

The City at the Intersection of Industry, Labour, and 'Memory':
Examining the Political Economy in
Brantford, Ontario, 1891-1924.

Anthony Lerno
Paul Emiljanowicz

Brantford Ontario in the early twentieth century was among Canada's most prosperous cities, renowned as the third largest industrial centre based in agricultural implements and manufacturing. The municipal motto 'Industry and Perseverance' confidently displayed the aspirations of profit seeking industrial controllers and the market dependent working class. At the level of this political-economy both classes enjoyed a self-propagated collegiality, an 'invented' far reaching hegemonic 'stability'. The 'Great War' provoked fundamental temporary shifts in industry and export product demand, requiring that elites maintain 'ordered' production to fulfill profitable war contracts. This meant attracting labor to fulfill positions and importing workers, as well as appeasing the existing increasingly war-weary workforce. By 1917 the underlying pre-war class antagonisms ruptured Brantford's feudal underlying social relations between Master and Man – there was no longer a hegemonic class 'stability'. War time production shifts, labour shortages and mechanization combined with a new returning politicized veteran collective demanding reorganization within the workplace, and the efforts of regional Wobblies and the Bolsheviks, meant an unprecedented increase in labor power apropos the classical Marxian dialectic. The invented 'Folk-Innocence' and collegiality propagated by the captains of industry became openly challenged, their profit-seeking paternalism and nepotism exposed.

Labor found its stride, striking for increased wages and lower working hours, provoking an anxiety in elites unseen since the Red River Rebellion (which provoked a public display of the modernizing Native subservient to European 'rule of law' in the Joseph Brant monument).¹ Yet, there was a prevalent shared optimism and faith in Brantford – an accepted notion that the 'great

¹ Peter Farrugia, "Convenient Truths: History, Memory and Identity in Brantford, Ontario," *Journal of Canadian Studies*.

city' would persevere and 'provide' once more. The memory of the antagonistic narrative of the 1917 shift(s) was selectively mediated by post-war municipal and industrial elites whom substituted actual historical remembrance for their own selective collective memory. An invented 'municipal memory' which would restore pre-war conditions of ordered production and faith in the captains of industry so as to restore 'profitability'. They had the resources to enforce what was to be remembered publically and also what was to be forgotten.

A Theoretical Framework

In order to analyze effectively the changes in Brantford and the subsequent propagated public remembrance during the post-war years, it is first necessary to establish an applicable theoretical framework outlining collective memory politics. Memory is contested in the contemporary and is "borne by living societies...open to the dialectics of remembering and forgetting".² Its instrumentalization in the public sphere functions with purpose as a societal behavior mechanism. Pier Nora pinpoints this attribute when he calls memory, "the transmission and conservation of collectively remembered values, whether through churches or schools, the family, or the state...that prepared a smooth passage from the past to the future...whether for reaction, progress, or revolution".³ A 'memory boom' refers to the rapid increase of concern for memory in the public sphere after a momentous event. The term has been used by historian Jay Winter to describe the variety of social commemoration projects which were provoked by the universal-transformative reach of World War 1 (WW1).⁴ Traditional sites of memory were unable to provide support for the aftermath of the *la boucherier* (slaughterhouse). Individuals,

² Pierra Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire," *Representations* (Spring 1989), 8.

³ Nora, 7.

⁴ Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (Yale University Press, 2006), 32.

families, and collectives used a variety of mediums of representation to propagate a desired remembrance. Public coffers were used to secure strategic monument projects, as the ‘new remembrancers’ actively took on the role of public remembrance.⁵

Winter refers to the notion of ‘collective memory’ to exemplify the contestation of public memory in hierarchically stratified societies. It is defined as the “set of memories expressed in public by different collectives”; collective memory functions as an organizing principle for the individual within a specific group.⁶ It reinforces among individuals a hegemonic identity, culture, value set, and history. A narrative can dominate State discourse or the public sphere when a collective has the ability to reinforce and reproduce their accepted collective memory over marginalized groups. It is not “seeing past events through exposure to discursive fields”, but selectively subjective and potentially propagandistic.⁷ For the purposes of this paper it is crucial to understand this theoretical context. Political-economic disturbances in the municipal status quo in Brantford ignited a quasi-memory boom as elites mediated ‘memory’ to ensure continuity in the pre-war narrative of ordered production and class collegiality – ‘Industry and Perseverance’. Here it is instructive to apply Ian McKay’s notion of Folk-Innocence to delineate the way in which elites mystified the 1917 shift through reproducing an ‘invented’ tradition subsequently neutralizing class conflict. McKay notes how elites and cultural producers in Nova Scotia cultivated an archetypal construction, an ahistorical narrative of the ‘rustic and innocent’ that was celebrated in place of actual lived experience.⁸ Rather than focus on Atlantic class formation, radical unionism, and Master and Man relations, they ‘decided’ that Nova Scotia’s

⁵ Ibid., 28.

⁶ Ibid., 185.

⁷ Ibid., 199.

