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This is Marktown, IN

Written by Ashley Jimenez

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Marktown, Indiana is a historical district designed by Howard Van Doren Shaw in 1917. Built for factory workers to live in, Marktown is surrounded entirely with four or more different factory type businesses such as ArcelorMittal Steel and BP Amaco. Contrasting its industrial surroundings, the town was constructed with heavy Eastern European influences from the construction of the houses to the narrow brick streets. This town is truly unique not only through architecture, but also by its inhabitants.

Stepping outside of my comfort zone is something I try to do in all of my work. Normally I photograph to accentuate the beauty in my subjects but when I came across Marktown, I had fallen in love with the idea of what beauty it used to have. I photographed Marktown because I want other people to be aware of something so relevant to North Western Indiana history that is deteriorating rapidly. I had lived no more than thirty miles from this district the majority of my life, and had no idea it even existed. Districts and towns like Marktown are all over America, and like me, most people are unaware that a major piece of history is so close to home.

I have been photographing Marktown for about six months now in an effort to show my audience what Marktown really looks like. My photographs span different times of the day, and its different inhabitants. What I realized is that Marktown, despite being partly in ruins or the grass being overgrown, really is beautiful. The roofs and paint may be worn but the spirit that desire Howard Van Doren Shaw wanted for Marktown to go against the popular or ordinary is still very present. Marktown is a diamond in the rough of industrialized Northwest Indiana.

I want to photograph Marktown in order to show it as it is today. Many websites glorify Marktown for what it was, and all the history it contains- but it is decaying rapidly. Many houses sit empty with broken windows and doors, houses that have burned down are left standing in shambles, and the level of gang activity keeps you on edge at all times. Many of Marktown's resident youth move away as soon as possible because there simply isn't anything around the area but factories, leaving more and more vacant homes. This once striving-on-industry area has become a desolate ghost town.

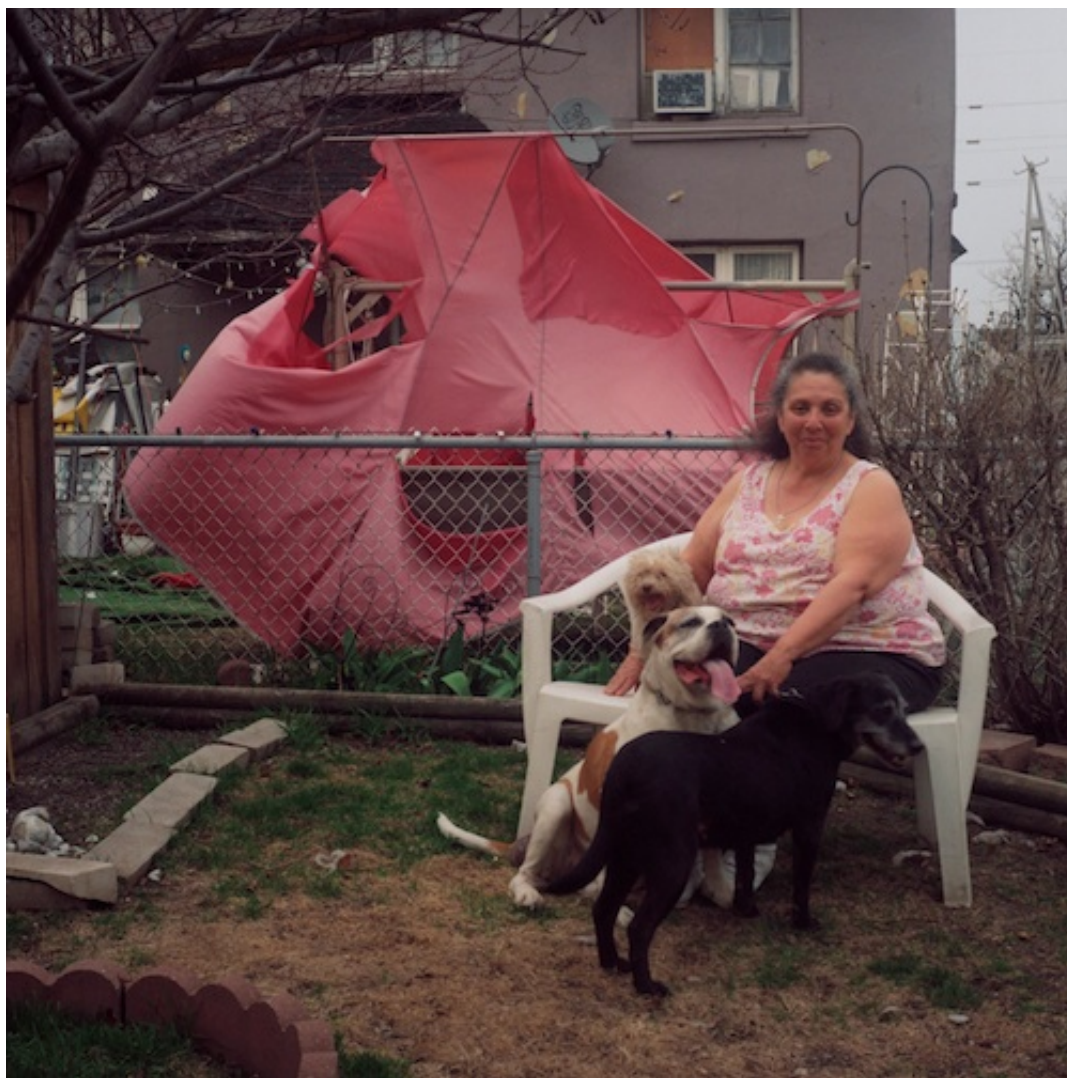




Marktown- Spruce Street: Spruce street is probably Marktown's widest street. Marktown actually has a Guinness Book World Record as being the only town in North America where residents walk in the streets and park on the sidewalk. Most streets are one way, and just squeeze in a car past parked vehicles.



Marktown Park: This is Marktown Park located just on the outer edge of the district. As most parks it is designated for children to play- but you may notice the building in the back. That building, less than 40 yards away from the jungle gym, is a factory. On numerous visits to Marktown I have seen this factory pour out so much smoke crossing the park, that it blocks out the sun, and casts a shade over half the town.



Marktown Residents- Barbara Perez: Barbara Perez is a resident in Marktown and has been for over half of her life. She and her late husband both worked at Mittal Steel (previously Inland steel).



Marktown Residents- Rodriguez Family: Kimberly Rodriguez (shown second on the left) has lived in Marktown her entire life. Her grandfather, and father both worked in the mill, and her son David (far right) now also works at the mill too.



Remaining Marktown- Getting Ready: This photo is in one of the abandoned houses that were simply left to decay, with no hope of restoration. Stray cats are the only living creatures who use this residence as shelter, even in this bathroom where a family used to get ready for the day ahead of them.





Occupied Marktown Remaining Marktown: In these photos you can see the unusual (for Americans) architecture that makes up the houses in the town. The exterior walls are made of plaster, and the roofs are extra steep. On most of my trips to Marktown, the streets were vacant making the town feel even more lonely and ghost-like.



Remaining Marktown- A Once Bedroom: This bedroom was once a place someone considered safe, and if you were to walk in here you would certainly not feel at ease. A Puerto Rican flag hangs in the window as it too was abandoned by it's owner.



Occupied Marktown: Usually a symbol of pride, these flags hang up tattered by the wind and weather.