

Heritage, Landscape, and the Production of Community: Consensus History and its Alternatives in Johnstown, Pennsylvania

Don Mitchell

Rutgers University/New Brunswick

On the night of July 19-20, 1977, a series of violent and torrential thunderstorms stalled over the watersheds of the Little Conemaugh and Stony Creek rivers unleashing a flash-flood into the heart of Johnstown that killed seventy-seven people and did \$300 million worth of property damage. Two months earlier, an internal Bethlehem Steel study had recommended the complete removal of steel-making from the city. The plan called for the elimination of all furnaces, "leaving only some rolling mills and fabricating units and only four thousand out of twelve thousand jobs."¹ The flood threw both the city and the Bethlehem plans into chaos. The Penn Traffic department store never reopened after the flood. Though no longer part of the Cambria Steel "empire," Penn Traffic had been a successor to a long line of company stores that could be traced back to the the Wood, Morrell, and Co. store of the mid-nineteenth century.² And Penn Traffic, until 1977, had always been located in the old building of the company store, a building that had survived all three of Johnstown's major floods.³ With the closing of Penn Traffic an important link with Johnstown's industrial past had been severed. In this sense, 1977 assumes importance as a year of closure in the industrial history of Cambria County.

But the complete, if tentative and not altogether successful, transformation of Johnstown into a postindustrial, and even in some senses "postmodern," city would have to wait at least another dozen years. Bethlehem Steel, in light of the flood damage and the national attention being paid to the plight of Johnstown, was reluctant to pursue its plan for reducing steel employment by two-thirds. But it was even more reluctant to continue operations in a city that was perceived to be both environmentally and economically hazardous.⁴ The construction of Basic Oxygen Furnaces, begun in 1983 as a way to maintain operations in Johnstown in the face of stiffened environmental regulations, was halted while Bethlehem requested unprecedented concessions from the Environmental Protection Agency and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources.⁵ Bethlehem argued that if

concessions were granted, it would be able to maintain a work force of nearly 8,000. The company, as it negotiated with EPA, promised to announce its "final" plans within two years. When those plans were unveiled, Bethlehem had decided to construct electric furnaces, resurrecting a plan first proffered then abandoned in 1973. With this plan 6,900 jobs would be retained.⁶

The reality, however, was quite different. By the beginning of 1983, the number of steel workers in Johnstown had been cut to 2,500, this after forty percent of the area's coalmining jobs had been lost in the previous six years.⁷ Even in the depth of the early 1980s depression in Johnstown, however, civic leaders and some workers were able to take pride in Johnstown's unofficial slogan: "The City of Adversity." Johnstown had survived three major floods and countless minor ones since it became the first important United States producer of steel rails in 1855. After each devastating flood, Johnstown was built anew. For many in Johnstown, as the steel mills cut payrolls and closed doors in 1982 and 1983, Johnstown's phoenix-like heritage provided solace that good could emerge from despair.⁸ This time, however, new economic realities dictated that Johnstown truly had to become a new city—a post-industrial city built out of the ashes of a declining industrialism.

A most significant part of this new city has been the creation of a new representational history—in essence a mythology that valorizes certain parts of the environmental and social history of Johnstown while minimizing others. History has been disciplined in such a way that a new city of surfaces and optimistic appearances may be sold to investors and potential immigrants alike. The repackaging of Johnstown has gone hand-in-hand with the re-presentation of the historical and contemporary landscapes of the city. A focus on landscapes is important in Johnstown because (as will be suggested below) one of the important features of the transformation of Johnstown has been the move to recreate the landscapes of the city as an outdoor museum. In essence, it is hoped that by turning the real social geography of the city into a landscape, post-industrial investment will be advanced.

As Denis Cosgrove has shown, landscapes must be understood as "not merely the world we see," but rather as "a construction, a composition of that world."⁹ As visual and verbal representations of the material world, landscape representations are abstracted from their material origin so that meaning and ideological value may be posited and controlled. They are selective surveys of what is extant in the material world. Thus there is a politics of representation, a politics that appears to be engaged wholly at the level of ideas. But landscapes are also

material things: the built form of a city that is represented as landscape has been constructed through very real social struggles (over appropriate use, social meaning, autonomy in housing, living conditions, work conditions and so forth). As the history of Johnstown has been commodified in anticipation of post-industrial investment, many of the social struggles that created the city have been lost in Johnstown's re-presentation as an historical place.

The City as Myth: Consensus History and the Built Landscape

Johnstown of the late 1980s was not the working class, unionist steel-town of the post-war boom. Steelworkers have been replaced at Main Street lunch counters by bank tellers and nurses. The city, with the support of Bethlehem Steel, has invested large sums of money and faith in the redevelopment of Main Street and other parts of downtown. As a city of adversity and a city of survivors, Johnstown, the papers repeatedly stress, is determined to survive its three major floods.¹⁰ And the business community of Johnstown knows that the key to survival is image. Through the projection of an image of hard work and tenacity, of loyal workers and a skilled yet not militant work force, of a vibrant downtown and residential neighborhoods free from the pathology that infects larger cities and shuttered factory towns (Johnstown's crime rate is consistently one of the lowest in the country), Johnstown aims to attract the post-industrial investment that it sees as necessary for its transformation from industrial backwater to important mid-sized service hub.¹¹ The icon of Johnstown is no longer the smoky blast furnace and the hard-hatted steelworker; it is the new Michael Graves-designed Crown America Headquarter and outdoor cocktails at the Holiday Inn that signal Johnstown's own version of the back-to-the-city movement.¹² The rebuilding of Johnstown, however, is not only about corporate headquarters and urbanized amenities. Johnstown is also using its past, its history of devastating floods and technological innovation, to leverage through heritage the capital necessary for its economic transformation.

Plans for the creation of Johnstown as a sort of industrial and disaster tourist site were born out of the depths of the despair of the 1983 recession. Precisely the look of Johnstown--the industrial heritage of the city as represented in its industrial landscape--provided the opportunity for recreating Johnstown along non-industrial lines. In the spring of 1983, Hollywood came to Johnstown to film "All the Right Moves." "The script was written for a town like Johnstown," a co-producer of the film was quoted as saying. "We're trying to be realistic. Johnstown has the steel mill and the right look more than anything else. You know you are in a

steel town." The president of the Greater Johnstown Chamber of Commerce hailed the movie as "a welcome economic and morale booster," and sought to turn the crowd scenes at Point Stadium into "a community pep rally." With over 70 percent of Bethlehem Steel workers laid off, image and landscape had become economic.¹³

The filming of "All the Right Moves" became the opening salvo in a continuing effort by the Chamber of Commerce, the city government, and image-conscious Bethlehem Steel to trade on Johnstown's history for economic development. Not just the city's Flood Museum, but the whole city itself, would become the locus, as one planning consultant put it, of a "long-term goal of using their (Johnstown's) heritage as a springboard to further develop the city."¹⁴ The city itself, then, was envisioned as a history museum. With the aid of the America's Industrial Heritage Project, plans were laid for an extensive flood centennial "celebration" for the summer of 1989. "Come for the history," the slogan ran, "and stay for the fun." The plans were more ambitious than simply a centennial commemoration of the great 1889 flood. Rather, heritage would lead development. The Philadelphia planning firm of Lane, Frenchman and Associates was hired through grant and sponsorship money to work closely with the existing Johnstown Flood Museum. Indeed, the museum took an active role in expanding its mission to include a larger slice of Johnstown's heritage. As Museum director Richard Burkert put it:

I like to think we are a window on the past and a door to the future. Our role as a museum has been geared to the past. . . . More recently we've moved beyond documenting the Flood and have begun to document the city. And we've moved into the role of attempting to assist the community in using its historic resources for revitalization and economic development.¹⁵

