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THE MINES THEY LEFT:

The Impact of Mining on Southeast Ohio's Cultural Landscape

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Mines They Left is a professional project consisting of written articles, audio and photographic multimedia presentations, and photography galleries presented within a Web site, www.minestheyleft.com.

The content examines the long-term impact of southeast Ohio's mining history. Emphases are economic, social, and environmental consequences due to the use and subsequent abandonment of mines that were active during the late 19th century on into the middle of the 20th century. This focus on abandoned mines is necessary to separate the topic of study from still-active surface mining, which is subject to federal reclamation laws passed in 1977¹; *The Mines They Left* examines the legacy of unregulated mining, from depopulated towns, to pollution in the streams to the depressed regional economy.

The resulting stories explore two former mining towns—Haydenville and Shawnee—in the form of written articles and multimedia pieces. The environmental consequences of abandoned mines are documented in the form of a photography gallery.

The effect that the region's mining history has had cannot be overstated. *The Mines They Left* is an attempt to use photography and audio to document these effects as still experienced and seen today.

Note

1. The Surface Mining and Reclamation Control Act of 1977 is available at <http://www.osmre.gov/topic/SMCRA/SMCRA.shtm>.

1. Background

The 150 years of mining that occurred in Ohio prior to 1972 were poorly regulated. From 1800 to 1972, more than 2.8 billion tons of coal were extracted from nearly 450,000 acres of surface-mined land and 6,000 underground mines below 600,000 acres of land in Ohio (Crowell 13-16). As a result, by 1972, 1,300 miles of streams were polluted, 500 miles of streams had sediment deposits from minerals carried out of flooded mines by water or created from gob piles, and 119,000 acres of land were in need of “major reclamation efforts” (Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Mineral Resources Management). Coal is not the only thing that has been extracted in Ohio; clay, salt, limestone, dolomite, sand, gravel, sandstone, conglomerate, iron, oil, and gas each have a place in the state’s long history of extraction (Ohio History Central).

This extraction process is inextricably linked to the histories of the places and people of southeast Ohio, and to the development of its unique cultural landscape. The region’s extraction history accounts for the very creation and existence of many of the towns in southeast Ohio and explains why other towns amassed the large populations that they did (mining used to be a labor-intensive process) and transformed from small, agricultural communities into large towns and cities. Furthermore, the extraction process explains why many of these towns have gradually depopulated during the last century as mines closed, the industry became more mechanized, and few, if any, employers stepped in to take the place of mining (Stephens 127-144). The extraction process explains specifics, too, about population. During the late 1800s and early 1900s, waves of European immigrants to southeast Ohio supplanted the mining

towns with labor (Stephens 127). This can be seen in family genealogy and surnames, surviving traditions such as serving Welsh faggot sandwiches during the New Straitsville Moonshine Festival, and in the names and birthplaces on the tombstones in mining town graveyards throughout southeast Ohio (Little Cities of Black Diamonds).

Other effects of the region's mining history are even more visible. From tipples and railways to company stores, infrastructure created by mining companies and built with the money made from resource extraction still stands all throughout southeast Ohio, though much is falling apart or covered with vegetation. As towns depopulate, buildings are abandoned, and the town is left with an empty skeleton of the society that once flourished. Residents who remain are impacted by all of this.

2. Cases

To document these effects, I focused on two towns in southeast Ohio: Haydenville and Shawnee. Both towns are visually striking, Shawnee, with its awnings and balconies running along the buildings of Main Street, and Haydenville, with its company houses lining Haydenville Road. Both towns are struggling to find ways to maintain economic relevance and keep young people in the town to curb depopulation. Yet the two towns have different approaches, different levels of community involvement, and different successes and failures in their restoration and preservation efforts.

Haydenville is in Hocking County. The town, originally called Hocking Furnace, was founded in 1852 by Peter Hayden as a company town for local extraction

of coal and iron, and later, shale and clay. But clay products were the town's claim to fame. After deep-bedded fire clay was found in the 1870s, Hayden established a clay products company that supported Haydenville for 80 years (Mould 73). From this clay, the town was built, with over 100 company houses, a company store, a post office, and a church. The town was originally built next to the Hocking Canal, between Logan and Nelsonville. However, the canal was abandoned in 1889 for the railroad, which was itself later abandoned around 1960 (Miller 223). Shortly after the switch to rails, which Hayden helped finance, Haydenville was sold to the National Fireproofing Company in 1906. Until 1964, when the last clay products plant closed, Haydenville was company-owned, making it the last company town in Ohio (Mould 73). In 1973, the historic district, centered about Haydenville Road, was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

Despite the changes in Haydenville since the last clay products plant closed (decreasing population, loss of the company store and school), evidence of the company is everywhere. The company houses are in surprisingly good condition, as is the company infrastructure that is left. The Methodist church, for example, of which Peter Hayden contributed ninety percent of the construction costs, is still in use and good repair. Like many of the company houses, the church displays the gamut of clay products that Haydenville Mining and Manufacture Company could produce, with four styles of building tile and hand-chiseled bricks (Mould 73). A company house was converted into a museum by the Haydenville Preservation Committee last year and is open to the public on weekends or by appointment. One resident, Rob Patterson,

compared the town to a permanent, life-sized catalog of the products Hayden's company could offer (Patterson).

Most of the people I interviewed in Haydenville were either unemployed, on disability or commuted to work in Logan or other nearby towns. The only two major employers in Haydenville today are Shelly & Sands, a gravel and tar operation at the back of town, and Saw Miller, a sawmill located along Haydenville Road. The two businesses combined employ less than ten people, with variation depending on the season (Swaim).

Shawnee is in southern Perry County. The town boomed from a settlement with a small Catholic population to an industrialist coal-mining town within the span of 30 years. By 1872, the town was connected to other towns via railroad, and industrialist Thomas Jefferson Davis had platted the land, selling 73 lots between 1872 and 1873 (Rob Dishon 9). Twenty years later, Shawnee boasted a population of 3,266 (Winnenberg 51). For the first 50 years of its existence, Shawnee relied on the coal, iron and clay industries. The last iron furnace was dismantled in 1906, the coal boom ended during the 1920s and the Claycraft Brick Plant closed in 1972 (John Dishon 142). The town has steadily emptied since the 1920s, down to 608 residents, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. In 1976, the town's business district was added to the National Register of Historic Landmarks. The Tecumseh Theater is under restoration and the North Country Trail, which will run past Shawnee, is being completed. Several buildings on Main Street are used for storage by the furniture company. Other

buildings are rotting and have been condemned, but remain standing, though they are beyond repair.

Shawnee is unique in several regards. Shawnee's Main Street has an impressive number of original buildings from the late 1800s and early 1900s that are still standing. Most have balconies and swings above the store fronts. Despite losing the post office, school, and grocery store, the town still has a library, a furniture company, a video store, a bar, a restaurant, an antique shop, and two gift shops along the Main Street. Community activists are working to turn Shawnee into an eco-tourism destination, as a stop on the developing North Country Trail and because of its proximity to Wayne National Forest.

Most of the people I interviewed in Shawnee commuted to work in Logan or New Lexington.

II. METHOD

I chose Shawnee and Haydenville because the two towns are following different paths. While both have historical groups and are on the National Register of Historic Places, Shawnee has more community involvement and a strong link to the Little Cities of Black Diamonds Council, as the organization is headquartered in Shawnee.

These differences impacted my interactions with residents in each town. I met the people I interviewed in a variety of ways. Some people came up and introduced themselves to me as I walked around. I struck up conversations with other people that

I met at church, at the post office, at the Little Cities of Black Diamonds office or at the library.

Once I met one person, they would introduce me to another person, who would introduce me to several more people. I found networking to be the most effective way to meet people. However, Shawnee has a more developed formal community infrastructure with churches, a library, a lake, a park and a town restaurant where residents gather. This made it easier to meet people in Shawnee than in Haydenville, where the only community-gathering place in town is the Haydenville Church, and only a few residents attend the church. In Haydenville, I took bolder steps to meet people, such as knocking on strangers' doors and making conversation with people on the street. This proved less effective than the networking I was able to do in Shawnee. The Haydenville Church is a beautiful building with a welcoming congregation that helped me immensely. Yet, networking with church members rarely took me outside of the church.

