September 2020

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Recommended Citation
Hylton, Kirsten (2020) "The Role of Women within the Mine Wars," West Virginia University Historical Review. Vol. 1 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.
Available at: https://researchrepository.wvu.edu/wvuhistoricalreview/vol1/iss1/7

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**The Role of Women within the Mine Wars**

**KIRSTEN HYLTON**

This paper examines the impact that the Mine Wars had on women who lived within the mine camps directly affected by labor unrest. While women were usually not the ones on the front lines of the Mine Wars, they still were impacted by and involved with the action. Just like the men of the camps, women were evicted from their homes, brutalized by mine guards, and were forced to change their lives. Assuming that the events of the Mine Wars were perceived in the same way by both men and women would be leaving out a large portion of the narrative. For this reason, in order to understand the full impact of the Mine Wars, the women of the mine camp’s stories have to be looked at separately.

An oral interview conducted with Mr. and Mrs. William Carey, who lived in the middle of the Paint Creek-Cabin Creek Strike, revealed that the couple remembered the lasting legacy of the Mine Wars differently. The couple was evicted from their home by the mine company Mr. Carey worked for and forced to live in a tent colony located in Goodman Holler. For two years, Mr. and Mrs. William Carey lived their lives while making a home within a tent. On one hand, Mr. Carey regards the time period as tough and comments on how his wife had to make sacrifices in order for them to survive.

However, Mrs. Carey believed the tent colony “wasn’t so bad.” When asked how she dealt with living inside of a tent for two years she stated that she was “young and stupid and didn’t pay much attention to it.” She goes as far as stating that the “tent colony was a happy place.” For Mrs. William Carey, the tent colony represented a time of togetherness and community. She no longer spent her time worrying about her husband succumbing to the dangers found underground; instead, he was right there next to her. A strong sense of community was born out of the closeness created by the mutual struggle experienced within the tent colonies. Mrs. William Carey used the example of neighbors coming together during this time period in order to support one another. She used the specific example of her neighbors willingly watching her children on days she had to wash clothes. For Mrs. William Carey, the tent was a sufficient home with comforts such as “a stove to cook on, a table to eat on, and chairs to sit on.” All of these comforts provide a stark contrast to the picture painted by Mr. Carey. To him, the period they lived in the tent colonies was one marked by struggle: mainly, the struggle to provide. This account of conflicting perceptions shows that the labor unrest in the period of the Mine Wars did not impact the players within the situation in the same ways. Both men and women were faced with a set of challenges within this time period, which they dealt with and perceived in different ways. It is for this reason that a closer look must be taken at the experiences of women in the Mine Wars to understand the situation fully.

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1 Mr. and Mrs. William Carey, Interview with Keith Dix, C179 R168-169, West Virginia and Regional History Center.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.
While women were not the ones who were striking due to their jobs underground, their lives were still directly impacted by this action. Women were evicted from their homes along with men, brutalized by mine guards like the men, and were forced to change their lives like the men. For this reason it is important to take a look at how the action of the Mine Wars directly affected women. Assuming that these actions impacted them in the same way as the male coal miners would be skipping the narrative of a large portion of the people affected by the Mine Wars. In order to understand the full scope of the impact created by the Mine Wars, women of the mine camp’s stories have to be looked at separately from the other players within the Mine Wars.

The term Mine Wars started being used to describe the time period of labor unrest after the book *Bloodletting in Appalachia: The Story of West Virginia’s Four Major Mine Wars and Other Thrilling Incidents of Its Coal Fields* by Howard B. Lee first used the term. Since the actual labor unrest occurred, events pertaining to it have been covered through multiple forms of media, such as books, movies, and articles. While over the years many different subjects have caught the attention of those wishing to learn more about this time period, originally the period was understood through the narrow scope of large-scale events and sensationalized figures. Action-packed events and memorable players quickly stole the stage from the everyday people who lived through the labor unrest. Saying that women in the Mine Wars have not been looked at before would be untrue. Their stories have been looked at in previous accounts of the Mine Wars. However, they are usually looked at as a complementary substance to form other arguments. One particular book that covers the position of women within the Mine Wars is *Never Justice, Never Peace: Mother Jones and the Miner Rebellion at Paint and Cabin Creeks* by Ginny Savage Ayers. While this book is centered on Mother Jones, the authors do go into detail about the conditions of women in the Paint Creek and Cabin Creek areas. In addition to this, another book that shows the movement into a more narrow approach on individuals’ impact on West Virginia and Appalachian history is seen in the book *Coalfield Jews: An Appalachian History* by Deborah R. Weiner. In this book, a closer look is taken on the amount of dependency citizens of coal camps have on the company store. Together, this shows that the fields of West Virginia and Appalachian history are moving from a broad approach to one that is more narrow and focuses on the lives carried out by everyday citizens.

