

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

# WARNING

THE LOCATION OF THIS PROPERTY IS RESTRICTED INFORMATION.  
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CHIEF OF REGISTRATION'S PERMISSION.

WHEN PHOTOCOPYING OR OTHERWISE REPRODUCING THIS  
DOCUMENT, BE CERTAIN TO COVER ALL LOCATION INFORMATION,  
INCLUDING THE ADDRESS BLOCKS, VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION,  
UTM COORDINATES, MAPS OR ANY SECTIONS IN THE TEXT  
DESCRIBING LOCATION.

Property Name: **Blair Mountain Battlefield**

State: **West Virginia**

County: **Logan**

Reference Number: **08000496**

Multiple Context (if applicable):

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 08000496

Date Listed: 3/30/09

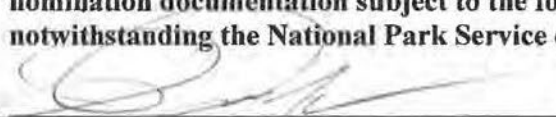
Blair Mountain Battlefield  
Property Name

Logan  
County

West Virginia  
State

N/A  
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
Signature of the Keeper

3/30/09  
Date of Action

**Amended Items in Nomination:**

The nomination is amended to change the number of contributing sites to 1. The property is simultaneously one large archeological site/battlefield. This amendment has been discussed with the West Virginia SHPO on 3/25/09 and with the American Battlefield Protection Program on 3/30/09 who both concur with this assessment.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

National Register property file

Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

Signature of the Receptor: [Signature] Date of Action: 3/30/09

Blair Mountain Battlefield

Name of Property

Logan County, WV

County and State

**5. Classification****Ownership of Property**

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property**

- ☐ building(s)  
☒ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing

Noncontributing

	1	buildings
16		sites
	7	structures
		objects
16	8	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

N/A

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions**

Defense: Battlefield

**Current Functions**

Landscape: Natural Feature

**7. Description****Architectural Classification**

N/A

**Materials**

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other N/A

**Narrative Description**

See Continuation Sheets



**8. Statement of Significance****Applicable National Register Criteria**

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☒ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Levels of Significance** (local, state, national)

National

**Areas of Significance**

Politics/Government

Social History

Other: Labor History

Archaeology: Historic – Non-Aboriginal

**Period of Significance**

1921

**Significant Dates**

August 31-September 5, 1921

**Significant Person**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

Appalachian

**Architect/Builder**

N/A

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

See Continuation sheets

**9. Major Bibliographical References****Bibliography:** See Continuation Sheets**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository: WVU Libraries, Logan County Public Library  
WV State Archives, Kanawha County Public Library

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** Approximately 1668.25

**UTM References:** See Continuation Sheets

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

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☒ See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**  
See Continuation Sheets

**Boundary Justification**  
See Continuation Sheets

## 11. Form Prepared By \_\_\_\_\_

name/title	Frank Unger, Kenny King, Harvard Ayers, Ph.D., Barbara Rasmussen, Ph.D., Chad N. Proudfoot, MA, MPA, Larry N. Sybolt, MA, MLIS
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organization	Multiple	date	December 2008
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street & number	Multiple	telephone
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city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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Property Owner \_\_\_\_\_

Multiple

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## LOCATION & SETTING

The nominated site consists of approximately 1668 acres stretching approximately ten miles along the [REDACTED] in Logan County, West Virginia. From the north, it extends [REDACTED]. The terrain is rugged and remote, [REDACTED] 7. The southeast end of the site is located [REDACTED] and is in West Virginia's Third Congressional District.

The topography of the area is characterized by steep mountains joined by spiny ridges, with sandstone outcroppings and shale-clay based soils on 70 percent slopes. [REDACTED] an undulating ridge approximately fifteen miles long when traveled by foot from the south crest of [REDACTED]. The peaks along the ridge vary in elevation from 1,809 feet [REDACTED] to a height of 2,045 feet [REDACTED]. The alluvial valleys below are tightly etched by small, meandering streams.

The Battle of Blair Mountain was fought between August 30, 1921 – September 4, 1921 [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] Logan County. The ridge is a unique geographical barrier that divides the Guyandotte River and the Little Coal River watersheds, running in a southeast to northwesterly course. This nomination includes a section of this terrain encompassing the territory where encounters between Chafin's Army and the miners – led by members of the United Mine Workers of America – took place. The ridge line itself, and the defensive positions on the upper slopes of the ridge were established by Sheriff Don Chafin of Logan County. Chafin's forces were arrayed at strategic points linked by a continuous sentry line along the ridge. The nominated area was the location of the hostilities between the two groups, reflecting the miners' selection of natural pathways up and over the ridge to breach Chafin's line. The topography of the region dictated the course of the confrontation, and as such is extremely significant.

The miners assembled [REDACTED] in Marmet in southern Kanawha County. Gaining supporters as they advanced, they marched [REDACTED] where they established bases in preparation for an assault on Chafin's forces defending the ridge. At the time of the battle, little more than a dirt path was available for most of the march. Few paved highways had come to Logan County. Steep mountains, narrow valleys, and small coal company towns characterized the area. A few farmers still held on to their small mountain lands.

Non-contributing elements on the south crest of Blair Mountain are a small concrete block building and metal shed. Two modern gas wells [REDACTED] are within the boundary. Additionally, there are rights

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of way for telecommunications, high voltage electric lines and towers, and remnants of an underground mine ventilation shaft [REDACTED]. The [REDACTED] have been compromised by coal mine operations and are not included in this nomination. Three roads and/or trails within the boundary are counted as noncontributing structures.

Fifteen contributing battle related archeological features have been identified within the Battle of Blair Mountain site boundaries. Archeological investigations in 2006 recorded evidence of 24 armaments, including 13 rifles, two shotguns and nine pistols. This evidence included 1032 shell casings, 41 spent bullets, and 35 other artifacts from the 14 battle features in the district for a total of 1108 artifacts. All artifacts were located in the intact A Horizon within 10 cm of the surface. The burial of these artifacts is due to the natural process of leaves falling to the forest floor and becoming soil. This occurred over the 85 years since the battle. The location of the artifacts represents the approximate place where the shell casings and other artifacts fell over the several days of the battle.

**CONTRIBUTING SITES/RESOURCES**

Blair Mountain Battlefield. The battlefield site consists of approximately 1,600 acres stretching approximately ten miles along [REDACTED] in Logan County, West Virginia. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The terrain is rugged and remote. The topography of the area is characterized by steep mountains joined by spiny ridges, with sandstone outcroppings and shale-clay based soils on 70 percent slopes. [REDACTED] is an undulating ridge approximately fifteen miles long when traveled by foot [REDACTED]. The peaks along the ridge vary in elevation from 1,809 feet [REDACTED] to a height of 2,064 feet [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The alluvial valleys below are tightly etched by small, meandering streams. The ridge is a unique geographical barrier that divides the Guyandotte River and the Little Coal River watersheds, running in a southeast to northwesterly course.

**One contributing site**

Site 46LG61. This battle feature consists of a scatter of battle-period shell casings and live shells that measure 60 by 90 meters. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] During recent field investigations, 118 artifacts were collected, mostly .30-06s. All these artifacts were in the top 10 cm of the intact soils. Key terrain features were large rock outcroppings that likely provided cover for the defenders. Most of the artifacts were collected near these outcroppings. Although this feature had been disturbed by collectors, the artifacts documented were intact and

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were sufficient to gain a good understanding of the locations from which the defenders fired and the caliber of weapons used.<sup>1</sup>

**One contributing site**

Site 46LG200. This battle feature consists of a scatter of battle-period shell casings and live shells, and measures 10 by 35 meters. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Twenty one battle-period shell casings and live shells were found during the recent field investigations. These included rifle, shotgun and pistol casings. All these artifacts were located in the top 10 cm of the intact soils. This feature had no signs of disturbance. This lack of disturbance is supported by the clustering of shell casings of like calibers. In one case, five .38 Smith and Wesson Special casings were tightly grouped and in another, two .25-20 casings were found near one another.

**One contributing site**

Site 46LG208. This battle feature consists of a scatter of battle-period shell casings and live shells that measures 35 by 90 meters. [REDACTED] During the 2006 field investigations, 153 artifacts were documented, of which 117 were .30-06 casings and 19 were stripper clips for .30-06 bolt-action rifles. All these artifacts were located in the top 10 cm of the soils intact soils. While a newly constructed natural gas access road cut through a portion of the feature, most of it is intact. This large undisturbed area allowed the survey to determine information about the types of armaments involved and the defenders' locations.

**One contributing site**

Site 46LG209. This battle feature consists of a scatter of battle-period shell casings and live shells that measures 20 by 210 meters. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] During the recent field investigations, 379 artifacts were documented at this feature. Based on a controlled sample of the feature, it was estimated that the feature as defined (basically the ridge top) would yield 1331 artifacts had the full 0.38 hectares been fully investigated. These artifacts were mostly shell casings and some spent shells, the most abundant caliber being .30-06s. All of these artifacts were recovered from the top 10 cm of the intact soils. Although portions of the feature have been disturbed by collectors, the documented artifacts were intact, allowing determination of both the calibers involved and the defenders' locations.

**One contributing site**

Site 46LG210. This battle feature consists of a scatter of battle-related shell casings and live shells that measures 25 by 70 meters. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The recent field investigations documented 31

<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that this is the only feature of the battle that was assigned a site number previous to the recent field investigation, as it has some prehistoric remains. Prehistoric remains were not located during 2006 survey efforts, because the survey did not do any testing, and the surface of the area was covered with leaves.



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artifacts, most of which were .30-06 shell casings. All these artifacts were in the top 10 cm of the intact soils. No signs of disturbance were present.

**One contributing site**

Site 46LG211. This battle feature consists of a scatter of battle-related shell casings, live shells, spent bullets, and two pennies, and measures 40 by 400 meters. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The recent field investigations located 119 artifacts scattered over several small concentrations along the long axis of the battle feature. All of these artifacts were in the top 10 cm of the intact soils. These artifacts were characterized by a large number of .45 casings fired from a Thompson sub-machine gun. Several tight groupings of these .45 casings were documented, indicating the intact nature of the particular portion of the feature. Another characteristic of the artifacts documented here was the large number of spent bullets (27). This was a higher percentage and higher absolute number of spent bullets documented by the recent field investigations. This feature contained a natural gas access road along its main axis. However, the artifacts located were in protected places, and were intact. This allowed the determination of the nature of the armaments, the locations from which the defenders fired their weapons, and the likelihood that close-in combat was indicated. One terrain element was present in the form of a large rock outcropping. A large concentration of shell casings was documented around this rock outcrop.

