

## “Industrious in Their Habits: Rediscovering the World of Work”

When the Ontario Museum Association, in cooperation with the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, decided to devote its 1983 Heritage Conference to Canada's working past, it intersected with one of the most vital streams in Canadian historical writing today. Wedding the dynamism of the new working class history to the enthusiasm of museum and heritage curators interested in similar themes resulted in one of the happiest mixtures experienced recently in Canadian scholarship. This highly successful conference, held in January 1983, melded the particular strengths and preoccupations of both.

The conference began with a series of general approaches to the main themes and followed through with workshops focusing on the rich detail of research, either completed or in progress. University and museum-based historians have much more in common than is generally realized. Their various research paradigms benefitted enormously from the exchange of viewpoints over the three days of the conference, where time and again participants from both sectors were struck with the complementarity of research that had previously seemed to have no connection. The organization of the work process and implications of technological and social change for the conduct of work in the past provided the focal point for most discussions, all of which provided much scope for investigation of aspects of our material past. The necessity of dealing with complex questions of class relationships was subordinated to some extent to the hard realities of exhibit and material-culture related research, which so determines the activities of museums.

The four conference papers published in this issue of the *Material History Bulletin* capture some of the potential for material history via the field of working class history. While some aspects of the new field are more advanced than others, there is much scope for future cooperation. Questions vital to our understanding of work in the past force us to confront specific aspects of Canada's material history. The initiatives taken by this conference should not be allowed to dissipate.

The Ontario Museum Association is preparing a facsimile edition of the entire conference proceedings which will be available in late 1984. For further information, contact the Ontario Museum Association, 38 Charles Street East, Toronto, Ontario, M4Y 1T1, (416) 923-3868.

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