BLAIR PATHWAYS HISTORIC NARRATIVE

A Companion to the Blair Pathways CD

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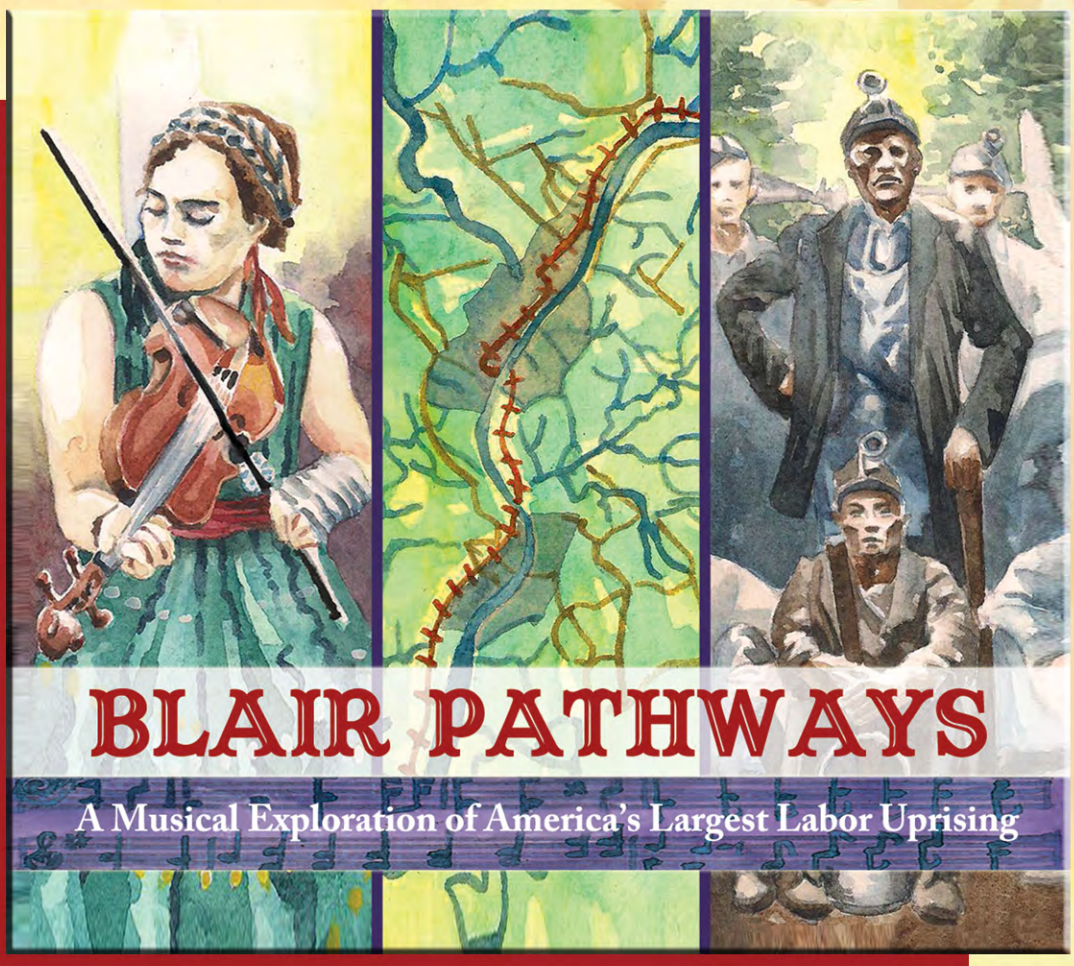

Blair Pathways Historic Narrative
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Introduction

"Injustice boils in men's hearts as does steel in its cauldron, ready to pour forth, white hot, in the fullness of time."
-Mother Jones

"It is we who plowed the prairies; built the cities where they trade;
Dug the mines and built the workshops, endless miles of railroad laid;
Now we stand outcast and starving midst the wonders we have made;
But the union makes us strong."
-from "Solidarity Forever" by Ralph Chaplin

At the turn of the 20th century, America was undergoing massive transitions. Rapid industrialization was causing enormous population and occupational shifts. Agrarian society was slowly disappearing, depleted as workers migrated to new centers of industry. In Europe, peasants facing a population boom and economic depression immigrated en masse to the United States, adding their numbers to the new industrialized workforce. These uprooting shifts naturally coincided with revolutions in political thought. Much of the working class now found itself facing harsh, inhumane conditions for little pay.

Political philosophies sympathetic to the working peoples- including communism, anarchism and socialism- began to take hold in America and abroad. Organizers such as anarchist Emma Goldman and populist Eugene V. Debs traveled the country campaigning for societal change and promoting the rights and autonomy of the everyday worker. The resultant class consciousness led to the formation of worker's unions across the U.S. Some of the most formidable of these unions in their time were the Industrial Workers of the World, the AFL-CIO and the United Mine Workers of America. These organizations and federations, constructed to protect workers' rights found themselves, predictably, in constant conflict with employers and investors who cared little for worker integrity.

West Virginia, a formidable producer of bituminous coal during this period, became a white-hot battleground for miner's rights during the first 20 years of 20th century. This narrative is a brief synopsis of these labor battles, generally called the West Virginia Mine Wars. The Mine Wars, though little acknowledged, were some of the largest and longest-lasting in America's labor history, culminating in a 10,000 person militant uprising in 1921.

The Blair Pathways CD and historic narrative was created as a way to engage with the stories of this period through music and writing.

There are 22 essays in the historic narrative, 20 of which focus on specific tracks from the CD. The CD tracks and their respective essays work in tandem to both educate and emotionally engage the listener. The narrative can be broken down into 3 sections: Essays 1-5b illustrate the social and political background from which the mine wars emerged. Essays 7-10b explore events and themes of early wars in the Kanawha Fields, including the Paint Creek and Cabin Creek Strikes. And finally, essays 11-18 focus on WWI, the Mingo-Logan Wars of 1919-1921 and the current fight to save Blair Mountain.

Notes on Approach

Why Music?
Music makes up the backbone of this narrative because in many ways it was the backbone of struggles in the coal fields. Music communicated the complaints of workers, raised their sprits when in sorrow, and filled them with vindication when preparing for conflict. The varied functions of music- from religious to recreational, propagandic and inspirational- permeated the world of mining families in times of strife. It is hoped that, through the reinvigoration of these tunes and songs, a new appreciation for the West Virginia Mine Wars might emerge, and future generations might continue to remember this history through music.

Language
One of the main goals in producing the Blair Pathways Project was to turn a gaze towards peoples from this period whose significance has customarily been ignored. All too often, narratives concerning the coal wars simply refer to “the miners” and “the union” as the main players in resistance to coal field autocracy. Moreover, visual media overwhelmingly presents coal war participants as white male Americans. These terms and representations problematically exclude the critical voices of women, African-Americans, immigrants and political radicals. These peoples, combined with their fellow Anglo-American miners, made up the whole patchwork of the struggle for humane treatment and dignity in the coal fields. Thus, when relevant, language in this narrative uses terms that speak to the actions of mining and striking communities and families, instead of merely to the miners themselves.

The reader should also note that West Virginia has experienced other periods of mine worker conflict, such as the Monongalia-Fairmont coalfield wars, which occurred between 1927 and 1931. The Blair Pathways project does not touch on these other conflicts, and encourages those interested to seek out other sources to expand their knowledge.

It is my hope that you will enjoy the Blair Pathways Project, and continue the struggle for economic and environmental justice in Appalachia.

In Song and Solidarity,
Saro Lynch-Thomason, *Producer*

Useful Terms

AFL: An acronym for the American Federation of Labor, a federation of unions founded in 1886. The AFL later merged with the Congress of Industrial Organizations to form the AFL-CIO.

Anthracite: A dense, shiny coal with a high carbon content. Pennsylvania and parts of West Virginia have historically produced some of the highest amounts of anthracite coal in the U.S.

Bituminous coal: A relatively soft form of coal, historically mined across the southern and mid-western U.S. Due to its softness, it is considered a grade below anthracite.

IWW: An acronym for the Industrial Workers of the World, an international labor union formed in 1905.

UMWA: An acronym for the United Mine Workers of America, a trade union formed in 1890.

UMWJ: An acronym for the United Mine Workers Journal, a publication of the UMWA.

1. Early Coal Mining and Slavery

Track Number: 1, Piece: "In That Morning"
Musician: Bernice Jones (vocals) and Rev. Robert Jones (guitar)
Origin of Music: Afro-Appalachian traditional, 19th century

On "In That Morning"

This piece was shared by Esther Johnson, who was a school teacher living in Logan County at the time she was recorded. Esther had learned the piece from a former slave named Joseph Black, who in turn had heard it sung by slaves as they were being transported from Virginia to Kentucky. A desire for release from bondage and suffering is heard strongly in

this song, reflecting the sentiments of slaves across Appalachia during the 18th century. Bernice Jones renders the song here in a strong gospel vibrato.[1]

Early Coal Mining and Slavery

"Work in the coal mines I always dreaded…There was always the danger of being blown to pieces by a premature explosion of powder, or of being crushed by falling slate. Accidents from one or the other of these causes was frequently occurring and this kept me in constant fear."
-Booker T. Washington, recalling his work as a slave in the coal mines of the Kanawha/New River Field [2]

"The story of coal is always the same. It is a dark story. For a second's more sunlight, men must fight like tigers. For the privilege of seeing the color of their children's eyes by the light of the sun, fathers must fight as beasts in the jungle."
-Mary Harris "Mother" Jones, organizer and orator[3]

Four hundred years ago, West Virginia was inhabited and utilized by several different native groups. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the Iroquois, the Conois, the Shawnee and Delaware, amongst others, hunted and lived in the region. In the late 18th century, wars and resulting treaties pushed natives such as the Kanawha and Mingo west of the Ohio River, though some stayed and assimilated into the ever-growing populations of colonizers. The new settlers of what would become West Virginia began to develop economies based on hunting and subsistence farming.[4]

During these first waves of European settlement, many began noticing coal in exposed seams in stream beds, fields and roadsides. Coal extraction soon developed into a casual business trade, utilized in the winter when farming could not be done, or when other income sources were poor. The first record of commercial mining occurred in 1750, when an English company used African-American slaves to work an open-face mine along the James River near Richmond, VA. As commercial mining slowly increased in the first half of the 19th century, Anglo-American farmer-miners, Irish and British immigrants and African-American slaves were the primary populations of people working in the industry.[5]

Southern West Virginia began to develop coal commercially upon the discovery of bituminous seams in the Kanawha Valley in 1817. Salt works along the Kanawha River began to use the coal as a fuel source, opening new mines and renting slaves to do the digging. One out of four slaves living in the Kanawha Valley was forced to work in these mines for the salt work industry, where rates of death and injury were high. Coal also

began to be shipped down the Kanawha and Ohio Rivers in flatboats, and on to cities where it was used as a heat source in homes.[6]

The end of the Civil War freed all African-American slaves in West Virginia. These people, who had worked West Virginia's early coal mines, had been the first to face the unregulated, harsh conditions of an economy more invested in coal than it was in the livelihood of those who extracted it. During the war, one of the leading arguments for emancipation in West Virginia had been that slavery took jobs from free white workers. As the late 19th century progressed, new populations of workers seeking employment in West Virginia's coal mines, though free, would still have to struggle with dangerous conditions, and risk their own well-being in the struggle to gain better treatment.[7]

In That Morning (original lyrics)[8]

Refrain:

In that morning,
In that morning,
I'm afraid some'll be lost
In that morning.

You can bury me in the East,
You can bury me in the West.
But I'll hear the trumpet of Gabriel
In that morning.

The chains will be broken
And the bound will be free.
I'm afraid some'll be lost
In that morning.

No more weeping, no more mourning,
No more sorrow and crying.
I'm afraid some'll be lost
In that morning.

No more thirst, no more hunger,
No more pain, no more death.
I'm afraid some'll be lost
In that morning.

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2. Southern West Virginia: The Landscape

Track Number: 2, Piece: "Sandy River Belle"
Musician: Sam Gleaves (guitar) and Myra Morrison (fiddle)
Origin of Music: Appalachian traditional

On "Sandy River Belle"

"Sandy River Belle" evokes the image of a boat floating up the Big Sandy, a river that marks the border between West Virginia and Kentucky. On the West Virginia side, the Big Sandy is formed from the confluence of the Levisa Fork and Tug Fork, the latter of which flows alongside Mingo County, WV. The name "Big Sandy" refers to the river's extensive sandy banks. Indigenous names for the river include the Chatteroi, Chatterwha, Tatteroa and Sikeacepe, the last name being a Lenape title meaning "Salt River." The Big Sandy has inspired many old-time tunes including "Boatin' Up Sandy" and "Big Sandy River." This spirited arrangement of "Sandy River Belle" was provided by Sam Gleaves and Myra Morrison.[1]

Southern West Virginia: The Landscape

"O Beautiful Hills of Galilee!
Amid whose scenes the Savior dwells,
Your flow'rs that bloom so beautifully,
Of heaven's lasting beauties tell."
-A traditional gospel tune popularly sung by musician Hazel Dickens. Hazel's version is often used to evoke the beauty of Appalachia's mountains.[2]

Southern West Virginia's geography is characterized by its dense mountainous highlands. It occupies the rugged Allegheny Plateau in the west and the Cumberland Mountains to the south, with elevation ranges between 2,000 and 5,000 feet in most places. Tightly interlocking mountains weave together endlessly on the plateau, sloping dramatically down into winding waterways which curl through the region. Rivers including the Big Sandy, Tug Fork, Kanawha and New all flow through Southern West Virginia, creating passageways which allowed for some of the first roads, and then rail lines, to be built in the 18th and 19th centuries. [3]

Ecology and Coal

West Virginia is nestled largely in what is called the Valley and Ridge Region of Appalachia- an area characterized by long parallel ridges that stretch from the south-west to the north-east, flanked on both sides by long sloping valleys. This landscape was formed over millions of years, influenced by factors such as plate upheavals, glacial advances and retreats, and weather erosion. Unique conditions helped to form the mixed mesophytic forests that cover so much of West Virginia, and Appalachia as a whole. These forests boast a robust mix of deciduous and coniferous tree species, constituting some of the most biologically diverse temperate forests in the world.[4]

Southern West Virginia is not only recognized for its unique forest ecology, but for its rich mineral deposits as well. Long before the upheavals that would form the Appalachian Mountains, North America was covered in swamplands which grew enormous ferns and club mosses. Over hundreds of billions of years, the organic debris from these plants compacted and developed into coal. It has been estimated that, prior to modern extraction, over 35-billion tons lay in seams across Appalachia.[5]

In contrast to the long process of its formation, the extraction of coal has been an incredibly rapid one. In only about 200 years, coal deposits in southern Appalachia have become dramatically depleted. The rapid pace of this extraction, and the human pressure to bring it about, created the conditions in which the mine wars took place.[6]

Influence in the Mine Wars

Quite often, places are defined by how they are utilized or valued by their inhabitants. To the coal industry 100 years ago, southern West Virginia was viewed as a series of production fields, divided according to geographic factors and valued by the richness and quantity of its mineral deposits. Two centuries before, native peoples like the Mingo and Delaware, as well as early settlers focused their knowledge of the region on the flow of rivers for transportation, and the growth of native plants for nourishment. During the coal wars, both of these ways of seeing the land, and many more, were important to those fighting in the mine wars.

The unique geography of the land helped determine the events of West Virginia's mine wars from beginning to end. For those who knew the mountains as their battleground (both strikers and coal company militia), it was imperative to know what creeks to follow, what ridgelines had the best vantage point, and how foliage at different times of the year affected visibility (for more, please see track #10 "When the Leaves Come Out" described under narrative section "The Bull Moose Special and Holly Grove."). For a woman living in the strike camps, it would have been particularly important to know where the clean water sources were, where wild edibles grew and where sunlight could reach to help gardens grow. Knowledge of these factors influenced the outcome of battles and strike periods- determining the health of strikers, morale levels and in turn, the strength and determination to fight for political change.

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3. The Building of the Railroads

Track Number: 3, Piece: "Lovers is You Right?"
Musician: Rev. Robert Jones (guitar)
Origin of Music: Lining Track Song, Mid-20th century

On "Lovers is You Right?"

Though names like Rockefeller, Vanderbilt and Huntington are often remembered in connection to the rail industry during 19th and 20th centuries, it was the sweat and blood of hundreds of thousands of laborers that truly built the railways. Railroad building was dangerous and physically challenging. The job of laying track involved the coordinated movement of heavy steel rails, and careful timing was important in order to complete the task and avoid injury. Therefore, workers developed songs to help keep in time and entertain each other. Call-and-response verses were common, since they helped maintain a steady rhythm and kept workers engaged. Verses were often created on the spot, since the length of the song was dependent on the time needed to complete the task at hand.[1]

"Lovers is You Right?" was shared by a man named Clarence Harmon when he was attending Bluefield College in 1951. Harmon worked on railroads during the summer. The song makes many place-based references to West Virginia locations like Bluefield and Keystone (the latter being a primarily-African-American community at the time of the recording). The song commands the workers to "carry it to the mountain" and "shake it to the river," reminding the listener that these men were often moving track between narrow mountains and winding rivers and streams. Though this song was not necessarily a contemporary of the major rail development era between the 1870s and 1900, it is exemplary of songs created to complete tasks essential to the building of railways during that time. Rev. Robert Jones uses his guitar as the "answer" to the caller's questions in this interpretation of the original shared by Mr. Harmon.[2]

Railways and Absentee Land Ownership

Lord, ten pound hammer, it killed John Henry,
Ten pound hammer, done killed John Henry,
Ten pound hammer, it killed John Henry;
Won't kill me, lord, won't kill me.
-From a laying steel song, shared by Albert McCoy, a retired railroad worker in Bluefield, WV. Recorded 1950[3]

The economic development of coal in West Virginia has always been intimately connected to the railroad industry. Beginning in the late 1800s, corporations from cities as far away as

Chicago and New York City built and invested in West Virginia's rail lines: designed to transport workers into the state and take coal and profits out. Along with these corporate investments came a new wave of land ownership in West Virginia that displaced mountaineer and farmer populations.

The Railways and their Influence on the West Virginia Mine Wars

Development of commercial mines in West Virginia was slow for the period leading up to the Civil War, and most of the state's mines were located in Kanawha County as part of salt work production. During the early 1860s, only 185 mines employing less than 1600 workers existed in the entire state of West Virginia. After the Civil War, Southern economic depression and other factors retarded rail development across the Appalachian Mountains. But in the early 1870s, northern corporate interests including J.P. Morgan and John D. Rockefeller began to invest in railroad expansion into West Virginia and other parts of Appalachia. Development continued so that by the 1890s a host of rail lines including the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O), the Kanawha and Ohio, and the Coal and Coke Companies were crisscrossing the state, bringing in European immigrant and southern black workers, and transporting out coal to northern industrialized cities. By 1900, West Virginia was traversed by rail lines and tunnels, which would not only transform West Virginia society, but also shape defensive and offensive strategies used by mine owners and strikers alike during the mine wars. [4]

In as much as rail line representatives claimed to have no interest in the politics between strikers and mine owners, it was clear throughout West Virginia's coal wars that the rail companies were firmly aligned with business interest over worker's rights. During the mine wars between 1900 and 1921, mine owners made use of rail companies like the C&O and Norfolk and Western to battle strikers. Trains armed with company guards were used to transport in strikebreakers and weaponry. In some cases, such as in the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek Strikes, specially-built armored trains were driven by strike camps, from which company militia would fire on strikers. In response, strikers would blow up or destroy rail lines and even commandeer trains during times of battle.[5]

Absentee Land Ownership

As Appalachia became increasingly valued as a profitable mineral-extraction region, corporate interests from the North and Midwest invested in a series of strategies to take ownership of lands already occupied by settlers. Agents were sent all over coal-rich areas, offering contracts in which a sum would be paid in exchange for the "mineral rights" of a property. Many Appalachians were invested in farming their land but had no plans to exploit the coal beneath it, and were happy to sign the contracts and receive an immediate

sum of money. However, the deeds often included a clause stating that the buyer was entitled with the right to do "any and all things necessary, or by him deemed necessary or convenient in mining and removing the coal." In this way, many Appalachians were legally driven from their land and livelihoods when corporate owners required destruction of a farmer's surface property to extract the coal beneath it.[6]*

Another popular form of land theft during the period took place in court rooms. After the Revolutionary War, the state of Virginia had granted large tracts of native-occupied land to veterans as payments for service, and sold the rest to speculators. By the late 1880s, Virginia and West Virginia reclaimed and re-sold this land due to lack of ownership registration and payment of taxes. Capitalists interested in buying West Virginia's coal fields simply bought the original deeds and went to court arguing that they still had rights based on the older claims. With money and skilled lawyers backing their case, much of West Virginia and Appalachia as a whole was swiftly handed over to corporate interests from Philadelphia, Chicago, New York City, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Baltimore and London. By 1900, with approximately 94% of Appalachia's mineral resources being owned by outside interests, states like West Virginia were transformed into a "vast colonial preserve."[7]

New land ownership patterns as well as the growth or rail and coal industries led to the rapid development of company towns and regulated school systems, while dissolving older cultural and social practices. The farming population decreased rapidly, and Appalachian communities were forced to either move away or supply for the new economic needs of incoming industry. Southern West Virginia had rapidly become a mono-economy, dependent on coal extraction.[8]

*This practice continues to the present day, in the form of mountain-top removal mining, which wholly destroys land and water resources during the extraction process. Please see narrative section "The Current Fight to Save Blair Mountain."