This paper will serve the purpose of taking a look exclusively at the effects that the Mine Wars had on the women who lived within the mine camps in areas of labor unrest. Primary sources have been the main source material used in producing this paper. The main documents used in the creation of this paper are oral histories and court documents. The goal of this paper is to provide a better explanation as to what women living day to day in Paint Creek and Cabin Creek had to experience. However, due to a lack of accounts coming solely from women on their experiences, accounts given by men and more sensationalized figures like Mother Jones must be used in order to decipher what women were going through in this time period. To accomplish the goal of presenting experiences of women living within the coal camps within the time period of the Mine Wars, this paper will look at multiple different factors that correlated in both Paint Creek and Cabin Creek and the Logan and Mingo County area. These correlating factors include eviction from company-owned homes and the process of moving into conglomerates of tents provided by the union; intimidation, disruption, and violence at the hands of the Baldwin-Feltz guards; and

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women-driven protest of scabs and the treatment of scab’s wives. Finally, it will take a look at the displacement that occurred after the time period of the Mine Wars. All of these situations affected women and changed the way their lives had normally functioned before the labor unrest. All of these elements dictated the lives carried out by women within the time periods of labor unrest called the Mine Wars.

In the time period leading up to the Mine Wars, tensions had grown between miners who desired to unionize in order to achieve better working conditions and those representing the mine who wanted to prevent unionization. The periods of 1912 to 1913 in Paint Creek and Cabin Creek and 1919 to 1922 in Logan and Mingo counties were marked with periods of extreme labor unrest. The time period of the Mine Wars started in the year 1912 when miners from Paint Creek and Cabin Creek joined the United Mine Workers movement of striking. The striking miners desired the right to organize, recognition of rights granted to them by the Constitution, an end to the practice of blacklisting men with union affiliation, and an end to the use of mine guards, amongst other demands relating to how they were paid and how they must perform their jobs. The labor unrest came to violence when tensions between miners, operators, and hired guards grew. On April 14th, 1913, miners were forced to end the strike with the condition that changes would be implemented, including no longer discriminating against union men, better work conditions, and other stipulations. However, this agreement did not take actually sustainably change any problems faced by striking miners and left them unsatisfied. In 1919, the Mine Wars continued in Logan and Mingo counties. These counties were left without the presence of an official union. Just like in the previous case, tension and violence came with the attempt to unionize. These conditions were what set the stage for the events that actually took place during the period of the Mine Wars.

One of the first situations within the time period of the Mine Wars that caused women to inherently struggle was the process of evictions. When miners started striking, the coal company they worked for made it clear that the men refusing to work needed to make room for those who would. This message came through in the form of eviction of miners and their families from company-owned property. While the miners were sometimes given written notices by the mine company they worked for, the process of eviction was carried out without due process of law, leaving miners with the complaint that they were not “legally summoned or notified to vacate the property.” While the written notices were signed by operators or their agents, the process did not proceed through a civil court. Those who received notices in the Paint Creek and Cabin Creek area were given around sixty days after the first notice to vacate their homes. In the case of the miners within Logan and Mingo counties, miners were given “a 10-day notice from the company... also a 3-day notice and after that they were evicted.” Miners, their wives, and their kids were all expected to leave the homes they had settled in within the company-owned property.

The dates used for the Mine Wars varies depending the source. Some prefer to extend the period to include other coal strikes that happened through West Virginia. Since I am focusing on the events of Cabin/Paint Creek and Mingo/Logan County, I will stick to their commonly used dates. West Virginia State Archives, “West Virginia’s Mine Wars,” West Virginia Department of Arts, Culture and History, accessed November 1, 2019, http://www.wvculture.org/history/archives/minewars.html.


Testimony of S.P. Smith, Conditions in the Paint Creek District, 425.

Testimony of William Rayner, Conditions in the Paint Creek District, 1101.

The evictions were carried out by the hands of the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency, whose men carried rifles with them through the process of eviction. This directly affected women because they were forced to leave the homes they had settled and based their lives around while their husbands were gone for around ten hours a day in the mines.

When the families of miners were forced to leave their homes because of eviction, it was often in a rush and under violent circumstances. A miner named Mr. W. E. Hutchinson, who worked in Mingo County for the span of five years, described how the process of his eviction went by stating:

My door was broken open by forcible means. I had the door locked and fastened with a key and also with a nail on the inside. They forced their way in at the front door, went in, and piled the contents, furniture, and things outside in front of the house, 20 yards from the house, up against the fence. Then they moved it back of the company store, moved it the second time, and piled it up against the company store, and to-day it is laying there as it was, only rotten. It has not been carried off. It is laying there yet.

