

Articles

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Public Memory in Gary, Indiana: An Examination of the Elbert H. Gary and Michael Jackson Memorials

Written by Amalia Shanks-Meile and Elizabeth LaDuke

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The City Methodist Church, located in downtown Gary, Indiana, is the epitome of urban decay. What was once an impressive structure is now in ruins. The church's current state mirrors the decline of the city itself. The massive gothic cathedral is riddled with holes in its walls and ceilings. It is filled with debris that has accumulated with time. The church was built in 1926 at a cost of one million dollars donated by the company that built Gary, the United States Steel Corporation, as well as the city's namesake, Judge Elbert H. Gary. It seemed in 1926 that the church, just as the city of Gary itself, would permanently preserve the memory of Elbert Gary. This has not been the case. On a wall within the church a spray-painted message reads, "M.J.'s home."^[1] While it is unclear exactly what the message's author meant, the appearance of Michael Jackson's name anywhere in Gary, Indiana, is unsurprising. Jackson has become the figure synonymous with Gary, Indiana, rather than the man for whom the city was named.^[2]



Photo of City Methodist Church taken January 27, 2012, by Amalia Shanks-Meile.

Gary is the home of monuments honoring both Elbert Gary and Michael Jackson. In front of Gary City Hall stands a statue of Elbert Gary, U.S. Steel's C.E.O. from 1901-1927. The statue of Gary's founding father was erected in 1958, the same year that Michael Jackson, Gary's most famous son and the future "king of pop," was born. Jackson's death in 2009 prompted a monument to be built and later placed in front of his boyhood home. Unlike the Elbert Gary statue, the former Jackson home is a frequently visited site. Elbert Gary has become a distant figure of the city's past, whereas Michael Jackson's memory, as the graffiti hints, is alive and thriving. Gary and Jackson serve as useful historical figures of contrast: a study of Judge Gary and U.S. Steel's historical roles in the city's development and their respective diminishment in contemporary relevance provides insight into the environment Jackson came from and the city that reveres him today.

The erection of the Elbert Gary statue by U.S. Steel stood as an unsuccessful attempt to perpetuate the city's founder's memory. The obvious explanation for the forgetting of Elbert Gary is the passage of time – over fifty years have passed since the erection of the statue and over eighty years since his death. Many cities' founding fathers have floated to the back of local citizens' minds as decades pass, and Elbert Gary is by no means exceptional in this respect. Still, the passage of time does not completely account for the neglect of Elbert Gary's memory. The fact that Elbert Gary is forgotten

and Michael Jackson remembered also reflects a complex socioeconomic evolution the city of Gary has experienced in its one-hundred plus years of existence.

Gary still holds tightly onto the memory of Michael Jackson for obvious reasons. There is no question that he is the most successful and famous product of the city. For the Gary community, many of whom struggle to attain economic stability, Jackson stands as a symbol of the American dream. His rags-to-riches story represents the hopes of those in Gary who strive to overcome poverty within a city that, for many, lacks opportunity. Besides Jackson's accomplishments, the Michael Jackson-Gary, Indiana, connection may be the key to the city's rejuvenation. The Jackson home, where the family resided from 1950-1968, has become an important attraction to Michael Jackson fans that swarm the Gary Midtown neighborhood on significant Jackson anniversaries. Also, talks of a Michael Jackson performing arts center, museum, and park could potentially bring much-needed jobs and revenue to the downtrodden city (although there has long been skepticism as to whether these projects will ever come to fruition).^[3]

An examination of these two memorials and the meaning they hold for the city's residents provides insight into Gary's past and present. Elbert Gary and Jackson define two dissimilar eras in the city's history and reflect the transition between these two distinct periods. While Elbert Gary shares a similar fate as other cities' local historical figures, it is highly unlikely that he could become an object of admiration for Gary citizens today. In the historical narrative of U.S. Steel, *Steel Serves the Nation* (funded and published by the company), the city of Gary is described as "a monument to Judge Gary."^[4] The statement conveys the belief that Elbert Gary would have an indelible place in the city's history and that U.S. Steel's role as the driving economic force of the town would further ensure the preservation of Judge Gary's legacy. But Elbert Gary's legacy in Gary, Indiana, is inseparable from U.S. Steel; no longer is Gary the steel center of the world, and no longer does U.S. Steel put food on the table for the majority of the city's inhabitants. Consequently, Judge Gary is no longer relevant to a city whose historical crises correspond with the dramatic decline in U.S. Steel's employment of Gary citizens. Had Gary, Indiana, not undergone such drastic changes, Elbert Gary's memory would have likely faded all the same. He was always a distant figure to Garyites – he never lived in the city and rarely visited. However, Elbert Gary's indifference to the institutionalized racism practiced in U.S. Steel plants, his staunch anti-union stance, and his refusal to address his employees' poor working and living conditions have created an unlikelihood of his legacy ever being resurrected in a positive light in Gary, Indiana.

