

Flowers for Homestead: A Case Study in Archives and Collective Memory

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Abstract

How is a historical event remembered, and how can that memory influence and enrich the archival record? This paper addresses that question by analyzing the memory trajectory of one well-remembered event in American history, the Homestead Strike of 1892. Tracking the traces of the strike, from tragic event to collective memory, it examines how the collective memory of an event enhances our ability to document and understand it in its entirety, demonstrating that while records may influence the memory of events, memory may also influence the production of records.

Homestead Strike

Now the troubles down at Homestead
were brought about this way
When a grasping corporation
had the audacity to say:
“You must all renounce your union
and forswear your liberty,
And we’ll give you a chance to live
and die in slavery.”¹

Prologue: A Strike and Its Memory

1. On 1 July 1892, steel magnate Andrew Carnegie and his plant manager, Henry Clay Frick, locked steelworkers out of the mills at the Homestead Works

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¹ From the website *A Traditional Music Library*, “Folk and Traditional Song Lyrics,” recorded by Stekert, *Songs of a New York Lumberjack* RG, at http://www.traditionalmusic.co.uk/folk-song-lyrics/Homestead_Strike.htm, accessed 12 August 2006.

in Homestead, Pennsylvania, in an effort to destroy the union, the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers (AAISW). The confrontation quickly became a tragedy on 6 July, when a battle between the workers and the three hundred Pinkerton detectives sent by Frick to break the strike resulted in the deaths of both workers and Pinkertons. This encounter ignited a further series of dramatic and violent events including the attempted assassination of Frick and the calling in of the state militia. Strikebreakers, protected by the militia, eventually restarted the mills four months after their closing. The strike was a significant blow to the nascent steel union movement.² Historian Paul Krause writes that even before it ended, the Homestead Strike had “became part of the folklore of Industrial America . . . a quasi-mythical epic that pitted the aspirations of organized labor against the heartless rule of greedy tyrants.”³

2. On 3 October 2000, “Flowers for Homestead,” a Web page consisting of two photographs and accompanying text, was added to an alternative history website, *Practical History*.⁴ The following statement precedes the first photograph, which is of the Dulwich Picture Gallery in London:⁵

As a small gesture in the field of historical memory and forgetting, flowers and a poster with the following text were placed on 21 July 2000 at the entrance to Dulwich Picture Gallery in South London, where a talk on the art collection of Henry Clay Frick had been scheduled . . . our aim was not simply to correct the historical record about Frick, but to pose some broader questions about *who gets remembered with monuments and who gets erased from history*⁶ (author’s emphasis).

The text below the photograph reads in part:

How easy it is to buy a place in posterity, so long as you can pay the asking price. The stories of the great cultural benefactors—the Fricks, Carnegies and Tates—rarely ask about the origins of their wealth. . . . But our memories are not for sale. For us Frick will always be remembered for his role in the Homestead strike in 1892 when he employed armed company goons to shoot workers at the Carnegie Steel Company.

² According to Homestead historian Paul Krause, after the Homestead Strike, “unionism in the national steel industry came to a virtual halt for four decades,” *The Battle for Homestead, 1888–1892, Politics, Culture and Steel* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992), 4. Although the AAISW was severely weakened, it survived and continued to organize strikes. The AAISW was dissolved in 1942 upon the forming of the United Steel Workers by a convention of representatives from the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers and the Steel Workers Organizing Committee, after almost six years of divisive struggles to create a new union of steelworkers. See *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Steelworkers#Origins_and_History, accessed 16 November 2008.

³ Krause, *Battle for Homestead*, 4.

⁴ See http://www.geocities.com/pract_history/flowers.html, accessed 16 November 2008.

⁵ The Dulwich Picture Gallery, built by Sir John Soane, is an art gallery in Dulwich, London. Opened in 1817, it is considered the first public art gallery in England. It houses a permanent collection of old European masters and also hosts contemporary exhibitions. See <http://www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/#non>, accessed 3 December 2008.

⁶ “Flowers for Homestead at Dulwich Picture Gallery,” http://www.geocities.com/pract_history/flowers.html, accessed 24 June 2006.



On 21 April 2000, flowers and a poster were placed at the entrance of Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, offering an alternative context for a lecture on Henry Clay Frick's art collection. On 3 October 2000, this image was placed on the website, Practical History, available at http://www.geocities.com/pract_history/flowers.html, accessed 24 June 2006.

The second photograph is of the Homestead Memorial erected in Homestead, Pennsylvania, in 1941.

Introduction

The Homestead Strike of 1892 was a defining moment for labor/management relations in the United States, and the media immediately recognized it as a watershed in the struggles for unionism and workers' rights. The memory of

the strike was shaped even as the story unfolded. Today, over a century later, modern manifestations of Homestead are part of the rhetoric of the labor movement, the Pittsburgh region, and beyond, appearing on websites, in newspaper articles, in songs and poetry. To refer to the Homestead Strike is to recall not only the event itself, but, more importantly, the ideologies that the event came to represent. As “Flowers for Homestead” illustrates, the collective memory of Homestead has become historic shorthand for registering particular attitudes about labor, capitalism, wealth, and morality.

“Who gets remembered with monuments and who gets erased from history,” is not an easy question to answer but may be a fundamental one for archivists who are well aware that the materials they appraise, preserve, and manage are critical ingredients in the memory-making process. Archivists⁷ recognize that as custodians of many of the traditional “triggers”⁸ of memory, they are uniquely positioned to explore memory’s theoretical and practical dimensions. Even though, as archivist Mark Greene and others note, memory can be “messy” and elusive,⁹ by analyzing and documenting the interaction between memory and archives, archivists can make collective memory a tangible, transparent, and valuable component of their work, adding value to archival products.

