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Regulating the Violent Past: Methods in Dark Tourism

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Regulating the Violent Past: Methods in Dark Tourism

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREE
IN MUSEUM STUDIES
HISTORY DEPARTMENT

BY

Jean Pietrowski

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Abstract

What if you could stay in the very room where one of the most heinous crimes in American history had occurred? At the Lizzie Borden Bed & Breakfast, you can, but how acceptable is this? How does one begin to experience darkness from a tourism site? Dark Tourism, which refers to “any site of death, grief, or suffering that is marketed as a site of heritage tourism,” gives people a place to experience these aspects of life and history. Places of death that are turned into places of touristic consumption give people a forum to discuss death and other tragedies. However, what methods are employed, dealing with such sites? In this thesis I set out to discuss the methods of Dark Tourism, evaluating three different types of Dark Tourism sites, represented by the Lizzie Borden Bed & Breakfast, Alcatraz Penitentiary(now Alcatraz Island, NPS), and Sloss Furnaces National Landmark. I chose each site for its optimal representation of certain types of Dark Tourism attractions: historical house, prison, and industrial tourism.

I asked the staff of each institution how they handle its violent past, how they interpret and market it to the public today, or if they choose to ignore it all together. The method I used to conduct this research was a phone interview with the staff of each institution. Each survey included two sections, one of questions that are consistent throughout, and another consisting of those customized to the individual institution. After transcribing and interpreting the responses, as well as comparing them to standards and practices of museums, I made a recommendation for each type of Dark Tourism institution, as well as an overall recommendation for Dark Tourism in general. The recommendations are broken down into an analysis of what they are currently doing and recommendations for how to fix any significant issues that I identify. Standards will be sought and brought via precedent cases in the Dark Tourism field, and also through cases of how

violence is handled and reacted to in the news today. Through this thesis I wish to achieve a way for Dark Tourism institutions to be better equipped to not only handle the violent past, but to give the visitor a better, more healing--yet truthful--experience.

Introduction

Darkness--many are afraid of it, yet many of us go toward it. Attracted to it as a moth to the flame, we want to spectate on the mortality of others, while we keep our own at bay. This morbid curiosity with the dark side of human nature has fueled many artistic pieces in the past, and many historical institutions to preserve not only these art pieces but also the actual tragedies that have plagued our planet. These institutions and sites fall under a category entitled “Dark Tourism.”

Dark Tourism is any site that can be considered a tourist destination that also includes death, tragedy, or suffering in general. Malcolm Foley and John Lennon were the first two scholars to coin the term “Dark Tourism” in their namesake book, *Dark Tourism*.¹ The term itself is only fifteen years old, and so the established field of Dark Tourism study is just as young as the term. While the topic of Dark Tourism has been talked about, written about, and studied for years it has not been a field of study until the last two decades. Several new collections of articles written upon the subject have popped up, such as *Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and practice of Dark Tourism*, put together and edited by Richard Sharpley and Philip Stone.² It has also lead to several theses being written about the subject, such as Stephanie Marie Yuill’s “Dark Tourism: understanding visitor motivation at sites of death and disaster.” written as a Master’s thesis for Texas A&M university.³

¹ While the subject of Dark Tourism had been written about before, and had been certainly going on for hundreds of years, Lennon and Foley were the first to place a phrase to the subject. There are many variations of Dark Tourism, such as Grief Tourism, Tragedy Tourism, Trauma Tourism, and even Ghost Tourism, but Dark Tourism creates a kind of “Umbrella Term” for all of these subcategories. All are dark in one way or another, and all are covered under the canopy of Dark Tourism. John J. Lennon, and Malcolm Foley. *Dark Tourism*. London: Continuum, 2000.

² Sharpley, Richard, and Stone, Philip R., eds. *Darker Side of Travel : The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*. Clevedon, GBR: Channel View Publications, 2009.

³ Yuill, Stephanie Marie. “Dark tourism: understanding visitor motivation at sites of death and disaster.” Master’s thesis, Texas A&M University. Texas A&M University, 2003.

What draws us to these sites of death and suffering? Why must we see them? Many historians, psychologists, and even English professors have tried to explain it. One such teacher, Eric Wilson, delves deeply into his own fascination with death. In his book, *Everyone Loves a Good Trainwreck: Why We Can't Look Away*, Wilson explains that “Our morbid fixations are connected to an essential component of language and imagination alike: the ability to relate to others in ways beneficial to a group. The trait most useful for forging these human relationships is empathy, the capacity to identify with the pleasures and pains of another. Our attraction to the macabre is on some level a desire to experience someone else’s suffering.”⁴

However, the bigger question, and the one this thesis will address, is how these sites of Dark Tourism portray themselves. What parts of their violent pasts do the current--and even past--staff choose to exhibit to the public? Many have studied how the public responds to such images and information of violence, but what about the supply? Why do institutions put violence at the forefront of their representation, or at the other end of the spectrum, why do they choose to shut it away? The texts and scholars that have already begun to cover and study Dark Tourism still have the ongoing issue of defining what “Dark Tourism” truly is, and how we define it as a field. While many have looked at Dark Tourism from a purely business standpoint, this thesis will set out to define the methods from a historical point of view, and how these sites discuss their stories with the visitor.

Within the touristic expectations of Dark Tourism, many places wish to produce an aura of education, or healing. Yet, here more questions start to arise, for by portraying darkness, do they welcome gawking from those visitors who are attracted to the site of death and suffering,

⁴ While lax in writing style, Wilson provides many sources from academic scholars on why the suffering of others is so enticing to view. Eric, Wilson. *Everyone Loves a Good Train Wreck: Why We Can't Look Away*. New York: Sarah Crichton Books, 2012.

without an actual tie to the location or without a need to heal? How often are these “gawking” patrons pandered to, and are they even welcome in many sites of Dark Tourism? What are the repercussions of such pandering, and why was it specifically created? These are but a few of the questions that are asked, and answered, within the body of this thesis.

To answer these questions, I have chosen three historical institutions, focusing on the Dark Tourism climate within the United States of America. These sites range from the small, for-profit enterprises to the National Parks Services. Each institution included in this thesis has been specifically selected for their outward portrayal of their violent pasts. This data has been collected via documentaries, researched articles, organization websites, and interviews conducted by the author. These three institutions are: The Lizzie Borden Bed and Breakfast, Alcatraz Prison, and Sloss Furnaces. They will be representative of not only their own categories of possible Dark Tourism sites, but as a place on a spectrum determined by how they use the violence in their histories. This spectrum goes from an extreme--i.e. using the violence as a gimmick--to a hush, where the violence is not mentioned at all.

The paper begins with the Lizzie Borden Bed and Breakfast, whose violent past is the focal point of a visitors’ entire stay within the historical house. Then, the paper addresses Alcatraz, a prison where tourists learn about the heinous criminals once housed there but are not entirely welcome to “experience” what they did. Finally, the paper takes an in-depth look at the industrial tourism of Sloss Furnaces, whose many accidental deaths go unnoticed and ignored where staff are concerned.

With this thesis I aim not only to study the methods used, but also to establish guidelines for these sites, and others like it. Whether it be to rein in their level of violent mentions, or to

bring more light to them, there is a reason and a recommendation for each one. After I have said my piece for each site, there will be an overall recommendation for Dark Tourism in general. Dark Tourism affects the most serious parts of history, and can play on our sympathies as well as our greatest fears. While there is no “standard” for Dark Tourism’s methods--each site is different, and should be treated as such--there is a way to respond to these histories that will help the public to heal, while getting their own “fix” of death. In the end, such methods will hopefully make the Darkness seem less foreign.

To reach these conclusions, I will be considering three factors: research into the field of Dark Tourism itself, interviews with staff of these sites, and websites and promotional materials. The secondary research comes mainly from major scholars in the Dark Tourism field. Some sources I have selected are from those who are knee-deep in fields dealing with death and darkness, such as Caitlin Doughty’s *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes, and Other Tales from the Crematory*.⁵ These sources are brought in for personal, down-to-earth descriptions of how people react to the way death occurs today in America.

The largest part of this thesis includes questionnaire answers from staff at each of the three locations. The information is condensed for the reader, to focus on why the violence in their institution’s past is their main focus, or not mentioned at all. What makes its outward portrayal of history tick? It is important to consider why the staff chose to do what they did, to portray history in a certain way. Curators and directors are our guides to the past when we choose to go to a museum or any site of history; they are responsible for the history they share

⁵Doughty talks about her personal experiences with the business of death. She knows that she is paid to take away those we love during the worst time of our own lives. It is never fun, but there’s a morbid fascination with what she does, and she makes the process easier and more personal for the family and friends involved. Caitlin, Doughty. *Smoke Gets in Your Eyes: And Other Lessons from the Crematory*. New York, NY. 2014.

with us. While they are not responsible for our perception of history, they hold the keys to the history on which we, as patrons, base our personal views.

Their websites and other promotional material will also count heavily toward their outward portrayal. In this day and age, an institution's website is one of its most important marketing tools. From the examples I have chosen, one is a National Parks Service institution, and as such, has a commonly formatted website with different pages that branch off. The other two, Lizzie Borden Bed and Breakfast, and Sloss Furnaces, have their own, stand-alone websites. While all of the websites will be scrutinized the same, there will be a clear distinction for those that are very separate from the government.

To bolster this research, travel sites like TripAdvisor and Yelp! were used to get the visitor's perspective as well. While the aim of this thesis is to consider the staff perspective and the method they use to talk about their dark history, the visitor insight can not be shoved aside. Many sites of Dark Tourism use visitor reactions in order to mold their 'attractions' to bring in more people. If there is a bad review for a site, it is important to know why this visitor had an unsavory time at a certain site. Was it because of the institution? Other visitors? These factors are important in shaping the outside view, and the inside workings.

While issuing the interviews to the staff themselves, a request was made of each institution to receive their paper materials including but not limited to, pamphlets, fliers, tickets, and event programs. You will find scans of each of these within the annex of this paper for examples. They were used as they were intended, to be seen as an overview and advertisement for the site itself. These are then evaluated by who they were meant for (what demographic of patron) and where they were meant to be distributed.

I, as an author, have tried to stay as completely unbiased as possible.⁶ When studying the methods of these institutions in regards to their violent pasts, many things can upset or disturb an individual. Death is a part of nearly every person's life, in a way you can not escape it. Whether it be your own death, or the death of a loved one, there is always one to face. Dark Tourism brings right up to you the feeling of looking into the face of death, and being able to walk away. There is no set-in-stone repercussion to visiting a site of Dark Tourism. Some may come from a site healed, feeling better about one's self, while others may feel traumatized, or deeply moved about what they have seen.

These scenes impact each patron in a different way, and that is why it is so important as an institution to make sure you represent such history in a way that one can connect to, and that one can heal from. While there are many facets of Dark Tourism, and certainly many of those are to entertain and delight, healing is a satisfying way to leave your visitors knowing that your institution left an impact on them.

Today, the reach an institution has beyond its walls as well is incredible. You no longer have to worry just about what people who see your brochure or flyer might have to think about your history, but those all over the world too. A good website is needed to lure visitors in without turning them off to the content or feeding them too much information. The web gives visitors a helping hand when trying to reach you as a tourism destination, and helps you help them as their hopeful final destination.

⁶ While I say this in regards to my research, I was biased in selecting these sites. Although they comprise of a sampling of the spectrum of Dark Tourism sites, personal experience drew me to each of them, although I have never visited any of the three. My thesis started out talking about how the public reacts to "hauntings" and the lure of the ghastly, and slowly evolved into the thesis available today. Each site has a reputation for being haunted for one reason or another, and I will discuss this in each analysis, however it is no longer my focus. Dark Tourism has many many more facets than simply its haunted factor, and its impact upon the visitor is the most important topic here.

Beyond this, many sites of Dark Tourism have achieved a reputation for their violent pasts, and with violent pasts come many “ghost stories.” Ghost tours--walking tours based on the ghost stories around a town--are not limited to museums or institutions, they can be found around every corner. Many people are fascinated with the thought of life beyond death, and the tragedy that led to this possible “emotional chaining” of one's spirit. Due to this reputation, many places have been spotlights of films, documentaries, TV shows, and books each new medium drawing more prospective patrons than the last.

All three of the institutions within this thesis have been featured in more than one late-night special. Some shows, such as *Ghost Adventures*, hit every single spot in search of grisly ghost stories and their real-life apparitions. While these shows teach the history of a site to the tuned-in masses, they skew for shock and awe value, exploiting a viewer's will to be scared and to believe. While this may not always be a bad thing, it gives an unreal perspective on the story that may have been true underneath mountains of editing to make it “suitable” for prime-time television.

The Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast

Lizzie Borden is one of the most infamous women in America's past. Accused of murdering her father and step-mother with an axe on a summer day in August at their house in Fall River, Massachusetts, she was eventually cleared of all charges against her. Since that day and the following legal case, Borden and her murders have become a legend. Public memory has condemned her as having actually having done it, while she was in fact found innocent. Mounds

of media have been created to perpetuate the myth of Lizzie Borden, the tale even having a children's "nursery rhyme" written about it:

"Lizzie Borden took an ax and gave her mother 40 whacks, when she saw what she had done, she gave her father 41."⁷

Imagine listening to a child sing that while jumping rope; it is possibly one of the more morbid nursery rhymes yet. However, as ridiculous as history has made her legend out to be, and as scary as it is, the Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast is all this and more. Once using the slogan "The Lizzie Borden Bed and Breakfast: Where everyone is treated like family(see Figure 1)," the charming bed and breakfast has not shied away from any version of Lizzie's fateful tale. The house has been reported to be haunted, causing a stir among paranormal investigators, and causing the house to be featured on a plethora of reality TV shows, such as *Ghost Adventures* and *Scariest Places on Earth*.⁸

The official website for the Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast is located at www.lizzie-borden.com. Upon entering the website, the patron will see several things: a dim but elegant background; links to other various parts of the site, like the gift shop, official blog and community; where to rent a room; and a news feed. Recent events, deals, and affiliated items will appear here, such as the Lizzie Borden point-and-click game, the recent Lizzie Borden movie from Lifetime, and new Lizzie Borden bobble-heads that one can purchase from their all-new gift shop.

⁷ Written right within their Brochure, the Lizzie Borden nursery is fairly common for anyone who has known the "legend" of the murder cast. Lee Ann, Howard *Lizzie Borden Museum Bed & Breakfast*.

⁸ There is an entire guide to the Lizzie Borden house on the Travel Channel's *Ghost Adventures* section. <http://www.travelchannel.com/shows/ghost-adventures/episodes/lizzie-borden-house>

Purely from their website, there would be no inkling of the serious business that goes on at the Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast besides the spooks and ghost cams that website visitors can view (for a fee)! On site, the staff at the house have painstakingly attempted to recreate the atmosphere that would have been present at the time of the murders. If a piece of furniture is not an original, it is a period piece, or a close look-alike. The only difference between the house and most historical houses is that guests stay within the rooms and on the furniture that has been supplied.

One thing visitors may notice is how the website reports on any piece of media based on their history--even if that history is wrong. The recent *Lizzie Borden Chronicles* (2015) represents an unproven and exaggerated look at Lizzie Borden, yet was reported several times on the Lizzie Borden website. However, this is not a bad thing; their excitement and over-exuberance in anything relating to them and their history is one of the many charms of the bed and breakfast. This is also very much intended for the visitors, who enjoy many things Lizzie Borden. I will touch on this again later as I get into the interviews given.

However, as a business built on history, on real lives and real stories, what is their duty not only to that history but to the public, to convey the truth in their endeavors? In the way they re-enact the story of Lizzie Borden, in the tours they give, and the literature they spread, what responsibility to the history and the truth of what happened does the Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast? There have already been several instances of “bending” the story, including placing characters into the day of the murders even though they were not actually there for it.⁹

⁹ Deborah Allard. “Actors Bringing 1892 Borden house to life Tuesday as local fans take a whack at solving murder mystery.” *The Herald News*, (Fall River, MA) July 30, 2015.

The fact comes into play, however, that many people come together to make up the Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast. Lee Ann Howard is the current owner and runner, but when it comes to many of the theatrics and interpretations of the history, the help of the Pear Essential Players--a theatre group in Fall River--comes into play(literally).¹⁰ Shelley Dziedzic is one of the main writers for the August re-enactments of the murders. Here is where history may be stretched, but the facts still come into play, as Howard describes it.

“[Shelley has] been here for many years. She worked with the former owner, she played Lizzie in the house, now she plays Mrs. Borden. And so, she’s very theatrical in putting together different views in, for the viewpoint for the guests to have. So if you come one year you’ll get one view of the murders, and if you come a different year, you may get the day in, the house in mourning. It may be the day actually of the murders, but it’s, y’know, portrayed a couple of days later. Where the house is going into mourning for the Bordens.”¹¹

The visitors and keeping them happy greatly comes into play for Howard and the house itself, as she describes the house as being “two businesses in one.” There is no official mission statement for the house, but Lee Ann was able to give a quick statement that encompassed everything the house is to the public.

“Our mission is to make sure that our guests know the true story as far as we know the details to be, of the Lizzie Borden case, and to make sure that

¹⁰ Shelley Dziedzic. Pear Essential Productions, accessed April 11, 2016, <https://peaessentialproductions.org/tag/pear-essential-players/>

¹¹ Lee Ann Howard (Owner, Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast), in discussion with author, March 2016.

our overnight guests have the best possible experience that they can have here.”¹²

Their strategies are working too, based on the many visitor reports on trip-ranking sites such as Yelp! and TripAdvisor. One visitor saying this:

“Everything you ever wanted to see or know is in the home including court records and crime scene photos. We stayed on the Andrew Jennings room. Bed was comfy. Didn't see any spirits, not even with the ouija board downstairs. One girl reported having her ankle tugged, and one couple said a post came out from under their bed during the night. All in all was a fun night and I would recommend it to those who are up for a little excitement.”¹³

Visitors who know the story well, who are looking for this sort of experience, and who also just come open-minded are excited to eager to learn from the house will have a good time!

Interview with Lizzie Borden Staff

What I wanted to learn from this set of questions is why the staff approaches Lizzie’s past the way it does. The bed and breakfast appears to be a business with history as an afterthought, despite how excited they are about the history of their institution. The Lizzie Borden Bed and Breakfast welcomes the world to its doorstep to participate in its history. Being this open must have its benefits, and its drawbacks.

¹² Lee Ann Howard (Owner, Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast), in discussion with author, March 2016

¹³ Ashroper, April 15, 2016, accessed May 10, 2016, https://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g41564-d115165-r364503923-Lizzie_Borden_Bed_and_Breakfast-Fall_River_Massachusetts.html#CHECK_RATES_CONT

What I was surprised to find out through my research and interview however, is that despite the look of the website and many of the social media accounts attached, the Lizzie Borden Bed and Breakfast is a very serious institution. This disconnect is not necessarily on purpose, but it does help in the marketing of the bed and breakfast. I was able to interview Lee Ann Howard, the current owner of the house, and while very excited she was very adamant about how the house portrayed its history. The gimmick may be used, but they handle the history for what it is, history.

“We portray [Lizzie] as this is Mr. Borden’s y’know, youngest daughter, she was 32. We give them the straight facts, and...we lay the facts out and let people decide for themselves.”¹⁴ Here she is referring to Lizzie Borden’s innocence, and how the visitors will choose to interpret the story. Lizzie Borden may be one of the most contested murder cases in history,¹⁵ and many visitors come to see if they might be able to bleed some answers from the house during their visit. While Howard and the house may not have the answer guests are looking for, many walk away feeling better and closer to the case than they had previously.¹⁶

“Our guide was Danielle, wicked cool girl that knew EVERYTHING about the history of the house and murders. Very personable and made you feel really welcome in the house. Once you get through the doors the rooms and crazy stories don't stop. It really makes you feel like you stepped back in time as you experience each room. I thought I knew a lot about Lizzie Borden but there was a lot I learned which is awesome. It's

¹⁴ Lee Ann Howard (Owner, Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast), in discussion with author, March 2016

¹⁵ Emily Anne Lucitt. “Ghost of the Lizzie Borden House Tour: Hauntology, Historicity and Attention at Work.” Master’s thesis, Order No. 1557609 University of California, Los Angeles, 2014.

¹⁶“Lizzie Borden Bed and Breakfast Museum - Fall River, MA.” Yelp. <http://www.yelp.com/biz/lizzie-borden-bed-and-breakfast-museum-fall-river>.

nice that you can take your time and soak everything in and also take pictures of whatever you want. The tour was about an hour long and I loved every minute of it.”¹⁷

Recommendation

While the Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast is a business in its own right, and not a Museum with a capital M¹⁸, it does land within the sphere of house museums. Kept in the period of the time of the murders, while it is used as a functioning bed and breakfast, its owners are also striving to protect a part of history, simply in their own way. However it is not held to the same standard that official museums are, and the business has the freedom to use its history liberally. With that in mind, here is my recommendation for historical houses that deal with Dark Tourism traffic.

This recommendation ranges from small “haunted” houses like the Lizzie Borden Bed and Breakfast to the expansive plantations of the south. Each place has its own ups and downs, and some have bigger issues than others. While Lizzie Borden has a double murder to portray, some houses may have to deal with issues such as disease, slavery, and immigration in the past. This is not a “one size fits all” recommendation, but merely how the topic of the dark history at play may be portrayed.

It has been perceived that visitors will come for the dark history, whether you advertise it or not. “Word of mouth” is a very common way that rumors of death, violence, and hauntings

¹⁷ JLynn C., February 19, 2016, accessed May 10, 2016, [http://www.yelp.com/biz/lizzie-borden-bed-and-breakfast-museum-fall-river?hrid=jwCKhIFu-WjMgSxn3iXyA&utm_campaign=www_review_share_popup&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_source=\(direct\)](http://www.yelp.com/biz/lizzie-borden-bed-and-breakfast-museum-fall-river?hrid=jwCKhIFu-WjMgSxn3iXyA&utm_campaign=www_review_share_popup&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_source=(direct))

¹⁸ Museums that do not have a capitalized M are not tax-exempt and recognized by the federal government as such. The Lizzie Borden Bed and Breakfast functions as a house museum, but is not recognized as a Museum.

spread about historical houses in general. The Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast is just one example of this, despite its roots in the murders themselves. Every town has a secret, made-up or real, a house that people think is spooky or haunted. Having historical meaning to a house only makes it more interesting, it means it has depth, that it is old, and that it has *seen things*.

Houses are lived in, and these spaces can hold a feeling for what has happened there. Hotels are famously regarded for this, best put by Stephen King in his short story “1408”: “hotels are a naturally creepy place... Just think, how many people have slept in that bed before you? How many of them were sick? How many... died?”¹⁹ With the Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast, you not only have the the feel of everyone who slept there before you, but also those who actually lived within the house. Lizzie and Emma Borden, Mr. and Mrs. Borden, the maid, and those before them; this was a family home, and one that saw the deaths of many of its inhabitants, whether natural or brutal.

As humans we want to believe that something else is there, something that justifies the goosebumps of simply being in an old place. Any house, field, or forest, that has been standing or has been inhabited and surrounded by humans for more than a few years has seen its fair share of life, and death. People who once walked the halls of Mt. Vernon are no longer here with us; slaves who walked the streets of Savannah, Georgia have passed and gone, and all that is left are the walls, buildings and items that surrounded them. If these material possessions and places survived, then they are here for us to ponder, and to preserve.

¹⁹ This specific quote comes from the movie version of *1408*, where Mike Enslin, the main character, is speaking with himself into a recorder. Being a journalist for haunted hotels he has seen many of these places and is rather apathetic, but tries to conjure up his own atmosphere in hopes he may find something. *1408 quotes*. IMBd, accessed April 12, 2016.

This is why house museums, and old houses in general are so important. There is a drive to preserve the old that stems from a respect for history and for those who built, lived, and experienced these places, as well as the beautiful architecture that has stood the test of time. Certain people feel as though they have a duty to it, to keep it preserved for those to come. The Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast is this, and doing a good job of it. While they are a business, and they cater to their customers, they are trying to preserve the history and the house in which that history happened. You cannot always keep incorrect history from spreading, but you can help correct that history when it fills the heads of the customers who come calling.

“No matter what you tell anybody they’re always going to get something wrong. Or, they’re going to make it more interesting than it actually is. Just to try and capture their audience. And then we go on damage-control here at the house, ‘no no,’ ‘well where in the parking lot did Lizzie burn her dress?’ ‘No no no, that was in the house.’ So you can’t stop, you can’t stop what the media will say about that. Or how it’s going to be portrayed.”²⁰

Protect, preserve, and perform, would be the recommendation here. Protect your history, preserve the physical history, and perform the story of that history for those who come to hear it. History may only stay around as long as there are those who remember it, and the more that know, the more likely your history will remain. The tale of Lizzie Borden, and the Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast certainly seems far from forgettable, and it is due to the nature of their history, and the care with which it is now kept.

²⁰ Lee Ann Howard (Owner, Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast), in discussion with author, March 2016

However because it is a darker form of history, and in turn a Dark Tourism site, this “protect, preserve, and perform” attitude must take on a different aura. Unlike historical houses that may have belonged to famous artists, politicians, or art collectors--such as the Seward House in Auburn, NY--it must be treated with a different type of respect. Since many people come with an idea of gore and ghosts houses that deal with Dark Tourism must take extra measure to pay attention to the visitor’s pre-conceived notions of the history, and how they can help push it in the right direction.

Since the house may be dealing with death, slavery, and other unpleasant tragedies, the first step must be to make sure that they are honest about their history. Covering up slavery, or death, or simply pushing it away--as in calling slaves “domestic servants” or explaining that a murder victim simply passed away--is hiding a part of the truth from the visitors themselves and does them--and the house itself--no justice. Write about the history, tell the history, but tell the entire history, this is to protect it, when a historical house protects its history this way, it goes a long way to preserving it.