The Flood Museum's new role entailed documenting the history of industrial development, as well as the impressive flood history of the city. In this the Flood Museum's role became similar to that of many other industrial museums in deindustrializing communities. As Michael Wallace has noted, "the very creation of an industrial museum is often a response by a community to the collapse of its manufacturing base, part of an attempt to transform defunct plants into marketable historical commodities and thus generate jobs."¹⁶

For Johnstown the search for new strategies to draw investment suggested

bringing history directly into the streets. Lane, Frenchman and Associates created for Johnstown what they called a "Third Century Plan," which they billed as a "strategy for the museum and the community to use its historic resources for economic development." The plan consists of three stages and carries a total price tag of from between \$57.5 and \$70 million. The first stage (\$3.5 to \$5 million) includes historic preservation of significant buildings and the development of a series of "Discovery Trails" around the city that lead to existing attractions such as the old Cambria Steel offices and the graves of the unknown flood dead at Grandview Cemetery. This understood to be a prerequisite to the following stages. The second stage entails the creation of a "Heritage Park" encompassing a good deal of downtown Johnstown. The plans for Heritage Park (\$12 to \$15 million) include renovating the historic Pennsylvania Railroad station as a Visitor Center, refurbishing the facade of the Gautier Works "as a tour site", and creating a scenic park along the famous (and now concrete) rivers. Washington Street fronting what was once the path of the Pennsylvania Mainline Canal and now facing the Gautier Works) will be refurbished to reflect its mid nineteenth-century splendor as Johnstown's first commercial center. The Heritage Park is projected to attract up to 200,000 additional tourists each year to the city. The final stage of the Third Century Plan consists of the creation of a National Cultural Park (\$42 to \$50 million) stressing industrial history. Included in this stage is the purchase of the sprawling Cambria Works and its partial transformation into a retail center. The various buildings of the Cambria Works, as well as downtown, would be linked by a trolley running on existing company tracks. Johnstown National Cultural Park hopes to attract a million visitors per year.¹⁷ All in all these were exciting plans for a city that six years earlier had an unemployment rate that was eighth highest in the country and which had lost 17 percent of its population during the 1970s.

History, and the historic spaces of the Johnstown, the Third Century Plan and the Chamber of Commerce suggest, will be the lynch-pins of economic development. Johnstown as an historic place is seen to be a cultural commodity that can be exchanged on the market of economic incentives, and it is a commodity that cannot (due to its very uniqueness) be duplicated elsewhere. A growing body of research in history, geography and planning shows that the deployment of heritage has been an important strategy for "growth coalitions" as they attempt literally to sell their cities to be would-be investors.¹⁸ The creation of a sellable history, however, is a selective process in which both history and historical landscapes are disciplined to reflect the economic realities of the place-market. In Johnstown, the

turning of the city into a marketable commodity entails the creation of a certain kind of history--a consensus history that displays not only the uniqueness of place, but also the strength of community, the ability and willingness of labor, and the devotion of the city's elite to providing necessary cultural and economic amenities.

The creation of a consensus history of place, however, can be a dangerous business. Just as history is shaped to make it sellable, so too must those who live within that history be convinced to accept particular and partial historical visions. In Johnstown, the iconic history of heroism in the face of adversity, of a community of interest that encompasses all the citizens of the city, is presented as *the* history of the town. The history of struggle and contest, control and cooperation, has been jettisoned for a new city of heroic surfaces and consumerist pleasure ("stay for the fun"). A mythic history and mythical Johnstown is being created.

The idea of "mythic history" is particularly curious if, as Roland Barthes suggests, "myth is constituted by the loss of the historical quality of things."¹⁹ Mythic history entails the removal of history from its historical context, the abstraction of certain historical occurrences from the web of events that constituted them. By the same token, myths are also geographically abstracted in that meanings within particular landscapes, such as the industrial landscapes of Johnstown, may be removed from their spatial context. Indeed, as Michael Wallace suggests, the history of industrialism and deindustrialism has most often been represented in museums and heritage sites at a remove from the social and economic relations that made that history. The social relations of capitalism, the struggles that create place and which may either help or hinder the process of deindustrialization, are erased in most tangible historic representations.²⁰ As meaning is removed from both its historic and geographical context, as myths are created in place, Richard Slotkin notes, "history becomes cliché."²¹ And as Neil Smith has shown, the creation of a workable myth may become the centerpiece in the selling of place and the creation of certain forms of economic development.²²

In Johnstown two myths--both of which were anchored in and yet abstracted from very material realities--were deployed in the early stages of industrial decline. The first centered on a partial reading of Johnstown's flood history that suggested that as the "city of adversity," Johnstown had learned that individual and community "pluck" were the important ingredients for survival in times of crisis.²³ In this myth, similar to the ideology of progress that has been identified as the overriding theme at EPCOT Center's American Adventure historical exhibit, adversity and disaster are shown to be "opportunities in disguise."²⁴ "Johnstown

had its day of woe and ruin," Cambria Steel general manager John Fulton declared a week after the Great Flood of 1889. "It will have its day of renewed prosperity. Labor, energy and capital, by God's grace, shall make the city more thriving than even in the past."²⁵ Fulton was echoed in the midst of the 1983 crisis by the president of Johnstown Bank and Trust Company: "We are a hardy people. And we have good productive employees."²⁶ Individual courage, this version of Johnstown history proclaims, coupled with a commonality of interest between workers and capital has led to the steady progressive development of Johnstown, and it will do so again.

The second myth--and a related one--concerns the nature of workers and citizens in Johnstown, and like the first it is not false per se. Rather it is a selective representation of historical development. The executive director of the Chamber of Commerce put it this way: "Johnstown people are noncomplex people. These people work hard, they stop and have a beer. They watch football games."²⁷ Johnstown workers work hard, but they are non-confrontational. Implicitly in this representation, the interests of workers are the same as the interests of business. For Mr. Rubal of the Chamber of Commerce, worker resentment in Johnstown aligns with the complaints of Bethlehem Steel. Foreign steel dumping and price subsidies, rather than management and investment decisions made by the steel company, are the focus of anger. With the Chamber of Commerce soliciting signatures for petitions protesting foreign steel dumping in the US, protest is partly removed from its geographical context--an interesting move in light of the decision by dissident workers a year earlier at US Steel's Johnstown plant to buck national trends and refuse give-backs to the company, and thereby assure the plant's closure.²⁸ Johnstown workers have always been contentious and willing to fight for their interests. And as the vote at the US Steel plant showed, a vote that was as wrenching to union solidarity as it was to the lives of those affected by the shutdown, "Johnstown people" can be very complex indeed.

Why have I labeled these particular representations of Johnstown and its people myths? To understand how the emerging consensus history of Johnstown as a city of survivors is a partial history entails the resurrection of other strands in the history of Johnstown. To do so implies engaging, as Johnstown workers have done in protest in the city's Central Park, in a struggle over image--over the iconography that will become the meaning of place. With its history of devastating floods, grass-roots activism, and ethnic complexity, Johnstown does possess a unique and valued heritage, but it is a heritage that is rapidly being redefined. The

remainder of this article constitutes one possible intervention into the historiographic development of Johnstown by juxtaposing some of the moments that have been “lost” in the construction of the new city with the more “consensus” and representational histories that have been mobilized as part of the reinvestment strategy. I will focus on two important moments in Johnstown’s history: the aftermath of the flood of 1889; and the contentious adjustment of social relations immediately preceding and following the “Little Steel” strike of 1937.