Collective Memory and History

Collective memory, identified as a legitimate aspect of memory studies by Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s, is a social phenomenon that refers specifically to a group’s recollection of the past in the present. The collective memory of a group of people whether a family, a community, or a nation at a particular moment in time is generally manifested through such forms of commemoration as monuments, parades, websites, books, exhibits, storytelling, or traditional gatherings like Thanksgiving. The form of the commemoration is the way in which the group chooses to remember and represent its past.¹⁰ The commem-

⁷ For an excellent examination of the relationships between archives and memory and archival writings in this area, see Michael Piggott, “Archives and Memory,” in *Archives: Recordkeeping in Society*, ed. Sue McKemmish, Michael Piggott, Barbara Reed, and Frank Upward, Topics in Australasian Library Studies No. 24 (Wagga Wagga, New South Wales: Centre for Information Studies, 2004), 299–328.

⁸ The term *triggers* in relationship to memory comes from a MAC session, “Triggers of Social Memory,” organized by Mark Greene, in which a version of this paper was first presented in fall 2004.

⁹ Some of the archivists and articles examining collective memory as well as social memory include Francis Blouin, “Archivists, Mediation, and Constructs of Social Memory,” *Archival Issues* 24, no. 2 (1999): 101–12; Mark Greene, “The Messy Business of Remembering: History, Memory, and Archives,” *Archival Issues* 28, no. 2 (2003/2004): 95–103; Richard J. Cox, “Public Memory Meets Archival Memory: The Interpretation of Williamsburg’s Secretary’s Office,” *American Archivist* 68 (Fall/Winter 2005): 279–96; Hugh Taylor, “The *Collective Memory*: Archives and Libraries as Heritage,” *Archivaria* 15 (Winter 82–83): 118–30; Brian Brothman, “The Past that Archives Keep: Memory, History, and the Preservation of Archival Records,” *Archivaria* 51 (Spring 2001): 48–80; Verne Harris, “Claiming Less, Delivering More: A Critique of Positivist Formulations on Archives in South Africa,” *Archivaria* 44 (Fall 1997): 132–41.

¹⁰ “Choosing” to remember not only implies selective remembering but also implies forgetting.

oration itself “enacts and gives substance to the group’s identity, its present conditions and its vision of the future.”¹¹ Although commemorations of a particular person, place, or event may change in style, focus, and perspective depending on the interpretations of succeeding generations—for example, the evolving collective memories surrounding the life of Abraham Lincoln or the Battle of the Alamo¹²—the core reasons why an event initially enters the collective memory generally remain constant.¹³

Prior to Halbwachs, memory was considered primarily within the purview of medicine and psychology, and his writings defined memory as an academic area for study. He characterized remembering as an “imaginative reconstruction in which we integrate specific images formulated in the present into particular contexts identified with the past,”¹⁴ and he concluded that “no memory is possible outside frameworks used by people living in society to determine and retrieve their recollections.” At the same time, “while the collective memory endures and draws strength from its base in a coherent body of people, it is individuals as group members who remember.”¹⁵

A central issue in the evolution of the discipline of memory has been the relationship between memory and history. Halbwachs made an important and influential distinction between collective memory and written history, observing that

Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time. The totality of past events can be put together in a single record only by separating them from the memory of groups who preserved them and by severing the bonds that held them close to the psychological life of the social milieus where they occurred.¹⁶

For Halbwachs, the secondary accounts of written history are, to some extent, the destruction of memory. Although he views history and memory as two separate entities, Halbwachs also finds room for their co-existence as he explains:

History is neither the whole nor even all that remains of the past. In addition to written history, there is a living history that perpetuates and renews itself through time and permits the recovery of many old currents that have

¹¹ Barbara A. Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2003), 7.

¹² Each of these has had a complex collective memory. See respectively Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) and Holly Beachley Brear, “We Run the Alamo and You Don’t,” in *Where These Memories Grow: History, Memory, and Southern Identity*, ed. W. Fitzhugh Brundage (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

¹³ Edmund Casey, “Public Memory in Place and Time,” in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall R. Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 19.

¹⁴ In Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover, N.H.: University of Vermont, 1993), 78.

¹⁵ Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 43.

¹⁶ Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, 22.

seemingly disappeared. If this were not so, what right would we have to speak of a “collective memory”?¹⁷

Halbwachs’s separation between history and memory articulated a scholarly dilemma that persisted through the mid-twentieth century. Historians insisted on treating history and memory as two entirely separate areas resisting the reconciliation of the traditional evidence of history’s primary sources with the ambiguity of memory. The uneasiness felt on both sides of the debate crystallized in a 1984 seminal essay by French scholar Pierre Nora. In “Between Memory and History,” Nora extols collective remembering as the primary sustaining source of national identity. He laments that the rise of history heralds the disappearance of this central national mythology. To Nora, written history signals both the death of memory and of the unifying forces of nationhood that it signified.¹⁸

Increasingly, however, for social scientists as well as historians, the cataclysmic events and social movements of the twentieth century with their competing narratives and diversity of voices, defied traditional historical documentation and analysis. Memory offered a way to comprehend, study, and explain these traumatic events with their multiple stories in meaningful and connected ways. Through the latter part of the twentieth century, collective memory gradually became established as a legitimate area for scholarly study as well as a methodological strategy for interpreting and understanding both contemporary events and historical ones. Historian Jay Winter points out that many scholars consider the early to mid-twentieth century as a “memory boom,” when memory not only achieved recognition as an academic pursuit in its own right, but was also acknowledged as a necessary partner with history to describe and understand traumatic mid-century historical events. According to Winter, “the need to attend to, to acknowledge the victims of war and the ravages it causes is at the heart of the memory boom in contemporary life.”¹⁹

Winter divides the century into two memory generations. The first, spanning the 1890s to the 1920s and including the First World War, emphasized memory as the key to the formation of identities, specifically supporting and reifying national identity. The second “memory boom,” which emerged in the

¹⁷ Quoted in Susan A. Crane, “Writing the Individual Back into Collective Memory,” *American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1377. It should be noted that this relationship between history and memory, as well as the concept of collective memory itself, speaks directly to postmodernist theory. The ambiguous and relational question of “whose memory?” reinforces the postmodernist concept that everyone’s truth is equally important. For more discussion of the postmodern view of memory, see Kerwin Lee Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” *Representations* 69 (Winter 2000): 127–50; or Terry Cook and Joan Schwartz, “Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory,” *Archival Science* 2, no. 1 (2002): 1–19.

