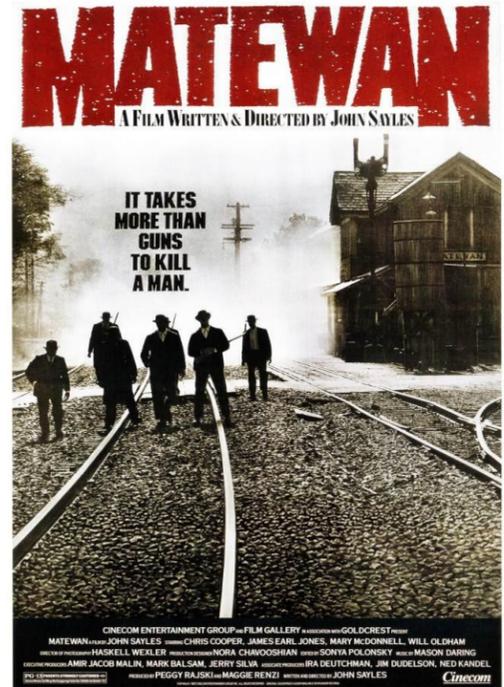
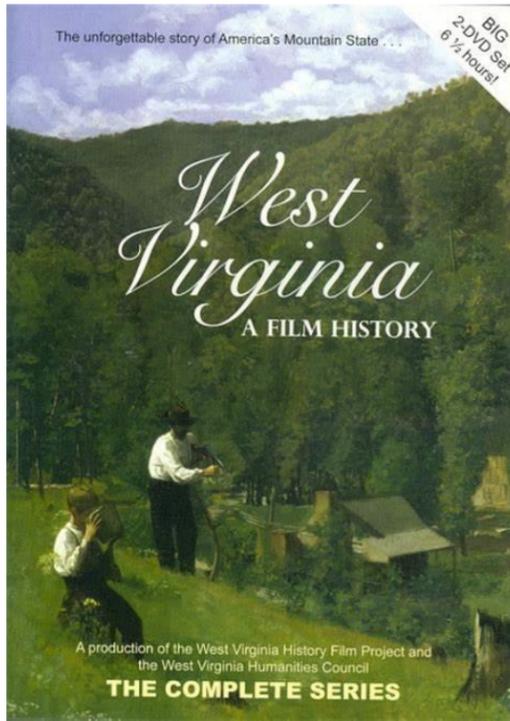
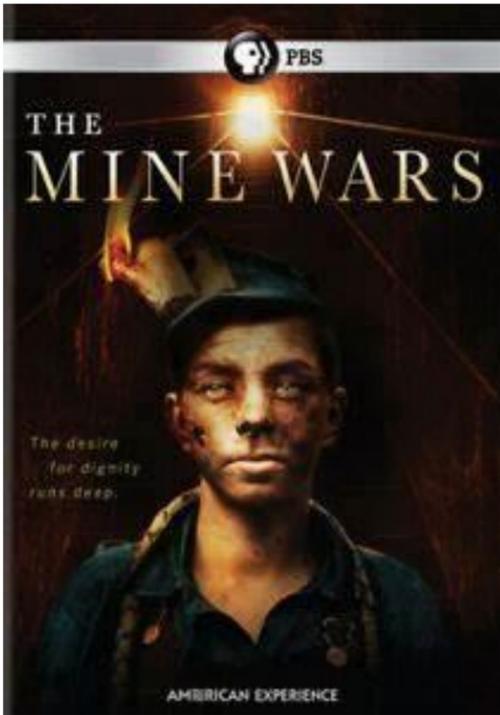


Part 1 – Mine Wars – OLLI – Winter 2022

West Virginia: A Film History (introduction) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYf9O5MOUOY>



<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/themineWars/>

www.wvencyclopedia.org

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvLwOfLZAbY>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvLwOfLZAbY&t=237s>

YouTube: *wv history documentary*



“Series: West Virginia Mine Wars”

