What fun and darn near unputdownable! Paint the Wind begins as ten year old Fancy Deverell's parents are murdered and their Louisiana plantation burned by marauding Yankee soldiers. Loyal slave Atticus saves Fancy from the destruction and with no other family left he takes Fancy along as they head west for a better life. After being on the road for a couple of years they meet up with a motley group of misfits in a circus run by Wes Jarvis and the spooky gypsy Magda. After several years on the road the circus disbands and Fancy and Atticus once again head west, but Atticus's health fails them in the Mosquito Mountains of Colorado and Fancy is left on her own as a deadly snow storm hits and she takes a tumble down a mountain side.....

Meanwhile the story switches to that of brothers Chance and Hart McAllister who leave their Kansas home behind at the death of their parents and head west to Colorado where they meet gunman Ford Jameson and miner Bandana McBain. Bandana takes the boys in as partners digging for silver in the mountains surrounding Oro City (soon to be Leadville when the silver boom hits), and on the way home to their mountain cabin Chance spots a bit of red cloth and a banjo sticking out of the snow and a near-frozen Fancy is rescued in the nick of time. Fancy spends the winter snowbound with the boys and stays the summer working the mine with them, as both brothers fall in love with the beauituous Fancy - - but she can only chose one -- will it be the reckless, gambling, womanizing live on the seat of your pants Chance or the steadfast and faithful Hart?

Desperate not to come between the brothers and longing to establish herself as an actress Fancy leaves the boys and after a wild auction to
raise money for her grub stake she heads for New York City. Once there, she struggles to support herself and her daughter, and eventually accepts an offer she cant refuse from ruthless businessman Jason Madigan. Fancys travels finally bring her back to Leadville and the McAllister brothers, now rich from their silver mine, but she can only marry one of the two brothers and a heart broken Jason begins his plot to bankrupt the man who took Fancy from him.

Well thats about all of the story Im going to tell, theres a whole lot more to Fancys tale in this 800 page paperback that kept me reading well into the wee hours. The story of Fancy and the McAllister brothers takes the reader through heartache, treachery, great wealth, financial disaster, and more until it finally culminates in a daring escape from a remote insane asylum in the Rocky Mountains along with a delightful sting to catch the baddies who done Fancy wrong worthy of Newman and Redford.

All in all a near perfect read and a jolly good yarn, my only quibbles are that I did find some of the secondary characters to be a bit stereotyped -- the Madam with the heart of Gold, Ford the gunslinger, Wu the Chinaman, the circus folks -- along with a few bits of language that didnt quite seem to fit the period. If youre willing to set those minor issues aside and want to sit back and lose yourself in the past with a big sprawling epic of soap opera proportions set in the old west, this is one book well worth looking in to.

4.5/5 stars.

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