**One contributing site**

Site 46LG212. This battle feature consists of a scatter of battle-related shell casings and measures 25 by 75 meters in extent. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] During the recent field investigation, 53 shell casings representing 11 different armaments were documented. These included several relatively rare calibers for this survey, such as .45/70s, .250-3000s, and .22 high powers. All these artifacts were recovered from the top 10 cm of the intact soils. No signs of any disturbance were present.

**One contributing site**

Site 46LG213. This battle feature consists of a scatter of battle-period shell casings and is 20 by 25 meters. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] During the recent field investigation, 13 artifacts were documented, most of which were .30-06s. These artifacts were located all around a key terrain feature, a large rock outcropping which could have provided cover for the defenders. All artifacts were located in the top 10 cm of the intact soils. 46LG213 has been disturbed by collectors over some of its extent. However the artifacts documented were intact, allowing the determination of the types of armaments fired by the defenders and the location of those armaments.

**One contributing site**

Site 46LG214. This battle feature consists of a scatter of battle-related shell casings and live shells and measures 25 by 70 meters in extent. [REDACTED]

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During the recent field investigation, 42 artifacts were documented, most of which were .30-06s. All these were located in the top 10 cm of the intact soils. No signs of disturbance were present.

**One contributing site**

Site 46LG215. This battle feature consists of a scatter of battle-period shell casings and spent bullets and is 20 by 65 meters in extent.

. A total of 21 artifacts was documented, all from the top 10 cm of the intact soils. 46LG216 contains a recent natural gas access road, but most of it is intact. Despite the disturbance, the types of armaments present and the location of those armaments were determined.

**One contributing site**

Site 46LG216. This site is 20 by 15 meters in size

It consists of two trenches, one unfired .45 caliber bullet from the battle period, and five batteries, which may date to the period of the battle. The trenches run north to south and are approximately 4 x 2 meters in size. They are lined at the top with stacked rocks. The site was possibly used as an observation and communication post for the Logan defenders. If the batteries date to the battle, they may have been used for operating field radios.

**One contributing site**

Site 46LG218. This battle feature consists of a scatter of battle-period shell casings and is 20 by 70 meters in size.

The recent field investigation documented 22 artifacts, including a mix of rifle, shotgun, pistol casings and stripper clips. Most of the artifacts were .30-06s. All of these artifacts were found in the top 10 cm of the intact soils. No disturbance was present.

**One contributing site**

Site 46LG219. This battle feature consists of a scatter of battle-period shell casings and is 10 by 40 meters in extent.

The recent field investigation documented 10 shell casings, nine of which were .30-30s. These artifacts were all located in the top 10 cm of the intact soil. No disturbance was present.

**One contributing site**

Site 46LG220. This small battle feature (five by 12 meters) consists of a scatter of battle-period shell casings.

Four shell casings were documented from three different rifles all in the top 10 cm of the intact soils. No disturbance was present.

**One contributing site**

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Site 46LG221. The portion of this large battle feature that was investigated consists of a scatter of battle-period shell casings and possibly battle-related trenches. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 46LG221 is huge, covering many hectares, but the recent field investigation documented only two small concentrations of artifacts. The northern most of these two clusters [REDACTED] measures five by 10 meters in extent. It yielded 54 casings, which were closely packed into clusters. They represented a mix of calibers, including .30-06s and .30-30s. All were located in the top 10 cm of the intact soil. The southern-most cluster yielded 57 artifacts, again mostly .30-30s and .30-06s. It is 20 by 25 meters in size, [REDACTED]. Again all these artifacts were located in the top 10 cm of the intact soil. The trenches in the southerly cluster were about five meters long by 1.5 meters wide. Their current depth is about 0.5 meters. Artifacts were located on all sides of these trenches, some being found in the trenches. These two clusters were not in any way disturbed. Disturbance is scattered across this large feature, but intact areas over much of its extent will certainly allow investigators to determine the nature and size of this resource.

**One contributing site****NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES**

1 - Small cinder-block building [REDACTED]. This building has one bay, a flat roof, and no windows. Formerly a communications relay hut for the State of West Virginia, this building is now abandoned.

**Circa 1960****One non-contributing building**

2 - Abandoned coal mine ventilation shaft with exhaust fan which was formerly owned by the Boone County Coal Corporation.

**Circa 1960****One non-contributing structure**

3 - Modern gas well head of standard construction [REDACTED].

**Circa 2000****One non-contributing structure**

4 - Modern gas well head of standard construction [REDACTED].

**Circa 2000****One non-contributing structure**

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5 - Large metal high-voltage power transmission line of standard construction. This power transmission line runs ENE by WSW [REDACTED].

**Circa 1980**

**One non-contributing structure**

6 - [REDACTED] runs through the southern boundary at Blair Mountain for approximately one-half mile [REDACTED]. The road is paved and is approximately 16 feet wide. It is labeled as a "secondary highway" on the USGS topographic map.

**Circa 1926**

**One non-contributing structure**

7 - [REDACTED] The roadway is dirt and is approximately 10-16 feet wide. It is labeled as a "light duty road" on the USGS topographic map.

**Circa 1926**

**One non-contributing structure**

8 - Jeep trails meander in and out of the boundary and are counted as one resource. The trails are dirt and measure 8-10 feet in width. They are depicted on the submitted USGS topographic maps as a single or double dashed line and are considered "unimproved." While many of the roadways and trails within the boundary may have existed prior to 1921, the exact locations are likely to have changed.

**Circa 1920**

**One non-contributing structure**

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NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Blair Mountain in Logan County, West Virginia, is historically significant at the national level under Criterion A for its association with broad trends in politics/government, Social History, and other: Labor History. It is also significant at the national level under Criterion D because it has yielded, and is likely to yield, important information concerning the largest organized armed uprising in American labor history. The ridge was the site of the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain that ended an unsuccessful three-year struggle to unionize the coal miners of Logan, Mingo, McDowell, and Mercer counties. Recent archaeological investigations have explored fifteen locations of battle-related artifacts that attest to the ferocity and magnitude of the battle. Ten of the sites were archaeologically unknown until ground work was conducted in 2006. More than one thousand artifacts have now been documented. Interpretation of these artifacts has shed new information about the direction of fire, the amount of ammunition used, and the types of weaponry that were involved in the battle. The events at Blair Mountain are overwhelmingly significant to the history of labor in the United States because they were an integral part of structured efforts to bring the benefits of unionism to working people.

## HISTORY

The unsuccessful campaign by the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) was a long and bloody affair that arose only after decades of exploitation at the hands of industries that absolutely ruled the southern coal fields of the state, manipulated politicians, and terrorized miners and their families. The needs and wants of the coal industry defined politics and government in West Virginia. Blair Mountain is the place where union miners took a stand against the low wages, poor conditions, and corporate abuses that characterized coal mining in those days. During their assault they tried to breach a defensive line that stretched for ten miles and included two armed pickets stationed every fifty yards.

Logan County Sheriff Don Chafin established that line to block the march, which began one week after the Aug. 1, 1921, murder of Matewan, West Virginia, Police Chief Sid Hatfield. Already frustrated by fifteen months of martial law in Mingo County that was invoked by the coal autocracy, miners viewed Hatfield's death as the final outrage that drove them to confrontation. The battle was the dramatic finale to the episodic mine wars in southern West Virginia's coalfields. This battlefield is the most important historic resource associated with the miners' rebellion,



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and should be listed in the National Register of Historic Places, just as the Aracoma Hotel, Don Chafin's home, and the Matewan Historic District have been.<sup>1</sup>

West Virginia contained one fourth of all bituminous coal miners in the nation. By 1919, organizing the southern coal fields became essential to the survival of the UMWA. The northern coal fields were unionized much earlier, but the non-union southern fields produced the nation's best specialty coal. Low in sulfur, it burned with a high BTU and produced very little smoke. At the time, coal alone fueled the American industrial machinery, so southern coal was in great demand and the non-union workers who produced it were grievously exploited. Unable to join the UMWA because of the "yellow-dog" contracts they were forced to sign by their employers, non-union miners in southwestern West Virginia threatened the union's existence by producing coal during strikes.

According to David Alan Corbin, "During the 1919 miners' strike in Mingo County, Logan and McDowell counties worked at full production and broke the back of the strike." The common belief was that if Logan County's mines were unionized, the rest of the state would follow suit.<sup>2</sup> The actual number of protesting miners in the 1921 war has never been unequivocally ascertained, nor has there been a definitive casualty count. Sixteen men died in the fighting, but no one knows how many others died in the march. Perhaps as many as four miners who objected to the strike were slain to silence their opposition.<sup>3</sup> Some sources estimate that a million rounds of ammunition were fired by the opposing groups. Archaeological discoveries lend much weight to this estimation.

The Battle of Blair Mountain took place between Aug. 30 and Sept. 4, 1921. However, the confrontation had been brewing for several months. Southern West Virginia's coal fields had become accustomed to labor strife, and West Virginia's governors had become accustomed to federal military assistance to resolve it. At the time of the march, the Mingo County coal fields were under martial law that was imposed in 1919. Earlier, during 1912-13, martial law was imposed in Kanawha County to quell unrest that arose with initial attempts to organize mines along Paint Creek. Although the events were separated by eight years, the miners marching to Mingo County remembered the Paint Creek strife

<sup>1</sup> Efforts to preserve the battle field as a signal resource in American labor history began twenty-five years ago, and included many of the affected property owners and the United Mine Workers of America. Representatives of the principal property owners, the Dingess Run Coal Company, participated in a field survey during the summer of 1991. The principal coal operators, Dal-Tex Coal Corporation and the Sharples Coal Corporation, along with the UMWA, signed an agreement in 1992 to create a foundation that would preserve six sites associated with the battle, including the South Crest of Blair Mountain and a part of the Spruce Fork ridge. However, that did not occur.

<sup>2</sup> David Alan Corbin, *The West Virginia Mine Wars: An Anthology*, (Appalachian Editions, 1999), 98.

<sup>3</sup> Lon Savage, *Thunder in the Mountains: The West Virginia Mine War of 1920-21*, (Charleston, WV: Jalamap Publications, 1984), 59.