U.S. Steel and the Founding of Gary

In 1901, Elbert Gary orchestrated the formation of U.S. Steel, a massive steel corporation and the largest conglomerate ever assembled up to that point. The corporation was a collection of 213 separate manufacturing plants and transportation companies. The purpose of the merger was to minimize "unhealthy" competition. The company was accused from the onset of being a monopoly, but

successfully fought attempts by the federal government to dissolve the trust. Elbert Gary's prominent role in organizing the formation of the conglomerate earned him the job of C.E.O., a post he held until his death in 1927. U.S. Steel was the first billion dollar corporation in history, and Elbert Gary's place at the head of the helm positioned him as one of the most powerful men in the country.^[5]

The founding of Gary, Indiana, in 1906 sprang from a combination of factors. The newly formed U.S. Steel had been struggling to supply the increasing steel demand in the Midwest, and Elbert Gary needed to find a large piece of land to build a major steel complex. U.S. Steel's first president, Charles M. Schwab, initially suggested a new location be placed in Pennsylvania, but it lacked the railroad and water transportation opportunities of a Chicago area position. Judge Gary proposed a spot by Waukegan, Illinois, but a number of U.S. Steel officials dismissed the idea because they feared the "political climate of progressive era Illinois" would not be conducive to company interests. Eventually, U.S. Steel officials looked to Northwest Indiana due to its proximity to Chicago and the region's railroads. The Hammond area was considered, but because the land in Hammond was too expensive, company men began to contemplate a section of uninhabited swampland and sand dunes at the southern shore of Lake Michigan. Land was cheap, Chicago was just thirty miles away, and the spot offered convenient transportation of Minnesota iron ore via Lake Michigan and Chicago's railroads. Moreover, Chicago would provide Gary with a consistent labor supply.^[6]

The burgeoning industrial center attracted thousands of unskilled European immigrants looking for work. Unfortunately, city planning was not the main priority of U.S. Steel, and overcrowding and deplorable living conditions for unskilled workers became the visible consequence of poor city planning. The singular purpose of the town, from the company's perspective, was the manufacturing of steel; as a result of this thinking, unskilled workers' interests were never addressed. The failure of U.S. Steel to properly and humanely plan a town had far-reaching consequences for the city.^[7]

U.S. Steel wished to avoid the same problems in Gary, Indiana, that had plagued the "Pullman Experiment," another company town on the outskirts of Chicago built for the sole purpose of housing workers. The Pullman fiasco – along with the negative press which haunted the project – was still fresh in the minds of U.S. Steel executives as they built Gary, Indiana. George Pullman, founder of the Pullman Palace Car Company, had hoped to create a content and stable workforce through the creation of an aesthetically pleasing town complete with a school, park, library, church, sanitation services, and company-provided housing. His motives were not absolutely altruistic: Pullman believed he could avoid strikes and the bitter conflicts between labor and industry through effective city planning and strict control of all aspects of workers' lives. The experiment occurred in a bubble, with the town almost completely isolated from any other inhabited area. Problems arose primarily because of Pullman's economizing drive. He saw the town and its inhabitants as a business venture, and workers were exorbitantly charged through the privatization of amenities such as water, sanitation, and utilities. Pullman not only wanted the town to pay for itself, but wanted to turn a profit. The violent

strike in Pullman in 1894 has been attributed primarily to a reduction of wages without a reduction in the already-inflated home rental rates, but the wage cut was likely the final straw in a series of workers' grievances. Early twentieth-century industrialists like Elbert Gary took to heart the failure of George Pullman to control labor through extensive city planning.^[8]

Officials of U.S. Steel did not share Pullman's ambition to create an industrial utopia, and many felt that the Pullman fiasco proved such a thing impossible. The company openly stated that the founding of Gary, Indiana, was not an attempt to create a model town; instead, the city was simply a practical necessity. Because of events in Pullman, U.S. Steel chose not to provide housing for unskilled workers and modeled the city based on a "limited involvement philosophy of town planning."^[9] U.S. Steel only provided housing within its limited jurisdiction and did little to prevent the surreptitious real estate practices of unscrupulous businessmen south of the Wabash. As historian James B. Lane explains, "Successful city planning never became a reality because U.S. Steel put less emphasis on the welfare of the community than on efficiency and profitability."^[10]

