



You Had a Job for Life: Story of a Company Town

Jamie Sayen

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Absentee owners. Single-minded concern for the bottom line. Friction between workers and management. Hostile takeovers at the hands of avaricious and unaccountable multinational interests. The story of America's industrial decline is all too familiar—and yet, somehow, still hard to fathom.

Jamie Sayen spent years interviewing residents of Groveton, New Hampshire, about the century-long saga of their company town. The community's paper mill had been its economic engine since the early twentieth century. Purchased and revived by local owners in the postwar decades, the mill merged with Diamond International in 1968. It fell victim to Anglo-French financier James Goldsmith's hostile takeover in 1982, then suffered through a series of owners with no roots in the community until its eventual demise in 2007.

Drawing on conversations with scores of former mill workers, Sayen reconstructs the mill's human history: the smells of pulp and wood, the injuries and deaths, the struggles of women for equal pay and fair treatment, and the devastating impact of global capitalism on a small New England town. This is a heartbreaking story of the decimation of industrial America.

You Had a Job for Life: Story of a Company Town Details

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From Reader Review You Had a Job for Life: Story of a Company Town for online ebook

Yunis Esa says

Jamie Sayen gives the reader a complete look at the life of the mill. The feel of working a small town in the heart of rural America. It was one of those stories that you already knew the end but it was still sad to see it happening anyways. Good luck to the town and the people of Groveton, Northumberland, NH.

Joe Keefhaver says

I heard this author speaking on C-SPAN and thought the book would be interesting. It focused more exclusively on life in one small paper mill town (Groveton, NH) than I expected, but it was still a good read about the forces conspiring to deindustrialize America. I also learned that papermaking was a really tough job, especially in the years before worker safety got much attention.

Doug Cornelius says

Reviewed in the Wall Street Journal 2018 Feb 26: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/review-r...>

Gene Weeks says

I really enjoyed this book. It tells the story of a small town New England paper mill from the day it was built until the day it closed and was eventually torn down. Mr. Sayen weaves together hundreds of interviews with former mill workers, townspeople, a former mill owner, and others into a very interesting and readable story. The closing of the mill was a small town tragedy that has played out in towns all over New England. How and why it happened is described very well. Highly recommended!

Pamela Kanooth-tucker says

Very information and a rich history as told through people who worked in the now defunct Groveton, NH paper mill. I grew up in a NH mill town too so this is a familiar tale to me. Our mill closed in the early 70's which devastated the town's economy. It was especially hard on middle age workers who had worked the mills their whole lives and really had no transferable skills or enough money to retire either. There were some suicides which were heartbreaking.

That being said, these mill owners raped the northern forests and saturated the once pristine NH rivers with hideous toxic waste. The Groveton area was called "Cancer Valley". Sayen's narrative is so compelling and he offers some ideas to help these vulnerable small towns protect themselves from outside investors who only want to exploit these people. A must read for all New Englanders and a great read for anyone. Highly

recommended.

Vicki Bacon-Thomas says

I was hoping to learn more about the decline of the paper industry in my home state and I did.

Donald Crane says

I actually started reading this book at Chapter 6, when the Wemyss family that dominated papermaking in Groveton for 50-ish years entered the scene, buying a nearly defunct paper mill. I know the central Wemyss figure, James Jr., fairly well, so I could easily identify with quotes from him (of which there were many; I could almost hear him speaking in reading those quotes).

There are a dozen or more other people whom I know well who were interviewed extensively for this book, so that added an element of interest to me. It's well-written and interesting, though I'm not sure how interested I would be without the personal connection. Nevertheless, the original purpose of the book was to create an oral history of this seminal North Country industry that is all but gone now, and it does that quite well.
