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Mediated Histories: Representations Of Nineteenth-Century American Life At Greenfield Village And Crossroads Village

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MEDIATED HISTORIES: REPRESENTATIONS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN LIFE AT GREENFIELD VILLAGE AND CROSSROADS VILLAGE

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DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to those that have provided me with comfort and support, and have pushed me to be tenacious. This includes my mother, who reminds me that I am more capable than I believe; my father, who we lost too soon, but whose memory still motivates me to pursue my interests, no matter what, in order to find my own happiness; my brother, Mike, who taught me how to have a thick skin and to not take everything so seriously, but to be determined; and finally, Scott, who is burdened with the task of listening to my daily complaints and worries, but never falters in providing constant reassurance that "I've got this."

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Open air museums are a form of history museum that strives to educate visitors through the presentation of recreated scenes from the past.[1] This can be achieved in numerous ways, such as through the use of tools prevalent during certain periods, recreating and utilizing buildings and artifacts from the same time period, and reproducing scents also associated with the given time (such as damp soil and burning coal).[2] Further, the use of interpreters dressed in period clothing, who perform tasks in the manner in which they would have been done during the specified era is also a common didactic method employed at these sites.[3] However, since time is fluid rather than static, and trends are in constant flux, representations of the past can vary from site to site. Further, the interpretation of the same time period can fluctuate between each site, leaving visitors with varying perceptions of history. An example of this can be found in the difference between museums whose interpreters take on the persona of individuals living during a specific period of time, such as Plimoth Plantation's original design, where individuals dressed and spoke as if they had been transported from the seventeenth-century (or rather, the visitors had travelled back in time) and sites that use non-costumed interpreters that discuss the site with visitors from a contemporary perspective. Visitors were allowed to interpret history through the presentation of routine everyday tasks while listening to the interpreters discuss aspects of their life.[4] However, in-depth conversations that related the past and present together were lacking, disconnecting the visitors from realizing the continuous nature of history as well as its repercussions on the present and future. The research scholar Kevin Walsh calls this kind of

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[1] Jay Anderson, *A Living History Reader: Museums* Vol. 1 (Nashville: American Association of State and Local History, 1991), 3.
[2] Kevin Walsh, *The Representations of the Past: Museums and Heritage in the Post-Modern World* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 112-113.
[3] Anderson, *A Living History*, 3-7.
[4] Walsh, *The Representations of the Past*, 101.

performance a form of empathy because it "denies the existence of history as process, which moves from the past through the present and into the future."[5] Therefore, similar living history museums can and often do represent history in different ways, through their design, method of interpretation to the visitor, and through the artifacts selected to represent different eras. Together, these factors play a role in this overall depiction and interpretation of the past which becomes a highly constructed representation of aspects from the past that are neither full truth nor complete fabrications.

In this essay I compare two living history museums that outwardly depict the same time and theme, that of nineteenth-century small town American life, and analyze their similarities and differences. They are Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan, and Crossroads Village in Flint, Michigan, which are separated by only seventy miles, and less than five decades in creation. I argue that although these museums outwardly present the same theme, they are actually revealing representations of the eras in which they were created. Greenfield village, which opened in the late 1920s, projects the increasingly elevated role of capitalist industry in the early twentieth-century, while Crossroads Village, which opened nearly fifty years later during the 1976 bicentennial, which was also a time of national turmoil and economic downturn for the city, attempts to revive the spirit of optimism and unity present earlier in the century. Both museums seemingly present a convincing representation of their shared theme, but by comparing their differences, one finds projections of contemporary concerns onto the past.

Firstly, in order to demonstrate how museums can project contemporary events and issues onto the past through their representation of historical themes, the concept of conservation and preservation needs to be addressed. By examining the history of these movements, one develops an understanding of the motives behind these movements and how those motives have

[5] Ibid., 101, 104.

played an important role in the representation of the past. Further, in order to demonstrate that these two museums (Greenfield Village and Crossroads Village) are not solitary examples of projections of the present onto the past, this essay addresses several notable living history museums founded at different times in the United States, in order to show that this is a trend prevalent in many open air and heritage museums. By examining the circumstances that led up to their creation and their finished design, one finds that contemporary concerns are often prominently featured within these museums and in turn affect representations of the past.

A History of Preservation

Preservation, restoration and conservation are fairly new processes in the United States. In comparison to their European counterparts, the United States is still in its infancy. The Declaration of Independence was not signed until 1776 and the Civil War began in 1861. During this early period, those living in the United States felt and treated the goods produced within the country differently compared to those produced in Europe, such as France and England. American made goods, such as furniture, and built structures were largely viewed as functional, rather than worthy of collection and preservation.[6] This sentiment was widely held, with influential individuals, such as Thomas Jefferson, stating that structures built in the Colonial era were testaments to America's early beginnings and therefore should be replaced with newer structures that exhibited America's matured nature.[7] However, by looking at the collections of Colonial artifacts housed in prestigious museums throughout the world, including the United States, as well as the numerous living history museums that depict America in its early stages, one finds that the general consensus has shifted to view America's past and the goods produced

[6] Jessica Swigger, "'History is Bunk': Historical Memories at Henry Ford's Greenfield Village," PhD diss. University of Texas at Austin (2008), 35.
[7] David M. Grabitske, "First Lady of Preservation: Sarah Sibley and the Mount Vernon Ladies Association," *Minnesota History* 58, no. 8 (2003/04): 407, 408.

during the Colonial era as significant. Therefore, it is not only important to understand the concepts behind preservation, but the shift that occurred in the United States regarding Americans' attitudes towards their own history. By correlating preservation efforts throughout different eras one begins to piece together cultural shifts and changing attitudes which become projected onto these representations of the past.

Kevin Walsh provides several important insights into the topic of modern and post-modern preservation movements. He discusses the early beginnings of the preservation movement, primarily in England, but addresses the United States as well. He believes the key to understanding the development of the preservation movement can be tied to time, more specifically, time-space compression, and the loss of place. His concept of time-space compression comes from the fact that prior to the Industrial Revolution people had a different concept of time, as opposed to the rigid idea that we know of today, which is synchronized throughout the globe. In the past, time was kept in different ways by different people, such as through the use of sunrise and sunset and local acceptance of time standards.[8] However, with the creation of the rail lines, a unified time was necessary for the system to work properly. Further, with the development of electronic transmissions such as the telegraph, people learned about current events much more quickly.[9] Marconi's wireless system, for example, allowed people in Europe and the United States to following the case of Dr. Hawley Crippen, who was suspected to have murdered his wife and fled England. Before Crippen even touched the shores of the United States, everyone had heard the news of the suspected murderer and his flight from England.[10] This availability of information, though at times exciting, created the sensation that the world was a much smaller place. This sensation was enhanced by the ability to move from place to

[8] Walsh, *The Representation of the Past*, 10, 11.
[9] Ibid., 65-67.
[10] Tom A. Cullen, *Crippen: The Mild Murderer* (London: Bodley Head, 1977), 135.

place more quickly. As a consequence of time-space compression, more individuals were struck by the notion that they needed to record their own personal pasts before it was too late.[11] The inventions of the nineteenth-century, though exciting and beneficial in many respects, demonstrated how quickly the world could change, which worried many people.[12]

The loss of place further evolved into the need to memorialize the past, as Walsh further points out. He again notes that the period of time preceding industrialization was key to this sense of loss. Prior to the period of explosive industrialization, people were far less mobile than they would become in the nineteenth-century and certainly in contemporary times.[13] The moving of an entire family from one colony or state to another was expensive and risky. In the early period of the American colonies, roads were harsh or non-existent, making travel an exhaustive and dangerous enterprise to take on alone.[14] The least expensive means of travel was on foot, but for long distances this was highly impractical. Traveling by horse was faster, but more expensive and still a tiresome method for long distances, especially where a family was involved. One could hire a coach, but the cost of doing so would have been out of the reach of those below the middle classes.[15] However, with the creation and expansion of the rail lines, the country became far more accessible. By 1853, a journey from Baltimore to Pittsburgh, about 247 miles, took four-eight hours.[16] This expansion in the railroads as well as industrialization further led to the movement of people from the country into city centers.[17] However, it was through this movement that people began to lose a sense of place. Walsh explains this conclusion by noting that prior to the movement to newly burgeoning cities, generations of families lived in one

[11] Walsh, *The Representation of the Past*, 65, 66.
[12] Ibid., 66.
[13] Ibid., 65, 150.
[14] Seymour Dunbar, *A History of Travel in America* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1915), 28-29.
[15] Ibid., 46, 47, 55,
[16] Ibid., 1088.
[17] Diane Barthel, "Historic Preservation: A Comparative Analyses," *Sociological Forum* 4, no.1 (1989): 97.

location, where other generations of neighbors also resided. This community of individuals became their continuous connection to history. However, once families began dispersing to new locations that were also in a constant state of fluctuation, largely due to the new ease of movement, this sense of history began to evaporate.[18] Joining the loss of place to the compression of time, one again finds an increased interest in recapturing and saving history prior to the rapid industrialization that helped to produce the sensation that history was slipping by, never to be remembered.[19] Furthermore, time-space compression added to the mentality that the past was somehow better than the present. The risk of losing elements from an earlier period helped to romanticize them, which led to the diminishing of negatives while heightening the positives, creating a nostalgic yearning for the past that somehow never seemed as shocking as the present. People were nicer and crime was far less brutal in comparison to modern times, tropes that are repeated in contemporary times.[20]

The act of preserving requires time and large sums of money, both of which are viewed as precious in their own right, thus establishing the significance of a preservation project. Using Walsh's explanation for the emergence of preservation efforts in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century, one can deduce that the reason why perceptions towards American-made goods shifted from negative to positive was because of the increased changes throughout the world resulting from industrialization and the rapid movement of individuals and how those individuals received information, which drove Americans to romanticize the objects from their past and initiated the act of preserving those objects that still remained. For a further analysis of why preservation has played an important role in such places as the United States, one can address the writings of Pierre Nora on nostalgia. Nora observes that preservation interests often occur throughout time in

[18] Walsh, *The Representation of the Past*, 11, 12.
[19] Ibid., 66.
[20] David Lowenthal, "Fabricating Heritage," *History and Memory* 10, no.1 (1998): 12.

waves, with these waves correlating with major events. He rationalizes this correlation by arguing that these peaks in preservation correspond to society's interest in retaining certain elements of the past that may feel lacking in present times. Society thus, looks to eras in which those lacking elements were present.[21] One finds this trend alive and well in current American society, with toys manufactured in the eighties and nineties netting large profits for those selling the vintage items on the market today. Contemporary adults that are jaded by the increased expansion of technology and the current cell phone culture have moved to recalling their childhood through the purchase of items they might have owned during that era, in order to cope with trends in current society. As we may see through this example, Nora's argument correlates with Walsh's. Through the process of nostalgia, the negative elements of the past tend to be overshadowed by the perceived positives of an earlier time. Though technology has taken great strides in just a few short decades which has led to less obtrusive surgical treatments and greater access to databases and research sources, just to name a few, technology has also pushed further into our private lives, constantly tuning us in to what is occurring around us twenty four/seven. This constant feed of information pushes many to recall the days when the bombardment of information was not as prevalent, but subsequently we rely on this technology to find and purchase items from the period that we feel is being lost, only regenerating the cycle.

Looking again at Nora's theories on preservation, one can correlate the first preservation efforts in the country with the War of 1812, which saw the battle between the United States and England renewed. With the goal of promoting patriotism, sites and artifacts that had ties to the Founding Fathers were deemed important emblems of the country and were the first preservation projects.[22] Preservation in America therefore, largely sprang from patriotism and a desire to

[21] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989): 7, 11, 12.
[22] Barthel, "Historic Preservation," 92.

reclaim the sense of identity that was required to defeat England less than a century earlier.[23] Later, the Civil War would serve as a catalyst for further preservation projects in America. Similar to the War of 1812, those that witnessed the Civil War saw the newly formed country split into two perceivably irreconcilable sides, with many men dying on both sides and patriotic feelings began to be renewed. Animosity continued well after the war ended, but still, the desire for unity existed. Also similar to the War of 1812, the Civil War ignited preservation efforts. Sites such as Mount Vernon,[24] the former home of George Washington, which will be discussed in the following chapter, would become the focus of those looking to reclaim a sense of unity that was lost during the war. Therefore, Nora's theory that major events sparked preservation efforts can be found within these two examples relating to the United States. The threat of England again opposing their will upon Americans drove individuals to reclaim elements from their early history and ignited the first preservation movements within the country.