⁸ Ian McKay, *The Quest of the Folk: Antimodernism and Cultural Selection in Twentieth-Century Nova Scotia*, (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1994), 29-33, 41.

true essence resided in the primitive, the rustic, the unspoiled, the picturesque, the quaint, the unchanging... Innocence was a way of seeing and thinking through which the pre-modern ‘Otherness’ of Nova Scotia was naturalized”.⁹ Winterian historical remembrance gets replaced by propagation of a Folk narrative, “vivid, replete with colourful motifs, romantic stories, and even magnificent landscapes...each was a token of Innocence”.¹⁰ The Brantford elite nurtured a Folk-Innocence through media outlets and commemoration projects, attempting to suppress the experience of class and ‘Great War’ transformations.

A Golden Era

Prior to the outbreak of war in 1913, Brantford was considered one of the industrial wonders of Canada. Local Paper, the Brantford Expositor, was understandably boastful in claiming that Brantford was, “The greatest and best known manufacturing city in Canada.”¹¹ By 1909 Brantford grew to a population of approximately 25 000, whereas approximately 24 percent were employed among the city’s 60 factories.¹² Strong employment in Brantford’s industrial sector, dominated by agricultural implement manufacturing, can be traced to the overall growth in value of production. For example, between 1910 and 1911 the value of production in Ontario, for agricultural implements, increased by approximately 133 percent, in contrast to a 20 percent increase a decade prior; Brantford was a prime hub in Ontario implement production.¹³ Rapid expansion, beginning in the late 19th century, was in part due to a system of transnational networks utilized by Brantford industry. Companies like Cockshutt Plow were able to emulate

⁹ Ibid., 30.

¹⁰ Ian McKay and Robin Bates, *In The Province of History: The Making of the Public Past in Twentieth Century Nova-Scotia*, (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 4.

¹¹ “Reasons Why They Succeed”, *Brantford Expositor*, *Greater Brantford Number*, October 1909, 1.

¹² *BX*, October 1909, 1.

¹³ Gordon Winder, “Following America into the Second Industrial Revolution” *The Canadian Geographer* 46 (2001): 298.

popular American implement designs due to liberal Canadian patent laws; this was a popular method which removed the necessity to maintain expensive engineering departments.¹⁴

Contrary to popular discourse, expansion in Brantford's agricultural implement production was not the outcome of Canada's National policy ratified in 1879, which promised unprecedented westward development and market protectionism. Rather, Brantford's growth was substantially stimulated by increased exports to European markets. The importance of a European market is illustrated quite accurately in the July 14th, 1914 edition of the Daily Courier. The paper boasted that there was, "No question as to the future greatness of the city, but only a matter of size – Telephone city is a producer for the world, and when quality is wanted, her goods are preferred."¹⁵ This accommodation, however, was perceived as temporary to the Brantford populace who saw the future greatness of the city as stemming from increased demand in the Canadian West; westward expansion seemed to confirm that, "The unqualified, almost unprecedented, success, of the past is the best possible guarantee of the future. A new star has risen in the Western sky."¹⁶

Brantford's prosperity at the individual level was understood to be rooted in the altruistic efforts of the city's captains of industry, the 'pillars' of the community. On the shop floor, a paternalistic relationship between industrial elites and their employees was perceived as a significant contributor to city's the stability and industriousness. Upon the passing of Charles H. Waterous for example, a stained glass memorial was constructed stating, "In Memoriam Erected

¹⁴ Gordon Winder, *The American Reaper: Harvesting Networks and Technology 1830-1910* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2012): 14.

¹⁵ "Facts and Figures shows Brantford is jumping ahead with each passing year" *The Daily Courier, Industrial Supplement*, Jul. 18, 1914.

¹⁶ "Growth For the West Means Growth For Brantford", *BX*, October 1909, 4.

by Employees” of Waterous Engine works (see appendix, figure 1.1).¹⁷ As illustrated by the memorial, Waterous was regarded as a provider for and caretaker of his labourers, responsible for the men who toiled. Such remembrance of Waterous was further evident in the Toronto Globe Obituary: “He was the friend of journeyman and apprentice alike and considered their comfort and contentedness as necessary to his own happiness.”¹⁸ The paternalistic relationship was further illustrated in 1909 by the Mayor of Brantford W.B Wood, claiming that, “The relations existing between the manufacturers and the men are for the most part pleasant in the extreme; not a few men can be named who have worked as mechanics in one shop for fifty years.”¹⁹ Collectively, the industrial growth of Brantford, coupled with the perceived philanthropy of its industrial elites, fashioned an understanding that the glow of Brantford’s ‘Golden Age’ was not going to fade.

However, there were significant underlying class antagonisms between an elite and petite bourgeoisie separated from a market dependent working class. The former is defined by white collar professions – banking, managerial, government – and the ‘captains’ of industry themselves. The latter group, which is also the majority, is made up largely of; domestic servants, artisans, general factory laborers, and farm hands. Samuel A. Becthel for example was a laborer with nine children all of whom were working to support the family unit.²⁰ By comparison, Steward Sanderson had six children who were being educated.²¹ This indicates that the pre-1914 political economic structure of Brantford was divided along class lines, with the paternal captains of industry as ‘feudal lords’.

