Appalachian Working-Class Fiction

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To see criterion or characteristics of how books were included.
http://smithdocs.net/AppalachianFiction.html

1860’s

Rebecca Harding Davis. Life in the Iron Mills or The Korl Woman (1861; rpt. 1972) [Harsh
working life in industrial Wheeling, WV, shows clash of classes]; Margaret Howth: A Story of
To-Day (1862) [A young girl abandoned by her fiancé is forced to work in an Indiana wool mill.]

1920’s & 1930’s

Appalachia.]
Alberta Pierson Hannum. Thursday April (1931) [Treats rural family life in Appalachian
mountains.]
focused on the lack of work during the Great Depression and the accompanying hardships in
Appalachia.]
Hubert Skidmore. I Will Lift up My Eyes (1936) and Heaven Came So Near (1938) [Both
books feature good hill people crushed by economic forces.]; River Rising(1939) [Travails of the
"hill people" confronting environmental and economic pressures of isolation, ignorance and
poverty which contribute to deaths by pneumonia as the main character vows to become a doctor
to help the farm families of the remote hollows of Appalachia.]

1940’s & 1950’s

Jesse Stuart. Trees of Heaven (1940) [Rural Kentucky setting for this the novel of Anse
Bushman, who loves working the land and wants more land.];
Men of the Mountains (Stories 1941) [Daily routines of Appalachian hill farmers.]; Taps for
Private Tussie (1943) [Soldier’s death brings $10,000 to poor white family who enjoy and
struggle with it; comic best seller.]; Tales from the Plum Grove Hills (Stories 1946).
James Still. River of Earth (1940) [Young boy sees family struggle between poverty of farm life
and promise of work in the mines.]
Hubert Skidmore. Hill Doctor (1940); Hawks Nest (1941) [Rural West Virginians lured from
their farms by the large construction project at Gauley Bridge, building the tunnel and
hydroelectric plant are crushed by company’s disregard for health and safety.]
Harriette Arnow. Hunter’s Horn (1949) [An account of Kentucky hill people, Southern
Appalachian farmers, foxhunters, foxhounds, women, and children.]; The Dollmaker (1954)
[Strength of woman forced to leave Kentucky home for life in Detroit shows women’s ingenuity
at getting by.]
James Agee. A Death in the Family (1957). [Classic story of family and death set in
Tennessee.]
1960’s & 1970’s

**Wendell Berry.** *Nathan Coulter* (1960) [In the time between the death of his mother and his grandfather, a backwoods Kentucky boy grows in manhood.]

*A Place on Earth* (1967, much revised 1983) [Port William, Kentucky farmer and community come to terms with the loss of farmer’s only son and other costs of World War II.]; *The Memory of Old Jack* (1974) [Story recounts the last days in the life of 92-year-old farmer Jack Beechum in the fall of 1952, as the self-sufficient man of the soil contemplates both his heartaches and triumphs.]

**Jesse Stuart.** *The Land Beyond the River* (1973) [Poor Kentucky family moves to dream of prosperity in Ohio yet encounters troubles.]

**Gurney Norman.** *Kinfolks* (1977). [Young man’s depiction of family life in rural Kentucky]

**John Knowles.** *A Vein of Riches* (1978) [Tale of wealthy coal and oil barons facing strike by miners in 1919.]

**Jayne Anne Philips.** *Black Tickets* (Stories 1979) [Gallery of characters deal with loss and alienation in mass culture.]

**Meredith Sue Willis.** *A Space Apart* (1979) [Treats a preacher’s family in small town West Virginia in 1950’s.]

1980’s

**Meredith Sue Willis.** Blair Morgan Trilogy: *Higher Ground* (1981), *Only Great Changes* (1985), *Trespassers* (1997) [Treats heroine Blair Morgan from her life in West Virginia to work as VISTA worker in Virginia, finally to life in New York City]


**Michael Henson.** *Ransack* (1982) [Set in Cincinnati’s Over-the-Rhine district, novel shows the struggles of community over the wrecking ball.]; *A Small Room with Trouble on My Mind* (Stories 1983) [Guitar playing rebel struggles to get by in poverty torn Appalachia.]


**Bobbie Ann Mason.** *Shiloh and Other Stories* (Stories 1982) [Kentucky farmer and truck driver struggles with urban life, and other stories.]

**Spence and Lila** (1988) [Contemporary families in Kentucky struggle with high tech medical treatment]; *In Country* (1989) [Young Kentucky girl travels to Washington D.C. with Vietnam veteran to try to reclaim her lost father].


**Breece D’J Pancake.** *The Stories of Breece D’J Pancake* (Stories. 1983; rpt. 2002). [This showcase of the writer’s only stories, who took his life in 1979, feature strong Appalachian characters who struggle with their ambivalence of place.]