¹⁸ Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 8.

¹⁹ Jay Winter, *Remembering War, The Great War Between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 1.

1960s and 1970s, focused on the Second World War and the Holocaust, shifting the emphasis to social and cultural identities. Winter and others suggest that “the term ‘memory’ has become a metaphor for ways of casting about in the ruins of earlier identities and finding elements of what has been called a ‘usable past’.” He concludes that

A century ago, the concept of memory was harnessed by a host of men and women as a means to constitute or fortify identities, in particular national identities in an imperial age. That age has gone, and so has its unities and its certainties. In its place memory still stands, but as a source of fractured national, ideological forms, forms which are resistant to linear reconstruction; the onward march of progress is a thing of the past.²⁰

Memory studies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, therefore, have been characterized by an evolving rapprochement between two concepts, a “braiding” to use Jay Winter’s term, of history and memory where the interactions of both are necessary to understand the social constructions of our past and our present.²¹

Archives and Memory

Why should archivists study collective memory, a social phenomenon that seems hard to pin down, complicated to describe, and difficult to preserve? Collective memory offers an alternate path to the past, one that may complement and enhance traditional archival records. Historian David Blight suggests that “We should write the history of memory,” noting that “What historians studying memory have come to understand is simply that the process by which societies or nations remember collectively itself has a history.”²² Blight does not speak for historians alone. Archivists, even more than historians, should study memory not only to consider their own role in the memory process but to recognize the ongoing significance of the materials in their custody. Charting the history of a particular collective memory as an extension of the event itself may be one way to augment, enhance, and contextualize the records, a way to fill in some of the undocumented and underdocumented spaces.

²⁰ Winter, *Remembering War*, 18–19.

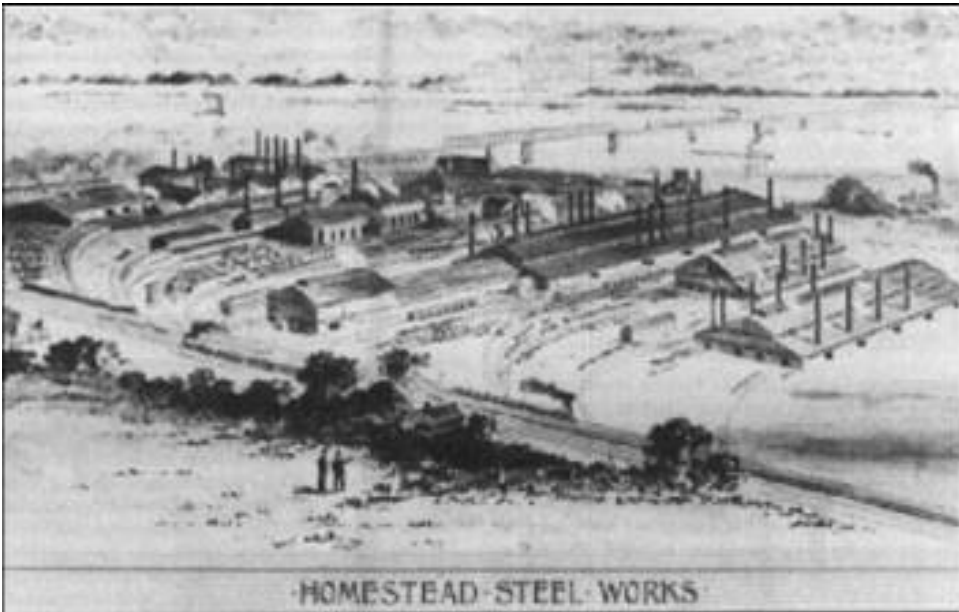
²¹ There is a large and growing literature on the relationship between history and memory. Some notable readings include Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelan, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); John Gillis, “Memory and Identity” in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 6–20; Kerwin Lee Klein, “On the Emergence of Memory in Historical Discourse,” *Representations* 69 (Winter 2000): 127–150; David Lowenthal, *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); David Blight, *Beyond the Battlefield* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002); Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

²² David W. Blight, “Historians and ‘Memory’,” *Common-Place*, 2, no. 3 (April 2002), available at <http://common-place.dreamhost.com/vol-02/no-03/author/>, accessed 12 October 2008.

Taking note of the “memory boom,” archivist Francis Blouin argues that as historians and other scholars have gradually shifted their emphasis away from dominant historical narratives and increasingly toward areas not previously considered worthy of historical inquiry, such as ethnic populations and gender studies, archives must respond. While the bureaucratic records often found in archives support master narratives, this new type of history, Blouin suggests, is “not so easily studied through existing documentation . . . hence there has been a cultural and academic shift from reliance on the narrow constructs of the past as associated with history to an embrace of broader constructs of pasts based on ideas about social memory.”²³ This, he argues, suggests a shift in the way archivists must think about archives.