The Great Flood: The Control of History

The publications of the Johnstown Flood Centennial Project frequently quote verbatim, though without attribution, from David McCullough’s *The Johnstown Flood*. McCullough’s history effectively describes the exceptional dramas and heroic actions that are certainly important to an understanding of not only the events, but also the meaning of the flood both to Johnstown and to the America of 1889. His description of the terrifying moments as the flood swept down the valley of the Conemaugh is extraordinarily vivid. And his recreation of some of the lives lost and saved in the flood is both realistic and compelling. *The Johnstown Flood* is available in local bookstores and at the Flood Museum, the gift shop at the Incline Plane, and numerous other points around Johnstown. In short, it is the “official” history of the flood, the authority most often turned to in press accounts and promotional literature. McCullough was featured as the keynote speaker at the Johnstown Flood Commemoration on May 30-31, 1989, and the Flood Centennial Project felt his appearance added an increased legitimacy to their efforts.²⁹

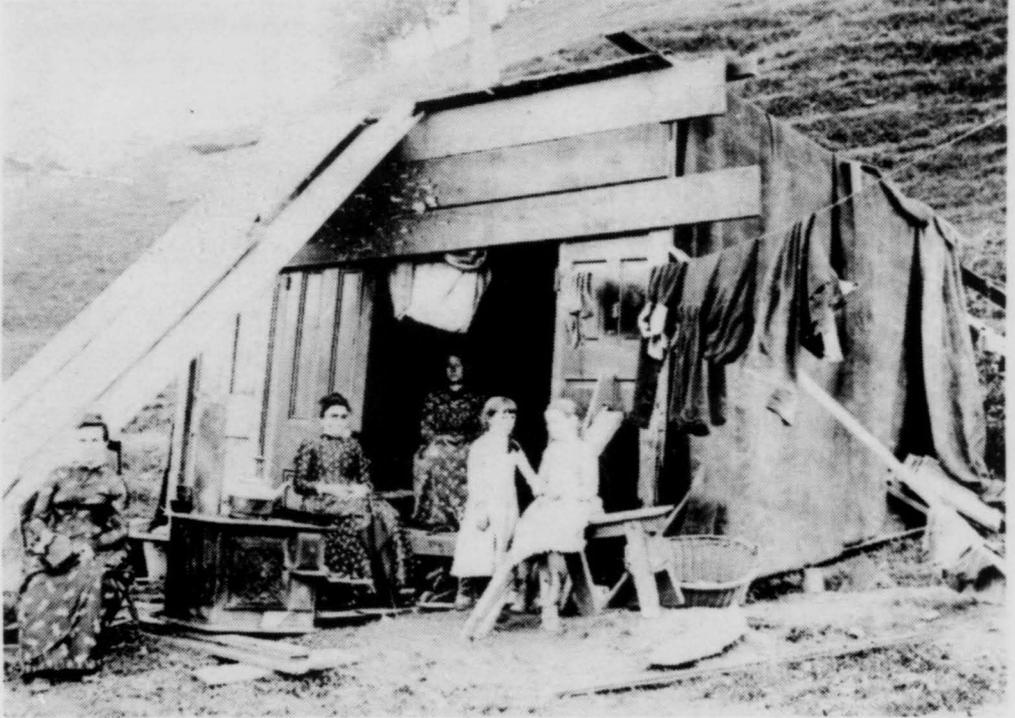
Like any history, *The Johnstown Flood* is partial, its silences as important as what it says. For McCullough, as he recreates the social and economic life of the pre-flood city, a prosperous storekeeper couple become “a typical married couple in Johnstown on the night of May 30, 1889.” But in 1889 Johnstown was one of the most important steel centers in the world, its population a heterogenous mix of ethnicities. Workers were poor and housing conditions often deplorable. Eastern and Southern Europeans, many of whom were imported during times of worker militancy, were becoming increasing populous in the outlying districts of the city. Cambria City, down river from downtown, was over-crowded with newly arrived immigrants.³⁰ Nonetheless, shopkeepers, newspaper editors and the generally prosperous of Johnstown are the iconic lives for McCullough’s history. Driven by the availability of written accounts, McCullough is not able to recreate to the same degree the lives and experiences of miners, railroad laborers, women workers in the woolen mill or immigrants in Cambria City.

Courtesy of Johnstown Area Heritage Association



Example of devastation caused by the 1889 flood.

The result is a history remarkable for the degree to which it reflects middle class interpretations of the meaning of work and recovery, of cooperation and consensus. Rather uncritically McCullough discusses the naming of a “dictator” to govern Johnstown in the immediate aftermath of the flood. “John Fulton (General Manager, Cambria Steel) was the obvious choice, but he was nowhere to be found, so it was assumed he was dead which he was not.” “Every able-bodied man who could be rounded up” then chose Arthur Moxham, the founder of the Johnson Steel Street Rail Company, the plant which eventually became the US Steel plant in which workers voted not to concede give-backs to the company in 1982. Surrounding the Johnson Steel plant was the district of Moxham consisting largely of housing built by the Johnson company.³¹ Considering the social position of both Moxham and Fulton in a company town such as Johnstown, and considering the stern anti-unionist, paternalistic policies of both men, whether they were truly the acclaimed leaders of the recovery is an important question. To accept at face-



Temporary shelter housing unidentified flood survivors, 1889, Johnstown.

value the role of Fulton and Moxham as “natural” leaders assumes that the residents of Johnstown were pre-disposed to recreate the pre-flood social system out of the flood devastated landscape. That is a large claim to make, and one that ignores very real historical processes that were geared toward the preservation of pre-flood power relations. Neither McCullough not the Flood Museum open this question--and, admittedly, it is a question that perhaps can never be answered with great certainty. It is exactly the question, however, that needs to be asked in the wake of the transformation wrought by the 1980s deindustrialization.

The history of relief in the aftermath of the flood seems to stand in opposition to the standard interpretation of cooperation and community spirit. Rather, some forms of relief were explicitly geared toward reestablishing social control in the wake of devastation. For all its vivid imagery and its heart-rending depiction of personal trauma, *The Johnstown Flood* stops short of exploring the history of social control and domination of those most marginalized by the flooding waters.

McCullough's history fits well with the image of the new Johnstown of the 1980s and 1990s. It eschews a more critical inquiry into the aftermath of the flood which examines the ways that Cambria Steel's control over the space of the city was reinvigorated.

There is truth, of course, in the portrait of cooperation and compassion. And it is a truth that sells particularly well, especially in the midst of a decade of assault on state-supported social institutions. McCullough documents the degree to which the response to the flood both within Johnstown and around the world was an affirmation of the good that community altruism may accomplish. As a ratification of what we want to believe is best about us, *The Johnstown Flood* is convincing. Cash contributions from around the globe for relief of suffering totaled some \$3.7 million. Contributions of food, clothing, building material and labor were also substantial.³²

Both the Flood Museum and *The Johnstown Flood* do call into question the culpability of the Pennsylvania Railroad which had not maintained, and the Pittsburgh elite which currently owned, the South Fork Dam that collapsed on May 31, 1889. Evidence points to gross negligence on the part of the South Fork Hunting and Fishing Club when it reconstructed the dam so that the lake behind it could be expanded. A rather consistent ill-feeling between Johnstown residents and the Club pervaded, especially during the annual spring floods. Though prominent wealthy members of the club and corporate policies are excoriated, both at the museum and in the book, rarely is attention turned to the more mundane moments of conflict between classes in the aftermath of the flood. The reclamation of such a history adds considerably to the social history of the flood; such is not a history, however, as immediately compelling as tales of heroism and compassion. In a town as image-conscious as Johnstown has become, that is an important consideration.