Once I met people who were willing to talk with me, I set up interviews and recorded their stories. These stories guided my photography of the towns.

Despite the use of different mediums, my approach remained consistent. I aimed to listen to current residents tell their stories and to document with my camera the parts of their stories that I could—tangible remnants of their memories and visual testaments to their day-to-day lives. The residents, of places about which I photographed and wrote, have seen changes in their communities and in the environment with their own eyes and present a more compelling and personal history

than any text or photograph from an outside perspective. Therefore, each story began with and was guided by interviews, and information gleaned from interviews is the framework of *The Mines They Left*.

1. The Interviews: An Oral History Approach

In determining how to structure, approach and guide interviews, I found the tradition of oral history to be most helpful. *The Mines They Left* is informed by journalism in that it presents information with brief articles and informative, captioned photography, but at its root the story is largely a historical one; how does the region's history influence people and places today? Oral histories speak to the project's goal of collecting and preserving residents' memories and experiences within the southeast Ohio landscape as it has changed over time. Thus, I found myself again and again returning to oral history techniques and strategies when planning and conducting interviews.

Oral history is a term that refers to information (for a historian, it is considered 'primary source material') that has been collected during an interview via recording of the interviewee's spoken word (Baum 5). Despite differences between an oral history and a journalistic interview (mainly in timeliness and intended use), I believe a discussion of oral history is pertinent to my project not only for the reasons listed above, but also for the practical reason that I interviewed people about their childhood and family history –topics frequently addressed in oral history literature.

In the preface to *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, co-editors David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum outline what they see as three generations of oral history. At first, interviews were used for oral biography and autobiography, and were stored as historical sources for future writers. Then, in the second generation, oral history's archives were expanded and its uses branched out. Educators, activists, feminists, and historians interested in local and ethnic histories began using oral histories to give voice to under-represented people. Oral histories were no longer just conducted with "so-called elite," but instead with "the nonliterate and the historically disenfranchised." The third generation saw an advance in technology (word processors, research aid software) and moved beyond collection and toward publicizing the oral history work (Dunaway). In their book, Dunaway and Baum present a selection of essays that explore the background of oral history; the ethical considerations, particularly those at the onset during interviews; the use and dissemination of oral history; and possible interdisciplinary applications of oral history—all aspects of oral history that the editors feel have come to light only with the third generation. I would venture to say that a fourth generation is underway, given the advent of the World Wide Web in the 1990s and the implications this level of instantaneous, direct communication has had on the collection and dissemination of oral histories.

The strengths of an oral history are many: it can record, archive and preserve stories that might otherwise go untold, explain people's motivations, grant details to history, add to the knowledge base in a particular field, and, perhaps the most

advantageous strength for my project, is the capability of oral history to provide personality, due to the medium's intimacy (Starr 4). Indeed, using a witness is one of the best ways to bring history to life (Rosenthal 428). Other strengths concern the practicality of conducting oral history. Oral history can be conducted anywhere. Paul Thompson, founding editor of the journal *Oral History*, asserts that "in any part of the country there is an abundance of topics which can be studied locally; the history of a local industry or craft, social relationships in a particular community, culture and dialect, change in the family, the impact of wars and strikes," just to name a few (Thompson 9). Another advantage is the medium's ability to demonstrate that historical study is relevant anywhere and everywhere (Thompson 9). Oral history can be collected by anyone from anyone, and "the documents are always new, at least in the sense that no previous historian has examined them" (Hoopes 350). This newness translates to "a freshness and candor" more often associated with direct conversation, because that is essentially what oral history is, as opposed to written documents, which often lack personality (Hoffman 72).

Despite these advantages, oral history collection faces the same obstacles that any interview does, in addition to problems specific to oral history interviews. An interview, particularly one about the interviewee's recollection, is problematic in that it relies on memory, which is "elusive, and personal and cultural traits color the ways in which [memory] is articulated," writes Charles T. Morrissey, former president of the Oral History Association, in the introduction to Dunaway and Baum's *Oral History: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*. Louis Starr agrees with Morrissey's critique,

calling oral history “hazardous for the researcher, since memory is fallible, ego distorts, and contradictions sometimes go unresolved” (5). Interviews can unintentionally deemphasize or exaggerate certain topics based on which questions the interviewer asks and how the interviewer guides the conversation.

The key to conducting a successful oral history interview in the face of these problems is to standardize oral history collection and adopt methods that will limit mistakes before the interview is even conducted. These methods are established with an understanding that the interview process is “a dynamic process in which the observer-collector (interviewer) has a marked effect on what the witness-narrator (interviewee) produces in the way of information and opinion” (Moss 98). One interviewing approach that is designed to elicit a successful oral history—that is, honest and candid conversation—is to make the interview situation as similar to natural, everyday conversation as possible. Another interview approach, this one designed to expose interviewee unconscious distortion or bias, is to ask a variety of questions in order to uncover any biases. Many oral historians espouse the importance of building rapport with the interviewee in an effort to develop honest conversation that is relatively free of self-consciousness (Cutler 81).

In order to combat these difficulties, I attempted to build rapport with my respondents, sometimes spending weeks getting to know them before pulling out a tape recorder and conducting a more formal interview. I occasionally re-interviewed someone, when I felt they may have been too nervous the first time around. Whenever

I interviewed someone, I warmed them up with easy questions about things they liked to discuss—their children, their hobbies and their home.

I cannot purport to know with absolute certainty whether my respondents distorted their information. Unlike oral historians, who use oral history just as a part of their research and are able to compare interviewee attitude and response against fact, I was extremely dependent on the interviewees, given that I was interviewing people about their personal feelings, beliefs and reactions, and these were areas in which I felt it best to let the interviewees speak for themselves. I did not collect audio with the primary purpose to reconstruct events. Given these goals, I still did a fair amount of pre-interview preparation and research to inform my questions. So while I confirmed interviewees' claims with outside information, I also let their experiences stand as they wish to report them, and I did enough pre-interview preparation to guide the conversation appropriately.

The Oral History Association, which was founded in 1967 with the intent to develop and promote professional standards for oral historians, has outlined ten responsibilities on their Web site that interviewers have toward their interviewees:

1. Interviewees should be informed of the purposes and procedures of oral history in general and of the aims and anticipated uses of the particular projects to which they are making their contributions.
2. Interviewees should be informed of the mutual rights in the oral history process, such as editing, access restrictions, copyrights, prior use, royalties, and the expected disposition and dissemination of all

forms of the record, including the potential for electronic distribution.

3. Interviewees should be informed that they will be asked to sign a legal release. Interviews should remain confidential until interviewees have given permission for their use.

4. Interviewers should guard against making promises to interviewees that the interviewers may not be able to fulfill, such as guarantees of publication and control over the use of interviews after they have been made public. In all future uses, however, good faith efforts should be made to honor the spirit of the interviewee's agreement.

5. Interviews should be conducted in accord with any prior agreements made with the interviewee, and such agreements should be documented for the record.

6. Interviewers should work to achieve a balance between the objectives of the project and the perspectives of the interviewees. They should be sensitive to the diversity of social and cultural experiences and to the implications of race, gender, class, ethnicity, age, religion, and sexual orientation. They should encourage interviewees to respond in their own style and language and to address issues that reflect their concerns. Interviewers should fully explore all appropriate areas of inquiry with the interviewee and not be satisfied with superficial responses.

7. Interviewers should guard against possible exploitation of

interviewees and be sensitive to the ways in which their interviews might be used. Interviewers must respect the rights of interviewees to refuse to discuss certain subjects, to restrict access to the interview, or, under Guidelines extreme circumstances, even to choose anonymity. Interviewers should clearly explain these options to all interviewees.

8. Interviewers should use the best recording equipment within their means to accurately reproduce the interviewee's voice and, if appropriate, other sounds as well as visual images.