<u>Lovers is You Right? (original lyrics)</u>[9]
Caller: Well Lovers is you right?
Response: Oh yes we right.
(These lines repeat before every verse.)
Caller again: Newborn baby born last night,
walkin' talkin' 'fore daylight.
Carry it to the mountain boys, carry it to the mountain.

Isaac, David (?), Luke and John,
All the prophets now are gone.

Shake it to the river boys, shake it to the river.

Bluefield women read and write
Keystone women fight and fight.

See that woman with the red dress on,
That's my woman as sure as you're born.
Shake it easy boys.

Center, head, joint and back,
Come on boys let's line this track.
Oh, Lord.

Daddy killed a rabbit, brought it home,
Children got choked on the rabbit bone.
Shake it easy boys, shake it easy.

Little girl if you were mine
You wouldn't do nothin' but starch and iron.
Move it over boys, move it over.

I've got a woman that lives up there,
She don't do nothin' but put on airs.
Get a hold a gold (?), boys, get a hold of the gold.

Shake it easy, shake it light,
Come on boys let's get it right.

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4. Ethnic Diversity in Mining Communities

Track Number: 4, Piece: "Stornelli d'esilio"
Musician: Il Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano
Origin of Music: Pietro Gori, 1895

On "Stornelli d'esilio"

"Stornelli d'esilio" was written by Italian anarchist and poet Pietro Gori (1865-1911). Gori committed a good deal of his life to anarchist politics as a practicing lawyer, writer and lecturer. Due to anti-anarchist sentiments he was exiled from both Italy and Switzerland and went on to tour and lecture in the U.S. and Canada in the mid-1890s. Themes of emigration, political revolution and a yearning for home made Gori's songs popular with Italian emigrants well within his own lifetime.[1]

"Stornelli d'esilio" or "Exile Songs" became popular amongst revolutionary movements in Italy after its creation. Italian folklorist Alessandro Portelli describes "Stornelli d'esilio" as a predominant folk anthem sung at demonstrations and organizing events throughout the 21st century. Given the song's popularity, it is likely that the anthem was sung by Italian anarchist immigrants during strikes of which they were largely participatory, including the IWW-led Paterson, NJ textile strikes in 1910 and the Lawrence, MA textile strikes of 1912-1913. It is probable that Italian anarchists in the Southern West Virginia coal fields knew this song as well. "Stornelli d'esilio" was selected to convey the radical politics of many Italian immigrants who came to be a fundamental part of the West Virginia coal wars. It is performed here by Il Nuovo Canzoniere Italiano, an Italian folk group formed in the 1960s.

In the recording the audience can be heard to rise in excitement each time the song returns to the chorus.[2]

Ethnic Diversity in Mining Communities

"Our homeland is the whole world
Our law is freedom
And a rebel thought is in our hearts!"
-from Stornelli d'esilio

"They (the Italians) played a big part in these things (strike). I recall one time we got whipped bad in the early days of the Cabin Creek-Paint Creek strike and we was down at Cabin Creek Junction and we seen a gang comin' from the river. My brother said, "Oh, boy, we got 'em now. Here comes the Boomer 'Talys and things are gonna get hot."
-Duff Scott, remembering Italian participation in the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek Wars ("Talys" being a localized term for Italians)[3]

Immigration and Migration to West Virginia

European
During the late 1800s and into the early 20th century, the U.S. experienced an enormous immigration influx from eastern and southern Europe. Europe was experiencing enormous population growth, while old peasant-agrarian systems were suffering from rapid market changes. These factors and more fostered a young population seeking to emigrate to find economic stability. Simultaneously, coal operators in West Virginia's bituminous fields recognized a need for a larger workforce, and so began to recruit immigrant populations. Coal agents would meet immigrants at ports of entry, like New York City and Baltimore, and even travel overseas to convince workers that West Virginia promised safe jobs and a home for single and family men alike. The result was that in 20 years' time, West Virginia's population increased from about 80,000 in 1880 to nearly 300,000 in 1910. And by 1915, almost half of West Virginia's miners were recent immigrants, mainly from southern Europe. [4]

African-American
New populations were not only arriving from Europe, but from the Deep South as well. At the end of the Civil War, blacks had already begun to establish their own migration networks into West Virginia, but in the 1880s and 1890s, another wave of migration occurred as young men poured in to help build the railways. Many of these workers who

helped to build the C&O and Norfolk and Western stayed and settled to work the mines of the Kanawha, New River and Pocahontas Fields.[5]

African-Americans continued to be attracted to the West Virginia fields during the late 19th century. Recruiters from coal companies would visit churches and meeting halls, expounding the advantages of mining work, and offer to help pay for transportation to West Virginia (travel fares were often later taken out of the worker's pay). The result of this recruitment, added to low income conditions in the agrarian South, encouraged large amounts of black migration to West Virginia. The state's black population of 4,800 in 1880 jumped to 40,000 in 1910. By 1885, African-Americans alone made up 90% of the mining workforce in the New River Fields. [6]

Immigrant/Migrant Populations and Organizing Influence

The unique combination of immigrant and U.S. borne populations in early 20th century West Virginia fostered an incredibly diverse workforce. By 1910 the largest populations of coal miners in West Virginia consisted of White-Americans, African-Americans, Hungarians, Italians, Poles, Russians and Slavs, such as Bulgarians. Smaller populations of Germans, English, Irish, Scotch, Roumanian, Lithuanian, Litvitch and Greeks also mined the region.[7]

The coal operators hoped that immigrants and African-Americans would prove to be a group resistant to forming unions. Portions of the UMWA feared this possibility as well, particularly in regards to immigrant groups. An article in a 1907 issue of the United Mine Workers Journal stated, "The classes of people which today arrive on our shores from the European South and West…are by far not the class of people that would join us or participate in our struggle for the maintenance of our standard of living." It is true that many who worked the coal fields were, as historian David Alan Corbin describes "existence-oriented" and not interested in creating long-term associations with political parties or unions. However, the politics of many who migrated to West Virginia would prove to provide fiery support for the worker's cause.[8]

Immigrant Influence

The 1902 Fayette/Kanawha Strikes (please see narrative section "The 1902 New River Field Strikes") convinced some companies in the Kanawha Valley that a larger foreign workforce would be more productive and less prone to begin conflict, and so efforts were made to bring Italians and other European immigrants to the area. However, it became apparent that the politics of the Italians' home country had made many of the newcomers ripe for radical organizing and protest. Anarchist, socialist and syndicalist sentiments were surging in Italy at the same time that many were immigrating to the U.S. Anarcho-

syndicalists in Italy and elsewhere believed that effective revolutionary transformation necessitated direct action through unions, not decision-making through republican and parliamentary systems. This attitude was clearly prevalent to many Italians in the Southern West Virginia coal fields, who repeatedly put themselves at the forefront of major conflicts and were often the last ones to give up strikes, even after unions declared them over.[9]

One example is the Kanawha Valley's Long Ton Strike in 1908. The strike, led by the UMWA, only lasted a week, but Italians in the Boomer area who were unhappy with the resolution reached by the union continued to demonstrate. The Italians marched, sang songs and shot their rifles in front of the mine offices at Boomer while parading a black and red flag (possibly a reference to anarchism) emblazoned with the words "Victory or Death." They shot at mine officers, took a local deputy hostage and continued to target the coal offices until 50 deputies arrived and several arrests were made.[10]

Later in the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek Wars, Italian and Greek strikers both assisted in arms transportation, guerilla warfare and convincing transportation workers to leave the strike zone. Rock Spinelli, an Italian immigrant, and his wife Nellie Spinelli from Eskdale, are of particular note. They both walked directly into the camps of replacement workers and were able to convince over 50 to leave on a boat bound for Charleston. Both were later imprisoned under martial law then released under conditional pardons by Governor Glasscock.[11]

After the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek Wars many Italians continued to support the more radical contingency of the UMWA's District 17, which included Frank Keeney and Fred Mooney, and went on to be prominent officials in the governing body of the district in ensuing years. [12]

African-American Influence

African-American populations were active in unions and during strike periods. When the Knights of Labor came to the Kanawha Valley in the 1880s, African-Americans readily joined. And as the K of L dissolved into the UMWA in the 1890s, black miners from several southern fields continued to take the union oath and gain elected positions as district officials.[13]

The Paint Creek/Cabin Creek Strikes of 1912-1913 witnessed unified participation across racial lines. One of the most well-known participants in the strikes was a black miner from California named Dan Chain, also called Few Clothes. Chain was active in turning back strikebreakers and fought in defensive units against company militia. He was arrested for his pro-union activities and was only released under a conditional pardon which stated he would no longer support the union when he left prison.[14]

During World War I, general membership of UMWA Districts 17 and 29 increased dramatically in West Virginia, with black members holding offices on executive boards as well as in local districts, and acting as delegates to national UMWA meetings. During the ensuing Mingo-Logan Wars, black miners participated at every level of resistance with many being notable pro-union preachers and organizers. It is estimated that over 2,000 blacks, mostly from the Kanawha and New River Fields, participated in the March to Mingo in 1921. One black miner, George Echols, summed up the reasons for his being on strike during the 1919-1921 Wars by saying: "I was raised a slave. My master and mistress called me and I answered, and I know the time when I was a slave, and I felt just like we feel now."[15]*

The working-class consciousness of foreign-borne workers and African Americans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries helped miners to work across ethnic lines in fighting for better rights and conditions. This diverse work force brought fresh political perspectives and a variety of tactics to the workers' struggle.

*The fact cannot be ignored that racial and ethnic discrimination existed in the West Virginia union movement. Blacks and immigrants faced consistent discrimination from American-borne whites across all social spheres, and this too is part of union history in the coal fields. Please see William Trotter's *Coal, Class and Color* for a thorough review of black worker politics in early 20th century West Virginia.[16]

Stornelli d'esilio (Exile Songs)[17]
Translated into English
Italian exiles, we venture on our way
with no regrets or fears

Chorus:
Our homeland is the whole world
our law is freedom
and a rebel thought is in our hearts.

As we raised the throngs of the poor
we were banished from every land (Chorus)

Wherever the exploited rebel
we will find hosts of brethren (Chorus)

As we roamed over land and sea

we left our loved ones for an ideal (Chorus)

We travel through the sorrows of the masses
forerunners of the nation of human kind (Chorus)

But your exiles, Italy, shall return
to wave the torch of rights (Chorus)

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5. Conditions in the Coal Fields

Track Number: 5, Piece: "The Company Store"
Musician: Tim Eriksen (vocals) and Riley Baugus (banjo)
Origin of Music: Isaac Hannah, 1895, United Mine Workers Journal

On "The Company Store"

*"*The Company Store," written by Isaac Hannah of Englewood, IL, was submitted and printed in the United Mine Workers Journal in 1895. It is likely Hannah worked as a miner in the Illinois fields and was all too familiar with the injustices suffered by workers under "the great coal monopolies." Mr. Hannah uses humor in referring to company store owners as "pirates and brigands" who have translated their practices into economic thievery on shore. It is not known if this poem was ever actively utilized as a song, although its structure lends itself to several traditional melodies. Tim Eriksen and Riley Baugus created this version for the Blair Pathways CD.[1]

Work Conditions

"Down in the mines they could not pass,
Their lives were snuffed out by fire and gas.
We're going to see our friends again,

Oh, Lord, Hallelu."
-from "Bartley Mine Disaster" performed by the Evening Breezes Sextet in 1940. The song commemorates the deaths of ninety-one men from an explosion at a mine in Bartley, WV, January, 1940.[2]

Mine Safety

Working in the mines required, and continues to require, a good deal of physical strength and endurance. Mine jobs entailed daily use of explosives, intense digging and picking, coal loading and many other tasks. Young boys often worked in various parts of mines and in breakers, separating coal from waste. All of these jobs were both straining and dangerous. Lack of proper ventilation and safety equipment could lead to mine explosions and cave-ins or long-term suffering from black lung and other injuries.

In the late 19th century, as coal production increased across the country, so too did mining accidents and fatalities. West Virginia was considered to have some of the worst standards for mining safety conditions. The West Virginia Department of Mines, which provided for mine safety inspectors, was created in 1905. Enforcement remained weak, however, and in 1907 a series of accidents led to further legislation which instructed mine foremen to train inexperienced workers in mine safety operations. In the same year, the Fairmont Mine Disaster, which killed over 361 miners, exposed West Virginia's lack of enforcement of its own laws. In 1908 President Theodore Roosevelt called for a federal department to be formed which would oversee mine industry safety, and two years later the U.S. Bureau of Mines was founded. Conditions slowly improved in West Virginia, but many unnecessary deaths continued to occur.[3]

Pay Manipulation

Coal companies developed a myriad of methods by which miners could be deprived of deserved wages. The following is a brief overview of strategies by which worker's pay was often compromised.

Blacklisting: A discriminatory practice employed to keep "troublesome" miners from finding employment. When a miner was fired for reasons related to organizing or union activity, details of his name and physical description were generated throughout the coal fields in order to discourage other companies from hiring him. When blacklisting worked efficiently, a miner and his family were usually forced to leave the region to find work elsewhere.*
Cribbing: Cars were designed to carry a certain tonnage and a miner was paid for filling his coal car to the top. Often, however, the coal company put extensions on these cars,

increasing the amount of tonnage that could be put into each one, but not compensating the miner for the extra tonnage. This method of increasing output while keeping the worker's wage the same was called "cribbing."
Docking: When a miner's car was taken to the tipple to be dumped, an employee called a checkweighman would inspect the car for rock, slate or other debris that wasn't fit for use. The checkweighman had the discriminatory right to determine how much of the car was waste, and the more of the car designated as waste, the less the company had to pay the miners. Thus oftentimes checkweighmen were paid by their bosses to purposefully lie about how much slate was in a car, so as to pay the miner less. There was not a system by which a miner could appeal a checkweighman's decision.[4]

During the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek strikes, the Paint Creek miners submitted a list of demands which, among other things, petitioned an end to cribbing, docking, and compulsory trade at company stores while demanding that miner-elected checkweighmen be installed. It is obvious that the miners of Paint Creek were regularly experiencing some of the corrupt practices used by southern West Virginia operators.[5]

The Company Town

The company town was a particular phenomenon of coal-based economies in Appalachia. Company towns were built and wholly owned by the companies that built them. The homes inhabited by mining families, and the stores from which workers bought daily necessities were all under company control. Mining families paid for their housing through regular deductions from their wages, and no leases were signed. This made it very easy for companies to eject workers when union troubles stirred up. Williamson coal operator lawyer S.B. Davis summarized this relationship by saying, "It is like a servant who works in your house…if you discharge him, you ask him to get out of the servants quarters. It is a question of master and servant."[6]

The dominance of coal company life in West Virginia mediated social and economic opportunities further. In *Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields* David Alan Corbin points out that "numerically and proportionally (94 percent), more miners in West Virginia lived in company towns than did miners in any other state." Without the advantage of nearby industrial cities nor quick and easy transportation to the next town, options open to miners in other states- such as multiple places to buy goods, or part-time work for women- were mostly closed off.[7]

The Company Store

Almost every coal camp would have a company store from which workers would buy

tools, food and other items. The company store served as a focal point of compromised exchanges between working families and the coal companies. Upon arrival in the coal fields, workers were given tools, but told that the cost for their tools came out of their paychecks. Further debts could be incurred when underpaid workers and wives would buy food and other items on credit at the company store.[8]

The company store was often the place at which workers received their pay, and wages were typically issued in a special form of money called scrip, redeemable only at the store itself. In 1891 it became illegal in West Virginia for any company or corporation to pay its workers in scrip, and yet the practice extended well into the 20th century. And though workers were supposedly allowed to purchase goods from wherever they chose, geographical isolation prevented families from buying elsewhere. Typically, prices ran higher at these stores than compared to other local shops.[9]

Several forms of scrip were generated for different purposes and types of exchanges. Another practice that has recently come to light is the exchange of "Esau" scrip by collieries run by coal operator Justus Collins, in Fayette County. When husbands or sons were injured in the mines and there were no other available men to work, women in the family would be forced to prostitute themselves in exchange for Esau scrip, which in turn could be used to buy food.[10]*

*Some company stores have been preserved and re-opened as museums. An excellent model is the Whipple Company Store in Fayette County, which gives frequent tours from May to November. More information can be found at **www.whipplecompanystore.com**

Worker Solidarity

The mediated circumstances of coal field life also led to greater class solidarity amongst workers. Even though coal camps could be segregated by race and nationality, conditions of houses and utility costs were often consistent regardless of background. The coal operators were more interested in having uniform, low-investment housing conditions for all their workers, simply because racial and social divisions would take extra effort (for instance, white workers could be put in traditionally black housing when openings occurred, rather than building a new house). This is not to say that racial division did not occur in coal camps- indeed it often did- but to point out that the economic motives of company owners often led them to ignore racial divisions that were prominent in other parts of the region.

Overall, because families suffered from the same poor conditions in coal camps and in the mines, working families inevitably came to rely on each other for material and emotional support, regardless of background. "The company town," Corbin writes, "quickly and

ruthlessly dissolved the traditional cultures and time-honored social institutions of the migrant miners (whether native white, immigrant white or southern black) that might have encouraged the continuation of ethnic or racial, instead of class, perspectives in the newly-created workforce." The mining community's interconnected identity would prove to be an essential ingredient in the battle for better conditions and unionization in West Virginia's mine wars.[11]

The Company Store [12]

The lot of the miner
At best is quite hard,
We work for good money,
Get paid with a card;
We scarcely can live,
And not a cent more,
Since we're paid off in checks
On the company store.

Those great coal monopolies
Are growing apace,
They are making their millions
By grinding our face;
Unto their high prices
The people pay toll,
While they pay fifty cents
For mining their coal.

They keep cutting our wages
Time after time,
Where we once had a dollar,
We now have a dime;
While our souls are near famished,
And our bodies are sore,
We are paid off in checks,
On the company store.

Though hard we may labor
But little we have;
We are robbed of our rights,
Though we fought for the slave.
Monop'ly keeps grasping

For more and still more;
They will soon own the earth,
Through the company store.

(The following verse is left out of Eriksen and Baugus' version)
We sign then a contract
As agreed between men,
Thought it holds us like slaves,
It never holds them;
And when they've exhausted
The old contract score,
They capped the climax
With the company store.

The old pirates and brigands
Who fought hand to hand,
Who would scuttle a ship,
Or pillage the land,
Have formed a collusion
And all come on shore,
And now ply their trade
Through the company store.

But when the old worthies
Are called to their doom,
I think honest business
Will enjoy a great boom;
And when they are finally
Called from our shore,
I hope they'll take with them
The company store.

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5b. Unions, UMWA Strikes and the Central Competitive Field

"Hear the pleadings of the workers,
As they toil from day to day;
Let it be our aim and object
To drive the hungry wolf away;
Give protection to the workers,
Needy ones all o'er the land,
Extending to our toiling brothers,
Everywhere, a helping hand."
-An opening ode used by assemblies of the Knights of Labor[1]

"It is evident that some step should be taken to check the evils that were fast accruing from insane competition, the heavy foot of which always rests upon the wage of the producer."
-from the Charter of the Ohio Miners Amalgamated Association, formed 1882[2]

Early Coal Miner's Unions and the Formation of the UMWA

The developments of the coal industry in the late 19th century led to an intensely competitive market in which constant swings in prices could affect the employment and pay of large populations of workers. This fierce competition led profit-driven employers to cut back on healthy work and home living standards for their employees. In reaction, miners began to organize protective associations to ensure security for themselves and their families.