¹⁷ *In memoriam: Charles H. Waterous, Jr.* (Brantford, 1892), Courtesy of Brantford Museum and Archives.

¹⁸ “Brantford Briefs”, *The Globe (Toronto)*, 12 Feb. 1892.

¹⁹ W.B Wood, “Why there Must be a Greater Brantford”, *BX*, Oct. 1909, 3.

²⁰ Brantford Public Library Archives, *1901 Brantford Ontario Census (24 Census Divisions)*.

²¹ *Ibid.*

An Industry in Transition

The Courier's preaching in July 1914 regarding Brantford's economic prospects, due to its global market networks, was surely lamentable following the outbreak of the First World War ten days following the issue. Between 1914 and 1915, Canadian aggregate exports declined by 12 percent.²² The Agricultural implement sector was the area of Ontario manufacturing hit hardest, in contrast to its level of growth in the two decades preceding. The Agricultural implement industry witnessed a 62 percent increase in value of production between 1906 and 1910, only to drop by 55 percent by 1915.²³ Considering Brantford's economy depended largely on its agricultural implement manufacturers, as noted by the Expositor, the decline of production was intensified, "by the cutting off of export trade from local factories, by the restriction of credits because of bad harvests in the west, and because of the general demoralization."²⁴ Indeed, war in Europe signified a real threat to Brantford's progress and stability.

The gradual decline of Brantford industry following 1914 was the product of prewar structural inefficiencies; wartime export barriers merely acted to exacerbate industrial instability. The immediate impact of the war in Brantford resulted in high levels of unemployment, particularly among local industries which depended on European exports. One of the largest victims of war was Massey-Harris which noted that, "Immediately [after] the war broke out, every order we had in hand from Europe was cancelled by cable"; collectively, the company

²² Statistics Canada, "Aggregate External Trade of Canada, by Fiscal Year, 1868-1917", *The Canada Year Book, 1916-17*.

²³ Statistics Canada, "Statistics of Manufacturers", *The Canada Yearbook, 1906-1915*.

²⁴ "Brantford and Brant County's Participation in the Great War", *BX*, February 1st, 1919.

witnessed approximately one half of its production output, destined for European farmers, grind to a halt.²⁵ Almost prophetically, Harry Cockshutt, President of Cockshutt Plow Co., predicted the ramifications war would have on the Brantford economy:

“Canadian agricultural implement industries would feel the effect of such a war no doubt, but the Cockshutt Company would not suffer to the same extent as the Massey-Harris company and some others, as its export trade to Germany, Russia, and other European Countries was not so large.”²⁶

Although Cockshutt was accurate in his predictions regarding the crippling of Brantford’s large scale agricultural implement industry, his statement also provides notable insight into the inherent structural problems of the city’s economy. With the exception of Massey-Harris, which began corporatisation and product standardisation in 1891, local industry lagged behind in restructuring their economies of scale. In Illinois for example, major agricultural implement industries such as McCormick and Deering operated within a corporate framework with both a de-unionized labour force and standardised production lines by 1886.²⁷ Paternalistic small industry reminiscent of the Victorian era continued well into the war for Brantford. Much of this is due to a mixed domestic agricultural economy, which reinforced custom small scale production; by 1915, Ontario’s wheat production, for example, declined by 50 percent in acreage output.²⁸ Essentially, this meant that Brantford agricultural implement manufacturers were already decades behind their American counterparts in organisational modernisation by 1914.

²⁵ The Daily Courier, August 6, 1914.

²⁶ Brantford and Brant County’s Participation in the Great War”, *BX*, February 1st, 1919.

²⁷ Winder (2001), 301.

²⁸ Robert Ankli and Wendy Millar, “Ontario Agriculture in Transition: The Switch from Wheat to Cheese” *Journal of Economic History* 42 (1982): 208.

While Brantford's implement industry was indeed decades behind those of various American Firms based in Wisconsin and Illinois, munitions and supply contracts provided artificial cushioning against an unstable market. In Ontario, munitions contracts proved to be such a boon to a recessionary economy that by 1917, as noted by D.J. Bercuson, "all traces of prewar recession and unemployment had vanished as a result of the recruitment and mobilization of war production."²⁹ Collectively, the contracts stimulated the city's fledgling economy at a total value of 19.5 million dollars by 1918.³⁰ The economic 'boom' Brantford, and Canada as a whole, experienced through wartime production is commonly understood as the sole driving force behind the reorganization of production and labour. For example, munitions contracts issued by the Imperial Munitions Board during a period of limited manpower introduced higher wages and labour classifications, due to the deskilling of labour, in Brantford factories.³¹ Further, the need for a universality in military goods encouraged the standardisation of products and skill, or Fordist mode of production, which continued into the postwar years due to the need for a "higher plane of efficiency."³² Nevertheless, modernisation of the factory in Brantford was already proceeding prior to the war, albeit at a far slower pace than among firms in Illinois and Wisconsin; wartime stimulus simply, as noted by Douglas McCalla, "sped Canadians a little faster down the road to industrial maturity."³³ One notable illustration of this was Pratt and Letchworth Company in 1914. Due to "ever-increasing business which the firm enjoys", Pratt and Letchworth expanded their plant to 22 ovens, all of which were regulated by electric

²⁹ D.J. Bercuson, "Organized Labour and the Imperial Munitions Board", *Industrial Relations* 28 (1998), 611.

