anderson is the Retail Operations, Marketing and Visitor Service Manager at Sherbrooke Village. He sees emphasis on marketing the museum product and providing visitor service as an essential component in museum operations, in order to maintain competition in a diverse tourism market. The current budget for promotion and advertising is approximately \$20 000. His job has been a position at the museum for approximately the past 12 years. He says the position came about from a realization that museums roles and functions were changing and that

there was a need for more participation in the marketplace in order to financially maintain the museum.

Anderson thinks Sherbrooke Village's main priority is to market the site so that it stands out. He wants to find something that Sherbrooke Village does well and then market it. For Sherbrooke Village, this seems to be visitor service, as opposed to authenticity, educational programming or preservation. Anderson says the goals when marketing are to stand out and increase visitation. Sherbrooke Village seeks to do this by knowing who their clientele are and what they desire, and then meeting those expectations through visitor service. For Anderson, visitor service is his number one priority at Sherbrooke Village, because that is what brings people through the door:

“Yes, it is quite a thing that we have to do. And I think there is an understanding throughout staff that it is inherent- when we hire, that's what we look for – people who are willing to service the client. And I think it's an important aspect of what we do here.”

Visitor service at Sherbrooke Village includes a costumed interpreter greeting a person in the parking lot, encouraging an opportunity to make a sale and get the person to tour the site. Staff who specifically deal with visitor service aspects, such as tourist information, orientation, and gift shop sales, wear uniforms to identify themselves to the visitor. Visitor service, at Sherbrooke Village, is about making potential visitors feel welcome, and letting them know why they should be at Sherbrooke Village. George Brothers sees Sherbrooke Village's vision and operation statement as providing an experience that will make the visitor want to come back:

“Everyone who comes here should be treated well enough that they want to return, and that's kinda what our focus is. We all feel like we have to act as ambassadors for the village, and everyone here should be treated well enough that they want to come back.”

Sherbrooke Village has recently undertaken a new marketing and re-branding initiative. Museum staff have developed a new logo and signage which identifies the site with the penny-

farthing bicycle. The Sherbrooke Village blacksmith commonly drives a reproduction of this throughout the museum site, and it is also seen in parades that Sherbrooke Village enters for publicity. A tag line ‘Our Past is Your Adventure’, was also developed. The tag line suggests that the visitor can expect an ‘experience’ in the past. This tag line may conjure images of a theme park landscape, playing on ideas of thrills and exploration. Seeing action and participating in it holds an attraction. Jamie Anderson doesn’t see this new re-branding initiative as making the museum more ‘commercialized’. He feels culture is not being sold or presented a certain way, but that the museum is trying to balance historical and cultural preservation with business imperatives. He feels there isn’t a pressure to market the museum with any ideas surrounding ‘theme park’, but that there is a need to market the museum, “I’ve never felt pressure to market as a theme park and I wouldn’t. I don’t want to see my culture or my past portrayed as a theme park.”

Anderson sees the conflicts between museum integrity and the need to sell the museum site and an experience to the public as something that can be balanced. He doesn’t see culture as being ‘sold’ at Sherbrooke Village, but as simply an economic exchange in order to promote the culture and history at the site, and to meet needs.

“It’s not being sold. You’re trying to meet your expenses. I don’t see it as being sold in the profitable sense. I see it as trying to cover your expenses so that other people can understand your culture and enjoy your culture.”

A Sherbrooke Village staff memo from 1995 details how important Gift Shop and product sales are for the museum. This was the first year (1995) that the Gift Shop expanded and moved to a location directly beside the parking lot, where visitors could see the shop when they entered and when they left the site. Within the first month of the museum’s opening for the season of 1995, merchandise sales jumped from \$8 500 to \$22 000. The memo details how the

museum, faced with a reduction in budget over the past few years, needed increased revenue generation to maintain operations:

“The new Company Store is an important cornerstone for revenue production at Sherbrooke Village. Governments are being forced to cut expenditures to bring budgets in line. Since 1992, the operating grant Sherbrooke Village receives from the Nova Scotia Museum has been reduced by \$126 000. This revenue must be found from other sources to maintain Sherbrooke Village at its present level. We are a business, and must operate like one to be successful.”