Gary's Founding Father

Elbert Gary lobbied to have U.S. Steel's new city named after him, and this desire would forever tie him to the steel town. Born on October 8, 1846, he came from humble beginnings, growing up on a farm in Wheaton, Illinois. His parents were devout Methodists, and he grew up in a household where piety and morality were emphasized. From an early age he was a devoted student. Upon the completion of his school career, he graduated first in his class at Union College of Law in 1868. He started a law practice with his uncle and quickly gained a reputation as a skilled lawyer. In his community and career, he steadily became more prominent. When Wheaton was officially incorporated in 1890, Gary became the city's first mayor. The capstone of his legal career was in 1882 when he was elected as a judge in DuPage County. The next year he was elected president of the Chicago Bar Association.^[11]

Although Gary's legal work was what began his life of success, his greatest legacy emerged from steel. In 1897, banker and financier J.P. Morgan called on Gary to consult on the merger of several steel companies, which would ultimately form the Federal Steel Company. Gary had innovative opinions on the matter. He argued that an "integrated production scheme" encompassing all aspects of the steel production process – a singular ownership of all facilities involving raw materials necessary for steel production and the transportation systems that moved these products – would dramatically increase efficiency and profitability. Gary's business savvy impressed Morgan to the extent that he offered Gary the job of president of the newly formed Federal Steel Company. In 1901, J.P. Morgan bought the Carnegie Steel Magnate, thus leaving Elbert Gary to manage the rising United States Steel Corporation. He effectively became the spokesperson for Big Steel. Judge Gary (as he continued to be called) at once became a national celebrity, appearing in advertisements, such as for a popular breakfast product, Cream of Wheat. Newspapers and magazines regularly featured Judge Gary, and in

1926 he even made the cover of *Time Magazine*. The cover story stated, “U.S. Steel was the sublimation of Judge Gary. He was the personification of U.S. Steel.”^[12]

The Steel Strike of 1919 and Elbert Gary’s Legacy

Because of Gary’s close identification with U.S. Steel in the public eye, he would be considered the man most responsible for the company’s treatment of workers when strikes broke out nationally following World War I. The Steel Strike of 1919 illustrated Elbert Gary and U.S. Steel’s innate fear of unionism. The cultural climate born of World War I patriotism set the stage for the strike as well as the strike’s failure. Steel workers had been hailed as domestic heroes during the war, but by war’s end workers felt uncompensated for their sacrifices. The emphasis on democracy and liberty that comprised patriotic war rhetoric created a sense in some workers that the existing corporate structure of industry was antithetical to democratic ideals. Many workers felt that their interests went entirely unrepresented and unvalued at the corporate level.^[13]

For the most part, the steel industry successfully fought unionism since the 1890s, but by the end of World War I union men felt that conditions were particularly advantageous for workers to push the union issue. The American Federation of Labor (AFL) formed the National Committee for Organizing Iron and Steel Workers, which functioned as a large conglomerate of steel-affiliated unions. For a time, it seemed that President Woodrow Wilson and the public at large sympathized with steel workers’ demands for collective bargaining and better working conditions. After all, unskilled laborers, who were disproportionately African American and foreign-born, worked twelve hour days, seven days a week, for meager hourly wages. Conditions were often unsafe, especially for the unskilled. Workers clearly had some valid grievances. Public opinion, however, took a radical turn, and the real issues of the strike were distorted through a propaganda campaign on the part of U.S. Steel.^[14]

The steel men had several potent weapons at their disposal in their battle against unionism: financial prosperity from the WWI manufacturing boom, power over local city governments, and influence over the press. Due to the 1917 Russian Revolution, a strong anti-immigrant, anti-communist sentiment spread throughout the United States. Workers held strikes in U.S. Steel plants across the nation. Judge Gary stood as the figurehead of the “open shop” debate once the Steel Strike of 1919 began in September. He maintained that collective bargaining made it impossible for non-union workers to find a job and insisted his refusal to meet with union leaders stemmed from his concern for non-union workers. Moreover, the twelve-hour day, seven-day week would be impossible to abolish from a production standpoint, Gary contended. And most effectively, he publically claimed that the strike was led by socialist radicals who exploited ignorant immigrant workers.^[15]

