

Messages from a Small Town: Photographs Inside Pawlet, Vermont--Neil Rappaport

Susanne Rappaport

Neil Rappaport, Illustrator

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Cultural Cues: "On a Saturday afternoon my car broke down next to the Evans pit, from which the sounds of the Italian opera could be heard. Looking over the edge, I could see a lone rockman shoveling slate rubbish, the radio in his lunch bucket playing the Saturday afternoon opera from the Metropolitan," writes photographer Neil Rappaport three years before he suddenly died in 1998.

In *Messages From a Small Town: Photographs Inside Pawlet, Vermont* (Vermont Folklife Center, 100 plus duotones, 9 " x 10 ", 136 pages, softcover, \$30.00, 0-916718-27-1), Susanne Rappaport, founding director of the Slate Valley Museum in Granville, New York, combines her husband Neil's photographs with excerpts from his own writings, conversations she had with the subjects of his photos, and her own commentary.

Neil Rappaport, who established Bennington College's photography department and whose photographs are in the permanent collection of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, took more than a thousand pictures over a thirty-year period of quarries, farms, landscape, and people. The contrast of black-and-white photographs exudes a ruggedness of cultural history and messages from the past. In the Evans pit two workmen are dwarfed by the immensity of the slate rock they stand upon as they labor at barring the enormous rock, their morning shadows foreboding a hard day.

Pictures of a past era that are representative of a region.

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