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that had included attempts to court-martial Mother Jones, a powerful supporter of organized labor who was placed under house arrest in the town of Pratt for several months.<sup>4</sup>

On the eve of the battle in early August 1921, more than half of West Virginia's one hundred thousand miners were organized, but they were in the northern coal fields. The northern mine operators earlier recognized the UMWA and agreed to deduct dues from miners' pay checks on the condition that the union also would organize the southern fields. The northern companies wanted to equalize the wages between the two coal fields so that southern coal was not cheaper than northern coal. Competition from the southern coal fields threatened the UMWA's national survival, so West Virginia represented the logical place to make a final stand for unionism.<sup>5</sup> The resulting confrontation on Blair Mountain was "the largest armed uprising on American soil since the Civil War," according to historian Robert Shogun.<sup>6</sup> A National Park Service theme study concluded that, "the violence of the West Virginia coal-mining war of 1920-21 reach[ed] a level unparalleled in U.S. history."<sup>7</sup>

With the financial support of the northern mine operators, the UMWA prepared for a long struggle in the southern counties.<sup>8</sup> The unionizing campaign had been sporadic, and included the shoot-out in Mingo County that resulted after Matewan police chief Sid Hatfield and Mayor Cabell Testerman refused to help the Stone Mountain Coal Company evict miners from company owned houses on May 19, 1920. That event left seven Baldwin Felts mine guards and two miners dead. Cleared of wrongdoing in this incident, Hatfield and his deputy Ed Chambers were later charged with illegal unionizing activity in McDowell County. When they arrived at Welch, the county seat, to answer those trumped up charges, they were gunned down in cold blood in broad daylight on the courthouse steps by C.E. Lively, a company spy who betrayed the miners in Matewan. Their bullet riddled bodies were then planted with guns – a ruse that was sufficient later on to acquit Lively of murder. The McDowell County Courthouse was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979.

Coal miners were devastated by the deaths and enraged by Lively's villainy. They vowed revenge. Led by Bill Blizzard, Frank Keeney, and Fred Mooney of the UMWA, the miners assembled [redacted] in Kanawha County and planned their march on Mingo County to demonstrate their solidarity, hoping to gather miners to their cause as they advanced. They knew that they would face

<sup>4</sup> Her "jail" there was a National Historic Landmark until its demolition in the 1990s.

<sup>5</sup> Winthrop D. Lane, *Civil War in West Virginia*, (B.W. Heubsch, Inc., 1921), 42-3.

<sup>6</sup> Shogun, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 199.

<sup>7</sup> Theme Study: American Labor History, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service.

<sup>8</sup> Carl C. Dickey, "Must Murder Be the Price of Coal?" 1919.

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strong resistance in Logan County, but they likewise believed that if Logan County fell to the union, Mingo would not be far behind. Thus, they planned to traverse Logan County, and hopefully win miner recruits to the cause.

Marital law was often used to quell labor unrest in America in the early twentieth century, but the practice drew criticism from the military as well as from the U.S. Congress.<sup>9</sup> Federal officials observed that if states rightly formed their National Guard units, federal force would not be required in times of civil unrest. Yet, guard units required funding, which would require tax hikes – something that West Virginia mine operators vehemently opposed. Thus, West Virginia did not re-establish its National Guard after it was federalized for World War I.<sup>10</sup> Without the military power of a National Guard, the governors of West Virginia were forced to plead with the federal government for troops to police the coal fields every time there was labor unrest. When the federal government did not respond as quickly as he wanted in the face of this rebellion, Governor Ephraim Morgan authorized Logan County Sheriff Don Chafin to assemble a civilian posse to defend the town of Logan from potentially violent miners. Forty of these “deputies” were paid by the coal operators. Morgan cautioned Chafin not to attack the miners, but that warning eventually got lost in the confusion of the battle. Nevertheless, these “deputies,” who called themselves “defenders” of Logan, were a major contending force in the unfolding events associated with the miners’ march to Mingo County.

Chafin was experienced in the matter of thwarting miners. He was paid \$32,700 annually by coal operators to keep his county non-union.<sup>11</sup> Hundreds of volunteers from all across southern West Virginia flocked to Logan town to “do their patriotic duty” and help stop the rebellion. Chafin, in the style of a potentate, vowed that no armed mob would cross Logan County. Soon, his deputies and his volunteers arrayed themselves [REDACTED] to block the impending assault. The murky legality of such a situation, coupled with the national phobia about Bolshevism, is another facet of the historic significance of the Blair Mountain episode, linking these remote mountain hollows and valleys to the major geopolitical events of the day. The coal field labor strife also threatened the steel industry and the railroads, the twin pillars of American industrial might at the time. Thus, this battle and its associated work stoppages extended their influence far beyond southern West Virginia. The federal government came under extreme pressure from these industries to lend its force and authority to restore order in the coal fields.

<sup>9</sup> Clayton D. Laurie, “The U.S. Army and the Return to Normalcy in Labor Dispute Intervention: The Case of the West Virginia Coal Mine Wars, 1920-21,” in *West Virginia History* 50 (1991): 1-24.

<sup>10</sup> Shogun, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 69.

<sup>11</sup> Chafin’s salary was more than \$300,000 in 2005 dollars when calculated for inflation using the formula available at <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/>.



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When President Warren G. Harding proclaimed during the battle that "all persons engaged in said unlawful and insurrectionary proceedings to disperse and retire peaceably by noon of Thursday, September 1," it was the first such proclamation since the U.S. entered World War I. Throughout the early twentieth century, labor strife at many mining operations was often quieted by federal troops, but West Virginia alone bears the distinction of having been the focus – and potential target – of military aircraft. Air Service Commander Billy Mitchell wanted to use the insurgency to demonstrate the efficiency of air power, saying planes could "go wherever there is air."<sup>12</sup>

The National Park Service observed that the fight for control of the southern West Virginia coalfields

centered less on economics than on civil liberties – freedom of speech and assembly, freedom from the industrial feudalism of company towns, and freedom from the terrorism inflicted by the operators hired gunmen. The struggle that began in 1912 and culminated in the 1921 armed miners' march to liberate Logan County, West Virginia, from the company rule shows that labor history is part of a larger historical theme, the struggle for liberties promised in the Bill of Rights.<sup>13</sup>

[REDACTED] separated unionized coal miners in the north from non-union coal miners in the south, thus it was both the symbolic and real hurdle that confronted miners wishing to bring the protection of unionism to the miners of Mingo, Logan, Mercer, and McDowell counties. Rising as high as 2,064 feet, the rugged mountain has slopes as steep as 70 percent. It was a daunting barrier for miners to face, because in 1921, there were no roads to speak of in Logan County. Before the march was done, miners even commandeered locomotives and coal cars to reach their destination. The ridge was a logical line of defense. It was a barrier between the two opposing forces, offering only the most inhospitable of conditions for a march: steep slopes, heavy timber, and rocky terrain. The ridge divided the county into union territory north of its peaks between Blair Mountain and the Boone County line, and the far larger non-union section to the south, which Chafin controlled. It also afforded high points that were good outposts for scouts. Massive rock formations along the ridge top provided strong defensive positions. According to Historian John Bond, the most direct route from the Kanawha River, where most of the miners began their march, to Logan was by way of Blair Mountain.<sup>14</sup> A branch of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad came to the mining community of Blair, at the foot of the mountain. From there, miners walked, rode horses, or took wagons over the mountain, using

<sup>12</sup> Lon Savage, *Thunder in the Mountains*, 128.

<sup>13</sup> NPS, "American Labor History Theme Study."

<sup>14</sup> NPS, "American Labor History Theme Study."

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crude dirt roads that cut through the pass between the north and south crests of Blair Mountain. Not really a road in the modern sense, this passage forded creeks and used dry stream beds. Serving the few farmers of the area, it was never intended for vehicular traffic, and so was nearly impassable other than by foot. Logan also was served by rail from Charleston, via Huntington, but the Huntington - Logan leg took three hours.

Many scholars contend that the Battle of Blair Mountain evidenced a political failure to allow the miners the right of association and to secure the benefits of collective bargaining. Frustration over the point was exacerbated by the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling that labor did not possess the right to organize, even by peaceful means. In upholding the lower courts who agreed with the Hitchman Coal Company that unions violated the Sherman Anti-trust Act, the court's decision rankled unions even further. West Virginia's courts implemented this decision through the tool of injunctions, which prohibited organizers and employees from breaking their employment contracts.<sup>15</sup> Before this court decision, both union and company had only violence and coercion as tools to advance their interests. The court, in ruling for the companies, effectively outlawed unions.

Most of the coal lands in West Virginia were mapped and acquired by speculators or industrialists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, establishing a long history of absentee control of West Virginia's natural resources, and later, West Virginia's government. U.S. Steel Corporation operated captive mines in the region, and was known for its anti-union sentiment. A single railroad, The Chesapeake and Ohio, monopolized coal shipments out of Logan County.<sup>16</sup> Thus, powerful out of state corporate investors worked hard to acquire considerable political power that they could wield to achieve their industrial goals. By financing a system of deputizing citizens to enforce "civil law," Logan operators triggered questions about the justness of the administration of public affairs in the nation.<sup>17</sup>

Class conflict and the armed revolution that accompanied the unionizing efforts in the southern coal fields did not eclipse the law, nor did it threaten the authority of the federal government. Rather, the marchers revealed a conflict between patriotism and allegiance to the American dream of economic and social betterment. Their challenge was to the corporate autocracy present in the coal fields, not to the government. In fact, the most poignant aspect of the miners' ultimate surrender was their abiding patriotism. Many of them were veterans of the Great War. As such, they would not shoot at a U.S. soldier. Far from considering the U.S. Army as an enemy, the miners considered the soldiers to be brothers. Surrender would be preferable to harming them. In surrender, the miners placed their faith in

<sup>15</sup> Lane, *Civil War in West Virginia*, 70.

<sup>16</sup> Lane, "Who Owns the Coal Lands?"; Barbara Rasmussen, *Absentee Landowning and Exploitation in West Virginia 1760-1920*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994); NPS, "American Labor History Theme Study."

<sup>17</sup> Lane, *Civil War in West Virginia*, 57.



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the ultimate justice of the American democratic process. They even waved small American flags as they marched off in defeat.<sup>18</sup>

As with other wars, this battlefield must be considered as an important part of a larger effort; it should not be viewed as the lone site of an isolated event. The battle [REDACTED] was the cataclysmic finale of a failed unionization attempt that affected the direction of American labor history. The miners' insistence upon a union, and the long struggle for recognition of collective bargaining led to violence that drew the attention of the nation to remote, rural West Virginia and exposed the shameful excesses of political fervor that supported the coal industry's rapid growth at the expense of an entire class of citizens.

The UMWA fielded a strong and successful effort in the late winter of 1919 and the spring of 1920 to unionize the southern West Virginia coalfields. UMWA President John L. Lewis' commitment to the union members in the Midwest and other parts of the nation depended on organizing West Virginia's southern counties in order to settle a nation-wide strike. Coal miners in the Williamson coal field, which included Mingo County, called a strike of their own on July 1, 1920. That strike was not settled until October 1922.