Finally, preservation and its importance cannot be discussed without acknowledging the numerous writings of David Lowenthal on the subject. The museums discussed in subsequent chapters of this paper all claim to have been established to serve an educational function by using and exhibiting items from the past. However, to achieve the authenticity that was desired by the founders of the museums, some items on display and used within the sites are not authentic examples from the era presented. In many cases, items are recreated to look a certain way in order to provide the right kind of aesthetic or they are repurposed to suit the needs of the new site. Of course this repurposing and the reproducing of former objects have produced controversy over the years, but that is beyond the scope of this paper. Lowenthal, however, addresses the symbolism behind preservation and the use of reproductions, such as the ones found in living

[23] Ibid., 92.
[24] Grabitske, "First Lady of Preservation," 408.

history museums. He maintains that preservation is a means by which people create and support a sense of identity, and they do this through the preservation of objects that can be seen and felt.[25] He also notes that these objects can take on many forms. Prestigious edifices were once prime targets for preservation, but public spaces that are accessible to a wide array of individuals have begun to become the focus of many efforts, due to their uniform availability to the wider public and the movement by some to democratize history.[26] It has become acknowledged in contemporary preservation studies that in order to present the past ones needs to make numerous aspects of the past available to the public, therefore clarifying the significance of numerous individuals and sites throughout history.

Lowenthal addresses the concept of history through preservation, which in relation to the different museums that are discussed in the following chapters, establishes a basis for the different ways in which history can be presented in diverse manners from one place to another. Lowenthal argues that there is no true past that can be reproduced. Rather, he argues that history is subjective, largely due to the different life events of individuals, which alters their perception of events throughout history. Therefore, many representations of the past can be truthful because there are multiple points of view.[27] A Japanese family living in the United States most likely has a different perspective on World War II than a German-American family, or an African-American family and so on. Lowenthal established four ways in which historical events can be viewed and presented in the future: the past as timeless, the past as mirroring the present, the unprogressive past, and a form of separatist past.[28] Looking at historical museums, one can find

[25] David Lowenthal, "Environmental Perception: Preserving the Past," *Progress in Human Geography* 3 (1979): 554.
[26] Ibid., 555.
[27] David Lowenthal, "The Timeless Past: Some Anglo-American Historical Preconceptions," *The Journal of American History* 75, No. 4 (1989): 1264.
[28] Ibid., 1264.

these categorizations in effect. In some cases, sites take on the shape of the timeless past, such as in the example of Plimoth Plantation, which will be discussed later, in which everything stays the same and is often devoid of conflict. This model was frequently employed in early designs for living history museums.[29]

Lowenthal further discusses the fluid nature in which history is presented at living history museums by discussing the difference between history and heritage. He states that history and heritage are often used interchangeably, but in fact they are considerably different in their definition. History in practice is based on facts, even though through time those facts can be reinterpreted through hindsight and the retrieval of new information. The tenets of history stay the same, in that there needs to be evidence for claims to be accepted by the wider historical community. Heritage on the other hand thrives off the lack of evidence. It perpetuates stories that, though not wholly true, ignite a sense of pride and oneness within those tied to the stories.[30] Lowenthal points to one such history museum that is discussed in this essay, Plimoth Plantation. Though the Pilgrims did arrive and settle in Plymouth, the site is designed around heritage. The symbolic Plymouth Rock is covered by a classical columned structure, which stylistically has no association with the first European settlers to the area, whose architecture was vastly different. Further, the lack of knowledge of the visitors to the site is evident, with questions such as "why is there only one ship in the harbor" (not three, suggesting the founding of America by Columbus with his ships, the Niña, Pinta and Santa Maria), or asking "how did Noah fit so many animals on one small ship?"[31] Lowenthal states, "as history this is absurd; as heritage it is hugely symbolic. The Rock and the Mayflower stand for all things, all voyages to new worlds, all paths

[29] Walsh, *The Representations of the Past,* 97.
[30] Lowenthal, "Fabricating Heritage," 7, 8.
[31] Ibid., 12.

to new things."[32] Heritage does not need to be truthful to illicit a positive response. Rather, Lowethal argues the opposite, that these stories cannot be verified and therefore allow them to retain power; exciting patriotism, pride and a sense of unity within people. He states this is often why one encounters school books that gloss over and omit controversies or character flaws, or even why living history museums would chose to not address certain aspects of the past, such as slavery. By including this information, these institutions feel they would damage patriotism and therefore, it is more "truthful" to omit those minor flaws in order to address the larger picture. The view is that it is fruitless to stress the bad when people in general want to think of the past in a certain way, which is often positive and heroic.[33]

[32] Ibid., 12.
[33] Ibid., 11-13.

CHAPTER 2: EXAMING THE LIVING HISTORY MUSEUM

Mount Vernon

The preservation movement in the United States was closely tied to the desire to renew patriotic feelings, as well as a response to the perceived loss of community and place that arose from the Industrial Revolution and the mobilization of society. Additionally, as Nora explained, preservation is often tied to what a society feels is lacking at a certain point in time. In order to fully tie the preservation movement to the subject of living history museums, as well as address how these sites project contemporary issues onto the past through their representations of history, I begin this assessment by discussing one of the first preservation projects in the United States, Mount Vernon. The former plantation of George Washington is a prime example of a community's desire to reclaim unity during a period of time (the Civil War) when the fate of the United States was in limbo.

After the death of George Washington, Mount Vernon remained in the Washington family, passing from one generation to the next. Through the years, the heavily visited site began falling into a state of disrepair (Figure 2.1). The site had been popular both before and after Washington's death, causing some visitors to suggest that the disrepair was due to the lack of interest by the younger Washington generation to maintain the property. However, the family blamed the failing health of the site on the costs necessary to mend the damage done by visitors that continued to take souvenirs and leave their own marks behind. Names and dates were gouged into walls, while pieces of the house were also subject to being ripped from the building. Members of the family had made attempts to repair the damage, but the costs exceeded their income, leaving the family open to offers to purchase the property.[34]

[34] Jean B. Lee, "Historical Memory, Sectional Strife, and the American Mecca: Mount Vernon, 1783-1853," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 109, no. 3 (2001): 256, 260, 262, 282, 287.

The property was often highly contested. Groups throughout the country felt that the family was obligated to maintain a certain standard in honor of George Washington, which included at different points a memorial on the grounds and a lavish burial memorial. These assertions by the public amounted to nothing and the building continued to deteriorate.[35] In 1853, with tensions mounting between the North and South, Ann Pamela Cunningham, a resident of South Carolina, resolved to preserve and restore Mount Vernon. Part of her concern arose from the family's desire to sell the property so the site could be maintained, though some speculated that the site would be used for commercial enterprise. Rumors were mounting that the site was being assessed by northern buyers, which piqued Cunningham's desire to retain the site as the house of the first president, and as a site to instill patriotism, rather than a resort, which were the rumors about its proposed future use.[36] Cunningham began the Mount Vernon Ladies Association, whose goal was to raise funds to purchase the mansion and restore it. Cunningham's organization was largely based in the south, since Cunningham was living in South Carolina. Obtaining the necessary funds to begin the large-scale project required the group to expand their efforts, which required the ladies to offer membership to women living in northern states. Extending the offer to the North brought further issues for the group. Raising money was still a difficult task, since fundraising members in the North had to compete with the increasing fear that donating money to the Mount Vernon project, a plantation home, would be viewed as supporting slavery and the position of the South.[37] Eventually, those in the North were persuaded to assist in the project, largely due to the overall approval of George Washington throughout the country.[38] He was recognized as one of the prime examples of an American who exemplified

[35] Ibid., 270, 275.
[36] Grabitske, "First Lady of Preservation," 408.
[37] Ibid., 408, 409.
[38] Ibid., 411.

courage, and in turn, his reputation was the driving force behind the donations that eventually funded the purchase of the property and its restoration.[39]

During the initial restoration process, it was determined that the site should remain largely intact. Photographs were taken of the site as well as drawings in order to ensure that the sight maintained its appearance in relation to Washington's original design, which is evident in prints commissioned by the Mount Vernon Ladies Association demonstrating the proposed repairs to the structure (Figure 2.2). However, some repairs were necessary due to the vandalism that occurred at the hands of visitors to the site. For example, a plasterer was called to repair some of the plasterwork on the walls that were too damaged to simply patch.[40] Though the site underwent some changes, it was still largely popular due to the prestige of the former owner. Though many of the visitors to the site agreed that they wished to see the house as it was when Washington resided in it, they also agreed that visiting the site was more than seeing a historically accurate representation of the house. They also traveled to the site due to the important patriotic role that Washington had played in the country. They were content to be where he had once been, to visit his tomb and to reflect on his life.[41] In this example, Lowenthal's observations on preservation are evident, in that objects from the past do not have to retain their original appearance in order to be appreciated for what they once were. The site itself had so much historic significance that it was appreciated for that fact alone by many individuals.

Looking at the preservation efforts at Mount Vernon in the 1850s, one begins to understand the issues that were affecting people through the country. The War of 1812 had helped to renew patriotic sentiments in America, when Americans were once again pitted against

[39] Lee, "Historical Memory," 256.
[40] P. Gardiner Hallock, "Assessing Past Conservation Treatments at George Washington's Mount Vernon," *APT Bulletin* 33, no. 2/3 (2002), 15, 18, 19.
[41] Lee, "Historical Memory," 263.

England and for a second time they were fighting for their independence. This battle with England caused many to reflect on the first war for independence. Those that had fought in the original war were already gone or coming closer to the end of their lives.[42] Soon, these original heroes would no longer be a part of American society, and this realization helped to spark patriotic feelings, which resulted in the preservation of such buildings as Mount Vernon, Independence Hall in Pennsylvania, and other early sites.[43] One such individual that was at the heart of these sentimental feelings was George Washington, the president loved by both the North and South. During the Civil War, it was Washington who could reunite a divided nation and therefore, the preservation of his home was the most obvious symbol of unity that could have been preserved during that era.[44] Through this project, one finds how a divided country attempted to recapture a sense of unity. By using a figure that could be agreed upon by both sides, Washington symbolized unity and independence from England and the project ultimately brought both the North and South together in their efforts to restore the property.

[42] Ibid., 264
[43] Barthel, "Historic Preservation," 92.
[44] Lee, Historical Memory," 256.

Figure 2.1 Eastern façade of Mount Vernon, 1858, Mount Vernon, VA. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association.

Figure 2.2 Unknown, Eastern façade of Mount Vernon, 1859, print, Mount Vernon, VA. Courtesy of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association.

Colonial Williamsburg

Perhaps one of the United States' most well-known living history museums is Colonial Williamsburg. The site is located in Williamsburg, Virginia, where contemporary visitors can attend historical reenactments and tours while also partaking in the nearby golf course and local day spas. Though today the site is surrounded by modern comforts and the museum itself has changed in regards to how it discusses the past, I will examine the original design of the structure.

Colonial Williamsburg started as a project initiated in the 1920s by the Reverend W.A.R. Goodwin, who felt that the country had strayed too far away from its roots and needed to reconnect to the past. He felt that the past was a simpler period and that the United States presently lacked a sense of patriotism that he felt was found in earlier periods. Goodwin was not alone in his sentiments. The era is often known for their desire to reclaim what the historian Warren Susman called "the American way of life."[45] This notion of capturing the "American way of life" can be found throughout cultural media of the era, such as movies, books and art. The theme of such works was the history of American people, particularly histories that valorized the simple ways of the past. [46] This movement towards a simpler life can be found in the rapid progress that had occurred in the last few decades. For those living in the early twentieth-century they witnessed the conflict and subsequent war (World War I), which demonstrated how inventions of progress could also be used in battle. Further, women in the United States were also experiencing significant changes in the social structure of the country by winning the right to vote in 1920. This led to a whole new generation of women that began to shed the silent role that they were often forced to play within the home and society. Further, a

[45]James Miller, "Mapping the Boosterist Imaginary: Colonial Williamsburg, Historical Tourism, and the Construction of Managerial Memory," *The Public Historian* 28, no.4 (2006): 53.
[46] Ibid., 53.

new era of wealth had been established in the early twentieth-century, leading to opulent life styles. It was from this foundation that Goodwin and others felt this swift transformation within the country, and began to look to the past as a source of comfort in a rapidly changing era. Williamsburg was Goodwin's solution to this perceived rapid loss of the past. He hoped his historical museum would educate the current population and those in the future by using the past as an educational tool. Further, through this museum Goodwin felt the presentation of history and heritage of America would instill a "spirit of patriotism,"[47] which might have suffered after the startling loss of life experience in World War I.