Starting in the 1840s, several miners' unions were formed and faded away. The first was founded in 1849 in the anthracite region of Pennsylvania by a miner names John Bates. A much larger union, the American Miner's Association, was founded in 1861and published the first official journal for coal miners, called *The Weekly Miner*. The Workingmen's Benevolent Society was founded in 1864, and though not exclusively a miner's union, in 1870 it was the first organization to negotiate a wage agreement with a coal operators' association. In the 1880s, two young unions- the Knights of Labor and the National Progressive Union of Miners and Mine Laborers- decided at a convention in Columbus, Ohio to combine and form a new, larger union: The United Mine Workers of America, or the UMWA.[3]

A common strategy used by unions to gain changes in treatment and pay was to go on strike- in essence, stop production by leaving the workplace- thus preventing owners from making profits until workers' demands were met. Following the birth of the UMWA, several strikes were staged, none of them successful. Then, in July of 1897 new union president Michael D. Ratchford called for a national strike in the bituminous fields of the Midwest. After 3 months the strike was won, resulting in a boost in membership and growth in the union's treasury. At the UMWA's national convention in 1898, Ratchford was able to boast a current membership of 33,000 workers.

During the 1897 strike, 100,000 Northern miners had walked out in solidarity, yet West Virginia had continued to mine coal and make profits even as other coal fields were shut down. An organizing drive was called, and in 1897 the UMWA sent a wave of organizers and orators to southern West Virginia.[4]

The Central Competitive Field and the UMWA's Focus on WV

The UMWA was motivated to organize southern West Virginia for another reason as well: pressure from the coal operators of the Midwest. By the late 19th century, two different coal-producing regions had emerged. In the Northeast and Midwest was the Central Competitive Field, comprised of Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio and Indiana. To the south were the bituminous coalfields of modern-day West Virginia, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee and Alabama. The Central Competitive Field had long been a dominant producer of coal, but by

the 1880s West Virginia, still largely unorganized by the unions, was beginning to exceed the Midwest in output. A nation-wide depression since 1892 had slowed extraction in the Midwest while West Virginia continued to open new mines. In fact, between 1898 and 1912, West Virginia's coal output rose 350%.[5]

In 1898, the coal operators of the Central Competitive Field addressed the "threat" of West Virginia at a joint conference with the UMWA and other unions. Reasoning that unionization would retard West Virginia's competitive edge, the operators encouraged the UMWA to organize the southern bituminous coal fields. The operators also emphasized that until the West Virginia coal fields were organized, little could be done for wage increases in the Midwest, since competition was too great for any concessions to be made. This pressure from northern coal operators gave the UMWA an even stronger impetus to strengthen its new campaign in West Virginia. By 1900 the UMWA was ready to send another influx of organizers into the area. As it turned out, many workers in the several West Virginia fields were ready to answer the call to unionize.[6]

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6. The 1902 New River Field Strikes

Track Number: 6, Piece: "Welcome, Mother Jones"
Musician: The Stray Birds, Maya DeVitry (vocals, banjo, violin), Oliver Craven (mandolin, guitar), Charles Muench (bass)
Origin of Music: Jenkin D. Reese, 1902

On "Welcome, Mother Jones"

This song commemorates the bravery and oratorical skills of Mary Harris Jones (or "Mother" Jones) one of the most famous union organizers and rabble rousers of the 19th and 20th centuries. "Welcome, Mother Jones" was composed by union bard Jenkin D. Reese, and sung to Jones when she visited Mahaska, Iowa in 1902, the same year when she was organizing strikers in the New River Field of West Virginia. This piece is an example of a form of balladry in which songs were composed to commemorate important events or people.[1]

Jones, like many union organizers, travelled widely across the U.S. to support various strikes, and similar songs may have been composed to her in her travels in West Virginia. The singers' command for Jones to "Steer forward! March on with thy mission; Through strife and injunction be brave…" indicates that the Iowan audience was well aware of the challenges that Mother Jones regularly encountered in her work. Just two months before in August, she had been forced to flee a meeting in the New River Field when someone fired upon the crowd during a speech.[2]

The song is performed here by the Stray Birds to the tune of "Rosin the Beau," a popular melody at the time of Reese's performance.

The 1902 New River Field Strikes

"The principal disturbing feature of the coal industry…is the absence of organization or mutual understanding between the operators and the miners of the State of West Virginia."
-*UMWA President John Mitchell, 1900*[3]

"My brothers, I shall consider it an honor if, when you write my epitaph upon my tombstone, you say, 'Died fighting their battles in West Virginia.'"
-*Mother Jones, addressing the January 1901 UMWA convention*[4]

The miners participating in the 1902 Strike, one of the first major strikes in West Virginia, were spread across several coal fields. Miners in the northern Fairmont Field as well as the south central fields of Kanawha and New River walked out in solidarity for the union. Though these strikes would not last as long as those that followed in West Virginia's violent labor history, they were the training ground from which newly-inspired mining families learned the endurance and attitude necessary to win union rights. These mining families formed a generation of hardened unionists who would repeatedly aid and inspire the organizing call in the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek and Mingo-Logan Wars.

Early Efforts to Organize West Virginia and the New River Field Strikes of 1902

In 1890 the UMWA had designated all of West Virginia as District 17, but for the better part of the next decade organizers in the field failed to receive the support they needed from the national union. While field organizers told stories of intense intimidation and strike-breaking practices, union members at the national level had trouble believing conditions were as bad as were being reported. However, the complaints of West Virginia union officials were founded on real hardships, as the UMWA would soon find out.[5]

The successful national strike in 1897 finally convinced the UMWA to turn its eye towards the southern bituminous fields. The 1897 strike that had enjoyed such a strong worker's response in the northern coal fields was barely evident in West Virginia, where production continued as usual. With West Virginia's lack of support evident, the UMWA sent down organizers that same year. These organizers included orator Mother Jones, socialist politician Eugene V. Debs and AFL president Samuel Gompers. Over 60 years old, Jones had already earned a reputation in the anthracite fields as a fierce orator and rabble-rouser. She utilized her grandmotherly appearance and age to shock miners and operators alike with rough, fiery language. The 1897 campaign exposed southern West Virginia mining families to the idea of unionizing their workplaces. [6]

The joint conference with Central Competitive Field operators in 1898 (see "Unions, UMWA Strikes and the Central Competitive Field" narrative section) and yet another successful strike in the anthracite fields in 1900 gave the UMWA confidence to continue its expansion into the South. In 1900 UMWA President John Mitchell declared a reinvigoration of efforts to organize West Virginia. Union members from the Central Competitive Field began the 1900 campaign in December of that year. That winter, Jones and others campaigned along the Kanawha River and the New River Fields, speaking in coal camps like Glen Jean, McDonald and Beury. [7]

By 1902 local organizers had gained enough confidence to request a joint conference with WV coal operators to discuss better pay and conditions. The operators refused to meet, and so a strike was declared June 7th, 1902, with miners across the New River, Kanawha and Fairmont Fields participating.[8]

In the New River Field, most coal operators consented to shut down and wait out the strikes, but operator Justus Collins soon changed his mind and imported 40 private guards from the Baldwin-Felts Agency, who guarded his mines while imported workers hauled coal. In September, tensions were heightened in the New River Field when federal marshals and deputies evicted over 800 families. In retaliation to the evictions as well as arrests and other abuses, the strikers pitched several battles with company militia including an attack

on evicting guards at the town of Red Ash that lasted an entire day. The National Guard was called in by Governor A.B. White, but the Guard only served to assist the coal companies with their evictions.[9]

By October, the strike was predominantly over in the Fairmont and Kanawha Fields. Parts of Kanawha, including Paint Creek and Cabin Creek had won recognition of the UMWA, and miners were going back to work under union contracts. But the New River Field continued to strike. The struggle climaxed when Federal Marshall Dan Cunningham and a selected posse attempted to arrest pro-union miners in the middle of the night in Stanaford City, near Beckley in Raleigh County. Seven miners were killed, and in the following days all men in the area were arrested and taken to Beckley. Over 200 miners, family members and residents were indicted, and the strike was given up.[10]

As the conflict subdued, many of the evicted and blacklisted miners from the New River Field travelled west to Paint Creek and Cabin Creek where operators were agreeing to union contracts. The 1902 strike had given southern West Virginians a grim understanding of the sacrifice necessary to form a union in their state. The aggregation of union miners on the Creeks would set the stage for even larger conflicts nearly one decade later.[11]

Mother Jones had helped and encouraged the miners throughout the 1902 Strike, risking her life simply by giving public speeches and helping workers to join the union. For the next 19 years, she would continue to organize West Virginia for the UMWA, lending a formidable presence in the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek and Mingo-Logan Wars (see narrative section “Military Trials and Martial Law”).

The Baldwin-Felts Agency

The 1902 strikes mark the first time that private detectives were used as strike breakers in the southern West Virginia coal fields. The hiring of private detectives, particularly the Baldwin-Felts agents based out of Bluefield, soon became a common practice during strike troubles in West Virginia. Private detectives took on roles as armed militia and as spies who infiltrated the ranks of the miners. They could be called upon to evict miners, turn around union organizers who entered the county, and even harass or kill union supporters. Hired again during the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek Strikes, and yet again in the Mingo-Logan Wars, the agents came to be intensely despised by the miners and notorious for their penchant for cruelty. Just as the agents made union sympathizers targets for violence, pro-union strikers in time chose to retaliate in kind. Several Baldwin-Felts agents were killed during the southern West Virginia mine wars.[12]

Welcome, Mother Jones [13]

Note from Journal: “The following verses, composed by the local bard Jenkin D. Reese were sung by him and family Monday evening at the meeting in the courtroom.” (Mahaska, Iowa)

All Hail, Mother Jones, to Mahaska,
The Garden of Eden in soil;
That has been the gem of all Iowa
In production of coal and of toil.

The smiling of faces that greet you,
Our heroine of labor and right,
God bless your dear soul, is our feeling
For visiting ‘Aska tonight.

The themes of your speeches are grander,
And richer than silver and gold;
The life of the mansions eternal,
Where wisdom and love will unfold.

Steer forward! March on with thy mission;
Through strife and injunction be brave,
And follow the steps of the leader,
The starving and toilers to save!

The world of today is advancing,
But Nero is yet on the throne;
And Croesus with iron rod ruling,
The devil will soon take his own.

The light of millennium is dawning,
The ages unborn will be blest;
Mother Jones will be ever remembered
When her soul joins the heavenly rest.

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3. Robert Shogan. *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 37. Cambridge: Westview Press, 2004.
4. McLean, "Warm Receptions and Cordial Invitations for Mother Jones in West Virginia," 3.
5. McLean, "Warm Receptions...," 3.
6. William C. Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 36. Edited by Wess Harris. Oakland: PM Press 2010., McLean, "Warm Receptions...," 3.
7. William C. Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 36. Edited by Wess Harris. Oakland: PM Press 2010., McLean, "Warm Receptions...," 3.
8. Shogan. *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 3., McLean, "Warm Receptions...," 4-5.
9. McLean, "Warm Receptions...," 6.
10. McLean, "Warm Receptions...," 10.
11. McLean, "Warm Receptions.,," 8.
12. Shogan. *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 17, 19, 39.
13. Reese 1902, "Welcome Mother Jones," in *Coal Dust on the Fiddle: Songs and Stories of the Bituminous Industry*, by George Korson, 347.

7. Start of the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek Strikes

Track Number: 7, Piece: "Law in the West Virginia Hills"
Musician: Samuel Gleaves (vocals, guitar), Myra Morrison (fiddle), Jordan Engel (bass)
Origin of Music: Walter Seacrist, 1930s

On "Law in the West Virginia Hills"

"Law in the West Virginia Hills" was written by West Virginia balladeer Walter Seacrist. Seacrist's childhood was intertwined with the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek Wars: He grew up in the strike camp of Holly Grove, famous for its battle with the Bull Moose Special train in February 1913. Seacrist became a union member as an adult, and felt compelled to write several songs about his experiences in the mine wars, including "Law in the West Virginia Hills," which is largely sourced from personal experiences.

In 1931 Seacrist's sister-in-law observed the eviction of a woman, Mrs. Deviti, from company housing in Hugheston, Kanawha County. The pregnant Mrs. Deviti was kicked in the stomach by company guards. This form of abuse on striking families was not a new phenomenon in the Kanawha region: women strikers in the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek Wars attested to the loss of their unborn children as a result of focused beatings from company

militia. Seacrist's sister-in-law, pregnant herself, died a few days after witnessing the eviction, even though she had not been physically harmed during the event.

Musician Sam Gleaves created his own moving arrangement of this piece, adapting some verses and shortening the song. Seacrist created the song to the tune of "Little Rosewood Casket" but Gleaves has converted it to a lonesome "Wild Bill Jones" melody, which he learned from West Virginia friend Eddy Ogle. [1]

Start of the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek Strikes

"Yes, Lord, I done went to that office,
And I sure done signed,
Got my name on the record
And sure have joined."
- *From "Got My Name on the Record" By Cleveland Perry, 1940, a UMWA member and former coal miner*. [2]

"We have joined the United Mined Workers and have come out on strike,
We're demanding higher wages, shorter hours and human rights;
Until we get our just demands we'll strike with all our might,
Shouting the battle cry of freedom."
-from "Down With The Tyrants" to the air of "The Battle Cry of Freedom," United Mine Workers Journal, 1910. Identified as "Striker's marching song of Westmoreland County, PA."[3]

Cabin Creek and Paint Creek flow through the southern neck of Kanawha County, wedged between Boone County and Fayette Counties to the west and east, respectively. The Creeks flow south to north, nearly parallel to each other, and empty into the Kanawha River southeast of Charleston. They cut through narrow valleys and dramatic ridges, providing constricted passageways through which newly-built roads and railways snaked through in the early 20th century. In 1912 approximately 96 mines dotted the hills alongside the creeks, which would soon be the setting of the Kanawha Valley's second major mine war.[4]

By 1912, the union had been established along Paint Creek and other parts of the Kanawha coal fields. However, the union held little sway in West Virginia as a whole: out of 69, 611 miners in the state, only 1,136 were union members. And even as West Virginia's coal production was skyrocketing, guarantees of safe working conditions and stable employment were scarce in the southern fields. [5]

In March of 1912, union representatives and coal operators of the Central Competitive Coal Fields of the Midwest met for an annual bargaining conference. The unions successfully negotiated a deal referred to as the "Cleveland Advance:" a 5-cent increase in pay per ton of coal mined and a 5.26% increase for day labor. Down in southern West Virginia, union contracts for Paint Creek coal field miners expired on March 31st. On April 1st, union miners and coal operators met in Charleston for a conference. The Kanawha miners had been inspired by the advance given to their fellow workers in the Midwest, and argued to be granted a similar increase in pay. The operators refused. The conference was broken up with no resolution. A few weeks later, on April 18th, thousands of Paint Creek miners walked out on strike.[6]

In an attempt to resolve the conflict, another conference was called on May 1st. During this second round, Quinn Morton, general manager of the Imperial and Christian Colliery Companies on Paint Creek, refused to negotiate an advance, saying the contracts he had signed with his workers did not expire until 1914, and therefore the new negotiations were irrelevant to his holdings. Morton returned to Paint Creek, pronouncing that any workers unhappy with his policies would need to vacate company homes immediately, and acquired 10 Baldwin-Felts agents along with new weaponry to insure the protection of his mines.[7]

To the west was Cabin Creek, which had lost its union contracts in 1904. Cabin Creek miners still remembered their hard-won fight for union recognition in 1902, and so in August of 1912, they decided to strike in sympathy with their brothers and sisters on Paint Creek. In addition to the Paint Creek miners, over 7,500 non-union miners from Cabin Creek, Kanawha and Fayette Counties quit work in an appeal for better conditions. The United Mine Workers of America responded enthusiastically to the strike, seeing it as yet another opportunity to organize the southern fields. Coal companies on the Creeks wasted no time in evicting tens of thousands of striking miners and their families from company housing, importing strike-breakers and hiring 300 Baldwin-Felts agents to break the strike. With assistance by the U.M.W.A. and local supporters, families soon set up tent colonies on the surrounding hillsides, prepared to wait out, and win, the strike.[8]

Evictions During the Wars

Mass evictions and abuse of evicted families were common forms of intimidation utilized by coal owners and county governments as the strikes commenced in 1912. Evictions not only caused strikers to be homeless, but were also one of the initial coercive tactics used during "union troubles" and were meant to be so harsh as to deter further resistance from the miners. Striking families were rarely delivered eviction notices or given time to remove property from their homes, and were sometimes beaten and physically intimidated during removal. Mrs. Inez L. Smith, whose husband was on strike from the Cabin Creek

Consolidated Coal Company, was evicted from her home in 1912. In testimony before a state investigation she affirmed that she saw "…thirty-five mine guards with Winchesters and pistols buckled all around…" approaching the house. She went on to describe how the guards aggravated her during her eviction:
"I had dinner on the table, but they would not let us eat. I asked them to let me set the table in the road, which they did, and they threw my victuals out. They threw the other things out on the side of the country road. Some things were destroyed."
Mrs. Smith spent the night in a field because Baldwin-Felts agents would not allow her to sleep on the porch of a neighbor. [9]

The violence of these expulsions often stirred strikers to defend themselves, and many of the battles in the West Virginia coal wars originated in evictions. These include the battle at Red Ash in the Fayette 1902 strike, and later the Battle of Matewan in 1921-prompted because of evictions from Stone Mountain Coal Company housing in Mingo County.[10]

After being removed from their houses, striking families would seek help from neighbors and relatives in the nearest towns or cities. For some, these expulsions were a large enough deterrent to leave the region altogether. But many stayed and waited for assistance from the UMWA and other relief organizations, which supplied tents and a limited amount of food. New communities of strike camps were set up on the hillsides, where families strategized towards the next steps needed for survival.

Law in the West Virginia Hills [11]
Lyrics with new arrangement by Sam Gleaves
In a little country churchyard,
Underneath a grassy mound,
There sleeps my own dear sister
In the cold and silent ground.

She was so tender hearted, oh,
So full of youthful life.
Oh the people that knew her loved her dear.
She was my brother's wife.

My brother was a mining man,
Toiling almost day and night
Deep down in those old coal mines
Far away from God's sunlight.

To this valley came a union, oh,

Brother joined with the band
For to better his condition of life
Children starved on every hand.

When the cruel mine foreman knew,
He sent my brother home,
No more to feed his wife and child
Digging that old black coal.

All over Kanawha Valley oh,
"We will strike!" the workers said.
For we are tired and starved to death
And our children cry for bread.

These miners banded together on
One warm, sunny July day
And they laid aside their shovels and picks
And they struck for better pay.

Then the company gun thugs came,
Officers from all around
Drove the miners from their house and home,
Kicked their wives and children down.

My sister, saw their cruelty,
As they ran loose among the town
Saw them murder unborn babies lord,
Kick their helpless mothers down.

The murders she did witness lord,
They say she lost her mind.
By the time the doctor came to her side,
Not a heartbeat could he find.

My brother is locked in a prison cell,
Until death shall set him free
But waiting for the Judgment Day
When his family again he'll see.

Peace is a stranger in this valley,

Justice is never there.
As I tell to you this story,
Tell me, do you think it's fair?

As I tell to you this story,
Tell me, do you think it's fair?

Law in the West Virginia Hills
Original Lyrics by Walter Seacrist
In a little village graveyard
Underneath a grassy mound
There sleeps a lovely maiden
In the cold and silent ground.

She was so tender-hearted,
So kind and noble too.
People that knew her loved her.
If you could have met her, so would you.

She was young and hopeful.
She was full of youthful life.
She made our home more cheerful
She was my brother's wife.

My mother how she loved her,
As much as she loved her son.
She was so kind and cheerful,
It seemed her life had just begun.

My brother was a miner,
Toiling almost day and night,
Deep down in the coal mines
Away from God's sunlight.

To this valley came a union.
Brother joined with the band
To better his conditions.
Children were starving on every hand.

Then the cruel mine foreman,

To which my brother hired,
Learned he had joined the union,
Then he was quickly fired.

Then all over Kanawha Valley,
"We will strike," the miners said,
"For we are tired and hungry
And our children cry for bread."

These miners got together
One warm July day.
They laid away their tools
And struck for better pay.

Then the cruel company gunmen
With officers from all around
Came and drove them from the houses,
Threw their stuff out on the ground.

My sister saw these cruelties
As they terrorized the town.
She saw them murder unborn babies,
Kick these helpless mothers down.

Such cruel sights paralyzed her.
Something snapped in her head.
Not another word she uttered.
Two days later she was dead.

In Chillicothie prison
So very far away
From his home and his loved ones
Brother sits and grieves today.

He was sent to this prison,
Whiskey was the charge they say,
By the law that cruelly murdered
His lovely wife that sad day.

Peace a stranger in the valley

Because justice is never there.
As you read this sad poem,
Tell me, do you think it fair?

My brother he is in prison,
His lovely wife she is dead,
While still in this same valley
Little children cry for bread.