The written notice did not do many families good because they had nowhere they could go if they left. Mrs. Inez L. Smith, wife of miner William Smith, stated that she and her husband would have been willing to leave their company-owned home, “but he had no work. He wouldn’t move away not knowing where he was going.” Those who were evicted from their houses did not have pleasant encounters with the Baldwin-Feltz guards who were presented with the task of evicting them. Mrs. Maud Fish of Paint Creek recalled how she was evicted in the middle of a meal. She stated:

On Friday morning they came to our house before I had breakfast; there were 22 men, guards, with their Winchesters, and there were two who didn’t have any guns... They came to my window before I knew they were on the place, and they says, “Mr. Fish, have you got your things out?” I didn’t give Mr. Fish time to answer, and I says, “Mr. Green, we don’t want our things any place; leave them here; we are perfectly satisfied to leave them as it is until we are ready to move.” He said, “I didn’t ask you that; I asked you where you want the things put.” He said he had come there to throw the things out. I said he should go ahead and throw them out; we couldn’t help ourselves; “you are here with 22 of your men, and what can two of us do?” I said, “Mr. Green, you will certainly give us time to eat our breakfast,” and he said, “You have had time to eat your breakfast...” He asked me how long it would take for us to have breakfast, and I had the biscuits in the stove; I had everything else ready, and just had the biscuits in the stove. But they would not give us time to eat our breakfast; they threw my breakfast things out, and we didn’t have anything to eat until the next day at 2 o’clock.

This is an example of how the homes may have been owned by the mine company, but it was the center of life for miners and their families. For Mrs. Fish, she was being taken away from what

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16 Testimony of Inez L. Smith, *Conditions in the Paint Creek District*, 1095.
17 Testimony of Joe Huber, *Conditions in the Paint Creek District*, 661.
19 Testimony of Inez L. Smith, *Conditions in the Paint Creek District*, 662.
20 Testimony of Maud Fish, *Conditions in the Paint Creek District*, 468.
21 Ibid. 469-70.
she worked for and cared for over her span of time living within Paint Creek. As stated above, this stood especially true for the women who were tasked with caring for the homes while their husbands worked the majority of the day.

To accommodate the loss of housing, tents were utilized as makeshift housing. Tents were provided to families by the union and were grouped together in units. The conglomerate of tents became known as tent colonies. To set the scene, the example of Holly Grove can be used. This was a location in which the strikers of Paint Creek and Cabin Creek set up a tent colony, and was described by a journalist as having “rows of tents and shacks for about 200 yards on either side of a curved track.” In the tent colony named “Goodman Holler” it was estimated that there were thirty-two tents split between twenty-five families. Women and children represented the majority of the population that lived within these tent colonies. According to a census of all the tent colonies in Mingo County, 284 women and 709 children lived in tents. Grown men only totaled to 273 people who lived in the tent colonies within Mingo County. Smaller family units would occupy one tent, while larger families were able to occupy two. A writer gives the following description of how evicted families looked from the outside:

I once drove up on a union truck loaded with tents and food to the outskirts of a town where an hour before sunup six families had been set out. Through slashing rains, our truck sloshed along a valley trail to the coal camp where we found women in drenched house dresses trying to calm their frightened children. They had taken refuge under the shed back of a small church. In the sulphur-yellow water there was a confusion of broken bedsteads, cribs, tables, chairs, toys.

On the inside, the state of the tents largely varied. In some tents, like the one occupied by Mr. and Mrs. William Carey, there were items needed for basic survival and comfort, such as stoves and chairs. In her oral interview, Mrs. William Carey stated that her tent had a “stove to cook on, table to eat on, and chairs to sit on.” For some, what the tent provided was all they needed to survive at the time. However this was not always the case.

As discussed previously, Mrs. William Carey conveys an example of a woman who remembers her time within the tent colonies as a positive experience. Mr. and Mrs. William Carey estimated that they lived within the tent colonies for two years. However, Mrs. William Carey did not live with her husband in the tent colonies year-round. She recalled leaving the tent colony to live with other family members in the winters and when she was nearing the birth of her children. Overall, she remarked that the time spent within the tent colonies was the “happiest days” of her life. The happy experience Mrs. William Carey recounted is not the universal experience held by all women who lived in tent colonies. For some, the tent colonies represented a time period when they had to fight in order to survive. Betty Smith of Matewan remembers the time spent in the tent colonies as a harsh struggle. When her family was evicted from their company-owned home it was the middle of winter. When asked about her family experience Smith stated “It

22Testimony of Winthrop D. Lane, *West Virginia Coal Fields Hearings*, 998.
24Mr. and Mrs. William Carey, Interview with Keith Dix.
27Ibid.
28Ibid.
was snowin’. I don’t know how deep the snow was but it was a terrible time and they were livin
in tents.”