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/series.htm?id=C8B39227-C269-2EE9-F318CA6374FA310F>

coal begins https://www.wvencyclopedia.org/media/29151?article_id=1349

Early West Virginia Railroads

West Virginia Railroads 1893

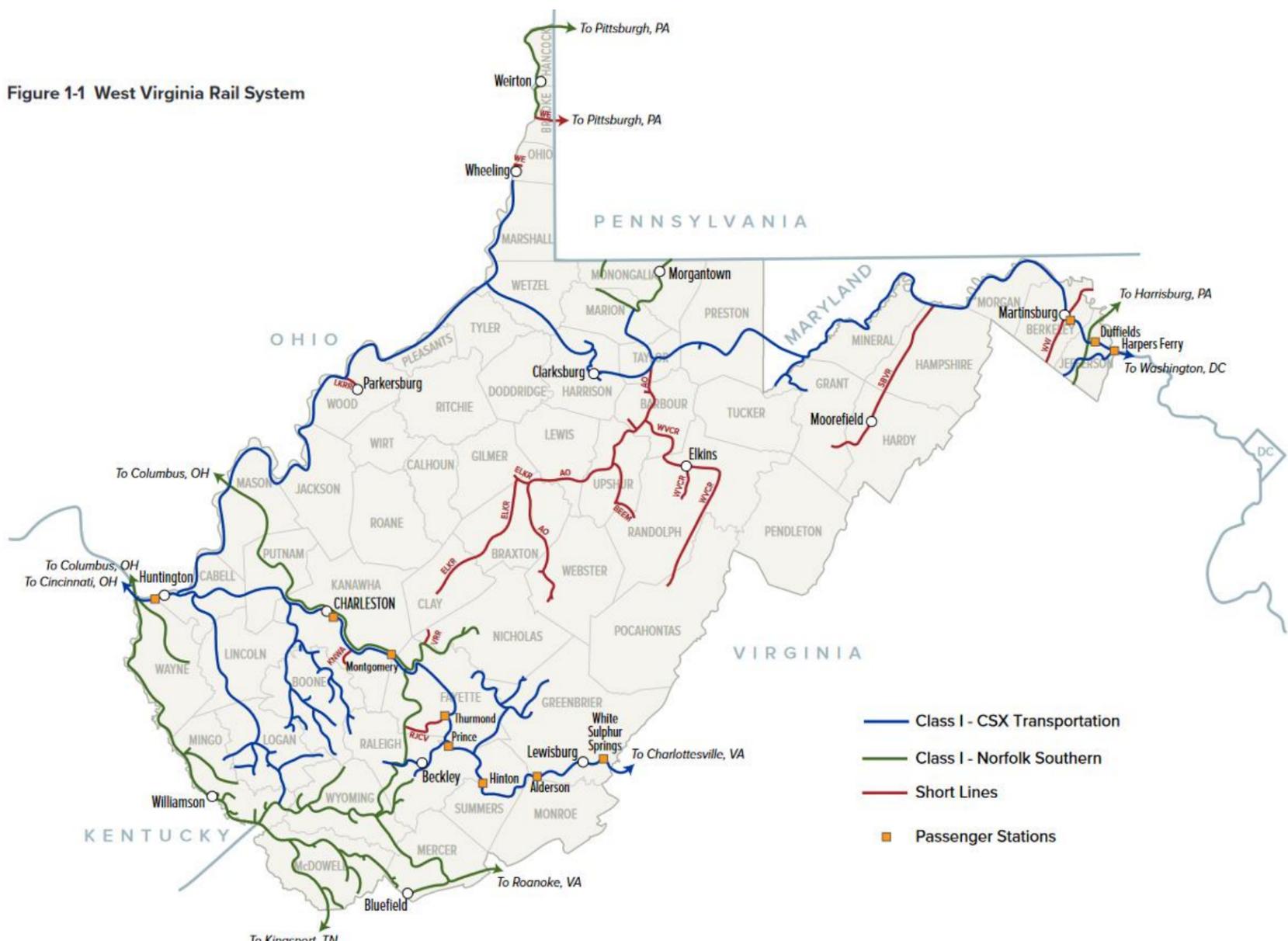


GOLDEN AGE OF RAILROADS



<http://wvstatemuseum.wv.gov/>

Figure 1-1 West Virginia Rail System





“Coal Industry”

Coal was known to exist in Western Virginia from colonial times, but not until the early 19th century was it exploited as a commercial fuel. Development came first along the Kanawha River near Charleston and the Ohio River near Wheeling, both areas of early settlement and industry.

The erection of [salt furnaces](#) in Kanawha County beginning in 1797 provided the initial stimulus to coal mining. By 1840, 90 furnaces produced a million bushels of salt annually and consumed 200,000 tons of coal. More than 900 salt workers, many of them slaves, mined coal to fire the salt evaporation furnaces. Although the salt industry began to decline after mid-century, the demand for coal continued for other uses, including the production of [coal oil](#) for lighting. Steamboats consumed great quantities of coal and also transported coal to the new and growing towns along the Ohio River and its tributaries. By 1860, 25 independent coal companies had been organized which employed more than 1,000 workers.