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7. Blizzard, *When Miners March*, ed. Harris, 48-49; Payne, *Mine War*, 107.
8. Blizzard, *When Miners March*, ed. Harris, 50; Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion,* 87.
9. Payne, *Mine War*, 13. Originally recorded under Hearings Conducted by the Senate Sub-Committee of the Committee on Education and Labor, United States Senate, 63rd Congress, First Session, Pursuant to Senate Resolution 37. A Resolution Authorizing the Appointment of a Committee to make an Investigation of the Conditions in the Paint Creek District of West Virginia, 1913.
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11. Walter Seacrist, "Law in the West Virginia Hills," in "Walter Seacrist: A Songwriting Miner Remembers the Mine Wars." *Goldenseal Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars*, edited by Ken Sullivan, 37. Charleston: Quarrier Press, 1991.

8. Survival, Skirmishes and Sabotage

Track Number: 8, Piece: "The Battle of Bull Run"
Musician: Wayne Erbsen (fiddle)
Origin of Music: Appalachian traditional, early 19th century

On "*The Battle of Bull Run*"

This tune is in the Appalachian old-time tradition, thought to be developed in commemoration of the first Battle of Bull Run, Virginia which took place June 21st, 1861. The version given here by Wayne Erbsen contains a dark air which alternates with high notes of tension. The tune effectively conveys the feelings of sadness, determination and anxiety felt by striking women and men as they forged their survival in the mountains during the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek Wars.[1]

Survival, Skirmishes and Sabotage

"We're union women,
We're fighting for our cause;
We're union women,
We're fighting for our cause;
Just like the one who lies here before us,
We're fighting for our cause."
-*Composed by Cathryn Feeney to memorialize Fannie Sellins, a martyred UMWA organizer*[2]

"The wildest theories concerning the rights of property were propounded and admitted by the strike organizers. Doctrines ranging upon anarchy were upheld with such effect that men who before were living peacefully and in comparative prosperity, purchased Winchesters, revolvers, blackjacks, and other murderous weapons to shoot down coal barons."
-*report from WV Governor Glasscock's Mine Investigation Committee 1912*[3]

"Arm yourselves, return home and kill every goddamn mine guard on the creeks, blow up the mines and drive the damned scabs out of the valleys."
– *Mother Jones, speaking to miners at a rally at the State Capitol in Charleston 1912*[4]

Survival

Strikers forced out of their homes and into strike camps quickly adapted to living without a wage. In some ways this was not a new challenge, since constant market swings and low pay meant that most mining families already practiced other forms of subsistence such as hunting and gardening. However, in the atmosphere of a strike, the stakes for survival were much higher. Women, already performing incredible amounts of labor in the daily lives of the coal camps, now had their burdens increased. The carrying of water and washing of clothes at nearby water sources became more dangerous because of the risk of encounters with company militia. Reliance on gardening and foraging intensified, and goods normally purchased at the company store had to be created by hand, done without, or smuggled in.

However, life in the tent colonies was fostered to be one of bravery and enjoyment. Communities sang, danced and played games together. Ralph Chaplin, an organizer and writer during the mine wars commented of the strikers, "…these people are not objects of pity. They are doing pretty well in their tents…The fact that many of the strikers seem to rather enjoy the situation makes some of the local respectables furious with rage. It isn't just what one would expect of a striker to see him holding his head high and walking around as if he owned the valley."[5]

Nevertheless, tent camps were in a vulnerable position. The terrain around the creeks was steep, and colonies had to be established in level, open areas, often times near rail lines and roadways. These factors made the camps exposed targets which had to be defended constantly.

Sabotage and Agitation

Sabotage and agitation were the favored tools utilized by both company militia and strikers during the coal wars. While open battle did occur, more common was the constant destruction of resources and emotional and physical harassment of participants. These tactics produced long-lasting effects on morale which were critical in determining who would wear down more quickly and be the first willing to negotiate.

In a region so deeply controlled by the coal industry, virtually every business and economy was coerced if not outright owned by the coal companies. This meant that most establishments surrounding the strikers were easy targets for disruption. Strikers tore up rail lines or loaded them with explosives. They sabotaged coal tipple and mines. The homes and meeting houses of coal operators and military commanders were shot up and set on fire. Sarah Blizzard, who supported the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek strikes, reflected years later on her role in the strikes: "Yes sir, that old Bull Moose [an armored train used by the coal companies] would parade up and down and shoot up the woods, where the miners were, so me and three other women decided one night to put an end to that. We slipped out after dark, took crowbars, and pried up the rails and rolled them down the hillside. The next morning when the Bull Moose came along, it didn't go on to Leewood like it was supposed to. The men inside the train cussed and fumed and we stood on the side laughing at them."[6]

The tasks of agitation and harassment of replacement workers and company military were often performed by women in striking communities. The women would wait at train stations for militia and replacement workers to arrive, upon which time they would "hoot and jeer" shaming the new arrivals. Women would also visit replacement workers' camps and picket in order to convince new workers to leave the district. Putting themselves in the way of danger as often as their male counterparts, women fed and clothed their families as well as gave hell to coal companies. "In West Virginia," a reporter from San Francisco noted, "women fight side-by-side with the men." After the strikes ended Fred Mooney, secretary-treasurer of District 17 commented "I am incapable of describing the courage displayed by the heroic women who passed through the strikes."[7]

Skirmishes, Battles and Declaration of Martial Law

During the 1912-1913 wars battles and skirmishes were frequent, and occurred across every terrain. Conflicts ranged from shoot-outs between a few individuals, to multiple-day battles involving hundreds, and marches of up to 6,000 people. Altercations took place in areas as small as private homes and businesses, to places as large as entire towns- and all citizens were affected. Frequently the mountains, creeks and roads of surrounding communities were the loci of battle, with the wilderness now being the home and familiar turf of the strikers.

A quick glance of the first few months of the strike gives a decent survey of the varied forms and locales in which battles occurred. On May 10th, 1912, the first contingent of Baldwin-Felts agents were brought in and soon after on May 29th strikers fired on a club house used by the agents and company operators. No casualties occurred, but the

attack served as a serious warning to the newly-imported agents. Some of the first blood was spilled on June 5th, at a battle near the Paint Creek Collieries, when an Italian striker was killed and his African-American comrade wounded. And towards the end of June, strikers in the Holly Grove tent colony fired on a moving train filled with Baldwin guards and newly-recruited militia. From club-houses, to collieries, to towns and trains, skirmishes were liable to occur.[8]

As the strike continued, larger battles took place. On July 26, 1912, a battle at the town Mucklow on Paint Creek lasted the better part of a day and resulted in the death of twelve strikers and four mine guards. No fewer than 100,000 shots were exchanged, with the town literally shot to pieces. This battle, along with the blatant murder of Baldwin-Felts guard Robert Stringer the previous day prompted Governor Glasscock to call in the national guard.[9]

Tensions mounted further on September 1st, 1912 when a combined force of over 6,000 miners amassed on a ridge at the headwaters of Cabin Creek, prepared to attack the coal mines and drive out the coal operators and company-controlled militia. West Virginia Governor, William E. Glasscock panicked at this uprising, and declared the first of what would be three periods of martial law in the strike zone.[10]

The declaration of martial law ushered in new forms of coercion into the Kanawha and surrounding Fields. Striking miners had initially been enthusiastic when the state militia were brought in and military courts established. However, though the new militiamen were meant to act as an impartial arm of the law, the coal operators soon gained them over. From September to the end of the strikes, the usage of martial law zones would be a powerful form of control used by the state and coal companies alike.

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8. Payne, *The Mine War,*74., William C. Blizzard, *When Miners March,* 57. Edited by Wess Harris. Oakland: PM Press 2010., Payne, *The Mine War,*75.
9. Lee, *Bloodletting,* 30*.,* Blizzard, *When Miners March,* 58.
10. Lee, *Bloodletting,* 30-32.

9. Military Trials and Martial Law

Track Number: 9, Piece: "Lonesome Jailhouse Blues"
Musician: Elizabeth Laprelle (vocals)
Origin of Music: Mary Stamos or "Aunt Molly Jackson," 1930s or '40s.

On "*Lonesome Jailhouse Blues*"

This song was composed by midwife, singer and union organizer Aunt Molly Jackson. In 1931 Jackson was imprisoned in Clay County, KY for her affiliations with the National Miner's Union. The experience inspired her to compose "Lonesome Jailhouse Blues," sung here in its original melody and ballad style by Elizabeth Laprelle. Aunt Molly's lyrics reflect the intense frustration and isolation of those imprisoned in the 1912/1913 strikes.

Note: The "dear old I.L.D." to which Jackson refers in the song is more than likely International Legal Defense, a legal defense organization founded in 1925 to assist labor and minority cases.[1]

Martial Law and the Military Trials at Pratt

"Our noblest men have oft' been called
To fill the felon's cell;
In tyrant's jails (securely walled)
Our greatest martyrs fell…"
–by Davie Robb, a union bard and poet. Written in county jail, Canon City, Colorado, 1914.[2]

"Send us soldiers," was the message
To our Governor sent.

“You must protect rich operators,”
Was what the message meant.
-from “The Virden Martyrs,” submitted to the United Mine Workers Journal, 1898[3]

“God is everywhere on land and sea, but He has not visited Paint Creek and Cabin Creek recently.”
– Adjutant General Charles D. Elliott, testifying to a U.S. senatorial committee on the conditions during the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek strikes.[4]

The First Period of Martial Law

As violence intensified in the fall of 1912, West Virginia’s Governor William Glasscock felt increasing pressure to call in outside forces to quite the strikes. The tipping point was reached in the early fall of 1912, when over 6,000 union-sympathetic miners crossed over the north side of the Kanawha River on September 1st, determined to aid Cabin Creek strikers. As the miners amassed at the headwaters of Cabin Creek, the coal operators panicked and alerted the governor. Glasscock immediately declared the strike zone under martial law. Glasscock was invoking a statute in the West Virginia constitution that allowed for the governor to declare a “state of war” in the event of…insurrection, rebellion, or riot.” This statute would prove to allow for any number of violations of constitutional rights during the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek strikes.[5]

Upon the declaration of martial law, 1200 state militia were rushed into the territory. The state militia made immediate attempts to disarm both sides, and in the ensuing days nearly 2,000 high-power rifles, 556 pistols, 225,000 rounds of ammunition, 6 machine guns and more were surrendered by strikers and operators alike. A military court was set up at the village of Pratt on Paint Creek, and a freight house dubbed the “Bull Pen” was designated as a holding cell for strikers.[6]

Immediately, laws limiting movement and social activity were put into place. Miners could not meet in groups greater than two, public meetings were outlawed, and strikers and residents were frequently prevented from traveling freely and receiving their mail. A few days after martial law was declared, Mother Jones was arrested for “inciting a riot” by reading the Declaration of Independence aloud to miners at the town of Eskdale. “The tragedy is,” she would later say, “the young boys who arrested me had no knowledge of that immortal document, and conception of its meaning.” During this first period of martial law, which ended October 15th, sixty-six people were arrested and sentenced.[7]

Initially the striking community had hoped that the state military would suppress the authority of the mine guards. And at the beginning of martial law, some mine guards were disarmed and arrested, while one coal operator had his machine guns and ammunition seized. However, the coal operators were soon able to gain favor with the new arrivals. When the first martial law period ended, many unemployed state militia took jobs as mine guards. Switching between state and coal company-employment soon became a regular practice, as the strike zone continued to move in and out of periods of martial law. The confidence of the Baldwin-Felts agents was bolstered by this new development, and their use of authority increased in the strike zone.[8]

The Second and Third Periods of Martial Law

Two more periods of martial law took place. The next occurred from Nov. 15th 1912 to January 10th 1913. The third and final period lasted the longest. It began on February 10th, prompted by a battle at Holly Grove (see narrative section "The Bull Moose Special and Holly Grove") and lasted until June 1913. During this entire period, the military court at Pratt continued to try and sentence citizens, regardless of whether their alleged crimes had occurred during or outside of periods of martial law. Military courts often tried and sentenced multiple people simultaneously and some strikers were sentenced to as many as 7 years in state prison. In his book *Bloodletting in Appalachia* Howard B. Lee writes, "In civil life, the judges of the military courts were laymen, many of whom did not know the difference between a felony and a misdemeanor…In testifying before the Borah Senate Committee [a state investigative committee] a member of one of the military courts admitted under oath that in pronouncing their judgments they (the courts) were not 'controlled by any law, either human or divine…'"[9]

Governor Glasscock granted "conditional pardons" during the second and third periods of martial law. These pardons released prisoners on the condition that they would not engage in union activity or discourage other miners from seeking employment in the strike zone. For example, Nellie Spinnelle , a union agitator (see narrative section "Ethnic Diversity in Mining Communities") was convicted and then pardoned on the condition that she "was not to menace or otherwise intimidate any miner or other person who desires to work or is seeking employment."[10]

Some of those convicted tried to challenge their sentences in higher courts of law. Frank Nance, convicted of interfering with an officer, brought his case to the West Virginia Supreme Court, arguing that his constitutional rights had been violated. The court concluded that the governor had lawfully declared a state of war, and the sentences of the martial courts could be upheld. However, one dissenting judge named

Ira E. Robinson argued that the martial courts need never have been formed because "The proper civil courts of the county [Kanawha County] were open and functioning as usual…" Robinson went on to say that no state statute could override the rights guaranteed in the Constitution, which was exactly what was happening in southern West Virginia. Unfortunately this reasoning was a minority opinion for the duration of the wars.[11]

Denial of Freedom of the Press

In March 1913, Governor Henry D. Hatfield assumed office, replacing Glasscock, who was by that point viewed by many as ineffective in dealing with the strikes. Hatfield allowed for several more months of martial law as he worked to forge an agreement that would end the ongoing conflict. During this period, Hatfield took his own measures to suppress left-wing sentiment in the coal fields. In May 1913 he had Huntington newspaper owner W.H. Thompson arrested and held without trial for several weeks before being released. The offices of Thompson's paper *The Socialist and Labor Star* were broken into and much of his property was destroyed. These actions clearly violated the constitutional guarantee to freedom of the press, and did not even occur in an area under martial law: Huntington was over 70 miles away from the strike zone. Later, Charles H. Boswell, editor of the *Labor Argus*, had his offices searched and property seized after criticizing the contracts Hatfield had created to end the strike.[12]

In his book "The Mine Wars" historian Dale E. Payne describes the martial law period as "perhaps the greatest miscarriage of justice that was ever witnessed in the state of West Virginia, or for that matter the nation." From the right to legal defense to freedom of the press, the constitutional rights of strikers and their supporters were violated. The extreme measures taken to suppress the unionists and any media voicing their cause exposed deep levels of anxiety on the part of the coal operators and the state of West Virginia, founded on the conviction that if the union was won, all profit in the industry would be lost. In the eyes of the operators, just pay and healthy working conditions were radical concepts that could not be supported under any circumstances. But the strikers' commitment to their cause matched in degree to the operators' repugnance of it, and it was not until Governor Hatfield forced an agreement between the two groups that some semblance of peace appeared.[13]

1. Aunt Molly Jackson, "Lonesome Jailhouse Blues," from *Hard Hitting Songs for Hard-Hit People*- by Alan Lomax, Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, 141. Oak Publications, 1967.
2. Davie Robb 1914, "Thoughts in a Colorado Jail" in *Coal Dust on the Fiddle: Songs and Stories of the Bituminous Industry*, by George Korson, 324. Hatboro: Folklore Associates Inc., 1965. Originally published in *UMWJ,* June 25, 1914., Korson, *Coal Dust on the Fiddle*, 441.
3. Unknown Author 1898, "The Virden Martyrs" in *Coal Dust on the Fiddle: Songs and Stories of the Bituminous Industry*, by George Korson, 380. Originally published in *UMWJ* December 29, 1898.
4. Howard B. Lee, *Bloodletting in Appalachia,* 17*.* Morganton: West Virginia University, 1969.
5. Lee, *Bloodletting,* 30, 41*.*
6. Lee, *Bloodletting,* 32-33*.*
7. Dale Payne, *The Mine War: 1912-1913 Cabin Creek and Paint Creek*, 41-49. Fayetteville: Dale Payne, 2011., Lee, *Bloodletting,* 33, 45*.*
8. Lee, *Bloodletting,* 32*.,* William C. Blizzard, *When Miners March,* 70-71. Edited by Wess Harris. Oakland: PM Press 2010.
9. Blizzard, *When Miners March,* 72., Lee, *Bloodletting,* 35*.*
10. Payne, *The Mine War*, 136, 140.
11. Payne, *The Mine War*, 137., Lee, *Bloodletting,* 41-42*.*
12. Blizzard, *When Miners March,* 33-35.
13. Payne, *The Mine War*, 136., David Alan Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922,* 113. University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1981.

10b. Ending the Strike, Changes in District 17, and Investigations

Ending the Strike

In the spring of 1913, Paint Creek and Cabin Creek had witnessed nearly a year of continuous fighting and violence. Neither side was willing to compromise on its convictions, despite huge economic loss to the coal operators and unemployment and starvation for the strikers. The coal wars were now being observed nationally, and the government of West Virginia was in increasing embarrassment over its inability to resolve the conflict. When Governor Glasscock left office in early 1913, it was hoped by many that the new governor, Henry D. Hatfield, would help end the war on the creeks. Hatfield did indeed prove effective in helping to end the conflict, though not to the satisfaction of many mining families.[1]

On March 4th, 1913, Hatfield assumed office as Governor of West Virginia. The morning after his inauguration, he took a train into the strike zone and spent several days assessing the state of the region while speaking with and even doctoring wounded strikers and other citizens. Resentful of the new governor's tactics, the coal operators sent a delegation to speak with Hatfield at his office. Upon a sharp reprimand from operator Charley Cabell, Hatfield struck him to the floor. Addressing the delegation he declared, "Gentlemen, you are not giving the orders now, you are taking them. This madness has got to stop. The State's general taxpayers have already contributed more than a million dollars to keep troops in your strike-torn coal fields, and they are tired of it…" Hatfield declared that if an agreement could not be reached between the strikers and the coal operators, than he would dictate the terms of an agreement.[2]

Over the next several months, state officials met with selected UMWA officials and coal operators in order to reach terms of agreement. However, the settlement Hatfield attempted to offer left out some of the miner's most important demands, including full recognition of the union and abolition of the mine guard system. Paint Creek and Cabin Creek strikers were infuriated with the exclusion of their voices during the settlement phase, and threatened to continue the strike if their demands were not met. One union local labeled the original Hatfield Agreement as "dangerous to the welfare of the union of coal miners in West Virginia and is hereby branded by this body as traitorous and delusive and not in any way in keeping with our peculiar demands." Mining families began to prepare for a renewal of the strike.[3]

In a panic over the possibility of further economic loss, operators agreed to several concessions, and the strike was settled. Paint Creek strikers won a nine-hour work day, pay on a semi-monthly basis, the ability to elect their own checkweighmen, the 2.5 cent increase per ton and an end to discriminatory hiring practices. In addition, the union was recognized and the mine guard system, at least for a time, was eradicated. The Cabin Creek strikers were designed a similar contract that was settled in August. New River Field strikers were given similar agreements. For those still sitting in prison as a result of military courts, Hatfield quietly paroled most of the sentences and disapproved of any and all awaiting sentences from the trials.[4]

Though most miners had gone back to work by late July of 1913, frustration and dissent lasted much longer in the region. For much of the striking community, the "Hatfield Agreements" were hardly a victory after so many deaths and repeated humiliations. It was estimated that over 50 men had died during the strikes, and that an unknown amount of women and children had perished from malnutrition and starvation. In order to ensure that the promises of the Agreements were kept, miners

conducted wildcat strikes across the Kanawha and New River Fields. They demanded the dismissal of non-union personnel and company spies, and the implementation of wage scales, amongst other demands. Violence continued to occur as well, with the killing of an anti-union superintendent shortly after the end of the strikes. Union mining families had been hardened by the 1912/1913 wars, and were determined to keep the rights they had won.[5]

The coal operators too, felt they had been slighted in the agreements, and resolved to better protect their interests in the future. In September of 1913 the "Coal Operators Protective Association" was formed. The principal purpose of the organization was to create a more closely-tied network in order to prevent further unionization. In a speech given to West Virginia coal operators shortly after the strikes, an operator stated, "The armed revolution in West Virginia was partially successful because there was no real cooperation upon the part of the state's mine owners to resist (the UMWA)." With an estimated overall economic loss of $100,000,000 from the strikes, the operators were determined to not be left vulnerable in future altercations.[6]

Changes in the West Virginia UMWA

The next few years were hectic for the UMWA in West Virginia. In addition to District 17 (which covered most of West Virginia) District 29 had been formed to specifically address the needs of New River Field miners. After the end of the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek Strikes, miners who were frustrated with the hierarchical process that led to the Hatfield Agreements began to complain that the union leadership was only interested in collecting dues and collaborating with capitalist interests. A larger militant and socialist sentiment was arising in the rank-and-file, led by members such as Frank Keeney, Fred Mooney, Lawrence Dwyer and Charles and Will Lusk. These members and their supporters forced a special convention in the summer of 1915 in an attempt to charge the current leaders with election fraud. When this attempt failed, the members founded a new District, called District 30, and miners from District 29 and the Coal River Section of Boone County soon joined them.[7]

After several failed attempts for recognition at the national level, District 30 members formed a new union: the West Virginia Mine Workers. However, support soon dissolved and officials let a local vote determine whether miners would like to stay with the WVMW, or return to the UMWA. The vote was overwhelmingly for a return to the UMWA, but members who before had been shamed by District 17 soon became some of its most prominent leaders. By the end of 1916, Keeney had been elected president, Mooney secretary-treasurer, and another militant, William Petry, voted

vice-president. The leadership of many of these men would soon play a large role in the Mingo-Logan Wars of 1919-1921.[8]

State and Federal Investigations

The 1912-193 war in Southern West Virginia had prompted not only a state investigation by Governor William Glasscock, but a federal review as well. Much of what modern historians now know about the strikes has come from the oral evidence transcribed from hearings related to these investigations.

