



# **Glass Towns: Industry, Labor, and Political Economy in Appalachia, 1890-1930s (Working Class in American History)**

*Ken Fones-Wolf*

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One of the central questions facing scholars of Appalachia concerns how a region so rich in natural resources could end up a symbol of poverty. Typical culprits include absentee landowners, reactionary coal operators, stubborn mountaineers, and greedy politicians. In a deft combination of labor and business history, *Glass Towns* complicates these answers by examining the glass industry's potential to improve West Virginia's political economy by establishing a base of value-added manufacturing to complement the state's abundance of coal, oil, timber, and natural gas.

Through case studies of glass production hubs in Clarksburg, Moundsville, and Fairmont (producing window, tableware, and bottle glass, respectively), Ken Fones-Wolf looks closely at the impact of industry on local populations and immigrant craftsmen. He also examines patterns of global industrial restructuring, the ways workers reshaped workplace culture and political action, and employer strategies for responding to global competition, unreliable markets, and growing labor costs at the end of the nineteenth century.

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