

Where Clash In Marion Mill Strike Occurred



The line pictured above running between the mill office and store nights and the traffic place of the Marion Manufacturing company strike was the stage for Wednesday's carnage of death. When workers and deputy sheriffs clashed, rioters took the road with police trouble. The officers were grouped in the gate which is pictured here guarded by lines of strikers. Two loaded strikers and strike sympathizers were parked in front of the gate. When the firing ceased a wave of men lay writhing, crawling or limping in the road. The mill office across the street let a wave of rioters strike. A small office inside the mill grounds showed two bullet holes. A number of windows in the mill were struck by bullets which officers and were fired from the crowd outside the gate.

—Staff Photo by Michael

On this day in WNC history: On October 2, 1929, deputies fired into a crowd of striking workers in Marion, North Carolina. Six were killed and even more wounded at the Marion Manufacturing Company in one of the deadliest acts of strike-busting in the South.

This year marked an apogee of strikes and labor organization in southern textile mills. Eight years prior, over 100 miners were killed at the Battle of Blair Mountain in West Virginia in a period of coal clashes and unionization attempts. Later in the 1920s, many textile workers reacting to grueling and dirty work conditions under the "stretch-out" system, along with a reduction of their pay in company scrip, began organizing and demanding better conditions. Spearheaded by the National Textile Workers Union (an organization supported by the Communist Party), concurrent strikes began early in 1929 at the Bemberg-Glanzstoff Rayon Corporation in Elizabethton, Tennessee and at Loray Mills in Gastonia, North Carolina. Female employees were key to the organization of both strikes, and the latter is most famously remembered for the death of Ella May Wiggins. National

AFTER HOURS Summer Concert Series

early in 1929 at the Bemberg-Glanzstoff Rayon Corporation in Elizabethton, Tennessee and at Loray Mills in Gastonia, North Carolina. Female employees were key to the organization of both strikes, and the latter is most famously remembered for the death of Ella May Wiggins. National Guard members, local police, and union-busting mobs were called to both of these events.

The Marion strikes (which occurred at the neighboring Clinchfield Mill as well) began July 11. Workers struck without official union support, resisting involvement by communist organizers. After frequent violence and threats, with two National Guard units present, workers returned to these mills September 11, with no raise in pay and a mandated 55-hour workweek. Marion Manufacturing Mill refused to rehire 114 of the strikers, leading to further anger. Workers struck again on October 2, and deputies were dispatched by the local sheriff. Though some details are murky, deputies shot into a crowd of strikers, killing four on site, wounding at least fifteen, with two others dying later. Nearby hospitals refused medical care to strikers, and churches of the mill village refused to administer their funerals. Eight deputies were charged, but acquitted in December. They contended the strikers were armed, but no guns were found, and the *New York Times* reported those killed were shot in the back.



Twenty-three Textile Workers Killed or Wounded Following New Walkout at Marion Yesterday Morning

SHERIFF'S MEN CLAIM THAT FIRST SHOT FIRED WAS BY UNION WORKER

This Is Denied By Union Forces; Many Statements As To Tragedy Undisputed But Various Claims of Both Sides Are Disputed By The Opposing Side; 'They Wouldn't Move and I Shot The Tear Gas Into Them', Says Sheriff Adkins, Telling of Beginning of Battle; Taylor Green, Deputy Sheriff. Only Officer Wounded

MASSACRE OF UNIONISTS AT MARION FOLLOWED BY 15 ARRESTS FOR MURDER

Green Urges Probe of Marion Strike Deaths

Long Hours, Low Wages and Dangerous Conditions of Employment Among the Textile Workers of the South
Shunned for Trouble by Labor's President

Washington, May 20.—Twenty-three workers of the Marion Manufacturing Co. were killed or wounded yesterday morning in a strike at Marion, N. C., according to a report from the American Federation of Labor. The report says that the strike was called by the workers because of long hours, low wages, and dangerous conditions of employment. The workers were demanding a 55-hour week, a 10-cent raise, and the right to organize. The company refused their demands and fired 114 workers. The strike turned violent when the sheriff's men came to break it up. The workers claimed that the first shot was fired by a union worker, while the sheriff's men claimed that the first shot was fired by a worker. The result was the death of 23 workers and the wounding of many others. The sheriff, J. B. Adkins, and his deputy, Taylor Green, were charged with the murders. Fifteen men were arrested and charged with the murders. The workers' union, the American Federation of Labor, is demanding a full investigation into the deaths.

Fourth Victim Dies and Two Others Are in Critical Condition

Union Men Arrive at Marion and Local Mill Employees Accompanied by Workers For 25 Workers Charged With Seizing Officers and With Seizure of Arms; 40 Are Released on Bond; More Protest of Paper Union Will Be Held Today; Newspaper Workers of Tragedy Run Officers Shot Stunned Shock Like Days

By HENRY TAYLOR, Staff Correspondent