



Amoskeag: Life and Work in an American Factory-City (Library of New England) (Paperback)

by [Tamara K. Hareven](#), [Randolph Langenbach](#)

★★★★★ ([3 customer reviews](#))

Customer Reviews

★★★★★ **A suprisingly good book**, March 20, 2002

Reviewer: ["jogila"](#) (Los Angeles, CA)

The story of Amoskeag is the story of a society...a story of a different time...a way of life that used to be. This book travels through the 1800's and the 1900's telling the tale of a factory, and the people who passed through it.

The highlights of the book occur when the factory workers are interviewed. The characters and stories they create are so funny and so real...you get such a feel for how their lives were. I laughed so many times.

The only parts I found boring were when the terms of factory making were being discussed. It was important to know to put what the workers were saying into context, but I found it boring.

Overall, the book was a gem. I am now very interested in a time period that before I thought was useless and boring. I would reccomend this book to anyone.

★★★★★ **"Been through the mill, and the mill's been through me"**, July 25, 2000

Reviewer: [Robert S. Newman "Bob Newman"](#) (Marblehead, Massachusetts USA)

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Nineteenth century American travellers waxed enthusiastic or properly melancholic amidst the ruins of Europe. Writers such as Henry James often contrasted the youth and vigor (and innocence) of America with old, tired Europe. None of them could have imagined that less than a century later, the busy New England mills that turned out huge quantities of shoes, textiles, and useful products of all kinds would be silent, weed-strewn ruins. When I look around at cities like Salem, Lynn, Lowell, Lawrence, and Brockton, Mass., at Manchester and Nashua, New Hampshire, at a

dozen small towns in Maine, I realize that I grew up during the fall of a whole civilization. I saw the tail end of it. Today so many of those thriving factories and mills have been razed to the ground, turned into condos or specialty shops, or even, into museums of industrial history.

AMOSKEAG is the story of one textile mill, once the largest in the world, along the banks of the Merrimack River in New Hampshire. The story is told through 37 interviews after an introduction of thirty-odd pages. The effect is most immediate: you feel as if you had lived the whole experience, grown up around these people. The reader is taken through the lives of management to the world of work--the varieties of tasks and social interactions to be found within the giant factory. Then we get an idea of family life, how the factory permeated every aspect of existence, and finally of the strikes, shutdowns and rising costs that eventually drove the mill out of existence (or rather, the whole textile industry to other states and countries). The text is punctuated by numerous black and white photographs which add to the atmosphere of "bygone days" that emanates from the whole book. If you are looking for a book on industrial history or early 20th century New England, you must read this one, it's unforgettable.

★★★★★ **interesting history told in their own words**, April 5, 2000

Reviewer:

You'll enjoy this book even if you're not particularly interested in Manchester, NH, or mill towns, as long as you want to hear people talk about their lives.

This is a good window into life in a "factory-city" along the Merrimack River from its start in the early 1800s through the 1970s. Each chapter is an interview. You get the story through the words and memories of those who live it. Mill workers and their families talk about the founding of the town, their arrival as immigrants seeking good jobs, what their work lives were like, the strike, and the eventual shutdown of the mills. A good read.