sidering the overall visitor path through the museum. In effect, the museum brings the visitor full circle from the past to the present—from the people themselves to their historic record. Significantly, the museum makes this maneuver even more evident in their special effects-laden show, *Ghosts of the Library*. The holographic theater entertains patrons while introducing them to the working methods of historians and archivists. Time and again, the show emphasizes and reinforces the links between the documents and historical experience, making them as compelling for the audience as the figures and special effects they have seen and experienced in the rest of the museum.

Museums are repositories that aid recollection; they are nodal points between our present reality and the history that drives it. They are, by their function, memorials that commemorate the collective experiences and ideologies of the societies that build them. Simply put, they are sites in which a government or a people tell stories about itself to itself. As the theorist Pierre Nora suggests, these places of memory (*lieux de mémoire*) stand in for the thing or things remembered and rely on polysemy for their ability to signify. If we accept that museums are *lieux de mémoire*, it is clear that to be of value a museum's display strategy must offer hermeneutic structures that are exegetical in nature. Under the facile surface of the ALPLM's flashy special effects, there is a subtle narrative that is open to visitors' interpretation and reinterpretation as well as to the near infinite combinations and recombinations of historical exegesis. This exegetical work is carried out by each of the museum's visitors and patrons. Despite the unease that academics may feel with this approach, the museum fulfills the primary mission of any pedagogical institution—it transmits knowledge, inspires inquiry, and opens the discourse to a multiplicity of voices and opinions.

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**Mill City Museum, 704 South Second St., Minneapolis, MN 55401.**


Walking tours of surrounding area, lectures, and summer concerts.

Internet: brief description and history of museum, school resources, and online store <http://www.millcitymuseum.org> (Sept. 16, 2005).

According to a former worker at the Washburn A Mill, milling was so ubiquitous in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in the early twentieth century that walking around downtown, one would become coated with flour. Minneapolis was once the flour-milling capital of the world, a title that the city held until 1930 when Buffalo, New York, surpassed it in production. Birthplace of General Mills and Pillsbury, the mills of Minneapolis
processed millions of bushels of grain that came into the city from the bonanza farms of the Dakotas, Montana, and Manitoba. During the peak of production, the Washburn A Mill, where the Mill City Museum is located, milled enough grain into flour to make 12 million loaves of bread a day.

A visitor to Minneapolis today would be hard-pressed to find immediate evidence of this past. Although the towering elevators that stored grain prior to milling still dot the urban landscape and the local beer is called Grain Belt, these reminders seem divorced from the service-oriented industries that now make up the local economy. Most of the remaining mill structures along the Mississippi River in the downtown area either have been converted into upscale residential lofts or office space or are being converted. The Mill City Museum should be praised for offering an alternative to the trend whereby the industrial buildings of the past find use only as the gentrified homes and offices of the future. The Mill City Museum has transformed a historical space that is awe-inspiring in its immensity into a museum that preserves a prominent landmark of the city’s past.

St. Anthony Falls are the only naturally occurring waterfalls on the entire length of the Mississippi River and the source of hydropower that led white migrants to settle what would become Minneapolis. Although lumber mills first used the falls, by the 1870s flour milling had become the predominant industry in the area. The Washburn-Crosby Company (which became General Mills in 1928) completed the second Washburn A Mill at the base of the falls in 1880, only two years after a devastating dust explosion killed eighteen workers and destroyed the company’s original structure. The Washburn A Mill closed for business in 1965. Although it was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1983, it was not until 2001 that the Minnesota Historical Society began work on the building. The museum opened its doors in 2003.
The central feature of a visit to the Mill City Museum is its Flour Tower tour, in which visitors ride in a modern elevator and view simulations of the different facets of the milling process. Those with young children or short attention spans will not be disappointed. The Flour Tower includes hi-tech re-creations that bring milling and its dangers to life, such as the automated display in which a belt slips off a flour sifter to the sound of a large bang. During the elevator ride, the visuals are accompanied by the voices of former workers from both the Washburn A Mill and the Pillsbury Mill, which was across the Mississippi River, describing what it was like to work in the mills and operate the pieces of machinery displayed. The Flour Tower tour comes to a conclusion on the eighth floor of the mill, where visitors step out of the elevator and are greeted by a museum interpreter. The eighth floor contains machinery used to clean grain and a row of daunting cyclone vacuums, which were used to suck up the highly flammable grain dust and prevent the explosions that were so frequent in the industry. After hearing a brief talk about this equipment given by the museum interpreter, visitors are invited to linger on the ninth-floor observation deck, which offers breathtaking views of the Mississippi River, St. Anthony Falls, and the surrounding area.