While every historic house may do this, it is important that houses dealing in tragedy keep in mind during tours and conversations with visitors the audience they are talking to. Performing the house’s history shows through in many things, the tours, the interpretation, and the media in which the history is shown. For places such as Mt. Vernon--George Washington’s former home and now historic house museum--this may be through period actors, while for the Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast, it can be through both actors and the way the tours and the house is set up.

What makes the Lizzie Borden house and their methods great is the way that they handle their tours. This being that the tour guide gauges how the visitors may react to going more into gore and storytelling, rather than dimming down or amping up any violence that occurred during the murders right away. Visitors come thinking that they know what they want and what they can handle, but the truth of the matter is sometimes they cannot handle as much as they think they do. This is especially true when they are at the site of where the tragedy occurred. While standing beside the couch where Mr. Borden was slain, one may not want to hear exactly how his face looked after it had been hacked to pieces with an axe. When it is just a story read at home it is not as real as when faced with the location of its actual occurrence, making a once “spooky” tale all too visceral in one’s imagination.

However, the Lizzie Borden Museum Bed and Breakfast is in a way that was discussed before, “milking the macabre.”²¹ While the site itself may be very serious, the website still tells another story in a variety of ways. From bloody designs to the promotion of many different forms of media involving Lizzie, the site preserves the house’s history in a way that may seem unsightly. Its portrayal of its own history will most likely be the first interaction that guests have with the house itself, as is the website for many historical houses and museum alike. It is the doorway to patronage, in a way, and because of this it needs to be carefully articulated what the actual location is about.

Since many patrons come intrigued about the gore and ghosts that might encompass the Lizzie Borden house it does not deter them from visiting the site itself, and their tour may even be tailored to their very gimmicky tastes. However, for those looking to do more research, more

²¹ Graham Dann, “Tourism: The Nostalgia Industry of the Future” in W. Theobald, ed. *Global Tourism: The Next Decade*. (Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann, 1994), 55-67.

serious inquiry, it may put them off ever so slightly. The face that the Lizzie Borden house puts out is not necessarily the tone the house wants to set, yet since it has been this way for years, it continues to be so. Houses dealing with Dark Tourism need to take care not to seem too much like a gimmick, to not seem to be exploiting--or again, "milking"--the tragedy that occurred, as well as taking care not to cover it up entirely.

It is with great care that these houses should preserve their history, and perform it to the public, and with these few guidelines I believe they will be well on their way.

Alcatraz Island, NPS

Alcatraz's past as one of the most infamous prisons in American history makes it a prime subject of Dark Tourism. Even its location on an island 1.25 miles off the San Francisco shore does not stop tourists from taking a boat to this forsaken fortress. Also known as "The Rock," Alcatraz ran as a federal prison from 1943 to 1963.²² However, its history runs much deeper than the federal prison it is known for.

The Mexican government first had a hold of the small island that now holds Alcatraz, and in 1846 they planned to construct a lighthouse upon it. However plans did not go through and one year later the island was purchased for the United States by John Charles Fremont, a military governor in California at the time. While its use ranged from a small prison to a lighthouse leading up to its conversion to a military prison in 1915, it ultimately ended up as a federal

²² *Discover Alcatraz, A tour of the Rock* NPS Brochure.

penitentiary in 1934. It held prisoners up until 1963 when Robert F. Kennedy ordered Alcatraz to be closed.²³

Alcatraz would stay empty until 1969, when an occupation by the “Indians of All Tribes” occurred for 19 months. This occupation was generally popular among those who resided on the main land, as Native American issues were coming to a fore-front and people began noticing the treatment against them. The Native Americans even offered to buy the island with “\$24 in beads, colored cloth, and other trade goods.”²⁴ However, as their food supplies dwindled, their occupation came to an end, and federal agents removed the few that were left on the island.²⁵ Finally, in 1973 the National Park Service developed interpretive programs for the island and opened it up to visitors.

Like The Lizzie Borden Bed and Breakfast, one of this institution’s main draws is its violent history and the rumor of it being haunted. Many have felt and seen apparitions, heard disembodied voices, and been unnerved during their time on Alcatraz Island, although tours may pull away from this, trying to show off the view of the gardens, and everything else that has happened upon “The Rock.” Visitors are allowed to stay in cells for small periods of time, as well as to see and experience much of the island at night, along with during the day.

Its fame has also been spread by the likes of *Ghost Hunters* and other paranormal, ghost-hunting shows. Many of these entertainment-driven mediums push the horror and delight of the violence, leading to the “hauntings” of the spaces. Some have thoughts of making amends with what has happened on the island, and some have not. Through religious ceremonies, historically-

²³ Richard Cavendish, “Alcatraz Prison Closes” *History Today*, Volume 63 Issue 3, March 2013.

²⁴ *Discover Alcatraz, A tour of the Rock* NPS Brochure.

²⁵ *Discover Alcatraz, A tour of the Rock* NPS Brochure.

accurate retellings, and simply respecting the space, these media outlets can bring--and sometimes do bring-- peace and healing to even those who cannot reach the island.

Though ghost-hunting shows may contribute to some of the island's fame--besides what it gets normally, and by that “word of mouth” mentioned before--it is Hollywood that really drives the island’s fame and infamy. Films like *The Rock*, *Escape from Alcatraz*, and *Birdman of Alcatraz*, make for a buzz and tales of mystery around the small prison island. People come to the island looking for these mysteries and horrors, only to end up finding out that the stories may have been skewed, and that actual conditions on the island were much better than portrayed.²⁶

While there is technically no fee to get into the park itself, visitors pay for the ferry to and from Alcatraz Island and are also given the opportunity to listen to an audio tour while they view the island. This tour is old, but it is one of the most important parts of a trip to the island. Voices of actual former inmates and guards can be heard as you walk around the island, experiencing the island through their eyes and stories.²⁷ One of the many warnings you are given, however, when you attempt to buy a ticket, is that you should plan your trip well in advance. Tickets go quickly and the island is usually booked several weeks out. However, tickets are available as soon as 90 days before the tours, so visitors can get them before they go.

Park Rangers are also available to give tours during the open-hours, and give visitors a view of the island that they may not have seen before. They also add a personalized touch, being able to answer any question a visitor might have that the audio tour may not have answered. Another duty that they perform is also just helping correct skewed perceptions of the island that have occurred due to Hollywood’s “dramatization” of its history. People believe that they know

²⁶ Craig Glassner(Former Park Ranger), in discussion with the author, March 2016. Found in Appendix.

²⁷ Tickets can range up to 33 dollars for juniors and adults, this includes the audio tour.
<https://www.alcatrazcruises.com/website/buy-tickets.aspx> accessed March 23, 2016.

a lot about the history that is there, bringing with them an often sympathetic view of people like Robert Stroud and other famous inmates. It is up to the inmates to give them the facts and show what the movie got right, and what the movie got wrong.²⁸

One of the biggest draws to Alcatraz however, is the many facets of its personality as an institution. The prison architecture, the prisoner stories, the gardens, and the ghosts are just a few of these. However, one of the many overlooked pieces of Alcatraz's history is its issues with race. While the brochures, academic papers, and public histories point to the Indian occupation and many other things concerning race, people mainly come looking for ghosts and Al Capone. This is discussed by Cynthia Duquette Smith and Teresa Bergman in their article "You were on Indian Land: Alcatraz Island as Recalcitrant Memory Space," where they brought to light how and why racially-charged history on Alcatraz Island is so easily forgotten. Written over 5 years ago Smith and Bergman criticize Alcatraz Island for its lack of emphasis on its purpose as anything "other than a federal penitentiary."²⁹ So how do, and should tour guides handle this?

While we get into this much more in-depth during the interview with Alcatraz Island staff, it is obvious that the discussion of race and history needs to be opened far wider than just the period of time that the island was a federal penitentiary. It has been commented that many tour guides attempt to give the visitor enough information about the island's history to make their own assumptions.³⁰ It is also said that the Native American Occupation is one of the most racially-charged incidents on the site, and due to misconceptions of what exactly happened

²⁸ Craig Glassner(Former Park Ranger), in discussion with the author, March 2016. Found in Appendix.

²⁹ Cynthia Duquette Smith, Teresa Bergman, "You were on Indian land: Alcatraz Island as Recalcitrant Memory Space" In Greg Dickinson, Carole Blair & Brian L. Ott (eds.), *Places of Public Memory: The Rhetoric of Museums and Memorials*. University of Alabama Press.

³⁰ Craig Glassner(Former Park Ranger), in discussion with the author, March 2016. Found in Appendix.

during the 19-month occupation many believe the Native American's ruined many of the sites buildings, when that is not the case.³¹

Looking at Alcatraz's website, it is just one branch of the National Parks Service's main site. With neutral colors it meets you, making sure you know that its functionality is more important than its design. Highlighted are many stories, exhibitions and other events going on around the time that you are viewing the website, letting you know that an event may be going on that you want to see. From historical details to where to stay around the area, all of your information can be reached from this one site.

While it may not be flashy or reel in the masses, the website serves its purpose without pandering too much to the horror or violence the many media creations around the island have expressed. Excluding Halloween, there is no exclusive advertising toward the macabre, only toward the history. This can be taken as a sign of how it is run by the government, or its respect for the history it portrays, or both. Really, the website gives the visitors the most honest portrayal of what it is, and the history the island stands for. There is no glamour of Hollywood here, no ghouls hiding behind the corners, just a place that once held people who happened to do bad things. The rangers talk about these people, and discuss the things they did, but they do not make spectacles out of them.

Interview With Alcatraz Staff

Craig Glassner used to be a Park Ranger on Alcatraz for 22 years, and I got the chance to speak with him for my interview of Alcatraz Island. What I wanted to establish with my

³¹ Craig Glassner(Former Park Ranger), in discussion with the author, March 2016. Found in Appendix.

questions was a firm understanding of why the staff market the different portions of Alcatraz as they do to the public. Alcatraz has a wide variety of events, tours, and all-around things to see. However, once you are on the island, you are there until the next boat ride home. Visitors must plan accordingly, as while there are water and restroom services available on the island, there are no food or picnicking areas.³² This being said, if there was a demand for them, would the staff allow them, and would it feel right?

Certainly prisons have been a more relaxed version of Dark Tourism, with many prisons even participating while they are still running. While you know it is a prison, you are not forced necessarily to think about the darkness it holds. You can take tours of many prisons today, like Angola, Eastern State, and Folsom. While some have no issue with participating in tourism activities, prisons were and still are a place to hold people, people who have—if convicted rightfully—abridged the rights and even ended the life of another human being. These sites are not usual sites of tourism because of this, tourism to these sites may be considered off-colored. If the prison is still in operation, it creates a tension between the visitors and the prisoners--those who cannot leave.

Yet, we see portrayals of the prison system in the media all the time. Glassner was very adamant about how rangers did not really go into the ghosts and ghouls of Hollywood. Hollywood certainly did a good amount of advertising for them, thanks to the lure of their history, but in all reality conditions on the island were much better, and the prisoners more well behaved than the movies portrayed them to be.³³ The island and architecture itself, although a bit run down, are beautiful, and there are strides to make the gardens greener again. These gardens

³² United States. National Park Service. "Alcatraz Island (U.S. National Park Service)." National Parks Service. Accessed December 11, 2015. <http://www.nps.gov/alca/index.htm>

³³ Craig Glassner (Former Park Ranger), in discussion with the author, March 2016. Found in Appendix.

are one of the main attractions that the Parks Services is attempting to bring to light as a place to go and see.³⁴

Mainly, Glassner wanted to get across that Alcatraz rangers seek to give the visitors the information to make their own opinions. They were in the business of giving the people the straight facts, and answering in a way that fit their audience. While many people come for only certain things--say Al Capone, or the Birdman of Alcatraz--there are many who are open to listening to what other things may be available on the island. While the audio tour that is given covers the cellhouse, it does not cover many of the other things previously mentioned--like the Indian Occupation and the beauty of the gardens--and Glassner had made that his goal during his time as park ranger.

“One of my goals when I worked on the island, was ‘Well, we got the audio tour that does the cell house, and it does that really well, I want to try and get people interested in the other stories.’ Uhm, y’know, as much as possible. Although I did do, my guilty pleasure was a ‘Hollywood’s Alcatraz’ where we would take a look at the movies and what they got right, and after that two minutes, what they didn’t get right.”³⁵

The rangers are so story-focused and driven that if a visitor came with a truly open mind, they would be treated to any story they could possibly wish for. The dark definitely resides on the island, and Craig made no struggle to conceal it, but as for any “ghosts” he was unsure there were even any there.

“We don’t have any history of hauntings despite what you might read on the internet. We have dozens and dozens of nights on the island, guards

³⁴ *The Gardens of Alcatraz*. Golden Gates National Parks Conservancy

³⁵ Craig Glassner (Former Park Ranger), in discussion with the author, March 2016. Found in Appendix.

that patrol it every night, and rarely are there any stories and usually if there are they're with the wink of the eye kind of thing. Now mind you, when someone pays a lot of money to come out with a film crew that has a ghost hunters type show, they somehow always see and hear things and none of us ever do. Uhm, an-and so were we to have a good ghost story, and there are some good ghost stories in some parks, the Lincoln room in the White House is notorious--y'know, and those are stories we would tell if we had them. And we sometimes get accused of just hiding that about Alcatraz, but we don't really have any good stories."