Sherbrooke Village staff, then, must look at the site as a business in order to generate the revenue it needs to sustain operations. Museum staff think the provincial and federal governments provide Sherbrooke Village with insufficient funding. As Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) maintains, museums are increasingly facing the need to generate more revenue on their own.

Conclusion

Publicly funded museums like Sherbrooke Village face economic imperatives to commercially exploit tradition for as many tourists as possible. Funding from government sources has decreased over the past several years, while self-generated revenue from sources such as entrance fees, as well as programming revenue, has increased over time. This suggests Sherbrooke Village must strive to meet government funding shortcomings, and the need for tourists to come and visit the site is essential in order for the museum to continue operations. Museum staff think provincial and federal governments are providing Sherbrooke Village with insufficient funding. They feel a threatening pressure to increase site visitation, so that they can maintain site operations. They say that this limits what they can interpret and present at the museum. Thus, economic imperatives shape how history is presented at Sherbrooke Village.

Chapter 6

Discussion and Conclusion

This thesis examines how the need to generate revenue influences the presentation of history at Sherbrooke Village. I ask whether the economic imperative to commercially exploit tradition for tourist's money shapes how history is presented at Sherbrooke Village. I conclude that the way the museum staff represent history at Sherbrooke Village is influenced by economic imperatives. The museum staff present visitors with exaggerated and sanitized Folk and agrarian cultural productions. This is done through accentuating idealized rural and pastoral images, and deemphasizing industrial and mercantile activities' which played important roles in Sherbrooke's history.

This conclusion coincides with the findings of what has become the authoritative scholarship in this area. Krishenblatt-Gimblett (1998) confirms that museums are facing funding problems and shifts in visitor expectations. She maintains that museums must engage in a competitive tourism market that demands popular 'experience' and visitor service. This stimulates an economic imperative to turn 'cultural' into 'commercial'. As Walsh (1992) has maintained, open-air, 'living history' museums, like Sherbrooke Village, are recognized for presenting history as sanitized, non-conflictual and confined to a singular, basic presentation. At these sites an idealized Folk and agrarian past is emphasized while less romantic narratives, like industry are muted. These Folk presentations arouse nostalgic visions of the past in post-modern visitors, but do not engage them in a critical understanding of the past, and its link to the present. Walsh states that nostalgic presentations of the Folk are profitable. McKay (1994) reiterates this observation in the context of Nova Scotia tourism. He argues that cultural producers have shaped

and molded Nova Scotia's past into a Folk ideal, which denies Nova Scotia's industrial past, labour organizations and social conflicts. He adds that this Folk ideal coincides with a search for profit, as there is a demanding tourist market which seeks an organic and primitive Nova Scotia 'experience'.

My thesis has demonstrated that Sherbrooke Village has steadily received less funding from government sources. Museum staff think that Sherbrooke Village does not receive enough funding; they feel limited in what they can present and do at the museum. To sustain its operations, Sherbrooke Village must increasingly rely on generating more of its own revenue through tourists. They argue that, as a larger employer for its area, Sherbrooke Village has a responsibility to the community to remain a feasible operation, not only in job opportunities, but also in preserving local heritage. The site administration, therefore, take their job of attracting tourists seriously, even though they know the way they present Nova Scotia's history is affected by touristic desires for certain kinds of images and activities.

Sherbrooke Village convincingly presents rural history in an engaging and informative manner. Efforts to present aspects of history outside of this Folk and agrarian story are present. The MacDonald Bros. Sawmill is a good example of Sherbrooke's industrial past being actively shown to visitors. However, in general, potential in the history of shipbuilding, gold mining and lumbering, as well as mercantile activities, are not being developed. I argue that the presentation of an idealized Folk past produces historical representations that challenge the integrity of the museum as a forum for educational pursuit. If the role of the museum is to find ways to present the challenges of history, to show a complex and nuanced past, to evoke new ideas, open new learning opportunities and engage the visitor in multi-vocal presentations of history, presenting history that only attracts visitors and plays to their comfort levels for economic gain, calls into

question whether these mainstream ways of telling a story convey the best message. Cultural commodification threatens the presentation of compelling and challenging representations of history. Sherbrooke Village is not fostering critical thinking, but reinforcing a static, complacent history. To maintain its integrity as a museum, Sherbrooke Village needs to develop new ways to present its history.