Harsh winters spent in the camps are what separate Mrs. William Carey’s happy
experience from Betty Smith’s tale of a fight for survival. While Mrs. William Carey’s tent had
basic comforts, this was not universally true for all tents. Mr. Winthrop Lane recalled seeing the
tents in Mingo County, stating that:

They lacked floors — the tents did. Winter was coming on and the inhabitants of the
colonies were exposed to snow. Many of them leaked so the rain got in. Trenching
had not yet been done in many of them; that is. I am speaking now of the many
individual tents that had not been trenched.

The added stress of having to provide under harsh winter conditions affects the impact of the
time period. The winters in Paint Creek and Cabin Creek were described with occurrences of
“snow, rain blizzards, high water, and arctic cyclones.” When asked further about the conditions
within the tent colonies, Smith recounts her mother’s story of living in the tent colonies during
winter: “I thought I would die but she said, I had my babies and she said I crawled out to the cow
and milked the cow so my other children could have milk.”

Women had to deal with not only
making sure they did not freeze or starve to death, but also making sure that their children did not
freeze or starve to death. Mr. Neil Burkinshaw recalled what those who lived in the tent colonies
in Mingo County looked like. He stated that:

These people were driven like cattle from their homes, and their goods were thrown
out into the roads, and some lived in tents and railroad stations and temporary shelters,
and others even were without shelter until the United Mine Workers’ organization at
Charleston sent them tents, and to this day those people are living in tents. They lived
there during the winter. I was down there last November and saw barefoot children,
women with a single garment, and men barefooted with nothing but overalls, living
in that cold. It is a high mountain country and it is very cold. They suffered tortures
that I have never seen before in this or any country.

Overall, the conditions that existed within the tent colonies were not good. The cold was plentiful
but the food and the supplies were not. Mother Jones described the conditions in the tent colonies
in the winter by stating, “More hungry, more cold, more starving, more ragged than Washington’s
army that fought against tyranny were the miners of the Kanawha Mountains.”

The difference warm shelter created during this time period of extreme labor unrest was
further confirmed by Addie Nowlin of Matewan. She recalls her father having pro-union stances
that caused him to lose his job, but they were not forced out of their house because they owned it.
Addie Nowlin’s interview serves to prove that existing within the tent colonies created a more
lasting impact on people. This conclusion can be drawn, because Addie Nowlin did not remember
the Mine Wars other than the sensationalized stories she had passed down to her.

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30 Betty Smith, Interview with Rebecca Bailey, October 19, 1990, Box 1, Folder 6, Matewan Oral History Project,
West Virginia and Regional History Center.
31 Testimony of Winthrop Lane, West Virginia Coal Fields Hearings, 989.
32 Ayers, Never Justice, Never Peace, 139.
33 Ibid.
34 Testimony of Neil Burkinshaw, West Virginia Coal Fields Hearings, 5.
35 Ayers, Never Justice, Never Peace, 135.
36 Addie Nowlin, Interview With Rebecca Bailey, June 10, 1990, Box 1, Folder 17, Matewan Oral History Project,
West Virginia and Regional History Center.
The Baldwin-Feltz guards were another commonality in the different locations of the Mine Wars. They were hired by the mine companies and were “notorious for patrolling the coal camps evicting striking miners and their families, and intimidating and harassing them.” The presence of these hired hands during the eviction process has already been highlighted above; however, this was far from the only way that their presence affected miners and their families. Intimidation and violence at the hands of the Baldwin-Feltz guards were felt by all who experienced the Mine Wars. Women were often a target of direct intimidation and violence; Baldwin-Feltz guards did not discriminate based on sex. In a speech given by Mother Jones, she described the Baldwin-Feltz guards as a “force of armed guards of men belonging to the reckless class, the criminal and lawless class [who] beat up...[their] citizens on public highways...insult our wives, our daughters, arrest honest citizens in lawful discharge of their duties.” The speech takes time to mention the fact that the women of these communities were also subjected to the violence felt by men. No one was safe from the wrath of the Baldwin-Feltz guards.

