



# **Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America: Vernacular Design and Social Change**

*Sally McMurry*

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## **Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America: Vernacular Design and Social Change** Sally McMurry

An era of great agricultural expansion in America, the nineteenth century witnessed the development of capitalist method, technological innovation, scientific experimentation, and the reorganization of social and family life -- changes that were reflected in striking transformations in the vernacular landscape. In this fascinating interdisciplinary study, Sally McMurry examines one arena of domestic change -- the design of northern rural farmhouses -- as an index of America's shift from an agrarian society to an urban, industrial nation. Drawing on myriad sources, McMurry shows how the farmhouse of the 1830s and 1840s -- a social and conceptual whole that integrated work, family, and leisure space -- gave way to a collection of rooms that filtered people by age, class, and sex, as well as by type of activity. Kitchens became isolated; rooms for farmhands were segregated or eliminated; separate bedrooms were assigned to children and adolescents. At the same time, the formal parlor was abandoned in favor of the open, multi-purpose sitting room, an attempt to maintain distinctly rural patterns of social life. A unique work that will interest a wide range of readers, *Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America* shows how progressive farm families adapted to industrialization, urbanization, the consolidation of capitalist agriculture, and the rise of a new consumer society. For this paperback edition, McMurry has written a new introduction that summarizes the scholarship done in the field since the book's initial publication in 1988.

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