Goodwin wished to carry out his goal of creating a museum to educate by reconstructing Colonial Williamsburg, the former capitol of the colony. This was no easy task, as there were still standing examples of colonial architecture in Williamsburg, but a good portion of the original structures had already been demolished to make room for newer building styles, while others had fallen into states of disrepair.[48] Since Colonial structures were viewed as primitive for over a century, these buildings were razed with little thought or left to decay. It was not until the early twentieth-century that this opinion began to shift. Americans had long valued the works coming out of Europe as the prime example of art and culture. However, by the twentieth-century, as the United States began to increase their position of power throughout the world, those living in the country began to value their journey to their present state, which included their earliest beginning.[49] With this shift in thinking, museums such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York opened a Colonial wing to exhibit works of early American settlers and a precedent for restoring and preserving these structures emerged.[50]

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[47] Ibid, 52.
[48] Ibid., 58.
[49] Barthel, "Historic Preservation," 93.
[50] Swigger, "History is Bunk," 34.

Recreating Colonial Williamsburg was a massive project that would require an enormous amount of capital in order to finish, and therefore, Goodwin needed to search out benefactors that could afford to assist in the project. One of his first attempts was directed at Henry Ford, who by the 1920s had made a name for himself in the automobile industry. However, Ford was not interested in participating in the project, largely due to his own project in Dearborn.[51] Goodwin also appealed to the Rockefeller family, who initially turned down his offer as well. However, after some thought, the Rockefellers agreed to partake in the financing of the project. John D. Rockefeller Jr. worried that the Rockefeller name had become tarnished when it had came to light that his father had some financial dealings that were not viewed favorably by the public. By participating in a project that was meant to pay homage to the past and to assist in the education of future generations, he hoped he could clear the cloud from the Rockefeller name.[52] With the Rockefeller's participation, Goodwin began the process of purchasing large tracts of land in the Williamsburg area within a year. The newer buildings that had replaced the colonial structures were moved off site, while the previous colonial structures were restored or rebuilt.[53]

At Colonial Williamsburg, the main goal was to rebuild Williamsburg as it once was. The colony was one of importance, being one of the first colonies in the country. Therefore, extensive pains were taken in order to create a site that looked as it once did in the Colonial era. Buildings were restored to their previous state or recreated on the site where they once sat, such as the reconstructed Capitol (Figure 2.3). Archaeological digs were conducted on site to find artifacts that might have been buried through the years.[54] Once the site was recreated, the use of costumed interpreters were employed, who took on the persona of individuals from the colony. Non-

[51] Anders Greenspan, "How Philanthropy Can Alter Our View of the Past: A Look at Colonial Williamsburg," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 5, no. 2 (1994): 194.
[52] Ibid., 195.
[53] Miller, "Mapping the Boosterist Imaginary," 58.
[54] Ibid., 58.

costumed interpreters who served as guides for the visitors were also employed. In terms of Colonial Williamsburg's representation of history, the site often offered visitors a sanitized version of history, where conflict was lacking, in order to strengthen both Goodwin's and Rockefeller's goal of a site that promoted patriotic feelings amongst visitors.[55] As it was noted

Figure 2.3 Reconstructed Capitol building, c. 2009, Colonial Williamsburg, Williamsburg, VA. Courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

increasingly in the 1970s, the original colonial population was nearly fifty percent slaves, but the site included few African-American actors and interpreters. Further, the museum rarely touched

[55] Greenspan, "How Philanthropy Can Alter," 193, 195, 196.

upon the living conditions and lifestyle of African-Americans within the colony as a way of mitigating the deep seated issues that come with discussing that aspect of history.[56] Therefore, by sanitizing and overlooking important aspects of history, Goodwin demonstrates how contemporary issues are projected onto the past. Goodwin was attempting to create a museum that captured a sense of patriotism, which might have been lacking due to the horrors witnessed during World War I. As Lowenthal stated, heritage is often devoid of conflict since heritage is not based in historical fact, but is rather a tool to instill unity and patriotism, which is evident at Colonial Williamsburg. In order to invoke this sense of patriotism, Goodwin and Rockefeller created a "safe" site, devoid of conflict, and therefore, negative aspects of the past were not addressed within the museum. Through these means, Goodwin and Rockefeller attempted to reclaim the sense of unity and patriotism they felt thrived in earlier periods.

Since the massive critiques of the seventies, Colonial Williamsburg has made strides in representing all individuals that once lived in the colony. A Colonial Williamsburg African-American Interpretation and Presentation group has been established at the site and lead third-person tours through the grounds, stopping particularly at the house of George Wythe, who many believe had a sexual relationship with one of his female slaves which resulted in a child. The white interpreters inside the building play historical characters and therefore do not discuss the relationship between master and slave, since the history is undocumented. The AAIP however discusses the possibilities of what happened at such places, based on accounts throughout history that are not documented in traditional sources, thus providing Colonial Williamsburg with contemporary understandings of the past which includes conflict.[57]

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[56] Kate F. Stover, "Is it Real History Yet?: An Update on Living History Museums," *The Journal of American Culture* 12, no. 2 (1989): 13, 14.
[57] Scott Magelssen, "Living History Museums and the Construction of the Real through Performance," *Theatre Survey* (2004), 69.

Plimoth Plantation

Many Americans can recall their early education about the settlers that landed in Plymouth, Massachusetts. There is even a holiday devoted to their early struggles, Thanksgiving. Our education on these events begins at a young age with rudimentary information, such as how they fled England hoping to find religious tolerance in the New Land. As we progress through school, discussions of their history become more in-depth. Our education on these early European settlers begins at an early age not only because their story is an integral part of American history, but also because of the sense of pride that such a history can instill. The idea of having to struggle for freedom, but fighting for it at all costs, sits at the heart of American ideals, and the story of the long and dangerous journey that led these travelers to a new land filled with uncertainty speaks to that drive for freedom. The retelling of their story helps to preserve and inspire patriotism within the country. Therefore, one would not be surprised to learn that there is a museum that focuses on the first European settlers in Plymouth. In fact, most would likely be surprised to find that such a museum did not exist until the 1940s.

As a child, Henry Hornblower II enjoyed visiting Plymouth, Massachusetts and even joined archeologists at the site for digs when he was a young man. He often stated that he enjoyed going to the site because he wanted to know what it was like for the first European settlers to the area. When he grew up, he joined his family's investment business, but still thought about his time spent at Plymouth. In 1945, he convinced his father to invest in a museum that would become Plimoth Plantation, a museum that was devoted to the first European settlers to the area.[58]

In order to design an authentic representation of Plymouth, Hornblower II purchased an area of land near where the new settlers landed, so that visitors to the site could more readily

[58] Terry Dunnahoo, *Plimoth Plantation* (New Jersey: Dillon Press, 1996), 45, 47.

connect to the first European settlers to the area. The site's appearance relied on the previous digs that had been conducted in the area, as well as on newly arranged digs. Each item that was unearthed was studied and incorporated into the site. Hornblower II had also studied the journals of Governor William Bradford, of early Plymouth, and consulted them regularly throughout the creation of the site. With the aid of these journals, Hornblower II named the site Plimoth, after the spelling used in Bradford's journals. Further, Hornblower II continued archeological digs, with each item unearthed studied and incorporated into the museum in one way or another.[59] Hornblower II strove for a visually accurate representation of Plymouth.

As the site progressed through the years, Hornblower II sought to create a more diverse educational experience, and therefore, he purchased more land and continued to reconstruct the colony. The first building on the site was a recreation of the colony's first house, called the Common House, and was built near Plymouth Rock, the fabled stone that the pilgrims stepped upon as they reached the New Land.[60] Other structures erected were the fort/meeting house and the 1627 house, which represented the style of homes that were erected once the pilgrims became more settled in the area, thus showing the progression of the people of Plymouth as well as the development of the site.[61] Eventually, plans were started to construct a model of the Mayflower, which would sit in the harbor (Figure 2.4). Again, books on ships created during the era in which the Plymouth colonists sailed from England to America were consulted, but the ship was never started by Hornblower's group. Rather, an English group also proposed to create a ship for the museum as a gift and it was decided this would be a suitable idea. The English group consulted the research and designs of the Americans and proceeded to construct the vessel that would be named Mayflower II. The plan was to sail the ship from Plymouth, England to Plymouth,

[59] Ibid., 47.
[60] Ibid, 47, 49.
[61] Ibid, 47.

Massachusetts, just as the pilgrims had done. However, finding a captain experienced enough to sail a ship this distance was difficult and one was eventually found in Australia. Further, sea voyages were extremely dangerous in the seventeenth-century and therefore, modern tools were added to the ship to ensure that those that went on the journey would be able to navigate their route as well as call for help, if help should be needed.[62]

Other elements that were also eventually added to Plymouth were a small Native American village, separate from the colony. Further, a rock that was deemed to be the original Plymouth Rock was placed within a case within a classical structure as a way of protecting the object from visitors that wished to take home a souvenir and chipped away pieces of the fabled rock.[63] However, the structure created for the rock was designed in a classical style, which Lowentahl points out, stylistically does not fit with Hornblower II's assertion that Plimoth Plantation should take on a realistic representation of the colony, therefore strengthening the argument that this site is a representation of the era in which it was created.

Looking further at Plimoth Plantation, we again find a site that was essentially devoid of conflict in order to further instill a sense of patriotism without having to conjure up upsetting images of turbulence. The settlers of Plymouth were not all of one mind religiously, and these social differences led to a great deal of conflict within the community. However, for decades, the site never portrayed these differences.[64] Rather, it emphasized the bravery and fortitude of the settlers, thus recalling the early beginnings of the country and the might of the people that comprised the nation. Placing this design within the forties, when this project began, again the world was in a state of turmoil. Many people had thought that World War I was a war to end all wars, but World War II proved that theory wrong. Combined with the fact that people were still

[62] Ibid., 59-65.
[63] Ibid., 55.
[64] Stover, "Is It Real History Yet?," 14.

recovering from the Great Depression, Plimoth Plantation and the lack of conflict presented was not only a project to divert attention away from the war for at least a few individuals, but it also served as yet another patriotic site, which recalled the country's early struggles and fight for freedom, creating a connection to current events. As a heritage site, the lack of conflict allowed for the site to serve a patriotic function without recalling social strife, in an era where the country was again faced with a devastating war which resulted in loss and discord.

Figure 2.4 Mayflower II, Plimoth Plantation Harbor, Plymouth, MA. Courtesy of Plimoth.org.

Old Sturbridge Village

When looking at the living history museums discussed so far, a trend starts to appear. Wealthy individuals, usually men, have either been asked to participate in the creation of historical museums or have taken the initiative to address certain aspects of the past through their own museums. Old Sturbridge Village continues to follow these examples. Founded by the brothers, Albert B. and J. Cheney Wells, from Southbridge, Massachusetts, in 1946, the site is dedicated to New England's history.[65]

The official Old Sturbridge Village website gives the following details of the early beginnings of the Wells family's interest in creating a historic site. The Wells family is best known for their optical business. In the 1840s, George Washington Wells established an optical shop that emerged into the American Optical Company of Southbridge, Massachusetts, a well known establishment that brought wealth to the family. Albert and J. Cheney would inherit the business from their father, along with a third brother, and they would continue to build the business.[66] Like Ford and Rockefeller, the Wells family became successful industrialists. They often claimed that they owed their success to their New England upbringing, since the area bred hard-working individuals. It was also through their success that they were able to amass a collection of objects that they found fascinating.[67]

When a game of golf was rained out in 1926, Albert Wells instead accompanied his brothers on an antiquing trip. Though Albert had collected a few items throughout his life, he said it was during this trip with his brothers that he began to collect his "primitives," or everyday objects made and found throughout New England. These objects would later drive his creation of Old Sturbridge Village. As a businessman whose prosperity arose from the creation of new and

[65] Kent McCallum, *Old Sturbridge Village* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 9.
[66] "History of Old Sturbridge Village," www.osv.org.
[67] Ibid.

better technology, he relished collecting items that were handmade and simple, as opposed to manufactured. He particularly enjoyed objects that were ahead of their time in design or verged on the bizarre (such as the guillotine mouse-trap). His brother, J. Cheney Wells, was also a collector, but his attention was mainly focused on old time pieces, which he would often use to decorate the main office of the American Optical Company.[68]

Together, the brothers accumulated a collection that expanded through forty five rooms of their Southbridge home by the 1930s. Realizing that the collection had grown too large for the house, Albert's son noted that the collection was too large for one man to possess and it should be made available to the public. The brothers, along with other members of their family and some outside associates, created the Wells Historical Museum, which would serve as an educational facility as well as a museum that could care for the artifacts entrusted to it. By 1936 however, it was decided by the Wells family that a standard museum was not the way in which the family wished to display their collected items and discussions turned to developing an area of family owned property into an open air museum, such as the ones found in Europe. Through such a museum, they could education those coming to the museum through the act of doing, as opposed to merely observing.[69]

The site went through several stages before it became Old Sturbridge Village, but the goal was to create a village that operated in a way that New England towns would have in the past, prior to industrialization. Arthur Shurcliff, an architect from New England, was enlisted to perfect the site's landscaping in order to illustrate a typical New England town prior to industrialization, which took on the shape of unpaved roads, farms, as well as shops that would have been necessary and popular for the time. Clapboard houses were also added to the site.