In the case of Paint Creek and Cabin Creek, the local post office represented a headquarters of intimidation. In the questioning of miner Joe Huber, it was revealed that “Baldwin guards...would stay in the post office, and sometimes there would be as high as 10 or 12 of them in there.” He continued on to say “it was dangerous for any man or woman to go in there with all the ammunition and guns.” In another testimony, Mr. S. F. Nantz stated that his wife would not even attempt to get their mail, saying “she never bothered there none while the militia [Baldwin-Feltz guards] was in power.” This infrastructure being taken over led to women being disrupted in their daily life routines. In some instances, run-ins within the post office turned violent. When miner Tony Sevilla was arrested at the post office, his wife Jeanina Sevilla attempted to help him. Edward Brag, a sheriff employed by the mine company, described the situation by stating “The woman started in to see her husband...and one of the guards reached up and caught her by the hair or back of her dress...and jerked her down off the steps.” Women were not able to carry on with tasks that were part of their daily routine before the outbreak of labor unrest.

The interruption of daily life did not stop with the guards infiltrating the post office, as just walking around became a dangerous task for women. Mine guards would stop just to intimidate women they saw moving around within the space of the mine camp. Mrs. Sarah Blizzard, who lived in the Cabin Creek area, recounted how she was stopped from moving about in her town by mine guards. In her statement she said:

Well, I went up to Leewood on or about the first Sunday in April, and one came out and ordered me not to go another step, and would not let me go another step. He had his gun in his hands and he would not let me go one step farther. I kept walking up, and I said I would go farther, and he told his gun in his hands and he would not let me go one step farther. I kept walking up, and I said I would go farther, and he told me that I could not go any farther; that if I did he would not let me go any farther, and he just dared me to go and give one step more. Mr. Jackson, he said his name was.

Another example of a woman who was prevented simply from walking comes from Mrs. Inez L. Smith who recounted in an investigation a time when she was scared to travel around by foot.

37Ayers, Never Justice, Never Peace, 5.
38Ibid., 47.
39Testimony of Joe Huber, Conditions in the Paint Creek District, 288.
40Ibid., 290.
41Ayers, Never Justice, Never Peace, 21.
42Testimony of Sarah Blizzard, Conditions in the Paint Creek District, 653.
She stated that “Eight men come out on Sunday and stopped me in the road. One followed me a long time, and I started back to home and met some more women. I was afraid... [T]hey stopped us—eight men, with guns—Winchesters—going out on Sunday.” Violent threats often kept women from getting around locations near their homes, even if the places they were attempting to travel to had nothing to do with the ongoing labor strife. This fear was exemplified once again when Nina West and her friends attempted to walk to one of their homes for a visit. When the group of women was stopped by a mine guard, they had to give up hope of making it to their original location because the guard told West’s friend “that if she took another step he would mash her face.” This intimidation while simply just trying to exist was seen again when May Claypool, who lived in Holly Grove, recounted an encounter with the Baldwin-Feltz guards: “they [the Baldwin-Feltz guards] started shooting at our tent and we started on the open road... they stopped me and asked me where I was going and where I had been. They told me I could not cross the bridge and had to wade the creek.” Just like the union men of the mine camps, women with union affiliation experienced harassment. This was not an isolated incident. Miss Fish was not even allowed to walk on a path when she encountered mine guards along with Miss Claypool. Instead, the women were expected to wade the creek while the mine guards pointed guns at them:

They called us red necks, and told us we had to wade the creek, we couldn’t come up the railroad; and I was scared, as anyone would be, to pass them when they were shooting that way, but we intended to go up to the bridge and cross, and were not saying anything to them.

She was never given a reason why she was not allowed to walk on the path; she was not even allowed to take her shoes off or pull her dress up. The mine guards did not remove the women from the aim of their guns until they had cleared the creek. Women were even stopped by the mine guards when they were on their way to perform important tasks. An example of this comes from Mrs. Georgia Parker. She stated that:

Me and two more parties started to Red Warrior Cemetery and had got up there at Leewood, and Mr. Jackson stops us and turns us back. He first asks us what our names were, and we told him, and then he asked us where we were going, and we told him we were going to Red Warrior Cemetery, and he asked our business at the cemetery, and I told him I had a baby buried there and I would like to go and clean the grave off. He dropped his head and he said. “I don’t know much about it; I don’t know where you are going,” and so we stopped, and he said that he was put there to stop ladies and gentlemen from going up the road, and he said we could go no further, so he got ahold of Mrs. Nace’s arm and turned her around and told her she could not go any further, and threw his gun up in front of me and told me I could not go any further unless I would let some of his men go with me.
Because of the presence of the mine guards, Mrs. Parker was not allowed to properly mourn the death of her child. This serves as an example of how much of the lives of these women were interrupted by the labor struggle. Every piece of their normal routine was torn from their grasps.

