

**United States Department of the Interior National Park Service
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM**

1. Name of Property

historic name: Battle of Blair Mountain
other names/site number: 1921 Miners March to Logan

2. Location

street & number: Spruce Fork Ridge between WV17 at Blair Gap and County Road 8 at Mill Creek Gap
city or town: Logan not for publication: N/A
state: West Virginia code: WV county: Logan code: 045 vicinity: X
zip code: 25601

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant X nationally X statewide ___ locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.
(___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

entered in the National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the
National Register

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the
National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

- building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>6</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>9</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Defense Sub: Battle Site

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Landscape Sub: Natural Feature

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION
(Enter categories from instructions)

N/A

MATERIALS
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>N/A</u>
roof	<u>N/A</u>
walls	<u>N/A</u>
other	<u>N/A</u>

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See continuation sheet

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- 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

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/Government

Social History

Other: Labor History

Period of Significance 1921

Significant Dates 1921

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Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder N/A

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more 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: Logan County Public Library
WV State Archives Library
Kanawha County Public Library

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately 1600

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	___	425974	4191633	C	___	424770	4192268
B	___	424958	4191857	D	___	423835	4192685

X See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Frank Unger, Historic Preservationist
Kenny King, Amateur Historian/Archaeologist

organization Past Respects date 12/20/04

street & number 821 Johnson Creek Road telephone (304) 577-6217

city or town Walton state WV zip code 25286

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Two sets of black and white photographs

Slides

USGS map

Sketch map or site plan

Owner notification information

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Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

See attached Property Owner listing

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, 1849 "C" Street NW, Washington, DC 20240

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PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The nominated site consists of 1,600 acres stretching approximately ten miles across the summit of Spruce Fork Ridge in Logan County, West Virginia. From the north, it extends from Mill Creek Gap southward to Crooked Creek Gap, Craddock Fork of Hewett Creek, Beech Creek, and Blair Gap ending at White's Trace Branch to the southeast. The site is located near the community of Blair and is in West Virginia's Third Congressional District.

The Battle of Blair Mountain was fought along the ridge line of Spruce Fork Ridge, beginning at White's Trace Branch in the southeast, to the Mill Creek Gap area in northwest 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 that terrain encompassing a portion of the miners' line of march led by members of the United Mine Workers of America; the ridge line itself, and the defensive positions on the upper slopes of the ridge that were established by Sheriff Don Chafin of Logan County who sought to block the miners' march. Chafin's forces were arrayed at strategic points linked by a continuous sentry line along the ridge. The nominated area was the location of most 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 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. Spruce Fork Ridge is an undulating ridge approximately fifteen miles long when traveled by foot from the south crest of Blair Mountain to Mill Creek Gap. The peaks along the ridge vary in elevation from 1,809 feet at the head of the left fork of Beech Creek to a high of 2,064 feet at the twin peaks of Pine Mountain. The alluvial valleys below are tightly etched by small meandering streams. Vegetation of the area is marked by mature stands of mixed hardwoods. Understory plants include orchids, lilies, coltsfoot, mullein and several species of briars.

The miners assembled at the mouth of Lens Creek in Marmet in southern Kanawha County. Gaining supporters as they advanced, they marched toward Big Coal River, to Peytona, and up Drawdy Creek. They continued up Rock Creek to Little Coal River, following that stream into Danville and Madison. At Madison, their march turned up Spruce Fork to the communities of Jeffrey, Sharples, and Blair, 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 include off-road vehicle trails that were constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps during the Great Depression; the extension of the ridge top road from Beech Creek to the north crest of Blair Mountain at State Rt. 17, a modern paved highway that was constructed shortly after the battle, bypassing the Blair Pass Trail. Non-contributing elements on the south crest of Blair Mountain are a

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small concrete block building and metal shed; the Civilian Conservation Corps construction included a fire tower and a ranger cabin, but those structures are no longer standing. Two modern gas wells at Crooked Creek Gap and at White's Trace Branch are within the boundary. Additionally, there are rights of way for telecommunications, high voltage electric lines and towers, and remnants of an underground mine ventilation shaft at White's Trace Branch. The headwaters of Beech Creek have been compromised by coal mine operations and are not included in this nomination.

Contributing elements include natural stone bulwarks and man-made breastworks located in gaps along the ridge. The natural terrain was strategically important for defensive entrenchments at all the peaks along the ten mile ridgeline, which truncated the movement of UMWA forces over the gaps and passes at the head of the left fork of Beech Creek, Blair Pass Trail, Beech Creek, Sycamore Branch of Craddock Fork, Craddock Fork of Hewett Creek, Balls Branch of Craddock Fork, and Baldwin Fork of Hewett Creek. Two farms between Crooked Creek Gap and Beech Creek are no longer present. The site of the Battle of Blair Mountain remains remote and sparsely populated. The battlefield site retains nearly all of its integrity, as discussed in Section 8 of this document.

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Spruce Fork Ridge of Blair Mountain in Logan County, West Virginia, is historically significant at the national level under criterion A for its association with broad trends in American Labor History, National Politics and Government, and American Social History. The ridge was the site of the 1921 Battle of Blair Mountain that ended a three-year struggle to unionize the coal miners of Logan, Mingo, McDowell, and Mercer counties. The unsuccessful campaign by the United Mine Workers of America was a long and bloody affair that arose only after decades of outrageous exploitation at the hands of autocratic 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. They tried to breach a defensive line along Spruce Fork Ridge that stretched for ten miles, with two armed pickets stationed every fifty yards.

Logan County Sheriff Don Chafin established the line to block the march, which began one week after the Aug. 1, 1921, murder of Matewan, West Virginia, Police Chief Sid Hatfield, who on May 19, 1920, stood between the striking coal miners and agents of the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency. Hatfield prevented the agents from evicting miners from their homes for joining the union, violating their work agreement not to do so. Already frustrated by fifteen months of martial law in Mingo County that was invoked by the coal autocracy, miners viewed Sid's death as the final outrage that drove them to confrontation. The battle for Spruce Fork Ridge 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, and should be listed on the National Register of Historic Places, just as several other sites associated with the wars have been.<!--[if !supportFootnotes]-->[1]<!--[endif]-->

By 1919, organizing the southern coal fields was 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.<!--[if !supportFootnotes]-->[2]<!--[endif]--> 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.<!--[if !supportFootnotes]-->[3]<!--[endif]--> Some sources estimate that a million rounds of ammunition were fired by the opposing groups.<!--[if !supportFootnotes]-->[4]<!--[endif]-->

Even though they were not successful at Blair Mountain, the miners accomplished a great deal in their revolt. The march focused national attention on their situation. Aside from gaining national press coverage, the marching miners amassed sufficient force to require intervention by the United States Army and they broke down racial and ethnic barriers to the solidarity they would need later when they did organize. Congress also opened an investigation

