

# RELICS

A Collection *of* Photographs



MICHAEL JOSEPH

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# DEDICATION

To the Aquarian and the Capricorn.

Thank you.

“The plane of soul is but the ether of the spirit plane vibrating not so fast, and in the slower rhythm of this plane the essences of life are manifest.”

*Levi H. Dowling*

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Compassion + Kindness

The unselfish attention to alleviate suffering,  
and pure intention of helping others.



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## FOREWORD

This book is an exploration of the farm machinery, structures, transportation signs, and vehicles that were once essential to daily life in the eastern U.S., yet now rest in solitude and seclusion. Many of us have driven past these landmarks without a second glance. In modern life, we often associate abandonment or retirement with loss or a lack of purpose. Michael Joseph does not subscribe to this instrumentalist view. His photographs invite us to pause and acknowledge the history of these forgotten moments. Through the camera lens, he gives new life and perspective where others continue past.

*Relics* gently guides us into this mindset. We slow down and are reminded that we can acknowledge the present state of these historical remnants without leaning into the impulse to save or restore them. We can see them as echoes of a time gone by—proof that all things move through cycles of use and rest. Each chapter focuses on a different aspect of these buildings, doorways, windows, roadside structures, and machinery that were once essential.

Today's zeitgeist doesn't encourage thinking of a future past our individual lifespans. The items our society produces today are no longer meant for beauty or longevity. When our possessions break, we buy new ones rather than fixing the original. But this was not always the case.

Perhaps this is why we often dismiss these aging structures as rusty eyesores without consideration for their history. We are uncomfortable with aging and eventual endings. Yet in *Relics*, the peaceful images of items now resting after decades of labor should cause us to reconsider that discomfort. These roadside and agricultural relics have completed their work and run their course; nothing more is asked of them. Their hardworking noon hours were glorious, and their sunset years are calm. Their final form is finally one of rest.

As you move through the history in this book, take in not only the subjects but also the beautiful, natural setting of stillness. The land simply holds them and allows them to be. Allow yourself to slow down, to travel from the present moment to the past and back, and to notice the quiet story they tell.

*Ariana Vazquez*



# INTRODUCTION

*Relics* comprises a collection of 154 photographs that I made from 2022 to 2025, traveling alone in my Jeep Wrangler to all four corners of Connecticut and back and forth to Florida. In continuance of my previous book, *Gone Country*, I have made many excursions and have driven on back roads and bypass roads seeking to discover a forgotten time. A time when things were slower, simpler, and when things were built with a predication on style and form, not just a basic function.

The photographs within this book have been carefully arranged into four thematic chapters, and each chapter opens with a short story to facilitate a setting and mood. The photo essay opens with *Moto Trend*, a concise collection of abandoned cars and trucks. Next is a natural segue into *Industrial Age* which features a diverse arrangement of discarded farm tractors, heavy equipment, machinery, and other mechanisms left behind during modern progress. As the adventure continues, you are encouraged to use your imagination, as we investigate *Time Portals*, an exhibition of windows and doors that are sure to pique your curiosity and wonderment. Finally, there are the *Lost Ruins*, a gathering place of dilapidated country structures, barns, silos, gas stations, and signs.

Photographing abandoned vehicles and rusted relics is a quiet homage to time's passage. Each corroded car, truck, or tractor tells a story of labor, travel, and elapsed purpose. Closed gas stations with peeling signs and silent pumps evoke a roadside America that once thrived. The textures—flaking paint, twisted metal, shattered glass—capture decay with dignity. These images aren't just about ruin; they're about memory. They preserve the soul of machinery that once moved lives and landscapes. Through the lens, rust becomes poetry, and silence becomes narrative. In every frame, the past lingers—weathered, worn, and beautifully still.

These rejected machines and neglected structures speak to resilience. They've endured lightning and thunderstorms, scorching and frigid seasons, and at times, desolate silence. Through it all they stand as monuments to human effort and ingenuity. A rusted tractor in a field becomes a sculpture of perseverance. A sunken automobile beneath vines becomes a canvas of nature reclaiming steel. Each photograph becomes a meditation on impermanence and endurance. The act of capturing them is not just documentation, but reverence. It's a way of saying: *You've always mattered, and you forever will.* In their solemn idleness, these relics remind us that beauty often lies in what remains, not just in what once was.



## MOTO TREND

Deep in an uncharted thicket lies a hauntingly beautiful secret—a forgotten graveyard of a rusted car or truck. As you step onto the moss-covered trail, the air feels heavy with history and the woods whisper tales of time's relentless march. The vehicles, once vibrant icons of progress and freedom, now stand as quiet monuments to decay, their skeletal frames entwined with vines and draped in nature's tapestry.

Far off in a field, a pickup truck with flat tires is slowly sinking and becoming swallowed by the earth, its shattered headlights resembling forlorn eyes. A convertible sports car still clings to the endless summer as fragments of elegance wear away; under the hood the engine compartment is a haven for a family of squirrels, and the cracked leather interior is a perfect nesting place for other small creatures.

There is also the origin of an eerie woodland graveyard that remains an unsolved mystery. Some say it was a dumping ground, hastily abandoned after stricter environmental laws rendered it illegal to leave cars in nature's embrace. Others believe the vehicles were left by travelers or thieves long ago, stranded by broken engines and an inability to return for their treasures. A local myth even whispers of a collector who chose the forest as his gallery, letting time and nature transform his prized possessions into living art.

As you wander deeper, the melancholy blends with fascination. Trees rise through engine blocks, roots snake through shattered windshields, and the forest floor drinks the rust like a silent alchemist, fusing man-made invention with the rhythms of mother nature.



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