9. Given the rapid development of new technologies, interviewees should be informed of the wide range of potential uses of their interviews.

10. Good faith efforts should be made to ensure that the uses of recordings and transcripts comply with both the letter and spirit of the interviewee's agreement. (Oral History Association)

The guidelines emphasize honesty and transparency, so that the interviewee is well-informed, knows what to expect, and is not exploited. According to the guidelines, interviewers should avoid making promises they cannot keep. Interviewers should also achieve a balance between the project's goals and honoring the interviewee. In addition, the association reminds interviewers to make their work meaningful, by fully exploring the topic at hand and not accepting superficial responses.

Pre-interview, I addressed some of the concerns on the checklist by thoroughly explaining to the interviewee the purpose of my project, how the interview content would be used in an audio slide show, and the means of dissemination (that is, my Web site). I relied on verbal agreement with these conditions. I promised to provide interviewees with content in the form of the Web site address and a CD when the project was complete. When someone did not have access to a computer, I offered prints instead, though Shawnee has a library with Internet access and the residents I interviewed in Haydenville each had computers. I offered content upon completion of my project instead of giving more immediate form of feedback because if I needed to re-interview someone, I did not want their responses to be colored by how they viewed my ongoing project, either to fit in with it better or to contest it. I encouraged participants to respond in their own language and in the style they preferred by attempting to make the interviewee comfortable, easing into as natural a conversation as possible and asking open-ended questions. I used a Zoom H2 recorder, which I believe relayed the tone and quality of the interviewee's voice sufficiently accurately. For possible use in the written component of each story, I took notes during each interview to capture details about the circumstances surrounding the interview, body language, and any other pertinent information that could not be captured by audio recording. Despite the inability of audio recording to portray these visual cues, audio recording still has at least one major advantage over interview transcripts: transcripts cannot capture qualities of the interviewee's voice and, "Nuances of voice [which]

must be heard rather than left to the reader to infer from a transcript, which cannot accurately convey accent, inflection, emphasis, or manner” (Starr 7).

William Moss, former chief of the Smithsonian Institution Archives, provides an additional checklist, this one to be consulted post-interview in an effort to evaluate content. First, Moss suggests evaluating the soundness of the interview. This can be done via consultation of other sources by determining whether sources agree with or contradict one another. Interviewers can also use their own judgment or examine whether the story makes sense “in light of subsequent events” (Moss 98). Second, Moss advises interviewers to determine the thoroughness of the interview and address any omissions. Third, interviewers should establish the necessity of the information provided. Is any of it repetitive? Is it unique or interesting or essential or enlightening? Moss suggests interviewers assess the usefulness of the interview and edit accordingly (98).

In post-interview editing, I amplified or quieted a voice or removed distracting noises as necessary, but I tried to select a quiet atmosphere to conduct the interview in the first place as post-processing can affect the tone and quality of the interviewee’s voice. To edit, I used the program Audacity. Likewise, while I aimed to edit down the interview to avoid repetition and to maintain audience attention, I was mindful not to let my edit impact meaning or emphasis. I played a strong role in guiding the interview to make sure that the conversation would be relevant to the project.

In *Transcribing and Editing Oral History*, Willa K. Baum describes four steps to creating oral history: “creating, processing, curating, and finally, using” (5). For the

purpose of this project, processing involved not transcription, but editing and preparation for presentation. Curating and using were intertwined in presentation. Even for oral history in the strictest sense, however, Baum is quick to point out that “there are no cut and dried rules for how to do oral history at any step. Oral history is an art, not an exact science” (6).

The form of presentation that I chose as a vehicle for the interviews was the audio slide show, to introduce visual elements to the stories that support and enrich the audio. Specifically, I used the program Soundslides, a program launched in August of 2005 by former journalist Joe Weiss. Soundslides creates audio slide shows from JPEG and MP3 files into a Web-ready Flash slide show format.

2. Audio Slide Show

“Audio slideshows existed long before Soundslides, of course,” Eamon Hickey points out in an article for Little Guy Media, a Web site and “digital photography training company” headed by Rob Galbraith. But just less than a year after Joe Weiss began selling the program, it has “taken the newspaper photojournalism world by storm” (Hickey).

The program was created by a journalist for journalists, and journalists are the ones using Soundslides and developing ‘rules’ for use of Soundslides. Recognizing that my approach differs from a purely journalistic one, I used their rules as guidelines.

Soundslides users still face the same obstacles as any multimedia producer.

“Juggling the competing demands of gathering audio and pictures, as opposed to just thinking about pictures, is the biggest challenge to doing day-in, day-out multimedia,” Brian Peterson of *The Star-Tribune* in Minneapolis, explains to Hickey: ““You have to be thinking about almost three things at once. You're thinking about the audio, you're thinking about the pictures, and then you're thinking about how they're all going to go together as a cohesive piece”” (Hickey).

To tackle this problem, all of the photographers Hickey interviewed for his article said they treated audio gathering and photography as “two separate tasks whenever possible—shooting for awhile, for example, then putting down their cameras before doing interviews or gathering ambient sound. Even in fast-changing situations, they rarely try to do both simultaneously” (Hickey).

In addition to the basic obstacles that gathering audio and photography present, the Soundslides presentation requires attention to narrative technique and flow (Hickey).

In terms of length, Hickey prescribes that “a good slideshow should be no more than two or three minutes in length, with somewhere in the neighborhood of 15 to 25 pictures” with about eight to ten seconds per slide, so that viewers have time to explore the photograph.

Despite Hickey’s recommendation, which has been broken many times, one of the advantages to Web presentation is that producers do not face the same space

limitations that they do with print. Soundslides allows still photography to compete with video on the Web.

“I think we all feared as we got into multimedia that we'd all be shooting video cameras by now. [Instead], we've all kind of gotten into this slideshow mode. It's a different form, and video isn't necessarily better,” Peterson said.

Lubens said that audio slide shows have “surprising power.” She realized this while working on a story about an Iraqi boy who was wounded during fighting in Iraq and brought to the U.S. for treatment.

“When we ran the story in the paper, they gave it two inside pages. If there were no Internet, I would've said 'wow, this is really nice', but there is no comparison between the effectiveness of the multimedia piece versus what's in print,” Lubens told Hickey. “Hearing the little boy's voice. Hearing his dad's voice. The multimedia piece is so much more effective and powerful.”

Given that Soundslides was only introduced to the market three years ago, journalists are still discovering what works. For example, Hickey's rule about limiting slide shows to two or three minutes has been broken with success.

There are few set rules for developing audio slide shows for the Web. Because of the medium's newness, most users are still in an experimental stage. For more concrete guidelines, I turned to documentary photography to guide my aesthetic and approach. I took a documentary photography class in the spring of my junior year, which acted as a springboard for this project. The raw visual material for *The Mines They Left* reflects that influence, with the slide shows consisting mainly of

photographs, with a few slides of text for clarification, explanation and introduction. Yet, as I delved further into the project, I began to encounter obstacles in producing an audio slide show that the literature on still photography did not address. It is for this reason that I looked at the theory of documentary film to inform my sequencing, pacing and narration, while keeping in mind that certain facets of film did not apply to the slide show, for example, motion.

III. THEORY: DOCUMENTARY

Ever since its inception, there has been disagreement over what the definition of documentary is. “Put two documentarians together and they will probably argue about what is, or isn’t a documentary,” Michael Rabiger writes in *Directing the Documentary*. Rabiger, an author and educator on the subject as well as a filmmaker, explains that over time, “the parameters keep enlarging and disputes are taken up by new generations.”