[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid.

Progress on the museum was halted after the attack on Pearl Harbor, initiating America's involvement in World War II, and would not resume progress until 1945, when the daughter-in-law of Albert Cheney initiated construction at the site once again. By 1946 the site became known as Old Sturbridge Village and opened to the public.[70]

The final design of the village included crafts workers, who dressed in period clothing. They not only produced goods similar to those found in the era but proceeded to demonstrate the methods in which they have been created in the past, thus demonstrating to visitors the methods of production prior to industrialization.[71]

Old Sturbridge Village tells a familiar tale and further demonstrates how the present can be projected onto the past. Successful industrialists from the early nineteen-hundreds begin to amass a sizeable collection of antiques, in this case goods from New England. Their collection grows to a considerable size, at which point the industrialists determine that their collection must be made public. The collection tends to have a certain bias, based on the individuals that purchased the original artifacts, but common structures are added to give the appearance of historical accuracy. The Wells family each had their own preference for antiques, such as J. Cheney's attraction to time pieces and Albert's to rural tools (Figure 2.5). These items would play a central role in the museums, but in order to provide the sense of a real village, items that would have been part of a typical village were found and placed on the site. In many instances, these architectural structures served as the exhibition rooms for the overall family collection. Actors are brought in to demonstrate processes, but in the end, the site is still a conglomeration of disconnected buildings that fit the role and design of the proprietor's wishes.

[70] Ibid.
[71] McCallum, *Old Sturbridge Village*, 11.

Through this view of Old Sturbridge Village, one again finds a museum that claims to be an educational site that seeks to educate individuals on the early processes of a certain era, in this example, New England, but also makes statements about the time in which the site is created. The Wells family were following in the footsteps of such individuals as Rockefeller and Ford, who amassed a sizeable about of wealth and felt it was their duty to educate the public. However, their own personal preferences were captured within these sites and conflict, as well as hardships were often nonexistent as a way of creating a positive message around the history they wished to present to the public. In modern times, critiques about this lack of conflict have pushed museums, such as Sturbridge to reevaluate history and provide a clearer understanding of what it was like to live in such an era. It is no longer enough to have an interpreter perform tasks, such as grinding grain and baking loaves of bread to educate visitors. In order to truly inform individuals about the past, one needs to provide methods for visitors to understand the hardships and historical context of the era.[72]

[72] Stover, "Is it Real History Yet?," 13.

Figure 2.5 The J. Cheney Wells Clock Gallery, 1982, Old Sturbridge Village, Sturbridge, MA. Courtesy of Nick Russell.

Shelburne Museum

In 1947, the Webb family from Vermont began work on what would become the Shelburne Museum. The initial spark for the museum arose from the desire to make public the collection of Dr. and Mrs. William Webb. Collecting ran in the family, with their son James Webb, and his wife, Electra Webb, both avid collectors in their own right. Electra's parents, Louisine and Henry Havemeyer, were both avid collectors of European art and inspired a collecting spirit into their daughter at a young age. Taking after their respective parents, both husband and wife began early in their lives to collect items that interested them. Electra collected mainly dolls, while James was intensely focused on architecture and architectural elements. Therefore, when the Webb parents left a substantial carriage collection to the family, it was

determined that the collection was too important to stay in the hands of the family, and it was determined that the carriages should be made public, and in the process, Electra and her husband's collections could be incorporated into the site. [73]

By the 1940s, the idea of forming museums devoted to American heritage in order to educate the public was well established. Therefore, the Shelburne Museum was following in the steps of a tradition of elevating American history as worthy of preserving and presenting in order to teach new generations about their ancestry. Though the museum began as a way to showcase the carriage collection of Dr. William Webb, it quickly expanded to a museum dedicated to American folk art. The Webb's acquired structures that they perceived to be important to not only the state of Vermont and locals of Shelburne, but to the United States and world at large, such as the double-lane covered bridge from Vermont. The bridge was the only one left in Vermont and was set to be replaced by a modern steel structure. The bridge was moved to the Shelburne Museum and serves as the entrance to the site. The Webbs not only appreciated the bridge because of its appearance, but because the bridge was built prior to the invention of automobiles and trucks, which carried massive loads of cargo. Though the bridge was not built for such heavy loads, it held up well to the weight, and was only set to be replaced due to traffic requiring a wider bridge. The Webbs therefore felt that the bridge demonstrated the strong craftsmanship of the people of Vermont.[74]

Some structures that were acquired and moved to the site would serve a didactic function in that they would hold the massive collection of items that embodied American folk art.[75] The Riddell Barn is one such structure (Figure 2.6). The barn was donated to the museum by Mr. and

[73] Ralph Nading Hill and Lilian Baker Carlisle, *The Story of the Shelburne Museum* (Vermont: The Shelburne Museum, 1960), iii.
[74] Ibid., 2-4.
[75] Ibid., 3, 8.

Mrs. Richard J. Riddell and now houses the museum's collection of Hudson River brass foundry wood patterns. The patterns demonstrate the tools that were once used in creating brass and bronze steamboat fittings. Within the barn, the fittings are arranged into the wooden frames of the barn, creating geometric patterns, which turns the patterns into a new form of art, and demonstrates the dual role that the structures play at the Shelburne Museum.[76]

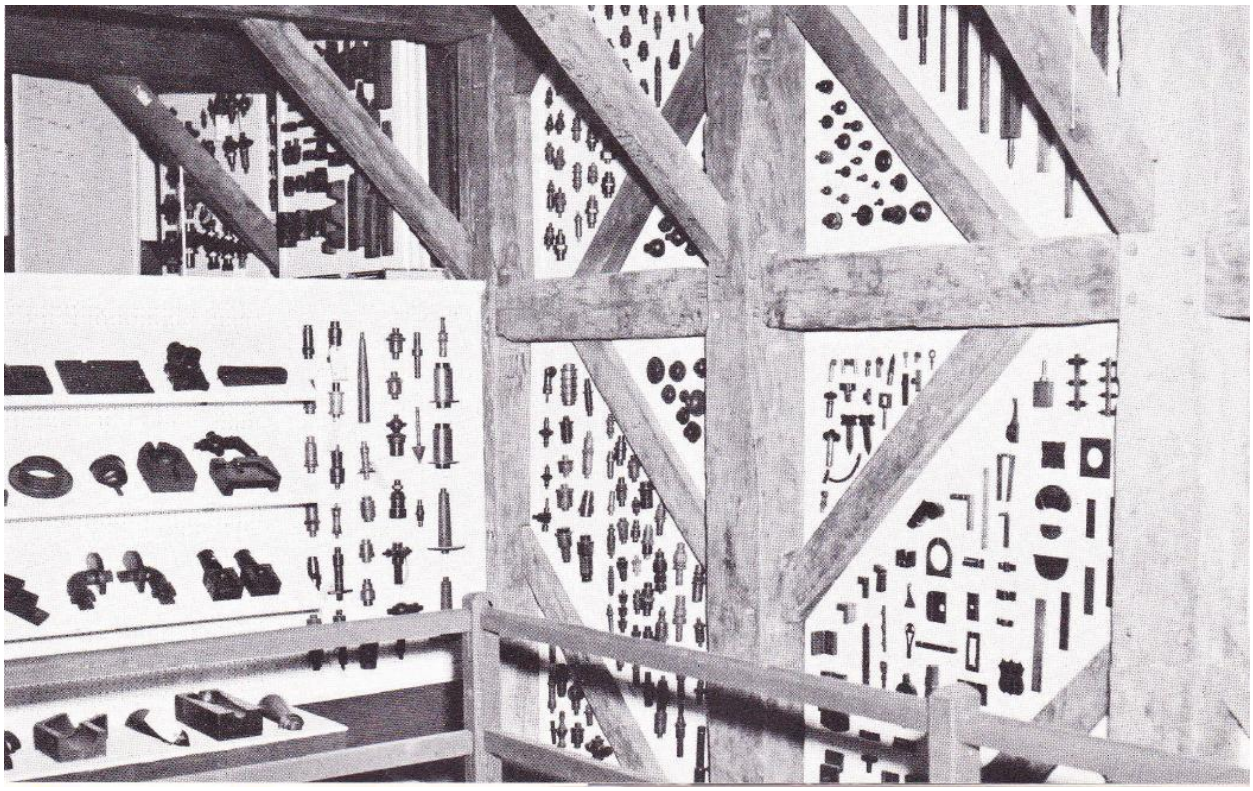

Figure 2.6 Interior of the Riddell Barn of South Shaftsbury, 1960, Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, VT. Courtesy of the Shelburne Museum.

In order to create a cohesive collection of folk art, the Webb's decided that they would need to define what American folk art meant for their museum. They decided that the definition that most suited their needs was items that had served a useful purpose, but also had some sort of aesthetic value, such as the foundry tools in the Riddell Barn. This definition of folk art honed

[76] Ibid., 93.

the collection to toys, including Electra's wide collection of dolls, various sculptures, including those found on ships as wells as on homes in the form of weathervanes and trade signs.[77]

Looking briefly at the Shelburne Museum, one finds that it fits strongly into the mold of living history museums that represent the past in a way that comments on the era and people that produced them. Both Electra and John Webb were born into wealthy collecting families that focused on items that were not necessarily viewed as valuable in the era in which they were living. As children, the spirit of collecting was instilled at a young age and both Electra and John developed a preference for their own collections. Their museum evolved from a desire to exhibit the carriage collection of the family into a showcase of both of their own personal collections, such as Electra's toy and doll collection, and John's selection of architecturally important buildings, such as the covered bridge. Though both argued the importance of their collections, which no one denies, the Shelburne Museum further highlights how contemporary issues are projected onto the past within living history museums. Electra's and John's personal tastes sit at the heart of their museum and other elements are added to fill in the gaps to present a cohesive presentation of the past. This is perhaps more evident at the Shelburne Museum due to the presentation of artifacts from the past. At the Riddell Barn, the objects are not being used, but instead are placed in geometric patterns, creating artistic patterns within the wooden beams of the barn, elevating these tools to the status of art, further promoting John's view of tools and architecture as aesthetically worthy of praise. Perhaps growing up in families that collected items that were not always appreciated as valuable, the Shelburne Museum was the Webb's reaction to this thinking. They placed these undervalued items that they appreciated into a museum setting and therefore declared their importance to the rest of the world.

[77] Ibid., 8.

CHAPTER 3: GREENFIELD VILLAGE

I have demonstrated, by the way that heritage museums construct the past, that they shed light on contemporary attitudes toward particular issues that are still ongoing. In order to further strengthen this argument, this essay now compares two living history museums that depict the same moment in history, nineteenth-century America. By comparing how the two museums depict this given era, one can determine what issues were relevant during the eras in which the museums were developed and therefore show how history becomes fluid and changeable at living history museums. In order to make this comparison, a thorough history of each museum will be addressed, beginning with Greenfield Village. By addressing the development of the site, including a short biography of Henry Ford, the creator, I will demonstrate how Greenfield Village is inherently a representation of the early twentieth-century.