In August of 1912, Glasscock appointed a commission, generally called the Bishop Donahue Committee, to investigate conditions in the strike zone. The overall findings of the commission were sympathetic to the coal operators, though somewhat critical of the mine guard system. The committee concluded that that the Baldwin-Felts guards, "…were not the grade of men who should be representing the rights of property and justice" and further stated that the committee was "unanimously of the opinion that the mine guard system as presently constituted should be abolished forthwith." The committee still insisted, however that the strikers were simply unmotivated workers and that unionization would pose a threat to the economic viability of coal mining in West Virginia.[9]

The federal investigation, conducted by the Borah Senatorial Committee began its inquiries in the spring of 1913 and concluded in the fall of the same year. Though it criticized some of the conclusions the Donahue Committee made in reference to the "greedy" character of the strikers, the Borah Committee reached few conclusions itself. Senator Kenyon, a member of the committee, recommended state ownership of industries like coal mining in order to ensure better treatment for workers, and Senator Martine of New Jersey introduced a bill that would fine corporations for employing armed guards. Waves of anti-Socialist sentiment in the coming years would prove Kenyon's suggestion impossible to fulfill, while Martine's bill sat and died in the Senate Committee on Education and Labor. Such a bill could not have withstood the influential forces of the coal lobbyists in a rapidly-industrializing United States.[10]

Overall, no remedial changes were made at a state or national levels as a result of the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek Wars. The Investigative Committees served the purpose of gathering important and vital perspectives on coal field conflict, but were merely the first step towards the corrective actions necessary to prevent further strife. Corresponding investigations in the Mingo-Logan Mine Wars a few years later would prove just as ineffective.

1. Robert Shogan. *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 41. Cambridge: Westview Press, 2004.
2. Howard B. Lee, *Bloodletting in Appalachia,* 44, 46*.* Morganton: West Virginia University, 1969.
3. David Alan Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922,* 97, 99. University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1981.
4. Lee. *Bloodletting*, 46., Barkey, Frederick E. "Here Come the Boomer 'Talys," *Transnational West Virginia*, ed. K. Fones-Wolf and R. Lewis, 178. Morgantown: WVU Press, 2002.
5. William C. Blizzard, *When Miners March,* 89. Edited by Wess Harris. Oakland: PM Press 2010., Lee. *Bloodletting*, 17., Corbin. *Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields*, 100.
6. Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 89., Corbin. *Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields*, 106., Lee, *Bloodletting*, 17.
7. Barkey, *Transnational*, 179, 181.
8. Barkey, *Transnational*, 181-183.
9. Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 62-63., Lee, *Bloodletting*, 24.
10. Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 99-100.

11. WWI and the 1919 National Strikes

Track Number: 11, Piece: "Stand Out, Ye Miners"
Musician: Jason Shelton and the First Unitarian Universalist Choir of Nashville, TN
Origin of Music: Flora P. Ford, 1897

On "Stand Out, Ye Miners"

Created during the 1897 UMWA strikes by Flora P. Ford, a miner's wife, this song touches on the mix of patriotic zeal and drive towards worker's self-determination felt as a result of World War I. "Stand Out Ye Miners" like many songs of the period, was written to the tune of a protestant hymn, in this case "Stand Up, Stand Up For Jesus." The arrangement is by choir director Jason Shelton and performed by a church chorus: the first Unitarian Universalist Choir of Nashville.[1]

WWI and the 1919 National Strikes

"Stand out, stand out, ye miners,
And wave the banner high;
The flag under which we're marching

We must wave until we die.

The royal banner given
To set this country free;
Oh! Do not let the tyrants
Take it from you and me.

But let us still march forward
With victory in our hand;
May we never let the tyrant
Make us slaves in our land."
*-from "Stand Out, Ye Miners," written by Flora P. Ford. Submitted and printed in the UMWJ, 1897.[*2]

"What is democracy? I mean pure democracy?...How far will it reach? Will it cross all class lines? Will it adjust raises and the prices of necessities so that labor can have a margin for the proverbial day?...Isn't democracy the golden rule? I hope that after the war we will have a pure democracy without any dross."
-C.M. Walker, a miner, in a letter to the editor, UMWJ, May 3rd, 1917[3]

WWI and Patriotism

The high demand for coal during World War I caused miners in West Virginia and across the United States to recognize their own influence on the U.S. economy. Encouraged through media provided by the UMWA, coal operators and the national government, miners came to recognize how vital their efforts were not only in fueling the war, but in powering the needs of their nation in and out of war time. The awareness of the miners' own communal strength, and their critical role in winning the Great War, energized post-war efforts towards strengthening the union and abolishing autocratic forces in the coal fields.

From the very start of World War I, a strong communal consciousness was formed amongst mining families of West Virginia. The war economy created an enormous demand for coal, and the bituminous coal of West Virginia was the highest valued in the country. When the U.S. entered the war in 1917, coal provided 70% of the mechanical energy in the nation, and West Virginia supplied approximately ¼ of all coal mined. Coal became so important to industrial production that the U.S. War Department decreed that any working coal miner was exempted from the draft. [4]

West Virginia miners responded enthusiastically to the needs of their country: each week new records were set in coal mined, and in 1917 coal production topped 90 million tons. The miners were responding largely to the patriotic precedent set by state and national governments as well as the UMWA. From all three sources, miners were told they were a vital part of the effort to defeat autocracy and bring democracy to the world. A cover of the *UMWJ* in 1918 proclaimed "Let our slogan be: "'Win the War for Freedom': The cause of democracy is at stake: Issues vital to Labor are hanging in the balance." Such was the patriotism for the nation that West Virginia mining families and their locals invested heavily in war and liberty bonds, and worked unsafe and poor conditions that in pre-war years would have justified walk-outs and protest. The miners embodied the nation's ideals of sacrifice for the greater good of democracy, and it was only a matter of time before they began to examine the failings of democracy in their own homeland.[5]

As the war drew to a close, the miners of West Virginia inevitably turned a scrutinizing lens towards conditions in the coalfields. In 1917 the UMWA had signed the Washington Agreement with the U.S. government, which granted a wage increase for mine workers and a promise from the UMWA not to call a national strike in war time. In addition, the newly-established Fuel Administration made efforts to insure that coal operators installed state-required weight scales in their mines, paid workers the new wage increase and allowed for unionization. However, many West Virginia coal operators resented these new forms of accountability, and ignored the federal laws. They raised company store prices, making the wage increase irrelevant to many miners. Southern West Virginia companies also sold coal during war time at what the U.S. Department labeled "excessive prices," eventually leading to the indictment of fifty-two companies in the region on charges of "profiteering."[6]

The West Virginia coal miners recognized the hypocrisy of their operators, who extolled democratic virtues while ignoring federal regulation, and determined to apply their new-found vision of universal democracy to their own state. A resolution from a UMWA local in Thayer, West Virginia in 1918 stated "the iron hand of autocracy is visible in the Labor world as well as in Germany, so let us put forth every ounce of energy…to abolish the fetters of autocracy." Miners from the New River and Kanawha Fields to the Williamson and Logan Fields would soon experience renewed conflict in post-war years when union-led attempts for economic stability once again provoked suppression from West Virginia coal operators.[7]

The 1919 National Strike and a New Campaign in West Virginia

As World War I drew to a close, UMWA national leaders were aware that coal prices would soon drop, and mass unemployment for miners across the country could become a swift reality. With these threats in mind, the UMWA decided to call a national strike beginning November 1st, 1919. The federal government panicked, quickly creating a federal injunction which cited the terms of the Washington Agreement- that the UMWA would not go on strike during war time. The UMWA acceded to the injunction, but did gain a small increase and a promise for a federal investigation into coal-field conditions.[8]

The 1919 National Strikes became a springboard for what would become a renewed battle for liberty and union recognition in West Virginia. In the New River Field, where unionized miners had walked out in support of the strike, coal operators responded by trying to dissolve the union in the region altogether. This prompted a violent and bloody struggle in Fayette and Raleigh Counties for over a year. Simultaneously, District 17 and 29 began a new focus on bringing the union to Mingo, Logan and McDowell Counties. During the 1919 strike, while coal production had stopped across the nation, these counties had continued their production, with hardly any union walk-outs, and this factor gave district officials all the more reason to begin a new campaign. At a District 17 Convention in 1919 Keeney stated that the miners in the southwest counties "have repeatedly appealed…for assistance in organizing" and that "the miners of Guyan and Norfolk and Western [coal fields] have no security whatever in their civil and constitutional rights so long as the criminal and unlawful mine guard system is maintained." The new efforts to organize the remote and tightly-controlled counties of Mingo, Logan and McDowell would usher in another period of conflict: the Mingo-Logan Wars of 1919-1921.[9]

Stand Out, Ye Miners (original lyrics) [10]
Shelton's recording keeps true to the original lyrics. Only verse five is omitted from the new version.

Stand out, stand out, ye miners,
Let wife and children beg;
Please don't go to the mines
And be called a scab, blackleg.

Stand out, stand out, ye miners,
You'll win the day at last;
You will not have to suffer
As you have in the past.

Stand out, stand out, ye miners,
The victory shall be yours;
This awful conflict must soon end,
And peace surround your doors.

Stand out, stand out, ye miners,
Your families will be fed;
After this strike is over
They will not cry for bread.

Stand out, stand out, ye miners,
The victory's almost won;
You miners have our sympathy
Till the victory is won.

Stand out, stand out, ye miners,
And hold your own today;
Don't listen to the tyrants
No matter what they say.

Stand out, stand out, ye miners,
And wave the banner high;
The flag under which we're marching
We must wave until we die.

The royal banner given
To set this country free;
Oh! Do not let the tyrants
Take it from you and me.

But let us still march forward
With victory in our hand;
May we never let the tyrant
Make us slaves in our land.

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1. Flora P. Ford 1897, “Stand Out Ye Miners,” in *Coal Dust on the Fiddle: Songs and Stories of the Bituminous Industry*, by George Korson, 410-411. Hatboro: Folklore Associates Inc., 1965.

2. Ford 1897, "Stand Out Ye Miners," in *Coal Dust on the Fiddle,* Korson, 410-411.
3. David Alan Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922,* 189. University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1981.
4. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 177.
5. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 181,180, 198.
6. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 184, 185.
7. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 189.
8. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 197., William C. Blizzard, *When Miners March,* 113-115. Edited by Wess Harris. Oakland: PM Press 2010.
9. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 199., Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 115.
10. Ford 1897, "Stand Out Ye Miners," in *Coal Dust on the Fiddle,* Korson, 410-411.

12. Organizing Mingo and Logan Counties

Track Number: 12, Piece: "No Unions Down Yonder"
Musician: Bare Bones, with Rebecca Kimmons, Bill Kimmons and Mark Davis (all vocals)
Origin of Music: United Four Quartet, 1940

On "No Unions Down Yonder"

"No Unions Down Yonder" was created by the United Four Quartet, an early barbershop-harmony group from Barrackville, WV. Members were James Dooley, Gus Joiner, Willie Jones, and Nathan Alexander. The singers combined popular hymn tunes with new pro-union lyrics. In this case, the song was created to the air "It's Far Down Yonder." The song reflects fears of going "down yonder" where there are no unions or conventions, and "scabs" work the mining jobs. "No Unions Down Yonder" could have aptly reflected the hesitancy and fear of UMWA organizers heading into the hostile territory of Logan and Mingo counties in 1919. The West Virginia trio Bare Bones artfully reproduces "No Unions Down Yonder" in much the same style as the United Four Quartet's 1940 version.[1]

Organizing Mingo and Logan Counties

"There's a call from West Virginia,
That appeals to you and me,
To the unions of the country
For to set the miner free."
-from "West Virginia Song of Freedom," to the air of "Wearing of the Green."[2]

“We are going to fight to the last ditch. There will be no abatement of effort and neither time nor money will be spared to protect the lawful and statutory rights of the workers of Mingo County.”
-*Frank Keeney, UMWA District 17 President*[3]

In the fall of 1919 Districts 17 and 29 declared new efforts to organize Mingo, Logan and McDowell Counties. UMWA officials were concerned for southern West Virginia’s lack of union solidarity, which had hindered the 1919 national strike, and were anxious to address the one place in West Virginia where the union had yet to make headway. Members agreed to send in 50 organizers, pledging that “both districts would jointly go to the assistance of the men…in the Guyan Field (the western coal fields), in order that they might exercise their lawful rights and become members of our organization.”[4]

The organizers sent into the southwest counties were met with many forms of resistance from coal operators, most notoriously in Logan County. The county was under the authority of Sheriff Don Chafin, widely known for his anti-union politics. It was understood by miners and local authorities alike that the salaries of Chafin and his deputies were paid in part by Logan County’s Coal Operators Association, which meant a hard reception for any union sympathizers in the area. Chafin’s deputies would wait at the train station, identify union organizers and turn them back, arrest them or worse. A visiting reporter from Washington D.C. wrote, “Everywhere one goes down in this county he hears the name of Don Chafin, high sheriff of Logan County. One can see that he has struck terror into the hearts of the people in the union fields…Every kind of crime is charged to him and his deputies…He reigns supreme by virtue of a State machine backed by the power of the operators.” Nevertheless, the UMWA continued to send emissaries from the Union, and mining families began to respond to the call to unionize the Logan and Williamson Fields.[5]

The UMWA’s efforts soon bore fruit. In the next two years (1919-1920), over 2,700 miners took the union oath in the southwest counties. Williamson and Logan fields exploded in wildcat strikes as miners demanded that the companies recognize the union. In one field, there were over 63 work-stoppages in an 11-month period. By the spring of 1920, enough locals had been established in Mingo County that Frank Keeney felt confident in asking its coal operators for recognition and new contracts. The companies refused and proceeded to evict miners, offer pay increases to those who would not join the union, and import strike breakers and Baldwin-Felts agents.[6]

In the next few months, miners continued to join the union, even though it meant prompt eviction. By July 1920, over 90% of the miners in Mingo had joined one of

thirty-four union locals. As they settled into tent colonies and prepared for a long fight, enthusiasm remained high among the strikers. A miner in the Lick Creek tent colony wrote to the *UMWJ*: “There are about 300 of us here in Lick Creek, living in tents. I have been living in a tent ever since June 1st, and if it takes that to make the company come to their milk, I am willing to stay there for five years, and the men all feel the same way…” With strikers amassing energy for a long strike period, and operators doing their best to continue production and drive the union out of the region, the southwestern fields were swiftly developing into a war zone.[7]

No Unions Down Yonder (original lyrics) [8]

Lord it's far down yonder,
I don't want to go, Lord;
It's far down yonder,
I don't want to go, Lord;
It's far down yonder,
I don't want to go, Lord,
I don't want to go, Lord,
I don't want to go down there.

Ain't no unions down yonder, Lord,
I don't want to go, Lord;
No unions down yonder
I don't want to go, Lord;
No unions down yonder.
I don't want to go, Lord,
I don't want to go, Lord,
I don't want to go down there.

Ain't no conventions down yonder,
I don't want to go, Lord;
No conventions down yonder,
I don't want to go Lord;
No conventions down yonder.
I don't want to go, Lord,
I don't want to go, Lord,
I don't want to go down there.

Oh, it's scabs down yonder,

I don't want to go, Lord;
It's scabs down yonder,
I don't want to go, Lord;
It's scabs down yonder,
I don't want to go, Lord,
I don't want to go, Lord,
I don't want to go down there.

Lord it's hell down yonder,
I don't want to go, Lord;
It's hell down yonder,
I don't want to go, Lord;
It's hell down yonder.
I don't want to go, Lord,
I don't want to go, Lord,
I don't want to go down there.

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1. Jackson, Mark Allan. *Coal Digging Blues: Songs of the West Virginia Miners,* liner notes. West Virginia University Press, Morgantown, WV, 2006.
2. William Feeney 1925. "West Virginia Songs of Freedom." in *Coal Dust on the Fiddle: Songs and Stories of the Bituminous Industry*, by George Korson, 428. Hatboro: Folklore Associates Inc., 1965. Originally published in *UMWJ*, Aug. 15, 1925.
3. David Alan Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922,* 203. University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1981.
4. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 199.
5. Robert Shogan. *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 171-172. Cambridge: Westview Press, 2004., Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 116.
6. William C. Blizzard, *When Miners March,* 128. Edited by Wess Harris. Oakland: PM Press 2010., Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 196, 200.
7. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 202.
8. United Four Quartet 1940 "No Unions Down Yonder." Korson, *Coal Dust*, 313-314.

13. The 1919 Rally at Marmet

Track Number: 13, Piece: "Mining Royalties"
Musician: 2/3 Goat with Annalyse McCoy (vocals), Ryan Dunn (vocals, guitar), Ryan Guerra (fiddle), Andy Wilmoth (drums), John Cavendish (bass)
Origin of Music: John W. Brown, 1913

On "Mining Royalties"

Mining Royalties was written and submitted to the *UMWJ* in 1913. The song artfully conveys the injustices felt by mining families while painting an eerie portrait of the dark and dangerous conditions experienced by miners working underground. At the conclusion of the song, throngs of miners ascend from the "dungeon deep" to claim their just earnings. This imagined procession echoes the real events of the 1919 rally at Marmet, where thousands of angry miners gathered, ready to unleash their anger into Mingo and Logan counties. 2/3 Goat uses strong vocals, a persistent drum beat and expressive fiddle to convey the forceful emotions of this song.[1]

The 1919 Rally at Marmet

"Two miles we come from the dungeon deep,
Where for aeons we have toiled in vain,
We have kneaded the force that moves the world
And you have branded our lot with shame.
Two miles we have come as the ages run,
We have come to present our claim;
Your mining royalties we measure now
By the blood of our brothers slain."
-*from "Mining Royalties" by John Brown*[2]

Amongst the many conflicts that occurred in the early part of the Mingo-Logan Wars, a little-known precursor to what would become the Battle of Blair Mountain took place in Kanawha County, nearly breaking into an immense conflict involving thousands. It was prompted by the violence incurred against union organizers as they began to campaign in Logan and Mingo Counties in the late summer of 1919.

As the campaign to organize the western fields commenced, Mingo and Logan County authorities used private militia and sheriff's deputies to shoot and beat activists. District 17 Treasurer Fred Mooney witnessed the injuries suffered by organizers at the hand of anti-union forces: "Some of them had been beaten into insensibility, and they were shot through the head and had different wounds over the body…" The injured were taken and shown to the Governor, from whom it was demanded that some action be taken to protect the organizers. Governor John J. Cornwell, who had taken office in 1917, was not disposed to listen to the complaints of the UMWA, and did nothing.[3]

Frustrated, the miners assembled a mass rally on September 4th at the mouth of Lens Creek, near Marmet in Kanawha County, intending to march southwest. It is estimated

that over 5,000 people were present and armed, hoping to overthrow the coal operator's authority in Logan and Mingo Counties. Governor Cornwell asked District 17 President Frank Keeney to speak with and dissuade the miners from their march. After several failed attempts, Keeney sent a message requesting that the governor address the crowd himself. The governor arrived in the evening with his wife and a secretary. Keeney later described the scene: "The moon was shining and the camp fires were there, and there were in that crowd about 5,000 rifles. It looked more like Dante's inferno than anything I can think of, with the moonlight shining on the rifles." The governor admonished the marchers, but also promised an investigation into the conditions of Logan County. According to Keeney, a miner in the audience responded, "Governor, you have made a good speech, and one that would be alright provided it was carried out. There is a group of men in this audience, who have been overseas fighting to save the world for democracy, but we found the conditions here more hellish than they were over there."[4]

Unconvinced by Cornwell's speech, the miners started out in groups towards Logan the next day. They had marched 32 miles to Danville by the time Keeney arrived again to ask the miners to stop their progress. This time the marchers decided to turn home, hoping that the investigation promised by Cornwell might in fact be carried out. Cornwell, it seems, never had intentions to do so, and nothing came of his promise.[5]

The 1919 march was indicative of the miner's ability to mobilize militarily, and it was a power that would be called upon again almost exactly two years later during the 1921 March to Mingo. In both cases, it would be unclear what particular individuals organized the gatherings. Some historic contemporaries favor the idea that District 17 officials including Keeney and Mooney were some of the main instigators, putting forward a cooperative face to state and national authorities while simultaneously encouraging the uprisings. Others argue that the marches were coordinated by rank-and-file members of the unions and other miners supporting an end to oppression in the region. Regardless of the presence or absence of leadership structures, the event demonstrated that strikers and their supporters were able to enlarge their tactics beyond small-scale guerilla warfare and would be willing to do so again.[6]

Mining Royalties (original lyrics) [7]
Two miles to the heart of the mountain,
Where we slave from morn till night,
With never a ray of the golden sun
To cheer us with its light.
With backs bent low by incessant toil,

With lungs beclogged with dust,
We miners work in the seams below
For a wage that means a crust.

