



Once I Too Had Wings: The Journals of Emma Bell Miles, 1908–1918 (Race, Ethnicity and Gender in Appalachia)

Emma Bell Miles

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Emma Bell Miles (1879–1919) was a gifted writer, poet, naturalist, and artist with a keen perspective on Appalachian life and culture. She and her husband Frank lived on Walden's Ridge in southeast Tennessee, where they struggled to raise a family in the difficult mountain environment. Between 1908 and 1918, Miles kept a series of journals in which she recorded in beautiful and haunting prose the natural wonders and local customs of Walden's Ridge.

Jobs were scarce, however, and as the family's financial situation deteriorated, Miles began to sell literary works and paintings to make ends meet. Her short stories appeared in national magazines such as *Harper's Monthly* and *Lippincott's*, and in 1905 she published *Spirit of the Mountains*, a nonfiction book about southern Appalachia. After the death of her three-year-old son from scarlet fever in 1913, the journals took a more somber turn as Miles documented the difficulties of mountain life, the plight of women in rural communities, the effect of disparities of class and wealth, and her own struggle with tuberculosis.

Previously examined only by a handful of scholars, the journals contain both poignant and incisive accounts of nature and a woman's perspective on love and marriage, death customs, child-raising, medical care, and subsistence on the land in southern Appalachia in the early twentieth century. With a foreword by Elizabeth Engelhard, this edited selection of Emma Bell Miles's journals is illustrated with examples of her painting.

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