Elbert Gary argued that unions sought “the closed shop, soviets, and the forcible distribution of property.”^[16] On one level, such a statement reflects a reality of the strike; there certainly existed

strikers who wished to see the industrial system fundamentally restructured, with more even or equal balance of power between workers and those at the top. On the other hand, Gary's statement reveals an overall wish to spin the strike as only radical in the public mind and dismiss the existence of legitimate complaints. Gary insisted that he had an open door policy, yet his office was in New York City, a far distance for most of his workers. When questioned in a Congressional hearing about his strict open shop dogma, he was unable to provide to the committee a clear method through which a steelworker could communicate grievances to any company official higher than a foreman. His argument that a closed shop took away an individual worker's choice neglected the fact that a worker had no avenue to voice complaints to higher-ups. Tensions between labor and Big Steel culminated in a national strike, and Gary, Indiana, was one of many steel towns affected.^[17]

On October 4, 1919, a minor altercation between African American strikebreakers and union members escalated into a riot once Gary police came to break it up. The pro-management mayor, William F. Hodges, called in U.S. troops led by General Leonard Wood. General Wood enthusiastically put down the strike and claimed Gary a hotbed of radicalism. Some workers did desire "industrial democracy" as much as better working conditions, and whether these radicals comprised the majority or the minority of strikers was a nationally debated issue in 1919. Unions insisted the strike was politically moderate, while steel officials claimed the strike as inherently radical. Still, General Wood likely had some bias in how he approached the strike. Wood was not only actively communicating with Elbert Gary about the strike, but he also had aspirations to be the Republican nominee for president and hoped for Judge Gary's support in the endeavor. With Gary under martial law and basic civil liberties taken away, the strike was effectively dead.^[18]

While both skilled and unskilled workers cooperated in the strike, African Americans were generally excluded by unions and solicited as scabs by steel companies. The preexisting racial and ethnic tensions were exacerbated by the strike, which may have had long-term effects on Gary. These racial divisions did not disappear with the end of the strike, and stand as one of the more devastating consequences of the action. The institutional racism seen in U.S. Steel plants was common business practice during this period, but any ethnic divisions present prior to the strike were consequently intensified and remained so long afterwards.^[19]

Following the strike, public sentiment toward Elbert Gary in the city would likely have depended on a citizen's position on the strike. Unskilled workers would have more reason to hold resentments against Elbert Gary and U.S. Steel than privileged members of the community. Following Elbert Gary's death in 1927, Gary, Indiana, went into a two hour official mourning, but the business world and prominent members of the Republican Party mourned him with greater fervor.^[20]

The Elbert H. Gary Statue's Dedication

The Elbert H. Gary statue, an idea conceived at a U.S. Steel luncheon during Gary's 1956 Golden

Jubilee, was made possible through a fifty thousand dollar donation from the corporation. The statue was meant to boost morale and good feelings toward the company. During U.S. Steel President Clifford F. Hood's dedication speech, he spelled out the symbiotic nature of the city's relationship with the company. The corporation employed the vast majority of the city of Gary's workers, and, indirectly through tax payments, the industry supported much of the city's public services. In thirty years, this would no longer be so.^[21]



Photo of Elbert H. Gary statue taken August 3, 2011, by Amalia Shanks-Meile.

The statue of Elbert Gary, crafted by English sculptor Bryant Baker, sits in the city's downtown district, just outside of Gary City Hall. While the surrounding buildings on adjacent street corners fall into disrepair, the monument remains in nearly pristine condition. The granite base contains a simple inscription: "Elbert H. Gary 1846-1927 Lawyer, Industrialist, Benefactor, Founder in 1906 of the City of Gary." Gary's face is distinguished, serious, and tense. The next notable quality of the work is the detail of the clothing. Elbert Gary himself dressed formally, often wearing a three-piece suit and jacket in his portraits. His right hand grasps a book with the word "Law" inscribed onto it.

One of Baker's most acclaimed statues, known as *Pioneer Woman*, is markedly unlike the Elbert Gary statue in that it displays a different approach to commemorating a historical figure. The contrast between these two figures can most easily be seen in the inscriptions: Elbert Gary's plaque contains the key facts of his life, while *Pioneer Woman's* inscription is more passionate. The *Pioneer Woman*

plaque states, "...in appreciation of the heroic character of the women who braved the dangers and endured the hardships incident to the daily life of the pioneer and homesteader in this country." The choice to commemorate the pioneer women in such a manner indicates that the representation is relatable. Elbert Gary's inscription, in contrast, is unemotional and concise.^[22]



Photo of Roman fasces graffiti in City Methodist Church taken January 27, 2012, by Amalia Shanks-Meile.