While there may be stories of deaths on the island and several inmates who may have gone a little crazy, rangers do not try to hold these back. They simply try to mold the conversation to the audience they are speaking to at the time. Alcatraz, despite what some may think, is a family-and-school-friendly place, an educational place. So some topics--such as murder and sodomy--will not be mentioned to a group of school kids, but may be rephrased so that older people may get what is going on while the kids are none the wiser. No matter what, it is all about the audience, and not telling them what to think. That, I believe, is what makes them such an important part of the Dark Tourism sphere, and history in general.

"We use words like that so that if you're old enough to know what I'm talking about, you're old enough to understand what I've just said, y'know? You have to change the message based on your audience. A story I would tell a group of Hope children coming to visit Alcatraz who had 19 tribal members that were prisoners in the 1800s. Y'know, is going to be

different than the story I would tell to a group of Inner-City kids possibly, who came out to visit. So, the other thing is, it's important to be factual. To not pretend the bad things didn't happen, and not make it out to be, it shouldn't be telling people what to think. You should be using facts to illuminate the story as of the location. It's important, and not always the easiest thing to do."³⁶

Recommendation

While Prison Tourism is alive and well, many only know of the tours happening in abandoned and closed prisons. Alcatraz is no different, being more or less one of the most famous discontinued prisons and tourist sites on the west coast and in the United States itself. Yet what does this say about the methods employed by prisons? Using Alcatraz as a base, I will now give my own recommendation for the Prison Tourism system. While as stated before, each institution is different, has different situations, statuses, and staff, there is an atmosphere of the treatment of a place of imprisonment as a tourist attraction. It is all in how the history and the prison is treated that makes it feel more, or less dark.³⁷

With prisons, honesty is the best key, this can be applied to any history really, but with prisons more so. Quite often they are run by the government, or by private companies, and for those who are open to the public there needs to be this awareness that these inmates are there--or were there--for a reason, a good one. Alcatraz has set this up, and let the public use the space for

³⁶ Craig Glassner(Former Park Ranger), in discussion with the author, March 2016. Found in Appendix.

³⁷ While using Alcatraz as a base, I cannot speak entirely for prisons currently in use allowing for tours and tourism, I will attempt to cover them as well.

what they want and what they need. They are honest about what has happened where, and they are now working to transform the space, while keeping the history that the island holds preserved. The stories of the inmates that inhabit or inhabited the space is very important and focusing on it--rather than architecture of systems--can branch to these other facets of the prisons. The honesty that will be brought about by focusing on the stories of the inmates will help the public connect.

There is a transformative quality to being able to do more with a space than just sit there. Many prisons today are aiming to recuperate those they hold, rather than just hold them. This can work wonders on not only the inmates themselves, but the visitors who come to see them, or where they were. It feels like Alcatraz has been taken back by the public, with its gardens, with its events, with its availability to that public that it serves. It is a place of public history, for the people, by the people. For prisons still in order, this transformative quality can still happen, if done right. Instead of making a spectacle of the space let the prisoners speak for themselves, like the stories speak for themselves at Alcatraz. This way they feel human, not just like a villain to be gawked at.

These prisons would do good to preserve their history while they are making it, too. One of the benefits of Alcatraz being closed relatively recently is that there are many former guards and inmates still living. Public historians can talk to them, touch them, and preserve their stories through their own eyes. Alcatraz has done this, having reunions for prior inmates, security and faculty, getting their oral histories then.³⁸ If a prison shuts down that was important, a few years after, speaking to these same people would be beneficial to the prison and the community around

³⁸ Craig Glassner(Former Park Ranger), in discussion with the author, March 2016. Found in Appendix.

it. It gives the people an understanding of what happens in prisons, and what we should learn from.

Prisons hold people, and they hold stories. Sometimes the stories may not be great ones, and sometimes they hold innocent people with solemn eyes and heavy hearts, but even they have stories to tell. These people are truly the history of the site, and their voices and their stories matters. Collecting that and preserving that is the history. Preserving the prison is preserving the container. Much like a historical house, you still need a story to go along with the feeling the house provides. To preserve these stories and these locations together you need to house them under the same roof.

Different tours can be held, old voices and current ones can be used from the prisoners, guards, and faculty themselves to make the experience richer for visitors, while allowing those who actually lived it and are living it their voice. It gives them a freedom back that many may not expect that they have any longer. Recording these oral histories are important as time goes on to preserve the history that has occurred and that is occurring today. Alcatraz is doing it, and I request and recommend that prisons today do it as well.

Because of the many stories that are produced from prisons, and the amount of crimes committed to these people and by them, it can be considered Dark Tourism in and of itself. While looking at captive humans draws back to the early days of Human Zoos there is a deeper darkness to this than what Alcatraz's "ghosts and ghouls" might have. The stories of the inmates and their experiences in and out of the prison make for a darker side of people, showing off a part of humanity we do not always get to see. Due to this I believe that sharing this humanity is part of the attraction of Dark Tourism. People come to Alcatraz to see Al Capone's cell, to see

these places that people who killed people resided. It is the interest for a human who can cross a line that societally, we can not.

It constantly leads back to the story that the rangers, the inmates, and the faculty in general wish to portray, and how the visitors wish to interpret them. Ghosts are one thing, and are part of the tourist culture at Alcatraz and many other prisons, perhaps even perpetuated by the inmates themselves, but it does not stop people from being drawn in by the stories the inmates have to tell themselves. For that, they need protecting.

Sloss Furnaces, National Historic Landmark

Now we arrive at the third and final location on our list, Sloss Furnaces. Nestled into the city of Birmingham, Alabama, Sloss Furnaces used to be a fully-functioning iron manufacturer. Founded by James Withers Sloss in 1881 as the Sloss Furnace Company, Sloss Furnaces spent its operating life providing much of the iron that pushed the United States to become a great industrial nation. Its furnaces kept producing until 1971, when due to competition with plastic and other forms of materials, it closed its doors for good. Shortly thereafter, however, it was put on the National Register of Historic places in 1974, and three years later the public voted to purchase Sloss Furnaces and turn it into a museum. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1981, and in 1983 it opened to the public as an Industrial Museum and Landmark.³⁹

One of the many points that stand out about Sloss Furnaces' past, just from the website itself, is the use of black labor in the furnace. Run during the time of segregation in the south, much of the hard labor at Sloss being performed by blacks who had their own areas completely

³⁹Utz, Karen. Sloss Furnaces, National Historic Landmark, Birmingham, Alabama. R. L. Ruehrwein, The Creative Company, Lawrenceburg, IN, 2008. Brochure.

separate from the “higher up” white folk. When convict labor came to be in 1928, the unionized workers at Sloss were laid off in favor of cheap, loaned prison labor.⁴⁰ These prisoners were also mostly black. This business practice which has been compared to slavery by the Sloss Furnaces staff themselves.⁴¹

Because of the status of the black workers, many of them were on the unfortunate end of many of the industrial accidents. They suffered from fumes and gas inhalation due to different pieces of machinery being installed incorrectly.⁴² Many of these deaths are not as gruesome as many of the dark and ghost stories make them out to believe. There is, however, some truth to some of the stories, as told in Sloss Furnaces’ own “official” ghost tours: “There is a folk tale called *The Ghost in Sloss Furnaces*, where a worker was killed at another furnace, he fell into the top of the furnace, and his spirit, since this is the last furnace, it’s supposed to still be here because he was, he really loved his job.”⁴³

These stories of the factual, *real* treatment of these workers makes the darkness of the site that much deeper compared to the “ghost stories” that are being perpetuated by certain pieces of media, which we will get into later. Such accidents were not just limited to the Furnaces as well, as prison labor was widespread and used across several states. This is just one of the many facets of Dark Tourism, making it very clear that you do not need a ghost story to make your site dark. Tourism to places that deal with slavery, tragedy, and forced pain onto another human--or animals--includes participation in the dark.

⁴⁰ "Sloss Furnaces - Birmingham, Alabama." Sloss Furnaces. <http://www.slossfurnaces.com/> accessed March 22, 2016

⁴¹ "Sloss Furnaces - Birmingham, Alabama." Sloss Furnaces. <http://www.slossfurnaces.com/> accessed March 22, 2016

⁴² Karen Utz(Curator/Historian of Sloss Furnaces), in discussion with the author. Found in Appendix.

⁴³ Karen Utz(Curator/Historian of Sloss Furnaces), in discussion with the author. Found in Appendix.

Going to the website, it is inviting and professional. It is easy to find and provides content that is informative and good for researchers who may not even be able to visit the physical site. The website is packed with historical content made to sell the site itself; it makes you feel like you will walk away with more than you wanted to know, but that you will be happy about it. Its purpose comes to the forefront where history is shown, and boasted. Their events and proposed opportunities are rooted in the beauty of its history. The old foundries and iron pours are the perfect places not only to tour and to learn about, but for your weddings, baby showers, and more. While it is a national historic landmark, it is its own business as well.

Yet there is no mention of the deaths that happened on site at all. A bit of digging will uncover Halloween events, but nothing more. Owing to its exclusion of dark or dissonant elements from its history, Sloss Furnaces can be called the initiator of this thesis. When I was younger I had a fascination with horror stories. Every Halloween when ABC Family would show their "13 nights of halloween," I would be right in front, watching shows like *Scariest Places on Earth* among more harmless movies like *Halloween Town*. One night on a particularly spooky episode I watched as Linda Blair introduced the site for this episode of *Scariest Places on Earth*, Sloss Furnaces.⁴⁴

I was thrilled, scared, and shaking as I watched people talk about their experiences, spend the night, and discuss the ghosts and bloody history of this spooky industrial pour site. That night, I went to bed and was unable to sleep because of the terrifyingly great ghost stories floating around in my head. What had happened in Sloss I could never forget: men falling into the pours, burning alive, getting caught in gears and ground up. It was too much to be true and I was *afraid*.

⁴⁴"Scariest Places on Earth." IMDb, accessed April 13, 2016 <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0280312/>

Flash forward to my sophomore year of college. During a Public History course I was assigned to read *Public History: Essays from the Field*. For one of the classes we were asked to read a piece by William S. Pretzer, an article entitled “At Historic Sites and Outdoor Museums: A Performance Act,” in which Pretzer talks about Sloss Furnaces. He describes how they run and different things they do in relation to other museums and historic sites.⁴⁵ While I read I was interested, but something was bothering me. I recalled the name Sloss Furnaces, but I wondered, “Wasn’t this place haunted? Why are they not mentioning it?” I took to the internet to do more research, where I found that I was not imagining things; it was the place from my childhood nightmares.

Yet the website treated it as if none of these things had happened. My interest piqued, and I brought it up in the class discussion, only to have my teacher--Dr. Eric Nystrom--bring up Dark Tourism and the possibility there. He had not heard of its possible haunted-ness but didn’t doubt that death had happened on-site. Being an industrial factory it was more than likely that accidental deaths happened, yet, failing to mention them--at least on their website--confused me more than not mentioning the supposed hauntings.

This says nothing, however, of the tours Sloss staff performed or more specifically the Halloween events that they put on once every year. I had so many questions I was eager to ask the staff of Sloss Furnaces and there started my thesis.

Interview with Sloss Furnaces Staff

⁴⁵ James, Gardner. Peter, Lapaglia. William, Pretzer. *Public History: Essays from the Field*. Krieger Pub Co; Revised Edition. April 2004.

Karen Utz is the curator and historian for Sloss Furnaces,⁴⁶ and we spoke by phone. This interview surprised me, yet confirmed many of my hypotheses about the Furnaces. Many of the rumors, hauntings, and other Dark Tourism elements of the Furnaces are wrong. She helped clarify this by explaining that the Halloween event was run by a third-party group called Sloss Fright Furnace who had perpetuated the “dark” history of the Furnaces with their use of the space.⁴⁷ This event in particular obscuring and twisting the “actual” ghost stories and dark past of Sloss Furnaces, making it more--and worse--than what it really is. For some this may have been a good thing, but with Sloss Furnaces title as a National Historic Landmark, it is far from such.

With the questions in my interview to the Sloss Furnaces staff, the profit of ghost tours specifically comes into play due to the lack of discussion over “dark” instances in the Furnaces’ past. I want to know where and when this part of their history comes into play, and how it is advertised to the public. Ghost tours are a lucrative business, one which many parts of the south have already cashed in on, this is discussed by Tiya Miles in her book *Tales from the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era*.⁴⁸ Miles brings the topic to light and explains it in-depth with the help and contact of fellow historians, many of whom have delved into the ghost tour business and writing several books on “haunted history” and the like. Sloss Furnaces is no exception to this, although if you did not visit or take in any other media besides their website, you would not think so.

So why do they keep it under wraps? An industrial tourism site like Sloss already has enough tourism without the ghost and violence factor. It is simply this, they do not try to hide it; it is just not their focus as a National Historic Landmark. During my interview with Karen Utz,

⁴⁶ Karen Utz. *Sloss Furnaces, National Historic Landmark, Birmingham, Alabama*. Brochure.