Private police forces (such as the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency) ignored the Bill of Rights as they ruthlessly protected coal operators from criticism or scrutiny. The agency had long been the target of miners' wrath because it was law unto itself as it carried out the wishes of coal operators. The "company thugs," as miners called them were resisting unionizing efforts in the mines in Mingo County by all means fair or foul. Martial law was imposed in Mingo County for the next fifteen months. It was enforced exclusively against miners, including occupation by federal troops on several occasions.

Miners were incensed by Governor Morgan's unwillingness to do anything about the situation in Mingo County, except to continue martial law. The miners had presented resolutions to the governor, asking him to establish a joint commission to bring the Mingo miners and operators together for the purpose of adjusting wages and other disputes. Realizing that the situation in Mingo was not going to be improved by anything the governor was doing, the miners took matters into their own hands. An aborted march on Logan County in September 1919 was now a reality. However, the miners did not intend to stop with Logan. They were determined to march on to Mingo to free their fellow union men from unwarranted imprisonment and to avenge Sid Hatfield's murder. This march and the battle of Blair Mountain comprised the greatest domestic armed conflict in American labor history. The revolt ended only after the intervention of 2,100 federal troops, sent to the area at the direction of President Warren G. Harding.

<sup>18</sup> Shogun, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 224-5; see also Jerry Bruce Thomas, *An Appalachian New Deal: West Virginia in the Great Depression*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998).

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The "On to Mingo" drive began on Aug. 20, 1921, when six hundred armed miners answered a call to arms and assembled [REDACTED] near Marmet in Kanawha County. Their numbers grew daily. By August 23 there was an armed camp of four thousand angry miners. By Wednesday, August 24, estimates of the miners' strength ranged from five thousand to thirteen thousand men. The miners gave no appearance of being organized, except around their local unions, or having anyone in charge, yet they were held together solidly by their anger over what had happened to Sid Hatfield. They also were united in the firmness of their intention to march to Mingo County, overrun the entire southern quarter of the state, drive out the thugs (Baldwin-Felts detectives), and free the miners who were illegally imprisoned there.<sup>19</sup>

To get to Mingo County, the miners had to cross Logan County first. That would not be easy considering the level of control Chafin wielded. He even approved or disapproved teachers hired by the public schools. Still, miners boasted that they were going to "go clean through to Mingo and kill Don Chafin on the way." Chafin kept the union out of Logan County with his "army" of deputies and the use of force. He was determined that "no armed mob [would] cross Logan County."<sup>20</sup> The miners were equally determined to reach Mingo County. As the miners were mobilizing on Lens Creek, Chafin immediately began organizing volunteers to stop the march. Hundreds of volunteers, from all walks of life and from throughout southern West Virginia came forth to perform their "patriotic" duty of stopping the rebellious miners. The "Czar" of Logan County, as Chafin was called by his enemies, shaped an army and established the same defensive line he had planned in September 1919, when union miners first threatened a march. That march had hardly started when then-Governor John J. Cornwell met with miners on September 5, and promised that he would investigate conditions in Logan County. At the same time, Cornwell telegraphed the War Department to put federal troops on alert. His threat to have federal troops in the area within hours and persuasion from UMWA District President Frank Keeney caused the miners to abandon that march. Union miners marching toward Logan in August 1921 angrily remembered Chafin's many previous injustices to union organizers, at the behest of coal operators, in prior years.

Chafin's line of defense was a logical one. He chose [REDACTED] because it provided a stretch of mountainous country that would be difficult to cross. The most direct route from the Kanawha River, where most of the miners had begun their march to Logan, was by way of Blair Mountain. A branch of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad came to the mining community of Blair, at the foot of Blair Mountain. From there, they walked, rode horseback, or took wagons over the mountain using a dirt road that cut through the pass between the north and south crests of Blair Mountain.

<sup>19</sup> Savage, *Thunder in the Mountain*, 58..

<sup>20</sup> Savage, *Thunder in the Mountain*, 58.

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As the march south gathered momentum, the miners overran the towns of Danville and Madison in Boone County on the afternoon of August 24. They cut telephone and telegraph lines and emptied the stores of food, shoes, and ammunition as they waited for trains to take them to Blair Mountain.

Chafin was kept well informed of the miners' movement through his use of reconnaissance planes. When an advance group of miners reached the foot of Blair Mountain early on the morning of Thursday, August 25, Chafin's men were already in position on the ridge and a pitched battle broke out. The miners retreated. The main body of the march was about fifteen or twenty miles behind. They were an odd looking bunch of men. There was no uniform. Some were dressed in their World War I uniforms; many were in blue bib overalls. They wore red bandannas around their necks as their union symbol, and called themselves "red necks." Some of them carried banners, which read "On to Mingo." Their firearms varied from machine guns to old flintlock mountain rifles.

On Friday, August 26, miners arriving at Blair commandeered a train and directed the engineer to back it up fifteen miles to Madison. By this time, there was panic in Charleston and Logan. Governor Morgan, who took office March 4, 1921, telegraphed President Harding to ask for one thousand federal troops and military aircraft armed with machine guns. A favorable response from President Harding seemed to be the governor's only hope in stopping the march. He had been keeping most of the recently doubled contingent of one hundred state policemen in Mingo County, citing a "state of war" there.

Secretary of War John W. Weeks responded immediately to Governor Morgan's request by sending Brigadier General Harry H. Bandholtz to Charleston to meet with the governor and to make a first hand assessment of the situation. As the former provost marshal general of the American Expeditionary Force, Bandholtz was known for his ability to handle tasks requiring a diplomat's tact and a soldier's firm hand. General Bandholtz arrived in Charleston by train at 3:00 a.m. on August 26. By 4:00 a.m. he was in the governor's office getting a report from the state's chief executive. Morgan told the general that he faced a full-fledged insurrection; Sid Hatfield's death had maddened the state's miners; they were killing [sic] and looting; he had no soldiers, little power. He had to have federal troops. Within the hour, Bandholtz summoned UMWA District 17 President Frank Keeney and Secretary Fred Mooney to the capitol and told them that the miners' march had to be stopped and they, as union leaders, were to do so.

By 6:00 a.m., Keeney and Mooney were on their way to meet with the miners. After traveling six hours by taxi they arrived at Madison. Keeney called a 2:00 p.m. meeting with the miners at the town's ballpark. There, he told the angry miners, "A lot of you men are going to disagree with me, but don't interrupt. I am telling you facts, and you will find that this is not the time to argue." Keeney related what had happened so far. He reported his meeting with Bandholtz and the position of the governor. He told the crowd that Bandholtz was acting on orders from President Harding and that the general was holding the union and its leaders responsible if things got out of hand. "There is no question," Keeney told them, "Bandholtz will see that the march is ended; he will use the entire might



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of the national government and the United States Army if necessary, to stop it." If the miners continued, Keeney said, they would not be fighting Governor Morgan, Don Chafin, or the Baldwin-Felts "thugs;" they would be up against the United States Army, the same army in which many of the miners had served in France. "Return to your homes," Keeney urged.<sup>21</sup>

By 2:30 p.m., Keeney had an agreement from the miners that they would abandon the march. Many started back home or waited for the special trains Keeney had promised would take them home. All of the miners, however, did not agree to stop the march. Ed Reynolds was among those unconvinced that Keeney was leveling with them. His band of three hundred miners walked out of Madison on the road to Logan with their rifles in hand and bandannas around their necks.

Although all of the miners were not convinced that the march was over, word quickly spread that the march had ended. Chafin got the word almost as soon as the ballpark meeting was over. At 3:00 p.m., he began recalling his troops from the front, where more than one thousand men waited in trenches and barricades. That evening, the first contingent of defenders arrived back in Logan, with many of them making their way from the courthouse to the Aracoma Hotel where Logan's ladies pushed quantities of food on them. From the time defenders first went out from Logan to the front, the Aracoma Hotel, located in downtown Logan, was designated a food distribution center that fed the troops in the hotel and sent rations to those on the front.

The lull did not last long. Late in the evening Chafin learned that the miners commandeered a train at Clothier and resumed the march on Mingo to avenge Hatfield's death and to free several unjustly jailed Mingo County miners from detention. Shortly after midnight on August 27, Logan's fire siren screamed out, summoning to arms those who had just arrived home. By 8:00 a.m., Chafin had eight hundred men back on the front, manning machine guns and rifle emplacements.

General Bandholtz was not entirely convinced that the miners' insurrection had ended, despite Keeney's and Mooney's report. He and his Chief of Staff, Colonel Stanley H. Ford, decided to make a personal inspection. They traveled to the town of Racine on the Coal River on the morning of August 27. There, General Bandholtz spoke to a group of miners who were returning to their homes, telling them:

I don't want martial law here. Neither do you. I've seen enough men killed. I don't want to see any more die. But if it must be, then we will go under martial law. I don't want it, but I must obey orders. They tell me you men are going home. I'm glad. It's the right thing to do. Let law and order take their course. Are you all going home?<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Savage, *Thunder in the Mountains*, 68.

<sup>22</sup> Savage, *Thunder in the Mountains*, 92.

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Bandholtz was reassured by his visit with the miners and reported to Washington, D.C. that the miners were returning home. He said that the federal troops being held in readiness would not be required immediately, but they should be "earmarked for the purpose, in case an emergency arose." The two officers left Charleston for Washington by train on the evening of August 27, believing that the insurrection was over.

Governor Morgan, however, was unconvinced. He still felt that Sheriff Chafin should be reinforced, and he wanted to demonstrate to the miners that he was in control of southern West Virginia. He thought this could best be done by having Captain J. R. Brockus, head of the state police, move from Mingo County to Logan County. There, he and twenty officers joined Chafin's men as they tried to arrest miners in the Sharples-Clothier area for capturing two state policemen on August 12. They met up with Chafin at his field headquarters at Ethel on the western base of Blair Mountain. At 6:00 p.m. on Saturday, August 27, Brockus led nearly three hundred men toward Sharples and Clothier. During the night they crossed over Blair Mountain on a rough horse trail, arriving at Beech Creek before dawn. At Montelo, Brockus and his men were surprised to come upon a group of armed union men who were still in the area. In the pitched battle that immediately broke out, two miners were killed and a third miner was critically wounded, but survived. Brockus' forces captured ten prisoners, but five escaped. The miners captured four of Brockus' deputies. All of this happened before daybreak on Sunday, August 28.