The situation at Sherbrooke Village signals the need for a review of the interpretation of heritage at the site, and a reassessment of site funding. Questions we need to ask are: “How can a different history be presented at Sherbrooke Village?” “How can Sherbrooke Village create programming and interpretation that uses critical thought to reflect broadly Nova Scotia’s past?” This study contributes to an understanding of how economic imperatives shape images, presentations and narrations of the past within the Nova Scotia Museum. These questions can be asked in relation to other sites within the Nova Scotia Museum, which may face similar situations. Further research should look at how a presentation of a Folk and agrarian past influences how the public understands history. Further, it should examine how Sherbrooke Village’s exaggeration of the Folk affects understanding of local identity.

Museums must compete with other attractions and other museums in a tourism market. Nevertheless, adopting representational strategies that satisfy tourists’ desires for idealized representations of lost and imagined pastoral life and excluding conflictual and industrial aspects of history does the public a disservice since it misrepresents the province’s past. Sherbrooke Village must strive to balance its need to attract visitors and generate funding, with its responsibility to educate the public about the complexity and diversity of past and present-day Nova Scotia.

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Appendix

Selected Interview Questions:

- Is Sherbrooke Village too commercialized?
 - Compared to other similar sites? To other sites in the NS Museum?
- Tell me how history is presented at Sherbrooke Village.
 - Do you see certain interpretations or histories accentuated or emphasized, and others denied? What are they?
 - What story does Sherbrooke Village tell? Do you think it is supposed to tell or convey a certain history? What? Who determines what and how the story is told?
 - Why the agrarian emphasis today? (vs. industrial or merchant) What do you think that emphasis says about the museum site?
 - Have you seen changes in how history is presented over the years at Sherbrooke Village? Describe these changes.
 - What do you think about 'living history'?
 - Is Sherbrooke Village a sanitized history? What problem does this present? Do you see this sanitized presentation offering benefits? What kind of benefits?
 - What kind of history do you think the visiting public is looking for? What do you think their expectations are? How contradictory or similar are these expectations to what Sherbrooke Village is offering?
 - Does Sherbrooke Village look to accommodate shifting expectations?
- What kind of budget does Sherbrooke Village operate with?
 - How much is provided by the government and/or the NS Museum and how much must Sherbrooke Village provide?
 - Where does this money come from?
 - Does the museum face economic constraints? Are these threatening?
 - How much does the Company Store and other areas of self-income, generate for the museum? Is this enough money?
 - Tell me about government funding. Is it adequate? How is it determined and allotted?
- Tell me how you feel about the commercialization of culture and heritage.
 - Do you think theme-parked styled museums or sanitized histories pose problems for museum's integrity? Explain.
- Tell me how you see history presented at Sherbrooke Village.

- What do you say/interpret?
 - Why do you say it?
 - How do you learn what you need to say?
 - Can you describe any changes in the narrative and presentation over the years? Have you changed what you say over the years?
 - Are there any directions from administration on what you should talk about or how you should contribute to how history and culture are shaped at the site?