³⁰ "Brantford and Brant County's Participation in the Great War", *BX*, February 1st, 1919.

³¹ Bercuson, 611.

³² David Carnegie, *A History of Munitions Supplies in Canada 1914-18* (Toronto: Longmans Green and Co., 1925): 281-285.

³³ Douglas McCalla, "Economic Impact of the Great War", in *Canada and the First World War* ed. David Mackenzie, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 140.

pyrometers.³⁴ Further, the example of Pratt and Letchworth demonstrates the corporate restructuring of Brantford industry. The foundry standardised modes of production following a merger with the Canadian Car & Foundry Company.³⁵

Aside from the temporary stimulus provided by supply networks, the First World War also ushered in unprecedented specialisation to wheat production in the Canadian prairies.³⁶ On the surface this might have seemed to present a means of restoring former glory in Brantford, due to the potential that westward growth offered for industry. With the armistice effectively liquidating all munitions production in 1918, Western demand was critical to maintaining a dominant presence in the national market.³⁷ However, at a time of limited rural labour, stemming partly from male military service and urbanisation, demands increased for gas-engine harvesting machinery.³⁸ Engine firms in Brantford remained effectively barred from providing engines for tractor development due to a focus on custom manufacturing and lack of capable engineering departments.³⁹ One underdeveloped firm was Goold, Shapley and Muir Co. which, in 1914, continued to produce “a most complete line” of gasoline engines ranging from 1.5 to 60 horsepower in addition to an assortment of many other manufactured goods.⁴⁰ As noted by Stephen Sheinberg, America’s ability to establish pre-eminence in the new western market was particularly the result of the investment capability of implement firms, as demonstrated in the 27 branch plants opened in Canada between 1914 and 1919.⁴¹ With the end of a wartime economy

³⁴ “The Pratt and Letchworth Company”, *The Courier*, July 18th, 1914, 11.

³⁵ “The Pratt and Letchworth Company”, *The Courier*, July 18th, 1914, 11

³⁶ McCalla, 144.

³⁷ Carnegie, 280.

³⁸ Stephen Sheinberg, “*Invitation to Empire: tariffs and American Economic Expansion to Canada*”, *Business History Review* 47 (1973), 231.

³⁹ Winder, (2001), 303.

⁴⁰ “Brantford Gas and Gasoline Engines” *The Courier*, July 18th 1914, 10.

⁴¹ Sheinberg, 230.

and the dawn of a mechanised era, by 1925 Brantford manufacturers were flooded with American imports, which took 47 percent of the national market (25 percent of which was controlled solely by IHC based in Chicago).⁴²

The overbearing presence of American farm implement companies like the IHC was perceived by many to be the result of a shifting tide in economic policy. For Gary Muir, the 1922 lowering of tariffs for agricultural implements in the federal budget was the key factor in destabilizing local industry.⁴³ The tariff did indeed have a detrimental impact on Brantford's implement industry, furthering the uncertainty of the city's economic prospects. Yet, Brantford's destiny was forged by a half century of underdevelopment. The fate of agricultural implements for the succeeding decade is articulated rather well by Brantford's Member of Parliament in 1924: "If in doing what I now see it my duty to do, I plow tonight a lonely furrow, I shall attempt to do so with a Brantford plow."⁴⁴ By the 'Roaring Twenties', Brantford's glimmering golden age was proceeding to leave the nations spotlight.

Instability within Labour

The aggressive industrial production measures needed to fulfill war contracts, agricultural demand, and military enlistment, both in Brantford and at the national level, meant that an ordered efficient workforce was needed and valued.⁴⁵ While Women took on new roles in industry, in Brantford they had already been working as is shown by pre-war census data. It is reported that national union membership rose to four hundred thousand, yet there is evidence of

⁴² Winder, (2001), 299.

⁴³ Gary Muir, *Brantford: A City's Century, Vol. I* (Brantford: Tupuna Press, 1999), 163.

⁴⁴ BX, May 8th, 1924.