Other highlights of the museum include its collection of material culture artifacts, which encompasses everything from cereal boxes to television advertisements. In 2001 General Mills acquired Pillsbury, creating a multinational conglomerate of previously existing conglomerates. Visitors to the Mill City Museum might not benefit from that at the supermarket, but in the museum itself, products representing both corporations' illustrious commercial pasts are on display. Visitors learn the histories of the iconic figures of Betty Crocker and Ann Pillsbury and the cultural influence they exercised over the consumer habits of Americans. In addition, less obvious historical factors that influenced the flour industry are explored in the museum's exhibits, such as the transition American consumers made from purchasing flour and baking their own breads and other foodstuffs to the trend, beginning in the 1920s, toward the purchase of pre-prepared mixes and premade goods. In the accompanying Baking Laboratory, visitors can even weigh in on what type of brownie tastes better—the version that comes from the familiar red box or the labor-intensive treat made from scratch.

Unfortunately, the museum's intricate interpretation of the technological and commercial aspects of the flour-milling industry does not extend to the humans who populated the mills. Most notably absent from the Mill City Museum's interpretive scope are the often-antagonistic labor relations in the mills. Its exhibits honor the machines and production techniques that made milling possible in the first part of the twentieth century, yet not the workers themselves. A single panel of information is devoted to the efforts of millworkers to unionize, and it elides the fact that the union formed in 1917 was a company union opposed to the International Union of Flour and Cereal Mill Employees, which was affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL). In addition, the museum avoids altogether a discussion of the contentious role that both the Washburn-Crosby and Pillsbury companies played in mobilizing resources to battle unionization in Minneapolis. As William Millikan has so meticulously documented (in *A Union against Unions: The Minneapolis Citizens Alliance and Its Fight against Organized Labor*, 2001), the business leaders and bankers of Minneapolis were adamant in their efforts to make the city one where open shops prevailed. Much of the money and leadership devoted to this cause came from milling. In September 1903 a strike of more then eighteen hundred
flour loaders and other millworkers, who called for an eight-hour day, was defeated by the Minneapolis Citizens Alliance, a consortium of business interests led by wealthy mill owners who had banded together to combat unionization.

Washburn-Crosby frequently allied with the Citizens Alliance and used its services to monitor workers affiliated with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and other radical organizations. In July 1920 Washburn-Crosby hired private spies from the Marshall Service, who then infiltrated the mills and reported on employees advocating a stronger union. It was not until 1936 that General Mills' employees formed a union that they themselves controlled. Clearly, a single exhibition panel cannot convey the complexity of the industry's local labor history, nor does it really seem to be trying to. Ironically, many of the primary sources relating to the Citizens Alliance and the personal papers of the mill owners who orchestrated the anti-union efforts are in the archives of the Mill City Museum's parent organization, the Minnesota Historical Society. Since General Mills contributed funds to the museum's capital building campaign, it ranks as a "founder" donor. That relationship raises the question of how such philanthropy and other corporate support informed narrative choices.

Other weaknesses of the Mill City Museum's interpretive focus are less blatant yet also sacrifice the complexities of what it meant to be a worker for a respectful veneration of the industry. The oral history segments used in the Flour Tower tour, for example, hint at larger themes concerning the material and psychological effects of deindustrialization that are not adequately pursued. When the Washburn A Mill closed its doors in 1965, one worker revealingly recalled, "They had it on the news before we knew about it." There is no follow-up as to what became of the workers who had previously labored in the mills or the types of jobs they took to continue to make a living. Similarly, one woman who provided an interview mentioned that earlier, following World War II, men came back to the mills and women were forced to hand over their jobs. The significance of gender here is reduced to a sound bite. Those topics seem to be of a more potent and contentious nature—they stand in contrast to the benign exhibits heralding General Mills' role in supplying flour to the world.

The Mill City Museum celebrates a local industry. In the museum's presentation, what constitutes industrial history is highly skewed toward the machines, technology, marketing, and agriculture that came together to make flour milling possible. As the presence of operative flour mills in Minneapolis fades further into the past, it is imperative that the struggles and experiences of the humans who worked in the mills be given a history that goes beyond mere memories. In addition, the circumstances that precipitated the decline of milling in Minneapolis cannot simply be relegated to the past. Myriad questions could be posed and addressed: Where do immigrants arriving in Minneapolis work today, if historically milling was a main venue of employment for new arrivals in the city? What are the environmental ramifications of the use of the Mississippi as a source of power for mills for so many years? Where do General Mills and Pillsbury operate today? Who works in their factories? The Mill City Museum saved an important structure; it needs to save its significance as well.

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