Word of the killings at Montelo was relayed as the "Sharples Massacre" where women and children allegedly were being "slaughtered." The story spread quickly and soon grew to fantastic proportions. Miners likened the event to Hatfield's murder. Word of what happened, and much of what didn't, reached miners in Boone and Raleigh Counties, along the Kanawha River, and in the mining camps of Cabin Creek and Paint Creek where miners were returning home from the previous week's march. At the news of the massacre, miners furiously resumed their march.

Suddenly, the miners' rebellion, which Keeney had largely defused, was reignited. What was anger over Sid's death became a raging fury. Men who had put away their guns on Saturday took them out again Sunday. This time, the miners did not assemble [REDACTED] They moved straight through, along [REDACTED] to Sharples and Blair to the foot of Blair Mountain, ready to attack Chafin's army. The miners wanted to get to Blair Mountain as quickly as possible. They commandeered every kind of transportation; automobiles, trucks, teams of horses, mules, and trains. Hundreds of miners arrived at Blair, on Sunday on regular passenger trains, but there were not enough. More miners commandeered both passenger and freight trains so frequently that regular train runs were discontinued.

In the meantime, General Bandholtz had returned to Washington with a report which said that the march had ended and that the miners were returning to their homes. The report did not get to President Harding and Secretary Weeks until Monday, August 29. Back in Charleston, Governor Morgan reportedly was "beside himself." On Sunday evening he had sent John Charnock, his new



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Adjutant General, and A.C. Porter of the UMWA, to the Sharples area to investigate conditions after the early morning so-called "massacre." Alarmed, Charnock and Porter returned to Charleston on Monday, reporting to the governor what they had seen. Porter's evaluation of the situation was that it was like "a monster powder keg awaiting only the smallest of sparks to launch one of the bloodiest industrial wars in the history of the world." Morgan telegraphed the President and the Secretary of War, pleading for federal troops immediately, saying that delay "would be most disastrous." That telegram reached Washington on Tuesday morning. To reinforce the Governor's telegram, former West Virginia Governor, W. A. McCorkle, and other prominent West Virginians met with Secretary Weeks and General Bandholtz then went directly to the White House to confer with President Harding. While the meeting with the president was in progress, the governor called saying that "conditions were still worse, far beyond state control." In further contacts Morgan had with Washington that day, he emphasized the continuing deterioration of the coal fields and promised that he would organize a National Guard within days.<sup>23</sup>

By this time, officials in Washington agreed to intervene to get things in West Virginia under control. Accordingly, Weeks prepared a proclamation for President Harding's signature. Harding signed the proclamation on the afternoon of August 30, finally putting the power of the federal government in motion. Citing the President's authority to suppress insurrection, the proclamation gave the miners less than forty-eight hours to disband.

His proclamation said, "Now, therefore, I, Warren G. Harding, President of the United States, do hereby make Proclamation and I do hereby command all persons engaged in said insurrection to disperse and retire peacefully to their respective abodes on or before 12 o'clock noon, of the first day of September, 1921, and hereafter abandon said combinations and submit themselves to the laws and constituted authorities of said State." Harding then ordered Bandholtz back to West Virginia to observe the extent to which the proclamation was followed and to determine how many federal troops should be sent if the miners refused to disperse. Two federal units, the Twenty-Sixth Infantry at Camp Dix, New Jersey, and the Nineteenth Infantry at Camp Sherman, Ohio, were alerted for duty in West Virginia on September 1 if the miners did not cease and desist.

As the miners' rebellion intensified, there was a strong sense of a full-fledged civil war. Many young men came forward as volunteers to help Logan County fight off the invading rednecks. As reinforcements rolled into Logan on special trains, there was excitement about being able to participate; some young men saw it as an adventure. There was an almost continuous flow of newly arrived volunteers moving through the streets of Logan, with many stopping at the Aracoma Hotel.

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<sup>23</sup> Shogun, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*, 188.

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Chafin moved his headquarters from the courthouse to the Aracoma so that he would be nearer the men who were joining his army. From his office in the hotel, Chafin could also keep an eye on reporters, such as Boyden Sparkes of the *New York Tribune*. Chafin's censor, Major Tony Gaujot, insisted that Sparkes and the numerous other reporters writing about what was happening in Logan County submit all news articles to him for approval.

The Aracoma became the headquarters for W. E. Eubanks, who was commissioned a colonel in the newly established West Virginia National Guard on August 29. Thus, the governor made good his promise to President Harding to re-establish the National Guard in West Virginia. Eubanks set up his headquarters on the hotel's fourth floor during the action. On August 30, Morgan relieved Chafin as commander of the Logan defenders and appointed Eubanks to head up the Logan army, presumably to clothe it with state authority. However, none of the participants in Logan's defense force had been organized into the National Guard at the time of the battle. Eubanks, a native of Welch, West Virginia, and a veteran of the World War, brought with him 250 American Legion volunteers from Welch. Altogether, his defensive army amounted to 2,800 men.

Immediately after arriving in Logan on August 30, Eubanks went into conference with Charnock and Chafin to plan their strategy. They knew they had to fight a defensive battle, because the governor ordered them to hold their positions and not to counterattack. Therefore, they decided to concentrate their forces at [REDACTED] Blair Mountain. Machine gun nests were placed at these key points and telephone wire was strung from them to the George's Creek company store. There, a telephone line connected with the headquarters of the "whites," as the defenders now called themselves, in the Aracoma Hotel. Additionally, they established two-man picket posts at fifty-yard intervals along [REDACTED] Blair Mountain.

The miners' strategy was developed by Ed Reynolds and sub-district UMWA president, Bill Blizzard, who was recognized more than any other person as the single most important of the miners' leaders. *Tribune* reporter Sparkes, when comparing Blizzard with Don Chafin, said, "If there is a king in Boone County I should say it is Bill Blizzard." Reynolds and Blizzard split the miners and made a two-pronged attack, with one force advancing [REDACTED] and the other [REDACTED] pushing across Blair Mountain. This pincer movement would bring them together at Logan. [REDACTED] At Blair, the miners established their headquarters in the Blair schoolhouse.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>24</sup> This building no longer exists.

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The first organized assault on Blair Mountain got underway during the evening of Tuesday, August 30, when John E. Wilburn, a Baptist minister and miner from Blair, declared: "The time has come for me to lay down my Bible and pick up my rifle and fight for my rights."<sup>25</sup> He told a group of miners assembled at the Blair schoolhouse that he would lead them to meet the enemy. By nightfall, he had seventy armed miners, black and white, including two of his sons, following him up the north slope of Blair Mountain. A second group of about seventy-five men under the leadership of "Red" Thompson, a black miner from Blair, moved out [REDACTED] the mountain. Both companies camped out on the mountainside that night.

It was obvious from all indications that the miners did not intend to stop their movement, despite the presidential proclamation. Copies of the proclamation were dropped from the three biplanes that Chafin's pilots flew over the miners' territory. The miners paid no attention to them.

Now, the miners were unchallenged in their control of five hundred square miles in southern Kanawha, Boone and northern Logan counties. Their fighting force consisted of about 2,500 to 3,000 men at Blair. Approximately four thousand men were stationed [REDACTED] while a smaller group guarded [REDACTED]. Others guarded roads and commandeered the trains that would be needed to bring U.S. troops to the fronts. The miners were confident that they were strong enough to push through to Logan and on to Mingo.

When Major Charles F. Thompson, accompanied by A. C. Porter of the UMWA, read the proclamation to miners at Blair on the morning of August 31, he did so under considerable threat from the armed miners. Thompson reported that the vehement miners were absolutely in no mood to accept the proclamation.

Wilburn and his men awoke that day to gunshots from along the ridge top of the mountain. Marching around the hillside through the woods, they kept moving toward the sound of the shooting. After reaching the top of the mountain, they followed a little road along a sag in the ridge. They continued for about a mile when they saw three men standing on the hill just ahead, cradling rifles across their arms. They were deputies in Chafin's defense force. Initially, neither side recognized the other. After asking for their passwords, "I come creeping" for the miners and "Amen" for the Logan defenders, and receiving them, the two groups knew that they were enemies. Firing broke out and immediately the three deputies, John Gore, John Cofago, and Jim Munsie, fell fatally wounded. One of Wilburn's men, a black man named Eli Kemp, was shot in the back and a short time later died at Dr. I. F. Milliken's office in Blair. After this encounter, fighting broke out all along the line. Blair Mountain is actually a twin-crested mountain with a graded road running through the pass between the crests.

<sup>25</sup> Savage, *Thunder on the Mountain*, 110.



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Fighting erupted on both sides of the road. The steep mountain was so heavily covered with trees and underbrush that visibility was barely twenty feet.

Captain Herman Leroy McNulty of Huntington was the defensive commander of the Blair Mountain sector. He had positioned a machine gun nest at the south crest and rows of breastworks between it and the road. A second defensive position was on the north crest. That was maintained by about two hundred "Bluefield Boys," the Mingo Militia of about 130 men under the command of Captain L. E. Lawson, and a contingent of state police and Chafin's deputies, led by Eli Gore, brother of the slain John Gore. While Eli Gore was intent upon avenging his brother's death, the defenders' goal was to prevent the miners from getting through.

The miners approached Blair Mountain [REDACTED] advancing in groups of from thirty to forty men. In addition to Red Thompson and John Wilburn, they were led by Alva Estep and Jim Morrison. At the Blair Mountain breastworks, a machine gun erupted, and several hundred deputies and volunteers maintained a steady rifle fire. The fighting became increasingly heavy. Rather than make a frontal attack on the strongly fortified defensive positions on both crests of Blair Mountain, the miners, in their small groups, tried to sneak behind the "whites," taking advantage of the rocks and underbrush for cover. The West Virginia mine war was fully engaged with ten thousand men arrayed along a ten mile front. The "reds" continued toward their prime objective, [REDACTED]. Success there, they believed, would give them easy access to Logan. It was less than six miles into town by way of a rough trail through the gap and a road [REDACTED]. The major assault [REDACTED] got underway on Wednesday evening when Ed Reynolds, with the assistance of a local school teacher Early Ball, who knew every crook and turn in the mountain, started moving three to five hundred miners, armed with rifles and a 111-shot Gatling gun [REDACTED]. They continued to move up [REDACTED] and there they camped on the right side of the defenders' position [REDACTED]. On Friday morning, September 1, the "reds," under Reynolds' leadership, were ready to attack [REDACTED] which was the most serious threat to the town of Logan. They chose this position because they believed the other likely target, [REDACTED] defense on the extreme left, was more heavily fortified.