⁴⁵ Craig Heron, *The Workers Revolt in Canada, 1917-25* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

de-unionization in Brantford during the years 1917-25.⁴⁶ As the war dragged on and the soldiers were not ‘home for Christmas’, war weariness developed – enlistment dropped and individuals began to protest against the war. The government responded with conscription, provoking both veterans and labor to ‘take to the streets’.⁴⁷ One of the most notable events is the Winnipeg General Strike 1919, in which returning veterans took a lead role in organizing and leading ‘militant’ strikes/demonstrations.⁴⁸ This period has been identified by Craig Heron as the ‘Great Labor Revolt’, an umbrella term used to describe the myriad decentralized movements ‘from below’ which influenced provincial and national policy.⁴⁹ McKay refers to these events as part of a wide push towards ‘Liberal Rule’ as “substantial institutional concessions were made to this multi-voiced Left, but only at the cost of editing out their unacceptably aliberal elements”.⁵⁰ This distinctive radical quality has been suppressed in popular public histories, as is the case in Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Brantford.⁵¹ Liberalism here is defined not as “easily manipulable” ideologies based on British conceptions of private property and access to a ‘free’ market; these “can be distinguished from the historical forms it has assumed” in Canada.⁵² This focus of liberalism functioned for many as the extension of rights to selective marginalized groups. How then does the experience of labor in Brantford during WW1 fit within these contexts of increased politicization and the push for economic ‘justice’?

⁴⁶ Ibid., 9-14.

⁴⁷ Desmond Morton and Glenn Wright, *Winning the Second Battle: Canadian Veterans and the Return to Civilian Life, 1915-1930* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987).

⁴⁸ Idiong Uduak, “Third Force: Returned Soldiers in the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919,” *Manitoba History* 34 (1997).

⁴⁹ Ibid., 2-29.

⁵⁰ Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A Prospectus for a Reconnaissance of Canadian History,” *The Canadian Historical Review* 81, (Dec. 2000), 9.

⁵¹ Ronald Rudin, *Making History in Twentieth-Century Quebec* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

⁵² McKay, “Liberal Order,” 3.

As noted, pre-war Brantford was quasi-feudal in structure with noticeable underlying societal class antagonisms – a separation between the paternal captains of industry and the ‘dependent working peons’. While little evidence exists detailing the experience of labor during WW1, what is evident is that labor power increased, resulting in unprecedented public arbitrations and ‘institutional concessions’ between Master and ‘Man’. The Working Educational League founded in Hamilton used education as a platform to lobby for increased working class rights, establishing a Farm Radio network and a variety of public outreach programs stretching into Brant-County.⁵³ These created outlets for discontent and contributed towards the construction of a ‘participatory’ public sphere in Brantford – as evident by the push towards post-war public works projects in utilities (public ownership campaigns).⁵⁴ The fear of a returning ‘veteran’ collective as a ‘Third Force’ was prominent among national and municipal industrial controllers; local GWA lodges were highly politicized. There was also a small so-called Bolshevik organization in Brant County during the war, highlighted in Expositor articles as a threat.⁵⁵ These ‘radical’ elements were operating within the war-weary context of an increased labor power in Brantford, nurturing strike action and a push for economic ‘justice’.

Labor power increased dramatically in 1917 as conscription crippled workforces. One Brantford superintendent noted publically that “we are handicapped through lack of competent help at this very moment and would gladly accept from 25 to 30 good men at this time, rather than discharge a single man now in our employ”.⁵⁶ This indicates that employers were willing to

⁵³ Joan Sangster and Ian Radforth, “A Link Between Labour and Learning: The Workers Educational Association of Ontario, 1917-1951,” *Labour/La Travail* (1981).

⁵⁴ Muir, “A Cities Century”.

⁵⁵ Ibid. These ‘threats’ were unwarranted as the group had no real ‘political power’ and is a reflection of underlying anti-immigrant sentiments.

⁵⁶ Brantford Expositor, “Munitions Works are Short of Men – Have None to Spare to Release for Farms, but will not Hinder Volunteers,” (April 21, 1917).

make ‘unusual’ concessions to their workforce in order to fulfill profitable contracts; they depended on an ‘ordered production’, which led to an increase in labor power. By May 21st 1917 there was a ‘threat’ to industry’s profitability as over three hundred coremakers and molders in Brantford began a strike for wage gains and a nine hour work day.⁵⁷ The arbitration process was first made public through newspaper reportage on April 1st, when the workers put forth their demands for a nine hour day with ten hour pay. These demands were the result of labour’s confidence, forcing manufactures to concede to their demands “but not till after the war”.⁵⁸ An employer warned, however, that as a result of this concession the firm could now “get castings outside the city cheaper than they could produce them”.⁵⁹ This indicates competing class interests being negotiated in the public sphere through strike-concession. Class is even implicitly identified as the paper refers to management and workers as separate ‘parties’ engaged in conflict negotiation to reach “an agreement [that was] mutually satisfactory”.⁶⁰ Even at the notorious Massey-Harris, some 1000 workers in both Brantford and Toronto coordinated stoppages to secure a fifteen percent cumulative pay raise (increase of five percent hourly).⁶¹ These antagonistic confrontations between elites and the newly politicized tone of labour provoked reactionary depoliticization strategies.

