



Down And Out: The Life and Death of Minneapolis's Skid Row (Minnesota)

Edwin C. Hirschhoff

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Minneapolis's skid row, known as the Gateway district, was a lively area consisting of dozens of bars, flophouses, pawnshops, burlesque houses, charity missions, and office buildings that had aged past their prime. Encompassing some twenty-five blocks centering on the intersection of Hennepin, Washington, and Nicollet Avenues, the neighborhood was demolished between 1959 and 1963 as part of the first federally funded urban renewal project in America. Gathered here for the first time, Edwin C. Hirschhoff's stark and moving images of the Gateway district's final days -- its streets, buildings, and parks, the rubble, smoke, and heavy equipment of its destruction -- eloquently capture its demise. Down and Out provides a unique historical perspective and the most extensive photographic record available of the Gateway demolition project.

Joseph Hart's engaging and comprehensive essay complements Hirschhoff's photographs by detailing the district's social and economic evolution and the political decision making that led to its destruction. Hart presents a popular history of Minneapolis's skid row and the people who lived there, migrant workers who learned that changes in the local economy could quickly degrade their status from valued laborer to societal menace (vagrant, tramp, or bum). By capturing the texture of life on skid row, Hart reveals the lost American culture of a bygone community.

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