The Civil War retarded the industry's growth, but the explorations of future promoters, such as the Confederates [Jedediah Hotchkiss](#) and [John D.](#) and [George W. Imboden](#), during the war and in the years following, laid the groundwork for rapid development as these men turned to peace-time industrial careers. Growth was especially dramatic in southern West Virginia, where the [Chesapeake & Ohio Railroad](#) wended its way through the New and Kanawha coalfields and connected Richmond and the new city of Huntington in 1873. The Pocahontas and Flat Top coalfields were linked to the national markets by the [Norfolk & Western Railroad](#) in the 1880s, when the line was completed from the port of Norfolk, reaching the Ohio River near Huntington in 1892.

The C&O did not attempt to control the land along its tracks, so the mineral lands in the New and Kanawha valleys were taken up by independent speculators or mining companies during the 1870s and 1880s. Pioneer operators in the [New River](#) field, therefore, tended to be independent investors who hired experienced mine managers. On the other hand, the N&W and its land company purchased hundreds of thousands of acres in the Pocahontas and Flat Top fields, which it leased to the actual operators. Pioneer operators in this field tended to be experienced practical coal miners, who had relatively little capital but a willingness to undertake hard physical labor and high levels of risk. Coal operators John Freeman and Jenkin Jones, later wealthy, reportedly arrived in [Mercer County](#) with little more than a pick and a shovel.

The northern West Virginia coalfields had their own pioneers. [James Otis Watson](#), sometimes regarded as the father of the West Virginia coal industry, must be considered as leader. Born in 1815 to parents who were among the first settlers in the Fairmont area, Watson learned all he could about mining coal and in 1852 organized the Montana Mining Company. He was the first operator in West Virginia to ship coal by rail, in this case the [Baltimore & Ohio Railroad](#), which linked Baltimore and Wheeling in 1852. Like the N&W and the C&O in southern West Virginia, the B&O sparked a boom in the northern West Virginia coalfields.

Under the direction of Watson's son, [Clarence Wayland Watson](#), one of the major coal corporations in America took form. Clarence, later a U.S. senator, convinced his brothers to join him in founding the Briar Hill Coal Company in 1893. The Watsons soon merged their coal mining interests with those of U.S. Sen. [Johnson Newlon Camden Sr.](#) A trusted lieutenant of oil mogul John D. Rockefeller Sr., Camden brought political power and deep financial resources to the new Fairmont Coal Company. Clarence Watson's brother-in-law, [Aretas Brooks Fleming](#), a Fairmont lawyer and governor of West Virginia (1890–93), also joined the company. In 1902, the Watson-Fleming-Camden syndicate, or the “Fairmont Ring” as some unaffectionately called them, acquired the Somerset Coal Company in Pennsylvania, and the following year purchased the B&O's holdings in the [Consolidation Coal Company](#), a Maryland company. With the blessing of Rockefeller in 1909 the entire syndicate reorganized as the Consolidation Coal Company. “Consol” was controlled by Clarence Watson for the next 20 years, and it remains today a major producer of West Virginia coal.

The massive capital investment poured into the West Virginia coal industry produced a social and economic transformation of the region. [Railroads](#) carried away coal but also connected the state to the national markets. Finding few of the supporting services required to sustain a workforce in this mountain vastness, investors rebuilt the region to fit their needs. In many locations, the resident farm population was too small to satisfy the demand for labor, so companies recruited workers from outside the region. Along with the coal mines that sprang up along the railroad lines were [company towns](#), built by the operators to provide the necessary services for a rapidly expanding labor force. Economic pressures created by the industrial transition, such as rising property taxes, demand for farm products, and imported manufactured goods, started the older subsistence farming system down the road to extinction.

The explosive growth of production suggests the scale of the coal boom: In 1867, only 490,000 tons of coal were produced in West Virginia, but by 1887 that figure had grown to 4.9 million tons, and by 1917 it had rocketed to 89.4 million tons. The number of mine employees kept pace with production, growing from 3,701 in 1880 to nearly 90,000 in 1917. With the burgeoning population of miners, many of them recruited from outside the state, came an ethnic and racial mixture previously unheard of in West Virginia. In some southern counties, the foreign-born and [African-American](#) populations

combined to outnumber native-born whites. Social services that previously had been either unavailable or scarce in most rural areas of the state, such as electric power, public schools, public libraries, and a variety of stores, as well as doctors and dentists, became widespread in the coalfields.