Art historian, critic, and curator, Jean-Francois Chevrier, mulls over the problem of defining a documentary photograph in *Documentary Now!*:

The notion of documentary photography covers a variety of practices almost as wide as the idea of photography itself. Any photographic picture may be defined as ‘documentary’ to the extent that it is the result of the process of recording, fixing and actualizing a virtual image. In the nineteenth century, this process was referred to as ‘reproduction.’ This term implies a first production: the optical production of the virtual image. In everyday language, this particularly

ambiguous word first designated a mechanical way of imitating or copying appearances. [...] This confusion between imitating appearances and reproducing a picture is significant. It shows how the documentary relationship between the picture and its model was conceived of according to the way the picture was technically produced. (47)

Here, Chevrier points out, with his broad definition, a common point of confusion: are all photographs, to some extent, documentary? Indeed, Chevrier argues that any photograph can be considered documentary because of the process behind it, because of the fact that it was 'shot.' Chevrier reminds us that photographs are at least in some way a part of the process of recording, and not purely "a product of the imagination" (47). Although it is arguable that digital manipulation undermines this assertion, at least at one point in time photographs had some basis in the reality they acted to record. This definition is so all-encompassing, however, that it lacks much meaning and undermines documentary as a sub-genre of photography in the sense that it is most commonly understood. However, Chevrier's observations address the main problem in differentiating documentary photography from other types of photography. That problem is to identify photography's opposite, that which is *not* documentary photography.

Olivier Lugon, an art history professor at Université de Lausanne, agrees. Over the years, "the word has encompassed varying images and attitudes, and given rise to contradictory definitions [...] no one has ever known with certainty what the term

‘documentary’ actually entails,” partly because it is difficult to define the opposite of documentary in photography: “What should we call fiction in photography?” (65).

Rabiger answers this question: Documentary photography cannot be fabricated. “Uncontested is what is central to documentary’s spirit –the notion that documentaries explore actual people and actual situations” (Rabiger 3).

1. The Human Document

When shooting for *The Mines They Left*, I was careful with my lens selection not to distort objects. I photographed places at varying times of day in different weather circumstances and made an attempt to select photographs that depicted each town as I most commonly saw it. In situations out of the ordinary, for example, Halloween, I was sure to identify the anomaly in the caption. By providing as much information as possible and shooting and editing with the goal to avoid misleading the viewer, I found a way to follow Rabiger’s standard for avoiding fabrication with which I felt comfortable.

Because my academic photography training is rooted in photojournalism, and because this guided my approach to *The Mines They Left*, I followed the ethics code set forth by the National Press Photographers Association, a professional organization established in 1946 that advocates photojournalism standards. The code has nine parts:

1. Be accurate and comprehensive in the representation of subjects.
2. Resist being manipulated by staged photo opportunities.

3. Be complete and provide context when photographing or recording subjects. Avoid stereotyping individuals and groups. Recognize and work to avoid presenting one's own biases in the work.
4. Treat all subjects with respect and dignity. Give special consideration to vulnerable subjects and compassion to victims of crime or tragedy. Intrude on private moments of grief only when the public has an overriding and justifiable need to see.
5. While photographing subjects do not intentionally contribute to, alter, or seek to alter or influence events.
6. Editing should maintain the integrity of the photographic images' content and context. Do not manipulate images or add or alter sound in any way that can mislead viewers or misrepresent subjects.
7. Do not pay sources or subjects or reward them materially for information or participation.
8. Do not accept gifts, favors, or compensation from those who might seek to influence coverage.
9. Do not intentionally sabotage the efforts of other journalists.

(National Press Photographers Association)

Using these rules as guidelines, it was easy to decide what would be inappropriate for *The Mines They Left*; it was easy to tackle Chevrier's dilemma and determine what would *not* be documentary. I decided early on that posing people, setting up scenes, and intentionally misleading the viewer were all inappropriate for

this project. I also tried to approach situations with an open mind and to try to leave my biases out of the work. Yet, was it enough to know what *not* to do, to avoid fabrication? As I discovered, adherence to Chevrier's parameter and to the National Press Photographers ethics code still leaves plenty of room for debate.

Barthes' *Camera Lucida* complicates the search for a definition by pointing out that both parts of the term "documentary photography" have stirred up quite a lot of respective controversy. The result can be frustrating: "Photography evades us" and "Photography is unclassifiable" (Barthes 4).

William Stott continues Barthes' search by parsing out the term 'documentary.' In addition to the meaning that refers to 'documentary proof' and 'legal documents,' which present facts objectively, there is another kind of a document, and thus documentary. "This 'document' is an abbreviation of a phrase still used today that was popular in the thirties, 'human document'" (Stott 6). Here, Stott refers to a 1970 film review in which Judith Crist praises a piece "as a social study, a human document and a fascinating and absorbing entertainment," by which she defined a human document as a piece that captures "a sense of small people sharing the universal burden of existence" (Stott 6; Crist 58); American poet John Crowe Ransom, who used the expression 'human document' when critiquing a poem (Stott 6; Ransom 59-61); and journalist Marquis Childs, who turned to the expression in describing Eleanor Roosevelt's autobiography (Stott 6; Childs 126).

This 'human document' is the opposite of the first, more literal, definition. Where the official document is objective, the human document is personal (Stott 7).

Stott points out an extreme example of the personal connotation of the human document: In documenting his hometown, Herman Clarence Nixon, an early member of the Southern Agrarians, proclaimed “I myself am a document” (Nixon 21). Growing up in Possum Trot in rural Alabama is what inspires and directs Nixon’s story. “I am telling of a particular community and its changes under the influence of the region and the times. I am telling of it, not because it is unique, but because I know it and know that it is not unique” (Nixon 5).

Nixon tells the story of his hometown with personal memories, oral history collected from interviews and Farm Security Administration photographs. “I tell of persons. I tell of a community. I tell of a region. And, therefore, I tell my story three times,” Nixon explains, writing that his approach is similar to that of a black preacher he knew who divided his sermons into three parts, saying, “‘First, I tells ‘em what I’s gwine tell; then I tells ‘em; and then I tells ‘em what I’s done told’” (Nixon 7). It is in this fashion that Nixon believes he tells “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” (Nixon 7).

The different components of *The Mines They Left* echo this approach. The articles, photography galleries, and audio slide shows not only offer different ways to engage the reader, but the different components also inform and reinforce one another to tell a more complex story than any individual part does.

“A human document carries and communicates feeling, the raw material of drama,” Stott explains (7). The two senses of documentary are received differently;

historical documents are understood on an intellectual level, but human documents are understood on a more instinctual and emotional level (Stott 8).

Recent photography historians recognize this; even John Grierson was one of the first people to acknowledge the two senses of documentary (Stott 9). Grierson, the British film producer credited with coining the term ‘documentary,’ “repented of the name he chose. He chose it thinking he was dealing with documents of the first sort, in which facts, not feelings, were paramount” (Stott 9).

The essence of documentary, Stott argues, is not information, but emotion. “Those who practice documentary tend to be skeptical of the intellect and the abstractions through which it works,” he contends, “Like artists, they believe that a fact to be true and important must be felt” (12). When done properly, “not only is *poetic* comment impossible, any human comment is” (Stott 14).

This is where Stott brings the two definitions together. Documentary of both kinds “defies comment; it imposes its meaning. It confronts us, the audience, with empirical evidence of such nature as to render dispute impossible and interpretation superfluous. All emphasis is on the evidence; the facts themselves speak” (Stott 14).

In the context of *The Mines They Left*, I took this to mean that when all the material is presented to the viewer, if done well, there is no need for further explanation. Indeed, the project is designed to be self-explanatory and self-contained within the Web site. A brief introduction page to orient the viewer to the project and the Web site style is all that is necessary. The ‘about’ section of the Web site is brief.

Viewers can jump in at any point and navigate through the story with minimal confusion.

Documentary, then, as used in *The Mines They Left* “is the presentation or representation of actual fact in a way that makes it credible and vivid to people at the time. Since all emphasis is on the fact, its validity must be as unquestionable as possible. [...] Since just the fact matters, it can be transmitted in any plausible medium” (Stott 14). Even Grierson acknowledged that film does not hold a patent on the documentary experience, and that the thirties’ documentary movement could have occurred in any other medium, under different circumstances. “The heart of documentary is not form or style or medium, but always content” (Stott 14). A slide show, an article, a photography gallery, and a Web site are all possibilities.

This content should act as “a lesson in living [...] that shows one what life is like; an epiphany that strips reality bare [...] a reality [the reader] must face” (Stott 16).