Events Leading up to the Creation of Greenfield Village

Greenfield Village in Dearborn was the brainchild of Henry Ford, the famous industrialist who created the Ford Motor Company and revolutionized factories by implementing the assembly line system. As a child, Ford lived on a successful farm in Michigan, tended by his father. Ford, like other children growing up in farming families, worked with his father to help support the business, but early on he knew that farming was not something he would want to pursue in the future. He had a burgeoning interested in mechanics, and idolized inventors, such as Thomas Edison.[78] Ford followed in the footsteps of such great inventors and eventually designed his own automobile, the Model T. The car brought Ford a great deal of success, but it was his implementation in 1914 of the five-dollar-a-day profit sharing scheme that brought nationwide attention to Ford and his company. Ford's plan was to pay employees that met certain

[78] Geoffrey C. Upward, *A Home for Our Heritage: The Building and Growth of Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum, 1929-1979* (Dearborn: The Henry Ford Museum Press, 1979), 1, 3.

requirements five dollars for an eight hour day, when they had previously received $2.34 for nine hours. Some newspapers claimed that five dollars for eight hours of work in 1914 seemed like an excessive amount to pay employees that were largely regarded as performing rudimentary tasks, and Ford's plan became fodder for satirists and journalists alike.[79] Scholars in recent decades have suggested the reasoning behind this new pay structure. Some theorists believe Ford paid his employees a higher wage as a way to diminish the high turnover rate he was witnessing at his factories. However, others tend to believe that the increased pay was closely linked to the newly created Fordist model, which required workers to receive a decent wage so they could in turn afford to purchase the products they made. Perhaps most importantly, it also got people talking about Ford and his company, and the way he was changing the standard business model.[80]

Ford would continue to receive attention, which was not merely directed at his business models, but at his personal life as well. Through his rise to success, newspapers often printed articles about the man, both praising and critiquing him. He was asked about his business practices as well as his views on current affairs. Through one such article, his life would change forever. In 1916, Ford made headlines when he was asked by the *Chicago Tribune* how he felt about the American military patrolling the Mexican border. Ford replied that he felt it was ridiculous, and that the Mexican people should be put to work in order to mitigate their uprisings. Ford's response largely sprang from a pacifist nature that wished to avoid war.[81] However, his comments prompted the writer to call him "ignorant" and "an anarchist."[82] Rumors spread that Ford planned on not paying those employees that were called to protect the border, which was

[79] Daniel Raff, "Wage Determination Theory and the Five-Dollar Day at Ford," *The Journal of Economic History* 48, no. 2 (1988): 387, 388.
[80] Bruce Pietrykowski, "Fordism at Ford: Spatial Decentralization and Labor Segmentation at the Ford Motor Company, 1920-1950," *Economic Geography* 71, no. 4 (1995): 386.
[81] Swigger, "History is Bunk," 45.
[82] Charles M. Madigan, "The Libel Case with a 6-Cent Verdict," *The Chicago Tribune*, June 8, 1997.

counter to business practices elsewhere. Ford was outraged by the writer's column, and the label of anarchist, and filed a million dollar libel suit against the paper.[83]

The trial took on a circus-like atmosphere, with the defense calling up witnesses from Texas that could relate stories of the travesties against Americans that were occurring at the border, while Ford's team brought in scores of Mexican witnesses that could relate travesties against Mexicans.[84] During the course of the trial Ford was asked a series of questions in order to determine if the writer's comments were unfounded. Many of the questions were historically based, which Ford answered simplistically. His answers caused some to argue that he gave the appearance of a man who had a "rural" education. Becoming increasingly irritated at the possibility of losing his case and having further headlines questioning his intelligence, Ford infamously asserted at one point, "What does it matter, history is more or less bunk." He expounded on this statement by saying that history was more or less devoted to tradition rather than true facts. In Ford's view, knowing the answers to the questions that he was asked was irrelevant, since history was largely based on what he believed to be falsehoods, or stories that were told to induce patriotism.[85] Ford received even more criticism for this response and he spent years attempting to explain the exact meaning of his declaration.[86]

Two years later, for example, while he was working on Greenfield Village, he again addressed his statement, explaining his feelings about what was said. He stated that what he truly meant by saying history was bunk was that the history taught in schools and in history books relied too heavily on political and military heroes, but spent little time addressing the common

[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Swigger, "History is Bunk," 46.

man, science and industry, all of which he felt the country was truly built upon.[87] This new statement could be seen as tactful in several ways. Firstly, as a business man, Ford had a reputation to uphold. By telling the "common man," who comprised the majority of the nation, that the country was founded through his hard work, Ford was ennobling him. Therefore, the "common man" would look to him as understanding the plight of the average person and would appreciate such a comment coming from a successful businessman. Secondly, by elevating the role of industry, Ford was not only elevating his role in the country, but in history as well.

It was not long after the libel trial that Ford began to work on Greenfield Village and establish his sense of history. His village was designed to be a celebration of early technology as well as the common man. When beginning this project, Ford claimed he was doing it to create a space where history was not "bunk,"[88] which meant that he would go against the grain in regards to what was typically thought of as preservation-worthy artifacts. Since the United States had mainly preserved buildings and artifacts that were tied to the Founding Fathers up to this point, this would help to explain why Ford claimed that history only focused on such individuals. In contrast, his site was dedicated to the common man and his industrious nature. Ford composed the village around: a museum that would showcase the tools that had been used in the past, a village that would implement the tools that were exhibited in the museum, and an academy where children would receive a classroom education before being allowed to use practical skills in the village.[89] Through these three structures Ford created a site that not only applauded the tools and industries of the past, but put them to use in contemporary times.

[87] Ibid., 1.
[88] Upward, *Home for Our Heritage*, 3.
[89] Ibid., 21.

Creating a Village

The events that led up to the creation of Greenfield Village are important to keep in mind when analyzing the finished product within the setting of the 1920s. The overall structure of the site should also be taken into account in order to fully address the themes found in the village and how they correlated with what was occurring in Ford's life, as well as in the country.

When Ford began to work on Greenfield Village shortly after the *Tribune* trial, and it seemed to many at the time that the reason he started such a project was to create his own version of history, since he thought that history was bunk, or to repair the damage that was done through his comments on history, Ford continuously denied these claims. He asserted that he had been active in preservation well before the trial.[90] It is well-known that Ford had been a great collector of Americana,[91] common American made goods that were once routinely thrown away, due to the view of many Americans that these items were inferior to their European counterparts. Ford's collection of Americana would begin to sharply increase in 1919 when he heard that his childhood home was set to be demolished in order to construct a new highway system that would accommodate the growing number of automobiles in the state. This construction project happened to occur in the same year as the *Tribune* trial. During the trial, Ford often visited his old homestead and took time away from the press and crowds in the courtroom.[92] Perhaps the stress of the trail was one of the factors that pushed Ford to devote so much effort towards the project of restoring the house.

Ford purchased the property and moved the home to a plot of land that he owned, which allowed him to restore the home at his leisure. This was necessary since Ford was extremely

[90] Ibid., 1.
[91] Ibid., 33.
[92] Ibid., 3-8.

demanding about how the house was to be restored. Ford was adamant that the house be an exact replica of itself in the year 1876, which was the last year that his mother lived in the house.[93]

Ford often stated that it was during this project that his interest in collecting America's past truly blossomed.[94] Conceivably, this interest arose from the wide-scale searches that Ford conducted in order to restore the house. Ford was extremely fond of his mother and therefore desired to have her memory preserved through all time. In order to achieve this, Ford felt that the house would need to be exactly as his mother would have had it.[95] Including objects in the house that were not present during his mother's life would be a falsification of history. Further, since creating an exact replica required Ford's knowledge of the items in the house, the choice of restoring the house to the year of her death also meant restoring it to the year when he was most capable of remembering which items it contained and how they were arranged.

In order to create an exact replica of the house, Ford set out to identify each object that was once housed within. Ford hired men to bring him every item they could find in and around the site. Excavations were conducted on the original site and each object found was brought to him for possible identification. Once objects were identified as being artifacts of the house, Ford would then determine if the items could be placed within the house or if they needed to be replaced. Exact replicas were often sought, and Ford sent his men as far as Ohio to scour antique stores. Ford also received donations from people all over the country who wished to aid his efforts. Not everything could be used for the house, but Ford did not throw anything away. Rather, he stored items in warehouses for future use. Naturally, exact replicas were not always found and therefore Ford had reproductions made.[96] The sheer magnitude of this project hints at

[93] Ibid., 8.
[94] Ibid., 3.
[95] Ibid., 8.
[96] Ibid., 8.

Ford's preoccupation with nostalgia and self-commemoration. After completion, Ford's boyhood home was eventually moved to Greenfield Village (Figure 3.1),[97] and helped establish Greenfield Village as a site centered on Henry Ford's life.

Figure 3.1 The Ford Family Farm, Greenfield Village, Dearborn, MI. Courtesy of Greenfield Village.

Greenfield Village's Design

When beginning his project that would become Greenfield Village, Ford decided that the era that should be represented in the village was the latter part of the nineteenth-century with a concentration on industry, agriculture and transportation. These were increasingly prevalent aspects of Americans' lives, and Ford felt that they were still not receiving the amount of

[97] Ibid., 7.

prestigious acclaim they ought to have, especially in the case of the everyday worker.[98] Ford knew the nineteenth-century as an era of progress, with miraculous inventions affecting numerous aspects of life, derived from working individuals who witnessed first-hand the need for these new forms of development. Further, Ford not only admired the nineteenth-century for the great minds that were produced through the era, such as his friend Thomas Edison, but because he felt that the nineteenth-century was a quieter time when life appeared to move more slowly and values were different. Largely, the nineteenth-century saw people perform tasks by hand, which required those individuals to become skilled trades people. Ford admired and emphasized the importance of skill and believed it was through such hard work that the country became what it was.[99] Ford's critics were quick to point out that he had been instrumental in the automaton of procedures and the reduction of skilled labor, which resulted in the increasingly fast-paced world of inexpensively produced goods that he was opining over.[100] It is not uncommon for individuals to be unhappy with the outcome of their success, and in Ford's case, the automobile had been instrumental in the near destruction of his childhood home as well as the increased scrutiny of his life. Therefore, looking to a period of time prior to this success for Ford is understandable. However, Ford built a museum centered on the technology and the ingenuity of the past as a means of validating his own innovations, and reassuring himself of the successes in his life.

To create the sense of a village, Ford included structures that would have been found in most towns, such as a post office and a general store. He also included places associated with agriculture, such as a mill. Homes, a church, a town hall and a school were also necessary

[98] Swigger, "History is Bunk," 1.
[99] Upward, *A Home for Our Heritage*, 4.
[100] Swigger, "History is Bunk," 1, 2.

elements to create the sense of a real village where people worked and lived.[101] Further, since Ford's goal within the village was to elevate the roles of industry, agriculture and transportation in the history of the United States, it was necessary to include such elements within his village. He was careful to add the structures of well-known inventors, such as Edison and the Wright brothers, as well as important transportation technologies, such as the locomotive.

In order to depict the role of agriculture in the early history if the United States, Ford used his family home and farm as an example of what farm living entailed. As a working farm, students at his school not only learned about the process of farming, but were able to actively participate in the process, and in turn, were educated on proper farming techniques as well as receiving a taste of the hard manual labor involved. Continuing the illusion of agricultural life, a working mill was located within the village, which also happened to be the mill that Ford and his father had used when Ford was a boy. As a further educational tool, Ford made use of the copious amounts of donated items, including old shearing and agricultural tools, within the village. Children that attended his school were taught how to use such tools and were expected to utilize what they learned on the farm.[102]

Transportation took on many forms at the village. Horse drawn carriages were used, but as more visitors came to the site, the horses became too overworked and therefore, cars were used more frequently within the village.[103] Additionally, railroad tracks were placed around the village, allowing visitors another means by which they could move through Ford's village and providing yet another tie to Ford's friend and idol, because the train station at Greenfield Village

[101] Ibid., 30, 31.
[102] Kerstin Brandt, "Fordist Nostalgia: History and Experience at Henry Ford," *Rethinking History* 11, no. 3 (2007), 383, 384.
[103] Upward, *A Home for Our Heritage*, 76.

is the same one where Edison, as a child, accidently started a fire.[104] Ford, not wanting to disregard contemporary progress in transportation, also acquired the bicycle shop of the Wright brothers (Figure 3.2). It was here that the brothers once operated a printing press, but also fabricated the parts for their first plane. Ford acquired this bicycle shop and moved it from Dayton, Ohio, to Greenfield Village. With the assistance of Orville Wright, the wind tunnel in which the plane was tested was reconstructed, and Wright also assisted in collecting items that were once in the building, and with their placement within the newly relocated structure.[105] As with many other items in Greenfield Village, this building served a dual purpose. It not only demonstrated a form of travel, but it also highlighted how ingenuity and hard work could change the country. Two brothers who once used to operate a neighborhood newspaper had changed the course of transportation by developing a means of human flight.

