



Living on the Boott: Historical Archaeology at the Boott Mills Boardinghouses of Lowell, Massachusetts

Stephen A. Mrozowski, Grace H. Ziesing, Mary C. Beaudry

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This book provides an excellent introduction to the field of historical archaeology. Using a single case study to demonstrate the power of their interdisciplinary approach, the authors create a fresh portrait of nineteenth-century domestic life in the company-owned boardinghouses of the Boott Cotton Mills of Lowell, Massachusetts. From a compendious three-volume site report the authors have distilled the essence of their findings. They discuss the methods and theory of historical archaeology and demonstrate its strengths and limitations in the examination of Lowell. Combining documentary evidence, oral and architectural history, and environmental and material culture studies, they trace the deterioration of living conditions for mill workers and their families as owners began substituting native-born employees with immigrant laborers. The detection of environmental decay and its implications for the health and well-being of the boardinghouse populations offer a compelling illustration of how information deduced from historical archaeology can augment and modify findings based on conventional historical documents.

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