Documentaries that solely inform the intellect to the exclusion of emotion, and documentaries that solely inform the emotion to the exclusion of intellect, represent two extremes within the documentary genre. “Documents at the extremes –timetables, hard-news dispatches, almanacs, encyclopedias, industrial films, legal paper, on the one hand, and human-interest journalism, on the other—are most often rhetorically dull, and in the case of the human documents, philosophically puerile” (Stott 18). Most documentary work, however, combines the best of each version, of each definition (Stott 18).

All the countless definitions do have one thing in common, which both Rabiger and Lugon hit upon, a “very general requirement to respect the subject matter, the desire to reveal ‘things the way they are,’ to provide reliable, authentic information about them, avoiding any embellishment that might alter the integrity of reality” (Lugon 65).

In this vein, Lugon argues that documentary can take three approaches: educational, conservation/heritage or social/political (Lugon 65).

Charlie Keil agrees and applies the approach to documentary filmmaking, which he argues serves one of only a few functions: preservation, analysis, persuasion or expression. When documentary was formed in the 1930s, it served the functions of persuasion and expression, as “the very formulation of the term [...] was predicated upon the meaningful convergence of the poetical and the political (Keil 120).” Only more recently has documentary filmmaking picked up the task of preservation and analysis, and many documentaries serve all three functions or some combination of the three (120-121).

2. Documentary as Conservation of a Truth

The Mines They Left is primarily designed to inform viewers, but in some ways the project serves conservation functions, as it records the towns as they are today. Given the state of many of the older buildings, particularly in Shawnee, it is hard to say how long the towns will look as they do now.

Keil argues that a major transition in the way documentaries were approached took place due to improving documentary technology. “The struggle of the documentary form to maintain a balance between sound and image, wherein experience and authenticity would prevail, parallels the problems of fiction film after the advent to sound” (Keil 133).

Such an adjustment spurred “a rethinking of the roles of montage and mobile framing” (Keil 133). Silent cinema acting had to be reconfigured to serve the addition of sound. Keil argues that the result was a more persuasive art form that no longer required the obtrusive style of narration; he parallels these changes to documentary’s move away from “voice-over narration,” which Keil argues led to increased authenticity (Keil 133).

Some critics have grasped onto Keil’s idea of prevailing “experience and authenticity.” One such critic, Cynthia Way, defines documentary photography as “an effort to record the way things are, either in a single image of a situation or an extended series on a topic,” while focusing on the assertion that it is an *effort*, and the photographer faces limitations (Way 92).

Point of view is an example of a limitation. Because each photographer has a unique perspective, photographs of the same topic by different people will be different. The photographic tools of framing, cropping, and point of view all contribute to a particular photographer’s rendition. Documentary photographers rely on photography’s “aesthetics and techniques” to communicate, “therefore, their visual statements, however objective they may seem, are still artful representations.

Sometimes, because the image is so clear or truthful or emotionally compelling, we forget that it is a perspective and hold it as a fact” (Way 92). Although Way acknowledges a common audience expectation that documentary photography “present an unadulterated vision of a particular time, place, and reality,” she points out another limitation: photographers, by their presence, inherently alter the scene that they photograph (Way 93). People act differently when they are being watched. It seems, then, that Way’s definition of documentary photography is the work that is produced as the photographer attempts to reach an impossible standard, that of objectivity.

Linda Williams elaborates on this goal:

Truth is not ‘guaranteed’ and cannot be transparently reflected by a mirror with a memory, yet some kinds of partial and contingent truths are nevertheless the always receding goal of the documentary tradition. Instead of careening between idealistic faith in documentary truth and cynical recourse to fiction, we do better to define documentary not as an essence of truth but as a set of strategies designed to choose from among a horizon or relative and contingent truths. (386)

It seems that a documentary photograph does capture a truth, given that the photographer operates ethically in using a recording machine. The problem comes when this truth is held as *the* truth and not one of many truths. Unadulterated vision is compromised by the fact that this tiny slice of life is often used to represent, or at least can be perceived to represent a greater thing (a lifestyle, a population, a people, a

place). How can a photographer know that their sample is really representative? Is there even a sample that is truly representative? Hegemony would be necessary for a sample to truly be representative.

I struggled with representation while selecting what to photograph and who to interview. Had I picked appropriate people to interview (sometimes they picked me)? Was I giving voice to enough of the population? Could the photographs ‘sum up’ the town? To answer these questions, I researched the towns before even visiting them. Once I had made initial contacts and explored the towns, I spent a great deal of time in each place to ensure that my photographs and interviews were representative of my experience in the town and the experiences of the people I spoke with, and not just based on first impressions.

Barthes’ work can be used to answer Williams: “the important thing is that the photograph possesses an evidential force, and that its testimony bears not on the object but on time.” This, Barthes writes, means, “from a phenomenological viewpoint, in the Photograph, the power of authentication exceeds the power of representation” (Barthes 88).

This “leaves us with a poignant reassertion of the realist position,” with the assertion that “the camera is an instrument of evidence,” Tagg claims. “Beyond any encoding of the photograph, there is an existential connection between the real subject and the photographic image” (Tagg 1). Tagg stresses that Barthes’ “demand for realism” be read in the context of his mother’s death and subsequent search for “‘a just image’ and not ‘just an image’ of her” (1).

Tagg offers a counterpoint to Barthes' demands. It is true that photographs do *not* guarantee the existence of that which is photographed; photographs have been manipulated almost since their invention (Tagg 2). Manipulation has an ever-increasing pertinence, given the image manipulation software now available. He concludes, "the link between the pre-photographic referent and the sign –is therefore highly complex, irreversible, and can guarantee nothing at the level of meaning" (Tagg 3). Instead, cultural, technical, and historical processes all work on the 'link' and make a new reality –"the paper image which, through yet further processes, may become meaningful in all sorts of ways" (Tagg 3). At every stage of photography, "chance effects, purposeful interventions, choices and variations produce meaning," a meaning which is *not* "the inflection of a prior [...] reality, as Barthes would have us believe, but the production of a new and specific reality, the photograph, which becomes meaningful in certain transactions and has real effects, but which cannot refer or be referred to a pre-photographic reality as to a truth" (Tagg 3).

In application, this means that photographs can only act as evidence "within certain institutional practices and within particular historical relations," such as law, and that otherwise, the meaning of a photograph cannot be expected to be stagnant or even consistent (Tagg 4).

I eventually came to terms with the idea that my work could not be completely representative of these towns, much less southeast Ohio as a whole region.

Haydenville and Shawnee are examples of former mining company towns struggling to survive without the industries that created them. These cases are

individual and unique and not necessarily prototypes for every town or a microcosm of the southeast Ohio region as a whole. By documenting more than one town, I aimed to show different ways former mining towns fared after the loss of their industries.

Originally, a third town, San Toy, was selected for this study. San Toy is even more depopulated than Shawnee or Haydenville, and shows one possible fate for former mining towns; San Toy is a true ghost town in that the town no longer exists. After the last mine was closed by the Sunday Creek Coal Company in 1928, the population dwindled, and eventually the remaining residents voted to disband the town. All that is left to speak to the town's once-booming history are foundations and an old mine entrance. With the addition of San Toy, the three towns would have shown a progression of the possibilities that can occur to a mining town after it loses the source of its revenue and the main reason for its existence. However, after an initial inquiry and two trips to photograph the town, this town was not pursued due to time constraints.

To further address the problem of representation, I avoided sweeping statements and narrowed my focus. I presented the content in such a way that it is not meant to be representative, but understood as a small slice of a larger story. I narrowed my focus from a region to two towns and from a culture to individual characters within the towns and let their stories guide the presentation.

Given the importance of context, given the role the viewer plays in constructing meaning, I made an effort to provide additional information (in the form of captions, audio interviews, written articles, and other photographs) to offer a

framework to guide the viewer to the meaning(s) I intended for a particular photograph. At the same time, perhaps it is too much to ask a particular photograph to convey meaning, and so I ask that *The Mines They Left* not be viewed as a primarily photographic project with supporting elements, but instead be viewed from a broader, overall perspective that allows the respective elements to play off one another and interact.