For an event, place, or person to be remembered, it must be represented, transmitted, and accessed. But, as historian Alon Confino points out:

Many studies of memory are content to describe the representation of the past without bothering to explore the transmission, diffusion and, ultimately, the meaning of this representation. The study of reception is not an issue that simply adds to our knowledge. Rather, it is a necessary one to avoid an arbitrary choice and interpretation of evidence.²⁴



Homestead Steel Works from an 1890 engraving in a company advertisement in the Randolph Harris collection, reproduced from *“The River Ran Red”: Homestead 1892*, vii.

²³ Blight, “Historians and ‘Memory’.”

²⁴ Alon Confino, “Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,” *AHR Forum* (December 1997): 1395.

In the understanding and implementation of this process of transmittal and reception, archivists, the documenters of society have significant roles to play.

The Events at Homestead²⁵

“To secure remembrance, one must first be able to tell what happened,” writes sociologist Iwona Irwin-Zarecka.²⁶ What happened at Homestead and why is it remembered?

The events of 1892 had long-term implications for the labor movement in the United States. At the center of the drama was the Homestead Works, a steel mill on the banks of the Monongahela River. Homestead, the factory town that had been built up around it, lies on the outskirts of Pittsburgh nestled within the woods and hills of the Mon Valley. Homestead Works was pivotal to Andrew Carnegie’s empire, the Carnegie Steel Company. Carnegie purchased the Homestead plant in 1882 and began applying theories of economy and mechanization to an industry that primarily relied on skilled labor. The skilled steelworkers were unionized by the Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, which had negotiated a contract during an 1889 strike. When the contract ended on 30 June 1892, Carnegie, determined to do away with the union, deliberately provoked a strike by locking the workers out of the plant. Plant manager Henry Frick anticipated the lockout by erecting a twelve-foot-high fence with rifle holes around the Homestead plant. The workers dubbed it “Fort Frick,” and it allowed the Carnegie Company to guard the Homestead works in the event of a strike and to bring in strikebreakers.²⁷ The unskilled workers, although not part of the union, joined with the union workers in the ensuing strike.

Homestead was a town of first- and second-generation European immigrants who brought with them their own ideas of workers rights and the American dream. The heart of the union/management conflict and the motivation for the workers’ resistance lies in their concept of “rights.” A union address in July 1892 stated this concept unequivocally, proclaiming that

Both the public and the employees . . . have equitable rights and interests in said mill which cannot be modified or diverted without due process of law; it is . . . subversive of the fundamental rights of American liberty that a whole commu-

²⁵ This account of the Homestead Strike draws from several sources including Arthur G. Burgoyne, *The Homestead Strike of 1892*, reprint edition (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979); Krause, *The Battle for Homestead*; and William Serrin, *Homestead, The Glory and Tragedy of an American Steel Town* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

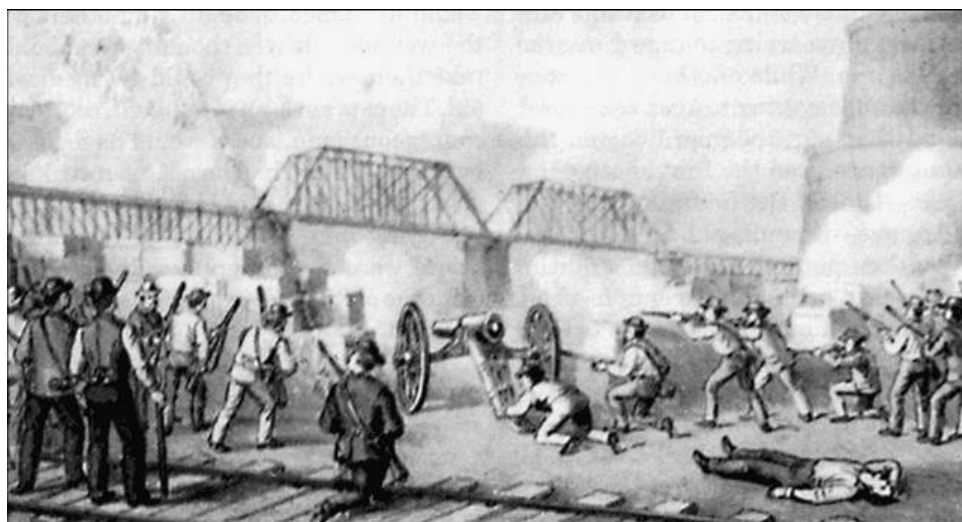
²⁶ Iwona Irwin-Zarecka, *Frames of Remembrance, The Dynamics of Collective Memory* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1994), 26.

²⁷ Serrin, *Homestead*, 67.

nity of workers should be denied employment or suffer any other social detriment on account of membership in a church, a political party or a trade union.²⁸

On 6 July 1892, a steamer towed two barges up the Monongehela River to Homestead carrying three hundred Pinkerton detectives brought in to break the strike. Having stationed lookouts, the workers and townspeople were prepared. They met the Pinkertons at the banks of the river, and when they attempted to land, opened fire. The Pinkertons returned fire with casualties on both sides. The battle continued all day with the Pinkertons huddled on the barges, which the crowd tried, in numerous ways, to sink. Finally, the Pinkertons surrendered and were escorted by the Union Advisory Committee off the barges. The angry crowd burned the barges and attacked the Pinkertons, making them “walk a gauntlet” through the crowd and injuring all of them as they were marched through the town. By the end of the day, seven Pinkertons and nine strikers had been killed, and at least forty townspeople were wounded.²⁹

The Union Advisory Committee continued to occupy the steel mill and to run the town until 10 July when the governor of Pennsylvania ordered the state militia to take control. On 12 July, over eight thousand troops took over Homestead, paving the way for strikebreakers. But Carnegie Steel had difficulty



A vignette from Edwin Row's 1892 broadside, "Great Battles of Homestead." Reproduced from "The River Ran Red": Homestead 1892, 82.