Pick! Pick! Pick!
In the tunnel's endless gloom,
And every blow of our strong right arm
But helps to carve our tomb.
But what is that to thee
Who live by our blood and toil?
For mining royalties must be made
To glut the coal barons' spoils.

Oh, ye, who sit in luxury's lap,
And ye who ride in state,
Do you ever think of our gruesome lives
Or bemoan our children's fate?
Our children are born in bondage,
Our wives but drudges and slaves,
While our days are turned to night
In the subterranean caves.

Two miles in the heart of the mountain,
We delve in the dismal damp,
Our bodies and souls, your royalties tolls
In interest, profits and rents,
Two miles from the heart of the mountain
We come to present our claim,
We march in silent procession,
The old, the halt and the lame.

Two miles we come from the dungeon deep,
Where for aeons we have toiled in vain,
We have kneaded the force that moves the world
And you have branded our lot with shame.
Two miles we have come as the ages run,
We have come to present our claim;
Your mining royalties we measure now
By the blood of our brothers slain.

By the blood of our brothers slain,
By the tears of our wives bereft.
By the soul of the girl thrust out in the world,
A prey to your hellish lust,
By the blood of our sire's dead,
We swear that our cause is just.
That for mining royalties you, too, must pay,
And when you pay, pay us.

2/3 Goat lyrics changes:
Chorus:
And they say pick, pick, pick,
In the tunnels' endless gloom,
While we help carve out our tomb.
And they say pick, pick, pick,
But what is that to thee but your mining royalties?

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1. John Brown 1913, "Mining Royalties," in *Coal Dust on the Fiddle: Songs and Stories of the Bituminous Industry*, by George Korson, 128 . Hatboro: Folklore Associates Inc., 1965. Originally published in *United Mine Workers Journal (UMWJ)*, February 6th, 1913.
2. Brown, "Mining Royalties" in Korson, *Coal Dust,* 128.
3. David Alan Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922,* 199. University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1981., William C. Blizzard, *When Miners March,* 117. Edited by Wess Harris. Oakland: PM Press 2010.
4. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 200., Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 118-119.
5. Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 119.
6. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 200.
7. Brown, "Mining Royalties" in Korson, *Coal Dust,* 128.

14. The Battle of Matewan

Track Number: 14, Piece: "Bumblebee in a Jug"
Musician: Brett Ratliff (banjo), Adrian Shepherd Powell (fiddle)
Origin of Music: Northeast Kentucky, 20th Century

On "Bumblebee in a Jug"

Brett Ratliff learned this historic piece from a fiddler named George Lee Hawkins, who resided in Bath County, KY. The popular tune can be heard today at jams across the

northeastern region of the state. “Bumblebee in a Jug” gives expression to the lively but brief Battle of Matewan, which lasted only a few minutes but left several dead.[1]

The Battle of Matewan

“The union forever, hurrah boys, hurrah!
Down with the Baldwins, up with the law!”
-from “We’re Coming Colorado” written by Frank B. Hayes, UMWA President. To the air of “The Battle Cry of Freedom.” Baldwin-Felts Agents were used in UMWA strikes in Colorado in 1914.[2]

After the Battle of Blair Mountain, the Battle of Matewan is perhaps the most famous event of the Mingo-Logan Wars. In comparison with many skirmishes during the Mingo-Logan Wars, it involved few people and lasted only a brief time. However, it initiated an important chain of events, the repercussions of which would be felt heavily all the way up to the March to Mingo in 1921.

During the organizing campaign into Mingo and Logan, elements of the law in Mingo County worked to support union strikers. Unlike Logan County’s Don Chafin, Mingo County Sheriff George Blankenship supported the protection of union miners. In April of 1920 Blankenship charged Albert Felts (brother to Tom Felts- head of the Baldwin-Felts Agency) and others with illegal evictions of miners from their homes. He then angered the agents further by asserting that it was his his right to handle eviction cases in the future.[3]

Allied with Blankenship was mayor Cabell Testerman of Matewan and his town sheriff Sid Hatfield. Matewan was a town of about 800, situated next to the Tug River on the border with Kentucky. In the spring of 1920, Albert Felts approached Mayor Testerman about the possibility of machine guns being placed on the rooftops of downtown Matewan. The mayor refused the proposal, even when a $1,000 bribe was offered. Sid Hatfield had been appointed town sheriff at the age of twenty-seven by Cabell. Nicknamed the “Terror of the Tug,” Sid had a reputation for being a skilled gunman and was never one to shirk from a fight. He and Cabell both kept vigilant as tensions between workers and operators mounted in nearby coal camps.[4]

Conflict struck in early summer. On the morning of May 19th, 1920, several Baldwin-Felts agents arrived by train to the town of Matewan. They met Albert Felts at the train station and commenced to the Urias Hotel, where they ate lunch. After a few more agents arrived, the party of 13 headed to the Stone Mountain Coal Camp and began to

evict union miners from their homes. They were soon accosted by Testerman and Hatfield, who both demanded to see a court order for the evictions. When the agents could produce none, the mayor and sheriff went back to Matewan and phoned the sheriff offices of Williamson to have arrest warrants for the agents drawn up. They also deputized several locals to wait by the train station in case of an altercation.

The agents finished their work mid-afternoon with the intention to catch the 5:15 train out of Matewan. They were alerted to the impending warrants by Anse Hatfield, and proceeded to the train station with pistols in their belts. As the Felts agents made their way back to the depot, they encountered Sid. Sid told them that he had warrants for their arrest coming on the 5:15 train, and Albert Felts countered by saying that he had an arrest warrant for Sid. Sid walked with the agents towards the station, and as they approached Cabell Testerman stepped out from Chambers Hardware to question what was going on. Albert produced the warrant for Sid's arrest. After examining the warrant Testerman exclaimed “It’s bogus.” Almost immediately after this remark, shooting broke out. Theories vary as to who shot first: some believe Sid, others believe Albert. In any case, Sid, the agents, and newly-deputized union miners waiting at the train depot began to fire upon one another. Cabell was shot and mortally wounded immediately. The town broke into a panic, with more than 20 people swimming across the Tug River to escape the battle. The deputies shot to kill, and chased down fleeing detectives in order to dispatch them. In total, four townspeople and seven detectives, including both Lee and Albert Felts, were killed.[5]

Dixie Accord, who was 8-years old at the time, witnessed the battle and its aftermath. She said after the shooting was over townspeople took new doors from the hardware store and lay the Baldwin Felts agents on them until an evening train from Bluefield came to pick them up. “And that night,” Dixie recalled, I don’t think anybody slept…they expected the Felts detectives to come in there and blow the city of Matewan up.”[6]

The Trial of the Matewan Defendants

Though Felts agents had been killed publicly in previous strikes (such as the 1912-1913 wars) the battle at Matewan was the first overt act of killing the spies during the Mingo-Logan Wars. And for many striking miners it was a cause for celebration. When news reached the District 17 Office in Charleston, it was said that one official even danced with joy.[7]

After several frustrating weeks in which officials struggled to select a non-biased jury, the Matewan deputies along with Sheriff Hatfield were brought to trial on February

12th, 1921. On March 21st, all 22 defendants were acquitted. Tom Felts, grieving for the loss of his brothers, immediately ordered covert investigations of the incident and began to plan retribution. Four months later, Felts would take his revenge, and the results would reverberate through the hillsides.[8]

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1. Brett Ratliff, e-mail message to author. June 14th, 2012.
2. Frank B.Hayes 1913 "We're Coming Colorado."George Korson, *Coal Dust on the Fiddle,* 388*.* Hatboro, PA: Folklore Associates Inc., 1965. Originally published in *UMWJ*, Sept. 18th, 1913.
3. Robert Shogan. *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 16-17. Cambridge: Westview Press, 2004.
4. Shogan. *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 21, 15.
5. Shogan. *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 21-25.
6. Dixie Accord, oral testimony. Matewan Development Center, Oral History Project Summer 1989. Eastern Regional Coal Archives, Craft Memorial Library, Bluefield, WV.
7. William C. Blizzard, *When Miners March,* 136. Edited by Wess Harris. Oakland: PM Press 2010.
8. Shogan. *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 107., Topper Sherwood, "The Dust Settles: Felt Papers Offer More on Matewan." *Goldenseal Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars*, edited by Ken Sullivan, 51. Charleston: Quarrier Press, 1991. Originally published in Topper Sherwood, *Goldenseal Magazine*, Summer Issue 1991 (Charleston: Goldenseal Magazine, State of West Virginia, 1991).

15. Skirmishes and Battles in the Mingo-Logan Wars

Track Number: 15, Piece: "The Pennsylvania Miner"
Musician: Jubal's Kin, with Gailanne Amundsen (vocals, banjo, fiddles), Roger Amundsen (guitar and vocals) and Jeffrey Amundsen (bass)
Origin of Music: Phillips Thompson, 1892

On "The Pennsylvania Miner"

The "Pennsylvania Miner" was originally printed in *The Labor Reform Songster* by Phillips Thompson, *Knights of Labor Journal*, Philadelphia, 1892. The same year *The Labor Reform Songster* was released, 300 Pinkertons were sent to put down the famous Homestead Strike by the Carnegie Steel Workers in Pittsburgh. A battle on July 6th, 1892 left 7 Pinkertons and 9 strikers dead.[1]

The altercation between the narrator and the Pinkerton agent in "The Pennsylvania Miner" is illustrative of violence that occurred throughout the Mingo-Logan Wars.

Close, personal combat could happen as frequently as battles stretched over many miles of terrain. And, as in "The Pennsylvania Miner," company-hired spies and thugs came were a special target for violence. Strikers, having experienced intense hardships, not the least of which being the death of family members, learned to relish the killing of Baldwin-Felts agents.[2]

Skirmishes and Battles in the Mingo-Logan Wars

You see them there below, the damned scabherders!
Those puppets on the greedy Owner's String;
We'll make them pay for all their dirty murders-
We'll show them how a starving hate can sting!
-from "When the Leaves Come Out" by Ralph Chaplin (see track #10)[3]

"The situation is serious, and unless steps are taken to disarm all persons on both sides of the river officers will be ambushed, houses shot up and murder committed by the wholesale."
-*Captain J.R. Brockus, reporting on the state of violence during the Three-Days Battle*[4]

With thousands of miners out on strike, and coal owners attempting to bring in replacement workers, war broke out in Mingo and Logan Counties. Neutrality was not an option in the coal fields and every resident found themselves drawn into the fighting. Miners attacked nearly every kind of structure owned by the companies-including coal tipple, the mines themselves and rail cars bringing in strikebreakers.

Oftentimes replacement workers and mine guards were attacked, beaten, or killed by the union miners. A Mingo County miner reported matter-of-factly in 1920 "A thug was killed last week on the Mingo County line. He had just driven two union men out of the county…Our people want no trouble, but the thugs can sure get it if nothing else will do them." In retaliation, coal operators utilized local police forces, mine guards and Baldwin-Felts agents to guard mines, infiltrate the striker's ranks, and attack and kill strikers. A number of fights and battles occurred at mine sites including War Eagle, Matewan, Merrimac, Borderland, Rawl and Vulcan, to name a few. Miners succeeded in shutting down several non-union mines, and even took authority in several towns. Governor Ephraim Morgan, who came to office in March 1921, was able to convince President Harding to call in federal troops during some periods of fighting. However, after every withdrawal, conflict would flare up again, leading Harding to believe that West Virginia needed to take initiative in creating its own national guard and a stronger police force.[5]

The 3-Days Battle (*or The Battle of the Tug*)

West Virginia's government was swiftly challenged to bolster its military forces in the spring of 1921, when one of the biggest battles in the Mingo-Logan Wars broke out along the Tug River. Fighting began in the town of Merrimac, largely inhabited by employees of the White Star Mining Company. After several smaller altercations, miners launched an attack on the town on May 12th. Fighting soon flared up along the Tug River into several towns, and even crossed over into Kentucky. Eventually, the violence formed a 10-mile battle front. Shooting became so thick and regular that injured comrades could not be rescued amidst the fray for several hours.[6]

Governor Morgan, after failed appeals for federal troops, called in additional state troopers, doubled the state police force and created a new army of 250 volunteers from Williamson, in Mingo County. The commander of this new army was Captain J.R. Brockus. Brockus and his men found they were unable to enforce their own authority in the battle zone due to the severity of the fighting, but the captain was able to help negotiate a truce on May 14th. Keeney later testified that after the battle, the "dead were brought out of the woods for eight days."[7]

Martial Law and the Lick Creek Raid

As a result of the 3-Days Battle, Governor Morgan declared Mingo County a martial law zone and placed the area under the command of Major Thomas B. Davis. Davis had served as provost martial over military courts during the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek strikes and quickly instituted several of the same measures against miners in Mingo as he had in the previous wars. All union meetings were banned and pro-union papers, like the *West Virginia Federationist* were confiscated and their production shut down.[8]

Violence was triggered again on June 14th, at the strikers' colony of Lick Creek, Mingo County. While attempting to make an arrest at the colony, Brockus and Davis were fired upon by the arrestee, prompting a call for military back up. After more exchanges of fire, all members of the camp were ordered to leave their tents. One miner, Alex Breedlove, was said to have been singled out and shot without provocation. The women and children were marched to jail and held for four days. In the mean time, members of the Williamson army ripped apart tents and made ruin of the settlement.[9]

Investigation

The violent events of May and June 1921 prompted some senators to call for the formation of a committee to investigate the conditions prevailing in West Virginia. Senator Kenyon of Iowa, chairmen of the Senate's labor committee, was asked to head the inquiry. Hearings in D.C. commenced mid-July 1921. District officials Keeney and Mooney, as well as former Matewan Sheriff Sid Hatfield testified before the committee. The investigation exposed corrupt aspects of southern West Virginia's local government- such as the fact that the income of police forces in Mingo County had at one time been provided by coal operators. The behavior of the Baldwin-Felts agency was called into question, when Baldwin spy C.E. Lively testified. For several years Lively had acted as a union activist, all the while being in the employ of the Baldwin-Felts Agency. This behavior disturbed and angered many senators.[10]

Over all, the hearings did not produce substantial sympathy for either the coal operators or the UMWA. The public attention gained from the investigation did not convince the federal government to intercede further in West Virginia, and the UMWA felt it had lost a chance for greater assistance in its efforts to rid West Virginia of the coal operator's unjust practices. However, the federal government would be forced to address violence in West Virginia less than two months later, when thousands of strikers would take it upon themselves to violently oust the corrupt elements of Mingo and Logan counties.[11]

The Pennsylvania Miner (original lyrics) [12]

Come, listen, fellow workingmen, my story, I'll relate,
How workers in the coal-mines fare in Pennsylvania State;
Come, hear a sad survivor, from beside his childrens' graves,
And learn how free Americans are treated now as slaves.

Chorus:
They robbed us for our pay,
They starved us day by day,
They shot us down on the hillside brown,
And swore our lives away.

For years we toiled on patiently- they cut our wages down;
We struck- they sent the Pinkertons to drive us from the town.
We held a meeting near the mine, some hasty words were said,
A volley from the Pinkertons laid half-a-dozen dead.

Chorus

I had a little family, the youngest scarce could creep;
Next night the the hireling ruffian band aroused us out of sleep;
The battered in our cabin door- we pleaded all in vain-
They turned my wife and children out to perish in the rain.

Chorus

They died of cold and famine there beneath the open sky,
While pitying neighbors stood around, but all as poor as I;
You never saw such misery- God grant you never may-
The sight is branded on my soul until my dying day.

Chorus

Half-crazed I wandered round the spot, and just beyond the town
I met a dastard Pinkerton and struck the villain down;
My brain was frenzied with the thought of children, friends and wife.
I set my heel upon his throat and trampled out his life.

Chorus

And now I roam an outlawed man, no house or friends have I,
For if the law can track me down I shall be doomed to die;
But very little should I care what may become of me,
If all the land would rise and swear such things no more shall be.

Chorus

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1. Philip Sheldon Foner. *American Labor Songs of the 20th Century*. University of Illinois Press, 1975., Wikipedia. "Homestead Strike." Accessed September 4th, 2012. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homestead_strike.
2. Philips Thompson 1892 "The Pennsylvania Miner." Philip Sheldon Foner. *American Labor Songs of the 20th Century*. University of Illinois Press,1975. Originally published in *The Labor Reform Songster* by Phillips Thompson, *Knights of Labor Journal*, Philadelphia, 1892., David Alan Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922,*100. University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1981.

3. Ralph Chaplin 1914. “When the Leaves Come Out,” in *Rebel Voices*, ed. Joyce L. Kornbluh, 299. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1968.
4. Robert Shogan. *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 116. Cambridge: Westview Press, 2004.
5. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields,* 203-204., Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 120.
6. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion,* 205., Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 116.
7. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion,* 207, 205., Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 117.
8. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 123-124, 126-127.
9. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 131-132.
10. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 134, 147, 149-150.
11. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 151.
12. Philips Thompson 1892, “The Pennsylvania Miner” in *American Labor Songs of the 20th Century* by Philip Sheldon Foner. University of Illinois Press, 1975

16. Assassination of Sid Hatfield and Ed Chambers

Track Number: 16, Piece: “Silhouette”
Musician: Jamie Laval
Origin of Music: Traditional Irish Tune and “Duncan Johnstone:” traditional Scottish tune

On “Silhouette”

Though the tunes from “Silhouette” do not originate from southern Appalachia, they are reflective of the cultural origins of Scottish and Irish mining communities in West Virginia. Laval plays the first tune in a slow lament, gradually building to a heightened energy- illustrating the strike community’s shift from grief to a firm determination after the deaths of Hatfield and Chambers.[1]

Assassination of Sid Hatfield and Ed Chambers

“Your brutish crimes are like a rotten flood-
The beating, raping, murdering you’ve done-
You sycophantic coward with a gun…”
-from “The Mine Guard” a poem addressing the crimes of coal company militia, by union organizer Ralph Chaplin[2]

After the acquittal of the Matewan defendants in March of 1921, a disappointed Tom Felts had declared “I shall spend my last cent and the last atom of my energy in trying to obtain Hatfield’s punishment.” Felts employed the help of Baldwin-Felts spy C.E.