When I designed the Web site, I made the text large so that it could compete with the photographs. This is particularly true for the front page and the splash pages that begin the story of Haydenville and Shawnee.

IV. PRESENTATION

Defining documentary photography and documentary film helped me approach the collection part of my project. Defining documentary photography and learning about the “human document” assisted in the formation of my aesthetic and process. Once the photographs and interviews were collected, organizing and presenting this data introduced new challenges. For these, the study of documentary style aided me significantly. Specifically, the study of documentary film proved helpful in determining how to structure and narrate *The Mines They Left*.

1. Documentary Style

In his essay “The Voice of Documentary,” historian and documentarian theoretician Bill Nichols identifies four major documentary film styles: direct address, *cinéma vérité*, interview-oriented and self-reflexive (48). The differences between the

styles are largely driven by how much of the filmmaker's presence is felt. A recurring debate among filmmakers is whether the maker should "vanish behind the subject in apparent neutrality" or whether "his presence [is] necessary for the credibility of his evidence," and each style takes a slightly different approach (Lugon 67).

The direct-address style employs "a supposedly authoritative yet often presumptuous off-screen narration," and is exemplified by the informational historical documentaries children watch in school, produced with god-like authoritative narration that seems to emanate from somewhere off-screen (Nichols 48).

The *cinéma vérité* method takes a different approach, promising "an increase in the 'reality effect with its directness, immediacy, and impression of capturing untampered events in the everyday lives of particular people'" (Nichols, 48-49). These documentaries purport to be void of commentary. While this style avoids "presumptuous off-screen narration," it does so at the expense of granting the viewer much of a "sense of history, context, or perspective" (Nichols, 48, 49). This style, along with the interview-oriented style, ascribes to the notion that 'true documentary' merely consists of evidence "defined entirely by its subject matter," and is void of even the slightest authorial signature (Lugon 67).

The interview-oriented style amends this by allowing a narrator or character to directly address the viewer, usually in an interview format, allowing 'witness-participants' to tell their own story. Nichols contends that this interview-oriented style, with results varying from the successful and 'profoundly revealing' to the failure of the 'fragmented and incomplete,' is the dominant contemporary model (Nichols 49). It

can be particularly useful in instances where the narrative “[relies] on oral history to reconstruct the past” (Nichols 54). Such a method manages to avoid direct-address documentaries’ habit of “didactic reduction” by snatching narration away from a single, omniscient voice-over and spreading it among several interviewees, marking a “strategic response to the recognition that neither can events speak for themselves nor can a single voice speak with ultimate authority” (Nichols 55). Indeed, this is one of the reasons that the interview-oriented style is the model that I chose to guide the production of my audio slide shows.

The fourth style, of which Nichols is a clear proponent, is the self-reflexive documentary. This approach mixes observation, interview, and the voice-over of the filmmaker, “making patently clear what has been implicit all along: documentaries always were forms of re-presentation, never clear windows into ‘reality’; the filmmaker was always a participant-witness and an active fabricator of meaning, a producer of cinematic discourse rather than a neutral or all-knowing reporter of the way things truly are” (Nichols 49).

What separates this fourth style from the others is its inclusion of the producer, and sometimes the process, in the presentation. Documentaries are made up of three parts: producer, process, and product. While the first three styles present the product to the exclusion of both the producer and the process, self-reflexive documentaries present all parts in an effort to be transparent (Ruby 65). By definition, this style asks, isn’t the documentarian integral to the documentary? A documentary is a “joint creation,” wherein the meaning of images is shaped by the creator (Lugon 67).

Although Nichols concedes that the self-reflexive approach is not a ‘pinnacle’ of documentary style without inherent problems, he sees it as “less obviously problematic” than the three other strategies. However, it seems that the documentary style should be chosen based on the subject matter, as different stories demand different tellers. In addition, revealing the producer risks coming off as “narcissistic, overly personal, and subjective,” while revealing the process can become “untidy, ugly, and confusing to the audience” (Ruby 65).

For the slide show component of my project, I chose the interview-oriented style. *The Mines They Left* aims to capture the experience of residents of the towns it documents in a slide show format that uses spoken word and photography to drive the presentation. Thus, it is appropriate for this particular project that interviewees speak for themselves. My authorial signature is evident in the editing, juxtaposition of images and text, and in the focus of the project. I aimed to produce work similar to that of Emile de Antonio, a pioneer of the interview style, who used the method to “organize complex historical arguments without a narrator” (Nichols 56).

2. *Medium*

In addition to selecting a style, the producer must decide how to disseminate content. And those two decisions play off one another, as the medium and style determine which content is emphasized and how.

San Antonio Express-News multimedia producer Angela Grant attests to the importance of matching a story to a good medium for telling that story. Grant told the

photo agency Black Star that she “believes if a photojournalist is able to shoot both video and stills, it allows him or her to choose the best medium for the story, which ultimately serves the viewer” (Kimzey).

“Not every story works best in every medium,” Janet Kolodzy agrees in *Convergence Journalism*, a book she wrote after eleven years at CNN and after working in print journalism (77). Given this ground rule, Kolodzy advises her readers to think about “how the medium and the story can dovetail to be effective in providing information to people” (94).

Although written for journalists, Kolodzy’s book brings up ideas that reinforce documentary credo. For example, there are common elements that unite storytelling, regardless of medium.

No matter what medium a journalist works in, when asked how he or she decides whether a story is news, the answer will be roughly the same: proximity, relevance, impact, usefulness, prominence, and timeliness will be among the common answers. When asked about the basic values and ethics of journalism, the answers will also sound similar: accuracy, truth, fairness, and balance. When asked about the purpose of journalism, the answers are similar from practitioners, no matter the media: to keep people informed about their world.

(Kolodzy 57)

Only after a journalist acknowledges these fundamentals of content can they even begin to think about the proper medium for their specific story, Kolodzy writes.

And she has plenty of ideas about how to go about picking one, because having worked in several mediums, she “understand[s] the pluses and minuses of each medium” (Kolodzy viii).

The best medium for storytelling can only be selected after the producer considers the content (what is being communicated), the goals of the finished product, the ethical values important to the project, and the overall purpose of the project.

Some elements that play into choosing a medium are how active or passive a story is, whether or not the story involves a set sequence or pattern that must be followed to convey information, and whether the story is linear or nonlinear. “The medium does determine what gets emphasized in our storytelling” (Kolodzy 58). Producers would do well to determine which content to emphasize before selecting a medium or an approach within a medium.

Perhaps the most relevant characteristic in determining medium is how quickly the information needs to be conveyed to readers. When speed matters, producers often turn to broadcast (and, increasingly, Web sites) as a method of quickly disseminating information (Kolodzy 72). Online content has several advantages: it can extend the reach of a story, especially for newspapers with limited circulation (Kolodzy 79). At the same time, Web-only content limits its reach to those who can access a computer, but with computers and Web access available at public libraries, even that obstacle is becoming less problematic. Yet print is tangible, and readers tend to spend more time with individual magazine articles. Each medium has its strengths and weaknesses.

V. THE MINES THEY LEFT

When I moved to Athens, Ohio, to attend Ohio University, I had only a vague idea of the region's history. Like so many other students I had met, I was not from southeast Ohio, or even eastern Ohio; I grew up in a part of the state where mining did not occur. As I learned more about the region, I became more interested in the ways in which the region's history shaped and still influences the people, economy, and environment today. Unfortunately, it took me two years of living in Athens to begin to really appreciate southeast Ohio's history. This appreciation was my original inspiration for the project and underlined my original goal: to reach out to underclassmen so that they could use this knowledge to better understand the area earlier than I did during my time as a student at Ohio University. It was with this goal in mind, a goal to inform a large group of busy people about the history of the landscape around them, that I created a place to present *The Mines They Left*.