Responding to an increasingly unruly workforce the elites of Brantford began to adopt pre-existing strategies to depoliticize labor in an attempt to restore pre-1917 ‘ordered’ production. The first strategy was to ‘slash’ labor to restore profitability as munitions contracts declined. It was reported on September 7th 1917 that hundreds of men were thrown out of work and unable to

⁵⁷ Brantford Expositor, “Coremakers and Molders Strike,” (May 21st 1917).

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Brantford Expositor, “Workers Secure Increased Pay,” (June 4th 1917).

find employment in the township; over 100 men had to leave for Manitoba.⁶² One worker is noted as having applied to every shop in the city and “was unable to get work”.⁶³ Yet new massive contracts for mechanization schemes were being introduced at the Steel Company of Canada Brantford plant. New Fordian line technologies would allow for “the manufacture of a new line of staple goods which has never before been manufactured in Brantford”.⁶⁴ This project needed a workforce addition of between “125-200 men”, but required “new men” for the operations of “high grade mechanics”.⁶⁵ For the labor historians these are typical industrial strategies used to deskill and depoliticize a militant workforce, restoring ‘profitability’. It is precisely what McKay means when he observes that as Liberal Rule emerged in response to capitalist antagonisms, elites were confronted with a challenge to their hegemony which then prompted “executing far ranging changes”.⁶⁶ Brantford labor like the rest of Canada was experiencing increased politicization – confronting elites to gain lower working hours and higher wages. Reactionary strategies to combat this trend and restore ordered profitability resulted in the long-term deskilling/depoliticization of labor through mechanization and lay-off (trends which persist in the contemporary world). Despite the consequences of this change, the experience of Brantford labor in 1917 was selectively ‘forgotten’ by elites and municipal cultural producers in the public sphere after the war.

⁶² Brantford Expositor, “Men Absorbed,” (Sept. 7th 1917).

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Brantford Expositor, “Contract for Big Addition – Steel Company of Canada has Received Big Order,” (Dec. 5th 1917).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ McKay, “Liberal Rule,”.

The Conflict within Memory

The resolution of the Great War, and the economic uncertainty accelerated by it, sparked a long term memory boom in the structure of the public sphere. The uncertainty emerging in Brantford industry and its subsequent relations with labour marked the beginning of an era where ‘stability’ was no longer commonplace. Despite the growing transparent instability, visions of prosperity and contentment, propagated by regional elites, became cemented in the city’s collective memory politics in the decade following the wars end. The only measure of ‘stability’ Brantford residents could count on was the unfounded rhetoric of a continuing golden age. Prewar expansion was framed as a period of folk innocence and master-man relations denoted a bond that was magnificent, idyllic, and happy. The population were repeatedly reminded that Brantford had a promising future due to a strong degree of collegiality between industrial elites and labourers. Class antagonisms, which had erupted during the war, went wholly unacknowledged in popular discourse. For example, in reviewing the increased demand for supplies later in the war, accompanied by a shortage of labour, the Expositor noted simply that, “workers call to work resulted in abnormal conditions” in local industry.⁶⁷

Such ‘abnormal conditions’ according to this premature remembrance of wartime unrest was little more than an anomaly caused by a lack of manpower. Indeed, the true miracle, according to this memory, was the ability for industry to stimulate production in a time of disruption in traditional markets. Folk innocence proliferated by regional elites demanded a remembrance, and facilitated the reintroduction of perceived collegiality and fraternity between worker and master. On January 15th, 1919 for example, Harry Cockshutt assured that Brantford, as in the past, would

⁶⁷ “Brantford and Brant County’s Participation in the Great War”, *BX*, February 1st, 1919.

witness, “Enormous possibilities if they are approached with proper spirit... in the new order of things there must be subordination of individual interests.”⁶⁸ Cooperation between labour and industrial elites, according to Cockshutt, was the foundation of success in Brantford industry. Such selective memory is advanced in 1922 with the Expositor boasting that Brantford has not fallen victim to a strike in over a decade; “Brantford has been singularly free from labour troubles.”⁶⁹ Given that there were over a dozen public displays of labour unrest following 1914, this clearly displays how the collective memory of a supposedly blissful bygone era conflicts with historical reality. Further, remembering the past glory of Brantford industry as one founded on collegiality and cooperation served a dual purpose. Cooperation, or at least the guise of cooperation, was designed to increase workplace efficiency while at the same time preventing disruption from radical echelons within labour.⁷⁰ This denotes what Bruce Scott considers a, “new system of industrial relations”; industrial elites were embracing the aura of cooperation in lieu of recognizing legitimate class antagonisms.⁷¹ For Brantford industry, the aura of cooperation was founded in skewed historical dimensions of shop-floor paternalism, where loyalty among labourers to their ‘master’ was valued above all else. This idealised vision of the past is noteworthy in a 1927 Massey-Harris advertisement, with “labore et honore” dutifully inscribed below a description of the company’s product quality (see appendix, figure 1.2).⁷² Here, the consumer and community can count on the ‘fraternity’ between master and man to produce quality equipment.

