



# **Angels in the Architecture: A Photographic Elegy to an American Asylum (Great Lakes Books Series)**

*Heidi Johnson*

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## Angels in the Architecture: A Photographic Elegy to an American Asylum (Great Lakes Books Series)

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In the nineteenth century, perhaps no approach to mental illness was more compassionate than that of hospital administrator Thomas Story Kirkbride, whose asylum designs integrated beauty and nature as a method to treat patients. The Northern Michigan Asylum in Traverse City, Michigan, was one of the last of nearly two hundred such architecturally intriguing asylums. Founded in 1885 under the principle "beauty is therapy," the Northern Michigan Asylum closed in 1989 and today stands as a haunting reminder of this lost era. *Angels in the Architecture* is a photographic study of this institution's one-hundred-year history. Heidi Johnson's photographs of the building today are juxtaposed with rare images from private collections and state archives. Johnson has captured Kirkbride's spirit of compassion-of angels in the architecture-in a book that conveys the human element of mental illness with beauty and integrity.

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