The amenities came with a price, however. Prior to the Great Depression of the 1930s, more than 90 percent of the miners in southern West Virginia lived in company-owned towns without benefit of civic institutions. Combined with numerous work-related grievances standard among miners during the pre-union era, labor-capital relations in the coalfields were frequently strained. Generally, the pivotal issue was recognition of the [United Mine Workers of America](#) as bargaining agent for the miners. Some of the most famous strike episodes in the history of the American coal industry occurred in West Virginia between 1910 and 1933, including the [Paint Creek-Cabin Creek strike](#) of 1912–13; the [Mine War](#) of 1920–21, which included the March on Logan, Battle of Blair Mountain, and the Matewan Massacre; and the Monongalia-Fairmont coalfield wars, which occurred between 1927 and 1931.

The economic underpinnings of these conflicts were rooted in the larger [economy](#). In addition to being philosophically opposed to unions, as most industrialists were, coal operators attempted to control labor costs within an environment of notoriously fickle markets. In these disputes, they resorted to every means at their disposal, legal and otherwise, to break the strikes and prevent unionization. Generally, the government sided with the companies. This period came to an end with the Great Depression, as the coal industry buckled in the general collapse of the American economy. Added to economic pressures was passage of the National Labor Relations Act in 1932, particularly Section 7(a) of the act, which granted workers the right to organize unions and provided further impetus for companies to abandon costly and unpopular paternalistic policies. Hence, they sold off the miners' houses and ceased to provide community services, such as education, police, and fire protection, and abandoned the now depressed mine settlements.

During the Depression and World War II, the coal industry laid the groundwork for a new era characterized by the accelerated introduction of labor-saving machinery. [Mechanization](#) had begun in the late 19th century with the introduction of the undercutting machine. In the early 1900s, underground coal haulage was improved with the gradual replacement of mules by electric locomotives, and by the 1920s underground work was revolutionized by the mobile loading machine, which organized formerly independent miners into supervised crews.

Miners resisted mechanization, but this was overcome when the union negotiated an agreement with the operators accepting a reduction in the number of workers but ensuring that the increased productivity would result in higher pay and shorter working hours for the miners who remained. By the early 1950s, a machine known as the continuous miner consolidated all of the basic steps in the mining process into one machine operation, radically reducing the labor force required. By the 1970s, mining was revolutionized again by the introduction of computerized longwall mining which sheared coal off sections hundreds of feet long onto conveyor belts. Mechanization underground had its equivalent in [surface mining](#) as companies sought to increase productivity and reduce costs. By the end of the 20th century, ever larger earth-moving machines decapitated entire mountains in the controversial practice known as [mountaintop removal](#).

As the capital requirements increased, hundreds of coal companies either disappeared or were consolidated into fewer, much larger corporations. By the end of the 20th century, a handful of major multinational corporations dominated the industry. Production grew under these conditions. In 1997, West Virginia reached a peak coal production of more than 180 million tons. In 2011, West Virginia coal mines produced 133 million tons.

About 25 percent of coal mined is shipped to foreign markets and used mainly in steel manufacturing. Another 15 percent is used by the domestic steel industry. The rest of the coal mined in West Virginia is used to generate electric power.

Absentee ownership continued to be a political issue for most of the century, and the social costs of longwall mining, mountaintop removal, and the moving of coal on overloaded trucks also generated serious political controversy toward the end of the century. However, the decline in the number of workers required by the increasingly automated coal industry had the most direct effect on West Virginia families. In 1950, there were 127,000 coal miners, but by the end of the 20th century that number had plummeted to under 18,000 even though coal production reached record highs. Correspondingly, the high unemployment during this period produced a great out-migration as redundant miners and their families were forced to leave the state to search for employment elsewhere. In 2011, West Virginia's coal industry employed more than 23,000 people. (e-WV)



Mary "Mother" Jones photographed during a meeting with President Calvin Coolidge in September of 1924.

Library of Congress

Miner's Angel

"In spite of oppressors, in spite of false leaders, in spite of labor's own lack of understanding of its needs, the cause of the working class continues onward. Slowly his standard of living rises to include some of the good and beautiful things of the world. ... Slowly those who create the wealth of the world are permitted to share it. The future is in labor's strong hands."