Through the inclusion of rudimentary industrial tools, such as hand shears, that progressed into industrial marvels, such as the steam powered locomotive and the light bulb, Ford created a museum that exhibited the hard work and determination of individuals who used these tools and enhanced them. However, by taking a closer look at the artifacts chosen for the village, one finds a site that not only elevates the resourceful nature of the working class, but also uses Ford as a prime example of the ideal American worthy of praise and historical prestige. This in turn highlights my argument that history within heritage sites is fluid and may be manipulated to present the past according to what is important in the present.

[104] Ibid., 39.
[105] Ibid., 114, 115.

Figure 3.2 The Wright Brother's bicycle shop, Greenfield Village, Dearborn, MI. Courtesy of www.Wright-Brothers.org.

Looking further at the individual structures that were placed within the village, one finds a trend besides depicting American life in the late nineteenth-century. Ford had control over all aspects of the village and therefore the buildings that were chosen for the site, as well as the way they were depicted, provide insight into what Ford found historically significant. As an example, the name, Greenfield Village, comes from a city in Michigan where Ford's wife grew up and where they met.[106] Here we find that Ford has already defined the village as personally significant and ties it to his own personal nostalgia for the past. The village therefore becomes a

[106] Ibid., 45.

site that fed Ford's desire for the past through the use of buildings from his history. Rather than address every structure within the grounds, a few key examples demonstrate this, including Thomas Edison's Menlo Park complex, the Martha-Mary Church, and the Clinton Inn.

Again, Ford made it known that his village was designed to stress the role that industry had played in shaping the country. In order to demonstrate this, Ford affixed reminders of notable figures in history, such as Thomas Edison, within the village. Edison had grown up in Port Huron, Michigan, which aside from his celebrity as an esteemed inventor, would have created a local link to the youth that came to the village. However, this was not the only reason that Ford included Edison into his village. As a child, it was Edison that motivated Ford to move away from a life of agriculture and towards a life of inventing, which resulted in Ford's creation of his automobile. In the years after Ford's success, he began a friendship with his childhood idol and ultimately, Ford dedicated the grand opening of the village to Edison and the Golden Jubilee of the light bulb.

To represent the inventor, Ford did as he had done with other structures, and obtained Menlo Park (Figure 3.3). Though the complex was in New Jersey, Ford had the structures moved, brick by brick, to Greenfield Village. The Park was one of the largest structures moved to the village. Like Ford's family home, Menlo Park had fallen into disrepair after Edison had moved on to facilities in Florida, and therefore the structures needed to be restored upon their arrival at Greenfield. Proving to be as obsessive with Menlo Park as he was with his family home, Ford planned every minute detail of the buildings reconstruction. Ford made sure that the buildings' orientation within the village matched their orientation in New Jersey, and even went so far as to ship in several boxcars of New Jersey clay, to ensure proper soil color around the buildings. Going further still, an old tree stump sat outside the New Jersey buildings, and Ford

had it replicated at its new site. When reconstructing the buildings, original hardware and fixtures were needed to replace the ones that had fallen too far into disrepair. Since Ford was friends with Edison, he was able to personally ask Edison to verify what was missing from the buildings and have replicas made.[107] Once Menlo Park was situated within Greenfield Village, Ford further requested that Edison's Florida laboratory be moved to the village as well, which it was, and it was located right next to Menlo Park. Finally, Menlo was the first building to be officially located to its spot within Greenfield Village, with all other buildings being placed around it, further cementing its central role within the village.

Menlo Park and Ford's childhood-home demonstrate how much care Ford was willing to take in order to reproduce accurate representations of the past, and one might therefore assume that each structure was presented in such a way. However, that is not necessarily the case when other structures throughout the village are assessed. The church within the village, for example, tells a different story, one that helps to identify the fictitious nature of the village and demonstrates further how the village was a personally nostalgic park for Ford.

Ford had planned the Grand Opening of Greenfield Village to coincide with the light bulb's Golden Jubilee as a way of further honoring his friend, who had provided a great deal to the village, through the use of both his New Jersey and Florida laboratories. However, the village was still far from complete. Several of the key buildings that evoked the idea of a living American village were still absent, such as a church. In order to meet the date of the opening, Ford realized that he would not be able to acquire already standing examples for some of his buildings, and they would need to be created instead. The church for Greenfield Village was one such building. The Martha-Mary Chapel (Figure 3.4) was designed by Ford's architect with the assistance of Ford, and was modeled after a church in Massachusetts. Though the chapel built at

[107] Ibid., 33.

Greenfield Village was a new structure, it included bricks from the chapel where the Ford's were married in Michigan. Upon completion, the chapel was given a name in honor of Clara Ford's mother and Henry Ford's mother, becoming the Martha-Mary Chapel.[108]

This structure is a key example of the overall theme of Greenfield Village, which not only elevated industry and agriculture, but also served a nostalgic function for Henry Ford. With the Menlo Park display, Ford's family home, and even the Wright Brother's bicycle shop, Ford made every effort to display these buildings as they once looked. However, with the chapel, he largely stepped back from the project and allowed his architect to take the reins. Choices were made that obviously suited Ford, such as the style of the Chapel, as well as materials from a building that was significant to him, but the church was a largely invented structure. Clearly, Ford did not devote the same amount of time to this structure as the ones that promoted industry. Ford was religious and therefore one might have expected him to take a more active role in relation to a religious symbol within the village. However, by handing this structure to his architect to design and construct, Ford was making a clear statement about the importance of certain structures in relation to others. Though religion was an important aspect of his life, elevating the role of industry and agriculture was his primary goal. Both had played an integral role in Ford's life, from his childhood growing up on a farm, to the insults that were hurled at him during his *Tribune* trial, in which critics stated that he had a simple farm life education, to his success in industry. Ford's devotion to buildings that promoted these professions was a way to elevate himself and his life while also creating a site that served a nostalgic function.

[108] Ibid., 45.

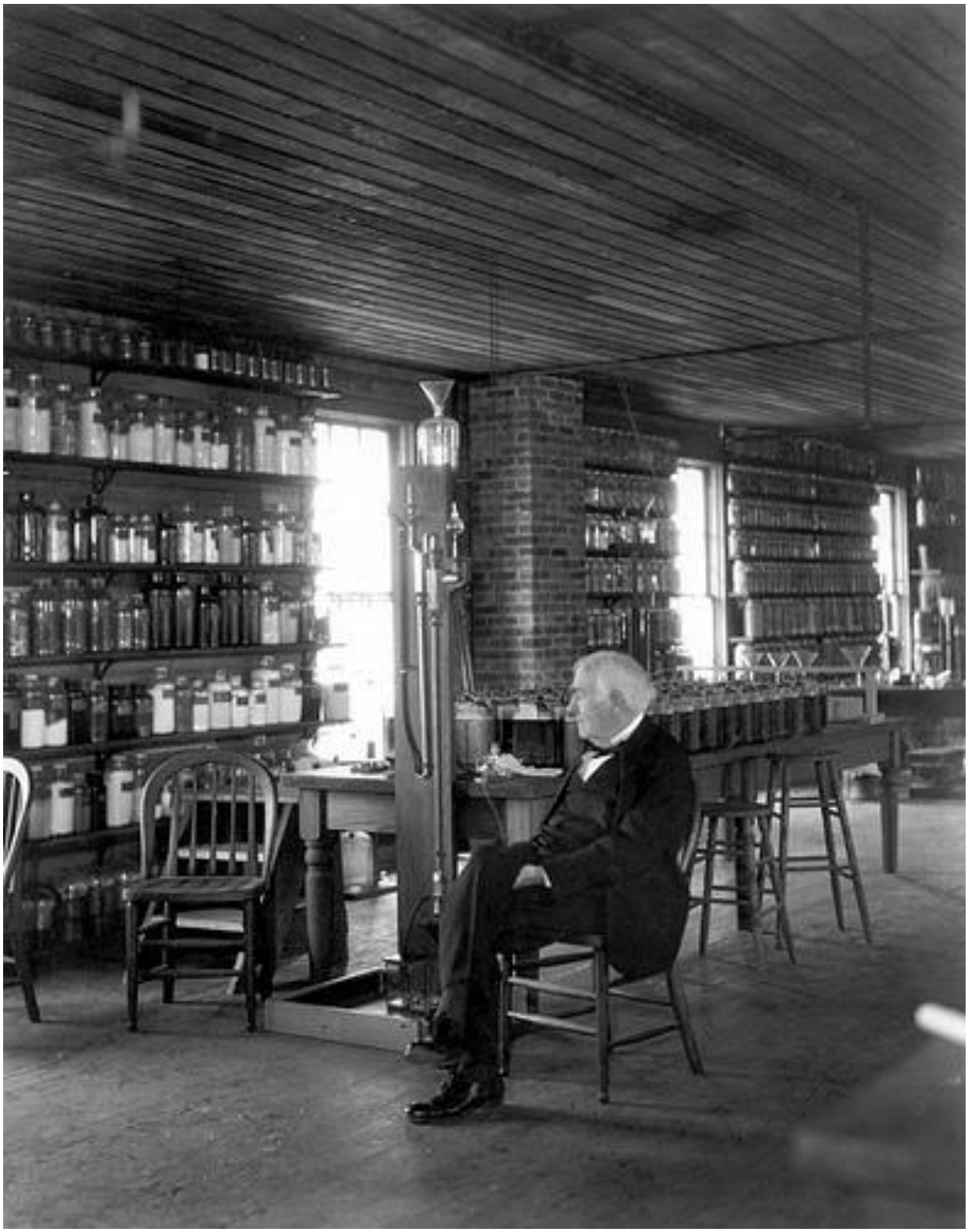

Figure 3.3 Edison on the second story of his relocated Menlo Park laboratory during the Golden Jubilee of the light bulb, 1929, Greenfield Village, Dearborn, MI. Courtesy of The Henry Ford.

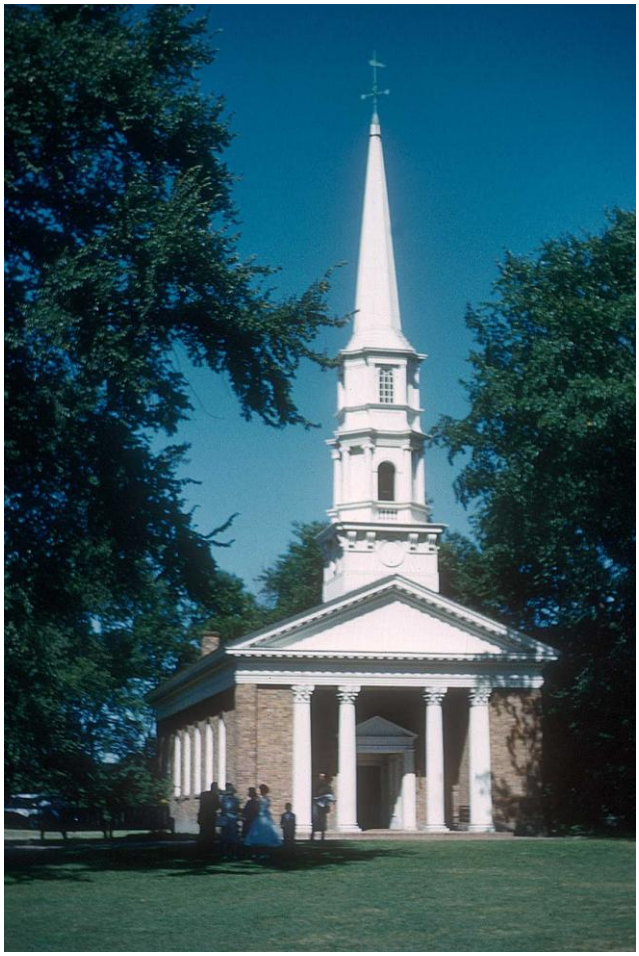

Figure 3.4 Martha-Mary Chapel, Greenfield Village, Dearborn, MI. Courtesy of The Edison Institution.