Unlike *Pioneer Woman*, Baker's depictions of U.S. presidents *Millard Fillmore* and *Grover Cleveland* share a similar quality to the Gary statue. The three men hold a rigid, commanding stance that exudes a sense of authority. Significantly, the symbol of the Roman fasces is present in the three pieces which emphasizes the authority and official nature of these figures. In Roman culture, the fasces "was an axe with a bundle of birch or elm rods signifying the power of Roman magistrates" and was used in rituals "to portray order and symbolize the fine line that exists between a ruler's ability to grant life or death to its subjects."^[23] In statuary, the fasces represent both the positive sense of order within society as well as an image of fear and distrust. One famous example is the Lincoln Memorial, where this symbol is proudly displayed on the arms of the sixteenth president's chair. The fasces are also used as a symbol of balance and order on the base of the Elbert Gary statue.

Interestingly, on the second floor of the City Methodist Church on one of the hole-filled walls is a spray-painted image of the fasces. A message below the fasces symbol appears to say "internal

contrast.”^[24] The spray-painted fasces may indicate the artist's distrust of authority -- a far cry from the symbol's meaning on the base of the Elbert Gary statue, located less than a mile away. The graffiti artist's appropriation of the fasces may even reflect an overall shift in public attitude toward authority. Regardless, the presence of the fasces on both the Elbert Gary statue and in the ruins of the City Methodist Church helps bridge the gap between the past and the present.^[25]

Racial Polarization and the Economic Decline of Gary

The white flight Gary experienced throughout the 1960s and 1970s coincided with the rise of African Americans in city politics, most obviously with the election of Gary's first African American mayor (and the nation's second African American mayor of a major city), Richard G. Hatcher, in 1967. Like much of the country in the 1950s and 1960s, Gary was heavily segregated, and racism divided the population. Throughout the 1970s, businesses left at a devastating rate, debilitating the city's economy. Federal money devoted to the city dried up by the time the Reagan administration took office, cementing Gary's downward spiral. By the 1980s, what was once an impressive downtown area became filled with vacant buildings, and Gary's nickname went from “Magic City” or “Steel City” or even “City of the Century” to “America's Murder Capital.” The growing black flight of the last two decades has worsened the city's problems, continuing the downward population trend.^[26]

Beginning in 1970, the population of Gary dramatically declined with each subsequent decade. The ethnic and economic demographics drastically changed as well. In 1970, the city was 53.3 percent African American and 46.7 percent white with a population of 175,415; in 1980, the city was 73.6 percent African American, 26.4 percent white, 7.5 percent Hispanic, with a population of 151,953; in 1990, it was 81.6 percent African American, 16.3 percent white, 5.7 percent Hispanic, with a population of 116,646; in 2000, it was 84 percent African American, 11.9 percent white, 4.9 percent Hispanic, with a population of 102,746.^[27] As of the 2010 census, Gary has a population of 80,294, with 84.1 percent African American, 10.7 percent white, and 5.1 percent Hispanic.^[28] Over one-third of the population is living under the poverty line. With steel production now highly mechanized, U.S. Steel employs only a



Photo of Michael Jackson memorial taken August 3, 2011, by Amalia Shanks-Meile.

fraction of the number of workers it once did. These metamorphoses have affected the collective consciousness within the city, and in turn the way Elbert Gary and Michael Jackson are presently viewed by Gary citizens.^[29]

The Jackson Family

The Jackson family left Gary in 1968, a year after Mayor Hatcher won office. The family patriarch, Joe Jackson, worked at Inland Steel, and his job was difficult and monotonous. Michael's mother, Katherine, worked at the Sears department store on Broadway, which closed just a few years after the family moved to California. Michael Jackson and his family left the city just before it experienced its drastic economic decline. Had the Jacksons not found success in the music industry and instead remained in Gary, they may have seen hard times.^[30]

Michael Jackson grew up in a house on the 2300 block of Jackson Street in Gary's Midtown neighborhood. From the age of five, Jackson performed in a musical group with his brothers under their father's guidance. Joe Jackson was a strict disciplinarian, and throughout his life Jackson complained he was deprived of a childhood because of the father's pursuit of success in the music business. His experiences touring with his band in Gary were unsavory, as it was not uncommon for the children to perform in bars or strip clubs. The Jackson 5 found success while Michael was a young

boy, and by the time Jackson was a teenager, he was internationally famous.^[31]