Lively and authorities in neighboring McDowell County to construct a plan by which Sid Hatfield could be killed. In the summer of 1921, based on testimony by Lively, Sid was indicted for participation in an attack on the town of Mohawk. The charges were suspicious, not only because of the source of the testimony, but because the battle at Mohawk had occurred in August of 1920, meaning prosecutors had waited nearly a year to call for an indictment. Nevertheless, Sid was ordered to appear in Welch, the capital of McDowell County, for trial.[3]

Near dawn on August 1st, Sid boarded a train with his wife Jessie and friend Ed Chambers, who was also accompanied by his wife Sally. They were to appear in court that day, but had great apprehension about the journey. Sheriff Bill Hatfield of McDowell County had promised them full protection during their time in Welch, but the travelers did not know that the sheriff had already mysteriously absented himself from McDowell County, ostensibly on vacation. When the train arrived in Welch that morning, the party stopped for breakfast and then retreated to the hotel room of Hatfield's lawyer for the remaining hours before the trial. During this entire time, the party was followed by C.E. Lively, who could be seen from the hotel window standing on the courthouse lawn.[4]

Witnesses for Hatfield's trial were to arrive on a 10:30 train, and when its whistle blew the party departed for the courthouse. According to Sally Chambers, both men went unarmed. Approaching the courthouse, the party could see nearly a dozen Baldwin-Felts agents standing at the top of the steps. When the four had reached the first landing of stairs, Hatfield raised his hand to the agents, saying, "Hello boys." With this, a volley of bullets struck Sid, propelling him backwards. Chambers was shot repeatedly by C.E. Lively, his body rolling down the courthouse stairs. Jessie tried in vain to find Sheriff Hatfield, but could neither find him nor any other law enforcement willing to give immediate aid. Sally turned on Lively and began to beat him with her umbrella. When Lively threatened to shoot her, at which point she turned to her husband's body, calling for help. She recognized the faces of several Baldwin agents and said to one of them, "Oh, Mr.Salter…what did you do all this for? We did not come up here for this." Salter responded, "Well that is all right, we didn't come down to Matewan on the 19th day for this either."[5]

Stirrings of an Uprising

Several agents, including C.E. Lively were tried for the murder of Ed Chambers. Despite the local authorities stating that evidence against them was "absolute," the defendants were acquitted. No one was ever brought to trial for the murder of Sid.[6]

On August 2nd, Sid and Ed returned to Matewan in coffins, and were buried with some 2,000 mourners in attendance. The news of the murders spread quickly through the coal fields. The *Wheeling Intelligencer* called the shooting, "the most glaring and outrageous expression of contempt for law that has ever stained the history of West Virginia." Outrage and grief was felt by miners across the West Virginia coal fields.[7]

The timing of the murders created a difficult situation for District 17, which had been planning on sending large numbers of organizers into Mingo County. The plan was to force mass arrests of the activists, which would fill county jail cells and incur a public response. Now with the death of Sid and Ed, the union felt it too dangerous to move forward with the plan. "My men are willing to go to jail, but I am not willing to have them killed," said Keeney at the time. However, momentum continued to grow from the anger of miners in the area. After being pressured by Mother Jones, Keeney and Mooney held a rally on the state capitol grounds in Charleston. They presented a petition to Governor Morgan asking, amongst other things, for a "joint commission of management and labor to adjust wages and mediate disputes." The officials also reminded Morgan that the 1920 Republican Party platform had promised to make efforts to rid West Virginia of the abuses of the mine guard system. Morgan said he would consider the requests of the miners, but Keeney and Mooney left the governor's office with the distinct feeling that nothing would be done.[8]

Morgan responded a week and a half later on August 17th, only to flatly refuse all of the union demands. The miners were further incensed by the news that a state supreme court had ruled to keep several hundred of their comrades imprisoned in Mingo County. Whether pre-meditated or spontaneous, thousands of miners began to assemble on Lens Creek, near Marmet, Kanawha County, just as they had in 1919. As word spread, miners and supporters poured in from McDowell, Mingo, Fayette, Boone, Raleigh and other counties, as well as from out of state. By August 23rd, the valley surrounding Marmet was teeming with an army of union miners and sympathizers, ready to bring justice to the southern West Virginia coal fields.[9]

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1. Jamie Laval, e-mail message to author. January 4, 2012.
2. Ralph Chaplin 1914. "The Mine Guard," in *Rebel Voices: An IWW Anthology*, ed. Joyce L. Kornbluh, 299. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1968.
3. David Alan Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922,* 215. University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1981., William C. Blizzard, *When Miners March,* 138. Edited by Wess Harris. Oakland: PM Press 2010., Robert Shogan. *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 154. Cambridge: Westview Press, 2004.

4. Blizzard, *When Miners March,* 141., Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 156-157.
5. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 158., Chambers, Sally. "Testimony of Mrs. Ed Chambers to the U.S. Senate," *Gun Thugs, Red Necks, and Radicals.* by David Alan Corbin, 113-114. Oakland: PM Press, 2011.
6. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 159., Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 144.
7. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 160, 162.
8. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 162-164 .
9. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 165., Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 219., Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 275.

16b. The March to Mingo

Track Number: 16b, Piece: "Hang Don Chafin"
Musician: Brian Claflin, Ash Devine, Saro Lynch-Thomason and Liam Michael Sky (vocals)
Origin of Music: March to Mingo, 1921

On "Hang Don Chafin"

Sources from the March to Mingo allege that a popular song amongst participants was a four-line stanza declaring marchers would "Hang Don Chafin to a sour apple tree" sung to the tune "John Brown's Body." The chorus to "John Brown's Body," written during the Civil War, declares "We're gonna hang Jeff Davis from a sour apple tree," which inspired the variation created by the 1921 marchers (Jeff Davis had been the president of the Confederacy). Also known to many industrial workers at the time was Ralph Chaplin's "Solidarity Forever," Written to the same tune as "John Brown's Body," "Solidarity Forever" had been written six years before the march, in 1915, and it is likely many marchers and supporters knew these lyrics and utilized them alongside the Don Chafin stanza.[1]

The March to Mingo

"Awake! the coal digger has found his might,
The union boys have put the foe to flight;
All loyal men are marching on each day,
To certain victory they will crown our way,
While now our children in white tents lay.
Yet we are nearer victory day by day;
For we will WIN- the end is almost here-
Peace and freedom for the Tug River men is near."

-from a poem by a Mingo Co. miner, 1921[2]

"Organize Logan and Mingo Counties we will, and no one shall stop us. If our organizers come back in pine boxes, neither heaven nor hell will stop the miners."
-Frank Keeney, from a speech in 1919[3]

By the third week of August 1921, hundreds of strikers and supporters were camped in and around the town of Marmet, preparing to go to battle. They spoke of going to Mingo County to free their imprisoned comrades, end martial law and kill Don Chafin in Logan County on the way. Reporters and residents couldn't identify any particular leaders, but it was clear that a loosely organized network of organizers was directing movements and giving orders. Miners came from coal fields across West Virginia to add to the ranks of their comrades, while many union locals voted to send hundreds to thousands of dollars along with armed support. Early Ball, a local teacher who fought on the miner's side recounted years later: "It wasn't just miners, there were men…from every walk of life- doctors, lawyers, people that run drugstores and got out of there and took to the hills with high-powered guns…" Women worked with the men as nurses, and inevitably as fighters as well. By August 24th, the group now swelled to 10,000 or more, armed marchers began to detach in groups, moving south.[4]

Publicly, the officials of District 17 did not endorse the march. Keeney told the press. "I've interfered time and time again to stop such enterprises. I seemed to have halted them only temporarily. This time they can march to Mingo, so far as I am concerned." On August 24th, Mother Jones had attempted to halt the march before it began, but all in vain. She had announced that she had received a telegram from President Harding ordering the marchers to turn around, in return promising an end to the mine guard system in West Virginia. However, when Washington confirmed that no such telegram had been sent, marchers felt Jones had betrayed their cause. It is likely Jones wanted to prevent the intense fighting that loomed on the horizon, even if it meant lying to the marchers. Publicly embarrassed, Jones left the state the same day detachments of fighters began to leave the camps at Marmet.[5]

Meanwhile to the southwest in Logan County, Sheriff Don Chafin prepared for the potential for conflict on the county border. Chafin utilized volunteers and strikebreakers to amass an army of "Logan Defenders" numbering over 3,000. The volunteers blocked roads, dug trenches and erected barricades to prepare for the assault.[6]

Governor Morgan was in a panic about the uprising, and appealed directly to president Harding for military support. Harding responded on August 26th by assigning an

emissary to the tumultuous fields: General Harry Bandholtz. Bandholtz was instructed to do what he could to turn the marchers around. He first met with Governor Morgan, who repeated his request for federal troops. Bandholtz then met with Keeney and Mooney, and firmly requested that they use their status to convince the miners' army to turn around. He emphasized the urgency of the situation, saying, "There are several million unemployed in this country now and this thing might assume proportions that would be difficult to handle." The District officials immediately travelled across the front lines of the march, speaking with groups as they encountered them on roadways. When the marchers came to understand that it was likely federal troops would be used to stop them, most were convinced to turn around. On Saturday, August 27th, Bandholtz toured the fields and felt confident that his mission had been accomplished. He informed the U.S. War Department that it appeared the marchers were going home, but concluded that Washington should stay vigilant.[7]

The Sharples Incident

It is suspected by many that the coal operators were just as invested in making the March to Mingo happen as were the marchers themselves. If the rebellion rose to great violence and federal troops were called in, then, the coal operators reasoned, the UMWA in West Virginia might finally meet enough opposition and unpopularity as to be destroyed completely. During the march certain coal operators provided weaponry directly to miners, and it is likely other "agent provocateurs" operated within the miner's ranks to stir up violence. It is likely Don Chafin was a part of the plot to provoke the marchers for the above purpose, because on August 27th, when the march could have ended, he instigated a series of events that led to a reinvigoration of the rebellion.[8]

At 3am on Saturday morning, Chafin called Major Davis in Williamson, Mingo Co., asking for assistance to meet the threat of marchers. Davis sent state police led by Captain Brockus. Brockus arrived Saturday afternoon and was directed to head to Clothier. He now travelled with a total of 290 state and county troopers and deputies. Brockus' goal was supposedly to arrest 30 or 40 miners who had disarmed state police weeks earlier on August 12. Brockus proceeded to Clothier, picking up miners along the way, and using them as shields on the front of his lines. When his men reached the town of Sharples, just below Clothier, they encountered 5 miners in the road. After a short exchange, both parties opened fire. Three of the captives were killed, and two more miners died later.[9]

News soon spread along the lines of returning marchers about the battle at Sharples. Rumors that women and children had been deliberately killed by Brockus' forces

enraged the miners. They quickly grabbed their weapons and headed back south to Logan County. Marchers were more determined than ever to destroy the authority of Don Chafin. Some came singing "We're gonna hang Don Chafin to a Sour Apple Tree" to the tune of the popular song "John Brown's Body." General Bandholtz would later state, "It is believed that the withdrawal of the invaders as promised by Keeney and Mooney would have been satisfactorily accomplished…but for the ill-advised and ill-timed advance movement of State constabulary on the night of August 27th, resulting in bloodshed."[10]

The March Continues

As the marchers moved southward in force, reinforcements continued to join them from neighboring counties. Various methods were used to make progress into the hostile fields. Both automobiles and trains were stopped and taken. Governor Morgan tried in vain to have the Norfolk and Western rail lines shut down even as hundreds of miners were piling onto flat cars and directing nervous train crew members to drive south towards Logan County. The marchers appointed commanding officers, who were often officials from union locals, and designated passwords. In answer to the question of where they were going, a marcher would answer "To Mingo." When asked how they were coming the marcher would reply, "I come creeping." Stockades of coal company weaponry were liberated for use by the miners and food and medical systems established along march routes. An informal uniform was developed as well, with red bandanas, blue jeans or overalls being the general attire.[11]

Meanwhile, Chafin and General Morgan made efforts to amass forces to defend Logan County. Morgan appointed Colonel William Eubanks to head Chafin's army. Eubanks arrived with 250 American Legionnaires- volunteers from Welch. Approximately 1,000 other volunteers poured in from McDowell County and Williamson. These "Logan Defenders" wore white arm bands to identify each other, and developed passwords including "Holden" (the name of a nearby company town) and "Amen." They amassed in the town of Logan, being directed to ridgelines and outposts to guard and defend the county.[12]

On Tuesday, August 30th, in response to increasing appeals for assistance, President Harding issued a proclamation ordering all peoples involved in the insurrection to return home by Thursday, September 1st. The proclamations were dropped by plane over the marchers' heads. This had little effect, for the resolute anger of the miners' army in the last days of August was only growing, never abating. However, their progress towards Mingo would soon be retarded by Chafin's forces, who sat focused and waiting along the eastern border of Logan County.[13]

Hang Don Chafin [14]
We're gonna hang Don Chafin from a sour apple tree,
We're gonna hang Don Chafin from a sour apple tree ,
We're gonna hang Don Chafin from a sour apple tree,
Our truth is marching on!

Solidarity forever!
Solidarity forever!
Solidarity forever!
Our truth is marching on!

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1. William C. Blizzard, *When Miners March,* 285. Edited by Wess Harris. Oakland: PM Press 2010., Wikipedia. "Solidarity Forever." Accessed September 18, 2012. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solidarity_Forever.
2. David Alan Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922,* 244. University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1981.
3. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 199.
4. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 218., Robert Shogan. *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 168. Cambridge: Westview Press, 2004., Michael M. Meador, "The Siege of Crooked Creek Gap." *Goldenseal Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars*, edited by Ken Sullivan, 66. Charleston: Quarrier Press, 1991., Herber Blankenhorn. "Marching Through West Virginia," *Gun Thugs, Red Necks, and Radicals.* by David Alan Corbin, 141. Oakland: PM Press, 2011., Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 284.
5. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 167, 170.
6. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 173.
7. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 177, 181-182.
8. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 184.
9. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 186-187.
10. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 187.
11. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 188-189, 194., Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 275., Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 220.
12. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 193.
13. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 191.
14. Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 285.,Wikipedia. "Solidarity Forever." Accessed September 18, 2012. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solidarity_Forever.

17. The Battle of Blair Mountain and the Siege at Crooked Creek Gap

Track Number: 17, Piece: "Coal Creek March"
Musician: Brett Ratliff
Origin of Music: Pete Steele, 1938

On "Coal Creek March"

There are several origin stories to this tune, all of which relate to the area of Coal Creek in Anderson and Campbell Counties, TN. Now called Lake City, Coal Creek was the locus for a miners' rebellion that lasted from 1891-1892. In 1891, the Tennessee Coal Company fired hundreds of its union miners and imported state prisoners to work the mines instead. The miners repeatedly freed the convicts from stockades, and eventually fought battles with state militia. The rebellion was extinguished in 1892, but in 1896 the Tennessee legislature chose not to renew its contracts with the TCC. Years later, in 1911, the Cross Mountain Mine Explosion close to nearby Briceville killed 84 miners, and a mass funeral was held in their honor. Both the Coal Creek Rebellion and the Cross Mountain tragedy have been cited as the sources for "Coal Creek March." It is just as likely, however, that the tune is older than both events.
In the context of the Blair Pathways narrative, this tune is meant to invoke the spirit and energy of the 1891 rebellion. Brett Ratliff provides this version of Coal Creek March, which alludes to the momentum and enthusiasm felt by the marchers as they met in battle with the Logan Defenders.[1]

The Battle of Blair Mountain and the Siege at Crooked Creek Gap

"Red Necks, don't admit defeat,
Don't give up this fight.
We're goin' to win this strike
Things again are goin' to be all right.
You've got to keep them scabs away!"
-from "Red Necks" by Fred Brown. Sung to the air "Red Lips Keep My Blues Away." Recorded in Mollenaeur, PA, May 22nd, 1940. Korson notes the song was "Widely popular during the strike of the late twenties in Western Pennsylvania."[2]

As marchers headed south with renewed vigor, Don Chafin was creating defensive lines stretching 15 miles along Spruce Fork Ridge, near the border of Boone and Logan Counties. Armed with machine and Gatling guns, defenders positioned themselves near gaps along the ridge, including Blair Mountain Gap, which runs between the two peaks of the Mountain. Spruce Fork Ridge and Blair Mountain were major barriers for

the marchers. In order to advance into Logan, the marchers found that they would need to make their way through gaps or hollows in between the ridgelines.[3]

Some of the first fighting that occurred in the area took place on August 30th. That evening, Reverend Thomas Wilburn of the town of Blair led 75 men up to the ridgeline of Blair Mountain. The next morning he and his men encountered John Gore, Chafin's chief deputy, and two other deputies. When the trio gave the wrong password the miners opened fire- killing all three men. Soon after, hearing that they would likely be indicted for the death of Gore and his comrades, Mooney and Keeney slipped out of West Virginia and escaped to Ohio.[4]

As reports came of initial clashes on Blair and elsewhere, the marchers began to develop an informal strategy of approaching Logan County from the northeast and southwest. Those coming from the north would focus on crossing Spruce Fork Ridge via Crooked Creek Gap, and those coming up from the south would attempt to head up and over Blair.[5]

On August 31st, an assault was launched at Blair. The miners faced the great difficulty of scaling the mountain from its base, and attempted to ascend by sticking to brushy areas under heavy fire from above. On September 1st much ground was gained, but it was lost again by the end of the day. Meanwhile, the attackers from the north broke through Logan defenses on September 1st, traveling south to the left fork of Crooked Creek- and just four miles away from the town of Logan itself. However, the marchers were prevented from going further when new breastworks were set up and a machine gun repeatedly fired on oncoming marchers. Logan officials panicked at the progress made by the marchers, and Chafin ordered several biplanes to drop tear gas and pipe bombs on the miners' lines. Due to several factors (including pilots miscalculating where marchers were located) no one was killed by these attacks.[6]

During the fighting General Bandholtz was called from Washington to again inspect the state of the rebellion. By midnight on September 1st he had determined that Harding's proclamation had been thoroughly ignored, and sent a telegraph to Washington recommending that federal troops be sent to the battle zone. Air assistance in the form of twin-engine bombers arrived at the Kanawha air field that day, and infantry units began arriving Friday September 2nd in the evening. As infuriated as they were with the local coal baron plutocracy, the marchers were not willing to fight federal troops. Many were veterans of the First World War, and felt a love of their national government if not their local authorities. Besides, it was thought that the federal troops would end the fighting on both sides, and disarm Chafin's forces. Word slowly

spread that federal assistance was on the way, and many marchers eagerly awaited the troops' arrival.[7]

Bandholtz ordered a cease-fire on September 3rd, but it took well through the weekend for the fighting to end. Skirmishes and conflict continued at Crooked Creek Gap and Blair until both opposing forces were called to withdraw. Eubanks militia was called back to Logan, but the miners were also ordered to surrender and hand over their weaponry. About 1,000 miners formally surrendered to the federal troops, but most hid their weapons and slipped away to home. Cush Garrett, who was a boy at the time of the fighting recalled years later, "Men stuck guns everywhere, just in hollow logs, under rocks or anywhere…I can remember my brother-in-law saw the edge of an army blanket sticking under the fence. He pulled it out, and there was a whole bunch of guns." Out of a march with an estimated 10,000 participants, only 400 guns were turned in to federal troops.[8]

The marchers had succeeded in intimidating local authorities and showing their ability to self-organize. However, the reaction from the state of West Virginia and coal operators would have terrible effects on the rights and conditions for coal mining families in the forthcoming years.

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1. George Korson, *Coal Dust on the Fiddle,* 353-370*.* Hatboro, PA: Folklore Associates Inc., 1965., Kahn, Ed. *Banjo Tunes and Songs, Pete Steele,* liner notes. Folkways Records, Washington D.C., 1958.
2. Fred Brown 1940, "Red Necks" in *Coal Dust on the Fiddle: Songs and Stories of the Bituminous Industry*, by George Korson, 430. Hatboro: Folklore Associates Inc., 1965.
3. Robert Shogan. *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 174. Cambridge: Westview Press, 2004.
4. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 192, 195.
5. Shogan, The Battle of Blair Mountain, 196.
6. Shogan, The Battle of Blair Mountain, 201, 197-198.
7. Shogan, The Battle of Blair Mountain, 200, 203.
8. Shogan, The Battle of Blair Mountain, 207., Michael M. Meador, "The Siege of Crooked Creek Gap." *Goldenseal Book of the West Virginia Mine Wars*, edited by Ken Sullivan, 70. Charleston: Quarrier Press, 1991.

18. The Treason Trials

Track Number: 18, Piece: "Harlan County Blues"
Musician: Dom Flemons (guitar and vocals)
Origin of Music: George Davis, 1937

On "Harlan County Blues"

"Harlan County Blues" was written by miner bard George Davis. Davis worked in coal mines for nearly 30 years, and in 1933 was inspired to play guitar publicly during coal strikes in Harlan County, KY. George Davis continued to write and perform throughout his career and was a disc jockey and performer in Hazard, KY from 1947 to 1969. According to Davis, "Harlan County Blues" was one of his most popular songs. Davis tended to name fellow strikers and organizers in most of his songs, indicating his audience consisted mostly of close-knit mining communities in eastern Kentucky.[1]

"Harlan County Blues" describes a situation in which several miners are arrested for their union affiliation during a Harlan County strike in Kentucky, probably 1933. The song names the various excuses the jailers use in order to justify the confinement of the men, who have all of their belongings, even glasses, taken from them. Sam Ward, the union president, arrives and convinces the jailer to free the union men. As they discuss their former imprisonment, one man who evaded arrest teases that if the men had just hidden their union buttons, they wouldn't have gotten into trouble.[2]

The freeing of the union men from prison is reminiscent of the exoneration of the marchers who faced imprisonment after the Battle of Blair Mountain. The humor and congenial air of "Harlan County Blues" reflects the joy felt by hundreds of miners who, charged with treason, were able to walk away free.