Existing records of flood relief efforts make it possible to resurrect some of the ideologies guiding relief efforts. Although the reception of flood victims to these efforts is difficult to gauge, the contours of social control attempted through the provision of charity may be drawn. In the immediate aftermath of the flood, the need for social control and order was paramount. For reasons of health and safety, but also for the security that order brings, both the care and the control of the homeless received top priority. One official government report put it this way:

The survivors, a homeless, half-crazed mass of humanity, seemed perfectly helpless and unable to give the Board the least assistance. All

departments of their local governments were paralyzed. They were without protection from the lawless hordes that were pushing in from every section of the country. Chaos reigned supreme.³³

The images are precise: the post-flood city was a city where a deserving and helpless few, people who needed to be looked after, cared for, and guided, met hordes of lawless "tramps, which were even then heading for the devastated city" on the chaotic and disordered landscape of the devastated city.³⁴ Social and individual control (and thus compassion and care for deserving victims) implied an ordering of each of these elements in such a way that mendicinity and pauperism were avoided, and in such a way that the rationality of the industrial community could be asserted and strengthened. A moral landscape had to be produced.

This moral landscape was a tangible production. Under the extraordinary circumstances following the flood, the apparatus of power was extended into almost every aspect of individuals' lives. The visibility of the homeless and the poorly housed was completed through an extension of the company and the state into the very spaces that the newly marginalized had secured for themselves.³⁵ The State Board of Health instructed its inspectors to:

proceed without delay to make a sanitary survey of their districts, recording every house without exception. . . . They were to ascertain the name of the owner of tenant, number of street, number of rooms, number of families, males, females and children, and whether there had been typhoid fever, diphtheria, or scarlet fever in the house in six months; to report the sanitary condition of the living rooms, yard, privy, stable and surroundings; to make note of all facets bearing upon the health and comforts of the people.³⁶

The last refuge of the homeless, the spaces to which they had retreated to establish some distance between themselves and the devastation around them, and the means by which they had masked some of their naked visibility, had been rendered visible, open and public again. Sanitary conditions were linked explicitly with particular occupants.

In private homes there remained a certain autonomy that threatened the efforts of the Sanitary Corps. A more healthful, and thus more rational, solution to housing needs was to be provided by the Red Cross and other organizations in the form of tent communities. Dr. Benjamin Lee, Executive Officer of the Sanitary Corps, in a "Notice to the Heads of Families" pleaded, "All who have lost their

home would be much more comfortable in tents than in crowded houses. Tent life is both healthful and pleasant.”³⁷ In tightly controlled tent communities a carceral space of compassion was created, in which anti-social or deviant behavior could be monitored (alcohol, for instance, was banned in most encampments) at the same time that the health of the community, as opposed to the individual, was insured.

Almost immediately moralistic articles and books, which explicitly outlined the moral premises of care, compassion and control, as well as proper attitudes towards receiving relief, began to appear in the popular press. These articles and books have performed a vital function in the creation of the “Johnstown story.”³⁸ Within these stories of devastation and heroism were written stories of the depravity, debauchery and abject evil that sprang from landscapes of absolute disorder and irrationality. In the consensus history, then, the heroism of Johnstown was not just that it survived a catastrophic flood (as if that was not enough) but also that, through community and through the leadership of brave individuals, it was able to overcome all sorts of evil and degeneracy. A certain kind of people were thus created during the emergency--a kind that reinforced and strengthened existing class and racial biases existent in the contemporary United States. Johnstown became, and remains in its received history, a morality play that teaches the proper attitude of labor, community “leaders” and philanthropists--all three of whom have a common enemy in both the environment and in the disorderly elements.

In a pamphlet published by Richard K. Fox, the danger of disorganization was palpable:

Danger hags over the unhappy town from another source. The presence of nearly ten thousand laboring men, half of them gathered at random from the idle classes in other parts of the country, and divided by race and other prejudices, threatens to lead to rioting and disorder beyond the power of the military now on hand to quell. Liquor has been introduced among these men surreptitiously, and trouble is feared.³⁹

In this image, labor itself has been defined as “dangerous.”

Moreover, there was a danger from within: many of those applying for relief were undeserving, idle, paupers. The whole of Johnstown could now be seen to replicate Chicago’s Main Stem or New York’s Bowery. Indeed, disorder within Johnstown was contagious. The *Report of the Secretary of the Flood Relief Com-*

mission stated that, "Some of the claims (for Relief) were remarkable as coming from presumably self-respecting people, who would only accept help when in great necessity."⁴⁰ Unless order could be restored the effect on "presumably self-respecting people" would be obvious.

One move towards order was the assertion of charity. To entice homeless families into tent communities offered and controlled by benevolent organizations implies enticing them into spaces controlled and molded by others, spaces in which the modalities of charity were always very much on the surface.⁴¹ The tent communities represented paternalistic spaces that in many ways refused to acknowledge any moments autonomy among the residents. At the same time, the assertion of charity established the limits of relief in a way that insured a return to the normally structured relations of production and reproduction in the community. Relief was not to be understood as an indemnity to which sufferers were entitled. The "Ladies' Branch" of the Union Benevolent Association of the Conemaugh Valley (a local organization formed during the summer after the flood by business and industrial elites to take over various state and non-local relief programs) made that abundantly clear in its First Annual Report:

Succeeding, as our Association did, to the work of Miss Barton (of the Red Cross), which has been conducted out of her ample resources in the most liberal manner, it was difficult at first to make the public understand that our Association was purely a charity; that its function was limited strictly to the relief of distress, and this, too, only where the parties could, by receiving relief, become self-supporting, and even in this case that the relief would be of a temporary character. The Association was not intended to displace public charity properly administered through county authorities for the benefit of the chronically and voluntarily (sic) helpless members of the community.⁴²

County charity at this time of course meant removal to the jail, workhouse or almshouse.⁴³ Thus distinctions between the deserving and the undeserving were maintained in spite of the destruction of the material base upon which these distinctions were founded. The unworthy of pre-flood Johnstown remained just as unworthy in the aftermath of the flood. The perception of those most marginalized by the flood may have been quite different:

The lavish distributions of all sorts of relief made through different agencies to sufferers by the flood had caused a considerable number of

Courtesy of Johnstown Area Heritage Association



As the Flood story appeared on front pages around the country, food, clothing, and every kind of supplies began to arrive by trainloads. It was the greatest outpouring of charity the country had ever seen, and the goods were distributed at commissaries like this one.

our people to feel that they had a *right* to any form of gratuity which would make good the losses they had sustained (emphasis added).⁴⁴

In Johnstown, it seems, the paralyzing influence of compulsive charity had to be continually combatted.

To insure that relief was given only to the “really necessitous,” relief experts and community elites--“persons whose judgement was entitled to consideration”--worked to structure relief giving in such a way that traditional social relations of

the community could be restored.⁴⁵ In the words of one report:

Many assignments of goods and donations of money were accompanied by a delegation in charge who were bound to see their material handed "direct to the people" and went away with well-satisfied consciences, unaware to the present day that their good intentions generally miscarried, and that their contributions of cash and clothing fell into the hands of the same "rounders" who were constantly on the alert for the opportunities presented through such visitations and who were unable to deceive those in *official* charge, the same persons usually receiving the cash and goods of these various delegates. The amount of cash distributed through private agencies to undeserving people was very great (emphasis added).⁴⁶

Outdoor relief, relief that was not channeled through the "official" organizations, pauperized those that received it and encouraged criminality among the "undeserving." In fact, one of the principles upon which the Union Benevolent Association was founded was "preventing pauperism and its ills."⁴⁷

The recreation of this history is important because it shows the extent to which the consensus history of cooperation and common battle in the aftermath of the flood is a myth. Rather, Johnstown was riven after the flood (as before) by class divisions and ideologies of control masquerading as benevolence. But the construction of the mythical history of Johnstown is much more complicated than that. Precisely in the sensationalism of the event and its coverage, a controlling myth of "togetherness," of a fight against a common enemy was created. By creating hordes of "idle vagabond negroes in Johnstown who will not work" (as one "eyewitness" account would have it) a common enemy was made—an enemy behind which continuing domination of the workers and common people of Johnstown could be hidden.⁴⁸ This point is missed by McCullough in his otherwise insightful evaluation of the sensational accounts of the flood. It is important because upon it rests the ability of Cambria to rebuild again as it was before, recreating the social relations of pre-flood Johnstown. And, indeed, it is also important to the historiography of Johnstown. Post-industrial Johnstown, the received history suggests, is a viable location for capital investment: the proof is in its history as "community"—a community that works together, that overcomes adversity with spirit, and that is in control of itself. Such a received history itself rests on the ability to control the marginal, to establish order, to circumscribe "pauperism."

