



Steeple: Sketches of North Adams

Joe Manning

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STEEPLES offers an unusual blend of poetry, oral histories, and photographs, which combine to form a portrait of an old Massachusetts factory town. North Adams is an ideal example of how the face of America has been changed by the urban renewal projects of the 1960's and 1970's, the decline of the industrial revolution, and the flight to the suburbs and the shopping malls. The author was fortunate to have the opportunity capture a snapshot of North Adams as it struggles toward recovery. In 1999, the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA) will open in twenty-seven brick factory buildings left vacant by Sprague Electric, formerly the city's largest employer. The story of the city and its immigrant people is told through the oral histories, which will remain a valuable document as memories fade with time. The photographs show the city as it was, as it is now, and as it may never be again. The poetry evokes the stillness and nostalgia of a quiet Main Street and the beauty of the geographical setting in the Berkshire Mountains. Now in its second printing, STEEPLES is required reading for several courses at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.

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