²⁸ Sheets containing partial text of this address were distributed at the Interpretive Pump House conference held at the Carnegie Public Library of Homestead, 6 July 1996. The full text of this address, originally issued by the Advisory Committee, the Knights of Labor, and the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steelworkers, Homestead, Pa., 22–23 July, 1892, can be found in the *National Labor Tribune*, 30 July 1892 and the *Pittsburgh Post*, 23 July 1892.

²⁹ Ronald L. Filippelli, ed., *Labor Conflict in the United States, An Encyclopedia* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1990), 243.

recruiting strikebreakers, and sympathizing union workers at other Carnegie plants joined the strikers, who were determined to hold out. Meanwhile, incited by accounts of the strike in the national press, anarchist (and companion of Emma Goldman) Alexander Berkman went to Frick's Pittsburgh office and shot and stabbed him. Although the assassination attempt failed and Frick was only wounded, this incident combined with the mistreatment of the Pinkertons began turning national sympathies against the workers.

The Carnegie Company instituted legal proceedings against those workers who had shot the Pinkerton guards. Even though the workers were all acquitted, they were re-arrested and charged with treason against the state. Once again they were acquitted, but, with their resources running low, the strikers' morale was weakening. The company evicted workers from their homes and "as winter approached and the strike wore on, the townspeople began to feel its effects."³⁰ Finally, on 18 November, the union released the unskilled workers from any obligation to continue the strike, and, on 20 November, union members voted to end the strike. Only a few were hired back at greatly reduced wages. The union disappeared from Homestead along with the hopes of the labor movement.

From its inception, the Homestead Strike was recognized as a significant event that dramatized "the broadest issues and problems of nineteenth-century industrial America . . . the right of individuals to accumulate unlimited wealth and privilege versus the right of individuals to enjoy security in their jobs and dignity in their homes."³¹ In this sense, it meets the memory conditions defined by philosopher Edmund Casey who suggests that for an event to become part of public memory, it must be "understood right away, without hesitation or interpretation, in its basic signification."³² Although the Homestead Works, purchased from Carnegie by United States Steel in 1901, went on to become one of the major steel plants in the nation, the steelworkers union movement, severely weakened, did not fully recover from this blow until 1942 with the emergence of the United Steelworkers of America. The Homestead Works, together with the majority of other steel mills in the Mon Valley, closed in 1986.

Homestead, the Memory

Formation of Homestead's collective memory began during the event itself as numerous local and national newspapers chronicled every phase of the strike and its aftermath. Pittsburgh journalist Arthur Burgoyne published a book-length eyewitness account of the strike within the year. Citing as his sources "personal observations in the course of visits to the 'seat of war' while hostilities were

³⁰ Filippelli, *Labor Conflict*, 245.

³¹ Krause, *Battle for Homestead*, 5–6.

³² Casey, "Public Memory," 19.

in progress, and subsequent conversations with the leaders,”³³ Burgoyne’s descriptions of the strike, the trial, and congressional hearings, as well as his biographical information about key players powerfully shaped the collective memory. Strongly sympathetic with the workers, Burgoyne presented a stark, detailed account of the actual event and its aftermath in the courtroom and the U.S. Congress that openly staked a strong claim for the future memory. Considered by historians to be “the best contemporary source of detail about the strike,”³⁴ Burgoyne’s anecdotal narrative and clear bias supported and bolstered the memory of the event.

Suppression of the labor movement after the Homestead Strike could not erase the memory. Sympathetic folksongs telling the story of Homestead began appearing in the 1920s. One sung by Pete Seeger, “A Fight for Home and Honor,” was actually written during the first week of the strike.³⁵ Efforts to erase memories of the strike are evident in Homestead town directories created in the early 1900s. Historian David Demarest explains:

The city directories tell the story. Before the strike glowing accounts were given of both the mill and the union: it is as though the author of the directory was asserting a partnership among labor, management and the town. When the town history was finally resumed in 1927, the company was described; there was no mention of unionism, not even a reference to the 1892 strike.³⁶

The Homestead Strike was not publicly commemorated until the 1930s when labor began to organize steelworkers aggressively once again, using the memory of Homestead as a touchstone. Since that time, the event has been remembered and carried forward in film, narrative, poetry, exhibits, conferences, and websites. Numerous folksongs memorialize the strike and the battle. Both labor sympathizers and state officials erected monuments that recall the fallen workers, and Homestead-related areas have been preserved as historical sites. Today, Homestead Works is part of the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area. Created by Congress in 1996, the Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area is committed to “preserving, interpreting, and managing the historic, cultural, and natural resources related to Big Steel and its related industries.”³⁷ Commemorative landmarks in the history of the Homestead collective memory include

³³ Burgoyne, *The Homestead Strike of 1892*, iv.

³⁴ David P. Demarest, Jr., Afterword, in Burgoyne, *The Homestead Strike*, 302.

³⁵ “A Fight for Home and Honor” was written by John. W. Kelly. See David P. Demarest, Fannia Weingartner, and David Montgomery, *The River Ran Red, Homestead, 1892*, Pittsburgh Series in Social and Labor History (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992): 222.

³⁶ Demarest, Afterword, 312.

³⁷ See <http://www.riversofsteel.com/>, accessed 26 November 2008.