⁴⁷ Karen Utz (Curator/Historian of Sloss Furnaces), in discussion with the author. Found in Appendix.

⁴⁸ Miles, Tiya. *Tales from the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era*.

she brought up the group that did the Halloween event--Sloss Fright Furnace--and how their depiction of the Furnaces strayed away from what the official National Historic Landmark was really aiming to do for the public.

“It’s called, you know, the Sloss Historic Ghost Tour, and we do it on the weekends and...but it’s really more about the history of the site, learning it in a fun way. It’s completely different from the Halloween event.”⁴⁹

Looking at their separate websites one can see the major differences(See Figure 2 and Figure 3), Sloss Furnaces aiming to be a place of education, while Sloss Fright Furnace’s main objective is to not only scare you, but to prove the existence of ghosts and make visitors believe in them as much as possible. While the Furnaces does rent out its spaces for this use, the attention the event--and the Furnaces in turn--gets is not always welcome.

The publicity for these events does have its positives, it brings in extra visitors during those months and keeps some visitor interest in the future, but it takes away from what they are trying to do in other areas. Karen Utz eventually puts it this way, talking about Dark Tourism in general: “ I guess the, some of the accidents may make it appealing, but really why people come here is the unique process and the way the site was run, and the fact that it’s the only one of its kind in the United States. But these stories and stuff have absolutely nothing, to me it’s all negative.”⁵⁰

Her opinion stems from the fact that many of the tales of death and ghosts are highly exaggerated or completely false. The many people who work on the events and tell these stories are not actual staff of the Furnace at all. There are some ghost tours that are done by the city of

⁴⁹Karen Utz(Curator/Historian of Sloss Furnaces), in discussion with the author. Found in Appendix.

⁵⁰ Karen Utz(Curator/Historian of Sloss Furnaces), in discussion with the author. Found in Appendix.

Birmingham, and then the Halloween event run by Sloss Fright Furnace as well. To counteract this, there has been an actual historical ghost tour in the works at Sloss. “The historic ghost tour is, is really good. ‘Cause you know, if we are going to have that kind of reputation as being haunted, y’know at least we’re gonna tell you why from an historic aspect that the paranormal events that we used to have, we don’t really, they’re not done.” Karen goes on to describe how the tours are actually fun, and bring people in, rather than just trying to scare them like many of the other events do.

This tour is turned into a “living history” event, where some workers may dress up as the certain people who worked and died at the furnaces. The living-history component makes this an event that people can connect to more, and that even children would be more interested in as it is very interactive. At the Furnaces they are finding ways to pull away from the negative light and put it into their own style, which is to preserve and focus on the history.

Recommendation

Industrial Tourism is not typically under the umbrella of Dark Tourism. Here Industrial Tourism shares only a little bit of its space with the term of Dark Tourism due to the mission of Sloss Furnaces being to interpret the history of the furnace itself, and the manufacture of iron. Its darkness has been perpetuated by others, and the aura has stuck to it thanks to the media. My recommendation for Sloss Furnaces is to keep moving forward.

They are doing a good job and people love them for what they do, as their TripAdvisor and Yelp! pages clearly show.

“Sloss is a great historical landmark that has been revitalized as an awesome event space. I have now been out to Sloss a few times and the historical relevance is still really cool. I would really like to go back outside of an event and explore the history side of things.”⁵¹

My only recommendation is that they set down their own ground-rules when it comes to their Dark Tourism. These rules being that they control their own history, if someone wishes to do an “official” portrayal of something dark from Sloss Furnaces’ past, they must go through the site itself. Their history is very important and reaches too many people to be spread so thin and obscured by false information. Working closely with Sloss Fright Furnace, they may be able to get them to pull away from the Furnaces’ image. With their historical ghost tours starting to take off once again, they will be able to set facts straight for those interested in the deaths and “ghosts” that permeate Sloss Furnaces’ reputation, while also being available all-year-round for the interested parties. However, if the company does not agree to these terms and place disclaimers of any false or misleading historical information, then I highly recommend Sloss restricting access from the company creating the Sloss Fright Furnace.

This taking-the-reins stance makes it so that Sloss Furnaces is in charge of its own history. Between its own ghost tours, and the mention of history of convict labor, inhalation deaths, and the like if it wanted to take advantage of its dark history, it very well could. Any place that starts to be taken over by rampant media or rumour-spreading can start to do this. If you are being told that you have a certain reputation, you might as well grab a hold of it in some aspect. Ghost stories can be exaggerated, but only those who know the truth can set things right.

⁵¹ Will B., July 16, 2015, Accessed May 10, 2016, [http://www.yelp.com/biz/sloss-furnaces-birmingham-2?hrid=NgBrrptn6cgFKPVKuSz3Ow&utm_campaign=www_review_share_popup&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_source=\(direct\)](http://www.yelp.com/biz/sloss-furnaces-birmingham-2?hrid=NgBrrptn6cgFKPVKuSz3Ow&utm_campaign=www_review_share_popup&utm_medium=copy_link&utm_source=(direct))

There will always be those who will not believe the truth, but in the end if you can convince a few people of the history that actually happened, instead of what people believe happened, then that is a better victory overall.

Final Interview

I wrote the last five questions I asked of each staff member--Howard, Glassner, and Utz--to link to Dark Tourism as a whole. There are so many facets and genres located within Dark Tourism that it is hard to give any sort of general recommendation. The field of study is still young, and as such, it is easier still to identify, and then look at the parts and after begin to construct your argument. That is what I have tried to do here. Through these final questions that were asked of each site I interviewed, I was able to figure out just where the field of Dark Tourism may be headed from a business and historical standpoint. The questions focused on where these many institutions are headed in trying to draw people toward their sites.

While as long as there are people living and tragedy, I doubt there will ever come an end to the call for Dark Tourism. People will trample through woods, risk their lives in abandoned asylums, and continue to photo, film, and record their experiences and brushes with the tragic. Our morbid fascination with death as a human race will continue on, and Dark Tourism is the result--and provider--of that. My three interviews revealed several ways to portray history, but when it came to what influenced that portrayal, every single answer pointed to one thing: the facts.

History is so important to sites of history that no amount of publicity or glamour should sway it. Historians and the public that surround these locations and know the story are

determined to portray it as accurately as possible. While they may try to cater to their visitors, or to their own personal mission statements, the fact remains at the end of the day that history is what they are loyal to. Spreading false information or trying to “amp” up the excitement by twisting the truth is not something that these sites wish to do, nor do many sites of Dark Tourism, from the many Holocaust museums to the 9/11 Museum. The public wants their history respected, and the historians want to respect it.

Conclusion

Through the three sites discussed here, we have seen the impact that Dark Tourism leaves upon not only its visitors, but its staff as well, the caretakers of the dark and the violent. Dark Tourism within the realm of public history is a difficult subject. After the research I conducted, and the many public historians I spoke to, I can safely say the outlook on Dark Tourism varies from person to person. While many public historians view Dark Tourism as a good thing--like Geordie Buxton, mentioned in Tiya Miles *Tales From the Haunted South*⁵²--others like Karen Utz, are adamantly against it. Buxton in particular realizes the follies of Dark Tourism--specifically ghost tours--but has come to terms with it because of the money and the interest it brings to history and the culture of a city or site itself. The term Dark Tourism spans different kinds of sites and can mean many things as well. Many visitors may not know that they are even participating in it.

Yet these visitors bring previously acquired opinions, knowledge, and misconceptions to the historic site or museum, where they encounter Public Historians and their knowledge of the

⁵² Geordie Buxton is a public historian who--besides writing several books--conducts the Walks in History walking tours while conducting ghost tours on the side. Tiya, Miles. *Tales from the Haunted South: Dark Tourism and Memories of Slavery from the Civil War Era*.

past. Whether it be to correct the misinformation the visitors have gained, or to inform them of things they may have never known before, those managing Dark Tourism sites have a challenge. In general, the view of Dark Tourism from the outside can be very damaging, reducing great historical locations to mere ghost stories. As historians, the bias must come out of the story somewhere, you cannot impose a certain way of thinking upon a visitor and expect them to react well. While no story may be without bias, some biases may be set right, as they may skew a version of history in a way that it was never meant to be skewed--whether it be of a murder case, a prison full of stories, or a perilous iron furnace, these stories will show up almost anywhere you turn, and they must be handled with care.

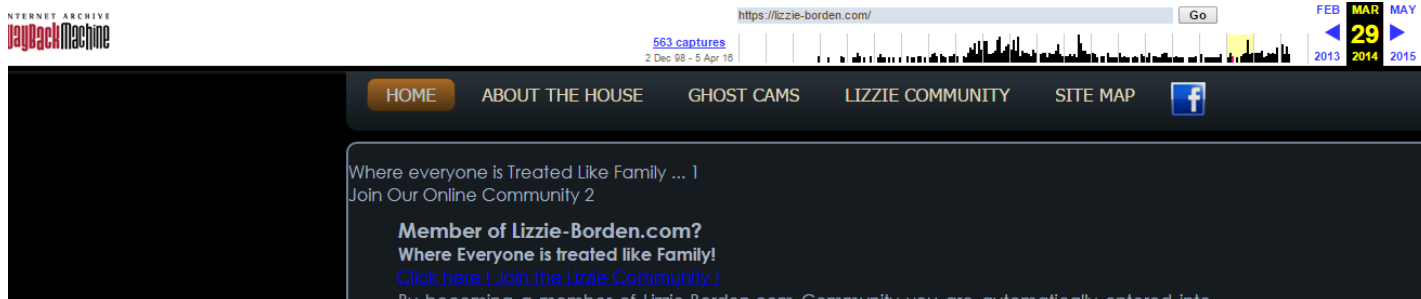
Recommendation

Damage Control is the main theme of my general conclusion. Each location I looked at seemed to have one thing in common: the perception the public brought to them. The media gave each of their visitors a skewed view of the history, and each staff member set out to make it right. Staff sought to provide an educational and transforming experience for each visitor who came with an open mind. While many visitors still come for the “ghosts” that inhabit each site, and to view the gore, the staff can only hope they walked away with something more

My recommendation for these staff is to keep it up. The most effective method is to offer visitors what they may have heard, and then to show them what really happened, or in other words what is really there. A place does not lose its eerie or dark quality over a few corrected opinions. History is meant to be preserved, and if one lets another go on believing a false history,

they are doing that person a great disservice. So to instruct and to lead the public is what is needed from these sites of Dark Tourism.

The public looks to these sites for interesting stories, and for answers to questions that may not always have an answer, but they want to at least feel better about themselves and the history. Dark Tourism sites can provide this sort of healing, and this sort of education for the public. While there may not always be an answer, there will always be a way, and a historian to help the visitor find it. If there is not one, there is always a person in the public interested enough to become that historian. Maybe that person grows up watching that misinformation on TV, through ghost shows, through horror movies, and finds that life may be more complicated than what they see on TV. They may find as well, that that is okay, and that the history they do find, needs to be preserved, no matter how it sizes up to the version on TV.



Figures

Figure 1. A wayback machine captured image of the captured sloga “Where everyone is treated like family!”

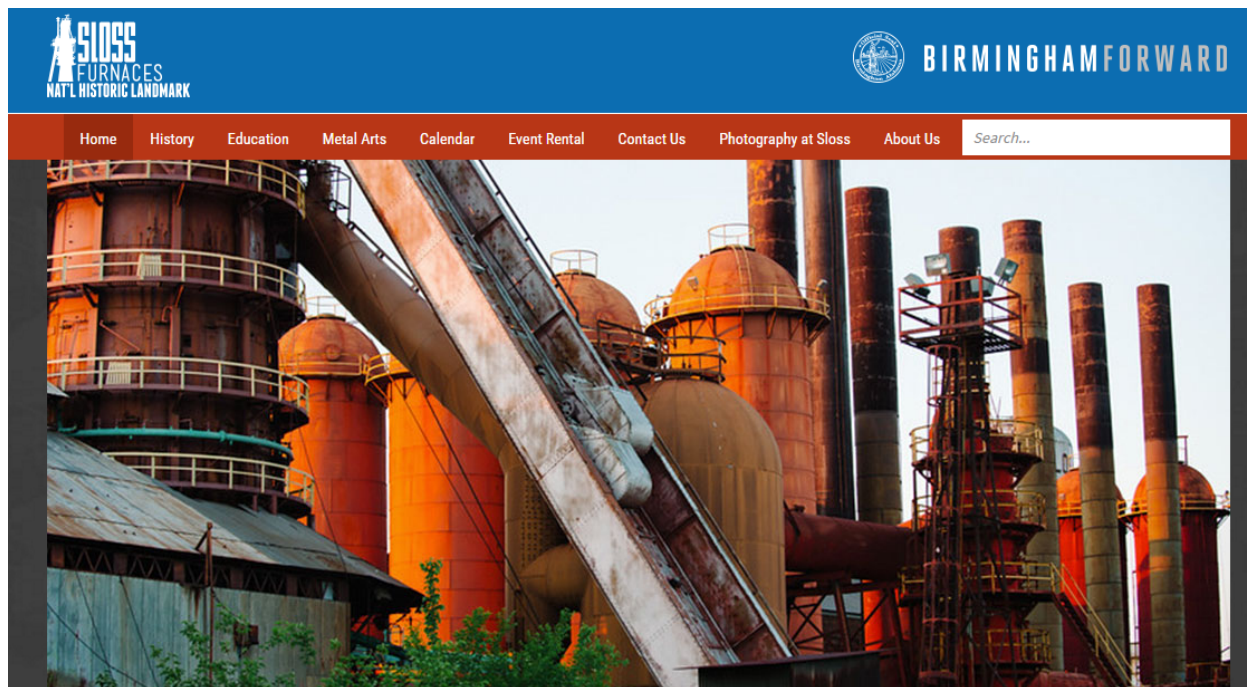


Figure 2. Image of the header from the official Sloss Furnaces National Historic Landmark website.



