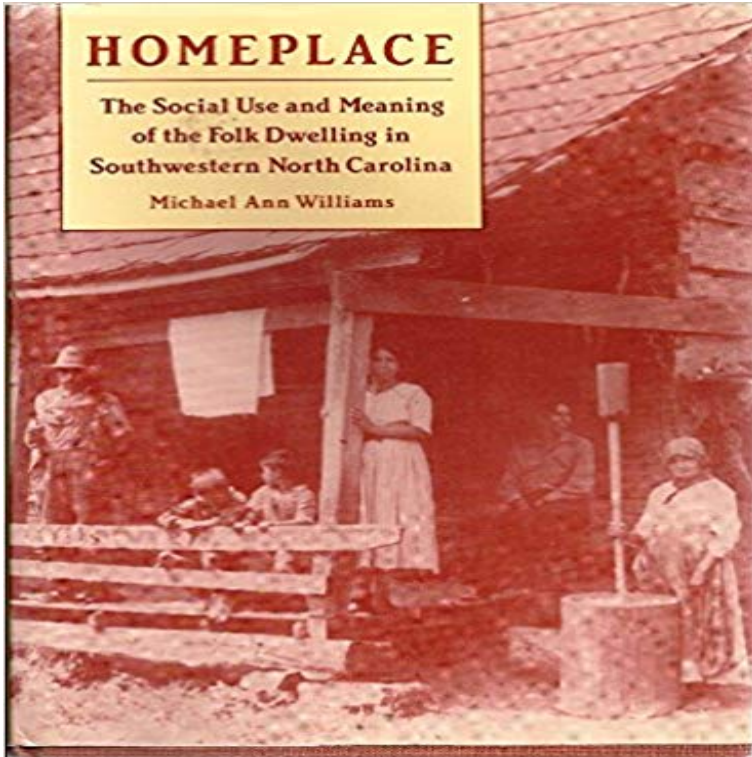


Homeplace: The Social Use and Meaning of the Folk Dwelling in Southwestern North Carolina



Challenging many of the methods and preconceptions of conventional folk-architecture studies, *Homeplace* examines traditional houses in the mountains of Appalachia from the perspective offered by oral histories. Michael Ann Williams bases much of her study on interviews with some of the people most intimately familiar with her subject: more than fifty individuals born and raised in southwestern North Carolina in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their testimony links the perspective of former occupants and the experiential aspects of folk architecture with more traditional scholarly studies. Most scholarship on vernacular architecture emphasizes form and structure and is based primarily on the examination of extant buildings. While *Homeplace* contains floor plans and historical photographs, it also illustrates how oral history is often a more reliable guide in the interpretation of folk buildings than artifactual or documentary evidence. By foregrounding inhabitants' reminiscences, Williams brings rural Appalachian architecture to life by emphasizing human experience within the dwelling. An examination of universal concerns—continuity and change in the inhabitants' uses and conceptualizations of interior spaces, domestic life and cultural change in southern Appalachia, the shifting importance of formal and informal spaces—*Homeplace* offers new insights into the folk building tradition and its cultural context that will be most helpful to those seeking a broader understanding of Appalachian life.

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