Women were often put in the position of being in the middle of violent outbursts at the hands of Baldwin-Feltz guards. Often, they were presented with no option other than sitting back and watching in horror. An example of violent horror at the hands of Baldwin-Feltz guards occurs when Mrs. Maud Estep recalled what she went through the night her husband, Francis Francesco, was murdered by Baldwin-Feltz guards:

We heard the train come shooting, and he [Mr. Estep] hollered for us to go to the cellar, and he went out the front door. I went through the kitchen way, and I never got any farther than the kitchen door; we were all trying to get to the cellar. He was standing right at the corner of the cellar near the kitchen door where I was standing hollering for me to go and get into the cellar. It was so dark that I could just see the bulk of him. It scared me so—and I had a little one in my arms—that I could not go any farther. His cousin was there on a visit, and after the train commenced shooting he took hold of me and told me not to fall, and about that time a shot struck him in the leg.50

Traumatizing situations such as this murder did not present the women of the mine camps with many opportunities for escape. Attempting to help their husbands would often place them directly in the way of danger. In addition, women like Mrs. Maud Estep had children to watch over that they wanted to keep away from the face of danger. Second-hand intimidation came from the fear of losing their husbands when they attempted to go out. Mr. George Echols testified, “If we go to town we have to go in such a way that we have to tell our wives good-by, for we know that we might not come back, and that we may be under lock and key.”51

Women were not spared from outright violence and brutality at the hands of the Baldwin-Feltz guards. One example of the Baldwin-Feltz guards assaulting a women turned up when Mrs. Mollie Fish of Holly Grove gave an account of her assault in the form of a testimony during a government investigation of Paint Creek and Cabin Creek: “Mr. Phaup, one of the guards, grabbed me by the throat and hit me on the arm with his fist.... He struck me several times.”52 Women whose husbands had pro-union ties during the Mine Wars had to deal with being harassed and violently assaulted by the Baldwin-Feltz guards just as their husbands were. Bud Frances recounts what happened to his wife after he was arrested:

They abused her and left her up there and they poured out all of her groceries and poured kerosene in the baby’s milk, and they busted up her rocking chair and broke up pretty nearly all of the furniture in the tent. She had to do without anything to eat from that morning until along at night when she went to town, and the United Mine Workers of America took her to a hotel and got her supper, and they had me in jail at that time.53

Jeanina Sevilla was brutalized once again by mine guards when they came looking for her husband at their cabin in Wacomah. The non-native English speaker tried to explain that he was not at

50Testimony of Maud Estep, Conditions in the Paint Creek District, 460-461.
51Testimony of George Echols, West Virginia Coal Fields Hearings, 470.
52Testimony of Mollie Phish, Conditions in the Paint Creek District.
53Testimony of Bud Frances, West Virginia Coal Fields Hearings, 477.
home; the only people inside were herself and her children, but the men did not believe her. She recounted the situation through an interpreter by stating:

I heard this shooting, and I went to the door to see what was the matter. I saw the guards coming down the hill. . . . Then they came to our house, and they opened the door, and they came in and looked under the bed; and then on the bed was my baby, and it was asleep, and I told the guards to let the baby alone because it was on the bed; and they struck me and I fell down, and then they kicked me in the stomach and then they hit me with their fist here [indicating] and then they knocked me down.

At the time of this attack Sevilla was five months pregnant. However, after the attack, Sevilla did not feel her unborn child move for two months, at which point the baby was delivered dead by a physician. Just existing within the property of the mines presented dangerous situations. For example, in a timeline of the events within Logan and Mingo counties it was stated that the “camp and store [were] shot up from Weirwood property, one bullet missing Mrs. Lloyd Eden by a few inches. Five bullets entered Mrs. Smith’s boarding house.”

In the case of the labor effort within Mingo and Logan counties, the feud between men with the wish to unionize and those who wanted to prevent unions took a particularly violent turn. Violence on the behalf of the union men also came out during the trial. Mr. Perkins recounted how he saw school teacher Mrs. F. J. Short shot at, saying:

I saw a woman trying to get from the tipple to the boilers with a baby in her arms, and they fired at her repeatedly. And she ran from the tipple to the steel car on the track, and they fired four or five shots. Finally, she got behind the boilers with the baby, and then she went across a clearing, and then they fired at her six or eight shots. I never felt so sorry for anybody in my life.

While this represents a woman of the mine camp being harassed at the hands of union men, it came out in trial that the situation was still instigated by the Baldwin-Feltz guards. The difference this time is that they did not present themselves as Baldwin-Feltz guards, but instead as union men. Figures such as Mr. Lively would instigate violence on behalf of union men in order to cause drama, which means that more often than not, the violence women experienced in the time of the Mine Wars came as a direct result of the presence of Baldwin-Feltz guards.