Figure 3. Image of the Sloss Fright Furnace website header and tabs.

Appendix

Interviewee Lee Ann Howard, Owner/Director, The Lizzie Borden Bed and Breakfast, Fall River, Massachusetts

Interview conducted March 14, 2016 by Jean Pietrowski

Transcribed by Jean Pietrowski on April 9, 2016

Jean: Uhm, I want to know, what is the main mission of the Lizzie Borden Bed and Breakfast?

Lee Ann: The main mission?

Jean: Yeah, like, what is your mission statement?

Lee Ann: Uhm, we don't actually have anything written up, haha. But uh, our mission is to make sure that all our guests are happy. Uhm, we do day tours of the house- We work as- Actually, we're two businesses. We're, in the same business. We are a museum by day--

Jean: Okay-

Lee Ann: From 11-3, and in the evening from 4 O'clock till 10 O'clock the next morning we're a bed and breakfast. So our mission is to make sure that our guests know the true story as far as we know the details to be, of the Lizzie Borden case, and to make sure that our overnight guests have the best possible experience that they can have here.

J: Awesome! Thank you, uhm, I also have--I-I have ten questions, I hope this is okay.

L: No, go ahead.

J: Alright--

L: The phone hasn't rung in 10 minutes, so you're good.

J: Awesome, okay. Does a staff member stay with the guests inside the house overnight?

L: Uh, the evening tour guide will stay til 11 o'clock, and then I'm with the guests till morning when the cook comes in.

J: Awesome, uhm, why did the house choose the methods of advertising and communication it has? Are you considering alternatives to your current approach? Like your website, and how you reach out via facebook and what-not?

L: I'm sorry, can you repeat that?

J: Uhm, I know the question is a little, er, written a little hard. Uhm, why did the house choose the methods of advertising and communication it has? Are you considering alternatives to your current approach?

L: Not really at this moment. We've tried--I've been here for 12 years, almost 12 years now-- We've tried different methods of print advertising and radio advertising over the years. We'll-- we'll do like two or three things in a year, just to see what kind of response we get. And we've actually stopped doing that, because most of our advertising comes from the TV shows that have been here over the years. And they can reach a broader spectrum of-of interest then we could ever do with a print ad.

J: Awesome! Yeah, I noticed that. Uhm, how are re-enactments received by the public? Do they enjoy them? Uh, what goes-

L: Oh yeah, very much so. We have a group called the Pear Essential Players, made up of several of our employees and other, other people that come from really all over the country. I think our furthest...furthest actors come from Ohio at the moment.

J: Oh wow.

L: And they come out for different events, over the last few years, and they help pick the cast for our august performance.

J: Nice! What goes into writing the script for these performances?

L: What's that?

J: What goes into writing the script for these performances?

L: Well, I leave that to Shelly at the moment. Shelly is one of our tour guides, she's been her for many years. She worked with the former owner, she played Lizzie in the house, now she plays Mrs. Borden. And so, she's very theatrical in putting together different view in, for the viewpoint for the guests to have. So if you come one year you'll get one view of the murders, and if you come a different year, you may get the day in, the house in mourning. It may be the day actually of the murders, but it's, y'know, portrayed a couple of days later. Where the house is going into mourning for the Borden.

J: Oh wow, uhm, is there any resistance to the re-enactments? Like has anybody brought up, like, this isn't right?

L: Not that I've heard.

J: Okay!

L: Nothing, nothing directly toward me. And nothing I've seen commented online. At least not so far.

J: Okay! Uhm, how do you set out to reach your audience? And where do you plan to go in the future with this?

L: Uhm, hm, again it's mostly word of mouth. Uhm, we uhm, my brain stopped.

J: It's okay.

L: I need caffeination. It's the end of the day, I just sat down, it's like, oh done, body's done, mind's done. Uhm, again we rely a lot on the TV shows that come through here.

J: Okay--

L: To reach the, uhm, prospective customers. A lot of people already know the story of Lizzie Borden, but they don't know ABOUT the case. They only know of the 40 whacks thing. Uhm, like, just the other day someone had sent me, and I posted it. Of all things, the TV show, Dance Moms, uhm, I don't watch the show, but I mean, the name, Maddy? Did a tribute dance to Lizzie Borden, I'm like, really?

J: I know, I saw that post, I haven't watched the video yet. But I did see it.

L: I mean, she's a great performer. But, I think the subject matter was a little, nn, for someone that young. Plus she was young wearing a bloody dress and all that, holding a hatchet, and again she did great but it was like oh, uh, okay.

J: Yeaaaah.

L: Y'know, we didn't, nobody called us about it. Somebody sent it to me send "Hey, have you seen this?" I'm like, nooo. So you never know where the subject of Lizzie is going to turn up. And that might be to another audience entirely by that direction.

J: Yeah, okay so these, uhm, these next five questions I'm going to ask you are basically the general questions for the different institutions and museums that I'm questioning.

L: Okay

J: Uhm, I'm also interviewing three other places. Alcatraz, Antietam, and uh, Sloss Furnaces down in Alabama. Just to fill you in on that.

L: Where in Alabama?

J: Oh gosh uh, it's off Birmingham, I believe, is Sloss Furnaces.

L: Mm, I have not heard of that. I've been to Alcatraz though.

J: Nice! I'm going to- I uh, I couldn't find their phone number so I have to e-mail them my interview. Sloss Furnaces is actually uh, the place that kind of set this off? And then Lizzie Borden kept me rolling, so you guys are inspiration on this one. Because, uhm, Sloss Furnaces is another "haunted" place, uhm but within the Historian field, it's not mentioned. A lot of the deaths that happened. Because it was an industrial site, they mainly focus on the industrial portion of it and then they go into uhm, some of the racial things. But otherwise, so it was very interesting like, why don't you guys mention this? But okay, back to the questions. Uhm, so what influences your institutions portrayal of history? Public opinion or feedback, government oversight, or both?

L: What influences us?

J: Yeah.

L: Uhm, history. Government has nothing to do with it, we don't get supported by it. Trust me, I pay a lot of taxes. We're definitely not tax exempt. But we're just out to tell the history as we know it. And then we do get people who are, guests that are interested in the paranormal of course. And so we try to, the tour guides will adjust their tour to what feedback we get from the customers as they come in. What they're interested in. Some people aren't interested in history at all, they just want, you know, where are the ghosts?

J: Yeah

L: But y'know, as we go through the rooms, you still give them the history. Y'know, Mr. Borden was found here, Mrs. Borden was found here, the autopsy was done here. And then after the correct information is given, okay, well in this room, y'know this happened!

J: That's in- hm?

L: So uhm, so it's, it's definitely based more on what the customers want.

J: That's great, okay. Uhm, do you believe your institution's relationship with a dark historical story helps promotion and advertising? So like, do the murders help with the promotion and advertising?

L: Oh, definitely. Because people are interested in dark history. Uhm, look at the people who travel to London just to investigate the Jack the Ripper case.

J: Oh yeah.

L: The people who go, as sad as it is, to Auschwitz. Uhm, in this country you have the vullisca axe murder house. Uhm, so there's definitely a, a scene for people who want to investigate and who are interested in the darker side of history.

J: Yeah

L: And, and I mean, I think either this year or next year, I think Johnny Depp is playing H.H. Holmes.

J: Oh yeah, I saw it was either him or Leonardo DiCaprio.

L: Well maybe it was Leonardo, it's-it's one of the two. But yeah, the H.H. Holmes mystery, that's coming to light. And not lot of people know about that.

J: I mean, a lot of people-

L: I mean that happened during the Chicago fair--

J: Yeah, and it got famous a few years from the uh, The Devil in the White City. That's what the movie is going to be based off of.

L: Yeah, that's piques a lot of people's interest. I'm surprised not a lot of people have never even heard of H.H. Holmes.

J: Okay, so what are your primary, what are the primary choices you have made in deciding how to portray your subjects and their history. So how do you, how you portray Lizzie, and what not?

L: Well we don't portray her as a, as y'know as crazy or anything. We portray her as this is Mr. Borden's y'know, youngest daughter, she was 32. We give them the straight facts, and we portray, we lay the facts out and let people decide for themselves.

J: That's great, okay uhm, do you believe attention dark or haunted history is positive? Why or why not?

L: Well, it's positive in the fact that it gets the information out there. Uhm, I mean, look at our, at America's darkest past. You have slavery and you have what America did to the American Indians.

J: Oh yeah.

L: That's as dark as you can get in this country. But it's history, and you can't bury history.

J: No you definitely can't.

L: You can't sugar-coat everything.

J: Alright so, I have one more official question and then I have another question for you. If you were able to set guidelines for institutions like your own are run, what would they be? And how would you portray violence and death, and in what light?

L: Well, how do you portray violence and death? We don't, we don't try to go into the gorey stuff, we just present it as it is. This is what happened, here it is, here are the photos. Y'know, look at them if you'd like to. But we uhm, y'know when we're giving the information in the rooms that crimes did happen, we do tell the guests. Yknow, Mr. Borden did receive 10 blows here on the sofa, Mrs. Borden received 19 blows here in the bedroom. So, again, we give it

straight out. I don't encourage the tour guides to try make it any more gruesome than it is. Because some people, even though they're interested in the history, and that side of the, the darker side of the history. Some of them actually don't want to hear it, they know it happened, but once you hear it spoken out loud, it becomes a totally different entity.

J: Oh yeah, especially in the place where it happened.

L: Right.

J: Alright, so, uhm, the last question, especially for your institution having so much media surrounding it. How do you feel about the way Lizzie's portrayed in certain uh, TV shows or movies?

L: Ah, we had nothing to do with the Lifetime movie. Or the mini-series. Uhm, we only call we got from anyone at Lifetime was asking if we could send them our ah, Mr. Borden's sofa up to Nova-Scotia for the filming and I was like no. You're not going to get my sofa. "Alright fine, we'll build one." Oh well, you do that. Everything else is wrong about the movie, so go ahead. Nobody will notice the couch. And even with the TV shows that come through, it doesn't matter how much correct information you give a TV show, they're always going to get something wrong. There was one show that came through a few years ago and, y'know, they said, only subject was Mr. Borden's daughter Lizzie, and they show a picture of Bridget Sullivan, who was the Borden's maid. So no matter what you tell anybody they're always going to get something wrong. Or, they're going to make it more interesting than it actually is. Just to try and capture their audience. And then we go on damage-control here at the house, "no no," "well where in the parking lot did Lizzie burn her dress?" "No no no, that was in the house." So you can't stop, you can't stop what the media will say about that. Or how it's going to be portrayed.

J: No, okay thank you so much! This actually, this is very good!

L: Thank you, well I hope I helped you out a little bit.

J: You definitely did, I also, I have two more questions. They're not related to anything. Uhm, would it be possible for you to send me any brochures or paper goods you usually give out on tours?

L: Uhm yeah, let me get a piece of paper here.

J: Okay!

Craig Glassner, Alcatraz, San Francisco, California

Interview conducted March 14, 2016 by Jean Pietrowski

Transcribed by Jean Pietrowski on April 9, 2016

Recording starts around the 15 minute mark, due to fault in recording we start at the first question of the general interview.

Interviewee: [unintelligible] by facts. Uhm, we don't pretend things didn't happen that did, uh, we don't pretend things did happen that didn't! Y'know, now facts change, I mean, you get new facts, you get new insights [coughs] excuse me. Uhm, but i-it's, it's it's the policy of the national parks services is to be accurate and factual. Our-Our job is to connect our visitor with the resource, using what we call "Universal Concepts". Uhm, universal concepts are things like, "love" is a universal concept, "pay" is a universal concept. Uhm, so we try to have, somehow make a connection with the visitor, so that this place has some special meaning to them personally. Uhm, and-and that can take many different forms. We don't tell them what that connection is, because it might the smell of the flowers and the-and the-and the baby goslings y'know in this time of year, y'know! And it might be y'know the, escapes! Because who doesn't want to escape once in a while, y'know?

Jean: Okay, so my second question here is, do you believe your institution's relationship with a dark historical story helps promotion and advertising?