Consensus and Community: Restoring Order During the “Little Steel” Strike

If a limited sense of common interest and community guided the creation and representation of the history of the Johnstown flood, an even more ideologically-laden construction of “community” was deployed by Bethlehem Steel and city elites to combat the spread of the 1937 “Little Steel” strike to Johnstown.⁴⁹ Just as the 1981 vote by the Lorain Steel workers to close their plant rather than participate in give-backs showed the workers of the 1980s to be anything but simple, and just as that vote showed how contentious and fracturous social relations within a community may be, so too did the ideological struggle over the meaning of the 1937 strike as *it was occurring* give lie to the claims to generality made on behalf of consensus, community and “harmony.” In 1937, as in 1889, the threat of “invasions” by lawless hordes was used to justify spectacular efforts by Bethlehem and the city government to reclaim the power to determine the contours of the social relations of the city.

From July to October, 1936, the Johnstown Chamber of Commerce and the allied Citizen’s Council of Greater Johnstown sponsored a publicity campaign designed to instill, according to one of its instigators, “a proper and peaceful relationship between employer and employee.” In a series of 12 full-page ads in the Johnstown *Tribune*, the Chamber of Commerce contrasted “the true American citizen,” defined as the Johnstown worker who favored “law and order,” with outside “influences” who sought to “destroy the value of citizenship.” These “destructive influences” worked to “pit class against class,” drive up payrolls (and thus increase unemployment), and induce workers into “blind compulsion” towards unAmerican ideas. The “task of all citizens (was) to make sure that these influences do not succeed.” Finally, the major industrial concerns of Johnstown—the very economic lifeblood of the city—deserved the “sympathetic and understanding support of workmen, businessmen, and everyone who calls Johnstown home.” Once again, it seemed, Johnstown was under siege, and these “Harmony Ads” (as they were called) were the first shot fired in support of home and community. It is no accident that the first of these ads appeared four days after a subregional director of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) came to Johnstown to begin a drive to unionize the Cambria and Lorain plants.⁵⁰

It had already been a trying year for Johnstown. In March, once again, flood waters had risen to deadly levels, doing some \$40 million damage. Eight people drowned and twelve other died from flood-related causes. The immediate official reaction to this calamity was to restore order to the city as quickly as possible. Mayor Daniel Shields proclaimed a 9pm curfew and imposed strict rules of behavior for the daylight hours:

People were not permitted to assemble; loitering in the street was forbidden; and sightseers were banned from the city. He ordered the state liquor stores closed and prohibited the sale of intoxicants.⁵¹

By fiat, then, in the extraordinary circumstances of the flood, the city was made moral and ordered. With 9,000 estimated to be homeless, with the forced idleness of thousands more because of the shut-down of the Cambria and Lorain plants, and with the city needing to turn "resolutely to the task of rehabilitation," Mayor Shields asked the Pennsylvania Governor to mobilize the National Guard and place the city under martial law.⁵²

The need for order was paramount: before rehabilitation could begin, a disciplinary rationality had to be constructed for those who would live in the (temporarily) irrational city. Thus, the police and military united to institute a pass system "to keep out the idle and curious." Absolute military control, absolute discipline, had to be placed on the people of Johnstown to substitute for the discipline normally imposed by the mores implied in the built environment. But the landscape would be rebuilt. Seven thousand WPA workers were sent to Johnstown following the flood "to clean the city," and officials of the WPA, speaking to the rehabilitation committee ("consisting of more than 100 of the community's ablest men"), promised to restore all public property--to rebuild the public landscape--at no cost to the city.⁵³

As order was restored in the wake of the receding flood waters, SWOC seemed to be threatening disorder of another sort. The community of survival created by the flood seemed tenuous indeed before the "influence" of the CIO. SWOC sought to remake the social relations of the city, to begin to move past the paternalistic welfare capitalist policies of Bethlehem and US Steel and create for workers the autonomous power to begin to challenge the prerogative of the companies to determine social interaction, as the companies had so adeptly done with the provision of company

housing and company stores, as well as through control over city political and economic structures.⁵⁴

While more overt control over workers in the workplace through the exclusion of autonomous unions has been well documented,⁵⁵ just as important in the construction of the corporate landscape had been the provision of workers housing--and the hegemonic ideologies that surrounded that provision. The provision of company houses allowed for the masking of control over worker and citizen behind a facade of corporate benevolence, and thus provided an important basis for the construction of a consensus history that suggested that the interests of Johnstown's elites were the interests of all. By the 1980s, Cambria owned over 700 rental properties for the housing of management, foremen, and millhands, as well as coal miners and employees of subsidiary manufactories.⁵⁶ Additionally, Cambria actively promoted homeownership among its employees by preparing lots and providing loans for the materials and construction of houses. Repayment was provided through automatic deductions from employee paychecks.⁵⁷ Through the provision of housing, of course, Cambria was able to extend its influence into the everyday social relations of family and neighborhood, and in this way it was able to construct the conditions of acceptable behavior.⁵⁸

That the steel company intended some level of social control over the "outside" lives of their employees was made obvious in Cambria's own publicity on its housing program::

The houses are in (the) charge of the superintendent of the lands and dwellings of the company's real estate department, and at frequent intervals, unknown to the lessees, the houses are inspected.⁵⁹

Company housing in Johnstown was, for the most part, adequately built and relatively inexpensive. Company housing, within the context of the overall urban structure, was something to be achieved. And through the paternalistic mechanism of housing provision, the construction of a unified vision of Johnstown's history was continued.