In order to further show how Greenfield Village served an artificial and nostalgic function rather than as a historical representation of the past, an anecdotal story told in the Greenfield Village history book sheds light on the true nature of the village. The story revolves around the staging of the Clinton Inn (Figure 3.5), and is meant to be a light-hearted example of Ford's love and devotion to his wife, but it is far more significant. When Ford purchased the Clinton Inn, it was falling apart. Its owner still resided in the dilapidated structure, which was surrounded by junk and debris. Regardless, it was moved to Greenfield Village. The building included many rooms, one of which was a barroom. As the building was receiving its finishing

touches for the Golden Jubilee Opening, assistants placed liquor bottles on the shelves, mimicking the appearance of an authentic barroom and further replicating the look of the Clinton Inn prior to its removal to Greenfield Village. However, when Ford, who opposed the use of alcohol, saw the bottles on the shelves he immediately inquired why they were present and asked for their swift removal, even though the assistants insisted it was merely for the sake of authenticity. Later, when Ford's wife gave Mrs. Edison a tour of the site, she noticed that there were no bottles in the barroom and requested they be added before the opening ceremony. They were again moved onto the shelves. During another examination, Ford became livid when the bottles were found back on the shelves. When it was explained to him that Mrs. Ford had requested their reappearance, Ford allowed them to remain without further complaint.[109] This anecdote reveals the degree of influence that Mrs. Ford had in the relationship, but it also says a great deal about Henry Ford and his village. Ford had the final say on the project's appearance, even if he did allow the empty liquor bottles to stay in the room. Ford repeatedly stated that his village was meant to be a truthful representation of history, but in this example we find an attempt to sanitize certain aspects of history that did not appeal to him. Ford acknowledged how important it was to have truthful representations of the past with such buildings as Menlo Park. He sought to rebuild and use materials that matched the site in its entirety. With the Clinton Inn, it would have been realistic to see liquor bottles on the shelves of a bar, but because Ford was not a public supporter of drinking, he had them removed in order to diminish the role that liquor played in this room and in history. However, this removal of symbolic objects falsifies the history of the room and history in general. The room was allowed to retain its original character only because Mrs. Ford thought it should be displayed that way. Otherwise, it would have been stripped of its historical appearance.

[109] Ibid., 29.

Figure 3.5 The Old Clinton Inn, Greenfield Village, Dearborn, Mi. Photo courtesy of http://gfv1929.blogspot.com/2008/07/clinton-inn-aka-eagle-tavern.html.

This example, paired with that of the Martha-Mary Chapel, begins to show the construction of Greenfield Village as not merely a representation of the past in nineteenth-century America; rather, it demonstrates how the site is an artificial and nostalgic playground for Henry Ford. Structures and objects that were personally interesting and significant to Ford helped to stress the importance of industry and agriculture in order to elevate the importance of individuals, such as Ford, in the development of the United States. Ford emphasized certain aspects of the past in order to achieve this goal. By stressing these aspects, Ford created a version of the past that was a representation of his present.

Greenfield Village in Context – The Twentieth-Century

Placing Greenfield Village in the context of the twentieth-century is important in order to demonstrate how Greenfield Village is a projection of contemporary concerns onto the past. Henry Ford was dealing with some substantial personal struggles just prior to his work on the village. His education had been called into question during the libel trial, and it was also during this period of time that he was made aware of how his own creation served as the destroyer of some of his childhood memories. The new highway system that would aid in automobile travel also brought the near destruction of Ford's boyhood home, until he save the structure. When looking at the themes of his village, agriculture, industry and transportation, they directly correlate to Ford's life and work. Additionally, the buildings chosen for the site mostly correlate to his life as well. Therefore, we see that Ford created a place of nostalgia for himself as well as a site that validated his life and work. However, this trend was far greater than Henry Ford's desire to confirm the importance of his work.

The call for preserving the history of the United States by the 1930s was not new. Sites like Mount Vernon demonstrated how Americans began to see their history and accept the importance of preserving. Also by thus time, people were looking back at the nineteenth-century as an era that might slip away. Many people were worried by how rapidly things were changing and, in turn, saw a need to preserve the history of the nineteenth-century. Further, Lowenthal's argument that previous eras tend to appear easier and more peaceful, due to our nostalgia for the past, was heightened by events in the twentieth-century, such as World War I and the Great Depression. Never before had people witnessed war on such a massive scale, nor had the methods of war been so technologically advanced. Further, the stock market booms that had led to increased prosperity suddenly came to a halt when the market crashed, leading the United

States into the Great Depression. Works Progress Administration imagery captured towns and people that were affected by the depression. These photographs not only brought to light the hardships of people all over the country, but helped to spread the longing for more prosperous years.[110]

Thus, Ford was not alone when he looked back to the nineteenth-century and decided to pay homage to the earlier period. Though the twentieth-century provided Ford with wealth and prestige, it was also an era in which he was heavily scrutinized professionally and personally. Coupled with the loss of his childhood home, and libel trial, as well as national and global issues, such as the World War I, Ford's yearning for the past was on par with the rest of the nation. However, his wealth allowed him to create a playground devoted to his past, which he could use to elevate his history, and perhaps lessen the sting of his critics.

[110] Miller, "Mapping the Boosterist Imaginary," 53.

CHAPTER 4: CROSSROADS VILLAGE

Crossroads Village, in Flint, like the living history museums that come before it, also represents contemporary concerns through its presentation of the past. To show how a different set of concerns were projected on to the past, I will discuss the foundation and design of the museum while comparing it to Greenfield Village and discuss issues facing those living in Michigan during the 1960s and 1970, as well as the nation.

Creating Crossroads Village

In 1968 the local Flint Farmers Club proposed an idea to the Genesee County Parks and Recreation Committee during a regular meeting. The club had often thought about founding a museum that focused on agriculture and had finally come to Genesee County to ask about erecting such a site. They suggested that the site be built in the city, so that it could serve as an educational center for local children. The museum would be dedicated to the agriculture of the area and would demonstrate farming procedures from the past. Subsequent discussions with Genesee County and other citizens expanded the museum into a village (much like the one founded in Dearborn), which would be used to educate visitors about American small town life in the nineteenth-century. Their museum would focus heavily on the city of Flint. The goal was to demonstrate how towns, such as Flint, grew and became successful cities.[111] Similar to Greenfield Village, Crossroads would accomplish this by stressing agriculture, industry and transportation, three areas that were vital to the success and growth of the city.

Plans for the village revolved around a working farm, where local children could witness how tasks were performed in the past and would be given the opportunity to participate, applying the method used at other sites that stress the importance of learning through doing. To make the

[111] Staff of the Flint Public Library, comp., *Genesee County Parks and Recreation: Crossroads Village, 1969-1995* (Flint: Flint Public Library, 2011), 4.

farm authentic to the nineteenth-century, tools and procedures from that era would be used.[112] Flint had initially grown out of the resources that were plentiful in the area, such as lumber, as well as through the hard work and ingenuity of its early residents, and therefore, it was vital to stress their importance in the growth of the area through the village. In order to create a cohesive village that adequately represented the city of Flint in its early stages the committee decided that a specific time period should be laid out. It was agreed that 1875-1880 would be the primary period of focus for reconstruction. However, as the project moved along, the committee varied these dates based on the donations and structures that they were able to acquire. The project eventually shifted as far back as 1860.[113]

The development of Crossroads Village gained momentum when the county's Urban Renewal Project began marking areas for demolition. The project entailed demolishing areas that had fallen into disrepair in order to build a new M-78 freeway as well as a cultural district. However, these plans cut through some of the oldest parts of the city and as a consequence, two historic buildings were listed for demolition. They were John Buzzell's "Little Red House" (Figure 4.1) and Judge Charles H. Wisner's property (Figure 4.2). The "Little Red House" was originally built in 1856 by Buzzell, a carpenter from Vermont that moved to Flint in hopes of finding work. Flint was known in the mid to latter period of the nineteenth-century to be a lumber hub and therefore a prime location for carpenters. By the 1960s, when the house was listed for demolition, it was the oldest standing house in the city. Since the house was built in the 1850s, just prior to the proposed period for Crossroads Village, and it was the oldest standing house in the city, the structure was considered a valuable example that should be used within the village to engage visitors with the history of Flint, and therefore the Committee sought to obtain

[112] Ibid., 4.
[113] Ibid., 12, 18

the property. The Genesee County Recreation Committee agreed to purchase the property from the city for the affordable price of one dollar and the house was moved to a site near Mott Lake where the rest of Crossroads Village would be constructed.[114]

Figure 4.1 John Buzzell House, 2009, Crossroads Village, Flint, MI. Photo courtesy of https://www.flickr.com/photos/gregandbryan.

[114] Ibid., 1.

Figure 4.2 Wisner Carriage House, 2014, Crossroads Village, Flint, MI. Photo courtesy of http://passionforthepast.blogspot.com/2014/05/the-historical-structures-of-crossroads.html.

In addition to the Buzzell house, the property of the former Judge Charles H. Wisner was also listed for destruction, largely due to the repeated acts of vandalism that occurred on the site after its abandonment. The former judge had been beloved by the city and it was said that Wisner had created the first horseless carriage in Flint, right in his carriage house. Therefore, the Wisner property was viewed by the Recreation Committee as yet another prime example of Flint's heritage and one that could serve as a clear connection to contemporary times.[115] Wisner exemplified the resourcefulness of the people that had resided in Flint and helped propel the city

[115] Ibid., 2.

forward. His connection to the horseless carriage would resonate with the residents of the city, who were largely employed by the General Motors Company, which had been founded in the city and played an important role in the residents' lives for decades.

Both buildings were moved to the parcel of land near Mott Lake while plans were made for expanding the area. Unlike Greenfield Village, which had the financial support of Henry Ford, Crossroads Village relied heavily on the generosity of the community in order to come to fruition. In the early stages of the project, local historical societies established fundraisers in order to secure the necessary finances to create the village. Those that donated designated sums were added to plaques that were placed within the village and would serve as a reminder of those that helped to make this community project a reality.[116] In addition to money, the Crossroads Village organization also sought out donated objects. They requested photographs taken between 1875 and 1880 to aid in the reproduction and reconstruction of buildings on the site, as well as styling.[117] Residents were actively enticed to participate in the project. Craft shows, fundraisers, donation drives and a logo design contest, established by the Crossroads Village Committee, all brought awareness to the community about the museum site. The logo design contest in particular highlights the communal nature of the project. The contest was open only to residents of Genesee County, with the winner's design used as the official logo for Crossroads Village.[118]

The project continued to develop and by 1973 it was decided that since the project was already so popular within the community that it should be adopted as the official bicentennial project for the city. Having obtained the distinction of being the official bicentennial project, new funds became available, including a grant from the Mott Foundation, which awarded the site

[116] Ibid., 5.
[117] Ibid., 12.
[118] Ibid., 19.

$200,000.[119] The city was also more apt to contribute and designate funds toward the project. As a consequence, further acquisitions were made, such as a set of trains for the transportation section of the village.[120]

Crossroad Village's Design

The overall design and themes of Crossroads are important to assess in order to compare this living history museum to Henry Ford's Greenfield Village, which was built only half a century before. Both villages emphasized agriculture, industry and transportation during the mid to latter part of the nineteenth-century, and therefore, though Crossroads Village is smaller in scale than Greenfield Village, this might suggest that both villages present the same depiction of the nineteenth-century. However, the process by which both museums were created as well as the items that were placed within each museum indicates how these museums differ in their representations of nineteenth-century American small town life, and also stress contemporary issues facing each at their time of creation.

Addressing Crossroad Village's and Greenfield Village's shared theme of agriculture, industry and transportation, a firm division between the two sites begins to appear. Like Ford, the city of Flint also has strong ties to the automotive industry, as well as to other forms of transportation. In the city's infancy, the site was a prime location for logging, and it was the logging industry which initiated the first major growth in the area. However, it was necessary to create a means by which this lumber could travel to processing centers, which required the extensive laying of railroad tracks to other lumber hubs. As demands for lumber grew, the length and number of tracks also grew throughout the nineteenth-century. Soon, the Flint area was

[119] Ibid., 28.
[120] Ibid., 63.

surrounded by railroad tracks.[121] These tracks today serve as a reminder of the important role the rail lines had in Flint's early history. Lumber played an additional part in Flint's transportation industry. Due to the readily available supply of wood, the city would also become known for carriage production,[122] which eventually led Flint into the era of the automobile. In 1908 the General Motors Company was founded by William Durant in Flint, who had originally built horse drawn carriages, but eventually moved into the horseless carriage market. Durant worked with Charles Stewart Mott, another eventual resident of Flint, on the business.[123] General Motors ultimately expand into one of the largest automobile producers in the world.