I: Nnn...in so far as Hollywood loves Alcatraz. Uhm, y'know, we-we don't advertise. Y'know, we sell out almost all the time. You know we try to, sort of, encourage locals to come out off-season when we aren't sold out. But when we get into the summer we can be selling out 2-3-4 weeks in advance, easy. Uhm, y'know, uhm and-and by and large, it's Hollywood movies *The Rock*, *Escape From Alcatraz*, *Birdman of Alcatraz*. That's what makes us sort of universally infamous or famous as it were. And I always thought that was interesting--well most of the movies, not all, some of are fictional obviously--we've had a couple horror films and *The Rock*, obviously was, ah, fictional. Uhm, but, most of the movies have been loosely termed "Inspired by True Events" although few of them have ever shown them very accurately. Uhm, so people think they know a lot about you know, the guys who escaped in '62, and the know a lot about Robert Stroud, uhm, and but they find when they get out there that there's a lot that the movie didn't get right and there's a lot that was missing. Uhm uhm uhm uhm from the movie, there's a lot of sympathy for Robert Stroud in-in the movie *Birdman of Alcatraz*. Uhm, he was not by any stretch of the imagination a sympathetic character by most accounts.

J: No-

I: And then there we are, y'know, rooting for the guys to escape in 62' escape in the escape from Alcatraz. What's-What's up with that? Well my theory is, they're underdogs. We all feel like underdogs to a certain degree--well, except for Trump--And uhm, we-we therefore even though we know they were criminals, we know they committed crimes y'know. There's no doubt about that, it's not like they were innocent. But we're still rooting for them because they're overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds. Y'know, I always thought of in two ways in terms of--beyond the movies why we're attracted to it. We are attracted to things that we wouldn't really want to

experience. You would not want to experience a runaway cable car on one of the [??] streets in San Francisco, but you'll go on a roller coaster, right?

J: Yeah, no.

I: You do not want to experience the isolation in a steel box uhm, but to do it while-while on audio tour, know that that door is not going to lock behind you, y'know, it's a safe way of exploring something that we wouldn't otherwise want to experience. I mean, I doubt very few people would say "Yeah I'd like to be locked up in a prison for a month to see what it's like." Uhm, so to do it in a safe manner by visiting places like Alcatraz, uhm, I-I think, uhm, it's like horror movies in a way. You wouldn't want to be stuck in that haunted with that guy with the chainsaw, uhm, but the idea of doing it safely in a theater is-is kind of interesting.

J: Yeah, I think that's really what's at the heart of Dark Tourism, and what makes me so interested in it. Uhm--

I: Not-Not to suggest you should, but there was interesting paper that I helped with--uhm, in terms of being interested--that was done by a Kevin Strange, and Michelle Kempa from a Canadian university, and I can't remember---Uhm, which was on shades of Dark Tourism and they did a survey of Alcatraz and Robin Island. Uhm, Y'know, and I-I know when I'm doing research on something I sometimes--I usually avoided things like that because I didn't want it to slant the opinions I was forming as I did my own research. But, uhm, you might check it out after you're done, just to see. They had a very uh, M-Marxist perspective on it, they uh, they were both pretty admittedly well, socialist [??]. But uh, their paper was very interesting and when I was the supervisor on the island for a number of years I made it required reading for any new staff.

J: Oh wow, yeah I'll definitely look into it. I have-uhm, I'm not covering anything to do with the Holocaust, because it didn't happen on like, American soil, I'm trying to stick to America for my paper, but I am sourcing a paper that somebody did over Dark Tourism with the Holocaust, which is--

I: Yeah, Auschwitz and things like that--

J: Yeah, Uhm--

I: Yeah, well I think--well there's different, well, I-I always like to say, the reason we became a national park, at least on the surface is because of military history. We were the first US built fort on the west coast. Now we had taken over some of the spanish-built presidios, but we were the first facility to be up and running with cannons and soldiers that was built by the United States government. But we were the first military prison in the US army system on the west coast, uhm, so that's the kind of history that would generally get a site designated as a National Park. Then there's the penitentiary--which in my opinion in a sense is the LEAST interesting aspect uh, uh, of it, uhm, in a sense--and then there's the American Indian occupation which is the only event that changed the course of US history. Y'know, that lead to immediate changes under the Nixon administration in terms of policies, uh, lands were returned--Blue Lake and New Mexico--policies were ended, like the Termination policy, uhm, it had a huge impact uhm, uh under Richard Nixon in terms of government policy towards uhm, Native Americans, not that there aren't still a lot of problems. So, y'know, o-one of my goals when I worked on the island, was "Well, we got the audio tour that does the cell house, and it does that really well, I want to try and get people interested in the other stories". Uhm, y'know, a-as much as possible. Although I

did do, my guilty pleasure was a “Hollywood’s Alcatraz” where we would take a look at the movies and what they got right, and after that two minutes, what they didn’t get right, so...

J: That’s really great, actually. So my third question here is what are the primary sources you have made in deciding how to portray your subjects and their history.

I: Well, we’re lucky in that most of us on the island--and that’s gonna end some day--have had a chance to interview correctional staff, to interview the convicts that still come out and visit with us. So we’re still compiling the resources for the history of Alcatraz, which is a unique opportunity. Y’know I worked at Fort Point for a while, and I never met anyone who was there during the Civil war, oddly enough. Uhm, but Alcatraz, we still have that connection with the American Indians, even occasionally someone who grew up as a child during the military era, y’know, in the 30s, a young child on the island. So, uhm, as far as resources we have the resources of the National Archives, given that it was always a government operation that there were extensive records that eventually ends up in the National Archives. And we’re, and we’re lucky that this money that holds--at least the penitentiary files--are in the Bay Area, here. In the National Archives uhm, uh records administration's office that’s in San Bruno down by the airport. Uhm, military stuff most of that’s back in the D.C. area in Maryland, but we have a-an amazing resource study which you can download for free on our website. Uhm, that was done by the park service when Alcatraz first became part of the national park system, uhm, and it was done by a historian by the name of Reverend Thompson and it’s called *The Rock* and-we, that’s sort of our bible, if you will? He did extensive research, visited archives all around the country, interviewed people, so unless you’ve learned something new or different that’s sort of our go-back factbook, as it were. But we all do our own research, y’know I’ve done research down at

the uh, down at the, in the archives, the newspaper archives in San Francisco, down at the national archives. Uhm, when I wanted to tell the story of the Native American occupation-- which we didn't KNOW very well at the time I started working on that. I went out looking for people that were involved in the occupation. That were members of that event, y'know, to get their stories. Who often don't agree with each other, but that's the nature of history. So sometimes you would tell the story that "Well, y'know, uhm, so-and-so who was on the island for the first couple of months of the occupation here's what they say happened. But on the otherhand! Here's what someone else says that happened--" Every Time we post something about the graffiti or the occupation we get a lot of--like on our facebook page--there's a lot of "Oh they destroyed the Island!!" And we go "Well, there's no proof of who started those fires, some have claimed it might have been an agent provocateur." Y'know, and then the wrecking ball that came out and knocked down all the buildings at the playground, after the occupation ended, that was clearly the government. So, y'know, and-and then y'know, we, it is, like it or not part of the island's story. And rather than white-wash it, which we did do some of that in the early years, we now recognize the importance of that story. The research done by Dr. Troy Johnson at UCLA and myself and others, many others, have-have, were able to prove the impact that have been had on what was to happen in the White House in several policies. Leonard Garment, who was Nixon's advisor and domestic affair, we did several interview with him before he passed away about the significance of that event and how it led to changes. Sashi Littlefeather who-who refuses the oscar for the Godfather in Marlon Brando's name was occupier at Alcatraz. Woman Mankiller who became the first female chief for her tribe, was an occupier at Alcatraz. John Trugala?? Who went up to Prague to be a musician and a poet and uh,

activist, uh, uhm, was an occupier at Alcatraz. So it had a huge impact on the Native American community, personally? In terms of in what they--Leonard Peltier, who lives at a federal penitentiary for many years, due to his alleged role in a shooting in penridge reservation.

Leonard Peltier was inspired to get involved in politics because he heard about, but never visited Alcatraz about the occupation. So, y'know, and so if we can get people to connect with that story, uhm, y'know I think that's pretty amazing, because to me that's one of the most interesting story on the island. And it does, it does have some dark aspects--there was a death of a young child that lead to one of the original leaders to leave the island, there were a lot of problems that began to occur on the island over time as things began to sort of disintegrate. Uhm and-and we don't pretend those things didn't happen. Uhm, but-but to me it's more of an inspiring story than the fact that Al Capone was suffering from syphilis to the point that there were days where he couldn't remember which his own cell was. Y'know, I mean Al Capone was--that's the two top questions we get on the island--well, the three top questions are, where's the bathroom, where's Al Capone's cell, and where's the Birdman's cell.

J: That's really good, I like to hear that you all are involved in writing the history as well. That's very interesting to me.

I: Because nothing--We have volunteer videographers that we do oral histories uhm, with, a former resident and ranger John Campbell, so a lot of that's over the last 25 years or so that he's done that. I've done 100s of hours doing audio recordings of not just Native Americans, but for example, we met uh through the alumni group that the former residents have uh, a fellow by the name of Bernie, uh, Bernie was a priest. And was coming out as a seminary student out to Alcatraz Island. And he told uhm, in a very powerful interview he did, Bernie Bush is ironically

his name. Imagine being “burning bush” y’know, burning bush? Oh well, nevermind, he gets a lot of jokes about that. Uhm, but he, he talks about, there was this fellow he met out in the wreck yard, and he chatted with him the first time he was out there. Because on the weekends after the religious services they tend to go out in the yard, and uhm, he talked to the guards about him later and they said “Oh don’t waste your time on him, he’s one of the bad eggs. Y’know y’know it’ll be just a total waste of your time.” So of course, being this young idealistic priest he takes it upon himself see him again, every time he comes out. And they become friends and the inmate starts attending mass, and uh, uhm, and actually ends up knitting, while in prison one of the vestments I guess they call them? The priest wore when he was ordained, when-when, Bernie, the student, wore when he was ordained, which he still has to this day. Uhm, and the even- y’know, so here was this guy who was written off, who eventually not only turned his life around, but got released from prison. Sadly to die shortly thereafter in a pedestrian-auto accident, gotten, uh, wrecked by a car. But what a POWERFUL story? Here was a man that was considered irredeemable, that-that through the friendship of one kid, one seminary student uhm, was able to so powerfully affect a life like that.

J: Yeah! That’s amazing. Okay, so my fourth question here is do you believe attention for dark or haunted history is positive? Why or why not?

I: Uhm, I just- Can you repeat the first part of that again?

J: Yeah, do you believe attention for dark or haunted history is positive?

I: Well, we, ah-, as long as it’s history. We, we don’t have any history of hauntings despite what you might read on the internet. We have dozens and dozens of nights on the island, guards that patrol it every night, and rarely are there any stories and usually if there are they’re with the wink

of the eye kind of thing. Now mind you, when someone pays a lot of money to come out with a film crew that has a ghost hunters type show, they somehow always see and hear things and none of us ever do. Uhm, an-and so were we to have a good ghost story, and there are some good ghost stories in some parks, the Lincoln room in the White House is notorious--y'know, and those are stories we would tell if we had them. And we sometimes get accused of just hiding that about Alcatraz, but we don't really have any good stories. Anything you read about the "glowing eyes" or stuff like that, either you can never find an actual primary source for that uhm, you know some things have just grown with the telling or people repeat where they read somewhere else. There were some stories of guys that went a little crazy, the guy who cut off his fingers with an axe. Although, it might have been an accident? But, the-the-there's, there are stories from some of the convicts about things that they thought it was haunted, but y'know, that's one of those areas that you believe or don't believe as a rule. And if you believe, you'll see and hear things that a non-believer won't see and hear in my opinion. Uhm, so, but yeah as far as the dark side, it is part of the island's history. The soldier who lived on the island with his wife and ended killing her and then committing suicide, that's a very dark story. Y'know, but it's a story we tell in the context of the military era. I don't think it's a good or bad thing, what happened in the past certainly can be judged as being good or bad. Clearly slavery was bad, right? Clearly there's things that are bad. Yet our job isn't to tell people what to think, it is to give them facts so they can form their own personal observations. Y'know, "Were inmates mistreated at Alcatraz?" Well, y'know, I could answer that yes, I could answer that no, and give facts to support both sides. But what we want to do is to tell stories so they can make up their own mind about things

like that. We're not there to tell people what to think, we're there to give them facts and information so that they can think for themselves.

J: That's really great, I'm happy to hear to that as well. Alright, so my last question, and I'll let you go. Is uhm, if you were able to set guidelines for the way institutions like your own are run, what would they be? How would you portray violence and death and in what light?