The melding of company and worker interest was further accomplished through the development of an "Employee Representation Plan" in 1919 in the wake of the first large strike to be conducted in Johnstown.⁶⁰ As officers of a fully controlled company "union," the employee representatives cautioned workers

against demanding wages too high and worked closely with management (though never from a position of power) to determine work and living policies.⁶¹ With the arrival of SWOC organizers in 1936, employee representatives were mobilized by the Cambria management to counter the threat posed by an autonomous union. Nonetheless, SWOC made steady progress in its organizational efforts during 1936-enough progress, in fact, that the company hired the Pinkerton Detective Agency to begin a program of industrial spying against “disloyal” employees and outside organizers. Bethlehem severed its tie with Pinkerton in March 1937 when the detective agency came under close scrutiny of the Senate Committee investigating violations of the rights of free speech and assembly.⁶²

When the Cambria workers voted to join the “Little Steel” strike on June 11, 1937, Johnstown business interests and Cambria management swung into action. The mayor, funded through a series of cash transfers from Bethlehem totaling over \$31,000 (\$23,000 of which eventually helped ease the mayor’s staggering personal debt burden), along with the city council and the Chamber of Commerce, took the lead in fighting the new threat that had descended upon Johnstown.⁶³ By Monday June 14, Mayor Shields had set the terms of the struggle in a statement to the press, and he clearly outlined how Johnstown should be positioned for the national attention the city was now being paid:

A number of men--not residents of our community--have been here for some months representing certain labor organizations . . . In my official capacity as mayor I feel justified in warning you that trouble of a certain character appears inevitable. I took the oath of office to uphold the Constitutions of the United States and Pennsylvania. Particularly does that oath make binding upon me to protect your lives, homes and properties against all *foreign* enemies (emphasis added).⁶⁴

That same day, the Citizens’ Committee of Johnstown, Pa. was formed. The Citizens’ Committee, on which no representatives of organized labor sat (they being defined by the mayor as foreign), maintained close connections with the Chamber of Commerce and was heavily subsidized by Bethlehem. Although the Citizens’ Committee declared that its founding purpose was to address the erosion of law and order in the community, there had yet to be any violent incidents connected with the strike. With the first act of violence, in a neighboring boro, Mayor Shields deputized “scores of person to act as vigilantes in Johnstown.”⁶⁵

With the first outbreak of violence in Johnstown proper, occurring even as the Citizens’ committee was holding its first meeting, Mayor Shields called up once

again the image of a horde of invaders descending on the city. This time, however, the citizens determined to be anything but helpless:

Unless Governor Earle takes this situation in hand without delay, I will bring out unlimited numbers of Legionnaires to protect our city against the invaders . . . The time appears at hand when we of this city must keep Johnstown for Johnstowners.⁶⁶

The image of Johnstown as a community of besieged Americans fighting off a foreign invasion would only become more pronounced. The Citizens' Committee prepared a series of advertisements in the Johnstown papers calling on the people of Johnstown to repel the invasion:

The citizens' committee is rising to meet the situation. The authority of the law must be restored and the citizens' committee means to see that it is. Johnstown is our city. Johnstown is our home. Johnstown is our greatest interest. Will you allow outsiders to come in and destroy it?⁶⁷

Further advertisements promised that the Citizens Committee would protect the city from the depredations of the "outsiders":

WE WILL KEEP JOHNSTOWN SAFE FOR JOHNSTOWNERS . . . (T)he citizens' committee means business . . . it means to preserve the lives of Johnstowners; it means to make its streets as well as its homes safe for its mothers, fathers, daughters, and sons. That is the obligation of the citizens of Johnstown. . . .⁶⁸

Mayor Shields made it plain from whom Johnstown had to be protected. Declaring that "law and order must prevail," Shields suggested that strikers and strike leaders were "undesirable hoodlums, Communists, and anarchists from out of town." The strike itself was "the work of the invaders who have the audacity to conceal themselves in our city." Dismissing out of hand the grievances of the workers, the mayor declared that "were Johnstown not invaded by undesirables, peace would reign at this time."⁶⁹

By June 20 invasion imagery provided the pretext for a declaration of martial law in Cambria County. A rally of coal miners, scheduled previous to the calling of the steel strike, was planned for a park on the outskirts of Johnstown on Sunday, June 20. With the threat of 20,000 to 40,000 area coal miners rallying near the site of a bitter steel strike, Bethlehem grew nervous. Along with the Cambria County

sheriff, a member of the Citizens' Committee and a former state senator, the General Manager of the Cambria Plant prepared a telegram (signed by the sheriff) warning the governor of "rumors of an invasion of great numbers of United Mine Workers of America." Although further investigation showed the "invasion" to be more a figment of the Citizens' Committee's fear than an actual plan by the mine workers, Governor Earle imposed martial law and John Lewis was persuaded to call off the rally.⁷⁰

Part of the martial law order entailed the closing of the Cambria Plants, and as this facet became clear, the "citizens" of Johnstown quickly changed their tune. Rather than the locus of imminent invasions and riots, Johnstown was presented as the very pinnacle of industrial peace. "There has been far less disorder in the community than people outside the community may think," a group of twenty-four Johnstown ministers wrote to the Governor urging him to open the plants. "The bulk of our citizenry has been going about the streets and the stores undisturbed."⁷¹

When the plant was reopened on June 25, with about one third of the normal work force, a national publicity campaign was developed (and financed largely by sources outside of Johnstown) to further stigmatize SWOC as an "arbitrary" minority bent on destroying American values by gaining control over industry. "Our fight is your fight," the national campaign declared. Vilified along with the union was the Governor of Pennsylvania who had incurred the business "community's" wrath by ordering Cambria closed. The publicity campaign and methods of persuasion of a rather more personal sort eventually "succeeded in getting men back into the mill in the period following the lifting of martial law."⁷²

With the strike broken and Johnstown presumably safe once again for Johnstownians, the city was subject to one final "invasion" during the summer of 1937. On July 15, 200 people met at the Fort Stanwix Hotel in downtown Johnstown to create a national Citizens Committee charged with defining for America the proper understanding of American values. Not only the CIO but also governmental officials became the targets of this meeting's scorn. Over minor objections, the meeting resolved that "as American citizens we feel it is our patriotic duty . . . to restore and protect those Constitutional rights that have been taken from American citizens by certain unworthy officials."⁷³ Though never a very successful organization this national Citizens' Committee did eventually produce a series of pamphlets and advertisements that declared, among other things, that CIO stood really stood (in Russia) for "Communist International Order" and that union members were "social and political termites."⁷⁴

The “Little Steel” strike takes on significance for an alternative history of the present in Johnstown, not because of its role in solidifying social control in the forces of the local state or a hierarchical union, but because of the symbolic importance of the response by Johnstown’s elite to the threat to order posed by a militant work force. The formation of the Johnstown Citizens’ Committee, which charged itself with protecting the “American way of life” and upholding specific values which it conceived of as universal, set the terms of what it meant to be part of the Johnstown “community.” War on the perceived agents of disorder (SWOC) was waged symbolically through the invocation of inalienable American values, values that were understood to be under siege by striking (and often “foreign”) workers. Such a symbolic meaning for Johnstown and the Citizens’ Committee was not lost on elite interests in other parts of the country. The reactionary Associated Farmers of California, for example, discussed the efficacy of the Johnstown Citizens’ Committee at its board meetings. Declaring that “a nation-wide program such as that of the Johnstown Committee would crystalize sentiment in every community,” the Associated Farmers resolved to commend and imitate the actions and techniques developed in Johnstown.⁷⁵ The constructed history of Johnstown, then, assumed an immediate symbolic importance that was larger than the contours of the local conflict itself. Such a history therefore is immediately relevant to the structuring of a consensus history of the community that may be used as Johnstown copes with deindustrialization: a particular vision of what it is to be a citizen in a unique community comes to stand for all possible interpretations of citizenship. Action and reaction to historical processes is circumscribed both in reality and in its iconography.

Conclusion: History as Community, History as Commodity

Under ordinary circumstances (unlike times of extreme crisis such as a flood or a severe industrial conflict) direct military, state, or corporate control over the actions of individuals in the landscapes of Johnstown is not possible. However, by the late 1980s pressure to preserve an ordered and rational landscape remained paramount. As the very history and geography of the city was being commodified and presented as a scheme of development in anticipation of the 1889 flood centenary, extraordinary pressure was being applied by community elites to insure conformity and thus marketability. In the run up to the flood “celebrations” in the spring of 1989, the *Tribune* ran a series of photographs, in full color, entitled “Blight of the Week” to highlight those properties that detracted from the assumed

Courtesy of Johnstown Area Heritage Association



Crowds gather in the streets of Columbia City during the National Polk Festival, held in Johnstown over Labor Day weekend. The festival is the jewel of Johnstown's evolving heritage and tourism industry.

aesthetic value of the community. Each photograph was accompanied by a caption that listed the location of the property, as well as the name and address of the owner. Also noted were any plans that the owner might have to remedy the blight. Thus the *Tribune* contributed to a campaign to erase a real history of struggle, pain, and suffering in the wake of massive deindustrialization, in favor of a manufactured, commodified, and "consensual" history of Johnstown as attraction.