The controversies of Jackson's adult life are well-known. He was seen as an eccentric figure in the 1980s, with outlandish rumors swirling about him, but molestation allegations in the 1990s forever tarnished his reputation. A survey of Indiana University Northwest students was conducted in the fall of 2011 to gauge the variety of opinions on Michael Jackson. Most answers were verbose and passionate, suggesting Michael Jackson's powerful influence. One person described Jackson as "the world's greatest celebrity," and another said "his music lives on." When asked, "Who was Michael Jackson?" some of the most revealing answers were "pedophile," "child molester," "singer, switched from black to white," "a pathetic excuse of a musician," and a "child molester, rotting in hell." Although many answers were an attack on his colorful personal life, eight percent of participants specifically stated they had a heightened sense of regard and/or sympathy for him following his death.^[32]

Still, the city's reaction to Jackson's 2009 death revealed that much of Gary had stayed loyal to him despite the negative publicity. Fans from Gary, along with many out-of-towners, swarmed Jackson's childhood home in the wake of his death, leaving piles of gifts outside for the late star. A city-sponsored memorial service was held at the U.S. Steel Yard two weeks following his death, with over six thousand in attendance. The construction of a Jackson monument was rushed by an Indiana company in order to be unveiled during the ceremony. This memorial reflects a new age in statuary. In a far cry from Baker's statue of Elbert Gary, the company created the design by computer, and the etchings were done by laser on the five-thousand pound granite slab. It took just forty-eight hours to complete. It has Jackson's likeness on both sides, a collage of pictures, and a short biography. The company took the opportunity to self-promote by placing its website in large print on the lower section of the monument.^[33]

Public Memory

Both the Michael Jackson and Elbert H. Gary monuments were created to serve a specific purpose, and each serve as a way of preserving and shaping public memory in the city. Social historian John Bodnar defines public memory as "a body of beliefs and ideas about the past that help a public or society understand both its past, present, and by implication, its future." In turn, any memorial or monument represents publicly shared beliefs regarding the past that often reflect present concerns.^[34]

Bodnar argues that public memory is shaped by two distinct forces: official and vernacular. He defines official memory as a product of a state's effort to promote positive feelings toward authority (whether economic, cultural, or political); vernacular memory is defined as a product of the local, non-ruling sects of society (essentially those who are not in power). The Elbert Gary monument could be described as a product of official memory, with the official interests being U.S. Steel and the Gary city government. At the time of the Gary statue's conception, the corporation and the city still enjoyed a

mutually beneficial relationship; the construction of the statue celebrated the role of U.S. Steel and Elbert Gary in the creation of Gary, Indiana, and was intended to promote a future relationship between the company and the city. There was never a clamoring for an Elbert Gary memorial by the larger public, and the statue was erected over thirty years after his death. Although Elbert Gary made many philanthropic donations to the city – he had the Gary Land Company donate property for parks, churches, hospitals, a YMCA, a YWCA, several public buildings, as well as the previously mentioned donation to the City Methodist Church – a public memorial took several decades to appear.^[35]

Jackson's memorial, on the other hand, displays a combination of vernacular and official interests. When Jackson died, the city went into mourning, and a permanent memorial was the means through which Gary citizens could find solace and honor Jackson's connection to the city. And Jackson may possibly have a more positive influence on Gary in death than in life. There have been numerous reports that the performing arts center, museum, and theme park projects are progressing, but the projects' futures are uncertain. (Gary's current mayor Karen Freeman-Wilson has stated that a large-scale project seems unlikely in the near future.) If these ideas come into existence, they may prove to be the catalyst that could lead to Gary's rejuvenation. Fans from all over the world have visited Gary to see Jackson's boyhood home. Moreover, in the three years following his death, Jackson family members have come for city-sponsored birthday celebrations which attract large numbers.^[36]

The city is not entirely pro-Jackson. Many still judge him based on his controversial behavior, and widespread media attention compounded negative feelings. Some in the African American community criticized him for bleaching his skin. This particularly impacted the Gary community, with segments of the population believing he turned his back on his race. Others took child molestation allegations on face value. Still, one of the most serious criticisms citizens of Gary have of Jackson is that he did not do enough to help the community. While he made huge charitable donations to countless causes throughout his life, Gary, Indiana, was never the recipient. A 2002 Gary mural project, with paintings made upon boards on abandoned buildings along Broadway, depicted Michael Jackson "symbolically turning his back on Gary, [with] three digits of his bejeweled glove-hand blotted out with graffiti, as if he were giving his birthplace the finger."^[37]

In 2003 Jackson made a trip to Gary, his first visit to the city since he was a small boy. While in Gary, he announced plans to open a Jackson museum and performing arts center, but these projects never moved forward. Part of his 2003 trip's itinerary was to meet with the mayor and receive a key to the city. A video of his visit shows him passing by the Elbert Gary statue – the man whose memory he would eclipse – as he walks up the stairs of Gary City Hall.^[38] The crowd's eyes stood fixed on Jackson, while Elbert Gary's statue stood obscured in the background. This moment perfectly represents the dichotomy between Gary's past and present.