[REDACTED] was defended by approximately three hundred Logan deputies, under the command of Captain Ivan Hollandsworth who had at least two machine guns in position. One of these guns was operated by an expert gunner, "colonel" Gaujot, the media censor. Reynolds' forces worked their way over the ridge until they were on the defenders' right flank. What followed was a three hour battle where the defenders' machine gun jammed and the "reds" broke through the defensive line at the gap and advanced as far as Elkins Field [REDACTED]. Captain Hollandsworth prevented any further advance of the miners by retreating about one-half mile and repositioning his machine gun. The breakthrough caused great concern in the town of Logan. Chafin and Eubanks were concerned as well. The defense command, however, had kept a large reserve in Logan to deal with such



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an emergency. A convoy of trucks carried deputies, machine guns, and munitions [redacted] to reinforce Hollandsworth. Part of the six hundred McDowell County volunteers [redacted] under Sheriff Bill Hatfield was ordered to move to the left side [redacted]. The "whites" organized a second line of defense encircling Logan. Despite almost continuous firing at Blair Mountain, [redacted] the defensive line held and the miners who had broken through were forced to retreat.

Eubanks resorted to another strategy to stop the miners. He ordered Chafin's reconnaissance planes to begin dropping homemade bombs on miners' positions. During the preceding week, Chafin got chemists in Charleston to make a number of explosive and gas bombs. Eubanks later testified at the miners' treason trials that, "I had reports that a number of men, from three to five hundred, were coming up certain roads to attack my position, and as I wished to stop them, and as I could not advance by order of the Governor, I dropped those bombs." Eubanks explained further that, "when they hit if anyone got in the cloud or the gas they would be made very sick -- they would vomit-- it would cause extreme nausea." He said of the other bombs, "if any part of it hit them it would hurt them very badly. They were made out of six inch pipe nipples with union joints, filled with black powder and nuts and bolts and any kind of scraps like that."

Eubanks was not altogether truthful in his explanation for why bombs were dropped, as indicated by the actual places where they were dropped. Planes dropped one regular explosive bomb near one of the miners' headquarters, [redacted] creating a small crater, but injuring no one. Another explosive bomb barely missed two women washing clothes in the miners' encampment [redacted]. Planes dropped one gas bomb at Blair and three [redacted] in Boone County, where defenders thought miners were massing for an attack [redacted].

By Thursday evening, (September 1) the defenders had regained full confidence. Chafin issued an "official communiqué" to the press, exulting in the success in maintaining the defense line. He said, "At all points our forces succeeded at driving back the invaders and in each instance regaining lost territory."

In the meantime, the miners failed to comply with President Harding's proclamation. Actually, they ignored the noon Thursday, September 1, deadline to "disperse and retire peacefully to their respective abodes." It was Bandholtz's responsibility to determine if the president's ultimatum was being obeyed. Bandholtz and his staff had arrived in Charleston at 11:30 a.m., thirty minutes before the deadline. He held an immediate conference with Governor Morgan. He tried to see Frank Keeney and Fred Mooney of the UMWA, but they "fled the state after being indicted in Mingo County for complicity . . . in the Three Days Battle of May." Instead, Bandholtz met with Philip Murray, international vice-president of the UMWA. The general directed his chief of staff, Colonel Stanley H. Ford, and Major C. F. Thompson to go to the battle zone for first hand impressions. Upon their return to Charleston, they reported to Bandholtz that the miners had not obeyed the president's proclamation, nor

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did they intend to do so. Bandholtz called another hasty conference with the governor shortly after midnight on Friday morning. He told the governor that he had no alternative but to call in federal troops. Accordingly, at 2:00 a.m. on Friday, Sept. 2, 1921, General Bandholtz telegraphed the Adjutant General of the Army that, "The invaders have not obeyed the President's proclamation and there is no apparent intention to do so. It is therefore recommended that the troops now held in readiness be sent to West Virginia without delay." Bandholtz announced the news to reporters, who then turned to the governor for a response. Morgan said, "I have nothing to say. I am through."<sup>26</sup>

Bandholtz asked the War Department immediately to send the entire Twenty-sixth Infantry regiment of one thousand men from Camp Dix, the Nineteenth Infantry regiment from Camp Sherman, Ohio, the Fortieth Infantry regiment from Camp Knox, Kentucky, portions of the Tenth Infantry Regiment, and a detachment from the Columbus Barracks in Ohio. Altogether, he requested two thousand soldiers and 106 officers. Accompanying the troops would be camp kitchens, mules, horses, caissons, mortars, and baggage wagons.

Word that federal troops were coming was not long in reaching the miners. In anticipation of their arrival, the "reds" unsuccessfully attempted to dynamite a Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad bridge on the Guyan Division at Big Creek in order to prevent reinforcements from getting to the "whites." In the meantime, Bandholtz ordered an air reconnaissance by the 88<sup>th</sup> Air Squadron, commanded by Brigadier General William (Billy) Mitchell, the nation's famous airman and Assistant Chief of U. S. Air Service. Mitchell saw in the West Virginia mine war an opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of air power in quelling civil disturbances in remote locations. He had just shown the ability of aircraft in sinking the German battleship (prize of war) *Ostfriesland* off the Virginia coast. Mitchell's pilots made several flights over the war zone for Bandholtz, but they fired no shots and dropped no bombs because the planes were unarmed. In later years, the 88<sup>th</sup> Air Squadron claimed to be the only Air Corps unit ever to have participated in a civil disturbance.

Seemingly undeterred by the impending arrival of federal troops, the miners did not let up in their efforts to get through to Mingo County. Heavy fighting continued at Blair Mountain [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Shots were exchanged [REDACTED] on Friday, September 2. A concerted attack was made by the miners at Blair Mountain during the morning. The miners faked an assault in the center, then switched to the flanks, where they tried to take the machine gun positions. The *Bluefield Daily Telegraph* described how the attack looked to the "Bluefield boys" defending Blair Mountain:

In the early morning hours, an alarm went off that the miners were attacking the outpost at the top of the hill. Things were quiet, however, until about nine, when a machine gun and automatic peppered the Bluefielders' position from the mountain slope across the valley. The

<sup>26</sup> Savage, *Thunder on the Mountain*, 117.

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skirmishing in the valley below was a ruse, for the attackers came from the left and right sides of the mountain." The miners pushed the attack desperately; they had no sense of fear. They advanced over the crest of the hill in the face of machine gun and rifle fire. After two and one-half hours of fire, the affair died down. A Cabin Creek miner told a Huntington, West Virginia reporter, "We couldn't fire a shot but what they would rake our line from top to bottom." He said they must have had carloads of ammo on that hill "for they fired hundreds of rounds for every one that we sent in their direction." Friday night the miners sent a small party on a charge up the slope. The defenders in the first line of trenches fled and miners dropped into the trench. "No sooner had the last man got in, than the trench was raked by a hidden machine gun located not more than fifty yards away," he said. "And they had one machine gun nest that we never could have dislodged, unless we had some of the one-pounders the troops brought up with them. He was setting in a rock cliff with great barricades all about. He could fire in just one direction, but brother, I'm a telling you he sure gave us hell on several occasions."<sup>27</sup>

Finally, the defensive line held. Both sides were convinced that casualties were high on the other side. Highly exaggerated accounts were given to reporters. Chafin told a reporter from Huntington on September 2 that at least fifty miners had been killed. The *Charleston Daily Mail* quoted Chafin as saying that the miners had buried fifty of their men near Blair on September 2. The *Logan Banner* reported on the same date that "many lives have been lost and quite a few prisoners taken." The same issue of the Logan paper noted that fighting on all sectors was at its worst on Thursday afternoon. "Two men were reported wounded from Logan's forces, but not seriously, while many miners are known to have been killed in this spurt to capture Logan City." The casualty figures apparently were much lower than the sensational reports, whether by the "reds," "whites" or newspaper reporters. Most of the fighting was done at a distance, and in underbrush and woods so heavy that the combatants could hardly see each other. Reliable accounts do indicate, however, that five miners were killed and at least five wounded on Thursday and Friday, the two days of heaviest fighting. The defenders brought in eighteen prisoners of war from the miners' army on Friday afternoon and placed them in the Logan jail, there joining thirty other men, who were mostly prisoners of war. Even the Aracoma hotel was used as a temporary holding place for prisoners until they could be moved to the jail. The *Logan Banner* reported on September 2, that, "One prisoner tried to get away from the Aracoma Hotel where he had been held pending his delivery to the jail last night. Owing to the crowded condition of the street with defenders of Logan it was not necessary to shoot after him, for he got no further than in front of the *Banner* building, before being retaken."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> *Bluefield Daily Telegraph*.<sup>28</sup> *The Logan Banner*.



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By Friday evening federal troops were beginning to arrive in the battle zone. From his new offices in the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company building in Charleston, Bandholtz provided overall planning and direction for involvement of the 2,100 men under his supervision. The general divided the war zone into three districts and planned a pincer movement.

The Nineteenth moved up Coal River from Saint Albans to Madison, Danville, Sharples, Jeffrey and Blair, behind the miners' lines; the Fortieth Infantry from Camp Knox moved to Logan to relieve the Chafin-Eubanks army and the Twenty-Sixth from New Jersey reinforced the Nineteenth around Madison, with additional companies stationed along the Kanawha at Marmet, Lens Creek, and Montgomery. The Nineteenth Infantry arrived in Madison around 10:00 p.m. on Friday.

There, Captain John Wilson met with now returned Bill Blizzard, who was the miners "field commander," if they had one. "We was just all leaders," was the general opinion of the miners. Yet, Blizzard, sub-district president of District 17, UMWA, was so closely identified with the miners' cause that when Captain Wilson asked him if he was the general of the miners' army, Blizzard replied: "What army?" then added "I guess the boys will listen to me all right." He told Wilson that if he would send a squad up the line with him, "I can get all of our fellows out of the hills by daylight." Saturday morning, (September 3), Blizzard appeared again, after having spent several hours at Jeffrey and at the fighting front. He reported to Wilson that, "The miners have withdrawn their lines," and are awaiting the arrival of the troops. When Blizzard arrived with the federal troops at Jeffrey later that morning, he made good his promise: he persuaded four hundred miners to surrender. The soldiers proceeded to set up posts at Jeffrey, with twenty-four officers and 753 men distributed among the different posts.

Even with federal troops to their rear, other contingents of miners continued the fight on Saturday at [redacted] Blair Mountain. The "whites" were getting perilously low on ammunition. An airplane was sent to Charleston Saturday morning, however, and returned with thirty thousand rounds of Springfield ammunition. Now, the defenders were able to protect their position. One miner was killed at Blair Mountain and two "whites" were slightly wounded [redacted] before the fighting ended.