The Logan and Mingo County feuds took an especially violent turn when Sid Hatfield and Ed Chambers were shot to death by Baldwin-Feltz guards while attempting to enter the court building in McDowell County to attend trial over their involvement in the Matewan Massacre. This presented an opportunity to affect women because the unarmed men were killed in front of their wives. Mrs. Sid Hatfield recounted how she was scared to even enter McDowell County for her husband’s trial. She said that:

We [herself and Mr. Hatfield] were afraid to come into that county [McDowell], because they say they beat up people and drag them off the trains from Mingo,

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54 Testimony of Jeanina Sevilla, Conditions in the Paint Creek District, 477-478.
55 Ibid., 478.
56 Ibid., 479.
57 Ibid.
58 West Virginia Coal Fields Hearings, 934.
59 Testimony of George H. Perkins, West Virginia Coal Fields Hearings, 503.
60 Testimony of Winthrop Lane, West Virginia Coal Fields Hearings, 1017.
wouldn’t let people come in off the trains from Mingo and all that kind of thing, and so I was afraid to come into that county.\textsuperscript{61}

Mrs. Hatfield did not see her husband shot; when she heard the gunfire, she ran to where she assumed safety would be. Mrs. Ed Chambers was not as lucky. She described seeing her husband die during an interrogation, stating:

He [Lively] was up on the step in front of me and kind of on this side...and my husband was on this side of me [indicating], and [Lively] kind of reached his arm across in front and shot my husband that way, you see, in the neck. My husband, he rolled back down the steps and I looked down this way and I seen him rolling down and blood gushing from his neck, and I just went back down the steps after him, you see, and they kept on shooting him, and when he fell he kind of fell on his side leaving his back up, you know, toward the steps and they were shooting him in the back all the time after he fell.\textsuperscript{62}

While these women are part of a story that has been sensationalized, their experience still offers up an important view of the lives women involved in the labor unrest. Like many others, these two women watched their husbands ruthlessly executed. To add insult to injury, one of the thirteen men who fired upon Ed Chambers and Sid Hatfield was Mr. Lively, who costumed himself as a union man for sometime while actually causing trouble on behalf of the Baldwin-Feltz guards.

While women were not the ones underground mining, they still pursued the interests of those they loved who were. While the pursuit was done by sticking with their husbands through eviction, all while experiencing violence and turmoil, women also stood in solidarity by protesting. As strikebreakers filed into the Creeks, they were met by groups consisting often of many women who were not happy with their presence. Reports described the women protesting strikebreakers as “uncouth, ill-bred, poorly clad, almost vicious women.”\textsuperscript{63} The media also attributed the women’s desire to persuade strikebreakers to leave to the presence of the sensationalized figure of Mother Jones. In reality, these women had their own stake in this fight and were just playing what they believed their part was in dissuading strikebreakers. Lillian Dwyer recounted her experience as a woman dealing with scabs, saying:

We told the transports that our husbands were fighting for their rights and they, too, should join in this fight. We told them how we had been driven from our homes and how we were forced to live in tents with our children. The mine guards threatened to kill us. They treated us like dogs. That is the way they have always treated us. We told the thugs that their mothers would be ashamed of them if they only knew what their sons were doing to help enslave the miners.\textsuperscript{64}

This testimony proves that women were not driven to protest in order to please Mother Jones. Instead, women were driven to protest due to the conditions they and their husbands were forced to experience at the hands of mine operators and mine guards. While the women probably did come off as rowdy, the real problem the anti-union men who ran the mines had with this display is that the women were warning the strikebreakers of what treatment they and their families would receive.

\textsuperscript{61}Testimony of Mrs. Sid Hatfield, \textit{West Virginia Coal Fields Hearings}, 734.

\textsuperscript{62}Ibid., 738.

\textsuperscript{63}Ayers, \textit{Never Justice, Never Peace}, 119.

\textsuperscript{64}Ibid., 120.
The women who came in with the strikebreakers were also negatively impacted by the labor unrest that was occurring. The men that came in as strikebreakers were labeled with the derogatory term “scab.” Scabs were disliked because they substantiated the mine companies’ belief that they did not have to improve labor conditions; they just had to bring in new workers. In Logan and Mingo counties, scabs were not greeted with smiling faces. Instead:

[T]hey will influence the children. His children will say that the other children “won’t play with me; they call me a scab.” Then they also influence the wife. She finds that the women will not associate with her. And she says, “Women will not associate with me and they call me a scab’s wife.” There is a pressure put on him and it is absolutely impossible for him to resist it.65

In another account from Logan and Mingo County, it was described how wives of strikebreakers would complain that “I can not live here. They call me a scab wife.”66 This attitude towards strikebreakers and their families was not confined to Logan and Mingo County. During the investigation into the Paint Creek and Cabin Creek District, Mrs. West admitted, “I wouldn’t speak to a scab at all.”67 While women were affected by the bad blood between the striking workers and their families and the strikebreakers and their families, it was not a result of their own actions. Instead, it was a result of the environment fostered by the mine companies that knew bringing in strikebreakers during this period would only worsen the situation.