Conclusion

The socioeconomic changes the city of Gary has experienced explain both the neglect of Elbert H. Gary's memory and the embrace of Michael Jackson's. Elbert Gary's statue still stands and the city still holds his name, but the memory of the man is hardly present in the city's collective consciousness. This is because Elbert Gary's relationship to the city relates only to the past; Michael Jackson's relationship with the city, on the other hand, is deeply rooted in his relationship with the current vernacular forces of the city. Perhaps more importantly, Jackson's connection to the city may provide a basis for economic hope for the future. A study of the Elbert Gary and Michael Jackson memorials reveals that public memory is dictated by the present as much as by the past. Both men embody the American rags-to-riches story, but Jackson's is more relatable to the city's population. Jackson's early life, in many ways, resembles much of the Gary community's present. As a boy, Michael Jackson struggled within the same city that is experiencing similar struggles over forty years later. Elbert Gary's connection to the city, quite simply, is no longer relevant or visible to the Garyites of today. The passage of time accounts for the city's disinterest in Elbert H. Gary, but so do the changes that have occurred over time.

[1] The authors saw the spray-painted message on a trip to the City Methodist Church on January 27, 2012.

[2] "Endangered Structures in Gary, Indiana," *Preserve Indiana*, http://www.preserveindiana.com/pixpages/nw_ind/orrcitymeth.htm (accessed January 27, 2012); Kendall F. Svengalis, *Gary, Indiana: A Centennial Celebration* (North Stonington: Duneland Press, 2006), 126; J. Randy Taraborrelli, *Michael Jackson: the Magic, the Madness, the Whole Story* (New York: Birch Lane Press, 1991), 3; A subculture of 'gravers' visit landmarks like the Michael Jackson home in Gary, Indiana, that are associated with deceased celebrities. See, Stephanie Shanks-Meile and Charles P. Gallmeier, "Grave Robbing, Virtual Cemeteries, and Participant Observation: Doing Ethnography on the Subculture of Gravers," *Journal for the Liberal Arts and Sciences* 15, no. 1, (2010): 7-24.

[3] Andrew Grenier, "Michael Jackson Museum to Get Rides, Golf Course," *NBC Chicago*, January 30, 2009 <http://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/Garys-Jackson-Museum-Plan-Grows-80336147.html> (accessed January 2, 2012); "No Thrills Yet at Michael Jackson Museum Site," *ABC 7 Chicago*, November 22, 2011, http://www.abclocal.go.com/wls/story?section=news/special_segments&id=8442413 (accessed December 3, 2011).

[4] Douglas A. Fisher, *Steel Serves the Nation: The Fifty Year Story of United States Steel* (New York: United States Steel Corporation, 1951), 38.

[5] Paul A. Tiffany, *The Decline of American Steel* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1988), 5; Svengalis, *A Centennial Celebration*, 57; Edward Greer, *Big Steel: Black Politics and Corporate Power in Gary, Indiana* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979), 51-52.