Joe Savage, a college student from Charleston, who had signed up to join the Logan defenders after hearing the governor plead for volunteers on Thursday evening, was in the [redacted] area since Friday morning, and reported that on Saturday morning, "just like the morning before, we heard the tat-tat-tat-tat-of a machine gun from the opposite ridge. . ." The defenders all along [redacted] Mountain had opened up and a real battle was in progress. Savage continued, "Colonel Gaujot was still on the job; up on the ridge his machine gun was barking in angry spurts. We took turns



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manning our parapet and kept steady fire for at least two hours. Bullets spattered all around us, but we were fairly safe in our natural redoubt."

As the morning progressed, firing on both sides became intermittent, and by 11:00 a.m., the miners had stopped firing altogether. Three companies of the Fortieth Infantry from Camp Knox, Kentucky, arrived in Logan by train at 1:00 p.m. Saturday, bringing machine guns, trench mortars, 37-millimeter guns, a radio outfit, wagons, and fifty mules. Logan townspeople and volunteers gave the troops a hearty welcome. When the soldiers entered the Aracoma Hotel lobby the women and ministers serving food broke out in applause. After being fed, the soldiers went about setting up communication equipment atop the Aracoma Hotel.

Major C. F. Thompson and Colonel G. A. Shuttleworth, the unit commander, began to assess the Logan situation, beginning with a visit to Eubanks, The West Virginia National Guard officer in charge of the defending forces. What they found, Major Thompson later reported, was that Eubanks and his staff were "so unmistakably under the influence of liquor as to render them unfit in our opinion for an orderly transaction of business." The state of intoxication had endured for most of the preceding twenty-four hours, Major Thompson believed. Federal forces were soon on their way to the front at [REDACTED] and Blair Mountain to relieve the defenders. As the defenders watched the troops ascending Crooked Creek Mountain, Savage said, "Pandemonium began to spread all along the ridge." The troops were "toiling up the mountain, accompanied by big, muscular Army mules drawing light artillery field guns." "We all jumped up on the parapet and cheered." "The long crest of the mountain rang with tumultuous shouts of welcome." He noted, "Old Warren G. Harding hadn't forgotten us after all." Savage continued, "The troops toiled upward and were soon with us . . . Many of the soldiers were young boys, grinning and asking what happened to the war . . . A corporal barked authoritatively at several men who were handling pack mules; the field guns had already been moved farther up to the right, where the crest was higher."

By mid-afternoon, Savage and his fellow defenders had been relieved by the soldiers from Camp Knox and were working their way down the pathways from the ridge and into the main trail to a road leading to Logan. Taxicabs and private vehicles were at the main road to take the defenders back into town. Savage and a friend from Charleston rode with a "horse doctor," who told them that "Billy" Blizzard was about to attack federal troops with grenades, then chided them for not knowing that "Billy" Blizzard commanded the miners' army." It was already dark when Savage and his friend, Grant Hall, were dropped off at the Aracoma Hotel. The entrance had arms stacked all about the entrance and a guard was at the door. The guard asked for the password, but neither could remember it. He still let them in. The military use of the Aracoma was readily apparent to Savage. "The lobby of the Aracoma Hotel was like a military headquarters," he said. "An Army colonel and several lesser officers were

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moving about, talking with deputies and state police officers. They all said the Mine War was over. There was a news bulletin that the miners had begun evacuating the disturbed area about noon."

Savage recalled that there was a Red Cross booth in the Aracoma lobby, "and after cleaning up in the washroom," he said, "we paid it a visit. The lady in charge was very solicitous of our welfare and advised us that efforts were being made for a special train to take the Kanawha County men back to Charleston." After being filled with sandwiches and hot coffee, Savage and Hall set out to see Logan, now overrun with defenders.

All weekend, the rebelling miners surrendered to the United States Army in large numbers. Many, however, hid their guns in the mountains and simply made their way home. They were not going to fight federal troops, for "when the moment came that they must fight federal troops, who were serving in the same army in which they, the miners, had served, there was no question in their minds." All of the injustices they had endured "paled into insignificance when compared with shooting soldiers of the United States. The miners knew this so well they did not need to talk about it . . . They would not, could not, make war against their own country."

The miners' march "On to Mingo" ended without meeting its objective. Hatfield's murder was not avenged and Mingo's miners were still in jail. But, it had taken the federal government, not "Czar" Chafin and his deputies or the state government to stop their march. Bandholtz felt good about what his soldiers had been able to accomplish: they made no arrests, fired no shots, and dropped no bombs. Yet, they had stopped the rebellion. The general was able to telegraph the War Department on Sunday, September 4, that, as of noon, "Federal troops had replaced both state and county forces and the invading miners throughout the disturbed area. Up to the present time there has been no hostile act on the part of anybody toward the United States troops." Additionally, Bandholtz did not need to use the martial law proclamation that President Harding had signed.

While the miners failed to achieve what they had set out to do, they did achieve victory in that they had gotten the nation's attention, and "had made the people of America a little more aware of the conditions of life of the Appalachian miner." Lives were lost on both sides, but not nearly as many as was expected or was reported by both sides and the newspapers. When the fighting ended and federal soldiers moved in to take control, soldiers with miners as guides searched through the hills looking for bodies, but none were found. From the time the march started [REDACTED] and the fighting stopped on September 3, 1921, sixteen persons were confirmed dead, all but four of them from the miners' army.

The consequences of the miners' rebellion did not end with the miners' surrender to federal troops. Soon after the Battle of Blair Mountain there were 1,217 indictments for complicity in the insurrection, including 325 murder charges and 24 indictments for treason against the state of West Virginia. Hundreds of union miners were jailed, with many of the cases transferred to Charles Town in West Virginia's eastern panhandle – in the same courthouse where John Brown had been convicted of

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treason in 1859. It was there that Bill Blizzard was acquitted of charges that he committed treason after a 30-day trial in April and May of 1922. Reverend J. E. Wilburn and his son were convicted of the murder of Deputy John Gore and sentenced to 11 years in the state penitentiary, but were pardoned after serving three years. Some of the cases were assigned to Fayette County – where the population sympathized with the miners, resulting in acquittals. Eventually, all remaining indictments were dismissed.

UMWA membership suffered a rapid decline after the march. However, the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) legalized unions in 1933, and the coal fields then organized very rapidly. Although the NIRA was ruled unconstitutional by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1935, no effort was ever made to derail unions, and organized labor soon spread to many other industries, protected by the National Labor Relations Act of 1935 (commonly known as the Wagner Act). Workers began demanding the right to unionize, invoking the power of the federal government to protect that right. Led by the UMWA, labor gains realized after 1933 spread to many workers in other industrial occupations, until, by the 1950s, labor was one of the most powerful political forces in America. Yet, at the time of the Battle of Blair Mountain, many Americans equated unionism with communism. After 1918, when Bolsheviks commandeered the Russian revolution and called on workers the world over to rise up against their capitalist oppressors to end the Great War, many people believed that union organizers were Bolsheviks, which heightened apprehension about collective bargaining and unionism in general. Although there was an extreme leftist wing of the labor movement that watched the West Virginia struggle closely, it played no part in the mine wars.<sup>29</sup>

The miners' rebellion and the Mingo strike, which had started in July 1920 and did not end until October 1922, cost the UMWA more than the bankruptcy it brought to District 17. Membership in the United Mine Workers in West Virginia slumped from its peak of 50,000 in 1920 to about 600 in 1929. For all intents and purposes, the UMWA had been killed in West Virginia. In fact, the continued existence of the miners' union nationally was questionable. However, when Congress passed the National Industrial Recovery Act in June 1933, the feeble organization recovered quickly and firmly re-established itself in America's coalfields, finally avenging Sid Hatfield and bringing the advantages of organized labor to America's coal miners.

### ARCHAEOLOGY

A professional archaeologist investigated the site in 2006 documenting fourteen battle sites.<sup>30</sup> This investigation was conducted to investigate, assess, and explore site's significance under Criterion

<sup>29</sup>. Robert Shogun, *The Battle of Blair Mountain: The Story of America's Largest Labor Uprising*, (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 2004), 222-3.

<sup>30</sup> Harvard Ayers, Zan Rothrock, & Kenny King, "Archaeological Investigation of the Battlefield," on file, West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office.



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D, within the cultural context of United States and Appalachian labor history, and to assess integrity issues under the same criterion. Access to potentially significant areas was sometimes limited by terrain and vegetation, but 1,008 artifacts were located and documented. They supply conclusive evidence that the Blair Mountain Battlefield has important information that contributes to the understanding of human history for this period of significance.

The archaeological investigation indicates that the focuses of the battle were near [REDACTED]. Based upon artifact counts and directions of fire, two tributaries to the north and one tributary to the south of [REDACTED] saw major action. Some smaller sites were found [REDACTED]. This evidence shows that the Logan forces defended the entire fifteen kilometer length of [REDACTED] Blair Mountain [REDACTED].

The data recovered from the archaeological sites provides a better understanding of the battle than is provided by the historical record alone. The findings show that at least five approaches [REDACTED] were attacked. Also evidence now indicates a possible breakthrough [REDACTED]. Hostilities were present around two kilometers [REDACTED] but not nearly at that level closer [REDACTED].

The 2006 archaeological investigation indicates that the potential for further archeological research is great, and could lead researchers to answer significant research questions regarding the battle. The 2006 report of the investigation suggests five research questions that may be addressed with data recovered from contributing archaeological sites:

1. How intense were the hostilities [REDACTED]
2. What does the choice of sites beyond the two hot spots tell us about the strategy of both sides? By studying both the sites located by the 1991 survey and not studied by the 2006 survey, and the areas where neither went, we could gain a better handle on this important aspect of the battle. Presumably, these sites would represent ones that the miners chose to attack. But also, they reflect the ability of the defenders to maintain a continuous line of defense as the historical record indicates. These sites would be of lesser intensity than the [REDACTED] but could allow this lesser known aspect of battle strategy to be delineated. For instance, a paucity of such sites might reflect the ability of the miners to concentrate their forces at the two hot spots.
3. What evidence of the historically-documented breakthrough [REDACTED] can be found further west of the current and previous surveys?



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4. What would a complete investigation of the slopes surrounding 46LG209 show, especially indications of direction fire in comparison to where the breakthrough(s) may have occurred?
5. How does the data confirm, disprove, or enhance information in the historic record?

