



## Appalachian Lives

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This collection of eighty photographs focuses on present-day Appalachia, a region that "progress" has placed under siege.

This once poverty-stricken, mountain backwater has been invaded by four-lane interstates, cable television, Wal-Mart, and mobile homes. The people have largely abandoned log cabins and country stores and now shun overalls in favor of tee shirts that blaze advertising logos.

Over a period of twenty-five years Adams has traveled back to his home state of Kentucky with his cameras to document the lives of people there and to enrich and challenge outside perceptions of Appalachia.

His previous books--*Appalachian Portraits* (1993) and *Appalachian Legacy* (1998), both published by University Press of Mississippi--established the grace, intelligence, and wit with which Adams depicts life, as well as the candor and straightforward honesty he evokes from his trusting subjects.

Adams photographed many of these faces several times during his career. *Appalachian Lives* depicts how time and the outside world have affected the people dear to him. The boys of *Appalachian Portraits* now have become the young men of *Appalachian Lives*. Old homesteads have changed hands. The elderly in earlier photographs have died, yet their features glow in the faces of descendants.

In her introduction Vicki Goldberg says, "Adams looks at a difficult subject with an artist's eye. At their best, the complicated and ambiguous pictures in this book are an uncommon blend of humanity, reportage, and art, an Appalachia most of us thought we knew seen through eyes that tell us that maybe we didn't know it so well after all."

Just as his photographs portray the richness and complexity of Appalachians, Adams's accompanying text explains how he attains the level of trust that allows him to continue photographing these people. He tells why the region continues to fascinate him. His reflections give context to the images and a sense of the lives lived outside of the photographic frame. His honesty about his interaction with his subjects, their sometimes wary reactions to him, and his personal history in the region infuse the photographs with an intimacy that only an Appalachian insider such as Adams could achieve.

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