-- Mother Jones

"There is no peace in West Virginia because there is no justice in West Virginia."

-- Mother Jones



Mother Jones speaks to an assembled crowd in Montgomery, West Virginia in 1912 ahead of the Paint Creek Miners' Strike. West Virginia University

<https://archive.iww.org/history/library/MotherJones/autobiography/>

The agitator Mary Harris “Mother” Jones, a leader in the American labor movement from the 1890s until her death in 1930, made a profound impression on West Virginia.

An Irish immigrant, Mary Harris was born in probably 1837. Her family arrived at Boston in 1850, then followed her father’s work as a railroad construction laborer into Canada. She attended Toronto Normal School, leaving in 1859 to teach in a convent school in Michigan. She later taught in Memphis, where her husband, George, and four children died during a yellow fever epidemic in 1867. Returning north, Jones operated a dressmaking business in Chicago until 1871 when the Great Fire burned up the business and her possessions.

Then she turned to the cause of labor, becoming a surrogate mother to the nation’s workers. In 1897, she joined Eugene Debs’s Social Democracy and the United Mine Workers of America national strike in the Pittsburgh district, the first UMWA victory. Jones joined the UMWA’s organizing drive in the Pennsylvania anthracite region, and was commissioned a national organizer. Sent to survey the West Virginia coalfields in December 1900, she reported that “conditions there were worse than those in Czarist Russia.”

Jones returned to West Virginia the next May and many times afterward. Short and sturdy, silver-haired with glasses, she dressed in conventional black but wore boots on her feet. After a year in the New River coalfield, Jones was sent to the Fairmont field. Two weeks after a strike was called in June 1902, she was arrested and taken to Parkersburg for violating Judge John Jay Jackson Jr.’s injunction. When freed, she returned to New River, where the strike continued until the bloody Battle of Stanaford in February 1903.

After seeing UMWA locals established in the Kanawha Valley and the reorganization of the West Virginia Federation of Labor, Mother Jones answered a call from striking textile workers in Philadelphia. She returned to West Virginia in 1912 to aid union miners on Paint Creek and Cabin Creek. Jones was arrested in Charleston on February 13, 1913. After being taken to Pratt, she was court-martialed and held under house arrest until May, when she precipitated a congressional investigation.

After testifying before another congressional committee in 1915, and forsaking the Socialists, Mother Jones returned to West Virginia in 1917 where she held meetings and gained union recognition in the Fairmont and Winding Gulf coalfields. She joined the steelworkers’ organizing drive in Pittsburgh in 1919, then traveled back to the hills of West Virginia and on to Mexico City. She returned to West Virginia by 1921 when the miners rebuffed her attempt to block their 1921 March on Logan. She then went to Washington, sick in mind and body. She recovered enough to write her autobiography and in 1924 to call on Governor Ephraim Franklin Morgan, seeking pardons for miners imprisoned after the Logan March. Despite failing health, she tried to stop John L. Lewis’s takeover of the UMWA.

Among her other causes, Jones vigorously opposed child labor. She spoke in West Virginia and elsewhere against the employment of young boys in and around the coal mines, and in 1903 she led a protest march of mine and mill children to President Theodore Roosevelt’s summer home at Oyster Bay, New York.

On May 1, 1930, Mother Jones celebrated her birthday in Maryland. One hundred years old, by her count, she made her debut before newsreel cameras, condemning the Prohibition Act “as a curse upon the nation” that violated her right to have a beer instead of water.

Mother Jones died November 30, 1930, and is buried in Mount Olive, Illinois. *(e-WV)*

Mary “Mother” Jones had a long and storied career as a fearless union organizer among miners. She immigrated to North America as a child after her family fled the devastation of the Irish Potato Famine in 1847. Her early life was marked by tragedy. When she was 30 years old and living in Memphis, Tennessee, she lost her husband and four children to a yellow fever epidemic that swept through the city. In 1871, after moving to Chicago to become a seamstress, she lost her shop in the Great Chicago Fire that ravaged the city. While living in Chicago and witnessing the labor uprisings of the late 1800s, Jones became active in workers’ movements, eventually becoming involved in the struggle for miners’ rights at the beginning of the 1900s.