1. The Web Site: www.minestheyleft.com

I chose to present my information in a Web site because I want the information to be accessible to people quickly. The Web site also allows me to break the information into smaller topics so that viewers can pursue the parts of the project that interest them. Increasingly, the Web is where students turn to get information. Because students were my target audience, I felt that a Web site was an appropriate way to reach students and a more permanent and accessible way to feature photography and

audio presentations than any alternatives (a gallery showing, book or DVD were other options I considered).

Another benefit of the Web site is that it allows for expansion. There are so many things I wanted to include in my project that I could not address due to time constraints. For example, I originally began interviewing old miners and descendants of miners in the hopes of exploring the importance of a mining heritage to descendants today. I think portraits and simple audio interviews could do a lot to preserve their memories and capture their input into the social fabric of life in southeast Ohio.

A Web site allows for relatively unlimited growth. As I continue to collect and edit photographs and interviews, I can post them on the site. In addition, any changes that need to be made can be made quickly and with ease.

2. Documentary Voice

When it came to establishing a ‘voice,’ I turned again to documentary filmmaking, because as a field, documentary filmmaking had the most information about finding, establishing, and defending choice of voice.

Regardless of the documentary style or medium chosen, Nichols laments that contemporary documentary producers have lost their voices. Instead, Nichols argues that filmmakers are replacing their own voices with those of their characters or interviewees. This comes at a price; for example, filmmakers “disavow the complexities of voice, and discourse, for the apparent simplicities of faithful observation or respectful representation, the treacherous simplicities of an

unquestioned empiricism,” Nichols scorns, questioning these filmmakers’ implication that “the world and its truths exist; they need only be dusted off and reported” (Nichols 50).

Voice is a narrower subcategory of documentary than style. Voices “convey [...] a text’s social point of view,” and is a way, not a method, of speaking to the audience; it is an “intangible, moiré-like pattern formed by the unique interaction of all a film’s codes, and it applies to all modes of documentary” (Nichols 50).

Nichols’ advice in regard to voice is that filmmakers find theirs and remember to acknowledge the role they play in their own film, thus accepting and relaying to the audience that “filmmaking is a form of discourse fabricating its effects, impressions, and point of view,” and not a collection of empirical truths (Nichols 50).

The interview approach offers its own set of problems in regard to voice. How can the filmmaker balance the voice of the interviewees and the voice of the overall project? If contradictions among interviewees are left unaddressed, the film’s voice may become muddled and unclear (Nichols 55). Another pitfall is that interview-oriented pieces can fall into a trap of assuming that things are or were exactly as the participant-witnesses remember or say they are (Nichols 58).

I addressed the first dilemma with careful editing, and this is also where I believe my voice as a creator comes through, for example in the deliberate juxtaposition of audio and photography, either to support or conflict with one another. While this is subtler than narration, the process of distilling hours of interview into a few minutes is one that allowed me to greatly guide and shape the material. This is a

responsibility that I took seriously, as I am the only person with access to the information that did not make it into the final project. Interviews and photographs were omitted for several reasons; I did not want to overwhelm or bore the viewer, I wanted to focus the scope of the project and I wanted each image and interview to have power that repetition can undermine. I did not want to include everything I collected, for fear of losing the viewer, so I omitted information when it was redundant, tangential, or irrelevant to the project. I addressed the second dilemma by spending enough time in the communities I documented in order to use my own judgment, and not completely rely on interviewees or my firsthand impressions. This can be seen in the time I spent in each town; I spent two months in Shawnee and nearly three months in Haydenville.

3. Examples

In addition to studying literature on documentary photography and filmmaking, I looked at what documentary work exists. I used these examples when determining how to shape my own project and to answer questions such as how much of myself to include, how to structure the project, and how to maintain the reader's attention. So much of this process is without hard rules, except to "do what works." I studied other's successes and mistakes and learned what to emulate and avoid.

Examples of still documentary photography I have encountered have run the gamut of style and voice much the same as documentary films. Bill Burke's *Mine Fields* goes to the extreme and reads more like a diary than a documentary

photography book. Though he begins the book with a brief timeline of events in Cambodia starting in 1975 through November of 1991, he quickly follows this with a detailed description of the divorce proceedings from his wife. He includes a note from his estranged wife that refers to their arrangements for Bill to use the darkroom in their house that she has had him court-ordered to vacate. He meanders between the divorce proceedings to his efforts to quit smoking to an affair he has with a Cambodian woman, all while interlacing imagery from his travels throughout the country. Although the effect is extremely personal, it isn't transparent or accessible. The presentation is messy and unorganized; it takes several readings just to become oriented with the material to the point where it is possible to navigate his web of the personal and professional. Bill blurs the line too far and his book suffers for it. *Mine Fields* reads like a sloppy, cryptic scrapbook, with handwritten captions and context-less images. Everything is scrawled. For Bill, the time he spent covering Cambodia is linked to his divorce, the connection is too personal to be accessible to an unfamiliar reader.

William D. Adams takes a different approach, more of a middle ground, to the inclusion of self in his documentary. Adams took his first photograph of an abandoned farmhouse in 1967, as part of a beginning photography project (13). Twenty years later, Williams completed the book *Abandoned: A Nostalgic Look at Rural America*. Though the first image was of a house in Perry, Oklahoma, that Adams has no connection to, he presents the farms he knows best first and then moves out to the farms of strangers. As a child, Adams worked summers at his Uncle Archie's farm

(Adams 14). He begins with photographs of his mother's old house (Adams 16-23), then moves to Uncle Archie's old house (Adams 24-25). Indeed, it is an image of Uncle Archie's old barn that is used as the cover photograph for the book. Adams includes a description of his childhood and relation to these two houses, and then branches out to one of Uncle Archie's friends (Adams 26), before including homes to which he has no connection.

“I wish I knew more about the people who lived and worked on the farms I photographed for this book. There must be great stories associated with each one that I will never know, but they still stirred my imagination” (Adams 15).

Interestingly, Adams includes his children in many of the photographs because he often brought them with him as he photographed old farms. “At first, I thought they were getting in the way when they took off scurrying about the landscape. I quickly realized, though, they were part of the experience. On occasion, I even orchestrated their activities to add to the meaning of the image I was photographing” (Adams 5).

Other photographers, who are ‘insiders,’ attempt to approach their content as an ‘outsider’ in order to avoid as much personal bias as possible. Danny Wilcox Frazier's book *Driftless* is a good example.

Frazier grew up hunting and fishing in Le Claire, Iowa, right on the Mississippi River. His family experienced the financial hardship of the 1980s farm crisis, and Frazier saw firsthand how devastating the time was for farmers and those working in farm equipment manufacturing. As an Iowan, Frazier was an ‘insider’ to

the state that he began documenting while a graduate student at the University of Iowa. He explains that his photography project eventually led to *Driftless*:

I'd been on assignment in northwest Iowa covering the harvest, and I met a farmer who explained to me when he first started farming he was the youngest to farm in his county. The day we spoke, nearly three decades later, he was the second youngest farmer in his county. Out-migration is devastating rural communities across Iowa. Iowa ranks second nationally for states losing young, well-educated, single adults to out-migration. (Daylight)

While growing up in Le Claire, Frazier said he “wrestled with the desire to escape the confines of my small town” (Daylight). This later played into his photographs as he explored rural life. “I think there’s a sense of tension in many of the images that reveals that desire,” he said in a video about his work (Daylight). Despite his own involvement with this subject, Frazier attempted to cover the area as an ‘outsider.’ “This is a very personal body of work, it’s true. But even though I am connected to Iowa both physically and emotionally, I feel I could make these images elsewhere,” Frazier told Mary Anne Redding in an interview for *photo-eye*, “Photography allows me to give testimony to what matters to me” (Redding 55).

4. Cultural Landscape

At the root of *The Mines They Left* is an effort to document the cultural landscape—polluted streams and abandoned mines, decaying buildings and residents

working to preserve them, mining-related structures in the woods covered with vegetation—of resource extraction in southeast Ohio.

The land bears witness to the region's history. Land is ever-changing and connected not only to the past but also to the people who currently live on the land and to ongoing events. At the same time, both current events and current residents are influenced by the past.