- 1933: Muralist Diego Rivera includes images recalling the Homestead Strike in his series of twenty-one fresco panels, "Portrait of America," at the New Workers School in New York City.³⁸
- 1936: The Steel Workers Organizing Committee (SWOC) launches its campaign to organize the steel industry at the site of the Homestead Strike to remember the trade unionists who died there in 1892.
- 1941: The Steel Workers Organizing Committee unveils a monument, located at the entrance to the town of Homestead, to commemorate those steelworkers who lost their lives on 6 July 1892.³⁹
- 1977: Pete Seeger sings "A Fight for Home and Honor" at the New Leona Theater in Homestead.
- 1992: For the centennial of the Homestead Strike, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission erects a historical marker to commemorate the Battle of Homestead.
- 1993: Pennsylvania Historical Markers Commission honors five of the seven workers who died at the Homestead Strike by marking their graves with historical markers. The graves are in two adjacent cemeteries, St. Mary's and Homestead.
- 1996: A group of historians, artists, and concerned local residents establish the Battle of Homestead Foundation to promote the Pump House in Munhall as an important national labor history site. The foundation holds annual conferences on Homestead.⁴⁰
- 1999: The Battle of Homestead Foundation organizes the dedication of the Pump House, the last remaining structure at the site of the struggle. State and local officials attend the ceremony.
- 1999: The Secretary of the Interior recognizes the Bost Building as a National Historic Landmark for its role as the steelworkers' headquarters during the Homestead Strike. The designation identifies nationally significant historic places that possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States. Today, fewer than 2,500 historic places bear this national distinction.⁴¹
- 2000–present: Websites on the Homestead Strike proliferate, many using photographs and records. While many of these are history and labor sites, some are more personal reflections on the event, such as "Flowers for Homestead" and "Daphne's Dispatch," an online diary.⁴²

³⁸ The panel, "Labor Fights During the '90's" showed the two great strikes of the era, Homestead and the Pullman Strike of 1894. This panel along with others in the series was destroyed in a fire in 1969. Demarest, Afterword, 218.

³⁹ This committee joined with other union groups to become the United Steelworkers of America in 1942.

⁴⁰ See <http://home.earthlink.net/~homestead1892/BoH/PHevents.html>, accessed 4 January 2008.

⁴¹ See <http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl/>, accessed 30 March 2009.

⁴² See <http://www.ustrek.org/odyssey/semester1/011301/011301daphnehome.html>, accessed 4 January 2008.

At least ten histories of the Homestead Strike have been published, most recently in 2006,⁴³ and numerous books, articles, encyclopedias, and websites concerned with the steel industry, labor unions, Andrew Carnegie, Henry Frick, and Emma Goldman analyze the strike. In 1992 Steffi Domike, Nicole Fauteux, and WQED-TV Productions created a documentary film, *The River Ran Red*. David P. Demarest, Fannia Weingartner, and David Montgomery concurrently published a book with the same title. Both film and book rely on the reproduction of primary documents to carry the story.⁴⁴

Conflicting Memories

No collective memory is complete without a countermemory.⁴⁵ Even though the Homestead Strike collective memory has been remarkably consistent for over one hundred years, some efforts have been made to soften if not reverse it. But, while the Pittsburgh visitor finds no mention of the Homestead Strike at Clayton, the historic, stately Frick mansion, attempts to shift or white-wash the collective memory of Homestead are generally met with resistance, if not derision. Examples of efforts to reshape the public memory of the Homestead Strike include the following:

- In 1897, Andrew Carnegie builds a Carnegie Library in Homestead, a palatial structure with a gym and meeting rooms that looms over the town to this day. Its dedication in 1898 inspires one newspaper to write that “ten thousand ‘Carnegie Public Libraries’ would not compensate the country for the direct and indirect evils resulting from the Homestead Lockout.”⁴⁶
- In the 1970s, a former mayor erects a memorial to U.S. Steel (USX), which stands at the entrance to Homestead across the street from the 1941 workers monument. According to one local citizen, he wanted to identify Homestead as a steel town.⁴⁷ The small model railroad track with a loading car and smokestacks, clearly meant to present the benign face of the steel industry, sits unmarked and unidentified across from the dramatic workers memorial still marked with flowers.

⁴³ Nancy Whitelaw, *The Homestead Steel Strike of 1892* (Greensboro, N.C.: Morgan Reynolds Publishing, 2006).

⁴⁴ Demarest et al., *The River Ran Red*; Steffi Domike and Nicole Fauteux, *The River Ran Red*, videoproduction, 1993.

⁴⁵ The symbiotic relationship between memory and countermemory is well established. See for example, James E. Young, “Memory and Counter-Memory; The End of the Monument in Germany,” *Harvard Design* no. 9 (Fall 1999): 1–10; “The Future of the Past, Countermemory and Postmemory in Contemporary American Post-Holocaust Narratives,” *History and Memory* 12 (2001): 56–91.

⁴⁶ Krause, *Battle for Homestead*, 351.

⁴⁷ Bill Gaughan, former manager of Homestead Works and collector of documents and photographs of Homestead steel history, exhibit at the Interpretive Pump House Conference, 6 July 1996.

- In 1996, *Points in Time*, a permanent exhibit at the newly opened Senator John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Center (the new home of the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania) includes a small section on the Homestead Strike as part of the history of Pittsburgh. The blandness of the exhibit prompts a local newspaper review entitled “Happy History,” to ask “Did anything bad ever happen in Pittsburgh?”⁴⁸

Homestead, the Records

The Homestead Strike is well documented. As the strike unfolded, it was the focus of nationwide interest covered by both local and national newspapers. Journalists camped out at Homestead, delivering artistic renderings and eyewitness accounts to eager readers around the country. The records of the Homestead Strike created before, during, and immediately after the strike run the gamut from coroners’ reports to the archives of U.S. Steel, from personal papers of Carnegie and Frick to militia orders. Union minutes record decisions of the strikers, court records report the proceedings of the workers trials, and congressional hearings held in 1893 recount the political aftermath.