I: Well, y'know, you have to be age appropriate. We get families and school groups, we don't talk about y'know, sodomy which was a common crime amongst soldiers that lead them to be sent to Alcatraz with the younger group. Uh, if we talk about Stroud and his affinity for younger, male, inmates. Y'know we'd do it in a way, y'know, well for example there was one murderer on the island that one theory is that that the one inmate had an interest in the other but he didn't reciprocate. We use words like that so that if you're old enough to know what I'm talking about, you're old enough to understand what I've just said, y'know? You have to change the message based on your audience. A story I would tell a group of Hope children coming to visit Alcatraz who had 19 tribal members that were prisoners in the 1800s. Y'know, is going to be different than the story I would tell to a group of Inner-City kids possibly, who came out to visit. So, the other thing is, it's important to be factual. To not pretend the bad things didn't happen, and not make it out to be, it shouldn't be telling people what to think. You should be using facts to illuminate the story as of the location. It's important, and not always the easiest thing to do, y'know, I know a lot of people who shy away from the occupation story, because it is fairly controversial and it can push buttons in some people's minds. I would never talk about the occupation in front of a former resident who grew up on the island, because to them the Indians ruined their homes! After the event. Y'know so, "Know your audience" is a common phrase you

hear in the Park Service, get your facts straight and-and by knowing your audience I mean, depending on what country they're from, what age they are y'know factors like that, what's the story that's going to help them connect to the resource.

J: Okay! That's great, uhm, I do have two more questions, just for the record because I did miss a little bit at the beginning with the recording. What is your name?

I: Craig, C-R-A-I-G, Glassner, G-L-A-S-S-N-E-R.

J: Awesome, I just want to give you the proper credit when I ah--

I: And to clarify I currently still work in the park. I do the e-mail for Alcatraz among other things, but I am no longer located on the island. But I did for 22 years, work as an interpretive ranger on the island before coming over to our park headquarters here. To do some of the same stuff? I still do the webpage for Alcatraz, and I was just out there. We had a uh, American Indian reunion from the occupation here a few weeks ago and I helped put that together and went out for that. So, but I'm not stationed on Alcatraz for the last ah, roughly two years.

J: That's okay! Honestly, all the information you gave me was amazing.

Karen Utz, Curator/Historian of Sloss Furnaces, National Historic Landmark, Birmingham, Alabama

Interview conducted March 14, 2016 by Jean Pietrowski

Transcribed by Casey Franklin on April 10, 2016

J: Yeah, because like I said, I was one of those kids watching the...the haunted things, and I did see Sloss Furnace when I was younger. And, flash forward, I was in a public history class two years ago and we actually read about Sloss Furnace(s?) in one of my textbooks. And I'm like, wait, isn't this the haunted place?

K: Which makes us cringe--

J: Yeah, okay, I definitely understand that, especially if that's not the sort of thing that you want to portray.

K: No, we don't.

J: Which is really interesting and really good. Okay, so like I said I have ten--

K: Oh, if you worked here for forty-five years, and your kids grew up in the Sloss quarters and you still came back to reunions, would you want to be portrayed like that?

J: No, no.

K: Okay, exactly.

J: Like I said, I definitely understand that and I definitely think a lot of these, especially those people that perpetuate hauntings and really amp up the death and dark tourism--

K: Of course they do, of course.

J: --mainly do it for the tourism and not because they really care about the history.

K: And there's always groups like that. I mean, we are a big public entity, so you're gonna get all kinds of y'know, wackadoodles. So it's just, y'know, you just deal with it.

J: Yeah. I actually just got done with my interview with Lizzie Bordon and even then, they get so many people, which is...

K: Yeah, but they're known for that, we're not known for that. We're...we're known for being an iron-producing plant.

J: Very true.

K: So, I mean, Lizzie Bordon, I mean that's obvious. Of course you're going to get questions like that. That's the only reason I would go there. It's because everybody knows the story. To me

that's apples and oranges, but...but I'm sure they do get, I'm sure there's other aspects of the woman's life that they want to put out there as well.

J: Yeah, I mean there, at least the owner of the house currently wants to put out the history; which is pretty interesting to me, 'cause considering if you look at a lot of the media out there and a lot of what they portray on their website, it doesn't really seem that way. But it's very interesting. Okay! So I have ten questions, like I said. I'm going to start with the site-specific questions: What part does industrial death play in the tours that you give?

K: [a considerable pause] None.

J: ...Okay! [giggles] What parts of the Furnaces' history is portrayed openly? So like, what do you actually talk about during tours and things like that?

K: Oh, that would take forever--this is an iron-producing plant. We talk about the process, we talk about the people. I mean, it's a 32-acre site.

J: Oh wow!

K: So we talk about everything. You know, we talk about all the equipment, all the buildings, we just kind talk about the complete iron-making process. So--and the people of course.

J: Yeah! Okay, Is the race of the workers a frequent topic of discussion?

K: The race?

J: Yeah.

K: Oh yeah, you know, if you think about it, we are in Birmingham. Birmingham is a city in the "New South." And, but it was very much tied into the Old South, meaning the first people who ran the site were ex-plantation owners and y'know, hold on, Jean, just a second.

J: Alright.

K: Okay, sorry. But in the Twenties, that's when you see the site become a little bit more modern and then, but segregation--we had a white back-house and a black back-house. But you would find this all over the country until the Sixties, of course the federal government said, "you can't do that anymore," and of course the southern states said, "well we can do it if we wanna do it." And, but Sloss is not going to hire its first African-American manager until the Sixties, and it was somebody that had been at Sloss a very long time. But you know, it's funny, we do have reunions for our retired workers since we closed in the 1970's and black workers come, white workers come, and they really just talk about what they did. Because if you think about it, this job for African-Americans and whites at the time, it was a step up from what they did previously. And so they were very proud of this job, so it's not, I mean, segregated? Absolutely. Unfortunately, absolutely. And--Oh, you know, and again, you could only reach a certain level at any southern plant, and then of course after World War II, this is really gonna start changing, and then in the sixties it definitely changes.

J: Okay, that's great. Alright, so my fourth question is, how long have the Halloween events been running?

K: I have no clue. I've been here since 19--I mean, I've been here since 2002, but I think maybe the 90's?

J: Okay.

K: Again, that's not a Sloss event, so...we don't really--it's just the site's rented out by a certain venue that puts it on. No Sloss workers are involved in it.

J: Okay, that's good to know. And you said--

K: No Sloss staff, it has nothing to do with our National Historic Landmark status. It just, it's like if you want to rent our site out for a wedding or a conference, it's the same thing.

J: Oh wow, okay. And you said that these run for like, two months around October?

K: I'd say about a month and a half.

J: Okay!

K: From September to the first of November.

J: Okay, so do you run ghost tours at all, then?

K: We used to do an historic ghost tour that we're gonna resurrect, but those are from like, stories of Sloss, it's called a [indistinct, can't make out words 6:30 ish], because you will walk the site in the evening, and we give newspaper articles about some of the men, how they--where the accidents happened. And there is a folk tale called The Ghost in Sloss Furnaces, where a worker was killed at another furnace, he fell into the top of the furnace, and his spirit, since this is the last furnace, it's supposed to still be here because he was, he really loved his job. But it's more of a...it's called, you know, the Sloss Historic Ghost Tour, and we do it on the weekends and...but it's really more about the history of the site, learning it in a fun way. It's completely different from the Halloween event.

J: Okay, that's actually very, very good to know. Do you believe that these ghost tours are profitable for the institution, and do they influence your advertising?

K: Not at all. And I hate them. [laughing together] Now, the historic ghost tour is, is really good. 'Cause you know, if we are going to have that kind of reputation as being haunted, y'know at least we're gonna tell you why from an historic aspect that the paranormal events that we used to have, we don't really, they're not done. The city of Birmingham owns Sloss Furnaces and so

they don't really promote anything like that at all. But we have a foundation and sometimes they'll take people around at night and do a paranormal event, but that...nobody handles that that is part of the Sloss staff. The main Sloss staff.

J: Okay. So you do...you don't like the Halloween, but you do like the historical ghost tour?

K: Well, if you think about it, it's...yeah. The historic ghost tour because it's based on historic facts and newspaper articles from the 1800's and like in the blown-engine building , we find a story, where there was maybe a gas leak in the [blown/ blowing? 8:43] engine building, and then we have someone dressed up as a worker from the 1800's that will talk about that. It's like living history.

J: Yeah. Okay, I definitely understand that, it's definitely fair. Okay, so that's it for the questions I have specific for Sloss Furnaces. I'm going to be going into the general questions now, these have to deal with more of government and whatnot. So the first question is, what influences your institution's portrayal of history? Public opinion and feedback, or government oversight, or both?

K: What influences our history?

J: Yeah.

K: The actual history. The government has nothing to do with it or, although the government did help put this back together. It was the largest historic American engineering records project in the history of the United States. But what influences...ask the question again?

J: So what influences your institution's portrayal of history?

K: Just...the facts. The people that worked here, all the records that were left, our archives, our collection. Nobody really influences us, we try to y'know, history is...you go to the primary

sources. Which are all the records that were kept here and the people that left stories. And the archives and places like that.

J: Awesome, that's actually...I'm very happy to hear that. I got that answer from the Lizzie Borden House as well.

K: Oh good!

J: Yeah, so it's, I'm very happy to see that history is basically what's driving everything. Alright--

K: Oh, absolutely. I mean if you're a National Historical Landmark, you'd better be, because...that, you could get your status taken away.

J: Mhm, okay...so the second question I have is, do you believe your institution's relationship with the dark historical story helps promotion and advertising?

K: No.

J: Okay.

K: But that's coming as the curator, who would rather see just the historic facts and...because it's just not...it's not a factual part of it. So I guess the...y'know I guess the, some of the accidents may make it appealing, but really why people come here is the unique process and the way the site was run, and the fact that it's the only one of its kind in the United States. But these stories and stuff have absolutely nothing, to me it's all negative.

J: Yeah, okay. My third question is, what are the primary choices you have made in deciding how to portray your subjects and their history?

K: Again, just by the factual evidence that was left.

J: Okay.

K: Interviewing retired workers, we shut down in 1970, there are over 100 oral histories left. And we see from that and y'know, all the financial records that date back to the 1800's are here. And so we have all of that as well. So we're quite fortunate.

J: Yeah! That's actually very impressive, I didn't know you had so--

K: We have a very impressive archival ledger and financial records collection.

J: And that's great that you have so many oral histories from past workers.

K: Absolutely. We are lucky.

J: Okay, so I feel like I already know the answer coming from you from this one, but my fourth question is, do you believe attention for darker haunted history is positive?

K: No, not at all. Not for here, I mentioned--what did the Lizzie Bordon House say to that?

J: So--

K: That's just part of what they are though, isn't it?

J: Yeah, they believe it's very positive, especially if it is the history--

K: That makes sense, yeah.

J: --that they're dealing with. Especially since, yeah, they are dealing with the murders of the Bordons and whatnot. Some of it especially if construed out of like, proportion, isn't positive, but otherwise they were pretty...for their position at least.

K: Why is there even a Lizzie Bordon--why is she even important? I mean, there's not a Ted Bundy museum.

J: Well I mean, because it's mainly a house museum, considering the house was from a specific time point and--

K: Oh, I see. And that was something very rare to have happen back then.

J: Yeah, having a female murderer and then not having her indicted.

K: Exactly. There, that's a very good point.

J: There's a lot of--[laughing together] Alright, so my last question here is, if you were able to set guidelines for the way institutions like your own are run, what would they be and how would you portray violence and death, and in what light?

K: Now, say that again, please? I'm sorry.

J: Sorry, that was a long one. If you were able to--

K: No, it's just noisy in here.

J: Oh, okay. If you were able to set guidelines for the way institutions like your own are run, what would they be and how would you portray violence and death, and in what light?

K: Well, I would portray an industrial site like...a site of the history. Of researching y'know, why the accidents happened. For example, y'know, we found out that most of the people, men, that passed away here, if there were accidents, because of the fumes. And so they learned to capture the gasses and I, we, mark it a part of the learning process. It's like space. Y'know there were a lot of men that died trying to land on the moon. Look at the mercury capsule. Because it was a learning process, it's a new frontier, and it seemed like when these accidents happened was when they installed a new piece of machinery and they realized that they had installed it incorrectly. So I think we portray it as a learning process and the fact that you should respect this type of work because it was dangerous. But even more so, it's amazing there weren't more accidents. But because these men were very skilled and they took their job seriously, and because of that, there were very few accidents, y'know after they mechanized in the 1920's. So it is part of the story,

but it's not a part to be....oh, what am I trying to say? Y'know, to...to...we're not a Disney World. I mean, it's not to be like, promoted, to bring people in.

J: Yeah.

K: It's just part of the story, and a very small part of the story. Not to say the men who lost their lives, y'know...it was important, but just, it's just not who we are. It's not what makes us y'know, a 20th century bi-furnace site.

J: Yeah.

K: It is part of the story, though, and it needs to be told. We don't try to cover up accidents, but y'know, with this Halloween event, it's just really hard to play it down. And it's very, very discouraging when people try to play it up.

J: Yeah. Alright, that's my questions. I have one more question, though.

K: Sure!

J: Would it be possible for you to send me any brochures, any like, papers that you might give to visitors on tours and whatnot?

K: Oh absolutely, we have a small book I'd be happy to send to ya.

J: Awesome! Thank you so much.

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