and Legend

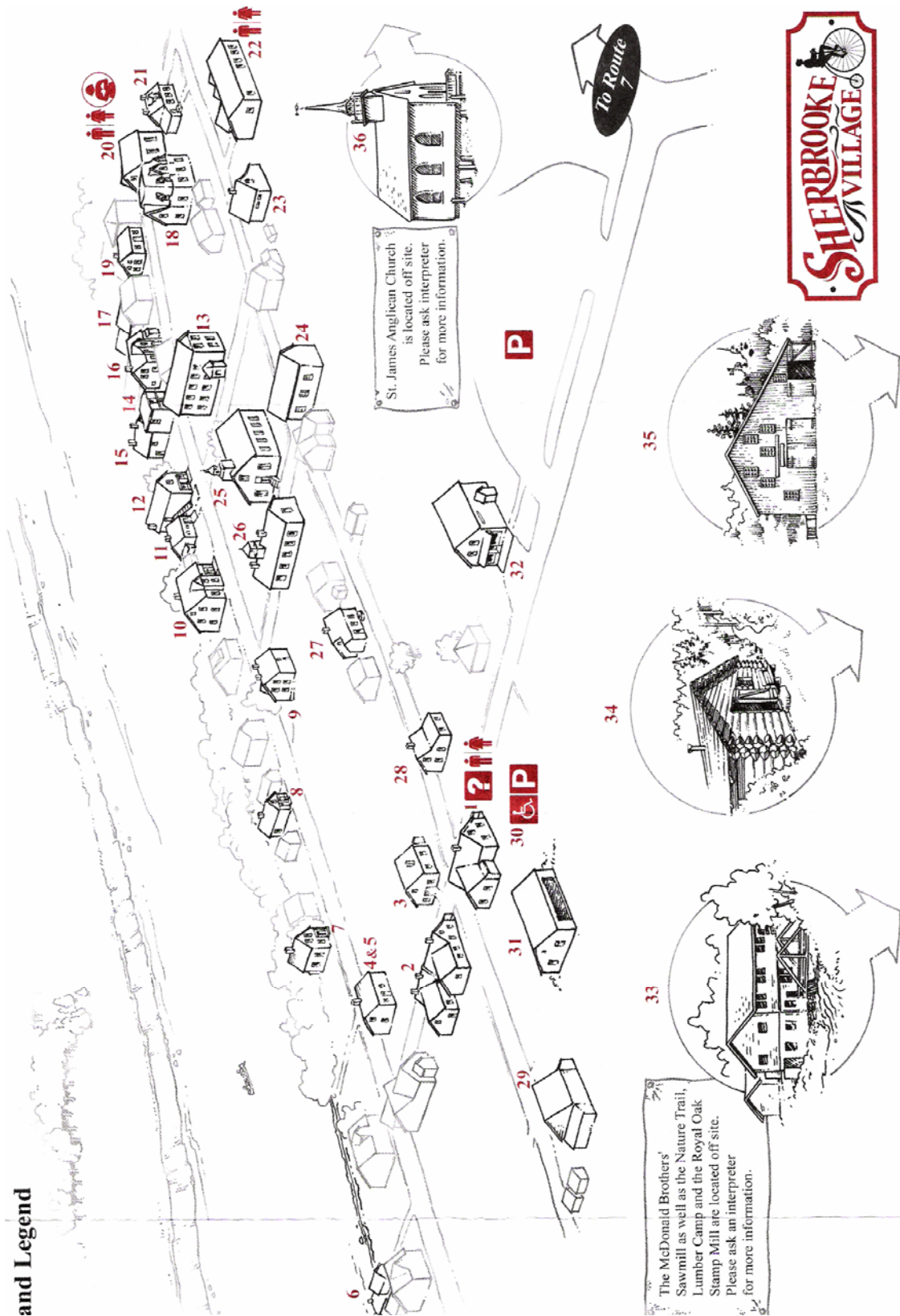




Figure 8: Site map of Sherbrooke Village.

Historic SHERBROOKE VILLAGE








Hitch a ride on a horse-drawn wagon to explore an authentic 1800s village with roots in timber, tall ships and gold-mining. Dress up for a portrait in the rare Ambrotype Photo Studio. Delight in musical concerts, unique programs, and tales shared by costumed interpreters as they demonstrate weaving, blacksmithing, traditional crafts and more!

June 1 -October 15 Route 7, Sherbrooke
<http://sherbrookevillage.museum.gov.ns.ca>
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Figure 9: A typical marketing advertisement for Sherbrooke Village, from the 2007 *Doers' and Dreamer's* guide to Nova Scotia. Note the prominent images of artisan work and the emphasis on traditional crafts.

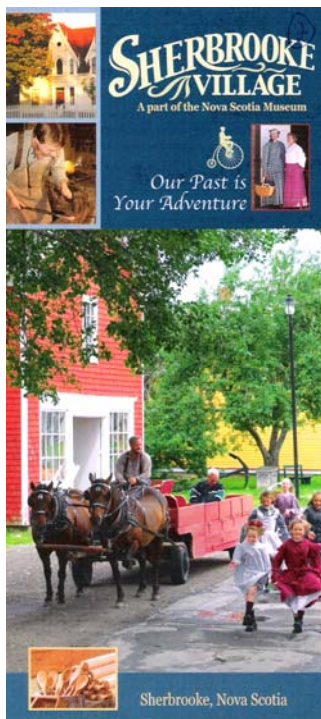


Figure 10: The Nova Scotia Museum rack card for Sherbrooke Village. The front image portrays the site as a pristine, Folk aesthetic.