⁶⁸ “Brantford Firm Expects Orders from Europe” *BX*, January 15th, 1919.

⁶⁹ “Free From Labour Troubles” *BX* November, 18th, 1922.

⁷⁰ Bruce Scott, “A place in the Sun: The Industrial Council at Massey-Harris, 1919-29” *Labour* 1 (1976), 160.

⁷¹ Scott, 158.

⁷² “Massey-Harris Company, Makers of Good Farm Implements Since 1847”, *BX, Souvenir Number*, July 1st, 1927, 63.

The collective memory developing following the war also embraced the notion that Brantford's progress was due to the paternalistic nature of industrial elites; the leaders of industry served as fatherly providers to the people. This form of memory politics is noticeably entrenched in popular discourse by 1922 with the Expositor noting that the position reached in Brantford was the product of the "outstanding character and ability" of industrial elites.⁷³ The article continues by noting that the "vision, energy and progressiveness", of the captains of industry, "laid the foundations of the industrial greatness of the city."⁷⁴ Similarly, under the headline of "Captains of Industry who Direct the Course of Brantford's Industries", the Expositor ran a detailed piece affirming the greatness and importance of several local industrial elites.⁷⁵ Inclusion of such an article elevated industrial elites to iconic positions in the locale as spiritual and economic pillars of the community. Further, such biographical pieces, commonplace before and after the war, reaffirm industrial elites' unequivocally illustrious position in collective memory politics.

Such a discourse is in stark contradiction to the economic uncertainty gradually ensnaring Brantford industry, under the very leadership of these 'fathers of industry'. For example, during the same period Massey-Harris had lost control of approximately 40 percent of the Canadian market to American competitors.⁷⁶ The result is fittingly noted by Peter Farrugia: "As the past slowly but inexorably slips through our fingers, we become all the more devoted to these sites where memory lurks."⁷⁷ In the case of Brantford, 'sites' were formed around hagiographies of captains of industry believed to be responsible for the city's former place in the sun. As

⁷³ "The City of Brantford Celebrated in History and Romance" *BX*, November 18th, 1922.

⁷⁴ "The City of Brantford Celebrated in History and Romance" *BX*, November 18th, 1922.

⁷⁵ "Captains of Industry who Direct the Course of Brantford's Industries", *BX*, November 18th, 1922.

⁷⁶ Winder, (2001), 294.

⁷⁷ Peter Farrugia, "Convenient Truths: History, Memory, and Identity in Brantford Ontario" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 46 (2012), 123.

instability was further propelled by the lowering of tariff walls in 1922, the significance of these 'sites' grew to accommodate the void in confidence. By the close of the 1920s in Brantford, the paternalistic aura of industrial elites gilding the city's history was assured. In describing Charles Waterous and Harry Cockshutt, the Expositor notes, "Great oaks from little acorns grow."⁷⁸ These sentiments typify the fierce individualism and 'self-made' status shared by both of these members of the local industrial elite. In reflecting on the legacy of Charles Waterous, the article directs attention to the stained glass memorial previously mentioned:

"the praiseworthy feelings held toward the founder of the Waterous family in Brantford have been fittingly commemorated by the placing in the most central point in the main office of a most effective memorial window, bearing a portrait of the founder and of the original Waterous plant, through which the afternoon sun beams brightly shedding refulgent rays over the modern quarters there provided."⁷⁹

The mural of Waterous has evolved from a clear representation of respect and loyalty by his fellow labourers, to a hagiography meant to inspire the greater community. By emphasizing the contentment of workers, and reinforcing the role of industrial elites as community pillars, postwar collective memory politics ensured that the realities corporatisation had on labour relations were cushioned by the illusion of prosperity and compassionate paternalism. Further, the collective memory being propagated effectively distracted the populace from the long-term regression of local industry.

⁷⁸"Waterous Limited Grew With Brantford" *BX, Souvenir Number*, July 1st, 1927, 28.

⁷⁹"Waterous Limited Grew With Brantford" *BX, Souvenir Number*, July 1st, 1927, 28.

Conclusions

During an era where Canada was young and the hinterlands of its vast territory untamed, Brantford moulded itself into an empire founded on quality farm implements. Its industrial output stretched across the British dominions, and well into the depths of Europe. Truly, Brantford could boast that it was a respectable urban centre, comparable to the most affluent Canadian metropolises. Yet, even at the pinnacle of its achievement, the city was victim of underlying class antagonisms, a formulation of ‘otherness’ between elites and the labourer. Clearly, Brantford’s prosperity was unevenly divided among its socioeconomic castes. These two opposing forces erupted as war raged in Europe between 1914 and 1918. The virtual collapse of regional industry, only artificially supported by wartime contracts, displayed the fragility of not only a manufacturing centre increasingly encumbered by underdevelopment and North American competition, but also the class relations previously propagated as collegial and temperate. The instability threatening Brantford following 1918 ushered a memory boom in the public sphere, defined by regional elites. Here, history was constructed along selective lines to glorify a past understood as paternalistic and idyllic. This falsehood within the collective memory politics of postwar Brantford would remain well into the future. Even by 1995, a series of regional studies, titled *Brantford Redevelopment Projects, Revitalization of the Downtown, 1960-1995*, retained a comparable narrative of Brantford’s perceived ‘past glory’, framed within the context of development. The intersection of memory and history in the political economy of Brantford remains fascinating. The golden era, and subsequent decline, of Brantford reflect a broader experience of rust belt cities where, all too often, remembrance is restricted to economic development, rather than class relations. Thus, collective memory must continue to be

deconstructed, to welcome robust historical remembrance of the relations between labour and industry.

