



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

*Sally McMurry*

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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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