Johnstown through its celebration of "heritage" has deepened its commitment to a "postmodern" vision of itself. Robert Hewison has framed the process of

postmodernization nicely: "Post-modernism and the heritage industry are linked, in that they both conspire to create a shallow screen that intervenes between our present lives, and our history. We have no understanding of history in depth, but instead are offered a contemporary creation, more costume drama and re-enactment than critical discourse."⁷⁶ But there is more to the transformation of Johnstown than that. Johnstown has been recreated as a landscape, and a view of the landscape is quintessentially an outsider's view. As an outsider's representation of place, the idea of landscape works to exclude as real corporeal social beings those who exist within the landscape.⁷⁷ The outsider's view posits a unified vision of historical change and process: landscapes are significant in their ability to "dissolve and conceal" social processes.⁷⁸ The history of struggle and contest has been replaced by a history of heroism and mythic regeneration.

As the urban spaces of Johnstown are being recreated in the 1990s as historical landscapes, a particular vision of history is being created. In many historical museums, Michael Frisch has found a reliance on what he calls an "urban biography" form of history that is "almost necessarily deductive, a linear, heroic form into which the city's growth and development must fit." In Johnstown, this vision has been writ large on the very spaces of the city. And it is precisely this linear, almost teleological, form that has required a reinvestment in the myth of community. Frisch calls for a more complex interpretive stance that will "reach genuinely diverse audiences with complex relationships to the embrace of the *presumptive community* of the city. . . ." (emphasis added).⁷⁹ With history being shaped as a means to attract capital investment, it remains a question in Johnstown whether there will be room for these "audiences" to stand in relationship to the constructed "community" of adversity and survival. A brief examination of some of the moments of community construction in Johnstown has shown that the relationship between the people of the city and "community" is complex indeed. The Johnstown Flood Museum has trumpeted its expansion into the industrial social history of the city. At the same time, the Museum and the surfaces of the city are seen as the lynch-pins of urban and post-industrial development. While there is great possibility in this move, there are also problems: "for history as a tool of civic revitalization is not history in necessarily reliable hands."⁸⁰ And, as seems to be the case in Johnstown, when history is posited in such a manner so as to legitimize claims of "community" and commonality of purpose, when the very economic and social survival of a city is seen to be at stake, the challenges are immense for those who seek to step out of the landscape and reclaim their history.

Notes

Thanks to Deryck Holdsworth, Neil Smith, and three anonymous reviewers for their constructive criticism.

1. Jack Metzger, "Plant Shutdowns and Worker Response: The Case of Johnstown, Pa, Socialist," *Socialist Review*, 10 (1980), 9-49, quote from 20; *New York Times*, February 17, 1978.
2. Cambria Steel was the predecessor to Bethlehem Steel, and Bethlehem's Johnstown works are still often called by that name. The Penn Traffic store began as Stiles, Allen, and Co., the first Cambria Company store. A year later the name was changed to Wood, Morrell, and Co. when Cambria Iron was reorganized. During another reorganization in 1891, the name was changed to Penn Traffic. By the beginning of the 1970s the Johnstown Penn Traffic Department Store was the flagship of a seven-store chain. Presently Penn Traffic is a fortune 500 company that primarily operates grocery stores. Kim E. Wallace, ed., *The Character of a Steel Mill City: Four Historic American Neighborhoods of Johnstown, Pennsylvania*. Draft report, Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service (Washington, D.C., 1985).
3. Significantly, the Johnstown Flood Museum--an important symbol of the "new" Johnstown--was relocated to the Penn Traffic Building while its regular quarters were renovated for the 1889 Flood Centenary.
4. Metzger, "Plant shutdowns," 20. *New York Times*, February 17, 1978.
5. Metzger, "Plant shutdowns," suggests that Bethlehem Steel maintained an interest in keeping Cambria open for two reasons: the huge investment in infrastructure represented by a physical plant that had developed over nearly 120 years, and a steel boom in the early seventies that made the need for increased capacity always a possibility.
6. Metzger, "Plant shutdowns," 20-21; Richard Burkert, "Iron and Steelmaking in the Conemaugh

Vallery," in Karl Berger, ed., *Johnstown: The Story of a Unique Valley* (Johnstown: Johnstown Flood Museum, 1985).

7. Jack Metzger, "Johnstown, Pa: Ordeal of a Union Town," *Dissent* 32, (1985), 160-163.
8. *New York Times*, January 3, 1983.
9. Denis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscapes* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 13.
10. This message has most consistently been brought to a national audience by the *New York Times*. See, for example, *New York Times* February 17, 1978; January 3, 1983.
11. See the comments by John M. Rubal, executive director of the Greater Johnstown Chamber of Commerce, *New York Times*, October 3, 1982.
12. Michael Graves is the preeminent "postmodern" architect, whose eclectic historicist pastiche has come to define the genre. The Graves' Crown America Building retains references to Crown America's earlier headquarters which was the former central post office. The post office (built between 1912-1914 in a Greek Revival style that was compatible with the classicist Beaux Arts City Beautiful that influenced city planning of that era) was abandoned when the WPA built a new office in 1938 (in, of course, a trendy Art Deco style). Crown America has now become the most influential "player" in the remaking of post-industrial downtown Johnstown. Crown America, and its affiliate Zamias Corporation, is a developer and operator of retail malls and other retail ventures including the Johnstown Holiday Inn. The new Crown America building was heavily subsidized through HUD redevelopment funds, and is perceived, especially with the closing of the remaining downtown department store in May, 1989, as being of primary symbolic importance to the survival of Johnstown as a prosperous community.
13. *New York Times* March 21, 1983.
14. Margie Fusco, "Johnstown Flood Centennial Project is Unique," *Centennial Reports*, 2 (1988), 3.