No central Homestead archives exists, although many of the records have found their way into repositories. The papers of individuals, such as Andrew Carnegie, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, and Henry Clay Frick, reside in a variety of public and private repositories, as do the records of corporations such as U.S. Steel and the Pinkerton Company.⁴⁹ If any repository could be called a center for issues relating to the Homestead Strike it is the Archives of Industrial Society at the University of Pittsburgh, which, since its establishment in 1963, has focused on documenting social and political aspects of labor history particularly in Pittsburgh and western Pennsylvania.⁵⁰ Its collection of specific Homestead records is sparse but includes microfilms of censuses and other relevant public records of the period, some records of Carnegie Steel, as well as records specifically relating to the Homestead Strike. Coroners’ reports and case files are digitized on the archives’ website.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Tim Haggerty, “Happy History,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 25 May 1996, A-13.

⁴⁹ Papers of Andrew Carnegie are at the Library of Congress, New York Public Library, and the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh. Emma Goldman Papers are at the University of California, Berkeley; some of the Alexander Berkman Papers are at the Tamiment Library/Robert F. Wagner Labor Archives at New York University. According to Paul Krause, some of the records of U.S. Steel are at the Annandale Archives in Annandale, Pennsylvania (Krause, *Battle for Homestead*, 491), others are at the Calumet Regional Archives at Indiana University; the Pinkerton collection is at the Library of Congress.

⁵⁰ See <http://www.library.pitt.edu/libraries/archives/ais.html>, accessed 4 January 2008.

⁵¹ The Labor Legacy website at the University of Pittsburgh Archives includes coroners’ case files, union minutes, and eyewitness testimonies. See http://www.library.pitt.edu/labor_legacy/homestead.htm, accessed 4 January 2008.

Not only are the records of the Homestead Strike scattered in many different repositories, some inaccessible to the public, but there are few from the viewpoint of the strikers and townspeople themselves. Historian Paul Krause, author of the definitive history of the Homestead Strike written for the centennial in 1992, recognized these impediments to telling the full story when he wrote:

Materials about the first Homestead steelworkers that would yield quantifiably satisfying information are unfortunately not available for two reasons. First . . . virtually no steelworkers who settled in Homestead appear in the 1880 population schedules of the federal census. Second, none of the extensive employee records maintained by Andrew Carnegie has survived: the repositories of Carnegie's archives maintained by the USX Corporation, the Library of Congress, and the New York Public Library contain materials with but scant mention of workers' names and jobs. . . . Henry Clay Frick, himself a careful record keeper, may have maintained employee files from pre-1892 Homestead, but the Helen Clay Frick Foundation which oversees his papers, has repeatedly denied access to them.⁵²

Attempting to remedy this gap by giving a personal face to the Homestead Strike may have been the motivation for Krause's assembling of an informal "archives" in the appendices of his book. In addition to re-creating an informal census of 1892 Homestead, Krause includes earlier censuses, population lists, lists of Homestead strikers together with biographical information about some of them and townspeople, and lists of militia members and city officials.

The uncovering of related records as well as the creation of new records has continued long past the event itself. The Homestead Strike and events related to the strike not only contextualize many collections of records and personal papers, but the subsequent Homestead events related to the collective memory of the strike created records of their own. The exhibits, historic restorations, centennial celebration, Pump House restoration, and other commemorations of the Homestead Strike all produced records relating to those activities. Not only have the original records of the strike found their way into books and films, but through the fluid environment of the Web, many of the textual records and photographs of Homestead are reinterpreted in new and creative combinations, as the "Flowers for Homestead" site illustrates.

Documenting the Memory Continuum

Archivists might agree with their colleague Angelika Menne-Haritz that "archives do not store memory. But they offer the possibility to create

⁵² Krause, *Battle for Homestead*, 373. As an additional complication, the 1890 census records were burned in a fire. See Robert L. Dorman, "The Creation and Destruction of the 1890 Federal Census," *American Archivist* 71 (Fall/Winter 2008): 350–83.

memory.”⁵³ Records facilitate collective memory while they also hold it historically accountable. In turn, collective memory can elucidate and add value to records. The history of the Homestead Strike as found in its records and the story of Homestead’s collective memory as seen through its commemorations combine to create a continuum that enriches both memory and records. But how do archivists meet Blouin’s challenge that a shift in the ways that historians study history mandates “a shift in the way archivists must think about archives”? How do archivists “braid” history and memory into usable records?

The cojoining of history and memory, together with thinking about the “history of memory” as a discipline for study in itself, offers some fruitful clues about how documenting memory might be approached. Certainly the advantages of documenting memory are manifold. As archival educator Richard Cox points out, “Whatever comes into the archives and however it gets there might be beside the point because archives are a symbolic way station to a collective memory.”⁵⁴ Viewed from the standpoint of memory, archival processes begin to take on a different, more fluid, character. As Cox continues, “. . . the notion of a public memory also suggests the ability of society to be constantly forming and reforming the manner in which we view a record or artifact.”⁵⁵ If we agree with this symbiosis between records and memory, how can we craft a relationship between archivists and collective memory in which memory becomes a significant contributor to the documentary record?

Several approaches might be considered, beginning with broadening the context of the records to embrace documentation of the memory as well as of the event itself. As part of broadening the context, both event and its evolving collective memory form a continuum. Along this continuum, the records of the event and the records of its open-ended collective memory are bound together over time by a context that encompasses both. This longitudinal conception of provenance implies an approach to records that acknowledges the value and meaning that memory adds to an event over time. In this construct, the records of the Homestead Strike and the records of subsequent commemorations of that event could be seen as sharing the same context.

There is evidence that, as archivists rethink and re-imagine the possibilities of description and access, a longitudinal approach to context, together with a recognition of an archival continuum of event and memory, might fit in well with current descriptive initiatives. Developing standards that address the multiple creators of a collection suggests that both context and creators are being

⁵³ Angelika Menne-Haritz, “Access—The Reformulation of an Archival Paradigm,” *Archival Science* 1 (March 2001): 59.