University of Colorado film professor Linda Williams writes about this in “Mirrors without Memories: Truth, History and *The Thin Blue Line*”: “There can be historical depth to the notion of truth—not the depth of unearthing a coherent and unitary past, but the depth of the past's reverberation with the present” (Williams 394).

Chevrier values photography that documents territory over photography that documents landscape because territory confronts human interaction with the land. Chevrier still sees territory as “an activity area and an object of political and socioeconomic conflict or competition” but does not discount “the cultural and imaginary dimensions” of territory (Chevrier 50). Still, “a territory cannot be conceived of without taking into account what makes it a *landscape*, more or less inhabited, developed and ‘imagined’ (in every sense of the word)” (50-51).

Pictures play an important role in interpreting a territory as a landscape, and Chevrier parallels the exploration era in America and the “golden age of documentary photography” in which photographs conquered the land and knowledge and power were inextricably linked (51). Chevrier's use of the word territory is similar to other writers' use of the word cultural landscape.

In *On This Site*, Sternfeld explores the American landscape in his documentation of 50 places where violence occurred. Long after the actual location has fallen from headlines and public attention, Sternfeld returns and examines the landscape, the site of an event—the otherwise ordinary. Otherwise except for the few sentences of terse explanation Sternfeld offers beside the photograph. The photographs are “sobering [...] free of the sensationalism of contemporary reporting,” the book jacket promises (Sternfeld). Sternfeld’s work stands as a reminder and a memorial to events that have transpired on the American landscape. His aesthetic is straightforward, mainly medium-distance shots, taken at various times of day, with enough space for the viewer to move around in the landscape.

In the afterword, Sternfeld reveals his inspiration for *On This Site*. While working on another book, *Campagna Romana*, Sternfeld spent time driving through the countryside around Rome. He was struck by the roadside crosses and shrines set up to commemorate people who lost their lives in car crashes. “Amidst the aqueducts and tombs of ancient Rome, they formed their own landscape of memorial. Each time I passed one, I would slow down. I wondered if the families who built these memorials knew that they would become cautionary as well as sacred” (Sternfeld).

When Sternfeld visited the first site he photographed for *On this Site*, a crab apple tree in Central Park behind the Metropolitan Museum of Art, “it was bewildering to find a scene so beautiful...to see the same sunlight pour down indifferently on the earth.” In addition to the landscape’s indifference, to nature’s astounding capability for regrowth, there is another facet which Sternfeld’s work

reveals—our interpretation of landscape and the role of memory in forming this interpretation: “Experience has taught me again and again that you can never know what lies beneath a surface or behind a façade. Our sense of place, our misunderstanding of photographs of the landscape is inevitably limited and fraught with misreading” (Sternfeld).

VI. CONCLUSION: THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF SOUTHEAST OHIO

Southeast Ohio is set apart from the rest of the state by its physical geography. Without any geologic training, it is easy to distinguish southeast Ohio’s rolling hills from the flatter sections of the state, a result of glaciers (Bain 315). The geology of the unglaciated southeast Ohio comprises the Permian and Pennsylvanian geologic systems, which contain most of the state’s coal (Palka 1). It is no coincidence that this same region is the poorest part of the state; in 2006, 19 percent of the population in southeast Ohio lived below the poverty threshold (Ohio Association of Community Action Agencies).

In 1986, Eugene J. Palka wrote a thesis for Ohio University that delves into Athens County’s cultural landscape as a reflection of its coal mining history. Although Palka limited his research to coal mining events between 1885 and 1927, his research is pertinent to any study of the region’s mining history, especially given that he chose to study the peak of mining activity in southeast Ohio pre-1972.

Indeed, the historical implications of southeast Ohio’s coal reserves have been vast; the region’s mining history has impacted “the physical, economic, social, and political development” of southeast Ohio (Palka 1).

“From a geographic perspective, one may recognize that many of the settlement patterns, transportation networks, and industrial complexes evolved through the efforts to exploit the economic value of coal” (Palka 1). The landscape of southeast Ohio reflects the extraction industry’s “successes and its failures” (Palka 1).

In addition to the extensive development that was required to support mining towns, themselves a result of the labor-intensive mining process, transportation lines were necessary (Palka 1). Shawnee and Haydenville are both excellent examples. Shawnee, in particular, has extensive infrastructure left over from its heyday, including two opera houses. And at the north and ends of Haydenville are old canal locks of the Hocking Canal.

Palka is quick to point out that “coal mining and its supporting activities modified the landscape both intentionally and inadvertently” (1). Though his study focuses on structures built to support the industry, he acknowledges that “just as significant in terms of their imprint on the landscape, were inadvertent or unintentional modifications such as subsidence, water pollution, or the creation of refuse or ‘gob’ piles,” all visible today (1).

Like Palka, I see the landscape as a cumulative “series of cultural overlays superimposed on the natural landscape” (Palka 10), with the addition of an emphasis on the interaction between a region’s history and its people.

Carl Ortwin Sauer introduced the term cultural landscape, which is the imprint of cultures on the land over time. Landscape denotes a geographical unit equivalent to ‘area’ or ‘region.’ However, landscape is not merely a physical term; it refers to “a

land shape, in which the process of shaping is by no means thought of as simply physical. Cultural landscape may be defined, therefore, as an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural” that change and layer over time (Sauer 321). A cultural group interacts with the natural landscape to create a cultural landscape (Sauer 343). This means that the human, or cultural, landscape “is our unwitting autobiography, and all our cultural warts and blemishes, our ordinary day-to-day qualities, are there for anybody who knows how to look for them” (Lewis 13).

Landscape, while not a full historical record, “is a complex cumulative record of the work of nature and man” in a particular place (Meinig 43). Although landscape is a rich store of cultural data about the people who created it, historic context is necessary for correct interpretation of this data (44). In *The Mines They Left*, photography captures the landscape as “a great exhibit of consequences,” here the consequences of the region’s history of mineral extraction. These observations of consequence do not stand alone. Interviews and written components complement observations with historical context and a human element.

This pairing of people (culture) and place (landscape) is the root of *The Mines They Left*. Photographs of artifacts and tangible remnants of the past supplement the interviewees’ experiences. “Memory and artifacts provide complementary but differing routes to the past” (Lowenthal 106). The photographs in *The Mines They Left* offer traces of history (rotting buildings, acid mine drainage, abandoned mine entrances, unused railroad lines) and the ongoing impacts of history on people

(economic depression, depopulation, acid mine drainage abatement); the interviews and stories offer recollections of history (growing up in a mining town, watching the population decline, making efforts to revitalize and rebuild) and the impact on daily life, personality, and outlook. “Traces from many periods of life and of history endure both in our minds and on the ground” (Lownethal 106). David Lownethal points out, “The past, like the present, is always in flux. When we identify, preserve, enhance, or commemorate surviving artifacts and landscapes, we affect the very nature of the past, altering its meaning and significance for every generation” (124).

Landscape is created by people, but also acts as a determinant in human behavior, and a landscape provides insight into the people that played a role in its creation—insight into their history, present, and future. This is because landscape is cumulative and dynamic (Winberry, 11-14).

People are constantly interacting with and changing their landscape. Residents modify old company stores, people research their personal history, some historical buildings collapse while others are restored, and landowners and watersheds constantly work to change the landscape.

Originally, *The Mines They Left* set out to document the long-term social, cultural, and environmental impact of mining in southeast Ohio. The project does this, but as the project progressed, it became clear to me that such an emphasis negated the cumulative effects and dynamic qualities of the region’s history. In the article about Haydenville, I wrote that the town is not a museum. Though many residents live in original company houses, they have made these homes and the town their own, for

example, through renovation and restoration. *The Mines They Left* is an attempt to document people's interaction with their history, and this is the cultural landscape I sought. It includes environmental modifications, as well as structural artifacts and cultural impact. It includes social and economic effects, such as a people's struggle to stay in their hometown as the local economy dwindles and the town loses residents. Although mining's gilded age and mining as a way of life has long since ended, its role in constructing and impacting southeast Ohio's cultural landscape will be long-lasting.

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