The Treason Trials

"So far as the law is involved, some coal miners are on trial at Charles Town, West Virginia, on a charge of treason. At the same time, however, the state of West Virginia itself is on trial before the bar of public opinion throughout the entire United States…"
-from an article by the Daily News, of Washington D.C. on the treason trials[3]

Even as the fight was still raging at Blair and Crooked Creek Gap, District 17 officials had known that it would behoove them to have fiscal resources ready for the legal battles that loomed on the horizon. Keeney and Mooney developed a fund, the Mingo County Defense League, which accepted donations to support marchers who would soon be indicted. And indeed, the State of West Virginia, backed by the finances of several coal operators, was determined to bring the leaders of the insurrection to trial. It was hoped by the prosecutors that these trials would destroy the UMWA in West Virginia.[4]

Not long after the fighting ended, Keeney, Mooney and over 550 others were charged with treason by the state of West Virginia. It has been speculated by modern historians that if the charges had been less severe, then the prosecutors would have succeeded in sentencing several participants to jail time. However, it quickly became apparent that it would be hard to find the marchers guilty for "levying war against the state." Time and again, the marchers had sought intervention from the state during the strikes, and their aims during the march had seemed focused on challenging county authorities, not state authorities.[5]

The trials largely took place in West Virginia's eastern panhandle in Charles Town, Jefferson County, far away from the coal fields. Charges against Keeney and Mooney were dropped quickly, since neither of whom were in West Virginia during most of the rebellion. The prosecution then turned its attention to Bill Blizzard, who had been a commander for the union miners during the march. Blizzard was also found not guilty of treason, and when later tried in another case for the murder of Deputy John Gore, was also dismissed of those charges. Since charges against Blizzard had been the strongest, the cases against the other defendants soon melted away.[6]

The trials proved to be embarrassing for the State of West Virginia. Instead of shaming the union, testimony from trials highlighted the corrupt relationship between coal operators and state government. Covering the trials, the *New York Tribune* said, "In his testimony in the West Virginia 'treason' trial Governor Morgan made the extraordinary admission that a private government whose army consists of notorious 'mine guards,' exists in his state, and that though opposed to it he is powerless to end it…If this condition exists it would seem that the treason prosecution should be against the organizers and maintainers of this private government rather than against the citizens of the state who went on the warpath to suppress it." Only two people were successfully jailed for their participation in the march: Rev. Thomas Wilburn and his son- but both served reduced jail times of 5 years each.[7]

In the end, however, the prosecutors were triumphant in damaging the strength of the West Virginia UMWA. The union's treasury was completely drained at state and national levels, spent on legal defense costs. Moreover, the trials were but one more element added to pains the UMWA was already feeling. Economic depression, an unsuccessful national strike in 1922 and a resurgence in anti-union sentiment led to a decline in the UMWA's popularity soon after the trials. In the next few years in West Virginia, UMWA membership dropped from 50,000 to just a few hundred. Moreover, disagreements between local and national leadership led to the removal of Keeney and Mooney from their district seats, and union miners were forced to sign contracts for much lower pay rates than had been previously found acceptable. The union would not

experience a resurgence until the mid-1930s, with the signing of the National Labor Relations Act and other changes.[8]

After the march, the federal government had done little to rectify the obviously corrupt relationship between business and government in West Virginia. In fact, Washington had even considered prosecuting the marchers, but had instead left this to state authorities. The Kenyon Committee, created to investigate conditions in the Mingo-Logan Wars, could not agree on a conclusive statement of any substance, and Congress took no action.[9]

The union families of West Virginia had been failed at almost every level of authority except their own. After years of attempted mediation through the state and national governments, the miners and their families had decided to utilize their own physical force to the greatest of their capabilities. Few entities outside of their own communities seemed to understand the real stakes of the battles they were waging, and when no one else would support their cause, they would move fiercely forward, regardless of the sacrifice. For these were not battles merely for better wages, but for the right to live with dignity.

Addressing an audience of striking miners during the Paint Creek/Cabin Creek strikes, Mother Jones had declared, “We are not going to leave a slave class to the coming generation!” Sadly, the mining families of Appalachia still very much live under conditions that deprive them of their health and economic stability. New mining practices not only reduce jobs but have introduced forms of environmental destruction that threaten the health of communities, while the power of unions remains weak. Hope lies where it always has, in the spirit of people who choose to yield to the inner call for dignity and freedom. The peoples who united in this cause in early 20th century West Virginia came from some of the most diverse backgrounds imaginable. If modern movements could again harness the emotional power that sprang from such adversity, then we may be able to fulfill Mother Jones prophecy, and raise a generation unpunished by capitalism’s gluttony.[10]

Harlan County Blues [11]
Original lyrics by George Davis
A bunch of fellers the other day
O'er to Harlan went;
They told me about the fun they had-
All the time in jail they'd spent.

Most of the fellers were like me

Who didn't go along;
If you want the story, boys,
Just listen to this song

"You didn't have to be drunk," they said,
"To get throwed in the can;
The only thing you needed be
Was just a union man."

None of the boys didn't like it much,
They said they's treated bad;
They took their knives or pocket books;
Or anything they had.

They throwed Bill Wheeler in the can,
With all his p'ison gases;
He had no money to pay a fine
So they just took his glasses.

Then Kelley said, "You can't do this to me,"
When they come to get his name;
"The hell they can't," the jailer said
"You're in here just the same."

Walter he's a funny chap.
With me you'll all agree;
He wants someone to hold to him,
When he gets on a spree.

Delmos he went down the street,
To a restaurant was bent;
When two fellers picked him up
And to the jail he went.

Put Bill Sheets in the jailhouse,
For reckless walking so they say;
They can't hold Old Bill for that,
Cuz he always walks that way.

Sam Ward went to the jailhouse,

And the jailer twirled his keys;
Sam said, "Mr. Jailer,
Now won't you listen please."

Everything grew quiet boys,
You couldn't hear a sound;
"Turn 'em out," Sam Ward said,
"Or I'll turn this jail around."

When they all was freed again,
You could hear them all take on:
"Just think of the fun that we'd missed,
If we hadn't come along."

Then our president he asked of us
"How'd you get locked so well?"
Then Taylor Corned laughed and said
"Why I was drunk as hell."

Lloyd Baker went over there
To dodge the jail he did.
He said they'd all stayed out of jail
If they'd kept they kept their buttons hid.

Now my song is ended and
I hope no one is sore.
If there is then please speak up
and I won't sing no more.

Version by Dom Flemons

Spoken: Harlan County Blues, talkin' 'bout the strife of the union man.

A bunch of fellers, other day
O'er to Harlan went;
They told me about the fun they had-
All the time in jail they'd spent.

All the other fellers were like me
Who didn't go along;

"If you want the story, boys,
Just listen to this song."

None of the boys didn't like it much,
They said they's treated bad;
They took their knives and pocket books;
and anything they had.

"You didn't have to be drunk," they said,
"To get throwed in the can;
The only thing you needed be
Was just a union man."

Spoken: And they was throwin' all sorts a union boys in the jail that day. Here's a few they threw in:

Throwed Bill Wheeler in the can,
With all his p'ison gases;
He had no money to pay a fine
So they just took his glasses.

Put Bill Sheets in the jailhouse,
For reckless walking so they say;
They can't hold Old Bill for that,
Cuz he always walks that way.

Then Kelley said, "You can't do this to me,"
When they come to get his name;
"The hell they can't," the jailer said
"You're in here just the same."

Spoken: But the boys found out later that they could have avoided being in the jail altogether, and this is what they had to do.

Lloyd Baker went over there
And dodge the jail he did.
He said they'd all stayed out of jail
If they'd kept their buttons hid.

Spoken: Sam Ward, the union president, he came over there, and this is how it went down with him:

Sam Ward went to the jailhouse,
And the jailer twirled his keys;
Sam whispered, "Mr. Jailer,
Now won't you listen please."

Everything grew quiet boys,
You couldn't hear a sound;
"Turn 'em out," Sam Ward said,
"Or I'll turn this jail around."

When they all was freed again,
You could hear them all carry on:
"Just think of the fun that we'd a missed,
If we hadn't come along."

Then Sam Ward he asked of us
"How'd you get along so well?"
Then Taylor Corned laughed and said
"Why I was drunk as hell."

Now my song is ended
I hope no one is sore.
If there is, then please speak up
and I won't sing no more.

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1. George Korson, *Coal Dust on the Fiddle,* 449. Hatboro, PA: Folklore Associates Inc., 1965., WSGS. "Remembering George Davis, the Singing Miner." Accessed September 18, 2012. http://www.wsgs.com/singing.htm.
2. George Davis 1937 "Harlan County Blues" in Korson, *Coal Dust*, 316-318.
3. William C. Blizzard, *When Miners March,* 335. Edited by Wess Harris. Oakland: PM Press 2010.
4. Robert Shogan. *The Battle of Blair Mountain,* 214-215. Cambridge: Westview Press, 2004.
5. David Alan Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion in the Coal Fields: The Southern West Virginia Miners, 1880-1922,* 237. University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1981., Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 215.

6. Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 349-350., Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 217.
7. Blizzard, *When Miners March*, 334, 350-351.
8. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 219., Wikipedia. "National Labor Relations Act" Accessed September 18, 2012.
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Labor_Relations_Act.
9. Shogan, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 212-213.
10. Corbin, *Life, Work and Rebellion*, 94.
11. George Davis 1937 "Harlan County Blues" in Korson, *Coal Dust*, 316-318.

19. Second and Third Marches on Blair

Track Number: 19, Piece: "Hold On"
Musician: 2011 March to Blair Mountain participants, song led by Saro Lynch-Thomason
Origin of Music: African-American traditional, 20th century, words adapted by Alice Wine, Blair verses created by Saro Lynch-Thomason 2011

On "Hold On"

"Hold On," also known as "Keep Your Eyes On the Prize," "Freedom Plow" and "Gospel Plow" has been altered to fit the needs of various movements over time. The oldest version of this song, "Gospel Plow," encourages the listener to keep a steady hand on the plow, symbolic of a firm commitment to one's faith. During the Civil Rights movement, Alice Wine added verses to reflect anti-segregation struggles, and the "gospel plow" in the song was changed to the "freedom plow." On the 2011 March on Blair Mountain, Saro Lynch-Thomason added verses once again to reflect the goals of the marchers, found at the end of this section. This recording is from the first day of the march, during an early morning water break. Singing became an important tactic to raise morale on the 2011 march, and many civil rights tunes were found to be emotionally symbolic because of their references to walking, journeys and roadways. Many recordings of songs from the march can be found in "March Songs" on the home page of www.blairpathways.com.[1]

Second and Third Marches on Blair

"Well I, I went down to the *SHPO's* office and I,
I took back what he stole from me and I,
I took back my dignity, and I,
I took back my humanity,
and now he's under my feet,

under my feet, under my feet, under my feet,
and ain't no system gonna walk all over me."
-sung by marchers on the 2011 March to Blair Mountain, a variation of the traditional "Under My Feet"[2]

"Ain't gonna let the coal companies turn me around,
Turn me around, turn me around,
Ain't gonna let the coal companies turn me around,
I'm gonna keep on a walkin' keep on a talkin'
Marching to the freedom land."
-sung by marchers on the 2011 March to Blair Mountain, a variation of the Civil Rights-era song "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around"[3]

The "Second Battle of Blair Mountain"

At the time of the writing of this narrative, Blair Mountain is in danger of destruction due to mountain-top removal mining practices. As the site of America's largest labor uprising, Blair Mountain is of great historic significance and deserves preservation for the education of present and future generations. The past 30 years have witnessed numerous efforts to bring attention to Blair's endangerment, including a march to Blair in 1999 and again in 2011.

Serious efforts to preserve Blair began in the 1980s when a subsidiary of Massey Coal received a permit for surface mining on Blair Mountain. Concerned over the potential destruction of the battle site, citizens began to conduct archaeological surveys of the area surrounding Blair. Multiple research expeditions produced thousands of artifacts, including approximately one million bullets and several discarded weapons. These surveys have also produced new evidence that union miners broke through the lines of Logan defenders several times during the course of the battle.

Evidence from the archeological surveys helped bolster the case for the protection of Blair Mountain as a historic landmark. In 2009, due to the efforts of several organizations including Friends of Blair Mountain, the site was successfully listed on the National Register of Historic Places, severely limiting the possibility of surface mining on the mountain. However, soon after in January 2010, the National Park Service de-listed the site. It is widely believed that this retraction was the result of pressure from the mining industry. [4]

The Marches

In 1999, a small group of individuals retraced the route used by many marchers back in 1921 as a strategy to bring attention to Blair Mountain's endangerment. Beginning in 2011, a coalition of organizations started planning a 3rd March to Blair Mountain, also retracing the miners' route. The "Blair Mountain Coalition," which included groups such as Friends of Blair Mountain and Appalachia Rising, spent several months planning the march, which, it was hoped, would bring national media attention to the mountain's plight. By the time the march began, over 67 organizations, including locals from the Industrial Workers of the World and the UMWA sponsored the march.[5]

On June 6th 2011, over 200 participants began marching southwest from Marmet, Kanawha County. According to the official website, the purpose of the march was "to demand sustainable job creation in all Appalachian communities, abolish mountaintop removal, strengthen labor rights and preserve Blair Mountain." Each day marchers walked between 5-15 miles along narrow roads in 90-100 degree weather. Three times during the week, marchers were told that the sites previously reserved for overnight camping would not be available to them, and so were forced to return to Marmet to sleep. It was believed by many attendees that these cancellations were due to coal company pressure and intimidation towards campsite renters. Despite these obstacles, marchers remained enthusiastic and received constant support from local residents, who offered food, drink, money, space for rest and words of encouragement.[6]

On the 5th day of the march, participants reached the base of Blair Mountain and camped for the night. The next day hundreds of additional supporters arrived, making the total number of participants 1200 strong. After a morning rally, marchers proceeded up Blair Mountain. Upon reaching the ridgeline, some marchers chose to peacefully cross on to one of Blair's strip mine sites, risking arrest. The rest of the participants held a rally, sang songs and erected a historic marker. One person was arrested on the mine site and released soon afterwards.[7]

The march was a remarkable logistical effort by a small group of organizers, and it succeeded in receiving attention from a national audience. The Huffington Post and CNN, amongst others, reported on the march. The event was a major step in focusing the public eye not only on Blair Mountain but on environmental and labor issues present throughout Appalachia.[8]

Hold On/Keep Your Eyes on the Prize[9]

Paul & Silas were bound in jail

Had no money to go their bail
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on
(third line repeats at the end of every verse)

Chorus:
Hold on, hold on!
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on!

Paul & Silas began to shout
Jail doors opened and they walked out

The only thing that we did wrong
Was stay in the wilderness too long...

Ain't but one chain that we can stand
That's the chain of a hand in a hand...

Freedom's name is mighty sweet
Black & white are gonna meet...

We've fought jail & violence too
And God's love has seen us through...

Got my hand on the freedom plow
Wouldn't take nothin' for my journey now...

Freedom's road is mighty slow
But it's the only way to go.

Additional verses to "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize" used on 2011 March to Blair Mountain
Back in August of '21
miners did what had to be done.
We're gonna march our way to Blair
and we'll stand with our comrades there.

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20. The Current Fight to Save Blair Mountain

Track Number: 20, Piece: “Stream of Conscience”
Musician: 2/3 Goat with Annalyse McCoy (vocals), Ryan Dunn (vocals, guitar), Ryan Guerra (fiddle), Andy Wilmoth (drums), John Cavendish (bass)
Origin of Music: 2/3 Goat, 2011

On “Stream of Conscience”

As this last essay is being written, the fate of Blair Mountain remains unknown. Will it be preserved as a state or national park? Will it be destroyed by mountain-top removal mining, burying West Virginia and Appalachia’s labor history? Will the residents of the town of Blair be able to drink its waters without fear of mine runoff or flooding from erosion? “Stream of Conscience,” by 2/3 Goat is both a call to the defense of Appalachia’s mountains and a reminder to honor the underground mining heritage of our forefathers and mothers. This, the last song on the Blair Pathways CD, is a prayer for the preservation of Blair and the healthy future of Appalachia.[1]

The Current Fight to Save Blair Mountain

"Now there's another battle brewing on Blair Mountain,
touchin' the root of our soul.
They wanna rip off the top of the mountain,
scoop out all of the coal.
It's plain that we got no friends in Charleston,
fewer still in D.C.,
If we wanna save that sacred mountain
it's up to you and me."
-from "The Battle of Blair Mountain" by contemporary songwriter Bill Talbot[2]

"Yes, the long memory is the most radical idea in this country. It is the loss of that long memory which deprives our people of that connective flow of thoughts and events that clarifies our vision, not of where we're going, but where we want to go."
- *U. Utah Phillips*, speaker, m*usician and political radical*[3]

"Blair Mountain is as close to sacred ground as there is for the UMWA…Though we may not physically own the mountain's land, its legacy is ours."
-*Cecil E. Roberts, UMWA President*[4]

Efforts to save Blair Mountain are ongoing and multi-faceted. In September of 2010, four groups, including the Sierra Club and the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition filed a federal lawsuit against the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service, alleging that the de-listing of Blair Mountain from the National Register was "arbitrary, capricious, and contrary to the National Park Service's own regulations." In West Virginia, Friends of Blair Mountain has continued its efforts to bring attention to the uncertain status of Blair's battlefields. A newly formed organization, the Blair Mtn. Heritage Alliance, operates the Blair Mountain Community Center in Blair and addresses health issues in the local community.[5]

Two coal mining companies currently own the mineral rights of Blair Mountain: Arch Coal and Alpha Natural Resources (the latter of which bought Massey Coal in 2010). Arch Coal has two active mine sites in the area of Blair: The Left Fork Surface Mine and Bumbo No. 2 Mine. The Left Fork Surface Mine is adjacent to the National Register boundary. As of this writing, no coal extraction is occurring on the Bumbo No. 2 site, but previously mined areas and the current blasting area occupy designated battlefield land.

So far, the UMWA has advocated for the preservation of Blair Mountain, but did not endorse the March to Blair Mountain in 2011 (though some local unions participated). The UMWA is not opposed to mountain-top removal mining, and in all likeliness feared association with the anti-MTR message of the march.[6]

It is a tragic fact that the same qualities that make West Virginia incredibly bio-diverse and ecologically unique have also doomed it to spoilage from capitalist interests. The drive for mineral extraction that has supported the lives of countless mining families is now also that which compels companies to accelerate the practice of surface mining, which not only employs less people but also poisons and destroys water sources for communities. An Environmental Impact Statement from 2003 cites that mountain top removal mining has removed 7% of Appalachia's forests, poisoned or buried over 1200 miles of streams and destroyed over 800 square miles of mountain ranges.* Communities all over the region must deal with erosion that leads to massive flooding and mine runoff which infects water sources, causing cancer and sickness across all ages.[7]

These conditions not only literally kill the people and the land, they destroy the memory of the region. The destruction of Blair Mountain not only means the demolition of an ecosystem and the poisoning of local water supplies, it means the erasure of a story. The writer hopes that the Blair Pathways Project can help to spur many onwards in the fight to save Blair and with it, preserve the "long memory" of Appalachia and its working people.

*It can be safely assumed that these numbers have risen steadily over the past several years.

Stream of Conscience [8]
Stream of Conscience

Written by Annalyse McCoy & Ryan Dunn; Additional Lyrics by Nina McCoy

A broken fiddle plays o'er my grandfather's grave
To a dying culture it screams a serenade
A drugged sleep, my people curse and decades gone
A story I heard not too far and not too long ago

A man came to this land, this dark and bloody ground
He walked through my back door, asked if he could stick around
I knew his intention so I turned him away

But a permit to destroy my home said do it anyway

Ooh

He paints his face with the color of the center of the mountain
He lies in wait for machines to mine the coal
Bomb detonates and it leaves me countin'
One less top of a mountain left, and one more soul that's sold

Ooh

Ooh

Stream of Conscience, hear my cry
I don't want my hills to die
Pour on me your sanctifying truth
It's your home to lose

How much would you give, sir, for this your mother's ground?
I'd give my whole life, sir, I'd lay my body down
Just like my grandfather who dug deep in the ground
He dug for coal, and then he left without a sound

Ooh

Oh rock of ages, these hills were cleft for me
Old faithful mountains, now you've taken them for free
And filled the hollows of the people of this land
Poisoned our water, all at Old King Coal's demand

Ooh

Ooh

Stream of Conscience, hear my cry
I don't want my hills to die
Pour on me your sanctifying truth
It's your home to lose
It's your life to choose

Love can move mountains, real Love would keep them there
Your runoff runneth over and out my sink
But your runoff is not fit for me to drink

For some clean water, man, I'll lay my body down
For my coal-stained fathers, I will lay my body down
For all these nations, I will lay my body down
For my unborn children, I will lay my body down

(The mask of progress) For some clean water, won't you lay your body down
(On the face of greed) For your coal-stained fathers, won't you lay your body down
(They took away) For all these nations, won't you lay your body down
(What they did not need) For these green mountains, won't you lay your body down

(The mask of progress) Lay your body down
(On the face of greed) Oh, lay your body down
(They took away) Lay your body down
(What they did not need) Oh, lay your body down

Before it's gone

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