- [6] Svengalis, *A Centennial Celebration*, 57, 58; Mohl, *Steel City*, 12; Svengalis, *A Centennial Celebration*, 57.
- [7] James B. Lane, *Gary's First Hundred Years: A Centennial History of Gary, Indiana 1906-2006* (Valparaiso: Home Mountain Printing, 2006), 25, 19; Mohl, *Steel City*, 5, 18.
- [8] Almont Lindsey, "Paternalism and the Pullman Strike," *The American Historical Review* 44, no. 2 (1939): 273, 286.
- [9] Lane, *Gary's First Hundred Years*, 17.
- [10] Paul O'Hara, *Gary, the Most American of All American Cities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011), 71, 47; Lane, *Gary's First Hundred Years*, 19.
- [11] Ida M. Tarbell, *The Life of Elbert H. Gary: The Story of Steel* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1925), 18, 40, 50, 65, 68, 72.
- [12] Mohl, *Steel City*, 11; Fisher, *Steel Serves the Nation*, 43; Mohl, *Steel City*, 11.
- [13] David Brody, *Labor in Crisis: The Steel Strike of 1919* (Philadelphia: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1965), 95-96; "Business and Finance: Steel," *Time Magazine* 8, no. 1 (1926): 28-30.
- [14] O'Hara, *Gary, the Most American*, 71; Brody, *Labor in Crisis*, 68; Lane, *Gary's First Hundred Years*, 63.
- [15] Brody, *Labor in Crisis*, 115; While he followed orders from his non-radical superiors in the AFL and National Committee, union leader William Z. Foster was later revealed to have indeed been a socialist; this fact was later used by anti-unionists to validate their assertion that the strike was radical in nature.
- [16] "Report on Steel Strike of 1919," *Interchurch World Movement of America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Howe, 1920), 33.
- [17] Benjamin Sevitch, *Elbert Gary: Spokesman for Steel*, (PhD diss., Indiana University Bloomington, 1978), 103
- [18] Brody, *Labor in Crisis*, 32.
- [19] Mohl, *Steel City*, 6.
- [20] Lane, *Gary's First Hundred Years*, 25.
- [21] Remarks of Clifford F. Hood at Elbert H. Gary Statue Dedication, June 18, 1958, Peter Mandich Papers, Box 2, Folder 33, Calumet Regional Archives, Indiana University Northwest, Gary, Indiana. The Calumet Regional Archives has within its collections a rare video of the unveiling of the Elbert

Gary statue.

[22] Bryant Baker, *Pioneer Woman*, 1927-1930. Bronze, Ponca City, Oklahoma.

[23] Anthony J. Marshall, "Symbols and Showmanship in Roman Public Life: The Fasces," *Phoenix* 38, no. 2 (1984): 120; Jack Tresidder, *The Complete Dictionary of Symbols* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2005), 177-78.

[24] Message seen by authors on a January 27, 2012, trip to the City Methodist Church.

[25] Bryant Baker was commissioned to do the *Millard Fillmore* and *Grover Cleveland* statues at the same time. They are located on opposite sides of Buffalo City Hall in New York. The statues were unveiled together. Bryant Baker, *Millard Fillmore*, 1930-32. Bronze, Buffalo City Hall, New York and *Grover Cleveland*, 1930-32. Bronze, Buffalo City Hall, New York; Marshall, "Symbols and Showmanship," 20; James Percoco, *Summers with Lincoln: Looking for the Man in the Monuments* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 174.

[26] Greer, *Big Steel*, 50; Mohl, *Steel City*, 7; Lane, *Gary's First Hundred Years*, 231.

[27] Barnes, *The Cost of Being Poor*, 24.

[28] "Gary, Indiana," *US Census Bureau*, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/18/1827000.html> (accessed December 5, 2011)..

[29] Barnes, *The Cost of Being Poor*, 175.

[30] Tarraborrelli, *Michael Jackson*, 3; Michael Jackson, *Moonwalk* (New York: Harmony Books, 1988), 50.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Poll taken by authors at Indiana University Northwest on November 6, 2011.

[33] Tom Coyne, "Michael Jackson Hometown Memorial: Crowds Flooding Gary," *Huffington Post*, July 11, 2009, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/07/10/michael-jackson-hometown_n_229638.html (accessed November 8, 2012); "Michael Jackson Memorial – By Stone Plans," *Stone Plans*, <http://www.stoneplans.com/component/content/article/53-spotlight-news-3/121-michel-jackson-memorial-by-stone-plans> (accessed December 3, 2011).

[34] John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 15.

[35] Ibid., 13-16; Lane, *Gary's First Hundred Years*, 25.

[36] Bryan Smith, "Can Karen Freeman-Wilson Fix Gary, Indiana?" *Chicagomag.com*, April 3, 2012,

<http://www.chicagomag.com/Chicago-Magazine/April-2012/Can-Karen-Freeman-Wilson-Fix-Gary-Indiana/> (accessed June 12, 2012).

[37] Jessica Hopper, "Why Michael Jackson's Past May Be Gary, Indiana's Only Future," *Village Voice*, July 1, 2009, <http://www.villagevoice.com/2009-07-01/news/why-michael-jackson-s-past-might-be-gary-indiana-s-only-future/> (accessed October 3, 2011).

[38] Austen Taylor, *Michael Jackson Commemorated*, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_KoQfv6u4sI (accessed December 3, 2011).