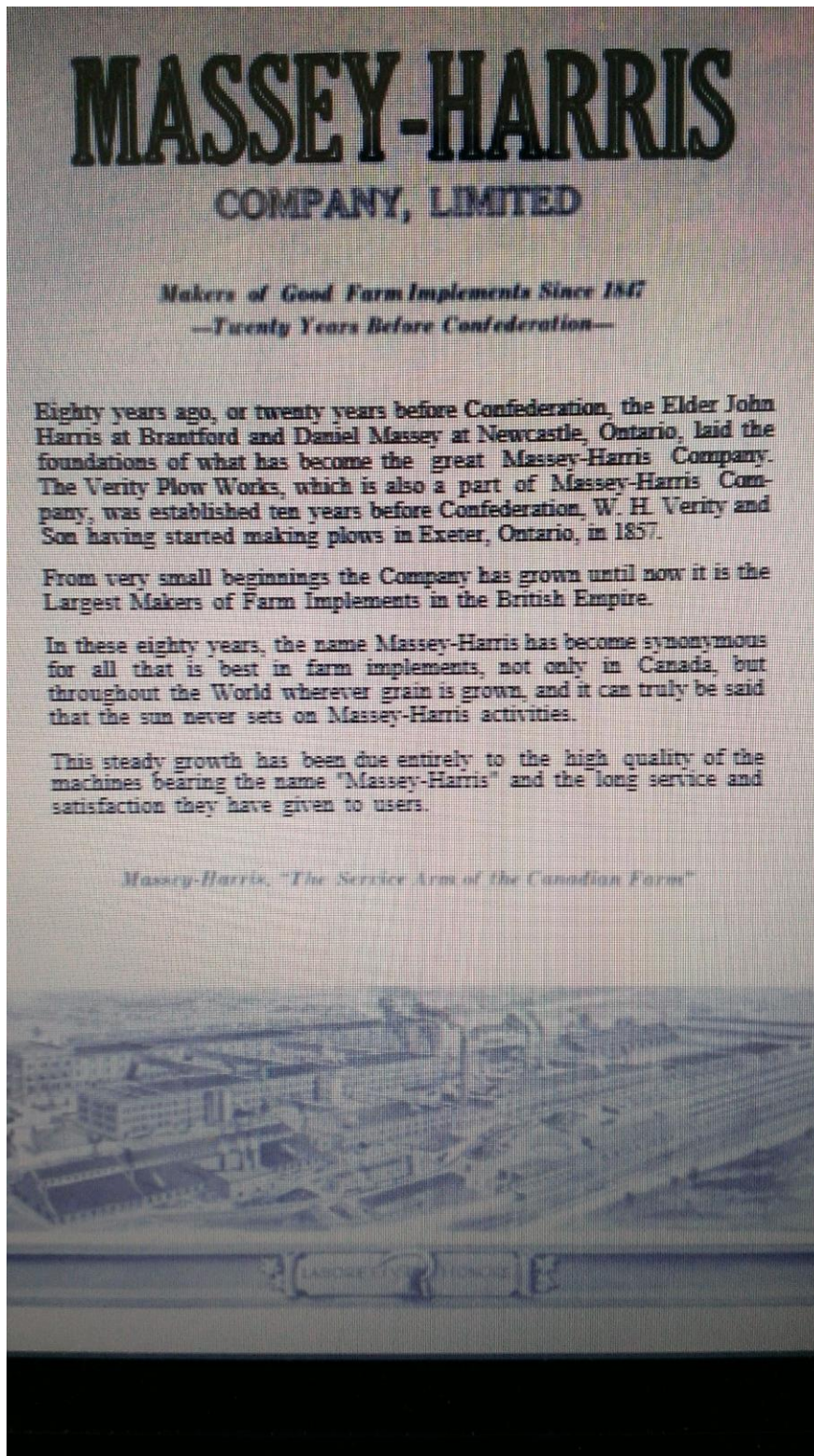
Appendix

Figure 1.1



In memoriam: Charles H. Waterous, Jr. (Brantford, 1892), Courtesy of Brantford Museum and Archives

Figure 1.2



"Massey-Harris Company, Makers of Good Farm Implements Since 1847", *BX, Souvenir Number*, July 1st, 1927.

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