**Annabel Thomas** *The Phototropic Woman* (Stories. 1981) [Award winning collection of stories, many set in Southern Ohio.].
Denise Giardina. *Storming Heaven* (1987) [Historical tale of miners struggles for unions in 1920’s West Virginia].


Barbara Kingsolver. *The Bean Trees* (1988) [Young narrator Taylor leaves home in Kentucky to travel west to Arizona picking up a family on the way]; *Pigs in Heaven* (1994) [Continuation of Taylor and her adopted daughter Turtle set in Southwest with connections to mother back home in Kentucky].

Richard Currey. *Fatal Light* (1988) [Young man emerges from West Virginia hometown to go to battlefields of Vietnam.]

**1990’s**


Denise Giardina. *The Unquiet Earth* (1992) [Reprises story of descendents from her *Storming Heaven* as they continue struggles for safe and fair work in the mines of West Virginia].


Fred Chappel. *Farewell, I’m Bound to Leave You* (Stories, 1995) [A series on interlinked stories set in the 1940s North Carolina].


Jim Wayne Miller. *His First Best Country* (1995) [Lyric prose from this poet treating social struggles at the turn of the century.]


Larry Smith. *Beyond Rust* (Stories 1996) [Novella set in working-class Ohio and stories set in steel mill towns of Upper Ohio River Valley.]


Charles Frazier. *Cold Mountain* (1997) [Wounded Civil War deserter walks home to North Carolina and his mountain love].

Sharyn McCrumb. *She Walks These Hills* (1994) [ Treats migration from Britain to American Appalachia]; *The Rosewood Casket* (1996) [Treats issues of the vanishing wilderness in Appalachia]; *The Ballad of Frankie Silver* (1998) [Mystery surrounding the two murders on the Appalachian Trail and subsequent hanging].

Meredith Sue Willis. *In the Mountains of America* (Stories 1994) [Appalachian characters relate to homeplace, landscape, and family in West Virginia].

2000’s

Barbara Kingsolver. Prodigal Summer (2000) [Multi-layered novel of characters living in contemporary Kentucky].


Annabel Thomas. Stone Man Mountain (2002) [A multigenerational saga set in South-eastern Ohio explores struggles between city and country, modernization and tradition.].

Meredith Sue Willis. Oradell at Sea (2003) [Rich widow recalls on her poverty days in Appalachia].

Wendell Berry Hannah Coulter (2004) [As old woman Hannah recalls her life at Port Williams community including the Great Depression, the post-war industrialization of agriculture, flight of young to urban employment, and her remoteness from grandchildren.]

Gretchen Moran Laskas. The Midwife’s Tale (2003) [Mother and daughter work as midwifes in 1930’s Kettle Valley, West Virginia]; The Miner’s Daughter (2007) [Perhaps primarily a young reader’s novel, it is a haunting story of loving family in a poverty stricken mining town in West Virginia’s Depression Era.]

Belinda Anderson. The Well Ain’t Dry Yet (Stories 2001).

Jeanne Bryner. Eclipse (Stories 2003) [Stories set in West Virginia and Ohio dealing with family and the migration north for jobs.]

Silas House. Clay’s Quilt (2002) [Contemporary story of young man struggling to connect with his family and dead mother set in Kentucky mining area.]; A Parchment of Leaves (2003); The Coal Tattoo (2005) [Continues the story of Kentucky mining family by looking back on the two sisters of Clay’s Quilt.]

Ann Pancake. Given Ground (2001) [Stories set in West Virginia’s southern region treating issue of poverty and urbanization]; Strange as this Weather Has Been (2007) [Set in near contemporary West Virginia, folks in flood torn community struggle with coal companies and mountain-top removal.]

Ed Davis. I Was So Much Older Then (2001.) [A coming of age novel focused on a mother and son living on the edge of poverty.]

Ron Rash. The World Made Straight (2006) [Young man deals with things in post Civil War period.]

Jim Tomlinson. Things Kept, Things Left Behind (Stories 2006) [Stories or family, marriage, and struggle set in rural Kentucky.]; Nothing Like an Ocean (Stories 2009).

M. Glenn Taylor. The Ballad of Trenchmouth Taggart (2008); [West Virginia centenarian recalls rugged life growing up, moonshining and mining strikes at Matewan].

Donald Ray Pollock. Knockemstiff (stories 2008) [Contemporary tales of rowdy folks in a small Southern Ohio town.]

Larry Smith. The Long River Home (2009). [Covers four generations of the hard working McCall family in rural Southern Ohio, then migration north to industrial Ohio River Valley.]