With trains, carriages and the automobile serving vital roles within the city of Flint, it was necessary to portray these elements within the village, since Crossroads Village's early mission was to emphasize the importance of small town life in America, and more specifically, in Flint. One way in which the theme of transportation was recalled throughout the village was through the Judge Wisner house. It connected the history of Flint to the modern day by highlighting the history of transportation through the example of the automobile. Flint was known for carriage production and later General Motors and Wisner make a connection to both since he built a horseless carriage in his own carriage house. In addition to Wisner's connection to the automotive industry, Crossroads Village draws on yet another connection to Charles Mott, the early partner of Durant and the General Motors Company. Mott owned some land in Flint, which included a man-made lake, and it was this piece of land that became the home of Crossroads Village.

Continuing the theme of transportation at the village, the rail system is also prevalent in its design. In contemporary times, Crossroads Village is better known as Huckleberry Railroad,

[121] Ibid., 64.
[122] The Flint Chamber of Commerce, *Flint, Michigan* (Chicago: Windsor Publications, 1970), 8, 71.
[123] Ibid., 63, 71.

named after the portion of railroad that was moved to the village,[124] allowing visitors to travel via steam engine through the village. Though many of the tracks in the village were acquired from the surrounding area, the trains were purchased from sites in Colorado and Ohio, which offered the trains at lower and therefore more affordable prices than locally found items. Although the trains were bought for their affordability, they were also selected because they were authentic representations of the era.[125]

In addition to transportation, industry was another important area of representation for the city of Flint. The big three in the automotive industry were Ford, General Motors and Chrysler, with General Motors having been founded in Flint, which continued to provide jobs while Crossroads Village was being established. The automobile industry helped to propel Flint in 1960s to the status of the second largest city in Michigan. The inclusion of the Durant Barn and Wisner Carriage House could therefore serve multiple purposes within the village. Not only do they represent the city and early transportation, but also how transportation played a vital role in Flint's industrial history. In addition to the automotive industry, Crossroads was careful to represent their early beginnings as well by incorporating elements from their very start, such as a blacksmith shop, as well as the Crossroads Lumber Company, which demonstrated the portable saw mills that had been used in the lumber industry during Flint's lumber industry period.[126]

Finally, agriculture was a vital part of life in the nineteenth-century, and Michigan, like other Midwestern states, has strong agricultural beginnings, including the city of Flint. Crossroad's roots established the site as an homage to agriculture, with the Flint Farmers Club initiating the project. One such example of early agriculture at the site is the working farm, complete with animals, though in recent years, the care of these animals has been shifted out of

[124] Staff Flint Public Library, *Genesee County*, 64.
[125] Ibid., 27.
[126] Ibid., 61.

the hands of the museum to an associated school due to the cost of raising and maintaining them.[127] Another structure that recalls the theme of agriculture is the simple farm house built in the 1860s known as the Eldridge House. Though the farm house is modest in size and ornamentation, the house was local to the city and therefore provides a direct link to the city.[128] Crossroads Village includes numerous other structures that served an agricultural role, such as a cider mill and a gristmill, all of which are operational and open to the visiting public. Together, these buildings demonstrate facets of agricultural life, from the living conditions of early farmers to the businesses that would aid in the processing of their raw goods, providing a glimpse of agricultural life in the nineteenth-century.

When considering how Crossroads Village represents the themes of agriculture, industry and transportation in comparison to Greenfield Village, one of the defining distinctions is that Henry Ford had complete control over every aspect of his museum while Crossroads was a community effort. Ford had a great deal of wealth and influence, both of which he used to create his final product. Greenfield Village served as a nostalgic site for Ford that drew on memories of his past and validated his life and work following a particularly trying time in his life. His design does not depict any one location in the nineteenth-century, rather a conglomeration of buildings and artifacts that had direct ties to Henry Ford and his life. Crossroads Village on the other hand started as the idea of a local organization that developed into a community project which relied on the financial support of the community as well as a wealth of volunteers. Therefore, Crossroads did not have the same opportunities to acquire structures for their site and the items that were chosen were either donated or purchased at reasonable prices that could be funded through charity events and fundraisers. Through this process, Flint purchased local items and in

[127] Christine Vogt, *Genesee County Parks and Recreation Commission: 2007 Capital Improvements Study*, (Flint: Center for Applied Environmental Research, 2007), 55.
[128] Flint Public Library Staff, *Genesee County*, 133.

some cases inexpensive objects from out of state. The key to Crossroads is the emphasis on the city and the people within. Crossroads Village helps to illustrate a more accurate picture of nineteenth-century life, in Flint, with many of the structures, objects and imagery that were local to the area. Though Crossroads did have to acquire items that came from other cities and states due to the cost of creating and running a museum, community engagement was central to the process and ultimately defined Crossroads as a museum representing the city of Flint.

Placing Crossroads Village in the 1970s

Having discussed how Crossroads Village portrayed the themes of agriculture, transportation and industry within the museum, it is important to once again look at what was occurring in the time period when the museum was under development. By looking at these events, one can further assess how they were projected onto the Crossroads Village project.

As the second largest city in Michigan, the city had expanded largely in response to the growth of General Motors. However, towards the end of the sixties, the automotive industry in the United States began to change. Factories began to automate more aspects of their assembly line, resulting in lay-offs, or moved to states that lacked unions, further shifting jobs out of Michigan.[129] The oil crisis added to the strain on automotive workers, since the lack of oil drove up prices, making it difficult for people to purchase gas, either because of the cost or lack of fuel available, which in turn resulted in fewer car sales. The demand for cars fluctuated during the 1970s and 1980s, but consumers began to purchase smaller, more fuel efficient cars from foreign automakers, creating long term problems for American automakers.[130] Together, these elements resulted in lay-offs starting in the late 1970s and escalating through the 1980s, which in turn

[129] Thomas J. Sugure, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 126-132.
[130] Jeffrey S. Rothstein, "The Uncertain Future of the American Auto Industry," *New Labor Forum* 15, no. 2 (2006), 67.

affected the cities where automobile production was at the core of their industry, including Flint. With residents out of work and unable to spend money, the city faced numerous financial hardships.[131]

With the financial crisis looming over the city, the museum could have gone down several paths when choosing to display industry within the museum. The museum could have downplayed the role of the automobile industry and instead focus on the locomotive, which already holds a central role within the museum. However, returning to Lowenthal's discussion of heritage, when times are tough, people look to reassuring themes; themes that tie them together. At Crossroads Village, instead of ignoring the role of the automobile in the development of the city, the village honors and valorizes it. This is a conscious decision by the organizers to boost morale among the citizens. As is often the case, once something disappears, it begins to take on a romantic façade, in which the negative aspects are subdued and the positive aspects are heightened. Crossroads uses the automotive industry as a way to highlight the ingenuity that led to the growth of the city rather than emphasize the negative aspects. By including elements of industry associated with the automobile, such as the Wisner Carriage House and the Durant Barn, Crossroads acknowledges their present story, that of a city that has been brought to the forefront as a burgeoning city, but also a city that is facing numerous struggles that are associated with their success, such as the fluctuating automotive industry. However, by correlating the present to the past and the early struggles that the city faced, the museum makes meaningful connections between the past, present and future of the city of Flint, by illustrating the cyclical nature of history, and in turn providing reassurance to the visitors. In essence, the

[131] Thomas R. Hammer, PhD., *The Once and Future Economy of Metropolitan Flint, Michigan* (Flint: C.S. Mott Foundation, 1997), 6.

museums stands as a reassuring symbol that hard-work and determination can propel the city back onto the right track.

In addition to serving as reassurance for the city, Crossroads Village was also a community project. Residents were invited to participate in numerous aspects of the museum's development and the theme of community became an essential aspect of the museum because of the hardships that those residing in the city were facing in the wake of the decline of the automobile industry, a primary source of employment. At the same time, it helped strengthen the community at a time when they were experiencing racial strife. In 1967, Detroit's race riots caused millions of dollars worth of damage, numerous arrests, over a thousand people were injured and forty three people died during the events. Detroit's riots were some of the worst in United States history and they underscored the rising racial tensions found throughout the country.[132] In Flint, the Urban Renewal Project was viewed by some as racially motivated. The areas designated for demolition were the poorer areas of the city, which included large minority populations, and therefore, claims were made that the city was using the project as a means by which to push minorities out of the city.[133] Escalated racial tensions therefore, might have been another push for a community project that would create a sense of unity within the city during a period of time when unity appeared to be lacking.

A third issue that provides context for Crossroad Village's development was the bicentennial. Although the museum project was not initially begun as the official bicentennial project for the city, the community's engagement in the development of the museum, as well as the themes of community and early American life fit well within the themes of the bicentennial. The bicentennial celebrations evoked feelings of patriotism throughout the country, which helped

[132] Thomas J. Hrach, "An Incitement to Riot," *Journalism History* 37, no. 3 (2011), 163, 166.
[133] Andrew R. Highsmith, "Demolition Means Progress: Urban Renewal, Local Politics, and State-Sanctioned Ghetto Formation in Flint, Michigan," *Journal of Urban History* 35, no. 3 (2009), 349, 350, 358, 359.

to calm the unease that followed in the wake of the Vietnam War and the Watergate scandal that shook the White House. The bicentennial recalled feelings of pride and patriotism by again highlighting the struggles and triumphs of the country. Through these connections to the past, Americans could then hopefully look to the future as a period of progress.

Conclusion

This paper has examined several living history museums that have been produced throughout the twentieth-century, starting with the earliest efforts at Mount Vernon and continuing with Colonial Williamsburg, Plimoth Plantation, Old Sturbridge Village, the Shelburne Museum, Greenfield Village and ending with Crossroads Village in the 1970s. Through these examples, I have demonstrated that contemporary issues are projected onto these structures through the way they are designed, the objects incorporated within these structures and how different eras are represented. Focusing in particular on the example of Greenfield Village in comparison to its younger neighbor, Crossroads Village, demonstrates that while both were created in response to the same themes, their different times of creation reflected different concerns. Crossroads Village was a community project, which sought to include the local population in its development as a way to diminish growing fears related to the decline of industry, as well as destabilizing social issues of racial tension, and growing unease from the Vietnam War. Local items were used within the site which helped to relate visitors to their city and to establish pride and a sense of belonging and history. Ford's Greenfield Village elevated aspects of history that, though also related to the history of Detroit in some instances, were mainly personally significant to Ford. Though individuals such as Thomas Edison and the Wright Brothers contributed inventions that served an important role throughout the world, Ford's inclusion of these individuals next to structures that had served a background in his own

life suggests that Ford was not merely including them because they were historically significant individuals, but because *he* found them significant. Greenfield Village reflects Ford's personal values and tastes, particularly the role that industrialists, such as himself, played in the development of the United States. Thus, the structures and designs of both villages help to construct two completely different representations of nineteenth-century America, which in turn addresses the anxieties felt at the time in which they were created.

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ABSTRACT

MEDIATED HISTORIES: REPRESENTATIONS OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN LIFE AT GREENFIELD VILLAGE AND CROSSROADS VILLAGE

by

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Living history museums are a prevalent form of history museum in which periods in history are portrayed through the use of artifacts and structures from the era, as well through the use of interpreters, which demonstrate processes from the past or discuss events with visitors. These sites have been scrutinized in the last few decades due to their constructed nature that often downplays negative aspects of the past. Since history is multi-faceted, it is impossible to present a clear recreation of history, and therefore, the creators of these sites have considerable leeway in how they choose to depict aspects of the past. It is through this license that current issues are often projected onto these sites and therefore the past. I argue this statement by looking at several living history museums created throughout the twentieth-century, specifically Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan and Crossroads Village in Flint, Michigan, which outwardly depict the same theme, but through their construction make statements about the eras in which they were created.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

The author is a graduate student at Wayne State University. In addition to her studies, she works full-time at Park West Gallery as a researcher and masterworks consultant. In whatever free time she has left, she dotes on her family and animals, reads excessively, volunteers at local museums and catches as many football and hockey games as possible.