⁵⁴ Richard Cox, *No Innocent Deposits, Forming Archives by Rethinking Appraisal* (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow, 2003), 234.

⁵⁵ Cox, *No Innocent Deposits*, 241.

broadly reconceived. Larry Weimer, for example, explores the evolving thinking about provenance and points out that “DACS does not assume that the provenance of collections will be associated with only a single creator; indeed, record groups are referenced as merely ‘a convenient administrative grouping,’ emphasizing the possibility of a collection’s plural provenance.”⁵⁶

The Encoded Archival Context (EAC) working group envisions providing a formal method of “encoding descriptions of persons, corporate bodies, and families responsible for the creation of records and other resources, where such descriptions provide context for understanding and interpreting the records and resources”⁵⁷ leading to the “development of archival systems that fully integrate contextual information into discovery and interpretation.”⁵⁸ Documenting an event and its collective memory under one contextual umbrella could point the user to all relevant records no matter their location, uniting records at a conceptual level across time and space. At the same time, these pointers add new and useful dimensions to collections as they track the history of their memory. Recognizing the fluid nature of memory, finding aids would be open ended, designed to accommodate new memories.

Rich, multilayered descriptions of the records of both the event and of the memories could complement this contextual umbrella, making both easily accessible and transparent to users. Linking these diverse records together would expand and enhance the values of the collections. EAC suggests that “the recording of context information in archival information systems directly supports a more complete description and understanding of records as well as the provenance approach to retrieval of these records across time and domains.”⁵⁹ Time, a key element of collective memory, would be accommodated within finding aids.

Utilizing a collecting policy approach, repositories of historical materials that have engendered collective memories could actively acquire the records documenting these memories, linking them through finding aids and creating transparent access through websites. Currently, collections linking event and memory are daily being created on the Web, though not necessarily by archivists. Commemorative sites such as the “September 11 Digital Archive,” and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum actively seek to build collective memory alongside the stark events that they portray.⁶⁰ An archival site such as

⁵⁶ Larry Weimer, “Pathways to Provenance: DACS and Creator Descriptions,” *Journal of Archival Organization* nos. 1/2 (2007): 41.

⁵⁷ “Beta Release of Encoded Archival Context (EAC) for Name Authority Control,” available at <http://xml.coverpages.org/ni2004-08-24-a.html>, accessed 25 November 2008.

⁵⁸ Richard V. Szary, “Encoded Archival Context (EAC) and Archival Description: Rationale and Background,” *Journal of Archival Organization* 3, no. 2 (2005): 226.

⁵⁹ “Toronto Tenets,” available at <http://www.library.yale.edu/eac/torontotenets.htm>, accessed 25 November 2008.

⁶⁰ See <http://911digitalarchive.org/> and <http://www.ushmm.org/>, both accessed 25 November 2008.

the University of Michigan's Polar Bear Expedition Collections offers possibilities of going beyond the actual collections as it opens up spaces for users to add their memories and thereby add to the collective memory of this World War I event.⁶¹

Although archivists might rightly say that the acts of preserving and describing records and making records available to researchers in themselves maintain memory, the material and intellectual variety of records as well as the mutable qualities of memories themselves suggest that the archives/memory relationship holds the promise of greater comprehensiveness and inclusivity. While the process of keeping records influences memory in numerous core ways that include not only their organization and description but their status as evidence, their presence as artifacts, and their contextualizing attributes, collective memory itself, at the same time, can be documented. Records can ground an event in facts in tangible documents, while memory can construct and sustain many different connections and relationships. In this way, archives can provide the continuity of a narrative as it moves from the actual event into the fluid space of its remembrance. Through this continuum of event and memory, the past can be recalled in the ever-changing present. In the end, who gets remembered with monuments and who gets erased from history depends to some substantial degree on archivists and the records they preserve.

Conclusion

For archivists concerned with documenting all aspects of society, understanding and making sense of our past in the present means recognizing and using the tools and strategies that elucidate and advance that understanding, including collective memory. Jay Winter reminds us that "history is not simply memory with footnotes; and memory is not simply history without footnotes. In virtually all acts of remembrance, history and memory are braided together in the public domain, jointly informing our shifting and contested understandings of the past."⁶² Not all historical events become collective memories, and even fewer endure and proliferate as Homestead has done. The Homestead Strike has, through its collective memory, become a legacy whose message of courage, human rights, and perseverance continues to echo today.

⁶¹ See <http://polarbears.si.umich.edu/>. See also Magia Ghetu Krause and Elizabeth Yakel, "Interaction in Virtual Archives: The Polar Bear Expedition Digital Collections Next Generation Finding Aid," *American Archivist* 70 (Fall/Winter 2007): 282–314.

⁶² Winter, *Remembering War*, 6.

Epilogue: Persistent Memory

On 6 July 2006, an op-ed article in the *New York Times*, “Billionaires to the Rescue,” discussed the philanthropy of Warren Buffet and Bill Gates and questioned the wisdom of society relying too heavily on private largess. The author recalls that spectacular but problematic philanthropist Andrew Carnegie and relies on our collective memory of the Homestead Strike when he writes, “for Carnegie, the assumption has often been made that he was trying to earn redemption for the bloodletting of the early 1890’s . . . he had, in fact determined to give away his millions long before the events at Homestead.”⁶³

The memory of the Homestead Strike continues to be a flashpoint into the twenty-first century. Events at Homestead in 1892 provided a social commentary on those times, but, as the *New York Times* article above demonstrates, the way we remember Homestead is a commentary on our own.

⁶³ David Nasaw, “Billionaires to the Rescue,” *New York Times*, 4 July 2006, A-17.