

Matewan: 100 Years Ago in Appalachian History



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Last Tuesday marked the 100th anniversary of the legendary Battle of Matewan, the spark that ignited the [largest labor uprising](#) in United States history. For more than twenty years, southern West Virginia miners had been striving to unionize, and coal operators were equally determined to keep them out. On May 19, 1920, Matewan Police Chief Sid Hatfield and pro-union townspeople confronted Baldwin-Felts agents who were hired to break the months-long Mingo County strike and had evicted eight families from their homes. A gunfight erupted. When the smoke cleared, seven agents and four townspeople and miners lay dead, making Matewan an important symbolic stop on a generations-long march toward mineworkers' rights to organize unions. Click [here](#) to read what a West Virginia newspaper reported the day after. And you can learn more about this day in Matewan from the [West Virginia Encyclopedia](#).

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“My feeling is that we mountaineers have a pretty realistic view of ourselves, and we don’t take ourselves too seriously. We never believe that man [sic] could be perfect. We don’t become cynical as others may when men fail. When they do not fail we are pleasantly surprised. These beliefs make us somewhat at peace with ourselves. We don’t pretend we are something that we are not.”

~Loyal Jones