15. Quoted in "The New Johnstown Flood Museum to Play a New Role in the Community," *Centennial Reports*, 3 (1989), 6.
16. Michael Wallace, "Industrial Museums and the History of Deindustrialization," *The Public Historian*, 9 (1987), 9-19, quote from 10.
17. "The New Johnstown Flood Museum," 8.
18. Kevin Cox and Andrew Mair, "Locality and Community in the Politics of Local Economic Development," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 78 (1988), 307-325; Briavel Halcomb, "Re-visioning Place: De- and Re-Constructing the Image of the Industrial City," in Chris Philo and Gerry Kearns, eds., *Selling Places: The City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present* (London: Pergamon, forthcoming); John H. Mollenkopf, "The Postwar Politics of Urban Development," in William K. Tabb and Larry Sawyer, eds., *Marxism and the Metropolis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Michael Wallace, "Reflections on the History of Historic Preservation," in Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *Presenting the Past: Essays on History and the Public* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Ian Springer, *Phantom Village: The Myth of the New Glasgow* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990).
19. Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1972), 129.
20. Michael Wallace, "Industrial Museums," 11.
21. Richard Slotkin, *Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialism, 1800-1890* (New York: Atheneum, 1985), 338.
22. Neil Smith, "New City, New Frontier: Lower East Side as Wild Wild West," in Michael Sorkin, ed., *Variations on a Theme Park* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), 61-92.
23. *New York Times*, February 17, 1978.
24. See Michael Wallace, "Mickey Mouse History: Portraying the Past at Disney World," in Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 158-180.
25. Quoted in David McCullough, *The Johnstown Flood* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 236.
26. *New York Times* January 3, 1983.
27. *New York Times* October 3, 1982.
28. *New York Times* April 21, 1981.
29. *Centennial Reports* 3 (3), 2.
30. Ewa T. Morawska, *For Bread with Butter: Life-Worlds of East Central Europeans in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, 1890-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).
31. McCullough, *The Johnstown Flood*, 189-190.
32. Wallace, *The Character of a Steel Mill City*; McCullough, *The Johnstown Flood*.
33. State Board of Health, *The Fifth Annual Report of the Board of Health* (Harrisburg: Meyer's Printing House, 1891), 8.
34. *Report of the Citizen's Relief Committee of Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh: Myers, Shinkle and Co., 1890), 9 (hereafter cited as RCRCP).
35. The art critic John Berger has pointed to the importance that space plays in the history of control and discipline--and in the creation of images--when he notes that "it is space not time that hides consequences from us" (quoted Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989)). The most insightful analyses of the disciplinary power of spaces as they reach into the lives and bodies of individuals as a means of coercing toward a norm are found in Foucault. See for example, "The Eye of Power," Preface to J. Bentham, *La Panoptique* (Paris: Belfond, 1977); and *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Random House, 1979).
36. State Board of Health, *Fifth Annual Report*, 12-13.
37. Benjamin Lee, Appendix E: The Operation of the Board in Consequence of the Floods of May 31, 1889, in *The Fifth Annual Report of the Board of Health* (Harrisburg: Meyer's Printing House, 1891), p. 88.
38. See for example, Frank Connelly and George C. Jenks, *Official History of Johnstown Flood* (Pitts-

- burgh: Journalist Publishing Co, 1889); Herman Dieck, *The Johnstown Flood* (Philadelphia: Publisher Unknown, 1889); George T. Ferris, *The Complete History of the Johnstown and Conemaugh Valley Flood* (New York: H.S. Goodspeed & Co, 1889); C.N. Field, *After the Flood* (Philadelphia: Publisher Unknown, 1889); Richard K. Fox, *The Johnstown Flood: Illustrated* (New York: Richard K. Fox, 1889); Willis F. Johnson, *History of the Johnstown Flood* (Philadelphia: Edgewood Publishing Co., 1889); J. J. McLaurin, *The Story of Johnstown* (Harrisburg: James M. Place, 1890); and James H. Walker, *The Johnstown Horror* (Chicago: L.P. Miller & Co., 1889).
39. Fox, *The Johnstown Flood*, 14.
40. *Report of the Secretary of the Flood Relief Committee* (Harrisburg: Meryer's Printing House, 1890), 8 (hereafter, RSFRC).
41. The political economy--the debts given and incurred--through gift-giving is probably best developed in Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1967); for an adaptation of Mauss' ideas to industrial and contemporary societies in the "Third World", see Gareth Stedman Jones, *Outcast London* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971); James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
42. Union Benevolent Society, *First Annual Report* (Johnstown: Geo. T. Swank, 1890), 13 (hereafter UBA).
43. On the creation of the pauper system in Pennsylvania in the last quarter of the nineteenth-century see Pennsylvania Board of Charities, *Fourteenth Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of Public Charities of the State of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg: Lane S. Hart, 1884); and Harold Boies, *Prisoners and Paupers* (New York: G. Putnam's Sons, 1893).
44. UBA, 12-13.
45. How "really necessitous" is defined is never made clear, but the constant denials of indemnity seem to imply that, for example, a man who has "merely" lost his wife, but who can still work, is not a member of this class. RSFRC, 38.
46. RCRCP, 15.
47. UBA, 3.
48. J. Walker, *The Johnstown Horror*. As McCullough shows there is little of historical accuracy in this volume--but that, of course, is not the point.
49. For a more complete history of the strike, see Donald S. McPherson, "The 'Little Steel' Strike of 1937 in Johnstown, Pennsylvania," *Pennsylvania History*, 39 (1972), 219-238.
50. United States Senate, 77th Congress, 1st Session, Report 151, *Report of the Committee on Education and Labor, Pursuant to S. Res. 266, Part IV, The "Little Steel" Strike and the Citizens' Committees* (hereafter LaFollette Committee Report), 254.
51. P. Toner, *The Floods of Johnstown* (Johnstown: WPA, c. 1939), p. 27.
52. *Ibid.*, 25.
53. *Ibid.*
54. Morawska, *For Bread with Butter*; acknowledges the controlling aspects of company housing provision and then shows how immigrant workers were often able to nonetheless use company housing as a means to transcend the marginal economic status to which their ethnicity often assigned them. For these workers, company housing was always a contrary thing: both controlling and liberating.
55. B. Williams and M. Yates, "Labor in Johnstown," in Berger (ed.), *Johnstown*, 595.
56. Burkert, "Iron and Steel Making," 286; Morawska, *For Bread with Butter*, 87-89.
57. "Helping the Workingmen to Help Themselves," *Iron Age*, June 6 1912, 1213-1219.
58. On the use of housing as part of a program of social control in company towns, see Stanley Bruder, *Pullman: An Experiment in Industrial Order and Community Planning, 1880-1930* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); John S. Gar-

- ner, *The Model Company Town: Urban Design Through Private Enterprise in Nineteenth-Century New England* (Amherst: Amherst University Press); Don Mitchell, "Public Housing in Single-Industry Towns: Changing Landscapes of Paternalism," in James Duncan and David Ley, eds., *Representing Cultural Geography* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, forthcoming); Ann E. Mosher, *Vandergrift: The Creation of a Model Industrial Town* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming).
59. "Helping Workingmen," 1215.
60. Midvale Steel and Ordinance owned the Cambria plant in 1919; when Bethlehem acquired Midvale in 1923, it reworked Midvale's company union to conform with the models developed at Bethlehem, PA and Sparrow's Point, MD.
61. *La Follette Committee Report*, 58-64.
62. *La Follette Committee Report*, 255.
63. *La Follette Committee Report*, 273.
64. United States Senate, Hearing Pursuant to S. Res. 266, *A Resolution to Investigate Violations of the Right of Free Speech and Assembly . . .* (hereafter *La Follette Committee Hearings*), pt. 19, exhibit 3929, 8610-8611.
65. *La Follette Committee Report*, 261.
66. *La Follette Committee Report*, 262.
67. *La Follette Committee Hearings*, pt. 16, exhibit 3787-G, 7330.
68. *La Follette Committee Hearings*, Exhibit 3787-G, 7329.
69. *La Follette Committee Report*, 266-267.
70. *La Follette Committee Report*, 276.
71. *La Follette Committee Hearings*, pt. 37, exhibit 5686, 14796.
72. *La Follette Committee Report*, 284, 279.
73. *La Follette Committee Hearing*, pt. 19, exhibit 4021, 8702.
74. *La Follette Committee Report*, 289.
75. Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting of the Associated Farmers of California, Inc. July 31, 1937, San Francisco. In *La Follette Committee Hearing*, Part 67, Exhibit 11322-B, pp. 24562-24563.
76. Robert Hewison, *The Heritage Industry* (London, 1987), p. 135.
77. Cosgrove, *Social formation*.
78. Stephen Daniels, "Marxism, Landscape and the Duplicity of Culture," in Richard Peet and Nigel Thrift, eds., *New Models in Geography, II* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 196-220, quote from 196.
79. Michael Frisch, "The Presentation of Urban History in Big City Museums," in Leon and Rosenzweig, eds., *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment*, 38-63 (quotes from 53, 44).
80. Frisch, "Urban History," 55.