Jones began organizing miners for the United Mine Workers (UMW) in Pennsylvania in the 1890s. Impressed with her ability to rally the men and to gain support from wives, daughters, and sisters of the miners, UMW president dispatched Jones to West Virginia when the union first launched its effort to organize the coal miners in the state. With her assistance, the miners in the Kanawha Valley were able to organize in 1902, but antiunion forces succeeded in forcing the union out soon thereafter. In 1912, when miners again went on strike in the West Virginia coal fields, demanding that operators negotiate a new union contract, their efforts proved successful. Not all miners succeeded, however, as the operators in Paint Creek refused to pay their workers on par with other miners in the region. In response to the strike, the Paint Creek mine operators hired mine guards from the infamous Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency to harass and intimidate the miners and their families with threats of violence that often turned real.

The violence in what became known as the Paint Creek-Cabin Creek Strike of 1912-1913 marked the beginning of the West Virginia mine wars. Mother Jones, who had been assisting miners in Colorado, returned to West Virginia to rally the miners once again. Here, she met the young labor organizer Frank Keeney, who was living with his wife and children in a tent camp set up for striking miners in Paint Creek. When no other officials from the UMW would come to organize the miners in nearby Cabin Creek, Keeney met with Mother Jones, who agreed to travel there with him and assist the strikers. Speaking on a

makeshift platform in a baseball field in a town near Cabin Creek on August 4th, Mother Jones theatrically recounted her experiences in the Kanawha Valley strike ten years earlier and proclaimed that she was back to aid in the current fight while calling for others to join her.

As the strike continued into the Autumn of 1912, West Virginia governor William Glasscock twice declared martial law in the region. In February of 1913, as the violence continued, authorities arrested Mother Jones while she was staying in Charleston and moved her to a makeshift military prison in the town of Pratt in Kanawha County. Perhaps given her national fame, Henry Hatfield, who had recently been elected governor of West Virginia, traveled to visit Pratt, where he found Jones sick with pneumonia. While he allowed her to return to Charleston for medical care, she was sent back to the temporary prison in Pratt upon her recovery. During this time she was tried in a military court on various charges ranging from inciting a riot to destruction of property; she received a sentence of 20 years.

Rather than being moved to the state prison, however, Jones remained incarcerated in the makeshift prison—a boarding house owned by a Mrs. Carney. While there, the 84 year-old union activist smuggled a message out, which was eventually conveyed to the halls of Congress. Senator John Kern of Indiana, who sought to start a congressional investigation into the conditions in the coal fields of southern West Virginia, read her message aloud in the Senate, which brought even greater attention to the plight of the miners and her own struggle with imprisonment.

Eventually, after being incarcerated in the boarding house for 85 days, Governor Hatfield released Jones with a pardon for her and others who had been arrested under martial law. If Hatfield intended for these pardons to turn attention away from West Virginia, he failed, for Senator Kern's resolution passed in May 1913, launching a congressional investigation into the conditions that surrounded the bloody Paint Creek-Cabin Creek strike.

Mary Jones spent her remaining years supporting the American labor movement and the cause of striking West Virginia miners. However, shortly before the Battle of Blair Mountain in August of 1921 Jones opposed the miners' march on Logan county. Jones told a group of assembled miners in Mingo County that the upcoming march would end in widespread bloodshed and produced a document that she claimed was a telegram from President Warren Harding offering to end the worst abuses of the mine company owners if they agreed to return home. Strike leaders, including Frank Keeney, cast doubt on the veracity of the telegram and refused to stop their march.

While Jones' reputation suffered as a result of her attempt to halt the miners march, she remained active in the labor movement. In 1925, Jones published an autobiography detailing her long history of championing labor rights related causes. Towards the end of the decade, Jones relocated to Silver Spring, Maryland where she passed away on November 30, 1930 at the age of 100. Mary "Mother" Jones continues to loom large in American political consciousness and is widely recognized as one of the nation's fiercest upholders of labor rights.

The makeshift prison where Mother Jones was incarcerated for 85 days was designated a National Historic Landmark in April of 1992. After the owner demolished the building in 1997, its NHL designation was withdrawn.

National Historic Landmarks (NHLs) are historic places that possess exceptional value in commemorating or illustrating the history of the nation. Authorized by the National Historic Sites Act of 1935, the National Park Service's National Historic Landmarks Program oversees the designation of NHLs with the goal of preserving them for the inspiration and benefit of the American people. All NHLs are also listed in the National Register of Historic Places. (NPS)



National Park Service