## INTEGRITY

The historic integrity of the nominated portions of the Blair Mountain battle site remains remarkably intact, due mostly to its geologic form, its ruggedness, and its isolation. Within the nomination boundary, some archaeological sites have been lost or compromised. Monclo, the site of the first clash between miners and a force of state police and Logan County deputies led by Captain Brockus, (the "Sharples Massacre"), has been disturbed by surface mining, [REDACTED] where John Wilburn led the miner's first assault on Blair Mountain that resulted in four fatalities. The [REDACTED] of Blair Mountain, which is the area most viewed by casual surveyors, has been partially disturbed by roads. The [REDACTED] is the most compromised part of the nominated area, but does retain sufficient integrity. However, new information acquired by aerial surveillance conducted by the State Historic Preservation Office and close scrutiny of recent aerial and satellite photography make it clear that the integrity of this site is not unduly compromised. Archaeological field work in 2006 further confirmed the high degree of integrity of the nominated area.<sup>31</sup>

The pertinent aspects of integrity that apply to Blair Mountain Battlefield are feeling, location, setting, and association.

*Feeling:* The rugged nature of the ridgeline and its haunting remoteness convey the feeling of the area as it was when these events took place; it is steep, heavily forested, rugged and remote. These physical features continue to express the historic character [REDACTED] as it was in 1921. Ground and aerial photography support this conclusion and accompany this nomination. Additionally, comparisons of period topographic maps and modern ones reveal that there is little change in the remote nature of the place and the ruggedness of its terrain. The main topographical features of this area are intact. The site of the defenders' machine gun nest has been identified, and although it has been minimally disturbed, it still retains intact archaeological evidence. More importantly, seeing this area provides a "feel" for the battle, giving an understanding of what it must have been like to defend or attack this position.

<sup>31</sup> West Virginia State Historic Preservation Office, "National Register Nomination Comment and Recommendation Sheet," prepared for the West Virginia Archives and History Commission. Spring 2005.

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*Location:* The location of the battle has been established. At least three scholarly works have documented the ridge as the site of the battle.<sup>32</sup> Most recently, a qualified professional archaeologist has identified fifteen sites that closely delineate many aspects of the battle's progression. [REDACTED] which was the point of contact between Chafin's forces and the miners is intact. The ridgeline is the location of the core battle because it was the dividing line between union and non-union territory. It offered Chafin a superb defensive position, and it was remote from population centers.

*Setting:* Owing to the remote nature of the location, the setting has changed only slightly since the battle there. The rural, rugged mountain lent itself to the conflict because of its geographic features. Steep and nearly insurmountable, the slopes presented daunting obstacles to the rebels and afforded Chafin's forces a fairly secure defensive position. There has been no change in this topography that would degrade the integrity of the site. [REDACTED] as a geologic feature, divides two watersheds and it divided the union miners from the non-union miners. Most of the passes and gaps across the ridge are still visible. From the air and on the ground, the ridge line continues to convey the aspects of topography and vegetation that drew the battle to this site in the first place.

*Association:* The association is clearly evident. Participant narratives, scholarly studies, field investigations, and news reports establish clearly that [REDACTED] was the core of the Battle of Blair Mountain. Because of its geologic and geographic attributes, as described above, [REDACTED] is inextricably associated with the historic events that took place there.

There are also several aspects of integrity which must be addressed under Criterion D.

*Criterion D:* Within the parameters of Criterion D, there have been some disturbances of the battlefield. However, the 2006 professional archeological investigation clearly indicates that enough integrity remains for the property to be considered significant under Criterion D.

Because of the nature of the artifacts, and their location near the surface, metal detectors can easily locate such items. However, looting has not resulted in a complete loss of integrity throughout the entire battlefield. The report states, "We found that all four of the sites we studied that had been documented by the 1991 report have been looted, while the other ten have not."

Despite this, many intact sources of potential information still exist. Every one of the sites studied in the 2006 investigation contains intact deposits. Site 46LG211 is a good example: "This long (400 meters) site is spanned by a gas access road for its full length, wiping out probably 80% of the site. But one particular area that is protected by a massive rock outcrop is intact. Small parts of the site on the other side of the road are still intact as well." The report also goes on to say that, "For each of the

<sup>32</sup>. Shogun, *The Battle of Blair Mountain*; Lane, *Civil War in West Virginia*; Savage, *Thunder on the Mountain*.

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looted sites, while we will never know how many artifacts were removed, we have in each case been able to document a significant intact sample.”

Thus, based upon the guidelines for Criterion D, the Blair Mountain Battlefield retains enough integrity to be nominated under this criterion. Even though there have been some disturbances, the property clearly retains significant data that is sufficiently intact to yield expected important information.

**SUMMARY**

The miner's rebellion of 1921 in southern West Virginia, which led to the armed confrontation on top of Blair Mountain [REDACTED] was the largest civil insurrection in the United States since the Civil War. It triggered congressional investigations into conditions in the coal fields and it brought national attention to the plight of coal miners in West Virginia. The event required the presence of the U.S. Army before peace was restored. These events are overwhelmingly significant to the history of the American labor movement and are directly associated with the rise of organized labor after 1933. Archaeological evidence has shown lines of fire, locations of gun emplacements, and the likelihood that much fire took place at very close range. If the site is preserved it will provide much more information about this chapter in American history.

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ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Maps

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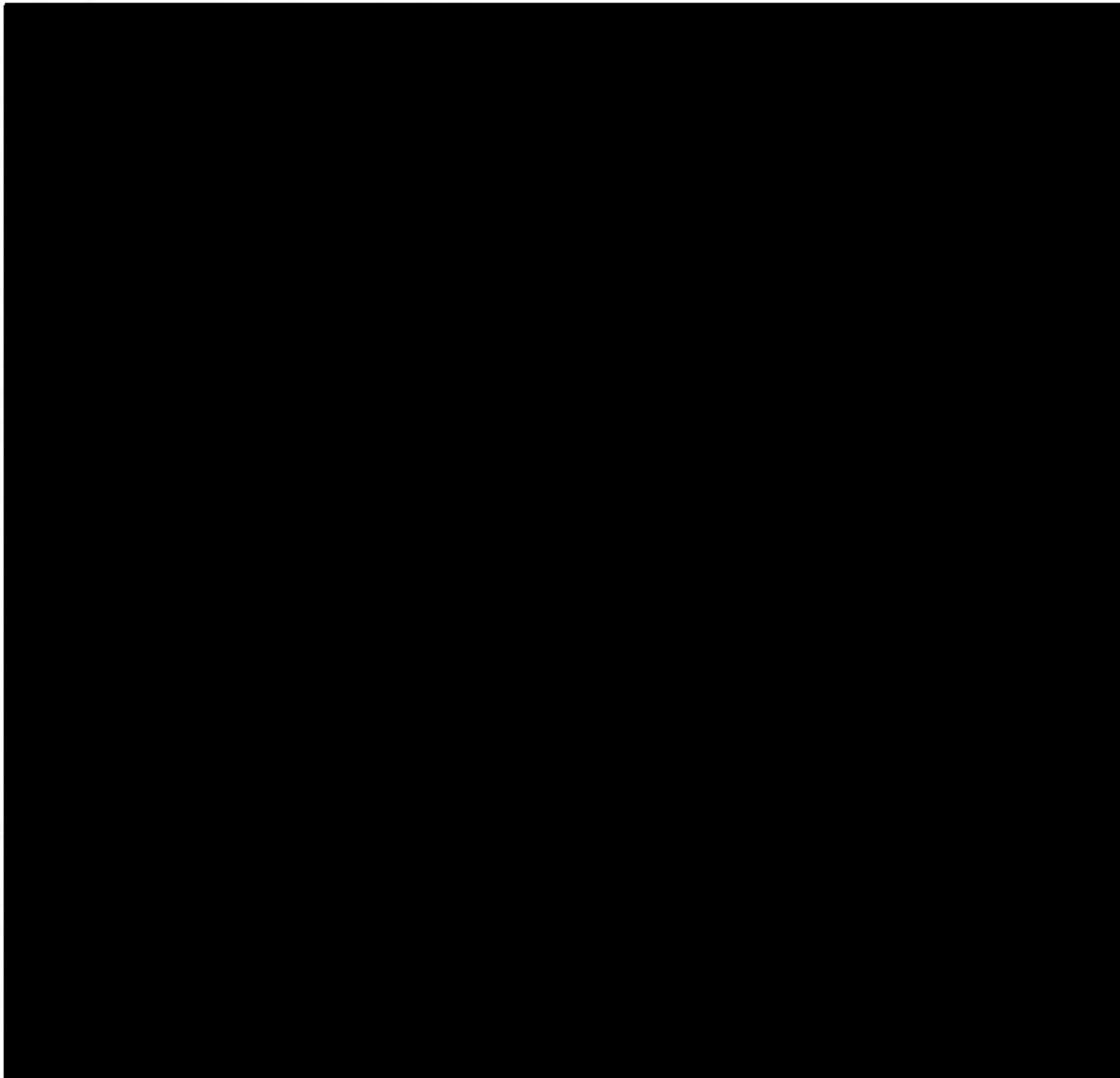
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**UTM REFERENCES**



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Section number 10 Page 2**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The boundary of the nominated property is enclosed by the polygon whose vertices are marked by the above UTM reference points, and shown on the enclosed USGS maps. This polygon covers portions of the Amherstdale, Clothier, and Henlawson quadrangles.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The boundary of the district encompasses the area between the 1400-2073 foot elevations on either side of the Blair Mountain in Logan County, which was the line of battle defined by the defenders when they erected armed pickets across the mountain at fifty yard intervals. The general area of the battle has been well documented in no less than four scholarly publications, which are included in Section 9 of this document. Archaeological findings throughout the ten-mile ridgeline and subsequent extrapolations indicate that the most intense activity occurred within the narrow, steep area encompassed by the proposed boundary. Although archaeological investigations were not conducted over the entire battlefield area, the inclusion of the setting around where events occurred is significant to understanding what the participants experienced.

Beginning within [REDACTED] the elevation of the battlefield ascends [REDACTED] rapidly. As the ridgeline meanders and folds back upon its northwest-southeast orientation, the elevation of the ridge quickly rises [REDACTED]. The area encompasses approximately 1,600 acres. Fingerlike projections of the battlefield trace the convolutions of the mountain ridge and contain archaeological evidence of the course of the battle and the direction of fire. Since the topography determined the course of action, the boundary corresponds to contour lines.

The boundary encompasses, but does not exceed, the full extent of the battle area and excludes the route taken to the battle area where no encounters took place. Finally, the boundary was drawn based on historic significance and integrity as required. The significance of the area encompassed by the boundary is provided in Section 8 and the area retains excellent integrity. Existence of noncontributing resources within the boundary, such as gas wells and power lines, do not affect the resource's ability to convey significance under the selected National Register Criteria.