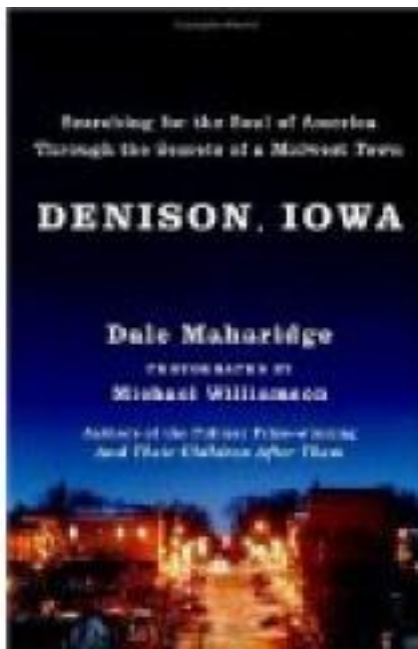


Denison, Iowa



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Denison, Iowa, is as close to the heart of Middle America as it gets. The hometown of Donna Reed, Denison has adopted "It's a wonderful life" as its slogan and painted the phrase on the water tower that hovers over everything in town. And in many respects, life is pretty good here: it's a quiet town, a great place to raise children; the crime rate is low, the schools strong. It's home to the county's only Wal-Mart and a factory that does a booming business in antiterrorism barriers. For outsiders looking in, there is something familiar and comforting about Denison -- it conforms to the picture of the wholesome, corn-fed heartland which we as a nation cherish and which we think we know so well. But something new and unfamiliar is happening in Denison, and traditional viewpoints and partisan labels don't quite capture it. The change goes beyond the post-9/11 loss of innocence; the sense of unease and, in some cases, of

rebirth began well before 2001. Relations between the growing Latino population and the established Anglo citizenry are not always smooth. The industries that still predominate have become a mixed blessing for many people -- in the 1980s the meat-processing plant, for instance, froze wages, and they have remained basically static to this day. For many years, Dale Maharidge and Michael Williamson have made it their business to document interior America. In 1990 they won the Pulitzer Prize for their book *And Their Children After Them*, a conscious homage to the 1941 classic *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* by James Agee and Walker Evans. To gather their observations and insights on Denison, Maharidge and Williamson lived there for a year, spending time among the 8,000 people who live, love, work, run for office, go to school, and sometimes struggle to get by there. From the Lutheran woman who singlehandedly teaches English to Latino immigrants seeking grueling work in meatpacking plants to the leaders who struggle to rescue the community from economic ruin to the Latino businessman whose career is saved by two white men risking the wrath of small-town politics, the author and photographer trace the intersections of lives, the successes and failures, the real stories beneath Denison's mom-and-apple-pie surface. Through Maharidge's gorgeous, plainspoken prose and Williamson's stunning photography, we are privy to a sweeping perspective layered with a microscopic depth of observation, and a searingly honest portrait tempered by heartfelt compassion. *Denison, Iowa* is a big, beautiful book about a small town at a critical time in our history -- and it's the crowning work of a brilliant, quarter-century partnership.

作者介绍:

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