In the aftermath of the Mine Wars, many families were left displaced. In the wake of losing their jobs, and often their houses, miners that formerly worked in the locations in which the Mine Wars took place were forced to leave. This displacement is made apparent through court documents when the people questioned are asked where they reside now. Almost none of those questioned about the events of the Mine Wars continued to reside where the labor unrest took place. The main reason miners and their families left was to find new and sustainable work. However, families did stay tied to the tent colonies for long increments of time, either because they had nowhere else to turn or because they still wanted to fight. An example of this can be found in the testimony of Grover Coleman, who when asked where he lived stated “I am not exactly anywhere now; I used to live on Cabin Creek.”68 This represents the displacement felt by those who were displaced after the drama of the Mine Wars. Eventually, they had to begin their lives again. Starting over directly impacted women because they had to leave behind what they knew, and all they had made, in order to find more stable living conditions with their families.

All those within the areas of labor unrest during the Mine Wars felt an effect. However, it is important to look at the women who were living within the mine camps because they were a direct player in the action that took place during the time period of the Mine Wars. This period can be accurately summed up by an account Mrs. Fish gave in the investigation into the conditions in the Paint Creek and Cabin Creek District. She stated:

I believe it was July 17th, and [I] helped my sister-in-law on the train with her baby and there were some transportation men came off and I got upon the car and there were thirteen of the guards on the ground with transportation people. I was getting upon the car when they were and I saw the transportation people and said “Boys there is a strike on Paint Creek and you had better stay away from there and not take

65Testimony of William M. Willey, West Virginia Coal Fields Hearings, 522.
66Ibid., 989.
67Testimony of Nina West, Conditions in the Paint Creek District, 467.
68Testimony of Mrs. West, Conditions in the Paint Creek District, 466.
our work from us.” Mr. Phaup, one of the guards, grabbed me by the throat and hit me on the arm with his fist and some of them said “Watch out, that is a lady you are striking.” He said “God damn the lady; let her stay in her place.” He struck me several times.69

This story demonstrates so many core positions held by the women who lived through the action of the Mine Wars. To start with, Mrs. Fish was ready to defend her husband against the strikebreakers who were coming through. She did not do this because Mother Jones was calling for her to, she did it because the strikebreakers’ presence in the Mine Wars had threatened to destroy what the miners and their families had worked for. In addition to this, Mrs. Fish was a victim of the harsh brutality that the Baldwin-Feltz guards dished out. Outsiders knew it was wrong for the guards to be handling a woman like that, but in the realm of the Mine Wars, no one was safe. If no one was safe or spared from the violence in this period, it is only fair to take a look at how each group was impacted.

In conclusion, women living within the coal camps were directly impacted by the period of labor unrest known as the Mine Wars. They were not the ones who were unionizing in efforts to create better conditions, but this does not minimalize their position within the conflict. Women were thrown out of their homes along with their husbands and their families. They were forced to leave the homes they had spent countless time making and caring for. When thrown out of their homes, they were forced to live within tents with their husbands and families. This placed them in a position in which they were lacking most comforts and were forced out into the cold. They were interrupted, intimidated, and brutalized by the Baldwin-Feltz mine guards just as the union men were. Every aspect of their daily life and routine was impacted by the presence of the Baldwin-Feltz guards. They were not allowed to indulge in normal tasks such as checking their mail or grieving a lost loved one. In addition to this, just like their husbands, they were brutalized and beat by the Baldwin-Feltz guards for little to no reason. They protested to advocate for improved situations by warning and shunning the strikebreakers who were hired to replace their husbands’ positions within the mine companies. This was not an action done to appease the media or any other figures; instead it was done for themselves and the men they loved. Finally, at the end of the struggle, they had to relocate in order to rebuild their lives. In the end, they had to pick up their lives and start elsewhere in many cases. Together, all of the above instances prove that the labor struggle forever changed the lives of the women who lived through them. Not only did their day-to-day lives completely shatter due to the unrest, they experienced widespread violence and chaos. All of this left the women of the Mine Wars with a harsh burden to carry on with them for the remainder of their lives.

69Testimony of Elizabeth Fish, Conditions in the Paint Creek District, 478.
References

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